

Sex and the Spiritual Path

SEX AND SPIRITUALITY

"Cosmically speaking, sex is a short word used to express the relation existing (during manifestation) between spirit and matter, and between life and form" Djwhal Khul, Esoteric Psychology

So sex is everywhere, because everywhere, spirit quickens matter and life expresses itself through form. Sex should therefore be seen as a natural function, as an energy which exists in our bodies and as an analogy for the relationship between spirit and matter.

But for most people it isn't! Sex is very much misunderstood at the present time, although people appear to talk about it a lot, seem to do it a lot, and use it to sell anything from cigarettes to cars. It has connotations of status and power and in the eyes of many people an individual is a failure if his or her sex life isn't up to the standard set by society and portrayed by journalists. *m. m. m. a*

So what is sex, why does it exist, and what is its place on a spiritual Path?

As the quotation from Esoteric Psychology suggests, one way in which sex can be viewed is as an analogy of the relationship between spirit and matter. Here spirit is seen as a Yang, active, penetrating force, quickening matter which is Yin, passive, receptive and nurturing. The combination of the two gives birth to Consciousness.

Throughout the Creation, we find reflections of higher causes, and in this way, Man is a microcosm of the macrocosm. That which is in Man mirrors that which is in Creation. In Creation as a whole, we have spirit penetrating matter; on this physical level we have the duality of yang and yin, opposite yet complementary, and in Mankind we have male and female.

Within both male and female bodies is an energy we know as sexual energy. It can be felt as sexual desire, and can be released through sexual orgasm. Sex is a means through which the two poles of a duality, male and female, can meet and attempt to create a unity. Each of us is drawn to complete ourselves - a very few can complement our outward male or female nature with the opposite which exists within us. Most of us seek to find the other half outside of ourselves in a relationship. Yet inevitably, everything must remain a duality on this level and all must change, so we never find a real and permanent unity.

Sex has other functions though. Most obviously it is a means of providing bodies for incarnating souls, and hence married couples have a responsibility to plan children as far as possible, to ensure that they grow up in a loving, caring environment which can provide for their needs.

Sex also provides a means of releasing tension, although there are of course other ways of doing this! If the sexual energy is not released and is instead used and directed upwards, it can lead to higher realisations and can be used to provide energy for abstract and philosophical thought.

Sex and the Spiritual Path

Sex and Spirituality 2

We are extremely lucky as Initiates to have so much wisdom available to us on the subject of sex, and in all other areas of life. For most people, their sexual lives are full of fear, guilt and confusion. There have been a number of surveys carried out in this century dealing with male and female sexual response, behaviour and attitudes. Perhaps the most widely known are the Kinsey Reports (1948 and 1953) investigating male and female sexual behaviour and the work of Masters and Johnson on Human Sexual Response (1966). These and other, more recent studies, such as the survey carried out in 1983 by "Woman" magazine amongst its readers, show a widespread misunderstanding of sex and of both male and female sexuality.

Eight out of ten wives feel that sex is as important to women as to men, but say that they feel misunderstood by men, only 39% being "very happy" with their sexual relationship. Almost three quarters of wives want to change the way they make love, but over 50% of women find it hard to talk to their partner about sex. As a result two out of five women fake their orgasms, and many complain that although the woman's orgasm is important to their partner, he ejaculates too soon. Kinsey found that for three quarters of all men in the USA, lovemaking lasts 2 minutes or less.

So while the books, magazines and newspapers tell us that everyone is doing it all the time and having endless fun the reality is very different. Many people feel worried that they don't match up to the "standards" and yet they feel unable to seek advice due to deep seated guilt.

Guilt is often associated with sex. After passing sexual energy, tiredness and guilt are common reactions. Both arise from the energy expended in sex, and the ensuing drop in general energy level. An additional factor is the christian attitudes to sex, which regard it as a sin rather than a God-given gift to be used wisely, but enjoyed. If lovemaking was embarked upon in a sense of giving and caring, rather than guilty, selfish pleasure seeking, sexual intercourse and the related releases of sexual energy, would give rise to a feeling of exhilaration rather than exhaustion.

Ishvara teaches us healthier and more beneficial attitudes towards sex, in both a married and a single lifestyle. Sex is supposed by many people to have no place on a spiritual path, or else to take the form of endless orgies. Within Lifewave we have as balanced an attitude towards sex as we have towards any other aspect of life.

For a single person, while Ishvara asks that we do not have sexual relationships for both practical and esoteric reasons, sex is not something to be shut away and regarded with guilt and mistrust. For many single people, sexual energies will build up and if these can't be released in other ways, then there is nothing wrong in masturbation. Kinsey found that 92% of males masturbate, and the Hite report later discovered that 82% of women do too. Again, a great deal of unnecessary guilt is attached to masturbation, arising again from the loss of energy involved and from christian attitudes. For women, orgasm is a great releaser of tension.

Sex and the Spiritual Path

Sex and Spirituality 3

For men the results can be tiring! As with all things, sexual release needs to be controlled. We're dealing with a powerful and important energy in the body which we would be wise not to deplete.

Just as there is nothing wrong with masturbation, there is nothing wrong, either, in celibacy. Retaining the sexual energy is very beneficial to health and to our ability to direct ourselves in higher ways, to philosophy and abstract thought for instance. Whatever our choice, it should be made from love, wisdom and common sense.

It is only ^{within marriage} in a married situation that Ishvara's initiates will have sexual intercourse, but the physical aspect of a marriage is only one part of a much greater whole which involves intercourse on an emotional, mental and spiritual level also. It would be true to say that most marriages have their basis in a physical attraction and relationship, which will always be very shortlived. Some involve an emotional interaction. Very few operate on a mental level, and a true spiritual relationship is only found on this Path. All four aspects must be present for a marriage to work successfully.

If a marriage works on all these four levels, then the single aspect which links two people together will be present - that of giving and seeing our partner's needs and feelings as being as important as our own. Giving and communication are vital for a marriage to work on any level, including sexually.

As some of the statistics will have suggested, men and women are very different in their sexual attitudes and responses. If we return to a Taoist view of sex and apply it to men and women we see that the male is yang: active, concentrated and penetrating, whereas the female is yin: passive, expansive and receptive. Each person will contain both male and female elements, but man is primarily yang and woman is predominantly yin. The nature of yin and yang is reflected in the sexual response of male and female. Men are much more quickly aroused than women, their attention is very focussed (ie on the genitals), their action is to penetrate and impregnate and once a man has ejaculated his interest usually drops very quickly and he often just wants to roll over and go to sleep. For a woman however, arousal usually takes longer, and is much more diffuse in its nature - women prefer kissing and cuddling and more attention to areas of the body other than just the genitals. A woman's role in sex is to receive and nurture, and because she is slower to excite she is slower to cool off too.

Hence a lack of understanding in many couples of each others' sexuality (since people tend to assume that everyone is like themselves). The ancient Taoist system recognised this problem and taught ways of remedying it. It was recommended that the male should not ejaculate every time he had intercourse and that the woman's orgasm was beneficial to both partners. This meant that the woman's needs were understood and catered for and also that the man retained his sexual energy to the benefit of his physical and mental health.

* In Society generally

Sex and the Spiritual Path

Sex and Spirituality 4

Sex is not well understood in our society and it is often misused. For many of us, coming to Lifewave is the first opportunity to gain a correct perspective on what is an important energy in our lives, giving us as it does, our confidence and self-esteem.

Sexual release without love, wisdom and self control is empty. Ishvara gives us the ability to love ourselves and hence others; the wisdom to understand all parts of ourselves; and the ability to regulate our lives to better reflect His Lifewave.

Ishvara gives us explanations and practical advice to put sex in perspective. Sex is everywhere - an analogy within our own bodies of the greatest relationship of all - that between spirit and matter.

Debi Begg 5th April 1985

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JOY

I am joy
the moment unborn-
that fires eternity.

Within the very pulse of life-
stillness, bursting
on stillness.

I am life
the bright heart
unbearable and free.

I am the fruit within the seed.

(Jasper E. Good)