**Religious Experience in Other Faiths**

**Hinduism**

"The temple is built as a palace in which the Gods live… a sacred place unlike every other place on the earth. Though the devotee rarely has the psychic vision of the Deity, he is aware of the God's divine presence. As he approaches the sanctum sanctorum [shrine], the Hindu is fully aware that an intelligent being, greater and more evolved than himself, is there. This God is intently aware of him, safeguarding him, fully knowing his inmost thought, fully capable of coping with any situation the devotee may mentally lay at his Holy Feet. It is important that we approach the Deity in this way - conscious and confident that our needs are known in the inner spiritual worlds. ...You can feel the presence of these divine beings, and this radiation from them is known as shakti.

... Perhaps not immediately, but the message that the shakti [power] carries from the Mahadeva [the supreme one] manifests in your life. This is the way the Gods converse. It is a communication more real than the communication of language that you experience each day."

*-from "Communicating with God and the Gods" on HinduNet.org*



"My relationship with the Bhagavad Gita goes back to the 1960s and throughout my life I read the Bhagavad Gita and attempted to grasp its subtle meaning. However, I did not truly understand. Still I knew an invaluable treasure lay within this book and I was not to be discouraged. I would stubbornly say, 'Someday, I will understand this.' I am now 60.

...I remember so well those hot summer days in 2004 reading on the screen-porch in the dappled shade of cedars, maples, and pine trees. Day after day I would listen with my heart to Krishna’s words of wisdom to his friend Arjuna, and I would cry and cry and cry the sweetest tears. Tears come easily when you feel the presence of God. I felt as if I were being given the eyes-to-see and the ears-to-hear. Even now when I think of that time, tears can pool in my eyes and my heart is filled with joy and gratitude. Krishna is my guru!

It is in the spirit of a deeply sincere humility and out of a love that can never be described or expressed that I set out here to share with you my understanding of this remarkable and magnificent text.

...We all have God dwelling within our Heart. We can realize that God not only dwells within us, but within everything. God is ALL!"

*-from "My reverence & deep respect for the Bhagavad Gita", by Susan Ferguson*

***Islam***

"There are no words to explain how I feel when I pray or read the Quran or listen to the Azan, and the only way you can ever understand this, is if you experience it yourself."

The moment I started reciting, I felt tears well up, not from sadness but from a sense of relief, as if he was filling my heart with light and joy. Although the moments of sadness came back when I sometimes forgot to pray, the second I start reciting, I feel that he is reaching out to me, as not only my God but as my friend. Without him, I lose hope for the light at the end of the tunnel in times of darkness."

*-from the Experience Project, "Prayer Saved Me".*

 "During my clean up I found my old Qur'an in Arabic that I had bought while I was a student. I had bought it as a study guide to help me learn to read Arabic.

It had been many years since I had last read anything in Arabic. I was curious as to if I could still read it. I opened it to Surah Fatiha and the first line literally jumped out at me.

Bismillah ir Rahman ir Raheem. 'In the name of Allah, the provider, the Most merciful'

It was like the words glowed and completely filled me with an inner peace I never felt before. I turned back to the preface and saw it was the supplication:

'Auzu Billahi Mina Al Shaytan Al Rajeem'. (In Allah I seek refuge from the evils of Satan)

After over 20 years of not speaking Arabic it all flowed back to me. I could not stop reading and I was not simply reading words, the feeling of each ayyat [Allah’s greatness] came upon me with an indescribable warmth and sense of understanding. I could not stop. I do not know how long I read I know it was for at least 48 hours and I still could not stop the feeling was so powerful and filling me with a strong sense of love and joy on the morning of what I believe was the 3rd day I finally set the Qur'an down and knew I was Muslim. I instantly said the Shahadah and knew I was now part of the Ummah."

Compare and Verify;

1. Highlight any similarities in each of these experiences.
2. Use either Otto’s, Swinburne’s and James’ descriptions of elements of religious experience to explain why each of these experiences could be called genuine religious experiences.

