Greta Thunberg's Climate Message

What is the issue?

- In September 2019, a teenager Greta Thunberg addressed the UN climate change summit, which made widespread impact on the climate change discourse.
- There is more to the Swedish teenager-activist's point of view than mere emotion and passionate commitment.

What were Greta's remarks?

- Greta accused world leaders of ignoring or deliberately looking away from the responsibility they have towards the young today and in the future.
- Her arguments would have pleased Mahatma Gandhi.
- He too thought that economics concerned solely with wealth undermines ethical responsibilities.
- It ignores justice as a primary human yearning and right.
- This was also the underlying theme of Greta's presentation to the leaders and representatives of different countries.
- One well-recognised issue is the direct connection between economic growth and the state of the environment.
- It is nearly half a century since the idea of 'limits to growth' was recognised and proposed as a ground for change in development policies.
- But still, those advocating speedy and high economic growth have been indifferent to the limits posed by nature on the theoretical scope of growth.

Who get to be the victims of this indifference?

- Greta presented herself as a victim of the world leaders' indifference to climate change.
- She said, "you have stolen my childhood with your empty words."
- It is true because her campaign on climate change had cost her more than just school attendance.
- She was referring to the collective future of those who are young today and also to future generations.
- It is not the distant generations that will face the consequences of climate change; the crisis is already upon us.
- The futures of these young ones are bleak, not in the context of economic

slowdown but climate change.
- Certainly, as observed by Greta, higher income or status would not help to avoid the consequences of climate change.
- But not everyone is convinced about this argument.
- Richer nations as well as richer people in every nation continue to believe that they can buy relief and escape from the climate change consequences.

What was Greta's idea on adult-child relations?

- Ms. Greta struck a new, unfamiliar note in adult-child relations.

- Human beings were used to deriving hope from their progeny.
- Children give them a sense of continuity, a symbolic conquest over death.
- Societies expect their long-pending problems to be solved by members of the young generation, with their creative and intellectual strength.
- It was this sentiment that Ms. Greta was referring to when she said, "You all come to us young people for hope."
- The steps currently under consideration for containing the consequences of climate change are far too inadequate to cope with the crisis.
- She thus reminded her audience that carbon emissions are crippling the capacities of the young in the early years.
- Notably, in cities like Delhi, doctors have been warning that children suffering from asthma cannot be expected to have a normal adolescence and youth.

Why are Greta's remarks notable?

- Paradoxically, among millions of teenagers like her, not all are as apprehensive about the impending future.
- In fact, the growth-centric model of progress and the consumer goods appeals to the vast population of the young in many countries today.
- They might also feel quite confident that their leaders will find the way forward against climate change.
- Ms. Thunberg does not represent this vast crowd.
- She was not speaking on behalf of the children and youth in any particular country, but representing the voice of the young in a generic sense.
- Her Swedish education has made her critically aware of what is going on, imparting to her a sense of urgency and impatience to act.
- Gladly, in many countries, countless children have begun to identify with her.
- With new curricular initiatives taken in all national systems of education, school-going children now know a lot more about the meaning of climate change than their parents.

Source: The Hindu

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