

## CHAPTER 12

# THE PROBLEM OF SEX IN SPIRITUAL LIFE

### The influence of sex on life

Sex is an important problem in spiritual life. Every aspirant must come to grips with it one day or other in his life. As some of the modern psychologists have pointed out, sex plays an important part in an average man's life, and absorbs a lot of his thinking, feeling and willing. Those who want to lead an intense spiritual life should first of all reduce this dominance of sex in their lives. Those who have led a pure life from an early age will find the problem easier. But the modern young man turns to spiritual life after collecting lots of impure thoughts. He generally finds a huge jungle to clear before he can successfully take up spiritual life.

The chief difficulty about sex is that it exists at various levels of personality. Sex is not all physical. Apart from the physiological urges, sex exists in the mental planes as subtle attractions or fascinations. It is like an iceberg just the tip of which is seen outside. The more introspective an aspirant becomes, the more he understands the subtle ramifications of sex within him. Very often this frightens people. Few people can face the great challenge that the control of sex offers. But unless one fully meets it, there can be no true spiritual life. One needs tremendous grit, an iron will for this. If an ordinary man gets a peep into the mind of a true spiritual aspirant, he will be frightened away. It is like the interior of a blast furnace where pure metal is being constantly separated from the ore.

### Celibacy and marriage

The first thing that a spiritual aspirant must decide is whether to remain a celibate or to marry. Hinduism does not look upon married life as bad but it definitely imposes certain restrictions on it. But on the celibate its rules are pretty hard. Those who want to lead an exclusively spiritual life will find life-long celibacy an absolute necessity. Christ said:

There are some eunuchs, which were born so from their mother's womb; there are some eunuchs, which were made eunuchs of men; and there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He that is able to receive it, let him receive it.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Bible, St. Matthew, 19:12

This was the passage Sri Ramakrishna told two boys, Sharat, and Shashi, (who were later known as Swami Saradananda and Swami Ramakrishnananda) to read when they first went to see him. He remarked that marriage was the root of all bondage. All great prophets have been unanimous about this fact, but worldly people are always so anxious to do something for God's creation, as if God needed their help. All this is hypocrisy and cant. God does not need anybody to help Him in His creation, neither do these people really care. What they want is their enjoyment, not God's creation. In one of his famous letters, St. Paul wrote

I say therefore to the unmarried and widows. It is good for them if they abide even as I. But if they cannot contain, let them marry, for it is better to marry than to burn.<sup>2</sup>

This is a very salutary advice. We do not say that everyone must become a monk. That depends on the stage of evolution one has reached. It is better to become a householder than to become a monk who breaks his great vows. Outward renunciation must always be followed by inner renunciation, otherwise it has no value. The monk must have both, only outward renunciation won't do. For those who cannot renounce inwardly because of their weaknesses and who keep themselves busy with worldly ideas, hopes and thoughts, it is better to follow the householder's life and not be hypocrites. A man who really renounces inwardly, can also live in the world and yet fulfil the conditions of absolute *brahmacarya*, all ethical conditions, and lead a sexually pure life, a life of non-violence, non-hatred and non-attachment, without fettering himself to any other human being through personal relationship. But this is very difficult and quite impossible for many people without preliminary spiritual training and long years of spiritual practice. Let them at least know that such a life is possible though it is rare and for most people, quite difficult.

Those who want to become monks or remain celibates throughout life must be extra-careful. Do you know the story of the monk who was ruined by a rat? There was a monk who was continually disturbed in his meditation by a rat. So some kind people gave him a cat to catch the rat. Naturally, the poor monk had to feed the cat with milk, and as it was rather difficult for him to get milk always, he decided to get a cow. The cow had to be fed, so people suggested to him 'Why not buy a field?' Finding this advice very reasonable, he bought a field. But after a short time, he found that the field had to be tilled. And this meant quite a lot of work which he could not do alone. So he married, and that was the end of his monkhood. This presents allegorically what generally happens in human life. One desire just breeds another, till in the end

<sup>2</sup> Bible, I Corinths, 7: 8,9

they become innumerable and can no longer be controlled

### Duty of householders

In all higher spiritual paths great stress is laid on the practice of continence. In the Hindu religious system the student is asked to observe strict continence and never to depart from it consciously. When he enters the householder's life, he does not throw all self-control to the winds. He holds the ideal of a remarkably-controlled life before him. Śrī Kṛṣṇa in his last message in the *Bhāgavatam* says

The practice of continence except for the purpose of procreation, the performance of the regular obligations of life with purity and contentment, and kindness to animals are among the duties of a householder<sup>3</sup>

The ideal householder is a great hero as he has to live the spiritual ideal in a world full of temptations.

While an exception is made in the case of those who live a family life, raising children and serving the society thereby, all other spiritual seekers should strive to transmute the energy that expresses itself as sex energy and sexual thought into spiritual power. This greatly helps in the awakening of the latent spiritual consciousness and its flow to the higher centres of consciousness, and brings new light and blessings to the aspirant. An exception is made in the case of householders, for it is not practical to live a life of perfect continence in married life. At the same time, the householder is enjoined to learn complete self-control gradually.

Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa used to say that after the birth of one or two children husband and wife should live like brother and sister<sup>4</sup>. But in order to attain this kind of self-control, both husband and wife should struggle for it right from the beginning. Immorality means not only impurity acquired by extra-marital relations, one can be as immoral with one's wife as with any outsider. If one leads a sexually immoderate life with one's own wife, wherefrom is he to get the energy and intensity so absolutely necessary for all real spiritual striving? We should clearly and dispassionately recognize this fact. We need tremendous energy for leading the higher life, and this energy of ours, which is really one, cannot be wasted through sexual channels, if we want to progress and really attain

<sup>3</sup> ब्रह्मचर्यं तपः शौचं सतोषो भूतसौहृदम् ।  
गृहस्थस्याप्यृतौ गन्तुः सर्वेषां मनुष्याणाम् ॥

*Bhāgavatam*, 11.18.43

<sup>4</sup> *The Gospel of Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa*, trans. Swāmī Nikhīlananda, (Madras: Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa Math, 1974) p. 640

perfection. Spiritual life is something more than mere social ethics and what people call normal good life. It requires great self-control and purity. Whoever desires to lead the higher life must pay the price fully. There can be no bargaining in this. Married people should also exercise great self-control if they are serious about spiritual life.

In the 'New Testament' Jesus Christ makes a significant statement about the soul's life after death. 'For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven.'<sup>5</sup> We seldom think about our life after death. Do people marry and beget children in the after-life? What happens to the soul after death? The future is as real as the present but few people bother about it. Enchanted by the attractions of our present life we seldom think about our future life.

Another duty of householders is to encourage and help those youngsters — men and women — who sincerely want to lead a celibate life, the life of a monk or a nun. The Holy Mother used to say that an unmarried man is half-free.<sup>6</sup> Very often parents are over-anxious to drag all their children into married life even against the latter's wish. You know what happened to Swami Yogananda, one of the illustrious disciples of Sri Ramakrishna? As a young man he did not like to get married at all. But, unable to withstand the importunities and tears of his mother, he finally got married. However, even after marriage he continued to lead a chaste life devoting all his time to spiritual practice. Seeing that his mother asked him, 'If you don't want to live like a householder why did you marry?' The innocent young man replied that it was for her sake that he had done it. His mother then told him, 'My son, does anybody marry because somebody else tells him to do so? Everybody marries because of his own wish.' Yogin was shocked to hear this. That is what happens in many homes. Parents drag their children into marriage even against their wish and then leave them to their own fate. Very often parents continue to interfere in their children's lives even after their marriage and that leads to domestic quarrels. It is of course true that not all young men and women wish to remain unmarried. It is also true that many of them talk about celibacy and monasticism without knowing anything about their own mind. But there is always a small section of sincere young men and women who are pure-hearted and sincerely wish to dedicate their heart and soul to the Lord alone. Why not allow some of them to pursue a life of perfect chastity in a monastery or a similar place? Why not allow some of them to enjoy the fragrance of holiness and purity?

Here what the Holy Mother once told her niece is worth citing. One

<sup>5</sup> Bible, St. Matthew, 22:30

<sup>6</sup> At Holy Mother's Feet (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1963) p. 367

day a young man named Manasa came to the Holy Mother with a desire to receive initiation and ochre robe from her. The Holy Mother gladly granted his request. That made him very happy. In the evening he was seated in the house of uncle Kali, singing songs in glorification of the Divine Mother. The Holy Mother liked those songs very much. Her nieces Radhu, Maku and Nalini, one or two of her sisters-in-law and some other devotees were with her. One of her sisters-in-law said, 'She has made this young man a *sādhū*.' Maku then commented, 'That's true. See what our aunt has done. She makes these good young men embrace monastic life. Their parents have brought them up with great suffering to themselves. All their expectations are centred in their children. What hopes they would have entertained about them! All these are now shattered. And what will this young man do now? Either he will go to Rishikesh and beg for his food, or he will clean the dirt and filth of the sick in the hospital. Why? To marry and settle down in life is also a form of religion. Well, aunt, if you thus make these young men *sādhus*, *Mahāmāyā* will be angry with you. If they want to be *sādhus*, let them be so of their own accord. Why should you be instrumental in their embracing monastic life?' The Holy Mother said to her in reply, 'Look here, Maku, these are all divine children. They will live in the world immaculate like unsmelt flowers. What can be nicer than that? You have seen for yourself what kind of happiness worldly life can give. What have you learned from me all these days! Why so much attraction for worldly life? Why so much animal propensity? What sort of happiness do you derive from it? Can you not conceive even in dream the ideal of a pure life? Can't you live with your husband even now as brother and sister? Why this desire to lead a piggish life? This misery of the world has been gnawing into my bones.'<sup>7</sup>

People who are fully able to control the sex impulse for many years and are able to observe strict continence in thought, word and deed, gain incredible creative strength on a higher plane. They alone really enjoy life, even physically, because they alone are the masters of their body and mind, and can direct them as they like. A good horseman has great pleasure in riding his horse and in making it follow his directions. Worldly people do not know the amount of joy a perfectly chaste person gets even out of his body, not to speak of his mind.

### Warnings to the unmarried

Sri Ramakrishna always used to warn all his disciples — mostly young men — against the snares of *kāminī-kāñcana* ('woman and gold'). But

<sup>7</sup> See Swami Tapasyananda, *Sri Sarada Devi, the Holy Mother* (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1969) pp. 417-18.

he used to tell the women who came to him for instruction, 'Beware of the snares of a man, even if he is a very near relative' One cannot attain anything in spiritual life without perfect chastity in thought, word and deed The extent of real chastity attained determines the whole progress of the aspirant Everyone should be on his guard with every person of the other sex. Real chastity means infinitely more than the mere avoidance of sexual intercourse

All unmarried persons, no matter who they are, should avoid the company of persons of the other sex (men and women), and should always consciously think thoughts which are opposed to the idea of sex Especially in the beginning of spiritual life, the sex instinct grows in strength in many people When we water and manure the soil nicely, the weeds too will grow nicely along with the plants we originally wished to grow We have to uproot these weeds when they rear their heads Otherwise they will smother the good plants This means we must be extremely careful regarding the company we allow ourselves to be in for the first few years of our striving Never believe yourself to be so strong as to be above listening to such advice Avoid spending time in the company of persons of the other sex, no matter how pure they may be Before you have attained real sublimation culminating in the transformation of your whole being, concentration influences your sexual imagination also and makes even the apparently harmless pictures more vivid and living, and apparently harmless emotions, very strong passions The arousal of sex need not be in any gross way at all Subtle attractions, subtle forms of stimulation, are worse than gross forms, because for the beginner, the former are not as easily recognizable as the latter Many a time I have found great carelessness in aspirants with regard to these points, and many have come to grief because of that

There is a funny story which very aptly illustrates the effects of carelessness regarding our choice of company Once a camel just pushed its nose through the door of an Arab's tent. The Arab first objected to this, but the camel said, 'Oh, I am only just putting my nose into your room for a moment Nothing more' But in fact, it slowly pushed in its ugly head and then its whole body through the door, and when the owner objected to its presence in his room it said, 'If you do not like my presence in your house you had better get out, but I will not' Lust sometimes comes in some such way, in the form of 'duty', in the form of 'compassion', in the form of 'service' Our mind is always out to deceive us about its true motive Without chastity in thought, word and deed, nothing can be achieved in spiritual life The subconscious or unconscious mind always wants to do harm to us, and it patiently waits for an opportunity to do so effectively So you should give it a good scolding now and then Drive into it powerful suggestions

and keep it under control After all, it is you who are the master, not the mind Do not allow the camel to come in If you do, you will have great difficulty driving it out again

### Beyond the male-female principle

If the thought of any woman rises in your mind, associate it at once with the form of the Holy Mother or with that of your own mother Kill the sexual thought at once Do not permit yourself to be in the company of women mentally In the Tantras there is an instruction which says that all woman forms should be associated with Umā and all man forms with Śiva This attitude is of great value in spiritual life There is a famous Sanskrit verse supposed to be written by Śaṅkarācārya:

Parvatī is my mother, Śiva is my father, Śiva's devotees are my friends and all the three worlds are my native land<sup>8</sup>

The aspirant who looks upon God as his father and mother is safe anywhere in the world But the beginner cannot do it effectively So he should be careful about moving in the company of persons of the other sex and talking to them

There is another effective means of counteracting the influence of sexual thoughts Just think of some women or men who never know what sex life is That kind of visualization does a lot of good If you do not know any such pure people, think of Śrī Ramakrishna or the Holy Mother who were from their very birth personifications of sexual purity in all its aspects Dwell on that thought daily, making it a part of your spiritual practice Your own self or ego slowly absorbs the noble attributes of such a pure personality and undergoes a complete change in due course

Our object in life should be to transcend the male principle as well as the female principle and to reach a plane where there is absolutely no sex On the lower planes of life we see the male and the female, but on the higher planes all sex ideas vanish In another verse Śaṅkarācārya says:

O Śiva, Thou art my Ātman The Divine Mother is my mind My Prāṇas are Thy attendants and my body is Thy abode All these sense contacts are part of Thy worship My sleep is like remaining in *samādhi* in Thee Wherever I go, I am just going round Thee All the words that I speak are hymns to Thee And all forms of activities I

<sup>8</sup> माना मे पार्वती देवी पिता देवो महेश्वर ।

ब्रह्मवा मित्रभक्ताश्च मन्देशो भुवनत्रयम् ॥

Śaṅkarācārya, *Hymn to Annapūrṇā* verse 12

engage myself in, O Lord, are Thy worship<sup>9</sup>

### Only a hero can stand the truth

In the life of an aspirant sex consciousness plays such an important role that it should never be awakened, even when he sees a picture. First of all, reduce your body consciousness, your sex consciousness, by never thinking, 'I am a man, a woman' etc. And to the extent to which you succeed in not thinking 'I am a man, a woman' etc., you come to have a new outlook and new reactions. This change at first brings about an awful unsettlement in some people who have the consciousness that they are men or women, their consciousness being centred on their body. Such people cannot even be told this truth. We must dilute it so much that very little of it remains, and what remains must be taken as the working ideal. Only sincere spiritual aspirants must be told the full truth regarding these matters. Swamiji in his 'Song of the Sannyāsin' forcefully says

Truth never comes where lust and fame and greed  
Of gain reside. No man who thinks of woman  
As his wife can ever perfect be,  
Nor he who owns the least of things, nor he  
Whom anger chains, can ever pass thro' Māyā's gates  
So, give these up, *sannyāsin* bold!  
Say—'Om Tat Sat, Om'<sup>10</sup>

These truths are too much for most people. They cannot stand them, and become unsettled. So weaker doses must be given, weaker injections of truth, for a time. But one day everyone will have to face them and follow their call, no matter even if these break their hearts. Only a hero can stand the truth. There is no place for weaklings in real spiritual life. True religion, real Vedānta is no joke.

### Beware of your mind's deceptions

All temptations are mental. Usually it is not what you do but what you think that is more troublesome. So take care of your imaginations.

<sup>9</sup> आत्मा त्व गिरिजा मति महचरा प्राणा शरीर गृह  
पूजा ते विषयोपभोगरचना निद्रा समाधिस्थिति ।  
सत्चार पदयो प्रदक्षिणविधि स्तोत्राणि सर्वा गिरो  
यद्यत्कर्म करोमि तत्तदखिन्द शभो तवागधनम् ॥

Samkarācārya, *Sivamānasapūjā*, verse 4

<sup>10</sup> *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta, Advaita Ashrama, 1978), Vol IV, p. 394

Beware of how other people's vibrations affect your mind. Develop more and more high sensibility. It is not enough to say, 'I have not done anything impure.' Analyze what you feel and what you think in the company of others—whether they attract you or not. The moment there is any attraction or aversion, be on your guard. Salute all people who tempt you, from a safe distance. No attraction is harmless in a finer sense. Never deceive yourself on this point. You should not allow old impure associations to crop up in your mind by mixing with people who may awaken them. When you follow this advice and practise raising strong opposite currents of thought, you will gradually be able to efface all impure impressions which you have allowed to sink into your mind by your carelessness. Then alone will your spiritual life be made safe to a certain extent. By repeatedly raising opposite thought currents temptations become weaker, and finally the new spiritual thoughts completely replace old associations and memories—but only if you strictly follow the advice. You cannot create a vacuum in your mind all of a sudden. It is even dangerous for the beginner to attempt it. So in the beginning he must learn to cultivate good thoughts. The question of transcending the thought plane comes only much later.

Control of mind comes step by step through practice but you can never hope to attain it if you are careless in your ways. If you allow the attraction of any other person to gain influence over you, you will never be able to attain control of mind whatever you may do. Then you are bound to have a nasty fall after some time. If you allow any woman to meet you as a man, if you allow any woman to attract you, control of mind is out of the question. You should always behave in such a way that every woman will feel that she cannot meet you on the plane of sex, that you do not see the woman in her and are not interested in the woman. But for the beginner the only way is to avoid the company of the other sex as much as possible and never to talk intimately with any person belonging to the other sex. If others want to stand in our way, we must just brush them aside, even if their hearts break. There must be a parting of ways however intimate we might have been before. A love that is dangerous has to be avoided at all costs. Do not grow sentimental about this. Otherwise, you will have to pay the price for your folly and egotism.

Unmarried young men and women should be very careful about their friendships. They are usually too young and emotional to recognize their own true motives. Very often sex hides under the cloak of duty. When the thought, 'It is my duty to be kind to him or her' rises in you, you should analyze it. Invariably, you find it is nothing but sex coming in some nice garb and finding some nice excuses for your clinging to a certain person. At first you see only the camel's nose. Never allow yourself to be caught in the snares of your mind. You may hear 'Oh, my heart will break if you leave me.' In certain cases you may have to allow

that heart to break. Such an attitude is necessary if the other person does not want to turn to spiritual life and wants to prevent you from doing so. You should be sympathetic and pray for such people, but there must be a parting of your ways. Otherwise both of you will get drowned in worldly life. You must have great strength of mind. You succeed only after a long time, but the struggle must be carried on unceasingly and doggedly. Medicine is so unpleasant to taste, but it has to be taken if the patient wishes to be cured.

### **Advice to the unmarried (continued)**

All these sexually aggressive people you daily meet make it terribly difficult for you to intensify your spiritual life. Avoid all danger zones and all such 'free' people who are proud of their so-called freedom which is nothing but abject slavery. If you cannot find clean people of your own sex, avoid all company and stay alone in the company of the Lord. This is the only way to salvation for the unmarried man or woman. Avoid all talk about the other sex or sex topics. Avoid seeing any sexually attractive picture. Do not read any novels or any other book on such topics. Do not see any plays that have to do with sex. Avoid the outward sex stimulus so long as the tug-of-war is going on inside you. Any reading or occupation that brings in any form of sex stimulus must be carefully avoided during the period of *sādhana*. If we do not do this, we shall never attain the necessary purification for higher forms of practice, and we are bound to come to grief sooner or later. Then there will be no freedom or fearlessness for us. Then we shall never rise to the full stature of a human being but shall always remain animals with more or less developed minds.

Unmarried men and women who wish to maintain life-long *brahmacharya*, would do well to note the following anecdote in the life of a Christian monk. It is very instructive. One day one of his brothers had been accused of having shaken hands with a woman, and he was brought before the chapter. He pleaded that she was a person of good reputation and great purity and devotion. But the great monk who was presiding over the chapter told him bluntly 'Rain is no doubt good, and earth is also good, yet when mingled they form mud which is not good. Similarly, though the hands of men and women are both good, yet great evil may arise in thought and affection if they are carelessly brought together.' This story can teach the celibate a great lesson. Always learn to go to the very root of the matter and never stop at the first superficial impression an action or a thought gives you. There is no East or West in this matter. Whether you are an easterner or a westerner, you have to be careful in mingling with people of the opposite sex. Even married people must be careful about this point. Hindu scriptures have laid down the rule that the householder must look upon all women other than his

own wife as his mother. A well-known saying of Tulsīdās goes like this

Truthfulness, obedience to God, and the regarding of others' wives as one's mother, are the greatest virtues. If one does not realize God by practising them, then Tulsī is a liar.<sup>11</sup>

Never be afraid of truth, even if truth means death. If truth breaks your heart, well and good, if truth breaks other people's hearts, well and good. Truth is more powerful and beneficial than false appearances. Allow your heart to be broken for the sake of truth. In the beginning truth destroys everything we used to hold dear. A new foundation is needed for spiritual life and on this new foundation the superstructure is to be built slowly and carefully. The laying of a new foundation naturally means destruction of the old one. But in the end this brings peace, happiness and freedom to ourselves and to others. The poison tree planted by our thoughtless actions and desires must be cut down ruthlessly. Having reared the poisonous tree we find it very hard to cut it down but it must be done.

### **The life and message of Sri Ramakrishna**

Sri Ramakrishna's message is. Be spiritual and realize the Truth yourself. By living the spiritual life we can make the Divine a living experience in our own life. In the human being the passions, usually lust and greed, or *kāminī-kāñcana* as he called them, play the greatest part, and Sri Ramakrishna shows us how we may overcome sex and greed—the greatest obstacles on the path of spiritual progress. He wishes us to have a new outlook on ourselves and others, men and women. Man as well as woman must have a spiritual outlook. They should look upon themselves and others as manifestations of the Divine. They should consider themselves as souls inhabiting bodies.

They should never think in terms of the body, but should rise to the level of the spirit. This is a most vital point to note for the spiritual aspirant. And the modern age needs this message more than anything else. The instruction the Master gives us was first of all realized in his own life and in the life of the Holy Mother. Without purity there can be no spiritual life. Seeing the Divine in oneself and in all other men and women, is the only ultimate solution for the modern world-wide problem of sex and the troubles connected with it. Seeing the Divine in all is the only practical solution, and the present age needs this more than any other age ever did. 'Lust and gold' is the sign of this age, because this is pre-eminently the age of sex and worship of Mammon. That is why the Master had to go to the very extremes of the denial of sex and greed so as to teach people the need for controlling these lower instincts of

<sup>11</sup> See *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, op. cit., p. 726

man The more one sees the western life, the more one comes to understand the full significance of Śrī Ramakrishna's life for all humanity

### Solution at the spiritual plane

You can never rise above the sex idea by merely hating woman or man or by fleeing from the world as many of the early Christian ascetics tried to do Something more is needed Even hatred is a kind of negative attraction The only way to transcend sex is to see the Divine in all men and women There is a well-known Upanisadic passage:

Thou art the woman and the man, the boy and the girl, and the old man tottering on his stick Thou alone has assumed all these various forms<sup>12</sup>

But in order to cultivate this attitude one should begin with oneself It is not the woman who is outside that is dangerous but the man within Give up the idea that you are a man, then the woman vanishes too Think you are the Self—the pure light of Consciousness that is shining in all bodies Drive down into the depths of your mind this concept of the eternally pure Ātman Early in the morning think about the Ātman in the night before going to bed think deeply about the Ātman, always fill your mind with It A spiritual aspirant should think about the concept of Ātman constantly at least for the sake of purity of mind

As I have often said, our concept of reality depends upon our concept of ourselves If you look upon yourself as a man, you cannot help looking upon a woman as a woman But if you look upon yourself as a star of light, then everyone else will just become another star in this wonderful firmament of God This idea of looking upon oneself as the Ātman is one of the important doctrines of the Hindu faith But few people make full use of it Even long before you actually attain illumination, the very concept in itself is of great help If you fill your mind with this idea, then your whole personality will be coloured by it and your attitude and behaviour will change Such a change is a fundamental need in spiritual life

There must be a definite change in our consciousness We should deliberately shift our centre of consciousness from lower centres to the higher ones The psychic power called *kundalinī* lies coiled at the lower centres As long as the sex centre is active, the *kundalinī* lies dormant In order to awaken it, the activity of the sex centre must be stopped It by some means or other (e.g. *prāṇāyāma*) the *kundalinī* is roused before that centre has been closed, the activity of the latter may get suddenly increased, often pulling down the aspirant towards a disaster So

<sup>12</sup> त्वं स्त्री त्वं पुमानसि त्वं कुमार उत वा कुमारि ।

त्वं जीर्णो दण्डेन वयसि त्वं ज्ञानो भवसि विप्रसोमसि ॥

Svetāśvatara Upaniṣad 4.3

before the *kundalinī* is awakened, the sex centre must be sealed. Not only that. The higher centres must be opened with the help of studies, prayer, meditation, etc. The *kundalinī*, when awakened, must be made to flow upwards to higher centres.

The higher centres must be stimulated. The unconscious mind must be slowly changed, it is like a fertile field: whatever idea you plant there will immediately strike roots and grow. If you plant good thoughts there, they will grow and gradually you will find your inner resistance to spiritual life becoming less and less. The very mind that was once against you now becomes beneficial to you. There is a famous song of Rāmprasād, the great poet-saint of Bengal:

O mind, you do not know how to farm!  
Fallow lies the field of your life  
If you had only worked it well,  
How rich a harvest you might reap!<sup>13</sup>

The problem of sex can be successfully tackled only on the plane of the Spirit. The soul is sexless. The Light of the Ātman has nothing to do with sex. Unless one realizes this inner Light, one can never completely overcome the sex idea. The peace and joy and freedom that we feel when we attain it are more than a reward for all our struggles and pain and suffering.

<sup>13</sup> See *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* op cit, p. 189