Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya's Vision of Integral Democracy

Tushar Ranjan Bhowmick
Assistant Professor in Philosophy
Barrackpore Rastraguru Surendranath College

Abstract

The article provides a comprehensive exploration of the concept of democracy in India, drawing on historical context and the perspectives of various Indian leaders, including Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, and Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya. It discusses the evolution of democracy in India, emphasizing the need for not only political democracy but also social and economic democracy. The article critiques the practical implementation of these ideals, pointing out the prevalence of oligarchic tendencies in Indian governance. The article also delves into the idea of secularism and religion's role in the state, with a focus on the perspectives of Deendayal Upadhyaya. It raises important points about the separation of religion and state, equality, and the need for a pluralistic approach. Furthermore, the article explores Upadhyaya's views on political, economic, and social freedom and their interplay in Indian society. It highlights the challenges and complexities of balancing these different aspects of freedom in a diverse nation like India. The article concludes by discussing the concept of "Integral Humanism" advocated by Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya, which emphasizes the holistic development of individuals and the state's role in promoting welfare and social justice.

Overall, the article provides a critical analysis of these concepts and their practical implications for India's democracy and governance. It highlights the challenges and complexities involved in achieving a balanced and inclusive democratic system that respects individual rights while promoting the welfare of all citizens.

Keyword: Democracy, Spiritual, Economic, Social, Equality, India, Socioeconomic, policy, Governance, Freedom, Integral, Humanism, Justice.

Introduction

From the 8th century onwards, Muslims began invading India as external powers, and this invasion continued unabated. In the 12th century, Muslim rule was established in India. During the medieval period, India was under Muslim rule, and it was semi-autonomous. After Muslim rule, British colonial rule was established in India. This foreign British rule was primarily non-democratic. After gaining independence, India has undergone significant fundamental changes in its political system. Right from the beginning of independence, India adopted a democratic system of governance. At the same time, there were plans for the centralization of wealth and power. Now let's see how the word 'democracy' is understood in India. The word 'democracy' can be used in both narrow and broad senses. Narrow democracy refers to the understanding of political democracy.

However, the meaning of modern democracy is mostly comprehensive. In the broader sense, democracy not only refers to political democracy but also encompasses social and economic aspects. It is said that without economic democracy, political and social democracy become meaningless. The effectiveness of political and social democracy can be compromised without economic equality. The world-renowned poet Rabindranath Tagore stated in his work *Nationalism,* "Democracy in the political sphere has really no meaning unless it is accompanied by democracy in the social, economic and the spiritual spheres."[1] He further emphasized, "Our real problem in India is not political. It is social."[2]

For these reasons, the Indian Constitution acknowledges the need to extend democracy into the economic and social domains. Democracy is established in all spheres of society's life. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India, stated, "If there is economy in equality in the country, all the political democracy and all the adult suffrage in the world cannot bring about real democracy."[3]

In the preamble of the Constitution, ideals of justice, liberty, equality, and fraternity are proclaimed. It is declared that there will be a system of equal opportunities for all and the establishment of just and harmonious relations among individuals and groups. The foundation of India's democracy is rooted in these principles of justice, freedom, equality, and fraternity. Jawaharlal Nehru and Dr. Ambedkar, prominent architects of the Indian Constitution, were diligent in their efforts to establish not only political democracy but also social and economic democracy in India.

Dr. Ambedkar stated, "We have established political democracy; it is a design that we will lay down as our ideal economic democracy."[4] This signifies the commitment of the framers of the Indian Constitution to not only ensure political

democracy but also strive towards achieving economic and social democracy for all citizens of India.

The perspective presented by Constitution expert S.C. Kashyap, along with the views attributed to Dr. Ambedkar and Pandit Nehru, highlights an important aspect of the relationship between democracy, social development, and economic progress. Let's break down and critically examine these points:

Dr. Ambedkar's Emphasis on Social and Political Democracy as Goals: Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, one of the key architects of the Indian Constitution, indeed emphasized the importance of social and political democracy. His focus on social democracy was particularly rooted in addressing the historical injustices and inequalities faced by marginalized communities in India, such as the Dalits. Ambedkar believed that achieving social equality and justice was a fundamental goal alongside political democracy.

Critical Perspective

Dr. Ambedkar's viewpoint aligns with the need for inclusive and just governance. However, critics might argue that while social democracy is crucial, it can't be viewed as the main goal of democracy in isolation. Political democracy serves as a means to ensure social justice, and both elements are intertwined.

Nehru's View on Democracy as a Medium: Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru's perspective that democracy is a medium for achieving certain goals, including addressing economic needs and improving the quality of life, is a practical approach. Nehru believed that democracy provided the platform for decision-making, policy formulation, and governance through which socioeconomic challenges could be tackled.

Critics might contend that viewing democracy solely as a medium to achieve specific goals might risk undermining its intrinsic value as a system that upholds individual rights, freedoms, and participation. Democracy should not be reduced to a mere tool for addressing economic problems but should also ensure the protection of civil liberties, human rights, and the rule of law.

The Interplay between Democracy, Social Needs, and Economic Progress: The critical perspective here is that democracy is a complex system that encompasses both political and social dimensions. Social and economic progress can indeed be achieved through democratic means, but it requires a balanced and comprehensive approach.

Democracy's success in the political sphere can be jeopardized if economic problems persist and worsen. However, critics might argue that focusing solely on economic issues may not fully address all social inequalities and injustices. A holistic approach to democracy is essential, encompassing not only economic development but also social justice

Lack of practical implementation of theory

In reality, the comprehensive form of the envisioned democracy as outlined in the preamble and the constitution has not been fully realized in India to this day. It remains largely a theoretical concept and has not been effectively put into practice. In practice, it is often reduced to just a name, democracy. The issue lies in the fact that outside observers often misinterpret India's governance and political situation as a full-fledged democracy. However, in truth, Indian governance is not purely democratic. Here, what prevails is more accurately described as oligarchy, where a select few hold significant power without a specific goal beyond maintaining that power. While the Indian Constitution recognizes the establishment of a democratic political system, the focus has primarily been on acquiring and wielding political power. However, it has not been geared towards achieving broader social development or economic progress for all segments of society. Even today, India grapples with extensive disparities and exploitation within the economic realm. The concentration of wealth and resources in the hands of a few has not been adequately addressed. The societal structure, where a significant portion of wealth is concentrated in the hands of a few individuals, does not allow for true freedom and equality to be realized in society. India is not unique in this regard; many nations face similar challenges. The governance system, which primarily prioritizes economic power, perpetuates injustice, and social inequality, often fails to uphold the ideals of justice, liberty, equality, and fraternity enshrined in the Constitution.

In conclusion, while India's Constitution professes democratic ideals, the actual practice of democracy often falls short of achieving broader social and economic goals. To truly establish democracy in its intended sense, it is crucial to address economic disparities and build a society where justice, freedom, and equality are not merely theoretical concepts but are realized in the everyday lives of all citizens.[5]

According to Deendayal Upadhyay, the character of the state

Deendayal Upadhyaya's perspective on the nature of the state, where he highlighted the importance of religion, needs to be critically examined. He argued that a state lacking religion could not truly be considered a state. According to him, the term "secular state" has been used in opposition to a religious state. In Upadhyaya's view, a truly secular state would not be devoid of religion but would rather be a state that respects and accommodates all religions equally. He believed that the concept of a secular state should be understood as a state that acknowledges and respects the role of religion in society without giving preference to any particular faith. However, this perspective can be critiqued in several ways: Religion and State Separation: Many modern democracies, including India, have adopted a secular state model that separates religion from

the affairs of the state. This separation is seen as essential to ensure equal treatment of all citizens, regardless of their religious beliefs. While a secular state respects the freedom of religion, it doesn't incorporate religious principles into governance.[6]

Equality and Inclusivity: Upholding the principles of equality, inclusivity, and non-discrimination is a fundamental aspect of a secular state. By giving a central role to religion in defining the state, there's a risk of marginalizing religious minorities and undermining the principle of equal citizenship.

Pluralism and Diversity: A diverse society like India comprises people from various religious backgrounds. Emphasizing a particular religion in defining the state could be exclusionary and detrimental to the country's social fabric. A truly secular state should celebrate and accommodate this diversity rather than privileging one religion.[7]

Secularism as a Shield: Many argue that secularism serves as a shield to protect religious freedom and prevent the dominance of one religion over others. By keeping religion separate from the state, secularism aims to ensure that the government doesn't interfere in religious matters and that individuals have the freedom to practice their faith without fear of discrimination or persecution.

In summary, Deendayal Upadhyaya's perspective on the role of religion in the state should be critically examined in the context of modern democratic principles. While acknowledging the significance of religion in society, a secular state prioritizes the principles of equality, non-discrimination, and freedom of religion to ensure a fair and just society for all its citizens, irrespective of their religious beliefs. Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya's perspective on political freedom and its relationship with economic and social freedom should be critically analysed. He believed that true happiness and peace for individuals can be achieved within the natural desires of the state. He argued that political freedom should not interfere with the normal well-being of individuals and society as a whole. Upadhyaya emphasized that along with political freedom, there should be economic and social freedom, which are currently lacking in India's democracy. Upadhyaya's concept of political freedom can be understood as a state where the government does not intervene in the natural aspirations and desires of the people. It implies that the government should act in a way that aligns with the wishes and needs of the citizens without imposing any undue restrictions or pressures. This, according to him, constitutes political freedom. However, there are critical points to consider.[8]

Economic and Social Freedoms: Upadhyaya's view that political freedom alone is insufficient without economic and social freedom aligns with the idea that true freedom encompasses various aspects of life. This perspective acknowledges that political freedoms may not lead to meaningful change if economic and social

disparities persist. Critics argue that India's democracy has not been as successful in achieving economic and social equality as it has been in the political sphere.

Balance of Power: In Upadhyaya's view, a government should refrain from interfering in the lives of individuals unless necessary. This principle emphasizes a balance of power between the state and its citizens. However, achieving this balance can be complex, as governments often need to make decisions that may restrict individual freedoms for the greater good or public interest.

Implementation Challenges: The practical implementation of the ideal of political freedom without infringing on individual liberties can be challenging. It requires a well-functioning democratic system, a robust legal framework, and strong institutions to ensure that government actions are in line with the will and welfare of the people.

Social and Economic Inequities: While political freedom is a fundamental aspect of democracy, addressing social and economic inequities is equally important. Achieving social and economic justice often involves government intervention and policies to redistribute resources and opportunities. Balancing these interventions with political freedom is a complex task. In conclusion, Deendayal Upadhyaya's perspective on political freedom as an integral part of a broader concept of freedom that includes economic and social dimensions raises important questions about the nature of democracy and governance in India. However, the practical implementation of such ideals and balancing various aspects of freedom remains a complex challenge in the context of a diverse and populous nation like India. Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya's perspective on economic freedom and its relationship with governance, social values, and decentralized economy can be critically examined in the following ways.[9]

Economic Freedom and Social Values: Upadhyaya's assertion that economic systems driven by profit motives, such as capitalism, are incompatible with Indian social values raises questions. While it is true that traditional Indian ethics often prioritize community well-being over individual profit, it's essential to recognize that economic systems can evolve. Capitalism, for example, can be adapted to incorporate social responsibility and ethical business practices. Therefore, the perceived conflict between economic systems and social values may not be as absolute as Upadhyaya suggests.

Decentralized Economy: Upadhyaya advocates for a decentralized economy as a means to empower individuals and communities. While decentralization can promote economic freedom at the local level, it may also pose challenges. Ensuring equitable access to resources and opportunities in a decentralized system can be complex, and there's a risk of reinforcing regional disparities. Additionally, it might be necessary for the central government to play a role in

regulating certain aspects of the economy to prevent exploitation and ensure fair competition.[10]

Balancing Economic Freedom and Regulation: Upadhyaya's vision of an economic system that encourages individual initiative and entrepreneurship is laudable. However, a critical question is how to strike the right balance between economic freedom and necessary regulations. Unregulated capitalism can lead to income inequality, exploitation, and environmental degradation. Effective government intervention, through well-crafted policies and regulations, can help address these issues without stifling economic growth and innovation.[11]

Social Justice and Economic Freedom: Critics argue that unfettered economic freedom can lead to social injustices, as some individuals or groups may exploit their economic power to the detriment of others. In contrast, a more interventionist approach may be needed to ensure that the benefits of economic growth are equitably distributed and that marginalized communities are not left behind.[12]

Global Context: It's essential to consider India's economic policies and practices in the context of the global economy. Economic globalization and interconnectedness pose challenges and opportunities that may require a nuanced approach. Policies that are too inward-focused can hinder economic growth and competitiveness on the global stage. In conclusion, Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya's ideas about economic freedom and its relationship with governance and social values offer valuable insights. However, it's crucial to critically assess the practicality and adaptability of these ideas to address the complex economic, social, and global challenges of the modern world. Achieving economic freedom while ensuring social justice and responsible governance requires a delicate balance that considers the unique context and needs of India. Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya's emphasis on decentralization and the complementary relationship between small-scale and large-scale industries, particularly in the context of India's predominantly agrarian economy, can be critically examined as follows.

Role of Agriculture: Upadhyaya's recognition of India's agrarian economy as the foundation of its economic development is valid. Agriculture continues to be a significant source of livelihood for a large portion of the Indian population. However, it's essential to acknowledge that modernizing and diversifying the agricultural sector is equally crucial. Over-reliance on traditional farming methods can limit economic growth and leave farmers vulnerable to various challenges, including climate change and market fluctuations.[13]

Decentralization: Upadhyaya's call for decentralization of economic power aligns with principles of subsidiarity, which argue for delegating decision-making authority to the lowest competent level. While decentralization can empower local communities and promote economic freedom, it must be carefully managed

to prevent the concentration of power among a few influential groups. Effective governance structures and mechanisms for equitable resource distribution are essential to ensure the success of decentralization efforts.[14]

Small-Scale vs. Large-Scale Industries: Upadhyaya's idea that small-scale industries should complement large-scale industries is reasonable. Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) can contribute significantly to economic growth, job creation, and innovation. However, the coexistence of different scales of industries also requires a regulatory framework that ensures fair competition and prevents the exploitation of small-scale producers by larger corporations.[15]

Self-reliance: Upadhyaya's call for self-reliance is in line with the idea of reducing dependence on foreign goods and technologies. However, it's crucial to recognize that complete self-reliance might not always be feasible or economically efficient. International trade can bring benefits in terms of access to resources, markets, and technology. Therefore, a balanced approach that combines self-reliance with strategic international engagement may be more practical.[16]

Innovation and Adaptation: To achieve economic growth and self-reliance, India must encourage innovation and adaptability. This includes investing in education, research and development, and fostering a culture of entrepreneurship. It's essential to strike a balance between preserving traditional practices and embracing new technologies and methods to ensure sustained economic progress.

Social Equity: While discussing economic development, it's critical not to lose sight of social equity and inclusivity. Economic policies should aim to reduce income inequality and address disparities in access to opportunities and resources. An inclusive economic model can better serve the diverse needs of India's population.

In conclusion, Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya's vision for India's economic development, emphasizing decentralization, the role of agriculture, and the synergy between small and large-scale industries, contains valuable insights. However, implementing these ideas effectively requires a nuanced approach that considers the complexities of India's economic landscape and the need for equitable and sustainable development. Balancing tradition and innovation, promoting self-reliance without isolationism, and ensuring social equity should be integral aspects of any economic strategy for India.

The criticism of Western capitalism and socialism presented here in favor of *"Ekatma Manavtabad"* or Integral Humanism, as advocated by Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya, raises several important points. Let's critically examine these arguments.[17]

Human Dignity: Integral humanism, as advocated by Upadhyaya, places a strong emphasis on human dignity and the holistic development of individuals. This perspective is indeed valuable as it reminds us that economic and political systems should serve the well-being and fulfilment of individuals, not just economic growth or state power.

Overemphasis on Materialism: The critique rightly points out that both capitalism and socialism, in their extreme forms, tend to overemphasize materialistic pursuits and economic achievements. However, it's worth noting that both systems can be adapted to incorporate elements of social welfare, environmental sustainability, and cultural preservation.[18]

Integral Humanism's Practicality: While the principles of integral humanism are appealing, critics may argue that implementing such a philosophy in practice can be challenging. Striking a balance between economic freedom, individual rights, and social welfare is a complex task that requires careful policymaking and governance.[19]

Globalization and Interconnectedness: In today's interconnected world, where nations rely on each other for trade, technology, and resources, advocating for self-sufficiency and isolationism (as suggested in integral humanism) may not be feasible or desirable. International cooperation and engagement are essential for addressing global challenges like climate change, pandemics, and poverty.

In conclusion, the critique of Western capitalism and socialism in favour of integral humanism highlights valid concerns about the excesses and shortcomings of these systems. The emphasis on human dignity, cooperation, and holistic development is commendable. However, it's essential to recognize that no single economic or political system is a one-size-fits-all solution. Instead, the key lies in finding a balanced approach that considers the unique needs and challenges of a society while respecting individual rights, fostering cooperation, and promoting human well-being. The argument presented here highlights the issue of economic self-reliance and its importance in the context of India's agriculture-dependent economy. Let's critically analyse this perspective:

Dependency on Market Centres: The argument rightly points out that many farmers in India rely on market centres, often controlled by middlemen, for selling their produce. This dependency can lead to exploitation and reduced profits for farmers. Encouraging local markets and reducing intermediaries can potentially benefit small-scale farmers.

Technology and Modernization: Modernizing the agricultural sector through technology adoption, irrigation, and sustainable farming practices can significantly enhance productivity and reduce dependence on external factors. Encouraging farmers to adopt such practices is essential.[20]

Social and Economic Disparities: India's agriculture sector is diverse, with a wide range of farming practices, from subsistence farming to large-scale commercial agriculture. Policies should consider the unique needs of different farming communities to address social and economic disparities effectively.[21]

Duties of Government: The government plays a pivotal role in ensuring the economic self-reliance of the agricultural sector. Implementing policies that provide farmers with access to resources, credit, and fair market prices is crucial. Additionally, investment in rural infrastructure and education can empower farmers to be more self-reliant.

In conclusion, the argument underscores the importance of economic self-reliance in India's agriculture sector but should be considered in the broader context of the nation's economic development. Achieving self-reliance should not come at the expense of ignoring the benefits of international trade and economic diversification. A comprehensive approach that addresses the challenges faced by farmers, promotes modernization, and ensures equitable access to resources is essential for sustainable agricultural growth and economic stability in India.

The concept of social freedom or social independence, as described by the Pandit in this context, emphasizes an individual's ability to pursue their holistic development without encountering societal hindrances. Here's a critical analysis of this perspective.[22]

Individual Development and Social Freedom: The idea that an individual is socially free when they are actively striving for their personal development without societal barriers aligns with the broader notion of individual agency. It highlights the importance of individual empowerment and self-realization.[23]

Collective Responsibility: While social freedom is primarily an individual pursuit, it also underscores the collective responsibility of society to create an environment where individuals can thrive without prejudice or discrimination. This implies that societies need to actively work towards fostering inclusivity and equal opportunities for all.[24]

Subjectivity of Social Freedom: Defining social freedom can be subjective, as it varies from one society to another and even among individuals within the same society. What may be perceived as societal constraints for one person might not be the same for another. Therefore, achieving a universally accepted definition of social freedom can be challenging.

Intersectionality: Social freedom often intersects with other dimensions of freedom, such as political and economic freedom. An individual's social freedom can be influenced by their access to education, economic resources, and political participation. These factors are interconnected and should be considered holistically.

Cultural Context: Cultural norms and values play a significant role in determining what is considered socially acceptable in any given society. Balancing social freedom with cultural respect and understanding is essential to avoid cultural insensitivity.

In conclusion, the concept of social freedom, as described by the Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya, emphasizes the importance of individual empowerment and the absence of societal constraints on personal development. It encourages individuals to challenge traditional norms and promotes a society where everyone has equal opportunities to pursue their goals. However, defining and achieving social freedom can be complex and subjective, and it requires a nuanced understanding of the cultural, economic, and political context in which it operates.

According to Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya, the responsibilities of the state and the concept of "democracy" can be understood as follows. Responsibilities of the State: Upadhyaya believed that the primary duty of the state should be to promote the welfare and well-being of its citizens. This includes ensuring social justice, economic equity, and the protection of individual rights. The state should actively work to eliminate poverty, provide basic necessities, and create opportunities for all its citizens to lead dignified lives.[25]

Decentralized Democracy: Upadhyaya emphasized the importance of decentralized democracy, where governance is not concentrated at the central level but is instead dispersed to local self-governing units. He advocated for a system where decision-making power and resources are devolved to the grassroots level, allowing citizens to actively participate in their own governance.[26]

Integral Humanism: Upadhyaya's political and philosophical framework is often referred to as *"Integral Humanism."* It's a holistic approach that seeks to balance individual rights and social responsibilities. In this context, democracy should promote individual freedom and liberty while also recognizing the importance of collective welfare.[27]

Dharma of Democracy: Upadhyaya used the term "dharma of democracy" to convey the idea that democracy should be rooted in ethical and moral principles. It implies that democracy should not merely be a political system but a way of life that upholds righteousness and justice.

In summary, according to Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya, the state's responsibilities should encompass the well-being of its citizens, economic equity, and the promotion of individual and collective welfare. He advocated for a decentralized and culturally grounded democracy that balances individual rights with social responsibilities. His philosophy, known as Integral Humanism, seeks to create a just and self-reliant society guided by ethical and moral principles.

"Let us understand very clearly that *Dharma* is not necessarily with the majority or with the people. *Dharma* is eternal. Therefore, it is not enough to say, while defining democracy, that it is the government of the people. It has to be a government for the good of the people. What constitutes the good of the people? It is *Dharma* alone which can decide. Therefore, ademocratic government, *Jana Rajya*, must also be rooted in *Dharma*, i.e. *Dharma Rajya*. In the definition of democracy, viz. "Government of the people, by the people and for the people"; 'of' stands for independence; 'by' stands for democracy; and 'for' indicates *Dharma*. Therefore, there is true democracy only where there is freedom as well as *Dharma. Dharma Rajya* encompasses all these concepts".[28]

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