



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CREATIVE RESEARCH THOUGHTS (IJCRT)

An International Open Access, Peer-reviewed, Refereed Journal

DATTOPANT THENGADI: PERSONALITY AND IDEAS

Suchi Tomar

Department of Political science

Ch.Charan Singh University,Meerut,U.P.

ABSTRACT

Dattopant Bapurao Thengadi was an efficient, profound, social and political thinker. He was an elegant parliamentarian who served two terms in Rajya Sabha on the behalf of Bharatiya Jana Sangh. His political activism was inspirational and he had an unmatched style of parliamentary speech, which cannot be paraphrased. He was a man of conviction, who always put forth his ideas and strongly believed that the Bharatiya tradition needed to be preserved, protected and nurtured. Thengadi ji proactively participated in Parliamentary debates and put forth his brilliant views on the floor. His views on the Maternity Bill, 1965, report of UGC, 1964 ,committee to check the influx of rural population in urban areas,1974, JNU Bill, 1960, BHU amendment Bill,1965 are a few of his many important debates. He expressed his ideas mainly through various lectures and writings. He was the originator of many well-known and popular institutions but was himself unknown. A Rishi ,a true tapasvi, he died unnoticed in 2004, but his ideas are being acknowledged now and have found long due and well-deserved recognition and reinvigorated call in the Narendra Modi government. Many of the current NDA government's schemes and decisions put the spotlight on Thengadi ji's ideas, especially, Atmanirbhar Bharat, Vocal about Local, Swadeshi, Self reliance and people's movement.The centenary year of Thengadi ji's birth anniversary i.e. 2021, has further highlighted the ideas of this great political thinker, one of the greatest trade union leaders and an exemplary politician.

I. INTRODUCTION

Sri Dattopant Bapurao Thengadi was an Indian Hindu ideologue, a parliamentarian, trade union leader and one of the greatest proponents of Bharatiya culture. Born in 1920 in Arvi ,Wardha district, Maharashtra, he joined the RSS during school days and became a full-time Pracharak at the young age of 22 and continued to be so till his last breath. In his intellectual and spiritual belief, Shri Thengadi ji was deeply influenced by Shri Guru ji MS Golwalkar and Dr.B R Ambedkar, and their influence shaped up his public disposition. He was an eminent exponent of the characteristic qualities of simple living, thorough study, contemplation, mental clarity, resolute and unwavering devotion to the goal. Thengadi ji was associated with formation of many sangh inspired organisations like Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP), Bharatiya Jana Sangh, Bharatiya Kisan Sangh, Swadeshi Jagran Manch, Akhil Bhartiya Grahak Panchayat, Samskar Bharti, Akhil Bharatiya Adhivakta Parishad, Samajik Samrasta Manch, Bhartiya Vichara Kendra. First hand experience that he gained by working with several unions and his association with various organisations helped shri Thengadi ji to start a labour organisation based on bharatiya values and traditions i.e. the Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh, in 1955 . Thengadi ji even wrote a book titled "Karyakarta", in which he explained the characteristics of a volunteer of a selfless nationalist organisation. Although this book was written in the background of RSS, the thought expressed by Thengadi ji are almost applicable to every social organisation with selfless volunteers who devote their lives towards the greater good of the society and the nation.

Shri Thengadi ji was elected to Rajya Sabha for two terms from 1964 to 1976. But he was not just a parliamentarian, he was also an activist whose political activism during the emergency in 1976 was incomparable. As a parliamentarian, Thengadi ji was not the one who could sit idly and only make speeches. Rather, he was a man of conviction and did not let his Parliamentary duties interfere with his thoughtfulness. He wrote around 50 books, 27 in Hindi, 12 in English and 10 in Marathi. Not only that, he also wrote forewords for many books. Shri Thengadi ji was a philosopher and a visionary who foresaw the downfall of globalisation and failure of communism long before it happened. He was unconvinced with both the Western models of development, viz. capitalism and socialism, and, therefore, suggested the 'Third way' of socio-economic development based on the ideology of Sanatan Dharam. His authority on swadeshi call and labour issues was unquestionable. He authored and presented various papers on these subjects in national and international conferences and journals. Today the government's call for 'Make in India', 'vocal for local', and Atmanirbhar Bharat find their origin in Thengadi ji's thoughts and ideas. He was a true *Drashta* (visionary seer), who never compromised on his cardinal principles. Shri Thengadi ji devoted his entire life to Dharma and worked tirelessly for his beliefs. He was a full-time RSS pracharak and referred to himself as karyakarta. He was offered many powerful positions, but Thengadi ji refused these positions with greatest modesty. Not only the posts, but he also never accepted awards. When his name was proposed for the prestigious Padma Bhushan award, he respectfully refused it. A great labour leader, organiser, and an

ideal patriot, he was a personification of Tyaag, Tapasya and Balidan and lived his life with such humility and profoundness that he is rightly honoured as 'Rashtra Rishi.'

DATTOPANT THENGADI'S IDEAS AND BELIEFS:

Shri Dattopant Thengadi ji expressed his unique views and tried to differentiate between modernisation and westernisation and how these two terms are used as synonyms today while they are exclusive of each other in totality. He emphasized the rich cultural heritage of India and how Indians have never suffered from superiority, but rather believed in a give and take relationship with others, offering the benefits of its unique culture and accepting the best from others. Thengadi ji said that Indians have never been isolationist but internationalist by nature and we do not perceive nationalism and internationalism to be incompatible. From ancient times, Bharat has maintained friendly contacts with the world, sending abroad its saints, scholars, soldiers, scientists, technocrats, artists, artisans, professionals, traders, industrialists and labourers who have acted as our unofficial cultural ambassadors. Nationalism, according to Thengadi ji, is a bridge between tribalism and humanism which would ultimately lead to universalism. But here one should be careful because universalism or internationalism does not mean foreign nationalism and it should be clearly distinguished so that the unjustified subservience to foreign culture and mental slavery could be avoided. Thengadi ji¹ made this a point because he believed that Indian intellectuals are fascinated by Westernism and believe every thing Western to be standard and every thing Hindu and oriental to be substandard. For them, Shakespeare is not a Kalidas of Great Britain nor Napoleon a Samudragupta of Europe, but Sardar Patel is Bismarck of India. And this is not it. our intellectuals rush to seek help from the West in all spheres, be it social, economic or political problems, like they have no history of their own and have nothing to learn from their own culture and can no longer depend on their own intellect. They need certification by the West for everything and instead of thinking in terms of their own national requirements, they just stubbornly and blindly follow the Western theories and try to fit hose in their country. This is nothing but the result of this presumption that westernisation is modernisation.

While delivering the speech and emphasizing on the need to question the presumption westernisation is modernisation, Thengadi ji quoted Voltaire² **"If you want to talk with me, define your terms"**. He said one should be careful while taking up the discussion and should understand that the terms that are technical and have not been properly explained to the people tend to be used in a loose manner. And, therefore, defining the terms clearly is the basic requirement for a meaningful dialogue. Thengadi ji goes on to elaborate the havoc wreaked by the wrong translation of Indian terms, for example, religion into dharma and Hindu into Hinduism. and many others like these. So defining the terms precisely and in an understandable language is the basic requirement to avoid any confusion and misunderstanding. Defining the terms, Thengadi ji said, 'Modern' means of the present and recent times and 'Modernism' is the tendency to harmonise the old with the new and therefore modernisation should simply be seen as way to achieve all-round progress, keeping in mind the problems and the challenges of modern times. Westernisation means making Oriental people or countries adopt ideas, ideals, institutions, systems, structures, living standards and values of life of the West. Once he defined these terms, he raised the question of how and why westernisation is perceived as modernisation when these are two different things in themselves. Thengadi ji questions how the human knowledge can be specified as Western or Eastern by giving the following examples:

- 1- The atomic theory of the West which was anticipated thousands of years ago by Parmanuvad of Kanad.
- 2- The well-known theorem of Pythagoras, who was described by King Clement of Alexandria age the pupil of a Brahmin.
- 3- Dialect system of Hegel and Marx, which was first envisaged and systematised by Kapil Muni.
- 4- Scientific concepts of space and time explained by Einstein and enunciated first by Vedanta philosophers.

Thengadi ji, thus, concluded that all knowledge is universal, it is neither Western nor eastern and it is rather unrealistic to make such a distinction. But then why is the difference between West and East? Is there really no difference at all? Well, the answer lies in the differences of the values and belief systems. The West is primarily materialistic and fragmentary. But the East believes in an inclusive approach and the inter dependence and inter relatedness of all phenomena. The West believes psychological transformation will naturally be achieved if social economic conditions are in appropriate order. They strongly believe in 'Homocentricism', which is a viewpoint or theory that places human beings are the centre of something, given preferences to human beings above all other considerations, which, according to the east, is injustice to other elements of existence. This difference is basically due to the different situations and history which have deeply impacted the mind of every society, giving rise to different cultures. So, it can fairly be said that West and East have their own distinct characteristics and just blindly following the West would not lead to progress or modernisation. But that definitely does not mean that we could not take inspiration from the West or are in any manner hostile to Westerners. Thengadi ji mentioned the names of Annie Besant, sister Nivedita, Romain Rolland, Max Mueller, Louis Fischer, etc. with great respect and gave them the well deserved credit for their love and service to India. Now the question arises that when there are clear distinctions between East and West, different cultures, different backgrounds and beliefs, then why is the term westernisation hailed as modernisation³? This is due to the fact that the term westernisation is no longer considered an academic term but it has been accepted as a universal model of progress and development, irrespective of the differences in all spheres. India has always stood for internationalism, as our great ancestors declared: 'from sea to sea over all the land, one nation'. But in the present scenario internationalism is increasingly being misconstrued as Sectarianism and communalism. Rabindranath Tagore's 'the emigrant' reminds us of the universalism in Hindu culture:

My home is everywhere, I am in search of it,

¹ Ganguly, Anirban, Kalingan, Navin, Dattopant Thengadi, The activist Parliamentarian

² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dattopant_Thengadi

³ Thengadi, Dattopant, Modernisation without Westernisation

my country is in all countries, I will struggle to attain it.

It may come as a surprise to most that, long before the conception of the universal declaration of human rights in 1948, Rabindranath Tagore and Romain Rolland had published a joint statement in 1921 which proved to be a precursor to this UN document. Shri Thengadi ji further explains that Hindus have never been adamant to accepting and adapting new ideas from anywhere and firmly believed in self evaluation and progress. The peaceful coexistence of different systems could be ensured only due to this flexible approach of the Hindus. Then why do we need to imitate the West when we have always believed in assimilation? Westernisation would lead to loss of identity and quoting Lord Jesus.

“Of what profit would it be, if you gain the kingdom of the earth, and, in the process, lose your soul?”

How did this conception, ‘westernisation is modernisation, come into being? This is because the West has successfully been able to propagate its superiority over the east even after the end of imperialism. They have been able to sell the idea that everything Western is ideal and standard. For example, in India the macaulian push successfully planted inferiority complex in the minds of Hindu intellectuals through the idea of ‘white man’s burden’, which was nothing more than a way to mislead the minds of people to believe into western supremacy. The need of the hour is to set a goal for ourselves, keeping in mind not only the Hindu way of life, but also our past, present and future. But that does not necessarily mean completely ignoring what we can benefit from the West. Hinduness has always been about accommodation and not outright rejection. This ability to adapt to change is what makes hinduness unique.

Thengadi ji emphasises that we should adopt a holistic approach towards ecology, economic and ethics and only adopt the foreign technology and approach that is best suited to our local conditions. He strongly talked about evolving indigenous technology and self-reliance. Being a trade union leader and founder of labour organisations, Thengadi ji was quite vocal about coordinated wage system and the overall development of the workers.

Further more, Thengadi ji elaborates that modernisation is only the means and not an end in itself and Bharat has all the available factors that God could endow us with viz. the humans, material and intellectual resources. There is no dearth of potential, but the lack of national will and unity. What we need is a new vision of a modern world, in line with local needs and not compliance with westernisation.

He allowed his ideas to develop with time and global changes. He laid the foundation of the economic philosophy of RSS and was one of the prominent ideologue of swadeshi economics. Thengadi Ji firmly believed in Indian culture and its ultimate success and took inspiration from ancient Indian concepts. It was at the centenary celebrations of Swami Vivekanand's universal Vedantic message and Chicago address that Shri Thengadi Ji first spoke on a global economic system⁴ that should contribute to a peaceful world. For this, he suggested the Indian approach that emphasizes a just and non-exploitative world order. His philosophy was inspired by the Sanatan dharma, which, according to Thengadi Ji, features universal laws that are constant and compatible with the ever-changing global order. Further elaborating on these universal laws, Thengadi Ji emphasized how these can act as guiding principles for the economic system that is in line with welfare and not exploitation. These laws are: '**AVIBHAKTAM VIBHAKETSHU**', perceive oneness amid all diversities, and '**VASUDHAIVA KUTUMBAKAM**', inter-relationship of one world. Thengadi Ji wonderfully explained these laws as the eternal message of Sanatan dharma and their relevance in contemporary times. Stating the importance and relevance of these principles, Thengadi Ji stressed upon unlearning the wrong and anti-future lessons to have a balanced understanding of the past, only then can the desired present be achieved. One of the most important things that he highlighted, decades ago, was the fact that the development or ideology of one particular region cannot be perceived as globalization, as the conditions of living, availability of resources and everything else differ from region to region. Therefore, a holistic view of globalization and development should be taken into consideration before making anything standard. Only then an ideal global order could be contemplated.

Shri Thengadi ji was a staunch supporter and deeply concerned with swadeshi⁵, which according to him is the practical embodiment of patriotism. He explains swadeshi as not only the production of goods and services but the most feasible way to achieve national self-reliance, preservation of national sovereignty and international cooperation. He believed Swadeshi to be a broad ideology comprising all walks of national life and not just the economy. Thengadi ji observed that the term swadeshi is often misinterpreted and perceived as being opposed to free trade and internationalism. Therefore, there is a need to redefine and affirm Swadeshi. Each country's historical background, geography, socio-economic conditions are different and any particular model of development cannot be accepted as a universal model and each country has to evolve its own strategy and develop a model that is in line with local conditions. This is the onset of Swadeshi⁶. The term does not only have significance in the Indian context, but Swadeshi is ingrained in every society. The course of development of a nation is settled keeping in mind its own specific requirements and availability of resources. Swadeshi is integral to the age-old Indian concepts of 'Swadharna', 'Swarashtra', 'Swavalamban' and 'Swarajya'. The likes of Mahatma Gandhi, Sri Aurobindo Ghosh, Subramanya Bharati, Vinoba Bhave, Guruji Golwalkar, Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya were some of the prominent exponents of Swadeshi in India. They may have had differences of opinion, but Swadeshi was fundamental to their beliefs.

Thengadi ji profoundly discussed Marx and Deendayal Upadhyay⁷ and called the two, humanists of the first order and their theories essentially humanistic. Both were against exploitation and any system that could give rise to it. Although neither Marx nor Deendayal gave an exact description of the ideal, socio-political and economic institutions and their mutual relationships, but they provided guidelines. Both Marx and Pandit Ji envisaged the holistic development of every individual, but Marx considered man to be an economic being, while Pandit Ji considered man in integrated manner. The famous adage by Marx 'from each according to

⁴ Thengadi, Dattopant, Global Economic System: A Hindu view

⁵ Thengadi, Dattopant, Swadeshi practical manifestation of Patriotism

⁶ Thengadi, Dattopant, Rebuilding the Nation - A Swadeshi Outline

⁷ Thengadi, Dattopant, Marx AND Deendayal - The two approaches

his ability to each according to his needs' is quite compatible with Deendayal ji's integral humanism. Essentially, Marx and Deendayal ji were same but still quite different with regard to mental backgrounds, sources of inspiration and contemporary world issues. Marx favoured Sanguin revolution to approve the existing social structure, while Deendayal Ji supported mass mobilisation ,awakening and education to alter the structure, leaving the foundation of dharma intact. Dharma comprises eternal, unchanging universal laws and socio-economic orders changing constantly with respect to the laws. The concept of Dharma has no parallel in the West. Even though Deendayal Ji was strictly against deviations and corruption in the matter of religion, he did not outright reject religion. But Marx was so opposed to the prevailing western tradition that he declared a crusade against all religions, about some of which he had no understanding.

Additionally, Thengadi ji gave an invigorating view on the concept of development and the drastic difference between the western and Hindu approach. He emphasised that every country's situation is different and ,therefore, there cannot be a model of development which could be universally applicable. Thengadi Ji quotes Maharshi Vyasa to explain the Hindu approach of development which is all inclusive. Material prosperity (samutkarasha) coupled with spiritual elevation (NISREYAS) were termed as prabhav by Maharshi Vyasa. He declared :

**“ Prabhavarthahi bhootanam dharma Pravachanam Kritam,
yatsyat prabhav Samyuktha Sa dharma ithi Nischayaha”**

For the material and spiritual progress of the beings, dharma was narrated. What is accompanied by material and spiritual progress, that indeed is dharma. The Hindu approach considers man as not just a physical being but also a mental, intellectual and spiritual being. Therefore, the drive towards purushartha chatushtayam , and belief in happiness for all .The service motive and 'aparigraha' (non -possession) makes our approach focus on 'Antyodaya' and hence complete harmony between an individual, society and nature. Therefore, Thengadi ji emphasises on the re-awakening of Hindu culture, not only for the process of remaking of the nation but for also establishing peace ,coordination and happiness.

The Western approach is compartmentalised and treats man as a mere material being who is submissive to Earth and Kama and focuses only on his own happiness, which puts him in conflict with society and nature. In addition to this, acquisition and profit are the main driving forces which only lead to exploitation, thereby no room for equality, spirituality and welfare. Their society is a club of self-centred individuals. Highlighting the differences in the concept of development⁸, Thengadi ji also focuses on economics, which, according to him, is a subject that has been made exclusive by the Westerners and, therefore, little interest is shown in the subject by the common people. Being well versed in the subject himself, Thengadi ji explains that long before the westerners even recognised economics as a distinct subject, Kautilya wrote his 'Arthashastra'. Artha stands for material well being as well as means for securing such well-being and that Artha should be based on Dharma. This is to say that Indians were aware of the fundamental laws of economics even during Rig vedic period. Furthermore, Indian economics aims to achieve 'Sarvodaya' i.e. welfare for all and not the greatest good of the greatest number. This allows every individual to develop and progress fully, according to his capabilities, which leads to an integral personality.

Shri Thengadi also provides a refreshing and different take on the nation and nationalism. Bharatiya 'Rashtra' has been translated as nation in English. But the parameters of both are different. Bharat has always been a rashtra, since time immemorial, but it does not fit in the definition of a nation which is the western concept.

The Bharatiya construct of Rashtra is profound and inclusive and considers Sanskriti (culture) as the basis of nation. The European concept of nations, takes race, language, geographical limits as the basis of their nation. Nation is materialistic while Rashtra is adhyatam (spiritual) and based on memory. We can quote the Atharva veda here,

“ Mata Bhumi putroaham Prithviah”

This holy land is my mother and I, myself, am the son of this land. The term Rashtra has a vedic origin ,rooted in the geo-cultural values of life. It is a socio-cultural construct based on a rich heritage. It denotes the mindset of the people, their attitude towards life, relationship with nature and the universe, approach towards history and tradition. It is the will to live together, respect for one's past and a common goal in the present. Hence, it can be concluded that Rashtra makes one integral with homeland.

Thengadi ji elaborates that every nation has its uniqueness and distinguishing attributes and national identity comprises collective unity and collective similarity. He gives a detailed description the difference between Indian and foreign nationalism and how the two are entirely different from each other. Indian Nationalism has been shaped by history. It is plural, democratic and tolerant and accepts diversity as integral to the national interest. On the other hand, western nationalism is quite recent and emerged as a reaction and thereby natural discord between nationalism of two nations and even nationalism and internationalism. In India we have a prayer in "Srisukta", which very well calls attention to our nationalist character.

“ Pradur Bhuto Asmin, Rashtra Asmi Kirtim riddhim Dadatu me”

I am born in this good nation, give me happiness and glory. Besides, Thengadi ji throws light on the Bhartiya Motto of "krinvantovishvam Aryan"⁹ i.e. We are Aryans and will make the world Aryan. We are cultured and will share our culture with others and raise their level. This notion shapes our positive nationalism. Even when the term civilisation was repeatedly associated with Hindu nationalism and we were in a superior position, we never oppressed other nations for our own progress. Our belief system does not create a clash between nationalism and internationalism and allows an individual to be nationalist and internationalist at the same time. While the West, at most, can contemplate humanity, in Bharat, we respect and value all life, even insentient objects, and believe them to be the creation of Parmatma and that all are one. To quote Chandogya Upanishad : "Sarvam Khalvida Brahma", meaning all is one.

II. CONCLUSION

⁸ Thengadi, Dattopant, The concept of Development

⁹ Thengadi, Dattopant, Integral Humanism - A Study

Shri Thengadi ji was a remarkable personality with an impressive hold on history and economics, sociology and politics. He was a ceaseless activist who changed the face of trade union movements in the country. He was an extraordinary man who never used his influence as a weapon to show his strength. He never called for a bandh, never brought any city to a halt and his unions never indulged in violence and were never part or even associated with any political party. Thengadi ji believed in collective national interests and rejected the idea of class altogether. He took nationalism and integral humanism to one and all without ,class hatred and class wars. In the dynamic times when protests and movements have become a common happening, the need of the hour is that the leaders learn from Shri Thengadi ji about how to organise and lead a movement peacefully and successfully, without creating chaos.

