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THOM WOLF

## CHANGING EDUCATION: A NOTE ON THE “ORIGINAL AND UNUSUAL” WORLDVOICE, WORLDVIEW, AND WORLDVENUE OF JAN COMENIUS AND SAVITRIBAI PHULE

**Abstract:** Two extraordinary leaders, Jan Comenius (1592-1670) and Savitribai Phule (1831-1897), widely designated as father of modern education and mother of modern India education, are presented as worldvoice, worldview, and worldvenue colleagues.

Informed by historians Arend van Leeuwen and David Freedman, philosopher Stephen Pepper, and economist Samir Amin, the cultural matrix of Comenius and Savitribai is delineated through their “Wv3”: their common worldvoice (individual virtuous, prototype person), who elicited their common worldview (holistic intellectual mindset), which informed their resultant worldvenue (social and behavioral mazeway) in education.

It is noted that though separated by centuries and cultures, Comenius and Savitribai both chose Jesus as their prototype person, their worldvoice. It is then argued that Comenius’ mature educational worldview replaced monastic education for the privileged that neglected peasant classes with “universal education,” one school system for all children; and that Phule rejected Brahmin education of only pure males which forbade education of polluted castes, radicalized by her fresh worldview of “universal rights” for all, all children created equal by the Creator of all. Thus, both leaders, Comenius and Savitribai, independently yet similarly, forged an uncommon educational worldvenue where education is universally available, child sensitive, intellectually critical, and socially reforming.

**Keywords:** *Jan Comenius, Savitribai Phule, Jotirao Phule, Wv3, worldvoice, worldview, worldvenue, root metaphor, world hypothesis, tributary systems, virtuous person, universal education.*

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## Introduction

If you want to bring about changes in educational practices or thinking, Jan Comenius and Savitribai Phule may be surprisingly helpful. In the field of education, many know of Jan Comenius (1592-1670), the father of modern European (even global) education. Fewer are acquainted with Savitribai Phule (1831-1897), the mother of modern Indian education. But most who have studied both Comenius and Savitribai agree that we are all in their debt (Alexander, 2001; Drucker, 2003; Ilaiah, 2010; Jamanadas, 2002; Keer, 1974; Manas, 2007; Mani, 2008; Peprnik, 2004; Piaget, 1993).

Mukesh Manas, professor of Hindi at Delhi University, asserts the following:

Modern India's first woman teacher, Savitribai Phule, was a radical advocator of female and untouchables' education, a champion of women's rights, a milestone of trailblazing poetry, a courageous mass leader who stood strongly against the forces of caste and patriarchy [and who] certainly had her independent identity for her contribution. (2007)

Indian women owe her. For in today's world, whether an Indian school girl reading English, an Indian woman who reads, an Indian woman who is educated, or an educated international *desi* woman, her education as an Indian female grows from the garden planted by Savitribai Phule.

Just as no one else vies with Savitribai Phule for the honor of "mother of modern education" for India (Chadha, 1998; Keer, 1974; Kumar, 2008; Mani & Sardar, 2008; Omvedt, 2008; Padhee, 2010; Wolf, 2007a), scholars recognize Jan Comenius as the "father of modern education" for the world (Dobinson, 1970; Eby, 1949; Peprnik, 2004). In Europe, the United Nations' Jan Amos Comenius Medal (for outstanding research and innovation in education) and the European Union's Comenius Programme (which focuses on all levels of school education from pre-school and primary to secondary schools and is part of the EU's Lifelong Learning Programme) are named after him (EU Comenius, 2011).

So what do the poor Maharashtrian Indian woman of the 1800s and the persecuted Moravian Czech man of the 1600s have in common? They are both persons who loved children and held in common a most uncommon outlook—an outlook that produced culturally uncommon outcomes, outcomes that changed our world of global education.

These two persons, separated by centuries and cultures, are world-view colleagues (Wolf, 2007b). Thus, across calendar and continents—the 1600s/1800s and Europe/India—Comenius and Savitribai, working educationally from a most uncommon worldview outlook, are today cel-

ebredated for their globally applicable intellectual and instructional outcomes. In an article posted on the United Nations educational website, Jean Piaget (1993), the Swiss philosopher and psychologist noted for his studies of the intellectual and cognitive development in children, asks pertinent questions regarding Comenius:

How are we to account for the fact that a theologian . . . of the 17th century should have concerned himself with education to the point of creating a “Great Didactic”?

There were indeed many educational institutions in which certain special methods had been developed; and these had been described. . . . But there was a long way to go before building up a whole philosophy of education and centring [*sic*] a still broader system around it.

Thinkers and philosophers, from Montaigne and Rabelais to Descartes and Leibniz, had likewise made profound remarks about education, but only as corollaries to their main ideas. Not only was Comenius the first to conceive a full-scale science of education but, let it be repeated, *he made it the very core of a ‘pansophy’* which . . . was to constitute a general philosophic system.

How can we explain so original and unusual a statement . . . in the middle of the seventeenth century? (Piaget, 1993, pp. 8-9)

The puzzlement of Piaget about the father of European modern education, Jan Comenius, applies equally to the mother of Indian modern education, Savitribai Phule: “How can we explain so original and unusual a statement,” in the light of her circumstances? What was so “original and unusual” about those two marginal persons that caused a revolution in the planet’s educational environment for children—especially the poor, the girl child, and the disadvantaged?

## The “Main Point”

Rosalind O’Hanlon (1985), former Cambridge scholar and now professor of Indian History and Culture at Oxford University, describes “Phule’s main point”<sup>1</sup> regarding the interconnected problems of the 19th century low caste majority Indian:

Traditional religious disabilities . . . lay at the root of the frustration and backwardness of the low castes. . . . These interconnected problems required a radical solution: *a revolution in the worldview* [emphasis added] of the lower caste individual.

In stripping the Brahman of his religious authority, and the social hierarchies of Hinduism of their religious sanction, this would free the lower caste man or woman to understand for themselves, both the workings of the natural world, and the distribution of power and authority in their own society. (1985, pp. 125-128; see also Deshpande, 2010)

With precision, O’Hanlon draws our attention to Phule’s “main point”—that the problems of majority-India are interconnected. Simply put, it is that the root of majority-India’s problems was the traditional religious disabilities, and that the only genuine solution would be a

radical solution. O’Hanlon’s verdict was anticipated by Comenius and Phule. Both Comenius and Savitribai shared one point; a never-surrendered, single point. It was their main point: *that the interconnected problems of their societies required an integrative solution*. For as Comenius and Savitribai saw their worlds, it was traditional religious disabilities which lay at the root of the frustration and backwardness of his 17th-century priest-Europe and her 19th-century pundit-India (Deshpande, 2002; Stark, 2001, pp. 68-75).

## **Worldvoice, Worldview, and Worldvenue**

If this analysis is accurate, then I think that a word about worldvoice, worldview, and worldvenue will help us see better what Savitribai and Comenius saw boldly (Wolf, 2011). Like Comenius and Savitribai, all of us work within some cultural matrix or social system; the matrix is everywhere. It is a system with three dynamic, but not disconnected, dimensions. Those cultural system dynamics I am designating as  $Wv^3$ : worldvoice, worldview, and worldvenue (Comenius, 2009; Deshpande, 2010, pp. 48-68; Jeynes & Martinez, 2007, pp. 37-66; Wolf, 2012).

*Worldvoice* is the *virtuous* person, the paradigmatic person who is the model person of the culture. *Worldview* is the set of *intellectual precepts*, the holistic 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 the distinctive dimensions of its  $Wv^3$ : its worldvoice adoration, worldview analysis, and worldvenue avenues.

These dimensions have been considered by some scholars in different ways. Consider, for example, three similar approaches from the fields of history, philosophy, and economics. First, there is the approach of Dutch Islamic scholar, Arend van Leeuwen. Van Leeuwen (1964) observes a triad of components in the “common pattern” responsible for the four earliest centers of Eurasian civilizations. Second, University of California Berkeley professor of intellectual and moral philosophy, Stephen Pepper (1970), contends that “world hypotheses” manifest a “certain symmetry,” a threefold “disposition.” Third, the African radical economist, Samir Amin, sees ancient social systems as cultural rivers. Amin’s explorations uncovered three processes which created the “parallel existence” of the “distinct tributary ‘cultural areas’” of the ancient world systems (Amin, 2011).

### *Arend van Leeuwen*

Some half a century ago, van Leeuwen (1964) described the meaning and spirit of the great ancient civilizations in comparison with and in contradistinction to the biblical-prophetic and Greek rational strains which created a unique phenomenon in Western civilization. His summary was that “the pattern of the ontocratic state, the basic pattern of the four earliest centers of Eurasian civilization [Mesopotamia, Egypt, India, and China], persisted without interruption for thousands of years and spread far and wide” (p. 173).

Rooted in “primordial and primitive ideas,” “ancient traditions” persisted in a “self-same theme” regardless of geo-specific adaptations, following the same “main principles,” and producing “the same basic pattern” socially, the ontocratic state (van Leeuwen, 1964, pp. 157, 164, 173). The common triadic components were (1) a universal idea, (2) “very ancient religious insights” and philosophical speculations “belonging to the common Eurasian stock,” and (3) subtle and varied material and social iterations (Corduan, 2002; van Leeuwen, 1964, pp. 148-196). In other words, behind every ancient civilizational iteration there lay common philosophical speculations, rooted in a primordial universal idea.

### *Stephen Pepper*

Pepper (1970) describes his work as one person’s “crystallization” of the centuries-long struggle of how people “get at the truth in matters of importance to them” (p. ix). His academic appointment in philosophy was linked to the practical: Professor of Intellectual and Moral Philosophy and Civil Polity.

Pepper (1970) said, “My aim is simple. It is [1] to present the root metaphor and [2] the set of categories of each . . . , and [3] to give some idea of the general appearance of the world as interpreted through each set of categories” (pp. 149). He explains these points:

The method in principle seems to be this: [1] A man desiring to understand the world looks about for a clue to its comprehension. . . . This original idea becomes then his basic analogy or root metaphor.

[2] He describes as best he can the characteristics of this area . . . [and] discriminates its structure. A list of its structural characteristics becomes his basic concepts of explanation and description. We call them a set of categories.

[3] In terms of these categories he proceeds to study all other areas of fact. (Pepper, 1970, pp. 91-92)

For Pepper, then, the threefold structure of any world hypothesis from “some twenty-five centuries’ struggle and experience” (p. ix) includes (1) a root metaphor, (2) a categories set, and (3) a general

appearance. Four maxims frame his threefold method (pp. 84-114).

**Maxim One.** A world hypothesis is determined by its root metaphor. From that root metaphor, that clue to comprehension, grows the world hypothesis frame (Pepper, 1970, pp. 96-98). It is the same metaphor, Pepper explains, which creates the like developments or statements across centuries and cultures:

The theories of Thales, Anaximenes, Empedocles, Telesio, and Spencer are all one world theory, because they all derived from one root metaphor. The statements of the theory may differ in the degree of refinement of the categories, in terminology, in emphasis on certain details, in omission of some details, and even in omission of some basic categories. Still, all these statements will be reckoned as statements of one world theory in that they are all generated from and related to a single root metaphor. (p. 96)

**Maxim Two.** Each world hypothesis is autonomous. Starting with different roots, the system grows different ways of comprehending and living (pp. 98-104). Thus, the world theories “have no difficulty in explaining each other’s errors” (p. 100).

**Maxim Three.** Eclecticism is confusing (pp. 104-113). This maxim follows from the second, for “if world hypotheses are autonomous, they are mutually exclusive. A mixture of them, therefore, can only be confusing” (p. 104).

Some may assert that all world hypotheses are saying the same thing, arriving eventually at the same philosophical mountain top. But Pepper is firm. “More perspicuously,” through a careful “study of their factual conflicts, their diverse categories, their consequent differences of factual corroboration, and—in a word—their distinct root metaphors . . . we become aware of their mutual exclusiveness” (pp. 104-105).

**Maxim Four.** Concepts which have lost contact with their root metaphors are empty abstractions (pp. 113-114). Here, Pepper’s study of the past takes on a prophetic dimension:

This fault is one stage worse than eclecticism, and is very likely to grow out of it. When a world theory grows old and stiff people “begin to take its categories and subcategories for granted and presently forget where in fact these come from, and assume that these have some intrinsic and ultimate cosmic value in themselves.” (p. 113)

### *Samir Amin*

Samir Amin (2011) is an Afro-Asian observer, a “deliberate globalist,” Muslim, radical economist with an intense analytical mind. His intellectual vision is to emphasize the “unequaled power of Marx’s method . . . in the analysis of global history” (p. 10). Amin does so in spite of and without reference to Marxism’s documented record of unparalleled mass

murders, reprehensible immoralities, unconscionable inhumanity, and its systemic global collapse (Courtois et al., 1999; Hollander, 2007; Radosh, 2007; Wolf, 2006).

That said, in laying out his framework for world history, Amin contrasts the ancient world systems versus the modern capitalist world system. He sees world history flowing from civilizational “tributary systems,” “distinct tributary ‘cultural areas’ founded precisely on broad systems of particular reference—most often religious: Confucianism, Hinduism, Islam, Christianity” (Amin, 2011, p. 27). Importantly, those tributary societies, by Amin’s thinking, experience parallel existences, each with a peculiar nature, living out its own particular trajectory, and manifesting its own distinctive contextual existence.

Three processes create each civilization’s tributary cultural area: (1) a universal ideology or religion “based on universal values that go and the ideologies of kinship and country”; (2) an intellectual incubation; and (3) a communal crystallization with its own production techniques and webs of exchanges in goods, techniques, knowledge, and ideas (Amin, pp. 23-48).

So then, with the van Leeuwen, Pepper, and Amin discussions in mind, I will explain what I am designating as worldvoice, worldview, and worldvenue. Here I must make this simple, but too often unnoticed, overlooked, or ignored point: that Jan Comenius and Savitribai Phule can help us relook at global education. And they do this because they so clearly illustrate all three of the dimensions in their own cultural matrix—what I call the “worldvoice | worldview | worldvenue connection” (Wolf, 2010a).

What has been said of Phule can be, with equal validity, attributed also to Comenius. For they both knew, with laser insight, that ideas have consequences. Phule and Comenius saw what I signify as Wv3: that who you adore (worldvoice) sources how you *analyze* (worldview), and how you analyze directs how you *act* (worldvenue)—*the worldvoice | worldview | worldvenue* connection (Wolf, 2010a, pp. 2-7).

## Worldvoice

The worldvoice is the *luminary*, the person who is looked to for one’s life standard. The *virtú* (Italian: virtuous or excellence; especially attributed to works of art) is the voice the culture listens to, the person of adoration. As the culture’s person-of-excellence, and thus the society’s worldvoice, that person sets the standard of spiritual excellence for aesthetic, moral, and religious living, and shapes habits of the heart



(Johnstone, 2009; Pellegrino, 1995; Wolf, 2012). As Pellegrino (1995) points out, notions of “virtuous” and “virtuous persons” are universal constructs:

Every culture has a notion of a virtuous person—i.e., a paradigm person, real or idealised, who sets standards of noble conduct for a culture and whose character traits exemplify the kind of person others in that culture ought to be or to emulate. (p. 225)

Three leading contemporary worldvoice contenders are Jesus, Buddha, and Mohammad. And across history, only a paradigmatic few have remained rather constant: Shaman, Moses, Buddha, Confucius, Socrates, Jesus, and Mohammad (Freedman & McClymond, 2001; Gooch, 1997; Jaspers 1953, 1962; Kreeft, 2002; Lewis, 2003; Smart, 2000a; Wolf, 1975, 2001). They are autonomous, mutually exclusive, and are not all saying the same thing (Pepper, 1970; Prothero, 2011; Stark, 2008).

Worldvoice, then, is the defining allegiance given to the ideal and exemplar person who embodies ideal personhood to a very high or perhaps even to the highest degree—usually beyond what normal people can attain to in organizing and conducting their lives (Johnstone, 2009; Wolf, 2011; and see aspects and themes of moral exemplars by Blum, 1988; Oliner, 2007; Pellegrino, 2007; Pellegrino & Thomasma, 1996; Walker & Ivanhoe, 2007).

University of Helsinki’s Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen remembers his childhood in Finland. His father enthusiastically told him about new engines for cars and airplanes. The original blueprint or model from which the actual engines would be produced, his father called a *prototype*. And his father was emphatic: the closer the product approximates the prototype, the better the engine.

For that picture, Kärkkäinen (2012) explains the position accorded to Jesus as a paradigmatic exemplar, a worldvoice: “Jesus, the revelation of God, is *the* prototype. He is the only one among us who faithfully and perfectly represents what God, the Creator, wished for the human person, created in his image, to be” (p. 30).

As the prototype person, then, Jesus is seen by Kärkkäinen as the blueprint of perfection by which others model their lives, the exemplar and virtuous person. And as such, Jesus is the paradigm person who forms the root metaphor; he is the primordial person for emulation.

The question that must always be asked is: Who is the prototype person for a thinker or leader or society? Is it Krishna, Mohammad, Buddha, or Jesus? Those virtús are each autonomous, mutually exclusive. They are not all saying the same thing (Wolf, 2009; Prothero, 2011; Stark, 2008). But if you can locate that prototype person, you have

touched the core of the system of thought, as well as the social trajectory.

David Noel Freedman, Professor of History at the University of California, San Diego, uses Genesis’ five Rivers of Paradise as a “metaphoric and parabolic . . . model or pattern for the great personality religions of the world” (Freedman & McClymond, p. 23). In a manner somewhat similar to Amin’s civilizational tributaries systems, Freedman charts the rivers metaphoric model as separate streams through history that can be summarized and correlated by their “founding father,” “sacred scriptures” and writings, and “religion” (Freedman & McClymond, 2001, p. 8). He points to Moses, Buddha, Confucius, Jesus, and Muhammad as source initiators of the Great-Person Rivers that continue to feed the planet’s majority worldview and worldvenue life-river basins (see The Great-Person Rivers Chart).

THE GREAT-PERSON RIVERS CHART	
RIVER BASIN	GREAT-PERSON RIVER
Source Initiator	Moses   1200 BC
Significant Writings	Tanakh Hebrew Bible, Talmud, Mitzvot
Spiritual Community	Judaism
Source Initiator	Buddha   563-483 BC
Significant Writings	Dharma, Vinaya, Sutras, Abhidharma
Spiritual Community	Buddhism
Source Initiator	Confucius   551-479 BC
Significant Writings	Analects, Four Books, Five Classics
Spiritual Community	Confucianism
Source Initiator	Jesus Christ   6 BC-30 CE
Significant Writings	Bible (OT+NT), Theologians, Councils
Spiritual Community	Christianity
Source Initiator	Muhammad   570-632 CE
Significant Writings	Qu’ran, Hadiths, Sunnah, Sharia, Fatwa
Spiritual Community	Islam
<small>©2012, Thom Wolf, <i>The Great-Person Rivers Chart</i>. New Delhi: University Institute. Based on and adapted from David Noel Freedman and Michael J. McClymond (2001), <i>The Rivers of Paradise: Moses, Buddha, Confucius, Jesus and Muhammad as Religious Founders</i>. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.</small>	

Freedman and McClymond (2001) also remind us of “a few failed candidates”: Zoroaster, Mani, and Bahá’u’lláh of Baha’i, for example (p. 6). To those might be added the 19th century’s father of the term “sociology” and founder of the Religion of Humanity, Auguste Comte (Pickering, 2006, 2009a, 2009b; Wernick, 2005). It remains to be seen if the focal person of the 2009 American Sociology Association’s Section on Altruism and Social Solidarity, Pitirim Sorokin, might eventually replace, for example, Buddha, Jesus, or Muhammad as a paradigmatic exemplar (Herrick, 2008; Jaspers, 1962; Jeffries, 2005; Pellegrino, 2007; Weinstein, 2010, pp. 48-53, 187-188).

But both Protestant Czech Comenius and Backward Caste Savitribai located Jesus as their fountain worldvoice, the initiator source of their counterculture ideas; and significant writings and the spiritual community associated with Jesus impacted them both. Jesus was the premier person they looked to as model, their person of virtue (Beale, 2008; Corduan, 2002; Deshpande, 2010; Mungekar, 2009).

Born in southern Moravia by the Olsawa River, Comenius’ family belonged to the Czech reformist evangelical church. After graduating from Heidelberg University, Comenius became a bishop. He writes that from his teen years he was “inflamed with the love for learning . . . and not only for myself, but for the good of others also,” convinced that education was for all, with the goal “that God be worshipped with all one’s heart” (quoted in Lang, [1891] 2009, pp. 7, 13).

Savitribai called Jesus “Baliraja” (*bali* = sacrifice; *raja* = king), asserting that “His great teaching is: ‘You must love your enemy and do him a good turn’” (Phule, 2002, p. 236). According to the way Savitribai saw history, Jesus was the “one, great champion of the downtrodden, the holiest of the holy, the great sage and lover of Truth, Baliraja” (Phule, 2002, p. 73, originally written in 1873). According to Phule, when that Baliraja was crucified, a great movement of liberation was set in motion in Europe: “Millions became the followers of this Baliraja in Europe where he had brought about a tremendous upheaval. All of them began to work ceaselessly of establishing God’s Kingdom on earth” in consonance with the will of “the Almighty God, our great Father and Creator” (Phule, 2002, p. 74; Sanneh & Carpenter, 2006).

And in her own lifetime, “followers of that Baliraja . . . came to India, preached and practiced the true teaching of their Messiah among the Shudras here. They thus emancipated the Shudras from the unnatural and inhuman slavery which was imposed by the wicked Brahmins” (Phule, 2002 [1873], Part 10). 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. Thus Comenius' and Savitribai's systems of thought and their resultant educational venues flowed from their worldvoice, from Jesus as their prototype person, a luminary person they profoundly adored. To them, He was a fountainhead who reimaged life, altered their thinking, and assigned them new life tasks. He was their worldvoice.

## Worldview

A worldview is the *lens* through which we look at life. It is comprehensive vision, the *arrangement* of analysis, a vital mindset perspective. If the worldvoice satisfies the heart, the worldview especially speaks to the head, justifying, arguing, and setting out the whole picture, giving a lens by which to see all of life and reality (Bertrand, 2007; DeWitt, 2010; Hiebert, 2008; Naugle, 2002; Smart, 2000b; Steinbronn, 2007). In the everyday world, surely Charles Taylor is right. For most people, “all beliefs are held within a framework of the taken-for-granted, which usually remains tacit, and may even be as yet unacknowledged by the agent, because never before formulated” (Taylor, 2007, p. 13).

Nevertheless, a worldview, Hiebert (2008) explains, is “the most fundamental and encompassing view of reality shared by a people in a common culture” (p. 84). This mental picture “makes sense” of the world around them, and is based on fundamental assumptions about the nature of reality, and “clothes these belief systems with an aura of certainty that this is, in fact, the way reality is.”

Worldviews, then, are “social creations, produced and sustained by communities of people in order to understand and live in their world” (Hiebert, 2008, p. 85; Madan, 1979; Tarnas, 1993). As such, worldviews function as “paradigms” (Andersen, Barker, & Chen, 2006; Hung, 2005; Kuhn, 1996; Moloney, 2000), “fields of consciousness” (Berger, 1990), or “research traditions” (Laudan, 1977), and our “structure of assumptions” (Douglas, 1966).

DeWitt (2010) reminds us of the importance of worldview:

[It is] a system of beliefs that are interconnected in something like the way the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle are interconnected. That is, a worldview is not merely a collection of separate, independent, unrelated beliefs, but it is instead an intertwined, interrelated, interconnected *system* of beliefs. (p. 7; see also Nersessian, 2010)

Interestingly, Sire (2009), after forty years of wrestling with worldviews, shifted from worldview as primarily a “set of presuppositions.” Sire’s expanded vision sees worldview as a “commitment, a fundamental orientation of the heart.” Thus he adds the notion of story for formation and expression, and acknowledges “the role of behavior in assessing what anyone’s worldview actually is” (Sire, 2009, p. 10). And my point is that a careful look at worldviews will clarify that each mindset lens and worldview story looks back to a moral luminary. Each of the major worldview systems owes its roots to a moral exemplar whose story still feeds the worldview (Dilworth, 1989; Graham, 1997; Mitchell, 2008; Sire, 2009; Stark, 2008; Wilkens & Sanford, 2009).

Both Savitribai and Comenius, in their own contexts, presented a coherent set of educational ideas that were radically different from the prevailing educational approaches of their respective societies. For example, Comenius’ approach was diametrically opposite to the European priestly position crystallized by papal priests (Begley & Koterski, 2005; Cubberley, 1920; Fulop-Miller, 1942, pp. 427-433); likewise, Savitribai’s educational approach was in stark contrast to the Indian priestly system imposed by pundit Brahmins (Mukhopadhyay, 2004; Rakhe, 1992; and see Sanneh, 2009).

In the Europe of Comenius, the powerful clergy were “immoral and indolent”; the monastic orders and upper clerical levels held wealthy properties, claimed exclusive privileges, pressed oppressive exactions on the poor, and demanded “pay for sacred services” otherwise “inaccessible” (Stark, 2003, pp. 68-73; Hillerbrand, 2009). Overall, education was a guarded preserve for rich, privileged males. Peasant families were expected to stay in their station of life, and any family caught educating a son without landlord permission was heavily fined.

Jotirao Phule, Savitribai’s husband, saw India’s cultural system as a comprehensive and crushing way of life. To him, it was a Brahmin-generated “rule of fear,” a way of life manufactured and maintained by what he called “their selfish texts like the *Manusamhita* . . . along with the magic of the Vedic mantras” (Phule, [1883] 2002, p. 128). Phule said it like this: “It would be very hard to find a parallel example anywhere in the world” to compare with the cultural system set in place by “the ancient and cunning Arya brahman scripture—writers [who] have so smoothly machinated to tie up the farmer in their selfish religion” (p. 120).

Notice that Phule sees *religious worldvoice* (“Arya brahman scripture”), *intellectual worldview* (“smoothly machinated”), and *social worldvenue* (“to tie up the farmer”) as an integrated whole. The medieval

Catholic priest system of Comenius' Europe *neglected* the education of the peasant classes. Worse, the karma Brahmin priest system of Savitribai's India *forbade* the education of the polluted castes. Nevertheless, their ideas bear striking similarities, despite their vastly different cultural contexts, and their educational proposals retain remarkable resonance with the latest 21st-century educational research (Becker & Woessmann, 2008; Frost, 2010; Tilak, 2001).

## Worldvenue

If a worldvoice is a luminary, and a worldview is a lens, then a worldvenue is the lifestyle, the resultant set of social practices that are typical of any particular worldvoice-worldview mix. Worldvenue is the network of visible veins, the *actualization* of actions constituting a visibly manifested social pattern (Cowen, 2001; Curtin, 1984; Huntington, 1996; McNeill & McNeill, 2003; Tarnas, 1991; Van Dijk, 2012). The worldvenue is the configuration of social life, the observable and persistent differences in the global culture zones, the tangible and visible differences between the social experiences and behaviors that flow from the particular voice and vision of that society (Madan, 2004; Nolan & Lenski, 2010; Wolf, 2012).

The worldvoice | worldview | worldvenue matrix encompasses not only the invisible realities of heart and head, but also expresses itself in the observable social texture, the visible realities of the hands, the actualized social pathway patterns. The different cultural zones of the planet, the meaning matrices, are multidimensional expressions of their own worldvoice voice, worldview vision, and worldvenue veins (Amin, 2011; Huntington, 1996; Wolf, 1975, 1999, 2007a, 2012). This truth Comenius and Savitribai intuited with precision.

By this understanding, the cultural geography of the global world can be likened to life houses constructed by the craft of those virtuous few. But they do not build life the same (Boo, 2012; Granito, 2007; Moisi, 2009; Noll, 1994; Stearns, 2001). The house that Moses (Beale, 2008, 2011) or Jesus builds (Schmidt, 2004; Stark, 1996) is not the same as that crafted by those thinking according to the blueprints drawn up by those following other luminaries.

The various worldvoices generate alternative worldviews, which advance distinctly different worldvenues (Stevenson & Haberman, 2008). The pagoda patterns of Buddha nations (Mungekar, 2009; Wolf, 2007b) have a distinctly different feel from the mosque modes of Muhammad countries (Pryce-Jones, 2009; Viorst, 2001). And the South

Asian caste civilization of Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva (Frawley, 2001; K, 2007; Mani, 2005; Patel, 2009; Pattanaik, 2003; Varma, 2007; Wolf, 2002) stands a world apart from the Socrates, Caesar, and Jesus ways of the Western civilization (McCloskey, 2010; Nemo, 2005; Schmidt, 2004; Stark, 2001, 2003; Tarnas, 1993; Warraq, 2012).

Savitribai's husband, Jotirao Phule, the Abraham Lincoln of India, called their religiously constructed social reality a "prison house" (Phule, 2002, pp. 98-99; cf. Sinha, 2005; Wolf, 2008). Phule poignantly describes the Western reaction to this "prison house":

[The] followers of Baliraja in the West . . . were deeply aggrieved by our misery. So they entered our prisons and asked us, "Folks, you are human being just like us. Our Creator and Sustainer are one and the same. You are entitled to have all the rights that we have. Then why do you obey the dictates of these crafty *bhats* [Brahmin priests]?" (Phule, 2002, pp. 76, 98)

Why the servile obedience? Because of dictates and dung: dictates that assigned each to their karma-caste, and legislated that only the male-reincarnated pure could be educated; dung that was slung at any who dared to do differently. When Savitribai opened the first Indian school for girls and backward and outcaste children in 1848, village Brahmins hurled damp feces at her face in their futile opposition. But she had heard a different voice. And she had formed until-then never-conceived views of children and education: that every child was created in the image of God and that education was for *all*.

Her cultural house built by Manu was a grinding reality to Savitribai. She came to be vividly aware that there were those in other lands who did not live in prison houses; instead, they dwelt in pleasant houses (Phule, 2002, pp. 88-89). Other people were listening to different voices, at least one of which contended with Manu. That voice, Savitribai discovered, conceptualized a whole different vision of the world from any she had ever imagined: "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them" (Matt. 19:14, NIV). Thus did that voice and view create a radically different social venue for daily life—a pleasant house, as it were (Kuhn, 1979; Wolf, 2003)—for the children of India, whether forward castes, backward castes, or those without caste, even girls as well as boys. Such was the house that Baliraja built: "Do not hinder them. Let the little children come to me." And Savitribai aspired to do the same.

By various reckonings, then, different cultures provide their occupants with differing life-flourishing environments, alternative kinds of cultural zones. That is, they express alternative mixtures of worldvoice (whom they spiritually look to), worldview (how they analyze logically), and worldvenue (what they express in their lifestyle). Historically, the

different life estates have formed ancient and present territorial zones of contest, zones of unequal fullness of life (Harrison, 2006; Kuran, 2010; Omvedt, 2008; Pryce-Jones, 2009; Stearns, 2001; Weber, 1993; Wolf, 2012).

For my purposes here, I simply note that Comenius and Savitribai converged on the same person-of-excellence: Jesus, or Baliraja (Atwood, 2009; Deshpande, 2002, pp. 9-12; Deshpande, 2010, pp. 50-57; Michaud, 2004; Omvedt, 2008, pp. 164-169; Spinka, 1942; Sztompka, 1993; Wolf, 2007b, pp. 4-10). Then, from that prototype voice (worldvoice), they designed an uncommon way to think about the education of children (worldview) and set out to construct a whole different world of social possibilities (worldvenue) (Deshpande, 2010; Lockerbie, 1994; Stroope, 2005). They resolutely set out to weave a different educational reality for the children around them, and for the emerging generations.

Both Comenius and Savitribai, in their own settings, sought to alter not only the existing child education *practices*, but also the very pedagogical *preceptor* and *presuppositions*, the *worldvoice* and *worldview*, on which those practices rested. For Comenius and Savitribai were content with nothing less than the creation of a paradigm shift that would reset an entire continent's—and eventually the globe's—concept of education (Deshpande, 2002, pp. 5-10, 18-21; Lang, 2009; Stroope, 2005, pp. 3-6).

Dominant views of opposition were entrenched against them, sitting in thrones of power. Comenius' and Savitribai's own minority positions of educational innovation were experimental at the time, scurrying for places to survive (Monroe, 2009). But both persisted: convictions guided them, compassion compelled them, and character sustained them. The powerful refused to honor them. But history cannot forget them (Eby & Arrowood, 2010). So much so, in fact, that what Cambridge University's Robin Alexander (2001) says of Comenius—"Comenius' ideas indeed are central to an understanding of continental European pedagogy"—can be equally said (with a *masala* pinch) of Savitribai. Savitribai's ideas of education remain central to understanding the consternations over contemporary Indian pedagogy (Murthy, 2009, pp. 129-153; Wolf, 2008, pp. 9-12).

Comenius was consumed with the metaphor of "*universal education*"—*one school system for all children*. Savitribai was radicalized by the picture of "*universal rights*"—*all children are equal because of the Creator of all* (Witte, Jr., & Alexander, 2010). Drawing from these minority perspectives, Savitribai and Comenius both shared a single theoretical metaphor: *every child is unique, created and sharing the image of God*.



Their core practical corollary was that *every child is equal and unique, deserving and demanding nurture to flourish in the will of God—each child and every child* (Dobinson, 1970).

According to their culturally most uncommon thinking, if each child is equal and unique, then each child should be nurtured, and education for children should be universal, yet child-specific. Each child is special, not for continued “endarkenment,” but for cultivated enlightenment. No child should ever be denigrated. Instead, each child should be elevated.

From their radicalized perspective, Comenius and Savitribai both designed an exemplary education program. Starting from the same core metaphor, both developed a similar framework of education that sought to revolutionize their societies, marked by four key features. The Comenius|Savitribai framework of education (1) conceives the scope of education as *universally available*, (2) introduces a teaching style that is *child sensitive*, (3) insists on a learning experience that is *intellectually critical*, and (4) leads to an education system that is *socially reforming* (Andrade & Wolf, 2008; Bušek, 1972; Sadler, 1966; Ulich, 1950, 1999).

## Conclusion

In the long run, Comenius succeeded (Alexander, 2001; Lawton & Gordon, 2003). Savitribai, on the other hand, has not yet succeeded within India. She has, however, succeeded beyond India (Kamble, 2007; Patel, 2009; Jamanadas, 2002). That is, there are those who contend that it is largely because India has failed to heed Savitribai and the thinking she represents, that India still faces her major problems of education to this day (Banerjee-Dube, 2010; Stern, 2003; Viridi, 2011). For example, in 1957 India’s leading sociologist, M. N. Srinivas, said, “In the last century or more, caste has become much more powerful in certain respects, than it ever was in pre-British days” (Srinivas, 1957, quoted in Guha, 2007, p. 605; see also Pandian, 2007; Perappadan, 2007).

In 2007, historian Ramachandra Guha, of Yale University, would write that “the subsequent decades were to provide resounding confirmation of M. N. Srinivas’ thesis. Far from disappearing with democracy and modernization, caste continued to have a determining influence in (and on) Indian society” (Guha, 2007, p. 606).

“True,” Guha notes, “the caste system was by no means unaffected by the economic and social change unleashed by Independence,” but still, whether “in town or village, at leisure or at work,” Indians continue to be “defined” by the caste “into which they were born” (Guha, 2007, p. 606; see also Chakravarti, 2006; Rothermund, 2008). The result in

education is that religious, cultural, and gender prejudices are “strong, keeping girls out of schools” so that “gender disparities in secondary education are the largest in the world” (Tilak, 2002), and “learning levels are in fact declining, especially in the Hindi-speaking states” (Brinkmann, 2012, p. 44).

That said, it must at least be conceded that in *every* educated woman of India, Savitribai has truly succeeded. For today, every *educated* woman of India, anywhere in the world, stands as testimony to the power of the four original and unusual ideas shared by Comenius and Savitribai: that education for every child, without exception, must be universally available, child sensitive, intellectually critical, and socially reforming.

And every *girl child*, in any school, on any day, in India—sitting alongside boys, reading a book, exploring the Internet, learning new things—is creating a new kind of India. It is a Savitribai-kind of India, where centuries-long deference is haltingly giving way to a barely-century-long, Savitribai-led defiance. It is a defiance that is struggling to break clear from a 3000-year past of mandatory *non*-education (Deshpande, 2010; Jamanadas, 2008).

A “canary in a coal mine” is a warning of danger or trouble yet to come. Early coal mines did not have ventilation systems, so miners too often died from the buildup of methane and carbon monoxide gases in the mines. A “canary in a coal mine” was a solution. Mine workers would carry a canary down into the tunnels with them. More sensitive to poisonous gases than humans, the canary’s death signaled the coming future for the humans. So everyone listened for the song and kept their eye on the sensitive little canary, the signal of their future.

Perhaps then, little girls being educated in India are little reverse-canaries in the coal mine. It may be that the presence or the lack of little girls’ presence in the Indian classroom will yet prove to be India’s early education sensors—heralds of a new kind of India—or hard evidence that all is not well, no matter how hard the laborers dig on (Tilak, 2002).

If the “main thing”—O’Hanlon’s “revolution in the worldview of the lower caste individual”—can become the classroom thing, then for the children of India, an original and still unusual thing might yet happen. For if traditional religious disabilities still lay at the root of the frustration and backwardness of the low castes and if these interconnected problems still require a radical solution (O’Hanlon, 1985, pp. 125-128), then the “original and unusual” song of Comenius and Savitribai needs to be heard today more than ever before.

Comenius and Savitribai pointed the way out of the poisonous pedagogical hole (Ghosh, 2009; Gupta, 2008). Their solution was radical then; it remains radical today (Anand, 2011). Plainly spoken, only a revolution in worldvoice, worldview, and worldvenue will bring a resolution to India's educational quandary (Kumar, 2008).

Like a breeze of fresh air, what French sociologist André Béteille has said of their parents, can be said of backward caste and outcaste children: they may be "still exploited, oppressed and stigmatized; but their presence" can "no longer be ignored" (Béteille, 2000, quoted in Guha, 2007, p. 615; see also George, 2010). But for sustained change there must be a radical rethink of the embedded inequality which Indian educationists Krishna Kumar (2008), Amartya Sen (2006), and Suzana Brinkmann (2012, p. 45) discuss as a "culture of inequality."

Could it be that Savitribai's and Comenius' person-of-excellence (worldvoice) might yet point the way to a new kind of educational blueprint (worldview) for India, as experienced in other places? As Amman Madan, professor of sociology of education, has mused, "if transformation can happen in other societies, it can happen here as well" (quoted in Srinivasan, 2011; see also Desai, 2011; Jongeneel, Liu, Ng, Ku, & Sunquist, 2011; Levine, 2010; Stern, 2003; Wolf, 2010a, 2010c; also consider Ruokanen & Huang, 2010; Sanneh & Carpenter, 2005; Wolf, 2007b).

If so, might just such a different arrangement provoke a future with a different kind of social construction—a worldvenue learning place different from the prison house kind of culture within which Savitribai lived? If so, then perhaps the children of India may yet sing in a pleasant house, little canaries freed into a most original and unusual future—a Comenius and Savitribai kind of future.

## Endnote

<sup>1</sup> Throughout this article the views of Savitribai Phule and Mahatma Jotirao Phule (her husband) on education are taken to be compatible. In "A Statement for the Information of the Education Commission" (1882), Jotirao Phule's first three opening sentences note the intertwined and interdependent relationship in things educational between himself and his wife, Savitribai: "My experience in educational matters is principally confined to Poona and the surrounding villages. About 25 years ago, the missionaries had established a female school at Poona but no indigenous school for girls existed at the time. I, therefore, was induced . . . to establish such a school, and in which I and my wife worked together for many years" (Phule, 2002, p. 102).

At his death in 1890, Savitribai assumed the presidency and continued the work of their co-founded organization, Satyashodhak Samaj. But I note that "Phule" particularly applies to references originally referencing, or personally written by, Jotirao; I take them as representative of Savitribai's basic thinking and work (Sardar & Wolf, 2008; Wolf, 2010a, 2010b, 2010c; Yagati, 2002; Zelliott, 2002).

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