



The Kama Sutra of Vatsyayana

Vatsyayana (2nd century AD) Translated by Richard Francis Burton, Bhagavanlal Indrajit and Shivaram Parashuram Bhide

Read by:	Mark F. Smith	Format:	MP3 CD in DVD case
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The Kama Sutra is an ancient Hindu text considered by many as the first and perhaps still the best work on human sexual behavior. Often mistakenly thought to be a guide to tantric sex, the *Kama Sutra* is not exclusively a sex manual, but rather a guide to living a virtuous and fulfilling life that treats matters of love, family, pleasure and passion in both a frank and insightful manner. The term “kama” means “desire”, and is one of the four goals of life within the purusharthas, the others being Dharma (virtuous living), Artha (material prosperity), and Moksha (liberation). A “sutra” means a line or thread that connects things, and often refers to a collection of rules, formulas, or aphorisms that serve as a guide or manual. The *Kama Sutra* was written in Sanskrit by Vātsyāyana in the Second Century AD, and represents an abridged assemblage of longer works composed by seven predecessors between 400 BC and 200 AD. The book

is written in prose with generous sprinklings of verse, and is structured in seven parts, 36 chapters and 1,250 verses.

The best known English translation first appeared in 1883 and is usually attributed to Sir Richard Francis Burton, although the work was done by an Indian Civil Servant and a student assistant. Burton learned of its existence through repeated references to Vatsyayana while at work on another translation. He learned that it was considered a definitive work and that it was impossible to find a complete version. Pundits obtained versions from libraries in Calcutta, Benares, Bombay, and Jaipur, and assembled a copy of the entire manuscript along with a commentary which Burton published privately.

Vātsyāyana was a Hindu philosopher believed to have lived in the Second Century AD in India and who is the author of the *Kama Sutra*. He describes himself at the end of the *Kama Sutra* as follows:

“After reading and considering the works of Babhravya and other ancient authors, and thinking over the meaning of the rules given by them, this treatise was composed, according to the precepts of the Holy Writ, for the benefit of the world, by Vatsyayana, while leading the life of a religious student at Benares, and wholly engaged in the contemplation of the Deity. This work is not to be used merely as an instrument for satisfying our desires. A person acquainted with the true principles of this science, who preserves his Dharma (virtue or religious merit), his Artha (worldly wealth) and his Kama (pleasure or sensual gratification), and who has regard to the customs of the people, is sure to obtain the mastery over his senses. In short, an intelligent and knowing person attending to Dharma and Artha and also to Kama, without becoming the slave of his passions, will obtain success in everything that he may do.”

Captain Sir Richard Francis Burton KCMG FRGS (19 March 1821 – 20 October 1890) was a British geographer, explorer, translator, writer, soldier, orientalist, cartographer, ethnologist, spy, linguist, poet, fencer and diplomat.