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A Thematic Study of Nyaya Philosophy with Research Methodology

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Abstract

This thematic study explores the intricate components of Nyaya philosophy and its methodological implications for educational research. This review examines the conceptual distinctions in ontological and epistemological perspectives currently employed within the theoretical framework of educational research. Nyaya philosophy, rooted in the universal truths of Hindu philosophy, serves as a foundation for developing research methodologies. Its sixteen divisions of Padarthas support four primary modes of knowledge acquisition: perception, inference, comparison, and testimony. Nyaya subtly steers researchers towards theoretical generalization in research design, emphasizing the importance of incorporating inductive and deductive procedures in the theoretical processes of educational research. Nyāya philosophy enhances research rigor through its ontological and epistemological principles. By using Nyāya's categories of existence, substance, quality, and action—research questions are clearly defined. Nyāya's logical rigor in data analysis ensures valid, consistent conclusions, aiding critical evaluation. Theory building is strengthened by its causation principles and categories, leading to comprehensive theories. Nyāya's principles also improve the critical evaluation of literature, helping researchers assess and build upon existing knowledge systematically, achieving greater clarity and validity in their studies.

Keywords: *Aksa pada System, Hindu Philosophy, Nyaya Philisoply, Nyaya Sutra, Padarthas*

Introduction

A thematic exploration of Nyaya philosophy offers valuable insights into its philosophical foundations, methodological applications, and cultivation of critical

thinking. Researchers can grasp its philosophical roots and implications for research methodology by delving into Nyaya's worldview. Integrating Nyaya philosophy into research methodologies enables scholars to discern the acquisition, analysis, and application of knowledge. Nyaya's emphasis on logical reasoning, inference, and empirical observation furnishes valuable frameworks applicable across various disciplines, fostering a culture of critical inquiry characterized by intellectual rigour and skepticism.

Nyaya's interdisciplinary relevance underscores its capacity to provide insights spanning diverse fields of study. Incorporating Nyaya principles into research methodologies allows scholars to address ethical considerations surrounding knowledge acquisition, truth-seeking, and intellectual integrity, ensuring that research is conducted with integrity and a commitment to truth. Hinduism is the third-largest religion globally, with its majority adherents residing in the Hindu Kush Himalayan region within the Asian continent (Kapur, Misra, and K. Verma 2022). The philosophical underpinnings of Hinduism draw from foundational texts such as the Vedas, Bhagavad Gita, Upanishads, Smritis, Mahabharata, and Ramayana. Within the Hindu tradition, six orthodox systems are revered: Nyaya, Vaisheshika, Samkhya, Yoga, Mimamsa, and Vedanta (Verma 2009).

The Nyaya School, in particular, focuses on elucidating a permanent immaterial substance, a concept that has sparked considerable debate within philosophical circles. Nyaya philosophy progresses through various stages in its quest to establish the permanence of the self, aiming to demonstrate this permanence as a fundamental subject of inquiry (John 2021). Notably, Nyaya's methodological approach, grounded in systematic logic, has significantly influenced other Indian philosophical schools (Schmidt and Sriraman 2021). Nyaya thought is centered around the four *Pramanas*, or sources of knowledge: perception, inference, comparison, and testimony. These sources serve as pillars for Nyaya's exploration into knowledge, the physical world, the individual self, liberation, and the divine (Tewari 2022).

According to Nyaya, the ultimate aim of life is to comprehend the twelve aspects of reality, encompassing doubt, aim, example, doctrine, constituents of inference, hypothetical argument, conclusion, discussion, wrangling, irrational reasoning, specious reasoning, and unfair reply concerning the traditional reality (Reno 2021) of the world. Nyaya philosophy emphasizes the importance of distinguishing actual knowledge from falsehood, positing that genuine knowledge corresponds accurately to the nature of its object (Tripathi and Bharadwaj 2021). Inference, a key facet of Nyaya philosophy, involves a systematic process of analyzing perceptions, correlations, and logical arguments to ascertain the veracity of knowledge claims (Chatterjee 2022; Wells 2021). Moreover, Nyaya acknowledges comparison as a valid source of experiential knowledge, enabling individuals to perceive similarities between descriptions and actual observations. Testimony, or *Sabuda*, is also esteemed as a valid source of knowledge, particularly when articulated by individuals whose thoughts, actions, and speech align harmoniously (Narayan et al., 2023; Ray, 2023).

The Nyaya theory of causation posits cause as an invariable, unconditional antecedent of an effect, emphasizing the deterministic relationship between cause and effect without hidden influences. In essence, Nyaya philosophy is deeply concerned with elucidating the means of acquiring true knowledge and fostering correct thinking through reasoned inquiry and methodological rigor (Gautam and Singh 2021; Narayan et al. 2023). The Nyaya Sutra serves as a vital testament to Nyaya's foundational principles, guiding inquiries into social phenomena through the lenses of perception, inference, comparison, and testimony (Dasti, 2023; Wells, 2021).

Therefore, this study explores the ontological and epistemological beliefs of Nyaya philosophy and its utility in shaping research methodologies. Key questions driving this inquiry include: What are Nyaya philosophy's ontological and epistemological beliefs? And how does Nyaya philosophy inform and enrich research methodology?

Methodology of this study

This study seeks to explore the theoretical underpinnings of Nyaya philosophy in the context of library research, internet searching, and online content presentation. Through a theoretical lens, this investigation aims to elucidate the ontological and epistemological dimensions inherent in the methodological processes of modern research (Achu and Ejeh 2022; Gannon, Taheri, and Azer 2022). A significant contribution of Nyaya philosophy to contemporary Hindi thought lies in its methodology for establishing the existence of a divine being, drawing upon the teachings of the Vedas. This methodology, rooted in a logical framework, has been widely adopted by various Indian philosophical schools, orthodox and otherwise, akin to the influence of Aristotelian logic on Western science and philosophy. However, Nyaya distinguishes itself from Aristotelian logic by encompassing more than mere logic; its adherents view acquiring valid knowledge as integral to attaining liberation from suffering. These sources serve as indispensable tools for discerning the accuracy of worldly events, thus broadening the scope of Nyaya thought to encompass the methodological insights of the Vedas. The theory of inference outlined in Nyaya philosophy provides researchers with a framework for transitioning from induction to deduction in theory formation. As such, Nyaya philosophy emerges as a profound contributor to knowledge formation.

Results and discussions

Analysis of ontological & epistemological beliefs of Nyaya philosophy

The Nyaya philosophical system, attributed to the sage Gautama, also known as Aksa pada, is often referred to as the Aksa pada system. Nyaya philosophy, also known as Nyaya Vidya or Tarka Sastra, primarily concerns with the conditions of correct knowledge acquisition and the methods for attaining such knowledge. Despite its focus on logic and epistemology, Nyaya is regarded as a philosophy of life (Gawande n.d.; Madalimov 2021). In Nyaya Darshan, the examination of visible reality and manifest reality is divided into sixteen major divisions based on Padarthas.

These divisions encompass various aspects such as the sources of knowledge (Pramana), the knowable (prameya), doubt or uncertainty (samaya), the end-in-view (prayojana), illustration from example (drstanta), doctrine of knowledge (siddhanta), constituent proposition (ayapana), hypothetical argument (tarka), certain knowledge (nirnaya), discussion (vada), wrangling (jalpa), debate (vitanda), invalid hetu (hetvabhasa), unfair reply (chala), reply on false analogy (Jati), and the grounds for defeat in debate (nigrahasthana). Among these divisions, the sources of valid knowledge (Pramana) hold significant importance.

Nyaya philosophy recognizes four primary sources of knowledge: perception, inference, comparison, and word testimony. Perception (Pratyakṣa) is defined as non-erroneous cognition resulting from interacting with sense organs and objects. It is further categorized into ordinary (laukika) and extraordinary (alaukika) perception. Inference (Anumana) is considered one of Nyaya's significant contributions, including inference for oneself and inference for others, and further classifications such as Purvavat, Sheshavat, and Samanyatodrishta.

Upasana and Sabuda are concepts in Vedic and non-Vedic philosophy, involving comparison and word testimony, respectively, to understand the relationship between words and objects. The methodology of inference in Nyaya involves a combination of induction and deduction, comprising five steps: Pratijñā (proposition), Hetu (reason), Udāhāraṇa (example of pervasion), Upanayana (application), and Nigamana (conclusion).

Nyaya philosophy also addresses various fallacies in inference, such as Hetvabhasa (fallacy of inference) caused by unproved hetu, Paksadharmata (false minor term), Nyaya identifies five types of accidental antecedents: mere accidental antecedent, conditional antecedent, co-effects of a cause, eternal substances, and unnecessary entities. Nyaya philosophy offers a comprehensive framework for understanding knowledge acquisition and reasoning, contributing significantly to philosophical discourse and methodology. To effectively study Nyaya philosophy or any intricate philosophical system, it is essential to employ a variety of research methodologies. These include close textual analysis of primary Nyaya texts such as Nyaya Sutras and secondary scholarly literature. Historical contextualization is crucial for understanding how Nyaya philosophy evolved within its cultural and historical milieu.

Comparative studies with other philosophical systems highlight both distinctive elements and commonalities, providing a comprehensive perspective. Empirical inquiry can further illuminate Nyaya concepts through case studies or experimental philosophy, particularly in fields like perception and inference. Engaging in philosophical reflection allows for critical evaluation of Nyaya theories' coherence, implications, and relevance in contemporary debates. Such a thematic approach not only explores Nyaya's intricate theoretical framework but also sheds light on broader philosophical inquiries into knowledge, reality, ethics, and human understanding. Through these rigorous methodologies, scholars can deepen their understanding and appreciation of Nyaya philosophy while exploring its contemporary relevance.

The analysis of ontological and epistemological beliefs in research involves thoroughly examining the nature of reality, the sources of knowledge, the methodology used to design and analyze research, and the interpretation of research findings, all of which are crucial in understanding the reliability and validity of knowledge. Nyaya philosophy promotes critical reflection and philosophical reasoning to assess the coherence, implications, and practical applicability of theories. This reflective approach enhances research methodology by fostering deeper understanding and ethical considerations in research practices.

Conclusion and reflection

This article delves into Nyaya Darshan and its utilization for acquiring knowledge. The Nyaya doctrine embodies profound implications for reasoning, emphasizing nuanced interpretations. Nyaya offers insights into ontology, epistemology, and theology as a Hindu philosophy, rendering it a comprehensive and autonomous philosophical school. Central to Nyaya is the comparison of truths through analytical argumentation and testimony, with the Vedas esteemed as the sole valid source of reliable judgment. In Nyaya philosophy, truth is uncovered through revisiting and analyzing decomposable simplicity. Ordinary perception is further categorized into six types—visual (by eyes), olfactory (by nose), auditory (by ears), tactile (by skin), gustatory (by tongue), and mental (by mind). Additionally, extraordinary perception includes three types: samanyalakshana, jñanalakshana (wherein sense organs perceive qualities beyond their attribution, such as inferring the taste of a chilli from its appearance), and Yogaja (where certain individuals, through Yogic powers, possess supernatural abilities including perception of past, present, and future events). Therefore, ontological and epistemological principles provide a structured framework for formulating research questions, designing methodologies, analyzing data, building theories, and critically evaluating existing literature. By applying these principles, researchers can achieve a higher standard of scholarly inquiry across various disciplines within educational diversity.

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