

5 July 1965

READING 8

The conversations last week seem to show a general acceptance of the concept that negative emotions are a terrible curse which is not natural to us and therefore could be eliminated. But I think each of us has a very restricted idea of what is to be included under the name 'Negative Emotion'. Thus A. might agree to call it negative if he loses his temper and resorts to violence; while B. only thinks of those waves of depression that assail her. It is of course impossible to make a complete list of emotions as Darwin tried to do in his book *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals*; and even more impossible to draw a neat dividing line between the pleasant and the unpleasant ones. But it's essential to know by taste what part of the emotions we are experiencing can be useful to the Atman and what cannot. This is the criterion by which the Shankaracharya classifies emotions, and he gave as examples desire for happiness, anger, affection, acquisitiveness, pride, desire to instruct other people, etc. For instance, 'if you have Pride in the Atman and you feel proud to meet Him, this pride is not wrong, it helps you on your way.'

(Discussion)

The power to make this distinction is directly connected in his System with the Three Gunas – Rajas, activity; Tamas, inertia; and Sattva, which is a force different from either of these. The Three Gunas are in everything but their proportions vary, and having acquired Knowledge and control of the Three Gunas in himself, the Realized Man can know most accurately, and can control, any situation in which he finds himself.

There was a Medieval diagram (designed to show the changing psychological 'climate and weather') which can be very practical if we relate it to the Three Gunas, for it shows the full range of the chemical factory in relation to our emotional life. Figure 1 (overleaf) shows the diagram in terms of climate and the four seasons. One can apply it also to many other things, for instance, to a car; the experienced driver has to know by means of eyes, nose, ears and his other senses how his car is running before the engine actually seizes up!

On the same analogy, one should be able to tell how one's own machine is running (Figure 2).

To 'know oneself' means to know one's temperament, the prevalent climate (is one emotionally an Eskimo or a tropical native). Then one should be watching the prevailing weather from season to season and from day to day. One may need some anti-freeze or be running out of oil. The figure shows the full range of our emotions from extreme fury to the depths of depression, and all but the pure Sattva have *some* impurity, some negativeness in them.

But my temperament and all this weather is *not me*; it is a property of the bodily machine and therefore perishable. If I want to find mySelf I must accumulate pure Sattva and withdraw to the Atman who is unaffected by the elements. Just as we may go up in a jet plane to 30,000 feet and looking down through a rift in the clouds see that it is raining there below.

Shakespeare, like other writers of the time, was fond of this analogy, and this Sonnet (18) comes to mind again when you look at the two figures:

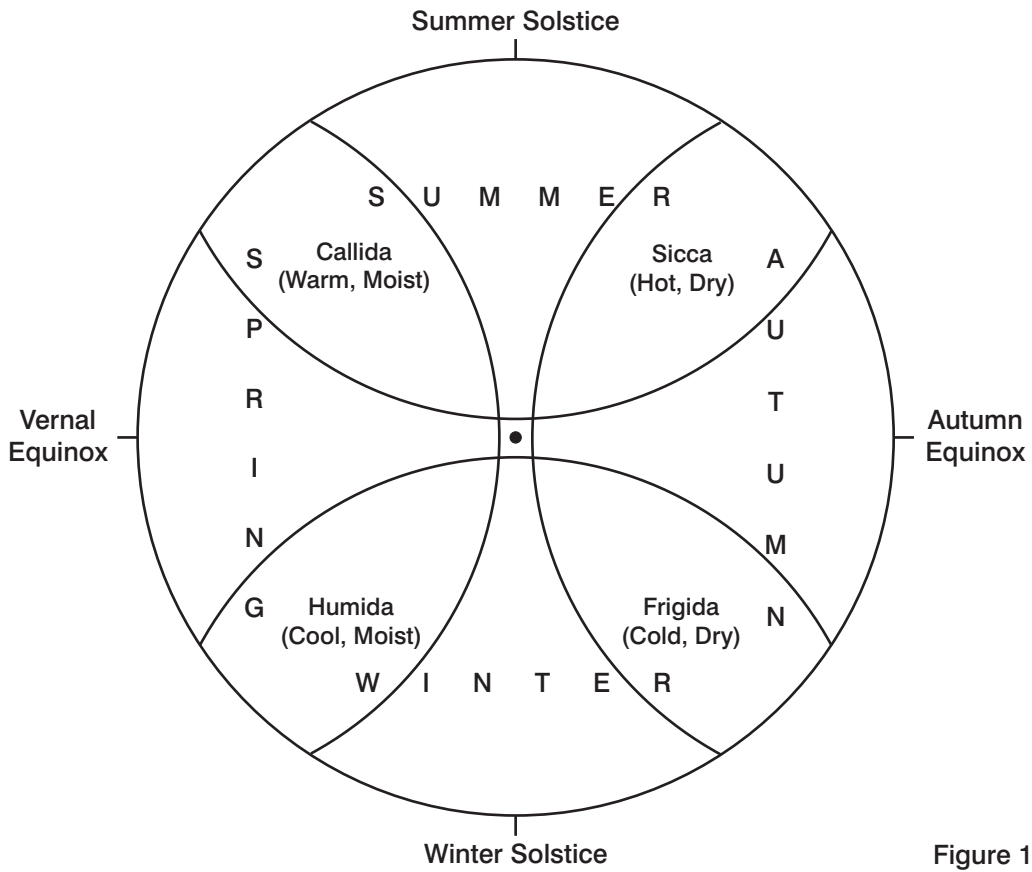


Figure 1

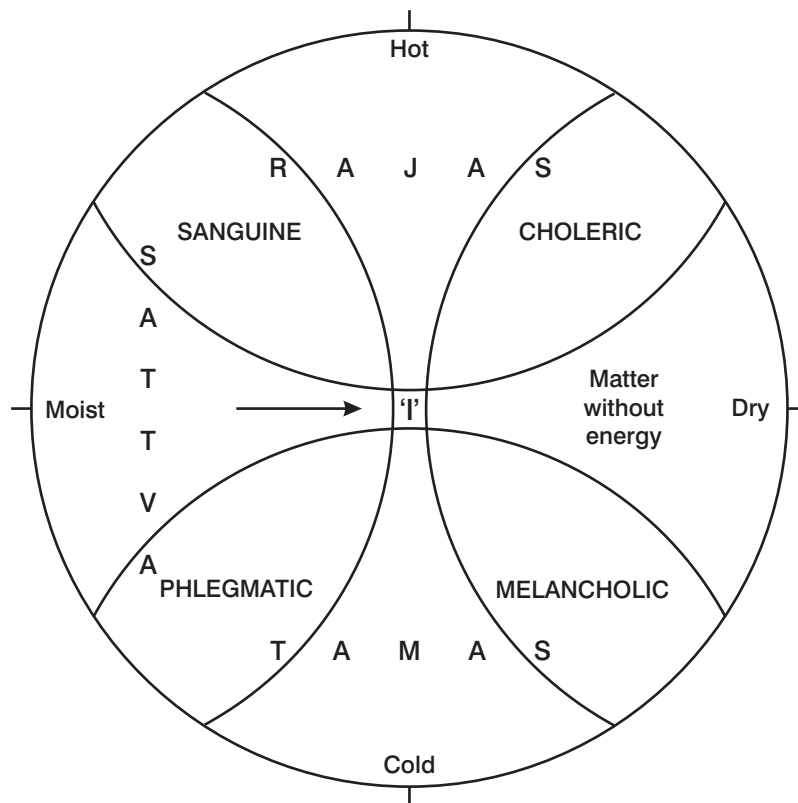


Figure 2

Shall I compare Thee to a Summer's day?
 Thou art more lovely and more temperate:
 Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,
 And Summer's lease hath all too short a date:
 Sometimes too hot the eye of heaven shines,
 And often is his gold complexion dimm'd;
 And every fair from fair sometimes declines,
 By chance or Nature's changing course untrimm'd;
 But Thy Eternal Summer shall not fade,
 Nor lose possession of that fair thou owest;
 Nor shall Death brag thou wander'st in his shade,
 When in Eternal lines to time thou growest:
 So long as men can breathe, or eyes can see,
 So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.

Finally, looking at the word 'I' in the centre of Figure 2, one may perhaps understand these words at the end of the 14th Chapter of the Gita:

Arjuna asked: 'My Lord! By what signs can he who has transcended the Gunas be recognized? How does he act? How does he live beyond them?'

Lord Shri Krishna replied: 'O Prince! He who shuns not the Guna which is present, and longs not for that which is absent;

'He who maintains an attitude of detachment, who is not disturbed by the Gunas, who realises that it is only they who act, and remains calm;

'Who accepts pleasure or pain as it comes, who is centred in his Self... such is he who transcends the Gunas.

'And he who serves Me and only Me, with unfaltering devotion, shall overcome the Gunas, and become One with the Eternal.'

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