



The Book of Love: The Story of the Kamasutra

James McConnachie

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An engaging, enlightening “biography” of the ancient Hindu manuscript that became the world’s most famous sex manual

The *Kamasutra* is one of the world’s best-known yet least-understood texts, its title instantly familiar but its actual contents widely misconstrued. In the popular imagination, it is a work of practical pornography, a how-to guide of absurdly acrobatic sexual techniques. Yet the book began its long life in third-century India as something quite different: a seven-volume vision of an ideal life of urbane sophistication, offering advice on matters from friendship to household decoration. Over the ensuing centuries, the *Kamasutra* was first celebrated, then neglected, and very nearly lost—until an outrageous adventurer introduced it to the West and earned literary immortality.

In lively and lucid prose, James McConnachie provides a rare, intimate look at the exquisite civilization that produced this cultural cornerstone. He details the quest of famed explorer Richard F. Burton, who—along with his clandestine coterie of libertines and iconoclasts—unleashed the *Kamasutra* on English society as a deliberate slap at Victorian prudishness and paternalism. And he describes how the *Kamasutra* was driven underground into the hands of pirate pornographers, until the end of the *Lady Chatterley* obscenity ban thrust it once more into contentious daylight.

The first work to tell the full story of the *Kamasutra*, *The Book of Love* explores how a remarkable way of looking at the world came to be cradled between book covers—and survived.

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Nancy Lundy:

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