**Study material for 6th semester (Major) Paper 6.5 Indian English Literature**

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**The Indian Philosophical Approach**

**By Jawaharlal Nehru**

This essay has been taken from Nehru’s *Discovery of India* which was published in the year 1946. It was written during his imprisonment at Ahmednagar fort in Maharashtra by the British. The book is considered to be an honour paid to the rich cultural heritage of India, its history and its philosophy.

Summary of the text

An individual’s mind is a bundle of contradictions and it is difficult o reconcile his actions with one another. This is because the new and the old thoughts run side by side and even though he tries to conform to the present but behind his modern lifestyle lay primitive and unreasoned convictions. Thus we find even in the most industrially advanced nations, people with set ideas which are unreasonable and unacceptable even though he may be using the latest modern discovery or device.

All of us have some kind of philosophy of life, conscious or unconscious, which may be thought out or accepted from others. Or some of us take refuge in some faith or in national destiny or in humanitarianism. Often these different strands are present together which results in split personalities of individuals in the present day world.

Nehru feels that there was more unity and harmony in the human personality in the old days and this unity has been broken over the years as we have not been succeeded in finding another. We talk and presume to live in terms of scientific method, yet cling to outworn practises and beliefs. Perhaps science has been too narrow in its approach to life and not been able to provide a new platform for unity and harmony. Moreover, it has become even more difficult to achieve this in the modern times because the sphere of even the individual has grown worldwide. He no longer lives self- contained lives, protected from outer worlds where there are different philosophies of life. In the words of Nehru, “A strong wind arising somewhere creates a cyclone in one place and an anti-cyclone in another.”Hence harmony can be achieved by the individual in modern times only when he is supported by some kind of social harmony throughout the world.

But in India, more than elsewhere in the world, the old concept of social organization and the philosophy of life underlying it, have existed till the present day because people found some virtue in it which conformed it life’s conditions. But ultimately it became a hindrance because the evil in them overcame the virtue.

Havell believed that in India religion is hardly a dogma but a working hypothesis of human conduct. Its attractiveness lies in its workableness, its conformity to life and its capacity to adapt itself to changing conditions. When religion loses contact with social needs and distance between life and it grows, it ceases to lose all its vitality and significance,

In India, philosophy has been more pervasive and has strongly influenced the national outlook and in developing a certain distinctive attitude of mind. Buddhist and Islamic philosophy has left its mark upon the national outlook. But the dominating influence has been that of six systems of Indian Philosophy or darshans as they are called. These are polytheism, theism with a personal God, pure monism, idealism realism and a system which ignores God altogether and bases itself on a theory of evolution. But these systems though different from each other there are a common presumption in all of them. There is belief in rebirth and an emphasis on unselfish love and disinterested activity. Intuition is considered to be greater value than logic and reason.

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