

## SEX AND RELIGION

The sexual ideology of someone depends on the culture in which he has grown up. Different cultures see sex in many different ways. Some of them freely accept it, while others still see it as a taboo. Sexual ideology also changes with generations. Nowadays, people of different ages look at sex with different eyes. But, from my point of view, the major reason for different sexual ideologies is religion.



In ancient times, even before religions existed, sex pervaded every aspect of life. Having descendants was not important, and although the birth of new children was celebrated, these were not specially desired. The things changed with the apparition of cereal culture in the Nile valley, where they started paying homage to fecundity, considered as a feminine virtue, as young people were needed to work the floor. Paternity attribution was not recognized to a determined individual. It was a pure sex, carried out openly, without other taboo than women's menstruation. Male got to all females searching for satisfaction.

As cultures started developing, religions appeared, and ancient people started believing in different gods, depending in the geographical area in which they lived. They also learned that reproduction is a consequence of sex.

Mesopotamia, which was formed by Babylonia and Assyria, is known to have the oldest records of human history, and is said to be the first human civilization. Sex was freely accepted then, and formed part of day-a-day life. Istar was the Babylon goddess of love, fertility, nature, sex and war. She ruled over everything, and required all women at least once in their lifetime to go to her temple. They usually went when they were already married. They were to sit in the temple until a stranger came and threw them a piece of silver in her lap. Then she was to leave the temple and have sex with the stranger, after which she could return home. They were not allowed to refuse the first stranger. Unfortunately, some of the less attractive women remained in the temple for years, waiting for a stranger to throw them a stone. That's how they prayed to Istar for fertility, virility, and sexual power. There were cults to divinities, such as the Peor, also called the celebration of the phallus, that were really a public orgy. She also defended prostitutes, and there were laws passed making it a serious offense to speak badly of the holy prostitutes. Important men in Mesopotamia had harems with women from around the entire discovered world, so they could choose the one they preferred in each moment.

In Ancient Egypt, they had many different sexual behaviors and diversities: homosexuality, transgenderism, exhibitionism, prostitution, adultery, bestiality, necrophilia and others. Egyptians believed that Phallus, the god of creation, masturbated, and from his ejaculation created the other gods. These gods defended all types of sexual behavior in the high classes and normally in the middle classes too, but for slaves and low classes, only if their superiors supported it.

In Ancient Greece, Gods defended sex and practiced it themselves, but women had very low status. They believed the penis was the main symbol of fertility, and it is represented continuously in temples. The male

idea of female sexuality is that male envied their penis. Rape was common and seen by men as a "right for domination by Greek men. Zeus, the god, raped many women, and even other men. Women were treated as slaves. Wife responsibilities were to give birth legitimate children and labor in the home. They were frequently enclosed inside their houses when their husbands left. They were expected to have male children, and female infanticide was common. Husbands had their wives with which to have legitimate children, their concubines, and what they used to call hetaera, which were low class prostitutes. Hetaeras were legally raped when they did not accept to do what men wanted for the price that they wanted. Homosexuality was also common in Ancient Greece. The most loved boys by homosexuals were usually age 12–14. Some homosexual men wouldn't even try to have sex with a boy over the age of 17.

Ancient Rome was nearly the same that Ancient Greece. They had practically the same gods, but with different names. The men owned all the property, including the women. Sometimes, in the wedding night, the men did not sleep with their new bride, but with another woman.

These mentioned have been the major civilizations in the zone of the Mediterranean before Christ, and, as time passed by, their religious ideas changed, and they started believing in monotheistic gods, depending on the geographical zone where they were. The two major religions of the zone became Christianity and Islam. The major part of Europe became Christian, and various centuries later, this religion extended too to the major part of America. The South of Asia, Eastern Europe and north of Africa became Muslim. These new religions changed completely the sexual ideology.

The Christian god completely forbids any kind of sexual activity out of marriage, and any kind of homosexual or including more than two persons sexual practices. They understand sex only if it's for procreation, and in the middle ages, sex was a taboo in Christian countries, and sexual practices out of marriage were completely hidden. Homosexuals were oppressed as people considered degenerated or ill, and thought they will directly go to hell. Prostitutes are also persecuted and considered to be deadly trapped, and masturbation pernicious.

Muslim god, Allah, allow men to have up to three wives, exclusively for him. These wives are completely inferior to their husband, and must obey him. The wife must reserve exclusively for her husband, and make efforts to be attractive, as well as making herself available whenever he is in need. They are not allowed to discover their faces in front of any other man than their husband. Procreation is not the sole and only purpose of marriage, but enjoyment also plays a significant role, as evidenced in the Islamic techniques which relate to sexual practices. Any sexual relationships are reserved exclusively for the confines of marriage. Sex under marriage is very well regarded by Allah, who condemns adultery: The woman and the man guilty of adultery or fornication— flog each of them with a hundred stripes. Let not compassion move you in their case, in a matter prescribed by Allah, if ye believe in Allah and the last day. And let the party of the believers witness their punishment (Koran, 24:2). Both husband and wife are obliged to honor the privacy of the intimate relations between them. The Koran also forbids sexual relationships when woman is menstruating, and states that Allah will not look at man who commit sodomy, either with a man or a woman, so homosexuals are also oppressed.

As we can see, peoples attitude toward sex changes around history. In Ancient times, with matriarch religions, sex was considered something ennobling and uplifting. Performing sex in front of other people was not the stressful thing in ancient times as it is now. Sex was often done in religious ceremonies in group—orgies.

There are still places where people still see sex as it was seen last century. Most Muslim religious still conserve the same ideals, and even though in many Muslim countries women can discover their faces and take most decisions by themselves, there are still many Muslim countries where women can't even go to the doctor, as they can't be seen by a man and women are not allowed to study to be doctors. Nowadays, Christianity and Islamism are still the two main religions in the world, but, modern society has led religion into a secondary stage.

Sex is something that has always been there, even if it has been hidden from public, and most young people in our society has stopped hiding their feelings and impulses, getting rid of oppression. This has created a great polemic for many old religious people, that still believe that sex out of marriage is immoral, and punished with hell. They try to inculcate these ideas to younger generations, and so, many people are still confused on what to think.

Hopefully, the day in which equality exists, and both men and women can freely follow their impulses will arrive. Every day, we are a bit closer, but there are many things that still have to change.

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