

Tantra & Erotic Trance: Volume One - Outer Work - John Ryan Haule

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A recurring metaphor Tantra & Erotic Trance is that of the ladder of mystical ascent, sometimes called the "diamond" ladder, evoking the Tibetan concept of dorje and the Hindu lingam but especially the diamond body of Buddhism. An ascent is described, beginning in the very first chapters where controversies about sex lead to the conclusion that human sexuality has both a horizontal meaning as the foundation of the nuclear family in a stable society and a vertical meaning as the engine of consciousness change in Tantra. We embark on the vertical path only by developing a new relationship with our body, in fact reversing some of the assumptions most of us take for granted. This first volume, "Outer Work," describes the influence our body can have on our consciousness, beginning with a new valuation of orgasm and its role in human sexuality. We also learn that being separated from our partner can be no less important than being together. Finally, Tantra takes us into conflict with the values of society at large and recommends an heroic stance in which we court the most disturbing and overwhelming emotions in a spirit of equanimity. The first volume ends with the reforms of the great tenth century devotee of Shiva, Abhinavagupta, who urged his disciples to turn their attention away from the outer forms of their practices and to attend instead to the changes occurring in their consciousness. Abhinavagupta made the essential mystical move recognized in every religious tradition: that we must learn to reverse our attention, away from the deity or sacred object before us to the effects such beings cause in our awareness. His contribution, then, becomes the foundation for Volume Two, "Inner Work."

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