What is Sacred Sex

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provided by the Goddess of Sacred Sex

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Introduction

All acts of creation are sexual and in fact, the universe and all creation myths from every culture are steeped in a fusion (or intercourse if you like) of forces wedded in a sacred cosmogenic act. All sacred thought systems contain concepts of male and female aspects joined in this creative dance. Every major religion and philosophy has a mystical aspect devoted to understanding and exploring the deeper concepts behind sacred sexuality and the integration of spirituality and sexuality.

So when we speak of sacred sex, we are not concerned with sex as we commonly encounter it; but of the hidden or esoteric knowledge of sex that has always been reserved for the priest and priestesshood or initiated disciples of every tradition. This sacred knowledge has always been concerned with the birth of the soul, the entry into a new world, or in other words, creation. Simple observation of natural laws demonstrate that creation is always sexual. Thus, the secret or private knowledge held by the high priests, priestesses and lamas has always been sexual knowledge, also known as the Tree of Knowledge, Tantra, Alchemy, Gnosis, and many other names. Although the methods may appear different, it remains undeniable that there is a great secret power hidden in the sexual forces that reside within all of us, and that aspirants throughout the world and its history have been educated in a method to access that power, which transforms the entire person, giving them in-depth knowledge of the mysteries of God/Goddess, the divine. Regardless of what particular philosophy, sacred sexuality has always been practised with the intent of transforming sexual energy into a higher, spiritualized, personal experience of oneness, or union with divinity.
In the temples of the Goddess

When we journey to our ancient past, long before a Christian god and patriarchal religions, we encounter a world where for millennia people worshipped the Goddess – benevolent, fertile and above all sexual. Very sexual! Today we have profound difficulty associating sexuality with anything sacred, but in ancient times the worship of the goddess was often conducted through sexual rites. As the goddess once again awakens in a western consciousness, the shame and guilt traditionally attached to our bodies and sexual experiences is being replaced with a remembering of lifetimes past when deity was female and sex was for worship.

The Sacred lives in your body

It has been 5,000 years or more since the goddess was at the height of her power, but with her return, we are remembering how to experience the divine through the sacrament of sex. The goddess offers us a new religion (actually an ancient one) where sex leads to enlightenment and the current shame and perversion we carry around sexuality is being transformed. What if I told you that the sacred actually lives in your body and that engaging in conscious acts of sex can lead to transcendent experiences of bliss and self realisation. When we engage with intent, when we open our bodies to experiences greater than ourselves, we become vulnerable and authentic and in that place our hearts become the doorway to expanded experiences of ecstasy. Remember, it is love that invokes the divine and if you are not connecting in love, you are not invoking the sacred.
Sacred Sex Today

Sacred sex in the 21st century is suddenly big business and the goddess looms large as we revisit the past to uncover the roots of traditions that honoured her. You will find her in the explosion of neo Tantra that offers a stylized western experience for those who want to heal their relationships and experience a full body orgasm. You will find her in a Wiccan or shamanic ritual, or a pagan magic sex rite. She is nature herself speaking to you through an ayahauscan drug taking ceremony. She is the rising kundalini serpent awakened in an ecstatic dance class. She is the healing found through a sex surrogate, or in the arms of a modern day sacred prostitute. Whichever path you may wish to traverse, the untamable, powerful sexual energy of the goddess is awakening and ready to enter into your relationships and your body.

What is Hieros Gamos

The term “Hieros Gamos” comes from the Greek whose etymology translates as “Hieros” – holy and “Gamos” – marriage or coupling. In ancient Mesopotamia, the lands known as Sumeria, Assyria and Babylon, from the 4th millennium BCE, the people worshiped the great Goddess Inanna, Queen of the Heavens and the Earth. Here, the High Priestess of Inanna would unite with or marry the King of the land who represented the young, virile vegetation god, in a public sexual ceremony that not only celebrated the fertile renewal of the land but was also a ritual act of
fertility and creation. This important festival would last for up to a week and occur around the time of the autumn equinox. The celebrations would include the ritual sacrifice of grains and fruits, including the first offspring of livestock. So important was this celebration of renewal that only the most precious objects would be sacrificed. Even libations of blood would be offered to increase the fertility of the union which was the culmination of these ritual celebrations.

Within the ritual sacred marriage, the High Priestess of the temple became the earthly embodiment of the Goddess herself, joining with the masculine in the form of the King or monarch of the land. This represented the joining of the elements of earth and spirit to create a holy sacred union. Here, sexuality was experienced as a pathway to the divine.
The Goddesses of Sacred Sex

The goddesses come to us from every culture and from every period of history and with them they bring their stories and their myths and these have always served to explain how the world came into being through the creation stories told by the various personalities playing within that world. Whether it was the story of the young heroine, or the evil stepmother, or the wise queen, we saw the various patterns that came to represent a personality type and those personality types or ‘archetypes’ could also be found reflected within ourselves as we played out the stories of the gods and goddesses in our own lives.

Aspects and reflections of ourselves

When we look at the Goddesses of Sacred Sex we find those representations of femininity that utilise sexuality as a main aspect of their archetype. The following four that I have chosen – Aphrodite, Inanna, Magdalene and Lilith – are not only all sexual goddesses, but they access aspects of the sacred within their archetypal stories. In healing post patriarchal and Christian suppression of women and their sexuality, I turn to a world that existed before both, and call upon the ancient goddesses of the past to once again tell their stories and share their myths. It is in these archetypes that have always existed, that women can once again find a way to heal their sexuality, whether that be through exploring the shadow or remembering lifetimes when they mediated as sacred sexual priestessess. Whilst these goddess’ stories are immense, it is my hope that these short versions will inspire you to seek them out and invite them back into your own life where as you unravel their myths, they help you to heal your own.
The Greek goddess Aphrodite, the original “Golden Girl”, the Goddess of Love; perfectly attired for the occasion in a simple string of pearls and a couple of strategically placed scallop shells, stepped out of the ocean on the island of Cypress and set the ancient world on its ear. Aphrodite, goddess of romantic love had finally arrived! Never had there been such sensual beauty and impeccable taste and a new era of sexuality had been birthed. While Aphrodite was more generally known to be associated with romantic love, her broad appeal also encompassed wild sexuality, the shadow aspects of sex and temples full of priestesses who offered their bodies as sacred prostitutes to the men who would come for a taste of the goddess’ delights.

The Corinthian Temple
A famous temple to Aphrodite stood on the summit of Corinth in the Classical Age. It is said to have housed 1,000 sacred prostitutes who would ply their profession in the city below. Corinth was a city catering to sailors and traveling salesmen. Even by the Classical Age it had earned an unsavoury reputation for its libertine atmos-
The name “Corinth” became synonymous for immorality. After landing at the Corinthian docks, sailors would apparently wheeze up the thousand-odd steps to the top of a stunning crag of rock called the AcroCorinth, which offered 360-degree vistas of the sparkling Mediterranean. There they would pass beneath the marble columns of the Temple of Aphrodite, goddess of Beauty and Love, within whose incense-filled, candlelit confines 1,000 comely girls supposedly worked around the clock gathering funds for their goddess.

The Transformative Power of Sexuality
Aphrodite represents the “cosmic life force, associated especially with the transformative power of sexuality.” This power evidently has its cruel side and Greek mythology often associates Aphrodite “not with human love in general, but with its darker side: rape, adultery, and incest.” Many voices don’t like to discuss the dark side of the Goddess, but each goddess (like ourselves) carries aspects of the dark as well as the light and as a cosmic force for transformation through

Aphrodite’s rituals of love and pleasure are the acts which connect the inner and outer planes ... we must actually dance, sing, feast, make music, and love in Her honor. It is with our bodies that we worship Her, and through our bodies that She blesses us. By these earthy rituals the false divisions between body and spirit, between mind and nature, are healed. We find the Sacred within us and all things, within our beautiful, living Mother Earth.”

Judy Harrow in Gnosis
sexuality, the shadow aspects must be experienced as well as the light. To most though, Aphrodite’s unbridled sexuality means lofty ideals such as liberation and renewal, energy and empowerment, ecstasy and oneness, both with others and with the divine.

"As a Goddess whose temples were filled with sacred prostitutes, Aphrodite reminds us of the transformative powers of sexuality. Call on her when you need her alluring powers of temptation and unbridled passion that can shift you from an inexperienced and timid woman into a sexual goddess.
INANNA – Queen of Heaven

While Aphrodite hails from the first millennium BCE, worship of the venerated Goddess Inanna, peaks from circa 4,000BCE where we find totally different attitudes towards sexuality and its potency used in a ritual context. Inanna was the Sumerian Goddess of the moon, known as Queen of Heaven and Goddess of gentle rains and terrible floods, Goddess of the morning and evening star, Queen of the land and its fertility, bestowing kingship on chosen mortals. She was the Goddess of war and equally passionately, the Goddess of sexual love. Her reign encompassed lands known as Sumeria, Assyria and Babylon and in later times she was known as Ishtar to the Babylonians and was one of the three great goddesses of the Bronze Age. Sumer was the first great urban centre to emerge and with it, the cuneiform or wedge shaped system of writing on clay tablets which was Sumer’s greatest gift to modern civilisation.

The archaeological evidence of some 10,000 unearthed clay tablets brings to life the public rites and rituals that dominated Sumerian religious practices. Central to this matriarchal temple system was the highly venerated Goddess Inanna. Far more extroverted than Aphrodite, Inanna celebrated her vulva and the sex act and below is one of the most quoted hymns of the bridal songs, where Inanna calls out to her lover the shepherd King Dumuzi:
My vulva, the horn,
The Boat of Heaven,
Is full of eagerness like the young moon.
My untilled land lies fallow.
As for me, Inanna,
Who will plow my vulva?
Who will plow my high field?
Who will plow my wet ground?
As for me, the young woman,
Who will plow my vulva?
Who will station the ox there?
Who will plow my vulva?

This hymn explains the openness of sexuality expressed in the writings of the Goddess and paints a picture of how liberally sexuality was viewed. Inanna’s vulva is often called the “holy lap” and is used as an adjective that is applied to numerous other deities, temples, places and artifacts and is usually translated as “pure” or “holy”. Inanna was said to have used her vulva and the power associated with it, to further the prestige and divine status of her city. This accounts for the myriad figurines and terracotta models of female nudes and vulva-shaped ceremonial offerings that have been found all over the ancient near East representing the holy power of sexuality.

Sacred Woman or a Prostitute?
But it was the highly trained priestesses who became the vessel for the Goddess in the holy sexual rituals performed in her name. The Sumerian and Babylonian temple records indicate that the Qadishtu who served in the temples of Inanna/Ishtar were often from wealthy
families. They owned property and land and engaged in extensive business activities. Although the title of Qadishtu translates literally as “sacred woman” or “the undefiled”, academic translations have nearly always used the term “prostitute” to describe these women and the term “temple prostitution” to depict the sacred acts of worship that occurred. In later patriarchal times these women from the temples of Ishtar become the reviled whores of Babylon referred to in the Old Testament.

Those of you familiar with Inanna, will know her rich mythology supports an underworld journey that is a metaphor for an excursion into your own dark abyss, walking the black night of your own soul. But this all sounds so ominous when the many faces of Inanna only reveal the breadth and depth of this ancient deity whose name lived on for millennia in Goddesses such as Ishtar, Isis, Neith, Metis, Astarte and Cybele.

If and when you choose to journey with Inanna, be mindful of coming face to face with the power of your own unbridled sexuality and a shadow journey in the underworld that will slay you open to the very depths of your soul.
MAGDALENE -
The Joining of the Two Equals

Whilst not a goddess in the typical sense afforded to deity, Mary Magdalene has assumed an archetypal representation to a modern western audience of the fallen woman who has been saved and reborn through the salvation of sexuality. You won’t find this story in the Bible, because there is very little actual historic evidence to draw upon apart from the writings of the New Testament. Here they tell us that she was a prostitute from whom Jesus cast seven demons and that upon her healing she became a follower of Christ. She is the one who washes his feet and anoints him and who witnesses his death and resurrection. She becomes the woman mentioned most often in the New Testament.

Was Magdalene a High Priestess of Isis?
So what else do we know of the Magdalene? It is known that the Temples of the Goddess existed throughout biblical times and some were still to be found up to the middle ages, amongst them, temples to the Goddess Isis. One well known image shows Mary holding the alabaster jar and wearing around her waist what is known as the ‘Girdle of Isis’ or the Isis knot which was worn by priestesses of Isis. Various authors on the Magdalene speculate on the fact that Mary as a young girl was most likely sent to Egypt and the Temple of Isis to become initiated into the ways of the sacred Priestess (as is also thought of Jesus’ mother Mary who was also trained in the sacred ways of the Priestess). Here, she
becomes Qadishtu (sexual priestess) and is taught the practice of sacred sexuality where she becomes the living vessel for the Goddess to enter in the ancient rite known as ‘Hieros Gamos’ or ‘sacred marriage’. The Da Vinci Code speaks of this sacred rite where through ritual sex, both parties are able to transcend the physical and know themselves as divine.

On returning to Jerusalem Mary no doubt became attached to one of the many temples which were known to have existed at the time and just the mere act of walking on the streets alone to and from the temple cast aspersions upon her, enough for her to be classified as an unclean woman. The claim that she was an actual prostitute in the sense that we know, is totally unsubstantiated. It must be remembered that women of that era belonged to men and remained their chattel, first their father and then their husband and walking unchaperoned was unheard of. It is known that women travelled with Jesus, were seen in public with him and attended at meals without any attachment to a specific male or household. This behaviour was highly suspect for the period, especially for women of any social standing, as it was known that Mary was.

A wealthy woman of independent means
It helps to explain how women seen in public with Jesus and even talking to him could be viewed as promiscuous. Mary Magdalene has been cast in the role of prostitute for public association with Jesus and behaviour that was no doubt completely at odds with the social practices of the day. Luke 8:1 though, tells us that Mary and the other women were financially underwriting the early Jesus movement out of their personal resources. This helps
paint a picture of a powerful, educated woman, a High Priestess who was forthright enough to stand against the social prejudices of the day and who also had independent financial means.

It is only recently that a reinterpretation of various texts reveals that Mary Magdalene was indeed the partner and most favoured companion of Jesus. These recently discovered writings from the Nag Hammadi library deliver up to us texts which reveal insights into the role of women and Mary Magdalene herself, at the very emergence of Christianity. The Gospel of Philip speaks of Mary Magdalene “as the most favoured companion of Jesus who loved her more than the other disciples and would kiss her often on the mouth”.

The Sacred Union of the Divine Feminine and the Sacred Masculine

Other Nag Hammadi texts paint a story and image of Mary Magdalene as one who had an innate understanding of the teachings being given, and who had an intimate relationship not only with the man, but with the wisdom that was being spoken and that it was a joining of two equals with the Magdalene representing the divine feminine element as did Jesus the sacred masculine.

While there is no actual historical evidence of a sexual relationship between Christ and the Magdalene as portrayed in the movie the Da Vinci Code, nor Mary bearing children and creating the supposed royal bloodline, there is now historical evidence that this was a power-
ful woman, an educated woman, one equal in spiritual understanding and training to partner with Jesus. Only a High Priestess or Qadishtu of the temple of the Goddess, trained in the ancient ways, a divine emissary in her own right would be able to enter into the sacred marriage of masculine and feminine as has been done throughout time.

Mary being cast in the role of repentant prostitute for so long, speaks of the Church’s attempts to denigrate the powerful sexual attributes that can be seen in the goddess religions of old. But like the goddesses of old, women and men related to the sexually erotic feminine archetype being represented by the Magdalene and despite the attempts of the Church fathers to repress and manipulate her image, she has remained loved and revered and touches both men and women with her sacred sexuality.

Call on the Magdalene when you are dealing with post religious suppression of your sexuality and authority and allow her to empower you as you journey to find the sacred in your love-making.
Lilith is the dark goddess of the Hebrew faith, who we are told was the first wife of Adam. She was created equally by God, not from a rib of Adam, as was Eve. Believing that they were both equal, she refused to lie beneath Adam during intercourse and so, became angry and fled the Garden of Eden. She was condemned by God to copulate with men in their sleep in “unbridled promiscuity”, a succubus thriving off their sexual energy, bearing over a hundred demon children a day. The Kabala describes her as a seductress, a succubus, but as far back as 4,000 BCE in the Sumerian culture, she was Inanna’s handmaiden, bringing men from the streets to the temple prostitutes. In one ancient form she wears owl wings and talons and is known as the “screech owl”.

Today, she represents a modern archetype of female sexual empowerment, the seductress, and the wild woman who has freedom, independence and refuses to be subordinate to any man. Lilith has thrown off the shackles of demoness and assumed almost heroine proportions to a modern female audience who is eager to explore the sexual shadow. Women are done with the Christian model of femininity they have been sold for millennia and are
exploring a much larger palette of opportunities to express themselves. It is safe once again for women to access the full power and spectrum of their sexuality, spread their wings like Lilith and explore the shadow to see what it holds in both the negative and positive and in doing so, create healing for the long standing wounded feminine. Lilith is the new pin up girl for female sexual emancipation and just as she preceded Eve in the original marital bed, she now heals the feminine by marrying the light as depicted in the sacredness of Eve, with the shadow of sexual sin and in doing so, births a new archetype of the divine feminine, one that is powerful enough to heal and forgive the masculine.

The Ownership of Shadow and Light
Awakened female sexuality has long been denied through patriarchal religions because of the earthy empowerment it invokes not only in the women who bring it, but in the men who are partnered to them. Streaming codes of light information, transmitting sacred knowledge that was once the practice of the goddess temples, a conscious relationship sets the foundation for the sacred marriage of the feminine and masculine to truly be manifest on the planet again.

Lilith today gives permission for women to investigate the sexual shadow. She represents a bold, awakened, sexually promiscuous archetype which allows women to say no, to have clear boundaries, to enjoy sex and to discover the innate knowledge and wisdom that is held
in an awakened woman’s body. Marvin Gaye had it right when he talked about sexual healing because sex is a healing balm available not only to awaken the sacred masculine, but to provide an opportunity for sexual healing of the whole planet.

Now the sacred feminine as it was known in the times of the goddess is allowed to re-emerge combining the twin aspects of shadow and light represented in the duality of Eve and Lilith, and providing healing for the split that has existed between the sexes since the rise of patriarchy.

Lilith in her role as modern day sexual Goddess, has traversed the journey from demon mythology to encompass contemporary female emancipation and therefore has the opportunity to wear a much softer and more healed personae. The shadow side of sexuality is an immense topic for discussion and when we journey with this goddess, we are asked to explore both shadow and light.

Call on Lilith when the shadow sexual behaviours in your life need to be explored – that may include rape, incest, sexual abuse or violence. Acceptance and ownership create healing and allow for transformation – that is her message for you.
THE GODDESS OF SACRED SEX offers workshops and information on reclaiming the sacred sexual feminine in women’s lives. By reigniting the divine shakti energy through the medium of dance, movement and awakened sensuality, the sacred fires can once again be lit, enriching sexual relationships, firing the creative juices and enhancing wellbeing in women’s lives.

A woman’s greatest gift is her awakened, present, juicy self. The fire in her womb is alight and she shares herself with love and generosity and brings the gifts of her feminine shakti energy to her home, her family and life, invigorating all that she touches, enlivening all with her glowing heart. The goddess lives in the hearts of both men and women and her return is nurtured and lived out through the sacred sexual joining of us all.

About: Kerri is a Priestess of the Goddess. A joyful teacher who brings out the best in everyone. She draws on her background as a qualified Kundalini and Chakra Dance Facilitator, and an initiated priestess in the Order of the Pomegranate Grove. She has a passion for the ritual and ceremony of earth based goddess religions and sharing her research and experience on Hieros Gamos (the Sacred Marriage).

With a Masters Degree in Religious Studies, Kerri has journeyed some 22 years on the path of her own spiritual awakening, including meditating in ashrams in India, holding a reiki masters and seichim qualification and conducting healing and body work sessions for clients.

As a writer and author her passion has long been the sacred feminine and she is keen to promote the blossoming of awakened consciousness between the sacred feminine and masculine energies and the union of sexuality and spirituality as a path to joy, love and expanded heart space.