



YOGA, SEX, AND KUNDALINI



Godfri Dev

Yoga can be seen as a way of establishing harmony in our lives. Harmony between intention and action, structure and function, body and mind, spirit and matter, self and other. This can not be done if we are not willing, ready and able to engage ourselves fully. To do this we must engage our sexual nature and the energies it generates. Yoga posture practice gives us a safe, gradual and effective opportunity to do this provided we are genuinely open to all the depths and subtleties of our being, and undertake our practice as enquiry rather than acquisition. We need to let go of all of our assumptions about sex in general, and its relationship to yoga in particular.

Sex is perhaps the most problematic of all human activities. So deeply is it embedded that it is not easy to recognise and express its natural place in the complexity of our modern lives. Few of us are not suffering the consequences of powerful, and often destructive, cultural forces of sexual conditioning. Few of us understand the sexual forces that move within us. Fewer still integrate them into the full spectrum of our lives. Yet sexual energy is the root energy of our lives: touching and shaping everything about us.

Yoga and sex are inextricable. It is not possible to separate sexual energy from anatomical, physiological, emotional, mental or spiritual energy. Yoga can be understood as a process of transforming sexual energy into spiritual energy, but this transformation does not, and can not, involve denial of sexual energy. To become truly comfortable in life, and in yoga, we must enjoy an open, creative expressiveness of our natural sexuality. The more

truly at peace we are with life the less this creative expression will resemble the compulsive, habituated patterns of sexual behaviour to which we have been culturally conditioned.

Yoga posture practitioners are constantly faced by the cultural divide between body and mind. Moment by moment, breath by breath we must choose to follow our body or our mind. No matter how we may conceptualise their relationship they are not always in harmony, yet yoga posture practice can help them to be. It can just as easily be a way to extend the division that culture has placed between them. This depends on whether, moment by moment, we give our practice to ideas or to experience, whether we are practicing in order to realise a cultural goal, or to encounter the deeper nature of our bodimind, whether we are imposing or enquiring, whether we are led by received knowledge or direct experience.

Yoga posture practice can work because of the intrinsic unity of body, mind and spirit. This unity underlies the power of the physical practices of yoga. However it does not guarantee their potency. For the body to reveal its nature and its relationship to mind and spirit it cannot be imposed on. It must be released from the distorting power of anxiety, ambition and intention. Only then can it reveal the depths and power of its innate intelligence. Only then can we encounter the wisdom of life, the guru within. There is only one way that this can happen. By being sensitive, honest, open, intimate and generous (yama) to the body. We must come to our mat to give, not to get. The key to this is sensitivity to the sensations being generated

by the body. By giving our practice to the presence of sensation, we encounter, and can be guided by, the wisdom of life. Doing this makes our practice not only physical, but sensorial to the point of sensuality. We are carried forward, taken inwards, on the flow of sensations being intimately encountered, deeply felt.

Eventually we begin to encounter and experience the inner qualities of sensation itself, of consciousness itself. Then we find ourselves in the pulsating, throbbing ocean of subtle delight known as **anandamayakosha**. We do this by tuning in to what we actually feel. In doing so we are encountering the very same energies we experience, even though very differently, in sex. If we meet them with the openness (**asteya**) of honest (**satya**) intimate (**brhamacharya**) enquiry (**svadhyaya**), we are enriched by their subtleties rather than driven by their intensities. This makes our yoga practice, in effect, internalised sex. The honest sensitivity of our conscious encounter with our internal energies harmonises and resolves them. This can only happen if they are encountered in a spirit of genuine enquiry which is always open to whatever may actually be happening, without regard to received dogma.

Yoga posture practice is a tantric practice. It takes place in and through the body as an expression and vehicle of the wisdom of life. The body is not only our tool and our temple, but also our guru. Through it we can encounter not only our finite, physical nature, but our infinite, divine nature also. Most significantly we will discover that these two, finite and infinite, divine and mundane are not separate. Yoga posture practice uses the body to reveal the

spiritual, divine nature of all phenomena: not least the body itself. This is tantra. Yoga is solo tantra. Tantra is yoga for two.

In yoga posture practice sexual energy is embraced methodically, but without direct reference. Our intentions are not sexual. We do not target or make deliberate contact with our sexual energy. Yet sexual energy is the source of life, of the life force in our body. As we encounter our body more deeply, we consciously engage the life force in its many forms and expressions. If we are not completely open to the internal energies that we encounter and release in our practice then they will express themselves unconsciously and destructively. If instead we approach the flow of sensations in our body with sensitivity, honesty, openness, intimacy and generosity (yama) sexual energy is transmuted spontaneously by the integrating power of conscious awareness itself. No special technique is required.

The culture of yoga is rich with its own language and terminology: chakras, nadis, grantis, kosha. These can be seen as metaphorical representations of the subtleties of matter only recently clarified in nuclear and quantum physics, but easily accessible to deeply internalised awareness. As we go deeper into our bodies, we are going deeper into sensation. After a while we find less and less certainty about where we are, about what we are feeling. Our experience becomes less and less concrete. We have run out of terminology to categorise and interpret our experience, the subtleties of the sensations that rise into conscious awareness. Everything becomes uncertain,

vague and indefinable. If we are uncomfortable with this uncertainty, we will reach for some support, some comfort. We will either pull ourselves back out to safer ground, where we can clearly recognise and explain what we are feeling in concrete, physical terms. Or we encapsulate it, and insulate ourselves, in thoughts of nadis and chakras. Either way we retreat into the safety of mind and its love of certainties however unverifiable.

However if we are not disturbed by uncertainty this need not be the case. We can settle into the fog and find ourselves well at ease. In fact we can encounter a deep delight within this oceanic miasma of uncertainty. A delight that is actually here, deep within the presence of sensation, the presence of conscious awareness. Eventually we encounter the most subtle qualities available to us. We encounter the inherent quality of sensation itself, that can be encountered within any sensation, within any experience. The twitching of muscle fibres, or pricklings of sensory receptors deep beneath the skin can lead us to it. As can the dapplings of light on our retina, or the swirl of sounds in the auditory canal.

*Within them all the same presence lurks. A presence that is simultaneously delightful and satisfying. The presence of consciousness revealed is the presence of delight. This is matter yielding its inner nature. The physical body deeply encountered reveals itself as the body of bliss: **anandamayakosha. Satcitananda**, as our experience and our nature, is the inevitable destination of yoga posture practice when approached as genuine self enquiry through the five lenses of yama (sensitivity, honesty,*

openness, intimacy and generosity). Whatever we call this it does not belong to yoga posture practice. It belongs to human nature. It can be accessed in many ways. The most popular are sex and drugs. Yet these forms of access are deeply problematic: legally, socially, morally, and consequentially. Yet all of them draw their power to attract and fascinate us from the same source: the delightful nature of consciousness itself.

We live in a toxic world in which our bodies are being constantly undermined, even by the very resources by which we maintain and energise ourselves. This toxic load weakens our organs, and depletes our energy. At the same time our minds are invaded by toxic ideas and beliefs. Some of which are so deep and universal that we do not recognise their toxicity. Not least amongst these are distorted and damaging notions about both sexuality and spirituality. Yoga posture practice can help us to release all these toxins. Not only from organ and cell, but from mind and thought. Then the life force can flow more freely and fully into our actions and behaviour.

This can have a profound effect on our sexual energy, though not in ways we might expect. It is quite likely that we will start to experience 'kundalini'. This deeply misunderstood energy is nothing special or supernatural. It is the very basis of embodied individuation. It is as an expression of the organic power of life itself, the essence of the life force necessarily present in every human organism. It does not need to be conjured up or awoken. If you are alive it is awake and functioning. For it to function freely, for your life to express its deepest potential, is another

matter: one that yoga posture practice, as a tantric practice, has been designed to address.

Kundalini rising is the life force focussed. The life force begins as sexual energy, which is the most basic, continual and universal expression of it. Sexual inhibition, compulsion and obsession are expressions of blocked kundalini, however that may have come about. When our sexual conditioning has been unnatural and distorted, as it always is within hierarchical, competitive, patriarchal societies, then the natural expression of the life force becomes blocked. This can manifest in many ways, from overwhelming sexual obsession to complete sexual shutdown. These blocks must be released if the life force is to flow freely and fulfil itself. This recovery of the free flow of the life force is esoterically known as 'kundalini rising'. This is a completely natural event. Yet it is one that very rarely happens because of our cultural conditioning and its damaging effect on our sexual energy. Life always seeks to express and fulfil itself as fully and authentically as possible.

Tantric (Hatha) Yoga systems can be seen as profound invitations to kundalini rising. This can not safely be done by targeting the kundalini and forcing it to rise. This will only precipitate a crisis: of repression or expression and the deep self deception required to accomodate them. Kundalini must be invited and allowed to rise freely by dissolving psychosomatic blocks. Yoga posture practice simultaneously frees muscles and joints from blocks as it revitalises the vital organs. The softer tissues of the body function as the unconscious storehouse for the left over

traces of unfulfilled experiences (samskaras). Energies are stored in the tissues as psychosomatic blocks that harden the tissues and inhibit the free somatic and psychic functioning of our organs. As our muscles are released and organs revitalised we are releasing our life force, and our sexual energy is no longer distorted by these energetic deposits into its common obsessions and compulsions.

Kundalini rising is the fruition of human potential. Yet it is often an uncomfortable, even painful and harmful, experience. This is because it has not been prepared for effectively, by listening to the wisdom of the body. If attempts are made to force kundalini to rise, without the body having been effectively opened, it can create new patterns of sexual distortion and obsessiveness to add to those embedded through the conventional forces of social conditioning. Often the powerful energy techniques of hatha yoga are used unconsciously in a way that makes this happen, and the increased energy of the life force unable to circulate freely can become trapped in many different forms of neurotic and manipulative tendencies: not only sexual.

Becoming free from the deeply destructive effects of our sexual conditioning is not easy. Yet yoga posture practice can help us to do so, but not if it is undertaken as an extension of the manipulative conditioning by which we have been so deeply and destructively imprisoned. If our practice is undertaken as a technique of self improvement, it will only drag us further down into confusion and self deception. Yoga is only yoga when it is genuine self enquiry: never when it is an attempt to make anything

happen, no matter how richly it may be dressed up with borrowed values.

Spiritual freedom does not mean becoming lost to our human nature. It does not mean becoming sexually apathetic or repressed. It does not mean having no preferences and attachments. It does not mean never feeling attraction, passion or love. It means something much more alive, positive and irresistible than any amount of "thou shalt nots". Sexual freedom does not mean license, Nor is it represented by the exhibitionist/voyeurist dynamic of contemporary media manipulations.

Genuine and lasting freedom does not depend on any special technique, does not have a special uniform. It can only be found and expressed through the lenses of sensitivity, honesty, openness, intimacy and generosity (yama), within which we encounter the nature and wisdom of our bodimind in all of its depths and subtleties. Then perhaps we can rediscover the joy and delight that being in a body can provide through intimacy with ourselves, or with another.