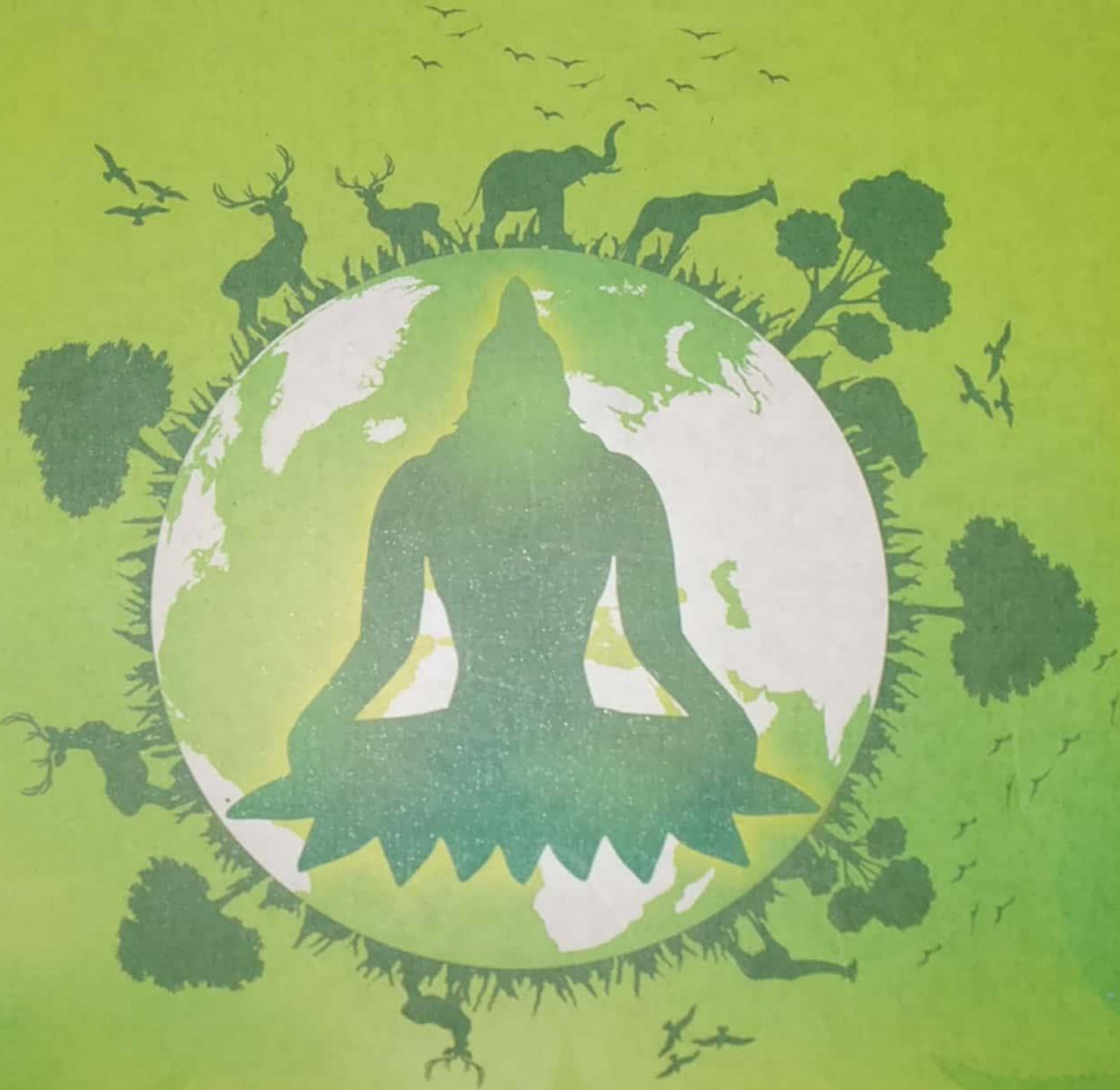


ECOLOGICAL AWARENESS

ENSHRINED IN THE ANCIENT WISDOM



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**Ecological Aswarness
Enshrined
in the Ancient Wisdom**

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J. C. KUMARAPPA: A TRUE FOLLOWER OF GANDHIAN IDEAL OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Dr. T. G. Sreekumar

The Gandhian ideal of Sarvodaya believes in the welfare (*Udaya*) of All (*Sarva*), which does not exclude any of the living beings. Thus, Sarvodaya implies the welfare of all beings without harming others. As Srī Nārāyana Guru preached, 'that which somebody does for his happiness, should be of no harm to others also.' (*Ātmopadeśasatakam* 25). Here, an attempt is made to reflect on a lesser known pioneer of the Gandhian vision of Sarvodaya in its true spirit.

Joseph Cornelius (J. C.) Kumarappa, a true follower of Mahatma Gandhi and an architect of Gandhian Rural Economy (Cinema Swaraaj) Programme, is also hailed as the founding father of green thought in India. Freedom and justice were enshrined in their true spirit in his life and activities. In his monumental work, 'The Economy of Permanence', he outlined the danger in the unscrupulous exploitation of Nature and its resources in a vain attempt at satiating the endless greed of man, which is at the core of today's consumerist culture. He does also provide an alternative to this by suggesting a parallel way of sustainable development, which comprises a humanitarian vision of development with lesser harm to the eco-system. He vehemently opposed the Nehruvian policy of economic development which emphasised, in place of the self-sufficient village economy vision of Gandhiji, on the capitalist ways of imported agricultural methods like chemical fertilizers and pesticides for more produce. This phenomenon called the 'green revolution' proved to be disastrous to the ecosystem prevailed in India. Excessive and uncontrolled use of

chemical fertilizers and pesticides destroyed the natural fertility of the soil, caused variations in climatic conditions and extinction of several species of birds and animals. Instead of measuring human welfare and development on the basis of material progress, he advocated the comprehensive well-being of the universe as a whole comprising, apart from man, all the living beings. As a member of the economic planning committee, while formulating the policies for economic development of the country, he cautioned against the open, unwanted subjectivism to capitalist interests. In a speech delivered at Lahore in 1930, he cautions:

'in studying human institutions, we should never ignore the great teacher, mother nature. Whenever we devise something contrary to her course of action, she will ruthlessly annihilate it. A nation that forgets or ignores the fundamental processes of nature will disintegrate.' (quoted in 'Building a Creative Freedom: J C Kumarappa and his Economic Philosophy', by Venu Madhav Govindu and Deepak Malghan, Economic and Political weekly, Sep. 2005. According to Kumarappa, 'self-interest and self-preservation demand complete non-violence, co-operation and submission to the ways of nature if we are to maintain permanency by non-interference with and by not short-circuiting the cycle of life.' (Economy of permanence, p. 10) He believed that material resources are an integral part of Natural Order and, hence, we should make a just use of those resources.

He also reminds us that nature pays its wages honestly in the form of food and nourishment in return for every benefit received by her (ibid.)

Explaining his vision of the economy of permanence, he observes: 'nature enlists and ensures the co-operation of all its units, each working for itself and in the process helping other units to get along their own too. Thus all nature is dovetailed together in a common

cause. Nothing exists for itself. When this works out harmoniously and violence does not break the chain, we have an economy of permanence'. (op.cit., p. 11)

The Kumarappan vision of the *Economy of Permanence* envisages five divisions such as *Parasitic Economy*, *Predatory Economy*, *Economy of Enterprise*, *Economy of Gregation* and *Economy of Service*. He takes examples from the nature to explain each. (Kumarappa, op. Cit. pp. 12-14)

In *parasitic Economy*, just like parasitic plants, some live on others and become parasites. As they grow, the host is destroyed. Thus, one's growth is harmful for another.

In *predatory economy*, one individual grows taking benefit from another, like a monkey entering a grove to eat the fruits, but, contributes nothing to the host.

In the *Economy of Enterprise*, each individual contributes his or her might to the society in a unique way. They benefit by their own enterprise.

In the *Economy of Gregation*, there is an extension from self-interest to group-interest and from acting on the immediate urge of present needs to planning for future requirements.

In the *Economy of Service*, as in the case of a mother bird feeding her child, one individual functions neither for its present need nor for its personal future requirement, but projects its activities into the next generation, or generations to come, without looking for any reward.

Throughout his career, Kumarappa had reiterated his feelings against forgetting the rhythm of nature while formulating economic policies. He had put forward the examples of the evils caused by *Green Revolution* which resulted in devastation of large area of land, loss of agricultural earnings, and the consequent suicides of the farmers. His

vision is all the more significant even today in the age of G. M. crops, because, in an ecosystem, every living being is inseparably linked to the other beings in such a way that, if any one link is disturbed, it will have adverse effects on others also. Each individual has, and should maintain also, its own position in an ecosystem. When the G. M. crops replace naturally bred ones, their impact may be disastrous, since, while the other components in the nature rise and grow in a natural way, the growth of the GM crops may be in an unpredictable fashion. Even though a particular breed of a certain crop may have greater yields in the first round, the same result cannot be expected in subsequent turns and, thus, if a farmer depends solely upon G. M. crops, he may lose his produce in the next season and may be forced to quit the crop, or even worse, may become desperate and even end his life. Farmers of the developing and under-developed countries, lured by the multinational corporate giants to make maximum profit at once, turn to these 'magic-crops' and either end their lives or quit farming forever.

Today's young generation has to take the moral responsibility to seek an alternative development model in the background of growing atrocities against the native people and culture in the name of development. In this endeavor, the ideals Kumarappa put forth, both in his book and throughout his life, will be a guiding light to them.

Endnotes:

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