

## More Wisdom from the Orient

***"The Kama Sutra of Vatsyayana: The Classic Hindu Treatise on Love and Social Conduct," translated by Sir Richard F. Burton*** (Dutton, 252 pp. \$4.95), written by an Indian religious student sometime between the third and fifth centuries A.D., itself draws on earlier Sanskrit sociologists like Svetaketu, Babhravya, and Dattaka. Robert J. Clements is director of comparative literature in New York University's Graduate School.

By ROBERT J. CLEMENTS

TO A REAL aficionado of erotic literature half the fun of collecting has always been outwitting the Post Office or customs control. You bought your copies of "Fanny Hill," "Chrysal," the "Perfumed Garden," and other choice titles *pour lire à deux* on the quais of the Seine and smuggled them in under the dust jacket of a cookbook. If your book searcher found an edition of Frank Harris in New York, he sent it to you in a plain wrapper aimed at confounding the postal inspectors. Now, however, the American publishers are out to remove the challenge and

even the fun by bringing these classics right out into the windows of the bookstores. Spoilsports, they have put Henry Miller into every corner drugstore. We are informed that "Fanny Hill" and even Frank Harris are soon to become over-the-counter items.

To upset things further, the publishers are now declaring that these old chestnuts are literature and appending learned prefaces and footnotes to them, as though you had to be an egghead to be an eroticist. The "Kama Sutra" is a case in point. It has been kicking around England and the Continent for over a century, ever since Richard Burton, the same traveler who was later to English the "Thousand and One Nights," translated it in 1883 for the Kama Sastra Society of London and Benares. Pirated editions flourished, gaudily illustrated, and it mattered not—at least to the dilettanti and to the police—that Sanskritists disagreed over points of Burton's translation. Now Burton's "Kama Sutra"—with a Foreword by Santha Rama Rau—is available to us in a handsome edition, as available, alas, as "Ship of Fools" and laden with footnotes and commentaries by Indologists. The book, they say, is required reading for the West. The idea is that it is not enough to send India \$160 million in foodstuffs in a decade. We've

got to know India's culture, and such books as the "Kama Sutra" are the avenue to such understanding. Thoughtless censorship of this volume might thus provoke an international incident, a thought to which we shall return.

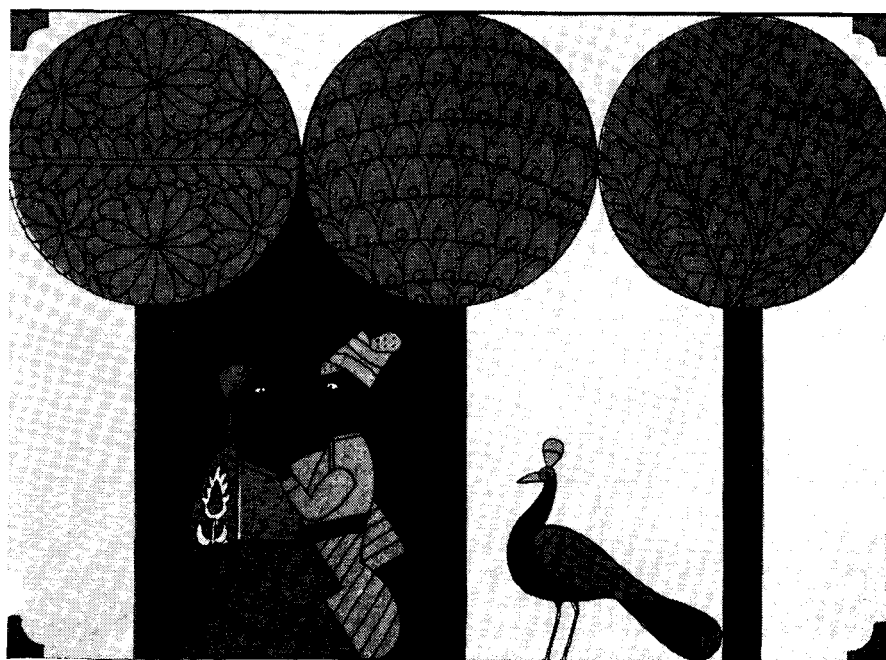
Understanding even the title requires a knowledge of Indic history. Kama, or Desire, is at the same time a god and the third principle of the ideal life. In the later Vedas, Kama became a flower-arrowed god of love akin to Eros and Amor. In fact, poetry in the "Atharva-Veda" recounting how the arrows of Kama pierce the heart sounds familiarly like Greek and Roman love lyrics. Kama, by the way, is the god who is burned with carnival revelry at each annual Holi festival in India—a ceremony remembered by those Westerners who saw Jean Renoir's film "The River."

Kama is similarly one of the three ways of life to which each man aspires. Dharma is obedience to the Holy Writ of the Hindus; Artha is the acquisition of material goods and creature comforts, including friendships. During a Socratic give-and-take Vatsyayana defines Kama as "the enjoyment of appropriate objects by the five senses, assisted by the mind together with the soul. . . . Kama is to be learned from the 'Kama Sutra' (Aphorisms on Love) and the practice of citizens." The coupling of Dharma with Kama—that is, the intrusion of the senses upon holiness and spirituality—will not surprise art students who remember the baffling presence of phallic sculptures in many Hindu temples, especially Konarak and Khajuraho. It will not surprise anthropologists, who remember that an Arab may pray to Allah while making love to his wife.

Vatsyayana Mallanaga was not the first of the Sanskrit writers to compose a treatise on love. He compiled and abridged from earlier works by Svetaketu, Babhravya, Dattaka, and others. He intended his manual to be read by sophisticated types and by women whose emancipated status allowed them free consort with men: courtesans, princesses, daughters of high officers. Even a blushing young wife, with the consent of her husband, might peer into this chapbook.

The counsels and speculations in the "Kama Sutra" wander through the areas of psychology and physiology especially. The first division is quite innocuous. It emphasizes that love is an art and a science. Here are found the famous sixty-four arts that a woman must master to become the ideal companion-entertainer of men. Beyond expected arts like cosmetics, scents, and the domestic chores, a woman must

(Continued on page 23)



—From the book jacket.

To be shunned: girls with bald heads and crooked thighs.

# Saturday Review

Editor: NORMAN COUSINS

Publisher: J. R. COMINSKY

Associate Editors: HARRISON SMITH, IRVING KOLODIN, HORACE SUTTON

Associate Publisher  
W. D. PATTERSON

Managing Editor  
RICHARD L. TOBIN

Science Editor  
JOHN LEAR

Poetry Editor  
JOHN CIARDI

Education Editor  
PAUL WOODRING

Production Manager  
PEARL M. STEINHAUS

Book Review Editor  
ROCHELLE GIRON

General Editor  
HALLOWELL BOWSER

Editors-at-Large  
CLEVELAND AMORY  
HARRISON BROWN  
JOHN MASON BROWN  
FRANK G. JENNINGS  
JOSEPH WOOD KRUTCH  
T. S. MATTHEWS  
WALTER MILLIS  
ELMO ROPER  
JOHN STEINBECK



Contributing Editors  
HOLLIS ALPERT  
HENRY HEWES  
GRANVILLE HICKS  
ARTHUR KNIGHT  
KATHARINE KUH  
ROBERT LEWIS SHAYON  
JOHN T. WINTERICH

## Cheers and Outer Space

THE TROUBLE with all the tumult and shouting over the space exploits, whether by the Soviet Union or the United States, is that these events are being celebrated for the wrong reason. The jubilant crowds that filled Red Square in Moscow last week didn't come together to acclaim one of the great achievements in human history. They were proclaiming *national* heroes, glorying in the assertion of a *national* ego, exulting in the high points being scored by their *nation* in a competition with another nation. The dominant response was a *national* victory yell and not splendid and silent awe over human intervention in the universal order. The prevailing sounds were indistinguishable from the roar that goes up when a goal is scored in the closing minutes of an international soccer game or when an extra-inning World Series baseball game is dramatically ended by a swat into the stands.

Thus the greatest achievement of human inventiveness has been tribalized. The triumph is claimed not by man but by the clan. Pride in the event comes not from belonging to a species that is capable of unlocking the most profound natural mysteries but from belonging to an aggregation. Response and reaction tend to be equal. On the same day that *Pravda* heralded the tandem orbital flights, a New York newspaper petulantly cried out in a

headline: "Why Not Us?" The chagrin of the Americans was as misplaced and immature as the frenzied elation of the Russians. To the Russians, the only thing that counted was that socialism had scored successfully. The Americans were angry because we didn't do it first. In both cases, the real significance of the event was lost.

The historical verdict of the human excursions into outer space may well be that the circumstances of the exploits discolored their meaning. For later philosophers may find it difficult to understand why people could become more excited about the shape of other planets than they could about keeping their own planet from being lacerated and despoiled for human life. The abundance of energy and resources going into the Soviet space effort will be viewed alongside the severe shortage of food and housing in that nation. And the disparity in the United States between money spent for space projects

and money spent for education and health will not be overlooked.

Is nothing worth our cheers? Certainly. Let the ingenious human mind invent a genuine peace, one that would give nobility and substance to the human estate. That would be worth cheering for. Let the Americans and the Russians put at least as much imagination and ingenuity into the control of force as they have into the magnification of force. That would be worth cheering for. Let the Americans and Russians put at least as many dollars and rubles into the betterment of life on earth as they are putting into the means for expunging it. That would be worth cheering for. Let the Americans and the Russians stop pumping radioactive poisons into the atmosphere on which life depends even before they seek out other heavenly bodies beyond the atmosphere. That would be worth cheering for.

This is not to say that the blame is equal. It is not equal. But the effects are equally grim. These effects apply not just to the peoples directly involved but to the entire human species. For the prime fact of our time is that the sovereign nations have gone berserk, pursuing those measures that are leading to a hideous decimation of life and the meaning of life. Any individual who would act or react in his own community the way the sovereign nations act and react in their dealings with one another would be promptly diagnosed as dangerously irresponsible and unbalanced. Yet absolutely sovereign states can ignore law and the rules of public safety; they can demonstrate all the symptoms of illogic, monomania, and destructiveness that would cause an individual to be institutionalized.

For all his inventiveness, man is still as primitive in designing a level of fair and workable intercourse between groups as he was in the age of the cave. The clan is still the ultimate value. The awareness of himself as a member of the human family confronted with the need to create a durable structure for sustaining life on this particular planet—this awareness has yet to become real. Any effort or enterprise, public or private, that ignores this need is wasting valuable time.

—N.C.

## The Light

By Hollis Summers

ONE face waits and the other watches.  
The chariot approach; and the other waits  
While the one face sees it depart;

And even Janus must turn to catch  
the moving present chariot  
Carrying his two-faced heart.