ReadingGroupGuides
The online community for reading groups

The Knitting Sutra: Craft as a Spiritual Practice

by Susan Lydon



About the Book

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.

Discussion Guide

1. Do you feel a personal connection between craft and spirituality?

2. What connection does your craft have to your family, cultural heritage, or history? What traditions are passed down in your family? Do you have clothes, blankets, or doilies that were made by a family member, either someone close like your mother or father, or several generations back, or even someone close enough to be family? What connection do you feel with the objects they have made?

3. Discuss the idea of "practice," in its secular and spiritual meanings, as it relates to knitting.

4. Does your craft bring you into a community? Are there people you sit around a project with, like a knitting circle or quilting bee? Is there a group that has sprung up around a craft store? Do you like being part of an on-line knitting community?

5. If you lost the use of one of your arms, what would you miss most?

6. Do you have any passion or desire, outside life's basic necessities, so strong that you would literally sell your clothes to fund it?

7. Is there a connection between work and play that comes into your craft? Is it as satisfying to craft without making something useful? Do you think you would enjoy making your livelihood as a professional crafter?

8. Is there a connection between the physical aspect of your craft and its importance to you? Do you like to "get out of your head" by spending time with your knitting needles, or keep your fingers flexible, or enjoy the texture of the materials?

9. Do you make or contribute to the production of anything else of practical use in your life? Do you grow herbs, bake, work in manufacturing?

10. Do you make or contribute to the production of anything else of practical use in your life? Do you grow herbs, bake, work in manufacturing?

11. What do you think someone could learn about you from observing your hobby?

12. How willing are you to accept mistakes in your projects?

13. Many religions use beads, knots, or other objects as complements to prayer. Do you ever feel that your handwork has a religious component, whether formal or not? Have you ever made a prayer shawl, or a yarmulke, or a christening gown?

14. Who is the intended user of your finished projects? Do you knit mostly for yourself or for others? Is it more enjoyable to give a knitted item to someone you've been thinking about while you make it, or to imagine using it yourself, or to give it to someone you may never meet?

Author Bio

Susan Gordon Lydon is a regular contributor to the knitting magazine*Interweave* and the *Knitlit* anthologies. The author of **Take the Long Way Home**, she has written for many national publications, including *The New York Times Magazine* , *The Village Voice*, and *Ms.*, and she writes a column for the *Oakland Tribune*. A resident of the San Francisco Bay Area, she conducts knitting workshops and is working on a new memoir of knitting.

Critical Praise

"Lydon is a good enough writer to bring one to tears."--- *San Jose Mercury News*"A very special book about women? Gracefully links handcraft and spiritual practice in our everyday lives. Because she is both a fine reporter and an honest woman, her book will be rewarding to many women, knitters or not, who are trying to untangle their lives."--- *Vogue Knitting International*"This soul-stirring volume offers proof positive that crafts are much more than creative outlets --- they can be catalysts for our personal transformation."--- *Body Mind Spirit*"This small, quite wonderful book shows all that knitting and meditation have in common --- and it's more than some might suspect."--- *Booklist*

The Knitting Sutra: Craft as a Spiritual Practice

by Susan Lydon

Publication Date: April 27, 2004

Paperback: 176 pages

Publisher: Potter Craft

ISBN-10: 0767916336

ISBN-13: 9780767916332