

Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya

Relevance of His Thoughts in the Present Education System

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Abstract

The establishment and expansion of a new education system in India after Independence, posed a formidable challenge. Under the hegemony of British education system, the aims of education lacked clarity and relevance to indigenous needs. Consequently, there arose an urgent need to redefine and reconstruct the educational framework. Several commissions and committees were constituted to review the existing system and recommend reforms. Numerous thinkers and reformers contributed significantly to the revival and restructuring of Indian education. Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya was one such visionary who provided ideological direction for the reconstruction of a new Bharat. He envisioned a nation where no individual is left behind (Antyodaya), where the citizens are socially responsible, culturally rooted, and economically self-reliant. This paper aims to highlight Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya's educational philosophy and examine the relevance of his ideas in the contemporary education system.

Keywords: Antyodaya, Integral Humanism, Value Education, Education System, Bharatiya Sanskriti, Skill Development, Medium of Instruction

INTRODUCTION

Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya was a prominent torchbearer of Bharatiya Sanskriti and a distinguished political, social, and philosophical thinker. He dedicated his life to the service of society and consistently raised his voice about the issues affecting the common people. Despite facing

numerous hardships and personal losses, he remained steadfast in his commitment to national service.

Born on 25 September 1916, Deendayal Upadhyaya was an intellectually gifted individual, who played a significant role in awakening the spirit of national consciousness. His early education began in Rajasthan,

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where he excelled academically and received several gold medals and scholarships. The untimely loss of his parents, brother, and other close relatives, instilled in him, a sense of detachment and deeper reflection on life, which profoundly influenced his worldview.

After completing his intermediate education in Rajasthan, he enrolled at Sanatan Dharma College, Kanpur, in 1937 to pursue a bachelor's degree. During this period, he founded the 'Zero Club' to support economically and academically weaker students by integrating them with their peers. This initiative earned him widespread recognition among students. It was also during this time that he came into contact with the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), which gave direction and purpose to his life.

Subsequently, he enrolled for a master's degree in English literature in Agra but had to discontinue due to the illness of his maternal sister. Although he qualified for administrative services, he chose not to pursue a government position owing to his lack of interest in bureaucratic life. He later completed his Bachelor of Teaching (B.T.) from Prayag. Upon completing his formal education, he devoted himself entirely to the service of society and the nation.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

This paper seeks to explore the vision and mission of Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya and examine the relevance

of his educational philosophy in the rapidly changing contemporary world. The education system today, faces multiple complex challenges. In an era of information overload, young minds are increasingly confused and directionless. Excessive use of technology and digital devices has contributed to impatience, aggression, and violent tendencies among students, alongside disrupted sleep patterns (Kausalaye and Sayankar, 2022).

Children are increasingly drawn towards the virtual world, showing declining interest in physical activities and outdoor play. Numerous studies have reported rising levels of anxiety, depression, and other mental health issues among students (Gautam *et al.*, 2020; Sharma and Kour, 2021; Moitra and Kumar, 2020). The Economic Survey of India 2023–24 highlights that nearly 49 per cent of Indian youth are not employable, indicating a significant skill gap among graduates. The education and workforce systems are struggling to keep pace with the growing demand for skilled labour, both qualitatively and quantitatively (Swain and Swain, 2020).

Moreover, excessive influence of Western culture has adversely affected Indian youth (Bhoje, 2015; Chuchra and Kaur, 2016). The increasing commercialisation of education has transformed it into a profit-driven enterprise rather than a social good (Rathod, 2022).

Moral and ethical values are steadily eroding—leading to a decline in respect, empathy, and social responsibility. The lack of practical moral education has also been linked to rising crime rates (Chelani and Rathi, 2018).

Against this backdrop, the present paper aims to analyse Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya's views on education and assess their relevance in addressing the contemporary educational challenges.

EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY OF PANDIT DEENDAYAL UPADHYAYA

Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya propounded the philosophies of Integral Humanism (*Ekatma Manavvad*) and *Antyodaya*, both of which centre on the holistic development of individuals and society. His thoughts consistently emphasised social harmony, national integration, and moral upliftment.

Integral Humanism reflects the intrinsic relationship between human beings and nature. It advocates the balanced pursuit of the four *Purusharthas*—*Dharma*, *Artha*, *Kama*, and *Moksha*—to fulfil the needs of the body, mind, intellect, and soul. In the context of education, this philosophy underscores holistic development and the ethical application of intellect (Deodhar, 2014). According to *Ekatma Manavvad*, education should nurture inner qualities such as self-restraint, courage, sacrifice, and social responsibility. It encourages

the development of a collective consciousness—fostering a sense of 'We' rather than 'I'—and prioritises societal and national welfare over individual gains.

The principle of *Antyodaya*—the upliftment of the last person—further reinforces his educational vision. Upadhyaya believed that the benefits of education, like all developmental initiatives, must reach the most marginalised sections of society. Education, therefore, should be inclusive, accessible, and equitable, ensuring that no individual is left behind.

Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya regarded *Sanskriti* as the soul and identity of Bharat (Kelkar, 2014). He opposed the uncritical adoption of Western culture and asserted that patriotism is an innate quality that must be nurtured through education. His writings addressed a wide range of themes, including nationhood, politics, the Constitution, language, democracy, economy, religion, and education. He strongly upheld the Bharatiya educational principle of "Sa Vidya Ya Vimuktaye"—education that liberates.

He believed education to be a means for attaining the four *Purusharthas* and for cultivating moral character and national consciousness. Emphasising patriotism, he stated, "It is essential for every individual to be patriotic, free from egotism, virtuous, and capable of merging one's identity with society." (Upadhyaya, 2017).

Deeply concerned about the moral decline of society, Upadhyaya observed that selfishness and ethical degradation had weakened social fabric (Nain, 2019). He believed that moral values and selflessness form the foundation of a strong society and must be inculcated in children through both formal education and social institutions. To inspire youth, he authored works, such as *Samrat Chandragupta* and *Jagadguru Shankaracharya*, aiming to nurture selfless individuals committed to national service (Tiwari, 2004).

According to Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya, education is not confined to classrooms alone; rather, it is a lifelong process in which every element of society functions as a teacher. This expansive view of education remains profoundly relevant in the present educational discourse.

DEENDAYAL UPADHYAYA'S VIEWS ON EDUCATION

In his work *Rashtra Chintan*, Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya discussed various dimensions of education and emphasised its indispensable role in sustaining society. He stated that “without education, the existence of society is not possible” (Upadhyay, 2017). In his view, education is more closely related to society than to the individual, and the very idea of a society without education is inconceivable.

Upadhyaya believed that a deep and comprehensive education system is essential for building a strong and

resilient society. Referring to the *Shastras*, he described education as *Rishi Rin* (ऋषि ऋण), a debt owed by every individual to society and humanity. Education, therefore, is not merely a personal pursuit but a collective responsibility.

His concept of education extended far beyond schools and formal institutions. According to him, learning that takes place at home, in the neighbourhood, in schools, and within society as a whole constitutes education (Upadhyay, 2017). He described education as the conservation, enrichment, and transmission of the experiences of the previous generations. Such education, he argued, enables individuals to strike a balance between traditional wisdom and new knowledge. Knowledge, in his view, is a form of capital that grows through individual effort and lived experience.

Upadhyaya viewed education from a distinctly social and cultural perspective (Sunita, 2023). He maintained that foreign cultures, ideologies, and lifestyles, cannot fully address the needs of Indian society. Therefore, the education system of India must be rooted in indigenous conditions and *Bharatiya Sanskriti* (Sunita, 2023). His conception of *Bharat* was not merely political, but fundamentally *sanskritik* (cultural), and he believed that this cultural consciousness could be nurtured only through education.

Thus, Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya accorded central importance to

education for the holistic development of the individual, society, and the nation. He integrated educational goals with societal needs and prioritised Bharatiya Sanskriti. His views on education are clearly reflected in his extensive writings, which provide valuable insights into his educational philosophy.

Aims of Education

From a broad perspective, Deendayal Upadhyaya regarded education as a powerful instrument of social transformation. He aspired to educate children who possessed a strong mind, a healthy body, and a noble spirit. He consistently opposed the dominance of foreign cultures and asserted that every nation has its own identity and cultural ethos. No external culture, he believed, could adequately fulfil a nation's unique needs. Hence, the structure of education must be aligned with the country's cultural and social context.

According to him, the aims of education, shape the entire educational system. Through his literary works, he offered several suggestions for reconstructing and reforming India's education system. His educational aims may be summarised as follows:

- Development of patriotism among children
- Conservation and promotion of culture
- Development of a religious and ethical outlook
- Cultivation of sacrifice, duty, and tolerance

- Development of courage and bravery
- Achievement, preservation, and promotion of Swaraj
- Preparation of creative, active, and responsible citizens
- Development of Bharatiya Jeevan Darshan and Su-Sanskrit citizens
- Development of individuals according to their abilities and diversities
- Promotion of self-employment and employment opportunities
- Encouragement of small-scale industries and respect for labour
- Integration of traditional knowledge with new experiences
- Balanced, integrated, and holistic personality development
- Attainment of the four *Purusharthas*: *Dharma* (righteousness), *Artha* (wealth), *Kama* (desire), and *Moksha* (liberation)

These aims clearly reflect Deendayal Upadhyaya's deep concern for societal and national welfare and his aspiration to establish a distinctly Bharatiya education system.

EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

Upadhyaya advocated a broad and inclusive educational framework to ensure a strong and stable society. He perceived teachers as integral members of society and education as a collective endeavour. The knowledge, values, and experiences of earlier generations should be preserved, refined, and transmitted to future generations. Educational planning,

therefore, should be comprehensive and sensitive to cultural continuity while accommodating innovation.

Agencies and Medium of Education

Deendayal Upadhyaya identified three major agencies of education: *Sanskara*, *Adhyapana*, and *Swadhyaya*.

Sanskara refers to values and impressions acquired unconsciously from society through imitation, sympathy, and suggestion. Parents, teachers, peers, elders, and social leaders play a vital role in shaping these values.

Adhyapana (teaching) extends beyond formal classroom instruction. For Upadhyaya, teaching includes all conscious efforts to transmit knowledge—whether in homes, farms, factories, shops, playgrounds, art centres, or through traditional and modern media such as *katha*, *kirtan*, radio, cinema, and newspapers.

Swadhyaya (self-study) involves independent learning supported by reading (*pathan*), reflection (*manan*), and deep contemplation (*chintan*). He emphasised that without *Swadhyaya*, the growth and continuity of knowledge are impossible. He also highlighted the importance of imitation, sympathy, and suggestion in the learning process.

CURRICULUM AND MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION

In alignment with his educational aims, Deendayal Upadhyaya advocated curriculum development grounded in societal needs and cultural values. He strongly supported

Swabhasha (mother tongue) as the medium of instruction, believing that learning in one's mother tongue leads to deeper understanding. He proposed the enrichment of Hindi with *Sanskritnishtha* vocabulary instead of relying excessively on English.

To cultivate patriotism, he recommended the inclusion of subjects related to *Bharatiya Sanskriti* and India's glorious history. Religious texts, according to him, should form part of the curriculum to strengthen moral and ethical values. Physical education, yoga, mountaineering, trekking, and adventure activities were also considered essential for developing courage, resilience, and problem-solving abilities.

Upadhyaya advocated activity-based and creative education to prepare productive citizens. For holistic development, the curriculum should integrate contemporary societal needs with traditional values. Subjects such as Indian philosophy, culture, history, ethics, vocational education, yoga, and meditation should be included.

He emphasised the establishment of well-equipped schools and libraries as centres for transmitting India's rich cultural heritage. He also stressed the need for a balanced relationship between school and society, as both function as vital agencies of education.

THOUGHTS ON LANGUAGE

Deendayal Upadhyaya expressed dissatisfaction with government language policies. He supported the Devanagari script and regional

languages and recommended a gradual reduction in the use of English. He promoted *Sanskritnishtha Paribhashik Shabdawali* and encouraged efforts to foster affection for Hindi while ensuring linguistic integration across non-Hindi-speaking regions.

He asserted that national dignity and independence require the use of indigenous languages in governance and international communication. According to him, certain spheres of national life demand the abandonment of English to preserve cultural and political autonomy.

RELEVANCE TO CONTEMPORARY EDUCATION

Deendayal Upadhyaya's educational philosophy remains highly relevant in the present era. Today, society is increasingly influenced by Western culture and technological advancements. He believed that students must be acquainted with India's rich cultural heritage, which serves as a foundation for moral and ethical education.

His emphasis on sacrifice, duty, tolerance, physical fitness, yoga, *Swadhyaya*, and experiential learning addresses contemporary challenges such as stress, indiscipline, and mental health issues. His opposition towards the commercialisation of education is particularly relevant today, as many private institutions prioritise profit over student welfare.

He advocated skill-based education and self-employment, encouraging respect for labour and

small-scale industries. Effective implementation of these ideas could significantly address the problem of unemployment.

At the same time, certain challenges exist in implementing his ideas. His emphasis on societal priorities may sometimes overshadow individual development. His preference for indigenous languages faces practical constraints due to limited availability of scientific literature in Indian languages. Additionally, some of his educational aims may appear idealistic in the context of global citizenship and international knowledge exchange.

CONCLUSION

Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya faced numerous hardships but never compromised on his values. He led a life of simplicity and selfless service to the nation. His educational philosophy remains profoundly relevant for nurturing duty, patriotism, moral integrity, economic self-reliance, self-discipline, and holistic development (Kumar, 2021; Kumar and Gupta, M. 2022; and Singh, 2020).

He strongly believed in ethical conduct—once stating, "*The illegal use of service facilities is a form of theft.*" This principle holds immense significance in contemporary society. Students and citizens alike can draw inspiration from his simplicity, discipline, integrity, and unwavering dedication to duty—qualities essential for building a responsible citizenry and a strong nation.

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