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**Researchers study earth's vegetation 21-mln-year-ago to understand climatic evolution**



Washington, April 28: The characteristics of the vegetation that inhabited Earth 21 million years ago provide vital clues towards understanding the climatic evolution in the last million years and the causes for those changes that occurred then, a new University of Granada study has revealed.

As part of the study, the research team analysed samples of the sedimentary bowls of the geographic section from the south of Spain to Turkey, and found that 14 millions years ago, glaciations in the South Pole caused a climatic change that turned from subtropical to warm.

It also transformed the characteristic vegetation of the area, said Gonzalo Jiménez Moreno, the author of the study.

"A result that can be vitally important to determine if the present climatic change is due to a natural period or, on the contrary, it is a consequence of the bad management of man," he said.

Moreno said although the project has focused on the palynological study of numerous localities of the Miocene, the conclusions obtained suggested that the cooling experienced in the planet 14 million years ago also extended to Upper Miocene, Pliocene and Pleistocene, with the respective change in the climate and the vegetation.

"From the remains of pollen it has also been possible to characterize a climatic latitudinal gradient in the southwest of Europe and climatic changes with regard to Milankovitch cycles (the Serbian astrophysicist Milutin Milankotovitch who developed a mathematical theory of climate in which he established, among other results, that changes in the seasonal distribution of sunshine, due to astronomical factors, are the responsible for the expansion and retreat of the big glacial layers)," said Moreno.

"Another reason for the drop in temperature and the transformation of the vegetation was the progressive raising of the European Alpine Arch during the Miocene," he said.

"The importance of this study lies in the fact that thanks to the available data of the past we will be able to know how vegetation will behave when there are climatic changes and if those transformations are due to a natural phenomenon or a bad action of man," he added.

Bureau Report

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