

From Global Capitalism to Local Humanism: Deendayal Upadhyaya's Alternative to Western Models of Growth

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Abstract

This paper explores Deendayal Upadhyaya's philosophy of Integral Humanism as a sociological alternative to Western models of development, particularly global capitalism and socialism. It examines how his vision of Local Humanism integrates material, moral, cultural, and ecological dimensions of human life, emphasizing holistic well-being, social harmony, ethical economy, and cultural rootedness. Through content analysis of Upadhyaya's writings and relevant sociological literature, the study identifies key themes such as the upliftment of marginalized populations (Antyodaya), self-reliance (Swadeshi), and ecological sustainability. The paper argues that Upadhyaya's ideas offer a human-centered, ethically grounded framework for envisioning Viksit Bharat 2047, challenging reductionist development models that prioritize profit or industrial growth over human dignity. By re-embedding development within cultural, ethical, and community structures, Integral Humanism provides a constructive blueprint for sustainable, inclusive, and socially cohesive growth, offering insights relevant for both India and the global development discourse.

Keywords: Integral Humanism, Capitalism, Local Humanism, Antyodaya, Swadeshi, Viksit Bharat.

1. Introduction

The contemporary global order is predominantly shaped by the ideology of capitalism, which has expanded from a Western economic system into a near-universal model of development. Global capitalism, driven by liberalization, privatization, and consumerism, has been celebrated for enhancing productivity and technological innovation. However, sociological scholarship has long critiqued its consequences growing inequality, cultural homogenization, alienation, and environmental degradation (Marx, 1867; Wallerstein, 1974). The dominance of market rationality has transformed human beings into economic agents, measured more by their productivity than by their moral or social worth. This global trend raises a fundamental question: Can a model of development grounded in materialism and profit maximization truly serve the holistic well-being of society? In response to this dilemma, Deendayal Upadhyaya's philosophy of Integral Humanism offers a profound civilizational and sociological alternative to Western capitalist thought. Introduced in 1965, Integral Humanism advocates a harmonious synthesis of material and spiritual values, emphasizing the welfare of the "last person" (Antyodaya) as the foundation of true development (Upadhyaya, 1965). It envisions an economic order that respects human dignity, community interdependence, and ecological balance. Rather than viewing society as a collection of competing individuals, Upadhyaya perceives it as an organic whole where the individual, society, and nature coexist in mutual

cooperation and dharmic harmony. From a sociological perspective, Upadhyaya's Integral Humanism challenges the Western epistemology of development, which is rooted in Enlightenment rationality and individualism. Thinkers like Max Weber (1905) and Karl Marx (1867) traced how capitalism emerged alongside the Protestant ethic and industrial production, reshaping human relations into market-based exchanges. In contrast, Upadhyaya's vision draws from Bharatiya philosophical traditions that regard development not merely as economic growth, but as the balanced evolution of the physical, intellectual, emotional, and spiritual dimensions of human life. This perspective aligns with contemporary sociological discourses on post-development theory, which call for alternative models grounded in local culture, ethics, and community solidarity (Escobar, 1995). In the era of globalization, where nations increasingly conform to the logic of the global market, India's developmental discourse must reconcile modernity with its indigenous value systems. Upadhyaya's thought provides a framework to critique the neo-liberal model of growth and to reimagine progress through a human-centric, community-oriented approach a concept now resonant with India's vision of Viksit Bharat 2047. His philosophy invites sociologists to rethink the relationship between economy and society, moving beyond structural dependency and capitalist accumulation to explore how ethical, cultural, and spiritual dimensions can form the foundation of sustainable development. This paper seeks to explore Deendayal Upadhyaya's Integral Humanism as an alternative sociological paradigm to global capitalism. It examines how his ideas reorient development around human welfare, cultural integrity, and local self-reliance rather than material accumulation and global dominance. Through a comparative and theoretical analysis, the paper investigates how "Local Humanism" as envisioned by Upadhyaya can guide India's transformation toward a more equitable, sustainable, and value-based society. The subsequent sections will outline the theoretical framework contrasting global capitalism and Integral Humanism, analyze their sociological implications, and discuss how Upadhyaya's vision can inform the development of Viksit Bharat 2047.

Global Capitalism and Western Models of Growth

The rise of global capitalism has been one of the most transformative processes in modern history. Rooted in the Western Enlightenment, it advanced the ideals of individual freedom, rationality, and progress but also led to the commodification of human life. As Karl Marx (1867) observed, capitalism reorganized production around the accumulation of capital, reducing labor to a market commodity and alienating individuals from their work, products, and communities. His concept of alienation highlights the sociological cost of a system that prioritizes profit over human welfare. Max Weber (1905), while offering a different interpretation, also traced the moral foundations of capitalism to the Protestant ethic, emphasizing rationalization, efficiency, and ascetic discipline. For Weber, modern capitalism exemplifies the triumph of instrumental rationality an ethos that transformed the world into what he termed an "iron cage" of bureaucracy and calculative logic. Together, Marx and Weber provide a sociological understanding of capitalism as both a structural system of economic domination and a cultural-ethical orientation toward material success. In the globalized era, Immanuel Wallerstein's (1974) World-Systems Theory expands this critique, showing how capitalism creates core-periphery hierarchies that sustain global inequality. Similarly, Andre Gunder Frank (1967) and Samir Amin (1976), through dependency theory, argue that Western

models of growth perpetuate underdevelopment in the Global South by imposing external economic dependency and cultural subordination. These theories underline that capitalism is not merely an economic system but a sociological structure of global domination shaping identities, values, and institutions worldwide. Global capitalism erodes local cultures, disintegrates traditional solidarities, and redefines development as material consumption. It has fostered what Herbert Marcuse (1964) called a “one-dimensional society,” where consumerism and technology replace moral and communal consciousness. Thus, the challenge before India and other developing nations lies in redefining progress in ways that recover ethical, cultural, and humanistic dimensions of social life.

Deendayal Upadhyaya’s Integral Humanism as a Sociological Paradigm

Against this backdrop, Deendayal Upadhyaya’s Integral Humanism (Ekatma Manav Darshan) emerges as a profound philosophical and sociological alternative. Introduced in 1965, it rejects both capitalist individualism and socialist materialism, seeking instead a balanced, holistic conception of human and social development. Upadhyaya’s central idea is that a human being cannot be understood as a purely economic or political entity but as an integrated personality whose body, mind, intellect, and soul function harmoniously within the social and natural order (Upadhyaya, 1965). Upadhyaya’s sociology is organismic, viewing society as a living body in which individuals are interdependent parts. This perspective resonates with Émile Durkheim’s (1893) notion of organic solidarity, where social cohesion arises from functional interdependence rather than mechanical conformity. However, unlike Durkheim, who emphasized secular morality, Upadhyaya situates moral order in Dharma the ethical foundation that sustains both individual conduct and social harmony. Thus, Integral Humanism unites material well-being (artha), moral duty (dharma), and spiritual fulfillment (moksha) within a sociological vision of development. In contrast to the Western notion of development as growth in GDP or industrialization, Upadhyaya conceives it as the balanced development of all human dimensions. He critiques the reduction of progress to economic indicators, arguing that it leads to spiritual impoverishment and social fragmentation. His concept of Antyodaya, or the upliftment of the last person, introduces an ethical principle into economic discourse transforming development from a race for wealth to a quest for dignity and justice. Furthermore, Integral Humanism challenges the dichotomy between tradition and modernity. It does not reject modern science or economic progress but insists that both must be guided by moral and spiritual values. This aligns with the sociological concept of cultural synthesis, where societies adapt modern innovations while preserving core ethical principles. In this sense, Upadhyaya’s thought offers a civilizational sociology a framework that seeks harmony among economy, culture, and ecology.

2. Content Analysis: Themes in Deendayal Upadhyaya’s Integral Humanism

2.1 Holistic Development of the Individual

A central theme in Upadhyaya’s thought is the integrated development of the human personality, encompassing physical, mental, intellectual, and spiritual dimensions. Unlike Western capitalist or socialist models, which tend to prioritize economic productivity or state-driven welfare, Upadhyaya argues that human welfare cannot be reduced to material prosperity

alone (Upadhyaya, 1965). From a sociological perspective, this aligns with the concept of human-centered development (Sen, 1999), emphasizing well-being, capabilities, and dignity rather than solely economic growth. By promoting balanced personal development, Integral Humanism addresses both individual fulfillment and social stability.

2.2 Social Harmony and Organic Society

Upadhyaya conceptualizes society as an organic whole, where individuals are interdependent parts functioning in harmony. This resonates with Durkheim's idea of organic solidarity, where social cohesion arises from mutual dependence rather than coercion (Durkheim, 1893). In contrast to the atomistic individualism of Western capitalism, Integral Humanism prioritizes community, family, and local institutions as the foundation for social order. Sociologically, this perspective underscores the importance of embedded social relations, fostering cooperation, social trust, and collective responsibility, essential for equitable development.

2.3 Ethical Economy: Antyodaya and Swadeshi

Upadhyaya introduces the concepts of Antyodaya (upliftment of the last person) and Swadeshi (self-reliance) as pillars of a moral economy. Economic activities, in his vision, are not ends in themselves but instruments for ensuring social justice and human dignity. This approach contrasts sharply with profit-driven global capitalism, which often exacerbates inequality and marginalization. From a sociological standpoint, these concepts represent value-based economic practices, where labor is dignified, resources are ethically managed, and wealth is distributed to serve human welfare rather than accumulation (Desai, 2020).

2.4 Cultural and Moral Foundations

Integral Humanism emphasizes Dharma the ethical and moral code as the foundation for social and economic life. Upadhyaya critiques Western development models for being culturally and morally disembedded, often leading to alienation, consumerism, and social fragmentation. By rooting development in indigenous knowledge, ethical norms, and community values, he proposes a civilizational sociology, where culture, ethics, and social institutions are inseparable from material progress. This approach resonates with contemporary debates on post-development theory and the indigenization of modernity (Escobar, 1995).

2.5 Sustainability and Ecological Awareness

Upadhyaya's vision integrates ecological balance into the developmental framework, highlighting the interdependence between humans and nature. Unlike Western industrial models that often prioritize short-term economic gains at the expense of environmental health, Integral Humanism advocates for sustainable resource use and responsible consumption. Sociologically, this anticipates modern concepts in environmental sociology, demonstrating that ethical, cultural, and ecological consciousness is central to sustainable human development.

2.6 Critique of Western Models of Development

Finally, a recurring theme in Upadhyaya's work is his critical engagement with Western capitalist and socialist paradigms. He argues that these systems, while technically efficient, fail

to account for moral, spiritual, and social dimensions of life. Capitalism fosters competition, alienation, and cultural homogenization, while socialism risks excessive state control and suppression of individual agency. Integral Humanism offers an alternative sociological model that reconciles material progress with ethical governance, social cohesion, and human dignity, making it particularly relevant for India's developmental aspirations.

3. Comparative Analysis: Global Capitalism vs. Local Humanism

The contrast between global capitalism and local humanism, as articulated by Deendayal Upadhyaya, represents more than a debate over economic systems it signifies a clash of civilizational worldviews. While global capitalism emerged from the Western intellectual tradition emphasizing individualism, competition, and material accumulation, local humanism is rooted in the Bharatiya philosophy of holistic well-being, emphasizing ethical balance, social harmony, and spiritual progress.

3.1 Philosophical Foundations

At the philosophical level, global capitalism is underpinned by materialism and utilitarianism, viewing human beings as rational actors motivated by self-interest. Theories of economic liberalism, from Adam Smith to contemporary neoliberal thought, assume that social welfare emerges naturally from individual pursuit of profit. This ideology aligns with the Enlightenment belief in universal reason and progress, yet it often neglects the moral and spiritual aspects of human life. In contrast, Deendayal Upadhyaya's local humanism is grounded in the principle of Ekatma Manav Darshan the unity of human, society, and nature. It rejects the dualism between the spiritual and material, proposing that a truly developed society must nurture all dimensions of human existence: physical (sharir), intellectual (buddhi), emotional (manas), and spiritual (atma). The ultimate goal of development, therefore, is integral well-being, not mere material prosperity (Upadhyaya, 1965). This vision transforms the philosophical foundation of development from individual self-interest to collective moral harmony.

3.2 Economic Orientation

Economically, global capitalism revolves around the logic of accumulation growth through consumption, profit maximization, and market expansion. Its sociological implications include the commodification of labor, widening class inequalities, and the dominance of transnational corporations. As Marx (1867) argued, capitalism thrives on the exploitation of labor and the alienation of workers from their products and communities. The globalized phase of capitalism, further intensified by neoliberal reforms, has deepened these contradictions, producing new forms of precarity and inequality (Harvey, 2005). Upadhyaya's Integral Humanism, on the other hand, proposes an "integral economy" a system where production and consumption are guided by ethical and social needs rather than profit motives. It aligns with the Gandhian ideal of self-reliance (Swadeshi) and the principle of Antyodaya, the welfare of the last person. Economic activity, in this view, must uphold the dignity of labor and strengthen community self-sufficiency. From a sociological standpoint, this vision emphasizes decentralized, small-scale, and locally adaptive economies that sustain livelihoods without eroding social and

ecological foundations. Rather than fostering competition, it promotes cooperation and mutual responsibility, echoing Durkheim’s concept of organic solidarity.

3.3 Cultural and Ethical Dimensions

Culturally, global capitalism has resulted in a profound process of homogenization and cultural imperialism (Schiller, 1976). Through the global spread of media and consumer goods, it imposes Western lifestyles and values, marginalizing local traditions and eroding indigenous forms of knowledge. Sociologically, this process undermines cultural pluralism and produces what George Ritzer (1993) calls the “McDonalidization of society” a world increasingly standardized by efficiency, calculability, and control. In this cultural milieu, human identity becomes defined by consumption rather than community. By contrast, Upadhyaya’s local humanism seeks to restore cultural self-confidence and ethical consciousness in development. It envisions society not as a marketplace but as a moral community (sanskritik samaj) guided by dharma. This moral principle is not merely religious but social it ensures that economic and political life remains anchored in ethical responsibility and compassion. Upadhyaya’s insistence on aligning material progress with moral order reflects a sociological concern for value integration, a theme central to the works of Parsons (1951) and Durkheim (1912). In his framework, culture serves as the binding force of social cohesion, ensuring that modernization does not result in moral anomie.

3.4 Ecological and Social Dimensions

Global capitalism’s relentless pursuit of growth has led to ecological imbalance and social dislocation. Industrial expansion, resource extraction, and urban consumerism have produced what Ulrich Beck (1992) describes as a “risk society”, where environmental degradation and technological hazards become global in scope. Capitalism’s anthropocentric worldview separates humans from nature, viewing the environment as a mere resource for exploitation. Upadhyaya’s philosophy, in contrast, envisions ecological harmony as integral to human existence. Drawing from Indian philosophical traditions that see the universe as interconnected, he argues that the exploitation of nature violates the principle of dharma. Sustainable living, therefore, is not an external policy goal but an ethical duty. Sociologically, this represents an early articulation of eco-humanism, where social justice, environmental balance, and spiritual well-being are inseparable. Such a perspective anticipates modern discourses on sustainable development and environmental sociology, positioning local humanism as a blueprint for ethical ecology.

3.5 Comparative Framework Table

Dimension	Global Capitalism	Deendayal Upadhyaya’s Local Humanism
Philosophical Basis	Materialism, individualism, utilitarianism	Spiritual humanism, harmony, dharma
Economic Orientation	Profit maximization, accumulation	Ethical production, Antyodaya, self-reliance

Social Relations	Competition and class conflict	Cooperation and social solidarity
Cultural Orientation	Westernization, consumerism	Cultural rootedness, moral community
Ecological View	Anthropocentric, exploitative	Ecocentric, sustainable coexistence
Concept of Development	GDP growth, modernization	Integral well-being and moral progress
Social Cohesion	Fragmentation, alienation	Integration through values and ethics
Ultimate Goal	Wealth and consumption	Human dignity and spiritual fulfillment

4. Deendayal Upadhyaya's Vision for a Human-Centered Economy-

4.1 Understanding Deendayal Upadhyaya's Integral Humanism: A Sociological Foundation

Deendayal Upadhyaya's philosophy of Integral Humanism (Ekatma Manav Darshan) presents a holistic worldview that challenges the reductionist tendencies of Western capitalist and socialist models. It envisions an integrated development of the individual and society materially, morally, intellectually, and spiritually rooted in India's civilizational ethos. From a sociological perspective, Integral Humanism seeks to harmonize the four dimensions of human life: the body (Sharir), mind (Mann), intellect (Buddhi), and soul (Atman), emphasizing that true progress cannot be achieved by economic growth alone but must ensure the well-being of the entire human personality. In contrast to the atomistic individualism of Western capitalism and the state-centric collectivism of socialism, Upadhyaya proposed a socially embedded individualism that recognizes human beings as part of an organic social order (Chaturvarnya, family, and community institutions). Society, in this vision, is not a mechanical collection of individuals but a living organism bound by cultural and moral unity. This sociological notion resonates with the idea of organic solidarity discussed by Émile Durkheim, though rooted in Indian cultural traditions rather than industrial specialization. Upadhyaya's Integral Humanism also aligns with indigenous sociological thought that prioritizes Dharma the ethical and moral order as the guiding principle of social organization. He rejected the Western dichotomy between materialism and spiritualism, arguing that Indian social philosophy offers a synthesis where both coexist in balance. This balance forms the sociological core of his vision for a humane and sustainable model of development. Moreover, his concept redefines the relationship between the individual, society, and the state. The state, according to Upadhyaya, is not the creator of social order but its guardian. The social order emerges naturally from shared cultural values, mutual obligations, and moral consciousness. In this sense, his thought can be seen as a precursor to contemporary sociological discussions on communitarianism and

ethical development, offering an alternative framework for envisioning Viksit Bharat a developed India that prioritizes human values over mere economic indices.

4.2 Global Capitalism and Its Sociological Critique

Global capitalism, as the dominant model of economic development, has profoundly shaped contemporary societies by emphasizing market efficiency, consumerism, and profit maximization. However, from a sociological perspective, it has also generated deep structural inequalities, social alienation, and moral disintegration. The capitalist system, rooted in Western Enlightenment rationality and individualism, privileges economic growth over social cohesion, leading to what Karl Polanyi (1944) described as the “disembedding” of the economy from social relations. This process transforms human beings into economic agents, reducing complex social identities to market-based roles such as consumers, producers, and competitors. Sociologists such as Karl Marx and Max Weber have critically examined the consequences of capitalism on human societies. Marx viewed capitalism as a system of exploitation where labor becomes commodified, and workers experience alienation from their work, from others, and from themselves. Weber, on the other hand, identified the rise of instrumental rationality and the iron cage of bureaucracy as key features of modern capitalist societies, where efficiency replaces ethics and human purpose becomes subordinate to economic logic. Together, these critiques underscore how capitalism produces material prosperity at the cost of moral and spiritual impoverishment. In the context of globalization, these dynamics have intensified. Transnational corporations, digital platforms, and neoliberal policies have extended capitalist logic to nearly every aspect of life from culture and education to relationships and leisure. Anthony Giddens (1990) describes this as the “intensification of worldwide social relations,” where local contexts are restructured by global forces. Yet, this global interconnectedness often erodes local cultures, traditional livelihoods, and community-based solidarities, resulting in cultural homogenization and identity crises. Global capitalism represents not merely an economic order but a cultural and ideological project. It promotes values such as competition, individualism, and material success, while undermining collective ethics, mutual aid, and spiritual well-being. This leads to what Émile Durkheim termed anomie a condition of normlessness where individuals lose a sense of moral direction. In India, the uncritical adoption of global capitalist frameworks has contributed to rising inequality, consumerist lifestyles, and the weakening of community institutions, challenging the indigenous moral economy that once emphasized social harmony and sustainability. Against this backdrop, Deendayal Upadhyaya’s vision of Integral Humanism emerges as a radical sociological alternative a model that seeks to re-embed the economy within ethical and cultural frameworks. It rejects both the exploitative tendencies of capitalism and the coercive centralization of socialism, calling instead for a human-centric, community-oriented development model rooted in Dharma and local self-reliance.

4.3 Deendayal Upadhyaya’s Critique of Western Development Models

Deendayal Upadhyaya’s philosophy of Integral Humanism emerged as a profound critique of Western development paradigms particularly capitalism and socialism which, in his view, failed to address the holistic nature of human existence. Upadhyaya argued that Western models of growth were inherently reductionist, as they prioritized material prosperity while

neglecting the moral, cultural, and spiritual dimensions of human life. His critique, therefore, was not merely economic but deeply sociological, grounded in a civilizational understanding of human society and its moral purpose. Upadhyaya observed that Western development models were based on an atomistic view of the individual, detached from the community and moral order. Capitalism glorified the pursuit of self-interest and consumerism, while socialism reduced the individual to a mere component of the state machinery. Both systems, according to him, were products of a mechanistic worldview that viewed society as an aggregate of competing interests rather than an organic unity. In contrast, Indian social philosophy perceives society as a living organism where all parts individuals, families, communities, and institutions are interdependent and function harmoniously when guided by Dharma (moral order). He questioned the notion of “progress” that equates technological advancement with human welfare. For him, true development (Vikas) must be rooted in the concept of Swaraj self-rule not only in the political sense but also in intellectual, economic, and cultural terms. This vision calls for a decentralized model of growth based on Gram Swaraj (village self-sufficiency), moral economy, and the harmony between humanity and nature. In his framework, development must ensure balance among four essential pursuits of life Dharma (righteousness), Artha (economic prosperity), Kama (desire), and Moksha (liberation). The Western obsession with Artha alone, he argued, leads to social inequality, environmental degradation, and moral crisis. Therefore, Upadhyaya’s Integral Humanism offers an indigenous sociological alternative that integrates economic development with ethical, spiritual, and ecological consciousness something missing in Western developmentalism. His critique also resonates with later thinkers like E.F. Schumacher, whose *Small is Beautiful* (1973) advocated for human-scale, sustainable development rooted in community and morality. Similarly, Mahatma Gandhi’s vision of Sarvodaya and Swadeshi can be seen as complementary to Upadhyaya’s ideas, both emphasizing the restoration of social harmony and self-reliance through culturally grounded development.

4.4 From Global Capitalism to Local Humanism: Deendayal Upadhyaya’s Vision for Viksit Bharat

Deendayal Upadhyaya’s vision of Viksit Bharat a developed and self-reliant India was rooted in the principle of Local Humanism, which stands in contrast to the impersonal and exploitative tendencies of global capitalism. Upadhyaya’s Local Humanism emphasizes that development must emerge from within society, not be imposed from above or borrowed from the West. He argued that every nation has its own Chiti a collective cultural consciousness that should guide its development path. For India, this Chiti is based on Dharma, harmony, and interdependence, which have historically governed social relations through family, community, and village institutions. A truly Viksit Bharat, in his view, would be one that revives and modernizes these indigenous structures rather than replacing them with alien models of growth. In Upadhyaya’s Local Humanism, economic activity is viewed as a means of fulfilling human needs, not as an end in itself. He envisioned a moral economy where wealth creation is guided by Dharma, ensuring fairness, compassion, and social equity. The focus on small-scale, community-based industries, agriculture, and cooperative models of production reflects his belief that economic self-reliance (Swadeshi) fosters not only prosperity but also dignity and social cohesion. This view provides a counter-narrative to neoliberal globalization, which often prioritizes profit over

people and efficiency over equity. Furthermore, his concept of Antyodaya the rise of the last person captures the ethical core of his developmental vision. For Upadhyaya, no society can claim to be truly developed unless it ensures the well-being of its most marginalized members. This perspective transforms Viksit Bharat from an economic goal into a sociological mission one centered on human dignity, community solidarity, and moral responsibility. Today, as India aspires to become a global power by 2047, Upadhyaya's Local Humanism offers a guiding philosophy for reconciling technological advancement with cultural rootedness and social welfare. It invites a paradigm shift from Global Capitalism, which thrives on competition and accumulation, to Local Humanism, which fosters cooperation, sustainability, and holistic development.

5. Conclusion

Deendayal Upadhyaya's Integral Humanism offers a sociologically grounded alternative to Western development models, emphasizing holistic human development, social harmony, ethical economy, cultural rootedness, and sustainability. By prioritizing human dignity, community self-reliance, and ecological balance, it provides a blueprint for Viksit Bharat 2047 that is ethically oriented and locally grounded. Beyond India, this framework offers valuable insights for societies seeking sustainable, equitable, and culturally resonant paths to development in an era dominated by global capitalist imperatives.

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