

**NYAYA PHILOSOPHY AND EQUALITY: IMPLICATIONS FOR INDIA'S
EDUCATIONAL AND SOCIAL POLICIES**

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ABSTRACT

Equality stands as a fundamental pillar of the Indian Constitution, supporting the nation's democratic values and its commitment to a welfare state. Although Articles 14 to 18 ensure comprehensive guarantees to endorse equality before the law and prevent discrimination, persistent disparities continue to limit the possibilities of equitable access to education, impede social mobility, and limit opportunities for various sections of society.

The Nyaya philosophy is primarily concerned with knowledge, logic, and justice, but it has significantly influenced the development of educational policies in India. It has significantly shaped efforts to address inequality, particularly based on caste, gender, education, and socio-economic status.

This paper explores how modern conceptions of equality and policy interventions can be enriched and escalated by the ancient Indian school of Nyaya philosophy, which is renowned for its profound discourse on logic, justice (nyaya), and logical adjudication. It examines how these principles fit in and can support the constitutional mandate of equality, particularly when it comes to educational reform and social policy development. This paper, through a doctrinal and analytical approach, evaluates existing educational and social policies, identifying gaps where the ethical and procedural wisdom of Nyaya can offer pragmatic solutions.

Keywords

Nyaya Philosophy, Equality, Indian Constitution, Educational Policy, Social Policy, Justice

INTRODUCTION

Nyaya philosophy, one of the six orthodox schools of Indian philosophy, is primarily focused on logic, reasoning, and the pursuit of justice. Nyaya School originated around the 2nd century BC by the Gautama or Akspada. Nyaya provides the systematic framework for understanding valid knowledge (pramana) through: perception, inference comparison, and testimony. While it is not directly connected to the law in ancient times the Nyaya philosophy influenced the development of the legal system and governance by providing rules and methods of reasoning in legal disputes and governance, now in modern times it has significantly influenced the development of the constitution of India. Nyaya's philosophy, while grounded in logic, reasoning, fairness, and non-arbitrariness, closely parallels the contemporary notion of equality, since it emphasizes an understanding of reality through correct knowledge and reasonable decision-making.

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Educational equality signifies that all individuals should be afforded equal opportunity to learn, cultivate skills, and achieve their full potential, irrespective of their social, economic, cultural, religious, gender, or socio-economic backgrounds, hence ensuring access to the same quality of education. However, despite significant progress in educational facilities post-independence, equal access to quality education remains a challenge for many marginalized communities. To address this problem, India has implemented various policies that aim to bridge these gaps, to ensure that equity, which accounts for individual needs and circumstances, complements the goal of equality in the education system. Through initiatives such as affirmative action, the Right to Education Act, and inclusive policies, India aims to create an educational system that promotes inclusivity and equal opportunities for everyone where every citizen has the opportunity to reach their full potential, thereby contributing to the nation's progress.³

Nyaya philosophy is pioneer of equality and justice in itself. It has had a huge impact on the importance of justice and fairness, which has directly interlinked with fundamental human rights, such as equality.

AN OVERVIEW OF NYAYA PHILOSOPHY

Nyaya philosophy's roots can be traced back to the ancient Vedic period, where debates and philosophical discussions were an important part of the intellectual tradition.⁴ The foundational text of the Nyaya School is the Nyaya- sutras, sage Gautama, which were composed around the 2nd century CE. The Nyaya sutras establish the basis for logical techniques and categorize the legitimate ways of obtaining knowledge. Over time, many thinkers contributed to its development, including Vatsyayana (around 5th century BCE), who wrote the earliest surviving commentary on Nyaya Sutras, which helped further development of School's theories on logic and debate. Uddyotakara (around 6th century BCE) who defended the school against the critiques from Buddhist philosophers, Gaṅgeśa Upādhyāya (13th century BCE) whose work "Tattvachintāmaṇi" systematized Nyāya thought into a more particular and analytical form and Jayanta Bhatta, and Vacaspati Misra, who further refined its principles and theories.⁵ Nyaya philosophy's focus on logical reasoning, structured debate, and seeking valid knowledge made it a key part of classical Indian thought, influencing areas like literature, law, and religious philosophy and governance.⁶ Nyaya philosophy focuses on understanding reality, acquiring knowledge, and using logical reasoning. Its key principles revolve around four main goals:

- a) *Pramana (Means of Knowledge)*: Nyaya introduce four valid ways to gain knowledge: perception (direct observation), inference (logical deduction), comparison, and testimony (reliable information). These methods are the foundation of Nyaya's approach to get the knowledge.
- b) *Analysis of Reality*: Nyaya takes a realistic approach, believing in the existence of a knowable, objective reality. It recognizes substances and their qualities, actions, universals (shared features), and particularities (specific traits). Nyaya also acknowledges the concept of God as a separate being.

³ Sanchaita Nath, Bridging the Past and Present: Philosophical Insights from the Indian Knowledge System, 2

Bharati Int'l J. Multidisciplinary Res. & Dev. 83 (Oct. 2024).

⁴ Satischandra Chatterjee & Dhirendramohan Datta, An Introduction to Indian Philosophy 230–32 (8th ed. 2016).

⁵ Karl H. Potter, Encyclopedia of Indian Philosophies, Vol. 6: Nyaya-Vaisheshika (Princeton Univ. Press 1977).

⁶ Supra note 4, at 240–45.

c) *Logical Reasoning*: Nyaya emphasizes logic and debate. It developed a system of formal logic using syllogism (a structured way of reasoning) to draw valid conclusions. The *Nyaya Sutras*, attributed to Gautama, outline how to make sound inferences and construct valid arguments.

d) *Ethics and Liberation*: Nyaya recognizes the importance of ethical behaviour (dharma) for living a righteous life. It also explores the concept of liberation (moksha), achieved by gaining true knowledge and overcoming ignorance.⁷

The *Nyaya Sutra* is not just a philosophical text; it has real-world uses in areas like law, ethics, and social justice because of its importance on clear reasoning and fair decision-making. The practical application of Nyaya sutras extend beyond philosophical inquiry and significantly impacting the related areas. Nyāya's principles offer a foundation for social justice by focusing on fairness, truth, and reason. Its emphasis on reducing biasness and false beliefs aims to reduce inequality and lighten the suffering, create a fair and unbiased society.⁸

In the context of social justice, Nyaya's focus on objective reasoning implies that systems like legal and educational institutions should address inequalities by providing fair access to resources and opportunities. For instance, Nyaya principles would support policies like affirmative action if they are logically sound and address historical disadvantages to enhance equity. Similarly, in law, Nyaya would advocate for rules that are consistently and fairly applied, ensuring that justice is extended impartially to all individuals, regardless of social status.

EDUCATIONAL EQUALITY IN CONTEMPORARY INDIA

Educational equality is a fundamental aspect of social justice, individuals across all backgrounds should be provided with equitable access to opportunities for personal and professional development. The idea of inclusive growth focuses on that every student from all backgrounds, regardless of region, religion, caste, gender, economic status, or disability, has fair chances to develop and succeed.

If we look back to the colonial period, education in India was only available to the elite and was intended to create a class of intermediaries to assist the British administration. This approach created significant inequalities, with access to education often restricted to privileged groups. Many Reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Jyotirao Phule, and others advocated for equal access, especially for women and marginalized communities, laying early foundations for educational equality. After gaining independence, India has done a great job in reducing poverty and People now earn more and live longer, while the number of people living in poverty, birth rates, and infant deaths have gone down, the economic and social conditions of people have become better overall. Although education significantly enhances people's quality of life, the persistent issue of inequality continues to circulate in society, posing a major challenge to the country's ongoing development.⁹

⁷ J.S. Junankar, *Gautama—the Nyāya Philosophy* (Routledge 2004).

⁸ Nirmalya Guha, *The Nyāya School of Indian Philosophy*, St Andrews Encyclopaedia of Theology (2021), Available at: <https://www.saet.ac.uk/nirmalya-guha-the-nyaya-school-of-indian-philosophy>.

⁹ Deep Chand & Sailu Karre, *Equal Opportunity in Education: A Perspective from Below*, 11 Contemp. India's constitutional system includes various provisions to ensure that citizens from different socio-economic backgrounds have equal access to education. Voice of Dalit (2019).

The Indian Constitution makes educational equality a central part of the nation's progress, social justice, and democracy. Since independence, India has worked to make education accessible and fair for all citizens, recognizing its importance for personal growth and reducing social and economic inequalities.

India's constitutional framework includes various provisions to ensure that citizens from different socio-economic backgrounds have equal access to education. Articles 14 and 15 outline the principles of non-discrimination, while Article 21A, which was introduced by the 86th Constitutional Amendment in 2002, established free and compulsory education for children aged 6 to 14 as a fundamental right.¹⁰ In addition, the Directive Principles of State Policy—specifically Articles 45 and 46—underpin the duty of the state's government to provide free elementary education and to promote the educational and economic interests of marginalized groups, including Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and other disadvantaged groups. Articles 29 and 30 of the Indian Constitution safeguard the rights of minorities by preserving their cultural and linguistic identities and guaranteeing their ability to create and oversee educational institutions, while also banning discrimination in admissions to government-funded schools. Together, these provisions seek to rectify historical injustices and foster inclusive educational advancement throughout the country.

Although constitutional provisions have established a strong pillar of foundation for fostering educational equality in India, their practical execution relies on comprehensive policies and focused schemes at the grassroots level. Since independence, initiatives like the Right to Education Act, 2009, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, and the National Education Policy 2020 have played a crucial role in addressing educational disparities. Complementary initiatives such as the Mid-Day Meal Scheme advance nutrition among school children and also help in increasing the enrolment of students, while the NEP 2020 emphasizes equity through scholarships, digital resources, and teacher training for marginalized groups. Furthermore, initiatives like Post-Matric Scholarships for SC/ST/OBC students and the integrated Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan are designed to offer thorough and inclusive education from early childhood through to higher secondary levels, thus furthering the constitutional goal of educational equity.

ROLE OF NYAYA PHILOSOPHY IN BRIDGING GAPS IN EDUCATIONAL EQUALITY

Educational equality is not merely a constitutional commitment but the foundation of a progressive and inclusive society. India's progress toward ensuring equal access to education shows a genuine effort to destroy historical divides. Literacy rates in India have been rising as an increasing number of individuals gain access to improved education, yet it remains far from universally achieved. In 2022, the degree of literacy in India was about 76.32 %, with the majority of literate Indians being men.¹¹ The global literacy rate for people aged 15 and above is estimated to be about 86%.¹² Despite the many constitutional provisions, policies, and schemes aimed at ensuring equality in education, India remains far from achieving universal educational equity. Systemic challenges continue to exist within the socio-economic framework of the nation, including discrimination based on caste, gender inequality, and economic disparities, which hinder the complete achievement of this objective. For achieving true educational equality, everyone should be collectively responsible, which demands continuous effort, equitable resource distribution, and a fixed and untiring commitment to justice.

¹⁰ Unni Krishnan, J.P. v. State of Andhra Pradesh, (1993) 1 S.C.C. 645 (India). This case became the foundation for the 86th Amendment Act, 2002, which introduced Article 21-A

¹¹ Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation, National Statistical Office, Literacy Rate in India 2022

¹² UNESCO Inst. for Statistics, Literacy Rate, <https://uis.unesco.org/en/topic/literacy> (last visited June 18, 2025)

Nyaya philosophy focuses on logical reasoning, critical analysis, and evidence-based argumentation and aligns well with modern education's objectives to develop critical thinking and scientific inquiry. Nyaya Philosophy provides a logical and ethical foundation for educational policies aimed at equality. Integrating Nyaya philosophy's principles of evidence-based decision-making, equity, and inclusivity inspires a framework that addresses systemic inequalities and promotes equal opportunities for all. Nyaya helps to understand the importance of fairness and addressing social inequalities through logical justice.

Nyaya's philosophy focuses on reasoning and promotes a culture of discussion and inquiry. This is seen in policies like the Right to Education (RTE) Act, which supports democratic involvement through School Management Committees, wherein local communities significantly contribute to decision-making.¹³ The Nyaya focuses on open inquiry and systematic reasoning inspires democratic participation in the educational system.

1. Corrective Justice and Nyaya Philosophy

A fundamental significance of Nyaya Philosophy to the discourse on educational equality lies in its persistent and steady emphasis on revitalizing justice. Unlike mere distributive justice, which focuses exclusively on allocating resources equally, Nyaya emphasizes that true justice requires addressing historical injustices and disposing of the structural impediments that formal legal equality cannot eliminate alone.

This insight is especially pertinent in the Indian constitutional framework. Although Articles 14 to 18 ensure equality before the law and forbid discrimination, these guarantees cannot remove by themselves centuries of caste-based exclusion and social disadvantage that continue to restrict fair access to education for marginalized communities.

However, the very framework of affirmative action has also highlighted the limitations of fixed or uniform quotas when they are not critically evaluated. In *M. Nagaraj v. Union of India* (2006), the Court affirmed the need for reservations in promotions, but it required a justification from the states with new, quantifiable evidence demonstrating backwardness and underrepresentation.¹⁴ The corrective justice principles in Nyaya's embody that remedial actions should remain grounded in evidence and proportionate, rather than being automatic rights that are detached from evolving social realities, is mirrored in Jarnail Singh (2018).¹⁵

The Supreme Court's recent cases like *State of Punjab v. Davinder Singh* (2024), has strengthened this insight that Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes are not homogeneous, allowing states to sub-classify sub-castes for more equitable distribution of reservation benefits. This judgment acknowledged that a rigid, fixed quota can fail to benefit the most disadvantaged groups, thereby allowing more dominant sub-castes to seize the advantages intended for the entire group.¹⁶ This aligns directly with Nyaya's approach: achieving fairness sometimes necessitates treating unequal groups differently to

¹³ Tilak, Jandhyala B. G. "Inequality in Education in India." *Indian Journal of Industrial Relations* 14, no. 3 (1979):

417–36. Available at: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27765728>.

¹⁴ *M. Nagaraj v. Union of India*, (2006) 8 SCC 212.

¹⁵ *Jarnail Singh v. Lachhmi Narain Gupta*, (2018) 10 SCC 396.

¹⁶ *State of Punjab v. Davinder Singh*, 2024 INSC 562.

rectify internal disparities. The constitutional principle of “equality for all” alone does not clarify who among the SC/ST category is more marginalized; Nyaya’s reasoned fairness addresses this issue.

Practical examples illustrate this gap. In spite of generous quotas and scholarships, audits consistently find repeated flows: irregular, sporadic distribution of funds, fictitious beneficiaries, and scholarships fail to reach intended students.¹⁷ The digital divide during COVID-19 similarly demonstrated the need for remedial action. Reserved seats are useless if the underprivileged students are not able to access the digital resources to attend classes. Nyaya’s dynamic correction principle directly solves this problem, which constitutional equality did not anticipate.

Several states have begun to follow this Nyaya-inspired reasoning. Punjab and Haryana have started following the Davinder Singh judgement, have carried out the new surveys to reevaluate backwardness within SC sub-groups, and have created sub-quotas accordingly. Similarly, Kerala and Delhi have distributed free tablets, neighbourhood learning centres, and provided free local Wi-Fi to address the digital exclusion; these are the actual instances of corrective justice in action.¹⁸

Nyaya Philosophy emphasizes that corrective justice is not rigid and static but a dynamic process. It requires ongoing monitoring, updated socio-economic information, rational reclassification, and accountability to make sure that remedial actions are not taken by the privileged or become mere symbols.

The National Education Policy 2020 somewhat largely reflected by emphasizing the use of data to identify learning gaps and implement targeted interventions for underprivileged groups.¹⁹ The National Education Policy 2020 somewhat largely reflected by emphasizing the use of data to identify learning gaps and implement targeted interventions for disadvantaged groups. However, audits by the Comptroller & Auditor General consistently highlight by their reports issues with implementation, including improper fund allocation and insufficient outreach efforts. Truly adhering to the principles of Nyaya necessitates not only progressive legislation but also effective administrative execution: properly monitored quotas, transparent scholarship processes, bridge courses for first-generation students, secure accommodations for students from remote areas, and consistent social audits to address inefficiencies.

Corrective justice serves as an essential link between the principles of the constitution and the actual circumstances faced on the ground. According to Nyaya Philosophy, India can only turn the constitutional promise of equality into actual, quantifiable educational advancement for its most marginalized citizens by continuously reevaluating who is left behind and creating customized, evidence-based solutions.

2. Contextual Fairness and Procedural Justice in Education

While the Indian Constitution guarantees equality under Articles 14, 15, and 16, its

¹⁷ Comptroller & Auditor General of India, Performance Audit on Post-Matric Scholarship Scheme for SCs (2023).

¹⁸ Government of Kerala, Digital Education Action Plan 2021–2022; Government of NCT of Delhi, Education Infrastructure Report 2021.

¹⁹ Ministry of Education, National Education Policy 2020, <https://www.education.gov.in/en/nep2020>.

application has often been formal and uniform, failing to take into account the socio-cultural nuances and hierarchies within marginalized communities. Nyaya Philosophy bridges this gap by focusing on procedural justice, which demands logical, fact-based, and open implementation, and contextual fairness, which takes situational and intragroup differences into consideration.

A key example is the Supreme Court's decision in *Society for Unaided Private Schools of Rajasthan v. Union of India* (2012), which affirmed the 25% reservation for economically disadvantaged groups under the Right to Education Act. The Court noted that without affirmative action, children from underprivileged families cannot compete on an equal basis.

Here, Article 14 alone would not have been adequate; differentiated treatment was necessary in order to align with Nyaya's concept of fairness, adopted to lived situations.²⁰

In the case of *Vikas Kishanrao Gawali v. State of Maharashtra* (2021), the Court invalidated local body reservations due to the absence of recent empirical evidence supporting these quotas. This ruling highlighted the risk of implementing constitutional equality in a mechanical manner, without regular re-evaluation — an approach that Nyaya philosophy expressly criticises for lacking of contextual and logical foundation.²¹

Furthermore, the lack of need-based and localized planning frequently leads to standard and uniform solutions that do not address the specific needs of different communities. A rigid interpretation of Article 14 often presumes a uniform experience of deprivation across social categories. However, Nyaya Philosophy challenges this assumption by promoting a contextual fairness — the idea that justice must consider internal diversities within marginalized groups. For instance, not all Scheduled Castes (SCs) or Other Backward Classes (OBCs) face similar challenges in education. The Supreme Court's judgment in *State of Punjab v. Davinder Singh* (2024) acknowledged this complexity by permitting sub-classification within SCs for more fairness in the distribution of reservations. The Court held that empirical evidence could validate intra-group differences to ensure that the most disadvantaged sub-castes receive appropriate support. This judgment highlights a key limitation of constitutional equality as traditionally understood — its formal, one-size-fits-all aspect — and affirms Nyaya's principle that justice must be situation-specific and responsive in real situations. By enabling targeted, data-driven interventions, Nyaya provides a more profound framework for educational policymaking that transcends legal formality and achieves true inclusion.²²

In the area of political representation, the limitations of nominal constitutional equality are much more apparent. SCs and STs are granted reserved seats in Parliament and State Assemblies under Articles 330 and 332. However, there is no equal provision for OBCs, despite their acknowledged backward status under Articles 15(4) and 16(4). This disparity become more pronounced with passage of enactment of the Women's Reservation Act, 2023 (106th Constitutional Amendment), which reserves one-third of seats for women in legislatures but does not provide sub-classification for SC, ST, or OBC women. Critics claims that without intra-group representation, such a provision may benefit elite women within privileged castes, marginalizing those most in need. Nyaya's concept of contextual

²⁰ *Society for Unaided Private Schools of Rajasthan v. Union of India*, (2012) 6 SCC 1.

²¹ *Vikas Kishanrao Gawali v. State of Maharashtra*, (2021) 6 SCC 73.

²² *State of Punjab v. Davinder Singh*, 2024 INSC 562.

fairness directly addressed to this issue that justice requires fairness within fairness, rather than depending solely on standard quotas. Additionally, Nyaya's focus on procedure points out the lack of a current caste census as a procedural lacking, undermining the logical foundation for establishing proportional political representation. A Nyaya-focused strategy would necessitate empirical validation, internal categorization, and regular re-evaluation to guarantee genuinely inclusive legislative policy.

Although constitutional provisions allow special measures, the implementation issue arises persistently due to weak procedural integrity. For example, the Post-Matric Scholarship Scheme for SC students' performance audit by the Comptroller and Auditor General in 2023 revealed serious problems, including incorrect beneficiary identification, payment delays, and underutilization of funds.²³ These failures are not from flaws in constitutional provisions, but rather from failures in ensuring fair procedures — the very concerns that Nyaya's idea of procedural justice seeks to address.

Nyaya demands evidence-based, transparent, and participatory governance. This is reflected in policy tools like the RTE Act's School Management Committees (SMCs). Tamil Nadu and Himachal Pradesh empowered SMCs and have effectively monitored teacher attendance, facilitated the textbook distribution, and encouraged community involvement, highlighting Nyaya's belief that justice must be both for and with the people.²⁴

Many state governments operationalized Nyaya's ideas of logical, need-specific solutions to more modern issues, like the post-pandemic digital divide. For example, Kerala and Delhi responded by setting up community learning centers, distributing digital devices, and offering free local Wi-Fi. These were tailored remedies to specific exclusion rather than general fixes.²⁵

Ultimately, while the framework of constitutional equality is essential, Nyaya Philosophy enhances it by emphasising the importance of educational and political justice to be both contextually sensitive and procedurally strong. The promise of equality is meaningless in the absence of current data, equitable procedures, and mechanisms for participation. In contrast, Nyaya provides a framework that is dynamic, flexible, and morally grounded, converting constitutional principles into inclusive, quantifiable results.

3. Nyaya Philosophy, Rational Inquiry, and Contemporary Policy Directions

Beyond its corrective and contextual aspects, Nyaya Philosophy plays a significant role in promoting educational equality by emphasizing the importance of rational inquiry (anvikshiki) and structured reasoning. Rather than formal equality provisions that focus on access, Nyaya focuses on emphasizing a person's ability to think, question, and reason — an aspect of justice often missing in conventional constitutional discussion.

The Indian Constitution ensures equality in educational access under Articles 14, 15, and 21A, but does not specifically address the intellectual content or emancipatory objective

²³ Comptroller & Auditor General of India, Performance Audit on Post-Matric Scholarship Scheme for SCs (2023).

²⁴ Ministry of Education, Status of School Management Committees under RTE Act, <https://www.education.gov.in/en/rte>.

²⁵ Government of Kerala, Digital Education Action Plan 2021–2022; Delhi Education Infrastructure Report, 2021.

of education. Consequently, equality is often interpreted in a limited sense as mere institutional access, neglecting the qualitative and participatory factors that are vital for genuine inclusion. Nyaya Philosophy fills this conceptual gap by arguing that justice requires not only access but also the ability to interact with, question, and transform knowledge. In *Avinash Mehrotra v. Union of India* (2009), the Supreme Court held that mere enrolment of students in schools is not sufficient to satisfy the constitutional guarantee under Article 21A if the educational environment is unsafe, exclusive, or not able to foster learning.²⁶ This case highlights that the substance of education is not merely its provision, but is crucial, highlighting the need for qualitative justice, a fundamental principle of Nyaya.

This vision aligns with the National Education Policy (NEP), 2020, which prioritizes comprehensive, inquiry-driven, and interdisciplinary education designed to cultivate critical thinking, ethical judgment, and self-directed learning.²⁷ These principles are reminiscent of Nyaya's approach to learning true knowledge (prama) through argument and reasoned analysis, which prioritizes cognitive independence over mindless obedience.

Additionally, teacher training, as mentioned in NEP 2020, must align with Nyaya's rationalist principles. Educators ought to act as facilitators of exploration and inclusive dialogue, fostering active participation in the learning process, particularly for students from marginalized backgrounds. In *State of Tamil Nadu v. K. Shyam Sunder* (2011), the Court upheld the need for quality in education, asserting that inferior schooling in government institutions violates Article 14 by indirectly reinforcing class and caste divisions.²⁸ This judgement illustrates that when the quality of education delivery is poor, with a lack of empowerment, the formal equality is undermined, which is precisely the concern Nyaya emphasises.

From a policy perspective, Nyaya's paradigm of inquiry model also emphasises evidence-based decision-making. In India, educational interventions — including reservation policies, curriculum design, and scholarship schemes — are often implemented without de-identified data or contextual evaluation. The Supreme Court in *Vikas Kishanrao Gawali v. State of Maharashtra* (2021) held that any reservation—such as for OBCs in local bodies—must be go through a 'triple test': (1) create a special commission for empirical investigation into backwardness; (2) proportionate reservation based on its recommendations; and (3) maintain the 50% cap on total reserved seats.

The Court interprets that without fulfilment of all these conditions, reservation notifications would be deemed to unconstitutional — providing Nyāya's insistence on evidence-based, reasoned policymaking.²⁹

Furthermore, Nyaya supports ethical and civic thinking as an essential and fundamental part of education. This perspective of Nyaya's supports the constitutional aspiration of nurturing values such as fraternity, secularism, and dignity—not only as theoretical ideas in curricula but as actual social behaviors. The Supreme Court in *Environmental &*

²⁶ Avinash Mehrotra v. Union of India, (2009) 6 SCC 398

²⁷ Ministry of Education, National Education Policy 2020, Available at: <https://www.education.gov.in/en/nep2020>

²⁸ State of Tamil Nadu v. K. Shyam Sunder, (2011) 8 SCC 737

²⁹ Vikas Kishanrao Gawali v. State of Maharashtra, (2021) 6 SCC 73

Consumer Protection Foundation v. Delhi Administration (2012) highlights this ideal by holding that the right to free and compulsory education under Article 21A extends beyond mere physical access to also include the basic infrastructure and conditions that support effective learning. The Court pointed out that “empirical research has shown that where schools lack toilet facilities, parents are reluctant to send their children (especially girls) to school,” highlighting that genuine education necessitates dignity, inclusivity, and moral growth.³⁰ This closely reflects Nyaya’s assertion that education must encourage both logical reasoning and ethical awareness, laying the groundwork for a fair and participatory democratic society.

In sum, Nyaya Philosophy expands the idea of educational justice by shifting it from mere institutional access to empowering individuals intellectually and ethically. While the Constitution guarantees a foundational framework for equality, Nyaya deepens it by demanding a justice system rooted in reasoning, evidence, and constant moral evaluation. This combination of knowledge-based and ethical considerations is crucial to guarantee that educational equality in India is not just a promise but truly achieved.

CONCLUSION

The Indian Constitution established equality as one of its fundamental principles, providing a framework through Articles 14–18 and various affirmative action provisions to rectifying historical injustices and structural disparities. Nevertheless, as this paper has demonstrated, constitutional guarantees alone—though necessary—are insufficient to fully understand substantive equality, particularly when it comes to education and social justice. The persistent inequalities in access, outcomes, and lived experiences of marginalized communities underscore the need for a deeper, more philosophically informed approach. In this context, the relevance of Nyaya Philosophy becomes both current and transformative, providing a sophisticated framework to tackle the limitations of shortcomings of formal constitutional guarantees and direct more equitable policy interventions.

Nyaya, as a classical Indian school of thought, does more than offer a theory of logic or epistemology. It offers a practical and morally grounded theory of justice that based on logical inquiry (anvikshiki), valid knowledge (prama), and a commitment to procedural and contextual justice.³¹ In contrast to rigid models of equality that consider everyone the same, Nyaya calls for an exploration of actual circumstances and emphasizes that justice should be flexible, grounded in evidence, and founded on moral reasoning. This perspective is remarkably similar to the changing Indian legal and policy environment, where court decisions increasingly demand empirical evidence and logical justification for affirmative action measures. — as seen in cases like *Indra Sawhney*,³² *M. Nagaraj*,³³ *Jarnail Singh*,³⁴ *Vikas Kishanrao Gawali*,³⁵ and *Davinder Singh*.³⁶

³⁰ *Environmental & Consumer Protection Foundation v. Delhi Administration*, (2012) 10 SCC 1979.

³¹ B.K. Matilal, *The Character of Logic in India* (Oxford Univ. Press 1984); Sanchaita Nath, *Bridging the Past and Present: Philosophical Insights from the Indian Knowledge System*, *Bharati Int’l J. Multidisciplinary Res. & Dev.*, Vol. 2, Issue 9 (Oct. 2024).

³² *Indra Sawhney v. Union of India*, 1992 Supp. (3) S.C.C. 217.

³³ *M. Nagaraj v. Union of India*, (2006) 8 S.C.C. 212.

³⁴ *Jarnail Singh v. Lachhmi Narain Gupta*, (2018) 10 S.C.C. 396

³⁵ *Vikas Kishanrao Gawali v. State of Maharashtra*, (2021) 6 S.C.C. 73.

³⁶ *State of Punjab v. Davinder Singh*, 2024 INSC 562.

Through its emphasis on corrective justice, Nyaya aligns closely with constitutional provisions such as Articles 15(4), 16(4), and 46, which provide the state to make special provisions for socially and educationally backward classes.³⁷ But Nyaya extends further — it demands continuous re-evaluation of such measures, evolving socio-economic data, and cautions against the rigid and uncritical implementation of quota-based policies. It emphasizes that justice must provide to those who are most marginalized within deprived groups, advocating nuanced sub-classification and rational targeting of resources.

In addition, Nyaya's recognition of contextual equity offers a valuable philosophical basis for understanding intra-group disparities and regional diversities. The approach taken in Davinder Singh — which upheld sub-classification within Scheduled Castes for more equitable reservation distribution — aligns with Nyaya's conviction that justice must be adapted to context, not confined to abstract notions of uniform equality.³⁸ This perspective is vital to refining India's educational policy, especially in a heterogeneous and stratified society where uniform solutions usually fail to solve the complexity of disadvantage.

Equally important is Nyaya's focus on logical inquiry and moral reasoning as central components of justice. In the context of education, this means moves beyond to access empowerment. The National Education Policy 2020 support this principle by promoting inquiry-based learning, moral reasoning, and inclusive pedagogy.³⁹ However, systemic barriers — including digital divides, poor infrastructure, inadequate teacher training, and implementation bottlenecks — continue to limit the realization of these ideals. Landmark cases such as *Avinash Mehrotra*⁴⁰ and *Environmental & Consumer Protection Foundation*⁴¹ have underlined that the right to education must be meaningful and inclusive, incorporating safety, dignity, and moral development — all of which Nyaya regards as indispensable to just outcomes.

Furthermore, Nyaya emphasizes that justice is a dynamic process that needs continuous assessment, not a one-time remedy, and community participation. This principle can improve the functioning of institutions like School Management Committees (SMCs) and inform the design of monitoring mechanisms for scholarships, mid-day meals, and digital learning initiatives. By promoting transparency, accountability, and citizen engagement, Nyaya integrates justice in the operational processes of governance, rather than treating it merely as an abstract goal.

In conclusion, Nyaya Philosophy offers a highly contextual, empirically supported, and morally sound framework that complements and advances India's constitutional vision of equality. It challenges us to look beyond legal formalism and consider the ethical and practical dimensions of justice in action. When it applied to educational and social policy, Nyaya pushes for a shift from tokenistic inclusion to actual transformation — from legal rights on paper to lived realities of dignity, opportunity, and self-determination. In the face of persistent inequalities and rapidly evolving socio-political dynamics, re-engaging with indigenous philosophical frameworks like Nyaya is not simply an academic exercise—it is an essential endeavour for advancing a truly inclusive, participatory, and equitable vision of justice in contemporary India.

³⁷ India Const. arts. 15(4), 16(4), 46.

³⁸ State of Punjab v. Davinder Singh, 2024 INSC 562.

³⁹ Ministry of Educ., Govt. of India, National Education Policy 2020 (July 29, 2020) Available at: <https://www.education.gov.in/en/nep2020>.

⁴⁰ Avinash Mehrotra v. Union of India, (2009) 6 S.C.C. 398.

⁴¹ Environmental & Consumer Protection Foundation v. Union of India, (2012) 10 S.C.C. 197.