



The Soteriological Aspect of Indian Epistemology

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Abstract

Epistemology is defined as a branch of philosophy that deals with knowledge. The purpose of epistemology is to acquire true or valid knowledge. Western epistemology fits perfectly into this framework, as it is concerned primarily with justification and truth conditions. In Western epistemology, reaching true knowledge is regarded as an intellectual project. In India, however, the scenario is somewhat different. The philosophical landscape of India is unified by a pervasive, albeit diversely interpreted, conviction that the ultimate purpose of human life is liberation from suffering. In the *Īśā Upaniṣad* it is said:

*vidyāṃcāvidyāṃcayastadvedobhayāmsaha.
avidyayāmṛtyumtīrtvāvidyayāmṛtamaśnute (Īśā Upaniṣad, Mantra 11)*

He who knows both knowledge and ignorance together attains immortality through knowledge. This is an example of a direct connection between Indian epistemology and soteriology.

Across nearly all major schools of Indian thought, both orthodox (*āstika*) and heterodox (*nāstika*), the existence of pervasive suffering (*duḥkha*) within phenomenal existence (*saṃsāra*) is taken as the primary philosophical problem. It is unanimously accepted that the root cause of suffering is ignorance. The Indian intellectual project is therefore fundamentally pragmatic, where knowledge acquisition is the *sādhana* (means) to attain liberation (*mokṣa* or *nirvāṇa*) or to eliminate the root cause of ignorance.

This paper highlights how the epistemological frameworks of major Indian schools are incorporated into their approaches to soteriology. In *Nyāya*, for example, the systematic use of the four *pramāṇas* aims at generating *tattvajñāna*, that is, true knowledge of the sixteen categories. Such knowledge directly removes *mithyājñāna*, which *Nyāya* identifies as the root cause of *duḥkha*. Thus, the pursuit of valid knowledge (*pramā*) is synonymous with the path to freedom. The paper concludes with a deductive argument: since ignorance causes suffering, and epistemology seeks to eliminate ignorance through validated knowledge, the purpose of epistemology is necessarily the cessation of suffering.

Keywords: *Jñānatattva* (Indian Epistemology), soteriology, *duḥkha* (suffering), *ātyantika-nivṛtti* (absolute cessation), *pramāṇa* (means of knowledge), *mokṣa* (liberation), *avidyā* (ignorance), *tattvajñāna* (true knowledge)

Introduction

Epistemology is a branch of philosophy that deals with knowledge: its sources, structure, validity, and limits. In the Indian philosophical tradition, epistemology holds a unique and profound purpose. The Indian philosophical schools are not merely concerned with the definition and attributes of knowledge, but more specifically with the purpose of knowledge, for it is believed unanimously by all the schools of Indian philosophy that correct knowledge (*pramā*) is the essential means to freedom from suffering (*duḥkha*). On this note, there is a fundamental distinction between Indian epistemology and Western epistemology. A comparative examination of the two traditions reveals a divergence that lies not in methods or doctrines but in the very purpose for which knowledge is pursued. While both traditions meticulously discuss questions concerning the nature, sources, and validity of knowledge, they

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differ profoundly in their underlying philosophical intention. Western epistemology, broadly speaking, has been shaped by a predominantly theoretical and justificatory impulse, whereas Indian epistemology is deeply embedded within a soteriological and transformative framework.

The primary concerns of most Western epistemologies are to provide a suitable definition of knowledge, distinguish it from belief and opinion, and justify claims to truth. From Plato's characterization of knowledge as "justified true belief" to Aristotle's emphasis on demonstrative knowledge (*epistēmē*), the purpose of epistemological inquiry has always been oriented toward securing certainty and objectivity. The central questions have always concerned the object of knowledge, the process of acquiring knowledge, and the justification behind claims to knowledge. Even in early modern philosophy, epistemology retains this theoretical orientation. Descartes' methodological skepticism aims to establish indubitable foundations for knowledge, Locke investigates the origins of ideas, Hume points out the limits of empirical knowledge, and Kant declares that we can attain knowledge of the phenomenal world, but the noumena will remain unknown and unknowable. In all these cases, the goal of epistemology is to conduct critical inquiry into cognition rather than to serve as a means to a higher end.

This theoretical pattern continues into contemporary Western epistemology, where the focus of inquiry is the analysis of knowledge in terms of belief, truth, and justification. Even when ethical or practical concerns are acknowledged, epistemology largely remains detached from questions of salvation, liberation, or the cessation of suffering. Knowledge is valued for its explanatory power, its correspondence with reality, or its coherence within a system of beliefs, rather than for its capacity to fundamentally alter the existential condition of the knower.

In contrast, Indian epistemology (*jñānatattva*) holds a radically different philosophical orientation. According to Indian philosophy, ignorance is the root cause of worldly suffering. Only the knowledge of reality (*tattvajñāna*) can destroy ignorance and thereby cease all kinds of suffering (*ātyantika-nivṛtti*). Thus, knowledge in Indian thought has always been evaluated in relation to its enlightening efficacy. The primary concern is not merely whether a belief is true or justified, but whether it destroys ignorance (*avidyā*) and thereby contributes to liberation (*mokṣa* or *nirvāṇa*). As a result, epistemology in Indian philosophy is inseparably connected with metaphysics, ethics, and soteriology. Theories of knowledge are constructed and assessed in light of their ability to bring about the cessation of suffering, or *ātyantika-nivṛtti*.

This soteriological connection profoundly shapes the structure of Indian epistemology. The elaborate analyses of *pramāṇas*, the means of valid knowledge, in schools such as Buddhism and Jainism among the heterodox schools, and Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika, Sāṃkhya, and Vedānta among the orthodox schools, are not motivated by abstract curiosity about cognition but by a practical concern to eradicate false cognition (*mithyājñāna*), identified as the root cause of bondage and suffering. Thus, in Indian philosophy, knowledge is inherently instrumental and existentially transformative. Although certain strands of Western philosophy, such as ancient Stoicism, Epicureanism, and later existential and phenomenological traditions, do recognize the transformative role of knowledge in human life, they remain exceptions.



Another significant contrast lies in the evaluation of error and ignorance. In Western epistemology, error is typically treated as a failure of justification, reasoning, or evidence. In Indian philosophy, ignorance is ontologically and ethically charged: it is the causal condition that sustains rebirth, attachment, and suffering. Epistemology therefore acquires a moral and existential urgency largely absent from Western accounts. To know falsely is not merely to be mistaken; it is to remain bound.

The objective of this paper is to establish that Indian epistemology, across its diverse schools, is fundamentally soteriological. Indian epistemology is structured and justified in terms of its capacity to eliminate the cognitive roots of suffering by inducing knowledge of ultimate reality. To establish this connection, the paper proceeds step by step, examining the theories of diverse schools of Indian philosophy on the concept of suffering, the concept of liberation, and how knowledge functions to terminate suffering and attain liberation.

Indian philosophical systems unanimously accept suffering (*duḥkha*) as an undeniable fact of human existence. Every system therefore provides a theory of the means for the complete cessation of existential suffering. This absolute cessation of suffering is known as *mokṣa*, *kaivalya*, or *nirvāṇa*. In Indian philosophy, suffering (*duḥkha*) is not seen as mere physical or emotional pain but as a condition intrinsic to the cycle of birth, death, and rebirth. Across diverse philosophical schools, suffering is consistently traced to some form of ignorance (*avidyā*), misidentification, or bondage, though its precise ontological status and causal explanation vary from one school to another.

In Buddhism, suffering (*duḥkha*) is described as a rising from ignorance of the Four Noble Truths. Suffering occurs through dependent origination (*pratītyasamutpāda*), and its cessation is achieved through insight into impermanence, non-self, and the Eight fold Path. In Jain philosophy, suffering is located in the karmic bondage of the soul, where subtle material karmic particles obscure the soul's innate purity and bliss. Here, *duḥkha* is neither illusory nor merely psychological; it is the consequence of ethical and epistemic impurity, which can be removed through right faith, right knowledge, and right conduct. Nyāya philosophy holds that suffering is primarily due to false knowledge (*mithyājñāna*), which gives rise to attachment, aversion, volitional action, and rebirth; liberation follows from true knowledge of reality (*tattvajñāna*), achieved through disciplined epistemic inquiry and the elimination of cognitive error. Vaiśeṣika, closely allied with Nyāya, treats suffering as a real quality of the self, produced by its conjunction with body and mind due to ignorance, and holds that liberation occurs through the disjunction of the self from corporeal association once the categories of reality are correctly known.

Sāṃkhya philosophy offers a metaphysical analysis of suffering, classifying it into three forms — *ādhyātmika* (internal), *ādhibhautika* (interpersonal or environmental), and *ādhidaivika* (cosmic or natural)—and attributes all suffering to the false identification of pure consciousness (*puruṣa*) with material nature (*prakṛti*); liberation (*kaivalya*) arises through discriminative knowledge (*viveka-jñāna*) that decisively separates the two. Pātañjala Yoga deepens this analysis by locating suffering in the afflictions (*kleśas*) - ignorance, egoism, attachment, aversion, and clinging to life -



which manifest through mental modifications (*citta-vṛtti*); for the discerning, even pleasurable experience is potentially suffering, and freedom is attained through meditative discipline culminating in the cessation of mental fluctuations. Advaita Vedānta offers a unique non-dual account in which suffering, despite being phenomenally real, is ultimately illusory. It arises from *avidyā*, which superimposes the body-mind complex upon the true Self (*Ātman*); liberation consists in the immediate realization of one's identity with Brahman, where as suffering is sublated rather than destroyed. Viśiṣṭādvaita and Dvaita Vedānta, by contrast, regard suffering as real, rooted in karmic bondage and the soul's separation from God, and maintain that its final cessation depends upon divine grace combined with knowledge and devotion.

Despite these differences, Indian philosophical traditions share a common conviction: suffering is a systemic condition grounded in ignorance, not an accidental feature of life, and therefore soteriology and epistemology are inseparable; knowledge functions not merely to explain the world but to transform the condition of the knower. Except for the Cārvāka system, almost all schools of Indian philosophy hold that the cessation of ultimate suffering is possible only through knowledge of ultimate reality (*tattvajñāna*). Depending on the school, this supreme knowledge is described variously as self-knowledge (*ātmajñāna*), *kaivalya-jñāna*, knowledge of the Four Noble Truths, or *Brahma-jñāna*. Despite differences in terminology, all systems agree that liberation is attainable through true knowledge of ultimate reality.

The branch of philosophy that examines the nature of knowledge, its definition, scope, classification, and the means of acquiring valid knowledge is known as epistemology (*jñānatattva*). Indian epistemology, then, is not merely a theoretical inquiry; it is a spiritual discipline whose purpose is to reveal the true nature of these of and the world through knowledge, remove ignorance, and liberate the individual from suffering and the cycle of rebirth.

Epistemology in Jain Philosophy: Truth-Seeking and Liberation

In Jain philosophy, embodiment and the experience of suffering are regarded as forms of bondage, and liberation from this bondage is possible only through the practice of right faith (*samyak-darśana*), right knowledge (*samyak-jñāna*), and right conduct (*samyak-cāritra*). According to Jainism, every object possesses innumerable qualities or modes (*ananta-dharma*), and it is impossible for an embodied being to grasp all these qualities simultaneously. Although the soul is inherently conscious and omniscient, karmic obstructions veil its consciousness due to embodiment, leading to suffering.

True or valid knowledge is that by which the desirable is attained and the undesirable avoided. Jain philosophers classify knowledge into five types: *mati* (sensory knowledge), *śruta* (scriptural knowledge), *avadhi* (clairvoyance), *manahparyāya* (telepathic knowledge), and *kevala* (absolute knowledge). Among these, *mati* and *śruta* are mediate, while *avadhi*, *manahparyāya*, and *kevala* are immediate forms of knowledge. Perceptual knowledge is included under *mati* and regarded as mediate, since it is organized by thought. *Avadhi-jñāna* and *manahparyāya-jñāna* are extraordinary perceptions limited by space and time: *avadhi* is clairvoyance, and *manahparyāya* is telepathy. Only *kevala-jñāna* is completely



infallible and represents supreme knowledge of reality. Jain epistemology is therefore not mere logical analysis; it is a rational framework for ethical purification, non-violence, openness of perspective (*anekāntavāda*), and karmic annihilation, all of which directly contribute to the cessation of suffering.

Buddhist Epistemology: Dependent Origination and the Removal of Ignorance

The foundation of Buddhist philosophy lies in the enlightened knowledge of Gautama Buddha, expressed through the Four Noble Truths: life is suffering; suffering has a cause; suffering can be ceased; and there is a path leading to the cessation of suffering. Buddhist philosophy begins with the recognition of *duḥkha* and with the insight that suffering is sustained by ignorance. The Four Noble Truths are therefore not merely doctrinal claims; they form a practical path of liberation, in which the root cause of suffering must be recognized, its cessation understood as possible, and the path leading to that cessation cultivated. In this sense, Buddhist epistemology is soteriological in nature.

A central idea in Buddhist thought is that ignorance is not simply a lack of information but a distorted way of seeing, an inability to recognize the impermanent nature of reality. Buddhist philosophy considers ignorance the root cause of suffering. Its central theme is that all phenomena are impermanent, without essence, and mutually dependent; due to ignorance, we mistake the impermanent for the permanent and the non-self for the eternal. According to Buddhism, ignorance generates a chain of volitional formations, consciousness, name-and-form, the sense bases, contact, feeling, craving, clinging, becoming, birth, and finally old age and death. This causal chain connecting ignorance to suffering, which drives the endless cycle of birth and death, is known as dependent origination. By tracing suffering back to its causes, Buddhism shows that liberation requires not only moral discipline but also deep insight into conditioned reality.

This is why the Buddhist path brings together ethics, concentration, and wisdom. *Śīla* represents righteous conduct, *saṃādhi* stabilizes and concentrates the mind, and *prajñā* enables clear insight into reality. These are not separate practices but mutually supporting stages of a single liberative discipline. Wisdom is decisive because it uproots ignorance, but it becomes effective only when the mind has been prepared through ethical and meditative training. *Prajñā* is not simply a theory of correct belief; it is a transformative way of seeing that dissolves mistaken assumptions about self, permanence, and possession. Clear understanding of the true nature of reality - impermanence, unsatisfactoriness, and non-self-gradually weakens attachment and craving, and breaks down the cycle of suffering at its root.

At the doctrinal level, this makes Buddhist epistemology deeply soteriological. Right knowledge is not valued merely because it is accurate; it matters because it leads to cessation. In this respect, Buddhist thought differs from purely theoretical approaches to knowledge, since its final test is whether insight helps bring about awakening.

Nyāya Epistemology: Knowledge as the Means to Liberation

The epistemological doctrine of the Nyāya school is one of the most prominent examples of the soteriological orientation of Indian epistemology. According to this



system, the true purpose of studying knowledge is not merely to obtain cognitive ability but to pursue valid cognition as the means to liberation, since true knowledge ultimately leads to the complete cessation of suffering. Nyāya philosophy holds that bond aegis sustained by false cognition, which misrepresents the self and the mundane world and there by produces attachment, a version, and uninterrupted engagement in action. Since such actions inevitably cause rebirth and continuous suffering, the root cause of suffering is evidently erroneous cognition.

The opening verse of the Nyāya-sūtra states that liberation can be attained by mastering the sixteen categories:

“Pramāṇa-prameya-saṁśaya-prajñāna-drṣṭānta-siddhānta-avayava-tarka-nirṇaya-vāda-jalpa-vitaṇḍā-hetvābhāsa-cchala-jāti-nigrahasthānānām tattvajñānānīḥśreyasādhigamaḥ” || 1.1 ||

These sixteen categories are pramāṇa, prameya, saṁśaya, prajñāna, drṣṭānta, siddhānta, avayava, tarka, nirṇaya, vāda, jalpa, vitaṇḍā, hetvābhāsa, chala, jāti, and nigrahasthāna. Their function is not merely logical taxonomy; rather, they constitute an epistemic guideline that leads from mere cognition to knowledge through correct discrimination, especially regarding the self and the non-self, thereby preparing the ground for liberation. According to Nyāya, false cognition generates defect; defect generates action; action leaves latent impressions and produces rebirth; rebirth sustains suffering. Valid cognition, by contrast, interrupts this sequence at its root. Pramāṇa is thus not only a source of knowledge but a means of liberation, because it removes the cognitive distortion that sustains bondage. The second verse states:

“Duhkha-janma-pravṛtti-doṣa-mithyājñānānāmuttarottarāpāye tad-anantarāpāyādapavargaḥ” || 1.1.2 ||

Nyāya thus affirms that false knowledge binds the soul, whereas true knowledge leads to liberation, in accordance with the opening aphorism: “from true knowledge arises liberation” (tattvajñānānīḥśreyasādhigamaḥ). Liberation is achieved through correct knowledge of the sixteen categories (padārthas), and the Nyāya system accordingly emphasizes logical analysis, valid cognition, and the refutation of error through reason.

Nyāya recognizes four means of knowledge: pratyakṣa (perception), anumāna (inference), upamāna (comparison), and śabda (testimony). Knowledge is valid when it corresponds with reality; by eliminating false cognition through rational inquiry, Nyāya epistemology paves the way to liberation. According to the Nyāya-sūtra and Nyāya-sūtra-bhāṣya, apavarga, or liberation, is the twelfth object of knowledge (prameya) in Nyāya epistemology. In the Tarkabhāṣā, Keśava Mīśra describes twelve stages culminating in apavarga:

“sapunarapavargāḥkatham/ucyate/śāstrādividitapadārthasamastatattvasyaviśaya doṣadarśanaviraktasyamumukṣoḥdhyāyino dhyānaparipākavaśātsākṣātkṛtātmanah kleśahīnasyaniṣkāmakarmānuṣṭhānādanāgatadharmādharmavarjayataḥpūrvopāttāndhar mādharma pracayaṁyogaprabhāvātviditvāsamāhṛtya bhuñjānasyapūrvakarmavirṭtauvartamānaśarīrādivigame'pūrvaśarīrābhāvādekaviṁśati duḥkhasambandhonabhavatikāraṇābhāvāt / yo'yaṁekaviṁśati duḥkhaḥhāniḥso'pavargaḥ”



These twelve stages are: (1) holistic knowledge of objects and their respective categories; (2) understanding of the flaws inherent in objects; (3) loss of attachment; (4) desire for liberation; (5) meditation; (6) knowledge of the true nature of the soul; (7) removal of all pain; (8) action without attachment; (9) understanding of the proper meaning of dharma and adharma; (10) cessation of the effects of prior action; (11) disappearance of the physical body; and (12) disappearance of the subtle body. Nyāya thus establishes a direct connection between epistemology and soteriology: valid cognition is not merely correct representation, but a disciplined means of ending the conditions that produce bondage and suffering.

Vaiśeṣika Philosophy: Knowledge of Categories and Liberation

The Vaiśeṣika School is often considered the metaphysical school of Indian philosophy, as it argues that suffering exists because the self fails to interpret reality correctly, and that only true knowledge of reality can destroy suffering. Vaiśeṣika admits *pratyakṣa* (perception) and *anumāna* (inference) as the means to attain true knowledge. According to this school, the objects of knowledge fall into six categories: *dravya*, *guṇa*, *karma*, *sāmānya*, *viśeṣa*, and *samavāya*. Vaiśeṣika thus shows that epistemology is concerned not only with describing reality accurately but also with removing ignorance and preparing the self for liberation through the light of knowledge.

Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika form a complementary system. Like Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika holds that correct knowledge is a decisive condition for liberation, which arises from the true knowledge of the six categories. In the Vaiśeṣika-sūtra, Mahārṣi Kaṇāda states:

*“dharmaviśeṣaprasūtādravyaguṇakarmasāmānyaviśeṣasamavāyānāmpadārthānām
sādharmyavaidharmyābhyāntattvajñānānniḥśreyasam”||1.1.4||*

In both Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika, epistemology is inseparably connected with liberation: correct knowledge of reality dismantles the ignorance that sustains bondage. Their difference lies in emphasis - Nyāya foregrounds logic to establish its doctrine, whereas Vaiśeṣika foregrounds ontological analysis.

Sāṃkhya-Yoga Epistemology

According to Sāṃkhya philosophy, reality consists of two ultimate principles: *prakṛti* (material nature) and *puruṣa* (pure consciousness). Ignorance consists in confusing these two, and discriminative knowledge (*viveka-khyāti*) - the clear distinction between *puruṣa* and *prakṛti* - is the means to liberation (*kaivalya*). Sāṃkhya accepts three means of knowledge: perception, inference, and testimony. Yoga philosophy adopts this epistemology and translates it into practical discipline through the eightfold path, culminating in *samādhi*, where mental modifications cease and the self abides in its true nature.

Sāṃkhya-Yoga epistemology is fundamentally soteriological. Knowledge is evaluated not simply in terms of correspondence or justification, but in terms of its capacity to bring about liberation. In Sāṃkhya, ignorance is the misidentification of *puruṣa*, the pure witnessing consciousness, with *prakṛti* and its products; this confusion is the basis of bondage and suffering. The epistemic goal of the system is therefore to produce *viveka-jñāna*, or discriminative knowledge, through which the distinction between consciousness and nature becomes irrevocably clear. Once this



distinction is realized, these If apprehends its true nature as eternal, free, pure consciousness, and kaivalya, or absolute freedom, becomes possible.

Yoga adopts the same basic metaphysical framework as Sāṃkhya but gives it a more explicitly practical and disciplined form. It holds that an ignorant mind is ordinarily clouded by fluctuations, impurities, and latent impressions that prevent clear discernment of reality. For this reason, Yoga does not treat knowledge as a matter of theoretical attainment; rather, it understands liberating knowledge as something that must be cultivated through the practice of the eight limbs of yoga, especially ethical restraint, concentration, meditation, and samādhi. The Yogic insistence on *citta-vṛtti-nirodha* shows that liberation is not achieved by conceptual understanding alone, but by the purification and stabilization of consciousness so that discriminative insight may become firm and uninterrupted.

From this perspective, Sāṃkhya-Yoga epistemology is inseparable from soteriology. Knowledge functions as a means of undoing *avidyā*, and its liberative value lies precisely in its capacity to dissolve this distortion. Epistemology in Sāṃkhya and Yoga is thus not an autonomous philosophical enterprise detached from existential concerns, but a practical discipline oriented toward the final cessation of suffering and the realization of freedom.

Vedānta Epistemology

The epistemologies of Advaita Vedānta and Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta are deeply soteriological, despite fundamental differences in their metaphysical commitments. According to Advaita Vedānta, *ātma-jñāna*, the direct knowledge of the non-dualidentity of Ātmanand Brahman, is the sole means of attaining *mokṣa*. The sole cause of bondage is ignorance (*avidyā*), which takes the form of *adhyāsa*, the superimposition of the non-self upon the Self. The primary function of the *pramāṇas*, especially *śabda* (Upaniṣadic revelation), is to remove this ignorance; once ignorance is purged, liberation is achieved through direct knowledge of the non-duality of Brahman. Knowledge here is a means to *ātyantika-duḥkha-nivṛtti*, the absolute cessation of suffering.

Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta, as propounded by Rāmānuja, holds a qualified non-dualism in which Brahman (*Nārāyaṇa*) is the only independent reality, while individual selves and the world exist as real, dependent modes of Brahman. Epistemologically, Viśiṣṭādvaita recognizes perception, inference, and scripture, and holds that *śabda* reveals the true nature of Brahman. Liberation is achieved not through the realization of identity but through true knowledge of one's essential dependence on Brahman, attained through devotion (*bhakti*) supported by knowledge (*jñāna*).

Conclusion

This study has argued that Indian epistemology is inherently soteriological in orientation. Across diverse philosophical schools such as Jainism, Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika, Sāṃkhya-Yoga, Buddhism, and Advaita Vedānta, knowledge emerges as the primary means for overcoming ignorance and achieving liberation. Despite the variety of conceptions of liberation and ignorance, the underlying notion remains constant: cognitive error is the root of suffering, and its abolition requires epistemic transformation. By situating epistemology within the human problem of suffering,



Indian philosophy offers an alternative model in which knowledge is not merely descriptive or justificatory but liberative. This perspective continues to hold relevance for contemporary philosophical discourse by encouraging a rethinking of the purpose and scope of epistemological inquiry itself.

Another significant observation of this study concerns the instrumental nature of truth in Indian thought. Unlike the Western pursuit of truth for its own sake, Indian philosophers evaluate knowledge on the basis of its enlightening efficacy; a “valid” cognition is one that successfully directs the practitioner toward ātyantika-nivṛtti, the final and absolute cessation of pain. Furthermore, the Indian tradition treats the mind and the senses as instruments that must be purified through disciplined inquiry (sādhana). Epistemology is thus a moral and existential urgency: to know is to be free.

In sum, Indian epistemology offers a profound challenge to the modern, detached view of cognition. It suggests that the highest purpose of human intelligence is not merely to map the world, but to transcend the limitations of the ego and the suffering inherent in a misperceived reality. By aligning the mechanisms of knowledge with the goal of liberation (mokṣa), these ancient systems provide a holistic framework in which the intellect serves the deepest aspirations of the human spirit.

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