

need to know?

Kama Sutra

**All the ideas and techniques you need to
enjoy a fantastic sex life**



Collins Need to Know?

Kama Sutra



Dr J Rogiere



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Kama Sutra

‘If all science is founded more or less on a stratus of facts there can be no harm in making known to mankind generally certain matters intimately connected with their private, domestic and social life. Alas! complete ignorance of them has unfortunately wrecked many a man and many woman...’

Preface to the original Burton translation of the Kama Sutra, 18

► Why learn about the *Kama Sutra*?

‘... while a little knowledge of a subject generally ignored by the masses would have enabled numbers of people to have understood many things which they believed to be quite incomprehensible, or which were not thought worthy of their consideration.’

Preface to the original Burton translation of the *Kama Sutra*, 18

Recently there’s been an upsurge of interest in books, videos and courses describing the *Kama Sutra* and also tantric sex practices. So, what is it that these very ancient ideas have to offer us in the 21st century?

One answer may be that while our Western society inherited religious traditions in which the body and even sensuality were as seen as potentially shameful, the East celebrated these things. The good news for people wanting to see their sexual lives in a new way is that, through the Eastern traditions of tantra and the *Kama Sutra*, for the first time in a few millennia, sexuality is being seen in a positive, even spiritual, way. Sex is really coming out of the ‘naughty’ closet.

Most of us would like to have an interesting and emotionally satisfying sex life. The fact is a lot of us don’t. Surrounded by images of sex and sexuality in advertising, on TV and in film, many people find that sex is not the wonderful, exciting part of life that magazines, novels and the media suggest it ought to be. We may wonder why this is, or maybe we just put it to the back of our minds and get on with our day-to-day lives. However, if the sales of guides and handbooks to sex and sexual pleasure are anything to judge by, today’s men and women want to change things for the better and this book will give you a great place to start.



▶ The origin of the *Kama Sutra*

The Kama Sutra reached the West through the work of 19th century British explorer and diplomat, Sir Richard Burton.

He had spent many years in India where he was shown ancient Indian erotic texts. He subsequently had these texts translated from the Sanskrit in which they were written and distributed them privately through the London Anthropological Society. Today, thanks to Sir Richard Burton and adventurers like him, anyone can access and enjoy texts like the *Kama Sutra* and benefit from the experience and wisdom of the East.

► Is it really a sex guide?

So what is the *Kama Sutra*? *Kama Sutra* translates as ‘rules of pleasure’ and it’s one of the earliest surviving examples of a lifestyle manual and sex guide. It is thought to have been written between the second and fourth centuries AD by the Hindu sage, Mallanaga Vatsyayana who drew on much earlier *Kama Shastras* or ‘Rules of Love’, some of them almost a thousand years old in his own time.

The book was intended as much more than just a sex guide as we understand it today – it was a guide to a whole way of life. Contrary to what most people imagine, the *Kama Sutra* is not simply about exotic sexual positions but gives guidance on how a wealthy, middle-class man should live his life in the most general sense.



‘Man ... should practise Dharma, Artha and Kama at different times and in such a manner that they may harmonise together and not clash in any way. ... Dharma is obedience to the commands of the Shastras or Holy Writ of the Hindus ... Artha is the acquisition of arts, land, gold, cattle,

wealth, equipages and friends ... Kama is the enjoyment of appropriate objects by the five senses of hearing feeling, seeing, tasting and smelling, assisted by the mind together with the soul.'

The text has seven parts: general observations, how to make amorous advances, finding a wife, the duties and privileges of a wife, how to behave with other men's wives, information on consorting with courtesans and eunuchs, occult spells and rituals and a section on herbs and potions to promote libido and virility. The book covers everything the wealthy Hindu man might have needed to know about conducting his personal relationships nearly two millennia ago, but Vatsyayana makes it plain that Kama – the pursuit of sensual pleasure – comes after Artha and Dharma and that it is the harmonious balance of these three that results in a 'good life'.

There are two main differences between the original *Kama Sutra* and modern texts. First, Vatsyayana's book was never meant as a manual for everyone; his readers were wealthy, urban men to whom he offered guidance on the social norms and sexual customs of the patriarchal North Indian society in which they lived. Secondly, as with the much later love and sex manuals the *Ananga Ranga* and the *Perfumed Garden*, the *Kama Sutra* described women and men as unequal partners socially and therefore sexually, something no modern writer of sex books could possibly do. But what Vatsyayana does do, which in western terms puts him nearly two millennia ahead of his time, is to place great emphasis on the equality of sexual pleasure between men and women, and the man's responsibility and duty to ensure that the woman's pleasure is as great as his own. Vatsyayana also advises women to study the *Kama Sutra*, albeit privately, in order to learn how to present themselves, how to please their partner and even how to subject a man to their will. He clearly had a great respect and affection for high-class courtesans –

'... a Ganika ... (is) always respected by the king and praised by learned men and her favour being sought for by all, she becomes an object of universal regard.'

► The *Kama Sutra* and spirituality

The *Kama Sutra* doesn't really address the spiritual aspects of sex between men and women – in fact it might be more accurate to describe the *Kama Sutra* as the 'game of love', rather than the 'rules', as much of the advice given by Vatsyayana is about turning sexual relations into an elaborate social artifice in which wealth and security are significant factors – not so different from today!

Many modern readers would consider much of the original text boring or even incomprehensible; so why is it still so popular? The reason, quite simply, is the number and variety of sexual positions that Vatsyayana describes so eloquently for his readers.

So, we've found the social and erotic aspects of the ancient Hindu tradition, where do we look for the spiritual aspects of sexuality?

Tantra and sacred sexuality

When he wrote the *Kama Sutra*, Vatsyayana was aware of much older Sanskrit writings that dealt with the same subjects. Unlike his book, which focused on the social and interpersonal aspects of love and sex, Sanskrit tantric texts examined the spiritual nature of sex. Tantra offered practices designed to use the natural energy of the physical body to raise the kundalini (spiritual energy), allowing a deep union between sexual partners and between the individual and the 'infinite'.

In the West, the body and spirit have been seen as separate and even contradictory for at least 150 years. Hinduism, on the other hand, historically saw body and spirit as inseparable, which made sex an important part of spiritual life, a means of expressing our God-nature. Tantra particularly offers a way of satisfying both our desire for an ecstatic, long-lasting and joyful sex life and our spiritual side. In an increasingly sophisticated and technology-driven world, sex remains one of the few free, natural pleasures left us. More than that, sex is just about the only way in which we can express every single aspect of our human nature: animal, emotional and spiritual. Tantra offers a key to opening these possibilities.

One simple way of describing tantric sex is that it's the absolute opposite of a quick fix. With practice, tantra can help you to turn orgasm into a whole body experience, creating a holistic union of mind, body and spirit through a combination of breathing techniques, simple meditations and delayed orgasm.

▶ *Aims of Need to Know Kama Sutra*

What this book aims to do is bring together the sophisticated sensuality of the *Kama Sutra* with some of the profound, spiritual practices of tantra, to offer a new way of looking at sex and love at your partner or partners and ultimately, at yourself. Despite occasionally strange and exotic suggestions, what you will find in this book is actually something universal, something common to every one of us, a birthright of physical and spiritual power, which we each have within us and which, with practice, we can rediscover.

I hope that you will find something personally useful in this book, whether that's fun and exotic new positions from the *Kama Sutra*, or the more profound lessons of Tantra. Whatever you search for, may all your efforts bring pleasure!

Dr Jean Rogiere

WATCH OUT

Starting Out

If you're in a relationship and become interested in the *Kama Sutra* or in tantra, mention the subject to your partner gently. Be aware that what you find an exciting or novel prospect could seem threatening or weird to someone else. He or she may take your new interest as evidence that you aren't into 'normal' sex, or maybe are bored with them, or even that they aren't good enough in bed. Your partner may think it's bizarre or a turn-off to discuss sex-based spirituality, or imagine that sex that requires effort or practice is less natural or spontaneous than your usual lovemaking. If these things do happen, listen to your partner's concerns, perhaps show her or him this book or some of the [suggested books](#) and let them see what it is you found so interesting and exciting so they can perhaps share that feeling with you.



Getting in the Mood

Contrary to what popular mythology would have us believe, we are not born great lovers. We all learn lots of different things at school or college, but nothing we discover there teaches us about how to behave in a loving relationship and there is definitely nothing on the school curriculum about the art of sensual loving!



▶ Getting in the mood

Many of us grow up feeling confused or ignorant about how to really please a partner and, more importantly, how we ourselves would like to experience pleasure.

Most people over 50 lived through the sexual revolution of the 1960s, which radically changed the way sex was seen in our society. But the feelings of guilt, shame and insecurity, which many people still feel today as a result of their beliefs or upbringing, did not disappear. Vatsyayana's readers were not restricted by an unhappy and contradictory relation between body and soul; properly conducted sexual relations with appropriate partners were actually seen as spiritually elevating, a way of balancing Artha and Dharma, while promoting social harmony.

In Vatsyayana's time a person's choice of partner, even a non-marriage partner, would have been socially engineered. Today most of us choose our own partners and this means that getting to know someone and feeling comfortable with them is particularly important if we are looking for a happy and relaxed emotional and physical relationship. So, whether you have just met a new person and want to impress, or you want to entertain your husband, wife or long-time lover, getting into the right mood is a key part of lovemaking, for everyone.

Sex on the brain

Many of us spend quite a lot of time thinking idly about sex, fantasizing about real or imagined experiences, remembering past encounters. One of the things this book will ask you to do, if you want to change your sex life from mundane or even quite good, to something ecstatic and life enhancing, is to start thinking about sex in a completely different way.

One of the many things the *Kama Sutra* and tantric practice focus on is the ritual nature of lovemaking. But what does ritual mean? Simply put, it means thinking about sex as a 'ceremony', a ceremony that is conducted with the intention of pleasuring and honouring your partner and yourself. Ritual can lead you away from a simple physical act and take what you do together into the realm of the divine. If this sounds bizarre or unlikely, remember that the tantric practices described later in the book have been studied throughout the Hindu world for millennia but have only been available here in the West for a relatively short time; hardly surprising then if we feel a bit dubious of such extravagant claims.



Dramatically improving your experience of sex and love starts by learning to think about lovemaking in terms of ‘ritual’ or ‘ceremony’, rather than as a ‘quickie’, or even something just done purely for physical pleasure. As you become more comfortable with the idea of ceremony, you will begin to experience the unique ‘specialness’ of your partner and yourself. This in turn can bring you closer to your partner in all aspects of your life, not just in the bedroom.

MUST KNOW

Something most people know, but few of us really pay attention to, is that the biggest and most important sex organ is the brain. Pleasure begins and ends in the head.

MUST KNOW

Having a good sexual relationship is about much, much more than what you do with your body, it's a whole attitude of mind, a new way of looking at your partner, yourself and the world around you. It's this attitude which can keep partners deeply in love and sexually attracted to each other throughout their lives.

▶ Making time

‘Going to Gardens or Picnics: In the forenoon, men, having dressed themselves, should to gardens on horseback, accompanied by public women and followed by servants. And having done there all the duties of the day, and passed the time in various agreeable diversions ... they should return home in the afternoon in the same manner bringing with them bunches of flowers etc.’

MUST KNOW

Relaxation is key to truly satisfying sex and it's no good worrying about who's going to be walking in on you, or being in a sumptuous location and thinking about what's happening at home.

The society described in the *Kama Sutra* is one of high culture in which pleasure, relaxation and the pursuit of sensuality were considered acceptable and worthy. Today we live in a world full of stress and pressures that would have been completely alien to readers of the original *Kama Sutra*. Finding the time to relax and try anything new seems to get more difficult as our lives get busier, and, for many people, making the time and space to really enjoy lovemaking is no easy thing. Part of ritual is setting aside time for what you want to do – the opposite of snatching a few minutes between TV and sleep.

Location, location

So, you're planning a spectacular sex ceremony – an hour, a night, a long weekend. Where will it be? Some people feel more relaxed in their own homes; others find the unknown space of a hotel or rented apartment, where friends and family won't phone or drop in, more conducive to relaxation. Perhaps it needs some serious planning if you have children or other responsibilities. Whatever you do, make sure this is what both of you want and feel good about.



► Food and drink

‘When the girl accepts the embrace, the man should put a tambula or screw of betel nut and betel leaves in her mouth... At the time of giving this tambula he should kiss her mouth softly and gracefully without making any sound.’

One of the many social etiquettes mentioned in the *Kama Sutra* is the role of food and drink in sensual enjoyment. Today, too, we often prepare for lovemaking by eating and drinking. How many of us have met a partner in a restaurant or a bar and eaten a three course meal complete with large quantities of alcohol before going home and falling into bed bloated and tired? A full stomach is not conducive to sexual pleasure and we all know the old adage about alcohol increasing the desire and reducing the ability. Our bodies respond best when they don't have to multi-task. Digesting a heavy meal takes a great deal of energy, energy that might be better spent giving and experiencing pleasure. The *Kama Sutra* and tantric texts advise that eating and drinking – like sex itself – should bring a sense of satisfaction without excess. (Moderation was clearly considered a virtue in ancient India!)

With this advice in mind, consider incorporating food and drink into setting the mood for lovemaking. In some exclusive Japanese restaurants it's possible to eat sushi (raw fish and rice) that has been carefully positioned on the body of a naked woman. While this may not be at all your thing, it does hint at the possibilities of combining the human body with food. Do you know what your partner's favourite foods are? Perhaps it's chocolate, or strawberries, toffee or peaches, Parma ham or oysters. Many foods are considered to be 'aphrodisiacs', passion stimulators, and sharing any food while naked can be very stimulating. Try feeding each other delicious tidbits – run juicy strawberries over each other's skin; pass small pieces of dark, dark chocolate with your lips. Having these things to hand requires a little planning, so try making it all part of preparing the ritual.



▶ Setting the scene

‘... balmy with rich perfumes, [the room] should contain a bed, soft, agreeable to the sight, covered with a clean white cloth, low in the middle part, having garlands and bunches of flowers upon it ... and two pillows, one at the top and another at the bottom. [A stool] on which should be placed the fragrant ointments for the night, pots containing collyrium and other fragrant substances, things used to perfume the mouth, and the bark of the common citron tree.’

MUST KNOW

Fragrance is a very important part of sensuality, and while we know that we should smell good, it's easy to forget our surroundings.

The space in which you make love with your partner is extremely important. The rumpled bed covered with last week's linen or with dirty laundry strewn around the room is not the best way to create a sensual and seductive atmosphere. One of the simplest ways to enhance the celebration of your sexuality is to create a special area in which it can be expressed. Try making the space in which you make love a beautiful place. The *Kama Sutra* advises decorating the room with many flowers and surrounding the bed with fragrant substances, which could be a bunch of lilies, simple sticks of incense or pure essential oils warmed in a burner.

Whether you are making love in the bedroom, in front of an open fire, or in your garden, make the space a special one in ways that suit you and your partner. The *Kama Sutra* suggests that the bed should be covered with a clean, white cloth and strewn with petals and flowers. Such simple but effective things immediately change the nature of your lovemaking from the mundane into something special.

Lighting is also very important for mood and candles are a perennial favourite, casting a soft, romantic glow that can make every man and woman feel attractive. These days it's easily possible to combine fragrance with subtle lighting in a scented candle. You and your partner can decide in advance what kind of lighting you would like in your special place. Some people feel more comfortable making love in darkness, which can greatly enhance tactile experience – though the visual side of things will be missing. Try experimenting with very, very low light, gradually increasing it so that a single candle lights the room. If you can only relax in total blackness, give some thought to why this is: how you feel about being looked at, or looking at your partner. Much of the information and advice offered by tantric texts and the *Kama Sutra* focus on honouring each partner's individuality and totality – not an easy thing to do in the dark.

One advantage that we have over Hindu ancients is the ready availability of pleasing music. Sound is very important for relaxation and relief of stress and can greatly enhance any lovemaking experience. Bearing in mind that you are creating what is in effect a sacred space for you and your lover, choose your music with care. A thumping rock beat may be fun at times, but on this occasion you are trying to create a mood of mellow, seductive relaxation. Find something unusual, something you wouldn't usually listen to, which has no history or meaning for either of you. Whether it's classical, jazz or chill-out music, remember its purpose is to enhance the celebration of your physical union, not to get your feet tapping!



► Preparing the body

‘Men should bathe daily, anointing the body with oil every other day, apply a lathering substance to the body every three days, get the head and face shaved every four days, and the other parts of the body every five to ten days. All these things should be done without fail, and the sweat of the armpit should also be removed.’

Cleanliness was clearly an extremely important part, not only of lovemaking, but also of everyday life in ancient India, very much as it is today. The idea of washing every day and frequently removing all body hair is something many modern people would find extreme. Just like their Roman contemporaries, the lovers of Vatsyayana’s time realised that hygiene is extremely important in sexual intimacy.

Preparing your body for lovemaking is something that you can do alone or with your partner. The advantage of sharing bathing and grooming is that it can enhance closeness and helps to build a sense of anticipation and excitement as you touch each other’s bodies intimately, but not sexually. The *Kama Sutra*’s readers would have visited professional barbers for a massage and shave, but shaving your man’s face, or washing your woman’s hair are things easily done at home. Shaving doesn’t only have to be for men of course, many women shave their legs and underarms and you can offer to do that for them. Some men and women also shave or wax their genital area, and this can be a particularly sensual experience to share.

Carry the sense of ceremony into the bathroom by placing scented candles around the room, make sure the room is clean and fresh and, if you have the space, put in fresh cut flowers to enhance the specialness of the moment.



▶ Little ritual for washing your lover's feet

Foot washing can have a particular significance as it introduces a sense of tenderness and service. You can make a ritual out of washing feet, simply by preparing a bowl of warm, scented water, with flower petals floating in it.

- Massage each toe gently as you wash, moving up the foot to the ankles.
- When the washing is finished, gently towel dry each foot, then hold a foot in each of your own hands and kiss them saying aloud: **'These feet embrace the earth. These feet carry you through the world. These feet are beautiful. I honour them'**.



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