

Ph.D. COM. PSY.

SAHAJA YOGA MEDITATION: THERAPEUTIC COMMUNITY

by

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that, this whole thesis, unless specifically indicated to the contrary, is the writer's own work.

Signature:

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Pravina Baijnath', is written over a horizontal line.

Pravina Baijnath

DISCLAIMER

This study was submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Ph.D. Community Psychology, to the University of Zululand, KwaZulu Natal, South Africa. The purpose of the study was to investigate, Sahaja Yoga (SY) meditation as a form of therapeutic community. This study may not be a true reflection of the teachings of Dr Nirmala Devi Srivastava, the founder of SY meditation, and, it is not intended to serve as a guide to SY meditation.

DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to:

Dr Nirmala Devi Srivastava, my Guru in the Divine;

Dr Steve Edwards, my Guru in academia;

Narranjan Baijnath, my mentor, for his life-long loving support;

Ramona, Yuri, Ulishia Yzareen and Chinta for their endless loving devotion.

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ABSTRACT

Man belongs to concentric circles of systems that surround him. As a result of breakage in these circles, the functioning of our social eco-systems is disturbed and our planet is in need of healing and transformation. The inner transformation of each individual is the key to the resolution of global crises. Sahaja Yoga (SY) meditation has brought about profound change in the lives of many individuals and it provides a possible solution for our collective survival and regeneration. SY is a form of *Kundalini Yoga realised in a safe communal and spiritual context with focus on integrated community Self-realisation*. Self-Realisation is the key to self-knowledge and as an individual becomes more balanced, peaceful and compassionate, society as a whole benefits and improves. Hence, SY meditation fosters and nurtures/nourishes therapeutic community.

The phenomenological approach was used to describe the lived experiences of six Sahaja Yogis in this study. Central themes which expressed the essence of the experiences were determined and discussed through the explication process outlined by Hycner (1999). These themes included meditation, collectivity, Kundalini healing, *transformation and Self-realisation*. This study is valuable because spiritual seeking is a natural urge and profound feelings of connectedness are universal human experiences widely reported across cultures, and, therefore, worthy of rigorous, scientific study. Furthermore, this study is valuable because it has provided empirical, experiential evidence as to the value of SY in building and promoting spiritual community and communal spirituality. The scope of the study emerged from indigenous knowledge that arose from original and phenomenological spiritual exploration of sages over the years.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

"The most beautiful thing we can experience is the mystical. It is the source of all true art and science."

- Albert Einstein

1.0 Overview and rationale

Sahaja Yoga (SY) is Kundalini Yoga (KY). The origins of KY date back to the time of rishis in ancient India more than 5 000 years ago, a time before the advent of the world's formal religions. The rishis were people of spiritual power, who over an untold number of generations had developed, through experimentation, a highly advanced knowledge of how the mind and body work. This understanding led to the body of knowledge called yoga. During that ancient era, yoga did not have the many branches or sub-specialities that are common today. Yoga was a comprehensive, technical and highly integrated system, and the physical movement, static postures, breathing patterns, mantras and meditation techniques formed the basis of a vast integrated science. Furthermore, the perceived difference today between yoga and meditation was non-existent.

Yoga, as described in this study is *Sahaja* Yoga (SY), the yoga of the Divine Energy within Man. This gentle and dynamic meditation which was introduced by Dr. Nirmala Devi Srivastava (Shri Mataji), in India in 1970, is currently practiced in over 120 countries around the world. SY meditation is founded on the principle that the path to achieving peace and harmony in the world begins with each individual establishing a higher sense of awareness and subtle self-knowledge. It works by balancing the energy of the body on a subtle level and connecting the individual with the universal

living consciousness. This inner awakening is called by many names: *Self-realisation*, *Second Birth*, *Enlightenment*, *Liberation*, *Moksha*, *Satori*, and it is the goal of all religions and spiritual traditions of the world. This knowledge is ancient, but for a long time, it was available only to a few, being kept secret and transmitted from guru to disciple, since Self-realisation was extremely difficult to achieve. In these modern times, through Sahaja ("spontaneous") Yoga ("union with one's Self"), this experience has become effortless and available to everyone (De Kalbermatten, 2001:49). As a result of this awakening, Kundalini is realised in a safe community context with emphasis on communal /spiritual Self-realisation.

Self-realisation is said to be the key to self-knowledge and as one becomes more balanced, peaceful and compassionate, society as a whole benefits and improves. Through Self-realisation one can gain increased access to creativity and intuition and become aware of how individual thoughts, words, and actions influence, and are influenced by the environment. As a result of this awareness, one can contribute to the collective awakening of world consciousness (De Kalbermatten, 2003).

According to Dr. Nirmala Devi Srivastava (1997), all people are born with an integrated system of energies within themselves. These energies, which are also present in the whole universe, can be awakened in human beings through their own desire. The primary energy that can be awakened in us, the Kundalini, is a reflection of the feminine aspect of the Divine Universal Being. It is said to rest in a state of hibernation within us until Self-realisation is achieved. The awakened Kundalini, in turn, awakens the energy centres called *chakras* which are located on the plexus and the sub-plexus in our sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous system. The

awakening of these energies have a direct effect on, and are affected by our behaviour, our thoughts, emotions and actions; our aspirations and motivations; our sense of self; our senses of our position in society and our relationships and responsibilities.

The purpose of yoga is to lead to a silence of the mind through the process of meditation. It has been found that, with the regular practice of SY meditation, there is a general improvement, in one's physical, mental, emotional and spiritual well being. By bringing about an inner transformation, the benefits of SY meditation accrue not only to the individual but also to society, nation and ultimately to entire humanity. Without the transformation of the individual, society cannot evolve. SY meditation resolves to transform the individual and society by promoting this mutual regeneration, by the action of one upon the other (De Kalbermatten, 2003; De Kalbermatten, 2001).

Transpersonal psychology is intrinsically linked to healing approaches the world over, including eastern mysticism, shamanistic healing and South African traditional healing. In terms of the transpersonal perspective, spiritual health and well-being is defined by a feeling of wholeness and integration. By turning inward, deep sources of growth and wisdom are available. Although mainstream psychology accepts this to some extent, for example, in finding the authentic self (client-centered) or nuclear-self (object relations), transpersonal psychology directs individuals to their deepest recesses of wisdom. Spiritual seeking is a natural urge, and individuals have a tendency towards self-growth and discovery. The spiritual quest aligns people to the

healing forces of the psyche thereby creating an optimal route towards psychological and spiritual integration (Cortright, 1997).

SY meditation deals with the body and mind, but is aimed at the spirit. “*Saha*” means with, “*Ja*” means union, “*Yoga*” means union, technique or ability. SY implies that every human being is born with the potential to be united with the Divine (the Infinite, the Reality) and that this potential is actualised by Sahaja Yoga, a technique of spontaneous, effortless salvation (De Kalbermatten, 2003).

According to the Oxford Concise Dictionary (1982:1110), the word therapeutic means curative; of the healing art; serving to cure or heal; serving to preserve health. The word community, a noun, refers to a body of people having a common interest (Oxford Concise Dictionary, 1982:190). In this study, the phrase “therapeutic community” has reference to SY meditation collectives. The word collective, a noun, means: formed by or constituting a collection (Oxford Concise Dictionary, 1982:183). A collection refers to belonging together; taken as a whole; aggregate (Oxford Concise Dictionary, 1982:183).

The Sanskrit word *satsang* is a general term that applies to most Indian spiritual communities. In Sanskrit *sat* means truth and *sang* has reference to a spiritual community. In Indian philosophy *satsang* has reference to the company of the “highest truth” (God); the company of a guru and the company with an assembly of persons who listen to, talk about, and assimilate the truth (Kumar, 2000).

As a phenomenon, satsang affects us not only individually, but, it has important implications for the concept of collective spiritual awakening in terms of SY meditation. There are distinct differences in the way the philosophy of satsang is applicable to SY meditation. Some of the ways SY meditation collectives differ from other types of meditation and spiritual communities are:

- SY meditation is available free of charge. Anyone can practise SY meditation as it transcends religious, cultural and language barriers.
- In order to practise SY meditation, you have to receive your Self-realisation. Your subtle instrument can be awakened spontaneously in the presence of the Guru (the founder of SY meditation – Dr. Nirmala Devi Srivastava/Shri Mataji Nirmala Devi), in the presence of Shri Mataji's photograph, and/or in the presence of someone whose own subtle system has already been awakened.
- After receiving your Self-realisation, SY concepts such as the subtle system, Kundalini, channels, chakra cleansing, mantras, affirmations, bhajans and the SY meditation protocol are introduced to you at the SY beginner's classes.
- SY meditation is practised collectively, that is, in the company of the Guru, in the presence of the Guru's photograph and/or other Sahaja yogis.
- Those who practise SY meditation are called Sahaja yogis.
- The term "collective" is used to describe the SY meditation community. Collectivity implies connectivity with Sahaja yogis' throughout the world.
- Self-realisation is a repeatable event and the Sahaja yogi has to strive to maintain this by meditating.

The practise of SY meditation stimulates the nervous and immune systems, improves

strength and flexibility, and balances the glandular system. It also claims to allow one to experience the highest level of consciousness. Altered states of consciousness can be a useful way of accessing the spiritual dimension, but, it is by no means the only way. Mental health is mediated by uncovering meaning in the world. Where Western psychology accepts human motivation as described by Maslow (1962), transpersonal psychology extends the motivation into the spiritual realm. In terms of the transpersonal perspective, spiritual health and well-being are defined by a feeling of wholeness and integration. Where psychology answers the question "Who am I?" with variations of - an ego or a self, - religion answers the same question with - a soul, a spirit. Transpersonal psychology attempts to blend these two world-views, and answer questions that cannot be resolved by studying the likes of genes and neuroscience (Cortright, 1997; Cowley, 1993).

SY meditation is effective medicine for the treatment of stress and therefore the treatment of psychosomatic diseases (Rai, Setji & Singh, 1997). It is used, in the main, to encourage health in the physical and mental states and, thereby, act as a preventive therapy. In order to cope with stress more efficiently we need to develop a greater sense of self-awareness. The key to achieving this awareness lies in shifting one's attention from the immediate external environment to one's internal environment, which is easily learned through the practise of SY meditation (Srivastava, 1997).

Recent studies with SY meditation in the treatment of anxiety, depression (Fenwick,

Donaldson & Gillis, 2000; Manocha, 2003), work stress (Manocha, 2003), hot flushes and other menopausal symptoms, hypertension and heart diseases (Schenider, 1997), asthma (Manocha, Marks, Kenchington, Peters & Salome, 2003) and seizure control and EEG changes in patients of epilepsy (Chugh, 1987; Manocha, 2003; Panjwani, Selvamurthy, Singh, Gupta, Thakur & Rai, 1996; Rai, 1995) have shown significant results. Studies at the Royal Hospital for Women in Sydney indicated that meditation prompts changes in the brain similar to bio-feedback techniques or drug therapy (Manocha, 2003). Studies conducted with children, diagnosed with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (Harrison & Manocha, 2004; Rubia, 2004) indicated noticable changes in the behaviour of children who were taught to meditate.

The most important contribution of SY to health would appear to be in primary prevention. Sahaja yogis seldom visited the doctor or spent days in hospital. SY meditation groups have shown relatively little increase in the need for health care with increasing age. Moreover, medical costs among Sahaja yogis are greatly reduced when the technique is supplemented by other aspects of Shri Mataji's Vedic approach to health. There is a decreased requirement for medication among people who practise SY meditation, including reduced use of mild analgesics, sleeping tablets, tranquillisers, anti-depressants, anti-histamines, asthma inhalers, anti-hypertensives, and drugs for heart disease (De Kalbermatten, 2003; Rai, 1993; Srivastava, 1997).

Reduced requirements for health care are consistent with research showing that SY

meditation reduces a variety of important risk factors for disease, including coronary heart disease and cancer. These findings include reductions in high blood pressure, elevated cholesterol levels, cigarette smoking, alcohol consumption, drug abuse, obesity, cardio-vascular reactivity to stress, physiological and psychological stress levels, anxiety, depression, and hostility. SY meditation also enhances potential protective factors such as job satisfaction and overall psychological health and well-being (De Kalbermatten, 2003; De Kalbermatten, 2001; Manocha, 2003; Rai, 1995; Shrivastava, 1997).

1.1 Statement of the problem

We are beset with problems such as increasing levels of depression, stress and rising unemployment. A deepening income divide splits our nations. Societies with wide income inequities have more instances of ill-health, social stress and crime. Beyond the family, society and nation, man is sustained by the surrounding ecosystems. In our exploitation of nature we have broken the pattern of its consistency and our planet is desperately in need of healing and transformation. Where will solace come from? Many people feel that the large scale dissension and corruption within the great religions of the world have failed to give them the peace they seek. Only a revival of spirituality can foster a post-materialist, meta-modern society, in which the necessary change in consumers' behaviour is at all possible. SY meditation unveils a possible solution for our collective survival and regeneration (De Kalbermatten, 2003).

SY meditation fosters and nurtures/nourishes therapeutic community. It provides the opportunity to contribute to a better world through the very personal choices we make on a daily basis. This study described the experiences of individuals who practised SY meditation in relation to their ongoing promotion of therapeutic community.

1.2 Research purpose

SY meditation has been practised by hundreds of thousands of people in over 120 countries, since the 1970's, with proven individual and community benefits such as inner peace and balance, stress reduction, enhanced quality of life (family, work environment, relationships with others, good communication skills) and a healthy, drug-free life. The positive changes that manifest in the individual's life from the practice of SY meditation, clearly demonstrate that we have the ability to transform our lives.

While the literature indicated ongoing research on SY meditation in countries such as India, Australia, Russia, United Kingdom and America, research focussing on investigating SY as a form of therapeutic community in South Africa as well as elsewhere in the world, is lacking. The study of Sahaja Yoga meditation: therapeutic community can therefore have great utility as it fills in the existing gap in the literature.

The aim of this study was to investigate SY meditation as a form of therapeutic

community by describing the experiences of Sahaja yogis (practitioners of Sahaja Yoga).

1.3 Statement of the research questions

The critical questions that guided the study were:

- What is SY meditation?
- How is SY meditation practised?
- How is SY meditation different from other types of meditation?
- In what ways is SY meditation a form of therapeutic community?

1.4 The study in context

Six Sahaja yogis provided rich descriptions of their experiences. They were willing to participate in this study and were able to grant sufficient time and energy.

A phenomenological approach was followed in this study. Participants were interviewed at a time and place convenient to them. The interviews were recorded and later transcribed. The study used the five 'steps' explication process as outlined by Hycner (1999). The five 'steps' or phases, are: bracketing and phenomenological reduction; delineating units of meaning; clustering of units of meaning to form themes; summarising each interview, validating, modifying and looking for general

themes. This method was chosen as it was congruent with the phenomenological research design of the study.

1.5 Limitations of the study

The scope of the study was restricted because:

- Vedic literature is the most ancient literature in the world. It has no describable origin and is timeless. The science of Kundalini is thousands of years old. It is an essential part of *tantra*, the spiritual science which was systematised over seven thousand years ago. Tantra was never publicly revealed and never written down as it was feared that these powerful practices would fall into the hands of immoral or power-seeking individuals. For centuries this ancient science was taught in direct transmission from *guru* (spiritual teacher) to worthy disciple. Gradually, the calibre of masters de-generated and it became necessary to write the secrets down so they would not be completely lost. However, when they were written, they were written in a "twilight language," that is, in allegory, symbolism, code, so they could not be misinterpreted and misused by unworthy seekers. The ancient texts may be confusing or even misleading to us today because we do not have a proper guide (Bhattacharyya, 1985; Kumar, 2000).
- Yoga is a fascinating subject and it is a mine field for unlimited research.
- SY meditation literature is in a development stage.

1.6 The significance of the study

Over the last two decades, the increasing speed and pressures of modern living

have been matched by an increasing need for ways to cope with them. Medical science is now proving what a growing number of people in the West have discovered for themselves, that, the relaxation of true meditation has measurable beneficial effects on all levels of our being, with no damaging side effects.

This study is significant because it has provided empirical, experiential evidence as to the value of SY in building and promoting spiritual community and communal spirituality. The study also acts as a catalyst for future research into SY meditation.

1.7 Clarification of terminology

The study contained a number of Sanskrit terms that required clarification. Sanskrit terms used in Chapter 1, were clarified in the list that follows. Terminologies used in the preceding chapters were clarified upon usage. Further to this, terms used in the study were listed in the glossary.

- *Chakras* refer to energy centres
- *Guru* refers to a spiritual teacher, an enlightened being authorised to guide and initiate disciples.
- The word *Kundalini* is the primordial dormant energy present in three-and-a-half coils, at the base of the spine, in a triangular bone called the Sacrum.
- *Kundalini Yoga* – The yoga system specially designed for the awakening of the Kundalini.
- *Rishis* – ancient seers who learned from nature and self observation and who possessed spiritual power.
- “*Saha*” means with.

- “Ja” means union.
- *Sahaja* means “born within”, non-conditioned existence, of pure spontaneity.
- *Sahaja Yoga* is a technique of spontaneous, effortless salvation.
- *Sahaja yogis* are practitioners of SY meditation.
- *SY meditation* refers to the spontaneous union with the Divine.
- *Sang* has reference to a spiritual community.
- *Sat* means truth.
- *Satsang* has reference to the company of the “highest truth” (God).
- *Self-realisation* is a process of assimilating the unconscious. It occurs when a dormant energy at the base of the spine is awakened and travels through the subtle energy centres within the body. When it pierces the fontanelle bone area it results in a cool breeze flowing out of the top of the head and from the hands.
- *Tantra* is the original spiritual science, first taught in India, more than 7000 years ago. Tan is a Sanskrit root which signifies, “expansion”, and Tra signifies “liberation.” Thus, Tantra is the practice which elevates human beings, in a process in which their minds are expanded. It leads human beings from the imperfect to the perfect, from the crude to the subtle, from bondage to liberation.
- *Yoga* refers to union, technique or ability.
- *Vedic* literature refers to the most ancient scriptures of Indian philosophy.

1.8 Thesis organisational structure

Chapter One provided an introduction to the study and outlined its purpose and importance.

In **Chapter Two** a review of the literature on the SY meditation was presented.

Chapter Three provided a description of the research methodology, research instrument and procedures employed to analyse the data.

In **Chapter Four**, the data findings, analysis and discussion of findings was presented.

In **Chapter Five**, the summary, the value of the study, recommendations of the study implications for future research and conclusion was presented.

1.9 Resume

Chapter one introduced the study, outlined its purpose and importance. In chapter two, a review of the literature on SY meditation was presented.

CHAPTER TWO: RESEARCH CONTEXT

Without self-knowledge, we cannot go beyond the mind.

- Jiddu Krishnamurthi

2.0 Introduction

The previous chapter outlined the rationale and the significance of this study. Man belongs to concentric circles of systems that surround him. As a result of breakage in these circles, the functioning of our social eco-systems is disturbed and our planet is in need of healing and transformation. The inner transformation of each individual is the key to the resolution of global crises. Sahaja Yoga meditation has brought about profound change in the lives of many individuals and it provides a possible solution for our collective survival and regeneration.

This chapter examined the research context of the study by reviewing the literature encompassing the field of Sahaja Yoga meditation. The chapter commenced with an overview to the study. It then reviewed the literature on the history of yoga and meditation. Thereafter, concepts pertinent to the study such as Self-realisation, Kundalini and the chakra system were explained in terms of its relevance to Sahaja Yoga meditation. The overall benefits of Sahaja Yoga meditation and research in the field was also reviewed.

The aim of this study was to investigate Sahaja Yoga meditation as a form of therapeutic community. The critical questions that guided the study were:

- What is Sahaja Yoga meditation?

- How is Sahaja Yoga meditation practised?
- How is Sahaja Yoga meditation different from other types of meditation?
- In what ways is Sahaja Yoga a form of therapeutic community?

2.1 Overview

Many people perceive Holy books such as the *The Bible*, *The Koran* or *The Gita* as special because they transmit precious messages about the spiritual inheritance of mankind. These messages pass down the corridors of history, even if, they are blurred or falsified. It is, after all, men who write these books and with such influential writings, distortions or losses of meanings of the original message are unavoidable. A most interesting attempt at looking through our traditions with a sensitive yet scientific mind can be credited to the Swiss psychologist, Carl Gustav Jung. His analysis of symbols, legends and dreams reveal archetypes and meanings that are the keys to unlocking the secrets of consciousness. Jungian analysis helps to give us a better grasp of the contents of the human psyche. The *Book of Genesis* can be approached in this manner because it recounts the famous 'original sin', a story that influenced the three great religions of the Middle East: Judaism, Christianity and Islam (De Kalbermatten, 2003: 40).

In the garden of heaven (Eden), the woman Eve, tempted the man, Adam, to taste the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. She did so under the influence of a serpent coiled around its trunk. Biting the apple had consequences. Man was thereafter born in sin, and, Adam paid dearly for his trust in Eve. They were thrown

out of paradise and their offspring, our whole race, were said to be cursed. Let us re-visit the scene in the Garden of Eden: the tree is in the midst of the garden of heaven, which was created by God for his children's enjoyment. This enigmatic tree is about knowledge of good and evil, wisdom and discrimination. If the garden is good, how could the tree be evil, and, how could Satan have gained entrance to this heavenly and most protected of places, God's own garden? How could the Devil have sneaked in? Perhaps someone got the script wrong?

The serpent was there for a purpose, and, according to Jungian analysis, it is not satanic as depicted in the Genesis account, but rather a symbol of positive energy. The symbol of the serpent can be seen on the door of most pharmacies. It is described in mankind's mythological memory as the Aagathodaimon, the healing power that is coiled on the caduceus of Hermes in ancient Greek mythology. It represents the residual power of Kundalini, a secret redeeming energy in Hindu mythology. The serpent represents a powerful, mysterious energy that invites Eve to look forward towards knowledge, growth, development and fulfillment. It symbolises the force of evolution that moves things ahead. "Eritis sicut Deus," said the serpent. "You will become similar to God". It is a promise of higher awareness (De Kalbermatten, 2003:41).

"Womanhood leads us above," says Goethe in the second Faust (De Kalbermatten, 2003: 41). In the sensitivity of simple people and in the countless manifestations of universal art, the woman, as mother, wife, sister or daughter is the companion,

sustainer and often protector of men. Woman inspires man. Eve was to Adam as Beatrice was to Dante. Rather than stay in the garden of certitude, man began a long quest for his true self. All the great instructors of mankind such as Moses, Socrates, Lao Tzu, Buddha, Jesus and Mohammed guided, led and pointed the way. To progress on this path of equilibrium and balance, Adam needed Eve and vice versa, and their equal, complementary balance is the key to the harmony of the cosmos. Understanding this bipolarity leads to higher synthesis, whereas negating either of the poles leads to a dead end (De Kalbermatten, 2003:41).

Taoist cosmology claims that the human psyche consists of two elements: Yin and Yang, the feminine and the masculine. Merwan Sheriar Irani, a Sufi saint, who achieved Self-realisation through sustained meditation, claimed that the "Human psyche has two parts, one part falls within the range of consciousness and the other part falls beyond it. The unconscious part, in its full extent, is identical with the power which is behind matter. It is referred to as God by the orthodox religions. The Ultimate reality, which is symbolically represented through such concepts, can be known fully only by bringing the unconscious into the conscious" And again, "The finding of God is coming to one's own Self" (Kumar, 2000: xx).

In his study on wholeness, Jung (1959) claimed that the ultimate goal of the developmental process is Self-realisation. He defined Self-realisation as a process of assimilating the unconscious and talks about the intrinsic 'God-consciousness' seated within us. Modern psychologists have described this phenomenon as

“individuation” or “self-actualisation” (Kumar, 2000:61). The drive for self-actualisation (realising one’s fullest potential) can be observed in exceptional individuals in whom all lower needs are satisfied. This is the goal of the Tantric pursuits. At the end of the successful culmination of the Tantric Yoga, all basic desires are conquered (Jung, 1959; Maslow, 1962).

Transcendence, (unity, bliss, “oneness”), can only be achieved through meditation and by following certain moral codes, that govern the ways in which people act and lead their lives. In the practice of yoga, the body is linked with mind, breath and movement to bring about a feeling of balance, relaxation and well-being. The ultimate aim of all Yogas is to awaken the Kundalini (female power). This inner awakening which is the goal of all religions and spiritual traditions of the world is referred to by many names: ‘*sammadhi*’ for the Hindu, ‘*satori*’ for the Zen Buddhist, ‘second birth’ to the Christian, Mohammed spoke of the inner *Jihad* of self purification and Jewish mysticism invites us to feel the Presence or the *Shekina* (De Kalbermatten, 2001: 137; Kumar, 2000).

2.2 Yoga

Yoga is an ancient science of physical, mental and spiritual development which originated in India more than 7000 years ago. The Sanskrit word *yoga* is derived from the verbal root *yuj*, meaning literally “to yoke” (De Kalbermatten, 2001:49). Yoga is the union of the body, mind and spirit – the union of individuality with that of the divine intelligence that orchestrates the universe. When you are in yoga, your

emotional, spiritual and psychological well being is enhanced because your desires are the desires of nature. Practitioners of yoga – yogis – are dynamic and creative forces for positive change. A yogi knows that his mind and body are in the ever-changing world, but his soul resides in a dimension that is beyond change (Srivastava, 1997).

Yoga is a vast subject, a deep practice, rooted in the mists of pre-history and developed by ancient seers who learned from nature and self observation. In approximately 500 BC, the physician and sage Patanjali, formalized this phenomenon into a science with four major and four lesser branches involving ethical restraint, self-discipline, mental focus, physical exercise and meditation. The four lesser branches concern a person's lifestyle which should be serene, with the days spent in contemplation, study, maintaining cleanliness, and living simply and at peace with others. It also specifies a number of exercises designed to promote peace and infuse energy into both the body and the mind (Sahajanand, 1997).

2.2.1 Branches of Yoga

The four main branches of Yoga are:

- *Hatha* yoga, together with *Dhayana* yoga (meditation) is by far the most popular of the yogas in the West. *Hatha* yoga is concerned with the practise of yoga postures or *asanas* and *murdas* for the purpose of acquiring good health and awakening the *Kundalini Shakti*. Self-realisation or God-vision comes with the awakening of the Kundalini.

- *Japa* yoga is a repetition of a *mantra* or the Name of the Lord. The mantra is a sacred word or set of words which if repeated all the time with deep attention and remembrance of God, leads us to perfection or God realisation.
- *Pranayama* yoga is the control of the breath. Breath control and mind control are very closely related. The breath is very closely linked to the mind. Yogis pay great attention to this science as the slower you breathe the quieter the mind becomes. If the mind is deeply concentrated, the flow of the breath is very slow. The practise of pranayama gives us robust health.
- *Kundalini* yoga is the power or *Shakti* (feminine aspect of God) that is located at the base of the spine in the nerve centre called the *mooladhara chakra*. *Chakra* means a “nerve centre”. This power is asleep or dormant in the vast majority of people. When it is awakened through the practise of yoga, it finally reaches the *sahastara* chakra in the crown of the head. When this stage is reached the yogi gets full illumination, God realisation or Self-realisation (Sahajanand, 1997:12-22).

The ultimate aim of all the Yogas is to awaken the Kundalini. This is done by concentrating on the various chakras, and by practicing *kriyas* (purification of mind and body), *murdas* (the practice of Yoga postures), *pranayama* (breath control) and (meditation) *dhayna* (Chopra & Simon, 2004: ix-xii).

2.2.2 Benefits of Yoga

Research shows that yoga interventions (particularly those that include meditation, relaxation, breathing practices, and a yogic diet) can benefit a

wide range of emotional and physical illnesses. Yoga can positively influence health in a number of ways. Listed below are some of the ways:

- Yoga can prevent and treat disorders/injuries of the muscular/skeletal systems (yoga as physical therapy).
- Yoga can help to prevent, postpone, slow down, or reverse stress-related diseases and suffering - which accounts for a huge proportion of human suffering (yoga as stress reduction).
- Yoga can help to keep the body and mind agile (yoga as the fountain of youth).
- Yoga can influence health-related behaviors (for example: diet, sleep, exercise; yoga as preventive medicine).
- Yoga can influence how we think, feel about, and respond to our experiences (yoga as psychotherapy).
- Yoga can influence our social relationships and roles (yoga as social intervention).
- Yoga can help us cope with the physical and psychological pain associated with illness (yoga as complementary medicine) (Shannahoff-Khalsa, 2006).

2.3 Meditation

The verb 'to meditate' can mean simply to think deeply about something, but meditation in its true meaning is more than just deep thought (Oxford Concise Dictionary, 1982:630). Like thought, meditation is a mental discipline, but it requires

even more concentration than our usual thought processes. Meditation is a way of focusing the mind, stilling the endless mental chatter that saps our energy and creates stress and negative feelings. Although meditation may not be as well understood or defined by western therapeutic models, the eastern definition is very clear: Meditation is a state of 'mental silence' characterized by the elimination of unnecessary thought, effortless attention on the present moment and alert awareness. In order to experience the real essence of yoga – the full integration of body, mind and soul, the ability to calm mental turbulence is essential (Chopra & Simon, 2004; Manocha, 2000).

Dhyana is the generic Sanskrit term for meditation, which in Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras* refers to both the act of inward contemplation in the broadest sense and, more technically, to the intermediate state between mere attention to an object (*dharana*) and complete absorption in it (*sammadhi*). The earliest known reference to such practice on the Indian sub-continent occurs on one of the seals, a figure seated in the lotus posture, found in the ruins of the pre-Aryan civilizations at Harappa and Mohenjodaro which existed prior to 1500 BCE. Most of the orthodox Hindu schools of philosophy derive their meditation techniques from yoga (Kumar, 2000: xxvi).

According to Patanjali's *Yoga Sutra*, the classical text on yoga, the purpose of yoga is to lead to a silence of the mind. This silence is the prerequisite for the mind to be able to accurately reflect objective reality without its own subjective distortions. Yoga does not create this reality, which is above the mind, but only prepares the mind to

chanting, drumming, visual symbols, a candle flame, incense sticks and pictures of people you love.

2.3.1.1 Silent meditation

One way to meditate is to begin with the energy of silence. Silence is ever speaking. It is a perennial flow of language which is interrupted by speaking. In silence one is in intimate contact with the surroundings. Honouring this energy allows us to come to a place of stillness. In silence, it is possible to perceive all sounds that can be created. Sitting in silence we recognise the inner symphony that is ourselves. Therby, we acknowledge that, there really is no silence. Like a celestial orchestra, we are filled with sound: the heart beat, respiratory system, circulatory system, nervous system and brain waves all create myriad sounds that we can become aware of through silence. When we sit in this manner, we also become aware of externally created sounds. We notice nature sounds such as birds chirping, the wind blowing and perhaps electrical sounds such as the hum of lights and refrigerators (<http://www.anandamarga.org/learn-how-to-meditate.htm>).

2.3.1.2 Mantra meditation

In yoga tradition meditation classically involves the use of a mantra or a primordial sound. A mantra is a collection of sound waves which can produce a powerful resonance or sympathetic vibration in the mind. Mantra is, in fact, the very basis of

the science of *tantra*. Tantra means, "that which liberates the mind" from the bondages of *Prakrti* (matter) and returns it to (*Purusha*) the state of pure Consciousness (De Kalbermatten, 2001: 54).

Mantras are pleasing resonant healing sounds. They were originally perceived by the great seers or rishis from the primeval or cosmic ether, and translated into very definite syllables with rhythm and melody. They are representative of sacred syllables containing great spiritual power, or energy and when recited, they have the ability to change the consciousness of the reciter. When used silently mantras serve as a vehicle to connect with deeper aspects of consciousness. In the Hindu tradition, there are literally thousands of mantras, each with a different purpose and intention. Some mantras are designed to unite the reciter with a particular deity or energy form. Other mantras are designed to empower the reciter with specific '*siddhas*' or powers. Still, other mantras are utilized to resonate and activate the chakras of the reciter (Chopra & Simon, 2004).

2.3.1.3 Chakra meditation

A different type of meditation involves intoning mantras aloud to create a healing resonance in the mind and body. There are mantras associated with each of the seven energy centres in the body, known as chakras. The chakras are major junction points between consciousness and the body, and each one is associated with a specific vibration. When the centre is open, the energy that flows through the chakra allows the meditator to meet those needs more effortlessly. If there is a

blockage in any one area of the body/mind system, energy becomes stagnant and ones intentions are more difficult to actualise. Each centre can be activated by focussing attention on the location of the chakra and sounding the associated mantra aloud (Chopra & Simon, 2004).

2.3.2 Types of mantras

- **Mantras without a specific meaning**

*Introducing a mantra that does not carry a specific meaning helps to interrupt the incessant association process that keeps the mind busy. It breaks the cycle and offers you the opportunity to glimpse the silent space between your thoughts. This is the beginning of the transformation of your identity from mind to spirit. The cosmic sound *Aum*, or its condensed form *OM*, is the origin of all other sounds and is itself a mantra. It is called a pranava or sacred syllable and symbolises Brahman or the spiritual reality. Aum is a one letter mantra, has no word meaning but its significance is definite; it is the smallest and most effective mantra. It is made of three and a half (3.5) strokes. These strokes are linked to the three and a half coils of Kundalini, the coiled power that lies within us (Kumar, 2000; <http://www.spiritsound.com/aum.html>).*

The most common feature of all religions is the hearing of this unstruck sound through the inner ears by the practitioner. In the Sanskrit tradition, this sound is called "*Anahata Nada*," the "Unstruck Sound." Literally, this means "the sound that is not made by two things striking together." Sound, which is not made of two things striking together, is the sound of primal energy, the sound of the universe itself. Christians call it "the Word" or *Logos*; Hindus and Buddhists call it Om or Aum;

Muslims call it *Kalma-i-Ilahi*, which is God in first hand (Kumar, 2000:162). Indian Sikhs call it *Shabad*, Pythagoras called it "Music of the Spheres," Paul Twitchell (founder of Eckankar – The religion of Light and Sound) called it "the Audible Sound Current" (Kumar, 2000:86). Parallel expressions can be found elsewhere. This sound is like the "humming of a swarm of bees" (Kumar, 2000:159) or the sound you hear "on opening the refrigerator" (Goel, 1985:24) or like the "hissing of a serpent" (Avlon, 1981:57) or the "blowing of a conch" (Goldman, 1996:109). Joseph Campbell likens this unstruck vibration to the humming of an electrical transformer, or the (to our ears) unheard hummings of atoms and molecules (Campbell, 1988). The sound of Om is said to be the after effect of Kundalini. It is the sound of instinctual wisdom of the earth and it is said to take the spirit beyond personal individuality to higher realms of existence (Kumar, 2000).

- **Siddha mantras**

The tantric scriptures say, "Inconceivable is the power mantra". The liberation of the Kundalini can be interrupted by a single stroke of a siddha mantra, a "proven" or effective mantra. A *Siddha* mantra is one which has been invested with spiritual power by a true guru. In the process of investing a mantra, the guru raises his own Kundalini to the highest point, sahasrara chakra, and then repeats the mantra, giving it intense spiritual energy. Then he lowers his Kundalini again. When the mantra is given correctly in the process of initiation, spoken directly from teacher to disciple, the vibration of the phrase or word will actually "strike" (*mantra' gha't*) the sleeping spiritual Source within the individual and awaken it. For this reason mantras learned from books or other sources will not carry the force of a siddha mantra. The

scriptures say: "Only that mantra which is received through the Grace of the Guru can give all fulfilment" (*Kularnava Tantra*). From the time the mantra is given, the more frequently and intensely the spiritual aspirant repeats it, the more the Kundalini rises under its vibrational impact. When the repetition stops, it again returns to slumber. If the mental repetition of the siddha mantra continues all the time, day and night, the Kundalini remains perpetually awakened. When the Kundalini is sleeping, the individual remains in one of the three states: wakeful, dream or dreamless sleep. Once the Kundalini is awakened the individual enters the fourth (*turiya*) state, known as 'thoughtless awareness' (<http://www.anandamarga.org/kundalini.htm>).

- **Chanting mantras**

In Hinduism and Buddhism, the repetition of the names of God constantly during meditation is called chanting mantras. In Sufism, a branch of Islam, the shortest route to reaching God is taken through *faqr* (pious poverty), studying religious literature, and prayer with *dhikr*, that is, endless repetition of the holy names of God and sacred passages from the Koran, like the chanting of mantras. Devotees use prayer beads, which are similar to the rosaries of Hindus. In Judaism, Kaballah, the shortest route to God, is supposed to have been taught by God to angels, then to Noah, Abraham and Moses, who finally initiated seventy elders. The Merkabah mystics endeavoured to reach the "God's Throne Chariot" after passing through *seven heavenly mansions* (Kumar, 2000:30-31). The process included fasting with repeated recitations of hymns and prayers to induce a state of trance. It is similar to meditation with the chanting of mantras leading to Samadhi. Practical Kabbalism, introduced by Adam Ben Smith in Italy, spread to Germany and became the basis of Hasidism. It involved prayer, contemplation and meditation leading to witnessing the Divine Fire. *Shekinah*

(likened to the *Shakti* of Hindus), the mother or female aspect of God (Bloom, 2000:59). *Orison*, the repetitive and devotional meditation on Christ, repetition of the Holy Names, the spiritual teachings of St. Ignatius, and the Eastern Orthodox practice of the *philokalia* are examples from the Western contemplative tradition that come nearest to meditation as it has been cultivated in Asian countries (Kumar, 2000:31).

The practice of chanting mantras sets up a vibration throughout the entire upper body. It stimulates the alveoli inducing a greater exchange of gasses in the lungs. Everything has a particular vibration, the mantra too has a particular wave-length, and that wave-length vibrates the mind with the feeling of infinite happiness. The meaning of the mantra is vital. It must be the most uplifting ideation; the most positive of thoughts of infinite happiness, perfect peace and contentment. The vibration also has an effect on the endocrine system and it massages the internal organs. It reaches into the deep lying tissues and the nerve cells and increases blood circulation. By its nature, the sound rises up through the body from the base of the spine to the crown of the head, stimulating the pineal and pituitary glands. The science of the relationship between the glands, hormones and the mind is known as bio-psychology. The glands are the link between the body and mind. They secrete the hormones that affect the way we feel. Thus, they determine the emotions, based on signals from the mind. We feel love in the heart through subtle glands in the chest. Normally that love is for our close family and friends, especially children, but it can be expanded to universal love. The thyroid gland (at the throat) controls the metabolism of the whole body. It also gives the feeling of self-reliance. The para-thyroids (around the thyroid) cause intellectuality and rationality. The pituitary gland (in the center of

the brain) controls all the lower glands. It is also the seat of the mind. Through it, it is possible to know everything about the past, present and the future. The pineal gland, at the top of the brain, is the master gland. It controls the mind as well as the body and it becomes activated when we meditate. The hormone melatonin, which it secretes, gives the feeling of bliss and infinite happiness (Goldman, 1996; <http://www.hathayoga.co.za/sound.htm>).

2.4 Benefits of meditation

Meditation is a wonderful tool for enhanced relaxation and reduction of stress. It is an extraordinary means of maintaining health and balance. By reducing our heart rate, brainwaves and blood pressure, we will be able to balance the many stresses that modern day living creates. The benefits of meditation ripple through everything we do. It is to have more energy, to be healthier, to think and work more efficiently and to enjoy life more. Being relaxed and aware is the mental equivalent of being fit and healthy. There are good reasons, both spiritual and physical, for the almost universal practice of meditation throughout history and in all the world's main cultures and religions. Inner peace and inner knowledge resulting in self-realisation is central to any journey of self-discovery. It is through meditation that we can experience the "wholeness" that the Swiss psychologist, Carl Jung claimed was the driving force behind human needs and desires (Goldman, 1996:81; Locke & Colligan, 1986).

2.4.1 Meditation techniques

There are many meditation techniques available to consumers. In addition to SY meditation, two notable meditation techniques are: Transcendental Meditation (TM) and Mindfulness and Vipassana meditation.

2.4.1.1 Transcendental meditation (TM)

Transcendental meditation or TM is the trademarked name of the most common form of mantra meditation. It was introduced in 1958 by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi. TM is taught using a commercial system in which one begins by purchasing a mantra. Mantras assist in preventing distracting thoughts.

TM is taught by qualified teachers who have undergone an extensive and systematic training programme, ensuring high professional standards worldwide. Instruction involves a standardized, seven-step procedure. This includes two introductory lectures, a personal interview, and a two-hour instruction session, given on each of four consecutive days. Instruction begins with a short ceremony performed by the teacher, after which, the student learns a mantra and begins practicing mantra meditation twice a day for 20 minutes in the morning and for the same period, in the evening. Students are instructed to be passive and, if thoughts other than the mantra come to mind, to notice them and return to the mantra. Subsequent sessions provide further clarification of correct practice, as well as more information about the technique.

TM allows mental activity to settle down in a natural way while alertness is maintained and enhanced. Following TM, individuals report feeling refreshed physically and mentally. The mind is calmer and more alert, thinking is clearer, and energy levels are increased. Benefits are cumulative with regular practice. More can be accomplished with less effort. Those with busy schedules note that TM brings

increased efficiency in activity, and, time is used more effectively. When mental and physical well-being are enhanced, personal relationships also improve, a commonly reported and valued benefit of TM.

A number of studies have reported finding a positive correlation between the Transcendental Meditation technique and various health-related conditions, including reduction of high blood pressure, younger biological age, decreased insomnia, reduction of high cholesterol, reduced illness and medical expenditures, decreased outpatient visits, decreased cigarette smoking, decreased alcohol use and decreased anxiety (Maclean & Walton, 2001; Schenider, 1997).

The TM organization recommends that the TM technique be learned from an authorised teacher only. The fee in the U.S. is currently over \$2,500. This technique requires on-going instruction which entails an escalating system of fees that can be cost prohibitive (Skolnick, 1991).

2.4.1.2 Mindfulness and Vipassana meditation

Vipassana is both a general term referring to a specialised form of mindfulness meditation and also a specific brand name. Vipassana, which means to see things as they really are, is one of India's most ancient techniques of meditation. It was rediscovered by Gotama Buddha more than 2500 years ago and was taught by him as a universal remedy for universal ills.

Vipassana is a way of self-transformation through self-observation. It focuses on the deep interconnection between mind and body, which can be experienced directly by

disciplined attention to the physical sensations that form the life of the body, and that continuously interconnect and condition the life of the mind. It is this observation-based, self-exploratory journey to the common root of mind and body which dissolves mental impurity, resulting in a balanced mind full of love and compassion.

Vipassana is taught in Australia via a number of Vipassana retreats and centres. The retreats involve up to 10 days of intensive meditation, several hours per day, and other strict observances such as not talking and encouragement to maintain strict postures for long periods of time. During this period, participants follow a prescribed code of discipline; learn the basics of the method, and practice sufficiently to experience its beneficial results. The course requires hard, serious work.

There are three steps in the training. The first step, for the period of the course, is to abstain from killing, stealing, sexual activity, speaking falsely, and indulging in intoxicants. This simple code of moral conduct serves to calm the mind, which otherwise would be too agitated to perform the task of self-observation. The next step is to develop some mastery over the mind, by learning to fix one's attention on the natural reality of the ever changing flow of breath as it enters and leaves the nostrils. By the fourth day the mind is calmer and more focused, better able to undertake the practice of Vipassana itself: observing sensations throughout the body, understanding their nature, and developing equanimity by learning not to react to them. Finally, on the last full day participants learn the meditation of loving kindness or goodwill towards all, in which the purity developed during the course, is shared with all beings.

Interested people are invited to join a Vipassana course to see how the technique works and to measure the benefits. Vipassana courses are even conducted in prisons, with great success and wonderful benefits for the inmates who participate. All those who try it will find Vipassana to be an invaluable tool with which to achieve and share real happiness with others.

There is no fee for these retreats but 'recommended donations' are described. These retreats are unsuitable for the average person, particularly those unfamiliar with meditation, due to the extreme physical and psychological demands. Mindfulness approaches have been shown to be effective in certain clinical applications such as chronic pain (Kabat-Zinn, Lipworth & Burney, 1998; Shapiro & Deane, 2001).

2.5 Sahaja Yoga meditation

The Sanskrit word "Saha" means with, "ja" means born and "yoga" means union. The name Sahaja Yoga means 'inborn union' (De Kalbermatten, 2001:41). It describes the natural and effortless manner in which the inner awakening occurs. SY implies that every human being is born with the potential to be united with the Divine and, that, this potential can be passed on from person to person, and so, to the whole world. This potential, which can be actualised through SY meditation, relies on the spontaneous activation of untapped spiritual potential. Self-realisation is the precise moment when the dormant Kundalini energy, awakens and rises through six subtle energy centres in the body (*chakra bhedah*), pierces through the apex of the brain (*Brahmarandhra*) and connects one to the all pervading Primordial Energy. This energy can be felt as vibrations and a cool breeze can be felt flowing out of the top of the head and from the hands (Srivastava, 1997).

This cool breeze has been described in the Bible as the “cool breeze of the Holy Ghost,” in the Koran as “Ruh” and in the Indian scriptures as “Chaitanya Lahari” the Water of Life or the Holy river Ganga falling from Lord Shiva’s head (De Kalbermatten, 2001:41). Whatever the name, this all-pervading power is responsible for performing the subtle work in the process of evolution. The existence of this all pervading energy is not felt before realisation, but at the moment of Self-realisation, vibrations can be felt as a cool wind, or, as a cool river flowing into the fingertips and later on the hands and the whole being. At the stage of God-realisation the water of life, referred to as “*amrit*” or nectar (De Kalbermatten, 2001:25) is felt as a shower of indescribable bliss, pouring down from the Sahastrara, into the central autonomous nervous system. When this happens, the individual feels very relaxed, and experiences a very peaceful meditative state known as “thoughtless awareness” or consciousness without thoughts. The Sanskrit term for thoughtless awareness is *Nirvichara sammadhi* (De Kalbermatten 2003; Srivastava, 1997).

Thoughtlessness, Emptiness, the Zen “Void” bring us to the Universal Unconscious. Bodhidharma, the father of Chinese Zen, who writes on “Wu-hsin” (“no mind”), says of the Unconscious: “The Unconscious is the true Mind, the true Mind is the Unconscious” (Suzuki, 2001:23). In this state of thoughtless awareness, one is able to by-pass the constant bombardment of thoughts in the brain. In addition one begins to feel sensations on the finger tips and feet which correspond to energy centres in the body. These sensations could consist of heat in the case of a problem in an energy centre or coolness when there are no problems in that centre. From thoughtless awareness, the individual goes into the deeper stage of “doubtless

awareness” or *Nirvikalpa sammadhi* where there is no longer the slightest doubt as to the true nature of God, the Self and their inter-connection (De Kalbermatten 2003; Srivastava, 1997).

Highly evolved individuals have found the experience both immediate and definitive. Some feel coolness, almost like having balls of ice in the centres of their hands, which seemed to melt into their forearms and then into all of their being. Others felt a powerful wind blowing over their bodies and a river of energy rushing through their nervous system, the coolness broadening away from their spinal columns. With the growing silent awareness, one is bathed in a placid lake of inner peace. The Maitri Upanishad states: “When thoughts become silent, the soul finds peace in its own source” (Mascaro, 1962:102). The experience of *sammadhi* is filled with an indescribable feeling of well-being. Yet a further stage is God-realisation (De Kalbermatten 2003; Godfrey, 2000).

2.6 The human inner system

The Bhagavad Gita proposed that the human inner system is a reflection of a living entity. The Integrated Primordial being, called the *Virata* in Sanskrit, encompasses everything that exists, and by analogy, it could be said that, “the Virata is to the universe what the operating system is to the computer” (De Kalbermatten, 2003: 171).

Sahaja Yoga reveals the link between the microcosm and the cosmic. In each of us the Tree of Life is the replica, perfectly miniaturized of the Virata, a first imprint of the Gestalt. The primordial archetype or Virata is venerated in different ways by all

humanity. It is called God and He intervenes in history, mostly through the movement of evolution, from lower to higher forms of awareness. He does so through the 'software' (De Kalbermatten, 2003:170) stored within us, which is a projection of his own attributes. Order and change in the cosmos depends on the interaction between different forms of a higher energy that our ancestors perceived as Divinity (De Kalbermatten 2003; Srivastava, 1997).

The Virata is the original Gestalt, the reference framework from which all shapes, rules and meanings flow. It is also a totally holistic entity integrating all global processes; it is the absolute software and mainframe, storing all knowledge and information. The Virata reveals the very functioning of what we call God. According to Srivastava (1997), the original cosmic structure of the Virata is completely reproduced at the microscopic level in each of us. Gnostic teachings claim that we carry in us the filigree image of the cosmos. The design of our creator is said to be imprinted in the soul. We are each a miniaturised Gestalt of the Virata and we carry within us the interior instrument for the transformation of our awareness (De Kalbermatten 2003; Prabhavanda & Isherwood, 1995).

"Allah-Hu-Akbar!" God is great, God is One, affirm the great religions, and the monolithic aspect of this unity is symbolized in its architecture by sacred stones: by the lingam of Shiva in Pashupatinath near Katmandu or the black Kaaba stone of Mecca. Under a super microscope, however, a stone is seething with the activity of trillions of atoms and in saying "God is Energy", we remind ourselves that energy is convertible and that it may be used in many ways (De Kalbermatten, 2003:171). Unity does not exclude a plurality of manifestations. Universality contains the

particular. A human body contains hundreds of billions of cells, organized into numerous organs in order to carry out multiple tasks. The human being that dwells therein is even more complex in the many forms of his or her mental and emotional life. In the same way, the idea of the oneness of God does not imply that he has only one aspect or attribute, or that He only exercises one function. In the Hindu tradition, God is both male and female and projects countless manifestations (*Avitars*). In the Christian tradition God is embodied in three forms (the Trinity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost). Hindus call the Trinity *Brahma-Vishnu-Mahesh*. In Islam or Buddhism, God is '*Nirakar*' – formless (De Kalbermatten, 2003:172).

According to Srivastava (1997:12), He (God) is not a static Being. She describes: "Him who is omnipresent and omniscient, who controls all things, who is at once smaller than an atom and vaster than the cosmos, He is infinitely more complex than man in His manifestation, while remaining perfectly integrated." And, "the material universe that we know is only a momentary glimpse of this manifestation."

2.7 Self-realisation

History can be symbolised by an elliptical motion, by drawing away from an initial point only to return there. This means that if through the creation, God moves from the infinite (Himself) to the finite (His Creation), one can conceive a contrary motion, that the finite, in its turn returns to the dimension of infinity. Human Self-realisation would then mark the turning point on the ellipse (De Kalbermatten, 2003).

“What is a human being?” According to a story from the Upanishads, a disciple asked his Guru, “*Ko aham*” (who am I?). The Guru replied, “*Tat-Tvam-Asi*.” The Sanskrit words *Tat-Tvam-Asi* mean “That-Thou-Art.” When the disciple asked what “that” was, he was told to find out. The enquiry begins with: “Am I this body?” and on reflecting on it, he realises that he cannot be the body, but something else. He also understands that “*Manas*” (Mind) is sometimes sorry, sometimes happy, attention is unsteady; “*Budhi*” (Intellect – inner voice “*Antarvaani*”) is busy only in analysing. Following the process of negation, he concludes that he must be that which remains unaffected. His Guru then tells him that he is “Immortal Spirit” and that he should meditate and become One with the Spirit (*Atma* - True Self). The *Atma*, at one with *Brahman* (Universal Consciousness) is the source of *Sat-Chit-Ananda* – Truth-Consciousness-Bliss (<http://tnsahaj.org/WhoAmI.htm>).

The great Indian sage, Ramana Maharshi, instructed his students to ask the questions “Who am I?” “What am I?” “Where am I going to?” The answer to these questions, declared St. Augustine, could be known through introspection, and he (St Augustine) stated unequivocally, “He who knows himself knows God” (De Kalbermatten, 2003:174). When Socrates went to find out what the Delphic Oracle knew of the subject, the answer came back, “Know thyself” (De Kalbermatten, 2003:174). Socrates was the first psychologist and prominent guide to Western thought to suggest that the spiritual and indeed most other answers can be found by looking inside (De Kalbermatten, 2003).

In yoga tradition, if you want to know all, you need to know “One”. What is that ‘one’ the pearl of yoga wisdom is talking about? It is the own inner “I”. How do you know

that you exist? When you think, "I know that I exist." That inner "I" which knows of it, is the consciousness within you (*Antarvaani*), which is eternal and cannot be limited. The message that Sankarcharya (788-820 A.D.) taught in the ninth century A.D. is that all is "One". *Tat Tvam Asi*: That Thou Art. That is This. The external world is fundamentally one, is really Brahman (Universal Consciousness/Universal Truth), appearing as many. *Tvam* is you, yourself. The profound discovery embodied in the wisdom of the Vedas: *Tat* is *Tvam*, *Tvam* is *Tat*; there is no second, there is only One. The cornerstone of a Hindu's faith may be taken to be the achievements of the beatitude of merging in a World Soul, or rather a soul of the entire universe, *Paramatma*, the Supreme. This feeling of complete unity with the creation is the ultimate goal of yoga, and, it is a state of unimaginable joy or bliss, which is called "*Ananda*" in Sanskrit (<http://tnsahaj.org/WhoAml.htm>).

Spirit or *Atma*, is the spark of divinity in man and spirituality is about lighting it. The spark to enlighten the flame of the Spirit must be more than just the sincere desire to reach our deepest reality. Religious, philosophical and Gnostic traditions emphasise that experience, and not just faith, embodies the description of a cognitive happening - a moment of initiation which opens us to the gates of a higher spiritual knowledge. It is called '*sammadhi*' for the Hindu, '*satori*' for the Zen Buddhist or the 'second birth' Christ mentions to Nicodemus (De Kalbermatten, 2003:175). This is probably what Christ meant when he said, "The Kingdom of Heaven is within you" (Luke 17:21). In the mystical pursuit of God, the exoteric divisions between Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity, Zoroastrianism, Taoism, Judaism and Islam and Confucianism melt away and converge to express man's innate divinity or Christ consciousness, and to achieve permanent union with God. This is the *Nirvana* of Buddha; and this is the

state of *Vada* mentioned by the Suffi mystics. Today it is commonly referred to as Self-realisation (De Kalbermatten, 2003).

Self-Realisation occurs when a dormant energy at the base of the spine is awakened and travels through the subtle energy centres within the body. When it pierces the fontanelle bone area it results in a cool breeze flowing out of the top of the head and on the hands. One feels very relaxed, and experiences a very peaceful meditative state known as thoughtless awareness. In this state one is able to bypass the constant bombardment of thoughts in the brain. In addition one begins to feel sensations on the finger tips and feet which correspond to energy centres in the body. These sensations could consist of heat in the case of a problem in an energy centre or coolness when there are no problems in that centre.

Self-realisation, a repeatable event and a continual process of spiritual growth, must be understood in two ways. It is a crossing of a key threshold in the process of self-improvement and it is also a breakthrough in the collective evolution of mankind. It marks the entry into a state where we grasp better, enjoy more and become more effective (De Kalbermatten, 2003; Godfrey, 2000; Kumar, 2000)

2.7.1 How does Self-realisation work?

According to *tantra*, the human structure is a microcosm of the macrocosmic. SY reveals the link between the microcosm and the cosmic. In each of us the Tree of Life is the replica, perfectly miniaturized, of the *Virata*, a first imprint of the Gestalt. The *Virata* transcends our dimensions and limitations, existing in a state of energy-consciousness which we cannot conceive. In many spiritual traditions, the Gestalt of

the Virata, which integrates and manifests the highest reality, was created by the Primordial Divine Energy even before the material universe in which we live was created. The Virata directs the universal evolution on the cosmic level and it controls our inner becoming on the microscopic level. Self-realisation implies the awakening of the Virata within us.

The Virata or the Tree of Life is formed by the seven energy centres (*chakras*), and three channels of energy (*Sushumna nadi*, *Ida nadi* and *Pingla nadi*), a coiled spiral in the triangular sacrum bone (representing the Kundalini energy), and a flame located in the heart, representing the Spirit (*Atma*). Each of these four elements can be defined as the 'subtle system'. Subtle energy is energy that seems to bypass the normal measurable aspects of energy such as heat which can easily be measured by a thermometer. It is energy that cannot be easily seen, felt or perceived except by individuals with heightened sensitivity. The link between the original cosmic structure and the psychosomatic support of our everyday life is described using an anthropomorphic depiction of the Virata within us (Figure 1: The cosmic structure). The seven chakras illustrated in Figure 1 are: *mooladhara*, *swadisthan*, *nabi* (*manipura*), *anahat*, *vishuddhi*, *agnya* and *sahastrara* (De Kalbermatten, 2003).

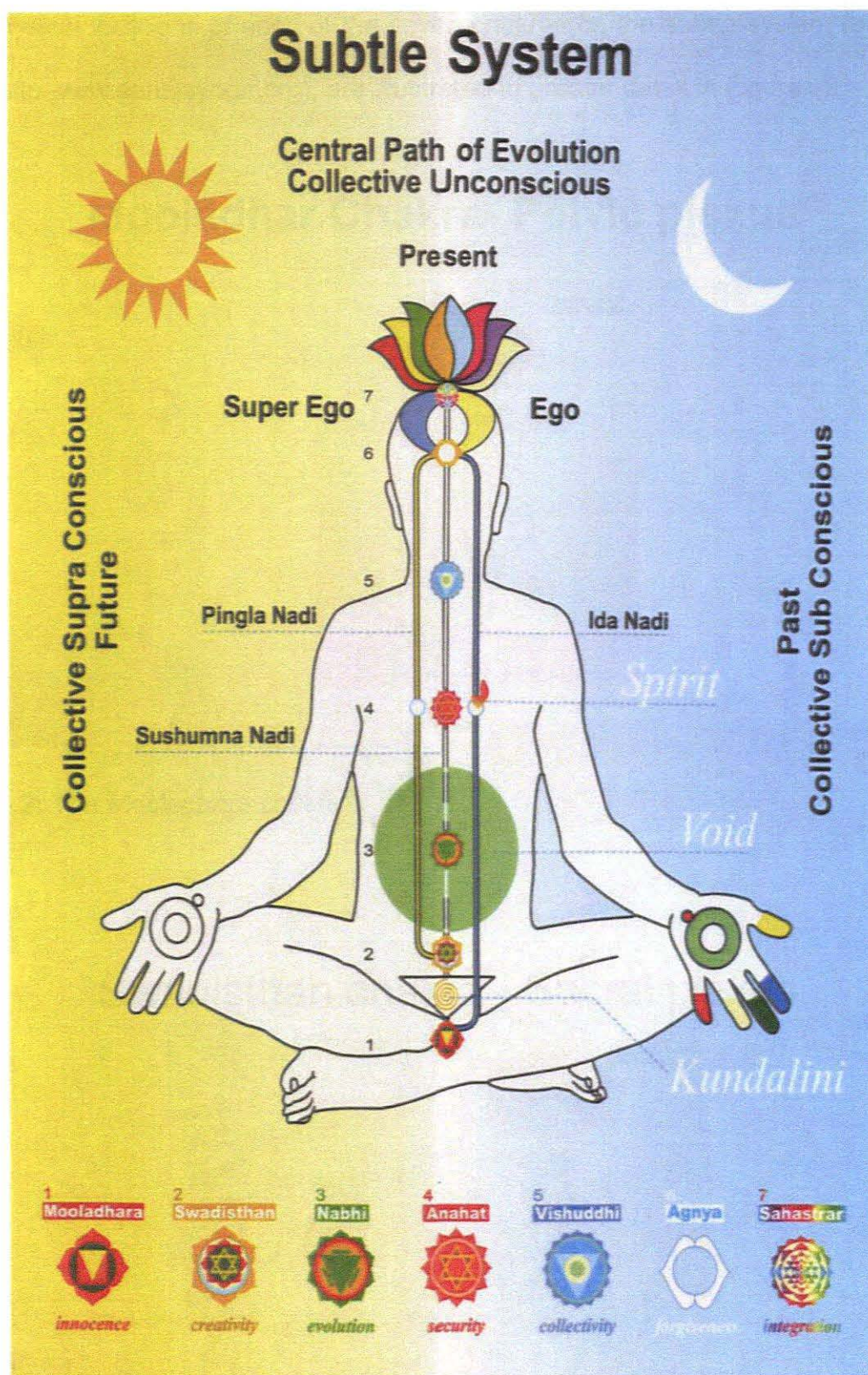


Figure 1: The cosmic structure (www.sahajayoga.org).

The physical locations of each of the seven chakras on the subtle system (compiled from: <http://www.sahajayoga.org>), are illustrated in greater detail in Figures 2 – 8.

Mooladhar Chakra- Pelvic plexus

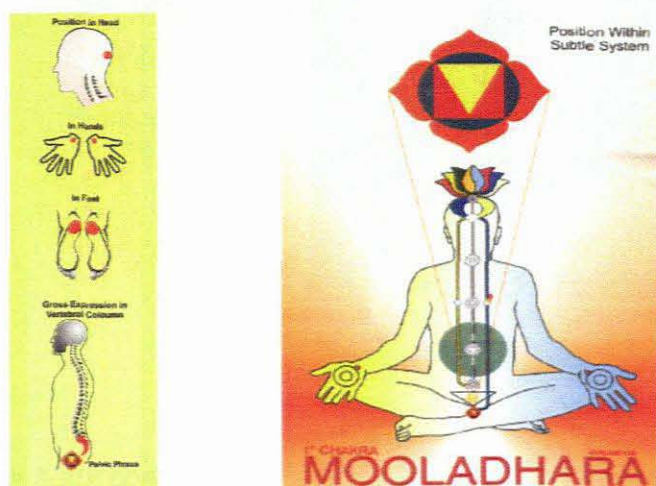


Figure 2: The Mooladhara chakra

Swadisthan chakra - Sacral plexus

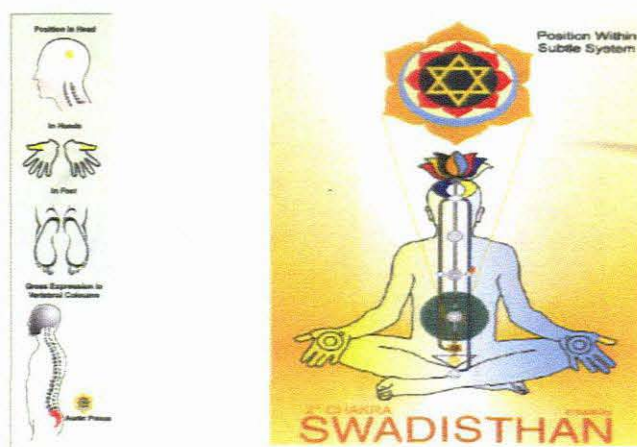


Figure 3: The Swadisthan chakra

NABI CHAKRA – SOLAR PLEXUS

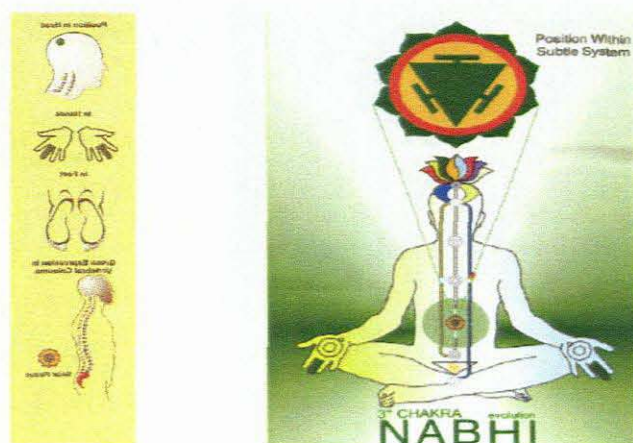


Figure 4: The Nabi chakra

ANAHAT CHAKRA – CARDIAC PLEXUS

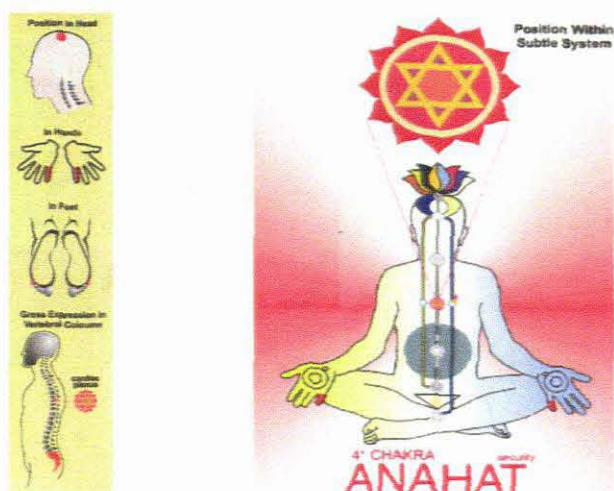


Figure 5: The Anahat chakra

VISHUDDI CHAKRA – PHARYNGEAL PLEXUS

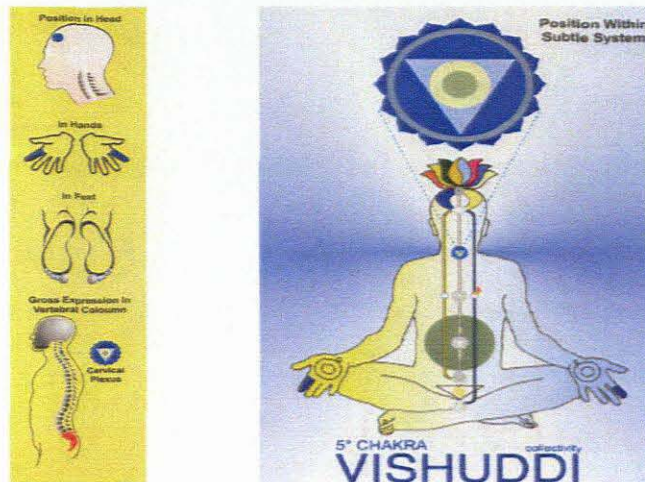


Figure 6: The Vishuddi chakra

AGNYA CHAKRA - CAROTID PLEXUS - THIRD EYE

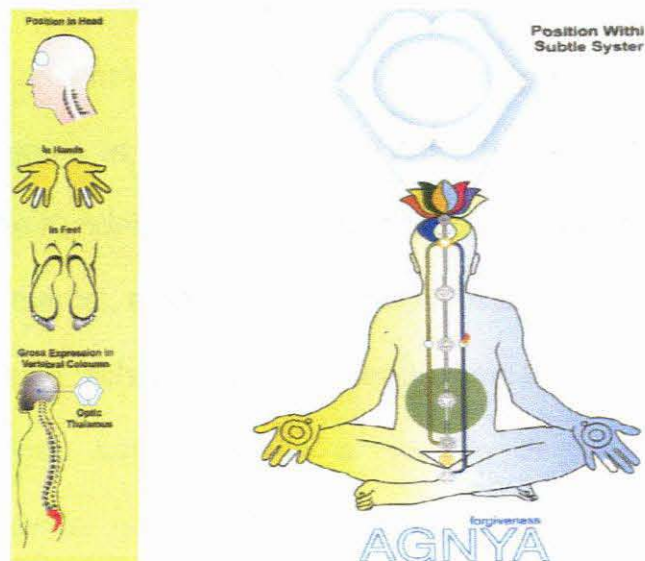


Figure 7: The Agnya chakra

SAHASTRARA – CEREBRAL CORTEX

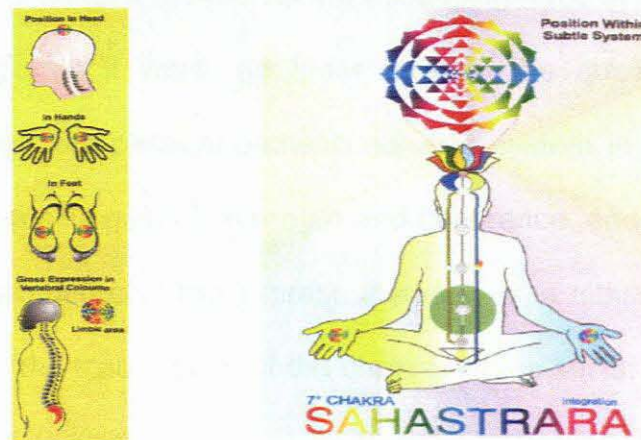


Figure 8: The Sahastrara chakra

Chakras are the focal point of manifestation for energy which makes up the subtle system. Chakras manifest outside the spinal cord as plexus, and, they control the organs of the physical body, as well as, the neuro-endocrinal system of the corresponding region, in the human body. When the spiritual energy of the chakras is awakened by the Kundalini, they start emitting positive energy with beneficial results at the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual levels. The reflection of the quality of the primordial being within is also improved when the chakras are cleansed by the Kundalini. Chakras correspond to a specific degree of actualisation of our evolutionary potential and, the growth of our capacities and awareness depends upon the gradual opening of our chakras (Judith, 2004; De Kalbermatten, 2003).

The happening of Self-realisation creates a new flow of energy in the sushumna nadi, which counters and balances various negative influences. It thereby makes the potential of the chakras dynamic, as the ascending force of the Kundalini lines up the chakras through, as it were, an inner thread. The qualities of the chakras are activated through the parasympathetic nervous system in a spontaneous manner. The entire personality gains in strength and coherence, and furthermore, in one form or another, awakened chakras express themselves in altruistic behaviour. Along the sushumna nadi, the stabilisation of the chakras at the social level, manifest sensitivity and compassion as well as the capacity to provide credible and sustained leadership. They build up the features of a personality structure that is wholesome and magnetic (De Kalbermatten, 2003; Judith, 2004).

In the ancient yogic system, there are three main energy channels or *nadis*. The presentation of this system was already contained in the Bhagavad Gita, one of the oldest sacred scriptures. In the Bhagavad Gita, these channels are said to correspond to the moods (*gunas*) of the Virata. The Tree of Life is the path of the sacred Kundalini. The three channels can be viewed as the central operating system of the Virata and the seven centers of energy as the main pillars of its evolutionary programme for the cosmos and the microcosm alike. The programme is gradually implemented as the Kundalini passes through the various chakras on the inner channel (Sushumna nadi - referred to as the trunk of the Tree of Life in the Bhagavad Gita) within the spine triggering new steps of evolution. After realisation, the qualities of the seven energy centres are activated. A summary of the principle qualities of the three main energy channels of the Virata is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: The principle qualities of the three channels of the Virata (adapted from Dale, 2005; De Kalbermatten, 2003; Judith, 2004)

Nadis	Ida Nadi	Pingla Nadi	Sushumna Nadi
Channels	Moon channel Mobilizes energy of desire (emotions)	Sun channel Mobilizes energy of action (physical and mental)	Central path (evolution)
Qualities	Female Yin qualities: gentleness, responsiveness, co- operation, intuition	Male Yang qualities: analysis, competition, aggressiveness	
Term in Indian cosmology	Tamo guna (dwelling in the past)	Rajo guna (dwelling in the future)	Sattwa guna (living in the present – collective consciousness)
System	Left autonomic nervous System	Right sympathetic nervous system	Parasympathetic nervous system
Area of Control	Right hemisphere of the brain: super-ego dominated part of brain	Left hemisphere of the brain: ego dominated part of brain	
Organ	Heart – emotions, past, memories, affective states	Liver – intellect Mental activities, planning, organisation	Brain – evolution
Power	Existence	Creation	Evolution
Moods/ Gunas	Stillness Passivity	Creation Activity	Benevolent Balance
Negative aspect	Darkness Inertia	Aggression, agitation oppression, domination	Awareness, Analytical abilities
Malfunction of this channel	Breakdown of families; degradation of environment	Speed of modern life; leads to a split society/ poverty/ criminality	Harmony, revelation through evolution

The Kundalini spontaneously labours to perfect the conformity of these qualities with their perfect essences contained in the centers of the Virata. In more abstract terms, it can be said that the Kundalini works to increase the vibratory resonance between the primordial chakras of the cosmos and the corresponding chakras in the human being (De Kalbermatten 2003; Srivastava, 1997).

The relationship between the nervous system of the individual and the cosmic structure of the the Virata is only confirmed after realisation. The practical implications are many. Firstly, most people who have gone through the experience of Self-realisation have gradually found that, their inner system has already been damaged by the lifestyle they have led. The accumulated consequences of all our errors, sins and good deeds are recorded on the chakras and this information is known by the Kundalini. All of us make mistakes and the damage at the inner spiritual level are expressed through their outer manifestation in our everyday lives. These may have caused health problems, troubles associated with psychosomatic malfunctions. Sahaja yogis may find that meditation practices can restore the condition of the chakras. The different chakras respond to the utterance of mantras which help maintain our psychological and moral integrity. Damaged chakras cause dysfunctional behaviour and make us vulnerable to various types of subtle aggressions. Modern 'workaholics' for instance are more likely to experience a breakdown than a breakthrough. Parents who are workaholics, for example, are responsible for the many broken families and frustrated children (De Kalbermatten, 2003).

2.8 Chakras - the “wheels of light”

The prophet Ezekiel saw the chakras as “wheels of light” that move about. Kabir tells us, “Within this earthen vessel, the body, are gardens and groves, and within it is also the Lord; within this vessel, the body, are the seven oceans and countless stars” (De Kalbermatten, 2003: 187). Guru Nanak (1459-1538) speaks about mysterious self-fulfilling flowers inside us. Ancient Hindu, Greek and Roman writings describe the energetic system of the psyche in terms of seven subtle energy centres called chakras.

The word chakra is a Sanskrit word that means ‘wheel’; they are seen as spinning wheels of energy. Chakras are not physical entities in themselves, and, like feelings or ideas, they cannot be held like a physical object. They, nevertheless, have a strong effect upon the body as they express the embodiment of spiritual energy on the physical plane. Chakra patterns are programmed deep in the core of the body-mind interface and have a strong relationship with our physical functioning. Just as the emotions can and do affect our breathing, heart rate and metabolism, the activities in the various chakras influence our glandular processes, body shape, chronic physical ailments, thoughts and behaviour (Judith, 2004).

Chakras are described as stations or centers of pure consciousness (*chaitanya*) and consciousness-power. They are focal points of meditation; iconographic structures within the occult or “subtle body”. A chakra is a vortex of psychic energy which can be visualized as a circular movement of energy at a certain frequency emitting

millions of vibrations. Physiologically, chakras are like junctions where the nerves meet, and they are situated on the interior walls of the spinal column. They are like poles of electricity through which electrical wires (nerves) run across to supply power at different centers. Through the nerves (*nadis*), *prana* (vital energy) flows forwards and backwards. The chakras can be conceptualised as funnels for drawing vital energies (*prana*) inward from a universal source and, in a sense, represent evolved levels of consciousness. These centres (chakras) are the controlling nuclei of the human body (Judith, 2004; Nelson, 1996).

In essence, seven energy centres (chakas), at various levels in the body, from the base of the spine to the top of the head, are the controlling point of the 50 main human emotions. Each higher chakra, encapsulates the capacities of lower chakras, and, with evolution, through the chakra levels, the essential focus of life changes. For example, while someone centered at the first level will be primarily concerned with survival needs, these will remain important for someone at the fourth level, but their primary concern may have switched to humanistic concerns. Each chakra level therefore, has its own qualities of being, including cognitions, relationships, ethics and values, with the chakra system being a map of consciousness development from embryonic, through ego to transcendent (Nelson, 1996).

There are fifty sets of cluster glands producing fifty hormones or chemicals in the body. Each hormone or chemical activates a unique feeling, emotion or tendency within the mind, so there are a total of fifty mental tendencies. This chemical

stimulation of the body affects the mind. Therefore, the chakras are physico-psychic, that is, the body influences the mind. The chakras located along the spine are primarily psycho-spiritual realities (rather than anatomical features) but they are associated with physical glands as well as nerves. Each of these centres regulates different mental propensities. The yogis in their meditation visualised these chakras and described them as flowers having different petals. Each petal represents a particular mental propensity. For example, the chakra located at the height of the navel area is pictured as having ten petals representing different mental propensities. One of these propensities is "anger". Thus it is often true that those individuals who have ulcers, constipation or other aggravations in this region also suffer from an irritable or angry personality (Nelson, 1996).

Each of the seven levels represents major areas of human life. By understanding the internal arrangements, we can understand our defenses and our needs, and learn how to restore balance. Each chakra has a specific location in the central nervous system. They govern a specific set of organs and exercise control over our emotional and spiritual qualities. The location of the chakras in the central nervous system, the physical organs controlled and the emotional and spiritual qualities are summarised and presented in Table 2 (adapted from De Kalbermatten, 2003:189; http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sahaja_Yoga).

Table 2. The seven energy centres – chakras

Chakras	Colour and Element	Number of petals	Location	Physical organs controlled	Emotional and spiritual qualities
1. Mooladhara 	Red Earth	Four	Pelvic plexus, coccyx	Sexual and excretory organs	Innocence, purity, wisdom, auspiciousness, magnetism, spontaneity
2. Swadhisthan 	Yellow Fire	Six	Aortic plexus, adrenaline glands	Liver (part), kidneys, lower abdomen, spleen, kidneys, pancreas, partly sex and elimination	Pure knowledge, creativity, aesthetics, intellectual perception, pure attention
3. Nabhi 	Green Water	Ten	Solar plexus	Liver (part), intestine	Centre of seeking, satisfaction, grace, balance, dignity, generosity, justice, peace, wealth, household qualities, respect for others.
4. Anahata 	Red Air	Twelve	Cardiac plexus	Heart, lungs	Security, confidence, immunity, love, joy, benevolence, father/husband/brother relationships, sincerity, protection, respect
5. Vishuddhi 	Blue Ether	Sixteen	Laryngeal plexus	Throat, mouth, ears, nose, arms, hands, lower brain	Collectivity, collective communication, self respect/confidence, responsibility, diplomacy, witness power, freedom
6. Agnya 	White Light	Two	Pineal and pituitary gland	Optic chasma, vision organs	Thoughtless awareness, forgiveness of others and self, morality
7. Sahastrara 	White or multi-coloured	One thousand	Fontenelle bone area	Brain	Self-realisation, meditation, Yoga, joy, collective consciousness, integration, recognition, knowledge

From the point of view of the human micro-cosm, each chakra governs a specific set of organs, aspects of our psyche through the development stages of childhood and spirituality. Imbalanced function of these centres results in abnormal function of any aspect of our being (physical, mental or spiritual) that relates to the imbalanced centre. Each of the seven chakras has several spiritual qualities. These qualities are intact within us, and even though they might not always be manifest, they can never be destroyed. When the Kundalini is awakened, these qualities start manifesting spontaneously and express themselves in our life. Through regular meditation, we become automatically very dynamic, creative, and confident and at the same time, very humble, loving and compassionate. It is a process which starts to develop by itself when the Kundalini rises and starts to nourish our chakras (De Kalbermatten, 2003; Judith, 2004).

Each chakra governs specific aspects of our psyche through the developmental stages of childhood through to adulthood (approximately 20 years). The chakras evolve sequentially from the bottom to the top along with our chronological age. With the first completed round of chakra development, the cycle begins again when the child leaves home and begins his or her adult life. According to Judith (2004), the development of the skills and concepts related to each chakra occur progressively over life with each completed stage supporting the healthy awakening of the next chakra. Although we function through all our chakras most of the time, there are specific developmental stages in which the various chakra skills are learned and incorporated into the personality. It is sometimes necessary for the next phase to begin in order for the one below it to be completed. Chakras have specific principles

and attributes. The principles and attributes of the seven chakras have been briefly summarised and presented in Table 3.

Table 3. The principles and attributes of the seven chakras (adapted from Chopra & Simon, 2004: 82-90; De Kalbermatten, 2003:181; Judith, 2004:10)

Chakras	Mooladhara (root support)	Swadhastana (sweetness)	Nabi/ Manipura (luscious jewel)	Anahata (unstuck)	Vishuddi (purification)	Agnya (to perceive)	Sahastara (thousandfold)
Governed by	Law of Karma	Law of least effort	Law of intention and desire	Law of giving and receiving	Law of detachment	Law of dharma or purpose	Law of pure potentiality
Mantra	Lam	Vam	Ram	Yum	Hum	Sham	Aum
Central Issue	Survival	Sexuality	Power, territory, ego	Love	Communication	Intuition	Cognition
Rights	To be here	To feel	To act	To love	To speak	To see	To know
Identities	Physical	Emotional	Ego	Social	Creative	Archetypal	Universal
Orientation to self	Self-preservation	Self gratification	Self definition	Self acceptance	Self expression	Self reflection	Self knowledge
Goals	Stability, grounding	Healthy Sexuality	Vitality, spontaneity	Compassion, balance	Resonance, clear communication	Discretion, insight	Wisdom, Knowledge
Demons	Fear, paranoia	Guilt	Shame	Grief	Lies	Illusion	Attachment
Excesses	Materialism	Obsessive attachments; sexual neurosis	Dominating, aggressive	Possessive, Jealous	Excessive talking, inability to listen	Headaches, nightmares	Overly Intellectual
Deficiencies	Undisciplined	Emotionally Numb	Weak will, Passive	Shy, lonely, Bitter	Fear of speaking, Aphasia	Poor memory	Learning difficulties

The over-lap between the development of one chakra and the next, results in variation from person to person with the discrepancy getting broader in the upper chakras. In Table 4 below, the stages in the developmental process are compared with various developmental models.

Table 4. Comparative theories of development (adapted from Judith, 2004:38-39)

Chakra	Mooladhara	Swadhi- sthana	Nabi	Anahata	Vishuddhi	Agnya	Sahastra
Age	Womb to 12 months	6 months to 2 years	18 months to 2 years	3 - 7 years	7-12 years	Adolescence	Adulthood
Freud	Oral	Oral	Anal	Phallic	Latency	Adolescence	Genital
Piaget	Sensory- Motor	Sensory- Motor	Pre- Operational	Pre- operational	Concrete operational	Formal operational	Formal operational
Erikson	Trust vs <i>mistrust</i>	Trust vs <i>Mistrust</i>	Autonomy vs <i>shame</i> and <i>doubt</i>	Initiative vs <i>guilt</i>	Industry vs inferiority	Indentity vs <i>role confusion</i>	<i>Intimacy</i> vs Isolation
Maslow	Physiological	Safety	Belonging	Self-esteem	Self- actualisation	Transcendence	Transcendence
Kohlberg	Punishment/ <i>Obedience</i>	Instrumental/ <i>Hedonism</i>	Good boy/ <i>nice girl</i>	Law and <i>order</i>	Social <i>Contract</i>	Universalism	Universalism
Wilber	Plerematic, Uroboric	Typhonic (axial, pranic, Image- bodies)	Member- ship self	Early egoic personic	Middle egoic personic	Centaur/ existential, Late egoic, Mature ego, low subtle	High subtle, causal ultimate

Mainstream theories of development are associated with the usual stages of human development from infancy through adulthood. They have largely ignored human spiritual and religious experience, except as sources for psychosocial support.

Transpersonal theory proposes that there are developmental stages beyond the adult ego, which involve experiences of connectedness with phenomena considered outside the boundaries of the ego. In healthy individuals, these developmental stages can engender the highest human qualities, including altruism, creativity, and intuitive wisdom. It is the idea, that there are stages of human growth beyond the ego (hence the term *transpersonal*), that sets these theories apart from other models of human development and psychopathology (Kaspro & Scotton, 1999).

Although "transpersonal" as a psychological idea was first introduced by William James more than 90 years ago, Carl Jung was perhaps, the first clinician who attempted to legitimise a spiritual approach to the practice of depth psychology. Jung suggested that psychological development extended to include higher states of consciousness and could continue throughout life, rather than stop with the attainment of adult ego maturation and rational competence. He also proposed that transcendent experience lies within and is accessible to everyone, and that the healing and growth stimulated by such experience, often make use of the languages of symbolic imagery and non-verbal experience, which are not reducible to purely rational terms. In addition, Jung was among the first to examine spiritual experience cross-culturally, and his study of Eastern mysticism, African shamanism, and Native American religion has helped define the universality of human spiritual experience and its relevance to psychological health (Jung, 1967; Kaspro & Scotton, 1999).

Abraham Maslow (1962) continued this theme with his naturalistic study of persons he considered to be "self-actualised." He found remarkably consistent descriptions of the characteristics of enlightened people across cultures, and he concluded that

human beings have an instinctive, biologically based drive toward spiritual self-actualisation, which he characterised as a state of deep altruism, periodic mystical peak experiences producing a sense of union, and freedom from conditioned thought and behavior.

Wilber's (2000) principal contributions to transpersonal developmental theory were first presented in *Transformations of Consciousness* (Wilber, Engler & Brown, 1986). In this work, he elaborates on a developmental model that incorporates not only the usual stages of human development suggested by Freud, Jung, Piaget, and others, but also transpersonal or transrational stages derived from non-Western wisdom traditions. Like the earlier psychological theories from which Wilber borrowed, his model is hierarchical in that he claims that reality and psyche are organized into distinct levels, in which "higher" levels are superior to "lower" levels in a logical and developmental sense. This "ladder"(Washburn, 1994) structure of Wilber's "spectrum of consciousness" model undoubtedly relates to his use of Eastern developmental theories, in particular the chakra system of tantra yoga, which has a similar structure. Each successive level subsumes the properties of the preceding level, resolves the developmental problems associated with that stage, and demonstrates new emergent qualities, as well as new developmental challenges. Thus he suggests that each stage of development is associated not only with the emergence of specific psychological structures and abilities, but, when aberrated, with specific kinds of pathology (Kasprow & Scotton, 1999).

According to Cumes (1998), the chakra model is another representation of Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Chakras 1 – 3 are synonymous with Maslow's (1962) deficiency

needs on his lowest two levels (physiological and safety). Similarly chakras 4- 6 correspond with Maslow levels 3 (love) and 4 (esteem), whilst chakra 7 is akin to Maslow level 5 (self-actualisation) though it goes beyond it in the Western sense of the word. Wilber (2000) notes that each of the 7 chakra levels takes seven years of adaptation, thus the first seven years of life are an adaptation to the physical realm (food, survival, security), the second seven years embrace sexual development culminating in puberty, the third seven years involves the emergence of the logical mind and new perspectives. The fourth seven years starting at around age 21 is often where consciousness development becomes stagnant.

The chakra system can also be used for spiritual diagnosis, similar in a way to Freudian fixation at various stages of development. For example, an individual centred at the root chakra is associated with co-dependency and neediness in relationships. It is the natural centre for infants before they evoke the second chakra, some years later. Nelson (1990), states that it is rare for individuals in industrialised societies to progress past the third chakra, whose primary modes are power and control. Individuals with their energies centered in the fourth chakra, have moved beyond attachments to the material world, and enjoy a union with all sentient life, and in the primary mode there is universal love. According to the predominant Western view (following Freud), the fifth level is regarded as the highest possible, and is characterised by wisdom, with the primary modes being grace and creativity. The sixth and seventh chakra would be considered to be pathological according to most Western models, as they include an expanded vision, capable of tapping into universal knowledge, and hence with the capacity for visionary power and prophesy, while the highest level is the complete dissolution of the self-boundaries and a

merger with soul and divine essence. It is rare for even highly evolved individuals to remain on this level with most people only ever being able to achieve a temporary centredness in this domain.

2.8.1 Malfunctioning of chakras

Chakras influence and affect the area of the physical body where they are located. Many physical imbalances may be perceived as being the result of imbalanced chakras. The malfunctions of the psycho-somatic and spiritual centres, technically speaking, correspond to lateral pulls, constrictions and distortions caused by the swings of energy from the lateral channels of *Ida* and *Pingla*. The malfunctioning of one or more chakras generates psychic disorders as well as possible medical consequences.

Targeted meditation practises (for example, reciting of mantras) based on the knowledge of the inner system can achieve a fundamental recovery of the whole personality and deploy a variety of therapeutic effects. The healing process can be understood as follows. When the chakras are connected to the *sushumna nadi* through a condition of equilibrium, they supply the energy of the para-sympathetic system to all parts of the body and play both a supply and regulatory function. When excessive behaviours disconnect a chakra from the centre, these functions are hampered. For instance, in a person who is active, the *swadisthan chakra* moves to the right side (*Pingla nadi*) and disconnects from the center. The supply of energy from the *pingla nadi* is gradually drained out. The *swadisthan chakra* no longer supplies the energy from the *sushumna nadi* and this process is then accelerated by

the intense mental activity of planners and thinkers. The supply of energy to the parts of the body controlled by the *swadisthan* is insufficient and this may cause asthma, blood cancer and diabetes (De Kalbermatten, 2003; Judith, 2004).

Lust is caused by the malfunction of the first centre (mooladhara chakra). By lust, we mean here, an addictive and compulsive interest in sex. Lust rarely releases its captives, it ensnares the attention of the young and not so young alike, and when people follow its impulse, their behaviour can lead to the destruction of relationships and families. Betrayed spouses, broken hearts and damaged relationships litter its path. But the restoring of the integrity of the mooladhara chakra is possible through SY meditation practices. A restored mooladhara implies the return of innocence. It facilitates a mature and fulfilled sexuality and the re-emergence of stable families.

Anger represents a malfunction of the second centre (swadisthan chakra) and can take a variety of forms. Anger breeds conflict and stress, bursts out into patterns of aggression, calls for violence, and pits man against man, and corporations and collective groupings against each other. The cycle triggered by anger is endless: turf battles, devious plots and power challenges all aggressively fuel angry responses in a never ending cycle of destructive competition. Another form of addiction attacking the swadisthan chakra is the phenomena known today as 'workaholism', a compulsive involvement in one's own activity whereby inner peace is lost (De Kalbermatten, 2003: 278-279).

Greed relates to a constriction of the third centre (manipur or nabi chakra) and, because of this, the energy of the being is diverted from inner growth into acquiring external possessions – ‘to have’ rather than ‘to be’ in the realm of one’s identity. Greed projects a fixation on ownership and an addiction to material accumulation. Greed produces uncontrollable desire and by its very nature tends towards excess. It encourages the hubris of the ego. Greed takes away from the many to give even more wealth to the few; it consumes natural resources in an unsustainable manner; it encourages corruption and organised crime. In this respect an important feature of a healthy third centre is a spontaneous adherence to an inner ethical code. The manifestations of the qualities of the nabi include an innate feeling of well-being and satisfaction, a condition that makes greed superfluous and irrelevant. The third centre grants balance to the personality and this factor of equilibrium, between the movements of the lateral channels, provides the basis for the capacity to adapt and evolve (De Kalbermatten, 2003).

Attachment strangles the opening of the fourth centre (anahata chakra). It is a conditioning which curtails the power of the heart to love in a generous and giving way. Attachment is a lower form of love, and a selfish one: it takes instead of giving and is a manifestation of excess. Attached love binds emotions in such a manner that the phenomenon of addiction is this time vested in specific personal relationships: mother, sister, son, friend, mistress. Attachment is the killer of freedom, mixing as it does, love with distorted feelings such as cravings and emotional dependency. It is both cause and consequence of a lack of inner security. Social manifestation of

attachments can take forms such as favouritism and nepotism (De Kalbermatten, 2003: 279-280).

Jealousy blocks the passage through the fifth centre (vishuddhi) and it can be understood as addiction of the ego, which is absorbed in the attainment of its own achievements. Consequently the success of another person will be resented, and jealousy prevents the establishment of common purpose and teamwork. It is thus destructive to the smooth functioning of any human collectivity. To the jealous mind, someone else's gain is its own loss. A person with a healthy vishuddhi chakra is sensitive to the needs of the whole, to the interests of the collectivity and to the organisation of which he or she is part. The focus is on the 'big picture'. Such a person will invariably improve the effectiveness of the workplace through interpersonal skills. *Their concern for others is not faked and colleagues recognise the qualities of a genuine team-builder.*

Vanity obstructs the opening of the Third Eye, the sixth centre (agnya). The vain character is addicted to himself. He places appearances above substance, and the narcissist may often inflict his strange malfunction on the surroundings in the form of pride. The movement corresponds to the flight from the real identity, the Self, towards an outside construction of the ego, a virtual identity carved out of successive layers of conditionings and misidentifications. Vanity has taken many entertaining forms through the ages: for example, the ludicrous wigs of Louis XIV or the pompous uniforms of Mussolini. *When the agnya chakra clears, the brain of the subject is no*

longer blinded or misled by the projections of ego or the residue of conditionings, and is capable of settling into a deeper self-identity: a source of personal strength, confidence and resilience (De Kalbermatten, 2003:281-282).

All these vices are the enemies of our self-mastery, and these unseen 'twisters' riding the dark horses of our thoughts and desires, often like riding together. Addiction, in its multiple forms, naturally tending towards the extremes, screams for more: more sex (lust), more violence (anger), more money (greed), more attention (attachment) or more self-glorification (vanity) (De Kalbermatten, 2003).

2.8.2 The curative powers of the *chakras*

The curative principle of chakra therapy is extremely simple. The meditation practice of a Sahaja yogi (realised soul) reconnects the chakras with the sushumna, thereby accessing the energy store of the Kundalini. It re-establishes the proper balance of energy flows (chi or prana). A range of meditation techniques (for example, mantras and affirmations) and specific methods (SY treatments) apply to address the problems of the various chakras, depending on the psychosomatic symptoms of the illness. A number of physicians are presently conducting research on the subject and have reported positive results, which have been scientifically monitored by controlled experiments on various groups of patients (De Kalbermatten, 2003; Judith, 2004).

2.9 The serpent power

Every human being has spiritual energy which may be still dormant. Although the names used to describe it may be different and the symbols used vary from culture to

culture, almost all religions have their own practices to awaken this energy, leading to self-realisation and a personal experience of the Divine. The Hindus call this energy *Kundalini*, and Muslims know it as the *Ruh*. In the Bible it is described as the *Holy Ghost*. The Japanese call it *ki* and the Chinese *chi*. The Masons speak of the *Spirit Fire* that rises through the spinal column and in Mexico this energy was worshiped as the serpent-god *Quetzalcoatl* (Kumar, 2000).

The Kung people of the Kalahari called this same power *n/um*. The Kung believe that "*n/um*" is a vital energy or power of supernatural potency. They describe the experience as if they have a hole their heads, perhaps two inches wide, which extends like an empty column down the spine and into the ground. American Indians know about the energy that is awakened at the base of the spine and which rises to the top of the head, but it is regarded as sacred and they are forbidden, even, to pronounce its name (Kumar, 2000).

The *Kundalini*, which is to nourish the tree of life within us, is coiled up like a serpent and it has been called, 'The Serpent Power'. It has been described in great detail in Vedic and Tantric texts. *Kundalini Yoga* is supposed to be supreme in all the *Yogas*. Guru Vashistha asserted that, *Kundalini* is the seat of absolute knowledge. The awareness of the presence of this primordial energy *Kundalini* within the human body was considered by the sages and saints to be the highest knowledge (Kumar, 2000).

In the mystical Hebrew tradition, in the Kabbalah and the Zohar, the *Shekhinah* is referred to as being the base *sefirah* within the Tree of Life. The *sefirot* on the left

side are referred to as feminine, and the right as masculine. Likewise, in the Indian tradition, the chakras on the left, *ida nadi* are with the moon, feminine, and Yin in nature. The chakras on the right *pingala nadi* are with the sun, masculine, and Yang in nature. The highest *sefirah* is called *keter*, the crown (Kumar, 2000).

Many spiritual and religious traditions (Chinese alchemists and Taoists, and Hebrew mystics) throughout the ages, have known this science of the Kundalini and its ascent. Some believed that the "seven churches" and the "mystery of the seven stars" referred to by John in Revelation represent the seven chakras. A great medieval Christian mystic, Jacob Boehme, described his own experience: "For the Holy Ghost will not be held in the sinful flesh, but rises up like a lightning flash, as fire sparkles and flashes out of a stone when a man strikes it. The Holy Spirit rises up, in the seven unfolding fountain spirits, into the brain, like the dawning of the day, the morning redness... though an angel from heaven should tell this to me; for all that I could not believe it. But the Sun itself arises in my Spirit, and therefore I am most sure of it" (<http://www.anandamarga.org/articles/kundalinii.htm>).

Kundalini energy is there to nourish, to heal and look after, and to give an individual a higher and deeper individuality. The manifested power is absolute purity, auspiciousness, chastity, self respect, pure love, detachment, concern for others and enlightened attention to give infinite joy and peace to an individual (Kumar, 2000).

The word Kundalini is derived from the Sanskrit word '*Kundal*' meaning coiled up. It is the primordial dormant energy present in three-and-a-half, coils at the base of the spine in a triangular bone called the Sacrum. The Latin name '*Os Sacrum*' suggests that it is a holy or sacred part of the body. The ancient Greeks were aware of this and therefore they called it the '*Hieron Osteon*', noting that, it was the last bone to be destroyed when the body is burnt, and also attributed supernatural powers to it. Egyptians also held this bone to be very valuable and considered it to be the seat of special power. In the West, Sacrum is symbolised by the sign of Aquarius and by the Holy Grail, container of the water of life (<http://www.transpersonal.com.au/divine-feminine.htm>).

Kundalini is referred to as a goddess that is waiting to be unleashed. Kundalini yoga is said to remove the blockages that keep this force at the base of the spine and to allow the energy to rise to the crown of the head to induce a feeling of euphoria. The practise of Kundalini yoga can stimulate the nervous and immune systems, improve strength and flexibility, and balance the glandular system. It also claims to allow one to experience one's highest level of consciousness. Swami Sivananda describes the *Kundalini* as 'and electric, fiery, occult power, the great pristine force which underlies all organic and inorganic matter' (Kumar, 2000).

The serpent is normally a symbol of efficient consciousness, and one can find its representation in various old mystic cults of the world. The three coils of the serpent, representing Kundalini, symbolize three parts of *Aum* (*Om*: the Word God) – past, present and future; three *gunas* (virtues) – *tamas* – ignorance (dirty, degrading,

deluding, destructive), *rajas* - passion (motivates us to create, acquire and enjoy) and *sattva* – goodness (pure, elevating, enlightening); three states of consciousness – waking, sleeping and dreaming and three types of experiences – subjective, sensual and absence of an experience. The half coil represents the state of transcendence consciousness which is beyond waking, sleeping or dreaming. Thus three-and-half coils of Kundalini represent the complete set of experiences of the universe followed by the experience of transcendent consciousness (Kumar, 2000; Woodroffe, 1981).

The serpent of Agathodaimon of Hermes Trismegiste or Mercury is a particularly explicit symbol of the Kundalini. According to the Gnostics it was the alchemical symbol of the process of psychic metamorphosis. It specifically represented the spinal column and the Rachidian Bulb. Today the serpent is the emblem of our pharmacies. Other symbols for the Kundalini recur: volumes of clouds or water which frame the stairs of the Forbidden City in Beijing; the burning bush or tongues of fire referred to in the Bible. Artistic references to the Kundalini and its three-and-half coils can be found in pre-Christian Ukrainian pottery, pre-Colombian handicrafts, or at Newgrange, just outside Dublin, Ireland, thought to be the oldest man-made structure in Europe revealed by carbon dating, to be at least 500 years older than the Great Pyramid of Giza (De Kalbermatten, 2003: 194-195; Kumar, 2000:33).

Within man, the Kundalini is the power of catharsis and transformation, and, when she rises within the sushumna nadi, located within the spine, and pierces the seven centres of power in the limbic area on the top of the head, she grants an experience of Self-realisation. In a very practical and effective manner, the Kundalini is our inner mother, guide and inner reflection of the motherly protective power. This protective

power of the mother was worshipped a long time ago in European countries. It was embodied in the Holy Virgin Mary.

The power of Kundalini, is such that, it releases the dynamics of love as it passes through the anahat (heart) chakra, even if the heart is bruised and burnt by past experiences. One of the greatest insights of Sahaja Yoga is the realisation of the symbiotic relationship between the heart and the Self. The Self is physically located within the heart organ and when the Kundalini pierces the seventh chakra at the top of the brain, she does so at the very spot which corresponds to the location of the heart chakra within the all-encompassing super-centre, the brain. Bliss then flows from this centre and hence the Kundalini establishes and regenerates in us the flow of the energy of love, the capacity to feel and to enact with compassion (Costian, 1995; De Kalbermatten, 2003: 194-198; Srivastava, 1997).

Once Self-realisation has occurred, it is logical to expect changes in patterns of desires. The Kundalini has the property of consuming our burdens, burning in us all lower hankerings from ego and superego, over-coming cravings, addictions and more futile wants. We drop the desires for fleeting, elusive or marginal satisfactions and focus, instead, on pursuits more likely to bring solid, genuine fulfillment. When these lower desires are overcome, whether they are expressions of individual weaknesses or of the influence left by the surrounding society, there is a sensation of heat in the sympathetic nervous system and the ensuing vibrations are perceived as hot. When the Kundalini regenerates and heals the nervous system, the vibrations are felt to be cool. The Kundalini may be a fire, but its flames burn with coolness and freshness. Highly evolved individuals have found their experiences both immediate and

definitive. Some felt coolness, almost like having balls of ice in the centre of their hands, which seemed to melt into their forearms and then into all of their being. Others felt a powerful wind blowing all over their bodies and a river of energy rushing through their nervous system, the coolness broadening away from their spinal columns. However, not everyone gets experiences like this (De Kalbermatten, 2003; Woodroffe, 1981).

Jung (1985:218) covered extensive ground in his quest to uncover the secrets of our psyche and he wrote, "The idea of transformation and renewal by means of a serpent is a well substantiated archetype. It is the healing serpent representing the God ... probably the most significant development as regards renewal of personality is to be found in Kundalini Yoga."

2.9.1 The physiology of Kundalini

Kundalini energy does not belong to the physical, astral or mental body and, consequently it cannot be found there. The serpent power belongs to a still higher plane, that is, the causal plane, which is above the concept of object, time and space. It connects the lowest unconscious seat of power, at the root of the centre, (*mooladhadra*) to the highest center of consciousness at the crown centre (*Sahasrara*). Illumination takes place when *Kundalini Shakti* (kinetic form of energy) rises to meet Lord Shiva (potential form of energy).

The awakening of the Kundalini causes it to rise from its position of slumber in the sacrum bone, pierce through each of the chakras, causing each of them to come into a state of balance and alignment (a little like a string threading through a series of

beads). In this way, the chakras are rejuvenated and nourished by the Kundalini's ascent. As the Kundalini reaches the brain and the chakras within it, mental tensions are neutralised. "Once the great *Shakti* awakens, man is no longer a gross physical body operating with a lower mind and a low-voltage *prana* (quantum cosmic energy). Instead his body is charged with the high voltage *prana* of the Kundalini. And when total awakening occurs, man becomes an embodiment of divinity" (Kumar, 2000: 6; Saraswati, 1984:13).

An inner state of mental calm is established. This inner silence becomes a source of peace within one, a fortress, which shields one, from the stresses of daily life, makes one more creative, productive and satisfied with oneself. Practitioners of SY meditation (yogi's) often claim to feel the chakras (energy centres) within the head open up as the meditative experience intensifies. They assert that it is this experience which is the essence of true meditation and that very few other meditation techniques enable the subject to repeatedly access this experience. With this actualisation in the limbic area of the brain, cool "vibrations" start flowing from both palms and the top of the head. During SY meditation, yogis' can actually feel this Kundalini energy as a "cool breeze" as it rises up through the central nervous system (CNS) and out of the sahasrara (crown) chakra. A speeding-up of mental, emotional and spiritual evolution takes place (Cooper, 2001; De Kalbermatten, 2003; Godfrey, 2000).

As the awakening of Kundalini takes place at the quantum level, the energy automatically heals the Sahaja yogi (practitioner), who then can heal others with the power within him. The Sahaja yogi who becomes a healer is actually only an agent.

The real work is done by the energy from a Higher Source. It is at the quantum level, that energy and matter are interchangeable. *Prana*, the unit of the cosmic energy at that level is responsible for life and healing. SY meditation leads to Self-realisation (healing the Self) and with “powers of healing” others (Chopra & Simon, 2004; Kumar, 2000).

The quantum fibre *prana* pervading the whole universe is a vital force or energy transcending time and space. It is responsible for life and health. Spiritual traditions converge with regard to a life force of spiritual healing energy called *N/um* (San), *Umoya* (Zulu), *Ruach Ha Kodesh* (Hebrew), *Prana* (Hindi), *Chi* (Chinese), *Nafas Ruh* (Moslem), *Spiritus Sanctus* (Latin for Holy Spirit), *Pneuma* (Greek), *Mana* (Figian), *Ni* (Sioux) and *Chindi* (Navajo), *ki* in Japan, *telesma* in the writings of Hermes Trismegistus, *astral light* in Kabbala and *mana* in Polynesia. Alchemist Robert Fludd called it *spiritus*, Hippocrates called it *Vis Medicatrix Nature* and hyptonist Fraz Anton Mesmer called it *Pneuma*. This spiritual healing energy is experienced through the life-breath, which forms the bridge between nature, God, ancestors, body, mind and world. This is the essential foundation for psychology (Kumar, 2000: 243; Wechseler, 1987).

A body filled with *prana* is strong and resistant to disease and illness, and is likely to live a long life. When *prana* is blocked, fatigue and disease soon follow. Yoga and meditation are in fact technologies for contacting the pranic/quantum level inside ourselves. Anything in the body can be changed with the flick of an intention. Signals from the quantum mechanical body can bring instantaneous changes in the physical

body. One can make use of the inner technologies which operate at the pranic/quantum level and cause the eradication of diseases. Awareness has a healing capacity, and this seems to explain the sudden cures even in the most advanced cases of incurable diseases (Chopra & Simon, 2004; De Kalbermatten, 2003; Kumar, 2000).

People with a strong “faith factor,” religious or psychological, who regularly and persistently practice yoga and meditation may achieve not only immunity to disease for themselves, but may also acquire an inner power to heal others, even those suffering from chronic/incurable diseases. Such people become store-houses of prana, which, perhaps, they pass onto the patients they touch consciously or unconsciously, causing the start of the healing process, terminating the disease sooner or later (Chopra & Simon, 2004; De Kalbermatten, 2003; Kumar, 2000).

Many practitioners in the complementary health field subscribe to the idea of “vibrational medicine”. This idea essentially suggests that complementary therapies such as homoeopathy and therapeutic touch, as well as other therapeutic phenomena such as the placebo effect, therapeutic contact, bedside manner, and spiritual healing, act on a subtle energetic level to achieve a cure or promote wellness. The difficulty has been the inability to detect this “subtle energy” and thus scientific verification of this concept is difficult to achieve. Medical science has not yet reached the level where it can register such psychosomatic phenomena, but that does not mean that such phenomena do not exist. The indigenous Australians, the Aborigines, still have sensitivity to subtler vibratory phenomena. They can communicate over considerable distances, in a telepathic manner, find the location of

water underground, heal with the hands and use vibrations to select which plants and animals to eat (Cooper, 2001; De Kalbermatten, 2003; Morgan, 2003).

2.9.2 Kundalini experiences

An experience similar to the awakening of the Kundalini is the ecstasy called *sheaf*, meaning divine influx. This ecstasy is reached through the process of *Tzeruf* (a short route to reaching God). It was developed by Spanish Kabalist, Abraham Ben Samuel Abulafia, and, it was performed at midnight. The process, involving breathing techniques, pronunciation of sacred names of God, and meditation, would result in *Sheaf* occurring in a short time. Experiences of the Kundalini type are also found in the esoteric teachings of Egyptians, Chinese and some Native Americans. In the Bible it is referred to as “the solar principle in man.” Similar references can be found in the Koran, and in the work of Greek philosophers, especially Plato, and Rosicrucian and Masonic writings (Kumar, 2000).

The caduceus, a wand entwined by two snakes and topped by wings, has been an esoteric symbol of spiritual enlightenment and intuitive wisdom since ancient times. Its shape is derived from the T-shaped cross used in Egyptian initiations. Its origin can be traced in Greco-Roman mythology dating back to 2600 B.C. The caduceus has been a symbol of earth, water, fire and air in ancient Indian temples. The wand represents the stick of *Brahma*, called *Brahm danda*, and the snakes represent the Kundalini force, the sleeping serpent power residing on earth. The pranic energy transforms the spiritual consciousness through the rising Kundalini via higher realms of awareness. This is the significance of the wings on top of the Caduceus. It

represents a balance between negative and positive forces in Freemasonry (De Kalbermattren, 2003; Kumar, 2000).

2.10 Sahaja Yoga - a healing system

The Bihar School of Yoga in Mungar, India, describes yoga as a healing system that can be used to treat many ailments and mental disorders. All yoga systems are part of a broad spectrum of healing. Through the regular practise of Sahaja Yoga meditation, one can experience relief from:

- **Panic attacks**

Quantum-Touch allows *Sahaja yogis* to easily hold an extremely high vibration in their hands through breathing and body awareness exercises. This can cause a field of energy that can profoundly accelerate healing for someone who experiences an extremely painful emotional state such as a panic attack. Life-force energy can cause one to feel emotionally balanced and can bring about rapid and profound emotional shifts in a short period of time. It is not uncommon for someone who experiences extremely painful emotional states to be brought to a state of well being by using recommended SY meditation techniques, such as *chakra* clearing, balancing, chanting of mantras, reciting affirmations and meditating.

- **Stress**

Stress is a product of imbalance between the left (Yin - our emotions, desires and the past) and right (Yang - our action and futuristic thinking) energies as well as an overworked and over-exhausted sympathetic nervous system. These energies can be balanced by using SY techniques to bring about peace and calmness.

- **Distant Healing**

A Sahaja yogi is able to assist in the healing process of another Sahaja yogi who is ill, and who may be many miles away, simply by visualising his/her subtle system and by using recommended SY techniques.

- **Improved Sleeping patterns**

SY meditation techniques, such as, chanting specific mantras enable a person to sleep better, deeper and to awake more refreshed in the morning. Many people suffer from insomnia simply because they have a busy mind (not letting go of the past day's events/worrying about and planning for tomorrow) (<http://www.sahajayoga.org>).

2.10.1 Sahaja Yoga medical research

The positive impact of SY meditation is not just a hypothesis. Several studies were undertaken in Australia, Russia, India, the United Kingdom (UK) and the United States of America (USA) to illustrate the therapeutic effect of SY meditation on several physiological and mental diseases and disorders. Studies published on the therapeutic effects of SY meditation on disease processes indicate that by practicing SY meditation for several months:

- the number and the duration of epileptic attacks in patients with epilepsy are reduced. Furthermore, it has also been instrumental in improving the clinical electro-encephalographic pattern of epileptic brain activation (Panjwani, Selvamurthy, Singh, Gupta, Thakur & Rai, 1996; Rai, 1993).
- the health of patients suffering from asthma and hypertension improved significantly. The improvement related to a significant reduction in the number

of acute asthma attacks and an improvement in the functioning of the lungs (Selvamurthy, Singh, Gupta, Thakur & Rai, 1996).

- a significant reduction of the depressive symptoms in patients with major depression, as opposed to control patients who were only treated with behavioral therapy (Panjwani, Selvamurthy, Singh, Gupta, Thakur & Rai, 2003; Woolery, Myers, Sternlieb & Zeltzer, 2004).
- reduced drug consumption: Of 501 drug abusers who practiced Sahaja Yoga meditation for a year at the University of Vienna in 1997, 97% of chronic drug consumers stopped taking drugs, 42% after the first week of meditation, and 32% after the first months (Hackl, 1995).
- diabetes and menopause: Studies from Melbourne University in Australia have shown beneficial effects of SY meditation on diabetes and menopause (Manocha, Marks, Kenchington, Peters & Salome, 2003).
- SY is used as cognitive therapy. It enables individuals to intervene on the central nervous system and the state of their centres and channels of energy (chakras). It gives access to a subtle form of energy, kundalini. This energy can be accessed through almost effortless, natural techniques to bring balance and health to the mind, body, and emotions. It raises human awareness to a new dimension of collective consciousness and enables the individual to feel the energetic state of another person and help in improving it (Rai, 1991).

2.10.2 Sahaja Yoga and community involvement

The positive changes that manifest in the individual's life from the practice of SY meditation demonstrate that, we have the ability to transform our lives. Some of the proven individual and community benefits of SY meditation are:

- healthy, drug-free life (active medical research on Sahaja Yoga is conducted in countries like England, India, Romania, Russia, Australia).
- stress reduction, inner peace, balance (stress management workshops are being presently conducted in the education, health, corporate arena and with the police force in certain provinces of South Africa (KwaZulu Natal, Gauteng, Western Cape).
- improving one's life and personal growth, developing skills and talents, self esteem and confidence.
- morality, righteousness and the elimination of bad habits follow as a by-product of the transformation in one's awareness brought by the regular practice of meditation.
- improved family life, work environment, relationships with others, communication skills.
- educational programmes are conducted regularly on University Campuses and schools. Many educational institutions are seeing the correlation between a balanced mental state and educative success outcomes.
- rehabilitation programmes for people in recovery: Sahaja Yoga has been working with the *Next Step* Addiction Recovery Centre in East Perth for the past 4 years, conducting weekly meditation sessions for inpatients and outpatients attending the centre. These programmes have been very successful in helping people establish simple meditative techniques to stay

calm and balanced. Similar programmes are conducted for people in recovery in South Africa at Chatsworth, Durban, KwaZulu-Natal, Gauteng and in the Western Cape.

- prison programmes - Sahaja Yoga meditation provides prison inmates with opportunities to address issues of anger, forgiveness and acceptance in subtle ways through the meditation. The awakening of Kundalini automatically starts to put each person 'in touch' with his own true nature. This is a vital step in the healing process as it empowers prisoners to move forward and to understand their lives from a new perspective. According to yoga associations, over 100,000 prisoners in 15 countries, including South Africa (KwaZulu-Natal, Western Cape, Gauteng), currently take part in such classes.
- low rate of criminality in cities like Togliatti in Russia where Sahaja Yoga is practised en-masse, in schools and in the work environment (<http://www.sahajayoga.org>).

2.10.3 Sahaja Yoga international projects

Some notable SY meditation international projects that have been created are:

- An international hospital in Mumbai, India affords patients from all over the world an opportunity for self healing using SY treatments.
- The International Sahaja Public School (ISPS) in Dharamsala, India for children from grade 1 to grade 12.
- An international cancer research centre in Bombay which studies the effects of SY meditation on cancer

- An international music school in Nagpur which promotes classical music
- A centre for destitute and homeless people in Delhi, to provide shelter and to assist them in becoming independent through the process of SY meditation (<http://www.sahajayoga.org>).

2.10 Resume`

This chapter explored the research context of the study by reviewing the literature covering the field of SY meditation. Concepts pertinent to SY meditation were explained, research in the field and the overall benefits of SY meditation was also reviewed.

In the next chapter, a comprehensive explanation of the entire process involved in conducting this research from its conception will be explained. This includes the research approach and the data collection and explication process.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

"In the course of human knowledge man must first make his inquiry into his awareness of himself..."

Suhrawardi, 12th century (as quoted by Yazdi, 1992:94)

3.0 Introduction

The previous chapter surveyed the literature on Sahaja Yoga meditation and concepts that were pertinent to the study were explained in terms of their relevance to SY meditation. The overall benefits of Sahaja Yoga meditation and research in the field was also reviewed. In this chapter, the nature of the research was discussed and the means of managing the quality of the study were outlined. The data collection method was identified and the data analysis techniques were defined.

The aim of this study was to investigate SY meditation as a form of therapeutic community. The critical questions that guided this study were:

- What is Sahaja Yoga meditation?
- How is Sahaja Yoga meditation practised?
- How is Sahaja Yoga meditation different from other types of meditation?
- In what ways is Sahaja Yoga a form of therapeutic community?

3.1 Research design

The design used in this study falls within the broad framework of qualitative research. Qualitative research yields descriptive data and enables participants to express their own meanings in their own terms (Frankfort - Nachmais & Nachmais, 1996). The aim of the “descriptive” approach is to investigate what and how something is, rather than why (Karlsson, 1993). Qualitative research from a phenomenological perspective tries to understand human experiences in a certain context within which people ascribe meaning to their world.

Phenomenology is concerned with the study of phenomena. A phenomenon is something that reveals itself to consciousness. A phenomenological approach refers to an attitude of consciously suspending any assumptions in order to allow phenomena to reveal themselves in their fresh, original reality. Such an approach means continually new discoveries as reality changes. It also means in depth investigations of essential structures of reality. This changing reality includes the consciousness of the phenomenologist as well as the phenomena revealing themselves to consciousness. The approach is subjective to the extent to which it is concerned with the lived – world as it appears to the phenomenologist. It is objective to the extent to which the phenomena are accurately interpreted by the phenomenologist and the truth of their reality inter-subjectively agreed upon by other phenomenologists (Edwards, 2006; Giorgi, 1990).

The epistemological position undertaken in this study can be formulated as follows:

(a) data are contained within the perspectives of the practitioners of SY meditation, and (b) because of this the researcher engaged with Sahaja yogis in collecting the data.

3.2 Pilot study

Imenda & Muyangwa (2000:90) stated that a pilot study is a preliminary trial of research measures, and techniques, intended to ascertain their appropriateness in addressing the stated research questions, hypotheses and/or objectives. They further added that this phase of the research process was essential for the development of a sound research plan. A pilot study (Appendix A: 1-11) of the entire research process, including the analysis of the data collected, following closely the procedures planned for the main study (Appendix B: 1-11) was carried out, with two Sahaja Yogis.

3.3 Target and accessible population

According to Hycner (1999:156) "the phenomenon dictates the method and even the type of participants." This study investigated SY as a form of therapeutic community. The participants were selected because they:

- had experience relating to SY meditation;
- were verbally fluent and able to communicate their feelings, thoughts and perceptions in relation to SY meditation;
- had the same home language as the researcher. This obviated the possible loss of subtle semantic nuances owing to the need to translate from one language to another (Leedy, 1997);
- expressed a willingness to be open to the researcher.

3.4 Sampling procedure

Welman & Kruger (1999), considered the purposive method of sampling as the most important kind of non-probability sampling to identify the primary participants. This sample was selected based on the researcher's judgment and the purpose of the research (Babbie, 1995; Greig & Taylor, 1999; Schwandt, 1997), looking for those who "had experiences" relating to SY meditation as a form of therapeutic community, the phenomenon to be researched (Kruger, 1998:150). Obtaining information relevant to a topic or issue from several informants is an indispensable tool in the real world enquiry. It is particularly valuable in the analysis of qualitative data where the trustworthiness of the data is of concern. It provides a means of testing one source of information against other sources. It is useful in validating information (Robson, 1993).

3.4.1 Research sample

Boyd (2001) regards two to ten participants or research subjects as sufficient to reach saturation and Creswell (1998: 65, 113) recommends "long interviews with up to ten people" for a phenomenological study. Taking the above into consideration, six Sahaja yogis were selected to participate in the main study and two in the pilot study.

3.4.2 Participant profile

The participants in this study were all females (Appendix A: 2; Appendix B: 2). They had been practitioners of SY meditation for between 6 to 19 years. The participants were between the ages of 35 and 58 years. Among the participants were a psychologist, an educator, a musician, a business administrator, a personal assistant and a housewife. All the participants lived in KwaZulu Natal, South Africa, except for

one who was touring the country. All the participants were married and had family members who were Sahaja yogis.

3.4.3 Informed consent

In order to ensure ethical research, the researcher made use of informed consent (Holloway, 1997; Kvale, 1996). A specific informed consent 'agreement' was used in order to gain the informed consent from participants (Arksey & Knight, 1999; Bless & Higson-Smith, 2000; Kvale, 1996; Street, 1998). The informed consent agreement (Appendix A: 1; Appendix B: 1) contained the following information:

- Participation in the research
- The purpose of the research
- The procedures of the research
- The risk and benefits of the research
- The voluntary nature of research participation
- The subject's (informant's) right to stop the research at any time
- The procedures used to protect confidentiality

The 'informed consent agreement' was explained to Sahaja yogis participating in the study at the beginning of each interview. Participation in the study implied consent.

3.5 Instrumentation

The following data-gathering method was used:

- unstructured in-depth phenomenological interviews

3.5.1 Informal interviews

At the root of phenomenology, “is the intent is to understand the phenomena in their own terms – to provide a description of human experience as it is experienced by the person him/herself” (Bentz & Shapiro, 1998: 96) and allowing the essence to emerge (Cameron, Schaffer & Hyeon-Ae, 2001). In this study, the in-depth interview was used as a data collection technique to obtain the participants’ descriptions of their SY meditation experiences.

Participants needed to be sufficiently motivated to describe their SY meditation experiences. In order to motivate participants to co-operate during the interview, I applied the three factors described by Nachmais & Nachmais (1981):

- I presented myself to the participants as a caring person, who was easy to get along with and easy to talk to so that our interaction was mutually pleasant and satisfying.
- I high-lighted the importance of the participants’ co-operation in the study as being worthwhile and beneficial not only to themselves, but also, that in participating, they played an integral role in creating international awareness of SY meditation as therapeutic community.
- I explained the purpose of the study, the method of selecting participants and the confidential nature of the interview to the participants in a relaxed and friendly manner so as to motivate the participants and to overcome barriers to the interview. Participants were encouraged to ask questions in order to seek further clarity.

The participants were interviewed separately between March and June 2007. I arranged interviews with the research participants at a time and a venue that was free from possible noise and disruption. At the outset rapport was established and an atmosphere, in which the participant felt relaxed, and where anonymity and confidentiality was guaranteed, was created.

The interviews were audio-recorded with the permission of interviewees (Arksey & Knight, 1999; Bailey, 1996). Audio-tapes were used during interviews, since extensive note taking runs a risk of distracting the participant and interrupting the flow of the interview (Barker, Pistrang & Elliot, 1996). Furthermore, using tape recorders provides a more accurate rendition of any interview than any other method (Yin, 1984). Other benefits to tape recording are that: by preserving the words of the participant, researchers have their original data, and if something is not clear in a transcript, the researcher can return to the source and check for accuracy. Tape recording also benefits the participants, in that they feel assured that there is a record of what they had said, to which they have access. Thereby they can have more confidence that their words will be treated responsibly (Seidman, 1991).

The interviews were unstructured and proceeded with the question: *What are your Sahaja Yoga meditation experiences?* This facilitated a free dialogic flow, which allowed other open-ended questions to be asked during the interview based on the emergent data. I attempted to influence the participant as little as possible. The interviews were of self-determining duration, and were conducted until participants reached saturation point. As soon as possible after each interview I listened to the

recording and made notes. Key words, phrases and statements were transcribed in order to allow the voices of research participants to speak (Seidman, 1991).

3.6 Data-storing methods

Data storage included audio recordings and filing of hard copy documentation. The interview transcriptions were stored electronically on multiple hard drives.

3.6.1 Interviews

Each interview was recorded on a separate cassette which was labelled and assigned with the interview code, for example: "Sohana, 21 May 2007." The researcher opened a file with divisions for the various interviews and filed the following hard copy documentation:

- The informed consent agreement (Appendix A: 1; Appendix B: 1)
- Notes made during the interview.
- Any additional information that the participant offered during the interview, for example brochures.
- Any notes made during the 'data analysis' process, e.g. grouping of units of meaning into themes (Appendix A: 11; Appendix B: 11).
- The draft 'transcription' and 'analysis' of the interview that were presented to the participants for validation (Appendix A: 3, 9; Appendix B: 3, 9).
- The confirmation of correctness and/or commentary by the participant about the 'transcript' and 'analyses' of the interview (Appendix A: 9; Appendix B: 9).
- Any additional/subsequent communication between the participant and the researcher.

3.7 Explication of data

The heading 'data analysis' is deliberately avoided here because Hycner (1999) cautions that 'analysis' has dangerous connotations for phenomenology. The term "analysis" usually means a 'breaking into parts' and therefore, often means a loss of the whole phenomenon, whereas the term "explication" implies an "investigation of the constituents of a phenomenon while keeping the context of the whole" (Hycner, 1999:161). Coffey & Atkinson (1996:9) regard analysis as the "systematic procedures to identify essential features and relationships". It is a way of transforming the data through interpretation. A simplified version of Hycner's (1999) explication process was used in this study. This explication process has five 'steps' or phases, which are as follows:

Step 1: Bracketing and phenomenological reduction

Phenomenological reduction refers to a deliberate and purposeful opening by the researcher to the research topic, SY meditation: therapeutic community, "in its own right with its own meaning" (Fouche, 1993; Hycner, 1999). It further points to a suspension or 'bracketing out' (or epoche), "in a sense that no position is taken either for or against" (Lauer, 1958:49) the researcher's own presuppositions, attempting to limit the researcher's meanings, interpretations and/or theoretical concepts from entering the unique world of the participant (Creswell, 1998: 54,113; Moustakas, 1994:90; Sadala & Adorno, 2001). It refers to the bracketing of the researcher's personal views or preconceptions (Crabtree & Miller, 1992).

The explication process commenced with listening repeatedly to the audio recording of each interview so as to become familiar with the words of the interviewee and in order to develop a holistic sense, the 'gestalt' (Holloway, 1997; Hycner, 1999).

Step 2: Delineating units of meaning

This is a critical phase of explicating the data, in that those statements that are seen to illuminate the researched phenomenon are extracted or 'isolated' (Creswell, 1998; Holloway, 1997; Hycner, 1999). Here I had to make a substantial amount of judgement calls while consciously bracketing my own presuppositions in order to avoid inappropriate subjective judgements. I carefully scrutinised the list of units of relevant meaning extracted from each interview and eliminated the clearly redundant units (Moustakas, 1994). To do this, I considered the literal content, the number (the significance) of times a meaning was mentioned and also how (in terms of non-verbal or para-linguistic cues) it was stated. Careful consideration was given to the actual meaning of two seemingly similar units of meaning, as they might be different in terms of weight or chronology of events (Hycner, 1999).

Step 3: Clustering of units of meaning to form themes

With the list of non-redundant units of meaning in hand, I once again bracketed my presuppositions, in order to remain true to the phenomenon under study. I, then, examined the list of units of meaning rigorously, and attempted to elicit the essence of meaning of units within the holistic context. This, according to Hycner (1999), calls for even more judgement and skill on the part of the researcher. Colaizzi (1999), makes the following remark about the researcher's 'artistic' judgement here: "Particularly in this step is the phenomenological researcher engaged in something

which cannot be precisely delineated, for here he is involved in that ineffable thing known as creative insight” (cited in Hycner, 1999: 150-151).

Clusters of themes were then formed by grouping units of meaning together (Creswell, 1998; King, 1994; Moustakas, 1994) before significant topics called units of significance were identified (Sadala & Adorno, 2001). This process involved going back to the recorded interview (the gestalt) and forth to the list of non-redundant units of meaning in order to derive clusters of appropriate meaning. Considering the nature of human phenomena, there were many overlaps in the clusters and here I had to exercise the necessary precaution not to cluster common themes where significant differences existed. By interrogating the meaning of the various clusters, central themes were determined (Appendix A: 7; Appendix B: 7), which expressed “the essence of these clusters” (Hycner, 1999: 153).

Step 4: Summarising each interview, validating it and where necessary modifying it

In phenomenological analysis, the aim of the investigator is to reconstruct the inner world of experience of the subject. By incorporating all the themes elicited from the data, I summarised each interview in order to present a holistic context (Appendix A: 3; Appendix B: 3). At this point, I conducted a ‘validity check’ by returning the summary of the interview to the participant, so as to determine if the essence of the interview had been correctly ‘captured’ (Hycner, 1999: 154). Any modification necessary was done, as result of this ‘validity check’ (Appendix A: 9; Appendix B: 9).

Step 5: Extracting general themes from all the interviews and making a composite summary

Once the process outlined in points 1 through 4 (Appendix A: 4-6; Appendix B: 4-6) had been done for all the interviews, I looked “for the themes common to most or all of the interviews” (Hycner, 1999: 154). I concluded the explicitation by writing a composite summary, which reflected the context (Appendix A: 7; Appendix B: 7) or ‘horizon’ from which the themes emerged (Hycner, 1999; Moustakas, 1994). These themes represented the core aspects of the experience of Sahaja Yoga meditation phenomena under investigation (Appendix A: 8; Appendix B: 8).

According to Sadala and Adorno (2001:289) the researcher, at this point “transforms participants’ everyday expressions into expressions appropriate to the scientific discourse supporting the research”. Coffey & Atkinson (1996:139), however, emphasise that “good research is not generated by rigorous data alone ... (but) ‘going beyond’ the data to develop ideas”. Initial theorising, however small, is derived from the qualitative data.

3.8 Research quality

Attempts were made throughout the research process to monitor and enhance the quality of the study by applying the criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Krefting, 1991). Credibility was established by prolonged engagement, member checking and peer evaluation.

3.8.1 Prolonged engagement

In this study, the phenomenological research design contributed toward truth. I bracketed myself consciously in order to understand, in terms of the perspectives of the participants interviewed, the phenomenon that I was studying, the “focus of an insider perspective” (Mouton & Marais, 1990:70). The audio recordings made of each interview and again bracketing myself during the transcription of the interview further contributed to the truth.

3.8.2 Member checking

After the data were analysed, I conducted an interview with each participant. The aim was to allow participants an opportunity to examine the data, confirm the correctness of the ‘transcript’ and ‘analysis’ of the interview and rate the emerging themes (Appendix A: 3, 9; Appendix B: 3, 9), in terms of a percentage from 0 to 100% (Krefting, 1991; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

3.8.3 Peer evaluation

The raw data was presented to two independent psychologists for evaluation (Krefting, 1991). They had to examine the data, confirm the correctness of the ‘analysis’ of the interview and rate the emerging themes in terms of a percentage from 0 to 100% (Appendix A: 10; Appendix B: 10).

3.8.4 Transferability

The potential transferability of the findings of the study was enhanced by providing a detailed description of the participants and the research context (Krefting, 1991;

Lincoln & Guba, 1985), thus enabling other researchers and practitioners to evaluate the applicability of the study to their contexts.

3.8.5 Dependability

Dependability was gained by giving an indepth description of the research method, data collection and analysis (Krefting, 1991).

3.8.6 Confirmability

Confirmability was established by using the strategy of researcher reflexivity (Krefting, 1991). The researcher engaged in supervision with another psychologist during the entire research process.

3.9 Resume`

In this chapter, a comprehensive explanation of the entire process involved in conducting this research from its conception was explained. This included the research approach and the data collection and explication process. The results of the study are discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Being in vibrations

Of what avail are words then?

- Shri Jnaseshwar

4.0 Introduction

In the previous chapter, a detailed explanation of the entire process involved in conducting this research was explained. The nature of the research was discussed and the means of managing the quality of the study was outlined. The methods used for data collection were identified and the data analysis techniques were defined.

In this chapter, the interpretive themes that were explicated from the data were reported on. The aim of this study was to investigate Sahaja Yoga meditation as a form of therapeutic community. The critical questions that guided this study were:

- What is Sahaja Yoga meditation?
- How is Sahaja Yoga meditation practised?
- How is Sahaja Yoga meditation different from other types of meditation?
- In what ways is Sahaja Yoga a form of therapeutic community?

4.1 Overview

Phenomenological researchers are likely to agree that the enquiry requires patience, receptivity, sustained focussed attention, emotional harmony, inspiration regarding the subject matter and some degree of characterological maturity. Phenomenology

can be useful for inner development. The navigation through one's own system of inner experience facilitates the faculty of epoche, the backward motion through the layers of experience towards the explication of ontologically deeper structures. How do we go from explaining to understanding? The wisdom that lies in the lived experience is infinite. The researcher matures through degrees of rising awareness, and the resulting knowledge is "not simply cerebral, but belongs to the realms of heart-intellect" (Nasr, 1992: xiii).

4.2 Common themes

Through mediating and reflecting on the data "for the themes common to most or all of the interviews" (Hycner, 1999: 154), five interpretive themes which explained the meaning of experience in terms of the research topic, SY meditation: therapeutic community was reported on. The themes common (Appendix A: 8; Appendix B: 8) to most, or all of the interviews were:

- Collectivity
- Kundalini healing
- Transformation
- Meditation
- Self-realisation

4.3 Discussion

SY meditation is different from other types of meditation such as Transcendental meditation and Vipassana and Mindful meditation because it can be practiced only upon receiving one's Self-realisation. Upon receiving his/her Self-realisation, the Sahaja yogi has to meditate daily on his/her own as well as collectively with other

Sahaja yogis. Daily meditation imparts healing qualities, which transform Sahaja yogis in positive ways.

As Self-realisation is a pre-requisite for practising SY meditation, the discussion on emerging themes commenced with Self-realisation. Thereafter, a discussion of the following themes was reported on: meditation, collectivity, Kundalini healing and transformation.

4.3.1 Theme 1: Self-realisation

Self-Realisation is the process of awakening the "Kundalini." When the Kundalini is awakened, it rises through each of the chakras, pulling them into alignment, like beads on a string, harmonizing their function. Since each of the chakras governs corresponding aspects of our physical body's function, as well as our psyche, the alignment of the chakras, causes our physical organs to function harmoniously and our health to improve. Similarly, our intellect becomes harmonised with emotions and a state of mental and physical balance is achieved. This balance of mind and body was taught by many great souls. Buddha spoke of a balanced lifestyle when he spoke about "the middle path". Lao Tse spoke of a balance that was dynamic, which changed with demands placed upon it, but was always a source of stability and balance. He called it "Tao ". Jesus Christ taught that, through forgiving others, and by being forgiven, we could experience inner peace and spiritual ascent. These qualities start to emerge automatically when the Kundalini activates the subtle system and Self-realisation is attained (De Kalbermatten, 2003:308).

Self-realisation refers to the realisation that, God is within you. The ultimate realisation is, not merely to connect, but to become. To become one with the divine

is, to realise that, the divine consciousness is, who that Self really is. According to De Kalbermatten (2001: 373), it is said that the Self is the primordial manifestation of existence within man. It has been asserted that in relating to the Self we relate to Existence itself. The knowledge of Existence implies the highest plenitude of bliss, for it finds its deepest roots in the presence of the Self, the Atman, God within us. Divinity lives within us. It is not found in pious practice, in churches or in temples. It comprises our own basic reality, the atma.

According to the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad:

Whoever worships another divinity other than his Self, thinking “He is one, I am another,” knows not One should worship with the thought that he is one’s Self, for therein all these become one. The Self is the footprint of that All – just as verily, by following a footprint one may find cattle that have been lost He who reverences the Self alone as dear – what he holds dear, verily will not perish (cited in De Kalbermatten, 2003: 210).

In the Upanishads, sacred texts of ancient India, the Spirit is the consolidated state of Truth, Consciousness and Bliss (Sat-Chit-Ananda). Parmendes, Aquinas and Heidegger said the same. The Spirit is the reflection of God (De Kalbermatten, 2003).

Participants’ descriptions of their experiences of Self-realisation follow:

- Chan reported *“I felt a sudden surge of energy rising inside me (1). Wave upon wave of blissfulness covered my entire being as I silently witnessed what was happening around me (2). I experienced a feeling of intense peacefulness and inner joy” (3).*

- Sohana experienced *“a very subtle inner transformation”* (1) when she received her Self-realisation.
- Shirley reported, *“I immediately felt a cool sensation on the top of my head (1). I felt cool breezes on my palms, under my feet, around my head and my forehead (3). I experienced a surge of energy rise in my subtle system, enfolding me in indescribable bliss”* (4).
- Pravina said, *“I felt tingling sensations on the palms of my hands, and, a pleasant feeling of a cool breeze flowing gently out of my fontanelle bone area”* (1) a few weeks after receiving Self-realisation.

“In my own early experiences,” De Kalbermatten (2001:39), stated, *“I felt the awakening (jagruthi) of my Kundalini a couple of times as a pleasant feeling of coolness from the bottom of my spine.”*

Other Sahaja yogis had other experiences. A yogi from India said that he actually heard the sound made by the Kundalini piercing the fontanelle membrane. Another yogi recalls after the same experience, a sensation of bliss melting down from the top of his head. Having closed his eyes, another yogi saw an elliptic movement of light spreading from the Agnya chakra and lightening his head (De Kalbermatten, 2003:40).

4.3.2 Theme 2: Meditation

Meditation is a practice that benefits mind, body and spirit. Through inner exploration (finding God from within), meditation awakens creativity, healing, and transformation. We spend most of our lives looking outward to the world of form and phenomena,

believing that the source of happiness, peace, and fulfillment lies external to ourselves. Meditation allows us to explore our essential nature, restoring the memory of wholeness in our lives. Meditation is not about forcing our mind to be quiet; rather it's a process to rediscover the quietness that is ever present. Behind the screen of our internal dialogue is the silence of pure awareness – a silence that is not disturbed by thoughts of the past or concerns of the future (Chopra, 2000; De Kalbermatten, 2003).

According to Krippner (1998: ix) during meditation "... one's identity plunges more deeply, extends more widely, or expands more broadly.... 'Spirit' is encountered..." This espouses the notion of an evolved state of being, similar to the Buddhist concept of Nirvana, wherein one experiences clarity of existence and enlightenment. Cortright (1997: 59) described how during his meditations he becomes "... more centered to the depths of my being ...a greater calm, equanimity, and loving sense of presence..."

Meditation is an important aspect in the lives of Sahaja yogis. Research participants' descriptions of their meditation experiences follow:

Chan said *"When I go into meditation, I enter a world where material things do not take precedence any longer (6). There's a different kind of joy, a different kind of peace (7). Through meditation I am able to look at the 'bigger picture' " (8). "... a state of blissful peacefulness prevails and there is no problem that is impossible to overcome" (13).*

Pravina reflected: *"Meditation allows me to introspect, and by changing my thoughts and feelings from negative to positive, I receive guidance and answers to my questions (10). Beautiful positive qualities such as innocence, child-like joy, dignity, balance, and a tremendous sense of direction and purpose in life manifest themselves in me (11). These special qualities have transformed the way I live my life, the way I enjoy life and the way I understand life (12). By living my life in meditation I have become humble, loving, compassionate and confident (14). Daily meditation has improved my mental focus, concentration and energy levels (16). Since I began meditating, my breathing has improved (17). I have become closer to the people around me, more productive in my work, less stressed out, and basically more contented than I have ever been" (18).*

Describing his meditation experiences, Taylor (2007) said: *"I started to experience very strange, pleasurable states of consciousness. I had often experienced feelings of peacefulness and well-being, which sometimes lasted for a couple of days afterwards, but this was something stronger. The first time it happened, I began to feel very relaxed and calm, as if the flow of my life-energies was becoming smoother and lighter. It was as if I was suddenly on a different planet. Over the following months I had the same experience several times again, and I learned to relax and trust it. I let the sense of strangeness overcome me, as the light in the room became brighter and all objects began to shimmer and merge into one another. The light seemed to be flowing out and immersing everything in its brightness. The room was filled with this beautiful shimmering haze of golden light, and I was filled with a deep serenity, a glow of intense well-being filling my whole body. I could feel it flowing through my legs and my feet, as if I'd taken a sedative of some kind. I usually had a*

very powerful feeling of calmness and serenity inside. I was often aware that my breathing had slowed down dramatically, and when I left I found myself doing everything very slowly, with a natural mindfulness. My mind was still and quiet, and outside everything looked beautiful and alive."

West (1980a, 1980b) said his subjects used these terms to describe their meditative state: feelings of quiet, calmness, and peace; pleasant feelings; relaxation beyond thought; warm contentedness and a feeling of being suspended in deep warmth. Kornfield (1979) said that rapture and bliss states are common during meditation and are usually related to increased concentration and tranquility. Goleman (1978-79) said that meditation brings about rapturous feelings that cause goose flesh, tremor in the limbs and other attributes of rapture. He said that sublime happiness sometimes suffused the meditator's body, accompanied by an unprecedented never-ending bliss, which motivates the meditator to tell others of this extraordinary experience. In this study, as a result of the joy Annie experienced when in meditation, she said *"I wanted to share this experience with others; I wanted to tell the whole world about SY meditation"* (19).

When Kerry was pregnant with her first child she learnt that when she was anxious, so was the baby. She said *"During my pregnancies, meditation helped me to remain calm whenever I was anxious"* (13).

Pregnancy is one of the most beautiful aspects of womanhood. Each pregnancy, each child born, is a special opportunity for a woman to discover within herself great

strength and flexibility. From the day the foetus begins its long path to final development, it shares the mother-to-be's stress, fears, and frustration. SY meditation helps to resolve the deepest of neuroses, fears and conflicts which are a major cause for stress and ill-health. SY meditation brings with it an incredible awareness which works at a very subtle level. It helps the mother-to-be to explore her inner self and to establish a deep and meaningful connection with her child. It facilitates the birth process by relaxing the mother and reducing her pain and anxiety. The repetition of certain mantras during meditation has a remarkably soothing and subtle impact on the consciousness and it has an extremely positive effect on the senses of the mother and on the developing foetus. SY meditation has the capacity to produce a higher quality of conception, a healthier maternal environment for pregnancy and a more harmonious birthing experience. More importantly, for the new-born, the SY meditation techniques assist in bringing into the world a child less inhibited by stress and potential illness, a Self-realised soul (Jamieson, 2005; Khalsa, 2003).

Describing her SY experiences Sohana said, *"One of my most striking memories about being in meditation is the incredible peaceful experience of being in the present, as well as in the witness state"* (12).

'Thoughtlessness' or thoughtless awareness is the fourth state of consciousness, referred to as the *turyiya state*. The *turyiya state* is beyond the three modes (trigunatmika). *Turyiya* is also described as the state beyond sleep, dream and waking. In this state we enter into the field of unbounded awareness, and through

meditation we are able to access the silent spaces between thoughts. The silence we experience in meditation is in the "gap" between thoughts. Glimpsing this field of quiet, expanded awareness allows us to recognise that our essential self is not the perpetual traffic of thoughts that fill our minds, but the silent witness to our thoughts, words, and actions.

According to De Kalbermatten (2003), the consciousness within is sometimes referred to as the witness. The witness sits beyond our normal activity, watching without judgment the changing emotions, the flurry of thoughts, the impulses and attachments. The witness is something above and beyond the body and its experience, beyond memories and dreams, even though it silently observes all these events. The witness may be the soul essence that has lived beyond this lifetime. It may be a divine intelligence that is larger than the Self. To become aware of the witness is to become aware of the essence that dwells within. The witness is the core of the Self, an indestructible spark of divinity. To embrace the witness is to embrace the underlying reality of our being. The witness can be both subjective and objective. It can detach from places where we suffer, and it can teach us how to swim in the stream when we are flailing about. The witness is the eternal guide, an invaluable friend, the deep inner awareness of the Self. Regular practise of the meditation technique known as Sahaja Yoga Meditation helps establish inner quietness in life, providing access to creativity and enabling us to make life-affirming choices (De Kalbermatten, 2003: 399).

Shirley reported *"By practicing SY meditation, I experienced a noticeable difference in my life (8). SY helped me to grow enormously (9). I developed courage and self-confidence and can deal independently with most situations (10). I used to be anxious, but meditation removed my anxiety and allowed me to live in harmony with my surroundings (11). My confidence and self-esteem thus improved (12). People refrained from meddling with me (13). I receive more respect at home and in the workplace (14). My husband believes the spiritual protection we receive has improved our relationship" (15).* Shirley added *"I believe that as a result of regular meditation the vibes within my home has changed tremendously and there is an over-powering feeling of peace and joy which has fostered strong family bonds" (24).*

Physical impurities in cells have their equivalents in the mind: fear, anger, greed, compulsivity, doubt, and other negative emotions. Operating at the quantum level, they can be as damaging to us as any chemical toxin. The mind body connection turns negative attitudes into chemical toxins, the so-called "stress hormones" that have been linked to many different diseases. All negative tendencies (mental ama) need to be cleaned from the mind. It is not possible to purify the mind by thinking about it. An angry mind cannot conquer its own anger; fear cannot quench fear. Instead, a technique is required that goes beyond the domain where fear, anger, and all other forms of mental ama hold sway. This technique is meditation. If properly taught and used, meditation allows a person to become unstuck from the ama in his thoughts and emotions (Chopra, 2000). Sahaja Yoga meditation is the perfect antidote to modern stress.

4.3.3 Theme 3: Collectivity

Collectivity is best described by the Sanskrit word *satsang*. In Sanskrit, *sat* means true and *sanga* means company. *Sat* really means association with the unmanifest or absolute existence. However, as very few can do that, they have to take second best which is association with the manifest *Sat*, that is, the Guru (teacher). Association with sages should be made because thoughts are so persistent. The sage has already overcome the mind and remains in peace. Being in the Guru's proximity helps to bring about this condition in others, otherwise there is no meaning in seeking his/her company. The guru provides the needed strength for this (<http://www.hinduwebsite.com/hinduism/concepts/satsang/asp>).

Relationships with the guru are important and in different spiritual traditions, the mode of relationship differs. In Shakta-Vedanta/Kundalini Yoga/Sahaja Yoga, for example, the teacher is highly revered and seen as "God" incarnate. Mahayana Buddhism suggests more "horizontal", less hierarchical relationship with the teacher as somebody who "walked the path" before you. Sufism introduces the notion of teacher as a friend. Many contemporary teachers emphasise that the "guru" (remover of the darkness of ignorance in Sanskrit) is nothing other than your own higher Self (<http://www.hinduwebsite.com/hinduism/concepts/satsang/asp>).

All the great spiritual masters and saints had their own teachers. Lord Jesus sought John the Baptist to baptize him on the banks of the river Jordan, Lord Krishna sat at the feet of his Guru Sandeepani, Lord Rama went to sage Vasishtha for instructions. It is necessary for us to have a Guru or a teacher to lead us safely to Self-realisation.

The grace of the Guru is the grace of God. Grace is linked to self-surrender. The more we surrender ourselves to the Guru, the more we draw ourselves to his/her grace (<http://www.hinduwebsite.com/hinduism/concepts/satsang/asp>).

Research participant, Annie emphasised that *“One has to surrender to her Divine Love to enable Her to work out one’s problems (36). The Divine Mother provides everything (33). She counsels, protects and educates via meditation and you reach a higher level of understanding humanity and the Love of God (34). All one has to do is to be the recipient of Her Love” (35).*

In order to evolve more rapidly one needs the guidance of a Guru. Opening up to a higher power and to the mystical and transcendental side of spirituality in general requires the ability to surrender. Only by surrendering our attachments, our unworkable belief systems, our addictive habits, and our need to control, can we truly experience the magnitude of our universal identity. Only then do we open to the abundant possibilities that exist. Surrendering to a higher power does not require us to relinquish lower states, but it does involve a release of that which separates us from the rest of creation

(<http://www.hinduwebsite.com/hinduism/concepts/satsang/asp>).

Enlightened people are like spiritual dynamos: they have a very strong presence which touches the people they come into contact with, transmitting something of their enlightenment to them. With enlightened people, their life-energy is so intensified and stilled, and has such powerful positive qualities, that they “transmit” waves of calm

and bliss to everyone around them. Even people who aren't at all "spiritual" usually feel a sense of well-being in their presence, and, so feel attracted to them without knowing why. For people who have made some spiritual progress already, the effect can be extremely powerful. Contact with an enlightened person may enable them to make the final "jump" to permanent enlightenment themselves. This is one of the reasons why many spiritual traditions place so much emphasis on the role of a guru. The guru is so important not just because of the advice and guidance he can give you, but because he/she can transmit his spiritual power to you, giving you a taste of enlightenment and speeding up your spiritual development (Taylor, 2007).

Describing his experience on being in the presence of his Guru, De Kalbermatten (2003:161-162) wrote: *"Shri Mataji sat in front of me, perhaps a yard away. I was holding my hands towards her to feel the vibrations, which at that moment, I could not perceive very clearly. Then she moved her hand and it all started. The vibrations coming from her increased and felt cooler but soon my attention was taken by another sensation. The top of my head was coming alive and I had the sensation of it opening, and it felt like the out-pouring of an incredible liquid awareness. I became drenched in an inner lake of joy, which then coagulated into something that I can only describe as a solidified state of bliss. My eyes were closed and gradually, slowly, the cup overflowed and bliss started flowing down from my head into my whole body, filling every nerve. It was both a state and a sensation, both spiritual and physical. O my God! I could not even utter these words; but I was just the awareness beyond the words: It was a flow, a river of beatitude; something literally and completely, in the parlance of the time, blew my mind. What I had known of the intensity of physical love seemed only a tiny inkling, a spark of this. It was a sacred moment beyond*

description. No matter how little prepared or purified my inner system had been, I felt washed, healed, cared for and loved by the touch of this divinity within. This condition, as I say, was unlike anything I am capable of describing accurately but if I were to try to characterise it, I would say that it was, at its core, the sensation of being completely, absolutely real. Was it a stream of consciousness, a liquid joy, a nuclear bliss?"

The American spiritual teacher Andrew Cohen had his first experience when he met the Indian teacher who became his guru, H.W.L. Poonja. Cohen asked his guru whether it was important to make an effort in spiritual practice, and he replied, *"You don't have to make any effort to be free."* And at that moment Cohen experienced enlightenment: *"His words penetrated very deeply, I turned and looked out into the courtyard outside his room and inside myself all I saw was a river – in that instant I realised that I had always been Free. I saw clearly that I never could have been other than Free and that any idea or concept of bondage had always been and could only ever be completely illusory"* (Taylor, 2007).

The 'flow' of power from the Guru can be received by anyone whose attention is focused on the Self or on the form of the Guru; distance is no impediment to its efficacy. 'Flow' is a state in which people are so absorbed that nothing else matter (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). The most important element in satsang is the spiritual connection, the 'flow' of power from the Guru. Satsang does, however, takes place not only in the presence of the Guru, but whenever and wherever one thinks of him/her. Contact with a guru is necessary, but this means spiritual contact. If the

disciple finds the guru internally, then it does not matter where he/she goes. Staying here or elsewhere must be understood to be the same and to have the same effect (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Taylor, 2007).

On his personal awakening of the Kundalini, Sahaja yogi, Rajbai J. Modi wrote, *“Shri Mataji touched the sixth plexus for a few seconds and a powerful force started rising from plexus to plexus and ultimately to the brain. While this was going on, I was going very deep into Dhyana (meditation) with immense joy and pleasing sensations all over my body. My eyes could not be opened and meditation continued. My body was warmer; I was within myself as if fully drunk, but completely conscious”* (De Kalbermatten, 2001:39).

David, a Sahaja yogi from London, described his encounter with Shri Mataji: *“I felt incredibly kind of happy. I felt very high. The pressure in my head melted away; everytime she looked at me coolness surrounded me.”* Mariam declared that: *“As soon as she put her attention on me I felt the vibrations.”* For Lindsay it was like flying with the Tao. *Wow! It was so beautiful. I was just silent. I felt so much love. It is my heart which decided.”* Christine: *“A couple of weeks before meeting Shri Mataji I started feeling full of joy and ... I don't know how to say it ... incredibly happy just to exist. I saw Her for the first time in a friend's flat. When she entered into the room, the palms of my hands started tingling and then there was a cool breeze. I felt completely at peace. Completely there, it was a second birth. Everything was new”* (De Kalbermatten, 2001:39).

Waiting to see Shri Mataji, while in collective meditation at an international pooja Annie spoke of her experience, *“The Kundalini energy within me was fully awakened, continuously ascending and descending and filling me with indescribable, intense feelings of blissfulness (24). A continuous surge of energy flowed through my subtle being, a river in pursuit of the ocean, pouring its refreshing coolness like a waterfall from the top of my head and around my body (25). On opening my eyes I realised that Shri Mataji was not physically present, but that it was the Power of Pure Love that She was emitting which I felt within my being (26). I was overwhelmed with wave upon wave of blissfulness and I surrendered myself totally to Her teachings (27). The connection between my Guru and me was as intense as the biological bond between mother and new-born child (28). This connection was re-established every time I heard Her voice, in my mind, on video or on cassette” (29).*

Tony, a Sahaja yogi was meditating in a room with a picture of Shri Mataji. Young children of visiting friends came into the room and asked what he was doing. He answered smilingly: *“I’m taking power from this Holy Lady. Do you want to try? So this little band sat down. They all stretched their hands towards the picture. After some time a little girl remarked: “Hey there is a lot of wind.” She paused for a while and then asked thoughtfully, “How do you switch it off?”* The common thread running through the various experiences is that just by Her glance or through the help of Her photograph one can achieve awakening and also Self-realisation (De Kalbermatten (2001:39).

Spiritual experiences are more than just feelings – they are also experiences of vision, insight and revelation. According to Taylor (2007) one of the most important aspects of satsang experiences, is that they show that spiritual illumination is also

communicable. Feelings of bliss can certainly spread from person to person – and so can the vision of the oneness of the universe, the awareness that the essential reality of the universe is a limitless ocean of Spirit, and the experience of transcending the ego and being reborn as a deeper and higher Self. These experiences are completely transferable – under the right circumstances, they can be passed from an enlightened person to others without any loss of intensity.

According to Shirley, *“When there is a pooja going on anywhere in the world, I automatically feel a cool breeze a good week in advance and this gets stronger and stronger as the time approaches (26). At a pooja, the vibrations are extensive and intense and I feel elevated beyond measure (27). When in the collective with other yogis, the vibrations become much stronger (28). When I leave the collective, I feel cool breezes emerging from my head and hands and around my body (29). I feel stronger for being part of the collective” (30).*

Pravina reflected: *“Collective meditation is a sublime experience which has strengthened and deepened the quality of my meditation” (15).* The synchronisation of a large number of people getting their experience of sammadhi matters as this is the power of collectivity ... the joining of the microcosm with the macrocosm. By attending satsang and by seeking the guidance of a guru, one can enhance one's spiritual knowledge.

Annie added: *“In collectivity with yogis from around the world from all walks of life, my instrument was in a constant state of renewal (30). There were no barriers and all the yogis enjoyed the enlightened spirit, friendship, ever flowing stream of Love,*

togetherness, total bliss and relaxation and connectivity with the common bond (31), Shri Mataji as Mother, Father, Friend and Teacher”(32).

4.3.4 Theme 4: Kundalini healing

The etymology of the term energy healing is derived from the Greek roots *energeia*, meaning activity, the German terms *heilin* (whole), *heilig* (holy) and related old English terms *hael* (whole), *haelen* (heal) and *halig* (holy) (Graham, 1990). The phrase “to heal” actually means “to make whole.”

The primary energy that is awakened in us is called Kundalini. It is a reflection of the feminine aspect of the Divine Universal Being. It rests in a state of hibernation within us, until it become active and then helps to clear us of all sorts of known and unknown psychosomatic, mental, physical and spiritual problems in our bodies, our psyche, our emotions and our spirit. It is through the work of the awakened Kundalini on our chakras that personality change can occur spontaneously. The process of the Kundalini passing through the chakras automatically improves specific qualities within an individual. Tears of joy may stream down one's face as love beyond measure courses through one's body. The Kundalini's gifts are incomparable. After receiving them no one is ever the same (<http://www.thesoulsjourney.com/kundalini.html>).

The experience of sammadhi is filled with an indescribable feeling of well-being as if the whole body is caressed inwardly (De Kalbermatten, 2003). Participants' in this study described their Kundalini experiences as follows:

Annie recalled: *“I felt a surge of Energy flow through me and cover my entire*

being with a feeling of intense blissfulness (11). Pravina experienced “an ever-flowing fountain of cascading cool breezes” (9).

In his book, *Third Eye and Kundalini*, Dr B.S. Goel (1985:288) stated the following:

Kundalini can cure any disease like cancer, heart trouble, asthma, provided one is able to attract the mercy of the Guru through whom God is operating. In fact, Kundalini is the Shakti of the Lord and anything can be accomplished through it. Indeed, “things that are impossible for man are possible for the Lord.”

Healing a person through a Higher Source Energy is prevalent from ancient times. Various names associated with this type of treatment are faith healing, paranormal healing, spiritual healing, psychic healing, absent healing, magnetic healing and mental healing. Procedures involved under the different terms are not necessarily the same, yet the common factor is that the healing energy belongs to a Higher Power. Kundalini healing takes place in several ways. Some of these are as follows:

- **Kundalini healing through music**

The human voice is one of the most interesting instruments when it comes to uplifting and healing. Singing can also be extraordinarily powerful in healing because of the sheer visceral experience of making music with one's own body. The ability to make beautiful sounds with the voice is something that most professional singers train at for years – and continue to perfect over a lifetime. Many healers prefer to use their voices instead of other instruments when channeling healing sound energy. The voice acts as a powerful vehicle for healing energy, in part because sound spoken or sung is made up of several overtones or harmonics – more so than a single note on

most instruments. These layers of harmonics amplify the capacity of sound to heal. Women's voices, in general contain more harmonics than do men's (http://naturalmedicine.suite101.com/article.cfm/healing_with_sound).

The great composers have known for centuries that music has the power to heal. Music allows the spirit to soar. When a piece of music touches you, some indefinable part of your consciousness transcends to new heights. Sohana was convinced that *"Music can cure people and give them Self-realisation (23). I am sure that my singing cures illnesses (24). My singing has always calmed my daughter when she is ill (26). When I sang to Sahaja yogis who were ill they often recovered from their illnesses"* (27) (http://naturalmedicine.suite101.com/article.cfm/healing_with_sound).

Kerry, who has a musical background said *"Whenever I sing, play a musical instrument or even listen to music, I experience deep vibrations (16). I enjoy the flow of the music as it has a joyous effect on me (17). Singing impacts on my breathing and as the flow of the music consumes me, the power of the Kundalini energy threads through my chakras and a cool breeze oozes out of the top of my head filling me with blissfulness and thoughtlessness (18). SY meditation is like music. It stirs my heart, uplifts my spirit, and, repeatedly gives me my Self-realisation"* (19).

The use of music in sacred ceremonies and shamanic rituals has occurred since ancient times. According to Goldman (1996), it has been recently verified that sound can be used to effect and change our brain waves. The changing of these rates creates changes in consciousness, allowing mystically altered states to be induced. These principles of using resonance and entrainment are the fundamental concepts

behind the use of sound to heal and transform. They are found in every practice that uses sound, regardless of the tradition, belief system or culture. The use of sound as a healing modality is nothing new. It is probably as old as the first sound ever made by man. The first humans are believed to have used sounds in sacred and ritualistic ways to promote fertility, to aid at birth, to facilitate the growing of crops, to accept death and for many other occasions. Using sound, they would summon spirits and ancestors and cure sickness and rid a body of disease. For all the instruments available on this planet, the most powerful is the human voice. This is especially true when the voice is used for healing (Goldman, 1996:15-17).

Indian classical music which is based on the primal sound OM and music such as that composed by Mozart, Bach and Vivaldi emit divine vibrations that are considered uplifting. They take us to a higher state of consciousness. Music helps us bring our attention inwards, away from all the external distractions and interruptions (http://naturalmedicine.suite101.com/article.cfm/healing_with_sound).

Sohana reported, *"I love singing bhajans as I experience a tremendous cooling, relaxing and joy-giving feeling"* (21). *"I believe that my voice, awakens my Kundalini and that of others, when I sing bhajans"* (25). Bhajans are songs of devotion, steeped in the timeless traditions of eastern wisdom. They were developed for the sole purpose of raising one's consciousness through recognition of the divine source, which permeates all things. They inculcate the feeling of bliss because in performing it, all the motor and sensory organs are engaged and directed towards the Supreme (http://naturalmedicine.suite101.com/article.cfm/healing_with_sound).

- **Kundalini healing through chakra clearing**

When we are in a state of ill health, the chakras may be distorted, out of alignment or even stagnant. When this happens, life force energy cannot flow in and out freely and the physical body may suffer. Stress, inability to express emotions, beliefs incongruent with Truth, disconnection from a higher power, unhealthy diet, lack of exercise and exposure to toxicity can cause the chakra system to close down.

We have seven major chakras and these correspond to seven segments of the body. Chakras supposedly operate as spatially represented domains of stable clusters of psychological experiences (Antonov & Vaver, 1989; Goswami, 1995). For instance, the root chakra is identified as an interior space of consciousness appearing when the yogi focuses attention inside the area between the pubic bone and sacrum. It is associated with survival and psychological-social stability. The throat chakra is associated with the development of capacity for discernment, moral sense, congruence of expression, sense of beauty and exaltation (Antonov & Vaver, 1989; Tirtha, 1993). Chakras also serve as entrances into the subtle states of consciousness, and as transformers of the energy/emotions in the alchemical forms of Kundalini tantra. By moving, for example, concentration between the solar plexus and the heart chakra, the yogi can cause the transformation of the emotion of anger into the emotions of compassion (Chia, 1991; Luchakova, 1998).

Every chakra can be under the attack of a specific defect, behaviour or addiction. While healing malfunctioning chakras is a fascinating process, the body has an

extraordinary intelligence and ability to heal itself. Cells desire to be well, and given the right energetic, emotional and nutritional environments, they do just that. One of the greatest aspects of SY is that a Sahaja yogi has the power to use his/her hands as a *multi-purpose transmitter of energy to cure people*. The hand is linked with the central psycho-somatic system. Each of the fingers of the hand sends forth and receives the differentiated vibrations of the corresponding chakras (De Kalbermatten, 2001: 38).

- **Balancing the chakras with the voice**

The use of the voice to balance and align the chakras has been part of the Hindu Ayurvedic medicine for thousands of years. The application of sound is usually practised through recitation of mantras.

According to Goldman (1996: 12), everything in the universe from the orbits of the planets around the sun to movement of the electrons around atoms is in a state of vibration. Sound may be understood as being vibration. 'Resonance' is the frequency at which an object most naturally vibrates. Everything has resonance frequency, whether or not we can audibly perceive it. In alignment with the concept of sound, every organ, bone and tissue in the body has its own resonance frequency. Through resonance it is possible for the vibrations of one vibrating body to reach out and set another body into motion. Different rhythms of the body may also be changed through sound. This is 'entrainment' and involves the ability of the more powerful rhythmic vibrations of one body to change the less powerful rhythmic vibrations of another body and cause them to synchronise their rhythms with the first body.

Sahaja Yogis use resonance and entrainment to facilitate healing of malfunctioning or blocked chakras. Yogis raise their vibration and create a high level of energy. When that energy field is placed in the area of a malfunctioning chakra it entrains to the higher frequency and allows its own biological intelligence to do whatever healing necessary. The chakra cleansing or balancing process provides healing energy for both the healer as well as for the person seeking healing. The healer does not become drained from doing the work, most often, he/she feels emotionally uplifted as a result.

Each chakra resonates with a particular frequency of vibration and is an integral part of vibrational medicine. Chakras are balanced by inviting them back to their natural state of vibration & frequency. The physical body is a unit made of many different integral parts that are designed to be self-correcting. The body's job is to maintain balance and the free-flow of energy. The chakras are an energetic gateway, feeding the body pranic energy and providing an outlet for the release and dispersal of spent energy. Annie commented *"When my instrument was cleansed by Her Love I felt the Energy flow"* (19). This refers to the moment of Self-realisation when the Kundalini rises within the spinal cord (Sushumna nadi – the Tree of Life) and makes its way through the void breaking through the apex of the brain (Brahma Randhra) and connecting with the all pervading Primordial Energy (<http://www.luminanti.com/>).

Imagery is the language that the mind uses to communicate with the body. It is the biological connection between the mind and body. Imagery is considered a healing tool in virtually all of the world's cultures and it is an integral part of many religions.

Navajo Indians, for example, practice an elaborate form of imagery that encourages a person to "see" himself as healthy. Ancient Egyptians and Greeks, including Aristotle and Hippocrates believed that images release spirits in the brain that arouse the heart and other parts of the body. They also thought that a strong image of a disease is enough to cause its symptoms. In order to find out which chakra is malfunctioning, Chan explains "*you evaluate yourself. Through introspection find out which chakra requires unblocking*" (2). Malfunctioning chakras can be unblocked through introspection and by chanting chakra specific mantras, reciting affirmations and performing mudras.

- **Chakra meditation**

Chakra meditation involving intoning a Siddha mantra gives all fulfilment (*Kularnava Tantra*). A Siddha mantra is intoned aloud to create a healing resonance in the mind and body.

There are Siddha mantras associated with each of the seven energy centres in the body. Each chakra identifies with a core human need and is associated with a specific vibration. When the centre is open, the energy that flows through the chakra allows the meditator to meet those needs more effortlessly. If there is a blockage in any one area of the body/mind system, energy becomes stagnant and ones intentions are more difficult to actualise. Each centre can be activated by placing attention in the location of the chakra and sounding the associated mantra aloud. The more frequently and intensely the Sahaja yogi repeats the mantra, the more the Kundalini rises under its vibrational impact. When the repetition stops, it again returns to slumber. If the mental repetition of the siddha mantra continues all the time, day

and night, the Kundalini remains perpetually awakened. When the Kundalini is sleeping, the individual remains in one of the three states: wakeful, dream or dreamless sleep. Only when the Kundalini is awakened can the individual enter the fourth (turiya) state, the state of non-duality or 'thoughtless awareness' (Chopra & Simon, 2004; De Kalbermatten, 2003).

4.3.5 Theme 5: Transformation

According to the Oxford Concise Dictionary (1983:1138), the word transformation means to change in outward appearance, character, and disposition. The awakened Kundalini can stir up everything from latent diseases of the body to emotional or psychological disturbances. Kundalini arousal include: rushes of energy through the body or up and down the spine, retention of breath and other changes in breathing patterns, healings, habits or addictions dropping away, inspired creativity, and states of boundless ecstasy and love arising for no apparent reason. While initial experiences may focus on physical, emotional and mental purification and transformation, shifts in values, attitudes and behaviours also occur and have a major impact on relationships. Changes with attitude and value are the most stressful areas of transformation for relationships.

From the very first beginner's class in meditation that Annie attended, she said: *"my instrument was cleansed by Her Love (11). I became more relaxed and stress free as I progressed in meditation (13). I became more satisfied with life (14). Persistent financial problems eased up and simply disappeared (15). I slept well and my migraines stopped (16). My energy levels returned to normal and my problematic slipped disc appeared to have recovered (17). My family realised that whatever I was*

doing had a positive effect on me and as a result my husband and son joined me (18).

Shirley reported that "On health issues I do not feel the need to run to doctors (16). As a Sahaja Yogi I meditate to rid myself of ills (17). Daily meditation is important for my well-being as it frees the body of negativity" (18).

According to Chan, "In Sahaj, we are happy everyday. We have beautiful vibrations because we have Mother (Shri Mataji) in our lives (5). Once you have Sahaj, you are balanced" (6).

Annie remarked, "I now know that the solutions for the world problems are the same as for individual problems, that is, to be connected to the source of Divine Love (39). I firmly believed that Self-realisation is the passport to universal social, political and economic problems (40). I experimented with it and I can confidently say that I live a blissful, peaceful and pleasant life (41).

By bringing about an inner transformation of human beings, the benefits of SY accrue not only to the individual but also to society, to the nation and ultimately to the entire humanity. SY brings about integration of all the major religions of the world.

4.4 Resume`

In this chapter a detailed discussion of the five interpretive themes: Self-realisation, meditation, collectivity, Kundalini healing and transformation, that explained the

meaning of experience in terms of the research topic, Sahaja Yoga meditation: therapeutic community were reported on.

In the next chapter an overview of the study, its utility value, recommendations, future research possibilities and concluding remarks are outlined.

CHAPTER FIVE

OVERVIEW, VALUE OF STUDY, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

"What a great thing it would be, if we in our busy lives, could restore into ourselves each day, for at least a couple of hours, and, prepare our minds, to listen to, the voice of the great silence. The divine radio is always singing, if we could only, make ourselves ready to listen to it, but, it is impossible to listen without silence."

- Mahatma Ghandi

5.0 Introduction

The previous chapter provided a detailed discussion of the five interpretive themes: Self-realisation, meditation, collectivity, kundalini healing and transformation that explained the meaning of experience in terms of the research topic, Sahaja Yoga meditation: therapeutic community. In this chapter an overview of the study, its utility value, recommendations, future research directions and concluding remarks were outlined.

The aim of this study was to investigate SY meditation as a form of therapeutic community. The critical questions that guided this study were:

- What is Sahaja Yoga meditation?
- How is Sahaja Yoga meditation practised?
- How is Sahaja Yoga meditation different from other types of meditation?
- In what ways is Sahaja Yoga a form of therapeutic community?

5.1 Overview

SY is a unique method of meditation which begins with an experience called Self-realisation (Kundalini awakening). It was founded on the principle that the path to achieving peace and harmony in the world begins with each individual establishing a higher sense of awareness and subtle self-knowledge. It works by balancing the energy of the body on a subtle level and connecting the individual with the universal living consciousness - a process known as Self-realisation. It is believed that you can realise a state of peace and tranquility and heal your body, mind and spirit with the regular practice of SY meditation. In the light of this new awareness, an inner transformation takes place through which you become your own guru and guide. The benefits accrue not only to the individual but also to society, nation and ultimately the entire humanity. SY meditation thus fosters and nurtures/nourishes therapeutic community (De Kalbermatten, 2003; Srivastava, 1997).

Satsang has an important bearing upon the concept of collective spiritual awakening. It is through participation in a community (satsang) that a person finds meaning in life. The importance of the community in self-definition is summed up by Mbiti's (1969:214) dictum 'I am because we are, and since we are, therefore I am.' The rooted-ness of the self-in-community is also reflected in sayings such as *Umntu ngumuntu ngabantu* (Nguni), or *Motho ke motho ka batho babang* (Sotho). These roughly translate as: 'One becomes a human being through other human beings.' This interdependence between the self and other is being increasingly recognised, and, as people begin to realise that they are members of a global village they become collectively conscious and acknowledge that 'a person is born for the other

'Muthu u bebelwa munwe' (Xhivenda). By fostering and nurturing/nourishing therapeutic community, SY meditation provides each of us with the opportunity, to contribute to a better world, through the very personal choices we make on a daily basis (Mkhize, 2004).

The benefits of SY meditation go beyond prevention and treatment, towards the development of positive aspects of health. This development is illustrated by studies showing: increased creativity and intelligence; improvements in perceptual acuity, mind-body co-ordination, and spinal reflex efficiency; improvements in academic performance, greater moral maturity, increased orientation towards positive values, and growth of social maturity in college students; better relationships at work; and increased marital satisfaction and adjustment (Manocha, 2003; Rai, 1995; Rai, 1991).

Individual health cannot be divorced from the collective health of society. Studies have indicated that, SY meditation can lead to the reduction of negative tendencies (such as violence, crime, accidents, disease, and suicides), and, an improvement in positive trends (such as economic prosperity) for the whole society. Reductions in crime and other improvements in the quality of life in society have direct benefits for the individual by reducing collective stress and social disharmony, both of which are known to be major factors influencing health standards in the general population (Manocha, 2003; Rai, Setji & Singh, 1997; Srivastava, 1997).

A number of authors have examined the role of SY meditation in the management of common clinical problems-including reduction of risk factors for disease, mild hypertension, stress-related disorders, migraine, anxiety, mild depression, and substance misuse, and have explored its contribution to the promotion of positive health and well-being, and the enhancement of quality of life for patients with serious disorders. Based on research and clinical experience, many doctors and psychologists have encouraged patients to learn SY meditation (Manocha, 2003; Rai, Setji & Singh, 1997; Rai, 1995).

5.2 The value of the study

As a “technology of the mind” SY meditation can help to alter our future, bringing us security, peace and unlimited opportunities for renewal. SY is an adventurous journey in the discovery of the wider, deeper more rewarding dimensions of human awareness. It is intended particularly for individuals seeking their own inner Self within a balanced, peaceful society. This study is valuable because:

- It documents authentic experiences of Sahaja yogis.
- It instigates further research as SY presents unlimited possibilities for further studies.
- It leads to theory generating as a result of on-going research in terms of the body, mind, spirit and soul connection.
- It adds to the literature on SY meditation.
- It provides information on how SY meditation can enhance healing, not only of the self, but of the community.

- It provides valuable information which counsellors can use to address clients' spirituality.
- It provides spiritual guidance and education to a population with self-identified spiritual awakening.
- It exposes readers to the value of Yoga and meditation with particular reference to SY meditation.

5.3 Recommendations

SY is a system based on experience, not on beliefs, and, while SY meditation techniques are a novel approach for prevention and treatment, an important pre-requisite for practising SY meditation is Self-realisation. SY meditation fosters and nurtures/nourishes therapeutic community and can be useful to everyone. It can benefit all individuals - parents who want to raise conscious and healthy children, the education sector, the health sector, the social welfare sector and the employment sector, amongst others.

5.3.1 Individuals

Through SY meditation, one can experience benefits such as:

- Improved health and strengthened immune system
- Reduced stress, anxiety and irritability
- Better focus and concentration in studies or at the workplace
- Giving up negative and self-destructive habits and lifestyle

- Strengthening self-esteem and self-confidence
- Improvement of communication skills leading to more enriched relationships in all areas
- Awakening of one's human awareness to a new dimension of collective consciousness, enabling the individual to feel the state of his own energies and that of others
- Overcoming divisive patterns which can lead to disharmony between individuals, communities, races and cultures

Morality, righteousness and dropping bad habits follow as a by-product of the transformation in one's awareness brought by the regular practise of SY meditation. Individuals enjoy an improved family life, work environment, relationships with others, communication skills, stress reduction, inner peace and balance (De Kalbermatten, 2003; <http://www.sahajayoga.org>; Srivastava, 1997).

5.3.2 Parents who want to raise conscientious and healthy children

One of the most deeply held commitments amongst all parents is that of the well-being of children. Parents are concerned with helping children grow to adulthood without falling prey to the traps of peer pressure, drugs, violence and immorality along the way. SY techniques can be used to help parents and children stay balanced, alert, healthy and self-aware. As children grow up, parents can teach them to meditate, and to understand the subtle inner workings of their own energy systems, to know when they are in a healthy, balanced state and when they are not.

Parents can teach their children how to rectify inner imbalances and how to take responsibility for their own states of mind and awareness.

The experience of SY meditation can easily lead to a clear and stable state of the mind, and one that borders on a state of bliss and ecstasy. The power and impact of SY meditation helps to ameliorate the most acute and intense suffering, but it can also play a vital role in providing an alternative to drugs and alcohol for our youth. Perhaps, there is no greater deterrent to the inebriated states of the mind produced by drugs and alcohol, than the natural “high” and the expanded bliss-like state that can be experienced using SY. In the late sixties, early seventies, and still today, many youthful and older individuals have found the effects of SY to be a wonderful and positive experience that quickly leads to a new path of wellness, delight, inner peace, clarity and optimism (Srivastava, 1997; <http://www.sahajayoga.org>).

5.3.3 The Education sector

A decade ago, Aldus Huxley said, in the field of education we do everything possible to keep us away from, “exploring inner space” and that “non-verbal humanities, the art of being directly aware of the given facts of experience is completely ignored” (Huxley, 1998:6). SY meditation techniques can be employed to enhance education at all levels, rehabilitation and maintenance in prisons, enhanced creativity, performance, and productivity with reduced stress throughout all aspects of the economy. Many educational institutions are seeing the correlation between a balanced mental state and educative success outcomes. Educational programs that include meditation are conducted regularly on University Campuses and more recently in schools. Confidence, clarity of mind, focused and heightened energy

levels become natural to those who meditate on a regular basis. Academic excellence, the ability to lead, and strong interpersonal skills are some resultant benefits. Regular practise leads to a strong, healthy body and a relaxed, stress-free mind (<http://www.sahajayogawa:community>; Manocha, 2003; Rai, 1995).

5.3.4 The Employment Sector

Emotional intelligence includes self-awareness and self-control, as well as the ability to get along well with others. Getting along with others implies an ability to listen, to communicate, to accept feedback, and to empathise with different points of view. Spiritual intelligence is concerned with the inner life of mind and spirit and its relationship to being in the world. Spiritual intelligence implies a capacity for a deep understanding of existential questions and insight into multiple levels of consciousness. Intelligence Quotient (IQ) is often talked about as being a measure of success. In the workplace, however, it is often not just how intelligent you are, but how well you can handle stress.

Stress is anything that brings mental and emotional pressure that leads to fear, anxiety, worry, apprehensions, anger and even excitement and the body responds in a prompt, speedy and inefficient way. Today's professionals need to graduate from the IQ (Intelligence Quotient) through EQ (Emotional Quotient) and arrive at SQ (Spiritual Quotient). Daniel Goleman (2006), in *Emotional Intelligence* says that it is the lack of application of intelligence to emotions that makes one depressed, angry, unruly, prone to worry, more impulsive and aggressive. He argues that, the emotional mind is far quicker than the rational mind making split-second decisions without analytical reflection of the consequences which can be bewildering to the analytically

inclined rational mind. Spiritual teachers like Buddha and Jesus touched their disciples' hearts by speaking the language of emotions. Improving the emotional quotient (EQ) or imbining (SQ) spiritual intelligence is important because it helps us deal with problems in a constructive manner. Spiritual intelligence is concerned with the inner life of mind and spirit and its relationship to being in the world. Spiritual intelligence implies a capacity for a deep understanding of existential questions and insight into multiple levels of consciousness (De Kalbermatten, 2003; Goleman, 2006).

One way of improving spiritual intelligence (SQ), enhancing one's emotional intelligence (EQ) and managing stress is through SY meditation. Stress is considered to be an occupational hazard, but with SY meditation, this need not necessarily be so. SY meditation programmes equip a person to open up a new dimension to management skills and achieve excellence at the workplace. It offers a paradigm shift from "working hard" to "working smart" and to achieve the balance between meeting the demands of personal and professional lives. Practical and effective SY meditation stress management programmes empower managers and employees to experience calmness and inner clarity in the midst of challenges. It is engineered to build teamwork and leadership through processes of self-acceptance and awareness. Greater understanding of oneself helps one to understand others. It is based on SY meditation and universally applicable values that contribute to self development and harmonious interactions (<http://www.sahajayogawa: corporate>; Kumar, 2000).

5.3.5 The Health Sector

Mind-body medicine is at the forefront of current mental health research and treatment, and the introduction of this ancient technology of the mind into the equation is a major breakthrough in our understanding of improved treatment for a wide variety of psychiatric disorders. The chakra system is taught in many Oriental and Asian medical schools (Nelson, 1990). Recently, contemplative education has been introduced in medical studies at the Monash University medical faculty in Australia and at the National University of Medicine in Mexico. This training helps students to work at a radically deeper level (Nelson, 1996; Nelson, 1990).

SY meditation skillfully introduces this exciting new frontier, and equips psychiatrists, psychotherapists, psychologists, social workers, and other clinicians (acupuncturists, naturopaths, osteopaths, physical therapists, Reiki masters, chi gung and cranial sacral practitioners) with the tools and techniques necessary to incorporate yogic meditation into their practices, and bring hope and healing to their clients (<http://www.sahajayogawa: medical>).

While mainstream psycho-therapeutic systems largely ignored human spiritual and religious experience, except as sources for psychosocial support, transpersonal approaches are concerned not only with the diagnosis and treatment of psychopathology associated with the usual stages of human development from infancy through adulthood, but also with difficulties associated with developmental stages, beyond that of the adult ego. The ultimate goal is not merely to remove

psychopathology, but to foster higher human development. Some methods that can assist clinicians in optimising treatment are meditation, guided imagery and alterations in breathing patterns (<http://www.sahajayogawa: medical>).

SY meditation as a therapeutic tool has a wide utilitarian value. It can be preparation for therapy, it can constitute the main therapeutic process, or it can serve as an adjunct to therapy. It is amazing that so much can be offered merely from becoming self-aware and stilling oneself (Rowan, 1993). That imagery is a potent healer, has long been overlooked by practitioners of Western medicine. As advocates of imagery, Sahaja yogis contend that it can relieve pain, speed healing and help the body subdue hundreds of ailments, including depression, allergies and asthma (Taylor, 2007).

Breathwork is a technique derived from ancient shamanic healing. It is found in many cultural healing practices like SY, Sufi practice, Buddhist and Taoist meditation. The goal of breathwork is to enter a non-ordinary state through which mental, spiritual, emotional and physical wholeness can be achieved. At its simplest level, individuals decrease their rate of breathing, whilst concentrating on inner experiences. During this state, defenses are typically loosened and unconscious materials released. Although SY meditation is straightforward and undemanding, the results can be profound and extremely healing (Taylor, 2007).

5.3.6 The social welfare sector

- **Prison programs**

Reduction in crime and other improvements in the quality of life in society have direct benefits for the individual by reducing collective stress and social disharmony, both of which are known to be major factors influencing health standards in the general population. SY meditation can provide prison inmates with opportunities to address issues of anger, rebelliousness, depression, fear and feelings of isolation, forgiveness and acceptance in a subtle ways through the meditation. The awakening of Kundalini automatically starts to put each person 'in touch' with his own true nature. This is a vital step in the healing process as it empowers prisoners to move forward and to view their lives in a new perspective. SY meditation has been applied very successfully in the rehabilitation of criminal offenders. Studies have shown improvements in mental health and behaviour in prison inmates, and substantially reduced rates of recidivism (<http://www.sahajayoga.org>).

- **Children's homes and old age homes**

SY meditation can empower those who suffer the trauma of separation and loneliness. The spiritual path is fun, it is joyful and simple. The chanting of mantras, singing of songs, reciting of affirmations, playing of musical instruments, chakra cleansing and balancing, enhance all aspects of the physical, emotional, mental and spiritual personality of the young and the old. SY meditation techniques equip the young and the old to channelise negative emotions and to handle anger, fear, pain,

jealousy and insecurity. Group meditation has a calming effect. Both young and old can learn to respect themselves and others (<http://www.sahajayoga.org>).

5.4 Implications for future research

The following are possible areas of future research:

- A new dimension for psychology: SY meditation
- SY meditation, a novel approach for prevention and treatment
- *The chakra system: a tool for diagnosis and healing*
- The relationship between the chakras and health
- Chakra energy healing: alternative medicine
- Chakra healing and music
- SY meditation – physician for times to come
- Self-transformation through SY meditation
- SY meditation: vibrational medicine
- The importance of collectivity in SY meditation
- SY meditation – self-healing

5.5 Conclusion

SY meditation fosters and nurtures/nourishes therapeutic community. Ordinary people from all walks of life, tap into their inner spiritual power through daily SY meditation in order to achieve a complete balance in their lives physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually. It is practised without distinction of race, religion,

age or social status. It is not a religion and it does not align itself with any one belief system, ideology, religion, philosophy or path. It recognises the intrinsic importance of each great prophet, sage, realised soul and artist, from the Buddha to Christ, from Lao Tze to Mohammed and the many other saints who assisted humanity on their evolutionary path (De Kalbermatten; 2003).

Finally and essentially, this research has provided empirical, experiential evidence as to the value of SY in building and promoting spiritual community and communal spirituality. It is the task of future research to continue to promote the journey on the Way to Self-realisation and beyond for the benefit of all concerned.

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7. GLOSSARY

Term	Definition
Aadi	Primordial Divine Energy.
Adi Ida	Adi Ida refers to the nerve channel running on the left side of the Sushamna from the base of the spine to the eye-brow center (Tamo guna).
Adi Pingla	Right side of the body, left hemisphere of the brain. Doing, creativity, thinking and planning (Rajo Guna).
Adi Shakti	Primordial Divine Energy - the wind of the Holy Ghost (the breath of pneuma of the Greek fathers) or the Holy river Ganga falling from Lord Shiva's head. They are also the Chaitanya (cool breeze) of Shri Shankaracharya.
Agnya chakra	Sixth energy center midway between the eyebrows called "center of command" or "eyebrow center."
"Allah-Hu-Akbar!"	God is great!
Amrit	When the Kundalini pierces through the fontanelle bone area, the nectar that is felt as a shower of indescribable bliss pouring down from the Sahastrara, into the central and autonomous nervous system is known as "amrit".
Ananda	A state of unimaginable joy or bliss.
Anahata chakra	The heart center, associated with love and courage, presides over the air element. The spiritual center located at the heart. The unstruck (anahata) sound heard in meditation originates in this center.
Anahata Nada	"Unstruck Sound." This literally means "the sound that is not

made by two things striking together.”

Antar yoga	Refers to the <i>inner</i> yoga.
Asanas	Various bodily postures practised to strengthen the body and purify the nadis.
Atma	The Spirit or Atma is the spark of divinity in man and spirituality is about lighting it.
Atman	Soul
Aum (Om)	Unstruck or unbeaten (sound). Om (Aum) is the Hindu word. It is a syllable that stands for absolute. It is uttered in the beginning as well as at the end of all Hindu prayers. To some extent it is the logos of the Holy Bible. Smallest and most effective mantra.
Aura	Subtle bodily radiance arising from virtuous action
Avitar	An instructor of mankind of divine descent.
Bandhan	Refers to a protective lock.
Bhajan	Devotional song.
Bhakti Yoga	The path of devotion.
Bhoomi Devi	Mother Earth
Bindu	The subtle abode of the inner Self. See Blue Pearl.
Blue Pearl	A brilliant blue light, the size of a tiny seed, which appears to the meditator whose energy has been awakened.
Brahma	The supreme Lord...in the Hindu trinity, God in His aspect as the creator of the universe.
Brahm danda	This refers to the stick of Brahma.
Brahmarandhra	Kundalini energy pierces through the apex of the brain.

Brahma-Vishnu-Mahesh	The Holy Trinity – The Father, Son and the Holy Ghost
Budhi	Intellect
Chaitanya	The term ‘vibrations’ is an approximate translation of the Sanskrit term <i>Chaitanya</i> .
“Chaitanya Lahari”	Refers to the Water of Life or the Holy river Ganga falling from Lord Shiva’s head.
Chakra	A subtle energy center, or nerve plexus, located in the subtle body. There are seven major chakras: muladhara, svadhishtana, manipura, anahata, vishuddha, ajna and sahasrara. wheels of energy in the subtle system.
Chakra bheda	The Kundalini energy awakens and rises through six subtle energy centres in the body
Chakra Chanting	The repetition of a mantra.
Chi	Life energy, according to the Chinese system of medicine.
Collective	In this study, collective has reference to a group of individuals (satsang) who practise Sahaja Yoga meditation.
Dharana	Intermediate maturation of sustained attentional focus.
Dharma	Religion; duty; righteousness. The highest dharma is to recognize the Truth in one's own heart.
Dhyana	Meditation
Dikr	Endless repetition of the holy names of God.
Faqr	Pious poverty
Ganga	Holy river in India.
Gunas	Moods of the Virata.
Guru	An enlightened being authorized to guide and initiate disciples.

Hatha yoga	The foundation of Raja yoga; ethics, postures, breathing.
Ida nadi	The feminine or lunar channel, which is on the left of sushumna.
Jihad	Self-purification
Jiva	The being that has the life; the soul of one's being.
Japa yoga	Repetition of a mantra or the Name of the Lord.
Karma	Some new action.
Karma/Krita yoga	The path of loving, selfless service to the divine.
Ko aham	"Who am I?"
Kriyas	Purification of mind and body.
Kundalini	Literal Sanskrit meaning: "coiled one". The supreme Power, the primordial shakti or Energy, which lies coiled at the base of the spine, in the muladhara chakra of every human being. When this extremely subtle force is awakened, it begins to purify the whole system.
Kundalini shakti	Kundalini shakti is a kinetic form of energy.
Kundalini yoga	Kundalini yoga is the power or Shakti (feminine aspect of God)
Kularnava tantra	Only that mantra which is received through the Grace of the Guru can give all fulfilment.
Lingam	<i>Lingam of Shiva</i> refers to sacred stones.
Lord Shiva	Lord Shiva is the potential form of energy.
Maha yoga	The "highest" yoga; Kundalini yoga.
Manipura chakra	The navel chakra, also known as the nabhi chakra.
Mantras	Mantras are pleasing, healing sounds.
mantra' gha't	The chanting of a siddha mantra awakens the sleeping spiritual Source (kundalini), within the individual.

Mantra yoga	The yoga of the divine word, the science of sound, integral to Siddha yoga. The path to union through mantra yoga is based on repetition of a sacred mantra and contemplation of its meaning.
Mudras	The practice of Yoga postures.
Muladhara chakra	The root chakra; sacral center; seat of Kundalini.
Nadi	Nadis are defined as “astral tubes” that carry prana or “life force” energy.
‘Nirakar’	Formless
Nirvichara	Sanskrit term for thoughtless awareness.
sammadhi	
Nirvikalpa	Sanskrit term for doubtless awareness
sammadhi	
Paramatma	The Supreme or the soul of the entire universe.
Paramchaitanya	This cool breeze has been described in the Bible as the “cool breeze of the Holy Ghost” and in the Koran as “Ruh”. This all-pervading power is responsible for performing the subtle work in the process of evolution
Patanjali	A great sage and author of the famous Yoga Sutras, the exposition of one of the six philosophies of India and the authoritative text of the path of Raja yoga.
Pranava	Sacred syllable that symbolises Brahman or the spiritual reality.
Pingala nadi	Solar energy channel corresponding to ida along the spinal sushumna channel and passing through each of the first six chakras.

Prakriti	Prakriti is matter. Matter is inert, temporary, and unconscious. Prakriti is the operative principle of the supreme consciousness.
Prana	Prana (quantum cosmic energy) is the vital, life-sustaining force of both the individual body and the universe.
Pranayama yoga	Pranayama yoga is the control of breath which leads to steadiness of mind.
Purusha	Purusha is the Transcendental Self or Pure Consciousness. It is absolute, independent, free, imperceptible, unknowable, above any experience and beyond any words or explanation.
Qi gong	Chinese yoga, cultivation of qi (chi), or prana
Rajo guna	Dwelling in the future
Rishis	Ancient seers, who learned from nature and self observation, and who possessed spiritual power
Sahaja	Spontaneous
Sahaja Yoga	The spontaneous union with the Divine.
Sahasrara chakra	The "thousand-petalled lotus" is the highest center of consciousness at the crown center. When this chakra is pierced at the crown of the head, the individual self merges into the supreme Self.
Sammadhi	State of meditative union with the Absolute; the gates of a higher spiritual knowledge; inner awakening
Samskaras	Impressions of past actions or thought which remain in the unconscious and are stored in the sushumna, the central nerve channel in the subtle body. They are brought to the surface and eliminated by the action of the awakened Kundalini energy.

Sang	Sang has reference to a spiritual community.
Sanskara	Sanskrit word for desire
Sat	Truth
'Satori'	Inner awakening (for the Zen Buddhist)
Satsang	The company of the "Highest Truth." The company of the Guru.
Sattva	Sattva (goodness) – pure, elevating and enlightening.
Sattwa guna	Living in the present – collective consciousness
Self-actualisation	Realising one's fullest potential
Self-realisation	Self-realisation as a process of assimilating the unconscious
Shakti	The feminine aspect of God.
Shakti Sanchaar	Transference of special spiritual vibration from Guru to disciple.
Shiva	Shiva is Pure Consciousness; the masculine principle of the universe. In the Hindu trinity, Shiva is the aspect of God as the destroyer of ignorance.
Siddhas	Powers
Siddha mantra	A mantra that has been invested with spiritual power by a true guru.
Subtle body	In the Vedic tradition it is believed that the physical body has a subtle counterpart, made not of gross matter, but of a finer substance, or energy. The chakras, nadis are the basic structures of the subtle body.
Subtle energy	Subtle energy is energy that cannot be easily seen, felt or perceived except by individuals with heightened sensitivity.
Sushumna nadi	The central spinal channel. It is referred to as the trunk of the Tree of Life in the Bhagavad Gita.

Swadhisthana chakra	The chakra at the genital pubic center; associated with sexual and reproductive functioning; presides over the water element.
Tamas	Tamas (ignorance) – dirty, degrading, deluding, and destructive.
Tamo guna	Dwelling in the past.
Tantra	Tantra is the original spiritual science, first taught in India, more than 7000 years ago. Tan is a Sanskrit root which signifies, "expansion", and Tra signifies "liberation." Thus, Tantra is the practice which elevates human beings in a process in which their minds are expanded. It leads human beings from the imperfect to the perfect, from the crude to the subtle, from bondage to liberation.
Tat twam asi	That- thou-art
Transcendence	Unity, bliss, "oneness"
Tree of Life	Sacred path of the Kundalini.
Turiya state	The state of non-duality.
Upanishads	Ancient text of the Indians
Vasana	Desire
Vedas	The most ancient scriptures of Indian Philosophy
Vipassana	A general term referring to a specialised form of mindfulness meditation, also a specific brand name.
Virata	This encompasses everything that exists; a first imprint of the Gestalt.
Vishuddha chakra	The fifth or throat chakra located at the pit of the throat.
Yang	Male qualities: analysis, competition, aggressiveness.
Yantra	The psychosomatic and spiritual instrument through which we

experience our second birth (Self-realisation).

Yin Female qualities: gentleness, responsiveness, co-operation,
intuition

Yoga "Union" - the state of oneness with the Self, with God; the
practices leading to that state.

Yoga Sutra Patanjali's classical text on yoga.

Yogi One who practises yoga; also, one who has attained perfection
through yogic practices.

Yug To yoke

RESEARCHER'S BABKGROUND

1. Personal data

Name: Pravina Baijnath
Date of birth: 1949 – 12 – 07
Address: 25 Hilltop Road
Bluff, Durban, 4052
KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa.
Telephone: 27031 – 4662298
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2. Academic and professional qualifications

Tertiary qualifications

1974	Primary Teacher's Diploma (University of Durban-Westville)
1981	Remedial Education Diploma (University of Natal, Durban)
1989	Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) (University of South Africa - UNISA)
1991	B.A. (Hons. Psy) (University of Durban-Westville)
2000	Further Diploma in Education (Computer Literacy) (South African College for Open Learning – SACOL)
2003	M. Ed. (Ed. Psy.) (University of Durban-Westville)
2004	M.Ed. (Psy.) (University of KwaZulu-Natal)
2008	PhD (Com. Psy.) University of Zululand

3. Thesis completed

3.1 “The occupational choices of ex-grade 12 learners from a Special Needs School”

3.2 “The career patterns of adults with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)”

4. Current research interests

4.1 Phenomenological study of meditation and breath control

4.2 Chakra therapy

5. Professional teaching experience

Teaching experience: 33 years (Primary school)

Mainstream Teaching Experience: Primary School - 16 years (Gr 1 – 8)

- Outcomes Based Education (OBE) facilitator – Department of Education 1997-1999

Specialised Education: 17 years

- Senior Remedial and Special education teacher
- Chair-person Remedial Education Committee (South Durban Region)
- Chair-person LSEN (Learners' with Special Education Needs) – School Governing Body (SGB)
- Support Group facilitator for parents with children with Special Education Needs (LSEN)

Experience as Psychologist:

University of Durban-Westville Assessment and Therapy Centre

The Adult and Child Assessment Centre (University of Pretoria)

Phoenix Assessment and Therapy Centre

Westville Prison (Juvenile)

R.K. Khan Hospital

Inanda Special School (Severely Mentally Retarded - SMR)

The Kenmont School (Learners diagnosed with ADHD: Gr 1 - 12)

The Browns School

Golden Hours School (SMR, Autistic, Downs, ADHD, Fragile X Syndrome)

The Bluff Medicross - Durban

The Westville Hospital - Durban

St Augustines Hospital - Durban

Entabeni Hospital - Durban

Parklands Hospital – Durban

Kingsway Hospital - Durban

6. Professional membership

Psychological Society of South Africa (PsySSA)

South African Council for Educators (SACE)

South African Democratic Teachers Union (SADTU)

Association for the Learning Disabled (ALD)

Appendix

PILOT STUDY

1. Informed consent
2. Participants particulars
3. Summary of participants' SY experiences
4. Recording experiences
5. Recording recurrence of themes
6. Identifying main themes in individual summaries
7. Descriptors used to identify main themes
8. Frequency table reflecting common themes
9. Internal validity (member checking)
10. External validity (peer checking)
11. Notes

Appendix A: PILOT STUDY

1. Informed consent

AGREEMENT

Between student researcher and research participant

I (participant's name) _____ agree to participate in the research project. I have read and understood the contents of the research information sheet.

I understand that:

- The researcher, Pravina Baijnath, is a student conducting this study as part of the requirements for a PhD Community Psychology degree at the University of Zululand.
- The researcher is interested in my Sahaja Yoga meditation experiences.
- My participation will involve responding to an interview or to a series of interviews, which will be audio-taped.
- I will be asked to answer questions of a personal nature but I can choose not to answer any questions about aspects of my life which I am not willing to disclose.
- I am invited to voice to the researcher any concerns I have about my participation in the study and to have these addressed to my satisfaction.
- I am free to withdraw from the study at any time; however I commit myself to full participation unless some unusual circumstances occur or I have concerns about my participation which I did not originally anticipate.
- The report on the research project may contain information of a personal nature, but that information will be designed in such a way that I will not be able to be identified by the general reader.

Signed on (date) _____ by (participant) _____

Researcher _____ Witness _____

2. Participant Information

PARTICIPANT	PILOT STUDY
1. Sheila	Age 58 years. Accountant. Received her S-R in 1993 from a practicing S.Yogi. Now a practicing S.Yoga for 14 years
2. Paula	Age 24. Student. Received her S-R in 1997 from a practicing S.Yogi. Now a practicing S.Yoga for 3 years.

3. Summary of participants' SY experiences

Sheila's experiences

Not long after receiving my Self-realisation, I went on a month-long SY meditation pilgrimage to be in the presence of my Guru. The first time I saw Shri Mataji, my body literally froze. While tears of joy rolled uncontrollably down my cheek, I experienced such intense inner peace as my body continuously filled and re-filled itself with torrents of cool vibrations.

Hundreds of Sahaja Yogis from all over the world, complete stranger, some of whom could not speak English, converged in India for the SY India tour. We bonded as a family as we travelled together by bus and rail to over ten different destinations in India, staying overnight for several days in each destination. Sharing facilities, meditating together, having meals together, sharing experiences, singing, travelling together, and bonding with Sahaja yogis from around the world, was a unique and extremely joyous occurrence for me. Everybody was so helpful, loving and caring. The Indian Sahaja yogis whom we met at the different destinations in India treated us as family and made our stay comfortable and enjoyable.

At each destination, a public Sahaja Yoga programme was arranged by the tour organizers. At these destinations, most of the streets were bedecked with posters, banners and handbills inviting the public to receive their Self-realisation. The public programmes were held in large halls and conference centres and busloads of Sahaja

yogis converged at these venues. The local people came out in droves to listen to Shri Mataji and to receive their Self-realisation from Her.

The highlight of the India tour was that at every public programme, Shri Mataji was present to address the congregation and to give Self-realisation to those who wished to receive it. For the yogis on tour, it was sheer bliss being in the presence of Shri Mataji at all the different venues. It also meant that we received our Self-realisation several times from Shri Mataji.

Paula's experiences

A handbill on Sahaja Yoga meditation in my postbox aroused my attention. It spoke about enjoying a stress free life! That evening I received Self-realisation at the local library. I didn't feel anything different, but I began attending the beginner's classes. After meditating for seven weeks, with the generous loving help of the local Sahaja yogis working on my subtle system there was dramatic improvement in my over-all health. I cannot remember when last I was in such a blissful state. My face softened, my skin glowed and my eyes sparkled and there was a whole new different me! At times I dwelt on my past and when this happened I spoke to other yogis about it. Collective prayer chakra clearing and meditation took care of my healing.

Attending Sahaja Yoga meditation collectives became a natural and blissful part of my life. I found that my vibrations became stronger and my meditation much deeper when I was in the company of other Sahaja yogis. When in the company of other yogis, I also felt a sense of oneness. The more I immersed myself in Sahaja Yoga activities, the more blissful and peaceful I became.

I found myself talking about Sahaja Yoga meditation and giving Self-realisation to others spontaneously at Sahaja Yoga meditation stalls at various venues through South Africa. An unforgettable experience was spending a week in Australia in the company of Sahaja yogis from all over the world. Although we were strangers, there was instant bonding and love simply flowed. I cannot explain the state of blissfulness that is experienced when one engages in collective meditation. Life simply becomes meditation and one knows what to do instinctively.

By taking Sahaja Yoga, I dropped all kinds of bad habits; smoking, drinking, thieving, lying, infidelity, jealousy, loose morals – the whole lot progressively disappeared! I became more empowered and self-confident and I became a brand new me.

4. Recording experiences

Sheila's experiences

Not long after receiving my Self-realisation, I went on a month-long SY meditation pilgrimage to be in the presence of my Guru (1). The first time I saw Shri Mataji, my body literally froze (2). While tears of joy rolled uncontrollably down my cheek, I experienced such intense inner peace as my body continuously filled and re-filled itself with torrents of cool vibrations (3).

Hundreds of Sahaja Yogis from all over the world, complete stranger, some of whom could not speak English, converged in India for the SY India tour (4). We bonded as a family as we travelled together by bus and rail to over ten different destinations in India, staying overnight for several days in each destination (5). Sharing facilities, meditating together, having meals together, sharing experiences, singing, travelling together, and bonding with Sahaja yogis from around the world, was a unique and extremely joyous occurrence for me (6). Everybody was so helpful, loving and caring (7). The Indian Sahaja yogis whom we met at the different destinations in India treated us as family and made our stay comfortable and enjoyable (8).

At each destination, a public Sahaja Yoga programme was arranged by the tour organizers (9). At these destinations, most of the streets were bedecked with posters, banners and handbills inviting the public to receive their Self-realisation (10). The public programmes were held in large halls and conference centres and busloads of Sahaja yogis converged at these venues (11). The local people came out in droves to listen to Shri Mataji and to receive their Self-realisation from Her (12).

The highlight of the India tour was that at every public programme, Shri Mataji was present to address the congregation and to give Self-realisation to those who wished to receive it (13). For the yogis on tour, it was sheer bliss being in the presence of

Shri Mataji at all the different venues (14). It also meant that we received our Self-realisation several times from Shri Mataji (15).

Paula's experiences

A handbill on Sahaja Yoga meditation in my postbox aroused my attention (1). It spoke about enjoying a stress free life! (2) That evening I received Self-realisation at the local library (3). I didn't feel anything different, but I began attending the beginner's classes (4). After meditating for seven weeks, with the generous loving help of the local Sahaja yogis working on my subtle system there was dramatic improvement in my over-all health (5). I cannot remember when last I was in such a blissful state (6). My face softened, my skin glowed and my eyes sparkled and there was a whole new different me! (7) At times I dwelt on my past and when this happened I spoke to other yogis about it (8). Collective prayer chakra clearing and meditation took care of my healing (9).

Attending Sahaja Yoga meditation collectives became a natural and blissful part of my life (10). I found that my vibrations became stronger and my meditation much deeper when I was in the company of other Sahaja yogis (11). When in the company of other yogis, I also felt a sense of oneness (12). The more I immersed myself in Sahaja Yoga activities, the more blissful and peaceful I became (13).

I found myself talking about Sahaja Yoga meditation and giving Self-realisation to others spontaneously at Sahaja Yoga meditation stalls at various venues through South Africa (14). An unforgettable experience was spending a week in Australia in the company of Sahaja yogis from all over the world (15). Although we were strangers, there was instant bonding and love simply flowed (16). I cannot explain the state of blissfulness that is experienced when one engages in collective meditation (17). Life simply becomes meditation and one knows what to do instinctively (18).

By taking Sahaja Yoga, I dropped all kinds of bad habits; smoking, drinking, thieving, lying, infidelity, jealousy, loose morals – the whole lot progressively disappeared! (19) I became more empowered and self-confident and I became a brand new me (20).

Recording recurrence of themes from interviews

Sheila's experiences

Not long after receiving my Self-realisation (SR 1), I went on a month-long SY meditation (M 1) pilgrimage (C 1) to be in the presence of my Guru (C 2). The first time I saw Shri Mataji (C 3), my body literally froze (KH 1). While tears of joy rolled uncontrollably down my cheeks (KH 2), I experienced such intense inner peace as my body continuously filled and re-filled itself with torrents of cool vibrations (KH 3).

Hundreds of Sahaja Yogis from all over the world (C 4), complete strangers (C 5), some of whom could not speak English (C 6), converged in India for the SY India tour (C 7). We bonded as a family (C 8) as we travelled together by bus and rail to over ten different destinations in India, staying overnight for several days in each destination (C 9). Sharing facilities (C 10), meditating together (C 11), having meals together (C 12), sharing experiences (C 13), singing (C 14), travelling together (C 15), and bonding with Sahaja yogis from around the world (C 16), was a unique and extremely joyous occurrence for me (T 3). Everybody was so helpful, loving and caring (C 17). The Indian Sahaja yogis (C 18) whom we met at the different destinations in India treated us as family (C 19) and made our stay comfortable and enjoyable (T 4).

At each destination, a public Sahaja Yoga programme was arranged by the tour organizers (C 20). At these destinations, most of the streets were bedecked with posters, banners and handbills inviting the public (C 21) to receive their Self-realisation (SR 2). The public programmes (C 22) were held in large halls and conference centres and busloads of Sahaja yogis converged at these venues (C 23). The local people (C 24) came out in droves to listen to Shri Mataji (C 25) and to receive their Self-realisation (SR 3) from Her (C 26).

The highlight of the India tour was that at every public programme (C 27), Shri Mataji (C 28) was present to address the congregation (C 29) and to give Self-realisation (SR 4) to those who wished to receive it. For the yogis on tour (C 30), it was sheer bliss (KH 4) being in the presence of Shri Mataji (C 31) at all the different venues. It

also meant that we (C 32) received our Self-realisation (SR 5) several times from Shri Mataji (C 33).

Paula's experiences

A handbill on Sahaja Yoga meditation (M 1) in my postbox aroused my attention. It spoke about enjoying a stress free life! (T 1) That evening I received Self-realisation (SR 1) at the local library. I didn't feel anything different, but I began attending the beginner's classes (C 1). After meditating (M 2) for seven weeks, with the generous loving help of the local Sahaja yogis (C 2) working on my subtle system (KH 1) there was dramatic improvement in my over-all health (KH 2). I cannot remember when last I was in such a blissful state (KH 3). My face softened (KH 4), my skin glowed (KH 5) and my eyes sparkled (KH 6) and there was a whole new different me! (T 2) At times I dwelt on my past and when this happened I spoke to other yogis about it (C 3). Collective prayer (C 4) chakra clearing (KH 7) and meditation (M 3) took care of my healing (KH 8).

Attending Sahaja Yoga meditation (M 4) collectives (C 5) became a natural and blissful part of my life (T 3). I found that my vibrations (KH 9) became stronger and my meditation (M 5) much deeper when I was in the company of other Sahaja yogis (C 6). When in the company of other yogis (C 7), I also felt a sense of oneness (KH 10). The more I immersed myself in Sahaja Yoga activities (C 8), the more blissful and peaceful (T 4) I became. I became more empowered (KH 11) and self-confident (T 5) and I became a brand new me (T 6).

I found myself talking about Sahaja Yoga meditation (C 9) and giving Self-realisation (SR 2) to others spontaneously at Sahaja Yoga meditation (M 6) stalls at various venues through South Africa (C 10). An unforgettable experience was spending a week in Australia in the company of Sahaja yogis from all over the world (C 11). Although we were strangers, there was instant bonding (C 12) and love (T 7) simply flowed. I cannot explain the state of blissfulness (KH 12) that is experienced when one engages in collective (C 13) meditation (M 9). Life simply becomes meditation (KH 13) and one knows what to do instinctively (KH 14).

6. Identifying main themes in summaries

Sheila's experiences

Not long after receiving my Self-realisation (SR), I went on a month-long SY meditation (M) pilgrimage (C) to be in the presence of my Guru (C). The first time I saw Shri Mataji (C), my body literally froze (T). While tears of joy rolled uncontrollably down my cheeks (T), I experienced such intense inner peace as my body continuously filled and re-filled itself with torrents of cool vibrations (KH).

Hundreds of Sahaja Yogis from all over the world (C), complete strangers (C), some of whom could not speak English (C), converged in India for the SY India tour (C). We bonded as a family (C) as we travelled together by bus and rail to over ten different destinations in India, staying overnight for several days in each destination (C). Sharing facilities (C), meditating together (C), having meals together (C), sharing experiences (C), singing (C), travelling together (C), and bonding with Sahaja yogis from around the world (C), was a unique and extremely joyous occurrence for me (T). Everybody was so helpful, loving and caring (C). The Indian Sahaja yogis (C) whom we met at the different destinations in India treated us as family (C) and made our stay comfortable and enjoyable (T).

At each destination, a public Sahaja Yoga programme was arranged by the tour organizers (C). At these destinations, most of the streets were bedecked with posters, banners and handbills inviting the public (C) to receive their Self-realisation (SR). The public programmes (C) were held in large halls and conference centres and busloads of Sahaja yogis converged at these venues (C). The local people (C) came out in droves to listen to Shri Mataji (C) and to receive their Self-realisation (SR) from Her (C).

The highlight of the India tour was that at every public programme (C), Shri Mataji (C) was present to address the congregation (C) and to give Self-realisation (SR) to those who wished to receive it. For the yogis on tour (C), it was sheer bliss (KH) being in the presence of Shri Mataji (C) at all the different venues. It also meant that we (C) received our Self-realisation (SR) several times from Shri Mataji (C).

2. Paula's experiences

A handbill on Sahaja Yoga meditation (M) in my postbox aroused my attention. It spoke about enjoying a stress free life! (T) That evening I received Self-realisation (SR) at the local library. I didn't feel anything different, but I began attending the beginner's classes (M). After meditating (M) for seven weeks, with the generous loving help of the local Sahaja yogis (C) working on my subtle system (KH) there was dramatic improvement in my over-all health (T). I cannot remember when last I was in such a blissful state (T). My face softened (T), my skin glowed (T) and my eyes sparkled (T) and there was a whole new different me! (T) At times I dwelt on my past and when this happened I spoke to other yogis about it (C). Collective prayer (C) chakra clearing (KH) and meditation (M) took care of my healing (T).

Attending Sahaja Yoga meditation (M) collectives (C) became a natural and blissful part of my life (T). I found that my vibrations (KH) became stronger and my meditation (M) much deeper when I was in the company of other Sahaja yogis (C). When in the company of other yogis, I also felt a sense of oneness (C). The more I immersed myself in Sahaja Yoga activities (M), the more blissful and peaceful (T) I became. I became more empowered (T) and self-confident (T) and I became a brand new me (T).

I found myself talking about Sahaja Yoga meditation (M) and giving Self-realisation (SR) to others spontaneously at Sahaja Yoga meditation (M) stalls at various venues through South Africa (C). An unforgettable experience was spending a week in Australia in the company of Sahaja yogis from all over the world (C). Although we were strangers, there was instant bonding (C) and love (T) simply flowed. I cannot explain the state of blissfulness (T) that is experienced when one engages in collective (C) meditation (M). Life simply becomes meditation (M) and one knows what to do instinctively (T).

7. Descriptors used to identify the main themes

Themes	Descriptors
Self-realisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The term Self-realisation was counted by the number of times it was used by the participants during the interviews.
Meditation	<p>Counted by the number of times the following words/terms were used by the participants during the interviews:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meditation “Thoughtless”, “doubtlessness”, “witnessing”, “collectively conscious” Beginner’s classes, “flow from the music”, “the here and now perspective”
Collectivity	<p>Counted by the number of times the following words/terms were used by the participants during the interviews:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Being in the presence of the Guru, Shri Mataji Nirmala Devi Looking at Shri Mataji’s photograph Listening to Shri Mataji’s discourses Watching Shri Mataji’s videos Being in the company of Sahaja Yogis, bonding Words such as “Divine”, “Pure Love”, “ Pure Desire”, “Higher Power”, “Love”, “Lord” “Part and parcel of the Whole”, sublime experience, collective, collectivity Light shining in our eyes/ consciousness shining out from within, the divinity of the Self in its wholeness.
Transformation	<p>Counted by the number of times the following words/terms were used by the participants during the interviews:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> giving up bad habits such as smoking, alcohol joy, tears of joy, joy-giving feeling bliss, blissfulness, child-like innocence, dignity, balance, subtle inner transformation tranquility, peace, humble, loving, compassionate, confident, contented, productive
Kundalini Healing	<p>Counted by the number of times the following words/terms were used by the participants during the interviews:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kundalini, vibrations, “Divine Love”, spiritual protection • Chakras, energy centres,, nadis, channels • vibrations, sensations, cool breeze, blocks of ice, coolness • fountain, top of the head (fontanelle bone region), subtle energy,surge of energy • mantras, affirmations, bhajans, bandans, SY techniques
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8. Frequency table reflecting common themes in the pilot study

	Self realisation	Meditation	Kundalini healing	Collectivity	Transformation
Names					
Sheila	5	1	4	33	4
Paul	2	6	14	13	7
Total	7	7	18	46	11
Rating	4	4	2	1	3

Collectivity

Kundalini healing

Transformation

Meditation

Self-realisation

9. Confirmation of correctness (member checking)

Sahaja Yoga meditation: therapeutic community

I, have examined the raw data in respect of the above study and confirm the correctness of the 'transcript' and 'analysis' of the interview. I rate the emerging themes as follows:

Emerging data	Rating: 0-100%
Collectivity	
Self-realisation	
Kundalini healing	
Meditation	
Transformation	

.....

(Research participant)

2007-11-20

10. Confirmation of correctness (peer)

Sahaja Yoga meditation: therapeutic community

I, have examined the raw data in respect of the above study and confirm the correctness of the 'transcript' and 'analysis' of the interview. I rate the emerging themes as follows:

Emerging data	Rating: 0-100%
Collectivity	
Self-realisation	
Kundalini healing	
Meditation	
Transformation	

.....

(Psychologist)

2007-11-20

11. Notes

Draft data analysis themes

Name	D. Love	S-Realisation Transformation	Medit	Collec	Vibrat	Spiritual energy, kundalini	Guru
1,An, Sel,	Higher power Creator	Peaceful Imp. Healt	Higher level of understandi ng	People from all over the world		Kundalini energy of love, pos.energi es	Mother, father, friend.teach er
	Power of pure love	Reformed Alcohol, drugs	Blissful, peaceful, pleasant life	Togethernes s, love. f/ship		Coolness flowing thro subtle body	Common bond 4 collectivity
	Pure uncondit. Love						
	Absolute truth						
	Total bliss		Ability to handle diverse situations				
2. Sel	Divine interven	Calmness	Improved health			Subtle forces at work within us	
						Critical care enviro, energies	

3. So p	Tremendous love	Special glow	Witness state No diff bet med & music one nourishes the other		Feel truth on body	Flow from music, cooling, relaxing	Indian bhajans
					S. you give me the wind	S. you give me the wind-energy during collectives and pujas	
4. Shi	Enlightenment	Secure, imp s/est	Grounded first joyful exp	Stronger vibrations, cool breeze	Poojas-intense vibrations		Connection with guru
		Imp health, keep subtle system clear	Medit-right choices; helps chn academicall y; helps cope in multi-cult teaching enviro	connectivity with yogis thro'out world esp during pujas	Cool breeze on head, hands, feet		
		Tools to uplift self	Family r/ships improve	Collective healing			
		Confident chn		Stronger for being part of collective			

5.	Thav	Pure Joy Divine source Source (of Joy)		Surrenderin g	Expanding awareness, deep inter- related- ness, illusion of separation		Connected with the Divine
					Collective intelligence & collaboration		Spiritual connection
6.	Lin	Total surrender	Drinking smoking	Surrender probs to guru		Power of vibration s in prob solving	
			Violence with chn				
			Bad temper				
7.	Ravi	Oneness	Poor sense of moral j/ment	Thoughtless awareness Peace in life	Sense of everyones subtle system	Continou s feeling of vibes	Doubtless awareness
8.	Bok	Spirit within us, Holy Spirit, Adi Shakti	Drinking, smoking lack of self/est	Peace, tranquility	Creating a collective spirit with people who were divided before	S-R awakening of energies- chakras	
		Reflection of almighty God, Primordial Power of the	Kundalini guides us in subtle ways, changes r/ships		Individual and societal trans	Kundalini- fem aspect of divine universal being	

	divine						
	Source of all beings	Protects from egos, conditng			Vibes on hands and top of head		
	Divine spark	Catalyst 4 transform		4 th dimension of freedom & knowledge			Knowledge of sages
	Empowerment of the spirit	Empowering people with divine love					
9. Hem		Empowered with S-R, own guru & master	Surrender to the divine		Checking vibes when unsure		
		Health of child improved	Impt to find yourself- S-R		Going by vibes		
10. Kas	Absolute joy	Surrender, calmness Detachment	Sahaj techniques, med, foot soaking			Music energy vibrations	Guru provides guidance and answers
	Protection of mother	Calmness, peace confidence, strength	Mantras part of everyday life				

Appendix B: Main study

1. Informed consent
2. Participants particulars
3. Summary of participants' SY experiences
4. Recording experiences
5. Recording recurrence of themes
6. Identifying main themes in individual summaries
7. Descriptors used to identify main themes
8. Frequency table reflecting common themes
9. Internal validity (member checking)
10. External validity (peer checking)
11. Notes

Appendix B: Main study

1. Informed consent agreement

AGREEMENT

Between student researcher and research participant

I (participant's name) _____ agree to participate in the research project. I have read and understood the contents of the research information sheet.

I understand that:

- The researcher, Pravina Baijnath, is a student conducting this study as part of the requirements for a PhD Community Psychology degree at the University of Zululand.
- The researcher is interested in my Sahaja Yoga meditation experiences.
- My participation will involve responding to an interview or to a series of interviews, which will be audio-taped.
- I will be asked to answer questions of a personal nature but I can choose not to answer any questions about aspects of my life which I am not willing to disclose.
- I am invited to voice to the researcher any concerns I have about my participation in the study and to have these addressed to my satisfaction.
- I am free to withdraw from the study at any time; however I commit myself to full participation unless some unusual circumstances occur or I have concerns about my participation which I did not originally anticipate.
- The report on the research project may contain information of a personal nature, but that information will be designed in such a way that I will not be able to be identified by the general reader.

Signed on (date) _____ by (participant) _____

Researcher _____ Witness _____

2. Participant Information

PARTICIPANT	MAIN STUDY
1. Pravina	Age 58. Psychologist. Received S-R in 1993 from a friend who was already a practicing SY.
2. Sohana	Age 37. Social worker/musician. Received S-R from boyfriend who was already a practicing SY 19 year ago.
3. Kerry	Age 35. Business administrator, Received S-R from a practising SY. Now, a practising yogi for 8 years.
4. Shirley	Age 42. Educator. Received her S-R in 1999 at a community fair. Now a practicing SY for 8 years.
5. Annie	Age 55. House-wife. Received her S-R in 1993 from a practicing SY Now practicing for 13 years.
6. Chan	Received S-R in 1993. Now 14 years in Sahaj. Initially received S-R from elder brother, a doctor who received his S-R from Shri Mataji in India while he was studying to be a doctor. Later received S-R from Shri Mataji at a public programme in Mumbai. Began practicing as a SY since then.

3. Summary of participants' SY experiences

Pravina's experience

While meditating a few weeks after receiving my Self-realisation in 1993, I felt faint tingling sensations on the palms of my hands and a gentle cool breeze flowing gently out of my fontanelle bone area. This tingling sensation has grown in momentum and I now often feel as if blocks of ice are placed in the centres of my palms. The cool breeze flowing gently out of my fontenelle bone area is now often experienced as an ever-flowing fountain of cascading cool breezes covering my entire being. On my finger tips and feet I feel sensations which correspond to energy centres in my subtle system. These sensations generate heat in the case of a problematic energy centre or coolness in a fully functional centre. Having attended the SY beginners' classes, I am able to heal, correct, balance and nourish the subtle energy centres and acquire

integration of body, mind, intellect and soul through simple SY cleansing techniques. I recited affirmations, chant mantras and use hand movements to clear blockages on the subtle system. I have become collectively conscious, by this I mean that I can feel others' centers and help them to heal. The fact that we are all part and parcel of the Whole has become a tangible reality to me.

Meditation allows me to introspect, and by changing my thoughts and feelings from negative to positive, I receive guidance and answers to my questions. Beautiful positive qualities such as innocence, child-like joy, dignity, balance, and a tremendous sense of direction and purpose in life manifest themselves in me. These special qualities continuously heal me and transformed the way I live my life, the way I enjoy life and the way I understand life. By living my life in meditation I have become increasingly aware of the multitude of choices available to me. I have become more humble, loving, compassionate and confident. Collective meditation is a sublime experience which has strengthened and deepened the quality of my meditation.

Daily meditation has improved my mental focus, concentration and energy levels. My mind has increasingly quieter and my breathing has slowed down dramatically. I have become closer to the people around me, more productive in my work, less stressed out, and basically more contented than I have ever been. I have also been extremely productive. At almost 60 years of age, I completed a degree in psychology. My knowledge of the Divine Kundalini energy, the chakras and meditation has become tools that equip me to work with people from all walks of life. When in the presence of a client, I instinctively know from “catches” on my chakras, how to commence with therapy.

Sohana's SY experiences

I experienced a very subtle inner transformation when I received my Self-realisation at the age of eighteen years. A month later, my boyfriend who gave me my Self-realisation, came to work on me with his hands, because I was ill. I noticed a kind of joy and special glow on his face when he spoke about his experience of being in the

presence of Shri Mataji. This awakened my desire to meet Shri Mataji. I felt a very subtle energy rising on my back whenever I experienced this desire.

Upon meeting Shri Mataji for the first time at a public programme in Geneva, my connection with Her was intense and the bonding instantaneous. I felt Shri Mataji's attention penetrating my entire being. The experience was incredibly blissful, joyful and unexplainably peaceful. Shri Mataji's voice was soothing, crisp, clear, endearing and healing and Her face was extremely beautiful, serene and joy giving. From that moment of meeting, I never stopped meditating. The desire to re-experience that tremendous love never stopped "running" in my mind. One of my most striking memories about being in meditation is the incredible peaceful experience of being in the present, as well as in the witness state.

Ever since I began practicing SY meditation, I felt fulfilled. The universal aspect of SY has touched me deeply. I can read any sacred scripture and feel the truth on my body in the form of vibrations. Whenever I give Self-realisation to seekers, I feel a cool breeze on my hands. This sensation grows in intensity over the years showing the incredible "intelligence of the kundalini".

I have a good voice and my strongest experiences are with music. I feel that the way people receive the flow from music is closely related to meditation. Together with other students from around the world, I learnt to sing songs in different languages, at the SY music academy in India. I love singing bhajans (Indian devotional songs) as I experience a tremendous cooling, relaxing and joy-giving feeling. Music, in addition to being meditation, provides me with a livelihood. In countries where language is a problem, the language of music is a powerful way to share experiences and give Self-realisation to people.

Music can cure people and give them Self-realisation. I am sure that my singing cures illnesses. When I sing bhajans, I believe that my voice awakens my Kundalini and that of others. My singing has always calmed my daughter when she is ill. When I sang to Sahaja yogis who are ill they often recovered from their illnesses. I wish to share this experience with other yogis who often run to the doctors.

Shirley's experiences

When I received my Self-realisation eight years ago, I immediately felt a cool sensation on the top of my head. Within weeks of attending SY beginner's classes and learning about the Kundalini energy, subtle system, chakras, mantras, affirmations and many different Sahaj techniques using the elements, I had my first joyful experience. I felt cool breezes on my palms, under my feet, around my head and my forehead. I experienced a surge of energy rise in my subtle system, enfolding me in indescribable bliss. For the first time I could feel the status, not only, of my own chakras but also that of my childrens' and that of other people whom I came into contact with. I felt empowered when I learnt to clear chakra blockages and balance myself. My Self-realisation meant that physically, mentally, socially and spiritually, I was in charge, that I had become my own guru and master.

Coming from a broken family background, I never had the security of a stable family life. By practicing SY meditation, I experienced a noticeable difference in my life. SY helped me to grow enormously. I developed courage and self-confidence and can deal independently with most situations. I used to be anxious, but meditation removed my anxiety and allowed me to live in harmony with my surroundings. My confidence and self-esteem thus improved. People refrained from meddling with me. I receive more respect at home and in the workplace. My husband believes that the spiritual protection we receive has improved our relationship.

On health issues I do not feel the need to run to doctors. As a Sahaja Yogi I meditate to rid myself of ills. Daily meditation is important for my well-being as it frees the body of negativity. I believe that all yogis have tools to uplift themselves in times of crises. My spirituality has eliminated all the fears that used to beset me. I believe that I have become fearless.

Aside from attending the weekly SY collective, my children and I meditate together at home. Collectively we enjoy a feeling of blissfulness. I believe that as a result of regular meditation the vibes within my home has changed tremendously and there is an over-powering feeling of peace and joy which has fostered strong family bonds.

The feeling of tranquility enables the family to remain focussed and to excel in their studies.

When there is a pooja going on anywhere in the world, I automatically feel a cool breeze a good week in advance and this gets stronger and stronger as the time approaches. At a pooja, the vibrations are extensive and intense and I feel elevated beyond measure. When in the collective with other yogis, the vibrations become much stronger. When I leave the collective, I feel cool breezes emerging from my head and hands and around my body. I feel much stronger for being part of the collective. In terms of collectivity, I relate beyond yogis and reach out to all people. I believe that I can help other people in distress. I am able to detect blockages in other people, but I can assist only if the person is willing. People need to be Self-realised before they can accept the ways of SY.

Annie's experiences

SY is just Love. It is Love of a very different nature. It cannot be measured, weighed or clarified. It is Love of a different dimension, of a very different level. It is Love that flows from the source that we address as Divine Love. We love each other on mundane levels, but, when you have this connection with the Higher Power which is your creator – the quality of this love is so unconditional and Pure and it flows from every part of your life.

I had always been seeking this union with the Higher Power from a very young age, but what fascinated me the most was meditation. It was a chance occurrence that led me to discovering SY meditation and receiving my Self-realisation. I learnt about the residual energy of Divine love called the Kundalini which provided positive energies to nourish the chakras in our subtle system. From the very first beginner's class in meditation, I attended, my instrument was cleansed by Her Love and I felt a surge of Energy flow through me and cover my entire being with a feeling of intense blissfulness. Others noticed a special glow on my face and commented that I looked younger and more beautiful.

I became more relaxed and stress free and as I progressed in meditation. I became more satisfied with life. Persistent financial problems eased up and simply disappeared. I slept well and my migraines stopped. My energy levels returned to normal and my problematic slipped disc appeared to have recovered. My family realised that whatever I was doing had a positive effect on me and as a result my husband and son joined me. I wanted to share this experience with others; I wanted to tell the whole world about SY meditation.

As I grew in SY, I experienced unlimited peace and joy in my life. As this joy grew so did my desire to be in the presence of my Guru, Shri Mataji Nirmala Devi. The very first time I saw Her was when I travelled to India, to celebrate Her 75th birthday, with thousands of Sahaja yogis from around the world. The vibrations that emanated from collective meditation were beyond description and Self-realisation, a never ending process during this state of permanent blissfulness.

While in collective meditation, waiting to see Shri Mataji for the first time, the Kundalini energy within me was fully awakened, continuously ascending and descending and filling me with undescrivable, intense feelings of blissfulness. A continuous surge of energy flowed through my subtle being, a river in pursuit of the ocean, pouring its refreshing coolness like a waterfall from the top of my head and around my body. On opening my eyes I realised that Shri Mataji was not physically present, but that it was the Power of Pure Love that She was emitting which I felt within my being. I was overwhelmed with wave upon wave of blissfulness and I surrendered myself totally to Her teachings. The connection between my Guru and me was as intense as the biological bond between mother and new-born child. This connection was re-established every time I heard Her voice, in my mind, on video or on cassette.

In collectivity with yogis from around the world from all walks of life, my instrument was in a constant state of renewal. There were no barriers and all the yogis enjoyed the enlightened spirit, friendship, ever flowing stream of Love, togetherness, total bliss and relaxation and connectivity with the common bond, Shri Mataji as Mother, Father, Friend and Teacher. The Divine Mother provides everything. She counsels, protects and educates via meditation and you reach a higher level of understanding humanity and the Love of God. All one has to do is to be the recipient of Her Love.

One has to surrender to her Divine Love to enable Her to work out ones problems. The more I saw Mother, the more elevated and energised I felt.

Having enjoyed the opportunity of being in the presence of Shri Mataji and yogis from around the world gave me a better perspective. I now know that the solutions for the world problems are the same as for individual problems, that is, to be connected to the source of Divine Love. I firmly believed that Self-realisation is the passport to universal social, political and economic problems. I experimented with it and I can confidently say that I live a blissful, peaceful and pleasant life.

Kerry's experiences

A friend introduced me to SY meditation and gave me my Self-realisation. In my daily life, I chant specific mantras to clear chakra blockages and to keep myself balanced. By reciting affirmations, I've learnt to value positive thought and to become my own guru and master. I protect myself by giving myself a bandan. Every week, I attend the local collective to exchange vibrations with other Sahaja yogis and to elevate myself through collective meditation activities.

My day begins by surrendering it to Shri Mataji. I ask for Her guidance and Her protection as this gives me direction to fulfil my role as a wife, mother and friend. I work in a very stressful environment and meditation helps me to work in a state of calm detachment. Meditation also helps me to develop confidence in preparing for an exam and writing a paper. I find that by chanting mantras and affirmations that respond to increasing my attention and concentration, I become focussed. A sense of peacefulness permeates me during my study period and the exams become a breeze.

My husband and I read Sahaj literature that prepared us for parent-hood. During my pregnancies, meditation helped me to remain calm whenever I was anxious. I attribute my healthy, trouble-free pregnancies and my calm, happy, beautiful and peaceful children to SY meditation.

I enjoy singing and SY has exposed me to singing in many different languages. Whenever I sing, play a musical instrument or even listen to music, I experience deep

vibrations. I enjoy the flow of the music as it has a joyous effect on me. Singing impacts on my breathing and as the flow of the music consumes me, the power of the Kundalini energy threads through my chakras and a cool breeze oozes out of the top of my head filling me with blissfulness and thoughtlessness. To me SY meditation is music that stirs my heart, uplifts my spirit and repeatedly gives me my Self-realisation.

Chan's experiences

While receiving my Self-realisation from Shri Mataji at a public program in Mumbai where She gave en-mass Self-realisation, I felt a sudden surge of energy rising inside me. Wave upon wave of blissfulness covered my entire being as I silently witnessed what was happening around me. I experienced a feeling of intense peacefulness and inner joy. Since then SY meditation has become an important part of my life. My children and I have developed the habit of meditating every morning and evening.

When I go into meditation, I enter a world where material things do not take precedence any longer. There's a different kind of joy, a different kind of peace. Through meditation I am able to look at the 'bigger picture'. I constantly speak about SY meditation to others because I want them to experience the kind of joy I feel. In Sahaj, I'm happy everyday because I have Shri Mataji in my life. When I focus on Shri Mataji, I receive beautiful vibrations. By surrendering to the Sahaj way I have learnt to practice detachment, to become balanced and to look at life from the here and now perspective. When I go into meditation a state of blissful peacefulness prevails and there is no problem that is impossible to overcome. SY techniques which were used by Sahaja yogis suffering from 'incurable' illnesses such as cancer have resulted in them being miraculously cured.

Every week, I join the main SY collective for meditation. By going into collective meditation my vibrations become more powerful. My vibrations reflect my physical, mental, emotional and spiritual status and "inform" me of any blockages which may be present on my subtle system. By using the five elements, chanting mantras and

affirmations I balance malaligned chakras and nadis. When chakra clearing and balancing is done collectively I feel more energised.

I owe my son's recovery from an incurable eczema to doctors at the Sahaj hospital in India, South African doctors who taught me Sahaj techniques and to SY collectives throughout the world for focussing on his recovery. Collective prayer played a vital role in his recovery. SY has taught me to become my own doctor and I've learnt to manage most ailments by using SY techniques. Simple breathing exercises help my sinus problem; walking on the sea-shore de-stresses my tired feet; watching the waves and listening to the music of the sea puts me into a meditative state. Sitting on the ground; pressing my palms on the ground helps me absorb the cool vibrations from Mother Earth, and keeps me grounded. Feasting on the greenery quietens my busy mind. Looking up at the sky and stretching my hands upwards keeps me balanced. Chanting mantras and affirmations help to attract the positive things in my life. Sahaj has helped me to enjoy the simple things in life!

4. Recording experiences

Pravina's experience

While meditating a few weeks after receiving my Self-realisation in 1993, I felt faint tingling sensations on the palms of my hands and a gentle cool breeze flowing gently out of my fontanelle bone area (1). This tingling sensation has grown in momentum and I now often feel as if blocks of ice are placed in the centres of my palms (2). The cool breeze flowing gently out of my fontanelle bone area is now often experienced as an ever-flowing fountain of cascading cool breezes covering my entire being (3). On my finger tips and feet I feel sensations which correspond to energy centres in my subtle system (4). These sensations generate heat in the case of a problematic energy centre or coolness in a fully functional centre (5). Having attended the SY beginners' classes, I am able to heal, correct, balance and nourish the subtle energy centres and acquire integration of body, mind, intellect and soul through simple SY cleansing techniques (6). I recited affirmations, chant mantras and use hand movements to clear blockages on the subtle system (7). I have become collectively conscious, by this I mean that I can feel others' centers and help them to heal (8).

The fact that we are all part and parcel of the Whole has become a tangible reality to me (9).

Meditation allows me to introspect, and by changing my thoughts and feelings from negative to positive, I receive guidance and answers to my questions (10). Beautiful positive qualities such as innocence, child-like joy, dignity, balance, and a tremendous sense of direction and purpose in life manifest themselves in me (11). These special qualities continuously heal me and transformed the way I live my life, the way I enjoy life and the way I understand life (12). By living my life in meditation I have become increasingly aware of the multitude of choices available to me (13). I have become more humble, loving, compassionate and confident (14). Collective meditation is a sublime experience which has strengthened and deepened the quality of my meditation (15).

Daily meditation has improved my mental focus, concentration and energy levels (16). My mind has increasingly quieter and my breathing has slowed down dramatically (17). I have become closer to the people around me, more productive in my work, less stressed out, and basically more contented than I have ever been (18). I have also been extremely productive (19). At almost 60 years of age, I completed a degree in psychology (20). My knowledge of the Divine Kundalini energy, the chakras and meditation have become tools that equip me to work with people from all walks of life (21). When in the presence of a client, I instinctively know from “catches” on my chakras, how to commence with therapy (22).

Sohana’s SY experiences

I experienced a very subtle inner transformation when I received my Self-realisation at the age of eighteen years (1). A month later, my boyfriend who gave me my Self-realisation, came to work on me with his hands, because I was ill (2). I noticed a kind of joy and special glow on his face when he spoke about his experience of being in the presence of Shri Mataji (3). This awakened my desire to meet Shri Mataji (4). I felt a very subtle energy rising on my back whenever I experienced this desire (5).

Upon meeting Shri Mataji for the first time at a public programme in Geneva, my connection with Her was intense and the bonding instantaneous (6). I felt Shri Mataji's attention penetrating my entire being (7). The experience was incredibly blissful, joyful and unexplainably peaceful (8). Shri Mataji's voice was soothing, crisp, clear, endearing and healing and Her face was extremely beautiful, serene and joy giving (9). From that moment of meeting, I never stopped meditating (10). The desire to re-experience that tremendous love never stopped "running" in my mind (11). One of my most striking memories about being in meditation is the incredible peaceful experience of being in the present, as well as in the witness state (12).

Ever since I began practicing SY meditation, I felt fulfilled (13). The universal aspect of SY has touched me deeply (14). I can read any sacred scripture and feel the truth on my body in the form of vibrations (15). Whenever I give Self-realisation to seekers, I feel a cool breeze on my hands (16). This sensation grows in intensity over the years showing the incredible "intelligence of the kundalini" (17).

I have a good voice and my strongest experiences are with music (18). I feel that the way people receive the flow from music is closely related to meditation (19). Together with other students from around the world, I learnt to sing songs in different languages, at the SY music academy in India (20). I love singing bhajans (Indian devotional songs) as I experience a tremendous cooling, relaxing and joy-giving feeling (21). Music, in addition to being meditation, provides me with a livelihood. In countries where language is a problem, the language of music is a powerful way to share experiences and give Self-realisation to people (22).

Music can cure people and give them Self-realisation (23). I am sure that my singing cures illnesses (24). When I sing bhajans, I believe that my voice awakens my Kundalini and that of others (25). My singing has always calmed my daughter when she is ill (26). When I sang to Sahaja yogis who are ill they often recovered from their illnesses (27). I wish to share this experience with other yogis who often run to the doctors (28).

Shirley's experiences

When I received my Self-realisation eight years ago, I immediately felt a cool sensation on the top of my head (1). Within weeks of attending SY beginner's classes and learning about the Kundalini energy, subtle system, chakras, mantras, affirmations and many different Sahaj techniques using the elements, I had my first joyful experience (2). I felt cool breezes on my palms, under my feet, around my head and my forehead (3). I experienced a surge of energy rise in my subtle system, enfolding me in indescribable bliss (4). For the first time I could feel the status, not only, of my own chakras but also that of my childrens' and that of other people whom I came into contact with (5). I felt empowered when I learnt to clear chakra blockages and balance myself (6). My Self-realisation meant that physically, mentally, socially and spiritually, I was in charge, that I had become my own guru and master (7).

Coming from a broken family background, I never had the security of a stable family life. By practicing SY meditation, I experienced a noticeable difference in my life (8). SY helped me to grow enormously (9). I developed courage and self-confidence and can deal independently with most situations (10). I used to be anxious, but meditation removed my anxiety and allowed me to live in harmony with my surroundings (11). My confidence and self-esteem thus improved (12). People refrained from meddling with me (13). I receive more respect at home and in the workplace (14). My husband believes that the spiritual protection we receive has improved our relationship (15).

On health issues I do not feel the need to run to doctors (16). As a Sahaja Yogi I meditate to rid myself of ills (17). Daily meditation is important for my well-being as it frees the body of negativity (18). I believe that all yogis have tools to uplift themselves in times of crises (19). My spirituality has eliminated all the fears that used to beset me (20). I believe that I have become fearless (21).

Aside from attending the weekly SY collective, my children and I meditate together at home (22). Collectively we enjoy a feeling of blissfulness (23). I believe that as a result of regular meditation the vibes within my home has changed tremendously and there is an over-powering feeling of peace and joy which has fostered strong family

bonds (24). The feeling of tranquility enables the family to remain focussed and to excel in their studies (25).

When there is a pooja going on anywhere in the world, I automatically feel a cool breeze a good week in advance and this gets stronger and stronger as the time approaches (26). At a pooja, the vibrations are extensive and intense and I feel elevated beyond measure (27). When in the collective with other yogis, the vibrations become much stronger (28). When I leave the collective, I feel cool breezes emerging from my head and hands and around my body (29). I feel much stronger for being part of the collective (30). In terms of collectivity, I relate beyond yogis and reach out to all people (31). I believe that I can help other people in distress (32). I am able to detect blockages in other people, but I can assist only if the person is willing (33). People need to be Self-realised before they can accept the ways of SY (34).

Annie's experiences

SY is just Love (1). It is Love of a very different nature (2). It cannot be measured, weighed or clarified (3). It is Love of a different dimension, of a very different level (4). It is Love that flows from the source that we address as Divine Love (5). We love each other on mundane levels, but, when you have this connection with the Higher Power which is your creator (6) – the quality of this love is so unconditional and Pure and it flows from every part of your life (7).

I had always been seeking this union with the Higher Power from a very young age, but what fascinated me the most was meditation (8). It was a chance occurrence that led me to discovering SY meditation and receiving my Self-realisation (9). I learnt about the residual energy of Divine love called the Kundalini which provided positive energies to nourish the chakras in our subtle system (10). From the very first beginner's class in meditation, I attended, my instrument was cleansed by Her Love and I felt a surge of Energy flow through me and cover my entire being with a feeling of intense blissfulness (11). Others noticed a special glow on my face and commented that I looked younger and more beautiful (12).

I became more relaxed and stress free and as I progressed in meditation (13). I became more satisfied with life (14). Persistent financial problems eased up and simply disappeared (15). I slept well and my migraines stopped (16). My energy levels returned to normal and my problematic slipped disc appeared to have recovered (17). My family realised that whatever I was doing had a positive effect on me and as a result my husband and son joined me (18). I wanted to share this experience with others; I wanted to tell the whole world about SY meditation (19).

As I grew in SY, I experienced unlimited peace and joy in my life (20). As this joy grew so did my desire to be in the presence of my Guru, Shri Mataji Nirmala Devi (C 21). The very first time I saw Her was when I travelled to India, to celebrate Her 75th birthday, with thousands of Sahaja yogis from around the world (22). The vibrations that emanated from collective meditation were beyond description and Self-realisation, a never ending process during this state of permanent blissfulness (23).

While in collective meditation, waiting to see Shri Mataji for the first time, the Kundalini energy within me was fully awakened, continuously ascending and descending and filling me with undescrivable, intense feelings of blissfulness (24). A continuous surge of energy flowed through my subtle being, a river in pursuit of the ocean, pouring its refreshing coolness like a waterfall from the top of my head and around my body (25). On opening my eyes I realised that Shri Mataji was not physically present, but that it was the Power of Pure Love that She was emitting which I felt within my being (26). I was overwhelmed with wave upon wave of blissfulness and I surrendered myself totally to Her teachings (27). The connection between my Guru and me was as intense as the biological bond between mother and new-born child (28). This connection was re-established every time I heard Her voice, in my mind, on video or on cassette (29).

In collectivity with yogis from around the world from all walks of life, my instrument was in a constant state of renewal (30). There were no barriers and all the yogis enjoyed the enlightened spirit, friendship, ever flowing stream of Love, togetherness, total bliss and relaxation and connectivity with the common bond (31), Shri Mataji as Mother, Father, Friend and Teacher (32). The Divine Mother provides everything (33). She counsels, protects and educates via meditation and you reach a higher level of understanding humanity and the Love of God (34). All one has to do is to be

the recipient of Her Love (35). One has to surrender to her Divine Love to enable Her to work out ones problems (36). The more I saw Mother, the more elevated and energised I felt (37).

Having enjoyed the opportunity of being in the presence of Shri Mataji and yogis from around the world gave me a better perspective (38). I now know that the solutions for the world problems are the same as for individual problems, that is, to be connected to the source of Divine Love (39). I firmly believed that Self-realisation is the passport to universal social, political and economic problems (40). I experimented with it and I can confidently say that I live a blissful, peaceful and pleasant life (41).

Kerry's experiences

A friend introduced me to SY meditation and gave me my Self-realisation (1). In my daily life, I chant specific mantras to clear chakra blockages and to keep myself balanced (2). By reciting affirmations, I've learnt to value positive thought and to become my own guru and master (3). I protect myself by giving myself a bandan (4). Every week, I attend the local collective to exchange vibrations with other Sahaja yogis and to elevate myself through collective meditation activities (5).

My day begins by surrendering it to Shri Mataji (6). I ask for Her guidance and Her protection as this gives me direction to fulfil my role as a wife, mother and friend (7). I work in a very stressful environment and meditation helps me to work in a state of calm detachment (8). Meditation also helps me to develop confidence in preparing for an exam and writing a paper (9). I find that by chanting mantras and affirmations that respond to increasing my attention and concentration, I become focussed (10). A sense of peacefulness permeates me during my study period and the exams become a breeze (11).

My husband and I read Sahaj literature that prepared us for parent-hood (12). During my pregnancies, meditation helped me to remain calm whenever I was anxious (13). I attribute my healthy, trouble-free pregnancies and my calm, happy, beautiful and peaceful children to SY meditation (14).

I enjoy singing and SY has exposed me to singing in many different languages (15). Whenever I sing, play a musical instrument or even listen to music, I experience deep vibrations (16). I enjoy the flow of the music as it has a joyous effect on me (17). Singing impacts on my breathing and as the flow of the music consumes me, the power of the Kundalini energy threads through my chakras and a cool breeze oozes out of the top of my head filling me with blissfulness and thoughtlessness (18). To me SY meditation is music that stirs my heart, uplifts my spirit and repeatedly gives me my Self-realisation (19).

Chan's experiences

While receiving my Self-realisation (SR) from Shri Mataji (C) at a public program in Mumbai where She (C) gave en-mass (C) Self-realisation (SR), I felt a sudden surge of energy rising inside me (1). Wave upon wave of blissfulness covered my entire being as I silently witnessed what was happening around me (2). I experienced a feeling of intense peacefulness and inner joy (3). Since then SY meditation has become an important part of my life (4). My children and I have developed the habit of meditating every morning and evening (5).

When I go into meditation, I enter a world where material things do not take precedence any longer (6). There's a different kind of joy, a different kind of peace (7). Through meditation I am able to look at the 'bigger picture' (8). I constantly speak about SY meditation to others because I want them to experience the kind of joy I feel (9). In Sahaj, I'm happy everyday because I have Shri Mataji in my life (10). When I focus on Shri Mataji, I receive beautiful vibrations (11). By surrendering to the Sahaj way I have learnt to practice detachment, to become balanced and to look at life from the here and now perspective (12). When I go into meditation a state of blissful peacefulness prevails and there is no problem that is impossible to overcome (13). SY techniques that have been by Sahaja yogis suffering from 'incurable' illnesses such as cancer and they have been miraculously cured (14).

Every week, I join the main SY collective for meditation (15). By going into collective meditation my vibrations become more powerful (16). My vibrations reflect my physical, mental, emotional and spiritual status and "inform" me of any blockages

which may be present on my subtle system (17). By using the five elements, chanting mantras and affirmations I balance malaligned chakras and nadis (18). When chakra clearing and balancing is done collectively I feel more energised (19).

I owe my son's recovery from an incurable eczema to doctors at the Sahaj hospital in India, South African doctors who taught me Sahaj techniques and to SY collectives throughout the world for focussing on his recovery (20). Collective prayer played a vital role in his recovery (21). SY has taught me to become my own doctor and I've learnt to manage most ailments by using SY techniques (22). Simple breathing exercises help my sinus problem; walking on the sea-shore de-stresses my tired feet; watching the waves and listening to the music of the sea puts me into a meditative state (23). Sitting on the ground; pressing my palms on the ground helps me absorb the cool vibrations from Mother Earth, and keeps me grounded (24).Feasting on the greenery quietens my busy mind (25). Looking up at the sky and stretching my hands upwards keeps me balanced (26). Chanting mantras and affirmations help to attract the positive things in my life (27). Sahaj has helped me to enjoy the simple things in life! (28)

5. Recording recurrence of themes

Pravina's experience

While meditating (M 1) a few weeks after receiving my Self-realisation (SR 1) in 1993, I felt faint tingling sensations on the palms of my hands (KH 1) and a gentle cool breeze flowing gently out of my fontanelle bone area. This tingling sensation has grown in momentum (KH 2) and I now often feel as if blocks of ice are placed in the centres of my palms (KH 3). The cool breeze flowing gently out of my fontanelle bone area is now often experienced as an ever-flowing fountain of cascading cool breezes covering my entire being (KH 4). On my finger tips and feet I feel sensations which correspond to energy centres in my subtle system (KH 5). These sensations generate heat (KH 6) in the case of a problematic energy centre or coolness in a fully functional centre (KH 7). Having attended the SY beginners' classes (C 1), I am able to heal, correct, balance and nourish the subtle energy centres (KH 8) and acquire integration of body, mind, intellect and soul (T 1) through simple SY cleansing

techniques (KH 9). I recited affirmations, chant mantras and use hand movements to clear blockages on the subtle system (7). I have become collectively conscious (C 2), by this I mean that I can feel others' centers and help them to heal (C 3). The fact that we are all part and parcel of the Whole has become a tangible reality to me (C 4).

Meditation allows me to introspect (M 2), and by changing my thoughts and feelings from negative to positive (KH 10), I receive guidance and answers to my questions (T 2). Beautiful positive qualities such as innocence, child-like joy, dignity, balance, and a tremendous sense of direction and purpose in life manifest themselves in me (T 3). These special qualities continuously heal me and transformed the way I live my life, the way I enjoy life and the way I understand life (T 4). By living my life in meditation (M 3) I have become increasingly aware of the multitude of choices available to me (T 5). I have become more humble, loving, compassionate and confident (T 6). Collective (C 5) meditation (M 4) is a sublime experience which has strengthened and deepened (C 6) the quality of my meditation (M 5).

Daily meditation has improved my mental focus, concentration and energy levels (T 7). My mind has increasingly quieter and my breathing has slowed down dramatically (T 8). I have become closer to the people around me, more productive in my work, less stressed out, and basically more contented than I have ever been (T 9). I have also been extremely productive (T 10). At almost 60 years of age, I completed a degree in psychology (T11). My knowledge of the Divine Kundalini energy, the chakras (KH 11) and meditation (M 6) have become tools that equip me to work with people from all walks of life (C 7). When in the presence of a client, I instinctively know from “catches” on my chakras, how to commence with therapy (KH 12).

Sohana's SY experiences

I experienced a very subtle inner transformation (KH 1) when I received my Self-realisation (SR 1) at the age of eighteen years. A month later, my boyfriend who gave me my Self-realisation (SR 2), came to work on me with his hands (KH 2), because I was ill. I noticed a kind of joy and special glow on his face (T 1) when he spoke about his experience of being in the presence of Shri Mataji (C 1). This

awakened my desire to meet Shri Mataji (C 2). I felt a very subtle energy rising on my back (KH 3) whenever I experienced this desire (C 3).

Upon meeting Shri Mataji (C 4) for the first time at a public programme in Geneva (C 5), my connection with Her (C 6) was intense and the bonding instantaneous (T 2). I felt Shri Mataji's (C 7) attention penetrating my entire being (T 3). The experience was incredibly blissful (T 4), joyful (T 5) and unexplainably peaceful (T 6). Shri Mataji's (C 8) voice was soothing, crisp, clear, endearing and healing (KH 4) and Her (C 9) face was extremely beautiful, serene and joy giving (KH 5). From that moment of meeting (C 10), I never stopped meditating (M 1). The desire to re-experience that tremendous love never stopped "running" in my mind (C 11). One of my most striking memories about being in meditation (M 2) is the incredible peaceful (T 7) experience of being in the present (M 3), as well as in the witness state (M 4).

Ever since I began practicing SY meditation (M 5), I felt fulfilled (T 8). The universal aspect of SY has touched me deeply (T 9). I can read any sacred scripture and feel the truth on my body in the form of vibrations (KH 6). Whenever I give Self-realisation (SR 3) to seekers, I feel a cool breeze on my hands (KH 7). This sensation (KH 8) grows in intensity over the years showing the incredible "intelligence of the kundalini" (KH 9).

I have a good voice and my strongest experiences are with music (M 6). I feel that the way people (C 12) receive the flow from music is closely related to meditation (M 7). Together with other students from around the world (C 13), I learnt to sing songs in different languages, at the SY music academy in India (C 14). I love singing bhajans (Indian devotional songs) as I experience a tremendous cooling, relaxing and joy-giving feeling (T 10). Music, in addition to being meditation (M 8), provides me with a livelihood. In countries where language is a problem, the language of music is a powerful way to share experiences and give Self-realisation to people (SR 4).

Music has healing qualities and I am confident that my singing cures illnesses (KH 10). By singing bhajans my voice awakens my Kundalini (KH 11) and that of others (C 15). Music can cure people and give them Self-realisation (SR 5). While in India, I

sang a song which I had dedicated to Shri Mataji (C 16), to a yogini who was very ill. At the end of that song, the yogini's fever was gone (KH 12). Whenever my daughter is ill, my singing calms her and has cured her many times (KH 13). I wish to share this experience with other yogis (C 17) who often run to the doctors.

Shirley's experiences

When I received my Self-realisation (SR 1) eight years ago, I immediately felt a cool sensation on the top of my head (KH 1). Within weeks of attending SY beginner's classes (M 1) and learning about the Kundalini energy, (KH 2) subtle system (KH 3), chakras (KH 4), mantras (KH 5), affirmations (KH 6) and many different Sahaj techniques using the elements (KH 7), I had my first joyful experience (KH 8). I felt cool breezes on my palms, (KH 9) under my feet (KH 10), around my head and my forehead (KH 11). I experienced a surge of energy rise in my subtle system (KH 12), enfolding me in indescribable bliss (T 1). For the first time I could feel the status, not only, of my own chakras (KH 13) but also that of my childrens' and that of other people whom I came into contact with (C 1). I felt empowered (T 2) when I learnt to clear chakra blockages (KH 14) and balance myself. My Self-realisation (SR 2) meant that physically, mentally, socially and spiritually, I was in charge (T 3), that I had become my own guru and master (T 4).

Coming from a broken family background, I never had the security of a stable family life. By practicing SY meditation (M 2), I experienced a noticeable difference in my life (T 5). SY helped me to grow enormously (T 6). I developed courage (T 7) and self-confidence (T 8) and can deal independently with most situations (T 9). I used to be anxious, but meditation (M) removed my anxiety and allowed me to live in harmony with my surroundings (T 10). My confidence (T 11) and self-esteem (T 12) thus improved. People refrained from meddling with me (T 13). I receive more respect at home and in the workplace (T 14). My husband believes that the spiritual protection (KH 15) we receive has improved our relationship (T 15).

On health issues I do not feel the need to run to doctors (T 16). As a Sahaja Yogi I meditate (M 3) to rid myself of ills (KH 16). Daily meditation (M 4) is important for my well-being as it frees the body of negativity (T 17). I believe that all yogis (C 2) have

tools to uplift themselves in times of crises (T 18). My spirituality has eliminated all the fears that used to beset me (KH 17). I believe that I have become fearless (T 19).

Aside from attending the weekly SY collective (C 3), my children and I meditate (M 5) together at home. Collectively (C 4) we enjoy a feeling of blissfulness (T 20). I believe that as a result of regular meditation (M 6) the vibes within my home has changed tremendously (T 21) and there is an over-powering feeling of peace and joy (T 22) which has fostered strong family bonds (T 23). The feeling of tranquility (T 24) enables the family (C 5) to remain focussed and to excel in their studies (T 25).

When there is a pooja going on anywhere in the world (C 6), I automatically feel a cool breeze a good week in advance and this gets stronger and stronger as the time approaches (KH 18). At a pooja (C 7), the vibrations are extensive and intense (KH 19) and I feel elevated beyond measure (T 26). When in the collective (C 8) with other yogis (C 9), the vibrations become much stronger (KH 20). When I leave the collective (C 10), I feel cool breezes emerging from my head and hands and around my body (KH 21). I feel much stronger for being part of the collective (C 11). In terms of collectivity (C 12), I relate beyond yogis and reach out to all people (C 13). I believe that I can help other people (C 14) in distress. I am able to detect blockages in other people (C 15), but I can assist only if the person is willing. People need to be Self-realised (SR 3) before they can accept the ways of SY (M7).

Annie's experiences

SY is just Love (C 1). It is Love (C 2) of a very different nature. It (C 3) cannot be measured, weighed or clarified. It is Love (C 4) of a different dimension, of a very different level. It is Love (C 5) that flows from the source that we address as Divine Love (C 6). We love each other on mundane levels, but, when you have this connection with the Higher Power (C 7) which is your creator (C 8) – the quality of this love (C 9) is so unconditional and Pure (C 10) and it flows from every part of your life (C 11).

I had always been seeking this union with the Higher Power (C 12) from a very young age, but what fascinated me the most was meditation (M 1). It was a chance

occurrence that led me to discovering SY meditation (M 2) and receiving my Self-realisation (SR 1). I learnt about the residual energy of Divine love (KH 1) called the Kundalini (KH 2) which provided positive energies (KH 3) to nourish the chakras (KH 4) in our subtle system (KH 5). From the very first beginner's class in meditation (M 3), I attended, my instrument was cleansed by Her Love (C 13) and I felt a surge of Energy flow (KH 6) through me and cover my entire being with a feeling of intense blissfulness (T 1). Others noticed a special glow on my face and commented that I looked younger and more beautiful (T 2).

I became more relaxed and stress free (T 3) and as I progressed in meditation (M 4) I became more satisfied with life (T 4). Persistent financial problems eased up and simply disappeared (T 5). I slept well (T 6) and my migraines stopped (T 7). My energy levels returned to normal (T 8) and my problematic slipped disc appeared to have recovered (T 9). My family realised that whatever I was doing had a positive effect on me (T 10) and as a result my husband and son joined me (C 14).

As I grew in SY, I experienced unlimited peace and joy in my life (T 11). As this joy grew (T 12) so did my desire to be in the presence of my Guru (C 15), Shri Mataji Nirmala Devi (C 16). The very first time I saw Her (C 17) was when I travelled to India, to celebrate Her (C 18) 75th birthday, with thousands of Sahaja yogis from around the world (C 19). The vibrations (KH 7) that emanated from collective meditation (C 20) were beyond description and Self-realisation (SR 2), a never ending process during this state of permanent blissfulness (KH 8).

While in collective meditation (C 21), waiting to see Shri Mataji (C 22) for the first time, the Kundalini energy within me was fully awakened (KH 9), continuously ascending and descending and filling me with undescrivable, intense feelings of blissfulness (KH 10). A continuous surge of energy (KH 11) flowed through my subtle being (KH 12), a river in pursuit of the ocean (KH 13), pouring its refreshing coolness (KH 14) like a waterfall from the top of my head (KH 15) and around my body (KH 16). On opening my eyes I realised that Shri Mataji (C 23) was not physically present, but that it was the Power of Pure Love (KH 17) that She (C 24) was emitting which I felt within my being (KH 18). I was overwhelmed with wave upon wave of blissfulness (KH 19) and I surrendered myself totally to Her (C 25) teachings. The connection

between my Guru (C 26) and me was as intense as the biological bond between mother and new-born child (C 27). This connection was re-established every time I heard Her (C 28) voice, in my mind, on video or on cassette (C 29).

In collectivity with yogis from around the world from all walks of life (C 30), my instrument was in a constant state of renewal (SR 3). There were no barriers and all the yogis enjoyed the enlightened spirit (C 31), friendship (C 32), ever flowing stream of Love (C 33), togetherness (C 34), total bliss (C 35) and relaxation and connectivity with the common bond (C 36), Shri Mataji as Mother, Father, Friend and Teacher (C 37). The Divine Mother provides everything (C 38). She (C 39) counsels, protects and educates via meditation (M 5) and you reach a higher level of understanding humanity and the Love of God (C 40). All one has to do is to be the recipient of Her Love (C 41). One has to surrender to her Divine Love (C 42) to enable Her (C 43) to work out ones problems. The more I saw Mother, the more elevated and energised I felt (C 44).

Having enjoyed the opportunity of being in the presence of Shri Mataji (C 45) and yogis from around the world (C 46) gave me a better perspective. I now know that the solutions for the world problems are the same as for individual problems, that is, to be connected to the source of Divine Love (C 47). I firmly believed that Self-realisation (SR 4) is the passport to universal social, political and economic problems. I experimented with it and I can confidently say that I live a blissful (T 13), peaceful (T 14) and pleasant life (T 15).

Kerry's experiences

A friend introduced me to SY meditation (M 1) and gave me my Self-realisation (SR 1). In my daily life, I chant specific mantras (KH 1) to clear chakra blockages and to keep myself balanced (KH 2). By reciting affirmations (KH 3), I've learnt to value positive thought (T 1) and to become my own guru and master (T 2). I protect myself by giving myself a bandan (KH 4). Every week, I attend the local collective (C 1) to exchange vibrations (KH 5) with other Sahaja yogis (C 2) and to elevate myself (T 3) through collective (C 3) meditation (M 2) activities.

My day begins by surrendering it to Shri Mataji (C 4). I ask for Her guidance (C 5) and Her protection (C 6) as this gives me direction to fulfil my role as a wife, mother and friend (C 7). I work in a very stressful environment and meditation (M 3) helps me to work in a state of calm detachment (T 4). Meditation (M 4) also helps me to develop confidence (T 5) in preparing for an exam and writing a paper (T 6). I find that by chanting mantras (KH 6) and affirmations (KH 7) that respond to increasing my attention (T 7) and concentration (T 8), I become focussed (T 9). A sense of peacefulness (T 10) permeates me during my study period and the exams become a breeze (T 11).

My husband and I read Sahaj literature that prepared us for parent-hood (T 12). During my pregnancies, meditation (M 5) helped me to remain calm whenever I was anxious (T 13). I attribute my healthy, trouble-free pregnancies and my calm, happy, beautiful and peaceful children to SY meditation (M 6).

I enjoy singing and SY has exposed me to singing in many different languages (C 8). Whenever I sing, play a musical instrument or even listen to music, I experience deep vibrations (KH 8). I enjoy the flow of the music as it has a joyous effect on me (KH 9). Singing impacts on my breathing (KH 10) and as the flow of the music consumes me (KH 11), the power of the Kundalini energy (KH 12) threads through my chakras (KH 13) and a cool breeze oozes out of the top of my head (KH 14) filling me with blissfulness (T 14) and thoughtlessness (M 7). To me SY meditation (M 8) is music that stirs my heart, uplifts my spirit (T 15) and repeatedly gives me my Self-realisation (SR 2).

Chan's experiences

While receiving my Self-realisation (SR 1) from Shri Mataji (C 1) at a public program in Mumbai where She (C 2) gave en-mass (C 3) Self-realisation (SR 2), I felt a sudden surge of energy rising inside me (SR 3). Wave upon wave of blissfulness covered my entire being as I silently witnessed what was happening around me (SR 4). I experienced a feeling of intense peacefulness and inner joy (SR 5). Since then SY meditation (M 1) has become an important part of my life. My children and I have developed the habit of meditating every morning and evening (M 2).

When I go into meditation (M 3), I enter a world where material things do not take precedence any longer (T 1). There's a different kind of joy (T 2), a different kind of peace (T 3). Through meditation (M 4) I am able to look at the 'bigger picture' (T 4). I constantly speak about SY meditation (M 5) to others (C 4) because I want them (C 5) to experience the kind of joy I feel (KH 1). In Sahaj, I'm happy everyday because I have Shri Mataji (C 6) in my life (C 7). When I (C 8) focus on Shri Mataji (C 9), I receive beautiful vibrations (KH 2). By surrendering to the Sahaj way (C 10) I have learnt to practice detachment (C 11), to become balanced (KH 3) and to look at life from the here and now perspective (T 5). When I go into meditation (M 6) a state of blissful peacefulness prevails (T 6) and there is no problem that is impossible to overcome (T 7). SY techniques (KH 4) that have been by Sahaja yogis suffering from 'incurable' illnesses such as cancer and they have been miraculously cured (T 8).

Every week, I join the main SY collective (C 12) for meditation (M 7). By going into collective (C 13) meditation (M 8) my vibrations (KH 5) become more powerful (T 8). My vibrations (KH 6) reflect my physical, mental, emotional and spiritual status and "inform" me (SR 6) of any blockages which may be present on my subtle system (KH 7). By using the five elements (KH 8), chanting mantras (KH 9) and affirmations (KH 10) I balance malaligned chakras (KH 11) and nadis (KH 12). When chakra clearing and balancing (KH 13) is done collectively (C 14) I feel more energised (T 9).

I owe my son's recovery from an incurable eczema to doctors at the Sahaj hospital in India, South African doctors who taught me Sahaj techniques (KH 14) and to SY collectives throughout the world for focussing on his recovery (C 15). Collective prayer (C 16) played a vital role in his recovery. SY has taught me to become my own doctor (KH 15) and I've learnt to manage most ailments by using SY techniques (KH 16). Simple breathing exercises help my sinus problem (KH 17); walking on the sea-shore de-stresses my tired feet (KH 18); watching the waves and listening to the music of the sea puts me into a meditative state (KH 19). Sitting on the ground (KH 20); pressing my palms on the ground helps me absorb the cool vibrations from Mother Earth (KH 21), and keeps me grounded (KH 22). Feasting on the greenery quiets my busy mind (KH 23). Looking up at the sky and stretching my hands upwards keeps me balanced (KH 24). Chanting mantras (KH 25) and affirmations

(KH 26) help to attract the positive things in my life (T 10). Sahaj has helped me to enjoy the simple things in life! (T 11)

6. Identification of main themes in individual summaries

Pravina's experience

In 1993, when I received my Self-realisation (SR), I felt no different. While meditating (M) a few weeks later, however, I began feeling faint tingling sensations on the palms of my hands (KH) and a pleasant feeling of a cool breeze flowing gently out of my fontanelle bone area (KH). As I progressed with my meditation (M), this tingling sensation grew in momentum (KH). When in meditation (M), I now often feel as if blocks of ice are placed in the centres of my palms (KH). The cool breeze flowing gently out of my fontanelle bone area (KH) is now often experienced as an ever-flowing fountain of cascading cool breezes covering my entire being (KH). On my finger tips and feet I feel sensations (KH) which correspond to energy centres in my subtle system (KH). These sensations consist of heat in the case of a problem in an energy centre or coolness when there are no problems in that centre (KH). Having attended the SY beginners' classes (C), I am able to heal, correct, balance and nourish the subtle energy centres (KH) and acquire integration of body, mind, intellect and soul (T) through simple SY cleansing techniques (KH). I recited affirmations (KH), chant mantras (KH) and use hand movements (KH) to clear blockages on the subtle system (KH). I have become collectively conscious (C), by that I mean I can feel others' centers and help them to heal (C). The fact that we are all part and parcel of the Whole has become a tangible reality to me (C).

In meditation (M) beautiful positive qualities such as innocence, child-like joy, dignity, balance, and a tremendous sense of direction and purpose in life manifest themselves in me (T). These special qualities have transformed the way I live my life, the way I enjoy life and the way I understand life (T). Through regular meditation (M) I have become humble, loving, compassionate and confident (T). So as to strengthen and deepen the quality of my meditation (M), I share the experience with others in group or collective meditations (C). Collective meditation (C) is a sublime experience

(C) as the power of not just one, but many kundalini's are raised simultaneously, in the same environment (C).

Regular daily meditation (M) has improved my mental focus, concentration and energy levels (T). Since I began meditating (M) my breathing has improved, I have become closer to the people around me (T), more productive in my work (T), less stressed out (T), and basically more contented than I have ever been (T). I have also been extremely productive (T). At almost 60 years of age, I completed a degree in psychology (T). My knowledge of the Divine Kundalini energy (KH), the chakras (KH) and meditation (M) have become tools that equip me to work with people from all walks of life (C). When in the presence of a client, I instinctively know from “catches” on my chakras (KH), how to commence with therapy (T).

Sohana's SY experiences

I experienced a very subtle inner transformation (KH) when I received my Self-realisation (SR) at the age of eighteen years. A month later, my boyfriend who gave me my Self-realisation (SR), came to work on me with his hands (KH), because I was ill. I noticed a kind of joy and special glow on his face (T) when he spoke about his experience of being in the presence of Shri Mataji (C). This awakened my desire to meet Shri Mataji (C). I felt a very subtle energy rising on my back (KH) whenever I experienced this desire (C).

Upon meeting Shri Mataji (C) for the first time at a public programme in Geneva (C), my connection with Her (C) was intense and the bonding instantaneous (T). I felt Shri Mataji's (C) attention penetrating my entire being (T). The experience was incredibly blissful (T), joyful (T) and unexplainably peaceful (T). Shri Mataji's (C) voice was soothing, crisp, clear, endearing and healing (KH) and Her (C) face was extremely beautiful, serene and joy giving (KH). From that moment of meeting (C), I never stopped meditating (M). The desire to re-experience that tremendous love never stopped “running” in my mind (C). One of my most striking memories about being in meditation (M) is the incredible peaceful (T) experience of being in the present (M), as well as in the witness state (M).

Ever since I began practicing SY meditation (M), I felt fulfilled (T). The universal aspect of SY has touched me deeply (T). I can read any sacred scripture and feel the truth on my body in the form of vibrations (KH). Whenever I give Self-realisation (SR) to seekers, I feel a cool breeze on my hands (KH). This sensation (KH) grows in intensity over the years showing the incredible “intelligence of the kundalini” (KH).

I have a good voice and my strongest experiences are with music (M). I feel that the way people (C) receive the flow from music is closely related to meditation (M). Together with other students from around the world (C), I learnt to sing songs in different languages, at the SY music academy in India (C). I love singing bhajans (Indian devotional songs) as I experience a tremendous cooling, relaxing and joy-giving feeling (T). Music, in addition to being meditation (M), provides me with a livelihood. In countries where language is a problem, the language of music is a powerful way to share experiences and give Self-realisation to people (SR).

Music has healing qualities and I am confident that my singing cures illnesses (KH). By singing bhajans my voice awakens my Kundalini (KH) and that of others (C). Music can cure people and give them Self-realisation (SR). While in India, I sang a song which I had dedicated to Shri Mataji (C), to a yogini who was very ill. At the end of that song, the yogini's fever was gone (KH). Whenever my daughter is ill, my singing calms her and has cured her many times (KH). I wish to share this experience with other yogis (C) who often run to the doctors.

Shirley's experiences

When I received my Self-realisation (SR) eight years ago, I immediately felt a cool sensation on the top of my head (KH). Within weeks of attending SY beginner's classes (M) and learning about the Kundalini energy, (KH) subtle system (KH), chakras (KH), mantras (KH), affirmations (KH) and many different Sahaj techniques using the elements (KH), I had my first joyful experience (KH). I felt cool breezes on my palms, (KH) under my feet (KH), around my head and my forehead (KH). I experienced a surge of energy rise in my subtle system (KH), enfolding me in indescribable bliss (T). For the first time I could feel the status, not only, of my own chakras (KH) but also that of my childrens' and that of other people whom I came into

contact with (C). I felt empowered (T) when I learnt to clear chakra blockages (KH) and balance myself. My Self-realisation (SR) meant that physically, mentally, socially and spiritually, I was in charge (T), that I had become my own guru and master (T).

Coming from a broken family background, I never had the security of a stable family life. By practicing SY meditation (M), I experienced a noticeable difference in my life (T). SY helped me to grow enormously (T). I developed courage (T) and self-confidence (T) and can deal independently with most situations (T). I used to be anxious, but meditation (M) removed my anxiety and allowed me to live in harmony with my surroundings (T). My confidence (T) and self-esteem (T) thus improved. People refrained from meddling with me (T). I receive more respect at home and in the workplace (T). My husband believes that the spiritual protection (KH) we receive has improved our relationship (T).

On health issues I do not feel the need to run to doctors (T). As a Sahaja Yogi I meditate (M) to rid myself of ills (KH). Daily meditation (M) is important for my well-being as it frees the body of negativity (T). I believe that all yogis (C) have tools to uplift themselves in times of crises (T). My spirituality has eliminated all the fears that used to beset me (KH). I believe that I have become fearless (T).

Aside from attending the weekly SY collective (C), my children and I meditate (M) together at home. Collectively (C) we enjoy a feeling of blissfulness (T). I believe that as a result of regular meditation (M) the vibes within my home has changed tremendously (T) and there is an over-powering feeling of peace and joy (T) which has fostered strong family bonds (T). The feeling of tranquility (T) enables the family (C) to remain focussed and to excel in their studies (T).

When there is a pooja going on anywhere in the world (C), I automatically feel a cool breeze a good week in advance and this gets stronger and stronger as the time approaches (KH). At a pooja (C), the vibrations are extensive and intense (KH) and I feel elevated beyond measure (T). When in the collective (C) with other yogis (C), the vibrations become much stronger (KH). When I leave the collective (C), I feel cool breezes emerging from my head and hands and around my body (KH). I feel much stronger for being part of the collective (C). In terms of collectivity (C), I relate beyond

yogis and reach out to all people (C). I believe that I can help other people (C) in distress. I am able to detect blockages in other people (C), but I can assist only if the person is willing. People need to be Self-realised (SR) before they can accept the ways of SY (M).

Annie's experiences

SY is just Love (C). It is Love (C) of a very different nature. It (C) cannot be measured, weighed or clarified. It is Love (C) of a different dimension, of a very different level. It is Love (C) that flows from the source that we address as Divine Love (C). We love each other on mundane levels, but, when you have this connection with the Higher Power (C) which is your creator (C) – the quality of this love (C) is so unconditional and Pure (C) and it flows from every part of your life (C).

I had always been seeking this union with the Higher Power (C) from a very young age, but what fascinated me the most was meditation (M). It was a chance occurrence that led me to discovering SY meditation (M) and receiving my Self-realisation (SR). I learnt about the residual energy of Divine love (KH) called the Kundalini (KH) which provided positive energies (KH) to nourish the chakras (KH) in our subtle system (KH). From the very first beginner's class in meditation (M), I attended, my instrument was cleansed by Her Love (C) and I felt a surge of Energy flow (KH) through me and cover my entire being with a feeling of intense blissfulness (T). Others noticed a special glow on my face and commented that I looked younger and more beautiful (T).

I became more relaxed and stress free (T) and as I progressed in meditation (M) I became more satisfied with life (T). Persistent financial problems eased up and simply disappeared (T). I slept well (T) and my migraines stopped (T). My energy levels returned to normal (T) and my problematic slipped disc appeared to have recovered (T). My family realised that whatever I was doing had a positive effect on me (T) and as a result my husband and son joined me (C).

As I grew in SY, I experienced unlimited peace and joy in my life (T). As this joy grew (T) so did my desire to be in the presence of my Guru (C), Shri Mataji Nirmala Devi

(C). The very first time I saw Her (C) was when I travelled to India, to celebrate Her (C) 75th birthday, with thousands of Sahaja yogis from around the world (C). The vibrations (KH) that emanated from collective meditation (C) were beyond description and Self-realisation (SR), a never ending process during this state of permanent blissfulness (KH).

While in collective meditation (C), waiting to see Shri Mataji (C) for the first time, the Kundalini energy within me was fully awakened (KH), continuously ascending and descending and filling me with undescrivable, intense feelings of blissfulness (KH). A continuous surge of energy (KH) flowed through my subtle being (KH), a river in pursuit of the ocean (KH), pouring its refreshing coolness (KH) like a waterfall from the top of my head (KH) and around my body (KH). On opening my eyes I realised that Shri Mataji (C) was not physically present, but that it was the Power of Pure Love (KH) that She (C) was emitting which I felt within my being (KH). I was overwhelmed with wave upon wave of blissfulness (KH) and I surrendered myself totally to Her (C) teachings. The connection between my Guru (C) and me was as intense as the biological bond between mother and new-born child (C). This connection was re-established every time I heard Her (C) voice, in my mind, on video or on cassette (C).

In collectivity with yogis from around the world from all walks of life (C), my instrument was in a constant state of renewal (KH). There were no barriers and all the yogis enjoyed the enlightened spirit (C), friendship (C), ever flowing stream of Love (C), togetherness (C), total bliss (C) and relaxation and connectivity with the common bond (C), Shri Mataji as Mother, Father, Friend and Teacher (C). The Divine Mother provides everything (C). She (C) counsels, protects and educates via meditation (M) and you reach a higher level of understanding humanity and the Love of God (C). All one has to do is to be the recipient of Her Love (C). One has to surrender to her Divine Love (C) to enable Her (C) to work out ones problems. The more I saw Mother, the more elevated and energised I felt (C).

Having enjoyed the opportunity of being in the presence of Shri Mataji (C) and yogis from around the world (C) gave me a better perspective. I now know that the solutions for the world problems are the same as for individual problems, that is, to be connected to the source of Divine Love (C). I firmly believed that Self-realisation

(SR) is the passport to universal social, political and economic problems. I experimented with it and I can confidently say that I live a blissful (T), peaceful (T) and pleasant life (T).

Kerry's experiences

A friend introduced me to SY meditation (M) and gave me my Self-realisation (SR). In my daily life, I chant specific mantras (KH) to clear chakra blockages and to keep myself balanced (KH). By reciting affirmations (KH), I've learnt to value positive thought (T) and to become my own guru and master (T). I protect myself by giving myself a bandan (KH). Every week, I attend the local collective (C) to exchange vibrations (KH) with other Sahaja yogis (C) and to elevate myself (T) through collective (C) meditation (M) activities.

My day begins by surrendering it to Shri Mataji (C). I ask for Her guidance (C) and Her protection (C) as this gives me direction to fulfil my role as a wife, mother and friend (C). I work in a very stressful environment and meditation (M) helps me to work in a state of calm detachment (T). Meditation (M) also helps me to develop confidence (T) in preparing for an exam and writing a paper (T). I find that by chanting mantras (KH) and affirmations (KH) that respond to increasing my attention (T) and concentration (T), I become focussed (T). A sense of peacefulness (T) permeates me during my study period and the exams become a breeze (T).

My husband and I read Sahaj literature that prepared us for parent-hood (T). During my pregnancies, meditation (M) helped me to remain calm whenever I was anxious (T). I attribute my healthy, trouble-free pregnancies and my calm, happy, beautiful and peaceful children to SY meditation (M).

I enjoy singing and SY has exposed me to singing in many different languages (C). Whenever I sing, play a musical instrument or even listen to music, I experience deep vibrations (KH). I enjoy the flow of the music as it has a joyous effect on me (KH). Singing impacts on my breathing (KH) and as the flow of the music consumes me (KH), the power of the Kundalini energy (KH) threads through my chakras (KH) and a cool breeze oozes out of the top of my head (KH) filling me with blissfulness (T) and

thoughtlessness (M). To me SY meditation (M) is music that stirs my heart, uplifts my spirit (T) and repeatedly gives me my Self-realisation (SR).

Chan's experiences

While receiving my Self-realisation (SR) from Shri Mataji (C) at a public program in Mumbai where She (C) gave en-mass (C) Self-realisation (SR), I felt a sudden surge of energy rising inside me. Wave upon wave of blissfulness covered my entire being as I silently witnessed what was happening around me. I experienced a feeling of intense peacefulness and inner joy. Since then SY meditation (M) has become an important part of my life. My children and I have developed the habit of meditating every morning and evening (M).

When I go into meditation (M), I enter a world where material things do not take precedence any longer (T). There's a different kind of joy (T), a different kind of peace (T). Through meditation (M) I am able to look at the 'bigger picture' (T). I constantly speak about SY meditation (M) to others (C) because I want them (C) to experience the kind of joy I feel (KH). In Sahaj, I'm happy everyday because I have Shri Mataji (C) in my life (C). When I (C) focus on Shri Mataji (C), I receive beautiful vibrations (KH). By surrendering to the Sahaj way (C) I have learnt to practice detachment (C), to become balanced (KH) and to look at life from the here and now perspective (T). When I go into meditation (M) a state of blissful peacefulness prevails (T) and there is no problem that is impossible to overcome (T). SY techniques (KH) that have been by Sahaja yogis suffering from 'incurable' illnesses such as cancer and they have been miraculously cured (T).

Every week, I join the main SY collective (C) for meditation (M). By going into collective (C) meditation (M) my vibrations (KH) become more powerful (T). My vibrations (KH) reflect my physical, mental, emotional and spiritual status and "inform" me (SR) of any blockages which may be present on my subtle system (KH). By using the five elements (KH), chanting mantras (KH) and affirmations (KH) I balance malaligned chakras (KH) and nadis (KH). When chakra clearing and balancing (KH) is done collectively (C) I feel more energised (T).

I owe my son's recovery from an incurable eczema to doctors at the Sahaj hospital in India, South African doctors who taught me Sahaj techniques (KH) and to SY collectives throughout the world for focussing on his recovery (C). Collective prayer (C) played a vital role in his recovery. SY has taught me to become my own doctor (KH) and I've learnt to manage most ailments by using SY techniques (KH). Simple breathing exercises help my sinus problem (KH); walking on the sea-shore de-stresses my tired feet (KH); watching the waves and listening to the music of the sea puts me into a meditative state (KH). Sitting on the ground (KH); pressing my palms on the ground helps me absorb the cool vibrations from Mother Earth (KH), and keeps me grounded (KH).Feasting on the greenery quietens my busy mind (KH). Looking up at the sky and stretching my hands upwards keeps me balanced (KH). Chanting mantras (KH) and affirmations (KH) help to attract the positive things in my life (T). Sahaj has helped me to enjoy the simple things in life! (T)

7. Descriptors used to identify the main themes

Themes	Descriptors
Self-realisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The term Self-realisation was counted by the number of times it was used by the participants during the interviews.
Meditation	<p>Counted by the number of times the following words/terms were used by the participants during the interviews:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meditation “Thoughtless”, “doubtlessness”, “witnessing”, “collectively conscious” Beginner’s classes, “flow from the music”, “the here and now perspective”
Collectivity	<p>Counted by the number of times the following words/terms were used by the participants during the interviews:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Being in the presence of the Guru, Shri Mataji Nirmala Devi Looking at Shri Mataji’s photograph Listening to Shri Mataji’s discourses Watching Shri Mataji’s videos Being in the company of Sahaja Yogis, bonding Words such as “Divine”, “Pure Love”, “ Pure Desire”, “Higher Power”, “Love”, “Lord” “Part and parcel of the Whole”, sublime experience, collective, collectivity Light shining in our eyes/ consciousness shining out from within, the divinity of the Self in its wholeness.
Transformation	<p>Counted by the number of times the following words/terms were used by the participants during the interviews:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> giving up bad habits such as smoking, alcohol joy, tears of joy, joy-giving feeling bliss, blissfulness, child-like innocence, dignity, balance, subtle inner transformation tranquility, peace, humble, loving, compassionate, confident, contented, productive
Kundalini Healing	<p>Counted by the number of times the following words/terms were used by the participants during the interviews:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kundalini, vibrations, “Divine Love”, spiritual protection • Chakras, energy centres,, nadis, channels • vibrations, sensations, cool breeze, blocks of ice, coolness • fountain, top of the head (fontanelle bone region), subtle energy,surge of energy • mantras, affirmations, bhajans, bandans, SY techniques
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8. Frequency table reflecting common themes in the main study

Names	Self realisation	Meditation	Kundalini healing	Collectivity	Transformation
Pravina	1	9	18	9	12
Sohana	5	8	13	17	10
Shirley	3	7	21	15	26
Annie	4	5	19	47	15
Kerry	2	8	14	8	15
Chan	2	7	26	16	11
Total	17	44	111	112	89
Rating	5	4	2	1	3

The themes that emerged from the data analysis were:

Collectivity

Kundalini healing

Transformation

Meditation

Self-realisation

9. Internal validity

Confirmation of correctness

Sahaja Yoga meditation: therapeutic community

I, have examined the raw data in respect of the above study and confirm the correctness of the 'transcript' and 'analysis' of the interview. I rate the emerging themes as follows:

Emerging data	Rating: 0-100%
Collectivity	
Self-realisation	
Kundalini healing	
Meditation	
Transformation	

.....

(Research participant)

2007-11-20

10. Confirmation of correctness (peer)

Sahaja Yoga meditation: therapeutic community

I, have examined the raw data in respect of the above study and confirm the correctness of the 'transcript' and 'analysis' of the interview. I rate the emerging themes as follows:

Emerging data	Rating: 0-100%
Collectivity	
Self-realisation	
Kundalini healing	
Meditation	
Transformation	

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(Psychologist)

2007-11-20

11. Notes

Notes made during data analysis

Kerry's Experiences

Meditation

- Beginning the day with meditation helps me to get through the day. It gives me peace and strength to handle whatever comes my way.
- At **work**, I have been commended on my ability to remain calm.
- **In my studies, chanting mantras** helps me to be calm and to develop confidence when writing an examination.
- **As a-mother-to-be**, I learnt that when I was anxious, so was baby and that I had to sit and meditate in order to calm my child.

Protection of children

- We use Sahaja Yoga techniques to help our children stay balanced, alert, healthy and self-aware. As they grow up, we teach them how to meditate, and to understand the subtle inner workings of their own energy systems, to know when they are in a healthy, balanced state and when they are not. We teach them how to treat imbalances within and to take responsibility for their own states of mind and awareness.

Stages of development

- When you do foot soaking, the children are inattentive. I find this frustrating. They tend to fidget – they are too young to understand.

Musical background

Recently while listening to a song, I felt such deep vibrations

Annie's experience

Kundalini – residual energy of Divine Love

- Energy of love called Kundalini, the residual energy of Divine Love – placed in all human beings in our foetal stage.

- This energy knows everything of the past and hardships we've been through.
- **Divine Love** - connection with the Higher Power which is your creator – the quality of this love is so unconditional and Pure, it flows from every part of your life.
- This Energy called Kundalini already knows what the individual child requires. She just starts providing positive energies and before you know it all your chakras are fully nourished with this Divine Love.
- When my instrument was cleansed by Her Love I felt the Energy flow. I wanted to share this experience with others who were in deep trouble, be it finance problems, family or health problems.

Meditation:

I found the difference immediately. I felt very peaceful. I was sleeping well. My migraines stopped. The slipped disc which was to be operated on disappeared. My energy levels came back to normal. My family realized that whatever I was doing was a positive effect on me. As a result my husband and son went into it.

- Tours

Collectivity – mother being the common bond

One had to surrender to her Divine Love to enable Her to work out our problems.

- India: Before I could see Her, I felt this Energy come up and my entire Being change within me. There was a surge of coolness flowing through my subtle being. When I opened my eyes I realized that the Mother was not there – but the Power of Pure Love She was emitting was being felt within my being. This deepened my trust and dedication to her. My instrument was clearing even more.
- There were no barriers – **all** were enjoying the **enlightened spirit** and friendship and the Love that was flowing.
Everybody felt Love, Togetherness, Total Bliss and Relaxation. This for me was great because Love has no boundaries – you feel that in the company of other Yogis – who are deep into meditation.

- On my European Tour: London, Rome and Italy, I met Shri Mataji. There were many Western Yogis. Westerners took to Shri Mataji without segregation in their hearts. They looked upon Shri Mataji as their Mother – Father – Friend and Teacher.
- The Divine Mother provides everything – counsels – protects, educates us via meditation – takes us to a higher level of understanding humanity and the Love of God.
- In Australia I found Yogis to be humble, simple and welcoming – because of **Mother being the common bond.**
- **One had only to surrender to her Divine Love to enable Her to work out our problems.**
- The more I saw Mother, the more elevated and energized I felt. My mind was getting clearer –
- If we can give this Divine Love to the World, social, political and economic problems could be resolved. Alcohol, drug problems, etc, because this Love is of that magnitude – it can relieve the child of all its problems. The solution to world problems is within us - to open and become the recipients of Her Holiness Shri Mataji. To become recipients of this Love, try it, and experiment with it and you will be on your way to a blissful, peaceful and pleasant life. You can then see the World becoming a peaceful, loving, non-violent and Heavenly place to live in.

Shirley's experiences

The experience of Self-Realisation

- Seeking - Looking for peace. I needed to release that energy that was in my subtle system and experience the sense of peace that was being talked about.
- The experience of Self-Realisation was most enlightening. I started meditating and foot-soaking I felt a huge up-liftment but I felt grounded at the same time. This was my first joyful experience.

Transformation

Insecurity and low self-esteem makes you very dependent on other people. You are too willing to please and as a result you burn yourself out:

- At the workplace this was evident to all and I was taken advantage of as people believed that they could use me and preyed on me all because I appeared more than willing to do my share.
- In my marriage, Jason knew that I was dependent on him.
- I came from a broken family (parents are divorced) and we were constantly shuttled about and never had the security of a complete home.
- Our father visited or cared for us little and mum had the burden of managing us on her own. Dad was an alcoholic and cared for little else.
- As a growing child, I did not have much personal touch with my mum. She was too busy trying to keep us alive. There was always fear and anxiety present. Our talks were mainly instructional or reprimands. Counselling came too late. Thus I would fear everybody in my life. Jason realized this also and used my sense of insecurity for his own ends. But now through meditation, I can release this fear and anxiety.

Security

Meditation: In our lives we encounter much negativity and meditation releases this and frees the body.

- As I grew in Sahaj, I grew a light around me and people would refrain from meddling with me.
- Sahaj made me feel secure within myself.
- My self-esteem began to improve.
- In my marriage, Jason realized that I had changed and became afraid because I was no longer dependent on him and now he had to pay me more attention.
- meditation removes anxiety and allows me to live in harmony with my surroundings. I have been touched by the light. My spirituality has eliminated all my fears that used to beset me. I believe that nothing can touch me. I have become fearless.
- My girls are confident and positive

- On health issues, I don't feel the need to run to doctors, as a Sahaja Yogi I need to meditate and rid myself of ills.

Collectivity/connectivity

- If there is a pooja going on anywhere in the world, I would automatically feel the cool breeze a good week in advance and this gets stronger and stronger as the time approaches.
- When in the collective with other yogis, the vibrations become much stronger.
- When I leave the collective I feel cool breezes emerging from my head and hands and other parts – I feel much stronger for being part of the collective.
- At poojas the vibrations are extensive and intense and I feel elevated beyond measure.

Sohana's Experiences

1. Self-realisation: **a very subtle inner transformation started**
2. Chakra cleansing: **“work on me” with his hands (which means checking other's imbalances and help with simple movements to take them away**
3. “intelligence of the kundalini”.when I had the opportunity to initiate somebody to Sahaja Yoga. I could clearly feel this cool breeze in my hands.
4. My strongest experiences are with music. It is more closely related to meditation – more precisely how people receive the flow from the music. I am lucky to have a voice. Today there has been no more difference between music and meditation since one nourishes the other.

In countries where language is a problem, the language of music is the way to share experiences as it is powerful. It can cure people and give them realisation. My experience with children was great. When I sang to the children, they said to me “Sophie, you gave me the wind.”

Sick yogini: sang to her a song dedicated to Shri Mataji. At the end of that song, her fever was gone. That gave me good inspiration and encouragement to cure people.

When my daughter got sick, my singing calmed and cured her many times. Thus we became more confident in S.Y. We wish to share this with other yogis because they often run to the doctors.

Unique experiences: My experience with children was great. When I sang to the children, they said to me “Sophie, you gave me the wind.”

Oh, Sophie, you gave me wind!" An intelligent little boy of 10 said to me while looking at my pendant with Shri Mataji's picture: "Oh this is the Holy Ghost, which Jesus' disciples received ...!" One can't forget Jesus saying "Truth comes from the mouths of children....