

SpaHealer

Writer Danielle Parla

Sally Kempton

For 40 years, Sally Kempton has integrated meditation, yoga philosophy and spiritual life skills in a deeply accessible way that bridges ancient wisdom with contemporary living

Despite the high respect she garners as a spiritual teacher, Sally Kempton approaches her students with such genuine humility and friendliness that it is impossible not to adore her.

Working as a journalist in New York in the 70s, Kempton experienced “a spiritual awakening that profoundly illuminated to me that ‘everything is love’ and shifted the paradigm to reveal the falsehood of what I was living at that time”.

“I wanted to experience bliss on a more permanent level,” Kempton shares, “since I’d already investigated marriage, politics, romance, psychotherapy and the fruits of money without discovering an antidote to my low-grade emotional pain.” During her search for authentic teachings and community, Kempton experienced an unmistakable kundalini awakening where the “foreground of egoic mentally-driven activity receded and the vast, tender and pure awareness of my being moved from the background to the foreground of my consciousness”.

True to the adage ‘when the student is ready, the teacher will appear’, Kempton was led to her teacher – the great Indian guru Swami Muktananda, and meditation became her path. Kempton left New York and spent the next eight years studying and travelling with her guru and Kundalini Master until his death in 1982.

Before his passing, Kempton was initiated into the Saraswati order of Indian Sannyasa (monks) by Muktananda, and for the next 20 years she continued dedicating her life to teaching and receiving traditional training in yoga philosophy and the teachings and practices of Vedanta and Kashmir Shaivism.

On leaving the Order in 2002, she shares, “After my teacher’s passing, I vowed to myself to return, at some point, to my human worldly life and complete the prophecies that I hadn’t completed, and



teach people (who would never go to an ashram) what I had learnt.”

During this time, the direction of her life was forever changed during an evening of celebration in rural India when she had a profound encounter with the Goddess Durga. She experienced an awareness of Shakti’s presence in both her physical and subtle body through the unfolding of kundalini, deepening her relationship with the divine feminine.

It was clear from her first teaching on the Wisdom Goddesses that her students were drawn to the strength, wisdom and beauty that the Goddesses offered and Kempton knew that her expanding relationship with them would guide her on her own path and be an integral part of her meditation teachings.

Forgoing the vertical and virtuous style sometimes exemplified by spiritual teachers, Kempton continues to teach using her American name and admits, “It works well because I like to teach in a way that is accessible and down to earth.”

Her skills as a journalist shine as she shares practical secrets of spiritual wisdom

in *Yoga Journal’s* Wisdom column, as well as her own growing collection of books. Her first book, *Meditation for the Love of It* was born from her deep motivation to offer spiritual aspirants both practical teachings on ‘how to’ meditate and the joy of accessing the inner territory of the heart, mind and body.

For more serious spiritual aspirants she created an audio programme *Doorways to the Infinite* to illuminate the art and core practice of tantric meditation from its original source: Kashmir Shaivism’s Vijnana Bhairava. Her latest book, *Awakening Shakti: The Transformative Power of the Goddess of Yoga* was written in order to bring the beauty and power of the Hindu Wisdom Goddesses to life through myth, meditation and mantra.

When asked how someone experiencing significant life challenges could benefit from the practices she teaches, Kempton replies, “Start to recognise the way you work with your own mind so that you will determine your experiences with your external life and turn inward and feel the inner support that maintains you at your centre.”

“One size does not fit all,” adds Kempton, “so I like to use a tool box and multi-level approach so that people can understand how to apply the amazing tools that were offered by the yoga sages and create deep transformation in their inner life.”

Kempton has an undeniable passion for teaching and her 40-year affair with meditation has led her to believe it is like “any other intimate relationship: it requires patience, commitment, and deep tolerance”. In addition to her books, Kempton bridges the ancient wisdom of India so that it is relevant in today’s world through teaching online teleclasses, and holding retreats in the USA, Europe and soon in Asia.

www.sallykempton.com 