

# Integral Humanism: A Political Philosophy Rooted on Indian Culture

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**Abstract**— The real contribution in the freedom struggle by leaders such as Bala Gangadhar Tilak and Mahatma Gandhi was 'Hindu Swaraj'. Their life time could be different, but their motive behind the freedom struggle was rooted in India's age-old culture. Nehru had an entirely different political philosophy that mostly differed with Gandhi's, but he emerged at the centre stage in independent India after the untimely death of Gandhi and Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel.

Political philosophies in the modern era are rooted in the uprising against theocratic Papal States. Most of these modern political philosophies are quite dogmatic, as they emerged as a reaction to political, social and economic situations/circumstances that existed/prevalled in European continent at the time, and hence, have promoted social strife and conflict.

Intelligence is what differentiates the humankind from other life forms and this intelligence has enhanced the livelihood, standards and thought of the world itself. Humankind is the ultimate in evolution and our ability, capacity and capability have given the world many new ideas and thoughts that can elevate Planet Earth into Heaven.

Unfortunately, the humankind has been reduced to a life of an animal, through concepts like the 'Survival of the Fittest'. Nehru, through his western influence, adopted socio-political and economic models that alienated the common man from the naturally-evolved, original political system and thoughts of India.

This ancient nation's culture, ethos and literatures were not just neglected, but attempts have been made to even obliterate these. The indigenous higher thoughts were not given due consideration, leave alone adopting them in the independent India's governance and political, socio-economic environment.

Here is where the contribution of social and political activists like Deendayal Upadhyaya and his political thought and philosophy, named as Integral Humanism, gain credence and importance. This concept and thought is rooted firmly in India's original ethos, virtues, culture and social thoughts such as 'one for all and all for one'. It is this beautiful, ideal concept of Integral Humanism that is apt and suitable to India.

**Keywords**— Deendayal Upadhyaya; Integral Humanism; Ekathma Manava Vadh; Political Philosophy; Democracy;

*Communism; Socialism; Survival of the Fittest; British Imperial Rule; Tilak; Mahatma Gandhi; Hindu Swaraj; Vallabhai Patel; Nehru.*

## 1. Introduction

Deendayal Upadhyaya, the ardent nationalist, brought to life the indigenous political concepts that find relevance in the ever dynamic political scenario of India. He never claimed that through his writings and speeches he gave anything new to our society, whatever he said was adhering to this nation's age-old wisdom, which was based on our culture and tradition. Leave apart his humility; we can say that Deendayal presented a philosophy with the ancient perspective but also one that is simultaneously willing to adapt to changed times, which insisted prevalence of synthesis not only in individual's life but also in society and nation. 'Ekathma Manava Darshana' (Philosophy of Integral Humanism) aims at elucidating the basic and all pervasive principle of total existence, purely dedicated to national re-construction. When we make a study with the prism of modern concepts like democracy and communism, 'Integral Humanism' is path breaking in intellectual and moral application of political thought. Deendayal learned and absorbed his ideas, principles and concepts through his active participation in the country's socio-political churning throughout his life.

Deendayal emphasized that politics should be for nation's sake alone and not for personal advantage of a selected few. He not only presented philosophical perception but also presented the mundane as to how the philosophical perceptions can be implemented with adherence to our tradition. With that outlook, he had presented Integral Humanism to maintain our large society based on Dharma - the sustenance of life i.e., laws of virtue. This concept in India has emerged without causing any conflict among the nation's constituents, namely, an individual, a family, the society, and the state, which are complimentary to each other for the collective growth of external and internal, be it the body, the mind and the intellect. The growth of Artha (Wealth) and Kama (Desire) should adhere to Dharma (Laws of Virtue). The concept of Dharma is not only applicable to an individual but also to the society, the state and the nation at large.

Humans are both political and socio-economic beings. They depend not only on their right alone, but also duty

and responsibility towards everything in their life, be it animate or inanimate. Each and every action of humans should adhere to Dharma, upholding which is the basic of Indian way of life from time immemorial. Living by their dharma slipped among Indians under the tyranny of the British rule.

## **2. The Modern political Philosophies and its Impacts**

The Modern period political philosophies having their origin rooted in uprising against theocratic Papal States, which eventually gave birth to predominant concepts namely democracy, socialism, communism and capitalism. People became dogmatic followers of such political ideologies, which were born as a reaction to prevailing socio-economic-political circumstances of those times. These political philosophies only perpetuated conflicts within society. Humans are the ultimate in evolution and creation, because of their mental ability, capacity and capability. These led to emergence of numerous great thoughts for the humankind and their life on Earth. But now, the modern era political philosophies have led to treating humans as animals, promoting thoughts such as the 'Survival of the Fittest' or the laws of the jungle.

## **3. India after Independence**

Politics had become integral part in the life of common man during British Imperial rule in India. Many movements, organizations, leaders sprang up and resisted the tyrannical rule of the British aggressors. There were leaders in the pre-independence era such as Bala Gangadhar Tilak, Vinayak Damodhara Savarkar and Mahatma Gandhi, who were trying to unite people in their fight against the alien rule under the banner of our rich culture and tradition. They believed that political freedom based on our culture alone will be stable and will last long. Unlike the freedom struggle of some other nations, which were mere political, Indian struggle for independence was based strongly on culture.

This proved that our country is a nation, rooted in culture, tradition and the glorious past. That is the real significance of our freedom struggle. The feeling of 'one nation' of our people is not exactly based on any political concepts, unlike other revolutions in the western world. The binding factor was 'we as a nation are one, not many'. That is the real contribution of freedom struggle led by leaders like Tilak and Gandhi. Even though their lifetimes were different, their motive behind the struggle was the same: 'Hindu Swaraj'.

The untimely demise of Gandhi and Patel soon after independence was the nation's misfortune. The Indian way of governance and politics based on this nation's rich heritage and time tested literatures were neglected. Nehru,

whose political philosophy was rooted in ideas alien to this nation, took centre stage in independent India. He, along with others sharing his political philosophies, not even analysed India's own political concepts and if they were worthy to follow and instead copied and implemented those systems of politics and governance prevalent in the West. Most of the western political concepts of modern time considered humans as material-being alone, whose physical, material needs had to be fulfilled. The divinity within the human being was not something they considered important. The concept of Socialist Indian Union alienated the common man from the political system of Nehruvian India. His socialism was silently rejected later, which is a different story. In Socialist India, for most of the problems solution could not be found; Social inequality, economic disparity, poor becoming more poorer, increasing dependence on Government by our people were those problems. It is the considerate opinion of this scholar that the Nehruvian political system adopted by India is not suitable to our nation.

The concept of Socialist Democracy of Nehru and its impact on this nation's socio-political system need to be rejected completely. To quote scholar and author Michel Danino, who countered the West's obsessionist concepts: "Strictly speaking, Secularism of the European kind is ill-suited to India, since religion did not here attempt to harness political power. Imposing it in Indian public life can only lead to cultural nihilism." Here comes an indigenous political philosophy, which is different from and is an alternative to what we are following for the last 70 years in our country: 'INTEGRAL HUMANISM'. Voiced by Indian politician Deendayal Upadhyaya, Integral Humanism is rooted in the ancient Indian wisdom, streamlined time-to-time by our forefathers, yet witnessing continuity in our ever-lasting long traditions, and which has always accepted and adapted changes in society.

## **4. Deendayal Upadhyaya the Visionary**

Deendayal Upadhyaya's main political philosophy 'Integral Humanism' was delivered as a lecture in Bharatiya Jana Sangh's (BJS) party conference at Mumbai in 1968, as its leader. Though, the phrase 'Integral Humanism' was originally used by Indian Freedom Fighter Bipin Chandra Pal in the year 1921, it was elaborated and given specific meaning by Deendayal Upadhyaya. Integral Humanism is about why there should be constant conflicts in man's life in the name of different political concepts? It talks about our time-tested way of life which is generally called as 'Dharma', the sustenance of life. Dharma can be applied to individual, as well as society and the nation.

Deendayal never ever claimed that his political philosophy was new. He only magnified it for the world at large to take a closer look at it. 'Integral Humanism' not only talks about our own ancient way of life based on dharma, but also how it is applicable in today's life.

Deendayal did not reject the western political concepts just like that; His contention was that the problem and its solution cannot be applied uniformly as it may not suit different cultures. He rejected the 'one size fits all' concept of the Nehruvian political thought.

## 5. Relevance of Integral Humanism

Since his political philosophy is rooted in Indian ethos and culture, one need not give religious connotation to his philosophy. Some elite English educated scholars in our country, following the footsteps of some western thinkers, had wrongly interpreted and defined our core concepts. They were not prepared to accept the contribution of non-conflicting Indian civilizational ethos to the world. E.g. the definition of 'Hindu' as a religion, contrary to this it is generally understood as way of life and it is our national identity. The same is in the case of 'Dharma' which means sustenance of life, and not religion. With proper understanding of these concepts Deendayal gave profound inspiration to our nation that had been subjugated by alien rule for centuries together and that had lost its ancient nationhood, which is 'Hindu' by nature, has its roots firmly on ancient Indian values, and our way of life based on 'Dharma'.

The application of his philosophy is possible not only in politics, but also in other spheres of man's life like social, economic and cultural spheres of our nation. Deendayal carried out in-depth study of most of the socio, politico, economic theories that prevailed in his life time, apart from analysing its evil impact on various nations, which made him to ponder on India's own system for way of life, and through that, to find solutions to present day conflicts across the board. Is there a synthesis among the western 'concepts' such as communism and capitalism? Can we find synthesis with each other in these philosophies since each is a dogma that rejects the other view? The western philosophies presented conflicts and struggles as a way of life to mankind. They did not know that life can be a fusion of struggles and peace, which can be attained through some specific practice in our life. What will be an everlasting solution?

## 6. 'Dharma', the Fabric of Indian Social Life

'Integral Humanism' was presented to entire humanity by Deendayal to resolve conflicts in mankind; to create synthesis in human's life with that of society, state and nation, and being complementary to each other rather than being as conflicting elements. Integral Humanism insists that human's life is embodiment of synchronization not only in body, mind and intellect but in all spheres, such as sharing duties as well as rights, human-to-human, individual-to-family, family-to-village, family-to-society,

society- to-nation. That is, each element is integral to the other one. Nothing will be in isolation.

The word 'Dharma' has its root in Sanskrit and its implying factor 'Purushutha' - with its implementing elements of 'Dharma-Artha-Kama-Moksha' - also has roots in Sanskrit. Dharma - laws of virtue, Artha - wealth, Karma - desire, Moksha - heaven are the meaning of four Purusharthas.

## 7. 'Integral Humanism', the Indian Way of Life

The Indian nationhood and its identity is 'Hindu', the Indian way of Life or 'Sanadhana Dharma' (Age-old Dharma). This land is hence called 'Hindu Rashtra', which is bound by 'Dharma'. Deendayal, while elaborating his philosophy, uses the phrases like 'our ancient nation', 'our idea of glorious life', 'the philosophy of life here developed through the ages', 'national self-respect' and 'national character'. These ideas had takers in modern leaders of India such as Aurobindo, Tilak, Gandhi and Patel. These phrases imply the direction of his thinking with stress for National reawakening, with the conception of cultural unity, which is the basis of existence as a nation and was evident in its thousands of years of history.

Historic concept of the nature of this nation developed through centuries: The nationhood cannot be created just by declarations. It is the continuity of history, culture and tradition that give reason for its function as a nation.

The growth of Artha (wealth) and Kama (desire) should adhere to Dharma (virtue). The concept of Dharma is not only applicable to an individual but also to society, state and nation at large. Human is both political and socio-economic being, he depends not only on his right alone but also has duties and responsibilities towards everything in his life, be animate or inanimate. That is his Dharma, which is Indian way of life, called 'Sanatana Dharma' (Age-old Dharma).

Deendayal emphasized that politics should be for nation's sake alone and not for personal advantage of a selected few. He not only presented philosophical perception, but also presented the mundane, as to how the philosophical perceptions can be implemented with adherence to our tradition. With that outlook he had presented certain system to maintain our large society.

The mechanism of that system insists one's duty and voluntary cooperation from all the participants in society from the village to the entire nation. This perception too was practiced successfully for long period in this soil. He wants to readapt it in consonance with the present socio-political climate. He reiterates that the administration of civic life such as tax collection from village level to regional level should become de-centralized: such as from lower rung to top, but not from top to bottom. The de-centralized administration which was practiced in India till

the arrival of British to this country is called as ‘Janapada’ – ‘people’s path’.

Through this our vast country was managed and it was brought to life again by Gandhi in administration, fund raising and electoral process of Indian National Congress during the period 1920-1930. Gandhi did this not on his own, but he read our old scriptures and practices about the ‘Janapada’ and implemented it in Indian National Congress organization successfully. After he found that this system gave effective and efficient administration in affairs of party management from small village to party headquarters, he proposed the ‘Janapada’ type of administration to govern India. But his idea was rejected by then administrators. They thought due to their inhibitions, politics alone is ultimate factor in society and country.

## 8. Conclusion

Dheendayal Upadhyaya tried to find solution from our own scriptures, culture and tradition and moreover, he largely and clearly understood though a philosophy evolved based on certain circumstance across the world. Those circumstances were not same or similar to all nations. One solution or philosophy cannot be applied and kept as a yard stick to other nation’s problems. Though Dheendayal’s ‘Integral Humanism’ is based on four Purushathas of Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha, he did not divulge much about the spiritual life of man since he was a political leader and not a spiritual guru. He did not give much importance to the spiritual or ultimate quintessential aspect of man in his ‘Integral Humanism’, which indicates that he wanted the ideas to be implemented by the common man, the ordinary folk.

That may be like Thiruvalluvar’s style of intrinsically weaving his couplets without talking about Moksha directly but gave enough stress to Dharma, Artha and Kama. They believed that when humans seek Artha and Kama in adherence to Dharma, that seeking will ultimately lead them to the absolute quest of Moksha. By analyzing ‘Integral Humanism’ of Deendayal Upadhyaya, the researcher concludes how apt these ideas are in the present scenario and how these ideas could provide solutions to some of the vexed problems of our country.

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