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Frontiers

Siddhi As Expounded In Patañjali Yoga Sūtra

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ABSTRACT

Patañjali Yoga Sūtra lists forty-five siddhi, 30 in Vibhūti Pāda (III) and 15 in Sādhanā Pāda (II), which are listed and their general nature discussed.

janmauñadhimantratapaù samādhijāù siddhayaù||IV.1||

“Siddhi may already be present at birth, or may be developed

through herbs, mantra, tapasa, or samādhi.”

Their relevance lies in the increasing experience of such ‘supernormal powers’ by the general population, as in ‘Telephone Telepathy’, and their seeming relevance to humanity’s progress to the next stage of its spiritual path. Reference is given to new physics of mind, which may provide a physical theory of these phenomena, and to Transpersonal Psychology in terms of which they may be classified

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Introduction:

Siddhi means perfection, particularly used in Patañjali Yoga Sūtra^{1,2} to represent extra-ordinary human abilities constituting natural milestones and attainments on the spiritual path. The ancient yogic texts describe many such abilities. Today’s need is for a systematic, in-depth, exposition drawing the attention of today’s academic, scientific and philosophical community to this ancient knowledge, for it to be accepted as a natural aspect of every person’s potential. One scholar to express this was Père Teilhard de Chardin who stated: “We are not human beings with a spiritual experience, we are spiritual beings having human experience.”³

The Sanskrit derivation of ‘Siddhi’ is from ‘Sidhu’, meaning Samradohau – achievement or accomplishment. To put it simply, Siddhi can be stated as follows: starting from the word Sādhanā, ‘to practice’, the practitioner is known as a Sādhakā; the object of practice is known as Sādhyā; and, when the Sādhanā has matured, results accomplished are called ‘Siddhi’. Siddhi are considered ‘Supernormal’ in physical science, and ‘Transnormal’ in psychology. 4

Patañjali Yoga Sūtra² describes 45 Siddhi and their means of attainment: 30 in its third chapter, Pādā III, which is exclusively devoted to them, and 15

effectively in Pādā II; which describes the (See Table 1.)
yama and niyama and elimination of kleṣā

Table 1: Siddhi according to Patañjali Yoga Sūtra			
Sr. No.	P.Y.S. ² No.	Practice / Samyamā on	Siddhi
1	2.35	Non-Violence	Abandonment of Hostility in Vicinity
2	2.36	Truthfulness	Actions follow God's Will
3	2.37	Honesty	All Gems Present Themselves
4	2.38	Brahmacārya	Virya – Indomitable Courage
5	2.39	Non-Possessiveness	Knowledge of Birth: How & Whence
6	2.40	Cleanliness (Physical)	Indifference towards Body & Non-Attachment to Others
7	2.41	Mental Purity	Fit for Cheerfulness, Infusion of Self-Awareness & Control of Senses
8	2.42	Contentment	Unexcelled Happiness
9	2.43	Austerities	Impurities Destroyed, Perfection in the Body and Sense Organs
10	2.44	Vedic Mantra Practice	Communion with Designated Deity
11	2.45	Complete Surrender to God	Perfection in Samādhi
12	2.48	Āsanā	Pairs of Opposite Cease to Impact
13	2.52	Prāṅyāma	Veils of the Inner Light Destroyed
14	2.53	Prāṅyāma	Mind becomes Fit for Dhāranā
15	2.55	Pratyahāra: directing the attention to the inner silence / quietness	Highest Mastery over Sense Organs
16	3.16	Three Transformations, Parināma (Nirodhā, Samādhi, & Ekāgratā)	Knowledge of Past and Future
17	3.17	Word, Object and Mental Content	Knowledge of the Speech of All Beings Arises
18	3.18	Direct Perception of the Impressions	Knowledge of Previous Births
19	3.19	Content of the Mind	Knowledge of Other's Mind arises
20	3.21	Form of Body and Suspending Receptivity of the Form	Invisible (Light is Stopped)
21	3.22	Sound, Touch, Taste, etc	Disappearance of Sound, and other Tanmātra
22	3.23	Karma - Active and Dormant	Knowledge of Death, Omens
23	3.24	Friendliness, Compassion Happiness and Indifference	Quality of Friendliness, Compassion, Happiness and Indifference
24	3.25	Strength of Elephant (any animal)	Corresponding Strength is developed
25	3.26	Inner Light	Knowledge of Subtle, Obscure or Distant objects
26	3.27	Sun	Knowledge of Cosmic Spaces
27	3.28	Moon	Knowledge of Position of Stars
28	3.29	Pole Star – Dhruva	Knowledge of Movement of the Stars
29	3.30	Navel Centre / Cakra	Knowledge of Arrangement of Body
30	3.31	Throat Pit	Mastery of Hunger and Thirst
31	3.32	Kurma Nadi (in middle of chest)	Steadiness
32	3.33	Light of Crown of Head (Sahasāra)	Vision of the Masters of Yoga
33	3.34	Separation of Matter and Energy	All Psychic Powers
34	3.35	Heart	Awareness of Chitta
35	3.36	Distinction betw Satva & Puruṇā	Knowledge of Puruṇā

36	3.37	Puruña or Subjective Awareness	Subtle Senses Hearing, Touch, Sight
37	3.39	Loosening of the cause of Binding and by Knowledge of Passage	Subtle Body enters Another's Body
38	3.40	By Mastering Udāna Vāyu	Non-contact with Water, Mud, Thorns, etc. and the Body Levitates
39	3.41	By Mastering Samāna Vāyu	The Body Blazes
40	3.42	Relation betw. Hearing & Space	Divine Hearing
41	3.43	Relation of Body and Ākāṣa and the Lightness of Cotton Wool	Levitation: Ability to Travel in Space
42	3.45	Gross, Essential Nature, Subtle & Purpose of Bhūtā, their relationship	Mastery over Bhūtā is Obtained
43	3.46	Mastery of Panca Bhūtā (3.45)	Añña Siddhi, Perfection of Body & Non-Obstruction of Bodily Functions
44	3.48	Power of Cognition, Real Nature, Egoism, All Pervasiveness & Purposefulness	Mastery over Sense Organs
45	3.53	Moments & Order in Succession	Knowledge of Distinction of Absolute and Relative

Although they may seem supernatural, Siddhis are available to all human beings willing to train in subtle aspects of the mind.^{5,6} Patañjali Yoga Sūtra; fourth Pāda-Kaivalya Pāda, Sutra 1 says,

**janmauñadhimantratapaù samādhijāu
siddhayaù||IV.1||**
**“Siddhi may already be present at birth,
or may be developed
through herbs, mantra, tapasa, or
samādhī.”**

Since they cannot be explained in material terms, modern scientists have largely rejected them.⁷ Also, those with such abilities have been few in number, and unwilling to undergo scientific tests. Repeatable experiments have proved difficult to perform⁸, those by J.B. Rhine, founder of Duke University's Parapsychology Laboratory, being classic examples.

Most people with mobile phones, however, have the experience of occasionally

knowing a caller's identity, especially of a close friend or relative, a phenomenon called 'Telephone Telepathy'⁹, scientifically substantiated by biologist Rupert Sheldrake. Siddhis start at this relatively mundane level and proceed to extraordinary phenomena making Mind seem more fundamental than Matter. Today, the presence of many more with such powers, recently born natural 'Siddhā', suggests that the time has come for humanity to understand Siddhi.¹⁰

This study aims to bring out knowledge of Siddhi described in Yogic Sutras together with a new line of understanding based on modern sciences.¹¹ It forms part of an overall study including Bhagavad Gētā and Yoga Vasēñōha, etc., that should facilitate humanity's next step on its path to perfection. Siddhi will be explained in terms of a new physics of mind^{12,13}, and classified as advanced psychological states according to Transpersonal Psychology.¹⁴

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