

Darshanik Framework

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“Systemic Architecture of Indian Worldviews.”

Abstract

This essay presents the Darśanik Framework as a unifying systemic interpretation of the major Indian philosophical traditions, both Vaidik and A-Vaidik. It reconstructs the shared conceptual architecture that underlies these traditions—the nature of the person, the structure of karma, the persistence of suffering, and the aspiration for liberation—while respecting their doctrinal divergences. By tracing the journey of the embodied agent through birth, action, consequence, death, and rebirth, the framework positions classical categories such as the subtle body, residues of action, destiny, and randomness within a coherent causal model. It further contrasts the metaphysical foundations of the schools, ranging from materialism and determinism to dualism and non-dualism, revealing the breadth of Indian thought on existence, agency, and transcendence. The accompanying diagrams provide a systematic scaffold for visualising cyclical life processes, karmic mechanisms, and soteriological pathways. Together, they demonstrate that Indian worldviews, despite their plurality, converge on a profound inquiry into the causes of suffering and the conditions for freedom, thereby offering a structured lens through which the architecture of Indian philosophy may be understood.

1. Introduction

Indian philosophy unfolds as a multi-layered inquiry into reality, self, and ultimate liberation. The Darśanas (systems of thought) emerged as attempts to explain existence, causation, and the path to transcendence. These frameworks not only sought metaphysical clarity but also practical guidance for human flourishing. The following narrative traces the journey of a person through the intertwined concepts of body, soul, karma, suffering, destiny, rebirth, and salvation, as articulated in various traditions. Each conceptual stage is illustrated with symbolic diagrams, providing a systemic scaffold for understanding.

2. The Person: Knower, Doer, and Residue

At the heart of the framework lies the human being (व्यक्ति), constituted by multiple dimensions: the knower (ज्ञाता), the doer (कर्ता-कर्म चक्र), and the residue (संचित) of past actions. This residue accumulates as virtue (पुण्य) and sin (पाप), which influence one's pursuits and drives. The subtle body (सूक्ष्म शरीर) acts as the carrier of these karmic residues across lives, while the gross body (स्थूल शरीर) provides the medium of worldly engagement (Fig. 1). The flame of consciousness

(चित्-शक्ती) links the subtle and gross bodies, allowing the embodied soul (आत्मा) to manifest experiences. This depiction captures the cyclical entanglement of personhood, karma, and rebirth.

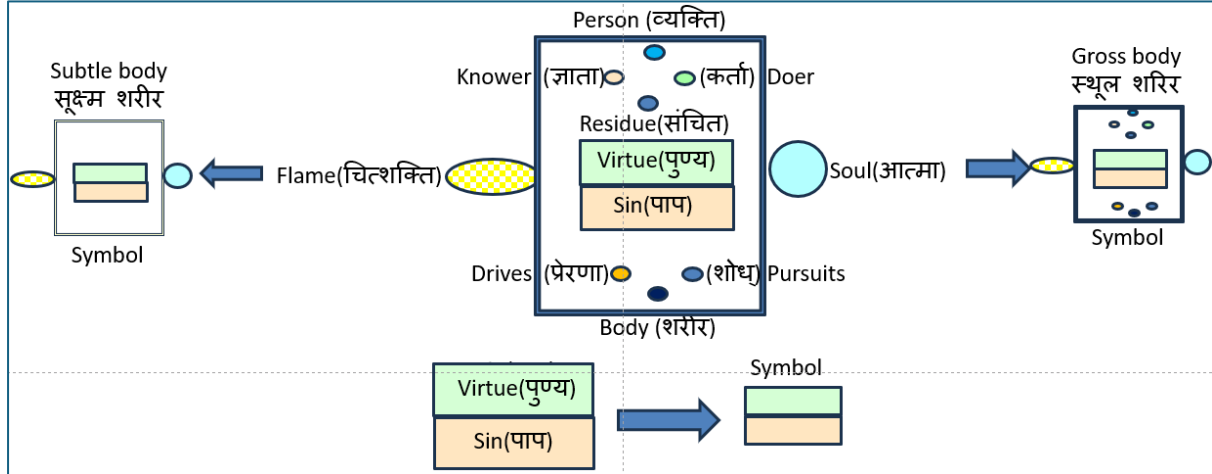


Fig. 1: Person, Residue, and Bodies (Subtle and Gross)

3. Birth, World, and Suffering

Human life begins with birth (जन्म) and unfolds within the world (जगत), characterised by both agents (सचेतन वस्तु) and objects (अचेतन वस्तु). Life is not free of calamities (आपदा) or suffering (दुःख) which emerge from the complex interplay of destiny (दैव) and randomness (यादृच्छिक). Death (मृत्यु) concludes each cycle, propelling the subtle body into rebirth (Fig. 2).



Fig. 2: Birth, World, Suffering, and Death

This stage illustrates the fundamental human predicament—suffering—and the quest for understanding its cause and resolution.

4. The Karmic Loop

Central to all Vaidik Darśanas is the doctrine of karma. Every pursuit and drive (प्रेरणा) generates karmic imprints, which accumulate as residues. These karmic outcomes shape the future of the agent, reinforcing the cycle of birth and death (संसार). The karmic loop (कर्मचक्र) thus perpetuates human existence, binding the soul to repeated cycles until liberation is attained (Fig. 3).

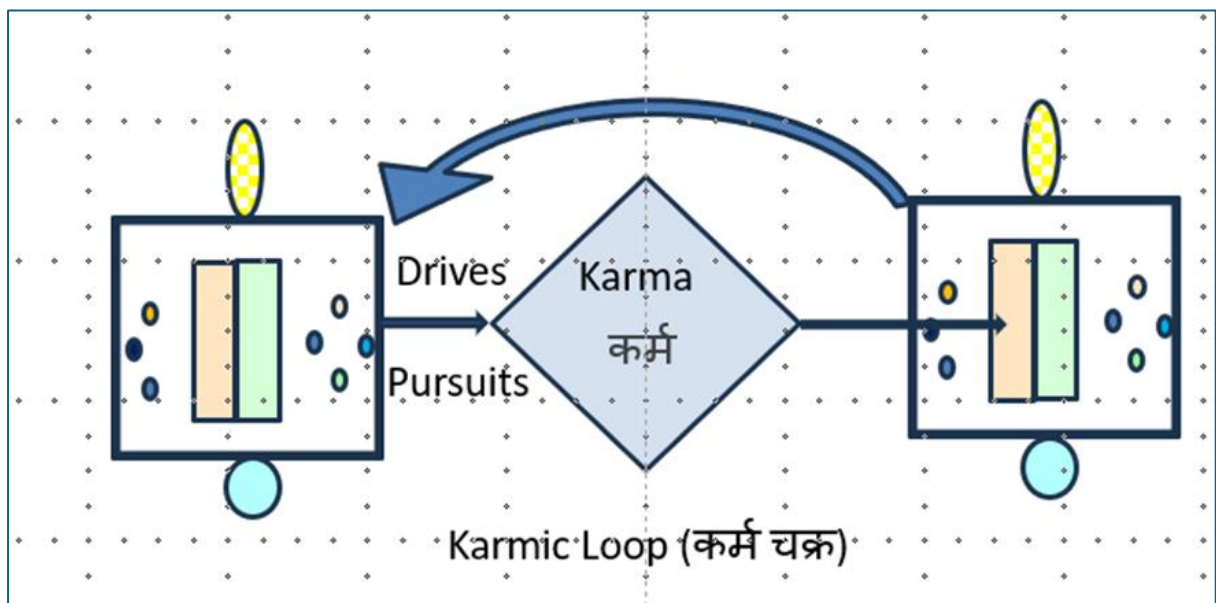


Fig. 3: Karmic Loop

5. Karma and the World

The world, seen through the karmic lens, is both a field of action and a stage of consequences. Calamities, suffering, and destiny are not arbitrary but follow causal principles rooted in karma. Yet randomness (यदुच्छ) is also acknowledged, suggesting that not all phenomena are strictly deterministic. The framework therefore accommodates both law-like causation and contingency (Fig. 4).

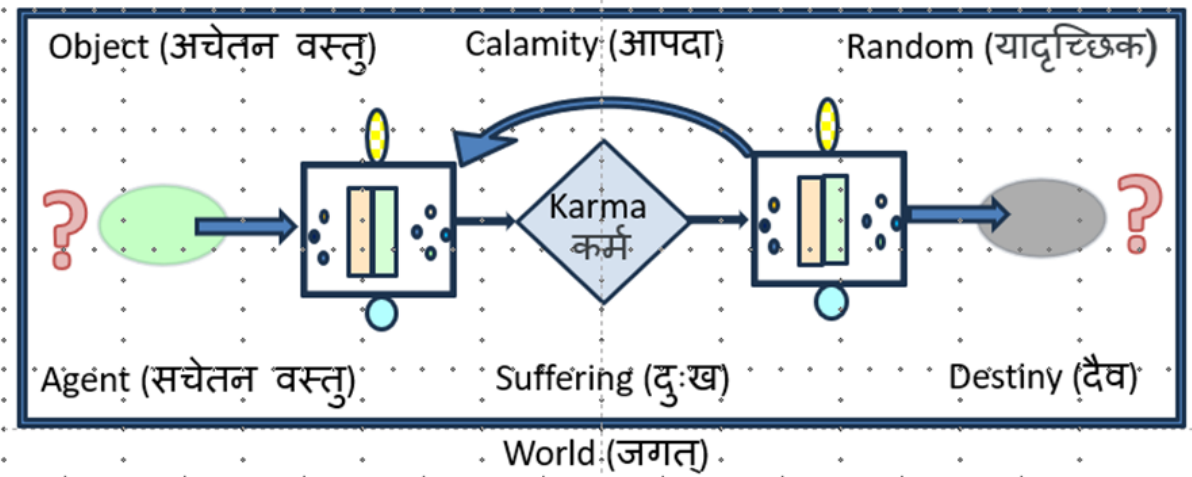


Fig. 4: Karma and the World (Calamity, Suffering, Destiny, Randomness)

6. Subtle Body and Continuity

The subtle body ensures continuity across births. Carrying the symbolic residues of past karma, it enters new embodiments through the channel of destiny. This mechanism explains why individuals face unique circumstances, sufferings, and fortunes. It also frames the philosophical question of whether liberation (मोक्ष) is attainable from within the cycle or requires transcendence (Fig. 5).

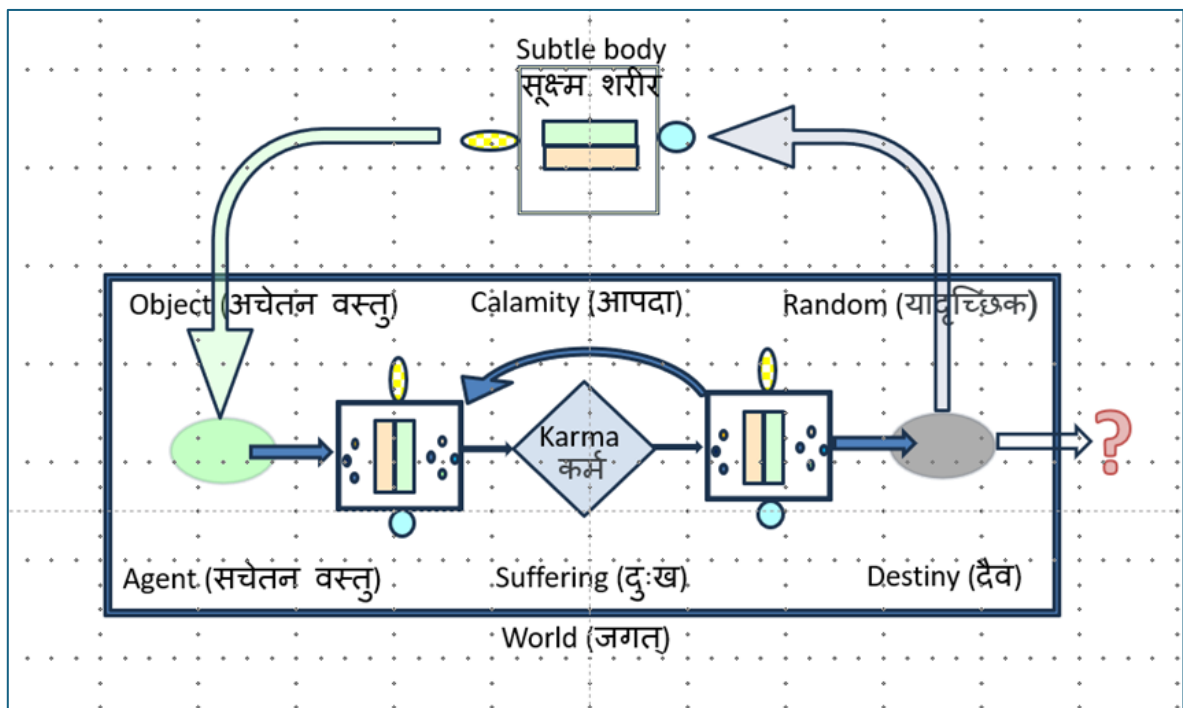


Fig. 5: Subtle Body and Continuity

7. Liberation and the Question of First Birth

The framework raises two critical questions: what constitutes the first birth (प्रथम जन्म), and how can liberation (मोक्ष, मुक्ति) be attained? While the cycle of rebirth appears endless, traditions diverge on whether the cycle had a definite beginning. Liberation, however, is uniformly viewed as release from the cycle, the cessation of suffering, and the attainment of ultimate freedom (Fig. 6).

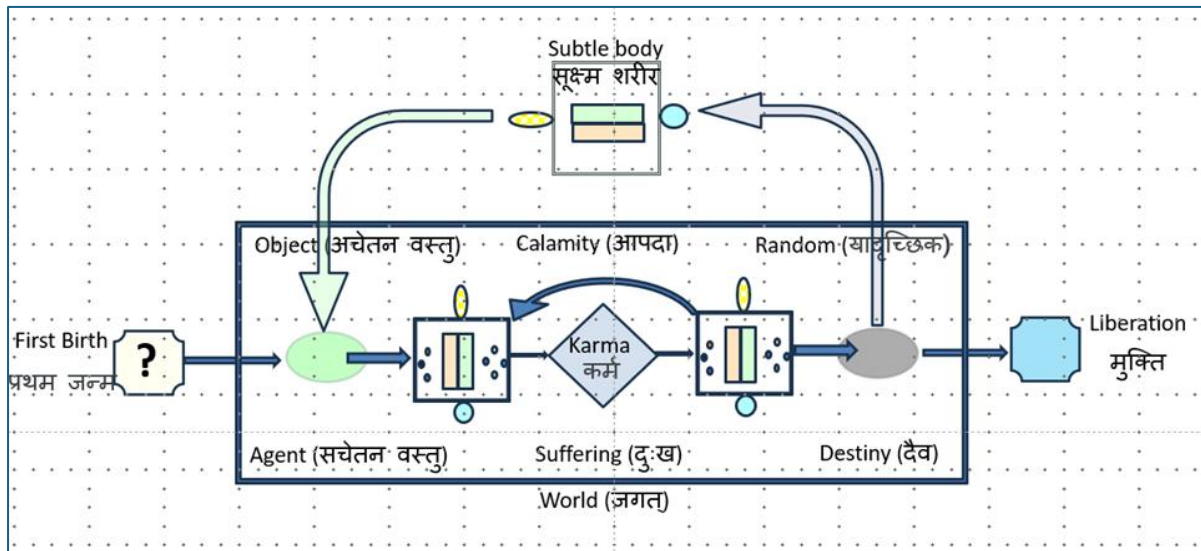


Fig. 6: Liberation and First Birth

8. Maya, Brahman, and the Vaidik Vision

The Vaidik Darśanas integrate the doctrine of Māyā (माया) and Brahman (ब्रह्म). Brahman is the ultimate reality, while Māyā (माया) represents the creative principle that manifests the world of multiplicity. Through creation, the world emerges; through karma, beings cycle within it; and through salvation (मोक्ष), the soul returns to its source, free from bondage. This establishes a cosmic arc encompassing creation, existence, and liberation (Fig. 7).

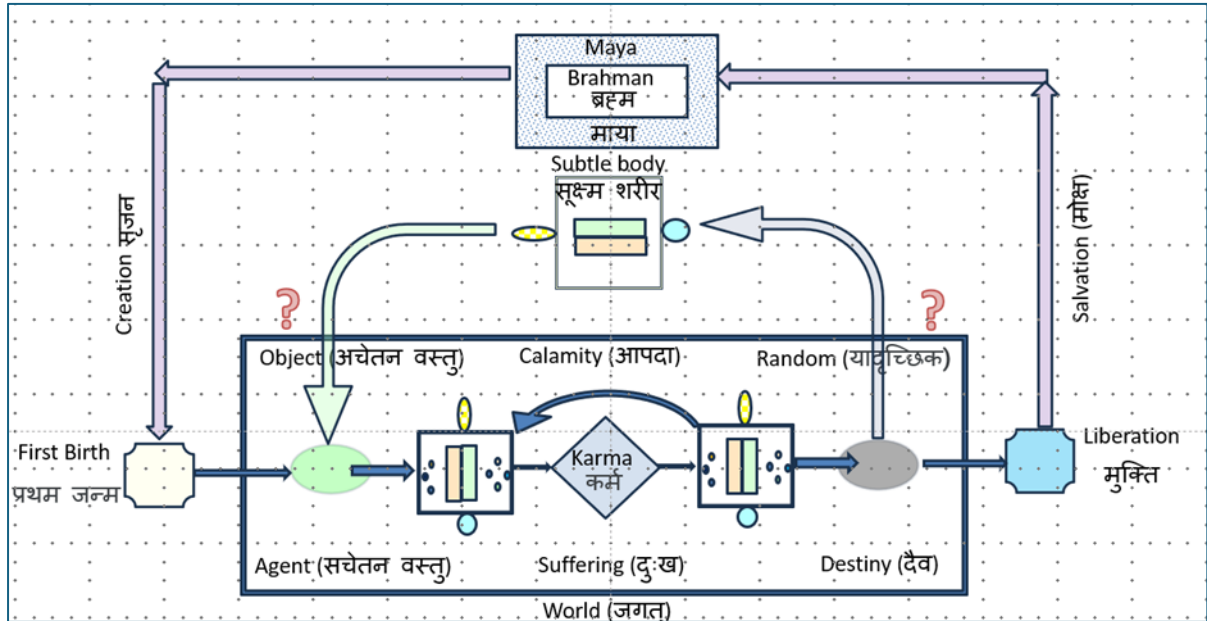


Fig. 7: Maya, Brahman, and the Vaidik Vision

9. Extinction and Emergence

The framework also incorporates notions of extinction (विनाश) alongside creation (सृजन). While Brahman remains eternal, the world is subject to cycles of emergence and dissolution. Liberation stands apart, marking the transcendence of the individual soul beyond both creation and extinction, into an unconditioned reality (Fig. 8).

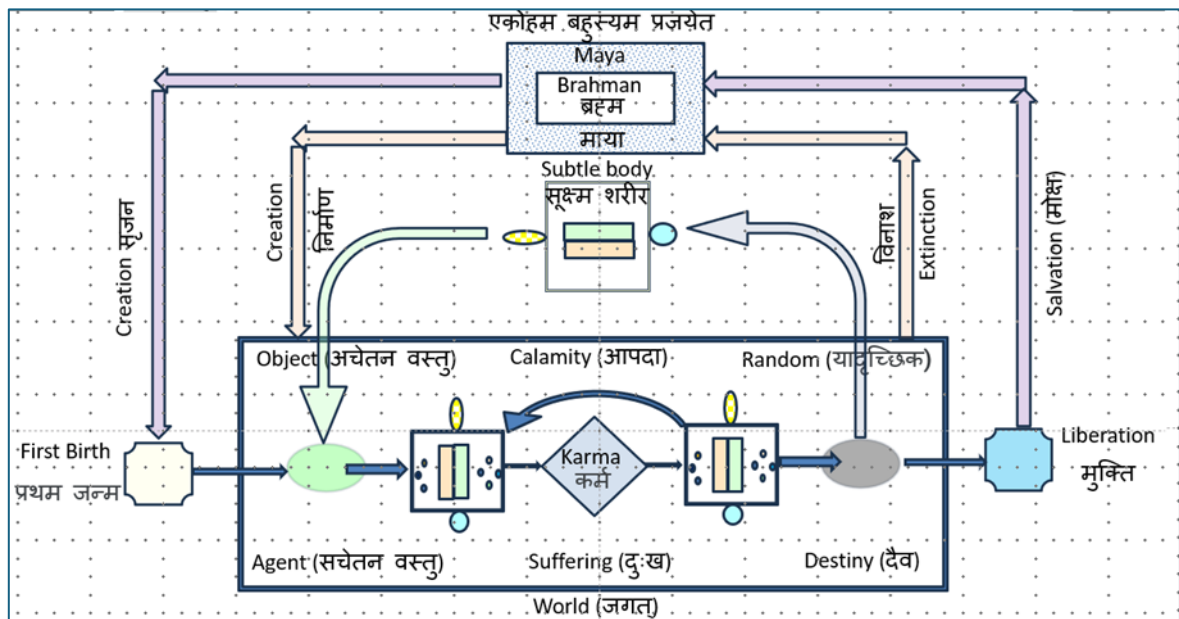


Fig. 8: Extinction and Emergence

10. The Vaidik and A-Vaidik Divergence

Indian philosophy bifurcates into Vaidik and A-Vaidik traditions. While Vaidik Darśanas (e.g., Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika, Sāṃkhya, Yoga, Mimamsa, Vedānta) retain the authority of the Vedas, the A-Vaidik schools (e.g., Buddhism, Jainism, Cārvāka, Ājīvika) reject or reinterpret it. The Darshanik framework captures both streams, situating them within the common concerns of karma, suffering, and liberation, while noting their metaphysical divergences (Fig. 9).

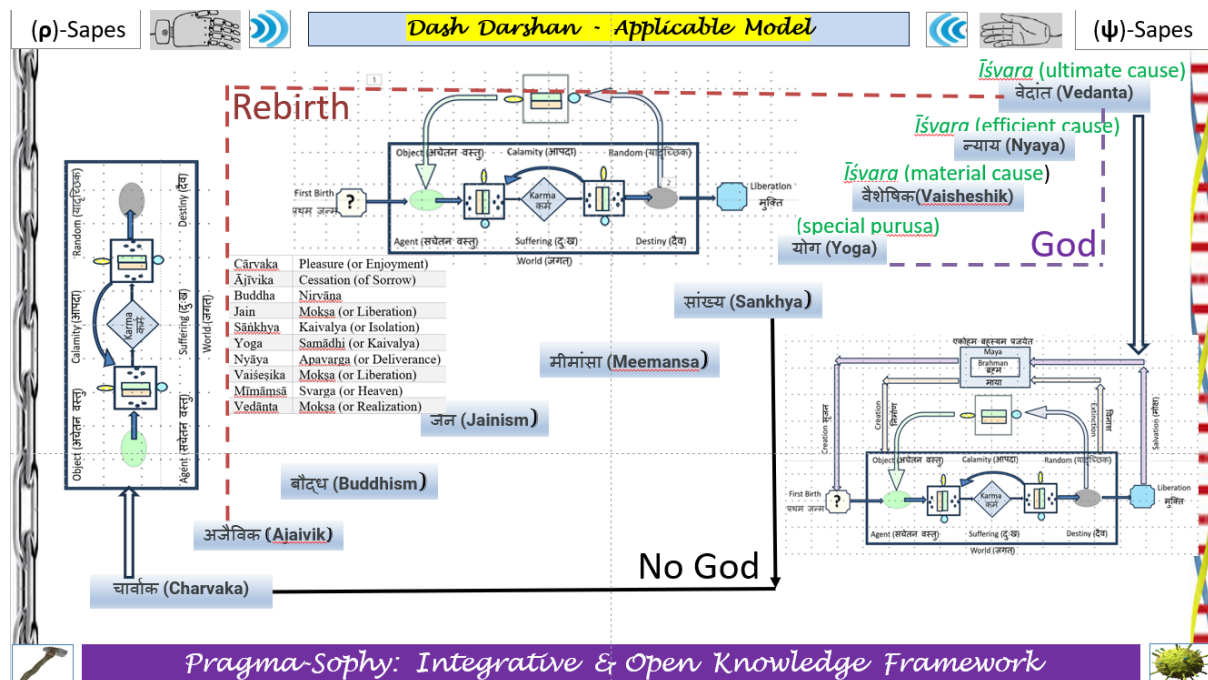


Fig. 9: Vaidik vs A-Vaidik Framework

11. Comparative Overview of Darśanas

Each Darśana diagnoses a root cause of suffering, proposes a goal of liberation, and introduces unique para-notions:

- **Cārvāka:** Rejects soul, karma, and God; admits suffering in life; goal is sensory pleasure.
- **Ājīvika:** Upholds Niyati (absolute destiny); liberation is predetermined.
- **Buddhism:** Identifies craving (trṣṇā) as root; liberation is nirvāṇa.
- **Jainism:** Karma as subtle matter binding the jīva; liberation is mokṣa.

- **Nyāya & Vaiśeṣika:** Accept Īśvara and karma; liberation is apavarga/mokṣa.
- **Sāṃkhya & Yoga:** Liberation as kaivalya or samādhi; dualism of puruṣa and prakṛti.
- **Mīmāṃsā:** Focus on dharma and ritual action; goal is svarga.
- **Vedānta:** Liberation as mokṣa through realisation of Brahman.

Darśana	Root Cause (Trigger)	Goal (Ultimate Aim)	Key Para Notions
Cārvāka	Pain Suffering in this life Misery	Pleasure (Maximum Sensory Enjoyment)	Only Pratyakṣa (Direct Perception) Rejects soul, karma, and God.
Ājīvika	Lack of awareness of Niyati (Absolute Destiny)	Cessation of all sorrow (Predetermined Liberation)	Niyati (Fate/Cosmic Determinism) as the supreme principle.
Buddha	Tṛṣṇā (Craving/Attachment) leading to Duḥkha (Suffering)	Nirvāṇa (Cessation of Suffering/Extinction of Cravings)	Anātman (No permanent self), Kṣaṇikatva (Momentariness),
Jain	Accumulation of Karma (subtle matter) on the Jīva (Soul)	Mokṣa (Liberation of Jīva from Karma)	Anekāntavāda (Non-absolutism), Jīva (Consciousness) and Ajīva (Non-Consciousness).

Darśana	Root Cause (Trigger)	Goal (Ultimate Aim)	Key Para Notions
Sāṃkhya	Aviveka between Puruṣa and Prakṛti	Kaivalya (Isolation of Puruṣa from Prakṛti)	Puruṣa (Consciousness) and Prakṛti (Matter/Nature)
Yoga	Citta Vṛtti (Fluctuations of the Mind-Stuff)	Samādhi or Kaivalya (Cessation of Citta Vṛttis)	Systematizes Sāṃkhya; introduces Īśvara (God) as an aid; focuses on the Aṣṭāṅga (Eight Limbs).
Vaiśeṣika	Ignorance of the true nature of the Padārthas (Categories)	Mokṣa (Cessation of suffering through right knowledge)	Paramāṇu (Atomism), Seven Padārthas (Categories of Existence).
Nyāya	Mithyā Jñāna (False Knowledge or Delusion)	Apavarga or Mokṣa (Final deliverance through true knowledge)	Focuses on Pramāṇas (Means of Valid Knowledge: Perception, Inference, Comparison, Testimony).
Mīmāṃsā	Deviating from Dharma (Vedic Ritual Duty)	Svarga (Heaven) or Mokṣa (Achieved by perfect ritual performance)	Absolute authority of the Vedas (Karma Kāṇḍa), focus on Dharma and Apurva (unseen ritual power).
Vedānta	Ayīdyā or Māyā (Ignorance of the true Self, Brahman)	Mokṣa (Realization of identity with or relationship to Brahman)	Brahman (Ultimate Reality), Ātman (Self), interpretation of the Upanishads (Jñāna Kāṇḍa).

Fig. 10: Comparative Overview of Darśanas (Diagram)

13. Recapitulation

The Darshanik Framework thus offers a panoramic view of Indian philosophy as an interwoven tapestry of metaphysical, ethical, and soteriological insights. Despite their divergences, the Darśanas converge on key existential questions: the cause of suffering, the nature of action, and the possibility of liberation. By mapping these systems within a unified framework, we

appreciate both their individuality and their collective contribution to humanity's search for meaning.

“Systemic Architecture of Indian Worldviews.”

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References

I. General Surveys of Indian Philosophy (Secondary Sources)

These standard academic works provide comprehensive overviews and critical analyses of the various *Darśanas* (Vaidik and A-Vaidik) and the core concepts (Karma, Mokṣa, etc.) discussed in your framework.

- Dasgupta, Surendranath. *A History of Indian Philosophy*. 5 Vols. Cambridge University Press (or Motilal Banarsidass). (A monumental, multi-volume scholarly work covering nearly every school).
- Radhakrishnan, Sarvepalli. *Indian Philosophy*. 2 Vols. Oxford University Press (or George Allen & Unwin). (A foundational and widely-cited text).
- Sharma, Chandradhar. *A Critical Survey of Indian Philosophy*. Motilal Banarsidass. (A concise, single-volume overview often used in universities).
- Zimmer, Heinrich. *Philosophies of India*. Edited by Joseph Campbell. Princeton University Press. (An influential work with a strong focus on the interconnectedness of Indian thought).
- Ganeri, Jonardon (Ed.). *The Oxford Handbook of Indian Philosophy*. Oxford University Press. (A collection of contemporary scholarly essays on specific schools and concepts).

II. Foundational Classical Texts and Commentaries (Primary Sources)

These references represent the source texts or the key commentators for the *Darśanas* you have integrated, such as Nyāya, Yoga, Vedānta, and the *Nāstika* traditions.

- Badarāyana. *Brahma Sūtras*. (The foundation of the Vedānta schools/Uttara Mīmāṃsā).
- Patañjali. *Yoga Sūtras*. (The foundational text of the Yoga school).
- Gautama. *Nyāya Sūtras*. (The foundational text of the Nyāya school).
- Kanāda. *Vaiśeṣika Sūtra*. (The foundational text of the Vaiśeṣika school, often studied with Nyāya).
- Śaṅkarācārya (Adi Shankara). *Bhāṣya (Commentary) on the Brahma Sūtras*. (The central text for Advaita Vedānta).
- The Upaniṣads. (*The Principal Upanishads*, translated with commentary by S. Radhakrishnan or Swami Gambhirananda). (As the source of Vedānta and the concepts of Ātman/Brahman).

- *Bhagavad Gītā*. (Translated by S. Radhakrishnan, Eknath Easwaran, or other reliable scholars). (A crucial source on Karma, Dharma, and Mokṣa).
- Mādhavācārya (Sāyaṇa-Mādhava). *Sarvadarśanasamgraha*. (A classic text that provides a survey and comparison of various systems, including Cārvāka and others).

III. Specialized Works on Concepts

These focus specifically on the concepts of Dharma, Karma, and Mokṣa, which form the ethical and soteriological core of your essay.

- Reichenbach, Bruce R. *The Law of Karma: A Philosophical Inquiry*. Routledge. (A detailed philosophical analysis of the doctrine of Karma).
- Potter, Karl H. *Presuppositions of India's Philosophies*. Motilal Banarsidass. (Excellent on the common ground of Indian systems, including suffering and liberation).
- Bronkhorst, Johannes. *Greater Magadha: Studies in the Culture of Early India*. Brill. (Useful for context on the early *Nāstika* schools: Buddhism, Jainism, and Ājīvika).

Technical Terms

English Term	(Sanskrit Term)	Short Definition
Anatma	अनात्मा	No Permeant soul
Agent (Sentient Entity)	(सचेतन वस्तु)	Being capable of intention, perception, and action.
Birth	(जन्म)	Entry of the subtle body into a new physical form.
Brahman	(ब्रह्म)	Ultimate reality; non-dual and foundational in Vaidik systems.
Calamity	(आपदा)	Sudden adverse events disrupting life.
Consciousness-Energy	(चित्-शक्ती)	Illuminating principle linking subtle and gross bodies.
Creation	(सृजन)	Manifestation of the world from primordial causes.
Craving (Buddhism)	(तृष्णा)	Root cause of suffering according to Buddhism.
Cycle of Birth–Death	(संसार)	Repeating chain of incarnations driven by karma.
Death	(मृत्यु)	Dissolution of the physical body; continuation of subtle body.
Destiny	(दैव)	Events shaped by past karma or divine order.
Destiny (Ājīvika)	(नियति)	Doctrine of absolute determinism.
Doer	(कर्ता)	The agentive dimension initiating action.
Emptiness	(शून्यता)	Doctrine that phenomena lack inherent substance.
Extinction	(विनाश)	Dissolution or disappearance of manifested forms.
First Birth	(प्रथम जन्म)	Philosophical question concerning the beginning of the cycle.
Gross Body	(स्थूल शरीर)	Physical body enabling worldly interaction.
Heaven	(स्वर्ग)	Rewarded state attained through ritual merit.

Impermanence	(क्षणिकत्व)	Doctrine that all phenomena are momentary.
Karma	(कर्म)	Law of action and its consequences across lives.
Karmic Loop	(कर्मचक्र)	Cycle of action, residue, and rebirth.
Knower	(ज्ञाता)	The cognitive dimension that perceives and understands.
Liberation (General)	(मोक्ष / मुक्ति)	Freedom from suffering and the cycle of rebirth.
Liberation (Buddhist)	(निर्वाण)	Cessation of craving and suffering.
Liberation (Jain)	(मोक्ष)	Release of the soul from karmic matter.
Liberation (Sāṃkhya/Yoga)	(कैवल्य)	Realization of pure consciousness independent of matter.
Liberation (Vedānta)	(मोक्ष)	Realisation of identity between ātman and Brahman.
Maya	(माया)	Creative power producing the appearance of multiplicity.
Object (Non-sentient)	(अचेतन वस्तु)	Entity lacking consciousness.
Person	(व्यक्ति)	Embodied humans are composed of body, mind, and soul.
Ritual Duty	(धर्म)	Moral and ritual obligations governing right action.
Randomness	(यद्गुच्छा)	Events without karmic or deterministic cause.
Residue (Karmic)	(संचित)	Accumulated results of past actions.
Self/Soul	(आत्मा)	The enduring inner essence that experiences life.
Sin	(पाप)	Negative karmic imprint created by harmful actions.
Subtle Body	(सूक्ष्म शरीर)	Non-physical carrier of karmic residues across lives.
Suffering	(दुःख)	Physical, mental, or existential distress.
Virtue	(पुण्य)	Positive karmic imprints created by righteous actions.
World	(जगत)	Realm of experience comprising agents and objects.
Vaidik Traditions	(वैदिक)	Schools that accept the authority of the Vedas.
A-Vaidik Traditions	(अवैदिक)	Schools rejecting or reinterpreting Vedic authority.

Annexure: Darshanas and Their Comparisons

- **Buddhism** denies the existence of a permanent self (anatman) and views reality as momentary (kṣaṇikatva). Liberation (nirvāṇa) is cessation of craving and suffering.
- **Vedānta** upholds the ātman as eternal and identical with Brahman. Liberation (mokṣa) is realisation of non-duality.

- **Comparison:** Buddhism rejects metaphysical permanence, focusing on impermanence and emptiness (śūnyatā), while Vedānta affirms ultimate permanence in Brahman. Both, however, agree on liberation as transcendence of suffering.
- **Vedānta** posits māyā as the cosmic illusion making the phenomenal world appear real though Brahman alone is real.
- **Simulation Hypothesis** suggests that our world is a computer-generated simulation by higher intelligence.
- **Comparison:** Both frameworks question the ontological status of the empirical world. Vedānta resolves it through self-realisation of Brahman, whereas the simulation hypothesis points to an artificial creator outside the system. The former is metaphysical and spiritual; the latter is technological and speculative.
- **Yoga** emphasises the discipline of mind, concentration (dhyāna), and samādhi as the pathway to liberation.
- **Nyāya** stresses logical reasoning, epistemology, and proof of Īśvara through causation and inference.
- **Comparison:** Yoga is experiential and inward, focusing on transformation of consciousness. Nyāya is analytical and outward, focusing on validation of knowledge and metaphysical principles. Together, they represent two complementary modes: practice and reasoning.

