8 RASAS, 8 bhāvas
re: Puruṣārthas

I have graphed many more
Indic phenomena
in color like these.
THE EIGHT COLORS (varṇas?) OF THE HINDU CUBE

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Abstract: Common Hindu paradigms (Figures 1 to 4) postulate three-dimensional property-spaces (Figs 5-8) that generate diverse, colorful qualities and types in their 8 corners (Figs 9-11) and also generate events and institutions (such as Figs 12-18) combining several of the 8.

NOTES ON THE FIGURES

A rationale for the analytic scheme (Figs 1-8) is offered in my essay, "Constructing an Indian ethnosociology." This appears with related essays by 5 others in "Toward an ethnosociology of India" (= Vol. 23, No. 1, of Contributions to Indian Sociology, 1989). Debates on the project continue in CIS. With an introduction and index, the 6 essays have been republished as a book: M. Marriott (editor), India through Hindu categories (Sage, 1990). Both are cited below as "ITHC."

(1) The 5 ELEMENTS (bhūtas) are inseparable, but the 3 motile elements among them (fire, water, & air) vary independently in their incidences. Hindus treat these and other triads as "spheres" (lokas); I cube them to make their three-dimensionality evident. "Earth" and "ether" provide loci and spaces, respectively, for the motile triad; they are shown by the cubes’ shapes and by their outlines’ transparency and porosity.

Red is identified by Hindus as the color of fire, passion, and heat, and is extended by me below to represent the homologous "bile," "attachment," and "mixing" variables. Blue is my substitute for the less manageable Hindu strand of "darkness" (Fig.3): I extend it to the homologous "air," "wind," and "unmatching" variables. No color but "clear" is given by Hindus to "water" or "phlegm" (nor by me to the homologous "goodness," "advantage," and "unmarking"), but I tint the antonyms of these with yellow, it being the remaining primary pigment.

(2) 3 HUMORS (doṣas) are the principal variables of Ayurveda, the "science of longevity," which derives them from the corresponding elements of Fig.1. Humors plus elements generate the flavors of Fig.12.

(3) 3 STRANDS (gunaś) are common in Hindu philosophic discourse, e.g., in Bhagavad Gītā. Note that Figs 1-3 all foreground the same 3 faces.

(4) 3 AIMS* (the trivarga, plus their 3 antonyms) are of major concern in this sphere of moral discourse. To these may be added the aim of "release" (mokṣa) from all spheres. Note that this triad, like those in Figs 1-3, forms a paradigm with many aspects, and not a single, fixed hierarchy of inclusions. Each aspect may be fore- or backgrounded, often with conflictual effect--so notes Malamoud in CIS 15:33-54 (1982).

(5) 3 VARIABLES. "Mixing-unmixing," "unmarking-marking," and "matching-unmatching" are Marriott’s coinages intended to summarize the several concentric triads already displayed in Figs 1-4, and to provide general names for the processes constituting the common, 3-D property-space.

(6) "DEFINITIONS" offers several further descriptions of the processes occurring along the three dimensions and in different regions of the general property-space that is postulated in Fig.5.
(7) 3 AXIOMS. Set theory and the logic of relations offer some near-analogues of the assumptions embodied in the elements, humors, and strands of Figs 1-3. Their relations (from which Fig. 4 partly differs) together constitute "antiequivalence." Resemblances such as these to mathematical fundamentals suggest the power of the Hindu concepts.

(8) 3 TRANSACTIONAL VALUES. Resembling the 3 aims of Fig.4 above, these terms derive from Gloria Goodwin (Raheja)'s analysis of shifting aspects of Hindu relationships (ITHC pp.79-102). Examples manifesting them are richly detailed in her book, The poison in the gift (Univ. of Chicago Press, 1988). By "hierarchy," she means simply asymmetry or ranking.

(9) 8 QUALITIES. The four diametric pairs of labels in the eight corners represent major and recurrent social concerns among Hindus: "pure-impure," "great-small," "subtle-gross," and "violent-nonviolent." These qualities are generated as different combinations of the triads of variables already named in Figs 1-6. Thus "purity" is given by water that is minimally affected by fire and air; by goodness with minimal passion or darkness; by phlegm with minimal bile and wind. "Violence" is an incoherent but passionate striving for advantage; and so on.

(10) 8 SOCIAL TYPES. Labels for groups who today express the above qualities still include the names of the 4 varṇas that were classically mapped in Figure 14; but now the lower two labels are moved to the front and reversed, right-to-left. Thus "Commoner" or Vaiśya is today applied to castes in the "nonviolent" (1,9,1), "Student" corner; and Śudras or "Servants" may appear close to the "gross" (9,9,1), or "Subject" corner. Of course, Brāhmaṇ or "Domestic Priest" can still relabel "Teacher" in the "pure" corner at (1,1,1), just as Kṣatriya or "Warrior" can still relabel "Ruler" in the "great" (9,1,1), "heroic" corner. Labels from many other social spheres—kinship, occupational, sectarian, modern political, economic, etc.—can appropriately mark people who occupy the 4 corners at this dhārmik, matching front of the cube.

This cube further generates 4 "other" social types at its unmatching backside. "Player" at (1,1,9) stands for all who dominate through "subtlety" (Fig.9) or "comedy" (Fig. 11), e.g., astrologers, funeral priests, tricky deities, ancestral spirits, mystics, magicians, clowns, and bards. "Criminal" at (9,1,9) stands for all who dominate through "violence," who take Arthaśāstra as their guide, or who are otherwise likely to feel the "furious" sentiment of Fig.11. These may be enemies, royal rivals, bandits, gunḍas, demons, or threatening deities like the Bengali "Brahma" in Fig.13. (Dirks' essay in ITHC links such violent "Thieves" (Kallars) with their well-matched, ruling cousins at nearby (9,1,1).) The lower "Slave" (1,9,9) and "Jungly" or "Tribal" (9,9,9) labels represent many dominated, disorderly, or migrant workers. Like their superiors, these "Untouchable" or "Backward" castes include both smaller and larger groups with cooler and warmer natures, respectively, as in Moreno's study of castes in Palani (ITHC 149-67).

(11) 8 SENTIMENTS (rasas) are borrowed from classical Hindu aesthetics, where all sentiments are derived from the "erotic" (a possible label for the whole, or center of this sphere). A recent recital of this typology is in B. N. Goswamy's Essence of Indian art, a 1986 catalogue from the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco. The locations of these sentiments in the cube are my own tentative interpretations, following various texts, informants, and contexts. They and their colors await rigorous study.
(12) 6 SEASONS bring with them certain distinctive "flavors" (also called rasas) that are generated by the humors and cosmic elements predominant at those times. (Ayurveda, such as Caraka’s Sūtra Ch. 6, gives details.) Solar cycles of both the day and the year as well as foods and medicines can thus be located in the cube. The figure follows Francis Zimmermann, "Rtu sātmāya: the seasonal cycle and the principle of appropriateness," Social science and medicine, v.14B (1980), p.99-106.

(13) 7 GENERA. These are "strand" (Fig.3) interpretations by some residents of a West Bengal village who were interviewed by Marvin G. Davis and reported on p.49 of his book, Rank and rivalry (Cambridge Univ. press, 1983). The colorings of plants as green, animals as brown, etc., are composites generated by the Hindu scheme adopted in Figure 1 above, and are not my ad hoc attempts at conventional realism.

(14) 4 VARNAS. These "strand" mappings, which resemble statements in medieval texts, were also given by Davis’ Bengali rural informants, p.51. Such characterizations vary and change with time, place, and person. Thus those called "Vaiśya" (Commoner) today are more likely to be shopkeepers, and to move on the "cooler," left side of the cube; they are unlike the classical Commoners who are described as farming and herding, occupations today more often ascribed to "Sudras." Both these varnas are now also perceived as less tāmasik; thus both move forward toward matching in the more recent diagram of Fig.10.

(15) MARRIAGES among males and females of any five ranks (of varnas or other "classes") are here formulated from Davis’ (pp.72-3) interviews. These interviews recall the formulations found in classical dharmaśāstra sources such as Manu (3.12-18 and 10.5-68). "Mixing" is here omitted as a variable, since all marriages are mixings; instead, all three axes of the cube are used for marking. Two axes show the marking of the male or female parents, while the third axis displays the excessive marking of some offspring. Offspring whose parents’ gender ranks (male over female) are positively correlated (anuloma, "matching") with their class ranks are assigned marks at the average of their parents’ markings, while offspring whose parents’ two kinds of ranks are negatively correlated (pratiloma, "unmatching") are marked more heavily than either parent, and are thus alienated to other, additional classes.

(16) "LIFE CYCLES" is a composite of actual biographies, of classical (e.g., Śrūtra’s Su. 35.39) and present popular accounts of the relevant humors (Fig.2), with accounts of usages prevailing at different phases of members’ lives in families. These phases resemble the mappings of āśramas and other familial forms described in dharmaśāstra.

(17) HOUSES of Kerala, represented here from Melinda Moore’s schematic diagrams (ITHC, pp.169-202), seem to respond quite precisely to the moral and elemental properties shown in the cubes of Figs 1-8 above. They respond approximately, too, to Varahamihira’s celestial and earthly placements of deities. Architectural responses differ in other regions, but seem everywhere to address similar cosmic and social issues.

(18) CASTES--here just six out of 28+ local groups--are mapped from their mutual food transactions and spatial relations, as noted by Paul Hiebert in an Andhra Pradesh village called Konduru (Univ. of Minnesota press, 1971), pp.58-62. Transactional data from here and elsewhere are formulated by Marriott in "Hindu transactions" in Bruce Kapferer (ed.), Transaction and meaning, pp.109-142 (Philadelphia: ISHI, 1976).
Common Hindu paradigms of nature

5 elements

1. ETHER
   akasa
2. EARTH
   earth
3. WATER
   apah
4. AIR
   vayu
5. FIRE
   agni

3 humors

1. WIND
   vata
2. PHLEGM
   kapha
3. BILE
   pitta
3 strands 3 aims

3. GOODNESS sattva
   DARKNESS tamas
   PASSION rajas

4. ADVANTAGE artha
   COHESION dharma
   ATTACHMENT kama

3. NON-ATTACHMENT nis kama
   DISADVANTAGE ghartha
assume a 3-D property space

3 variables (defined)

5.

6.
3 axioms 3 transactional values
that generates eight corners

8 qualities

8 social types
8 sentiments

and also

6 seasons
accommodates many other realities—

7 genera

4 varṇas
15. marriages

16. life cycles
houses

castes

17.

18.