



# Advanced Spiritual Intimacy: The Yoga of Deep Tantric Sensuality

By Stuart Sovatsky Ph.D.

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**Advanced Spiritual Intimacy: The Yoga of Deep Tantric Sensuality** By Stuart Sovatsky Ph.D.

A practical guide for both individuals and couples to transform sexual energy into spiritual and erotic fulfillment

- Explains how to awaken advanced stages of sexual development for spiritual intimacy and deep erotic satisfaction
- Includes illustrated instructions for exercises and techniques based on yoga, kundalini, breathing practices, mantra chanting, and chakra meditation
- Explores how this practice can deepen a life partnership, enhance creativity, heal emotional scars, and awaken new understandings of gender

Sexual development does not end in adolescence. There are advanced stages of glandular, emotional, and erotic development based in the lifelong “puberty of the spine.” Known in India as kundalini awakening, these stages form the energetic basis of all yoga forms and deeper erotic aspirations. They present an opportunity for couples and individuals to explore the consciousness-expanding abilities of sexual energy as both spirituality and sexuality transform into what Michel Foucault called *ars erotica*, far beyond the Freudian *scientia sexualis* sexuality of the Western world.

Offering a guide to the advanced stages of human sexuality and a passionately infused tantric yoga practice, Stuart Sovatsky explains how to awaken the complete spinal puberty, resulting in spiritual intimacy and orgasmic pineal maturity that far surpasses the gratifications of modern sexuality. With illustrated instructions, he reveals flow-yoga asanas, mantras, and devotional breathing practices for solo kundalini yoga as well as couples’ yoga practices and chakra meditations to awaken the heart and the divinely eroticized mind. He shares inspiring stories from those on this path about ever-deepening life partnerships, enriched family life, enhanced personal creativity, profound new understandings of conception, masculinity, femininity, and gender itself as well as healing emotional scars of romantic breakups and sexual abuse.

Sovatsky shows that by transcending conventional Western sexuality and returning to the *ars erotica* beliefs of ancient India, we can harness the divine energy--glimpsed for only an instant by most people--at the heart of all erotic yearning.

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### Editorial Review

#### Review

"I highly recommend this book to any spiritually minded person or couple looking to awaken their creative potential, deepen their life partnership, heal the emotional scars of past relationships, or mature their emotional-sexual being beyond the impulses of adolescence. This book would be a valuable asset for any couples therapist or marriage counselor who wants to offer a yogic spiritual component in their practice." (*Merikah Robertson, Common Ground, September 2014*)

"*Advanced Spiritual Intimacy* is a cultural critique, tantric sex manual, and an astute primer in verbal and nonverbal communication. While most psychologists dismiss romance as infatuation, Sovatsky's brilliance is to take it seriously as the ground of a highly disciplined but unique Kundalini-inspired approach to erotic intimacy." (*Seth Farber, Ph.D., author of The Spiritual Gift of Madness*)

"Stuart Sovatsky's well-researched and experimentally validated teachings, shared in *Advanced Spiritual Intimacy*, will surely be a great resource for empowering married couples around the world to find true spiritual happiness, as well as helping contemporary yogis and yoginis actually achieve the exalted goals of yogic adepts of ancient times." (*Robert Thurman, Professor of Indo-Tibetan Buddhist Studies, Columbia University, author of Inner Revo*)

"Through decades of pioneering service projects, writings, and his kirtans arousing of Kundalini, Stuart has uplifted the academic and spiritual landscape of the West. For those who long to meet a lifelong yogi, master, beloved of Lord Shiva, you will find such a one in the pages of *Advanced Spiritual Intimacy*." (*Swami Adi Narayan, author of The Beloved: A Song of Eternal Love*)

"Stuart Sovatsky's *Advanced Spiritual Intimacy* is a tour de force. He takes us beyond the texts to demonstrate how the ancient path of spiritual growth may extend across a whole lifetime. This book expands our Western hermeneutic of tantra toward engendering a paradigm shift in the methodology for all who have been teaching its ways for years or decades. And as years and lifecycles unfold for persons of all walks of life, this study may help to honor the depths of Indian marriage from the depths of SanĀ tana Dharma itself." (*Purushottama Bilimoria, Ph.D.; Chancellor's Scholar, UC Berkeley; post-doctorate fellow, Oxfor*)

"This book reveals tantra's most central and powerful aspect: converting sexual energy into a higher, consciousness-altering vitality. Stuart Sovatsky's vast knowledge and four decades of practice of tantra yoga and his lifelong work as a relationship therapist is a perfect combination for his book *Advanced Spiritual Intimacy*. A must read for all who aspire to a spiritual way of life and are wondering just where sex fits in." (*Georg Feuerstein, Ph.D., author of Sacred Sexuality, and Brenda Feuerstein, author of Traditional Yo*)

"*Advanced Spiritual Intimacy* is an excellent book that will help couples and individuals to grow and master themselves." (*Frédéric Luskien, Ph.D., author of Forgive for Good and director of the Stanford University*)

"Few people are as well positioned as Stuart Sovatsky to contribute to the West's understanding of yoga and tantra, and he has done so with *Advanced Spiritual Intimacy*. This book adds a new dimension and another level to the understanding of our ultimate potential." (*Philip Goldberg, author of American Veda*)

"Sovatsky's work brings the depths of India's spiritual path of marriage and family love to the Western

world in keeping with India's core vision of Vasudhaiva kutumbakam--the world is indeed one Family--and reveals the devotional dimension of yoga in the truest voice of the Indian spiritual soul." (*Sunil Saini, Ph.D., president of Indian Association of Health, Research, and Welfare*)

"The extent of Sovatsky's knowledge is breathtaking. He makes an important and persuasive reframing of Brahmacharya as an 'inner marriage' rather than celibacy, with yoga as its own love affair with prana. He completely transforms what is currently understood as 'practicing yoga' and provides a fresh way of re-envisioning intimacy for anyone on a spiritual path." (*Ira Israel, marriage and family therapist and yoga teacher/therapist*)

"Sovatsky guides us with a master's hands to open the portals of devotional worship in yoga and in love. His book is a tour de force, beckoning lovers deeper into the seed mysteries of devotion and worship." (*Tina M. Benson, M.A., transpersonal/Jungian-oriented coach and founder/creator of the Soul Speaks Pr*)

"The Age of Aquarius begins right now with Stuart Sovatsky's new sexual (r)evolution. Get out your surfboards and anchor yourself on the crest of the wave with *Advanced Spiritual Intimacy*. Don't forget to enjoy the ride!" (*Lisa Paul Streitfeld, cultural critic/philosopher, Huffington Post Arts*)

"Stuart Sovatsky's *Advanced Spiritual Intimacy* bravely walks the cutting edge of tantra and blasts us open into spirit consciousness, while enlivening us to the potentiality of matter and flesh." (*Katie Silcox, author of Healthy Happy Sexy: Ayurveda Wisdom for Modern Women*)

"Sovatsky's forty years of spiritual practice, erudite scholarship, and clinical experience radiates throughout *Advanced Spiritual Intimacy*. This book shows a way to lifelong love that lives within the hidden depths of tantra and the inner marriage of yogis, saints, and sages." (*Ken Wilber, author of The Fourth Turning: Imagining the Future of an Integral Buddhism*)

"*Advanced Spiritual Intimacy* is like an attic trunk packed with treasure-garments, with gowns and capes that must perhaps be shaken out and worn, gotten accustomed to, before their full value is revealed." (*Craig Comstock, Huffington Post Blog, June 2014*)

#### About the Author

Stuart Sovatsky, Ph.D., has degrees in religion and psychology from Princeton University and the California Institute of Integral Studies. A kundalini tantra practitioner since 1972, he was the producer of the World Congress on Psychology and Spirituality in India in 2008, which featured more than 400 delegates from 40 countries, including B. K. S. Iyengar, Robert Thurman, and S. S. Ravi Shankar. A kundalini chant-master with Axis Mundi, he has counseled thousands of people worldwide on yoga and relationships. He lives in Richmond, California.

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#### Yoga Practice as Ars Erotica

*In the erotic art, truth is drawn from pleasure itself, understood as a practice and accumulated as experience; pleasure is not considered in relation to an absolute law of the permitted and the forbidden, nor by reference to a criterion of utility, but first and foremost in relation to itself; it is experienced as pleasure, evaluated in terms of its intensity, its specific quality, its duration, its reverberations in the body and the soul.*

Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*

Hatha yoga practices have been available in our culture for some time now primarily as a form of gentle exercise or perhaps as physical disciplines that purify and prepare the body for meditation. To consider them as erotic practices is perhaps a semantical stretch, but only if we are too bound up in the conventional understandings of eros. For what we discover is that the postures, breathing practices, and meditations are all ways to plumb the depths of erotic mystery within our multidimensional bodies and open us to a deeper sensitivity to others.

We are searching for how to animate our yogic practices, solitary or partnered, with the energy of sublimative passion. When we pay attention to subtleties and nuances of movement and feeling, the body language of mystery, we begin to transform the more formalistic exercises into an *ars erotica*. Yet yoga is rarely taught within this context. We usually learn poses as stretching exercises to hold and perfect rather than as a repertoire of intimate and passionate gestures of self-expression that inherently perfect themselves. The spirit or quality of passion that we bring to these practices is as significant as the practices themselves. How, then, to find this passion?

The purist approach consists of meditating in stillness until your body begins to move on its own, however long that might take, sometimes called “awaiting the beloved.” This approach simulates how many yoga postures originated, in a spontaneity similar to one’s first stretchings in bed while barely awake. Here the stillness of meditation allows prana, the vital energy of *pranamaya kosha*, to build to a certain pitch, and then, guided by its inner intelligence, prana moves the body exactly as it needs to be moved to release tensions and blocked emotions, transmute desires, open nadis (subtle channels), and stimulate the chakras. We are assured of entrance into sublimative passion through the spontaneity of movement, beyond egoic choosing or desiring. The yogic movements feel like acts of surrendered worship and each asana a bodily form of prayer. However, not everyone can arouse prana through meditation to such a degree that spontaneous, or *sahaja*, yoga results.

There are several ways the breath can be willfully managed in the beginning as an entrance to more spontaneous movements. Perhaps the easiest way is to move very slowly into a series of asanas, or yoga positions, while breathing just as slowly as you are moving. Synchronizing breath, movement, and concentration engages prana as well, and at some point you will feel as if you are no longer willfully moving but are being moved by prana itself. As you penetrate mundane thinking by mentally merging with the nuances of bodily sensation, you will slip unobtrusively into a meditative state. In this way, postures and variations unfold in the moment as a flow from one asana to another.

Another way to arouse prana is by holding a posture in increasingly more accurate alignment. Here, perfecting an asana is like perfectly attuning an instrument to a certain key. When the pitch becomes perfect, strong vibrations of energy can be felt, and one asana follows another, according to our specific needs. Holding a posture beyond the first limits of discomfort can trigger the yogic passion and spontaneous asanas and pranayamas, and even dance movements. We must give ourselves permission to move, even with the scantiest of internal guidance.

Occasionally, sublimative passion is able to move us through asanas far beyond the reach of any willful attempts. It is as if our body needs to be in a specific asana for a specific amount of time to generate exactly the effects required for our development. You might find that chronic tension is actually held in place by your identifying with it and gripping your muscles from within in a habitual fashion. Giving up the tensions feels frightening, when actually it is more problematic to hold on to them.

Other more subtle contractions of the abdominal muscles draw sexual energy to manipura, an important site of transmutation, and also can cause the intercostal muscles to flex with subtle pleasures, propelling energies

farther into the nadis in the thorax. Various pumping motions in the throat, rib cage, sacrum, lumbar, and perineum, along with micromotion of the eyelids, nasal muscles, fingers, toes, head, and even the scalp, carry the sublimated energies throughout the body. Again, it is the nuances that bring a depth of feeling and expression to each movement, revealing its pleasures and meanings.

Finally, it becomes clear that you are moving from one practice to another, expressing sublimative passion in your own perfect way. Rotating the neck while drawing the breath in, then exhaling the humming sound “hmmmm” in your throat, which vibrates into a smile as you release the breath and stretch forward on the floor into the cobra posture, then drawing your legs up under you to sit up, cross-legged in stillness; followed by an elaborate series of finger and hand movements, or mudras, in which moods change with every tilt of each finger, myriad variations, each unique to the moment. Thus some yoga texts claim that there are 840,000 yoga asanas.

Gradually we achieve a bodily openness and a rechanneling of erotic pleasures that transform our practiced sublimation into a natural brahmacharya. We feel more fullness in ourselves, and we are more appreciative of what we are receiving from others.

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