

# Nyāya -Sutras and the modern decision-making process in an organisation: A Note

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## Keywords

Nyaya-sutras,  
Decision-making  
process,  
Indian philosophy  
Management

*Indian philosophical traditions have received laconic scrutiny from the West. Most of the contemporary academic work in the West is based on the Greek philosophical tradition. Given this gap, this paper will attempt to provide an expository analysis of an ancient Indian school of thought in the context of organisational management. Specifically, this paper will focus on one specific school in Indian philosophy, namely Nyāya Sutras. In this article, we implement the Sutras in solving real-world decision-making steps in an organisation. We find that western minds largely ignore Indian Philosophy. The sutras provide the policymakers with executing activities that will enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of the organisation.*

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The first submission received: 4<sup>th</sup> October 2020.

Revised submission received: 14<sup>th</sup> December 2020.

Accepted: 27<sup>th</sup> March 2021

## 1. Introduction

Indian philosophical traditions have received laconic scrutiny from the West. Most of the contemporary academic work in the West is based on the Greek philosophical tradition. Given this gap, this paper will attempt to provide an expository analysis of an ancient Indian school of thought in the context of organisational management. Specifically, this paper will focus on one specific school in Indian philosophy, namely Nyāya Sutras. In this paper, we attempt to implement the Sutras in solving real-world decision-making steps in an organisation. With a corpus of literature stretching for practically two thousand years, Nyāya is a leading school of classical Indian philosophy. Broadly within the "Hindu umbrella" of communities that saw themselves as inheritors of an ancient Vedic civilisation and cultural traditions, Nyāya is one out of about fourteen or fifteen distinct philosophical schools and traditions to be counted as Vedic. Among these traditions and schools, Nyāya is celebrated in late classical erudition and modern scholars as pioneering developments in epistemology, metaphysics, and logic for all the philosophies and world views of India. The word nyāya broadly could be translated as "just and righteous reasoning" and should not be confused with "logic." The term, however, does not do justice to the breadth of Nyāya contributions to classical Indian philosophy. A whole set of interlocking views and arguments arrived at by critical reasoning are presented in the Nyāya-sūtra itself, which is the oldest Nyāya text. It is attributed to Gotama as the author of the Sutras (Bhattacharyya, 2010). Gautama's 528 sutras range over the whole world of philosophy, emphasising epistemology and philosophical method, logic, and critical reasoning.

Nyāya philosophy is centered on the notion of pramāṇa, "knowledge source." These sources are processes such as perception and inference by which an individual gains knowledge, that is, belief that is true by having been generated in the right way. Nyāya is devoted to the identification and extensive analysis of the knowledge sources. In this context, the school develops innovations in epistemology, logical theory, the theory of cognition, and the nature of rationality. Pramāṇas are the sources of an

individual's justified beliefs and the final court of appeals within the philosophical dispute. The sutras, therefore, formulate methods of inquiry to find an answer to a rational query.

## 2. Theory of Inference in Nyāya Philosophy:

Logic and reasoning are developed in classical India within the traditions of epistemology. The inference is a second knowledge source, and a means to know things not immediately evident through perception. Oetke (2004) finds three roots to the earliest concerns with the reasoning in India: (1) common-sense inference, (2) establishment of doctrines in the frame of scientific treatises (Sastra), and (3) justification of tenets in a debate. The three of these come together (though the latter two are predominant) within the epistemological traditions in almost universal inference as a knowledge source. Western philosophy relies on Aristotle's view of inference that is a deductive theory to deduce the knowledge from the perceived one. The perception leads to memory, which creates experience leading to memory and subsequently defines syllogism's premises. A syllogism is a logical structure to explain the reasoning to generate knowledge through perceived information, consisting of three categorical propositions, two premises, and one conclusion. The proposition consists of three important terms: the subject term, middle term, and predicate term.

Classical Indian philosophers are not focused on logic per se, but rather on a psychological process whereby we come to know things indirectly, by way of a sign, hetu, an indication of something currently beyond the range of the senses, whether at a distance spatially or temporally or of a sort that by nature cannot be directly perceived. The inference is the knowledge that is preceded by perception and can be a priori, posterior, or commonly seen. Gotama lays down that there are five phases of inference. As described in Gautama's Sutra 32, the five phases are as follows:

- Proposition (Pratijna): There is fire on a hill (required to be proved),
- Reason (Hetu): Because there is smoke there,
- Example (Udaharana): Wherever there is fire, there is smoke,
- Application (Upanaya): There is smoke on the hill,
- Conclusion (Nigamana): Therefore, there is a fire on the hill.

Inference plays an essential role in decision-making. Two distinct prepositions related to the same strategic plan may be used as premise arguments that can deduce a conclusion, thus leading to a decision. These five phases of deducing an inference will help in structuring the proper decision-making process.

The next section highlights the congruence between the classic philosophy of Nyāya Sutras and the modern decision-making concepts in an organisation setting.

## 3. Nyāya Throes and the Modern Decision-Making Science

Based on the resource-based theory in management science, firms' resources, particularly the intangible ones, are most likely to contribute towards firms' survival and competitiveness (Barney, 1991). More specifically, Subramanian and Youndt (2005) and Narvekar and Jain (2006) found that an organisation's capability depends on the level of intangible resources, firms that can expedite and resolve the business problems gain a sustainable competitive advantage.

### 3.1. Decision Making and Organizational Management

Decision-making science in the western world is rooted in the ideas of Greek Philosophy. They are, in essence, the rules Hippocrates laid down for medical diagnosis well over 2,000 years ago. Rules first introduced by Aristotle for scientific observations and then reaffirmed in Europe during the ages of the European Renaissance. These time-tested rules were borrowed by related researchers and were applied in organisational behaviours and executive decision making systematically. An effective executive's strength lies in knowing when a decision has to be based on principle and when it should be made pragmatically,

on the merits of the case. They know the trickiest decision is that between the right and the wrong compromise, and they have learned to tell one from the other. They know that the most time-consuming step in the process is not making the decision but putting it into effect. Unless a decision has degenerated into work, it is not a decision; it is at best a good intention. This means that, while the effective decision itself is based on the highest level of conceptual understanding, the action commitment should be as close as possible to the capacities of the people who must carry it out. Above all, influential executives know that decision-making has its systematic process and its own clearly defined elements.

### Sequential Steps using Greek Philosophical Traditions

The elements do not by themselves "make" the decisions. Indeed, every decision is a risk-taking judgment. But unless these elements are the steppingstones of the decision process, the executive will not arrive at a right, and certainly not at a practical, decision. Below, we delineate the steps using the western class methods of the decision -making.

- *Classifying the problem.* Is the problem generic or unique?
- *Defining the problem.* What are the issues that we are dispensing with?
- *Specifying the answer to the problem.* Determine the possible actions.
- *Choosing the departments who will find the answer.* Who must know about it?
- *Testing the validity of the findings via implementation:* Are results effective?

The afore-mentioned well-accepted steps of the modern decision-making rationale find striking equivalence with the Nyāya Sutras, historically estimated to have been composed between 6th-century BCE and 2nd-century CE. Below, we have presented a comparison of inference theories in the Nyāya -Sutras with the same using modern decision-making logic. One can see the synergism between the two. The readers must keep in mind that the Nyāya Sutras was written more than two thousand years ago. Such resemblance with modern management science indicates strong rationality, logic, and deductive reasoning among ancient India's erudite scholars.

Table 1: Nyāya-Sutras as a Business Problem Solver

Nyāya Inference Steps	Inference Steps in Management Science
Pratijna	Classify and define the problem
Hetu	Specify the answer
Udharana	Building into Decision
Upanaya	Testing the Validity
Nigamana	Conclusion

### 4. Conclusion and Future Work

A corpus of literature in the fields of western epistemology defines modern management theories. However, the paper established a close analogy between distinct knowledge theories given by the Western philosophers and the Indian school of Nyāya Sutra. Therefore, the author calls for more sincere efforts to explore and unearth classical existing views of inference theories. The treasure box of Indian Philosophy that is largely ignored by Western minds should provide the policymakers with executing activities that will enhance the organisation's effectiveness and efficiency.

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