

Love: The magic behind Spirituality and Sexuality*

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Sex and the spirit have been intricately and intimately linked with man's quest for meaning and fulfillment. Sexuality is destructive or valuable to the extent that it does not express or does express love. A life, truly guided by spirit, neither glorifies nor denies sexuality but puts it in the right perspective. Sexuality and spirituality are different means of worshipping the divine temple i.e. the body where the soul is housed in the brief sojourn on planet earth. Bridging the apparent chasm between sexuality and spirituality is possible through a healthy balancing of "Eroticism" and "Asceticism", not necessarily compromising either of the two. Becoming one with the cosmic dance of this primal force, an individual loses his/her self only to find new elements in him/her self hitherto unknown and unexpressed, nevertheless profoundly alive and inherently dormant.

***Love, enjoyed by the ignorant,
Becomes bondage.
That very same love,
Tasted by one with understanding,
Brings Liberation.
Enjoy all the pleasures of love fearlessly,
For the sake of liberation.
-Cittavisuddhaprakarana.***

Love, the ephemeral, essential and innate component of human nature, is the most sought after quality of life, by all beings. It is one of the most basic human needs- to love and be loved. To hold and be held. To understand and be understood.

It's true, sex is a beautiful way of expressing love in a relationship, to reach out to the core of the other person. It's a passionate way of unifying the male and female elements of the spirit. But it can also be used as a tool to control and manipulate the others. Drawing a parallel in the modern day trend of "Spirituality practice" almost everyone is aware of thousands of so called "Guru's" and "Spiritual leaders" promising to "Bless you with the High", *only if* their dictums, their conditions, their way of practice is followed! It's a sad demise of "Spirit within". Both sexuality and spirituality lose their sanctity when the underlying love becomes conditional. True sexuality and True Spirituality have, at their roots, a "Free spirit", experimenting and experiencing the unknown, the mystery, in their own terms, not defined by the boundaries of limited knowledge of someone else. Their experience can never be ours.

The "Ego" loves to engage us in tricky games, creating illusions of "Intimacy" while enforcing invisible chains of separation. The ego's need to manipulate, need to control, its incessant desire to 'own' or 'possess' others are all based in fear. And this fear separates us from love. From true love, which is unconditional. That's because, the ego finds momentary gratification and a false sense of power in instigating us to indulge in power games.

Sexuality and spirituality are two facets of the same energy, the same drive. Sex is an eloquent expression and an integral part of spirit. Sex can be evolved into a sacrament and a tool for enlightenment. When the truly sacred nature of sex is understood and practised, a deeper connection with oneself, one's lover and the divine spirit can be established and an ecstatic freedom within can then blossom. It's time to transcend the polarity and integrate these two vital aspects of human consciousness for enriched and meaningful living, not a time to debate which stems from base instinct and which leads to highest peaks of ecstasy.

Ancient Hindu scriptures such as Upanishads and Vedas revered the human body with all its innate qualities. Many artists and poets, the world over, celebrated the "Art of Loving". Two very familiar names immediately come to our minds when we think of sexuality. They are, first and foremost, Vatsyayana of the famous classic "Kamasutra" and the other one is Sigmund Freud, the founder of psychoanalysis. The main theme in "Kamasutra" appears to be the expression of Indian attitude toward sex as a central and natural component of Indian psyche and life. Vatsyayana includes the three pillars of the Hindu religion "Dharma", "Artha" and "Kama" representing religious duty, worldly welfare and sexual aspects of life respectively. Love is in the true nature of humans and sex is a form its expression, bringing two people together overcoming the feeling of 'separatedness' and fulfilling the deep seated need for affection and belongingness. Within the framework of Dharma, love remains balanced and in harmony. Sigmund Freud holds that the commonly associated (with sex) emotions of guilt and shame, when carried to extremes, can adversely affect the mental health of an individual. Unless resolved completely, these can become pathological, interfering with the normal sexual life of individuals, significantly distorting the meaning and diminishing the quality of life.

Hinduism has also been the origin of many paradoxes, one of them housing - **asceticism** as in Buddhism and Jainism renouncing all sensual pleasure and **eroticism**, embracing sex in all its splendor as in Tantric sex. Both of them eventually lead to the same goal – the rebirth of the practitioner to a new existence on each level of consciousness. The implications are clear – the sexual energy can be transmuted to highest form of spiritual energy. The cosmic energy contained in human sexuality could be released into the consciousness, but only after completely surrendering and worshipping as the sacred, primal power '**Shakti**'. Indian mythology depicts the coming together of male and female parts of human consciousness as represented by "Shiva" and "Shakti". When Shakti unites with Shiva, the universe is created in a sexual dance of cosmic bliss.

Our body is an ocean of vibrating energy. Ecstasy is the invariable consequence of free flowing and expanding energy. Regarding sex as a mere physical act robs the deeper meaning and beauty inherent in this passionate and mystical union of two energy bodies, of male and female forces of nature. Conscious love making reconnects us with our spiritual origins.

Teachers and practitioners of Tantric sex view body as an instrument through which the cosmic power (Kundalini shakti) manifests itself. Visualised as a coiled serpent at the base of the spine or "**Moolaadhara**" (Root chakra), Kundalini shakti is believed to transform the body and mind when aroused through elaborate ritualistic steps. In Hindu mythology, a frequently encountered symbol of spirit is 'light' or 'fire' represented as 'Agni'. The Vedic description of 'Agni' as 'Hiranyagarbhi' meaning 'Golden germ', is compared to 'lightning' and to the flash of orgasm. When this falls on

earth in the form of rain, the fertile earth gets impregnated eventually resulting in “Rich crop or Harvest”. A ‘perpetual fire’ is a symbol of immortality and indestructible soul.

According to Osho, orgasm is a transient state of ‘Samadhi’ where the mind becomes empty of thoughts akin to peaks of meditational ecstasy reaching the state of ‘Timeless nothingness’. On the contrary, emphasising the value of ‘Samyama’ (conscious abstinence), Swami Chidananda comments that celibacy is the deliberate conservation of precious energy which can be transmuted to different forms creating miracles.

Daniel G. Amen states that, both peak experiences - religious ecstasy and sexual pleasure, appear to be primarily processed in the right hemisphere of the brain, particularly the right temporal lobe and prefrontal cortex. This implies that enhancing the experience of one may favorably influence the other.

As natural therapy, using meditation and other spiritual practices for therapeutic and preventive purposes in sexual dysfunction hold a great promise. It has been observed that these practices have the potential to bring deep rooted, regressed issues buried in the unconscious, bubbling up to the surface. This facilitates dealing with those issues in the present and resolving them, fostering healing and leading to enjoyable sexual life. Many sex therapists recommend Yoga asanas (to facilitate harmony of body and mind) to their clients, in an attempt to free them from the mental blocks that inhibit sexuality.

An interesting question to pose at this juncture would be whether sex can be spiritually liberating or whether spirituality can liberate us from the throngs of sex? Perhaps it is more of an individual perspective and choice where the answers can be found within one’s self, when one has the courage, patience and perseverance to explore, contemplate and accept.

‘Having seen one’s partner as a god or goddess, one naturally feels a sense of devotion. At this point, there is no need for elaborate instructions, as love play spontaneously becomes the sport of deities. Every gesture becomes an act of worship, every sigh and word of love becomes a prayer, and gazing into the lover’s eyes becomes a one-pointed meditation.

-Miranda Shaw