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An Analysis of Extrasensory Perceptions in Indian Philosophy

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Abstract

Parapsychological experiences, also known as siddhis, are among the diverse range of human experiences documented since ancient times across different cultures and regions. Findings and hypotheses from research in this field contribute to philosophical discussions regarding the concepts of time, causality, and information, and their relevance to the debate on free will versus determinism. In this article, we offer a comprehensive review of the theoretical perspectives on extrasensory perception found in four traditional Indian texts. Classical Indian literature extensively discusses the various types of siddhis. We analyze this Indian literature given parapsychology. The psi ability is in the form of siddhis or supernatural power attained by a practitioner during their practice of sadhana. Although siddhis are not the ultimate goal of sadhana, the manifestation of siddhis validates the practice. These siddhis are termed as various kinds of extrasensory perceptions in parapsychology.

Keywords: Parapsychology, Yoga, Extrasensory perceptions, Traditional Indian texts

INTRODUCTION

Extrasensory Perception (ESP) encompasses the reception of sensory information that extends beyond the conventional five senses—sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch. This phenomenon can furnish individuals with insights into the present, past, and future, appearing to emanate from a secondary or alternate reality. [1]

Parapsychology focuses on investigating psychic abilities through observation and experimentation conducted under controlled conditions. The Parapsychological Association (established in 1957), an international organization comprising professionals dedicated to the study and research of parapsychological phenomena, is at the forefront of advancing this field of inquiry, defines Parapsychology is the field dedicated to investigating apparent behavioral anomalies that exist independently of currently understood explanatory mechanisms for the exchange of information and influence between organisms and their environment or other organisms. The specific abilities subjected to scrutiny in this discipline are generally denoted as Psi. [2]

Two primary forms of psi are distinguished: extrasensory perception (ESP) and psychokinesis (PK). ESP involves the ability to acquire information that is shielded from the ordinary senses, while PK involves the ability to influence external systems beyond one's motor activity. ESP further branches into Telepathy, which involves the perception of another's thoughts, and clairvoyance, which involves the perception of external objects and events. Precognition refers to ESP of future events, while retrocognition pertains to ESP of past events. Although parapsychologists have developed specific methods to test each type of psi, there is increasing recognition that they all derive from a common source. [3]

Sense and Extra-Sense (The Sixth Sense)

The fundamental concept of dialectics asserts that everything in existence is a synthesis or unity of opposing elements. This principle extends to human nature, wherein man embodies a fusion of opposites—sense and extra-sense, blending the natural with a touch of the supernatural. Humans naturally possess five senses: touch, taste, smell, sight, and hearing. These senses are traditionally acknowledged as the empirical tools through which humans interact with their environment. However, the world perceived through our senses is inherently subjective to some extent. The way everyone reacts to stimuli differs. Empirical science strives to generate, to the greatest extent possible, an objective perspective of the world. Comparison of perception of different people

towards the world is different from each other. Some practices can increase the range of our senses. Our capacity for communication is significantly influenced by the functionality of our ears and voices. This has however been improved by many kinds of yoga practices. Research centers have presented arguments and positions supported by advocates who propose the existence of a sixth sense. These centers have provided evidence suggesting the presence of an additional sensory capacity beyond the traditional five senses.[3,4]

Types of Extra-Sensory Perception: Many types of extra-sensory perceptions have been recently described in parapsychology.

Clairsentience (feeling/touching)

Perception in which an individual obtains psychic knowledge predominantly through feelings. The term originates from the French words *clair*, meaning clear, and *sentience*, meaning feeling, ultimately rooted in the Latin words *Clarus*, meaning clear, and *sentience*, derived from *sentire*, meaning to feel.

Beyond its parapsychological context, clairsentience holds significance in certain religions. In Buddhism, for instance, it is acknowledged as one of the six special human functions achievable through advanced meditation. Generally, clairsentience refers to an individual capable of sensing the vibrations of others, with varying degrees of proficiency ranging from perceiving the ailments of others to discerning thoughts or emotions. Notably, this ability contrasts with the third eye, as it does not involve vivid mental imagery but rather an intense feeling. Clairsentience also shares a connection with psychometry, a term derived from *psyche* and *metric*, signifying soul-measuring.

Clairaudience (hearing/listening)

Clairsentience is frequently regarded as a variant or form of clairvoyance within the realm of paranormal phenomena. Clairaudience is fundamentally the paranormal hearing ability, distinguishing itself from paranormal seeing (clairvoyance) and feeling (clairsentience). Individuals with clairaudience possess psi-mediated hearing. While the term may not exclusively denote the direct perception of external sounds, it can also encompass impressions in the inner mental ear, akin to the way people mentally form words without actual auditory input. Additionally, clairaudience may involve the actual perception of sounds—such as voices, tones, or noises—that are not discernible by ordinary human hearing or recording equipment. [2,5,6]

Clairience (smelling)

In the realm of parapsychology, clairalience is a manifestation of extra-sensory perception where an individual attains psychic insights through the physical sense of smell. The term is thought to originate from late seventeenth century France, combining clair meaning clear and alience suggesting smelling.

Claircognizance (knowing)

Claircognizance, likely derived from late 17th-century French with clair meaning clear and cognizance, denotes a type of extra-sensory perception. In this phenomenon, an individual gains psychic knowledge predominantly through an innate understanding. This ability allows one to know information without a discernible physical explanation, drawing parallels to the concepts often associated with mediums.

Clairgustance (tasting)

In the field of parapsychology, clairgustance is defined as a form of extra-sensory perception that allegedly allows an individual to taste a substance without actually ingesting it. Those thought to possess this ability are believed to perceive the essence of a substance from spiritual or ethereal realms through their sense of taste.

Telepathy

The thought waves transmitted by the human mind are supposed to be some kind of 'Bioelectrical ' impulses of the brain signals of a specific wavelength. Telepathy is defined as the transmission of mental states from one mind to another. Numerous studies have been conducted in an effort to detect, comprehend, and harness telepathy within this field. However, the scientific community generally does not recognize telepathy as a genuine phenomenon, as no conclusive evidence has been presented to demonstrate its existence to a greater degree than what could be attributed to random chance under controlled experimental conditions. [7]

Extrasensory Perceptions in Indian Doctrines: Extrasensory perception is described as siddhis or supernatural perception in various traditional literature.

Nyaya Philosophy

In Nyaya philosophy, extra sensory perceptions are termed as Yogaja Pratyaksa, mentioned in the Nyaya Sutra (3.2.43). Maharishi Gautama denotes Atman as Jnanavan, signifying the self as a knower. According to the Naiyayikas, the supernormal perception of an individual, such as that of a

yogin (a practitioner of yoga), is regarded as equally valid or real as any other perceptual experience. Naiyayikas acknowledge the description of yogic perception as true and attempt to provide an independent interpretation of such experiences.

In Nyaya, Yogaja Pratyaksa is described as a phenomenon involving direct perception of objects that are distant in space and time or imperceptible objects (e.g., paramana). It is asserted that a Yogin can achieve, through the yogic practice of concentration known as samprajnatayoga, an indescribable supernormal state or quality. With a mind of incomprehensible power aided by this supernormal quality, the Yogin can perceive their own self, the selves of others, and all other things—past, present, future, and distant. In this context, the supernormal state or quality of the mind serves as the super-normal sense-object contact (alaukika sannikarsa). This type of contact with objects of perception is termed Yogaja sannikarsa, and the perception resulting from it is referred to as Yogaja Pratyaksa.

Vaisesika Philosophy

According to Vaisesika, Yogic perception is categorized into two types: Ecstatic (Yukta) and non-ecstatic (Viyukta) perception. The definition of ecstatic perception involves the Yogins perceiving the essential nature of themselves, other selves, ether (akasa), space, time, atoms, air, and manas (mind), along with the qualities, actions, generalities, particularities, and inherence remaining in them. This perception is attained through meditative efforts leading to a heightened state of consciousness or spiritual ecstasy. Yogins perceive these objects through their internal organs (manas), which are strengthened and perfected by their merits resulting from the practice of meditation. A Yukta-yogin possesses non-erroneous knowledge of everything through the instrumentality of the mind, aided by supernormal Yogic power. Various forms of mental concentration lead to different types of supernatural abilities. These practices enhance the acuity and power of the sense organs, enabling them to operate on objects that are typically beyond their ordinary range of perception. In the case of viyukta pratyaksa, the obstacles to the function of the sense organs are eliminated, and they are brought under control by the Yogins.[8]

Samkhya Philosophy

According to Samkhya philosophy, extrasensory perception constitutes a form of mental and supernormal perception. This perspective aligns with the concept of ecstatic perception discussed earlier. In this framework, the past is considered present as it is merged in the material cause, and

similarly, the future is also regarded as present potentially within the material cause. The present is viewed as the actual manifestation of a physical entity. Extrasensory perception is said to apprehend objects from the past and future because they exist in a present condition and because Yogins possess supernormal power acquired through the practice of yoga. Through yogic practice, the manas (mind) establishes a connection with Prakrti (the material world), which grants excellence due to special merit (dharma). This enables Yogins to perceive all objects across all times and places through yogic perception.

Yoga Philosophy

According to Yoga philosophy, both the past and the future exist in some condition within physical substance and can be perceived through yogic perception. However, the philosophy asserts that only the present moment is truly real. The temporal order, including past and future, is considered a construct of our intellect rather than an inherent reality. In actuality, there is no aggregation of moments; rather, there is only the eternal present. Yoga posits that all objects are fundamentally alike, and therefore, by concentrating on any single object, one can gain insight into all other objects. This suggests a profound interconnectedness and unity underlying the diversity of the world.

The application of the combined force of Dharna, Dhyana, and Samadhi upon any particular object about which one wants to know everything with one hundred percent fullness and clarity is Samyama. When concentration, meditation, and absorption, together on an object, are directed, it brings in total awareness about the object, what one sees, he knows. As one gets closer to the state of samadhi, one can observe that there is a very great sense of calmness in him. [7,9]

Description of extrasensory perceptions in III chapter of Patanjali Yog Sutra:

According to Maharishi Patanjali Once absorption of form, time, condition, seeker crosses the barrier of time and space. It's a kind of extrasensory perception, beyond time and space, knowledge of the past and future arises.

Poorvajaati jnanam (Knowledge of past incarnations): Through perception of latent impressions comes knowledge of past incarnations.

Parachitta jnanam(Telepathy): One is not different from another. There is a universal consciousness that permeates every being in the universe. The key distinction lies in the varying degrees and intensities of consciousness among different entities. When one raises his level of

consciousness through samyama, he can easily know (read) what runs through another's mind. This is another kind of extrasensory perception called Parachitta jnanam(Telepathy).

Maitri Adishu Balani (Friendly disposition): Concentration on qualities like compassion, Strengthens such disposition. Realization, that one is not apart and different from others around, is gained by Samyama on attributes such as compassion. Compassion is a profound understanding and sympathy for the suffering of others.

Hasti Bala Adini (Strength Elephantine): Through concentration one can gain Strength Elephantine. Patanjali says that by concentrating on the strength of the Elephant, it is possible to get the animal's strength and dexterity.

Sukshma Vyavahita Viprakrishta Jnanam (Remote viewing): Concentration on inner light gives one knowledge of things beyond sight When one concentrates on inner light, he can attain the knowledge of things beyond sight like Sanjay of Mahabharat.

Bhuvana Jnanam (Cosmic viewing): When one considers the sun and applies the triple of concentration, Meditation, and absorption on the sun, one should keep in mind three aspects of the sun. First the physical aspect, second life force aspect, and third the light aspect. By absorption of the sun, one gains knowledge of the cosmic region. [5,7]

Chandre Tara Vyuha Jnanam (Knowledge of objects far): The Moon in scriptures is always given as an example to convey the message that the mind is only the reflected consciousness. Mind and object being co-terminus, object perception, near or far are linked to the mind, through concentration on the moon and star, Begets one, knowledge of objects far. These are some examples of extrasensory perceptions described in the vibhutipada of Patanjali Yog Sutras.

In Yoga philosophy, there are four types of sampradaya samadhi, distinguished by the nature of the object of concentration: vitarka, vicara, Sananda, and sasmita. [3,10,11,12]

- ***Vitarka Samadhi:*** In this state, the mind focuses on gross objects, such as physical entities.
- ***Vicara Samadhi:*** Here, the mind concentrates on subtler aspects, like atoms or tanmatras (subtle elements).
- ***Sananda Samadhi:*** This state of mind involves deep concentration, leading to identification with the gross sense organs, which are characterized by the quality of sattva (clarity and balance).

- ***Sasmita Samadhi***: In this state, the mind focuses on the ego or sense of self. Each type of samadhi represents a different level of concentration and absorption, leading to various states of consciousness and realization in the yogic path. [12,13,14]

RESULTS

In this article, we have examined four traditional Indian texts for analysis of extrasensory perceptions. We analyze some aspects of Nyaya-Vaisheshik and Sāṃkhya-Yoga school, based primarily on the view of parapsychology.

This line of analysis first and foremost states that there is a huge amount of data in support of the existence of an anomaly called psi. The anomaly pertains to the capacity to obtain information that is concealed from the usual senses and not available by inference or other normal means. It encompasses phenomena such as extrasensory perception (ESP), telepathy, precognition, and the direct influence of the mind over matter, technically termed psychokinesis (PK).

The traditional texts conveniently accept extrasensory perceptions as part of abilities earned by yogis and describe them in different forms in different kinds of literature in Indian texts. All Indian philosophical systems apart from Mimamsa acknowledge the legitimacy of Extrasensory perception.

CONCLUSION

In Indian tradition, there are various practices and beliefs related to spiritual powers and abilities, such as telepathy, clairvoyance, and psychokinesis. These are sometimes referred to as siddhis, or supernatural powers attained through spiritual practices.

Acquisition of extrasensory perception or 'Psi' ability is not an option – it is the natural outcome of practice. Succeeding waves of inner awakening will continue sharpening the faculty of discernment, leading towards these siddhis. A yogi should know which should be used for the attainment of a supreme goal and which should be concealed. These siddhis are mentioned in various Indian texts, including the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali and the Bhagavad Gita. However, it should be noted that the attainment of siddhis is not the ultimate goal of spiritual practice, but rather a byproduct of it.

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