



T9: India: Rise of Dissident Ideologies

Dissident Ideologies in India

- **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**

Axial Age (8th – 3rd Century BCE)

- Introduced by German philosopher **Karl T. Jaspers** (1883 - 1969)
- A critical period in ancient history – **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 (contd.)

- **Zoroaster** (7-6 cent.), **Buddha** (6-5 cent.), **Mahavira** (5 cent), **Confucius** (6-5 cent.), **Laozi** (7-6 cent.), **Socrates** (5 cent), **Plato** (5-4 cent), **Aristotle** (4 cent) and others
- Axial Age changed the spiritual thinking and worldview of ancient people

New Thinking and Beliefs in India

- New ways of philosophical thinking - took
- the form of new **religious beliefs**
- Emergence of **Buddhism** and **Jainism** – challenging the traditional beliefs and rituals of the Vedic religion
- Dissidents came from the upper classes - opposed the domination of Brahmins and caste system in Vedic religion



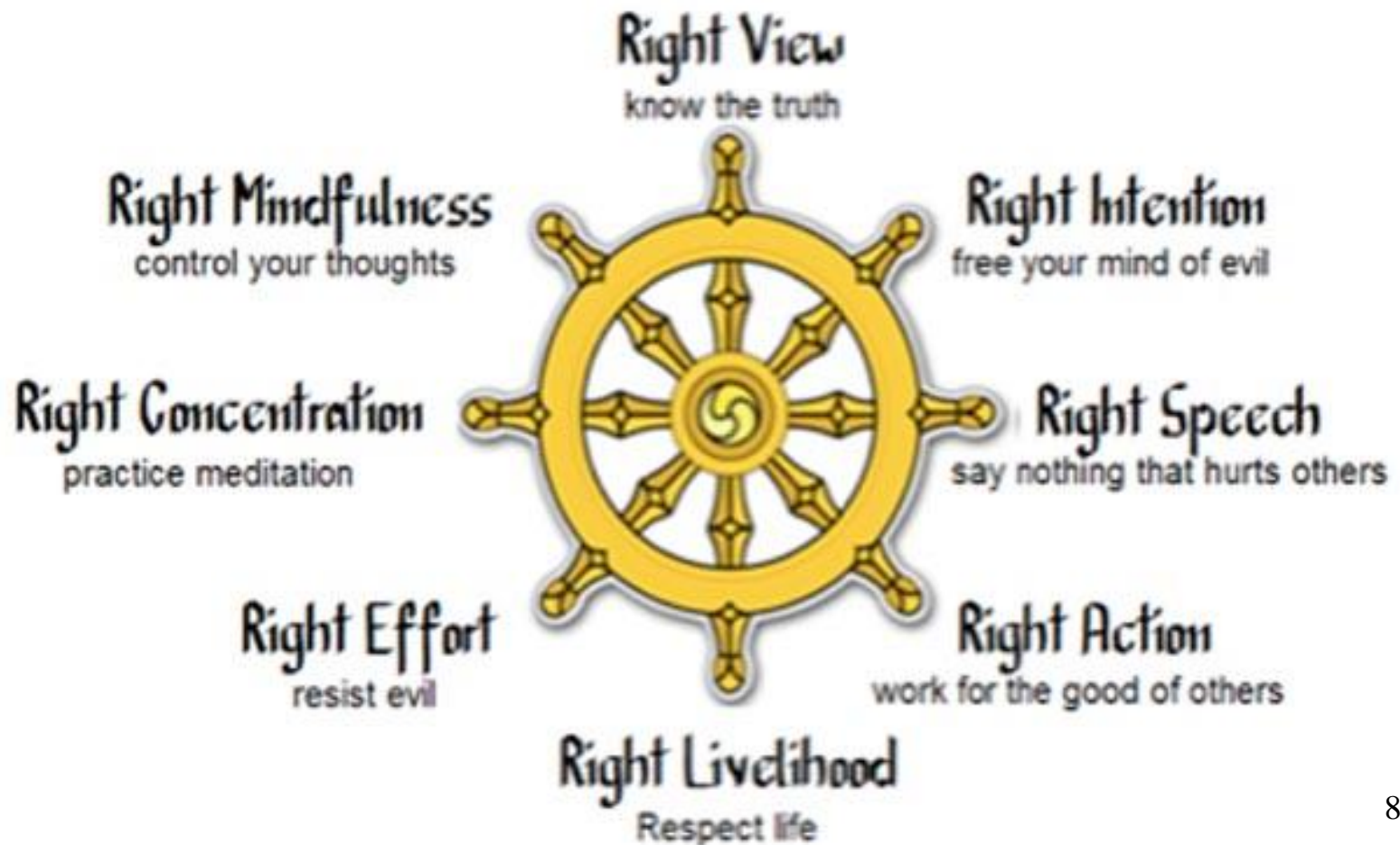
Picture taken by M A Kawser
Tokyo, Japan

Buddhism

- Propagate by **Siddhartha Gautama** (c.563-483 BCE) – later named *Buddha* (the Enlightened One)
- **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**
- Eightfold Path includes: **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)

Eightfold Path in *Dharmachakra*

The Noble Eightfold Path



Jainism

- Popularized by *Vardamana Mahavira* (c. 540-468 BCE)
- Universe follows its own rules – can not be controlled by god
- Purpose of life: purify one's soul through **asceticism** – strict self-denial to attain liberation of the soul and **permanent bliss**

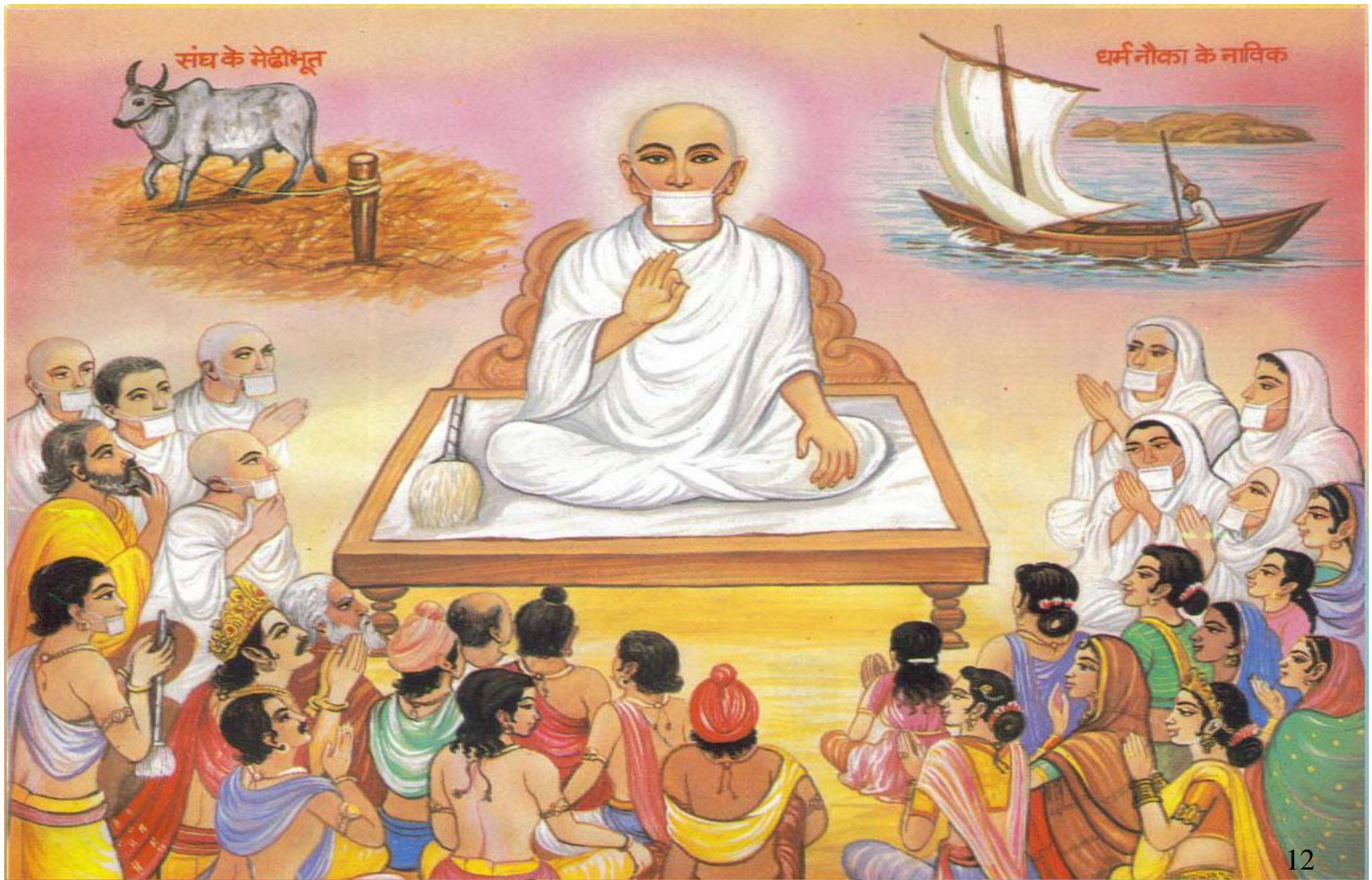
Jainism (contd.)

- Absolute **non-violence** – every living being with a soul – killing a life would lead to a bad rebirth and deprive people from permanent bliss
- Spiritually motivated **diet** – completely vegetarian
- Ultimate goal – **liberation** of the soul

Ahimsa (Nonviolence) in Dharmachakra



Mahavira and the Jains



Study questions

- What does “Dissident Ideology” mean?
- How would you define “Axial Age”?
- Identify the dissident ideologies in Vedic India.
- What are the ‘Four Truths’ of Buddhism?
- How can *Nirvana* be attained in Buddhism?
- What is the purpose of life according to Jainism?
- Compare ‘*Nirvana*’ with ‘Permanent Bliss’.

Thank You