



The Knitting Sutra: Craft as a Spiritual Practice

Susan Gordon Lydon

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Available for the first time in paperback, *The Knitting Sutra* reveals how women can learn to knit their way to nirvana.

When Susan Gordon Lydon was coping with a broken arm, her craft took on new significance. While knitting was essential to strengthening her hands, it also provided her with a newfound sense of peace and creativity. Immersed in brilliant colors, textures, and images of beautiful sweaters, Lydon found healing and enlightenment in a way she had never imagined. Capturing this journey of discovery, *The Knitting Sutra* recounts her remarkable membership in a community of craftswomen around the world, from sweater makers in Scotland to Navajo weavers, and the adventures that her craft led her on.

As she masters new techniques and conquers old obstacles, Lydon's story conveys how the lessons she learned from knitting, such as stillness and interdependence, later sustained her through a cancer diagnosis and even the incapacitation of her hands. *The Knitting Sutra* is both a meditation on craft and an affirmation for anyone seeking heartfelt comfort.

The Knitting Sutra: Craft as a Spiritual Practice Details

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Author : Susan Gordon Lydon

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From Reader Review The Knitting Sutra: Craft as a Spiritual Practice for online ebook

Laura says

Such a gift to we the reader to go down the spiritual path of one that loves our craft in such a profound way. Bittersweet.

Catherine Theriault says

I'm giving myself permission to knit more and to not feel like I have to multitask. Knitting is enough!

Chade66 says

This book approaches knitting as a spiritual exercise, sort of moving meditation. I have thought of spinning as meditation for a long time, but I can see how the other would translate as well.

Its always interesting, to me at least, to "listen" to someone's hunt for enlightenment and see what they come up with or where they hunt.

This is a quick read, also read in a day this weekend. Yay for Spring Break!

Katherine says

This was a very disappointing book. As other reviewers have noted, this is a memoir and ought to be promoted as such. Once I realized that it was easier for me digest, but I still had trouble following the rambling prose and the stories and topics are covered vaguely and quickly that it was hard for me to even get a clear picture of what the author was going through. I did enjoy some of the insights about the intention put into knitting and other crafts and connecting to history of those practices and all of the people (primarily women) who have practiced them in the past. But overall this was just not an enjoyable read.

Beth says

I love the concept of knitting as a spiritual practice and absolutely truly believe that. Unfortunately, I don't think the final product of this book lived up to the promise. It wasn't advertised as a memoir but that's exactly what it was. And unfortunately, it was a memoir of the "I can't relate" variety.

Maureen says

A spiritual quest that starts with knitting but winds through many avenues of women, relationships, creativity, and craft. Since I have often thought of knitting and embroidery as forms of meditation I was intrigued by the discoveries the author made in her own travels,

Deborah Britton says

This book describes how I feel about knitting as a type of meditation and a calling.

Tara Choate says

I really wanted to like this book, but I got tired of the endless attempts to turn knitting into something sacred. Knitting is fun. Knitting is meditative. I can see how it can be more, but this woman really labored trying to explain her point. I didn't enjoy it.

Mazohyst says

Disclaimer: I'm not actually a knitter. I mean, I knit, but I am in no means an actual knitter. It doesn't stop me from enjoying stories related to knitting.

Initially, I thought this would be a more of a workbook that would help guide you through spiritual knitting. When I decided whether or not to take this book out of the library, I read a snippet. Nope, it seemed to be largely a memoir. Admittedly, I was a bit disappointed but like I said, I enjoy stories related to knitting.

Lydon seems to be a very spiritual person. I didn't expect a knitter would be crossing the country seeking guidance from spiritual leaders. It was a bit out of the ordinary but I quickly grew to wish I had known Hayat and Jimmy and the likes. Lydon seems like a very well traveled and knowing person so I enjoyed following her around in her attempts to make peace with the spiritual.

Of course, the main lesson of the story is mindfulness. The main reason why I felt this book didn't satisfy me was because I didn't necessarily learn anything new. While I do like how Lyndon approaches mindfulness, I was still left for wanting more.

What I appreciated the most however was her advice on knowing yourself. Several times throughout the book, Lyndon refers to making sweaters that never really appear like she thought they would. The sleeves would turn out too big or the garment would be slipping off her shoulders. It was best to make your own tweaks to patterns so that whatever you were making was fit for you. And mistakes were okay. Arabic weavers would often put in mistakes into their works because "Nothing but Allah is perfect." I thought that was a good metaphor.

Ketti says

To knit is to be freed from time and the constraints of everyday life. This book is perfect for the devoted knitter, if you don't knit, leave it on the shelf.

There were quite a few places in the book when I was ready for it to move on.....but I found myself highlighting so many areas of the book that in the end I had to give it the 4 stars. In a recent study commissioned by the American Home Sewing & Craft Association, New York Univ. researchers gave subjects simple sewing projects and fitted them with blood pressure monitor cuffs and fingertip electrodes. On the average, heart rate dropped eight beats per minute for beginners and eleven for experienced sewers. This goes with the "forget therapy; just knit" school of stress reduction, and it also mimics some of the better known physiological effects of meditation. Now-----off to knit!

Kerry says

To tell you the truth, I found the Knitting Sutra to be a mixed experience. On one hand, I am not that familiar with most of the spiritual paths that the author discusses or references. And there are times when the tone of those discussions gets to be a bit much, like a sort of spiritual name-dropping which got a bit annoying at times.

Having said that, there were some jewels scattered through the book that made it a fascinating read. Sometimes, those bright moments were spelled out in the book and sometimes they were just thought-provoking little sparks that sent my mind out on its own line of thinking but I came away from the book with a lot to ponder, like:

- The concept of knitting (or craft in general) as a sort of meditation or prayer... teaching you to be still, aware, and to take each moment as it comes. There was a comparison between the stitch by stitch motion of knitting and praying with rosary beads which I just loved.
- The fact that while there is value to learning from many different sources, that ultimately, you need to tailor and adapt what you know and what you do to your own situation and needs.
- Permission to make mistakes and embrace the imperfect in yourself and in the things you do
- The theory that in order to make a garment for yourself, you must really be accurately aware of your body, with all its individuality and imperfections. As someone who has struggled with body image and awareness, I find the idea that knitting for yourself as a path to self-awareness fascinating. I also love the idea that once you have that accurate view of yourself, you choose to spend time, effort and money to make something beautiful for yourself. It seems like it could be therapy and self-validation all wrapped up in one.
- The belief that "If we are indeed made in the image of our Creator, it stands to reason that we are most like that Creator when we are creating something ourselves."

While, I may not have connected to the authors own philosophical knitting journey on a personal level, I was glad to have read the Knitting Sutra for its contribution to my own.

Rae Lewis-Thornton says

This is a wonderful look memoir chronicling the authors spiritual journey through knitting. A lot of little take always for the knitter who loves the craft.

Jennifer says

I was all set to rip this book apart in my review. I was going to put it on my bad-bad-bad shelf and laugh when it wept. But I cannot. Sadly I actually got a few little moments of joy out of this book.

This is a tiny book and really should be read in one chunk some lazy afternoon while you sip hot tea. I made the mistake of reading a little section and then running away screaming. I think the thing I struggled with was the feel-good-tree-hugging-schizophrenic-menopausal-self-absorption that I kept seeing. Yeah. I developed a bit of an attitude problem with this book. Here is the thing. I am a knitter and I am obsessed. Today at work I finished a container of dried prunes (shut up - they are actually really sweet and tasty and I am trying to be HEALTHIER - ok?!?) and I looked at the container and thought it would be perfect for putting double point needles in. I think about knitting in the morning before work. (Should I knit with my coffee today? No - I am too tired - I will mess it up!) I talk about it with strangers at coffee shops and my co-worker. I come home and turn on my computer and go to "my" knitting sight. I lay in bed and think of patterns. You get the point here. (ha!) So when I picked up the book and read the title *Knitting Sutra: Craft as a Spiritual Practice* I thought it would be more inclusive of other people besides the author. I was only a few pages in when I started feeling like this book was more like a therapy session slash journal entry with research done to boot. Instead of feeling inspired by what the author went through and the teachers she studied with I felt like she was kind of whining about things and too self-absorbed to include her readers in on how her experience relates to them too.

There was the occasional antidote that was relatable - but really it felt like this was one woman's life story told through the metaphor of knitting with A LOT of religious (mostly Native American and Eastern Religious thought) thrown in to try and force a sense of inclusion.

But I did walk away from this book with a few things. The first thing I got was a good conversation with my husband about how through a craft you are connecting to a culture or an ancestry or even just a single designer of a pattern in a much more dimensional way then we could through just talking to them or knowing of there existences. When I work a knitting pattern I get a sense of the person who wrote it. Usually I pick the pattern for aesthetic value - which means I am already sharing something with the designer. Then I read it to see if I am up to the challenge and if I speak the same language as the author. Then I pick out my yarn and begin working it. There are certain designers who just feel so cold and presumptuous in their patterns. (I can't tell you how often I get excited by a pattern only to be crushed when I see that the designer included crochet instructions for parts of the pattern. And as brilliant as Debbie Bliss is her patterns leave me kind of cold.) Sometimes while working the pattern I see the humor of the author (Stephanie Pearl-McPhee) and sometimes I see how very clever they are. You have to trust the designer to be able to tell you in written word how to do something that is not natural and that you are intimidated by. And when you finish and are successful you like the designer. And if you finish and realize there is an error in the pattern you feel sad and betrayed. (I am looking at you Lion Brand web site!)

Recently my mom gave me some patterns from her basement as she was cleaning and included are some patterns in my great grandma's writing. I feel a NEED to do these patterns even though I have no need for the product. I just want to walk in her shoes and feel the connection.

And I have to say the last couple of chapters in the book were a bit more relatable. Chapter 10 is called *Dreaming of Dragons* and she talks about this sweater that was insanely hard to make and had dragons all over it and it was just evil to make. But she was driven. She was compelled. She was determined. And she talked about why and I got it. Ah ha!

There is also a quote (the book is full of homilies and paragraphs destined for cross stitch samplers) that REALLY spoke to me. It's on page 145 and here it is:

Letting go is the lesson. Letting go is always the lesson. Have you ever noticed how much of our agony is all tied up with craving and loss?

I read that and went WHOA. YEAH. It was my moment. 145 pages in and months of wrestling with this book and it got me. I finally had a moment that made me read and reread something over and over and then stare into space and reflect. DAMN. It totally got me.

So in the end I have to show the book a little respect. I can't say I liked it, but it was ok.

Rachel E Glass-Montany says

This was an enjoyable read. It took me a little while to get into it. I definitely shared some of Susan's sentiment about knitting and it was nice to hear that other knitters feel the same way about projects and their craft as I do. Overall I enjoyed this and it made me think about knitting in a way that I had subconsciously envisioned it, but hadn't quite labelled it that way.

Camellia says

I love reading books on knitting and how knitting heals...
