

**Human Spirituality and Coming Together in Peace, Looking Through Two  
Lenses (Māori and Sahaj Marg Raja Yoga).**

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**by**

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## Abstract

This project explored the experiences of ordinary men and women involved in spiritual practices in order to understand the phenomenon of spiritual heart and any implications for outer peace. The primary question asked of informants was what was spiritual brotherhood? Very early in the process the research question refined itself to ask about spiritual brothersisterhood, as the connotation of brotherhood was excluding for the female informants.

In order to understand both the question and perhaps the phenomenon; participants from two communities became involved. Both communities were viewed as having expert knowledge about indigenous spirituality. One group came from a purposive sample of practitioners from the multi-cultural global Sahaj Marg community of Raja Yoga practitioners.

The other group belonged to the Aotearoa New Zealand Māori community and had close *whānau* (family), kinship and *iwi* (tribal) connections. An indigenous perspective reminds us all of our roots, when we, in our present day lives, often forget these. The willingness of this group to guide this project and be involved was very welcome.

Informants in this study identified a universal thread of awareness that revealed itself to each one as a practical knowledge of the spiritual heart. Informants in both groups experienced an ongoing transcendental connection through the spiritual heart, to a unified field of consciousness that they called respectively: *Master*, *tūpuna* (ancestors), and *atua* (forces that generate and animate particular realms of reality). This connection influenced relationships and lifestyle practices in ways that were described as peaceful. The researcher conceived an intrinsic space to hold the knowledge shared by informants as a form of dynamic conversation between a universal *whānau* (family) connected by spirit. It is not a comparative study. As such this thesis modestly outlines the convergences of practices, beliefs, attunement and awareness, that led to a peaceful lens, as described by these participants.

Constructivist grounded theory and methods and Māori centred research perspectives was utilised in this three-year inquiry. The Māori people are the indigenous inhabitants of Aotearoa New Zealand, and in this study came from South Island Ngai Tahu and Waitaha *iwi* (tribe), with connections through *whakapapa* (genealogy) to many North Island *iwi*.

Interview data were collected from 56 participants (N = 49 Sahaj Marg and N = 7

(Māori). Interviews with Māori informants were of longer duration. In addition, seven focus groups occurred with N = 46 (Sahaj Marg) and N = 6 (Māori). The Māori focus group met three times. Informants (called participants in the remainder of this thesis) represented a wide age span, from eighteen to eighty-nine years, with approximately 30 % male and 70 % female. Informants came from thirty-six different cultures. When contextual data came from participant observation, the researcher used the word ‘practitioners’.

**Keywords:** Human spirituality, Waitaha people, Ngai Tahu, Sahaj Marg meditation, Māori spirituality, Consciousness, Peace building, Spiritual heart, Spiritual brother-sisterhood, Yoga, Raja Yoga.

## Preface

Tihei mauri ora.

I give greetings to the inner wellspring and the collective of ancestors that we all share. With gratitude, I acknowledge the *mauri* (vital life force) that nourishes us all in this wonderful play of creation. I belong to the *waka* (canoe) *Te Wai Pounamu* (South Island) of Aotearoa New Zealand, the *Tākitimu* Mountains and the wind swept Pacific Ocean. My people originate from the Celtic tribes of Ireland and Scotland and this land and its people have hosted us for five generations. The island of *Te Wai Pounamu* (South Island), Aotearoa has nourished my *whānau* (family) and given a place of safety and *aroha* (love). My name is Janine Maree Joyce and my heart is full of gratitude for this land and its peoples. My father is Hugh Joyce and my mother Heather Joyce née Powell from *Murihiku* (Southland). My children are Taarn, Ronan and Samson Scott. Their father is Bryan Scott. This journey of listening has been unexpected and has filled my heart with wonder, awakening a deep remembrance of connection within me.

I have found no words in the English language that adequately describe or hint at the possibilities contained within this experience. I have had to blindly feel and attune to the mind of other cultures more richly endowed with deep spiritual traditions of unity and awareness. As such my journey has been one of faith and *aroha* (love) and I share the following not as an expert but rather as one who has been permitted to listen and act as momentary scribe.

I would like to now acknowledge the support, instruction and teaching from a number of people. Dr. K.S. Balasubramanian, Assistant Director, Kuppuswami Research Institute who during an informal conversation activated my wonderings about Māori cosmology, Hine Forsyth (Waitaha, Ngāi Tahu, Rūnanga Council Ngāi Tahu) for her careful and kind guidance over many years. All the Māori sisters and brothers (many from Waitaha tribe) who have shared knowledge and enabled me to understand more deeply. The Sahaj Marg brothers and sisters who have so willingly considered the nature of spiritual brother-sisterhood and those who have not spoken directly but assisted this research process in many other ways. I have received more than I can express from my spiritual master: Shri Parthasarathi Rajagopalachari, Shri Ram Chandra Mission, who encouraged my involvement in this project.

I am grateful for the assistance and spiritual guidance of Kamlesh Patel, Santosh Sreenivasan, Elizabeth Denley, Prasanna Krishna and others. John and Alison offered affection and the necessary care and practical support for this project. Although I name, I do not place any in a position of responsibility for these findings.

I hope that the findings of this research will make a useful contribution towards humanities quest for harmonious living.

I am particularly grateful for the practical instruction, support and extension from Yogacharya A. Rajendra Reddy, M.Sc., (Y & N) and all at the faculty at the Rashtriya Sanskrit

Vidyapeetha Department of Sāṅkhya Yoga and Yoga Vignana, Tirupati, India. I am grateful to the New Zealand Indian High Commission who provided the support and Commonwealth scholarship for my studies and needs in India. My supervisors, Dr. Heather Devere and Dr. Grant Gillett, have been simply wonderful in the way that they provided wise guidance, flexibility and a deep hospitality towards an indigenous perspective and voice.

I am grateful to all my colleagues at the Aotearoa Conflict and Peace studies centre as well as at the Bioethics Department in Aotearoa New Zealand. It was a delight to be with such caring human beings from all over the globe. The collective commitment towards the wellbeing of humanity was inspirational. I learnt a great deal from you all.

The students at the Rashtriya Sanskrit Vidyapeetha gave me an openhearted welcome into their lives as we lived alongside each other on campus. I am grateful to Sravana, Vikram, Rakesh, Gayathri, Vaishnavi, Yoga Sir and Yoga Madam and many others. It was auspicious for me to be able spend so much time with you all. My heart feels you all as *whānau* (family).

Finally, the reciprocated *aroha* (love) and generosity of my *whānau* (family) and children. Accommodating the changes in *whānau* (family) structure that assisted this work, is rare. Not all could adjust to their ex-wife, mother, sister and daughter living in another country for such lengthy periods and continue to flourish, *Ka nui taku aroha ki a koe*. I acknowledge that adjusting is not always an easy process and I honour the growth that happened for us all.

It is not generally my nature to name and thank each person individually. Every person that I have met during the last three years has contributed in some way to the understanding of this research topic. If I name some, then I forget others. For some, we just forgot to introduce ourselves. I am profoundly grateful for all the practical kindness and support, wonderful

curries, hugs and laughter from brothers and sisters within India and elsewhere. Your collective strength became my strength.

Ultimately, this work has been a growing into an embodied awareness of the spaces that connect us all. I am very grateful for the spiritual values and knowledge that I now embrace and the deepening of a certainty of personal relationship with unity and oneness. Beyond this, I am in awe of the glimpses gained of a Creative being of such essential gentleness, silence, truth and freedom.

I offer this work as scientist, as an artist, and as an aspect of a deep unifying consciousness that potentially embraces us all, despite the separations that we choose to create through our personalities, beliefs, cognitive frames and identities.

Nō reira, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā tātou katoa (Therefore, thank you all).

Janine Joyce,  
Dunedin, Aotearoa New Zealand November,  
2014.

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## **List of Abbreviations**

DTI: Diffusion tensor imaging.

eLORETA: exact standardised low resolution electromagnetic tomography.

5HIA: 5 – Hydroxyindoleacetic acid.

HTIA: Diffusion functional MRI

## **Glossary of Terms**

The Glossary of Terms is placed at the back of this thesis.

## Chapter One: Invitation

### 1:1 Summary

Coming together in peace and looking through two lenses was not simple. It required a shift in sensibility from material rationalism towards a certain hospitality and willingness to engage with the spiritual accounts given by participants. In this chapter I explore this invitation and describe the development of a convergent, and transdisciplinary approach to the work. I introduce the concept of ‘transversal spaces’ (Schrag, 1992) as a way in which to engage with the material in a peaceful manner.

### 1:2 Invitation

This thesis offers an invitation for those of us who are reading it to view the world through an inner lens. An inner lens, which may become attuned, to the participant’s perspective of unity, communion and compassion. As we open ourselves to an inner hospitality towards the spiritual experience of participants, there is a possibility that we may glimpse a little of what these participants experience as ordinary human perception and interaction.

This thesis as a written work represents a modest attempt to understand the inner essence that was contained in the words of two different communities who, separately, identified with and emerged out of spiritual unity. Throughout this thesis, I listened to the participants’ spiritual experience to see whether there was material there that, whilst coming from two different perspectives, could contribute in the understanding of the relation between spirituality, peace and conflict.

Entering into another’s spiritual experience is perhaps impossible and this thesis does not claim to dive deeply.<sup>1</sup> Rather a meaning making conversation developed between the experiences given by two communities rooted within indigenous paradigms of spirituality. I have taken the position, somewhat at odds within the conventions of academia, whereby I do

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<sup>1</sup> Within this thesis, there are many voices, coming from many cultures. The expression of spiritual heart is beyond words, yet where possible I have tried to use the appropriate Māori *Te reo* (language) and Sanskrit words. I apologise for any inadvertent mistakes as I have listened. I am aware that there are dialect and spelling differences between Northern and Southern Māori, which may feature within this thesis.

not engage in any historical positioning nor any form of critique of the participants' knowledge.

Nor do I propose to frame this in modernist or anti-modernist terms (Singh, 2010), yet I accept that participants' implicitly question linear modernity. Furthermore, I do not offer any form of colonisation towards this knowledge by seeking to frame it in a post-modern paradigm (Ketola, 2009; Singh, 2010; Carr & McCallum, 2009). The participants' knowledge brings its own paradigm based upon understandings about Morphic resonance and universal collective ethics alongside deep, unconscious energetic processes and awareness (Sheldrake, 1988; Ketola, 2009; Prabhavananda, 2012; Prasada, 1912). As an emerging paradigm, it seems pro-life and does not support modernist capitalist efficiency nor post-modern individualism (Giri, 2008). As sustainable development expert Tarja Ketola (2009) states: "...both schools are guilty of demeaning life at the expense of efficiency (modernism) or individualism (post-modernism)" (p 114).

I was ever mindful that the material forming this conversation was at best a glimpse or whisper of this paradigm, filtered through the lens of my own culture, prejudice and awareness. In this, I hold the constructivist grounded theoretical view, which renders this work a convergence that may not be replicable. It was a process mediated in time and space and through the spiritual and cultural apparatus of all of the participants including the researcher (Crohy, 1998; Charmaz, 2003; Charmaz, 2006; Bryant, 2007).<sup>2</sup> This differs from traditional grounded theory, which tends to maintain positivist perspectives including: an objective external reality as independent from the observer, objective categories derived from data and a passive neutral observer (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss, 1987; Strauss & Corbin 1990b; Glaser, 1978).

Given the subjective nature of human spirituality, I also agree with grounded theorist Kathy Charmaz (2000) that, "the viewer creates the data and ensuing analysis, through interaction with the viewed" (p 523). In this way, data does not provide a window on an

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<sup>2</sup> As such, I include myself as a participant and at times share insights from my journal. I share in an explicit and transparent manner (Charmaz, 2006). However, I use the word 'I' in the sense of the Sanskrit term *tattvamasi* (that thou art, or the realization of oneself as a spiritual being). I do not propose or describe an identity, a view of myself or in any desire to claim knowledge. Rather it is sharing of relevant spiritual conditions that I experienced during the course of this study. It alludes also to a process of cultural immersion and becoming the engaged spiritual observer or "Other". These concepts are a thread that will flow throughout this thesis and are suitable to the methodology and study perspectives (see Chapter 4).

absolute reality; rather the ‘discovered’ reality arises from the interactive process and its temporal, cultural and structural context (Taylor & Francis, 2013).<sup>3</sup>

Accordingly, I did not attempt a comparative study, although grounded theory actively engages in what it identifies as a comparative process with the research material (Silverman & Marvasti, 2008). Nor did I attempt a sociological or anthropological study. Instead, I engaged with the convergences of connection believing to find there something that unifies. Often this led to a ‘transversal space’ between what one group may currently assume as the norm and what participants shared as their day-to-day awareness. This was suitable to grounded theoretical method whereby there is space given to an ongoing reflective and reflexive relationship between the data, the participants, the researcher and the analysis (Somekh & Lewin, 2011).

Later I altered my lens as I noted glimpses within the neurobiological scholarship that offered complimentary findings. This thesis does not summarise this scholarship but instead tentatively opens a new area of inquiry into the inner essence of spirituality, its possible effects on neurobiology and the resulting relationship with peace and conflict.

### 1:3 Convergent Lens

I began with a simple curiosity about the practical merit and value of large groups of human beings coming together in meditation. I was a member of global Raja Yoga Sahaj Marg<sup>4</sup> community (Durai, 2009; Prasad, 1984; Ram Chandra, 1991a) whose main method

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<sup>3</sup> I do not outline the historical development of grounded theoretical debate, which I view as situated on a qualitative and quantitative methodological interface. Bev Taylor and Karen Francis (2013) give clear information about the issues in: *Qualitative Research in the Health Sciences: Methodologies, Methods and Processes*. I agree with their eventual recommendation that the qualitative researcher pay especial attention to congruency within and between all aspects of the research project.

<sup>4</sup> Yoga is one of six classical Indian perspectives of scientific inquiry (*Shad Darshana's*). These perspectives range from the material world to the world of quantum physics and transcendental consciousness (Mehta, 1970). The areas of focus are: i) logic and epistemology (*Nyaya*), ii) the nature of the world (*Vaisheshika*), iii) enumeration or reckoning of categories of existence within the subatomic world (*Sāṅkhya*), iv) yoking and joining of consciousness (*Yoga*), v) inquiry (*Mimamsa*), and vi) the end point of knowledge which was the knowledge of one absolute reality of which we are all part, as documented in the Upaniṣads (Abhedananda, 1967; Mehta, 1970). For this thesis to be understood both schools of knowledge from Yoga and *Sāṅkhya* philosophy are necessary but I will try to sketch some foundations as I proceed.

The earliest references to Yoga occur in the ancient writings of India and in archaeological evidence. Archaeological evidence from the Pre-Vedic age shows figures practicing Yoga in the ancient Pakistan city of *Mehargarh* (Feuerstein, 2002). Excavations in the Indus valley have revealed a seal of Lord Shiva surrounded by animals which are represented in the traditional *Hatha Yoga asana* or poses and which emphasise our oneness with other creatures as in contemporary evolutionary science and in most indigenous traditions (Feuerstein, 2002). The original guru or teacher of Yoga, according to the *Hatha Yoga Pradipika*, was *Shri Adinath* whose

was meditation on the spiritual heart.<sup>5</sup> It was clearly an individual practice, yet built-in were twice weekly and biannual opportunities for group meditation; ranging from as few people as five to as many as 50,000.<sup>6</sup> Subsequently I wrote asking Sahaj Marg master Rajagopalachari what the purpose of group meditation or *satsangh* was.<sup>7</sup> I received an invitation; an inspiration and later permission to research more deeply the phenomenon of spiritual brotherhood (see Appendix 1).

Almost immediately Māori participants volunteered to take part in the project and raised concerns about the questions' underlying patriarchal base. For one group of participants the term spiritual brotherhood represented a universal connectedness beyond identity; yet for the Māori women it indicated inequality and domination:

When you first raised that concept, I automatically went to the gender perspective, you know the word 'brother' brotherhood. Being a staunch feminist, it was not a good place to go. For me looking at the world now and learning a little bit about history, brotherhood usually meant, from a female perspective, not good. It was not productive or nurturing for woman and their children. Taking the gender out of the word brotherhood and looking at it holistically changes that whole concept for me. So I won't go down the whole 'what does spiritual brotherhood' mean, which is that exclusion I think of women's rights. I will look at it as a generic word for humanity, spiritual humanity. To me there is a universal brotherhood in that context. When you meet people from different cultures, from different religious backgrounds, there is a strong universal thread that shows itself. (Māori, female participant, 2011).

The first convergent lens therefore involved the expansion towards the reconciled term of spiritual brother-sisterhood as an expression of spiritual humanity (Carr & McCallum, 2009; Buchanan, 2011). From this began the preparation for identifying whether ordinary

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name is one of the names given to Lord Shiva (Yogendra, 14<sup>th</sup> century; Singh, 1918). The *Rig Veda* refers to the Yogic practice of meditation (Gupta, 1967; Mitchener, 1982). Later in the Upaniṣad age, the *Chandogya* Upaniṣad and *Sveta Arvatara* Upaniṣad describe Yogic practices (Swahananda, 1984; Radhakrishnan, 1974).

<sup>5</sup> *Chandogya* Upaniṣad, translated by Swami Nikhilananda. Part 8. Chapter 1: *Brahman* [Supreme Being] in the heart: "Within Brahman resides a small city in the akasha [space] of the heart". Composed Northern India, circa 8<sup>th</sup>/ 7<sup>th</sup> Century BCE.

<sup>6</sup> Sahaj Marg is a modern version of Raja Yoga whereby the teacher (master/ *guru*) transmits *pranahuti* (energy) to the followers for the divine evolution of human beings. According to Sahaj Marg *prefect* (spiritual trainer), Sri M.S. Sundara (1984): "the time had come when this [method] was to be given. This is a very ancient system, which, we are told, was in vogue seventy-two generations before Raja [King] Janak. Our Guru's Guru felt that the time had come for the world to receive it" (Prasad, 1984, p. 8).

<sup>7</sup> *Satsangh* is from the Sanskrit language and literally means to sit together in the truth. It is a state of consciousness that comes with inner silence and attuned awareness.

human beings were familiar with a unity of consciousness that was beyond culture or group identity (Wilber, 1999; Dennis, 2010; Davis, 2006; Gupta, 1967). Whether one could define such a phenomenon for the purpose of further scholarship and if so, whether it had any practical applications for peace and the modern problems plaguing humanity.<sup>8</sup>

As I listened, I found myself participating in an ongoing and sometimes uncomfortable introspection about the relationship between truth and meaning, power and control:

All knowledge is constructed and consists of what individuals create and express. Since individuals make their own meaning from their beliefs and experiences, all knowledge is tentative, subjective, and personal. Knowledge is viewed not as a set of universal "truths," but as a set of "working hypotheses." Thus constructivists believe that knowledge can never be justified as "true" in an absolute sense (Airasian & Walsh, 1997, p. 444).

A constructivist grounded theory epistemology encourages the researcher to recognise knowledge as constructed alongside the experience of participants (Charmaz, 2000; Bryant & Charmaz, 2007; Giri, 2007). Bridget Somekh and Cathy Lewin (2011) note: "Participants' feedback not only contributes to the co-construction of the theory but also enables the researcher to make changes or modifications to theory as needed" (p 116). This theoretical perspective does not aim to identify nor does it support the likelihood of an absolute or generalizable truth, rather it remains respectful and cognisant of multiple viewpoints. It is useful in generating concepts grounded in data and responsive to the meanings that people give to their experience (Somekh & Lewin, 2011). Consequently, I do not propose that participants' views are representative of all those in the wider Māori community, nor that there is one agreed Māori worldview. Similarly, the views of Sahaj Marg participants cannot be generalised to their cultural groups or the Sahaj Marg organisation as a whole. However, I do suggest a common experience of awareness and connection that seems beyond culture. This study identifies practices that promote this awareness alongside its potential utility in the field of peace.

Scholars within the education field warn of essentializing, or denying people their own subjectivity (Butler, 2011) and throughout all stages of this thesis I have gone back to participants and participant interviews for clarification and to ensure that the analysis was free from any 'ideological axe grinding' (Langlon, 2011). The perspective of seeking convergence

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<sup>8</sup> Pre-scoping the topic included: filming a documentary video of a *Bhandara* Celebration (Lucknow, India, 2010), participation observations, and studying an additional University of Otago postgraduate paper on ethnographic research methods.

between such disparate voices was a strategy intended to be respectful towards the subjective experience of participants. There is no intent in this thesis to remove the essential meaning from the discourse through oversimplification or over seeking of convergence (Shields, Bishop, & Mazawi, 2005; Langlon, 2011). Consequentially, themes from the data are explored through a number of lenses. These lenses developed from the participant's stories and through the process of categorisation and recognition of core concepts. These lenses or core concepts represent separate chapters in this thesis.

Participants consistently shared stories about a multidimensional inner reality known as the *Master*<sup>9</sup> by Sahaj Marg participants and *tūpuna* (tangible and accessible ancestors) and *atua* (ancestral forces) by Māori participants (Ram Chandra, 1991a; Robinson, 2005).<sup>10</sup> The medium of connection with this unifying field of consciousness (Williams & Kabat-Zinn, 2013; Wilber, 2000; Ram Chandra, 1991a; Marsden, 2003) was through the spiritual heart, *wairua* (spirit) and *mauri* (life essence) (see, Glossary of terms), via processes of attunement which established subtle presence within each individual participant (Williams & Kabat-Zinn, 2013; Prasada, 1912; Robinson, 2005).

#### **1:4 Transdisciplinary Perspective**

As I listened to the participants' experience and the process of meaning making, I found a need to examine scholarship from Yogic and Māori philosophy and psychology, neurobiology, peace studies, Western philosophy, Māori cosmology, and spirituality as a relational science. The literature encompassed aspects of knowledge from the social sciences, the humanities and the medical sciences (see fig. 1). Whilst this could be viewed as 'what we

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<sup>9</sup> Sahaj Marg participants used the word *Master* to mean both their teacher as a person and also an inner consciousness and connection with the Creative Source or Higher Self. This was initially confusing for me and in order to clarify I have used the form *master* or the Sanskrit term *guru* (teacher) in reference to the teacher and person and the italicized form *Master* for what participants consider to be the inner consciousness. However, in many ways I consider that this represents the problems for a mind conditioned by a binary language. Most participants saw no difference between 'the master and *Master*' as *there was no separation internally* between each human being and this unified perception. Wilber (1999) has described this form of consciousness as a holon.

Although it was Arthur Koestler in his book, *The Act of Creation*, who first that coined the term 'holon' in Systems Theory (1990).

<sup>10</sup> Throughout this thesis, I have italicised the Sanskrit and Māori language words and placed the English translation in brackets. I accept that in places, this may be repetitive and I request my reader's tolerance for this style. Furthermore, I am not proficient in either language and I apologise for any inadvertent mistakes that may be present, despite checking with speakers of *Te reo* (Māori language). Māori participants spoke the South Island dialect and for the most part Māori word spelling reflects this.

think' or the knowledge that was brought to the inquiry (Montuori, 2013), it also represented visually the contextual and relational process of how I thought (Kaplan, 2006; Joyce, 2014; Kierkegaard, 2007).<sup>11</sup> According to the useful thoughts by Montuori (2013) on transdisciplinary research:

The implications of complexity and transdisciplinarity go far beyond a set of tools for academic inquiry. They call for a reflection on who we are, how we make sense of the world, and how we might find ways to embody different ways of being, thinking, relating, and acting in the world (p 214).

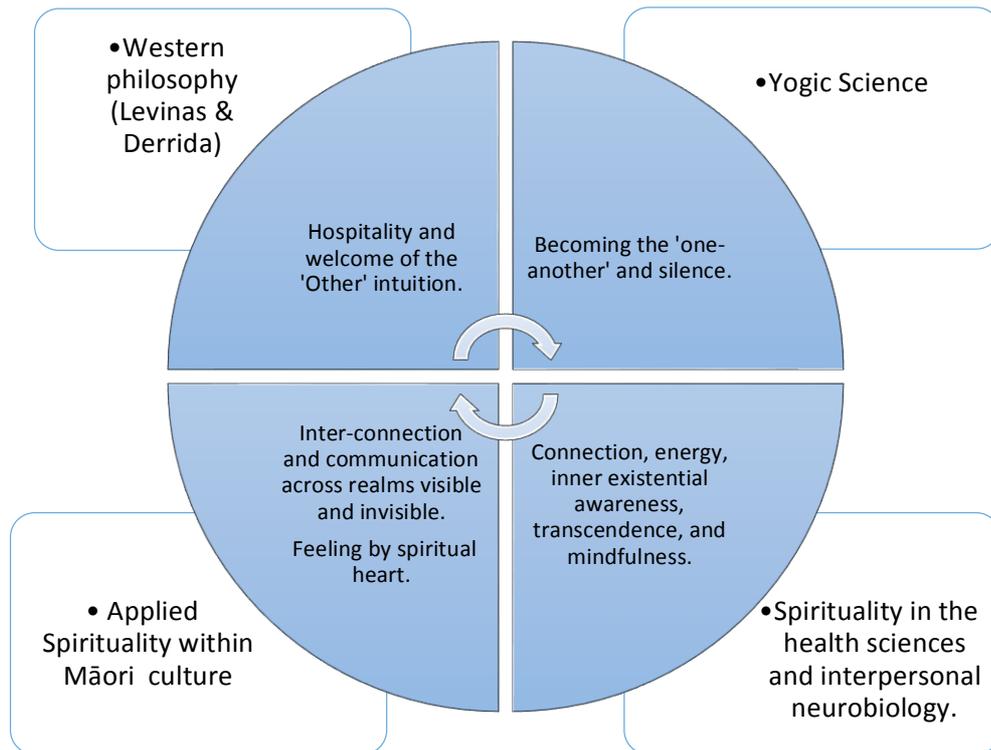
Nicolescu (2002) in his *Manifesto of Transdisciplinarity* assists in the developing a lens for understanding these difficult-to-define features and it was this way of thinking that I felt was the most sensitive to the needs of this inquiry:

Transdisciplinarity transgresses the duality of opposing binary pairs: subject/ object, subjectivity/ objectivity, matter/ consciousness, nature/ divine, simplicity/ complexity, reductionism/ holism, diversity/ unity. The duality is transgressed by the open unity that encompasses both the universe and the human being (p 56).

Figure 1 illustrates the 'transversal spaces' that developed in the process of placing the concept of spiritual brother-sisterhood in its relational context. In each of the quadrants, we encounter intuitive and often difficult to define features of human interaction. These aspects of human interaction indicated to me the inner workings of a multidimensional human being in flux as response to environmental influence and each other (Denning, 1999; Dietrich, 2013).

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<sup>11</sup> I embody the world as a creative person (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996). Koestler (1990) describes a characteristic of creative people as bisociation, or thinking together of terms or concepts in unusual combinations. Csikszentmihalyi (1996) goes further and describes the creative person as someone that appears to me to embody diversity with an identity that balances opposites. For example, Csikszentmihalyi (1996) cited in Montuori (2013, p. 215), summarises ten characteristics of a creative person and includes: i) creative people tend to be introverted and extroverted and ii) creative people as both rebellious and conservative. How is this logical? It is not, yet it is possible. It is a step beyond binary thinking and identity and I suspect a necessary characteristic in anyone that is interested in studying what G. Bateson (1972) called, 'the pattern that connects.'



**Figure 1: The transversal knowledge spaces pertinent to spirituality**

A transdisciplinary lens acknowledges a need for multiple perspectives and recognises: i) the diversity of life worlds, ii) a cumulative and circular approach towards mutual learning, iii) the pragmatic value of holistic analysis, iv) takes into account any scientific perspectives, and v) “valorises the search for the new and emergent” (Moulaert, MacCallum, Mahanood & Hamdouch, 2013, p. 430).

Transdisciplinary approaches have become increasingly popular<sup>12</sup> or, as Barbara Rimer and David Abrams (2012)<sup>13</sup> describe from research experiences with the United States National Institute of Health: “Across NIH and beyond, globally, transdisciplinarity is now part of research parlance and is increasingly embraced as a mission-critical conceptual framework to address complex problems, from molecules to macroeconomics and from basic science to

<sup>12</sup> An analysis of the degree of this popularity is outside the scope of this thesis.

<sup>13</sup> Both authors were involved in early transdisciplinary research in the United States when they proposed Transdisciplinary Tobacco Use Research Centers (TTURCs) to the National Cancer Institute's (NCI's) Board of Scientific Advisors (BSA) for approval (1998). David Abrams in 2008 built on this experience to make transdisciplinary systems science the centerpiece of the Office of Behavioral and Social Sciences Research's strategic plan for National Institute of Health Institutes and Centers.

policy” (p 201).<sup>14</sup> According to Carew and Wickson (2010) in their helpful discussion on transdisciplinarity:

The term ‘transdisciplinary’ has evolved from its more literal meaning of transcending the traditional boundaries of university-based research to include the participation of extra-academic stakeholders. While transcending discipline boundaries certainly remains an important activity for transdisciplinary researchers: “...others have argued that the crossing of these boundaries alone is not sufficient, but that the transdisciplinary researcher needs to put effort into integrating these potentially disparate knowledge’s with a view to creating useable knowledge. That is, knowledge that can be applied in a given problem context and has some prospect of producing desired change in that context” (p 1147).

Whilst transdisciplinary research teams can be viewed as a sensible pooling of expertise in the management of complex and complicated issues, transdisciplinary research as described by Carew and Wickson (2010) poses some obvious difficulties for the lone researcher (Wickson, Carew & Russell, 2006; Pahl-Wostla, Giupponib, Richards, Binderd, de Sherbinine, Sprintzti, Tooney & van Bergh, 2013; Rimer & Abrams, 2012). Difficulties in this thesis included: the complexity and breadth of academic disciplines involved, the cultural diversity, geographical constraints, and epistemological intuitive knowledge and faith traditions.

Choi and Pak (2006) describe transdisciplinarity whereby we each go beyond our distinct disciplines to create a common theoretical and conceptual frame: “The relatively newly used term transdisciplinary refers to an integration of the natural, social and health sciences in a humanities context, and in so doing transcends each of their traditional boundaries” (p 359). As I have conceived it, it may also transcend the post-enlightenment project that constrains much current scholarship (Singh, 2010; Capra, 1982; Lazlo, 2007; Lederach, 2005). It is very likely to require an attitude of humility and willingness to connect with others (Moulaert et al., 2013; Hadorn, Biber-Klemm, Grossenbache-Mansuy, Hoffman-Riem, Joye, Pohl, Weismann & Zemp, 2008). Ramer and Abrams (2012) share, from their experiences in the field of preventative medicine: ‘Measuring and capturing the full, yet often subtle, processes, network dynamics, and structural and functional aspects of transdisciplinary science is a complex undertaking’ (p 201).

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<sup>14</sup> NIH: National Institute of Health, United States of America.

Such a perspective requires familiarity with several fields of conceptual and technical knowledge, alongside the capacity to identify and integrate areas of convergence. I followed Idil Gaziulusoy & Boyle's (2013) recommendation that the lone researcher undertake: "an iterative, reflective enquiry throughout the research project to identify several literature review files" (p 139).

Integrating knowledge from different disciplines also represents awareness that for many areas of inquiry a discipline-specific method or lone theory may not be sufficient. Traditionally in India, questions of a Yogic nature tend to become embodied knowledge (Mitchener, 1982; Minor, 1978; Muktananda, 1978; Pranavananda, 1992). Additionally, once the knowledge is realized then its practitioners begin teaching and serving their communities (Vivekânanda, 1899; Ram Chandra, 1991a). As such, I found myself becoming the recipient of Commonwealth Scholarship, to study a postgraduate diploma in Yoga therapy and stress management in a traditional Indian Sanskrit University and Yogic community.<sup>15</sup> This provided a very different approach to scholarship and crucial practical and theoretical skills from which to engage in meaning and truth making according to the participants lens.

I consider it a modest attempt at complying with the collaborative aspect of transdisciplinary research, within the constraints of the Doctoral thesis (Wickson et al., 2006). As I have previously remarked, women and one man from the local Aotearoa New Zealand Māori community volunteered to give an indigenous perspective on the topic; again potentially transformative of the current academic climate.<sup>16</sup> Indeed their conversation formed the first engagement in meaning-making leading to the definition of key terms prior to extensive fieldwork in India.

Wickson et al., (2006) describe one of the ways that transdisciplinary differs from multidisciplinary research. It seems that the researcher is implicitly interested in creating change in response to a real life problem (Wickson et al., 2006). It is not only a need to view research themes from multiple perspectives.

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<sup>15</sup> Rashtriya Sanskrit Vidyapeetha, Tirupati, India is a University where students learn in a traditional way. Specific topics include Sanskrit language, traditional cultural and lifestyle practices, Yogic science, *Vedic* values, and modern and traditional academic knowledge.

<sup>16</sup> I would like to honour the only male Māori elder participant in this study. He was from the Tuhoe *iwi* (tribe). He died prior to the completion of this work. I honour his spiritual contribution and willingness to share his words, wairua and heart.

I was both naïve to the research question in the way that it emerged and was framed; yet deeply concerned about the effects of human beings not understanding their spiritual potential, given the multiple and desperate needs on the planet. I was concerned about spirituality remaining cocooned within cultural traditions and/or bound by religious constraints of identity, prejudice and conflict. It seemed to me that a transdisciplinary approach was useful, to identify any practical benefit of a connected universal awareness between human beings (spiritual brother-sisterhood as defined by participants in this study). Consequently, this thesis was located in the Aotearoa New Zealand National Centre of Peace and Conflict Studies and the Bioethics Centre of the University of Otago Dunedin Medical School.<sup>17</sup>

### **1:5 Transversal Spaces**

In this section, I define the concept of ‘transversal spaces’ (Schrag, 1992) as a medium for holding the convergences of knowledge, arising out of the study’s transdisciplinary underpinnings and in response to the research outcomes. According to the participants, despite the heterogeneity of practices and culture, spiritual brother-sisterhood did exist and was experienced at multiple seen and unseen levels. Participants viewed it as a natural part of life and were able to demonstrate an application of that fundamental aspect of humanness in relation to peace.

Initially it seemed that colleagues were surprised that I viewed this topic and outcome as a complex problem or even relevant to the modern world of conflict resolution. Some wondered what I was doing subjecting personal journeys of spiritual development and living to academic scrutiny. Others, who viewed life in an inherently non-positivist way, were delighted that their way of experiencing life could be shared openly and explored for enlightenment.<sup>18</sup> Still others wondered whether it was even possible to research the topic or believed, as one participant stated: “...there are no words for such divine things” (Belarusian Sahaj Marg male participant, 2012). Others were concerned about the effects of subjecting a

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<sup>17</sup> My supervisors embraced political science, peaceful transformation, neurology, neurosurgery, cultural criticism, philosophical theology and bioethics. I brought to the table: social work, mental health, complementary therapies, Yogic science and trauma specialties.

<sup>18</sup> Enlightenment is an Eastern mystical term used to describe a state of consciousness where there is no separation between self and source. Yogi Jaggi Vasudev (founder of Isha Yoga foundation for peace) describes this in simple terms as the absence of any doing in the mind. The body is quiet and not doing; the emotion is quiet and not doing; the thoughts are quiet and the mind is still. It is a continual state of union. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sfxpfEYUv9g>).

subtle phenomenon to the process of observation, as that which is observed changes in some way. It was Calvin Schrag's (1992) term 'transversal spaces' that assisted a reconciliation of these views. It also assisted my personal development of a peaceful stance towards the transdisciplinary underpinnings and the elusive, subtle nature of the phenomenon. Accordingly, 'transversal spaces':

...are spaces in which different voices are neither in opposition nor in danger of becoming unified but instead dynamically engaged with one another. Transversality occurs when different disciplinary perspectives can lie across, extend over, intersect, meet, and convey without becoming fused or enmeshed (van Huyssteen, 1999, p. 247).

Throughout this research process there was a dynamic engagement between participants' understanding of themselves as spiritual beings and transdisciplinary knowledge. This engagement was not a 'fusing' or a 'dominating' but rather a fluid conversation and development of awareness. An aspect of Nira Yuval-Davis theory of 'transversal dialogue' is useful in describing an underlying assumption of this virtual conversation: "In transversal dialogue participants remain rooted in their identity but try to shift to empathise with participants differently rooted (1997, p. 130). Furthermore, I agree with her argument: "Thus the only way to approach "the truth" is by a dialogue between people of differential positioning, and the wider the better (Yuval-Davis, 2012, p. 51). Chapter Four describes the methodological process of this dialogue.

I will now share the process of engagement and the subsequent development of an awareness of transversal spaces (see fig. 1). Alongside a concurrent data gathering process and analysis (Charmaz, 2006), I considered the Yogic literature and found that spiritual development was identified as an internal and external science with recognizable steps and stages taken by the sincere practitioner (Prasada, 1912; Rahrkar, 1964; Shearer, 1989; Singh, 1918). There were Sanskrit words for the various stages of inner experience and these stages seemed similar to some of the concepts shared within the narratives of research participants (Prasada, 1912; Ghosh, 1980). This was encouraging, yet I was aware that participant narratives sprang from a diverse range of cultures. Emerging from this was a 'transversal space' where elements from two western philosophers' views of consciousness and relationship engaged with Yogic notions of consciousness (Levinas, 1981, 1987; Derrida, 1988, 1997; Prajnananda, 1971; Prasada, 1912).

The work of the French philosopher, Jacques Derrida, and the Lithuanian philosopher, Emmanuel Levinas, described the intriguing notions of the ‘Other’ (Levinas, 1981). They posed a universal responsibility towards the ‘Other’ combined with notions of a current, and future, universal hospitality to all (Derrida, 1997). In this way, they provided an encouraging resonance with the universal notion of *ahimsa* (non-injury) in Yogic science<sup>19</sup> (Prasada, 1912). According to Levinas, the ‘Other’ was said to be a ‘development of conscience arising from suffering’ whereby the individual conscience begins to develop an ethic of responsibility for the ‘Other.’ The ‘Other’ was both the third (beyond neighbour and ethnicity) and also mysterious - speaking of infinity, the feminine and connection (Levinas, 1981). Yogic science described such a consciousness yet did not view suffering as the only way that this consciousness could develop.<sup>20</sup> Jacques Derrida deepened the notion of responsibility towards the embodied, as well as the mysterious, ‘Other,’ by inviting a consciousness and ethic of infinite hospitality.

Accordingly, if one is truly in relationship with the ‘Other’ then one must value the ‘Other’ beyond self and border (Derrida, 1988). Derrida and Yogic scientists proposed that this relationship evolves a joyful and unrequested infinite hospitality (Derrida, 1997; Vivekânanda, 1899).

For the purpose of this study, I have viewed this inner ‘transversal space’ as an attitude exemplifying Derrida’s insight - perhaps a form of applied Derrida - rather than an attempt to present his work on deconstruction. Although the spiritual framework often involves a deconstruction of the mind’s traditional dimensions and illusions, which may be considered a result of meditation and self-negation (Vivekânanda, 1923).

This attitude was required as a way of managing my bias as a member of the Sahaj Marg group,<sup>21</sup> whereby I had developed a sense of myself as part of a universal web of

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<sup>19</sup> *Himsa* and *ahimsa* are Sanskrit words meaning violence and non-violence respectively. *Ahimsa* refers to the primary Yogic moral ethic of not harming. At its strictest manifestation, it is the dictate to not kill or be violent towards any life form. However, an individual practising *ahimsa* in the context of modern Raja Yoga may employ an expanded perspective (Ram Chandra, 1991a; Vivekânanda, 1923). For example, *ahimsa* may include being prudent in the use of nature’s resources. It could also include a willingness to become more self-aware and reflect upon one’s ethical practices. *Ahimsa* develops naturally from a range of spiritual practices including an attitude of *bhakti* (devotion) or connection with the divine principle (Abhedananda, 1967).

<sup>20</sup> Swami Vivekânanda noted that suffering was a common denominator in the life stories of deeply compassionate and practical human beings. However, he did not view it as the only pathway for the development of compassion (Vivekânanda, 1899).

<sup>21</sup> I take a value explicit stance in this research thesis (Smith, 2012; Charmez, 2003). I do not doubt my experience of the *Master*. Nor do I seek to convince another. All ways, beliefs and non-belief are possible. However, I acknowledge this as a joyful relationship with mystery. A mystery that I also view as a science, with known and unknown laws. I suspect that I would be more comfortable with other names, perhaps creator, source

connection and relationship. I began by simple deconstructions. For example, although the topic uses the word ‘spiritual’, were the narratives actually about spirituality? What was spirituality? If we defined spirituality through casting it into a purely intellectual form, was it still spiritual? Was it even possible to define spirituality? Was it hospitable to define any aspect of spiritual brothersisterhood? If I defined the ‘Other’, was I still friend? Was it friendly to view spiritual brothersisterhood as a collective universal reality? Does universality represent another form of colonization of the ‘Other’? If those who experienced the effects of sustained colonization, shared narratives that pertain to ‘sacred’ inner knowledge (the only knowledge that cannot be easily taken away by another), was that a friendly thing to do? When knowledge was glimpsed, what was the duty to such a truth?

Derrida seemed to me to suggest a truth beyond all societal and psychological conditioning, history, posturing, attribution and attachment (Derrida, 1988; 1997; 2002). Beyond anything, this evolution of attitude towards the topic, and the narratives and themes, were most useful in developing a reflective stance, even as I deepened my involvement with the participant communities (Giri, 2008; Dahlberg, 2006). The engagement with an essence of Levinas encouraged me to remember the subtle nature of the topic; reminding me that an engagement with the ‘Other’ was not primarily an intellectual experience:

The movement here is thus inverse. The transcendence of the feminine consists in withdrawing elsewhere, which is a movement opposed to the movement of consciousness. But this does not make it unconscious or subconscious and I see no other possibility than to call it mystery (Levinas, 1987, p. 88).

Participants in this study shared a process of inner movement, response and attunement towards an inner reality. It was an inner coherence of unity alongside diversity of individual embodiment. The inner unity found practical expression as nourishment for an ‘applied spirituality’ (Heaton, Schmidt-Wilk & Travis, 2004).<sup>22</sup> It was a unified connection and oneness of feeling and intuition as well as an embodiment.<sup>23</sup> These shared themes and

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etc. However, there seem to be few spiritual names not associated with violence or conflict. This is hard for me to reconcile and I have had a sense that the connection with *Master* has been constrained by minds focusing through a positivist lens and paradigm. Losing my own conditioning in this respect was uncomfortable and involved a complete deconstruction of what I believed truth, unity and reality to be. As a result I seldom experience life as mechanical, outwardly focused, hierarchical or repetitive.

<sup>22</sup> The heart is another term for the Yogic understanding of the spiritual human subtle body energy system of *chakras* (centre of vital energy). In Yoga there are said to be seven main areas of the energetic system concerned with receiving information: i) the base, ii) sacral, iii) solar plexus, iv) heart, v) throat, vi) third eye and vii) crown *chakras* (Feuerstein, 2002).

<sup>23</sup> There is some scientific literature that supports a view of connection beyond embodiment. For example, Russell Targ and Harold Puthoff (1974), at the Sanford Research Institute, took pairs of people who knew each

outcomes required going beyond preconditioned ideas at all levels of analysis. It required further investigation within me, including: space was not empty and there was an unseen connection between us all (Dennis, 2010; Bohm, 1994; Braud, 1992; Robbins, Hong & Jennings, 2012), then what was our responsibility in terms of emotion and thought management.<sup>24</sup> In addition, if the Māori concept of *maanakitanga* (hospitality) was the practical expression of this inner unity and connection (Mead, 1961; Robinson, 2005; Royal, 1998) then where was my own cultural equivalent?<sup>25</sup>

As we recall van Huyssteen's definition of transversal spaces: "perspectives can lie across, extend over, intersect, meet, and convey without becoming fused" (van Huyssteen, 1999, p. 247). As such there emerged a 'transversal space' that held broad convergences from Māori cosmology and Yogic traditions, alongside relevant findings from quantum physics (Thornton, 2004; Salmond, 2012; Bohm, 1994). This convergence contributed one possible lens for entering the participant's experience of unity within diversity.

## 1:6 Thesis Layout

Chapter One outlines this project's epistemological perspective, including a suggested lens for engaging with the rich description by participants.

Chapter Two defines the key terms and includes: i) spirituality, ii) peace, iii) Māori community and iv) Sahaj Marg community. In this thesis, spirituality is understood as distinct

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other and had emotional affinity. The participants were separated and placed in different rooms. One of the pair was exposed to rapid flashing light that temporarily reduced the alpha activity in their brain. The second person was asked to say when they felt that the other person was experiencing light. The accuracy of these verbalised responses were no greater than chance. What was interesting was that at another level there was a 'knowing', as the alpha activity in their brains also reduced at the same time as their partner's. The scientific community criticised the methodology of Targ and Puthoff's (1974) study, and they responded by revising their methodology and retesting. I quote the findings in full:

"Working with six inexperienced volunteer subjects, each of whom attempted to describe six randomly selected distant locations visited by the experimenters. Four of these subjects achieved independent statistical significance in their six trials, evaluated by rank ordering of the six transcripts. The one-tailed probability of finding four significant at  $p$  [less than] .05 out of the six in this experiment is  $p$  [less than]  $8 \times 10^{-5}$ . This corresponds to a  $z$  score of 3.76 standard deviations from chance expectation, one-tailed. When we divide this by the square root of the number of trials (36) we obtain an effect size of 0.63. This effect size is comparable to that of prior SRI studies" (Targ, 1994, p. 271).

<sup>24</sup> Powell (1996) shares this quote from Sahaj Marg master/ teacher Babuji which casts some illumination upon this question: "Thoughts during meditation are like children playing on the road. They are leaving their field waiting for Divinity to come in. One should not worry about the thoughts that rise during meditation or at other times. They rise for the sake of fall. It is not possible to become completely thought-less" (p 145).

<sup>25</sup> The Māori word *Manaakitanga* is the cultural process of hospitality, reciprocity and caring for the other.

from religion (Zabriskie, 2005; Brentlinger, 2000; Carmody, Reed, Kristeller, & Merriam, 2008). Whilst participants shared narratives of transcendent experience or consciousness, often described as presence, essence, heart, *Master*, *atua* (forces that generate and animate particular realms of reality) or *tūpuna* (ancestors), only occasionally was the ‘god within’ referred to. As such, this thesis does not frame participants’ themes according to Western notions of God (Brill, 2012).<sup>26</sup> Instead I have relied upon the Vedic and Māori descriptions of a subtle, formless, omniscient, omnipresent, negated ‘in-determinant reality’, to understand the narratives within the theme of transcendence (Chandra, 1983; Te Haupapa-o-Tane, 1920; Salmond, 2012).<sup>27</sup> I have simultaneously adopted the helpful Māori understanding of the *atua* or gods as “ancestral forces that generate and animate particular realms of reality” (Salmond, 2012, p. 136). This topic was not viewed through the lens of the religious mystic and theological or religious discipline; as this seemed unsuitable to the heterogeneity of the participant group. Most participants were unaffiliated with any religious organization, and surprisingly the Sahaj Marg participants did not consider themselves in a religion, although they had standardised spiritual techniques.<sup>28</sup> Whilst there were some indications of Sahaj Marg practitioners approaching the practice like a religion,<sup>29</sup> their teacher (master/ *guru*) was encouraging less dependence on the outer form of the *guru* and other spiritual trainers (called prefects). Practitioners were being encouraged to deepen their own personal awareness of *Master* and develop presence.

Whilst Māori and Sahaj Marg participants in this inquiry did not demonstrate a rigid system of beliefs, such a system was at times evident in the wider Sahaj Marg community of practitioners.

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<sup>26</sup> The Yogic definition of god differs substantially from Western discourse, although perhaps not in terms of an individual’s experience. From the Yogic perspective god is not an outward supernatural power, instead it is an internal condition that one becomes more aware of. As Sri Ram Chandra of Shahajanpur (Babuji) replied, when asked in the book *Face to Face: who is God?* “God is inside everything, but the real question is, are you inside god?” When asked how god could be defined he replied, “If all the adjectives in the world are withdrawn whatever left is god” (Prasad, 1984, p. 1). The founder of modern science, Sir Isaac Newton, in *Principia Mathematica 1687* states: “the most beautiful system of the sun, planets, and comets could only proceed from the counsel and dominion of an intelligent and powerful being... This being governs all things, not as the soul of the world, but as Lord over all... he is eternal and infinite, omnipotent and omniscient... He governs all things and knows all things that are or can be... Why there is one body in our system qualified to give light and heat to all the rest, I know no reason but because the author of the system thought it convenient” (Arntz, 2005, p. 18).

<sup>27</sup> A ‘negated in determinant reality’ is an esoteric and subtle description for a consciousness, which is beyond outer forms referring to the creative source of those forms.

<sup>28</sup> Whilst the reader might reasonably consider that Sahaj Marg represented a religious group, it was not the view of the participants themselves. In accordance with this inquiry’s methodology, I accept the participants’

Chapter Three examines the shared knowledge between the two groups and convergences elaborated upon enabling a richer engagement with the participants' material. These include: i) life as an interconnected and ongoing process of moving energy, ii) the human body is comprised of matter and spirit, iii) methods exist that realize the inner consciousness of unity, iv) wellbeing begins at the subtle level of existence, and v) the existence of universal and individual ethical laws for human beings (Robinson, 2005; Feuerstein, 2002; Burke & Marconett, 2008).

Chapter Four describes the methodology and research design in depth. However, as I reflected upon the project it seemed to me that the accepted term of methodology was not the correct way to describe the process of this project (Smith, 2012). I found myself at the end of this academic project deeply uncomfortable with the academic conventions that I had automatically fallen back into during the writing. As I was welcomed onto the *waka* (physical canoe) with the women that I have listened to, as we paddled in unison back and forth on the Otago harbour my heart felt peaceful. I recognised later that I feel deeply uncomfortable with any language that places into the mind the idea of separated other. The Western research paradigm is imbued with the politics of domination of the other (Smith, 2012; Jahnke & Gillies, 2012) and this perspective is disrespectful towards the spiritual heart and humanity of us all (Ai, 2002; Bleicher, 2006). Even the idea that there was a researcher and a researched seems odd and disrespectful. I am mindful that the doctoral thesis suggests the idea of expert, yet in

construction of their experience. However, I note that some organisational practices appeared religious to my Western mind. This was more apparent if viewed through the commonly defined lens of religion as forms of practice, personal beliefs or values, a set of strongly-held beliefs, values, and attitudes that somebody lives by, and an institutionalized or personal system of beliefs and practices relating to the divine (Zabriskie, 2005). While I was aware of this apparent dichotomy, it was not the purpose of this thesis to investigate this question. According to participants, the practice or *sadhana* was instrumental in deconstructing such values, attitudes and automatic belief systems.<sup>29</sup> Some used the form 'reverent master' to address their teacher. There may be many reasons for using this terminology. I would suggest, within a lens of spiritual brother-sisterhood as defined by the participants that everyone is reverent (recognising the divine within all human beings) or none (thereby reducing old paradigm notions of power, control and religious hierarchy).

this context, it seems nonsensical as it is the phenomenon itself that is the expert (Arntz, Chasse & Vincente, 2005). Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2012):

What researchers call methodology, for example, Māori researchers in New Zealand call Kaupapa Māori research or Māori-centred research. This form of naming is about bringing to the centre and privileging indigenous values, attitudes and practices rather than

disguising them within Westernised labels such as ‘collaborative research’ (p 219).

As a Pākehā it is not appropriate for me to carry out Kaupapa Māori research (Smith, 2012), however it was suggested that I could modestly offer this as Māori -centred research. In this I am both here and not here, it is a space beyond insider and outsider which perhaps comes from the perspective of ‘putting the first last’ (Chambers, 1997). The grounded theoretical commitment to reflexivity was useful in developing a natural responsiveness towards prioritising indigenous values, alongside external relationships (Smith, 2012; Tolich, 2001). To begin, I found the unexpected guidance of those that had knowledge unsettling. Participants or elders came alongside naturally to give advice throughout the process, and sometimes this was about aspects personal to myself. For example: I sat silently with my Māori supervisor as she read this study prior to thesis submission. We say little, but it is as if I am reading through her eyes and I can see where my assumptions reflect a Western mind and corrections are to be made:

Consent is not so much given for a project or specific set of questions, but for a person, for their credibility. Consent indicates trust and the assumption is that the trust will not only be reciprocated but constantly negotiated - a dynamic relationship rather than a static decision. Similarly, indigenous elders can do wonderful things with an interview. They tell stories, tease, question, think, observe, tell riddles, test and give trick answers. Conversely, they can also expect that an indigenous researcher will do the same back to them (Smith, 2012, p 229).

This type of research and engagement does not have an end despite the academic conventions of research. Within Māori-centred research the relational values and process of connection once begun does not end.

Chapter Five continues with preliminary data analysis and convergence of themes: i) connectedness, ii) existential inner reality, iii) transcendence, iv) *mauri* (energy) and v) *aroha* (love).

Chapter Six examines the ideas about relational spirituality arising from the data analysis: i) brother-sisterhood, ii) self as *whakapapa* (genealogy), iii) *whakapapa* and awareness, iv) *Io* (supreme being), *Ishwara* (supreme being), *Master* (supreme being), v) *tūpuna* (ancestors), and vi) heart-to-heart. For some Sahaj Marg practitioners there appeared to be some confusion and interchangeability across terms. For the purpose of this data analysis I have accepted the person of the master as teacher (*guru*) concerned with ‘applied

spirituality’ and the inner presence of the *Master* as an immersion with universal consciousness and wellspring of love or ‘pure spirituality’ (Heaton et al., 2004).<sup>29</sup> However, it was an academic construct, as the physical master in Yogic terms, is viewed as the conduit of the *Master* and as such inseparable (Rajagopalachari, 1994; Ram Chandra, 1991b).

The use of the terminology of heart by participants did not refer to the physical heart (see Glossary of terms). It referred to the energetic aspect of the human being experienced metaphysically and relationally by sensitive participants (Feuerstein, 2002). The spiritual heart as experienced by participants was a natural medium of communion, connectivity and knowledge. It was described as a natural engagement with life and awareness. Such knowledge was beyond any sensory or traditional spiritual experience or information. Any spiritual experience (hearing voices, visions etc.) was actively discouraged by the Sahaj Marg teacher and not viewed as the spiritual heart.

Chapter Seven examines biological spirituality according to the relevant scientific literature: i) meditation, ii) the relational brain, iii) the group brain, iv) interpersonal neurobiology, v) compassion and volunteers, vi) potential for peace builders, vii) awakening and awareness. Marchand’s (2014) meta-analysis examined the effect of mindfulness meditation on the structure of the human brain.<sup>30</sup> He concluded that this form of meditation affected the structure of the medial cortex, associated default mode network and the basal ganglia (Marchand, 2014, p. 471). Whilst authors Fox, Nijebuer, Dixon, Floman, Ellamil, Rumak, Sedlmeier & Christoff (2014) reviewed 123 brain morphology differences from 21 neuroimaging studies, with three hundred participants. They found eight functional capabilities consistently altered in meditators: i) meta-awareness, ii) exteroceptive and interoceptive body awareness, iii) memory consolidation and reconsolidation, iv) self and emotion regulation, and v) inner neurological communication (p 48).<sup>31</sup> Perhaps, in this context the themes from my study’s data analysis, may be understood as arising from deep

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<sup>29</sup> However, I acknowledge that for readers stable in unitary consciousness, any definition based upon separation may be illusory and unsatisfactory. For many participants there was no perceived difference between the physical master who embodied and transmitted energy from the *Master* and the transcendental source or field: *Master*. It is also important to recall that in Yogic literature love refers to a forceless force or subtle energy rather than ties of affection or liking. Māori participants also viewed the *tūpuna* and *atua* as present and real.

<sup>30</sup> A meta-analysis on mindfulness meditation cited studies which identify brain regions subject to mindfulness related changes These included: anterior cingulate cortex; orbitofrontal cortex; inferior temporal gyrus; insula; lingual gyrus; cuneus; sensorimotor cortex; fusiform gyrus; corpus callosum; posterior cingulate cortex; cerebellum; hippocampus; amygdala; putamen; caudate; and thalamus. (Marchand, 2014).

<sup>31</sup> This is an excellent article for those who wish to view brain images and read a very detailed summary of the data and field at this stage. Category 8 described more precisely in the original text as the brain processes of intra- and inter-hemispheric communication.

neurological underpinnings,<sup>32</sup> and therefore not easily appreciated from a more distanced, objective cast of mind.

Chapter Eight examines the participants view on spirituality by analysing the data through the lens of character development. The areas included: i) spiritual values, ii) the whole is the concern of the parts, iii) suffering, iv) love, v) unity, vi) internal presence, and vii) unbounded choice. In the clinical literature mindfulness developed through meditation was associated with reduced anger, anxiety, depression and worry (Grossman, Niemann, Schmidt, & Walach, 2004). Meditation practices affected different areas of the brain neurological structures according to the object of focus (Shear & Travis, 2012; Ji-Wong Kim et al., 2009; Marchand, 2014)<sup>33</sup> however in general, the literature supported changes in compassionate relating which were implicated in a range of pro-social behavioural outcomes (Pruitt & McCollum, 2010; Zac & Baraza, 2013). These included: i) compassion, ii) awareness, iii) tolerance and acceptance, iv) connection with others, and v) dis-identification from thoughts and emotions (Greeson, 2009; Hofman, Grossman & Hinton, 2011; Luders, Toga, Lepore, & Gaser, 2011). Mindfulness may develop a form of contemplative lifestyle that has the capability to orientate our attention, awareness and acceptance throughout the activities of each day (Williams & Kabat-Zinn, 2013; Carmody & Baer, 2008; Sedlmeier, Eberth, Schwarz, Zimmermann, Haerig, Jaeger, & Kunz, 2012).<sup>34</sup> Mindfulness was defined as a “present, close repetitive observation of the object”. (Williams & Kabat-Zinn, 2013, p. 20). For Sahaj Marg participants the object was the *Master*, whilst for Māori participants it was the *tūpuna* (ancestors) and *atua* (ancestral forces that generate and animate particular realms of reality).

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<sup>32</sup> It is outside of the scope of this study to examine this scholarship in any depth. However, I note that it is an area for future investigation.

<sup>33</sup> For example, compassion meditation done in the Tibetan tradition by expert practitioners (over 10,000 hours) shows activation of the brain in the motor region. Author’s Back, Bauer-Wu, Rushton & Halifax, (2009) wondered whether compassion meditation done in this way created a state of readiness to act. They demonstrated neural integration, as evidenced by high-amplitude gamma-band oscillation in experienced meditation practitioners, suggestive of beneficial effects of contemplative practice on cognitive and affective functioning (Back et al., 2009). Maharshi Patanjali’s seminal work on Yoga identifies different objects of focus by which the disturbances of the mind may be stilled: i) concentration on a single truth, ii) cultivation of friendliness with the happy, compassion for the unhappy, delight in the virtuous and indifference towards the wicked, iii) expulsion and retention of breath, iv) fixing the mind on an inner light which is beyond sorrow, or v) fixing the mind on an illumined soul that is free from passion, or vi) on a dream experience about a holy personality or on any divine form or symbol that one views as good (Prasada, 2012, p. 32-39). These forms of meditation are said to lead to better mental health as one is able to adjust to the outer environment in such a way as to induce a state of *santosha* (contentment) and awareness.

<sup>34</sup> In the Buddhist work *Pāli Nikāyas*, mindfulness is described: “And what, monks, is right mindfulness? Here, a monk dwells contemplating the body in the body, ardent, clearly comprehending, mindful, having removed covetousness and displeasure in regard to the world. He dwells contemplating feelings in feelings, ...contemplating

Chapter Nine presents the data analysed through the lens of inner essence, presence and spirituality. Specific areas: i) natural connection, ii) natural connection between self and each other, iii) inner essence communion and awareness, iv) outer expression of inner awareness, v) gratitude, service, humility, friendliness and discipline, vi) spirituality as a progression of consciousness and vii) the barriers. Both groups cultivated habits of mind and inner relationship through practices such as meditation, awareness of *Master* or *atua* (forces that generate and animate particular realms of reality) or *tūpuna* (ancestors), alongside constant remembrance of the inner connection, and *karakia* (prayer) (Rajagopalachari, 1999; Marsden, 2003). Those who participated in this research, whilst regular in their practice of awareness, also added the inner dimensions of an attitude of constant remembrance towards the *tūpuna* (ancestors) or inner *Master* and presence of devotion (*bhakti*) and *aroha* (love). Whilst a number of terms were used interchangeably by Māori participants, it seems that *tūpuna* referred to family members who were no longer living in the material realm, as well as going back to the *atua* as the wellspring or source of love. This was the primary difference between the two participant groups. *Tūpuna* are tangible and *accessible* ancestors, who are in active relationship with people as shown by signs, symbols, presence and remembrance. The following participant quote is illustrative:

Māori participant: And we've got wedding photos where there is tūpuna in them in the back, right at the back. Researcher: Captured on film?

Māori participant: Yep, yep.

Researcher: That is powerful isn't it?

Māori participant: Yep.

I now draw generally and briefly from Buddhist scholarship in order to give a conceptual definition of presence. The Buddhist *dhamma* of mindfulness describes the process of presence.<sup>36</sup> According to Buddhist texts mindfulness comes from the Sanskrit word *sati* which has a range of meanings.<sup>37</sup> The word *sati* is derived from the Sanskrit language word *smrt*

mind in mind...contemplating phenomena in phenomena, ardent, clearly comprehending, mindful, having removed covetousness and displeasure regarding the world. This is called right mindfulness." (Williams & KabatZinn, 2013, p. 20).

<sup>36</sup> Sanskrit word: *dharma*.

<sup>37</sup> A full discussion of this is contained in the first chapter of Mark Williams and Jon Kabat-Zinn's book entitled: *Mindfulness: Diverse perspectives on its meaning, origins and applications*. The first chapter acknowledges the introduction of mindfulness practices into the arena of stress management and the Western health care

system since 1979. However, it argues the need to look at the original context in order to ensure that the correct essence

meaning “remembrance, reminiscence, thinking of or calling upon, calling to mind...memory” (Williams & Kabat-Zinn, 2013, p. 22). It was extended to *sati upaṭṭāna*, described by Williams and Kabat-Zinn as:

“Here, *sati* is equated with *upaṭṭāna* not in the sense that the meditator ‘establishes’ mindfulness but in the sense that the mindfulness is itself an act of establishing presence. Mindfulness establishes the presence of the object and thereby makes it available to scrutiny and discernment” (ibid., p 25).

The presence of the *Master* was used by many Sahaj Marg participants to define an inner state of consciousness, unity or awareness. It seems that the Sanskrit word *manas* translates as heart or mind. Interestingly the Māori word *mana* is: “...hard to define exactly, but it is, in its original meaning, mind, intelligence. It was afterwards, in India, used as the subtle force of the creative power of Brahma, thence it dropped down to the meaning of magic.

The Māoris have kept its real sense better” (Didsbury 1885 in Tregear 1984, p. 17). Throughout this thesis I have understood the Māori word *mana* (power) in the context of participants’ words as an embodied and assured presence stemming from *mana atua* (sacred spiritual power from the *atua*) (Murton, 2012).

Chapter Ten concludes this thesis by discussing the interrelationships between the participants, themes, their spiritual practice and peace. Specifically the common outcomes of spiritual practice included: compassion, tolerance and acceptance, and connection with others. By nature, these themes are relational and lead to the next transversal space connecting spirituality with conflict transformation. At a micro level the literature indicated that meditation was associated with better relationships, as well as greater meaning and peace in one’s life (Carmody et al., 2008; Burpee & Langer, 2005; Carson, Carson, Gil, & Baucom, 2004; Jones, Welton, Oliver, & Thoburn, 2011). I wondered what the collective effect of spiritual practice might be and whether there was any application in the conflict transformation literature. I found international scholarship, which examined the positive role of contact or physical proximity between groups, gave little attention to the deeper inner relational dynamics of awareness and connection (Pettigrew, Tropp, Wagner, & Christ, 2011; Allport, 1954; Ray, 2009).<sup>38</sup> The

and understandings are conveyed. To do so the authors consult the original texts attributed to Buddha and other noted commentators and translators. It makes for very useful reading.

<sup>38</sup>Within conflict transformation, contact theory suggests that positive physical contact reduces racial and outgroup intolerance and prejudice (Allport, 1954). A recent review and meta-analysis of 515 eligible contact studies concluded that contact typically reduced tension universally for all groups regardless of gender, health, culture, race or age (Pettigrew et al., 2011). Additionally vicarious positive contact through the mass media was useful in transforming conflict. Attitudinal gains transferred from the immediate contact members to others in the out-group. The original aspects of optimal contact: i) equal status, ii) common goals, iii) no intergroup competitions, and iv)

applied work of Ghais stepped into the gap and provided useful illumination. Ghais (2005), an experienced facilitator in areas of extreme conflict, argued that five capacities were necessary for ‘extreme facilitation’ including: i) physical, ii) emotional, iii) intellectual, iv) intuitive and v) spiritual capacities. The spiritual capacity was seen as useful as it allowed the human beings involved in entrenched conflicts to: i) transcend narrow self-interest, ii) extend compassion, iii) allow people to rise above base instincts, iv) maintain hope, v) feel gratitude, and vi) be truthful.

For Ghais spiritual capacity was the most difficult of the five capacities, yet had the capacity: “to help overcome the most deep-rooted conflicts” (p 6). Ghais reassured her readers by stating that a spiritual capacity: “... does not require the facilitator to bring in either religion or ‘new age’ concepts. Rather it entails establishing the conditions in comfortable and almost invisible ways that draw out the best side of human nature” (Ghais, 2005, p. 6).

Chapter Ten also presents this research project’s conclusions. I contend that establishing the various conditions that bring out the best side of human nature may involve an invisible spiritual process mediated by a human being/s whose physiological system/s is/are in a state of calm awareness and established presence. Again, a ‘transversal space’ of experimental interpersonal neurobiology shows that this is possible, invisible and natural. According to the ‘transversal space’ of indigenous knowledge and interpersonal neurobiology the concept of presence is ‘viral’ in a metaphorical sense (McCraty, Barrios-Chaplin, & Rozman, 1998; Buchanan, Baley, Stansfield, & Preston, 2012; Siegal, 2001). The experimental literature indicates that mere ‘alongside-ness’ with human beings, who are inwardly stable, creates peace or communication without the requirement of friendship or outer forms of sociality (McCraty et al., 1998; Orme-Johnson, Alexander, Davies, Chandler & Larimore, 1988; Targ & Puthoff, 2005). In this, we see the worlds of inner and outer peace, and micro and macro blurring into a field of possibility.

Spiritual traditions call the influence of this relational congruence an outcome of presence (Williams & Kabat-Zinn, 2013; Chandra, 2001). This influence is purposeful and

support of the authorities, were “facilitative but not necessary for gains” (p 271). The meta-analysis noted additional gains alongside reduced prejudice, including: i) reduced anxiety, ii) reduced individual threat, collective threat and in group identification together with enhanced empathy, iii) perspective taking, iv) out-group knowledge, v) intergroup trust, vi) forgiveness, vii) job attainment and satisfaction, and viii) perceptions of outgroup variability (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2011). Not all inter-group contact reduced prejudice and in situations where there were danger, threat and a lack of choice, contact grew prejudice (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2011). Increased contact was not mere proximity and the establishment of intergroup friendship was important (Allport, 1954; Pettigrew et al., 2011). Peacekeepers describe a deep bond that develops as ‘band of brothers’ amongst soldiers and is attributed in part to the close living space (Ray, 2009). It seems that physical proximity has a role to play in certain situations; however new understanding from spirituality and cognitive neuroscience of presence and consciousness supports an understanding of connection beyond material boundaries (Davis, 2006; Dennis, 2010). It is possible that these transversal realities support and deepen our understanding of the empirical work on contact.

practical according to Sahaj Marg Master, Sri Babuji. He describes that the highest service a human being can offer to the ‘Other’ is to become someone whose mere presence creates an unbounded peace that permeates everywhere; throughout the atmosphere and throughout human interactions (Ram Chandra, 1991c).<sup>35</sup> This suggests a definition of presence that includes yet goes beyond the usual meanings of: i) the state of being present, ii) the immediate proximity of someone or something, and iii) a dignified manner or conduct (Schmid-Wilk, 2000). Since the 1600s, the word has also meant ‘otherworldly’ as in a spiritual or divine presence.<sup>36</sup> Schmid-Wilk (2000) reminds that presence is not merely an altered, transcending state of consciousness but a way of being, as being in encounter (p 63). Whilst Native American folk healer, White Bear, states that neither the written word nor speech carries full presence and suggests that human beings need to get back to hearing each other without talking (Robbins et al., 2012). The nature of speech and words themselves may be subtly alienating in that they distance the speaker from the object (Robbins et al., 2012). Like Derrida, White Bear cautions that words may do violence when imposed upon the experience of spiritual awareness (Derrida, 1997). They suggest that experience of spiritual conditions are subtle and not easily expressed:

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<sup>35</sup> Sahaj Marg spiritual teacher, Babuji, writes: “World peace is the crying need of the day and those at the top are trying hard to bring it about. But the means adopted for the purpose do not so far seem to promise fruitful results. The efforts for the establishment of world peace do not seem to be very effective only for the reason that they are merely external, touching only the fringes of the problem. As a matter of fact world peace can never be possible unless we take into account the inner state of the individual mind. World peace is directly related with individual peace, for which the individual mind is to be brought up to the required level. If the individual mind is brought to a state of rest and peace, everything in the world will then appear to have the same colour. It is, therefore, essential to find out means for developing within each individual a state of peace and contentment. Thus, all that we have to do for the attainment of world peace is to mold the mental tendencies of the people individually. That means proper regulation of the mind so as to introduce into it a state of moderation. That is the only way for bringing peace into the world. It is therefore essential for all of us to develop peace of mind within our individual self. But that being exclusively the scope of spirituality, one must necessarily resort to spiritual means for the purpose” (Ram Chandra, 1991c, p. 87).

<sup>36</sup> <http://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/presence>

He said words and concepts split life into separate segments that have no reality in themselves. He said use of words may preclude or even exacerbate rather than heal, and for White Bear healing is what his life is about. White Bear stressed a nondualistic direct perception of ultimate reality, whereas words require a separation between the speaker and the experience that keeps one a step away from the pure healing energy of ‘momentization’ (Robbins et al. 2012, p. 102).

This perspective concurs with a way of communication valued by participants in both groups. The Māori participants described this practice and I observed it between and with Sahaj Marg practitioners. One elderly participant said: “Make sure you tell them that the true language of Sahaj Marg is silence” (Indian Sahaj Marg male participant, 2013) whilst another participant: “Sister, see if you can become so silent on the inside that you can hear a pin drop” (Malaysian, Sahaj Marg female participant, 2014). Spiritual awareness or knowledge of the real as described by practitioners was a state of unity, which was not truly accessible to external grounded theoretical methods. Perhaps a glimpsed reality may be possible in the ‘transversal spaces’ created by linking brother-sisterhood to the fields of quantum physics and interpersonal neurobiology as we go beyond that inaccessibility.

This leads into the next ‘transversal space’ or into the sound of silence. Without the indigenous knowledge giving authenticity to the multi-dimensionality of the human being and the seen and unseen realms, it would have been difficult to open deeply into this aspect of the analysis (Mark & Lyons, 2010). Indeed, it is possible that participants would have been less open in their willingness to share, sense, contemplate and translate this knowledge. For most participants, their way of being was so natural that answers came after time in silent communion. The willingness to sit quietly alongside the other in silence was an important inner aspect during interviewing. There was a subtle atmosphere of presence and essence as the narratives were shared. Literature on compassionate silence within the patient-clinician encounter in the health sciences assists in describing the dynamics of such a silence, as not awkward, or demanding but rather full of presence, connection and compassion (Back et al., 2009).

The concept of mere ‘alongside-ness’ with human beings who are inwardly stable, refers to those who are expert practitioners of meditation and mindfulness. This can come from a range of secular and non-secular practices that develop the individual consciousness to

an inner state of dis-identification alongside coherence.<sup>37</sup> That is, individuals no longer attached internally to a constructed identity of themselves according to gender, class, culture, religion or preconditioned thought (Vivekânanda, 1899). It is likely that human beings in such a state are more likely to be able to be tolerant, non-prejudiced and open towards others. Perhaps this is a deconstruction beyond identity and in tune with a Derridian essence. According to Yogic literature, it also alludes to practitioners' who have stilled the habitual fluctuations of the mind and have developed a consciousness that is capable of impartially observing the inner processes of reaction, cause and effect (Prasada, 1912).

The writing of the chapters throughout this thesis required a continued deconstruction of my own cultural and academic norms, including doubts about intuitive knowledge. According to Rantanen and Kahila (2009) who explored a comprehensive understanding of local knowledge in the sphere of urban planning approaches: "...tacit knowledge is deeply personal and intuitional knowledge that is hard or impossible to articulate" (p 1986). It seemed it might be difficult for participants to verbalise their spiritual and often intuitive knowing. However, this was not apparent as many narratives gave examples of glimpses of knowing and examples of unexpected happenings in relation to the *Master*. These glimpses were similar to the experiences of others. Dorfler and Ackerman (2012), propose two distinct kinds of intuitive judgment and intuitive insight, assisting in understanding the way in which the experience of spirituality has an intuitive flavour. In their review of management, philosophic, and psychological literature they identified intuition as useful in decision-taking and creative problem solving. It had six characteristics:

Intuiting is rapid (often labelled instantaneous), spontaneous (does not require effort and cannot be deliberately controlled) and alogical (meaning that it does not necessarily contradict the rules of logic but does not follow them either). The outcome of the intuitive process is tacit (in that the intuitives cannot give account of how they arrived at the results), holistic (also often called gestalt, as it is concerned with the totality of a situation rather than parts of it), and the intuitor feels confident about their intuition (with no apparent reason in terms of evidence) (Dorfler & Ackerman, 2012, p. 547).

They further identified the difference between expert intuition and novice intuition whereby the expert intuition was often accurate and, in the field of management, effective.

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<sup>37</sup> It is useful to remember that not all human beings require contemplative practices to develop mindfulness and sensitivity. Some are naturally attuned to this way and literature shows that they are less stressed, anxious, depressed, and more joyful, inspired, grateful, hopeful, content, vital, and satisfied with life (Baer, Smith, Hopkins, Krietemeyer, & Toney, 2006; Brown & Ryan, 2003; Cardaciotto, Chadwick, Hember, Mead, Lilley, & Dagnan, 2008; Walach, Buchfield, Buttenmuller, Kleinknecht, & Schmidt, 2006).

Expert intuition was an efficient and desirable trait within management. Study participants from both groups in this thesis shared one characteristic; their expertise in the field of inner intuitive contemplation. As one Māori participant shared,

Māori participant: Fair enough, we do scare some people from other iwi. The only other people that I've come across who just take the piss (*tease*) and are really cool are Tuhoi wahine (*women*). They are very, very, very connected. Oh God yes. You'll be sitting there or lying (*down*) at the marae (*meeting house*) on the mattresses, just thinking about something and one of them would come and slap me with her jangle and say, "Cut it out" (*stop*). I'm like, "What?" And she says, 'Cut it out. You know what I'm talking about. I'll give you the jangle if you keep it up.'

Researcher: So they know what you have been sending out? Māori participant: Yep or what I'm taking from what is going on in the room.

Many participants described experiences of intuitive awareness that were present in childhood and became enhanced as their lives progressed although some described times of self-doubt and overt disparagement by others. Accordingly, their narratives gain authenticity through a form of expert knowing. When we consider the nature of 'transversal spaces', whereby knowledge structures are far more holistic, exploratory and less clearly articulated it seems intuition is particularly apt. Although, grounded theory recognises the intrinsic authenticity of each participant's knowledge of his or her own reality.

I considered it an example of Ghandian and Derridian peace building, as Māori and Indian participants shared valued cultural information (Te Haupapa-o-Tane, 1920). In doing so, it confronted what social historian Brendon Hokowhitu (2014) argued as notions of a home in thought and nationalism; placed within a dominant Aotearoa New Zealand Pākehā discourse, inhospitable to Māori knowledge:

This response, thus, speaks to the spectre of the radical metaphysical Other that haunts the postcolonial New Zealand and the tumorous selfhatred the majority of New Zealanders emanate via a dominant discourse that, at almost every turn, attempts to attack authentic alterity including the epistemological diversity of its very own indigenous culture (chapter in Hemmingsen & Shaw, 2014, p. 11).

### **1:7 Limitations**

An iterative constructivist grounded theoretical process, nested within a transdisciplinary Māori based research perspective was not simple. To begin, I had to make sense of the grounded theory debates and revisions as they ranged from challenging the view of qualitative research as unsystematic or as a precursor to more robust quantitative study.

I accept that I may be criticised for not applying the commonly used qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS). The use of the software may increase transparency and a deepening of the iterative process (Bringer, Johnston, & Brackenbridge, 2006). Whilst I used CAQDAS initially and planned to use it for all analysis, I did not find that it deepened my iterative engagement with the research material. I engaged more fully with the material via memos and the capturing of ideas, connections and insight in a daily moment-by-moment process (Charmaz, 2000; 2006). I found that difficulties with the technology distracted me from the content and intuitive meaning of the data, particularly whilst I was in India with daily electricity outages and unpredictable damaging electricity surges. When the temperatures soured into a physically debilitating 40 degrees Celsius, I found myself using my computer battery webcam to record my memos, thoughts and observations.

I recognise that I cannot claim to have become an expert in such a diversity of perspectives, particularly in the short time frame of the academic doctorate. Instead, I have utilised various strategies within the methodology. These strategies have brought both the methodology and the data analysis to the gaze of those who were experts in their specific disciplines, including the participants.

I had come from a quantitative background so the whole process of qualitative research was a little unsettling. However, grounded theory is particularly useful when a topic is relatively unexamined and has the delicacy and sophistication to encourage the development of a shared inner lens or meaning making. I was aware that there was a methodological risk that the study could become merely descriptive and not generate theory (Charmaz, 2006). I have therefore followed guidelines and recommendations for effective qualitative research and outlined in a detailed manner the methodological processes of data collection, data analysis and the influence of the researcher (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007; Charmaz, 2006; Hutchison, Johnson, & Breckon, 2011). A frequent mistake by grounded theory researchers involves not deepening the thematic analysis after the initial investigation of themes (Charmaz, 2006). I give rich qualitative description along with the deepening of

themes and connections that occurred when viewing the data through disparate lenses. Several models emerged from this approach.

One model identified the aspects of deconstruction in an individual developing an expanded consciousness and connected concern for others. As Sahaj Marg master Parthasarathi Rajagopalachari shares:

One thing I would like to add – that although this would appear to be an individual pursuit, there is a larger context to it. We are always talking of society, social change, social transformation, bringing in a new order of existence. And it is not enough if there is one person practicing yoga and trying to climb up the mountain of spirituality and reach the top. It is a sad thing that in the past this has been so in all countries, in all religions, whether it was the Sufis who evolved out of Islam, or the mystics of Christianity coming out of the Christian church, or the rishis of India from their own Hindu background. They pursued an individual path for their own individual transformation, individual liberation, individual spiritual goals, and by and large they left the masses to their own fate, to their own destiny  
(Rajagopalachari, 2013, p. 47).

The second model identified the development of an awareness towards the *Master*, *atua* (forces that generate and animate particular realms of reality) and *tūpuna* (ancestors) leading to interconnected values and behaviours conducive of peace. I modestly conclude that it is the process of presence and the embodiment of spiritual values that lead to the neurobiological changes shown in those that meditate. I suggest that such an attunement connects the individual consciousness to a field of intelligent disembodied human consciousness, which may be naturally compatible with outcomes that are collectively coherent with *ahimsa* (non-injury).

## **1:8 Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have described the personal and academic development of a convergent lens with which to engage with the participants, and their experience of an embodied spirituality and peace, as represented in this thesis.

The following chapter examines the key terms and definitions. I considered presenting a historic and linear literature review however, the voices of the participants were novel and

authorative and therefore any relevant literature weaves alongside their experience, throughout the whole thesis.

The chapters in this thesis represent a view from the inside of spirituality and its felt relevance to peace as that appeared to my participants. They speak from two different contexts and the themes and narratives are woven together according to the meaning making with participants.

## **Chapter Two: Key Terms and Definitions**

### **2:1 Summary**

This chapter defines and discusses the key terms that weave throughout this thesis including: i) spirituality, ii) peace, iii) connectedness, iv) Māori community, and v) Sahaj Marg community. It provides the basis for understanding the later narratives from Sahaj Marg and Māori participants.

### **2:2 Spirituality**

Spirituality has been a difficult concept for academics to define and quantify. De Jager Meezenbroek, Garssen, van den Berg, van Dierendonck, Visser, & Schaufeli, (2012) reviewed various spirituality questionnaires, as tools for measuring spirituality as a universal human experience. They found that current questionnaires were inadequate for identifying a comprehensive understanding of the role of spirituality as a universal human experience.

Particularly as questions tended to be about specific belief systems or religiosity: “In view of this, we have defined spirituality as one’s striving for and experience of connection with oneself, connectedness with others and nature and connectedness with the transcendent” (de Jager Meezenbroek et al., 2012, p. 338).

This definition converges with Yogic philosophy and one Māori view of spirituality believed to be a complex network of interrelationships and connections that open up an

understanding of the deepest aspects of human reflection and our fundamental connectedness to one another. It is almost too confining to call such an orientation a religion or, as Fiona Wright (2007) discusses in her article on *Law, Religion and Tikanga Māori*:

Tikanga Māori blends an underlying system of values, some spiritually based, with accepted customs and protocols that are based on those values. It also commonly involves practices such as karakia, which are overtly spiritual in nature. Therefore, it is not unreasonable to consider tikanga from a law and religion perspective. Although aboriginal religions can be religions for the purposes of the law, this article does not claim that tikanga Māori is a religion. It is unlikely that those who practice tikanga would see it as such (p 266).

Within clinical practice, religion was as an *organised* system of beliefs, rituals, behaviours, and social functions. It is usually shared by people in an institutionalised setting involving a denominational identity (Zabriskie, 2005; Tanyi, 2002). Spirituality, on the other hand, has been understood to encompass the beliefs or practices of the individual human being including: making meaning of life events, meditation, mindfulness, the use of intuition, empathy and social relationship, and connecting with clients/ patients (Zabriskie, 2005; Sessanna, Finnell, & Jezewski, 2007). A religion may or may not believe in 'God' but all tend to have a prophet or teacher and are often concerned with consciousness.<sup>38</sup> Many of the prophets or teachers view themselves as ordinary human beings despite the projections from some of their followers. Additionally, within the applied research literature, there is a theme emerging to support the view of religion and spirituality as constructs that may or may not overlap (Ai, 2002; Wilber, 2000; Chui, Emblem, van Hofwegon, Sawatzky, & Meyerhoff, 2004; Gillett, 1998).

Indian Yogic philosopher Dr. K. C. Varadachari offers the concept of 'presence' as a source of distinction: "Spirituality is not like religion just a form of worship or technique of observances; it is a living in the awareness of God and in His essence." (Ram Chandra, 1989, p. 188). Neuroscientists Gillett and Joshua (unpublished, undated) suggest an understanding of spirituality:

A connective paradigm whereby we consider the universe as existing by and through the presence of a fully conscious, cognising, loving

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<sup>38</sup> The Christians have the teachings of Jesus Christ; the Buddhists have the teachings of Siddharta Gautama; the Islamists have the teachings of Prophet Mohammed; the Hindus have the teachings of Ramakrishna Paramahansa; and Zoroastrians have the teachings of Prophet Zoroaster. None of these enlightened human beings followed a religion rather they raised their own consciousness to a constant level of communion with the creative source of life.

and living being. It is a set of holons....it opens the way for a God Conscious Loving Family through personal interactions between each member and the first person who is The Creator of All and to whom we may refer as the first Father and Mother of all creatures, Father-Mother-Love (p 2).<sup>39</sup>

This view finds some support within Indian philosophy, as researcher Prajnanada (1971) states:

The God of Vedanta is not a personal Being dwelling in Heaven, outside the Universe, but He is all-pervading, immanent and resident in nature. His Will is the supreme power in the universe and is one with the eternal energy. When this Energy, through the process of evolution, manifests itself as the various forms of the external and internal world, Vedanta philosophy says, these are like so many expressions of that one and all pervading will. And the laws of nature are nothing but the modes by which that almighty Will or eternal Energy operates in this universe (p 342).

Yogic researcher Kapila neither posed nor deposed a God, instead saying that God was unprovable (Bahadur, 1978). His modern counterpart, physicist Sean Carroll (2012), suggests that in relation to the notions of a supernatural agent: “When you study the workings of the natural world for a living, you tend to be impressed by how well the universe gets along all by itself, without any supernatural assistance” (p 22).

Spirituality within this thesis is therefore not understood as a religion but rather a universal human capacity (simultaneously indicating the within and the in-between-ness of human experience). It was this view and definition of spirituality that was the most congruent with the narratives of participants and the underlying ontological belief systems of Yoga and Māori. Yogic Sāṅkhya philosophy and Māori have the similar view that all of life is interconnected through all realms, be that physical, psychological, relational, or spiritual (Bahadur, 1978; Robinson, 2005; Ruwhiu & Cone, 2010). Indeed each life form is a complex interweaving of such dimensions (Feuerstein, 2002; Royal, 1998; Anantharaman, 1996; Swahananda, 1984; Robinson, 2005; Mark & Lyons, 2010). The connecting medium is *prana* (life force), *wairua* (spiritual essence) or vital life force that flows through all living and nonliving objects.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> A holon is something which is simultaneously a whole and a part. Ken Wilber discusses this clearly in relation to spirituality (Wilber, 2000).

<sup>40</sup> Yoga has the understanding that the human body is made of various sheaths: i) physical/ gross, ii) mental/ subtle, and iii) causal/ spiritual. The power or force that gives life within the body is '*prana*' (vital life force) or

A meta-review of spirituality studies in the health sciences (Chui et al., 2004) defines human beings' spiritual experience. These definitions have described the experience of spirituality as beyond organisational membership and comprised of: i) an inner existential awareness, ii) connection, iii) energy or power, and iv) transcendental experience (Chui et al., 2004). Schmidt-Wilk (2000) extend this definition by suggesting categories of 'applied spirituality' and 'pure spirituality'. Pure spirituality was a: “silent, unbounded, inner experience of pure awareness” (Heaton et al., 2004, p. 63) whilst applied spirituality referred to the practical applications and measurable outcomes that arose from the inner experience (Heaton et al., 2004, p. 63). This is a useful distinction as we view the narrative themes, whereby inner practices have outward relational expression. John Brentlinger (2000) in his article ‘*Revolutionizing Spirituality: Reflections on Marxism and Religion*,’ highlights the dynamic role of feeling and connection. As he shares, spirituality is:

The capacity to feel deeply bonded with all beings on this earth; to acknowledge the deep, ultimate value of life and community, among ourselves and with nature. It is expressed by love and a sense of responsibility for others. A spiritual perspective values all beings as intrinsically good and acknowledges and respects the parts they play - positively or unfortunately negatively - in the same creative, evolutionary process of life and liberation (p 190).

Hollingsworth (2008) assists by delineating compassionate spirituality as: “a way of relating to the sacred that cultivates empathetic connectedness with others in their suffering and promotes action to ease their distress” (p 840). Spirituality was viewed as an active inner relationship or response that was expressed compassionately with others (Hein & Singer, 2008).

Büssing & Ostermann (2006b) extend the definition towards a certain motivation:

Spirituality refers to an attitude of search for meaning in life. The searching individual is aware of its divine origin (either transcendent or immanent, i.e. God, Allah, JHW, Tao, Brahman, Prana, Unity etc.), and feels a connection with others, nature and the Divine etc. Because of this awareness one strives towards the realisation of the respective teachings, experiences or insight, which have a direct

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*mauri*. *Prana* and *mauri* manifest in many forms including electrical, magnetic and as bioenergy within the human body. *Prana* and *mauri* are therefore the vitalising forces within the body. Without this, there is no life. The *prana* moves through the body via special channels called *nadi*. The ancient *Vedic* texts, *Gheranda Samhita* and the *Chandogya Upanishad*, refer to 72,000 *nadi* present in the human body and they are said to be finer than a human hair divided several more times (Swahananda, 1984; Mallinson, 2004). In this understanding, the body is an interconnected system that includes *prana* through to the physical form (formed solely by the food consumed). Yoga is the union of all these bodies such that the mind of an individual is still and stable and ultimately in awareness, remembrance and union with its inner divine consciousness (Wujastyk, 2009).

impact on life and ethical commitments (Büssing, 2006b cited in Büssing et al., 2010, p. 28).

However, participants in this study also described spirituality in an uncomplicated manner:

Spirituality is simple. It is the capacity to be happy. The love comes from God in the heart. It is the natural state for the human to be happy. If we are not, it is the rubbish we carry inside us. Everything receive and see with love (French Sahaj Marg Male participant, 2014).

### **2:3 Peace**

In this thesis, I take a perspective that understands peace as a relation between two or more parties that are immersed in an openness and respect for difference (Young, 2010; Dietrich & Sützl, 1997; Muñoz, 2001). I do not support or argue for a view of peace rooted within any ideas of group membership<sup>41</sup> or individual characteristics of perfection as have been the case in Judeo - Christian ideas of the good human being.<sup>42</sup> Nor do I intend to suggest a Universalist notion of peace in connection to the concept of spiritual brother-sisterhood. Or as Dietrich & Sützl (1997) proclaimed: “Linear, universalist, reductionist – one truth, perpetual peace – one world society has the germ of self-reproductive structures of violence and lacks the respect for otherness and its’ secrets” (p 292).

In alignment with participants’ narratives, this thesis embraces an energetic understanding of peace, as a way of relating in a sustainable and non-violent manner with all of life. Dietrich & Sützl (1997) suggest that this understanding of peace directly challenges the current climate of capitalistic competition. They give an example from African peace views:

...one encounters a wide range of terms invariably connected to *energetic* interpretations aiming at harmony of society, nature and cosmos. This harmony is reached in different ways, depending on temporal and spatial circumstances. It is responsible for personal

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<sup>41</sup> Goetschel & Hagmann 2009, remind us that diplomatic led peacebuilding consensus has often involved the hidden economic liberation agenda that links capitalist development with peace. They describe it as an implementation of positive peace that is an imposition of top-down liberal politics. This is clearly not peaceful.

<sup>42</sup> The old testament of the Bible.

health as much as for the well-being of the family and the community, for the growth of plants and the fertility of domestic animals. The cosmos, nature and society are seen as being in an inextricable reciprocal relationship, which, when balanced, is experienced as peace (p 294).

For participants in this thesis the energetic interpretation was described as an inner awareness and attunement to the *tūpuna* (ancestors), *atua* (forces that generate and animate particular realms of reality) and *Master*. Participants viewed peace as a level of consciousness that revealed itself through awareness and contemplative silence. Stories of transcendent ‘presence’ and the processes of establishing connection have been mentioned historically in various Māori<sup>43</sup> and Indian cultural stories such as Patanjali's Yoga Sutras and the BhagavadGita<sup>44</sup> (Prajananda, 1971; Prasada, 1912; Radhakrishnan, 1974; Marsden, 2003). The modern and ordinary content of thesis participants’ stories of peaceful awareness in life, enhance what Muñoz (2001) described as a rescuing of the phenomena of peace:

One of the first steps towards rescuing the realities, or “phenomena”, of peace could well be to recognise all those actions in which peace is present, all the predispositions - individual, subjective, social and structural - that are related to peace in our speech, thoughts, feelings and actions. One way of seeking the “idea” of peace could be to approach it through the meanings that it acquires at different individual, social and cultural moments and spaces (p 252).

This research was ultimately concerned about whether practices that promoted inner peace and spiritual brother-sisterhood had any positive outward expression in the modern world. There was encouraging research in the 1980s suggesting that practices such as meditation were capable of effecting profound change in the behavior of non-meditating individuals in the surrounding area (Dillbeck, Cavanaugh, Glenn, Orme-Johnston, & Mittlefehldt, 1987; Hagelin, 1998). These studies correlated the group effect of transcendental meditation with reductions in daily total crime, war deaths, traffic accidents and fires (OrmeJohnson et al., 1988). The data came from cities in the United States and, for a period of two months, from war torn Lebanon (Orme-Johnston et al., 1988). This research suggested that meditation and specifically a group of inner peace practitioners meditating together had

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<sup>43</sup> Chapter 10, in Hirini Moko Mead’s book *Tikanga Māori Living by Māori Values*, outlines case studies of leaders who have embodied these values and the ways in which they have brokered peace. I would encourage the reading of it as it represents a foundation to Māori worldviews.

<sup>44</sup> The Sanskrit word *Bhagavad Gita* translates to the English language phrase: the eternal song. The book of the same name is comprised of a series of chapters from the Indian classical work, The Mahabharata (5<sup>th</sup> to 1<sup>st</sup> Century BC). This book is essentially a story about life and work that outlines the Yogic precepts of *bhakti*, *karma* and *Jnana* through the Yogic protagonists Krishna and Arjuna (Radhuramaraju, 1974; Prabhupada, 1972).

measurable impact on the behaviour of others in the outer world, even though it was a little difficult to explain the mechanism of such change.

I could not help but wonder what such a consciousness could contribute to peace. It seemed that even though there may have been a great deal of work carried out examining the mechanisms of conflict and violence, less prominently discussed is the idea of a basic mindset or spiritual grounding that could cause individuals to seek reconciliation and cooperation.

Johan Galtung (1964), in his seminal work on a structural theory of aggression, defined relations between nations in four ways:

- 'War' which was organized group violence.
- 'Negative peace' which was the absence of -violence but also of any other significant relation.
- 'Positive peace' which was marked by absence of violence and occasional cooperation.
- 'Unqualified peace'- the absence of violence and a pattern of lasting cooperation (Galtung, 1996).

John Paul Lederach (1995) expanded Galtung's notion of physical, structural and cultural violence by highlighting the personal and relational aspects of peace. He usefully viewed conflict as a natural aspect of relationship, with each human being or community having access to a range of inner harmonising practices. In this, we see the role of a person's inner processes and outer manifestations in relationship to the processes of peace and conflict. Lederach's original pyramid of reconciliation was a process of harmonisation between the qualities of peace, mercy, justice and truth. Here there is the influence of the Christian biblical notion of bringing these essential forces and actions together (Psalm, 85:10). Wolfgang Dietrich (2013), in his work on a model of Transrational peace, extended Lederach's pyramid and spider web of relationship by integrating the work of Buddhist philosopher, Ken Wilber (2000). The components of this integration includes both internal and external aspects of peace dimensions (Dietrich, 2013). As such, we see, similarities with the Yogic view of self and the potential influence of the inner mind upon the outer. Recently, geographers Fiona McConnell and Philippa Williams (2011) have argued similarly to Dietrich & Sützl, 1997, that any definition or understanding about peace must be contextualised, and also expanded in response to what has been observed as 'every day peace'. Their expansion includes peace as: i) tolerance, ii) friendship, iii) hope, iv) reconciliation, v) justice, vi) humanitarianism, vii) cosmopolitanism, viii) resistance, ix) solidarity, x) hospitality, xi) care and xii) empathy. According to Williams

(2007) ‘everyday peace’ is a labour intensive process of multiple conscious and unconscious acts and practices involving: negotiation, consultation, distancing and indifference.

This perspective is well documented in the transdisciplinary literature and can be simplified as the inner ‘pure spirituality’ creating the base for ‘applied spirituality’ or change in a variety of human relationships and organisations (Heaton et al., 2004).

The literature on the Māori community process of *hohou rongō* (peace agreement) was a common action and involved: i) negotiation, ii) arranged marriage, iii) peace that was negotiated to last and peace agreements that were temporary, iv) the exchange of meaningful gifts and v) linkages to the land and cosmology (Moko Mead, 2005). There was a strong humanitarian aspect (*he aroha ki te tangata* / love for the people) alongside willingness to forgive and to show compassion for the people affected by conflict. Māori Chieftainesses involved in peace agreements were said to have embodied certain values:

They had their own way of persuading leaders of the attacking groups to show compassion. They did this by exhibiting great compassion themselves and being unequivocal about this. They were convincing advocates for their people and probably had a reputation for caring (Moko Mead, 2005, p. 179).

An everyday peace for this community came from outer forms of negotiation combined with peace builders who embodied certain noble values. Perhaps we can see a convergence here with the postmodern theorists who view peace as coming from an inner energetic and embodied compassion (Dietrich, 2013; Wilber, 2000; McCallum & Williams, 2011).

I would agree with Dietrich’s (2013) argument that one cannot understand an episode of violence or conflict without understanding the inner psyche of the actors and the correlated and interrelated multidimensional aspects of influence. This very much mirrors the Yogic and Māori view of the human being as multiple layers of connected influence surrounding the core inner self (Feuerstein, 2002). The practice of *rangimarie* (being peaceful), or *ahimsa* (nonviolence in thought, word or deed) arises from the peaceful inner core, from mindfulness based awareness and capacity for choice and includes inner attitudes and thoughts (Prasada, 1912).

Dietrich (2013) describes:

The pyramid therefore must be thought of like the matryoshka dolls, or a Chinese box, on the inside of which there are the smaller pyramids of the ego, the individual voices of the inner team, and the self as a multi-layered epicentre (p 156).

He goes on to suggest the following therapeutic layers between the social episode and the energetic epicentre: “society, kinship, core family, subject, body, organs, cells and atoms” (p 157). This concept finds an echo in the experimental work on human consciousness, which shows nested systems of interconnected and non-local information sharing and relationship (Sheldrake, 1995).

The concept of a hospitable universal spirituality appeared to relate to relationships based upon a possible sixth form of peace, beyond a positive or negative peace or state relationship, and towards individual and collective universal connection and communion. According to many, although not all, of my study participants, it was a communion that was felt in the atoms of the sensitive other, demonstrated in a ‘felt knowing’ of the needs of the other which was not limited by space or time and occurred spontaneously. This level of harmonious relating was not understood or experienced as a dominating sameness. In some ways this is similar to Koopman’s (2011) argument:

I want to argue for taking peace to pieces, not just by place, but also space. Peace(s) are always shaped in and through the spaces and times through which they are made. Peace is not a static thing, nor an endpoint, but a socio-spatial relationship that is always made and made again (p 194).

This thesis adds the idea that space is a dynamic interaction of thought, attitude, feeling and communicative vibration. It is relationship. Moreover, as Koopman (2011) suggests: “to take peace to pieces requires both understanding space as a doing, and grounded definitions of peace” (p 194). Davis’s (2006) work on the neuropsychobiology of the individual brain connected to the source perhaps provides some insight into the potentiality of such an awareness of space. He stated:

These characters and personalities identify themselves with the Creator’s essence and attributes and are inviting their fellow human beings to embrace the possibility to tap into the spiritual nature of human existence to find peace and harmony and to develop a brain capable of a higher cognitive map attuned to god’s consciousness and the Universe at large, its environment (p 5).

Perhaps this is a glimpse of a Derridian form of peace that has yet to be welcomed or made manifest. In addition, as Derrida states in his essay ‘A Word of Welcome’ in *Adieu to Emmanuel Levinas*:

Now, how can this infinite and thus unconditional hospitality, this hospitality at the opening of ethics, be regulated in a particular political or juridical practice? How might it, in turn, regulate a particular politics or law? Might it give rise to - keeping the same names - a politics, a law, or a justice for which none of the concepts we have inherited under these names could be adequate? To deduce from the presence in my finitude of the idea of infinity that consciousness *is* hospitality, that the *cogito* is a hospitality offered or given, an infinite *welcome*... (Derrida, 1997, p. 48).

For participants in this study peace was attitude of welcome and acceptance of presence. It existed alongside relations with each ‘Other’ and through consciousness.

## **2:4 Māori Community**

The original culture and *tangata whenua* (people of the land), of Aotearoa New Zealand are the Māori. Māori have many tribes with their own traditional and sacred knowledge. Participants came from members of the Waitaha, Tainui and Tuhoe *iwi* and their views may not be generalisable to all Māori. Their narratives are their own yet collectively linked to narratives from their elders, *whakapapa* (genealogy) and shared group knowledge. Recent national statistics show that *Pākehā* (New Zealand European) make up 68 % of the population, Māori 15 %, Asian groups 10 %, and Pacific peoples 7 % (Statistics New Zealand, 2006). It is important to understand that the word Māori is understood by Māori as a holistic way of denoting human beings among all living beings and includes the concepts of ethnic group, water, land, spirit and *whānau* (family) (Pitama et al. 2007; *Marae* training visit, Puketaraki *Marae*, Karitane, Aotearoa, New Zealand, 4th April, 2014).

## **2.5 Sahaj Marg Community**

Sahaj Marg emerged in Northern India in the late 1800s as a system of practical training in Raja Yoga, which focused upon training the mind. Since 1945, Shri Ram Chandra Mission and Sahaj Marg Spirituality Foundation (founded in Switzerland 1994, USA 1999, and India 2003), are non-profit charitable organisations providing: i) spiritual training, ii)

retreat centres, iii) research, iv) meditation centres and ashrams, v) free medical centres and vi) scholarships for spiritual training (<http://www.smsf.in/aboutSMSF.html>, accessed 2014). Its teachers, Ram Chandraji (of Fategarh, known as Laliji), Shri Ram Chandra (of Shahjahanpur, known as Babuji) and current teacher Shri Parthasarathi Rajagopalachari, have offered this method to humanity. In 2005, Shri Ram Chandra Mission was formally associated as a non-governmental organization with the United Nations Department of Public Information (<http://www.srcm.org/home>).

As an organisation, it has not been without conflict, specifically around the successor of the spiritual and organisational lineage. Sahaj Marg practices and teachings are conveyed in over 100 countries, with over 300,000 practitioners.

## **2.6 Conclusion**

This chapter has given broad definitions and discussion about key terms as preparation for the novel and authoritative voices of the participants. It assists in leading us into other sections that will represent a view from the inside of spirituality and its felt relevance to peace, as that appeared to my participants from the two very different communities.

It will take several chapters to set the scene for entering the inside of spirituality and I consider it an important preparation for a deeper engagement with the material. Chapter Three continues by identifying the broad conceptual base of shared philosophical and cosmological knowledge between the participants. It includes: i) Raja Yoga, ii) Māori cosmology, iii) convergent teachings and, iv) potential of the human being.

## **Chapter Three: Shared Knowledge**

### **3:1 Summary**

This section provides a broad conceptual base for later narrative themes and reiterates key concepts from other lenses or perspectives. The broad conceptual base includes: i) Raja Yoga, ii) Māori Cosmology, and iii) convergent teachings. This base assists our understanding

of the shared ontological beliefs held in the collapsed themes from participant narratives. These themes were:

- i) underlying recognition and experience of self and others as spiritual,
- ii) underlying internal connection via processes of awareness and remembrance to *Master*, source and *tūpuna* (ancestors),
- iii) development of a universal consciousness of connection, and
- iv) spiritual brother-sisterhood as a peaceful way of living in the world.

The following section places and connects these themes conceptually; drawing upon the relevant literature from the fields of Yogic philosophy and Māori cosmology.

### 3:2 Raja Yoga

Yoga is the Sanskrit language term, which studies the yoking and joining of consciousness, seen in the two words from which Yoga is derived. The first root word '*yujir*' means unity, union, connection, intimacy and harmony. The second Sanskrit root word is '*yuj*' which means to control and to contemplate. According to the *Bhagavad-gita*, Yoga is defined as: "*Samatvam yogamuchyate*" (Radhakrishnan, 1974, II: 48) which translates into English as 'being stable.' Prabhupada (1972) writes:

Let this be known by the name of Yoga, this viyoga (disconnection) from samyoga (firm vision) with dukkhu (sorrow or pain) - where in the citta (mental being) restrained by Yoga-seva (Yogic practices) comes to rest, wherein one beholds the Cosmic Self through his individual self and rejoices in the Cosmic Self, wherein one experiences that supreme bliss that can be grasped by the buddhi (pure intellect), but is beyond the reach of the senses wherein established one does not deviate from the truth. On gaining which one cannot conceive of any greater gain than that and where in anchored one is not shaken even by the heaviest dukkha (sorrow or pain) (Bhagavad - Gita, VI: 20-23, in Radhakrishnan, 1974).

Marharshi Patanjali was the first researcher to codify and compile all the practices of Yoga<sup>45</sup> and his work is considered an authoritative and integrated account of Yoga

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<sup>45</sup> There are several Patanjali's of repute in ancient manuscripts with some debate as to whether this represents one person or many. It is possible that Patanjali was also a grammarian and mathematician. His work is dated 200 BCE but the practice of Yoga is more ancient, as already discussed. Patanjali's Yoga Sutras consists of four

philosophy, psychology and physiological practices<sup>46</sup> (Prasada, 1912; Ananthuraman, 1996; Feuerstein, 2002). He describes Yoga as: '*Yogas citta vritti nirodha*'. This can be transcribed from the

Sanskrit into English as: "Yoga as the state of cessation (*nirodha*) of all fluctuations (*vrittis*) in the mental being or the inner instrument of cognition and consciousness (*citta*)" (Prabhavananda, 2012, Yoga Sutra, 1: 2). Another ancient Indian text defined Yoga as: '*Tam yogam-iti manyante sthiram-indriya-dharanam*,' which transcribed from the Sanskrit into English is:

The highest state is that, they say, when the five senses of knowledge, together with the manas (the lower mental faculty) cease from their normal activities and the buddhis (pure intellect) itself does not stir. This, they consider to be the state of Yoga, this firm holding back of the senses, when one is completely undistracted. Yoga, verily, is beginning and end (or birth and death) (Katha Upaniṣad, II, 3.II).

Yogic psychology simply stated teaches that the human being wishes to be happy but is unable to achieve this whilst they have desire and attachment to objects. The material world of objects is impermanent and constantly changing. Therefore any joy so derived is followed by feelings of loss, change and misery. The three kinds of *duhkha* (suffering) are: i) those caused by the individual's self-caused internal atmosphere within the body, ii) those caused by natural and extra-organic causes, *adi bhautika* (agents outside of the body), and iii) those caused by supra-natural and extra-organic causes, *adi dairika* (unseen energies).

One way for human beings to be free of this cycle was to regulate the mind and reach the stage where the mind was no longer unruly (Prasada, 1912; Dasgupta, 1989; Prabhavananda, 2012). From this state human beings had the possibility of realising their true nature which was said to be pure consciousness (Prasada, 1912). The practices that led to this state were of an outward nature (*bahiranga*) and the inward (*antaranga*) nature. The outward

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chapters: Yoga and its aims, Yoga and its practice, Powers and Liberation (*Samadhi*) (Prabhavananda, 2011, p. 1). Yoga is codified who eight integrated practise or *ashtanga* (limbs).

<sup>46</sup> The Yogic classical text Patanjali's Yoga Sutras describes the eight limbs as; i) ethics and restraints (*yama and niyama*); ii) poses (*asana*); iii) breathing (*pranayama*); iv) cleaning and locks (*kriya, banda and mudra*); v) energy drawn inwards (*pratyahara*); vi) concentration (*dharana*); vii) meditation (*dhyana*); and viii) blissful condition (*samadhi*). In this coding system each aspect of practice and its effects have been systematically recorded by various Yogic scientists. Their method of inquiry is outlined by Patanjali in sutra 1: "Direct observation, rational inference and verbal cognition (or recorded testimony) constitute the sources of right knowledge" (*Pratyaksanumanagamah pramanani*) (Ananthuraman, 1996, p. 27). The outcomes of practice were systematized and replicated from teacher to student prior to Patanjali's codification system.

practices strengthened the systems in the body and the inward purified the mind.<sup>47</sup> Both groups of practices were intertwined and interconnected.

The outcomes of such regular and systematic practice were documented for all eight aspects of practice and it was understood that each practice contributed to the efficacy of the others.

*Patanjali's Yoga Sutras* identify the various health effects in the following sutras: i) mental (2: 2; 1: 32-39), ii) cause of illness (2: 4; 2:12), iii) spiritual health (2: 25-26; 2: 28), iv) physical health (2: 29; 2: 35-45) and v) conduct and ethics (2: 30-32) (Prasada, 1912). Whilst Yogendra Svatmarama, in the 14th century book, *Hathayoga Pradipika*, describes specific health benefits, for example in Sloka 2:25: “There is no doubt that coughs, asthma, diseases of the spleen, leprosy and twenty kinds of diseases caused by excess mucus are destroyed through the effects of dhauti karma.” Modern research, during the last fifty years, on the various techniques or methods in Yoga (including breathing, meditation, physical postures, centering, and visualization) has verified many of these ancient findings. Indeed, the list of disorders has expanded to include: the amelioration of stress-related mental and physical disorders such as asthma, high blood pressure, cardiac illness, elevated cholesterol, irritable bowel syndrome, cancer, insomnia, multiple sclerosis, and fibromyalgia (Benson, 1996; Becker, 2000). A review of the literature by Field (2010) noted the positive effects of Yoga poses on psychological conditions including anxiety and depression, on pain syndromes, cardiovascular, autoimmune and immune conditions, and on pregnancy. Further, the physiological effects of Yoga included decreased heart rate and blood pressure. Physical effects included weight loss and increased muscle strength (Sukshole & Phataket, 2012).

The Sanskrit word *raja* translates as 'king'. Raja Yoga is therefore the 'King of Yoga' and is a 'method of mental regulation'. It is comprised of *dharana* (concentration), *dhyana* (meditation) and *samadhi* (bliss). This practice assumes that practitioners are already competent in the early limbs of Yogic practice, including the ethical observances and moral aspects of spiritual training. Current Sahaj Marg master, Parthasarathi Rajagopalachari (2013), shares his own Yogic master's views on this:

Yama and niyama, he said, have to be taught from the cradle, till the child becomes an adult. It is the responsibility of the family, the

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<sup>47</sup> Inward practices included concentration, meditation and cultivating attitudes of remembrance, gratitude, *bhakti* and awareness. The outer practices included; breathing to still the mind, devotional objects to prompt remembrance and attitudes of gratitude, physiological poses, a calming diet and other lifestyle practices.

school and some sort of social life to bring this together, to make him moral, and to make him ethical. When you go to a 'yogaachaarya' [yoga teacher or a master], you are not supposed to be taught 'satyam vada' (tell the truth, do not tell lies). This is too fundamental a beginning (p 40).

As such, Patanjali's traditional *yamas* (individual restraints) and *niyamas* (ethical observances) are not directly part of Sahaj Marg teaching (refer to Table 1 and 2). Sahaj Marg assumes that practitioners are aware and practising: i) non-injury, ii) truthfulness, iii) nonstealing, iv) greedlessness, v) purity, vi) contentment, viii) asceticism, ix) self-study, and x) devotion to *Ishwara* (Supreme Being/ cosmic consciousness). The ancient Yogic practices of asceticism and *brahmacharya* (chastity or conservation of energy), are not included in Sahaj Marg.

The assumption that all Sahaj Marg practitioners were established in the basics of spiritual life may not be correct as Mukherjee (2001) demonstrated. She examined the efficacy of Sahaj Marg as a coping strategy for life management. Overall participants found that the practice was beneficial; however, some participants indicated that they began some of the assumed basics of spiritual life such as non-stealing after starting the meditation practice.

Sahaj Marg begins at level seven of Patanjali's system with meditation. It adds an additional feature of the transmission of the master's *pranahuti* (heart condition) which is used for the divine evolution of human beings (Naidoo, 1994).

**Table 1: Patanjali's first stages of Yogic training – *Yama* and *Niyama***

<i>Yama/ Individual restraints</i>	<i>Niyama/ Observances</i>
<b>Non-injury/ <i>ahimsa</i></b>	Purity or cleanliness/ <i>shaucha</i>
<b>Truthfulness/ <i>Satya</i></b>	Contentment/ <i>santosha</i>
<b>Non-stealing/ <i>asteya</i></b>	Asceticism or austerity/ <i>tapas</i>
<b>Chastity/ <i>brahmacharya</i></b>	Self-study/ <i>swadhyaya</i>

<b>Greedlessness/ <i>aparigraha</i></b>	Devotion to God/ <i>ishwarapranidhana</i>
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Swami Vivekânanda identified different pathways of Yoga suitable to differing human natures: i) union through mysticism is called *Raja Yogi*, ii) union through love and devotion is called *Bhakti Yogi*, and iii) union through philosophy is called *Jnana Yogi* (Vivekânanda, 1923; Abhedananda, 1967). It is said that all Yoga lead to Raja Yoga, whilst the practice of Raja Yoga itself, creates the normalisation of posture, breathing, purification, service and devotion necessary for reaching the goal (Prasada, 1912; Feuerstein, 2002; Ananthuraman, 1996). Yoga throughout this thesis is understood as a complete lifestyle practice not merely meditation or poses. Yoga as an integration of practices can lead to a change of relational, ethical and consciousness paradigms in its practitioners (Adhia et al., 2010; Feuerstein, 2002; Rajagopalachari, 2013; Travis & Pearson, 2000).

I will now identify the ethics and practice suggested to Sahaj Marg practitioners as an extension of general Yogic *yama* (individual restraints) and *niyama* (ethical observances). The first lifestyle practice for Sahaj Marg practitioners is shown in Table 2. Maxim 1 is the practice where there is the connection and tuning in to source or the inner *Master* and nourishing and vitalizing of spirit. It is at the beginning of the day that the practitioner attunes to ‘presence’ through the processes of *bhakti* (love and devotion) and will. Maxim 2 describes the process of intent combined with the forceless force of love. Maxim 3 encourages the will power and vision of unity. The fourth and fifth maxims together encourage a certain equanimity in the face of the vicissitudes of life.

According to Yogic theory and Māori worldview, we live in a conscious universe that requires balance. If there are any properties of binary thought such as good within us, then there will also be bad. If there is the idea of connection, it must contain within it the possibility of disconnection. Alternatively, described more simply, light cannot be perceived without dark. The distribution and experience of such depends upon our actions and the meaning that we attribute to events (Robinson, 2005; Ram Chandra 1991a, 1991b, 1991c).

Traditionally in Yogic literature, this has been described as internal processes of attachment and desire for certain objects (for example, outcomes, people, and material goods). The following maxims encourage attitudes of simplicity, universal notions of family, truth and conservation. The practical application of the ten maxims begin at levels of materiality and

deepen into more subtle significance as one's inner awareness refines (Rajagopalachari, 1999).

These basic practices are found in many religious traditions and are more important for life than are currently recognised (Brill, 2012). As the cosmology, stories indicate the mind of the human being is powerful and brings the Universal creative energy into form (Robinson, 2005). Ancient peoples valued the importance of stories and practices that ethically attune a human mind to an awareness of interconnection and balance between all life forms (Riascos, 2007; Verbos & Humphries, 2014). According to the base knowledge of the traditions informing the words from my study participants, we can very easily see what happens in the world before us as the outcome of human minds attuned to materiality, positivism and attitudes of lust, greed and competition. The words of the participants tend to reinforce the idea that in the minds of ethical human beings there are varying degrees of fear and anxiety, which subtly taint action.<sup>48</sup> The current predominant human mind, driven as it is by the unhelpful attitudes, co-creates and channels its Universal creative energy and produces outcomes such as pollution, war, and unsustainable living practices that threaten the very life of our mother Earth and all the diversity of life that she nurtures. However, there are practices, which attune the human mind towards a relational ethics. *Ngati Kowhai o Waitaha* (Waitaha elders) share:

Know that our truth and your truth may not be the same. We all have our own journey to make and many are the trails that lead to wisdom.

We place our sacred Histories before you in the hope of fostering mutual trust and understanding. There is no greater gift we can give to the people of this land. These are our greatest treasures. Know what is given (1994, p. 12).

**Table 2: Ten Maxims of Sahaj Marg**

Maxim	Description of the Practice
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<sup>48</sup> I spoke with an Indian elder at the start of this research; I said that I did not understand why I had been invited to listen to these stories. I could not see any reason for me to gain a PhD and there were certainly many others more suitable. He said that this would not be 'academic only'. It would be about realised faith and love. At times as I worked on this research project, I could feel the invitation to step back into mind that was conditioned by fear and competition. I learnt what to do when my thought veered into I-ness and anxiety. I would breathe. I suggested gently, 'who am I/we' without seeking a cognitive response, and my mind gently returned to source and I was united again.

1	Rise before dawn. Offer your prayer and puja at a fixed hour, preferably before sunrise, sitting in one and the same pose. Have a separate place and seat for worship. Purity of mind and body should be specially adhered to.
2	Begin your puja with a prayer for spiritual elevation, with a heart full of love and devotion.
3	Fix your goal which should be complete oneness with God. Rest not till the ideal is achieved.
4	Be plain and simple to be identical with Nature.
5	Be truthful. Take miseries as divine blessings for your own good and be grateful.
6	Know all people as thy brethren and treat them as such.
7	Be not revengeful for the wrongs done by others. Take them with gratitude as heavenly gifts.
8	Be happy to eat in constant divine thought whatever you get, with due regard to honest and pious earnings.
9	Mould your living so as to rouse a feeling of love and piety in others.
10	At bedtime, feeling the presence of God, repent for the wrongs committed. Beg forgiveness in a supplicant mood, resolving not to allow repetition of the same (Source: Ram Chandra, 1991a).

### 3:3 Māori Cosmology

I do not offer this section as a definitive understanding of Māori cosmology but rather as a base from which to understand the perspectives of Māori participants in this study. Most but not all Māori cosmology traditions begin with omnipresent and formless *Io* (Supreme Being) and there are many names for the various attributes of *Io* (Marsden, 2003; Whatahoro, 1913).<sup>49</sup>

Each of these names has a cause, a reason. *Io* is his name in short. *Ionui*, he is the god of all other gods; *Io-matua*, he is the parent of all things, the life and being of all things; *Io-te-wananga*, he is the wananga of all things; *Io-tikitiki*, he is the god of the heavens, of all things therein, and in the *Kauwhangas* [planes] on earth, and also in

<sup>49</sup> This website gives a sketch of this controversy in non-technical language.  
<http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/maoricreation-traditions/sources>

Hades. He is the exalted one of all those things. Io-mataaho; if he visits the [other] heavens, or the other worlds, the planes, it is as a flash of light only - man never sees him. Io-matua-kore, he has no parents; Iomata-ngaro, he is never seen by man; Io-mata-putahi, he is a god of one word [command], not of two [i.e., his single word is obeyed, is never altered]; Io-mata-wai, he is a loving god; Io-te-hau-e-rangi, he presides over all the heavens; Io-tamaua-take, nothing of his can be changed from what has been decreed. This ends the subject (Whatahoro, 1913, p. 111).

However, participants in my study stated that the use of the masculine pronoun was not accurate in the southern Māori tradition. The Waitaha tribe is matriarchal and the female element is strongly prominent in the cosmological stories.

The following sacred Māori creation genealogy begins with the omniscient, omnipotent presence of *Io* (Supreme Being) (Marsden, 2003; Thornton, 2004; Robinson, 2005). Whilst early Pākehā authors cast doubt on the authenticity of this knowledge, Māori did not, as kaumatua Te Haupapa-o-Tane, (1920) stated:

It has been reported that doubt has been expressed on the genuineness of this supreme god creator, and it has been said that the Māori priests have adopted the idea from the scriptures and tacked the whole doctrine on to their original beliefs. To us this is absurd (p 139).

The following words come from an approved oral tradition and as such are quoted directly so as to preserve this knowledge correctly. The sharing of one Māori cosmological chant in Taylor (1855):

*Nā te kune te Pupuke* (From the first surge of energy the rising)

*Nā te Pupuke te hiriri* (From rising the thought)

*Nā te hiriri te Mahara* (From rising thoughts the memory)

*Nā te Mahara te Hinengaro* (From memory the mind-heart)

*Nā te Hinengaro te manako* (From the mind-heart, desire)

*Ka hua te wananga* (Knowledge became conscious)

*Ka noho I a rikoriko* (It dwelt in dim light)

*Ka puta ki waho ko te pō* (And *Pō* (darkness) emerged...)

*Ko hau tupu, ko hau ora* (The hau of growth, the hau of life)

*Ka noho I te atea* (Stayed in clear space)

*Ka puta ki waho ko te rangi e tū nei* (And the sky emerged that stands here)

*Te ata rapa, te ata ka mahina* (The early dawn, the early day, the midday)

*Ka mahina te ata I hikurangi!* (The blaze of the day from the sky ...and then land emerged, then the Gods, then people!) (cited in Salmond, 2012, p. 119).

In these words, we may see many similarities with Sāṅkhya philosophy. The breath that connects and empowers; the mind from where the outer forms and projections arise. According to the ancient knowledge that participants represented, the mind of the human being is powerful and sacred. In addition, I would suggest, along with the Yogic analysis above, often currently being utilised in degraded ways. It does not need to be.

At the beginning of this research project, I found myself on the North Island of Aotearoa New Zealand and in a different city. It is the first time in twenty years that I am there. I found myself at a second hand bookshop where there were rare books about the Waitaha *iwi* (tribe). I know them as *taonga* (treasures) and I pass them to the *tangata whenua* (people of the land) that I am meeting with. Three years later during the last stages of writing this thesis, I am unexpectedly at the University of Auckland library, a three-hour flight away from where I live. Again, I find myself drawn to the Waitaha cosmological book - *Song of the Waitaha*.

Stories of small happenings like this have abounded throughout this project. Always I find myself where I am meant to be, although I always think I am there for another reason. Always it is like this. This is one of the ways that I have known this experience as spiritually centred or perhaps Māori-centred research (Smith, 2012). Like the Sahaj Marg elders, *Ngati Kowhai o Waitaha* (Waitaha elders) have also proclaimed that it is time for the spiritual knowledge to be open to everyone:

Now the day has arrived for the peoples of the Nation of Waitaha to open the Kete [basket] of Knowledge to everyone. The time of sharing is upon us, and a prophecy is fulfilled, because what is written was foretold. The hand that moves knows a wairua warmed in ancient days and entrusted with old wisdom. It merely writes what is already spoken for there is nothing new in the Universe (1994, p 11).

I find myself in the middle of this research going into Myanmar and sitting listening to villagers who remember the ancient Buddhist knowledge of unity, through the mind of each other. They say to me that our visit is significant and is to be placed in the kept history. They want me to know, that despite the effects of climate change and unremitting poverty, they are building a new place to meet, where all peoples, of all religions may feel welcome and be as

one. Within academic convention, this would not be part of this thesis. My heart knows however that it is.

According to the Song of Creation from the *Ngati Kowhai o Waitaha* (Waitaha elders):

‘WE ARE OF THE VOID...’  
 IN THE BEGINNING WAS KARAKIA  
 And in Karakia was the beginning.

Nothing  
 The Void  
 And in the depths of the Void there was a Great Sound  
 And in the Great Sound there was Something  
 And Something made the Seas of the Dust  
 And the Dust was like Hine Pu Kohu Rangi  
 And She swirled around the Heavens  
 And then came a Sudden Light that was called  
 Te Ra  
 And He warmed the Heavens  
 And out of the Dust and the Warmth was made the Earth  
 And she was called Papatūānuku  
 And Land was formed out of Chaos  
 And Io separated the the Earth from the Other Lands  
 And set them on their journeys through Time

“WE ARE OF THE GODS...” AND  
 KARAKIA BOUND US IN SPIRIT,  
 One family within the vastness of Universe.

We are of Io  
 The Land is of Io  
 The water is of Io  
 The birds and all life are of Io Therefore  
 we are of Io  
 The land is not bound by women  
 The land is not bound by men  
 The land is not bound by trees birds and all life  
 The land is bound by Mind and by Tangaroa  
 Therefore Papatūānuku is bound eternally by Tangaroa  
 Tangaroa is of water  
 Therefore he is of Io  
 Papatūānuku is the land  
 With water she grows and gives birth to everything  
 Therefore she is of Io  
 Earth and Water are surrounded

By the vastness of the Time and Space that is Ranginui Rain  
is born of the Earth

And sent down to us from Ranginui  
Therefore the Parents must be of Io (1994, p. 8).

It is said that *Io* lived eternally in *Te Korekore*, which translates as 'in the Absolute Nothingness'. It was the original seed, placed in *Te Kore* and *Te Kowhao*, the Nothingness and the Abyss, which contained the *Mauri* (spiritual essence) which impelled the seed to send forth the roots to begin their quest to fulfill the latent urge towards being.

The Realm of *Te Hihiri* (pure energy) was established where the processes, based upon rhythmical patterns of energy, began (Robinson, 2005). From this stage, we begin to get closer to matter. From *Te Hihiri* (pure energy), the subconscious begins to go back to its creator and towards *Te Whakaaro* (think, plan), emerging into *Te Wananga* (knowledge) (Marsden, 2003).

The combination of *whe* (sound) and *wananga* (knowledge/ wisdom) made possible the transition from the spiritual world to that of the material world (Marsden, 2003). In this, we find similarities with the Yogic notion of *Om* as the seed note for the universe (Feuerstein, 2002).

The next stage of creation involved *Te Hauora* (the Breath of life), *Te Atamai* (shape) and *Te Ahua* (form). The birth of word and wisdom now made, *Io* infused *Te Hauora* (the breath or spirit of life), into the cosmic process and this gave birth to *Atamai* and *Ahua* (shape and form). So the birth of the material natural world of sense perception was set in motion by the infusion of *hauora* (the breath or spirit of life) (Marsden, 2003; Robinson, 2005; Royal, 1998). In this, we see convergence with the Yogic science role of *prana* (cosmic energy) (Abhedananda, 1967). This was the moment of conception, the moment when *mauri-ora* (the divine life force), was infused into the processes which had been planted within the realm of *Tua-uri* (the world behind our sense experience). This *mauri-ora* as the divine life force is distinct from the *mauri* as a principle that activated the original process climaxing in pureenergy - *hihiri*.

From *Te Atamai* (shape) and *Te Ahua* (form) came *Te Wā* and *Te Atea* (time and space). Now with the *mauri-ora* (life force of the spirit) is present. Word and wisdom as the agents for the creation of *Te Aro-Nui* (the world seen by our senses) could begin to create *Rangi* (sky) and *Papatūānuku* (earth) and the myriad shapes and forms together with *wā* and

*ātea* (time and space) (Marsden, 2003). Time and space became the framework into which *Rangi* (heaven, sky) and *Papatūānuku* (earth) emerged out of *Te Ao Wairua* (world of spirit), into daylight and the world of sense perception (Marsden, 2003; Royal, 1998).

An essential element in the process was the *mauri* (the energy or life force), which was needed to bring it about, and is still needed to keep it in being and to bring it to completion. In this, we see similar understandings that pertain to the notion of *prana*.

Māori distinguish between the *mauri* (essence or life force), and the *mauri ora* which was known as the living essence. This assists in interpreting the use of the words ‘essence’ and ‘presence’ by participants in this research. The *mauri*, 'essence' or 'life-force', is defined as the energy by which all things cohere in nature, whilst the essence of the human being, is the *mauri ora* or the 'living essence'. The priests of the *Io* tradition believed that when they acted together they could control that energy.

This is a relational cosmology with all of life: “Te ao Māori reality is generated as arrays of open-ended, continuously reproducing networks of relations” (Salmond, 2012, p. 124). This differs to a capitalistic worldview based upon individual bounded entities.

Here there is no radical disjunctive between the mind and matter, thought and emotion, subject and object. Because everything is animated by *hau tupu* and *hau ora*, the winds of growth and life, including objects and people (*ahau* means ‘I’ in Māori), animate and inanimate phenomena are not distinguished. As the *tohunga* (knowledgeable expert) Te Matorohanga explains, ‘All things unfold their nature (*tupu*), live (*ora*), have form (*āhua*), whether trees, rocks, birds, reptiles, fish, animals, or human beings (Smith, 1914, p. 13 cited in Salmond, 2012, p. 120)

### **3:4 Convergent Teachings**

Māori and Indian traditions have a diversity of theory, schools and tribal variations. For the purpose of this thesis, we will try to understand the human world from the perspective of

Sāṅkhya philosophy and Māori cosmology and from direct testimony of Māori and Sahaj Marg Raja Yoga participants. Indian Sāṅkhya philosophy and Māori philosophy can be interpreted as sharing an understanding of certain natural laws. According to these two traditions the human being represents a universe of realities, from the gross manifestation of

matter seen as the physical body, through to the levels of psychology and identity and beyond to the finest levels of subatomic reality (Wujastyk, 2009; Royal, 1998; Taylor 1885, cited in Salmond 2012). Ontological assumptions include: i) all of life as an interconnected and ongoing process of moving energy, ii) the human body is comprised of matter and spirit, iii) methods exist that realise the Self, iv) well-being begins at the subtle level of existence, v) there are universal and individual ethical laws for human beings, and vi) the essence of spiritual practice is beyond the sense organs but is related to practical activity (Joyce, 2014b; Raghuramaraju, 2006; Robinson, 2005; Marsden, 2003). This has been summarised by Yogic scientist Prajananada (1971):

So when we understand our entire organism, physical and mental, we find that all the forces which we are using, belong not to any particular person, but to the universe. Looking at ourselves from the standpoint of the universe, we perceive that our bodies are like so many whirlpools in the sea of matter, every particle of which is in constant motion. Similarly, when we realize the nature of our minds, we discover that there is one mental current flowing through the universe. When that current, which is known as the cosmic mind, appears in one form, I call it my mind, in another form you call it your mind; but, in reality, it is acting in every mind. The one universal energy is manifesting through numberless forms and shapes and can never be regarded as possessed by any individual. The power of thinking, of hearing, of tasting, of smelling, all exist in the universe. Every force, operating through the machinery of the human body, is a force of nature; but being self-deluded, we dream that these forces are ours (p 258).

The Indian Yogic tradition states that the ultimate purpose of such practices is human evolution (Prabhavananda, 2012; Prasada, 1912). For some Māori this relational knowledge is known and has been passed on through *whakapapa* (genealogy), *karakia* (prayer), cosmological stories, protocols, and carvings within the *wharehenui* (meeting houses) (Royal, 1998).

From this perspective, there is an understanding of influence and connectedness through physical, mental and spiritual realms. The emphasis on a common connection or genealogy enables a relationship of genesis and belonging between human beings and the environment (Patterson, 1992, 1998). The understanding that all things have mauri or life force further enhances this connected relationship. There is a Māori story that illustrates this - ‘*Te Moko Nui o Io i Te Kunenga*’. This story tells that it was *Io* (Supreme Being) as the transcendent source of all of the elements in the universe that in turn build those things that would bring about the miracles that were needed for the universe to come alive. Furthermore,

Sāṅkhya philosophy views the whole universe as being created of two materials: *akasha* (omnipresent, allpenetrating existence) and *prana* (infinite omnipresent manifesting power) (Prajnananda, 1971).

Akasha is everything that has form and everything that is the result of any combination is evolved from this. It becomes the air. It becomes all the liquids and all the solids, the sun, the earth, the human body, the plants—everything that exists. At the beginning all is akasha and at the end all dissolves back into akasha. The power that creates the universe from akasha is prana. It is prana that becomes force, motion, and actions of all objects in the universe. Prana in its original state is the sum total of all the forces in the universe, whether mental or physical (Abhedananda, 1967).

Both traditions hold that the human being is made up of both matter and spirit and that these dimensions are veiled from each other and difficult for the organ-based senses to perceive. These dimensions of reality are superimposed on each other and, in one interpretation, represent differing frequencies of space and matter. Self-realisation can be seen as the process whereby the vital life force is redirected from the lower to the higher regions along the nerve centres of the spine (Dutter, 1998), through channels affected by blockages in the subtle energy of the body caused by attachment and desire. When these channels are open the human being may choose to experience life in a different way (Srivastava, 2001). Often participants in this study call this energetic system spiritual heart.

Who are you and how is your heart? To the center of *kou wai au* is where the heart is. The heart is that ability to enlighten and connect out to others. The others aren't just people, it is this land, and it is this everything. I am part of you and you are part of me, and everything above as below. My concern is that *kotahitanga* [unity] or the ideology of politics will restrict Māori from growing and transforming. It's not about loss – it is about strengthening what it is that we are and those intrinsic values that we have to be more than we need to be (Māori interview, female participant, 2012).

In the above words the participant alludes to the spiritual knowledge that comes from an awareness of *kou wai au* (who am I). Once a human being is aware of their spiritual heart and connections through *mana* (power/ presence); there is also rises the knowledge of *Ko koe ko au, ko au ko koe* (I am you and you are me) which is an important understanding within Māoridom. This concept is extended between a person and a geographical feature, *Ko au te awa, ko te awa ko au* (I am the river and the river is me). I found this feature of spirituality described by participants from both groups in my study. The connecting medium between all

living things was the vital life force and awareness. This level of unity appeared to be participants to be beyond culture, gender, class or politics.

Yoga practitioners identify *prana* (breath/ vital life force) as accumulating in eight main centers along the spinal column. These centers are located in the subtle body and correspond to the nerve plexuses in the physical body (Feuerstein, 2002; Malshe, 2009). The centers are known by the Sanskrit term *chakra* which means a 'circling motion or a wheel'. From these *chakras* are channels that redistribute energy. In deep meditation, Yogic practitioners have described these centres as flowers or lotuses with different form, colour, sound, and vibration (Feuerstein, 2002).

For Māori - *Te Aka* (translated into English as the cosmic vine) constitutes the different aspects of energy, intelligence and consciousness within the universe and the body (Robinson, 2005). From the perspective of the body, this is similar to the Indian notion of the central channels for energy that run on either side and along the centre of the spinal cord. These channels are usually referred to as *nadi*, which is a word that comes from the Sanskrit language and translates into the English language as channel, or stream (Feuerstein, 2002). The *ida nadi* goes along the left side of the spinal column (referring to the *Chandra* (moon) energies), whilst the *pingala* runs along the right side (referring to the *surya* (sun) energies) and the *sushumna nadi* runs centrally in the middle of the spinal column. They are said to go from the base of the spine to the top of the crown and above (Anantharaman, 1996; Dutter, 1998; Buhnemann, 2007). In Māori, *Te aka* (the vine) runs along the spine and is naturally linked to the: i) *hāmano* (pure soul), ii) *manawa* (heart/ mind), iii) *ata* (shadow/ astral body), and iv) *kiko* (physical body) (Robinson, 2005; www.maoridictionary.co.nz, sourced 2014).

Both traditions describe similar centres of subtle energy: the Yogic tradition has described the first *chakra* of energy (*mooladhara*) as a red coloured, four-petaled lotus. Its area of influence are the excretory and reproductive organs and the reproductive glands and hormonal secretions. Similarly for Māori the base of the vine is situated within the genital organs and called *āhua* (to approach or head towards/ to make): “Upon the actual vine the *āhua* is described as a flower with the image of a woman upon it. This image is its blue print, Hineahu-one, the first woman or human to ever be created, which the *āhua* uses as a map to direct all bodily functions” (Robinson, 2005, p. 228).

The ability to perceive the subtle energy centres is not commonly available. However, for Yoga practitioners there are replicable techniques or methods that allow access to the inner

realms of self and therefore bestow a deeper intuitive knowledge and perception (Prabhavananda, 2002). The work of Maharshi Patanjali documents the physiological, psychological and spiritual changes that a human being experiences in this process of reducing and purifying the layers of impressions that prevent realization and awareness of the soul. According to this philosophy, every action of body or mind, including every thought, is said to be stored in the mind as a form of *samskara* (impression). These impressions remain latent until conditions are such that a form of mental wave rises up and produces new desires (Abhedananda, 1967). Processes of refinement and purification include *asana* which means posture or to hold steady and *pranayama* breathing techniques that bring the gross manifestation of *prana* which is breath into the body (Pranavananda, 1992; Prasada, 1912). These techniques over time begin to facilitate a deep concentration and awareness that goes beyond the physical body towards a connection with the universe as represented by the *Master*, *atua* (forces that generate and animate particular realms of reality), *tūpuna* (ancestors). One of the effects of these methods is improved physiological and mental health (Malshe, 2005; Gore, 2005).

Samuel Robinson (2005) describes similar processes of training for Māori healers:

The body was trained in whakawheua or 'stance' where it was disciplined not to distract the mind. The ata [shadow self] was trained and purified by hā, the technique of even, deep breathing. The manawa or mind was disciplined in te-pu-manawa, the art of concentration. Throughout the training of an akoako (aspirant), without his knowing it, he was trained in the ways of perfecting and mastering himself in the three lesser parts. This opened the way for mana [power/ presence] to pass down from the hāmano [pure soul], manifesting through the lower levels by karakia or perfect prayer, which is the origin of tohunga power (p 219).

The Māori story of the first *atua* Tāne's ascent through the ten heavens (twelve according to Northern Māori traditions) to retrieve the three baskets of knowledge could be seen to allude to what is expressed in the Yogic processes of enlightenment and human evolution. Māori access to this knowledge is communicated through symbols contained in weaving, carving, in the layout and protocols on the *marae* (place to gather together), and in stories often in Māori. The path of knowledge or enlightenment is seen to be difficult, sacred and not for the majority. The Yogic techniques aim to assist in the evolution of a collective human consciousness leading towards harmony in diversity and peaceful happy life (Vivekânanda, 1923; Chandra, 1989). Similarly, for some Māori, the goal of life appears to be

beyond individual self-realization, as a canoe for the spirit of the ancestors, focusing on a collective goal for the people (Moko Mead, 2005). This is represented in the circular relational concepts for each human being of *mana atua* (empowerment and ancestral forces), *mana whenua* (empowerment and land) and *mana tangata* (empowerment and people) (Salmond, 2012; Robinson 2005; www.maoridictionary.co.nz, 2014). In the words of Samuel Robinson (2005):

The purpose of life is to empower and be empowered by the mana of the land, the mana of the people and the mana of the atua, to be among those that renew the world, to make the world progress towards perfection and peace. Our mission is to be kaitiaki [guardian], a protector of the land, a guardian of the atua and carer of the people (p 278).

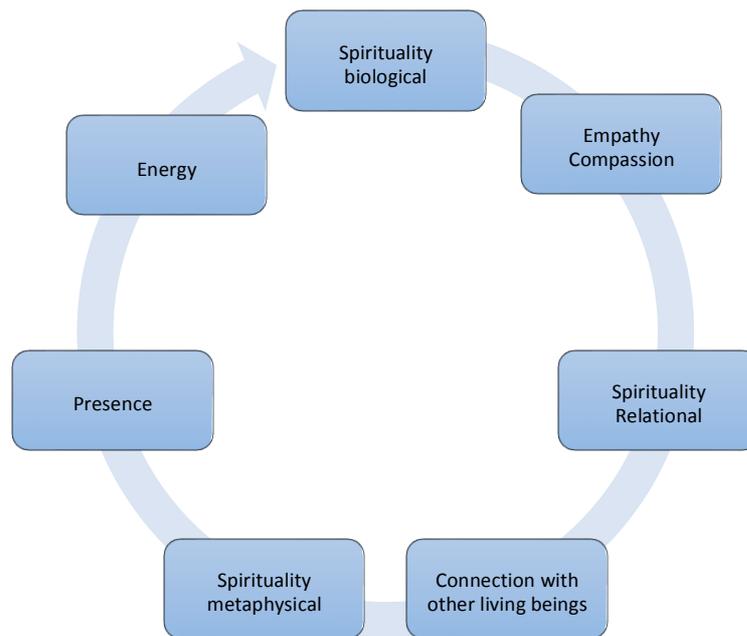
For traditional Māori, health was understood to be due to the flow of *mauri* (life force) from the *hāmano* (pure soul) through the spirit, through the *ata* (astral body) and into the physical body (Mark & Lyons, 2010). Any blockage in the flow of *mauri* (life force energy) could manifest as mental and physical illness (Robinson, 2005). A similar concept exists within Yoga as it is the flow of *prana* (life force energy) via subtle energetic channels of *nadi* and *chakra* that determines the health of the body (Swahananda, 1984). In this way of understanding, all disease is psychosomatic (or bio-psycho-social) and begins as blockages in the flow of *prana* (life force energy). All of life is viewed as being vitalised by *prana* (life force energy) and, as such, health is pragmatically reliant upon the quality of nutrition, genetics and other lifestyle factors.

Practices situated in the context of these two philosophies give rise to natural ethical laws related to human beings and the environment. In Yoga these natural laws are known as *yama* and *niyama* and simply mean the knowledge, practice and development of internal attitudes pertaining to both universal laws and individual ethical laws (Prasada, 1912). For Māori such ethical laws are known as *tikanga* (correct practices and protocols). Each tribe has its own particular *tikanga* (correct practices and protocols) shaped by the natural environment and history of the land and people. In general, however they are based upon similar notions of right conduct towards people and towards the natural world. Many of these values are beyond the individual human being and are concerned with the interconnected nature of reality seen and unseen (Moko Mead, 2005). In the words of one participant;

Tikanga are protocols and processes and ways of being and ways of doing that are across culture, across the realms as well. It's about

being accountable. For me, it's about tikanga being set out before us and acknowledging that those who have gone before us are still with us and still guiding and still watching and still there. Tikanga is not specific to Māori or whatever - it crosses all those gaps - it's about honesty and doing things purposively (Māori, female participant, 2012).

In these words we move towards an understanding of a relational spirituality, embedded and embodied in a relational field of awareness and connection (see fig. 2).



**Figure 2: Spirituality as a relational, metaphysical and biological field**

### **3:5 Conclusion**

This chapter has argued that, according to the study participants, spirituality was an interconnected relational and metaphysical process. The relevant biological processes are described in chapter seven. According to one Māori perspective and Yogic thought, the essence of being human develops when we begin to understand or realise that there are certain energies within the body that allow us to connect with all living things. The processes of communion involve the knowledge of who I am, relaxation and the ability to connect.

According to Sāṅkhya philosophy, the whole cosmos is energy. The whole cosmos is vibration. According to Yoga, the human being is uniquely equipped after processes of purification, pranayama, asana and meditation to connect with all frequencies of vibration

(Vivekânanda, 1923). Ultimately, Yoga is this awareness aligned with the capacity to connect internal energies and frequencies. However, there seems to be a distinction in that spiritual connections with others - including those who have gone before - are part of the mode of becoming oneself for Māori, whilst individual self-realisation and inner focus seem more important in classical Yoga. However, Sahaj Marg teachers emphasise a modern vision including connection with others, tolerance, and human integration (Rajagopalachari, 1999; Ram Chandra, 1991a, 1991b, 1991c). As such, the traditional practices have been simplified based upon spiritual heart rather than knowledge; feeling and intuition rather than solitude and austerity which brings them discernibly closer to the underlying beliefs of Māori practice. Both practices recognise the similar concepts of presence and *mana* (power).

In the next chapter, I describe in full the Māori-centred research methodology used in this thesis.

## **Chapter Four: Māori-Centred Research Design**

### **4:1 Summary**

This chapter outlines the methodological framework for this study. This project utilized a qualitative constructivist grounded theoretical approach, alongside Yogic and Māori research ethics and perspectives.

Theoretical issues are examined alongside the practical details of data sampling and analysis. The research participants are described in full, as are the research stages. The chapter aims to convey the steps in replicating this study, in spirit as well as in kind.

### **4:2 Grounded Theory and Justification of Approach**

Grounded theory emerged in 1967 through the works of Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Halberg, 2006). They sought to generate theory from qualitative research and this represented an alternative to the positivist quantitative research paradigm. Anselm Straus and Juliet Corbin (1990) later contributed a coding paradigm that highlighted an integrative approach and ‘streamlined’ a second level of coding or axial coding. Axial coding occurred after the initial open coding and re-examined the whole data by looking specifically at conditions, context, action/interactional strategies, and consequences (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, 1990, 1990b, 1994). Early grounded theorists saw data as discoverable and separate from the researcher (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Glaser, 1978). Later writers acknowledged the researcher as an active part of the theory generating process (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1998; Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Kathy Charmaz (2000, 2006) extended grounded theoretical methods further by arguing that data and theories were a coconstruction between the researcher, who was part of the world in question, and the data collected. Instead of discovery, it was a co-creation. The recent clarification of this debate as representing two positions namely the objectivist and the constructivist may be helpful (Bryant, 2002; Charmaz, 2000, 2006; Bryant & Charmaz, 2007).

Charmaz (2003) continued her argument by articulating a constructivist grounded theory in which the researcher enters the studied world, learning from the inside. A

constructivist grounded theory approach therefore requires a reflexive stance by the researcher as everything is data, although this is a point of agreement between all grounded theoretical approaches' (Glaser & Holton, 2004). It is the meaning, action and process in social situations that give ontologically rich and pragmatic data (Charmaz, 2006). This stance assumes multiple and changing human realities which the researcher studies from within these perspective/s (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007; Charmaz, 2009). This is also an intrinsic and essential aspect for any research on spirituality (Prajnananda, 1971). It requires the quality of presence within the researcher and a willingness to engage deeply with one's own spiritual nature and embodied identity, alongside the meaning, action and process of the participants' lived world (Charmaz, 2006). There was a Yogic skill called *sthithi* which appeared to develop within me during the time of this project. *Sthithi* is the capacity to determine objectively and dispassionately one's current spiritual place or position, to be able to plan's one's method. This was a necessary skill in order to engage with the participant's material. However, I combined the capacity of *sthithi* with rigorous checking of views/ findings with other meditators in all seminars that I found myself (formally and informally) and with Māori *whānau* (Tolich, 2001; Hallberg, 2006). This allowed a viewing of the resulting mental and emotional self-organisation from many different perspectives (Crohy, 1998).<sup>50</sup>

In terms of both Māori *matauranga* (epistemology) and Yogic epistemology, I acknowledge the depth of the ontologies from which they spring:

The question is what is *Matauranga Māori*? *Matauranga Māori* is simply the epistemology of Māori - what it is that underpins and gives point and meaning to Māori knowledge. *Whakapapa* is the skeletal structure to Māori epistemology (Sharp & McHugh, 2001, p. 67).

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<sup>50</sup> In addition, the Yogic researchers argue that spiritual topics require investigation by those who are adepts in matters of spirituality. I am clear that this would provide many benefits as the light of direct experience generally provides useful insights. The Yogic scientist is described by Shri Babuji Ram Chandra. His first criterion is that: "the worker must be a Yogi of high calibre, with full experience and knowledge of all the super-conscious states. The thinking should be correct. Even if you think only a little, that should be correct, and the signal from the heart should verify it" (Ram Chandra, 1991c, p. 9). I found this somewhat daunting. As one participant said: "the only one qualified to research the *Master* is the *Master* himself" (Indian female participant, 2013).

*Whakapapa* (genealogy) is a deeply spiritual process of relationship and connection with life; it affects notions of space and time;<sup>51</sup> and notions of history and family (Moko Mead, 2005). In the following quote, we may gain a glimpse of the depth of the knowledge contained, nourished and accessible within *whakapapa* (genealogy):

We Ngāi Tahu have extensive whakapapa that define and order our weather patterns and other meteorological phenomena. Like all whakapapa, the descent line reaches back to the atua - who are often misleadingly equated with western 'gods'. Thus knowledge of whakapapa brought one closer to the atua and reinforced the spiritual relationship (Te Maire Tau in Sharp & McHugh, 2001, p. 66).

For any researcher to enter into this understanding without previous exposure to the meaning, actions, and social processes of the cultures is difficult (Carr & McCallum, 2009). I have relied upon a reflective, intuitive and responsive stance, which acknowledges my own cultural roots, alongside appropriate clarification with Māori and others in Sahaj Marg who had deep knowledge (Tolich, 2001; Smith, 2012). I did not become an expert in Māoricentred research but I did attempt to recognise this paradigm and honour its importance for this study (Smith, 2012; Bazeley, 2009).

### **4:3 Methods of Inquiry**

The main methods of data collection in all schools of grounded theory are in-depth, open ended questions, participant observations and reading relevant documents in order to get a '360 degree' view of the area of interest (Chen & Boore, 2008). This fits well with the study of spiritual questions and communities. An additional requirement for the researcher of the inner world of human experience is the capability to have realised a certain level of approach or consciousness. In a sense, this is to be familiar with the inner world that one is entering (Jyotirmayananda, 2006). Accordingly, I was a prefect in the Sahaj Marg community.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> According to Te Maire Tau "Māori cannot impose a chronological order upon Rangi and Papa, saying that they lived in some distant past, when *Rangi* (the Sky Father) and *Papatūānuku* (the Earth Mother) are standing directly before us in the present. Likewise with our ancestors whom we continue to communicate with,

regardless of whether they died yesterday, last year, or a decade ago. The Māori perception of the past is not the same as that held by *Pākehā*” (cited in Te Pouhere Korero, 1999, p. 11).

This knowledge is not taught, accepted or encouraged within *Pākehā* culture as a whole. However, there are many individual *Pākehā* who hold similar understandings and lived experiences, in respect to their ancestors, as Māori. I include myself in this latter group and I attribute this to my Celtic roots and being parented by my mother, a twin. This experience opened up understandings of relational connectedness not constrained by space or time; alongside an awareness of my interrelationship with all other forms of life and consciousness.

<sup>56</sup> A *prefect* or *preceptor* is one who is permitted to do the work of the teacher (master) in terms of spiritual training and conveying heart conditions to those new to meditation.

During the course of the research, I was required to develop and gain additional understanding of all eight branches of Ashtanga Yoga and studied for a postgraduate diploma in Yoga Therapy and Stress Management in a traditional Vedic University and *gurukula* environment in India. At the end of this process I was invited to go into thirty days of primarily silent spiritual retreat in order to: i) reflect deeply, ii) test out practically some of the findings, and iii) seek internal revelation. In addition, there was natural access to many experienced meditation practitioners, including Madam Helen (the scribe of a number of important revealed Sahaj Marg books). I frequently sent progress updates to the Sahaj Marg current Master - Shri Parthasarathi Rajagopalachari - and his designated successor, Shri Kamlesh Patel,<sup>52</sup> both of whom offered an attitude of open hospitality towards my queries.

I also maintained contact with Māori participants through email and later through face-to-face conversations.

A similar process occurred prior to embarking on the research with Māori as I participated in a *raranga* (flax weaving) course based at a *wananga* (education provided in a Māori cultural context) for one year. This involved regular weekend *hui* (meetings), communal living and coming alongside other traditional weavers in a Māori environment. Participation and developing a beginner’s knowledge of *tikanga* (customary protocols) was expected including: *karakia* (prayer), *waiata* (song) and protocols with the plants, meals and physical environment. I have had a variety of relationships and played several different roles with many of the Māori participants.

Given the nature of the area of inquiry, it was crucial that the researcher enter the world of spirituality and not take a detached stance towards it (Giri, 2007). Whilst ordinarily this would raise questions of validity being the opposite of an objective scientific

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<sup>52</sup> This does not imply that my findings or conclusions are in accordance with the views of these two Sahaj Marg leaders.

position (Taylor & Francis, 2013; Airasian & Walsh, 1997), it is considered indispensable in the areas of inquiry in this thesis where intersubjective validity is more appropriate (Smith, 2012; Bryant & Charmaz, 2007). It is unlikely that participants of either group would have shared as freely with me had they felt that their inner knowledge was not properly entered into by, or comprehensible to, the listener (Jahnke & Gillies, 2012).

I have taken the stance as a researcher that it would have been disrespectful and unethical to approach the nature of the phenomenon being studied without possessing substantial ability to understand what was being said through a non-secular/material lens (Giri, 2007 & 2008; Carr & McCallum, 2009; Cooney, 2010). It is therefore reassuring to note that many of the stages of consciousness that I experienced are well documented by all Yogic masters (Prabhavananda, 2012). The methods of inquiry, under which I trained, conform to classical Ashtanga Yoga requirements.<sup>53</sup> Furthermore, throughout this study I presented the data analysis and findings to secular and spiritual audiences via conference papers, published articles and focus groups. In this way, I checked my interpretations with others (Chenail, 1995).<sup>54</sup>

#### 4:4 Sampling

I utilized the grounded theory purposive sampling technique (Chen & Bore, 2008). In this approach, interview sampling often begins with a few individuals who are viewed as having capacity to explore the issues (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Kvale, 1996). It is usual from a grounded theorist perspective to enter the research community via known social networks (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Charmez, 2000). In this thesis, Māori participants emerged through processes of relationship, trust building and *whakapapa* (genealogy) For example, “When my cousin asked me to talk with you, and another family member e-mailed me, and then we came and spoke face-to-face (*Kanohi ki te kanohi*). I knew then that I wanted to meet you and be involved”. Similar processes have occurred with Sahaj Marg participants. This is an example of a snowballing process, following initial purposive

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<sup>53</sup> *Ashtanga* yoga includes all eight aspects of Yogic training, i.e., self-control, rules of conduct, posture, control of breath, withdrawal of sensory perceptions, concentration, uninterrupted meditation and *samadhi* (effortless meditation, absorption, equilibrium). Raja Yoga is concerned with the last three practices and assumes that the other aspects are present.

<sup>54</sup> The speed of spiritual development of consciousness depends upon the aspiration of the candidate and for some can take as short a time as seven months and for others it may take considerably longer.

sampling (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). David Silverman and Amir Marvasti (2008) encourage this approach:

As a qualitative researcher, you should be especially open to chance learning. Indeed, qualitative methods incorporate chance into the research process. For example, snowball sampling (e.g., asking a contact to introduce you to another and letting the sample exponentially grow from there) is a method of data gathering based upon chance meetings. Similarly, grounded theory, inductivism, and open ended or unstructured questions are all founded on the belief that researchers cannot know from the start where their observations may lead (p 122).

For the second branch of inquiry with Māori I have been an outsider, which posed its own difficulties in understanding and meaning making (Smith, 2012). Māori research ethics suggest that all research begins with a respect for the people, which includes allowing people to define their own space (Moko Mead, 2005; Carr & McCallum, 2009). Māori participants initiated tribal consultation within the *iwi* (tribe) before participants made contact with me. For both communities, my sincere willingness to immerse in the worldview and paradigms of understanding was important (Ruwhiu & Cone, 2010).

For each meeting with Māori participants *whakawhanaungatanga* (process of relating well to others and community relationship) was established as both parties spoke to their connections and how they connected to the other research participants. A remarkably similar process occurred with Sahaj Marg practitioners as the interviews developed from shared experiences with the master and connections with others. *Kanohi ki te kanohi* (faceto-face) contact was important and occurred at an individual level between researcher and participants. This was also important with the Sahaj Marg community, as Dr K.S. Balasubramanian - at that time involved in the research branch of SRCM - first issued the invitation to do research within the community.

I met with Sahaj Marg master Parthasarathi Rajagopalachari and asked him who would be suitable as participants for the study (Malaysia Inauguration of Ashram Seminar, 2011). He responded: "I do not know. Follow your heart". This was an unusual way of selecting the sample of participants and made me feel a little nervous. However, this combined with purposive and snowballing sampling methods was appropriate (Smith, 2012; Shastri, 1976). Nevertheless, it is possible that the over representation of females in this study represents this sampling style and the practical fact that I was often in close

quarters with women. I am aware that gender was not the main variable of interest in this study yet this discrepancy may suggest the need for future studies that examine spiritual brother-sisterhood, connection with *tūpuna* (ancestors), *atua* (ancestral forces that generate and animate particular realms of reality) and *Master* alongside gender (Airasian & Walsh, 1997). However, within grounded theory it is appropriate that I interviewed those who had knowledge of the area, rather than seeking even gender representation:

The sampling process in grounded theory research proceeds on theoretical grounds. Theoretical sampling means that the study sample is not set prior to starting data collection, but rather that participants or other data sources are selected purposefully as the analysis progresses for the ability to provide data that would confirm, challenge or expand on emerging theory. Further sampling is undertaken not for the purpose of representation of a population but in order to develop further emerging analytical considerations (Kennedy & Lyngard, 2006, p. 105).

Fieldwork in foreign countries with a diversity of cultures is not a simple process and is suited to grounded theories responsiveness and flexibility towards data gained in the real world (Charmaz, 2000). It may not provide a participant sample that is representative or homogenous according to positivist science (Airasian & Walsh, 1997). However, its strength is the potentially rich grounded data from those that understand and have knowledge of the phenomenon being studied (Charmaz, 2000, 2003, 2006). A semi-structured interview and question style is common within grounded methods to guide the interview; however, spontaneous questions, exploration and development of responses are equally desirable and appropriate (Reinharz, 1992; Kvale, 1996). Within this study, I had some ideas of possible questions and developed a general outline that refined and expanded in response to the research process. These questions included:

- What is Spiritual brother-sisterhood?
- How is Spiritual brother-sisterhood understood from within Raja Yoga?
- How is Spiritual brother-sisterhood understood by Māori participants?
- How does it differ from Kotahitanga *oneness of purpose*?
- Do we only live in a political world?
- Within the Marae, does tikanga contribute to spiritual brother-sisterhood?
- What does Spiritual brother-sisterhood feel like?
- What practical experience do we have of this concept?
- Is Spiritual brother-sisterhood the correct term to use for the concepts being shared?

- I wonder whether there are any images that express the essence of what Spiritual brother-sisterhood means to you? · How does Spiritual brother-sisterhood become steadfast?
- What makes you continue to be in brother-sisterhood when people can disappoint?
- What moral/ ethical changes would you see in your country, family, and friends if we all practiced spiritual brothersisterhood?

Not all interviews covered all of these question areas, yet all interviews began with one common question, i.e., “What does spiritual brother-sisterhood mean to you?” It is a common practice in grounded theory to have a central question as, “The question driving a grounded theory is purposefully open and broad allowing the researcher to discover relevant variables in the data” (Somekh & Lewin, 2011, p. 116). Similar to other studies my broad question allowed the interviews to be spontaneous and responsive, as participants spoke from their own level of experience and consciousness (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006).

Initially my broad question was, “What does spiritual brotherhood mean to you?” which was altered in response to meaning making with Māori participants. This is an ordinary aspect of constructivist reiterative process. This following interview excerpt is illustrative of the beginning of an iterative process and search for shared meaning:

Māori Participant: It is really awkward brotherhood, spiritual brotherhood. Really, to me it's just awkward but as I said, you know all babies start as female and in each of us we have te taha tane (*male*) and te taha wahine (*female*). So we're all made up of both. We have a male side and we have a female side. Its probably why through menopause women grow whiskers.

Researcher: Awkward because it creates a barrier?

Māori Participant: It is an awkward term. I do not think so much about the barrier. My first impression was the monks you know. Then the ‘brotherhood of man’ because they used to sing some really nice songs (not that I remember any of them). I also had Woodstock and all that kind of stuff went through my head. I think throughout the ages people are tribal/ clannish. People are community-ish. But yes I suppose if I think of myself as part of the iwi and that is where I am comfortable. If there are three of us and we are all sitting down weaving our wairua – there's a sisterhood, a brotherhood, a motherhood and a fatherhood because our harakeke (*flax plant*) is a whanau (*family*). So with our harakeke we have our karakia (*prayer*). For me I always give thanks to our earth mother, our sky father and the sun for providing this taonga (*treasure*). So spiritual brotherhood – it could just mean anything. Actually, it could mean anything. It

could be interpreted. Different people will have their own interpretation spiritually.

Researcher: So the kinds of words that I am hearing are family, spirit in the physical world. So this connection with all and as that gets bigger and bigger the unsaid connection between each of us, the connection with the past and the future? What would the world look like if people were more aware of this? You are saying that Māori are aware of this? Māori Participant: We would have a happier place wouldn't we? (*Example of local authorities removing a grass area to make a concrete parking area*). With everything that modern technology does on one side and then we've got people saying, whole communities saying, that we can't be destroying the rain forest. We need to be protecting papatuanuku (*earth mother*) because she can only give off so much and then she will die basically. So the spirit of the land is getting weaker and you have people who say we need to progress and move forward, that is why you have to do these things. I think that is power and greed.

In response to participants' experience, the opening broad question was re-termed spiritual brother-sisterhood, yet framed in universal terms akin to kotahitanga *oneness of purpose*. As time went on, I would re-examine the original data according to new insights as I developed theoretical sensitivity. Somekh and Lewin (2011) define theoretical sensitivity as "...the ability on the part of an analyst to respond to nuances or implied meaning in the data. Theoretical sensitivity grows over time as analysts 'work' with the data" (p. 116).

Following the practise of constructivist grounded theory I simultaneously collected, coded, analysed data throughout the research process. Analysis of data began immediately and as categories and convergences emerged, participants were re-contacted (Charmaz, 2000; Cooney, 2010; Bazeley, 2009). For example, the preliminary convergences between relevant Māori and Sankhya thought developed into a publication with Māori participants through discussion and amendment. Participants were interested in the similarities in understanding. This perspective was evident within the data from one participant who was a member of both participant groups and was describing her experience at an Indian Himalayan ashram called Satkhol:

But one thing I do remember was this. In one meditation, I remember seeing a tupuna (*ancestor*) in the sky. He cut a massive figure. Wearing the traditional cloak across one shoulder, holding a tiahā in one hand with a white feather in his hair, I felt so

privileged that someone was here for me. One year later at my father's dinner table, I felt this person looking at me. When I looked around, I saw this photo of that tupuna (*ancestor*) I had seen in the skies in Satkhol. When I mentioned this to my father, his casual response floored me when I told him the story. He said, 'I'm not surprised. There is some thought that Maori originated from the Himalaya's and that tupuna (*ancestor*) is where your middle name originates from Te Koharangi - A gift from God.'

In another piece of writing generated from the data, one participant responded in a manner illustrative of the support and enthusiasm given by participants to this study's theoretical construction: "As for the new paper that is evolving 'spiritual brotherhood from Maori perspective.' I would love to partake in it, I think I could also help find some other volunteers in particular kaumatua (*elders*) - happy to ask my father who always willing to give his views. So let me know what needs to be done" (Māori participant, 2012).

#### 4:5 Indigenous Research Methods

Aroha mai, aroha atu

(Love towards us, love going out from us).

(<http://www.massey.ac.nz/massey/maori/events/maori-month/korero/maori-proverbs.cfm>)

language-

"Asian traditions do not privilege scientific methods of observation above the intuitive illumination of the original mind but rather see these as complementary forms of knowing" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 217).

Indigenous research methods are grounded within a knowledge paradigm that is holistic, intuitive, connected, relational and accountable (Smith, 2012; Tolich, 2001; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Knowledge is often shared orally through stories; subjectivity is valued and there are relational ethics (Tolich, 2001; Smith, 2012).

The process of entering this world could be described as a series of happenings and the first indication that it was an indigenous research paradigm that I was entering began immediately. I would like to share this in full.

One day I had an unexpected and strong intense feeling that I wanted to volunteer my services to Sahaj Marg - the free meditation and Raja Yoga training that I had been attending for several years. Although it sounds naïve, I had no idea of what this might involve or even what I was volunteering for. I sent a generic e-mail and received a reply

from Dr. K.S. Balasubramanian inviting me to do PhD research on Sahaj Marg. I was surprised. Over the following months, I proposed several quantitative research designs relating to spirituality and various health variables. The community for inquiry did not accept these. I became perplexed and wrote an email-asking master Rajagopalachari what topics would be suitable and useful for inquiry. His response was relayed back to me: “Tell her she is to do what she loves the most”. This also seemed unhelpful as my heart suggested that I loved the inner *Master* the most. I was uncertain how to subject this to academic scrutiny. Over the next few months, I realised that the invitation for this project came with its own rules and I settled into meditation and contemplation as part of the methodology, in accordance with Yogic research methods (Prabhavananda, 2012; Shastri, 1976; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). During one meditation session the inquiries question came forward in my mind. I then wrote and asked for permission to research the question, which was duly granted

(see Appendix 1). Shortly after this, a member from the Māori community volunteered to give their perspective on the topic, saying: “A First Nation’s perspective on this would be good”.

Perhaps understandably, this thesis has taken the view that any research on spirituality requires a paradigm that allows flexibility, recognition of the appropriate worldview and its ontology, and capability of understanding meaning from within that value base (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Giri, 2007). By nature, indigenous research methods nest within a relational, contextual and spiritual ontology (Smith, 2012; Marsden, 2003). Māoricentred research is based upon Māori values and pays particular attention to the following: *manaaki* (hospitality), meaning to show respect or kindness between people; *aroha* (love) which is to show care, empathy, charity and respect; *hāu* (breath), which means to respect, promote and maintain vitality; *kaitiakitanga* (guardianship), which includes stewardship, guardianship and wise use of resources; and *hāpai* meaning to uplift others (Spiller, Erakovic, Henare, & Pio, 2011; Tolich, 2001; Smith, 2012). In particular, there is acknowledgement of the role of human beings who act as caretakers of the *mauri* (the life principle/ spirit in nature) and each other (Tolich, 2001). These are not theoretical concepts but rather enlivened and vital knowledge.

These concepts suggested to me that, to gather rich stories about spiritual brothersisterhood, we might need to do this within a group context. Together we might

shed some light on the phenomena being studied and its influence in the world of materiality. From these realizations, a qualitative study design emerged based upon the possibility of listening to the stories of those who devoted time to a spiritual practice, including meditation. Wilber (2000) has identified a three-fold epistemology consisting of: i) empirical/ analytical ways of understanding the world, ii) hermeneutic/ phenomenological or expressive ways of understanding perhaps our mental and social worlds, and iii) paradoxical/ mandala based way of understanding the world of spirit. I was initially confident that this would give good quality data and validity. However, as I began to explore this topic and listened to scoping interviews/stories, it became apparent that story-telling and sharing stories could give deeper understandings of connections whilst the semi-structured questions could be in some ways limiting, if they were allowed to be (Denzing & Lincoln, 2011). It was only when everyone's part was shared in a story that the interconnected nature of the web of life became more visible.

There are areas where grounded theory and Māori-centred research methods are similar. Constructionist grounded theory is ideally suited to value the prominence of indigenous epistemology to guide research and interpretation. The role of oral knowledge is recognised, whilst valuing the holistic and contextual nature of knowledge. Furthermore both approaches support the importance of the researcher's knowledge and relationships within the area; whilst the indigenous perspective leads the interpretation of results. The concept of *kia tūpato* (safe practice) which means that the researcher is safe, reflective about outsider status, and considerate of political and other ramifications (Tolich, 2001) - fits well with the requirement for a grounded research practitioner to be reflective throughout the research process (Charmaz, 2006). In this study a combination of semi-structured individual interviews, focus group sessions, participant observation, co-construction with participants, and shared stories were utilized to systematically give a 360 degree view of the phenomenon (Chen & Boore, 2008).

#### **4:6 Ethics**

The basic question of ethics is 'how should we live?' a very inclusive and holistic question. As such, ethics are guiding principles for our treatment of each other and in human research, it is vital that such principles prevail in order to prevent misuses of power.

For some, ethics in practice is relative to a culture; the rules of conduct recognized in respect to a particular class of human actions or a particular group.<sup>55</sup> Thus, we have medical ethics, Christian ethics, legal ethics, indigenous ethics, spiritual ethics, and cultural ethics and so on (Clark & Poortenga, 2003; McGinn, 1997).

This research proposal complied with the University of Otago's contemporary ethics review process, which included both the University of Otago's Research Consultation with Māori Process and the University of Otago Ethics Committee. The underlying principles and purpose of such committees have some similarity with Vedic ethics in the sense that they recognise the sanctity of the human being. However, Vedic ethics differ in that they govern a practical teaching that promotes a way of living in the world that will be more clearly outlined in later chapters.

When one is working in Māori-centred research, it is important to recognise additional ethical requirements, including *manaaki ki te tangata* (hospitality to the people). This predicates a research relationship based upon a collaborative approach, care for, and sensitivity to, those involved and reciprocity. It was a natural awareness and appreciation that both parties were contributing and sharing with each other (Smith 2012). These particular ethical requirements informed this project's open interview style, the disclosures of the researcher, and the ways in which interviews were conducted with contemplative practices built-in, including: *waiata* (song), *karakia* (prayer), active acknowledgement of the *tūpuna* (ancestors), and silence. In addition, interview transcripts were shared with the individual participants to allow for changes, in thanks, and in a symbolic recognition of that which was gifted.

There are implications regarding just how to build-in reciprocity into this particular project. Other writers suggest that creating opportunities for participants to be co-authors and propose different ways of disseminating information back to them as worthwhile ways

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<sup>55</sup> Sahaj Marg teaching gives a similar understanding of ethics as that held within Māori *whakapapa* (genealogy) and *tikanga* (customary protocols). "Ethics reflect one's attitude to one's behaviour, to one's interpersonal relationship with other human beings. In essence, it is what guides our relationship with the external universe. I think, rather unfortunately, there is a tendency to imagine that ethics apply only to behaviour towards human beings. Perhaps that is the most important aspect of ethics or ethical behaviour, but from my Master's teaching I understand that the concept of ethics must be a total concept, a global concept—in modern terminology—which embraces all life. In the illimitability of the ancient Indian Vedic concept, life includes everything from mineral particles to Divinity itself. Therefore ethics governs our relationship to all life, all nature, as we understand it - how we treat minerals, how we treat plants, how we treat animals, birds, angels, even Gods" (Rajagopalachari, 1999, p. 23 Salient Features).

of showing reciprocity and avoiding alienation of the participants from the research (Tolich, 2001). This required ongoing awareness of appropriate reverence throughout the research project and respecting the absolute requirement that Māori participants were not reduced to a marginalised or less-than other status (Smith, 2012). The process and reporting needed to reflect human decency and a common humanity, respecting and honouring what was shared, and a willingness to use the outcome for the good of those who shared to help provide it. As such, most presentations of the narratives, or academic paper in the academic community, included participants at the telling and involved silence, *waiata* (song) and/or *karakia* (prayer) before the paper was shared. Participants engaged with the audience in meaning making. Beyond this, I felt that it required the attitude whereby I did not view this as ‘my topic’ but rather a process of dialogue between the two communities of interest (YuvalDavis, 1997). It required a comfort with uncertainty, not knowing, a willingness to suspend decisions for as long as possible, and trying not to think in English language terms about the indigenous knowledge being conveyed (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

One primary ethical issue guiding this project was confidentiality. Given the sensitive nature of the material and the small communities involved, it was difficult to ensure that people were not recognisable. For the most part people remained aware of this and, as the project advanced, the researcher was able to show how the information was being reported and where it was being shared, for example, at seminars and conferences. Participants were able to indicate which information they were happy to share and which information they were not. This was facilitated by distributing the typed transcripts amongst participants. During the pre-scoping stage of the research, full written and oral permission was given by participants for their views to be included in this thesis.

For the Māori process, *kaumātua* (elders with knowledge of tradition and protocol) were involved in an ongoing, natural way as the author found herself unexpectedly meeting and discussing the research (Tolich, 2001; Jahnke & Gillies, 2012; Carr & McCallum, 2009).

As initial collected material was developed into articles, Māori and Sahaj Marg participants were invited to read, give feedback, and encouraged to alter anything that was not conveyed correctly. Senior prefects in Sahaj Marg. also reviewed article drafts and other documentation prepared for inclusion in the thesis. At a departmental seminar where I

presented research findings, Māori participants came and entered into a *kanohi ki te kanohi* (face-to-face) process with the audience. The material was presented after *karakia* and *waiata*. Māori participants answered questions and endorsed the findings. *Kanohi kitea* (the face that is seen) is another important cultural process, which speaks to the need to have ongoing relationships. It is planned that shared writing projects and authorship arising from the study, with Māori participants will be developed after the thesis is submitted. Also prior to journal submission, several articles were given to the communities of interest for review and permission to share with a wider audience. Throughout tribal information did not identify Māori participants and I did not include cultural information when it seemed that confidentiality would be compromised.

#### **4:7 Consultation and Permission**

Dr. K.S. Balasubramanian, PhD, Assistant Director, Kuppuswami Research Institute, was available to provide additional expertise in the areas of Yoga and Sahaj Marg. He has post-graduate qualifications in Sanskrit and Yoga (MA Sanskrit, PhD Hatha Yoga, and PhD Yoga).<sup>56</sup> He also issued the invitation for me to pursue PhD study on Sahaj Marg (2010). The faculty at the Rashtriya Sanskrit Vidyapeetha Yoga Therapy Department gave significant academic assistance during my postgraduate study. Written permission was given by Sahaj Marg Spiritual Teacher, Parthasarathi Rajagopalachari, for this research topic to be examined (see Appendix 1, May 2011). Regular consultation occurred with him and his nominated successor, Kamlesh Patel throughout the research period. Research Consultation with Māori Process was followed and consultation was undertaken with Hine Forsyth, Rūnanga Council Ngai Tahu. Therefore, the project was placed as an agenda item with the Rūnanga (November 2011).

#### **4:8 Literature Search**

An extensive literature search utilized the following databases: Medline, Web of Knowledge, Scopus, CINAHL, Google Scholar, Google, Te Puna and alerts from journals to include new, relevant releases. Books and articles came from specialist libraries in India and New Zealand. Reading of relevant Yogic philosophical texts was possible from such

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<sup>56</sup> I had one meeting with this scholar to discuss this project and the good fortune to listen to several of his live webcam speeches on the Bhagavad Gita and Sahaj Marg (Manapakkum Ashram, 2013).

specialist libraries as: i) the Shri Ram Chandra Mission Library at Tirupati Ashram, Tirupati, India; ii) the Shri Ram Chandra Mission Library at Manapakkum Ashram, Chennai, India; iii) the Shri Ram Chandra Mission Library at Natrampali, Tamil Nadu, India; iv) the Shri Ram Chandra Crest Research Centre Library, Bangalore, India; and v) the Rashtriya Sanskrit Vidyapeetha Library, Tirupati, India.

Reading of relevant texts on Māori philosophy came from specialist collections such as the University of Otago Te Aka a Tāwhaki collection; and consultation took place with

Te Tumu research unit, University of Otago, Aotearoa New Zealand regarding appropriate texts to scrutinize on Māori cosmology, *tikanga*/ protocol, and nature of body and worldview.

#### **4:9 Recording of Research Data and My Reflective Process**

The author kept extensive field notes for all Sahaj Marg seminars attended throughout the duration of the study (see Appendix 2). In accordance with grounded theoretical methods, extensive memos and field noting of interviews were maintained (Glaser, 1998; Mills, Bonner, & Francis, 2006; Mills, Bonner, & Francis, 2006a).

All interactions with Māori participants were recorded and reflective introspection notes maintained. Insights pertinent to the researcher's preparation for this research and glimpses into Māori lived world occurred during my 2011 attendance at the *wananga*, Waitati, Aotearoa New Zealand, twelve-month course on *raranga* (weaving). In addition, whilst acting as a member of the Aotearoa New Zealand Association Social Workers Governance Board (2011-2012), I learnt a great deal from interaction with *Tangata Whenua* (people of the land)<sup>57</sup> and *kaumātua* (elder) on *tikanga* (customary protocols) and bi-cultural process. It is not wise to take this out of context, however informal conversations about brother-sisterhood were shared.

For the purposes of this study, the researcher recorded and maintained a daily record of events, synchronicity, behaviours and reflections that occurred both cognitively

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<sup>57</sup> *Tangata Whenua* is the Māori term given to the 'people of the land'; those with the role of guardian and maintaining the *mauri* and responsibilities towards all living beings.

and materially. In accordance with Yogic research, meditation was included as a method. This included meditating upon the material generated by participants in order to gain insight. Information gained in this way was also recorded. A personal diary of 40,000 words developed alongside the field notes. Throughout the study, the author collected reflexive information and data on how interview information was progressing and recorded theoretical connections as they occurred. Field information was collected by digital media (voice recorder, video recorder, camera and Skype) and written notes.

#### **4:10 Publications and Presentations**

A number of conferences were attended and various aspects of the research was placed in view of academic peers (See Appendix 3). Two articles were published in academic journals.<sup>58</sup> Two chapters were requested and accepted for the respective books: i) Dr A. Giri, *Practical Spirituality*, Madras Institute of Development Studies, Chennai (Human beings evolving into a higher level of communion and ethical relating with one another), and ii) Dr Pradeep Dhakal, *Non-killing Peace traditions*, Chetanalaya Institute for Humanity, Peace and Spirituality, Nepal & the University of Hawaii (Ahimsa and non-killing traditions).

For all presentations, including this thesis I have shared participant interview excerpts. I have chosen excerpts for their clarity and as being representative of themes throughout my entire study.

#### **4:11 Instruments**

These were the research instruments: Olympus Digital Voice Recorder WS-760M, MAC Computer (Microsoft Office software), Skype and Facebook Chat, E-mail, Video recorder, Diary, and the Researcher.

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<sup>58</sup> Joyce, J. (2014). Bildung, meditation and safe haven. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 19(7): 54 – 61.

Joyce, J. (2014b). The essence of Yoga is beyond. *International Journal of Yoga and Allied Sciences*, 2(2): 120-131.

#### **4:12 Transcription**

The recordings of one focus group and one interview were externally transcribed. All other interviews and focus group recordings were transcribed by the researcher. The transcription protocol reported exactly what was said by participants. The author recorded additional notes for unusual features such as long silences, emotion and other non-verbal cues necessary for understanding context.

All interviews were transcribed within 1 - 4 days of being recorded in order for the researcher to place words in reasonable non-verbal and social context. Notes were maintained during the interview to assist in accuracy (but not to the extent of diminishing the flow and rapport between researcher and participant). Whilst there is some argument that this is disruptive to the grounded theory engagement, I found it a useful practice for staying close to the data and developing theoretical sensitivity.

The transcription of the focus group recordings was accompanied by written information about the seating arrangement; the order in which people spoke to aid voice recognition of the recording (in order to connect pieces of each participant's story) alongside the recording of non-verbal behaviours such as eye contact, posture, gestures between group members, crying, or fidgeting; and the themes that stood out. Because most of the recordings were fully transcribed by the researcher, the data benefitted from having the transcriber herself knowing who was speaking (Krueger, 1994).

Focus group transcription involved initial colour coding of each participant's verbal contribution in order to analyse group composition, and to identify dominant views and any gender or personality bias (Krueger, 1994). Once transcribed, individual interviews were emailed to participants with a request to check for accuracy and the invitation to add to the interviews or make retractions as required. In the later stages of the research the interviews were recorded by hand whilst the participant was speaking and meaning clarified at the time. This was useful with those for whom English was their second language and those who were advanced meditators who tended to come alongside the investigator and give key points of information for very short periods of time and were not interested in being taped.

#### **4:13 Grounded Theory Process**

Within a grounded theory approach the process of data collection involves a simultaneous process of coding and analysis of those data (Charmaz, 2000, 2006, 2009). This is an organic process that allows the researcher to stay sensitive to the needs of the research question and responsive to changes of direction and, therefore, modifying what information to collect next (Glaser, 1967). It involves a purposive development of research participants. Glaser (1992) suggests that researchers first collect data in the field and then begin the process of coding with an action-reflection-integration model of constant comparison and recoding as necessary. This iterative approach was followed throughout this study providing refinement, expansion and challenge of the studies modest theory (Kennedy & Lingard, 2006; Collier & Mahoney, 1996).

##### **4:13:1 Preliminary Scoping of the Topic of Interest**

For this study, the first source of field sampling came from an observation and filming over five days of a large meditation *bhandara* (celebration) held in Northern India just outside the city of Lucknow (2010). Participants at the gathering (40,000 approximately) came from all around the globe and represented a range of cultures including, although not limited to: Indian, English, Russian, Belorussian, Irish, New Zealander, Australian, German, French, South African, Swiss, French, Japanese and Chinese.

The film followed a process whereby the researcher filmed wherever she found herself. It began with the arrival of the spiritual master/ teacher at the airport and continued until his leaving from the same airport. Footage was recorded within the accommodation, dining, meditation hall and teacher's cottage. The film was then edited as a 'slice of life of a celebration' chronologically. I then watched the documentary many times recording observations, themes and questions. At this stage, I was observing behaviours, interactions, and the feel of the celebration, alongside routines and daily structure. The film was returned to Sahaj Marg at the end of this process (2010/2011). Alongside this, the formal application and proposal for PhD study took place.

During the celebration, I developed a primary research question: What does spiritual brother-sisterhood mean to you? This was revealed during deep meditation outside

the teacher's cottage. This fits with notions of indigenous researchers whereby there is an allowing of 'intuitive illumination' of the mind as opposed to solely 'sensible intuition' based only upon data from the physical senses (Kashima, 2005; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

In addition two individual interviews were trailed to see whether an open interview style based on only one question generated useful data. The interviews were analysed for themes and direct quotes emerged regarding a working definition (Chen & Boore, 2008). These two participants came from Australia (male) and Ireland (female) and were spiritual trainers within the Raja Yoga tradition being studied. The researcher selected them purposefully as they were present during many of the filming opportunities and instrumental in facilitating access to many aspects of the *bhandara* (celebration). They gave full written and oral permission for their views to be included in this thesis.

At this stage, I began to examine the literature from a range of perspectives: anthropological, cultural, applied health sciences, philosophical and spiritual. In this way, the understanding of the research question developed over a period of six months. Preexamining the field in this way is not common within grounded theoretical methods, as the researcher does not want to impose ideas or assumption onto the phenomenon. However, Thornberg (2012) argues that one can use literature in a constructive and data sensitive way without forcing the data. I found the preparation time useful to ascertain novelty and originality of the area of research. The real world setting was widely spread geographically and the use of the documentary assisted in preparation for extensive fieldwork.

#### **4:13:2 Preparation of the Researcher**

I was nominated and accepted onto a four-week residential scholarship-training program on Raja Yoga in India with thirty other practitioners from all around the world. Participants came from China, Japan, Philippines, Vietnam, South Korea, Russia, Estonia, Ukraine, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Peru, Nepal, Haiti, America, New Zealand, Kazakhstan, Italy, Spain, Brazil, France, Switzerland, India, Romania, and Slovakia.

Participants had a full program of individual meditation, group meditation, meditation sittings, lectures, film, small group activities, and housekeeping and shared activities. The program was from 4 am until 9 -15 pm. Accommodation was a shared

dormitory with sleeping on simple cots or on mattresses on the ground. During this process I kept full notes as I observed what the process of developing attitudes and behaviours based on spiritual brother-sisterhood, and how barriers such as a lack of common language, were negotiated.

#### **4:13:3 Initial Data Collection from Individuals and Analysis**

Data collection involved in-depth, open-ended question interviews with four participants from different countries. These participants had attended the four-week residential program and were comfortable with being interviewed via Skype. Participants came from Vietnam (female), the Philippines (female), Nepal (male), and Romania (male). Two were spiritual trainers in the Raja Yoga tradition being studied and two were not. The process of interviewing occurred purposively with the participants from Vietnam and the Philippines.

The third fieldwork observation occurred at an Asian seminar in 2011, held to inaugurate the Malaysian ashram. Participation in the seminar interviews occurred via a snowballing technique as the Vietnamese participant contacted the other two interview participants via Skype and set up the interviews. An additional face-to-face interview occurred during this seminar with an Indian (female) participant. These interviews were then analysed, direct quotes extracted, and similarities and differences observed. New ideas were noted for development in further interviews.

Analysis began immediately as I compared the data with what was known about spirituality in applied health science research. A review of health sciences research on spirituality had identified four themes from a range of research designs and populations, viz.: connectedness, existential inner reality, transcendence and energy. These themes were compared with the emerging themes from the interviews. The data were compared to see whether anything novel was being described. At this point, it seemed that the interviews uncovered themes that were very similar to what was already known about spirituality in the health sciences. However, there were additional categories also. The emerging information was then linked to Western and Eastern philosophical literature on ethics, spirituality and hospitality. These ideas were woven together and then presented at an international conference for peer review (see fig. 1: The transversal knowledge spaces pertinent to spirituality).

A focus group was held with students from the Bioethics Department during my departmental seminar. They read out selected pertinent quotes from each of the five participants and then ideas about possible research themes were generated. I remained silent during this process and simply recorded the ideas that arose onto a white board. Afterwards, I asked whether any common themes could be identified. Students identified virtually the same themes as were present in the health science literature and identified the additional themes that correlated with the researcher's coding. In addition, possible mechanisms of action or theory began to emerge (Glaser, 1992). This focus group identified research saturation and areas for further investigation and clarification. In addition, this process introduced an aspect of triangulation into the data analysis, which may help control for bias within qualitative research (Mays & Pope, 2000; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). There are some difficulties with the method of triangulation as a form of validity, as it assumes that the techniques placed together have different strengths to each other and some researchers suggest it as more of a process to encourage 'comprehensiveness' (Mays & Pope, 2000). I have used it in that manner.

#### **4:13:4 Introduction of Māori Group**

At this stage Māori women from the Waitaha tribe, as described in Chapter One, volunteered to be part of the research as they felt that a First Nation's perspective would be useful. A similar purposive and snowballing sample began to develop. A generic e-mail was sent out by Ngāi Tahu *tāua* (female elder). An immediate reply was received and the first interview was conducted on the 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2011. From here, other people were introduced to the project. Interestingly I approached a colleague, also in November that year to request her participation, who responded by saying, "I have been expecting this for several months". This was significant as this participant was not aware that I was doing a PhD nor what topic I had chosen.

Five individual, open-ended question interviews were conducted with women from the Waitaha tribe. These interviews were analysed for themes and relevant quotes. This began to generate other ways of understanding the mechanisms of spiritual brothersisterhood and outlined similarities and differences between Raja Yoga practices and Māori *tikanga* (customary protocols).

This was followed by three focus groups with six Māori women from a range of *iwi* (tribe). The women asked to bring a colleague from Samoa as they considered her also to have special knowledge on the topic. Within grounded theory it is reasonable to select additional groups to aid in the development of emerging categories (Glaser, 1992) and within indigenous research methods it is entirely appropriate for a group to volunteer suitable community members (Tolich, 2001). An additional Skype interview was conducted with one

Māori woman who was also a Sahaj Marg Raja Yoga practitioner. Later her father gave a telephone interview and was the only male Māori participant.

When the researcher gained a Commonwealth scholarship to study Yoga therapy and stress management in India, her seeking of knowledge and her journey was blessed by *tangata whenua* (people of the land) and a *kaumatua* (male elder) through *karakia* (prayer) at the Aotearoa New Zealand Association of Social Workers board meeting.

As mentioned above, a generic e-mail was sent to local Māori (25<sup>th</sup> October 2011). This mode of recruitment fits with both grounded theory research methods and indigenous research methods of *whanaungatanga* (relationship, kinship, family spirit) for initial identification of a convenient sample (Devers & Frankel, 2000; Hutchings, 2012). It generated a purposive sample identified by a respected *tāua* (female elder) who was related to the esteemed South Island Waitaha Māori spiritual teacher Te Maiharoa, who conveyed knowledge to many children and established *rūnanga* (councils) for political debate for the adults in the mid to late 1800's (Mikaere, 1988). She chose Māori *whānau* (family) she considered both able to act as a bridge between Pākehā and Māori knowledge and as having experience and knowledge of the area of interest. Interested participants made contact and they introduced others (snowballing). The *tāua* (female elder) was chosen as the first point of contact as she had provided cultural supervision to the author for many years and was well known, respected and trusted in the local Māori community. Given the personal nature of the topic being discussed, it was important that she vouch for the trustworthiness of the researcher (Dever & Frankel, 2000). The first two interview participants had worked alongside the author for many years and endorsed both the integrity of author and the project to the next participants.

Many of those interviewed were from Ngāi Tahu and Waitaha descent; others came from the northern Tainui and Tuhoe tribes. In keeping with the concept of *matauranga*

(knowledge, to know, a knowledgeable person), this research moved from one person based on knowledge and referral to the next one who could add to this story. This fits with both indigenous research methods and grounded theory purposive sampling techniques (Tolich, 2001; Charmez, 2000).

Whilst her attendance was not part of the data gathering for this project, the researcher had previously had some exposure to the Māori world during a twelve month *wananga raranga* course in 2011 where *tikanga* (protocol and associated knowledge), language, *karakia* (prayer or spiritual address to another), *waiata* (songs) and *raranga* (flax weaving) were taught alongside the option of residing together for each of the weekend sessions. This by no means implies any level of expertise within the researcher but simply exposure which might allow glimpses of insight into a partially experienced world.

#### **4:13:5 Data Collection from Groups**

Stage five involved conducting focus groups with two Raja Yoga groups based in Wellington and Auckland, New Zealand. Participants came from India and Sri Lanka and were an even mix of male and female. The youngest participant was eighteen and the oldest seventy-six years of age. The interviews were coded according to a broad range of themes. The purpose of collecting these data was to see whether the themes from individual analysis were apparent within, or agreed with, by larger groups of participants.

#### **4:13:6 Extended Range of Cultural Participants**

Stage six involved a seven-week field research period in India. During this process individual interviews using an open-ended interviewing style were held with participants (N = 11) from Australia (female: 2), Denmark (female: 1), South Africa (male: 2 & female: 1), Canada (female: 1), Russia (male: 1), Ukraine (female: 1), Fiji (female: 1), and France (female: 1). All interviews were conducted in English. I spent time in the Sri Ram Chandra Mission library reading relevant texts on Yoga philosophy, ethics and psychology, and theses and dissertations for Masters and doctorate degrees on Sahaj Marg Raja Yoga. I also attended a number of courses pertinent to the research question on working together and communication (see Appendix 2).

These interviews were coded with the original five thematic categories. In addition, I began to understand the values implicit to the research question and linked themes,

pertinent participant quotes, and philosophical scholarship and developed ideas that were shared at conferences.

#### **4:13:7 Intensive Communal Experiences**

Stage seven involved five days on two occasions, living on an ashram with thirty non-English speaking practitioners from Belarus and Russia. Extensive field notes were maintained. Courses conducted on *sadhana* during that time were simultaneously translated into English and Russian. Communication for day-to-day living was primarily in the Russian language. Following on from this an additional individual interview was conducted in English with one Belorussian Raja Yoga practitioner (male). Additional communal experience was gained in the same ashram environment during the second five-day period with Indian, Vietnamese, Swiss, and Danish practitioners.

#### **4:13:8 Observational Data**

Stage eight involved continued attendance at country seminars as the opportunities presented themselves. This included a two-day attendance at the annual seminars in two Baltic countries (Lithuania and Latvian). Field notes were maintained on components of spiritual brother-sisterhood and ways in which complete strangers came together in a harmonious and flexible manner were observed, leading to a deepening of the research question. An additional interview was held with a male practitioner from Estonia who had also attended the International Scholarship Training Program. Finally, two interviews occurred at a *bhandara* (celebration) in July 2012, with one participant from Japan (female) and one from Kuwait (male). Questionnaire interviews occurred with participants from Malaysia and Hungary and then followed with Skype chat. An interview took place with a Chinese Sahaj Marg participant. A focus group was held with female Sahaj Marg prefects to discuss their experiences of brother-sisterhood and *Master*. Secondary data were sought from the first sub group of Sahaj Marg participants. Analysis of data was again carried out.

#### **4:13:9 Researcher and the Process of ‘Other’**

In accordance with indigenous research methods (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011) I entered into a process of cultural immersion and what one Māori research participant described as:

“becoming the ‘Other’ and surrendering to the spiritual observer” (2014). It was a state of quietude as I surrendered to this inner development.

During the ten months at the Indian Rashtriya Sanskrit Veedipeetha I experienced spiritual conditions as described by Yogic scientists (Prasada, 1912; Ram Chandra, 1991a, 1991b, 1991c) and personal rather than theoretical glimpses of the unseen forces intrinsic within it.

#### **4:13:10 Continued Participant Observation**

Over a 12-month period, I continued participation at various celebrations and seminars with the communities of interest. I completed three post-graduate courses that were relevant to understanding the theoretical and conceptual frameworks of Raja Yoga and participants’ data. These included papers on Sāṅkhya Philosophy, Patanjali’s Yoga Sutras and Hatha Yoga Pradiyapika (theory of Hatha Yoga). The theoretical interweaving of Māori cosmology and Indian Sāṅkhya philosophy was presented at the National Yoga Therapy Conference, India. This paper was shared prior to presentation with Māori research participants who gave supportive feedback (Smith, 2012).

Throughout informal conversations and shared stories began to occur naturally between the researcher and Māori and Sahaj Marg elders.

As a researcher I recognised my own culture’s lack of spiritual training and therefore allowed a great deal of time before I would draw any conclusions or make any decisions about what I was experiencing, listening to and observing (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

## 4:14 Participants

### 4:14:1 Inclusion/ Exclusion Criteria

Sahaj Marg Raja Yoga group: Participants were required to be members of Sri Ram Chandra Mission and to be meditating regularly. They were included if there was a dedication or devotion towards the Sahaj Marg practice and a sense of presence. All those interviewed had sufficient proficiency in English to give rich description to their views and experiences. Māori participants were included if there was a willingness and capability to speak on spirituality. The initial invitation was offered by Māori *kuia* (female elder) to those that she viewed as having knowledge and capability to share on this topic. Each Māori participant chose the next participant in a snowballing sampling style (Charmez, 2003).

### 4:14:2 Participant Demographics

A total number of one hundred and two participants were formally interviewed in this study via both focus group and individual interviews. Forty-nine individual Sahaj Marg and seven Māori participants were interviewed separately. Twelve Māori participants (combined individual interviews and focus group) from a range of *iwi* (tribe), viz.: Waitaha (N= 4), Tainui (N= 1) and Tuhoe (N=2). One participant from Samoa was included by Māori in their focus group (Charmez, 2000). In the whole sample more females (N= 71) than males (N= 31) were interviewed. The Māori group had fewer participants but interviews were much longer and involved several meetings. Participants' ages ranged from 18 to 89 years of age. Table 3 shows the age range of participants. Table 4 outlines the regional, cultural and gender demographics of all the participants.

**Table 3: Age range for Sahaj Marg and Māori individual participants**

>19	20 – 29	30 - 39	40 - 49	50 – 59	60 – 69	70 – 79	80<
3	5	16	12	6	8	3	3

**Table 4: Regional, cultural and gender description of Sahaj Marg and Māori participants (N = 56)**

Region	Male Participants	Female Participants	Culture
Oceania	2	15	Fijian Indian, Māori, New Zealander, Australian, Samoan
Asia	2	9	Indian, Philippine, Malaysian, Vietnamese, Japanese, Chinese, Sri Lankan, Nepalese
Europe	4	7	English, Scottish, Irish, French, German, Hungarian, Romanian, Serbian, Danish
Africa	3	3	South African, Ethiopian, Madagascan, French Moroccan
Middle East	1	1	Kuwait, Iranian
Former Soviet Union	2	2	Estonian, Russian, Belarusian, Ukrainian
America / Latin America	2	3	American, Canadian, Native American Indian, Brazilian, Columbian

#### **4:14:3 Participant Sampling**

The Sahaj Marg group participants were identified from people with whom the researcher had attended seminars or who were recommended by others. This was a purposive sample that developed on the advice of the researcher's teacher. The latter when asked, "who should I interview?" replied, 'I do not know. Listen to you heart'. Within grounded theory often there is someone who acts as a gatekeeper of knowledge or of access to the community (Dever & Frankel, 2000). The effect of this statement by the master of Sahaj Marg, was that I felt confident to approach others and became more open about the project. However, it also encouraged a level of discernment that shaped the sampling process. This process meant that I exercised some prejudice as I approached those that I knew at the beginning. I also developed a feeling or knowing before approaching potential participants and consequently interviews occurred in diverse locations. Those interviewed had shown themselves in some way to have an understanding

of the topic; this may have been in the way that they behaved with their peers, their attitudes, a general feeling of openness in their company and/or a sense that they had a heart connection to their teacher. Often it was the capacity for presence and stillness. In addition, they all had the capacity to speak from the heart and to introspect deeply on their experiences and understanding of the research topic. Everyone who was approached agreed to being interviewed, although some participants preferred for their responses to be written down rather than recorded.

Some participants were new to Sahaj Marg and some had been affiliated for decades. Some were prefects (N = 25) and others were not (N = 31). Very few were functionaries or profiled within the organisation. Those who had high profiles within the organisation or opportunities to share their spiritual experience through writing or seminar presentations generally were not approached. I felt that their information was already on public record and I was interested in the spiritual perspective or voice of ordinary meditators. The Sahaj Marg focus groups developed from New Zealand centres (N = 2), Indian Ashram (N = 1), and Sahaj Marg prefect group (N = 1). The Māori group developed from a group who were employed in an environment where they practiced Māori *tikanga* (protocols). They volunteered a group perspective and met three times over three months.

#### **4:15 Interviews**

Most, but not all, interviews were recorded digitally and took place at a convenient venue for the participant. Most interviews occurred on site at various ashrams but other venues included: airport waiting room (N = 1), sleeping quarters (N = 4), café (N = 1), rented office (N = 2), Skype (N = 8), standing outside queuing (N = 1), university club rooms (N = 3), participant's home (N = 1), via email (N = 2), via telephone (N = 1), and/or given in written form to researcher (N = 2).

An unstructured interview style was adopted with the first question being the same for all interviews whether individual or group. Each interview began with an introduction about the interview; affirming purpose, anonymity, confidentiality, and obtaining consent.

Each individual and group interview began with the following words: ‘I would like to welcome you to this project. We will begin with the simple question - ‘What does spiritual brother-sisterhood mean to you?’

Sahaj Marg participants were invited to spend time introspecting with their eyes closed and speak from the heart. Each interview closed with completion of the demographic data sheet or a verbal questioning and recording of that information if was not already known to the researcher. For the interviews with Sahaj Marg participants, the conversations began and ended with a moment’s silence in order to allow any further insights from the internal world to come forward.

For Māori participants, *titiro* (look), *whakarongo* (listen) and then *kōrero* (speaking) informed the interviewing style in that the researcher looked and listened before speaking. Indeed the interview schedule consisted of one common question, the same as for the Sahaj Marg participants above. Each interview began with welcome and *karakia* (prayer), followed by the question. One interview finished with *waiata* (song).

Three Sahaj Marg participants in the Sahaj Marg organisation acted as key informants via regular Skype contact checking the understandings about the topic and assisting the researcher in developing a deepening understanding of the research material. This included the reviewing of various journal articles and conference presentation material. A key informant tended to be an interviewee who had demonstrated a willingness and capacity to act in role of mentor for the researcher (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). Several Māori participants who had the capability to liaise with other family members were consulted as various writing projects developed throughout the project.

The role of mentor was crucial, particularly as the researcher had to be fully cognizant of the changes taking place within her rather than letting them occur in a natural manner. The type of mentor was also important, as they needed to be someone whom I could relate to, i.e., more advanced in awareness but not so far as to be unreachable or daunting. It was also necessary that the mentor engaged with the researcher in a relational manner, compassionately walking alongside whenever the misunderstandings arose.

#### 4:16 Focus Groups

The focus group sessions began with an introduction of the researcher as facilitator and an explanation of her role. Comfort with the use of a tape recorder and the possibility of note taking was established with participants and confidentiality was stressed. The purpose and process of the focus group, the probable duration of the session, and the availability of comfort facilities or refreshments were shared at the beginning. The researcher emphasized the need to hear all participants' experiences and opinions; that there were no right or wrong answers; and that each person's input was important. The researcher gave a summary at the end of each session. Process notes were observed as well as details of information shared. She also asked each person to think quietly for a few moments to see whether there was more to share about the topic. Many writers see this as an important request that may stimulate some additional but important discussion points (Morgan, 1997; Krueger & Casey, 2000). Following this phase, the researcher thanked participants and closed the group process.

The Wellington, New Zealand, Sahaj Marg group was identified for the first focus group. This was a convenience sample chosen owing to the established nature of the group and their willingness and enthusiasm for the project. The invitation to be involved was given several months in advance to all *abhyasi* (meditators). Group leaders encouraged people to begin observing and considering the notion of brotherhood. The author spoke after morning meditation about the project and asked whether the group wished to be involved. The group asked questions and then agreed to participate. It was agreed that the Sahaj Marg focus group would occur where the group ordinarily held their Sunday Satsangh and for the other group when this venue proved too cold at the home of the New Zealand centre-in-charge. This ensured that the interviewees were familiar and comfortable with their surroundings. The second focus group occurred with the Auckland Sahaj Marg group.

The three sessions of the Māori focus group all occurred in the same neutral room on the University of Otago campus. Participants sat in a circle and began the conversation with a *karakia* (prayer). Because the same participants attended each session each time, this allowed a deepening of the understanding of the research question. In addition,

feedback was elicited from group members about how their understandings grew between sessions.

This group was relatively small with six participants.

Focus groups in India with Indian sisters occurred in an informal, opportunistic manner. For example, I recorded natural conversations that began after dinner or broke out amongst the sisters at bedtime in the dormitory. These were either taped or contemporaneously written. If the group discussion began with sisters then, over time, the brothers would become curious and join in, sharing their views. All participants were aware that the interviews were for research purposes and that there would be publications related to conferences, books and a thesis. All gave written or verbal permission for their views to be shared. On occasion participants would state when they did not want their words to be shared. The material from these naturally occurring groups was used for thematic analysis and individual statements were not published.

#### **4:17 Data Analysis**

##### **4:17:1 Stage One**

The first six individual interviews (Australia, Ireland, Romania, Philippines, Nepal and Vietnam) were analysed by the researcher according to current known themes on spirituality in health science research (Chui et al., 2004). These known themes were present in this sample, namely: Inner existence, Transcendence, Energy/power and Connection. An additional theme emerged from these initial scoping interviews: spiritual heart. This process involved an in-depth reading of the interviews, highlighting words and concepts. These were then analyzed and categorized according to the themes and similarities and differences in material noted. This assisted the researcher in identifying whether the responses to the research question added anything potentially new to the current literature.

The researcher then sought to verify her coding of material by hearing whether a larger group of participants had the same understandings about the topic (Bazeley, 2009). The ten participants were post-graduate students and lecturers in the Bioethics Department, Otago Medical School, University of Otago, New Zealand. There was a mixture of those who were interested in spirituality and those who were not. They were given no

information about spirituality themes in the health science literature and were merely asked to read out excerpts from the interviews and reflect on whether there were any obvious ideas. The researcher did not give any feedback and recorded the ideas on the white board as they emerged. She asked the group to summarize the ideas into major themes and the group accurately identified all the five themes namely: inner existence, transcendence, energy/power and connection and heart/love. These were not interview participants but rather colleagues and peers who were in a position to critique the work. Their feedback gave the researcher some confidence in the way in which the material was being understood and coded. These initial interviews were collated into a paper on spiritual brotherhood and the links with the Western philosophical works of Jacques Derrida and Emanuel Levinas and Yogic philosophers. This paper looked at the themes mentioned above and how these contributed to a universal and ethical way of relating. This was shared at an international conference of Eastern and Western philosophers and linguists. The philosophical underpinning of the project received very good feedback and I was requested to contribute a book essay on practical spirituality. Thus, I was assisted in assessing the academic merit of the research question.

#### **4:17:2 Stage Two**

The researcher reread all interviews. The interviews were scrutinised at a descriptive level for categories. All categories were written down, colour coded and placed onto separate pieces of card and organised into categories of similarity, for example: unity, oneness, and unified. Interviews were re-analysed for all statements pertaining to these terms. As new data emerged, either they were clustered into already existing categories saturating those groupings or, particularly in the preliminary stages of analysis, they were sorted into a new category. These categories were then refined into one encompassing term. These category codes were collapsed into categories of interest or themes. A theme was understood as an integrating concept (Bazeley, 2009). The thesaurus, as well as Yogic and Māori philosophic literature, was used to identify the correct term for concepts raised.

For Sahaj Marg participants twelve themes were generated from the data under which all data were accounted for. These themes were: i) connectedness, ii) existential inner reality, iii) transcendence, iv) energy, v) love, vi) awakening and recognition, vii) *Master*, viii) spiritual heart, xi) *yama* and *niyama* (relevance of universal core values), x)

unity in diversity as a practical path, xi) vision for humanity, and xii) barriers inhibiting the development of spiritual connection and communion. As the analysis continued, the categories were continuously compared with one another and with new emerging data in order to discover convergences and differences. These were recorded diagrammatically as mind maps. Any categories that were related were combined and once again compared with incoming data to assess their relationships to the hypotheses that were emerging. Once this initial analysis had occurred, the themes were examined in more depth for possible mechanisms of action, stages of development in personal experience of spiritual brother-sisterhood and implications for community relationships.

Within qualitative research, openness with participants is a key part of the iterative process as well as being usefulness in enhancing reliability (Chenail, 1995). Throughout this research, ideas about mechanisms of action and possible connections were shared with specific key informants. These key informants were skilled in ensuring that the material did not stray from Yogic philosophy or Māori *kaupapa* (theme) but rather enhanced what was already known. They would give feedback, challenge the researcher's understandings and ask pertinent questions.

Sahaj Marg and Māori participants were given the transcripts of their original interviews for further change or comment. In addition, eight Sahaj Marg practitioners were given a copy of the first journal article, '*Spiritual brotherhood*' (Joyce, 2013, accepted for publication), to read and give feedback on. This included the current master of Sahaj Marg, two trainers on Sahaj Marg Brotherhood, the key informant and four of the six participants from the first interviews. The Māori participants were given a copy of the journal article; '*The Essence of Yoga is Beyond*' (Joyce, 2014b), to make any necessary alterations. The bioethics students were not given further information, although their analysis was generated and shared as a group on the white board.

The focus group interviews with Māori participants were analysed according to the above procedures. One person in the Māori focus group also gave an individual interview. She was pivotal in bringing together the participants for the focus group.

For Māori individual and focus group participants the themes were: i) connectedness, ii) existential inner reality, iii) transcendence, iv) energy, v) love, vi) awakening and recognition, vii) *tikanga* (relevance of universal core values and protocols),

viii) *tūpuna* (ancestors), ix) *manaakitanga* (hospitality), x) *whakapapa* (genealogy) xi) vision for humanity, and xii) barriers inhibiting the development of spiritual connection and communion.

#### **4:17:3 Stage Three**

The interviews were then re-read a third time for crystalizing outlying and divergent points of view. This was important as divergent points of view enable a deeper analysis and development of alternative explanations (Bazeley, 2009; Anderson, 2010). Some researchers also suggest that the outlying information may give hints as to what might be happening in the larger population (Bazeley, 2009). Analysis of these data also allowed the researcher to be more transparent about assumptions and the way in which material was being interpreted.

The outlier material is reported on in the visioning statements theme.

The interviewer's input and questions were analyzed and included as part of the data. This has the advantage of heightening transparency and renders the contribution as active rather than neutral (Bazeley, 2009). It is difficult to claim in research of this nature that the researcher was neutral. Thus, the researcher could examine the ways in which the paraphrases biased or shaped the interviews and allow readjustment for future interviews.

#### **4:17:4 Stage Four**

Analysis of the similarities and differences between the two groups was undertaken and the key aspects of spiritual brother-sisterhood theorized.

#### **4:18 Data Storage**

Data were stored digitally with a secure password in a locked office at the University of Otago. All participants were allocated a study identification number.

#### **4:19 Conclusion**

In this section, I have described how the study was conducted and some of the key components of qualitative research in the field of pure and applied spirituality. By this stage it is probably clear I agree with the view that to adequately understand this study, it must be placed within its relational context; a 'knowing with' rather than a 'knowing of' (Giri, 2008). A 'knowing with' in this context does not exclude a critical engagement with the phenomena but encourages a deep understanding about the principles of spirituality. In the following section, I will outline the convergence of themes between Māori and Sahaj Marg participants.

## Chapter Five: Early Convergence of Themes

### 5:1 Summary

This chapter outlines the initial exploration and analysis of the data. The research explored a relational and metaphysical spirituality and tests whether the practices of Sahaj Marg and Māori participants added anything to what was known already about spirituality in the health sciences. Consequently, initial interviews were analysed according to themes developed by Chui et al., (2004). Their study examined how research about the concept of spirituality had been reported in the health literature and led to a development of an ontological and theoretical understanding of spirituality. Their examination was based on a quantitative and qualitative integrative review, and their sample included 73 spirituality research articles, which were published in English between January 1990 and September 2000. The themes that were identified were: i) connectedness, ii) existential inner reality, iii) transcendence, and iv) energy.

In this study participants identified further spiritual categories which were; i) love, ii) awakening and recognition, iii) *tikanga* (relevance of universal core values and protocols), iv) vision for humanity, and v) barriers inhibiting the development of spiritual connection and communion. Māori participants identified novel themes, namely: i) *tūpuna* (ancestors), ii) *manaakitanga* (hospitality), and iii) *whakapapa* (genealogy). Whilst Sahaj Marg participants uncovered the novel themes of: i) *Master*, ii) spiritual heart, and iii) unity in diversity as a practical path. All these novel themes will be discussed in later chapters.

### 5:2 Connectedness

Scholarship across a range of fields agrees that any definition of spirituality includes a deep awareness of one another and the natural world around us, which is experienced as a sense of connection (Chui et al., 2004; de Jager Meezenbroek et al., 2010). Being connected is an intuitive idea and in relation to spirituality, I will take it to mean an inner awareness of unity with a transcendent source, which enlivens the relationship with all of life, in an attitude of oneness (Wilber, 2000). It is not something

that one does to another rather it is a natural process of awareness and relationship. As one participant stated:

The whole humanity and that we are all one brotherhood yes, so this is the spiritual brotherhood also for me. It's like we are all breathing the same air, we are all seeing the same sun, we all live under the same sun, we all have the same, and how shall I say? We all have the same path, the same spiritual path which is guiding us (Romanian, Sahaj Marg, male participant, 2011).

In this example it seems that the theme of connectedness is illustrated through the metaphor of nature and, in some ways, the reminder of the same human needs, such as oxygen, reveals an equality of human need. It also hints at the spiritual exchange of breath as described in previous chapters. If we recall Babuji's definition of Yoga as the: "permanent realization of His presence in you, about you, and around you" (Powell, 1996, p. 147), then it is the perception of a profoundly connected reality. It also suggests that there are many ways to the top of the mountain that all spiritual paths aim to ascend and, in that sense, are the same. Practitioners of other spiritual practices may, in the context of multi-faith perspectives, offer this level of inclusivity (Halafoff, 2012) while some spiritual practices based upon more fundamental interpretations of religion may not be so inclusive (Brill, 2012). Certainly, the theme of an understanding of spirituality by Māori and Sahaj Marg participants represented an inclusive view. As one participant with over thirty years in Sahaj Marg commented:

Spiritual brotherhood is not a superficial friendliness but a deeper understanding that we are all sparks of the Divine and thus children of Master/god. This should make us realize that we are really the same underneath the so called differences of race/country etc. I feel for my brother or sister as I feel for myself and family. I see the other as myself (Malaysian, Sahaj Marg, female participant, 2013).

In this example, we gain glimpses of the importance of empathy, compassion and feeling in the development of the capacity to see the best in the 'Other'. It is a Levinasian welcome that extends this to a willingness to see the 'divine' in the 'Other' and is beyond self-regard to other-regard (Levinas, 1981, 1987). Some participants linked this capacity to connect with the 'Other' to a multi-dimensional view of themselves:

The level I'm talking about is energetically. Like I know for myself when I don't spend time in my place and I don't listen to my energetic self that I'm not able to listen to others and I'm not able to manaaki them or support them in a way that is mindful and respectful (Māori, female participant, 2012).

As we recall, *manaakitanga* relates to the care and support, inner and outer, that we offer to the embodied 'Other' (Moko Mead, 2005). In this example, the capacity to connect with the 'Other' was related to the practices of inner awareness, remembrance and stillness. Yet some were not able to feel this connection, whilst others were developing this capacity within the Sahaj Marg group:

It was difficult even during the 2007 Tirupur celebration (Masters 80<sup>th</sup> birthday) and last year when we visited Manapakkum. I found  
- except for people whom I know a like 'S' only them I can connect to straight away. But then when it comes down to the other person Mr X or Mrs Y. I was not able to connect with them-maybe my heart was not open, maybe their heart is not open it doesn't matter. But forget about the connecting heart to heart-there was not even a smile on the face! (Indian, Sahaj Marg, male, focus group participant, 2012).

Māori participants deepened the understanding of a connection to include a universal consciousness between inanimate and animate objects. This included a deeply felt connection to *Papatūānuku* (Mother Earth) as well as to all the children of the God - Tāne.

According to Māori, Tāne's children are comprised of all that is 'alive' on the surface of planet earth including the rivers, the mountains, the trees, the animals, the ocean, the sea creatures, the birds and the rocks. This also includes a connection to the *Rangi* (Sky Father) and all that is in his domain including the winds, the stars, the planets and the celestial beings.<sup>59</sup> In the words of Samuel Timoti Robinson (2005):

This was the blanket for our Mother Earth and the atua (gods) called the garden Pohutakawa. It covered her whole body and adorned their beautiful mother completely. Nothing was left undone with springs, rivers, vegetation and forms of land life appearing from the seed of Tāne. All things can be traced back to

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<sup>59</sup> Many indigenous cultures have a similar understanding, e.g., Zeus represented the Sky Father who was in an essential relationship with the Earth Mother for the Ancient Greeks; whilst the Chinese had the idea of Chien (Heaven) being the father and Khun (Earth) being the mother (Radhakrishnan, 1994). According to Yogic thought, this macrocosmic belief is represented at the microcosmic level, e.g., the body of a human being is viewed as being comprised of food only or the elements of the earth; whilst the enlivening force comes from the breath and spirit.

this one garden, be they plants, animals, reptiles or humans, and Io became Io-mua or Io-Forerunner, the ancestor of all things (p 35).

For one Māori participant this led to an awareness of responsibility to the inner world of relationship and connection:

I'm actually very specific with why I would want to get involved with a person and why would I need to? And that's the whole realization of the impact you have, you think we're one person but actually we're not, we come from a whānau. It's a transgression by not acknowledging (Māori, female, participant, 2012).

### **5:3 Existential Inner Reality**

Does Spiritual brother-sisterhood with its basis in connection and relatedness also lead to a shared internal existential reality? Does this internal recognition, this acknowledged feeling of the 'Other' as connected to oneself in a deep way, this inner remembrance, create a different experience of humanity? If one is aware of the 'Other', is open to the 'Other', and welcomes the 'Other' then, according to the philosophy of Levinas and Derrida, this naturally develops into an ethic of hospitality and in some way to an ethic of peace. As one participant describes:

We keep going on because we know that spiritual evolution never ends and so we go on and we go on and we observe and we learn and we discover you know and it comes from inside. You know it's like when Master sits right beside you, you cannot be like a spoilt child, you know you cannot behave stupidly - so this is a very important thing that when your conscience is awakening to his presence then everything is changing and it is simply that you are more responsible. You are more aware that this counts much more than the other thing and then you start showing them and it starts coming out more naturally as these vibrations are easily changing and I feel that this is the process of becoming (Romanian, Sahaj Marg, male, participant, 2011).

Within this example, we see an allusion to an inner connection 'and it comes from the inside'... 'Your conscience is awakening to his presence'... 'It starts coming out more naturally as these vibrations are easily changing' (Romanian, Sahaj Marg, male, participant, 2011). To understand these references to the divine 'Other' we must

momentarily surrender a secular lens. The knowledge contained in the Upaniṣads is helpful as it describes the process as the ego is abandoned and an inner realization of the eternal presence is felt as energy (Radhakrishna, 1994; Swahananda, 1984).<sup>60</sup> Another participant states, ‘we only have the love between brothers and sisters, we can feel inside from the heart beyond the words’ (Vietnamese Sahaj Marg female participant, 2011) and ‘I don't know if it's right for all people but to me, the heart can feel and can see’ (Vietnamese Sahaj Marg female participant, 2011). This is interesting given that there are many barriers of language and cultures between practitioners and yet it seems that some felt inner connection occurs. There is a responsibility – a transmutation of ‘responsively’ - as being responsive to those affected by what one does. Then one can think of circles of behaving responsively which potentially widen more and more on the basis of connectedness and deepen our connectedness. If I am responsive to the effects my words and actions will have on the other, it means I am learning to be responsible.

In the context of Raja Yoga tradition, the ‘awakening to his presence’<sup>66</sup> suggests awakening to the infinite and the consciousness of I am Brahman (*Master*) (Prasada, 1912). It is in the awakening of the infinite within ourselves that we begin to see a link to the scholarship of Levinas when he suggests the idea of infinity as already a welcoming of the ‘Other’ (Levinas, 1981, 1985).

To begin it seems that the ‘*Master* sits right beside you’ suggests a physical presence that encourages correct behaviour towards the ‘Other’ however there appears also to be an inner awakening to the divine presence ‘your conscience is awakening to his presence’ which alludes to a ‘process of devolution and becoming’. It seems that the experience of awakening for practitioners begins to translate into the welcoming of the ‘Other’ in the sense of a developing ethics of responsibility as both behaviours and feeling; ‘then everything is changing and it is simply that you are more responsible’ and ‘you cannot be like a spoilt child’. A spoilt child in this context refers to the ego that responds only to his or her own felt need – located almost exclusively in the illusory world of desire and therefore has a very narrow circle of egocentric responsiveness. In some manner, it is as if the relationship with the teacher and *Master* triggers a relational connectivity and

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<sup>60</sup> The following words describe a understanding that rises from within the Upaniṣads: “Prayer and sacrifice are means to philosophy and spiritual life. While true sacrifice is the abandonment of one’s ego, prayer is the exploration of reality by entering the beyond that is within, by ascension of consciousness. It is not theoretical learning. We must see the eternal, the celestial, the still. If it is unknowable and incomprehensible, it is yet

responsibility alongside maturing of the personality and de-centering of self. It seems that it becomes natural in the devolution of becoming more responsible, ‘that this counts much more than the other thing’.

realisable by self-discipline and integral insight. We can seize the truth not by logical thinking, but by the energy of our whole inner being (Radhakrishna, 1994, p. 50).

<sup>66</sup> According to Powell (1996): at the cosmic level there is the manifestation of purusha as the only male principle or energy, all other life forms embody the female. However, at the level of body there is male and female; but not at the level of individual *soul* (p 124 - 125).

This suggests a developmental process involved with a spirituality that experiences ‘presence’ and certain personality changes consequently. It seems also that there is a feeling of vibration in the heart. Other practitioners have also described energy as a feeling in the heart - a communication internally and externally of sorts.

In keeping with the concept of the ‘Other’ having priority over the subject; an ethics of hospitality appears infinite, having the qualities of warmth, sincerity, and unconditionally. It is beyond formal convention or legality. In the following example, a practitioner begins to describe how an ethics of hospitality may begin to develop;

We should start with ourselves; we practice to love, to forgive, to forget, to share, to open. Then we receive those things back from others. And in that way, the feeling will show itself. It is like the vibration in the heart (Vietnamese, Sahaj Marg, female participant, 2011).

Initially these words viewed through a secular lens do not seem to offer hospitality, unconditionality or altruism. Derrida assists with the concept of the impossibility of the gift (Derrida, 1992).<sup>61</sup> He proposes that a gift is an act of economic reciprocity, containing notions of the market place, therefore replacing the essence and meaning of gift as a pure expression of uncomplicated hospitality, free from expectation and social norms (Derrida

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<sup>61</sup> It is worth quoting Derrida in full: "One cannot treat the gift, this goes without saying, without treating this relation to economy, even to the money economy. But is not the gift, if there is any, also that which interrupts economy? That which, in suspending economic calculation, no longer gives rise to exchange? That which opens the circle so as to defy reciprocity or symmetry, the common measure, and so as to turn aside the return in view of the no-return? If there is gift, the given of the gift (that which one gives, that which is given, the gift as given thing or as act of donation) must not come back to the giving (let us not already say to the subject, to the donor). It must not circulate, it must not be exchanged, it must not in any case be exhausted, as a gift, by the process of exchange, by the movement of circulation of the circle in the form of return to the point of departure. If the figure of the circle is essential to economics, the gift must remain an economic. Not that it remains foreign to the circle, but it must keep a relation of foreignness to the circle, a relation without relation of familiar foreignness. It is perhaps in this sense that the gift is impossible. Not impossible but the impossible. The very figure of the impossible" (Derrida, 1992, p. 7).

1992). In the participant's words, there is the development from 'the impossibility of the gift' towards the unconditional welcome of self to the 'Other' as an inner, natural and reciprocal process.

It is in the context of Derrida's infinite welcome that the Yogic ideal of 'constant remembrance' is the most closely realised (Derrida, 1997). When a Yoga practitioner moves into a space of internal constant remembrance of the *Master* or 'his presence', it is suggested that the internal consciousness is at all times aware of the 'Other', in an infinite welcome of the 'Other'. Given that, the human is a moment of God's self-forgetfulness then constant remembrance puts us in touch with our eternal being and connectedness with others (Gillett, 1998). It is not a mechanical cognitive process but rather an enlivened attunement, feeling and constancy of orientation. Both participants above allude to an internal existential experience 'like the vibration in the heart' and 'it starts coming out more naturally as these vibrations are easily changing'. It is possible that the internal vibration of the heart begins to create the internal condition for an exchange of compassionate knowing and connection that leads to a natural ethics of responsibility and hospitality.

There was a paucity of literature defining the term 'vibration' as shared by participants. However, as we recall from chapter two, Robbins et al., (2012) shared one folk healer's experience of energy whereby vibration or resonance was again described as a medium of communication and connection, as he states:

Energy is what is supposed to be communicated. Words are just vibrations. Everything is communication with a vibration . . . rocks, hawks...I hear the energy, and it is like it is being filtered through something. I hear the vibration, then I see a picture and feel things (p 103).

Perhaps this is a lived explanation of Rupert Sheldrake's (1995) theory of Morphic Resonance whereby all matter is posed as vibration creating resonance when the vibrations interact.<sup>62</sup> Many study participants had developed an awareness of themselves as

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<sup>62</sup> Physical energetic resonance occurs when a system is acted on by an alternating force that corresponds with its natural frequency of vibration (e.g., nuclear magnetic resonance, electronic spin resonance, etc.). Common to all these types of resonance is the principle of selectivity. Out of a mixture of vibrations, however complicated, the systems respond only to those of particular frequencies...atoms, molecules, crystals, organelles, cells, tissues, organs and organisms are all made up of parts in ceaseless oscillation, and all have their own characteristic patterns of vibration and internal rhythm (Sheldrake, 1995, p. 95).

multidimensional beings and were sensitive to the field of ‘presence’ or space within themselves.

#### 5:4 Transcendence

In a recent review, transcendence was considered an essential component of spirituality (Chui et al., 2004; Sessanna et al., 2007). Spirituality was viewed as transcending a present context of reality and the limits of one’s own body and interest as a *karmic* (law of cause and effect) boundary and existing throughout and beyond time and space. Transcendence was defined as a level of awareness through which a person achieves new perspectives and experiences that exceed ordinary physical boundaries (Chui et al., 2004). It seemed in this thesis to involve an awareness and remembrance of the *Master* or inner realms of *tūpuna*. One participant experienced this as sacred:

To me spiritual brotherhood is a very beautiful thing. Today, there are too much barriers between human beings, religion, country border, languages, culture, race... when we develop spiritual brotherhood, all barriers are gone, we only have the love between brothers and sisters, we can feel inside from the heart beyond the words. So spiritual brother-sisterhood is really beautiful and important in my life. I don't know if it's right to all people but to me, the heart can feel and can see. Normally we often judge people when we meet or talk with the mind, and it makes us see them in the way we judge them at the beginning, but if you practise to feel and see people with the heart, you will see something words cannot describe. The feeling shows itself. It’s like the vibration in the heart (Vietnamese, Sahaj Marg, female participant, 2011).

Giving and receiving here was not like a reciprocal exchange as it would be in secular consciousness; hence Derrida’s impossibility of the gift and the importance of resonance/ vibration rather than playing it forward as a bottom line. Participants began to identify aspects of transcendence using such words as: “can feel inside from the heart beyond the words”... “The heart can feel and can see”... “the feeling will show itself, it's like the vibration in the heart” and “It is like the vibration, it is like the wave of the light, it goes up and down and up and down and so easily this vibration is changing”.

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Somehow, for these practitioners the spiritual heart allowed communication, feeling, vibration and an exchange of information at an unsaid level. The spiritual heart appeared to transcend ordinary definitions of the physical heart or even the heart as a self-orientated commitment, raising the possibility of an energetic heart (vibration) and communicative heart ('the heart can feel and see'). The cognitive mind divides; the physical heart beats in time, whilst the transcendent heart resonates with an inner song, memory, connectedness, and perhaps the music of the spheres. One participant describes her experience of transcendence that was visual, spatial, vibrational, and heard:

So that happened, that sort of sound happened in my mind and suddenly I was outside of this ego and I could see like .... Trembling waves themselves. But I was awake to reality as it is, I could actually feel like the disintegration of my body into the air and the ground and into everything else, the total .... Just to see that the whole world now is pulsing as it is ... new eyes and you are awake all of a sudden, a massive rush of information came in at that point as well.... The realization of reincarnation was one thing that was interesting; it was almost like a side-line, oh yeah of course, that's the way it works. But it was just this incredible love that came out of just the 'real'. For me, it was love is a reality because everything is connected, there is no disconnect between anything so once you can tangibly feel that brother, you are that brotherhood. It is not your brother, it is you (English, Sahaj Marg, female participant, 2012).

According to Sheldrake (1995) Morphic Resonance theory, vibration was defined as a form of relationship, information sharing and communication between all objects of matter, involved in an ongoing process of oscillation and adjustment with each other.

For many participants the vibration in the heart served a similar purpose and gave feeling and silent communion between people. Often practitioners spoke of *Master's* grace rather than vibration, in relation to happenings in the physical world, which were natural, light and helpful. According to Sahaj Marg Master Babuji: "...grace may be understood as the sweetness of the spiritual heart" (Powell, 1996, p. 147).

For some participants the practice of spiritual brother-sisterhood and experience of transcendence enhanced a feeling of connection with something greater than their usual level of consciousness. For Māori participants however *tūpuna* (ancestors) were an integral part of the here and now and constant. Many participants were practical and saw spirituality as a natural way of life rather than a seeking of transcendent experience:

I have met people who are fervent believers of God or are more disciplined in the practice than I am but the way they live their lives is outright the opposite of what they preach, so to speak. For me, if you are able to live your life according to the principles of Spiritual brotherhood, then it is a good start doing the practice and/or believing in God enhances it. I've always believed that what good is a lot of theory about enlightenment or brotherhood if you can't be a good example yourself? (Philippines, Sahaj Marg, female participant, 2011).

Māori participants were clear that spirituality was relational and for the good of all living things:

It's like why are we here? I'm to learn or I'm to teach you. It doesn't come down to ethnicity and some discussion it creates. It is learning from each other and learning through process. It may not be the way you think. Have you thought of this? Planting the seed, food for thought. It might be the last time I see them but food for thought though. And then they are aware (Māori focus group female participant, 2012).

### **5:5 Mauri /Energy**

Energy has been described as that which adds the dynamism to what we do and which makes us lively and motivated, and this latter is a more relevant understanding for this thesis

(Chui et al., 2004). It is similar to Immanuel Kant's holistic idea of *geist* defined as a combined intelligence, mind and spirit, described in his book, *Anthropology from a pragmatic point of view*: "...spirit is the animating principle of a human being" (Kant, 1974, p. 124). I chose to understand the sweetness of heart or grace described and valued by Sahaj Marg participants, as an aspect of *geist* (animating spirit).

One cultural study identified the importance of grace in Spirituality. Coulon's (1999) study of the Senegal Grand Magal religious festival, describes the word used to designate the Mouride brotherhood as *turug*. *Turug* translates into English as route, path, way or direction. The Saint associated with fellowship is the source of spiritual power or grace that suffuses the members. This is similar to the Yogic and Sufi concept of transmission whereby the master's (teacher, guru) grace, heart condition or love is transmitted to the aspirants via meditation practices (Chandra, 1991a; Naidoo, 1994; Prasad, 1984). It is the master's or Saint's *pranahuti* (life offering) that assists the 'brother-

sisterhood' in progress on the path. According to Powell (1996) *pranahuti* is: "...the process of Yogic transmission; derived from prana meaning life and ahuti meaning offering. It the gracious and conscious offering of the life force or spirit by the Guru into the disciple's heart" (p 170). According to another participant:

So the first thing is that slowly we are feeling that brotherhood and second thing I feel that nowadays I feel that the same energy, the same energy that is like in me, in you, in Master, everywhere the same energy. I feel this nowadays. I am feeling this it is a very good example to understand the brotherhood-ness; there is no difference. If you feel from the heart there is no difference. So this is first thing, the idea - master, mission, method; if I feel the same thing from heart, the same energy is working everywhere I am feeling this (Indian, Sahaj Marg female participant, 2011).

In this excerpt, the 'energy' is experienced as creating a connection, of dissolving ego boundaries and a feeling of sameness. This is not a secular material sameness but rather sameness at the subtle level of energy that allows and some would argue creates diversity within nature (Radhakrishnan, 1994). So in this humanity becomes part of nature and part of larger systems of unseen subtle energy, which allows one to be a graceful and harmonious presence in the world (Shastri, 1976). The energy we are given is like a spring of eternal water always refreshing and flowing over, and which is written about by poets and mystics.<sup>63</sup> Sahaj Marg master, Shri Ram Chandra Babuji, comes into this discussion by considering that the usage of the language of 'energy' is not correct to describe this aspect of nature, because an essence, by definition, has even less force than that which we are currently accustomed to. He states that this essence is a 'forceless force' and it is this force that mystics have called 'love' because it is conducive not coercive like most forces (Ram Chandra, 1991c). The purpose of Raja Yoga meditation was to become merged in this field (Prasada, 1912).<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> I agree with the Yogic knowledge that describes Nature as the underlying principle or life essence that animates all of life and may be understood as a process of development as summed up by: "Creation is interpreted in the Veda's as development rather than the bringing into being something not hitherto existent. The first principle is manifested in the whole world" (Radhakrishnan, 1994, p. 39).

<sup>64</sup> To do so one begins to experience self as energy. This conception of life, despite linguistic differences, agrees in a way with a suggestion from quantum mechanics that all material life forms at the sub-atomic level are fermions, beyond vibrating waves, towards particles that exist in and move through a quantum field. "The photons that carry electromagnetism are vibrations in the electromagnetic field that stretches through space. Gravitons are vibrations in the gravitational field; gluons are vibrations in the gluon field, and so on. Even the fermions – the matter particles -- are vibrations in an underlying field. There is an electron field, an up

As we contemplate the infinitely extending connections that link us to others and ultimately to everything and to the ground of all being, this potentially leads us to a development of faith. For participants the experience and practical experience of spiritual brother-sisterhood was attributed as an outcome of their *sadhana* (spiritual practise involving meditation) and for Māori of their cultural practices and understandings about reality.

We are somehow constant in speaking and behaving, we are not rushing too much in all the directions somehow it is a more constant flow, you know it's like the vibration, you know in mathematics there is a function called senescence<sup>1</sup>. It is like the vibration - it is like the wave of the light, it goes up and down and up and down and so easily this vibration is changing. So the difference between the ups and downs are not so big any more, it is more constant like the still lake you have the beginning, you can have a storm you can have the wind and then the waves and then it calms down so something like that I think shows in our behaviour - how shall I say in our relationship to the others you know it simply comes down to the silence on the inside which shows on the outside” (Romanian, Sahaj Marg, male participant, 2011).

In this excerpt, a Sahaj Marg participant attempts to give words to the inner experience of energy, awareness and the resulting mastery over the fluctuation of inner reaction to outside events and unconscious conditioning. As the inner stir settles, a deep silence develops. The compilation of this inner revelation and feeling was the study of the Upaniṣad writers:

“In our inspired moments we have the feeling that there is a greater reality within us, though we cannot tell what it is. From the movements that stir in us and the utterances that issue from us, we perceive the power, not ourselves, that moves us” (Radhakrishnan, 1994, p. 53).

As the familiarity with this inner feeling continues, there are changes in development:

Well for me it is like a big package of energy which gives me courage, which gives me faith, which, you know, gives me that hint that says to me that “this is it” you know, and then somehow

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quark field, and a field for every other kind of particle. Just like sound waves propagate through the air, vibrations propagate through quantum fields, and we observe them as particles” (Carroll, 2012, p. 33).

everything changes, the attitude changes, the presence changes, his presence in your life becomes more perceivable. And then you are aware, you are aware that you are not alone, you are aware that He is by your side, you are aware that all the struggling is given by him with all his love so that you can grow, so that each one of us can see and rise above all these problems so there - I guess there is the beginning of change (Romanian, Sahaj Marg, male participant, 2011).

It was common for Sahaj Marg participants to use the words Him, Higher Self, *Master* and He to describe the awareness of the inner divine. Whilst this Sahaj Marg participant was not unusual in describing ‘presence’ as ‘he’; Sahaj Marg literature was clear that the relationship and view of the inner and outer master was not gendered and could be experienced or related to as: sister, brother, mother, father, friend, teacher. Vedic writers suggest a similar remembering and awareness of He or Him that is subtle, unknowable, undefinable, and omnipresent, within and separate to all things (Radhakrishnan, 1994).<sup>65</sup>

For Sahaj Marg participants the awareness of an energetic presence allowed a certain confidence, calm and silence to develop within the individual. Perhaps this was also true of the Māori and their relationship with *kauae runga* (upper jaw and celestial knowledge).

Nature at its subtlest is a balance of three energetic forces that are said to also manifest the human being (Prajananada, 1971). Soul (*purusha* in the Sanskrit language) is the catalyst for life, “...the mere proximity of purusha (creative source) starts the entire cycle of creation and sets the cycle in motion like a magnet placed near iron fillings”

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<sup>65</sup> Human beings’ interest in, and research of, the atomic world has been going on for some time. Sāṅkhya philosophy, as developed by Indian researcher Kapila (6<sup>th</sup> Century BC), was also concerned with atomic theory (known as *tanmatras* in the Sanskrit language) and establishing the natural laws of the universe (Capra, 1982; Bahadur, 1978). Much like the research of modern particle physicists, his approach was to go from gross reality to the more subtle aspects. Kapila (6<sup>th</sup> century BC) argued that, “...the knowledge of imperceptible things can be obtained by inference, as one may not see fire but infer that it is there by the smoke” (Kapila, 6<sup>th</sup> century BC, Book of Topics, in Bahadur, 1978, p. 64). The subtle aspects were inferred from the gross aspects of nature. This is somewhat like modern experiments in a physics cloud chamber, which allow the creation of images showing the tracks of charged particles, from which theories can be tested (Carroll, 2012).

According to Kapila’s research, nature (*prakriti* in the Sanskrit language) is comprised of three qualities of energy (*gunas* in the Sanskrit language). These energies have the following properties and are present in all manifestations of nature: i) purity (*sattva* in the Sanskrit language, and includes light), ii) activity (*rajas* in the Sanskrit language, including movement and heat) and iii) solidity (*tamas* in the Sanskrit language, including ignorance and inertness).

(Kapila, 6<sup>th</sup> century BC, Book of Topics, 1:60 in Bahadur, 1978, p. 64).<sup>66</sup> Prajānāda (1971) described the interplay of the subatomic field:

Everything in this phenomenal and mental world is governed by the universal law of cause and effect. The effect is visible or perceivable, whereas the cause is invisible or imperceivable. All perceivable phenomena are the various expressions of different forces which act as invisible agents upon the subtle and imperceivable forms of matter, and when the subtle forces are objectified, they appear as gross objects, which are subject to birth and decay. The subtle body consists of internal organs or antahkarana with its different modifications like mind, intellect, egoism, memory; five instruments of perception (jñānendriyas), five instruments of action (karmendriyas), and five pranas. Prana means vital energy and force and not air (p 103).

In this passage we can understand the constant movement of the universe into matter, the building blocks of matter that are produced from that movement and a view of the human being as both energy and matter, like all life in the universe.<sup>67</sup> Prajānāda highlights the importance of inner attitudes and thought in creation of the material world.

Again, Prajānāda (1971) identifies an additional force called *prana*. *Prana*, however, exists in all things and when there is no *prana*, there is said to be no life (Feuerstein, 2002). Māori have a similar concept called *mauri*, which means ‘life-force.’ However, as Jacques Derrida alerts us, translation of meaning from one language to another is often an action of domination and loss of meaning (Derrida, 1997). Patterson (1998) assists by saying that *mauri* can be viewed as life force, life principle, character, essence, uniqueness, quality and value. What is clear, in my mind, is that the English language and modern Western culture based on a Cartesian separation of mind and body (Capra, 1982) are poorly equipped to understand the Māori and Yogic notions of *prana* and *mauri*. In

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<sup>66</sup> Kapila speaks of the gravitational force and its role in creation: “*Prakriti* is the state of equipoise of purity (*sattva*), activity (*rajas*) and stolidity (*tamas*). From *prakriti* proceeds the cause of the universe (*mahat*); from *mahat* the I-sense (*ahamkara*); from the five subtle elements (*tam-mantras*) the two sets of organs (*indriyas*); and from the gross elements (*sthoola-bhootas*). Then there is the soul (*purusha*). Such is the group of twentyfive principles” (Kapila, 6<sup>th</sup> century BC, Book of Topics, in Bahadur, 1978, p. 64).

<sup>67</sup> Ian Stevenson, University of Virginia, USA, has gathered 3000 cases of reincarnation from India, Sri Lanka, Burma, Thailand, Turkey, Lebanon, Syria, West Africa, and Northwest (native) North America. The common aspects among these are: i) an elderly person predicts rebirth and subsequent death, ii) a baby is born who has exactly same markings (scars, birthmarks, etc.) of the iii) as the young child begins to speak there is shared precise verifiable detail about their past lifetime, and iv) behaviour, attitudes of the child are unusual in the family and there is often an adult demeanor. In rare cases there is xenoglossy whereby the child speaks a completely different language to the family and surrounding area. (Gupta, 2002).

addition, these notions are central to any understanding of spirituality as an all-encompassing science of life (Jyotirmayananda, 2006). Even early Christianity, based upon the ancient language of Aramaic, did not differentiate between inner quality and outer action as both were always present. A neighbour was both inside and outside and the arbitrary borders between mind, body and spirit were not apparent (Douglas-Klotz, 1990). This suggests a greater spiritual understanding of life, similar to the philosophy of Yogic science and of Māori.<sup>68</sup>

### 5:6 Aroha/ Love

Sahaj Marg practitioners spoke often about love similarly to the way it is referred to in the Christian gospel of St. John.<sup>69</sup> Their descriptions of this love was linked with brothersisterhood, correct ethical behaviour and a vibrational feeling in the heart. One practitioner described the following process:

It is within ourselves where we overcome our animal kind of desires and our attention to the physical world - like pleasure and power and money and all of this. Once we overcome all of that grabbing and grasping for that and focus on the divinity, on love. Once we bring our attention in that direction and only in that direction then (brotherhood) is a very natural and very simple process (French, Sahaj Marg, female participant, 2010).

This process seemed to involve above all *karmic* (law of cause and effect) things alongside unceasing feeling of connection and constant remembrance of a human being, in this instance the external teacher, who is himself immersed in love.<sup>70</sup> According to Patanjali, in Prasada (1912), one can also connect or meditate directly on love and

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<sup>68</sup> According to Douglas-Klotz (1990) The Lord's Prayer translated directly into English from Aramaic (according to the Syriac Aramaic manuscript of the gospels, Peshitta Version):

O Cosmic birther of all radiance and vibration! Soften the ground of our being and carve out a space within us where your Presence can abide. Power us with creativity so that we may be empowered to bear the fruit of your mission. Let each of our actions bear fruit in accordance with our desire. Endow us with the wisdom to produce and share what each being needs to grow and flourish. Untie the tangled threads of destiny that bind us, as we release others from the entanglements of past mistakes. Do not let us be seduced by that which would divert us from our true purpose, but illuminate the opportunities of the present moment. For you are the truthful vision, the birth-power and the fulfilment, as all is gathered and made whole once again (Douglas-Klotz, 1990, p. 4). There is controversy over this translation. However, the author describes his method clearly and points out, that like the Sanskrit language, Aramaic words have meaning from several points of view, whilst the sound and feeling of the word conveys important information.

<sup>69</sup> St John was one of the twelve disciples of Jesus in the Christian tradition. The gospel of St John is in the New Testament and he represents Jesus as an incarnation of the divine logos.

<sup>70</sup> According to Hinduism and Yogic science *karma* is the law of causation or cause and effect, which all living things are subject to.

divinity. A male participant from Nepal extended this concept in the following example when asked about brotherhood;

I didn't know you. I didn't saw you. I didn't meet you. You're from a different country, a different world, a different part of the world and I am from a different part but there is something between us, which is connecting with each other. If you are having any problem, if you are in a pain, I will feel that my sister is in pain and I will also be in that pain. I will also be suffering because we both are connected. What is that? The love. This the Master is building between us. This thing - this brotherhood is a good thing. This thing helps us to create peace because I don't have any type of thinking inside my mind to make you hurt, to make you in pain because why? We have a relation; a heart-to-heart relation. So this helps us in creating peace (Nepalese, Sahaj Marg male participant, 2011).

In this example, it is suggested that the heart to heart connection gives feeling, knowing and a shared internal transcendental reality. This participant also believed that without opening your heart it is very difficult to get a heart to heart connection. This was a felt inner feeling of warmth and energetic vibration and occurred when there was less fear and inner prejudice between human beings. It was viewed by participants 'as occurring spontaneously or without conscious action and developed from the deep relationship with the inner higher self, *Master, atua* (ancestral forces) or *tūpuna* (ancestors).

What is also striking is the way in which this demonstrates an attitude of 'friendship' similar to the Aristotelian idea of 'self-regarding and other regarding' motives in relationship

(Carreras, 2011). In one case, a human being's motives are predicated for benefit to their own self and in the other towards the benefit of the other person. In this example, I wonder whether there is a union of self and other regarding. There is no felt separation between many of these participants. In this example, there is no motivation or desire to hurt because there is an 'each other' mediated by heart. This reminds us of the Aristotelian idea that true friends represent a single soul (Carreras, 2011). During the course of this study, many participants felt the other person's pain at quite a physical level. There seemed to be a heightened sensitivity to the feelings and attitudes between people whether they were familiar with each other, or strangers, in close proximity or separated by time and space. For some it extended to an embodied perception including even the physical health issues of the other person, as shared by my Nepalese participant above, e.g.: 'if you are in a pain,

I will feel that my sister is in pain and I will also be in that pain. I will also be suffering because we both are connected.' Such an unbounded connection was not affected by space, distance or time. He went on to suggest that the mechanism of this was love: "What is that? The love.'

There is some evidence in the literature to support that this kind of relationship<sup>71</sup> (Venkatasubramanian, Jayakumar, Nagendra, Deeptha, & Gangadhar, 2008; McCraty et al., 1998; Mann & Jaye, 2007; Pavlovich & Kranke, 2011). It seems that the qualitative themes and narratives from these participants support what researchers have found in the fields of heart connection, telesomatic connection and telepathy. As we recall from earlier sections, McCraty et al., (1998) demonstrated in their neurobiological studies that when we stand beside someone with or without touching, the electrical signal from our heart is transmitted to the other person's brain. The cardiac and neurological electrical signals become the same.

Our spiritual conditions and inner peace appear to be contagious.

### **5:7 Conclusion**

Study participants from both communities experienced spiritual brother-sisterhood as assisting in the development of a consciousness of connection. The effects of this consciousness were spiritual as many practitioners identified themes such as connectedness and relationship with self and with others, the existence of an existential inner reality, transcendence and energy. These were different findings as practitioners mentioned the importance of the divinity within, connection to an overriding presence, and love. In addition, they talked of a shared inner feeling mediated by a transcendental spiritual heart, inner *Master*, *atua* or the *tūpuna*. Further investigation in this area may provide a greater understanding of the experience of the heart to heart communication.

This section has outlined the initial data analysis. As we recall, Yoga has been defined as a settling of the mind into stillness, an expanded or transcendent awareness of consciousness, and a balance such that one feels a stabilising effect within. Study themes from participants were congruent with other community samples on spirituality. However, in accordance with constructivist grounded theory it was important to re-examine the data

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<sup>71</sup> An awareness or communion beyond an embodied separateness.

from a range of thematic perspectives (Charmaz, 2006). In the next section, I examine the themes through the lens of an applied, practical and relational spirituality.

## **Chapter Six: Relational Spirituality**

### **6:1 Summary**

This chapter develops the convergent themes and concepts from the perspective of a relational spirituality as described by Māori and Sahaj Marg participants. These include: i) spirituality as ordinary life, ii) brother-sisterhood, iii) *whakapapa* (genealogy) as realms of awareness or consciousness, iv) *Master/ Ishwara* (supreme being)/ *Io* (supreme being), v) *tūpuna* (ancestors), and vi) heart. These terms and the concepts in practice, represent an interconnected holistic ontology (Mark & Lyons, 2010; Salmond, 2011). Additionally, once combined they generate a definition of spiritual brother-sisterhood. At some level, separating this topic out from the whole is nonsensical, as for these participants, spirituality was natural and did not exist without relating.

### **6:2 Self as Relationship**

According to modern psychology, the study of self is concerned with the individual person's processes of cognition and the affective representation of one's identity as the subject of experience (Menon, Sinha, & Sreekantan, 2014; Deaux, 1993; Markus & Wurf, 1987). Such a definition of self is concerned with social identity, motivation, cognition, and affect; in a sense, self as a neurological and social process (Tajfel & Turner, 1986; Schwartz, Luyckx, & Vignoles, 2011). In this view the self is also a process shaped by external stimuli as mediated by processes of learning, observation and experience.<sup>72</sup> We see that identity can be shaped in a fluid way as Van der Werff, Steg & Keizer (2014) noted. According to their study environmental self-identity and biospheric values can be strengthened in the present when one remembers past pro-environmental behaviours. Stets & Carter (2001) show the importance of individual values in the formation of identity:

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<sup>72</sup> The book: *Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Consciousness and the Self* (Menon, Sinha, & Sreekantan, 2014) provides an excellent view of Western and Indian notions of Self Identity including overviews of the key theorists.

Individuals vary on what personal characteristics they class as essential to themselves. Some may class competitiveness, kindness, or friendliness as their core attributes. Whatever they class as essential, this identity orders their life, provides purpose, and influences their lifelong projects. When individuals identify being moral as central or core to themselves, this moral identity is experienced as the ‘real me’ the authentic self, and the deepest principle that guides the individual (p 194).

Yogic psychology extends this essential view of self to include both i) an ego-self developed from the reactions to experience and learning, and ii) a self that is sometimes called the ‘true self’, the ‘observing self’, or the ‘witness’ (Hall, 1942). Or as Brown (1980) describes: “In theology, the issue of personal identity is seen as only the prologue to the really important question of divine identity” (p 240). According to Indian Psychology the divine identity is that aspect of self which is unchanging and always present, an identity based on being, rather than an identity caught in a continual process of becoming (Pranjpe in Menon, Sinha, & Sreekantan, 2014). According to the research from India the true self is blissful, unselfish and limitlessly compassionate (Menon, Sinha, & Sreekantan, 2014).

The first aspect or ego-self is experienced as a sense of identity and of 'i-ness', whilst representing a consciousness that relates to the world as the doer and as the creator. According to Yogic science, the true self or spiritual self, is stable and beyond such constructs. It is experienced as a shining intelligence that emerges when the self is no longer identified as being in any of the states or conditions of intellect, mind, or ego (Prasada, 1912, Prabhavananda, 2012; Prajnananda, 1971). The Sanskrit term for the tripartite of intellect, mind, and ego is *citta*. When the self is identified with this tripartite *citta* (intellect, mind, ego), then the focus of attention remains upon the experiences of the body and, as such, Yoga or ‘union’ is not achieved (Feuerstein, 2000). Alternately, if the individual ontological experience of self is based upon unruly cognition, affect, experience and identity then the awareness of the inner true self is not possible. There are processes that allow the development of freedom from the unruly sense of 'i-ness' and are called by the Hindu tradition—collectively—as Yoga.

However, the understandings about the multidimensional nature of human reality and the attitudinal, behavioural and contemplative practices that are conducive to realizing these truths are familiar to traditional cultures (Murton, 2012; Robinson, 2005). For Māori

this knowledge leads to ways of inner and outer conduct known as *kaupapa* (Māori theme) and *tikanga* (customary protocols) (Mead, 2003).

The Māori view of identity is similar to the Hindu and Yogic view, and communal, geographical and ultimately relational as 'being' in the world (Murton, 2012; Marsden 2003). The Māori view of self is radically non-individualistic and the Māori word *au* is the *kākano* (seed), for the self as first person 'I', as *whanāu* (family), as *whanauka* (Southern Māori, relative), as *whanaukataka* (Southern Māori, the practice of community), and as *whakawhanaukataka* (Southern Māori, building relationships) (Salmond, 2011; Jahnke, 2002). Patterson (1992) shares:

...we should expect a Māori view of the self to be, like Aristotle's intrinsically social, situated in the world appropriately nonindividualistic and narrative based. And in fact this is exactly what we find: a traditional Māori view of self is quite radically nonindividualistic, to the point that what we would think of as an individual is identified with the kinship group (p 110).

The practices known as Yoga are said to lead to an integration of the spiritual and psychic aspects of the human being such that the true self is revealed. Derrida suggests that the self that is not preoccupied with 'i-ness' is one that is open to a relationship of hospitality and responsibility towards the 'Other.' As such, he moves scholarship from recognition and duty towards the 'Other' towards an 'unconditional infinite welcoming' of the 'Other' and ultimately a recognizing of the 'Other' as brother-sisterhood. Derrida concurs with Levinas that such a welcome, such hospitality, would require the interruption or reduction of the self.

He notes the level of willingness that is required to entertain this possibility: "One will understand nothing about hospitality if one does not understand that 'interrupting oneself' might mean the 'interruption of the self by the self as other'" (Derrida, 1997, p. 49).

I wonder whether the collective of ancestors or *tūpuna* may be understood as 'the self as 'Other'' and, if so, then there are similarities with the Raja Yoga notions of a transcendent *Master*. In this study, the 'self as 'Other'' interrupts participants to give warning, guidance, awareness and spiritual nourishment. One Māori participant described how her experience of the true self interacts with the consciousness of 'i-ness':

You think you're in control but you're being guided, you think how did I get here, where am I going to get the money from, but it

evolves, it happens. It's sort of like we all could do with more money but what would we do with it because actually we've got other treasures that are worth far more than money would ever be (Māori female participant, 2012).

It seemed that these 'treasures' were the practical awareness of connection as an active relationship or as one Māori participant shared:

You know imagine you're sitting in a stadium and there are about 50,000 people. And it's like if you've got a *take* [problem] - connect in to the resources that you already have. They are just sitting there screaming to help, with the hand up, "pick me, and pick me." So it's sort of like we're really clear now if we need to do something or something's coming through or wanting to do something. It's like sitting in that stadium and saying 'okay those *tūpuna* [ancestors] who have the skills (around whatever it is say finance) we need to go to a *wananga* [meeting] and we need to know where the *putea* [resource is going to come from]. So it's like come forward those that have the skills and capabilities to help in this area. Just that sort of thing and also there is the *haututū* [mischievous ones] in there that actually like to play, so you have to be able to shut them down and keep them in their place (Māori female participant, 2012).

In this example, the practical effect of union with the *tūpuna* (ancestors) gives assistance in the material world of duty to embodied others.<sup>73</sup> Throughout these narratives the Māori participants were identified according to individual characteristics (culture and gender) yet their words were collective. In the focus groups it was as if I listened to 'one through the many', as the women would add to the words of the other in a seamless manner.

Sahaj Marg practitioners described a sense of stability<sup>74</sup> and harmony once personally established in remembrance or awareness of the eternal *Master*. In this, there

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<sup>73</sup> As we recall from earlier sections, Yoga is a Sanskrit term derived from two root words. The first root word *yujir* means unity, union, connection, intimacy and harmony. The first teacher/ *adiguru* of Sahaj Marg defined yoga as, '*Purusha* means soul. It is of two kinds- *Jeevatma* and *paramatma*. *Jeevatma* is many, *paramatma* is one. The union of these two is called yoga' (Chandra, 2001). Perhaps our previous Māori participant's metaphorical way of describing the *tūpuna* realm gives an indication of *paramatma* or one as part of a multiembodied transcendent soul.

<sup>74</sup> According to the Bhagavad-Gita (Prabhupada, 1972, Bhagavad-Gita II, 48) Yoga is defined as: "*Samatvam yogamuchyate*" which translates into English as 'being stable.' The text suggests that a calm mind is capable of beholding: "the Cosmic Self through his individual self and rejoices in the Cosmic Self, wherein one experiences that supreme bliss that can be grasped by the buddhi (intellect)" (Prabhupada, 1972, BhagavadGita VI, 20-23).

was a balancing of relationships in the material and non-material worlds. This was described as:

i) *bhakti* (devotion), ii) energy, iii) power and iv) love. According to scholars, this condition was a practical rendering of Yoga (Jyotirmayananda, 2006). As Feuerstein (2002) writes:

“In other words, Yoga means the condition of inner stability or equilibrium that depends on one's fixity of attention. When the mind is stabilised, then one can begin to discover the wonders of the inner world, the vast horizons of consciousness” (p 183).

It is these vast horizons of consciousness that Māori participants access in their own particular way, when connecting with the *tūpuna* (ancestors) (Marsden, 2003). The capacity to do this was culturally valued and the women stated: “we have nurtured our children's precious gifts...you can walk past them and they are all sitting silently having a conversation even though no words are said” (Māori Focus group, 2012). The Sufi tradition assists our understanding of this capacity of a ‘realized self’ by viewing the witnessing, observing and higher self as an unfolding process: “The self is actually a living process rather than a static structure in the psyche. The self is not a thing. The Arabic term is related to words for

‘breath’, ‘soul’, ‘essence’, ‘self’ and ‘nature’ ” (Fadiman and Frager, 1977, p. 19). This definition of ‘self’ is by nature an essence of connection, accessed by inner existential awareness, energy and ultimately transcended. Here we see similarities with the Māori concepts of *wairua* (spirit/ spiritual) and its connection to *mauri* (life principle in people and objects) and *tūpuna* and with the Yogic notion of *prana* (universal life energy that is found in all living and non-living objects). Whilst these concepts are distinguished, they are experienced as an interconnecting whole. Having *mana* (empowerment) in this way involves a commitment to human community, relationship and the spiritual heart of each other. As one participant observed:

There is the universal brother-sisterhood where we all assist each other in times of difficulty but alongside this is a feeling or a knowing that one is needed to be with the other. To me it's *whangaitanga*. Because *whangaitanga* is not just about family, it's that universal spiritual brotherhood really. Okay at the moment we've got W. up there with T. and people coming in to – you call it *manaakitanga*, because we're supporting and all that

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but it's part of *whanangatanga*, part of the brotherhood that you just do. So it would be the *wairua* of the *whanangatanga*, wouldn't it be? (Māori female participant, 2012).

*Whangaitanga* is an expanded notion of family - beyond culture, genetics, affection or tribe. In this understanding and narrative, spiritual brother-sisterhood has a communicative aspect whereby people just know to come; that they are needed in a practical way to help the other. In this, it is possible to see a 'self' that is connected and moves towards outward expressions of service to the other (Derrida, 1997). For some this is an aspect of the notion of spiritual brother-sisterhood. In some ways this brings to mind the idea of 'radical embodiment' (or enactive or extended cognition) which views the whole body as the locus of sensing, with the pathways of the mind and relationship not bounded by the skin (Drury, 2011).<sup>75</sup> Raatikainen (1989) described such a radical embodiment or brotherhood:

Brotherhood contains a feeling of friendship or fellow feeling and social solidarity. Empathy and humanitarianism in human relations are based on brotherhood and ultimately on the value of love. Love is the opposite of indifference. Love means devoting oneself to the good of another, it is action in response to human needs (p 193).

It seems that brother-sisterhood for Māori includes action and responsiveness to the multi-dimensional needs of others. For Sahaj Marg spiritual brother-sisterhood is not about ties of sociality and affection. Rather it is a relationship mediated by the forceless force of love and a compassionate yet non-attached relationship with each other. This echoes the work of elicitive conflict transformation as explained by Wolfgang Dietrich (2013):

In terms of elicitive conflict work, the transformation of the external world begins with the awareness of one's inner life. When we think of the world as a place of encounter, then we will meet people in all their richness and beauty, and we will do so on all levels. Peace work is a tremendous and wonderful challenge that takes us into the deep layers of ourselves, so we can be of service to the world outside ourselves (p 228).

Within Sahaj Marg these skills were encouraged by frequent seminars and large multinational annual gatherings which gave opportunities for practitioners to live alongside

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<sup>75</sup> I highly recommend this article as a starting point for understanding the participants in my study. Drury (2011) outlines the cognitive research on radical embodiment, which was the common knowledge or base theme for participants in my study. It also showed how this knowledge might change the practice of mental health practitioners. As a former therapist and counsellor, this gave me a deep sense of hope.

each other. Whilst they came together to meditate, they also deepened their mastery of the ten maxims and Yogic *yama* (ethical observances) and *niyama* (moral restraints) in general. Pearmain (2006) examined the value that youth participants put on the capacity to come together in a Sahaj Marg seminar and identified a composite theme of 'safe haven'—a space that allowed the participants to explore their inner worlds whilst becoming open to others. Sahaj Marg values both inner and outer silence. According to current master Parthasarathi Rajagopalachari (2013): “So we have to similarly start thinking in those terms; less of speaking, more of communion, communication without speaking. So that is, that was, and that should be, the essence of our system all along” (p 38). Supposedly, the Yogic personality once self is realised is a personality based upon sensitivity, awareness and a deep inner connectivity with all of creation (Vivekânanda, 1923). There is no separation. Perhaps we are able to glimpse this consciousness in the following words: “It is feeling connected all the time, even without verbal or any other form of physical contact” (Belarus, Sahaj Marg male participant, 2012). As described by participants’ this feeling of connection and knowledge was not dependent upon proximity or even living in the same country and was beyond constraints of space and time.

### **6.3 Whakapapa /Brother-Sisterhood**

There are studies throughout the literature looking at political, ethnographic and religious brotherhoods and sisterhoods (Koskinsen, 2005; McIsaac, 2001; Coulon, 1999; Loosely, 2007). I do not propose to outline this vast literature.

Western philosopher, Ken Wilber, in the book *The Collected Works of Ken Wilber: Sex, Ecology, and Spirituality* (2000), shares an understanding of brotherhood that extends the idea from the more commonly held notions. It is in his description of interrelatedness that we find aspects of what can be described as spiritual brother-sisterhood:

Each being is deeply bound together with other people and with the surrounding non-human forms of life in a complex interconnected web of life, that is to say, a true community. All creatures and things are brothers and sisters. From this idea come the basic principles of non-exploitation, of respect and reverence for all creatures (Wilber, 2000, p. 14).

The spiritual definition, of brother-sisterhood, as understood by Māori and the Yogic community, leads to a universal connection mediated by inner awareness. This awareness can be understood as contemplation of *whakapapa* (genealogy), or as one practitioner from Ireland suggested:

The separation between each other becomes less and less because ultimately we are all one'... 'the concept needs to expand into a universal-hood; Master talks about all life, all consciousness- so there is this connection- this oneness with all. So maybe it has to expand- we've got to go beyond that and maybe brotherhood is just the beginning stages of some type of unity (Irish Sahaj Marg, female practitioner, 2010).

Thus the Levinasian and Derridian ideal of the 'Other' is encouraged to go beyond and it is here that we begin to see glimmers of the felt expanded consciousness of the Yogic notion of Spiritual Brother-sisterhood. Participants from the Māori focus group (2012) recognised this concept immediately and developed a range of ways of describing it. They were clear, in amongst a great deal of laughter, that brotherhood was actually sisterhood.

They then proceeded to give the following agreed adjectives:

- connection/ unspoken connection
- balance of wahine (female) and tane (male) energies within body
- whether you are aware or not
- it is that whole nurturing of self and other
- an unspoken knowing - feeling each other's vibes
- respect and humility
- awareness of each other
- safety
- unconditional love in material connection such that we are able to challenge and be challenged back
- when you are reunited it's like you've never been apart - no difference between who we are at home and who we are at work
- no one is above anyone else
- one's all understood within the sisterhood
- trust

These words describe an ethical, intuitive and natural relating with one another. As one participant said:

You become part of a *whānau* (family) because there's this automatic connection and actually everyone is attuned to their intuition. You know when something is up and you know- do I

need to do anything about it or does someone else? People within this room do that without having to be told to do it, they pick up, we all pick up on. The right person then approaches the person rather than being left (Māori focus group, female participant, 2012).

For this Māori participant *whānau* (family) was beyond bloodline. In this relating there was an emphasis placed upon responsibility, responsiveness and caring action. It was accessed through an inner silent communication. It was not enough to receive and share information without a responsive action. According to Māori participants it required a response: “So we all look out for each other if we think somebody is being treated unfairly or taken advantage of. That doesn't sit well, one is never going to be left there standing on their own. And we will step up to the plate and protect each other” (Māori focus group, 2012). This echoes the notions of hospitality and responsibility to the embodied person as well as the mysterious ‘Other’ (Levinas, 1985; Derrida, 1997).

According to Māori focus group participants a practical expression of brothersisterhood is universal, relational and beyond group identities (Murton, 2012; Jahnke, 2002).

This example from their place of employment describes actions when they sense another’s distress: “I think it actually shocks others sometimes. There’s sometimes a shock factor in that we do that but we are open and we embrace other teams as well. If they need a hug then we'll just go and give them one” (Māori focus group, 2012). In this example, colleague’s distress is intuitively felt and acted upon.

Many Sahaj Marg participants - although not all - by contrast found it difficult to define the term ‘spiritual brother-sisterhood’ and required some reflection time.

Subsequently, they were able to define the term in similar ways to Māori but could see inconsistencies between the concept and its application. As one male Indian Sahaj Marg participant shared: “Forget spiritual brotherhood there’s not even a smile of welcome or basic brotherhood when you go to the ashram.<sup>76</sup> We get more [in Aotearoa New Zealand], in any group here, even when we are just talking about rugby” (Sahaj Marg Focus group, Aotearoa New Zealand, 2012).

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<sup>76</sup> This participant is referring to the central Ashram at Manapakkum, Chennai, India where many practitioners return to experience group meditation and deepen their inner practices.

The Māori focus group was encouraged to consider whether brother-sisterhood was unconditional towards all people or whether there was some prejudice in its practical expression. They agreed that there were gender differences:

When I think about my brotherhood, I think about individual males rather than a group, it's really quite bizarre. I see one-on-one, whereas sisterhood it's like this here - we're all sitting and chatting whereas I don't see myself sitting here with men. Yeah, so it's definitely different (Māori Focus group, 2012).

Participants felt that this was because men could hurt differently. This created boundaries and limits of trust between men and women. As one participant described: “I am likely to listen to sisters more and fight back against the men” (Māori Focus group, 2012). Thus, the abstract, even academic, definitions of brother-sisterhood may not receive adequate practical expression.

The Māori participants' experience of brother-sisterhood was situated in the context of maintenance of language, cultural and spiritual values and practices during sustained years of colonization.<sup>77</sup> Dietrich (2013) states:

In conclusion, I wish to emphasize one last time that elicitive conflict work is a job for heroes. Indeed, working in conflictual settings may involve danger to life and health. But I am not referring to this as much as to the psychic challenges faced by elicitive conflict workers, in line with Ghandi's poetic and popular sentence: 'We must become the change we wish to see in the world.' If this statement is considered and acknowledged in its full depth, then peace workers must, in addition to acquiring academic

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<sup>77</sup> The arrival of Captain James Cook in 1769 instigated migration of European (mainly British) settlers into Aotearoa New Zealand. The Treaty of Waitangi (an agreement made between Māori Chiefs and the British Crown) was established in 1840. Whilst The Treaty of Waitangi was driven by humanitarian ideals the negative effects of colonization on Māori have been consistent with other indigenous peoples' experiences (Human Rights Commission, 2009). Rata, Liu, & Hanke, (2008) conducted in-depth, semi-structured interviews with 10 Māori (the indigenous people of New Zealand). *Rongo* (demonstration of commitment to restore relationships), *whakapapa* (interconnectedness between people, places, and events overtime forming identity) and *kaupapa* (agenda set based on the costs and benefits of forgiveness) were identified as core themes using thematic analysis. Forgiveness was seen as a collective social process, and as an outcome required commitment from both the victim and the transgressor to maintain their relationship. In the context of Māori - Pākehā relationships, it was felt that genuine remorse and commitment to transgress no more had not been achieved, and that honest communication was lacking. Colonization was seen as on-going, and most interviewees felt that forgiveness was costly and inappropriate. These findings provide insights into the perceived usefulness of forgiveness in an ongoing conflict, and processes through which group relations could be improved. I am very mindful that the honest communication from participants in this thesis towards a Pākehā researcher represents a deep level of *manaakitanga* from these women; and the knowledge shared by all should not be considered lightly.

knowledge, enter the dragon lair of their own inner shadows before they can work in this field (p 227).

I consider it a peaceful act to rise above transgression and become the change that one envisions. One Māori participant described what a world based on spiritual brothersisterhood might feel like: “I think it comes down to rhythm, maybe a harmony, a stillness. So you would see and maybe connectedness. So you would see a depth of whānau and a depth of relationship which was full of love” (February, 2012). For these participants the depth of relationship was beyond ethnicity.<sup>78</sup>

#### **6:4 Whakapapa/ Genealogy and Realms of Consciousness**

The Māori word *whakapapa* is a more universal ontological term than the English translation of genealogy suggests (Royal, 1998; Jahnke, 2002; Murton, 2012). This is an important concept to understand and it has been translated poorly into the English language. To address its deeper meaning, I will use the following quote. I feel this helps illuminate the multidimensional aspects of *whakapapa* (genealogy), specifically as an encompassing term that connects all to a holistic ontology (Charles Royal, 1998):

It is the genius of the Māori world for it was the tool by which our ancestors accounted for the origins and nature of the world which were further explained and embellished by myth and legend. It was also the tool employed to explain, locate and predict phenomena. Whakapapa is a symbol set within which are encapsulated the Māori world’s deepest thoughts and perspectives on the nature of the universe and features of the human condition. Whakapapa is used to order the evolutionary processes and patterns from the beginnings of time to the birth of the world in which we now dwell, the world known as Te Ao Mārama. Whakapapa is a symbolic tool, employed by the old - time philosophers to apprehend, to comprehend, to analyze the world and reality in all its forms. These include both the physical forms of the world as well as the invisible forms (Royal, 1998, p. 78).

For many in this study *whakapapa* (genealogy) was a lived, practical, and experienced knowledge. As one Māori participant stated: “The more you delve into

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<sup>78</sup> Swami Vivekânanda is a prominent figure in India. He was instrumental in re-establishing an Indian national identity. He unified the Hindu religion and made it available to all castes. He argued for universal human values and was the first monk to share these ideas at the first interfaith parliament in Chicago in the late 1800s. He is an authority on Yoga and considers that the first sign that you are becoming religious is that you are becoming cheerful: “When a man is gloomy, that may be dyspepsia, but it is not religion. A pleasurable feeling is the nature of *Sattva*. Everything is pleasurable to the *Sattvik* man, and when this comes, know that you are progressing in Yoga” (Vivekânanda, 1899, p. 211).

whakapapa, the more you glow, the more you think with a super grin on your face 'yeah I'm from royalty'. In this excerpt, *whakapapa* (genealogy) leads the individual to an expanded awareness of self through an understanding of *whānau* (family). This is useful when understanding the way that participants talked about connection by heart and a sense of family that was felt more deeply than the genetics link, or the bond of affection. The notions of radical embodiment extended towards all of creation including the life forces that were seen as essences, frequencies and presence.

Both Māori and Sahaj Marg participant communities shared stories that led to a theme of access to knowledge of different realms and worlds. In Māori terms, this is also *whakapapa* (genealogy). This knowledge is carried by oral tradition and there are some tribal variations (Thornton, 2004). Some participants from both groups had developed a shared, natural relationship with different realms. For them there was an awareness of the smallness of humanity's role in the vastness of nature and this knowledge led to attitudes of utmost respect, care, *tikanga* (protocols) and humility.

Given that we cannot prove the existence of other realms, all that can be done is report the narratives (representing the knowledge that was gained by many of those in this study) that collectively led to this theme. As others have done in qualitative research, I present the lived perspective of participants (Mann & Jaye, 2012). The Indian researcher, Kapila, 6<sup>th</sup> century BC, addressed these difficulties: "The knowledge of imperceptible things can be obtained by inference, as one may not see fire but infer that it is there by the smoke" (Kapila, *The Book of Topics*, 1:60, cited in Bahadur, 1978, p. 64).

I suspect that it is this sense of something more powerful that creates a feeling of vulnerability or fear within some human beings. It is the doubt and fear, which leads to the separation from the self as a radical embodied field of awareness and cognition (Drury, 2013). My study participants acknowledged a journey from doubt and fear towards a radical embodied self, beyond brain and skin boundaries. They were very naturally, and in a joyful manner, sharing an awareness of support and help from 'others - who were simultaneously each other, another and yet not another' to become more peaceful. As Māori Focus Group, participants (2012) shared: "if you shut off then you don't receive messages from the universe." These messages came through feeling and awareness, with a variety of simple expressions or signs in the outer world. Several examples were given by Māori of signs coming from the outer environment, for example, from the presence and

sound of the birds which triggered awareness of and attunement to being needed somewhere. The acceptance of the reality of different realms led to certain attitudes developing within participants. For example, difficult life events were understood in a purposeful way, as a strengthening of ethics or the upholding of *tikanga* (customary protocols). As one Māori participant shared:

“those things are sent to test. It’s like the *tūpuna* (ancestors) are throwing it at us. And it’s like ‘be steadfast - you’re thousands of years old’ (Māori focus group, 2012). The upholding of *tikanga* can be understood in terms of protocols and ways of doing in the outer world (Moko Mead, 2005). However, there is also a deeper understanding closely aligned to Buddhist notions of *dharma* (fundamental laws of nature and right behaviours) and the Tao notions of ‘the way’. From my field journals, “...for me the *dharma* is a constant feeling of the *Master*. Somehow the heart has this soft connection and communion with source”

(2013). For Māori there was recognition that one's commitment to *tikanga* (protocols and ways of doing in the outer world) would be tested. There was also a belief in a certain amount of predetermination: “And we are all here because this is where we're supposed to be, and when I'm told to move – it's not by anybody, again it's the *tūpuna*” (Māori focus group, 2012).

I would argue that if we view the *tūpuna* (ancestors) as a Levinasian 'Other' who is also a trace in one's world-as-experienced, then the conscious connected relationship may be understood as an invitation into mystery or perhaps into the Vedic notion of a subtle formless, omniscient, omnipresent, and negated 'in-determinant reality' (Swahananda, 1984). Levinas recognition of the 'Other' is often interpreted materially, i.e., in relation to other living people whom are encountered and, one's decisions about values, morality and cognitions create the necessary conditions for external behavior that may represent an ideal of brother-sisterhood. However, in the context of the *tūpuna* (ancestors) as tangible, accessible transparent selves, recognition of the 'Other' could also have an aspect of welcome to an inner consciousness that leads to an infinite responsibility for all others. This relationship was nourished by participants in this study with attitudes and practices of devotion, *aroha* (love), alongside constant remembrance of the *Master*, *tūpuna* (ancestors), and *atua* (ancestral forces). This conscious devotion to the invisible, subtle formless, omniscient, omnipresent, and negated 'in-determinant reality' creates the ground for reciprocal connection:

Devotion, in its dis-interestedness, does not lack any end, but is turned around - by a God who in his infinity “loves the stranger” - toward the other person to and for whom I have to respond. Responsibility is without concern for reciprocity: I have to respond to and for the ‘Other’ without occupying myself with the Other’s responsibility in my regard. A relationship without correlation, love of the neighbour is love without Eros. It is for-the-otherperson and, through this, to God! Thus thinks a thought which thinks more than it thinks, beyond what it thinks (Levinas, 1987, p. 137).

I would argue that, in this, Levinas is describing similar notions to those in Yogic ideals whereby one's life is a source of service. Similarly, as the *Bhagavad - Gita* states: “You have the right to perform your prescribed duty, but you are not entitled to the fruits of action. Never consider yourself the cause of the results of your activities, and never be attached to not doing your duty” (Radhakrishnan, 1974, 2, Sutra 47). We could also acknowledge the Māori notion of *kaitiakitanga* understood as the exercise of guardianship. According to Māori, the land has been consecrated with the *mauri* (spiritual life essence) of their ancestors so that there is a family connection of *whakapapa* (genealogy) with plants, animals, and the land such as mountains and rivers (Patterson, 1992; Patterson, 1998; Jahnke, 2002). This is a cultural embodiment of something similar to the Yogic practice of *ahimsa* (non-violence), towards all living beings representing a form of brother-sisterhood with land, animals, water, sky and peoples (Wilber, 2000; Pranavananda, 1992).

According to Derrida (1997) the recognition of the other comes to show the way in which any being other than me has an absolute moral claim on me. This moral claim develops and is maintained regardless of the behaviour or habits of the other person or people. In this, one does one’s duty towards another person without thought of gain, of recompense or even recognition. Duty is done because the remembrance of the mysterious ‘Other’ calls this forth. This occurs whether the other wants it or not and, one hopes, in a way which is non-imposing. The relationship with the ‘Other’ does not lead to a social utopia. Instead, it leads to an ethical relating with the ‘Other’, which puts the ‘Other’ before 'i-ness'.

Within Yogic philosophy the non-attachment to the outcome of duty is viewed as allowing the capacity for love to grow and again this seems similar to Levinas’s thoughts on a type of love, which is not romantic or erotic but one that leads through brother-

sisterhood towards the infinite. Duty in this instance is about an appropriate relating to one another or as Levinas (1987) states:

The relationship with the ‘*Other*’ is not an idyllic and harmonious relationship of communion, or a sympathy through which we put ourselves in the other’s place; we recognize the other as resembling us, but exterior to us; the relationship with the other is a relationship with Mystery (p 75).

What is the mysterious that Levinas alludes to? It seems the ‘*Other*’ as an infinite presence within each of us, a presence that speaks of the omnipresent third that is greater than just our neighbour or our neighbourhood. The ‘*Other*’ speaks in a silent voice and triggers a remembrance or recognition if you like when we are face-to-face. So the ‘*Other*’ exists both within us and is recognised outside of ourselves.

Māori focus group participants shared their practical experiences and understanding that ‘cause and effect’ comes from the inner world of attitude, thought, and feeling. It then manifests in the outer world of relationship and behaviour. They stated that: ‘the *tūpuna* are aware of all of that.’ This is similar to Yogic theory that states the law of cause and effect or *karma* is directly created and maintained by subtle forces. Such subtle patterns are formed through the processes of thought, feeling and willpower over long periods. As Yogic scientist Prajnananda (1971) states, in his critical study of the philosophical ideas of Swami Abhedananda:

Everything in this phenomenal and mental world is governed by the universal law of cause and effect. The effect is visible or perceivable, whereas the cause is invisible or imperceivable. All perceivable phenomena are the various expressions of different forces which act as invisible agents upon the subtle and imperceivable forms of matter, and when the subtle forces are objectified, they appear as gross objects, which are subject to birth and decay. The subtle body consists of internal organs or antahkarana with its different modifications like mind, intellect, egoism, memory; five instruments of perception (*jnanendriyas*), five instruments of action (*karmendriyas*), and five *pranas*. *Prana* means vital energy and force and not air (p 103).

These subtle forces are said by both communities to be part of a vast field of consciousness for which there are many names: *Ishwara* (Supreme Being), *Io* (supreme being), *Master*, and *tūpuna* (ancestors). Furthermore, human beings are a connected and a creative aspect of this field.

### 6:5 Master/ Ishwara/ Io

Whilst perhaps intuitively pleasing, this teaching leads to some questions, such as what is the Supreme Being and how can identity be created as nothing? How can human beings be in spiritual relationship with subtle, omnipresent nothingness? According to these participants, questions based upon ‘how, what and who’ are not useful as they create the idea of separation. Rather it is a subtle relational identity based on expansion of felt awareness and attunement to a world of radical embodiment (Drury, 2013).

Physicists have identified four forces in the universe: i) electromagnetic forces, ii) forces of gravitation, iii) weak nuclear forces, and iv) strong nuclear forces (Carroll, 2012). These forces and the particles that carry them hold matter together.<sup>79</sup> As Carroll states: “Without force particles, the world would be a boring place indeed - individual particles would just move in straight lines through space, never interacting with one another” (Carroll, 2012, p. 11). In other words force particles hold the atomic building blocks together and create life as we know it – human beings, text books, coffee – everything. The recent evidence for a particle, which meets the mass and properties of the theorized the ‘Higgs Boson’ particle, has been particularly intriguing. According to Carroll (2012), it is a forcecarrying particle but a different kind to what theorists are familiar with. He states:

The Higgs is important not for what it is but for what it does. The Higgs particle arises from a field pervading space, known as the ‘Higgs field.’ Everything in the known universe, as it travels through space, moves through the Higgs field; it’s always there, lurking invisibly in the background. And it matters. Without the Higgs, electrons and quarks would be massless, just like photons, the particles of light. They would move at the speed of light themselves, and it would be impossible to form atoms and molecules, much less life as we know it. The Higgs isn’t an active player in the dynamics of ordinary matter, but its presence in the background is essential (p 5).

It is a transcendent feature that sustains the universe but is not conceptualised within a spiritual framework. Could this underlying background presence be *Io* or *Ishwara* or *Master* according to the views of these participants? Suffice to say that participants in

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<sup>79</sup> There are three types of particles according to modern physics: i) the particles of matter like elements and quarks which constitute the atomic world of everything that we see, ii) the force particles that carry the nuclear forces, gravity and electromagnetism, and iii) the Higgs Boson.

this study spoke of experience and glimpses of reality, which were more subtle than that of an ordinary perception of matter (Dennis, 2010). According to Yogic science, such perceptions of expanded consciousness are beyond mechanisms of psychology and 'i-ness' (Anantharaman, 1996).

According to Sahaj Marg participants the *Master* was an: i) inner presence, ii) essence, iii) divinity, iv) active state of connection or remembering the divine and v) inner awareness: "You are in this what master calls constant remembrance but I already don't remember about God somehow, I mean I do not have to speak about God, I am just in this vibration of joy, everything happens and I have enough" (Russian, Sahaj Marg, female participant, December, 2011).

In this we see that there is an aspect of faith in the experience of having ones need met in a natural way. It seems that the vibration itself is enough to attract grace and provisioning.

Fadiman and Frager (1977) in their book on Sufi literature refer to this process of remembering as leading to a state of expansion; something also commented on by Sahaj Marg and Māori participants: "Love is a constantly expanding capacity that culminates in certainty, in the recognition that there is nothing in this world or in the next that is not both love and loving" (p 14).

A spiritual master or *tohunga/ tohuka* (an expert or person chosen as an agent by *atua*) is one that is expert in the field of meditation or things spiritual (Rajagopalachari, 1994; Powell, 1996; Robinson, 2005). According to Sahaj Marg the concept of a master can be defined in the following way:

At a later discussion in Denmark, Master (Rev. Babuji) was asked as to why he was called Master by his disciples. Master, in his reply, emphasized that God alone is the real Master and all spiritual teachers or masters who work for the spiritual regeneration of mankind work under His guidance and His authority. He laughingly added, "Well everybody has got to be called something and my associates call me Master. But I do not consider myself a Master in any sense. I only feel that I am a servant of humanity offering such service as I can to help them for their spiritual development" (Rajagopalachari, Yatra, V 1, p. 184).

Sahaj Marg training material argues that the role of the master is to act as: i) a role model to emulate and use as a bench mark, ii) a mirror, iii) a teacher, friend, brother, father, mother or even the sole beloved and iv) the goal and the means for reaching the goal (in accordance with the night time prayer) (Sri Ram Chandra Mission, 2009, p. 18).

At another level, a definition of a 'spiritual master' is also a question of what is 'presence' and what is 'essence'? These words have been used by many participants in this study and may be understood metaphorically and religiously. However, many Yogic physiological processes have a proven scientific basis (Malshe, 2005), which leads one to wonder about a possible sub-atomic experience of 'unity and oneness' or 'essence and presence.' One could read the connection to the *Master* as a quantum presence, predicated by silence and a pure mind-body system, which attunes itself relationally with the essences and invisible forces that maintain life:

Being one with each and everybody and everything. Just listening to each person's heart and where they are coming from. It can be different feelings it can be sad it can be happy you just have to go with the moment I think it can be whatever it needs to be and that's acceptable whatever it needs to be. The living Master, the Master within that supports you and loves you and it just at one with everything I think. It makes me feel confident in myself as I am not on my own whatever I need to do in life I can do. Because I'm not on my own and it certainly is energy positive and negative and more like you get energy from different people around you and it could be negative or positive because it's like a living Master this energy. Everything's vibration I think. Just listen to what your heart says and if it's right just go for it and don't let doubt even appear in any shape or form. Probably people think I'm a bit queer [lots of joyful laughter] that's hard but that's the doubt (Australian Sahaj Marg female participant, January 2013).

In this example, the person of the master has the capacity to transmit energy to the other (Naidoo, 1994). The radical embodiment literature suggests that all human beings have this capability and it is a natural aspect of human life (Drudy, 2011; McCraty et al., 1998). Sufi wisdom reminds us: "Love is the only force that can transcend the bonds of reason, the distinctions of knowledge and the isolation of normal consciousness" (Fadiman & Frager, 1977, p. 14). I suspect it is the capacity of the spiritual master to attune to the forceless force of love, alongside the values/ frequencies/ essences of truth, love and unity.

The notions of *Io* (Supreme Being) and *Ishwara* (Supreme Being) take us beyond ourselves as human form only. In the Shvetashvatara Upanishad, *Ishwara* is the 'supreme being'. Similarly Māori cosmology uses the idea of *Io*, although there are tribal variations (Thornton, 2004). Respected elder, researcher and writer, Māori Marsden, talks of his grandfather who was a priest of the *Io* school, for which *Io* was known as the 'Supreme God' who created all things. Māori Marsden shares that, according to the Ngāpuhi tribe,

*Io* is both 'Being-itself and absolute nothingness; infinite and encompassing absolute positivity and negativity within himself. He also is described as: *Io* of the slumbering countenance; the calm and tranquil countenance; the unchanging and unadulterated in whom there is no confusion and inconsistency; of the glorious blinding countenance and *Io* of the flashing countenance; and omnipresent ([ihug.co.nz/-dominic/io-oral.html](http://ihug.co.nz/-dominic/io-oral.html)).

There are obvious similarities with the Vedic notion of God as subtle, formless, omniscient, omnipresent, negated 'in-determinant reality,' (Ram Chandra, 1991a). The spiritual opportunity for individuals is to recognise their self-identity as being, rather than as a becoming (Menon et al., 2014).

### **6:6 Tūpuna**

All participants were clear that other realms were real and that human beings received guidance and training from beyond. For some this was a process of correctly interpreting the signs that life gave and for others it was a natural process mediated through processes of intuition and feeling. For the Sahaj Marg group it was a process of connection with the *Master* or perhaps more precisely remembering that there was no separation between themselves and the *Master*. It was a radical embodiment of oneness in many embodied forms. For Māori it was a connection to the ancestors who were viewed as omnipresent and held within an invisible world veiled from ordinary human perception. As one Māori participant shared:

Sometimes I think that the learning comes from another realm and we impart that on this realm to just get through. Because really this is a test, yeah and some days you do it really well and other times you're like: "Oh I think I could just leave this now" and then "oh no you're not". So I'm really firm - everybody has a role and a responsibility and you might think that you can walk away from that but in some way or shape or form they will make you know what that is (Māori Focus group female participant, 2012).

‘They’ in this excerpt were understood as invisible helpers, *tūpuna* (ancestors), and spiritual others. The process of being multi-dimensional in this way involved tests, signs and moments of unlooked for coincidence. It involved a responsibility towards becoming responsive. As one Māori participant, who also practised Sahaj Marg Raja Yoga, described an experience as she arrived to stay at the Himalayan Sahaj Marg ashram<sup>80</sup>:

As you know, our journey takes us through, over, under, around many obstacles and this trip certainly was not shy of any of these. But one thing I do remember was this. In one meditation I remember seeing a tūpuna in the sky. He cut a massive figure. Wearing the traditional cloak across one shoulder, holding a taiaha [fighting weapon] in one hand with a white feather in his hair, I felt so privileged that someone was here for me. One year later at my father’s dinner table I felt this person looking at me. When I looked around I saw this photo of that same tūpuna [ancestors] that I saw in the skies at the ashram. When I mentioned this to my father his casual response floored me. When I told him the story he said, 'I'm not surprised. There is some thought that Māori originated from the Himalayas and that tūpuna [ancestor] is where your middle name originates from (Sahaj Marg, female participant, 2011).

## 6:7 Spiritual Heart

The distinguishing factor, for all Sahaj Marg participants regardless of age, length of time in Sahaj Marg practice, culture or gender, was the reference to the spiritual heart. The spiritual heart, as seen in previous chapters, was a source of information, communication, connection and feeling. For some it was also known as love. Some described this as a deep feeling of warmth, love, energy and inner knowing. Many examples were given of a person coming alongside another person quietly and without speech or acknowledgement whilst an exchange of feeling of inner warmth and solace was conveyed from one heart region to another. This was even when one did not realise personal blocks or physical tension until the warmth was felt. It was also without need for introduction or previous meeting. This was described as an open heart that was not limited

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<sup>80</sup> George Didsbury (1885) argued that the Māori peoples originated from the Aryan race and left India 4,000 years ago. His work collates a number of linguistic similarities between Sanskrit and Māori words. For example: to ascend is *tara* in the Sanskrit language and *tawera* (to rise up) in Māori. To know is *kit* in Sanskrit language, whilst in Māori *kite* means to see, know, perceive/ *whakakite* is to reveal (Didsbury 1885 cited in Tregear, 1984). I do not offer any debate about this.

by traditional notions of space, distance and time. However, Māori participants were also aware of this practice which occurred during face-to-face meetings. The practice by Sahaj Marg meditation trainers (prefects) of giving one-to-one training where the hearts commune and *samskara* (impressions on the mind) were cleared; was a natural process for Māori participants, without appointment or any aspect of mechanisation. In this way there was no idea of trainer or non-trainer, or giver and receiver. Whilst these aspects of communion and adjustment are difficult to describe, the following study may enhance an understanding of the possibilities for multidimensional aspects of human relating.

According to a study by Mann and Jaye (2007) on telesomatic experience in twins, “the term 'telesomatic' literally 'to do with the distant body', refers to the experience of bodily sensations associated with the related bodily experiences of another person that is not mediated by the senses” (p 183). Twenty adult twins from the city of Christchurch, Aotearoa, New Zealand, described fifty separate events of telesomatic experience. These experiences were associated with pain, pregnancy symptoms, childbirth, threat and accidents. For example: the non-pregnant twin would experience the labour pains and morning sickness of the pregnant twin. Others were accurate in feeling intense pain at the exact time that their twin was undergoing surgery or was in an accident. Many of these experiences happened without prior knowledge of their twin’s situation, and were verified in retrospect. I refer to this research to show that human beings that are attached to each other in this special way have a wider range of perceived embodied connection than a modern understanding of the body allows. As Mann and Jaye (2007) continue:

On the face of it, twins' telesomatic experiences suggest a radically different body - a body with a modified sensorial architecture where sensations, emotions and knowing that arise from outside the lived body, specifically from the contingent experience of the distant co-twin, are experienced from inside the lived body (p 184).

Most twins in the study experienced this as a precious reality, although one pair viewed this connection as intrusive. The authors described the feeling of dynamic communion and connection between twins:

Our respondents who 'lived' the world as twins often wondered whether they and their co-twin constituted 'one body' because the twinned body was not experienced as a static, bounded, discrete unit, but as a body with dynamic boundaries that expanded and

constricted through telesomatic experiences. In other words their bodies were not only twinned but entwined (p 184).

Some sensitive and empathetic participants in my study described examples of their inner world being easily and naturally read by others. I will share one small excerpt from my journal:

I was at the ashram and started to introspect upon little prejudices that I had towards the other European sisters around me. One day later, one of the preceptors came up to me and said, 'sister not messages from the outer world -- 'oh I don't like ...' -- go deeper and receive messages from the inner world (2013).

Re-reading this excerpt, I was left wondering about the practical expression of the self-realised spiritual heart and whether these participants experienced themselves as a natural creative flow of love. The experience of heart and love was described by all Sahaj Marg participants as being linked to the internal presence of the *Master*. According to Fadiman and Frager (1977): “One of the basic Sufi practices to open the heart is remembrance” (p 15) and for Māori such remembrance is through the *tūpuna* (ancestors) and *atua* (ancestral forces). The spiritual heart according to mystical traditions has always symbolized a potentiality of transcendence within human beings, as Fadiman and Frager (1977) in the book *Essential Sufism* share:

The goal of all mysticism is to cleanse the heart, to educate, or transform the self, and to find God. The lowest level of self is dominated by pride, egotism, and totally self-centred greed and lust. This level is the part within each person that leads away from truth. The highest level is the pure self, and at this level there is no duality, no separation from God (p 19).

I return to the narratives to share how this was practically described by those immersed in Raja Yoga. In the words of another Sahaj Marg participant:

But really speaking from the heart we already know that this universe is so huge and so full of life. And we have never been separated in reality from this entire universe, we were together but we were not receiving each other by eyes or ears and we cannot touch each other, maybe soon. But really speaking, by heart we already feel presence of somebody who helps, really caring about us, sending us knowledge and love (Russian, Sahaj Marg, female participant, December, 2011).

She was not unusual in her feeling of connection with all life but her anthropomorphising of 'presence' was. One Sahaj Marg participant was more active in her connection with other realms and was similar to the Māori participants requesting help from the *tūpuna* (ancestors) or *atua* (ancestral forces). In her words:

If I feel myself in a not favourable condition I call for help. Someone will appear in front of my inner eye. Sometimes it will be Master (Chariji), sometimes Babuji or Lalaji, sometimes a relative from the brighter world and sometimes a living person. In case of a living person I can then either inquire on a soul level how this person can help me and maybe a memory of something they said will come up and give me an idea about my condition. Sometimes I feel like contacting them in the material world and something will come out of the contact for me that lead me on somehow. When communicating with the Masters or descended people the result is more subtle and often something will shift but my mind can't grasp what exactly happened. And it really doesn't matter. Also I feel like everything in my life happens for a reason. The people I meet, the conversations I have, things that I find in nature. It's all a way of communicating with my higher self. And my heart knows this and finds reassurance in the constant support and all the pointers that tell me what turns to take in my life, all the while reminding me of the very existence of the Master and hence helping me to move more and more into a heart space (German, Sahaj Marg, female participant, January 2013).

Here we begin to understand the role of the inner *Master* in transformation. It is a practical relationship of 'tuning in' and requesting help; the help may be the removing of internal attitudes that prevent the outflow of love or a shift in perspective. One Māori participant assisted further:

I think there are two levels to the heart. There is one that is connected to this time and that's absolutely lovely but there is also the energetic aspect of the heart which is just a total knowing and you only get in touch with that if you spend time and listen to that (Māori, female participant, February, 2012).

In this, we see the value of contemplative and calming practices that bring the mind to a deep, and receptive stillness. In such a stillness, there are no objects. Another participant shares the common experience of the way that the heart connection overcomes difficulties of communication in the outer world:

The biggest experience, deep experience of brotherhood that I get in my Sahaj Marg mission when I became part of this

multinational family was when I start visiting big celebrations. Big bhanduras where 50,000 - 60,000 people can sit together in one meditation hall praying for unity, for oneness. Speaking with each other by hearts because when I came first in India 1999 I didn't speak English almost at all and I was a Russian speaking woman in this big family and I never felt myself lonely, separated or confused because somebody always helped me. Somehow I understood people, we understand each other. Now I understand that time, almost 15 years back, that we were speaking by heart and by heart we can understand each other and help each other and be happy with each other without any differences that can be different in us. For me that was the most important quality that can be open in every one of us I'm sure. This respect of difference in this unity (Russian, Sahaj Marg, female participant, December 2011).

It is here that participants begin to speak about a peace that comes into the outer world from the inner practice. She continues:

Yes, like two days back we were sitting with people from different countries, with different backgrounds but we were standing, discovering, researching (by the way we are all searching in the same place researching in our hearts) and in the moment when we were adjusting ourselves from the mind to the heart we were all very attentive and caring. We were listening to each other by heart in the moment. Before we were somehow jumping back to the mind, with our interrupting each other, didn't listen and not a very nice feel? And right away after small adjustments and a few moments meditation, when you return to your own heart, you don't need to go anywhere pay big bucks for big tickets and fly so far away ...we all have powerful place in our heart, it is the most powerful place. We have to turn back to this powerful place only for 5 minutes then moving again with peace, harmony, caring, compassion - all of these qualities that we are looking for in a relationship (Russian, Sahaj Marg, female participant, December, 2011).

It is perhaps useful to understand this participant's use of the word 'mind' as the *ahumkara* or ego sense of i-ness.<sup>81</sup> Whilst her use of the word heart relates better to *citta* which has been regulated of fluctuations by remembrance of the inner *Master* or connectedness. In this we see a very pragmatic way of managing conflict and tension, as strangers - without any commonalities - are brought together to work together. The meditation and the capability to attune inwardly to the stillness and presence of *Master* was

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<sup>81</sup> According to the Upaniṣads the ego is the instrument of attunement; "The ego is perpetually changing, moving up and down, up towards union with the divine godhead or down to the fiendish extremes of selfishness, stupidity and sensuality" (Radhakrishnan, 1994, p. 92).

viewed as a compassionate and caring way of interacting. In some ways this group experience demonstrates what eminent Quaker and researcher, Elise Boulding, would define as ‘peace learning’ (Stephenson, 2012). In this becoming peaceful or connected to the ‘Other’ is not a special course or programme but rather a process that goes on ‘inside the learner’ (Boulding & Brock-Utne, 1989, p. 6). The process brought individuals who had no prior relationship or knowledge of each other (a training program with practitioners from Singapore, Ukraine, Aotearoa New Zealand and India) together to develop skills in learning to care and listen intently from the heart. Central to the success of this was an established spiritual practice, which permitted the alert mindfulness, and self-control to allow correction.

The Quaker notion of seeking the truth through direct experience (Stephenson, 2012) finds echoes in Māori and Sahaj Marg practices. According to Boulding women have a ‘spontaneous capacity for sisterhood’ (1977, p. 182 cited in Stephenson, 2012, p. 122). Yet the example cited above is from a mixed cultural and gender group of strangers who successfully managed to apply inner peaceful processes to the outer task and interaction.

A third way which I propose, is to see peace processes - those activities in which conflict is dealt with in an integrative mode - as choices that lie at the heart of all human interaction. Each of us comes into the world with as a unique individual with unique perceptions, needs, interests, yet each of us finds ourself surrounded by others with different perceptions, needs and interests. In that difference lies threat to the self. Yet we also come into the world needing the other, dependant on the other for nurturance, feeling a common bond of unity for the other in our humanness, in our need, and even in our isolation from each other.

We are social beings and cannot find completeness alone. How we deal with the tensions between the two conflicting needs determines whether we are ‘peacemakers’ or ‘war makers’ (Boulding, 1977, p. 140).

### **6:8 Narrative Example**

Throughout this thesis I have included raw narrative from participants in accordance with suggested grounded theory reporting processes (Anderson, 2010; Chenail,

1995; Charmez, 2000). The following excerpt comes from the conversation with one Māori participant. It illustrates concepts and practical examples that may demonstrate a holistic place in the world, purpose of connection and responsibilities towards the other. Her words illustrate unseen connections and an unbounded consciousness (Jahnke, 2002; Murton, 2012). It is a practical example of a lived consciousness of connection. Such examples were present in many narratives from both groups and seemed beyond individual or group identity. The awareness of the needs of each other was unspoken and not constrained by time, space or distance. With such awareness, there was a known practice of natural responding to and looking after the other. In this example, the participant speaks of the knowing around danger and death and the ways in which that is perceived or sensed by Māori. She begins:

Well early this morning I talked to ‘M’ and he’s related to ‘T’ [brother who was about to pass]. When he had rang him, yesterday or the day before, to say that ‘T’ was asking for him, and he ignored it which was not like him at all. (He would usually drop things to practice whangatangata). He ran down to this motel, he had a job to do in the bathroom in one of the units of his motel and he was going to go but he just did this first. And ‘R’ his partner was going [makes a whiney noise] ‘you’re supposed to be there’ (‘M’ ‘nah I have to fix this’, ‘R’ ‘the rooms won’t be used for days’, ‘M’ ‘no I have to’). And he walked into the unit and a bird appeared - a pīwaiwaka (fantail bird), and he turned and it hit the glass, I think.

I’m not sure if it hit the mirror and sort of [makes a crashing noise] on the shelf. And he knew, he knew that um – maybe it was yesterday morning, I’m not sure [he knew that T had died]. But he said that it was just the way that the bird came in for him. But when they come in agitated, when they come in squawking, when they come in talking and it’s not pleasant, it’s striking, it has Australian harshness that all the birds have over there [New Zealand bird song is usually harmonious]. So for our birds, particularly for our fantail to be coarse, strident I think is the word, then and there actions are very strong, then there’s that usually – he sat there and cried, really because he knew that the spirit was standing there waiting. Now I need to talk to him again as it was happening so fast this morning, as to whether that was the time ‘T’ passed or whether that was the call that comes before or the one that comes with the – when the spirit is ready to go because they come and stay a while before you stop, you know, on this mortal world.

So from that perspective, the one that I get more than birds is the voice. You do something and it’s like ‘what’, it’s that strong. And you know once you’ve actually said ‘what’ or *ae* (yes) or

whatever you were going to say, that the voice didn't actually come from outside, it came from in your head really but it usually goes with a cold shiver that goes right down your back and arms and legs [makes a shivering noise], somebody's walking over your grave feeling. That's how it happens for me. For 'M' he tends to – birds tend to show themselves. Janine: And this is always around death? Always around passing? No, no. Danger, for me, is what sets me off and I'm thinking of back in 92' when I went up to Marlborough Sounds around the head of the Fiord up there with my brother, and the wind was blowing and then, so now I'm contradicting myself because there was a *Ruru* [Morepork New Zealand bird] and it called really stridently. And I turned it was my granddaughter calling. [She brought her awareness into focus and realised that it was her Granddaughter in Australia who needed her. The call of the *Ruru* bird was the way in which the tūpuna gained her attention]. Janine: Ah. And she would be 2, 3 [years old]. I begged my brother, 'we got to go, something's wrong', we're without phone, without electricity away in this place and he didn't even question it. This is the brother with his feet on the ground and we drove through the main road between Nelson and what were the other places? Blenheim. To the Rai Valley I can remember that now. To the butcher shop there with a phone because it was some ungodly hour of the day by the time we got out and the shop was shut but the butcher was working around the back. So I rang and found that my daughter and the 3 children had been whisked down the country and were safe in Canberra. Oh yeah, I forgot about that *Ruru* (Morepork). Maybe it's because I live in a city, maybe if – whereas 'M' has been raised as a bushman. Yeah, I know people who have ancestors who give them a warning that there's something... so then - for me I don't necessarily know what it is so much as there's something. So once you're alerted to it - you're looking it'll come, it'll be something that would happen. The last time I got a visit from my grandmother [spiritual], really stridently was when I had been followed by this guy with a huge dog. And I made a silly mistake of going onto this property because the light was on and I thought they were home, they weren't, it was outside lights and I was caught around the back of this house in the middle of the bush with this grubby Alsatian, who was a happy little fellow anyway, the guy wasn't. Having that sensation of having the energy sapped out of you. 'Oh he's coming towards me' and then as clear as a bell [snaps fingers] I could smell it, which I often do, it was my grandmother's smell as clear as a bell and it was then 'don't forget your second wind' was all I heard and this burning sensation came up and I felt like I was 11 foot tall and I was on top of him standing. I had his ear actually, I marched him all the way up the road. All the way down the steps into the side house. I'm marched him there saying; '00 'N' Street, say it, say it, come anywhere near the property...

where do I live again?’ So actually rather than trying to hide, I’ll tell you exactly where I live, bring it on. Afterwards I went into a neighbour’s place and collapsed. But that power that came through was not mine, it’s just - that sensation and he was looking like this [small] even though he was taller than me. No way I could have done that, no way in the world and that was simply because, yea. I look back now and I never reported it. Yeah but there’s always so who else - you’re not the only person that this person has stalked because he stalked me. The only thing that gave him away was the [makes panting noises] happy dog. So anyway spiritual brother-sisterhood. Yup, don’t forget your second wind, those were the words, what a bizarre thing and it was not something I would associate my grandmother using but it was her voice. Yeah, I just felt like it was hers. But again I don’t think I’m talking about her individual strength or power, it’s connecting to that spirituality that universal source of power. I think it’s wound into everything actually, just trying to separate it out, it just is unspoken, accepted and I suppose because it’s— that concept of your *mauri* (spirit), your life form, that concept of having *mana* [power]. There’s often fear when it’s mixed with distortions, cultural distortions um. Cultural distortions I suppose we have them in every culture where they will give, importance to things of this nature for I suppose as many reasons as people do it. I think it’s accepted that it’s not just you alone, that there’s some universal something that’s coming in. And it accepts both sides, there’s that balance. Most cultures when you go back into the basics have that balance, absolute balance. And that’s what *utu* [balance] is. Most people think *utu* is revenge and it’s nothing to do with revenge at all” (Māori, female participant, 2012).

This example is of interest as the participant directly mentions the energy, force or power of her 'second wind' and according to previous definitions could allude to *wairua* (spirit), self or *prana* (vital life force energy). In this example, the advice is given by *tūpuna* (ancestors) through an inner awareness or 'voice'. In this the breath has an inner sound. From a Yogic perspective, the psychic centres are naturally open to a range of information through inner feeling, smell, seeing and hearing. It represents a practical example of how an inner connection with a field of consciousness gives practical help and natural guidance.

### **6:9 Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have outlined the underlying concepts relating to understanding the relational consciousness of connection that are embodied and embedded in the emerging definition of Spiritual brother-sisterhood. There has been a convergence of

themes, raw narratives, and relevant literature. We can see from the narratives that spiritual and contemplative practices had powerful effects on the relations and a holistic experience of self as we-ness. If we recall Feuerstein's (2002), definition of Yoga as the 'condition of inner stability or equilibrium' and the manifestations of the stable mind as leading to 'the wonders of the inner world' then the stories of inner realms and inner knowing seem less surprising.

Whilst these traditions view spirituality as relational, the Yogic scientist encourages us to be curious about the nature of the mind. According to Indian Psychology it is the mind that tunes awareness and connection. This leads to the next chapter in which coming together in peace is viewed through the lens of spirituality as biology and in doing so examines the transversal space held by relationship, Yogic mind and neurology.

## **Chapter Seven: Biological Spirituality**

### **7:1 Summary**

In the previous chapters, I have explored the 'transversal spaces' of shared philosophical viewpoints and relational spirituality. A conceptual base of spirituality as relational, metaphysical and biological was developed. Terms were defined according to the lived experience of participants and the topic was considered by identifying convergence in Yogic and Māori traditions.

In this chapter I consider more deeply interpersonal neurobiology (Siegal, 1999), its links to the narratives and research findings and the possible implications for developing 'spirituality as biology'. As such I consider: i) meditation, ii) the relational brain, iii) group brain, iv) interpersonal biology, v) compassion and volunteers, vi) neurology and peacekeeping, and vii) relevant participant narratives on awakening and awareness.

### **7:2 Meditation**

According to the literature, the practice of meditation affects human beings in many ways. Research has focused upon the effects of meditation upon physiological and

psychological well-being, higher order cognitive functioning, attention and focus and brain activity (Brown & Gerbarg, 2009; Carlson, Speca, Faris & Patel, 2007; Field, 2011; Kozasa, Lacerda, Barreiros, Radvany, Russell, Sanches, Mello, & Amaro 2012; Fox & Ward, 2014). Psychological studies with clinical populations have shown that meditation gives positive benefit in the areas of anxiety, addiction, suicidal tendencies, chronic pain, aggression, depression, insomnia and hypertension (McGee, 2008; Astin, 1997; Hoffman, Grossman & Hinton, 2011). The meta-analysis by Grossman and colleagues (2004) showed beneficial effects for meditation on measures of general health. Meanwhile neuroimaging studies suggest that meditation may enhance activation of the brain areas that are involved in emotional processing and empathy. This may support the Yogic view that regular meditation leads to inner balance and less reactivity in relation to environmental stressors.

According to Raja Yoga, meditation is the seventh stage of practice (Dasgupta, 1989; Shearer, 1989; Prabhavananda, 2012). For Sahaj Marg practitioners it is the main method of their practice although the order differs from the classical prescription of Patanjali (Prasada, 1912). Sahaj Marg, as a form of Raja Yoga, takes up meditation, followed by concentration, followed by *samadhi* (bliss), as the progression to realizing the self as a spiritual being (Ram Chandra, 1983).

Studies, specifically on Raja Yoga meditation approaches, show beneficial effects such as lowered serum cholesterol and low-density lipoprotein-cholesterol in postmenopausal women (Vyas, Raval & Dikshit, 2008), beneficial heart rate, blood pressure and electromyography changes (Maini, Kaur, & Maini, 2011; Vyas, Raval & Dikshit, 2002), and improvement of cardio-respiratory functions and modulates mucus immunity (Sukhsohale, Phatak, Sukhsohale & Agrawal 2012; Vyas, Raval & Dikshit, 2002; Fan, Tang, Ma, & Posner, 2010).

One study on the physiological effects of Raja Yoga meditation gave intriguing results as the measure of heart rate during the meditation period increased compared to the preceding baseline period, as well as compared to the value during the control sessions. There were no significant group changes during meditation, in palmar galvanic skin response, finger plethysmogram amplitude, and respiratory rate (Telles & Desiraju, 1993). These results however were quite compatible with the brain connectivity enhancement discussed by the same practices.

This view is supported by recent brain and meditation studies showing that different meditation practices implicate and effect different areas of the brain (Mograb, 2011; Wang, Rao, Korzykowski, Wintering, Pluta, Khalsa & Newberg, 2011; Tang, Lu, Geng, Yang, & Posner, 2010). Subsequently, we are beginning to see that different approaches to meditation give different experiences and effects. As researcher, Jonathan Shear shares in a recent article on meditation and pain: “Meditations differ in both their ingredients and their effects, just as medicines do. Lumping them all together as ‘essentially the same’ is simply a mistake” (Shear & Travis, 2012, p. 1). In addition, in the same article his colleague Dr Travis makes this point, “explicit differences between meditation techniques need to be respected when researching physiological patterns or clinical outcomes of meditation practices. If they are averaged together, then the resulting phenomenological, physiological, and clinical profiles cannot be meaningfully interpreted” (ibid., p 1).

Shear and Travis (2012) classified meditation practices into three groups according to their neurological effect. The first group was ‘focused attention’ meditation approaches characterized by beta/gamma activity, for example, Tibetan Buddhist (loving kindness and compassion), Buddhist (Zen and Diamond Way), and Chinese (Qigong) traditions. The second group had meditation approaches that taught ‘open monitoring’, and were characterized by theta activity, and include meditations from Buddhist (Mindfulness and ZaZen), Chinese (Qigong), and Vedic (Sahaja Yoga) traditions. The third group comprised meditation approaches based on an ‘automatic self-transcending’, which were characterized by alpha1 activity, and included meditations from the Vedic and Raja Yoga traditions (Shear & Travis, 2012). In fact, the frequencies involved respectively invoke a more task or topic related medium distance or middle level connectedness and coherence of brain function (beta/gamma) whilst it is the alpha rhythm that seems most involved in yoking disparate areas together. I suspect it is the alpha rhythm that is implicated in the Sahaj Marg meditation process.

This classification perhaps reflects a shift in the focus of research into meditation from: ‘does meditation work?’ To ‘how does it work?’ Consequently, there has been a call for the development of psychological theory and specific measurements linked to Indian psychological theory where meditation traditions have arisen. Sedlmeier et al., (2012) metaanalysis discussed the different approaches to meditation and pointed out that there is a lack of precise theory or understanding in the empirical research. They make the useful

distinction between meditation practices, based upon the Eastern theoretical approaches with the goal of transformation, and those based upon Western theoretical approaches with the goal of self-regulation and what could be termed stress management (Sedlmeier et al., 2012). They noted that none of the 163 studies included in their meta-analysis explicitly dealt with the real goal of meditation as defined by Indian approaches (the development of higher consciousness and enlightenment).

The methods of meditation discussed suggest that in the East some practices actively integrate and harmonize areas of the brain traditionally regarded as instinctive or emotive with those regarded as intellectual or contemplative. One study investigated the experiences participants had within meditation. Travis & Pearson (2000) asked 52 participants to describe in their own words their deepest experiences of transcendental meditation. Three main themes emerged the absence of space, time or body sense, peacefulness and unboundedness.

Sahaj Marg meditation practice has a goal that has not been well investigated in the literature. Their stated goal of meditation as ‘complete oneness with god,’ said to be beyond enlightenment and liberation. In this process, the outcome is expected to be ‘human integration’ (Ram Chandra, 1983). A great deal of energy is given to regular speeches and training courses so that aspirants practice sincerely and correctly. Combining approaches from various meditations is discouraged but it seems that some practitioners are still likely to do so as pointed out by Sedlmeier et al., (2012):

Moreover there is a practical argument that meditation may not exist in a pure form: Many meditators have tried the different methods and might still use earlier practices after switching to a new form of meditation (p 1141).

Thus, the nature of the human being poses some difficulties for researchers in this field reminding us that the human mind, according to the Yogic scientist, is more than consciousness or neurology (Dutter, 1998).

There is a great deal of evidence showing that meditation affects the function and structure of the brain. Luders et al., (2011) in their study on the effects of meditation using Diffusion Tensor Imaging to access neurological white matter density and brain connectivity concluded:

Interestingly, existing findings appear to support the notion that significant links between meditation and brain anatomy are widespread throughout the entire brain involving both cortical and subcortical regions (eg., superior, middle and inferior frontal gyrus, orbito-frontal cortex, paracentral regions (including somatosensory cortex), inferior temporal, superior temporal, fusiform, and cingulate gyrus, insula, thalamus, putamin and hippocampus), as well as the brain stem and the cerebellum (p 1315).

The involvement of learning in these meditative tasks was supported by the Lutz, Toga, Lepore, & Glaser (2009) study which used functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) to indicate that positive emotions such as loving-kindness and compassion can be learned in the same way as playing a musical instrument or being proficient in a sport. The scans revealed that brain circuits used to detect emotions and feelings were dramatically changed in subjects who had extensive experience practising compassion meditation. The scans revealed significant activity in the insula (a region underlying and serving as a basal ganglion for the frontal portion of the brain that plays a key role in bodily representations of self-emotion) when the long-term meditators were generating compassion and were exposed to emotional vocalizations. The strength of insula activation was also associated with the intensity of the meditation as assessed by the participants. Activity also increased in the temporal-parietal juncture, particularly within the right hemisphere. Studies have implicated this area as important in processing empathy, especially in perceiving the mental and emotional state of others and relating it to oneself. Participants in my thesis naturally demonstrated care and empathy in respect to others that may indicate a neurobiological change from their spiritual practices.

Meanwhile Hölzel, Carmody, Vangel, Congleton, Yerramsetti, Gard, & Lazer, (2011) found increase in brain grey matter after an eight week program of mindfulness meditation and concluded that meditation affected the neurological areas associated with learning and memory processes, emotional regulation, self-referential processing and perspective taking. Luders et al., (2012) found that meditators had greater density of connective fibres in regions implicated with emotional regulation and response control. The density suggests an enhanced connectivity and ability to rapidly relay electrical signals. Perhaps this is implicated in the responsive, sensitivity and relational connecting shared by participants in this thesis.

As previously mentioned, in the Vedic Upaniṣads, the untrained mind is likened to a fish which swims back and forth, from one bank to another, where the two banks of the river represent the conscious and the unconscious regions of the mind (Srivastava, 2001). The Maitrayini Upaniṣad (VI: 25) specifically defined Yoga as: the unity of the three aspects of personality (senses, the mind and the life force/ *prana*) in which one ceases to be under the influence of cravings and thoughts.

According to Sahaj Marg the experience of mind during meditation can be: i) imagination, ii) cleaning of impressions, and iii) 'revelatory' experience. A number of Māori and Sahaj Marg participants shared revelatory experience. There is some evidence suggesting that spiritual experience may be related to variability in 5-HT1A receptor density in the dorsal raphe nuclei, the hippocampal formation, and the neocortex (Borg, Andree, Soderstram, & Forde, 2003). Borg and colleagues studied the serotonin system via Positron Emission Tomography brain scans and a Personality Inventory with fifteen healthy men. They found that scores for spiritual acceptance versus material rationalism correlated significantly with 5-H1A binding potential. Significance was also demonstrated for self-transcendence and 5-H1A binding potential (2003, p. 1967).

The spiritual acceptance scale measures a person's apprehension of phenomena that cannot be explained by objective demonstration. Subjects with high scores tend to endorse extrasensory perception and ideation, whether named deities or a commonly unifying force. Low scorers, by contrast, tend to favour a reductionist and empirical world view (Borg et al. 2003, p. 1967).

Participants in this study accepted and had direct experience of spiritual phenomena. For both groups such experiences were valued and recognised as natural:

The third category is what master has referred to as 'revelatory' experience. Very valuable in nature as they contain messages from the inner self of the Abhyasi which, if properly interpreted, can help him considerably in his journey. Such experiences may come during meditation sittings, or as dreams. Master has also stated that orders, instructions, and advice from the master himself can be conveyed in this way (Rajagopalachari, 1998, p. 146).

### 7:3 The Relational Brain

The brain is comprised of the cerebral cortex which is in turn comprised of the left and right hemispheres which are connected by bands of tissue known as the corpus callosum (Gore, 2005; Carter, Aldridge, Page, & Parker, 2009). The corpus callosum has the task of integrating the information between the two hemispheres and allowing the transfer of information. Our brain was once described as just one organ. However, researchers are beginning to write about the two brains held within the two separate hemispheres of the cerebral cortex (Schoore, 2012).

The brains of women, on average, are said to have a greater density of corpus callosum fibres. Given this anatomical difference, I had expected the female participant narratives to demonstrate more intuitive sensing of implicit holistic meaning, but this was not the case. Thus, it may merely indicate in women a greater propensity to integrate verbal and non-verbal approaches to life's daily tasks and in meditators, the other modes of integration demonstrated may render this natural propensity for integration somewhat less necessary. The male participants were equally adept at sensing by heart. It led me to wonder about the changes going on in the neurology of the participants who had in common a mindful and spiritual connection with the *Master* and *tūpuna* (ancestors).

According to the literature, the left hemisphere is responsible for linear and logical processes and is concerned with the 'conscious explicit' whilst the right hemisphere receives emotional information through non-verbal channels and is concerned with the 'unconscious.'<sup>82</sup> McGilchrist (2009) in his book, *The Master and His Emissary: The Divided Brain and the Making of the Western World*, states that the differences between these brain hemispheres are profound. He postulates that each hemisphere has its own mind and that these minds are different. Each 'mind' creates a coherent, different and often incompatible version of the world alongside competing priorities and values (p 35). He helps us to understand the importance of the 'right mind':

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<sup>82</sup> According to Carter et al., (2009) the right hemisphere has its main growth in the first two years of life and is responsible for non-verbal communication including tone of voice, gesture, facial expressions of affect and perception in receiving signals from the outside. This hemisphere is dominant for a global view of the inner and outer worlds. It provides direct connection with the autonomic nervous system and holds the awareness of physiological states coming from the body. In this context, it is interesting that mindfulness practices develop as an outcome the capacity for the human being to be more aware and present to the inner and outer experiences.

The representation of the two hemispheres is not equal, and that while both contribute to our knowledge of the world...one hemisphere, the right hemisphere, has precedence in that it understands the knowledge that the other comes to have, and is alone able to synthesise what both know into a useable whole (p 40).

It seems that one's mind, when functioning correctly, is naturally more holistic and intuitive and simulates the natural function of the brains of women that, on average, are said to have a greater density of corpus callosum fibres.

Recent research has shown that the human adult brain is responsive and demonstrates structural and functional plasticity in response to experience (Rosenzweig, Krech, Bennett, & Zolman, 1962; Rosenzweig & Bennett, 1996; May, 2011; Sagi, Tavor, Hofstetter, TzurMaryosef, Blumenfeld-Katzir, & Assaf, 2012). Change can take as little as a few minutes or as long as days (May, 2011). Plasticity is the term used for the brain's permanent capacity to continually adjust to new information:

...it has the capacity for continuously changing its structure, and ultimately its function, throughout the lifetime. This capacity to change, which is known as brain plasticity, allows the brain to respond to environmental changes or changes within the organism itself (Kolb, 1995, p. 14).

Subsequently, it is not surprising that studies show that the practice of meditation also affects the function and structure of the brain (Tang et al., 2010; Mograbi, 2011; Wang et al., 2011).

The human brain can change in response to the 'word' as shown in the functional and structural brain changes that occur during verbal psychotherapy and other learning tasks (Glass, 2008; Schmidt-Wileke, Rosengarth, Luerding, Bogdahn & Geenlee, 2010; Lövdén, Wenger, Mårtensson, Lindenberger, & Bäckman, 2013). There are grey and white matter brain changes in meditators (Luders et al., 2012; Scholz, Klein, Behrens, Johanson-Berg, 2009; Van Prang, Kempermann, & Gage, 2000). Compassion based meditation practices enhance our emotional and somatosensory brain representations of other's emotions (empathetic relating) and this effect is stronger according to meditation 'expertise' (Lutz et al., 2009, p 1038). This study identified by Functional Magnetic Resonance imaging that compassion meditation activates the areas of the neuronal network involved in processing the same state in oneself. Therefore, if I see someone in pain it

activates the same areas in me as if I was in pain. This is also described in the research on the function of neurological mirror cells:

A ‘mirror neuron’ is a brain neuron that is activated (‘fires’) when a living being (such as humans, and other animals such as primates and mammals) observes the action of another. In other words, if an individual watches another person eat an apple, the exact same brain neurons will fire in the person observing the action as if they themselves are performing the act (Dennis, 2010, p. 516).

As we recall from earlier sections, the practice of Raja Yoga is interested in the union of the self and begins with physiological processes of breathing<sup>83</sup> and postures<sup>84</sup> (Muruges, 2007; Malshe, 2005). These have the original goal of strengthening the nervous system, purifying the system<sup>85</sup> and relaxing the mind-body in order to achieve a deep internal integration. My Yoga teachers in India were concerned about the ‘problem of the modern mind’.<sup>86</sup> By this they meant a mind within a brain that is not integrated due to unremitting stress, anxiety and, for many, trauma.<sup>87</sup> They describe such a mind as self-absorbed and selfinterested, creating automatic cycles of thought, worry and anxiety about one’s own circumstances, personality, and life situation. Authors are beginning to suggest that stressful life experience and trauma may impact on the growth of the fibres in the corpus callosum. This may interfere with the integration of knowledge between the two

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<sup>83</sup> A range of *pranayama* (breathing practices) exist with the aim of increasing *prana* within the body. Additionally, some also affect body temperature, appetite, mental clarity, lung capacity and the efficient removal of toxins in the body.

<sup>84</sup> Postures or *asana* are utilised to give a strong, healthy body and mind. It is a strengthening of the nervous system so the body is able to access other levels of consciousness safely.

<sup>85</sup> There are various *shatkriya* (cleansing practices) that are useful for clearing excess gas and mucus in the body. These processes allow the nasal and oesophageal passages bringing oxygen and nutrients into the body to be clear. The excretory and digestive systems are assisted to work more efficiently.

<sup>86</sup> Bertrand Russell’s *The Conquest of Happiness*, Part One, (1932) describes fully the aspects of a Modern Mind which would be familiar to my teachers’ assessment. He describes the ennui of the modern mind which has had the basic survival needs met and yet chooses to focus the resources of the human being in a reduced self-interested way. It makes excellent reading and describes fully the concerns of my Yogic teachers. According to Russell (1932): “I believe this unhappiness to be very largely due to mistaken views of the world, mistaken ethics, mistaken habits of life, leading to destruction of that natural zest and appetite for possible things upon which all happiness, whether of man or animal, ultimately depends. These are matters which lie within the power of the individual...” (p 18). If we understand *zest* as ‘a great enthusiasm or energy’ then it has perhaps some similarities to the Yogic understanding of *prana* and will.

<sup>87</sup> Judith Schore’s excellent article quotes the work of Roth and Sweatt (2011), and helps us to understand the neurological effects of childhood trauma. “Imaging studies on adults with a history of childhood maltreatment indicate that the frontal cortex, corpus callosum, amygdala...HPA axis and cerebellum are particularly impacted by these experiences” (Roth & Sweatt, 2011, p. 400 cited in Schore 2012, p. 104).

hemispheres and limit the development of a coherent sense of self and life events (Smith, 2011). Other studies note the sensitivity of the brain to external stress:

...stress induced reactions in 5-HT1A receptor binding and alterations in serotonin activity may contribute to the etiology of both anxiety and depression. It may be that under situations of extreme or chronic stress, individuals who are at risk for depression and anxiety experience greater reductions in 5-HT1A binding and greater alterations in serotonin activity than do individuals who are comparatively stress resilient (Southwick et al., 2005, p. 260).<sup>88</sup>

Some authors suggest that spirituality may also contribute to stress resilience as; “...chronic stress may lead to down regulation of 5-HT1A receptors, spirituality and religiosity may enhance the functioning of the serotonin system, fostering resilience and protecting against the development of posttraumatic mental illness” (Haglund, Nestadt, Cooper, Southwick, & Charney, 2007, p. 911).

What is hopeful for peacekeepers is that whilst the right brain develops the most in the first two years of life, our brain remains receptive and open to change throughout the lifespan. We recall that studies show that we can change in response to the ‘word’ as shown in the functional and structural brain changes during verbal psychotherapy (Glass, 2008), and meditation practice (Luders et al., 2011). We can learn compassion and empathy and develop the neuronal pathways for these responses. It may be that such attitudinal and skill development have a place in conflict resolution practices.

Non-verbal processes are useful in assisting the right brain to reintegrate and perhaps this is potentially the greatest assistance of all the Yogic techniques in conflict transformation.

In my study, the relational practices of the two communities contributed a number of factors identified in the literature as building stress and neurological resilience. Current knowledge about the separate factors that enhance neuropsychobiological response to stress and resilience included: i) positive emotions, optimism and humour, ii) active coping style, iii) facing fears, iv) cognitive flexibility, explanatory style, cognitive reappraisal and acceptance, v) moral compass, vi) physical exercise, and vii) social support (Haglund et al.,

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<sup>88</sup> According to Borg et al., (2003): “Central serotonergic neurons originate from the raphe nuclei in the brainstem and innervate major regions, such as the hypothalamus, the limbic system, the striatum and the neocortex” (p 1965).

2007, p. 911). The two groups specifically demonstrated: positive emotion, optimism and humour, cognitive flexibility, cognitive reappraisal in response to altercations with others, a moral compass known as maxims and *tikanga* (customary protocols), and social support.

Travis & Pearson (2000) found increased frontal lobe coherence, alpha and gamma power ratio, and more efficiency in cognitive tasks for participants in their study reporting frequent integration of transcendence with day-to-day tasks. They found high correlation between neurological integration and moral reasoning.

### 7:4 The Group Brain

From the narratives of the participants in my study, there were many experiences of an invisible unity of communication and knowing. For the Sahaj Marg group this was called heart-to-heart:

What does a “consciousness of connection” mean to you? The Spider’s web. We are all connected and our lives are intertwined. Everything we do has an effect on everyone and everything else. Once we become conscious of this connectedness, we begin to adjust our lives accordingly. Our thoughts, words, deeds, it has been laid down in the Ten Maxims. We begin to live more simply, very naturally. We know that this is how nature intended it to be and that a simple life is better for us and everyone else. We realize the importance of our *Sadhana* [spiritual practice] because our spiritual progress is our duty to ourselves and everyone else. Attachment to people and worldly things leave us, because we know we are all connected to each other, and all connected to the source. And this becomes the only thing that matters. Knowing that all strings lead back to that same source and knowing that life is a process of continuous change and transformation helps us to develop faith. We are never alone and we are always supported if only we are looking the right way. The answer to any question is always at our fingertips. All that’s left to do is for us to stay aware of this universal connection. It’s the framework of our experience and it gives us support and stability even in times of great upheaval  
(German, Sahaj Marg, female participant, January 2013).<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> The forms are manifestations of the real or the creative power of the universe and like this participant it is common to find use of the spider analogy in Māori and Yogic thought; “The similes employed by the Upaniṣads, salt and water, fire and sparks, spider and thread, flute and sound assume the existence of an element different from being” (Radhakrishnan, 1994, p. 87).

For Māori participants the invisible unity of communication and knowing was connection through *wairua* (spirit): “You become part of the *whānau* (family) because there’s this automatic connection and actually everybody is attuned to their intuition” (Waitaha Māori, female participant, 2012). In this description, the sense of unity was not a momentary experience but rather an ongoing steady embodiment.<sup>90</sup> For many in this study the permanent connection to unity, *Master*, *tūpuna* (ancestors), *atua* (ancestral forces that generate and animate particular realms of reality) was: i) a process of willpower, ii) cognitive remembrance, iii) daily practices of attuning attitudes and behaviours, and iv) a feeling of awe, reverence and zest. The experience of the state of unity was multi-dimensional in its practice and expression. Davis (2006), in his cognitive neuroscience approach to spirituality, moves our consideration of this topic towards a greater perception of the subatomic world that we are part of. He states: “...the brain is capable of providing an experience of unity and bliss and that this may be triggered by electromagnetic fields” (Davis, 2006, p. 60). He goes on to suggest that Spiritual Values such as Truth, Love, Unity are certain frequencies that human beings respond to and are enlivened by:

Universal Values are an invisible yet apprehensible presence, essences and forces, which may beget noble human thoughts and feelings that are beneficial to the body, our mental, emotional and physical wellbeing. To explore and embody Universal Values leads to the Exploration of the Source of All Values. The Value Giver, The Ultimate Value and Everlasting Never Changing Presence (p 67).

From a practical level, it seemed that this shift in focus or awareness had happened for many Sahaj Marg participants as they discussed the inner *Master* as a transcendent, omniscient, omnipresent, source and presence. Whilst Māori participants had a deep and similar connection to *tūpuna* (ancestors), *atua* (ancestral forces that generate and animate particular realms of reality). If we remember from earlier chapters, *tikanga* Māori is the process of living by Māori values which are embedded and enlivened by practices of spirituality. From these perspectives, I have viewed the experience of study participants,

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<sup>90</sup> Davis (2006) from a cognitive neuroscientific approach to spirituality reminds us that the underpinnings of a transient experience versus a continual attunement may be quite different; “Reporting a Spiritual Experience of “Oneness” with the Universe that one has at a given point in time is different than “manifesting the love of God continuously” in actions and words like, “I Am The Love and The Light of God” implying an Identity and an ongoing way of being rather than just a transient experience” (p 60).

less as a group brain and more as a field of connective frequencies and intelligent consciousness.

Dennis (2012) assists by describing the brain as a multi-layered frequency receptor:

As the brains receptors tune-in to a particular pattern of frequency a ‘pattern recognition’ response is received by the brain and interpreted according to the perception allotted to the frequency. In other words, the act of *tuning in* invokes picking up familiar frequency patterns out of the ocean of frequencies that surround us constantly (p 513).

Davis (2006) continues to describe what an individual brain, always attuned to Universal frequencies of Spiritual Values, might offer for peace as a form of cosmic brain map. It is this description of a neuro-genetics of peace that has similarities to the lived embodiment suggested by these participants:

Such a cosmic brain map is grounded in thought patterns and brain activity capable of eradicating discomforts in the body by the agency of the mind and spiritual values and it is a brain compatible to thoughts without limitations where everything and anything is possible. For this kind of brain peace is accessible at all times, in any situation. This has been described as a peace that surpasses all human understanding, a brain that is at peace, even in the face of life-threatening events, a brain that is most of the time entrained and in synchrony with the heart, respiratory, digestive and nervous systems (Gillett & Davis, undated, p. 1).

From my review of the literature it is clear there are few studies of the neuropsychobiology of spirituality or the neural and social components of a cosmic transcendent brain map. However, some of the participants in this study appear to give glimpses or indications of what Davis (2006) would describe as an: “Emergence of a fully conscious Human Being who physically embodies and expresses continuously Universal Values” (p 67). Dennis (2012) continues by stating: “this new state may likely be characterized by quantum properties such as coherence and non-local field information.

Such a ‘consciousness field’ would transform how we relate to other people, the world around us, and expand our perceptual realities (p 512). I suggest tentatively that this opens a new area of scholarship, once considered purely the preserve of the mystics.

### 7:5 Interpersonal Neurobiology

Interpersonal neurobiology refers to an integrated understanding of the effect of interpersonal experience on the brain (Siegal, 2001). The brain is a key part of the central nervous system, which is throughout the whole body. The brain is an aspect of mind and can be understood from this perspective: “the entity we call mind can be understood in the simplest terms as patterns in the flow of energy and information” (Siegal, 2001, p. 69).

In an expanded definition Siegal goes on to state:

Thus, though we may speak of mind as emanating from the neurobiological processes of the brain, this statement is an abbreviated way of referring to the flow of energy and information within the brain as a fundamental part of the functioning of the body as a whole. The patterns in the flow of energy and information, the essence of the mind, are a product of both bodily (neurophysiological) processes and interpersonal interactions (Siegal, 2001, p. 70).

In many ways, this seems similar to the Yogic definitions of mind as *citta*. According to Siegal (2001) it is the human connections that create the neural connections from which mind emerges. In this, we see that spiritual processes are likely to directly shape the neurological integration of practitioners.

This perhaps explains the necessary processes of individual change prior to any emergence of a cosmic brain map and the level of connectedness and attunement that these participants experienced. From my observations with practitioners over a three-year period, it seems change is possible, but requires certain practices. These may be cultural practices that nurture the connectedness during childhood or practices that allow changes in adulthood. It seems that there are differences in the neurobiology of those who relate in such ways. Haglund et al., (2007) state:

Neurobiology of spirituality is not well understood at this time. There is some evidence from positron emission tomography studies to indicate that spiritual or self - transcendent experiences are associated with density of 5 – HT1A receptors, are implicated in the psychopathology of depression, in the dorsal raphe nuclei, hippocampus, and neo cortex of healthy adult males (p 911).

Participants who, as adults, were developing an integrated mind via the Yogic processes of meditation and attitudinal change, described it as difficult, emotional and, at

times, uncomfortable. One practitioner from England talked of the difficulties of integration of the self and developing a consciousness of connection:

I don't know why it's such an ongoing process, I don't know why that's the truth, why is it so difficult. Sometimes I think maybe it's a complex evolution from an animal brain through the human into? You know - I have this idea that it's possibly about a growth of perspective - simple as that. At first you see only yourself and if all you can see on one level is the separation between yourself and everything that you pick up or touch or bump into, talk to, like yourself or everything else or some other thing. And probably most animals live in that realm, although I can't say that I know that for sure. But, and then, a little bit wider, I think possibly where most people are, is that we see these systemic processes, we harness them technologically very well, social structures and everything. But that's the systemic cooperative view and I think people are finding that we can no longer sustain in a competitive, individualistic which - is all those things that we look down on in terms of moral values or see as being dangerous, morally. You know, greed, selfishness and so on. And we're seeing that those systems just can't sustain us socially anymore and also that there's a conscious move - we're looking at people starving around us and going - 'hold on this isn't working'. And I think that's the systemic level like I said. From the individual, to the tree, through to the systemic entity of the forest for example. Those systems overlap, emerge and become unified. Then it becomes unified - with universal prana. And I wonder, possibly, if it's a matter of evolution of awareness (English, Sahaj Marg, female participant, 2012).

Others described an evolution of awareness happening in an ordinary way, as the condition of the heart and mind changed rapidly if there was remembrance or attunement via

'thought - feeling' to the energy of the *Master* or to a mind that was already stable and tuned, i.e., master.<sup>91</sup> However, some Sahaj Marg participants experienced the complications of selfdoubt and confusion. Badenoch and Cox (2010) argue that group therapy processes can be aided when participants are aware that the issues that they face may be neurobiological rather than character flaws, thereby increasing self-compassion, and decreasing blame and shame (p 465). They state:

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<sup>91</sup> Perhaps there are links here to the Autonomic Nervous System (ANS). The ANS has three levels of circuits that operate hierarchically. Their activation is dependent upon the degree of threat or danger perceived. According to Gantt and Agazarian (2010): "the myelinated ventral vagal branch activates to neuroception of

The practice of observing one's own mind, as well as the minds of the individuals in the group builds in a layer of processing via increased integration between the middle prefrontal cortex and limbic regions, creating a broader perspective and a sense of confidence and stability, often followed by increased compassion (Badenoch & Cox, 2010, p. 464).

They continue their argument by suggesting that as the limbic system<sup>98</sup> calms because of this internal integration, there is a reduction in reactivity and a greater range of experience can emerge in the group. Whilst Sahaj Marg and Māori participants were not in therapy, they all experienced natural, intimate and prolonged group living. Accordingly, these understandings of group process are helpful in understanding the types of recorded observations and experiences. There is neurobiological evidence to suggest that human beings experience physiological resonance, one to another. Buchanan et al., (2012) examined whether physiological stress was contagious. Public speaking was viewed as a stress producing activity and salivary cortisol (measure of activation of the hypothalamic pituitary adrenocortical and sympatho-adrenomedullary stress axis in human beings) was measured in speakers and observers. There was an identical resonance in salivary cortisol between the two groups. They concluded: "In human behaviour, emotional contagion is described as a simple state in which one simply catches the emotions of another, producing a similar internal state in the observer that resulted directly from the observation" (Buchanan et al., 2012, p. 192).

safety and is the highest and only uniquely mammalian level of the three. This circuitry links the heart to the striated muscles in the face and inhibits sympathetic activation of the heart. Porges calls this ventral vagal circuit the social engagement system, in that its activation orients to facial expression, vocalisations, and listening, which allows for interpersonal regulation and experiences of calm, relaxation, and openness. The middle level of autonomic activation involves the sympathetic branch and activates with perceived threat. Sympathetic activation prepares us for flight and fight and diminishes social engagement. The lowest level system, the unmyelinated dorsal vagal, takes over with severe threat and initiates death-feigning, dissociating freeze response" (Gantt & Agazarian, 2010, p. 527).

<sup>98</sup> The limbic system is comprised of the amygdala, hippocampus and hypothalamus and combined with the middle prefrontal regions of the cortex is known as the 'social brain' that is based mainly in the right hemisphere.

This assists in understanding the possible mechanism of the spiritual benefit of spending time with the physical master or in remembrance of the inner *Master* for Sahaj Marg, or *tūpuna* (ancestors) and/or *atua* (ancestral forces that generate and animate particular realms of reality) for Māori. As one participant shares:

It's just like this open space. You have a lot... massive... majestic. When you're in this world you are kind of boxed in kind of thing. Not boxed but thinking about things all the time, you know. I've got to do this and if I don't do this, then this will happen...you know? But when you're connected with your tūpuna, with your spirituality, its space. It's massive and you are not. So you have more freedom (Māori female participant, 2012).

## 7:6 Compassion and Volunteers

Spirituality seems to be importantly relational in general (Wilson, 1998; Atterton & Calarco, 2005) and for the two communities being studied. Volunteers run the ashrams and organisational structure of Shri Ram Chandra Mission from all around the world. Many aspects of Māori cultural organisation, including *marae* (meeting houses) and particularly the process of achieving justice in terms of the Waitangi Treaty<sup>92</sup> and land settlements, have occurred through the coordinated efforts of volunteers. Māori leaders during and since, have had full, extended family lives and employment in jobs that were often low paying, alongside their tribal leadership roles. Volunteering to act has manifested itself in many ways including some powerful examples of peaceful resistance.

Indeed the first documented global example of passive resistance was a response to the New Zealand Government forcing the Māori off their land. Māori South Island Waitaha leader and visionary Te Maiharoa led his people in peaceful occupation of the disputed land:<sup>93</sup> “in the winter of 1877 with more than one hundred followers the prophet set out for Omarama (name of village)” (Mikaere, 1988, p. 69). The British colonial police who were sent to expel the community were met with peaceful resistance.<sup>101</sup> Similarly the North Island Māori people of Parihaka (name of village on the West Coast of the North

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<sup>92</sup> Historian Claudia Orange (1987) in *The Treaty of Waitangi* describes the process by which the British government sought to secure sovereignty. The government sought to secure this through treaty if possible and by peaceful means. However, land was already being sold illegally and the treaty Māori language translations were not accurate. It is not the scope of this thesis to outline this fully. I strongly recommend reading this book which gives a detailed historical account of the treaty forming and signing process.

<sup>93</sup> Te Maiharoa was a man of spiritual knowledge and many children were sent to him to be taught: “this famous school specialised in the teaching of religion...according to Waitaha traditions ‘what was important was that their leader had a reputation as the leading Waitaha and Kati Mamoe [Māori tribe] scholar of the age” (Mikaere, 1988, p. 52). His teachings included: *kotahitanga* (unity), *rangimarie* (non-violence), *rongo* (peace) and the place of intuitive knowledge and communion with the *tūpuna* (ancestors) and *atua* (ancestral forces). He was unusual in that he taught both males and females: “But although Te Maiharoa taught ancient lore, contrary to ancient practice he made no distinction between male and female pupils. Miria Kemara recalled as

Island) resisted the crown and British colonial soldiers during the years 1879 to 1880 via non-violent practices such as removing survey stakes and ploughing and re-planting the disputed land

(Sharp, 1997). The village was established in 1866 as a refuge for Māori forced off their land by the British crown, perpetrating the violent land confiscation of 1865. The leaders; Te Whiti-o-Rongamai and Tohu Kakahi led their people in a long dispute on land ownership and, in response to the soldiers forcing and destroying their village, showed no aggression (Sharp, 1997).<sup>102</sup>

Soldiers were met by women and children and given food and welcome. At no point was violence met with violence. It is difficult to imagine the depth of connection, solidarity and commitment that such a course requires from a people. According to Māori, the wellknown activist, Mahatma Ghandi, learned about the actions and philosophy of Te Whiti-o-Rongamai from an Irish delegation that first visited Parihaka and then later met with Ghandi (Sharp, 1997, p. 1089).

In addition, the actions of the Parihaka protest were extensively reported in English newspapers at the time (Sharp, 1997). Accordingly:

In this storyline, the history of passive resistance begins with indigenous actors in Aotearoa, spreads to Ireland and then on to India before making its way across to the United States. It is an inventive whakapapa [genealogy] of non-violent protest in which the seeds of the family tree of passive resistance were planted by Tohu and Te Whiti at Parihaka (p 1089).

a child she had been ‘under Maiharoa for three months at Korotuaheka’ and ‘what she learned came to her years later’ (Mikaere, 1988, p. 122). Many of the Waitaha *iwi* (tribe) participants in this study are the direct descendants of Te Maiharoa.

<sup>101</sup> The author Buddy Mikaeres’ book, *Te Maiharoa and the Promised Land*, outlines the historical actions, complexities and perspectives of the land disputes. He describes clearly the effect of the two cultures coming together and the speed of change on traditional Māori lifestyle practices. As I read this book I could feel the shock of two cultures with such different values coming together on the one land and the rapid changes (reinforced by laws and direct violence) in livelihood, health, and dietary practices for Māori. It was powerful also because I was reading the *whānau* (family) story of my study participants. I was experiencing Te Maiharoa as a living legacy through *whānau* (family).

<sup>102</sup> This book gives a comprehensive outline of the examples of Pākehā aggression and direct violence towards Māori.

The degree of composure, steadiness and pro-life attitudes demonstrated by the Māori peoples group practice of *rangimarie* (non-violence) at this time was enlivened and strengthened by attitudes of *kotahitanga* (unity), and the relational knowledge of interconnection with the *tūpuna* (ancestors) and *atua* (ancestral forces). According to the literature there is a certain cluster of personality traits that characterise the person who is likely to volunteer, help or be pro-social: “The traits that make up the pro-social personality include empathy, a sense of responsibility, concern for the welfare of others, and a sense of self-efficacy” (Howard & Allyn Pliavin, 2001, p. 116). Costa, McCrae, & Dye (1991) describe the Big Five Model of pro-social personality traits: i) openness (active imagination, aesthetic sensitivity, attentiveness to inner feelings, preference for variety and intellectual curiosity); ii) agreeableness (trust, straight forwardness, altruism, compliance, modesty and tender mindedness); and iii) conscientiousness (order, dutifulness, achievement striving, self-discipline and deliberation).

How do such traits develop? Recent laboratory studies have shown that empathetic concern triggers the brain’s release of the hormone oxytocin promoting collective action and pro-sociality (Zac & Barraza, 2013).<sup>94</sup>

The neurobiology of social support is complex and involves many brain regions, biological pathways, and neurochemicals. The neuropeptide oxytocin is important in mediating social attachment and bonding, and has been shown to augment the anxiolytic affects of social support during stressful situations, perhaps by reducing HPA axis activity (Haglund et al., 2007, p. 912).

Oxytocin is the main neuropeptide associated with childbirth, breastfeeding, and the regulation of social behaviour, affiliation, reproduction, communication, aggression and attachment in human beings (Insel & Young, 2001; Love, 2014). Volunteers may have a range of motivations (obligation, reputation) but also function from the base of empathetic concern whereby there is a reduction in self-regarding concerns and an increase in other regarding motives (Batson, 2010). Empathetic concern is a key factor in motivating collective action. According to Haglund et al., (2007): “altruism, which can be thought of

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<sup>94</sup> Oxytocin is implicated in mammalian attachment and caregiving behaviors and protection of mates. It facilitates the ability to infer another’s emotions and intentions from facial expressions. Until recently oxytocin was only known to be associated with childbirth and breastfeeding. Recent studies indicate that oxytocin is also released in relation to empathetic concern and after massage. However, it can also be associated in certain contexts with ethnocentrism, and less adherence to fairness norms. This paper gives useful references for the field of oxytocin research (Zac & Barraza, 2013).

as putting one's moral compass into action, is a powerful contributor to resilience in response to stressors" (p 911).

According to Sahaj Marg literature, volunteering, an aspect of altruism accelerates spiritual progress or integration, especially if nourished by an internal attitude of remembrance of the *Master* (Ram Chandra, 1989).

In Sprecher and Fehr's (2005) *Compassionate Love Scale*, compassion is conceptualized as a type of love that can be demonstrated both as being for close others and for all of humanity. Compassionate love is defined as a behavioural, emotional, and cognitive attitude focused on care and concern for others that manifests itself in supporting and helping in times of suffering and need (Sprecher & Fehr, 2005). This type of love is described as selfless and self-sacrificing. Lilius, Worline, Maitlis, Kanov, Dutton, & Frost (2008) identified three aspects of compassion: i) noticing another person's suffering, ii) empathically feeling that person's pain, and iii) acting in a manner intended to ease their suffering (p 195). It is interesting in that the sensitivity of empathy may not be enough to translate into action and, in fact, feeling another's pain may be immobilising (Hein & Singer, 2008). Compassion appears to be thus more active than empathy, requiring action regardless of outcome.

The act of volunteering in a compassionate way is good for everyone, it seems. For example, Crocker and Canevello (2008) suggest that compassionate goals may be associated with a host of positive outcomes such as improved social bonds, enhanced well-being, feeling less lonely, depressed, and anxious. Whilst Sprecher and Fehr (2005) in their conceptualization of compassion found that compassionate love was positively associated with empathy, helpfulness, volunteerism, and social support. In addition, the related literature on meditation shows positive influences on the quality of relationships (Pruitt & McCollum, 2009; Burpee & Lange, 2005; Jones, Welton, Oliver, & Thoburn, 2011). Pruitt and McCollum's (2010) qualitative study examined the effects of meditation traits on close relationships. They identified three meditative traits and the effects of these traits on close relationships. Effects included: reduced reactivity, a greater sense of freedom and safety, and new understandings about the connection between people including concepts of unity, separation, intimacy and independence. Other researchers have found that attitudes of mindfulness correlated with greater marital attachment and relationship satisfaction (Burpee

& Langer, 2005; Jones et al., 2011; Brown & Rogge, 2007). Therefore, it seems that meditation leads to a humanizing of practitioners (Vivekânanda, 1923). That is they begin to show qualities and behaviours such as helpfulness, empathy, compassion, social support, connectivity, relatedness and reduced reactivity. They become more attuned to the unity between each other and I would argue demonstrated pro-social personality traits.

Empathy in this context is defined as the: “capacity to understand and share another person’s emotional experience” (Lutz et al., 2009, p. 1038). Empathy has been usefully summarised by one social work expert as: i) the innate and the proximate mechanism for altruistic behaviour, ii) mediated by neural networks, iii) including affect sharing, self/other awareness, emotional regulation, and perspective taking, iv) empathetic skills that enhance resilience, and v) empathetic perspective taking leads to targeted helping of others (Gerdes & Segal, 2011).<sup>95</sup>

Psychotherapist Claudio Rud (2003) argues that empathy, that transforms the ‘Other’, has aspects of presence and contemplation. He states:

...to empathize is then to be in contact: with myself, with the other, with the environment, all as one and one as all. It is a form of encounter that, as with any genuine encounter, is eternal — not because it lasts a long time, but because it fills ‘all the time’ (p 166).

It seems that we are ‘biologically wired’ to respond and connect with the ‘Other’. The capacity to ‘feel deeply bonded’ or attached to living beings in a universal way, is developed by study participants through the various spiritual techniques and alongside cultural and psychological processes that promote remembrance of humanities relatedness (Rajagopalachari, 1986). Psychotherapist Claudio Rud (2003) states that “...Empathy is then, for me, a form of the practice of Otherness. Perhaps this is the primitive language in which we can all understand one another, the language of resonance that we share in our empathic communication...” (p 170).<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> This article provides many practical examples and methods for enhancing empathy. It also quotes literature whereby the skills of empathy have been shown to increase resilience and reduce compassion fatigue and secondary trauma in helping professionals.

<sup>96</sup> Perhaps this is one way of understanding the later Sahaj Marg participant categories of spiritual heart, vibration and heart-to-heart. According to these participants the spiritual heart is experienced as providing information and felt embodied connection with other living beings.

Compassion has been described as the outward concern for the well-being of others (Cosley, McCoy, Saslow, & Epei, 2010); as a non-judgmental, compassionate attitude towards oneself; as an affective experience aimed at facilitating cooperation and protection for those who are vulnerable (Goetz, Keltner, & Simon-Thomas, 2010); and as part of a family of states including empathy, sympathy and pity (MacBeth & Gurnley, 2012). Buddhist literature adds other qualities including: loving-kindness; joy and sympathy and equanimity (Williams & Kabat-Zinn, 2013). Self-compassion has been defined as:

Being touched by and open to one's own suffering, not avoiding or disconnecting from it, generating the desire to alleviate one's suffering and to heal oneself with kindness. Self-compassion also involves offering non-judgmental understanding to one's pain, inadequacies and failures, so that one's experience is seen as part of the larger human experience (Neff, 2003b, p. 87).

The literature on spirituality emphasises a universal ontology that encompasses a transcendence of an individual ego sense of 'i-ness' and leads towards a collective consciousness of connection and relationship (Ho & Ho, 2007; Coulon, 2006; Kaye & Robinson, 1994).

For the Māori community, values of *whakapapa* (genealogy) encourage practices of interrelating and pro-sociality. There is a Māori word, *whaaungatanga* which translates into English as 'connections and relationships' and a sense of communion and we-ness (Drury, 2011). There are many protocols anchored around the *marae* (area to gather together) that recognise and grow this sense between people. This word calls for respectful relationships with awareness of the responsibilities and obligations that exist. It brings to my mind the Vedic teaching that 'your guest is God' and should be treated in such a way, including love and respect. Volunteering combined with an internal attitude of remembrance or universal love, as we will see in later chapters, may be the lifeblood of practical spirituality.

### **7:7 Neurology and Peace Keeping**

As we can see, the contemplative practices have a powerful effect on the neurology of devoted practitioners. What is encouraging is that studies are showing that the brain maintains plasticity throughout the lifetime. Yoga is founded upon knowledge of practices

and processes of physiological relaxing, alongside contemplative and attitudinal practices that are conducive to integrating the mind. The knowledge of the brain's plasticity alongside its environmental responsiveness, explain the utility for peace builders of meditation and contemplation. These and other practices directly affect brain structure and function related to compassion, intuition and empathy, which may be fundamental for conflict resolution and peace building. I suspect this knowledge may be of future use as we consider the use of contemplative and arts traditions in the transformation of post-conflict societies.

Judith Schore argues from her work, integrating neurobiological effects of trauma and therapy, that it is important for a therapist to find a way to be with each client that is "psychobiological attuned to the patient's internal state" (Schore, 2012, p. 104). Peacekeepers are often working with the traumatised and this stance may be useful for them.

The capacity of an individual to be aware of multi universes as described by social scientist, Ananta Giri, appears to be an outcome of individual spiritual development, leading to contributions towards social transformation (Giri, 2008). If we recall the studies that examined the broad effects of consciousness associated with collective practice of the Maharishi Transcendental Meditation and TM-Sidhi programs by large groups, we can see that there are practical possibilities for peacekeeping. The studies measured included quality of life measures from archival statistics and content analysis of current events. What was claimed was a range of improvements in quality of life measures including: i) unemployment and inflation, ii) violent crime, total crime, fires, mortality rate (except traffic fatalities), iii) traffic fatality rate, auto accident rate, iv) pollution, v) beer consumption rate and, vi) cigarette consumption rate (Hagelin et al. 1999; Dillbeck, 1990; Orme-Johnson et al., 1988; Dillbeck et al., 1987). Assessments of consciousness-based interventions on war and peace utilized; the Conflict and Peace Data Bank (COPDAB), war-related fatalities and injuries, and blind ratings of news content for evidence of hostile acts, verbal hostilities, and cooperative events (Orme-Johnson et al., 1985, 1988). Such measures suggested the types of impacts that can be assessed as researchers examine not only individual and organizational, but also societal, transformations (Kenny, 2008).

It is an area of paucity in the research literature and I am left postulating that it is an area worth examining further:

In turn, qualitative and quantitative measures, or third-person perspectives can be used to investigate pure spirituality, applied spirituality, and spiritual development. In addition, by enlivening the inner Being through experiences of pure spirituality, which in turn leads to healthy changes in behavior, each individual personally becomes an instrument for transformational change in organizations, again an "inside →out" approach to change' (Heaton et al., 2004, p. 66).

### **7:8 Awakening and Awareness**

In this study of spiritual brother-sisterhood, participants from around the world were asked about their experiences of this concept. In keeping with holistic views outlined in

Yogic and Māori texts, all participants knew themselves as an individual consciousness with an awareness or realization of self as more than body and gave examples of a self that included spirit/*wairua* and unseen energies. This was a practical embodiment of mind that influenced biology. Participants gave many examples of physical change in their bodies, if requested or needed. Perhaps, in time biological process may begin to be consciously viewed as a quantum expression of mind (Stapp, 2007)

The following example highlights the participants' views that before one can experience spiritual brother-sisterhood one has to have the realization of oneself as a sacred spiritual and energetic being. All the other aspects of practice including *yama*, *niyama*, and remembrance of connection, as outlined in previous chapters, were viewed as a beginning knowledge developed by the attitudes that we each develop in response to our relationships, environments and pressures that nature places upon us. As an example, this is what one Māori participant shared:

How we fit into the ecology, into the cosmology, into mythology and it comes back to knowing who you are. If you know who you are and you have a whakapapa that's Māori or if you have a whakapapa that's from Glastonbury and the ancients of the Avalons. You know if you have the ancients of the Scottish there is the wisdom of the Celts. There is also the wisdom here in this whenua/ this land for everyone. But those adolescents - were the beginning of mankind's relationship with this land but are not the end point. They are a really good starting point to understand *wairua* (spirit), *manaakitanga* (hospitality) but without that intrinsic sacredness, spirit - who are you as an individual - you can't go beyond (Māori, female participant, 2012).

When asked what this feels like as a way of being in the world with a series of constitutive connections to others according to *whakapapa* (genealogy), one participant shared the following:

What does it feel like - it feels peaceful, you know I want to stamp my hand on the table and scream it's about capacity, it's about change, it's about growth, it's about seeing what our true potential is. We don't know what our potential is. If we truly opened our hearts - do we know? Have we truly ever experienced a collective consciousness on this planet that is truly connected and truly about heart? I mean I don't know if we have and it is beyond even my comprehension to think what that could look like. But it would feel incredibly scary and I think that's where the resistance for people comes from; I feel we want to control, we want to be able to predict, and we want to know what's going to happen next. And so we miss things. When you open up your heart and allow things to flow and not be inhibited by the mind and our pre-socialised understanding about what this world is all about - it's dizzying. Because when you do open your heart to experiences without that static, without that buffer - life is different. Life is absolutely different and how we engage with it (Māori, female participant, 2012).

In this excerpt there is a sense of potentiality, of a shift in consciousness and what this might be like for a group of human beings to experience. It is an invisible collective consciousness beyond all preconceived differences based upon physical expressions of form. I was also aware of the self-created fears; consisting of prejudicial barriers and doubt based upon ignorance of the true nature of the human being.

Many participants in this study described awareness as children, of a consciousness that was open to a wider perception of knowledge. Many described the negative influences that society, including the church, imposed, that led to self-doubt and closing down of these capacities. As one participant shares:

When I was a young kid I used to see halos. I was brought up in the Mormon Church for a few years. I would watch the elders and go and look at these gorgeous halos and because they were elders I would think that it was okay. You know they are halos - it's all good! They were meant to have them because they were church elders. God has them so these people have them too. And then I'd see little colours and occasionally I'd get little feelings and I'd see things and things would come out of my mouth and then I was taught that was evil and wrong so in my teenage years I really

struggled with seeing and feeling things because it was wrong (Māori, female participant, 2012).

For another participant her experiences of connection involved expanded levels of seeing, hearing, and sensing. When she refers to 'they' she is talking about her *tūpuna*/ancestors:

It started when I was about four. They used to yack away to me and it used to really upset my mother. Apparently it was because of me that we couldn't go to my granddad's funeral/ tangi because I said "no its okay mum he's just sitting over there and he's telling me that old lady's mean. That old lady over there is mean (which was my grandmother). So it was the only funeral that they never took us to and my older sister says 'if only you'd shut your mouth, can't you just shut your mouth' and I'm like 'okay'. I'd find things that had been lost. Like some people thought they had been lost forever and I would find them in rivers and other places (Māori, female participant, 2012).

Māori participants described a spiritual family comprising all human beings as being something they automatically recognise, only requiring (for recognition) an intuitional attainment or 'tuning in'. From this arises knowledge of how to support each other in the physical realm. The need for words was often unnecessary. Others described this more esoterically in terms of human beings emitting an energy that connects each one of us.<sup>97</sup> It is this example that practically illustrates the notion of 'all of life as energy' in Sāṅkhya philosophy. It also suggests that time and space are constructs representing configurations or situations at certain levels of resonance. According to Swami Abhedananda: "One thought following another gives us a conception of intervals which we call time, while that which separates them, is what we call space" (Prajnananda, 1971, p. 114). According to the Sanskrit language, time and space are known as *kala* and *desha* and are self-created *maya* (illusion).

As another Māori participant said:

For me it's about a connectedness and I suppose it's the image that I have is this light ball which is emanating from each of us as

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<sup>97</sup> According to Peter Russell in his book *The Global Brain – The Awakening Earth in a New Century*: "An important element of Indian thought is the notion of *darshan*, the belief that an enlightened person can pass on to someone else a taste of enlightenment. Sometimes it may be a touch or a look from the master that confers the experience; sometimes it comes just from being in the presence of an enlightened person (2007, p. 207).

individuals and it's that connection that happens in the 'and space' my teacher calls it. Reweaving the web. It's those little nodules. I see me as a nodule on that woven world and when we have that wholeness then we are able to reconnect to others. Others and ourselves in the past, present, future, and in the now. I suppose brotherhood also elicits healing. Healing connectedness (Māori, female participant, 2012).

This brings in the notion of the woven universe – whereby we are all connected and woven together as individual nodes whose being is relational (Marsden, 2003).<sup>98</sup> According to Sāṅkhya philosophy cosmic energy is omnipresent and one of the goals of Yoga is to learn to join with this energy (Radhakrishnan, 1994). It is a process of learning to find the cosmic frequency and tune in. A weaving together of subtle energy and attitudes of willingness and hospitality takes place and, in this process, we become like receiving stations of light – gifted, healthy bodies which are able to receive information from all sources. In the words of another Māori participant:

It's like when you go onto a marae (meeting house) and you do the hongi (greeting).<sup>99</sup> And there's somebody (you've not met before) and you actually stop. You both stop. I always say kia ora (hello) and hongi but then all of a sudden you just have a feeling and it's there and you are pressed together and it might only be half a second but it feels like an eternity. It's like you know that person, there's something - you know the energy. You recognise the energy, and that person recognises your energy. That's happened - well actually that happens quite a lot (Māori, female participant, 2012).

In this statement, the participant shares the belief that a conscious connecting field of energy has the capability to affect the 'Other'. She describes the *hongī* (greeting) as sacred act as each person shares the most precious thing that they have, which is *Tihei mauri ora* (the sneeze or breath of life). According to both Sāṅkhya and Māori philosophy, this is what we each individually have the latent capacity to do. This brings us back to the ideas of quantum physicist David Bohm (1994) when he described that your thought-feeling can uplift or deflate me; it can encourage or it can damage, because we are one. According to Yogic scientists we train our concentration to tune in and then we are there at

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<sup>98</sup> “The Shvetashvatara Upaniṣad describes God as *mayin*, the wonder-working powerful Being, who creates the world by His powers (Radhakrishnan, 1994, p. 82). According to Yogic thought the energy of everyone is part of these divine powers or *Shakti*.

<sup>99</sup> Hongi is an ancient traditional greeting from Māori whereby the noses are gently pressed together and the 'breath' is shared. According to the letters between Sir Apirana Ngata and Sir Peter Buck it was also found and practised in other Polynesian countries (Sorrenson, 1988).

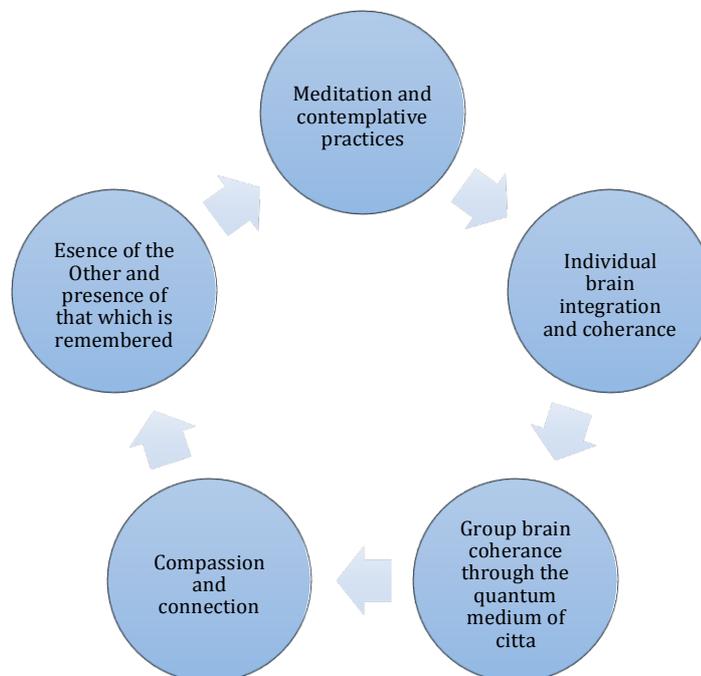
the deeper, internal levels of self – as connected to the ‘Other’. A Māori participant describes this in the following words:

And actually at the end of the day even though some of us weren't physically present, it isn't like where are the sisters? We're actually there [others agree]. We get caught up in the physical presence when the non-physical is stronger and it's just about calling on that.

Say 'hey guys we need some awahi (support) out here.' Invite something, I need help here (Māori, female participant, 2012).

These descriptions of a shared, internal heart-based, quantum communication between human beings and invisible others were given by the majority of study participants.

Figure 3 outlines the interaction of the individual's material reality with the tuning in by thought and will to the quantum world and quantum connected ‘Other’. Whilst it is represented as a circle, it is better considered as a fluid interconnection, as each practice nourishes all others. One can start anywhere in the circle and develop a consciousness of connection.



**Figure 3: Individual practices and spiritual connections**

## 7:9 Conclusion

The essence of spiritual brother-sisterhood appears to take us into the higher subtle realms of who we are. For many of us it is beyond our everyday consciousness. However, these narratives invite us to dive deep into the potentiality that is contained within ourselves. Contained as a latent potential within our nervous systems and realized through the disciplined, regulated, time-tested practices of *asana* (posture), breathing, purification, meditation and attitudes of *aroha* (love), and connection. The analysis of shared stories on lived experience of spiritual brotherhood/sisterhood from Māori and Raja Yoga practitioners suggests that ordinary human beings are experiencing a wider transcendent consciousness in a natural way. There are differences between the two communities and these differences are likely to centre on the Raja Yogic notions of the *atman* (individual purity) alongside spiritual transmission versus the importance of connectedness and *whakapapa* (genealogy) for Māori participants. One tradition has described the topic scientifically and the other metaphorically. Regardless, both have gathered knowledge via direct observation, rational inference and verbal cognition or recorded testimony.

In the next chapter I examine coming together in peace through the lenses of spirituality and character development.

## **Chapter Eight: Character Development and Spirituality**

### **8:1 Summary**

In the previous chapter, I examined the neurobiology of meditation, relationship and I introduced the possibility of neural and social components of a cosmic, transcendent brain map. It was suggested that spirituality in the context of such a brain map leads to a state of consciousness whereby universal values may be expressed constantly. I shared participant narratives that provided glimpses of this possibility.

In this chapter I examine the data in light of the question: how may an ordinary, modern, human being evolve from a state of animal-human, whereby self-concern, one's desires and wants take priority over all else (Diehm, 2004), towards a human being endowed with a character, heart and behaviours based upon spiritual values, enlivened by connection with source (Vivekânanda, 1923).

This chapter contends that the natural outcome of embodied spiritual values or an applied spirituality is an inner harmonising. It becomes natural for the individual, and the associated communities of like-minded individuals, to express universal spiritual values of compassion, truth, unity and love. They naturally demonstrated an awareness of the importance of behaviours based upon: openness, tolerance, connection, and acceptance. These universal values and their application do not negate individual identity or situations of disagreement but appeared to lead to a motivation to harmonise or seek resolution within diversity. The attitudes and practises of brother-sisterhood appeared intrinsic to these participants in the development and maintenance of practical spirituality.

### **8:2 Spiritual Values**

According to Yogic scientists, a connected relationship with an enlivened universal consciousness develops from the core virtues of love, kindness, compassion, brotherhood/sisterhood, and justice (Vivekânanda, 1899). Within this, unity is a fundamental dimension of morality (Shaw, 2011). In this manner participants echo the

essences particularly valued within all major religions including Christianity.<sup>100</sup> The participants understand that these are essential forces of nature that human beings may attune to and be nourished by (Davis, 2006; Ram Chandra, 1991a).

Western philosopher Emmanuel Levinas, assists by describing an infinite ethics of responsibility. As we recall from earlier chapters, infinite responsibility develops from our encounter with each other and the 'Other'. This comes from the ordinary experiences that we have in a relationship and the 'Other' as a metaphysical experience of the Infinite.

Rushworth M. Kidder (1994) asked twenty-four 'men and women of conscience' to identify a global code of ethics. Each were peace builders in their local communities. They described their work as being enlivened by certain values. The common core of values were: i) love, ii) truthfulness, iii) fairness, iv) freedom, v) unity, vi) tolerance, vii) responsibility, and viii) respect for life. According to participants in this thesis these values were also important and represented for them, a type of frequency or vibration mediated through the spiritual heart. They also recognised that there were values based upon fear, competition, greed and lust which were also a form of vibration recognised by the spiritual heart. These qualities were viewed as leading to tension, conflict and unsustainable life style practices. It seemed that these participants were in general agreement with Kidder (1984) about the kinds of ethics and values that were considered fundamental for human beings survival. These ethics and values were beyond identities based on separation according to race, culture, gender and age.

According to the spiritual path, ethical and practical expressions alter according to one's self-development (Ram Chandra, 1991a). Again, the Sufi tradition assists by describing four levels of ethical understanding. First, there is the level of law (*shariah*) with individual rights and laws and notions of yours and mine. At level two there is the Sufi path (*tariqah*) with deep notions of brothers and sisters or the embodied understanding that mine is yours. This is followed by the level of truth (*haqiqah*) whereby there is no longer mine or yours. All things are seen to come from God and as human beings, we act as caretakers and possess nothing. In this stage of spiritual evolution, the personality goes beyond attachment to identity. Finally, the level of *gnosis* (*marifah*) is reached where there

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<sup>100</sup> In the Bible, Psalm 85:10: speaks of the weaving of love, faithfulness, righteousness and peace. (<http://biblehub.com/psalms/85-10.>)

is no longer me or you. The individual has realized that all is God, that nothing and none are separated from

God (Fadiman & Frager, 1977). The term God is defined similarly to the Yogic science view as an inner capacity, presence and connected consciousness accessed by the heart of each human being (Chandra, 1991). Whilst the process of *gnosis* is defined variously as: i) a superior form of wisdom derived mystically, ii) intuitive apprehension of spiritual truths, and iii) revealed knowledge of spiritual truths (<http://www.thefreedictionary.com/gnosis>).

The level of *gnosis* lends itself to universal expressions of ethics, behaviours and structures that go beyond the conventional level of law and notions of yours and mine. The spiritual person develops a personal integrity based upon the comprehension, “What is lawful at one level may not be lawful at another level of understanding” (Fadiman & Frager, 1977, p. 13). In this, we may understand the meaning behind the Sahaj Marg participants’ statements: ‘understanding by heart’, ‘listening to the heart’, and ‘following the heart’. Māori participants alluded to a similar truth when describing a way of following *tikanga* (customary protocols) which included a particular knowing that one was to do something, even if the reason was not clear, or it did not please the others. Awareness was transmitted via an inner silent space. Back et al., (2009) propose a typology of silence in the medical sciences, including an enriched silence. They identified that silence may be: i) awkward, ii) invitational, and iii) compassionate. They describe compassionate silence alongside the qualities of the clinician who emits this quality:

Compassion in contemplative traditions is transmitted through a quality of mind and requires active intentional mental processes - it is the opposite of passive, receptive activity. These compassionate silences arise spontaneously from the clinician who has developed the mental capacities of stable attention, emotional balance, along with pro-social mental qualities, such as naturally arising empathy and compassion (Back et al. 2009, p. 1114).

Many participants in the Sahaj Marg group commented on the quality of silence, presence and communion that was experienced when groups without common language came and lived together in an ashram environment.

Māori participants were clear that within enriched silence actions must be *tika* (correct). This was the process of being correct through an inner connection with *tūpuna* (ancestors) and in accordance with *tikanga* (customary protocols) (Moko Mead, 2005).

Most participants had the capacity to feel when the inner and outer actions/ thoughts of the human being were not congruent. For some it was an uncomfortable aspect of unity, for others it was a source of strength and accountability.

### **8:3 The Whole is the Concern of the Parts**

Within Sahaj Marg there is the hope that, through the process of regular meditation practice combined with the implementation of character development through the ten maxims, practitioners will develop what Levinas might call an ‘ethics of responsibility’. I suspect that this may be the practical expression of spiritual and neurological integration. For Levinas an ‘ethics of responsibility’ was an infinite, internal, open relating with the ‘Other’. Within Sahaj Marg the ethics of responsibility begins individually with the practical mastering and elevating of the self - at the level of mind including: thought, habits, regularity of practice and behavior. As one participant in one of the five Sahaj Marg focus groups shared:

So I guess that’s the difference we can make. We have a choice being friends with someone; sometimes we cannot. With brotherhood there’s no choice; in a situation *Master* is as a mother and has put us in one place in a centre so we may grow. So we need to learn to endure, to tolerate, accept and be there” (Sahaj Marg Focus group, female participant, November, 2011).

The willingness to be tolerant did not appear to come from aversion or attachment but rather from an allegiance to the *Master*. As an observer from the West, I was struck by the lack of stoicism in the concept of endurance. For Sahaj Marg participant’s, the experience of endurance appeared to be held lightly in self-deprecating laughter and reflected an awareness of presence and surrender to a greater plan whereby the complexity of human reaction was merely part of a cosmic game. Others however were not so light in their experience of conflict. They identified with the events and experienced reaction, pain and misery. Again, as an observer, I was intrigued by their voluntary willingness to undergo life experiences as a process of devolution based upon trust in the organization of the external teacher and their personal inner glimpses of the *Master*.

Another participant in the focus group continued with his understanding of how the attitude of spiritual brother-sisterhood allowed thoughts and behaviours conducive to selfmastery to emerge:

Sometimes with a friend you may end up having expectations whereas if it's a brotherhood actually a spiritual brotherhood there is no expectation. Also going back to the first question we are all different; our personality, our habits, our cultures but to be able to accept people for what they are, who they are, being in a spiritual process helps you to understand" (Sahaj Marg Focus group, male participant, November, 2011).

Here we notice that spiritual values allow a greater tolerance of difference, and one of the woman in the focus group adds to this discussion by using the example of our traditional understandings of friend:

I often find that the thing that keeps pointing back at me; because being human there are things or ways of other people that may sort of rub you on the wrong side; but then being in a spiritual process

I have learned to question myself. Whereas before 'oh what they said' or 'what they did' and I wouldn't like it full stop so that is one negative feeling. Whereas now I try to turn that feeling towards myself saying why are you feeling like that? Is it because your ego is bruised? Or because they are different? (Sahaj Marg Focus group, female participant, November, 2011).

This demonstrates an ethics of hospitality towards the other as the participant moves from values of blame towards values of self-awareness, self-change and self-responsibility.

She continues:

I am also thinking, *Master* has put that situation there in front of me so I can learn from that. So I find that for me a spiritual brotherhood process allows me to be able to work on myself more and more. I can be more open to be able to accept other people for whatever they are. It is freeing because it is a process of working on myself all the time (Sahaj Marg Focus group, female participant, November, 2011).

In this example, the participant is using an expanded consciousness to view relationship as purposeful and as allowing a deep growth in compassion and peaceful relating. The awareness of the concept of brother-sisterhood appears to allow an acceptance of difference and a willingness to challenge her internal, prejudiced reactions to others. In addition, she allows herself to develop a welcoming attitude towards the discomfort in that '*Master* has put that situation in front of me so I can learn from that'. In this way the responsibility to elevate self appears encouraged, 'a spiritual brotherhood

process allows me to be able to work on myself more and more' and in this she begins to perceive a moving towards greater tolerance and reduced prejudice, 'so I can be more open to be able to accept other people for whatever they are'. In a sense, this is an ongoing process of developing an awareness. She indicates that becoming the Gandhian peace that we wish to see was a continual moment-by-moment, inner process of adjustment and recalibration of attitude, past conditioning, and frequency of spiritual heart. Perhaps this represents a stage towards the Ancient Greek idea of constant and complete presence (*ousia*) rather than an ecstatic and temporary experience of presence (Backman, 2006).

Respect comes from the Latin word *rēspecere* to look back, pay attention to, from *re* and *specere* to look. As a noun it is used to describe an attitude of deference, admiration, esteem or regard, the state of being honoured or esteemed, a detail, point, or characteristic. *A respect for life* is often understood as holistic, i.e., including human beings, the planet and ecology (Patterson, 1992). It is interesting that as 'we look back' it is in some way 'a looking forward' or 'making present' the *atua* (ancestral forces), *Master* and *tūpuna* (ancestors). This is an attitude of honouring life and settling naturally into in a condition of calm, truth, love and unity. As participants shared we are yet to see what could be possible if the majority of human beings were attuned in this way. How would they live? Would we see a deep cooperation? According to the Sahaj Marg participants the respectful lens towards life was constructed by an open hearted relationship with *Master* and other human beings.

Master said once very beautifully that when we change ourself the whole world would change for us. That means that whatever is inside of us and when the purity inside of us is coming out (is showing out) then automatically we attract the same kind of purity. The same kind of vibration what we spread out to the universe is coming back to us. You know some people perceive this, some people maybe not; it is also depending on their own vibration. That is why you resonate with some people and with other people you don't resonate so much (Sahaj Marg Focus group, Indian male participant, November, 2011).

When asked how to develop an attitude of brother-sisterhood one participant from India stated: "Forget yourself first and then try to help others. So only think of the other person without any bonds, no expectations (Sahaj Marg focus group, Indian male participant, November, 2011). This reduction of self-absorption leads to flexibility and

reduced inner judgement. We find similarities to both Derrida's and Levinas's notions of reducing the individual self in order to be in connection with the other.

It is also a humble attitude to forget oneself and be in service to another human being, or as one focus group Sahaj Marg participant simplified: "try to help the other with no expectations". One Māori participant linked the concept of responsibility, responsiveness, spirituality and feeling in this way:

I think about it like waves of emotion; sometimes it can be like overpowering. When someone says to me spirituality, for me, I think waves, sometimes it's small wee breakers but there's always that thing that guides me and how I'm feeling. So whether it is a bad feeling; whether it's a good feeling; loving feeling whatever or empathetic feeling towards others, it's the wave that overcomes me and that pushes me to do whatever I do, how I act or say (Māori focus group, female participant, 2012).

This has similarities with some Sahaj Marg practitioners who experienced the 'real' as a feeling of soft presence and awareness. What was interesting in this statement is the way in which the wave 'pushes the participant to act in some way'. This is perhaps a difference in the experience between the two communities as Sahaj Marg participants stated: "there is no push or pull by the *Master*". My experience of the *connection between us all* was very similar at times to the descriptions given by Māori participants.

For Sahaj Marg participant's external unity was encouraged in a number of ways. It seems that there were a number of mechanisms both internal and external. Practitioners in this community were encouraged to practise by meeting together in a range of situations including: weekly group meditation, seminars, and annual celebrations.

From the perspective of Sahaj Marg Raja Yoga, it was as the practice began to bear fruit that practitioners begin to express a reducing internal prejudice. Reduced prejudice was seen as a precursor to developing an internal attitude of tolerance. This was both in terms of reduced prejudice towards the outer world of personality, habits and behavior but also internally towards our own prejudice towards the unknown and unseen (Hokowhitu, 2014, cited in Hemmingsen & Shaw, 2014).

Truthfulness is commonly defined as telling or expressing the truth and being realistic, honest or candid. To these participants being natural and unified required practise. A process took time and involved the shedding of various personalities and masks so that

the individual becomes the same on the inside as the outside. In essence, one says what one is thinking or feeling rather than something different. As one participant described:

You are nice, a simple person, natural person. Not like you're behaving or making (up) something or liking to show that you are something else, whilst on inside something else. A natural way and inside everything is natural (Sahaj Marg Indian, female participant, April, 2011).

As this process of development continued, there was an opening of the deeper vibration of truth. This was experienced as an open spacious expansion of *Master* and *tūpuna* (ancestors) as an enlivening source of energy and presence.

This finds echoes from the words in previous chapters of the Māori participants, who described a way of being in the world that was the same regardless of whether it was home or work. In Jacques Derrida's book *Politics of Friendship* (1997), we find echoes of such a natural relationship in his discussion of truth. Truth is seen as something that is neither dogmatic nor inflexible:

The friends of the *perhaps* are the friends of truth. But the friends of truth are not, by definition, *in* the truth; they are not installed there as in the padlocked security of a dogma and the stable reliability of opinion. If there is some truth in the *perhaps*, it can only be that of which the friends are the friends. Only friends. The friends of truth are without *the* truth, even if friends cannot function without truth. The truth - that of the thinkers to come - it is impossible to *be it*, to *be there*, to *have it*; one must only be its friend" (Derrida, 1997, p. 43).

This concept, of not owning the spiritual value of truth or the way, is practically illustrated in the following participant example of changes within family relationships (see p. 189). If we remember from previous chapters that for these participants there was a shared lens viewing each human being is a unique amalgamation of thought, action and reaction enlivened by *prana* (vital life force) and *wairua* (spiritual essence).

Consequently, each human being was viewed as connected to source either consciously or unconsciously and with belief or without belief. In a simple way a human being does not exist without breath. According to Yogic science and Māori cosmology breath is oxygen and energy (Ram Chandra, 1991a; Bahadur, 1978; Abhedananda, 1967; Robinson, 2005). The energy and oxygen is transformed by human agency and subjected to

unconscious and conscious action. For these participants there was a tuning by thought and relaxed, joyful, awareness to spiritual frequencies of truth, unity and love. They recognised how powerful the integrated human being was. They consistently spoke of happenings, synchronicities and small miracles. It became ordinary and no day was repeatable (Norgaard, undated). The external structures of existence (family, employment etc.) remained constant but the inner world and possibilities for creative unity abounded.

From the perspective of the Sufi's *gnosis* level of truth, we note that all is possible when each human being is viewed as an aspect of the *I Am Love* presence and a necessary expression of the ultimate balance in nature. A balance occurring over a time span that human beings are poorly equipped to perceive (Fadiman & Frager, 1977; Davis, 2006). From the *gnosis* perspective of intuitive apprehension, what is judged unsuitable from a secular level of knowledge may be viewed as necessary at a cosmic level. Perhaps this is why it is difficult to judge the spiritual development of another from their external behaviours only. Often Sahaj Marg participants spoke of the feeling in the heart, which guided actions and led to communion. At a more secular level one of the participants described this:

Like it is always a generation gap - my way of thinking, my son's way of thinking, and my daughter-in-law's way of thinking. Everyone thinking there is a difference. Always there is a generation gap and always there is a gap but now I can understand my people, my relations in a better way. Now I don't react - I agree with what they say. Yes it should be like this. It's not that I like this way that it should be like this, it is just that this can be like this also. There is a way like this also that they want. So like this we grow. And I have seen this change in myself. And the relations have become nice, better, better and in the mission also of course when we change everyone seems like brother and sister (Sahaj Marg Indian, female participant, April, 2012).

We see here how one participant begins to experience respectful relations with her family coming from her own embodiment of the Spiritual Value of truth that is similar to that of Derrida's notion of friend. She recognizes that there are many ways whether she likes or dislikes them. She begins to describe a willingness and flexibility in attitude such that other truths or ways can take precedence over hers. She no longer turns away from the

other.<sup>101</sup> Perhaps this is a micro expression of the post-modern transrational peace as described by Dietrich (2013) and mentioned in earlier chapters. Both Lederach and Dietrich view conflict as a natural aspect of relationship, or as Lederach states: “Conflict is not disturbance, but an unchanging element of social life” (Dietrich, 2013, p. ii). Crime is viewed as an energetic disturbance: “By contrast, the Transrational approach views violent crimes as blockages of energy. A crime causes sorrow, fear, outrage, and anger. It is, therefore, a dysfunction in the flow of interhuman relationships” (Dietrich, 2013, p. 7). Participants in this study had similar views.

He goes further in the description of peace as a process of transformation:

Conflicts are a vital gift to every human context. Peace work is the art of constructively applying this gift’s creative energy toward rebuilding personal and social relations that are in a constant state of flux. It is, therefore, more of an artistic endeavour than a linear, formulaic accumulation of activities that aim at a specific goal (Dietrich, 2013, p. 7).

His idea of a constant state of flux in relationships matches the lens that both communities had, of the human being as a vehicle for creative energy. It also matches the views of Yogic and quantum scientists that human thoughts are linked by nature and represent a non-localised, connected process whereby the universe is made up of a growing compendium rather than individual bits of matter (Stapp, 1988, 2007; Bohm, 1994). Processes of meditation entrain the physiological system such that the human being’s thought and will power become fully conscious. Both Sahaj Marg and Māori participants suggest that fully conscious human beings can be in attunement with a transcendent source of higher Spiritual Values, and, in that relationship, embody and make manifest the spiritual values of love, unity and truth. They state clearly that human beings can be more

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<sup>101</sup> Whilst preparing this chapter I found myself reading Roman emperor Marcus Aurelius’ book *The Meditations*. Whilst the content was not immediately relevant, I found his view on human relationship interesting: “For we are made for cooperation, like feet, like hands, like eyelids, like the rows of the upper and lower teeth. To act against one another then is contrary to nature; and it is acting against one another to be vexed and turn away” (Book 2: 167 ACE). It seems that study participants are describing the practical capacity of not turning away from each other as they persevere through difficulties and conflict. <http://classics.mit.edu/Antoninus/meditations.html>

purposeful in their inner relationship with the transcendent source of Spiritual Values and if help is needed, they may ask (Stapp, 2007).<sup>102</sup>

And you know physicists talk about matter and energy but what happens in spirituality is we go back to something beyond all that which is not any more even vibration. It's the thing behind the vibration, the thing that Babuji in Sahaj Marg calls God. In yoga its called *akasha* or space—the thing that existed before a universe existed. That which physicists say was just space before the Big Bang occurred, you know, to create this universe. In Hinduism there's an amazing image that's always struck me as just the most beautiful explanation of this: that when the Lord breaths out a universe is created and when the Lord breaths in a universe is destroyed. So there's this substratum behind all of that that's beyond even the vibration, even the energy and it's the substratum of space (Australian Sahaj Marg, female participant, 2012).

According to participants, creativity is a natural; heart based, energetic visioning and emitting. Participants suggested that the possibilities for transformative change from this level of human consciousness were only beginning to manifest on the planet. Dietrich (2013) describes the potentiality thus:

...the consciousness of the peace worker and his or her connectedness with the universe and thus all aspects of potential conflict in each breath. The direction given to conflict with the next exhalation will depend on the person's inner peace, attitude, and perceptiveness. If, through this method, a conflict is changed in a way that brings relief and allows all parties to see new action choices, then the term elicitive conflict transformation is appropriate (p 7).

I do not know how this process works in situations of entrenched, extreme violence within patterns of genocide; although there are many cases of teachers from all traditions creating cosmic maps of peace for the benefit of ordinary people. It is said that these maps have been instrumental in the ending of the world wars but this is difficult to prove and ventures into a transversal space that this thesis and participant stories do not sketch out (Minor, 1978). However, from participants' examples, at the causal and beginning level of individual, family, village and community conflict, I can see the practicality of the transrational and spiritual values and the resulting multi-diverse expressions of

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<sup>102</sup> This book gives a comprehensive understanding of how human beings may experience themselves consciously in light of understandings about mind and quantum physics. We may indeed co-create through mind. It makes excellent reading.

brothersisterhood for peaceful relating. The practical implementation of fully conscious human beings applying only their mind and thought to the lens of peace was a transversal space of possibility, which these participants were offering and growing into. The Greek philosopher Plato, in his work Symposium (380 – 375 BC) on the nature and purpose of love and the concept of a platonic love, gives a glimpse of the possibilities of such a cosmic consciousness in the words attributed to the character, Socrates:

Remember how in that communion only, beholding beauty with the eye of the mind, he will be enabled to bring forth, not images of beauty, but realities (for he has hold not of an image but of a reality), and bringing forth and nourishing true virtue to become the friend of God and be immortal, if mortal man” (Jowatt, 2008, ebook).

All participants, from both groups, described a simple and transformative way of being in the world whereby the internal thoughts and attitudes naturally matched the external world of action and behavior. A continual process of awareness and attunement. Perhaps these are the practical underpinnings of Transrational peace. Perhaps this is the Truth that Derrida is asking us to consider. Not an external rule-bound truth but rather the inner integrity of truth that has a fluidity, flexibility and perhaps, nobility. Perhaps the physical embodiment of a level of truth known as *gnosis*. Perhaps the manifestation of a cosmic brain map and relational neuropsychobiology. Perhaps simply the knowledge contained, expressed and shared with each human being’s exhalation.

Within Māoridom an awareness of the importance of balance is viewed within small and larger timeframes (Moko Mead, 2005). According to Patterson (1992):

Such balancing of opposing qualities is a common and important feature of Māori values. One proverb commends a quality, another commends its opposite. Compared with an ethics based on rules, an ethics based on proverbs, traditional narratives or ideals is flexible, almost it sometimes seems to the point of inconsistency” (p 58).

In this view, opposites are kept in check and one is never allowed to dominate the other. I view this as a practical rendering of the spiritual value of truth whereby keeping the balance or *utu* is a practice occurring in the realm of the *atua* (ancestral forces), *Master* and *tūpuna* (ancestors) and paid attention to by human beings. Many Sahaj Marg participants described a state of non-judgement where they accepted and described, “It is as it is”

perhaps an indication and reflection of a character that has surrendered to the expression of Spiritual Values in their lives and inner attitudinal processes.

### **8:4 Suffering**

During the German invasion of France in 1940, Western philosopher and Lithuanian Jew, Emmanuel Levinas, was taken as a prisoner of war and placed in a camp near Hanover, Germany where he spent the remaining years of World War II. In this context, it is perhaps understandable that, for Levinas, the potential development of a true, moral consciousness required the crucible of suffering. Suffering, acting as the enzyme or the catalyst for the ego to awaken to its impotence; creating the possibility of a remembrance or recognition of the “Other” (L’Autre). What does this mean? What is this depth of suffering that creates vulnerability such that one begins to develop the capacity to feel for others? Sahaj Marg participant shares her understanding of suffering and its role in spiritual development:

Master was giving a talk and he said the friction he uses, the lubricant he uses to work on us, is friction. The reason being is that we need strengthening and nature strengthens us by giving us obstacles and that if we are going to be stronger in order to evolve our character to match our spiritual growth we need to be strengthened. So this whole thing of brotherhood for me is...it’s evolved because it’s not about everything being nice and sweet all the time at all and I used to think that. I used to think that brotherhood was about everybody being peaceful and harmonious and everything lovey-dovey all the time and it’s not. In fact it’s about being in brotherhood and having love there even in the midst of the conflict, so that the conflict doesn’t lead to further division, so that it’s a process that goes from conflict to harmony. It’s what Laliji said, you befriend your enemies (Australian Sahaj Marg, female participant, 2013).

From the Latin we discern that the word compassion means ‘to suffer alongside’ and perhaps it is this that hints at the mechanism and requirement for developing a Levinas consciousness of the ‘Other’. However, we may recall from earlier chapters that the Buddhist description of compassion involves behaviours concerned with the wellbeing of all, alongside attitudes of loving kindness and equanimity (Williams & Kabat-Zinn, 2013). As one Sahaj Marg participant reflected:

There so many people that you see daily walking up and down our road in South Africa - people going into bins and taking out things. I mean you see all of this. Yeah, you don't need to go and give all your clothes to a charitable organization because you can see people in front of you that are in need of it so you just give whatever naturally. But it's not like giving; it's like they become part of the family and now there's these guys that when they walk up and down the street they say hi to our children. So that heart to heart becoming more and more of a natural thing and somehow it's very disturbing when you don't see that being carried out more internally within the *abyasis* and functionaries where they put a hindrance towards everything because of the intellect and that stagnates everything so much. You know it's really a hindrance when you do things superficially - it's really, really a hindrance because you are stagnating *Master* in you (South African Sahaj Marg, male participant, 2012).

From this example, the communion with the *Master* is transformative and expresses itself in an attitude of care for those who are suffering.

For Levinas the feminine referred to a silent, hidden, mysterious presence, called forth during suffering and potentially present in all of humanity regardless of gender. It is the feminine that is described as the true home, a place of refuge and a place of welcome when we can feel ourselves as the 'the motherless child a long way from home.' This begins to have some possible links with Yogic scholarship, which also talks of the true home being within the human being. It may be accessed during silence and specifically through the practice of meditation (Vivekânanda, 1899).

Levinas explores the role of the ego, describing a process of reducing ego-based concern for self as the awareness of the 'Other' takes precedence. In this again there are similarities with Raja Yogic thought whereby the ego goes through a process of devolving until the true inner nature is revealed (Ram Chandra, 1991b). This concept is echoed within Islamic tradition and the Sufi school of thought associated with Muhyi al-Din Ibn al-Arabi, known in Sufism as 'the great shaykh' (al-Shaykh al-Akbar):

In other words, in this process of spiritual ascent there is *tahlil* and *tarkib*, dissolution and reconstitution, dissolution of all elements pertaining to the ego, and then reconstitution of this same ego, but on a higher plane: that of a conscious realization of one's actual nothingness. Higher the plane reached by essentialized consciousness, deeper is one's awareness of one's slavehood. In contrast to deconstruction, this dismantling of specificity and identity in the movement towards universality and

transcendent Selfhood is accompanied by a return to the specific identity, which is now vibrant with the spirit of the ultimate Self: the individual sees the Face of God everywhere, because of the very completeness of his self-effacement (Fusus al-Hikam, p. 35).

From this, internal transformation may be enacted a universal awareness and responsibility towards the other. Suffering when understood from a spiritual perspective can be transformational leading to deep universal ethics. Whereas suffering, without a spiritual basis or attitudinal awareness, may merely contribute to greater internal separation, pain, miserliness and competition.

### **8:5 Love/ Aroha**

Love is perhaps the most common Universal Spiritual Value of all.<sup>103</sup> However more simply, according Sahaj Marg Master Babuji: “Love is awakening to reality” (Powell, 1996,

p. 148). He continues to describe the process of inner development as: “trust crossing its own boundary becomes faith; faith when it crosses its own boundary becomes love; and love when it crosses its own boundary becomes surrender” (Powell, 1996, p. 149).

Within Sahaj Marg love was viewed as both a natural state but also one that required practice as participants began to receive and convey love as a conduit.<sup>113</sup> The Aristotelian and Sufi idea that it is more worthwhile to love than to be loved is useful in this context and Derrida (1997) encourages us to consider what love is:

The friend is the person who loves before being the person who is loved; he who loves before being the beloved, and perhaps (but this is something else, even though the consequence follows) he who loves before being loved (Derrida, 1997, p. 8).

This leads us to the Yogic idea that to love others we must first love the *Master* and from that communion is emitted as a natural outpouring freed from notions of ‘should’ and reciprocity. It takes us past the impossibility of the gift as identified by Derrida. Jacques

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<sup>103</sup> Love according to dictionaries is defined as a profoundly tender, passionate affection for another person, and as a feeling of warm, personal attachment or deep affection, as for a parent, child, or friend. Its synonyms include: tenderness, fondness, predilection, warmth, passion, and adoration. Love, affection, and devotion all mean a deep and enduring emotional regard, usually for another person. Love may apply to various kinds of regard; the charity of the Creator, reverent adoration toward God or toward a person, the relation of parent and

Derrida envisions the person who loves as developing a morality that is unconditional, combined with a natural state of being that is constant (Derrida, 1988; 1997).

How do we learn to love in such a desire less, open manner? As a female practitioner from Ireland stated:

It's created through finding love within us. If we find that divinity or that spark within ourselves ultimately we're not looking externally, we can only look internally. Therefore we can see love so therefore that's all we can express. Therefore we have brothersisterhood so really it has to be through meditation, through the process of looking within and finding divinity within. There is no other way (Sahaj Marg Irish, female participant, July, 2010).

Thesis participants use of the word 'spark' suggests to me an intermittent state of spiritual experience, whilst the neurogenetics of peace encourage the embodiment of a

child, the regard of friends for each other, romantic feelings for another person. Affection is a fondness for others that is enduring and tender, but calm. Devotion is an intense love and steadfast, enduring loyalty to a person; it may also imply consecration to a cause. Merriam-Webster's Dictionary (11<sup>th</sup> ed.).

<sup>113</sup> Love was not defined in the psychological or sociological manner according to bonds of affection and procreation. It was in the sense of the previously defined forceless force that enlivens all of life.

cosmic brain map that is attuned to a metaphorically constant, blazing fire of awareness, connection and communion (Davis, 2006; Prasada, 1912; Gupta, 1967; Mitchener, 1982).<sup>104</sup>

### **8:6 Unity/ Kotahitanga**

According to Jacques Derrida in *Politics of Friendship* (1997), friendship goes through an ordeal of stabilization, which requires time, and acquired capacity, cultivated aptitude, experimental faculty, and occurs against a backdrop of predisposition. This is useful when we consider the concept of faith and how it might develop. Whilst Sahaj Marg

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<sup>104</sup> It is worth noting that Yogic science acknowledges that it is the sacred fire or *agni* that creates Rishis or sages or Yogis. *Agni* being the creative energy held within the human being's heart.

participants did not speak directly about faith in their brothers and sisters, it was implicit in many of the interviews. As this participant with over forty year's meditation experience states:

I see growth. I've been in this long enough that I see a lot of change in people and so I do see changes. I do see people change - amazing changes... and so you know... But it's a process and like you can't do it over night. So of course we're still going to have conflicts and this and that but again it's learning more and more just to go back to your heart. For me I usually, it's like seeing that divinity or that spiritual essence in another person, and if I can remember to do that immediately then it really helps me not go into conflict or whatever. I think it becomes easier and easier to do (Sahaj Marg Canadian, female participant December, 2011).

In this excerpt, we see both a testimony to changes in others and a willingness to manage personal attitudes and behavior. She also highlights the remembering and attunement to a cosmic brain map of spiritual values that is enlivened by the spiritual heart. This explanation indicates there is a natural relating to each other based on values of unity and reciprocity. Montaigne distinguishes such a communion as a 'great friendship':

Our souls were yoked together in such unity, and contemplated each other so ardent an affection, and with the same affection revealed each to each other right down to the very entrails, that not only did I know his mind so well as I knew my own but I would have entrusted myself to him with greater assurance than to myself (Derrida, 1987, p. 213).

For these participants it was as if such a friendship was experienced through the relational medium of *Master*. Sahaj Marg participants alluded to the importance of the ashram as a place of communion.

You know this was my first bhandara and I was for the first time seeing these people and the ashram. I was closed you know and everything was too different for me. I was just wondering because I didn't get anything at first. But after a few days some energy makes me want to attach to something, to receive and to get. It is a craving. Everything was new for me. That growth in people. We were there for the same reason and it was astonishing (Sahaj Marg Iranian female participant, 2013).

In a similar way the *marae* for Māori could be considered a place of safe haven or as Ranginui Walker (1977, p. 28-29 cited in Petterson, 1992) states:

The marae is central to the concept of Māoritanga. Māoritanga consists of an acknowledgement and pride in one's identity as a Māori. While Māoritanga has a physical base in ethnic identity, it also has a spiritual and emotional base derived from the ancestral culture of the Māori. Māori oratory, language, values and social etiquette are given their fullest expression in the marae setting at tangi (funerals) and hui (meetings) (p 79).

According to participants, the *wharenui* (meeting house) and *marae* (place to gather together) is the *whare takata* (womb) of *Papatūānuku* the embodiment of 'earth as mother'. They shared that there is no safer place than being protected and nurtured by ones tūpuna or ancestor. Perhaps similarly within the ashram Sahaj Marg practitioners describe being able to fully express themselves as a multidimensional consciousness. It was common in this study to hear stories like the following:

There's a time and a place for everything and justice isn't in the immediate cause and effect of this life and that's what I had to learn. The *bhoga* goes back over lifetimes and something that may happen to me now may be the result of ten life time's ago. So how can I possibly understand that and think that what's happening in the moment is unjust - I really don't know. It took a long time to work through that stuff because anything that happens to us is as a result of our samskara. To get to that level of acceptance and to accept not being resentful for wrongs done by others, to accept that they really are there for our benefit to release stuff, to let go of stuff took a long time for me. And only going through these processes with individuals did it happen. I can look back over my life and I can see key individuals all through my life that that's happened with. And to know to be just so amazingly thankful to all of them, especially the ones that gave me the hardest time, because if it wasn't for them I wouldn't have gone through this process. I wouldn't have got to where I stop pointing the finger at other people and blaming other people. Started just accepting how I respond, do I react or do I just absorb and respond and grow and get stronger and continue to love as much as possible unconditionally no matter who is doing what and to me. You know the brotherhood is not always about having these situations in the world because I think, as we grow, *Master* gives us more and more to deal with. He strengthens us more and more, so it's not like I expect that for ever and ever I'm going to have some superstar beautiful fairy tale land wonderful state of harmony with every human being I ever met. Not at all. But it's in my attitude; it's in my feeling inside that the brotherhood is. Not in anyone else's behavior and that's what's changed (Sahaj Marg Australian, female participant, December 2012).

From this quote, we see that the experiences of relatedness and relationship are crucial in developing unity conducive to a practical expression of spiritual values. It involves a transformational process of inner attitudes and use of mind. There is reduced communion with qualities of competition, judgement, prejudice and fear.

### **8:7 Internal Presence**

The following male practitioner from India described a process of beginning to have faith in each other's connection with the *Master* which allowed the possible seeds of Montaigne's 'great friendship' albeit not limited to one person:

For me it's something that binds despite the differences. You know even if you are born to the same parents you all still have differences but that binds you, actually, that feeling you are part of brothers and sisters. In a family it is easy to identify but [harder] when it comes to the outside world with different colours and cultures. All sorts of things being different. The concept of the spirituality is that it actually brings us all together. Just one somebody out there to whom we all belong to (Sahaj Marg focus group, male participant, November, 2011).

The physical form of the master allowed the beginning of an internal recognition and connection to the 'Self' as unity. How does such a connection with unity arise within a human being? According to one Sahaj Marg practitioner:

For me it is elevating us to that consciousness where the oneness is experienced because of our spiritual practice of sadhana. We stop fighting the small things. Then only can we feel real oneness when we lead a simple life and release expectations and all that that is only possible by practising sincerely and it may not be Sahaj Marg (Sahaj Marg Indian, female participant, November, 2011).

What is the elevation of consciousness that is required to develop the core value of unity? I wonder whether it is the attitude of brother-sisterhood combined with a willingness to connect rather than separate. Or perhaps it is the willingness to let go of the disillusioned self and step into a powerful co-creatorship with the inner presence (Rajagopalachari, 2008).

As another practitioner shared:

To add to what has been said I think it's the word itself

'brotherhood'. It is that you are to live your life with fellow human beings without any kind of prejudice or segregation or compartmentalization of God's creation - so you forget yourself, you think of others but also when you think about others you don't think about the differences you just look at Brotherhood- the unification of us all being created by the Master. I guess that's what I see - that our creator is one, so we are all brothers (Sahaj Marg focus group, male participant, November, 2011).

One Philippine participant said that in her language spiritual brotherhood transcribed as: "Brothers and sisters in mind and heart."

### **8:8 Unbounded Choice**

One interpretation of the analysis of my research involving these communities, would be that the manifestation of universal values rested upon the development of internal thoughts, attitudes and lifestyle practices that demonstrated tolerance, concern, care and awareness. As current master, Shri Parthasarathi Rajagopalachari (2012) teaches:

Resistance to change is caused by fear and prejudice. Prejudice is the resistance to a change in values. We resist the change in others; rather, we refuse to perceive such change. Since our views become fixed, our own progress is adversely affected. My Master has cautioned us that prejudice is one of the most harmful things on the spiritual path. Why is this so? It is because prejudice is a mental phenomenon. The power of the mind, thought power, is the highest power, the most potent power, available to man. When we use this power in a negative way to oppose change in others or ourselves, that is, when we yield to prejudice, we are using the power of thought in the wrong way. The greatest alertness is therefore necessary to avoid prejudice (p 287).

Many are aware of the common prejudices related to caste, colour, race, age disability and gender but in this excerpt, we are encouraged to go into the internal world of thought. We recognize that thought has a creative, manifesting power. For one male participant:

Master kind of opened my eyes because I always thought of it as a brotherhood. He said this 'Sahaj Marg brotherhood - you're actually excluding the rest of the world'. Then I kind of realized how my thinking was and it's really about a brotherhood where there is no boundary; everybody is your brother or sister, whereas in a normal brotherhood you belong to the same mother or father

and you are a brother or sister but here everyone is just humans (Sahaj Marg focus group, male participant, November, 2011).

In this example we see how thought has the capacity to exclude and promote prejudice even when we consider ourselves open minded. To repeat: “then I kind of realized how my thinking was and it’s really about brotherhood where there is no boundary”. He underlines how thought creates attitude that in turn creates action and behaviour. The Yogic concept of internal self-mastery joins with Levinas in the recognition of the power of the inner world. This potentially adds a requirement of infinite responsibility to any proposed future ethics. As another practitioner stated:

But the brotherhood comes in two things for me. It comes in identifying with the oneness, the vibration of love, and the vibration of all being the same. Whilst accepting and celebrating the differences that we have on the outside where we’re all different - acknowledging that through those differences we (are) all help each other and support each other because what your strengths are maybe [are] my weaknesses and vice versa (Sahaj Marg Irish, female participant July, 2010).

However, change does not rest upon this alone; it required self-control and responsible exercise of willpower, focus and choice. In the words of another participant:

Babuji sent out for the milk and he didn’t really have the money but he gave the milk. And that’s what we have to do to our brother man. We are our brother’s keeper. We are responsible for one another and we have to take that attitude on a day-to-day basis. We are responsible. We are the mother. We are the father. We are the son. We have to start taking responsibility (Hopi First Nations/ Irish, male participant, July 2013, Sahaj Marg archive material).

In this excerpt, the example of the teacher encourages an understanding of relating which is beyond what the household can easily share and is an attitude of universal hospitality and trust (Derrida, 1997). The participant continues:

I think in Sahaj Marg or not in Sahaj Marg, we are all brothers and sisters...We’re in the boat together. And if you read the history in all Hindu books you will find that we go into a 25,000 year cycle.

And we’re in the boat so it is *all* of our responsibility that *everybody* in the boat moves along (Sahaj Marg Hopi First Nations/ Irish, male participant, July 2013, Sahaj Marg archive material).

Again, this illustrates the themes of one family and the implications of personal behavior and life style choices. In this, there is an awareness of shared consciousness among all of humanity and the need to step into a willingness to embody the highest spiritual values and the highest notions of peace that we can imagine. Another participant continues this theme by discussing the need for humanity to exercise its capacity to use will power and create change:

Willful restraint. We realize that the population is too great. What are we doing creating two babies, three babies, four, five babies per family? What are we doing using gas guzzling cars and going down to get a newspaper? We can take a bicycle. There are very simple adjustments that we can make on a very human local level which are wise to do. Whether you are an *abhyasi* or not is not the issue. I personally don't want to wind all this up in Sahaj Marg, because what you're talking about is humanity, which is the whole group. It's not just this or that. Don't join Sahaj Marg to change the world. Join Sahaj Marg to change yourself. *You* changing will change the world... and whether you've done it through Sahaj Marg or through some Sufi mystic, it doesn't matter. If it changes the world for the good - good. If it doesn't, it's not so good (Sahaj Marg English, male participant, July 2013, Sahaj Marg archived material).

Perhaps we can see that character development requires determination and the development of an internal integrity that resonates with core values. However, there is still use of the language of binaries and 'should'. An indigenous relating encourages more flexibility, subtle inner attunement and awareness of balance. Change emerges naturally from an inner becoming alongside practices of sustainability and balance. It is a practical emitting from a peaceful heart, which is itself nourished by blissful embodied presence.

Participants were asked what the world might seem like if enough human beings decided to evolve the best of themselves in thought, word and deed. One participant shared her vision:

We'd see a very calm, easy, relaxed non-competitive, harmonious, loving society. Yeah, we'd just see oneness. For example, where people who are of maybe higher intelligence would be using that intelligence for humanity - for other beings. People who had power would be using that to help others not for self-gain. So we'd see cooperation and the word harmony really is very nice. What's the opposite of cacophony- Harmonic existence? (Sahaj Marg Irish, female participant, July, 2010).

A harmonic existence I suspect is one where human beings experience a sensitivity to feeling and subtle resonance via the spiritual heart, which in turn guides their choices and actions in life. If this is the case and if we accept, the life experience of this heterogeneous group of participants then there is much research remaining to be done within the ‘transversal space’ of human subtle awareness and peace.

According to these participants, it is possible to evolve into a human being that is able to tolerate and care for all others, regardless of identities or other forms of social connection. They discuss the process of developing attitudes such as acceptance, tolerance and self-responsibility. None of these participants claimed that it was easy:

I think people are too unrealistic about this all. They say hand it over to *Master*. Oh right, well if you’ve handed it over to Master – why do you still think like that? [prejudiced] So why are your actions like that? Just hand it over to *Master*? Like this... and I try to tell them that the reality is we can’t just hand it over to *Master* [to do]. Because if we could just hand it over to *Master* then why would we be here? [human beings] (Sahaj Marg, female participant, 2012).

It appeared to require dedicated and systematic exposure to practices that deepened one’s awareness of self as connected and in relationship with the ‘Other’. It required development of an attitude that was willing to recognize and reduce internal and external judgement and prejudice. Such a creation of spiritual brother-sisterhood appeared to rest upon a platform of faith and love and, for Sahaj Marg participants, a dedication to the internal *Master* and external master. For Māori participants it was predicated upon a deep understanding of the natural world including the relationship with the invisible ancestral realm.

A practical spirituality, anchored in processes of spiritual development and nested in a world of social relatedness and connection, may very well offer the key to human beings evolving to a higher level of communion and ethical relating with one other. It may offer the capacity to create the practical embodiment required for an expansion of our understanding of the latent possibility contained within elicitive, conflict transformation processes.

According to this study it is both an individual's reckoning with processes of self-awareness, reflection and willingness to make changes, alongside a connectivity and relationship with the 'Other' and, indeed, all others. Participants from both groups suggest an intimate and personal relationship with a transcendent 'Other' such that a natural expression and value based character emerges.

It seems that human beings can evolve into a nobler expression of self. A self which nurtures and enlivens the expression of life through the metaphysical 'Other' and of course 'the each other' that we encounter moment-by-moment in our everyday lives.

### **8:9 Conclusion**

This chapter has examined the participant's narratives and themes through the lens of relationship. I have attempted to view through the relational possibilities, towards a potential for peace according to Derrida, Levinas and Yogic scientists.

In the following chapter, I refocus the lens on the more subtle aspects of human spirituality as shared by these participants.

## **Chapter Nine: Inner Essence, Presence and Spirituality**

### **9:1 Summary**

The purpose of this research was to explore whether brother-sisterhood immersed in spirituality offered anything practical for the individual person and the communities in which they were living.

What we can see from previous chapters is that participants from both groups had developed a spiritual practice, which allowed them to experience themselves as much more than a physical form. In this process they had gone on to connect with each other and their community in natural ways. There were capacities that had developed, mediated through the inner world and there were behaviours visible in the outer. For all of the participants' in this study these changes were mediated by the acceptance of a higher power/ source and a connection to something that was beyond materiality. Each participant had attitudes of

gratitude, service, humility and discipline. The universal frequencies and values of unity, truth and love were important to all participants, as was service and relating to each other in a correct way.

This chapter views the material shared through the lens of essence, presence and the possible implications for peace.

## **9:2 Natural Connection**

We recall from earlier chapters that all of the participants in all of the interviews had the characteristics of: spirituality, inner reality, energy and transcendence as identified by other research in the field of health science (Chui et al., 2004). In addition, they all had an understanding of spiritual brother-sisterhood as a universal concept encompassing all of life's creation (Wilber, 2000).

From the Sahaj Marg and Māori participants themes were identified and collapsed together into conceptual frameworks (see, Table 5). These conceptual frameworks provide the base for the emergence of an awareness of presence and essence. For all participants this was natural and very difficult to speak about. For many the invitation to speak was counter to years of prejudice and ridicule by those in the church and social groups:

It's the way we've been conditioned that we don't think we have it. Because we can't physically see it, we can't smell it. You can't touch it or anything. So you think you don't have something. But you know [that you have it]. I was just thinking when you asked what spirituality means. And boom - it went straight in there [pointing to heart space]. This is the difference between spirituality and its all about the ache that's there. You know why we don't invest as much time into our children especially in Sahaj Marg as we do with the adults. We go through all of this [pain]. Why would we want our kids to go through it? But perhaps it is something they need to go through (Sahaj Marg, female participant, 2012).

All participants viewed spiritual brother-sisterhood as a development of a universal consciousness of connection between all of life. This was in accordance with the literature on Māori spirituality (Robinson, 2005; Mark & Lyon, 2010; Marsden, 2003) and Yogic philosophy (Rajagopalachari, 2012; Wilber, 2000). It was a relationship beyond bloodline.

**Table 5: Novel Themes and conceptual frames from the descriptive analysis of Sahaj Marg and Māori participant data.**

Sahaj Marg Participants	Māori Participants	Conceptual Frame
Awakening & recognition	Holistic selfknowledge (including: self as sacred, <i>wairua</i> , <i>aroha</i> , and <i>mana</i> )	Underlying recognition and experience of self and others as spiritual ( <i>Samatvam</i> )
Master as an inner transcendent relationship with source	Relationship with other realms via <i>tūpuna</i> and <i>atua</i>	Underlying connection to <i>Master</i> , <i>atua</i> and <i>tūpuna</i> .
Ten maxims	<i>Tikanga</i> and practices of hospitality	Development of a universal consciousness of connection including inanimate and animate objects
Importance of a relational connection with brothers and sisters	Universal humanity hood	Spiritual brothersisterhood as a way of being in the world, inner & outer ( <i>vasudeiva kutumbakam</i> )

All participants knew themselves as each having an individual consciousness with an awareness or realisation of self as more than body and mind; i.e., that was more than physical, psychological or behavioural processes. All gave examples of a self which included *wairua* (spirit) and unseen energies. This was in keeping with the view of the body as holistic and made up of physical and non-physical sheaths as outlined in Yogic and Māori sacred and philosophical texts (Singh, 1918; Robinson, 2005).

All Sahaj Marg and Māori participants shared stories about the ways in which they awakened to the reality that they were much more than physical form. For some this was a knowing from childhood whereby they would have experiences of a world that others around them could not see:

*I feel like Master has been working on me or the divine has been working on me for eons of time. I mean ever since I can remember. As a small kid 7/8 years old I would be under my blanket and I used to think of all the hospitals that I knew of. You*

know how parents talk about hospitals: that aunty went to that hospital. And hospitals were something that I would look at: people who are sick and dying in there. From a very young age I used to always pray that these hospitals and that all the people that are in these hospitals are getting better and that God is helping them. And every year from a very little kid up until I was 15 /16 years old every year during July/ August I used to have very big lumps everywhere on my body. I could not go to school for about a week or two weeks or so. We always went to a doctor but he could never find the fault and when I used to sleep in bed and I used to close my eyes to sleep and I could always every year feel this expansion in myself. You know when you sit in meditation now and when you feel that expansion you feel like you growing like bigger and bigger and bigger. Every year that used to happen to me and I couldn't understand for the life of myself why this was happening. Only when I came to Sahaj Marg and when I started experiencing these things during meditation did I realize that the divine was all the time with me and there was a special purpose for us (South African Sahaj Marg, male participant, 2012).

For others it was a heart feeling of deep compassion and an internal world mediated by gratitude, prayer and a feeling of the divine love. For many of them this was not always well received by the adults or other people around them. Māori participants found that their own culture was open to concepts and practices inclusive of the expression of spiritual brother-sisterhood yet the dominant Pākehā culture was not. Most study participants had experienced repression of their spiritual awareness through social forces (see Chapter Seven).

As they matured into adulthood participants found practices that nourished this awareness. For Māori participants this was based around connection to *tūpuna* (ancestors), *whānau* (family), *tikanga* (customary protocols) and community. For Sahaj Marg practitioners it was a deep connection to the *Master* and the teachings and presence of their teacher, Shri Parthasarathi Rajagopalachari.

For some in Sahaj Marg this awareness developed gradually as a process of *sadhana* (spiritual practice), meditation, refining processes and exposure to their *Master*. As this awareness developed, they began to have experiences and glimpses of something that they identified as spiritual heart.

The method of our meditation has described it very well - it is so light, it is so divine... yes beyond words beyond everything. I even heard of one scientist from America who write book and

even the name of the book very good. The matrix. From the love thing extended the network or the spider web (Chinese Sahaj Marg, female participant, 2012).

The practical knowledge and awareness of oneself as a sacred, energetic being was seen as the first step towards being able to truly connect with others. In this space *whānau* (family) was not based on genetics but rather the inner connection and recognition of the 'Other':

My understanding about who I am as a whole intrinsic sacred being - only then can I share, can I reconnect with others. Because if you are fragmented and don't know who you are- how can you share, how can you connect? Because if you're always looking for external feedback about who you are- how can you give? You can only really give once you know yourself (Māori, female participant, 2012).

### **9:3 Natural Connection between Self and Each Other**

Eastern and Western traditions, both ancient and modern, describe an underlying field of spiritual potentiality, which is independent, and devoid of discrete activities, an allpervasive: "immanent and transcendent Ground of all being" (Wilber, 1999, p. 57). Modern sciences, such as quantum mechanics and interpersonal neurobiology, now describe the foundations of the material world as relational and non-material (Capra, 1982; Dennis, 2010; Thaheld, 2001; Richards, Standish, & Johnston, 2000; Graf, 2000), with quantum physics revealing a single, universal, non-material, unified field underlying, giving rise to, and governing, the classical or material universe (Hagelin, 1998; Byrd, 1988; Braud, 1992). According to the experimental work of Graf (2000) and others it seems that human beings can experience practically any aspect of the world around them without sensory contact:

When experiencing the mind of other individuals, some subjects report a loosening and melting of the boundaries of the body ego and a sense of merging with another person in unity and oneness, while others achieve a sense of complete identification to the point of losing awareness of their own identity. In still deeper altered states some individuals can expand their consciousness to an extent where it encompasses the totality of life on the planet, and seems to extend outward into the cosmos (Lazlo, 2004, p. 33).

Grinberg-Zylberbaum, Delaflor & Arellano (1992) conducted fifty experiments on human transpersonal transference. Two people meditated together deeply for twenty minutes and then were placed separately in sound-proofed and electromagnetically shielded Faraday cages. They were asked to meditate and relax deeply. One received an electric shock at random intervals whilst the other did not. They were instructed to feel the presence of the other. Their electroencephalography records were found to be synchronised. This was not the case with the control group who had not previously interacted. It seems that spirituality is biologically and relationally mediated and that presence is non-local. Quantum physicist Henry Stapp (1988) argues:

The new physics presents prima facie evidence that our human thoughts are linked to nature by nonlocal connections: what a person chooses to do in one region seems immediately to affect what is true elsewhere in the universe. This non-local aspect can be understood by conceiving the universe to be not a collection of tiny bits of matter, but rather a growing compendium of 'bits of information' (p 104).

Physicist Jeffery Satinover, working from the condensed matter physics laboratory at Nice University, France, argues: "there is essentially nothing to matter whatsoever - it's completely insubstantial. The most solid thing you could say about all this insubstantial matter is that it's more like a thought, it's like a concentrated bit of information" (cited in Arntz et al., 2005, p. 37). A recent dissertation by Oates (2010) gives some practical outcomes of such an understanding of the human beings capability of co-creation through the medium of 'presence' and a shared thought. His work on a consciousness-based interpretation of quantum mechanics, through the comparison of what had been often called conventional quantum mechanics with Maharishi Mahesh Yogi's self-interacting dynamics of consciousness, suggests:

Maharishi's theories were shown to be based, not on individual consciousness, but rather on an unbounded, omnipresent *field* of consciousness (like the gravitational field or the electromagnetic field), which, by virtue of its nature as consciousness, knows itself, thus stirring up fluctuations or vibrations in the abstract field of consciousness that appear first as subtle sound and then as 'material particles' (Oates, 2010, p. 2).

He concludes that: i) quantum mechanics and the Maharishi's self-interacting dynamics appeared to describe the same underlying reality; ii) that aspects of quantum

mechanics that appeared as unresolvable conundrums, when viewed from the materialist perspective, appeared natural, and even necessary, from a consciousness-based perspective; and iii) that the Maharishi's self-interacting dynamics of consciousness was a comprehensive and persuasive interpretation of quantum mechanics; a consciousness-based interpretation including the motion and interactions of individual quanta.

If we understand each participant in this thesis as an 'individual quanta' or 'element of energy in a quantum field' then the types of experiences that participants in this study share, seem very natural. In the past these types of human experiences, as described by participants, have been hidden due to self-doubt and fear of punishment (Levack, 2013).<sup>105</sup>

How powerful are 'individual quanta' in creating change? A 1981 study of the Maharishi meditation effect<sup>106</sup> on twenty-four United States cities demonstrated that whenever 1% of the population was carrying out regular transcendental meditation the crime rate dropped 24%. In a follow up study with similar protocols, 48 cities achieved a 22% decrease in crime compared to an increase of 2% in the control cities (Dillbeck et al., 1981). Orme-Johnson et al., 1988 investigated the Maharishi effect in the Middle East. In this twomonth study, transcendental meditators assembled in Israel for daily meditation. They maintained the protocol of 1% of the population meditating during a 13 day 'experiment within an experiment' period. The conflict in the area was tracked daily during that time. Results showed a correlation between numbers meditating and conflict. On the days that there were 197 people meditating the war deaths in Lebanon fell by 76% and total crime, traffic accidents and fires all decreased. Confounding factors such as weekend, holiday and weather conditions were controlled for (Orme-Johnson, et al., 1988).

The idea, that a number of human beings or 'individual quanta' sharing the one peaceful loci of focus, in this case the use of a mantra,<sup>107</sup> can create a change in the field or the behaviours of other human beings in the environments around them, is in my view extraordinary. In this it is possible to see the Ghandian perspective 'of be the change you

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<sup>105</sup> If we recall European history, many of those with psi-abilities, or even knowledge of the medical properties of plants, were killed during the reformation by the Christian church. In Europe and North America the witch hunts during the Reformation and Thirty Years' War, 1480 to 1750, resulted in an estimated 40,000 to 60,000 executions (Levack, 2013, p. 1).

<sup>106</sup> The studies upon the group effect of transcendental meditation, as taught by the Maharishi Mahesh in the 1970s, clearly demonstrated an influence by human beings meditating together and the outer environment consisting of other human beings engaged in everyday activities (Maharishi effect).

<sup>107</sup> A mantra is a form of meditation that focuses the mind through sound and through word.<sup>117</sup>

wish to see' amplified many times. Perhaps demonstrating a metaphorical 'viral aspect' consistent with the idea that a quantum field is connected and communicative (Stapp, 2007).

Early researchers on quantum theory, David Bohm and Karl Pribram, developed the notion of the holonomic brain and the unified and connective nature of human thought (Pribram, 2013). In this there was the idea that there was a relationship between what we ordinarily experience, alongside the implicate or enfolded in which all things are spread or distributed. Research indicates that empty space is in fact a magnetic field of information, exchanging energy. We are part of this magnetic exchange of information (Dennis, 2010). Thus, the subatomic world is an entanglement of interconnected energy within a field of continuous flux and constant exchange and adjustment to forces of information (Dennis, 2010; Prajnananda, 1971; Swahananda, 1984).

Yogic science invites us to wake up and remember that we too are subatomic in our make-up and that our conscious and unconscious minds are connected, creating and influencing an ever present and moving whole (Bahudur, 1978; Dennis, 2010; Hollingsworth, 2006). The current challenge for 'individual quanta' according to participants in my thesis, was to develop the capacity to connect with *Master*, *tūpuna* and *atua* without any idea of prejudice or fear in their field of consciousness.

Participants in this study were sensitive with an awareness of themselves as both 'one' and 'separate'. Both groups had practices of pure spirituality leading to an automatic and practical expression. From the themes within this thesis 'individual quanta' (or human beings that have developed a consciousness of connection and awareness) were often sensitive to the unseen world. Anthropologist Margaret Mead states that 'sensitive' individuals have historically kept a low profile in their communities. This is particularly true within the Aotearoa New Zealand context. According to Māori psychologist Donna Awatere: "white psychiatric prisons are full of Māori who 'see' people. To see wairua, one's tūpuna, is to live one's whakapapa. And yet even in this small matter the white response is overkill. Lock it up. Put them away" (1983, p. 13 cited in Patterson 1992, p. 79).

Mead returns to this conversation by highlighting that: i) practitioners may have very little control or understanding of their special capabilities, and ii) there may be a

‘fluctuating and unpredictable’ characteristic to such capabilities (cited in Targ & Puthoff, 2005). The Yogic culture identifies and describes these psi-capabilities as representing a certain stage of spiritual growth; determined by universal laws of cause and effect in their manifestation (Prabhavananda, 2012; Prabhupada, 1972). Furthermore such capabilities were said to disappear at certain stages of advance (Prasada, 1912). Mead highlights that psi-capabilities may be scientifically understood and are not benefited by a belief in life after death, or belief in a supernatural or transcendent superpower (Mead, 1961).<sup>108</sup>

I will now ground these ideas back to the words and themes shared by participants (Charmaz, 2000; Chenail, 1995). It seems trite to me to separate participant’s experience of ‘presence’ and ‘essence’ as ‘psi capabilities’. Rather presence was a natural, spontaneous and relaxed happening within the lives of the participants. There was no trying, or goal setting. Instead it was another aspect of self that seemed almost automatic in its expression (for example, like breathing). Vivekânanda (2012):

...there is such a thing as instinct in us, which we have in common with the animals, a reflex mechanical movement of the body. There is again a higher form of guidance, which we call reason, when the intellect obtains facts and then generalizes them. There is still a higher form of knowledge which we call inspiration, which does not reason, but knows things by flashes (p 82).

For the Sahaj Marg group the heart experiences and inner glimpses were described as 'beyond words' and 'divine'. The process of the heart opening led to a natural way of being in relationship and connection that was beyond any bonds of genetics:

To me spiritual brotherhood is a very beautiful thing. Today, there are too much barriers between human beings, religion, country border, languages, culture and race. When we develop spiritual brotherhood, all barriers are gone, we only have the love between brothers and sisters and we can feel inside from the heart beyond the words (Vietnamese Sahaj Marg, female participant, 2012).

There were many examples of happenings that allowed material life and the carrying out of one’s duty to happen smoothly. This natural way of connecting and being

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<sup>108</sup> Mann and Jaye (2007) provide a useful discussion on the debates raging around whether to accept or reject parapsychology. They summarize the evidence: “...it is largely determined by a priori assumptions about whether it is reasonable or not to consider the probability that parapsychological experiences exist or not” (p 193). It is not the purpose of this thesis to enter into this debate.

with others is described as becoming so ordinary, occurring without any fuss in all areas and aspects of a person's life. This Sahaj Marg physiotherapist shares an example of this:

I was in Bangalore and Master called me to come and care for him. I didn't have enough money for a ticket so I borrowed 1000 rupees from a brother and I went straight away to the railway station. When I got there I unexpectedly met a brother who asked me what I was doing and I explained. He said, "I have a ticket here for Chennai that I was going to cancel but you take it and you just go" (Indian Sahaj Marg, female participant, 2012).

If we know anything about the size of the crowds and the general noise of Bangalore Central train station then this example becomes even more remarkable. It is difficult in such a large, crowded environment providing a transportation depot for the third largest city in India (population 8.5 million, 2011 Census), to even imagine the possibility of this natural, unplanned meeting.

According to Vivekânanda, an integrated mind receives intuitive knowledge via inspirational flashes that should always be for the good of the world, perfectly unselfish and not contradicting reason. (1923, p. 82). One aspect of the open heart according to Sahaj Marg participants was an intuitive way of problem solving and communicating. They described practising in groups a way of communication that was devoid of self-interest and of any limiting thoughts about the other:

Every time when we sat during the International Scholarship Training Programme training when we would have a discussion we would close our eyes. And we would connect in with each other. It's like being more of a family than you can ever imagine. Every time I think about our togetherness - it feels like you've got the sun, you've got the moon and that represents like Master and he's somehow dispersed everybody and we are so much connected. We are so much connected with each other that we don't even know (South African Sahaj Marg, male participant, 2012).

Māori participants also commented on a form of awareness that was silent and intuitive. This form of communication could be between whole groups at a time and was part of a felt world. This reality was agreed upon by all focus group members as being a part of the way in which they experienced being involved in an expanded consciousness.

Gatherings on the *marae* for Māori, and *bhandara* for Sahaj Marg participants, were situations where participants naturally learnt how to reduce the barriers created by the mind and the deep fears that separated one from another:

At a Celebration in the enjoying of ourselves and in the divine spark we see our brothers and sisters from many cultures there. We just happen to love to share. You know it is almost like they reflect it back to us and we reflect it back to them so we become like little reflectors to one another. I start to shine a little bit - they start to shine a little bit and we start to shine. And we smile towards one another and we greet one another and for no reason we smile at one another. And the bigger the better it seems. It doesn't matter if it's 100 people or 10,000 people - it could be 50 - 100,000 people but the thing about Sahaj Marg is it doesn't matter (Australian Sahaj Marg, male participant, 2012).

For both groups this way of connecting was mediated by being open. Smiling for no reason and with no expectation of the other was viewed as a liberating experience. Many people said they did not realise that they were smiling; they just felt a sense of lightweightless inside. According to research by Eckman, Davidson, & Frissen (1990) there are two classes of smiles. Genuine smiles of pleasure occur spontaneously during positive times together and involve the orbicularis muscle. Polite smiles do not involve this muscle. What is interesting is that people can predict a genuine smile and have changes in brain electromyography readings *before* they see another person's smile (Heery & Crossley, 2013). It is not triggered by social mimicking or responding, it is natural. Perhaps this helps explain this participant's experience of smiling for no reason. Perhaps also it suggests a deeper neurological relating between Sahaj Marg participants during seminars and *bhandara* (celebrations).

As we recall there were many examples during Sahaj Marg training seminars, where small group exercises and discussion groups were held with participants from around the world. Whilst English was spoken, it was at the level of the least fluent speaker and the primary language was heart-to-heart mediated through presence, connection to the unifying principle of *Master* and silence. Many participants commented on how their capacity to both communicate and understand the other's foreign language was enhanced and natural within the atmosphere of a seminar. This phenomenon was common place:

I see what my beloved *Master*, what he is doing with all of us.  
Like 300,000 people from one hundred countries, from all

religions, from all languages...what is he doing? He united us in one family and we are happy to see each other, we are happy together, we are happy to cook together, eat together, travel together, sleep together, celebrate together, read together, discover something and learn together (Russian Sahaj Marg, female participant, 2012).

It seems for these participants natural practices of connection led to enhanced presence and behaviours of cooperation. These capacities were conveyed and entrained and practiced in a variety of social settings.

One Sahaj Marg participant shared how she had learnt minimal conversational Telugu as a young person and twenty years later she was asked to speak to a Telugu audience (no previous arrangement to do so) and somehow was able to speak Telugu fluently for two hours on the topic of spirituality. If asked to do so now, she would not have that capacity. All participants had the notion that this way of knowing was natural although many had experienced societal pressure inhibiting their capacities in this area.

#### **9:4 Inner Essence, Communion and Awareness**

For all participants the unseen world was a reality that was in their awareness simultaneously with their awareness of the material world:

For myself I feel the link with my ancestors. One of the things is a very strong relationship with the spiritual past which is very much alive for the blood in my veins. For my *whānau* [family] it is an important part of who they are and it is indigenous (Māori, male participant, 2012).

For many Māori and for these participants, *tupuna* are embodied beings. They exist in realms separate yet connected to the Earth. It is believed that they observe us and assist with signs and support. For Māori the connection with *tūpuna* is experienced as real - not as story or myth. *Tūpuna* are those that have been related by bloodline and for this study's participants' those who are related by *wairua* or similar resonance. The *tūpuna* nourish, guide, observe, maintain cosmic balance and assist in bringing human beings back into line when their transgressions are no longer permissible (this occurs at a collective and an individual level). At a metaphorical level the *tūpuna* are like a collective, sacred protective presence surrounding *Papatūānuku* (mother earth) (Robinson, 2005).

All Māori participants extended these notions of relationship towards *tūpuna* as the spiritual indications; feelings or signs that life gives:

Not knowing why we do the things that we do but knowing that we have to do them. Knowing that feeling of - 'I don't want to go here but I have to'. Listening to those calls, listening to what's behind that and doing it for whatever reason but following through with those things. You might not initially know what purpose of doing those things are but there is a reason. But you do that in the *tikanga* [customary protocols] and where *tikanga* comes in is that it's what guides you in how you do those things safely and correctly or how you are supposed to do it (Māori, female participant, 2012).

In this example we may see trust becoming faith, becoming love, becoming surrender (Powell, 1996). Their spiritual waters or *tūpuna* were also those that shared the same heart or the same vibration.

Sahaj Marg practitioners were connected naturally with the invisible realms through the *Master* and all Yogis past and present. From a logical perspective this may include all future Yogis because the heart, *wairua* (spirit), is beyond space and time. This too, when it is deeply realized, influences ways of conduct on the planet. When this presence was felt deeply in the heart, practitioners appeared to wake up to a greater responsibility. In addition, the masters of Sahaj Marg transmit *pranahuti* (life essence) which is a subtle essence believed to be beyond any sense of form, time or space.

This is where the Masters are so important because it is going back to beyond anything material. Because for me energy is still the material world, its still *maya* [illusion], its still an expression of existence and so in Sahaj Marg we have this ability to go even beyond that to what was prior to anything existing. The Masters in Sahaj Marg transmit from beyond space and time; they transmit from a place that is beyond where gurus normally transmit from; and this to me is where spiritual brotherhood is. It is that part that's in us. If you look at the atoms in the body - you have protons, you have a nucleus with protons, neutrons, all sorts of funny little particles, quarks; you have electrons whizzing around that, so you have solid matter in terms of particles. You have energy in that the particles are moving but then you have the space between the electrons and the space is 90% of an atom. This is the nothingness, this is the no existence which makes up most of who we are and it's not physical, it's not energy, it is nothingness and it is most of what we are and, even in a physical sense, it is most of what we are. In a spiritual sense it's the nothingness out of which everything emerges and the beauty

about Sahaj Marg is that we have Masters who can transmit from that space - from the source of existence (Australian Sahaj Marg, female participant, 2012).

These words have little meaning if we have not had some practical introduction or transcendent experiences of these states of subtlety. We recall from earlier chapters that words may do violence, particularly if they highlight a separation between those who experience the real in this way and those who are still developing their capacity for spiritual experience, or have no interest in this field (Robbins et al., 2012). I would therefore ask that we hold a respectful stance, whereby even though this may be outside our experience, we do not hold a view that denies another's inner witnessing. The following Sahaj Marg participant shared her experience when the teachers or masters were changing, as Babuji Maharaj died and his successor emerged:

I still saw Babuji in Parthasarathi so they had merged. So for me Babuji was still there but the form had changed and was Parthasarathi. I still see that today a lot of times. I've literally seen where I've been in different circumstances a few times where it's almost like I'm looking at Babuji literally physically. Occasionally a flash will come and I know that sounds crazy but occasionally that will happen. So you know they are merged together and anyway it's the essence of the teacher; it's not the physical form. It's the essence of what is being passed on to them, which they are passing on to us (American Sahaj Marg, female participant, 2012).

For many participants the resonance of such communication was perceived via feeling and sensitivity. Many felt that there were no words for this stage of human experience or development: "To me I think it is most about the feeling inside. I'm not looking outside much. It's more about another quality of feeling yourself - you are feeling more sensitive" (Belarusian Sahaj Marg, male participant, 2012).

The attitudes associated with this spiritual development were: i) remembrance, ii) openness, iii) gratitude, iv) loving devotion, v) prayerful respect, and vi) alertness. Participants viewed the outer world of materiality as a mirror to their own inner condition of connection with beyond. All observed themselves for signs and way markers of direction and need for self-correction:

After some time I realised that other lads from distant lands were disturbed by the same things. They have the same joys and sorrows, the same hassles in life. It was one of the steps along the

way to a real awareness of brotherhood. Now when I hear the word brotherhood it seems closer to my heart. Insufficient to just talk about brotherhood; it needs to be experienced and felt. For that a pure and open heart is necessary (Estonian Sahaj Marg, male participant, 2012).

The concept of the external world as a place that was full of signs and way markers for spiritual growth was understood by both groups. It was these signs that could indicate one was progressing in the right direction and also show areas for refinement or adjustment. Other human beings and indeed all experiences in the outer world were seen as a direct mirror for attitudes and practices within the individual self. This participant puts these concepts in her own words:

I might still do it - get caught into trying to explain and rationalize but actually more and more I'm starting to see the world as a reflection of myself. So if I really and truly believe in a brotherhood or a spiritual brotherhood then I would say there is an element of myself or my connection with god that I need to examine. What I manifest I have to take responsibility for, as well and kind of make peace with, that bit of me that's connected to that (Māori, female participant, 2012).

Māori participants all simultaneously deepened this understanding as they identified a *whakapapa* (genealogy) back to the *atua* or the source, and the importance of knowing what nourished you spiritually such that you became whole. Such nourishment included attunement to the internal spiritual waters or *aroaha*:

I think there has been some severing of those ties from our traditional practices but I think underneath it the essence of who we are is very powerful and it's listening to that inner world and I also think that it's the way of the indigenous people as opposed to just Māori that is global world view that is with indigenous people (Māori, female participant, 2012).

In the following words, we may recall the posed capacity of the cosmic brain map and its unlimited possibility to bring physical health, awareness and balance to the fully conscious human being (Davis, 2006):

Spiritual brotherhood is this capacity to rebirth each day. And to allow the other the potential to also rebirth every day. So that's kind of what I've been observing, noticing, feeling and wondering about (Danish Sahaj Marg, female participant, 2013).

It seemed to me from listening to the participants that as one's consciousness developed there was a corresponding awareness of an inner self as energy. Once this unity or oneness was glimpsed, the personality often becomes more mindful of the effects of behaviour, thought and emotion on the sub-atomic field of life and in ordinary day-to-day community life. There developed an expression of awe, responsibility and a potential embodiment of spiritual values such as truth, love and peace. According to Davis (2006) in his neurobiological work on understanding the connection between the individual brain and the Creator:

Universal or Spiritual values are presented as the essences and forces which act as absolutes in overriding or changing the delicate neurobiological fabric associated with the cognition and experience of Unity and harmony between different individuals with different cognitive behavioural maps. In that sense they breathe the life into peoples' behavioural values and underpins them in human interactions and dealings (p 3).

In this quote we begin to glimpse a possible mechanism behind the experiences of Yogic scientists and meditation practitioners who all speak of oneness, connection and a unified consciousness between apparently different and distinct things (Prabhavananda, 2012). Certainly I am not the first to consider that there may be a natural synergy between the science of spirituality and quantum mechanics (Wilber, 2000; Chopra, Arntz et al. 2005). Physicist Karl Pribram (2013) suggests that the rules of quantum mechanics may apply all the way from the Cosmos through to our psychological processes, mediated by the nervous system.

### **9:5 Outer Expression of Inner Awareness**

All participants had developed a way of being in the world based upon an understanding of Universal Spiritual Value of brother-sisterhood. This included ways of welcoming, serving and connecting with all who came across their path:

It goes back to what we were saying in Māori terms but it's the embracing of others in the outside. That it's actually about being around people, it's not a colour thing or an ethnicity thing. We've got all sorts in my family; you don't see colour. It's the same thing like the gender thing you don't see it as a kid. You just are, you are who you are, you are just mixed together and that's how it is (Māori, female participant, 2012).

For some the sense of brother-sisterhood had crossed human boundary towards a connection of oneness with all living things. For the majority of Sahaj Marg participants and for some Māori participants this had translated into the lifestyle choice of vegetarianism. Fox & Ward (2008) study showed that vegetarianism often begins from concern for the health and ethical treatment of animals and over time may augment to other reasons. Authors have identified a lifestyle as being one that reduces the pressures on the earth and enables all human beings to have adequate food. Raphaely & Marinova (2014) make an interesting argument for the reduction of meat eating globally to the recommended healthy daily levels (flexitarianism), as assisting to stabilise the current global climate change increase of 2 degrees Celsius. They recognise that livestock greenhouse gas emissions are the single largest contributor globally to climate change. They argue that simple dietary change can lead to global decarbonisation.

I've really started feeling in the last year that these animals are my brother and my sister. And I can't imagine actually deep in my heart I feel like how can I eat my brother and my sister. That sounds corny but it's even come to that level for me now (American Sahaj Marg, female participant, 2012).

All Māori participants articulated a deep connection to the natural world and the planet. This was less obviously shared by the Sahaj Marg participants. As one Māori participant said: "For me it's more about the connection to the land, connection to *Papatūānuku*, and then beyond that to the galactic beings" (Tainui Māori, female participant, 2012). Perhaps this reflects a consciousness previously described by the Sufi concept of *gnosis*, as the highest level of Truth based upon intuitive revelatory knowledge. For another Māori participant these connections of family and communication or brother-sisterhood had extended beyond humanity and connects to the important concept of *turangawaewae/tūrakawaewae* (your place to stand tall):

So somewhere in the world I have a tree and somewhere in the world I have a whale - you know, somewhere. So all of those things are really interconnected. Interconnected in an indigenous kind of relationship with this place and the people here and not here (Māori, female participant, 2012).

The Māori attitude and practice of *manaakitanga* (hospitality) whereby one has a responsibility to welcome and host all who come to your land was also seen to be extended

by Indian Sahaj Marg practitioners at the ashrams. All participants hosted others in a way that were natural and altruistic. Social pretence was not encouraged and participants were intuitively sensitive to others motivational states i.e., whether ego-focused or heartfocused:

I've always believed what good is a lot of theory about enlightenment or brotherhood if you can't be a good example yourself? (Philippine Sahaj Marg, female participant, 2012).

Participants interviewed were generally humble and viewed themselves as a small part of much larger universe. Their ideas of space and time were not linear, in that the past, present and future were in some way, collapsed into the moment of now. They seemed to me to be grateful for an emerging and expanding consciousness, which was often beyond their descriptive capacity. All participants looked beyond to their *Master, atua* or *tūpuna* for guidance, attunement and nourishment. As one participant shares:

And those things are sent to test, the tūpuna [ancestors] are throwing at us. And its like, be steadfast; you're thousands of years old. You've got iwi [tribe] lying everywhere, it just means someone hasn't got the time to get to know you, or your values or morals, which we take into our work with our whānau [family] because that's what we're here to do (Māori, female participant, 2012).

Both groups had *tikanga* (customary protocols) and maxims that enabled them to continue with a daily process that supported an infinite communion. As one Sahaj Marg participant shared: “We keep going on because we know that spiritual evolution never ends. We observe and we learn and we discover” (Romanian Sahaj Marg, male participant, 2012).

For both groups these processes offered security and strength. For Māori participants the connection with *tūpuna* created the willingness for participants to behave in a way that was ethical or *tika* (fair and correct) in terms of *tikanga* (customary protocols). All Māori participants felt that transgressions of *tikanga* (customary protocols) resulted in consequences that ultimately served the purpose of training the human being to relate in a more ethical manner.

Tikanga are protocols and processes and ways of being and ways of doing that are across culture, across the realms as well. It's about being accountable for me, it's about tikanga being set out

before us and acknowledging that those who have gone before us are still with us and still guiding and still watching and still there. And will tell you when you step off. Because the protocols are not just about tikanga in systems, in organisations, but there is also tikanga in life. And if you do it truthfully and honestly which is not specific to Māori or whatever it crosses all those gaps - it's about honesty and doing things purposively (Māori, female participant, 2012).

This has similarities with Raja Yoga notions of *karma*, which is the universal law of cause and effect.

For me it's the correct way of doing something even if you feel: 'no, no I can do it like this. Instead it's: no, no this is how it's done and it's done like this for a reason'. We know what those reasons are because we've been bought up with them. That's to believe in a higher power and higher being and there's actually you know generations that have gone before us and they have done it like this for a reason. You get to know that reason eventually but if you don't understand it, it's because you've still got learning, which means *kia tūpato* [be cautious] be really careful (Māori, female participant, 2012).

This is similar to several of the maxims in Sahaj Marg that encouraged simplicity, truthfulness, and repentance against transgressions towards nature.

Both groups had the concept of moving towards a higher consciousness: "It is that higher being, whatever that higher being looks like, is what we strive towards" (Māori female participant, 2012). Sahaj Marg participants also had the concept that consciousness was an infinite, expansive and progression of Being:

You know we have people: master of violinist, cellists, master carpenters - because they've mastered their craft. So in meditation we have a teacher who has mastered the path and also is still growing himself. But he's mastered it enough where he's helping us, just like anybody else would be in any other practice (American Sahaj Marg, female participant, 2012).

The remembrance of this aspect of themselves allowed participants to develop the capacity to see the divine potential within others. In many ways, this was viewed as an expression of *mana tangata* (empowering and empowerment of each other) by Māori whereby the spiritual progress within oneself is shown by the capacity for hospitality on all levels including the levels of spirituality, thought and attitude. Sahaj Marg participants

described this: “It is when you see the divine light in another person so there is no difference to me between brothers and sisters in the mission and other people” (Belarusian Sahaj Marg, male participant, 2013).

In general, there was a shared view of spirituality as an infinite approach, expansion and progression (Ram Chandra, 1991a). All of humanity were seen as being part of this consciousness albeit at different stages of spiritual awareness:

I think people are on different arms of the tree. I suppose or different parts of their journey although they are all on that journey. All of them. I think my experience of it is that they all have an inner drive and they all have a sense of responsibility sometimes about that. So they are all on that journey but maybe all at different levels if that makes sense? (Māori, female participant, 2012).

### **9:6 Spirituality as a Progression of Consciousness**

Spiritual brother-sisterhood emerged as a practical ontology; that is, a particular way of being in the world. For Sahaj Marg practitioners being was mediated through the connection to the *Master* and for Māori it was mediated by connection to the *tūpuna*, *atua* and each other (Bohm, 1994; Robbins et al., 2012; Dennis, 2010). This ontology involved a holistic merging of seven aspects, including: realisation of self, faith, love, awareness, responsibility, connection/ unity, and peace (Zac & Baraza, 2013; Sprecher & Fehr, 2005; Ghais, 2005).

All participants gave rich detail of their experience of the inner realms of *Master*, *tūpuna*, *atua* and how this expressed itself in community and being (Ghais, 2005). This gave originality to this research. All participants developed rich appreciation for the way in which the inner reality developed into a web of connection between self and others, not limited by space or time (Robinson, 2005; Marsden, 2003).

Many shared transcendent experiences but this seemed almost common place and not the focus of these practitioners’ attention (Travis & Pearson, 2000; Dorfler & Ackerman, 2012). Spirituality and the tuning to spiritual values was viewed as a process of transformation from one level of human awareness to another (Davis, 2006; Rantanen & Kahila, 2009).

For Sahaj Marg participants, meditation was a technique, not the objective, of their practice and was seldom mentioned in relation to spiritual brother-sisterhood other than as the practice that led to the open heart. All participants mentioned the importance of the processes and practices of remembrance of the *Master*, *tūpuna*, *atua* (see fig. 5).

The open heart was unanimously mentioned by all Sahaj Marg participants as being vital for an ontology of spiritual brother-sisterhood. The spiritual heart was spoken in connection with *Master* and love. It appeared as having active principles contributing to nonverbal communication between people or perhaps more accurately between souls (Carreras, 2011; Ram Chandra, 1991a). It mediated a way of being in the world that was intuitive and natural (Hofman et al., 2011; Dorfler & Ackerman, 2012). The cognitive capacities were merged with an intuitive flow of synchronicity in daily events, which was experienced as simple, natural, and efficient (Rantanen & Kahila, 2009). The felt experience of this was described as being 'more family than you can ever imagine' and as a deep connection where physical proximity and words were not required to feel the presence of the 'Other' (Robbins et al., 2012). The 'Other' was intuitively felt and not merely a cognitive remembrance. The quality of feeling as an energetic resonance rather than an emotion (Marchand, 2014). What was also evident was a process of devolution from preconceived notions of relationship and a transformation of consciousness from being body to seeing oneself as soul (Vivekânanda, 1889).

Many of those interviewed were naturally aware of an expanded inner reality. This was experienced as a quantum field of connection beyond feelings of space, time and identity (Robbins et al., 2012; Greeson, 2009; Luders et al., 2011). These ones communicated silently and maintained a deep inner connection with the divine, the source, and *Master*.

To understand this shift was to enter into the understanding of the human body as *prakriti* (matter), *purusha* (energy) and *akasha* (nothingness) (Prabhavananda, 2012; Prajnananda, 1971; Jyotirmayanandam, 2006). Some participants described how this consciousness required courage as their ideas and experience differed from those around them. They described the capacity to persevere through self-doubt and discomfort towards an acceptance of a widened perception of reality. For others it was a more natural knowledge that they had since childhood. Participants used words such as 'know who and what you are' said in the context of knowing yourself as soul, heart and energy.

For some Sahaj Marg participant's devolution was progressive and there were certain stages of spiritual awareness (Ram Chandra, 1991a, 1991b, 1991c). Many were of the opinion based on their own experience that a key ingredient for spiritual brother-sisterhood was a 'pure and open heart' which was an outcome of *sadhana* (spiritual practice) and internal attitudes.

The processes of attunement and connection with the *Master* for Sahaj Marg participants and for Māori the *tūpuna*, alongside practices of gratitude, community and *tikanga* were viewed by participant's as essential in this development (see fig. 5).

I will now sketch out the stages of development in consciousness according to my own observations and personal experience. This is of course a modest construct and not to be considered a linear process nor a definitive prescription for the development of an open heart. Things can always be different.<sup>109</sup> However it does give some clues to the various shifts in consciousness that may occur. Whilst I speak predominantly from my own tradition of Raja Yoga, the insights from Māori participants are shared. I am not able to comment on how consciousness develops if like Māori, one is member of a collective with spiritual knowledge conveyed from childhood.

Spiritual knowledge states that we can only recognise qualities and attributes in another, if they are also present in our own quanta or field (Chandra, 1991a). Consequently, I experienced this research process as personally painful, challenging, joyful and transformative. Any words that seem to critique another, I ask be understood as a critique also of myself. The following outlines a possible progression of consciousness as others and I experienced it. I discuss the process of development of consciousness via the following stages: i) materiality, ii) materiality and spirit, iii) awareness, iv) acceptance, v) non-duality, vi) unified consciousness, and vii) presence. This is of course a construct, as spiritual reality does not conform readily to linear models of development (Stapp, 2007).

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<sup>109</sup> I am not willing to assess another person's stage of consciousness. For me spirituality is beyond this and simple. These stages are offered tentatively and come from recorded observations of my own progress. Participants words are used when they illustrate a type of thinking style that suits a particular awareness. It is not intended to indicate their stage of approach at all. I believe that consciousness is much more responsive and fluid than any stage model could identify.

### 9:6:1 Materiality

The first stage of spiritual growth was the process of creating initial movement from the 'I am body only' perception. This level of perception was ordinary and common to many human beings. It is a consciousness whereby all of the world is understood through the five senses. Reality is that which can be tasted, smelt, heard, seen and touched.

It horrified me to think that everybody could be my brother. It disgusted me. I thought - you surely can't be related to me; you know not in the ten lifetimes or past, you know; and that kind of ego. You know a kind of disgusting ego that I am overcoming now. I think I read something in Heartspeak 2005 that to love *Master* means to love everybody he loves. You know to love God means to love everybody. God loves and to have that realization and that has only come through growth that means that I have to love everybody. Unless I do that, I don't really love *Master* or love God or understand what God is and God is love as it is said (Indian Sahaj Marg, male participant, 2012).

At this stage people are experiencing life through personality, body bound ego and judgements that are made from the data coming from their sense organs. It was a stage where the opening to a spiritual reality could be plagued by self-doubt and confusion. This may be a difficult stage as these comments illustrate:

But the other thing is people may say that they are open hearted but actually the actioning of it quite often baffles me because I don't see the actions. I actually see ego; I see but then who am I to say what that is? But that's how I feel and I get confused with one thing being said and actually not seeing it or feeling it (Māori, female participant, 2013).

Requires courage - yes. If a person is easily swayed by the opinions and biases of the people surrounding him it becomes possible for him to turn his back on spiritual brotherhood or even twist the concept of spiritual brotherhood to suit the selfish needs of the person influencing him or to suit his own self-interest (Philippine Sahaj Marg, female participant, 2012).

As a child you are more open to spirituality and as the pressure of society comes down on you there is 'oh the other awareness'. Guess they stick with you, don't they? (Māori, female participant, 2012).

I'm still reconnecting with what my heart is telling me. I mean I had an 'aha!' moment on a plane once. Where I was in the cheap seat right beside the engine that was going round and round and

when it was still I could see the blades and then the blades get faster and faster and they disappear but I know that if I put my hand in there it gets cut off, but I can't see it. I couldn't see it because the vibration was different and that's when I had that moment. That's okay - there are truly different vibrations and I may or may not at different times connect with different vibrations that are going on. But what I am at the point of trying to explore is what those vibrations are for and what they feel like and I think I'm still stuck wanting things to be tangible (Māori, female participant, 2012).

We've found ways to dampen communication. So when I'm communing with my trees or just in stillness or like at the moment I don't trust my heart so I use tools such as different types of cards to just affirm that I'm not picking up something or making it up (Māori, female participant, 2012).

Perhaps it is at this stage where transgressions of the material 'Other' may be possible. I am thinking about some of the behaviours observed occasionally at the ashrams, for example, the stealing of possessions by other abhyasi, the pushing to get closer to the physical master and other aspects of selfish behaviour.

If 'I' am body only and 'I' am in a physical environment, which is foreign, challenging, physically painful and uncomfortable (for example, camping with 50,000 human beings from all around the world whilst at *Bhandara* in India) then 'I' may put my own needs first and lose any consideration. However, being in relationship and proximity with human beings from all around the world also creates the conditions for the blooming of a consciousness loving-kindness, mercy and truth. Practitioners often commented on how they learnt at seminars and *bhandara* that everyone had the same challenges in life regardless of caste, country, creed or colour. According to participants, this created the first platform for the development and refinement of an ethical relating, kindness, and selflessness.

For me it was a good experience to be with people from different parts of the world. My reaction to some extent was of fear which showed itself in different ways like uneasiness and discomfort. Perhaps the language barrier promoted that discomfort. But now I may say that it was not a language barrier but a closed heart (Estonian Sahaj Marg, male participant, 2012).

Initially the attitudes of sharing, attitudes of compassion, attitudes of connection and oneness were not natural and required willpower and effort to practice meditation.

Others spoke of a glimpse of what was possible when the heart was nourished by presence and essence:

But once we are able to have his love flowing through us we will have the strength to handle things and forgive and let go easily. I think the biggest problem is that we hold onto too many barriers and we keep recreating them. So it begins with me and it ends with me! (Fijian Sahaj Marg, female participant, 2013).

The *bhandara* (celebrations) and other experiences of living in groups with many different peoples from around the world allowed prejudice and barriers between people to dissolve. I observed a great deal of tolerance between those that had realised themselves as soul and those that had not. There was also a clear ongoing process of change and deepening of awareness, which created a sense of humility within me.

### **9:6:2 Materiality and Spirit**

Later practitioners moved to a reality of 'I am body and there is such a thing as soul.' In this stage, the mind was divesting itself of prejudice and the practitioner was beginning to have experiences that were mediated through grace and intuition. There was a developing awareness of heart that was not the physical heart.

I don't know if it's right to all people but to me, the heart can feel and can see. Normally we often judge people when we meet or talk with the mind, and we see them in the way we judge them at the beginning, but if you practise to feel and see people with the heart, you will see something words cannot describe. The feeling shows itself (Vietnamese Sahaj Marg, female participant, 2012).

However, the physical world was still the primary field of experience.

[I] have to accept what I am because I'm not that forgiving. I have judgments about other people. I would like to say that I don't have any but I do. It's hard and it's very difficult to accept that I'm like this (Japanese Sahaj Marg, female participant, 2013).

It can be difficult because there is felt calmness and self-control during *satsangh* (group meditation) and at celebrations, yet it is difficult to integrate these states and attitudes into modern life. At this stage, the practice may be experienced as difficult. Practitioners used such words as: hard, it is very difficult to accept that I am like this, ego, not easy to adjust attitude, importance of master to show the way, hard to let go of hurts

and fears and hard to be in relationship and share with others without conflicts/prejudice. The judgement of self and others may be strong.

There's a big insecurity that makes us behave in an artificial way. It is always based on this attraction thing- you know - like you want to make sure that people are going to like you and so there is always this kind of small game you know between brothers and sisters that make the brotherhood not possible. Because the moment you have two sexes there is no brotherhood any more. We have to forget all this too (French Sahaj Marg, female participant, 2013).

Within Yoga, this is understood as one stage in which we are learning to control the *citta* (mind and its faculties) and effect of thought waves (Ram Chandra, 1991a, 1991b, 1991c). Much has been cleaned away by the practice and we are now experiencing painful, non-painful and glimpses of divine condition. The contrasts between these states can be confusing as the ego is still defining itself by the outer world of materiality and personality. Practitioners may feel that no progress is being made. At this stage it is difficult to experience a sustained sense of unity or oneness with others, as there is still movement within the individual mind and attitudes of separation, prejudice and fear.

### **9:6:3 Awareness**

From there, practitioners, seemed to have a consciousness of 'I am body and I am soul.'

I come back to *ko wai au* [who am I]. Who are you that is beyond form and then it is transformed into heart connection, relationships, interconnectivity with everybody and everything (Māori female participant, 2012).

In this consciousness, there is still a thought wave of body and of soul. The ego still identifies itself with these thoughts and identity, so reality is still experienced through the perception of the sense organs. The ego is still defining experience and experiences are often viewed in a binary classified way, for example: good/bad; happy/sad.

However, the practitioner was having glimpses of beauty, sensitivity and the capacity to feel was developing. There was some withdrawal from the mind's identification with and through the sense organs. At this stage practitioners often identify these experiences as only occurring when they are in the vicinity of the physical master, when at

seminars or at *bhandara* (celebrations) or ashrams. For example, participants used the words: light atmosphere, his grace, peaceful, joyful and blissful.

Where your *Master* is there is your brighter world. My heart fully understood it then when I was waiting inside master's cottage - in that refined and subtle spiritual atmosphere of his home - that can't be found anywhere else because he was present there. Doubts, worries, tensions and expectations left behind and only our true self is present, when in that subtle atmosphere. It was like being brought to a balanced state by his grace (Malaysian Sahaj Marg, female participant, 2013).

### **9:6:4 Acceptance**

The next stage in development appears to be: 'I am awake.' We recall this participant's immediate experience of this realisation:

A sort of sound happened in my mind and suddenly I was outside of this ego and I could see like... Trembling waves themselves. But I was awake to reality as it is I could actually feel like the disintegration of my body into the air and the ground and into everything else. Just to see that the whole world now is pulsing as it is... new eyes and you are awake all of a sudden, a massive rush of information came in at that point as well. The realization of reincarnation was one thing that was interesting, it was almost like a sideline, oh yeah of course, that's the way it works. But it was just this incredible love that came out... For me, it was love is a reality because everything is connected, there is no disconnect between anything so once you can tangibly feel that brother, you are that brotherhood. It is not your brother, it is you (English Sahaj Marg, female participant, 2012).

This is a stage of greater subtlety and grace whereby the processes of purification and expansion have reached a stage where there is a greater connection with the internal divine presence. There is a feeling accessed during deep states of meditation of 'His' presence in the heart. This stage is experienced as wonderful but there is still a separation. Practitioners at this stage used the words: feeling in the heart, love for the *Master* and connected through heart by His.

### 9:6:5 Non-Duality

The next stage being: 'I am soul within body' develops as the ego becomes totally identified with soul. It is more subtle than other stages but there is still materiality. Practitioners at this stage used many adjectives: recognising the self as a soul and nothing else, recognising the same thing in others, divine, silence on the inside, natural, pure heart, silence on inside, acceptance, trust, faith and love, feeling oneness with the *Master* inside your heart - his presence - he's always there in your heart, relationship with source, God, *akasha* (space), beyond matter and energy, lightweight, divine, and simple.

I think first acknowledging your *whakapapa* [genealogy] is part of that, who you are, where you come from and then you know it's like another layer will unfold and then you see the wider context and then you see how you're all interconnected across lifetimes. It just unfolds so there's no separation. The more and more I practise and acknowledge the stuff that's here in my heart (touching and gesturing out from her heart area). And in my energetic level the more and more I become aware that we are not separate; that we are one; and that things that have happened in the past out of my consciousness may be played out in this lifetime. Time - I think time is a perception but things are played out over life times. And not necessarily in this time so that's that oneness. Time is not really real (Māori female participant, 2012).

The perception of the material world does not trigger internal stir and there is a detached attachment. Practitioners are still able to enjoy and function in the physical world but there is little effect on the energetic heart and the heart mind is becoming still.

At this stage, other people may comment on the practitioner's calmness or capability to effect a naturally calming environment wherever they may be. Some may recognise and comment upon a 'purity of heart' or a 'clarity of mind.' The practitioner is likely to not be aware of this, as it is so natural; it is like taking breath.

### 9:6:6 Unified Consciousness

From here there is a progression to a simultaneous consciousness of 'i-we.' That is 'iwe' are a collective of souls and also in body.' The Hindu language has a phrase that describes this *un kahaa* or *ham kahaa*: which means 'I/we said' or 'he/she/they said'.

At this stage practitioners described their experiences as being divine, heart-to-heart, heart communication like heart telepathy, feeling, all *Master*, beyond, unity/ unified, natural, simple, listening by heart, speaking by heart, as more family than could be imagined, let feelings out from the source, natural prayer, love for the God only, constant remembrance, constant remembrance as feeling, beyond words, beyond everything, connected all the time, connected awareness all the time without need for physical or verbal contact, the matrix, and the spider's web.

So we move to the oneness. You can imagine the world would be more united because we all follow the same direction somehow. I like to watch BBC documentaries especially the deep sea ones where you can see the fishes. They all follow the same direction - they protect themselves (Chinese Sahaj Marg, female participant, 2012).

If this is true and there were large numbers of people who have attained this way of being in the world then their experience of relationship and community would be specific and perhaps different to the norm.

And in this process we cease to be separate. We can no longer be separate because the same purity will be discovered in the others. His presence is everywhere. It's like Babuji [previous Sahaj Marg master] at some stage of his evolution started to see all the things were shining around him, you know (Romanian Sahaj Marg, male participant, 2012).

The heart-to-heart communication described by these practitioners was not a metaphor but is rather a practical experience as real as drinking water or having a verbal conversation. It is a paradox as there was no loss of difference in the outer world of identity. However, there was a loss of attribution of meaning to outer identity. From my journal, I describe this as:

It is a form of communication or relationship which is like an inner heat,<sup>110</sup> feeling, stillness, knowing and remembrance. It is like a telepathic heart-to-heart. But much more subtle. It feels

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<sup>110</sup> The Rg Veda says that it is the divine Agni that creates a rishi or rishika through the processes of tapas, austerity and devotion (Rg Veda- 1.31.16 cited in Gupta 1967). It is also said that it is the Lord of Delight who creates seers (Rg Veda- 9.96.18 cited in Gupta 1967). Modern practitioners of Raja Yoga recognize the importance of this divinity, which is beyond words: "Oh, love is so important and Sahaj Marg always talks about love. But on the other hand master also says that love only beyond to the God" (Chinese Sahaj Marg, female participant, 2012).

beyond time or space. It does not need physical presence or words. It is about awareness and the forceless force of love (2012).

Groups of such individuals were observed to communicate easily with each other, in a straightforward manner with laughter and shared humour. They naturally worked cooperatively and were not rule bound. Instead, they demonstrated flexibility and efficiency in the moment. What was interesting was that they could do this without common language and from a position of having never met each other before. This was observed at the shared seminars when different zones were placed together, for example, Oceania and South Africa.

Many struggled to put into words the way in which they could work so easily together and would often say by way of explanation, gratitude and acknowledgement- *Master's grace*.

These practitioners were very natural and congruent. That is the inside and outside were the same. There was little judgement about self or anyone else and the need for perfection and other constraints was dissolved away.

I think it comes down to rhythm, maybe a harmony, and a stillness. So you would see and maybe connectedness. So you would see a depth of *whānau* [family] and a depth of relationship which was full of love. You would see maybe celebrations of that through rhythm, dance, activity that harmonizes and brings people together *raranga* [weaving], *waka* [going out on the water in the canoe]...things that connect people, support and those relationships are seen as so valuable. The connectedness between us and the land you know ...picking up rubbish, you know, like little things. People that notice and do what they can to *manaaki* [hospitality] others, other relationships not only with people but with animals and land. Taking the time to care for things through love and peace and listen with your heart (Māori, female participant, 2012).

### **9:6:7 Presence**

No idea of body, no idea of soul. Then what is that? That is oneness (Chandra, 1991c).

This stage has been the most difficult area to research as many practitioners in this stage have no knowledge that they are there - it is so natural to them. There is a natural

inner absorption. It is a subtle inner stage which does not easily present on the outside other than perhaps as a sweetness of character, a certain childlike innocence and unwavering faith in the *Master*. It manifests as a purity that others who are sensitive may recognize but not the one who has flowered in this way. Through observation, these ones either struggled to put their experience into words or were the ones where each word was influenced by constant remembrance of the divine *Master*.

These interviews were often shorter but there was no word spoken that was superfluous and the researcher observed that the entire content of these interviews would remain in her memory and that the words would come forward and resonate for weeks afterwards and reveal profound meaning. Much in the way that the words in book from revealed knowledge such as the Vedas, Koran and the Bible may do for the devoted reader. At this stage, practitioners used words such as beyond, without words, all *Master*, silence, omnipresent, oneness, space inside, expansion, and nothingness.

This stage is one that barely registers as balance, surrender, detached attachment, and awareness but no reaction; all done by *Master/ Ishwara* (Supreme Being), natural forceless force of love, devotion and service. Babuji Maharaj who resided in such a condition can best describe it: Forgetful state means, you do not remember that you exist. In other words, all your body, except, or soul, nothing of the sort (Ram Chandra, 1991a).

### **9:7 The Barriers**

The key barrier for the development of the consciousness of spiritual brothersisterhood was the modern mind. Described by Buddhism as ‘the monkey mind’, I consider it the perpetual habit of thinking about one’s self identity in an automated way. It may also an anxious, selfish or grasping way. According to Yogic science, the human being may never be free of thought except at death (Prajnananda, 1971). Consequently, they advocate an attunement towards the *Master* rather than the action of the outer identities as one way of developing an integrated mind; however, it is not the only way (Prasada, 1912). According to Yogic science, an integrated mind is an intuitive mind (Vivekânanda, 1923). When a human being attunes to something greater than their own identity needs, then we begin to see altruism, communion and expression of spiritual

values, motivated by inspiration (Vivekânanda, 1923; Greeson, 2009; Hofman et al. 2009; Pruitt & McCollum, 2010).

It was notable that all Māori participants were concerned about the needs of the wider community, including Māori and Pākehā members of society. They described the effects of poverty, inequality and violence as significant barriers to the development of a universal humanity-hood.

I was thinking there's not much I can say about my brotherhood. My brother, my father and husband have all beat me up, and so there's been a positive and negative before them and so you know you live with it. In New Zealand it's okay. But I've learnt so much in the last twenty years. Culture is really who I am and all of you guys and the unity and connections is what make me who I am now. But yeah, that's why I kind of kept quiet about brotherhood. That forgiveness - having the smack, jumping out the window, because I wanted to go to a party. Father beat me up back in the day when it was okay. Yeah - should we be abused as children? (Māori focus group, female participant, 2012).

Some of the Sahaj Marg participants also commented on these concerns. At the beginning of this study, I did not observe this compassionate attitude in overseas Sahaj Marg practitioners attending seminars in India. Often our own short-term discomfort rendered us incapable of observing the challenging conditions of permanent volunteers at the ashram; managing the high expectations of the visitors alongside the severe effects of drought. During the several years that I attended and observed at seminars, the water crisis intensified and the overflow water channel remained dry throughout the monsoon season. Temperatures continued to soar as foreign practitioners seemed to demonstrate a certain 'iness' and limited scope of compassionate concern. At some level they came to India to 'get something' rather than give. There seemed to be the idea that they were the only one suffering, whereas all were. Of course, if I can observe this then I too was culpable.

I observed the same resident volunteers (mainly from India) sitting in the sun day after day assisting their foreign brothers and sisters—each new group excited and feeling welcomed. It seemed to me a punishing schedule for volunteers as the training seminars occurred each week with large groups coming from foreign countries and from within India. The daily grind of catering for the nutritional, medical, travel and spiritual needs of such large groups was cheerfully undertaken.

Over time, I observed more foreign practitioners practically volunteering and helping with dishes; eating the ashram food rather than the canteen food; and cheerfully sleeping on the ground in the communal dormitories.

Many Sahaj Marg participants continued to identify constraints that made spiritual brother-sisterhood difficult to manifest. These included: i) lack of welcome by others, ii) poor communication between centers and individuals, iii) and inflexibility of management style. This attitude was expressed from all zonal areas:

I wasn't able to find that spiritual brotherhood or the sense of connectivity that I have found outside of Sahaj Marg. Forget about Auckland or just New Zealand *abhyasis* [meditators] or outside of abhyasis. Unable to connect myself to the Wellington abhyasis, unable to connect myself to the Christchurch or Dunedin abhyasis. Even though we are from the same place, New Zealand, where there are a minimum of abhyasis; where we should know each other very well but there is no communication at all. So I think what I found was communication between the centres, communication between the others - overseas abhyasis centres there is no connection with New Zealand. How are we going to join a spiritual brotherhood if there is no communication? I can give you one simple example: if today I sit with anyone of you and if I talked to you about rugby or cricket, I can connect to you straight away (Indian Sahaj Marg, male participant, 2012, based in New Zealand).

Whilst another Sahaj Marg participant from Oceania highlighted how difficult it was to learn to be in a family beyond bloodline:

The practicality of working with other people who are different from me and there was one situation I had in the Mission that went on for years like that that was really incredibly uncomfortable with another prefect in the center. It went through all the stages of first of all having a very strong and close relationship and then having a falling out which at the time I had no conscious understanding of why. Going through bitter, bitter discomfort with it having to work with this person and not knowing how it could possibly work in fact resigning as a functionary as a mission because of it. Asking Master if I could resign because it was I didn't want it affecting the mission. To eventually doing everything possible bending over backwards to try and fix it, which didn't solve it made it worse eventually deciding that the only recourse was to let it go and just not even try to fix it just giving it time and patience and it eventually coming good and now to an even stronger relationship than it was before. For me that was a huge learning because that was over a

process of 15 years (Australian Sahaj Marg, female participant, 2012).

Participants identified the need for a certain level of spiritual attainment before spiritual brother-sisterhood could become practical: “So without opening your heart it is very difficult to get a heart to heart connection. Because before that we are filled up with grossness, heaviness, so to get release from those things you should do your practice and clean (Nepalese Sahaj Marg, male participant, 2011).

Others identified a lack of encouragement and willingness to practise and participate in this way of connecting with the other. I found myself struggling at times as my journal entry attests:

The capacity for heart-to-heart communication may also be a barrier if it is only undertaken only with those that a particular practitioner likes or whom one views as 'elder'. If it is not spontaneous and requires a conscious relaxing or tuning. This is another form of prejudice and maintains separation. When offered universally it builds community, tolerance and connection between all practitioners. It reduces doubt and confusion (2012).

Māori participants identified being taught as children the practices that enabled the lens of spiritual brother-sisterhood to stabilise. They describe some of the barriers as: “It’s the listening, that’s the hardest one because that’s the thing that creates the change and we don’t like change you know” (Māori, female participant, 2012). Another participant added: “We think we have to go into a marae, we think we have to go into a church, we think we have to go into a whare [house], but actually we’re embodied with what we need. We’re just going to a physical place because that’s what we do” (Māori, female participant, 2012).

Only Māori participants mentioned the connection between spirituality and politics. It is worth quoting one participant in full:

And, you know, I hear some of my Māori *whānau* [family] talk about we need to make it a political issue not a spiritual issue. And it’s not religion and I have a level of discomfort with that and I’m not sure what it is. On an energetic level it feels somewhat separate to my global feeling of oneness. And I think it is maybe relevant to this time but the other side of me, when I sit and listen to my guides they would say ‘put your energy forward, take what you know and put it forward and create that consciousness that is

oneness'. And I feel that some of my *whānau* [family] do that really well, and some of them use a political means to get to that platform but I'm not sure that that political means is the one. I think it was because I lay witness to the manifestation of that political stuff on my father and how it just stole so much from him. Because what he did was create the problem and fed the problem. I guess when I think about it now - loss of his self and loss of connection to God. Yeah, definitely bitterness and frustration and you know the moment of death is so revealing, so revealing, and to die without faith is not a good place to go. Because he's going to carry that into his next world. You know that's what's for me that all of the stuff that we do in between time is measured in seconds at the end you know like. So it was really revealing and so that's why political for me ... I can go there because I've been taught how to but I just find give peace to it (Māori, female participant, 2012).

Who are you and how your heart is and to the center of *ko wai au* [who am I] is where the heart is and the heart is that ability to enlighten and connect out to others and the others aren't just people; it is this land; it is this everything. I am part of you and you are part of me and everything above as below. My concern is that *kotahitanga* [unity] or the ideology of politics will restrict Māori from growing and transforming. It's not about loss it is about strengthening what it is that we are and those intrinsic values that we have to be more than we need to be (Māori, female participant).

### **9:8 Peace/ Piece: Sometimes the Peaceful disengage**

During the course of this research, some Sahaj Marg participants left the organisation and practice of Sahaj Marg. This was a key difference between the two communities. For

Māori participants' whakapapa is obviously an unbreakable bond, irrespective of the quality of the relationship.

The number of participants from my study who left the organisation and practice of Sahaj Marg was small (n = 6) and represented the regions of Oceania and Europe. However, they all expressed a common respect and gratitude to the masters of Sahaj Marg for their teachings and for the awakening of a true spirituality within them.

Like others, their inclusion as participants in this study included their devotion to the Master, knowledge of the practice, disciplined practice, sensitivity and *bhakti*. I was

therefore curious about their reasons for leaving the organisation. Those who left appeared to me as sensitive, intuitive, naturally ethical and expressing a need for a greater sense of freedom from rule bound consciousness. Their reasons were individual and did not demonstrate any particular theme. It did not seem to me that they left the inner *Master* at all. When I sat listening to some of them, I felt that I was in the presence of truth and integrity.

It was unsettling for me to observe and listen to their reasons, whilst watching their inner recognition of themselves as an aspect of an expanded consciousness. It seemed to me that some of them were tuned very finely to qualities of love, truth and unity. They were unwilling to contribute to structures or communities that had any limitation, misuse of the life force or prejudice. For these participants, an expanded consciousness was natural, somewhat like breathing and somehow protected from intrusions by the modern competitive mind.

I will outline the individual reasons in full. Some experienced the hierarchical structure in the Sahaj Marg organisation of prefects and non-prefects as another form of religion or priesthood. It represented for them a worrying similarity to patriarchy, embedded within human beings (prefects) that still had the mind seeded with competitive and religious notions of high or low; better or worse; or even representing the unfortunate idea of spiritual advancement.

For another the prefects and functionaries' concern with growing organisation numbers was difficult to reconcile as it seemed like a lack of faith and attunement to the consciousness of the *Master*. From a secular lens, it could be viewed as a somewhat calculated strategy, perhaps with good intent, yet lacking the inspiration of a compassionate offering to life and humanity.

Several others were fully embracing a deep tolerance towards the spiritual needs of the 'Other' and did not find the examples of intolerance by prefects with positions of authority in the Sahaj Marg organisation as credible. The egotistic, self-regarding insecurities and i-ness of some prefects was viewed as a limited stage of consciousness and concerning for seekers whose expression of consciousness was more deeply embodied and compassionate.

For those that who the organisation, there was a deep commitment to the needs of the planet, the needs of humanity or the importance of balance. They were no longer at ease with any form of hypocrisy, in word or action. Whilst they expressed regret at leaving the spiritual master, they were no longer comfortable with gossiping, back biting behaviours of both functionaries. As an example:

I've been in the presence of two people who are quite high up in the hierarchy who have talked about somebody else [badly] and I have gone far out [like this is unbelievable]. And I lost all respect for them because I thought, 'Nah I can't be bothered', you know? Maybe I should try but you know... (Sahaj Marg female participant).

This participant followed ethical practise and spoke directly to those concerned about her concerns. However, according to her understandings this way of using words and attitude was not correct. According to Māori cosmology and Yogic science, words and sound are creative and have power. Even the need to explain this to another who was in a hierarchical position and empowered by the *Master* would be concerning.

Several observed a lack of spiritual progress in abhyasi who were still demonstrating binary attitudes of good and bad, and minimal practice of the ten maxims. Some were disappointed in the channelled writings, which seemed not credible—both in the regulated mechanical way of arriving and as having failed to achieve a constancy of stillness in the inner development of meditators, shared and experienced in satsangh. One participant viewed this writing as an unnatural phenomenon, designed to manipulate the other.

In summary, whilst participants left the organisation for many reasons, it would be naïve to suggest that it was solely due to the usual explanation of a self-regarding consciousness or 'ego' as they did not abandon a deep commitment to spirituality as a way of life.

It seemed to me that the changes in their consciousness bought about by their previous sincere, deep practice of *sadhana* (spiritual practice) did not disappear. Several left naturally by heart without any obvious desire for something different or judgement of the organisation or the *Master*. I wondered whether they were exploring a stage beyond spirituality or a stage that Sahaj Marg master Babuji described when asked what was

forbidden in Spirituality; “only forbidden is forbidden.” Perhaps another way of describing the Sufi *gnosis* consciousness.

Within Sahaj Marg, those participants aware of spiritual brother-sisterhood tended to have frustration and difficulties with structures within the Mission or communication that was rule bound and not from the internal connected heart. They were unlikely to push to get to see the physical master as they had no feeling of being separated from him. Those with positions of authority in the organisation sometimes misunderstood them.

During this interviewing process some Sahaj Marg participants were facing ethical dilemmas regarding group behaviours such as dishonesty (e.g., Country statistics going back to Manapakkum that were falsified, bullying, etc.) and their own response and responsibility to model integrity.

These participants had an understanding of leadership that appeared naturally different to some others in the organisation as I observed them demonstrating, facilitating and embodying their principles rather than preaching. They did not appear to value hierarchical social structures. They worked hard but laughter tended to be around them. I experienced them as very humble.

### **9:9 Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have identified the stages of developing an integrated consciousness according to study participants. This was not a linear or absolute process. All ways are possible according to the nature and heart of the human being who is interested in developing their spiritual heart. The spiritual essence of Truth is simple and may not require such complexity as demonstrated by some Sahaj Marg practitioners. I include myself in this complexity.

Māori participants described child rearing and cultural practices that enlivened and valued a lens of connection and embodied spiritual values. It was a simple knowledge passed on by stories, the arts and through relationship. There were many similarities between the two communities although Māori participants attuned internally to *atua* (ancestral forces) and the *tūpuna* (ancestors). The knowledge of vertical and horizontal attunement was known and conveyed carefully. The embodiment of presence and connection with essence occurred naturally and conveyed carefully from one generation to

another. The role of *tikanga* (customary protocols) and *tika* (correct practice) was beyond individual desires and in situations of choice took precedence.

It seems, from this sample of Sahaj Marg participants from around the globe that the recommended Raja Yoga practices can lead to a similar consciousness. This integration seemed possible irrespective of gender, culture, age or length of time practising Sahaj Marg. The role of the *Master* was pivotal in the development of an integrated consciousness. It seemed that there were identifiable stages and way markers of inner condition. Although again I note from a constructivist perspective that all ways are possible, and I do not suggest the stages identified in this thesis as predictive, nor linear. I have learnt that where there is a constant attunement to *Master*, *atua* and the *tūpuna* then there is also flexibility, creativity and originality. A thought may also have immediacy in its capacity to create change. It is not a repetitive mechanised consciousness. However, again there are similarities with Māori notions of *tikanga*, as the role of service takes precedence over individual desire.

I am currently of the view that spirituality is simple, and unique to each human beings heart. Change can be immediate, it can be layered, it can be circular (like onion rings being peeled away as a devolving) and it can be spiral. It can be seen and unseen. It is a journey of mystery and it can always be different.

At the beginning of this thesis I wondered whether spiritual brother-sisterhood arose out of the experience of an expanded consciousness of connection and whether this consciousness could lead to peaceful ways of living in the world. According to participants in this study, it was possible. However, it had been difficult for some to change from a modern competitive individualised mind to an integrated mind.

As I observed countries, individuals over time and in a variety of settings and roles, in multiple situations, it seemed to me that the qualities prevalent for those that had an integrated consciousness included: i) flexibility, ii) openness, iii) tolerance, iv) lightness, v) calmness, vi) humour, and vii) an attitude of not wanting to harm the other or encroach on the other in any way (Greeson, 2009; Hofman et al., 2009; Luders et al., 2011). These appeared to be qualities and relational styles that were conducive to peace.

In the next and final chapter, I explore what a future peace could look like from within the lens of human spirituality, according to Māori and Sahaj Marg participants. It concludes by summarising the findings of this research.

## Chapter Ten: Peace and Spirituality

### 10:1 Summary

I conclude this thesis by outlining: i) natural peace, ii) peace as sustainable living, iii) unity and oneness, iv) revision of themes, v) mind as instrument and vi) potential. I sketch a modest theory of peace building based upon the indigenous notions of a unified field of consciousness that human beings co-create, nourish and are enlivened by.

Furthermore, I look through the lens of visioning a peaceful humanity. The data is analysed for practical ideas and actions; as well as exploring the potential for change arising from a transcendent base. I have created a virtual ‘transversal space’ in my mind between the examples of ancient Yoga practitioners (Rahurkar, 1964; Gupta, 1967) and the activities and visioning of modern Sahaj Marg and Māori participants. The ancient Yoga practitioners visioning offered a glimpse into a realm of deep connection and communication with unseen forces,<sup>111</sup> which was compatible with Māori participants lived experience. It was also compatible with experiences of the *Master* by Sahaj Marg participants.

Whilst this could be viewed as metaphor or myth, it was useful to take into account the capacities of the Yoga adepts to transcend ordinary rules of possibility. If a human being has conscious awareness of oneself as a quantum field of love; then human beings may be capable of more than we currently accept.

Very few of the participants in this study had begun visioning at this level. Despite transcendent experience, they remained constrained by a materialist and positivist paradigm.

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<sup>111</sup> The Rg Veda is one of the oldest books recorded by human beings (2400 BC) (Tregear, 1984). A group comprised of four hundred seers; twenty-five of whom were women wrote it. Each seer, through their Yogic practice, had reached a level of spirituality whereby they were able to access higher planes of consciousness and intuitional knowledge. As such, it was said to be inspired by the grace of cosmic powers.

Some of the Vedic women seers from the Rg Veda included Lopamudra, Visvavara, Sasvati, Apala, Ghosa, and Jabala (Gupta, 1967). The spiritual practices that developed and sustained their capacity to glimpse into a vaster reality continue to be available for the empowerment of modern human beings. The following themes form their lives: i) spiritual life leads to the highest experience of bliss, ii) family and spiritual life is compatible, iii) well advanced practices of Yoga developed alongside family life, and iv) making the impossible possible.

## 10:2 Natural Peace

Qualitative constructivist grounded and indigenous methods were utilised to identify whether participants experienced the phenomenon of spiritual brother-sisterhood and if so, whether there were any implications for peace. Participants identified a natural energetic peace that expressed itself via an inner attitudinal hospitality and activities reducing prejudice towards the 'Other'. They gave many descriptions of natural peace, ranging from not doing to an active calling for help. As this participant describes:

I seldom pray for my problems because I don't think that my problem is a real problem but I do pray for those people who need us to pray. Or sometimes I sit and close my eyes and just pray for things that I don't know. So it is natural letting the feeling go out. Or just closing the eyes not really meditation, not really prayer, just closing your eyes and letting your feelings coming out to the source (Chinese Sahaj Marg, female participant, 2012).

This was a prayerful approach to the divine occurring as a natural outpouring to and from the source. It was communion from within a deep space of presence and *samadhi* (bliss).

Only by cleaning our heart and changing our belief system - it is the only way we have to make this jump and shift in our consciousness. It is the only way and then it's easy, it's natural. We don't need to do really speak anything with anybody, there is no need to do, and there will be no need to do something with anybody if we will do this work inside our self. Of course for this there has to be some method that can make this difference in progress in consciousness in very short time. Because this planet really needs it. We already need, you know already see planet really crying for these changes in us and we don't have thousands and thousands of years to do this shift. We have to do it right now because of this we have to look for some method that is easy that can be adapted, easily adapted in our busy modern life (Russian Sahaj Marg, female participant, 2011).

Participants spoke of being able to communicate and listen to each other by heart and without words. The basis of such a natural peace was connection with *atua*, *tūpuna* and *Master*. My study's participants experienced the connection with this existential inner reality: i) love, and ii) awakening and/or recognition. All participants highlighted the importance and relevance of universal core values and protocols, as the lens through which

an energetic natural peace manifested. From this shared perspective there were examples of social hospitality within community experience:

It was like coming home and I liked the mix of religions, colours, cultures and no idea of difference between us all. For me it was like coming home in two ways actually. Coming from Ethiopia you are always hungry for sunlight as well. There is also the same openness, the same simple way of life, of being together. You don't even need to have a big discussion like about politics you know. Just self-smiling a little bit and talk without language. We talk together with a smile and use of fingers and hands to explain. Don't speak the same languages but still you are together and you are brothers and sisters. And it creates something special between people when they are just together. I've noticed that we talk too much and we have to explain everything. In Danish there is a saying 'talking is silver but silence is gold' (Ethiopian Sahaj Marg, female participant 2012).

### **10:3 Peace as Sustainable Living**

I observed that many of the Sahaj Marg ashrams in India modelled a sustainable way of living. For example, the Manapakkum Ashram in the middle of a large modern city has a small agricultural area for the cows which provide milk for the ashram, water harvesting is undertaken, also composting of vegetation and food scraps occurs on site, solar power is generated, a vegetable garden is maintained, plastic waste is taken for recycling and drinking water is filtered and the use of plastic discouraged. People practise non-wastage of food as it is *prasad* (precious). Everyone conserves water. Personal hygiene is managed with cold water bucket baths which encourages less use. The ashram timetable means that lights are turned off by 10 pm, which has an impact on electricity consumption. People collectively ate simple food, which is bought in bulk. There is reduced choice of food but what is offered is nutritious, tasty and often organic. The collective timetable and reduced opening of various resources means that everything is utilized mindfully and efficiently. The regular meal times and times for meditation also mean that volunteers are often healthy and strong. These guidelines shared many similarities to *marae* protocols.

The recent and ongoing development at Kantha, Hyderabad, of a five hundred acre eco village based on a spiritual, ecological and collective living develops the vision of ashram life further in a practical way. However, I have a personal concern about gated

communities and the ideas of separateness that they may contain or propagate. I wonder whether this eco village will embody a new paradigm of expansive inclusivity regardless of group membership or even ideas of property ownership.

I observed or participated in a number of Crest and Retreat programs, as well as visit centers and the Lalaji Memorial Omega International School (LMOIS). LMOIS, according to its website, has the following vision:

“Omega strives to produce youngsters who are balanced, with soul, mind and body working in unison, with the soul guiding the mind in its activities and the body acting under the guidance of the mind’ (<http://www.omegaschools.org/>).

It has a role of 1500 pupils spanning primary to secondary schooling. Many students attend from countries other than India as their parents commit to the creation of human beings with a global appreciation of connection and interdependence and the need for spirituality in life.

There are three residential Crest training facilities (Bangalore, Kharagpur, and Berlin), which were established by the Sahaj Marg Spirituality Foundation (SMSF) with the purpose of exposing participants to a variety of religions, cultures, philosophies, and ideologies. The aim was to inspire an appreciation both of the multiplicity of approaches to the divine and of their single underlying essence.

There are four spiritual retreat centres (Malampuzha, Panshet, Spurs Ranch Retreat, USA and Vrads Sande, Denmark). In addition there are many ashram established in India (N= 209; Source Prefects Directory, 2013) and around the world (N = 24; Source Prefects Directory, 2013) with the purpose of teaching meditation and training. A specialised ashram for the elderly has been established allowing both long and short stays (Param dharm Ashram, Bangalore). There are 3,493 meditation trainers known as prefects; 2,022 within India and 1,471 outside of India (Source: Prefects Directory, 2013).

These activities represented the practical and physical expression of inner lenses attuned to values of unity, *ahimsa* (non-harming), and spiritual brother-sisterhood as described by participants. Many of these activities were initiated and maintained by volunteers perhaps illustrating a compassionate turn of mind as discussed in chapter seven.

### 10:4 Unity and Oneness

Participants described a sense of inner connection and relationship that was beyond ideas of space and time. Many described intuitional knowledge and feeling by heart that was not bound by geographical position. Again, this was viewed as mediated by inner presence and *mana* (power) alongside connection to *Master*, *tūpuna* and *atua*. In accordance with these themes of unity and connection, many participants were beginning to feel a hospitality for the ‘Other’ and were wondering what a Transrational peace could look like. One Māori participant could see a peace for all peoples:

Yes I think so because what he’s talking about when he puts love in a political arena is all the various tribes of New Zealand coming together as one. But *kotahitanga* [unity] for me is all of us being together across the world as one and one consciousness. So there is a slight difference I guess and I think that some people would say that’s one and the same. It’s the vehicle that you use that might be good or it might not be and you know we’ve had really good examples in history of Te Whiti<sup>112</sup> who was really clear about peace and peaceful movements. For me I look to him for guidance, for how to do that in a way that is full of love I think (Māori female participant, 2012).

Visioning statements were many and are worth sharing more fully. There was a multiplicity of concerns framed as the psychological, relational, ecological and global. Participants shared a number of practical ways that they wanted to live in the future. They shared a concern for the planet and a desire to go beyond the mentality of competition and rampant individuality. They were focused on a vision that took humanity beyond survival to an actual flourishing with communities that honoured sustainable lifestyles based upon love. Not the outer forms of affection and romantic love but more a quantum field of love predicated upon a new understanding of self as consciousness. They saw meditation as developing the individual awareness, realization and capacity to manifest such a collective flourishing. This was anchored firmly in a universal and inclusive understanding of brothersisterhood. Here are some of the visions and plans for the future. One participant commented on this sense of collective unity:

For me spiritual brotherhood means accepting oneness, unity, and peace, life together on this planet, in a way where we let everyone

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<sup>112</sup> Māori leader who met British colonising armies with non-violent methods of protest. See chapter 7 in this thesis.

be unique and different. This for me is the most important quality of brotherhood; it's not the sameness but oneness in all this beauty of differences that we can see (Irish Sahaj Marg, female participant, 2011).

As another participant shared,

In general, I see people becoming more compassionate. You can dislike, even, a person's behavior, but you still feel love towards them. So what is meditation? What is this Divinity? It's just really, really pure love. I guess, in a simple way, you just keep learning how to love and that (open heart) keeps expanding (Canadian Sahaj Marg, female participant, 2012).

Whilst another participant shared this relation to identity:

Spiritual brotherhood it's a brotherhood based on spirituality which is higher than say economics, higher than money, higher than nationality, higher than language, higher than religion so it's the next step in consciousness. Its brotherhood based on (I would say) unconditional love or something like this. On the idea of oneness, that we are all one literally. It will come naturally as soon as each one realise who we really are. That we are really just fingers on one hand or whatever. Which are different but has our own role, our own function, our own everything. So we just 7 billion fingers on the hand of our God. So at least on this earth, you know once we realize that then brotherhood will come in naturally. You find your own place in this universe, your own role in this creation, to find your connection with yourself, with your heart, with your God, with your creator, whoever... the universe. You can call it any name and it will happen sooner than we anticipate (Russian Sahaj Marg, male participant, 2011).

Whilst another participant wondered about a global economic system based upon principles of spiritual brother-sisterhood rather than capitalist notions of competition. Her ideas were lengthy and I quote them in full:

And so I try to design a system that would, an economic system, that's a transition from where we are now into a system of business, and fiscal logistics that looks like much more like a natural system, much more cyclic, ritually replenishing. And the second key element was to stop this idea of wealth equals debt. Because essentially what we are doing is just generating scarcity. And scarcity plus a competitive system combine the two and you get this concentration of wealth or whatever. It's just horrible, you get poverty and desperation and all the neurosis, the psychological neurosis of desperation and poverty, you know, and self-protection, and the greed and what not. You know, it's all not

looking very spiritual [laughs]. So the idea is ok, to have a more co-operative, abundant system of fiscal logistics but also to attach the generation of wealth to increase in the resource base which basically is going to have like everybody on the planet focusing on creating abundance, sustainable, regenerative, because once you get a regenerative activity then you are actually increasing the health of the living systems around you by your activity. Which is certainly not impossible by any means and I'm sure that if we started to work on it like it's our bread and butter, those things will be coming out of the woodwork, sprouting all over the place. And you know that's just a very skimming the surface of this sort of idea. The idea is that within that kind of system, people could – that is a response to a common sense crises, critical problems right now, of scarcity and ecological degradation -- so is a kind of common sense shift to make but at the same time you provide a platform for the psychological expansion into a sort of more caring more compassionate environment because your prosperity equals others' prosperity. It circulates, you know. And so, I find, I ultimately believe that the endpoint is the emergent prospective of reality. That would be mainly represented by a money-free economy because if you actually find yourself, feel yourself to be part of the whole there is really no need for money, it becomes very efficient. Does that make sense to you? A money free economy basically would be like, in my understanding, would take a massive psychological leap, a quantum leap you know. And if you actually find yourself in that place in terms of spiritual understanding - not the end point, what would I know about the end point, absolutely nothing, but that point of unity and ego-less and if you actually experience that you believe yourself to be part of the whole, your entire life becomes motivated by service. You are part of the whole so there is no need for barter, there is no need for anything. Look at what we have, how is the best way to organize it. This is very quick, this is a very simple equation. Basically, if all the money is, you understand that if - all money is generated as debt, no? You understand that equation, so if the government want to have more money it goes and borrows. And so, but what the banks do they say there's this law they have to keep 10% of that capital in reserve and they can lend out 90%. But what they do is let's say 10 billion was borrowed, it's sitting in the bank, that's our 10%. Someone comes in the bank, 'I want to borrow 9 billion', and ok they'll just make it up. We've got 10 billion, great. They just make it up. Their justification being the economy is growing, there are people needing money to do things, great so we need more money then of course we do, fair enough. But the trouble is of course if all the money is generated as debt and you have to pay it back plus interest, where is the interest to pay it back? That's not there, there's never enough money to go around. The only way to get that money is to borrow more. How does that serve the people? Why is that part of the system? Mostly I've kind a get blank looks, most people have

said that it's a competitive environment, which I don't think is a good thing [laughs] but I suppose it is in a competitive economy. I don't know, I suppose, I don't know enough about it to be like, would the whole thing collapse if they don't borrow more money I suppose. Maybe? Before all the debts are paid back. But then there'll be no money in circulation so [laughs]. So I don't get it [laughs]. All I am saying it creates scarcity and scarcity is causing all the loath, stress, and emotional problems and so on (English Sahaj Marg, female participant, 2012).

In this section we have seen that a practice of pure spirituality does not constrain the participants from being aware and willing to act in the field of applied spirituality. For many as the inner pause developed (Robbins et al., 2012) there were greater possibilities for visioning peace in the spontaneous, compassionate moment. The focus of peace moved from one's inner calmness to a felt *manaakitanga* to others. The concept of community began to expand from family unit towards all those where there was a felt connection or *whakapapa*.

This was mediated by a 'feeling in the heart' rather than bonds of friendship or affection.

### **10:5 Revision of the Themes**

Spiritual brother-sisterhood was a phenomenon that participants could define. It involved practices of attunement, ethical observances and relationships. The remembrance of *Master*, *tūpuna* (ancestors) and *atua* (*ancestral forces*) led to hospitality and *manaakitanga* with others. Practices of meditation, contemplation and *mana* (power and presence) lead potentially to neurobiological changes that were pro-social and compassionate. It seems that our spiritual *mana* (power and presence) arises from multiple biological, relational and cognitive practices. Spiritual brother-sisterhood was an outcome of such practices and was experienced as: presence, energy, connection, communion and reduced identity based boundaries.

Participants identified the shared themes including: i) underlying recognition of self and others as spiritual, ii) internal connection to *Master*, source, *tūpuna*, iii) development of a universal consciousness of connection, iv) spiritual brother-sisterhood a peaceful way of living in the world. Participants described a spiritual heart which they experienced as connected to *Master*, source, or *tūpuna*. The experienced knowledge of *whakapapa*

(genealogy) and relationship was embodied through practices that enhanced presence and *mana* (power).

For most of these participants peace was not viewed as an absence of conflict. Conflict was understood as a natural part of human communication (Lederach, 2003; 2005). Peace was the absence of killing alongside an expanded spiritualised relationship of responsibility between all living beings. Peace was viewed as a host of sustainable pro-life practices.

### **10:6 Mind as Instrument**

There was an understanding that communion, unity and energy alone does not create change. Any change requires human agency. As one Sahaj Marg participant, with over forty years' experience, stated: "I am sad that people with so many years in Sahaj Marg have the goal of calming the mind only. This is only 5% of what is being offered to them" (Indian Sahaj Marg, male participant, 2013). According to these participants' the human being with a trained mind knows how to tune itself to certain values of expression. Study participants' had different practices for achieving this. The participants' who had trained their mind as an instrument experienced themselves as peaceful, open-hearted and balanced. They then went beyond this in a natural connection with other minds that were at the same stage or vibration. This was a natural occurrence and did not require complicated techniques. According to these participants' it was a process of awareness and attunement mediated by outer forces, inner awareness and intuitive knowledge.

I observed a commonality between all focus group participants' which was the way all participants took responsibility for their own attitudes when they were not attuned to source values of truth, unity and love. This seemed to lead to an open honest communication between participants as they understood each other's mind and were less likely to take offense when the other person was in pain or struggling for some reason. I observed: interpersonal light heartedness, natural synchronistic happenings, flexibility and tolerance.

Participants demonstrated different ways of thinking in relation to their mind. Yet what was common to all was how they understood the creative manifesting power of mind.

They all knew how to connect to an underlying unified field of consciousness. Whilst the names and methods for connection differed the insights and values elicited were similar.

They described what happened within themselves when they attuned to values of unity with source, *Master*, *tūpuna*, and *atua*. They described love as an energy and they described a shared truth of themselves as multidimensional and consciously energetic. Each understood that the energy of love flowed through them and was made manifest through the actions of mind. The process of mind was easily seen in outer behaviours, feelings and choices.

However, I felt that we had only scratched the surface of our understanding as a field of conscious creative potentiality. When I looked at the data analysis through the lens of visioning it seemed that participants were indeed using their minds to create change in their own lives and were engaging in ideas for the possible good of humanity. Māori participants were naturally looking to the needs of their people and the wider community affected by the physical expression of minds attuned to lust, power and violence. Sahaj Marg participants spoke of a concern for all of humanity.

What I observed through my own lens as researcher was that there remained the limits of group identity for many participants. It was difficult for some to see *Master* as a field of potentiality beyond membership of Sahaj Marg, whilst for one Māori participant this knowledge was held within his bloodline and was indigenous; potentially an exclusion for others of different cultural and genetic background.

Spiritual brother-sisterhood through the conjoined lens of Yogic science and Derrida and Levinas encouraged an unlimited expression of this hospitality. I felt that there were glimpses of this, yet there was still an underlying conditioning of ‘me and mine’ in some of the individual interviews alongside ‘i-ness’ demonstrated by attitudes of: I do/ I help/ this is hard/ this is not possible. These attitudes were less noticeable in the focus group material for both participant groups.

Participants represented a range of stages in terms of awareness and an open spiritual heart. Placing human beings with similar practices in one community will not necessarily lead to a peaceful utopia. If we have learnt from history, all such ideas have failed and have had a deeply buried seed of violence. It may not even be moral as utopia has within it the hint of a dominating sameness which is not hospitable or responsible.

Whilst unity was experienced as an energy or communion, it did not create change in and of itself. It required human agency or mind. This ultimately reflected upon the relationship that each participant had with the ecology of the planet and systems of production, which are often the root causes of poverty and war.

I examined some of the early literature of Yogis not plagued by confusion, doubt or minds attuned to limiting values of greed, lust and violence (Chandra, 1991; Dasgupta, 1989; Pruthi & McCollum, 2010; Roer, 2000; Sankaracarya, 2012; Dass, 1991; Mitchiner, 1982). I noticed that there seemed no limit to the way in which those human beings connected reverentially with source energy (however named). Indeed their co-creativity included practical manifestation of physical healing for the body, crops and land (Gupta, 1967). I wondered what the potential for spiritual brother-sisterhood was if human beings widened their circle of interest and opened to the latent potential within them.

Māori participants in this study were encouraging a greater engagement and use of will in connection with the transcendent. They actively spoke of asking for help, putting energy and an intention forward, listening to the inner knowing and signs that were given. In a sense they shared a practical co-creator relationship with a quantum field of possibility. For Māori participants the purpose of connection with the realms of *Kauae Runga* (realm of spirit) had practical collective expression in the physical realm of *Kauae Raro* (realm of materiality). Spirituality was for the practical benefit of all, not for the individual enjoyment only.<sup>113</sup>

For all participants in this study, their experiences of spiritual brother-sisterhood opened a universal connection and concern for others. Their primary consideration was not their health or their family's health but a deeper encompassing of all creation. I have argued that this is a heart connection with an underlying spiritual current, field or *dharma*. As one participant described:

The minute we think of someone as our spiritual brother as opposed to another we have missed the point because spirituality is all embracing. My spiritual brotherhood comprises all human

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<sup>113</sup> Within Māoridom the concept and role of *manaaki* (*hospitality*) is to create community. In the kinship group it both arises from the community and creates it and therefore is a double necessity, or rather a matter of course. Manaaki ties people together so that nobody knows who gives and who receives (Patterson, 1992, p. 148).

beings - friends and foes alike. It is founded less on similarity or preference, more on difference and difficulty. My spiritual brothers are not just humans with whom I can share concerns. It includes all beings! All are, just like me, manifestation of the divine, down to the smallest blade of grass (Brazilian Sahaj Marg, female participant, 2012).

All participants viewed mind as an instrument for connection and awareness. Several Māori participants were concerned that spiritual values might not be allowed to flourish fully.

### **10:7 Potential**

As we recall from earlier sections the work of peace theorist Wolfgang Dietrich (2013), in his model of Transrational peace, extended Lederach's pyramid and spider web of relationship, with integration from the work of Buddhist philosopher Ken Wilber. If we consider this thesis as comprehensive whole we begin to see a form of Transrational peace.

To begin with the Māori participants volunteered to share a perspective on life that was predicated on a deep, peaceful connectedness with the gods and unseen realm of *Kauae Runga*. This was the first tier of peace and was described by words such as: "know yourself and where you come from before you can help others" (Māori, female participant, 2012). This was beyond any Maslovian physical conditioning and into a deep, open hearted relatedness or, as she continued: "beyond DNA and back to the gods" (Māori, female participant, 2012). For these practitioners this was the central hub of any peace. It was the organising principle for all outer expressions of connection and relatedness. At its most evolved form it demonstrated itself as *Manaakitanga* (hospitality) which was a form of community-building whereby no one knew who was the giver, or who was the receiver.

How would this look in the conflict resolution field? To begin these peace builders actively and consciously, in many ritualised ways, established 'presence' and 'inner connection' with each 'Other'. This did not only occur separately but also together. And this was also demonstrated by the Sahaj Marg group. Each group consciously and purposively and together would connect to the most centred and stable inner communion. From this creative solutions and activities emerged. So not a peace building that was

predictable and following a set agenda but rather an ethics of relationship that demonstrated the Derridian concepts of responsibility, hospitality and flexibility.<sup>114</sup>

Once an object was viewed it immediately began a process of evolution and transformation. A viewing of each other as a universal consciousness had the capacity to elicit values that were pro-social. The primary evidence for this was the way in which these women stepped into sharing an indigenous paradigm within the unwelcoming paradigm of academic rationalism and with a researcher who represented the historically colonising 'Other'. As an example: they also abandoned the security of anonymity and came into the university to establish 'hospitality' and 'presence' when the first paper was presented at a departmental seminar. Rituals of *waiata* (song) and *karakia* (prayer) preceded the academic lecture; whilst blessings and silent communion were offered at the end. They offered a connection and face-to-face communication with other minds tuned to a variety of lens including rational materialism. Māori participants demonstrated a courageous 'harmony in diversity' and a 'gentle coming alongside of the 'Other'. They showed their collective responsibility to their spiritual truth, taking time from their employment to do so. They offered a deep hospitality to the knowledge they conveyed from the most sacred aspects of the self. Therefore, peace was demonstrated as a flexible, open, modelled, joyful and unpredictable honouring of presence and the worth of the 'Other'.

Spiritual brother-sisterhood alludes to an energetic base of peaceful relations. An active, silent state called forth spontaneous compassion, which is what happened when the women were invited into the University to support our shared *mahi* (work). There was peace out of community support. An environment and experience that may have been stressful became hospitable. The shields of engagement radically deconstructed through purposive processes of evoking presence. There was a peace out of the 'truth' of what ultimately connects us all in the relational and biological aspects of spirituality. There was a 'peace of justice' as the way was not colonised.

Some theorists argue for an integrated, multidimensional rendering of conflict transformation. I would agree with Dietrich's (2013) argument that one cannot understand

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<sup>114</sup> One example in the literature of the kind of peace building strategies that come from inner values and flexibility include the World Bank Mauritania Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper process. Those who created this document began by listening to their instincts and values. They developed one measure of success that was inclusion of all stakeholders. Once this was achieved focus groups, themes and planning naturally evolved.

an episode of violence or conflict without understanding the inner psyche of the actors and the correlated and interrelated multidimensional aspects of influence. In many ways, this planet has been experiencing a sustained level of conflict and violence towards the human mind and spirituality, defined by these participants as spiritual brother-sisterhood for several centuries (Capra, 1982, Stapp, 2007). Perhaps this study is a modest step towards reconciling a world that has denigrated the spiritual and forgotten intrinsic aspects of being human.

### **10:8 Finale**

As I reach the end of this convergent conversation between experts in human spirituality, I feel that I am at the beginning. Participants in this qualitative constructivist grounded theoretical study identified a universal thread of awareness that revealed itself to each one as a practical knowledge of the spiritual heart. Participants in both groups experienced an ongoing transcendental connection through the spiritual heart or *wairua* (spirit), to a unified field of consciousness that they called respectively: *tūpuna* (ancestors), *atua* (ancestral forces that generate and animate particular realms of reality) and *Master*. This connection had implications for inner and outer peace practices. The convergences of attunement and awareness, that led to a shared lens of peaceful practices, as described by these participants, was suitable for all people regardless of age, gender and cultural identities.

I suspect that there are deep neurobiological underpinnings to the multiple changes that participants reported in their experience of spiritual heart and multidimensional communion. Their descriptions of spiritual and relational *kotahitanga* (unity) may be the peace that Derrida hinted at. A peace, which happens naturally because we no longer experience our self-identity as, isolated from the ‘Other,’ who is each other.

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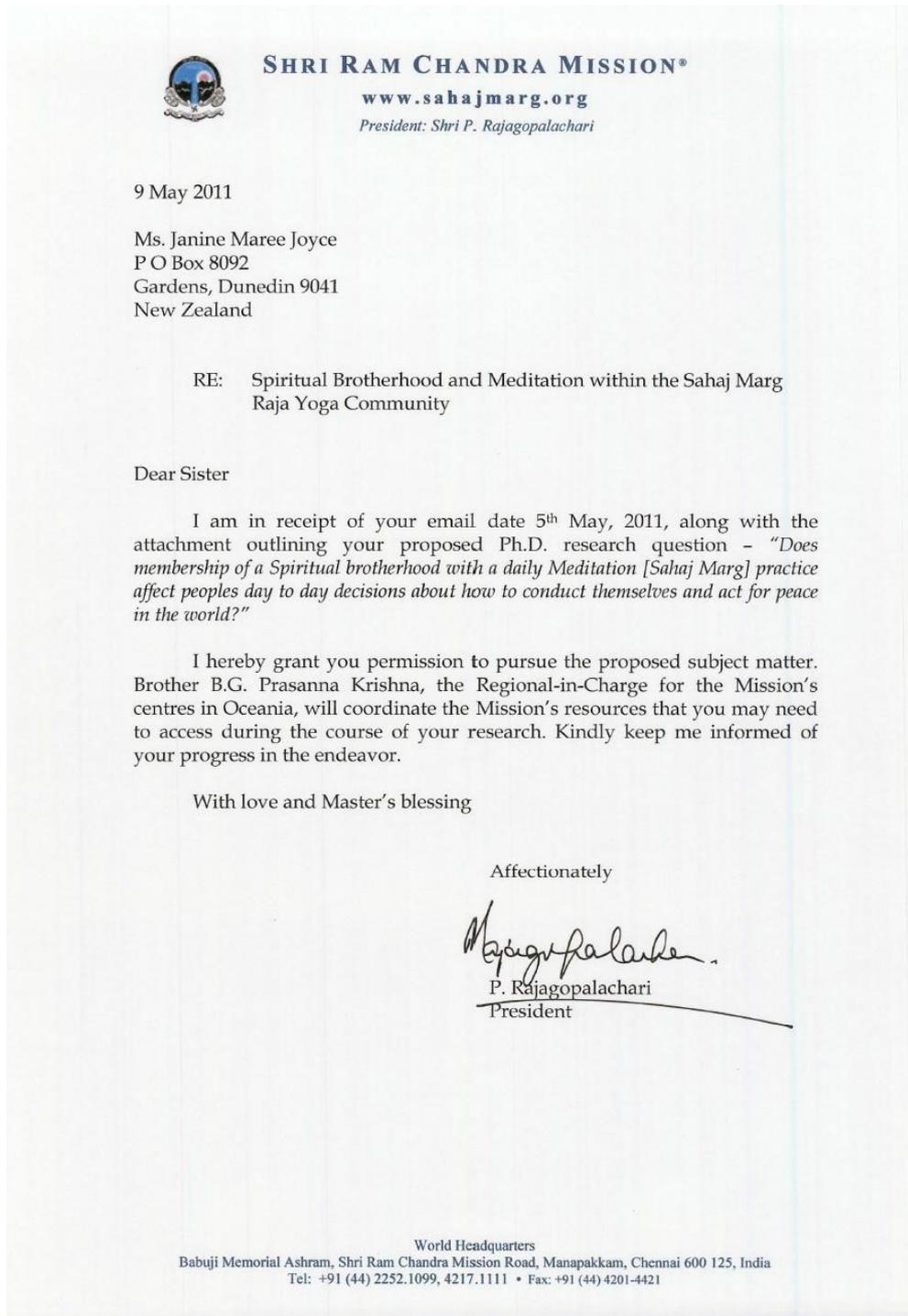
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## Appendix 1:



Letter of permission from P. Rajagopalachari, 9.5.11

## Appendix 2:

### Seminars, courses and centres visited during the project

Seminar	Date and Venue
Lucknow birthday celebration ( <i>bandura</i> ) attended by approximately 50,000 <i>Abhyasi</i> representing 57 countries	Lucknow, India (July 2010)
International Scholarship Training Program in Sahaj Marg Sadhana	Natrampali and Chennai, India (A four week intensive, December 2010)
Asian seminar and Malaysian Ashram Inauguration	Klang, Malaysia (June 2011)
South Africa and Oceania seminar	Chennai, India (December 2011)
South Africa and Oceania Prefects seminar	Chennai, India (December 2011)
Sahaj Marg facilitators workshop	Chennai, India (December 2011)
Satkhoh Ashram, Himalayas, India with Russian group	(10 <sup>th</sup> - 15 <sup>th</sup> January, 2012)
Silent retreat, Vrads Sande Retreat Centre	Vrads Sande, Denmark (June, 2012)
Lithuanian Seminar	Vilnius, Lithuania (June, 2012)
Latvian seminar	Riga, Latvia (June, 2012)
Tirupur birthday celebration attended by approximately 50,000 <i>Abhyasi</i> representing 57 countries	Tirapur, India (July, 2012)
Special one-day <i>Bandura</i> , attended by 22,000 practitioners	Chennai, India (August 15 <sup>th</sup> , 2012)
Prefects training course	Crest centre, Bangalore, India (18 <sup>th</sup> - 23 <sup>rd</sup> September, 2012)
Weekends participating and observing at the World Headquarters Manapakkum ashram	(27 <sup>th</sup> September, 2012; 6 <sup>th</sup> October, 2012, several weeks in December 2013; February 2012; May 2013)
Four days Ongal ashram, Dharmashram	(18 <sup>th</sup> October, 2012 - 21 <sup>st</sup> October, 2012)
Four days Pune Retreat Centre	(24 <sup>th</sup> October 2012 - 27 <sup>th</sup> October 2012)
Seminar Tirupati Centre	Manapakkum World Headquarters Ashram (20 <sup>th</sup> November, 2012 - 25 <sup>th</sup> November, 2012)
Satkhoh ashram, Himalayas, India with Russian group	(January, 2013)
Russian Seminar	Manapakkum World Headquarters Ashram, (February 2013)
Latin American seminar	Manapakkum World Headquarters Ashram, (February 2013)

Visit to four Hyderabad ashrams including- Tumukuntha, Andhara Pradesh Zonal ashram and Kanha Shanti Vaman	(May, 2013)
Malampuzha, Kerala Retreat Centre	(1/06/13 - 30/06/13)
Abhyasi and prefect at Tirupati Yogashram	(July 2012 - January 2014)
Satkhola ashram, Himalayas, India with Vietnamese and Indian and European group	8 <sup>th</sup> - 20 <sup>th</sup> October 2013
Greater China seminar	October 2013
Paris ashram , France	January 2014

### Appendix 3:

#### Paper and Conference Presentations

- i. New Zealand Political Science Association Conference, University of Otago, New Zealand (December 2012).
- ii. International Meaning, Culture and Values, International Interdisciplinary Conference. Hosted by: Centre of Arabic and African Studies, School of Languages, Literature and Culture Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi (5 - 7 January 2012) alongside Centre for Spirituality, Ethics and Global Awareness, Davis and Elkins College, USA.
- iii. International Conference Bildung, Mission for Humanities University, Lithuania (June 2012).
- iv. 15<sup>th</sup> International Philosophy and Psychiatry Conference, University of Otago, New Zealand (July 2012).
- v. The National Yoga Therapy Conference, Mangalore, India (January 2013).
- vi. The National Empowerment in Vedic Women's Literature, Tirupati, India (2013).
- vii. Departmental Presentation, National Peace and Conflict Studies Centre, University of Otago, New Zealand (May 2014).

#### Glossary

Δ Terms related to Māori tradition.

∞ Terms related to Indian Sahaj Marg tradition.

☼ Terms not related specifically to either of these traditions.

∞ **Abhyasi/s:** In Sanskrit this means the one who practices as a spiritual seeker. In Sahaj Marg, it refers to a person who is practicing the system of meditation.

∞ **Ahamkara:** 'I' making faculty, ego and egoism. The process of attachment and identification with ones ego or i-ness.

Δ **Ahau:** Personal pronoun meaning I.

∞ **Akasha:** Space - the subtlest of the five mystic elements, which in itself has a graduation of subtlety. Omnipresent, all-penetrating existence (Prajnananda, 1971).

Δ **Akoako:** Māori word that refers to an aspirant who receiving spiritual training and usually does not realise this is happening.

∞ **Anahata - sabda:** The eternal sound current; the song of the purified heart of the Yogini and the touch of grace. It is referred to in ancient Yogic texts and may be a variation of tones.

∞ **Ananta:** Infinite, eternal; symbolised by the snake swallowing his tail.

∞ **Antaryami:** The God within; the in dweller.

∞ **Aparigraha:** One of the individual restraints in Yoga that gives the condition of being without greed.

Δ **Aroha:** Māori word meaning love, feel pity, feel concern for, feel compassion and empathise. Also affection, sympathy, and charity. (Moorfield, 2000, p. 11). For participants in this study it expressed the felt compassionate heart and caring in relationship.

∞ **Asana:** This is the Sanskrit word for pose or posture. Hatha Yoga has eighty-four codified postures, although the possible number of variations are infinite. Raja Yoga has one pose associated with its practice. In general, *asana* are physical movements improving one's posture, preparing the body for sitting in meditation, and allowing the free flow of energy. These postures keep the body strong, and flexible. In Yoga, all posture names end with the word *asana*.

∞ **Ashram:** Hermitage - usually a Yoga centre, a retreat, where spiritual principles and life style are practised. Sahaj Marg study participants regularly returned to the central *ashram* in India to deepen their practice of meditation.

∞ **Ashtanga:** This word comes from the Sanskrit words: *Asht* 'eight' and *anga* 'limb'. Patanjali codified Yoga into eight connected yet separate branches, beginning with moral practices and ethics, culminating in meditation and *samadhi*. Ashtanga Yoga leads to mastery of the mind. The final goal of union and is *Kaivalya* or Absoluteness, in which the Yogi realizes the Truth.

∞ **Asteya:** The Yogic restraint of not stealing.

Δ **Ata:** Shadow or astral body.

∞ **Atman:** Over soul, Spirit, *Brahman* and Self.

Δ **Atua:** Many Māori trace their ancestry from *atua* (ancestral forces that generate and animate particular realms of reality) within their *whakapapa* (genealogy). *Atua* are ancestors with influence over particular

domains. *Atua* are a way of rationalising and perceiving the world (Moorfield, 2000) and for Māori participants in this study an important aspect of human spiritual identity.

∞ **Ayurveda:** From *Ayu* 'life' and *Veda* 'knowledge'. *Ayurvedic* science originates from *Vedic* knowledge, which date back to 3000 B.C. It was the traditional natural medicine of India. Many *Ayurvedic* hospitals exist in modern India, alongside Allopathic hospitals. Clinicians make referrals to Allopathic and *Ayurvedic* specialists.

∞ **Bhagavad-Gita:** The Bhagavad-Gita is a part of the Mahabharata epic. The Bhagavad-Gita tells the story of Krishna and his Yogic disciple Arjuna. It is a story whereby the complexity of ethics feature as Arjuna wrestles with his conscience and the requirements of his duty.

∞ **Bhakti:** Yogic practice of extreme devotion involving a one-pointed concentration upon one's concept of god.

∞ **Bhandara:** A *bhandara* is a celebration or gathering of people. In the Sahaj Marg tradition, annual large celebrations occur on the birth dates of one of the three teachers. Participants come from all over the world and groups can be as large as 50,000.

∞ **Bhoga/ Bhog:** The process of undergoing the effects of impressions, experience and enjoyment.

∞ **Brahman:** This is another word for the Supreme Being or creator within Hindu philosophy. *Brahman* is similar to notions of *Io* (Māori word for Supreme Being) and *Ishwara* (Supreme Being).

∞ **Brahmacharya:** The Yogic restraint of chastity in word, thought or deed and/ or conserving the vital life force energy. This was not a core aspect of the spiritual training for any of my study participants.

∞ **Buddhi:** Intuition, higher realm, spiritual discrimination, unclouded, and pure vision.

∞ **Chakra:** This Sanskrit word translates as wheel, circle, and plexus. According to the Indian sacred texts, the *chakras* are subtle aspects in a human beings invisible anatomy. They are the centres serving as human beings instrument and means of communication in an interplay of forces between man's various vehicles of consciousness. Participants in this study seldom mentioned *chakras*.

∞ **Citta:** This translates as mind. Mind/ *citta* is comprised of mind/ *manas*, intuitive intelligence/ *buddhi*, and ego/ *ahamkara*. The mind is comprised of all its various faculties, i.e.: selection, rejection, analysis, attention and egoism. The goal of Yoga is to control the fluctuations of the mind until ultimately they cease. There are four stages of stilling the *citta*. These stages are: i) wandering, ii) gathered, iii) concentrated and iv) restrained. At the wandering stage the mind is interested in powers and objects related to enjoyment. This mind is not suitable for *Yoga sadaka*. *Yogic sadaka* is suited to the mind that practices without desire or expectations. Branches of Yoga seek this goal through different means including, service, devotion, *asana* (poses) and knowledge.

∞ **Cittakasa:** The Sanskrit word meaning mental space (realm). According to Yogic science, human beings are able to sense and connect with each other beyond their body/ skin, time and space boundaries through the mental realm.

∞ **Citta – vritti - nirodha:** Subsidence of the modifications of the mind. According to Patanjali's *Yoga sutra*, this is the goal of Yoga. A common metaphor for this condition is it as if the waters of the lake remain profoundly calm.

∞ **Darshan:** Vision of someone else inner reality.

∞ **Dharma/Dhamma:** There are many applications of this word according to context. In this study, it means a combination of the following words: duty, righteousness, destined way, truth, virtue, and that which holds.

∞ **Dharana:** This is the Yogic practice of collecting or concentrating the mind, or the act of holding, bearing, wearing, supporting, maintaining, retaining, keeping back, a good memory, or firmness, steadfastness, and certainty.

∞ **Dhyana:** Profound meditation, which is the penultimate stage of Yoga. People often confuse the practice of *dharana* as meditation.

∞ **Duhkha/ Dukkha:** According to Yoga, this suffering comes from the human beings continual search and craving for happiness through the external world that by its very nature is binary and changeable. In Theravada Buddhism, it is the belief that all things give suffering, due to the human beings desire to seek permanence or recognize the self when neither exist.

☼ **Geist:** Term used by the philosopher Immanuel Kant to mean the spirit or animating principle of a human being.

∞ **God realisation:** In Yogic science this refers to a stage of consciousness. It is a state whereby the human being understands intuitively and deeply the spiritual goal of human life. This includes the ultimate destiny of all souls in Creation. A human being in this consciousness experiences God's infinite power, knowledge, and bliss continuously. God is not understood in Western terms but rather as source energy.

∞ **Guna:** The three energies in the universe of which all things are influenced. *Raja guna* is the creative and active principle. *Tamas guna* is the destructive, ignorant and lazy state. *Satva guna* is the name for the harmonised energy of maintenance, which is characterised by purity, inner calmness and clarity. It also refers to an essential property, essence or quality. A term that has numerous meanings, including 'virtue'; often refers to any of the three primary 'qualities' or constituents of nature (*prakriti*): the principle of inertia (*tamas*), the dynamic principle (*rajas*), and the principle of lucidity (*sattva*).

∞ **Guru:** The Hindi word for teacher or one that has spiritual knowledge. It is similar to use of the word 'master' in this thesis. In the Yogic tradition it refers to a human being who has gained the inner knowledge, realization and liberation from rebirth.

∞ **Gurukula:** The living in the same household as the guru or alongside for the purpose of learning.

Δ **Hapai:** To lift up, elevate, rise of heavenly bodies, carry and take up (Moorfield, 2000, p. 24).

∞ **Hatha Yoga:** This Yoga focuses upon physical postures and poses. According to Patanjali, it is the stage in Yogic training following universal and individual ethics. It is the base of a practice that culminates in Raja Yoga (Prasada, 1912).

Δ **Hamano:** Pure soul.

Δ **Hāu:** According to participants, *hāu* was a feeling and translates into English language as wind, air, breath, vital essence, and/ or vitality of human life. There is also the aspect of respecting, promoting and maintaining this vitality.

∞ **Heart:** The subtle energetic aspect of the human being.

∞ **Heart to heart:** According to study participants, this was a form of communication that was non-localised and mediated through the forceless force of love, inner silence and awareness.

Δ **Hohou rongō:** Peace agreement.

Δ **Hui:** Community meeting.

Δ **Io-matua-kore:** “*Io* the parentless one. One of the names for the supreme being” (Moorfield, 2000, p. 46). *Io* as the source or originating power and beyond ideas of identity or gender.

∞ **Ishwara:** The Supreme Being in Hindu philosophy. Attributes of formlessness, omniscience, and omnipotence. In this thesis, I have taken the liberty of posing *Io* (Supreme Being) and *Ishwara* as similar concepts.

∞ **Ishwara-pranidhana:** Devotion to the inner God said to be in the spiritual heart of the human being.

Δ **Iwi:** Tribal groups.

∞ **Jnana:** This path of Yoga is the path of wisdom or knowledge. Some Yogic teachers consider it to be the most difficult path.

Δ **Kaitiakitanga:** Guardianship.

∞ **Kaivalya:** The permanent cessation of the three gunas. Independence, isolation, self-realization, perfect liberation, and total self-awareness.

∞ **Kama:** The Yogic law of action and reaction.

Δ **Kanohi kitea:** Face to face meetings and being there. The face that is seen.

Δ **Kanohi ke te kanohi:** Face to face.

Δ **Karakia:** As an action, karakia means to recite ritual chants, say grace, pray, recite a prayer and chant. A second meaning includes: prayer, grace, blessing, service, church service, incantation, ritual chant, chant, intoned incantation - chants recited rapidly using traditional language, symbols and structures.

∞ **Karma/ kama:** This form of Yoga is where all movement, all action/work of any kind is done with the mind centred on a personal concept of God.

Δ **Kaumatua:** Elder within Māoridom; one with knowledge and wisdom.

Δ **Kauae Runga:** Realm of spirit.

Δ **Kauae Raro:** Realm of materiality.

Δ **Kou wai ou:** This relates to the understanding of the divine nature of the human being and ones interconnecting relationship with all of life. It is a knowing who you are as a multidimensional and reciprocal being.

Δ **Kiatiaki/ Kiatiakitanga:** Relationship of guardianship or protection of land, people and spirit.

Δ **Kia tupato:** Be very cautious.

Δ **Kiko:** Innards or guts.

Δ **Kōrero:** To speak together. Often used as a way of understanding each other or in a spirit of hospitality.

Δ **Kotahitanga:** In this thesis, this word refers to an underlying spiritual unity between all beings but more often, it refers to Māori political and ideological unity.

∞ **Kriya:** Hatha Yogic cleansing and purifying of the physical body.

Δ **Kuia/ tāua:** Female elder.

∞ **Laya:** Dissolution - subsidence; total mental absorption in a higher state of consciousness.

∞ **Mahabunga:** The 'great void', the sphere of influence of the purified *ajna - chakra*.

Δ **Mana wairua/ atua:** The spiritual process of empowerment by and empowering the spiritual realms.

Δ **Mana whenua:** Is the embodied power of the land.

Δ **Mana tangata:** Is the embodied power of the human being as well as the development or realising of such power.

Δ **Mana ki te tangata/ Manaakitanga:** Human rights and hospitality.

Δ **Manawa:** Mind or heart of the person.

Δ **Marae:** Meeting house and a safe area for relationship and things Māori.

∞ **Master:** In this thesis, the italicised form of *Master* describes an omniscient, omnipresent field of awareness and love.

Δ **Matauranga:** Knowledge and epistemology.

Δ **Mauri:** The life principle, special nature, a material symbol of a life principle, and source of emotions.

Δ **Mauri ora:** The breath of life, the originating spark Δ **Tāua/ Kuia:** Female elder.

Δ **Tihe Mauri ora:** The sneeze of life and the call to speak.

∞ **Moodha:** Ignorant stage in human development whereby the individual has forgotten spiritual self.

∞ **Nadis:** Refers to the 72,000 nerve passages in the body and their relationships with the mind. Located in special areas of the body, these energy channels are similar to the meridians in acupuncture. There are three major energy channels in the body. These are Sushumna (which carry the Kundalini energy up the spine), Pingala and Ida (which carry the solar and lunar energy respectively).

∞ **Namaste:** Literally, “the divine in me honours the divine in you.” The traditional Indian salutation done by pressing the hands together near the heart and the head bowed.

∞ **Neti:** *Neti* is an important part of Hindu *Shatkarma*, the yogic system of body cleansing techniques that is an integral part of Hinduism. It is used to cleanse of the air passageways in the head.

Δ **Ngai Tahu:** Indigenous Māori tribe of the South Island of New Zealand. Kai Tahu is the Southern Māori dialect equivalent.

∞ **Niyama:** Ethical codes of practice as outlined in Yoga.

☼ **Open Heart:** A spiritual heart that is open and able to feel and be aware of the invisible information.

Δ **Pākehā:** The non-indigenous population of Aotearoa New Zealand.

Δ **Papatūānuku:** Mother Earth.

∞ **Prana:** The cosmic energy that animates everything. *Prana* is also breath, the life force sustaining the body and connecting the mind to the senses. There are five pranas or vital currents in the human body system according to Yoga: i) *prana*, ii) *apana*, iii) *vyana*, iv) *udana* and v) *samana*. The pranas constitute the second sheath (*kosha*) of a human being (who is essentially the *Atman* or the Self). In its original state it is the sum total of all the forces in the universe (Abhedananda, 1967).

- ∞ **Pranahuti:** The conscious sharing of the gurus or masters spiritual heart condition or energy.
- ∞ **Pranayama:** Breathing practice in Yoga, which increases the amount of vital life energy in the body as well as contributes to beneficial physiological changes. There are eight common *pranayama* practices.
- ∞ **Pratyahara:** A Yogic stage of practice that involves the withdrawal of the mind and disengagement from sense objects and organs.
- ∞ **Prefect/ preceptor:** Spiritual trainer in the Sahaj Marg tradition.
- ∞ **Puraka:** Inspiration.
- ∞ **Purusa/ purusha:** Individual soul in the Yogic tradition.
- ∞ **Raja Yoga:** This Sanskrit word translates into the English language as the 'royal path' of Yoga because it incorporates exercises and breathing practice with meditation and study. The goal is mergence with the Supreme by means of complete mind control and mastery of the individual nature; regeneration and 'birth' of the spiritual mind.
- Δ **Rakimarie:** Act and state of being peaceful. Southern Māori dialect.
- Δ **Rangi:** Sky Father who is at all the time present and alive.
- Δ **Raranga:** This is the sacred Māori art of weaving of the *harakeke* or flax plant. It comprises prayer/*karakia*, conservation and practical techniques of creating garments and many articles for daily living.
- Δ **Rongo:** Peace.
- ∞ **Sadhaka:** Spiritual aspirant in Yogic traditions.
- ∞ **Sadhana:** Spiritual discipline and self-culture.
- ∞ **Sakti/ shakti:** From one point of view there are two principles in the Universe. *Siva* (consciousness) and *Sakti* (energy and power). *Sakti* is the totality of power, be this manifest or latent.
- ∞ **Samadhi:** State of total absorption, when the observer (thinker/knower) and the observed (thought/thing) are one. A blissful condition.
- ∞ **Samskara:** The impressions stored in the *citta* (mind) that form the basis of our beliefs, attitudes and personality.
- ∞ **Samyoga:** Firm vision on the spiritual.
- ∞ **Sanskrit:** The mother of all Indo-European languages. Predating Greek and Latin, Sanskrit is an ancient language and is the base of many modern languages. The word *sanskrit* itself translates into 'perfected, polished, or refined'. The Devanagari alphabet consists of fifty letters, each with a distinctive sound.

- ∞ **Santosa/ santosha:** Yogic state of contentment.
- ∞ **Satsangh:** Sitting in the truth, in meditation together.
- ∞ **Satya:** Yogic practice of truth.
- ∞ **Saucha:** Yogic practice of inner and outer cleanliness.
- ∞ Spiritual heart: See heart.
- ∞ **Stithi:** Capacity to determine objectively and dispassionately one's current spiritual position in order to plan one's method. I find that the silent interaction with others, combined with awareness is immensely helpful in this process.
- ∞ **Self:** In terms of Yoga this refers to the inner core of the human being that is beyond individual ego and *citta*.
- ∞ **Shanti:** This is a Sanskrit term for the 'peace'.
- ∞ **Sushumna:** The mystical mechanism of the self-realization. According to Yogic science, it is the subtle channel corresponding to the inner portion of the spinal column. It constitutes the path of liberation. It is the secret path - the pathway of *kundalini-sakti* or pristine spiritual energy in Yoga. It is also the name for the *chakra* at the top of the head.
- ∞ **Sutra:** Literally, 'thread'. A book of aphorisms like the Yoga Sutras by Patanjali.
- ∞ **Swadhyaya:** The Yogic practice of self-study or awareness.
- ∞ **Swami:** From the Sanskrit root word, *swa* (self). This translates as 'he who is one with him Self'. The term indicates a Hindu monk or realised *Yogi*.
- Δ **Tane:** As a noun, this means man. However, Tane was also a God who ascended eleven of the superimposed heavens to the twelfth heaven (tenth heaven in Southern traditions) of the supreme power *Io*. There he received the three baskets of knowledge and the two sacred stones. According to the cosmology of many participants in this study, there are ten heavens.
- Δ **Tangata whenua:** This means 'people of the land' and refers to ancestral claims as well as responsibilities of guardianship.
- Δ **Te Kauwae Runga:** The knowledge of the upper jawbone pertaining to cosmology and universe.
- Δ **Te Kauwae Raro:** The knowledge of the lower jaw bone pertaining to human beings and the material world.

∞ **Tattvamasi:** This Sanskrit language term means ‘that thou art’ referring to the supreme realization that humans are spiritual beings. It is the knowledge that the divine abides within and is in fact ones very nature. According to both participant groups, the only way to discover this truth was by means of intense selfrealization.

∞ **Tapas:** The Yogic practice of austerity. It also relates to those practices that increase the divine fire or *agni* (spiritual fire) within the spiritual apparatus of the aspirant. It is said that it is the divine *agni* that creates seers.

Δ **Te-pu-manawa:** The art and training in concentration.

Δ **Ti hei mauri ora:** The sneeze of life and the call to claim the right to speak.

Δ **Titiro:** To look, to stare and to see.

Δ **Tikanga:** Customary practices.

Δ **Tohunga/ tohuka:** Spiritual expert chosen as an agent by the atua.

Δ **Tūpuna / tipuna:** The spelling for this word differs according to the area and tribal affiliation. However, the meaning remains the same - ancestor, grandparent, grandfather, and grandmother.

Δ **Turangawaewae/ tūrakawaewae:** Your place to stand tall and connected through all aspects of your spiritual and physical being.

∞ **Upanishad:** Short summaries of the Vedas. Also called Vedanta - the end of the Vedas.

Δ **Utu:** The process of addressing balance is utu. It can include ideas of reciprocity, hospitality and retribution. Whatever is required to restore the balance of mana (presence/ power).

∞ **Vedas:** From the Sanskrit root word Vid, meaning ‘to know’. According to Indian philosophy, the Supreme Being revealed 100,000 couplets of chants to the Rishis. There are four Vedas: i) Sama, ii) Rig, iii) Yajur, and iv) Atharva. The Rig Veda is one of the oldest book preserved by humanity. The sacred knowledge was valued and transmitted orally (prior to being recorded in writing), by Brahmin priest’s, generation after generation. This is similar to the Māori spiritual knowledge, conveyed orally by tohuka (tohunga in Northern dialects).

∞ **Vedanta:** The latter part of the Vedas - the crown of the Hindu spiritual message of liberation and enlightenment.

∞ **Viyoga:** Disconnection.

Δ **Waiata:** At its simplest, this means to sing and chant. It can also mean song. Participants in this study described it as a means of peaceful protest on the marae.

Δ **Wairua:** This refers to the spirit, soul, and quintessence - spirit of a person, which exists beyond death. To some, the wairua resides in the heart or mind of someone; while others believe it is part of the whole person and is not located at any particular part of the body. The wairua begins its existence when the eyes form in the fetus and is immortal. Some believe that all animate and inanimate things have a whakapapa and a wairua. The wairua has the power to warn the individual of impending danger through visions and dreams.

Δ **Waka:** Physical and metaphorical canoe.

Δ **Whakarongo:** The art of listening. This word however includes the word for peace and reminds us to listen to another with a hospitable attitude.

Δ **Whakawhanaukataka:** The important spiritual and relational art of building relationships.

Δ **Whānau:** As an action, whānau means to be born, and give birth. It also refers to an extended family, family group, and is a familiar term of address to a number of people - in the spiritual context the term may be refer to friends who may not have biological kinship ties.

Δ **Whanaukataka:** The practice of community.

Δ **Whakapapa:** This can be understood as both a noun and an activity. As an activity it means to lie flat, lay flat, recite in proper order (e.g., genealogies, legends, months), and recite genealogies. As a noun, it refers to genealogy, genealogical table, lineage, and descent. Behind the face of whakapapa lies the sacred code of the *Tapu a Io ko Atua* (sacred code of *Io* (supreme being) and the gods) (Ra, 1999).

Δ **Whakawhanaungatanga:** Establishing and relating well to others.

Δ **Wananga:** Learning center. Māori maintained learning centres for the transmission of spiritual knowledge. A number of the Waitaha participants' in this study were related to the prophet Te Maiharoa. "But although Te Maiharoa taught ancient lore, contrary to ancient practise he made no distinction between male and female pupils" (Mikaere, 1988, p. 121). A traditional learning school whereby students live on the marae alongside their teachers.

∞ **Yama:** Yogic ethical restraints.

∞ **Yoga:** Disciplines of control and transcendence of mind, senses and internal faculties; it relates to the unfoldment of intuition, the experience of mystical states and self-realization.

∞ **Yogi:** Expert male practitioner of Yoga.

∞ **Yogini:** Female expert practitioner of Yoga.

∞ **Yogāseva:** Yoga practice.

Sources: <http://www.maoridictionary.co.nz>

<http://www.imperience.org/> <http://www.abc-of-yoga.com/yoga-dictionary.asp>

Moorfield, J. (2000). *Ngā Kupu me ngā tikanga*. Auckland, N.Z.: Pearson Education New Zealand.

Study Participants for Southern Māori dialect versions.