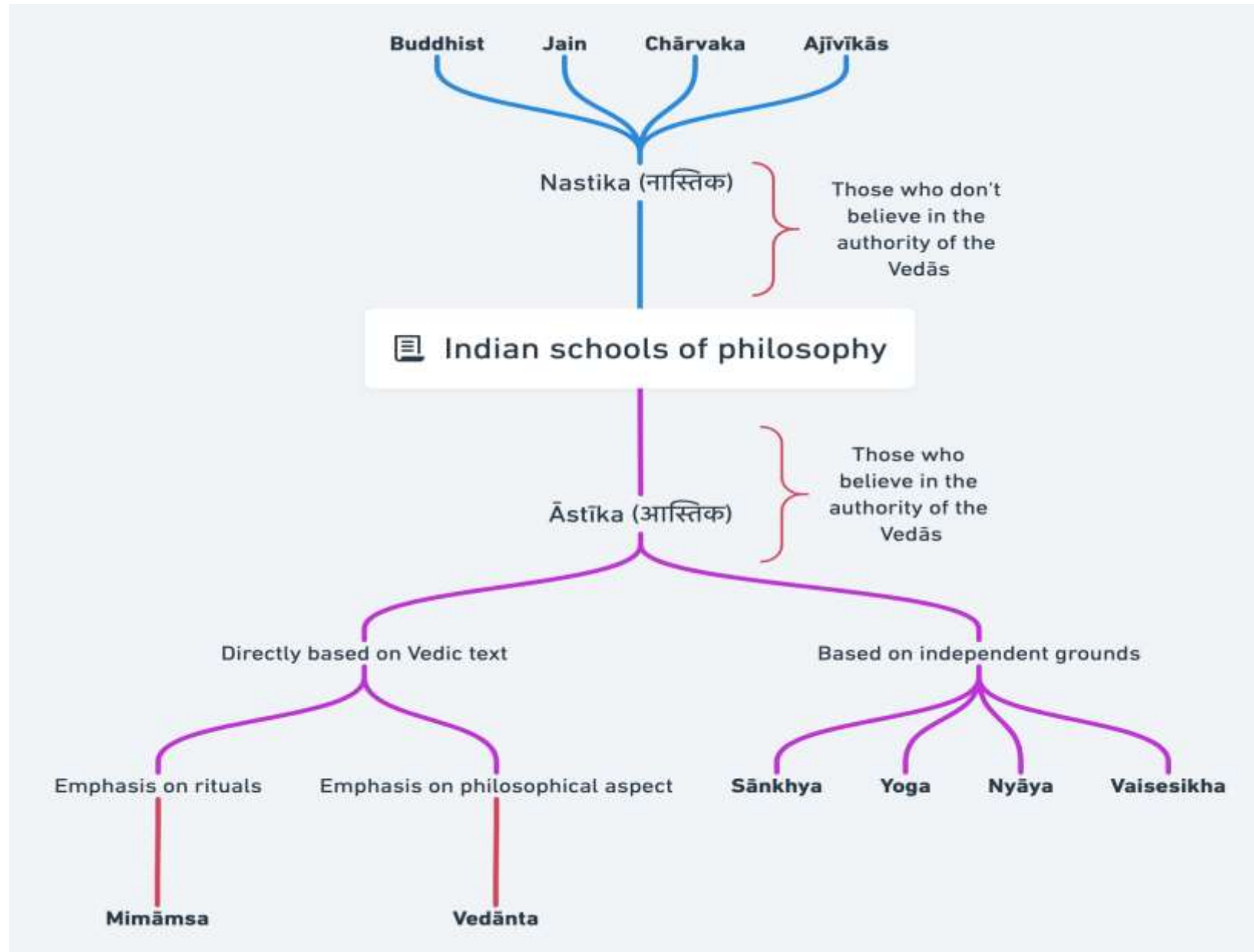


Cārvāka

600BCE

Divisions in Indian Philosophies



Cārvāka



Charvaka

One of the key beliefs of Charvaka was hedonism, the idea that pleasure is the ultimate goal of human life. Charvakas believed that one should pursue pleasure in the present moment without regard for the consequences, as death was the end of all consciousness.

Brihaspati is referred to as the founder of Charvaka philosophy.

Cārvāka

Cārvāka is the oldest heterodox school. It predates Jainism and Buddhism.

There are no remaining original texts from the Cārvāka. One reason is because there were no major royal proponents, and also the believers may have destroyed their texts. We have access to their views because they are mentioned by other schools in their scripture.

Brhaspati is considered to be the founder of the system. However, his original sutra is lost.

Cārvāka

Lokāyata is the only sutra: directed towards, aiming at the world, worldly/ Philosophy of the People or Ordinary People

perception is the only source of knowledge; earth, water, fire, and air are the only elements; *artha* and *kama* are the only two goals of human life; consciousness (in the body) is produced by earth, water, fire, and air. Mind is only a product of matter. There is no other world. Only death is *moksa*.

Sutra = Teaching

Kama = Sexual Pleasure

Artha = Wealth

Moksha = liberation from the cycle of rebirth

Cārvāka

Deny: Authority of the Vedas.

Deny: Life after death.

Deny: Existence of God.

Deny: Theory of karmic action and cycle of rebirth.

Deny: Meditation and Fasting as important ascetic practices.

Cārvāka's Epistemology

- Perception is the only valid source of knowledge.
- Neither inference nor scripture is a valid source of knowledge.
- The self is the body.
- Consciousness arises from the combination of the natural elements which constitute the body.
- Consciousness does not continue after death.

Inference is not Certain

- Inference is an attempt to move from a case where something is known by observation to a case where something is not known by observation.

1. There is smoke on the hill over there. [By observation]
2. Where ever there is smoke there is fire, because in my kitchen when there is smoke there is fire, and on a lake where smoke is absent fire is absent.
3. So, there is a fire on the hill over there.

Carvaka criticism: How do you know claim (2)?

There is no certainty with respect to (2).

- Inference is an uncertain leap from the known to unknown

Testimony is not acceptable

1. Testimony depends on inference.
2. Inference is not knowledge generating.
3. If mental state x depends on mental state y , and y is not knowledge generating, then x is not knowledge generating.
4. So, testimony is not knowledge generating.
5. Testimony relating to unperceived objects is not reliable

Why does testimony depend on inference?

Application: Vedas are not a source of knowledge, because they only provide thoughts / cognition via testimony which is not knowledge generating.

Critical Question: is the rejection of testimony politically based on the attempt to avoid having to accept the Vedas as authoritative?

Cārvāka's Materialism

- Earth, water, fire, and air are the only realities. **Ether is not** a fundamental element because it is not perceptible.
- **Consciousness** arises from these elements in the same way as the intoxicating nature of a drink arises from the combination of elements each of which separately does not have that power to intoxicate. Mind emerges from basic elements. But it is not distinct in kind from them.
- **The self** is nothing but the body constituted by consciousness. Contrary to the Hindu permanent self, and the Buddhist impermanent self.

Mind Emerges from Basic Material Constituents.

The Self = Consciousness + Body

Mian Thesis...

- Consciousness is produced by the combination of elements.
- Mind and body are unified.
- There is no eternal soul apart from the body.
- When the body is destroyed consciousness is destroyed.
- The theory of karmic action cannot be proved.
- There is no result of good or bad actions.
- We don't know if there is life after death.
- We don't know what consequences of an action are good or bad or how that effects us.
- Divine literature and religious practices are made by priests for their own benefits. Religion is for foolish people.

Mian Thesis

- Sensory experience is the only valid source of knowledge.
- All beings are created by male and female sexes.
- All men are equal.
- There is no purity or superiority of caste.
- Social equality is the supreme philosophy.
- Death itself is liberation.
- One should not follow religious duties. Since the result is in the future and doubtful.
- The conscious soul is only the aggregate of body and senses.
- Since no one has seen the next world, it does not exist.

Cārvāka's Ethics

Egoism: Individual needs and ends are prior to the ends of others.

Hedonism: Pleasure is the only positive good of intrinsic value.

Rejects the utilitarian principle that one should promote the action that is best for all parties. Rather it promotes the idea that one should never act so as to benefit a group if it does not benefit one as well.

Nihilism is the view that nothing has meaning or value. Some believe that the fundamental nature of Cārvāka ethics is nihilistic because it denies the existence of God.

Discussions/Questions