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Biography

Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya (1916-1968): A Short Biography

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सारांश

Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya was the leader of the Bharatiya Jana Sangh from 1953 to 1968. A profound philosopher, organiser par excellence and a leader who maintained the highest standards of personal integrity, he has been the source of ideological guidance and moral inspiration for the BJP since its inception. His treatise Integral Humanism, which is a critique of both communism and capitalism, provides a holistic alternative perspective for political action and statecraft consistent with the laws of Creation and the universal needs of the human race.

Keywords: Integral Humanism, Hindutva, Unity.

Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya was born on Monday September 25, 1916, in the sacred region of Brij in the village of Nagla Chandrabhan in Mathura District . His father was a well known astrologer. An astrologer who studied his horoscope predicted that the boy would become a great scholar and thinker, a selfless worker, and a leading politician - but that he would not marry. While at Bhatpur tragedy struck the family, he lost his brother to illness in 1934. He later went to high school in Sikar. Maharaja of Sikar gave Pandit Upadhyaya a gold medal, Rs. 250 for books and a monthly scholarship of Rs.10. Pandit Upadhyaya passed his Intermediate exams with distinction in Pilani and left to Kanpur to pursue his B.A. and joined the Sanatan Dharma college. At the instance of his friend Shri. Balwant Mahashabde, he joined the RSS in 1937. In 1937 he received his B.A. in the first division. Pandit Upadhyaya moved to Agra to pursue M.A.

Here he joined forces with Shri. Nanaji Deshmukh and Shri. Bhau Jugade for RSS activities. Around this time Rama Devi, a cousin of Deendayalji fell ill and she moved to Agra for treatment. She passed away. Deendayalji was very depressed and could not take the M.A. exams. His scholarships, received earlier from Maharajaj of Sikar and Shri. Birla were discontinued. At the instance of his aunt he took a Government conducted competitive examination in dhoti and kurta with a cap on his head, while



other candidates wore western suits. The candidates in fun called him "Panditji" - an appellation millions were to use with respect and love in later years. Again at this exam he topped the list of selectees. Armed with his Uncle's permission he moved to Prayag to pursue B.T. and at Prayag he continued his RSS activities. After completion of his B.T., he worked full-time for the RSS and moved to Lakhimpur District in UP as an organizer and in 1955 became the Provincial Organizer of the RSS in UP.

He established the publishing house 'Rashtra Dharma Prakashan' in Lucknow and launched the monthly magazine 'Rashtra Dharma' to propound the principles he held sacred. Later he launched the weekly 'Panchjanya' and still later the daily 'Swadesh'. In 1950, Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee, then Minister at the Center, opposed the Nehru-Liaquat pact and resigned his Cabinet post and joined the opposition to build a common front of democratic forces. Dr. Mookerjee sought Shri. Guruji's help in organizing dedicated young men to pursue the work at the political level.

Pandit Deendayalji convened on September 21, 1951 a political convention of UP and founded the state unit of the new party, Bharatiya Jana Sangh. Pandit. Deendayalji was the moving spirit and Dr. Mookerjee presided over the first all-India convention held on October 21, 1951. Pandit Deendayalji's organizing skills were unmatched. Finally came the red letter day in the annals of the Jana Sangh when this utterly unassuming leader of the party was raised to the high position of President in the year 1968. On assuming this tremendous responsibility Deendayalji went to the South with the message of Jana Sangh. On the dark night of February 11, 1968, Deendayal Upadhyaya was fiendishly pushed into the jaws of sudden death. On Friday, on the 99th birth anniversary of Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya, Sangh Parivar leaders will predictably lavish praise on him for creating the concept of Integral Humanism. They will hail him for his stellar contribution to the Indian intellectual tradition, and blame the lack of recognition for him on the dominance of Nehruvian ideas.

However, a reading of the four lectures Upadhyaya delivered on Integral Humanism in Mumbai between April 22 and April 25, 1965, shows he dressed popular prejudices, unfounded assertions and ideas, neither novel nor uniquely his, in the cloak of what he calls the Bharatiya culture. Worryingly, Integral Humanism challenges the supremacy of the Indian Constitution and can be invoked to justify its violation. His prejudices burst through his intellectual pose of objectivity on the third day of his lecture series. Upadhyaya is explaining to his audience that the mode of thinking of a group is remarkably different from the individuals who comprise it. To prove this no-brainer, Upadhyaya narrates a discussion between then Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh sarsanghchalak Guru Golwalkar and Bhoodan movement leader Vinoba Bhave.



Golwalkar tells Bhave that no society has a monopoly over “goodness”. There are good human beings among both Hindus and Muslims, but there is a crucial difference between the two communities. Upadhyaya quotes Golwalkar, “It is observed that Hindus even if they are rascals [in] individual life, when they come together in a group, they always think of good things.... [But] when two Muslims come together, they propose and approve of things which they themselves in their individual capacity would not even think of.” Such prejudices and assertions constitute the defining feature of Upadhyaya’s four-part lecture on Integral Humanism, which seeks to invent a paradigm of progress that is uniquely India’s, nay, Bharat’s. This paradigm of progress is required because Upadhyaya, in 1965, sees chaos prevailing in the country. He was realistic enough to accept that in the India of “450 million people” (in 1965) there couldn’t possibly be one answer to that existential question: What direction should Bharat take?

Bharatiya culture will show the way

He finds a way out with the first of his many assertions – every nation has “what is called a more or less common desire of the people”. This is followed by a wish: “If this popular longing is made the basis of our aims, the common man would feel that the nation is moving in a proper direction.” You don’t have to be a genius to know that this “more or less common desire” has to be progress, prosperity, and happiness. But the issue of determining the path to take for realising these goals has been complicated because of the existence of two groups of people.

There are those who want to pick up the threads left off a thousand years ago, when foreign invaders descended on India. Upadhyaya advises against it: “The task of turning the waters of Ganga back to some previous point may not be wise. The Ganga at Banaras may not be crystal clear as at Haridwar... It has absorbed numerous rivulets with all their refuse.” No prizes for guessing who the polluters were. Then there are those who want India to take the path the West has. Look at the West, the impact on it of the three isms – Nationalism, Democracy and Socialism, he suggests. Nationalism has led to conflict among nations and shattered global peace. Democracy, no doubt, guaranteed individual liberty and gave every person a vote, but it has also led to his exploitation by the rapacious capitalists. Socialism sought to establish equality among individuals, but eroded his dignity and liberty. Nor has the West’s prosperity led to happiness. As proof, he talks of a high suicide rates in the US and the tranquilisers people there pop to gain a good night sleep.

“The West is not in a position to say with confidence that ‘this alone and no other’ is the right path,” says Upadhyaya. This leads him to the question: Is it possible for the Bharatiya culture to point the world in the right direction?



Dharma: the ethics in Nature

You bet it can, because the defining trait of the Bharatiya culture is that it “looks upon life as an integrated whole. It has an integrated viewpoint,” Upadhyaya asserts. By contrast, the “confusion in the West arises primarily from its tendency to think of life in sections and then to attempt to put them together by patch work”. This explains the conflict in the western societies. We must turn to the Bharatiya culture to determine the path India should take because the “more or less common desire”, that “common longing”, constitutes the society and the nation. What is a nation? Rejecting the social contract theory, Upadhyaya says the nation is self-born. It is organic. It is a “group of people [who] live with a goal, an ideal, a mission” and looks “upon a particular place as motherland”.

The goal or the ideal too is given. What soul is to the individual, the goal is to the nation. The nation’s soul is called Chiti, which is innate to it. Upadhyaya goes on to make three inter-connected assertions: “Chiti is fundamental... to the nation from its very beginning. Chiti determines the direction in which the nation is to advance culturally. Whatever is in accordance with Chiti is included in culture.” From this it follows: Whatever is not in accordance with Chiti is perversion, not culture. Upadhyaya says as much.

Most human beings will find it difficult to determine beforehand which action of theirs is in accordance with Chiti. Upadhyaya refers to the principles of ethics embedded in Nature. These principles are not man-made or framed. We only discovered them, just as Newton did the law of gravity when he wondered why an apple from the tree fell to the ground. In Bharat, says Upadhyaya, these principles are called the dharma, or laws of life. “All those principles which bring about harmony, peace and progress in the life of mankind are included in this dharma.” In other words, the ideals of the nation constitute Chiti, or the soul of the nation. The laws that help “manifest and maintain” the nation’s Chiti (ideal, soul) constitute the dharma. The nation’s ideal, to emphasise, is to progress harmoniously, that is, without conflict.

A human being is the son of his mother, husband of his wife, father of his son (the idea of patriarchy informs his lecture series), a member of his profession or an institution, say, the state, and is also a member of the nation. It is wrong to think these multiple roles are in conflict, Upadhyaya says. He has to harmonise his roles to live an integrated life. This is what the Bharatiya culture demands. This is also what the West doesn’t understand – and, therefore, suffers. Upadhyaya’s idea distinctly echoes social thinker Emile Durkheim’s theory of functionalism, with notes and tunes and terminologies from the Bharatiya culture.



'No conflict between castes'

He, therefore, rejects the inevitability of conflicts between classes. “Here (India) too, there were castes, but we had never accepted conflict between one caste and another as a fundamental concept behind it.” From Virat-purusha’s head, he says, were created the Brahmins, the Kshatriyas from his hands, the Vaishyas from his abdomen and the Shudras from his legs. Rather childishly, Upadhyaya asks: Can there arise any conflict among the head, the arms, the stomach and the legs?

Upadhyaya answers: “If conflict among them was fundamental, the body cannot be maintained... If this idea is not kept alive, the castes, instead of being complementary, can produce conflict. But then this is distortion.” It is so because conflict is not in accordance with Bharat’s Chiti, it is not culture and violates the dharma. Had Deendayal Upadhyaya been born Deendayal Ambedkar, he might have perceived the Indian reality from a different perspective. Upadhyaya asserts the Indian Constitution is subordinated to the dharma. “That Constitution which sustains the nation is in tune with Dharma,” he declares, finding fault with Article 1 of the Constitution. According to him, Article 1 defines “India that is Bharat will be a federation of States”. In fact, it states, “India that is Bharat shall be a Union of States.” This quibble apart, Upadhyaya interprets Article 1 to mean that “Bihar Mata, Banga Mata, Punjab Mata, Kannada Mata, Tamil Mata, all put together make Bharat Mata”. He finds this ridiculous. “We have thought of the provinces as limbs of Bharat Mata and not as individual mother(s). Therefore our Constitution should be unitary instead of federal,” he argues.

On the debate whether the judiciary or the legislature is supreme, he refers to the talk of amending the Constitution to address this ambiguity. Then he argues, “Neither the legislature is higher nor the judiciary. Dharma is higher than both... Dharma will specify limits of both... Even the people are not sovereign because people too have no right to act against the Dharma.” Rejecting the notion of conducting a referendum in Goa to decide whether or not it should be merged with Maharashtra and holding a plebiscite in Kashmir, Upadhyaya declares, “This is wrong. National unity is our Dharma. Elections and majority can decide as to who will form the government... What the government will do will be decided by Dharma.”

Dharma over will

He refers to Abraham Lincoln’s rejection of the decision of American states to secede on the slavery issue and says, “Here in our country the situation in this regard is very much like old Hindu marriages where a married couple could not divorce even if both the parties wished. The principle was that their behaviour should be regulated not by their sweet will but by Dharma.” All this is bound to prompt a question in 2015: Are



ghar wapsi campaigns, love jihad, or attempts to deny free choice to women, in accordance with the dharma? To answer this question from within Upadhyaya's ethical framework, turn to the third part of his lecture. Therein, he states, "Kauravas were defeated, and Pandavas won. Why did we hold up the conduct of Pandavas as Dharma? Rama was assisted in his invasion of Lanka by Vibhishana, brother of Ravana. Such conduct of Vibhishana, instead of being branded as treason, is considered good and exemplary. Why so?"

He provides the answer, "If there is any standard for determining the merits and demerits of particular action, it is this Chiti... Chiti is the touchstone on which each action, each attitude is tested, and determined to be acceptable or otherwise." Considering the Bharatiya Janata Party's official philosophy is that of Integral Humanism, we can't help but conclude divisive programmes such as ghar wapsi pass the test of Chiti. This is why Upadhyaya's Integral Humanism leaves you with little hope and no comfort.

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