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The Complete Kama Sutra: The First Unabridged Modern Translation of the Classic Indian Text

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The world's oldest and most widely read guide to the pleasures and techniques of sex, the *Kama Sutra* was compiled in the fourth century A.D. by a Brahmin and religious scholar name Vatsyayana, who worked from texts dating back to the fourth century B.C. Until the present, the only English translation of his Hindu love classic was that of the famous English explorer Sir Richard Burton, published in 1883.

Unlike Burton's version, Alain Daniélou's new translation preserves the numbered verse divisions of the original and includes two essential commentaries: the *Fayamangala* commentary, written in Sanskrit by Yashodhara during the Middle Ages, and a modern Hindi commentary by Devadatta Shastri. Whereas Burton's Victorian reluctance to translate certain terms obscured our understanding of the philosophy and techniques of the *Kama Sutra*, Daniélou has preserved the full explicitness of the original, dealing with everything from the art of scratching to relations with the wives of others.

Realistic and pragmatic in its approach, the *Kama Sutra* deals without ambiguity or hypocrisy with all aspects of sexual life--including marriage, adultery, prostitution, group sex, sadomasochism, male and female homosexuality, and transvestism. The text paints a fascinating portrait of an India whose openness to sexuality gave rise to a highly developed expression of the erotic.



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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

The galaxy of pleasures in Alain Daniélou's translation of the *Kama Sutra* takes you back to an India where sexuality was an integral part of life and an avenue to spiritual bliss. As Devadatta Shastri says in his commentary: "At the moment when the peak of bliss is attained, the internal and external world vanish. The man and woman cease to be separate entities and lose themselves in the beatitudes of being." Daniélou's elegant rendering includes not only the entire sutra, much of which is excluded in other versions, but two essential commentaries as well. More than just a pillow book, the *Kama Sutra* is a guide to the labyrinth of sexual etiquette, from how to bathe before meeting a lover to how lovers should entertain each other after making love. Admittedly, the text is dated and culture bound in places; it can be chauvinistic, bizarre, and even violent. The commentators are careful to point out, however, that the work is an overview of all sexual practices, some of which are not recommended. Take from this encyclopedia of amour what you will and let it keep you moving down the path of spiritual practice. --*Brian Bruya*

From Library Journal

Long dismissed as a sort of Sanskrit Joy of Sex, the *Kama Sutra*, composed by Vatsyayana in the fourth century B.C., explores sexuality as an integral part of human existence. Arguing that happiness and moral duty (dharma) depend on elaborate social ritual to satisfy the essential needs of life, the *Kama Sutra* describes the practices, rituals, and lore of the erotic (kama) in human relations, both heterosexual and homosexual. Noted Indologist Danielou provides a fluent and literal translation of the entire Sanskrit original with interpolated extracts from the 12th-century commentary by Yashodara and the modern Hindi commentary by Devadatta Shastri. This is an important advance over Burton's Victorian abridgment. - *T.L. Cooksey, Armstrong State Coll., Savannah, Ga.*

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From [The New Yorker](#)

Dildo was translated as 'medicine.' Lesbian was just 'corrupt woman.' No wonder we couldn't follow any of the instructions in the **Kama Sutra**. But now, there's a new translation of the oldest sex manual, the first since the Victorians brought it home and hid it under the mattress.

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