Relevance of Gandhi's Economic Wisdom

What is the issue?

With India facing new age economic challenges, Gandhi's economic wisdom might prove to be of help.

What is Gandhi's economic wisdom?

- J C Kumarappa called it "economy of permanence". [J C Kumarappa is a Gandhian thinker and economist]
- Gandhi proposed bringing together the best in city people and the best in village people.
- He was telling the young people of those days, be it Subhash Chandra Bose or Nehru or hundreds of other highly educated city people, to go to villages.
- He was also asking the village people to go to the city for inspiration.
- His economic model provided for saving nature by actually shifting to production systems that use less of automation.
- By this way, the nature is treated as less of a raw material.

How different is India's economy from Gandhi's idea?

- For Gandhiji, economy meant construction of jobs, more than production, more than profits.
- In contrast, in the last 70 years, India has been increasing production only because it meant a lot of profit for a few people.
- It was genuinely believed that those few people would transfer the profit to the masses.
- Jawaharlal Nehru tried seriously to achieve that, as did others, and the present PM Modi too is trying to achieve that.
- But unfortunately, this has not happened.

What is the consequence?

- The economy of over-production and excess profit and growth is collapsing.
- There is much hope for economic revival but the possibilities are too less or are highly challenging.
- In the recent Climate Action Summit, activist Greta Thunberg expressed concerns for the global economic growth pattern.
- She said to the leaders, "You people are destroying my world".

- She was so concerned because many developed countries have converted so completely to homogenised economic systems that they may be unable to go back.
- However, India's economy, which was dear to Gandhiji, is still alive in India.
- So, there is a possibility of going back to nature, unlike the many other countries that have homogenised economic systems.

How can that be achieved?

- A hundred years after Gandhiji, India cannot draw the line between the handmade and the machine-made.
- Nevertheless, the country should start the scale from the complete handmade, as the most sacred; a little less handmade is a little less sacred and so on.
- This alternative needs time as well as hundreds and thousands of what Gandhiji called constructive workers, who will go to the villages and arm them with systems.

What should be done?

- Over the last 250 years, millions of dollars have been spent in industry.
- The knowledge accumulated is in the construction of systems of accounting, of management, production, managing markets, managing production, etc.
- But the villagers do not have this.
- It is time to inspire thousands of young people, who are rendered jobless every day, to go to the villages.
- India definitely needs Gandhi. But, the challenge is to find ways to utilise his wisdom to sort out the problems created in the last seven decades.

Source: The Indian Express

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