

## Resources

### *Sacred Marriage*

**At the Summer Solstice the Goddess in her fullness meets the God at the height of his powers and they join together in the Sacred Marriage.....**

**Dying or dead he falls from the tree into Her arms. Or his blood soaks into Her land, as an offering. He walks onto the battlefield, knowing that in death he will meet Her embrace. This is the sacred marriage.....**

**As the leaves fall from the trees and the Goddess descends into her yearly retreat of the Underworld, the energy of the dark god is stirred into rising and, hidden from all, they perform the rite of the Sacred Marriage.....**

**It is the moment of the Winter Solstice, when the age-old goddess gives birth to the god of the new year and as he passes through the gate of her flesh the possibility of sacred marriage is born.....**

Sacred Marriage is the union of the divine with itself. It is the union of the god with the goddess; the alchemical mixing of the divine opposites that, combined, become one. And this one is the essence of all that is. Sacred Marriage is the marriage of Inanna to Dumuzi. It is the ecstatic embrace of Shiva and Shakti. It is the magical sexual act of Isis with the dead Osiris. Its theme may be found, diluted, in the stories of the Greek Gods and their many loves and joinings. Its essence may be sensed, obscured, in the relationship of Jesus Christ to his disciple, Mary Magdalene. It has been mythologised throughout time. Sacred Marriage renders opposites into synthesis; it is a paradox, yet utterly understood.

And does Sacred Marriage exist in human lives? Does it spill over from the gods, overlap into the earthly realm? What does Sacred Marriage mean to us, in our fragile alliances with others and in our innermost, transformative workings?

I think that sacred marriage does exist for humans, in several ways, and yet not perhaps in the way it is most commonly assumed to exist. I do not think that two humans, however evolved and however spiritual, can realistically call their relationship a sacred marriage - unless they cease to be human. I think that they can engage in sacred marriage - that it can be one of the components of their relationship, when her goddess relates to his god, for example - but I do not think it is useful to label the whole relationship as a sacred marriage. To imagine that it is a state that humans can live in detracts from its transformative and transcendent powers, because only for a portion of our time do we live in transformation and transcendence. So, for humans, sacred marriage is more useful as a verb rather than a noun; it is something you practise, some series of actions or interactions on the divine level that you engage in as part of your relating, rather than a constant state of being.

Sacred Marriage (as a noun, and henceforth capitalised for clarity) is for the gods. For humans, sacred marriage can be a moment, a practice, an act, an ideal. This definition of sacred marriage opens it up to occur beyond the bounds of conventional marriage, and even outside committed relationships. Who has never felt that moment of pure joy and union, gazing into the eyes of a stranger? Who has not felt it at the height of an experience with a friend or child? Who has not known it in ritual, or a workshop, or at work; blending one's essence with that of another and meeting in that space the blending of divine with divine? All of those things, I would say are moments of sacred marriage. It

is, essentially, when spirit is joined to spirit and the two become one. Its most obvious illustration is the sexual act, although I would argue that meeting the god in a trance-state alone in a forest (for example) can be just as much of sacred marriage.

And it can occur within the self. There are those moments when one delicate part of the self meets and blends with another part, and the touch of the divine is present. There are those times of totally giving over to the goddess, or to spirit or god, which may be ecstatic or meditative or terrifying. It is the delicate blending of the conscious self with the immanent divine. It is the bringing together of the god and goddess, within the self. It is the birth of the new god, within the self, if the birth is conscious and an act of divine love. It is the death of the old god, within the self, if the death is received into the arms of the divine lover. And many other moments of blending, of union, of surrender, of renewal.

So what happens when we participate in sacred marriage? What are its effects? And is it possible, or how is it possible, to bring in these elements or moments of sacred marriage within our relationships? These are the questions that, in pursuing this topic, I want to ask.

My research is to go back to the texts, to the myths, to the old stories. I believe that there are the learnings, sometimes encoded, but laid out in patterns that communicate essential human understandings. My favourite source on Sacred Marriage is in *The Courtship of Inanna and Dumuzi*. It includes this:

He has sprouted; he has burgeoned;

He is lettuce planted by the water.

And this:

O Lady, your breast is your field.

And this:

I poured out plants from my womb.

I placed plants before him,

I poured out plants before him.

I placed grain before him,

I poured out grain before him.

I poured out grain from my womb.

Throughout this poetry of the sacred union of the god and goddess their love for each other is not separate from their sexual union or from the production of the land or the fertility of the flocks or the rejoicing of the people in the streets. This is what happens in the Sacred Marriage of Inanna and Dumuzi; literally because they make love the fields and animals become fertile and the people celebrate with food, drink and love. This Sacred Marriage is intrinsic to life, its enactment does not just celebrate but actually creates fertility.

How does that apply to us? I think that the teaching is that this union, divine union, goes beyond itself in its implications and affects. It is not a selfish thing, or even if its initial impulse is to do with personal fulfilment (and certainly Inanna and Dumuzi seem filled with impatient passion for each other) then even regardless of that, it has wider effect. So for us, we could begin to imagine that sacred marriage occurring within a relationship would reach beyond that couple in its love, in its celebration of the divine, in its magic. Similarly, sacred marriage occurring for a few moments in an almost altered state during ritual or

meditation, could stretch in effect beyond those few moments into our whole lives not just by happenstance but because expansion and flow-on is what Sacred Marriage is all about.

When the divine spark meets the divine spark it is the same as the egg meeting the sperm; their union creates and near-endless proliferation of expansions and elaborations of those initial two cells. To engage in divine marriage, to connect spirit to spirit creates or enters a space that is larger than those two spirits, it is Spirit. Or God. Or Goddess. Gazing with love into the eyes of your beloved you meet not just your beloved, but the Goddess. The Universe. All. And it is not just that you meet that, you participate in it (again, sacred marriage works better as a verb) and you are its progenitor; you have not only linked into the flow of its always-being, you have also initiated its happening where before it was not happening. This is very powerful magic.

One year I was in Germany with my lover and son as the last leaves fell from the trees. At the end of October we found two owls, (separately) dead on the highway. On the eve of Samhain, camped in the forest, we did a ritual where all that had been planned is that I would become the goddess, and my lover the god. I picked up the wings of one of the owls and swooped through the trees; I felt alive and wild and immense. My lover lay down on the leaves - and they were banked in mounds and hollows - and appeared to go to sleep beside the fire. As I came closer to him I felt his surrender, the grace with which he was folding into the land and I laid my shawl over him, covering him.

I felt then the god's presence under my feet, in the ground, in a way I had never felt it before. I felt his potency, sleeping but not dead and I embraced the earth with my arms and my wings. Later I discovered that a friend of mine, who had been dying for a long time, had died that night, whilst we performed that ritual and I could not help feeling that his life was indeed, as the god's, sleeping beneath my feet and embraced by me. That in dying, he had become the god. And also that, in that ritual, we had reached beyond the German forest where we were to my friend's bedside in an Australian hospital; or perhaps there are no distances and no separations within that space. I believe that I felt his actual death, though I did not consciously know that at the time, through this ritual enactment of one strand of sacred marriage.

It is one thing to discuss sacred marriage in the context of ritual and another to find it, or seek it within the everyday interactions we have with our partners and children and workmates. Most of us have experienced the bliss of such a union in dreams, a relationship where it seems that each moment is an unfolding and ever-deepening joy. Many of us have had, or even regularly have, visions or meditation experiences of the divine where we feel this union within our hearts. That startling encounter with a complete stranger, so much a part of our romantic mythology, is also a familiar experience, where the intimacy is as deep as any we have ever known and appears irrefutably profound. Also in unlikely and intense situations (illicit affairs, chance meetings, transient encounters) we experience, apparently without effort, aspects of sacred marriage.

It is easy, in ordinary relationships, to let a combination of habits and defences take over the more extraordinary possibilities inherent in relating. It is said that falling in love we catch a glimpse of the other's soul. And I think that to weave sacred marriage into our relationships we have to court those moments, cultivate them, offer them. Not just in good moments, either; when we are vulnerable spirit can often be more easily accessed. I believe that sacred marriage can be a continuing thread within a relationship, any relationship, if the two people are willing to enter into their divine aspect, recognise the divine aspect of the other and join together on that level. I believe that if this happened continually in tens of thousands of relationships all over the planet, that it would be felt on divine levels. That we would live, as those people of Sumer did, in a time where the god and goddess made love as a continual act of sacred regeneration and that that would flow through the land and all of its people.

I believe that Sacred Marriage exists as a continual, on-going interaction on divine levels. In the forests, as the rain falls from the sky to the earth and rivers, as the sea washes against the shore, as the god and goddess meet and dance their intricate dances; all of those dances. I believe, and my experience supports that belief, that the energy of Sacred

Marriage is able to be received, to be joined into, at any moment. And I think that is the way to bring it through, in individual moments, in ordinary relationships. To practise the dance of the gods with each other. To participate in the union of the divine, as the divine and yet still human; that is to be living the sacred marriage.

**Inanna: Queen of Heaven and Earth. Her Stories and Hymns from Sumer.** Diane Wolkstein and Samuel Noah Kramer. Harper and Row, 1983.

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