

**An exploration of the potential of meditation
to inform teaching practice**

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Attestation of Authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

Invocation

I pray to Gurumayi for guidance and love so that I accomplish my thesis goal and to fulfil my intention for this writing. I pray that my mind can articulate clearly the many thoughts I have on this topic and that the work is enjoyable and meaningful. I pray that the writing is interesting and useful to others, that it is well supported by relevant work and the ideas of other well informed and knowledgeable people. I pray that this thesis is imbued with your wisdom Gurumayi, to strengthen my understanding and to contribute these ideas to the world in which I live.

Sadgurunath Maharaj ki Jay

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Abstract

This thesis documents a self-study of the author's meditation and teaching practice. The purpose of this study was to explore the potential of meditation to develop authentic teaching practice and to consider the applications of new understanding to the teaching environment. The process of meditation is the primary inquiry method supported by self-study, an emergent teacher-practitioner based methodology. Siddha Yoga meditation teaches that continual meditation practice leads to a direct experience and expanded awareness of your own Self.

A practice of regular meditation and journaling over a teaching semester identified four key themes. These themes span the personal inner experience and deepening spiritual awareness, through to the everyday professional practices and skills of a teacher. The themes acknowledge the mysterious and potent place of unknowing concealed deep within an individual; the experience of cultivating Self-awareness which leads to a unified perspective of others; and finally describes the ways in which this new awareness influences the teacher-student interaction, regarded in this study as the observable artefacts of the study. The study describes how a deepening awareness of oneself supports authentic development in one's professional role as a teacher.

Although there are definite challenges to using a model of contemplative self-inquiry within an academic framework, there are clear benefits. This study can contribute to the development of new methodology that fully accepts the value of self-experience as a form of self-knowledge, and which aligns with contemplative or integrative teaching approaches.

Introduction

Personal Impetus and intention for the study

My name is Kitt Foreman and in my professional life I am a teacher. I have been teaching in a professional capacity for ten years, mostly on a university bridging programme designed to support students into undergraduate health degrees. As a teacher, so too am I a student. Part of my work is to learn the art of teaching. If someone had said to me when I was in my twenties that I would one day be a teacher I would have ridiculed the idea. This attitude however changed once I had school-aged children. I became encouraged by my belief that children deserved good teachers and indeed that I could be one of these 'good' teachers. This principle, that students deserve good teachers, has carried through into my present job teaching young adults and underpins my work ethic. I now have grown up children and know full well the power of love and compassion that helps form strength and wisdom in others.

From a professional perspective, a major motivation has been to achieve an integration of my daily work with my soul, as described by Palmer (2003). Zajonc (2009) discusses his disconnection with academic study and how, with the guidance of a spiritual mentor, he began to reanimate ideas of education that had long been inert for him. In a similar fashion, my experience as a student in the New Zealand education system was alienating, a cultural necessity to be negotiated with the least resistance, and at best a place to socialise with friends. Inspirational people were certainly there, but scarce. In my long years at school and then university, I continued to experience a scarcity of personal connection. Looking back, I would define this sense of alienation as a longing in my heart for an idealised way to engage in the pursuit of knowledge.

Why did I choose to study meditation as a foundation for discussing educational pedagogy? I believe that the personal is political. If I don't know myself, how can I ever truly know others? I also believe that I am the change agent, hence the most important place to initiate change is here with me. There is a Siddha Yoga story that tells of a person who wanted to change the world. Years passed and this did

not happen. They then wanted only to change their family and friends. Again this was not achieved. By now they were old and so with the little strength they had left they began to change themselves.

Repeated persuasively in all Siddha Yoga literature and sacred teachings is the call to 'know one Self'¹, to develop a deepening awareness of the divinity that abides within. My inquiry focuses on coming to know my Self. Performing practices that support insight and connection to the natural wisdom that inhabits the inner reaches of my being. From this vantage I hope the axiom of 'teach what you know' is fully imbibed and reflected in my work as a teacher.

Teaching, I believe, is more an art than a well rehearsed training. Skills and professional knowledge from the external world connect and combine with the inner knowledge of the practitioner. Nugent (2009) points out that spirituality is primarily to be understood as a learning process. It is precisely this that has led me to want to unravel the intricacies of my spiritual development and discover how it interfaces with my teaching development.

Learning the art of good teaching is similar to the practice of meditation. Both entail focused attention and effort, continuous reflection, and allowing for indeterminacy and space in which new understandings can arise. For me teaching and meditation practice are inseparable from who I am. Meditation is a powerful tool for a teacher and teaching is a gratifying and exacting environment to reinforce inner skills.

The spiritual dimension of who I am cannot be separated from my professional self. It is an integral aspect of my conscious world and is the eye through which I perceive and receive. To live an undivided life, it is essential to build bridges between spiritual wisdom and worldly life. Contemplation and meditation brings a different texture to my role as a teacher. Meditation is a critical discipline to focus attention and awareness inwards, to still the mind and from this experience the awareness of your own heart (Durgananda, 2002). As Palmer (1998) says,

¹ Capital letters are used to denote a pure or divine state of awareness

listening to oneself is the most reliable way to get reconnected with what is real in the world

Rationale for the study

“The spiritual is always present in public education, whether we acknowledge it or not. It is not something that can be bought into or added onto. It is at the heart of every subject we teach” (Scherer as cited in Crossman, 2003, p. 511).

Being and becoming a teacher is a challenging and unique journey. Ayers describes teaching as “an activity that is intensely practical and yet transcendent, brutally matter of fact, and yet fundamentally a creative act” (as cited in Gibbs, 2006, p. 15). A teachers sense of being or presence says Gibbs (2006), is at the core of teaching and learning. Good teachers are connected with their feelings, spirit, heart and soul and assume a genuine presence in the lives of students (Intrator, 2004). Palmer (1998), who has made an extensive contribution to this topic, encourages educators to inquire, ‘who is the self that teaches’? Inward inquiry leads, he believes, to bridging personal and professional identities and is essential for living an undivided life. Cultivating an authentic identity is grounded in a strong sense of Self. Our consciousness needs and wants to feel connected to things beyond us that also, paradoxically, make us feel more like who we really are (Seymour, 2004). The art is to combine skills and professional knowledge from the external world with the inner knowledge of the practitioner. To know yourself is surely a prerequisite for knowing who you are as a teacher.

A new learning paradigm in education pedagogy emphasises subjective knowing alongside objective knowledge (Palmer & Zajonc, 2010). Teachers need the opportunity to inwardly reflect on their own growth, to constantly reintegrate their purpose and commitment to their work (Intrator & Kunzman, 2006). In line with teacher renewal programmes advocating that the inner lives of teachers is a vital dimension of professionalism, this study seeks to address a balance between the personal and shared aspects of life. Teaching is after all a highly intimate as well as communal experience.

This study joins the stream of educators and writers striving to integrate spirituality in their lives and work. Spiritual awareness within the context of the education environment begins with a deepening consciousness of others and ourselves. Self-study is a catalyst for change from the inside out. Combining skills in the external world with inner knowledge it becomes possible to teach from who we are.

There are a number of core questions that have been fundamental to this research inquiry:

How can the disconnection of mind and heart occurring in education be explained?

What does integrated education look like?

What role can Siddha Yoga meditation play in realising integrative education in both a personal and social context?

Can traditional academic research processes accommodate contemplative self-inquiry?

Embarking on the esoteric and spiritual exploration of these questions has provided me with both an anchor and a trail to explore and begin to find answers for the tenet of this thesis, the place and relationship of spirituality with teaching practice.

Structure of the thesis

Chapter one contains the literature review. This begins with a sketch of spirituality in education with a focus on philosophical and pedagogical approaches. A comprehensive account is provided of integrative and contemplative education and the foundational concepts central to this approach.

In chapter two I explain the epistemological underpinnings of this self-inquiry with consideration given to two distinct paradigms that reflect a western academic tradition and a spiritual view of knowledge. I then present the design of the study and outline the methodological approach that supports this research process.

Chapter three provides a comprehensive overview of the philosophy and practice of Siddha Yoga, which situates the meditation practice used in this self-study.

In chapter four a conceptual map is provided, introducing the findings of the self-inquiry, to assist the reader to access and understand the themes presented in the subsequent chapters.

Chapter five presents the insights from meditation that lead to the expansion of Self-awareness. The three themes of Concealment, Self-Awareness and Awareness of others are fully described.

Chapter Six is the culmination of the self-inquiry that had direct relevance to my teaching practice. This chapter is divided into three themes, Relationships, Listening with Awareness and Creating Space.

Chapter One: Literature review: Spirituality within education

To explain the current relationship between spirituality and mainstream education, the literature review begins with a background summary of influential educational philosophy and pedagogy that has shaped contemporary educational practice. The overview helps to identify both barriers and supports, beginning with the dominant cultural transmission approach that has its roots in western realism and scientific objectivity. A discussion of economic beliefs underpinning New Zealand education models and the authority of the state to safeguard religious freedom in secular society, further clarifies the marginalisation of spirituality within education.

The literature review culminates by presenting a synthesis of contemplative frameworks that place spirituality at the centre of teaching and learning. Integrative education can be defined as a model of education where spirituality is embodied within educational practice. According to this model there is a harmonious balance between the inner authority of teacher and student, where principals of spirituality combine with knowledge and practice from the external world.

The term 'spiritual' is variously replaced with other terms such as holistic, integrative, contemplative, inner inquiry or self-awareness. As the scope of integrative education is elucidated, the parameters of these expressions will become clearer. At this stage, it will be advantageous to make a preliminary inquiry as to the actual significance of spirituality in peoples lives, and to define what is commonly understood by this notion.

Meaningful spirituality

Studies indicate that most people have some belief in a spiritual dimension to life (Crossman, 2003; Gibbs, 2006; Zajonc, 2009). New Zealand has one of the highest rates in the western world of people with no religious affiliation. But while

organised religion is steadily declining, there is evidence that a spiritual revolution may be occurring similar to other western countries with upwards of 40% of New Zealanders reporting having had a spiritual experience different from their everyday reality (Vaccarino, Kavan, & Gendall, 2011). Arguably, spirituality in its organized and idiosyncratic forms is as important to most people as it ever was (Mayes, 2001). Spiritual groups tend to be small and loosely organised. Crossman describes how for many people in the modern western world spirituality is regarded as private and individual, almost secret, and that this has influenced the way in which spirituality is voiced and interpreted (Crossman, 2003).

Although a broad definition of spirituality would be useful at this point in the discussion, a key feature of the concept of spirituality is the multiplicity of expression, meaning, and layers of understanding surrounding the term (English, Fenwick, & Parsons, 2003). West Burnham and Huw Jones (2007) observed the inner journey is often alluded to as a passage to find authentic and profound understanding of the self which can then inform behaviour, nourish hope and enable personal transformation. Vokey (2003) suggests that spirituality can mean experiences of connection with our selves, our deepest hopes and fears; other human and non human beings, and all their similarities and differences; the natural world and the cosmos, complexity, beauty and mystery; purposes and powers that transcend the ego. English and Gillen (as cited in English et al., 2003) define spirituality as an awareness of something greater than ourselves that moves one outward to others. Spiritual experience is described by Capra (as cited in West Burnham & Huw Jones, 2007) as an experience of unity that transcends the separation of self and world a profound sense of oneness with all, a sense of belonging to the universe as a whole. And finally, Hayward (1999), who is a physicist, says that spectrums of finer and finer awareness-energy that at the level of transcendent being equate to what some people call God. Hayward explains that the concept of God according to many spiritual traditions represents a human perception of the transcendent, and therefore the expression of 'nothing' or 'void' is more apt.

A lineage of influence: Philosophical and pedagogical approaches

As with definitions of spirituality, contemporary education is made of many parts, each fragment reflecting a different position and contributing to its overall evolution. Pope and Denicolo (2001) offer a valuable summation of philosophical approaches that underpin educational pedagogy as it is practiced in schools and universities. These authors present five categories, each encapsulating major theoretical stances. The categories are cultural transmission/ instrumentalism, romanticism and progressivism, de-schooling and humanistic. When viewed together these strands of philosophy and theory help illuminate the interconnected discourses that have influenced contemporary education and provide a clear vantage point to observe many if not most of the significant pedagogical influences in integrative education.

The first category Pope and Denicolo (2001) termed Cultural transmission/ instrumentalism to represent the classic western educational tradition, whereby truth is approached as independent, objective and measurable. Information is transmitted by the teacher and accumulated in the student. This output/input behaviour is illustrated by a mechanistic metaphor that approaches knowledge as structured, reductionist, rational and technocratic. Cognitive, rational development is emphasized and results are measured and ranked in competency based assessments. Outcomes focus on what is known and dismiss what is not known, ignorance is regarded as error. This approach aligns with the concept of the 'knowledge economy' that promotes education as a developer of people's skills to better contribute to the economy (Miller & Nakagawa, 2002; Zepke, 2003 -a) and is heavily reflected in current New Zealand education policies. The New Zealand situation will be more fully examined shortly.

The historical influences that have impacted on thinking and approaches summarised by this category have been around for a very long time. In the 12th and 13th centuries European universities emerged from monastic and cathedral schools and undertook an Aristotelian program based largely on logic, the natural sciences and theology (Stock, 2006). These ideas of realism with their rigorous methods of objective inquiry gained considerable traction in the industrial and

technological age of the 17th and 18th centuries, continuing at an exponential rate to the present day (Crotty, 1998). This behaviour of perceiving and understanding external phenomena changed humanities relationships to the world. Understanding truth was possible through applying certain objective principles and reasoning rather than along a path of internal transformation. Famously coined the dawn of modernity by Foucault (Cottingham, 1996), this was a paradigmatic shift from spirituality to science. Human comprehension of the objective workings of the world escalated and once understood, this aspect of knowledge was considered capable of being harnessed or changed to human advantage. This ontological shift is generally thought to begin with Descartes scientific method (Cottingham, 1996). It is salient to read Descartes thoughts who in 1637, nearly 400 years ago wrote about the potential of science for humanity. The excerpt leaves little doubt as to the persuasive power and appeal of the scientific method.

Through [my discoveries in physics]...we could know the power and action of fire, water, air, the stars, the heavens and all the other bodies in our environment as distinctly as we know the various crafts of our artisans; and we could use this knowledge for all the purposes for which it is appropriate and thus make ourselves as it were masters and possessors of nature....[We] might free ourselves from innumerable diseases, both of body and of the mind, and perhaps even from the infirmity of old age, if we had sufficient knowledge of their causes and of all the remedies which nature has provided (Cottingham, 1996, p. 43).

Romanticism, the second category put forward by Pope and Denicolo (2001), stems from 19th century philosophers such as Rousseau who advocated that education be based on the natural goodness and development of the child as opposed to a pedagogy of control and restraint. A child's inner world of thoughts, perceptions and emotions are emphasized as well as freedom of expression. These ideas underlie many of the fundamental humanistic beliefs including the non-directive role of the teacher, student centered approaches, self-directed learning methods and values based learning.

The idealist school of philosophy that Plato is associated with sits adjacent to romanticism. They hold that ultimate reality is spiritual rather than material. The external world is real, but there exists a more fundamental incorporeal reality. Knowledge of the inner realm is the goal of knowledge and self-inquiry. Writers such as Crotty (1998) describe how idealist philosophy emphasises learning as holistic and highlights the power of ideas above all else to achieve synthesis and universal truth. For the idealists the spiritual, intuitive aspect of awareness was as significant as knowledge of the physical realm. Kerwin, (2011) comments how these ideas are rarely brought to the attention of students in today's academic world with the ideas of spiritual knowledge once embodied by scholars such as Socrates and his student Plato, the founder of the academy around 387 BC, being largely dismissed in the western citadels of education and inquiry. Commenting on the reintroduction of meditative practices in the humanities to be used to educate the whole person, Stock (2006), notes that increasingly scholars are recognising that the roots of this approach lie in ancient Greek philosophy and a concern for the creation of self-knowledge.

The next category progressivism presents the ideas of Dewey, the founder of the Progressive School movement, who believed education should stimulate the process of development through active participation. Teachers create experiences and facilitate the learning process in contrast to transmitting discrete information. How people make sense of their environment as they interact with it is regarded as the defining quality of the individual's reality. This category also reflects the developmental and learning theories of Piaget and Bruner who describe knowledge as being internally organized in complex cognitive structures and dependent on an individual's interaction with their unique environment (Pope & Denicolo, 2001). Experiential learning and lifelong learning are contemporary offshoots of this category.

A small but significant category according to Pope and Denicolo (2001), de-schooling is the category used to reflect the influential and revolutionary educational movements of the 1970s that advocated for revolutionary change or dismantling educational structures. 'Schools without walls', were regarded as the mechanism to address the alienation, apathy, dis-connection and even harmful

environments experienced by many students. Pope and Denicolo describe how Ivan Illich with authors such as Holt, Reimer who wrote *School is Dead* and Postman and Weingartner's text, *Teaching as Subversive Activity*, rejected the educational structure as no longer having relevance in an affluent, post-war, youth centric society. Strong criticism was levelled at the transmission approach and included a lack of flexibility in a modern global society and hierarchical power structures. Home schooling was considered a more suitable learning environment for children.

The final approach discussed by Pope and Denicolo (2001) termed humanistic; emphasises personal experience and interpersonal relationships as the origin of action. Carl Rogers (1975) the father of Humanism differentiated between learning processes that were teacher based (the traditional cultural transmission approach) and learner-based. He argued that genuineness and presence in the teacher influenced learners and that 'personal knowledge' acquired through self-discovery brings together intellectual and emotional learning for the whole person.

Education for emancipation is another paradigm linked to the humanistic category. Paulo Freire was a strong proponent that humanistic approaches were central to empowering the learner. He advocated that interactive dialogue between teacher and learner and reflection on experience was of paramount significance (Pope & Denicolo, 2001). Another important influence was Schon who developed the concept of 'reflective practitioner', emphasising that professional development can build from a teacher's independent judgement and creativity when they articulate reflections on their practice. Schon referred to the moment-to-moment intuition that guides action, 'reflection-in-action' and demonstrated that reflective practice brings tacit knowing into consciousness (Miller, 2000). Mezirow proposed that critical reflection on one's assumptions, values and beliefs (frames of reference through which the world is understood) may be challenged and that this facilitates transformation in an individual and in a collective sense. Transformative learning leads to a deeper sense of self and an expanded consciousness (Cranton & Carusetta, 2004). The reflective process is also used as a learning approach in experiential learning and constructivism. Through direct experience and active

learning an individual constructs and re-constructs knowledge and meaning about oneself and the world (Zepke, 2003 -a).

Theorists such as Rogers, Schon and Mezirow particularly enrich and corroborate some ideas from integrative educators. So too does the epistemology underlying idealism which proposes that ultimate reality is spiritual rather than material and that this is the goal of knowledge and self-inquiry.

An economic model of education

As understandings about the nature of knowledge influence the practices of teaching and learning, so economic and political contexts directly impact on the institutional arrangements and understandings of education. As previously described in the section on cultural transmission/instrumentalism, western capitalist management systems of education consider that ideas focused on intrinsic values of the 'whole' body-mind-spirit have little validity or worth. Knowledge and learning is approached as independent, objective and measurable. Information is regarded as something to be delivered by a teacher and retained in the student. Writers have theorised that this focus on individualism and rationalism reflects a much broader social malaise of disconnected and dislocated people (Glazer, 1999; Palmer, 1998; Seymour, 2004) and argue that these institutional features exert great pressure on professionals, ultimately resulting in high levels of job dissatisfaction and anxiety amongst teaching staff (Codd as cited in Giles, 2008).

Codd describes how extrinsic market driven economic models have had too great an influence on contemporary education (1998). Others argue that neo-liberalism is a delivery mechanism for corporate interests that sort students into workers to yield the maximum economic return on society's investment in public education. (Codd, 1998; Glazer, 1999; Mayes, 2001). In this model, emphasis is on training for a largely mechanistic technical set of skills and functions. Market policies have introduced efficient and contestable management systems into education leading to increased competition for funds and students, mass information transmission, nationally based quantifiable outcomes and intense concern over quality

assurance (Codd, 1998; Glazer, 1999; Mayes, 2001). Giles (2008) describes this trend in New Zealand showing how new right policies have “reconceptualised education as an economic transaction” (p34).

The New Zealand Ministry of Education, established in 1988, introduced a centralised business model and managerial culture to schools and universities. The Ministry’s regulatory agency, the Education Review Office was set up to externally invigilate school effectiveness by collecting quantitative data on operations, organizational culture and pedagogical processes. This corporate model contrasts with the former consultative and advisory mandate of the former Department of Education (Giles, 2008). The New Zealand Qualifications Framework, a standards based approach, regards education in terms of measurable competencies and in the language of economics, is designed to be transparent and accountable to the global market (Findsen, 2003 ; Zepke, 2003 -b).

According to Zepke (2003) proponents of these models emphasise transparency, practicality and democratic measures of performance, while detractors believe that technical knowledge supporting wealth and economic development is given too much credibility. In the face of much opposition from teachers unions, school principals, teachers, boards of trustees and parents (New Zealand Educational Institute, 2012), this business model continues to dominate educational change. Evidence of this can be seen in the National Governments introduction of National Standards in 2010 for years 1-8. These standards are designed to measure and compare learning outcomes across schools. More recently the National Government has put forward proposals for privately owned charter schools and that results for all New Zealand secondary schools be published in league tables.

Secularisation

Western ideology has also given rise to secularisation, the separation of the state from church authorities and influence (Crossman, 2003). New Zealand supports religious freedom, a freedom protected in law (Vaccarino et al., 2011). The State’s commitment to liberalism and secularism can also be construed as avoidance of religious doctrine. According to this model there is a compulsion for schools to

uphold student rights to freedom from religious dogma (Gibbs, 2006), therefore safeguarding democratic principles. The unintentional consequence of this approach has resulted in a system of education whereby concepts of spirituality are either largely excluded or not explicitly defined in curriculum documents (Mayes, 2001). This situation is reinforced by misconceptions and a lack of clarity as to what spiritual education is deemed acceptable in the classroom (Keast, 2003). Teachers also report they are often without necessary skills to incorporate religious and spiritual issues in their classrooms in a way that honours diversity of beliefs and gives students the opportunity to express personal views and learn from others (Mayes, 2001). Recently new immigrants have brought a proliferation of alternative faiths to New Zealand making spirituality more visible in education (Vaccarino et al., 2011).

As New Zealand increasingly becomes a multicultural society, there is growing understanding of world religions and culture as well as the associated responsibility to reflect this in education settings (personal communication, 2011). In addition to multicultural perspectives and their incumbent spiritual understandings, the role of Maori spirituality in education is increasingly represented and impacting on traditional secular educational practice and understanding. The secular education system is now required to reflect a commitment to The Treaty of Waitangi which includes respect and practice of Maoritanga as identified in articles 2, 3 and 4 (Vaccarino et al., 2011). This exposure to spiritual meaning in a New-Zealand educational context, sits alongside an upsurge of international interest and interchange of ideas (Gibbs, 2006; Hart, 2009; Miller, 2006; Zajonc, 2009).

Contemplative/Integrative education: A context of support

This section of the literature review examines models of contemplative education. It includes the contribution of educators whose teaching and philosophy is critical to achieving a broad understanding of contemporary integrative practice. Educational models are concentrated around two axis points; pedagogy that integrates the contemplative practice of the teacher; and pedagogy that integrates a contemplative framework to enable the unfolding of inner consciousness in the

student. These models are relevant in an educational environment that has an explicit spiritual philosophy, or within a secular context. Non-alignment to particular spiritual traditions possibly broadens the reach of integrative education as can be seen in the interest and endorsement given to the concepts of mindfulness and authentic teaching.

Integrative teaching

Long have luminary educators such as Maria Montessori, Rudolph Steiner, Martin Buber (Miller & Nakagawa, 2002) and Parker Palmer (1998, 2004) advocated the use of holistic, inward centered approaches to teaching. These approaches are embedded in a spiritual conception of the world and the individual. The physical world is viewed as spiritual in nature and cannot be separated from the consciousness of the individual and his or her understanding the world.

The term integrative teaching describes the nurturing of inwardness expressed in the practice of teaching. It may be linked to contemplative practices or an affirmation to live a whole or authentic life. It denotes an intentional connection between the inner and outer life of the teacher. A general definition of integrated education devised by Esborjn-Hargens, Reams and Gunnlaugson (as cited in Palmer & Zajonc, 2010) comprises exploring multiple perspectives including; first, second and third person methodologies of teaching and learning; combining critical thinking with experiential feeling and; exploring the non-rational aspects of self. A coherent philosophical rubric to cover the ontological, epistemological, pedagogical and ethical modes of knowing in integrative education is required suggest Palmer and Zajonc (2010). In a nutshell they propose that ontological reality equates to ecological, relational and interdependent ways of being in the world in contrast to the dominant reductionist and individualistic views. An epistemology begins with the understanding that we are embedded in social reality but we cannot really know this reality until we are truly conscious of ourselves as knowers. Objectivity emerges from subjective knowing and experience. Unified knowing leads to a pedagogy shaped by relational principles and practices and finally, integrative teaching supports ethical thinking and action.

Chogyam Rinpoche, responsible for establishing three Buddhist inspired schools and the Naropa University in the United States, suggests that contemplative education integrates the principles of meditation and practice into everyday, non-sectarian education. Writing on Quaker education, Lacey (as cited in Miller, 2006) describes education that is neither student-centered, nor discipline-centered but rather inward-centered. This is illustrated by the notion that there is always one other in the classroom, the Inward teacher, residing inside every individual. By evaluating Quaker educators, Miller (2006) stresses the cultivation of respectful, receptive, compassionate, connected and accountable attitudes toward individuals and the human community as a whole. In Steiner's view, spiritual concerns cannot be separated out from the curriculum. The spiritual activity of the world can only be understood through inner activity, and the creative in the world can only be understood by awakening the creative within us. 'Living' thinking means to be inwardly active and resonance occurs when the Creative in the world is perceived as the creative within oneself (Kane, 2002). Crowell and Reid-Marr (2006), teaching an arts based curriculum, refer to integrative teaching as inquiry that is spiritual and emphasises contemplative learning processes such as personal reflection and self-understanding. Curricula innovation in higher education would examine the relationship between student's studies of the 'objective' world with the purpose, meaning and aspirations of their lives to help bridge the divide between outer and inner (Palmer & Zajonc, 2010).

Brown (2002) cautions about recognizing the trap of preconceived ideas on what spiritual or holistic teaching is. It is not evidenced by an inspired, blissful state of mind or amazing classroom experience but rather in the development of transcendental common sense, seeing things as they are. It is indeed salutary to ask whether all teachers embarking on an inner journey, come to a place of spiritual understanding or recognition that the material world is not all that exists (Liston, 2002). The answer to this question depends on personal understanding. According to the many traditions, certain experiences cannot be regarded as spiritual because the whole of existence is sacred (Chogyam Trungpa as cited in Brown, 2002; Kane, 2002; Muktananda, 1997).

Parker Palmer

Parker Palmer has been instrumental in helping define and envisage what spirituality in contemporary education might look like. Palmer has succeeded in giving voice to what is a genuinely personal experience. Like other writers in this field, his writing embodies the wisdom and support from his own spiritual life, in his case the community of Quakers. The touchstone of Palmer's worldview is that all human activity emerges from within and that the work we do and our relationships with others rest on how well we know and understand ourselves. His fore-most intent is to explore the dynamic interplay of the inner world of spirit together with the external practice of teaching and to initiate dialogue in a community of others (Intrator, 2005).

In regard to educational reform, Palmer (1998) deliberates on the heart of the teacher from which he says good teaching comes. His contention is that by grounding teaching in the inner landscape of the teacher, the outer relationships and forms of community that teaching and learning require are better served and brought to light. Focusing on one's inner life is far from egocentric self-absorption, rather self-inquiry is integral to good pedagogy.

I have no question that students who learn, not professors who perform, is what teaching is all about... Nor do I doubt that students learn in diverse and wondrous ways including ways that bypass the teacher in the classroom and ways that require neither a classroom nor a teacher. But I am also clear that in.... the places where most people receive most of their formal education – teachers possess the power to create conditions that can help students learn a great deal – or keep them from learning much at all. Teaching is the intentional act of creating those conditions, and good teaching requires that we understand the inner resources of both the intent and the act (1998, p. 6).

Palmer directs attention to the intersection of personal and public life (1998) affirming that good teachers must experiment with creating connectedness between the strands of one's identity, with students and with the subject. When we

are not connected to the inner voice says Palmer (2004), we live a divided or wounded life, we live in a gap between the way things are and the way things might be. While there is no easy solution, people must learn to live in this intersection of possibility, to hold the tension and to feel vulnerability and danger. Palmer (2004) acknowledges teacher authenticity relates as much to one's shadows and limitations as to strengths and potentials.

Authenticity

Authenticity embraces Palmer's (1998) principle that good teaching comes from the identity and integrity of the teacher. Sometimes referred to as authentic identity this denotes an inner knowing and trueness to oneself and recognition that the personal qualities of the teacher, their personality, attitudes and beliefs united in a person's presence, is evident in their teaching (Gibbs, 2006). An authentic identity links teaching capability to ineffable qualities that are often characterized by heart, passion or connectedness (Intrator & Kunzman, 2006). A sense of wholeness becomes transparent when a sense of self and how one teaches is aligned (Gibbs, 2006). Interest in authenticity in teaching is associated with the promotion of student learning (Cranton & Carusetta, 2004), or even as *the* pivotal role in student learning (Intrator & Kunzman, 2006). Cranton and Carusettsa's (2004)'s research connects teacher authenticity to teachers having an awareness of themselves along with personal values and beliefs that influence their teaching. Further characteristics of authenticity relate to the development of inward qualities such as awareness, intuition, contentedness, purpose, critical reflection, discernment, transformation, integration, not-knowing and human agency (Crowell & Reid-Marr, 2006; Gibbs, 2006; Intrator & Kunzman, 2006).

Dirkx (as cited in Cranton & Carusetta, 2004) argues that when someone consciously participates in cultivating a deepened sense of self, there is transformation, and the development of authenticity. Teaching from the 'inside out', as Crowell and Reid-Marr (2006) describe attending to the integration of self, involves a shift in perception. Authentic teaching is an intuitive approach to teaching that has more to do with 'who one is' rather than 'what one knows'. Responding from intuition requires enormous concentration and willingness to be

receptive and open and brings a powerful element of spontaneity and aliveness to the territory of the classroom. Listening intuitively allows teaching to be indeterminate as control of decisions about timing and content relaxed. The unpredictability and dynamism of teaching is rejoined with a deepened sense of reflective reasoning and trust that the students needs could be sufficiently provided for, when it was needed.

Liston (2002) notes a sense of aliveness between the teacher and students, a place to attend to others, to share with each other and transform together. Relationships with students and student learning were found to be critical in Cranton and Carusetta's study (2004), as was a strong sense of care, interactive dialogue and awareness of power differentials. They found in the study that authenticity develops over time and with experience. As teachers develop more self-awareness there is movement from fragmented, linear, hierarchical perceptions to more integrated, constructed self-knowledge, capable of complex and sometimes ambiguous understandings. Critical self-reflection played a significant role by which people developed these capacities (Crowell & Reid-Marr, 2006).

Integrative learning

The awareness of the inner narratives of lives and the inherent connectedness to the larger narratives of life is paramount in integrative learning models (Crowell, 2002). Buber thought that the work of education is to assist and facilitate the process of spiritual actualization unfolding through the child. The educator's role is to be aware of the wholeness of the personality, to perceive the dynamic, unique center in each child (J. Miller, 2002; Yoshida, 2002). Montessori emphasized a child growing from the inside out, from a spiritual source. She conceived of the child as a 'spiritual embryo' and according to Miller (2002), the heart of her mission was for the world (and teachers and parents), to become sensitive to the wonder of life revealing itself through the life of each child. Education was the process of awakening the divine forces within every person so they could make their contribution to evolve the cosmos. Quaker educators maintain that learning from experience, aided by the development of reason and judgement enables individuals to discern deeper wisdom and truths. Opening the heart and mind to

dimensions of truth that lie beyond current comprehension allows knowledge to be revealed in greater fullness through out life. All voices are regarded as valuable, all people, even children and youth are considered to have access to deeper knowledge. Authority comes from the cultivation of self-awareness and personal conscience rather than from academic knowledge (R. Miller, 2002).

These pedagogical approaches support a paradigm of nurturing an unfolding inner consciousness, often referred to as a process of inner transformation. Mezirow and Kegan (as cited in Palmer & Zajonc, 2010) suggest that a transformative approach is the most powerful way to conceptualise the developing human and that enabling this transformation is a goal of education. Crowell and Reid-Marr (2006), refer to designing learning themes to engage the deep human experience of the group and to sow the seeds of transformation. Integrative teaching focuses on developing potentially transformative experiences within formal education suggest Cranton and Carusetta (2004) where integration or harmony among the many aspects of self occurs and is the result of observing life experiences rather than simply reacting to them. Transformative learning is multi-dimensional, concerning the physical, cognitive, emotional, social and spiritual domains, and is ultimately characterized by identifying with the transformative aspect of being. This implies that the individual is capable of sustaining multiple, dynamic and possibly contradictory views at once.

Processes of transformation are echoed in Hart's (2009) view of integrated education that needs he asserts, to have inner significance by creating opportunities for *unfolding inner consciousness* within each person. Drawing on the wisdom traditions, transpersonal and spiritual studies, Hart explicates knowing and learning into six interrelated layers. These are described here in some detail, not only because they clearly outline and reinforce many of the learning concepts under discussion, but also because Hart competently evokes the inward journey familiar in contemplative learning.

Hart (2009) seeks to show education's potential for depth and an awakening of oneself to an expanded consciousness which contrasts to education fixated on the surface level of awareness. Beginning with information; moving into intelligence;

understanding; wisdom; and transformation; education matures past the small separate identity to self-transcendence. On the surface layer of Hart's model is exchange of *information* akin to the mechanistic model of understanding. Information opens to *knowledge* and the mastery or accommodation of ideas into whole patterns and systems of meaning. Experiential learning facilitates knowledge as does teacher authenticity and learning in community. Developing *intelligence* involves refining the mind through the cultivation of creative and imaginative thinking along with analytic critique and synthesis to elucidate the multiplicity of the world. Thinking about what is known, reflecting, questioning and reconstructing knowledge as well as intuitive understanding are all aspects of intelligence. *Understanding* is the shift from the head to the heart. Moving towards the nurturing of compassion, empathy and connectedness, the divided self is integrating into wholeness. *Wisdom* involves discovering the nature of the Self, it relates to being centered, present, authentic and harmonizing with the flow and movement of life. Acting wisely entails the capacity to listen with awareness and discernment.

Contemplative Practice

There are many contemplative practices (Hart, 2009; Miller, 2000) with mindfulness (Kabat-Zinn, 2005) attaining particular prominence and acceptance in the last decade. The capacity to be fully aware and conscious is sometimes referred to as the practice of mindfulness. Mindfulness involves consciously attending to ones moment to moment experience and is a fusion of Buddhism and western thinking (Kabat-Zinn, 2005). Originating from Buddhist meditation and developed primarily as a secular strategy to help mental health sufferers, the use and application of mindfulness has burgeoned into many professional arenas including education (Didonna, 2009; McCowan, Reibel, & Micozzi, 2010). Mindfulness in an educational context is relatively new and has been integrated into a range of areas. For instance, a mindfulness based curriculum teaches students to think for themselves and explore their world from new perspectives and possibilities, (Langer, 1993; Ritchart & Perkins, 2000); teachers and student teachers cultivate a discipline of attending to themselves and their own surroundings in a non-judgmental way to become more centered, compassionate and authentic (Brown,

2002; Kabat-Zinn, 2010); or mindfulness interventions are utilized to support students social relationships, emotional and cognitive self regulation (Saltzman & Goldin, 2008).

Chapter Two: Researching teaching practice

Living the questions

As will be explained within this chapter, the nature of self-inquiry does not lend itself easily to academic study. The research tensions lie not only within the particular context of academic inquiry but are held within my being as I consider what is real and what is truth. From the outset I have been aware that the parameters of this project inhabit what might be called a liminal space, meaning that the inquiry is a personal transition or initial stage of an unfolding process of learning, and the topic itself appears to be on the "threshold" between two different existential planes. Essentially these planes relate to the question of immanent or materialistic understanding of reality. I find myself trying repeatedly to organise meanings and structures to accommodate understanding so as to be able to clarify explanations. I regard this process as a deeply meaningful element of research and that my understanding is all the more richer because of it. The following vignette is offered to show how contemplation can assist conceptualising problems and solutions.

Two months ago I was extremely fortunate to attend a conference with Arthur Zajonc who shared many contemplative exercises with the group. In one exercise we were directed to formulate a question and were taken through a focused process to distil the essence of the question, concluding with forming an image to represent understanding into the original query. My question was how to present the findings in my thesis. The image that arrived in my mind was a brown cardboard box, exactly like a supermarket box without labels. A very prosaic and unremarkable picture indeed, but I have learnt that by simply waiting without judgement a story will usually unfold. The box was situated in black space with stars as you find on a clear night. As I checked the image from other angles it came to my attention that the top flaps on the box were fully open. With curiosity I looked inwards into the box, and at this point the box peeled away in to space. It was bottomless. In fact the box which had looked so substantial a minute before began to retreat as space infiltrated the view. The resulting impression was that

the seemingly solid box was merely a container to hold ideas together in a particular order, a tool to create shape and substance, bringing ideas into a whole. The overall purpose of the methodology will achieve a dialogue to share ideas and understanding. That is enough.

This simple imagery gave me confidence that it is possible to bridge or possibly integrate different paradigms into a cohesive research story. The epistemologies significant to this study are Siddha Yoga meditation that stems from an ancient Indian philosophical tradition; an emergent integrative epistemology; and a western frame of knowledge represented by an interpretive approach. A comparison between these epistemologies will identify what are in my view, some of the inherent schisms of these approaches as well as commonalities. This begins to create a picture for how the self is viewed in the context of academic research. In addition, the commonplace distinction between subject and object is considered through the lens of non-duality and duality, drawing attention to the mostly unquestioned but incongruous convention of studying self in a objectified research paradigm.

Epistemology

Interpretive epistemologies

Epistemology in the context of research is paramount as the paradigm selected guides the researcher in philosophical assumptions about the research and determines the methodology, tools and participants used in the study (Crotty, 1998). The seeds of the interpretive approach trace back to Kant who recognised that human claims about nature cannot be independent of the mental processes that organise meaning about a subject (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Qualitative researchers rest their inquiry on the understanding that reality is essentially constructed in the mind and that there are multiple realities of equal validity (Crotty, 1998). Reality is viewed as subjective and influenced by the context of a situation, the individual's experience and perceptions, the social environment, and the relationship between the researcher and the researched. The important reality is what people perceive it to be. The qualitative researcher conceptualises the

relationship between themselves and that being researched, recognises the integral role of values and attends to the ongoing layered process of research (Cresswell, 2009). The interpretive position accepts that while some knowledge exists independently of the knower, the idea of personal or tacit knowledge is even more important. Indeed, objective reality does not have its own 'truth' as it can only be understood from the subjective position of an individual (Crotty, 1998). For qualitative researchers this understanding is particularly relevant because their research rests on the understanding that reality is essentially constructed in the mind and that there are multiple realities of equal validity (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Heavily influenced by research in physics, ecology, psychology, chemistry, spirituality and philosophy awareness of objectivity can be fairly broad (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Interpretive paradigms support complex realities, indeterminacy, mutual causality, diversity, holism, complexity, openness, multiple perspectives and engagement (Schwartz and Ogilvy as cited in Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Practitioner based methodologies such as self-study and reflective practice and more particularly phenomenology, heuristic research and hermeneutics have a significant contemplative or immersion component whereby the researcher encounters themselves in relation to the research material. Indwelling with the observed phenomena, tacit knowing, intuition, and imagination all contribute towards illuminating the relationship between the knower and known (Moustakas, 1990). Acknowledgement of self-transformation and self-understanding is overt, suggesting that there is much overlap with a spiritual/meditative paradigm.

Integrative epistemology

Integrative philosophy in contrast places paramount importance on awareness of the inner narratives of lives and the inherent connectedness to the larger narratives of life (Brown, 2002; Intrator & Kunzman, 2006; Zajonc, 2009). Additionally, some writers believe that all human activity emerges from within (Chogyam Trungpa as cited in Brown, 2002; Kane, 2002; Muktananda, 1997). Palmer and Zajonc (2010) propose that an integrative educational epistemology begin with the understanding that objectivity emerges from subjective knowing

and experience and that we are embedded in social reality which becomes more fully known as we become more conscious of ourselves as knowers. Knowledge is revealed in greater fullness throughout life from opening the heart and mind to dimensions of truth that lie beyond current comprehension (Miller, 2000). To encapsulate the philosophy of Siddha Yoga meditation, which will be fully discussed in chapter three, ultimate 'truth' is considered to be a universal experience that can be realised in the inner awareness of an individual. In contrast to ultimate truth, ordinary everyday truth that is accessible to the mind and derived from understandings arising in the materialised world, is not incorrect or 'wrong', it is merely limited. Knowledge is formed with both the intellect of the mind and in an embodied or experiential sense and meditation is the means to access the knowledge of one's inner world (Brooks, 1997a).

Weft and warp

Clearly there is convergence between the two epistemologies. Reality is essentially viewed as subjective and constructed in the mind (Crotty, 1998; Muktananda, 1992b), and the authority of experience is a justification of establishing what is real or true (Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009), and is centrally positioned in the inquiry process (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Concepts of relational connectedness, indeterminacy, holism, ecological complexity and openness are shared frameworks as is engaging in self-knowledge and the acknowledgement of self-transformation. Major interpretive approaches such as phenomenology, constructionism, existentialism and hermeneutics are grounded in awareness of self and experience that directly positions the consciousness of the individual in relation to the objective world.

These commonalities are significant and so also are the differences. I would like to suggest that the critical dichotomy between the epistemologies results from the ontological positions of duality versus non-duality. The term duality denotes separation, object-subject and investigator – investigated. The positivist form of duality determines that the inquirer and the object of inquiry is independent; whereas the interpretive or naturalist version determines that the inquirer and the object of inquiry interact to influence one another (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), they are

relational. This compares to the non-dualistic perspective whereby the inquirer and the object of inquiry are unified as one.

In this regard, interpretive research maintains its outward emphasis and objective - subjective dichotomy. New knowledge is formed from observing phenomena, observing other people or even observing oneself in the context of a transitory socially constructed external world, as in the case of self-study. Awareness of experience derives from senses that are focused outward into the external world. Qualitative methodologies continue to emphasise a scientific, rational and systematic interpretation of subjective experience (Crotty, 1998; Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009). Research questions and topics of inquiry are also externally located, as is data collection and research findings that once completed, enter the public domain.

From a position of non-duality, truth is considered to be a universal experience gained through inward attention and awareness. Yogic sages describe the entire universe emanating from One reality (Muktananda, 1997). The separation of subject - object, rather than the core focus of study, is seen as a limited form of reality. Although the universe contains these divisions, they arise from the non-dualistic, singular reality. Development of inner awareness increasingly counterbalances the drive to look for meanings in the external world. As previously discussed, many believe that the process of engaging with oneself is the essential element for engaging more fully with the outside world. Inner knowledge develops essential attributes and connections for worldly life.

Methodology:

The primary methodologies supporting this project are meditation and self-study. First person qualitative methods for conducting educational research are in an emergent phase, however self-study methodology redresses this situation to some extent. The use of meditation as a process to conduct first person research in an academic context is very scarce. Research into meditation using third person methodology is more common, but while of value in itself, it does not serve the purposes of meditation as self-inquiry. The tenets of meditation will be clarified in

chapter three which outlines the philosophy of Siddha Yoga, and later the techniques of meditation and contemplation that have facilitated this inquiry will be described. But first of all an in depth explanation of self-study is provided.

Self Study – teacher as researcher

The methodological framework for this research project is self-study. Self-study is an emerging methodology within the interpretive approach that employs a range of qualitative methods developed from the social sciences and humanities traditions such as autobiographical narrative. It provides an important theoretical structure to situate the overall aims of this study by explicitly and analytically connecting teaching practice to self-inquiry. The overall methodology and epistemology offer a sound educational structure and substantiates many of my own experiences in both the research and teaching process.

The purpose of self-study is to improve one's teaching practice and understanding of that practice by engaging in systematic and sustained inquiry. Pinnegar and Hamilton (2009) make the salient point, that most of what is known about teaching and teacher education is based in the hearts, minds and actions of teachers. A practitioner based research approach, “self study points to a simple truth, that to study practice is simultaneously to study self: a study of self in relation to other” (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001, p. 14). Hamilton and Pinnegar (1998) define self-study as the study of one's self, one's action, one's ideas, as well as the not self. It combines learning from teaching practice with tacit and personal practical knowledge (Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009).

Whitehead (2005), whose ideas have been influential in self-study and action research takes the position that individuals can create and test their own 'living' educational theories. Described as 'living', they emerge in real life situations and continue to grow and change. They help identify and explain a person's own learning and are grounded in values that give meaning to life (Whitehead, 2005).

Through self-study teachers can question common practice, approach problems from new perspectives, consider and implement new solutions and evaluate and reflect on the results. They bring their scholarship into their teaching experience

(Cole & Knowles, 1998). “To act is to theorise” (Pagano as cited in Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009, p. 4). Those involved in self-study collect evidence from their practice allowing them to conceptualise new interpretations and to create different teaching strategies (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999).

Drawing on the humanistic approach to education, methods such as self-examination, reflection and critical reconsideration are touchstones of self-study. Engaging in a reflective process deepens understanding of practice that does not simply arise from daily practice. As teachers collect evidence from their practice, potentially opening themselves to new interpretations, they create educational strategies aligned with new understanding (Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009). Critical reflection assists unconscious assumptions to shift, making way for genuine innovation and transformation (Whitehead, 2005). In addition, the learning that occurs through the research is a first person exercise that allows for the ‘authority of experience’ as a justification of knowing. It is therefore less focused on outcomes, as reflection adds to cumulative experience and intelligence (Dinkleman, 2003). Establishing what is real or true is constructed through a person’s own experience and in relationship to the external world. (Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009). “Each one of us must explore our own experience, not the experience of others, for no one can take that step back to the things themselves on our behalf “ (Crotty, 1998, p. 85).

Self-study has grown out of the teacher research movement, influenced from four separate developments in educational research. The first is the introduction of qualitative research methods into education bringing a different understanding of the nature of research and the relationship of subject/object. The second influence is from psychology that helped legitimise the study of self as a foundational practice. The third influence comes from humanities research approaches, as distinct from social science, that emphasised phenomenology and the nature of experience and narrative as a way of writing and thinking. The fourth influence comes from action research where the lines between traditional empirical research and reflective practice have broadened, effecting the distinctions between researcher/practitioner (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001).

As part of an educational research community, even research that is private ultimately serves a public domain. By uncovering implicit knowledge of practice and making it explicit, self-study contributes to and improves educational discourse. As self-study methodology has evolved, practitioners have grappled with ways to satisfy qualitative demands for evidence, rigor and veracity, while at the same time retaining ownership of their personal position in research accounts (Cole & Knowles, 1998; Ham & Kane, 2004; Loughran & Russel, 2002). Other researchers found that the story of research in the social sciences was not necessarily the only way to view research (Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009). Some believed self study to be irreconcilable to positivist principles of objectivity and detachment (McNiff 1993), while other researchers chose to focus their concerns on personal, subjective and creative forms of communication (Cole & Knowles, 1998). Ham and Kane (2004) make an interesting observation regarding the legitimacy of qualitative research.

For interpretive and critical sociologists alike, as long as has been the case for historians and phenomenologists, the fact that even 'researched' knowledge is the articulated construction of a knower/enquirer who is just as susceptible to illusions, delusions, assumptions and misinterpretations as any of their informants, is to be acknowledged and illuminated as part of any claim to know or understand (p. 120).

Ham and Kane (2004) observed that self-researchers generally conducted studies extensively in alignment with conventional research processes. Data gathering, analysis and presentation most often conformed to academic principles of validity and rigor. Further challenges to the credibility of self-study were due to inadequate research methods that situate the self centrally in the research process. Researchers borrowed methods, but as Bullough and Pinnegar (2001) explain, trying to establish scholarship from borrowed and mixed methods was difficult. A proliferation of research publications indicate an extensive range of methods, such as narrative, journaling, autobiography, poetry and visual arts are utilised to report on one's own experience. However, while the boundaries of general qualitative research methodology have been blurred and crossed, a clearer

articulation of techniques to capture a comprehensive and clear account of self-practice will ease application and utility for researchers.

As self-study continues to develop, understanding of the research process relating to self is sharpened and positioned with increasing authority and legitimacy as evidenced in the following assertions made by Pinnegar and Hamilton (2009). The value of self-study research they state is not formed from analytical tools and rigorous scholarship resonant with the scientific method. Inquiry is subjective and relevant to a particular time and place and questions develop from a perspective of not knowing and wondering. Its value is not in generalised, objective claims about truth that then require endorsement from a research community. Instead, self-study research is determined to be valuable when understandings are judged trustworthy, helpful, plausible or insightful, and when results can be used to guide actions to improve practice. Methodology has now evolved to the extent that knowledge emerging from self-studies has gained enough trustworthiness to guide teaching practice, and to be useful to others, and furthermore has contributed to the wider community of educational research and teacher education.

Methods of data collection and analysis

Meditation and contemplation

A full meditation practice was the primary component of this inquiry. Regular practice enabled me to deeply contemplate the relationship between my meditation and teaching practice and provided research data. Data was gathered from meditation practice over a 12 week teaching semester and recorded in a journal. The Siddha Yoga Home Study Course (SYHSC), a structured programme designed by Siddha Yoga teachers to facilitate meditation practice, supported my meditation practice.

Meditation is a dynamic wellspring of creative engagement. Possibilities of topics to contemplate were endless, relating to teachings from the SYHSC, intuitive ideas that had spontaneously arrived, student interactions, any activities or events in the class, teaching strategies, discussions with colleagues and so on. My mind tended

to gravitate towards particular patterns or themes and these topics were reflected on over and over again. Contemplation led to understandings that easily may have gone unnoticed in daily practice. Penetrating past a surface layer of inquiry, fresh ideas were often surprising and unconventional. Gaining insight into these themes would encourage me to create a response in my teaching practice. This relationship between action and reflection is very much in keeping with the self-study cycle referred to by Whitehead (2005) as a living theory, evident in the continuous shifts between action and contemplation and new understandings.

As will be shown in chapter four, the subtle or concealed nature of this topic is why meditation is considered invaluable for developing awareness of one's Self. This careful self-examination probes the multi faceted parts that make up one's nature, going beyond the mind and into the territory of the heart. 'Who am I' entails observing ones feelings, experiences, reactions, thoughts and contemplating both the known and as yet unknown aspect of one's life. Self-inquiry supports you to know what lies beneath the surface of human experience to discover new aspects of your personality/self. Self-inquiry may result in an internal shift, some greater clarity or a sense of being lighter and rejuvenated (Hayashi, 1994).

The contemplative nature of this inquiry and the process of writing have similarities to a heuristic investigation that invites an inner search to explore the meaning of the data. The researcher immerses themselves in the material for a period of time, waiting for an inner tacit dimension to reveal itself. The process of illumination occurs naturally when the researcher is open and receptive to tacit knowledge and intuition (Moustakas, 1990). Contemplation is an important tool for a meditator as a means for connecting spiritual practices with daily life. Whereas meditation is the process for abiding inwardly, contemplation helps to unfold inner wisdom and bring understanding into consciousness. As such it is a highly significant aspect of the research process. Contemplation involves more than simply thinking about something. You use your mind to think about the idea for some time, then you pause from the process of thinking and hold the concept, or some part of it in the space of consciousness so you can discover what is revealed from within (Vasudevananda, 2009). Swami Vasudevananda (2009) teaches a contemplative process in the SYHSC where having clarified a topic or

question, you hold the topic in the space of consciousness, in the light of your awareness. With patience and without expectations the innate wisdom from your own heart will be revealed. If the meaning is initially indistinct, it may become clear later.

With practice, contemplation becomes an organic and effective part of the inquiry process. In fact a contemplative attitude imbues all aspects of this study. For instance, the original journal entries often originated from concentrated contemplation, so too did the themes. Articulating the Siddha Yoga philosophy in chapter two was aided by actively contemplating meanings in the texts and was critical to expanding my own understanding. Contemplation is regarded necessary to reveal the deeper levels of meaning within sacred texts. The discussion outlining the findings, particularly in chapter five, was also supported through continuous contemplation. Indeed separating the actual process of contemplation from the findings can seem an artificial division. As one becomes immersed in the narrative it becomes possible to attune to another dimension of knowledge, an intuition from which subsequent conscious understanding is derived. This is explicitly addressed in theme one of the findings that depicts the integration from silent self to social self, from inner inquiry to outer expression (Zajonc, 2009).

This form of inquiry is not without its challenges and demands. Like so many aspects of learning the guts of the work are hidden from view. Moustakas (1990) work on heuristic research which also emphasises the internal frame of reference and indwelling, notes the challenges of this process.

...research is an extremely demanding process, not only in terms of continual questioning and checking to ensure full explication of one's own experiences.... but also in the challenges of thinking and creating, and in the requirements of authentic self-dialogue, self-honesty, and unwavering diligence to an understanding of both obvious and subtle elements of meaning and essence inherent in human issues, problems, questions and concerns (p. 37).

The Siddha Yoga Home Study Course (SYHSC) is structured to explore Siddha Yoga teachings and their subtle meaning. In the words of Vasudevanada (2009), “the purpose of the course is to access the heart’s wisdom and to express it in every part of your life” (p. 1). Exercises are skilfully designed to engage students and to illustrate a variety of techniques for understanding specific essential teachings. Four elements are explicit in the process of imbibing a teaching: study, practice, assimilation and implementation. Strategies may constitute invoking the Guru’s grace, listening and reading to a teaching with the awareness that the teachings are infused with spiritual power, inner contemplation exercises, journaling, attention to breath and asanas (physical postures), chanting, mantra repetition and guided meditation. The ways in which these exercises deepen inner-inquiry become more evident in the findings and discussion chapter. The SYHSC proved an invaluable aid to the research. It was cohesive, perfectly aligned to Siddha Yoga teachings and provided techniques for journaling insights gained through meditation and contemplation.

The SYHSC was incorporated into my meditation routine. Generally I would sit for a one hour morning meditation and a half hour meditation in the evening. There are many techniques to enter meditation. A simple process includes having a specific place for sitting that is cared for and free of interruptions. Usually I would invoke the Grace of the Guru so that the Guru’s inner state of clarity, love and subtle awareness comes alive. This reflects the honouring of oneself. Attending to the body is important, ensuring the spine is upright and the body is relaxed. The in and out breath relaxes the body and the mind. In Siddha Yoga meditation we learn to observe ourselves, instilling an attitude of acceptance and openness of the state we happen to be in. Various strategies can help deepen meditation such as mantra repetition and focusing on the breath. When practicing meditation at home, I find the words of the Guru beneficial as a means to shift my attention inwards. As will soon be described, the aim of Siddha Yoga meditation is to let thoughts subside, allowing attention to focus on the experience of inner consciousness that is continuously present.

Developing the findings

The core data was recorded in a daily journal. A process of thematic analysis was helpful to discover meaning and create understanding from the written data. Braun and Clarke (2006) set out six recursive phases of analysis:

1. Familiarisation with and coding ideas in the journal;
2. Identification of initial features;
3. Searching for themes;
4. Reviewing themes and relationships;
5. Defining and describing essential themes; and
6. Developing the whole and producing the central shape of findings.

This pattern of organizing and analysing data in the journal proved to be very useful. Having coded the ideas in the journal, most of the themes were readily identifiable and unfolded naturally. Although amalgamating the details proved to be more exacting. Ideas are synthesised in the form of a narrative with the addition of poems and extracts from my journals. Journal excerpts documenting my day-to-day experiences are distinguished from other writing by using italics. Generally the narrative is organised to present my voice in a straightforward and undiluted way. My intention is to keep the narrative honest and true to my inward inquiring self. Where necessary the narrative is supported by Siddha Yoga literature for the purpose of refining and illuminating understanding. In other places the discussion extends to spiritual and self-study research literature to corroborate findings related specifically to teaching and learning.

Professional conversations – circle of friends

A critical element of self-study is collaboration and interactivity allowing for ideas to be shared, mulled over, critiqued and re-digested. This echoes the individual reflective process. Dialogue is part of a self-study framework that explores ideas through reflection and analysis. The process of dialogue is considered important to building community and is a public forum where ideas can be critiqued (Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009). It was interesting to notice that as my themes developed I felt

naturally compelled to discuss these ideas with others. I needed to broaden my enquiry and analysis, to discover if the themes resonated or had traction with other teachers.

Keeping in mind the notion of a 'circle of friends', an arrangement was made to meet other Siddha Yoga practitioners who are professional educators. The aim was to have a structured conversation to explore their experience of meditation in relation to their teaching practice and to present my emergent themes from the research for discussion. The conversation lasted two and a half hours and was later transcribed. This conversation has been analysed in relation to the subthemes in chapter six and comments are incorporated under the title of 'circle of friends'. As will be shown, dialoguing with colleagues was a fruitful activity that affirmed my research and extended particular ideas into new unseen territory. This aspect of the research, while remaining a relatively minor part of the overall project, was extremely beneficial for the study, for the participants and myself.

Ethics approval was not required as this was not a formal interview but rather an informal meeting to engage in ideas directly stemming from my self-study. The idea for gathering informal feedback from interested colleagues derives from self-study methodology. A letter inviting these colleagues to participate in the conversation is documented in Appendix I. In the findings their names are changed to ensure confidentiality.

Chapter Three: Siddha Yoga meditation, a foundation for Self-inquiry

A student of Siddha Yoga, such as myself, is interested in, connected to and engaged in particular sets of beliefs, constructs and learning experiences. This account is given from a student's perspective and is not designed as a critical analysis of Siddha Yoga. There is no intention to 'stand apart from' this phenomenon or even to observe from the midst of it (Geertz as cited in Brooks, 1997a). Siddha Yoga meditation is holistic in that it embraces all aspects of one's life. A discussion of Siddha Yoga has a threefold purpose. First of all, to explain meditation, it is necessary to elucidate key aspects of Siddha Yoga and to shed light on the underlying epistemology and ontology. Secondly such an account is essential for building a framework to support and interpret the goals and findings of the study. Without an explanation of these principles, the substrata on which the findings rest will be inaccessible to the reader. Creating a firm foundation at this point allows for clarity later. And thirdly, the process of researching and explaining Siddha Yoga directly impacts and expands my own knowledge creating another entry point from which to refine my understanding and experience of this topic.

Swami Chidvilasananda (1994) makes the point that all courses of study are designed as a means of coming to know one's own Self. It isn't only intellectual wisdom, it is the experience of the supreme Self, which dwells inside the individual that is being offered in the teachings. My intention is to let the teachings speak for themselves hence the use of direct quotes presents the teachings in an undiluted form. Siddha Yoga meditation is described first of all and the discussion is further broken down into; the nature and function of Siddha Yoga and of the guru; the nature and function of spiritual literature and language; and the nature of the Self and the non-dual state.

Siddha Yoga meditation

The purpose of meditation is to know the Self. Siddha Yoga teaches that God is present in each one of us and students are invited to Wake up, to remember our true Self. “Look within; Meditate” is the emblematic instruction of Swami Muktananda (1991a). “You will find Oneness. You will discover there is no difference between you and God. God is within you” (p. 48). In his seminal book entitled *Meditate*, Swami Muktananda (1991a) tells students that meditation brings inner peace, joy, strength, freedom and the ability to connect fully with others. He asserts that the goal of meditation is to unite the limited awareness of the individual with the awareness of the inner Self. Discovery of the Self is considered the goal of human life, the summit of a human’s maturity. With steady practice, meditation expands a person’s awareness and understanding. All Siddha Yoga teachings exist to support the individual to reach the state of the Self. The tradition of Siddha Yoga teaches that meditation is universal and does not belong to any culture or religion (Brooks, 1997a). Everything is considered as Consciousness, therefore it is only due to our sense of limited individuality that we see things differently. You meditate to change this understanding, not to attain God, but to become aware that God is you (Muktananda, 1991a).

An introduction to Siddha Yoga

Contemporary history

Siddha Yoga is a lineage tradition, linking back to ancient traditions of Indian sages. The contemporary movement is founded on the intention of three spiritual masters. Bhagawan Nityananda, a silent and unconventional holy man who laid the foundations of the present day movement. His disciple, Swami Muktananda, who initiated the distinctive body of teachings, practices and interpretations that are recognised in modern India and the West as Siddha Yoga (Brooks, 1997a). Under the instruction of his guru, Muktananda set out to expand his spiritual purpose into the West, a journey that would eventually lead to a worldwide movement. In Swami Muktananda’s words, the main goal of Siddha yoga is to awaken people to the vast potential for power and happiness that lies in the human heart and to

unfold fully the God-consciousness that lies in all humans (1994b). According to Muktananda, the vehicle to achieve this potential was meditation, hence the new movement was often referred to as a 'meditation revolution' (Durgananda, 1997).

Swami Chidvilasanada is the current head of Siddha Yoga. She continues to deliver the teachings of her guru, Swami Muktananda with a distinctly contemporary flavour. Swami Chidvilasananda shows familiarity with Indian scriptures and with the complexities of modern life, notably finding a way to make the teachings relevant to individual students in their every day lives. The expansive growth of Siddha Yoga that occurred from the 1970s to the 1990s has since contracted, but the incorporation of many western organisational and technological styles has helped establish a global community. While the external culture of the movement continues to evolve, the fundamental teachings and experiences for participants remain unchanged (Durgananda, 1997).

Approaching the Truth

Siddha Yoga rests on a belief system quite distinct from western paradigms. Truth as individuals experience it is seen as finite and relative to the infinite 'truth'. Ultimate 'truth' is considered to be a universal experience that always exists and can be realised in the inner awareness of every individual. The universal truth contrasts to ordinary, everyday truth that is accessible to the mind and is derived from understandings arising in the materialised world. An example of conventional knowledge is the physical, external reality that is tangible to the senses and dominates an individual's day to day thinking. "Swamis Muktananda and Chidvilasananda make clear that ultimate truth is in itself beyond all other forms of knowledge. Knowledge, which is not ultimate, is not incorrect or 'wrong'. Rather it is limited" (Brooks, 1997a, p. 343). Someone who follows the teachings of Siddha Yoga will acquire knowledge simultaneously in an intellectual sense and an embodied or experiential sense. Knowledge therefore is formed with both the intellect of the mind and with the unfolding realisation from direct experience of the teachings. These experiences, while intensely 'real' are often difficult for the mind to grasp. Aspects of Siddha Yoga philosophy that may first appear to be

abstract or imperceptive to the mind, over time and with contemplative study and practice, become concrete and direct (Muller-Ortega, 2003).

Not a religion

The foundational viewpoint of Siddha Yoga is that God dwells within each human being as his or her own truest Self. It is because of this viewpoint that Siddha Yoga is not considered to be a religion even though it shares the major features of world religions such as scripture, ritual and mysticism. This also means that the Siddha Yoga teachings are not competing with other religions and theologies. The Siddha guru's highest truth – that God dwells within each human being as his or her own truest Self – becomes that point in which all differences between religions vanish and all religious positions converge (Brooks, 1997a). According to Muller-Ortega, “what is particularly significant about the notion of the siddha is that it alludes to and draws together most if not all! – of the major strands of Indian religion” (1997, p. 167). The guru's stance is that at the core of all religious and spiritual traditions are common human experiences and insights that originate from the ultimate divine reality. From the perspective of non duality, a concept which is discussed in some detail later, there is no ‘other’, there is only one reality that assumes many forms. From this viewpoint it makes sense that all religious truths will ultimately unite into oneness (Brooks, 1997a).

Perfected yoga

Yoga means any effort or commitment made to achieve a goal. Swami Chidvilasananda defines yoga as the practice of concentrating the mind until it can focus on an object without wavering or as “that which unites the mind to the supreme Soul” (1996, p. 125). In a spiritual sense, yoga is making a determined effort to commit to a course of action, with the intention to reveal ones own fullest potential as a human being (Brooks, 1997b). There are many varieties or typologies of yoga taught in India such as karmayoga, the path of action; bhaktiyoga, the path of devotion; and jnanayoga, the path of knowledge. Siddha yoga also has its own typology. The name of the movement Siddha Yoga is derived

from the Sanskrit word siddha, interpreted to mean the spiritual discipline of the siddhas or perfected yoga. In its wider context, the idea of the siddha has a long and complex history in India and is associated predominantly with Saivite and Tantric traditions. In Sanskrit, siddha means 'perfected' and denotes the successful completion of a long evolutionary process of growth. If a person is called a siddha this means that they have unfolded the full intrinsic possibilities of human existence and live in a state of perfection and liberation (Muller-Ortega, 1997). Swami Muktananda describes a siddha as "one who has attained perfect freedom, who has become completely independent...None of the senses can move him. His mind cannot be moved; it is always established in his own Self" (1994a, pp. 56-57).

The guru principle

A prerequisite to learn and to practice yoga, according to Hindu based teachings is to have a qualified teacher, a guru capable of guiding a student to the same realised state of God-consciousness as himself or herself. The role of the guru is pivotal on the path of yoga. According to Indian tradition, a student without a teacher is like a person who has been blindfolded and led into the wild. Knowledge is embodied in the form of a guru, hence spiritual knowledge of the absolute is deemed inconceivable without a teacher who has already embodied the ultimate or divine reality (Brooks, 1997b). The Katha Upanishad puts it like this;

Unless taught by a teacher [who truly understands], there is no access there,
For – being more subtle than the subtle –
[Ultimate reality] is inconceivable.
(Katha Upanishad as cited in Mahoney, 1997a, p. 224)

Indian scriptures say that a true teacher listens to his or her own teacher who has listened to their teacher and so on, hence they are considered the recipient of a long lineage of teachers. Chidvilasananda (1996) maintains that if the disciple is able to imbibe the teachings the guru gives, the seeker can experience self-transcendence and enter the guru's realm of divine radiant light. Mahoney (1997a) eloquently expresses this transmission of knowledge between the guru and disciple as, truth that is not fashioned by the human mind, but rather truth that is

revealed to the mind. The student learns to 'listen' to that which is beyond the constraints of time, space and causality. Revelation of the divine is considered to be "that which has been heard" (p. 233).

Both Swami Chidvilasananda and Swami Muktananda constantly emphasise the relationship between the guru and the disciple. Swami Muktananda says that it is through the Guru's grace, a person comes to know their own Self, and their life is transformed (1992b). The guru is said to exist not only in the external form of a teacher, but also within one's own inner most being. It is because of the unique relationship between the guru and the disciple that spiritual progress takes place. A verse from the Guru Gita, a principal text in Siddha Yoga, describes the importance of the Guru in this way.

I bow to the divine Guru, who is the bliss of the divine Absolute, the embodiment of the highest joy, who is supremely independent and the personification of pure knowledge. There is no trace of duality in him. He is perfectly detached and all-pervasive, like the sky (Nectar of chanting, 1983).

This verse exemplifies that the Guru is considered equivalent to the universal power of Consciousness that creates and sustains the entire universe (Muktananda, 1980). God takes the physical form of the Guru so that a liberating relationship between teacher and students can take place. In Siddha Yoga tradition, the guru is considered firmly established in an unwavering awareness of God. It is this concept that is at the heart of Siddha Yoga and is known as the guru-principle or gurutattva. Through the relationship between the guru and disciple one obtains knowledge of one's own true nature (Mahoney, 1997a).

Non duality

The yogic philosophy of non-dualism infiltrates all aspects of Siddha Yoga. According to the sages the entire universe emanates from the vibration of the One reality. In his book entitled, 'Nothing Exists that is not Shiva', Swami Muktananda (1997) explains that the universe is made up of the seer and the seen, the perceiver and the perceived, the subject and object. But although the universe

contains these divisions, they arise from the undifferentiated and unchanging singular reality. In Shaivism, the creation of the universe is symbolised by the primordial couple, Siva and Shakti. Siva is personified as the inert and formless singular essence, considered as the ultimate reality, whereas Shakti represents the many forms of creation. She represents not only the creative energy but also the knowledge or consciousness of that creation (Brooks, 1997a). Siva is the power to give form and existence to things and Shakti is the seed of all created things. The creative and conscious aspects of Shakti give the power to perceive and distinguish between the various forms in the universe and the power for individuals to be conscious of their perceptions and of themselves. These two aspects of creation are always united and share the essence of the other, they are divided only so that they can be described (Shantananda, 2003).

The goal of non-dualist Saivism is to reunite Shakti and Shiva. This, says Brooks (1997a), brings together all forms of self-experience with their source, the Self, and can be described as seeing the One in many and the many in only One. Siva and Shakti are aspects of our own Self, a concept concisely illustrated by Shantananda as, "I exist because of Shiva; I am aware of myself and my world because I am Shakti" (1997, p. pxxii). The ultimate paradox of searching for Self awareness is that while you are searching for God, you are already God (Shantananda, 2003).

One recognises that God, Guru and one's own inner Self are all aspects of the same divine Consciousness. What is seen at the beginning of Sadhana as duality, as an apparent separation between disciple and guru, becomes recognition that we are indivisible one" (Shantananda, 2006, p. pxxvi).

The Self

The experience of the Self is the goal of Siddha Yoga. This is crystal clear in Swami Muktananda's (1978) emblematic message; Meditate on your Self. Honour your Self. God dwells within you as you. As Swami Chidvilasanda puts it, when you become one with the Self, you experience God in everything and everyone (as cited in Brooks, 1997b). Or as Muktananda says, God the Self exists everywhere in his fullness and being present in everything, he is also present within us (1991a). The

Self is in the form of sat, chit, ananda translated to mean absolute existence, Consciousness and bliss (Muktananda, 1991a).

The Siddha Yoga conceptualisation of the Self is essentially aligned with the non-dualistic Vedantic traditions that date from about 1500 to 300 B.C.E. They include the Upanishads, the Bhagavadgita and the Bhrama Sutras. The core teaching of the Upanishad is the realisation that beyond the phenomenal world is a singular, unchanging and eternal reality that creates, sustains and destroys all things (Mahoney, 1997b). This inward Self is said to exist in all things, animate and inanimate. Referred to by many names, God, Siva, Brahman, Krishna, the Goddess, Friend, Consciousness, the Self is present within each human, hidden in the deepest levels of one's being. As someone gains understanding of the teachings, they are freed from the false identification with their body and personality and are also liberated from the struggles and vagaries of the temporal physical world (Chidvilasananda as cited in Brooks, 1997b).

This concept of the universal Self differs from the common western usage of 'self'. It does not mean an individual's unique personal characteristics, nor identification with the mind and ego or the body and its various senses. The individuated being is referred to as the small self and is considered, in its finite state, to be not ultimately real (Mahoney, 1997b).

Truly speaking a human being is divine. It is only our wrong understanding that keeps us small. We think of ourselves as the body. We think we are a certain physical structure, with hands, feet, legs and eyes. We think of ourselves as a man or woman, as belonging to a particular class or country. We identify ourselves with our thoughts, our talents, our good and bad actions. But none of these things is what we are. (Muktananda, 1991a)

Swami Muktananda (1991a) says that the Self is beyond the distinctions of name, colour, sex, culture or class, and when we go beyond these identifications, we experience the inner Self, the formless, universal presence that exists beyond all categories. This is the awareness of the pure 'I'. It is so subtle that most people

cannot see or hear it, it cannot be perceived through the senses or the mind and it is through meditation that we come to know the inner Self more and more.

Literature and Language

Sources of literature

There is no pre-ordained written doctrine that defines Siddha Yoga and it is inaccurate to describe the 'siddha tradition' as if it were a cohesive body of philosophical teachings (Brooks, 1997a). Since the early 1980s there has been a steadily growing body of literature that has helped to shape a broad understanding of Siddha Yoga philosophy. The organisational arm of Siddha Yoga, the SYDA Foundation, publishes texts under the authority of the Guru. These publications have helped make the teachings accessible to a worldwide community of spiritual seekers. Swami Chidvilasananda and Swami Muktananda are the primary authors of contemporary Siddha Yoga literature. Traversing established traditions they have created their own authoritative body of teachings, both drawing extensively from a wide range of Indian scripture and literature that spans many regions, languages, historical periods, philosophical schools and traditions. The scriptural sources are principally Hindu based and the non-dualistic theologies of Kashmir Shaivism and Vedanta are drawn on especially to reflect the reality and philosophies of the Siddha Yoga gurus (Brooks, 1997a).

The Hymns from the Vedic tradition, particularly the Upanishads are commonly cited. So too are the great epics of traditional Hindu literature comprised of the Mahabharata, in which the Bhagavadgita and the Ramayana sit. Patanjali's Yoga Sutras are another important resource. References are frequently made to saints and poet sages such as Janeshwar, Abhinavagupta and Akkamahadevi along with the more contemporary voices of Tukaram, Mirabai and Kabir (Brooks, 1997a). Scriptural traditions outside India, including Christianity, Buddhism, Taoism and mystical Islam are referred to liberally as are western and eastern philosophers, poets and sages. Any teaching that brings insight to non-dualism and the state of awareness of one's perfect, infinite identity may be selected, for incorporation into the Siddha Yoga body of teachings (Durgananda, 2002).

Other contributions in the form of books, articles and course materials come from Siddha Yoga Swami's and students. Scholars and academics have been given the responsibility of translating and providing commentaries on Indian scriptures as well as the preservation of historical textual material. Contemporary writing can be enjoyed on an explicit level, however narrative written by highly aware individuals is said to contain multiple levels of implicit meanings that are revealed to the reader by a process of meditation and contemplation. A considerable amount of spiritual writing is devoted to giving commentaries on sacred texts, where the seeker illuminates the original by sharing their own experiences and wisdom. Amongst the variations of literature forms, the goals are consistent and this is simply to create a bridge for spiritual seekers, or an open doorway to the unfolding of a direct, experiential realisation of the Self (Brooks, 1997b).

Sacred texts are 'experiential'

Swami Chidvilasananda iterates that the true purpose of study is to know one's own Self.

What you are being offered is the experience of the supreme Self, which dwells within you. In fact, the professors, the scholars, the swamis who give these courses all speak from their direct experience... They speak from the depth of their own beings. When you hear a teaching that is given from someone's experience, it has the power to affect you, to purify your mind, your heart and your body (1994, p. 12).

These words indicate the important relationship between written and oral knowledge. The power and authority of a text is attributed to the teachers who have embodied and experienced for themselves the essence of their meanings. Spiritual texts are not seen as having independent or autonomous power with a 'life' that stands apart from the originator of the transmission. This relationship between author and reader encompasses the flow of knowledge between teacher and student, guru and disciple (Brooks, 1997a). Because spiritual teachings are considered a sacred and powerful means of transmitting Self-realisation, it is

considered essential to maintain the integrity and authority of the teachings and to avoid them being diluted or misinterpreted by people who have not yet fully imbibed them. This critical message, reminding people that a little knowledge does not make you an authority or anywhere near ready to teach to others is summed up the poet Bholenath (as cited in Chidvilasananda, 1989). “No one is ready to receive the teachings, but everyone feels clever enough to give teachings” (p. 123).

The creative power of language

The fundamental nature and importance of Siddha Yoga literature can only be clearly understood by looking at the unique function of language itself. Indeed the significance of language and its association with the mind and consciousness is thoroughly comprehended and clearly defined in Indian tradition. Language is the instrument by which humans think like humans. It is the element from which intellectual knowledge is constructed, organised, expressed and passed on amongst individuals and groups and between generations. In Indian tradition, the Goddess Saraswati is responsible for wisdom, learning and speech, and through her power language is possible. In the Vedas, the Goddess of speech, named Vak, is described as the principle of pure affirmation. Vak is understood to link the inner and outer worlds of an individual. According to the scriptures, out of silence the Word sprang into being. Speech in its original form is therefore divine and is capable of reconnecting an individual with the presence of God (Chidvilasananda, 1996).

Described as the vibrational power from which objects become manifest, language is depicted as the root of our experiences in the phenomenal world (Chidvilasananda, 1996). The Shatapatha Brahmana scripture describes the existential relationship between the mind and language in this way; “The cosmic mind was said to be neither existent nor non-existent. Once created, this mind desired to become manifest...The cosmic mind then created the word” (as cited in Chidvilasananda, 1996, p. 145). Furthermore, the Shiva Sutras explain the force behind the mind and the reason for the limitations in the mind as matrika shakti. Translated from Sanskrit, matrika means ‘letters’ including the vowels and

consonants of the alphabet, and it is matrika, or the power of sound inherent in the alphabet that is the basis of limited knowledge (Muktananda, 1992b).

According to Muktananda (1992b) the matrika shakti encapsulates both the creative power behind letters and words and the limitations placed on a persons experience and comprehension of the phenomenal world. Muktananda illustrates the matrika shakti in this way. Initially letters are simply sounds, but bringing them together they form words. Each word has its own meaning and when it is heard, an image is created in the mind. Each image carries an emotion of joy or sorrow, desire, greed, or love so different feelings arise in the heart. The matrika shakti, the power of letters, creates the different feelings and emotions that agitate the mind. When we wake each day, our mind starts to think about where we are, what is for breakfast, how we prepare for work. One thought leads to another in an infinite fashion and as we identify with the words we become attached to their meaning and bound by them. And so it is through words, says Muktananda (1992b), that the mundane world comes into existence and the limitations of the mind that make us feel separate from everyone and everything are created, veiling our true nature.

Recognising that the very source of the matrika shakti is pure knowledge it is possible to see that in the form of words, syllables and sounds, both spoken and written language is considered to reflect pure Consciousness. This means that when the matrika is properly understood, it has the power to help someone experience the limitless cosmic mind (Muktananda, 1992b). Seen in this light, words are intrinsically potent and when used in a disciplined and focused manner, language becomes highly honoured as a means for turning the mind inward. While Consciousness is ultimately considered indescribable, beyond the realm of the mind and language, the matrika shakti is the mechanism by which the teachings are delivered, the scriptures are contemplated, the mantra is repeated, the names of God are chanted and the Self is contemplated. It is because of the matrika shakti that ordinary language becomes a byway for individuals to connect with their inner spaces and to hear the heartfelt words that emerge from within.

Study and contemplation

Swami Chidvilasananda (1996), describes how prayers arise from deep inside you and as you pray you begin to notice that the words come from a place far beyond ordinary consciousness. Swadhyaya, the recitation of holy texts, literally means 'studying one's own Self'. Chanting, scripture recitation and contemplation of spiritual teachings are commonly practiced in Siddha Yoga to steady the mind and turn attention inwards. In accordance with the scriptures, these disciplines are intended to bring the seeker closer to the cosmic mind, a return to their inner Self and the deep silence of one's own being. By understanding the power in ordinary words, students can observe the play of their inner thoughts. Bringing the mind under control, says Swami Muktananda (1992b), it is possible to become free of thoughts, free of the dance of the matrika shakti.

These practices form the basis of the indispensable routines for a student of Siddha Yoga and contribute greatly to the cultivation of equanimity and personal happiness. The analogy of bathing in a holy river is often used to describe the uplifting and cleansing attributes of the practices (Chidvilasananda, 1996). Chanting and contemplating spiritual teachings, usually those of the Guru's, makes up the core of Siddha Yoga programmes. The opportunity to recite spiritual texts occurs frequently and programmes end with a period of meditation, a time to silently repeat the mantra, to observe thoughts without becoming entangled in them and to rest in the space where thoughts arise and subside (Muktananda, 1991a). In the ashrams or retreat centres, these practices are held at regular intervals throughout the day and combine into what is commonly called the ashram routine.

In providing this framework of Siddha Yoga my intention was to better understand the journey of the meditator (me as the self enquirer) and the philosophy that supports me to integrate the knowledge of the inner realm with everyday existence. It is clear that the philosophy of Siddha Yoga has a fully developed, yet alternative view from which to perceive individuals and the world. Part of my intention in this chapter was to reflect how the medium of thought and language, which is central to a thesis such as this, has another exceedingly important

dimension. Even a rudimentary understanding of these concepts is beneficial to comprehending the importance of meditation as a method to connect with the inner Self and links to the discussion on the mind a little further on. According to Siddha Yoga tradition, the purpose of formal study is to transform a person's awareness and awaken the Inner Self and engaging in study of spiritual texts is a respected pathway for students of meditation. Immersing oneself in researching and organising material for this section has in itself been a significant contemplative exercise and has greatly contributed to the goal of the thesis.

Chapter Four: An integrative inquiry

Swami Shantananda (2003) explains that spiritual work develops in two directions simultaneously; on the one hand it is introspective and unfurls personal potential, on the other hand it is extroverted and enhances our relationship with the surrounding world. The essence of self-inquiry, he says is recognising that Consciousness within our inner Self is the same Consciousness outside in the Universe.

The themes identified in this self-study developed from my 12 week study of meditation and teaching practice and sit within the context of a long time meditation practice. The themes are holistic and constitute a non-linear process as each theme continuously folds back on preceding themes. The full significance of this inquiry can be best understood when all themes are considered together as a whole. What I have grappled with is how to communicate knowledge and insight gained from my contemplation in a tangible externalised written form. I would ask the reader to wait until completing the following two chapters in which the themes are presented in order to fully assimilate the outcomes of this research.

It has been challenging to find a suitable structure to present these understandings so that they are accessible to the reader. The themes denote insights gained from contemplation using the framework of Siddha Yoga discourse. Without the structure of Siddha Yoga literature to support my understanding, penetration to deeper levels of awareness would not have been attained to the same degree. As explained in chapter three, sacred teachings have in themselves the power to turn an individual's attention inwards to access the subtle intent of the message and in this way scriptural text has an enlivened and personal dimension.

I wish to emphasise the point that self-inquiry is a living phenomenon in that it is an active all encompassing and transformative process. The individual is inextricably bound in this transformative process of meditation. This can be expressed by considering that the meditator, meditation practice and the goal of meditation are all the same. The methodological chapter describes how, when

viewed through the lens of ontology and epistemology, meditation is a way of being and a way of knowing. Hence it is essentially inaccurate and misleading to separate the methodology from the findings. In the following chapter I present my research experience and understandings as a 'living inquiry' to show the different levels of new knowledge.

The themes rest on a central idea, that cultivating awareness of the Self, the pure inner Consciousness existing within each individual, will naturally support engagement and positive transformation within a teaching environment. Cultivating a deepening awareness of Self forms the core of the study and is the engine driving all parts of the exploratory process. The experiences and ideas of chapter five are divided into the following themes:

Theme 1) Concealment

Theme 2) Awareness of Self

Theme 3) Awareness of others

The themes relate to meditation practices and focus on a metaphysical level of knowing. The process of exploration and understanding occurs within my inner space whereby meaning is largely concealed from the external world except in my telling of it. These initial themes are presented somewhat differently to the themes presented in chapter six which has evidential as well as intrinsic value.

Theme one represents the concealment of wisdom, it is the aspect of awareness still secret and as yet unknown, where recognition of meaning has not yet occurred but the potency of this wisdom is not diminished in any way because of this. Theme two, awareness of Self describes the heart's wisdom and the power of the mind as essential vehicles for strengthening inner understanding. The third theme, awareness of others, concerns externalising inner knowledge, bringing forth understanding gained from meditation to illumine lived experiences in the external world. This theme focuses on cultivating a new awareness in relation to other people with a particular emphasis on the relationship between teacher and student. It draws on the ontological concept of non-duality to reflect on these relational constructs.

Following on from this, chapter six presents the fourth theme entitled, teacher-student interactions. Here teaching behaviours are emphasised and knowledge that directly result from the contemplative process is presented. The experiences and ideas of theme four are divided into the following sub-themes:

Theme 4) Teacher-student interactions

- I. Relationships;
- II. Listening with awareness; and
- III. Creating space

Together, the sub-themes show the observable teacher-student interactions occurring in my teaching environment, each representing a product or artefact resulting from the inner inquiry discussed in the previous themes. A shift in awareness through contemplation and self-inquiry has created new knowledge that is observable, recordable and can be substantiated by others.

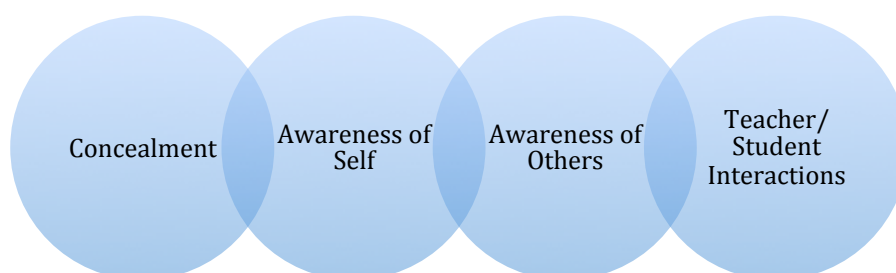


Figure 1:

The four themes identified for discussion in chapters 5 and 6 are represented above, in figure 1. The metaphor of a simple house can be used to emphasise the holistic nature of the combined themes as well as the different dimensions of subtlety contained in each. Theme one, concealment, can be likened to the fertile, earth from which all necessary materials for building a house are provided. The materials of earth, wood, clay and iron give substance to and dictate the shape of the dwelling. Theme two, representing awareness of Self, is represented by the foundation stone which serves as the threshold between the earth and building. It represents an identifiable form and is the base from which the building derives its intrinsic quality and strength. Next, the scaffolding erected over the foundations

depicts the third theme, awareness of others. The connecting supports braced together denote the relationship of one self to others. The scaffolding is essential to support the outer shell of the building, its shape and style clearly determining the outer contours of the dwelling. The completed dwelling represents the final theme, the observable interactions between the teacher and students. Made of many parts, it has grown from the inside out, yet it is the outward appearance of the dwelling that attracts most attention and comment. It is seemingly the most flexible feature of the dwelling, easy to alter in a superficial way with cladding, paint and furnishings. If one didn't know better, someone could easily conclude that this shell was in fact 'the house', and if attention remained focused on this outer layer of the dwelling, then knowledge of all else, the scaffolding, the foundation stone, even the earth from which the house is made would be forgotten, remaining concealed until someone delved to reveal the secrets within. Finally one day when the house has rotted or blown away in the wind, there the earth will remain, unchanged and self-replenishing.

The metaphor helps to explain, how rather than a linear model, a more accurate depiction is to show the themes developing from the inside out as summarised in figure 2.

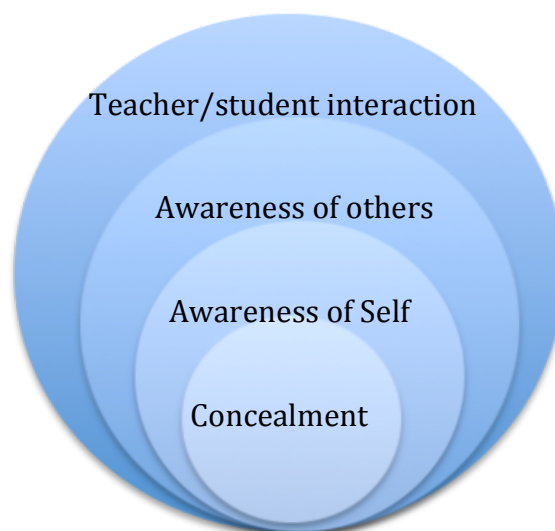


Figure 2

Chapter Five: Cultivating a new awareness

“Changing the prescription of your glasses”

Theme 1: Concealment

Concealment precedes awareness. It denotes the as yet uncomprehended inner state. Concealment can be thought of as the long process of fermentation where ideas slowly rise to the surface of your mind, coming to fruition with a sense of purpose and commitment. It implies the clearing of mist that sometimes precedes a bright blue day; an inspirational dream that upon waking you cannot quite remember; concepts that have lain dormant, incubating in the recesses of your being waiting for something that sparks them into consciousness. Concealment may be the seed of an intention held closely in the heart, largely unnoticed but exerting quiet influence in daily actions, feelings and decisions. The formation of significant new knowledge, rather than being tangible and memorable, is often elusive as it comes and goes on the tides of the mind. Ever forgetful, the mind reveals its contents, only to conceal them later. This may reflect the tendency of the mind to hold on to habitual thinking or perhaps an emotional resistance to perceived change. Nevertheless, to maintain a set of thoughts and to bring them to the forefront of one’s awareness requires intentional refreshment, steady focus and commitment.

One of the principal questions arising from self-inquiry is; how do you know what you are looking for and perhaps even more pertinently, how will you recognise it when you find it? Here, within a context of meditation the notion of concealment takes on a level of pertinence critical to this method of inquiry. Cultivating a new way of seeing the world is not straightforward when the conscious mind literally cannot grasp the true nature of spiritual transformation. I cannot perceive the Self through the ordinary senses of sound, sight, touch, smell or taste. My mind cannot reason or use logic to comprehend its nature and normal recourse to intellectually informing myself has only limited value. Unfolding from the inside out, imperceptible to the conscious mind, the underlying quality remains secret, too

subtle to comprehend. Try as I might to capture the impression, it remains just out of reach, like trying to catch the wisp of an evocative scent that passes on a wind current. Over time, with further contemplation and inner strengthening, these subtleties slowly become clear and understandable. It is this aspect of inner wisdom, available to the heart but concealed from the limited mind portrayed in this theme.

There are of course many skilfully crafted methods to support students (such as myself) search for the Self. Within Siddha Yoga most of these techniques are designed to appease the mind. While the mind is appeased, a deeper process of wisdom unfolds within the subtle levels of consciousness. As previously explained, contemplating the Guru's words engage the mind and at the same time strike the heart in a potent way so that the inner awareness within this individual is activated. Swami Chidvilasananda (1997, p. 42) writes;

The kind of life you lead when you follow the teachings, when you become aware of God's presence in your heart is truly golden. You no longer live an ordinary life, you live a golden life, you live yoga.

This statement points to the possibility of transformation that takes place from spiritual study. Swami Chidvilasananda says, when you follow the teachings "you no longer live an ordinary life, you live a golden life". On the surface, this remains merely an interesting or curious idea, but by holding these words inside, letting them resonate with my inner being initiates an opening to the guru's full intentions. The Guru is instilling an attitude of possibility and potential, of exploration and self-inquiry. She encourages me, the student, to move forward, to live a life not bound by ordinary expectations, a life that delivers great riches and wonder. The following is an excerpt of free writing taken from my journal having contemplated the phrase – "you live a golden life, you live yoga". As with all subsequent extracts, italics distinguish my personal thoughts in writing.

Live, live, live, I am alive, my breath flows, heart beats, leg muscles move, bones give uprightness and solidity. Living yoga is a transforming idea, a life of service if you like – clear, disciplined, immersed in the Guru's teachings and

those of the sages. A life honed like a careful, precise instrument. Absolutely no room for murkiness, pure and replenished. A life worth living. a golden life. An alone life, aspects of ordinary life no longer accommodate you, nor you them. An inner life, attention focused – fused with my surroundings but in a detached way. Focused, but apart, always mindful (August 4, 2010).

This extract describes how I am trying out the possibility of living a transformed life, a golden life. I am certainly not there yet but I have some emerging ideas about what this life might be like. I have only partial knowledge of what Swami Chidvilasananda is talking about when she says 'live yoga'. There is an appeal to this promised change that includes me making some shifts in my thought processes and behaviours. With effort, some of these changes become real. Often the change is imperceptible to begin with, but with patience and diligence, abstract concepts take shape in the form of my own self.

One of the purposes of self-inquiry is to go beyond what is known in an everyday sense, beyond ordinary consciousness. Without disciplined practice and study and ongoing commitment to explore the depths of one's being, it is not possible to learn to live in the awareness of the universal Self. In this inquiry I discover how ideas such as focused attention, detachment or replenishment are practised again and again until one day they have become, to some degree, a part of my being. They begin to manifest in my attitudes and interactions with others, they subtly influence the feelings I have about myself and bring change to my perception of daily life. Cultivating a new awareness becomes a natural experience that occurs incrementally over time and with steady practice.

Levels of knowing

Self-inquiry is considered necessary for an individual to awaken to the subtle inner energy. There is a point in meditation where you lose awareness, and in that moment, there is absolute awareness (Chidvilasananda, 1989). The Self exists beyond the ability of the mind to grasp and of words to express. It is often simply referred to as simply 'That' or Neti Neti, not this, not that (Muktananda, 1978). It is only from going deep within that an individual can perceive the supreme 'I' that is

beyond the body, the mind or the ego (Chidvilasananda, 1989). The philosophy of Vedanta describes how in meditation we pass through four bodies. The first is the physical waking body. Next is the subtle body of the sleeping dreaming state and beyond that is the causal body of the deep sleep state, experienced as great peace or emptiness. The final state, is smaller than a sesame seed and is known as the transcendent state where one experiences the light of the Self (Muktananda, 1991a). A story from the Taittiriya Upanishad (7th century B.C E.) highlights the many levels of understanding possible for a human to experience. It recounts the Self as not only that which is physical matter, life-force, sight, hearing mind and speech, the Self is that from which these beings are born, that in which these beings live, and that into which these beings will depart (as cited in Mahoney, 1997b). In the Chandogya Upanishad, the Sage Sanatkumara (as cited in Mahoney, 1997b), aptly shows the increasingly subtle forms of the Self to the scholar Narada that lies outside knowledge of ethics, mathematics, politics, astronomy and the scriptures.

Words cannot fully reveal Brahman; nevertheless to one who is attentive to it, Brahman *is* revealed in words (as it is in all things); and that knowing this one is liberated from the constraints of language. Sanatkumara brings Narada's attention to increasingly subtle and sublime forms of the absolute. Brahman as speech is more subtle than Brahman as name. Mind is more sublime than speech. Will or intention is more subtle than mind; thought is more subtle than will. Contemplation is more sublime than thought, while understanding is more sublime than contemplation (p. 375).

This statement resonates with me even though I cannot say I understand all of it. The first thing that strikes me is that contemplation is recognised as a relatively deeper level of knowing, deeper than thought, will, mind and speech. Also recognised as having great power is thought. This has intriguing implications, given that people are usually unaware of the constant stream of their thoughts, and even when conscious of them, find they are exceedingly difficult to control. The priority that western culture gives to speech is literally turned on its head in this context so that communication of thoughts and discourse of ideas is considered to be merely the outer layers of knowing. Even an obtuse interpretation of this

Upanishad indicates that many ways of knowing are present beneath the surface of speech and that they exert a powerful influence.

The concept of concealment in this theme captures the sense of unfolding awareness created from steady self-inquiry. It points to movement from the supremely subtle transcendent level into consciousness. The scriptures illuminate the subtle nature of the Self to the seeker, reaffirming that meditation is the key to access deep inner knowledge and wisdom. As I contemplated the findings, I directly experienced the powerful energy swelling from the depths of my being sweeping all other ideas into consciousness/space. Siddha Yoga teachings help to give shape and form to my largely inarticulate experiences. They provide luminosity to ideas that are sometimes perceived only dimly and great reassurance that my inquiry is authentic.

Theme 2: Awareness of Self

I am the knower. Focus attention on my own Self – it is almost effortless but takes awareness to be in my own Self, to be in my own power and authority (August 5, 2010).

The heart and mind are commonly employed to convey the transformative experience of expanding Self-awareness. Cultivating understanding of the heart and mind are considered significant ways for an individual to make meaning of their meditation experiences and to investigate what the sages mean when they say we are not different from Consciousness. Beginning with the heart, this section illuminates the abode of the Self and later describes the complexities between the mind and the Self.

Let the mind rest in the cave of the heart (September 5, 2010).

The heart

The spirit of this project is encapsulated by the symbolism of the heart and the inner process of delving through the layers of the heart to come to a clear space of innate understanding and recognition. With my attention focused inwards I am aware of the impulse in my heart and its unsurpassed merit, this beating heart, as near to me as is physically possible, as dear to me as life itself. I do not know where my individual heart ends and the universal divine Heart begins, I am simply aware of the wisdom, the shelter and loving peace that is available within this innermost sanctity. Again and again I discover the importance of inwardly focusing my attention. I write a poem to capture and attest to the inward smile in the light of the heart.

Rays of sunshine

Fields ablaze in golden light

Sprinkled like dust, the finest of layers on my skin

The smile that melts what was

And breathes into me, my

Own radiant smile

Courage, faith, truth (August 1, 2010)

The hub of all sacred places

Siddha Yoga teachings and scriptures are emphatic on this point; The heart is the hub of all sacred places (Bhagawan Nityananda as cited in Shantananda, 2003, p. 363). To enter the Heart and behold divine splendour is the summit of human reality says Swami Chidvilasananda (2006). A western mystic, Angelus Silesius wrote; “The most high is absolutely without measure, as we know, and yet a human heart can enclose Him entirely” (as cited in Chidvilasananda, 1994, p. 18) and from the Bhagavad Gita, Krishna tell Arjuna; in the hearts of all beings, the lord lives (as cited in Chidvilasananda, 1994). Often when we connect with a feeling of love or intense joy, the experience may seem to arise from outside of us. For example we identify the connection with our heart to a particular person, a special place, or the satisfaction of achieving something. But actually, the feeling of love

arises from within our own being and the intensity of that experience derives mostly from its capacity to connect us with the sacredness within our own hearts (Vasudevananda, 2009). The supreme understanding is that the sacredness within our own hearts is nothing less than the great Self, the glorious heart (Chidvilasananda, 1997). There is no need to look in the outside world for sacredness or to journey anywhere to find God, because the experience of being established in the heart allows individuals to regard all people, places, and things as sacred (Vasudevananda, 2009).

Many different attributes arise from the heart connection according to the unique conditions of each individual. Continuous effort to connect with the heart is transformative in my experience. Renewed commitment to strength and courage supports a particular challenge in one's life, or a moment of peace provides the space to let go of troubling thoughts. Profound feelings of love can bring inspiration to a situation at work or possibly a sense of compassion and clarity in engaging with others. Feeling alone can be transformed to feeling nourished and whole while at the same time there is a growing realisation that solitude brings resilience and equanimity. From situations such as these I notice that decisions and actions taken in life are more closely aligned with the intentions of my heart. This can be explained as a heightened sense of trust in my choices, patience and flexibility when required, and acknowledging the authority of others. Examples are infinite, they may be powerful or very tiny, but I can say for certain that remembering my Heart has created greater equanimity and wellbeing in my personal sphere and the influence of this is carried into my social life.

There are many subtleties conveyed by the word heart. It is often employed as a metaphor to denote that which is sacred, treasured, essential, pure, generous and hidden. It also represents the core of an individual on a continuum of levels, from the physical to the most subtle and transcendent (Vasudevananda, 2009). At the physical level the heart is the central organ of our circulatory system. Some yogic texts describe the heart as a spiritual centre or chakra located in the chest region radiating vital energy throughout the body (Iyengar, 1977). Other Indian literature speaks of the heart as the psychic instrument in the body that is equivalent of the mind (Chidvilasananda, 2006). The heart can describe the centre of our feelings,

thoughts, emotions, memories and impressions, elements that comprise our identity as separate individuals (Shantananda, 2006). The Guru's and scriptures also describe the effulgent Heart, the centre of our essential Self, the divine centre of all that exists (Chidvilasananda, 1997).

Penetrating into the heart of the matter is described as a process of purification because while the heart is crystal clear, it is surrounded by layers of impurities that have accumulated from unresolved events of life (Chidvilasananda, 1994). To recognise your own goodness is, as Swami Chidvilasananda says, the whole point of spiritual practices (1994). Through meditation I experience the possibility of becoming stabilised in the heart. A reflection describes my insights at this time.

*A knife to cut away delusion
There is a fine silver filament inside
connecting me to all the worlds and
put there by the Guru. Carefully placed.
Its power is infinite, a million volts of
Energy and as gentle as a fluttering leaf
The internal-eternal pearl
It is life, creation unfolded in upon itself
A knife to cut away useless emotions
Victim, once my friend but now no longer needed.
Pick and choose carefully to fill my heart,
Love, love, humility, gratitude, strength,
Beauty, the Guru's presence, laughter,
Awareness, space, kindness, longing, love, love,
My heart is God's heart, so all seasons
in the world are here. It is a magic heart
and breathes love
Gurumayi whispers, "surrender" to me
I am listening, I hear you. (September 25, 2010)*

The mind

The purity of the heart is offset by the restlessness and power of the mind. It is the mind that both keeps us from experiencing the radiance of the Heart and is the vehicle for attaining Self-awareness. Swami Chidvilasananda declares that if God dwells in the heart, then it is the mind that is the doorway to knowledge of Him (1994). The system of yoga considers the mind to be extraordinarily significant and is indeed the main subject of concern in sacred texts. The Yoga Sutras explain that the restlessness of the mind acts as a barrier to experiencing the inner Self and when the mind becomes still and turns inward, the Self is immediately perceived (Chidvilasananda, 1996). When you become aware of the way your mind thinks, she continues, and of how the subconscious mind retains impressions of all thoughts and actions, you come to understand the effort and necessity of spiritual practice.

Knowledge of the mind is in my view essential for integrating inside wisdom with outer living. Contemplating the nature of the mind in yogic terms extends well beyond normal cognitive frames of references pushing my self-inquiry into new and expansive dimensions. As any person who has made an effort to get to know their thoughts will have experienced, the mind is mercurial with a nature not naturally disposed to discipline and compliance. In meditation practice it quickly becomes evident that the biggest obstacle or distraction to experiencing the inner peace of the heart, is the chattering mind.

Defined as evenness of mind (Bhagavad Gita as cited in Chidvilasananda, 1994), yoga is that which overcomes thought waves that arise in the mind. Patanjali the renowned sage who wrote the Yoga Sutras explains that the purpose of yoga is to still the waves of thoughts and feelings that arise in the mind and are experienced as painful or nonpainful. All suffering, said Patanjali is created by these thought waves and not the mind itself which is a pulsation of God and can never be destroyed. By intense practice and detachment the modifications of the mind can be brought under control (Muktananda, 1992b). Swami Muktananda gave numerous commentaries on the power and nature of the mind;

The mind is the most important thing. Your happiness and sorrow depend entirely upon it. Your mind is the master of your future. You will find out from your own experience that during those moments when your mind is free from thought, when it is not disturbed by worry or anxiety, you experience a most wonderful kind of peace inside, you experience freshness, great inspiration (Muktananda, 1992c, p. 24).

The individual mind has the same nature as the Self

The mind is defined as individual consciousness. It is the centre of individual activity, the psychic instrument responsible for the perception, judgement, cognition and personal identification that allows us to perceive and understand our experience of life and the world we live (Shantananda, 2003). The mind from a yogic perspective however pertains not only to individual consciousness and in this sense it differs from western developmental theorists. Yogic psychology includes one more stage in the development of humans which is coming to know the Self (Durgananda, 1992). The Yoga Vasishtha (as cited in Chidvilasananda, 1992), considered the founder of yogic psychology says;

The mind is produced from the utterly still nature
Of the Supreme Self,
And is changed into a state of restlessness
Like a surge in the ocean (p.34).

The scriptures regard the mind as having the same nature as supreme Consciousness, as being a pulsation of the inner Self (Muktananda, 1992b). The mind is the aspect of Shakti, the creative energy that has descended from pure awareness to become identified with infinite external objects perceived by the mind. The mind has no independent existence, it is a contracted form of supreme Consciousness that assumes the limitations of the individual mind. The Self makes the mind think, the imagination spin and for the ego to be endlessly concerned with 'I' (Muktananda, 1991a). The Upanishads say, the Self lives in the mind, but is different from the mind. It is God that makes the mind think but who can never be apprehended by the mind because the Self is the motive power behind all the

movements of the mind (Kena Upanishad as cited in Muktananda, 1991a). The mind cannot recognise the Self because it is its body, but when the outward flowing mind turns inward, it merges in its source (Brihadaranyaka Upanishad as cited in Muktananda, 1991a).

This world is produced from the mind alone

Like supreme Consciousness, individual consciousness has creative power and an individual's thoughts are strong enough to create the limited world of the individual (Shantananda, 2003). The Yoga Vasihtha continues to point out that the thought waves produced in the mind are only illusory like a mirage (as cited in Chidvilasananda, 1992);

This world is produced from the mind alone,
Like the waters of a mirage.
It manifests in fleeting thoughts,
Which are as illusory as the reflections of the moon in water (p.34).

The world of thoughts is considered to be temporal and to have only relative truth. The individual mind perceives diversity and difference and distinguishes the personal self as a separate entity, subject to measurable knowledge, emotions, space and time (Shantananda, 2003). Without the experience of these limited conditions created by the mind, there would not be an individual or a personal identity, there would be only supreme Consciousness. The mind erases God's creation and replaces it with its own design, it causes individuals to perceive the universe as filled with diversity and creates the separation between the individual self and the supreme Self seeing only duality in Gods unity (Muktananda, 1992b). The irony is that the mind feels individuated and small while in fact the scriptures have declared it as infinite and omnipotent. Bhagawan Nityananda said, "as long as the mind is alive, you are a human being. When the mind becomes mindless, you become God" (as cited in Muktananda, 1992b, p. 37).

What a person thinks is what he becomes

The Maitri Upanishad says (as cited in Chidvilasananda, 1992);

One's own thought is one's own world
What a person thinks is what he becomes –
That is the eternal mystery (p.36).

According to Muktananda (1992b) an individual exists because of the mind, and everything in this world can be attained through the mind. It is our constant identification with the endless mental creations of the mind that make us feel limited. Consequently, happiness and sorrow, pain and pleasure are caused only by the play of the mind rather than anything in the external world. What an individual sees is determined by his or her own thoughts and perceptions and the inner experience of the world reflects their own outlook. Muktananda describes that the nature of the mind is to think ceaselessly, it can never be left behind and it never lets us alone. It is our thoughts he says, that create our heaven and hell, that make us experience divinity or feel like hellish insects. And it is therefore of the highest importance that we think positively about ourselves and other people.

These teachings outlined above; that Consciousness becomes the mind; that like supreme Consciousness individual consciousness is a creative power; and that one's thoughts are one's own world; are drawn from the experience of siddhas and are critical to the practice of yoga. While knowledge of the scriptures is regarded as paramount to understanding the Self, it is consistent practice that transforms ideas into direct experience.

I awoke this morning from a very vivid dream. Here is the outline. The mind filters everything in the world around us. Everything I know is filtered by the mind. This is how the world is seen and known. Does this mean that the essence is already inside the person / is the person / is me? (August 23, 2010)

Meditating on the mind as the Self

Precisely because a still mind is elusive, much of meditation concerns learning how to deal with the constant flow of thoughts people experience. Swami Muktananda (1991a) explains that a meditator must understand how to manage the mind, to ultimately transcend thoughts and emotions by observing them from a position beyond the mind. Most methods of meditation focus the mind on a single point, an image, sound, thought or feeling, in order to still the mind (Haight, 2010; Muktananda, 1992b), but harnessing the stream of mental activity is notoriously difficult. A notable instruction given by Swami Muktananda is to allow the mind to do what it will, while holding the awareness that each thought is an expression of the highest consciousness. In meditation students are invited to see whatever arises on the internal mental screen as the goal of meditation, as Consciousness (Shantananda, 2003).

Lots of thoughts in meditation - was going to write a shallow meditation but I think from my reading that if the intention is to meditate then that is what it is (September 5, 2010).

The goal is to witness the different thoughts as they come and go in the mind with the understanding that no matter what thoughts and images appear, they are not concrete manifestations, they are merely the play of infinite desires, fears, positive and negative thoughts the mind has created. There is no need to try and subdue the mind, but rather honour the mind as the Self (Muktananda, 1991a).

Vital to meditation then is the awareness of equality, that all thoughts are the same nature as the supreme Self, all mental activity is a play of supreme Consciousness. When the mind is quiet it becomes possible to hear the inner Self speak, or as Swami Durgananda puts it, “when we step back and watch our thoughts, we discover that it is not the mind that is watching them, but something else, an ‘I’ that is entirely free from the productions of the mind” (Durgananda, 2002, p. 45). This ‘I’ is the witness of the mind, the ever present, all knowing, unchanging Self, perceived as one cultivates inward flowing awareness.

Gaining understanding of the mind and creating a shift in awareness inevitably entails learning how to control or discipline the mind. As will be shown, this is not easy, but strengthening the mind is considered essential if one wants to attain inner peace and fulfilment.

Strengthening the mind

Strengthening the mind is vital because the process of meditation is demanding and at times arduous. Having some initial awareness of thoughts does not imply that you have any control whatsoever over them. It requires vigilance to be aware of your thoughts even occasionally and great courage to be non-attached to even just one thought. It takes determination to cultivate even a limited awareness that each thought, each emotion, each picture that arises in your mind, is a form of pure Consciousness.

Sitting for meditation is fine and nice but slightly annoying if mind continues on and on with its rumblings. I love that feeling of having 'dropped' into meditation. It feels sometimes like honey / quiet / still / at ease / natural / shakti / loving / smiling / So good (July 29, 2010).

In my experience progress is completely unhurried and the path unfamiliar and so it is beneficial to hear how more advanced practitioners, such as the teaching swami's, have managed and what methods deepen their meditation practice. In meditation or in daily life Swami Vasudevananda (2009) observes that if we become involved in our emotions, projections and memories, either by identifying with them or trying to suppress them, we are actually adding energy to them and in this way strengthening or prolonging them. Learning to watch thoughts calmly and to focus on the energy of the thought rather than the content, allows even the most intense and stubborn thought to eventually merge back into its source.

Swami Shantananda (2003) equates it to forging new habits and literally retraining the mind. By way of example he shares that in meditation he witnessed images arising on the screen of his mind from a splendid inner light and then dissolve back into the same light source. He describes this as watching the birth of

his thought forms, which were made of energy in the form of light. Seeing that all mental movement is a form of consciousness, Shantananda shares how he developed more tolerance and less judgement towards his thoughts and as a result feels happier and happier. Your awareness can go deeper than thought and rest in the source of all thoughts, Consciousness itself, the Heart. Observing one's thoughts as a play of Consciousness is a practice to be remembered as often as possible. Practicing the yoga of discipline, Swami Vasudevananda (2009) describes how you gradually notice that the capacity to maintain focus and stability develops, and slowly you break free from limiting patterns and tendencies that once hindered us. There are moments he says, when you recognise the inner strength and equanimity you've been cultivating, and it is possible to identify many occasions of touching the fullness of the Heart in spiritual practice, and in the midst of daily life.

What I particularly respond to in Vasudevananda's description is the 'in the moment' nature of cultivating Awareness as well as the importance of recognition. It is possible to experience wonderful insights, great courage or lightness in one moment where you are fully connected to the Heart, and then it is gone. There are times I have been in the grip of restlessness, melancholy or anger and any attempt to budge the emotion or to uncover its source is strongly resisted. However, over time I have noticed that my ability to be a witness to intense thoughts has increased markedly, and my skill at not getting caught up in even the most intractable mental patterns is enhanced. Learning to observe myself allows detachment to stories that once totally engaged my senses and energy. There may have been a realisation that I cannot afford to squander energy on negative thinking or I decide to drop some baggage that has kept me feeling weak and fragmented. Whatever changes occur, they are inevitable and transformative. But change arrives in its own time. Accordingly I have learnt to relax and trust the process and to savour the times where disciplined practice has borne fruit.

I feel the baggage. I have to leave the feelings in my body behind and move forward. I have learnt so much. I can do this. I remember the field of the mind, planting beautiful and positive thoughts in my mind. I have learnt discipline and now I will practice it (December 12, 2010).

Be vigilant with my thoughts - I will cut back on ruminating over upsetting or energy sapping things (November 30, 2010).

Strengthening the mind has helped me to pay more careful attention to daily treasures when a Heart connection is made. These moments are actually innumerable but if they go unacknowledged they simply scatter out of one's awareness. Recognising and considering the value of such moments can strengthen one's understanding of the Self. Like pearls they can be savoured and if collected and strung together, they create a substantial and tangible form of beauty. Practising observing the thoughts that play in the field of my mind cultivates beneficial thinking. I can choose to 'plant' positive and inspirational thoughts in my mind. Such thoughts create an inner environment that is pleasant not only for me, but for others. It is obvious that the quality of a person's thinking has an enormous impact on how life is experienced.

I like this simple classroom exercise where I ask students to turn to their neighbour and give them a compliment. The room immediately erupts into laughter and once the compliments have been exchanged, student's faces beam with joy and friendliness. In two minutes the energy in the room has transformed to a positive hum (August 11, 2010).

Thoughts are not simply part of personal stories and identity. As they exist, so do I, they keep my personality, my ego, the sense of my-self alive. As the scriptures say, my thoughts create my world so without my thoughts, it is appropriate to ask 'what will be left of me'? I imagine this is yet another paradox and ultimately the answer to practising non-attachment to my thoughts will lead to a sense of liberation and a deeper sense of wholeness. An exercise to help explain this is to ask repeatedly, "Who am I"? I am a mother, friend, daughter, teacher, student, musician; I am healthy, old, thinking, writing; I am happy, hopeful.... in fact, inestimable versions of myself appear. But as I keep delving into the question, I begin to sense limits to these identifications. None fully capture my essence. My individuated mind lets go of these images and in that instant I feel the space of the Self. Setting aside the mental definitions of what my actions, feelings and emotions

represent, I am aware of the pure 'I' underlying the many mental pictures that create my personal story.

This sense of a pure 'I' is also referred to as 'I' consciousness and leads to theme three that acknowledges that the inner experience of 'I' is the same in everyone and everything. Understanding this in a Siddha Yoga context requires examining the concept of universal oneness or non-duality.

Theme 3: Awareness of others

Equality consciousness

Theme three explores equality awareness connecting the Self to others. This awareness underpins the relationships that are critical in all aspects of life including teaching. Siddha Yoga nurtures an awareness of others that includes a perspective of unity in interpersonal relationships. An expanded awareness conceives of the Self and the other as having the same essential nature. This perspective derives from the ontological position of non-duality and implies that there is no difference between the Self and the other, that they are in fact the same Self. Like other aspects of Siddha Yoga, the knowledge of unity does not depend on faith in the Guru's teachings or the scriptures, but in direct experience. While not an easy concept to comprehend, non-duality can be glimpsed imperceptibly in the beginning, and with time and practice is rendered into a more tangible experience. Siddha Yoga teachings, including the Siddha Yoga Home Study Course (SYHSC), abound with various ways of helping individuals transform their understanding of themselves in relation to others, and are key to my exploration on teaching and meditation.

I notice that there is an – I – made of me, my personality, culture, emotions, behaviour, thoughts.... my individual identity. Letting go of these characteristics, I am aware of an 'I' that underlies all of me. I love this feeling, the pure 'I' is clear, spacious and it is a treat (almost a relief) to know that this 'I' is in others too (November 13, 2010).

The essence of non-duality is that although the universe contains divisions between object and subject, perceiver and perceived, all differences arise from the undifferentiated and unchanging singular reality known as Shiva, Consciousness, God, the Heart and so forth (Muktananda, 1997). According to the ancient scripture Pratyabhijna-hridayam, every individual embodies the universe in a contracted form (Shantananda, 2003). This means that God dwells in the heart of every human. “No matter who we think we are, no matter which country we may come from, no matter which language we speak, we all have within us the same ‘I’ consciousness” (Muktananda, 1992a, p. 5). The same ‘I’ consciousness is the same in everyone, although it manifests in infinite forms.

The motto of Siddha Yoga ashrams is ‘paraspara devo bhaava’ which translates to mean “See God in each other” (Muktananda, 1991a). This favourite aphorism is an invitation to practice the understanding that God is present in every person, to acknowledge the divine spark in each human being (Siddhananda, 1991). All the Guru’s talks begin with the words; “With great respect, with great love, I welcome you all, with all my heart” (Chidvilasananda, 1997). In the same way that meditation directs our attention to the light of the inner Self, so we practice recognising this same Self in others. Once you understand your own great Self, says Muktananda (1992a), you will see the divinity in others.

This powerful teaching felt like an extension of my own thoughts, fully resonating with my own experiences of teaching. I had naturally become aware that meditation helped me to perceive others with greater acuity, attending inwardly to myself deepened my capability to attend outwardly to others. I noticed that to see God in others is easy and rather delightful – even with tricky characters. It is illuminating and truthful. To see God in myself is however nearly impossible.

The major obstacle to seeing God in others, says Chidvilasananda (1994) is the inability to see God in oneself. It is common to feel undeserving she continues, yet this feeling of unworthiness is what creates disrespect for others. If we cannot experience goodness within, how can we understand the goodness in others? (Chidvilasananda, 1991) A siddha maintains a constant vision of their own divinity

and so they continually see this radiance in others (Mahoney, 1997a). Swami Muktananda (1991b) says that to truly know others is the highest religion and the highest duty of a human being. When you experience the unconditional love of the inner Self this not only connects you with the love in your own heart, it creates the expansion of love towards others. Through meditation, experience of boundless love expands into an ever-widening circle that can extend to include all people (Siddhananda, 1991). It is a wonderful and uplifting discipline to think of people and consciously remember the same 'I' consciousness is in all of us.

I contemplate

If we all have the same consciousness, does this mean that inside we all share the same feelings such as love, lust, fear, grief, compassion? And if I can identify that feeling in me, can I also know that feeling in you? If this is true, how did I not know that? (October 22, 2010)

The act of perceiving another with equality-consciousness can be referred to as the common nature existent in an interaction and is not of a personal nature but rather is impersonal (Fredman, 1991). Reflected in all creatures, in all people and in all minds, the Self always remains steady, unaffected by emotions, judgements or concepts of the individual mind (Siddhananda, 1991). To see with equal vision goes beyond the imperfections and usual barriers that are normally felt between each person. I-consciousness recognises the sanctity in others just as they are. This includes all animate creations and inanimate objects. It is not about superimposing expectations on anyone or suggesting people should behave in certain ways or prescribe a particular set of moral values. Indeed it is important to acknowledge that Consciousness manifests in unique and varied ways in everyone and everything.

In India, beloved Saints sometimes exhibit extremely unconventional behaviour such as Zipruanna who lived in abject filth but remained completely clean and pure, or Harigiri Baba who would demand money from people and collect stones that he would give to people as jewels (Muktananda, 1978). These saints who were revered and recognised as having attained the perfect state of a siddha, optimise

the notion that you have to look past outward behaviour to see that each and every person is a manifestation of Shiva. According to Muktananda (1992a), whether you are considering a fruit, or a stone, an animal or a person, it is beneficial to remember that everything in its natural form is the manifestation of God. It can be liberating to think of the fruit and see God in the form of fruit, or to see God in the form of a stone. You look at a person and you understand that they are also God. Everything and everyone is God, exactly as they are.

The ensuing excerpt was written in response to a teaching in the SYHSC. “Wherever you are, God is. We all live in God’s heart”. The instructions that came with this teaching were to write freely without censoring or editing.

God’s heart must be very big, big enough for all the universes, and also very intimate and finite because it contains my heart, a seed, an ant’s being. If something is simultaneously finite and infinite – that is obviously out of all boundaries of time/space that are normally understood. We all live in Gods heart suggests great difference and variety (I know this because this is the normal way of seeing the world) – the endless creative dynamic yet unchanging and undifferentiated (September 15, 2010).

Ideas of non-duality and unity consciousness can be challenging to comprehend. Most often we learn to recognise difference rather than the sameness. Borrowing a simple picture from Steiner (as cited in Zajonc, 2009, p. 133), figure 3 shows how these concepts can be represented visually in diagrammatic form. Each image when contemplated may initiate feelings of dissolving into one, of differences subsiding, or of breathing in a sense of harmony and compassion.

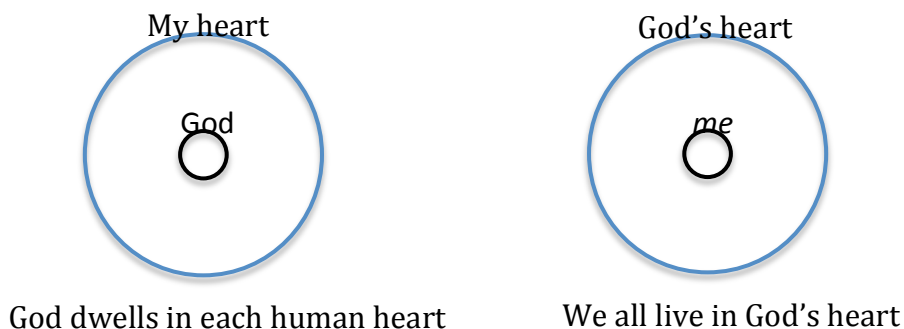


Figure 3

Somehow it makes me think of how the outside is inside. I look at the window – there is sea, grass, pohutukawas, puddles, and am aware that what I see out there is in me. I ‘see’ it and ‘perceive’ it, but something more. The scriptures also say that my ‘inside’ (of feelings, teachings, values, culture, shared knowledge) frames what I see outside. Are they the same, internal/external? Non-duality. No duality. No ‘me and that’, or ‘them and me’ (November 5, 2010).

I have learnt that steady practice makes steady experience. Practising the awareness of equality means it continues to increase (Vasudevananda, 2009). Gradually I have become increasingly aware of the ways I see others even if the person is not physically present. When a relationship manifests with tension, it takes a lot of discipline to relate to that person in a friendly way. In difficult relationships, I notice that the benefits of meditation are very tangible. Even when your mind and emotions may be caught in negative emotions or thoughts, it is possible to feel a certain inner recognition, a connection in the heart with that person. Honouring the divinity in oneself, remaining anchored to one’s essential nature helps to neutralise feeling of negativity.

It is our tendency to see difference and distinction that creates fear or enmity explains Muktananda (1991), and the concept of duality is the root cause of all conflict in the world. Swami Chidvilasananda (1995) reminds students that in order to achieve inner peace, it is essential to constantly work on how you regard other people. As she puts it “you must catch the impulse to see differences and pull it out by its roots” (p. 45). Non-duality means seeing unity in diversity, seeing oneness where there is difference, seeing God in each other. Equality – consciousness is remembering this. By cultivating the awareness of oneness, understanding that we are all the same Self, no matter what our particular life path is, then according to the wisdom of the Guru’s, there will be peace in the world.

This chapter has focused on the processes of meditation that enabled me to cultivate a changing awareness. Everything one does and does not do, the words spoken, silences kept, all reflect deep inner understanding. Swami Chidvilasananda (1999) expresses this succinctly.

In the course of your life you do so many things. It is very important that you allow the fountain of knowledge to spring forth continually from within. This is the true bath, the true ritual – constantly allowing yourself to bathe in the fountain of knowledge that springs forth from within (p. 138)

Steeped in the practices of meditation, engaging the heart and mind, provides an enriched awareness from which to participate in the responsibilities of working life. This brings me to the next chapter, teacher - student interaction, based on my expanding insight that the Self colours the teaching experience. The process of formal teaching can be regarded as a product or manifestation of Self-awareness.

Chapter Six: Transformation

Theme Four: Teacher-student interaction

Whereas the preceding chapter focused on the inward flow of attention, this chapter follows the principles of self-study to highlight what emerges in the outer environment as a teacher when a connection to the inner Self is maintained through reflection and contemplation. Each theme in this section intertwines with the inner unfoldment described in the previous chapter and typically arose from experiences in the classroom in my role as teacher.

The nature of the discussion is offered with slight hesitancy and by way of explaining I will share a story about Swami Muktananda. Some Carmelite monks had come to meet him wanting to talk about the suffering of the world. As Baba talked of joy and light heartedness, the monks became more and more agitated. "Why do you not care enough about people's pain?" they said. Baba retorted, "Suffering is ordinary - why do you not show enough attention to God's joy?" (Chidvilasananda, 1996)

In describing the interactions between students and myself I have not emphasised the day to day trials and errors inherent in the teaching process or the periods of unsteadiness in meditation practice, but have seen more relevance in choosing to present positive understandings and outcomes. Rather than seeing this as one-sided, I view this as in keeping with the aspirational quality of both meditation and teaching.

Being able to align with my own intuition or at least having an intention to maintain a heart connection, to act from what I know, is tremendously invigorating. The benefits are extensive, impacting on one's confidence, sense of self worth, interest in work, and students and colleagues. A wonderful contradiction I have noticed is that as I let go of a more rigid approach and become more spontaneous, teaching is newly manageable and controllable. This appears to be a state that

students strongly respond to. Inner treasures are many, often arriving spontaneously and departing as quickly as they came. They may momentarily bring refuge or inspiration to your teaching or simply support you to face a group of students with some sense of fortitude. Alternatively the treasures may be slumbering imperceptibly, outside the parameters of normal comprehension, until one day I realise that there has been a clear and welcome shift in my habitual way of thinking or feeling. It takes time and effort, in other words practice, to genuinely integrate insights. Meditation practice helps to make ongoing refinements to already familiar pedagogical skills and it is these refinements that shape my teaching afresh.

At this point I will present the circle of friends who in a focused discussion shared key ideas relating to this study. Vignettes and experiences from this focused conversation will be drawn on throughout this chapter.

Circle of friends

The three members of the focus group all enthusiastically expressed how meditation supports and underpins their teaching practice. This was expected. What was a surprise was the similarity between their experiences and my own. The conversation that transpired around my study was affirming for all of us. In some instances the discussion deepened my own thinking and in other places ideas were expanded into new areas. It was gratifying and humbling to be shown that the intensely personal is also a social phenomenon and that the beliefs and traditions of Siddha Yoga that we share, are also reflected in our daily our working lives. This confirms Palmer's point, that "every way of knowing becomes a way of living, every epistemology becomes an ethic" (as cited in Zajonc, 2009, p. 188).

Louise teaches at an Auckland high school. She believes meditation underpins everything she does making her a better person and certainly a better teacher. Louise returned to teaching after a lengthy departure from the profession, she spoke of how her earlier style of teaching was modelled on what she was taught rather than an authentic model that aligned to her personal values. After becoming involved with Siddha Yoga, she began to have a clearer idea of how she wanted to

teach. She wanted to be a practitioner of yoga in the classroom, someone who endeavours to practice the teachings with every single person she comes into contact with. Initially this was a considerable effort, but over time it has become easier to work from her heart at any time. Louise says that her inner landscape is completely different, and as her inner world changes, what she projects into the world also changes. Meditation has helped her to become a more relaxed teacher with much less inner turbulence and she is able to retain greater equanimity even when things are not going as planned.

David teaches English for a Wananga. A school based on the practices and principals of Maori tikanga (ways of knowing). The practices of meditation and chanting have opened his empathy towards students and encouraged him to be better attuned to them. Referring to the metaphor of 'warm heart, cool head' he points out the importance of cultivating a balanced consciousness between head and heart. He maintains that it is necessary to be discriminating about what you give your attention to, which for David includes watching out for an overabundance of information and ideas. The spontaneity and creativity of the heart must also be reigned in and structured so that it is appropriate to each teaching situation.

In David words "I can come from the heart, but don't need to be absolutely open, without borders" (personal communication, 2010, June 18 2011). His experience as an actor also shapes his view that being in front of a class is a gift, an opportunity to bring about certain mentalities not only for students, but also for him.

Maria is a senior lecturer in the tertiary sector. She was a secondary school teacher and enjoys teaching. Being exposed to the various practices of Siddha Yoga has had a profound impact on the way she sees the world, the students and her role in their educational journey. The practices have helped her move from an intellectual space to a more emotional space and connection with the heart. In the busyness of life, finding equipoise can be challenging and she deliberately and intuitively employs a multitude of practices to create desirable outcomes at work.

I. Relationships

In this section the inquiry focuses on the relational aspect of teaching building directly on from theme three in the previous chapter (Awareness of Others), whereby relationships were considered from a non-dualistic perspective. While I have always been interested in others I have noticed that during the process of this study my capacity to work with students has strengthened. Meditation has created a fresh foundation to engage in teaching and invigorated the ways I relate to students.

Look through the eyes of love, look through the heart

Be with students and teach through the heart...spontaneous and intuitive
(September 20, 2010)

A renewed enthusiasm and deepened capacity to love or feel compassion towards students is evident. A clear personal outcome has been that in spite of having a very full workload during the timeframe of this study, I can honestly say, I have never enjoyed teaching more. And although I did not formally try to analyse the students experience in this study, the official end of year student evaluations conducted by the university, rated my teaching more highly than ever before.

Formal teaching relates to the imparting of knowledge, from one knowledgeable person to another. It involves building self efficacy, communicating, guiding learning experiences, developing activities to practice and deepen understanding of concepts and so on. Always there is some form of relationship between the student and the teacher – there is always the Self and the other(s). The effects of honouring students with love and respect or entering a class and remembering unity rather than perceiving difference can be powerful for both the teacher and students.

To teach from the heart is to be alive, to care, to hope, to be in the moment, to share yourself, to put effort in, to nurture happiness, to listen, to create spontaneity and movement and to want to be there. If I cannot teach from the

heart then I am mechanical and detached and not really alive to the event at hand (August 20, 2010),

What colour does the Self bring to teaching? If I try to pinpoint what has happened since I began this project, at the most simple level I think of love. It is very fine and subtle but love is the best word to describe the changes in my teaching practice. I call it love because the feeling engages my heart and is one of empathy and compassion. It is love in a formal or disciplined sense, love that is appropriate between a teacher and students. I am not talking about blurring the roles of teacher/student. This aspect has not altered. My sensitivity to student's emotional lives has grown. As I deepen my capacity to behold students, I am able to perceive the students more holistically. I allow more of myself to be available to them. I consciously put myself in their shoes and consider their perception of the teaching process. I consider "what would students say they would like or need"? I pause to attempt to untangle the anxiety that lies behind their demands. They see more of Kitt the person, a teacher self with foibles and uncertainties, my humour, my care, the constraints I deal with and so on. These shifts are liberating for myself the teacher, they are subtle but real and tangible and they indicate to me a relationship with students that is now better connected and more sincere.

Trust in myself. Faith is inner trust. Being spontaneous needs trust in oneself. It is important for me and important for students (December 1, 2010).

This increased awareness of the inner Self profoundly influences the way I perceive my everyday personal self, made up of ego, personality and behaviours. Self-awareness sustains notions of serving students and humility. Teachers hold ultimate authority in a classroom so paying attention to my ego and identifying it as a central character in my teaching role significantly affects my attitude. Soria (1994) calls this a shift in transcending egoism and moving towards altruism. As teaching becomes demanding I notice the tendency to focus on myself while ignoring the needs of others. Recognising my identification with my ego, particularly if I am feeling fearful, helps me to remember the importance and worthiness of the students and the equality that exists between us. I have experienced a greater tolerance for discordant situations. I may be feeling ruffled or harassed by the students for example, but the feeling has a lighter quality so I do

not remain caught in that state for long. Making this shift from attachment to my small self, from egoism, to the universal Self, requires perseverance and clear intention. My desire to support students has remained stable. What has altered is my capacity to accept the demands that are made of me. Providing support in the classroom sometimes leaves me feeling depleted, but I have a new awareness that support suffused with authentic caring for another can be gratifying and refreshing for one's own heart. It is something of a revelation to find that giving to others is a form of giving to oneself.

I care. There is something scary about that personal investment. A question of failing, of being too boring, not clever enough, too tired, too short of time. I care and I hedge my bets (October 26, 2010).

At the heart of my relationship with students is the expression of care. It inspires me to do a good job. I also care about how the students see me. Searching for meaning I worked consciously with this idea to better understand what it means to care. It is quite clear that without care, my work is dry and depleted for students and me. Care is the oil that activates and motivates, nourishes and soothes. I could not perform my job authentically if I did not care.

Caring is an expression of my heart. It is a lovingness that stems from my heart and embraces others. Without it, relationships lack joy, my attitude is mechanical, frustrated and bored (October 26, 2010).

Central to my role as a teacher is supporting students to meet their educational goals. I attempt to bridge them across a foundation course with adequate knowledge, confidence and interest so they transition successfully into a degree programme. I care about the outcome for students and I care about the process that helps build a successful outcome. There are many other examples of care in my teaching. Care inspires me to develop workable pedagogy, give quality feedback, return work promptly to students and put additional course materials online. I go to battle for students who are beleaguered by administration constraints. I respond to student queries. I welcome students and try to make them

feel comfortable, building their sense of ease. I am accessible and approachable, smiling, happy and calm - (mostly!)

Circle of friends

Conversation with the focus group clearly indicated support for this theme that relationships are crucial to good teaching as well as positively influenced by meditation. As David highlights, “relational skills are at the heart of my teaching it is so important to meet students on the same level” (personal communication, 2010, June 18 2011)

Starting back into full time teaching, Louise recalled how she would emphatically practice the teaching of equality consciousness. “Over and again as I communicated with students, I reiterate to myself I am a reflection of myself, I am God, I am God that’s an interesting version of God” (personal communication, 2010, June 18 2011).

Louise commented how this supported her to behave in a manner that was light hearted and respectful, particularly if students were in some way difficult to deal with. Louise described how she likes to teach ‘with’ in contrast to teaching ‘to’ or ‘at’ the students and that this puts you on more of an even plane.

All three teachers linked their understanding of relationship to Maori tikanga. Maria explained how building whanaungatanga, focusing on relational attributes, was foundational to the courses she led. Teaching in the wharenui and inviting the invisible world to the teaching space, helped to create a spiritual connection and was an approach embedded into the beginning of the programme. A non-hierarchical approach acknowledges that student peers are teachers as well and affirms every ones contribution to learning. Teaching with the Wananga, David said that it was vital to listen to, and celebrate the significant experiences students bring from other cultures. Louise added that Te Kotahitanga, a course she attended at Waikato University focusing on nourishing relationships to enhance educational success, was the best professional development she has done and had greatly impacted on her teaching.

II. Listening with awareness

Listening initiates a very powerful process says Swami Chidvilasanada (1996). It is a form of giving to the world, giving by being receptive, patient and open. It is a great art continues Chidvilasananda, because you have to keep yourself present and discriminating to protect yourself from being depleted. The art of listening to others is considered to be a supremely beneficent and compassionate act to help others in need. Listening to others with love and interest is an act of giving that can both support others and create more openness in our own heart (Soria, 1994).

Listening to myself creates the space and interest to listen to others (July 28, 2010).

As an adult student I was inspired by a teacher adept at bringing their full attention forward, a quality that appeared to be as natural and spontaneous as it was effortless. Falling well outside my usual educational experience, I was curious to understand what had transpired and how it was achieved. The lessons were crafted with intelligence and dedication and an atmosphere of interest, acknowledgement and care engendered. The diverse group of students were fully engaged for the length of the course. The teacher's approach felt genuine and honest, not perfunctory or learnt from a book. Reflecting on this experience I would say the teacher's own discipline and wisdom ushered in love and sensitivity to the classroom. Steadfastly they applied the discipline of listening to spoken words and the actions they employed, in this way the power of the heart's intention carried into their teaching.

Learning how to listen better to students has in fact long been a goal, indeed I can pinpoint it as a key element of interest behind this study. As an experienced teacher I had some understanding of teaching with compassion but what I sought went beyond this. Because I teach large classes, upwards of 100 – 200 students along with medium sized classes, I have an interest in discovering how to relate to a body of students that is larger than a conversational group. I am searching for ways to listen, to hear and attend to the whole 'body' of students while in the process of teaching. By listening I refer to strengthening my attention to better

gauge the quality of learning students are receiving. This includes increased sensitivity to the emotional state of students, their levels of engagement, attentiveness and enjoyment as well as the flexibility to be able to respond spontaneously to perceived needs. Listening is about cultivating an attitude of awareness that goes beyond sound, linking you instead to the place where the sound vibrations emanate from – the heart and the mind. Figure 4 connects this state of open and attentive listening to the concept of non-duality or equality-consciousness. In this mode of listening, the barriers between people slowly merge.

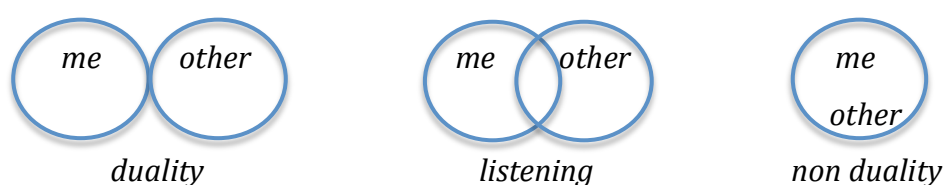


Figure 4

I have been trying to listen to others in a more conscious way, to step closer to another, to include their perspective in my own. The opposite of this position is when I am absorbed with my self, my limited one – side - only self. Listening has the power to bring enormous change (August 18, 2010).

The current usage of the word 'listen' originates from the Old English word *hlýsnan*, interpreted to mean 'pay attention to'. This is a broader definition of the commonly used meaning; to take notice of and act on what someone says; or to make an effort to hear or be alert to some sound. Paying attention signifies being fully present and aware, and requires focused intention towards the subject matter. It is quite similar to a yogic interpretation that refers to using the sense of hearing to connect with the heart. The act of listening happens not only with the external ears, it is a process that takes places within (Chidvilasananda, 1996). Listening with intent is an effective way to integrate the external with the internal, to bring inner wisdom into the teaching environment. From this perspective, the act of listening with focus and awareness has a natural alignment with meditation, it is no wonder then that meditation has led to my interest in 'listening' as an act of teaching.

Through meditation practice my ability to 'listen' to the class as I am teaching has strengthened. My ability to pay attention to others as well as myself has become steadier, affording a broader perspective of the situation as it is happening around me. Listening is a little like being tuned into the flow of classroom energy, adjusting the dial and picking up the student station. The following discussion builds around teaching exercises or journal extracts to illustrate listening in a practical sense and begins by explaining an exercise that was beneficial in helping me extend my skills at listening. It is a simple tool to check in with students and developed to keep me alert to the ongoing mood of the class. Having a small, manageable strategy assisted me in remembering to maintain focus on the students. The strategy, which can be applied any time during a lesson, goes like this:

Pause – Internally, take a moment to shift focus away from myself to the students;

Pay attention – Focus on the students to gauge their mood and level of engagement;

Identify – Ascertain what, or if any adjustment is required;

Intervene – If an adjustment is required, decide on the best intervention (July 30, 2010).

Used as an internal check, it could take 2 seconds to quickly run through these steps in my mind and proved the most effective when practiced throughout a lesson. The interventions, if warranted, are totally flexible and creative. They may be very subtle such as changing the tone of your voice or body position, posing a question to regain students attention, or formulating an encouraging statement aimed at refocusing attention. Possibly a new activity was considered to be the most suitable intervention or it may have been appropriate to provide a break, enough having been said and done at that point. I found that asking students directly what they required and giving them choices on occasion, was effective. Alternatively, the above strategy was used by the students themselves, encouraging them to pause and pay attention to their own feelings so that they learnt to identify significant elements influencing their own learning process and ways to enhance and accommodate these.

Going back to this simple strategy again and again meant that I made many small changes in my teaching, some of these were new, but mostly they refreshed and deepened an existent approach I already had some knowledge of. To illustrate this shift some examples will be briefly discussed, they are certainly not intended to be exhaustive because listening is an attitudinal skill that underlies the development of classroom pedagogy. It also is a spontaneous act that occurs as much in the moment as in any long term or planned for scenario.

Feedback

There are many pedagogical strategies for listening to students and creating clear, trustworthy channels of communication. I used Brookfield's (1995) idea, asking students to describe warm and cool spots, to gather feedback from a large group of students in a quick and informal manner. I let the students know that the purpose of the exercise was to find out what was going well for them and what obstacles they were facing. The feedback affirmed such things as the pace of lectures and accessibility of information, the sorts of things that denote a students feeling of comfortableness and interest and hence engagement. Their overriding issue concerned time management and connects closely with the next sub-theme, the need for space. The following week I presented a quick summary to the students by way of acknowledging what they had shared, answered queries that had come to light and referred to other feedback points as discussion topics.

Listening carefully also supports the provision of feedback to students, and is integral to student learning. I wanted students to experience that their ideas and hard work were recognised and appreciated. This was at the forefront of my mind when assessing students over the duration of the study so considerable effort was given to this task. Evidence of these small changes can be shown with a particular assessment devised as an opportunity for students to step outside academic conventions and have fun with a creative group presentation. As students presented their ideas, I was aware that what students needed was encouragement and appreciation of their work rather than critique. The role of teacher as assessor in this situation was secondary to the role of teacher as appreciator. There was lots of laughter and support amongst the groups and I relaxed and enjoyed the moment

with them. The lines between teacher – student were still clearly demarcated but there was a sense that we were sharing in something valuable together. My formal feedback for this assessment was handwritten and fairly extensive to explicitly acknowledge their efforts. Photos were immediately put online for the students to view. From this perspective I saw feedback in the spirit of reciprocity, recognising the value of their work.

On other occasions when students were not happy with an aspect of the course, for instance with their grade, I noticed that by simply listening to their concerns, the problem often resolved itself. Being heard invites trust into the teacher – student relationship, helping to break down barriers of resistance and misunderstanding.

Less is more: Speaking less, listening more

Teaching truly provides a great opportunity to practice discrimination, to choose what things ought be listened to and what not to give your attention to. Within the classroom I found that by actively listening more, I spoke less. Speech dominates communication. It links the internal and external worlds, enabling feelings, thoughts and concepts to be shared. Speaking engages groups of people effectively and teachers learn to be proficient at communicating ideas verbally, possibly to the detriment of listening. This observation is taken from a journal extract.

Less is more. Attempting to listen to students needs. I walked around as students got on with group work. Normally by wanting to act considerately I would stop with each group and discuss the topic or answer questions and generally make myself available. This time as I walked between groups, I practiced listening and offered less feedback. For the first time I saw that feedback can often be disrupting and, even disturbing, if students feel they have missed the point because they are coming at the question from another angle. Students need time to talk, think, share ideas, puzzle, tease through ideas. (No one has asked me any questions yet!) (August 6, 2010)

My focus is also a 'distraction' – what does this mean? (August 12, 2010)

The above statement describes the many times delivering the planned lesson took precedence over student levels of interest and emotions. One pattern I observed was when time pressures were present I became increasingly focused on getting through the work and ignored the growing feeling of detachment, even annoyance and anxiety from students. I had to let go of my own schedule and learn to be more responsive to the moment-by-moment needs of the class. Strengthening my skills as a listener, made me realise that I needed to learn to be flexible enough in the delivery and timing of activities to accommodate the various moods of the students, a concept that is taken up in the next sub-theme.

Circle of friends

David and Louise both introduced the importance of listening into their discussions about teaching. When David spoke he vividly described his headspace as “full of ideas and overstuffed” which he “regurgitates and pours out on people using them as a sort of screen rather than being genuine” (personal communication, 2010, June 18 2011). In contrast to this he gave the image of a beautifully poised white swan to show what a balanced and serene consciousness can be like. Using this imagery to bring a state of equipoise to mind, he would like to listen in conversations, to speak with vigilance rather than treating students as an audience.

Louise described how meditation practice enables her to “get out of the way” so she was able to hear other people. Through meditation she could clear a little space making it easier to listen to people. The impulse to jump into a conversation diminished and she was able to let the conversation just happen. Louise describes becoming attuned to what is happening in a room; “even when you’re not looking, you know what little Johnny is doing at the back of the room even when they are trying hard to hide it from you” (personal communication, 2010, June 18 2011).

III. Creating Space

How does one clear even one small space in worldly life? It appears tantamount to an offence in a modern, achieving, competitive, jammed, crammed, industrious era. I crave space (July 28, 2010).

It can take fortitude and diligence to find time for meditation, to relax in solitude, to imbibe the sweet fragrance of the garden roses. When time feels like it is running out there is a constant nagging anxiety, the high demands of teaching can feel relentless and impinge on my capability to teach well. The grip of tension is an insidious barrier to teaching from the heart, a modern dis-ease it effects teachers and students alike.

The feeling of no space is like a monkey on my back. Pressure, always something next in line to attend to. I wake in the morning feeling at ease but by the time I sit for meditation I feel anxious in my heart and solar plexus. It is the thoughts about the day and all the things that need to be seen to that set it off (July 15, 2010).

This sub-theme was formed from an acute need to deal with these feelings. As a meditator I knew it was possible to create a different mindset to reframe a sense of overwhelming busyness, but I had not yet been able to bring about a substantial change. If anything, life seemed fuller than ever. Commonly it is the contraction or negative quality that creates a situation so uncomfortable we are forced to seek a fresh approach. This juxtaposition between shadow and light becomes a gateway to a change in perspective. And so it was very rewarding to observe how the following practices helped to balance various demands, leading towards a sense of equanimity I had long been seeking.

Breathing space

Experiences from meditation can nourish and inspire you long after you have gotten on with your day. There are also numerous and memorable techniques to find pauses in daily life and to enter the quietude of your own inner space. If you look from a slightly altered perspective, you can find space everywhere. In siddha yoga students are often directed to focus on the pause in between each breath. As the breath goes out and comes in, there is a space inside where it becomes still for just a fraction of a moment (Muktananda, 1991a). The space between the breaths is tiny and subtle, the still point of the turning world where one can connect to the heart (Durgananda, 2002). Focusing on the breath can be a centering exercise easily done throughout the day. Repeating the mantra is another way to find equanimity and can take place silently while you engage in any daily activity. Whatever action is performed, Swami Chidvilasananda (1996) advises, if it is performed without connection to your Self even momentarily, it does not bring satisfaction.

Standing in tadasana I easily become aware of the vastness of space contained in the body, in the breath, between my limbs, in my mouth, ears, nostrils. As I am vigilant in the pose my mind is focused, there is no energy wasted on ruminating or negative thoughts. My energy is fully focused, energised and then relaxed. Contract, release. My body knows how to breathe mindfully (November 5, 2010).

Saying the mantra in the pause before each new activity begins was a convenient way stay in touch with the space of the heart, even when busy. When at work I made an effort to repeat the mantra as I went to work, as I entered my office or attended a meeting, and especially at the start of a lecture or tutorial.

Each day is full of transitions, a natural pause in activities to remember the inner space. As I momentarily focus inward, I realise the mantra is already there, reverberating internally. Even if there is no noticeable change in my emotional or conscious state, I still regard this as a message that the practices of Siddha Yoga are there to support me.

A welcome space – Namaste

In the same way that attention is given to the inner space, I discovered so it is important to create an external space beneficial for learning. An effective way for doing this is through the practice of Namaste, whereby I silently welcome students from my heart in respect of the divinity that exists equally within everyone. Experience has shown me that a teacher can mirror the experience of the Heart to the wider group. Traditionally the first weeks of the course I lead are concentrated on supporting students to form relationships with each other. I employ a series of activities to do this such as icebreakers, sharing information about each other's lives in a validating way, and learning activities that involve working in pairs and small groups. The underlying intention is to create a safe and enlivened work environment. As the semester continues I reduce group activities to concentrate on individual skills, but I find in the beginning they strengthen the students overall sense of comfortableness and learning support. When students get along well together it sets up a series of other connections, with the wider University environment, the subject, the teacher and of course with themselves.

Practicing this inner attitude of welcome was I found surprisingly easy and delightful. I discovered that an undemanding exercise carries a great deal of transformative power. Tutorial classes had a warmth and ease that I have come to anticipate, but the real test was to teach in the lecture theatre, conventionally an unwelcoming and indifferent environment. I have often found lectures to be relatively daunting, a place that invokes feelings of disengagement, particularly if students are not known by face or name. However, in line with the study I would remember my intention before each lecture and intentionally hold an inner attitude of greeting students warmly, of appreciating their input, their queries and even their fears. And although a lecture theatre holds a mass of students I found myself for the first time pausing to notice students individually. As the quality of exchanges shifted to a more personal tone I began to connect with them receptively, finding myself relaxing, laughing and engaged. My manner gently and subtly changed in a natural way, I revealed more of myself to the students and as I was able to welcome them from the heart, so too could they welcome me.

Taking my awareness into the space of my heart also helped me deal with adverse situations and to communicate with disruptive students. Instead of becoming embroiled and reacting to the intense energy of the situation, I had space and perspective to respond with clarity. Connecting with the inner space was like gaining the vantage point of a witness. It was cooling, removing the heat from the immediate intensity of the situation for the student and myself. Viewing the student with compassion, remembering that at some level they are the same as me expanded my ability to remain calm and to focus on the issue as it unfolded. In difficult situations where I was not sure what the best response was, I would literally say the mantra and consciously remember that their heart and mine are the same.

Creating space for students: Structure and spontaneity

Timing plays a significant role in face-to-face teaching. Initiation and duration of activities impact directly on student levels of engagement. Tertiary education tends to be highly structured with a heavy emphasis on content retrieval. This aspect of teaching and learning in tertiary education is of course well researched and I have long been a proponent of having built in breaks, diverse activities, curtailing content to memorable chunks, and so on. Creating space begins with taking time to greet students, making sure to proceed slowly enough to invoke learning, to touch base with students about their happiness and concerns regarding their study. Students need time to assimilate, daydream, mull over, think, contemplate, twiddle their thumbs and have emptiness. There is an ongoing problem of overloading students, not only with information, but also with activities and in particular excessive assessments and curriculum objectives. However, while designing a course with allocated space to promote learning is fairly well understood, there remains much resistance to implementing it.

I have observed an uncontrolled divide between planning a lesson and the implementation of it. As I became increasingly sensitive to the timing of activities, I saw the need for more flexibility everywhere. It is possible and desirable to plan a structure that creates pauses and even to plan for flexibility, however this must be reconciled with the moment-by-moment nature of teaching. No matter how well

planned a lesson is, without flexibility in the delivery, the exact same problems of overload or disengagement can manifest. I observed myself fiercely resisting spontaneous changes to a planned lesson. The more carefully prepared and structured the teaching session, such as a lecture, the stronger my resistance and less flexibility I had to accommodate change. I would witness how my own need to include more assessment instructions or to keep on explaining an answer to a question overrode the compelling sense that 95% of the students were saturated with information and had already switched off! I was attached to the lesson objectives and hesitated to compromise the structure of the lesson that gave me direction and security. Lectures proved to be the most difficult environment to make spontaneous adjustments and thus these were the last to change.

Nevertheless, with perseverance I did begin to respond more spontaneously, to listen to my intuition so that lessons were better aligned to the needs of the class. Examples of the 'less is more' approach included making a decision to play only one half of a video; taking a full lesson to listen and dialogue with a guest speaker, keeping to the intended time frame and always breaking after 50 minutes; taking the necessary space to unpack one planned activity rather than the two that were planned for; pausing between slides or activities and enjoying the silence or quiet student talk. Spontaneity also means opening to the creative spaces that occur within any class at any time. Here the classroom energy takes on its own flow and momentum quite outside of your pre-formulated expectations. This unplanned, but not unmanaged space might be viewed as the portal lying between 'effort and non-effort' or 'discipline and freedom' and can signal a stream of creativity, unique thinking and deep learning.

Sometimes things happen through effort, but often it is the letting go, being in the moment or non-effort that brings as much achievement (September 7, 2010).

By stepping back, letting go of control or handing over to students, the energy of the group can find its own flow. This space invites freedom to be playful and present but remains bounded by the overall objectives of the class.

Circle of friends

The focus group commented on the idea of mental space and how it plays a large part in helping them cope with the demands of students, which were seen as sometimes relentless, both inside and outside of the classroom. They were better able to step back from teaching, to be present and attuned to the situation but not get caught up in the immediate drama. This made a significant contribution to combating exhaustion and also helped to promote an attitude of tolerance and patience. Connecting momentarily to their inner space, particularly using mantra repetition was viewed as an effective technique to manage challenging situations.

Louise explains “mantra repetition in a split second takes me to a deep place, that I know from regular meditation practice. I can hook into that inner space change my state and help a situation” (personal communication, 2010, June 18 2011).

One of the strengths of mantra repetition is that it takes place internally and occurs simultaneously while being engaged in any outer activities. Louise and Maria explained how they would repeat the mantra internally maintaining a calm disposition instead of raising their voices or getting agitated.

Louise gave the example of saying the mantra as she walked across the room to deal with a student issue. As she addressed the students she was surprised to notice that her comments were strikingly different to what she had been intending to say and her tone far more appropriate to the situation. Within a brief space of time and without thinking, her response was re-framed and better attuned to her inner wisdom. Maria explained how breathing and mantra repetition helped deal with any situation that was very tense, including meetings, entering a new teaching situation and so on. On one occasion a work colleague who had received a number of student complaints was in turn coming to complain to her. Instead of being a ‘jibbering wreck’, she was instead able to defuse a potentially volatile situation and enjoy a productive meeting.

The group described the many different techniques used to sustain inner connection with work. Little reminders were tucked into readily accessible places

such as computers and logins, pictures, music in the car, and readings kept handy. Marie favoured invoking grace from deities such as the Indian Goddess of learning, Saraswati and Catherine of Alexander, who was the patron saint of woman scholars. She described the energy from this practice as focusing and revitalising, great support for writing and research commitments. The use of an invocation either publicly or privately was also found to be an excellent way to open a meeting with other colleagues or with students.

It was Louise who raised the importance of the classroom environment. Being well managed, setting up, having your space and having it work the way you want it is part of a student's security, knowing that things will be well organised and available. Once that is achieved, Louise is able to be as spontaneous as she likes. But as she points out, designing a suitable environment to achieve a constructive dynamic between structure and spontaneity is hard work. "You need to keep regulating the teaching space, you don't let students take over and you stay in charge" (personal communication, 2010, June 18 2011).

In this self-study, I have considered in detail the transformation arising in my teaching practice from a disciplined process of meditation and an expanded awareness of myself and others. These sub-themes have described aspects of the study that apply to classroom and teaching interactions as I maintained connection to the inner Self through reflection and contemplation. I discovered inner attention enhances outward engagement. Influenced by the Self, teaching becomes more heartfelt, creative and adaptable. This has been fully discussed in the themes of Relationships, Listening with Awareness and Creating Space. Each theme has provided comment and insight about the observable aspects of teaching and interactions with students.

Feel the energy streaming through the body flowing towards your goal. Don't give up and don't be afraid. Keep going in your life with fortitude and happiness. Don't fear the unknown. Be positive about making change, each new beginning brings its own rewards (November 24, 2010).

Links with Integrative Education

The examples of transformation described in these findings, resonate with, and illustrate many of the ideas explored previously in the literature review on integrative teaching. To conclude this section, it is therefore pertinent to refocus on relevant points made by these authors and to position these findings within a wider body of work.

The key ideas examined in the themes of this study, focus on what Gibbs (2006) describes as, the ineffable qualities characteristic of authentic teaching when the inner and outer life of the teacher is connected. Aligning with Palmer's (2004) central tenet, that all human activity emerges from within, these themes give insight into processes of self-inquiry, regarded by many as essential to good teaching practice. According to Dirkx (as cited in Cranton & Carusetta, 2004), cultivating a deepened sense of self, creates transformation and the development of authenticity in teaching. Crowell and Reid-Marr (2006), express this transformation as a shift in perception, where one is able to respond to teaching with intuition and in a spontaneous and indeterminate manner. They describe the immense effort it takes to teach from the 'inside out', the ongoing concentration and willingness to be receptive. By learning to trust in their ability to respond to students needs, Crowell and Reid-Marr consider the indeterminate nature of teaching to be an crucial dynamic that effectively engages students and teachers in meaningful learning.

Transformation and self-awareness was found to be critical in Cranton and Carusetta's (2004) research on authentic teaching, with the cultivation of reflection playing a significant role. They found that experienced teachers are more likely to develop self-reflective strategies and by doing so they transition from linear, reductionist educational approaches, to integrated complex and uncertain understandings. Critical reflection, such as that popularised by Mezirow (as cited in Pope & Denicolo, 2001), involves an individual deliberately questioning their values and beliefs that shape their worldview and which inevitably leads to transformative learning and an expanded awareness. Schon, whose philosophy has been critical to self-study, demonstrated the concept of 'reflection-in-action',

whereby a teachers professional development builds from tacit intuitive understanding (Miller, 2000). Whilst much of the self-study research concentrates on the external educational context, the very act of studying the self, involves uncovering implicit knowledge. Its subjective and reflective nature allows for 'authority of experience' (Dinkleman, 2003), extending understanding of teaching beyond what is learnt in everyday practice (Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009), and allowing unconscious beliefs to shift and transform into genuine and innovative comprehension (Whitehead, 2005).

Transformative learning is a powerful way to conceptualise the development of an individual (Palmer & Zajonc, 2010). The notion of growing from the inside out, of opening the heart and mind to deeper wisdom and truth, is reflected in the enduring philosophies of Buber, Montessori and Steiner, as well as contemporary educational commentators representing a range of spiritual backgrounds. Positioned at the apex of Hart's (2009) model of education, is the shift from the head to the heart, the gaining of wisdom as the individual rediscovers the capacity to listen with open awareness and discernment to the present, authentic Self.

Conclusion

A colleague once asked, “What is the purpose of doing research, to make change or to change yourself”? (personal communication, May 16, 2011) I interpreted this as an endorsement of the value of self-inquiry that seeks to change the personal and thereby contribute to positive change in a social sense. My final reflection here at the end, takes me back to the beginning of this study and to reflect on the original questions posed.

How can the disconnection of mind and heart occurring in education be explained?

Without a doubt the social scientist in me knows that social context is all pervasive. The meditator understands deeply however that the division in oneself is reflected in the division in the outside world.

What does integrated education look like?

It is education that values and embodies spiritual awareness through contemplative practice for both teachers and the students. Integrative education has morals, ethics and values aligned with knowledge of the inner Self (as described in this study) that flows into loving action and promotes community wellbeing. The Self is none other than an individual’s deep, profound being, and in this sense integrative education nurtures learning to develop awareness and experience of oneself. Integrative education has a clear lineage, both in theory, philosophy and institutional models and although it is not mainstream, it clearly does exist and its influence can be discerned in wider education.

What role can Siddha Yoga meditation play in realising integrative education in both a personal and social context?

Siddha Yoga meditation embraces a philosophy that supports an individual to transformative and deepening inner knowledge. This aligns well with the paradigm of integrative education whereby contemplation is regarded as a core value and fundamental to learning and teaching. A constraint of Siddha Yoga meditation is that contemplative methods are inseparable from spiritual

philosophical understandings, making it less accessible to those in the wider community who have an interest in secular meditation.

Can traditional academic research processes accommodate contemplative self-inquiry?

There are real limitations here. Eventually there will be a place for contemplative inquiry within academia but at present the research methods to engage in this pursuit are underdeveloped and undervalued. The subtlety and depth of spiritual inquiry does not translate well into methodologies appropriated from the schools of social science, education or even from psychology and humanities. Until the traditional paradigm of realism gives way to accommodate subjective knowledge and inquiry, there will be little change. The interpretative paradigm goes some way to addressing subjective reality but this approach still derives from a realistic worldview. What is required is methodology that fully accepts the value of self-experience as a form of self-knowledge. New methods to express ideas and experiences gained from inner awareness will also need to be advanced.

Key findings, implications and further research

During this self-inquiry four key themes emerged. The first is described as concealment, the mysterious place of unknowing that abides in the inner space of an individual. I became aware of the uncomprehended yet fully potent realm of the concealed Self that exists in the core of all beings and is gradually comprehended through entering into more subtle levels of understanding. Meditating on the heart and mind supports cultivating Self-awareness, which is the topic of the second theme. Meditation practice supported me to penetrate through the shell of habitual patterns to experience the energy and love of my own Heart. To cultivate this expanded awareness I found it is essential that the mind becomes disciplined and turns inward. Making a steady effort to witness my thoughts, my mind is better able to release its identification with the limited phenomenal world. The themes were further refined to include relationships with others. From the perspective of the Self, I practised engaging in relationships with the understanding that beyond personal differences is unity and that the same Self exists in all people. As this happened I observed an increased softening of care towards others and myself.

The final theme that emerged focused on how meditation impacted on my interactions as a teacher with students. These themes can be likened to the artefacts or products of the study. The Self-knowledge gained from meditation has flowed into growth in my role as a teacher. This has been fundamental in terms of strengthening and expanding my interactions with the students. The students were repositioned at the heart of my teaching day and working life. By cultivating Self-awareness I was able to perceive aspects of my teaching world previously unknown and unnoticed.

The shift in awareness that arrived from this self-inquiry has made me realise that the inner gateway to understanding and learning about the world has more substance than normally appreciated. In the role of teacher, one's focus is concentrated on the external dimensions of pedagogy, so in light of these research findings it is sensible to inquire, what would happen if the traditional approach to education were reversed, so that more or at least equal attention was given to the internal processes of learning? In what ways would this shape a new pedagogy? This would have major ramifications for education pedagogy and I believe would serve students and the community well. The Dalai Lama (as cited in Palmer & Zajonc, 2010) encapsulates the goals of many when he calls for the development of a secular ethics of the heart. In accordance with integrative education, this points to the need for a new paradigm in secular educational communities to embrace human spirituality and authentic teaching and learning practices.

Challenges and rewards

The greatest challenge was a lack of precedents to map a suitable research process. As Palmer (as cited in Intrator, 2005) says, we are familiar with creating spaces that invite the intellect to show up but we know much less about creating spaces that encourage an awareness of the Self to grow. Self-inquiry is an emergent research methodology in education, and few guidelines exist on how to conduct this type of research. I found no research that uses meditation as a first person research methodology within an academic framework. Furthermore I was working within two paradigms of thought familiar to me, that of Siddha Yoga and western realism. The consequence of this was felt at all levels in the research process,

particularly the uncertainty brought about by trying to bridge discordant ontological and epistemological positions, as well as a deficiency in methods and tools to carry out the goals of the thesis.

The difficulties can be clearly identified by simply thinking about self-inquiry in education. Inquiry into self does exist on a surface level, but researching one's own actions, motivations and wisdom is not yet a comprehensive research methodology equipped with suitable tools of inquiry. I struggled with questions of how to present new knowledge acquired from deep contemplation and reflection. For instance, conceptualising the initial theme, concealment, I contemplated for many days as to how to articulate and present what was actually a feeling of potent unknowing. As I continued to read Siddha Yoga literature, I recognised my own experience described in the teachings, as the Self that is concealed in the heart of every human. Reading further, authors such as Brown (2002), Zajonc (2009) and Hart (2009) also refer to this hidden or secret matter, which they regard as part of a transformational process to deeper and deeper levels of understanding and knowing. This process is however so fine and subtle only a refined awareness can perceive it. This example rather aptly describes the process of creating space, the waiting required for an answer to arrive.

Another challenge was the style of literature that forms the foundational underpinnings of the thesis and the processes involved in representing these ideas cohesively. Educational literature on contemplative/integrative education is not research focused, rather it is written in the form of personal stories and experience. Self-study texts, which are research based, are also predominately written as narratives. Siddha Yoga literature, aside from one scholarly text, is scriptural and written in either an informal style or as commentary on spiritual aphorisms. This meant reviewing and synthesising the literature was not only very labour intensive, but in order to gain meaning from the texts, indwelling and immersing in the material was essential. I was also aware that I did not want to misrepresent the Guru's teachings and for this reason many direct quotes are used throughout the thesis.

This brings me to the rewards of undertaking this research. My natural inclination when organising the initial material for the thesis was to start with the findings. As previously stated in the methodology chapter, writing the findings was an act of contemplation, as I wanted to steep myself in these experiences to fully distil new understandings. What I did not realise at the time was that indwelling in this process was itself a major aspect of my learning. I would call this deep learning that has significantly influenced my sense of personal integration. After writing the findings and as I proceeded to extend my understanding of the topic through relevant literature, I now saw my ideas and experiences reflected everywhere. I could fully grasp the intention in the words of other authors. Their ideas were imbued with identifiable meanings, which helped to situate my own thoughts and validated my own understanding of this topic. This has been a very salutary and powerful outcome. As I write this concluding section, I am aware that I have a new found sense of integration never felt before. Through this self-study, and with the support of many wise people, I have come a long way to re-join my divided worlds into wholeness.

In my experience, inner transformation is a very unhurried process. There are moments when there is light that brings luminosity and clarity to a new or refined understanding, and periods where there is complete darkness. Self-inquiry appears to me less concerned with adding new skills, and more about a letting go. Letting go of habitual ways of thinking, acting and even cherished beliefs, releasing the mind into the heart. The journey concerns faith and effort, and the adage of the process being as important as the goal is strikingly clear. Self-inquiry can be likened to the flight of a bird, effort and grace are the two wings of the bird and both are equally important to maintain flight and direction. Learning more about myself as a teacher through meditation I have experienced the familiarity of diving inwards, listening, absorbing, thinking, feeling, except in this instance, I have paid better attention to what I was diving into. And as I endeavoured to highlight in presenting the findings, the inner world is deep!

Appendix I: Letter to professional colleagues

Dear

As some of you are aware, I am studying at AUT for my Masters in Education. My research topic is a self-study focusing on my personal experiences of Siddha Yoga meditation and teaching. The topic is 'An exploration of the potential of meditation to inform teaching practice and contribute to education'.

From July to November 2010 I collected data from a daily practice of meditation guided by the Home Study Course. This was accompanied by periods of contemplation relating to my day-to-day teaching experiences, and regular journaling. The journal entries have now been categorised into three broad themes.

Theme 1: Awareness of Self

Theme 2: Awareness of Others (Self & other)

Theme 3: Teacher - Student Interactions (engaging with others)

The next stage of this project is to discuss these findings from my self-study with a small group of practitioners in the Siddha Yoga community, devotees who are also teachers and educators. Once I have outlined the essential element in the themes I would like to hear your responses and thoughts, guided by your own experiences of teaching. This is an important part of the overall study, as it will help me to clarify meanings and refine aspects of the study.

I am hoping to meet with you in mid May. The discussion will be recorded for accurate recall later. Can you email me the most suitable time from the list below. I will then organize a time that everyone can attend.

Love Kitt

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