The Shanti Path

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The Shanti Path

A Peace Invocation and Prayer to be Led from Darkness to Light

Asato Ma Sad Gamaya
Tamaso Ma Jyotir Gamaya
Mrityor Ma Amritam Gamaya

Saravesham Svastir Bhavatu
Saravesham Shantir Bhavatu
Saravesham Purnam Bhavatu
Saravesham Mangalam Bhavatu

Lokah Samastah Sukhino Bhavatu

Om Trayambakam Yajamahe
Sugandhim Pushtivardhanam
Urvarukamiva Bandhanan
Mrityormukshiya Mamritat

Aum Shanti Shanti Shanti
Abstract

This thesis considers the relationship between our own individual peace that we experience and the external peace of the world around us. It seeks to gain a deeper insight into this connection through a two-pronged approach. The first approach is an autobiographic narrative, drawing from the autoethography research methodology, which examines my own internal processes affecting my own individual peace. This includes conversational interviews with teachers and inspirers within my own internal journey. The second approach is an academic one, where firstly literature regarding the relationship between the inner and outer realms is considered. Religion is examined here as the external representation of the inner path. Then both the internal and external approaches are considered in their own right. The internal path is identified as the act of ‘Living Peace’ in our own lives. Qualities like service, love, balance, detachment, non-violence and compassion were all seen as fundamental to developing inner peace, regardless of the religious or philosophical framework within which these ideas are presented. Here scientific evidence is also highlighted regarding the physical and mental benefits observed through spiritual activities such as prayer and meditation. The outer realm is represented through the concept of ‘Sharing Peace’. Here education is highlighted as a system that every child experiences and therefore a powerful tool for developing peace. There are a number of aspects identified as being important to holistic peace education, including the role of the teacher, the teaching of morals, the importance of experiential learning, the function of contemplation and the role of myths and stories. The effect of trauma on children is also considered in terms of changes in their fundamental beliefs, post traumatic-stress, depression and anger. The thesis then seeks to
explore some pathways to healing from these events. Spirituality is seen to be important in post-traumatic growth and helps in coping and growing from these experiences. Ultimately the thesis comes full circle, returning to my own individual experience and journey, which highlights the underlying theme of this work. All efforts for peace are interrelated and can never be truly separated. While no work is more important than the other, we always must come back to ourselves. We as individuals are responsible for peace not only on the macro level but the micro as well. We must work to become more complete and peaceful in ourselves so we can seek to develop these qualities in the people and systems around us. The two aspects of peace, the internal and external, must be developed together. They rely on one another and if they are not cultivated simultaneously the result is unbalanced. Peace is defined as a state of balance and harmony, so if we wish to work towards it we must do so on both fronts. The thesis that follows is my attempted to do this in my own life and academic studies.
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An Introduction

Opening thoughts

Sometimes I feel like a small, budding flower trying to reach the sun. I forever seem to be stretching for something that seems infinitely far away. Something I know in my heart I will never reach no matter how fertile the soil is or how much water I receive. Whist I spend my life looking up at the glowing ball above, yearning for it above everything else, concentrating solely on the distance between us, I forget that it is simultaneously present - its warmth and radiance constantly wrapped around me in an ever present embrace, its energy pouring into and sustaining all the life around. Every moment I live I am already in the company of what I seek. But still I keep reaching higher and higher, forgetting this fact and continuing to reach for what I already have. I see only the separation, distance and isolation so these are the things I feel. If I could learn to see the warmth, radiance and connection then these would be what I experience. Is it the same with peace?

The thesis that follows is much more than the accumulation of a year’s research. The idea of peace is something we grapple with our whole lives. How we engage with ourselves, people and our environment can all be expressed in terms of peace. Around the time that social justice and peace issues really started to take precedence in my life I also started to actively engage with, and focus on, my spiritual life. As my self-awareness grew I started to see the issues, struggles and problems I faced within. I started seeing the negativity and conflict I harboured inside and then questioned how I could help others find and create peace in their social structures when I could not even create peace in
my internal ones. This paper is an attempt to consider this question in more depth - what is the relationship between our own individual landscape and the external environment in the context of peace? This question is tackled from two perspectives. The first been an examination of peace in myself and the second been an academic analysis of the relationship between internal and external peace and how this can be applied in the movement towards a more holistic harmony.

The thesis starts with an autobiographic narrative, describing my experience of peace (and more often my unpeacefulness) and an introduction to the experience of others. Through this foundation the base for an academic study is laid within which the inner and outer peace paradigm is considered with the true path to peace being considered a balance between the two. Two branches peel from the study at this point, one dealing with the internal realm of ‘Living peace’ and the other tackling the external environment of ‘Sharing peace’. This balancing act ultimately embodies the search for peace, as a state of harmony with ourselves, others and our environment.
This thesis is not intended to be considered solely as an ‘academic’ piece. Rather I try to express and explore my own intimate experiences in relation to peace in my own life. This is done for a number of reasons, explained in more detail, but it comes down to the idea of creating connection. Connection with myself, with the interviewees, with the reader and with the literature. Connection is a key to peace and this is the underlying reason for this first section. This first section aligns with the emotional aspect of human nature while the second section, which consults literature, falls more into the rational realm. These two fields are not mutually exclusive (i.e. literature is not solely concerned with the rational and my experiences are not only related to the emotional), however, with the inclusion of both, I aim to address both sides of the human experience more holistically.

This thesis does not seek to convince the reader of anything. I do not claim to hold the answers to world peace and harmony. I struggle to find serenity in my own life so far be it from me to say what is right or wrong. I am merely trying to explore my inner and outer environment while encouraging the reader to do the same. The findings and conclusions arrived at are in no way static or definitive. Re-reading these findings a few months after writing them my thoughts and ideas have evolved further. Life is about this evolution and growth and encouraging others to do the same.

This thesis is an expression of my journey and thoughts on peace, articulated over a limited period of time. I have undertaken this to not
only help in processing my own path but also in the hope that maybe it will aid others, in some small way, with theirs. It is meant as nothing more, and nothing less. Ultimately I think this is all we can do, put one foot in front of the other and when we meet others on our path, help them to do the same in any way we can, no matter how small or seemingly insignificant that assistance may appear.
Some reflections on Peace

I would like to start by proposing my idea of peace. Peace is a fundamental theme in the thesis and my view of it may differ slightly from those of the readers. So I think it is important to lay my concept of peace on the table.

According to Leo Tolstoy (1900a), if you concern yourself with the questions of science instead of the questions of life you become entrapped in the mind. I think this is the story of human existence. We pay far too much heed to what goes on in our head; our intellect and rationality dictate our existence. We let them rule our reality and how we perceive truth.

Is peace an idea that can be conceived of and rationalised? Is it possible for people to imagine a world where hate is reduced or eliminated? Most people say that this is asking too much and that it is impossible to envisage a world without hate; that peace is really just an absence of violence. But if we still wish violence on others then this is only surface peace. A veneer, a cover, a thin crust with molten rock underneath that could explode any time.

We cannot imagine a world without hate because it is difficult for us to imagine ourselves without animosity. We stand in front of the mountain range within, and see our own limited self with all its faults and it is difficult to contemplate alternative behaviour or consciousness. So we compromise, we tell ourselves to take easier routes. But this short cut, in the end, proves damaging. We do not address the root causes of conflict and we create a society that mirrors
this. We don’t start by looking at ourselves, how we interact with the world, how we create conflict in our lives, how we stop ourselves experiencing peace. We need to understand that we can not control how others act and feel. Our peace can not lie in the hands of other’s actions. We must take responsibility for our lives and see that how we live affects all those around us. This does not mean we never get angry, hurt, or hate others. We do not need to become Christ, Buddha or Rama. We do not need to reach any ‘enlightenment’ or ‘God-realisation’. This is not some removed idea of creating Heaven or Nirvana within. It is cemented in reality; it involves accepting what, where and who we are. It involves being honest and true to our self and then standing in that truth. Knowing our weaknesses and seeing our strengths, which can sometimes be much harder. Once we accept who we are, life automatically becomes more peaceful. The tension eases, we have room to move. I think it is important to mention that this is a gradual process, not something we achieve suddenly. In my experience when things happen quickly they can prove detrimental to one’s development, causing more damage than good. The same is true with the idea of peace. It is not something we can just arrive at. If we try to take shortcuts fundamental lessons are missed. Then we wonder why the building keeps collapsing. Each individual is part of the foundation of society so it falls to the individual to take responsibility for creating peace within themselves. This means not only they are more peaceful but they can help others reach some peace in their lives.

So peace is a state of being that happens on all levels of existence - individual, family, community, national and global levels. This is a crude example – in truth this scale is not something that can really be expressed. It extends far beyond the parameters given here and within
there is infinite detail. But the idea is that the levels are connected and interact with each other. If an individual in a family is unstable this can affect the whole family, and the inverse is true as well, if a family is stable while one member is unbalanced just by living within the family that member may experience some of this balance. So there is interplay in both an ‘upwards’ and ‘downwards’ direction (although there is no actual hierarchal scale here; the words upwards and downwards are merely used for descriptive purposes).

Because of this interplay the importance of individual peace can not be stressed enough. Through this process we start to learn what peace really is and this aids us in our creation of peace on the other levels. Our body and mind provide the tools we use to experience the world from. These are the aspects of the world we have the most control over so it is important to work from this point. We can still undertake outward actions that work towards peace but we must always have this internal awareness. Peace starts in the mind which is greater than words or action, as it precedes them. By working at this level the problems can be truly solved and not merely covered up or suppressed.

I feel that true Peace is a state of Harmony and Balance. There is no friction when peace is achieved. Rather there is understanding and surrender to the processes at work. Surrender doesn’t mean give in, or don’t try. It means accepting what comes to us in life; not running from circumstances we do not want to be in or trying to manipulate situations to get what we want. Both cause friction. Life presents us with something and we say “I don’t want that, give me something else”. This is not a peaceful way to interact. By surrendering on some level we attain a small amount of peace. This is seen in a number of
traditions and religions. Surrendering to God or Guru is all the same, it is the act of surrendering that is important. This helps us to achieve peace. Peace involves accepting who we are and where we are. This includes mistakes we have made and our perceived failings. Peace is a stillness, it is a silence. It is when the judgements of our self and others slip away, when we stop thinking about what we should have done, who we should have been and what we are going to do. It is the idea that by understanding one’s self fully in the existing instant, seeing one’s self clearly, we can then choose the best path from there. The path that doesn’t cause friction. I do not mean friction in terms of conflict. I am not suggesting avoiding anything. I am merely suggesting that, at the point of making decisions there are a number of factors to be processed rapidly. Some of these are on the conscious level and some are deeper. All I am proposing is that the more of these layers we see the better a decision we can make. Sometimes we need to stand our ground but it is important we understand and see the reasons behind why we stand. These motivations are what are important.

Because of the importance I believe the individual plays in the development of peace it would be hypocritical for me to not undertake my own journey towards my view of peace. I have tried to express a few of my experiences and understandings in the hope that they will further highlight the importance of everyone trying to find their own peace. There is no specific religious framework which this falls into; if something or someone inspires me towards peace then I integrate it into my life and thought process. Perhaps the best description of a religious, empirical or theoretical context for this body of work comes in the form of a poem by Ibn ‘Arabi.
My heart holds within it every form,
It contains a pasture for gazelles,
A monastery for Christian monks,
There is a temple for idol worshippers,
A holy shrine for pilgrims.

There is the table of the Torah and the book of the Koran.

I follow the religion of Love and go whichever way his camel leads me.

This is the true Faith,
This is true Religion.
Importance of my Path

It often seems we go through life asleep. We float through life quite unaware of what we are doing and who we are. Every so often we get a jolt that wakes us up; we tilt our head slightly and see things a bit differently. These shifts in perception are normally small, but their effects can be enormous. It is within the subtler aspects of life that we discover its true meaning. To find balance one does not jump from one end of the scales to the other but makes slow and small movements towards the centre, a place of stillness, where we are on an even keel. Only once this movement stops can we start to truly see and experience the world we live in. Only once we stop running from one end to the other, and stop in the middle to catch our breath can we relax. I think this is what I am trying to express in these opening chapters. I am trying to articulate my search for this balance, this longing for the space from myself, for stillness, reprieve from the noise.

I feel it is important for me to express a small portion of my own journey for a number of reasons. No human is perfect. We have all had times when we acted poorly, said things we wish we had not or treated someone in a way we knew was not fair. Sometimes we are not aware we do this, sometimes we are. Sometimes we do these things with knowledge of why we do them and sometimes we have no idea why we feel the way we do. Our human experience is very much unknown to us. We go from the soft, new-born baby, completely open to the world to the old and wrinkled elderly, who have been weathered by the winds of life, who have experienced hurt and pain, joy and happiness, seen their loved ones die and their grandchildren grow.
As we make this journey we amass experiences from our environment. We learn to make judgements about the world and compare what we are currently going through to our past experiences. These things may be natural and necessary but they also block our view, impair our sight. So we must start to understand them and where they come from, we must start to see these deeper layers of ourselves so we can actively decide whether these layers are beneficial for us or detrimental. It is a process of knowing ourselves and them becoming ourselves, and until we see this I believe it is very hard to help others. We must work on our own problems and not escape into other people’s. If we do not have the courage to face our own demons how can we ask others to face theirs? If we can not be honest with ourselves how can we be honest with others? If we know no truth in our life how can we help others find their truth? Which leads to the crux of these chapters – if I have no peace within, how can I help create a world in which there is peace?

I am not suggesting that we need to attain complete self knowledge and stillness. I am not saying that we cannot start to look at righting wrongs in the world until there is no wrong within us. In fact I feel the two are highly interrelated. To ignore injustices in the world, to turn our backs on others, only creates more friction within. Balance is the critical point here. Finding a balance between the internal and external journey. The aim is to discover peace in ourselves and then to share whatever we have found with others. Ultimately it is this process of sharing and giving that creates true growth. We cannot hope to truly overcome ourselves and our limitations by being solely with ourselves. We need to get out of our head space, get out of the ideas about who we think we are and what we want, and serve. Help others, give up our actions and serve without focusing on what we can gain
for ourselves but on how we can benefit others. This sounds easy, but in my experience it is not. We seem so hard wired to think of ourselves first, to put our needs before others. That’s why the process of service is so important. We can put ourselves aside while we undertake some action and start to see how our minds works. We see how the mind jumps back to what it wants, to how others have wronged us, to how things are unfair, to how we want to be somewhere else, to how we used to be happy or to what we are going to do when we have finished. If we can observe all this going on and continue working, to be thrown off, we start to understand ourselves better. We become more acquainted with the patterns of our minds and start to grow beyond these patterns. In helping others we help ourselves; we build peace externally and create peace within and as we build peace within it becomes easier to spread externally. I feel this is the most productive to approach the question of peace; external focus with internal understanding, internal awareness while external actions are taken, to live and interact with the world while deepening self understanding. We need to cultivate awareness of ourselves and our struggles and learn to apply what we have discovered from ourselves to others. To strive to find that balance between the internal and external.

Another reason I have included a personal section is to do with accessibility beyond the academic community. I find many papers I read are so focused on being credible that they are littered with unnecessary citations, wordings and countless other attempts to cover all bases. I feel there is some underlying negative aspects to the academic world. One will often gets credit for finding faults in the work of others as opposed to building on it. I am not saying that it is wrong to point out where others need to improve but it needs to be
done in the right way. Too often I get the feeling people have their own set ideas and agenda and that they use academia to justify this agenda. Academic work is also hard for the general public to access. Journal articles require subscription; the language used is often difficult to understand for those outside the field. Often when studies are relayed to the public it is only pieces of the puzzle, not the whole picture, perhaps they hear just the most shocking or interesting parts. It is not that I believe that academic work and writing does not have its place and surely academic journals are as good a place as any for this type of work. However, I want to make this piece (or at least part of it) more accessible and more personal. I feel that this will make the research more real for the reader and myself. Here I am not trying to be antagonistic towards academia. I am merely being honest about things I have experienced after spending the last seven years within the academic system. I think peace research, especially, has a responsibility to make its work accessible because peace is something we are all accountable for and have the power to change in our daily lives. Because of this I have opted to make my first two sections without academic reference. They are completely the experiences of myself and others I have met.

Academic studies do, obviously, have their limits. I wrote my last thesis for UNICEF on motivations behind large donations to non-profit organisations. My work there received a high academic grade but in terms of practical application it was limited. I think a lot can get lost in the translation from the academic world to implementation in the ‘real’ world. Models and theories seem so good on paper but often don’t work out quite as well when we go to use them. I am trying to smooth over this transition. For me to try to examine the relationship between internal and external peace from an academic standpoint
without studying it within my own life would not lead to a balanced, realistic or honest view on the subject from my perspective. It would mean I only presented the theory without implementing and testing those theories on myself, it would be like prescribing medicine without running tests.

In the eyes of some these sections will decrease the credibility of this study, leading it away from the more traditional academic thesis structure. However parallels exist between my experience of inner peace and the processes described in the literature I draw from. This, I hope, will highlight the importance of the individual undertaking their own personal practice towards cultivating their inner peace. So from my viewpoint it is worth sacrificing some ‘academic credibility’ in the hope that some people maybe encouraged to start, or strengthen, the development of their own internal peace.

This leads into the last reason I felt it important to include and undertake my own journey as part of this thesis. It is experience not intellectual knowledge that truly leads to our growth. You can study swimming all you like, read books, talk to people and learn theories. But unless you have practised, actually been in the water, you will not be able to swim. One of the reasons I wanted to undertake my thesis was to upskill myself so I could help others. To understand the world I live in so I could make it a better place. To do this I needed to understand myself and that is not something that can come out of a book. It is a process of starting to acquire self wisdom, gained through experience. These experiences are what help change our perspective on ourselves, the world and how we interact within it. This is what will, in the end, allow us to truly help others. By experiencing, facing and overcoming the limitations and challenges you have within
yourself you can help others do the same. If you have not faced your demons how can you ask others to do so?
Discussions on Language

I have always struggled a bit with the process undertaken by academics of defining, refining and then redefining words. I appreciate the idea and motivations that drive it, including an increase in the intellectual capacity of the reader to comprehend the author’s ideas. Movement towards correct definition means we can more accurately observe the phenomena in question and it creates a synchronisation between separate researchers examining the same process.

But I feel that this approach is missing an important piece of the puzzle. It suggests that if definitions are refined and made clear enough we will all reach some common collective and universal understanding of a term. Again I am not trying to villianise academia, much modern intellectual thought (outside of the sciences) is based on the notion that there is no definitive ‘truth’, that everything is perceived through a socio-cultural and personal lens, but I am merely suggesting that I sometimes feel we become stagnated on defining and redefining words. Perhaps the idea of collective understanding can hold true on some intellectual level; that maybe we can find the common ground on the logical plane. But I have always felt we bring so much more to whatever we do in our life, not of course excluding the process of academic study. We bring our experiences, our pain, our love and our lack of it. We bring our culture, our religion, our family. We read through the lenses of our life and no amount of careful word craftsmanship is going to take that from us.
I would like to embrace and honour that. I offer the reader the space to create their own experience throughout this thesis. Find your own meaning within the text, take your life experience and view it through those lenses. See what appears true for you. Create your own definitions. What does spirituality mean to you? How do you view religion? How have you experienced trauma? When you experienced peace inside what did it feel like?

Following this line of thought the following discussion on some of the language used is offered. Within this discourse you may find your own definition of the words used and I invite you to know that they are yours and hold them close to you while being open to their evolving and changing. When you read this paper it becomes yours, it becomes part of you. Create your own meaning and experience with this paper, because in the end it is our experiences that truly lead to our transformation not our intellectual understanding. Perhaps through this discussion we can converge on some points, constructing a shared understanding of the idea of peace and paths to it.

**Spirituality**

There were many views on spirituality found amongst the readings studied. After synthesising many readings and definitions, Mata (2010) comes to the conclusion that spirituality is a human characteristic. Miller (2003) also highlights this idea stating it is an inherent human quality within us all.
The idea of connection is consistently linked to the notion of spirituality. Palmer (1999) believes that we narrow the meaning of spirituality if we consider it in terms of God. Instead he links it to the idea of connection with “something larger and more trustworthy than our egos”. He describes it as an ancient and enduring quest of human existence. Burke, Chauvin and Miranti (2005) also link the spiritual journey to an ancient, abiding human quest for connectedness. They feel we seek this connection with our soul, one another and nature. Similarly Decker (1993) senses that spirituality relates to the faith in a power beyond our existence and connection to this life force that transcends everyday comprehension. Sheridan (2004) also comments on the importance of connection, stating spirituality is “the search for meaning, purpose, and connection with self, others, the universe, and ultimate reality”. Mata (2010) supports the theme of connection maintaining that spirituality “allows us to connect with a transcendent or high power, beyond our minds and emotions, in order to feel part of something greater than ourselves”. Vialle et al. (2008) provide one last perspective on the idea of connection describing spirituality “as connectedness to others, to nature, and to the wider cosmos as well as connectedness within the individual, integrating mind, heart, body and soul”.

The search for meaning in life and development of certain values are linked with spirituality. For Drescher and Foy (1995) spirituality includes the individual’s values and construction of their meaning and purpose in life. Sheridan, Wilmer and Atcheson (1994) also see it as the “search for purpose and meaning of life experiences”. Some authors feel that spirituality can also be viewed as finding meaning in everyday situations - that we can utilise these situations to come to a greater understanding of ourselves and that true spirituality is to
develop compassion, wisdom, connection and service in our daily lives (Burkhardt, 1994; Saint-Laurent, 2000). Mata (2010) echoes this idea saying “it [spiritually] is to search inwards and search for meaning and purpose, to seek an understanding of what really matters in life and why”. Miller (2003) believes it “moves the individual toward knowledge, love, meaning, peace, hope, transcendence, connectedness, compassion, wellness, and wholeness”. Mata (2010) also mentions the development of higher qualities and values as encompassing part of the spiritual journey and Deshmukh (2006) feels it to be a personal worldview that underlines the significance of determining the meaning in one’s life.

Iannone and Obenauf (1999) regard spirituality more as the missing piece in and of itself and Suhor (1999) feels it is simply a sense of wonder, experience (both sensory and extrasensory) and personal contact (like love and real communication). Hill and Pargament (2003) suggest that spiritual struggles could lead to considerable distress as they confront our most scared beliefs. They feel that spirituality is an “individual, subjective, emotional, inward, unsystematic, freeing expression”. Mata (2010) emphasises the importance of balance between the inner and outer worlds, stating that spirituality is the “search for quality of life and unity”.

Tolstoy (1990) felt that spiritual development was the most important aspect of life. “I need only be aware of God to live; I need only forget Him, or disbelieve in Him and I die”. Moulin (2008) compares Tolstoy’s life to that of the Hindu stages of life, with Tolstoy finally seeking to become a Sanyasi or renunciation, dedicating himself fully to his spiritual life.
Religion

Religion is often defined more rigidly and institutionally than spiritually. However, Jackson et al. (2010) feel that the meaning of the term religion has shifted. Once, they believe, it was linked to an “individual/personal experience and inherited set of practices” but now it “represent[s] an institutional, formal, outward, doctrinal, authoritarian, inhibiting expression”. Sheridan (2004) deems religion to be “an organized structured set of beliefs and practices shared by a community related to spirituality”. Canda (1989) also describes religion in the formal institutional context. For Cascio (1998) religion entails an acceptance of the values, beliefs and practices of a particular faith community while Marris and Jagers (2001) define it as “the beliefs and practices of a faith tradition and the observance of sacred ceremonies, symbols, expressions or behaviours related to the worship of a Supreme Being”.
Here I thought it might be useful to look at the relationship between these two terms. In much of the work reviewed they are often used together or interchangeably. Although many academics argue that they both have their own unique meaning, others have maintained that spirituality and religiosity are interconnected. It is hard to disentangle the two as religiosity focuses on external expressions of spirituality (Gilbert, 2000). So through exploring the links between the two terms we may gain some insight into what they mean to us.

According to Hill and Pargament (2003) there is a perceived division or polarization between the two which makes the notion of spirituality more acceptable. However, they feel that for many people they are one and the same. This links to the idea that Jackson et al. (2010) raise, that religion carries a lot of negative connotations for some people. The idea of religion is often related to abuses and scandals in institutions such as some churches and cults.

Some authors define the two terms in relation to one another. Pargament (1997) sees religion as “a search for significance in ways related to the sacred” and spirituality as “the key function of religion – the search for the sacred”. In this light Askay and Magyar-Russell (2009) feel religion is no longer a static set of beliefs or practices but a process where we search for what we hold sacred and this offers us insight into what is important in our lives. Anandarajah & Hight (2001) advocate a “universal, broad-based definition of spirituality that encompasses religious and non-religious perspectives”. Jackson et al. (2010) define the two together stating they are a “system of beliefs;
identification/personal relationship with a higher power; development of a sense of purpose, morality and social responsibility; intimate connections with others; love and value for self; and practices or behaviours viewed as powerful and helpful”.

Hull (1999) meantime proposes the idea that the relationship between spirituality and religion can be imagined as concentric circles. Spirituality is the larger circle and religion is the smaller one contained within. This is because “religion as a whole is concerned with spirituality but not all spirituality is concerned with religion”.

This last idea - that spirituality does not depend on religious involvement – continues to surface. Meister Eckhart, a fourteenth century mystic, philosopher, theologian and preacher always maintained a person can find unity with God without the church. If a person was righteous, virtuous and good then they would be these things wherever they went, be it “in church, or a desert place, or a cell” (Garner, 2009). Because Mata (2010) regards spirituality as a human characteristic, it follows that it may or may not be fostered through religion. For Pargament (1997) spirituality is universal and found in all cultures, so is not exclusively possessed by any religious group. Because of this he feels people can pursue their spirituality within or outside of the walls of religious institutions. Other authors also feel spirituality can be nourished and expressed with or without formal religious institutions (Sheridan, 2004; Sheridan et al., 1994). Moulin (2008) sees spirituality in some ways as a rejection of organised religions but in other ways dependent on their wisdom. Carr (1995) feels that through religious understanding we can aid our spiritual growth as it is the dimension of the human experience in which spiritual truths and reflections are most naturally and commonly revealed. Tolstoy believed the heart of all religions was
true but that this has been lost over time. This led him to consider that spiritual development would not flourish through belief in a religious institution. Rather one must experience one’s own spirituality, aided by religion. This idea is echoed in the bible extract “The kingdom of God is within you” which he uses as a book title (1984).

This idea of experience is central in my mind to the spirituality and religion paradigm. One old Swami said to me in a conversation “that the difference between spirituality and religion is that in religion we are told the truth and in spirituality we experience it”. There is something incommunicable about spiritual truths and there is also a dilution process that happens as they are passed from one person to another. Moulin (2008) says that “spiritual truths have to be discovered; they cannot be dictated” as “spirituality can be seen as [a] more personal, less corporate, less dogmatic and more experiential” approach to life.

For me Anandarajah and Hight (2001) bring many of these ideas together neatly.

Spirituality is a complex and multidimensional part of the human experience. It has cognitive, experiential and behaviour aspects. The cognitive or philosophic aspects include the search for meaning, purpose and truth in life and the beliefs and values by which an individual lives. The experiential and emotional aspects involve feelings of hope, love, connection, inner peace, comfort and support. These are reflected in the quality of an individual’s inner resources, the ability to give and receive spiritual love, and the types of relationships and connections that exist with self, the community, the
environment and nature, and the transcendent (e.g., power greater than self, a value system, God, cosmic consciousness).

The behaviour aspects of spirituality involve the way a person externally manifests individual spiritual beliefs and inner spiritual state. Many people find spirituality through religion or through a personal relationship with the divine. However, others may find it through a connection to nature, through music and the arts, through a set of values and principles or through a quest for scientific truth.

Study of the world's religions reveals that each religion attempts to help answer mankind's spiritual questions and that each has developed a specific set of beliefs, teachings and practices. A person's experience with religious organizations may range from extremely positive to extremely negative.

Peace

Adolf (2009) believes that peace consists of so much more that just absence of war. He feels that history has unfolded on the structure of war and the way to move away from this pattern is to focus on accounts of peace champions as part of the human narrative. He does not believe in a static definition of peace but one that changes with time and location. World peace, to him, is a collection of smaller peaces rather than a single peace, which he feels would have to be imposed by a dominant authority. He has three peace categories:

1. Individual Peace – This relates to how individuals become peaceful and stay at peace.
2. Social peace – This is how groups become peaceful and stay at peace within themselves.

3. Collective peace – This is how groups become peaceful and stay at peace with each other.

Others categorise peace within the framework of ‘negative’ and ‘positive’ peace (Boulding, 1991; Hicks, 1988). Negative peace primarily refers to systems that reduce and impede war and violence, including disarmament, international court systems, conflict resolution, security and peacekeeping forces. Weil, (1990) states that in this case peace is the dissolution and transformation of the causes of conflict. Positive peace, on the other hand, relates to imbedding the value of peace within ourselves and society and building relationships based around this principle. This to me fits with the idea of peace being a “state of inner harmony, non fragmented vision of reality” (Weil, 1990). It is to do with our relationship with ourselves, with others and with our environment.

Arweck and Nesbitt (2008) define peace from an individual perspective, stating that it is a state of emotional and mental equilibrium that comes from an understanding that we have all we need to be happy within. Within this value a number of other values are held including attention, calm, concentration, contentment, dignity, discipline, equality, equanimity, faithfulness, focus, gratitude, happiness, harmony, humility, inner silence, optimism, patience, reflection, satisfaction, self-acceptance, self-confidence, self-control, self-discipline, self-esteem, self-respect, sense control, surrender, understanding and virtue (Alderman, 1999; Arweck & Nesbitt, 2008).
I think ultimately peace is an experience and can not really be understood fully through intellectual endeavours. The experience of peace is a lot simpler I believe, than we make it out to be. Our constant intellectual efforts to understand it highlight not only its absence but also our desire to find it. When we over intellectualise it, I sometimes feel we get lost in the surface complexity without realising that it is the same truth pulsating underneath the confusion. This underlying current of peace can be seen in the simple statements of people who, in my opinion, have lived lives of peace. An example would be Mother Theresa’s saying that “Peace begins with a smile” or Gandhi’s view that we must become the peace we wish to see in the world.

Peace is a process which manifests itself in a range of different ways and at different levels of human behaviour. I believe the key to understanding peace is to stop trying to box it in and instead to allow ourselves to see it as it emerges in a wide range of different interactions. So that is what I invite you to do. Experience your own peace, not as a definition but as a feeling. It is my belief that this will aid you more than any intellectual understanding of peace.

Meditation

“Meditation is mediation between the conscious and unconscious aspects of mind” - Nobel (2005)

The concept of meditation is central to this thesis so I feel it is worth spending some time exploring the idea. The term meditation and its
perception have evolved over time. While for some it may conjure up images of ancient spiritual practices, neuroscience is now confirming its benefit alongside medicine (Cardoso & Camano, 2007). While it cannot be limited to any particular tradition, it may take place within one. Meditation can be seen all over the world in a number of forms, including the ritual dances of African tribes, the spiritual exercises of the desert fathers, and the tantric practices of a Tibetan (West, 1987). Borysenko and Miroslav (1994) say “there are as many ways to meditate as there are human beings”.

According to West (1987) meditation is a process of turning one’s awareness/attention to a single focus; this maybe an object, a concept, a sound, an image or an experience. Kristeller and Johnson (2005) also focus on the idea of it being a process of focusing attention using “repetition, and a non-judgemental rather than analytic thought process”. Deshmukh (2006) states the same idea but in a different way: “Meditation is an art of being serene and alert in the present moment, instead of constantly struggling to change or to become”. For Deshmukh the idea of being alert in the present aligns with the concept of attention; the non-judgemental thought process is not constantly struggling to change or to become. On this level it would be considered a cognitive technique based on its ability to draw attention away from thought (Ellis, 1984). However, Marlatt and Kristeller (1999) describe it as metacognitive technique as the aim is not to alter thoughts, instead to retrain awareness. This allows thoughts to be objectively monitored and it is this process that leads to the transformation of self. Vietnamese Zen master Thich Nhat Hanh observes that “the essence of meditation practice is to come back to and dwell in the present moment and to observe what is happening in the present moment” (Hanh, 1990).
According to Lutz et al. (2006) meditation must:

1) induce a predictable and distinctive state whose occurrence is clearly indicated by certain cognitive or physical features or events phenomenally observable to the practitioner.

2) have a predictable effect on both mind and body in such a way that, by inducing that state repeatedly, a practitioner can allegedly use it to enhance desirable traits and inhibit undesirable ones.

3) involve practices that are gradual in the sense that the ability to induce the intended state is supposed to improve over time, such that an experienced practitioner should meditate in a manner that is superior to a novice. From the traditional standpoint, this improvement is marked especially by two phenomenally reportable features: the acquisition of certain traits (cognitive, emotional, or physical) and/or the occurrence of certain events (cognitive, emotional, or physical).

4) be learned, usually from a meditation teacher.

Cardoso and Camano (2007) also provide a methodical set of parameters for meditation. They state it is “a self-induced state, applied through a specific technique (clearly defined), using a self focus skill, intending the ‘logic relaxation’, and presenting muscle relaxation somewhere during the process”. Logic relaxation allows the meditator to not become involved in the stream of thoughts and involves three aspects:

1) Not to intend to analyse the possible psychophysical effects.

2) Not to intend to judge the possible psychophysical effects.

3) Not to intend to create any type of expectation regarding the process.
Swami Rama (1984) feels that meditation is different to prayer in that during meditation we rise above our individual interests through the one-pointed mind that desires to understand the “desireless and unfathomable realms of life”. Prayer and contemplation are dualistic, but through meditation, unity with God can be achieved.

There are a number of different reasons for undertaking meditation. For some it is a process of relaxation while others see it as a path to spiritual growth (Kane, 2006). West (1987) states it can be undertaken with the intention of gaining greater spiritual insight or with the goal of improved psychological well being. It can be used to unify the mind, quieten the mind, ground oneself, connect the lower self with the higher faculties, foster integrity, for health reasons and to access the higher creative energies (Nobel, 2005). McLean (2001) says that fundamentally it is undertaken for the sake of inner peace.

Buddhists often meditate to awaken from ordinary consciousness and discover “the nature of existence” (Momen, 1989). Edgar Cayce stated “in prayer we talk with God, in meditation we listen” (Jahnke, 1997). Theists may meditate to know, love, and draw closer to God (Nobel, 2005) which is similar to the Sufi mystic Muhasibi, for whom “meditation is the chief possession of the mystic that whereby the sincere and the God-fearing make progress on the journey to God” (Vaughan-Lee, 1995). The Bhagavad-Gita advocates training the mind “for he who has conquered his mind, it is the best of friends; but for one who has failed to do so, his very mind will be the greatest enemy” (Nobel, 2005).
Both traditions in the East and West emphasise the importance of purification in preparation for meditation. This requires us to subdue the passions of the lower nature and cultivate virtues of the higher nature (Nobel, 2005).

Kristeller and Johnson (2005) feel there are three types of meditation used, but most fall into the first two categories:

1) Concentrative meditation is where the focus of attention is on a particular object with the goal of maintaining focus as much as possible on the particular object of attention. When the mind wanders you return to the original object of attention.

2) Mindfulness/insight meditation is where the attention is kept open, and whatever the meditator becomes aware of they observe. The process of observing requires us to suspend analytic engagement with the object of awareness which may be an emotion, a physical feeling, an image, an external object or the breath. The key to this is the absence of analytic or self-judgmental thoughts.

3) Focused/directed meditation is where the content carries significance and is intended to engage a particular aspect of self. Again the importance here is on engaging in a mindful rather than analytic way. The focus may be a particular chant, symbol or physical sensations, the aim being to increase awareness and modify the nature of cognitive or emotional response to these experiences.

Lutz et al. (2006) warn us against the trap of using the generic term meditation. By not honouring traditions as separate, with different aims, techniques and benefits, we lose their individual insights. They liken it to using the word sport to refer to all sports as if they were fundamentally the same. By examining a specific tradition we gain
that specific knowledge. Too often research bundles all meditations together to “emphasize some vague universality in human experience” (Lutz et al., 2006). They are not suggesting that all these traditions do not lead to the same end but strongly advise against starting with this assumption. This is an important point to highlight because it is a common assumption made in much of the research reviewed for this paper. While I do not think it draws anything from the study I think there is a lot of validity in the statement.

**Mindfulness**

Mindfulness ties in closely with meditation. Meditation in may ways is a process of mindfulness. It is about being present in each and every moment and fully experiencing what is happening on the physical, emotional, mental and spiritual level. It is the idea of paying attention in life as if it really mattered. It is the process by which the mind maintains awareness of itself from one moment to the next. In this regard it is a cognitive skill and it can be learnt and developed (which is the process of meditation).

**Wisdom**

The development of wisdom is a key aspect in the growth of the human. It is through this process that true change can start to take place. My understanding of wisdom is that it is knowledge that comes from experience. Because truth in these lessons has been seen and felt is the importance of them is much more visible oppose to someone
who has merely been taught intellectually the lesson. Frankl (1978) defines wisdom as “knowledge plus the awareness of its imitations”. McClain et al. (2010) characterise it as an “uncommon, common sense, an understanding of the deeply interconnected and interdependent nature of all of life”. In an interview they conducted the interviewee said “wisdom is knowing and seeing with your heart” which I connect with. Once we see the wisdom of interdependence, they believe, our faculty to open, empathise and love deepens and expands automatically.

Compassion

I always feel the Dalai Lama is a good starting point for a discussion around compassion. Being Buddhist, compassion is central to the Dalai Lama’s belief system and “makes up the moral fabric of world peace” (Gyatso, 1994). The Dalai Lama believes compassion to be an aspiration, the desire for others to be free from their suffering. It is not a passive state and is much more than empathy; he describes it as “empathetic altruism that actively strives to free others from suffering”. For the compassion to be genuine he feels both wisdom and loving-kindness must be present (Gyatso, 2005). Staying with the Buddhist perspective, Saichoo, founder of the Japanese Tendai sect, feels that the height of compassion is represented by those who take the bad upon themselves in order to benefit others (Groner, 1984). Kraft (1995) believes there is more to it than this. Compassion is not just about relieving the suffering of others. This is because the pain of the world and the personal pain we feel are interrelated, they are tied together so tightly it becomes difficult to separate them. Once we see that we are tied to all other suffering in the world we have no choice
but to act with compassion. Monroe (2002) says that the terms compassion, empathy, altruism, and other similar terms, like connectedness and compassionate love, are used interchangeably to refer to different but overlapping phenomena. McClain et al. (2010) bring the two headings above into their understanding of compassionate action stating it is “the expression of the reciprocal nature of wisdom and mindful awareness”. They also feel that compassion is a natural state of being that comes with the development of wisdom and mindfulness. These two qualities lead to the expression of generosity, carefulness, patience and diligence in our lives. To them it is simply doing what is required without expectation or requiring recognition.

_Happiness_

There are a number of definitions of happiness but as with the idea of peace I often feel that the intellectualising of the concept pulls it away from how it is experienced. I did, however, like Klamut’s (2002) view on happiness in which it is described as a state of the spirit (which encompasses the mind). This state is made up of internal peace; contentment with one’s self and one’s life; the joy of life; benevolence, and cordiality towards oneself and others; sensitivity to the beauty of nature, culture, and art and harmonious coexistence with the surroundings. To achieve this state depends on oneself and one’s environment. This description ties together a number of the ideas present in this thesis.
**Non-violence**

Arweck and Nesbitt (2008) assert that non-violence is universal love. Like compassion it is a natural state which creates harmony with the environment. According to Alderman (1999) non-violence, which occurs when “life is lived without harming or violating anything else”, is “the highest achievement of human living, encompassing respect for all life - living in harmony with nature, not hurting by thought, word or deed”. To me non-violence operates on all levels of existence – so must be practised on all levels. This means it is equally important to be non-violent with ourselves as it is with others. I think that, like compassion, it comes with a greater understanding of the true nature of the world that we inhabit. The more we start to see the connections within our environment, on whatever level, the more sense it makes to create harmony. Violence has the tendency to unbalance the environment and disrupt harmony. While I would not go as far to say I know that harmony and violence cannot co-exist, I do believe that harmony is lost when intentional and unnecessary violence occurs.

**Consciousness**

Krippner (1972) defines a state of consciousness as "a mental state which can be subjectively recognized by an individual (or by an objective observer of the individual) as representing a difference in psychological functioning from that individual’s 'normal', alert, waking state". According to Mahowald (1997):

Consciousness is a primary function and activity of the human brain itself. Mandatory for a neural basis of consciousness is the existence
of a constantly present, spontaneously generated oscillatory neural activity (rhythmic impulse or spandanam). Consciousness is simply the brain’s integration and interpretation of all information, available to it, at any given point in time. During wakefulness, the sensory information is due to environmental stimulation. During sleep, consciousness is attempting to ‘make sense’ of the internally generated brain activity.

Tononi and Edelman (1998) feel that:

Conscious experience is integrated (each conscious scene is unified) and at the same time it is highly differentiated (within a short time, one can experience any of a huge number of different conscious states). Integration is a property shared by every conscious experience irrespective of its specific content: Each conscious state comprises a single scene.

Peace Education

Arweck & Nesbitt (2008) understand peace education as simply that. Education that promotes peace. It is where knowledge is passed on that will help understand, achieve and maintain peace. They also believe it encompasses the development of “critical and reflective capacities to apply knowledge in order to control, reduce and eliminate forms of violence”. They feel it comprises both negative and positive peace concepts with the empowerment of the children being at its heart.
My Methodology

I think the overarching attempt here has been to find some balance in my paper, and myself. To allow space for the rejection of some of the negative aspects of academia while not letting any animosity towards it dominate my thought. I’ve tried to find the place of individual experience in the greater environment, the relation between my poetic expression and rational thought; I have searched for the connection between the practical and the imagination, the academic and the experiential.

Autoethography – Discovery through narrative

While the idea was to create a more personal piece that was somewhat free from the bonds of laying down a set ontological or epistemological point of view, I still feel without a description of my research technique, the work, as a whole, feels as though it is missing something. The technique I have used, autoethography, is generally placed in the constructivist - interpretivist or critical – ideological paradigms (McIlveen, 2008). While certain tenets of these schools of thought do resonate with me, I would not say they wholly encompass my perspective, which in itself is constantly changing. While I may believe in some form of ultimate Truth, God or Spirit I also believe that each of our journeys towards that truth is different. For me, this is the reason autoethography was selected.

Autoethography is a reflexive method in which the researcher draws from their own experience (Delamont, 2009). They consciously
embed themselves in both practice (which in this research takes the form of the initial chapters on my journey and my conversations) and theory (which is the academic literature review that follows) (McIlveen, 2008). McIlveen describes it as an intimate autobiographic account that allows us to clarify the phenomenon under investigation. Smith (2005) says that through the use of this technique we can draw on both the researcher’s experiences (my journey) and the experiences of other participants, which in this case is the experience of others working for the development of internal and external peace, both in themselves and others (my conversations). Here it is the narrative that provides meaning, the autobiography that we can reflect on. quotes According to Nietzsche, “however far man may extend himself with his knowledge, how ever objective he may appear to himself—ultimately he reaps nothing but his own biography” (McIlveen, 2008). For Hoshmand (2005) there are three types of research in which narrative inquiry is acceptable for research and my research falls into two of these categories. The initial section of my experience is what Hoshmand calls a descriptive report of a privately constructed self account, while the conversations fall into storied accounts of experiences constructed from interviews.

When using narrative for research Morrow (2005) highlights three indicators of quality:

1) It must be a faithful and complete version of the author’s experience.
2) There must be a transformation seen in the author through self-explication.
3) It must inform the reader of a happening they may have never experienced or that they may not experience, or an experience they
have gone through (now or in the future) but have been unable to share.

When the narrative is coupled with theory it allows the reader to construct their own sphere of meaning, creating their own validity (McIlveen, 2008). There are some obvious criticisms that come to mind here, including subjectivity, lack of ‘analytical’ data and inability to generalise, but I think that what McIlveen (2008) says is true regarding the importance of truly understanding a single case and its ability to stimulate new outlooks and generate personal meaning for the reader. Bell (1980) states that any confusion regarding the assessment of behaviour in psychiatry is not due to its unscientific nature but rather the nature of knowledge. Physical medicine employs empirical knowledge while behavioural medicine tends to be metaphoric and therefore more subjective. There will always be “difficulty standardising metaphoric knowledge as different individuals favour different symbolic representations of subjective phenomena depending on their own personal experiences”. Given the topic of the thesis and the importance of the personal experience in the generation of internal peace, I feel that this style of qualitative research is the most effective and will offer the most benefit in terms of illustrating the importance of the internal realm and offering the reader the opportunity to develop their own relationship between their inner and outer environments.
My Journey – Thoughts, Ideas, Experiences

Darkness

It seems strange to have a section on darkness in a paper on inner light. But they are so closely interlinked that you cannot have one without the other. They define each other. One can not hope to understand and live in light without experiencing and knowing the dark. Experiencing the horrors of war allows us to know we desire peace. We must go through this phase to know it is not what we want out of life, that we need more. Pain is perhaps one of the greatest teachers in life. By going through it we are challenged, stripped down, forced to examine ourselves and change. If there was no pain or hurt where would the motivation come to change? I have experienced this darkness and still do. I am in no way claiming to be free from this veil but I thought it would be a good place to start, as it is often this pain that triggers the movement towards healing.

I remember having a children’s fable book read to me recently. It was based around a Hindu text where the Gods lose their strength as Indra, the king of the Gods, insults a Sage. In order to regain their immortality they must churn the ocean –to do so they seek the assistance of the demons, the king of snakes and Vishnu (who brings the mountain to them to churn the sea with). Once they begin the churning a poison gas is emitted from the sea, which would have proved fatal had Siva not come to their aid. Only then do the good things start to come to the surface, including the Amrita (the elixir of life).
Why does this relate to me, my thesis, or you – the reader who is now a few paragraphs into this and wondering whether it is worth continuing? This fable is used as a parable for the human mind; on the surface it seems settled, perhaps a bit murky. However, if you give it a bit of a stir things start to come to the surface. For me the significance of this myth is that within everything (including ourselves) are both positive and negative qualities, both light and dark. When we start to delve into our own nature and examine ourselves and who we are, we will see both sides of this coin.

Now, I remember reading somewhere about the Dalai Lama and his meditation routine, which was some four hours or more a day. At that point I had recently discovered meditation and felt that it was certainly the path for me. If I wanted to have insights like the Dalai Lama I needed to meditate like him. So I started waking up in the early hours of the morning to do my routine, which in hindsight seems to be extreme. The practice included a lot of very advanced techniques I had read about and where far above what I was ready for. This was a serious process of self exploration.

I think I lasted some two weeks. Then something clicked in me. It was strange and very hard to describe. I was as if something bubbled up inside me, something that had always been there but I had never paid much attention to or never really been aware of. I suddenly felt this void within me. Like a black hole. It sucked any light in. I just felt numb, everything was dark. My existence was without light. I looked around me and saw no point, no meaning. All my thoughts, words and deeds seemed pointless, all getting swept up into the churning white water, hurled over a waterfall into a dark, bottomless, sinking void. I saw this void around me and I felt it within me. Sometimes getting out
of bed seemed like an exercise from times when it was necessary for survival. Those days seem long gone now, so people are faced with the question of why and instead of asking this question they merely distract themselves from it. Life seemed to be a series of unfulfilling moments. Constantly working towards the next thing that I believed would make me happy and then reaching that goal and seeing nothing changed. I was still searching, still incomplete, still broken.

Perhaps the most damaging thing for me at that time was I saw myself sucked down into that void as well. My individual self, my body, my mind, was pulled down into this abyss and disappeared into the darkness. I saw that all those things in the end meant nothing and ultimately would slip away into the darkness. This was the hardest thing for me to see, I felt that there was no real point living, or at the least there was nothing that would come from living. That no matter what happened I would end up falling away into the void. Why did it matter whether it happened now or in 50 years? I was unbalanced and not ready to see this aspect of reality at the time and so it caused a downwards spiral in my life.

I had seen what I perceived to be my insignificance and unimportance. My life lost meaning. I stopped caring whether I continued living and sometimes the only thing that made me feel alive was pulling myself close to death. I would paddle out into big surf on deserted beaches just to try to feel something again. I felt numb to my life, the world and others. Maybe that was the hardest part, the numbness. The pain wasn’t enough to cause me to take action but it was enough to create indifference within. Whether I got out of bed or not, it just didn’t seem to matter. It was a difficult place to be in.
It taught me a lot though. It showed me the darker sides of myself and how I interact with them. Perhaps one of the most interesting sides of this darkness is the fact that there is a part of me that enjoys the pain on some level. I didn’t want to let go of it. There was something comfortable and familiar about it. There were times I had the option of starting to pull myself out of the hole, and time and time again I choose to sink back down. It was in some ways easier to live in the darkness. I didn’t have to try, I could wallow in my pain, get caught up in my own self pity. It was a strange side of myself to see. The side of me that liked to see myself in pain. I think this is perhaps something we all have within us. Where exactly it comes from I do not know but I believe it to be there.

Another fragment of myself that I became acquainted with over this period was the side of me that always wants to escape, to get away. Perhaps my whole life the trend of running and fear of commitment can be seen. Constantly changing what I wanted to do, where I wanted to be and who I wanted to be with. One thing I saw quite clearly that was that although I had thought it was the external factors I needed to get away from, this was actually an internal process. There was something about this body and mind I inhabited that made me feel very trapped. I felt stuck here, sometimes to such a degree I felt sick. My impulses told me I needed to leave - this job, this person, this town. But really this was a much deeper desire to escape the claustrophobic limitations I felt from living through this experience. I have always found it hard to accept who I am. I have high ideals and expectations of myself and who I should be; when I fail again and again to meet these goals I feel I am not being true to myself. It is as though I know who I really am, what I should do and how I should
treat others, but how I do all these things is far removed from this true self. I don’t have the courage, strength, will to live in this truth and this makes me feel trapped. Trapped by my weakness, trapped by my desires, trapped by my greed.
Meditation, Yoga and Life on the Ashram

These are not things I really claim to know too much about. They have helped me and aided my growth and self understanding but I would in no way maintain that I fully understand them as a process. I am not a teacher of these things on any level. These are things that helped pull me, to a degree, from my darkness or at least start to understand it better. That is one of the reasons I felt sharing some of my thoughts and ideas was more appropriate. I know I have very little inner peace, I have started to see my limitations, to see the things within me that create conflict. These are some of the tools I have found useful in this exploration of myself. Even though I still have far to go on my journey towards finding some peace I would like to give the reader an idea of how these systems can assist their growth. These are by no means the only way to grow but they are the ones I have experienced so they are the only ones I feel I can talk about.

Perhaps to start with I will explain what an Ashram is. Ashrams are an ancient system of living, seen all over the world. The name may be different but the idea is much the same. It is a group of people living together, working towards self understanding and spiritual growth. They give of themselves to learn about themselves. They are not motivated by materialistic goals, often serving a god, the certain way of life, a guru or something higher than themselves. This allows surrender of the individual’s desires and wants to carry out a higher work. It offers a supportive environment, where one can concentrate on becoming a more complete and peaceful member of society. It facilitates self awareness and positive action. The Ashram also provides a chance to remove ourselves from our environment, which I think is critical. It gives us some distance from the patterns we have
built up in our lives with people, places and roles we play. We are able to reassess how we conduct ourselves and because we are not so involved in our ‘outside’ lives we often gain new insight and perspective. The environment there is also geared towards change so when we see these aspects of ourselves we feel encouraged to create change. In this way it fast tracks our growth. This does not mean it is an easy process. Creating change, whether you are in a supportive environment or not, is difficult. Our patterns of how we deal with life and the situations it throws at us are very strong and a true desire to change is needed. This desire can be fuelled by learning to see ourselves more clearly. When we start to really see the true motivations behind our actions and realise they are not as selfless as we believe we are inspired to change.

Meditation is something I have found to be incredibly challenging and also particularly useful. It comes in a number of shapes and forms, and, although it is normally associated with sitting cross-legged with the eyes closed, it is certainly not limited to this. It is more about a state of mind than the particular technique you use. It is about cultivating awareness, observation, concentration and balance. It is a processes of learning to bring these aspects into your daily life and using them for your self understanding and growth. You learn to observe and become aware of how your mind, body and emotions react to different situations. By not becoming too involved in the things you observe, you are able to remain balanced. This allows you move on to the next thought or emotion that rises without become involved in the previous one. It is a constant practice of becoming aware, observing and letting go of internal processes while keeping in balance throughout. This allows us to start to see parts of ourselves we were not aware of. It deepens our self knowledge through actual
experience of the arcane layers of ourselves. It reveals new insights into our thought process and emotional patterns. By starting to see these patterns we can begin to move beyond them.

This is where the idea of service plays such a large part in Ashram life. The idea of Karma Yoga is proposed in The Bhagavad-Gita but is by no means limited to the Hindu tradition. It is the practice (and it is a practice because most of the time you are not doing it) of selfless service with meditative awareness. This means that in every action you take you become completely aware of everything that goes on within you, including thoughts, emotions and physical reactions. At the same time you have no expectations of reward and no thought of the benefits you get from doing the job. In real terms Karma Yoga is a method of engaging with life while keeping a focus on the internal processes. What is interesting about having this focus in your life, while living in the Ashram, is it highlights aspects of yourself. You see how you react to getting certain jobs or how certain types of people can create responses within you time and time again. As you clean toilets you think about how you are better than this, or how you end up doing this job more than anyone else. As people go back for their second helping at dinner you start to think about how greedy they are or you end up getting up and serving yourself some more even though you’re not actually that hungry because you don’t want to miss out. It is a process of learning to use everything in your life as a way to learn and grow. By offering your services up, acting selflessly, we do not buy in to the thoughts we have so much. Even though we may not want to undertake a certain job, we do so - and observe our thoughts and feelings as we do it with out getting too caught up in it. This allows us to learn more and more about ourselves. It helps us see the true reasons behind our actions. Instead of just avoiding things we
do not like we start to find out why we dislike them and instead of rushing into things we like we start to see what we are truly trying to satisfy by doing so.

Asana and Pranayama, which are the more commonly known forms of Yoga (postures and breathing exercises respectively), have also helped in my search for peace. These help create an understanding of the physical body and the breath. They teach you to know your limits and work within them. They allow you to feel more open and relaxed in yourself. They are a meditative process in movement. They highlight different aspects of yourself to the Karma Yoga and the formal seated meditation. They create a strong feeling of balance and stability within.

But Yoga is so much more than postures or breathing exercises. It is a way of interacting with life. Yoga means ‘to yoke’ or ‘to join with’; it relates to living in unity with life. It is to see and understand your place in the world and play the role you are given without thought of yourself. It creates an attitude towards life that is void of internal conflict. It is a slow and gradual process of working with yourself, body, mind and emotions. You begin to see how they are interconnected and interrelated. You see how they become triggered and set off a chain reaction within. Through this understanding you can learn to break this chain. Yoga is a path to freedom - freedom from your reactions, freedom from your patterns and freedom from limitations. It is a mindset, a lifestyle and living method of creating peace within.
Holding On and Letting Go

One thing I often hear people talk about a lot is the idea of attachment. That we are all too attached to ourselves, people and things; that to truly be happy we need to live in a state of detachment. For me, the idea of holding on and letting go is more appropriate. I do not feel that I am at a stage where I am ready to give up all my attachments, but I know I hold on many of them too tightly. I find the concept of constantly being detached a hard idea to grasp but the idea of trying to let go is more palatable. Perhaps they mean the same thing, but I have just found that this wording sits better with me.

Life is a flow that is not something that can be altered. Time will pass whether we like it or not. People and things will come and go. Life is not static but dynamic. There are aspects of the world we live in that we cannot change, like the fact that we must all at some stage die. I was once told an analogy that compared life to flowing water. We float down the stream of our lives whether we like it or not. When life is going well we are happy to be in the water, the gentle bobbing can be relaxing and time flows along without trouble. However, it is in the rapids that problems occur. We try to grab the sides, struggling to holding onto a branch that overhangs the rapids, prolonging our time in this troubled water, sometimes pulling us down, smashing our head against the rocks, still we hold on, still we continue to drown ourselves by holding on. If we could just let go we would pass through the rapids into new water. We do not know what sort of water it will be but if we can learn to flow with the stream and relax in the process, rapids and calm patches will come and go. We start to see that neither is forever and by trying to fight the flow we only make things worse for ourselves. We fear the unknown. We would rather fight the rapids
we are in than let go and see what is around the corner. It is this holding on that causes so much of our pain, so much of our conflict.

People hold on to their ideas, beliefs, views, religions, countries, race and anything they believe makes up their identity. We are so afraid to let go of what we believe makes us who we are because we do not know what we will be left with. We may fear there is nothing really there or it maybe we fear we will not like what we see when we start to strip ourselves down. It’s a hard thing to do, to step into the unknown aspects of ourselves. We become so comfortable holding on we hardly even notice all the tension we create in ourselves. To step out of the secure platform into the darkness is a big ask. But it’s an important step to our development towards peace within. If we are unwilling to move and grow as life intends us to, if we are determined to stand our ground (not out of a knowledge that it is right thing to do but out of fear) even when it is time to move, then we create friction in our lives. We create conflict. We create it in ourselves and with others.

This is something we have all done in our lives to some degree. A simple example is that of the relationship that we know is not working for us or the other person. We feel it is wrong and is causing damage to both involved. But even in seeing and knowing this we let it continue – perhaps because we have become comfortable having someone round and we do not want to step back into that life of being ‘alone’ or we fear we will not find anyone else. We can feel the same thing towards ideas like God. We hold onto our concept of the transcendental. We become comfortable and settled in these ideas. We build them up around us. We start to identify with them. They become part of who we think we are and start to dictate how we see the world.
We do not like these to be challenged because we believe them to be parts of ourselves. We start to lose perspective on what they really are because we do not know who we really are. Out of fear of the unknown sides of ourselves we have created a self of ideas and thoughts. It is not who we really are but it appears more comfortable than finding out, so we cling to it. We stop exploring and only start justifying.

There is also an aspect of ourselves that holds onto our suffering and pain. I think within us there is a part that feels comfortable with the hurt we inflict on ourselves. Maybe it is because we feel we deserve the pain, maybe it is because we are used to it and do not know any different or maybe it gives us an excuse not to try. We can just give in to the pain and it does not matter so much if we fail. In many ways I think it is an easier choice to stay in our pain. If I am hurt and apathetic to the world and what I do, I no longer have to strive so much. If I fall short I can just use it as an excuse. It is not until we start to learn to let go of this pain, to allow ourselves to move on, that we really start to grow. Until we learn to use the pain as a motivation for change instead of an excuse for stagnation, we will always be trapped. We can not have peace if we wish harm. We need to learn to forgive ourselves and allow ourselves to become free from our own negative patterns and processes.

In the end I believe we have to let go of everything we know. When we die, whatever comes next, we must give up this existence. This can either be a smooth process or a painful one. We can either let go willingly or have it ripped from our grasp. Many people have stated that life is preparing us for death, whether this is true or not I do not know, but I think it further highlights the importance of this letting go.
We will all have to do it some day to the ultimate degree so why not get some practice in now? Death maybe the best or worst experience of a human’s life, with heaven and hell being expressions of this idea. If we can learn to start letting go now this process will become easier. Our lives now also become easier – we become more relaxed, calmer and more able to flow with life. We start to see the limited way in which we once viewed the world and how much of the time we spent justifying our views to cover our fears. We can then start to face these fears and unknown aspects of ourselves. We can learn to let go of the branch we cling to over the rapids within and see what the river has in store for us. The next time the stream picks up speed again we will most likely hold on again, but again we let go and again and again. It is a process. We can not suddenly live detached from the world but must learn to let go at every chance we get. We will not always be successful but we just keep working towards learning to flow without get hung up, without creating conflict.
The Mind and Heart

The Heart and Mind are two very interesting tools humans use to perceive this experience. We often have very different views on the world, on what we should do and how we should act. The mind seems to be louder, better versed, more logical than the heart. The mind has persuasive arguments and complex reasoning behind its actions. It can back up what it suggests with facts, dates, past experiences and ideas for desired outcomes in the future. The heart on the other hand is that quiet knowing you have within yourself about what is right. It is so easy to ignore, or create an argument against. We can easily block it out all through our life. We listen to our mind more and more, and by doing so we become less and less attuned to our heart. The subtle voice gets softer and softer and we become less accustomed to listening for it.

As individuals and a society we have placed the most importance on the development of logic and reason and placed little or no importance on the expansion and connection with our own inherent knowledge of what is true. The main problem with this is that we do not fully understand ourselves, our mind or its process of decision-making. I have already explained my own self discovery of the sides of mind that actually enjoy our pain and suffering. But one only really needs to spend a little time observing one’s own mind to see another aspect of the mind that warrants some distrust. We have all had the experience of wanting to obtain something. However, once we possess it we realise it is not what we want or is not as we expected it to be. Our mind turns to other things; it keeps seeking other avenues for its fulfilment. This process is something we can see throughout our life. We follow a path laid out by rational thought, but once we arrive at
the destination it is not what we believe it to be. It is not the place our mind told us it would be. So we turn to something else. How do we spend our lives - living in this process of rationalising what we think we need or want, achieving it and then not being satisfied in the way we believed we would - without seeing that there is something wrong with this picture.

I believe this is a major source of conflict in our lives. This pull between what we know is right and what we justify as being right. We feel our actions must have a logical and understandable reason behind them; we try to hold onto the idea of control in our lives. Because of this need we put our trust in our mind. It provides the feelings of safety we need with its detailed reason for every action. But our mind may not be working in our best interest. It is a tool that can be our best friend or worst enemy. If we do not fully understand the mind then to trust in it fully is what is truly illogical. There are darker sides to ourselves and by placing complete faith in our intellect we give these darker parts licence to have some sway in our lives. The heart on the other hand, our feelings and intuition, are not tainted in the way our mind is. The heart doesn’t cheat us, it is honest. It doesn’t take into consideration what we ‘want’ or what we will get out of a situation. It only tells us what is right. What decision is best for us in a way we probably do not yet see or understand.
Judgment

This relates closely to the Heart and Mind paradigm. This may in fact be one of the main differences between the two. Our mind is in a constant state of judgement, whereas the heart does not judge. For me I felt it important to have a small section on this because a large part of my journey has been to start to let go of the judgements I have about myself and learn to be easier on myself. It is still something I am not terribly good at but I have seen improvements, and with those improvements I’ve seen large changes in my outlook. This too is a process of learning to accept who we are and being patient with ourselves. Once we start to separate ourselves from our mind and thoughts, and see them more for what they really are, the judgements we make of ourselves become less important.
Surrender and Accepting

These ideas seem important in the movement towards internal peace. I have already mentioned the importance of the idea of surrender. It relates very closely to the concept of accepting because the more we surrender to life the more we can accept it in all of its complexity. This is part of the power of surrender, it helps us accept. Surrender isn’t an excuse to give in or to have no personal responsibility. Only once we accept where we are can we take the next step forward from that place. We begin to act rather than react. We stop trying to be somewhere or someone else. We stop worrying about what we do not have or what we need, and work with what we have. We give up these ideas of what we think we need and accept what we get.

People often think this means we end up in a much worst situation in the physical realm. In my experience, and in the experience of others I’ve talked to, this isn’t the case. The more we give up the need for something, the more it comes into our lives. The more we struggle to hold something the more we push it away. This is often seen in relationships with others. The more one person holds on the other the more that person wishes for distance.

These ideas seem crucial to peace because surrender of some of our individual comforts is necessary for the development of peace. On the individual level we need to make these sacrifices for our growth. To help us realise that we do not need certain things to be fulfilled. On a societal level there are also sacrifices that need to be made to adjust how we live together and interact with one another. The focus of society needs to shift if we are to start to move towards more peaceful
waters. The individual focus needs to be shifted to the collective focus. Not just of other people but as a way of interacting with life. We need learn to give of ourselves and be happy in doing so. It is only in giving that happiness can occur and we will start to become peaceful. It is once we can discern that we are a small part in a bigger wheel and learn to surrender and accept where it takes us that life becomes easier.

This is my journey, this is all our journeys, I believe. To learn to live in line with life. To learn to be free of the destructive conflict within and to share this with others. To search for peace within ourselves and then help others recognise their own peace in themselves.
Other Experiences on My Path to Peace

I recently attended a weekend workshop targeted at men. It was about the reconstruction of what it means to be a man; about the perception we have of men, about how we relate to ourselves and how we express our emotions. The most powerful thing about the weekend for me was hearing other men’s stories about their lives, love and pain. It was an experience where I really connected with these people and was able to see past the exterior into the interior. What I saw was myself. In all these people I started to see myself. It was the common struggle we faced, the same problems and fears dressed differently. Isolation, fear of the unknown, inability to truly express emotions, anger and loss seem mutual threads running between us. It humanised others for me a lot more.

I discovered some interesting things about myself. One of the main things is that my ‘outward’ portrayal of myself is perhaps the opposite of how I feel inside. It’s almost like the attributes I wish I possessed are the ones I show on the outside. For example, I think most people assume I’m a laid-back, relaxed person. I have long hair, a beard and I surf - but in truth I am much the opposite. I have an intense need to be in control, I won’t talk unless I know what I want to say. Unless I can sound intellectual or as though I actually have my life in order, I don’t speak because these are things I feel I lack. I like to talk about high philosophy, death and the afterlife in a way that makes me seem wise in these matters when the truth is I am scared and clueless. I need to feel in control because on a deep level I know I have no control, like a cork floating in the ocean. I try to become the on the outside the person I wish I was on the inside.
I also saw how my emotions affect me. They either control me and I become lost in them or I suppress them. Its either a bonfire or I am suffocating the flame. There’s no controlled release, I feel uncomfortable expressing myself because I do not feel I know how. Also I noticed how uncomfortable I feel after opening up to people. The actually opening and feeling connected is beautiful but afterwards I feel embarrassed and awkward. I close up after opening, shut down to people. This is how I deal with a lot of my emotional issues, instead of facing them I close to them. If someone hurts me, I switch off to them; if I feel uneasy around someone I ignore them.

I also saw the victim mindset I have. My mother is a rescuer and so often when things get difficult I turn to her instead of working it out for myself. In many ways I have become lazy; always looking for a hand up. It also means I am unsure about my capabilities. I realised I do not need a father anymore only a dad. That is to say I do not need an adult telling me how to live and who to be, but I need someone older, to share with me, be honest with me and love me. I also need to accept myself and be gentle with myself, to hold myself like child and love myself like one. To accept I’m learning and will make mistakes, to laugh and be light on myself.

The final thing I really learned on the weekend and wanted to share was the power of listening to heal. That giving answers and filling space with conversation does not help. People need space to figure their life out for themselves and by listening, truly listening, we allow them to do this. They start to join dots and see connections, finding their own way to the answers they seek which is ultimately what we must all do. I think, in part, that is what the next section offers space for; the way of others - their expressions, experiences and truths.
My Conversations on Peace

I undertook a series of highly informal, conversational interviews. The sampling was possibly closest to the non-probability technique of convenience sampling (Teddlie & Yu, 2007). However, this term doesn’t really cover how I came to these interviewees. Most of them were selected because I knew them and had been taught by them (all with the exception of Peter Crompton). The sampling was somewhat selective and idiosyncratic in its nature. They were people who had influenced my journey in some way and I think that is what I wanted to show by including them. The effect we have on those around us, the effect these people’s internal balance had on me (which is their external). I have not transcribed and coded the interviews; I have merely listened to them and drawn my meaning from them. Each interview has influenced my perspective and the direction of my writing. The effect these people have on me has inspired me to develop similar qualities.
Swami Muktidharma Interview – Peace, Children and Education

Swami Muktidharma has been practising Yoga for over 40 years, 16 of those years were spent in India living with his Guru Swami Satyananda. I was lucky enough to live with him for three months at the Ashram for which he is Acharaya, in Golden Bay, New Zealand. People with the depth of insight and awareness that Mukti have are rare to find in the world and it was an honour to live with him.

Our interview was by no means a typical research interview. I had planned what would have been considered a semi-structured interview, however, 45 minutes into our interview he looked at the recording device and realised he had not turned it on. Without hesitating he looked at me and said “I understand all the questions you want to ask me and I will synthesise them all”. He then lectured me for half an hour on how he viewed peace and how to bring this change in society. It was this conversation (one way as it may have been) that provided the direction of much of the research in this thesis.

There are three main parts to his interview I wanted to examine and expand upon. His view on what peace is, how it can be achieved and the importance of children and education in the creation of peace.

What is Peace?

Mukti describes peace as a “state of being”. To him it is way of viewing and interacting with the world that is balanced and...
harmonious. It comes from understanding that existence stretches beyond our life time and seeing that we are not isolated from the world. He describes the interdependence of life using the relationship between humans and trees. We breathe in oxygen and breathe out carbon dioxide while the trees turn the carbon dioxide back into oxygen. It is a simple idea but it helps him get his point across - that every action has an effect on another aspect in the ecosystem and all parts of this system rely on one another in some way.

He also stresses the importance of seeing peace as a process, a work in progress. It is not something that just happens - “peace is not something that comes all of a sudden – it is a product of transformation” – and it is this process of transformation that we need to focus on. He feels that the place to begin this journey is within the individual. “Peace starts internally with the process of self transformation”. Working with individuals is important to Mukti because we are part of the society, making up its base. He says the quality of society is determined by the quality of the individuals.

This is why he believes that peace can really only be achieved by working at the personal level. He states that it is a long road to self transformation - “you may experience glimpses of peace but this doesn’t mean you become peaceful. This is a long process … it’s a spark given to you for transformation”. He feels we need to work towards becoming peaceful in our own lives, then whatever action we undertake becomes a peaceful one.
How can we Work Towards Peace?

“So it is clear here we need ways to change the individual”

Under the ‘how’ section Mukti again highlights the idea that the scope of existence is wider than we think and that it is “impossible to achieve perfection in one life”. Because of this he feels it is important to see life and evolution from a wider point of view. He is talking about the idea of reincarnation, the continuing flow of life after death. However, he brings it back to a pragmatic view, putting across his idea in a different, dogmatic-free way. He says that things will not change in one generation; we have had many generations in the “darkness” and so it will take some time to change. He doesn’t feel change can crystallise in one generation.

Another idea he emphasised was that we need to work with the realities of the world. This is the idea of being honest and practical when tackling the issues around peace. He said “forget about total harmony here because this isn’t heaven here”. If we don’t accept the current situation it makes it hard to move forward – Swami Mukti feels it is important to deal with issues like poverty and hunger as well as the internal issues. He believes if people are hungry they will commit crimes to feed themselves and the mind will not listen when there is no food in the stomach. If people are in this position you can not preach to them to change. He does not believe that charity is the answer to these problems, instead he feels it is important to offer opportunities. He gives the example of The Sivananda Math in Rikhia India. Here Swami Satyananda set up a charitable institution to facilitate the growth of weaker and underprivileged sectors of society, providing empowering opportunities like education, medical access,
farming assistance and equipment, scholarships and more. They have been working there for over 30 years now and the changes in the community are incredible. The once poor village is now completely changed. The children have access to computers and education, the people farm their own food and no one goes hungry, and people rely on themselves. Swami Mukti is inspired by what Swami Satyananda did here for the 90,000 people in Rikhia. He feels Swami Satyananda knew he could not change the whole world, so he did what he could do where he was.

He then also brings this idea of wealth distribution back to the westerners. Why can we not distribute wealth he asks? The answer is within. He believes the individual is derogating. Our ego and greed grow; we want things for ourselves, so people suffer. We do not see deeper within so our perception of wealth is misguided. We produce harmful things for our society, we have material wealth but we are not happy, we want more. There is a contraction, the amount we get does not relate to how content we are in the world.

There are two key ways Swami Mukti mentions to create a more peaceful society. The first is through leadership. He feels that leaders need to change. They need to become more aware and “conscious about qualities like compassion”. He believes that most of our leaders are not well balanced people so it is no wonder our society is out of balance. The second road to change is through education. Children are different from adults according to Swami Mukti as they imbibe instead of understanding. “Imbibing is what transforms not understanding”. It is for this reason he believes children are critical - He says we can understand many things but this does not change us (for example we know smoking can kill but we continue to do it).
Here he brings to light the limit of intellectual mind and the need to acknowledge “more aspects of our mind”. He gives the example of the receptive as opposed to the rational part of the brain. Through working with children and education we will start to work towards peace. “You cannot change the whole world but you can put your own gain wherever you are”.

Education and Children

“We have to work with children because they will be the redeemers of our society”

Swami Mukti deems education to be one of the seeds for creating balance in society. He stresses the importance of training young people because as we get older patterns become fixed and the mind becomes stiffer. An old twisted tree is harder to straighten than a young sprout.

What is needed is a “revolution in education”. He says that “the way education is understood now is the way of physical survival, not transformation” and that we “need to provide children the conditions to grow in a healthy way”. On the whole parents and society do not understand how to educate because we have not been educated properly either. To break this cycle and create change in society we must “find the real propose of education”. This needs to be done not only from an intellectual point of view. Swami Mukti believes that we do need to learn to live and function in society. But to read and write, get a job and earn money is only a small part and the creation of
wealth and should not be the goal or the measure of the educational system’s success. Educational systems need to teach children to understand themselves, teach them to manage psychological problems and deal with challenges. This side of education is the most important and it is overlooked in most educational systems currently. He compares this to the ancient Indian educational systems where children spent their first 25 years living in an Ashram-like school environment, learning maths, reading and writing as well as Yoga, meditation and self enquiry. One example he gives of the benefits of this is that through Yoga the life of the pineal gland, which normally starts to die around the age of eight, is extended by at least 10 years. When the pineal gland starts to die sexual desires start to appear. If this happens when the child is younger it can cause imbalance. Children get the physical sexual desires but they are not psychologically ready for them. Through this style of holistic education this imbalance can be avoided.

Swami Mukti ties the idea of education back to his first method of creating peace, leadership. It is this lack of proper education which renders leaders incomplete. They study but they do not understand the deeper aspects of themselves. “They (the children) will be the leaders of the future” so by educating them in a peaceful, holistic and balanced way we are creating leaders in the future with these qualities. If children experience this sense of balance within they will want to pass it on to others. They will inspire others to change rather than imposing themselves. Then they will teach their children and their children will teach theirs and through this cycle we can build the foundations of a peaceful society, which is peaceful individuals.
Peter Crompton Interview – Work with Holistic Education

Ficino School in Auckland is based on the successful model of the St James Independent Schools in London. It is named after the Fifteenth Century Renaissance Philosopher, Marsilo Ficino. They have a holistic approach to education that encourages a child’s growth as a person. They are a full primary school running from Year 1 through to intermediate, with 117 students. I had a chance to meet with Peter Crompton, the school’s principal, and look around the school.

Peter started off running through the basic school curriculum, which he says is broad but they penetrate the subjects with as much depth as they can. They work within the National Curriculum offering maths and English. Science is called nature studies for the first four years. Here they concentrate more on observation and connecting with the elements – earth, fire, water, air and space. This allows the children to discover the world and nature for themselves and helps put the awe and wonder back into the study of science. History of myth and culture is taught instead of social studies. Peter said this is more the study of the culture of humanity and aims at going to the heart of western culture. This includes studying the Renaissance and Egyptians. They try to study people to give the children examples to learn from. This could be any one from Moses to Sir Edmund Hillary. Sanskrit is one of the oldest classical languages and is also taught at Ficino. Through the study of this language children are assisted with grammar and the ability to annunciate properly. Understanding the mechanisms that underlie speaking aids their ability to speak clearly and listen properly. This means they can communicate better.
There are also philosophy lessons that examine the underlying basic human values that are evident throughout all religions. These are not taught from a religious perspective but more as universal truths to be discovered. They also undertake scripture lessons which are based around Christianity even though, Peter says, they are not a religious school. They feel it is important to have a working knowledge of the Christian stories and values as these are the foundations of western society and the basis of western laws and constitutions. The school does not teach Christianity as being the right or wrong but lets children come to their own conclusions about the importance of Christian teachings in their life.

Formal Meditation is offered from the age of 10; however, right from the beginning they undertake a mindfulness exercise before and after every lesson. Peter calls it a pause and it is a chance for the children to fall quiet and connect with the senses. With their eyes closed, they connect with the touch of their clothes, their feet on the floor, any aromas they can smell. Then they listen to the sounds in the room, then let their hearing run right out as far as in can and listen for the stillness beyond the sounds. He said it is hard to gauge the benefit this exercise but he doesn’t doubt its effectiveness. “There’s no question that when the children get to year 7 and 8 that we see some fine qualities starting to express themselves and good sense of worth and ability to express themselves freely and a calmness”. This enables them to “find quietness within themselves” so that “they are very ready to have a lesson”. The children “enjoy this and get a real taste of what stillness inside is”. “If they can have a sense of what it is to be quiet that’s a huge benefit to them when life gets tough, they can have recourse to their own sense of peace and stillness”.
He says there are three essential tenants of their ethos. The first is to present simple principles of spiritual knowledge. This is done through philosophy lessons, scripture lessons, assemblies, stories and the pause. He mentions the importance of narratives, saying these are vital to a child’s education. He feels it is one of the best ways to teach as they become enlivened and attentive during stories. They draw these narratives from different spiritual traditions, literature (like Shakespeare), myths and legends. The second is that the school presents the finest materials that society has to offer as a means to teaching. This is done through art, poetry, music and literature. People like Mozart and Shakespeare are studied and experienced in detail. Finally they give the children principles of conduct to live by. Examples of these include respect, truthfulness and courage. Again these are mainly taught through philosophy and stories.

More than half the teachers attend the School of Philosophy (which is the founding organisation. The school is a global adult education institution that teaches about the process of understanding the self through many different religions, teachings and philosophies. It encourages members to undertake meditation and service and offers guidance in spiritual growth). Many of the teachers meditate daily so they understand the principle of stillness. Most of the other members have a background in some form of spirituality which helps them to understand the ethos and provides the children with good role models.

According to Peter, in the past students have integrated well into high schools. “The values and human relationships they had at Ficino meant they knew the type of friendships they where looking for and didn’t just have to fall into a crowd”. They are not so concerned with fitting in when they get there and they have enough of their own
strength to choose their friends carefully. He says the children of Ficino have an emotional maturity that most others their age do not have.

The children surprised me the most. They seemed very calm and confident. They were comfortable looking you in the eye and were not intimidated by you. At the same time they were respectful and polite. They could read in front of you without becoming shy and talk to you without losing a sense of themselves. They seemed very balanced, healthy, well rounded and happy. The environment at the school seemed very conducive to growth and had a loving atmosphere. The teachers loved their children and their role as educators. I remember walking away thinking those children were different to others their age.
Swami Gyan Dharma is another one of those rare people with whom I have been lucky enough to live over the last six month period. He lived with Swami Mukti in India for some seven years in one of Swami Satyananda’s Ashrams. He is fully dedicated to his spiritual life and when he left for India he renounced everything. He owns nothing and has not seen or spoken to his family in over 30 years. Despite what may seem a very extreme choice of life path, he is very grounded, humble, rational, accepting of people and, most importantly, practical in his approach.

It is interesting to see him and Mukti side-by-side. They look completely opposite, Swami Gyan Dharma is about 6 foot 8 inches, thin as a bean and European, while Mukti is under the 6 foot mark, slightly rounder and South American (although he often mistaken for being Indian). Upon talking to them you start to see their approach to life is equally different. While they are both approaching the same destination they have done so in their own way. I spent equal time with both of them so I was very fortunate to see these two paths that have developed out of the same place (their Guru Swami Satyananda). This highlights the importance of finding and walking your own path with gentle guidance as opposed to strict direction and guidelines.

I have split our conversation into three parts. What Swami Gyan Dharma believes Peace to be, why it is important in our lives and how we can achieve it.
What is Peace?

Gyan Dharma stresses the importance of being true to your road and not shying away from it.

Peace is about being focused, what works for you, what makes your life bloom, what brings the right things into you life. It’s got to do with right thought, right speech and right action. Not in a moralistic sense but in the sense of what will make you prosper spiritually. That is Shanti (peace). It’s got to do with doing what needs to be done if you shy away from that then you are already creating conflict.

For him peace involves doing what is required of you in life, even if you do not want to. He refers back to The Bhagavad-Gita, to the role Arjuna had to take on as a warrior. Even though he did not want to kill it was what was required of him by life. To not fight would have created conflict within himself and Swami Gyan Dharma feels that peace is more to do with your motivations than your actions. If you see someone hurting someone then you have to stop it. If it is on your road you need to help even if it creates conflict (in the external sense). He gives the example of World War 2 and Hitler. People stood up to him because they felt it was the right thing to do. He did not have the welfare of others at heart and wanted power for his own misguided reasons. It is not peace if you see someone being hurt and you do not help them. So in this case, he feels, war was needed to restore peace.

He does not feel that there are any rules or guidelines to peace. As shown above he believes that violence can sometimes bring peace, but what we need to do is look inside at our motivations. Peace is not a state of stagnation. Rather peace is an active state that is flexible and
changes from moment to moment. There are no hard and fast mathematical rules for it. It changes for the needs of the moment. This is why he emphasises the importance of experiencing peace for ourselves. It is not a theory or a concept, it is not something someone can tell you or show us. Unless we experience it we can not understand it; we can not understand it through reading about it or someone telling us. These things can help us if that person has made the journey but we ultimately have to see and do it ourselves.

We are all here to realise who we are and our true nature. “That is our purpose here, that’s spirituality … I think we are all on that journey, there is no other journey”. You can think it is about getting rich or having children. But we all ask somewhere along the line who am I and what is my purpose here? These are fundamental questions and the base of all religions. However, he reinforces the idea that experience is the path to self knowledge and peace, and that we each need to find our own answers.

He also feels peace is closely related to those around us and is not a solely internal process. “For most of us though our lives are very intertwined, so the people around us are part of your peace”. He states that the people in our lives are the ones important to our peace. Our conflicts are tied up with other people. We project our conflicts onto other people.

“Life has its own flow and we need to learn to flow with that”. He says though that the flow is different for everyone and so we need to be able to recognise our path because to be in that flow is to be at peace. We need to learn to surrender to it life, not necessary
everything in it, you surrender to your inner battle (as opposite to running from it) and to things you cannot change.

**Why is Peace so Important?**

Gyan Dharma starts by laying out the inner-outer paradigm as he saw it. “What’s important to understand is that without internal peace there is no external peace. You have to start from the inside out. You can’t create peace outside if there is no peace inside”. This, he feels, is the problem with much of the peace work undertaken; the fact there was often little inner peace underlying the external work. Without this foundation he feels these efforts were “almost bound to fail”. The first thing those of us working for peace need to do is create that peace within ourselves. Then we can start spreading it to the world beginning with the people we live with. We start to carry peace with us wherever we go and people notice it. According to Gyan Dharma “trying to stop external wars is a noble sentiment” but paying attention to the internal is the “biggest difference you can make” as it affects the people we live with which is where “it all begins”. “If you have no inner peace in yourself you are going to bring up children at war with themselves”.

Gyan Dharma talked of his travels over the last 25 years as a homeless Swami. Moving from place to place with only the clothes he owned, living off the goodwill of others. To me his works about the state of the world really emphasise the importance of the inner struggle. He feels that the level of consciousness is at “crisis” point. In all his travels over the last quarter century he has not met a single person in the west who lives in the present. Yet if we do not learn to
step into the present it is going to have really serious consequences for
our society in terms of the destruction we are causing from greed,
selfishness, anger, possessiveness and envy. We are in the process of
destroying the world. “The papers still are talking about economic
growth while the planet is on its knees … it’s begging… please”. But
still we can not really see this; we still go on building and exploiting.
“There is a global psychosis”. He thinks we are harming ourselves by
not being present, because we do not need that much it the present.

How can we Reach a State of Peace?

If we want to reach inner peace we need to see life as a spiritual
journey, as a whole package, good fortune or bad. Gyan Dharma
stresses the importance of seeing both as a chance to grow. This
means we cannot negate anything that is uncomfortable, inconvenient
or unpleasant. He feels most of us spend our lives avoiding these
things; however, the things we try to avoid make up a big part of life.
We create conflict by not accepting life as a whole package, and
trying to extract the bits and pieces we like. We need to start looking
at the teaching in every conflict, problem and undesirable situation.
Then they become things that add richness to our lives. They become
our stepping stones to peace. Through embracing these parts of life we
struggle with, we start to see our “faulty projections and perceptions”.
If we know that there is a teaching in everything, that our life is there
for us to work with and that what we need will come to us, there is no
conflict because we accept life as a whole.

This also requires us to trust in life and be open to it. The world is out
to get us and we should not protect ourselves from it. We need to stop
seeing dualities and start seeing the interconnections. Gyan Dharma mentions again the importance of being present in the journey to peace. Being present gives us a chance to rest within ourselves, it lets us be happy with little, simple things. It allows us to be present to the divine, to our own sacredness, our holiness, our divinity and it lets us see these things in others. It requires us to see the world differently and means being able to live without distractions, without constant entertainment, without needing to escape the mind; to “be simple, to live simply, eat simply, and cause less damage generally”.

To cultivate peace Gyan Dharma also described the importance of being honest with ourselves. Until we realise we are not at peace inside, we cannot attain the peace we desire externally and the journey cannot begin. He said “you must admit there is a war going on inside you to stop it”.

The mind plays a big role in the conflict we create in our lives. Swami Gyan Dharma says there is no other place it can come from. He feels conflicts come because our mind is not in agreement with the flow of life. So we need to change the way we relate to the mind. We have a claustrophobic relationship with our mind. We have become totally absorbed and overwhelmed by our mind. There is not even a little bit of detachment, distance or moment of standing back. There is just total involvement and that spills over as breakdowns and explosions. We think that we are our mind and do not understand it. We want to run from it.

If you want to realise the bigger part of who you are you need to look at your mind and emotions and realise they are not something cast in
stone, they may not be true, they may not have any value, you need to start to question these things.

That is where meditation comes in. It starts to question these basic assumptions about who we are and how we view and relate to the world. We start to see the misery the mind creates and the bottomless black pit of desires that come from there.

Meditation is the practice of being present. The negative emotions like anger and repression are states of living in the past. They do not add anything positive to our life. If we project these states of mind into the future, we may see ourselves being unhappy then too. Present is the only place we can work on our spiritual development. Meditation is, as a concept, simple. It is merely being present. You can practice with the breath, with people, with work. The formal sitting practice is the rehearsal for the real world. It helps us understand what being present means so we can use it in life. It is a process of reorganising the mind. It is not about living removed from the world in a mountain cave. You can be quite active in the world. The Bhagavad-Gita shows the spiritual journey can be undertaken on the battlefield. It is about one-pointedness. At first this starts off as a structured, meditative process but then it becomes a way of interacting with life. Interacting in a way that involves seeing all life as one and living in this oneness.

“You bring these things into the world by bringing a new version of ourselves into society”. We have to stop reacting and start interacting. Start looking at why we react in certain ways. Then we can start choosing if we want to react in that way. “We start to reduce the
fiction in our lives and people around us feel that because in the end its something we all aspire to...peace. Its something we all want".
Marianne Interview – Yoga, Hot Spots and Inner Peace

Marianne was one of my first Yoga teachers. She studied law and spent a number of years in the Gaza Strip and Afghanistian. She worked with a number of organisations including Mercy Ships, Save the Children and the United Nations. There she undertook community research, worked as a human rights officer and performed child advocacy and protection work. At the moment she still teaches two classes a week in Wellington and also creates online audio Yoga and meditation programmes designed for humanitarian and aid workers. She currently has around 300 subscribers and aims to create an online Yoga community where students feel that they can have a connection with the teacher and other students. “I have a student in the Sudan texting someone in Gaza” she laughs. With her experience both as a Yoga teacher and aid worker, I felt it was important to get her perspective on the inner and outer peace paradigm.

The main thing that came out in our conversation was the importance of finding a balance between inner development and outer work. She talks of her experience of working in these highly unstable environments and the effect it had on her. She believes that one of the most important things is to take care of your inner self. It is important to give yourself time off. For her a large part of this relates to reconnecting with her spiritual teachers as well as herself. This is the best way to continue to make a positive impact in the long-term. She says it is a continuing process of investing in yourself, then focusing externally on service. The balance is constantly shifting from one to the other.
She does note that this model of working in the field, then taking time to focus inwards, is not a widely tolerated one. Her career has been a constant process of two years in the field working for one organisation, then coming out, and then starting again with another organisation two years later. As she is an independent contractor this model suits her and she has made it work. She feels the accepted model of constantly working in the field without a break is damaging to a worker’s overall well-being. Some people she knows are lucky to get two weeks off in-between deployments and she said that some fairly harmful coping mechanisms are socially acceptable in the field.

According to Marianne, “the process of Yoga to me is the process of coming home to myself”. For her it is a survival tool in the field. She believes it is what makes her able to maintain her centre and balance in an unbalanced environment. For example it enables her to let go of the suffering she sees around her. The key for her to do this comes with softness and openness. It is when we tense and try to close that we end up holding onto the suffering. “Stability comes in the softness” she says. She actually feels that it is destabilising to try and stay strong.

One of the last things we talked about was the need for inner peace to undertake this external work. I asked if there was a certain stage of inner development one needed to be at to enter these types of environments and really be of any benefit. Marianne says that when she was younger she believed you first needed the perfect relationship with yourself and then you could offer it to others. Now, however, she sees it is synergistic - that sometimes we actually need the external stimulus to have the internal experience. She gives the example of a mother giving birth and seeing her child for the first time. This
normally causes all the layers the mother carries to fall off her as she experiences real and complete love. Now the mother could have spent years trying to remove these layers so that she could be a perfect mother, but in that instant she is there - there is only love. The process of having the child has allowed her to experience what it truly means to love and also allows her to see her capacity to love. Of course the layers, walls and protections we have spent our lifetime putting up come back. But we have the experience of what it means to be free and this helps to guide our journey. For her this was the process of aid work. “Working with children opened my heart so much that there were no barriers between us”. She doesn’t believe it is a process of becoming stronger but of seeing the strength already within you.
Tyrg’s Interview – Yoga in Prisons

“Saying it’s a challenging environment is a massive understatement”

Tyrg has spent a number of years in Ashrams in India, Nepal, New Zealand and Australia. He teaches Yoga in Wellington now and works in prisons doing rehabilitation. We talked for well over an hour on a number of issues, from relationships to Ashram life, but his work in the prison is what I was really interested in. He says that 87% re-offend within two years of being released and this figure is even higher for Maori population. With the recent move to privatise Mt Eden prison e might ask what is the real purpose of these systems? Is it to rehabilitate or to sweep undesirables under the rug? Ultimately he said “they are just guys, just people”, so the question is, are we treating them like people? Are we giving them the space and tools to heal and grow away from their destructive patterns or are we just perpetuating them?

The first thing he really brought to light was the importance of not expecting too much out of his students. “Karmic ripeness” is the term he uses. This means he turns up and is genuine, but any real change has to come from them. Being genuine is important as the prisoners are hyper-aware of everything that happens within their environment because it is so small. He said they knew if he was not being honest with them and as his role was to inspire self development it was important that he himself was honest.

The prison environment was another thing we discussed. Tyrg said one way to describe it was a lot of “angry men in a cage”. He felt they
had a very distorted view of themselves and the way they treated themselves was not positive - “a lot of them have very negative patterns of asserting themselves”. He also felt the act of locking up another man was incredible degrading and harmful to self image, which can only really lead to the perpetuation of the violent patterns. He just felt that there where “so many forces are against those guys” that although the challenges were not insurmountable, the road to change was difficult.

He felt the prison environment fuelled many of the violent patterns of those within. “It’s (violence) the way of the prison, you have got to stand up for yourself”. He told me of one prisoner he taught who was very soft and gentle by nature but often felt forced to use violence to survive and hated it. The prison environment normalises violence, which is what many have been accustomed to in their lives, which merely reinforces that this behaviour is acceptable. Tyrg also mentioned that many prisoners felt that their time inside gave them a chance to break from some patterns in their lives, like drugs. Some said they would be dead if they had not been sent to jail or even killed someone by now; they were in the process of “destroying themselves and others”. From this I really felt that it was important to remove these people from their destructive patterns of violence but it was just as important (if not more so) to make sure that the place they where being taken to was not worse than where they came from. That it was somewhere that aimed to heal oppose to punish, allowing them to grow beyond their destructive patterns opposed to reinforcing them.

The service Tyrg gives at the prison is both fulfilling and painful. The emphasis was on helping the prisoners to discover ways to help themselves. Sometimes all he could do was listen and know it was not
his place to tell them what to do, how to act or who to be. Tyrg felt that we need to see that these people are very wise in their own way and often by just letting them talk they figure things out on their own. It is this process of self discovery that is truly healing and leads to sincere growth.
Literature Review

I have examined my own internal journey from a descriptive, narrative perspective and I have considered other’s journeys and their influence on my thought and direction. The next step is to explore the literature, both academic and applied, related to the role and relationship of internal peace and the external environment. This draws from a grounded theory perspective, with my narrative acting as my data which the academic study will grow from. This section of the paper starts by looking into the inner/outer peace paradigm which includes the role of religion (as an external expression of the internal journey) in peace and the need for a shift in the current worldview. Then the concept of ‘Living Peace’ – or the internal development of peace - is explored. This section considers the qualities of someone living peace and the effect of ‘Living Peace’ on the mind, body and brain. Finally the review turns to the external environment and how we can share the internal peace with others. Two specific examples are considered, both relating to children – through education systems and in the rehabilitation of children following traumatic events.
The Inner and Outer Peace Paradigm

This section will make up a large part of the material reviewed and synthesised. I think the importance of starting to understand the interactions between the inner and outer world, and the effect of this interaction on peace, is reflected in the weighting given to it in this thesis.

First I outline the importance of seeing our own role in the world and taking responsibility for ourselves and our actions. The significance of inner peace and motivations is highlighted and then considered in relation to outer peace. Balance, connection and interplay between the internal and external realms are all considered. Religion also plays a large role in this section of the thesis. I believe religion to be one way the internal landscape has attempted to break into the external environment. The role of religion in both conflict and peace has been well documented and I believe it has potential in the development of both of these. I consider both an internal (contemplation) and an external (interfaith communication) pathway to peace offered by religion. Finally I bring to light the importance of finding a greater balance between the internal and external landscapes. The remaining part of the thesis addresses the ‘how’ of this problem.
Seeing Ourselves as Part of the Problem

While some may argue that the title above could have been ‘Seeing ourselves as part of the solution’, I feel as though that may be a disconnected and sugar-coated way of describing the current situation. Peace is not a process of running or hiding from uncomfortable realities. It is about standing in front of them and facing them. So I do feel there is a crisis of consciousness at the moment and I believe that every one of us has a part to play in that crisis.

Weil (1990) says fragmentation is one of the main sources of the breakdown in peace. This can be at the level of nations, knowledge (between say arts and science) and ourselves (mind, body and emotions). Once we start seeing that we are fragmented, as well as society, there can be some forward movement, but until that happens we will remain static. Fragmentation from others is also another way we become part of the problem. Gyatso (1994) relates this not only to humans but to all beings and the environment. He believes that all beings, no matter how evolved, seek peace, comfort and security. He says:

Life is as dear to the mute animal as it is to any human being; even the simplest insect strives for protection from dangers that threaten its life. Just as each one of us wants to live and does not wish to die, so it is with all other creatures in the universe, though their power to effect this is a different matter.

Rather than acknowledging and living in this way, we adopt a self-centred approach to life where we see our needs and wants (and our
life) as being more important that those round us (be it people, animals or insects). Gyatso (1994) feels that if we continue to operate in this way both personal happiness and world peace will be out of the question. Lederach (2005) proposes a similar idea in *The Moral Imagination*. He talks of the web of connection between all people and the patterns that are created within these webs. To move beyond the patterns of violence he believes that individuals must “situate and recognize themselves as part of the pattern”. He does not believe these negative patterns can be stopped without admitting our role in their creation and recognising our connection with those around us. We need to see everyone as human beings, who may on the surface appear so different to us but underneath are so similar. The common human struggle – with all its pain, loss, worry, fear, joy, happiness and hope is what connects us all. Until we see this and act from this understanding we are still part of the problem. When we recognise it and move towards bringing this into our lives, we become part of the solution.

**Responsibility**

With the knowledge that we are part of the problem comes responsibility. The onus is on every human being to make the world a more harmonious, peaceful place. This may seem like an immense responsibility, but how we interact with ourselves, one another, animals and the environment is something most of us already take responsibility for. So it is just incorporating the understanding of connection into these interactions. Gyatso (1994) believes qualities such as morality, compassion, decency and wisdom have been the foundations of all civilizations and by teaching these virtues a more
humane world may emerge. He stresses that we cannot wait for the next generation to renew these basic human values. He feels there is a mounting need for a sense of universal responsibility. Lederach (2005) also believes that to rise above cycles of violence there are two paths that need to be walked, the one that accepts personal responsibility and the one that acknowledges relational mutuality.

To be born a human being is a rare event in itself, and it is wise to use this opportunity as effectively and skilfully as possible. (Gyatso, 1994)
Inner peace

Inner peace is an integral part of understanding, achieving and maintaining overarching peace. Weil (1990) believes it means the removal of the destructive aspects of the self. While conflict may still remain, it becomes transformative and evolutionary instead of destructive. He talks of inner conflicts such as the heart versus the reason and instinct versus the heart. He believes that, as inner peace develops, these frictions naturally decline. Kraft (1995) links the idea of inner peace back to awareness of oneself and of others (and their suffering). Dorn (2001) states that inner peace can be felt as a calming of the mind (stillness), tranquillity of the emotions and satisfaction (contentment) of the soul. In both the East and the West this can be cultivated though spiritual practices like meditation, prayer, service, worship or chanting. Again this is an experience beyond anything else and its academic study will only take one so far. We need to see these conflicts within us and understand what is driving our actions. Our motivations are key to the development of not only inner peace but peace in the wider sense.
Motivations

“If only one man acted thus, and all the rest agreed to crucify him, would it not be nobler for him to die in the glory of non-resisting love, praying for his enemies, than to live to wear the crown of Caesar stained with the blood of the slain?” - Tolstoy (1984)

To work for peace requires us to be motivated by peace. We must be aware of what is motivating our actions – peace, work and life require constant self-examination and adjustment. Gorin (1993) states: "I was disillusioned to discover the extent to which my behavior is motivated by the need for recognition and not just pure humanitarian ideals”. The motivations for giving are very often selfish as well as selfless (Gibb, 2009). I do not believe we ever fully understand the reasons for our actions but it is important to never stop looking inwards to try and understand why we act in a certain way. Some may argue that if we are helping someone or stopping violence then the action is enough and the motivation is not as important. However, the voice of sages and saints suggests that the motivation behind the action is far more important than the deed itself. Examples of this idea can be seen in modern psychology too, Lancaster (1991) states that shaming someone into giving maybe far more destructive to the individual than the original deed. People may, for example, feel inferior and so they need to create situations where they seem superior by shifting the shame they feel onto the other person. This is not to say that we need to have perfect motivations for every action we undertake. It is more a process of coming to know ourselves; to see ourselves more clearly. This enables us to address the reasons underlying our ‘negative’ motivations and change how we interact with the world. By starting to purify our motivations we become a more effective tool for peace.
Upon seeing some of our underlying motivations, we realise we are not as elevated in our ideals as we believe. Through this process we become more humble and can understand the selfish aspect that is within us all on a deeper level. This is a process that develops compassion for other humans, which in the end is one of the highest goals in life.

“But those who seek after peace, and behave kindly and harmlessly, forgiving and forgetting injuries, for the most part enjoy peace, or, if they die, they die blessed”. – Tolstoy (1984)
Relationship between Inner and Outer Peace

This section will touch more deeply on some of the ideas already expressed so far in this thesis. According to Dorn (2001),

without an awareness of the deep inner causes of conflict it will be hard or even impossible to bring about an end to war in the world. Conversely, without international and global institutions to develop and encourage high standards of behaviour, it would be harder to find the means and the personal safety and security to allow people to perform spiritual practices in order to develop their own inner peace and spread it to others.

His paper is titled *Lotus on the lake: How Eastern spirituality contributes to the vision of world peace* and he draws on the analogy of the lotus to advance this idea.

The blossom of the lotus plant lies on the surface of the water but the roots reach deep down to the soil of the ground well beneath the surface of the lake. Outer peace is like the beautiful lotus flower that adorns the lake and the outer life. Inner peace is the submerged stem and roots deep in the inner consciousness. The flower produces wonderful blossoms whose fragrance then spreads far and wide for the glorification of life and the betterment of the world.

This idea can also be seen when comparing the scientific and the spiritual paths. Although they seem contradictory in a number of ways, they have the same underlying goal; the search for truth and
knowledge of reality. The scientific path leads infinitely outward (exploring and observing phenomena objectively) while the spiritual path takes us infinitely inwards (exploring and observing subjectively). Because they seek the same ends, a number of parallels can be seen between them, the difference being that science operates within the space-time framework of the physical universe while the spiritual path offers a way to experience beyond it. This maybe why the greatest scientists, including DeBroglie, Einstein, Eddington, Heisenberg, Jeans, Plank, Pauli and Schrodinger, all eventually became mystics. (Davies, 1992; Groff & Smoker, 1996; Watson, 1988).

The Tao Te Ching also mentions the relationship between apparent contradictions where “having and not having arise together. Difficult and easy complement each other. Long and short contrast each other. High and low rest upon each other. Voice and sound harmonize each other. Front and back follow one another” (Tsu, 1989).
Weil (1990, 2002) believes that peace must be achieved on three levels. These are the inner ecology (peace of mind, body and heart), social ecology (economy, social and political life, and culture) and planetary ecology (Matter – solids, liquids, gas; Life – animal, vegetal and human; Information – atomic, genetic and intelligent). These are similar to Adolf’s (2009) three categories of peace except for the last one in which Weil takes a wider view to encompass the environment as well as the collective human experience of peace. The boundaries of these levels are fluid and there is constant interaction between them. Because of this, benefits in one realm yield gains in the others (Kraft, 1995). So this means we need to find a balanced approach to handling peace on its different tiers. Gyatso (1994) does not see anything wrong with economic progress but believes people must be given precedence. He feels that we must harmonize economic development with spiritual growth. His idea of happiness is a combination of inner peace, economic development and world peace. He does not believe that merely focusing on the internal will solve all external problems. There is still work to be done on this level, but he does feel that the spiritual (internal) approach is a way of addressing the foundation of the problems we face. Fox (1991, 2006) acknowledges that both the internal and external paths to developing peace are valid but concludes that they should not be seen as mutually exclusive choices. He feels they are equally indispensable and complementary and that balance should be maintained between the two approaches.
The importance of Connection

So it is clear that there is a connection between the levels of peace. Weil (1990) expresses this by saying that external peace is the object and internal peace is the subject. Kraft (1995) affirms the interconnection between individual peace and social or political peace. In his view inner peace, world peace, justice, and economic equality are interdependent, so one must be concerned about the implications of the smallest acts, choices and details. According to Gyatso (1994) “others’ desires are the same as mine. Every being wants happiness and does not want suffering”.

Connections are being drawn between health care and spirituality (Chopra, 1992) and environmental science and interconnection. The Gaia hypothesis, for example, presents a theory where the Earth is viewed as a whole and seen as a living entity, a self-regulating system of which we humans are a part (Lovelock, 1991). This theme constantly appears through my research in a number of forms and on a number of levels. It can be seen as the connection between people, actions, consciousness, knowledge and the environment, but it is in no way limited to these. The more clearly we see, understand and experience this, the more peace will follow.
Support for the premise that inner peace is a requirement for any form of world peace can be found in numerous places. Spiritual leaders like Sri Chinmoy believe that peace is an individual achievement that expands into a collective one before becoming a universal one. The Dalai Lama believes that only through inner peace can we attain genuine world peace as we must have a feeling of what peace is so we can spread it to our families, our communities and ultimately the whole planet (Dorn, 2001). Groff & Smoker (1996) draw on a number of traditions and conclude that,

only true inner peace within the hearts of people can bring about true outer peace in the world, because if individuals are plagued by inner conflicts, doubts, fears, and insecurities, they will tend to project them outwardly onto others, blaming others for their problems, without even realizing what they are doing.

Academics also maintain this idea. A conscious and strong individual creates the same qualities in the society in which they live, generating higher levels of peacefulness (Roques, 2006). The focus cannot solely be on changing others but a balanced approach is required which starts by changing internal attitudes then influencing those around us. World peace can only be reached in her view by finding and maintaining our own inner peace. Alexander (1992) sees a strong connection between healthy and mature psychological development and the task of creating world peace. He states that “individual peace is the unit of world peace: a peaceful world is possible only if it consists of individuals with peaceful minds and peaceful physiologies”. Weil
(1990) believes that we destroy peace with our mind. We use it to separate ourselves from the universe, cutting ourselves off from society and the environment and cutting ourselves off within from our mind, emotions and body. Other authors who maintain that world peace is dependent on individual peace include Gandhi (1983), Macy (1991) and Curle and Boulding (2000).

Kristeller and Johnson (2005) believe it is important to begin with compassion towards the self first. Their reasoning for this is two fold. Firstly by actively trying to become compassionate towards ourselves we become aware of the things that block this experience within us; secondly it encourages understanding of inner methods of dealing with these feelings. By gaining a deeper understanding of our blocks to experiencing emotions like peace, compassion and love, we start to understand why we struggle to express these to other people.

Dorn (2001) believes there are three ways in which inner peace is transferred to society:

1) Through the individual’s actions the suffering of others is decreased.

2) Through the individual’s actions others are inspired. This is done by example and social interaction. This can lead to changes in the perceived social norms of those the person comes into contact with, moving the idea and, more importantly, the experience of peace into mainstream consciousness. This will lead to a greater pool of educated and spiritually developed people in society, meaning leaders with experiential knowledge of inner peace are more likely to obtain office and then use that position to advocate peace in a much wider sense. This could lead to, for example, spiritual, holistic or peace-centred education becoming part of the curriculum.
3) Through the individual’s ability to raise their own consciousness they raise the collective consciousness. This relates to the more mystical idea of interconnection; that behind the physical world is an unbroken chain of consciousness that everyone is connected to. By connecting into this universal consciousness the aspirant finds themselves naturally living in harmony and peace and they become instruments for these qualities. This idea moves beyond the field of scientifically proven concepts, into the hazy mist of which we sometimes catch glimpses. While there are some studies centred on the effects of prayer and intention, these are far from becoming accepted as scientific norms. This study does not so much concentrate on the empirical evidence surrounding such topics. However, I do not feel that they have been disproved either. On an experiential note I would like to add that when I have been in the presence of those who have dedicated their lives to the spiritual path (Sanyasians) I am often able to access deeper aspects of myself. Some people believe that this is the idea behind many of the physical spiritual leaders worshipped today. The example of Jesus comes to mind. This line of thought would suggest that Jesus was one with the universal stream of consciousness and that by following him and bringing ourselves closer to him we are put into higher states of consciousness (or closer to God).

Empirical evidence for the relationship between inner peace and world peace can be seen in the examples of those who have lived this paradigm (Dorn, 2001; Hill et al., 2006). Martin Luther King, Mahatma Gandhi, Nelson Mandela, Mother Theresa and the Dalai Lama are all people who have had a profound effect on the world. All of them express the importance of the development of the internal self and/or spiritual life. These are modern examples, but religious
founders like Buddha and Jesus also offer evidence of this idea. Other examples of leaders who have merged the spiritual aspects of themselves into their external life include U Thant, Lester Pearson, Presidents Woodrow Wilson and Mikhail Gorbachev. It was Napoleon Bonaparte who said “Alexander, Caesar, Charlemagne and I myself have founded great empires; but upon what did these creations of our genius depend? Upon force. Jesus alone founded his empire upon love, and to this very day millions will die for him”. While their empires have been and gone, Jesus’ still remains.

The Constitution of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) states that “since wars begin in the mind of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed” (Dorn, 2001; Weil, 1990). Weil (1990) also uses the biblical analogy of turning swords into ploughshares. He states that if this is not done internally men will merely be fighting with ploughshares. I feel there is much truth in this statement. Unless we understand our reasons within for acting violently towards others, then we cannot stop the actual violence taking place, only the parcel in which we deliver it. Physical violence may not be seen as being acceptable so we shift that into another mode, which may come in any form; from trade regulations to discriminatory laws to much more subtle methods. But the violent intention remains and so this is not a form of peace. Tolstoy (1900b) addresses this theme in his fiction work, Work while ye have the Light. He believes that the act of creating laws and rules (i.e. ‘do not kill’) does not create a peaceful society; it merely re-states the problem. He compares it to an archer teaching someone to shoot by saying you will hit the target every time if you shoot straight from the bow to the target. The creation of laws and rules only encourages people to find ways not to get caught and in
the heat of emotion these laws will often not apply anyway. So he believes we need to find ways to create societies of people who live by morals. This is the same concept of creating inner peace. We cannot just say the violence is wrong and it should not be committed. We must find ways to make people believe, feel and experience it. Only then can authentic peace manifest.
Positive effect of inner peace on actions

“For force always attracts men of low morality” - Einstein (1934)

The more peace and satisfaction a person experiences within themselves the more likely that selfish desires (jealousy, envy or ill will to others) are lessened. This means the person has little desire to act violently or antagonistically towards others (Dorn, 2001). Weil (1990) observes that violence is the by-product of anger and hate and inner peace is the result of harmony and fulfilment. Gyatso (1994) believes that once we accept that all beings desire happiness it becomes morally wrong to follow selfish wants at other’s expense. He believes the wise course of action is to consider other’s happiness when pursuing one’s own. He calls this call 'wise self-interest' which can transform into 'compromised self-interest' or even 'mutual interest'.

Nobel’s (2005) paper highlights the benefits of the marriage between meditation and mediation, considering them “each powerful processes for working through surface difficulties and confusion in order to contact a deeper, fuller reality which lies hidden”. Through the process of meditation mediators gain some inner peace which allows them to more effectively remove themselves and let the process unfold. They become more balanced and unbiased, not bringing so many judgments to the table. Inner peace takes us out of our sense of our own self importance. It humbles us, allows us to stop trying to control our world by reducing our insecurities.
A common misunderstanding with the inner peace paradigm is that it leads to withdrawal from the external world. Indeed historically withdrawal has been the path often taken by those motivated by spiritual life (Alexander, 2000). However, there are cases in the ancient traditions of people where inner journeys are bound to those of others. The bodhisattva, in Buddhism, has the goal of freedom for all other sentient beings (Tworkov, 1994). They are not merely concerned with their liberation but the liberation of all. In Buddhism there is a longstanding connection between salvation - enlightenment and moral behaviour - compassionate action (Kraft, 1995). Dorn (2001) also believes that to become self-absorbed ignores the basic principle that inner peace involves the expansion of the limited view of the self, the strengthening of morality and an increase in the responsibility one feels to others. Thus anyone with true inner peace will focus on service and uplifting others. Any inner peace that does not generate some kind of response to external suffering is not real inner peace (Kraft, 1995). Because of their belief in interconnection between the inner and outer realms, many western Buddhists strongly believe that social engagement is actually required for the experience of inner peace (McMahon, 1991). The development of inner peace may sometimes require us to withdraw and gain strength within ourselves but it must not lead to us avoiding our external responsibilities. Inner peace gives us the ability to face life as it comes to us. To serve, love and grow with our experience. Inner peace actually means we become more engaged in our lives. We are more aware of ourselves, our motivations and the choices we make. We are more mindful and compassionate. We see the connection between
ourselves and the environment in which we live. The inner journey does not ask us to hide from life and close to others; rather it encourages openness, love and harmony. Thus the inner path leads us back to the external world, as a whole person.
Effects of the External World on the Internal Landscape

Dorn (2001) believes that the creation of outer peace makes the inward journey to peace more accessible. People have basic material needs: food, water, shelter, safety, security and education to name a few. Whether there is structural violence that leaves people without these things or physical violence like war, reaching inner equilibrium becomes an almost impossible task. War for example can lead people to do things contrary to their spiritual beliefs. Often immoral acts are undertaken by people out of fear of losing these basic needs, or their lives (Dorn, 2001). During times of violence people must focus on the basics and their family and the inner dimension is not something they have time for. These conflicts also create huge amounts of psychological and spiritual baggage for the individuals involved. Fear and hatred become much more ingrained in their worldview which makes the attainment of inner peace much more difficult (Dorn, 2001).
Groff and Smoker’s Model (1996)

Groff and Smoker (1996) provide a model that shows some of the links between inner and outer peace in a circular fashion (Appendix 1). To them mythology plays a key role in the relationship (this topic will be covered in greater detail later on). They draw on the idea put forward by Joseph Campbell (1968) that myths offers us hero figures, common archetypes that provide a road map for individuals to follow in their inner/spiritual journey. For the transmission of peace from the inner to the outer world they give the example of spiritually based non-violence as used by Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King. Non-violence becomes embedded in lives and actions and is not merely a short term tactic. The other two linkages are prayer (from the outer to the inner) and meditation (from the inner to the outer). Groff and Smoker separate these by stating that prayer is talking to God and meditation is listening. However, they feel that the distinctions between them are blurred and often they can be part of the same process. They do not in anyway maintain that these are the only ways the two interact, but instead offer some interactions they believe to be important.

This diagram, in all its simplicity, highlights the main point of this section, that neither inner peace nor world peace are separate entities. There are no clear lines between them but instead a constant flow of information. They are interconnected, interdependent and intertwined. So the importance here must be on how to find balance and foster this relationship so that they can grow together, like two legs climbing a ladder, one after another, each step taking us closer to the goal of peace.
Role of Religion in Peace

I remember reading that the ‘The Bhagavad-Gita’ narrative encompassed the whole spiritual struggle of the human soul. This is so with all religion, it is an outer expression of our inner journey. Within the struggle are the forces of good and evil, light and darkness and peace and war. I therefore felt it was important to look at the role of religion in the creation of peace. As we have both peace and violence within us, so it expresses itself in these forms. Contained in the teachings of all religions is the path to peace. The importance of contemplation and interfaith communication are highlighted in this section as two possible paths, one internal and the other external. This is not an in-depth examination of specific religions and their role in peace. Rather I provide some examples of the ways religion has influenced peace and conflict. Religion expresses both the inner and outer struggles in human existence and so it is important to spend some of this thesis looking at and honouring that fact.
Groff and Smoker (1996) observe that when we consider the idea of religion we have to see the spectrum held within it. Every religion has a range of teachings including the socially-learned, culturally based, ‘organised’ end which involves the beliefs, rituals, and institutions passed down the generations. The extreme of this end of the spectrum would be the people considered ‘fundamentalist’, ‘fanatics’ or ‘extremist’. They are dogmatic and consider themselves right and others wrong (other religions, non believers and even those within their religion). It is the severe ‘us’ and ‘them’ mentality. At the opposite end of the spectrum are the mystics whose beliefs are grounded in direct inner spiritual experience. The emphasis is on experiencing as opposed to learning religious truths. Mystics can be seen within all traditions and more often than not the founders of world religions are themselves mystics (Groff & Smoker, 1996; Swami Rama, 1984).
Religion and violence

The idea that there is a link between religion and violence is certainly not a new one. In fact in conversation, this is the first thing a number of people associate with religion. Perhaps this is even truer in the Western, Christian-influenced cultures. Dorn (2001) admits that as a Christian he feels that “Buddhism has had far fewer embarrassments in its long history to apologize for when it comes to supporting aggressive wars”. He mentions the Christian crusades, the series of Catholic/Protestant wars in Europe and the sanctioned slaughter of indigenous people during colonial campaigns. While he struggles to identify any major Buddhist wars, he does give the examples of Buddhist support of Japan before and during the Second World War (although he states that Shintoism underpinned the aggression and military expansion); the Buddhist-oriented state of Myanmar and the human rights violations committed internally there by their dictatorship; and the Sri Lankan government’s (Singhalese Buddhist majority) human rights’ violations against the Tamils. The connection between religion and conflict is not statistically difficult to support for (Groff & Smoker, 1996). Authors like Quincy Wright, A Study of War (Wright, 1941), Lewis Richardson, Statistics of Deadly Quarrels (Richardson, 1960) and Samuel Huntington, The Clash of Civilizations, Foreign Affairs (Summer 1993) identify proof of this connection.

However, by considering religion as a purely historical phenomenon one misses its essence (Sander, 2008). There is so much depth and meaning within religion that it is problematic to try and disentangle the actual role of religion in war. How do we understand the true motivations, beliefs and views of the people fighting for ‘religion’?
Where in the religious spectrum did they fall? Did the individuals undertaking the conflict have other benefits to be gained through the violence? These are all questions that can not ever be truly answered or fully understood. Perhaps it is more likely a connection between human nature, in the guise of religion, and violence.

The poet Archibald MacLeish (1960) talks much about poetry and meaning. He does not believe we can remove, break up and take away the meaning of a poem. We only know what it is like to be ‘in’ a poem. Sander (2008) uses an analogy of mining for gold to explain this idea. “We analyze out the meanings as if we are mining gold from a mountain. It does extract the gold, which then makes us rich with exchangeable information. But it destroys the mountain”. People use their religion to find ways to justify their actions. The take everything from their mountain for their own gains, their own desires. They leave their mountain empty and hollow. They give up the true meaning of their faith for their own, twisted meaning. Gyatso (1994) says that when any conflict happens, be it ideological, political or religious, we lose sight of the basic humanity that binds us all together as a single human family. “We must not lose sight of this fundamental goal and at no time should we place means above ends; the supremacy of humanity over matter and ideology must always be maintained”. It is with this line of reasoning that I feel that the relationship between religion and violence is the human element. That it is when we change, interpret and place our own meaning on religion that it manifests into a force used for violence. It is when we use our rational mind to understand something beyond the rational that we get lost. We are not doing wrong in our minds as we have the reasoning laid out before us, but in our hearts we know the wrong we do.
Religion and Peace

“He knows me, the God of the worlds who accepts the offerings of men, the God who is the friend of all. He knows me and he attains peace” - The Bhagavad-Gita (Hinduism)

“Victory breeds hatred, for the defeated live in pain. Happily live the peaceful, giving up victory and defeat” - Dhammapada (Buddhism)

“Thoughts of war bring destruction to all harmony, well-being, restfulness and content. Thoughts of love are constructive of brotherhood, peace, friendship, and happiness” - Abdu'l-Baha (Baha’i)

“Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called sons of God - Gospel of Matthew” - 5:9 (Christianity)

“The whole of the Torah is for the purpose of promoting peace” – Talmud, Gittin, 59b (Judaism)

“And make not Allah by your swearing (by him) an obstacle to your doing good and guarding (against evil) and making peace between men, and Allah is hearing and knowing” - Qur'an Surah, 2:224 (Islam)

“Do you want long life and happiness? Strive for peace with all your heart” - The Book of Psalm, 34:12-14 (Christianity & Judaism)
“Through what can the Empire be settled? Through unity. Who can unite it? One who is not fond of killing” - Mencius, 1.A.6
(Confucianism)

“Without form there is no desire. Without desire there is tranquillity. And in this way all things would be at peace” - Tao Te Ching, 37
(Taoism)

For Tolstoy religion was a simple process of finding the correct relationship to life (Moulin, 2008).

The more precisely and definitely we formulate the answers to questions concerning what we do not know, that is, to questions regarding the soul, God and life after death, the more vague and indecisive we are in defining our relationship to life and moral questions. (Moulin, 2008)

As shown in the quotes above, peace is an undercurrent that flows through all religious traditions. Be that focus internal or external, it is ever present. However, through over-analysis we lose this idea.

Dorn (2001) examines the different approaches to peace of the East and West. He splits the two into an internal and external orientation and contrasts them in a number of ways:

- Christian concept of a ‘just war’ versus Buddhists and Hindus seeking to explain the inner causes of conflict.
• Christians wanting ‘peace on earth’ versus Eastern spiritual teachers highlighting the path of Shanti (peace) within the individual.

• Christians preparing themselves for the second coming of Christ and the peace that would follow in the world versus the Eastern approach to using meditation to obtain internal peace in the present.

Dorn believes this split can be seen in the efforts of the cultures to achieve peace. The West (with its outer focus) is concerned with peace between nations (interstate structural violence normally) which expresses itself in the formation of international treaties and international institutions to monitor, promote and enforce those treaties. Ideas like balance of power, collective security, arms control, disarmament peacekeeping and conflict resolution all make up this outer peace paradigm. In contrast he feels the Eastern approach is an individual, focused one, where the changes are made within with the ultimate aim being “not to avoid or mitigate the fires of war, but to dampen the fires of anger, desire and ignorance”.

While Dorn does not maintain that Western approaches to peace are entirely external or Eastern approaches wholly internal, he still asserts that these are their main focus. In the Christian context he gives the examples from the Bible including “my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you”. (Tolstoy titled a book “The kingdom of God is within you” (1984)). Dorn also emphasises leaders like Woodrow Wilson and Franklin Roosevelt who both recognized the significance of inner and spiritual peace. Another example of a Christian teacher placing importance on the inner spiritual journey is
Meister Eckhart for whom the importance of religion was the practice of Gelassenheit (a ‘released’ state, where the person has fully let-go) and the cultivation of an inner desert (the idea of emptiness and stillness often associated with inner peace) attained through detachment (Radler, 2006). For proof of external examples of an Eastern approach to spirituality, Dorn (2001) considers the actions of the Buddhist ruler, Ashok the Great, who was concerned deeply with the formation of laws to make a peaceful kingdom. He also points out that the Mahabharata is full of outer rules to guide rulers in peacemaking. He concludes that neither approach is superior, instead they are complementary. The fact that both are required for peace is a concept that is gaining recognition and it is the marriage of the East and West, internal and external, that is what religion truly offers peace.

Kraft (1995) writes on the idea of the Western socially-engaged Buddhist. Here is an example of a group that belies many of the typical, East/West, Inner/Outer dichotomies. Here Kraft shows a large group of Westerners seeking inner peace (through the Buddhist practices), then applying these Eastern principles to the practice of outer peace. It is too easy to say one is about the internal and one the external. These religions and ideas have be passed through the filters of time, cultural setting and historical circumstance. People have changed their meaning and adapted it, sometimes with good intentions, sometimes without. At the heart of all religions there is emphasis on both the internal and external importance of peace. The key is creating the awareness to see this and realise the importance of both. Below I outline two ways in which religion can be used in the creation of peace, one internal and one external approach.
The Internal Path of Contemplation

As already stated, with religion comes interpretation of meaning. When this happens the lines between what is true and what we see to be true can become blurred. Tworkov (1992) uses the example of Buddhism and abortion to highlight this idea, stating that it can validate either pro-choice or anti-abortion depending on the lenses we look through. Removing these lenses is a key step in the path to developing inner peace. We need to see reality as it is, not how we would like it to be. Almost every religion in the world has expressed this point, that we need to overcome the limited, disconnected self and create a bond with higher qualities. We need to rise above our conditioned existence, living within the dualities, paradoxes and violence of everyday life. To do this the path of contemplation is offered.

“Be still, and know that I am God” – The Book of Psalm, 46:10

(Christianity)

“Let me know myself, Lord, and I shall know Thee” - St. Augustine

(Christianity)

“I commune with my heart in the night; I meditate and search my spirit” –The Book of Psalm, 77:6 (Christianity)

“This is the rule for achieving this (oneness): control of breath, withdrawal of senses, meditation, concentration, contemplative
inquiry, and absorption; (this is) said to be the six-fold Yoga” - Maitri Upanishad (Hinduism)

“That in which thought ceases, stopped by the practice of disciplined concentration, and in which, seeing himself through himself, one is content in oneself” – The Bhagavad-Gita (Hinduism)

“If you think the Law is outside yourself, you are embracing not the absolute Law but some inferior teaching“ - Maja writings of Nichinen Daishonion (Buddhism)

“The Superior Man seeks within himself. The inferior man seeks within others” – Analects 15:20 (Confucianism)

”The shining Self dwells hidden in the heart. Everything in the cosmos, great and small, Lives in the Self. He is the source of life, Truth beyond the transience of this world. He is the goal of life. Attain this goal!” - Mundaka Upanishad (Hinduism)

Swami Rama (1984) examines the role of meditation in the Christian context. He feels that the belief that truth has already been discovered and our role is merely to reproduce this truth is one that severely cripples the human mind. Religion, to him, involves much more than just intellectual conformity. If we were to compare mystics from all traditions there would be a general consensus that the inner experience of God/spirit/reality/truth, where unity occurs, is the true meaning of religion. With these experiences we come closer to states described as enlightenment, God realization and oneness (Groff & Smoker, 1996). It is only the experience that transforms us and words always fall short of fully encompassing the truth of the experience (as the quote from
the Tao Te Ching suggests). According to Swami Rama (1984) religion “is an experience to be lived, not a theory or belief to be accepted”. He believes we suppress our spirit by creating a ‘shell’ around the soul made of things like pride and dogma. We must undergo a crucifixion of these aspects of ourselves to experience our rebirth, liberation and realisation of the truth within our soul. Groff & Smoker (1996) talk about a similar idea, highlighting that many mystical traditions involve unlearning our previous beliefs or using meditation as a way to clear the mind and come to a place of inner stillness or emptiness. Only once the still, quiet mind is reached can we perceive things beyond our mind. This is where the experience of something greater than ourselves happens without our lenses and mind trying to rationalise, explain and label it.

Hill, Herndon & Karpinska (2006) recognise the link between all religious experiences in relationship to the contemplative process and have created a tertiary educational program around this. They state that although religion is often used for conflict “educators have an opportunity to cultivate respect for the contemplative quest at the heart of diverse spiritual traditions”. By placing the emphasis on the experiential aspect of religion, it is more likely to be a source of peace than of conflict.

The history of contemplative practices in each religion can generally be traced back to its founder. Christ, Buddha, Moses, Zoroaster and many others all had direct inner experiences that showed them the truth behind the veil of existence. They then returned to teach and share what they had experienced. It was after they passed on the teachings to followers that the teachings “became codified as beliefs, rituals, even dogmas” (Groff & Smoker, 1996). The messages that
they spread where lost and only through direct experience, contemplation and meditation can they be found. Examples of people who have used contemplative practices in their peace work include Mahatma Gandhi (Hindu), Joanne Macy (Buddhist) and Adam Curle and Elise Boulding (Quaker). They all maintain that inner peace can be nurtured through contemplation (Hill, Herndon & Karpinska, 2006).

The term contemplation here is used in a cross-cultural context as a way comparing the inner practices that all traditions share, including both prayer and meditation. There are a number of examples that fall into this category. The Benedictine Order uses the Jesus prayer of the Heychistic Christian Catholic tradition as a contemplative prayer, using repetition (Keating 2002). Kristeller and Johnson (2005) compare other Christian prayers to mantra meditation and also state that repetitive prayer remains a central aspect of Hasidism in Judaism. Chase (1951) states that Quakers have used meditation in conflict resolution for centuries using “the inner light, purging their minds of outside matters”. Swami Rama (1984) gives examples of a school developed by St. Anthony for monastic meditation in A.D. 310 and another monastery founded by Paul in A.D. 300 taught similar techniques as well as the practice of silence. He also compares the breathing meditations of fifth century A.D. by the Hesychast monks to the yogic breathing (pranayama) practiced in India.

Kristeller and Johnson (2005) feel that Jesus’s time in the desert highlights the importance of reflection and listening to inner guidance. The importance of meditation and Yoga to the Buddha’s development is also considered essential to his enlightenment. This tradition still places central importance on the practice of meditation using
techniques like Vipassana (insight) and Metta (loving kindness) (Hanh 1998; Kornfield 1993). Tibetan Buddhists developed meditation techniques that cultivate compassion and love (Goleman, 2003).

Within the path of contemplation we are offered a way to develop inner peace, in whatever form that takes for us; it maybe through prayer, meditation or just reflective silence. It offers us a chance to go beyond ourselves, our beliefs and our limits. It enables us to more objectively view reality and also our role in that reality. We start to see our anger, hatred, pain and sadness and the ways these things manifest in our lives. It is a process of starting to wake up to the truth beyond our rational mind and discover the meaning of peace that lies within all of us.

“Theologians fail to see that it is not a matter of proving the existence of the light, but of blind people who do not know that their eyes could see. It is high time we realize that is pointless to praise the light and preach it if nobody can see it. It is much more needful to teach people the art of seeing. For it is obvious that far too many people are incapable of establishing connection between the sacred figures and their own psyche.” – Moacanin (1986)
Withers (2003) states that “the historic failure of religions to work together for peace, stems from the fact religious people attach importance only to formal differences of faith, without trying to see the common aspects that lie behind their respective religions”. Niwano (1977) also believes that it is our failure to see the common link behind all religions which generates one of the great hindrances to world peace. Those who commune with the inner aspects of their religion (the mystics) can relate to, appreciate and identify with other religious and spiritual traditions more easily than others (Groff & Smoker, 1996). We only can understand the experience of ‘God’ from our own point of view. We observe it through our lenses, and so Withers (2003) claims that our conflicting “claims about God are really but variegated human understandings of one’s own mystical subjective experience”. Christian monk Thomas Merton (2002) and Buddhist monk Thich Nhat Hanh (1995) both note that the exploration of other traditions has allowed them to go deeper into their own practice. Hill et al. (2006) observe an increase in tolerance from students who come to understand the similar features in particular religious traditions. Meister Eckhart presents many of his concepts like selfhood and nobility of the soul in such a way that no specific belief system is required (Classen, 2003). Gyatso (1994) believes that all religions require control of the undisciplined mind and the lessening of selfishness. He feels each path leads to a “peaceful, disciplined, ethical, and wise” state and all have fundamentally the same message. This is the key to interfaith communication, finding the similarities to cross the void we have created between each other. The quotes below highlight this concept:
"In any way that men love in that same way they find my love: for many are the paths of men, but they all in the end come to me” – The Bhagavad-Gita

“All destiny leads down the same path – growth, love and service” - Kubler-Ross (1997)

“I maintain that every major religion of the world -- Buddhism, Christianity, Confucianism, Hinduism, Islam, Jainism, Judaism, Sikhism, Taoism, Zoroastrianism - has similar ideals of love, the same goal of benefiting humanity through spiritual practice, and the same effect of making their followers into better human beings” – The 14th Dalai Lama

Groff & Smoker (1996) raise a central problem in intercultural communication; that we confuse the map (one’s own tradition, religion, path or practices) with the territory (the experience of Reality/God/Truth/Spirit). Here they bring to light the idea of cultural or religious programming which individuals may not realise they are influenced by. Through our preconditioning we act without being aware of other cultures, religions or ways of understanding reality. They believe that by becoming aware of our programming and experiencing other viewpoints, we can come back to our own culture with some new understanding. They believe that through “educational programs focusing on the appreciation and understanding of cultural and religious diversity”, misunderstandings between religious groups can be overcome. This is one of the underlying ideas behind Hill et al’s (2006) education programme outlined in Contemplative Practices: Educating for Peace and Tolerance.
Gyatso (1994) reasons that if religions work for the betterment of humanity then they should work together for world peace. Through interfaith communication this goal can be achieved. To do this he believes we must promote better interfaith understanding so as to create a workable degree of unity among all religions [and] we must bring about a viable consensus on basic spiritual values that touch every human heart and enhance general human happiness.

This comes down to finding the common ground on which all religions stand. To do this it is important to consider the purpose of the religion and not the theological or metaphysical details surrounding it (Gyatso, 1994). While he strongly believes in building the bridges between religions he does not think that they should become indistinguishable. Their differences enrich the human experience and cater for the many different minds, with their various calibres and dispositions, in the world. Gyatso concludes that the role of religion is to benefit humanity through the creation of happiness and peace, not to convert others and prove superiority over others.

Interfaith communication offers us an external path to peace through religion. By honouring and highlighting the similarities between religions we can build bridges over the voids we have created. These connections between religion can be experienced through proper educational systems, exposure to other religions and cultures and by deepening our own practice and understanding of our own religion.
(this relates to experiencing the truth beyond the dogma and then seeing these truths in other religions).
Need for a Shift in Focus

Despite all our work in the external sphere, including technology and science, we have failed to create peace and happiness or end suffering. By placing most of our focus in these external areas we have started to lose touch with our “human knowledge and understanding that aspire towards honesty and altruism” (Gyatso, 1994). Gyatso acknowledges the benefit created through these paths but believes basic, underlying human problems remain untouched. He calls for a more balanced approach to be taken between material (external) development and spiritual (internal) development. This is where I feel the need is, to shift our focus from an externally dominated paradigm to one that rests more in the equilibrium between the two.

Groff & Smoker (1996) feel there is a growing need for people to become conscious of their own thoughts and feelings and the effect they have on the environment surrounding them. When people see the effect they have on the world they start to see they are responsible for the state of it, including whether it is peaceful or not. They believe it is this shift from the isolated individual perspective to the connected, inseparable and intertwined outlook that will create this shift from win-lose to win-win thinking and lay the foundation for a culture of global peace. Withers (2003) described this as our “tunnel vision” worldview which stops us from experiencing inner peace and manifesting it in the external world.

Lederach (2005) calls for the development of the moral imagination, the ability to transcend the cycles of violence while living within
them. We need to shift our internal perspective, to see beyond the physical realities we experience. He too highlights the importance of seeing the interconnection that binds us all, calling for the need to “imagine ourselves in a web of relationships that includes our enemies”. To him this process also requires paradoxical curiosity, pursuit of the creative act and acceptance of the inherent risk of stepping into the mystery. He encourages us to step beyond a narrow view of time, to connect to reality and transcend it in the same breath and to search for something that lies outside and yet is grounded in our daily life. He states that we must value who we are (internal) and not what we do (external) and believes that through our response, be it thoughts, words or actions, we “choose to transcend or enter and sustain the cycle of violence”. Developing the moral imagination is a pre-requisite for the transcendence of violence. Lederach suggests that through the development of our awareness of ourselves and the environment we live, peace becomes the natural state which we work towards. A shift in perception, he believes, is required, a shift in focus. Only through this shift can peace follow.

Fox (2006) sums up this need for a shift by saying if compassion became the norm and humans rose above their “narrow confines of egoism”, giving up “malice as a motive for interactions with others” then the underpinnings of peace, unity, generosity, tolerance, and non-violent coexistence would be laid. Mutual support and cooperation would develop out of seeing others as internally identical and world peace would follow if “loving-kindness and justice were to prevail in our dealings with others”. By changing the way we interact with ourselves, others and our environment, violence and all destructive and abusive relationships (institutionalised and non-institutionalised)
would simply no longer be compatible with the compassionate mind-
set created and would be “unsustainable in its light”.
The ‘how’ is the harder part of this problem. The shifting of perception is a process that takes time and commitment. There are a number of ways suggested in which this process can be started, including some methods already mentioned that link interfaith communication and contemplation. Others that will be looked at here include developing compassion, increasing our understanding of our mind and the role of meditation in relation to these processes.

Compassion is a recurring theme throughout thought and literature in relation to a peaceful way of interacting with life. Schopenhauer states (in Fox, 2006) that it melts the barrier between the individual and the other. That through the act of empathy we engage fully with the person and can act free from selfish motives. He believes that it is through compassionate action that inner harmony and equilibrium within the psyche can be achieved. This is because it works in line with the fundamentally metaphysical truth of interconnection and it bubbles up from a deep spring within all beings. Intuitively it goes against nature to act out of selfishness. Schopenhauer calls this ‘applied metaphysics’, an idea echoed throughout this thesis (and human thought) as a path to a higher self. Compassion can be cultivated, learned and experienced. It encourages us to develop altruism and empathy. It helps us see our relationship with those around us and challenges our belief that our individual needs take precedence over those around us. It is a powerful tool for developing peace.
Meditation in its many forms is another method that can be used to change our perception of the world. The details of this are examined in greater detail in the following section, however, here is an outline of some of its benefits. Meditation helps us to go beyond the thoughts and feelings of separation we experience (in ourselves and from others) (Weil, 1990). Thurman (2006) considers it an important part of psychological, intellectual and spiritual development and according to Hill et al. (2006) its benefits have been shown in the body (e.g., the neurosciences), the mind (e.g., cognitive psychology) and society (e.g., social anthropology). Nobel (2005) believes there is a fundamental connection between meditation and mediation saying both can be used in the creation of peace. This is because both require and develop equanimity (impartiality in the terms of mediation), the overcoming of paradoxes surrounding us, humility, mindfulness, contact with reality and self-reflection, and both diminish self-interest. This thesis provides an example of how the inner workings and successes of peace can be applied to the outer world.

This question of how to shift the focus from the current paradigm to a new, more balanced one, will be the heart of the rest of this thesis. It is broken into two parts – the first relates to how we, as individuals, live peace and the second is how we teach others to live peace.
Living Peace

This section of my thesis looks into the idea of living peace, of cultivating the internal aspect of ourselves. The importance of this has already been covered but will be touched on again. The majority of this chapter is broken into two parts. The first explores the qualities and merits that need to be developed by someone ‘living peace’ and the second considers the effect of the practice of living peace (in the form of meditation and spirituality) on the mind and body.

A Quick Look at the Importance of Living Peace

“To educate people for peace we have two alternatives: to use words, or to be peaceful ourselves and to speak with our lives and our bodies. I think the second way is more effective” – Eppsteiner (1985)

One of Plato’s most famous teachings was his cave allegory. Here he raised the question of how can we know the infinite nature of reality when our habitual patterns of viewing the world only allow us to see the “limited shadows of reality” (Sander, 2008). Withers (2003) also states that “we live according to certain values that depend on our perceptions of the world, and it is very common that our paradigms in understanding the world are extremely narrow-minded”. So to break away from the violent perceptions within the world we need to develop and live peace in our lives. This gives us an understanding of what peace really is and allows us to show and inspire others. For an educator to teach effectively he must be an example himself (Weil, 1990). He must practice affection, patience, kindness, openness and empathy. Plato again states that the unexpressed and inexpressible
truths in the world, that can only be experienced by philosopher kings, can only be communicated passively (Sander, 2008). This is the idea of living peace; through our lives we communicate the experience of peace.

I want to also look at the internal/external paradigm from a perspective that I have not touched on yet which is from the psychological standpoint of the relationship between self-esteem and violence. I ask the question, how does an unstable and unbalanced self opinion affect a person’s actions?

A number of authors maintain that low self-esteem is a cause of violence, delinquency and other antisocial behaviour (Adler, 1956; Bushman, 1998; Fergusson & Horwood, 2002; Horney, 1950; Kirschner, 1992; Long, 1990; Oates & Forrest, 1985; Rogers, 1961; Rosenberget al., 1989; Schoenfeld, 1988; Sprott & Doob, 2000; Tracy & Robins, 2003; Wiehe, 1991). These people theorise that inner self-doubts and self-dislike encourage violent behaviour towards others. There are a number of reasons for this, ranging from the idea that feelings of inferiority are embedded in early childhood rejection and humiliation to the idea that individuals guard themselves against feelings of inferiority and shame by externalizing blame for their failures (Donnellan et al., 2005). There have, however, been studies that have not found a link between the two problems (Bushman & Baumeister, 1998; Bynner, O’Malley, & Bachman, 1981; Jang & Thornberry, 1998; Kirkpatrick, Waugh, Valencia, & Webster, 2002; McCarthy & Hoge, 1984; Twenge & Campbell, 2003).
There are also many scholars considering the other end of the self-esteem spectrum, that is narcissism, and its effect on violence. There is debate here as to whether narcissism is really a superior self perception or merely a defensive shell compensating for unconscious inadequacy (e.g., Campbell, Rudich, & Sedikides, 2002; Kirkpatrick et al., 2002; Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001; Tracy & Robins, 2003) but there are also a number who reject this idea (Baumeister et al., 2000; Jankowski, 1991; Olweus, 1994). Baumeister et al. (2000) put forward a strong case for the positive relationship between narcissism and violence.

Murderers, rapists, wife beaters, violent youth gangs, aggressive nations, and other categories of violent people are all marked by strongly held views of their own superiority. When large groups of people differ in self-esteem, the group with the higher self-esteem is generally the more violent one.

They point to the correlation between intoxication, increased self-esteem and violence and to the fact that prisoners’ scores of self-esteem indicate high narcissism as the main reason for aggression. There are a number of reasons as to why narcissists are more likely to be violent. Baumeister et al. (2000) say they are deeply invested in their opinion of themselves and if others do not share or confirm this opinion aggression becomes the response in defence of their grandiose self-view. Bushman (1998) also believes that narcissistic people are more likely to act violently in response to an ego threat. Stucke (2002) says they act aggressively to re-establish their positive self-view and to derogate the cause of the ego threat. Other authors also find this connection include Baumeister et al. (1996), Baumeister (1997), Kernis et al. (1989), Rhodewalt and Morf (1998) and Stucke (2002).
Baumeister et al., (2000) believe that there is no simple link between self-esteem and aggression, but Bushman (1998) confirms there is an observable connection even if its source (high or low) is unknown. It is reasonable to assume, given the research, that both low self-esteem and narcissism contribute to externalizing problems (Donnellan et al., 2005). This highlights the idea that internal problems do spill out into the external world. Be it extremely positive or extremely negative, neither is a balanced view of the self or the world. In fact Stucke (2002) states that “stability of self-esteem has already been found to be an important moderating variable between self-esteem and anger and hostility”. We need to find balance and stability based on a sense of self that is grounded in reality.

Kraft (1995) recognises that this internal approach will not automatically solve the world’s problems. There is a moral complexity within all aspects of peace work in the modern world that is far beyond any simple answer but “those who have been exposed to genuine training and have tasted some of its fruits (of the internal realm) find that they can bring added clarity, patience, and centeredness to their work”. Through reconnection to the underlying unity beyond the complexity, we become more proficient at functioning within the chaos. Keown (1992) holds the traditional view from Buddhist thought that motivation is the measure of an action’s ‘rightness’. Kraft (1995) takes this a step further, saying that most people believe themselves to be doing good. “Even Hitler was convinced that eliminating the Jews would greatly benefit humanity”. He goes on to say that most of the world’s suffering might have been caused by well-intentioned people opposed to those trying to cause harm. The internal approach and the path to living peace allows us to
see that our “convictions are no less conditioned than the convictions of bomb makers and polluters”, meaning we can move beyond these convictions. We can start to see our motivations and assess whether our actions are done for the good of others or the good of ourselves. While Kraft (1995) believes that our fundamental motives may never be understood, by peeling off some of our layers we can advance our actions and start focusing them more towards peace.

Meister Eckhart poses a similar idea in his sermons, talking about “business people” who are seeking something, be it external awards or inner soothing. He says they see and love God as they see and love a cow. They love the cow for the milk, butter and cheese it produces, its usefulness, its value. It is with this mindset they love God; they worship for external riches and internal comfort. He does not think they are bad people. They try their best to please God in the way they know how, but it is not pure worship (Radler, 2006). These people do not see or understand the underlying motivations for worship and this parallels the work for peace. We must look inside and understand why we undertake action. To do this we must ask and cultivate the stillness to listen.

Mahatma Gandhi is one of the best examples of what can be achieved through ‘living peace’. He undertook the scientific study of non-violence but not as an academic pursuit. Instead he treated the world as his laboratory (Gan, 2008). Leo Tolstoy, Gandhi’s teacher, also highlighted the importance of the experience and the ability to see beyond the “perversion” of religion, believing this was where we truly found our relationship with God (1934). Thich Nhat Hanh shows how people can touch peace every moment in their lives. Acts like breathing, smiling, walking, eating, driving, using a phone, and
gardening can all lead to the experience of peace (Kraft, 1995). The action of restraint is equally important in the path to living peace (Kaza, 1991; Kraft, 1995). This could be in the form of what we consume (or do not, as is more likely in this case), what we say or how we act. Kraft (1995) also believes that living peace is to do with not looking away from reality no matter how painful it is. “If we look and continue to look, perhaps we can find something redemptive in it, or at least reach something like acceptance”.

So it is through the internal development we come to see who we really are. We see what motivates us, what drives us, what scares us, what we want and how we want to be seen. While this is sometimes neither a pretty nor comforting picture, by understanding ourselves more we can put aside certain aspects of ourselves that are not fruitful to our growth and try to cultivate ones that are. The following section discusses just this, what qualities need to be nurtured within for the growth of peace.

“When his soul is in peace he is in peace, and then his soul is in God. In cold or in heat, in pleasure or pain, in glory or disgrace, he is ever in Him” - The Bhagavad-Gita
Qualities of Living Peace

Service

“He who works not for an earthly reward, but does the work to be done, he is a Sanysai, he is a yogi: not he who lights not the scared fire or offers not the holy sacrifice” - The Bhagavad-Gita

The ability to serve, to give of one’s self fully, is a quality at the centre of living peace. It is through this service we interact with others, we are able to extend beyond ourselves and our worldview. To serve without thought of self is the highest way to interact with life and can be seen in the saints and sages across the ages. It also has a base in academic literature. Arweck & Nesbitt (2008) believe this process of giving aids the individual to control the mind. “If the mind is engaged in good thoughts and deeds, it cannot be occupied with useless, random thoughts”. Nobel (2005) feels the theme of service is central to both the meditation and mediation processes. Yick (2008) notes that people who experience abuse can see a transformative process occur through social activism as a form of giving back. Underwood (2002) suggests that there are observable cognitive, emotional, and/or physical benefits in directing compassionate love towards others. Much research suggests that volunteers possess better health and are more satisfied with life than those not involved in serving others (Field et al., 1998; Hunter & Linn 1981; Musick et al., 1999; Wheeler et al., 1998). Helping others is also part of the twelve-step ‘self-help’ programmes of the AA groups worldwide and is used in the function of self-transcendence (Kristeller & Johnson, 2005). Zemore and Kaskutas (2003) show, in a sample of 200 recovering alcoholics, that service to the community is positively related to
soberness. Brown (1985) and Tiebout (1961) feel this process is humbling and diminishes the ego while O. J. Morgan (1999) thinks it amplifies connectedness which aids spiritual growth and recovery. Kristeller & Johnson (2005) quip that paradoxically, by giving up concern for our own needs, we actually benefit.

The Bhagavad-Gita (Mascaró, 1962) has a whole chapter on the importance of service, or karma Yoga, as it is called in the yogic language. The idea contained there is that all life is work and by seeing this, and not working for ourselves and our benefit, we will find freedom. When we work without expectation then everything becomes a gift. The Bhagavad-Gita actually says that peace is found in work. When we accept what has to be done and do it without expectation or reliance on anything or anyone and undertake it with the fullness of our heart, we find peace. It also says that through service we can show people, by example, the best way to live.

Even as the unwise work selfishly in the bondage of selfish works, let the wise man work selflessly for the good of the world. Let not the wise disturb the mind of the unwise in their selfish work. Let him, working with devotion; show them the joy of good work. (Mascaró, 1962)

Meister Eckhart encourages us not to forsake our activities and says we can find God and see God in all that we encounter. He also embodies this truth in his own life, actively engaging in communities where he taught and preached (Garner, 2009). For him the journey ‘inwards’ is always grounded in the journey ‘outwards’ and service provides the link. He bridges the voids between ‘interior’ versus
‘exterior’ and ‘contemplation’ versus ‘activity’ by opening to the human experience. Every path to him can become a path to God if approached properly (Radler, 2006). Radler (2006) quotes Philip Sheldrake’s belief that “interaction, participation, and active citizenship should be seen as forms of spiritual practice”. Nobel (2005) asserts that the goal of transformation is about coming back to the ‘marketplace’ to serve others.

Correctly understanding and implementing the concept of service is instrumental to the development of peace. It takes us from our bonds of servitude to our wants and desires to a space beyond ourselves. Here we feel more connected, loved and fulfilled. We start to understand what it is to live peace, which is to give of ourselves.

“God aspires us into Himself in contemplation, and then we must be wholly His; but afterwards the Spirit of God expires us without, for the practice of love and good works” - Jan Van Ruysbroeck, 14th Century Dutch Mystic
Love

“Who have all the powers of their soul in harmony, and the same loving mind for all; who find joy in the good of all beings – they reach in truth my very self” - The Bhagavad-Gita

Kubler-Ross (1997) is often described as the death and dying lady after she published her definitive book entitled *On death and dying*. However, in later works she started exploring the post-death experience. All this led her to discover what it means to live. For her, the sole purpose of life is to grow and the ultimate lesson is to learn how to love and be loved unconditionally. She concludes that death is one of life’s greatest experiences and compares the experience of the butterfly coming out of its cocoon. She feels we are on this planet to learn the lessons we need to learn then we go onto an existence of complete and overwhelming love. This would align with other’s experience of God and Kristeller and Johnson (2005) actually state that ‘God is love’. Through connecting with a sense of love we are connecting with God and our spiritual self. Tolstoy (1984) believes the only necessary element for society to return to its pure doctrine and render unnecessary every other form of social order is the law of love. For Gyatso (1994), this must be a pure love, free from attachment (that changes or disappears as circumstances shift). He believes the base of real love is altruism and compassion. He advocates a wider love that incorporates everyone, even our enemies. The Bhagavad-Gita emphasises the importance of loving enemies as well as friends, rendering one “free from the chains attachment” (Mascaró, 1962). This relates to the concept of seeing God/ourselves in everyone and this is the base of true love. Once we recognise the interconnection
between all of us, love is the only way to truly honour this. Through love we find peace and by loving we live it.

“Everything is bearable when there is love. My wish is that you try to give more people more love. The only thing that lives forever is love”

- Kubler-Ross (1997)
Balance

The struggle for balance is one we often experience. Finding balance in life is also closely related to the peace we experience. When the ups and downs of life come, our ability to remain centred is a reflection of the inner peace we experience. According to Meister Eckhart "it is the sign of a weak spirit if the passing things of this earth cause someone joy and despair" (Davies, 1994). The Bhagavad-Gita also reiterates this saying: “Who is balanced in blame and in praise, whose soul is silent, who is happy with whatever he has, whose home is not in this world, and who has love – this man is dear to me” (Mascaró, 1962). Deshmukh (2006) quotes Patanjali’s Yoga-Sutra view on the importance of a balanced mind. Eckhart believes this relates to seeing the beauty in all things beyond the package they come in. All things, ‘good’ and ‘bad’, are a gift from God to help us grow. By knowing and seeing this we become balanced. Outward ugliness pertains only to the surface and has nothing to do with the true beauty of the soul (Davies, 1994). Eckhart also encourages us to have a balanced approach to the internal and external world, stating that often people make great efforts for small material gains but are unwilling to make small efforts for large spiritual gains (Classen, 2003). Davies (1994) quotes Meister Eckhart:

A knight in battle risks his possessions, his life and his soul for the sake of a glory that is brief and passing, and yet enduring just a little suffering for God and for eternal blessedness seems such a big thing to us.
Connection

Connection with life and connecting with others seems fundamental not only in peace research but also in life itself. All religions and spiritual guides give importance to this truth, from the East to the West. Through the experience of connection we start to break down the illusions that stop us living and experiencing peace. We see the common threads that run between us and experience compassion for the pains of others.

Central to the concept of connection is the importance of communication. Roque (2006) says that “peace is connecting, seeing the truth without illusions, understanding and being understood”. She believes that the ways in which we communicate and how we listen is an instrumental in connecting with people. Rosenberg’s (2001) research shows that non-violent communication can replace previous patterns of “defending, withdrawing or attacking” when confronted with “judgement and criticism”. Through this process we enable ourselves to see ourselves and others from a new perspective which encourages increased compassion. Fragmentation, which occurs between nations, types of knowledge and ourselves, is considered by Weil (1990) as one of the main reasons for the deterioration of peace. So surely better communication offers a bridge over the separation of fragmented parties.

Many express the idea of connection as seeing God in other beings. The Bhagavad-Gita has much to say on the importance of this. Kristen says to Ajuna “thou shalt see all things in thy heart, and thou shalt see thy heart in me” (Mascaró, 1962) and he tells him through the practice
of Yoga one “sees the self abiding in every being, and sees every being in the self” (Deshmukh, 2006). Deshmukh (2006) quotes the Gheranda-Samhita as saying: “All living creatures on land and in the sky, all trees, bushes, creepers, plants, grass, all rivers, and mountains – all are seen as the one supreme Brahman, and one’s own self is seen in all”. Christianity also highlights the importance of seeing into the soul of others and recognising it is a part of God. Classen (2003) believes this relates to observing creatures as “part of the divine universe” instead of looking at the physical form. Meister Eckhart states that the noble soul (a concept he uses that is comparable to the idea of living peace) knows that he/she is part of the Godhead, "blessedness consists primarily in the fact that the soul sees God in himself” (Davies, 1994), which means they only sees God in everything and nothing else. Classen (2003) states that it is only through this union of soul and God that one can find absolute peace and love. As Eckhart says, "there she knows nothing but essence and God" (Davies, 1994).

Eckhart provides more verification of the importance of connection through his concept of the circular journey of the soul. We begin with God, then move away from Him and then return. This is the God beyond the God (the Trinity), the nothingness, the all encompassing. Eckhart concludes that all things are in all and God is closer to ourselves than we are (Radler, 2006). Lederach (2005) quotes Wheatley’s (2002) more scientific explanation for this concept of interconnectedness, stating that nothing exits in isolation or independence within the cosmos. Everything is interdependent and relies on relationships, from the subatomic particles who share their energy to the ecosystem that shares its food – “in the web of life, nothing living lives alone”. Kraft (1995) says the experience of
interconnection enables Buddhists to work more fully towards peace. They realise whatever work they do helps all causes. Each struggle is intertwined with all the others. This allows us to give ourselves more fully to the work we are doing at present.

Connection is about seeing the web of relationship that connects everyone. As Lederach (2005) puts it, it is about recognizing that our grandchildren’s fate is intertwined with our enemy’s grandchildren. Arweck & Nesbitt (2008) believe that it is this web of connection that creates a family-like bond in the world. We experience awe and wonder for the universe; a feeling for unity of all; the desire to improve quality of life for everyone; feeling part of a larger whole; feeling part of the planet and feeling love for everything on it; awareness of an underlying order of creation; love and respect for the diversity in the human family.

Gyatso (1994) points out we need to look at life from a more holistic perspective. In the beginning and end we rely on others, so in the middle we should act kindly to others. By stepping back we see the give and take relationship of life and can engage more fully in this process. Kubler-Ross (1997) believes that the experience of heaven and hell we go through at death is actually an experience of this interdependence. We see how our actions affect all those around us in their entirety and through this we see the effects of how we lived our lives. By seeing this connection we can work more towards the creation of the experience of heaven on earth through our actions, thoughts and words. This is what it means to live peace.
To experience this connection with life we need to go beyond the self, because the limitation of self does not allow us to enter into the connective web. If we are too lost in our own problems and our own suffering how can we feel other’s pain? Maslow (1968) talks of self-actualization as containing the healthiest, most creative and integrated individuals who experience loss of self or transcendence of it. Alexander et al. (1991) argue that the experience of the transcendental self is actually the self of all beings which is the “unified field of natural law recently glimpsed by modern quantum physics” (Orme-Johnson, 2000). Deshmukh (2006) uses the yogic term Samadhi for this state, where the individual becomes one with the collective. Radler, (2006) comments on Eckhart work saying “as ‘God’ and the created ‘I’ vanish and pour back into the riverbed of the source, there is no one in this fusion of identities to ask whence ‘I’ come and ‘I’ have been and there is no one to miss ‘me’”. Eckhart encourages us not to become too tied to the physical body we inhabit, as through searching for God here we create a spiritual vacuum. It is only when we go beyond this plane that we can reach fulfilment of the soul (Garner, 2009).

The final aspect of connection is realising we are all the same. That above all religions, economies, race and colour is a shared experience of life. That all people come from the same source and return to that same source (Kubler-Ross, 1997). All beings have the same desires and should have equal right to fulfil them (Gyatso, 1994). Vialle et al. (2008) quote from Paul Cassey’s speech at an interfaith vigil in 2004, We've got to hold on to and encourage each other with the moral imagination, that capacity which lets us listen to and sympathize with those who are suffering, lets us live with their reality, not to
appropriate their lives for our own, but to know others as like us, to see in them our siblings, children and spouses. The moral imagination teaches us to grant other human beings their humanity, and to act from that knowledge.
Sander (2008) comes back to the root of the word theory, *theoria*, which relates to the idea of being a spectator or witness of the metaphysical reality unfolding before us. This was top of Plato’s hierarchy of knowledge and the paramount way in which to know reality. This is the idea of detachment; it is removing ‘ourselves’ from the picture and seeing the world without our lenses. Browning (no date) brings to light that peacemaking paradoxically requires us to engage and detach, to speak out against injustices and learn to let them go. He quotes Jesus saying “to be in the world but not of the world”. He believes that to work for peace we must let go of any responsibility we feel for the outcome and challenge our need to be right. To work from peace and to live peace we need to see beyond ourselves, our point of view and our beliefs. Detachment is about disengaging with these aspects of ourselves and fully experiencing life. Part of this is seeing the individual work as merely being a “drop of water in the wave of history that is rolling inexorably towards liberation” with “each grain of sand, we are building a new world” (Gorin, 1993). By viewing the world in this context, we see ourselves as small part of the infinite whole and what ‘we think’ is right becomes overtaken and enveloped by what ‘is’ right.

For Meister Eckhart the ability to detach is instrumental in creating unity between the individual and God. This is because God is beyond the concept of the individual who "flies about in yesterday and in tomorrow" (Davies 1994). Only through detaching ourselves from the physical realm can we experience Him (Radler, 2006). It is not a static process and involves removing all that does not take us closer to God. Eckhart believes we forget our divine identity, choosing instead to
cling to our fleeting existence with an all-consuming addiction with the particular self (the ‘I’, ‘mine’ and ‘me’) as the Ultimate Reality. He calls the illusion of the autonomous, individual self a “negative nothingness” that creates the greatest basis of human attachment. He compares detachment to a story in the bible of Jesus’ dissatisfaction with the trade being undertaken in the temple and his removal of the vendors there. Eckhart believes the cleaning of the temple is a representation of detachment, emptying the soul “so that the divine in its transcendent nothingness and translucency can fill this spaceless space” (Radler, 2006). He highlights the importance of detachment saying we make the search for God harder by looking for “something” when in truth God is “nothing”. In our search we misstep and grasp for things that “seem divine” out of the “anxiety caused by emptiness rather than embracing it peacefully”.

Through this process we lose sight of the unity that exists within us and through detachment we can reclaim it. It is only through letting-go and letting-be that we can truly be in the world and we can ultimately return to our original source. It is a “wayless way” that can be undertaken with the same dignity on the streets as in the church and Eckhart calls for people to detach - “that is, to be, know, and love simply and simply be, know, and love” (Radler, 2006).
Judgement

To live peacefully we need to see how we judge ourselves and what affect these judgements have. Roques (2006) states that when we become aware of the judgement and labelling process we can start to make conscious choices about whether we hold onto the judgement or not. This allows us to see the intent behind these judgements which adds to our self understanding. As well as this, Lederach (2005) believes that we must suspend judgement in the face of conflict. Not in the sense of “relinquish opinion or the capacity to assess” but to use non-judgement as “a force to mobilize the imagination and lift the relationships”. To him the refusal to judge is about the refusal to reduce the complexities of reality to the duals of right and wrong, yes and no. He calls this paradoxical curiosity – using the complexity of the world to explore new opportunities “that surpass, replace, and break the shackles of historic and current relational patterns of repeated violence”. The idea of working towards removing judgement means we enable ourselves the limits we place on ourselves. To live peace, to be peace and to see peace, is for most of us a concept beyond our conception. We must move beyond our self perception and to do this we need to stop listening to the voice that has held us there our whole lives.
Non-violence seems to be a virtue many of the great sages have lived by. Jesus, Buddha, Tolstoy and Gandhi all lived this truth and through their lives they created peace. What violence is, as an internal attribute, is harder to pin down. We can be violent to ourselves or undertake action that does not cause physical violence but is motivated by violence. As Gandhi said "the means are as important as the ends" (Groff & Smoker, 1996). Because of this, non-violence is a philosophy of life, a trait to be developed and a natural state of being that is not only important to living peace, but may in fact encompass the whole struggle to do so. Arweck & Nesbitt (2008) believe it entails psychological (compassion for all, including one’s self) and social (includes appreciation of other cultures and religions as well as environmental care) aspects. For Tolstoy (1984) the virtue of non-violence is at the centre of the quest for peace. He believes that this is the core of Jesus’ teachings and feels that these teachings can only be taught “by the example of peace, harmony, and love among its followers”. He states that this will sometimes require self-sacrifice but ultimately he maintains that if all men refused to oppose evil by evil then there would be peace in the world. The imperishable heritage of every soul who embraces the teaching “Resist not evil” is overruling love.
Stillness

Stillness is often equated to peace in both Eastern and Western traditions. The ability to go beyond ourselves and our mind requires an inner stillness; as the bible says “be still and know that I am God” (Psalm 46:10). The Bhagavad-Gita highlights the importance of finding this stillness by saying that “the man who in his work finds silence and who sees that silence is work, this man in truth sees the light and in all his works finds peace” (Mascaró, 1962). Meister Eckhart believed that humans possess a natural craving to experience stillness which he believed to be of a divine nature. Only through offering a still heart to God can we please Him and through the stillness of the soul God can work. He believed that, in this stillness, we find a divine empty desert beyond all creation and the Trinity, where there is nothing but stillness (Radler, 2006).
“Life is illusion… The only real thing is compassion – the bonds we share with others” - Kamimura from the movie Broken Saints

Compassion, our ability to feel for others and show them love, is at the foundation of living peace. It was Elisabeth Kübler-Ross who said that the “greatest rewards in life come from opening your heart to those in need” (1997). Her earlier work showed that those dying measure the meaning of their lives by whether they made a difference in the world, which shows the overarching desire to help others within us all (1969). From the The Bhagavad-Gita to the Bible, compassion for others is ever-present. Kristeller and Johnson (2005) state that meditation and contemplative prayer practices, of both the East and West, provide the space from usual thought processes, like self-judgment, and promote and cultivate compassion.

Work on the ‘altruistic gene’ (Silver, 1980; Wilson, 1978) suggests that compassion is a genetic function. Webb et al. (2000) state that altruism is embedded in our cognitive structure. Schervish (2005) shows that desire to make a difference is common to all humans. Guy and Patton (1998) state that the strongest motive is the basic, deep-seated need to help others and Miller’s (1977) social justice perspective holds that people will help others if they see they are suffering unjustly. As well as the studies centred on the ‘altruistic gene’, another stream of literature is focused on what is referred to as the ‘empathy-altruism hypothesis’. This study brings to light the idea that we are not always acting in our own self-interest but will often aid those around us out of empathy. It asserts that facility for self-
protection and capacity for compassion are divisible human functions (Batson, 1991; 2002). Through the ability to understand and even share other people’s suffering, we are able to act in a way that is not driven by self-interest. People display actions where they have no expectation of reward other than the joy or pleasure of helping (Guy & Patton, 1998). Many studies claim that there is much evidence in favour of purely altruistic motives (Clary & Snyder, 1991; Margolis, 1982; Piliavin & Charng, 1990). In my previous work I concluded that the desire to help others and make a difference in the world was the underlying reason for giving charitable gifts (Gibb, 2009). Through this I feel there is an academic basis to the claims of religions, sages and saints that compassion is all important in our approach to life.

“The man who has a good will for all, who is friendly and has compassion; whose determination is strong; whose mind and inner vision are set on me – this man loves me and he is dear to me” - The Bhagavad-Gita
Self Connection

Awareness of Feelings and Strength to Follow Intuition

This quality of peace relates to self understanding, knowing thyself, and listening to thyself. Some people express this as listening to God; for others it is following one’s intuition. It is hearing the wordless voice, the part of us that knows what needs to be done. Tolstoy describes seeing an execution in Paris. As the head parted from the body he knew the deed was wrong and evil. No theory could justify it to be good. He says, “good and evil isn’t what people say or do, nor is it progress, but it is my heart and I” (Tolstoy, 1900a). It is being beyond theorising, rationalising and the bickering of the mind. While this may this go on within, it is knowing what is true and right and standing in that truth.

For many it is the experience of God or the divine within that we are connecting with. Eckhart believes that human life is divided into the physical and the spiritual, body and mind or as he calls it the “outer man” and "inner man" (Classen, 2003). It is through this "inner man" that we achieve nobility of the soul. Davies (1994) highlights Eckhart’s belief that God is the central and unwavering flame and the heart of all humans, saying "since it is God himself who has engendered this seed, sowing and implanting it, it can never be destroyed or extinguished in itself, even if it is overgrown and hidden". Eckhart maintains the as we grow we must learn to follow our path which ultimately leads to God and inner peace (Classen, 2003), "quietly resting in the overflowing wealth of the highest and unutterable wisdom" (Davies 1994). Eckhart uses the analogy of the
sculptor shaping a figure from stone, the figure is already held within -
the sculptor merely removes the sections that conceal it from view.
The same is true with us, the inner peace is within us, but we must
learn to see it and connect with it (Classen, 2003). Others also follow
the Dominican’s approach. Swami Rama (1984) believes that human
beings remain unfinished beings who must seek their own completion.
Through Yoga, meditation or contemplative prayer he asserts we can
go beyond our mind into the collective consciousness. These practices
are not about intellectual pursuit or emotional rapture but are the
processes of self-realization and divine connection within. For him
meditation is the search within oneself that finally leads one to that
centre from whence consciousness flows. Heschel (1951) says that:

God is in everything, but God is nowhere as much as he is in the soul.
There, where time never enters, where no image shines in, in the
innermost and deepest aspect of the soul, God creates the whole
cosmos

Maslow’s state of self-actualization is considered to be in the ‘God
realm’ by Welwood (2000) and at this moment the person becomes
whole and is “overflowing with love, peace, and light” (Withers,
2003).

Others tackle the idea from a more scientific perspective, looking into
the role of the heart and intuition. Roques (2006) reviewed research
showing that the heart is more than a blood-pumping organ. It is
actually responsible for aligning bodily systems so they function
coherently, balancing hormones and sending intuitive signals to the
brain. She also maintains that connecting with our core heart feelings
gives our mind better focus and concentration and renders it more open to receiving new information and learning. McCraty et al. (2004) conclude that the heart and brain are together involved in receiving, processing, and decoding intuitive information. For them intuition gives us access to information that is beyond what we are consciously aware of. Andreasen (2005) feels that there is a strong link between intuition and creativity, so connection to our intuition is key to the creation of peaceful solutions in daily life.
Jung (1933) considers the conscious mind to be a fragmented piece of the total psyche, which is made up of the conscious and the unconscious. Our conscious mind struggles with the unconscious, attempting to move it from the unknown to the known – an infinite and ultimately unachievable quest. Once we see this we must surrender to the autonomy of life as a whole and through this we experience the soul (Sander, 2008). Surrender is imperative to the journey to peace, evidenced in Reinhold Niebuhr’s Serenity Prayer which begins “God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change”. Swami Rama (1984) states the only way to rid yourself of ego is to Surrender to God, loving God fully so the barrier between consciousness melts. Askay and Magyar-Russell (2009) say that terminally-ill people regain control over their lives by relinquishing control to God. They accept the process and use it for personal and spiritual growth which leads to emotional healing. Eckhart states that we only suffer if we have not turned and surrendered to God. If we do, no outward misfortunes can affect us as we were one with God (Davies, 1994). It is our separation that creates our suffering (Classen, 2003). It is when we try and assert ourselves and control life that we suffer. Part of this relates to seeing the lesson in every aspect of life, even death. We need to learn that we can grow in every situation - "neither God nor nature allows such a thing as unadulterated evil or suffering" (Davies, 1994). Classen (2003) believes that perfection in humans is only achieved when the individual abandons the self entirely to God. Only through this surrender is God able to work through the individual, and this is the meaning of living peace.
But surrender does not need to be in relation to God, it is merely an acceptance of life as it comes. It is approaching whatever is happening to us as what needs to be happening and moving forward from where we are. It allows us to unshackle ourselves from our mind and need for control, enabling us to be free of our individual baggage and to find openness in our actions.
The Mind and Body

Alfred Adler (1930) theorises that all children feel inferior, weak, helpless and dependent in comparison to adults. This has the potential to make the whole childhood traumatic. We become disillusioned and our concept of the world is continually destroyed. Perhaps the same could be said for life. If this is the case, that life creates wounds, then the spiritual journey is a search for healing. Was this what the Buddha was trying to articulate in his ‘noble truths’, the journey from the suffering that surrounds us in the world to freedom from it? Adler states that it is through social interest, concern beyond ourselves, that we find healing. Here I have looked at academic evidence which confirms this idea. I am trying to find the link between the philosophical concepts I have already mentioned and current scientific thought. Countless people in human history have stated the importance of spirituality and religion - but what does science have to say? What effect does meditation and prayer have on our mind and body? What measurable (physical, mental and emotional) changes can be observed when these activities are undertaken? This section seeks to provide a different perspective on these practices and further bridge the gap between the philosophical thoughts addressed in the thesis and current scientific research. To do this I change into a more ‘academic’ gear – the style and flow of the writing will shift to express these concepts from a scientific standpoint. This section is part of the attempt made in this thesis for some kind of holistic validity.

I have split the section into two broad topics. The first addresses general spirituality, including religion, and the effect it has on health and healing. This covers a range of benefits from mental to physical health. The second section looks more specifically at the role of
meditation on the brain. I have briefly overview the human mind, then explore the observed effects in the brain from meditation and finally look at the mind-body interaction. Whilst the previous section considers some of the qualities required to ‘live peace’, this section assumes that through spirituality and meditation we start to engage in this process. That meditation, for example, may bring some detachment, stillness, balance, non violence, self connection, compassion and non judgement and that spirituality (and religion) may encourage service, love, connection and surrender. This thesis is not claiming that these qualities are the causes of the benefits observed through these practices below, nor that spirituality and meditation develop these qualities; it is merely suggesting it. The link between the two is implied, however. Even if viewed as being completely unrelated, both the development of the qualities above and the practice of spirituality and meditation, will encourage the growth of inner peace.
Spirituality and Healing

For most of human history the roles of religion and healing have been intertwined and often performed by the same individual. Every human civilization has used a form of spirituality or religion during times of sickness or death. Torosian et al. (2003) state that spirituality has been recorded since the earliest time in human history as being instrumental in the healing and recovery from illness. They state that the link between spiritually and medicine can be seen in cultures “from the Mediterranean region of Europe, the Far and Middle Eastern regions of Asia, Africa, and North and South America” and in spite of customary and behavioural differences there is a common belief that “faith, spirituality, and religion played a powerful role in the healing process”. However, with the rapid expansion of scientific knowledge in the 20th century, these once interdependent roles have become separate (Boehnlein, 2006).

More recently, as humans become more migratory, and national, cultural and religious lines become more blurred and entangled, diverse traditions have become more common in western cosmopolitan societies (Boehnlein, 2006). This exposure has perhaps encouraged some to look again at the spiritual-healing paradigm from a different angle. Psychiatrists, for example, are becoming more knowledgeable and accepting of spiritual traditions. Boehnlein (2006) notes that the “processes and goals of some psychotherapies and spiritual practices are remarkably similar”. Tornstam (1989; 1997) believes there is more to humans than the biological, social or psychological nature of our being. We have a deep contemplative nature that struggles to transcend our self concerns, to find meaning and purpose in life and that ultimately we yearn to be transformed in
the spiritual realm. It is through this process that we create our wellbeing.

There are a number of studies showing a positive correlation between a patient’s spirituality or religious commitment and health outcomes (e.g. Anandarajah & Hight, 2001; Chandler et al., 1992; Fry, 2000; Hawkes, 1994; Kaldestad, 1996; Lindgren & Coursey, 1995; Levin et al., 1997; Matthews et al., 1998). There is also the growing belief that patients want their spiritual issues considered as part of their health care (Anandarajah & Hight, 2001; King & Bushwick, 1994; Maugans & Wadland 1991). King and Bushwick (1994) show that 77 percent of patients fall into this category. Up to 94 percent of patients deem that spiritual health to be as important as physical health (Anandarajah & Hight, 2001). Maugans and Wadland’s (1991) study shows that 91 percent of patients believe in God compared to 64 percent of doctors. Anderson et al. (1993) studied former rehabilitation patients and found that 74 percent believed that spiritual beliefs were important. The American Academy of Family Physicians conducted a poll in which 99 percent of 296 doctors believed that religious faith had the ability to heal and 75 percent believed prayers could heal other people and assist in recovery (Eisenberg et al., 1993). Religion and spirituality has been connected with life satisfaction and quality of life (Riley et al., 1998), self-esteem (Harris et al., 1995), recovery from many sicknesses, including cancer, cardiovascular disease, neurologic disorders, musculoskeletal disease and mental health problems (; Ornish, Brown, Scherwitz et al., 1990; Post et al., 2000; Pressman, et al., 1990; Propst et al., 1992; Torosian & Biddle, 2003), emotional well-being (Kim et al., 2000) and functional outcomes (Fitchett et al., 1999; Pressman et al., 1990). According to Torosian et al. (2003) studies have demonstrated “reduction in stress, relief of pain,
improved recovery from surgery, reduced depression and anxiety, and prevention and recovery from substance abuse” through spiritual and religious methods. Anandarajah and Hight (2001) indicate that there are up to 50 medical schools presently offering classes in spirituality and medicine which to me recognises the gradual movement back to where we began, where spirituality and healing are convergent rather than separate fields.

There is a growing amount of research looking into the role of spirituality in mental health (Ai et al., 1998; Hunsberger, 1985; Koenig & Futterman, 1994). Watlington and Murphy (2006) show that African American women with higher levels of spirituality and greater religious involvement report less depressive symptoms after domestic violence. Others (e.g. Fry, 2000; Levin, 1994; Moberg, 1990; 1997) have shown that religiosity and spirituality shield aging people from anxiety, depression, alienation and loneliness. There is much research on the role of spirituality in the recovery from trauma as well (e.g. Boehnlein, 2006; Torosian et al., 2003; Watlington & Murphy, 2006). This is reviewed in much more depth later in this thesis. Oxman et al’s (1995) study showed that the risk of death during the six-month period following elective cardiac surgery for elderly patients was correlated to lack of strength and comfort from religion.

Religion and spirituality can also play an important and positive role in individuals’ attempts to cope with stressful events. Examples include people who have undergone physical traumas, such as accidents, illness and major surgeries (Fitchett et al., 1999; Koenig et al., 2001) and people coping with aging (Ai et al., 1998; Idler & Kasl, 1992; Levin, 1995; Maton & Wells, 1995; Pargament, 1997). Torosian
et al. (2003) say that it improves recovery, creates a sense of purpose in life, promotes hope, helps achieve peace of mind and enhances coping skills for people with cancer. It has been shown that religion helps up to 85 percent of people with cancer cope with their illness (John & Spica, 1991). Holland et al. (1999) found that religion supported patients with melanoma. Other studies include Kaczorowski et al. (1989) who showed that spirituality eased symptoms of anxiety in cancer patients while Roberts et al. (1997) provided evidence that 76 percent of women with gynecologic cancer felt religion aided them through their illness. Torosian et al. (2003) say that “spiritual integration promotes the use of one’s spiritual resources to better cope and recover from traumatic events, difficult life transitions, and spiritual crises”. Through prayer and surrender to God, they believe that deep-seated fears and emotions can be released. Through surrender and forgiveness we engage with cognitive, behavioural, and spiritual aspects of ourselves that reduce anger and encourage spiritual growth. By using spirituality in therapy they maintain that we can awaken and utilize the patients’ “spiritual resources to provide strength, faith, and hope to overcome even the most difficult of life’s challenges”.

Wallis (1996) states there is an increasing consensus among medicine, gerontology and mental health researchers that there is a beneficial relationship between religiosity and spirituality and physical health. Some studies show a connection between spirituality and the immune system. Sephton et al. (2001) associate spirituality with a higher number of circulating white blood cells, total lymphocyte counts, increased helper T cells, and increased cytotoxic T cells in cancer patients. Koenig et al. (1997) found that religious attendance was inversely associated to interleukin-6 levels, signifying a healthier
immune system. Stress and anxiety produce a physiologic response characterized by amplified cortisol levels and diminished circulating T cells (Benson, 1996). These stress-induced variations lead to a suppression of the immune system. Koenig et al. (1998) hypothesize that spirituality will possibly inhibit or reduce these endocrine and immune transformations by reducing stress, anxiety, depression and hopelessness.
Meditation and the Brain

The Human Brain

The human brain is incredibly (perhaps infinitely) complex. This thesis in no way hopes to even scratch the surface of current thought of this topic. However, some working knowledge will be helpful when trying to understand the effects of meditation on the brain. The brain regulates multiple functions essential to life, including consciousness, respiration, cardiovascular haemostasis, digestion of nutrients and excretion of toxic metabolic by-products. Deshmukh, (2006) describes the brain as an “interface that mediates interactions between the internal milieu of the organism and its environment”. He summarises current neuroscience thought and, to provide a better understanding of the following section, I provide a synthesis of his work.

Some well-established facts he highlights include:

- Mind and consciousness are functions of a living brain that cease when the brain stops functioning i.e. no bio-psycho-physical afterlife.

- The brain is responsible for regulating most of the vital functions of the body including heart rhythm, circulation, breathing, swallowing, eye and head movements, phonation and automatic movements.

- The cerebral cortex, consisting of two cerebral hemispheres, is essential for higher mental functions. Generally the left hemisphere is dedicated to language processing and the right hemisphere specializes in visuospatial and auditory processing, attention and inhibition of behaviours.
• The frontal lobes modulate voluntary movement, speech, working memory, planning of complex, sequential actions, emotions and self-reflection and personality traits.

• The temporal lobes, along with the limbic system are involved in emotion, motivation and memory processing.

• The parietal-temporal-occipital lobes have specific areas devoted to the integration of perceptions including vision, audition and touch, speech comprehension, object and face recognition, space perception, and processing of colours, numbers, mathematics and music.

• Perception of space and time is integrated in the left inferior parietal cortex (Assmus et al., 2003).

• Attention functions in the mnemonic mode (dominated by memories, associations, and ruminative thinking) and the presence mode (attention on present reality free from past memories, biases, preferences, and projections).

Deshmukh, (2006) also draws from a number of other authors, concepts and schools of thought in his description of the brain and its functions. He considers the neuroecological perspective (e.g. Jarvilehto, 2000), which deems the organism and environment to be a functional, unitary system as the organism cannot survive devoid of the environment and the environment has descriptive properties when connected to the organism. He quotes Ventegodt et al. (2005) who write that the brain is “connected to itself, to the outer world through the senses, to the body through the nerves, and to the wholeness through the coherence given from the fundamental structure of the world”. He takes into account Robertson and Garavan’s (2004) idea that vigilant attention as a continuous inhibition of irrelevant task in which the prefrontal cortex plays a central role. Garavan et al. (1999)
also state that the right hemispheric network is activated during voluntary inhibition. Deshmukh also highlights the importance of the brain in identifying, understanding and expressing emotions, as well as their assimilation into thought and regulation, by drawing from Mathews et al’s (2002) work. They believe that this process of ‘emotional intelligence’ is key to a satisfying life and is related to “academic achievement, occupational success and satisfaction and emotional health and adjustment”. He also considers the ability of humans to exercise control over mental functions that other animals do not have the ability to do. He quotes Panksepp (1998) as saying:

When the mushrooming of the cortex opened up the relatively closed circuits of our old mammalian and reptilian brains, we started to entertain alternatives of our own rather than nature’s making. We can choose to enjoy fear. We can choose to make art of our loneliness. We can even exert some degree of control over our sexual orientations. Most other animals have no such options. Affectively, we can choose to be angels or devils, and we can construct or deconstruct ideas at will. We can choose to present ourselves in ways that are different from the ways we truly feel.

Beauregard et al. (2001) agree with this sentiment, stating that we have the ability to manipulate electrochemical dynamics in our brains. We can do this by changing the nature of their mental processes voluntarily. Churchland (2002) believes that we maybe misinterpreting ‘spiritual experiences’. While he believes them worthy and valid, in that they inspire kindness and virtue, he warns against deceiving ourselves with an inflated sense of cosmic significance. He maintains these to be brain states rather than soul states and we are not trivializing them by accepting that they rely on the brain.
Kristeller and Johnson (2005) explain that the brain continuously scans our environment (internal and external), constructing meaning based largely on past experience. Associations of threats or danger and gratification and reward are highly conditionable and the response that follows, physiological, emotional or behavioural, happens within milliseconds. They state that because of this, many of our responses, including meaning-making, happen before the experience reaches consciousness. When/if these experiences do reach the conscious level many of the responses, interpretations and reactions that occur are similar to those of lower organisms. They are designed to meet basic survival needs and are inherently “self-centred and self-protective but necessary to both learning and daily functioning”. However, in contrast to lower mammals “we have much higher developed levels of symbolic knowledge”. This can be seen in our language, complicated learning facilities and planning abilities. These help in our adaptive functioning, expansion of intellectual knowledge and our capability for self-judgment. On top of this they state that our capacity for creativity, spirituality, altruism and wisdom is beyond the functioning of any other animals.
There is much work pointing out that meditation and spirituality cause changes in our psychological patterns. Dabrowski’s (1967) concept of positive disintegration describes the individual’s ability to end habitual ways of thinking and behaving through compassion, integrity and altruism. Similarly Rogers’ (1959, 1980) humanist psychology emphasises that through values such as openness, caring for others and desire for wholeness, we can satisfy our innate drive to become a better person. But what actual changes take place during the meditation process?

To start, the idea of neuroplasticity must be considered. Buddhists claim that the mind is not rigid, predetermined, and circumscribed but rather flexible and transformable. For Lutz (2006) this means emotions, attention, brain activity and introspection are all malleable and can be trained. Others authors also claim that cognitive functions are skills that depend upon learning from environmental input (e.g., McClelland & Rogers, 2003; Saffran et al., 1996). Neuroplasticity is essentially this, the ability of the brain to change with experience (Lutz, 2006). Meaney (2001) states that these experience-induced alterations can occur all the way down to the level of gene expression. Structural alterations within the brain have been seen, in all research undertaken, in both humans and animals (Lutz, 2006). Maguire et al. (2000) observe that London taxi cab drivers have larger hippocampi and that the time they work as a driver is directly related to the size. This idea of neuroplasticity raises the question - can we make alterations to the brain to cultivate beneficial qualities?
According to Kristeller and Johnson (2005), few studies have looked into the impacts of meditation on the cultivation of spiritual well-being, love, and compassion which, of course, were the original purpose. Before looking at the empirically proven physiological changes that take place in the brain, I would like to consider some other transformations that occur. The first is an increase in awareness of the conditioned responses of the brain. Lutz (2006) states that “empirical evidence clearly indicates that only a selective set of neurons in the brain participates in any given moment of consciousness. In fact many emotional, motor, perceptual, and semantic processes occur unconsciously”. Once we learn to see these patterns, unconscious responses and conditioning, we can disengage from them. Schwartz (1975) believes that awareness is fundamental in supporting psychological and physiological self-regulation. Appendix 2 shows that even small amounts of meditation (Urry et al., 2003) can create alterations in brain function; we gain heightened awareness of habitual patterns and our ability to disengage increases. Nobel (2005) states that through concentration on physical sensations we can become aware of the sympathetic-adrenal system’s flight or fight responses. This can help us become aware of the fear and anger underlying these conditioned responses.

Freud (1923) believed that it was the ego defence mechanisms that actually regulated instinctual responses, enabling the person to act in an adaptive manner. Authors state that meditation (in this case Vipassana or insight meditation) leads to a quieting of instinctual drives (Goldstein 1993; Kornfield 1993). Emavardhana and Tori (1997) show that,
an intensive seven-day Vipassana meditation retreat has positive effects on self-concept and unconscious ego defence mechanisms. Following the retreats, the self-perceptions of participants were more favourable, and coping became characterized by greater maturity and less reactivity to common stressors.

As well as increases in self-esteem, feelings of worth, benevolence and self-acceptance, they also observed changes in the unconscious coping mechanisms. Participants were less affected by external stimuli and sexual impulses than controls and less likely to employ defences like displacement, projection and regression.

Meditation has been seen to decrease physiological arousal (Benson, 2000; Gillani & Smith, 2001; Wallace & Benson, 1974) while increasing levels of self-actualization (Bono, 1984; Compton & Becker, 1983) self-acceptance, self-awareness, cognitive control, strengthening a connection with the self and facilitating disidentification from abuse (Charles, 2001; Fay, 1996). Both Buddhism (Harrington 2001; Walsh 1999) and Christianity (Jones 2003; Keating 1994) provide meditative practices for cultivation of compassionate love. Meditation is also said to improve efficiency and effectiveness (Thurman, 2006), quietening the distracting thoughts of the mind (Deshmukh, 2006) and increasing the ability of meditators to withstand emotionally negative workloads (Aftanas & Golosheykin, 2005). Austin (1999) cites a study of Japanese Zen monks who displayed similar characteristics to highly altruistic Americans. They take swift action, lack fear and demonstrate characteristics of simplicity, stability, selfless compassion and a high capacity for change.

A number of changes measured in the brain during meditation have been documented. Newberg et al. (2001) showed that similar functional changes happened for Franciscan nuns in prayer and Buddhist monks in meditation. They experienced a decrease in activity in the posterior superior parietal lobe during the peak of prayer/meditation. This is the area of the brain associated with establishing our physical relationship to the outside world. Lou et al. (1999) measured differences in posterior sensory and associative cortices (which are known to participate in imagery tasks) and well as in the “dorso-lateral and orbital frontal cortex, anterior cingulate gyri, left temporal gyri, left inferior parietal lobule, striatal and thalamic regions, pons and cerebellar vermis and hemispheres, structures thought to support an executive attentional network”. Lazar et al. (2000) observed significant increase in signals from the dorsolateral prefrontal and parietal cortices, hippocampus, temporal lobe, anterior cingulate, striatum, and pre- and postcentral gyri during meditation. These areas are involved in attention and control of the autonomic nervous system.
Newberg and Iversen’s (2003) study of eight Tibetan Buddhist monks shows that meditation activates the bilateral prefrontal cortex and cingulate gyrus. This stimulates the inhibitory reticular nucleus of the thalamus, which interrupts the posterior temporo-parieto-occipital areas, diminishing the cortical sensory input. We perceive our physical bodily self through the activation of posterior, superior parietal lobules. Through connections with the prefrontal cortex, amygdala, and hypothalamus, the hippocampus acts to adjust cortical arousal and responsiveness. These structures are concerned with the creation of attention, emotion and imagery.

Activation of right amygdala results in stimulation of the hypothalamus, with subsequent stimulation of the parasympathetic system. This is associated with a sense of relaxation and profound quiescence, reducing breathing and heart rates, which in turn, reduces the activity of locus ceruleus. Decreased NE from locus ceruleus would decrease the stimulation of hypothalamus, thus, decreasing the stress-related production of CRH, ACTH, and cortisol.

Argenine vasopressin (AVP) was also shown to be released during meditation which contributes to the “maintenance of positive affect, to decrease self-perceived fatigue and arousal, and to significantly improve the consolidation of new memories and learning”. The amount of free glutamate in the brain increases with the activation of the prefrontal cortex which leads to the release of beta-endorphin from the hypothalamus. These reduce pain and fear and create a sense of joy and euphoria. Alexander (1982) studied 90 maximum security prisoners and found that through meditation they grew more in
cognitive complexity, character and social development in a single year than university students did over a four-year period.

Electroencephalography (EEG) “measures the electrical potentials on the scalp. EEG has an excellent temporal resolution in the millisecond range that allows the exploration of the fine temporal dynamic of neural processes” (Lutz et al., 2006). EEGs are commonly used in studies looking at effects of meditation on the brain, however, Lutz et al. (2006) say we must keep in mind that such “measures reflect extremely blurred and crude estimates of the synchronous processes of the \(10^{11}\) neurons in a human brain”. EEG studies have been undertaken since Hirai’s work in 1974. Significant changes have been found in the frontal lobe (Torosian et al., 2003). They focus on the changes in the brain’s oscillatory rhythms, normally in the slower frequencies of alpha and theta rhythms. Kjaer (2002) stated that an increase in ‘theta’ activity (common in meditation) correlated with the reduced raclopride binding. Banquet (1973) noted that gamma frequency band was another prominent trait of brain electric activity during meditation. “It is proposed that this frequency acts as a mechanism for visual representation of objects and for binding distinct aspects of object perception into a coherent and unitary concept” (Lehmanna et al., 2001). Lutz et al. (2006) maintain that sometimes conclusions are made about these results which may not be accurate. The many Transcendental Meditation studies claiming that alpha coherence values reflect more ‘ordered’ or ‘integrated’ experience, may in fact be caused by relaxed, inactive mental state. Authors have found that alpha global increases and alpha coherence, mainly over frontal electrodes, can be linked to the practice of Transcendental Meditation (Morsee et al., 1977). But Lutz et al. (2006) state that “because alpha rhythms are ubiquitous and functionally non-specific
the claim that alpha oscillations and alpha coherence are desirable or are linked to an original and higher state of consciousness seem quite premature”.

Sheline’s (2003) research showed patients with mood disorders displayed structural differences in their brains, notably in the hippocampus and prefrontal cortex. It is often stated that the prefrontal cortex, which is involved in planning, expectations, working memory and attention, stops (or decreases its activity) working during meditation (e.g. Kjaer, 2002). But Cardoso and Camano (2007) say there are a growing number of studies that challenge this assumption. Lazar (2000) found an increase in activity in the prefrontal region during the meditative practice. Other research has shown that meditation can lead to increased activity in the left hemisphere of the prefrontal cortex (Davidson, et al., 2003). Cardoso & Camano (2007) state that there is proof that “the prefrontal cortex could have a basic participation in the necessary attention for fulfilment of a task”. Kane & Engle (2002) reviewed the role of the prefrontal cortex in working memory capacity, executive attention, and general fluid intelligence. Because meditation requires the focusing of attention on an ‘anchor’ (like the breath, mantra, sound etc) Cardoso & Camano (2007) maintain that it makes sense that the prefrontal cortex would be engaged. Kjaer (2002) demonstrated increased endogenous dopamine release in the ventral striatum during meditation. Persinger (1996) and Ramachandran et al. (1998) found a relationship between heightened temporal lobe activity and experiences of spirituality.

One of the main downfalls of most of this research is the lack of advanced practitioners to study. It is an agreed fact that mature state of psychological health is rarely attained (Cook-Greuter, 1990; Fromm,
1941; Loevinger et al., 1985; Maslow, 1968; Schultz, 1977) so it is harder to examine the higher stages of human development. Orme-Johnson, (2000) says that because of this, theories about these states remain somewhat untested and underdeveloped.
Here I want to raise the idea of the mind and body interaction. Lutz et al., (2006) states that one of the most fruitful areas of meditation study could be the effect of training the mind on the “peripheral biological processes that are important for physical health and illness”; in other words how the mind affects the body. Little is known on the subject currently, however it is established that there is bidirectional communication through the autonomic nervous system, the endocrine system and the immune system. This opens the possibility for meditation to influence physical health.

Some conditions of peripheral biology may be potentially affected by meditative practices because those conditions – such as an illness – are susceptible to modulation by the autonomic, endocrine, and/or immune pathways involved in brain-periphery communication. Thus, because there is bidirectional communication between the brain and periphery, it is theoretically possible to affect those types of conditions by inducing changes in the brain through meditation.

There is some evidence to suggest this link already. Matthews and Dale (1998) believe it can be used in the treatment of “hypertension, irregularities in heart rhythm, chronic pain, insomnia, anxiety, depression, infertility, and the side effects of treatments for cancer and AIDS” while Anandarajah & Hight (2001) say it decreases metabolism, rate of breathing, blood pressure, muscle tension and heart rate.
Sharing Peace

After considering how individuals can live peace in their own lives and the qualities required for them to do so, as well as looking at a few of the effects on the mind and body of practising ‘living peace’, the question then arises of how we share this peace with others. I think it is important to acknowledge that just in the act of ‘living peace’ it becomes a shared experience. People can feel when someone is at ease with themselves and this makes them feel relaxed. The same is true of the qualities of peace mentioned above - love, balance, stillness and compassion. When you are around someone who lives these qualities they grow in you.

Children are especially sensitive to these qualities in others and that is one of the reasons so much importance is placed on them. Children have an ability to change, adapt and heal that is beyond adults and because of this I have looked at two situations where peace, in all its forms, can be shared with them. The first is education. The other is children who have experienced trauma, who have been wounded and need to find healing.
Education

From my conversation with Swami Muktidharma I was inspired to include educational issues in my thesis. His words and the importance he place on education, coupled with my natural affinity with children, meant that it seemed natural to include it in the sharing peace section of this thesis. Again this represents a convergence between my own individual journey, philosophical thought and academic theory.

Children

I felt it best to start with children, who they are, what they need and how they are affected because they should be the start of any educational system. When Tolstoy became disgusted with fellow writers and artists he started helping peasants and education was a vital part of this for him. After intensive travel in Europe he came to the conclusion that even though all children were different, they were put through the same curriculum, not because it was best for the child but because it was easiest for the teachers (Moulin, 2008). Tolstoy believed that children must be the starting point for education and allowed space for self-expression as a method of education (Moulin, 2008). Educators must ask themselves what a child needs for their development and not what they need to make their job easier.

The Sufi Inayat Khan (1962) compares the infant with a negative film; everything is recorded and cannot be erased. Positive and negative influences are all retained. Children are highly impressionable and the actions, lessons and words of teachers will form part of the basis of who they are. As well as being highly impressionable, Rennebohm-
Franz (1996) states that in other regards children are also very free from “cultural misinformation”. When children first arrive they are “not yet neutralized by institutionalized and conforming elements of school cultures. They bring with them the realities of who they are, with an honesty that makes for real communication of thought and ideas”. Mata (2010) considers Noddings’ (2004) comments - that through faulty education we can come to believe ridiculous things which can lead to us performing terrible and immoral acts. Educators want their children to be neither victims nor perpetrators, but we cannot let them become victims of miseducation.

There is a growing body of work suggesting the integration of spirituality and education (for examples see Arweck & Nesbitt, 2008; Halford, 1999; Kessler, 2000; Palmer, 1999; Suhor, 1999). Coles (1990) has published one of the few comprehensive works on spirituality in children and describes children as young pilgrims starting out on life’s journey, and I believe it is important to honour them as such. Coles found that all children expressed similar spiritual concerns and aspirations which emerge from their yearning to know, not only ‘what’ but also ‘why’. He also observed that their spiritual thinking was highly connected to their mental and emotional processes like shame and guilt. In conversations with children he found that regardless of ability, age, experience or culture, they pondered questions of philosophy and theology. For him, spirituality confirms the humanity of children which means that parents and educators have a responsibility to cultivate children’s spirituality. Coles believes that the instinctive sense of curiosity and fascination with the world is evident from an early age. Vialle et al. (2008) assert that children as young as six are very much “engaged by contemplating their own creation, the creation of others, and the
connections among people and other aspects of their world” while Carlsson-Paige (2001) believes that we start considering God and formulating theories on the meaning of life at the age of five. Many other authors follow this line of thought, Derezotes (2006) says that children are spiritual beings who have the ability to develop and experience spirituality. Burke et al. (2005) feel that children are able to undertake soul-searching and develop spiritual awareness and Lovecky (1997) believes children seek experiences of connection to something beyond themselves. This may be “to nature, to the universe, or as an inner experience of wonder and awe”. Children’s spiritual experiences extend beyond the labels we box them into and in this way are more mysterious and imaginative. They may experience it in terms of a “divine presence, oneness and interrelatedness, energy pulsating in living and non-living objects, self as not physical, a sense of continuity between life and death” (Piechowski, 2001). Crompton (1998) describes these experiences as being meaningful and full of awareness, delight, wonder and mystery. Piechowski (2001) says these experiences are joyous, reassuring and blissful for children. Tolstoy actually felt that children would be intuitively superior to adults when it came to the topic of spirituality and religion (Moulin, 2008).
What is Education

Educators like Pestalozzi, Montessori and Steiner, while differing in approach, based their models of education “on the idea that children’s search for meaning can only be realised by their connectedness to others, to nature, and to the world” and that “children’s questions should be at the heart of the school curriculum” (Vialle et al., 2008). Authors such as Egan (2001), Glazer (1999) and Palmer (1999) also state that schools need to be a place children can develop their spirituality as opposed to merely accumulating knowledge, facts and figures. Jackson (2010) feels that children need to learn a range of skills to interact with the world. Not only are there the physical needs but there are social, emotional and spiritual ones that need to be addressed and developed. For Weil (1990) this is the difference between teaching and educating. Teaching is directed towards the intellectual and sensitive abilities, it focuses on reason, whereas education incorporates both reason and intuition. Teaching emphasizes the content of a programme and the acquisition of knowledge; it concentrates on consumption, competition, aggression, success, specialization, acquisition and possession of money. Education teaches the importance of learning from every situation in life, it gives importance to the inner and outer worlds and emphasizes simplicity, co-operation, human values, general knowledge over specialized knowledge, money as a means not as an ends. For Weil education is about active methods that direct the student back to their sensation, feelings, reason and intuition. It creates “balance between emotional and rational aspects and between the awakening and maintenance of human values”. By replacing teaching with educating, the fragmentation in the child’s life is decreased as the school now plays a role in their character development. When teaching is employed and character development is left solely to the family, there
can be a breakdown between thought and action, patterned by school on one side and family on the other. The school, for example, may teach the importance of non-violence while the child is punished physically at home.

Krishnamurti (1953) spoke much on education and he rejected the conventional teaching paradigm labelling it as conformist. He felt that through the pursuit of success, security, and comfort we had smothered the growth of children. Education is undertaken, in his eyes, to acquire better jobs, to become more efficient, and ultimately to gain dominion over others. He observes: ‘‘Though there is a higher wider significance to life, of what value is our education if we never discover it?’’. He believes the goal of education is to understand ourselves and what the essence of life is and then the share this with others. Miller (1999) feels that education is about proving children experiences that permitted physical, emotional, aesthetic, moral, and spiritual growth.

For Bhagwan (2009) children endure suffering, loss and hardship like everyone else as these are part of life. Spirituality becomes a way educators can help children make sense of their journey through life, face challenges, develop internal peace and find connection with themselves, others and ‘God’. Derezotes (2006) believes children need to be encouraged to search for their own meaning and truth. They should be supported in their journey to discover their own spirit. Splitter (2001) believes the current climate does not allow children the opportunity to think in ways that enable them to make good judgements and decisions. It is more focused on the accumulation of facts. For Splitter education needs to be about creating understanding as opposed to knowledge.
Egan (2001) feels the development of the imagination is fundamental in education. He follows in Plato’s footsteps by asserting that the most important responsibility of education is to challenge children’s conventional beliefs. He proposes five elements that need to be included in an educational programme to develop children’s spirituality.

1. Encourage children to question their conventional beliefs about the world and experience.
2. Introduce them to the various ways people have struggled to make vivid a range of intense human experience.
3. Introduce them to scholarly virtues, such as precision, caution, careful and intense observation, and delight in discovery.
4. Encourage them to feel the pleasure of self-sacrifice for the good of others.
5. Engage them in discovering the past and how it shaped the present.

For Tolstoy education was not a way of shaping children in the teacher’s principles but instead a method to promote the child’s own investigation of the world and their place in it. Although he felt there needed to be a base for this education it should be “moral and spiritual, not technical and instrumental” (Moulin, 2008). McClain et al., (2010) quoted the mission statement from one school they studied that they felt was exemplary:

We intend that our pupils leave our school with a good heart, sound ethical values and a sense of responsibility combined with the
academic and social skills that enable them to make a successful transition into secondary school. We hope our pupils will then go on to act in ways that will create a more compassionate, intelligent and peaceful world.
What does Peace mean to Education?

“It is through education that peace will be established in the world” - Jumsai (2005)

Buckland (2006) states that while education does not start or end wars it can intensify or alleviate the conditions that contribute to violence. In this way education, according to Buckland, can play a role directly and indirectly in building peace and “early investment in education is thus an essential prerequisite for sustainable peace”. The role of peace in education can be seen in a number of religious and spiritual groups (for examples see Arweck et al., 2005; Harris & Morris, 2003; Nesbitt & Henderson, 2003; Said & Funk, 2003; Tyrrell, 1995; Werner, 2005) and in the field, educators combine self-awareness and personal skills with attention to key issues in the creation of peace (Jackson & Fujiwara, 2007).

Hettler & Johnston (2009) state that experiential peace education falls on the ‘positive’ peace end of the spectrum as it relates to righting structural imbalances among groups of people. Peace education, for them, must recognise the relationship “between the self, community and world, and so foster reflection upon and development of peace within the self, in relationships, in the community, and in the natural and political worlds”. They encourage students to become whole and see the relationship between who they are and what actions they take and the environment, individually, socially and globally. They recognise a link between peace and holistic education saying that “most experiential peace education programs share a foundation with holistic education, recognizing the links between the personal and the
political”. For McFarland (1988) holistic education is about discovering unity and harmony and recognising the “core divinity, love, goodness or peace” present in existence. Peace education must go deeper than surface conflicts and explore the inner realms of peace and conflict. It is about starting to see and understand our inner nature of peace and then recognising it in others.

While Hettler & Johnston (2009) say many peace education programmes fall more into the political sphere, dealing with issues like injustice, oppression, human rights abuses, racism, prejudice and structural violence, experimental peace research differs in that it also aims to help students to: understand the impact of their actions; cultivate sensitivity and service; and act in a way that promotes positive peace. It attempts to shed light of the connection between spirituality, simplicity and world peace. Through spiritual practice and reflective social action, experimental peace education aims balance both the political and personal spheres. These educational programmes undertake activities such as “community or nature immersion, cross-cultural experience, community service (often with a peace and justice focus), prayer, and reflection upon personal values” (Hettler & Johnston, 2009).

There are a number of examples of programmes and schools undertaking peace focused education. These include: the Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University - peace is one of their ‘living values’ (Arweck & Nesbitt, 2008); Baha’i initiatives (Gervais 2004); West Midlands Quaker Peace Education project (Nesbitt & Henderson 2003); Brahma Kumaris sponsored Living Values programme (Arweck & Nesbitt, 2008); Farm and Wilderness Foundation, Pendle Hill Youth Camp and Interlocken (Hettler & Johnston, 2009). Another
example considered by Arweck and Nesbitt (2008) is the Sathya Sai Education in Human Values programme which teaches children to bring the core values of love and peace into their family and community.
What is needed in Education?

Current education system

“When institutional conditions create more combat than community, when the life of the mind alienates more than it connects, the heart goes out of things, and there is little left to sustain us” – Palmer (1993)

It was Gardner (1994) who said “the enemy of understanding is coverage”. The majority of current education systems attempt to achieve the widest coverage they can, from “Plato to NATO”, and it is through this process they actually limit children’s mental growth. According to Vialle et al. (2008) we need to be more concerned with developing ways of thinking in children that will enable them to become better people. We can never cover all topics, so instead we should attempt to teach how to deal with life. However, this is not the common practice in education. Gardner et al. (2001) call for the highest moral standards to be taught as well as involvement in the “marketized” society. Over 100 years ago Tolstoy called education a “deliberate moulding of people into certain forms” which are “sterile, illegitimate and impossible” (Maude, 1908) and while much has changed since then Moulin (2008) still feels there is truth in these words today. For Tolstoy education should be a “human activity, having for its basis a desire for equality, and constant tendency to advance in knowledge” (Maude, 1908). For Moulin (2008), education kills creativity and innate curiosity and utilises fear as opposed to the inherent joy of learning. Vialle et al. (2008) state that although there are a number forms in which spirituality is seeing a resurgence, there
is still little proof of this in education systems. The idea of the separation of church and state is still predominant. They say that “the majority of teachers would not mention spirituality as one of their aims in teaching”.

For McClain et al. (2010) the current education system is all about high-stakes accountability. While they see value in this, in that teachers must be explicit about what they teach and how children perform as a result of it, they question whether it has the students’ best interests at heart. They feel that in the process of standardised testing with a “mechanistic consideration of students and standards” we have lost sight of what is truly important. Teachers spend time “analyzing test data” when they could be planning lessons and children “may not get all of the enrichment programs they deserve because we have to use more time for the tested core academics”. They feel what is needed in the current system is more focus on the joy of learning than on passing tests. They state in a US survey on the impact of accountability conducted by the National Association of Elementary and Middle Level Principals, 75% of principals felt that accountability had a negative effect on schooling. The survey found these effects to be:

- Diminished attention to the whole child.
- Increased time on test preparation activities.
- Increased anxiety over standardised testing and student outcomes.

Hill et al. (2006) believe that schooling is considered from an economic perspective, with efficiency and effectiveness measured in terms of student outcome per investment. They criticise
Slavin & Madden’s (1995) ‘Success for All’ model, stating that it “depends not on fostering a love of reading but on improving reading skills” and describe it as a “teacher-proof, heavily scripted, proscribed curriculum” in which instructional materials virtually remove educators from the teaching process”. This, they feel, cannot create an environment in which children can grow and learn properly. They also feel that programmes like The School Development Program (Comer, 1995) - which utilises child development theories to overcome student faults produced by low socioeconomic status - work on the fundamental notion that children are broken and must be mended before they can profit from education. For them this programme highlights and concentrates on the child’s weaknesses, not strengths.
What Children Need

Children’s needs, like stimulation and inquiry, have not changed over time. Because of this Hill et al. (2006) contend that teaching methods that worked hundreds of years ago are still applicable today. It is on these grounds that they see no reason not to pay heed to the overlaps between ancient traditions and the writings of contemporary educational researchers. They pose the idea of ‘right teaching’ which is an environment in which the teacher and the student work together to create the right environment for enquiry and learning and in doing so the spiritual dimension of education is restored.

Numerous authors feel that one of main elements of children’s education is the spiritual aspect (some examples include Arweck & Nesbitt 2008; Carr, 1995; Hill et al., 2006; Iannone & Obenauf, 1999). Cajete (1994) and Vialle et al., (2008) state that indigenous philosophy, with its emphasis on the passage from childhood to adulthood and close relationships with the environment, can be a good method of inclucing spirituality to education. Jackson (2010) synthesises a number of authors’ work stating that spirituality for indigenous cultures includes ceremony and ritual (e.g. rites of passage), sharing time and food with family and friends, music, storytelling, hearing the wisdom of elders, spiritual healers/helpers and, for some, connection to a powerful deity, connection to the environment and the concept of grace or favour from God.
DiLorenzo and Nix-Early (2004) state that if the connection between family and community is broken in youths holding indigenous beliefs then a spiritual void is created. Through spirituality, connection to culture offers a sense of belonging and resilience (Jackson, 2010). Hill et al. (2006) state that by teaching children about the deeper aspects of themselves (their essence) they can start to understand the struggle of human existence and recognise this within them. They believe it is important to allow children to experience the wonder of life and identify the same beauty in themselves. For Tolstoy spirituality is central to a child’s development. He says that “education is primarily concerned with moral and religious formation” (Murphy, 1992). Arweck and Nesbitt (2008) acknowledge that in Britain there has been some recognition of the importance of spirituality with the passing of the 1988 Education Reform Act which “made it statutory that schools pay attention to pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development”. For Vialle et al. (2008) spirituality provides children with meaning and purpose, connection, ethical and compassionate decision-making skills and the ability to search deeper within themselves for truth.

Children require positive, supportive relationships to create a sense of love, compassion and belonging (Bryant-Davis 2005; Fergus & Zimmerman 2005). For McClain et al. (2010) the heart of education is about learning to move through the world with loving kindness, joy, equanimity and compassion. This comes from trusting, supporting and nourishing children (and ourselves) with mindfulness, wisdom and compassionate action.

Hopfenberg et al. (1993) offer the Accelerated Schools Project which acknowledges that each child is an individual. Children are treated as
being gifted and talented, and their strengths are emphasised. Here the whole school community is encouraged to help each individual child build and develop their assets, as opposed to concentrating on their weaknesses.

Serna and Lau-Smith (1995) maintain that children need self-determination skills. These include social skills and skills of self-evaluation, self-direction, formal and informal networking, collaboration, problem solving and decision making, stress management and family relationships. Glenn and Nelsen (2000) feel children need self-efficacy (self-belief, which includes belief in their abilities and their worth), skills to assess problems and make good decisions, and the capacity to manage their emotions and behaviours. Hill et al. (2006) believe that it is the development of problem-solving skills and the tools for lifelong learning that children really require.

According to Moulin (2008), both Tolstoy and Dewey highlighted the importance of allowing children to experiment. Truth and knowledge are relative so it is important to encourage children to construct their own reality, not merely take on someone else’s. Here the idea of personal reflection is instrumental, the importance of the individual’s own subjective experience. Traditional teachings may contain truths within them but children need to see and experience these truths themselves.
Bhagwan (2009) outlines the pathways through which a more holistic approach to education can be achieved. These pathways are:

- **Spiritual Stories** – Through the creating, sharing and telling of stories children can delve deeper into their spirituality. Through literature, myths and legends children can explore ideas like good and evil, faith, love and truth. They can learn about their own, and other, cultures, “cultivating a deep respect for all humankind”. It creates the room for dialogue on spiritual issues, making these parts of the child’s growth and development. Through the archetypes conveyed in stories, children can reclaim parts of their lost psyches (Burke 1999) and self-transformation, self acceptance, responsibility and forgiveness can be developed.

- **Spiritual Rituals** – Expand identity and connectedness to spiritual community (Crompton, 1998) and the divine. Rituals have been shown to heal (Canda & Furman, 1999) and create feelings of wonder, reverence, awe and openness to new possibilities (Griffith & Griffith 2002).

- **Creative and Expressive Arts** – Arts such as poetry, drama and painting have been seen to benefit children in distress (Henley 1999; Jones and Weisenfluh 2003; Pond 1998; Walsh-Bowers & Basso 1999). Through these arts humans tap into deeper aspects of themselves and can experience spirituality free from any dogmatic ties.

- **Sacred Play** - Flows from freedom, joy and spontaneity. Derezotes (2006) says that “play can be an expression of soul
and Creative Spirit’. Through this creativity children discover themselves. Hill et al. (2006) state that it is through play and experimentation that children can assimilate new information with pre-existing notions, allowing for the creation of new ideas.

- Solitude and Mindfulness – Solitude deepens spiritual experience and can be fostered by leaving the child ‘uninterrupted’ and ‘undistracted’ in nature, at play, painting, drawing or praying. The cultivation of stillness creates peacefulness and serenity (Galanaki 2005) and children appreciate these feelings (Goodman, 2005). Attention to thoughts, feelings, sensations, intuitions, breath, sounds or external symbols/pictures can offer new insights, awakening inherent creativity.

- Eco-spirituality – Nature offers children a way to contemplate the deeper meanings in life (Harris, 2007) and it allows them to experience a sense of peace and harmony (Tacey, 2003).

- Community Spirituality – Is based on the concepts of collective responsibility and social justice. It is creating communities where children can explore, experience and share their spirituality so they do not feel so isolated in their journey. It also enables the child to help and inspire others, which is healing in itself.

Arweck and Nesbitt (2008) outline the five teaching components of the Sathya Sai Education in Human Values programmes. These programmes aim to create moral citizens through the use of themes of the week, silent sitting, story telling, group singing and group activities. They strive to go beyond academic abilities, providing
strength of character and ‘inner resources’ to fulfil their role in society. Vialle et al. (2008) map out a six point research programme, which draws together the important aspects from their studies, to enhance children’s education. The areas in education they feel need to be recognised are the element of spiritual intelligence, indigenous beliefs related to connection with people and nature, children’s innate curiosity about the world and its meaning, contact with nature, the role of stories and narratives and engaging children in discussions about the nature of existence.
Role of the Teacher

In Tolstoy’s work The Restoration of Hell the devil describes how he deceived people here on earth. “The devil of education explained that he persuaded men that while living badly and not even knowing in what a right life consists, they can teach children the right way of living” (Tolstoy, 1934). To educate the teacher must be an example, not merely in words but in actions. They must imbibe the lessons they advocate. Weil, (1990) states they must be show affection, patience, kindness, openness and empathy. Teachers must lead others by example, helping them discover moral and spiritual truths they have found. Hill et al. (2006) pose the model of right teaching based around the work of George Ivanovitch Gurdjieff, the Russian mystic (Ouspensky, 1949). Gurdjieff too was under the impression that education sought to indoctrinate children into the dominant world view. He viewed education in a much broader sense as being “every mannerism, habit, posture, and attitude that children learn consciously and unconsciously from the adults around them” (Hill et al., 2006). In this regard all life is education to children and parents are their main teachers. This means that every interaction with a child is a way of ‘educating’ them on how to live in the world. Our attitudes, opinions, judgements, fears and actions provide guidelines that children learn from. Unconscious projections become important as they radiate from us and all other members of society, colliding into each other and then educating children (Hill et al., 2006). Gurdjieff maintains that we spend most of our lives asleep, unaware of our essential nature. What we need are teachers not living in this fog, who know and understand themselves and can teach children to do this as well. Tolstoy felt that that the learning environment must genuinely reflect these morals it
teaches and teachers should lead by integrity and example (Moulin, 2008).

Teachers must be able to put themselves to the side and allow the child to grow. They orient the learning process but the development must come from the child (Weil, 1990). The child must be the “self-governed creator” of their knowledge (Hill et al. 2006) while the teacher is the facilitator rather than superior (Strommen & Lincoln, 1992). To do this the teacher must honour the child’s beliefs and not suppress their expression (Mata, 2010). They must put the views and beliefs aside and get out of the way of the child’s education.

Hill et al. (2006) encourage teachers to “bring their own questions into the classroom” stating that ‘right teaching’ comes from the teacher’s own self-exploration. As teachers work through their problems, so will children learn to deal with their own struggles. This comes back to the idea that neither teacher nor student has all the answers and are both on the journey towards truth together. The Sufi Inayat Khan (1962) says that instead of letting children know you are teaching them, act as if offering counsel to a friend, acknowledging the shared journey towards truth.

Sander (2008) states that it is important for the teacher to realise that no two children are alike; each is “unique and irreplaceable”. Hill et al. (2006) establish principles of ‘right teaching’ that are important for the teacher to know and understand:

1) Differentiate between the temporary (personality) and the eternal (essence) and teach to both.

2) How we teach is far more important than the content.
3) Teach beyond rational intelligence; address the other intelligences, such as the emotional, from a holistic perspective.

4) Make a space for silence in your classroom. Do not feel you have to fill silence.

5) Value questions more than answers. Encourage questions.

6) Build on student strengths.

7) Teach through relationship.

8) Teach children through stories.

9) Teach children through indirection (i.e., do not show that you are teaching them) so that they can be more active.

10) Never force children.

11) Use an integrated curriculum.

12) Observe your own attitude, thinking, and responses. How do you feel toward each student, topic, and activity? Discover what unconscious emanations you are giving off.
Adhishiksha or the Three Spiritual/Higher Educations of Buddhism encompass the Higher Educations of Morality, Meditation, and Wisdom (Thurman, 2006). These were described by Buddha to open the minds of those who learned them to a new understanding of self and the world. Buddhism is the tradition of Spiritual Education according to Thurman (2006).

*Teaching Morals – The Higher Education of Morality*

For Inayat Khan (1962) teaching maths and English, numbers and letters is not so important earlier in the child’s development. Providing routine and teaching morals like respect (for self and elders), love, thoughtfulness and inspiration from the unknown are more valuable. These provide the child with solid foundations to build from and do not deplete their mental energy. Surrounding the Sathya Sai Education in Human Values system outlined in Arweck and Nesbitt (2008) are five core values: right conduct (*dharma*), peace (*shanti*), truth (*sathya*), love (*prema*) and non-violence (*ahimsa*). These are based on the inherent qualities of human personality that are recognised in noble thoughts and actions of people like Mother Theresa, Mahatma Gandhi and Sathya Sai Baba.

In Schopenhauer’s case there is but one moral to be taught and that is compassion (Fox, 2006). In contrast to the development of an ego-centred approach that merely draws the individual farther into themselves and their needs, compassion motivates acts of loving-
kindness and justice. Schopenhauer believes it cultivates actions of genuine moral worth, appealing to our moral intuition which knows the benefit to the world of helping others. Fox (2006) states that education should reinforce kindness to animals and other humans, learning about inner peace, understanding the meaning of negotiation and compromise. Through repetition, these behaviours become second nature, with the ego being replaced with compassion.

**Learning through Experience – The Higher Education of Wisdom**

Experiential education can be traced back to early twentieth-century educationalists like Dewey (1900) and Steiner (1924) who criticized traditional education systems based on discipline, order and memorization. Recent examples include Freire’s (2000) work with Latin America children and academic reviews undertaken by Hettler and Johnston (2009) who highlighted the importance of the process of experience and the reflection on this experience. Dewey (1900) also expressed the importance of reflection in the learning process, stating that learning can only occur when students start to share and understand their experiences. The underlying nature of experiential education is the participation in the activity, then reflection on the experience, then the application to relevant situations, and then again further experience and reflection (Hunt, 1991). This cyclical process can be seen in most experiential education models. Wight (1970) states that we are unlikely to learn from an experience unless we assess it and assign it meaning. It is through this process that we generate insight and then integrate this insight into our individual psyche. Hettler and Johnston (2009) believe the value of experiential education can be seen in the constructivist trend in cognitive theory which contends that knowledge must be constructed in order for...
learning to take place. It acknowledges that current experiences are processed in terms of previous ones and “knowledge is regarded as an emerging characteristic of activities taking place among individuals in specific contexts” (Jacobson et al., 2004). Weigert (1999) believes that this pedagogy is a powerful tool for growth in understanding of peace and violence in the contemporary world.

The concept of experience in education can also be seen in religions. Thurman (2006) states that while beliefs, meditation, teachers and practices are all helpful in the process of education, it is only through the understanding that comes from our own experience that we truly learn and ultimately become liberated. Buddhism was based on this “liberating curriculum” of individual experience and from this a number of universities were developed. Thurman feels that Buddhism is essentially an educational tradition. Hill et al. (2006) draw attention to the work of Lao Tzu in the Taoist text the *Tao Te Ching*. Chapter 12 for them highlights the lack of true experience of the world. Instead we experience through associations – they offer the examples of the idea of red or the memory of sourness: “The five colours blind the eye. The five tones deaden the ear. The five flavours dull the taste.”

Tolstoy considers education from the Christian perspective, believing that children’s development could be encouraged through the exploration of the Bible in their everyday lives thereby experiencing spiritual truths for themselves (Moulin, 2008). He encourages reflection on narratives where the listener discerns and negotiates the morals for themselves. This is because he feels that truth has to be discovered and not dictated, the higher truths in life are indefinable and incommunicable (Moulin, 2008), or as the *Tao Te Ching* says, “the Tao that can be told is not the eternal Tao. The name that can be named is not the eternal name” (Tsu, 1989).
Sander (2008) considers the poet Archibald MacLeish who said the poems do not mean. What we know and experience from them, we experience in them. The knowledge and meaning can not be separated from the poem as they are part of the person experiencing their meaning. When we place all importance on the meaning we blemish the source. The analogy of mining a mountain for gold (meaning), where we become rich (with information) but we destroy the mountain (the real experience), has already been mentioned. Arweck and Nesbitt (2008) ask children to think of situations when the statements ‘the grass is always greener on the other side’ and ‘happiness comes from within, not from external things’ have been true in their lives. The programme they examine highlights the importance allowing children to arrive at their own informed decisions instead of dictating action. It is based on the idea of inherent goodness and the role of education being to put children in touch with this side of themselves.

Importance of Contemplation – The Higher Education of Meditation

Numerous authors note the importance of meditation in education including Goodman (2005), Thurman (2006), Kessler (2000), Berryman (1999), McClain et al. (2010), McLean (2001), Arweck & Nesbitt (2008) and Hill et al. (2006). Meditation can help “build the threads of their [children’s] unique spiritual tapestry” (Bhagwan, 2009). Thurman (2006) states that through education we build up our worldview which is reinforced by symbols and images that we contemplate in our life. By teaching meditative practices children can develop contemplative states that “increase contentment, detachment, tolerance, patience, non-violence, and compassion, which simultaneously decrease feelings of anger, irritation, and paranoia”.

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Through this development they gain wisdom, freedom, creativity and self-responsibility. Hill et al. (2006) maintain that the practice of meditation gives children the opportunity for silence which they do not normally have access to. Kessler (2000) feels this gives them the chance to rest and renew themselves. By employing meditation Kessler believes that children can process what they have just learnt and prepare for the next lesson. Berryman (1999) asserts that this practice helps children develop new, non-verbal ways of communicating. Hill et al. (2006) believe meditation is growing in popularity in school systems and can help children to see their own internal, mental and emotional processes. When they start becoming more aware of their own mental habits they take more responsibility for their education. Arweck and Nesbitt (2008) state that the act of sitting silently contributes to “the experience of peace both by individuals and the group”. It provides the children a chance to use their imaginations, reflect and contemplate. Both Stone (1997) and Farrer (2000) believe there is much benefit from taking time to be still and reflect in our busy world. However there must be openness to the idea of stillness for it to have effect (Arweck & Nesbitt, 2008).

There is also empirical evidence suggesting that mediation will have a positive benefit on children’s education. McClain et al. (2010) observe a number of classroom situations where meditation is used and conduct interviews with students and teachers. They believe it fosters clarity, focused attention, and living and learning together. McLean (2001) states that all teachers interviewed noticed that meditation improved concentration and focus in class. These findings are surported by Mann’s (1995) study of secondary school students which showed meditation helped students to cope with pressure and stress. McLean (2001) also found that teachers recognised a link between
meditation and creative expression. There was also a belief amongst teachers that meditation enhanced academic performance, however, this connection is yet to be proved. Mann’s (1995) study also suggested meditation may improve memory recall. Vipassana has also been shown to work as an intervention for youths with problems associated with a lack of control of impulses (Rhead & May, 1983; Shapiro, 1992).
The Role of Myths and Stories

It was Joseph Campbell who largely opened the study of myth to mainstream society. In his work *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (1968) he suggests the idea of a single story underlying all mythology. This is the story of an archetypal hero’s journey of self discovery and while there may be differences created by culture, space and time, the deeper aspects are universal and transcend these barriers. Campbell (1991) argues that stories and myths are connected to spiritual understanding and so dialogue about narratives offers the capacity to enhance children’s spirituality. Groff & Smoker (1996) believe there is much to be learned from myths as they link the external and internal worlds. They provide outer examples of methods to discover inner truths. They speak to us not in factual terms but as archetypes and metaphors. For Tolstoy, narratives were important to aid in children’s religious and spiritual understanding, allowing them to delve deeper, increase their comprehension and explore complex ideas (Moulin, 2008). Myers and Myers (1999) also believe that literature can deeply enrich children’s spirituality and Bhagwan (2009) states that spiritual texts enable children to undertake their own journey. Bhagwan maintains that narrative can open dialogue with children about deeper issues in a comfortable manner. Burke (1999) states stories help in the healing process, cultivating self-transformation, self acceptance, responsibility and forgiveness. Arweck and Nesbitt (2008) feel narratives are “an important medium for teaching young people about life, their own identity, and their relationship to the world about them”. 
Here I want to acknowledge the importance of creating awareness of the world beyond the classroom. Rennebohm-Franz (1996) believes this can be done through multicultural experiences in the classroom. The example is given of a class of first graders communicating with Nicaraguan children who could not attend school as they were spending their days carrying water. This gave them new awareness of the world around them and gave them an appreciation of their privileged life. It also created connections that decreased barriers between people, providing a movement towards peace. Jackson and Fujiwara (2007) talk about one of peace education’s key goals as being the promotion of “knowledge and understanding of different religious traditions”. It is also important for children to have a deeper understanding of their own tradition so they can recognise the similarities beyond surface differences. Vialle et al. (2008) believe that more than one view of religion needs to be taught with an empathasis on commonalities instead of differences.
Trauma

The Effects of Trauma on Children

Children experience the horrors of the world; they are exposed to physical, sexual and emotional abuse, neglect, exploitation, discrimination, illness and death (Bhagwan, 2009). Child soldiers, of whom there are some quarter of a million worldwide, are abused and tortured while forced to fight and kill. In the last ten years there have been over two million children killed and six million permanently disabled or injured in conflicts (Ursano and Shaw, 2007). Children have a long history of involvement in the military according to Ursano and Shaw (2007), from David’s service to King Saul to the Hitler Youth in Nazi Germany, ‘powder monkeys’ in the Royal Navy to Napoleon’s drummer boys. The American Revolution had flag bearers and today we see children as suicide bombers. Bhagwan (2009) states that these experiences leave children both emotionally scarred and deeply vulnerable, and while Ursano and Shaw maintain that there is little known about the full effects of these events, they do state that no one comes out of war-related traumatic events unchanged. De Silva and Hobbs (2001) do however state that children, who are still learning to control mood and aggression, are more vulnerable to life-changing events. Often children are orphaned and have no means to support themselves. They will sometimes join armed militias for security or for food and shelter. “The militias become a source of security, a surrogate family, and guarantor of meals, clothing, and shelter, or a chance to express rage and sense of oppression” (Ursano & Shaw, 2007).
Bayer et al. (2007) surveyed former child soldiers living in rehabilitation centres, most forcibly recruited by the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) in Uganda. These children experienced threats of being killed or injured (70.4%), killing others (54.4%), and forced sexual contact (34.9%) and unsurprisingly the rate of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) was high (34.9%). Abu Hein et al.’s (1993) study of children during the First Intifada in the Gaza region showed 74% of the children had encountered assaults on family members, 38% knew someone close put in prison, 88% experienced night raids on their home and 51% said they had been beaten by soldiers. During the Al Aqsa Intifada 52–77% of children witnessed killings, 88% encountered night raids and 30% had a family member injured.

The effects of traumatic events on children are great., Qouta et al. (2008) consider the impacts on mental health, cognitive, emotional and social development and family relations. Maltreatment and displacement can negatively affect physical and mental health, self perception, relationships and cognitive functioning (Cicchetti & Toth 1995; Felitti 2001; Jackson, 2010; Kerker & Dore 2006). Sexual violence can lead to physiological (Goldberg & Goldstein, 2000; Golding, 1994; Golding, Cooper, & George, 1997), psychological (Denov, 2004; Draucker, 2001; Hall, 1999) and behavioural (Dimmitt, 1995; Roberts, Reardon, & Rosenfeld, 1999; Seng, Low, Sparbel & Killion, 2004) consequences according to Knapik et al. (2008). This can include depression, dissociation, health problems, drug and alcohol abuse, and interpersonal problems (Goldberg & Goldstein, 2000; Roberts et al. 1999). Knapik et al. (2008) also assert that trauma can have a negative impact on spiritually. They give the examples of distancing from God and their religion (Ganzevoort, 2002; Hall, 1995; Kane, Cheston, & Greer, 1993), less religious activity (Finkelhor,
Hotaling, Lewis, & Smith, 1989) and spiritual distress (Lawson et al., 1998). Bruskas (2008) states that when children are disconnected from their families their coping ability is negatively affected. Both Brewin and Holmes (2003) and Herman (1992) feel these events affect family relations, world view, mental and somatic health, attributions and emotions and Qouta et al. (2008) believe that military violence influences cognitive development, including memory, problem solving and moral reasoning, emotional expression and recognition and social development. They consider the effects on hormonal and psychophysiological regulation shown in Carlson et al. (1995) and Victoreff and Qouta (2005) and the impact on brain anatomy and functioning highlighted in Bremner & Narayan (1998). They believe these factors can lead to alterations in developmental paths. There is also the effect on mental health including post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, sleeping difficulties and anxiety (Aldwin & Sutton, 1996; Laor, Wolmer & Cohen, 2001; Thabet, Abed & Vostanis, 2002; Thabet & Vostanis, 1998) which they bring to light. As well as this they draw on the work of Pfefferbaum (1997) and Punamäki (2002) stating that trauma shapes “symbolic development, meanings, narratives and metaphors of life”.
Our fundamental belief dimensions according to Tedeschi and Calhoun (1995) encompass a predictable, comprehensible, meaningful and compassionate world that consists of people we can rely on. Traumatic events create disorientation by challenging these cognitive perceptions, confronting our worldview and fundamental beliefs (Ai & Park, 2005; Janoff-Bulman 1992; Park & Ai, 2006; Qouta et al., 2008; Tedeschi et al., 1998; Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1995; Vis & Boynton, 2008; Yick, 2008). The more traumatic events are the ones that shatter our fundamental, ‘childish’ beliefs that our environment is safe and fair, that humans are compassionate and that we are worthy of protection (Janoff-Bulman, 1989). Often events involving one’s family, which symbolizes security and protection, are particularly traumatic (Dybdahl, 2001; Macksoud & Aber, 1996). Women involved with marital violence are deeply affected as it violates embedded cognitive scripts about the notions of love, marriage and commitment (Fletcher et al., 1999). In Yick’s (2008) study a number of women stated they experienced a spiritual vacuum as a result of traumatic events. This not about losing faith but “rather, it is literally an annihilation of the essence of who they were”.

Coping strategies like avoidance or denial are the reaction to traumatic events as the victim faces a devastating psychological and spiritual dilemma (Vis & Boynton, 2008). Their worldview is no longer workable and they are forced to re-work prior beliefs on cognitive and emotional levels (Janoff-Bulman, 1992). Their basic assumptions about the world, self, relationships and Spirit are challenged making comprehension difficult. This allows for the victim, however, to go “beyond the ordinary range of human experience, naturally creating a
spiritual or worldview crisis, which requires attention and opportunity for processing” (Vis & Boynton, 2008). Yick (2008) reinforces this idea stating that domestic violence survivors can either have their spiritual and religious orientations strengthened or weakened. These traumatic events may shake and even tear down our fundamental beliefs but this offers the chance to rebuild, to grow and heal.

*Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)*

PTSD can come in many forms. Children may have vivid and unmanageable memories of the trauma - flashbacks or nightmares - or they may avoid or suppress painful and shameful memories, trying to numb their feelings or deny the significance of the event. They may become hyper-vigilant to threats, ‘seeing monsters everywhere’, causing concentration difficulties, instability and irritability (Qouta et al., 2008). Children experiencing PTSD are less likely to be willing to reconcile and more likely to hold feelings of revenge (Bayer et al., 2007). They are also more likely to see violence as a pathway to peace (Vinck et al., 2007). There has been a high frequency of PTSD observed in Palestinian children throughout the Al Aqsa Intifada (Thabet et al., 2002; Thabet & Vostanis, 1998) that further highlights the connection between violence and PTSD. The effects of this are ongoing, and its reach extends far beyond the scope of the physical combat. Children affected in childhood can experience PTSD, depression and lower perceived quality of life in adolescence and beyond (Qouta et al., 2007)
Revenge and Aggression

Through personal experience of loss, humiliation and destruction, children become more likely to participate in political groups (Qouta et al., 1995; 2005; 2008). There was a positive correlation between acceptance of suicide bombings and having had a family member wounded or killed (Qouta et al., 2008). The authors also found a link between military violence and aggressive responses in children. This was especially likely in the case where the child was the target of physical and direct violence. Experiencing atrocities in preschool years means that aggression is more probable in adolescence years (Kerestes, 2006).

Depression

Childhood maltreatment can cause a number of psychiatric symptoms such as depression, anxiety and somatization (Qouta et al., 2008). After traumatic events, the susceptibility to mental health and developmental issues increases significantly. Garbarino and Kostelny (1996) show that this connection becomes stronger as the number of traumatic experiences increases. More than five events means it is much more probable that emotional and behavioural disorders will develop.
Learning

Qouta et al. (2008) state that traumatic events affect “children’s cognitive capacity, intelligence, creativity and school performance”. Children experience concentration problems and their cognitive capacity is negatively affected making it harder for them to process new and retain old information (Qouta et al., 1995). The authors find that information processing is also less flexible and more rigid in traumatized children. Miller et al. (2000) indicate that school performance is harmed when a family member is imprisoned or dies.

Other

Other issues faced by children exposed to traumatic events included sleeping difficulties (Punamäki, 1997), vivid emotional recollection of the event (Qouta et al., 2008), breakdown of normal social, intimate and economic patterns (Qouta et al., 2008), increase in fears, bedwetting and speech difficulties (Qouta & El Sarraj, 1992) and night terrors and withdrawal symptoms (Qouta et al., 1996).
The Facilitation of Healing

It is important that those working with trauma remain facilitators (Vis & Boynton, 2008) and see themselves as learners, as opposed to experts (Clark, 2006). While working with children affected by trauma we must provide space for healing, growth and opportunity. Children must be able to feel safe, share their pain and discover themselves and develop their spirituality (Bhagwan, 2009). Cohen et al. (2006) state that trauma blocks the normal grieving process, affecting behaviour and cognition. Through the healing process we are able to come back to a more stable and positive state of mental health. Vaillant (2003) describes mental health as normality, positive psychology, maturity, social-emotional intelligence, subjective well-being and resilience which implies a healthy ability to love, work, and play, problem solve, invest in life and be autonomous.

Central to the idea of healing from trauma is the concept of Post Traumatic Growth (PTG). Here we ask the question “can suffering lead to strengthening and growth?” (Askay & Magyar-Russell, 2009). Positive psychological change can be experienced as a result of struggling with highly challenging life circumstances (Calhoun & Tedeschi, 1999; Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1995). If it is accepted that traumatic events challenge fundamental worldviews, then they also offer the possibility for growth and transformation (Lightsey, 2006; O’Connor, 2002–2003; Smith, 2006). Such a situation offers the opportunity to re-appraise, re-orientate, re-evaluate and re-frame worldviews (Janoff-Bulman, 1992; Park & Ai, 2006; Tedeschi, Park, & Calhoun, 1998). It is a movement away from the traditional emphasis on loss and suffering from traumatic events to the possibility of growth and change (Linley & Joseph, 2004; Vis & Boynton, 2008).
Thus there is more to these experiences than just grief and suffering. PTG provides hope and brings light into the life of survivors, and offers them the chance to ‘thrive’ in the face of adversity (Caplan, 1964). It can “help maintain the human spirit and promote the incredible resiliency of human nature” (Askay & Magyar-Russell, 2009). It places the control back in the hands of the individual (Vis & Boynton, 2008). Askay and Magyar-Russell (2009) believe PTG comes in five forms including “a greater appreciation of life and changed priorities; warmer, more intimate relations with others; a greater sense of personal strength; recognition of new possibilities; and spiritual development”. PTG has been observed in patients with burns (Patterson et al., 1993), cancer (Cordova et al., 2001; Lusyczynska et al., 2005), HIV (Milam, 2004), heart disease (Sheikh, 2004) and multiple sclerosis (Pakenham, 2005) as well as people who have faced political imprisonment and torture (Fontana & Rosenheck, 1998) and sexual assault survivors (Frazier et al., 2001). Askay and Magyar-Russell (2009) state that while it is important to study, understand and address the distress and negative affect of traumatic events, it is equally important to focus on the positive emotions and growth that can come out of these incidents.
The Links and Benefits of Spirituality on Trauma

“The healing from trauma is a quest for spirituality. This quest reflects a deep need for meaning and value” —Barrett (1999)

Throughout time and cultures spiritual aspects have been inseparable from the self (Williams & Ellison, 1996; Cross 2001). Haight (1998) believes that by just addressing physical health (body and heart) and mental health (mind) without considering the spiritual facet, we can actually increase distress and inhibit resilience - defined by Fergus and Zimmerman (2005) as the ability to overcome and cope with trauma while avoiding negative trajectories. Traumatic events can be incredible spiritual experiences in terms of challenging/confronting supernatural and metaphysical beliefs. Because of this, parallels can be seen between religious faith and the process of post-traumatic recovery (Boehnlein, 1987). Schimmel (2002) draws parallels between the process of spiritual repentance and psychotherapy, stating that in both there is a journey of transformation that entails introspection, working through rage, guilt, and shame and seeking a balance of justice, repentance and forgiveness. Religion deals with concepts like suffering, agony, despair, pain and conflict and gives them a place and purpose in life (Rhi, 2001). It allows survivors to adjust and create meaning from their pain. Boehnlein (2006) states that Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism and Christianity all create meaning and hope and they make up part of the identity of the person.

The impact of trauma on faith is complex and unpredictable. It can lead to a strengthening of belief, the ability to cope or a total collapse in faith (Boehnlein, 2006; Connor, Davidson, & Lee, 2003).
Boehnlein (2006) gives the examples of healing through specific religious traditions. Judaism offers the restoration of the relationship with God through atonement. Christianity encourages repentance for sin and seeking God’s forgiveness while Buddhism involves accepting life, including trauma, as it comes - with balance. In Islam the concept that death is divinely ordained removes guilt from the survivor. Boehnlein generalises that the Western traditions take a more active approach to suffering while the Eastern take a more reflective one.

There is much research into the links between spirituality and trauma. Spirituality offers young people strength, meaning, joy and support for healing (Jackson, 2010). It has been shown to increase resilience for children facing adversity related to trauma, grief and loss, physical and mental illnesses and disabilities (Browne 2002; Cotton et al., 2006; Daining & DePanfilis, 2007; DiLorenzo & Nix-Early 2004; Pendleton et al., 2002; Scott et al., 2006; Witvliet 2001; Wright et al., 1993). It has been linked to quality of life (Miller et al., 2007; O’Connor et al., 2007), coping (Pargament et al, 1995) and search for meaning (Ardelt et al., 2008) after trauma. It has been seen as being helpful in women’s recovery from sexual abuse (Geisbrecht & Sevcik, 2000; Kennedy et al., 1998; Knapik et al., 2008; Krejci et al., 2004; Oaksford & Frude, 2003; Shaw et al., 2005; Smith & Kelly, 2001; Valentine & Feinhauer, 1993; ) as well as men’s (Draucker & Petrovic, 1996; Ganzevoort, 2002). An association has been identified between spirituality and healing in survivors of childhood sexual abuse (Oaksford & Frude, 2003; Valentine & Feinhauer, 1993), rape (Smith & Kelly, 2001), adult abuse (Geisbrecht & Sevcik, 2000) and war-related trauma (Leigh, 2009).
Some people felt they regained control over their lives by relinquishing control to God (Askay & Magyar-Russell, 2009). Forgiveness too is important in both spirituality and trauma recovery. This is not a simple or a brief, one-time endeavour but is instead an ongoing process (Giesbrecht & Sevcik, 2000; Senter & Caldwell, 2002; Taylor, 2004; Yick, 2008). Appendix 3 shows the “psychosocial process in which the survivors of sexual violence experience Being Delivered by a divine being” (Knapik et al., 2008). Here there is a process of transformation from spiritual connection to spiritual journey to spiritual transformation which they believe represents “Being Delivered” from sexual violence. For authors like Smith (2006), spirituality and trauma are intertwined, they are interacting domains as a person attempts to heal. “Trauma affects spirituality, and spirituality can shape the journey through trauma” (Vis & Boynton, 2008). Decker (1993) feels that spiritual development is a necessary consequence of traumatic events. This type of thought is becoming more prevalent in a number of fields and there is a growing call for the use of spirituality when dealing with trauma survivors (Carroll, 1998; Clark, 2006; Fabrega, 1975; Gillum, 2006; Jackson, 2010; Parlotz, 2002; Sheridan, 2004; Thompson, 1985; Vis & Boynton, 2008) while authors like Ai and Park (2005) and Calhoun and Tedeschi (1999) call for more research on these issues. Kubler-Ross’s (1997) work in prisons led her to believe that the prisoners could not be healed unless the trauma that motivated their actions was externalized. Giving these people the space and ability to explore themselves leads to walls being broken down and prisoners being able to lead fuller, more peaceful lives. For Vis and Boynton (2008) it is important to create spaces where spirituality can be explored. “If we are truly practicing holistically, it is imperative to incorporate the spiritual context into our theory and practice to support the spiritual development and empowerment of clients”.

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Meditation

Kane’s (2006) study highlights feelings of well-being, increased control of emotions and behaviour and self connection during and following meditation. According to the study meditation also provides the opportunity for dealing with abuse-related material including feelings of fear, vulnerability, anxiety and a general sense of not being safe. Epstein (1995) finds links between contemplative practices and the fostering of mental health while Goleman (1995) explores the relationship between meditation and emotive-cognitive functioning. Cohen et al. (2006) use meditation and relaxation in their work with children and adolescents who have experienced trauma. Meditation can also be an avenue for self-care (Vis & Boynton, 2008), assisting in the creation of calmness, mindfulness of self and detachment from emotions as well as the recreation of trauma narrative (Fulton, 2005; Wong, 2004). Self-care offers both psychological and physical healing according to Miller (2003) and the use of meditation as a mode of relaxation is important in her eyes.

Narrative and the Search for Meaning

Vis & Boynton (2008) describe spirituality as an extension of meaning-making. Through the power of narrative, they state, we can weave this meaning into our daily lives, offering the chance to rise above loss and hopelessness into the possibility of growth. The search for transcendent meaning reaches beyond cognitive and logic-based meaning. It involves a deeper intuitive understanding of our relationship with ourselves and our world (Decker, 1993; Mattis,
Transcendent meaning provides hope and can sustain our spirit (Emblen & Pesut, 2001). Vis & Boynton (2008) portray it as a “bridge between despair and hopefulness” and during the loss and pain associated with traumatic events it is “necessary to encourage transcendent meaning reflection, with the intention of maximizing the possibility for post-traumatic growth”.

Creating a narrative around trauma can aid in the creation of meaning and the search for healing and growth. Initially trauma narratives centre around the ideas of loss, suffering and the inability to cope (Vis & Boynton, 2008). Vis & Boynton (2008) believe that searching out alternative narratives that go beyond the event itself enables the trauma survivor to find meaning in the event. They give the examples of an appreciation for care shown to them by others, their resiliency, or the strength of their spirituality. Baumeister and Newman (1994) state that through narratives we can come to an understanding of traumatic event. Cohen et al. (2006) also advocate the use of trauma narratives with children, comparing the process to cleaning a wound, “painful, but necessary for healing”. They slowly start to tell their story, re-reading and associating emotions with the story. Eventually they describe the whole event, allowing them to process all aspects of it. Through spiritual experiences, women in prison were able to free themselves by reconstructing and reinterpreting their victimisation (Schneider & Feltey, 2009).

The Role of Spirit in Coping and Growth

The role of coping and spirituality has already been covered in much depth, but here I would just like to re-voice this idea in relation to
overcoming trauma. There is much research showing the link between spirituality and coping with traumatic events (some examples include; Billingsley, 1992; Brome et al., 2000; DuBois, 1977; Foner, 1983; Jean & Cecelia, 2007; Koenig, 1995; Koenig et al., 2001; Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990; Meier & Rudwick, 1970; Simoni et al., 2002; Vis & Boynton, 2008; Watson, 1984;). Support from a religious community can be helpful in the face of traumatic events and spiritual beliefs aid in restructuring worldview (Askay & Magyar-Russell, 2009; Watlington & Murphy, 2006). Religion was a source of hope and identity for African Americans throughout their 250 years of slavery (DuBois, 1977; Foner, 1983; Meier & Rudwick, 1970;). Bryant-Davis’s (2005) study showed children who survived violence integrated prayer and spiritual beliefs to cope with the related trauma.

There is also a positive connection between people using spirituality to cope and the occurrence of PTG (Askay & Magyar-Russell, 2009). The ability to sustain and grow can come from a person’s spiritual or religious anchor (Pargament, 1990). Spirituality and religion become an aspect of many survivors’ identities (Boehm et al., 1999; Giesbrecht & Sevcik, 2000; Kreidler, 1995). Tedeschi and Calhoun (1995) believe that through the use of religion and/or spirituality, people are able to manage a crisis more effectively as there is an exchange with the higher power which allows for the management of emotions, provides support and assists with problem-solving and self-care. The inclusion of the trauma into a divine perspective moves it beyond the personal, making it possible to endure and grow (Vis & Boynton, 2008).
Concluding Thoughts

So where does this leave us?

Now it seems we have come full circle, from the individual narrative of my internal journey to the academic examination of teaching others inner peace. Before concluding I wanted to highlight briefly some aspects of the study that seem important to me.

Search for Spirit – The Missing Piece

One strong theme that came through in the study was what I would call the ‘Search for Spirit’, the inner struggle within us all for meaning and understanding. This may come to different people in different parcels. For some it is a search for God while for others it maybe a desire for a deeper understanding of themselves. Some may seek the correct way to live and interact with life through their work or relationships while others try to find happiness in their life. All of these are part of the search for meaning, the attempt to stretch beyond and reach for something we feel is outside ourselves. An important part of this journey is to recognise that what we seek must be found within and this is a pre-requisite to seeing what lies around us. Happiness, love or peace cannot be seen as exclusive qualities of the external environment otherwise we will never hold or live these virtues. Through the search and discovery within we are able to see and live these qualities in our environment. As we progress we can assist others, not as teachers but as fellow pilgrims, neither fully knowing the path but learning from each other’s journey in the time
spent walking together. Be it a child going through the education system or recovering from a traumatic experience, to a Swami who is dedicated to a spiritual life, we all seek wholeness, balance and healing.

**Need for Space**

If we all seek this peace and healing, then to understand this truth we must have some experience of it and our lack of it. We must know we do not completely have it and at the same time recognise it to be there. This is not something that can be taught, it must take place within the individual. Because of this it is important to provide space for the cultivation of peace and the facilitation of healing. Individuals are responsible for their own happiness and wholeness. In saying this there are different tools and guidance which can make this process easier. Even with guidance from someone who has walked a similar path it is still important for people to walk the path themselves. The process of contemplation was important in my own journey and the journeys of those I talked to. Contemplation has also proven to be effective in the education system and PTG process.

*Parallels between My Journey and the Qualities of Living Peace*

One pattern I noticed between my internal research and academic findings were a number of crossovers between the themes from my own journey and the qualities I identified in someone living peace. This is not to suggest that I have fully attained these qualities nor does
it suggest that I am living peace but it sheds light on what is common in the shared journey.

**Holding On and Letting go and the Pparallels to Detachment**

As already mentioned, there is a correlation between the concept of letting go and detachment. However, the idea of letting go sits better in my experience. We live in our comfort zone and hold on to our ideas, beliefs and concepts of self because we are unwilling to step into the unknown. Through detachment, authors state, we can step back from this limited view and witness the metaphysical reality unfolding around us (Sander, 2008). From Plato to the Eastern sages there is an insistent call for some measure of detachment. The ability to step beyond ourselves and explore what lies ‘out there’ is required to move from where we are. To move from darkness to light we must step out of the dark. Eckhart states that this is required to move us into unity with God (Davies, 1994).

**Connecting to the Heart and the Understanding of Self**

The ability to connect with, and listen to, our heart shares similarities with the idea of self connection. The importance of hearing and acting on the quiet voice of our intuitions and feelings and the conflict that ensues when we follow the path that we have to justify as being right. Tolstoy (1900a) talks of the importance of his heart. The ability to know right or wrong in his eyes is not a function of the mind but an inner knowing. Eckhart talks of connecting with the “inner man” (Classen, 2003) and Roques (2006) considers the idea from a
scientific perspective, relating the heart to a number of functions in the body beyond pumping blood, like balancing hormones and sending intuitive signals to the brain. This all relates back to the idea of ‘knowing thy self’, connecting with the deeper and hidden parts of ourselves and acting with trust and faith in our hearts. Ultimately the heart relates to the idea of acceptance. Here we find a freedom from judgement and a degree of surrender; the heart doesn’t need to control. Because of this the concepts of surrender and judgement are closely linked to the process to coming into the heart space.

The Importance of Surrender

The importance of surrender in the creation of inner peace has been a persistent theme in history. Surrender is not considered a state of giving up or inactivity but a process tied closely to acceptance of life. Through the acceptance that comes with surrender, friction in life is decreases and, by definition, peace increases. Control is a function of the mind. To move more into our heart, intuition and feelings we need to surrender. Surrender is seen in Jung’s concept of the mind as a fragmented piece of the total psyche which we cannot understand in its entirety and in Swami Rama’s statement that the only way to rid yourself of ego is to surrender to God. Authors from both religion and academia agree on this point. The benefits of surrendering experienced in my own journey suggest this an vital aspect of life to be developed for the creation of peace.
Separation from Judgements

Judgement relates to our ability to accept life, ourselves and others as they are. The less we judge ourselves and our situation the more acceptance we find. As the mind needs to control, it also needs to judge and criticise. Acknowledging our judgement and negative labelling allows us to separate ourselves from these labels and judgements enabling us to find some peace and stability beyond them. Lederach (2005) maintains that by suspending judgements we can go beyond them and generate what he calls “paradoxical curiosity”. Removing judgements removes limits and both research and personal experience confirm the importance of it.

Service – The Training Ground for Peace

From AA meetings to the text of The Bhagavad-Gita, the role of service is highlighted. As seen in my experience, the role of true, selfless service helps deepen an understanding of ourselves, while also enabling us to go beyond our limited self. Learning to serve and be of service is central in the creation of peace and through the giving of self we go beyond the self. It produces observable cognitive, emotional, and/or physical benefits (Underwood, 2002) and stops the mind engaging in negative thoughts (Arweck & Nesbitt, 2008). Both in my experience and in the work of Yick (2008), service is seen as a transformative process. It humbles, diminishes ego and increases connection. Eckhart believes it to be the bridge between the inner and outer realms. It is through service that we can practise and hone the qualities of ‘living peace’, learn to grow and realise our wholeness.
The final theme I wanted to touch on before rounding things up is the importance of the narrative in our journey. The narrative helps us to make sense of our life and its events. It allows us to see deeper, observe things from a different perspective and recognise things we were unaware of before. It can be used as a healing tool or an educational method. I think that was the underlying reason for the inclusion of my own narrative, to search for my own healing, my own spirit and to, hopefully, aid others in their search. The narrative can teach morals and provide examples. Through the creation of our own narrative we can begin to understand our journey and facilitate healing. The narrative is a powerful tool in our ‘Search for Spirit’.
Rounding Things Up

Corbett & Fikkert (2009) describe us all as being ‘broken’. That our relationship with God, ourselves, others and creation needs to be amended. So in acknowledgement of my brokenness I have attempted to show some of my journey to find healing and wholeness in myself. The importance of the individual in the creation of peace requires us to undertake our own journey to peace; it would be hypocritical not to. Peace is described as being a state of harmony and balance so it is important to peace work to develop these qualities in ourselves. The inclusion of personal experience offers access to those beyond the academic community and attempts to overcome some of the tunnelling effect of a purely academic study. It seeks to humanize the journey to peace as not just an abstract idea but a common struggle.

Through my own experience I explained my understanding of the journey to peace. The process of coming out of the darkness, learning to let go, surrender and accept are all elaborated in relation to inner peace. I explained the relationship and roles the heart and mind play in expressing intuitive feelings and rational logic respectively as well as the role of self judgement within this framework. The tendency to privilege logic over feeling was reflected on, as well as the importance of moving into a more balanced position between the two. Meditation and Yoga were explored as two possible tools for deepening self examination and their place in my journey was considered.

In my conversations I found parallels with my journey and inspiration. Swami Muktidharma described peace as “a state of being”, a harmonious and balanced way of interacting. Swami Gyan Dharma
believed that peace is about being your true self and not avoiding or running from things that appear in our path. Marianne talked of peace as “coming home” to ourselves and of the importance of finding a balance between our internal and external realms. Both Muktidharma and Peter Crompton highlighted the importance of education in the development of both inner and outer peace, teaching more than just what is required for “physical survival” by providing the “conditions to grow in a healthy way”.

Having considered the inner and outer peace paradigm from this informal viewpoint, I then took an academic perspective. I outlined the relationship between the the inner and outer realms. That world peace depends on a foundation of inner peace is a recurring theme that can be found in academic and religious teachings throughout the ages. Through the development of inner peace we can increase our participation in the external environment. This includes considering the importance of seeing our own role in the external environment and taking responsibility for it, the importance of balance and connection in the creation of peace and the interplay, in both directions, between the internal and external realms.

I addressed the relationship between religion and peace as religion is believed to be an external representation of the internal journey. Religion has a violent history but there is also much potential for peace within it. Two possible pathways religion offers to peace were explored: the inner realm, the pathway of contemplation, and the outer realm, the pathway of interfaith communication. Ultimately it is the balance between the inner and outer environments that is seen to be the true path to peace. This led on to the concepts of ‘living peace’
and ‘sharing peace’. The idea being that as we undertake the ‘search for spirit’ in our lives we should help others in their journey.

I explored the concept of ‘Living Peace’ as the expression of peace in the inner realm. The link between unbalanced self-esteem and aggression was confirmed, highlighting the importance of developing inner stability and peace. I probed some of the qualities of a person ‘living peace’, including service, love, balance, connection, detachment, non-judgement, non-violence, stillness, compassion, self connection and surrender. As well as this the effects of meditation on the brain and spirituality on healing were examined and a number of relationships found between the development of inner peace and the physical and mental states.

‘Sharing Peace’ is the expression of the outer realm contained within the thesis and was divided into education and post trauma rehabilitation in children. Children are the basis of the external work as they have the greatest ability and potential to change and adapt throughout their lives. I discovered that children’s spirituality needs to be developed through education. Children need to be encouraged to ask questions and be challenged. They should feel confident to explore the deeper issues and relate them to their own lives. They need supportive relationships to create a sense of love, compassion and belonging. They should be encouraged to experiment with truths in their own lives. Stories, rituals, arts, play, solitude and mindfulness, eco-spirituality and community spirituality are all pathways through which children can grow and experience their spirituality. The teacher plays a critical role in this process and they exploring and growing alongside the children. There three main approaches to teaching were considered – adhishiksha (teaching morals, learning through
experience and the importance of contemplation), the role of myths and stories and the importance of exposure to the world. Traumatic events affect a child’s ability to learn and challenge their fundamental beliefs, causing post-traumatic stress disorder, increasing their aggressive tendencies, their desire for revenge and the likelihood of their experiencing depression. From trauma, however, there is the opportunity for growth. The spiritual journey is the same as a quest for healing as both seek meaning and value (Barrett, 1999). It represents the ‘search for spirit’ – and within this search meditation and narrative can be powerful tools to support healing.

This takes us back to the beginning. My search for healing leads me back to the searches of others. The internal journey ultimately leads back to the world. Our search for spirit requires us to interact with the world around us, to live peace and share it with others. To balance the inner and outer realms, working externally for others while being aware and responsive to the internal landscape. To see and acknowledge both the light and the dark that exists within us and be humbled by it. Know that we are no ‘better’ or ‘worse’ than others, and that all we can do is offer ourselves in the service of other broken humans. When we learn that others can help us heal, that is when the true healing within begins. True service, real giving is the ultimate expression of love, compassion, surrender and connection. It moves us from the mind into the heart which is where true healing takes place and where we will ultimately find the spirit we seek.
Some Postscript Thoughts

I sit in an air conditioned office; it’s hot and humid outside. Why wouldn’t it be? – I am in Liberia, West Africa. I am finishing up my thesis, proof reading, double checking and for the first time I read the whole thing through in a while. I try to think how it ties together, what the point of it all was. I started from a place of deep rejection of much of the academic world I saw around me and tried to break from it and find my own path. I am unsure whether or not I was successful. I tried to examine myself, which seems like a never-ending gauntlet I put myself through. I’ve often been told I think too much and maybe that’s half my problem. I think it’s very hard to separate the rational and experiential realms. For better or worse, we have a mind that is at least half dedicated to rational, linear processing. We need to come to terms with this and make room for it, not avoid it or focus solely on it. Similarly I do not feel we can separate ourselves fully from our past or our experiences when using rational thought. I started with my own thoughts, feelings and experiences which lay more in the experiential realm, but still very much grounded in rational processes (otherwise I would not have written anything down). Then I moved to other’s experiences, which was a step ‘away’ from the experience to the rational. I talked to others about their lives, to draw comparisons and find guidance. While this wasn’t focused on my direct experiences, I could reflect on it in relation to my own life. Then I moved more into the academic world, considering the relationship between inner and outer peace, ever moving further and further into the rational realm. From here I broke into two branches – the inner path of contemplation and the outer path of education and post traumatic growth in children – and this is where it comes together, this is where the knot is tied.
Here I am in West Africa, in a country that was torn apart by 14 years of brutal civil war, working for UNICEF, an organisation focused on children’s wellbeing, and struggling to keep my own inner balance in this intensely unbalanced environment. As I look over the thesis as a process, starting with myself and my journey and slowly moving away, I am struck that I ended up exactly where I started. The final chapters of my rational, ‘academic’ work directly relate to my current journey and experience. Here I am still struggling to ‘Live Peace’, trying to focus on loving and serving as opposed to acquiring money and status. I struggle not to judge those around me as they try constantly to swindle money from me. My tendency to close off to the pain and suffering of those around me continuously emerges and I am forever challenged to engage my compassionate side despite a strong desire to ignore this part of me. On top of this I am surrounded by those suffering from post traumatic stress and the educational system here was lost during the war. There is a whole generation here that missed out on education and a current one that is suffering through a broken system, with widespread corruption and teachers that often do not even turn up. Here the ideas and concepts I grappled with in ‘Sharing Peace’ come into my life. This is the crux of it all I feel. I tried to leave the intellectual behind but ultimately it provided assistance in my personal journey. I have tried to show this in Appendix 4. I started my journey, moved through academia and ended up back at my own journey again. Same problems, different packages. This is what I am really seeing from this thesis, the link between the academic and the practical, between the rational and the experiential. One helps guide the other, one is the road map and other is the journey. They cannot replace each another but can be used together, they are intertwined and they cannot be separated so easily.
Appendices

Appendix 1: Some Linkages between Inner and Outer Peace - Groff and Smoker (1996)
Appendix 2: Effects of Basic Meditation Practice - Kristeller and Johnson (2005)

Usual patterns of:
- Conditioned habit: Avoiding fear and seeking gratification
- Relationship to self and to others

Basic Meditation Practice:
- Awareness of patterns and disengagement of reaction

Enhanced Well-Being
- Behavioural Regulation
- Centred Self
- Less attachment to self
Appendix 4: My Circular Journey

Diagram:
- My Journey
- Education
- Post Traumatic Growth
- Conversations
- Living Peace
- Sharing Peace
- Inner and Outer Peace Paradigm
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