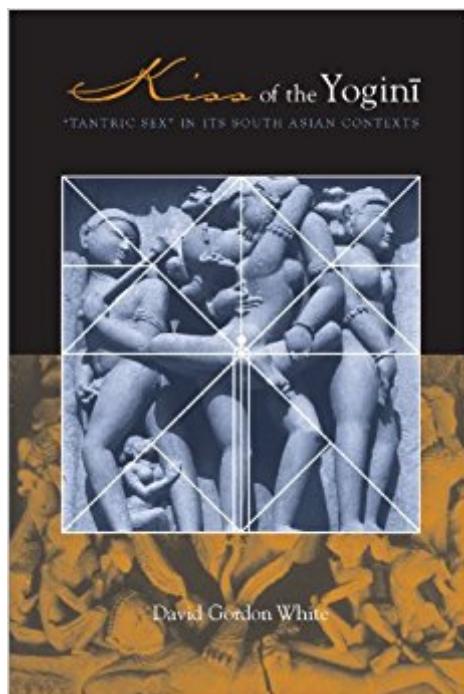


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Kiss Of The Yogini: "Tantric Sex" In Its South Asian Contexts



Synopsis

For those who wonder what relation actual Tantric practices bear to the "Tantric sex" currently being marketed so successfully in the West, David Gordon White has a simple answer: there is none. Sweeping away centuries of misunderstandings and misrepresentations, White returns to original texts, images, and ritual practices to reconstruct the history of South Asian Tantra from the medieval period to the present day. *Kiss of the Yogini* focuses on what White identifies as the sole truly distinctive feature of South Asian Tantra: sexualized ritual practices, especially as expressed in the medieval Kaula rites. Such practices centered on the exchange of powerful, transformative sexual fluids between male practitioners and wild female bird and animal spirits known as Yognis. It was only by "drinking" the sexual fluids of the Yognis that men could enter the family of the supreme godhead and thereby obtain supernatural powers and transform themselves into gods. By focusing on sexual rituals, White resituates South Asian Tantra, in its precolonial form, at the center of religious, social, and political life, arguing that Tantra was the mainstream, and that in many ways it continues to influence contemporary Hinduism, even if reformist misunderstandings relegate it to a marginal position. *Kiss of the Yogini* contains White's own translations from over a dozen Tantras that have never before been translated into any European language. It will prove to be the definitive work for persons seeking to understand Tantra and the crucial role it has played in South Asian history, society, culture, and religion.

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Customer Reviews

"*Kiss of the Yogini* is one of the few good, interesting books about Tantra, a passionately argued

work that transforms scholarly understanding of its subject.... By reconstructing the medieval South Asian Kaula and Tantric traditions that involved sexual practices, David White hopes to restore the dignity and autonomy of the people who invented them and continue to practise them. This monumental scholarly work does precisely that." - Wendy Doniger, *Times Literary Supplement*"

For those who wonder what relation actual Tantric practices bear to the "Tantric sex" currently being marketed so successfully in the West, David Gordon White has a simple answer: there is none. Sweeping away centuries of misunderstandings and misrepresentations, White returns to original texts, images, and ritual practices to reconstruct the history of South Asian Tantra from the medieval period to the present day. *Kiss of the Yogini* focuses on what White identifies as the sole truly distinctive feature of South Asian Tantra: sexualized ritual practices, especially as expressed in the medieval Kaula rites. Such practices centered on the exchange of powerful, transformative sexual fluids between male practitioners and wild female bird and animal spirits known as Yognis. It was only by "drinking" the sexual fluids of the Yognis that men could enter the family of the supreme godhead and thereby obtain supernatural powers and transform themselves into gods. By focusing on sexual rituals, White resituates South Asian Tantra, in its precolonial form, at the center of religious, social, and political life, arguing that Tantra was the mainstream, and that in many ways it continues to influence contemporary Hinduism, even if reformist misunderstandings relegate it to a marginal position. *Kiss of the Yogini* contains White's own translations from over a dozen Tantras that have never before been translated into any European language. It will prove to be the definitive work for persons seeking to understand Tantra and the crucial role it has played in South Asian history, society, culture, and religion.

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David White gives clear, detailed insights into the origins and evolution of Tantric practices. Serious students of South Asian religious history will find his meticulous work a wealth of information filled with practical examples, diverse sources and original accounts rarely, if ever, this accessible in English. The work's logical analysis of Tantric traditions visits its roots, components, rituals and development through the centuries. White states his goal "to reconstruct a history as well, perhaps, as a religious anthropology, a sociology, and a political economy of (mainly Hindu) Tantra, from the medieval period down to the present day." Indeed, this is what his book accomplishes. Unlike other works focusing on a particular aspect of Tantra, White takes a holistic approach that includes texts,

imagery, politics, art, architecture, social relationships and practice in his sources. His linguistic abilities enabled him to include translated excerpts from more than 25 ancient Sanskrit works. He also references many modern sources that had me frequently returning to to order more books! White's creative vocabulary delights and stimulates; Acoustic phoneme, aestheticize, cosmeticized, countercasuistry, dissimulation, doctrine of radical nonduality, gerocomy, gnoseological, homologous, hegemonic, nondiscursive agglomerations, occulted, photeme, photic grapheme, polyvalence, postmodernisme oblige, semanticize, scholasticist, soteriology and typology are a few examples of the verbal tools he wields to make his finer points. The resulting prose is necessarily dense; a complex treatment by an expert immersed in his topic. Most paragraphs cite multiple sources, all thoroughly described in his bibliography and copious endnotes. The book also includes more than 25 helpful illustrations that give visual representations of many concepts. My only suggestion to improve future editions is that it would be helpful to add the following graphics: [1] Timelines - to illustrate chronological relationships of literary works, religious traditions and teachers referenced; [2] Hierarchical diagrams - to illustrate relationships among the multiple systems of gods, goddesses, demons, deities, yogis, yoginis, dakinis, etc. and; [3] Maps - to show geographical and temporal relationships in the spread of Tantric practices and related political systems. Finally, I must comment on a few of the poor "reviews" of this work that sadly appear on . It is obvious that some people have not read the book. Like most fanatics, they leap to judge something they don't care to accept or understand. In his five page preface, and in many other chapters, White makes it quite clear that he is a scholar with tremendous respect for Indian and Hindu religious traditions. His years of investigative effort in original sources establish strong pedigrees of origin that, in fact, enhance the basis of these traditions. The only groups White directly criticizes are "New Age" proponents of Tantra who have hijacked Indian culture and distorted it for commercial gain in the West. His historically accurate report is no threat to any tradition based on truth.

I very much enjoyed this book. White's dedication to accuracy and his polite exposure of the West's manipulation of Sacred Truths definitely strikes a chord with anyone who seeks a non biased approach to the historical origins of Tantric Sex.

I have not finished this book yet because I have been savoring it like a good french meal. This book has given me a piece of the puzzle I have been waiting for a long time in terms of my own personal practice. It is very scholarly and thorough. My regards to the author.

This is a very academic discussion of kaula practices in India. White is a first-rate academic, but this is overkill unless you are doing researchLaypeople should consult Arthur Avalon 'The Serpent Power.' In fact, in the introduction to White's book, he recounts how he was told this by an India when he (White) was studying in Varanasi

The book discussed in these pages is brilliant, well done and highly recommended. I have just finished reading it, more or less non-stop, in 2 full days. As with his earlier work (The Alchemical Body), the author's research is detailed and professional - and anyone calling it "pathetic" (anonymous review May 26 2004) or "saddening" (anonymous review May 29 2004) only admits in so doing that he or she has personal problems with the sexual aspects of Tantra as they are discussed in "The Kiss" open and honestly by David Gordon White. Someone else called his conclusions "controversial" (anonymous review June 16 2004), yet the only "controversial" thing I can find in this book is the author's honesty - and one can only congratulate him for this - and of course he's intelligent enough to have foreseen that his theme and stance won't be liked by many - both in India and within the "New Age Tantra" community across the hemispheres. To everyone who has read actual Tantric texts - even in translation - White's conclusions are fully in concordance with previously published material AND with actual practice - the real merit of this book lies in presenting us with more and new material (translated by the author), and by connecting and combining previously difficult to relate evidence. So what is the book actually about that shocks so many sensitive minds? It is the fact that White establishes more firmly than has been done (in scholarly circles) before, that Tantric ritual makes use of the fluids that arise from the genitals - both female and male. And we're not only talking about orgasmic emissions, we're also talking about the magical blood we call menstruation. And we're talking about oral sex. So the author must have known that he'll get plenty of 'flames' for various reasons - and I wish him that he is immune to it. Congratulations, DGW, for this great book - and for the Vira balls to write it. May the Yogini grant you many more sweet en enlightening Kisses.

Maybe it's because I'm searching for my inner goddess, but I found this book very interesting, dense at times, but filled with amazing information that every woman should read--or at least hear about. Ari

A masterfully written origins of tantric sexual practice written by a professor who does not place

himself above his readers. A well researched technical history!!!

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