

# Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay's Integral Humanism as a Transmutation of Gandhian Spiritual Radicalism

**Dr. B. DHARMALINGAM**

*Chair Professor, Pt. Deendayal Upadhyay Chair  
Alagappa University, Karaikudi*

**Dr. SHEELA P. KARTHICK**

*Associate Professor of English  
The Madura College (Autonomous), Madurai*

## Abstract

*It is evident that there are many similarities and dissimilarities between the political and spiritual philosophy of the father of our nation Mahatma Gandhi and the unassuming and humble Deendayal Upadhyay (1916-1968), who served as a long-time General Secretary and later President of the Bharatiya Jana Sangh, the forerunner of the present day Bharatiya Janata Party. Many critics have written comparing both the ideologues from many different possible perspectives. There are some who wanted to politicise and others whose comparison was apparently hesitant to elevate Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay to the stature of Mahatma Gandhi. This present research is a modest attempt not to eulogise one over the other but to analyse whether the integral humanism of Upadhyay is a transmutation of Gandhian spiritual radicalism.*

**Keywords:** *Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay, Mahatma Gandhi, Gandhian Spiritual Radicalism, Integral Humanism, Transmutation*

## Introduction

It is evident that there are many similarities and dissimilarities between the political and spiritual philosophy of the father of our nation Mahatma Gandhi and the unassuming and humble Deendayal Upadhyay (1916-1968), who served as a long-time General Secretary and later President of the Bharatiya Jana Sangh, the forerunner of the present day Bharatiya Janata Party. Many critics have written comparing both the ideologues from many different possible perspectives. There are some who wanted to politicise and others whose comparison was apparently hesitant to elevate Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay to the stature of Mahatma Gandhi. This present research is a modest attempt not to eulogise one over the other but to analyse whether the integral humanism of Upadhyay is a transmutation of Gandhian spiritual radicalism.

## Objectives

- To appreciate Gandhian Spiritual Radicalism
- To elucidate Upadhyay's Integral Humanism
- To analyse the possible points of convergence &

divergence between Gandhian Spiritual Radicalism and Upadhyay's Integral Humanism

## Literature Review

"Mahatma Gandhi and Deendayal Upadhyaya: An Analytical Study" (2018) is Dr. Abha Chauhan Khimta's research paper where he concludes, "Deendayal Upadhyaya and Mahatma Gandhi shared the views that democracy in real sense can be attained only through proper and active participation of people. They stressed on the collaboration of different political parties for attaining that. Both believed in adoption of Swadeshi and decentralization of social, economic and political powers". Jiří Krejčík's article "From Gandhi to Deendayal Contradictions of conservative Hindu tendencies in Indian environmental thinking" (2019) observes that "Deendayal Upadhyay's integral humanism, largely drawing on the doctrine of advaita and the Gandhian approach to the relation of nature and society, is often seen as an indigenous concept of sustainable development rooted in Indian culture by the proponents of the Hindu nationalism and conservatism".

While critics, thus, perceive a comparative study between Gandhi and Upadhyay, the present research attempts to focus on the possible transmutation of Gandhi's spiritual radicalism into Upadhyay's integral humanism.

It is to be noted here that the following are the philosophical precepts where both Gandhi and Upadhyay strike points of convergence and divergence: i) Good Governance ii) democracy iii) Swadeshi and decentralisation iv) Spiritual Development. Gandhi said, "I am not interested in freeing India merely from the English yoke. I am bent upon freeing India from any yoke whatsoever. I have no desire to exchange 'king log for king stork'. Hence for me the movement of swaraj is a movement of self-purification" (qtd. by Bose 118). Even when one's own brothers were ruling oneself, one might not have swaraj and might have swaraj under foreign rule. Gandhi was opposed to all types of oppressions. According to Upadhyaya, the problems of Bharat were not merely political, social, economic or cultural but of establishing in Indian society those values of life which can solve these problems. The root cause of all this is political corruption. Therefore, unless a qualitative change in politics is brought about, it is not possible to have a good government run by good people.

Deendayal said, "Only the common man should be made the god of democracy". Speaking on the relations between political parties and the people, Deendayal had stated, "If you are democrats, you should follow the dictates of your own discretion rather than accept any other authority". Similarly, Mahatma Gandhi's true democracy was participatory democracy. It was the idea of participation by the whole community in the political process. It based political authority on the will of individuals who by a process of cooperation make decisions that were binding on all. Gandhi considered that citizens had a duty to decide to whom they should give their loyalty and support and under what conditions.

Like Gandhi, who observed that the freedom, the honour of the individual and democracy could be protected only through Panchayati Raj and decentralized economy, Upadhyay observed, "The economy policy suitable for the present situation can be described in two words, Swadeshi

and decentralization". Also, they strike similar views when Upadhyaya believed that it is true that the body must be attended to properly but it is necessary to remember that the purpose of a healthy and strong body was as the chief instrument in observing the dictum of Dharma.

To insist again, it can be stated that this present focuses on the analogical and comparative study of Gandhian Spiritual Radicalism and Upadhyay's Integral Humanism.

### **Mahatma Gandhi and Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay: A Bio-Note**

It may seem to be redundant to introduce the two great political philosophers; however, to understand the timeline links between the two, it necessitates a provision of bio-notes. It is also relevant to quote here what R. Balashankar, the then editor of RSS's magazine *Organiser*, and now a member of BJP's central committee said: "Deendayal Upadhyaya is to the BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party] what Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi was to Congress" (The Indian Express September 24, 2016). Mahatma Gandhi, byname of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, (born October 2, 1869, Porbandar, India—died January 30, 1948, Delhi), Indian lawyer, politician, social activist, and writer who became the leader of the nationalist movement against the British rule of India. As such, he came to be considered the father of India. Gandhi is internationally esteemed for his doctrine of nonviolent protest (satyagraha) to achieve political and social progress. His spiritual radicalism is evidently practised by him during the Indian freedom struggle: "I am not a saint who has strayed into politics," Gandhi once wrote. "I am a politician who is trying to become a saint" (1929, 338). While Adolf Hitler organized genocide in Europe, Franklin Roosevelt militarized America, Winston Churchill cheered on the Allies and Harry Truman ordered that atomic bomb be dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Gandhi was attempting an entirely new kind of politics based on the transformative spirituality of nonviolence.

Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya was born on September 25, 1916, in the village of Dhankia in Rajasthan. He lost his father, Bhagwati Prasad, when he

was less than three years old and his mother before he was eight. He was then brought up by his maternal uncle. Deendayal was outstanding in his studies and stood first in examinations. He won a number of prizes and scholarships. While he was a student at Sanatan Dharma College, Kanpur he joined the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (R.S.S.). Although he qualified as a teacher, he did not take to teaching profession. Instead, he dedicated himself to full-time work in RSS from 1942. Deendayal Upadhyaya was a man of soaring idealism and had a tremendous capacity for organization. He started a monthly magazine "Rashtra Dharma", a weekly 'Panchajanya', and a daily 'Swadesh'. Deendayal was a deep and original thinker. His philosophy of Integral Humanism, which is a synthesis of the material and the spiritual, the individual and the collective, bears eloquent testimony to this. In the field of politics and economics, he was pragmatic and down to earth. He visualized for India a decentralized polity and self-reliant economy with the village as the base. He welcomed modern technology but wanted it to be adapted to suit Indian requirements. Deendayal believed in a constructive approach. He exhorted his followers to co-operate with the Government when it was right and fearlessly oppose when it erred. He placed the nation's interests above everything else. Deendayal Upadhyaya was found dead in the early hours of February 1, 1968, while traveling in a train.

It is understood that Upadhyay was born when Gandhi was more than 45 years old and when Gandhi was dead Upadhyay was about 32 years old. When compared to the 79 long years of Gandhi's life Upadhyay lived for 52 years only. Of the 32 years of contemporaneity, Upadhyay definitely had had a chance of being partially influenced/inspired by the political philosophy of Gandhi.

### **Upadhyay's Mentors**

Upadhyaya had come into contact with the RSS through a classmate, Baluji Mahashabde, while studying at Sanatan Dharma College in 1937. He met the founder of the RSS, K. B. Hedgewar, who engaged with him in an intellectual discussion at one of the shakhas. Sunder Singh Bhandari was also one of his classmates at Kanpur. He started full-time work in the RSS from 1942.

Syama Prasad Mookerjee walked out of Jawaharlal Nehru's cabinet due to ideological differences and started the Bharatiya Jana Sangh (BJS) in 1950. In 1951, Deendayal became the first General Secretary of its U.P. branch. He was also chosen as All India General Secretary. The acumen and meticulousness shown by Deendayal deeply impressed Mookerjee and elicited his famous remarks "If I had two Deendayals, I could transform the political face of India". After Mookerjee's mysterious death in 1953 [he too died at the age of 52], the entire burden of nurturing the orphaned organization and building it up as a nation-wide movement fell on the young shoulders of Deendayal. For 15 long years he remained the party's General Secretary and built it up, brick by brick. He raised a band of dedicated workers imbued with idealism and provided the entire ideological framework of the party. The final triumph of his statesmanship and vision was the historic session of the Party in 1967.

### **Gandhi as a Fore-Runner**

Gandhi's philosophy of Spiritual politics is summarised by Gandhi himself when he said during the Great Trial of 1922: "Non-cooperation with evil is as much a duty as cooperation with good". One needs to appreciate this spiritual radicalism of Gandhi in order to understand the integral humanism of Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay. It is needed to be publicly active in promoting the common good as well as organizing against the common evil. Gandhi's path to political transformation is fundamentally rooted in the spiritual requirement of risk, renunciation, sacrifice, even martyrdom. Gandhi teaches to accept suffering, even to court suffering, if one wants personal transformation, political revolution and a vision of God. When asked to sum up the meaning of life in three words or less, Gandhi responded cheerfully, "That's easy: Renounce and enjoy" (Qtd. in Parekh).

Though Gandhi was a lawyer, politician and revolutionary, he acknowledged that his most powerful weapon was prayer. His prayer led him to a near total reliance on God that gave him the faith (much more important than courage) to undertake his bold public actions for justice and independence. His commitment to prayer transformed Gandhi from a politician into a saint,

someone who does God's will, through whom God speaks and moves and touches the human race. If truth and nonviolence are pursued, human life will bear the good fruit of truth and nonviolence, Gandhi said. Similarly, he observed, violence can only lead to further violence. Violence is not only immoral; it is always impractical. With this insight, Gandhi teaches that there are no just wars, just revolutions, justified executions, or justified weapons of deterrence.

Having pondered over the spiritually radical political perspectives of Gandhi it is time to browse through Upadhyay's integral humanism and thereby understand that it is a transmutation of Gandhian spiritual radicalism.

### Upadhyay's Integral Humanism

Integral humanism rejects western concepts like Marxist socialism as well as Capitalist individualism and seeks what can be called a middle ground between the two. But it welcomes what is good for the society being offered by Western science. It is critical of the two systems for their excesses and alienness. Upadhyay believed that humankind had four hierarchically organised attributes of body, mind, and which corresponded to four universal objectives, kama (desire or satisfaction), artha (wealth), dharma (moral duties) and moksha (total liberation or "salvation"). While none could be ignored, dharma is the "basic", and moksha the "ultimate" objective of humankind and society. Integral Humanism is a synthesis of the material and the spiritual, the individual and the collective.

Now, it is to analyse the different point of convergence and divergence between Gandhi and Upadhyay to prove that the latter's philosophy is found to be a transmutation of the former's.

### Points of Convergence & Divergence

#### On the Form of Government

Gandhi himself carried forward the idea of *Swaraj* from Lokmanya Tilak (1856-1920). *Swaraj* the basis of Gandhian view of nation-state is thoroughly Indic. In 1931 Gandhi defined *Swaraj* as a uniquely Indic concept different from the Western conception of political independence: "The root meaning of *Swaraj* is self-rule. *Swaraj* may, therefore, be rendered as disciplined

rule from within. ... 'Independence' has no such limitation. Independence may mean license to do as you like. *Swaraj* is positive. Independence is negative. ... The word *Swaraj* is a sacred word, a Vedic word, meaning self-rule and self-restraint and not freedom from all restraints which 'independence' often means".

Pandit Deendayal took the same concept further. He considered '*Chiti*' as the Self of the nation. The democracy and culture of the nation need to be centred around the '*Chiti*' of the nation. He stated that the loss of the 'self' is the reason for the downfall of the nation as well as polity.

#### On Economic Development

Of all the sharing of core values, it is in the way they viewed economic development as well as technology for economic development that the thoughts of both Gandhi and Upadhyaya converge with perhaps highest relevance for India's future. Upadhyaya, with the advantage of being into a few decades of witnessing Nehruvian development model, could adapt and carry forward the seed thoughts of Gandhi expressed in '*Hind Swaraj*'.

Initially, Gandhi considered machines and hence technology as inevitable though ideally, he considered them a hindrance to absolute freedom. One can say that Gandhi's view of technology was really Darwinian in a sense. He was against monoculture of technology just as he was against the monoculture of expansionist religions. To him, technology was inevitable '*like our own body*'. Linking technological development to Swadesi and *Swaraj*, Gandhi stated that '*we need to devise our own technology to suit our requirements.*'

This view of technology is expanded and presented by Upadhyaya in his *Integral Humanism*. He looked at the economic system and emphasised that it should not make 'extravagant use of available resources but should make a well regulated use'. Technology should be evolved with this in mind. According to Pandit Deendayal, the technology developed should take into account seven factors (The 7-M model) 1. Man (human factor) 2. Material (natural resources) 3. Money (economic feasibility) 4. Management 5. Motive power (energy efficiency) 6. Market and 7. Machine. He said that we should design suitable technologies taking all these things into account and thus

evolve a 'Bharatiya technology' (*Integral Humanism*) an Indic technology for sustainable development.

### On Exploitation of Man by Man

Upadhyaya was 'far less committed to traditional institutions than Gandhi': "Upadhyaya's writings are sprinkled with attacks on caste system as practiced. In his view all institutions are derivative and, when they cease to fulfill the integrating function, they should be revised and abandoned. It is not surprising that orthodox Hindus were among the major critics of the *Jan Sangh*" (Anderson). However here Anderson's assessment of Gandhi is not entirely right. Gandhi was against the evils of untouchability and gradually he came to be against the evils of caste system itself. In this he had to face bitter opposition from the orthodox heads of Hinduism. Gandhi also battled for Sharda Act, which stopped child marriage. Incidentally, the act was drafted by Hindu nationalist Har Bilas Sharda. Socially stagnant sections of Hindu orthodoxy did not hesitate to join hands with Islamists politicians to oppose the act.

### On Religion

Unlike Gandhi, Upadhyaya was not a religious man in conventional sense of the term. While he was steeped in the Hindu traditions, particularly Vedanta, he was not a worldly sadhu and he was not moved to act by religious precepts. However like Gandhi, he rejected post-Machiavellian trend of western thought that posited the separation of religious and political ideals. In their attempt to fuse the two concepts, Gandhi and Upadhyaya drew on the traditional Hindu concept of *Karma Yoga* or spiritual realization through social work. Both accepted the traditional notion that *Dharma* (individual and social duty) is the legitimate guide for shaping *Artha* (interest) and *Kama* (pleasure).

### Conclusion

Having understood the points of convergence and divergence between Gandhi and Deendayal Upadhyay, it is needless to assert the relevance of applying Deendayal's economic philosophy in India today. It is apt to conclude by quoting the rousing call made by

Deendayal in the Calicut session: "We are pledged to the service not of any particular community or section but of the entire nation. Every countryman is blood of our blood and flesh of our flesh. We shall not rest till we are able to give to everyone a sense of pride that they are children of Bharatmata. We shall make Mother India sujala, suphala (overflowing with water and laden with fruits) in the real sense of these words. As Dashapraharana Dharini Durga (Goddess Durga with her ten weapons) she would be able to vanquish evil; as Lakshmi she would be able to disburse prosperity all over and as Saraswati she would dispel the gloom of ignorance and spread the radiance of knowledge all around her. With faith in ultimate victory, let us dedicate ourselves to this task". With Integral humanism seeking to develop an Indian, self-reliant economic model with village as the base and putting human being at the centre stage, it is hoped to have a better India.

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