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A Mira Nair Film

KAMA SUTRA

A TALE OF LOVE

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KAMA SUTRA: A TALE OF LOVE

"In my mind, to be utterly modern is to embrace the truly ancient." —

MIRA NAIR, writer/director/producer, *KAMA SUTRA: A TALE OF LOVE*

Trimark Pictures presents an NDF International Ltd., Pony Canyon Inc., and Pandora Films, in association with Channel Four Films, present a Mirabai Production of A Mira Nair Film: **KAMA SUTRA: A TALE OF LOVE**. With Indira Varma, Sarita Choudhury, Ramon Tikaram, Naveen Andrews, and Rekha as "Rasa Devi." Directed by Mira Nair, produced by Mira Nair and Lydia Dean Pilcher. Executive Producer Michiyo Toshizaki. Screenplay by Mira Nair and Helena Kriel, based in part upon the story "Hand-Me-Downs," by Waiida Tabassum. Original Score by Mychael Danna. Cinematographer Declan Quinn. Production Designer Mark Friedberg. Costume Designer Eduardo Castro.

CAST

Maya	Indira Varma
Tara	Sarita Choudhury
Jai Kumar	Ramon Tikaram
Raj Singh	Naveen Andrews
Rasa Devi	Rekha
Biki	Khalik Tyabji
Annabi	Arundhati Rao
Young Maya	Surabhi Bhansali
Young Tara	Garima Dhup
Maham Anga	Pearl Padamsee
Dilki	Kusum Haidar
Doctor Mani	Harish Patel
Babu	Ranjit Chowdhry
Rupa	Achla Sachdev
Bashir	Arjun Sajnani
Vazir	Avijit Dutt
Madho Singh	Anjum Rajabali
Prem Siddharth	Anand Kumar
Dance Teacher	Debi Basu
Royal Messenger	Rahul Vohra
Aunt Laila	Manize Boga
Praveen	Prabeen Singh
Begum Para	Sinia Jain
Rich Friend	Urvashi Nair
Old Woman	Bhanumathi Rao
Astrologer	Vasudeo Bhatt
Madame	Moneeka Misra Tanvir
Singer	Shubha Mudgal

CREW

Director	Mira Nair
Producers	Mira Nair
.....	Lydia Dean Pilcher
Screenwriters	Helena Kriel
.....	Mira Nair
Executive Producer	Michiyo Yoshizaki
Co-producer	Caroline Baron
Associate Producers	Dinaz Stafford
.....	Tina Difeliciantonio
Director of Photography	Declan Quinn
Production Designer	Mark Friedberg
Editor	Kristina Boden
Costume Designer	Eduardo Castro
Production Manager	S.M. Ferozeuddin Alameer
Unit Manager	Harish Amin
1st Assistant Director	Mary Soan
Location Manager	Sajid Mitha
Set Decorator	Stephanie Carroll
Script Supervisor	Robyn Aronstam
Sound Mixer	Drew Kunin
Hair Supervisor	Stephen Rose
Makeup Supervisor	Pat Hay
Still Photographers	Peter Mountain
.....	Prabuddha Das Gupta
.....	Nupu Chaudhuri
Choreographers	Debi Basu
.....	Maya Krishna Rao
Composer	Mychael Danna
Featured Musicians	Shubha Mudgal
.....	L. Subramaniam
.....	Ustad Vilayat
.....	H. Khan
Scenic Artists	Ramesh Ghate
.....	Laloo Mall
.....	Yeshwant Patil
Animal Wrangler	Satchitbrata Gupta
Stunt Director	Amin Ghani
Unit Publicist	Lalitha Krishna

KAMA SUTRA: A TALE OF LOVE

Acclaimed independent filmmaker Mira Nair (*Salaam Bombay!*, *Mississippi Masala*) has returned to her roots in her newest motion picture. In **KAMA SUTRA: A TALE OF LOVE** the Indian-born director re-embraces the traditional culture of her native land — the grandeur of its legends and their distinctive narrative traditions.

KAMA SUTRA brings the legends to life as it follows the fortunes of Maya (Indira Varma) and Tara (Sarita Choudhury) through a pivotal period of 16th century Indian history.

Tara is a princess, Maya her servant. Raised together as childhood friends and rivals, each in different ways uses the teachings of "The Kama Sutra," the 4th century Indian treatise on love and sexuality, as a source of inspiration and enlightenment in a high-stakes romantic chess game.

When Maya finally achieves the equality with Tara she has always desired, the price that must be paid is mythic in its finality.

In Nair's mind, the Eros of her film was never about the scenes of lovemaking — as central and as frankly sensuous as those may be. "It lies equally," she says, "in the sensuality of the everyday life in this period, of the way these characters live and dress and move. The whole play and touch of the society creates a climate of eroticism."

For Westerners, with our Puritan heritage of sexual taboos, this look at an age and a culture far removed from ours, where very different traditions held sway, can be a revelation. "The past is the best mirror to reflect our future," Nair declares.

For her native country, India, the director has a somewhat different message: "India in its post-colonial phase has gotten so far away from the native spirit that created 'The Kama Sutra.' Sexuality is so repressed, now, so twisted, especially in the media."

"All direct physical contact is censored in movies in India, even kissing, and sexuality emerges instead in scenes of rape and violence against women. I wanted to make a film that countered the sickness and perversity where women were concerned on the Indian screen."

Apparently, India's government censors are still more comfortable with rape than rapture. **KAMA SUTRA** has been stuck in the bureaucratic snares of the Indian "certification" process for several months, thereby making the release of the film uncertain.

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SYNOPSIS

KAMA SUTRA: A TALE OF LOVE is the story of two young women: Maya, a servant on the periphery of the royal court, and Tara, a noble princess. Though friends since childhood, the women are antithetical in ways beyond their social class. Tara is egotistical and insolent while Maya, even at a young age, is self-possessed and aware of her feminine powers. As they blossom into beautiful young women, Maya's intense sensuality - her sexual strength - threatens her friend. Tara lashes out with her only weapon: her position in society. She imperiously casts Maya her hand-me-down garments and humiliates her publicly. The rivalry beneath their affection for each other brews and their love/hate relationship acquires complexity.

On the eve of Tara's wedding to the great king Raj Singh, Maya exacts sweet revenge on her friend: she slips into the royal tent and seduces the King. She mesmerizes Raj Singh with her sexuality and directness. But Tara's brother, the hunchback prince, whose advances Maya had always spurned, has witnessed Maya's transgression and informs his family. On the day of the royal wedding, Maya is banished from the palace. On the royal wedding night, however, to the new Queen's horror, Raj Singh cries out the name of her rival as they consummate their union.

Maya wanders through the kingdom, a lost and lonely vision, until the court sculptor, Jai Kumar, is taken with her beauty. Nair explains, "Jai is somebody who is looking for the embodiment of perfection in woman, in a mythical way but also as inspiration for his work. That's how he views Maya first." The illegitimate son of a courtesan and no stranger to the politics of the harem, Jai brings Maya to the home of Rasa Devi, the priestess of sensuality who was the chief courtesan in the court of Raj Singh's father and who now teaches the lessons of "The Kama Sutra." Still idealistic about matters of love, Maya refuses to learn these ancient lessons, preferring an unmediated, spontaneously sensual relationship with Jai. Inspired by Maya's personification of the perfect woman, he sculpts her in stone for what will become his erotic masterpiece: the Lotus Women. But as Maya falls in love with Jai, he withdraws. Only with his muse upon a pedestal does the artist feel in control.

To reassert herself, Maya takes up the teachings of Rasa Devi and decides to be a courtesan. Fortunately, she is a natural.

At the palace, Tara, too, is put upon a pedestal of sorts - the throne - and then abandoned as her husband chooses opium inspired decadence to marital bliss. Not having Maya's innate will to survive, Tara comes close to madness.

When Raj Singh recognizes Maya's likeness in Jai's masterpiece, he becomes obsessed with finding her again. "The king is undone by love in a way he has never been before," Nair offers. Maya claims her ultimate revenge on Tara when she returns to the court - as the chief courtesan to Raj Singh.

Nair parts the veils and leads us into the forbidden realm of the harem where sensuality oozes like an over-ripe fig, where indolence and languor erase time as we know it, where saturated colors - reds, ochres, burgundies, deep purples - bleed into each other, where silks and rich embroideries cover voluptuous bodies but bare just enough shoulder or torso to turn a servant into a master, a ruler into a pawn. Through the teaching of "The Kama Sutra" the women discover they can use their sexual prowess to empower themselves, allowing them to control their own destiny.

When Jai returns and discovers that the woman he loves has become his king's obsession, a vortex of passion is set in motion with the four players - Maya, Tara, Jai and Raj - fighting each other - and themselves - in a quest for love. In the emotional and erotic chess game which ensues, all rules and order cease to exist.

ABOUT THE PRODUCTION

India in the 16th Century, which forms the cultural and social backdrop Mira Nair's **KAMA SUTRA**, was a millennial society, a feudal culture on the brink of metamorphosis. The Indian national identity itself was called into question in an epoch of transition, turmoil and reassessment.

At the beginning of the century, India was a patchwork of hundreds of independent domains ruled by assorted hereditary Sultans and Rajahs (like **KAMA SUTRA'S** decadent Raj Singh) who jostled for power among themselves.

The invading forces are represented in Mira Nair's film by a distant, nameless Shah, whose forces pose a looming threat that the arrogant, doomed Raj Singh dismisses.

Mira Nair first considered making a film set in this period in 1989, during a visit to a museum of evocative everyday items from 15th century India - hair combs, coconut grinders, urns, prayer objects.

The first germ of the story came from a short story discovered by Nair's husband, Waaida Tabassum's "Hand-Me-Downs." It was, she says, "a diabolical story about a girl avenging the humiliations she suffers at the hands of a rich friend by seducing the girl's husband on her wedding night." This story became the basis of the first 15 minutes of the finished film.

Mira Nair had met South African playwright Helena Kriel in 1992 in Kampala, Uganda, where Nair had settled after shooting portions of *Mississippi Masala* on location there. They had worked together on an adaptation of a novel by Athol Fugard.

Kriel was immediately intrigued, she says, by the opportunity to "craft a story that dealt with sex and spirituality within the same plane. **KAMA SUTRA** is about having the courage to yield to love."

In addition to the complete text of the original "Kama Sutra," the Co-writers drew upon other ancient Indian texts for inspiration: the erotic poetry of Kalinda and Bihari, Gita-Govinda, "The Bhagavad-Gita."

Producer Lydia Dean Pilcher was drawn to the project by the Nair-Kriel screenplay. "I liked the fact that the story was from a female perspective," she says. "That's rare in cinema today. It explores the fundamental difference between men and women in sexual terms. **KAMA SUTRA**, the film, is about the attempt to go beyond physicality and explore the very soul of sexuality."

Pilcher had produced Nair's two previous films, *Mississippi Masala* and *The Perez Family*, and was eager to work with her again.

Indira Varma was a stage actress, trained at the famous Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts (RADA), who had never acted in a film before. "It all happened so fast," says the actress. "I met Mira and read the script. The same afternoon I did a screen test and was told I had been hired."

Varma freely admits she was "a bit scared. But I decided to trust Mira. Because she started as a documentary filmmaker I was sure she would be able to coax a performance out of someone like me, who was unused to the camera."

For Nair, the casting of *Mississippi Masala* star Sarita Choudhury in **KAMA SUTRA** had the force of inevitability: "We saw 500 actresses in New York, and only Sarita made a lasting impression."

Nair made the bold choice of casting both actresses against type: the regal Varma was cast as the sensually precocious servant girl, while the "earthy" Choudhury portrays the spoiled princess, ill-at-ease with her physicality.

"I thought the brittleness of Tara might be a welcome stretch for Sarita, after all the earthy characters she had played."

"Tara's motivation for what she does, in my mind, is simple," Choudhury says. "She has never learned how to feel. Maya wears her heart on her sleeve and Tara just can't do that. It's no wonder she tries to dominate her friend with her social status instead."

The casting of at least one of **KAMA SUTRA'S** four major roles came easily: the character of Jai Kumar. The role of the sculptor who fears that allowing himself to love one woman will inhibit his quest for ideal female beauty in his work, was written with actor Ramon Tikaram in mind.

After a world-wide search, Nair had selected Tikaram to play the title role in her aborted biographical picture *Buddha*. The actor identified strongly with his character: "When Jai gets something into his head, it pursues it so completely, so powerfully, to the omission of everything else. That's very close to the sort of person I am, if I'm passionate about something."

As the libertine king Raj Singh, married to princess Tara and seduced by Maya, Nair selected Naveen Andrews, a rising young stage and screen actor in England, recently acclaimed for his performance in *The English Patient*.

"I wanted to work with Mira Nair because of *Salaam Bombay!*," Andrews exclaims. It's one of my all-time favorite movies. I was desperate to appear in a Mira Nair film!"

Nair calls Raj Singh, "My favorite character in the movie. He is the kind of man women should not love but cannot resist. His tragedy is that after pursuing all sorts of partners he is finally undone by the one love he can not have. I saw that vulnerability in Naveen and he was a gem to direct."

In the rehearsal period, Indira Varma and Sarita Choudhury spent three weeks learning classical Indian dance under guru Protima Gauri at her Nrityagram School on the outskirts of Bangalore.

"We lived in mud huts and did yoga every morning before beginning our training," Varma recalls. "The Odissi dancing was hard to learn because it's stylized and has a very specific language of movements. It has a raw passion that Mira wanted me to capture on film. She called it an ancientness."

Nair says Varma proved to be a "master pupil" of the antique dance style. "Maya dancing is a sensual combination of the ancient and the contemporary. It's something completely different from what you would normally see in Western cinema."

There was never any doubt in Mira Nair's mind that the film should be shot entirely on location in India. "I become inspired when there's real life around me," she explains. "It's a great treasure to be able to see an image and incorporate it instantly into the film. Spiritually real places have helped the atmosphere of the movie enormously."

KAMA SUTRA began ten weeks of filming in early October, 1995, in Khajuraho, the Rajgarh Fortress, the small town of Rajnagar, and Jaipur, the capitol of Rajasthan.

The permanent crew numbered 300 people, including the principal cast. "The amount of work that went into the simplest operations was amazing," Naveen Andrews recalls. "One day some huge date palm trees were used for set dressing and had to be hauled up into the fort. It took 10 men over six hours to move the trees under the blistering hot sun."

Production Designer Mark Friedberg, who had filled the same role for Nair on *The Perez Family* ("so there was neat shorthand between us"), researched Indian architecture and design motifs extensively and drew from the styles of several periods and regions to create an impression of a legendary, essential Hindustan.

"Raj Singh's palace location was the feudal Rajgarh fortress. But the interior design was inspired by the Gwalior fort from an earlier era altogether. For the flags, banners and symbols we adapted Tantric motifs. Tantric art is rooted in a cult of ecstasy and metaphysics; it was a great inspiration to Mira and myself."

For Nair, the look of the film was "inspired by primeval things: stone, mud, earth. And in the court, I went against excessive ornamentation, we went more for opulent minimalism."

Like Friedberg, Costume Designer Eduardo Castro, another *Perez Family* alumnus, immersed himself in Indian culture for the **KAMA SUTRA** assignment.

"The female silhouette was very uniform in 16th century India," Castro says, "so to ring changes I used as many different fabrics and colors as possible. India is not a place to be afraid of color when you are designing authentic costumes."

The female silhouette, of course, in costume and out, plays a central role in the visual scheme of **KAMA SUTRA**. "Every costume showed our midriffs," Indira Varma recalls, "we all had to embark on a strict exercise regime before starting the picture."

One especially revealing outfit Castro made for Varma consisted entirely of plastic pearls woven together like a suit of erotic chain mail. "We had four jewelers on set," she says, "sewing that one directly onto my body. It took four hours every time."

In keeping with the conception of a world suffused with sexuality, Director of Photography Declan Quinn (acclaimed for his work in *Leaving Las Vegas*) bathed the sets and performers in various kinds of natural light.

"The sunlight in India is so bright and direct," Quinn explains, "that it doesn't really need to be augmented. And some of our best effects came when we relied upon candlelight or firelight."

Nair concludes, "Eroticism is rarely about flesh or nudity. Erotic is when Maya looks at Raj Singh and you know exactly what she's feeling."

In the post-production phase, this "differentness" came to the fore in the crucial choice of music to set the movie's mood.

The film's 16th century setting allowed Nair to work in some of her favorite Indian classical music, the devotional songs of the Sufi Muslim tribes. World Music audiences have become familiar with this soaring vocal style in recent years through the work of artists like The Sabri Brothers and Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan.

"The Sufis songs always contained double entendres about the Lover and the Divine being one and the same," Nair explains. "They said that sex was holy."

“THE KAMA SUTRA OF VATSAYANA”

“The Kama Sutra of Vatsayana” has long been a precious text for students of Ancient India, for the many clues it holds to the social customs and morality of its period.

Written around 300 AD, during the so-called Gupta period (The Classical Age of India), the book is known to Westerners mostly as an instruction manual for acrobatic sex. This is partly because most translations excerpt only a portion of one chapter out of 35, the famous index of sexual positions.

“It’s an amazing text,” says producer Lydia Dean Pilcher, “an amazing philosophy that connects sex with the whole spiritual embodiment of the experience. A lot of that spiritual subtext has been lost throughout the centuries.”

“The Kama Sutra’ deals very matter-of-factly with the different kinds of sex and love that exist,” says director Mira Nair. “It says that sex without love is completely natural, but not to get disappointed when the act itself is not exalted.

“However, if practiced with the skills of ‘The Kama Sutra,’ sex with love with someone with whom you want a more complete union, can be holy, transcendent, divine.”

The complete text of the Burton translation of “The Kama Sutra of Vatsayana” can be downloaded from the World Wide Web at:

<http://www.awa.com/library/omnimedia/kama.html>

ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS

MIRA NAIR

Writer - Director - Producer

Mira Nair burst onto the international film scene when her first feature, *Salaam Bombay!* (1988), won the Camera d'Or and the Prix du Publique at the Cannes Film Festival. The picture went on to an Academy Award nomination as Best Foreign Language Film.

But Nair had already established herself as a documentarian, initially in the US with Richard Leacock and D.A. Pennebaker. She then made four celebrated documentary features exploring the culture and traditions of her country, and their day-to-day effects on the lives of ordinary people.

Born in Bhubaneswar, Orissa, the daughter of a civil servant, Nair was educated at the Irish Catholic school in Simla and studied sociology and theater at the University of New Delhi. She worked frequently as an actress in repertory theater in India.

In 1976 she traveled to Harvard to pursue an advanced degree in sociology. Her graduate thesis took the form of a documentary film, *Jama Masjid Street Journal* (1979), a study of a traditional Muslim community. In the process, Nair fell in love with movie-making itself.

Her second film, *So Far From India* (1982), paved the way for her return home. It was double portrait of an Indian subway news vendor in New York, and of the pregnant wife in India awaiting his return.

For Indian television Nair directed *India Cabaret* (1985), a study of aging strippers at a Bombay nightclub that was controversial at home but went on to win prizes at international film festivals. Her second TV documentary, *Children of a Desired Sex* (1987), looked at the dilemma facing women who discover that their fetus is female in a society that places a premium on male offspring.

After the success of her transitional movie *Salaam Bombay!*, which used documentary techniques to tell a fictional story of life in the great city's lower depths, Nair returned to the cross-cultural themes of her earlier work. *Mississippi Masala* (1991), which shot both in the US and in the Indian expatriate community of Kampala, Uganda.

Denzel Washington and Sarita Choudhury (**KAMA SUTRA'S** Princess Tara) starred in this romantic comedy of multi-cultural manners.

Her next feature took her much further afield, *The Perez Family* (1993), with Marisa Tomei, Anjelica Huston, Chazz Palminteri and Alfred Molina playing various members of an extended Latino family.

With **KAMA SUTRA**, Nair has returned to her roots in Indian culture, to the grandeur of its legends and to its narrative traditions of color-saturated stylization and omnipresent sensuality.

HELENA KRIEL

Co-writer

Helena Kriel worked as a playwright in her native South Africa, where her plays *Pigs On Passion*, *Arachnid*, and *I Can't Wait to Tie You to the Sofa* were performed by Athol Fugard's famed Market Theater company. She met Mira Nair, and worked with her on the film adaptation of Fugard's novel *Tsoti*, when the director was on location in Kampala, Uganda in 1992, shooting the African sections of *Mississippi Masala*. After Kriel relocated to Los Angeles to pursue a screenwriting career, *Pigs On Passion* had its U.S. premiere in 1993 at the Los Angeles Theater Center. Although *Kama Sutra* is her first screenplay to be produced, Kriel won a Diane Thomas award for her original script *Virtuoso* and is currently working on three films in development, *Heated*, *The Arabian Nights*, and an adaptation of the Ford Maddox Ford novel *The Good Soldier*.

LYDIA DEAN PILCHER

Producer

Lydia Dean Pilcher began her career in the production departments of such successful films as *F/X*, *After Hours*, *'Round Midnight*, *The House on Carroll Street*, and *Planes, Trains and Automobiles*. She was associate producer and Unit Production Manager on Forrest Whitaker's *Strapped* and the HBO telefilm *Criminal Justice*. Her other film credits include *Quiz Show*, *Mississippi Burning*, and Jonathan Demme's *Domestic Dilemma* segment of the HBO mini-series *Women and Men II*.

Pilcher also co-produced Stacy Cochran's *My New Gun*, Norman Rene's *Longtime Companion* and *Red, Hot + Dance*, an AIDS benefit performance documentary for MTV and Sony Video.

KAMA SUTRA marks the third collaboration between Pilcher and director Mira Nair. Pilcher produced Nair's *The Perez Family* and was co-producer and UPM on *Mississippi Masala*. She produced Maggie Greenwald's *The Kill-Off* and Michael Moore's *Pets or Meat: Return to Flint*, the sequel to his controversial documentary *Roger and Me*. She is currently starting production on director Wayne Wang's *Chinese Box*, starring Gong Li.

DECLAN QUINN
Director of Photography

Declan Quinn won an Independent Spirit Award for Best Cinematography in 1996 for his stunning work on Mike Figgis' *Leaving Las Vegas*. Additional credits include Louis Malle's *Vanya on 42nd Street*, Bruno Baretto's *Carried Away* and Maggie Greenwald's *Ballad of Little Jo* and *The Kill-Off*. He worked with directors Phil Joanou and Jonathan Kaplan on their segments for the HBO *film noir* anthology series *Fallen Angels*.

MARK FRIEDBERG
Production Designer

Mark Friedberg, born and raised in Manhattan, designed many New York-based independent films, including W.T. Morgan's *A Matter of Degrees*, Alexander Rockwell's *In the Soup*, Herb Gardner's *I'm Not Rappaport*, Maggie Greenwald's *Ballad of Little Jo*, and Griffin Dunne's 1996 Academy Award nominated short film *Duke of Groove*. As an assistant art director he worked on several films for Woody Allen, including *Another Woman*, *Crimes & Misdemeanors*, and the *Oedipus Wrecks* segment of the anthology film *New York Stories*.

Friedberg collaborated previously with Mira Nair on *The Perez Family*. His work will appear in the upcoming Ang Lee film *Ice Storm*.

EDUARDO CASTRO
Costume Designer

Eduardo Castro made a lasting impact on American popular culture when he designed the distinctive shades-of-pastel look of the threads in TV's *Miami Vice*. He began his big-screen career as an associate

costume designer with multiple Oscar-winner Milena Canonero on many films, including Warren Beatty's *Dick Tracy*. He was Costume Designer on Chris Menges' *Bird on a Wire* and Martin Lawrence's *A Thin Line Between Love and Hate*.

Castro collaborated previously with Mira Nair on *The Perez Family*. His work can be seen in the upcoming *City of Industry*, directed by John Irvin. He is currently at work with director Warren Beatty on his as-yet untitled film for 1997.

KRISTINA BODEN

Editor

Kristina Boden worked with director Brian De Palma as assistant editor on *Body Double* and *Casualties of War*, and with Paul Schrader on *Comfort of Strangers*. She edited *Witch Hunt* and *Light Sleeper* for Schrader and *Carlito's Way* for De Palma.

ABOUT THE CAST

INDIRA VARMA

Maya, the servant girl

Indira Varma trained at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts (RADA) in London, and has performed on stage in *Hedda Gabler* and *House of Bernanda Alba*. She is making her screen debut in *Kama Sutra*.

"At first," according to Varma, "Maya just wants to get even with Tara for tearing their friendship apart through jealousy. Then she meets Jai and falls in love, and it's this innocent loss of control that proves so emotionally dangerous for everyone."

SARITA CHOUDHURY

Tara, the princess

Sarita Choudhury made a strong first impression on international audiences in 1988, in Mira Nair's *Mississippi Masala*. She played the daughter of an ethnic Indian family, exiled to the American deep South from their adopted homeland in Uganda, whose romance with Denzel Washington stirred the film's multi-cultural cross-currents. Choudhury went on to win acclaim in several international films, including *Wild West* and *The House of the Spirits*, co-starring with Meryl Streep and Vanessa Redgrave. She will appear later this year in Leslie Meggahy's *The Advocate*.

"When Mira told me she wanted me to play Tara," Choudhury recalls. "I thought, I've never seen myself as regal or elegant. So it intrigued me: what would it be like to learn how to be a princess?"

RAMON TIKARAM

Jai Kumar, the sculptor

Ramon Tikaram is a graduate of Kent University, England, and a published author and musician. He has appeared in the U.K. in numerous stage productions, including *LA Plays* and *After Magritte*. After a worldwide search, Mira Nair had selected Tikaram for the lead in her biographical film *Buddha*, before the project was postponed. He recently buckled his swash in the Renny Harlin / Geena Davis pirate epic *Cutthroat Island*.

To prepare for his role, Tikaram worked for weeks with the great Indian sculptor Radha Kaishnan: "I learned how to hold a chisel and how to hammer without looking like a complete amateur. I almost feel I could start sculpting myself now and make a go it it."

NAVEEN ANDREWS

Raj Singh, the king

Naveen Andrews' performance as Kip, the Sikh bomb-disposal expert, in Anthony Minghella's *The English Patient*, has been a revelation for audiences outside the U.K.. On his home turf, however, Andrews was already one of the most sought after young performers around. His award-winning work on two popular BBC television dramas, *Two Oranges and a Mango* and Hanif Kuriishi's *The Buddha of Suburbia*, was followed by acclaimed feature film roles in *Peacock Spring*, *London Kills Me*, and *Wild West*.

"Raj Singh is not particularly enamored with the idea of kingship," Andrews deadpans. "He is obsessed with the limits of his own power and with manipulating other people."

REKHA

Rasa Devi, the teacher

Rekha "occupied a mythical dimension" in the mind of *Kama Sutra* director Mira Nair long before production began. The role of Rasa Devi, the *guru* of sensuality, was written with this legendary performer in mind.

The daughter of Tamil movie stars Gemini Ganesh and Pushpavalli, Rekha has been an actress most of her life. In her teens, when she was billed as Bhanurekha, she was a gawky ingenue. As the number one leading lady of "Bollywood" (Indian commercial) cinema in the 1980s, she made 20 films with the top male icon of that period, Amitabh Bachchan. She specialized in playing sophisticated and worldly "other women," like the tragic prostitute Zohra in *Muggaddar Ka Sikander* (1978).

A third career phase began in the 1990s, when Rekha became a favorite of such leading "Parallel Cinema" *auteurs* as Shyam Benegal and Girish Karnad. In 1982 she won the National Award as Best Actress for her performance in *Umrao Jaan*, displaying an unexpected mastery of Indian classical dance forms --- a mastery she is able to display again in *Kama Sutra*.

ABOUT THE MUSIC

The composer chosen to weave the musical fabric for **KAMA SUTRA** was a Canadian of non-Indian heritage, composer Mychael Danna. But as Mira Nair observes, "Mychael is obsessed with India. He is as knowledgeable about Indian music as the snake charmer on the street. My own influences for the soundtrack ranged from the fairly operatic songs of Guru Dutt's Bollywood 'art melodramas' of the 1950s, to the drummers of Burundi. My agenda, as I voiced it to Mychael, was to 'funkify the pure.'"

The musicians assembled in New York not just to perform but to collaborate with Danna on his score, in traditional Asian fashion, were some of today's strongest interpreters of Indian classical idioms. Nair explains, "In New York we gathered together some of the greatest Indian musicians; the legendary sitarist Vilayat Khan (who hadn't done a score since Satyajit Ray's *Music Room*), L. Subramaniam, the great violinist responsible for the soundtracks of my first two films, G.S. Sachdev, the extraordinary delicate Indian flutist, Aruna Kalle Naravan, the masterful sarangi player and the amazing kings of South Indian percussion, Vikka and Selva. And Shubha Mudgal who sang Maya's theme. Her voice just belted out raw passion in such a powerful and moving way."

Danna took the raw material provided by the musicians and sampled it with Tibetan chants, Greek shepherd's calls, African drums and his own vocals to produce the final score for **KAMA SUTRA**.

MYCHAEAL DANNA

Composer

Mychael Danna is best known for his scores for four films by fellow-Canadian Atom Egoyan, *Family Viewing*, *Speaking Parts*, *The Adjuster* and *Exotica*. For the latter he won Canada's Genie Award for Best Original Score.

L. SUBRAMANIAM

Violin

L. Subramaniam wrote the scores for Mira Nair's *Salaam Bombay* and *Mississippi Masala* and was musical advisor to Peter Brook on *Mahabharata*. He has recorded with jazz musicians Herbie Hancock, Maynard Ferguson, Stanley Clarke and Larry Coryell, and was a featured player on the score for Bernardo Bertolucci's *Little Buddha*.

USTAD VILYAT KHAN
Sitar

Ustad Vilyat Khan is widely believed to be the foremost musician in India today. He began playing at age three and made his first public appearance at eight, in 1936. His concert appearances number at least 1,000 to date, and they are often several hours long, regularly selling out in both India and England. Khan is also a noted composer whose work for films includes the Merchant-Ivory production *The Guru* and Satyajit Ray's *Jaisaghar (Music Room)*.

RON KORB
Flute

Canadian Ron Korb is one of the few Westerners ever to master the exacting Japanese bamboo flute. His albums of original compositions include *Tear of the Sun*, *Japanese Mysteries*, *Flute Traveler* and *Behind the Mask*. He contributed to Michael Danna's the score for the film *Exotica* and has written songs for several Asian pop stars, including Stephanie Lai and Alan Tam.

SHUBA MUDGAL
Vocals

Shuba Mugdal performs one of Nair's beloved Sufi "kalems" in the brothel scene in **KAMA SUTRA**.

G.S. SACHDEV
Flute

G.S. Sachdev is a world-renowned master of his instrument. He was placed in the Billboard Magazine Critic's Choice Top Ten in 1992 and won the magazine Album of the Year Award (World Music) in 1993 for his album *Global Meditation*.

ARUNA NARAYAN KALLE
Sarangi

Aruna Narayan Kalle plays the sarangi, a bowed instrument from North India reputed to be one of the world's most difficult to master. In addition to being one of only a handful of active solo sarangi, Aruna is currently the only female master of this daunting instrument.

VIKKU & SALVA
Percussion

The rhythm section was the duo Vikku and Selva, described by Nair as “the amazingly rotund kings of South Indian percussion.”