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***Development and Its Implications for the Indian Social System:
A WV³ Case Study of Jotirao Phule***

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Abstract

Recognizing that many social maladies stem from religious origins, a proposal is made to see societies as “culture trees” in order to intellectually frame and to practically approach development for mobilizing change. A vocabulary is introduced to visualize a culture as a distinctive lifezone which occupies geographical space.

“WV³” designates a cultural matrix composed of a worldvoice (luminary mentor of adoration), worldview (lens mindset of analysis), and worldvenue (lifestyle mazeway of attitudes-actions). Conceptually, a culture tree is an interrelated social system of worldvoice roots, worldview shoots, and worldvenue fruits.

Proposals by Ambedkar, Marx, and Gandhi are noted; a case study of India’s father of social revolution, Jotirao Phule, is delineated. Phule’s activist voice is used to describe India’s WV³ Culture Tree, its spiritual mentor roots, systemic mindset shoots, and social mazeway fruits.

Keywords

WV³, worldvoice, worldview, worldvenue, culture tree, spiritual mentor roots, systemic mindset shoots, social mazeway fruits, social maladies, Jotirao Phule.

By Nepal's *National Census of 2011* statistics, Hindus (81.3%), Buddhists (9%), Hindu-Buddhist-animists Kirant/Yumaists (3%), and Muslims (4.4%), constitute 97.7% of Nepal. The remaining 2.3% are Christians (1.4%) and Others (.9%) (National Population and Housing Census 2011). NIRN [National Inter-Religious Network, Nepal] is an umbrella network of faith-based organizations in the country. NIRN engages Hindu, Buddhist and Muslim leaders, representing some 98% of Nepali population, to play a key role in bringing social reform, since they are among the leading religions in the country.

Nepal, the world's only officially Hindu nation until 2008, is addressing a problem which Sangeet Sangrula locates as "social maladies... stemming from religious origin." Sangrula draws attention to efforts of the Government of Nepal and NIRN to diminish "various social evils prevalent in the Nepali society in the name of religious belief, tradition and culture" (Sangrula 2014; and see Thapliyal, 2014; Wolf 2012a; Roche & Mehta 2014; Gellner 2007, 1823-1828; Milikan 2009; Upadhyay 2013, 65-78; Jensen & Mandozai 2014, 3-96).

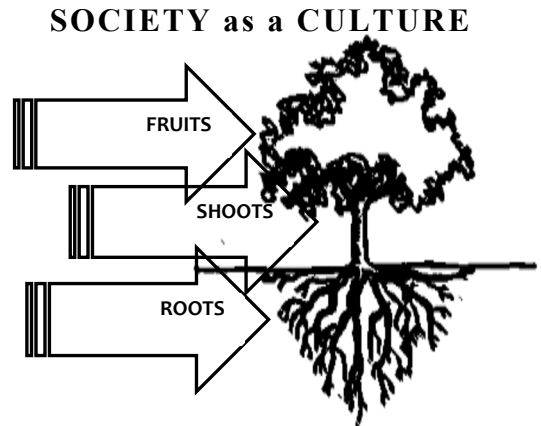
Nepal's NIRN initiative and Sangrula's framing offer a most helpful expression for considering society as a *culture* tree, and specifically, for discussing development and its implications for India's social system. For, as B. Upreti, director, South Asia Studies Centre, University of Rajasthan, reminds us, "Religion is a major binding factor between India and Nepal" and as a Hindu kingdom, Nepal has been "the farthest place in the north where Hindu culture is dominant. It is on account of reverence towards a Hindu monarch that the king of Nepal had been accorded privileges in India. For instance, in the temple of Puri, other than priests of the temple, the king of Nepal alone had the exclusive right to enter the innermost sanctuary of Lord Jagannath and offer worship" (Upreti 2014, 8, 1-22; Wolf, T. 2012d).

In Nepal, "superstition and harmful social practices in the three religions are widespread. So, the role of the leaders of these religions is really crucial for social transformation," explains Narendra Pandey of NIRN. Identified maladies include child marriage, caste-based discrimination, violence against women, and witchcraft, as well as dowry, marginalization of widows, polygamy, *Chaupadi* (excluding women from participating in normal family activities during their menstrual period), and the traditions of *Ghumto* face-covering, *Deuki* and *Jhuma* (Hussain 2011; Gaestel 2013; Das 2014; Kapoor 2014; Mahto 2012).

Deuki and *Jhuma* traditions involve selling and/or dedicating young girls to Hindu temple deities (*Deuki*) or to Buddhist monasteries (*Jhuma*) as a sacrifice to recover health, bear a son, or other accomplishments (Basnet 2012; Custom 2013; Paudel 2011). These beliefs and behaviors are what Edgerton, Martin-Gorski, Afshari, Sutton, Edgell, and others call "maladaptive practices" – entrenched practices which harm a society's members (Edgerton 1992, 144, 65-74, 101-104, 202-209; Edgerton 2005; Martin-Gorski 2002; Afshari 2001; Sutton 2005, 35-43; Edgell 2013; Wolf 2012e).

How can we intellectually frame and practically approach development in a social system in order to mobilize change? My proposal is to see societies as “cultural trees” (Wolf 2012e, 17-29).

A Culture Tree is a cultural matrix, a lifezone system of Roots (worldvoice), Shoots (worldview), and Fruits (worldvenue). I will draw on the vision and vocabulary of Mahatma Phule to explore India as a Culture Tree, a social space, a geo lifezone of identifiable and system-distinctive Roots (worldvoice), Shoots (worldview), and Fruits (worldvenue).

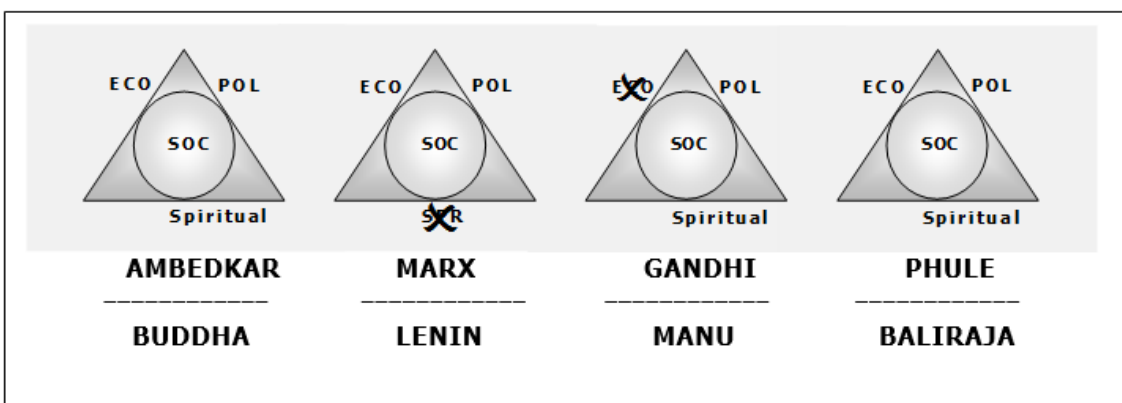


CULTURAL MENTORSHIP: Ambedkar, Marx, Gandhi and Phule Proposals

Dr. Ambedkar (d.1956), with Marx (d.1883), Gandhi (d.1948), and Phule (d.1890), form a wide window of world-class leaders during the crucial hundred-years womb-window of modern India (1848-1948). Each of them grappled with the core issue of development and its implications for India’s social system, the persistently progress-resistant and religiously-sanctioned traditions that comprehensively shaped India, proposing divergent and “multiple modernities” (Eisenstadt 2002; Devare 2011; Wolf 2007a).

Cultural Mentorship: The Proposals of Ambedkar, Marx, Gandhi, and Phule

Cultural mentorship: The proposals of Ambedkar, Marx, Gandhi, and Phule © 2006 Thom Wolf.



K. Ilaiah informs us, that it was especially Ambedkar who conceptualized a comprehensive program of liberation for India – a development schema that included the political, economic, social, and spiritual. In comparing Ambedkar, Marx, and Gandhi, Ilaiah clarifies that “Karl Marx thought of only social, economic and political liberation but left the question of spiritual liberation untouched. Gandhi thought of social, political and spiritual

liberation but completely ignored the problem of economic liberation of the people” (Ilaiah 2004, 38; Rao 1993, 17-33. On the deification of Lenin, especially within Russian Marxism, see Stalin 1924; Velikanova 1996; Tumarkin 1997; Dreeze 2013).

Ilaiah also keenly observes that, in contrast to Marx and Gandhi, only Ambedkar “worked out a comprehensive scheme of liberation – social, political, economic and spiritual.” Ilaiah’s conclusion: “Only Ambedkar thought about all the four processes of liberation. Therein lies his greatness” (Ilaiah 2004, 38; Massey 2003).

Therein also is the greatness of Ambedkar’s intellectual and social mentor, Jotirao Phule. Phule was the only person other-than-and-before Ambedkar who so fully thought through the needed changes for Indian developmental transformation in the inclusive dimensions of the political, economic, social, and spiritual. Therefore, what K. Rao writes about Ambedkar can equally be said of Phule: “He advocates a religious revolution as an essential prelude to a social revolution, which, in its turn, is a prelude to a political revolution” (Rao 1993, 26; Ambedkar 1946).

P. Metha, Director of the Centre for Policy Research, New Delhi, has taught law at Harvard, New York University, and Jawarhalal Nehru University. He provides a Phule-Ambedkar opposite. For Metha gives a formula for an incomplete revolution: “India was one of the few societies where a political revolution preceded a social one,” leaving a classic “society of inequality” intact, so that “in all our social and political relationships, procedures, habits of thought, patterns of conduct,” even in contemporary India, “the influence of inequality is palpable.”

Metha credits his 21st-century observations about the pundit-based Indian Hindu society to Rousseau’s 18th-century critique of the priest-based French Catholic society. Historically, both France and India experienced political revolution before social revolution. Also, France and India are contrasted to prophetic-based American Protestant society where the social revolution preceded the political revolution (Metha 2003, 35-57; Rousseau 1755; Brinton 1965; Shain 1999).

Thus Metha observes, the cultural result is that the fabric of the Indian social system remains pervasively dominated by the four common psychic characteristics of “inegalitarian societies”: (1) fierce competition for dominance, (2) abject servility, (3) volatile violence (to announce one’s power and worth), and (4) routine humiliating discrimination (Mehta 2003, 51).

It is significant then that along with (but before) Ambedkar and Gandhi, Phule fully understood the life lesson that India’s future would always include, and even be based on, a spiritual solution. That is what Boettke, Berger, Harrison, Inglehart, Welzel, Yale University’s ‘Spiritual Capital Initiative,’ and others refer to as “cultural capital” or “spiritual capital” (Boettke 2011, 29-39; Harrison 2011, 15-28; Berger 2011, 1-14; Berger & Redding 2011; Harrison 2013; Inglehart & Welzel 2005; Yale 2014). For Phule,

however, the cultural base for a transformed India lay neither in Gandhi's Brahmanism nor in Ambedkar's Buddhism (Parekh 2001; Chowdhury 2006; Wolf 2009). Instead, Phule saw the future of a progress-prone India flourishing only in the cultural mentorship of Baliraja, whose "great teaching is, 'Do to others what you would have them do to you'."

Only that root teaching, Phule argued, would uproot the caste tree and grow a society where "the code of proper conduct" would be "judge others as you would judge yourself" (Phule 2002, 236, 232; Phule 2002, 73-83, 97-99, 235-236; Despande 2002, 9-11; Wolf 2007; Wolf 2011a). Thus Jotirao Phule, who described India from Pune in the middle of the generation of Karl Marx, Abraham Lincoln, Charles Darwin, and Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, stands as a breathtaking conceptualizer for a new kind of India even today (McPherson 2009; Blackburn & Dunaevskaya 2011; Baum 1988; Troll [1979] 2013; Hasan 2006; Barzun 1981).

WV³: A World voice|World view|World venue Cultural Matrix

Jotirao Phule (1827-1890), recognized father of Indian social revolution, was one of India's first systematic theorists of caste. While remembered in Maharashtra, Phule's voice has been more muted beyond Maharashtra. Internationally, the writings of O'Hanlon, Omvedt, Jaffrelot, and others, led the way for the rehabilitation of Phule's contemporary voice (O'Hanlon [1985] 2002; Omvedt 1976; Omvedt 2008; Jaffrelot 1996).

Nationally, perhaps no one has projected Phule into the public eye in a physical way more than Uttar Pradesh's Chief Minister Mayawati, through her grand "statues drama" of enormous monuments, statues, and memorial parks chocked with elephant overlords of carvings of Buddha, Kanshi Ram (and herself), Dr. Ambedkar, and Phule. According to sociologist Shiv Visvanathan, Mayawati's clear intent was "to create an alternate idea of history – one that cannot be easily erased" (Ahmad 2008, 90-92; Sharma 2011).

I credit my prolonged exposure to Phule to be the activating vector for what I have called the WV³ cultural matrixes of the major geographical lifezones of the planet. An outcome of that traffic point led to a look at Phule through his own words (Wolf 2008; Wolf 2010d, 22-24) and a sociological study of the "500 years history lesson" comparing Nepal and Switzerland (Wolf 2012c, 58-62). The various WV³ cultural matrixes or social systems common to human life on our planet are systems characterized by three dynamic, but not disconnected, dimensions.

Those cultural system dynamics I am designating as "WV³": *worldvoice*, *worldview*, and *worldvenue* (Wolf 2012e, 17-29; Silveira 2008):

- *Worldvoice* is the *virtuous person*, the model person of the culture.
- *Worldview* is the set of *intellectual precepts*, the comprehensive way of perceiving reality that flows from the prototype person.

- *Worldvenue* is the daily set of *social pathways*, the social life system of everyday customs and behaviors which flow from the worldvoice person and the worldview precepts.

Thus a cultural matrix is recognized by its distinctive dimensions of origination, incubation, and manifestation of its particular WV³: worldvoice *adoration*, worldview *analysis*, and worldvenue *avenues*.

In everyday discourse such as Phule's, the three dimensions of a society's WV³ can be highlighted by asking three questions: Who? How? What?

- For the WV³ worldvoice: Whom do you listen to?
- For the WV³ worldview: How do you look at things?
- For the WV³ worldvenue: What do you leave off or lift up?

A society's worldvoice is its mentor, the *luminary authority*. A society's worldview is its mindset, the *lens of analysis*. And a society's worldvenue is its mazeway, the *lifestyle of attitudes-actions*.

S. Amin, *Global History: A View from the South* (2011, 12-49) uses a different vocabulary, but gives an insightful discussion on "distinct tributary 'cultural areas'" in parallel existence, each civilizational system with its own peculiar nature and particular trajectories. He is clear that each geo-located life system is identifiable by its own distinctive universal ideology – a religion based on universal values, an intellectual incubation, and a recognizable communal crystallization. Alongside economist Amin's Marxist-Muslim articulation, global ethicist H. Küng (1993), religion professor S. Prothero (2010), historian N. Ferguson (2010), and sociologists Eisenstadt (1986) and Stark (2007), provide complimentary voices in the interdisciplinary conversation about worldvoices, worldviews, and worldvenues.

WV3 CULTURE TREE: A Culture Tree of Roots | Shoots | Fruits

For a clarifying metaphor, think of a cultural matrix as a WV³ Tree. When you see culture as a tree, it becomes clear that every WV³ Culture Tree produces its own lifezone in character with its internally generated roots, shoots, and fruits. In other words, each cultural tree produces its own worldvenue fruits, *its mazeway practices*, social behaviors. But those fruits grow from that society's supporting cultural worldview shoots, *its mindset perspective*. And those systemic beliefs are organically related to the underlying worldvoice roots, *the model person*, that culture's spiritual benchmark person. If, for instance, a society's model luminary is divinely devious, it can be anticipated to generate a compatible corruption-justifying mindset lens, which in turn feeds and sanctions a social lifestyle mazeway of corrupt practices (Jost & Hunyady 2002; Wolf 2012d).

Take for example India and the 15% factor, wherein 85% of government allotments are eaten by corruption. S. Visvanathan and others argue for "the necessity of corruption," but

S. Bhalla disagrees. By corruption, 85% of India Government designated funds for the poor do not reach the poor. From the Subsidy Bill 2011-12's Rs73,000 crore dispersed via the Public Distribution System (PDS), 50% reached government shops; and from PDS shops, 40% of the poor received no subsidy. The net effect: of every Rs100, only Rs15 reached the poor.

Even so, to Bhalla, the “social malady” or “maladaptive behavior” centers not on crops, calories, cash, or compassion, but on corruption, so that “poverty elimination” must “maximize governance and reduce corruption” (Visvanathan 2012; Bayer 2014; Bhalla 2014).

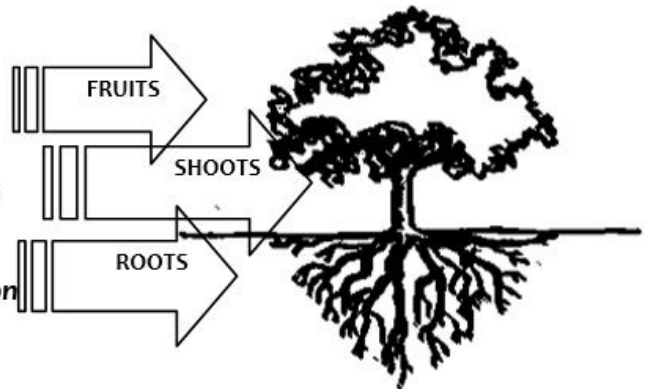
Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been publicly pointed: “The biggest issue [of India] is trust. Why do we not trust our fellow countrymen?” In the words of Aakar Patel, India is “a nation based on distrust” (Patel 2014; and see Ernst & Young 2013). Of such a situation, Chetan Bhagat asserts, “Corruption is a way of life in India. Our society respects power, not excellence or integrity. Sure, such societies can function. However, they don't progress much” (Bhagat 2012).

That is, each culture tree's particular cultural matrix tends either to release-and-enable or restrict-and-inhibit its people (Eisenstadt 1986; Harrison 2013). The WV3 culture paradigm graphed is:

WV³ GEO LIFEZONES

Geo lifezones are WV³matrixes – worldvoice | worldview | worldvenue cultural lifezones which release-and-enable or restrict-and-inhibit their peoples according to:

- their resultant lifestyle practices:
the social venue of mazeway actions
- their reflective lens perceptions:
the systemic view of mindset analysis
- their root luminary prototype:
the spiritual voice of mentor adoration



In some ways, the fact that geo lifezones locate the cultural WV³ various and varying earth orchards – those ways of life planted in history and still living parallel lives around the planet – is nothing new. G. W. F. Hegel (1770-1831) saw world history as the unfolding of “three main principles” or “patterns”: the Asian (including Chinese and Indian), the Middle Eastern (Islamic monotheism “coupled with unrestrained arbitrariness”), and the Western European (“the Christian... the highest principle of all”). Hegel observed that those “patterns... which are spiritual forms, are also natural entities. Accordingly, the

various patterns they assume appear to coexist indifferently in space, i.e., to exist perennially” (Hegel quoted in Guha 2002, 32).

Researchers from different disciplines have identified six-to-nine-or-so geo lifezones in pre-modern and modern times. For example, J. Abu-Lughod analyzed eight intense circular overlapping zones in the pre-modern world-system; Samuel Huntington suggested six or seven cultures entering the 21st century; S. Amin, seven or eight; R. Inglehart and C. Welzel’s 2005-2008 *World Value Survey Cultural Map* clusters the world by nine cultural (not geographical) neighbors; and Freedman and McClymond map five historical cultural river basins.

While I see eight global WV³ cultural trees, most can rather readily recognize and largely agree on a fairly basic handful of the major lifeways on our planet. Designated by their root luminaries, the eight geo lifezones are the WV³ culture trees of Shaman, Confucius, Shiva, Buddha, Jesus, Pope, Mohammad, and Self (Abu-Lughod 1989; Huntington 1996; Amin 2011; Inglehart & Welzel 2005; Freedman & McClymond 2001; Wolf 2012a; Wolf 2012f).

Jotirao Phule’s endurance and exceptional significance is that he addressed the issue of India as a whole, as a cultural system, a WV³ matrix. G. P. Deshpande explains, “Phule’s canvas was broad, his sweep majestic. He identified and theorized the most important questions of his time – religion, the varna system, ritualism, language, literature, British rule, mythology, the gender question, the conditions of production in agriculture, the lot of the peasantry” and “no other Indian figure of the 19th century comes to mind who displayed this sort of range” (Deshpande 2002, 20; Wolf, T. 2012b).

But it must be emphasized that Phule was an activist, not an academic. His personal engagement is obvious, his vocabulary was bold, and his comments were blunt, at times belligerent. Even Phule’s close associates Lokhande and Bhalerao reacted to *Farmer’s Whipcord* as too “*kadak*” (too hard, vitriolic). Lokhande himself said it was “*vazvipeksha phajil* (overstated beyond necessity)” (Phule 2002, 11).

Perhaps Lokhande and Bhalerao had a point. But certainly no one ever mistook Phule’s pathos-filled voice for the poor, oppressed, and humiliated; his public opposition to the matrix of misery from the hegemonic culture; or his piercing intellectual analysis of causes and effects. I say this in advance, for the documentation I present here is, to say the least, not expressed in the tone or the voice regularly encountered in academic dialogues. Nevertheless, such is the actual framing of Phule, and (probably) such is the reason for his original and continuing impact.

For example, Phule’s own picture-of-choice for India’s traditional social system was that of a “prison,” “the age-old prison house,” “this slavery system,” not of a Culture Tree as employed here (Deshpande 2002, 21; Phule 2002, 44, 98-99). Using Phule’s picture for a moment, think of the world’s life-houses as constructed by the craft of a virtuous few – and

they do not build their life neighborhoods the same. Phule observed and commented on both pleasant houses and prison houses.

In that metaphor, like the nursery rhyme “This is the house that Jack built,” each geographical region’s lifespace has its own distinctive pattern of spiritual meaning, systemic mindset, and social maze. As a result, living in the pagoda patterns of Buddha is a distinctly different life experience from the mosque modes of Muhammad (Berzin 2014; Goucher, LeGuin, & Walton 1998; Wolf 2010e). Or, the South Asian Indian caste house of Brahma mythology, Vishnu jurisprudence, and Shiva linga spirituality stands a world apart from the Western Euro-American church house of Socrates rationality, Caesar jurisprudence, and Jesus spirituality (Kakar & Kakar 2007; Madan 1979, 64-251; Stevenson & Haberman 2012; Thakur 1969; Braunthal 1979; Nelson 2010; Shain, 1996).

And of course there is the 20th century house-of-horrors that Karl built: that toxic spiritual-intellectual-social matrix cocktail of the Marx master prototype, the Communist worldview, and the Gulag prison house, which created the same oppressive life-neighborhood everywhere it spread (Wolf 2012a, 17-29; Courtois 1999). But everywhere, “This is the house that _____ built” is obvious to ordinary people on the street, and those obvious differences drive global immigration toward cultural pleasant house nations.

Here, I will integrate Phule’s prison-house/slavery-system image with that of the WV³Culture Tree. Using the WV³ framework, Mahatma Phule’s themes are clear.

MAHATMA JOTIRAO PHULE: A WV³ CASE STUDY

ROOTS: The Worldvoice Mentor of Phule’s India

Taittiriya Brahmana II.8.9.6 (ca. 450 bce) says, “The Brahman was the wood: Brahman the tree from which they shaped heaven and earth” (*Taittiriya Brahmana* 2011). That root, the worldvoice luminary of South Asia’s WV³, was accurately located by Phule in what he called the “earthborn gods, the Brahmins... certain groups of individuals who are called super-sacred and indeed are worshipped as gods on earth”. As the worldvoice mentor, their collective voice has directed the India cultural system “for many centuries past” – for “probably more than 3,000 years.” That root-voice Phule describes with precision: “The Brahmin is styled the Lord of the Universe, even equal to the God himself. He is to be worshipped, served and respected by all. A Brahmin can do no wrong” (Phule 2002, 28,230, 31, 27, 29; Wolf 2012d).

In Phule’s systemic thinking, then, what India is, she owes to the prototype person, the person of cultural virtù, the Brahmin. The Brahmin is the root, the spiritual luminary, of the WV³ Chaturvarna lifezone spread geographically across South Asia.

SHOOTS: The Worldvoice Mindset of Phule's India

The worldview lens by which those of India “generally view men and things” are “Brahmin spectacles.” The character of those “spectacles” Phule delineated in detail. It is not a neutral description, but it is Phule’s own voice; phrase upon phrase he piled up. It is a litany of disdain, a distaste born from what Phule discerned was the intent of that mentored way of seeing things: “Innumerable Bhut writers, with the selfsame objects as those of Manu and others of his class, added from time to time to the existing mass of legends, the idle phantasies of their own brain, and palmed them off upon the ignorant masses as of Divine inspiration, or as the acts of the Deity himself” (Phule 2002, 31-32; Tripathi 2014).

The goal of the Brahmin hegemony, Phule wrote, was “domination.” “To achieve this devious goal,” he argues, “they created the fraudulent rigmarole of the caste system and wrote several books to legitimize the caste system.” In fact, to Phule’s thinking, “Their main object in fabricating these falsehoods was to dupe the minds of the ignorant and to rivet firmly on them the chains of perpetual bondage and slavery which their selfishness and cunning had forged” (Phule 1991, 29, 45, 30).

Thus the spectacles’ power grew over time, magnifying misery to the Shudra and Atishudra masses. To Phule, it was “a mass of specious fiction,” so that the masses themselves “still remain ignorant and captive in the mental slavery which the Brahmans have perpetuated through their books” (Phule 1991, 30, 45), ignorant of their basic human rights, captive to brahmanic hierarchical rites.

Finally, Phule often piled up multiple descriptors around the triad of “magic” | “mantras” | “Manu”, with a special place reserved for Manu-related literature. To Phule, the lens of the Earthborn Gods produced a comprehensive view, a systemic mindset perspective. A sampling from *Slavery* reveals that prevailing mindset as one of “magic,” “black magic,” or “Brahman black magic”; often described by Phule as “all manner of ghosts and creatures and...mumbo-jumbo and magic”.

He assigns an entire section of *Slavery* to the exposure of what he calls Vedic magical incantations, the power of magic, being possessed by spirits, and “telling the beads” -- rosary beads and the recitation of sacred words. Phule’s location of magic at the cultural worldview core appears accurate, considering representative texts from the *Arthrvavada*, the fourth Veda (Arthrvavada 2014). Thus, Phule railed against *Arthrvavada*’s *shatkarmas* | the six magic mantra formulas: *Shanthi* |to subside, for healing or banishing negative things; *Vashya*|to attract, a love spell; *Sthambhana*|to stop, a hex; *Vidhveshana* |to separate, freezing objects and people, *Ucchatana* |to send away, making two people enemies, and *Maarana*|to destroy, for killing – all without anybody being able to diagnose or identify how it happened – which formed the sap of the culture tree (Phule 1991, 71-73).

All told, Phule considered such a package to be a cohesive unit. Those intellectual shoots, to Phule, conveyed the worldvoice which instructed all the castes and was responsible for

“poisoning their minds against each other,” compiled from “books such as *smrutis*, *shastras*, *puranas*, *samhitas*” (Phule 2002, 71-73; with Phule 1991, 32-35). And for Phule, those “Brahman spectacles” (the “mass of incredible fiction...found in the books of the Brahmins”) were the cultural lens of analysis, the worldview shoots, which grew vigorously from the roots of Manu and *Manusmriti*. Thus, with very non-neutral terms, Phule described the “fraudulent tales from the Bhagawata and rigmarole of the Vedic incantations,” a wide, numerous assembly of “spurious religious books of the bhats,” which he summarized as “fraudulent make-believe stories concocted by the Brahmins.”

To Phule’s thinking, then, those worldview “arguments” formed the shoots of India’s WV³: the stories and interlocking-and-reinforcing ways of viewing everything from people to plants to planets; from cosmos to conception to caste to cremation – a thick grove of mantras, magic, myths, and manipulations. After Phule says, “Now I will explain a little,” he provides 30 WV³ examples (Phule 1991, 127, with 123-130; Parry 2004, 79-106). It was precisely those “arguments”, Phule railed, which were firmly “imprinted” and “implanted” in the secluded minds and social mazes of the illiterate and uneducated Shudra and Atishudra masses (Phule 1991, 32, 28, 74, 38; Phule 2002a, 119). On this point Phule was *kadak*.

FRUITS: The Worldvenue Mazeway of Phule’s India

What were the fruits, the social results and reinforcements, of such roots and shoots? “Thralldom” was Phule’s one-word definition, a “system of slavery.” And Phule allowed no one to mistake his evaluation about that “age-old prison house” social system:

“To this system of selfish superstition and bigotry, we are to attribute the stagnation and all the evils under which India has been groaning for many centuries past” (Phule 2002a, 31, 31, 99, 31). At one point Phule profiled “this system” by some eight recognizable worldvenue attributes of civil lifestyle attitudes-actions: (1) “they do not know they are human,” (2) they do not know “what their rights are,” (3) “they have worshipped stone and metal idols, cows, and snakes, and plants, and treated them as gods,” (4) “the farmers do not have the power of balanced thought,” (5) they “believe in all manner of ghosts and creatures,” (6) they “practice all manner of mumbo-jumbo and magic,” (7) they “waste their own money,” (8) “they lose their lives, too, because they do not believe in medicine, but turn to shamans and magicians” (Phule 2002a, 170-171).

The educational fruits of the system had been cultivated and continued by perpetual isolation and by prohibitive exclusion. “From the prisons of the Brahmins,” by Phule’s reckoning, the Shudras “were like a prisoner who has been imprisoned for a long time and desperately looks forward to the day when he will be set free...because 1/10th of the total population, the Brahmins, had deprived 9/10ths of the people of strength, intelligence, knowledge, skill and courage in matters of religion and state [worldvenue], hiding behind their scheming religion [worldvoice] and on the strength of their pens [worldview].”

In other words, the everyday social lifestyle attitudes-actions of such a WV³ matrix – the fruits eaten by Phule’s generation – had been (1) perfected over an extended period of time, which allowed the system to remain and increase, and was (2) adamant about the prohibition of education to 90% of the population (Phule 1991, 44, 151). Of this social worldvenue profile, Phule concludes that “they (i.e., people) are tethered from all sides” (Phule 2002a, 170-171).

Phule felt that he himself was fair. Certainly he was insightful. First, he said, “Anyone who will consider well the whole history of Brahmin domination in India, and the thralldom under which it has restrained the people even up to the present day, will agree with us. [It is the] tyranny by which India has been so long governed” (Phule 1991, 31).

Second, Phule repeated the question of how such a WV³ matrix with obvious maladaptive metrics could be maintained. The question: How could the farmers be exploited for so long? Phule’s answer: By the strict prohibition of education. At his street-fighter best, in *Cultivator’s Whipcord*, Phule puts it like this: “How is it that the farmers continue to be ignorant and are looted till today? My reply is that in the ancient times, the moment Arya bhat brahmanas began to rule this country, they totally prohibited education for their subject Shudra farmers and for thousands of years, they looted them as they willed” (Phule 2002a, 128; Wolf 2011).

Third, completing the picture of his Maharashtra WV³ culture tree, Phule in *Slavery* concludes: “They strictly prohibited education of the Shudras and made strict rules about their books like the *Manusamhita*.”

To Phule, this strict prohibition of education had a built-in benefit: “Keeping the Shudras illiterate also enabled them (i.e., leaders) to make whatever changes in their books they wanted to suit their interests.” And to make sure every reader felt the sting that all this was not simply by benign neglect, in *Whipcord* Phule emphasized that the cultural non-education motif was not a shriveled but a full fruit: “This knowledge and education the ancestors of the Brahmins shut tight by prohibiting it in their selfish books.” For Phule had come to clearly see that, while some societies had been passive towards, and others neglectful of, education of the masses, the Brahmin worldvoice and its caste worldview had a prominent and mandated worldvenue cultural distinctive: “they totally prohibited education.” “And now, even though they speak sweetly to all the farmers,” Phule concluded that still “they avoid educating the farmer” (Phule 1991, 73, 73; Phule 2002a, 175, 169), thus providing for the poor a tree without shade.

But Jotirao and Savitribai provided just such a shade for the children of Pune under the Baliraja Tree, founding in 1848, the first-ever Indian-originated school to educate Shudras and Atishudra children, including the girl child:

The key social benefit was the practice of learning for all, a concept unthinkable and forbidden in the Brahmin system. There, learning was only for forward caste persons,

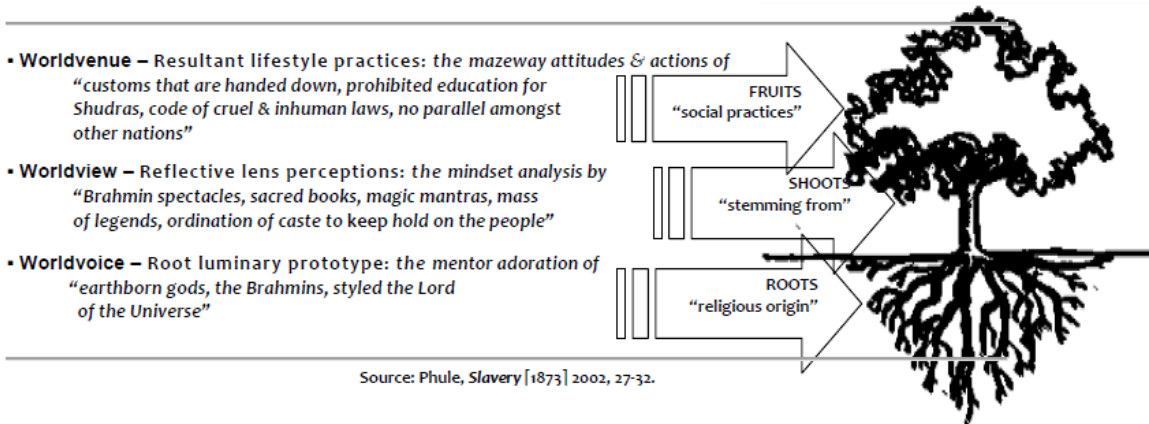
specifically for Brahmin caste males. But Baliraja radically reached to teach and share all learning with all persons: backward caste, those without caste, and even – if it could be conceived – for females.

In Baliraja, Savitribai found a luminary with a liberating voice, a person of virtue unimaginable...an uncommon educational worldvenue where education [was] universally available, child sensitive, intellectually critical, and socially reforming (Wolf 2011, 87-88; Phule 2002a, 128).

With the above in mind, then, from Phule's writings his WV³ Culture Tree of India might be constructed as follows:

PHULE'S SOUTH ASIAN WV³ GEO LIFEZONE

WV³matrix of the Brahmin worldvoice | Manusmriti worldview | Caste code worldvenue



CONCLUSION

In WV³ terms, Phule saw his India as a whole. In his indigenous 19th century vocabulary, Phule:

- *located the worldvoice* in the Brahmins (“mythological legends” by “earthborn gods”),
- *found the worldview* to be consistently Manu-compatible (“Brahmin spectacles,” “books to legitimize the caste system”), and
- *surveyed the worldvenue* as everywhere an everyday experience of a caste-coded-and-conducted geo lifezone (“a prison house”, “this system... under which India has been groaning for many centuries past”, “the chains of slavery... many customs traditionally handed down to us”).

Phule concluded that such a “system of despotism and priestcraft” “can never create social unity,” and “till a true unity is established, there will be no progress in this country” (Phule 2002a, 176, 178).

Thus, the WV³ matrix, viewing a society as a WV3 culture tree, has presented a metaphor and a theoretical model for cross-disciplinary exploration. Initial dialogues in India and South Asia, Central Asia, the Gulf States, Europe, the USA, Canada, and South America have demonstrated international interest. Also, the picture of Roots | Shoots | Fruits, paired with the perspective of worldvoice | worldview | worldvenue appears to form a good and fruitful meeting ground for persons of widely different backgrounds and life experiences. It is hoped that further consideration, critique, and collaboration will correct weaknesses and errors, strengthen the core insights, and open new explorations in different disciplines.

Persistent issues being addressed by South Asian nations, illustrated here from Nepal and India, have provided case study examples. Historically, Mahatma Jotirao Phule's has provided a 19th century comparative sociology reading of his own indigenous ground realities.

Phule's writings might also be engaged for his WV³ prescriptions: how to change the current reigning cultural matrix. For Phule wanted not just to change his geo life system, but yearned especially to exchange that system. As G. P. Despande, Jawaharlal Nehru University, concludes, Phule argues for "a monotheistic, humane, and benevolent system. That we as a people have not yet succeeded in doing this, demonstrates the relevance of Phule" (Despande 2002, 226).

Surely then, the current concern of Nepal and others throughout South Asia over "social maladies stemming from religious origin" and the compassionate and compelling voice of Phule regarding India's geo lifezone, offer all of us rich starting points to benefit in practical ways from the conversation on development and its implications for the Indian social system. ▪

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