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## Kamasutra by Vatsyayana: An Aesthetic Analysis in a Postmodern Perspective

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### Abstract

This paper aims to throw the light on the relevance of the study of 'Kamasutra.' It has been misinterpreted as the book of pornographic and obscene material. It has been misunderstood as the synonym of erotic desires and satisfaction. At the present, it has become only the tool of glorifying glamour and sensuality. But it is not only a part of erotic literature but a handbook to achieving some goals as love, pleasure, spirituality, and relief. In this paper, the author has tried to find the answers to some questions with the help of this book: How to gain education for a good life? What is love and how to find it? What is the key to aesthetic pleasure? Is sexual pleasure is evil? How can a man lead his life to a

satisfying climax? How 'Kamasutra' helps to achieve the 'four Purusharthas' for a better life in the postmodern era?

## **Keywords**

Kamasutra, art of love, sexual pleasure, moksha, Purusharthas the four stages of life.

## **Introduction**

Chaucer once mentioned in his poetry lines:

*“...Then you compared a woman’s love to Hell,  
To barren land where water will not dwell,  
And you compared it to a quenchless fire,  
The more it burns the more is its desire  
To burn up everything that burnt can be.  
You say that just as worms destroy a tree  
A wife destroys her husband and contrives,  
As husband know, the ruin of their lives...” (Edmonds)*

Here, the word 'woman' or 'wife' is not related to the general idea of particular female 'gender' or universal thinking of the role of a wife as Eve, the mother of evils but it is about a man and his faithful partner that lights his path to lead a happy married life. If a man lures a woman with lust or temptation as Satan did, that love led him to the hell. And the fire of 'lust' will burn him in the hell for eternity. This fire is not of a physical form but inner-side burns the soul. The 'lust' desire never be fulfilled; it grows more how much someone tries to feed it. So that if a man doesn't attach with his wife or beloved emotionally and with true feelings of love his physical

encounter can never satisfy her. She can betray him for real pleasure and he will not be able to save his life from this suffering of un-satisfaction. As Jose Bergamin has written, "Sensuality without love is a sin; love without sensuality is worse than a sin." (Deck) So, he must keep balancing his 'lust' and other desires. And must become master of himself, first. There are two phrases on this subject as follows: "Desire, which springs from nature, and which is increased by art, and from which all danger is taken away by wisdom, becomes firm and secure. A clever man, depending on his ability, and observing the ideas and thoughts of women, and removing the causes of their turning away from men, is generally successful with them." (Vatsyayana) There are also some arguments related to the role of a woman as the love partner: A girl should marry a man that she loves and likes. Because that man will be obedient and honest to her and capable of giving her pleasure. But when a girl is married by her parents in the greed of wealth a social status of a rich man without taking into consideration the character or looks of the bridegroom that marriage cannot be successful. She never becomes attached to the man even though he contains good qualities, obedient, active, strong, and healthy, and ready to please her in every way. On the other hand, a man husband who is master of himself though he is poor and lack of beauty is better than one who is common to many women even though he is handsome and attractive. That's why wives of rich men generally do not attach to their husbands and do not faithful to them even though they possess all the external enjoyments of life. A man possessing a low mind, broken reputation and social position, having many wives and

children, devoted to sports and gambling, love for travel, and who come to close to his wife when only he wants to closure does not deserve to be married. Because he cannot be, 'The husband of love.' I was not disappointed to know that the idea of self-satisfaction by the soul is not limited to Chaucer's poetry but the universal.

### **Why Pornography?**

Pornography is as old as humankind. It has appeared in all cultures and civilizations over centuries. The name was given to a situation where non-relational sex takes action without any requirements for relational intimacy. The excess practice of pornography is associated with psychiatric comorbidities such as anxiety and depression and even sexual dysfunction. Its expression of fantasies and is said to have the potential to rewire pleasure centres of the brain and alter structures and function. It brings about significant changes in the brain similar to what can be seen in drug addictions. Turning to pornography could cause one partner to withdraw from the relationship between the two because of the immediate moment gratification receives from it. It will decrease sexual satisfaction between both partners. And guilt and loss of trust will tear a wedding apart.

### **How to Avoid Pornography?**

In the present time, people are running after money and luxury for a better life. But in this daily life hustle and bustle, they find himself alone and isolated. They have no strong family relations, obedient children, and loving life partner. The anxiety of loneliness forces them towards digital

entertainment where they try to find a place of solace and peace. But this digital commercialisation of entertainment gives them only false satisfaction, a kind of pleasure that does not reach to their body or soul, only create an illusion of satisfaction. The Postmodern man eats street-food to satisfy his tongue, use mobile for entertainment, and breathe in polluted air. The most pathetic condition is man's love need. At this time the postmodern man is lonely and suffering the dilemma of the digital crowd. It is the most interesting subject of the world and the commercialization age has made it a tool to gain money and materialize it. That increased lust, human trafficking, body commercialization, etc. And the disaster thing is the porn material easily available on the internet that claims the source of sharing real sex experience to the audience. But everything is false and illusion. All these are just wasting his time and misguiding his goals of life without any happiness. People do not think that what porn has done to them psychologically and how they are comfortable with that. Plenty of people including young and pre-mature young people use the internet for satisfying their plastic minds and sync fictional porn with their real-life sexuality. The lead researcher, Simone Kuhn, hypothesized that "regular consumption of pornography more or less wears out your reward system." (Church) People think that porn material is real. It provides knowledge and education. But it is just their deception. Not a single piece of pornography provides the audience with real knowledge or information, everything as posters, images, videos, and games are just fictional products. Like a movie, they can only entertain but in a more harmful way.

## **What is Love or not?**

There arise the question what is love and what is not: there has mentioned four kinds of love by Vatsyayana in Kamasutra: *Love acquired by continual habit*: Love resulting from the constant and continual performance of some act is called love acquired by constant practice and habit, as for instance the love of sexual intercourse, the love of hunting, the love of drinking, the love of gambling, etc., etc., *love resulting from the imagination*: Love which is felt for things to which we are not habituated, and which proceeds entirely from ideas, is called love resulting from imagination, as for instance that love which some men and women and eunuchs feel for the mouth congress, and that which is felt by all for such things as embracing, kissing, etc., etc., *love resulting from belief*: The love which is mutual on both sides, and proved to be true, when each looks upon the other as his or her very own, such is called love resulting from belief by the learned., *love resulting from the perception of external objects*: love resulting from the perception of external objects is quite evident and well known to the world. (Vatsyayana) Because the aesthetic pleasure is superior to the pleasure of the other kinds of love that exists only with it.

## **What is Written in the Vedas about Sexual Union?**

There arise a question that sexual intercourse is evil or not. The answer is in Vedas that sexual union is not evil. It is essential to the life cycle of nature. For instance, ancient cults believed drops of rain are seeds of the heavens and the Earth's seasonal cycles are menstruation in the woman.

Passion knows no rules, nor place, nor time...moral objections do not resist the mounting of passions. Fantasies a man invents under the effect of erotic excitation are not imaginable even in dreams. So, the motive leads the man. If it is natural it will lead to satisfaction or it is of artificial feelings then lead to guilt.

### **What are Purusharthas?**

In four Purusharthas, Kama finds place just before Moksha which shows the utility and importance of Kama before a normal persona concentration. The creation of the universe is based on the act of Kama. Rigveda mentions, the emergence of Kama is divine. To fulfill earthly purposes, humans take birth by the act of Kama. The order is Dharma, Artha, Kama, Moksha because this order has been decided based on the utility of each of them, at various stages in life, from birth to death. It means the ultimate goal of human life is Moksha but not by overlooking the utility of Kama. So, Kama is ultimately a supporting tool for a normal human to reach Moksha but not an obstacle to it.

In Hindu Vedas, human life has been divided among four Purusharthas – Dharma, Artha, Kama, and Moksha. A man must practice Artha, Kama, and Dharma at different times and in such a manner that they can lead him to the ultimate goal of soul Moksha. Artha, Kama and Dharma are practices, and Moksha is the ultimate goal. Dharma is the first stage when the command of the Shastra or Holy Writings of the Hindus urges man to do certain things for the salvation of worldly temptations and sufferings. The practices of Dharmashastra

teach the performance of sacrifices related to wealth, power, property, and desires. Artha is the stage when a man acts to earn arts, land, gold, cattle, wealth, equipages, and friends. It is the knowledge about how to protect what is acquired, and how to increase what is protected. It should be learned from the king's officers, and from merchants who may be versed in the ways of commerce. The Kama is the third stage where a man enjoys acquired objects by the five senses of hearing, feeling, seeing, tasting, and smelling with the participation of the active mind to satisfy the soul. When the organs of sense come in the contact with a particular object of their kind, the consciousness of pleasure arises from that contact, that pleasure is called the Kama. The Kama is the practice that can be learned from the Kamashastra and the experiences of other professional people. According to Dharma, this world is merely an illusion and our body is merely a vehicle to achieve the ultimate goal of Moksha. So, achieving that goal man should keep the faith, do charity, and be kind to other beings and separate himself from worldly attachments.

It is also a noticeable thing that people take seriously the two Purusharthas as; Artha and Dharma but avoid the true meaning of the Kama and the ultimate goal of life, Moksha. Postmodern man thinks that he must suffer all his life and it will never end like Sisyphus. And thinks that the Kama is only the act of lust. In Greek erotic arts, females have depicted as submissive, pleasing their partners, and not focusing on their pleasures. The term is in contrast to 'erotica' in which refers to the action which both the partners in the act are simultaneously enjoying their sexual acts and focus on

sensuality. In the sport of purified feelings of love Reiner Maria Rilke says,

“Physical pleasure is a sensual experience no different from pure seeing or the pure sensation with which a fine fruit fills the tongue; it is a great unending experience, which is given us, a knowing of the world, the fullness and the glory of all-knowing. And not our acceptance of it is bad; the bad thing is that most people misuse and squander this experience and apply it as a stimulant at the tired spots of their lives and as a distraction instead of a rallying toward exalted moments.”  
(Rilke)

### **Relevance of Kamasutra**

Vatsyayana created the ‘Kamasutra’ in an attempt to harmonize the human nature of sexuality, aimed at ensuring the well-being of the society. He lived at a time when big cities with economic prosperity thrived across the Indian heartland and less morality with lust and an enthusiastic lifestyle. Hence, it became essential to re-establish the ethical boundaries of communal living with ever-changing value systems. Under its systematic socio-ethical directives endeavours Kamasutra provides stability to a world of shifting moral grounds.

Kamasutra does not merely teach a man or woman how satisfying their sexual desires and not merely a part of ancient Vedic erotic literature but provides the knowledge to a person of the true principles of the science: the science of body, emotions, passions, balance, and life. A person who can restore balance in Dharma, Artha, and the Kama and has

respect to the customs of the people surely obtain the mastery over his life. In short, an intellectual person attending Dharma, Artha, and the Kama without becoming the slave of his senses will obtain success in his life. Vatsyayana believes in the theory based on knowledge and resists the education earned from the actors who merely ritualistically mimic the behaviour of artificial love. Pleasure and love differentiate human sex from mere animal sex. It cannot be stated that animals do not gain pleasure from their sexual acts, but relatively having a low level of consciousness and behave according to their desire when the season arrives. Pleasure as a principal sphere of human activity, according to Kama-Shastras.

### **Kamasutra, not Merely the Handbook of Erotics**

Vatsyayan connects the Kama not with the physical satisfaction and to lust but defines it as a state of activation of five senses, ear, skin, eye, tongue, and nose, and their participation to achieve the aesthetic pleasure with their tendency of hearing, touching, looking, taste and smell. Because the soul is mere energy without any form but the body gives it the shape and ability to feel everything. Senses of the body help the soul to feel the surrounding atmosphere and everything. Sensuality is also called the appeal of human senses. Eyes see, ears hear, nose smells and identifies various things, then hands touch and feel them, and the tongue tastes them. All these feelings provide a divine delight to the soul that is not possible for a soul without the body. Lebo Grand rightly said, "All have senses, but not all have sensuality

because sensuality is predicated on one's soul journey to self-awareness." (Grand)

In Kamasutra, there have discussed two types of Kama or sexual relation as:

- Kama-If the physical relation gets established to obtain progeny as per Dharma, then it is divine and is called Kama Sambandha.
- Yauna-If the physical relation gets established out of lust or pleasure then it is ordinary and is called Yauna Sambandha. (Vatsyayana)

Vatsyayan has provided a very clear message about the intention of this scripture as, "This message is generally ignored or never read by people that composition of Kamasutram is the result of a lot of meditation and self-study to keep the social order and practices in the proper place so one should not understand that it is written only to fulfill lust or sensual desire. Whoever will understand the essence of Kamasutram, will become Jitendriya (Conqueror of senses)." (Vatsyayana) He has also made it very clear that someone who will study this document of 'science of love' in the hope of sensual pleasure never gain anything but the one who will study it with wisdom will find its true essence.

Some learners argued with the philosophy of ancient love scientists that Dharma is connected with the cosmic world and mentioned only in books and also Artha has straight rules those are written in books and rarely practiced by people. But the Kama is the only one which is practiced even by the wild creation and can be found anywhere. So this is natural and not

need to teach or learn. In the reply of this, Vatsyayana has written, sexual intercourse is equally dependent on both man and woman's requirements and proper actions help them to achieve the climax. This art can be learned from Kama Shastras. But wild creation or other living beings and dependent on only their seasons. And the females among them are the only beings fit for sexual intercourse at certain seasons. Their intercourse is not being preceded by thoughts or by pleasure. So, it is not right to study the various creations behaviour from the same perspective. Every living being on this earth is unique in itself.

### **Why We Need to Study about Kama?**

There is another doubt for those who think that Artha is the chief object to be obtained a successful and satisfying life; pleasures are not the thing to search because it is the obstacle to the practice of Dharma and Artha. And also it brings a man into stress and depression and can be the reason for failures. A man will come into contact with lower standard people. Their company leads him to commit anti-social acts and fill the impurity in him. It is noticeable that many men who have given themselves up to pleasure alone have been ruined along with their families and relations. Ancient Vedic literature is full of examples; the king of Bhoja dynasty, Dandakya, forcefully captured a Brahman's daughter and lost his kingdom. A Hindu God, Indra violated the chastity of Ahalya because his unstable passions suffered the curse. A mortal from Mahabharata, Kichaka tried to seduce Draupadi and brutally killed by her five husbands. And immortal Ravana, who kidnapped Sita was also

punished for his evil action. And all are already familiar with the great fall of Adam and Eve.

Answering this objection, Vatsyayana says that pleasure is equally necessary for the soul and mind as food is for the body. Without pleasure, this life can no longer survive. Human is a civilized and cultural animal. He is creative and imaginative. These things prove that he is an art lover. And he created all these things only for pleasure. He cannot live an ordinary life like wild animals. His existence without pleasure is not possible. Pleasure is to be followed by moderation and caution. Someone does not prepare food for beggars or does not grow plants for deer. But they do it because they enjoy it. Different tastes of food, different smells of flowers, and different tunes of music only produce to give pleasure the senses and then the soul. Dharma, Artha, and the Kama teach the man to find the balance in his life and enjoy more without guilt and evil. The disciplined performance with good actions leads him to a fearless life that what happened next in his life or what had he done. Any action which follows the calling of Dharma, Artha, and the Kama altogether is only the way to perform properly and if left single one then action will not be performed properly.

A man should study Kamasutra as the subordinate of art and science containing Dharma and Artha. And this is not written for a particular gender but all, male, female, transgender, and eunuch. If a girl learns this Kama Sutra along with its arts and sciences before marriage she can also achieve the key to happiness. Some intellectual men rise the objection about it and argue that women should not be allowed to study any

kind of science and also Kamasutra. But ancient scholars give the opinion that women are already familiar with the practice of love and an active participant in it. So, she should also have the right to study it.

It has already been discussed that Kamasutra is the science of love. There are some rules and laws mentioned that should be followed and performed. There is also discussed the different kinds of unions in lovemaking. And also divided the kind of men into three classes as the hare-man, the bull-man, and the horse-man, according to the size of his private part. Women are also divided according to the depth of their parts as a female deer, a mare, or a female elephant. So, in the Kamasutra there is discussed three balanced unions between persons of these dimensions and six unequal unions:

<b>Equal</b>	<b>Unequal</b>
Hare Man- Deer Woman	Hare Man- Mare Woman
Bull Man- Mare Woman	Hare Man- Elephant Woman
Horse Man- Elephant Woman	Bull Man- Deer Woman
	Bull Man- Elephant Woman
	Horse Man- Deer Woman
	Horse Man- Mare Woman

*Figure 1. In equal row, the perfect match of male and female organs is mentioned and the unequal row imperfect match is mentioned.  
(Vatsyayana)*

In the unequal union when the male exceeds the female in point of size, "his union with a woman who is immediately next to him in size is called high union while his union with the woman most remote from his size is called the highest union. On the other hand, when the female exceeds the male in point of size, her union with a man immediately next to her in size is called low union while her union with a man most remote from her in size is called the lowest union. In other words, the horse and mare, the bull and deer, form the high union while the horse and deer form the highest union. On the female side, the elephant and bull, the mare and hare, form low unions while the elephant has and the hare make the lowest unions." (Vatsyayana)

A man is called the participant of small passion because he cannot bear the touch of a woman or her embraces and lose the semen so quickly. His passion at the time of sexual union reaches not to the great climax. Some are different from this temperament and are full of intense passion called men of middling passion. In the same way, men and women are divided the three degrees of feelings according to their intensity of passion. According to time and performance, there are three kinds of men and women, the short-timed, the moderate-timed, and the long-timed. Auddalika says, "Females do not emit as males do. The males simply remove their desire, while the females, from their consciousness of desire, feel a certain kind of pleasure, which gives them satisfaction, but they cannot share what kind of pleasure they feel. The fact from which this becomes evident is, that males, when engaged in coition, cease of themselves after emission, and are satisfied, but it is not so with females." (Patil)

The opinion establishes the ground that if a male performs for a long time the female loves him more but if he is short-timed she is dissatisfied with him. But it is not said that women do not emit. They do. But this opinion does not hold good if it is a woman's desire and she is engaged equally in the action she will wish to keep continue. On this discussion there is a saying as follows: "Men and women, being of the same nature, feel the same kind of pleasure, and therefore a man should marry such a woman as will love him ever afterwards." (Vatsyayana) The pleasure of men and women has proved to be of the same kind.

Vatsyayana also has discussed the kinds of heroines or women as the maiden, the twice-married woman, the public woman, and the woman resorted to for a special purpose. But there is also some kind of women with whom should not perform the sexual act as, a leper, a lunatic, a woman turned out of caste, a woman who reveals secrets, a woman who publicly expresses the desire for sexual intercourse, a bad-smelling woman, a woman who is a near relation, a woman who is a female friend, a woman who leads the life of an ascetic and lastly the wife of a relative or a friend. It is discussed in *Chhandogya Upanishad* that union with the woman is like the songs of *Samaveda*; pleasing a woman is the beginning, sleeping with her is a celebration, the physical union is divine touch and sperm ejaculation at the end is a concluding passage. All these processes are sung in the chorus during the chanting of *Samaveda*.

Sexual union is indeed celebrated in Hindu teachings and also in tales but with morality not with evil intentions. It is also

believed that it is only the performance of married or loving couples. During the Dharma, chastity is encouraged and both men and women are traditionally expected to be virgins when they marry. In these teachings and tales, there appears also the queer relationships and permits homosexuality relations also.

To conclude his book treatise Vatsyayana pen down, "Thus have I written in a few words the 'Science of love,' after reading the texts of ancient authors, and following the ways of enjoyment mentioned in them...Kama Sutra was composed, according to the precepts of Holy Writings, for the benefit of the world while leading the life of a religious student, and wholly engaged in the contemplation of the Deity. This work is not intended to be used merely as an instrument for satisfying our desires. A person, acquainted with the true principles of this science, and who preserves his Dharma, Artha, and Kama, and has regard for the practices of the people, is sure to obtain the mastery over his senses. In short, an intelligent and prudent person, attending to Dharma and Artha, and attending to Kama also, without becoming the slave of his passions, obtains success in everything that he may undertake." (Vatsyayana)

## **Conclusion**

It is the noticeable fact that Kamasutra is one of the most popular as well as the misinterpreted text of the world. And now also paying the attention for the current marketing strategies glorifying glamour and frenzy of sensuality. But it is necessary to understand its relevance at present not as

pornographic material but as the guidance on sex. It does not sensationalize sex to feed the gluttony of erotic desires but a manual of the various sexual guidelines and instructions that have remained relevant in every kind of society throughout the periods of history. Vatsyayan tried to confine the pleasure and morality at the same place. It is a respected guide to physical pleasure as well as divine pleasure based upon aesthetic love and respect.

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