

# Revisiting Deendayal Upadhyaya's Idea of Integral Humanism: Its Relevance in 21<sup>st</sup> Century

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## Abstract

This research paper revisits Deendayal Upadhyaya's philosophy of Integral Humanism, a holistic framework that emphasizes the integration of material and spiritual well-being, social justice, and ethical governance. Originally conceived as an alternative to the ideological extremes of communism and capitalism, Integral Humanism advocates for a balanced approach to human development that harmonizes economic progress with cultural and moral values. Upadhyaya's ideas offer a compelling vision for sustainable and inclusive growth in the context of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, characterized by economic inequality, environmental crises, and a pervasive sense of moral disorientation. The study explores the foundational principles of Integral Humanism, including its views on human nature, society, economy, and polity, and assesses their relevance to contemporary global challenges. Through a critical analysis of primary texts and contemporary interpretations, this research elucidates how Integral Humanism can inform modern policy-making and social initiatives. The paper argues that Upadhyaya's philosophy provides a robust framework for addressing current issues such as economic disparity, social fragmentation, and the erosion of ethical standards in public life. By bridging philosophical insights with practical strategies for sustainable development, this research paper highlights the enduring significance of Integral Humanism. It advocates for a reevaluation of Upadhyaya's thought, demonstrating its potential to contribute meaningfully to modern discourse on development, ethics, and governance. Ultimately, the paper underscores the relevance of Integral Humanism in fostering a balanced and holistic approach to contemporary societal challenges, promoting a vision of development that is both inclusive and sustainable.

## Introduction

Ideas play an important role in changing society; Integral Humanism is one of them. In India, the Idea of Integral Humanism was pioneered by Deendayal Upadhyaya, a renowned thinker in Indian political tradition. According to Shantishree (2024), Many like Aurobindo, Tilak, Ambedkar, Savarkar and Deendayal Upadhyay were simply pushed out of the mainstream without any serious study. He was a founding member of Jan Sangh.

Madhav (2021) found that philosophy of Deendayal very close to Gandhi. Like Gandhi Deendayal's Integral Humanism traces its roots to the ancient Indian tradition and cultural ethos. The philosophical orientation of integral humanism was shaped by Indian society, particularly Dharma. Deendayal Upadhyaya deeply understands the political philosophies that prevailed at that time, and based on

understanding, he highlights the inherent demerits of liberalism and socialism. He focuses on the question of the individual, he found that both ideologies are not suitable for the betterment of the individual, he also focuses on the economic dimension. Therefore, integral humanism is faith in the integration between the individual and society and the universe and the ultimate authority of the supreme. Deendayal gives indigenous ideas and one of them is the idea of the nation. According to Deendayal “Every nation has its own cultural and societal ideas which he called Chiti and every society has some peculiarities which could be identified as Virat”. Every individual has a different role and various types of activity in society. Integrating varying aspects of human life into a continuous integration with each other is the essence of integral humanism. This paper tried to conceptualize ideological elements of integral humanism and its relevance in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya is the most underestimated thinker in the Indian political thought tradition. Despite being the only thinker after Gandhi, he traces all the elements of thinking from ancient Indian knowledge tradition and Indian culture (Sharma & Nain, 2018). Due to his high intellect level and deep understanding of ideas like capitalism and communism, he rationally criticizes both ideas and offers an Indian alternative. The idea of Integral humanism that offers a solution to the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Kumar (2023) mentioned in his study that Deendayal Upadhyaya’s thinking effectively bridges the gap between integrated and multidimensional attempts to envision a post-independence India. Integral humanism offers insights into the development of society beyond the materialistic aspects highlighted. Deendayal wants to develop an Indian alternative to these destructive ideas of Europe.

In Europe, there was also a rise in dissent towards these ideas. French philosopher Jacques Maritain is regarded as the philosophical father of Christian Democratic movements, three decades before Deendayal he wrote the book in 1936 titled “Integral Humanism”. In this book, Jacques Maritain had developed his integral humanism theory in the historical context of the rise of totalitarian ideologies like fascism, nazism and communism. Maritain’s central concern revolves around the man. Abraham (2019) mentioned in his study that Martain gives importance to the integration of spiritual and material concerns and he criticize both capitalism and communism for their inability to facilitate the full actualization of an individual’s humanity (p.19).

### **Central Ideas of Deendayal Upadhyaya’s Integral Humanism**

Deendayal Upadhyaya introduced the philosophy of Integral Humanism in India during a four-day lecture series for the workers of Jan Sangh in Mumbai in April 1965. Before this series of lectures in January 1965, Jan Sangh adopted integral humanism as the guiding principle at the Vijayawada conference in Andhra Pradesh. The thought of Deendayal essentially addresses the need for comprehensive and multi-faceted efforts to envision the future of India in the post-independence era. J. Abraham (2019) in his paper argues that the title Integral Humanism itself seems to have been inspired by Jacques Maritain (p.18).

### **Critique of the West**

In his first lecture, Deendayal aimed to address the query of what the new face of Bharat would be post-independence and the direction in which we should progress. He traced this to the self-deception prevalent in the country due to the influence of Western ideas and ideologies. Deendayal found that the influence of Western ideals and ways of life on Indian society and Indian leadership blindly follow Westernization and modernization. He made a distinction between Western science and lifestyle. As

Deendayal Upadhyaya (2020) noted in his book “Integral Humanism: An Analysis of Some Basic Elements;

“Western science and the Western way of life are two different things. Whereas Western science is universal and must be absorbed by us if we wish to go forward, the same is not true of the Western way of life and values. Thoughtless imitation of the west must be scrupulously avoided” (p.73)

Deendayal’s analysis delves into the foundational principles of various Western economic and political ideologies and asserts that they have not yielded favourable results for Western nations. Deendayal, who was a staunch advocate of democracy, criticised it for its failure to protect the rights of individuals, which contributed to the emergence of revolutionary labor movements rooted in communist/Marxist philosophies. Despite democracy being widely embraced throughout Europe, the exploitation of individuals persists. Deendayal Upadhyaya’s work noted that;

“In some countries of Europe, there was a social revolution. There was a socialist revolution. Even where socialism was not accepted, the politicians had accepted the right of workers. ‘Welfare State’ was accepted as an ideal. Nationalism, democracy, socialism or equality these doctrine have dominated European social and political thinking” (p.76)

Deendayal concluded his first lecture on the premise that west itself facing a dilemma over ideologies and institutions and that India should think in terms of sharing its own wisdom with the world rather than ape the west.

### **Body, Mind, intellect and soul**

Deendayal argues that two types of people think about the direction of the country. Firstly, some hold the idea that India should move forward from the point where it had stopped, considering the direction of India’s progress that has been going on for thousands of years. On the other hand, there are those people who, for various reasons (due to time or basically considering the condition to be unfit) are not ready to think about that ancient tradition of India. On the contrary, the movements that took place in the West, the ideologies that emerged in the political and economic fields, considered them to be the direction of progress and tried to impose those entire ideologies and movements on India. They move forward with the idea that India should be their reflection in some way or the other. Both these types of thoughts are not true. But it would not be right to completely invalidate them. The reason for this is that there is definitely truth in them.

Those who think that we should return to the place where we stopped and start moving again, they forget that whether it is desirable or not to move back, it is definitely impossible, because the speed of time cannot be reversed. Can’t let go of the old time and space . Whatever we have done in the last thousand years, whether we have got it through compulsion or we have achieved it through efforts, we cannot move on by removing everything from it. Also, during this period, we ourselves have created something or the other in our lives. In the new situations that arose and the new challenges that came, we did not always sit idle as a passive agent. We not only reacted to whatever the outsiders did, we also tried to mold our lives according to the circumstances. That’s why we can’t forget that whole life and move on.

### **Western ideas are not universal**

Deendayal criticizes those who want to make western life and ideas the basis of India’s progress, they also forget that these foreign ideas are the product of a special situation and a special trend. These are

not universal. They bear the imprint of 'nationality, nature and culture of Western countries'. At the same time, many of these ideas, have now become outdated. Karl Marx's theory has changed so much both from the point of view of time and place that today if we memorize Marxist analysis like a parrot and blindly apply it to India, then it will not be said a scientific or rational approach. That would be stereotyping. Who claims to reform his country by erasing its stereotypes? Deendayal (2020) claims that "Every country has its own historical, social and economic situation and the leaders and thinkers of that country determine the path to take the country forward from that situation. It is wrong to think that the solutions suggested by him to solve his problems will be completely applicable to the society living in different circumstances" (p.80)

Deendayal Upadhyaya views Dharma as the main principle that should guide all aspects of society, politics, and individual life. It controls Artha, Kama, and Moksha for him, with Moksha being the result of selfless behaviour in accordance with Dharma. It also controls economic activities, enforces justice, and manages governance. When it comes to governing, he sees the excessive gathering of political and economic power as going against moral duty, indirectly criticising communist governments and also raising questions about tendencies towards state-controlled, democratic socialism. Generally speaking, Upadhyaya links the dominance of power, such as economic monopolies, to corrupt and adharmic behaviour.

Deendayal highlights the characteristics of Indian culture. He describes that it has a comprehensive idea of the entire life and the entire creation. The approach of this culture is integrated. He argues that thinking in bits and pieces may be good from an expert's point of view, but not from a practical point of view. The main reason for the problem of the West is their fragmented thinking about life and then trying to connect them all with a thread. We accept that there is diversity in life, but we have always tried to find the unity underlying it. This effort is completely scientific. The effort of a scientist is to find order out of the chaos seen in the world, find out its rules and make rules of behavior accordingly. Deendayal gives example of chemists discovered some basic elements from the entire physical world and told that all things went beyond them. He discovered the power i.e. consciousness that lies at the root of these elements. all over the world.

Deendayal makes mention of the four elements of individual that is Body, mind, intellect and soul. These all are integrated hence we cannot think of each part separately. The confusion that arises in the West; is due to their approach, they have treated each element of human separately. In the words of Deendayal (2020),

"When there was a movement for democratic structure, they proclaimed, Man is a political animal, and therefore political aspirations must be attended to. Why should only one person be the king and all others his subject? Let everyone rule. In order to satisfy this political man, gave him the right to vote. Now he did get the right to vote, but at same time other rights diminished. Then the question arose, voting is nice, but what about food? what if there is nothing to eat?" (p.88).

In all the development of human, every element is equally important this is the major feature of Bhartiya culture that looks at life as an integrated whole. To think in parts may be suitable. It is not useful from a practical point of view. Deendayal criticizes the Western notion of the survival of the fittest, called the law of the jungle. Beyond physical and mental happiness, Deendayal gives importance to intellectual happiness. According to him, if the body and the mind are happy, yet there is intellectual confusion, then it would be equivalent it would be equivalent to madness.

### **Material Man Vs Integral Man**

In the classical text of India, the existence of humans depends upon the four-fold – body, mind, intellect and soul. He describes Western thinking as compartmentalized. Some Western thinkers consider man as a political animal and extend voting rights to him. However, they could not offer him food. Marxist societies offered food to men, not voting rights. People revolt in both situations. Countries like the US provide food and voting rights, yet people are unsatisfied. Deendayal (2020) mentions in his book that the USA has the highest number of suicides, highest mental patients and highest number of drug addicts. Deendayal mentions that West failed to recognise man as an integral being.

Deendayal rejected the conception that the West focuses solely on the body, while Indian philosophy concentrates only on the soul and achieving moksha. Although he acknowledges the importance of focusing on the soul, we also prioritise caring for the body. The Upanishads clearly state that a person who is weakened cannot understand their true self.

The main tool for fulfilling the duties prescribed by Dharma is the physical body. The key distinction between our beliefs and those of the West lies in the fact that they view the body and fulfilling its desires as the primary goals.

He identifies the fundamental difference between our position and that of the West. In contrast, they have regarded the body and satisfaction of its desires as the aim, we believe the body is an instrument for achieving our aims. We recognise the importance of body only in this light. The satisfaction of our bodily needs is necessary, but we don't consider this to be the sole aim of all efforts. Here in we don't consider this to be the sole aim of all our efforts. Here in Bharat, we have set before ourselves the ideal of four-fold responsibilities: to meet the needs of the body, mind, intellect, and soul to achieve man's integrated progress. Dharma, Artha, Kama, and Moksha represent four types of human endeavours. Purushartha refers to efforts that are appropriate for a man. Humans are naturally born with desires for Dharma, Artha, Kama, and Moksha. We have also considered these four efforts in a cohesive manner. Despite that, we have also considered things in a holistic manner. While Moksha has been seen as the most important of the Purusharthas, striving solely for Moksha is believed to not provide any soul benefits. On the contrary, a person who participates in the action without being attached to its outcomes is said to achieve moksha.

### **Views on Society, Nation and State**

Promises Deendayal rejects the social contract theory that promises society came into existence through a contract between the people. Besides this, Deendayal highlights the Indian view that society is self-born and people do not produce the society. Society had its own life, mind, intellect and soul. When he discusses the nation according to him, the feeling of a nation is not in staying on a particular piece of land only but something else. Vivekananda was the first who had an emphasis on the nation's soul. He mentioned that "every nation has a destiny to fulfil, duty to perform and mission to accomplish" (Vivekananda, 1965). Deendayal took forward it was that mission, together with a motherland that constituted the nation. Deendayal views the nation and the state as two different entities, differentiating between the two, he says that the nation is natural and self-born but the state is artificially created, which comes into existence to fulfil the needs of the nation. Further, he mentions that the state is temporary and the nation is permanent (Singh, 2020). The state came into existence to protect the nation. Deendayal gives the highest place to Chiti, which is the soul of the nation, Chiti is a Sanskrit term that means the Universal consciousness. The Chiti provides a standard for evaluating the pros and cons

of an action: If an action aligns with our nature or Chiti, it is endorsed and becomes part of the culture. These things should be nurtured. Actions against Chiti are rejected as deviant and undesirable and should be avoided. Chiti is the criterion against which every action and attitude is measured to determine its acceptability. Chiti is the essence of the Nation. The birth and strength of a nation depend on this Chiti. The actions of every great individual in a nation reflect this, Chiti (Anand, 2021).

### **Relevance of the idea of Integral Humanism in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

Sharma and Nain (2019) described that even though significant contributions have been made by Deendayal Upadhyay, very little academic discourse is available on his philosophical and ideological orientation and analysis of accomplishment, in this light, it becomes pertinent to examine and analyse. Deendayal Upadhyaya introduced 'Integral Humanism' to address disagreements among people in the realms of politics, religion, and economics. His philosophy can be seen as a blend of socio-economic, and political views with a focus on Bharathiyatha–Indianness, aiming to unify individual life with society, state, and nation, all working harmoniously together. Integral Humanism emphasises that the essence of human life lies in achieving a balance in various aspects, including physical, mental, and intellectual well-being, and in establishing a sense of equality and responsibility among individuals, families, villages, societies, and nations. Each element is essential to one another and nothing will be left alone. The philosophy of integral humanism by Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya is relevant today as it emphasizes the welfare of all in Indian tradition while tackling current societal issues and providing an Indian perspective. Upadhyaya's integral humanism creatively interprets ancient Indian traditions in the context of post- independence society. It points out the imbalance between capitalist and socialist ideologies and aims to provide a native way of living.

### **Conclusion**

Deendayal Upadhyaya's Integral Humanism offers a profound and holistic framework that remains highly relevant in addressing the multifaceted challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This philosophy, with its emphasis on the harmonious development of the individual and society, transcends the limitations of both communism and capitalism by integrating ethical, cultural, and spiritual dimensions into economic and social policies. In an era marked by economic disparities, environmental degradation, and a pervasive crisis of values, Integral Humanism provides a balanced approach that prioritizes both material well-being and moral development. The analysis of Integral Humanism in this research has demonstrated its potential to influence contemporary policy-making and social initiatives. By advocating for an economy that serves the broader goals of human development and societal harmony, Upadhyaya's vision encourages sustainable and inclusive growth. It also emphasizes the importance of ethical governance and social justice, promoting a system where individual rights are balanced with collective responsibilities.

Moreover, Integral Humanism focus on cultural rootedness and spiritual growth offers valuable insights for fostering social cohesion and resilience in an increasingly fragmented world. By drawing from India's rich philosophical heritage, Upadhyaya's ideas challenge the prevailing materialistic and individualistic paradigms, advocating for a more humane and integrated approach to development.

In conclusion, revisiting Deendayal Upadhyaya's Integral Humanism reveals a comprehensive and adaptable philosophy that can address modern global challenges effectively. As we navigate the complexities of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, embracing the principles of Integral Humanism can guide us towards a

more equitable, sustainable, and morally grounded society. This research underscores the need for a reevaluation of Upadhyaya's thought, highlighting its enduring relevance and potential to contribute significantly to contemporary discourse on development, ethics, and governance.

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