



Kama Sutra For A New Time

By: Shahnee Zaver

February is the month of love, so why not celebrate by picking up the universal classic text on love aphorisms - The Kama Sutra. Embark on this journey into the past with your loved one and apply it to your present relationship or simply read it for your own pleasure and enjoyment. Revel in it, play with it, and learn from it!

This 2000-year-old document originated during the 4th Century C.E. but it is said to have existed in oral form for centuries before that. Translated from Sanskrit it literally means "Treatise on Pleasure". Kama is the Hindu God of Love and Kama also means desire. Sutra makes reference to the manual or guide. Mallanaga Vatsyayana, the Indian scholar who wrote it many centuries ago meant for it to be a philosophical work on the science of love, exploring human desire, as well as a classic guide to lovemaking that reflected the social and sexual traditions of the time. During this period, education in the ways of sexual loving was mandatory for scholars and as important as learning

law, business, commerce or any of the other sciences.

Ancient India embraced such teachings because it was believed that relationships were the core of human culture. Indians historically have embraced sexuality and sexual loving as integral and essential aspects of human relationships, honoring the mysteries of love and teaching the skills of loving. Ancient Hindu culture considered physical love to be a natural element of spirituality. They maintained the belief that passion and loving in this life would lead one down the path of eternal bliss in the next. This credo is also reflected in much of the art from this period of time. The goal of the Kama Sutra's teaching which can be applied to one's relationship today is to strive to keep two people connected and to dedicate yourself to your relationship as you would your hobbies, your professional pursuits or raising your children.

The teachings of the Kama Sutra have transcended throughout time yet what tends to peak our curiosity when we hear its name today is what Westerners know and associate with it - a guide to sexual fantasy

and satisfaction with exotic sexual positions and beautifully drawn painted pictures. In fact the true intention of Vatsyana's work is to blend the physical, emotional and spiritual aspects of love to strengthen, expand and spice up one's relationship and to create a powerful and lasting union.

In contemporary society we tend to live within a climate that more often than not, separates learning about sex and love. This presents a limiting view and mixed messages on coupling. The very concept of being intimate with someone we love is often contradicted and given passing attention. What the Kama Sutra maintains is there is an art in courting, wooing, communicating and respecting. Experiencing this kind of pleasure is inherent to us but can easily be sidestepped and dismissed. According to this classical text man had three main goals in life - *Dharma* (duty and responsibility), *Arta* (obtaining power through wealth and politics) and *Kama* (pleasure). As Deepak Chopra states in his interpretation of the Kama Sutra, "Most books on the Kama Sutra are very good, but most of them are about sexual positions.

The Kama Sutra is much more than that. It's a political commentary, social interactions. More than eroticism. It's about the spiritual component of human relations" and in the context of his own work, it's about "exploring consciousness." The advice he would give to fellow Indians is this "Take it easy. Don't be self-conscious. Be natural, without any guilt or repression or moral compunctions. It is difficult to influence people who are indoctrinated by religion, parents etc. " He goes on to say that "Sexuality represents our total value system. That is what the ancient texts meant." It is this insight into human relationships that have made it such an important

part of our culture.

If we took cues from the Kama Sutra's teachings and devoted more time on getting back to ourselves and focusing on one another, we would undoubtedly experience more fulfilling and more satisfying relationships. Sustaining a healthy, loving and passionate relationship is about striking a balance – finding a common ground between your needs and the needs of your partner. In fact one could even say the Kama Sutra is about the art of living.

Kama Sutra Tidbits and Facts:

During the time he wrote the Kama Sutra Vatsyayana lived in the North Indian city of Benares, now called Varanasi, in Uttar Pradesh.

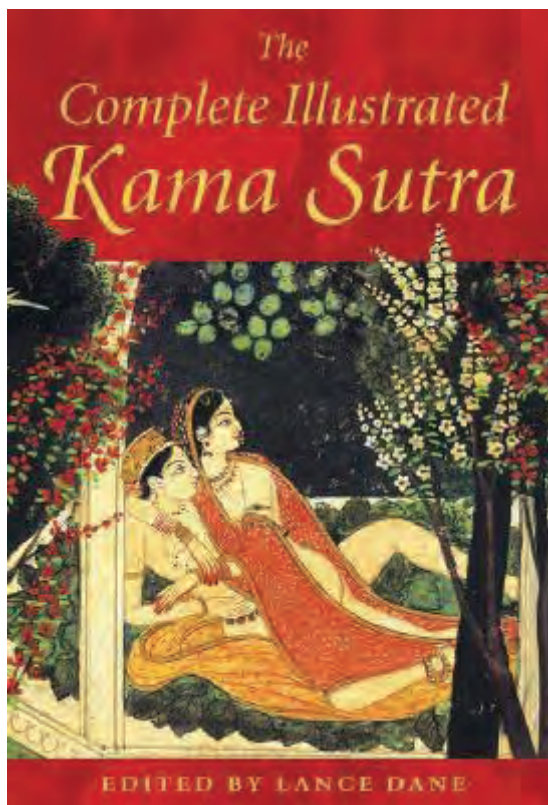
It was first translated into English by the 19th Century British explorer Sir Richard F. Burton in 1876. Born in 1821 the adventurer, who spoke 25 languages, came across the Kama Sutra in Bombay in 1842 and became fascinated with Indian erotica

In 1883 Burton risked prosecution and imprisonment under the Obscene Publications Act after publishing 250 copies of the Kama Sutra privately in Britain. The book did not become legal in Britain until 1963.

The Kama Sutra contains a total of 64 sexual positions. Vatsyayana believed there were eight ways of making love, multiplied by eight positions within each of these. In the book, they are known as the 64 Arts.

Only about 20 per cent of the book is devoted to sexual positions. The remainder gives guidance on how to be a good citizen and insights into men and women in relationships, a bit like Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus.

The Kama Sutra describes making love as "divine union". Vatsyayana believed that sex itself was not



wrong, but doing it badly was sinful.

After Burton published the Kama Sutra the prudish British Raj banned the book in India.

According to the book a man becomes irresistible to women if he ties the bone of a peacock or hyena that has been covered in gold to his right hand.

The Kama Sutra also gives tips on the best ways to arrange a house. It suggests that people will be happiest if they have a pot for spitting in, a lute hanging from an elephant's tooth, a soft bed and pots of flowers

The book contains an early recipe for Viagra. It suggests that sparrows' eggs boiled in milk

and then mixed with clarified butter and honey will do wonders for a man's love life

There are 10 methods of kissing in the Kama Sutra (including) - the nominal kiss, the probing kiss, the touching kiss, the straight kiss, the bent kiss, the turned kiss, the pressed kiss and the greatly pressed kiss - and four ways to administer the kiss. That gives a total of 40 different ways to kiss a lover.

In April 1998 former president Bill Clinton was handed a copy of the Kama Sutra as he did a walk-about with Canadian Prime Minister Jean Chretien after the Summit of the Americas in Santiago, Chile.