

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter lays out the background against which the work is setup, it also gives the etymological meaning of the word *siddhi* and its various meanings in Sanskrit. It provides an understanding of the word equivalent to *siddhi* used in modern science. The chapter also lists the commonly known *aṣṭa siddhi*, and explains the point in the study and the need for it.

1.2 BACKGROUND

The mind of a man subject to the limitations of time and space can only understand things within space-time. Any new knowledge is immediately related to previous knowledge, classified and docketed as pre- or post-, higher or lower.

This PhD study will not let the mind settle and docket knowledge, but will create new space and understanding for the reader to revisit old, and possibly rigid ideas, and bring about a paradigm shift by understanding *siddhis* as science.

It is well known that if one wants to bathe in a river, one cannot bathe in the whole river; one has to bathe at some spot. If one wants to have a conception of ebb and flow, the eddies and currents of a river, one should bathe at various spots in the river. Similarly in the ocean of knowledge, a seeker can aspire for integrated knowledge, and he may, depending on his capacity, come nearer to Total Knowledge, *Brahman*, by having as many insights and realizations as he can.

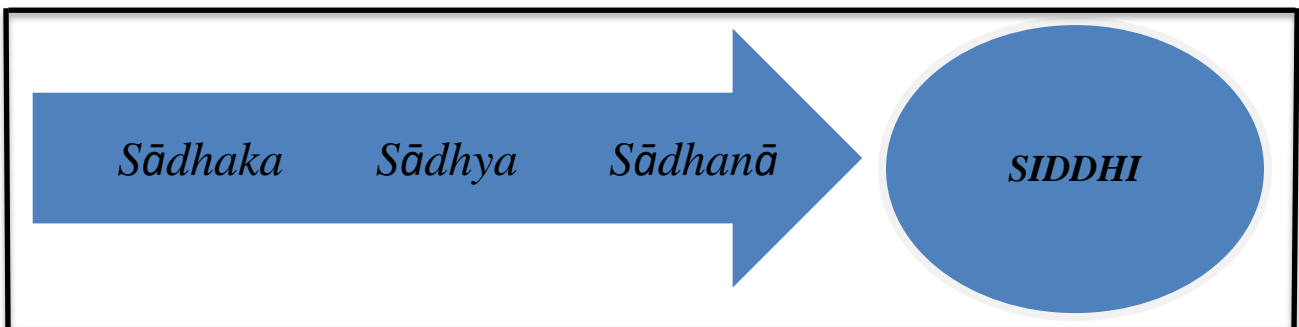
The researcher is highly inspired by Swami Vivekananda's statement, 'Each soul is potentially divine. The goal is to manifest this divinity by controlling nature, external and internal. Do this either by work, or worship, or psychic control, or philosophy - by one, or more, or all of these - and be free. This is the whole of religion. Doctrines, or dogmas, or rituals, or books, or temples,

or for ms, are but secondary details.’(Vivekananda, 2007). The study elucidates the processes, which occur on the chosen path to freedom. As is evident, steps must be taken and stages attained. *Siddhis* are known Milestones on the Path described in texts such as *Yoga Upaniṣads* (Vidyānāṅkar, 2018; Ayyaṅgar, 1938) and Patañjali Yoga Sūtra (Shearer, 1982).

1.3 MEANING OF THE WORD *SIDDHI*

The term ‘*siddhi*’ translates as ‘perfection’, ‘accomplishment’, ‘attainment’, or ‘success’. *Siddhis* are the fruit of achieving perfection of mind through spiritual practices, which train the person to operate on subtle levels of existence.

The word *siddhi* comes from the Sanskrit word, ‘*sidhu*’, meaning ‘*samradohau*’ – achievement or accomplishment. Simply put, *siddhi* can be explained as follows. The word *sādhana* means ‘to practice’; hence, a practitioner is known as a *sādhaka*; the object of practice is known as *sādhya*; what is practiced is called *sādhanā*; and, as the *sādhanā* matures, the results accomplished are *siddhi*.



From the perspective of science, physics considers *siddhi* supernormal, while psychology uses the terms transnormal and paranormal. The eight major ‘*aṣṭa siddhi*’ (Muktibodhananda, 2008) are:

- i. *Aṇimā* – the yogi can make his body small like an atom.
- ii. *Mahimā* – the body can be made large.

- iii. *Laghimā* – the body can be made light.
- iv. *Garimā* – the body can be made heavy.
- v. *Prāpti* – capacity to reach anywhere.
- vi. *Prākāmya* – unobstructed fulfillment of desire.
- vii. *Īsatvā* – the capacity to create and destroy at will.
- viii. *Vaśitvā* – control over all objects, organic or inorganic.

1.4 POINT IN THE STUDY

This study sets out a complete exposition of *siddhis* in ancient yoga texts, together with their detailed descriptions, and the procedures given for developing them. It thus seeks to explain to the scientific community higher functions of the human mind known to the world of yoga. It also brings out the modern physics perspective based on recently developed models of conscious experience connected to criticality in brain function. Physical models of the workings of a few *siddhis* are included, without attempting to be comprehensive. The study also illuminates aspects of transpersonal psychology that the scientific and medical communities are coming to accept.

In short, the study attempts to bring into mainline science many things now considered exceptions by the scientific community; or which have previously not received due attention by mainstream scientists, nor by academics in other disciplines. One of its aims is thus to provide the beginnings of a theoretical base for further empirical research in the field, so that scientists, philosophers, and other academics can better explore the concept of *siddhi* and its ramifications.

1.5 NEED AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Because *siddhis* are unusual and cannot be explained in material terms, scientists have largely rejected them. Also, because people with such abilities are few in number, and may not be willing to undergo scientific tests, or may even make fraudulent claims, reliable and repeatable experiments have proved difficult to perform; those by Professor J.B. Rhine at Duke University's

Parapsychology Laboratory being classic examples. Dean Radin provides a counter example.

Despite appearing to be supernatural, *siddhis* are available to all human beings through subtle aspects of the mind. Most people with mobile phones have the more or less frequent experience of knowing the identity of a caller, especially that of a close friend or relative – the phenomenon of ‘telephone telepathy’ scientifically substantiated by Rupert Sheldrake (Sheldrake, 2003). *Siddhis* start at this level, and, as this study relates, proceed to really extraordinary phenomena that make Mind appear more fundamental than Matter.

For reasons like this, *siddhis* described in the ancient literature should be considered natural phenomena to be known, understood and accepted by all human beings. They are milestones on a person’s spiritual path to realizing their innate Divinity. *Siddhis* arise naturally when, through spiritual practices mentioned in Maharshi Patanjali’s yoga *sūtras*, higher potentials begin to be realized. Conversely, lack of understanding of *siddhi* is one reason why so many are stuck in materialist doctrines, which inculcate attitudes holding back their higher evolution.

Today, the presence of many natural *siddhās*, recently born with such powers (Carroll & Tober, 1999) suggests that the time has come for humanity to understand *siddhi*, and to progress towards their natural use. This study will help facilitate humanity’s progress toward this next step on its path to perfection. It proposes that *siddhis* can be explained rationally in terms of Physics of Mind, and studied as advanced states of psychology identified in Transpersonal Psychology. These considerations highlight the need for experimental research on *siddhis* and their development. Scientific study builds on earlier investigations, refining previous experiment and testing theories. That way, it extends science’s knowledge and understanding of the topics being studied.

1.6 SUMMARY

The study looks at the concept of *siddhi* from the three angles of yoga, physics and psychology. It presents procedures recommended in ancient texts for *siddhi* attainment, and use the lens of modern science to discuss these phenomena. Manifestation of *siddhi* is not bound by time or space. Yogi(ni)s acquire them as they transcend those levels of existence.

Siddhis represent attainments on the path of spirituality. They are natural milestones on the path of developing extra-ordinary human abilities. The ancient yoga texts describe many such abilities. Today's need is for a systematic, in-depth, exposition to bring the ancient texts to the attention of the scientific community, academics and philosophers, so that their knowledge can be accepted as a natural part of humanity's rich and varied heritage. As Teilhard de Chardin stated:

“We are not human beings having a spiritual experience,
we are spiritual beings having a human experience.”

(De Chardin, 1959)

Thus, the following literary research has been undertaken.