

Pt. Deendayal Upadhyay's Thoughts on Women and Their Role in Nation-Building

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Abstract

Pt. Deendayal Upadhyay was one of the most influential thinkers of modern Indian political thought. He was an ideological architect of Integral Humanism which used to be the official doctrine of earlier the Jan Sangh and now the current ruling government i.e. Bhartiya Janta Party. It proposes an integrated approach towards life and follows the idea of *vasudhaiv Kutumbakam*. His philosophy majorly based on dharma, harmony, equality and deeply rooted in cultural norms and traditions. Central to his philosophy, was the recognition of women not merely as passive recipients of welfare but an active participant in preserving the moral and cultural fabric of the nation. This research paper aspires to explore his thoughts on the role of women in society, emphasizing their contribution as nurturers of cultural continuity and as indispensable agents in the process of nation-building. Further, it examines the extent to which Upadhyay's ideological framework has influenced contemporary political ideology and policies under Bhartiya Janta Party (BJP) government. By tracing the ideological continuity between Deendayal Upadhyay's thoughts and present-day policies framed by Bhartiya Janta Party, this study highlights how his vision continues to shape the socio-political narrative on women's empowerment in India.

Keywords: Deendayal Upadhyay, Integral Humanism, Women, Bhartiya Janta Party, Nation-building

INTRODUCTION

So far, Women in India have contributed prominently in nation-building, Advancements in diverse domains, evolving development index of India and serving as a catalyst for cleanliness campaign. Women have advanced to distinction and excellently performed their responsibilities. Notable women like Rani Laxmi Bai of Jhansi and Begam Hazrat Mahal were fought courageously during the revolt of 1857. Amid the struggle for Indian Independence, Women began to involve in wider responsibilities in national life. Commencing with the Swadeshi movement, Women's activism in widespread movements evolved with the Non-cooperation Movement. They assembled in large figures to align with National Movement i.e. boycotting liquor and stores of clothes, Nursing of the Indian freedom fighters who were injured. In the battle against colonial rule, Women were also imprisoned along with men. During this time period, Women were given paramount roles and responsibilities by various leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru and Sardar Vallabh bhai Patel. Since freedom struggle to the post-1947 phase, Indira Gandhi emerged as the first female Prime Minister of Independent India, emerged as a landmark triumph that western nations could only crave for (Shairgojri, 2022). Gender Equality signifies a just and fair treatment, providing unbiased opportunities irrespective of gender hindrances. It serves as a core pillar for achieving wider social and economic advancement targets, markedly emphasized in the United Nations Sustainable

Development Goals (SDGs) (Chikwe et al., 2024). Advancing the aim of gender equality is not merely a virtuous necessity but also a driving force behind social and economic perseverance. When women have equity in access to resources and opportunities, their deliberate engagement catalyze change across the society. Further, it contributes to their economic prosperity and enhancement of holistically healthier social groups. In a similar vein, women active participation in decision-making procedures stabilizes institutional governance, heading to policies that elevates social welfare and upholds environmental sustainability (Akinwale, 2023). An Indian socio-political and nationalist thinker, Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay is widely recognized for a champion of Bhartiya Sanskriti. His philosophy of Integral Humanism is revolving around various aspects of human life, intrinsically asserts in cohesive alignment of an individual, society, the universe and the ultimate supreme. Pt. Deendayal Upadhyay reinforces building harmony and corporation among public domain (Deb, 2023). Integral Humanism is viewed as a vital element of Hindutva, the term used to distinguish the political and cultural philosophy associated to Hindu nationalism and it incorporates more foundational ideas that apply to society as a whole, not as a part Karigar & Dhavaleshwar (2025). The notion of Pt. Deendayal Upadhyay reflects Hindu philosophy where women hold a pivotal position as Divine Feminine Power (Matrishakti). In his philosophy of Integral Humanism, he discussed about an individual, family, society, nation and the entire cosmos, both men and women are considered as integral and equitable parts of this holistic unity (Sunita, 2025). In synergy with Pt. Deendayal Upadhyay roadmap, the current ruling government has strived for the path of “Sabka Saath Sabka Vikas”. The government has carried on numerous schemes and programs named after him, reflecting his vision for the upliftment of the most marginalized section of the society. The paramount focus on villages and the welfare of poor, farmers, and marginalized communities, particularly empowering youth and women. Pt. Deendayal Upadhyay’s integral humanism remains a cornerstone for inclusive growth (Sarkar, 2024). When we thoroughly examine the principles of Pt. Deendayal Upadhyay, we realized that his philosophy was about integrated human life which is composed of all men and women irrespective of their caste, gender, class etc. It was precisely articulated by him that diversity of any kind in life is merely an expression of internal unity. He subsequently employed the metaphor of Virat-Purusha to justify the origin of different castes, afterward reached to the point where he upholds that even though differentiations in society and individuals, one cannot function without cooperation from another. The same belief also points to the interrelation between men and women in nation, where the two act as sperate limbs of a unified structure but always have their own roles to play and in commonality, having a common point of inception. His concept of Chiti i.e. soul of Bharat, also lies the philosophy of “Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam” i.e. the entire world is one family and this has been a light of wisdom to the Indian family system where the position of women is of supreme value. Likewise, his concept of Rashtira is a female entity in the country. His idea of nationalism is not merely a piece of land, Bharat but Bharatmata. It evidently exhibits the honor and value given to female gender by Pt. Deendayal Upadhyay. His notable idea of integral humanism believed in strengthening and empowering all individuals of Indian territory who further donated in creating well-integral society (Sharma, 2024).

Significance of the Study

Interpreting a view point of Pt. Deendayal Upadhyay on women and their role in nation-building advocates a substantial relevance. As the principal doctrine of *Integral Humanism*, his insights offer a distinct synthesis of tradition and modernity, rooted in Indian culture. At a time when India was evolving from colonial rule and reenvisioning its national identity, Upadhyay encouraged for a model of development

that stressed on cultural rootedness and holistic human upliftment within which the position of women was central. By emphasizing the importance of women's roles in the family, education, and the preservation of *dharma*, Upadhyay reframed their contribution to national development in terms that unified social commitment with empowerment. In contemporary times, as India wrestles with challenges of gender justice, women's empowerment, and inclusive development, revisiting Upadhyay's thoughts provides valuable observations. Exploring his views not only enhances a deeper understanding of his political and social philosophy but also provides an indigenous intellectual framework to reconceptualize gender roles in context of nation-building.

Research Methodology

The research paper is thoroughly built on qualitative, descriptive and analytical method. It is based particularly upon secondary sources to explore Pt. Deendayal Upadhyay's views of role of women in nation-building. Data is collected from secondary data resources including research papers, speeches, books, newspaper articles related to Pt. Deendayal Upadhyay and consulted documents related to a particular domain.

Research Objectives

The paper is constructed the objectives as following:

1. To analyze Pt. Deendayal Upadhyay's views on the role of women in society and their contribution towards nation-building.
2. To examine the impact of Pt. Deendayal Upadhyay's ideological perspective on contemporary political ideology and policies under Bhartiya Janta Party (BJP).

Integral Humanism: His core philosophy

Deendayal Upadhyay is best worldwide known for his vision of Integral Humanism where the main focus is on a human being and offers a holistic approach of human empowerment. The prominent ideas of Pt. Deendayal Upadhyay are seen in his conceptualization of Bhartiyata, Dharma, Ramrajya and Antyodaya (Kumar & Kumar, 2025). His ideological framework of *Bharathiyata-Indianness* can be seen as an alienation of social, economic and political viewpoints with an intention of integrating society, state, and the nation together for unified existence. The nucleus of human life is finding a balance in multiple domains, such as mental, physical, and intellectual health, along with fostering uniformity and transparency among people, families, communities, cultures and countries (Kumari, 2024). His vision of "education to all" and "*har hath ko kam, "har khet ko pani"*" was seen culminating his idea of economic democracy. He was a staunch supporter of a democratic system free from societal inequalities where capital and power get decentralized. His message was to build a strong and prosperous India on the strong foundation of Bhartiya culture which guarantees freedom, gender equality, justice to all and synthesis not conflict as the basis of life. The key pillar of his development model includes '*social justice through Antyodaya i.e. the rise of the last person*'. The concept emphasized for prioritizing the welfare of the most marginalized sections in society, such as *the poor, tribals, women and the rural population*. For him, true social justice was not just about economic redistribution but about ensuring that all people, regardless of caste, class or gender have access to the resources, opportunities and societal respect needed to empower according to their nature and capabilities. He favored the moral reform and the alignment of societal values with principles of justice, fairness and mutual respect (Kumar & Kumar, 2025).

Role of Women through Pt. Deendayal Upadhyay's Vision

Deendayal Upadhyay was an analyst of Jana Sangh. It was inaugurated in 1951, just four years after India gained its independence. He was appointed as the General Secretary of Jana Sangh in 1952 (Kalkar, 1991). He supported the set-up of separate front wing particularly for women among Jan Sangh working autonomously for their upliftment. Deendayal Upadhyay was a devoted supporter of equality and encouraged that in politics women should be given acknowledgment like men. Their conglomerate for nation-building should also be considered. He firmly believed that it has been the tradition of Bhartiya women to stand together with the chief of the family. Approximately half of the population consists of women and even if those occupies in the political field did not concentrate to women, their difficulties and their capabilities, it would be equivalent to ignoring one half of our society. According to Deendayal Upadhyay, we cannot allow to show this kind of disregard in the pathway of building a new Bharat. Consequently, Pt. Deendayal Upadhyay kept an eye on organizing women's front inside the Jan Sangh. Women's front has taken a central role not only in the constructive programmes but also in the agitational programmes of Jan Sangh (Kalkar, 1991). Pt. Deendayal Upadhyay widely accepted that it is the trait of both men and women is society that would eventually influence the nature of the state (Voice of the Nation Organiser, 2022). Moreover, he was one among the male political thinkers in modern India to openly proclaim that gender inequality is equally detrimental to both caste or class oppression. His views on women were grounded in Sanatan dharma, yet absent from patriarchal orthodoxy. He approached the question of gender through the paradigm of cultural dharma and collective-well-being and sought to strengthen women beyond mere symbolism or nominal representation. Deendayal Upadhyay favored honor, education, active participation in decision-making and community-oriented leadership among women, enabling them to grow spontaneously within society. He accepted the need for reform but claimed that family is not systematically unjust and it must be refined, not omitted. He saw a woman as the moral foundation of family and society. Thoughts of Upadhyay mainly focused that women's emancipation is not about replication of western feminist thought, but building Indian model rooted in justice, dignity and active participation in nation-building task. Women is not inferior but thorough expression of Shakti (power). Progressive society values the corresponding roles and responsibilities of men and women. Therefore, Women's participation in national life- as educators, mothers, activists, service-based leadership is indispensable, facilitating them to grow indigenously within society. Deendayal Upadhyay asserted that mere western approach towards equality overlooks the cultural and spiritual facets of womanhood. He criticized modern commodification and traditional marginalization, aspiring to secure a dignified, equitable role for women in public and private life (Mishra, 2025).

Contemporary Political Ideology- Traces of Deendayal Upadhyay's Thought

The current ruling party at the center is guided by the ideology of Pt. Deendayal Upadhyay who served as the president of the Bhartiya Jana Sangh (1967-1968), the precursor party of today's ruling government (The print, 2018). The roots of BJP traced back to Jan Sangh as founded by Shyama Prasad Mukherjee in 1951. The philosophy of integral humanism of Deendayal Upadhyay is an official doctrine adopted by Bhartiya Janta Party (Prasad & Ojha, 2024). According to the Article 3 of BJP's constitution "integral Humanism" is its basic ideology. Noted by R. Balashankar, former editor of Organiser, the official mouthpiece of the RSS, "*Deendayal Upadhyay is to the BJP what Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi was to congress*". It clearly encapsulates the ideological centrality of Upadhyay within BJP's political imagination. Just as Gandhi symbolized the moral and philosophical foundation of the congress, Integral

Humanism serves as guiding principle, shaping its socio-political worldview and public policies including its approach toward women roles, decentralization and cultural nationalism (The print, 2018). Bhartiya Janta party agenda of cultural nationalism, positioning women not only as beneficiaries of empowerment but as custodians India's spiritual and moral. Prime Minister Narendra Modi on many occasions, publicly credited women as the "silent voters" behind the party's stupendous electoral wins and consider that "Nari Shakti" (women power) has taken a front row in politics (Desai, 2021). He states that *the progress of humanity is incomplete without the empowerment of women. The issue is not only the women development but it is women-led development*. Even from a decade, Bhartiya Janta Party's election manifestos showcase a consistent narrative around women's empowerment framed within the ethos of *Nari Shakti*. This emphasis aligns with Deendayal Upadhyay's vision which advocated for culturally-rooted family centric society where women are not merely beneficiaries but pivotal agents of social cohesion. In 2014 manifesto, women were portrayed as *nation-builders* with promises ranging from women's reservation in Parliament to safety and skill-based empowerment programs (Johari, 2019). Furthermore, BJP's Manifesto 2019 intended towards gender equality, promised to amend the constitution to introduced 33 percent of reservation for women in parliament and state assemblies and also a law to eliminate practices like triple talaq and nikah halala (Das, 2019). It focused on women's financial autonomy through initiatives like SHG's and rural entrepreneurship schemes. Women empowerment has always been a key poll promise of the BJP. After coming into power BJP has launched *Beti Bachao Beti padhao yojana* for prevention of gender biased sex selective elimination, ensuring survival and protection of the girl child, ensuring education and participation of the girl child. The criminalization of *Tribble talaq* through the Muslim Women (Protection of rights on marriage) Act, 2019, marked a landmark shift in India's gender justice narrative (Prasad & Ojha, 2024).

Conclusion

Pt. Deendayal Upadhyay's vision of women as pivotal contributors to the nation's moral, cultural and social foundation presents a distinct amalgamation of traditional values and nationalistic aspirations. He recognized them as an essential participant and leading figures in the advancement of nation. He always preferred integrity, honor, respect, education and active participation in decision-making among women and underscored that gender inequality has damaged our Bhartiya culture. Rooted in the philosophy of *Integral Humanism*, his thoughts underlined the role of women in nation-building as equal partners with men in preserving *Sanskriti*, confirming familial stability and contributing to social development. Moreover, in contemporary politics, Bhartiya Janta Party is following his ideological perspective and his legacy has a continuous influence on policy making of this particular political party. Yet, mere representation is not enough. For political empowerment, there must be deeper commitment towards capacity building, leadership training and creating spaces where women can meaningfully influence policy and governance. Deendayal Upadhyay's agenda, offers an ethnically rooted yet a progressive approach for enhancing women's participation- an approach that continues to shape India's political discourse and must be further scrutinized in terms of impact, inclusivity and practical results.

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