

Sexuality: The case for moderation



Photo: Google

Charles Shahar explains how judiciously indulging in sex is the key to conserving the vital energy which, when properly channelled, can help one soar to spiritual heights

This article relates to the question of sexual activity and its effects on *prana* or vital energy in the body. More specifically, I want to address how energy is dissipated through the sexual act. The reader may immediately think that, unlike a monk, you cannot see yourself forgoing this type of pleasure, no matter what type of energy dissipation is involved. Well, who says that you have to? However, there are

a number of interesting considerations that relate to sexual activity from a subtle energy perspective, which may throw a different light on what is commonly understood about it.

First, when the sexual act is performed, there are many levels of expression which may give rise to it. There may be genuine affection involved, which means that the person is relating to the life form that is in front of them, and the heart is open to appreciation and tenderness. This is quite beautiful and uplifting for the people involved and gives rise to many loving feelings.

Life contacts with life

Human beings have energy centres called chakras, which range from the lower chakras that involve baser desires to the higher chakras which, when awakened, can give rise to spiritual experiences. If the individual is operating solely from the lower chakras and is completely identified on a body level, sentiments such as tenderness may not play a large part in their sexual desire.

However, even if little affection is involved, it is misleading to think that the individual is not interested in connecting with something higher through their sexual activity. They will generally want to have physical relations with a person who is alive rather than a corpse. This would suggest that even if life is appreciated in its most basic form, it is still at the root of all attraction.

My point here is that if two life forms are involved, behind all the pleasure-seeking, the

ultimate pleasure is the contact that life makes with itself. This is a bit of an esoteric point, but one that is important to express because sexual activity is only physical at its most superficial level. The body is a shell that carries life but is itself wholly inanimate—what the Hindus term as *jada*. Ultimately, what we respond to, what we love and seek to unite with, is the unobvious living essence behind the form.

The mechanism of sex

Whenever lust is felt between two individuals, the lower three chakras become stimulated, and the entire consciousness rushes to these centres. The mind itself is dragged into this level of experience, such that the body and senses become the focus of its attention. As the sexual activity becomes more intense, the *kundalini*, or energy force that sits coiled at the base of the spine, begins to stir and a type of heat or fever pervades the body. At this point, the more primal instincts of the first to third chakras, those most implicated in the physical act of sex, subvert the faculties associated with the higher centres.

At the brief moment of climax, the *kundalini* energy activates the various chakras as it surges sharply upwards. A mindless ecstasy is then reached as this energy blows through the crown or seventh chakra, which is called the *Sahasrara* in Sanskrit. This surge is also associated with a powerful rush of pleasure that the body and senses experience during orgasm. Unfortunately, the *kundalini* energy will sink back down to the lowest or root chakra almost immediately afterwards, so the delight will be very short-lived.

The climax associated with the sexual act is an ecstatic experience, a surrendering of mind and, in that sense, a type of transcendence. This is why it has been strongly linked to the spiritual aspect, to the ultimate union of the soul with the divine. It has been said that this ecstatic state is like touching God. There are those who try to regularly and intentionally manipulate the *kundalini* through sexual activity to achieve various ecstatic experiences, such as through tantric sexual practices.

Difference between orgasm and meditative bliss

On the other hand, there are qualitatively different states that take place in deep meditation and during the sexual act. For many people, the sexual climax is the only experience they have of transcendence. Hence, the distinction between ecstatic pleasure and meditative bliss is blurred. The two have the same root, which pertains to the *kundalini* that resides in the base chakra. In meditation, one's consciousness is elevated toward the *Sahasrara* or crown chakra. However, while it is true that a form of surrender may happen during the sexual act, and that this may take one beyond the mind temporarily, one's self-awareness is not enhanced.

The body that has not been properly purified in a spiritual sense cannot hold the state of *kundalini* arousal for very long. Sexual climax is therefore brief and there is often a letdown after its termination. A few seconds of release, with little to show for it afterwards. On the other hand, when one meditates, one connects deeply with the spirit within, and that connection can be maintained even after they open their eyes and interact with the world. The more a person meditates, the more they radiate an inner splendour. This is not generally the case for someone who is constantly depleting their energy through sex, and I'll explain why presently.

Drawbacks of indulgence

Getting back to the sexual response, there are a number of other considerations which you may find interesting. In some individuals, the experience will be



Photo: Google

Sex is a way of relating to another life form

strongly influenced by negative elements related to the lower chakras. For instance, if the solar plexus chakra is implicated, as the *kundalini* rushes upward, it may be mixed with impulses of aggression or violence. The rush of *kundalini* energy may also be difficult to support for some people. A sudden opening in the heart chakra, for instance, may cause a heart attack if there is already a major pranic weakness in this area.

A person who is obsessed with sexual activity will be stuck mostly at the level of their second or sacral chakra. They will exude strong sexual vibrations in their interactions with others, which may appeal to those who are also operating from this chakra but will

seem offensive to people with more refined sensibilities. For the person who is thus fixated in a type of 'genital consciousness', they will think about sex constantly and, if they are heterosexual, will relate to members of the opposite gender mainly in such terms.

Their second chakra is often overactive and requires constant release. Since their mind is locked in this chakra, they will indulge in endless sexual fantasies, constantly searching for pornographic material to titillate themselves and often engaging in masturbation for relief. The second chakra is often associated with sexual perversions when it is over-stimulated and warped in its structure or if it is spinning in the direction opposite to its natural inclination.

Sexual energy and celibacy

Most adults are not necessarily overly fixated in their second chakra but neither are they celibates. They enjoy their sexual activity and see it as a necessary or natural part of living. They are perfectly right to do so. One can be pure at heart and have sex at the same time. The two are not mutually exclusive conditions. In fact, most of the great religions of the world do not necessarily discourage sex for pleasure's sake, although they usually emphasize procreation as the ultimate goal of the sexual act.

One can ask why it is that people with a strongly religious lifestyle often stress upon celibacy? A priest or nun may say it is to channel his or her thoughts toward God. This assessment is actually not far from the truth. But it also has a lot to do with vital energy. The more this is conserved in the body, the more this energy is available for pursuing higher spiritual awareness. If one squanders their energy reserves, they will lack the alertness and stamina necessary to lead their attention to a higher dimension.

The value of ojas

Why does spirituality require stamina? We often think of stamina in physical terms, how it is important when we jog for three miles or swim across a lake. But there is a spiritual energy that relates to a different type of staying power. A person who cannot keep his or her mind focused or alert during meditation, for example, lacks this type of stamina. Sexual overindulgence perpetuates lethargy and, as such, makes the mind dull, heavy, and susceptible to the influences of the grosser nature.

Sexual activity uses up energy, which is why there is usually a feeling of tiredness or letdown that comes after the sexual act. There is also a sensation of having lost something, which is obviously more pronounced on the part of the male, and actually reflects what is

happening on a subtle level. The ancient yogis described a subtle fluid, which is contained in semen, called *ojas*, a form of concentrated energy, distinct from the *prana* itself. Other terms in the vernacular, such as *mojo*, loosely refer to this same force. In tantric practices, it is known as *jing*.

Ojas is likewise stored in the ovaries of women. They lose a certain amount of this vital energy during menstruation, although depending on their constitution, their recovery of *ojas* may not take long. Women who bleed a lot, on the other hand, will lose more vital fluid, and this is partly why they will feel exhausted for long periods. Ovarian cysts or blockage of the fallopian tubes will likewise disrupt the circulation of vital fluid in their body.

Great spiritual feats

It was said by the yogis that a man who retains his *ojas* will be capable of great feats of spiritual mastery: Control of the senses, the ability to remain unmoved amidst the distractions of the world, superior power of concentration, and the aptitude to exercise one's will over nature and other people. Such a being will emanate lightness and vitality and will be considered charming and attractive. His physical and mental stamina will be truly impressive, and he will be able to perform great austerities.

The climax associated with the sexual act is an ecstatic experience, a surrendering of mind and a type of transcendence. This is why it has been strongly linked to the ultimate union of the soul with the divine.

When the *ojas* is channelled towards the higher centres, it becomes a potent force. In fact, the yogis were scientific about it. They had a formula in which they said that a certain amount of *prana* in food can be converted to blood, which can be made into a certain amount of semen, and so on. They even calculated how long it would take to recover one's spiritual powers from a discharge of semen. It is hard to know how seriously one is to take all of this in terms of specific details and formulae.

The cautions I point out regarding the sexual response have more to do with overindulgence, which can have some unwelcome consequences for the subtle energy body. It can lead to an extreme dissipation of the vital fluid and its effect will be felt for a long time. However, the other extreme, such as abstinence from sex, may cause repression in some, and thus is not necessarily for everyone. In the case of the execution of all desires, moderation is recommended.

For instance, it is interesting to observe those known as modern-day Lotharios. After years

of libertine behaviour, they often look spent, as though the life has been squeezed out of them. There is little *ojas* in their system; they seem dull and unresponsive. It is also noteworthy that athletes are discouraged from engaging in sexual activity before a major competition. Boxers, for instance, have long been cautioned about this before a big match or even during training. In a way, the energy that is saved through their abstinence can be redirected towards the physical activities they need to perform. It is a kind of sublimation of the seminal force.

Channel sexual energy

Celibacy, or sexual abstinence, should not be understood merely on the level of obvious actions. It is not complete if the person abstains from sex but is constantly thinking about it. They will still be operating from their second chakra, so they will need to know how to channel the pent-up energy. Otherwise, it may be expressed as aggression, unhappiness, bitterness, or irritability. It is observed, for instance, that not all monks or nuns in a monastery will necessarily be vital folks, in touch with a particularly joyful dimension. In fact, one might wonder why some of them are downright crabby and, if anything, not very connected to the life force within.

The answer is that the vital energy might get stuck in many ways, for instance, perpetuating stale

concepts and ideas. The life energy must be directed into a higher channel if the senses are to be truly transcended. This is what celibacy for spiritual ends is really about. The more refined one's awareness is, the more mastery they will have over their senses. However, in order to achieve such higher awareness, one must get beyond the lower chakras.

The benefits of conserving sexual energy

The energy can be released through the sexual act, or it can be sublimated for other purposes. However, if the sexual drive remains stirred yet untapped, it can become a hindrance to individual growth and can lead to imbalances of the mind. The family man who engages in sex in a natural and loving way should not worry about depleting his *ojas*. As long as growth is promoted in any relationship and one does not overindulge, sex will just be part of a healthy sharing between two people.

For the person who is intent on conserving their energy and who wishes to refine it for spiritual ends, the signs of their abstinence are remarkable and subtle at the same time. There is a shiny glow around their features. There is clarity about their person, and their mind is invigorated and alert. Such people radiate blissfulness, a kind of joy that reflects a sense of fulfilment that cannot be attained through worldly pleasures alone.

Unfortunately, we find other ways to burn seminal energy, which include doing stressful work, worrying, drinking alcohol, using drugs, drinking too much coffee, smoking, and partying hard. In my spiritual practice, particularly in the meditation classes I teach, I notice that people who are low on *ojas* generally sleep through the meditations. They cannot hold the meditation posture, are usually slumped over, and unconscious of their existence. On the other hand, people with conserved *ojas* tend to stay alert and maintain a lightness that is helpful if their spirit is to soar to higher dimensions.

There are ways to conserve and enhance the store of *ojas* in the organism. Hatha yoga is a highly beneficial practice for enhancing this energy. *Pranayama* is excellent for the manipulation of this vital force. Finally, the *sattvic* or refined lifestyle, which includes eating *sattvic* foods and avoiding extreme conditions of any type, is essential for anyone wishing to enhance their consciousness above the mundane level of human experience.

We welcome your comments and suggestions on this article. Mail us at editor@lifepositive.net