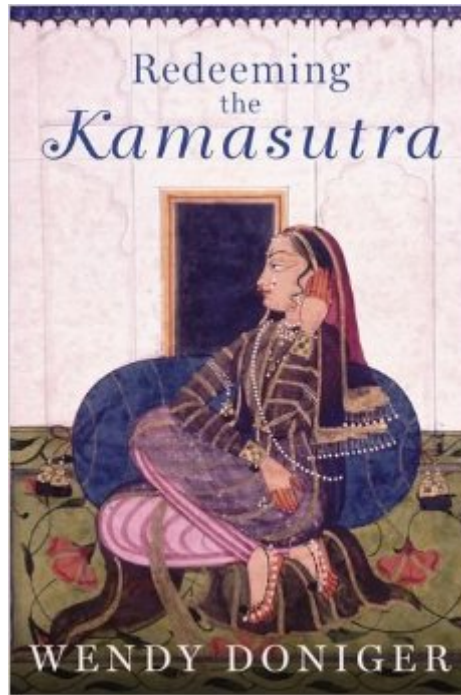


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Redeeming The Kamasutra



Synopsis

The Kamasutra, composed in the third century CE, is the world's most famous textbook of erotic love. There is nothing remotely like it even today, and for its time it was astonishingly sophisticated. Yet it is all but ignored as a serious work in its country of origin-sometimes taken as a matter of national shame rather than pride - and in the rest of the world it is a source of amused amazement and inspires magazine articles that offer "mattress-quaking sex styles" such as "the backstairs boogie" and "the spider web". In this scholarly and superbly readable book, one of the world's foremost authorities on ancient Indian texts seeks to restore the Kamasutra to its proper place in the Sanskrit canon, as a landmark of India's secular literature. She reveals fascinating aspects of the Kamasutra as a guide to the art of living for the cosmopolitan beau monde of ancient India: its emphasis on grooming and etiquette (including post-coital conversation), the study and practice of the arts (ranging from cooking and composing poetry to coloring one's teeth and mixing perfumes), and discretion and patience in conducting affairs (especially adulterous affairs). In its encyclopedic social and psychological narratives, it also displays surprisingly modern ideas about gender and role-playing, female sexuality, and homosexual desire. Even as she draws our attention to the many ways in which the Kamasutra challenges the conventions of its time (and often ours) - in dismissing procreation as the aim of sex, for instance - Doniger also shows us how it perpetuates attitudes that have continued to darken human sexuality: passages that twin passion with violence, for example, and those that explain away women's protests and exclamations of pain as ploys to excite their male partners. In these attitudes, as in its more enlightened observations on sexual love, we see the nearly two- thousand-year-old Kamasutra mirror twenty-first-century realities. In investigating and helping us understand a much celebrated but under-appreciated text, Wendy Doniger has produced a rich and compelling text of her own that will interest, delight, and surprise scholars and lay readers alike.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Wendy Doniger has provided a clear and concise overview of the Kamasutra's structure, themes, and historical background. She navigates the ambiguity of the text with skill, showing how on one hand, the Kamasutra was highly progressive for its time (allowing for extramarital affairs from women as well as men, not condemning homosexual relations, and even subtly acknowledging the presence of bisexuality, etc.), and on the other hand perpetuating a rape mentality (for example, taking a woman's protests and screams as an attempt at arousing her partner, rather than something genuine). She illustrates how the Kamasutra draws on older works such as the Arthashastra and the works attributed to the mythological Manu) and plays on their themes. She also looks a bit further in history, bringing the tale to the period of British imperial rule and modern day instances of puritanism and censorship. She makes a strong case for the ascetic and anti-erotic traditions having always been a part of India's history and culture, rather than as being the sole product of Muslim and British occupations; it is only in the aftermath of the latter occupation that (primarily upper class) India has privileged the ascetic and anti-erotic and sought to revise history, trying to make the erotic streams of culture and spirituality appear as aberrations (most recently caused by the West). If you're interested in seeing a tiny piece of India's erotic history, then you could do worse than Redeeming the Kamasutra. Hopefully, Doniger's work will take things at least one step further against the tides of censorship and puritanism. On the downside, do not go into this book expecting a conventionally "entertaining" book, like many popular histories. Doniger remains a scholar and despite her humor, the book remains in that mode. The text is lively, undoubtedly, but still formal to a degree. It is a short and quick read, however, so this may balance out for some readers. As a final note, you will see with many of the other reviews for this book, and others by Wendy Doniger, examples of puritanical anger in response to her illustrations of narratives alternative to the standard one preached by the upper classes of India and the Indian diaspora. The Indian culture was not always one of sanitized, ascetic spirituality - there was, and still is, flesh on the bones and a healthy appreciation of kama, or desire.

American politicians make stupid comments all the time. But Doniger only cherry-picks stupid

comments made by Indian politicians. Her whole career is based on cherry-picking and outright fabrications. At the very minimum, criticize Pakistan's role in global Sunni terrorism.

Very complicated and wordy writing- not easy to read.

ĀçĀ Āœlts (GanesaĀçĀ Ā™s) trunk is the displaced phallus, a caricature of ShivaĀçĀ Ā™s linga. It poses no threat because it is too large, flaccid, and in the wrong place to be useful for sexual purposes.ĀçĀ Ā• (Page 121)ĀçĀ ĀœHe [Ganesa] remains celibate so as not to compete erotically with his father, an otiose womanizer, either incestuously for his mother or for any other woman for that matter.ĀçĀ Ā• (Page 110)ĀçĀ ĀœSo Ganesa takes on the attributes of his father but in an inverted form, with an exaggerated limp phallus-ascetic and benign- whereas Shiva is a ĀçĀ ĀœhardĀçĀ Ā• (ur-dhva linga), erotic and destructive.ĀçĀ Ā• (Page 121)ĀçĀ ĀœBoth in his behavior and iconographic form Ganesa resembles in some aspects, the figure of the eunuch...Ganesha is like eunuch guarding the women of the harem.ĀçĀ Ā• (Page 111)ĀçĀ ĀœAlthough there seems to be no myths or folktales in which Ganesa explicitly performs oral sex; his insatiable appetite for sweets may be interpreted as an effort to satisfy a hunger that seems inappropriate in an otherwise ascetic disposition, a hunger having clear erotic overtones.ĀçĀ Ā• (Page 111)ĀçĀ ĀœGanesaĀçĀ Ā™s broken tusk, his guardianĀçĀ Ā™s staff, and displaced head can be interpreted as symbols of castration.ĀçĀ Ā• (page 111)ĀçĀ ĀœFeeding Ganesa copious quantities of modakas, satisfying his oral/erotic desires, also keeps him from becoming genitally erotic like his father.ĀçĀ Ā• (Page 113)ĀçĀ ĀœThe perpetual son desiring to remain close to his mother and having an insatiable appetite for sweets evokes associations of oral eroticism. Denied the possibility of reaching the stage of full genital masculine power by the omnipotent force of the father, the son seeks gratification in some acceptable way.ĀçĀ Ā• (Page 113)After Shiva has insulted Parvati by calling her Blackie [Kali], she vows to leave him and return to her fatherĀçĀ Ā™s home and then she stations her other son, VirakaĀçĀ Ā™the one Shiva had madeĀçĀ Ā™at the door way to spy on her husbandĀçĀ Ā™s extramarital amorous exploits.ĀçĀ Ā• (Page 105-106).The Bhagavad Gita is not as nice a book as some Americans think.ĀçĀ Ā•[Throughout the Mahabharata.. Krishna goads human beings into all sorts of murderous and self-destructive behaviors such as warĀçĀ Ā•]. The Gita is a dishonest book.ĀçĀ Ā• Wendy Doniger Philadelphia Inquirer, 19 November, 2000.Lord Shiva is a serial adulterer & encourages adultery. His penis is worshipped as lingam by Hindus. ĀçĀ Ā• Wendy DonigerLord Shiva encourages ritual rape & prostitution.ĀçĀ Ā• Wendy Doniger Holi festival & wearing kumkum by

Hindu women signifies violence & a thirst for blood innate in Hindu culture. Wendy Doniger Ramakrishna Paramahansa had gay sex with Swami Vivekananda. Wendy Doniger & Paul Courtright Sri Ramakrishna placed his feet on Swami Vivekananda's penis. The Hindus mistook this for the mysticism of Ramakrishna. Wendy Doniger Sri Ramakrishna had homosexual relationships with young boys. Meaning=He had gay sex with his male disciples. Wendy Doniger Sri Ramakrishna's mystical states were generated by his pedophilia. Wendy Doniger Sri Ramakrishna's female Guru forced him to have sex with her. Wendy Doniger and Jeffery Kripal Stunned by the cocked hips of the boy, Ramakrishna fell into ecstasy. Jeffery Kripal, Wendy Doniger Goddess Kall has an insatiable lust for sex. Wendy Doniger Goddess Kall is a phallic being, a mother with a penis. Wendy Doniger, Sarah Caldwell Kall is a blooded menstruating & castrating woman. Sarah Caldwell, Wendy Doniger Bloodthirsty tongue and the self fed breast, homosexual fellatio fantasy in a South Indian ritual tradition equals Hindu Goddess. Wendy Doniger Everything valuable in Hinduism comes from the lower castes & Dalits. Every evil comes from Brahmins & Sanskrit. Wendy Doniger breastfeeding Hindu mothers don't bond with their children like their counterparts in the West do. Wendy Doniger Sage Mandavya regarded the stake (which was later cut off & shortened) he was impaled upon as his super penis. Wendy Doniger Hindus who fight to defend Hinduism suffer from psychological disorders which have roots in their penises. Wendy Doniger

Piece of junk and waste of paper. Better to feed the trees to herbivores animals than use it to print this crap. The author seems to have some sexual problems in life and they come up in the book. Can I return this s*** and get my money back?

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