



International Journal of Humanities & Social Science Studies (IJHSSS)

A Peer-Reviewed Bi-monthly Bi-lingual Research Journal

ISSN: 2349-6959 (Online), ISSN: 2349-6711 (Print)

ISJN: A4372-3142 (Online) ISJN: A4372-3143 (Print)

Volume-XI, Issue-I, January 2025, Page No.102-108

Published by Scholar Publications, Sribhumi, Assam, India, 788711

Website: <http://www.ijhsss.com>

DOI: 10.29032/ijhsss.v11.i1.012

Deendayal Upadhyay and His Vision for Indian Society

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Received: 01.01.2025; Accepted: 21.01.2025; Available online: 31.01.2025

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Abstract

Born in a humble family, Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya became a prominent Indian philosopher, and political activist. He played a pivotal role in shaping India's political and social landscape, and his legacy continues to inspire generations. His philosophy of Integral Humanism emphasized cultural nationalism, Gandhian socialist values, and self-sufficiency, presenting an alternative to Western individualism and materialism. His vision for India focused on social harmony, cultural identity, and economic self-reliance. This is reflected in his principles of Dharmarajya (a just and righteous state), Sarvodaya (upliftment of all), Antyodaya (supporting the most disadvantaged), and Swadeshi (economic independence through self-reliance).

Integral Humanism underscores the intrinsic interconnectedness between individual well-being and collective societal progress. This philosophy draws deeply from the wisdom of ancient Indian traditions, emphasizing the need for a harmonious balance between material and spiritual growth. It rejects the extremes of individualism and collectivism, advocating instead for a holistic approach that integrates personal development with social responsibility. This timeless philosophy holds profound relevance in the modern world. It offers sustainable development models that respect cultural heritage while promoting economic self-reliance. Its principles encourage inclusive approaches to conflict resolution by fostering mutual understanding and emphasizing shared human values. Additionally, Integral Humanism provides a framework for nation-building that prioritizes unity in diversity, ethical governance, and the upliftment of the marginalized. By addressing the complexities of contemporary challenges, it serves as a guiding light for creating a just, equitable, and sustainable society.

Keywords: Dharmarajya, Sarvodaya, Antyodaya, Culture, Humanism.

Introduction: If we study any personality of history and evaluate their contribution, it becomes necessary to evaluate their contribution towards the society, one of the strongest

tools we have, for thinking through social phenomena outside of the conventional framework. It is necessary to trace the contribution of visionary personalities towards the society. One of the greatest visionaries of all was Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay, whose contribution was not only relevant in his times but holds relevance in contemporary context as well, who in his vision for Indian society, prioritised much on talking about issues requiring public awakening, one such reference is his philosophy of 'Integral Humanism', that holds important value till today. His ideology was very much influenced from Swami Vivekananda and Mahatma Gandhi's vision, where he primarily focused on adopting Swadeshi economic policies that can inculcate in it nationalist values, Indian culture, ethos and belief system. His end goal was to make India stronger through Bharatiyakaran/Indianization. After Mahatma Gandhi, he is perhaps the only Indian popular thinker of contemporary times, who emphasized on the indigenous knowledge system.

Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya was born on September 25, 1916, in the quaint village of Nagla Chandraban, situated in the sacred Brij region of Mathura District, Uttar Pradesh. This auspicious day corresponded to Ashwin Krishna Trayodashi, Samvat 1973, in the Hindu calendar. His aura radiated an emphatic and simple approach with a sense of selflessness and sacrifice. He in his young days was deeply disturbed because of the prevailing conditions of the society which was being devoid of morals and was steeping into the arms of selfishness. Emphasizing on the need of the hour he remarked, 'Today, begging bowl in hand, the samaj is seeking alms from us. If we continue to be indifferent to its demands a day may come when we may, have to part with a great deal that we most dearly love.' The final goal of his life was to unravel the path to India's empowerment, envisioning a nation that was valiant, resilient, and prosperous. He strove to organize society based on the principles of nationalism, seeking to unify the country and elevate its people to unprecedented heights of glory and self-sufficiency. Upadhyay was serious about different forms of imperialism. After independence, he was much concerned about impacts of colonization and in other words he was much interested in the process of decolonization. Deendayal rejected the idea of partition proposed by the Muslim League and suggested the idea of larger Hindu society.

Deendayal was not only against the direct foreign rule but also considered serious implication of postcolonial impacts. His vision for India's freedom struggle was distinct from the Congress party's approach. He refused to participate in the national freedom struggle under Congress leadership, instead believing that the goal of all-round social development could only be achieved through the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS). Deendayal was heavily influenced by the RSS ideology, which emphasized the importance of cultural and national identity. His journey began when he became a full-time worker in his forties, during the height of India's freedom movement. Although he strongly opposed British rule, he decided not to join the freedom struggle under Congress leadership due to significant ideological differences. His entire life was dedicated to Bharat and ideology of his organization. He focused on indigenous knowledge system of Bharat and emphasized that thinking in foreign terms was dangerous to our society. Moreover, in response to the western

ideologies, Upadhyay came up with his concept of 'The Doctrine of Integral Humanism.' He was of the belief that western theories not only treated every individual as an economic man but also ignored the social contacts, cultural milieu and psychology of each individual. These theories emphasised on development primarily through the lens of economics which lacked ethics and morality, thus creating a crisis in the society. His philosophy of Integral Humanism was a critique of both communism and capitalism and was a synthesis of the individual and the collective and the material and the spiritual. He wanted people to endorse modern technology but with conditions suitable to Indian environment. He believed in constructive approach and taught his followers to co-operate as well as fearlessly oppose the government when needed while placing the national interest above all. In this way Deendayal became an ideological thinker of the right movement in entire India and especially in his party. His philosophy was not only fruitful for one community but for the entire nation and became manifesto for the nationalist movement in India. He believed that every resident of Bharat is child of Bharat Mata, so he or she should dedicate their entire life towards society and nation.

Socio-Political Idea of Upadhyay: Integral Humanism of Upadhyay is the main central idea of philosophical framework of his philosophy which originated in 1960s. Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya's Integral Humanism played a crucial role in shaping the ideology of the Bharatiya Jana Sangh (BJS). First articulated in August 1964, this philosophy served as a distinct Indian approach to development and governance, rooted in the nation's cultural and spiritual heritage. It presented a philosophical and socio-economic alternative to Western models, emphasizing the harmony of individual, societal, and national growth.

The importance of Integral Humanism was formally recognized when the Akhil Bhartiya Pratinidhi Sabha of the BJS unanimously adopted it as a resolution during its session in Vijayawada from January 23-25, 1965. To further explain and popularize this concept, Upadhyaya delivered a series of four lectures in Mumbai between April 22 and April 25, 1965. These lectures elaborated on the principles of Integral Humanism, solidifying its role as the ideological foundation of the BJS and offering a framework for India's socio-political and economic progress.

The roots of this idea can be traced back to ancient Indian heritage and cultural ethos and framework of integral humanism emerged from the idea of Dharma. According to Upadhyay, every nation has its own distinct culture and society, which is important to formulate any political idea. He in his thesis talked about four ingredients of an individual human- body, mind, intelligence and soul. These four ingredients corresponded to the four cosmos objectives of *dharma* (moral duties), *Artha* (wealth), *Kama* (desire), and *moksha* (salvation). Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya's concept of Integral Humanism is a holistic philosophy that emphasizes the interconnectedness of individual, society, nature, and the divine. At its core, Integral Humanism recognizes the multifaceted nature of human existence, where every individual play various role and engages in diverse activities. He envisioned a harmonious and balanced interaction among these different aspects of human life, culminating in a unified and integral whole. This philosophy is rooted in the idea of a classless and casteless Indian

society, where social hierarchy and conflict are minimized. The key principles of Integral Humanism include:

- a) **Interconnectedness:** Recognizing the inherent connections between individual, society, nature, and the divine.
- b) **Holism:** Embracing the multifaceted nature of human existence and promoting a balanced interaction among different aspects of life.
- c) **Classless and Casteless Society:** Striving for a society where social hierarchy and discrimination are eliminated.
- d) **Conflict-Free Social Order:** Aiming to create a harmonious and peaceful social order, where conflicts are minimized and resolved through cooperation and mutual understanding.

Upadhyay criticized the social and political philosophies of both capitalism and communism through his doctrine of integral humanism as both had disregard for the humanitarian aspects of personal life which he wanted to uplift through his philosophy. Main idea behind formulating this idea was turning ideas into reality as he stated, 'We do have a vision of a wonderful future for this country before our eyes; we are not mere visionaries, but karmayogis, dedicated to translating our vision into reality'. In the words of Upadhyay, the new Bharat after independence should adopt the internal philosophy of integral humanism, his philosophy was closed to Gandhi's famous work *Hind Swaraj*. Even works like *Gita Rahasya* by Lokmanya Tilak discussed the philosophical basis of the rejuvenation of Bharat, but Upadhyay discussed about the next level of this journey in other words, the journey of Bharat after independence. He emphasized the vital importance of national identity in his philosophy. He believed that understanding and embracing one's national identity is essential for true independence and progress. According to him, without a strong sense of national identity, independence is meaningless and cannot be a catalyst for progress and happiness. Recognizing one's national identity is crucial for understanding and developing individual and collective potentials. His concept of national identity is deeply rooted in Indian rich cultural heritage and values, emphasizing the importance of preserving and promoting these aspects. From these lines of Upadhyay, we can trace philosophy of Upadhyay regarding the national identity. He further considered that the basic cause of problem faced by Bharat is the neglect of national identity and continuing practices of western culture. Upadhyay suggested the claim of Bharatiya culture instead of western Eurocentric culture. Upadhyay not only suggested this culture for Bharat but also thought that Bharatiya culture can point the direction to the world. As he links culture to the very basis of independence and for him independence can only be meaningful for us if we consider it as expression of our culture which from the national standpoint should be the basic nature of every individual. Hence, principles of Bharatiya culture becomes essential for both national and human standpoint.

Upadhyay further elaborate that from human standpoint, we can also reconcile the various ideal of western political thought, it will be advantage point for us because these western

political principles are product of revolution in human thought. So, it is hard to ignore these principles from the human standpoint.

Holistic Nature of Bharatiya Culture: Upadhyay elaborate Bharatiya culture as holistic culture which looks at life as an integrated whole. He critiqued the Western approach to understanding life, which he believed was fragmented and compartmentalized. He argued that thinking in parts, while useful for subject specialists, is not practical from a humanistic perspective. Upadhyaya attributed the confusion in Western thought to its tendency to divide life into separate sections, with Western thinkers offering piecemeal solutions that failed to address the interconnectedness of human experience. Upadhyay suggested that holistic culture can cure all the problems of human life. Unity in diversity and expression of diversity in any form remains the central pillar of Bharatiya culture.

Upadhyay further emphasises on the aspect of mutual corporation in his philosophy of integral humanism where he claims that mutual corporation is the only way to sustain human life. Moreover, he claimed that mutual sustenance among different forms of life is a basis of humanism and mutually sustaining is prime pillar of society. Bharatiya culture does not disregard nature rather it flourishes in nature and enhances those elements which help human to sustain a life in this cosmos.

Ideas about Society: In the views of Upadhyay society is group of individuals but it is a common truth, he further traces the idea of origin of society through various theories of philosophers especially western philosophers for instance ‘Social Contract Theory’. Further Upadhyay told that ‘Conflict is not a sign of culture of Nature rather it is a symptom of their degradation’, so in this way western thinkers misunderstand the idea of society and further theories from this framework dismantled the idea of real progress of humanism. According to Upadhyaya every nation in this world has its own cultural and societal central idea, which he termed as *Chiti* (collective consciousness) and every society in this universe has some peculiarities termed as *Virat* (power). If any country wants to be prosperous this combination of *Chiti* and *Virat* will work in right direction. Every human has different roles in individuality. These all Integrating aspects of human life interacting with each other in continuity is the essence of integral humanism. He believed that society to be work in direction to enlarged man. Upadhyay also talked about the relationship of human with cosmos. Deen Dayal considered the idea Swadeshi as indigenous to Indian soil and argues that this idea can help us to sustain a wealthy Indian society.

Society and Dharma: According to Upadhyay, in Indian natural principles are termed as the *Dharma*- the laws of life. Such laws are known as the principles of ethics. These principles are not made by any one person rather they are discovered, for instance, the analogy of law of gravitation, which was not made by newton rather he discovered it. The natural principle which maintains harmony, peace and progress in humankind are included in this term *Dharma*. Taking Dharma as law here, Upadhyay claims that by channelising nature through the principles of Dharma, we can have both culture and civilisation and can sustain the life of mankind as well. Here, the English translation of Dharma as religion is not applicable.

Conclusion: Integral Humanism offers a distinctive and indigenous approach to social and economic development, deeply rooted in India's cultural heritage and philosophical traditions. Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya's intellectual framework does not align with a single school of thought nor is it derived from Western philosophies; rather, it emerges from a multi-dimensional exploration of alternatives to capitalism, communism, and socialism. His vision articulates foundational ideas for India's progress, emphasizing the need for a development model that harmonizes tradition with modernity.

In the 21st century, India has increasingly embraced Upadhyaya's philosophy, particularly in areas like self-reliance, cultural integrity, and sustainable development. Integral Humanism provides a comprehensive roadmap for societal growth, focusing on the harmonious development of individuals and communities. This philosophy is both balanced and deeply rooted in indigenous frameworks of thought, emphasizing the integration of spiritual and material well-being for the upliftment of society.

His ideas continue to shape India's identity and influence its policies across various domains. By promoting a holistic approach to governance and development, his philosophy remains a guiding principle for fostering a just, self-reliant, and culturally vibrant nation.

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