

## Extrasensory Perception and Psychic Powers

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### ABSTRACT

Any kind of experience that comes to our conscious awareness, or any kind of knowledge that we gain about our immediate environment, occurs primarily through our five sense organs, a process known as 'Perception'. However, there have been times where we gain insight either through dreams, visions, gut feeling or intuition prior to its occurrence. A phenomenon known as 'Extrasensory Perception'. The paper aims to understand such psychic abilities and contribute by expanding our limits of what we know about our mind and consciousness. The objective is to reveal new aspect of human potential and explore the unknown.

**Keywords:** *Psychic abilities, Psychic power, Extrasensory Perception, Consciousness, Mind, Meditation, Parapsychology, telepathy, intuition*

Extrasensory perception (ESP) is defined as a claim of perception that occurs without the use of normal sensory channels such as sight, hearing, touch, taste, or smell. The term was first coined by J. B. Rhine, professor at Duke University in 1927. Such concepts are studied under parapsychology.

### *Early Psychological Research*

In 1853, the chemist Robert Hare conducted experiments with mediums and reported significant findings. Frank Podmore highlighted flaws in these experiments, such as lack of control to prevent trickery. Followed by this many other researchers like Agenor de Gasparin, Johann Karl Friedrich Zöllner conducted early experiments but flaws were discovered. The Society of Psychological Research (SPR) founded in London in 1882 was first systematic effort to scientifically investigate paranormal phenomena. The SPR became a model for similar societies in other European countries and the United States during 19<sup>th</sup> Century. In 1930, Duke University became second major academic institution to engage in critical study of ESP (as claim of perception without normal sensory channels) and psychokinesis (ability to move or manipulate objects with mind, without any physical interaction) in laboratory. Psychologist J. B. Rhine and Louisa E. Rhine under guidance of psychologist William McDougall used quantitative and statistical approach using cards and dice as opposed to general approach of qualitative evidence for paranormal phenomena. As a consequence, standard laboratory procedures for testing ESP were developed and adopted by researchers throughout the world.

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Received: January 27, 2025; Revision Received: June 12, 2025; Accepted: June 15, 2025

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As per the beliefs of Scientific communities, the ideas of psi (precognition, psychokinesis and telepathy) violate well established laws of physics. Parapsychological theories are viewed as pseudoscientific as they are incompatible with well-established laws of science. The early scientific research on psychic abilities in parapsychology failed to establish significant scientific evidences to support existence of psychic abilities. However, recent studies conducted in the field have done a remarkable progress.

The common kinds of extrasensory perception are: -

1. Telepathy – ability to read another person’s mind or thoughts
2. Clairvoyance – ability to see things that are not actually present
3. Precognition – ability to know something in advance of its occurrence or to predict future events

### *The Scientific and Spiritual Implication of Psychic Abilities*

In their article ‘*The Scientific and Spiritual Implication of Psychic Abilities*’, Russell Targ and Jane Katra (2001) discuss that spiritual healer, mystics and scientists are in touch with their interconnected and nonlocal mind. They believe whenever one person demonstrates ability beyond ordinary, while it is an inspiration to all of us it is also an indication of largely undeveloped human potential. Their observations emphasize that we live in very interconnected world. Psychic abilities and remote viewing can be seen parallel to David Bohm’s investigation of ‘quantum-interconnectedness’ or nonlocal correlations. As demonstrated in laboratories, the quanta of light sent in opposite direction at light speed maintain their connection to each other, i.e. each photon is affected by what happens to its twin miles apart. This is similar to the nonlocal connection or interconnectedness that we hold in our consciousness.

The article also highlights varied interesting laboratory experiments conducted in 1972 for two decades and supported by Stanford Research Institute (SRI) and Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) to understand human mind’s capacity in expanded awareness (remote viewing). The author shared one of his personal experiences where he had to volunteer spontaneously in absence of primary remote viewer, only to understand that “a scientist can be a psychic too when the need is high”. The paper sheds light on Distant Mental Influence of Living Systems (DMILS) experiment carried out by psychologist William Brand and anthropologist Marilyn Schiltz. They state that if a person simply attends fully to a distant person whose physiological activity is being monitored, he or she (acting as sender) influences distant persons galvanic skin response. It was observed that shy and introverted people reacted with significantly more stress than extraverted ones.

### **ABHIÑÑĀ**

A concept parallel to Extrasensory Perception of Psychology is Psychic powers known as ‘**Abhiññā**’ in Buddhist Psychology. The Buddha mentioned that it is possible to attain such powers after fourth stage of meditation. In the Buddha-Dharma, the teaching of supernatural power is seldom the topic mentioned by most Dharma teachers. Supernatural power is actually a naturally occurring by-products of someone who has achieved mastery of the samadhi meditation (single-pointed focus of mental power).

The Manual of Abhidhamma by Narada Maha Thera mentions **Abhiññā** as five kinds of higher knowledge. They are Divine eye (dibbacakkhu), Divine Ear (dibba-sota), Reminiscence of past births (pubbenivāsānusati ñāṇa), Reading thoughts of others (paracitta-

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vijānana) and psychic powers (iddhividha ñāṇa). To develop these five abhiññas one must possess fifth jhāna ('dhyana').

Only one who has gained fifth jhana can develop five kinds of supernormal knowledge or vision:

1. Iddhividha – flying through air, walking on water, diving into earth, creation of forms, etc. belong to this category
2. Dibbasota – is Celestial ear, also called as clairaudience, which enables one to hear subtle or coarse sounds far or near
3. Paracittavijānana – is power to discern thoughts of others
4. Pubbenivāsānussati – is power to remember the past lives of oneself and others. This is first supernormal vision the Buddha developed during the first watch on the night He attained Enlightenment. With regard to this knowledge the Buddha's power is limitless, while in the case of others it is limited
5. Dibbacakkhu – is celestial or divine eye, also called clairvoyance, which enables one to see heavenly or earthly things, far or near, which are imperceptible to physical eye. This was second knowledge the Buddha developed during the second watch on night of His Enlightenment

### ***Other Perspectives***

In his book *Extrasensory Potentials of Mind* (2005), Pandit Shriram Sharma Acharya discusses how the transformation between visible and invisible forms of existence is a natural process, even though it may seem mysterious due to our limited understanding. Matter can be converted into energy, and energy can take material form. At a basic level, our sense organs seem to perceive both the internal and external environments of the body, working in coordination with various body parts. However, the true cognitive functions of these senses depend on the central nervous system. The author describes this by giving example of perception. For instance, though we see through the lens of eye, but realization and recognition of this process (vision) becomes possible only via nerves in optical region of brain.

Normally, the brain centers associated with sensory and learning process is majorly used for routine functions, limiting its purpose. Consequentially we remain unaware of extraordinary potentials hidden in 'intelligent centers' which account for extrasensory perception. The third eye chakra, identified by contemporary science as the center of extrasensory potentials, was a profound insight described as the *ājñā cakra* and shared by rishis. This is also referred as third eye or sixth sense in general. The yoga shastras describe the position of *ājñā cakra* in inner core of the brain deep behind *bhrū Madhya* (center between the two eyebrows).

Psychologists are of the opinion that natural dreaming takes place during sound sleep when eyes are closed, all the sense organs, genitals, and other organs are dormant; the conscious mind is inactive. It is found that right side of brain remains active in state of dreaming. The studies further evince that our brain is endowed with the potential to perform all the faculties of the sense organs in absence of activities of the latter. The precognitive dreams reflect extrasensory, subliminal powers of the mind.

Clairvoyance, precognition, telepathy, knowledge of past and future, extraterrestrial communication, are other supranormal potentials by activation of *ājñā cakra*. The exponents of dhyana yoga regard *ājñā cakra* as core of self-realization and center for linkage of

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individual consciousness with Omnipresent Supreme Consciousness – the *Para Brahm*. Realization of divine powers and thou presence becomes possible by spiritual enlightenment of this cakra.

### CONCLUSION

The study of extrasensory perception and psychic abilities explores realms of human potential that challenge our conventional understanding of the mind. While scientific research in the field of parapsychology continues to face challenges in proving the existence of such phenomena, the growing body of evidence from laboratory experiments and personal experiences indicates that the human mind may possess untapped potentials. Spiritual traditions, such as those in Buddhism and Yoga, offer profound insights into the development of psychic abilities, framing them as natural extensions of the mind when cultivated through deep meditation and spiritual practices. The third eye chakra, or *ājñā cakra*, emerges as a symbol of this untapped potential, serving as the center for both heightened awareness and connection to universal consciousness. Whether viewed through the lens of scientific inquiry or spiritual enlightenment, the exploration of psychic abilities invites a broader understanding of human consciousness and its capacity to transcend ordinary perceptions of reality.

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### Acknowledgment

The author appreciates support of professors from the department of Pali and Buddhist Studies, Savitribai Phule Pune University who encouraged this topic in dissertation. Without the resources, modern technology, books, and articles by esteemed authors the work would be incomplete.

### Conflict of Interest

The author declared no conflict of interest.

**How to cite this article:** Shinde, A.A. (2025). Extrasensory Perception and Psychic Powers. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 13(2), 3597-3600. DIP:18.01.316.20251302, DOI:10.25215/1302.316