The Guru-Disciple Relationship in Diaspora

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The Certificate Of Originality

No portion of the study that is referred to herein other than that which is acknowledged, has been submitted in support of an application of another degree or qualification, of this or any other university or institution of learning.

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Glossary of terms

1.Acharya – Teacher.
2. Adi-guru – Founder guru
3. Advaita Sidhanta – The principle of non-duality
4. Ahimsa – Non violent
5.Ananda – Bliss
6. Archana – Worship
7. Anushan – Small chapter
8. Arpan – Offering
9. Arti – The final act of Hindu worship
10. Asana – A seat
11. Ashram – A place where sadhna is carried out
12. Atman – Soul
13. Arti – The final act of worship
14. Avtara – Incarnation

15. Babaji – Aterm of respect for the elderly
16. Bandhu – A relative or friend
17. Bhakti – Devotion
18. Bhandara – The large kitchen used for distribution of food
19. Bhaktivedanta – Name of Prabhupada Swami
20. Bhashiya – A commentary
21. Brahaspati – The priest of Gods
22. Brahmacharya – Student period in ancient India
23. Bhuddi – Intellect

24. Chela – Disciple
25. Chakra – A centre in Yoga

26. Dakshina – A fee or donation to the priest
27 Darshanas – Formal audiences
28 Diksha – Initiation
29. Dhama – One of the four beneficial acts (purusharthas)
30. Deva – A shining God.
31. Devi – Goddess
32. Dhyana – Meditation

33. Guru – The remover of ignorance
34 Guru dakshina – Last offering to the guru before ending discipleship
35 Guru kulas – Schools run by the gurus in later period of history
36. Guru pooranma – A formal occasion of guru worship
37.Gaudiya tradition – Devotional tradition from Bengal
38. Gaiyatri – The famous Hindu mantra
39. Gomukha – A musical instrument shaped like cow’s face

40. Hare – Victory

41. Hatha – Yoga of physical postures
42. Hindutva – Concept of Fundamentalism in Hinduism
43. Havana – Fire alter
44.Ishatadevta – The favoured God
45. Ishavera – God

46. Jagna – Fire offerings to the God or Gods
47. Japa – Repetition of mantra
48. JNANA – Knowledge
49. Jaggannatha – Temple of Vishnu at Puri
50.Juga – Age
51. Jivan mukta – A Liberated soul

52. Karma – Action
53 Kala – The time or God of Death
54. Kali – Black Goddess in a temple at Calcutta
55. Karma marga – The path of action leading to union with God
56. Kirtana – Hymns of praise addressed to a deity
57. Kriya – A yoga advocated by Shakti peeth gurus

58. Lila – God's play
59. Lilaprasangha - Autobiography of Ramakrisna by Sardananda Swami
60. Luxmi – Goddess of Wealth

61. Mata – Mother
62. Manusmriti – Law book by Manu
63. Mahan – Great
64. Mahan mantra – Important mantra
65. Maharishi – Great rishi
66. Marga – The path
67. Mahatma – A sage
68. Mukti – Salvation
69. Moli – Amulticoloured thread

70. Narad Bhakti – Devotion attributed to Narada rishi

71 Osho – Rajneesh's last name before his death

72.Parampara – Tradition
73. Paramartha – Four great benefits
74. Parishad – An organisation
75. Pir- Persian name for a guru
76. Pita –The father
77. Pooja – worship
78. Prabha – A chapter
79. Prabhu – God
80. Puranic – Belonging to the Puranas ie Hindu scriptures
81. Puttaparthi – Pilgrim place associated with Sai Baba

82. Ratha - Chariot

83. Rajneeshpura – The ranch bought by Rajneesh in USA
84. Rajdhani - Capital
85. Rishis – Saints

85.Rta – The cosmic principle of order
86.Sadhak –Renunciaet
87.Samaskara – The rite of the passage
88.Sadhana - The path leading to spirituality
89. Sakha - Friend
90.Samadhi – A trance or vision
91.Sangha – An organisation
92.Sansara – The created world
93.Sanyasins- Renunciates
94.Sarees- A garment ladies wear
95.Sri- An address showing respect
96.Sudra - Belonging to the 3rd cast in Hinduism
97.Swami - The master
98.Suddhi - Purification

99. Tantra - A system of philosophy.
100.Taraka - Arguments
101.Tilak - A red or yellow mark on the forehead
102.Tumhi - You are

103.Upadhis - Positions
104.Upanayana - Initiation ceremony

105.Vaidya - Ayurvedic practionar
106.Vaishnusva - The followers or lord Vishnu
107.Vibhuti - Ash
108.Vishva - The world
109.Vrindavana - A forest associated with Lord Krishna
110.Vyasadeva - Name of an ancient Rishi who composed the Vedas.

111.Yatra - A journey
112.Yogis- Practioners of yoga
113.Yuga - Age

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Abstract

Gurus claim that they are able to act as mediators to put disciples on the path of spiritual development in diaspora. This study aims to investigate this claim, researching the hypothesis 'that changing cultural environments in the United Kingdom, compared to those of the Indian sub-continent, requires a different model of the *guru-chela* (guru-disciple), relationship?' In effect it seeks to test the differences, based on the stability and sustainability of the relationship in diaspora? This claim was endorsed by psychotherapist, J S Neki (1973), in a meeting in America and was published in *The Journal of Ortho-psychiatry* Volume 3. It discusses the possibility of the *'guru-chela* (disciple) relations' acting as a model for 'therapeutic care for the Hindu patient in diaspora.'

This research aims to examine critically the effectiveness of the guru-disciple relationship in light of changes the gurus have made in the delivery and quality of instructions they provide and the changes in the disciples' aspirations in the new environment.

The study investigates the meeting ground for science-based western psychotherapy and intuition-based spirituality. Both subjects deal with pastoral care components for their respective respondents, but are diametrically opposed in their approaches. The research sample in the study, are taken from Leicester, where the researcher is based, as the area provides a diverse group in the Heart of Hindu England, through which to examine the guru-disciple phenomena in diaspora.

Chapter 1

Unwanted Strangers?

1.1 Introduction

During the last two centuries Hinduism has spread from India to other parts of the world through a process of migration. The most recent diaspora studies place Hindus in all of the world's continents in visible minorities. As a result of the diasporic spread, Hinduism has moved away from the patriarchal culture of extended family dependent networks, of restraints and safeguards, to a more materially orientated Western society, with its emphasis on individual freedom of choice and independence.

Against a background of the diasporic spread of Hinduism in the twentieth century the research within seeks to address the current empirical understanding of the guru-disciple relationship, by investigating the phenomena through a sample of Hindus in diaspora Leicester. The research seeks to test the hypothesis 'that changing cultural environments in the United Kingdom, compared to those of the Indian sub-continent, requires a different model of the *guru-chela* (guru-disciple), relationship?' In effect it seeks to test the differences, based on the stability and sustainability of the relationship in diaspora? As a prominent figure in the Hindu community in Leicester the researcher tests empirically the hypothesis, balancing the benefits of insider enquiry in the research process.

The complexity of guru-disciple relationships among Hindus in Leicester is examined using a number of informants, who maintain, in a variety of forms such a relationship. The critical evaluation of the empirical evidence takes account of the claims by J S

Neki (1973), that the *guru-chela* acts as a model for the therapeutic care of Hindus in diaspora?

The hypothesis above and literature in the field gives rise to a number of research questions by which to evaluate the relationship.1. To what extent has living in diaspora forced changes on the *guru-chela*? 2. Is there a more therapeutic model to be discerned in diaspora? 3. How effective is the relationship from the perspective of both the guru and the disciple? 4. Are gurus in diaspora an obstacle to social change?

1.2 Setting the Scene: Explaining the Content

This chapter identifies a working definition of the term 'Guru' and offers an understanding of traditional practice of the *guru-chela.* It deals with the historical background to the research, *vis-à-vis* the arrival of Hindu migrants in Leicester from the mid 1950s and their struggles to settle in the new area. It concentrates on the necessity to find a guru in Hindu societies, and explains the Hindu worldview based on the cosmology of the Vedic and Upanishadic teachings in history.

Chapter Two identifies in the literature a number of issues, which helps to bring into focus the research questions outlined above. At the outset five areas of concern emerged from the literature search. These were: 1. the type of spiritual care expected by disciples in diaspora. 2. Gurus' emphasis on complete surrender. 3. Problems of emotional exploitation. 4. Problems of financial exploitation. 5. Gurus' as an obstacle to social change. These areas are discussed with reference to both scriptural validation and more popular writing in modernity, which addresses a variety of styles adopted by gurus from the colonial period to date. It also takes account of critiques offered by Storr

(1996) and Copley (2000). The overall discussion focuses on the attributes of gurus in modernity and investigates explanations by writers in the field, of Hindu, and South Asian studies, and the psychotherapeutic nature of gurus in diaspora.

Chapter Three sets out the method of enquiry and offers a personal reflexive account of the researcher as both an insider and an outsider in the process. It outlines a qualitative approach using informants who were the subject of interviews conducted using a semi-structured interview technique. Within that interview system the researcher designed the interviews in two parts. This was to allow for a quantitative analysis in the first section and a more qualitative interpretation in the second, as part of the research strategy. It raises questions about the validity of such an approach and suggests its usefulness in this type of empirical enquiry.

Chapter Four develops the notion of Neki's (1973), research and investigates the psychotherapeutic and transpersonal psychologies of a number of writers who advocate these approaches as a valid aspect for comparison within the *guru-chela* in diaspora. It also addresses these issues and their relevance for investigating sexuality in the guru-disciple relationship.

Chapter Five explores living gurus in modernity and their applicability to disciples in diaspora. It seeks to explain how the various methods explored by gurus are assessed, moving the discussion and exploration of Chapter Four towards the empirical evidence of Chapter Six.

Chapter Six investigates the evidence of the informants in the study and assesses and critically evaluates their interviews using both quantitative and qualitative methods. It also draws a number of findings from the material related to the research questions set out above (Chapter One). The evidence is summarised for use in the concluding chapter.

Chapter Severn; 'Research Analysis and Conclusions', summarises the evidence presented in the thesis and offers a range of concluding material based on the findings in Chapter Six. It seeks to answer the research questions previously outlined and offers an explanation for the hypothesis which began the research. In so doing there are a number of suggestions for further research into the phenomena of the *guru-chela* in diaspora settings, which could be mapped in other parts of the world.

1.3 Working Definition of the Guru

The term 'Guru' is commonly used in a derisory manner in the west; i.e. a media-guru, a political-guru or a spin-guru. Etymologically the "Guru" is a Sanskrit term. It is made up of two syllables *'Gu'* and *'Ru'*. *'Gu'* means darkness or ignorance and *'Ru'* means dispeller or remover, so the guru is one who removes or dispels ignorance of the disciple.

The literal meaning of the term guru is 'the heavy one'. The reason for this meaning is that gurus were specialists in their chosen scriptures and were often involved in debating contests. They mostly tended to win and were called 'the heavy ones.' It was customary to accept the winner of the contest as the guru of a person in defeat.

The compilers of the *Vedas* (early Hindu scripture), were called *rishis.* They used to meditate intensively for very long periods of time. They heard the verses of the *Vedas* while meditating. They memorised verses that were intoned in a certain manner so that nobody could tamper with them in the future. The *'Rig Veda'* is one of the earliest Hindu scriptures with seventeen thousand verses. The guru would memorise all of them, even front to back and instruct their disciples to do the same. The *rishis* became experts in spiritual knowledge and tended to transmit it to the disciples.

Stutley (1977: 18) defines the guru in *A Dictionary of Hinduism,* as "The guru is a religious guide or a teacher, who especially gives initiation to disciples."
The guru is distinguished from a family priest and a temple priest on the basis of the work he undertakes. The family priest is solely devoted to presiding over ceremonies connected with the rites of passage, called *'samskaras'* that are usually sixteen in number for a Hindu. He generally gets paid in the shape of **'***dakshina'* or donation. The temple priest is 'a paid personal attendant' of the deities installed in the temples. He serves deities of the temple and is considered a 'holy person' and is respected as such.

Since Vedic times the gurus tended to reside in the forest dwellings called '*ashrams*.' Gurus required their disciples to memorise the whole *Veda* over a period of years, for example twenty or more. The disciples approached *guruashram* (forest dwellings), holding a bundle of dry sticks, symbolically implying that there is a hidden fire in the sticks that could only be ignited by an expert. Similarly they have the spark of the 'Self' *or 'ataman'* that can be known with the help of an enlightened guru. The disciples' aim is to start on the path of spiritual journey with the guidance of the guru**.** Traditionally no

seeker after the truth can be refused by gurus, except females and the *'sudras'* (low caste Hindus). Both categories were prevented from adopting gurus in the Puranic[1] tradition, it is not, however, the case today.

The disciples lived in *ashrams* until their study was completed to the satisfaction of the guru as well as the disciple. The *ashrams* were in the vicinity of the guru's hut so that it was easy for the guru to monitor the disciples' progress. The life in the ashram was very harsh. The disciples had to beg alms to replenish the food for the inhabitants and would have to gather food from the forest. They were required to wake up a couple of hours before dawn, to gather fire- wood for the guru's daily *havan* (daily *Jagna*- fire ceremony) and to obtain flowers for his *pooja*, or morning worship.

Disciples had to memorise the verses taught the previous day back to front or on a piece-meal basis. They were enjoined to show the guru and his wife complete respect at all times. They had to complete all tasks entrusted to them to the satisfaction of the guru. In return they were given free board and lodging and a chance to acquire spiritual knowledge. There is a tradition to give *'guru-dakshina'* (payment), when finally leaving the *ashram*, disciplined disciples still observe this today.

Gurus would always keep the lines of communication open with former disciples in case they needed to consult them on matters involving religious, moral and scriptural issues. The gurus were regarded as the custodians of *dharma* (duty and moral precepts), the transmitters of culture and ethical values. They usually tendered impartial advice and won general accolade, even from the kings of warring states.

[1] Puranic Tradition is a written tradition scattered among Hindu texts, which date from the Upanishadic period.

1.4 The Plight of Migrants

In the late 1950s and 60s migrant workers from India came to the UK in ever increasing numbers to support the growing economy. Many believed they would make sufficient money to return home and often did. However, large numbers managed to survive and send for their families, and subsequently started a new life in most cities in the British Isles. Leicester was particularly attractive as a place where both Hindus and Muslims settled as part of the migratory process, influenced by the hosiery and knitting trades, among others, as a major employer of ethnic minorities. Luckily there were gaps in the labour market due to economic processes of decentralisation of town centres and displacement of populations.

Migrant labour was a replacement for the upwardly mobile natives. British workers often saw migrants as a threat to their jobs and their way of life. Migrants did not expect such hostility and suffered degrees of stress as a result. As a migrant, the researcher shared common problems, experiences, stresses and struggles in the process of settlement with his fellow migrants. They looked to God for peace and courage and found gurus in the West offering some hope. Some of them sought initiation and became disciples. New visible minorities were subjected to the usual market entry barriers, but Black and Asian migrants felt that they were additionally targeted for unfair treatment on racial grounds.

The message from the authorities was that migrants should integrate with the native culture. They must endeavour to fit in with the established community. The newcomers

felt threatened by this assimilative and integrative pressure on them and felt their cultural identity and values were under attack. This was a new experience for Hindu migrants because they belonged to a tolerant culture. The hostile reception of the new environment was distressing because they had landed in the country after sacrificing their financial security, social status, and safety of the extended family networks. In fact they were led to believe that they were going to help the host community by coming to the UK because of a shortage of labour supply.

As a few migrants began to own properties, newcomers arriving with only £3 cash in their pockets, were obliged to rent rooms in an Asian household. Generally two or three single beds were placed in a small room. One bed had to be used by three people in rotation. The accommodation obliged people to find work on different shifts. They were allowed the use of bed for only eight hours and were forced to sleep on the floor on public holidays. Newcomers were allowed limited use of the kitchen and cooking was accomplished by rotation, meals being very basic. There were often no proper washing facilities, therefore the lodgers had to use public baths when they could. The highlight of the week was the communal visit to the local pub for all who lodged in the house**.** Mishra and Mohapatra (2001:12) pointed out

> *"Such atrophic situations led to a loss of identity and to an extreme feeling of helplessness among migrant Hindus. Many of these new arrivals came from a religious background and were feeling under extreme pressure. The jobs befitting their qualifications and experience were not on offer."*

They subsequently turned to God for peace, believing that God could provide them with the solace and courage needed to deal with the situation they were facing.

1.5 The need for a guru

Every Hindu is aware of the traditional saying that ‘there is no salvation without a guru.’ The guru is supposed to mediate and even change the course of one’s fate. This belief made some of the Leicester migrants turn to the visiting gurus for spiritual direction. In India, gurus were available in large numbers, but in Leicester the choice was severely limited. The gurus would only visit from India if they could secure free return passage from the sponsors, and the newly arrived migrants were not able to afford the expenses that this entailed. However, some of them managed to get initiated by the visiting gurus locally, who had successfully secured sponsorship from wealthy Asians in other cities.

1.6 Modern Gurus

Modern gurus in India still maintain *ashrams* and let visitors stay in them for a small charge, with free board thrown in. The only condition imposed on the visitors is that they are to show willingness to go on the path of *sadhna* (the path to spirituality), at their own pace.

Modern gurus in the sub-continent as well as in European areas known as the ‘cultural shift’, have three types of disciples. ‘Initiated disciples’, who reside in the *ashram,* ‘initiated householders’ who reside in their own homes and the ‘uninitiated followers’ who support gurus by attending lectures and by coming regularly to the *ashram* for *‘darshans’* (formal audiences). The third type of followers are organising themselves in *Sai Baba* groups (followers of a discoursing guru), in many cities of the UK. Modern gurus are more commercially inclined than ever before and believe in effective

management techniques in order to treat disciples in a less authoritarian manner. The focus for the research here is the second type of disciples that is the 'initiated householders', as the most common inititiant in diaspora.

1.7 Transformation in Community Relations in Leicester

During the last three decades, between 1970 and 2000, the situation in diaspora has registered a dramatic change for the better as far as many migrant Hindus are concerned. There was a mass movement of Asian migrants from Southern African countries to the U.K during this time; many were very skilful and enterprising people. They settled in run-down inner city areas, tried their hands in business ventures and through sheer hard work and dedication made the ventures undertaken into going concerns.

Their success in business caused a perceptive change in the host community. It stopped seeing Asian migrants as pejoratively 'benefit spongers', but rather as a productive element of the society. The story of a prosperous Hindu area in Leicester referred to as 'The Melton Road Golden Mile' was being repeated all over the country. The Melton Road Business District lacked investment, but was transformed by Hindu businesses. Hindu migrants became valued as the creators of jobs instead of competitors for labour in the market. This goodwill led to healthy co-operation and good community relations between communities in the city of Leicester and beyond.

Mishra and Mohapatra (2001:27) confirm the role of migrants, claiming

"In course of stay in the new lands of their choice, these people have greatly enriched the composite culture and the life style of that country."

The Asian community, along with others, decided to establish religious organisations. They registered these organisations with the Charity Commission to collect funds for the spiritual needs of the community. The Punjabi-speaking Hindu community of Leicester could not benefit from existing social and entertainment institutions in place in the extant culture, as they were teatotallers and strict vegetarians. As a result obsolete churches or under used community buildings were acquired and new community and religious centres were organised to provide facilities. The *Geeta Bhavan* Centre, Leicester, is the result of such efforts on the part of Punjabi speaking Hindus. The researcher was one of the founder members of the society and served as the president for six years. He is currently actively participating in the affairs of the society, without being a member of the Executive Committee, as a senior member.

1.8 Hindu Worldview

Hinduism like all traditional religions offers a "Comprehensive worldview," in which every thing has its place and where all individual parts contribute to a meaningful total picture. Hindus show an optimistic attitude to 'Creation' it is seen as an act of God's *'lila'* or play. After the act of creation God enters into it and remains activity involved in its affairs. The following quotation from Prabhupada (1972:7-8) taken from the *Bhagvada Gita* explains "Whenever and wherever there is a decline of dharma, and adharma dominates, I descend to right the balance. 'O' descendent of Bharata"

In Hinduism each order of reality known to man can only be approached from a higher point. When humans try to understand reality, they have to start from the physical realm, move to the biological realm and then to logical and finally to the spiritual

realm. Radhakrishnand (1937: 46) a famous contemporary Indian philosopher, explains Hindu philosophy, saying

> *"We do not infer God from our feeling of dependence or on our analysis of the self. The reality of the God is revealed in the immediate intuition of the essential dependence of all finite beings, from the priority of absolute to relative things."*

He (ibid:47) further uses Sankara's quotation to reinforce his argument, claiming

> *"Absolute Brahman can be realized in its twofold aspects. In one aspect it is endowed with upadhis or adjuncts of name and form that are subject to modification and cause differentiations; in the other aspect it is transcendental reality, bereft of all apadhis."*

His references are to the universal absolute of Brahman and the relative nature of the *atman* or soul of humans, which come with name and form, both aspects must come together in one to find salvation. To realise this experientially will necessitate going beyond mind and reason, hence the support and direction of the guru to achieve this aim.

Ancient Hindu philosophers constructed six systems of philosophy, called *darshanas.* They were: *Nyaya, Vaisheshka*, *Sankhya*, *Yoga*, *Mimansa and Vedanta*. Each school of philosophy was attributed to a founder or *rishi. Mimansa* dealt with two aspects of Hindu code of conduct that are *'dharma'* (duty) and *'karma'* (action). Both are considered the cornerstones of Hindu morality. A common feature of all *darshanas* is that their teaching is condensed into sutras or threads to help the commentator to connect the text to its source. However sutras needed *bhashyas* or commentaries to help readers understand the context to which they point. Klostermaier (1994:112) making reference to such a Hindu worldview claimed "All astronomical, geographical, historical and cultural information is available, at a certain period of time, what is

overarching is its ethics, its anthropology, and its socio-political laws, ultimately in a creator and the ruler of the universe."

This view is significant because it looks at the Hindu worldview in a positive manner in spite of the prevalent attitude of some Western historians that the Hindus have no sense of history because no chronological dating is available for ancient Hindu scriptures.

The Hindu worldview has not remained static the evolving philosophy and experiences of ancient *rishis* and gurus spearheaded change. It has maintained its influence over time despite different sectarian inputs in the national life and thoughts of the ordinary people. Even prolonged foreign invasions have left the world-view unaltered in its essence, while apparent adjustments were duly made.

Hick (1999: 104) considered Hindu myths authentic when he said

"Even Hindu myths with their colourful accounts contain profound ideas and structures that could easily be expressed in modern abstract mathematical terms."

The overview of the migrant situation in diaspora Leicester from the Second World War reflects the 'cultural shift' process undertaken by many Hindus moving from their homeland in search of a better life. The necessity to find a guru in diaspora being a real and important part of the Hindu worldview expressed above. What follows is an investigation of the literature affecting that process in light of the research questions set out at the beginning of this chapter.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the literature that affects the guru/disciple relationship in so far as it can address the research questions (previously outlined). The scope of the review is therefore limited due to the constraints on a thesis of this size. It nonetheless focuses specifically on primary and secondary evidence by which the sustainability of the guru-disciple relationship in diaspora may be appraised. In addition consideration is given to the similarities and differences within the literature, based on the cultural and societal environment in which they were created and where empirical evidence is drawn from, be it in the Indian sub-continent or the wider world.

The four research questions outlined in chapter one can be further subdivided when investigating them in light of the literature. At the outset of the literature search five questions were raised, which can be mapped as part of the investigation of the original four research questions, helping to break them down further in the search for evidence of a model of the guru disciple relationship in diaspora and its sustainability.

The research questions asked by the researcher below are reflected in the literature as follows: 1. To what extent has living in diaspora forced changes on the guru-disciple? This question gives rise to the type of spiritual care expected by disciples in diaspora? 2. Is there a more therapeutic model to be discerned in diaspora? This question opens up the discussion about the likely problems of emotional and financial exploitation within relationships both in the sub-continent of India and in diaspora Leicester? 3.

How effective is the relationship from the perspective of both the guru and the disciple? This question hinges on the notion of complete surrender, traditional to the relationship, and to what extent this effect both the guru and the disciple? Finally, 4 Are gurus in diaspora an obstacle to social change? This question stands alone and requires no further explanation. It implies however that the guru in diaspora may affect western cultural norms taken on by migrants, and impose aspects of the culture of the Indian sub-continent in diaspora settings.

These questions have been addressed by academics in the field of Hindu and diaspora studies, hence the legitimate use they have in breaking down the hypothesis outlined in chapter one, in order to compare the evidence from the literature with the research findings presented later in Chapter Six.

Kakar (1991: 11) suggests that despite modernities propensity to individualisation in Western cultures "The guru-disciple relationship has shown extraordinary resilience and adaptability to retain its hold on the minds of people despite challenges of modernity and the process of individualisation." Both aspects of this statement are tested in the context of the findings in Chapter Six. Similarly, Brent (1972: 78) in his work *The Godmen of India* explains that "The guru-disciple relationship is a culture sensitised Hindu tradition, which uses complete surrender as an instrument of salvation in order to transcend shackles and bonds of samsara." This too has an effect on the way the Hindu tradition translates important aspects of the guru-disciple relationship into diaspora Britain, not least in the way that surrender is understood by the respondents in this study.

In so far as there may be a more therapeutic element in the relationship in diaspora, compared to that of the sub-continent of India, Neki's (1973) *Guru-chela Relationship: The Possibility of a Therapeutic Paradigm*, offers an opposing view of the nature of the guru to his/her disciple compared to a more Western understanding of therapy based on psychotherapeutic interventions. He suggests (ibid: 89)

> *"Concepts and processes used in the guru-disciple relationships are opposed to the care models used by psychotherapy. The model used by the guru-disciple relationship is based on dependence while the model of psychotherapy is based on the principle of freedom of choice."*

There is also evidence of a more Freudian aspect to the guru-disciple relationship, supporting Neki's suggestion above that the relationship is based on 'dependence' not freedom of choice. This comes from Freud's (1910) work *Leonardo De Vinci and Memory of his Childhood* in which he claims "The guru-disciple relationship is based on an act of 'Infantalization'. It is in reality a search for an ideal parent." The purely psychological aspects of this assertion are beyond the scope of this study, they do however offer evidence for further investigation in the psychological make up of disciples within the guru-*chela.* There are also important socio-psychological developments within the literature, which, when taken as a whole, impact on how the guru-disciple relationship has more generally shaped societal beliefs within traditional settings, and how they may transfer their impact into the diaspora environment.

This aspect is something Jha (1980: 18) addresses in his work on the guru-*chela* and society. He suggests that the "Predomination of the guru-disciple relationship in the Hindu tradition has shaped the disposition and beliefs of society so much that it has become a serious obstacle to social change." This presents an element of interest in the research process, not least as it is a research question which will be given consideration

in the empirical findings in chapter six. Is there evidence that the guru-disciple relationship can act as an obstacle to social change in diaspora?

2.2 Spiritual Validation of the Guru-Disciple Relationship

For any reading of the guru-disciple relationship to be valid there needs to be, by definition, account taken of the primary scriptural evidence that supports the principle. There are a number of scriptural texts dealing with the guru - disciple relationship that will be reflected here. One of the best known is the *Mundaka Upanishad* [2] that illustrates the basic requirements for the guru. The guru should be the knower of *Brahman*.[3] The knowledge should be acquired through a thorough study of the *Veda.* The *Veda* was revealed to the *Rishis*[4] in deep *Samadhi* (concentration), the texts of which stated that "Unless the guru is well-versed in the scriptures, he will find it difficult to direct the gaze of the disciple to the 'Self-shining' within." This citation has been instrumental in setting very high standards for gurus ever since.

In the post Upanishadic period, *Manusmiriti*[5], the famous Hindu Law Book enjoined Hindus to follow *samskaras* (rites of passage) of which there are sixteen in number. One of the most important of these *samskaras* is the '*Upanayana'* ritual that is considered a must for every Hindu. The term *Upanayana* means bringing the disciple close to the guru. The *samskara* confirms the fact that the individual has completed the

[2] An early Indian scripture from the Upanishadic period, dated between 8th and 5th Centuries BCE. It divides knowledge into two areas *Para vidya* (self realizing knowledge) and all other knowledge (*apara Vidya),* or knowledge of the material world.
2Revealed Hindu scriptural texts of the ancient oral tradition of the Indian sub-continent. Relates to that which is heard by *Rishis,* known also, as *Sanatana Dharma.*
3 A God beyond qualities impersonal, infinite, immanent and transcendent.
[4]Inspired sage or poet revered for their ability to sing the revealed scriptures of the *Vedas.*
[5] Law book of Hindus

previous developmental stage and is ready to perform the duties of the next stage. The *samskara* brings the disciple nearer to the sacred knowledge of the guru. Panikar (1992: 18) confirms the importance of *samskara* or developmental stages in one's life, when he states "It is a period in human life, in which living means emergence of creative forces informing human persons biologically, intellectually and spiritually."

2.3 The Trika Tradition: A Tantric System of Yoga from South India

This tradition is a variation of yoga in which devotees tend to follow Lord Shiva[6] who traditionally lives in crematoriums and smears his body with the ashes gathered from burnt bodies. Shiva is a powerful deity in the Hindu tradition, capable of uniting the power of male energy with that of the female form. The Tantric adepts seek to gain power resulting from the worship of female energy in conjunction with male energy. The emphasis is placed on direct experience of Tantric practices. This movement tended to lean toward eroticism and reformist Hindus looked down on Tantric practices. Here, however we are concerned with the guru -disciple relations in the Tantric tradition. Bhattacharya (1999:18) expresses that disciples in this tradition often see the same power seen in the guru as the powerful deified figure of Shiva. "The guru unites the initiate at the summit of the subtle level of the universe and then equips the initiate with a pure subtle body." The mystical imagery of a union with universal power does much too almost deify the guru as a proponent of tantric practices.

[6] Supreme Lord in S*haivism*, (a main branch of Hinduism practised in India), part of the *Trimurti* of Brahma, Shiva and Vishnu. To *Shivite* followers he is a manifestation of creator and sustainer of the universe and dissolver of evil. Seen as part of the threefold power in the Hindu traditions more generally.

This union of guru and disciple and the subtle union with universal power are expressed in the *Skanda Purana*[7] (verse 2), in which the guru declares "Under my direction I replace your heart, your mind will follow my mind. In my word you rejoice with all your spirit. May *Brahaspati*[8] [The guru of Gods] unite you to me?"
This shows a scriptural validation of the power relationship in which the disciple is reduced to a passive recipient. It may seem strange to suggest that a process that is supposed to grant freedom from all human psycho-social shackles begins with a total lack of power and complete surrender to the will of the guru.

Bhattacharya (ibid: 18) describes a disciple's initiation, supporting the complete surrender described above, claiming "The guru consecrates the novice by sprinkling holy water and uttering mantras[9], invoking the deities before giving the initiate a new name." The new name signifies a complete break with the past, which includes parents and other close family members.

The *Bhagavad Gita,* [10] one of the most famous Hindu scriptures, for contemporary Hindus, states, in the *Srimadbhagvadgita* (trans.1999: 655, chapter 15: Verse 5)

> *"The free wise men are free from pride and delusion, have conquered the evil of attachment, are in eternal union with God, their cravings have altogether ceased and are completely immune from all pairs of opposites going by the name of pleasure and pain. They reach my supreme immortal state."*

The above citation deals with the wise man, which is another name for the guru. It lays down rigorous criterion for the guru by which the public can judge if the guru has

[7] Hindu scripture of *Skanda* or *Karthikeya*, son of *Shiva* and consort *Parvat.i*
[8] Guru of the Gods
[9] The power of words that have been hallowed, repetition of which is auspicious and spiritually powerful in visualisation or prayer.
[10] Ancient scripture, containing 700 verses of the epic *Mahabharata*, one of the most sacred of all Hindu texts, particularly to followers of *Krishna*.

acquired theses qualities. The *Bhagavad Gita* cites a more devotional form of practice, born out of the *Bhakti* tradition,[11] in a devotional union with God, who is, in some senses seen in deified form in the shape of the earthly guru, with whom union, as described above, is a fundamental goal to liberative freedom, known as *moksha*.[12] It also reflects the power of love in devotion, which is also a feature of Tantric practice, in that complete surrender to the practice requires a devotion to the teacher, which takes on this *Bhakti* quality.

Bhakti as a form of yoga is described in the *Gita* in great detail as the ultimate form of religious expression, for which all other *dharmas*[13] should be abandoned. Despite there being little evidence of its exact origin, as a devotional movement it derives from the late Vedic period. It appears to have started in Tamil Nadu in the south and spread northwards over time, where it became established in a number of different forms within schools of Hinduism, and became increasingly popular as a doctrine between 12th and 17th centuries. Of the three realizations of *Brahman* as the ultimate creative force in the universe, or supreme deity/Godhead, described in the *Bhagavata Purana* literature, *Bhakti* is described as the devotional nature of the relationship with the Supreme Being as *Bhagavan* (personal Godhead).

[11] *Bhakti* has Sanskrit origins which mean 'devotion' and 'the path of devotion itself'. It describes devotion to a supreme God, as *Bhagavan* (ultimate *Nirguna* –beyond form) or manifest material deities in the form of *Krishna* (at a number of levels), in the *Bhagavad Gita*. All have the same end, the union of ultimate reality with the *atma* (self/soul) through service as devotion. It is one of the four forms of yoga, the others being *Karma* (action), *Jhana* (discrimination between real and unreal states of existence) and *Raja* (stilling the mind through meditation techniques).

[12] *Moksha* or *Mukti* in Indian religions refers to liberation from the cycle of death and rebirth and all the suffering and limitation entailed in embodied worldly existence.

[13] Dharmas refer to the underlying law in nature and human behaviour. It also means duty in Hindu thought pertaining to ethical behaviour and responsibility, known also as *Sanatana Dharma.*

It is difficult to conceive that God can be an actual person. But the *Vedas* tell us that God's unique personal identity is His highest aspect. The following analogy may help cast light on God in Hinduism having three main features.

Looking at a mountain from a distance, one can make out only its size and shape. This is compared to comprehending God only as *Brahman,* his impersonal energy, which emanates from him just as light shines out from its source. As one moves closer, one starts to make out more of the mountain's characteristics—the colours of its foliage, for example. This is compared to understanding that God is within one's heart as *Paramatma,* or the Supersoul. Finally, when one arrives at the mountain one can explore its soil, vegetation, animals, rivers, and so on. This is compared to understanding God the person, or *Bhagavan.*

Bhagavan is the source of *Brahman* and *Paramatma* and is therefore, in a sense, one with them. In the *Srimad-Bhagavatam* literature, *Brahman, Paramatma,* and *Bhagavan* are called the three phases of the Absolute Truth. *Bhagavan* is often used to indicate the 'Supreme Being' or 'Absolute Truth' with the fundamental essence of a personal God, making it different from the other two aspects. It is this principle of devotion in absolute terms that is translated into the relationship of the disciple to his guru. This is an area of interest where the diaspora setting may affect that relationship, and where surrender to the will of the Guru is perhaps more relational, than first considered. It may in fact take a clear lead from the *Bhakti* tradition, where a personal relationship with *Krishna* or *Vishnu* for example, is often seen as a loving relationship, which is discussed later in this chapter and affects what it is a disciple expects from his guru.

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Another important contributor to the guru-disciple debate is the famous Tamil Shaivite, *Adi Sankaracharya*, who lived around 800CE. He was a great debater and managed to convert many Buddhist followers to the Hindu tradition through the medium of the debate. *Sankara* (as he is more commonly known), wrote commentaries on the *Upanishads* and wrote a world famous book, the *Viveka Chudamani* on Advita *Vedanta*[14]. Many leading Hindus wrote commentaries on the book. The following is a translated verse relating to the qualities of the seeker or the disciple. *Sankara's Viveka Chudamani* (Verse 17, page 29) states "He alone is considered qualified to enquire after the supreme reality, who has discrimination, detachment and qualities of calmness and burning desire for liberation." The pre-requisites of the disciple require a single-minded approach to the search for liberation through the guru, a fundamental issue when considering this style of approach in diaspora Leicester.

2.4. J S Neki's Paradigm

In 1973 Neki presented a paper to a conference of Psychotherapy based on cultural values that were different from the accepted views of the leading psychotherapists of the time. Western psychotherapists were, at the time recommending strategies based on western cultural values. In the West independence is highly prized. The expertise of the therapist lies in evoking right decisions for patients that consist of improving their ego so that they are able to conform to society's norms and feel empowered in the process. Neki found that the universal application of such strategies was not very successful

[14] Proffered the Non-dual school of Vedanta, a non -dual reality. The *Viveka Chudamani* was different to any other book or commentary of its time, because instead of being written in verse form, it was a dialogue between the master and his disciple, hence its prominence in this discussion.

among Indian patients in diaspora settings. He found Indian patients obstinately persisting in adopting a helpless dependent attitude and compelled therapists to take a more active role. Neki started to look for an alternative model of therapy suitable for Indian patients centred on an indigenous Indian cultural background. He turned to the traditional concept of the guru-disciple relationship to explore the possibility, of what he later called "The therapeutic paradigm." Such relationships had continued uninterrupted for centuries within the Indian sub-continent. He highlighted his experiences in the *American Journal of Ortho-psychiatry* in 1973. The model was very well received and Neki (ibid: 179) wrote

> *"Psychotherapy, more than a phenomenon, is a cultural institution of the society from which it springs, and which in turn it purports to transform. It is, therefore understandable that psychotherapeutic techniques developed in one culture do not function well in another culture."*

If Neki's assumption is right then the guru-disciple model is probably more applicable to the Hindu disciple in diaspora Leicester, as a means of self realization, and potential than would be a psychotherapist, whose techniques would not have the same affect, because of the cultural dependency of the patient, albeit generationally removed from their indigenous homelands. The guru may not be as effective as in native India, but is still able to inspire those disciples who have been brought up on the dependency culture in diaspora settings, which are largely independently inspired. This does however, raise questions of age in relation to disciples in diaspora, a profile of which can be seen later in Chapter Six. Not only does the empirical evidence test Neki's assertion, but in doing so raises further questions. Not least, does his thesis hold for younger generations, who may be third generation British-Asian? Are they still dependent, because of their parents or grandparents heritage, or has there been a shift in dependency of the latest Hindu generation, and if so would they sooner see a psychotherapist in times of need,

or follow their traditional roots and seek out the guru, not only as a spiritual guide but as a would-be therapist in a western environment? These questions are not wholly addressed within the sample in this study, but leave open an important aspect for consideration in future work on the guru-disciple relationship in diaspora, an area which will be reappraised in the concluding chapter.

2.5. Spirituality the Aim of a Relationship

Barratt (2001: 23) while working on the role of the guru in his book *New Believers*, made a discovery that the believers expected the guru to give them access to the state of Godhead (described above in the explanation of *Bhakti* as *Bhagavan* -personal Godhead). He refers to the quality of spirituality expected from gurus in these words

> *"The East links spirituality with either seeking or attaining the state of Godhead and regards such a person as a knower or a cosmic person. The knower is considered a vessel of the truth and it is considered bad to acknowledge that such a person can do anything wrong."*

The citation above does not recognise that there is a need to discover the suitability and maturity of the disciple and indeed the spiritual authenticity of the guru. It does, however make note of an old Indian adage, 'never speak ill of the guru.' The notion of authentic gurus and spiritually mature students can be seen in the evidence of the respondents in Chapter Six.

Barratt (ibid: 23) goes on to comment on the consumer world found in the West, in which expectations are high and equality in all things, with instantaneous results, is a pre-condition of many westerners' understanding of life. He claims

> *"In the West life is governed by supermarket consumerism as the expression of individual liberty. The principle is extended to all aspects of life including spiritual development. Individuals demand equal satisfaction as their birth right, from their God too. This is irrespective of their differing capabilities. So*

an asymmetrical relationship between the guru and the disciple is looked down upon."

In other words western experiences of the guru demand parity with that of their eastern counterparts. The diaspora setting could be seen from the perspective of the consumer, who seeks out a guru for a positive experience, in which his/her spiritual needs are met in the same way as if the disciple were in the Indian sub-continent, irrespective of the disciples' capabilities to follow the guru on such a spiritual journey. The difficulties however, for Hindu disciples in Leicester, is that they do not live in isolation, they are influenced by their immediate environment and they may expect the guru to provide them with instant answers, as befits their cultural experience, if they follow his instructions literally.

There are a number of other factors aligned to a western diaspora lifestyle that cause concern for disciples in Leicester and elsewhere in the UK. They see the break down of older more traditional moral values around them because of the 'cultural shift' situation East to West. They are also concerned when social institutions like family and marriages are no longer enduring as they did before. Some are even suggesting that mankind is facing a spiritual vacuum. Disciples do, in fact (as later evidence will show), fondly look up to gurus for spiritual guidance. Many migrants found themselves impotent when it came to changing their destiny in the West; did they therefore look to gurus to provide some hope in diaspora?

The uncertainty migrants felt when coming to the UK is manifest in the loss of social cohesion, based on the older more traditional dependency structures within extended families. Does that uncertainty about future generations of diaspora Hindus reflect a

change, from a cultural perspective, towards a tried and tested spiritual tradition - the guru-disciple relationship? Is this a means of maintaining traditional values, as the new more individualistic western environments had lost credibility for Hindus, of a particular generation? Kranmar and Alstad (1993: 25) offered their thoughts on the diaspora situation for Hindus, when they suggested “Most people are uncomfortable with uncertainty, so when a previously held world view loses credibility, it is natural to seek another structured viewpoint to look at the world from.” The suggestion being, the credibility of UK society may have lost its potential for early Hindu generations (who came with great expectations), in terms of future developments of their religious and cultural communities. They therefore may be turning to the guru as another structured viewpoint from which to view the world? More so as it has a definite heritage in the sub-continent, and may therefore be seen as a way to support spiritual progress and ultimately Hindu community life as a result. More will be made of this in the empirical findings in Chapter Six.

2.6. The Qualities of an Authentic Guru

The question of authenticity was raised above, and continues to shape the relationship of gurus and disciples world wide. There is perhaps a greater potential need for authentic gurus in diaspora settings like the UK? The guru is a spiritual teacher who through obedience to his own guru has attained full spiritual realization. It is assumed that the guru can do the same for any new disciple if the disciple obeys his instructions. In other words, the guru should know the spiritual path and the hurdles that might be in the way and can make *sadhna* (the religious path), easier for the disciple. Kranmar and Alstad (ibid: 36) reinforce the relevance of gurus in the East when they state

> *"In the East gurus have institutional status and are considered by the believers to be a direct and unblemished expression of the divine. Gurus have earned this status by dint of hard and selfless work for the society as a whole. They dedicated their life's work for the good of total humanity. The thought of personal ego or pride never occurred in their lives."*

Hindu life was divided into four stages according to *Manusmrti* (Laws of Manu).[15] The first stage was called *Brahamcharya* (student stage), and the last stage was that of *sanyasins* (renuncients), [16]who were expected to wander from place to place teaching those in society eternal truth about life and morality. They tended to beg for their food from the householders and it was customary never to refuse alms to the *sanyasins*. Basham (1954:26) aptly describes them, saying

> *"It was the duty of the mendicants of the ashrams or gurukulas to wander from one pilgrimage to another, from one forest retreat to another as part of sadhna. In course of such spiritual adventures some completely retired from the habitation of men while the majority stayed within society and disseminated ideas and truths that they had acquired from their own experiences."*

The renouncer tradition spawned many gurus in the Indian sub-continent, and was seen as an authentic lifestyle change, whereupon the altruism of the individual renouncer in the *sannyasin* stage of life was the key to his authenticity, and learning. Few would take up this difficult path without the necessary ability to teach, by their example, as well as by narration and explanation of issues facing others in society. They are considered a person integrated into the spiritual world after giving up material life, and were known historically to travel from *Ashram* to *Ashram* spending his time in spiritual contemplation in search of liberation, which can come in a number of forms dependent on one's school of Hindu thought. Although Basham has been criticised as an apologist for the Hindu way of life and has failed to take a critical view of the culture's

[15] The sage *Manu* is accredited with the production of this work of Hindu literature. Some date it around 1st Century CE (in its current form), but it is probably older in origin. It sets out laws by which twice-born men (the first three major castes), shall live their lives, and remains controversial in relation to its dealings with low caste *Shudras*.

[16] A person who renounces the world to teach others, and is usually in the final stage of life.

shortcomings, he nonetheless expresses his support for authentic gurus coming from the *sannyasin* (renuncients) stage of life. This poses a number of questions for disciples in diaspora, in terms of how they authenticate gurus coming from the sub-continent; these issues will be further discussed later in the thesis.

In The *Bhagavad-Gita* Lord Krishna describes the qualities of persons of steady minds as translated by *Swami Prabhupada* (1972: 26) as "One who is not disturbed by threefold miseries [attachment, fear and anger], is called a sage of steady mind."
In the rigid culture of the East, most people had little chance of moving out of the social authority imposed by a strict caste system. Recently people have moved out of traditional boundaries due to economic reasons. The only exception was to seek out a spiritual teacher for inner development. So to some the guru was a refuge from the normal grind of life, but that amounted to an exchange of one dependency for that of another, which is the constraints of harsh *ashram* life for that of harsh life in society.

There is a common assumption in India that the guru is totally immune to corruption. It is based on the idea that the guru is supposed to be free of self-interest. Such a trust of any individual may leave one vulnerable to abuse, if trusting unconditionally is all one has by way of authenticating the guru. There is a contemporary safeguard in use in parts of India, in which the guru gets introduced to potential disciples through personal recommendations. There is less likelihood, one assumes, of the disciple getting an inappropriate guru as a result. Perhaps the ideal of a person of 'steady mind' is too difficult to attain in contemporary reality? However, evidence from the disciples in this

study will shed some light on this problem. Kranmar and Alstad (1993:27) are right to express the possible vulnerabilities of disciples when considering the one-sided power relations in the guru disciple relationship. They claim "The power one person can have on another in so called spiritual realms is far greater than even the political power because the disciple believes that the guru is a gate way to salvation." The safeguards in place in the sub-continent are necessary in the diaspora situation in order to prevent the vulnerabilities of trusting disciples turning into realities of emotional/sexual and/or financial exploitation.

2.7 Expectations of the Guru

Adi-Sankaracharya[17] became known as a renowned philosopher and teacher, responsible for establishing the doctrine of *Advaita-Vedanta* (non-dual Vedanta). His commentaries on Hindu scriptures include his book *Viveka Chudamani* (mentioned earlier) that deals with the disciple's qualifications. *Chinmaya Swami* (1970:29) commenting on Sankara's work on the disciple's qualifications for a guru, states

> *"He alone is considered qualified to enquire after the Supreme Reality, who has discrimination, detachment and calmness and a burning desire for liberation. The guru is supposed to rest the disciple's eagerness for liberation. In addition the disciple must have some experience of the transitory nature of the pleasure and comforts of the world."*

The guru ideally requires the disciple to provide him (the guru), with a clean slate. That means to reduce and ultimately remove the ego and the learned associations with those close to the disciple. Experience of life is not imperative for a disciple, but an important part in the realization of experiences relative to the transitory nature of the experiential

[17] *The teacher of Vedanta philosophy explained above.*

world. In the eyes of the guru attachments (physical and mental), are hurdles in the path of spiritual progress. The guru may, therefore act like a personal trainer for the disciple in the initial stages of the relationship. As Hixon (1999:33) points out, gurus have skilful ways of dealing with disciples in order that they (the disciple), understand, with training, the subtleties of their teaching, as he claims

"An illumined sage can push us inward in the direction of a more primary or primal being. Ramana could give an initiatory push by a mere touch or a glance."

2.8 Gurus of the Holy Madness Tradition

Exploitation, mentioned earlier, is a serious problem both in the sub-continent and in diaspora settings. Gurus sometimes provoke spiritual crisis in the disciple in order to lead him/her to achieve spiritual breakthroughs. Some gurus push their disciples beyond human endurance in the name of achieving illumination. Gurus of 'The Holy Madness tradition' are considered to be unorthodox and follow the notion of pushing disciples towards liberation. They believe that if they tell disciples to respect social rules, they would never make any spiritual progress. Only when the disciples are shocked, will they leave their docility and break free, according to this method. This can cause additional problems according to Fuerstein (1991) who has researched and written about this tradition in his book *Holy Madness.* He makes the point that sexual exploitation as a method to push a disciple beyond social norms is comparable to a parent sexually abusing a child. He claims (ibid: 28) "A spiritual teacher who sexually exploits a trusting disciple is comparable to a parent who sexually molests a child." The disciples are trusting to the point of powerlessness, and are described by Fuerstein (ibid), as deluded by assertions that the guru can transmit power by a mere pregnant

glance or touch, or by giving a mantra to release mental blocks. Very few gurus have such ability, as Fuerstein suggests, numerous realities are given to place or persons, but they are only the conduits of reality and as such could be seen as questionable. He claims (ibid: 28) “To encounter the sacred or holy is to encounter reality in its numinous transcendental essence but holiness can also be attributed to finite beings.”

The warning here is for disciples, who, despite being seen as conduits of reality and thereby manipulated by gurus towards liberation, they cannot loose site of two important issues in diaspora. Firstly, there must be discrimination on the part of both guru and disciple. The Holiness of a guru does not equal invincibility, or immunity from consequences of societies and laws. Secondly, disciples should avoid the naiveté of believing gurus are capable of directing them to liberative experience without considerable work and dedication on their part. Beware also those gurus who claim to use psychic triggers, to steer disciples. This begs the question, whose psyche is being identified, the disciple or the guru? To what extent is there a danger of emotional exploitation, based on how a guru understands a disciples psyche? Fuerstein (ibid: 30) makes the point “Their [disciples] psychic state make them conduct triggers, the guru’s conduct.” Are gurus therefore using their conduct responsibly? On the other hand there are also gurus from the East who make the claim that Western disciples are too fickle in their commitment to the spiritual process, implying this may be due to their upbringing in a non-dependency culture. These issues are reflected in the findings and analysis later in the thesis.

2.9 Gurus Mishandling Disciples' Trust

Paul Brunton (1898-1981) an English mystic and guru in the Hindu tradition took few disciples in his lifetime. He left a journalistic career to live among yogis, mystics, and holy men, and studied a wide variety of eastern and western esoteric teachings. With his entire life dedicated to an inward and spiritual quest, Brunton felt charged with the task of communicating his experiences to others, and, as the first person to write accounts of what he learned in the East from a western perspective, his works had a major influence on the spread of eastern mysticism to the West. He wrote about mysticism as a living ancient tradition as living wisdom.

Jeffrey Masson, an American Jew and author, was the son to wealthy parents who were both disciples of Brunton. Masson wrote a critical book titled *My Father's Guru* which uncovered Brunton as being less than the guru he proclaimed to be. He also included work on gurus in general. Masson wrote of his father, who claimed in his diary, "On the disciple's side, there must be complete faith, devotion, loyalty and willingness to subordinate his little ego, his own limited intellect if he wants to benefit from the guru's guidance." Masson suggested the relationship between father and son was almost parallel to that between the guru and the disciple. He claimed (1993: 30)

"A guru accepts the disciple for a life time. If the disciple turns a murderer, the feelings of the guru do not change. If the disciple leaves the guru, he can come back knowing that the guru is waiting for him." This is much the way most fathers (parents), would act towards their children; however as will be seen below, Brunton acted less than like a Father in his dealings with Masson and his Father.

Masson goes on to insist that every guru inflicts tyranny upon his disciples and every guru dominates those disciples. His final verdict was that Brunton defrauded him by influencing his Father at a very vulnerable age. There is a great deal of negativity in Masson's account of the guru, largely based on the experience of his parents, but nonetheless his writing has been influential in asking questions about the possibilities of exploitation in the relationship.

Anthony Storr (1920-2001) was a psychiatrist and wrote psychoanalytical portraits of historical figures. Part of his work included a well known book on gurus, called *Feet of Clay: Saints, Sinners and Madmen: A Study of Gurus* it was mainly dedicated to collecting discriminatory material against gurus. It does not offer a particularly balanced view of the guru rather, it portrays their psychological characteristics implying most gurus generally maintain a state of mind which suggests they are both a prophet and a deceptor, to some degree, at the same time. He claims this state of mind is paradoxically, the only thing which prevents them from descending into wholesale psychosis. Academic, Anthony Copley, in his (2000), work '*Gurus and Their Followers: New Religious Reform Movements in Colonial India* discusses Storr's negativity to the guru, stating (ibid: 30) "The term guru can be pejorative. Storr certainly viewed them dimly, highlighting their narcissism, their claim to be above the law and their ways of seeking attention." Storr points to some common features in the life of gurus, for example, an early death, journeys of discovery, a creative illness, mid-life crisis or the idea of an access to sources of special knowledge. He further claims (1996: 33) "Dominance rather than friendship defines the relationship of the guru to the disciples because they are unable to relate to anyone on an equal and ordinary level."

2.10 Gurus with the Welfare of Their Disciples in Mind

There are, contrary to the negative aspects of the gurus presented above, a number of examples of the guru with a positive outlook and an appreciation of their disciples built into their philosophical and practical experiences. One example is *Swami Prabhupada* the founder-guru of The International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON), known as the 'Hare Krishna Movement', who declared (1977: 33) "The guru is described to be as good as God. The guru never says he is God. As soon as he thinks that he becomes a dog." Hare Krishna devotees specifically follow a disciplic line of *Gaudiya,* or Bengali, *Vaisnavas,* which comes under the general description of *Gaudiya Vaishnavism.* This has had a continuous following in India, especially West Bengal and Orissa for the past five hundred years. *Swami Prabhupada* popularized *Gaudiya Vaishnava* [18] Theology in the western world through extensive writings and translations, believing *Krishna* to be the origin of Lord *Vishnu.*

The Swami believes that disciples should seek 'the guru' and not 'a guru'. The guru should belong to an authentic sect with a long proven record and tradition. Hence his own association with the lineage of the Bengali *Vaishnavites* from which ISKON takes its philosophical positioning.

Sri Aurobindo (1872 – 1950) was educated in Britain and upon his return to India became involved in a revolutionary struggle for the independence of India. He was jailed and began to practice yoga whilst in custody. He became famous for his philosophical essays on Hinduism. He fled to Pondicherry having been acquitted in Bengal and started an *ashram* there. He defined the spiritual master, according to

[18] A *Vaishnava* religious movement founded in Bengal in 1496 by *Chaitanya Mahaprahbu*. It focuses on the devotional worship *(Bhakti)* of *Radha* and *Krishna* and their many divine incarnations as the Supreme forms of God.

McDermott (1984:34) as “One who has risen to, and is regarded as a manifestation of higher consciousness.” *Aurobindo* believed that human development occurs in consciousness through the process of yoga. His method is called integral yoga or *purna yoga.* In that process all parts of the body are integrated with the divine in a harmonious transmutation of higher divine consciousness and existence. He did not want to be a guru but participants in his work accepted him as a yogi, a guru and a sage. He stated (1972: 35) “The whole basis of Indian mind is its spiritual and inward turn, its propensity to seek things of the spirit and inner being.” His voluminous writing and contribution to Indian philosophy, was only part of his life, which engaged him in great compassion for his followers.

2.11 Summary

This chapter has covered the type of spiritual care expected by disciples, both in diaspora and the sub-continent of India. In addition aspects of the understanding of surrender and the implication of exploitation, emotional, financial and sexual are discussed within the literature. The question of therapy within the relationship in diaspora has been raised, and a thorough reflection of the scriptural validation supporting these areas explained. The question of both negative and positive renditions of guru-disciple experiences suggest there are a number of interesting elements to be discerned in the empirical findings to follow (Chapter Six), as there are in examining the therapeutic implications of those findings comparatively with the literature. The research questions addressed in the literature examine the nature of the changes forced on the guru-disciple relationship, and the effectiveness of that relationship for both guru and disciple, as well as the possible impact on society in diaspora, based on gurus as an

obstacle to social change. All the elements of the research outlined here in summary, will be examined further from the perspective of the respondents in the study. From their evidence comparative findings and analysis will be produced, leading to the conclusions for the study, defined in chapter severn.

Chapter 3

Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter seeks to justify and explain the research methods and in so doing validate the research process. It takes account of the combined methodology using a semi - structured interview schedule, both as a tool for quantitative and qualitative analysis (Sapsford 1999:119). The focus for the method adopted is a practical and straight forward approach for the testing of the hypothesis (outlined in chapter one), based on the possibility of a different model of the guru-disciple relationship, compared to that of the contemporary Indian sub-continent, as a necessary requirement of its existence in diaspora Leicester? It is therefore assuming a deductive approach, outlined by Bryman (2004: 8) and to be understood as considering theoretical perspectives in a particular domain, from which a researcher "deduces a hypothesis (or hypotheses) that must then be subject to empirical scrutiny." As will be seen from what follows, the empirical scrutiny to which Bryman refers, are a range of interviews with disciples and a guru in Leicester, evidence of which can be found later in chapter six.

The general method of enquiry follows ethnographic principles, in that as an insider to the research the researcher has lived among the researched community for some considerable time, and has based his decisions on choice of respondents/informants on his experience of the Hindu community in Leicester. Despite him not taking up a formal position as participant observer, which would not be practical given his proximity to the community in question, the general principles of ethnography are

present. Ethnographic enquiry adopts qualitative methods of data collection, according to Bryman (2004:267) based on a researcher's "…[immersion] in a social setting for some time in order to observe and listen with a view to gaining an appreciation of the culture of a social group." The ethnographic style adopted will accord more importance to the informant's interpretation of their cultural situations and works well from the insider perspective. Spindler and Spindler (1992) suggest, in their analysis of the suitability of ethnography in situations similar to the investigation of the guru-disciple relationship

> *"Principles of ethnography are applicable to the Guru-disciple relationship because of the shared meanings of the group, which are crucial to its understanding. Ethnography is sensitive to the actions, and events, from insider's perspective…. Specific data collection methods and hypotheses can be effectively used to further research aims as ethnography is eclectic and allows the use of any technique."*

Within the hypothesis, previously outlined, there are a number of researchable entities, which will, as Spindler and Spindler suggest above "further research aims", based on the research questions in chapter one and the subsequent breakdown of those questions within the literature search in chapter two. In the context of those questions the method outlined below translates in operational terms into how the collection of data specifically addresses the concepts that make up the hypothesis. These are born out in the evaluation of the hypothesis, which suggests, from the data collected that there is a need to address changes in diaspora relations between guru and disciple. There are conceptual and theoretical considerations in approaching the subject, not least that traditional and contemporary forms of the relationship in the Indian sub-continent are prone to an emphasis of complete surrender by the disciple, leading to accusations of authoritarianism, sometimes seen as financial and sexual exploitation implying an

emotional/psychological dissonance that may be an abuse of power or a misreading by Western academics of the holistic and complex nature of the guru-*chela.*

3.2 Self-Reflexivity – Insider? Outsider?

The method takes its lead from a variety of similar approaches to the guru-*chela* in diaspora (Kraemer and Alstead 1993, Feuerstein 1990). From the perspective of both self-reflexivity in the research process and researcher as both an insider and outsider in the setting, there are a number of aspects addressed below which explain and validate the researcher's position.

Reflexivity, according to Hufford (1999:294)

> *"…is a metaphor from grammar indicating a relationship of identity between subject and object, thus meaning the inclusion of the actor (scholar, author, observer) in the account of the act and/or its outcome. In this sense reflexivity shows all knowledge is subjective."*

This infers that reflexivity in a knowledge making sense, involves bringing the 'doer' of that activity back into the account of the knowledge. The question of reflexivity in research has become a prominent feature of the social science method, especially in the qualitative paradigm. Bryman (2004:543) suggests it is a

> *"…term used in research methodology to refer to a reflectiveness among social researchers about the implications for the knowledge of the social world they generate of their methods, values, biases, decisions and mere presence in the very situations they investigate."*

The nature of the values, biases, decisions and presence have a significance for the researcher in this case, as the investigation undertaken came about as a result of two conjoined interests, that of researcher and Hindu insider. The questions relative to the study were questions that were held privately prior to the research, and are still held.

That is, as a Hindu the researcher is also part of the Punjabi speaking Hindu community in Leicester, with a function as a senior (albeit non- executive), member of the community committee. Therefore the researcher's knowledge of the subject already held preconceived notions of what it is to be a Hindu in that community and what conditions prevailed as far as the guru-*chela* was concerned. The project therefore is more than an academic subject and the research undertaken should be understood in relation to that declared interest in it. Declared in the sense that as a method of enquiry it is replicatable, valid and reliable, being a research project and not a personal stage for an apologist description of diaspora gurus and their disciples.

As a researcher my interest in the topic emerged when I, along with other concerned Hindu community members in Leicester, got together to look at the feasibility of forming an association to focus its energies on the cultural, spiritual and educational needs of Punjabi-speaking Hindus. The community was scattered in and around the city and the county. I was elected the president and remained in the post for six years. During that time 'The Hindu Society' began its monthly religious and cultural programmes in a rented hall in the St Saviour's Neighbourhood Centre, Leicester. The society successfully managed to reach out to the majority of Punjabi-speaking Hindus, who became members and it emerged as a viable organisation. It forged good links with other social and cultural organisations in the City. Our attempts to learn from each other paid dividends and some would say the tactics adopted proved to be a good first step to the future communal harmony of Hindus in Leicester.

Members wanted 'visiting gurus' to be invited to monthly meetings to refresh their minds on current spiritual issues. Some members wanted to adopt gurus at that time and

this subsequently led to an agreement to investigate the phenomenon of gurus more thoroughly, however, at the time no systematic attempt was made to do so. Questions that arose, due to growing interest with the guru-disciple relationship in diaspora, led to the five areas of concern outlined below, which were developed out of the research questions in chapter one, in conjunction with the literature search undertaken into the subject. They were:

1. The type of spiritual care expected from gurus in diaspora.
2. The gurus' emphasis on complete surrender.
3. The problems of emotional exploitation.
4. The problems of financial exploitation, and
5. Gurus as an obstacle to social change.

The aims of the study became twofold: firstly, on a practical level the research could be seen as capable of generating information from which advice would be made available to members of the Punjabi-speaking Hindu community on the complexities of the guru-disciple relationship. Not least the study aims to present evidence based advice that may help to uncover in-authentic or fake gurus. Secondly, at an academic level it seeks to further the localised study of the guru-*chela*, which adds to knowledge in the field of diaspora studies of this phenomenon, specifically in the East Midlands and more generally in the UK, and Western Europe.

As a senior member of the community I am an insider researcher in the context of the community under investigation, however as a researcher into the specifics of the relationships of gurus and disciples in diaspora I am an outsider, having no personal experience of the guru-*chela* in my own practice as a Hindu. This can be made clearer

by using the example of Buddhism in the UK, which is another minority religion closely aligned with the Hindu tradition. Within the various Buddhist traditions around the world there are strong guru-disciple bonds. A Buddhist scholar in the UK has commented on the nature of insider outsider relationships to research and the material being studied.

Harvey (1999:1) reflected on his own position as an insider/Buddhist researcher and he comments that

> *"In the study of religion, an 'insider' is generally seen as a person with commitment to the beliefs and practices of a specific religion, e.g. 'Buddhism'. Being an 'insider' to a religion, though, is not an all-or-nothing affair, for:*
>
> *i) an insider to one sub-tradition of a religion will be a relative outsider to other sub-traditions: there is no one 'Buddhism' to be an 'insider' to. Thus members of one form of Buddhism may see another form as:*
> *not the real 'Middle Way', or as Hinayana and not 'Mahayana', or as not 'mainstream' Buddhism, or simply as something that they do not know much about.*
>
> *ii)Moreover, even within a person's own sub-tradition, he or she may be a relative outsider to:*
>
> a) *the intellectually or experientially deeper aspects of it, or*
> b) *the details of its texts, or*
> c) *the religious elite of the sub-tradition, or*
> d) *any aspects or movements within that sub-tradition which he or she sees as somehow wrong or inauthentic."*

In the context of the quote above Harvey sets out some clear perspectives on how an insider to a religion, may also be an outsider to a sub-tradition within it, and it is also apparent that being an insider, is not in anyway an all or nothing affair. I clearly identify with this approach holding to the insider position within my community whilst not having the intellectually or experientially deeper aspects of knowledge of the vast numbers of gurus and their many forms of practice with disciples as outlined in the literature search in chapter two. Similarly, it would be possible to see myself as an

insider in my own community, but not necessarily so within wider Hindu sub-groups or traditions whom I may know of, but have little in-depth knowledge intellectually or experientially, at least as far as concerns 'ii) a and c', pointed out by Harvey above. For example I am aware of the work of The International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKON), in the UK, but would not consider myself an insider to them, although I recognise them as Hindu. I would not claim to have any insider knowledge of the religious elite in my own sub-tradition, despite being a senior figure in the community. In acknowledging my position as an insider and an outsider to the research undertaken, it is a clear statement to help avoid unnecessary bias in the process and seeks to assure its validity and authenticity.

3.3 Research Strategy and Approach

The strategy put in place at the outset was born out of the concern of the researcher personally, as it was among the Hindu community of Leicester collectively. How does one seek the services of a guru in diaspora Leicester, and to what extent is there a definitively different approach and experience to the Indian sub-continent, a former homeland to many of the researcher's generation? This question formed part of the thinking behind the strategy and research approach that was finally put in place. It helped develop the hypothesis outlined in chapter one, and focused the research questions that were developed. Contemplating the necessity to test the hypothesis led to a decision to use a deductive method of enquiry, as an appropriate strategy under which to conduct the research. As Bryman (2004:8) suggests

> *"The researcher, on the basis of what is known about in a particular domain and of theoretical considerations in relation to that domain, deduces a hypothesis (hypotheses) that must then be subjected to empirical scrutiny."*

The hypothesis, outlined earlier, has two aspects to it from a research perspective: Firstly that the character of the guru-disciple relationship in diaspora is influenced by the cultural shift of this experiential spiritual relationship into western culture, *vis-à-vis the* UK. Secondly, as a result of this 'shift' in diaspora the relationship takes on a different form to that in the Indian sub-continent. Both aspects are tested against the empirical evidence of the semi-structured interviews of respondents in the Leicester Hindu community explained below. The findings and analysis which follows shapes the concluding evidence in this study and allows the researcher to revise, if necessary, the hypothesis above. Bryman (ibid: 9) sets out the deductive process as a diagram, reproduced below as figure 1.

The Deductive Process

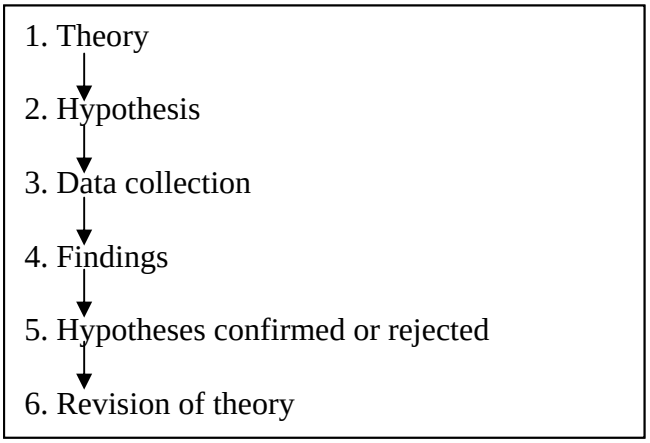

Figure1.

Verma and Beard (1984: 184) affirm that hypotheses can act as an instrument of research and should be altered if the end results do not satisfactorily meet conjectures made. "Hypotheses are tentative preconditions that are subject to verification through subsequent investigation. These imaginative preconceptions begin with a speculative

adventure that may be true." The results obtained from the hypothesis need to be subjected to critical scrutiny before being validated, as Medawar (1977: 22) suggests "The conjectures made in the hypotheses are then exposed to criticism to find out whether the imagined world is anything like the real one." The necessary validation in this case comes from the empirical evidence of the respondents, based on the semi-structured interviews detailed below.

The use of both quantitative and qualitative approaches in the interview schedule help to obtain biographical information and the role early religious instructions play in research subjects' lives. This is important to help find out why respondents want to adopt a guru in diaspora. As Bryman (2004:279) points out, talking about qualitative aspects of research

> *"The core feature of qualitative research is the satisfactory explanation of social activities which requires a substantial appreciation of the perspective culture and the worldview of the actors involved."*

The topic of research suits the criterion on two counts. It hopes to clarify western misconceptions on the role of gurus in Hindu culture and to increase appreciation of Hindus' worldview**.** Punch (2000:19) sums it up below, suggesting

"Qualitative research tries to understand the social reality, which is a human construct, framed within a particular set of ideologies and conducted in a social context." The guru-disciple relationship is a culturally-sensitised Hindu social reality framed within a set of ideologies, which this research seeks to understand. The design of the research will indicate the way the process is being visualised. The researcher uses semi-

structured interviews based on a questionnaire to obtain information, which as Bryman (Ibid: 279) points out "The stress is on understanding of the social world through an examination of the interpretation of that world by its participants." It is that examination and interpretation of what it means to want the service of a guru, and how that is manifest in diaspora Leicester, which the method outlined seeks to address. In addition it supports the use of the research questions as examined in both the literature search and the empirical evidence. As Denizen and Lincoln (1994) point out "The paradigm developments in qualitative research can be enhanced when they are based on the results of the literature review."

3.4 Research Respondents

Ten research subjects were earmarked as an appropriate number, given the size of the study and the limitation on the total word count. The obvious qualification was that a guru had initiated any respondent interviewed in the study. The researcher made contacts with most of them by telephone or orally. They were drawn from within the known Hindu community in Leicester, more specifically from within the *Geeta Bhavan* community. A questionnaire was prepared taking account of the research questions outlined earlier (explained in detail below). The number of those sampled was small so it was not put out for pilot testing. The questionnaire was posted to the respondents and when they agreed to be interviewed, a letter of assurance about confidentiality, explaining the academic nature of research, was posted to them (see appendix1 for a copy of the letter). Mutually agreed dates, times and venues were arranged for interviews (see the interview schedule at appendix 2 for a complete list**).** The respondents were visited a day early to remind them of the time of the interviews and were offered Hindi or Gujarati versions of the questionnaire if needed. One couple

did not want separate interviews. Both decided to give one interview. It was mutually agreed by the couple that husband should be the spokesperson for the interview because they had similar experiences of the spiritual journey. This was by no means ideal from the objective perspective of the research, but was the only way that those particular interviews could be conducted.

The Biographical data obtained from the semi-structured interviews is designed to provide basic information about the respondents. It helps to understand their background which is derived from interviews in part two of the questionnaire (explained below). A separate question looks at the role that early religious instructions played in the life of the research subjects. Information obtained from that question can help explain reasons for the compelling need of the respondents to restart their arrested spiritual growth in diaspora.

3.5 Semi-structured interviews

A decision was made to use a flexible structure of interviews that is why the questionnaire contained both 'closed' and 'open' questions, which thereby limits to some extent the understanding it allows for respondents to articulate views on the more closed questions. An issue Bryman **(**Ibid: 321) takes up when suggesting interviewees should be allowed to articulate their experience from their own perspective and understanding of those events, concepts or thoughts. He claims

> *"… the emphasis must be on how the interviewee frames and understands issues and events – that is what the interviewee views as important in understanding and explaining events, patterns and frames of behaviour."*

The open questions allow interviewees to explain their own view of the topic without influence from the researcher. The questionnaire was divided into two parts. The first part is devoted to obtaining biographical data to compile a better understanding of interviewees' lives and is largely quantitative in design, in the hope of being reflective of the demographics of the respondents. The sixth question in the first part is to ascertain the influence of early religious instructions in respondent's lives (see appendix 3 for the questionnaire).

The second section of the questionnaire contained a more open question structure thereby combining quantitative questionnaire (in part one) with more qualitative semi-structured open questions. This lends itself to a more phenomenological approach. Bryman (2004) cited above, provides a useful template under which to adopt an approach that, despite the insider relationship to many of the respondents, is useful for the study in hand, as it allows the researcher to frame the research, based on a phenomenological perspective. In attempting to bracket out one's own preconceptions, and offering unbiased and objective methods within the interview structure, has shown clearly the difficulty of this approach when the researcher is close to the community being researched. There are however advantages of being an insider, which were discovered in the process. As a founding member of a Hindu Religious Society and through activities with the community the researcher has acquired a great deal of goodwill. The initial approaches for interviews were well received and accepted. Only one person objected due to the intrusive nature of the subject of the interview, and he was replaced by another without any difficulty.

One major concern was the quality of 'objectivity' that the research required. As an insider, expected to act as an impartial outsider the task was very difficult, especially when having to explain the background to some of the issues in the interview. This is where every effort was made to ensure my own views did not influence the responses of the interviewees. I have been able to sympathise with the participants but not to sympathise too much. Burgess (1984: 37) reflects on the phenomenological approach, towards participants in this situation, and he suggests "Prominence is given to understanding of actions of the participants on the basis of their active experience of the world, and the ways in which their actions arise from and reflect back on experience." Looking at Kvale's (1996:12) criteria for successful interviews when conducting semi-structured interviews, fourteen points are listed, one of them was that "the interviewer was to be ethnically sensitive." Something, as an insider I am well aware of, yet as a researcher with an outsider's objectivity in the phenomenological process, it still requires careful consideration when dealing with research in ethnic communities. This was an area that I had not felt would be a concern, before taking a more formal approach from a research perspective, with those whom I knew well within my own community.

An example of this approach can be seen here, as it is possible that the Hindu respondents may not perceive culturally that their relationship with the guru was open to abuse. However pre-judging their response is not my prerogative. The research subjects own experience is of paramount importance for the purpose of the study and it is that experience that is reflected here. The subjects may have found their gurus the 'embodiment of renunciation' and that they did everything for the benefit of disciples?

If this were the case any preconceived ideas on the part of the researcher could prove damaging to the authenticity and legitimacy of the material under investigation. On the other hand, however, this should not prevent the researcher from posing such a question or indeed using it as a hypothesis to test, as such hypotheses are only the researcher's conjectures. For example, the areas of concern, projected by the literature review, may not necessarily be the ones that exercise participants minds, the correlation between the literature and the empirical evidence however, can help shape the conclusions drawn later in the study.

3.6 Data and analysis

In order to find meaning in the data collected through the semi-structured interviews, the questionnaire is divided into two parts (outlined above). Part one, collecting information of a biographical nature from the first six questions. Part two of the questionnaire contains eight open questions, each question being given critical scrutiny in analysing the responses of the interviewees and that of the single postal respondent. Any filtering of the material will be carried out at this stage in an effort to present an unbiased analysis. As Bryman (2004:327) suggests "There is a possibility that full objectivity may not be possible at the outset and filtering through the interviewer's view may happen." In as much as there is any need to filter the material, it should be noted that it will only relate to matters outside the research questions, in order to maintain clarity in the research.

The collated data from the interviews will be presented in summary form so that one can visualise information at a glace. The summaries appear in appendix 4 –'Collated Observations', the remaining detail from the interviews (part two), being used as

qualitative evidence, forming part of the findings and analysis in chapter six. The quantitative material will be displayed graphically to help inform the demographics of the respondents together with biographical information. Quotes from the open semi-structured section of the questionnaire (part two), will inform the findings and analysis material further by interrogating the responses for a better understanding of the evidence they present compared with the material drawn from the literature review. If necessary further clarification may necessitate revisiting respondents for follow up work in the subject area. The transcription of the questions in the questionnaire is summarised as set out above, which will act as a prompt for further research in the area in the future.

3.7 Social implications of the study

It is expected that the adopted method of enquiry will help inform the outcome of the research in diasporic Leicester. Not least in the way the informants see themselves in the cultural shift situation, hence a phenomenological approach. There are a number of interesting factors that help shape their relationship with gurus in diaspora, and although the social influences are different in many ways from a traditional understanding of the Indian sub-continent, a good deal of influence from traditional Hindu society still comes to bare in the guru-disciple relationship in diaspora. Benedict (1934: 24-5) makes the point in her critique of the functionalist view of society, in which she suggests “The functionalists claim that religion is always shaped by its society but it is no less true that the society is also shaped by its religion.” This is an aspect for the social implications for this study which will be drawn from the evidence in the findings and analysis in chapter six. The point being made here is that without

the freedom of a phenomenological approach it would be difficult to establish the evidence for how the Hindu society in diaspora is shaped, and shapes its religious experience, in so far as the guru-disciple relationship is concerned.

Gurus take precedence over the elders and the parents in Hindu society. This is often seen as the only approved path of escape allowed by extended family networks to the rebellious members of Hindu society. This is one case in point where society is being shaped by its religion. The guru here is a symbol of shaping that society and culture. In fact the analysis of culture is not an experimental science in search of a law, but is an interpretative one. Analysis looks for suitable meanings to be attached to symbols. Such symbols carry and convey meanings and ideas to the followers of the tradition. Then individuals in turn allot 'enduring values' to these symbols and tend to get attached to them and feel threatened when outsiders question their importance. The guru as symbol is important to this study and to the analysis of his position in society. Bostock & Thompson (1985**:** 27) make the point "Humans are said to have the natural propensity to symbolize. The symbol systems are important factors to build stable structures of society."

Similarly gurus in this relationship tend to preserve, transmit and enrich the symbolic structures through the medium of disciples. The phenomenological approach seeks to identify this process and asks only that informants are allowed the freedom to express their thoughts, feelings and value structures with the minimum influence from the researcher, or the process he/she adopts to carry it out. There are therefore a number of

considerations to the ethics, validity and authenticity of this type of study to be considered in the research design.

3.8 Validity and authenticity

The contributions made by the research under investigation should be seen as both valid in its methodological application and authentic in the process. The evidence should inform the meaningfulness or meaninglessness of interpretation arrived at on the guru-disciple relationship in diaspora. Any changes made due to the pressures of the cultural-shift should be noted and thoroughly analysed. The evidence may reflect changes in disciples' views due to the catalytic effect of Copley's (2000:31) suggestion of the "interactive suggestibility of the dominant culture." The point however is that regardless of the research outcomes from the findings they should be seen to be reliable, authentic, valid and replicatable.

Mason (1996:21) argues that reliability, validity and generalization are the main components of external validity. She asserts a view that this criterion is suitable for qualitative research. She claims "Validity refers to whether you are observing, identifying or measuring. Also what you say, you are." However all researchers observe, measure and identify to some extent but not all can validate every research finding. As Bryman (2004:273) suggests, citing Le Compte and Goetz

"Le Compte and Goetz classified validity as an external reliability. They noted that there were problems of replication in the process as it is difficult to freeze social reality at a certain moment of time" The same problems with replication are an issue here, however the methods adopted can be followed in order to provide replication. To what

extent ethnography from one set of time bound circumstances to another is wholly replicable is uncertain. The framework outlined in the research design does however follow protocols that can be replicated in other circumstances that are of a specific time and place, and that any future research may well be based along similar lines but of a different time.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) replaced the term validity with ‘trustworthiness’ when describing research findings. They attributed credibility, transferability, dependability and authenticity to the term. These attributes were designed to facilitate measurement of research outcomes. However the criterion of trustworthiness is also a useful instrument if the participants are used to corroborate the research findings. The question of meaningfulness in social sciences will still be there, even if, as Skeggs (1994: 86) reports, the phrase “Can’t understand a bloody word it says” was the most common response while she was researching women’s lives from a feminine perspective.

Irrespective of the complexity of the research in hand, it is important to construct ‘believable criteria’ to assess and monitor the claims of spiritual progress made by the guru-disciple association. The criteria should be comprehensive enough to cover all aspects of the relationship. It should also show sensitivity to the perennial philosophy of Hindu and Buddhist traditions. It is the intention of the researcher to provide that comprehensive and sensitive analysis of the research as displayed later in the thesis.

3.9 Suitable criteria

The nature of surrender and exploitation discussed in chapter two, are also relevant when considering criteria by which to assess and analyse research findings in areas where public concern is prominent. This may be true of some aspects of the guru-disciple relationship, made more of in diaspora settings, than perhaps it has been in the past in the sub-continent. There is a growing public concern about cults or New Religious Movements in western society. The results of this kind of concern gives rise to what Ken Wilber (1983:64) suggests is a criteria "To test the legitimacy and validity of the New Religious Movements in view of the public concern on resulting mass suicides and other unsavoury happenings."

A believable scale was presented in order to differentiate the valid New Religious Movements (NRMs) from dangerous ones. The scale addressed areas of concern looking at: recruitment procedures, the methods used to retain participants, the claims of 'Brain Washing', cases of reported abuse and the exploitation incidences. Wilber's 'suitable scale' is appropriate to assess some aspects of the guru-disciple relationship, and consideration is given to these aspects in the findings and analysis which follows when investigating the question of whether a therapeutic approach has been adopted in diaspora.

In the next chapter I plan to engage science-based psychotherapy with intuition-based Hindu spirituality to investigate the emergence of a relatively new subject called 'transpersonal psychology, 'in which the case for pastoral and patient care praxis in the guru-disciple relationship is made.

Chapter 4

Psychotherapy, Spirituality and Pastoral Care.

4.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the approaches of pastoral care within spiritualities, Hindu and Christian. It is based on a reflection of how western understandings of psychotherapy are influencing Christian clergy, thereby implying they may be adopting a more scientific method of pastoral care, compared to the more intuitive-based model offered by the Hindu guru. Evidence of this will be examined in the concluding chapter of the thesis when discussing the role of a more therapeutic model of the *guru chela* in diaspora posited by Neki (1973).

4.2 Some Assumptions

Hindu Gurus assume that when disciples enter into the care of the guru, they leave all cares, wows and anxieties of the world behind. However the reality is that they bring their own baggage of learned responses with them. It is further assumed that they have had some experience of the troubles of the world and that they found them to be of a transitory nature. Such assumptions are rarely proved to be factual.

Another misconception is that since they have been accepted as disciples, they have reached the place of bliss and serenity psychologically. This is far from the truth. It is important to understand that acceptance by a guru is just a beginning and the real struggle is bound to come when one starts on the difficult path of *sadhna*. He/she will

have to face reality, sooner rather than later. The guru is going to insist that the disciple should forget his/her 'lived experience' as the guru prefers a clean break from the past. The disciple should understand that this long and arduous process might provide him with true healing if the final goal is attained to the satisfaction of the guru as well as the disciple.

Disciples used to obtain pastoral help from the guru's wife in classical times. They used to find, and expect, an atmosphere conducive to the spiritual learning, at ashrams or *gurukulas.* The changes however, based on disciple's experiences in diaspora, leave gurus unable to offer a base for spiritual learning. Such learning is therefore carried out by short visits, telephone or even electronic contact via the internet. They do nonetheless continue to provide a therapeutic and empowering element as part of the spiritual learning process, which, although dissimilar to the western understanding of psychotherapy found in a Christian pastoral context, nevertheless, presents a verifiably comparative appreciation of east, west 'psycho-therapy' as it applies to spirituality.

Punjabi-speaking Hindus in Leicester have expressed a desire to know the ideological basis of pastoral care praxis in Christianity in order to make comparisons with their own positions, based on how to make a relationship work in a diaspora setting. They are aware of the reliance of Hindu, Buddhist, and Sikh religions on gurus for religious direction and pastoral guidance and to some extent the Sufi tradition of the '*pirs'* , but not much was known about Christianity. They had come across the clergy administering care and spiritual direction, but were not aware of their actual role. As a researcher I knew that clergy were turning more and more to psychotherapy for inspiration, leaving questions of a comparative nature (between Hindus and Christians)

open for discussion; not least how both Christian clergy and gurus understandings of the psyche used both pastoral care and psychotherapy as a tool in contemporary settings. Browning (1977: 12) writes "Moral psychotherapists gain the right to use the word pastoral by virtue of the moral context in which they have acquired public visibility with the wider Christian community."

It was therefore thought prudent to find a common meeting ground between the intuition-based spirituality offered in the guru-disciple relationship and science-based psychotherapy being adopted in Christian circles. Both offer pastoral care; psychotherapy to patients/clients and gurus to disciples, who in some ways may also be seen (from the western perspective), as patients of the guru seeking spiritual well being as a cure for many of the unsatisfactory elements in samsaric life[19].

It also seems important to define spirituality when making reference to pastoral care comparatively across religious and cultural experiences. According to Clinebell (1995:2) "Spirituality is a word that has been used to describe the human need for meaning and value in life and desire for relationship with a transcendent power." Myers et al. (1991:54) accepts transcendence as an attribute of spirituality but adds other attributes claiming "Spirituality generally refers to something that is transcendent, ultimate, and known in an extrasensory manner." Spirituality can be experienced and expressed through religion, which for many scholars is normally characterised by beliefs, social organisation, and cumulative traditions. In the case of Hinduism, gurus have contributed considerably to the common cumulative tradition in much the way Myers (1991) expresses his views above.

[19] *Samsara* is the cyclical notion of life seen by a number of religious traditions which originate from the Indian sub-continent. Liberation (*moksha)* from *samsara* is the goal of the Hindu practitioner.

4.3 Are gurus good persons in society?

One goal of societal cultural systems is to perpetuate, enrich and transmit values through the mediums of suitably adjusted good persons. According to Kirschner (1998: 21) “The legitimacy of a culture’s manifest vision of the ‘good’ person is seen to hinge upon the fact that such a successfully developed person, fits with, and is well adapted to his particular socio-cultural system.” In other words a situation of mutual dependency or collaboration exists between the qualities required for good persons and societal systems. Gurus in Hinduism represent ‘good persons’ from the societal perspective, who, seem to be ever ready to help the householders in general and disciples in particular, by providing guidance in spiritual matters.

4.4 Psychotherapy and Anglo-Saxon values

The main aim of psychotherapy is to provide healing in such a way so as to make clients conform to established norms of the existing cultural system. This view has come under criticism from social scientists on the grounds that it is based on the principle of functionalism.

A group of American social psychologists investigated and published findings based on this assumption in the *American Journal of Personality and Psychotherapy: Volume 35*, suggesting there is an inherent bias, based on Anglo-Saxon values, in the theories and models, being recommended and used for universal application within their own field of study. It is apparent from this and other evidence that in many fields of psychoanalysis this bias continues, as Kirschner (Ibid: 21) claims

"The categories and explanations used by psychologists – in social psychology, in personality theories and even in psycho-dynamics – were informed by implicit ethnocentric attitudes." Gilligan (1982:18) confirms a pervasive ethnocentric bias when he suggests "The yardsticks used by psychologists, to measure minds and selves, have resulted in reinforcing and extending social inequality." This is a thought Erikson (1980:103) takes further with his observations about the nature of functionalism[20] in the world of the psychotherapist, claiming "It is evident that a psycho-social orientation fuses with such a developmental and historical view, and the clinical observations are made with such awareness in dealing with patients of different ages in different areas of the world." This dominating and constraining characteristic is based on therapists personal assumptions, learned during their developmental stages and influences clinical decisions that are being advocated for universal application across nations. This view, according to the evidence above, takes a dominant ethnocentric position, based on, essentially western values.

It is not my intention to belittle the contributions made by the theories and models of psychologists, but it is important to subject them to critical analysis to understand that some theories and models are culturally constituted and value-laden. The irony is that the psychologists tend to apply and recommend theories and models to all situations and cultures. Sometimes such attitudes and value systems get extended to the topic of the guru-disciple relationship. In other words, the *guruchela* can be explained in terms used by western psychology, however such terms do not always provide an objective unbiased appreciation of the cultural differences in the relationship. They often make efforts to explain them based on the fact that disciples in diaspora may be subject to

[20] Functionalism here relates to the social science tendency to view and explain institutions (for example, psychotherapy) according to the function it performs in society.

cultural conditioning of the host nation, which, in most cases is erroneous. In so far as understanding one's position (as a disciple), with a guru is concerned, the disciples views are largely influenced by the psycho-social and historical underpinning of the Indian sub-continent.

4.5 Mystic experiences

Kirschner (1996:21) considers the use of sexual fantasy as a repressed emotion of experience and suggests this is a common practice among Hindu mystics. He poses the question

> *"Let us consider a psychoanalytic proposition that religious dogma and experiences are essentially drawn from the most 'primal' and internal (universal) human feelings, including fantasies and dreams that are based on our repressed emotions in the light of our past relationships…The mystics themselves used metaphors of marital union of the soul with the divine. It is assumed that all spiritual experiences irrespective of culture are erotic."*

Gurus however do not generally accept this. They often vehemently deny such practices, with the exception of Rajneesh who made use of sexuality openly in his exercises of 'dynamic meditation.' Sufis and others speak of a godlike state of consciousness, in which the patterns of divine energy are in union with the cosmos, in the ecstatic flights of the Soul. This however is a metaphorical analogy of union with God, not an explicit reference to sexual energy. That is not to say that such ecstatic practices do not have foundation within Tantric, Goddess and other traditions originating in the sub-continent, however in the gurus efforts to attend to diasporic disciples it is not a principle adhered to by those subject to this study.

4.6 Psychotherapists and gurus

According to Claxton (1986: 320)

> *"The spiritual traditions offer an invitation to psychotherapists to see their training as experiential and continuous, and to appraise their value to their clients in terms of 'quality of being,' rather than the skills and techniques of doing or the conceptual understandings of knowing."*

However the Psychotherapists find it hard to accept Claxton's ideas because their professional training and exclusive professionalism do not readily let them open up to outsider's suggestions. When the psychotherapists techniques are compared to that of the enlightened masters (in a Hindu context), the practices do not seem to cover the whole person, which is the spiritual goal of the guru.

Psychotherapy, being scientifically informed, depends on an approach that enables people to change themselves to achieve normalisation. What matters most to psychotherapists is to strengthen patients' egos. This is entirely opposite to what gurus believe. They tend to take disciples beyond the ego, as a pre-condition to ensure their spiritual growth.

Gurus put the therapist and the client in the same boat. The client seeks healing and the psychotherapist is neurotic about his role as a professional. It amounts to the blind leading the blind according to Claxton (ibid: 320), who illustrates this, by claiming

> *"The disciples are looking for something, the guru has got it and the disciples do not know they have got it as well. The guru knows it is his job to prevent them from looking for it in the wrong places, such as in an acculturation of intellectual knowledge or in a deliberate affectation of a certain life-style."*

Neki (1973: 755), the Indian psychotherapist, was the first professional to advocate that the eastern gurus can be a useful paradigm for the therapeutic role when he writes

> *"The major paradox of psychotherapy is that the psychotherapist stands with the society and works for the individual's adjustment to it by modifying and coaxing the latter's unconscious drives and tendencies towards the socially acceptable norms, then he/she can become an obedient instrument of rancid tradition, decaying systems and disintegrating institutions."*

However gurus do not care much for the norms of society as their lessons begin by describing the world as an illusion or *Maya*.

4.7 Mediators between psychotherapy and spirituality

There have been a number of mediators between psychotherapy and spirituality attempting to help both sides of the discussion meld in an amicable union. Some of them are described here in an effort to make the two approaches reflect more clearly their interaction with the guru-disciple relationship. Maslow (1971: 301) was the first psychotherapist to base his theory of human inner nature on a holistic-dynamic principle. He believed that

> *"The human organism is organised; an integral and dynamic organism and that human behaviour is an expression of the total organism…Organisms that prioritise individual needs, both basic and fundamental, are the motivational expression of human organisms as a whole, and are informed by the inner human nature, which is biological and autonomous. This motivational expression leads to the individual's growth and development."*

He called it 'self-actualisation,' however; he believed that all organisms do not achieve self-actualisation because the ego-defence systems act as barriers to the self-actualisation process. He claimed that they want to achieve their potentials but they are unable to achieve them because they get side tracked by their ego-personalities that are social constructs.

Another important contributor is Assagioli (1971: 130**)** who adds intuition and creative insights to Maslow's model. In doing so he showed that "the human organism was able to explore spiritual dimensions of human personality as a method of treatment for psychological illnesses." Assagioli (Ibid: 196) improved the model further suggesting

> *"The techniques of his process not only strengthened under-developed functions but also transformed psychological energies so as to arouse latent potentialities of the total being. This area of human psyche transcended personal experiences and leads to the 'transpersonal realm."*

According to what he suggests above, it appears that ultimate reality is beyond time and space and is transpersonal in nature.

Wilber (1980: 53) is a major contributor to the model based on a transpersonal theme. He takes into account approaches of both the East and the West and produces a synthesis. He states "All human beings are endowed with same nature but varied cultural inputs conditioned them to produce a pluri-dimensional and multi-layered consciousness." He believes in the absolute, ultimate, non-dual reality in each individual. He further postulates that the individual is not aware of his real identity that transcends his personal boundaries. His lived experiences are conditioned by the environment, familial and societal conditioning. This produces an egocentric self-image that leads to a final false and inaccurate self-image, creating a shadow reality. Wilber considers the non-dual level, what he calls the only unchanging structure in the 'Spectrum of Consciousness', and calls it the **'**Brahman' level. In this (ibid: 81) he explains that it works through the "Triple-process of 'dis-identification, transcendence and integration." One reaches the higher-order structures, or levels when the self shifts its identification from the lower levels to achieve transcendence. The process goes on until all levels are integrated at the top level and union with Brahman is achieved.

There are remarkable similarities between Grof' and Wilber's approaches to inner development**.** Grof (1993: 175) uses a 'holographic model' to explain the difference between the part and the whole, in which the part "reflects the whole spectrum." The idea is similar to one that is expressed in the invocation mantra of *Isavasya Upanishad;* Aum pooranamadah pooranamidam pooranat pooranam udyachtate Poornasya pooranamadhya pooranam eva vashiyate. When translated it means "Brahman is perfect. The manifested universe is perfect, because it emanates from perfect Brahman. Only the perfect can create the perfect. If perfect is taken away from perfect, the perfect remains."

Washburn (1988), who is another contributor to the discussion involving psychotherapy and spirituality, believes that individual's ordinary constituted ego can be transcended to make higher states of consciousness accessible to individuals. He stated that the conflict between the ego and the psyche of individuals acts as a regenerative process resulting in integration. He points out that "The ego personality becomes spiritualised and unifies the total human resources."

The Hindu gurus' approach is in complete contrast to Washburn's views. Gurus would like to annihilate the disciples' ego before they begin to teach them. There is no doubt that there are inherent dangers in the gurus' approach psychologically as the clean break with the past may cause depression or paranoia.

4.8 Transpersonal Psychology

The development of states of consciousness beyond the limits of personal identity is reflected in the quest set by gurus for their disciples. The individual tries to develop towards wholeness, beyond normal comprehension through the process of self-development and self- transcendence. Sri Aurobindo (1872-1950) started out as a freedom fighter during colonial rule in India, and later became a guru and spiritual leader through his method of transpersonal psychology, called 'Integral Yoga'. Aurobindo (1971: 227) applied Darwin's theory of evolution to the field of spirituality suggesting that "The new evolution is going to come about in that field." According to Smith (2003:176) Aurobindo claimed that India would be the eternal fountainhead of holy spirituality harmonising all other religions and philosophies throughout the world, "making mankind one soul."

Heehs (2000: 56) citing *The Collective Works of Sri Aurobindo* states that the author believes

> *"The mind is an essential centre of power in humans. But it is an inadequate organ for the task of governing human life. So the Human Being is imperfect, as he/she is hampered, confused, ill-ordered, and mostly in-effective in understand his/her consciousness."*

This is a pointer towards the classical Hindu theory of Karma. Sri Aurobindo believed that each birth provides the soul with an opportunity to have varied experiences. For him the 'rebirth' is a logical necessity for the evolution of consciousness to go on. Vrinte (1996: 136) another explorer in the field of transpersonal psychology, comments on Aurobindo's use of the transpersonal method, explaining

"Aurobindo not only guides the seeker from potentiality to actuality but he also tries to find out ways and means by which the individual and humanity could improve spiritually, hence he guides in the exploration of the divinity with each seeker."

Bede Griffiths (1995:32) commenting on Jungian contributions to the theory of 'the evolution of consciousness' said

> *"Carl Jung, the Swiss psychologist who originally had been a disciple of Freud, went far beyond his pioneering predecessor. He realised that beyond the personal unconscious is what he termed the collected unconscious…Jung concluded that a whole mythological world is present in the collective unconscious."*

4.9 Summary

The use of a transpersonal psychology reflects much in common with practices adopted by and transmitted through the guru both historically and within contemporary understanding. The literature suggests that collaboration between intuition-based spirituality and evidence-based psychotherapy is possible and can provide joint healing strategies for future human evolution as suggested by the emergence of 'transpersonal psychology.' The research findings in chapter six will go some way to explain this still further as it affects the guru-disciple relationship in diaspora and where, if at all a more therapeutic model can be discerned. However, the following chapter (chapter five) takes the discussion a stage further by analysing the methods adopted by recognised gurus in modernity, some of whom have exported the traditional relationships into diaspora settings.

Chapter 5

Modern Gurus Under the Microscope

5.1 Introduction

This chapter deals with the general characteristics of gurus in modernity, looking to focus on four specific modern gurus as part of this discussion. The implications being that a review of practicing gurus and principles they adopt will help inform the following two chapters, where evidence of disciples experiences are analysed against the norms presented here, based on the literature that explains the modern guru. All four of the gurus under investigation were initiating disciples in the West as part of their practice.

5.2 A lack of central authority

Gurus are often conceived in the literature as a law unto themselves and more often than not they make their own rules up as they go along. Smith (2003:171) points to the difficulties that exist in appraising the worth of a guru, claiming "This is the great problem in studying gurus. Everything hinges on the spirituality they possess and impart to their disciples." In other words it is impossible to evaluate that spiritual power unless you are an insider. He goes on to say (ibid: 171) "…it is difficult for an outsider to reach a just conclusion about the value of a guru and his teachings." He also warns of the often recanted stories of false gurus, who lay claim to powers, physical and spiritual which are erroneous. The decentralisation of doctrinal accountability in Hinduism allows them to make such claims. Only by testing the guru as a disciple are they often discovered to be legitimate or otherwise. There is no central authority to validate the

conduct of religious rituals and ceremonies. The claim of divinity is challenged purely on philosophical grounds. It means that all people who claim to be enlightened (Hindus use the term to mean on the path of *mukti*) are able to declare themselves divine. Gurus often claim this and consider themselves immune from responsibility and accountability.

5.3 Leading gurus and their Influence

What follows is a selected appraisal of the work and practices of a number of leading gurus including Krishnamurti, Rajneesh, Prabhupada and Sai Baba and their followers. This section of the study engages with similarities and differences in their approaches, so as to assess their impact on lives of people in diaspora. All four have at varying times throughout modernity initiated disciples in the West.

Hindu migrants in 1970s Leicester looked up to these gurus, based largely on the anecdotal evidence of others, passed on by word of mouth and by reading popular literature, often from India. Their influences and impressions were also coloured by news of the gurus from India, among extended family members still living in the sub-continent. They wanted to know what their relationships as ‘diaspora disciples’ would be like, with the guru? What would be the attitude of these gurus to the materialistic nature of western society? What would be the quality of their leadership and their teachings, and how would it relate to the role of sexuality in western society, where attitudes were considerably more open, (some would say permissive), compared to the Indian sub-continent? They wanted to study critically, the gurus’ methods of imparting

spiritual instructions as they believed that the gurus' role would have direct bearing on their own family dynamics.

5.4 Krishnamurti (1895-1986)

Migrants in Leicester had read about the Theosophical movement and the work of Anne Besant, former President of the Indian National Congress and a popular leader before Gandhi. They had heard about Krishnamurti, who had become well known for his act of giving up the claim that he was a Messiah. They seemed proud of the sacrifice he made, in giving up his involvement in Theosophical plans.

In 1909, Rev. Charles Leadbeater, the librarian of the Theosophical Society, saw a beautiful 13-year-old boy on the beach near Adyar, Madras. The child proved to be one of the eight sons of a former Indian Civil servant, who was working for the Society. The boy's father agreed to allow Leadbeater to adopt Jiddu (who became Krishnamurti) and his brother Nitya, but later changed his mind.

One may wonder at the efficacy of the discovery in the light of the lawsuit that followed the legal adoption of the brothers. Whether the poverty of the family prompted the father's initial willingness to allow adoption or his after-thoughts based on 'caste taboos' caused his change of heart? One can never know. Krishnamurti and Nitya however, both sided with Leadbeater in the legal struggle and their father never forgave them.

Leadbeater claimed to be able to accurately read people's past reincarnations and was immediately convinced that Krishnamurti was the latest incarnation of the future

Messiah, the world teacher after Christ. Anne Besant, the leader of the Society, was equally impressed with young Krishnamurti.

An endowment fund called 'The Star of the East' was created to educate the brothers at the Sorbonne, in France. It was decided to broadcast the message of the impending event of the coming of the future Messiah to the world, through the branches of the Society. An enormous organisation was built up to celebrate the event in 1929. According to Wilson (2000: 75) however, "Krishnamurti announced that he was no Messiah and decided to live as an average man among men. He would follow the pathless path."

His approach to life was mainly intellectual but it required individually oriented knowledge verified by experience. He was plucked from his natural Indian family environment and nurtured to become the leader of the World. He showed great moral courage by refusing to take on the role of the Messiah in the blaze of international publicity and decided to spend his life teaching freedom, as he understood it. He decided to carve his own spiritual path in the light of his own experience and thinking.

His appeal is often described as limited to academics and the intelligentsia, however, the popular following that sought his advice, stemmed over sixty years of teaching in India, Britain and the USA, his following, however, never became a mass movement. He wrote many books with a philosophical trend that are still popular within academia. Hindus in diaspora had heard of him and were proud of his contributions in the religious field. Ordinary folks in diaspora saw him as a guru who walked away from the life of luxury offered by the Theosophical movement.

Krishnamurti's view was that 'when a person says that he is free, he is not really free.' However this expression makes us aware of our bondage. According to him, 'freedom is not something that can be achieved'. The statement shows an inherent bondage that negates freedom. Brown (1999: 78) illustrates this point when he quotes Krishnamurti saying

> *"You must be free from all authority, all traditions, all fears, and all thoughts. These come as hidden in cunning words… We are lost, we are forlorn because we have accepted words, words, words…Feeding on words when you need the substance is equal to living in bondage."*

Krishnamurti, according to Storr (1996:76) was critical of the psychologists' division of human consciousness into compartments based on unsatisfied sexual urges, particularly the Freudian perspective. He stated

> *"If consciousness is made up of my despair, anxiety, fears, pleasures, the innumerable hopes, guilt and the vast expanse of past, then any action springing from that consciousness can never free the consciousness from its limitations."*

Krishnamurti gave the intellect priority over emotions and advocated the use of intellect in all aspect of life. He did however insist on an empirical experiential understanding of that intellect, which sort to test emotions as part of the process. His major concerns where that individuals did not follow blindly in the footsteps of many who had gone before them, using religious and often dogmatic institutions as evidence of spiritual progress. His comments were often addressed to the intellectual and the wealthy. He believed the memory to be a trap. This became the central tenet of his life philosophy. He wrote in 1971 "When thought acts, it is this past which is acting as memory, as experience, as knowledge, as opportunity."

It was a prelude to his teaching that the mind should be emptied to find the truth. However the freedom from memory seems to be an unattainable goal because it gives us a sense of our own life history. Perhaps Krishnamurti is talking about the ego of the individual, the result of his lived experiences. It appears that there is a similarity between him and other gurus on this point. Though he was vehemently opposed to the concept of teachers, gurus or any spiritual paths or processes of organised religion, he maintained a one to one relationship with the persons who wanted to learn from his philosophy.

What is especially different from other visiting gurus is Krishnamurti's opposition to conscious meditation techniques. Brown (1999: 243) points to his view suggesting "Sitting cross-legged or lying down or repeating certain phrases, which is a deliberate and conscious effort to meditate is a nonsense." According to Ravindra (1997:333), a long standing admirer and friend, there are two contradictory aspects to Krishnamurti's personality

> *"Two contradictory aspects were reflected in his personality. One aspect was his deep spiritual essence that was felt souring high and the other was the conditioned aspect which was the result of his fighting against theosophical mentors control and tyranny."*

The lofty aspect of personality made listeners feel blessed and in total accord with the message he conveyed, the other aspect was like a discordant note.

Perhaps the most significant influence in Krishnamurti's life which was to act as a foundation for his personal relationships, was the tragic death of his brother Nitya age twenty-severn, who had been a close companion through problems of adjustment after adoption. From the day of his death he longed to break his ties with the Theosophical

movement. As a result of this experience he never established close personal relationships with his associates.

According to Masson (1993:52), a disciple of Paul Brunton, who visited Krishnamurti in Gstaad as a disciple of his guru's guru,

> *"Krishnamurti was living in a luxurious Villa lent to him by a friend? Not really, she would not have called herself that. If 'the land of the truth was pathless,' some apparently knew their way around better than others. Krishnamurti allowed himself to be seen by others as a guide, which in the end was just a variation on the guru theme."*

Masson (ibid: 51) also added "While Krishnamurti rejected the teaching of his Indian background, he subtly and lucratively made himself an international super-guru largely by denying the validity of being a guru."

5.4.1 Influence

Krishnamurti stirred the intellects of many leading thinkers of the day but did not want to mount a mass appeal and had never thought to be a guru. Hindus in Leicester looked up to him for inspiration but were awed by the contents of the polemics in his publications. He left no movement or organisation to keep his life-long work going and was opposed to anything beyond the individual's ability to seek out knowledge. He was true to his word that he was following a 'pathless path.' His life demonstrated the affect of his experiences on his life. He was probably the best known of Indian gurus of that era despite claiming not to be a guru. He used to say "I have no disciples. Every one of you is a disciple of the truth, if you understand the truth and do not follow individuals, you do not need any mediators." His whole teaching could be summed up in his 1929 statement

> *" Truth is a pathless land. Man cannot come to it through any organization, through any creed, through any dogma, priest or ritual, not through any philosophic knowledge or psychological technique. He has to find it through the mirror of relationship, through the understanding of the contents of his own*

mind, through observation and not through intellectual analysis or introspective dissection."

In the *Geeta Bhavan* Temple in Leicester the majority of the devotees sing devotional hymns addressed to deities and believe that their prayers are being accepted. The devotees mix devotional *bhajans* (hymns), with action to serve in the temple. Punjabi-speaking Hindus in Leicester believe that the knowledge (intellect), the devotion, and the action alone are not enough to attain the goal of salvation. They are therefore drawn to the kind of knowledge based discussion of a guru like Krishnamurti. He is undoubtedly to be seen as a revered character, although, not an essentially approachable figure for Hindus in Leicester. He was however given a great deal of respect in the 1970s and 80s and proved a catalyst for those searching for a guru at a time when the migrant population was beginning to settle in their new environment and second generations were emerging. The world wide profile of Krishnamurti informed a whole generation of Hindu disciples in diaspora. Moreover, however, Hinduism enjoins devotees to follow the path that suits their own nature. The variety of followers of gurus requires a vast array of teaching styles to accommodate their complex and varied natures, as will be seen below when considering other styles of guru in the modern diasporic world.

5.5 Rajneesh/ Osho (1931-1990)

Rajneesh was one of those gurus Hindus in Leicester wanted to avoid, though his books were read and well liked. They were aware of the immense wealth and prestigious Rolls Royce cars he collected. And were deeply concerned about the rumours suggesting he was deluding rich disciples and exploiting them.

Rajneesh was born Rajneesh Chandra Mohan Jain in 1931 later changing his name to Osho, but for most of his adult life has been known as Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh. He was a brilliant student and studied philosophy graduating from Jabalpur University. He taught in the same university and was considered a good teacher. He claimed to have attained enlightenment at the age of twenty-one following a long bout of mental illness which he suffered after the death of his beloved grandfather. Similar incidents have occurred in other gurus' lives, and these have subsequently been described by Storr (1996: 80) as a "creative illness that gurus often suffer from."

In 1966 Rajneesh started lecturing and preaching across India. His main themes were meditation and 'free love.' Free love had been a taboo in religious discourses in India, over a long period of time, except for the preachers of the 'Tantric tradition.' Rajneesh attracted lots of interest from middle class business followers, in India.

In 1969 he started an *ashram* in Bombay, however, in 1974, he moved to Poona. His fame spread to foreign countries and he attracted large numbers of the 'Flower power generation of the sixties' with nostalgic memories. He gave initiation to them, changed their names to symbolise their break with the past and called them *Sanyasins.*

He did not deny sexuality, in fact it is often suggested that he promoted it as an exploratory method of transcendence. He asserted that sex was a beautiful thing, and one should enjoy it. He said if you engaged in sex completely and were consumed by it, naturally you would, sooner or later, transcend it. According to Ritchie (1991: 124) "His followers were the free-love zombies of the seventies and eighties, the orange-clad, chanting and dancing *sanyasins* of the guru who preached that sex was the door to Divinity."

Rajneesh was endowed with many qualities as Klostermaeir (1994: 442) implies "His brilliant intellect, his hypnotic voice and his ability with words, made compulsive listening. His doctrine was easy to live by because it basically meant that everything goes." Perhaps this was the message people wanted to hear. So he was never short of followers or the wealth that many of those followers brought with them. His philosophy claimed the greatest values in life, were, (in no particular order), 'Awareness', 'Love', 'Meditation', and 'Laughter'. He also claimed 'Enlightenment' was everyone's natural state but that humans were distracted from realising it by the process of human thought, societal expectations and emotional ties and the subsequent fears and inhibitions that followed.

Rajneesh's concept of meditation was totally different from the majority of Hindu customs. Calder (1998: 5) explains his meditation techniques claiming

> *"His techniques started with a 'catharsis,' that aimed to purge the followers' emotions through the evocation of pity and fear, and by bringing repressed ideas into consciousness through free association. His meditation sessions were physically active, emotionally intense, and stimulating."*

The aim of the techniques was to 'kick start' the process of sublimation through dynamic activity. Rajneesh rightly considered it a better option than the alternative of repression of the ego. He saw that repressed modern men needed activity which included, altered breathing, gibberish, laughing and crying. These he suggested were the cleaning out, preparatory methods, which allowed practitioners to have a cathartic experience before taking on other methods of meditation. He introduced minimal parts of a number of meditation traditions using what he considered to be the most therapeutic aspects. He believed that, given sufficient practice, the meditative state can

be achieved and maintained while performing everyday tasks and that enlightenment is nothing but being continuously in a meditative state.

In the Siva Tantra tradition of Tamil Nadu, one is able to achieve a 'super-conscious state' through the medium of sex under controlled supervision of an expert guru**.** Rajneesh used these techniques with devastating consequences for many. The meditation lasts for ten minutes per session and there are three sessions in all. The first session is fast breathing through the nose. The second session involves whirling round and round, faster and faster.

Bharti (1981: 16) explains her physical state in the meditation rounds, claiming

> *"I was crying. I fell down. I tried to stand up and fell down again. I could not stop crying. The third session was chanting of the Sufi mantra 'boo, boo, hoo, hoo'. A great release of energy was felt by me in the session resulting in peace and blissfulness."*

All this was theoretically good, but it had devastating effects on the individuals, the local community and the authorities in India. Drug taking became part of the *ashram* life. Some *sannyasins* indulged in drug trafficking in order to finance their habit. The cases of prostitution and insurance frauds increased in and around the *ashram*. Some *sannyasins* were caught peddling drugs. Ensuing criminal cases produced a climate too hot for the *ashram* to remain. Rajneesh decided to leave India for the USA to avoid disputes. However in the USA he was to court further controversy and criminal charges. His commune acquired an extensive Oregon ranch and called it Rajneeshpuram. Many followers were attracted to the ranch. They worked as unpaid labourers. There were allegations of violence against those who did not do as they were told.

Ultimately disputes between Rajneesh and his staff came to a head. There were allegations against the ranch for breaches of the immigration controls with the Federal Authorities, in addition to this; his staff were accused of poisoning conspiracies by biochemical agents, attempted murder and other criminal conspiracies. Rajneesh decided to leave the USA but was apprehended at the airport. He had to pay a significant fine to secure his release. He approached many countries but was refused permission to reside and therefore travelled around the world on what was described as a world tour, before finally being accepted back in India in 1986, moving back to his Pune *ashram* in 1987. There he died in 1990 having taken the name Osho in 1989. He believed his untimely death (put down to heart failure), to be part of a radioactive thallium poisoning campaign against him, by the US, Reagan run administration.

His organisation regrouped under the name of Osho and is still circulating his literature from London and Pune. His books show depth of knowledge rarely expressed by a guru. He had excellent ideas but depended too heavily on a few incompetent and corrupt officials, who were more interested in personal control and power. Only Rajneesh and Ghandi have had the whole of their literary works archived in the Indian Parliament.

5.5.1 Influence

Rajneesh made enormous headlines, often for the wrong reasons, nonetheless his large following were generally the middle class and privileged of society. He supported a notion that the poor man can ‘never be spiritual’. Osho claimed that he was a rich man's guru, and that material poverty was not a spiritual value. He was photographed wearing sumptuous clothing and hand-made watches. This position is absurd because the poor

of India are the backbone of the revival of the *bhakti* devotional movement in the country. His reasons were that the poor have to waste too much of their energy in eking out a living and are always too tired to think of *sadhna.*

In sum Rajneesh preached spiritual hedonism but he paid lip service to the Hindu idea of detachment from desires, not through asceticism, but by the quickest path of experiencing all desires. He mixed the techniques of Tantra with that of the exercises used by Gurjieff, the Russian master, in his dynamic meditation. Gurjieff's techniques involved 'freezing' at a given command to 'observe one-self and to learn from the observation', he also saw merit in Gestalt psychology, but he attempted to ensure that no "system of thought" would define him, since he believed that no philosophy can fully express the truth.

Every Sunday the Secretary of *Geeta Bhavan* Temple Leicester gives a short speech on current religious issues followed by a question and answer session. In one session the role of Rajneesh was discussed. The Secretary was very critical of Rajneesh's use of free love to attract disciples. The congregation's verdict was that such gurus give Hinduism a bad name. He remains, as Smith (2003:178) insists "the most notorious of modern gurus."

5.6 A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada (1896-1977)

Prabhupada was the founder guru of the 'International Society for Krishna Consciousness' (ISKCON), in 1966; otherwise known as the 'Hare Rama; Hare Krishna' movement, based on the worship of Krishna in the *Bhagavata Purana.* It is an international movement where some of its leading figures in a variety of regions are

authorised to initiate disciples. A research respondent (in the following chapter) was initiated by a local guru from ISKCON but held the deepest respect for Prabhupada for his contributions to the movement.

Prabhupada was the first guru to take a form of Krishna Bhakti devotional practice to the USA. The previous gurus from the Ramakrishna Mission, including Vivekananda and others, took the message of Hinduism in general to the West, but Prabhupada's message was strictly according to his sampardaya's[21] version. He belonged to the '*Gaudiya' sampardaya*, a branch of Vaishnava Samparadya founded by Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, (1486- 1534) in Bengal, who was regarded as an incarnation of Krishna. It is classified as a monotheistic tradition seeing the many forms of Vishnu as expansions or incarnations of the one Supreme God.

Prabhupada hailed from Bengal, where the Krishna revivalist movement of Chaitanya were operating and no doubt influenced his early life. He was born in 1898 in Calcutta and graduated in Philosophy, Economics and English in 1922. He started translation of Sanskrit texts into English on the instruction of his guru. He worked as a manager of a pharmaceutical plant for the major part of his working life and retired in 1959. He became a *'sannyasin'* to carry on the work of 'Lord Krishna' in the West at the behest of his guru.

He migrated to the USA in 1965, with a one-way ticket. His trunk was full of his own translated books. He managed to attract intellectual hippie members seeking new spiritual adventures. He offered them peace and tranquillity without stimulants of tea,

[21] The disciplic succession serving as a spiritual energy channelled between guru lineages.

coffee, alcohol and drugs. His followers were asked to follow a strict code of morality, including a vegetarian diet and the giving up of worldly objects. He asked them to go to the city streets, singing songs of praise for Krishna and dancing for him. They were asked to attire themselves in saffron-coloured clothes. It was a noble experience for them as well as the citizens of the States. It attracted a large number of people to the organisation. This movement grew to become ISKCON.

Prabhupada's mission was to begin a new peaceful crusade in the western world dedicated to Krishna devotion, using traditional *Bhakti* as the doctrine of liberation through devotion to the Lord Vishnu, as opposed to *karama marga* (a path through good deeds) and *jhana marga* (the path of pure knowledge). *Bhakti* is a humble reverence to a chosen deity using songs. The devotees adore the object of worship as a lover, or a son or a mother. Evidence for this can be found in the *'Narada Bhakti Sutra'* which contains good explanations of *bhakti marga* and contains an authoritative version of *bhakti*. As Brown (1994: 59) points out:

> *"The human soul becomes contaminated by becoming entangled with the material world. What was needed was to lead a simple, drug-free, meat-free and greed-free life to purify oneself by chanting and dancing to the tune of the 'Hare Krishna' Mahan mantra."*

One can see devotees of the movement on the high streets of many cities, attired in white and saffron clothes, singing and dancing *Hare Rama* and *Hare Krishna 'maha-mantra'* or selling well-illustrated literature produced by the movement together with female devotees wearing multi-coloured *sarees.*

Prabhupada was in essence setting up something far more than a religious sect. In fact it was a multi-million-dollar business empire that had the capacity to tap the goddess of

Wealth *'Luxmi.'* This empire would have needed experienced executives, but what he got were totally inexperienced drop-outs, who were unable to do the job, and were not prepared for the immense riches they were required to receive and manage.

Before the founder's death in 1977, efforts were made to construct a management structure, however, chaos was let loose after his death. Twelve appointed Presidents could not get on with each other, and the lack of central control made matters worse. There were cases of murder, drug-taking, and drug trafficking against prominent authority figures of the movement. The state of the movement shows that however great and enlightened the founder may be, he cannot be an expert in all matters of life. The situation went from bad to worse and drastic steps were needed to stem the deterioration.

In spite of the chaos that ensued after the founder's death, there were no cases in the public domain when Guru Prabhupada used sex to exploit or attract devotees to the movement. Contrary to this he was against free sex syndrome and used *bhakti* or devotion to God as an instrument of *mukti* or salvation. He even allowed marriages within the movement and emphasised that sex could only be used for reproductive purposes and not as an instrument of pleasure or exploitation.

Despite mismanagement in America, ISKCON in the UK has managed to survive. The centre at Watford Manor Temple began to be run like a temple and Hindu followers in the UK began to flock to its sessions. ISKCON joined the National Council of Hindu Temples (UK) and moved away from its insistence on being a separate religion. Its popularity with Hindu devotees caused some problems for the local residents around

the area of the temple. This resulted in a prolonged legal dispute with the Local Authority on account of increased traffic and congestion in the locality. The local authority placed a ban on numbers attending, Watford Manor Temple on Hindu festival days. This proved a boon for the fortunes of the movement. Hindu devotees' country-wide supported the Temple's stand against the ban as they considered the ban an unjust encroachment on their free right to worship.

It cemented the Hindu Community's bonds with the movement throughout the country. It produced a change to the anti-family policies of the movement in the shape of siding with the devotees who joined the movement against the wishes of families.

Recently the movement has been in the forefront of promoting causes in the Indian mainland, like tree planting in Vrindavana and other charitable activities, in order to pay something back to the spiritual motherland. It confirmed the effectiveness of the reverse 'pizza effect.' The reverse pizza effect refers to the re-importing of spirituality in the form of Vaishnava devotion to India, in the same way that the pizza was imported and re-imported around the world.

5.6.1 Influence

The liberal point of view shown by the movement from exclusivity to openness, has endeared it to the general Hindu devotees, who feel no compunction in taking an active part in activities organised by the movement. The movement makes special efforts to become a bona fide part of the Hindu community in diaspora. An increasing number of Hindus attend the annual '*Ratha Yatra'* processions, organised in the High streets of many cities on the lines of the *Jagannatha Temple* in India.

The Hare Krishna movement is a devotional movement. However its relevance to Hindus in diaspora is clearly established as it is directly linked to Bengal Vaishnavism. Prabupada (1977: 72) explains the way the original *Gaudiya Sampardaya* started

> *"The transcendental knowledge of the Veda was first uttered by God to Brahma, the creator of this particular universe. Brahma taught the knowledge to Narada and Narada gave it to Vyasadeva, and in this process of disciple succession the transcendental knowledge was transmitted till it reached Chaitanya Mahprabhu and then to the gurus of the Gaudyia tradition to which he succeeded from his guru."*

Finally, Hindus in diaspora like ISKCON because it forescores the growth of missionary spirit in India confirming the metaphor of the 'Pizza Effect'. The problem, the researcher (as an insider), along with Punjabi-speaking research subjects, have experienced with the movement is its own streamlined version of Hinduism. It may have been authenticated by the '*Gaudiya* tradition' but it tends to demote even 'Lord Shiva' and 'Mother Goddess' as demigods. It is understandable that they do place their own deity over others for the occasion of celebration, but it is not customary to put the others at a lower pedestal at all time. This is contrary to the tolerant spirit of Hinduism that in general tends to accords equal status to all major gods.

5.7 Sathya Sai Baba (b.1926)

Sathya Narayan Raju was born in a remote village of Puttaparthi, in the South-Central part of India, in 1926. He did not show much interest in formal learning at the local school, though some of his answers did astound the teacher. At the age of fourteen he suffered from some kind of seizure attack and then left the family, proclaiming himself to be Sai Baba, the reincarnation of Shridi Sai Baba, a Muslim saint who lived in a

mosque but was buried in a Hindu temple and spent his life reconciling both religious perspectives peacefully.

Sai Baba built his ashram 'Prashanti Nilyam', meaning the abode of peace in Tamil Nadu. It has grown to be bigger than a village over the years. In the beginning of his mission, mainly Indian people were attracted to him due to his miraculous production of '*Vibhuti'* , i.e. sacred ash with many beneficial effects and other objects like watches, rings, and items of costly jewellery. Sai Baba claims to 'restore dharma in this dark age of Kali,' through the medium of right living and actions. He aims to put mankind on the path of righteousness. Klostermaier (op cit: 442) explains

> *"One of the most colourful of the contemporary saints is easily Sri Sathya Sai Baba sporting a bright-red Silk robe and an Afro-hairdo. His healing powers are said to be phenomenal and people come from far and wide so he may help their bodies and souls."*

He is said to read thoughts and has the gift of forecasting events in devotees' lives. The most important thing that strikes one is that his followers do not receive any formal initiation, and have very little chance of meeting him face to face to obtain personal spiritual instructions. Sri Sathya Sai Baba uses modern technology to spread his message. He has shown tremendous staying power over many decades. He is one of the most charismatic of the living Indian gurus.

He gives public d*arshans* (audiences) daily to his devotees. The *darshans* are usually well-managed affairs. The devotees, who undergo personal interviews, are selected from the public randomly by Baba himself. The selected devotees are seen to feel really electrified when selected, because they feel that the selection confirms they have achieved spiritual maturity. Babb (1986: 160) spotted a public notice extolling the

importance of *darshans* from Sai Baba; it read "Never underestimate what is being accomplished by the act of darshan. My walking among you is a gift yearned for by the gods of the High Heaven and here you are receiving this grace." There are many moving and extraordinary stories currently circulating among the visitors to the *ashram* about Baba's power of healing, and of his divine intervention for devotees, even to the extent of taking on devotees' serious illnesses.

Sai Baba is gradually being referred to as a God. The literature published on behalf of the Sai Trust encourages the followers to address him as 'Sai Ram.' This is alternated with 'Sai Siva', 'Sai Krishna', 'Sai Allah', and 'Sai Ma'. All publications are authored, printed and sold exclusively by the Trust, giving this message of divinity. All devotional songs recited in the daily *darshan* ceremonies address him as a God.

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In the early days of Sai Baba's ministry, he was popularised as an incarnation of the saintly Shridi Sai Baba. The movement later dropped Shridi Sai's association with Islam, in order to appeal to the majority Hindu population in the locality. Sai Baba was declared an incarnation of Siva. This provided Sathya Sai, a link with the great body of myths and beliefs about *Siva,* to obtain a greater hold over the local populace. This was done to confirm Sai Baba's divinity with Siva, the God of gods.

The movement is helping to reinforce the growing power of the wealthy Indian middle classes in order to broaden its power and resources base. Babb (ibid: 161) illustrated this when he compared Sai Baba devotees' wealth, with Brahma Kumari and Radha Swami movements in India. He claimed

> *"Though his [Sathya Sai Baba's] devotees are not all rich, but as a group they tend to be both wealthier and more cosmopolitan than the generality of Radhasoami and Brahma kumari devotees. Whatever else the wealth and status may mean it has provided his cult with vast resources and unparalleled public*

visibility. There is no dearth of Sathya Sai Baba's detractors, who frequently accuse him of fraud and favouring only the rich and powerful. "

It is apparent that his personal biography and manner of life is buried beneath layers of hagiography and few objective accounts are allowed to be made public, expect by those who are very close to him. Constructive criticism of such a powerful persona is seemingly impossible, particularly as he has the ear of the Prime Minister and past Prime Ministers of India.

Copely (2000: 9) explains Sai Baba's hold over his devotees in terms of Faustian concepts of love, because followers will never meet face to face with Sai Baba "So the relationship must be based on the concept of 'Faustian Love'. In this relationship mutual love does not get reciprocated, the very force of reflected love tends to create an illusion that it is being returned."

This is one interpretation, but another is that the Hindu world-view expects God to reincarnate in any garb and it depends on the spiritual maturity of the individual to identify such an august person. However this allows gurus to claim divine status. Palmer (1997:18) offers a psychological explanation put forward by Jung that might explain Sai Baba's relationship with his followers; he suggests "Jung considered that the psychic function of religion is inseparable from the individual like any other instinct. Any attempt to deny its significance will result in a loss of psychic equilibrium and in a descent into neurosis." It seems that Palmer suggests that Sai Baba's visible personality has become an anchor to provide for the psychological needs of his followers.

A matter of sexual impropriety was brought into the public domain and published in a special edition of *India Today,* an International Journal devoted to the theme, but no follow up action has resulted from the allegations. Many people expressed the opinion that no one dares to take a stand against Sathya Sai Baba because of his prestige and influence over the Indian Government. Even the last President and the former Prime Minister of the Republic went to seek audiences with him at his Centre.
A further allegation was made in a BBC broadcast, but Sai Baba's followers dubbed it as another attempt on the part of the media to smear his name.

5.7.1 Influence

Sathya Sai Baba's movement is gaining popularity in Leicester as well as in other cities of the UK. In Leicester out of two hundred Hindu Punjabi households, at least ten are the followers of Sai Baba, who actively and regularly attend devotional monthly meetings. Other Punjabi Hindus attend if invited by close friends on the occasion of special festivals. Despite Sathya Sai Baba's international status, his main constituency remains purely Indian. Sai's contributions in the field of services are described with great pride by Sai followers. Sathya Sai Baba may be a great spiritual leader or even an incarnation emanating a great deal of charisma (in the Weberian sense) but he is not a guru in reality as Caplan (1999: 197) points out

> *"The real job of a spiritual teacher is to devote him/herself wholly to the 'I' within the disciple who wants God or Truth. The teacher must skilfully work with the multiple aspects of psychology and psyche which support and express truth."*

Huge numbers that attend Sai Baba's *darshan* sessions make it humanly impossible to provide personal tuition to each one of them.

5.8 Summary

The four gurus appraised here are only a few of many popular gurus in modernity. Others, like Ramana Maharshi (1879-1950), Aurobindo (1872-1950), Shivananda (1887-1963) and Maharishi Mahesh Yogi (b. 1911) fit the profile of the four outlined in this chapter. However, they are not essentially influential in the Leicester Hindu community, especially with the Punjabi-speaking Hindus of the *Geeta Bhavan* Temple, where this research is focused. What however can be drawn from an appraisal of popular guru figures is a genuine approval or disapproval of them, as individuals and spiritual leaders within the Leicester community. That is, how do the community view them as popular figures, who amongst them lays claim to the spiritual, by much that is mystical, sometimes magical and often falsely presented?

Seeing the guru, can, despite reputation, often be enough for some devotees to form a spiritual bond. This act of *darshana*, may also be responsible for devotees' blind attention to the gurus overall personality and misgivings. As Smith (op cit:180) points out " For the guru, modernity can be a profitable home, encouraging his entrepreneurship, spreading his ideas more easily, fostering innovation in techniques and doctrine." This then is the dilemma facing diaspora Hindus who seek to sit at the feet of the guru in order for the system to work. What has been described here highlights the power and potential for false claims, or at the very least misguided views based on the autonomy of the decentralised Hindu spiritual heterodoxy, and for that matter orthodoxy. The following chapter takes account of individual disciple's positions, in finding, securing and sitting at the feet of their gurus in diaspora, in hope and expectation of spiritual awakening. It will also take the rare opportunity to present

the guru perspective, in a somewhat unorthodox interview with a guru of a disciple in the study.

Chapter 6

Engagement with Research Subjects

Part One: Results of quantitative Questions

6.1 Introduction

This chapter is divided into three parts. Part one illustrates the results of the first six questions in the semi-structured questionnaire (see appendix 1), that was completed by all eight respondents having experience of gurus in diaspora Leicester. These are included to obtain biographical data from the research subjects in order to plot a demographic of the respondents. The second part deals with a more detailed discussion based on responses made by the respondents on the remaining questions in the questionnaire. These however were more open questions designed to illicit a qualitative response from the respondents. The final part deals with an interview conducted in Leicester with a guru of one of the respondents, something that was notably difficult to arrange, and equally difficult to follow through in a strategic way using the semi-structured interview method of enquiry. Hindu gurus consider interviews a waste of time unless the interviewer is genuinely searching for a guru. The method of obtaining information from him therefore departed from the semi-structured example used for the other respondents and was more of an in-depth interview without specific structural constraints.

6.2 Summary of data collected

The table below (figure 2), contains the summary of responses and the demographics of the respondents to the guru-disciple relationship on questions from one to six of the questionnaire.

Demographic Summary

Total Number of interviewees	10 (9 face to face interviews, 1 postal respondent.)
Migrant Generation	8 First Generation, 2 Second Generation
Duration of Interview	1 hour to 2 hours 15 mins (max)
Gender	8 males 2 females
Average age of interviewees	52.8
Professional status of interviewees	2 priests, 1 engineer 3 retired (Secretary, Railway Guard, Teacher) 1 Scientist, 1 Teacher, 1 Retailer, 1 Mechanic
Place of origin	6 Punjab, 3 Gujarat, 1 Ireland
Raised in	Village: 5, Cities: 3, Towns:2
Children	Average 2.4 children

Figure 2.

It is important, at the outset of this analysis, to make clear that the sample are small and therefore would be insufficient to claim any statistical inference. There is however merit in analysing the data within the constraints of the numbers involved and offering the evidence as a basis on which a wider study might be mounted in the future. What can, however, be said, is that the respondents subject to this study are from within the heart of the Hindu community in Leicester and above all represent Hindus in diaspora who have experiences of a guru within their spiritual lives.

6.2.1 Demographics

The respondents referred to in the table above (figure 1), were dived by gender as eight males and two females, with an average age of 52.8 years. Of the ten in the sample, eight were first generation and two second generation Hindu migrants in diaspora in the UK. Nine out of ten were interviewed face to face with one being subject to a postal enquiry. They originated from the Punjab (6), Gujarat (3) and Ireland (1), Three were retired (as teacher, railway guard and secretary), among the remainder were a mechanic, a retailer, a teacher, a scientist, an engineer and two priests. The range of employment suggests a diverse mix from within the community, including two priests. Five respondents were brought up in villages, three in cities, and two in towns in the Indian sub-continent.

In addition to the information in the table (fig.1) above, the priests were from the Brahmin caste and followed in the footsteps of their fathers, both of whom were described as religious, one being a Hindu priest the other a railway clerk. All the respondents were associated with the Gita Bhavan Temple Leicester, either directly or indirectly. They all claim to have come from families who were religious, in that they observed religious ritual and custom at home and in the Temple. The only respondent religiously inclined towards another faith was a respondent who was a Roman Catholic, Irish Vedanta scholar; however, one other taught Hatha Yoga in his spare time and was also associated with the Brahma Kumaris in Leicester. All the respondents had contact with a guru. The hybridity of identity is not uncommon within the Hindu tradition, particularly where it concerns western converts.

The bar and pie charts below (figures 3 and 4), identify the migration generation divide (fig3), eight first generation and two second generation respondents, and (fig.3) the gender divide, eight males to two females.

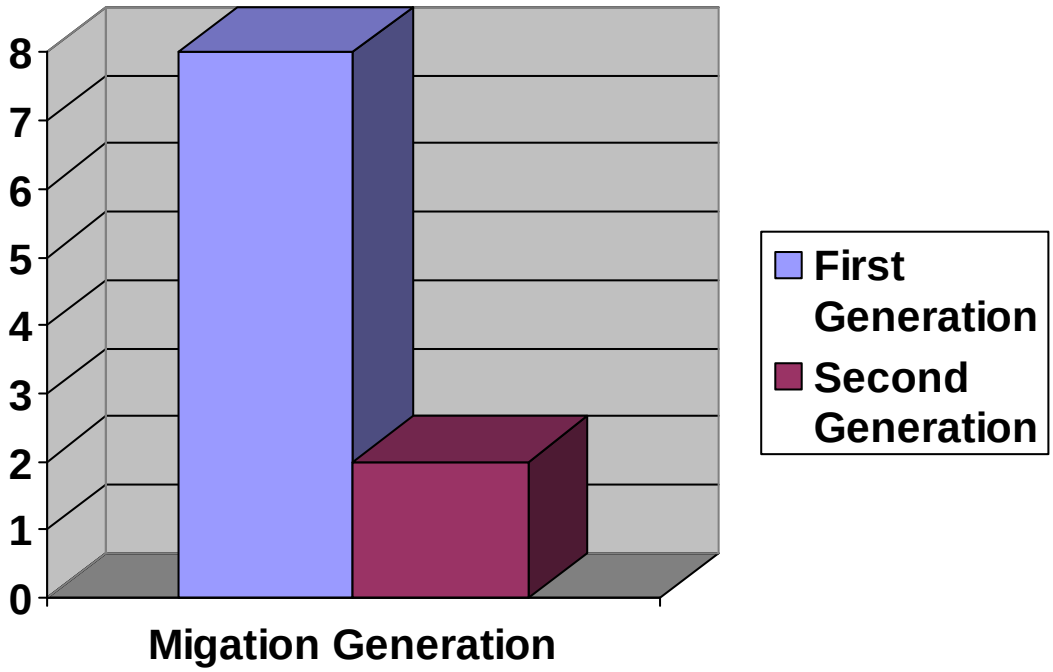

Figure 3

It is important to notice in line with the generational split above (figure two) more first generation Hindus approach gurus in diaspora, than second generation migrants to ask for initiation. Although only two second generation respondents are part of this study, a general anecdotal appraisal of the situation, supported by those known personally to the researcher, suggests the division above, eighty percent to twenty

percent may not be uncommon among the generations who ask for guru initiation in diaspora; another area that a wider study would illuminate.

There is an assumption within the Hindu community in Leicester that second generation Hindus in diaspora view the guru disciple relationship as something common to their elders from the first generation of migrants. Adopting the guru may be seen by the second generation as an old fashion action by the aged elders. Other reasons may reflect multiple social factors, like the secular educational system, peer pressure, non-availability of gurus as a role model or the atmosphere of non-conformity in diaspora. The Sunday congregation in *Gita Bhavan* Leicester have discussed their concerns about the low participation of youth in religious practices, but were heartened to recognise that attendance at the festival ceremonies was satisfactory.

The variable indicator on gender ratio (below figure 4), implies what might be thought of as a new trend in diaspora. Female members have shown less inclination to adopt gurus in diaspora. Evidence from within the Hindu community implies Hindu wives customarily gain half the karmic merit for their husband's good deeds, while they get no bad karma for husband's sins. Although there is little evidence from within the respondent group about the nature of gender relations to the guru, it is not a surprise to the researcher that so few females were available to interview in the Leicester community, as there were very few who had any experience of the guru disciple relationship.

Gender status of the respondents

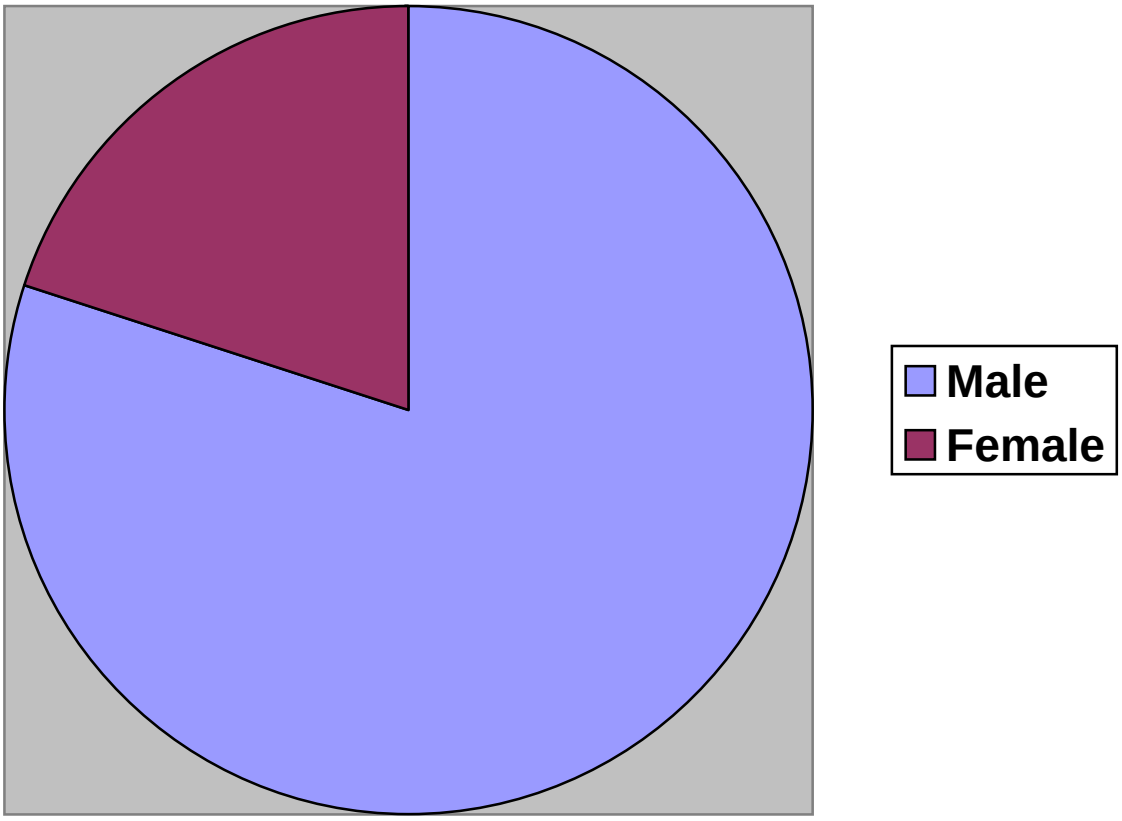

Figure 4.

The bar chart below (figure 5), identifies the professional status of the respondents.

Professions of the Interviewees

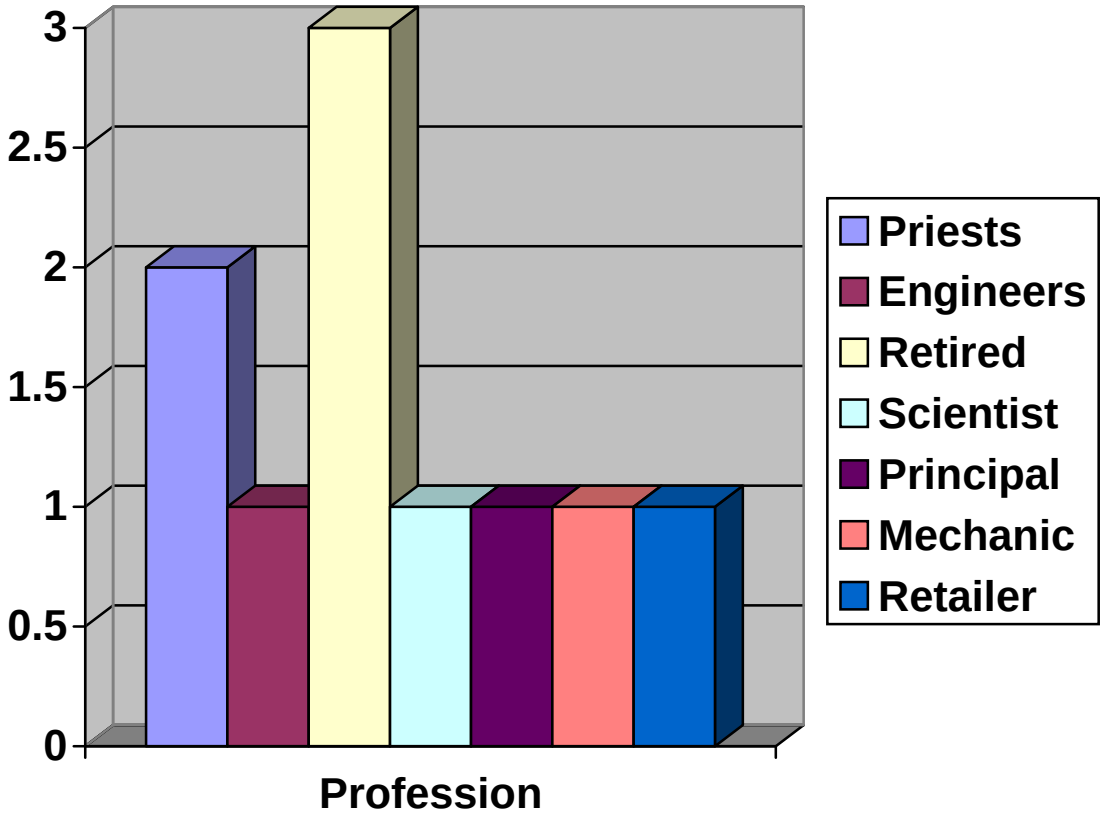

Figure 5.

The graph indicates that interviewees belong to an assortment of professions. The professional status indicates that Hindu migrants were from a reasonable educational background and would probably be described as middle class at the time of interview.

Evidence from the bar chart below (figure 6), identifies where the respondents grew up within the Indian sub-continent. It may not have a specific bearing on the differences between those who come from rural or urban environments, as it is only applicable to the small sample of interviewees in the study.

Where the Interviewees were raised

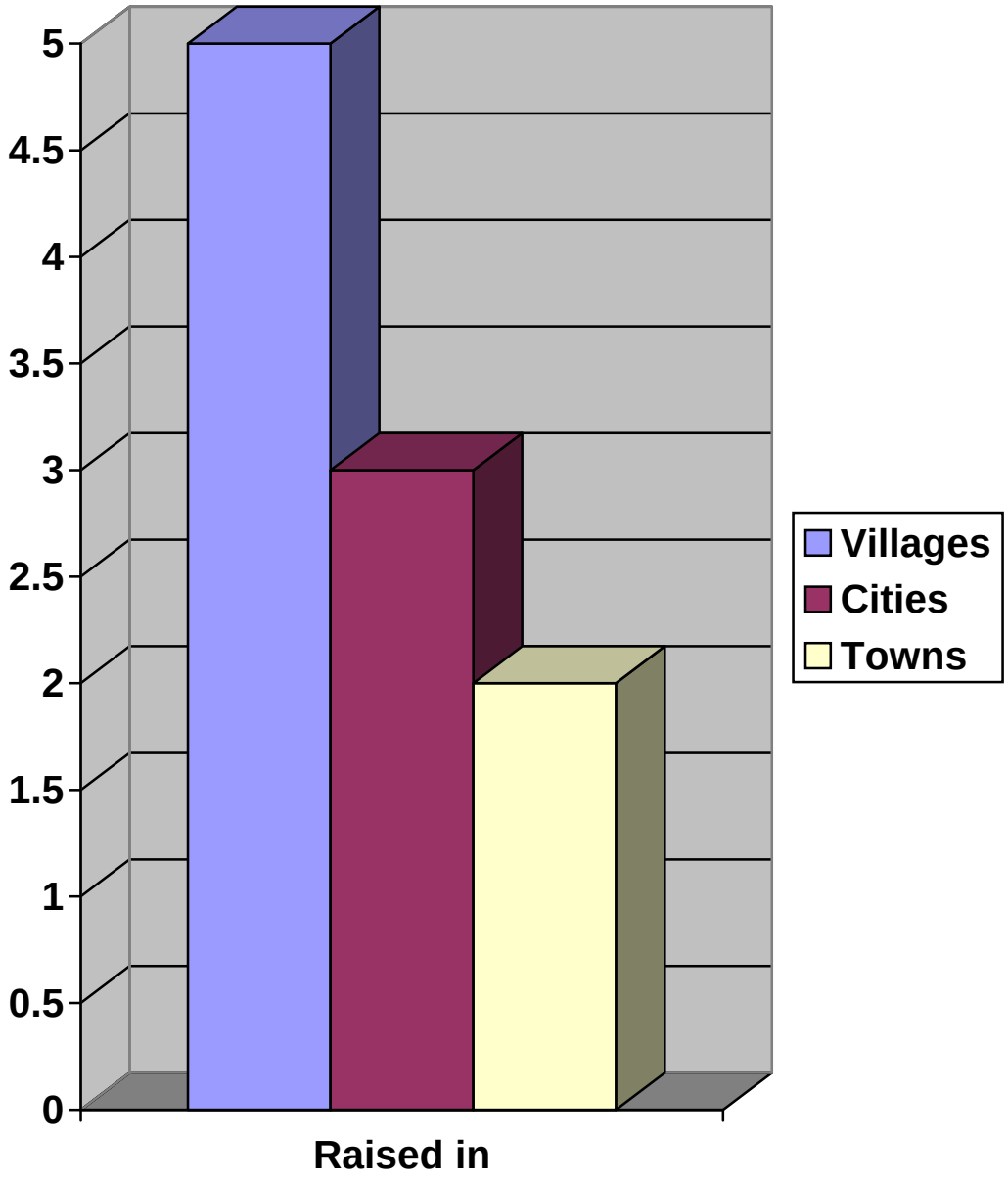

Figure 6.

Interviewee's early development as children into young adults was evenly spread among the respondents between rural areas and the urban conurbations in India. Looking at the demographics of location to give a pointer to those with preferences for adopting the

guru in either rural or urban areas, leaves one believing that a fairly even spread across locations, may not be typical in the sub-continent of India. This is only an indication of the location of the interviewed participants; however, rural areas tend to follow traditions more than the cosmopolitan mix of people living in conurbations, there is no way to quantify that in this study however.

6.3 Interviewees and the postal respondent

Interviewees were mainly taken from Leicester. Methodologically it was considered appropriate to use a minimum of ten interviews for the purpose of the research. I had actively sought out the postal respondent who was a frequent visitor to Leicester and was an initiated disciple to attain the minimum number of interviewees. Unfortunately I was unable to arrange a face- to-face interview with the respondent, who finally agreed to send my interview questions back to me by post. Having no way of making an individual meeting, I agreed. This was not ideal in the circumstances but was better than failing to achieve ten interviews, albeit the latter was somewhat unorthodox. The apparent, difficulties of finding sufficient initiated disciples, has been a feature of the research and an area discussed later in the findings.

The remaining interviewees were Punjabi Hindus, three Gujarati Hindus and one Irish Hindu. Out of nine interviews, six were held at interviewee's homes. One was held at the Temple office and another research subject invited me to his yoga class. The last interview with the couple was held at the Temple hall after evening prayers.

Part Two: Qualitative Research Discussion

6.4 Gurus in diaspora

After studying responses of the interviews, it has become apparent that the guru phenomenon is not so popular among young Hindus' in Leicester. Out of 200 Hindu-Punjabi families, members of Geeta Bhavan Temple in Leicester, only one young person had adopted a guru. The young man was born in England; however, the remainder of the research participants and the postal respondent were all over 50 years of age. This fact supports the earlier argument made that there tends to be a lack of the guru appeal, among young Hindus. Within India there are similar tendencies, with the exception of places like Bombay, where, according to *India Today* (July 2004) "gurus tend to be available as guides and friends at a commercial price and it is becoming increasingly fashionable to use them."

It was discovered in the interviews that each respondent used different strategies to find an appropriate guru. It seems that interviewees were not in a mad rush to seek discipleship but exercised great caution in finding the guru. The first respondent was mulling over whether to take up the priest's job in Leicester. His friend introduced him to a Sanskrit- speaking, blind, elderly person in Bombay. After an exchange of usual greetings, the elderly person casually remarked that his stay in the UK is going to be very successful. The topic of impending departure was not introduced at that time but his friend may have done so in the priest's absence. The priest took it as a coincidental remark but was nonetheless impressed. The priest went to see the blind man in a subsequent visit and requested that he be accepted by him as a disciple. The guru

agreed, gave him *diksha*[22] and allocated him with a mission 'to spread Sanskrit language to Hindu devotees in Leicester.' However I wondered whether the anxiety of the priest about his future in a foreign land or the Sanskrit language skills of the guru were deciding factors behind the request for initiation.

The second interviewee's job is to receive the visiting gurus on behalf of the temple and to give a verbal resume of the address to the devotees' and finally to look after the gurus more generally during there stay. He was impressed by Swami Satyamitrananda's discourse and requested the guru to accept him and his wife as disciples. Another couple also made the same request to a different guru after attending another discourse.

The third interviewee wanted initiation from a guru who belonged to an established *sampardaya* or sect, so that the guru did not make up rules on the hoof, but followed established norms. He wanted to avoid all showy gurus, that is, those with 'so-called' popular profiles. He found such a person in a Vedanta guru Shri Vishnapuriji (See interview with the guru Vishnupuriji later in this chapter).

Interviewee four was instructed by his father to provide personal assistance to a blind learned individual (a Sanskrit author of renown). The respondent was a bubbly person and never took the job seriously. The blind person was happy with the service and offered him *diksha* as a reward for his service. The respondent, in his usual careless manner, took *diksha.* The guru died shortly afterwards. The respondent went to seek admission into a prestigious institution in Bombay. The head of the interviewing board recognised him as the person who had provided personal service to the blind learned

[22] Worship of a deity, initiated by the guru for the disciple, it often involves mantras and other ritual practices.

man and offered him a place. He was surprised to see the working of his guru's grace posthumously and has valued it ever since.

Other interviewees stated that close family friends introduced their guru to them and they got initiation as a result. This is an instance of personal recommendation for the guru, who was known to the close family and friends of the disciple and was seen as an authentic guru.

The experience of choice, is not, as the above suggests, straight forward. Gurus are sought after both in direct response to a perceived need to follow direction on the path to liberation, but can also become a reality for disciples through more chance encounters and spiritual favours for service provided. It seems then that although the encounters themselves are often more random than one might at first assume, the serious application becomes evident from the point at which *diksha* is contemplated and offered.

Two issues are important in the analysis of the way interviewees chose gurus. Kakar (1978:8) in the study of society in India, made a relevant remark on the topic under discussion when he stressed the "importance of the intimacy that the disciple feels he enjoys with his guru" as a fundamental part of the relationship. The feeling of intimacy is a very important feature of the guru-disciple relationship, especially between authentic gurus and true disciples in diaspora. The second issue is the common Hindu belief that an authentic guru appears when the disciple is spiritually ready for *diksha.* This is slightly problematic because it puts the onus on disciples, when they unfortunately adopt false gurus, it suggests that somehow it is their fault.

Leaman (2000: 163-4) counters this view, rightly pointing to the optimistic and evolutionary nature of Eastern philosophy when he says

> *"In Eastern Philosophy every soul is destined to be perfect and every being, in the end, will attain the state of perfection…But an impulse is needed to kick start the individual on the road to perfection. The guru provides this impulse to the appropriate disciple."*

His suggestion is contrary to the view that the disciple is to blame for false guru adoption, it being the guru that provides the impulse for the appropriate disciple. The disciple should be ready to take on a guru disciple relationship and seeks out the guru (not always overtly), but the guru, by his words or deeds becomes the initiant of the relationship in the first instance, by his acceptance of the disciple. The diaspora experience tends to suggest only after an appraisal of the worth of the guru would a disciple ask for *diksha*? The onus then should be put on the guru, as the one in control of the power matrix between himself and the disciple. If the guru takes advantage of a disciple, from his privileged position, the disciple cannot necessarily be blamed for making an unfortunate choice. This commonly occurs in India, but the diaspora experience, because it is more difficult to initiate, implies a greater duty of care on the part of the disciple in making his/her choice.

The experiences of the respondents supports this idea; examples include, Respondent 1, who had a guru recommended by a close friend, Respondent 2, had seen many gurus over the years and made a judgement based on the inspiration he received from the guru he finally chose. Respondent 3 claimed "I had seen too many extrovert and showy gurus who were looking for disciples" and he settled on one with a long lineage, a good

reputation and simple habits. Respondent 4 claimed to have been initiated too young to realise the consequences of the action, however, despite the death of his guru he now appreciates his teaching and suggests his grace, even after death is his teacher, based on the experience of surrender to God and not an individual. Respondent 5 was also a child initiant, but was allowed to develop at his own pace under the watchful eye of his parents and elders. He was initiated by the family guru on behalf of the Adi-Guru, and has developed with service to friends and family. Respondents 6 and 7 both have the same guru, and were initiated after he visited the UK. He is a famous guru from the Ramakrishna Math in Calcutta with an international reputation and profile. Respondent 8 was initiated in the UK having investigated many gurus throughout his life as a scholar. The initiation was based on a voluntary relationship at first with the guru, inviting the respondent to more complete surrender over time. Respondent 9 was also initiated in the UK (in Leicester) by a famous guru in the Natha Yogi tradition. This too was based on evidence of a guru with an international reputation, which was untarnished.

Rawlinson (1987: 97) has tried to ease the concern for disciples when choosing a guru by articulating a comprehensive model as a means to assess teachers in the West who are involved with Eastern religions. He has produced the model taxonomy to assess the role of Western gurus following in Eastern traditions. Even though most of the respondents in this study have sought out Eastern gurus, Rawlinson's model is a useful and applicable guide, at least in the academic classification of teachers, including gurus. He labelled gurus as 'cool, hot, structured and unstructured,' depending on style of

teaching, and the tradition within which it is taught.[23] The taxonomy is a good instrument to use when trying to sift authentic gurus from the fraudulent gurus. I doubt whether this information is available to disciples in diaspora, perhaps it should be publicised in a form that Temples can display to would be disciples, prior to initiation? However the issue is further complicated because Rawlinson acknowledges that while it is possible to categorise teachers from within and across religious traditions, it is impossible to set up descriptors to measure inner realities of the disciples or others pursuing a path to engage a guru as a teacher.

When one looks at the claims gurus make, for example, that their mission is the betterment of mankind, it is imperative to look at what Welwood (2002: 267-81), illustrates, as the list of strategies used by the false gurus to assume and retain absolute power. He claims

> *"Gurus tend to assume absolute power in order to validate their personal position in the organisation. They tend to fix the main focus or ideology of the institution and accept no alteration to the central focus. They use emotions of hopes and fears to keep the followers in line. It is a common tendency on the part of gurus to maintain a rigid boundary between the insiders of the institution and outsiders."*

There is competition between gurus in India. A guru with a large number of disciples is considered more prestigious than a guru with small number of disciples. It is ironic to see that gurus leave family ties behind to achieve freedom from the cares of the world, only to get entangled in the power politics of ashrams or centres as suggested by Welwood (2002) above.

[23] See Rawlinson (1997:107) and his explanation of the four types of teaching, all of which are applicable to both the Hindu and Guru traditions.

6.5 Early religious instructions

Respondents revealed that the role parents, siblings and extended family elders played in providing early religious experience in their lives is very important. It is evident that many of those interviewed have felt impelled by their religious thirst to actively look for gurus, to restart what they see as ‘stalled spiritual development’ apparent in diaspora. Both psychologists and sociologists agree on the importance of family for the new born. The family provides security, nurture, code of conduct and fundamentals of religion. Certainly respondents in the study found nurture and the fundamentals of religion taught within their own backgrounds. Respondent 1, claimed to have been instructed by the priests and elders in the Temple. Others suggested family life was inseparable from the religious experience of festivals and pujas. Many were involved in facilitating roles within Temples at varying levels. Six out of ten respondents claimed their families were “very religious”. This subsequent rebirth of spiritual development in diaspora is seen by the respondents as their dharma, and most are happy with their quest, despite difficulties in communication that may occur with the guru due to distance and time factors, although most acknowledge easier communication in a global age than would have been their experience as first generation migrants.

The evidence of interviews proved the utility of early religious instructions. Respondent 1 related an incidental instance of early learning experience, stating
”My younger sister at her young age used to work in the kitchen near the school, my father used to run voluntarily, the village boys, I learnt to recite rituals by just listening to the boys recitals.” Similarly the majority of respondents related instances of having received religious instructions while accompanying elders in their early life.

Respondent 9 remembered, "going with my mother to the fair of *'Krishna lila'* and the lovely stories of devotion of young *Gopis* for Lord Krishna." Other respondents talked of 'very religious families', 'early instruction by elders and priests in the Temple'. Respondent 2 was inspired by his mother and eldest brother's energy and devotion after his Father's death, saying "my widowed mum and elder brother brought up the family of seven; three boys, four girls, we were schooled in *Sanatan dharma*." Others spoke of family deities, particularly the Goddess Kali, visiting festivals and regular pujas at home and in the Temple, which for respondent 3 was the start of many years of searching for a guru.

In Hindu society there is a mutuality of benefits for the offspring and parents in the continuation of the family line. According to Prabhu (1958:19)

> *"The Hindu parents find a spiritual immortality through their sons that absolves them of the debt to their ancestors. The result is that the parent's life here and hereafter is blessed by their sons through their social and religious behaviour."*

The citation shows that the birth of a son is considered auspicious for the family line because it absolves parents of the debt to the ancestors. The extended Hindu family is focal to the respondents in the study, all of whom mention family relationships and their formative years as an experience marked and shaped by early socialising with religious experiences.

When assessing the social and psychological implications for Hindu disciples in the diaspora UK setting, it became apparent that it was necessary to consider the implications of Western psychology on the respondents. Freud's statement that the aim of religion was the 'search for an ideal parent' was rejected by all the respondents in the

study because they felt that they loved and respected both parents and provided financial security for them in their old age. Freud's formulation was based on the 'regressive revival of the forces' that protected the individual in infancy. This means that babies tend to form a closer protective bond with their parents and hope to re-create similar safe environments when threatened in their later life. This does not mean that they need to suffer from emotions of Oedipal or Electra complexes; however it may have some interesting implication for the relationship formed in later life between a guru (as parental figure) and the disciple. It is not however, an issue that can bear any real analysis in this study, but, perhaps, one that might follow from a more psychological investigation of the relationship between gurus and disciples in diaspora. It seems fair to assume that the question of ideal parents was not understood clearly by the respondents, hence their rejection of it.

Freud's statement that religion was an attempt to look for an 'ideal parent' might, however be liken to a search for the guru as an extension of the same view as the search for God. Jung's idea of 'child's mother' as the earliest expression of the archetypal mother is an extension of Freud's view. According to the postal respondent, the search for God is not an 'infantile gesture' but is the noblest act of human existence. Respondent 2 said that "there is an abundance of ideal relationships in Hindu society, there is no need to search for another one." Respondent 3 stated that Freud was wrong to say that religion is a search for the ideal father. In Hinduism God is seen as immanent in all relations. He wishes to reach back to the source to experience permanent states of tranquillity. Respondent 5 suggested that "so-called libidinal instinct does not govern all aspects of one's life. Other instincts are important as well." Respondent 8 thinks that psychologists are unqualified to venture into theological areas.

In sum the evidence showed that participants viewed relationships differently than the psychologists.

All the interviewees agreed that early religious training inspired them to look up to gurus for continuous spiritual progress in an effort to attain permanent peace in this life and beyond. They were influenced by the Hindu adage '*that there is no salvation without the guru*.' However one interviewee stated categorically that he was looking for tranquillity and peace in life and not beyond it.

6.6 Spiritual development

Gurus in the Hindu tradition tend to organise their teaching around the fact that the home environment has instilled a reality, fed through the sense organs, and has made individuals slaves to the objects of those sense organs. Gurus tend to consider this conditioning a major hurdle to the disciple's spiritual progress.

Gurus often use drastic remedies to de-condition the disciples from their previous experiences. In fact they want a clean break from their earlier life experiences. The possibility of some neurotic repressive ailment cannot be ruled out as a result of this break. However gurus assume that the disciple has been through some experience of the impermanent nature of the world and has made a deliberate choice to achieve freedom and is therefore ready to make sacrifices. None of the respondents, however, supported the view that they were turning their back on the world for the sake of salvific experience. The majority of them gave more priority to family and societal responsibilities than even salvation. Respondent 2 was exhorted by the guru to "serve

the Lord and society more fully and selflessly." Respondent 5 similarly, was tasked by the guru to "serve the family and others within the limits of responsibility."

Kirpal (1995:26) suggests that "The Human mind possesses a certain characteristic, a common biological base, a symbolizing function, defence and censoring strategies such as repression, displacement, and projection." What he seems to be saying is that there are common features in human beings that effect psyche, irrespective of one's cultural background. The respondents did not recall any guru telling them to forget the past and start a-new but seem to find this message subconsciously grafted onto their psyche at the time of *diksha*, thereby emphasizing the role of the '*japa'* or secret '*mantra'* as a vehicle for *sadhna.* Of those interviewed seven received secret mantras as part of their initiation, respondents 7 and 8 both explained that the mantras were whispered in private into the right ear of the disciple at initiation, a common occurrence with other respondents.

According to Lewinsky (1984:105) "The guru does not give instructions like a university professor; he imparts his very being, his life, his spiritual potency to the disciple who may in turn serve his guru with whole hearted devotion." Her work is about the life of Swami Parmananda, a direct disciple of Swami Vivekananda, who organised many centres in various parts of the United States and assessed 'disciples' spiritual development' through work situations. It is indicative of this style of assessment that four of the ten respondents were given family and community based tasks to follow as their path to salvation, from spreading the Sanskrit message, to serving the Lord and society, more fully and selflessly, and exhortations to refer to ones own base nature when controlling the mind.

Many of these requests to follow a particular path are interesting to researchers because they are tasks that can be kept up in daily life, providing one continues to follow the devotional path of Bhakti that the gurus advocate. There is a sense that to ask too much of disciples in diaspora, would be counter intuitive as part of the spiritual quest. Respondent 1 confirms that the guru is unable to monitor a disciple's progress, and therefore "self monitoring by conscience, and feeling that the guru is sharing the path" become fundamental to the path in diaspora. This was reiterated by three other respondents in the study.

6.7 Initiation

The respondents consider initiation to be a very important ceremony. All of them remember the ritual clearly. It brings into focus the view that to adopt a guru and to develop spiritually are matters of priority for them. All initiations involved a spiritual quest, some, as mentioned earlier, related to more family and society oriented aspects, based on disciples responsibilities to their families and peers. Others however, involved, for respondent 8, "no illicit sex, no gambling, no meat eating and no intoxicants," a more preceptual requirement than was the requests to spread the Hindu Dharma, or Sanskrit.

There were a number of different initiation ceremonies undertaken by the respondents. Respondent 9 was initiated in Leicester and brought flowers, rice, milk some sweets, paper and a pen to the ceremony. Others experienced chanting of a *mantra*, and suggested the search itself was part of the spiritual training for discipleship. All bar two were given the *mantra* in private. Respondents 6 and 7 said there was no special

ceremony, but that they both wore clean clothes and sandal paste and carried flowers, each were given a secret *mantra*. For interviewees, the actual initiation ceremonies have not changed since Vedic times. The majority of respondents stated that they were asked to take a bath or shower, to put on freshly washed clothes, to bring *tilak*, flowers, and an offering for the deity. Guru recited the *mantra*, gave the mission, asked for regular *japa* (repetition) of the *mantra* and blessed the disciple by putting tilak on his/her forehead.

The exception was special ceremonies of '*Hatha* Yoga' and the *Gaudiya* traditions. In both cases the ceremony was based on the fixed rituals of the tradition.
The main focus of the *Hatha* tradition was the big toe, as explained by Respondent 5 "The guru washed the big toe, put *tilak* on it, tied an auspicious thread called *moli* round it and bestowed a silver-mounted *singhi* as an item of grace." Then the guru wrote the secret *mantra* on the paper and asked the disciple to read and learn it. He blessed the respondent after the ceremony and gave him the mission to hold regular Mother Goddess all night vigils. The *singhi* acts as a binding factor with the new disciple. The guru advised the disciple to blow through the *singhi* when in trouble. It amounted to summoning guru's grace. It was an indicator that the guru has the power of *singhi* to intervene in case of trouble. The respondent said that, "he has been graced by the guru's intervention many a time." The *Gaudiya* tradition ceremony followed the fixed procedure transcribed by the gurus in the traditions scriptures.

Dharmananda Swami (2002:11) talking of the competitive nature of the guru disciple experience in India states

> *"My guru authorized me to give diksha or initiation. There are two types of disciples. There are those who want initiation of mantra only [they belong to the*

> *outer circle of disciples] and others who join the ashram as novices and become inner circle disciples."*

Inner circle disciples have to undergo a hard selection process. Only twenty candidates out of 2000 were selected. One has to be a graduate to apply. "The novice becomes a disciple after three years of diligently learning Vedic scriptures and has to acquire proficiency in all of them." (ibid, 2002:12). The acceptability of the disciple by a guru was an important issue for the aspirants because the guru had to test the suitability of the disciple for spiritual development. Respondents in this study reveal no cases of formal questioning or competition as in India, but gurus have witnessed their involvement in the spiritual activities at the temple or elsewhere. Swami Satyamitrananda, the guru of Respondent 4, visits the temple whenever he is in Leicester and witnesses his disciple managing Sunday congregations.

At present gurus do not administer any tests in diaspora to check a disciple's suitability for initiation. This may be due to the prestige of having disciples in foreign lands. Gurus in diaspora simply give *diksha* or initiation. *Diksha* is associated with the idea of rebirth and is understood to sanctify the body and also to purify sins of disciples.

True to the Hindu tradition no genuine seeker of spiritual knowledge was refused initiation among the respondents. None in the sample experienced any difficulty in obtaining discipleship. One young guru even volunteered initiation on a trial basis to the youngest interviewee (respondent 10), conditionally, saying that he can renounce the discipleship if it did not work for him. Perhaps this is a symbol of acknowledgement on behalf of gurus to recognise changed conditions found in diaspora.

6.8 Exploitation, financially or emotionally

All the respondents are very clear that their guru has never demanded any money from them. However they reveal that whenever they visit the ashram in India, they invariably contribute some money voluntarily. The guru however never handled the money it was given to the treasurer. This is due to the tradition that one should never go empty-handed to the guru or a religious place. Babb (1986: 210) calls this "process ingesting." Ingesting is a process that is used to preserve and improve one's own nature by participating in the cosmic world that is in a constant flux. This happens when disciples bring offerings to the guru and receive part of it back as *prashada.* This exchange provides disciples with the opportunity to release their coarser nature into a spiritual act. Gupta (1969: 101) refers to an episode in Ramakrishna's life that illustrates ingesting, claiming

> *"Ramakrishna visits one of his devotees Surendra in 1881. Surendra offers him a very costly garland. Ramakrishna tosses it carelessly aside. The devotee is hurt. He joins his friends with tears in his eyes. In a choked voice he says, 'I am very angry. How can a poor Brahmin know the value of such things?' "*

On reflection he realized that the guru cannot be bought with money and is very contrite. In the mean time unknown to him, Ramakrishna picks up the garland and starts to dance with it. He even asks Surendra to feed him with his own hands. This is an example of an apparent reciprocity when the devotee takes as well as gives.

On the question of exploitation more generally, all the respondents denied any event that could be construed as exploitation. There is, however, a tendency in Hindu society not to speak ill of people in saffron clothes (gurus, and other mendicants). Their teaching, since early childhood, instils respect for all elders of the community. It is

possible that they are afraid of the *sadhu's* curse. The other factor is that individuals do not want to increase bad karma by speaking ill of those seen as holy.

Reading between the lines there is an element of indirect exploitation perpetuated by the guru centres. The gurus hold annual *Bhandaras* (free meals), for lot of invited *sadhu* guests. The more guests a Centre attracts, the better standing it secures in the brotherhood of gurus. It is an accepted principle that disciples are expected to participate in *bhandaras.* The majority of interviewees donate money but personal service is equally prized. A generous donation cannot pass un-noticed. A respondent explained, however, that when large or small donations are made to the *bhandara* fund, apparently no notice is taken. The disciples in diaspora are correct in their assessment of exploitation but one cannot forget that they are responding to the indirect inducement to participate in *bhandaras* to enhance the guru's position. It is almost beside the point that the service or *sewa* offers the individuals an opportunity to work for others, which in itself is a rewarding activity.

Respondent 3 asserted that the Hindu society in the UK is aware of rogue gurus. Normally no compulsion is used to attract disciples but one cannot rule out subtle publicity and pressures by fake gurus. Another respondent claimed that if gurus follow the rules of their *sampardayas,* there is no possibility of exploitation.

Respondent 3 blamed the general decline of morality due to the influence of the *'Kali juga'* (age), he believed that universal dedication to spiritual *sadhna* would improve matters. Respondent 6 categorically declared that his guru has never exploited him in any manner so to speak. He worships the guru on Guru *Poornima* day and donates money to either a temple or to a deserving cause. Respondent 7 wrote that he tended to make unjust demands on the guru's time with his doubts that deflect him from the given

path. He stated "I seem to take undue advantage of my guru's good nature by imposing myself on his time while getting my doubts cleared, which I could clear with better effort and concentration." The youngest interviewee (respondent 10), went to visit the Guru Centre in India. The guru was very pleased to see him. No money was given, offered or demanded. In sum there seem little evidence of open exploitation but one cannot rule out subtle pressures exercised by the guru Centres to acquire money.

6.9 Surrender

The term surrender or Hindu term '*Arpan'* is an offering of oneself to the guru voluntarily without any compulsion. However the term surrender is an important issue in the guru-disciple relationship. Its importance can be reflected in the way Western academics put a high premium on the 'enlightenment movement of the eighteenth century' and emphasise the conflict between the praxis of surrender and the freedom of choice principle in their analysis of the guru disciple relationship. The notion of individualism associated with the Western enlightenment movement is criticised by Kakar (1978:47) stating

> *"Individualism has been entombed in psychoanalysis as it shows limitless respect for the individual faith, believing that 'understanding is better than illusion,' and its insistence that our psyche harbours darker secrets than we care to confess."*

In the above citation Kakar criticises emphasis placed on individualism. Neki (1973:36) supports him saying

> *"Decision making in the West is camouflaged so as not to look like an imposition from others and should be based on the principle of individual choice. Dependency is considered bad while independence is idealised."*

Surrender is a culturally sensitised issue because in Hindu society dependence, cooperation, family loyalty, sibling affections and group work is nurtured and prized. Dependency and respect for the elders of the extended family are considered virtuous acts. In the tradition the disciple is admired when he or she goes out in search of a guru and pleads to be accepted as a disciple.

It is claimed that the guru creates or provides situations and the disciple learns while going through them. In addition the guru acts as a charioteer to cut the bonds of false attachment of the disciples. The *mantra* is the power-word taken from the scriptures. *Mantras* are associated with the Vedic *rishis* who having heard them in a state of *samadhi*, have passed them on to disciples. *Mantras* are hallowed by constant repetition *(japa)* by the holy persons and supposed to become charged with power.

The most important aspect of the guru's personality is the trust disciples bestow on the guru. They believe that the guru has the ability to provide spiritual guidance so that they can achieve their spiritual potential. Hindu scriptures require gurus to treat disciples as family members. The guru needs to produce an environment of hope in his vicinity. He must show that he has traversed the path himself and is aware of the obstacles in the way of *sadhna.*

Evidence from respondents offered qualified surrender to the gurus in diaspora. They considered their first priority was the family and surrender to the gurus comes second to their family duty. Gurus generally agreed with the interpretation in diaspora.

Respondent 3 claimed "My guru did not demand complete surrender. The guru is aware of the fact that I have my own duties and responsibilities."

6.9.1 Power relationships and surrender

The Aitreya Upanishad states that disciples bring with them “a bundle of mundane attachments previously accumulated.” The guru has to get rid of the mundane attachments to make a fresh start. Most disciples establish a trust in the guru, and the trust provides the guru with absolute power. The guru may become attached to this power. Sometimes the guru’s perfection is used to justify anything, not always in keeping with spiritual development. . Many times gurus use real anger as a ploy to test the disciple, and argue that the anger was to provide a learning situation. Some respondents said that the guru wanted them to surrender to God and not to a human being. This seems to be a departure from the norm perhaps due to the effect of diaspora**.** Respondent 5 stated in the interview that “Babaji [the guru], asked me to surrender to God only in mind and put my trust in the guru to help me in case of any trouble.” Other examples of qualified surrender can be found within the sample studied; Respondent 1, claimed “surrender was of false ego [ahankara], a condition of spiritual progress, not slavery.” In response to the question of surrender, Respondent 2 states “there is no conflict between surrender to the guru and the freedom of choice. Freedom of choice becomes clearer when taken on a journey by the guru, if it doesn’t question their authenticity.” Respondents 4, 5, 7, 8 and 9 all claim that surrender is to God and not to an individual guru. Respondent 3 also points out that there is no conflict between choice and surrender unless the guru is a fake. The question of devotion (Bhakti) to Krishna was also clear in a number of responses, where the guru is only seen as a conduit of that devotion. A feature of the surrender is its qualified aspects and focus on God within the diaspora setting.

Moreover surrender is an instrument better exercised in the controlled-ashram environment and is difficult to administer to the household disciples or to followers.

In summing up the topic of surrender, it emerged from the interviews that it is an un-equal contract between the guru and the disciple. However it is not entered into blindly. An interviewee referred to the tradition that allows the disciple to end the relationship when the goal of discipleship is not being achieved or there is no benefit in keep going. Hindu society does not consider them a failure if they exercise the right to quit. The guru can terminate the relationship too if the disciples are unable to achieve their spiritual potential.

6.10 Monitoring spiritual development

The majority of participants were very vague about the monitoring of their spiritual development. A few of them relegated this to individual disciples, they remarked that it is up to the individual to make sure that he/she follows the guru's directions properly and when in doubt should consult his guru by telephone. Respondent 1 expressed the opinion that the guru can test the disciple by asking him to talk on a topic in a public session however, that does not account for those who are not good debaters. There seems to be no effective monitoring system in operation at the time of the research. It may be due to the situation of diasporic distances that makes exercising such a control, impossible. The emphasis from respondents 2, 4 and 7 was that the responsibility and initiative lies with the disciple, who, if in doubt should contact the guru by whatever means for advice. Respondents 1, 2 and 3 all suggested that it was up to the disciple to work hard to sustain the practices given by the guru. Respondent 1, made the point "

inspiration from the guru helps, but at the end of the day the individual traverses the spiritual path alone." In other words self-help is essential and having been given *diksha,* individuals are responsible for themselves, perhaps even more so in the diaspora setting?

As for the effectiveness of gurus, I agree with Caplan (1999:112) when he disagrees with the concept of good and bad gurus, stating "It is pretty arrogant to think that you know how a teacher is supposed to act." Caplan (ibid:112) lists difficulties in prescribing descriptors for the inner realities of anybody, claiming

> *"It is impossible to set any particular descriptors in the assessing criterion that deals with the immeasurable inner realities. There is a need for human ingenuity to assess the depth of connectedness with the divine."*

The inability of unenlightened persons to judge the quality of another's enlightenment is key to the difficulty in attempting to quantify or qualify the effectiveness of gurus in diaspora. One needs the depth of spiritual knowledge, the purity of intentions and a great deal of self-security in order to be a proper judge of enlightenment. One can only assess if there has been a visible enhancement in the disciple's spirituality. It is clear from the evidence of interviews and the postal respondent that all of them appreciated that gurus challenge the perception of ordinary reality and try to transform it into spiritual reality on the basis of the life force that provides 'restorative self-knowledge' so prized by Jung in his concept of individuation.

6.11 Obstacles to social change

It was an Indian Sociologist, Jha (1980), who developed the critique of gurus following Max Weber's (1958) adverse comments on the role of gurus in his work.

Jha A (1980:68) provided plausible instances to suggest that "gurus had vested interests to oppose the changes in the fabric of Indian society. Gurus kept their hold on the society and Gandhi could only secure a mass following when he became a Mahatma," the implications being that gurus are an obstacle to social change. This is therefore worthy of note in diaspora, to make efforts to ascertain if the guru has an influence on disciples in society that could have an effect on the fabric of Hindu communities in diaspora, but certainly not that the guru could affect social change in host countries like the UK, or elsewhere.

Interviewees as well as the postal Respondent did not agree with the hypothesis that put total blame on gurus as obstacles to social change in the sub-continent Jha (ibid:90) claimed "Some sociologists blame the guru tradition as an obstacle to social change resulting in fundamentalism in the Hindu society." The research participants stressed that there are many factors responsible for the nature of Indian society. First is the greed to amass material prosperity and secondly the colonial exploitation and the resultant partition of the continent along communal lines.

Respondent 9 emphasised the role gurus had in keeping dharma going for the masses even in the face of foreign invasions and centuries of slavery. He also wanted sociologists to stop making blanket statements on matters that he felt, did not fall under their expertise. Moreover he stressed that it is not compulsory for everyone to adopt the

guru. His final point was that gurus oppose only those social changes that lead to the formation of self-centred, materialistic, immoral and unjust societies.

Respondent 5 said that his guru runs a centre looking after the disabled and chronically ill, suffering from leprosy. There is a taboo in India against this disease suggesting it is contagious. The centre provides disciples with the opportunity to serve the stricken and stigmatised patients. This work, he contends cannot be construed as an obstacle to social change.

The general consensus among participants is that gurus are positive figures within Hindu society for social change and not an obstacle to it in any negative sense. Respondents all claim that their gurus, do, or have, at some time in their lives promoted the public good and taken care of the dispossessed or discriminated against in society.

6.12 Goal of meditation: Samadhi

Gurus consider meditation as one of the most important instruments of spiritual development. That is why they stress the role of *japa* (to mutter in a low voice), as a vehicle of spiritual development. In the seventies Maharishi Yogi introduced 'transcendental meditation' to the Beatles. It became a craze of the fashionable world. Hindus in diaspora are aware of the goals of meditation that is *samadhi.* Hixon (1978: 41-59) looks up to Ramana Maharishi to provide an authentic example of *Samadhi* stating

"Ramana experienced sudden opening into Ultimate consciousness in which the individual identity was lost…suddenly there flashed into view, a timeless and complete primal awareness, the source of our very being."

A similar but more vivid state of *samadhi* is described by Sarananda Swami (1986: 2.6.13) in the *Lilaprasanga,* stating

> *"It was as if the room, the door, the temple itself, everything vanished-as there was nothing anywhere! And what was it I saw? A boundless, endless, conscious ocean of light! Where ever and however far I looked, from all four directions its brilliant rows of waves were roaring towards me."*

One must understand that going into the state of *samadhi* is the beginning of the spiritual experience of the adepts and not the destination of the process. Gurus prepare disciples for this experience as the first step.

Respondent 1 stated in interview that, "*Samadhi* is not achieved daily as a matter of course. It is reached rarely and it leaves wondrous feelings behind."

Respondent 2 said that, "I have experienced the state of *samadhi* occasionally but not regularly. One needs one hundred percent concentration to achieve *samadhi.* The control of mind is most important in the process. I understand my guru's insistence on *japa* to achieve this."

Respondent 3 said that, "Sometimes meditation does not go deep enough to reach the state of *samadhi.* I have experienced it a few times at dawn or earlier."

Respondent 4 worships Lord Siva. When he experiences the state of *samadhi*, he feels "invigoratingly tranquil."

The remaining participants made similar remarks. The only exception was Respondent 8, who said that his aim was not to achieve *samadhi* but "to work to create the right conditions so that everyone achieves peace and bliss in life."

Part Three: Interview with the Guru

6.13 Encounter with a guru

The guru of an interviewee was visiting Leicester at the invitation of the local Vishava Hindu Parishad. An interview was set up with him through the good offices of the interviewee. The interviewee had taken a long time to select the guru because he wanted to get initiation from an authentic guru of a long lineage so that the guru does not construct procedures on the hoof. The interviewee was very impressed by the guru's vast knowledge and useful work for orphan children.

The eighty four year old guru was suffering from deafness. This was the Guru's fourteenth visit to the UK, he spoke very little English therefore the interview was conducted in Hindi. It became necessary to discard the semi-structured questionnaire as the guru wanted to follow his own agenda. He considered that the purpose of the interview was for clearing doubts on some complicated religious issues. He would not follow the questions in the sequence they were phrased.

He refused to give any details of his family history. His retort was, *'sanyasins'* need not dwell on their personal history that they leave behind. However he mentioned that he was born in Bengal, now Bangladesh. He went to Ahmadabad in Gujarat to join Sankara's Vedanta *Parmartha Sadhak Sangha.*

The guru's guru was Swami Jaitendra Puriji. The only reference he made to his guru was 'the ocean of knowledge.' He clarified his remark saying that "one cannot drink

directly from the ocean but one can drink when it falls from the sky as the rain." Similarly, his guru, through his kindness, made his knowledge accessible to him.

He had managed ten relief centres in the border areas of Assam for fifty years. The area had become a major sector of missionary activities. The Aboriginal tribal males were converted to Christianity with material inducements which resulted in a large number of uncared for orphans. His guru had directed him, at the time of initiation, to provide relief to the orphans. *Sangha* provided medical care, education and food for the abandoned children. Its aim was to bring up children in their own cultural traditions. It provided them the chance to reconvert to *Sanatana dharma* if they wished to do so. '*Shuddhi*' or purification ceremony was on offer in the centres.

The total number of disciples who have received initiation from Vishnupuriji was six. Most of them were *sanyasins* (people who leave home in later life in search of salvation). The Respondent (disciple who had organised the interview), was the exception as he was a householder. He had offered his residence in Leicester free for the guru and his associates for the duration of their stay. The *sanyasin* disciples were extensively trained to manage relief centres under *Sangha's* guidelines and guidance from the guru.

The guru monitored the spiritual progress of disciples in private sessions. He used techniques of disputations to test their views on current religious and social issues and the width and depth of their *Vedic* knowledge. They were also required to perform tasks to demonstrate skills of management. Similar techniques were used to test the household disciple too.

He was the first guru (among those mentioned by disciples in the study), who had devised a useful monitoring strategy to check disciples' spiritual progress. The other gurus mentioned in the study leave it to the discipline of disciples to develop spiritually, using a method of self-assessment, invoking their conscience to see if they were following their gurus instructions. Vishnupuriji said that "it is easy to get initiation, but true struggle starts when one is on the path of *sadhana.*" The endeavour to make progress is, it seems, generally based on one's unsupervised efforts. The disciples are cautioned to persist on the path set for them at the time of initiation. They are assured that they will attain the goal either in this life or the next.

On the question of surrender he referred to the Bhagvada Gita in which Krishna gave instructions to Arjuna only when he agreed to surrender. Gurus should also follow examples set by the Lord Krishna and should give instructions only after the disciple has surrendered.

When discussing the claims of Jha, (the sociologist), he said that Jha must have a guru who offered the initial analysis. He was correct because Jha had closely followed the views expressed by Max Weber (who had perhaps been seen as a guru-like figure), on the topic that religions tend to side against social change. The interviewee was opposed to the sociologist's contention that gurus have been obstacles to social change in India.

On the issue of the psychologists' contention that 'all religions are the result of the search for an ideal parent,' he quoted the *Vedic mantra*
Tumhi-ho mata, pita tumhi-ho

Tumhi-ho bandhu, sakha tumhi-ho

This mantra translates as; *God is mother; God is father; brother, relative and friend*. He altered the verse to mean that his mother is God so she should be worshipped and served like a deity. Similarly should father, brothers, relatives and friends be served and treated like a deity. He went on to say that God is present in every bit of his creation and that disciples should accept this fact and serve total humanity. Vishnupuriji was also relating this ideal to the centres' relief work he was involved in.

On claims of 'some gurus are living Gods,' he declined to give a direct answer but implied that there was only one true incarnation in Rama *yuga* and one in Krishna *yuga*. Others were frauds.

He was very concerned when he witnessed the *Vedic Gayatri mantra* being taught to very young Hindu children associated with Sai Baba's community. He said that nobody had the right to corrupt the *'Shruti' mantras*. The Vedic *Gayatri mantra* translation is given below

> *O God! You are the giver of life, the remover of pains and sorrows, and the bestower of happiness.*
> *O Creator of the universe! May we obtain your 'sin-destroying light. Please guide our intellect towards righteousness.*

Hi objection was that Sai Baba's form of this *mantra* had replaced the word 'God' with 'Sai Baba'.

The next question was about the disadvantages of no central doctrinal authority in Hinduism. He said that unfortunately there is none in existence but expressed his inability to contribute anything positive while he had been active. He is retired now and

can take no part in making such decisions. However it was a topic of discussion in a meeting headed by Sankarachaya of Ranchi and other senior gurus but the issue was not resolved.

In sum the guru provided relevant answers to the questions posed and offered a clear strategy for monitoring his disciples. His affirmation of Gods grace and the willingness of disciples to follow the guru by surrender to that grace was apparent. His views reflected clear affinity with the 'ideal of *Hindutva* (a nationalism within Hindu communities in India). Vishava Hindu Parishad originally advanced the view that Hinduism is not being treated fairly in India despite it being the religion of the majority. There are, as a consequence fundamentalist Hindus within the movement for *Hindutva.* The relief centres, the guru managed, were sponsored by Vishava Hindu Parishad, a 'world-wide' organisation working for the advancement of Hinduism.

Finally Vishnupuruji cautioned that his belief that 'the divine is present in each individual,' gives unscrupulous gurus, a license to claim divine status without compunction.

Chapter 7

Research Analysis and Conclusion

7.1 Introduction

In this chapter I draw on the analysis of the research undertaken based on the initial hypothesis set out in chapter one; 'that changing cultural environments in the United Kingdom, compared to those of the Indian sub-continent, requires a different model of the *guru-chela* (guru-disciple), relationship?' This hypothesis is testing the differences, based on the stability and sustainability of the relationships in diaspora, examining responses empirically, provided by respondents (as disciples). The hypothesis above and literature in the field, as outlined in the research, gives rise to a number of research questions by which to evaluate the relationship. They are: 1. To what extent has living in diaspora forced changes on the *guru-chela*? 2. Is there a more therapeutic model to be discerned in diaspora? 3. How effective is the relationship from the perspective of both the guru and the disciple? 4. Are gurus in diaspora an obstacle to social change?

In order to evaluate these questions and the subsequent hypothesis, it seems implicit from the research that the overall perception of respondents examines the possibilities of changes in practice to suit the needs of disciples in diaspora. This raises questions of how disciples view the validity and trustworthiness of the guru practices on issues of surrender, emotional and financial exploitation, the monitoring of spiritual progress and the power relations which surround these issues, all of which were given due consideration in the previous chapter. It also asks questions of the influences in the lives of the respondents, from their formative years (outlined below), which may have a bearing on their later search for the guru in diaspora.

7.2 Formative years

The respondents in this study suggested that participation in annual festivals as youngsters was the best method of learning about Hindu dharma. They attended festivals with parents or grandparents in their formative years and in later life. The enjoyment and bliss of *Samadhi* (expressed by many), seems to have left indelible impressions on their memories. The majority of them remember, singing *sadhus,* discoursing gurus and troops of actors performing religious mythical *lilas.* Both young and old looked forward to local recitals of epics and the respondents remembered themselves, sitting enthralled by the colourful narratives and stories from the lives of *Rama* and *Krishna.*

The respondents retain a nostalgic attraction towards the religious environment made available to them at an early age, and feel it is extremely useful in later life. To what extent this is mere nostalgia is largely irrelevant, as to hold these feelings as an emotional register is part of their constructed history. It is that sense of history that they refer too when reflecting on their experiences of religious instruction in their formative years. Holding a slightly idealised view of religious experience may account, in part, for their interests in later life towards discipleship. It might also be suggested that the necessity for most respondents to seek out a guru in diaspora stems largely from both this sense of ideology, and an unexplained fear of dislocation or disassociation with their religious heritage in the Indian sub-continent. To this end it seems they are trying to ‘kick-start’ what some have referred to as a ‘stalled spiritual maturity’ in the diaspora environment, which comes about in generational terms for a multiplicity of reasons, not least that the first generation migrants to the UK are approaching a time in life where

greater consideration is given to the nature of the spiritual. In addition, they are living in more settled circumstances in social terms, compared with thirty years ago, within established and largely harmonious areas of Leicester and its suburbs.

7.3 Changes in lifestyle after initiation

Gurus in general believe that ordinary people tend to grope in the dark because of their innate tendencies, desires and passions. The majority of individuals fail to maintain control over desires. Gurus promise peace for disciples who follow their instructions to the letter. The majority of respondents agree that the peace comes through the grace of the guru. Gurus provide positive inspiration through the process of initiation but it is left to the individual to follow the behests of the guru properly to sustain this.

The changes seem to happen when a suitable 'inner condition' is achieved after following the path delineated at the time of initiation. The guru's grace is said to help to accelerate the changes in disciples' lifestyles. Gurus believe that this relationship lasts throughout this life and beyond. The initiation makes one aware of the spiritual side of life. The majority of interviewees remembered every detail of the ceremony and claimed that good karma had started after the ceremony. An interesting case of vigils for the Mother Goddess was stopped by the guru, to force the Goddess to grant the disciple a son. This brings into focus the fact that individuals can force the hand of their karma in their own favour with the guru's grace. A respondent remarked that, "It may have been a coincidence but our lives registered a change for the better as we became a spiritually inclined family." The majority of respondents stated that their lives became more tranquil after initiation and they remain aware of the mission their gurus gave them at the ceremony.

For the disciples interviewed in this study, initiation, it would seem, is one of the rituals of life that they hold dear. They consider it a major event, the implications of which can be seen in all areas of their lives. The initiation is the single ceremony that most claim to be responsible for changing their very being in the world.

7.4 Freedom of choice and complete surrender

According to the majority of respondents there is no conflict between the two concepts of 'freedom of choice' and 'complete surrender'. The guru-disciple relationship is based on trust reposed by disciples on gurus to seek realisation of their true divine nature. According to the Hindu tradition, when true nature is realised, contradictions and gross selfishness disappear and the totality of creation seems closely related to the realisation of the individual. Followers of the B*hakti* tradition make deliberate choices to surrender the self to the Lord *Krishna* in exchange for a loving relationship. It became apparent that respondents were use to the 'Indian dependency culture'; where duty to the extended family and society governed 'choice'. As a result it seems they are unable to grasp contradictions in both concepts, that of the freedom to choose and of surrender. Respondent 8 stated "I am asked to get rid of my selfish-ego (*ahamkara)*, which is a great hurdle in the path of spirituality. My guru wanted me to work in a selfless way. He gave us total ownership of our actions. This did not curtail my freedom of choice." Respondent 10 stated that "one's inner consciousness is a good guide to tell us which is the good or bad karma. The freedom of choice is not curtailed by my relationship of respect to my guru."

If one studies the implications of their remarks, one can discover the breadth of their approach to spiritual progress and their expectations from the relationship.

They trust their gurus but not blindly and are aware of the reality of the gurus' responsibilities to the centres that they manage in the sub-continent. This seeming trustworthiness in gurus tends to validate and authenticate their expectations. Although the personal and social contexts of respondents are different, this approach to validity could be adopted to take account of the guru's validity in the eyes of the disciple. If the guru is trustworthy and the disciple is at ease with him, this helps to develop complete commitment to the guru.

7.5 Personal contact and monitoring spiritual development

Respondents provided three inspirational responses in the interviews that were related to the power and discipline of relationship with gurus. One aspiration was to maintain close personal contact with the guru. This however was considered an impossible task because disciples were scattered all over the world. The majority of respondents were of the opinion that a great deal of advice is available on the lives of *'Adi-gurus'* like Ramakrishna, Ramana Mahrishi, Swami Vivekananda and Sri Aurobindu. Moreover they knew that gurus were only at a telephone distance away if doubts assail them.

The second response was that, the guru's grace and blessings have the power (*shakti*), to intercede on behalf of disciples with bad karma. Two cases on this theme were recorded. Respondent 5 revealed "the instance of the birth of a son when the guru instructed him to stop *jagratas* (full night vigils) to force the Mother Goddess to grant his wife a son (outlined above). Second was the disclosure by Respondent 4 when

posthumous power of grace the guru secured an admission for him in a prestigious institution of higher studies in Bombay. In both cases coincidental factors cannot be ruled out. However both events manage to transform the disciples spiritually and as a result one has to accept the validity of their version of events.

Thirdly there are issues of discipline through devotion that were voiced by the respondents. In the devotional *bhakti* tradition, the disciple takes vows. The gurus can easily find out by testing the disciple whether the vows are being kept. Gurus usually ask disciples whether the meditation or *japa* (repeated recitation) of mantra is being continually practiced or if it has become automatic or not. If there is a lapse then the guru inquires about the reason for the lapse. Finally the guru tends to inquire about how far the disciple has been successful in achieving 'mission goals.'
These simple but effective devices are useful to monitor disciples' spiritual progress. Gurus are aware that the spiritual transcendence of the self is the main goal for disciples in diaspora and aim their guidance in an effort to achieve this.

7.6 Gurus and social change

The majority of respondents were unanimous in thinking that it is wrong to blame gurus for the historically complex economic and social ills of Indian society. Jha (1980) advocated that the gurus were to blame, being obstacles in the path of social change and responsible (in part) for the economic ills of Indian society. However gurus claim to act as the guardians of traditional culture. There are many other factors that respondents feel should be included in such a list as outlined in the previous chapter. Gurus, it was acknowledged, have kept Hindu dharma alive notwithstanding the adverse environment due to centuries of slavery. Respondent's personal experiences suggests that gurus

wanted them to acquire good, moral and virtuous traits, which could be expressed at a personal and social level, for example, organising projects to serve others. This cannot be construed as an obstacle to social change. Most of the respondents felt that it was a positive step to enhance social conditions, instigated by gurus both in the subcontinent and in diaspora.

Comaraswamy (1985: 1) stresses the positive role of gurus or *rishis* in Hinduism, stating

> *"Hindus under the direction of gurus and rishis grasped more firmly than others the fundamental meanings and purpose of life, and more deliberately than others organised society with a view to the attainment of the fruit of life: and the organisation was designed not for the advantage of a single class, but, to use a modern formula to take from each according to his capacity, and to give to each according to his needs"*

7.7 Changed guru praxis in diaspora

The minor adjustments in guru practices in diaspora reflect the changing nature of gurus in India to some extent. In the last five years or so, a plethora of new gurus have sprung up across the country. They, unlike the old masters, are trendy, urbane and educated. According to the international journal (July 2003) *India Today*

> *"They are bending and blending ancient wisdom and modern techniques to concoct a novel millennial spirituality. For them 'wellness' is a buzzword and they are more likely to discourse on relationships and career stresses than on the morality of the Vedas and the Upanishads."*

The new generation of teachers are not 'deified remote saints' but accessible, aware and buddies-cum-psychiatrists who help navigate through the minefield of modern life. They use modern methods of healing such as aura surgery, magnet and crystal 'Meridian healing' or combinations of different 'healing practices' based on clients

needs. The guru business is growing at a very fast pace in the commercial capital of India.

The implications for this style of guruship have not yet been seen in Leicester. The nearest related incident showing any real unorthodox style came from a young female guru announcing publicly to a Leicester congregation, to see her after the lecture if they wanted to see God. This was found to be a ploy to attract new disciples to her guru and nothing more.

The evidence of the research indicates some adjustments are made due to the distances involved such as already discussed in the section dealing with complete surrender and freedom of choice, where the disciples are allowed to give family duties a priority. Disciples are not regularly updated about the direction the guru practices are taking in India. Some guru centres have printing facilities that could be used to distribute new information to disciples in diaspora. At present disciples depend on the media for much of their information.

7.8 Authenticity of the guru principle

The majority of Respondents were baffled by the news that many gurus claim divine status for themselves in India implying the same is true in diaspora. They wanted some clarification on the issue. They were worried that their guru had made no such claims. Were their gurus not good enough to make divine claims? The issue was referred to in chapter five while discussing the role of the ‘Sathya Sai Baba Trust’, who claimed divine status for Sai Baba. Vishnupuriji (the guru interviewed), also touched on this issue in his interview in chapter six.

Swami Chinmayananda (1987:2) a respected guru was shocked at claims of gurus being described as 'God', stating

> *"It may be a sheer accident to find three separate individuals claiming that they have seen God in their gurus. They did not mean to say that they saw godly virtues in their teacher and accept them as the nearest approximation to the Supreme. Moreover each one of the gurus has shamelessly asserted that 'He is Bhagwan, the only God.' This sort of screaming guru-adulation tends to mount dangerous and parasitic attacks that sucks away the sacred juice of faith and reverence from the living body of our community."*

7.9 Conclusions

The analysis thus far has highlighted the empirical experience of the respondents in the study and casts significant light on the position of disciples in diaspora Leicester and their efforts to engage in a sustainable and stable relationship with a variety of gurus as previously outlined. In conclusion it is incumbent here to reflect on the research questions and the related issues that were identified as part of that discussion in chapter two.

How are the research questions posed affected by the evidence generated by this research? In considering the extent to which living in diaspora has forced changes on the guru-disciple relationship it is essential to consider the type of spiritual care appropriated by disciples in diaspora. There are questions appropriate to generational issues which come through in diaspora, not least that fewer younger Hindus are actively seeking gurus. This is also a fact in the Indian sub-continent, outside of trendy urban settings like Bombay (outlined above). To some extent the situation in the UK has its own culturally specific contexts outside the Hindu community. This can be seen

historically, as pointed out in chapter one, how the new arrivals were pressurised to conform to the codes of conduct inspired by the dominant culture. These social pressures made migrants reflect on their religious beliefs. It seems that the social changes have had some obvious impact on Hindu beliefs. Hindus started to allot specific corners of homes to shrines for personal worship, to some extent creating separate spaces in their lives where the host culture and the migrant culture co-existed, but for many that co-existence was one of initial tension. The tensions were born out as migrant families witnessed their offspring were not as devout as the parents. The children were rapidly absorbing the host culture and were often disdainful of their own (Hindu) culture. The discoursing gurus, like Sai Baba provided some direction to the young but not enough to assure them.

A number of related factors have played a part in the generational changes in diaspora (as they have in the Indian sub-continent), not least education, peer pressure and the non-availability of gurus at an everyday level as role models. This can be coupled with an atmosphere of non-conformity due to western influences, and the nature of secularisation among the largely (if nominally), Christian population of the UK. Declining numbers of worshippers in a Christian context, runs parallel to the time that Hindu migrants have settled in the UK, and although this study has no way of offering a clear correlation with this decline in institutional religiosity, it is a factor for consideration, as most of the respondents in this study probably grew up with their Christian peers. Many of whom were not spiritually affirming their position in public, and even clearly opposing any form of Christianisation in their homes and families.

The research was also inclined to investigate gurus' claims that they could help disciples to restart on the spiritual path in diaspora. This sense of 'stalled practice' in diaspora stems from the tensions between host and migrant cultures outlined above, and is even more interesting as the majority of those respondents in the study are the very same second generation migrants, whose parents feared for their future spiritual wellbeing. It is to these respondents that we turn for answers to the changes in diaspora relations between them and their gurus.

An obvious point of interest is the accessibility issue to gurus, who in the main were visiting Leicester or had been specifically sought out by the disciple. Some were more chance encounters, even involving returned favours for past support and service. What is clear is that the majority were involved in active searching, either in the UK or the Indian sub-continent and gave great consideration to the choice and process to be adopted. With few exceptions the majority wanted established gurus with proven track records. This too suggests the social influence of a particular way of thinking, by many in the host culture, of which the respondents are irrevocably British and Asian, and think accordingly when making decisions relative to their spirituality. Although the notion of hybrid-identities is beyond the scope of this study, it nevertheless bears further consideration in any wider reaching research on the subject.

The outcomes of the research have partially clarified the assumption that gurus are totally immune to self-interest. They maintain large centres in India and are entangled in prestigious competition with other centres. However, the diaspora experience is one where power politics does not seem to be evident, nor does the concern about exploitation; financially or emotionally appear in the research. There is however an

unwritten appreciation of the guru, which most disciples acknowledge, this generally means making donations to the Indian centres run by their gurus, which they are happy to do for the service they receive. This 'qualified giving' is a feature of the diaspora experience and is evidence that the guru disciple relationship although patterned on 'father and son' relations, in reality it is based on one- sided respect of the disciple for the guru. It having cost implications raises the question of to what extent the disciple, by necessity, comes from a middleclass background in diaspora in order to afford contact, donations, and possible visits to the sub-continent to meet with the guru from time to time. The time and distance discussion is an obvious one; however, global communications afford the possibility of communicating without the difficulties that may have presented thirty years ago.

Respondents did not obtain any special spiritual input after their initiation ceremony, in fact one guru offered initiation on a trial basis, allowing the disciple to renounce it if it didn't work out. Monitoring of spiritual progress became a matter for the disciple, who, in the main was required to 'self-monitor by conscience'. The research evidence shows some changes in gurus' expectations on complete surrender when they agreed to replace it with family responsibilities, effectively allowing 'qualified surrender' in diaspora, something which would be more difficult to find in India. To that end there appears to be no conflict between freedom of choice and complete surrender due to the cultural environment of dependency. It does not, however, remove the deeply felt trust that disciples have in their gurus. This clearly puts 'diaspora household disciples' in the 'outer circle' of disciples, with little or no competitive element to their discipleship and equally as little questioning or testing of their suitability to be a disciple. Although the guru interviewed did monitor progress with a series of tests that was seen as the

exception rather than the rule. The allocation of the mission was a very important aspect of the relationship and the majority of participants tried to do their best to achieve it. However some of the missions were unrealistic in diaspora, such as teaching Sanskrit without proper English language proficiency.

This brings us to the second question; is there a more therapeutic model to be discerned in diaspora? In order to have a sense of the outcome of this question it is helpful to reflect on Neki's 'therapeutic paradigm' outlined in chapter two. If Neki's assumption is right and Hindus in diaspora do not easily appreciate the ego building conditions of western psychotherapy in times of psychological need, then the guru- disciple model is probably more applicable to the Hindu disciple in diaspora Leicester, as a means of self realization, and potential than would be a psychotherapist. Cultural dependency (outlined above) is based on extended family, and although generationally stronger in first and second generation migrants, it may not be so in the third generation, who are content with the host culture as their own. This area could be developed in a more psychologically based study looking at later generations and the guru-disciple relationship. What seems clear is that the guru may not be as effective as in native India, but is still able to inspire those disciples who have been brought up on the dependency culture in diaspora settings.

There are a number of subtle changes in diaspora which affect the possibility for a more therapeutic model, not least the intimacy between the guru and disciple, whose trust may be sustained in the culture of dependency, but in qualified surrender and more service based missions sees a less rigid approach to household disciples in diaspora. This was also made evident by the sense of greater responsibility to family and community and the fact that disciples need to follow a self-help style of monitoring

progress but still have the guru to fall back on if lapses occur. The overall loosening within diaspora of the gurus' expectations fits the more independently open setting in which they find disciples in the west.

Moving on to the third question; how effective is the relationship from the perspective of both the guru and the disciple? There are areas of overlap here with question one, however, a fundamental aspect where the relationship has been described as affective involves the working of the 'gurus grace', sometimes posthumously, where disciples acknowledge that the guru as 'knower' acts as a container or conduit of Gods grace and through him that grace can be realised in everyday life.

Disciples have also made clear their intentions to take the responsibility in diaspora seriously and have gone to great lengths to seek out a guru, exercising caution in finding one with a tested profile and reputation. There is a necessity to 'get it right' and to avoid false gurus in the process. Whilst Rawlinson's (1997) taxonomy to test the authenticity of gurus may have an academic application, it does not speak to everyday disciples in a language they can understand. Therefore there might be some merit in redefining it for use among lay members of Hindu temples as a guide to prevent the possible pitfalls that an inauthentic guru could present.

There are a number of difficulties in trying to measure the effectiveness of a guru not least the almost impossible task of being able to judge disciples 'inner development' based on the guru experience. This leaves disciples in a vulnerable position, where to trust the guru is essential to spiritual development and where the ambiguity of

unenlightened minds cannot make a clear judgement on the effectiveness of the relationship in diaspora.

From the gurus perspective (bearing in mind only one guru was interviewed in this study), efforts were made to test and monitor disciples progress, but as became clear self-monitoring was the norm, hence the necessity to make the right choice in the first place, supported by the caution shown by disciples as outlined above. The catch twenty-two situation for disciples being that most gurus will not give effective instruction unless the disciple surrenders, which from the perspective of protection for disciples in diaspora was toned down to allow 'qualified surrender', based on the western experience of living.

Finally, question four; are gurus in diaspora an obstacle to social change?
The majority of respondents did not support the idea that gurus were an obstacle to social change. They appreciate that the complexities of Indian society cannot be attributed to the guru-disciple relationship (outlined in chapter six). The implications for diaspora hinge largely on the effectiveness issue (referred to above). Most respondents reported a positive open relationship which should enhance personal and therefore social change for the good. The more relaxed approach to surrender plays a significant part in this assumption implying that positive spiritual efforts that take account of family and community responsibilities cannot be seen as an obstacle to social change, but rather supports it. The dependency issue may be viewed with less acceptance by later generations of Hindus in diaspora, but that would tend to suggest that gurus still have a part to play if they intend to appeal to a generation with an independence developed out of their host environment. To what extent that becomes a

characteristic of the latest generation, may in part be attributable to the values carried forward within families in diaspora, verses the secularising trends in western society more generally. An area beyond the scope of this study, but one (as previously mentioned), that could take a closer look at the generational issues within diaspora and the effectiveness of the guru from that perspective.

7.9.1 Closing remarks

On the whole disciples in Leicester are reasonably happy with their spiritual progress. There are some obvious reservations about disciples being left to their own devices to cope with their own spiritual progress after initiation. However, in general terms gurus have created a beneficial spiritual environment for Hindus in diaspora. The Punjabi Hindu community in Leicester is concerned that very few new disciples are coming forward to request initiation. At the same time there is an increase in the followers of Satya Sai Baba and the popular discoursing gurus who use modern media channels to spread their word. Perhaps Hindus of Leicester should take a leaf out of the book of discoursing gurus and use modern media technology to spread their message.

The most important outcome of the guru-disciple relationship in Leicester has been the transformation of disciples' from their self-centredness of managing their personal affairs, to service in, and for the community. The majority of disciples in this study have become enthusiastically involved in national and international charitable causes.

In summary the guru-disciple relationship in diaspora could be characterised as part of a 'generationally dependent culture', initiated in light of 'stalled spiritual development',

advanced through cautious assessment of the guru, marked by ‘qualified surrender’, ‘self-monitoring by conscience’, but no less an intimate experience relying on the gurus grace as a conduit towards salvation.

Future work on the guru-disciple relationship in diaspora could concentrate on the combined approaches of psychological and sociological effects on the current generation, which would form the basis for the future of the guru-*chela* in the UK. Such a study could build on the work carried out in this study, which is limited to the generational attributes outlined, but nonetheless provides a current perspective.
The hypothesis ‘that changing cultural environments in the United Kingdom, compared to those of the Indian sub-continent, requires a different model of the guru-*chela* (guru-disciple), relationship? Would appear to have been upheld, the characterisation of the relationship in diaspora above may become a helpful starting point for others working in this area in the future.

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Appendix 1

The Letter

24 Heachan Drive,

Leicester. LE4 OLF.

Dated: 2003-09-2004.

Dear Friend,

Thank you for agreeing to take part in my research study on the Guru-disciple relationship. You must have studied the copy of the questionnaire posted by to your residence. I hope that you are still willing me to proceed with the interview.

I would like to assure you that the purpose of the research is purely academic and the information provided by you is going to be treated confidentially. Its future use would only be for the academic research only.

I am also going to post the schedule of your interview, informing you of the place, the exact time and the date of the interview.

If the date is not convenient, please ring me so that a new schedule agreeable to you may be prepared.

I thank you again for your cooperation on the research.

Yours truly,

(Paras Shridhar)

Appendix 2

Schedule of interviews

Please note that the underlined schedule applies to you

Interviews	Venue	Date	Time	Transcription On week
1	Temple	24.9.03	4pm	One week
2	Home	1.10.03	4pm	Do
3	Home	8.10.03	6pm	Do
4	Home	15.10.03	2pm	Do
5	Shop	22.10.03	1pm	Do
6	Temple Class	29.10.03	7.30pm	Do
7	Temple after service	5.11.03	8pm	Do
8	Retail Shop	12.11.03	12midday	Do
9	Retail Shop	19.11.03	12 midday	Do
10	By Post	15.12.03	Morning post	Do

Appendix 3

Questionnaire/Semi-Structured Interview Schedule

Questionnaire is an essential tool of research to make, the preconceptions in shape of hypotheses, concrete. Designated research is used to test the validity of the paradigms.

The questionnaire is divided into two parts. The first part deals with early history of the sample to test the role of early religious instructions on the sample to see if it influenced the individuals to seek a guru in diaspora. It is based on quantitative research techniques. The second part of the questionnaire will be used to check respondents' reactions in a more qualitative style as a semi-structured interview guide.

Question 1: Please indicate your age group:

a) 0—--18
b) 19----30
c) 31----50
d) 51----64
e) 65+

Question 2: Please indicate immigrant generation:

a) 1st generation
b) 2nd generation
c) 3rd generation

Question 3: Please state your family religious orientation:

a) Religious
b) Secular
c) Agnostic
d) Atheist

Question 4: Did your parents or elders give you early religious instructions:

a) Yes
b) No

Question 5: Did your family perform religious ceremonies:

a) Yes
b) No
c) Please explain your feelings about the ceremonies**.**

Question 6: How often did your family attend the local place of worship:

a) Daily
b) Weekly
c) Monthly
d) Occasionally

e) Please name activities got involved in the local temple.

Question 7: Did you get initiation from a guru? If so, give details :

a) Explain the ceremony in detail
b) List your efforts to get accepted
c) Explain your feelings about the ceremony
d) Obtaining the Mantra.

Question 8: “Gurus generally demand complete surrender from the disciples.” Please write your reflections on this statement.

Question 9: “Some thinkers object to the practice of complete surrender on the plea that it is against freedom of choice of the individuals. Please give your views on the statement.

Question 10: “Close personal contact is a very important factor to monitor disciple’s progress in sadhana.” How does your guru assess your progress?

Question 11: “Some authors consider the guru tradition open to exploitation, religiously, economically and emotionally, because it is based on power relationship.” Please comment on this statement in the light of your experience.

Question 12: “Some sociologists blame guru tradition as an obstacle to the principle of Social Change and blame it for Indian conservatism and backwardness.” Please give your views on this.

Question 13: “Adopting a guru transforms one’s life style, leading to inner peace and tranquillity.” Has it happened in your life? If so, list personal instances.

Question 14: Have you achieved undifferentiated state of samadhi or altered consciousness in your meditation? If so, give details of your experience.

Question 15: “Psychologists regard guru tradition an infantile gesture to seek an ideal parent.” Please give your reactions to this view in detail.

Appendix 4

Collated Observations

Observation 1

The respondent is the priest of the Punjabi Community Temple, Geeta Bhavan. He is an expert in Hindu rituals and is well versed in Vedic literature and an expert in Sanskrit language. Indian visiting Swamis used to invite him to officiate public 'Jagnas' or 'Havans.' Geeta Bhavan secretary approached him to become the priest in the temple. He accepted the post with the condition that he will join when he has satisfactorily sorted out his affairs in India and obtained the Entry Permit from the British High Commission in India. It took him more than three months but he joined the temple to the satisfaction of the devotees.

The interview was held on 7th November in the temple office. The interviewee was relaxed and eager to start the interview. I asked him about his family history. He came from a Brahmin village. His father was a very devout person. He was the purohit (priest or kul-guru) of the village folks and was responsible for family rituals of the village and other ceremonies. He used to run a free school in the village for the children and the interviewee had his early instructions about rituals in his father's school. His sister used to work in the kitchen and learnt to recite all stotras (mantras) just by listening to students' recitals. He finished his instructions and then went to the college to graduate from Bombay University. He is married with two sons. The eldest is in the university and the younger in a secondary school.

Observations 2:

The interviewee is one the founder members of Hindu Religious and Cultural Society Leicester. The society was formed to provide basic religious and cultural needs of countywide Punjabi Hindu Community comprising of 200 households. The society used to hold meetings to in a rented Neighbourhood Centre to provide a framework for society's organisation. It took the society 16 years to acquire a building to operate from the premises. It took us 6 more years to convert the premises to the temple. Interviewee worked tirelessly as the secretary to make it a success. He still holds that post and is an accepted leader of the temple.

He is a pensioner but dedicates most of his time to serve Gita Bhavan Temple. He is a first generation immigrant, aged 68 years. He hails from Hoshiarpur, Punjab and was a teacher. He migrated in 1965 and his wife joined him after about 5 years with his son and daughter. A son was born to his wife after 3 years.

His family was very religious. His father died while he was two. His widowed mother, ably supported by his elder brother, brought up a large family of 3 brothers and 4 sisters. He went through all religious ceremonies and was an able student. He completed his schooling in Sanatan Dharama School and was given good grounding in the basic tenets of Hinduism. He was involved in family ceremonies and urban religious festivals. He remembers taking part in Shiva and Mother Goddess all night vigils.

Observations 3

Interviewee is a member of the Punjabi Hindu community and is the founder member of Geeta Bhavan Temple committee. He came from Nawanshahr Doaba, a medium-sized town in District Jallundar Punjab. The town recently has been promoted to the district status.

His parents were 'Vaidyas' practicing 'ayurvedic' medicine. The family was well to do as per local standards. There were three bothers and two sisters. The family was very religious. They took active part in the religious functions ad festivities. The family held regular services round the family shrine. Near to the home was a temple dedicated to Lord Siva. Interviewee used to visit the temple daily.

Interviewee takes active part in the local Swayam Sewak Sangha's activities. He runs a branch and organises activities for the Hindu youths every week. He follows BJP (India). He subscribes to the idea of Hindutva to some extent.

Observations 4

Interviewee is a priest in the leading temple of Leicester. The temple is the Sanatan Temple. This is the first Hindu temple run and managed by Gujrati Community. The majority of its services are conducted in Gujrati. It has a very vibrant Youth Community Centre in the next street, affiliated to the temple but run by a separate management committee. Interviewee's main job is to manage the daily worship of deities of the temple He enhances his income through officiating Sanskara ceremonies at people's homes. He is well qualified and has done his graduation in Sanskrit and Advaita. He is married with three grown up children.

Observation 5

Interviewee is a teacher of 'Hatha yoga' connected to the 'Brahmkumaris Centre' in Leicester. He has been teaching yoga class for the last two years. He has been a dedicated teacher and would be on time to start the class and copes really well with variable numbers at Geeta Bhavan Temple. I attended a few of his lessons and found him a very competent teacher. He has a good singing voice and he appears to be full of peace and tranquillity. His own centre is a thriving where sixty plus people attend yoga classes daily, early in the mornings.

Observation 6

Interviewee has given a conditional consent to be interviewed if single interview is held. Both of them were disciples of the same guru but the husband is more spiritual minded and wanted to take the leading role. I accepted the condition thinking that the client is always right and asked for collaboration and for additional comments from the husband to take his experiences into account. However I will count this as a single interview.
The husband is the Vice-President of Geeta Bhavan Temple. Both attend the temple four times a week. Interviewee has a very good singing voice and leads the congregation in bhajans (devotional songs). He is a very popular member of the management team. Interviewee regards the Temple a place of refuge, where all worldly cares are forgotten.

He was teacher of Mathematics in a local Secondary school and is still teaching Mathematics to 16 plus students. His wife worked in a factory, many years after her normal retirement age. The husband was a national hockey umpire for many years. Both of them have lead very active lives.

Observations 7

The postal Respondent is a Roman Catholic from Ireland. He is the Principal of Advaita College in Oxford where scholars from India come to study Vedanta. He is a follower of the Hare Krishna movement in UK. He joined the movement while he was a student. I attended one of his lectures on Vedanta at Derby University Campus and was impressed by his scholarly insights of Hindu tradition. He is an initiated follower of the movement's guru. He is still attached to his Guru and actively seeks guidance from him.

He visits Leicester regularly and I was lucky when agreed to grant me an interview. But unfortunately it was not possible to have a face to face interview so I decided to send him the questionnaire and request his responses. He was called the postal respondent in the text of the thesis.

Observation 8

Respondent is a very religious person. He runs whole-night vigils called ‘Jagratas’ devoted Mother Goddess. He is a follower of a well-known saint Baba Balak Nath who was born in Gujarat province, left his parents at the age of 12 and became a wandering yogi.

In the course of time he acquired yogic powers and granted boons like health and progenies to the ardent devotees. The devotees organise annual yatras of devotees, carrying flags, singing bhajans on the way to the Hilly regions associated with him.

There are a number of Punjabi Hindus and Sikhs devotees of Baba Balak Nath in Leicester. The Geeta Bhavan’s attendance increased with the installation of the image of the Yogi in the temple.

Interviewee donated money for the shrine of Baba in Geeta Bhavan Temple and sends regular donations to his Guru’s Centre in India. He got initiation from Hatha yoga guru who runs the centre for leprosy patients.

Observation 9

Interviewee is a very religious person who migrated to Leicester to marry. Her husband is a shopkeeper. Interviewee considered it her religious duty to help her husband in managing the retail shop despite the language problem. A close family friend introduced her to a guru. The guru was visiting UK at that time. She and her husband are very religious people. When she wanted to be initiated, her husband happily gave his consent though he never adopted the guru himself.

She stated that she has made good progress in the spiritual field and sees visions in her meditation. The family is very actively involved in the management of the local temple. Her husband is a Trustee of the Temple. She is the mother of four children, a son and three daughters.

Observation 10

He is the youngest interviewee of the lot. He is a PHD in Chemistry and is working for a Pharmaceutical firm. He is the only person who was born, bred, and educated in UK. He was invited to become the disciple on trial basis. The reason for the offer was that the head-disciple of his mother’s guru was recently authorised to give initiation. The guru was convinced of his potential for spiritual development.

He is a total vegetarian and regularly visits Geeta Bhavan. He does not eat food prepared by restaurants or hotels and daily commutes to London and back to partake the food prepared by the family.

He is not sure about his spiritual progress but feels peaceful and happy within. He has not severed his relationship with his guru as yet. This is an indirect sign that he is happy with the relationship. This may be due to the fact that the Centre in India does not place any financial or other demands on the family.