

India:

Rise of Dissident Ideologies

1.What does “Dissident Ideology” mean?

Ans: Dissident: Those who disagree with an established religious or political system.

Ideology: set of ideas and beliefs prevailing in a state, society, group or political party.

Dissident ideologies emerged in the Axial Age.

2.How would you define “Axial Age”?

Ans: Axial age was a critical period in ancient history. It changed the spiritual thinking and worldview of ancient people. It developed new ways of thinking about life and the world; how to live a better life; how to make the world a better place. Axial age existed from 8th-3rd century BCE. It was introduced by German philosopher Karl T. Jaspers (1883 -1969).

3.Identify the dissident ideologies in Vedic India.

Ans: New ways of philosophical thinking took the form of new religious beliefs. Emergence of Buddhism and Jainism – challenged the traditional beliefs and rituals of the Vedic religion. Protesters came from the upper

classes, who went up against the domination of Brahmins and caste system in Vedic religion.

4.What are the 'Four Truths' of Buddhism?

Ans: Buddhism was propagated by Siddhartha Gautama (c.563-483 BCE), who was later named *Buddha* (the Enlightened One) The Four truths of Buddhism: a) life full of suffering;
b) Suffering caused by desires
c) suffering can be ended by renouncing desire
d) attaining *Nirvana* (a state of contentment) through the Noble Eightfold Path The Eightfold Path includes:

- Wisdom (right views and right intentions),
- ethical behavior (right conduct, right speech and right livelihood),
- mental discipline (right effort, right thought and right meditation)

5.How can *Nirvana* be attained in Buddhism?

Ans: *Nirvana* is a place of perfect peace and happiness, like heaven. In Buddhism, *nirvana* is the highest state that someone can attain, a state of enlightenment, meaning a person's individual desires and suffering go away.

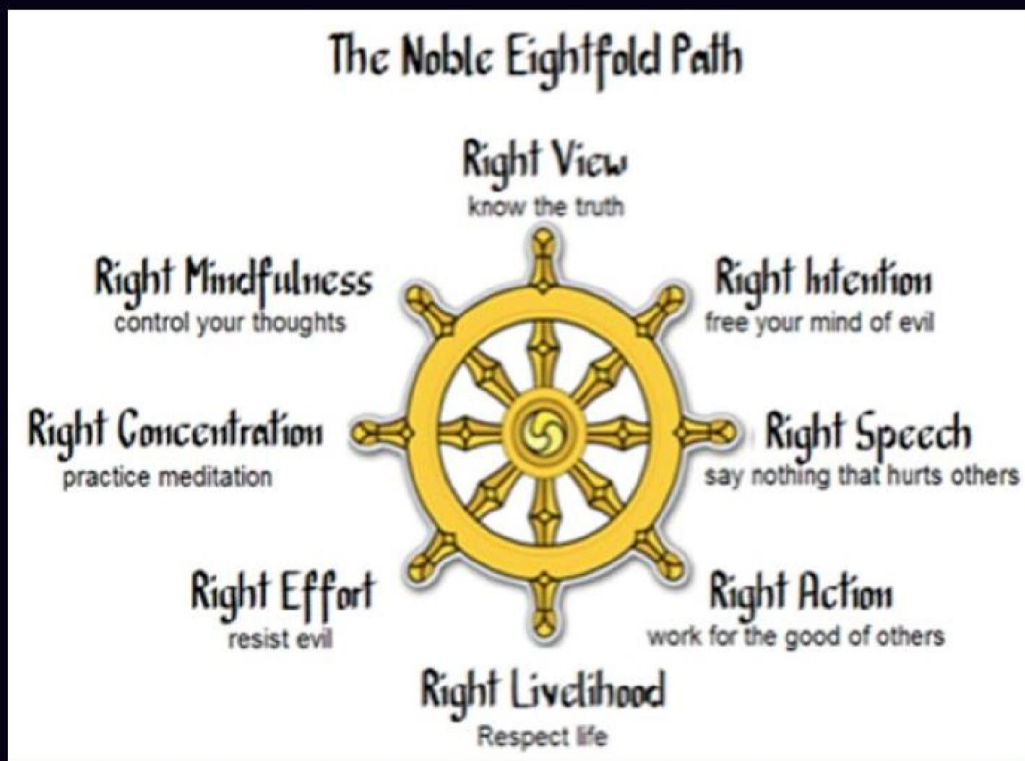
The Four Noble Truths are the essence of Buddhism and provide a plan to deal with all of the suffering that humans face. These truths state that life is filled with different types of suffering; suffering has a cause and an end; and you reach Nirvana when you end this suffering. The Noble Eightfold Path outlines the steps you must take to achieve Nirvana in your life. The Four Noble Truths describe the sickness in the human experience, and the Noble Eightfold Path is the prescription that provides healing. Understanding the truths and traveling the path will lead to peace and happiness in life.

The Four truths of Buddhism:

- a) life full of suffering;
 - b) Suffering caused by desires
 - c) suffering can be ended by renouncing desire
 - d) attaining *Nirvana* (a state of contentment) through the Noble Eightfold Path
- The Eightfold Path includes:

- Wisdom (right views and right intentions),
- ethical behavior (right conduct, right speech and right livelihood),
- mental discipline (right effort, right thought and right meditation)

Eightfold Path in *Dharmachakra*



6.What is the purpose of life according to Jainism?

Ans: Jainism and Buddhism were the two most influential schools outside the Vedic tradition that set themselves against the Brahmins. In the sixth century BCE, Vardhamana Mahavira (c. 540–468 BCE) popularized the doctrines of Jainism, which had emerged in the seventh century BCE. Born a Kshatriya in an oligarchic republic, Mahavira left home at age thirty to seek the truth about life; he spent twelve years as an ascetic (one who rejects material possessions and physical pleasures) wandering throughout the Ganges Valley before reaching enlightenment. He taught that the universe obeys its own everlasting rules and cannot be affected by any god or other supernatural being. He also believed that the purpose of life is to purify one's soul through asceticism and to attain a state of permanent bliss. The Jains' religious doctrines emphasized asceticism over knowledge: strict self-denial enabled one to avoid harming other creatures and thereby purify the soul. Moreover, the doctrine of ahimsa ("no hurt") held that every living creature has a soul. Killing even an ant would lead one to an unfavorable rebirth and further away from permanent bliss. Therefore, believers had to watch every step to avoid inadvertently becoming a murderer. Since land could not be cultivated without killing insects, the extreme nonviolence of Jainism excluded the peasants. Instead, it became a religion of traders and other city dwellers. Mahavira's followers originally transmitted his teachings orally; but a thousand years after his death they wrote them down. The strictly nonviolent doctrine, though originally intended only for followers of Jainism, has profoundly affected the inhabitants of South Asia down to modern times.

7.Compare 'Nirvana' with 'Permanent Bliss'.

Ans: Nirvana: *Nirvana* is a place of perfect peace and happiness, like heaven. In Buddhism, *nirvana* is the highest state that someone can attain, a state of enlightenment, meaning a person's individual desires and suffering go away.

The Four Noble Truths are the essence of Buddhism and provide a plan to deal with all of the suffering that humans face. These truths state that life is filled with different types of suffering; suffering has a cause and an end; and you reach Nirvana when you end this suffering. The Noble Eightfold Path outlines the steps you must take to achieve Nirvana in your life. The Four Noble Truths describe the sickness in the human experience, and the Noble Eightfold Path is the prescription that provides healing. Understanding the truths and traveling the path will lead to peace and happiness in life. The Four truths of Buddhism:

- a) life full of suffering;
 - b) Suffering caused by desires
 - c) suffering can be ended by renouncing desire
 - d) attaining *Nirvana* (a state of contentment) through the Noble Eightfold Path
- The Eightfold Path includes:
- Wisdom (right views and right intentions),
 - ethical behavior (right conduct, right speech and right livelihood),
 - mental discipline (right effort, right thought and right meditation)

Permanent Bliss: Jainism and Buddhism were the two most influential schools outside the Vedic tradition that set themselves against the Brahmins. In the sixth century BCE, Vardhamana Mahavira (c. 540–468 BCE) popularized the doctrines of Jainism, which had emerged in the seventh century BCE. Born a Kshatriya in an oligarchic republic, Mahavira left home at age thirty to seek the truth about life; he spent twelve years as an ascetic (one who rejects material possessions and physical pleasures) wandering throughout the Ganges Valley before reaching enlightenment. He taught that the universe obeys its own everlasting rules and cannot be affected by any god or other supernatural being. He also believed that the purpose of life is to purify one's soul through asceticism and to attain a state of permanent bliss. The Jains' religious doctrines emphasized asceticism over knowledge: strict self-denial enabled one to avoid harming other creatures and thereby purify the soul.

Moreover, the doctrine of ahimsa (“no hurt”) held that every living creature has a soul. Killing even an ant would lead one to an unfavorable rebirth and further away from permanent bliss. Therefore, believers had to watch every step to avoid inadvertently becoming a murderer. Since land could not be cultivated without killing insects, the extreme nonviolence of Jainism excluded the peasants. Instead, it became a religion of traders and other city dwellers. Mahavira’s followers originally transmitted his teachings orally; but a thousand years after his death they wrote them down. The strictly nonviolent doctrine, though originally intended only for followers of Jainism, has profoundly affected the inhabitants of South Asia down to modern times.

Other Important Questions:

1) BUDDHA AND BUDDHISM:

The most direct challenge to traditional Brahmanic thinking came from Siddhartha Gautama (c. 563–483 BCE), usually called the Buddha, or the Enlightened One. He was a contemporary of Mahavira as well as of Confucius. The Buddha not only objected to Brahmanic rituals and sacrifices but also denied their elaborate cosmology (a branch of metaphysics devoted to understanding the order of the universe) and the preference for kingship that kept the priestly class in power. His teachings provided the peoples of South Asia and elsewhere with alternatives to established traditions. In this respect, Buddhism in South Asia functioned much like Confucianism in China. (See Global Connections & Disconnections: Prophets and the Founding Texts: Comparing Confucius and the Buddha.) The Buddha came from a small Kshatriya, or warrior, community in the foothills of the Himalayas; in this oligarchic republic, his father was one of the rajas. Dismayed at the misery and political carnage of his age, Siddhartha left home at age twenty-nine in search of truth and enlightenment. Traveling through the Ganges region, he lived as a beggar and then as a hermit, and finally, according to legend, meditated for forty-nine days until he understood how to eliminate suffering from the world. His wanderings and ascetic life led him to create a new credo, which his teachings expressed as the Four Truths:

- (1) life, from birth to death, is full of suffering;
- (2) all sufferings are caused by desires;
- (3) the only way to rise above suffering is to renounce desire; and
- (4) only through adherence to the Noble Eightfold Path can individuals rid themselves of desires and the illusion of separate identity and thus reach a state of contentment, or nirvana.

The elements of the Eight fold Path represent wisdom (right views and right intentions), ethical behavior (right conduct, right speech, and right livelihood), and mental discipline (right effort, right thought, and right

meditation). Because these principles were simple and clear, the Four Truths had a powerful appeal. This teaching also represented a dramatic shift in thinking about humanity and correct behavior. Like the teachings of Mahavira, the Buddha's doctrines left no space for the supernaturals to dictate human lives, a theme stressed in classical Brahmanic thinking. Buddha's logical explanation of human suffering and his guidelines for renouncing desire appealed to many people, for it set forth tenets by which its followers strove to live virtuously. Those who accumulated enough merits could be reborn in heaven. In contrast, wasting merits by indulging in desires could mean failing to reach heaven, or even sliding to hell.

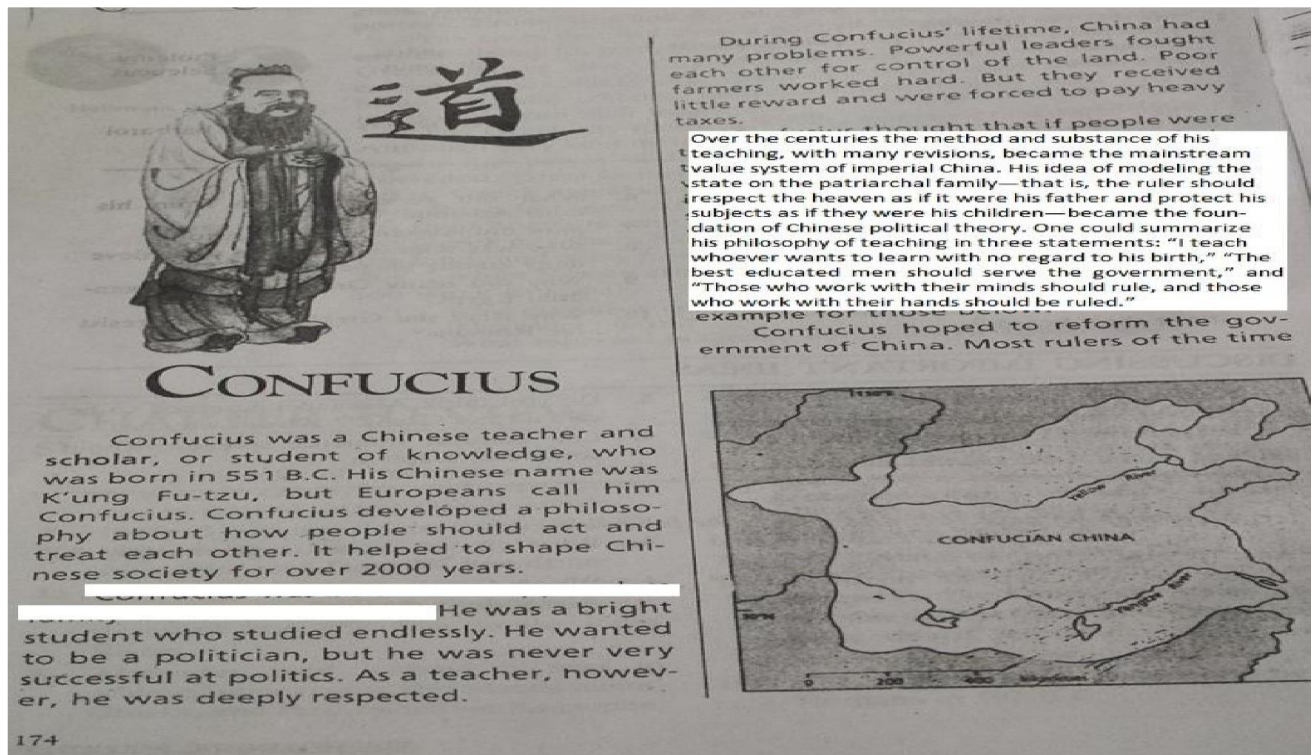
Buddhism's appeal becomes more understandable in the context of reincarnation of the soul, a concept initiated in the Upanishads and widely accepted by the people of South Asia. If life itself is suffering, and if death leads simply to rebirth into another life, then the cycle of time brings endless suffering. Attaining

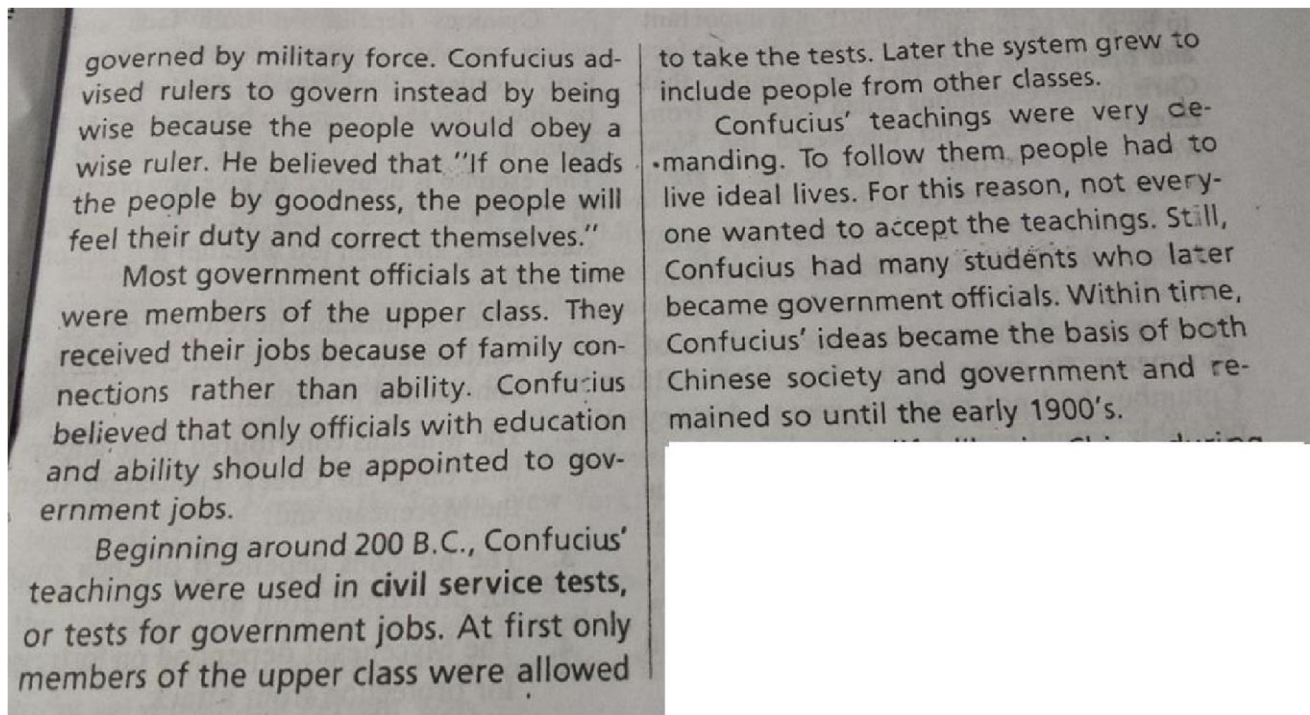
Nirvana, a state reached only after accumulating many merits, was the sole means of achieving liberation from life's troubles. Like other dissident thinkers of this period, the Buddha delivered his message in a vernacular dialect of Sanskrit that all could understand. His many followers soon formed a community of monks called a sangha ("gathering"). The Buddha and his followers wandered from one city to another on the Ganges plain, where they found large audiences as well as the alms needed to sustain the expanding sangha. Infact, the Buddha's most influential patrons were urban merchants. And in struggles between oligarchs and kings, the Buddha sided with the oligarchs—reflecting his upbringing in an oligarchic republic. He inevitably aroused opposition from the Brahmins, who favored monarchical government. While the Buddha himself did not seek to erase the caste hierarchy, the sangha provided an escape from its oppressive aspects and the prestige that it afforded the Brahmins. Although Mahavira and the Buddha did not erase the Brahmins' spiritual authority or dismantle the caste

hierarchy nevertheless they established independent enclaves that carried out religious, scholarly, and social activities based on their own doctrines.

2) Confucius:

Confucius (551 B.C. to 479 B.C.), also known as Kong Qui or K'ung Fu-tzu, was a Chinese philosopher, teacher and political figure. His teachings, preserved in the Analects, focused on creating ethical models of family and public interaction and setting educational standards. After his death, Confucius became the official imperial philosophy of China, which was extremely influential during the Han, Tang and Song dynasties.





3.MAHAVIRA AND JAINISM:

Jainism and Buddhism were the two most influential schools outside the Vedic tradition that set themselves against the Brahmins. In the sixth century BCE, Vardhamana Mahavira (c. 540–468 BCE) popularized the doctrines of Jainism, which had emerged in the seventh century BCE. Born a Kshatriya in an oligarchic republic, Mahavira left home at age thirty to seek the truth about life; he spent twelve years as an ascetic (one who rejects material possessions and physical pleasures) wandering throughout the Ganges Valley before reaching enlightenment. He taught that the universe obeys its own everlasting rules and cannot be affected by any god or other supernatural being. He also believed that the purpose of life is to purify one's soul through asceticism and to attain a state of permanent bliss. The Jains' religious doctrines emphasized asceticism over knowledge: strict self-denial enabled one to avoid harming other creatures and thereby purify the soul. Moreover, the doctrine of ahimsa ("no hurt") held that every living creature has a soul. Killing even an ant would lead one to an unfavorable rebirth and

further away from permanent bliss. Therefore, believers had to watch every step to avoid inadvertently becoming a murderer. Since land could not be cultivated without killing insects, the extreme nonviolence of Jainism excluded the peasants. Instead, it became a religion of traders and other city dwellers. Mahavira's followers originally transmitted his teachings orally; but a thousand years after his death they wrote them down. The strictly nonviolent doctrine, though originally intended only for followers of Jainism, has profoundly affected the inhabitants of South Asia down to modern times.