Introduction:

Sindhudurg district is one of the famous districts in the State of Maharashtra in India, well known for its naturally enriched flora and fauna. It is the naturally rich district of the of Maharashtra; obviously that of India. It is popularly called as Malabar and extends from Mumbai to Kanyakumari. The total sea coast length of the district is 121 km.

Topologically Devgad is situated on 16° 23' N, 73° 21' E. It is a hilly place elevated by about avg. 300m from the actual seashore. Major crust of the whole Taluka has been formed of the strong layer of ignite rock, devoid of soil. No doubt, patches of red soil are present at a number of places. Main region of Devgad Taluka lies on a flat rocky peninsula.

The Taluka is well known for its cultivation of Alphanso mango trees. It also bears the creeks of Devgad, Mithbav, Vijaydurg and Achara. Besides all this, the Taluka has been endowed by a natural seacoast of aprox.55 Km. This coast is enriched with the natural creeks like Devgad, Malai-Kawalewadi, Katta, Achara, Vijaydurg, Kalaval, Mithbav, Tembavali-Mond, Waniwade, Padavane, Mithmumbri etc. All these creeks are distributed in different parts of the Taluka. Each of them represents a different type of environment, microenvironment as well as other characters of an aquatic ecosystem. Hence obviously they harbour more of less a different type of fauna in their waters as well as on their shores.

Devgad has got a comparatively fine, cool, temperate and bracing climate all throughout the year. In spite of the rather heavy coastal rainfall, it remains comparatively dry owing to its special natural situation as all the rain water is drained off to the creek very quickly. Hence Devgad is free from constant epidemics.

The climate of the Taluka though moist is generally healthy. The rainfall is plentiful and regular. The year may be divided into four seasons as…
1] Summer or pre-monsoon season from March to May.
2] South-west monsoon season from June to September
3] Post-monsoon season from October to November
4] Winter season from December to February.

Importance of the Topic:
Today the world is inhabited by several million species of living animals. About 1,200,000 different species and subspecies of animals have been identified and named worldwide to date. It has been estimated that almost 1300 new animal species are described every year in different corners of the world. This diversity of the animals plays an important role in some way or other in Natural Processes as well as affects human life.

Phylum Mollusca is the second largest group of living organisms in the world. It comprises more than 1,00,000 species. First Molluscan species appeared during Cambrian period about 500 million years ago. Molluscs are soft bodied and boneless animals. But they have developed a capacity to build their own house i.e. Shell. Shell is built of Calcium Carbonate. Shells are generally used in classification of molluscs based on their size, shape and colours. Molluscs carry their houses along with them. Shells are protective in function by all means. Especially in molluscs like gastropods, bivalves, chiton and several others, external presence of shell is quite important in survival. Some of the species of these categories are attached to the substratum [ex.: Green mussel - *Mytilus viridis*, Barnacles, chiton] and others are slow moving intertidal species like Pila, Katelysia etc. In certain molluscan animals like Sepia, Loligo, Octopus etc. the shell may be reduced and present inside the body. In some terrestrial species of snails, it may be absent or vestigial.

**Justification of the Selection of the Topic**

A lot of work has been done by different workers on the coastal diversity of the molluscan animals in all parts of the total Konkan belt of Maharashtra state including the Sindhudurg district. But a very less work has been done with respect to the molluscan diversity of different creeks in the district Sindhudurg. Besides, complete ecological studies of the creeks as a natural habitat are also not that much thoroughly done if the creek ecosystems in the district are concerned. In different parts of the district, a number of creeks are observed with their own ecological characters which need to be studied separately as well
as comparatively. Such studies can help for the future conservation strategies of the natural habitats in the Malabar zone as well as all over the Indian context. If so far the available references are concerned, very less references are available with respect to this district.

Besides, Devgad Taluka is specifically selected from the district for the studies because it is a remote place which is least studied in context to the proposed studies. A very less field work is available with respect to this Taluka if proposed title is concerned. It should also be mentioned specifically here that the Taluka harbours all possible natural types of creek habitats including muddy, rocky, sandy as well as brackish waters etc. Hence all possible types of natural creek habitats can be studied at a single place by considering adequate parameters. Comparative account of the studies could also be done as the environmental factors all over the taluka are more or less similar in all places.

Diversity of Phylum Mollusca in the creeks of Devgad Taluka has been selected because molluscan animals are very sensitive to any type of change in the ecological parameters in their natural habitat. They detect any minute change in the magnitude of each parameter which supports their life. Besides, a large number of species of the phylum are economically important if the local human life is concerned. A large human population is associated with marketing of molluscan animals found all over. In addition to that, it is a well known fact that molluscan animals form a major place in the food chain of any aquatic ecosystem. Hence molluscan life is selected for the studies considering all possible directions of the studies.

Besides, it has been estimated that more than 350 species of different molluscan species exist in all coastal habitats of the district Sindhudurg. But the exact number of the molluscan animals that exist in the creek habitats is not yet estimated with reference to Devgad Taluka. Hence the proposed work could be a basic work in that sense. In addition to that, it could be a fresh reference available for the any future work in same respect.