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## Discovering the self: An enquiry into spiritual seekers journeys towards self-realisation

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# **DISCOVERING THE SELF**

## **An Enquiry into Spiritual Seekers' Journeys towards Self-Realisation**

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September, 2006

## USE OF THESIS

The Use of Thesis statement is not included in this version of the thesis.

## ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the notion that a spiritual search for meaning can lead to the discovery of one's true nature, known in the Eastern tradition as Realisation of the Self. The necessity of a teacher to assist the seeker on this spiritual journey is also investigated. Three questions in particular are raised that will facilitate the analysis of this journey of discovery:

- 1) Is the longing for a sense of completeness, Beingness, awakened by a particular experience or is it in fact inherent in each human being?
- 2) Do spiritual seekers need to go out into the world to find meaning before the possibility of another reality is discovered in oneself?
- 3) The concept of a spiritual teacher to guide one towards Self-Realisation is integrated in the Eastern spiritual tradition but is it possible to discover one's true Self without such outside assistance?

The methodology adopted is Moustakas' (1990) Heuristic Research Method because it emphasises the necessity of dedicated participation on the part of the researcher and offers the opportunity to engage in a personal process of enquiry. In heuristics there exists a distinct connection between a perceived outside reality and that which is within oneself in "reflective thought, feeling and awareness" (Moustakas, 1990:12). This entails that the use of the heart as well as the intellect is encouraged. This method of research is particularly suitable as the issues discussed in this thesis are of a deeply personal nature.

In order to come to an understanding of the search for meaning of Self-Realisation, I compare the spiritual journeys of the contemporary mystics Irina Tweedie and Bede Griffiths with the search for my true Self. All three of us come from a Western cultural paradigm but have found the need to encompass Eastern spiritual traditions in our lives. This thesis therefore

contains references to literature and scriptures from the West as well as the East and does not adhere to any particular religious belief.

Douglass and Moustakas warn that “[The heuristic method] defies the shackles of convention and tradition” (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985:44) and by embracing this mode of research the thesis has become a process of discovery in itself.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The completion of my thesis signifies the end of a long and interesting time spent at Edith Cowan University. I met Dr Anne Harris at the first lecture I attended in 1997 for the unit called 'A Search for Meaning'. Her unfailing support and belief in my academic abilities have significantly contributed to the completion of my Honours Degree. I wish to acknowledge Dr Harris' incredible patience, her constructive and incisive critique and not in the least her warm-hearted friendship without which I would never have completed my 'search for meaning' at university. Many lecturers have supported me over the years and I also wish to acknowledge Dr Peter Bedford, Dr Lekkie Hopkins and Dr Pat Baines, in particular, for their help and encouragement.

This journey would not have been possible without the loving support of many people in my life who have accepted, encouraged as well as humoured my intense process of 'discovery of the Self' so unconditionally. In particular I wish to acknowledge Angie, Banyin, Bruce, Fiona, David, George and Greg. I thank them all for their inspiration, friendship and tolerance of the 'agonies and ecstasies' I could share at all times!

I dedicate this thesis to my two daughters Maryse and Marie-Louise who have been an inspiration to me from the day they were born and have now grown into wonderful, independent and aware young women. They are well on their way to discovering the Self.

## DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis does not, to the best of my knowledge and belief:

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Ah, not to be cut off,  
Not through the slightest partition  
shut out from the law of the stars.  
The inner – what is it?  
if not intensified sky,  
hurled through with birds and deep  
with the winds of homecoming. (

Rainer Maria Rilke  
(in Mitchell, 1995:191)

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## INTRODUCTION

A son returned home after having studied for many years and completing his university degree.

His father asked, "Son what did you learn at school?"

The son replied, "I learned about the stars and the earth, the oceans, plants and history of our country."

The father asked, "Son, have you learnt the one thing, knowing which, everything else becomes known to you?"

"No Father," the son replied.

"Come with me", and the father took the son outside.

"What do you see?"

"I see the mountains and the fields. There also is a river."

"What else do you see?" asked the father again.

"I see trees as well".

"Look closer, what else do you see?"

"There is fruit on the trees".

"Now son, get me a fruit".

The son obliged.

"Cut the fruit in half".

"Now Son, what do you see?"

"Many seeds Father".

"Son, cut open a seed and tell me what you see inside the seed"

The son took his knife and cut a seed in half, looked closely and replied, "Nothing Father".

"Son, out of that nothingness, a huge tree is born – find out about this nothingness. That is wisdom".

(Mansukh Patel in Engelen, 1998)

The motivation to undertake this project is fuelled by my desire to gain the wisdom the father in this little parable alludes to. Bede Griffiths and Irina Tweedie are two alleged mystics who claim to have attained this wisdom and understood the true meaning of this 'nothingness'. Their spiritual journeys differ vastly and the purpose of this thesis is to analyse the ways in which they each searched for meaning and gained knowledge of themselves. I have chosen to examine Griffiths and Tweedie in particular because I find that aspects of their search resonate with several of my experiences. I will juxtapose these experiences with theirs to gain a deeper understanding of the journey of discovery they undertook in order to come to the realisation of the true nature of themselves. I hope to illustrate the possibility that spiritual seekers search in the world, each in their unique way, what they in fact already are. This was suggested by the ancient Advaita Vedanta scholar Shankaracharya when he wrote:

That which permeates all, which nothing transcends and which, like the universal space around us, fills everything completely from within and without ... that thou art (in Dikshit, 1973/2003:n.p.).

The contemporary philosopher and spiritual teacher Tolle appears to apply this same notion when he explains that spiritual realisation is a process in which one discovers one's "essential Beingness, the I Am" (2005:79). He explains that once one has attained knowledge of one's true nature life loses its "absolute seriousness" (2005:79). Interestingly the humanist and psychologist Maslow speaks about a "Being-Psychology" and describes it as, "Here-now states [of mind] in which the present is experienced fully" (1973:127).

I have had to undertake my investigation with 'absolute seriousness', however, in order to gain an understanding of this fascinating albeit deeply mystical subject. The research process has become a journey unto itself and the questions with which I started have been constantly refined and adjusted. Inspired by Shankaracharya, I initially gave this thesis the title "How Do We

Find That?" but came to the realisation that this was a misnomer. One cannot set out to find something which one already is. What, however, inspired Griffiths and Tweedie to go in search for peace of mind and a sense of completeness, 'Beingness'? Did they indeed have a notion of what they hoped to find? Where does the longing for understanding of life's mysteries originate?

Easwaran suggests that the root of humanity's longing is, "... a force four and a half billion years old – as old as life itself" (2002:214). Is it possible that spiritual seekers have come to the final stage in what Maslow describes as the "hierarchy of needs" (in Boeree, n.d)? After all basic desires have been fulfilled, one discovers a continuous desire to fulfil potentials, to become totally complete - what Maslow called "self-actualisation" (in Boeree, n.d). Or is the longing simply a desire for happiness? The highly respected Indian sage Ramana Maharshi<sup>1</sup> says that, "Every being in the world yearns to be always happy and free from the taint of sorrow" and suggests that it is due to the ignorance of the real nature of one's being that humanity lives in a state of unhappiness (in Osborne, 1959/1969:124). Is it possible we are simply searching for love? Underhill who thoroughly investigated mysticism, equates the desire for knowledge with love and suggests that, "There is a sense in which it may be said, that the desire of knowledge is a part of the desire of perfect love ...."(1911/1995:46). There are those who equate love with God (Griffiths, 1954/1979; Harvey, 1995; Vaughan-Lee, 1993) but God is usually perceived as an external authority which might solve all our problems and fulfil desires.

It became clear to me that spiritual journeys lead the seeker into the unknown in order to discover, as Griffiths says, "The other half of the soul" (1982:7). The psychiatrist Frankl who survived the horrors of concentration camps during World War II, stresses that "... the true meaning of life is to be discovered in the world rather than within man [sic] or his own psyche, as

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<sup>1</sup> For a comprehensive insight into the life of this sage I recommend *In Search of Secret India* by Brunton (1952:132-165,285-299).

though it were a closed system" (1959/2004:115). Tolle (2005) contradicts this statement when he explains that seekers are searching outside of themselves for that which they in fact already are.

Griffiths' and Tweedie's spiritual journeys may be pointing to a similar outcome. I will question whether one initially needs to search 'in the world' before the possibility of another reality is discovered within oneself. An important issue that emerged during the research process is whether such a journey can only be undertaken with the assistance of a spiritual teacher or *guru*<sup>2</sup>. An increasing number of Westerners are involved in spiritual quests and seeking their answers in the East, particularly in India. Many take the decision to devote their lives to a particular teacher thus immersing themselves in a totally different culture. Generally speaking scepticism still exists in the West regarding the validity of such a search. For example, York calls these pursuits "religious consumerism" (2001:363). He argues they are born out of dissatisfaction with traditional religious institutions and can lead to totally different and even deviant forms of religion (York, 2001).

There are indeed many examples of self-styled teachers, in Eastern as well as Western societies, who promise 'happiness' and 'enlightenment' in exchange for adoration, vast amounts of money and, at times, self-sacrifice in one form or another. Surrendering to a teacher is however a familiar concept in Eastern traditions even though it can evoke disbelief and even aversion to those from Western religious traditions. Tweedie's (1979/1993; 1986) search led her to India where she relinquished her ego-will to a teacher called Bhai Sahib. Griffiths (1954/1979) committed himself to the Roman Catholic Church<sup>3</sup> before seeking further understanding in the Eastern traditions. His journey towards Self-Realisation was marked by intense intellectual study and surrender to that institution, rather than to one teacher in particular. I question whether a journey towards discovery of the Self can be undertaken without the guidance of another and if the Church, in the case of Griffiths, could be considered a teacher. I analyse to what extent the

<sup>2</sup> This word will be discussed in the section 'Definition of Terms' later in this chapter.

<sup>3</sup> From hereon I will use Church to mean the Roman Catholic Church.

attachment to a teacher or particular paradigm needs to be relinquished in order to discover the 'Oneness' within oneself.

I have asked these questions of my self and chose to analyse Griffiths' and Tweedie's lives in order to gain a deeper understanding of my own. To undertake this rather personal enquiry I realised I needed an academically acceptable framework to do so.

After having read Moustakas' (1961/1989) deeply insightful and moving book *Loneliness* I discovered the Heuristic method of research<sup>4</sup>. Herewith I was given the opportunity to seek clarity and understanding of my search for the perplexing mysteries life presents through the analysis of others' journeys, within an academic structure that would discipline me to examine and critique the issues at hand. The Heuristic Research Method demands of the researcher to pose a question in which she<sup>5</sup> immerses herself in order to gain clarity and understanding (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985; Moustakas, 1990). I will describe why I understand this particular method to be suitable for this project in the following chapter 'Methodology'. Placing my self as a subject of analysis is an integral aspect of this method, despite some within academe still considering it somewhat controversial.

As aspects of my spiritual journey will feature in this thesis I take the liberty to give some background information about my motivation and inspiration to undertake this particular enquiry. In order to better understand and possibly find academic validation for my lifelong search for meaning I enrolled in Religious Studies at university. The academic structure provided me with many opportunities to battle with words and concepts and to train my mind to analyse and critique. My 'spiritual quest' therefore became less vague and gained more substance. I found such a wide range of literature to inspire me that rather than my thirst for knowledge being quenched, that thirst became insatiable. My search was focused on finding answers out in the world, not

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<sup>4</sup>I will explain this research method and its background in the following chapter "Methodology".

<sup>5</sup> I will consider the researcher to be female during this thesis though I of course acknowledge and respect all male researchers in any fields of research!

only through available literature but also by engaging in a range of belief systems and joining groups of people whom I thought to be of like-mind. Eventually this led me to embrace the guidance of an Indian teacher. Many years later an unexpected health problem brought an abrupt end to this outwardly focussed journey of searching for spiritual answers. It also brought to an end an Honours thesis I had started in which I was researching the significance of my teacher, Sathya Sai Baba, in the lives of his followers.

Two years of physical and emotional dis-ease led me to discover the existence of an inner world that lay beyond any perceptions I had previously held. The period of non-activity entailed an introspection that revealed an inner battle in which I questioned the core of my identity. Seeking clarity amid the confusion motivated me to re-visit the writings of a number of spiritual seekers and scholars, many of whom today are considered to be mystics. I became aware that my thoughts and experiences were increasingly mirrored by theirs and I began to question whether Underhill's statement that mystics are, "[T]he giants, the heroes of our race" (1911/1995:446) was in fact true. If I was able to relate to their experiences there must be countless other 'ordinary citizens' in the world who do so too, therefore making us all 'heroes'. My health restored I accepted a tutoring position in the subjects I so passionately pursue and enjoyed the interaction with the students. Fisher explains that mystics have such deeply personal experiences that, "What has touched them lies beyond the world of time and space to which our languages refer" (2002:19). I too was struggling to find words to express the insights and experiences I had gained during the last two years and recognised, once again, the need to find answers within an academic context. This need led to the decision to embark on the project of finding a 'language' which would be able to clarify the mystery of 'Discovering the Self' by means of an academic process of enquiry. The following pages will reveal that this process became an even more deeply felt experience than I had initially anticipated.

As this thesis is concerned with experiences and feelings of a rather esoteric nature it has proven difficult to find appropriate words and phrases for



concepts that are essential to its comprehension and yet often misunderstood or ridiculed. For example, even though I am comfortable with the words 'mystical' and 'mysticism' I think James' observations given in the early twentieth century are still valid when he says: "The words 'mysticism' and 'mystical' are often used as terms of mere reproach, to throw at any opinion which we regard as vague and vast and sentimental, and without a base in either facts or logic"(1902/1985:379). It might appear that this thesis does not adhere to 'logic', but answers, as will be shown, are sought in available facts. To avoid confusion and misunderstanding I will herewith discuss some definitions of terms that will be used.

### Mystic/Mysticism:

Like James, Underhill too recognised the difficulty in understanding the mystery surrounding mystics and mysticism and in her introduction mentions that, "Mysticism ... [is] one of the most abused words in the English language" (1911/1995xiv). She explains, however, that humanity has an innate desire to seek harmony and that in mystics this desire eventually will "capture [their] whole field of consciousness ... and in the experience called 'mystic union' attains its end "(1911/1995:xiv). James (1902/1985) grapples with the issue in a different manner and highlights that the difficulty lies mainly in the fact that it is nigh impossible to describe feelings and experiences that are totally subjective. He determined that if an experience fulfils four particular criteria<sup>6</sup> it deserved to be considered a mystical state of consciousness. James' four "markers" (1902/1985:380), as he calls them, are still valid today. Griffiths and Tweedie describe states of consciousness that fulfil these criteria and I use the terms 'mystic' and 'mysticism' with this description in mind. To this I add James' warning that, "Mystical states ...

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<sup>6</sup> These are Ineffability, Noetic quality, Transiency and Passivity. Constraints on this paper prevent me from extensively discussing these criteria but I will give brief a description of each: (see in James, 1958:293)

1) Ineffability: that which defies description and best described in negative terms.

2) Noetic quality: mystical states that are filled with illuminations and revelations full of significance.

3) Transiency: the state of mind cannot be sustained for long and can also be extremely brief.

4) Passivity: the experiencer feels as if s/he has no control over the situation and is grasped by a 'superior power'.

wield no authority due simply to their being mystical states” but that they do offer “hypotheses” that could assist in the understanding of the meaning of life (1902/1985:428).

*Spiritual/Spirituality:* The search for an appropriate definition for this word has been an interesting exercise, especially considering I use it frequently and assume others knows what I mean by it. Eliade only refers to Christian Spirituality and describes it as: “An existence before God and amid the created world” (1987:451), which does not express what I understand ‘spirituality’ to mean. I hoped to find the answer in the chapter “What is Spirituality?” by Flew (in Brown, Farr, & Hoffman, 1997:31-41) but, after taking me on a journey through the Greece of Plato and Aristotle via Thomas Hobbes’ opinion that spirit is an “inclination of the mind” (Brown et al., 1997:35) to a discourse on experience, I was still none the wiser. I wish to avoid any misconception that this thesis is written from a so-called ‘New Age’ perspective. York says that New Age spirituality is difficult to describe and is, “a blend of pagan religions, Eastern philosophies, and occult-psychic phenomena” (1995:34). Eastern philosophies and scriptures feature prominently in this paper but are not blended with any other phenomena, pagan or otherwise.

I do not consider the subject I am discussing to be a form of ‘alternative spirituality’ either. Partridge describes “alternative spirituality” (2004:16), as a phenomenon in which, especially in the West, people are increasingly involved in personal forms of belief and practice (2004:17). Griffiths, Tweedie and I, are searching for a sense of wholeness and meaning and I suggest that our journeys have a sacred universality to them. Our spiritual search is better explained by the American educationalist Palmer. In an interview he said that spirituality for him meant the, “eternal yearning to be connected with something larger than my own ego – to be connected only with your [sic] own ego is a very disconnected life – a very lonely life” (in Kanowski, 2006). This notion is found in the words of the Eastern sage Nisargadatta, “The Seeker is [one] who is in search of [one] self” (in Dikshit, 1973/2003:1). I will use the

words 'spiritual' and 'spirituality' as meaning one's search for a wider and more truthful understanding of life and one's true Self.

### Self/God/self

The straightforward sounding statement "The Seeker is [one] who is in search of [one] self" (Dikshit, 1973/2003:1) is based on profound notions presented in the *Katha* and *Mandukya Upanishads*<sup>7</sup> as well as in Buddhist teachings and increasingly found in Western spiritual literature (Buber, 1937/1979; Easwaran, 2002; Harvey & Matousek, 1994). Limitations of this paper prevent me from giving an in-depth analysis but I will, however, elaborate a little further. For example, in his entertaining as well as deeply insightful book *God: A Biography*, Miles<sup>8</sup> analyses God's role in the Old Testament. He uses the analogy of a play in which God is, "like a director whose actors never seem to get it right and who is, as a result, often angry but who doesn't, himself, always know beforehand what getting it right will be" (1995:87). He implies God, as mentioned in the scriptures, is humanity itself and that part of the human being which is always observing and watching. This is further explained by Tolle who goes to great length to explain the difference between the ego-self and the "I am", which is another term for the Self or 'true Self'. Spiritual awareness, he maintains, means knowing that the Self is never-changing and that the ego-self is a mere illusion of the mind. He interprets Jesus' words "Deny thyself" as meaning, "Negate (and thus undo) the illusion of self" (2005:79), emphasising that there is another Self, a true Self, which is ever present. Griffiths explains this notion in a slightly different manner. He says that the concept of God or Ultimate Reality, is experienced, "in the depth of the soul ... as its very being or Self" (1982:27).

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<sup>7</sup> The Upanishads date from approximately 1500 BCE and serve as an epilogue to the Veda, scriptures considered the 'sacred knowledge' of the Hindus (Crystal, 1990:1260).

<sup>8</sup> Miles, a former Jesuit undertook religious studies at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome and amongst a large number of credentials holds a doctorate from Harvard University in Near Eastern Languages (in Miles, 1995)

The anthropologist Drury underpins the above by stating that [S]elf is, “the divine essence of one’s being. ... [It] contains the spark of Godhead and is the source of pure consciousness” (2003:280) and I will use ‘Self’ in this sense.

In an attempt to avoid confusion around this issue I will use ‘self’ (no capital) when referring to the ‘ego-self’ or one’s personality<sup>9</sup> and I will write ‘her self’ and ‘him self’ as separate words. Although not all literature makes a distinction between a capitalised ‘S’ and a ‘s’ to indicate the difference, certain scholars like Radhakrishnan (1939/1959) and Easwaran (1987/1996) do. To reiterate, when I mention ‘Self’, capitalised, I mean it to be in the sense of one’s divine essence, God or consciousness, as defined by Drury. When I use ‘self’ (no capital) I will be referring to one’s personality or one’s ego-self.

### *Realisation of the Self/Self-Realisation*

Initially the sub-title of this thesis was to be: “An Enquiry into Spiritual Seekers’ Journeys towards Self-fulfillment”. I wanted to avoid using terminology which could be confused with ‘New Age’ concepts. ‘Self-fulfillment’ seemed neutral enough to describe the state of mind that Griffiths and Tweedie had attained. I considered taking Maslow’s (1973) concepts of “self-actualisation” and “peak experiences” as a benchmark for my analysis but came to the conclusion that I hoped to find a deeper, mystical understanding of the issues at hand. I therefore decided that the term ‘Realisation of the Self’ would be more accurate and therefore more appropriate.

Tolle says that spiritual realisation is, “to see clearly that what I perceive, experience, think, or feel is not who I am” (2005:78). This notion is found in Nisargadatta’s teachings where it is suggested that the seeker finds out who

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<sup>9</sup> The psychiatrist Jung stated that the ‘self’ is “identified with the conscious ego which in turn is seen as playing a lead role in the human personality” (in Clarke, 1994).

s/he is *not*<sup>10</sup> in order to know who s/he in fact *is*<sup>11</sup> (in Dikshit, 1973/2003). The contents of this paper will illustrate both the profound effect such a realisation has on the spiritual seeker as well as how arduous the journey can be. Drury also sheds light on the way I use the term Self-Realisation in this thesis, by stating that, "Self-Realisation [is] knowledge of one's true, inner self" (2003:280).

### Teacher/Guru

In the Eastern traditions the role of the teacher is a much discussed aspect of the search for spiritual meaning. In Chapter Four I will elaborate on this issue but at this stage I need to mention, what I perceive to be, a subtle difference between the Western concept of 'teacher' and the Eastern '*guru*'.

*Guru* is translated into the English language as 'teacher', 'spiritual teacher' and sometimes as 'spiritual master' (Du Boulay, 1998; Guiley, 1991; Harvey, 1991). The Oxford English Dictionary describes 'teacher' as, "One who ... teaches or instructs; an instructor; also *fig.*; *spec.* one whose function is to give instruction, esp. in a school" (OED, 2006). This definition implies that there is a student who needs to be instructed in a skill s/he does not yet possess by one who does have the required aptitude or knowledge. However the subtlety of the ancient Sanskrit meaning is lost in the English translation. The following stanzas from the *Advayataraka Upanishad* explain what the word *guru* means in its original sense:

The syllable *gu* means shadows  
 The syllable *ru*, he who disperses them,  
 Because of the power to disperse darkness  
 The guru is thus named  
 (Advayataraka Upanishad 14-18, verse 5).<sup>12</sup>

<sup>10</sup> My italics

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Du Boulay (1998), Easwaran (1981) and Paul (2004) mention that the Upanishads describe the role of the spiritual teacher as the 'dispeller of darkness'. None however quote the original verse. I found it on the Wikipedia website (Wikipedia, 2006). I believe the

In this context 'shadow' means the ego-self, a notion found in the writings of the Vedic scholar Easwaran (1981)<sup>13</sup>. He describes the relationship between the illusory, ego-self or personality and the Self in the following words:

A shadow does have reality. ... it comes and goes and you can put your hand through it. A physicist, in fact, would say that a shadow is only the absence of light ... Just as a shadow is produced when light is blocked, the jiva [personality] is what we see when the light of the Self is obstructed by self-will ... we take the shadow for reality while our real Self, if we even guess at it, seems shadowy and unreal (1981:162).

I deduce from the above that a *guru* is one who assists the spiritual seeker to become aware of and confront the 'shadow' therefore enabling her/him to discover the Self. The English word 'teacher' does not imply the specific role of the *guru* as explained in the above, therefore I will use the term *guru* when referring to a spiritual teacher in Eastern traditions.

As I have mentioned earlier, the following section will give an in-depth analysis of the methodology I have chosen with which to conduct this enquiry. In Chapter One I will address the question of the origin of the longing to seek clarification of the mystical and truth regarding the Self. In Chapter Two, I analyse Griffiths' journey towards the discovery of the Self. As mentioned, although Griffiths committed him self to the Roman Catholic Church, he eventually travelled to the East and settled in India. He had come to see the West as symbolising the masculine and the East as the feminine aspects of humanity as well as him self and believed that the two needed to

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reference to this particular Upanishad is authentic. I have included it because this particular verse is of the utmost importance in the process of understanding the role of the *guru*. I acknowledge that this website can be considered a poor source but hereby refer to an article in the Weekend Australian that states: "Wikipedia is a first draft. ... But understood and used in that way, it may prove to be one of the most spectacular inventions of the 21<sup>st</sup> century" (MacIntyre, 2006).

<sup>13</sup> Easwaran moved from India to the United States in 1959, where he founded the Blue Mountains Centre of Meditation. He has taught and written on Eastern scriptures and mysticism (<http://www.spiritsite.com/writing/ekneas/>, 2006).

be united for spiritual wholeness to occur (Griffiths, 1982). Tweedie also originates from England and the analysis of her journey reveals she too went to the East where she found a teacher in India to whom she committed herself for five years. In Chapter Three I will describe Tweedie's journey in depth and introduce two gurus from the East and their teaching methods. These two chapters in particular will be written in a narrative style that I understand to be supported by the Heuristic method of research. The Eastern notion of the guru and her/his authority over the seeker creates controversy in the West. This issue has emerged as an important theme underlying the journeys of the Griffiths and Tweedie as well as mine. Weaving throughout the chapters I will analyse aspects of my search for Self which I see echoed in the lives of these two mystics.

The eminent French feminist philosopher Luce Irigaray urges her readers to create a new language, a new way of communicating one with the other. Rather than perceiving God as, "an entity of the beyond" who remains out of reach, Irigaray suggests we find divinity in one another as well as ourselves (2004:172). She encourages us to find new ways of listening and so re-discover the divine that has always existed. Irigaray is one of many who have inspired me to find a 'new way of communicating' and I will attempt herewith to make a small contribution towards a deeper understanding of ourselves as divine beings. I now invite you, the reader, to join me on a journey of discovery of the Self.

## METHODOLOGY

To be able to conduct an enquiry of a deeply personal nature, to gain an understanding in “the deepest roots of [my] nature” (Moustakas, 1961/1989:xii) I realise I need to adopt a research method that encourages participation and subjectivity. I find this possibility offered in Moustakas’ Heuristic Research Method. He describes this method as, “a process that begins with a question or problem which the researcher seeks to illuminate or answer” (1990:15). What specifically appeals to me in this remark is the word ‘process’ as from further reading I understand Moustakas considers the ‘process’ to be even more significant than the outcome. I find myself reflected in Moustakas’ (1990) writings and immerse myself deeper into the process of enquiry in the manner which he encourages.

Under Moustakas’ guidance my enquiry takes on a totally different meaning. He says, “In heuristics, an unshakeable connection exists between what is out there, in its appearance and reality, and what is within me in reflective thought, feeling, and awareness” (Moustakas, 1990:12). I understand this also to mean that in heuristics the use of the heart as well as the intellect is permitted and that it is important for the researcher to become immersed in the chosen subject. Maslow whose work inspired and influenced Moustakas, encourages the researcher to be “different, unpopular, nonconformist” in order to create the best results (1973:47). This is encouraging advice for a researcher who chooses to explore deeply experienced concepts of a mystical nature and therefore needs audacity to go beyond the restraints of conventional academic research methods.

The scholar Reason, who was inspired by Moustakas, urges the researcher to “re-sacralize” her enquiries (1993:1). This remark further supports my decision to embrace Moustakas’ method as it offers me a structure within



which I feel a freedom to explore the spiritual journeys that I consider to be of a sacred nature.

When I was introduced to this method of research two years ago, I was initially surprised to learn that Moustakas' book, *Heuristic Research; Design, Methodology and Applications* (1990) was out of print. I wondered if this meant that it was regarded academically as somewhat problematic but later found his method extensively used in the field of humanistic- and transpersonal psychology by Hiles (2002) and Braud and Anderson (1998) as well as in Reason's (1993) work in the areas of ecology and sacred science. Moustakas' gentle, considered approach to investigation appealed to me and I took it upon myself to first explore the publications that illustrated how he had come to create this particular methodology.

His quest for self awareness comes to light in his first book called *Loneliness*<sup>14</sup> (Moustakas, 1961/1989). He explores the path to self-fulfilment through loneliness and I sense I have met a 'kindred spirit'. Moustakas explains that his enquiry into loneliness,

[G]rows out of [my] own search to come to an understanding, awareness, and respect for [my]self as a solitary, isolated, lonely individual and the gripping, painful, exhilarating and beautiful experience of being utterly alone and separated from others (1961/1989:xii).

In his search for understanding Moustakas examines the lives of a range of well known people in public life. For example, the aviator Antoine de Saint-Exupéry crashes his plane in Africa and whilst marooned in the desert reaches the utter depths of loneliness and despair. He becomes aware of the "man's relatedness to all of life" and finds that, "he is the desert and the

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<sup>14</sup> Moustakas reaches the depths of his aloneness and isolation due to his young daughter's near-fatal illness during which she spent much time in hospital (1961/1989).

desert is him" (1961/1989:59)<sup>15</sup>. Moustakas also paints an interesting portrait of the poet Emily Dickinson who chose to live in isolation and loneliness, the depth of which is reflected in her poetry. In spite of the pain involved she was able to give it, "liveliness and beauty" (1961/1989:75). By analysing the lives of these and other public figures Moustakas comes to the profound conclusion that loneliness is, "as much a reality of life as night and rain and thunder and it can be lived creatively, as any other experience" (1961/1989:103). Moustakas thus gains a deeper understanding not only of suffering caused by experiencing loneliness but also how sorrow and despair eventually lead to an expanded awareness of his Self and life as a whole (1961/1989; 1972).

The contents as well as the title of the book *Finding Yourself, Finding Others* (1974) give a revealing insight into the depth of Moustakas' being and his method of exploring meaning. The chapters vary from "Being an Individual" to "Love in Relationships" and are filled with reflections, never longer than one or two paragraphs, by people of whom no further biographical details are given except their name. Moustakas includes his own thoughts and ideas. Black and white photographs are scattered throughout sensitively illustrating the feelings surrounding the contents of the pages. The following quote touched my heart; it comes from Moustakas' introductory poem and expresses a thought I wish to convey to the readers of this paper:

I do not know whether you can stay with me in the way in which I have decided to share my life with others but if you can I offer something of myself that may create currents in your own awareness and being (1974:3).

Inspired by the manner in which Moustakas searches for meaning I too will offer you, the reader, something of my self by delving into the lives of people who, in turn, have shared their experiences with the world to obtain a deeper understanding of life and their selves.

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<sup>15</sup> This "relatedness to all of life" in relation to self-fulfilment will be further discussed in this thesis.

The concept of a Heuristic Research Method was first launched in the *Journal of Humanistic Psychology* in 1985 by Douglass and Moustakas as “a passionate and discerning personal involvement in problem solving” (1985:39). They argue that of all available research methods, only heuristics offer the researcher the opportunity to explore and uncover “that which is, as it is” (1985:42) rather than to have to “prove or disprove” (1985:42) issues under investigation. It is five years before Moustakas publishes his *Heuristic Research: Design, Methodology and Applications* (1990). After my initial reading of this book I felt, for the first time, that I would be able to undertake an analysis of the mysterious paths undertaken by spiritual seekers which had fascinated me for so long. In the following paragraph Moustakas (1990) persuades me to embrace this method of research and undertake my enquiry into a deeply personal journey:

I begin the heuristic journey with something that has called to me from within my life experience to which I have associations and fleeting awarenesses but whose nature is largely unknown. In such an odyssey, I know little of the territory through which I must travel. But one thing is certain, the mystery summons me and lures me to let go of the known and swim in an unknown current (1990:13).

And what an ‘odyssey’ this heuristic journey has become for me! He warns that “self-understanding and self-growth” (1990:13) will happen during the research process and now that I have come to the last phase thereof, I can confirm, wholeheartedly, that Moustakas is correct. I have asked my self repeatedly if the method has become the way in which I now live my life, or if it merely remains the academic framework within which I explore the spiritual journeys of others and my own. For answers I keep returning to his text. He reiterates time and again how the researcher will have to become intimately involved in the questions posed and deeply immersed in the subject. I question whether my deeply felt involvement in the chosen subject is actually conducive to the end result of this thesis. I go through emotional phases of

elation due to the wonderful journeys of others I am discovering, as well as deeply felt doubts questioning whether I will be able to do their accounts justice, all the while losing my sense of individuality. There is a difference between seeing one's own experiences reflected in another and comparing them with those of another. The latter is not beneficial to the process as comparisons can involve value judgements rather than discovering "that which is, as it is" (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985:42).

Moustakas outlines six phases in which the research is conducted. He names these as follows: Initial engagement, Immersion, Incubation, Illumination, Explication and Creative Synthesis (1990:27-34). The phases give the researcher a framework within which to cope with the required intense personal involvement. Becoming familiar with these has been very helpful to keep me moving forwards towards the final stage of 'creative synthesis' I find myself in now.

Possibly the longest and most difficult to describe is the first phase of "initial engagement" (Moustakas, 1990:27). It is the time in which the researcher gains awareness of her passionate interest that calls for further investigation and questions arise which demand to be answered. It is a time of deep introspection in which she starts formulating the burning questions that surface due to a lifelong passion. During this phase the insight emerges that answers can only be found by gaining deeper understanding of 'the other', by exploring her/his life from a broader perspective. In this context, Hiles deals with the importance of "knowing through participation" (2002:2). He argues that the researcher needs to become completely involved in the subject matter for the experiences to be considered authentic.

I understand the following 'Immersion' phase to mean that the enquiry starts to consume every waking moment of the researcher's life. Moustakas states that she must become alert and aware of anything in her environment that can be even remotely connected to the questions raised. "People, places, meetings, readings, nature – all offer possibilities for understanding" (1990:28).

During the period of “incubation” (Moustakas, 1990:28) the researcher needs to withdraw from the intense questioning to allow the unspoken, intuitive levels of understanding to process the information hitherto acquired. Only once the researcher truly allows herself to open up to her intuitive faculties can “illumination” (1990:29) take place. This is an awakening to different, unexpected dimensions of the issues involved.

For example, moving through this ‘incubation’ phase I come to realise that the conclusion I believed I was working towards would be rather different to that which I had initially assumed. I observe that I am indeed deeply immersed in ‘indwelling’. Moustakas insists that ‘indwelling’ is an essential element of the process throughout the heuristic inquiry. He explains the term ‘indwelling,’ as meaning, “the heuristic process of turning inwards to seek a deeper, more extended comprehension of the nature or meaning of a quality or theme of human experience” (1990:24). This turning inwards can create upheavals which contribute to the suggestion that the heuristic enquiry becomes an ‘odyssey’. I begin to understand the concept of ‘tacit knowing’ that Moustakas simultaneously refers to. These notions are inspired by the philosopher Polanyi who originally coined the phrase ‘heuristic’ (Hiles, 2002). He insisted that each person knows far more than logic can unveil and that through the ‘tacit’ realm, the intuition can lead one to a “true conclusion” (Polanyi, 1969:138).

Moustakas says of the ‘illumination’ phase that it is “a breakthrough into conscious awareness” (1990:29) and this is indeed how I experience it. Taking the freedom to allow my thoughts to wander outside the confines of reasoning, they meander in a non-linear manner. I experience this as somewhat unsettling as the process of investigation is not only taking much more time than I had anticipated but it is leading me into areas I had not imagined. The ‘linear’ plans are disrupted by intuitive insights and perceptions that demand attention. A deeper understanding of others and my self is emerging but this occurs at a level of my being which I can best describe as ‘conceptual’. To transform the intuitive insights into linear thought

is proving to be a challenge. I find support to overcome this obstacle in Braud and Anderson. They recognise that, “Emotional, intuitive and nonverbal expressive aspects” (1998:51) must be added to research projects and that the enquirer needs to be bold and recognise that she will move through inner transformations during the enquiry process. They encourage the researcher to “pay full attention to what is *known directly by the eye of the spirit*<sup>16</sup>” (1998:51). They go so far as to state that the unique and personal involvement of the researcher enlivens the results of the research “with depth and richness” but issue the warning that it is important “to impart creatively the character of the experience without diminishing it in the telling” (1998:82). I feel confident Moustakas would support this interpretation of his research method and therefore take the liberty of embracing their interpretation of it.

The period of ‘illumination’ is followed by the ‘explication’ phase in which it becomes important to thoroughly examine what has been awakened in the unconscious, tacit realm. The researcher must further examine her feelings, experiences, beliefs and judgements in order to be able to access and understand the many layers of meaning. Moustakas outlines how, towards the end of the explication phase, the researcher will bring together the “discoveries of meaning” (1990:31) and analyse the essence of the experiences. She will then assemble all the aspects of her investigation and put them together into a complete experience. This sounds so straightforward and comprehensive but I am discovering it is actually excruciatingly difficult to do.

I am entering what seems to be the final phase of the process which Moustakas calls ‘creative synthesis’. Moustakas urges that the final phase can only be completed if the researcher’s tacit and intuitive abilities are used. He even says that, “a period of solitude and meditation focusing on the topic and question are the essential preparatory steps” towards enabling the creative synthesis to occur (1990:32). ‘Periods of solitude’ have become a necessity for me and are continuing during the final phase of my project. I

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<sup>16</sup> Existing italics

believed the creative phase would unfold easily as I have spent the best part of the last year immersed in the subject matter. I have noticed however that not one of the phases outlined has been completed but how they continue to flow into one another. This creative phase is turning out to be one of many 'stops-and-starts' for me. I trust this is part of the 'process' Moustakas suggested the heuristic method of research would be and assume that the six phases are not meant to be as linear as depicted but merge together as streams into a river.

As I have mentioned, this method has given me the opportunity to explore the depths of my life's passionate search for meaning within an academic framework. I am experiencing that which Moustakas means when he says, "Heuristics ... enables one to develop a new view of self and life, and makes possible movement toward authenticity, self-efficacy and well-being" (1990:124). I now continue confidently to creatively synthesise the data I have collected with my 'new views of self and life'.

# CHAPTER ONE

## STARTING THE JOURNEY

It can be assumed that the beginning of a journey is not the point of departure but the moment of inspiration that drives the traveller to embark on an adventure, a voyage or a process of which the destination cannot yet be perceived. Can this inspiration, however, be found beyond a particular experience? I am intrigued by the mystery of the origin of the longing to seek for truth and meaning in one's life and in this chapter I will attempt to unravel how Griffiths and Tweedie were propelled onto their journeys towards discovery and Realisation of the Self. I acknowledge that researching spiritual experiences can be problematic as they are always of a deeply personal nature and often occur in the form of feelings, images and impressions difficult to express in words. Bruner says, "Like a stream, experience is an ongoing temporal flow of reality received by consciousness" (1986:6), an image which I find appropriate in the context of what I am trying to discover. Hiles (2002) reminds me that the researcher can only explore spiritual experiences by participation. I have wondered where the origin of my spiritual search lies and find aspects of my journey mirrored in Griffiths' and Tweedie's experiences. Therefore, in keeping with the chosen methodology, I will also discuss the 'streams' in which I have found myself immersed.

Griffiths recounts the story how, as an eight year old, on his way to school, he went into a heightened state of awareness and heard the "chorus of song" of a flock of birds and asked himself if they always sang like that. He says that, "If I had been brought suddenly among the trees of the Garden of Paradise and heard a choir of angels singing I could not have been more surprised" (1954/1979:9). Griffiths explains that the search for God started for him at that moment and never ceased. At that particular instant he had faced a reality that gave him a "true perspective in relation to eternity" (1954/1979:11). From that day onwards he was convinced that human beings were, "part of a whole, elements in a universal harmony" (1954/1979:11). This insight is reminiscent of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Vedic scholar



Müller's notion that the origin of a religious need is born once one has glimpsed the possibility of the infinite, perceived the existence of something beyond oneself (in Sharpe, 1975/1986). Du Boulay (1998) writes that it was the longing to be reunited with the spirit of his experience of something beyond his perception of ordinary reality that set Griffiths on a path in search of God. Was this the flash of inspiration that determined the future course of his spiritual journey or is it possible that this experience awakened in him a deeper, archetypal sense of longing that could exist in each human being? He tried for many years to satisfy his yearning for the truth by seeking knowledge that would explain the experience for him. Had the glimpse of the perfect sound of the birds simply given Griffiths a moment of perfect happiness for which he then continued to yearn during the rest of his life? As mentioned in the Introduction, Ramana Maharshi says that all every human being wants from life is happiness, which will remain illusive until one's true nature is discovered (in Osborne, 1959/1969).

I too have a deep yearning for happiness which I have attempted to satisfy by seeking knowledge of a possible larger reality as well as my true nature. My quest has brought me to the understanding that happiness and love are inter-related and that the pursuit of knowledge alone does not suffice; had I not sought knowledge, however, I probably would not have come to that insight. Unfortunately I cannot say that I was given an experience as revealing as Griffiths' at such a young age but I recall an urge, a longing to know more about the true meaning of our lives. This might be explained by the aforementioned, simple statement that those who embark on a spiritual quest for meaning are simply following an, "Eternal human yearning to be connected with something larger than [my] own ego" (Palmer in Kanowski, 2006).

Although I was raised within a particular religious institution I was exposed to mainly Christian norms and traditions throughout my years at primary and

high schools<sup>17</sup>. The Protestant Church was always part of our social structure and memories inform me that, during my teenage years, I often felt depressed and unhappy but showed myself to the outside world as reasonably well balanced and capable. My memory lacks what might be defined as a spiritual experience but I do trace my yearning for meaning to that period as I remember my questioning mind that sought answers to many questions about love and life. Rather than joining my friends in the organised bible study group I remember that I was allowed to visit the local minister in his office. We used to have lengthy discussions in which I passionately argued that a God outside my self could not exist. I remember the strength of my conviction that there was “a little piece of God in each of us” and that Jesus’ life story was just an example for what we could all eventually become. Love was often mentioned, which I equated with the concept of what people called God. To this day I am grateful for the open-minded and open-hearted manner in which this gentle man left the doors to my search for meaning wide open. Had I then been exposed to Eastern scriptures and philosophical thought, in which it is suggested that there is an all-pervading Reality which is the essence of every living thing, it is possible that my spiritual search may have taken on a whole different direction (Easwaran, 1987/1996; Griffiths, 1982). It would be another 25 years before I was introduced to Eastern scriptures and philosophies. The cosmology conveyed slowly started to satisfy my yearning for knowledge regarding life’s mysteries.

Available resources do not reveal many details regarding Tweedie’s life before she met her Sufi teacher Bhai Sahib and therefore I cannot ascertain when her longing for spiritual truth and meaning began. She mentions that she went to India at the age of 52, after the unexpected death of her husband (Tweedie, 1979/1993). I could speculate that the void left by the death of her partner of many years prompted her to seek love in a different form and that she undertook that search by acquiring knowledge, as Underhill (1911/1995) suggests. The fact she went to India to study at the Theosophical Society in

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<sup>17</sup> I am from Dutch heritage but my primary school years were in an Anglo-Saxon environment. We returned to The Netherlands when I was 13 years where I received a Dutch education.

Madras does imply she had already embarked on a quest to acquire knowledge on spiritual matters. It was however during a pilgrimage with a friend to the North of India that she was introduced to the concept of the role of a spiritual teacher. The friend, Lillian, spoke incessantly about her own teacher and whilst doing so Tweedie instinctively knew that she had to meet this man herself (1979/1993; 1987/2002). In an interview Tweedie (1987/2002) gives the small, yet interesting detail how she pleaded with her friend not to write down the teacher's name. "You see," she explains, "there is an ancient tradition in the East to not name an elder. It's a very powerful taboo.... As soon as you name the Teacher, you limit the Teacher". History proves that Tweedie did not 'limit the Teacher' by any means. Some time later, with only sketchy details of his whereabouts, Tweedie (1979/1993) goes in search of this teacher and finds him in a small village in India. She decides to remain at Bhai Sahib's *ashram* for an undetermined length of time and with this decision she commences a life-changing journey towards satisfying her longing to discover truth (1979/1993; 1986). When asked why she felt compelled to abandon her affluent lifestyle in England and commit to living, for an unspecified period of time, in Bhai Sahib's presence, Tweedie simply answered, "I knew what I was doing, and I wanted the truth" (1987/2002).

The validity of Tweedie's inner knowing, her intuition, is supported by Moustakas when he says that, "Intuition is an essential characteristic of seeking knowledge" and that it develops a discernment essential to reach a level of sensitivity which will perceive the essence of the sought after truth (1990:23). In 1987 I also met a spiritual teacher, Sathya Sai Baba, who lives in India. The many times I visited his ashram and sat, for hours on end, on a cold marble floor in agonising physical discomfort, I too intuitively knew it was the 'right thing to do'. I yearned for truth, whatever it meant, and believed that I would find it with the assistance of Sai Baba<sup>18</sup>.

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<sup>18</sup> In Chapter 4 I will discuss the role of a spiritual teacher in greater detail.

The above analysis of the origin of the seekers' journeys has not yet provided me with satisfactory answers. Is a childhood experience enough to determine the course of one's life? Can a lost love inspire someone to seek God or is the longing of an unhappy teenager strong enough to make seeking happiness a lifelong quest? Frankl suggests the following concept:

“Man's [sic] search for meaning is the primary motivation in his life and not a “secondary rationalization” of instinctual drives. This meaning is unique and specific in that it must and can be fulfilled by him alone; only then does it achieve a significance which will satisfy his own *will*<sup>19</sup> to meaning” (1959/2004:105).

Underhill appears to support this notion when she says that the spiritual search is, “... a quest, an outgoing towards an object desired, which only when possessed will be fully known” (1911/1995:46). Is it possible to actually ‘possess’ knowledge of Self? Radhakrishnan says that it is humanity's inherent “duty” (1939/1959:26) to become aware of its true self, which could imply that the search for spiritual wholeness is intrinsic to each individual's nature. Tolle explains that each human being feels a deep sense of incompleteness which usually translates into a longing, a desire, to accumulate mainly material things in life that give her/him an identity. He explains that when a person says “I don't have enough’ ... the ego really means ‘I *am* not enough yet” (2005:46). The inner yearning is actually the human being wishing to know one's true Self that has been obscured by the ego, the “shadow” (Easwaran, 1987/1996:162). What the Upanishads call “the essence underlying all of creation” (Easwaran, 1987/1996:13), Tolle calls ‘consciousness’. According to Tolle (2005) each human being will feel complete once s/he comes to live in the awareness of the true Self. This concept seems to reflect what Ramana Maharshi means when he says, “When the mind is externalised it cannot listen” (in Natarajan, 1998:9). He too implies that seeking for meaning in one's life is a journey inwards rather than out in a noisy world.

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<sup>19</sup> Existing italics

The research illustrates to me that the longing to know truth, to know God, to know Self, exists in each person, regardless of her/his interests or vocation in life. There are those however who experience an event or a moment that ignites a passion, maybe stirs a memory deep within, that propels them onto a spiritual journey towards completeness and others who might never embark on such a quest. The ensuing chapters will reveal that the longing to search for meaning can be a powerful force that leads to dramatic and drastic changes in a person's life, possibly leading towards the Realisation of Self.

## CHAPTER TWO

### FINDING THE OTHER HALF OF HIS SOUL

“Who are you? The inner vision of consciousness?

The heart? A sacred half-light, are you that?”

(Rumi in Barks, 2005:111)

All through his life Griffiths shared his thoughts, doubts and experiences openly in the books he wrote as well as in interviews and letters. Du Boulay published a very detailed biography about him and more than a decade after his death the influence of his teachings is found both in Christian groups and organisations and in writings by non-Christian scholars and mystics (Barnhart, 1999; Harvey & Matousek, 1994). In this chapter I will discuss Griffiths’ life in some detail, not only because of the effect he has had on countless seekers, but also because through analysing his spiritual journey I have been able to gain a deeper understanding of my search. To once again paraphrase Moustakas (1990) and Hiles (2002), the heuristic research method demands immersion into the issues at hand and intense personal involvement.

Even though Griffiths made an extensive journey out into the world, moving from England to India, from one culture to another, he discovered that the real journey was one that took place within him self. He explains that it is necessary to “journey into the darkness” of oneself in order to find eternal truth, the mystery at the heart of the world” (1994:20). I was introduced to Griffiths’ work in the late 1990s. I related instantly to the painful struggles and inner ‘darkness’ in which he often found himself as well as his deep love of India and her people. He also seemed to echo my own search for meaning by means of studying worldly literature and theological theories.

In Du Boulay’s biography, appropriately called *Beyond the Darkness* (1998) Griffiths emerges as a stubbornly determined man who challenged authority

and remained resolutely on the path he had chosen. Before I elaborate on his life in India, I will briefly describe the years before he left England. His endless search for meaning and truth had led him through the literature of authors as diverse as Socrates, Plato, Keats, Blake, D.H. Lawrence, St Thomas of Aquinas and eventually towards the biblical gospels. I find it interesting to note that even though Griffiths believed he had experienced the manifestation of the Divine, of God, he did not initially search for answers within a religious context. I gained a glimpse of how this might have been for Griffiths at a conference I attended in Liverpool in 2005. There I met the highly respected contemporary theologian Daphne Hampson who spoke about the need to, “recast [her] understanding of God” (2002:238). I heard her fervently argue that she had “no doubt that there exists that which is God” (Hampson, 2005), a remark I find reminiscent of the manner in which Griffiths interpreted his mystical experience early in life. Hampson left the confines of a religious institution to pursue this notion of God from a broader perspective; Griffiths on the other hand experienced what he believed to be ‘that which is God’ and set out to explore worldly literature for understanding before committing him self to a religious framework.

Griffiths (1954/1979) mentions that he was surprised at the length of time it took him to become truly interested in the gospels themselves. He acknowledges that it was the combination of the intense study of the gospels and the scrutiny of Newman’s *Development of Christian Doctrine* (1845)<sup>20</sup> that paved the way for his conversion to Catholicism. Griffiths (1954/1979) agonised about the dilemma of becoming a Catholic and he describes how he felt “compelled to surrender” the independence he had thus far enjoyed by remaining outside an organised religious structure (1954/1979:104). He meditated on this predicament for many hours during which he had a profound mystical experience. He claims he received the ‘sign’ he had prayed for (Du Boulay, 1998). This sign came to him as a voice; “When I say that I heard a voice, I do not mean that I heard any sound. It was simply that this was signified to me interiorly” he explains (1954/1979:105). Barnhart

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<sup>20</sup> Newman switched allegiance from the Church of England to Catholicism after this paper is published (Du Boulay, 1998).

(1999) mentions that this experience concluded with Griffiths having a feeling of being flooded with overwhelming love and calls it Griffiths' "conversion experience".

Griffiths was brought up in the Anglican Church and it is difficult to understand from a present day perspective how controversial his decision was to join the Roman Catholic Church. His mother, with whom he had a very close relationship, was devastated by this choice but unable to convince him otherwise (Du Boulay, 1998). He had come to the conclusion that the structure of the Church<sup>21</sup> with its dogma and discipline was as essential to spiritual growth as "bones and muscles" were to the growth of the human body (Du Boulay, 1998:71). He entered a Benedictine Order of monks at Prinknash Priory in Gloucester at the age of twenty-seven and wrote of this event, "The presence of God had been revealed to me that day at school ... but now it was another presence which I perceived, the presence of God in the mystery not of nature but of Grace" (Griffiths, 1954/1979:130). Du Boulay describes Griffiths' entering Prinknash Priory as, "love at first sight" (Du Boulay, 1998:74).

However interesting Griffiths' subsequent years in the monastery in England were, I need to now move on and elaborate on his motivation to make the journey to India where he eventually would find his peace and completeness. In his first autobiography *The Golden String* (1954/1979) Griffiths tells how he sensed that the Order was to be his final destination and that he had found the fulfilment he had been searching for. His intense scholarly pursuits, however, led him to studying the Vedanta<sup>22</sup> for many years. These teachings were to affect him deeply and he came to believe that they were of great significance to the Church and the world (Griffiths, 1982). He had again reached a point in his spiritual search where he found that something was

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<sup>21</sup> Griffiths refers to "the Church" when speaking about the Roman Catholic Church.

<sup>22</sup> "Vedanta: A system of mediaeval Indian thought expressed in commentaries on the *Brahma Sutras*, which in turn were inspired by the *Upanishads* (Crystal, 1990:1260)". (Hislop, 1986/1999; Tweedie, 1986).



lacking, this time not only within himself but specifically in the Western world and the Church.

We [were] living from one half of our soul, from the conscious, rational level and we needed to discover the other half, the unconscious, intuitive dimension. I wanted to experience in my life the marriage of these two dimensions of human existence, the rational and the intuitive, the conscious and unconscious, the masculine and feminine. I wanted to find the way to the marriage of East and West (Griffiths, 1982:8).

He not only found the way to this marriage, he also experienced the merging within himself of the East and the West. The journey towards this objective would prove to be physically and emotionally deeply painful, though eventually, totally fulfilling (in Swindells, 1992; Swindells, 1993). Although he had already harboured the desire to spend time in India, it was eventually a chance meeting with Father Benedict Alapatt, an Indian Benedictine monk, who wished to introduce the monastic life of the Church to India, that gave him the opportunity to leave England (Du Boulay, 1998).<sup>23</sup> Griffiths initially settled in a monastery on a mountaintop called Kurisumala in Kerala and embarked on a new and lasting 'love affair', with India and her people.

It was not the poverty and the misery which struck me so much as the sheer beauty and vitality of the people. On all sides was a swarming mass of humanity, children running about quite naked, women in saris, men with turbans, everywhere displaying the beauty of the human form. ... They have the natural spontaneous beauty of flowers and animals, and their dress is as varied and colourful as that of a flower-garden. ... There is poverty and misery enough in India, but above all in the villages and among the poorest there is an abundance of life and joy (1982:8,9).

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<sup>23</sup> This detail gives the impression that the people of India might have been unfamiliar with Christian monastic life but it is a widely held belief that Christianity was brought to the south-western state of Kerala by St Thomas who arrived there in 54 CE (Visvanathan, 1993).

I too have a lasting 'love affair' with India and Griffiths' words express my feelings precisely when I arrived there for the first time in 1991. Not only did I feel that I was to, "discover the other half of my soul" (Griffiths, 1982:8) but I fell in love with her people, just like Griffiths.

"[T]he one who searches heuristically may draw upon the perceptual powers afforded by maturation, intuition and direct experience" (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985:44). With this statement in mind, I will describe the visits I paid to the two monasteries, also called ashrams, Griffiths lived in. This particular journey, in 2003, gave me an insight into the extent of his physical tenacity as well as his unrelenting pursuit of truth. Literally walking in his footsteps gave me the opportunity to experience, first hand, the concept I had embraced as my own, of the 'marriage between East and West', on a cultural as well as a spiritual level. Griffiths first went to the south-western state of Kerala to a newly established monastery, named Kurisumala, situated on top of a mountain. As my taxi reached the monastery I felt I had arrived at a dairy farm in the south of England. The hedges were neatly trimmed, the black and white cows were fat and healthy and even the buildings would not have been out of place in Europe. It is difficult to believe that, when Griffiths and Fr Frances Malieu<sup>24</sup> arrived, there was only a wind-swept granite rock (Du Boulay, 1998). Space precludes further elaboration on the harsh conditions and incredible amount of physical work these men, with only two other aspirants to assist undertook to construct the lasting monastery,<sup>25</sup> but they were true pioneers in their time.

The next physical step towards the merging of "East and West" Griffiths took was embracing the life of a traditional Indian sannyasi.<sup>26</sup> For the rest of his days he donned ochre coloured robes, walked barefoot and adopted a vegetarian diet. He wished to identify not only with the sannyasi but also with

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<sup>24</sup> The abbot with whom he started this monastery.

<sup>25</sup> Kurisumala is now a fully operational dairy farm and daily provides the district with fresh milk.

<sup>26</sup> "A sannyasi is one who does not possess anything, not even the clothes on his back. He has renounced all 'property'. This is the real renunciation which is demanded, the renunciation of 'I' and 'mine'" (Griffiths, 1978:11,12)

the poor people of India (Du Boulay, 1998). There are a variety of reasons why Griffiths only stayed in Kurisumala for seven years and are all irrelevant in the context of this paper. It was in the next ashram, Shantivanam<sup>27</sup> in the southern state of Tamil Nadu that he set about blending the two cultures and religions together in an attempt to create his vision of universal unity. I saw first hand how Hindu and Christian symbolism had been combined in and around the buildings as well as during the mass that is performed twice a day. The church is a rectangular building, with a roof and without walls. It is ornately decorated with images of Hindu deities as well as images of Jesus. I sat on the floor, Indian fashion amongst the buzzing flies and mosquitoes, and received the Eucharist; a memorable experience. The mass was an interesting combination of Hindu rituals and Christian liturgy. Combining the sacred rituals of both religions was one of the important legacies left by Griffiths and about which there has been much theological discussion (Anandam, 1998; Barnhart, 1999). As Griffiths had hoped, Shantivanam became a place where people came to pray and to experience God in their lives. An Indian Jesuit priest<sup>28</sup> is quoted as saying that Griffiths, "Provide[d] opportunity for anybody, man or woman, religious or lay, Christian or non-Christian, believer or atheist, to find with him [Griffiths] a haven of spiritual rest and recollection" (Du Boulay, 1998:174).

Even though he never left the Church, it is noticeable that Griffiths' life reflects the teachings of the ancient scriptures of the East. Griffiths writes of the Upanishads, "The wisdom of the Upanishads is inexhaustible. It arises from a profound intuition of ultimate reality, a passing beyond all the outward forms of nature and the inner experience of man to the pure intuition of the spirit" (1982:61). He continues to explain that when the human being finally passes "beyond the limits of body and soul" one awakens to the reality that has always "been present but hidden" and reaches the goal of "knowledge of the Self" (1982:62,66). Griffiths came to not only understand the knowledge the Upanishads was imparting to humankind, but he was to experience the reality of it.

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<sup>27</sup> Shantivanam means 'forest of peace' (Du Boulay, 1998:158).

<sup>28</sup> No name of this person has been provided.

It took a stroke for Griffiths' desire to move 'beyond the limits of body and soul' to be fulfilled (Du Boulay, 1998; Swindells, 1993). During this event, he felt he was going to die and he moved through utter darkness until he felt "overwhelmed by love ... unconditional love beyond words" (Swindells, 1993). Griffiths had lived his life through his intellect within the patriarchal structure of the Church, suppressing the intuitive and feminine aspects of his being. Finally, after the stroke he felt that, "the left brain and the whole rational system had been knocked down and the right brain and the intuitive understanding, the sympathetic mind, had been opened up" (Swindells, 1993). Herewith the masculine and the feminine merged into one, the 'marriage' was complete and he knew in the wholeness of his being that, as there is no division in one self, there is unity behind all diversity in the human existence (Du Boulay, 1998). This notion is expressed similarly in the Upanishads. Easwaran explains how they tell us that there is a "Reality underlying life ... that is the essence of every created thing, and the same Reality is our real Self, so that each one of us is one with ... the universe" (1987/1996:13).

During the last few years of Griffiths' life, he taught this principle of non-duality with a greater passion than ever before. He now knew from experience, from his own inner being, that by encountering the inner darkness and going beyond that, "total fulfilment, total wisdom, total bliss, the answer to all problems, the peace which passes understanding, the joy which is the fullness of love" could be found (Du Boulay, 1998:274). The people who surrounded him observed profound changes in Griffiths after his stroke. He exuded a powerful radiance and "an astonishing energy was released in him" which enabled him to travel extensively to England, the United States and Australia (Du Boulay, 1998:260). During this time, even more than before, he became regarded as a mystic and established himself, albeit reluctantly, as a true spiritual teacher (Harvey & Matousek, 1994).

Griffiths not only taught me many things but enabled me to understand my self in a more profound manner because I recognise aspects of my path as a

spiritual seeker in his. His search for unity in the diversity of the major religions is one that I have found a revealing and fulfilling process and which occupies much of my time. He has helped me to understand the concept of a non-dual reality for it is this aspect of Vedanta that profoundly resonates with me and has given me meaning in this turbulent world. A month after I had visited Shantivanam I suffered a heart-attack and entered a period of 'darkness' beyond the body. Griffiths mentioned this was necessary to access the essence of one's Self and now, three years later, I know what Griffiths means when he describes the effects of his stroke to be on "three levels", the physical, psychological and spiritual (Du Boulay, 1998:250). I realised that a heart-attack is actually a 'masculine' symptom to experience as a woman. My mind had driven me towards a constant gathering of knowledge; always questioning any answers I might be given, seldom allowing my intuition to guide me towards a deeper truth. I can now say that the feminine, the 'East' within my self has risen to the surface and that 'mind and heart' now work in better unison than before. The physical shock to my body, mind and spirit pushed me into another realm of learning. Although I did not experience visions or an overwhelming sense of love, the latter is emerging as a 'trickle'. It is as if there is now more space within myself to give and receive love more profusely. Griffiths' open discussions on this period in his life have assisted me to embrace the process of realising the truth of my Self.

As I continue my research I ask the question if we, as seekers, actually postpone the moment of finding inner peace by endless searching and querying. Rather than accepting the mystical experiences as sufficient evidence of the Divine, Griffiths searched ever further. It was only in old age, when his body in fact collapsed that he was able to surrender completely into the love he had been seeking all along. Is the human being her/his own greatest obstacle during the search and longing for truth and love? Or is it the mind which is the greatest obstacle to the human being to be able to Realise the Self? These are questions that deserve deeper scrutiny and which could form the basis of another thesis.

In 1993, after yet another stroke, Griffiths died. During the last weeks of his life he was surrounded by people from the West and the East. Shantivanam reflected a true blend of Christianity and Hinduism and Griffiths himself felt complete happiness and love (Du Boulay, 1998). When he left for India nearly 40 years earlier his intention was to experience the 'marriage between East and West' and to find the 'other half of his soul'. During my stay at the ashram in 2003 I had the privilege of having a long conversation with an Indian Catholic nun, Sister Marie-Louise, who had spent thirty years living in Griffiths' ashram. I asked her if she could tell me the circumstances surrounding his death and the story she told was filled with as much love, respect and devotion as befitting the death of a saint. "In his last days", she said, "his body was in such pain, such agony. I slept on the floor next to his bed every night. But there was so much light coming from him; he radiated so much love; he was totally at peace in his spirit" (Sister Marie-Louise, 2003). She concluded by saying, "I have no doubt that Father Bede found the other half of his soul ... when he died he knew the nature of his true Self (Sister Marie-Louise, 2003).

## **CHAPTER THREE:**

# **SURRENDERING TO THE TEACHER**

I do not seek to understand in order that I may believe,  
I believe in order that I may understand.

(St Anselm in Billington, 1997:177)

Tweedie's biographical details are as scarce as Griffiths' are prolific which is probably due to the manner in which her particular spiritual journey unfolded. Her teacher Bhai Sahib led Tweedie through a process of the annihilation of her ego towards the discovery of her true Self and I suspect that once she attained that state of mind she saw no need in describing details of her life before the moment her spiritual search commenced (Tweedie, 1979/1993). In this chapter I will discuss some details that are known about her life before I introduce the concept of surrendering one self to a guru. Once again I will juxtapose experiences in my journey with hers in order to gain greater clarity of understanding of the issues raised. Further analysis of the necessity and actual role of a teacher, or guru in a spiritual seeker's life will follow in Chapter Four.

Before she died in 1999, Tweedie had spent over 30 years guiding other seekers towards the Absolute Truth she had discovered. She never considered herself a teacher and believed that everybody was simply "trying to reach reality" and that she was "only a little step ahead because [she] made a little more effort ..." (Tweedie, 1987/2002). The way in which this, the second half of her life, unfolded would have seemed unimaginable to the child born in Russia in 1907 who later moved to England and married a naval officer. Tweedie's husband died unexpectedly when she was 52 (Newburn, 2006). Moustakas (1974) describes accurately what can happen when a sudden crisis or abrupt change occurs in a person's life when all that once was valued and seemed real is called into doubt. Often alienation and despair will follow and "a search begins, a search for order and harmony in a

universe that now appears to be flighty, unstable and capricious” (Moustakas, 1974:50).

As discussed in Chapter One, this search possibly brought Tweedie to India inspiring her to embrace Bhai Sahib as her teacher and commit to living in his presence for an undetermined length of time. Shortly after Tweedie’s arrival at the ashram, he instructed her to keep a diary of the time she was to spend with him and told her it would eventually become a book. He explained that books that are being read about spiritual journeys describe people who lived thousands of years ago, but that her book, “will be proof that such things as are related do happen today, as they happened yesterday and will happen tomorrow – to the right people, in the right time and the right place” (Tweedie, 1979/1993:7). Reading her story indeed gave me ‘proof’ I was not alone on my journey and contributed to the inspiration to undertake this thesis.

In *Daughter of Fire*<sup>29</sup> Tweedie (1986) takes the reader on an epic journey of doubt, despair, sorrow and love for this man who, more often than not, treated her harshly and without pity. She is given the opportunity to speak with Bhai Sahib on a daily basis and the discussions she has with him range from deeply spiritual matters relating to the existence of an Absolute Reality to her annoyance with people who do not wash their dhotis<sup>30</sup> properly (Tweedie, 1986). She is often thrown into deeper doubt and despair by the way he scolds her for the thoughts and feelings she has. The following diary entry, after a particularly hurtful encounter with Bhai Sahib, is typical of many of Tweedie’s reactions to her teacher’s remarks: “The depression is terrible. Absolute despair. I am useless; I am a failure” (Tweedie, 1979/1993:151). At other times Bhai Sahib explains where this ‘yogic training’ as she calls it is leading her and she was increasingly able to surrender to his authority (1979/1993). She was able to accept his behaviour towards her somewhat better when he said, “Sometimes I speak to you harshly, but forget about it. I

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<sup>29</sup> Tweedie initially wrote *The Chasm of Fire* (1979/1993) which only represented excerpts of her diaries. Some years later she was encouraged to release the unabridged version of her experiences and subsequently *Daughter of Fire* (1986) was published. I use both publications in my analysis.

<sup>30</sup> A piece of cloth traditionally worn by men in India.



am scraping off the mud" (Tweedie, 1986:162). Bhai Sahib explained that, "The Soul is covered with so many sheaths, veiled by many curtains" and Tweedie comes to realise that every now and again one of these curtains has been removed (1986:244).

Tweedie (1986; 1987/2002) explains that the years she spent with Bhai Sahib were dominated by her constantly doubting mind. She had doubts about his validity, as well as the environment she found herself in. "Such ordinary surroundings. Such ordinary people around him", she wrote and asked herself the question "Is he a Great Man?" (1986:15). For a long time her doubts continued to swing from unconditional love for Bhai Sahib to that of recalcitrant fury. In an interview she explains how she came to understand that the doubting of the mind is a good and necessary process one needs to experience. "Doubts create great confusion", she said and "when the mind is absolutely lost, absolutely not able to think, then the human being is desperate. Then perhaps something will happen. There will be a moment of intuition, and this moment will be enough to show the human being the light" (1987/2002). Bhai Sahib tells her that absolute obedience is required as, "If you have no faith and [no] absolute obedience, you will not progress (Tweedie, 1986:56).

Time and again I encounter the themes that total faith in the guru is required and the mind needs to stop questioning so another aspect of one's being can be heard or recognised. This notion brings to mind the words of the ninth century scholar and Archbishop of Canterbury, St. Anselm (1033-1109), who stated, "I do not seek to understand in order that I may believe, I believe in order that I may understand" (Billington, 1997:177). What kind of faith is St Anselm referring to? It could be as in Osborne's<sup>31</sup> explanation that one is constantly absorbed in individual existence, or ego-self, but that each has, to a more or lesser degree, "an intuition of pure Being" (1987/2001:216). Interestingly, Douglass and Moustakas suggest a similar notion when they say that, "Through intuition I [sic] reach beyond the scope of my [sic] usual

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<sup>31</sup> Arthur Osborne (1987/2001) was strongly influenced by Ramana Maharshi but includes teachings of other teachers like the Buddha in his writings.

perceptual abilities and discover knowledge and meaning unexpectedly” (1985:50). Osborne (1987/2001) goes on to explain that once the pre-occupation with the ego-self is relinquished, the conscious mind is stilled. He suggests it does not matter if one believes this ‘pure Being’ is an inner or an outer power. Tweedie describes her particular journey as the “slow grinding down of the personality” and explains how, eventually, she experiences periods during which her mind seemed to cease to exist (1979/1993:7), suggesting she had stilled her ‘conscious mind’.

“Self experience is the single most important guideline in pursuing heuristic research” (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985:50) and I will therefore now discuss some facets of my journey which are mirrored by Tweedie’s.

Approximately nineteen years ago, when my life had become very ‘unstable’ due to the break-up of my marriage, I read *Chasm of Fire* (1979/1993) and felt a deep affinity with Tweedie. Over time I did not remember the details of the journey she had made but only retained the impressions of the suffering she had allowed her self to endure. “The spiritual life of every one of us is the drama of the soul” (Vaughan-Lee, 1990), she once said and I indeed was to live a few of my own ‘dramas’ before I would be able to come to a deeper understanding of her quest for truth.

During this ‘unstable’ time of my life a friend continuously urged me to read the teachings of an Indian teacher called Sathya Sai Baba but I had no interest in Eastern traditions let alone in a self-proclaimed guru. This stubborn resistance lasted for three years until, one day, whilst I was walking down the aisle of a well known esoteric bookshop in Sydney a large book fell off a shelf onto my foot. It seems needless to explain in this anecdote that the book was one on the life and teachings of Sai Baba<sup>32</sup>. On that day my spiritual journey took a completely new, and unexpected, direction. I had been struggling with two baffling questions, namely ‘what is love?’ and ‘who am I?’ Today, nineteen years later, I know when a person asks the second

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<sup>32</sup> This is actually a true story! There was no apparent, physical reason why the book should fall off the shelf.

question and persists in obtaining a satisfactory answer the arduous journey towards Realisation of the Self truly begins. As Nisargadatta says:

Give up all questions except the one: "Who am I? After all, the only fact you are sure of is that you are. The 'I am' is certain. The 'I am this' is not. Struggle to find out what you are in reality. To know what you are, you must first investigate and know what you are not (in Dikshit, 1973/2003:vi).

Tweedie knew, without reason, that Bhai Sahib would show her the way to the truth she was seeking and so did I come to believe that Sai Baba would offer the answers to my questions. I am sure that neither of us had any idea what the decision to accept our teachers as an 'absolute authority'<sup>33</sup> into our lives would entail, because that is what seems to be demanded in the spiritual tradition these men represent. Coming from a Western, monotheistic paradigm as Tweedie and I do, it is important to note that the Vedic tradition to which these teachers belong does not attempt to explain the origins of life as such. Instead "it [is] designed to help people to come to terms with the wonder and terror of existence" (Armstrong, 1993:28).

Bearing this concept in mind, it is impossible to describe the deeply personal and complex methods in which Bhai Sahib and Sai Baba guide people on the path of self-knowledge. I will attempt however to give a brief sketch of the essence which I have experienced over time. It is interesting to note that although the two gurus are vastly different, Tweedie's and my journey show distinct similarities. Bhai Sahib lived in a small ashram in the north of India and appears to have been surrounded, at any given time, by a small band of dedicated students, or 'devotees' as they are called (Tweedie, 1979/1993, 1986). From Tweedie's account I get the impression that there were very few foreigners who visited him. On the other hand Sai Baba's ashram, in the south of India, has grown into the size of a small city in the last thirty years. Twice a day, every day of the year, he comes to the temple yard where a

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<sup>33</sup> I will discuss the notion of 'absolute authority' in Chapter Four.

minimum of 5,000 people, which includes many foreigners, will be waiting to catch a glimpse of him. There are allegedly many millions of devotees around the world (Esposito, Fasching, & Lewis, 2002; Goring, 1992; Hislop, 1986/1999; Karanjia, 1994). Tweedie had daily personal contact and discussions with Bhai Sahib. Only rarely do Sai Baba devotees receive an audience and therefore personal conversations with him are practically non-existent. Despite it being difficult for those who have not followed this particular spiritual path to comprehend, these communications occur nevertheless. Hislop quotes Sai Baba "God is the only reliable Guru and, if appealed to, God will answer from within the heart of the devotee or will cause an embodied guru to appear in the devotee's world" (1985/2002:73). His devotees believe he is this 'embodied guru' and that he is omnipresent and omniscient (Hislop, 1985/2002, 1986/1999).

Using an example from my experiences might contribute to understanding this form of communication. Sometimes whilst waiting for Sai Baba to arrive in the temple yard or as he was walking past me, I would become aware of an internal dialogue taking place in my mind. There seemed to be two different 'voices'. I return to a previous quote by Griffiths I used to explain this strange occurrence: "When I say that I heard a voice, I do not mean that I heard any sound. It was simply that this was signified to me interiorly" (in Du Boulay, 1998:105). Needless to say, that when these conversations initially started, I seriously doubted my sanity. Over time I came to realise that questions I was grappling with were sometimes answered and surrendered to accepting this phenomenon as my teacher's omnipresence. I also became aware of the fact I was in the process of 'removing sheaths' towards gaining knowledge of Self and that the constant inner dialogue could be one between the self and the Self.

Although Tweedie experiences him as the Beloved<sup>34</sup>, Bhai Sahib never explicitly announced that he was a manifestation of the Divine, as Sai Baba has. The idea of God incarnating in a human body is understandably

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<sup>34</sup> In the Sufi tradition the word Beloved is used to signify the manifestation of the divine (Rumi, 2004; Vaughan-Lee, 1998/2003).

unacceptable if not outright repugnant to the intellect of scores of people around the world and Westerners in particular. Sai Baba reiterates time and again that he is God manifested in human form and has come into the world, “in order to repair the ancient highway leading man to God” (Karanjia, 1994:6). The truth of this statement cannot be a further issue of discussion in this paper. Suffice it to say that those who follow him believe in his claims. Karanjia explains this notion as follows

Millions in India and abroad are willing to accept Sai Baba's word that he is God for the simple reason that there is not and cannot be any possible test barring faith for such a phenomena. They are like the multitudes who for similar reason accepted the “Godword” of Christ, Zoroaster, Mohammed, Rama, Krishna and Buddha (1994:7).

Bhai Sahib and Sai Baba both teach the necessity of the annihilation of the ego (Hislop, 1985/2002; Tweedie, 1986). Sai Baba states that egoism disturbs the inner peace and creates persistent discontent. Therefore, when the ego is destroyed all unhappiness will dissolve and a state of true bliss will remain (No-Author, 1974)<sup>35</sup>. Apart from rendering selfless service, another way of achieving this is by surrender and renunciation. “True renunciation”, he explains, “means the giving up of attachment to hearth and home and to high position in society and business” (No-Author, 1974:22). Sai Baba suggests the seeker give up the *attachment*<sup>36</sup> to the material world rather than give up wealth and the home altogether. Bhai Sahib, on the other hand told Tweedie to give away her rather substantial wealth and all her material belongings as he considered this necessary to achieve the annihilation of her ego-identity (Tweedie, 1986, 1987/2002). Oral accounts tell of Sai Baba demanding of a devotee to give up all earthly possessions. I learned of this fact during a personal communication with one of his followers in 1997, but have not found it mentioned in any of the literature to further support the

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<sup>35</sup> Books relating to Sai Baba often will not mention the author's name. This is a reflection of his teachings about self-less deeds and actions.

<sup>36</sup> My italics

validity of this instruction. The concept of submitting to the will of the guru unconditionally is familiar in the Eastern traditions but one which creates much discussion in the West. I will address this issue in the following chapter.

It is appropriate to pause at this point and recall Underhill's words which equate the desire for knowledge with love and suggest that "There is a sense in which it may be said, that the desire of knowledge is a part of the desire of perfect love" (1911/1995:46). Tweedie's journey is one of a constant desire for knowledge - knowledge of the Truth - and through her diary notes the reader learns how she also unceasingly yearns for the love and approval of her teacher. Although I was forewarned by Moustakas that the heuristic research method could be "disturbing and even jarring" (1990:13), re-reading Tweedie's books became a more challenging experience than I had anticipated. I saw my deep longing for love and attention from Sai Baba reflected in Tweedie's and had to re-visit those feelings to gain a broader awareness of the issues I am investigating. At the time I did not recognise that my desire for knowledge of my Self had translated into the yearning for love from the guru. I was yet unaware that surrendering to Sai Baba could lead to the understanding that he "reflects [my] inner experience of the oneness of the Self", as Vaughan-Lee explains (1998/2003:205). After having spent time with Ramana Maharshi, Brunton (1934/2001) describes this notion in the following words: "He has taken me into the benign presence of my spiritual [S]elf" (1934/2001:317). I still grapple with the true meaning of this concept and ask myself if it is possible that I "made a God of my own reason" as Griffiths suggested is possible (1954/1979:104).

Tweedie writes that, "Love for the Unlimited is also unlimited; that's why our hearts have to be broken and become nothing to be able to accommodate the Unlimited" (1986:420) and indeed her heart was broken when Bhai Sahib died. Understandably she was distraught after her Beloved's death and she touchingly writes about her overwhelming sorrow and sense of loss during the period shortly afterwards (Tweedie, 1979/1993). Interestingly, years later during an interview, Tweedie tells how she came to learn that the time spent with her guru did not really constitute the 'real training'. Three weeks before

he died, Bhai Sahib had said to her, "Spiritual training? Rubbish! All that I did, I tried to erase your ego" (Tweedie, 1987/2002). The true extent of the meaning of these words started to dawn on her slowly but surely over time. This is what she writes in a letter to a friend :

*8 November [1966]*

Almost sixteen weeks have passed since Guruji's<sup>37</sup> death. So much has happened within me; slowly, gradually, by degrees the world begins to look differently, to change imperceptibly. Something which seemed intangible, unattainable, slowly, very slowly becomes permanent reality. There is nothing but Him. At the beginning it was sporadic; later of shorter or longer duration, when I was acutely conscious of it. But now ... the infinite, endless Him ... Nothing else is there. ... This constant vision of the One is deepening and increasing in the mind, giving eternal peace (Tweedie, 1979/1993:201).

This is a very powerful statement; a statement that initially left me wishful I had experienced something similar. I can say I placed my "compassionate heart" fully into Tweedie's ecstatic experience and imagined myself in her place, as Braud and Anderson encourage the researcher to do (1998:51). I would like to have a 'constant vision of the One' but then wondered what the 'One' would have to look like. Tweedie surrenders her all to the guru and her ego-self seems to have been unveiled. Now, towards the end of the research process, I am experiencing doubts around this issue and I question why she retains the image of Bhai Sahib. This issue will be spelled out in further details in the following chapter.

During my enquiry into her journey I have come to deeply respect the extent of Tweedie's determination and perseverance to reach her goal of knowing Truth. Not only did she give up her material possessions and desires, she gave up all notions of who she believed she was by surrendering to the will of

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<sup>37</sup> Guruji is a term of endearment for the Guru.

the guru. I am aware of the challenges living in India poses for the physical body of a Westerner and am in awe of how Tweedie survived the five years she spent in Bhai Sahib's ashram. I believe this fact played a role in the 'whittling down of her personality'. The death of her Beloved heralded a whole new phase in her life and one which she never could have anticipated at the beginning of her spiritual journey. She discovered the truth she was searching for: the truth was the discovery of Self, the apparent 'Oneness' of everything.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### THE GURU

“No man can reveal to you aught but that which already lies half asleep in the dawning of your knowledge” (Gibran, 1926/1971:67)

Although the main thrust of my enquiry into the spiritual journeys of Griffiths and Tweedie concerned the discovery of Self, the role of a guru,<sup>38</sup> in this process has emerged as a significant theme. As I have mentioned in the Introduction, in the Eastern religious traditions the role of a guru is a generally accepted aspect of spirituality but sometimes creates controversy in the West. An increasing number of Western seekers are flocking towards the East (Drury, 2003; Fisher, 2002). I believe it to be of importance, within the context of this thesis, to try and gain a deeper understanding of the conflicting opinions surrounding the necessity of a guru during a spiritual search for meaning.

As I have illustrated in the previous chapters, Griffiths and Tweedie claim to have realised the Self and have done so through vastly differing means. Griffiths found inner completeness through the relentless study of world religions and self enquiry, remaining within the structure of the Church in spite of the fact he took on the lifestyle of a sannyasi in India during the last forty years of his life. Tweedie also went to India, but committed her self to a guru whose authority she accepted unconditionally, surrendering all her material possessions and personal desires in order to gain the truth she sought. Interestingly, both became highly respected spiritual teachers during their lifetime and are referred to as mystics (Harvey & Matousek, 1994; Vaughan-Lee, 1994). In this chapter I will juxtapose their journeys in relation to the guidance they received from teachers and include insights I have gained during my experiences with Sai Baba. I will briefly question why a spiritual seeker could feel the need to devote her/him self to another person

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<sup>38</sup> As I discuss the role of a spiritual teacher within the Eastern tradition I will exclusively use the word 'guru' in this chapter.

taking Western as well as Eastern perspectives into consideration. I intend to expand on the two questions raised in the previous chapter, whether the seeker needs to detach from the guru completely and if true awareness of Self can occur even though the image of the teacher is retained.

Is humanity indeed so “uneducated” that we need a “Father”<sup>39</sup> figure from above” to show us the right way to live our lives, as Jung proposed (Billington, 1997:107)? Extensive research has been conducted into the reasons for humankind’s need for religion and the concept of an externalised God but unfortunately limitations in this thesis prevent me from entering into further discussions on the matter (see for example James, 1902/1985; Stawski, 2003). Examining what might draw a seeker to a particular person will have to suffice. Is a devotee merely “dazzled” by a person’s aura of “personal charisma” as the nineteenth century sociologist Weber (1948) suggested? Weber defines charisma as “a certain quality of an individual personality by virtue of which he [sic] is set apart from ordinary men [sic] and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman ... powers or qualities” (Weber, 1947/1964:358,359). This definition applies to Bhai Sahib, a fact illustrated for example when Tweedie describes how she saw a “quality of the superhuman in him” (1979/1993:107) and that “he looked absolutely glorious” (1979/1993:154). She also believes he has the power to erase thoughts from her mind and manipulate her thinking which could be considered a ‘superhuman’ ability. Sai Baba has the reputation of being a ‘man of miracles’ and is known to have manifested all kinds trinkets, like rings, pendants and crystal prayer beads as well as allegedly bringing a man back to life who had been declared dead for five days (Haraldsson, 1987/1997; Murphett, 1971/2002).

O’Dea summarises Weber’s analysis of charisma by saying it has three particular characteristics, “*unusual ... spontaneous ... [and] creative ...*”<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> I wish to acknowledge here the notion of the need for a ‘Mother figure’ as well. There are many female mystics and gurus (Yoginis), past and present, who are considered manifestations of the divine, even though I do not discuss them in this paper (Conway, 1994; Harvey, 1995; Ryan, 1998).

<sup>40</sup> Existing italics.

(1966:24). He brings the reader's attention to the fact that these three qualities coincide with what Judeo-Christian theologians attribute to God, namely: "[R]adically different from his creation.... In whom nothing is unrealized,... an infinite 'now'. And he is the creator of all beings" (1966:24). This suggests that Griffiths was drawn to God, Jesus and the Church by their charismatic features. Du Boulay describes Griffiths' conversion to Catholicism and taking his vows in the Benedictine Order as the beginning of a lasting 'love affair' with the Church and Christ. Griffiths describes the Church as representing the "bones and muscles" he needed in order to grow spiritually (1998:71). These remarks suggest that a spiritual seeker could quite simply be 'dazzled' by the charisma of the teachers. I concede I have been 'dazzled' by Sai Baba's personal charisma and came to accept that there are supernatural abilities he shows which are beyond my comprehension. It can also be argued, however, that gurus not only provide guidance but offer structure, love and a sense of belonging. The question arises where the perceived wisdom originates from with which they instruct their devotees.

Weber appears to dismiss the perceived 'superhuman' qualities of the guru in Hinduism when he suggests that he (sic) simply seizes authority over his disciples and merely transmits "acquired" rather than "revealed knowledge" (Weber, 1948:51,52). When viewed from an Eastern perspective however the notion of 'superhuman qualities' changes. Ramana Maharshi explains that "The guru is none other than the goal man [sic] seeks, the Self" (in Natarajan, 1998:11). This statement reflects the concept outlined in the Upanishads that underlying life is a reality, the very essence of all creation, which is in fact one's real Self (Easwaran, 1987/1996). I could therefore draw the conclusion that it is possible that a guru's teachings come from 'revealed knowledge' rather than 'acquired' as Weber suggested. If one has realised the Self it is arguable one lives in a state of 'Beingness' which is itself the essence of creation and therefore omniscient. Easwaran explains that the Upanishads teach that "Each one of us is one with the power that created and sustains the universe" (1987/1996:13). This perception, in turn, leads to the question

whether it is possible that a spiritual seeker is drawn to 'the charismatic aura' of a teacher because of an instinctive recognition of that underlying essence.

When trying to explain the phenomenon of a guru in one's life Ramana Maharshi says: "As the seeker's mind is bent outwards [in search of truth], the Self takes a human shape as a guru to help driving [sic] it inward. Self or Guru appears as a man [sic] to dispel the ignorance of man [sic] just as a deer is used as a decoy to capture a wild deer (in Natarajan, 1998:11). I find this an interesting remark and one which illustrates the complexity of the questions I attempt to address in this chapter. Does this imply that we, as spiritual seekers, are indeed simply searching outside of ourselves for something that we already are, as Tolle (2005) implies?

Can it be argued that searching for answers Griffiths' mind 'bent outwards' and manifested the Roman Catholic Church and therefore Christ into his life as the guru? Griffiths has said that Christ was his teacher to whom he initially prays fervently for answers until he increasingly identifies himself with his life and particularly his suffering. Du Boulay describes how Griffiths saw that,

The crucified Christ [was] constantly with him and several times he felt himself with Jesus on the cross, surrendering himself to the darkness of death, and in the self-emptying, becoming one with all (1998:246).

From an Eastern perspective this would indicate that Christ becomes the reflection of Griffiths' own inner being and, as Ramana Maharshi suggests, the very goal he is seeking (Natarajan, 1998). Is Bhai Sahib simply the reflection of Tweedie's Self? After the initial conversation with him, Tweedie gets a sense she already knows Bhai Sahib and feels a deep familiarity with him, in spite of the fact she knows she had never met him before. When she asks him where this feeling stems from he replies: "Some day you will know yourself" (1986:9). When I witnessed Sai Baba walking past me during my

earliest darshan<sup>41</sup> I attended in 1991, I was filled with a sense of always having known this little man dressed in orange robes. Had I had the opportunity to ask Sai Baba the question as Tweedie asked of Bhai Sahib, I believe I would have received the same answer, though I would not have grasped its depth of meaning at the time. With the insight I now have, however, I now dare to suggest that this profound reply could confirm that Tweedie's mind as well as mine had 'bent outwards' and that we each had found the guru who would mirror that within us which we in fact already are.

'Bending the mind outwards' and manifesting a guru is but the first step in the process of discovering Self. Total surrender and commitment to the teacher then seems to be required. Tweedie gives up all her material possessions and accepts Bhai Sahib as the absolute authority in her life to whom she surrenders her ego-self completely. Griffiths takes his vows of obedience and chastity and so surrenders him self to the authority of the Church. The Western psychologist Welwood (2000) makes a distinction between "relative authorities" and "absolute authorities" (2000:273). Of 'relative authorities' he says that they "include those who, human like the rest of us but perhaps one or more steps ahead on the path, function as mentors or guides". 'Absolute authorities', on the other hand, "include the gurus and masters – whatever we call them – who are seen either as incarnations of the divine, or as powerful (if not flawless) vehicles of transmission for divine direction" (2000:273-276). To an outsider Bhai Sahib might be seen as a 'relative authority' but to Tweedie there was no doubt that he was "beyond this world of matter" and she saw him as a "golden Deva"<sup>42</sup> (Tweedie, 1986:700, 740). It can be accepted that the Church, an authority in itself, considers Christ's teachings as its 'absolute authority' and so Griffiths and Tweedie both surrendered to an 'absolute authority' convinced these would lead them to their eventual goal, Realisation of the Self. I have not completely surrendered to Sai Baba as an 'absolute authority' and neither can I say that I have realised my Self.

<sup>41</sup> Sanskrit word translated which means "The direct seeing of a holy person, which brings his Grace to the viewer" (Hislop, 1986/1999:234).

<sup>42</sup> Sanskrit word translated as "A God: one of the powers of nature or life" (Easwaran, 1987/1996:306).

Has that prevented me from realising Self? Ramana Maharshi responds to this question as follows:

All depends on what you call a guru. He [sic] need not be in human form ... did I not sing hymns to Arunachala?<sup>43</sup> What is a guru? Guru is God or the Self. First a man prays to God to fulfil his desires. A time comes when he will no more pray for the fulfilment of material desires but for God Himself [sic]. God then appears to him [sic] in some form or other, human or non-human, to guide him to Himself in answer to prayers and according to his needs (in Natarajan, 1998:9).

To briefly return to a Western point of view I find educationalist Palmer's thoughts interesting in this context. He says do not ask the question "What made your mentor great? but 'What was it about *you*<sup>44</sup> that allowed great mentoring to happen" (Palmer, 1998:21)?

This notion is reflected by Nisargadatta who explains that it is the intention of the seeker which is of utmost importance rather than the guru s/he finds. If the intention is to surrender all concerns and attachments to one's past, present and future, to relinquish all attachment to physical and spiritual comforts and security, then, says Nisargadatta, "a new life dawns, full of love and beauty. . Complete self-surrender by itself is liberation" (in Dikshit, 1973/2003:410). He insists that one must not search for a guru but, "make your goal your Guru. After all, the Guru is but a means to an end, not the end itself (in Dikshit, 1973/2003:411). Vaughan-Lee alludes to a similar notion. He suggests that even the longing for spiritual progress is a limitation and that this yearning is very difficult to give up. "Not only must this world be given up, any idea of spiritual transformation must also be abandoned" (1998/2003:240). I have not been able to surrender 'the world' or my ego-self, with the consequence I am not familiar with the state of mind created by

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<sup>43</sup> Arunachala is a mountain in the South East of India in the city of Tiruvanamalai where Ramana Maharshi's ashram is situated (Osborne, 1959/1969).

<sup>44</sup> Existing italics

Realisation of Self. Tweedie and Griffiths both were able to describe the 'dawning of a new life' at the end of their journeys but did they indeed completely relinquish the attachment to the teacher and the guru in order to do so?

This question has haunted me from the start of my research and I have tried to find the authenticity of the Realisation of Self in Tweedie and Griffiths' lives. Once again I return to Braud and Anderson who encourage the researcher to add "Emotional, intuitive and nonverbal expressive aspects" to her project (1998:51). I sense acutely the meaning of the idea Nisargadatta expresses when he says that, "Words are merely pointers, they show the direction but they will not come along with us" (in Dikshit, 1973/2003:515). The tens of thousands of words I have read and scrutinised on the subject of the discovery of Self have not yet led me to grasp its true essence. If they each realised that their guru was identical to the Self, why do they continue to retain the images in their minds of Christ and Bhai Sahib, respectively (Du Boulay, 1998; Vaughan-Lee, 1990)? It is possible that the dichotomy between Western and Eastern perspectives creates my confusion? Once again I have to turn to an Eastern writer to find a satisfactory description of the concept of the necessity to completely release the guru.

Nisargadatta claims that he "realized" three years after meeting his guru (in Dikshit, 1973/2003:28). The total identification with and surrender to his guru seems to have led Nisargadatta to be able to completely relinquish any lingering attachment he might have cherished. He describes this 'realisation' as follows:

Pleasure and pain lost their sway over me. I was free from desire and fear. I found myself full, needing nothing. I saw that in the ocean of pure awareness, on the surface of the universal consciousness, the numberless waves of the phenomenal worlds arise and subside beginninglessly and endlessly. As consciousness they are all me. As events they are all mine. There is a mysterious power that looks after them. That power is

awareness.... Be free of name and form .... the void remains. But the void is full to the brim (in Dikshit, 1973/2003:28).

The passion with which Griffiths speaks about non-duality after his initial stroke seems to indicate that he too had 'realised' the essence of Self. He told an audience in Germany in 1992 that: "It feels like death.... It is facing nothingness" (Du Boulay, 1998:274). The spiritual experiences Griffiths had during the three strokes his body suffered are, however, always described with reference to images of Christ and also Mary (Du Boulay, 1998). This is of course totally understandable as Christianity remained the dominant paradigm within which Griffiths had grown and developed spiritually. I return to my initial concern, however, whether Griffiths remained in that state of consciousness in which any identification with name or form disappears. When he identifies with Christ's suffering and sees the image of the crucifixion does that not mean there is still a sense of duality, Christ and I, rather than the 'Nothingness', or 'Oneness' of the Self (Barnhart, 1999; Du Boulay, 1998)?

As I have no experience of facing my own physical death, I do not find any resemblances between the final stages of Griffiths' spiritual journey and my own though the relevance of having to detach myself from Sai Baba as my guru does arise.

My enquiry into the ongoing identification with the guru's form and the necessary detachment from it, was fuelled by two brief, albeit transforming, experiences I have had in the presence of Sai Baba. Whilst researching the experiences of others' loneliness to gain a deeper understanding of his own life, Moustakas came to "see and understand something, freshly, as if for the first time" (1990:12). I too have gained a 'fresh' understanding of my journey through analysis of others' experiences and take the liberty of adding this insight herewith.

During a brief visit to Sai Baba's ashram in February 2003 I had, what I now understand to be, the first of two mystical experiences which fulfil the criteria



of James' (1902/1985) 'markers'. As Sai Baba walked past me one morning I knew with absolute certainty 'all that which he was not'. At the time I did not understand that concept but did not dismiss it either. I instinctively trusted the feeling of deep knowing that overcame me with these words. Two years later I found the explanation of the experience when I happened upon Nisargadatta's suggestion that in order to know who you are, you find out who you are not (Dikshit, 1973/2003)<sup>45</sup>. It dawned on me that Sai Baba was a reflection of my higher Self and understanding who he is not may eventually lead to understanding who I *am*. Further insight into this notion occurred in December 2005 when I had another 'ineffable experience' in which I realised that Sai Baba was the manifestation of the Absolute, of consciousness, and at that point his form lost all significance to me. I felt totally alone and yet completely safe without understanding what had actually transpired within my self.

Researching Tweedie's experiences led me to review this knowing feeling and I came to the 'fresh insight' that I had been partly released from the emotional attachment I held to his form. I do not know what consequences this realisation will have in my spiritual journey. I used to visualise Sai Baba's face, his eyes in particular, and talk to him with my mind. This is how I prayed, fervently and often and I needed his form to which to direct my prayers. My enquiry has led me to understand the process of detachment and since last year my need to conjure up his image has lessened, so too has the need to pray fervently. An inkling of stillness sometimes enters my mind but I concede that, contrary to Tweedie and Griffiths, I have no concept what 'nothingness' or a 'void filled to the brim' could possibly feel like and, regrettably, neither do I truly know the concept of 'perfect love' (Underhill, 1911/1995).

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<sup>45</sup> The notion of discovering "what I am not" deserves a thesis in itself. It is based on realizing one's attachment to identity and transient nature thereof. A simple example is "I am a student"; when I have graduated I am not a student anymore, what identity am I then? Eventually the questioning will lead to the realisation that "I Am" or as Shankaracharya said "That thou art" (Dikshit, 1973/2003in ). "That" signifies consciousness, that which is the essence of all of reality (Dikshit, 1973/2003; Easwaran, 1987/1996; Tolle, 2005).

Tweedie explains years later that “the atman<sup>46</sup> of the disciple is united with the atman of the teacher” (in Vaughan-Lee, 1990). She continues by saying that, “my higher [S]elf is sort of, I can’t say, it’s guided by the teacher because the higher [S]elf is higher [S]elf, it’s not guided by anybody, it’s part of the infinite” (in Vaughan-Lee, 1990). I detect a contradiction in the fact that she can say on the one hand that her soul and that of her teacher have merged, and are therefore one and the same, but she continues to refer to Him as the Absolute or Infinite, as if that is outside of herself. She explains that “We<sup>47</sup> have this state of oneness with the Beloved and it is really a condition of love” (Vaughan-Lee, 1990). Can she embrace and truly accept she is the Infinite without referring to Bhai Sahib’s image or form?

As I have illustrated above, Tweedie and Griffith both continued to refer to their respective teachers and again I turn to Nisargadatta to question the continuing duality I detect in these two mystics. “What is to be understood is that “I”, the [S]elf, comprises all things; this unity is to be understood thoroughly. Can there be anything else but one” (Powell, 2003:41)? Have Tweedie and Griffiths really understood this notion of the ‘One’?

As I come to the end of this chapter I draw the conclusion that Griffiths touched on knowing the Nothingness and that this awareness created the radiance and inner peace that emanated from him, particularly in the last few years of his life. I do not mean to convey that my doubts of the authenticity of Griffiths’ Self-Realisation, by any means, diminish my respect and admiration for his journey. I still believe he is the true mystic so many of his followers and admirers claim him to be (Barnhart, 1999; Du Boulay, 1998; Swindells, 1993). I concede it is possible that had an Eastern biographer written about Griffiths’ life, the interpretation of his Realisation might have been very different. My research, however, has ‘transformed’ my being so to speak and led me to a different depth of perception of the true meaning of Realisation of Self. Du Boulay writes that at the end of his life Griffiths, “reached his full

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<sup>46</sup> Atman is a Sanskrit word that is translated as ‘soul’, ‘spirit’ or ‘Self’ (Hawley, 2001).

<sup>47</sup> In this particular section of the interview the discussion is about mystics; the “We” refers to mystics (Vaughan-Lee, 1990).

humanity" (1998:282). This simple, though deeply felt remark could indicate that Griffiths did reach his desire to discover "the other half of [his] soul", and finding "the way to the marriage of East and West" (1982:7). Does this mean that one can only realise the Self when the body and the mind face physical death? Is it only when all physical and mental resistance evaporates that one comes to know Truth?

Only days before Bhai Sahib died he told Tweedie, "There is nothing but Nothingness" and she describes in this particular diary entry that it awakened something in her heart which made her think it was the "most wonderful sentence" she had ever heard (Tweedie, 1979/1993:191). This indicates that the truth of this statement must have resonated with Tweedie's inner knowing, intuition. How would she have been able to detach her self from her guru had he not died? I realise that the answer to this question will remain illusive. Taking my experiences into consideration I will speculate however that had her 'heart not been broken' by his death, it would have been far more difficult for her to experience those moments of 'Oneness' and 'Nothingness' and live without any doubt about the reality of her Self.

It appears from the above analysis that Griffiths, Tweedie and I attracted into our lives 'one who dispersed darkness' rather than 'one who instructed' us in skills we did not possess. I still grapple with a large variety of 'shadows' but at the end of his life, Griffiths gained with a sense of completeness and fulfilment of all he had longed for during his life's journey (Du Boulay, 1998) I deduce from this fact that the 'shadows' he had carried with him had vanished. Tweedie too exuded an inner radiance that attracted many disciples into her life (Vaughan-Lee, 1994).

My enquiry leads me to conclude that a journey towards Realisation of Self cannot take place without a guru. I use the word purposefully for, as I have illustrated by using examples from the literature, a guru can take many forms and dispels the darkness created by the 'shadow'. It does appear to be necessary to find a mirror, a form outside one's self, to be able to discover that which one is not. It is quite clear that the *intention* of the seeker is of

utmost importance in order to attain self-fulfilment. Detachment from all that is known is essential to be able to move beyond the limitations of the life we perceive to be reality. This means that detachment from the form of the guru too is necessary to become aware of the 'void which is filled to the brim'. I consider this detachment to be the most difficult phase a seeker needs to pass through in order to realise the Self. I find the extent of inner confidence and certainty necessary to release even that which 'dispelled the darkness' practically inconceivable.

I will close with a metaphor used by Balsekar<sup>48</sup> that sums up the contents of this chapter:

The relationship of the guru and the disciple is like the getting together of the wick and the light – there is only the light. When the camphor and the fire<sup>49</sup> are brought together, both eventually disappear. So when the disciple meditates upon the nature of the Guru, both get merged in each other and all duality disappears (in Jacobs, 2004:69).

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<sup>48</sup> Balsekar was once Nisargadatta's disciple and biographer. His followers consider him to have realised the Self (Jacobs, 2004).

<sup>49</sup> Camphor and fire are used in most if not all Hindu holy rituals.

## CONCLUSION

I feel a pending sense of loss as I start on this last section of my thesis. The enquiry I have conducted has become intricately interwoven with my daily life and the 'immersion' process, Moustakas (1990) insisted was necessary, proved to be all consuming as well as a wondrous adventure. I realise, as I complete the 'creative synthesis' required, the enquiry itself will continue but the close relationships I have established with my new found friends and teachers like Griffiths, Tweedie, Moustakas, Easwaran, Frankl and others will slowly lose their intensity and others will enter into my life. It seems a contradiction in terms to draw definitive conclusions regarding a subject matter as extensive and mysterious as the discovery of the Self. Griffiths reminds me that, "We have always to bear in mind that the divine Mystery, the ultimate Truth, lies beyond our perception" (1982:202). As shown in the previous chapters, my investigation raised a number of issues that might lie *within* our 'perception. It might be useful to first briefly reiterate the core questions I used during the research process, before I continue with the findings:

- 1) Is the longing for a sense of completeness, Beingness, awakened by a particular experience or is it in fact inherent in each human being?
- 2) Do spiritual seekers need to go out into the world to find meaning before the possibility of another reality is discovered in oneself?
- 3) The concept of a spiritual teacher to guide one towards Self-Realisation is integrated in the Eastern spiritual tradition but is it possible to discover one's true Self without such outside assistance?

As I finalise this thesis, it has become apparent to me no objective definitive conclusions can be drawn on the subject of such esoteric notions as an inner longing for a sense of completeness or of a journey leading to Realisation of

the Self. A conclusion depends on the perspective one chooses to adopt but, for it to be acceptable within academe, it of course needs to adhere to 'logic' (James, 1958). I now, even more than at the onset of the research process, understand the significance of Moustakas' heuristic approach to analysis. By being able to personally identify with aspects of Griffiths' and Tweedie's experiences I was able to conduct the research from an intellectual as well as intuitive perspective, thus gaining not only a broader but also clearer insight into the concept of discovery of the Self. An unexpected finding that became apparent to me in re-reading the previous chapters is that although the notion of an all pervading Reality forms the basis of the Eastern spiritual tradition, it is also found in unexpected Western sources. From a psychological viewpoint Moustakas, for example, writes that there is an "unshakeable connection ... between what is out there, in its appearance and reality, and what is within me in reflective thought, feeling and awareness" (1990:12). Palmer (1998) instructs his education students to discover their true Self in order to become aware and effective teachers. These examples illustrate that the notion of discovering one's Self is not necessarily limited to a particular spiritual tradition. I have become aware that, in order to truly grasp the possible meaning of our lives, Griffiths' belief in the necessity of merging East and West, our masculine and feminine aspects, rational and intuitive thought, is indeed essential.

In answering the question if the longing for spiritual fulfilment is inherent in each human being I ended Chapter One stating that indeed each human being has an inner longing to know Self but that not all will embark on a journey of discovery. Upon further reflection I wish to add that I intuitively grasp the validity of Easwaran's suggestion that the longing to know Self is "as old as life itself" (2002:214) but acknowledge that it brings into question many perceptions of humanity's evolutionary development, on a physical and a spiritual level. The mystery as to why some people are inspired to go on a quest for truth and others never attempt to question the possibility of a reality beyond the material world is a far more complex issue than I initially realised. I suggest it therefore deserves significantly deeper scrutiny and could form the basis of a thesis in itself.

Analysis of Griffiths' and Tweedie's differing spiritual journeys indicated that a journey of Self discovery inevitably leads a seeker out into the world before the possibility of an inner all pervading reality can be discovered. Tolle (2005) might repeatedly state that one cannot search outside one self for that which one already is, but the limitations of the human psyche prevent this concept from being grasped without much questioning and doubting. Griffiths first searched for the understanding of the divine by studying world literature before committing him self to the Church. Only after periods of intense personal 'darkness' was he able to experience the divine 'Oneness' of the Self. Tweedie's Realisation of Self was preceded by five years of confrontation with and subsequent annihilation of her ego-will under the guidance of her guru Bhai Sahib. She too first searched for truth out in the world before discovering the essence of her true Self. An outward search therefore appears to be inevitable. From experience I know that it is necessary to develop a critical mind in order to differentiate between what is illusory and what is reality. One's intuition can be heavily influenced by the ego-will as Tweedie's journey illustrated. A questioning and doubting mind seeking answers can eventually lead the seeker to clarity and truth. From all this gathered information I draw the conclusion that in order to discover one's inner Self an intellectual as well as a spiritual search is necessary. The intellectual search can be undertaken through the study of literature and scriptures as well as through confrontation with the ego-will. Self-analysis that involves the mind can eventually lead to discovery of one's true nature. Once again I return to Griffiths notion of the 'marriage of East and West' in which the intuition and the rational operate in harmony. I close the discussion on this particular question and reiterate that by undertaking an intellectual search out in the world it is possible a spiritual seeker discovers the intuitive knowing of the existence of an inner, true Self.

The above conclusion leads me to the third question: can this search for meaning only be undertaken under the guidance of a spiritual teacher, or guru? My investigation revealed that Griffiths' teachers were many. The philosophers, poets and scholars who wrote the wide range of literature he

studied as well as the structure of the Church, in which he was embedded, guided him towards Realisation. He considered Christ to be his most significant teacher and came to regard him as the reflection of his inner Self. Tweedie's search intensified once she met her guru Bhai Sahib and I explained how she became aware that he, like Christ for Griffiths, mirrored her true Self. After embracing Sai Baba as my guru I too eventually came to understand the concept of an all pervading sense of Self that is my true nature. I initially believed that embarking on a spiritual search did not necessitate the guidance of a teacher. I considered following a guru simply one of many possible spiritual paths. During my research, however, I became aware that teachers, or, more appropriate in this context, gurus, come in many different forms and that, in Ramana Maharshi's words, "The guru is none other than the goal man [sic] seeks, the Self" (in Natarajan, 1998:11). At the end of his life Griffiths identified completely with Christ and Tweedie realised she and Bhai Sahib were in fact one and the same (Du Boulay, 1998; Swindells, 1992; Tweedie, 1987/2002). The role of the guru is an essential and therefore accepted aspect of Eastern spiritual traditions, but is still not embraced as such in the West. I would like to be able to draw the definitive conclusion that a spiritual seeker indeed needs a guide to find the desired 'goal' but must concede that further research into this matter is necessary. If the discovery of Self would be studied from a solely Western perspective it is possible the outcome might be different than when Eastern thought and discipline are taken into consideration.

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Another issue linked to the above that still troubles me is that of the true meaning of Self-Realisation. I questioned if Griffiths and Tweedie had indeed attained the state of mind they described as 'Oneness' or "Nothingness". Griffiths describes the images of Christ he has right to the end of his life; Tweedie mentions how she can call upon her teacher at any time and feel his presence. From the available literature I understand a Realised Self to be one who does not live in duality anymore and I found Nisargadatta to exemplify this notion. His Realisation came to pass after spending three years with his guru. "I trusted my Guru. He told me I am nothing but my self and I believed him" (in Dikshit, 1973/2003:4), is the only time Nisargadatta



refers to his guru. After this total surrender he describes his state of mind as being without a name or form, an emptiness “full to the brim” (in Dikshit, 1973/2003:28). Does this imply he proceeded to live in a truly non-dual reality?

The final draft of the thesis had been completed, without the Conclusion however, and rather than trying to find further clarification of the non-duality of a Realised individual through the literature, I decided to travel back to India. I spent five days in the presence of my guru hoping to gain a deeper insight by contemplating the dilemma I felt around this issue. I wondered if “*the eye of [my] spirit*”<sup>50</sup> would reveal knowledge to me that I could not access through the mind, as Braud and Anderson suggest is possible (1998:51). On my way to India I pondered the journeys Griffiths and Tweedie had made and how they had reached that point of being able to say they had come to Realisation of the Self. My respect for these two mystics grew even greater than I had already experienced as I became aware how much I had learned from them during my research process. Each in their own way had put mystical experiences and concepts into rational words in an attempt, I assume, to offer others an understanding of the experience of Self-Realisation. I sensed however that my doubts and confusion surrounding the truth of their alleged non-dual state of mind were due to the fact I was simply not able to grasp their discovered Reality.

Once again I found my self sitting on the cold marble floor in the ashram. I waited for Sai Baba to make an appearance in the, by now, so familiar physical discomfort. After several hours he came down the path and in spite of being surrounded by thousands of other devotees, Sai Baba’s eyes met mine. All the critical analysis I had applied for so many months to try and understand the concept of Self-Realisation disappeared in an instant. The only thought that entered my mind was “I give up; this is all beyond my comprehension” and I cannot even begin to describe the inner connection I experienced with my guru nor the feeling of total peace that engulfed me in

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<sup>50</sup> Existing italics

the same instant. As Sai Baba disappeared into the crowd I knew beyond any doubt the process of Self discovery the thesis had offered me was complete. How can I acceptably explain, however, to you the reader that 'the eye of my spirit' showed me Sai Baba exists in a non-dual reality? How can I acceptably explain to you that I know that Griffiths and Tweedie remained in a dual reality but had experiences of Self-Realisation? How can I acceptably explain to you that I now know, beyond doubt, that Sai Baba's essence and mine are one and the same as well as never-changing? All there is left to acknowledge is that I now know I am totally responsible for every aspect of my life and that I am to apply that which I have experienced to my everyday existence. I know too that one day I will come to Realise the wisdom of the Nothingness contained within that seed I spoke about, what now seems an eternity ago.

The divine mystery that is humankind's existence can but be experienced for

"What is word knowledge but a shadow of  
wordless knowledge?

(Gibran, 1926/1971:103)

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