

# Knowledge, Society and Culture

*for India as a developing society*



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# Today

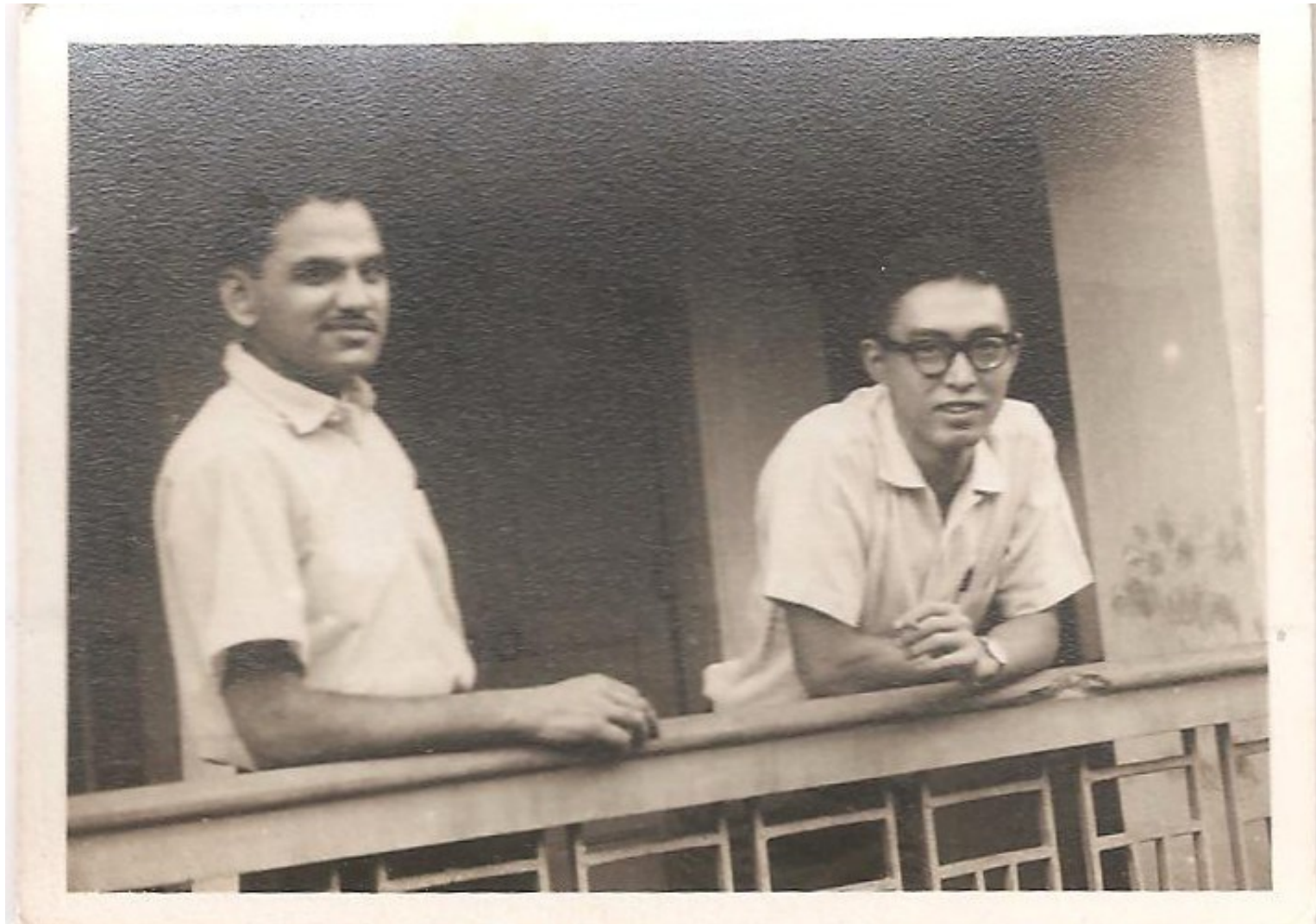
- | Types of Knowledge-personal and systematic
- The development question and how they fare
- *The forging of culture!*
- A personal narrative

# 50 years ago in Nasik





# The Meticulous Engineer The Meticulous Singer





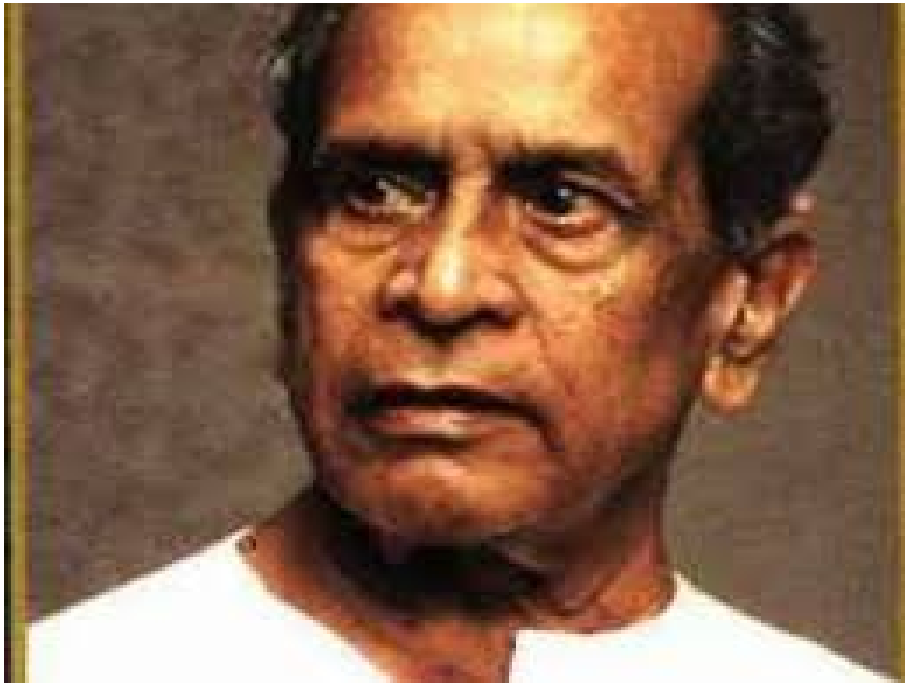
What if I hide as a मोगरा in the  
mali's garden? How will you find  
me?

I will become a जाई. Mali baba will  
string us together in a mala. That is  
how I will find you.

# A saint

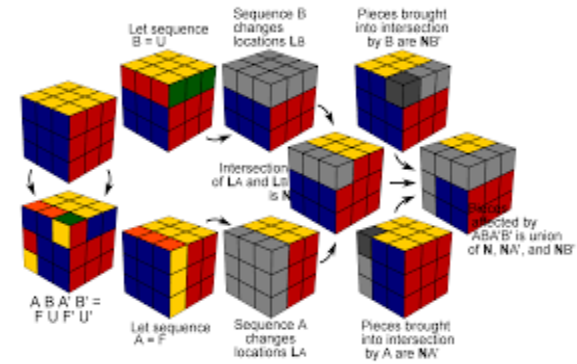
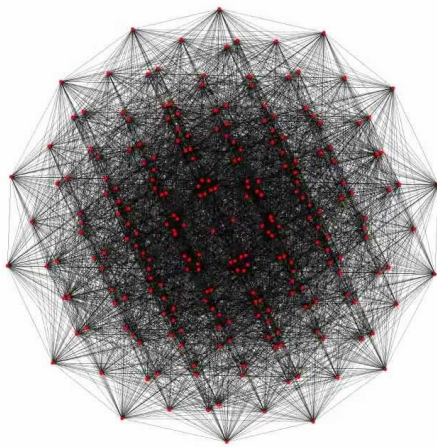
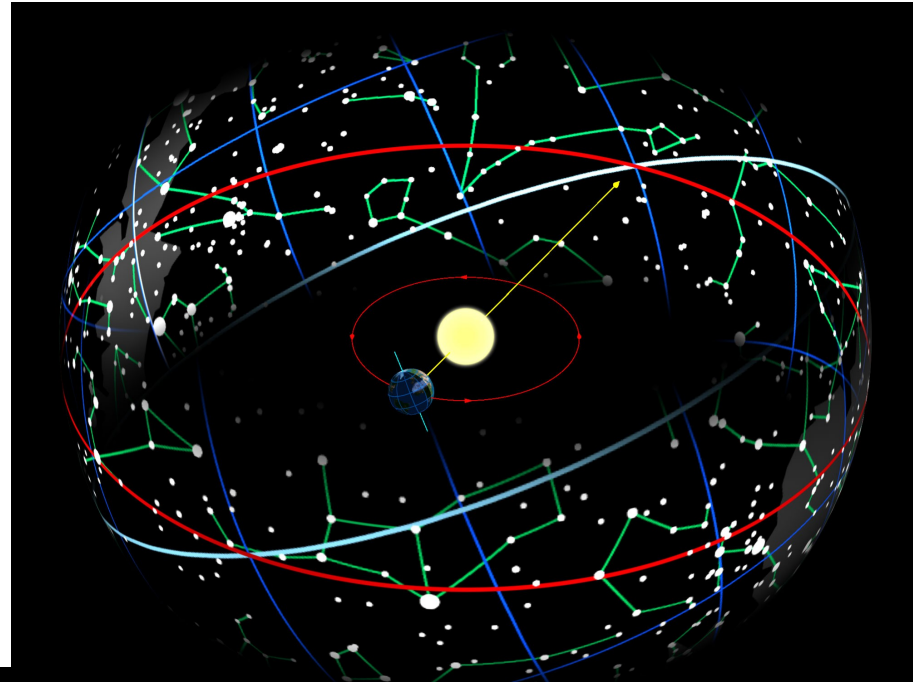
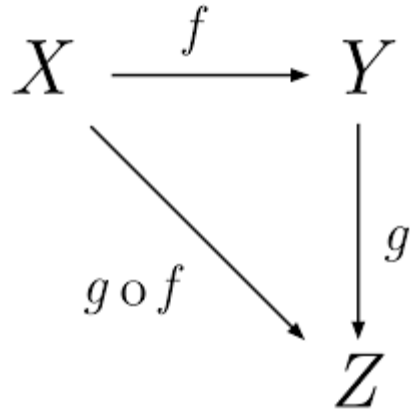


# A listener in Mumbai



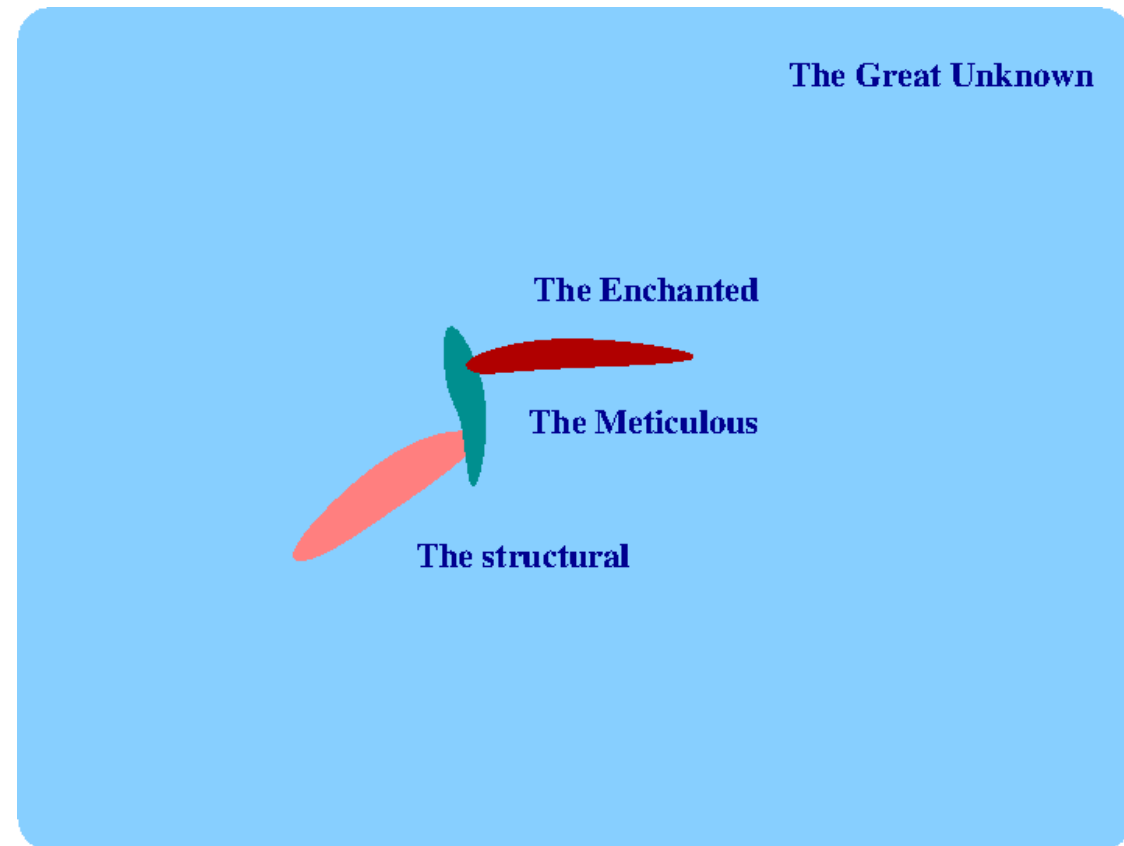


# Structure and Correspondences

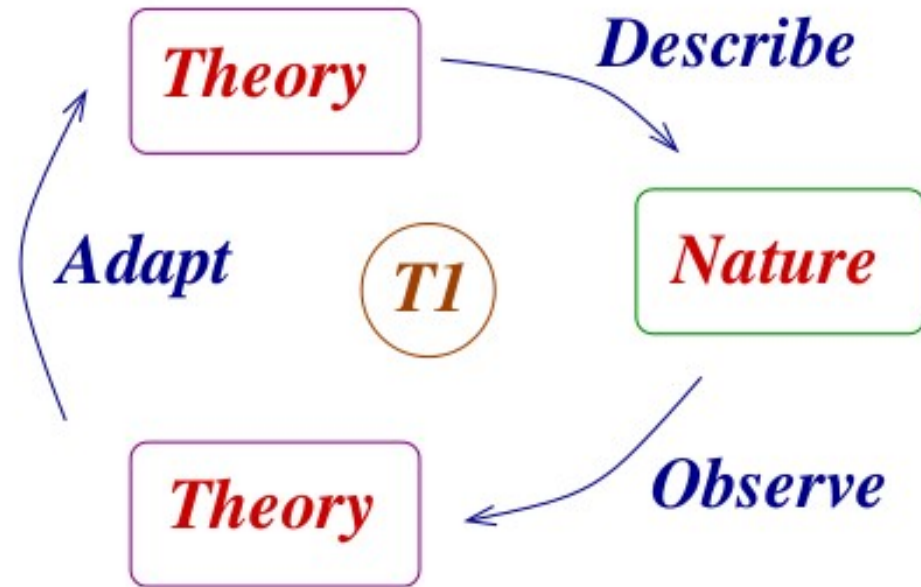


# At 17

51 kilos, three *personal*  
representations



# Science

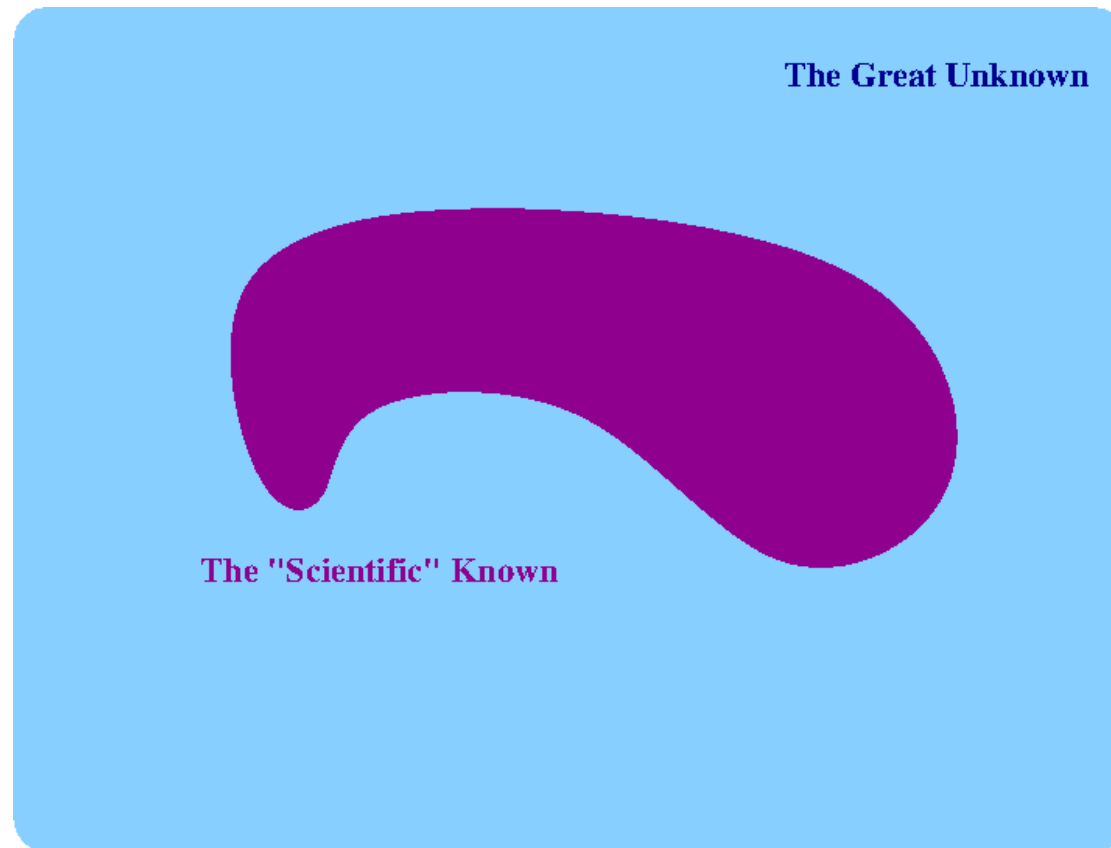


## *Properties*

- Outcome- Theories, causality.
- Leads to technology
- Social-Aesthetics and argumentation
- Systematic-expensive experimentation



# Big Science



# Natural History



# The culture of natural history





# Treks



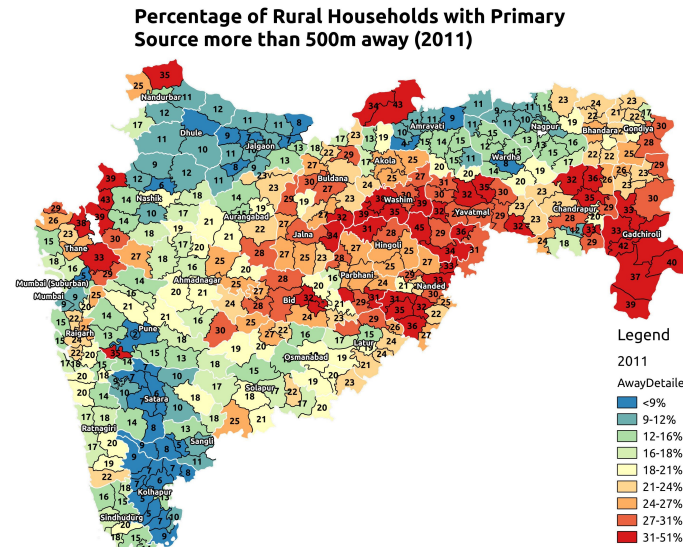


# After several years

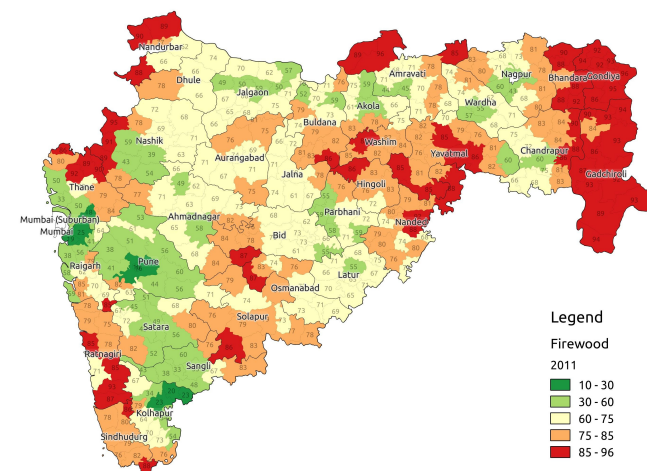
How do we explain this?



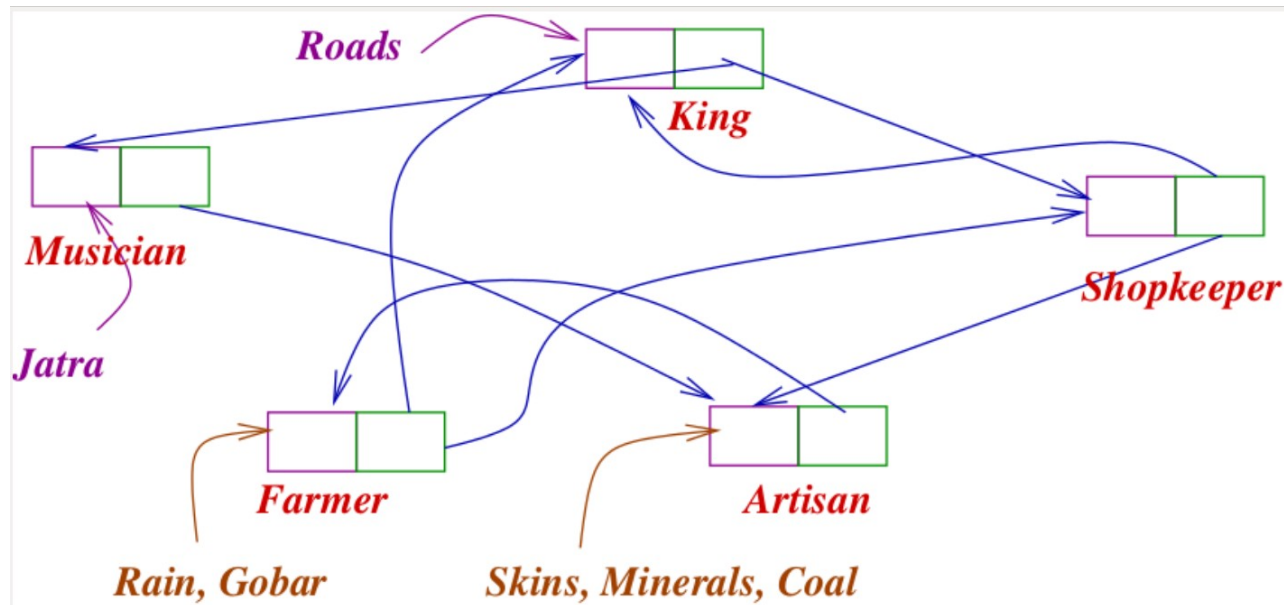
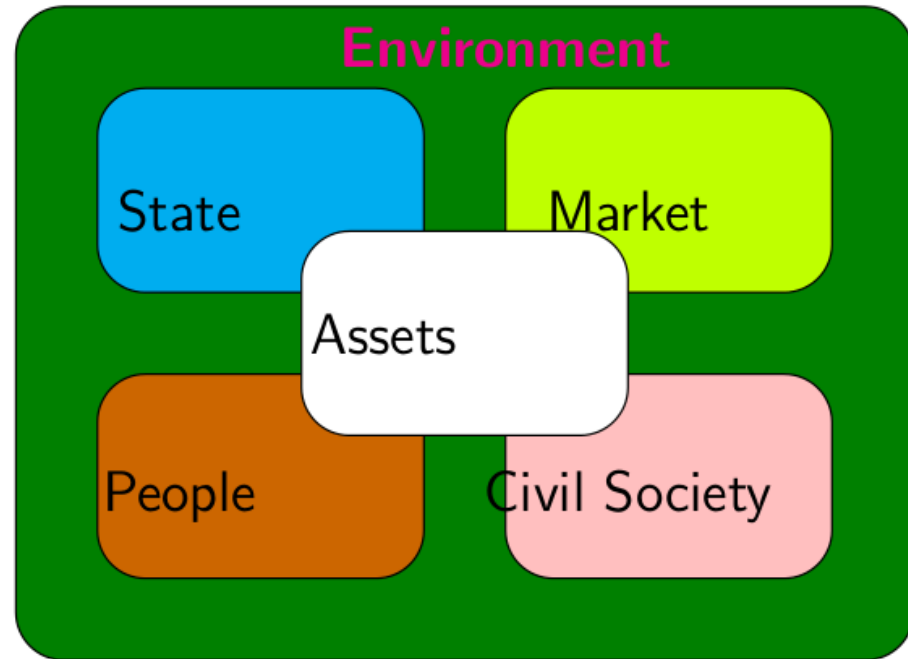
# Severe stress in key areas



**Percentage of Rural Households cooking with Firewood (2011)**

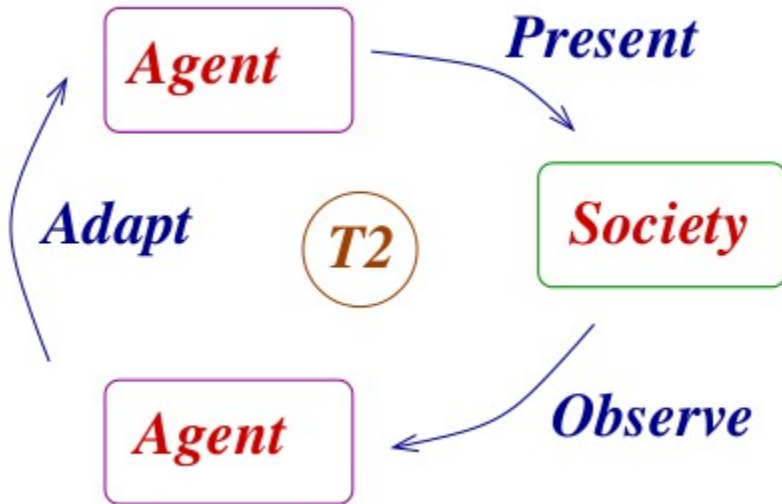


# Society





# Agents



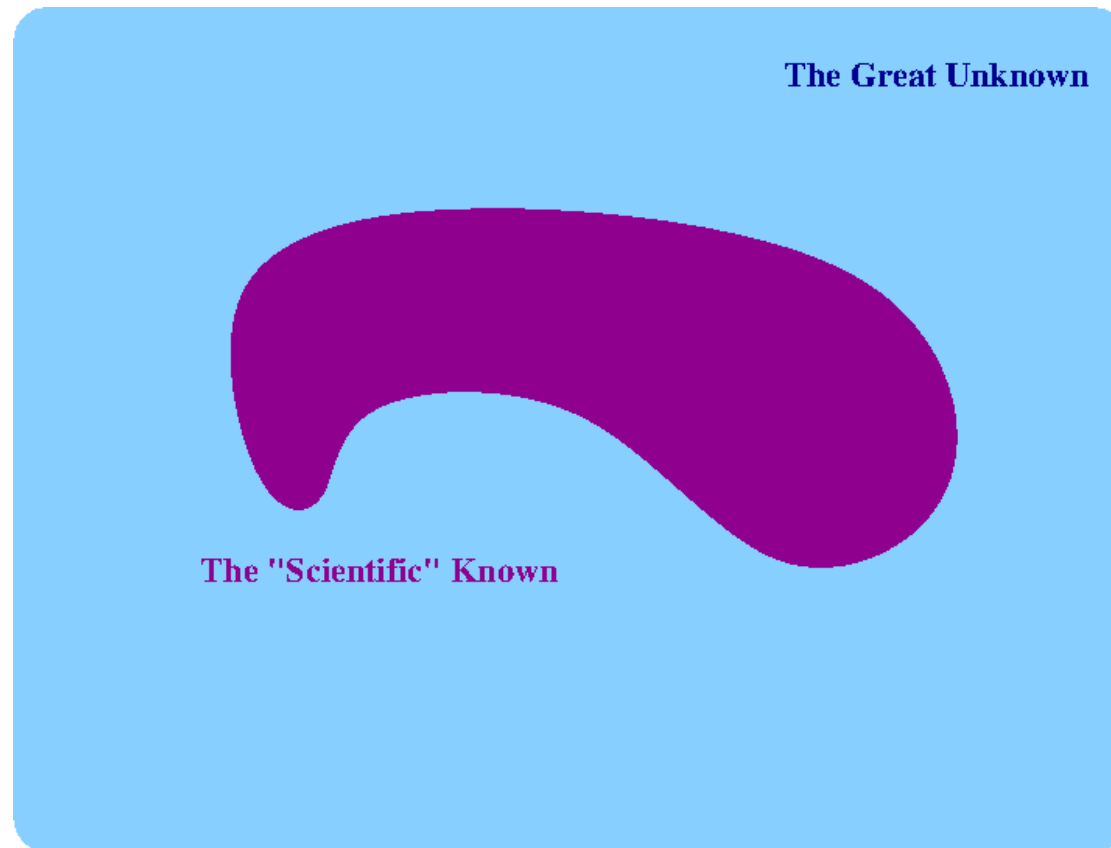
Knowledge

*Sound and  
Rigourous*

- | A pays B to deliver to A
- | A pays B to deliver to C
- | Examples Cobbler-Teacher-Tehsildar



# Ask the scientist



# Everything is known!



- Scientist-corruption, backwardness
- Social Scientist-class, gender and caste
- Economist-market failure

# But is this true?

## What is science made up of?

### Subject of science

Combustion, nano-electronics

### Process of science

skills of observation, documentation,  
argumentation, experimentation

▮ New experiment

▮ *Which is the best chulha in the village?*

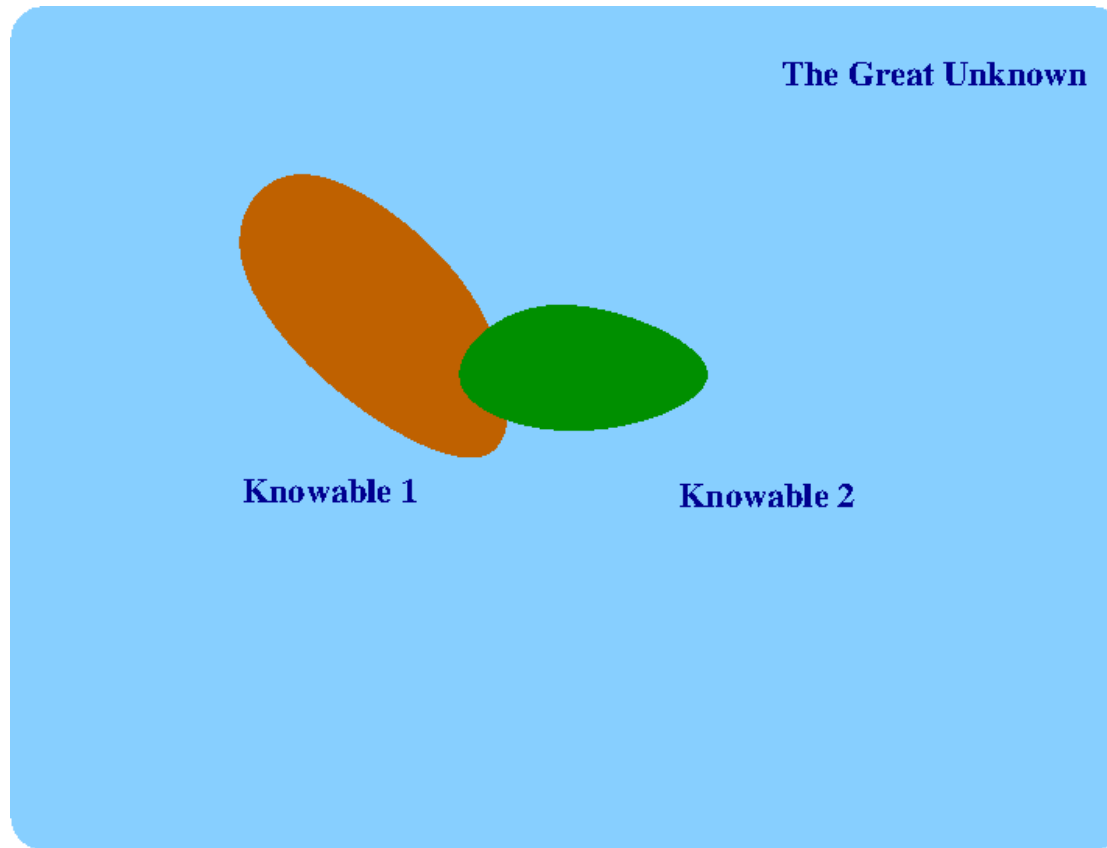
# Dhaulvalli



## *What happened*

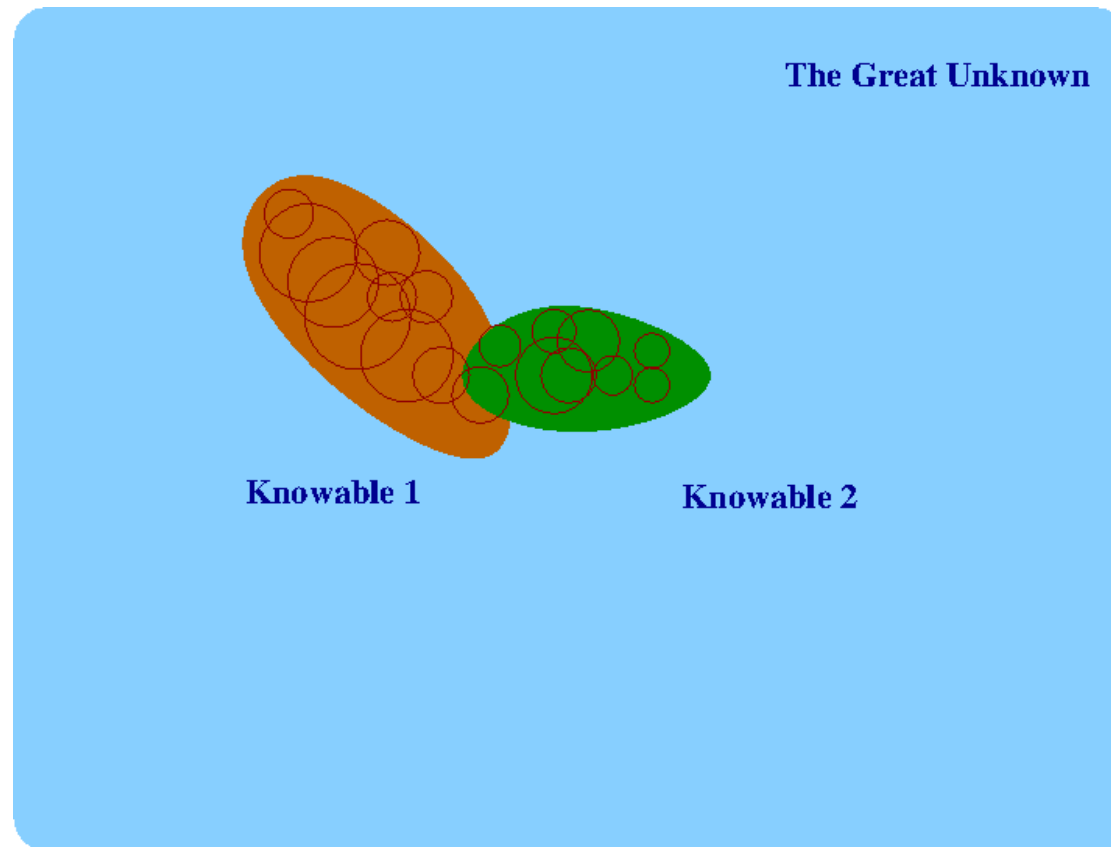
- 7 wadis, 5 best chulhas-lots of arguments
- Boys and girls visited each other homes and took measurements
- Lead to better chulhas? Role-models?
- *Separate the cultural from the scientific?*

# In fact...quite possibly





# In fact...quite possibly



# Another System-Markets



# Markets

- commodity (utility)  
not cultural artefacts
- Money-price as  
signal
- anonymous,  
instantaneous,  
ahistorical
- *Beliefs*
- Rational and fair
- Efficient



# How does it play out



- *Packaged Wafers Rs. 5 for 30gm, Rs 8 for 50gm*
- Money going out-coming in as dole or low prices for rice

## Hindustan Lever 2014 Annual Report

Revenues	27,000 crores
Profits	3,000 crores
Sub-contract	9,000 crores
Salaries	1,500 crores
Transport	1,500 crores
Royalties	900 crores
Marketing	3,000 crores



# How do we reverse this?



Can women of Dahulvalli not make wafers?

Quality, Hygiene-better machines and processes

Trust, confidence, role models

Same as what runs community services!

How does a community serve it self better?



# What runs the modern Big-System?

## Branding

- Support to mobility
- Suspension of discernment
- Eventually consumable, part of identity

## Elite Agency

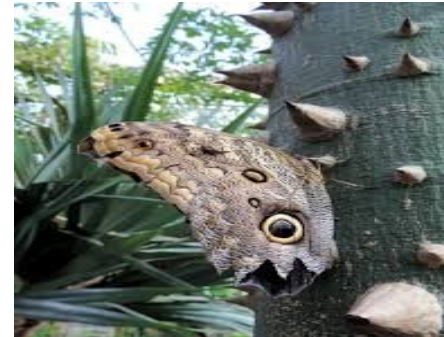
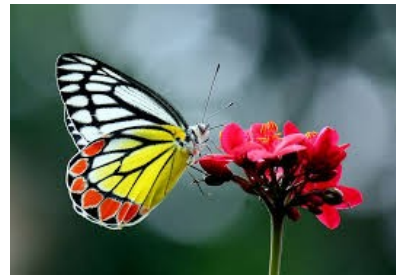
- Highly productive systems: clever people to operate.
- **Elite Agents**-iconic scientists, innovators, artists
- Elite identification
  - Harvard, MIT, IIT, UPSC
- Put In charge of big systems
- **All benefit!**

# In Reality

- Wasteful, Unsustainable, inequality wired-in
- Aspirational dysfunction, inimical to community action
- Turns the rest of us into alienated consumers
- Loss of empiricism. Loss of coding and transmission of knowledge. **Loss of culture!**

# How does a community serve it self better?

- More diverse roles for the familiar
- More give and take across time, more history
- **More comprehension**
- **More practice and culture!**



# What to do?

**Massive Decentralization right down to taluka level-governance, higher education**

- Give people back their language, their *shastra* and their *sahitya* and *its methods*
- Human practices and empathy as the guide to teach social and physical sciences
- Comprehension of the structure of society
- **Rehabilitation of the seasons and natural history**
- Production of role models

# Towards a convivial society

- *The personal-experiential*
- *The systemic-methodological*
- *The subject matter-practices*
- *The mystery resolved-choice!*



*But there is only one way-Culture as growth*

- 
- A Human Weakness
- More secure, More certain, less drudgery=agriculture
- Inherent bureaucracy
- **Culture of the government servant!**
- **Allure of the big system**



Finally, at the personal level



***Re-enchantment-Hard Work***

# Thank You

