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The Role of Powers in Pādas III and IV in the *Yogasūtra* of Patañjali: Realities and Implications

by

Mathilde Peña

A thesis paper presented to the

Faculty of the Department of
Yoga Studies
Loyola Marymount University

In partial fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts in Yoga Studies

May 11, 2023

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A system is the simplest physical or metaphysical experience we humans can have. Human minds inherently seek comprehension of the topological interrelationships of all experiences. Universe is ever intensively and intertensionally pulsing and resonating, converging-divergently, explosively-implosively, in a vast range of system frequencies, magnitudes, and chords.

R. Buckminster Fuller, *Cosmography* (1992)

Chapter 1: Introduction and the *Siddhis* in Early Yoga

YS II.52 *tataḥ kṣīyate prakāśāvaraṇam*

Thus, the covering of light is dissolved.¹

Shining by the function of the senses,
Yet freed from all the senses,
Unattached yet maintaining all,
Free from the *guṇas* yet experiencing
the *guṇas*.

Bhagavad Gita XIII.14²

I. Introduction

Yoga philosophy tells many stories about the nature of reality. This innate multivalency makes the practice and study of yoga philosophy particularly potent because of the prevalence of borrowing and exchange among coexisting strands of thought, many of which were codified and streamlined due to pressures from globalization and neoliberalism.³ The *Yogasūtra* of Patañjali, for example, is now considered one of the most significant yogic texts and has made the eight-limbed framework the standard among modern yoga schools. Rising in popularity since the 19th century, the *Yogasūtra* had fallen into obscurity for centuries until British, and also Indian, orientalists in the 19th century learned Sanskrit and translated the text in accordance with Anglicized monotheism, supporting the orientalist outlook, which “imposes Western hermeneutical ways of dealing with an Indian text, as developed in the interpretation of the Bible.”⁴ By honing in on Patañjali as the logos of yoga, orientalists essentially co-opted the practice of yoga, reducing much of what Yoga is according to a singular text, much like the Bible

¹ Christopher Key Chapple, *Yoga and the Luminous: Patañjali's Spiritual Path to Freedom*, (Albany: State University Of New York Press, 2008), 127.

² Christopher Key Chapple, *The Bhagavad Gita* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2009), 528.

³ Farah Godrej, “The Neoliberal Yogi and the Politics of Yoga,” *Political Theory* 45, no. 6 (April 8, 2016): 772–800, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0090591716643604>.

⁴ Suzanne Scholz, “Reading Patañjali’s Yoga sūtra like the Bible in Sunday School: Orientalist and Western Protestant Hermeneutical Assumptions in Contemporary English Translations,” *Shifting Locations and Reshaping Methods: Methodological Challenges Arising from New Fields of Research in Intercultural Theology and Interreligious Studies* 12, 127, 1-2.

has been advertised as the sole authority of Christianity, when the reality is that the Bible, like the *Yogasūtra*, has many versions, interpretations, and translations, given its broad history.

Separating the *Yogasūtra* from its sociocultural and religious context and infusing it with a message about personal salvation consequently made it possible for various groups and individuals, such as 19th and 20th-century Hindu reformers, Theosophists, and New Age spiritualists, to take from it what they want and discard the portions that do not align with their chosen philosophy.⁵ Throughout the 19th century, there was a systematic effort to reject the portion of the *Yogasūtra* that explores the proliferation of the *siddhis*, or the *magical* powers that arise from yoga practice, because of the pull of Western Protestant hermeneutical principles on the text.⁶ The *siddhis* do not fit into that framework, and therefore are often ignored or dismissed. Therefore, this framework disavowed itself of the *siddhis* as a natural consequence of the hermeneutical lens. Pādas III and IV of the *Yogasūtra* are radical in the sense of asserting that *siddhis*, or powers, can arise as a result of *saṁyama*, a skill of intense laser-like focus on the essence of an object, eliciting a deeper perception of the nature of reality and how the mind via the senses can alter that reality. This project will explore the transformative potential of yoga using the framework detailed in Pādas III and IV of the *Yogasūtra* of Patañjali. Contending for the possibility of the supernatural or paranormal, it will consider how the *Yogasūtra* conceptualizes the development of *siddhis* as well as the realities and implications of codifying the *siddhis*. In *Yoga Powers*, a reference book by Knut Jacobsen, Christopher Key Chapple comments on the importance of Patañjali's inclusion of *siddhis*, in "*Siddhis in the Yogasūtra*," writing:

The discussion of powers in the *Yogasūtra*, coded in the author's characteristic aphoristic style, gives a sense of the paranormal as a part of the yoga tradition while still asserting

⁵ Scholz, "Reading Patañjali's Yoga sūtra like the Bible in Sunday School," 2-3.

⁶ Scholz, "Reading Patañjali's Yoga sūtra like the Bible in Sunday School," 3.

the foundationally theological or spiritual intent of yoga practice... The key to achieving special powers lies in the application of *saṃyama*... Following the application of *saṃyama* on the object, one gains power.⁷

For the purposes of this paper, the *paranormal* or *supernatural* refers to that which is *beyond* the subjective experience of ordinary awareness via the five senses – or that which classical materialists would believe has a rational explanation.

Other translations for siddhis are “perfections,” and “supernatural,” “suprasensory,” or “magical abilities”--that which is beyond the five senses.⁸ They have been called many names throughout history, and weren’t codified until early centuries CE, however the term *siddhi* or *siddhis* has become the most synonymous word in the English language for powers and most often used in academic books on yoga as a general term for yoga powers.⁹ Knut Jacobsen explains that this might be due to the central role of the words *siddhi*, and *siddha*, especially in the Śaiva and Tantra religious traditions in South Asia, which have been undergoing a resurgence in the last fifty years due to movements like the human potential movement, developments in psychology, and the psychedelic renaissance in the mid 20th century, which Jeff Kripal denotes as the Tantric transmission.¹⁰ Developments in psychology, relating to the fields of cognitive science and humanistic psychology, for example, and quantum physics, relating to Einsteins’ theories on general relativity and space-time, started shifting the Western hermeneutic lens away from ascetic, orthodox, and highly philosophical forms in the late 19th through the 20th century, providing the basis for an interdisciplinary approach to analyze the *siddhis*.¹¹

⁷ Christopher Key Chapple, “*Siddhis* in the *Yogasūtra*,” in *Yoga Powers: Extraordinary Capacities Attained through Meditation and Concentration*, ed. Knut A. Jacobsen, (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2012), 223.

⁸ Knut A. Jacobsen., ed, “Introduction,” *Yoga Powers: Extraordinary Capacities Attained through Meditation and Concentration*, (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2012), 3-4.

⁹ Jacobsen., ed, “Introduction,” 3.

¹⁰ Jacobsen., ed, “Introduction,” 3; Jeffrey J. Kripal, “The Evolving *Siddhis*: Yoga and Tantra in the Human Potential Movement and Beyond.” in *Yoga Powers: Extraordinary Capacities Attained through Meditation and Concentration*, ed. Knut A. Jacobsen, Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2012), 483-484.

¹¹ Scholz, "Reading Patañjali's Yoga sūtra like the Bible in Sunday School"; Kripal, “The Evolving *Siddhis*.”

In this sense, texts such as the *Yogasūtra* reveal the paradoxical nature of reality. While the role of powers is ultimately to achieve freedom, they would not be mentioned if they were insignificant along the path, so there is some value in considering the realities and implications of their inclusion in the textual traditions of Indian spiritualities. For example, the Buddha's enlightenment under the Bodhi tree was preconditioned upon his recollection of previous lives and his battle with *Mara*, showing a power beyond ordinary awareness. Instead of dismissing the *siddhis* as a fantastical impossibility, this paper seeks to bring together concepts from quantum physics and cognitive sciences to analyze the realities and implications of codifying the *siddhis* as found in the *Yogasūtra*. On the other side of the room, cognitive scientists and scholars such as Edward Kelly are providing overwhelming evidence for the reality of psi phenomena.¹²

What this broad validation for the *siddhis* demonstrates is a dissolution of the Western Protestant hermeneutic principles which deny the *siddhis*. It signifies a reopening, the possibility of reading a text like the *Yogasūtra* without as much bias coming from the Western hermeneutic lens since that lens itself is undergoing a change. From this perspective, the *Yogasūtra* offers a quantum framework for the practitioner to embody philosophy on the path to freedom. This framework would imagine a universe where the *siddhis* are natural, albeit still a result of some modicum of discipline and ongoing practice. The ability to intensely focus, as in *samyama*, does not spontaneously occur; it must be cultivated and approached with intent and responsibility. Rejecting the classical materialist and Newtonian-Cartesian model of reality upheld by Western Protestant hermeneutical principles and opening to a metaphorical and imaginal foundation for meaning-making as conceptualized in pādas III and IV of the *Yogasūtra* may explain the effectiveness of yoga and other subtle body disciplines.

¹² Edward F. Kelly et al., *Irreducible Mind: Toward a Psychology for the 21st Century* (2007; repr., Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2010).

Given the lack of consensus even nowadays as to what *consciousness* or the *mind* is and how that relates to the concept of a higher power, the *Yogasūtra* provides a framework which broadens the scope of consciousness beyond the five senses. While Patañjali ultimately concludes that *siddhis* are a distraction to *mokṣa* or liberation, they reveal both the human potential to experience a variety of consciousness states and where human consciousness could evolve in a positive way, given the ethical and moral grounding of the *yamas* and *niyamas*. They signify a reorganizing of the subtle body resulting from an activation of primordial elements, or *tattvas*; this reorganization offers a newfound directionality to construe the seeming material world.

Bryant suggests that *siddhis* “are not only fundamental and intrinsic to the *Sāṃkhya/Yoga* tradition, but an essential by-product of its metaphysical presuppositions.”¹³ These metaphysical presuppositions appear to arise organically throughout the development of early yoga history. They surround concepts in the *Sāṃkhya/Yoga* tradition such as *saṃyama*, *tattvas*, and a cosmic dance between *puruṣa* and *prakṛti*, for example. These concepts will be explored through an imaginal, metaphorical lens blending ideas within the cognitive science of religion (CSR) and quantum physics, which includes mirror neurons, embodied cognition, image schemas, the filter thesis, non-locality, and quantum entanglement, among a few other key concepts which relate to the *siddhis*.¹⁴ Pādas III and IV of the *Yogasūtra* offer a foundation for a conversation between dualities, planting seeds for the need for new metaphors and frameworks which can sew parts

¹³ Edwin F. Bryant, “The Metaphysical Logic of the Siddhis, Mystic Powers, in Patañjali’s *Yoga Sūtra*,” *Journal of Dharma Studies* 3, no. 1 (2020): 3, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s42240-020-00073-z>.

¹⁴ Glen Alexander Hayes and Sthaneshwar Timalsina, “Introduction to ‘Cognitive Science and the Study of Yoga and Tantra’,” *Religions* 8, no. 9 (2017): 181. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel8090181>; J.M. Kilner and R.N. Lemon, “What We Know Currently about Mirror Neurons,” *Current Biology* 23, no. 23 (December 2013): R1057–62, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cub.2013.10.051>; George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980; Jeffrey J. Kripal, *The Flip: Epiphanies of Mind and the Future of Knowledge* (New York: Bellevue Literary Press, 2019).

together, grappling with the tension caused by a universe in constant change and flux and the suffering that arises from attachment to form.

Drawing on various strands of literature, this paper desires to elevate the conversation about consciousness and how practices such as yoga facilitate an embodied exploration of it. It wants to observe the disembodiment of Western culture. The weight of capitalism, materialism, and technology focuses consciousness externally.¹⁵ For example, social media pressures proliferate perfectionistic tendencies and external focus on “image.” It can feel like this economic, sociocultural system rewards the ego and removes personal or spiritual sovereignty. It can feel like docility about this dilemma is the eventuated solution. Although practitioners come to yoga practices for many reasons, there are an inevitable portion who desire radical transformation and perhaps see yoga as an opportunity to resist neoliberal and classical materialist ideals.¹⁶ Nurturing awareness of the tension between opposing forces, and the dance existing within duality, the *Yogasūtra* offers an embodied philosophy to grapple with the changing fabric of reality. This paper seeks to understand what is lost in the external gaze and how drawing the gaze inwards shifts the fabric of reality.

Yoga, conversely, is a practice of embodiment. It works from the inside-out as it requires *abhyāsa*, or practice. The *Yogasūtra* upholds the notion that one must master the elements, and thereby the senses, which are connected to the elements, in order to make spiritual progress. Furthermore, developments in fields like quantum physics offer updated information and models to understand models of reality, a goal which yoga and the *siddhis* share with science.¹⁷ For example, electromagnetism and toroidal fields fall somewhere in the intersection between yoga,

¹⁵ Godrej, “The Neoliberal Yogi.”

¹⁶ Godrej, “The Neoliberal Yogi.”

¹⁷ Kripal, “The Evolving *Siddhis*,” 506.

particularly as it relates to the subtle body and five *kośas*, and quantum concepts such as *nonlocality*.¹⁸

Metaphors exploring the shape of reality in a quantum, molecular sense are present across the textual traditions of India, including the *Ṛg Veda*. Both the *Yogasūtra* and quantum physics uphold the metaphorical notion that reality is more of a flexible fabric than a rigid grid. The imagery of a woven creation was evoked over 3,000 years ago in *Ṛg Veda 10.130*, “Hymn of Creation”:

The Sacrifice, drawn out with threads on every side,
Stretched by the song of one hundred singers and one.
The Fathers who have here gathered, weave these songs,
They sit beside the warp and chant: ‘Weave back, weave forth.’
Man stretches it and man shrinks it;
Even the vault of heaven he has reached with it.¹⁹

Both the *Ṛg Veda* and the *Upaniṣads*, specifically the early *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* and *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, also evoke imagery of a woven creation, a matrix of space and time. The threads holding this creation together are name and form or, essentially, time and space.

Furthermore, the *siddhis* have their roots in the earlier Vedic period, relating to:

...the *dhīh* of the Vedic *ṛṣis*, seers ... as ‘exceptional and supra-normal faculty, proper to ‘seers,’ of ‘seeing’ in the mind things, causes, connections, as they really are, the faculty of acquiring a sudden knowledge of the truth, of the functions and influence of diving powers.²⁰

Another earlier narrative instance in yoga history of the *siddhis* is the long-haired (*keśin*) ascetic of the *Ṛg-Veda* who flies through the sky (RV 10, 136).²¹ The *Sāṃkhyan* metaphysics present in the *Yogasūtra*, specifically *pādas* III and IV where the *siddhis* are discussed as real potentials, developing as a result of yogic practice, is articulated in the *Upaniṣads* and early Buddhist and

¹⁸ Kripal, “The Evolving *Siddhis*,” 482-483.

¹⁹ Antonio T De Nicolas, *Meditations through the Rig Veda* (1976; repr., Lincoln, NE: iUniverse, 2003), 230.

²⁰ Corrado Pensa, “On the Purification Concept in Indian Tradition, with Special Regard to Yoga,” *East and West* 19, no. 1/2 (1969): 196, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/29755401>.

²¹ Bryant, “The Metaphysical Logic of the *Siddhis*,” 5.

Jain texts. The *Upaniṣads* and early Buddhism both treat *siddhis* as inevitable byproducts of the path. For example, the Buddha’s enlightenment under the Bodhi tree was preconditioned upon his recollection of previous lives. Additionally, yoga traditions are often tied back to *Upaniṣad*-era sages like Yājñavalkya, and overall, many scholars have shared the belief that the *Upaniṣads* contain aspects of the later *Sāṃkhya-Yoga* system which will be discussed further in this paper.

II. Early Yoga and the *Siddhis*

Written between the seventh century BCE and the first century CE, the systematic, cosmological growth seen within the early *Upaniṣads* provides an outline for the development of Yoga into formal systems of yoga seen during the classical era.²² Around this same period in 350 BCE, several Buddhist and Jain texts also mention Yoga and its practice.²³ Narratives of *siddhis* pervade the entire textual and scholastic traditions of India with its roots in the mystical poetry of Vedic *ṛṣis* extending now to the hagiographical tales of modern/postmodern mystics.²⁴ From this perspective, it is impossible to separate Yoga from the *siddhis*, or abilities which develop beyond ordinary awareness of the five senses as a result of developing inner concentration. There is also evidence of *siddhis* and for awareness beyond the five senses in Jainism (*yogī-pratyakṣa*) and the later Yogācāra school of Buddhism which has a system of eight consciousnesses.²⁵

Written in the last few centuries BCE, the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* specifically refers to “yoga of the inner self (*adhyātmayoga*)” as a “technique for the fixation of the senses (*indriyadhāraṇā*).”²⁶

²² Stuart R. Sarbacker, *Tracing the Path of Yoga: The History and Philosophy of Indian Mind-Body Discipline*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2021), 63, Kindle.

²³ Chapple, *Yoga and the Luminous*, 2.

²⁴ Bryant, “The Metaphysical Logic of the Siddhis,” 5.

²⁵ Sarbacker, *Tracing the Path of Yoga*; Piotr Balcerowicz, “Extrasensory Perception (*Yogi-Pratyakṣa*) in Jainism, Proofs of Its Existence and Its Soteriological Implications, in *Yoga in Jainism*, ed. Christopher Key Chapple, (London: Routledge, 2015), 48–108.

<https://search-ebscohost-com.electra.lmu.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=1089799&site=ehost-live&scope=site>.

²⁶ Sarbacker, *Tracing the Path of Yoga*, 23.

Liberation is an ascent where “the knots (*grantha*) of the heart (*hṛdaya*) are cut and the practitioner rises through an inner channel (*nāḍī*).”²⁷ The literary arc of the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* is a dialogue between a young brāhmaṇa named Naciketas and the lord of death, Yama, containing “a trope in Indian literature in which accomplished yogis are tempted to obtain worldly or spiritual boons at the expense of their spiritual progress.”²⁸ This echoes Patañjali’s warning about the *siddhis* ultimately being a distraction to *mokṣa*. The yogic aspect of renunciation is highlighted when Naciketas refuses worldly temptation, seeking instead to understand the mystery of death via Yama, who presents the syllable *om*. Representing the Vedic tradition, *om* embodies the potential for one to unite with *brahman*.²⁹ Once all is revealed by Yama, Sarbacker writes, “Naciketas is referred to as having received the precepts of yoga (*yogavidhi*)...and having obtained brahman (*brahmaprāpta*) and thus deathlessness (*amṛtyu*).”³⁰ Later, the *siddhis* become associated with abilities like those Naciketas attains and are codified into eight powers whose definition extends beyond the Hindu yoga tradition.

Also written around the last few centuries BCE, the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* discusses the effects of yogic practice. This description aligns semantically with the concept of *siddhis* in how yogic practice can cause the development of abilities beyond ordinary sense awareness. Among the preconditions to “pave the way to the full manifestation in Brahman” described in 2.8-2.11 are sitting with the “three sections erect” where one “draws together the senses with his mind into his heart.”³¹ From practice and concentration comes the realization of *brahman*. 2.12-2.13 describes the beginning effects of yogic practice:

²⁷ Sarbacker, *Tracing the Path of Yoga*, 28.

²⁸ Sarbacker, *Tracing the Path of Yoga*, 25.

²⁹ Sarbacker, *Tracing the Path of Yoga*, 26.

³⁰ Sarbacker, *Tracing the Path of Yoga*, 29.

³¹ Patrick Olivelle, *The Early Upaniṣads: Annotated Text and Translation*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).

When earth, water, fire, air and ether have arisen together, and the body made up of these five becomes equipped with the attribute of yoga, that man obtaining a body tempered by the fire of yoga, will no longer experience sickness, old age, or suffering. Lightness, health, the absence of greed, a bright complexion, a pleasant voice, a sweet smell, and very little feces and urine.³²

This passage speaks to some of the benefits that arise in the pursuit of realizing the true nature of *brahman*. It acknowledges that there are inevitable physical manifestations from yogic practice and yogic restraint on the path towards liberation without undermining the centrality of *brahman*. Without calling these manifestations “*siddhis*,” it describes a similar evolution in consciousness as a central aspect of yoga practice as would be conceived by Patañjali.

Early Buddhism arose during the fifth-to-sixth century BCE in India and features supernatural elements.³³ During this time, the *śramaṇa* or “striver” traditions developed, including the Jain, Buddhist, Ājīvika, and Lokāyata traditions, which confronted the norms of Vedic dogma. Bryant and Sarbaker assert that both Jain and Buddhist texts and cosmology feature supernatural tales; for example, the mother of the Buddha had a culturally auspicious precognitive dream about a white elephant entering her womb before giving birth to the Buddha.³⁴ This story highlights the inclusion of mystical events in the endogenous narratives of various spiritual traditions which eventually came to be associated with yoga, including the *Upaniṣads* and early Buddhism.

Another key aspect of yoga that involves the *siddhis*, and is particularly prevalent in Jain, Hindu, and Patañjali-inspired traditions, comes from early Buddhism— the practice of the four altruistic attitudes (*brahmavihāra*) characterized by the cultivation of four qualities: “friendliness or loving-kindness (Skt. *maitrī*, Pāli *mettā*), compassion (*karuṇā*), sympathetic joy (*muditā*), and equanimity (*upekṣā*, *upekkha*).³⁵ In YS III.23, the text reads, “*maitrī ādiṣu balāni*,” which

³² Patrick Olivelle, *The Early Upaniṣads*.

³³ Sarbaker, *Tracing the Path of Yoga*, 68.

³⁴ Bryant, “The Metaphysical Logic of the Siddhis,” 5; Sarbaker, *Tracing the Path of Yoga*, 99.

³⁵ Sarbaker, *Tracing the Path of Yoga*, 83.

translates to: “(By *saṃyama*) on friendliness and so forth, (corresponding) powers.”³⁶ This is found in the portion of the *Yoga Sūtras* where the various types of knowledge (*jñāna*) or liberating knowledge (*viveka-jam jñānam*) developing from *saṃyama* are listed. This suggests that the *brahmavihāra* are among the *siddhis* that arise from *saṃyama*, which is a yogic practice combining *dhāraṇā* (concentration), *dhyāna* (meditation), and *samādhi* (absorption).

Finally, early Buddhism offers meditation (*dhyāna*), another aspect of Yoga which connects to the *siddhis*, for all practitioners to earn merit (*puṇya*), purify thoughts, and inspire insight (Skt. *prajñā*, Pāli *paññā*).³⁷ Although it appears *siddhis* were not codified into the classical eight found in Hinduism until the earlier centuries CE, around when the *Yogasūtra* came to fruition and various traditions were evolving and adding more layers to their cosmologies, supernatural abilities were on display in narratives as early as the *Rg-Veda* and exemplify the embodiment of yogic practice, in that one’s physical reality and abilities may change drastically in the process of *bhāvanā*.³⁸

³⁶ Chapple, *Yoga and the Luminous*, 190.

³⁷ Sarbacker, *Tracing the Path of Yoga*, 79.

³⁸ Bryant, “The Metaphysical Logic of the Siddhis,” 5-6; Sarbacker, *Tracing the Path of Yoga*, 25-26; Stuart Ray Sarbacker, “Power and Meaning in the Yogasūtra of Patañjali,” in *Yoga Powers: Extraordinary Capacities Attained through Meditation and Concentration*, ed. Knut A. Jacobsen, (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2012), 199-204; Sarbacker, *Tracing the Path of Yoga*, 25-27.

Chapter 2: *Siddhis* in the *Yogasūtra*

Arjuna said:
Prakṛiti and *Puruṣa*,
 The field and the knower of the field,
 Knowledge and the knower of knowledge,
 I wish to know about these, Krishna.
Bhagavad Gita XIII.1³⁹

Within the history of the *Yogasūtra*, there are a variety of translations available. The translation used in this project is from *Yoga and the Luminous* (2008) by Dr. Christopher Chapple. The multivalent aspect of translation and interpretation contributes to the polysemous conversation between various systems of yoga and reveals the paradox inherent in reality, that there are multiple ways to read a text. The *Yogasūtra* was compiled around the year 3rd century to 5th century CE and contains 195 verses, or 196 in some versions, and is one of the first attempts to weave together various types of yoga practice into a phenomenological framework which then provides a basis to evaluate the *siddhis*.⁴⁰

Sūtra, in Sanskrit, means “thread” so the *Yogasūtra* then contains the threads of yoga, which was the original inspiration to explore the metaphor of the woven fabric of reality.⁴¹ The *Yogasūtra* is credited to a sage named Patañjali; though the exact identity of Patañjali is unclear, perhaps he was a Sāṃkhyan philosopher.⁴² It was composed sometime between 200 to 400 CE and is based upon a “pithy narrative or thread (*sūtra*)”; it also includes the eight-limbed framework of *aṣṭāṅgayoga* popularized among yoga schools in the 20th century.⁴³ Eventually, the *Yogasūtra* became part of the larger *Pātañjalayogaśāstra*, which includes both the *Yogasūtra* and its main commentary, the *Yogabhāṣya*.⁴⁴ Denoting the generic term for a compiler across

³⁹ Chapple, *The Bhagavad Gita*, 528.

⁴⁰ Sarbacker, *Tracing the Path of Yoga*, 115; Sarbacker, “Power and Meaning in the *Yogasūtra*,” 199-201; Chapple, *Yoga and the Luminous*, 2.

⁴¹ Sarbacker, “Power and Meaning in the *Yogasūtra*,” 199-200.

⁴² Sarbacker, *Tracing the Path of Yoga*, 116-118.

⁴³ Sarbacker, *Tracing the Path of Yoga*, 119-120.

⁴⁴ Sarbacker, *Tracing the Path of Yoga*, 119-121.

several instances in yoga discourse, the *Yogabhāṣya*, or “Explanation of Yoga,” is associated with Vyāsa, although some scholars contend that it may have been an “auto commentary,” meaning it was composed at the same time and by the same author as the *Yogasūtra* to further explicate the *sūtras* themselves.⁴⁵ Therefore, its timing is unclear. From tracing the powers that are mentioned in the *Pātañjalayogasāstra*, it is evident that they were codified into eight powers whose definition extends beyond the Hindu yoga tradition. Vyāsa’s formulation became the “classical” formulation of eight *siddhis*, which are: “smallness (*aṇimā*), lightness (*laghimā*), greatness (*mahimā*), obtaining (*prāpti*), willfulness (*prākāmya*), pervasion (*vaśitva*), lordship (*īśitṛtva*), and the suppression of desire (*kāmāvasāyitva*).⁴⁶

The systematic conception outlined by Pantañjalian *aṣṭāṅgayoga* is sometimes referred to as the *yoga darśana*, the “yoga viewpoint,” as *pātañjalayoga* (“Patañjali’s yoga”), as *rājayoga* (the royal yoga), and in European and American scholarship as “Classical Yoga.”⁴⁷ The *Yogasūtra* forms the *yoga darśana*, one of the six formal Indian philosophical schools, with the others being termed, roughly: *mīmāṃsā* (Examination), *vedānta* (the *Upaniṣads* or end of *Vedas*), *sāṃkhya* (Enumeration), *yoga* (Discipline), *nyāya* (Logic), and *vaiśeṣika* (Categories).⁴⁸ The *yoga darśana* is often placed in a dyadic with Sāṃkhya, being called *Sāṃkhya-Yoga*, a term previously mentioned in this paper.⁴⁹ Within the *Yogasūtra* are four sections, or “feet” (*pāda*): *samādhipāda* (the section on contemplation), *sādhana-pāda* (the section on practice), *vibhūtipāda* (the section on power), and *kaivalyapāda* (the section on freedom).⁵⁰ So moving forward, *pādas* III and IV provide the framework to discuss *siddhis* because those sections discuss the *siddhis* and structure them. According to Larson, the *siddhis* as outlined in *pādas* III and IV can be

⁴⁵ Sarbacker, *Tracing the Path of Yoga*, 119.

⁴⁶ Sarbacker, “Power and Meaning in the *Yogasūtra*,” 203-204.

⁴⁷ Sarbacker, *Tracing the Path of Yoga*, 115-116; Sarbacker, “Power and Meaning in the *Yogasūtra*,” 200.

⁴⁸ Sarbacker, *Tracing the Path of Yoga*, 116.

⁴⁹ Sarbacker, *Tracing the Path of Yoga*, 116.

⁵⁰ Sarbacker, “Power and Meaning in the *Yogasūtra*,” 200.

placed in two categories: “knowledges,” including knowledge of the past and future, sounds of all beings, previous births, mind-reading, telepathy, knowledge of one’s own death, objects near and far, the structure of the cosmos and body, and then embodied “powers” including invisibility, strength, possession of others, disembodiment, perfection of the body, and the five “clairs.”⁵¹

Sarbacker describes how the framework of the *Yogasūtra* cohesively weaves together ascetic and yogic techniques from Buddhism, broader Hinduism, and Jainism under a phenomenology drawn from the Sāṃkhya philosophical tradition.⁵² Its timing historically generally aligns with the rise of a major Hindu empire in India, the Gupta empire, and a reimagining of Indian thought and culture during that era.⁵³ The inclusion of philosophical elements of Jainism, Buddhism, and Sāṃkhya-Yoga in the *Yogasūtra* provides a dynamic conversation between the three systems.⁵⁴ On the question of *karma*, Chapple delineates how Patañjali weaves together various philosophical schools, ranging from the emphasis on suffering (*duḥkha*) and meditative practices from the Buddha, the nature of the relationship between seer (*puruṣa*) and seen (*prakṛti*) from Sāṃkhya, and the ethical components of Jainism such as nonviolence, truthfulness, non-stealing, sexual restraint, and nonpossession.

Interestingly, Patañjali parallels Jainism in describing *karma* as a physicalized substance, and in this case, as colors. YS IV.7 mentions karma being threefold (white, black, or mixed) while the karma of a yogi is colorless.⁵⁵ To summarize its syncretism, Chapple describes the *Yogasūtra* as a “minimalist though thorough approach to overcoming the negative influences of past *karmas*, advocating the application of reflective analysis, ethical precepts, and physical as

⁵¹ Gerald James Larson and Ram Shankar Bhattacharya, *Yoga: India’s Philosophy of Meditation*, (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2008), 125-132.

⁵² Sarbacker, *Tracing the Path of Yoga*, 115-133; Sarbacker, “Power and Meaning in the *Yogasūtra*,” 200; Chapple, *Yoga and the Luminous*, 190.

⁵³ Sarbacker, “Power and Meaning in the *Yogasūtra*,” 200.

⁵⁴ Chapple, *Yoga and the Luminous*, 103-113.

⁵⁵ Chapple, *Yoga and the Luminous*, 205.

well as mental disciplines.”⁵⁶ The philosophy of *karma* is prevalent among several traditions in India and Asia, including Sāṃkhya, Buddhism, and Jainism. Using differing methodologies, each tradition strives to conceive of what karma is and how it functions as a universal law. Sāṃkhya utilizes the framework of the *guṇas* to explain how karma can be understood, while Buddhism focuses on the connection between karma and *duḥkha* (suffering).⁵⁷ Jainism frames karma in terms of *ahiṃsā* and describes it as a physicalized substance. In the sense of Yoga/Sāṃkhya, the final goal is to discern between *puruṣa* and *prakṛti* to reach *mokṣa* (liberation), *kaivalya* (isolation), or *nirodha* (restraint), which all describe a state where the fluctuations of the mind are stilled. Yoga/Sāṃkhya is dualistic in its distinction between consciousness and matter, whereas in *Advaita Vedānta*, the final goal is non-dual: the realization that *ātman* is *brahman*.

In the *Yogasūtra*, YS I.1 states: *yogaś-citta-vṛtti nirodhaḥ*, which defines yoga as “the restraint of the fluctuations of the mind.”⁵⁸ Another translation could be: “Yoga is the control of the modifications of *citta*.” *Citta* is a complicated concept and this paper will refer to an alternate translation of *citta* as *consciousness*, or at least the form of *consciousness* which manifests in *prakṛti*. For most Sanskrit words there are multiple translations, so paradox is inherent in the language of the *Yogasūtra*, whose aphorisms are shorthand encoding larger concepts and philosophical dialogues. This leaves space for interpretations, an aspect which explains the tradition of textual commentaries on the *Yogasūtra*.⁵⁹ Regardless of this abstract quality, the second *sūtra* states that *citta*, meaning mind, consciousness, reason or intelligence, coming from *-cit* meaning perceive, observe, or know, is something that fluctuates but can be stilled, or that

⁵⁶ Chapple, *Yoga and the Luminous*, 8.

⁵⁷ Sarbacker, *Tracing the Path of Yoga*; Chapple, *Yoga and the Luminous*.

⁵⁸ Chapple, *Yoga and the Luminous*, 143.

⁵⁹ Sarbacker, “Power and Meaning in the *Yogasūtra*,” 200.

yoga can help one more or less refine.⁶⁰ *Vṛtti* refers to the “fluctuations” or “modifications” which are categorized in YS 1.6 as *pramāṇa* (correct cognition), *viparyaya* (misconception), *vikalpa* (imagination), *nidrā* (sleep), and *smṛti* (memory).⁶¹ Patañjali states that it is only practice (*abhyāsa*) and freedom from worldly desires (*vairāgya*) that can bring the *citta* into a state of *nirodhaḥ* (restraint) (YS I.12).⁶² YS I.13 states, *tatra sthitau yatno’ bhyāsaḥ*, which translates to: “Practice requires effort and stability,” which emphasizes the importance of the physical aspect of Yoga.⁶³ Then, Sāṃkhya enters the conversation in I.16, where Patañjali describes the “highest release” as the “discernment of *puruṣa*” (*puruṣa-khyāti*) which is a “thirstlessness for the *guṇas*” (*guṇa-vaitrṣṇyam*).⁶⁴

Next, Patañjali defines “awareness” as *saṃprajñāta* which is akin to *consciousness* albeit with a slightly different connotation than *puruṣa* or *citta*. The text then describes the qualities of *Īśvara*, which is (YS I.24) “a distinct *puruṣa* untouched by afflictions, actions, fruitions, or their residue” and is the “seed of omniscience” (*sarva-jñā-bījam*) (I.25) whose expression (*vācakaḥ*, from *-vac* meaning ‘speak’) comes through repetition (*japas*) (I.28) of *praṇava* which is the syllable *om* (I.27).⁶⁵ The utilization of *vācaka* to describe the “expression” of chanting *om* has an interesting connection to the Vedic goddess of speech, *Vāc*, from the *Ṛg Veda* who is connected with the awakening of creation through sound and language. The text then states that the only way to overcome the distractions (*vikṣepa*) is practice (*abhyāsa*) and then urges practices of the *brahmavihāras* (YS 1.33) or “expulsion and retention of breath” (I.34) among a few other methods to achieve “clarification of the mind” or *citta-prasādanam*.⁶⁶ In YS I.41, the text states

⁶⁰ Chapple, *Yoga and the Luminous*, 143.

⁶¹ Chapple, *Yoga and the Luminous*, 144.

⁶² Chapple, *Yoga and the Luminous*, 146-147.

⁶³ Chapple, *Yoga and the Luminous*, 146-147.

⁶⁴ Chapple, *Yoga and the Luminous*, 148.

⁶⁵ Chapple, *Yoga and the Luminous*, 151-152.

⁶⁶ Chapple, *Yoga and the Luminous*, 153-155.

that from this the mind which is “of diminished fluctuations” (*kṣīṇa-vṛtteḥ*) will become like a “precious (or a clear) jewel assuming the color of any near object,..[and] has unity among grasper, grasping, and grasped.”⁶⁷ This *sūtra* utilizes the metaphor of a jewel to describe the state of the mind in *citta-vṛtti-nirodhaḥ*, where it has the clarity and lightness to assume the qualities of anything it would like, which relates to the idea of *saṃyama*.

The first portion of the pāda then continues with a conversation about *samāpattiḥ* (unity, coming together) (YS I.41) in terms of *savitarkā* and *nirvitarkā*, both of which are “subtle conditions” (*sūkṣma-viṣayā*) (YS I.44) and are *samādhi* “with seed” (*sabījaḥ*).⁶⁸ This confirms there are various stages and types of *samādhi*, or various states of *citta* or *consciousness*. Chapple comments, “the levels of unity (*samāpattiḥ*) are explained as four fold: *savitarkā* (with gross object); *nirvitarkā* (free of gross object); *savicārā* (with subtle object); *nirvicārā* (free of subtle object).”⁶⁹ The movement from “reflection” (*savicārā*) to “beyond reflection” (*nirvicārā*), which are both also *sabījaḥ samādhi*, towards seedless (*nirbījaḥ samādhi*) is then discussed. From here, eventually the “clarity of the authentic self” (*adhyātma-prasādaḥ*) will lead to wisdom (*prajñā*) that is “*ṛtaṃ* bearing,” presenting the true view of *puruṣa* (YS I.48).⁷⁰ Once this *saṃskāra* is born, other *saṃskāras* are restricted (*nirodhe*) and this is *nirbījaḥ samādhi*.⁷¹

In pāda II, *Sādhanapāda*, meaning “the section on practice,” *Kriyā Yogaḥ* is defined as well as the five afflictions of ignorance (*avidyā*), egoism or I-am-ness (*asmitā*), attachment (*rāga*), aversion (*dveṣa*), and clinging-to-life (*abhiniveśa*).⁷² Patañjali offers methods to move beyond these afflicted *karmas* (*kleśa-karma*) which all arise from the veil of ignorance (*avidyā*)

⁶⁷ Chapple, *Yoga and the Luminous*, 157-158.

⁶⁸ Chapple, *Yoga and the Luminous*, 159-160.

⁶⁹ Chapple, *Yoga and the Luminous*, 159.

⁷⁰ Chapple, *Yoga and the Luminous*, 161.

⁷¹ Chapple, *Yoga and the Luminous*, 162.

⁷² Chapple, *Yoga and the Luminous*, 224.

and cause the *vr̥ttis* (fluctuations). Meditation (*dhyāna*) (YS II.11) can help one achieve this.⁷³ It is the confusion between the Seer with the Seen (*saṃyogaḥ*) (YS II.23) which causes suffering (*duḥkha*) from which the only release is “discriminative discernment” (*viveka-kyhāti*) (YS II.26).⁷⁴ The path to achieve this is called *aṣṭāṅgayoga*, or eight-limbed yoga, and is a process of purification whereby, through adherence to certain ethical standards and physical practices comprised in the outer limbs (*bahir-aṅga*), one can gain the “light of knowledge” (*jñāna-diptir*) (YS II.28), mastery over the senses, and beyond.⁷⁵

The first mention of *siddhis* is in YS II.44, where the text states: *samādhi-siddhir īśvara-praṇidhānāt*, or, “Perfection in *samādhi* (arises) from dedication to *Īśvara*.”⁷⁶ Here, *siddhir(h)* seems to be used to urge for *samādhi* to remain grounded in colorless *puruṣa* rather than speaking to a distinct ability or superpower. It describes the remaining process through the limbs of *aṣṭāṅgayoga*, concluding with a description of *pratyāhāra* or “inwardness of the senses” which cultivates the command of the senses (*vaśyatā indriyāṇām*) (YS II.55) necessary for *siddhis* to arise.⁷⁷

Pāda III is called *Vibhūti Pāda* which contains *vi-* (a prefix and intensifier) + verb root *bhū* (“to become”).⁷⁸ *Vibhūti* translates to “manifestation of might, great power, superhuman power” which evokes the *siddhis*, and is another term used for *siddhis*. So the way the *siddhis* arise is outlined in pāda III, with the beginning premise of *saṃyama* being the combination of concentration on a single point (*dhāraṇā*), meditation with is the ability to concentrate on an intention (*dhyāna*), and then *samādhi* (or absorption).⁷⁹ According to Patañjali, the *siddhis*

⁷³ Chapple, *Yoga and the Luminous*, 165-166.

⁷⁴ Chapple, *Yoga and the Luminous*, 171-172.

⁷⁵ Chapple, *Yoga and the Luminous*, 172; Chapple, “*Siddhis in the Yogasūtra*,” 224-225.

⁷⁶ Chapple, *Yoga and the Luminous*, 178.

⁷⁷ Chapple, *Yoga and the Luminous*, 181.

⁷⁸ Chapple, “*Siddhis in the Yogasūtra*,” 223.

⁷⁹ Chapple, “*Siddhis in the Yogasūtra*,” 223.

develop from the application of *saṃyama*, the three-fold practice combining the three inner limbs (*antar-aṅga*) of *aṣṭāṅgayoga*: concentration (*dhāraṇā*), meditation (*dhyāna*), and *samādhi* (non-dual absorption). Through mastery (*jayāt*) of *saṃyama*, a yogi gains the “splendor of wisdom” (*prajñā ālokaḥ*).⁸⁰ On a practical level, one learns to refine awareness and gains the ability to focus and hold awareness on the object of one’s choice.

At the beginning of Pāda III is an explanation of *saṃyama*. YS III.1 states, “Concentration (*dhāraṇā*) of the mind is (its) binding to a place.”⁸¹ YS III.2 states, “The extension of one intention there is meditation (*dhyānam*).” YS III.3 states, “When the purpose alone shines forth as if empty of own form, that indeed is *samādhi*.” Lastly, YS III.4 concludes, “The unity of these three is *saṃyama*.”⁸² Shifting the gaze inwards (*pratyāhāra*) is the bridge between ordinary awareness and the *siddhis*. The Yogasūtra distinguishes between the inner limbs (*antar aṅgam*) (YS III.7) comprising *saṃyama*: (6) *dhāraṇā*, (7) *dhyāna*, and (8) *samādhi*, and the outer limbs (*bahir aṅgam*)(YS III.8) including (1) *yamas*, (2) *niyamas*, (3) *āsana*, (4) *prāṇāyāma*, and (5) *pratyāhāra*.⁸³ *Pratyāhāra* is the bridge to higher states of consciousness (*citti-śakti*). To experience those elevated states, ultimately, the *buddhi* (intellect), which delivers all experience to *puruṣa*, must dissolve. Another layer to consider is that there is also power in understanding that experience colors perception and the difficulty of truly knowing or understanding what another being thinks or feels. Perhaps there is liberation in having the veil lifted momentarily to humbly sense the limitations of ordinary awareness, and to experience the field of consciousness expanding wider than the body.

⁸⁰ Chapple, *Yoga and the Luminous*, 184.

⁸¹ Chapple, *Yoga and the Luminous*, 183.

⁸² Chapple, *Yoga and the Luminous*, 184.

⁸³ Chapple, *Yoga and the Luminous*, 184-185.

From there what unfolds from this intense practice of inner concentration is a sequence of *pariṇāmas*, or “transformations (of consciousness),” starting in YS III.9.⁸⁴ In “*Siddhis* in the

Yogasūtra, Christopher Key Chapple, writes, regarding the multivalency of reality:

According to yoga, the structures underlying perception are malleable and can be reformed and directed away from lethargy and passion (*tamas* and *rajas*) towards the illuminative (*sattva*). In the *Yogasūtra*, the altering of the world begins with altering the mind. The starting point is *pariṇāma*, the five-fold process of transformation.⁸⁵

It involves tracing the movement of causality backwards from its physical manifestation to its point of origin, or original cause. Probing the origin or cause of an experience is *pariṇāma* and provides a purpose for why that experience was experienced. Once the purpose is realized, it no longer holds the power to influence future actions and *karmas*, both afflicted and unafflicted.⁸⁶

First there is *nirodha-pariṇāma* where everything disappears and the *saṃskāra* coming from that is a “calm flow” (*praśānta vāhitā*) (YS III.10), then *samādhi-pariṇāma* where the sense of focus and absorption is directed, and then followed by *ekāgratā-pariṇāma* which describes a laser beam focus.⁸⁷ This focus comes down to the realm of the *guṇas*, the three strands of existence which fluctuate, and then one is able to go beyond and reconstitute the *guṇas* as a result, with an aim towards the quality of *sattva* in the *buddhi*. Moving from subtle to gross, the fourth is *guṇa pariṇāma* and pertains to mastery over the realm of the elements (*mahābhūta*) and senses (*indriyā*) as it pertains to *dharma* (nature, character, essential quality), *lakṣaṇa* (designation, mark, symbol), and *avasthā* (stability, state, condition) (YS III.13).⁸⁸ In this sense, *dharma* starts to interact with the holder of that *dharma* (*dharmī*) (YS III.14).⁸⁹ The fifth and final *pariṇāma* involves all aspects of time in terms of an ongoing awareness of experience

⁸⁴ Chapple, “*Siddhis* in the *Yogasūtra*,” 224-225.

⁸⁵ Chapple, “*Siddhis* in the *Yogasūtra*,” 225.

⁸⁶ Chapple, “*Siddhis* in the *Yogasūtra*,” 225.

⁸⁷ Chapple, “*Siddhis* in the *Yogasūtra*,” 225-26; Chapple, *Yoga and the Luminous*, 185.

⁸⁸ Chapple, *Yoga and the Luminous*, 186-187.

⁸⁹ Chapple, *Yoga and the Luminous*, 187.

within past, present, and future.⁹⁰ Patañjali connects *pariṇāma* as the basis for the *siddhis*, or perfections. It describes an ability to zoom in and out, and back again, on aspects and qualities of various objects of various sizes and levels of materiality or density. Essentially, using the will to understand world creation via mental constructs, one can mold the world as intended.⁹¹

Once *pariṇāma* is established, Chapple cites the initial moment of clarity as *samādhi pariṇāma*, where there is the “destruction of objectivity” and “arising of one-pointedness”; this stage is the entry point to the *siddhis*, including knowledge of past lives, awareness of the scope of time, information about one’s death, “invisibility,” embodiment of qualities of certain animals and celestial figures, visions of realized beings, perfection of the body, moving between bodies and through space, and perhaps most importantly, the capacity to discern between *puruṣa* and *prakṛti*.⁹² YS III.17 through YS III.48 outlines the extraordinary abilities that arise from *saṁyama* on various objects.⁹³ YS III.36 discusses intuitive hearing, touching, seeing, tasting, and smelling, which relates to the subtle discernment of the five *elements*, or the five “clairs” as many new age circles call these abilities.⁹⁴ YS III.37 provides a warning, stating that these abilities are ultimately impediments to *samādhi* because they are things that appear in this world and are manifestations of what is going on behind the veil, so to speak.⁹⁵ One must not be attached.

The concluding segment of Pāda III, following its progressive display of *saṁyama*, encourages the discernment between *sattva* and *puruṣa* to maintain “sovereignty over all states of being and knowledge of all” (YS III.49) and find the state of *kaivalyam*, or isolation (YS III.50) to become well-established (*sthāni*; from *-sthāna* (the act of standing, a state) + *-in*, a

⁹⁰ Chapple, “*Siddhis in the Yogasūtra*,” 227.

⁹¹ Chapple, “*Siddhis in the Yogasūtra*,” 224.

⁹² Chapple, “*Siddhis in the Yogasūtra*,” 227-232.

⁹³ Chapple, *Yoga and the Luminous*, 188-197.

⁹⁴ Chapple, *Yoga and the Luminous*, 193-194.

⁹⁵ Chapple, *Yoga and the Luminous*, 194.

possessive suffix) (YS III.51).⁹⁶ Then, YS III.52 mentions how from *saṁyama* on the moment and its succession, something akin to observing thoughts in meditation, there is *viveka-jam jñānam*, or the knowledge born of discrimination, which is “liberating, (inclusive of) all conditions and all times and nonsuccessive” (YS III.54).⁹⁷ So then, if *viveka-jam jñānam* comes from *saṁyama* on the moment and its succession, and in that moment there is a sameness in purity between the *sattvic* quality of *buddhi* and *puruṣa*, as is stated in the concluding sūtra of Pāda IV, then there is *kaivalya*, meaning space, isolation, or freedom. The *buddhi* (intellect) in the *sattvic* state must dissolve in order for *prakṛti* to realize the nature of *puruṣa*. Though some translate *kaivalyam* as “isolation,” this paper contends that *kaivalya* refers to the sense of embodied internal space created in the mind from awakening *puruṣa* and discerning between *sattvic* quality of *buddhi* and *puruṣa*. In Pāda IV, *Kaivalya Pāda*, the implications of reaching the spaciousness of *kaivalya* is detailed.

The first sūtra of *Kaivalya Pāda* (YS IV.1) declares: *janma-oṣadhi-mantra-tapaḥ samādhi-jāḥ siddhayaḥ*, which Chapple translates as “Perfections are born due to birth, drugs, *mantra*, austerity, or *samādhi*.”⁹⁸ Patañjali is acknowledging that there are multiple paths to the *siddhis*, and the portion regarding “drugs” or “herbs” as an alternate method is particularly intriguing and an area for future research.⁹⁹ In YS IV.2, there is a discussion about the remaining *saṁskāras* flowing from *prakṛti* that cause *pariṇāma* into other births.¹⁰⁰ There remains an “initiator” (*prayojakaṁ*) (YS IV.5) who is distinct from experience, or the fluctuation of the *guṇas*, and resides as the *sattvic* quality of the *buddhi*, who is pure like *puruṣa*, and causes no

⁹⁶ Chapple, *Yoga and the Luminous*, 199-200.

⁹⁷ Chapple, *Yoga and the Luminous*, 202.

⁹⁸ Chapple, *Yoga and the Luminous*, 203.

⁹⁹ Stuart Ray Sarbacker, “Herbs (*Auśadhi*) as a Means to Spiritual Accomplishments (Siddhi) in Patañjali’s *Yogasūtra*,” *International Journal of Hindu Studies* 17, no. 1 (April 2013): 37–56. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11407-013-9137-3>.

¹⁰⁰ Chapple, *Yoga and the Luminous*, 203.

residue (*anāśayam*) and whose *karma* is “neither white nor black” (IV.6).¹⁰¹ It then discusses the unseen connection of *saṃskāras* (impression left by actions done in the past) among “birth, places, and times” (YS IV.9), to which there is no beginning (*anāditvaṃ*) due to the unfolding of desire (*āśiṣaḥ*) (IV.10).¹⁰² The *sūtra* states that various paths of *dharma* provide a reason for *saṃskāras* to shape throughout the past and future, because of their “manifest and subtle *guṇa* natures”(YS IV.13).¹⁰³

The text then enters the quantum realm and previews what will be discussed later regarding a quantum reality that is “objectively indefinite” and based upon the nature of observation on an object. For example, in YS IV.17, the text states, “An object of the mind is known or not known due to the anticipation that colors it (the mind).”¹⁰⁴ *Puruṣa* can see the *citta-vṛttis*, while *prakṛti* cannot see this because of its nonconscious nature, however YS IV.20 confirms that *puruṣa* does not contain the *citta-vṛttis* but remains a separate, watchful eye.¹⁰⁵ Since the human body exists in the realm of *prakṛti*, it is limited by the fact that the *buddhi* at its best can still never be *puruṣa*, so it can only truly see a reflection of *puruṣa* or “higher consciousness” (*citeḥ*) through the “perception of one’s own intellect” (*svabuddhi-saṃvedanam*) (IV.22).¹⁰⁶ However, through the luminosity uncovered even from briefly experiencing the mere reflection of *puruṣa* as a result of established practice designed to purify the density covering the reflected light of *puruṣa*, then “all purposes” can be known (YS IV.23).¹⁰⁷ This light illuminates the veil of ignorance (*avidyā*) and creates the conditions for *kaivalya*, or isolation, given its

¹⁰¹ Chapple, *Yoga and the Luminous*, 204.

¹⁰² Chapple, *Yoga and the Luminous*, 205-206.

¹⁰³ Chapple, *Yoga and the Luminous*, 207.

¹⁰⁴ Chapple, *Yoga and the Luminous*, 208-209.

¹⁰⁵ Chapple, *Yoga and the Luminous*, 208-209.

¹⁰⁶ Chapple, *Yoga and the Luminous*, 210.

¹⁰⁷ Chapple, *Yoga and the Luminous*, 211.

ability to illuminate the *vṛttis* and lead to the *citta* being “inclined toward discrimination,” (*viveka*) realizing its true illuminative nature.

YS IV.29 describes this illuminative state of discriminative discernment (*viveka-khyāti*) where no *karma* is accumulating as *dharma-megha-samādhi*, or the cloud (*megha*) of *dharma-samādhi*, where *prakṛti*, veiled in the light of *puruṣa* suddenly aligns with *dharma*, its essential nature or quality, and thereby returns to the “origin of the *guṇas*” and finally understands its purpose. This stops the unfolding of *pariṇāmas*, and seems to symbolize the end of a process.¹⁰⁸ The concluding sūtra YS IV.34 describes yoga as an embodied experience. It states that *kaivalya* is the “steadfastness in own form” (*svarūpa-pratiṣṭhā*) and the “power of higher consciousness” (*citi-śakti*) which arises from returning to the “origin of the *guṇas*.”¹⁰⁹ This return to the origin of the *guṇas* happens through discriminative discernment (*viveka-khyāti*) between *prakṛti* and *puruṣa* which creates the conditions for the cessation of afflicted *karmas*. This stops the process of *pariṇāma* and provides no purpose for the *guṇas* which then allows, as was iterated in YS I.3, for “the seer to abide in its own form.”¹¹⁰ *Kaivalya* describes an embodied state in between form and formless that is engaged in what this paper refers to as the cosmic dance between *puruṣa* and *prakṛti*, revealing the power of higher consciousness that is revealed through the *siddhis* as well. Overall, within the framework of Patañjali’s *aṣṭāṅgayoga*, the *siddhis* arise from a subtilizing process that involves dissolving the *buddhi* (intellect) through focusing awareness on increasingly abstract objects until the notion of separation dissipates, revealing a clarity of *citta* that illuminates the fabric of *citta* itself and contains a reality which can be accessed and altered via the five senses.

¹⁰⁸ Chapple, *Yoga and the Luminous*, 213.

¹⁰⁹ Chapple, *Yoga and the Luminous*, 215.

¹¹⁰ Chapple, *Yoga and the Luminous*, 143-144.

Using the framework of *saṃyama* and the proceeding *pariṇāmas* as the basis for the *siddhis*, Pādas III and IV provide an effective framework for understanding why practices like yoga are effective in transforming perception and thereby, the state of *citta* or consciousness. The elusive question is: what is *consciousness*, then? Is it physical matter, an unseen force, or both, or neither? If the answer were easy or simple, it would not be worth discussing, however there is no solid consensus on what *consciousness* or the *mind* really is as it pertains to humans and also all of creation, from a theological perspective. Science says one thing, while religion says another, and the wheel goes on and on in this duality of disagreement over what is really happening. What the sages and mystics of history have offered is hope for a way out through belief in another world, in the sense that perhaps there is a veil that can be lifted to some unseen dimension which greater beings have some sense of and which many know nothing about due to nothing more than a lack of awareness (i.e. ignorance, or *avidyā*). Some texts say it is like dreaming, and we forget who we are, and perhaps part of what yoga does is help the body remember its primordial origins and wake up into the dream of being embodied and in connection to celestial bodies and the elements that compose creation.

The *siddhis* that great beings have exhibited and supernatural tales about these great beings substantiate the central role of powers in the framework of yoga history. There is ongoing debate in the field about whether texts are symbolically talking about these extraordinary abilities or if they are an observable reality.¹¹¹ This paper contends that the most appropriate answer right now is that it may be a bit of both and will extrapolate further upon the range of implications of the *siddhis*.

¹¹¹ Kripal, “The Evolving *Siddhis*,” 209; Sarbacker, “Power and Meaning in the *Yogasūtra*,” 206-213.

Chapter 3: Metaphor Theory in the *Śiva Saṃhitā* and *Yogasūtra*

If you push too hard to get free of what you've been trapped in, that very pushing entraps you... Then you see the whole process is constantly the ascent and descent, and it's all just a liquid process in which both are going on all the time. You're constantly bringing spirit down into form, and you're constantly, as a form, moving towards spirit, or the formless. It's the dance of form and formless.¹¹²

Ram Dass

Pādas III and IV offer a foundation for conversations about duality and paradox because of the dynamic tension they draw between *puruṣa* and *prakṛti*. Essentially, the human conceptual system is metaphorical in nature and grounded in the physical body's perception of experience via webs of association in the mind, and so the webbed aspect of metaphorical thinking explains how *maṇḍalas*, via sight, and *mantras*, via sound, for example, and these webs of different metaphors encode layered aspects of reality that often are multivalent and paradoxical.

Defining what is coined as *conceptual metaphor theory*, Lakoff writes, "Conceptual metaphor is a natural part of human thought, and linguistic metaphor is a natural part of human language. Moreover, which metaphors we have and what they mean depend on the nature of our bodies, our interactions in the physical environment, and our social and cultural practices."¹¹³ Lakoff is speaking about the idea of *embodiment* and what this paper refers to as *embodied metaphors*.

Conceptual metaphors speak to the understanding of one idea or conceptual domain in terms of another, as in the culturally embedded metaphor of love as a journey. In *Where Metaphors Come From* (2015), Zoltán Kövecses offers a postmodernist critique of conceptual metaphor theory for its "lack of integrating context into its model of metaphorical meaning making" and argues that "metaphorical meaning making, is affected and shaped not only by the

¹¹² "The Dance between Form and Formlessness," Ram Dass (Love Serve Remember Foundation, July 16, 2018), <https://www.ramdass.org/the-dance-between-form-and-formlessness/#:~:text=You%27re%20constantly%20bringing%20spirit.>

¹¹³ Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, 247.

body (as context), but also by the linguistic, conceptual-cognitive, and situational contexts.”¹¹⁴ Kövecses notes that the body may be the most crucial context to consider since cognitive sciences has shown that “human cognition is grounded, or embodied, in experience in multiple ways.” In his view, metaphorical cognition is not only based on the body but also in daily situations and interactions, accumulating in our conceptual knowledge.¹¹⁵ This reformulation of conceptual metaphor theory is interesting as it pertains to yoga because modern postural yoga is heavily focused on body-centered practices, as previously cited.

In the Patañjalian context, this emphasis on context aside from bodily experience and in the sense of daily experience can help explain why it takes *abhyāsa* to become established in the practice of yoga. It takes practice (*abhyāsa*) and repetition to expose the conceptual system to new metaphors via multi-modal *image schemas* that build one’s conceptual knowledge, allowing new image schemas to become ingrained in the conceptual system as *embodied metaphors*. Save for a few rare souls, for most the *siddhis* do not arise without cultivation (*bhāvanā*) and according to YS I.13, without some effort (*yatnaḥ*) in stability (*sthitau*).¹¹⁶ Drawing from cognitive linguistics, conceptual metaphor theory and embodied cognition can help us understand why practices and texts like the *Yogasūtra* invoke *pariṇāmas*, or transformations of consciousness. The idea explored here is that in order to shift states of consciousness, or to be able to have that experience, underlying frameworks of reality must shift away from classical materialist notions of consciousness and matter. The difference between the classical material Cartesian model of the mind is that the body, world, perception and action are understood as independent and in the embodied cognition model of the mind, they are understood to be

¹¹⁴ Zoltán Kövecses, *Where Metaphors Come From: Reconsidering Context in Metaphor* (New York, New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 175-178.

¹¹⁵ Kövecses, *Where Metaphors Come From*, 200.

¹¹⁶ Chapple, *Yoga and the Luminous*, 146-147.

dynamically related to each other. It is from this classical materialist lens that contemporary psychology, neuroscience, and philosophy derive.¹¹⁷

According to the framework outlined in this paper, language, which is a part of *prakṛti*, shapes thought, shaping perceptions of reality and frameworks of belief in networks of association. Language and visual symbols encode various aspects of primordial shapes nested within this network in *image schemas*, an idea that expounds upon *schemas* as was coined by Lakoff and Johnson. In “A Cognitive Approach to Tantric Language,” Timalsina defines a *schema* as “a mental framework, a way of organizing knowledge, a map for us to evaluate the situation and guide response” or following Piaget, “a cohesive, repeatable action sequence possessing component actions that are tightly interconnected and governed by a core meaning.”¹¹⁸ Timalsina provides a broad definition of *image schema*: “the structure of our cognitive process that helps us establish patterns of understanding and reasoning” and also “a prelinguistic structure of experience that guides the process of mapping over domains in forming conceptual metaphors.”¹¹⁹ The schemas of Tantric language present abstract metaphors and specific narratives to display “altered states of consciousness that are mapped in bodily language and the mystical and esoteric experiences are described in terms of orgasmic or other forms of somatic experiences.”¹²⁰

Later theories expounded upon image schemas and embodied aspects of cognition, such as the *conceptual blending theory* associated with Mark Turner and Gilles Fauconnier.¹²¹

Conceptual blending theory addresses more complex mappings and interactions between domains in the form of entrenched domains, like sensation and movement, in *image schemas*

¹¹⁷ Kelly et al., *Irreducible Mind*, 113.

¹¹⁸ Sthaneshwar Timalsina, “A Cognitive Approach to Tantric Language.” *Religions* 7, no. 12 (2016): 2-3, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel7120139>.

¹¹⁹ Timalsina, “A Cognitive Approach to Tantric Language,” 3.

¹²⁰ Timalsina, “A Cognitive Approach to Tantric Language,” 3.

¹²¹ Hayes and Timalsina, “‘Cognitive Science and the Study of Yoga and Tantra’,” 3.

which here are defined as “the ability to hold different domains in mind” in order to “construct new concepts” and “then play with them [which] is at the core of human cognition.”¹²² *Image schemas* contain shifting, embodied patterns unfolding physically in time, combining multiple elements to encode patterns of experience beyond the visual. *Image schemas*, then, are experienced via the body and senses, which forms an object of perception in the *buddhi* (intellect), *ahamkāra* (ego, or I-maker), and *manas* (mind), and are evoked through activating one or several parts of that *image schema* until it becomes something that can be called on internally, as in the process of *saṁyama*. Consciousness, in this sense, does not operate as a single point but as an interweaving network shaping matter together in fluctuating forms within this network based upon collective memory and patterning. Realizing the illuminative nature of *puruṣa* allows one to wake up and sense this underlying network, which is not *puruṣa* itself but something *puruṣa* is overseeing. From a Sāṁkhyan perspective, *puruṣa* holds space for the waves and frequencies composing matter (i.e. *guṇas*) to move into various forms based upon the *karma* that needs to unfold within consciousness networks for it to continue evolving.

Much later around the 7th century CE, the *Yogavasiṣṭha* echoes the metaphor of a woven creation cited earlier, in stories such as Puṇya and Pāvana, conveying the idea that consciousness is not isolated but rather interconnected and relative.¹²³ Some universal themes that appear within “The Story of Puṇya and Pāvana” are relationships as a vehicle for awakening, loss and grief, and the nature of reality as both dual and non-dual. Beings exist in collectives and consciousness functions more like a web than a single point. It is from contemplating on this interconnectivity that one intuits a larger grid within which our bodies and consciousness move and operate.

Relationships within the web of consciousness and also choosing not to identify with limited

¹²² Levy, “Cognitive Linguistics and Religion,” 144.

¹²³ Christopher Key Chapple and Swami Venkatesananda. *Concise Yoga Vasistha*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1984), 176-179.

concepts of 'I' creates a shift where mental faculties are used to understand the Self in a new way so that the ego is no longer guiding action. Instead, the newly experienced identification with infinite consciousness provides the framework for liberating action within the Self and relationship. This revelation of the body as separate from consciousness does not mean that one is freed from action. Rather, this *knowledge* opens up this plane in a beautiful expansiveness.

Reality, in this framework, is not consciousness or matter but the perception of this interaction via the experiencer. It is constructed via the perception arising from the *manas*, *buddhi*, and *ahaṃkāra*, as it is understood in Sāṃkhya. In order to understand subtler aspects, one must learn to subtilizing *tattvas* as well as the *guṇas*. The *siddhis* tune into the subtler forms of objects via the ability to discern *puruṣa* from *prakṛti*. *Siddhis* show the farther extent of the various shapes and forms dancing with the formless. Sarbacker uses the term *numinous* to understand *siddhis*, or *yoga powers*, which “blur the distinction between the human and the divine since yogins and yoginīs become transformed into deities and are as much objects of fear as objects of awe.”¹²⁴ This connects with the concept of embodied cognition via *image schemas*. Whatever any of this actually is appears in various names and iterations throughout the vast library of literature, and the human inability to agree on what to call it is why a conversation about the *siddhis* shifts the conversation to something more palpable and focused on what is or is not possible in the known realm. There seems to be enough evidence to suggest that humans throughout history have been capable of developing *siddhis*, which may or may not appear outwardly superhuman.

Viewpoints on metaphoric thinking are convergent with Tantra which teaches an elaborate system of subtle body practices that acknowledge the metaphoric nature of experience and shares the idea that reality is constructed via metaphor and relational webs of association

¹²⁴ Jacobsen., ed, “Introduction,” 22; 3; Sarbacker, “Power and Meaning in the Yogasūtra,” 217-218.

based upon one's physical experience of being in a body and perceiving via the senses. This makes tantric texts interesting because they show the metaphorical aspect of reality and can be used as a framework for reading other texts like the *Yogasūtra*.¹²⁵ Within yoga and tantra, knowledge of the subtle body is symbolized metaphorically and awoken in the human body via mantras, sound, and visualization, among other techniques. In "A Cognitive Approach to Tantric Language," Timalsina describes these tools to awaken the subtle body via maṇḍalas and mantras, for example, as forming a "*meta-language*" leading to esoteric Tantric experiences.¹²⁶ What tantric texts offer is a framework for a metaphorical reality dependent on esoteric or mystical states of experiences, those which lie beyond ordinary awareness, which will be explored in this paper via the lens of the *Śiva Saṃhitā*.

Timalsina describes how "mystical" language broadly utilizes images and metaphors and that research on the metaphorical aspect of Tantric language provides a framework for reading other varieties of mystical expressions across cultures.¹²⁷ Understanding the cognitive mechanism beneath this process allows us to contextualize the embodied experience that Tantric literature endeavors to capture by the use of metaphors.¹²⁸ Given this clear emphasis on metaphor in Tantra and yogic texts, it makes sense to look at the *siddhis* metaphorically as well and not necessarily think about the *siddhis* in terms of literally gaining the ability to fly or becoming an elephant, and instead to conceive of *siddhis* more so in terms of *embodied aspects*, whether it be of deities, or of the *brahmavihāras* and compassion, that can be integrated via these primordial tools including visual and aural aspects to awaken the memories stored in the elements that comprise the body, and the story they tell about all of this, whatever it is. Overall, learning tools

¹²⁵ Timalsina, "A Cognitive Approach to Tantric Language," 1.

¹²⁶ Timalsina, "A Cognitive Approach to Tantric Language," 3-4.

¹²⁷ Timalsina, "A Cognitive Approach to Tantric Language," 1-2.

¹²⁸ Timalsina, "A Cognitive Approach to Tantric Language," 10.

to get into the subtle body through *image schemas* often involves some aspect of *language* (i.e. *pratipakṣa-bhāvanam*; YS II.33) and are the bridge to higher states of awareness associated with the *siddhis*.

The perspective cognitive linguistics offers is that there are elements of space and time encoded in the human word. Given that creation is in constant flux and that thought forms continue to appear like waves in the ocean, the only way to shift reality is to get behind these frameworks and belief systems that are structuring the experience of reality, such as the fluctuating thought forms appearing as *vṛttis* and afflicted (*kleśa*) karmas, for example. The *Yogasūtra* offers practices such as *pratipakṣa-bhāvanam* (cultivation of opposites) and *dhyāna* (meditation) which go behind the veil to still the *vṛttis* and help one learn how to read the ocean better, in *surfspeak*. Timalsina writes, “Rather than making metaphors an after-effect of symbolic activity, this assumption brings metaphoric thinking to the very heart of what it means to have a conscious experience.”¹²⁹ This is to suggest that yogic texts cannot be separated from the metaphorical aspect of reality. Timalsina mentions that in the past studying these texts has been problematic, both because of the challenge of unraveling the overlapping schemas contained within metaphors and symbols seen in Tantric and mystical texts, and also because mainstream contemporary scholarship dismisses these texts due to the epistemic frameworks of Western hermeneutics being non-metaphoric, or feeling that metaphors are subordinate to some separate “reality.”¹³⁰ This is why portions like Pādas III and IV of the *Yogasūtra* have been dismissed in the past.

Given the significance of metaphors in shaping human thought and experience and their consideration within this context, this paper proposes that the *Yogasūtra* utilizes metaphorical

¹²⁹ Timalsina, “A Cognitive Approach to Tantric Language,” 10.

¹³⁰ Timalsina, “A Cognitive Approach to Tantric Language,” 10-12.

webs of association among concepts to codify systems for consciousness transformation and may discuss extraordinary abilities of the practitioners as evidence for its effectiveness, given that many traditions at the time were vying for adherents. Consciousness can be embodied in extraordinary ways, and pādas III and IV provide a framework to understand the *siddhis* through an interdisciplinary lens, and hence, lead to a holistic understanding of the effectiveness of sustained yoga and subtle body practices in effecting radical transformations of consciousness and their positive potential when grounded both in the body and an ethical component, a template provided in the *Yogasūtra*.

The *Yogasūtra* outlines a framework for postmodern yogis to understand how consciousness can evolve; its secular and minimalistic style does well in the postmodern age despite its rise to popularity being connected to colonialism and the British empire; it deconstructs the process of consciousness evolution via *saṁyama* to substantiate how following the eight-limbed framework can manifest subtle faculties including mastery of the senses and elements. However, many modern yoga schools ignore pādas III and IV for various reasons, but perhaps also due to the philosophical rigor and study required to understand the concepts in the text. The hope is that a closer reading of the text among yoga schools, teachers, and practitioners would reveal a universe where the *siddhis* are natural and encourage consciousness to manifest externally in a more expansive, open, peaceful, and loving way.

The *Śiva Saṁhitā*, a core Sanskrit text of Haṭha Yoga, is also a Tantric text and conceptualizes *siddhis* within a Tantric framework that can be compared and contrasted with the *Yogasūtra*.¹³¹ It offers a lens on the conversation about *siddhis* within Haṭha Yoga and Tantric traditions. Composed between 1300 to 1500 CE, it contains five chapters, featuring a dialogue on the practice of Yoga between Śiva and his consort, Pārvatī, and emphasizes embodiment and

¹³¹ James Mallinson, *The Śiva Saṁhitā*, (YogaVidya.com, 2007).

practice in regards to the manifestation of *siddhis*.¹³² Borrowing from earlier Haṭha texts such as the *Amṛtasiddhi* and *Dattātreya yogaśāstra*, the *Śiva Saṃhitā* eclectically combines elements of the Tantric school of Śrī Vidyā, nondual Vedāntic philosophy, and Haṭha Yoga, whose texts are disjointed in their own right, oftentimes compiling concepts from several schools and philosophies.¹³³ It provides another lens to evaluate the evolution of *siddhis*. While stylistically the *Śiva Saṃhitā* feels less systematic than Patañjali's *aṣṭāṅgayoga*, it provides practitioners with specific visualizations and practices to manifest *siddhis*.

The first chapter, “The Vital Principle,” proclaims “one true eternal knowledge” and details various methods and practices for liberation as well as their associated philosophical standpoints.¹³⁴ Similar to the *Yogasūtra* in its dedication to Īśvara as the “Lord” or “supreme ruler,” the *Śiva Saṃhitā* starts off listing many paths and philosophies, but ultimately concludes that all teachings are transcended by those in the text. Purporting its teachings as superior is a common theme among texts about the practice of Yoga, which makes sense considering the wide variety of traditions would naturally be competing for followers.

To introduce its cosmology, the text details how “mistaken perception of the world” is a result of “imagination” and “erroneous inference” (ŚS 1.41), mimicking YS 1.8 - 1.9, which states: “Error, or false knowledge, has no foundation in form. Imagining is the result of words and knowledge that are empty of an object.”¹³⁵ While the *Yogasūtra* does not specifically mention *saṃsāra* like the *Śiva Saṃhitā*, both purport that ignorance (*avidyā*) is the cause of this dualistic confusion (*saṃyogaḥ*) between seen (*prakṛti*) and seer (*puruṣa*), or more broadly, between the world and the self. ŚS I.40 states that “the mistaken perception of the world always

¹³² Mallinson, *The Śiva Saṃhitā*, xi.

¹³³ Mallinson, *The Śiva Saṃhitā*, ix.

¹³⁴ Mallinson, *The Śiva Saṃhitā*, 1-25.

¹³⁵ Mallinson, *The Śiva Saṃhitā*, 10-11; Chapple, *Yoga and the Luminous*, 116.

disappears on cognition of the self.”¹³⁶ Aligning with the tradition of Goddess worship seen in Tantra, the *Śiva Saṃhitā* then introduces Māyā as the mother of the universe whose play both makes the world appear and is the entity responsible for confusion (*saṃyoga*) and ignorance (*avidyā*). She is the goddess of illusion. Refutation and knowledge can make this disappear, and it is through the union of Śiva and Shakti that the five elements (*mahābhūta*) arise and thereby combine gross elements in the “egg of Brahma,” creating the body. Its actions form the *jīva*, taking various forms as a result of its action and being born over and over again until its purpose is met, and it disappears. The *Yogasūtra* maintains a dualistic *Sāṃkhyan* paradigm between *puruṣa* and *prakṛti* while the *Śiva Saṃhitā* veers away from *Sāṃkhya* and emphasizes tantric goddess worship. While the *siddhis* are not mentioned in the first chapter of the *Śiva Saṃhitā*, it is worth noting some of the similarities and differences between each texts’ cosmology.

Chapter 2, “Knowledge,” emphasizes the translatory relationship between microcosm and macrocosm. It describes the *nāḍīs*, the internal digestive fire, *kuṇḍalinī*, and the relationship between *karma* and *jīva* as it relates to liberation.¹³⁷ In ŚS 2.46 - 47, the text situates knowledge as the path to liberation:

Just as one can mistakenly consider mother-of-pearl to be silver, so, through the fault of one’s karma, Brahman can be considered to be the universe. Knowledge is more than capable of eradicating the delusion that arises together with desires. Were such knowledge to arise, it would be the means to liberation.¹³⁸

Without mentioning any *siddhis*, Chapter 2 outlines a cosmological foundation for the knowledge that can arise from the practice of Yoga. In Chapter 3, “Practice,” the *Śiva Saṃhitā* has its first mention of *siddhi* or “perfection” as arising from faith and practice.¹³⁹ It states that one must first possess the necessary faith to believe that practice will “bear fruit” and also

¹³⁶ Mallinson, *The Śiva Saṃhitā*, 10.

¹³⁷ Mallinson, *The Śiva Saṃhitā*, 26-39.

¹³⁸ Mallinson, *The Śiva Saṃhitā*, 36-37.

¹³⁹ Mallinson, *The Śiva Saṃhitā*, 43-44.

remember to honor the Guru.¹⁴⁰ To contrast, as a philosophical compendium, Patañjali's *Yogasūtra* does not mention the importance of a Guru or diet specifically, maintaining a minimalist and secular point-of-view.

Chapter 3 of the *Śiva Saṃhitā*, "Practice," emphasizes the benefits of practice in the yogi's body and appearance.¹⁴¹ It also describes the winds, or *vāyus*, in the body, the importance of a Guru, the four stages of Yoga, five elemental visualizations, and four *āsanas*. Through practice resulting in the mastery of the breath, suffering and sin are destroyed, hindrances can be overcome, and the *siddhis* can appear. In ŚS 3.52, the text names "*Bhuchari Siddhi*," "whereby... he can move like animals which are hard to catch when hands are clapped." Then, the text provides a more detailed list of the special abilities that arise from practice (ŚS 3.60-61):

Mastery of speech, the ability to go where he wants, long-distance vision and hearing, subtle sight, the ability to enter another's body, the power of producing gold by smearing objects with one's feces and urine, and the capacity to make things invisible..¹⁴²

Many of these powers overlap with those discussed in the *Yogasūtra*, such as long-distance hearing and the ability to enter another's body, however the alchemical *siddhi* (i.e. "power of producing gold") most likely comes from Tantric influence. Gaining mastery over the sense organs through *dhāraṇā* (concentration) on various objects, *samādhi* arises, thereby freeing one from the seeds of karma and disease.¹⁴³ At this point, the text mentions how dedicated practice brings forth *siddhis*, such as "long-distance hearing and sight," "discernment," "powers of becoming infinitesimal," and "conquers all elements" (ŚS 3.86-90; ŚS 5.207).¹⁴⁴ It then lists four *āsanas* (*Siddhāsana*, *Padmāsana*, *Pascimottanāsana*, and *Svastikāsana*) which can lead to the attainment of *siddhis* (ŚS 3.99-115).¹⁴⁵ Emphasis is placed on the connection between practice

¹⁴⁰ Mallinson, *The Śiva Saṃhitā*, 42-43.

¹⁴¹ Mallinson, *The Śiva Saṃhitā*, 40-71.

¹⁴² Mallinson, *The Śiva Saṃhitā*, 54.

¹⁴³ Mallinson, *The Śiva Saṃhitā*, 57-60.

¹⁴⁴ Mallinson, *The Śiva Saṃhitā*, 60-61; 154.

¹⁴⁵ Mallinson, *The Śiva Saṃhitā*, 63-70.

and *siddhis*, although the *Śiva Saṃhitā* does not warn against the distractory aspect of *siddhis* from the pure goal of liberation like the *Yogasūtra* does.

Chapter 4, “Mudras,” provides more specifics about subtle body practices and visualizations which awaken *kuṇḍalinī*, resulting in yogic attainments and *siddhis*. *Mantras*, in accordance with the *Yogasūtra*, but in this case, when given by a guru, are one method to attain *siddhis* (ŚS 4.10-11).¹⁴⁶ Once again highlighting the importance of practice, ŚS 4.18 mentions the “mastery of speech” and “ability to go where one wants”.¹⁴⁷ It provides a list of ten *mudrās*, all of which have associated *siddhis*: “*Mahamudra, Mahabandha, Mahavedha, Khechhari, Jalandhara, Mulabandha, Viparitakarani, Udyana, Vajroli*, and... *Shaktichalana*” (ŚS 4.23-24).¹⁴⁸ It is noted that mudras help to awaken the sleeping *kuṇḍalinī* (ŚS 4.21-22), and when that happens, *siddhis* are possible, but one must practice, practice, and practice.¹⁴⁹ Practicing and mastering three *mudrās* (*Vedha, Mahāmudrā, and Mahābhandha*) in succession, respectively, is recommended to gain *siddhis* (ŚS 4.47-49).¹⁵⁰ However, all ten *mudrās* must be practiced and mastered in order for *siddhis* to arise. Overall, the *Śiva Saṃhitā* extrapolates upon the *siddhis* found in the *Yogasūtra*, offering more detailed practices based in the physical body that produce *siddhis*.

The final, fifth chapter, “Meditation,” is the longest and muses upon the hindrances to liberation, the four types of yoga and practitioners, the internal sound (*nāda*), energy centers (*cakras*) in the body such as *kuṇḍalinī* and the seven lotuses, and also a mantra which leads to *samādhi*.¹⁵¹ The *Śiva Saṃhitā* appears to use the Sanskrit term *siddhi* to refer to both specific suprasensory abilities and also a general sense of “perfection” or “attainment” in the yogic realm.

¹⁴⁶ Mallinson, *The Śiva Saṃhitā*, 74-75.

¹⁴⁷ Mallinson, *The Śiva Saṃhitā*, 76.

¹⁴⁸ Mallinson, *The Śiva Saṃhitā*, 77-78.

¹⁴⁹ Mallinson, *The Śiva Saṃhitā*, 77.

¹⁵⁰ Mallinson, *The Śiva Saṃhitā*, 84-85.

¹⁵¹ Mallinson, *The Śiva Saṃhitā*, 104-168.

In 5.62 and 5.64, the text describes a visualization practice which resembles a similar one found in the *Yogasūtra*:

5.62 When the yogi visualizes the eye of Śiva as an aperture in his skull, then there arises a shining light as brilliant as a ball of lightning. 5.64 Then, the wise man continually performs this visualization, he is sure to see and speak with the adepts.¹⁵²

This resembles YS III.32, where Patañjali states, “[From *saṃyama*] on the light in the head, vision of perfected ones.”¹⁵³ The use of language in the *Śiva Saṃhitā* is much more elaborate, poetically metaphorical, and flowery as compared to that in the *Yogasūtra*, though both seem to describe a similar practice of concentration somewhere within the head that engenders visions of enlightened beings, of which the *Yogasūtra* refers to as “*siddha-darśanam*.”¹⁵⁴

Other specific *siddhis* are mentioned in the *Śiva Saṃhitā*, such as “*Darduri Siddhi*” or “the ability to leave the ground like a frog” from meditation on the *mūlādhāra* lotus (ŚS 5.90), which involves concentration on the base of the spine where kuṇḍalinī resides, the repetition of specific syllables, and visualization of a four-petaled lotus.¹⁵⁵ Each of the seven lotuses are related to an adept and a Goddess. The second lotus, *svādhiṣṭhāna*, is red and has six syllables and six petals. From this, he achieves “the powers of becoming infinitesimal and so forth,” a synecdochical expression the *Śiva Saṃhitā* uses several times to refer to the full range of *siddhis*. The third lotus, *maṇipūṛaka*, has ten “spokes” and is gold and elicits “*Patala siddhi*,” or the capacity of traveling to the underworld.¹⁵⁶ As a result of this, one can also “enter another’s body” and “create gold” (ŚS 5.110-112).¹⁵⁷ The fourth lotus is the heart, *anāhata*, and has twelve spokes and is bright red. The ability it creates is “the reward of knowing one’s pasture and future lives”

¹⁵² Mallinson, *The Śiva Saṃhitā*, 118.

¹⁵³ Chapple, *Yoga and the Luminous*, 192.

¹⁵⁴ Chapple, *Yoga and the Luminous*, 192

¹⁵⁵ Mallinson, *The Śiva Saṃhitā*, 125.

¹⁵⁶ Mallinson, *The Śiva Saṃhitā*, 130.

¹⁵⁷ Mallinson, *The Śiva Saṃhitā*, 84-85.

and a general knowing about time, and “moving through the air at will” (ŚS 5.115-117).¹⁵⁸ Other *siddhis* noted in this section are the “Bhuchari” and “Khechari” *siddhis*. Located in the throat, *visuddha*, the fifth lotus, is golden and has sixteen syllables (SS 5.121); its manifestation is the four Vedas within the yogi. The *ājñā* lotus is the sixth and is found between the eyebrows. Containing two syllables and two petals, it is colored white, and focusing upon it brings the yogi “supreme perfection” (ŚS 5.128).¹⁵⁹

Lastly, at the root of the palate is the *sahasrāra* lotus, in which the *susumṇā nāḍī* begins and goes towards the *mūlādhāra* lotus. The *sahasrāra* is also in the space of the skull and it is suggested that one “should visualize an ocean of milk in the space in the skull. Remaining there, he should imagine the moon in the *sahasrāra* lotus” (ŚS 5.185).¹⁶⁰ From this point of concentration, “the future becomes manifest” and there is the potential for the “*Khechari*” and “*Bhuchari*” *siddhis*.¹⁶¹ Through the consistent practice of these meditative visualizations, the *Śiva Saṃhitā* concludes that various *siddhis* will arise and knowledge illuminates the yogi, provided practice is free from attachment. The final suggestion to attain *siddhis* including clairvoyance and omniscience is repeating a “triad of seed syllables” received from one’s guru, while also making an offering before the goddess. The *Śiva Saṃhitā* concludes with another treatise on the importance of practice and also affirms the possibility for householders to achieve liberation (ŚS 5.257-259).¹⁶² To conclude, the *Śiva Saṃhitā* places significance upon the *siddhis* as a real potential resulting from practice, and in its eclecticism inspires a magical, poetic approach to Yoga and its potential to transform consciousness via embodied practice.

¹⁵⁸ Mallinson, *The Śiva Saṃhitā*, 84-85.

¹⁵⁹ Mallinson, *The Śiva Saṃhitā*, 134.

¹⁶⁰ Mallinson, *The Śiva Saṃhitā*, 148-149.

¹⁶¹ Mallinson, *The Śiva Saṃhitā*, 149-150.

¹⁶² Mallinson, *The Śiva Saṃhitā*, 167-168..

Embodied practices like yoga reveal the centrality of metaphor and language in human experience and perception of reality. Body-centered contemplative practices like yoga, attempt to bridge the mind-body separation and form a healthy interdependence between the two so that lived experience is a process of blending and integrating old and new concepts. Language, and the embodiment of metaphors, gives humans access to the philosophical, esoteric concepts behind these practices. Yoga, then, is also about meaning-making, a broader human desire to connect with something larger. By viewing science and religion as complementary, cognitive linguistics and theories of embodied cognition and conceptual metaphor theory can enhance the contemporary understanding of yoga and the *siddhis*, refining the nonbinary relationship between religion and science, cognition and the cosmos, and in turn, the evolution of human personality and consciousness.

There are countless *embodied metaphors* that appear throughout the evolution of yoga; however, this paper only emphasizes a few of them. First, there is the cosmic dance evident in Sāṃkhya and the *Yogasūtra* where *puruṣa* realizes its own nature as distinct from *prakṛti* and gradually develops discernment through the *buddhi*. This then frees them both to no longer engage in creation for the sake of it and instead for one to realize the state of *citta-vṛtti-nirodhaḥ* where *siddhis* and *sattvic* perception are inevitable byproducts. Another metaphor from Sāṃkhya and the *Yogasūtra* is that of the *guṇas* or “strands” or “qualities” which are constantly shifting and fluctuating, evoking this image of waves that tie into electromagnetism. The *guṇas* originally inspired my connection between the metaphorical domains of Sāṃkhya and quantum string theory. There are many aspects of yoga to be explored in quantum, yogic realms, however one potentially elucidating future area of study is the Tantric concept of *spanda*, coming from the *Śiva-sūtras* of Kashmir Śaivism, which denotes a “spiritual dynamism,” a *throb*, or the “divine

creative pulsation.”¹⁶³ A third metaphor is the *universe as a hologram, mirror, or some sort of reflector* of the relationship between *form* and *formless*, which is evident in the *Yogavāsishtha* and many Buddhist texts, in the sense that this reality is somehow reflected or projected from some greater reality and light source that is not ordinarily seen until some sort of conversion experience, echoing Plato’s allegory of the cave.¹⁶⁴

Lastly, and perhaps most relevant to this paper is the idea of reality as a flexible fabric within a grid. The idea is that there is an underlying structure that the *guṇas* need in order to fluctuate and undulate. Upon looking at the connection between geometry, shapes and forms, toroidal fields, and Buckminster Fuller, all are speaking to this idea that reality can be broken down into constituent parts, like the *guṇas*, which then come together to create this gestalt of an experience.¹⁶⁵ The *siddhis* evoke a dynamic subtilization of the ability to deconstruct the *guṇas* through the skill of *viveka-khyāti*. Then, like water being pulled back into the ocean after crashing as a wave onto the shore, the sattvic *buddhi* is able to harness the power of the *guṇas* and reconstitute the illuminative fabric of reality as a result. Therefore, the sattvic quality of *buddhi* reflecting *puruṣa* is the perceived field but it is *puruṣa* which oversees this unfolding. The long compendium of Indic texts suggest that the ability to perceive the field of *puruṣa* is inherently coded in the mind, consciousness, and body.

One metaphor that connects Saṃkhyā philosophy, which is an evident thread within *The Yogasūtra*, quantum physics, and cognitive sciences is the metaphor of a cosmic dance between *puruṣa*, consciousness, and *prakṛti*, matter. In the Lakoffian model, viewing the Universe and its reflections as a cosmic dance provides a framework and language to discuss the paradoxical

¹⁶³ Jaideva Singh, *Spanda-Kārikās: The Divine Creative Pulsation*, (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 2009), 1-13.

¹⁶⁴ Christopher Key Chapple and Swami Venkatesananda, *Concise Yoga Vasistha*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1984), 176-179.

¹⁶⁵ R. Buckminster Fuller, *Cosmography: A Posthumous Scenario for the Future of Humanity*, (New York: Macmillan, 1992).

dynamic between the seen and seer, who remain separate yet engaged in Sāṃkhyan frameworks. The conceptual metaphor of a cosmic dance highlights paradoxical duality and the contrast necessary for objectivity to exist within subjective experience. Drawing the senses inward towards concentration on a single point pulls consciousness towards a singularity of sorts where subject and object merge into complete absorption, dissolution, or “same vision,” *samādhi*. Before this conversion event, *puruṣa* is concealed and the divine remains hidden in everything as *pradhāna*, who is *prakṛti* in potentiality waiting to engage and liberate *puruṣa*.¹⁶⁶ After such an experience, the lone dancer becomes engaged in a shared dance with the formless, becoming a superconductor for transmuting the *guṇas*, thereby transcending duality, because of this reintegrated and newly expanded identity.

Lakoff upholds conceptual metaphor theory’s ability to hold paradox and posits that there is no right way to abstract metaphors because the conceptual system is inherently contradictory. He states, “Abstract concepts have a literal core but are extended by metaphors, often by many mutually inconsistent metaphors.”¹⁶⁷ This abstracted core of truth speaks to the freedom that arises when the dancer, dance, and dancing merge into one expression. Counterintuitively releasing attachment allows one to dance freely without the limitations of Self-consciousness. Controlling the experience stops the *guṇas* from shifting. The eight *bhāvas* forming the personality are music inspiring each unique expression of the dance. This detached, yet fully engaged liminal, embodied space is where creation springs from.

On a practical level, another reading of the cosmic dance metaphor within these texts could be that the body is a vehicle to practice discernment of the five gross elements, *pañca mahābhūtas*, through the other *tattvas*. Once that ability is developed within the three-fold inner

¹⁶⁶ Chapple, “*Sāṃkhya Karika*.”

¹⁶⁷ Lakoff and Singleton, *Metaphors We Live By*, 272.

organ of *manas*, *ahaṃkāra*, and *buddhi*, it is possible to discern *puruṣa* from *prakṛti*.¹⁶⁸ The metaphor of dance, according to Sāṃkhyan and Lakoffian conceptual frameworks, substantiates the belief that perception is embodied, so attaining *kaivalya* requires embodiment in order to liberate *puruṣa* and release consciousness from *saṃsāra*. This is the same embodiment that led Arjuna, upon viewing Krishna's magnificence with his own eyes in the *Bhagavad Gītā*, to wake up to his *dharma* on the battlefield.¹⁶⁹ The metaphor of *puruṣa* and *prakṛti* shows a cosmic dance of reciprocity where the shared dynamic of the dance and the way one responds to fluctuations of the *guṇas* is the vehicle for awakening. The metaphor of the cosmic dance between *puruṣa* and *prakṛti* provides further evidence about the need for new metaphors that can include seemingly disparate phenomena like electromagnetism and the rapture of St. Teresa of Avila from her body, for example.¹⁷⁰

The questions being asked of these metaphors, then, are: from a developmental perspective, how then might one integrate new conceptual metaphors such as *the Universe and its reflections as a cosmic dance* to both intellectually understand and embody the creative, paradoxical aspect of reality? The *yamas*, *niyamas*, and inclusion of Buddhist practices such as *brahmavihāra* in the *Yogasūtra* provide a basis for a worldview with non-attachment to *siddhis* as powers to be used against others and instead perhaps used to help others awaken. And furthermore, using what we understand about metaphors and meaning-making from Lakoff et. al, how might one wisely approach discarding stale metaphors imbued in platitude and societal conditioning? How might we read a text like the *Yogasūtra* in a responsible way considering its

¹⁶⁸ Chapple, "Sāṃkhya Karika."

¹⁶⁹ Antonio T. de Nicolas, *Avatāra: The Humanization of Philosophy through the Bhagavad Gītā*, (New York: Nicolas Hays Ltd., 2003).

¹⁷⁰ Kelly et al., *Irreducible Mind*.

context, ultimately seeking to uncover more nuances while staying open to changing our views on something like *siddhis* that are controversial and triggering?

It starts with following a multilayered framework like that outlined in the *Yogasūtra* which contains both space for the paradoxical aspect of reality to unfold and the necessary structure within that to focus the senses and thereby evolve consciousness towards higher states. From there, one can understand the practice and philosophical rigor required to shift states of consciousness safely and ethically. This is achieved through tools that build resonance between *puruṣa* and *prakṛti*, such as visualizations, sound, and more broadly, language, bringing the two closer together in a state of harmonized embodiment where there is space for all aspects of creation. The ethical component contained in *yamas* and *niyamas* ensures that the vessel is protected and able to contain these *pariṇāmas*, or transformations of consciousness; there are safety precautions necessary any time one engages in a dance of this sort. It requires reorganizing the subtle body to align with the *tattvas* and elements in a repatterning process that identifies *saṃskāric* patterns and clears karmas so that clear perception can come through. One mark of this process unfolding is *siddhis*.

Chapter 4: Embodied Metaphors for a Quantum Reality

Multi-colored lines of light formed a kind of dome covered in faceted geometric network of jewels, the whole dome spinning silently. The jewelled dome seemed to become a kind of lens, through which I could see into other worlds beyond, where the points of light were stars and galaxies. At first there were tiny scintillating sparks of light against a velvety blackness. They merge to become a brilliantly colored, weaving, flowing tapestry of geometric forms, extending infinitely to all directions. Then this kaleidoscopic field of patterns dissolved my body into it, so that I don't see it anymore – I have become part of it.¹⁷¹

Ralph Metzner

When one first learns something new, such as walking, it is more about mimicking and copying than being creative or expressive. The recent scientific discovery of mirror neurons in the last twenty years provides a potential physical explanation for embodied cognition, and thereby, the *siddhis*, which represent embodied aspects of primordial image schemas, referred to here as *embodied metaphors*, encoded within the metaphorical fabric of reality. Mirror neurons are “a class of neurons that modulate their activity both when an individual executes a specific motor act and when they observe the same or similar act performed by another individual.”¹⁷² As such, mirror neuron research is showing that action and observation are closely related and “that our ability to interpret the actions of others requires the involvement of our own motor system.”¹⁷³ Mirror neurons suggest that as one observes and integrates concepts into the body, such as walking or catching a ball, it is remembered in the flesh via mirror neurons without having to consciously use the intellect or ego to access this information, like Arjuna at the moment of his revelation. This conceptually relates to the way *siddhis* arise naturally from *samyama*, given the idea that repetition and practice (*abhyāsa*) potentially “install” certain

¹⁷¹ Ralph Metzner, *The Toad and the Jaguar: A Field Report of Underground Research on a Visionary Medicine: Bufo Alvarius and 5-Methoxy-Dimethyltryptamine*, (Berkeley, CA: Regent Press, 2013), 34.

¹⁷² Kilner and Lemon, “What We Know Currently about Mirror Neurons,” R1057.

¹⁷³ Kilner and Lemon, “What We Know Currently about Mirror Neurons,” R1057.

embodied metaphors, and *image schemas* within the brain. To extrapolate, once an image schema is installed *without seed* (*nirbījah*), one can then freely run, skip, jump, or read minds, perhaps, and otherwise access a wide range of potential movements. Mirror neurons provide a potential modern neuroscientific explanation for embodiment and the manifestation of *siddhis* in that one's physical experience shapes the cognitive structures deriving language and concept acquisition. Viewed in this way, cognition is embodied, meaning that consciousness and matter are engaged and interacting in a dynamic within creation.

For many yoga practitioners, control of the breath (*prāṇāyāma*) is necessary for *pratyāhāra*, in that stilling the fluctuations of the mind involves restraining the fluctuations of the breath, which is mentioned in YS I.34 and II.49-55.¹⁷⁴ From *samādhi-siddhir*, or perfection in samādhi (YS II.44), which arises from dedication to Īśvara, there is *prāṇāyāma*, control of the breath.¹⁷⁵ In this state, the breath (*prāṇa*) becomes long (*dīrgha*) and subtle (*sūkṣmaḥ*), and so then the mind (*citta*) and thereby the senses (*indriyas*) are able to be slowed and controlled, which is the basis of *pratyāhāra* (withdrawal), the act of turning the gaze inwards.¹⁷⁶ From this, the YS II.52 states, *tataḥ kṣīyate prakāśa-āvaraṇam*, or, “Thus, the covering of light is dissolved.”¹⁷⁷ This luminosity refers to the light of *puruṣa* reflecting lovingly on *prakṛti* after their close encounter. The resonance of the *buddhi* with pure *sattva* leads to the practice of *dhāraṇā* (concentrations) (YS II.53) and the inner limbs of yoga, which comprise *saṃyama*, and when mastered, lead to the arising of *siddhis*, physical manifestations of these divine reflections.¹⁷⁸

As previously stated, cognitive scientists and scholars such as Dr. Jeffrey Kripal and Dr. Edward Kelly are providing overwhelming evidence for the reality of psi phenomena.¹⁷⁹ Kelly

¹⁷⁴ Chapple, *Yoga and the Luminous*, 155-181.

¹⁷⁵ Chapple, *Yoga and the Luminous*, 178.

¹⁷⁶ Chapple, *Yoga and the Luminous*, 180-181.

¹⁷⁷ Chapple, *Yoga and the Luminous*, 180.

¹⁷⁸ Chapple, *Yoga and the Luminous*, 180..

¹⁷⁹ Kelly et al., *Irreducible Mind*.

writes, “Psi phenomena in general are important because they provide examples of human behavior capacities that seem extremely difficult or impossible to account for in terms of presently recognized computational, biological, or physical principles.”¹⁸⁰ A more recent take on bridging the materialist, Cartesian gap between dualistic notions of consciousness and matter, *The Flip: Epiphanies of Mind and the Future of Knowledge* (2019) by Dr. Jeffrey Kripal, a Professor of Religious Studies at Rice University speaks to various modes of knowing outside of ordinary awareness.

One aspect of knowing outside of ordinary awareness is the concept of quantum entanglement.¹⁸¹ This quantum concept reinforces the paradoxical notion of a cosmic dance. This theory arose from the 20th century physicist, Neils Bohr, who fundamentally disagreed with classical Newtonian mechanics upheld by Einstein and instead championed the view that “uncertainty and indeterminacy are woven into the very nature of things... quantum reality is ‘objectively indefinite.’”¹⁸² Empirical testing of Bell’s theorem substantiated this paradoxical quantum framework, confirming the concept of entanglement:

That particles that have once interacted become ‘entangled’ and therefore correlate with one another’s internal states (like ‘spin’) instantly, regardless of the spatial or temporal distances the two particles have since traveled. Entangled particles form an indivisible whole and cannot be treated as if they were separated from one another.¹⁸³

Looking at images of quantum entanglement, the infinity sign, and the number 8, which coincidentally ties into the number of limbs in Patañjalian yoga and the number of *siddhis* codified, evokes a dynamic image schema which illustrates the relationship of this reciprocal dynamic. This dynamic is also displayed in some parts of the *Sāṃkhyakārikā* that talk about the metaphor of the cosmic dance. *Sāṃkhyakārikā* verses 59-62 illustrate this dance through verse:

¹⁸⁰ Kelly et al., *Irreducible Mind*, 30.

¹⁸¹ Kripal, *The Flip*, 99-101.

¹⁸² Kripal, *The Flip*, 99.

¹⁸³ Kripal, *The Flip*, 100.

59. Just as a dancer stops dancing
when the charade ends,
so also, *Prakṛti* ceases
once the nature of *Puruṣa* is revealed.

60. She is helpful in various ways.
He is not helpful.
She possesses the *guṇas*.
He has no *guṇas*.
She moves for the sake of him.
He has no purpose.

61. It is my thought that there is nothing more exquisite
than *Prakṛti* who exclaims “I have been seen!”
and retreats from the view of *Puruṣa*.

62. Therefore, no one is bound.
Indeed, no one is released.
It is only *Prakṛti*
in her various costumes that transmigrates, is bound, and is free.¹⁸⁴

In this passage, there is a juxtaposition and paradox between being bound and also not being released that complements quantum entanglement.

Kripal believes quantum frameworks are challenging for society to accept because they defy all Newtonian conventions taught in the education system.¹⁸⁵ It takes tension from some sort of *conversion moment* to flip convention on its head to shift conventional paradigms, similar to Arjuna’s overwhelming experience seeing Krishna’s embodiment in the *Bhagavad Gītā* and Rama’s progressive liberation beyond the ego-sense in the *Concise Yoga Vasistha*.¹⁸⁶ This desire to find relief from *samsāra* is a universal paradigm since *prakṛti* is bound in her expression. Dr. Kripal discusses how conversion stories leave behind a stale, conventional worldview in favor of a richer, more inclusive worldview embracing the reciprocity between *the One in the Many* and *the Many in the One*. What marks these stories is a “dramatic movement from one world to

¹⁸⁴ Chapple, “*Sāṃkhya Karika*.”

¹⁸⁵ Kripal, *The Flip*, 54-58.

¹⁸⁶ Chapple and Venkatesananda, *Concise Yoga Vasistha*.

another.”¹⁸⁷ This could be compared to the adoption of a new quantum reality after discarding the conventional materialistic worldview. This worldview contains space for paradox and uncertainty, leaving the metaphorical dance floor as an open space to explore.

Further speaking to the indefiniteness of quantum reality, Kripal writes, “It is as if everything is already one thing and is simply responding to itself, evolving itself through time.”

¹⁸⁸ Within the Sāṃkhya conceptual framework, the *one thing* is *puruṣa* and *everything* is *prakṛti*. In this evolution through time, the *bhāvas* provides structure for *prakṛtis*’ movements; creation is the dance between form and formless, or as the *Concise Yoga Vasistha* describes it, “the entire creation is like a stage on which all these potencies of consciousness dance to the tune of time” and then describes “will, space, time, order (or destiny), and the cosmic unmanifest nature” as the five aspects of the formless.¹⁸⁹

Looking through the lens of quantum theory, when *puruṣa* and *prakṛti* come close to each other, they begin harmonizing in ways that defy the visual and spatial. Mastering a dance not only involves the physical practice but also the invisible spark, or consciousness, animating the dance. The elements of tension and unpredictability are necessary for creation -- the vehicle for realizing unitive states. Kripal describes the parallels between quantum mechanics and unitive states like *samādhi* as it relates to reflecting quantum aspects of the cosmos. This is seen in mystical forms of *mind* emphasizing “unity over plurality” and “routinely expressed through symbolism of complementary or open paradox, things like snakes biting their own tails, sexual union, and the yin and yang of Chinese Daoism.”¹⁹⁰ These experiences are apophatic and noetic, both Greek words, meaning that they defy traditional understandings of life and cannot be

¹⁸⁷ Kripal, *The Flip*, 58.

¹⁸⁸ Kripal, *The Flip*, 103.

¹⁸⁹ Chapple and Venkatesananda, *Concise Yoga Vasistha*, 295.

¹⁹⁰ Kripal, *The Flip*, 54-58.

described adequately with language. Even though materialism currently ignores the nature of consciousness, Kripal cites well-documented evidence about mystical events defying what modern science can explain and presents an argument for how quantum mechanics might potentially help humanity understand materialism and consciousness.¹⁹¹

Kripal cites the *radio metaphor* as one potential metaphor to frame this interplay between consciousness and matter. Like a radio that can receive transmissions, this metaphor demonstrates how consciousness and matter are communicating in ways that neither science nor religion can answer adequately. For example, Eben Alexander, a neurosurgeon on faculty at Harvard Medical School, experienced a *conversion moment* in 2008 while he was in a coma from E. coli meningitis. While in that state, he encountered “a world of consciousness that existed completely free of the limitations of my physical brain” and said that he “communicated with beings he met in that other world directly, without language.”¹⁹² The pushback that often comes up regarding such experiences is the modern psyche’s dominant belief in materialism, which Kripal defines as “the conviction that there is only matter, which is fundamentally devoid of mind or intelligence, and that this mindless matter is arranged according to the mathematical laws of physics.”¹⁹³ Kripal echoes the *Concise Yoga Vasistha* with a similar understanding of creation as “a mirror-reflection in indivisible consciousness in the beginning,” arguing how it is precisely the human mind’s intuitive ability to mathematically map any portion of the cosmos which indicates that “there is something about the human mind that is itself a reflection (or a reflector) of this same cosmos. The mind is a kind of mirror.”¹⁹⁴

¹⁹¹ Kripal, *The Flip*, 64-71.

¹⁹² Kripal, *The Flip*, 67.

¹⁹³ Kripal, *The Flip*, 104.

¹⁹⁴ Kripal, *The Flip*, 93; Chapple and Venkatesananda, *Concise Yoga Vasistha*, 393.

The metaphor of the mirror suggests that the nature of creation is the doubling of one, thereby creating the two, or duality. This split appears in the imagery evoked within Vedic literature in the *Asat*, darkness, and *Sat*, light.¹⁹⁵ Consider how creation is in constant flux; vibrations create waves rippling through space in fields much like a rock striking water causes fluctuations in the water's surface. Energy pulses outwards in accordance with the rock's movement and the water at the moment it is contacted. A thought form, much like the rock, arises from consciousness and becomes, in some cases, a physicalized form in three dimensional reality via language and sound. Elements of space and time are encoded in the human word, which locates bodies in space and time. What qualities of sound, and its expressions, such as language, connect humanity to its cosmic origins then?

Sound provides a direct bodily connection to the divine within the matrix of space and time. It provides a method to reconcile duality. In darkness, one must learn to trust sound and other modes of perception since light is not available. Darkness is the absence of light, and light reveals creation which may mistakenly appear as its source if consciousness is anchored in *Sat*. However, returning to the *Asat* through sound reunites the body with *Vāc*, the feminine aspect of creation who is experienced through the human word, or prayer, or mantra, and is associated with language and sound.

Sound travels mechanically through a medium as waves and is literally in motion, is doing something, and dissipates into *ākāśa*, or space. Whereas sound travels through a medium, light travels best through empty space and consequently moves much faster than sound. The ear only works because it can receive mechanical vibrations of sound which are then converted into electric signals for the brain to decode. The *Ṛg Veda* was originally chanted and transmitted orally before it was recorded on paper or, more likely, palm leaves. Its continued aural existence

¹⁹⁵ Antonio T De Nicolas, *Meditations through the Rig Veda* (1976; repr., Lincoln, NE: iUniverse, 2003).

provides evidence for languages' roots in sound and what it means to have a body that can receive and make meaning from sound. Is the body an instrument for the source of this sound, then? Imagery evoked within the *Rg Veda* and the *Upaniṣads* portrays *Vāc*, the Vedic goddess of speech, as a force that both pushes and pulls; her presence in language encodes various aspects of ultimate reality arranged like building blocks according to what is desired and possible, aligning language, speech, and sound conceptually with aspects of morphic fields and resonance.

In the Sāṃkhyan framework, *puruṣa*, pure consciousness, was enmeshed with and eventually liberated from *prakṛti*, matter, and the current materialist understanding of neurological processes of the *mind* can still not prove that *consciousness* is purely *matter* (i.e. the brain). Thus, there is no consensus of their relationship yet and therefore no widespread models or frameworks to understand how the two might or might not be interacting. In Sāṃkhya, the *buddhi* delivers all experience to *puruṣa*. The meaning-making component is three-fold and includes *manas*, *aḥamkāra*, and *buddhi*. This suggests a relationship between *puruṣa* and *prakṛti*. The Sāṃkhyan framework provides a basis for understanding how consciousness and matter might be interacting from a conceptual level in a way that current science does not. Perhaps new conceptual metaphors are needed to shape our awareness, language, and thought around what might be concealed and not yet illuminated in order to build discernment about how and why one may not be able to or want to access everything. The larger question is, why is it not possible to access everything in states of ordinary awareness or even slightly elevated states?

Kripal provides a possible explanation from Edward Kelly's *The Irreducible Mind* (2007).¹⁹⁶ Kelly is a doctor who had a near death experience that flipped his perspective on everything. Kelly challenges reductive theories of neuroscience asserting that properties of minds cannot be fully explained by those of brains. Kelly references the *filter thesis* or "the idea that

¹⁹⁶ Kripal, *The Flip*, 67.

our brain blocks out, or veils, the larger cosmic background” to explain these undefinable, otherworldly encounters.¹⁹⁷ Perhaps this filter is there because the magnificence of the cosmos would be too much for corporeal form to bear in everyday, three-dimensional experience. He describes meeting other types of beings in these realms. It harkens to the moment Krishna reveals his true form to Arjuna, who experiences fear and overwhelm upon seeing Krishna’s multidimensional forms. From personal experience, Alexander believes these visionary experiences foreshadow future forms of knowledge, and the best hypothesis he could come up with is that there is something that is veiling consciousness.

Regarding the *siddhis*, there is a portion of *Irreducible Mind* which discusses mysticism and supernormal phenomena in the context of *siddhis* in the *Yogasūtra*.¹⁹⁸ He cites narratives on the founders of world religions which often recount supernormal phenomena, and cites Yoga and specifically, pādas III and IV of the *Yogasūtra*, as a suitable framework to begin discussing the supernatural. Using the framework of *saṁyama* and its potential to elicit higher states of consciousness, Kelly describes *siddhis* as being “reported in a matter-of-fact fashion as a byproduct of this central movement, their value consisting mainly in providing markers on the developmental path.”¹⁹⁹ The *Yogasūtra* is noted as containing a multilayered conversation about transformations of consciousness and supernatural, or psi, phenomena, as an observable reality resulting from the repetition of specific practices, though this needs much more experimentation and research to be validated empirically.²⁰⁰

One other consideration regarding the metaphorical fabric of reality and the cosmic dance is the work of Rupert Sheldrake, a biologist, who builds on what is seen in pādas III and IV,

¹⁹⁷ Kripal, *The Flip*, 68.

¹⁹⁸ Kelly et al., *Irreducible Mind*, 526-528.

¹⁹⁹ Kelly et al., *Irreducible Mind*, 526-527.

²⁰⁰ Kelly et al., *Irreducible Mind*, 528.

writing about *morphic fields*, described as a “pattern of informational energy that determines how an object or living thing behaves, such as the organizations of minds, bodies, crystals, plants, molecules, planets, solar systems, galaxies etc.” or as “a generic terms that includes all kinds of fields that have an inherent memory given by morphic resonance from previous similar systems.”²⁰¹ They provide shape, form, and organization for bodies ranging from humans to galaxies through vibratory patterns stored in a process called *formative causation*. He describes this causation as imposing “spatial order on changes brought about by energetic causation,” though this is not energetic nor explainable by known physical fields. Sheldrake writes that systems are organized in the way they are because of their organization in the past and that formative causation depends on the “repetition of forms and patterns of organization” rather than the “origin of these forms and patterns.”²⁰² He describes an experiment where rats learning a new behavior in New York and London tended to learn the behavior more quickly as more rats across both cities learned that same behavior without any physical connection between the laboratories.²⁰³ This experiment aligns with ideas on quantum entanglement described earlier, and that there is an underlying structure *i.e. puruṣa* that provides the basis for interconnectivity between its shared forms *i.e. prakṛti* despite spatial and temporal distances.

In *Morphic Resonance*, Sheldrake also provides substantiation for the reality of psychic, nonlocal phenomena such as telepathy, where minds are extended beyond brains through these fields, and gives examples where the effects of attention and intention at a distance can be detected experimentally.²⁰⁴ Rather than dismissing this phenomena, he uses the idea of *morphic fields* to counter the classical materialist notion of a mechanistic universe and removes the

²⁰¹ Rupert Sheldrake, *Morphic Resonance: The Nature of Formative Causation*, (1981; repr., Rochester, VT: Park Street Press, 2009), 162;

²⁰² Sheldrake, *Morphic Resonance*, 3-4.

²⁰³ Sheldrake, *Morphic Resonance*, 5.

²⁰⁴ Sheldrake, *Morphic Resonance*; Sheldrake, *The Presence of the Past*, 273

Western Protestant hermeneutical lens which dismisses the *siddhis*. He believes that nature, including humanity, has a collective memory and is organized repeatedly in various forms and fields which explain nonlocal phenomenon and extrasensory perception like those arising from *siddhis* and provide a basis for more conversation between religion, especially in the realm of mysticism, and science, particularly quantum theory.²⁰⁵

Combining the lens of *tapas* arising from the Vedic fire sacrifice, and literally meaning “heat,” to its conception in the *Yogasūtra* and in modern yoga philosophy as meaning “asceticism,” *embodied cognition* suggests that one reading of *formative causation* is that *tapas* (heat, or asceticism) builds from the practice (*abhyāsa*) and repetition of various forms and organizing principles, installing *image schemas* found within *embodied metaphors* into *citta* (mind, or consciousness) which can then reconstitute the *guṇas*. This highlights how disciplining the mind and body through *tapas* (asceticism) has been conceived in Indic philosophical and narrative literature to result in *siddhis*, where the material morphic units forming the physical body align with certain primordial energy patterns and natural fluctuations of the universe.²⁰⁶ The embodiment of these natural rhythms would then form a *morphic resonance* across the consciousness field, or the metaphorical fabric of reality, which has been encoded in the *tattvas* and therefore, make the metaphorical aspects of a practice or philosophy more potent in regards to transformations of consciousness towards higher, constantly evolving states. Sheldrake refers to morphogenetic fields, which pertain more to the structures of living things, as “probability structures” which have influence on other connected structures; this relates schematically to the concepts of quantum entanglement and the cosmic dance.²⁰⁷ Certainly, there is much more

²⁰⁵ Sheldrake, *Morphic Resonance*, 18.

²⁰⁶ Sarbacker, “Power and Meaning in the *Yogasūtra*,” 199.

²⁰⁷ Sheldrake, *Morphic Resonance*, 72.

research to be conducted in the intersection between mysticism, and its embodiments, and quantum physics.

Finding a language for the unknown is messy in that it involves weaving together contradictory metaphors to tie fragments of reality together into a unified vision. These metaphors shape our bodily experience and can only be experienced by interacting with form, or matter, known as *prakṛti*. One can practice making peace with fragmentation just as the *guṇas* fluctuate. Like light, it comes and goes, dancing among forms. Through seemingly disparate aspects of consciousness, one can experience mystical forms of *mind* where the filter between consciousness, *puruṣa*, and matter, *prakṛti*, is removed. George Lakoff similarly relates the conceptual system to a filter for experience, and metaphors as a natural phenomenon, writing,

Conceptual metaphor allows inferences in sensory-motor domains (e.g., domains of space and objects) to be used to draw inferences about other domains (e.g., domains of subjective judgment, with concepts like intimacy, emotions, justice, and so on). Because we reason in terms of metaphor, the metaphors we use determine a great deal about how we live our lives.²⁰⁸

Using a Sāṃkhyan lens, Lakoff acknowledges here how *prakṛti* reflects *puruṣa* in language's display of contradictory, layered conceptual metaphors derived from sensory experience with the elements, both gross and subtle.

The opening portion of *Metaphors We Live By* challenges the culturally embedded metaphor of *argument as war* in favor of one where *argument is dance*. Lakoff describes how underlying metaphors form the basis of thought and language:

Imagine a culture where an argument is viewed as a dance, the participants are seen as performers, and the goal is to perform in a balanced and aesthetically pleasing way. In such a culture, people would view arguments differently, experience them differently, carry them out differently, and talk about them differently.²⁰⁹

²⁰⁸ Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, 44.

²⁰⁹ Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, 5.

What if this life is seen as a dance then? And what about the Universe? Or the practice of Yoga? Applying conceptual metaphor theory to quantum mechanics helps make a bit more sense of the Cosmic Self as it is reflected in what can feel like a confusing interplay between the physical and subtle bodies.

Perhaps the divine communicates in symbols and metaphors until humans develop a more adequate language, or telepathic abilities, to interface with the unseen Seer. This is the concept that Plato describes in his *Allegory of the Cave*, where one must first shift the gaze inwards to perceive that the shadows on the walls of the cave, emerging as symbolic forms through language and metaphor, for example, appear to come from a light source.²¹⁰ To exit the cave, one must move towards the light source, or the cause of these reflected shadows.

I believe that when the West, or perhaps the English language, forgot to shift its gaze inwards towards its cause, then the body was reduced to one term and its many layers or *kośas* were streamlined into materiality. Although language is not sufficient to interface with *puruṣa*, or pure consciousness, it is certainly a vehicle for building new layers of understanding along with multimodal activations of *embodied metaphors* via *image schemas* awakened in the flesh through the senses, including the practices of subtle body visualizations, mantras, and maṇḍalas, for example. Acknowledging that “one’s perspective on life is restricted to a limited language of things and how the sense-of-self- relates to those things” illuminates how cyclical, samskaric patterns pigeonhole cosmic consciousness.²¹¹ By shifting the gaze inwards, one can shift inner narratives towards a path of illumination and freedom within form, or *kaivalya*.

What if it is precisely the non-linguistic, non-linear dynamic within creation that renders language and current culturally embedded metaphors inadequate to describe it? This aligns with

²¹⁰ Plato, *The Republic*, trans. Benjamin Jowett (Digireads.com Publishing, 2016).

²¹¹ Christopher Chapple, *Karma and Creativity*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1986), 38.

the Sāṃkhyan metaphor of *puruṣa*, the spirit, as being concealed from *prakṛti*'s view. I will call this the metaphor of divine concealment, which is another metaphor that overlaps with the metaphor of the cosmic dance. What eventually unfolds within the *Yogasūtra* is the development of *saṃyama*, a skill of intense-focus beyond ordinary awareness, and the subsequent *pariṇāmas* concluding with an experience of pure consciousness, *puruṣa*. The true light arising from the knowledge born of discrimination becomes embodied in *kaivalya*, where one transcends duality, establishing the separateness of *prakṛti* from *puruṣa*, which allows one to reconstitute the *guṇas* as a result. This is akin to the moment in Plato's allegory of the cave where one prisoner realizes there is a light source behind them and that there is something outside of the cave, which is in fact light, expansive, and creative. Upon leaving, the prisoner is blinded and upon returning to the cave, remains blinded. His seeming lack of sight is a notion that instills fear in the prisoners that have not undertaken the same journey.²¹²

Sheldrake shares moments from mathematicians like Karl Gauss, who in the middle of working on an unsolvable theorem, are hit by “a sudden flash of flight” or “flashes of intuition through which a new paradigm is born.”²¹³ This *intuitive hit* expands the notion of consciousness beyond the body and though the *Yogasūtra* does not speak of the Vedāntic concept of *ātman* directly, one might suggest that the *aṣṭāṅgayoga* framework dissolves the veil of ignorance above the ego causing then, the *ātman*, or limited Self, to see the magnificent web of luminosity reflected in the many faces of the Sāṃkhyan *puruṣa*, which has also been translated as the “cosmic person,” or the non-anthropomorphized macrocosm captured in the Vedāntic *brahman*.²¹⁴

²¹² Plato, *The Republic*.

²¹³ Rupert Sheldrake, *Presence of the Past, The: Morphic Resonance and the Habits of Nature*, (1988; repr., Rochester, VT: Park Street Press, 2012), 326.

²¹⁴ De Nicolas, *Meditations through the Rig Veda*.

Understanding that there are many frameworks which conceptualize the nature of reality and assign meaning to that reality is akin to the Jain concept of *anekāntavāda*, or many-sidedness. Chapple notes *anekāntavāda* as one of the three basic teachings of Jain traditions that create a sense of openness within the tradition.²¹⁵ The other two are *ahiṃsā*, or non-violence, and *aparigraha*, or non-possession. Considering Jainism among Hinduism and Buddhism provides the postmodern student of yoga with a newfound perspective with which to conceptualize and triangulate between narratives, delivering a richer texture and deeper sense of interconnectivity of consciousness systems rather than the binary of East and West.

The universe is a dance within the cosmic fabric of reality in the way of bodies and their layers, such as the five *kośas*, the subtle and physical, *Śiva* and *Śakti*, *puruṣa* and *prakṛti*, or perhaps the *knower of the field* and *the field*, engaging in a divine reflective dance to alchemize the *guṇas*, sparking the inner divine light of creativity needed for consciousness to evolve itself towards an embodied vision of the macrocosmic vision. Instead of running on autopilot, when one engages in such a reflective dance sequence, the other dancer responds to support the other, providing the balance between flexibility and structure for new combinations to arise, thereby cultivating a sense of freedom beyond *Māyā*. In one glance, *Nāṭarāja*, the dancing *Śiva*, with his wild electric locks extended into space, conveys how the whole universe is on fire with the cosmic dance, drawing one closer and closer towards its source. It points to the paradoxical aspect of transformation—that birthing an integrated identity including expansive metaphors to replace outdated binaries and concepts requires a death or unlearning of what was known.

²¹⁵ *Yoga in Jainism*, ed. Christopher Chapple (Routledge, 2015), 252.

Conclusion

Examining the realities and implications of the *siddhis* in Pādas III and IV of the *Yogasūtra* through an interdisciplinary lens reveals the value of applying a metaphorical, imaginal lens to reading texts on yoga and the supernatural, acknowledging the various cultural contexts and motifs shaping experiences with the *supernatural* and associated powers beyond ordinary awareness. Beyond establishing the mind-body relationship within metaphorical thinking, cognitive linguistics might also help remove or at least bring awareness to sociocultural attitudes, notably *orientalism* and *colonialism*, so often placed upon yogic practices and traditions.²¹⁶ *Siddhis* are central to the study of modern transnational yoga and offer a layer of understanding about the shifting fabric of reality within the movement itself, given the implications of the Tantric transmission and the ongoing tension between orthodoxy and Tantric sensibilities within Indian spiritualities.

Despite evidence to the contrary, there is still a large contingency of belief denying the possibility of the supernatural. The pushback that often comes up regarding such experiences is the modern psyche's dominant belief in materialism, which Kripal defines as “the conviction that there is only matter, which is fundamentally devoid of mind or intelligence, and that this mindless matter is arranged according to the mathematical laws of physics.”²¹⁷ The denial of the unseen is palpable and should not require much further explanation. Therefore, given the sensitive nature of making such claims, one may also consider how commonly *siddhis* appear in popular culture through the stories of superheroes and characters which may be potentially inspired by stories of yogis, for example.²¹⁸ Though the hermeneutic lens is undergoing

²¹⁶ Hayes and Timalsina, “‘Cognitive Science and the Study of Yoga and Tantra’,” 4.

²¹⁷ Kripal, *The Flip*, 104.

²¹⁸ Jeffrey J. Kripal, *Mutants and Mystics : Science Fiction, Superhero Comics, and the Paranormal*, (2011; repr., Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015).

inevitable shifts, as it will, other forces, such as fundamentalism, that cannot accept a worldview of the *siddhis* as natural and part of the quantum dance within the fabric of reality shows how classical materialism remains the predominant framework. However, the inclusion of *siddhis* in the textual compendium on yoga and its history paints a compelling narrative on the potential of yoga to effect radical changes in consciousness through the *Ṛta dhiḥ*, or the *embodied vision* described in the *Ṛg Veda*.²¹⁹

The paradox of truth is that language is not sufficient to describe and understand truth, or conversations about truth would not need to occur. There would be nothing else to describe. It is in the not-understanding that language becomes a vessel for understanding. *Vāc*, the Vedic goddess of speech, weaves together units of sound to birth possibility, creating a matrix where name and form can interact in a way that reveals *puruṣa*. Through *Vāc*, *ātman* can reflect *brahman* within sensory experience and realize its source, or *yonī*. Therein lies the epistemological limitation of language; it is a reflection of the laws of the universe but is not the universe itself. It is possible that the human form cannot fully fathom the universe's immensity, as in the *filter thesis*, which contains the space for the supernatural and validation for experiences outside of classical materialist notions on consciousness and matter. Since sound and the senses appear to filter consciousness in some way, the *filter thesis* can conceptually apply to the domain of language as well. For example, when an utterance is spoken, as in the syllable *om*, its source emits a sound wave, which the body and senses filter internally to create meaning. It does not physically receive the object tied to the sound.

The concept of *Vāc* filtering sound appears throughout the *Ṛg Veda*. Amongst the cacophony of vibrations lies the *Ṛta dhiḥ* or “embodied vision” unlocking the hum of the universe (*om*) within the human body which evokes the concept of the *siddhis* from the

²¹⁹ De Nicolas, *Meditations through the Rig Veda*.

Yogasūtra. Creation emerges from the earth because of heat, water, and food, as a sprout emerging from *Asat* grows towards the light of *Sat*, who nonetheless, is always rooted in the *Asat*. So too do the *R̥g Veda* and *Upaniṣads*, through the human word, elevate *Vāc* as the cosmic mother. Her sacred seeds of sound are the canal for source, or *yonī*, to birth creation. In this creation story, from nothingness, *ātman* enters the web of spacetime through the density of sound. *Vāc* is a portal molding herself to flow through the elements, birthing creation, and for us, an unclear future.

The *siddhis*, however, can be seen as “clear and exciting signs of a likely human future.”²²⁰ The *Yogasūtra* exemplifies the notion that repetition of *embodied metaphors* installed within various *image schemas* can integrate new concepts into existing schemas, guiding one’s journey into deeper, symbolic realms of consciousness. This can introduce a practitioner to states and concepts that are more challenging to definitively understand, especially without knowledge of *Sanskrit*. Yoga practices install the *R̥ta dhiḥ* or “embodied vision” in the conceptual system, which is metaphorical and non-linear in nature, through the repetition of body-based practices. Given that one’s perception of reality is based on perceptions formed through the five senses, *embodied metaphors* can form new perceptions about reality. This awakening aligns the mind with the body to transcend the bondage of *saṃsāra*. *Siddhis* demonstrate the inherent paradox in the molecular reality that the structure of bones and organs reveal within the great expanse of nature and the lightness coming from the field of consciousness it invokes. There is an acknowledgment of expansion, and contraction.

Attunement without attachment to these various embodied aspects allows one to become a unique *morphic field* through the formation of a resonance representing the accumulation of the *guṇas* in the body which harmonizes with its highest possible *dharmic* outcome. There is

²²⁰ Kripal, “The Evolving *Siddhis*,” 503-504.

evidence that the *siddhis* transcend the tension between *brahmanical* and *śramanic* traditions and push back against orthodoxy and myopic hermeneutics. Given the well-documented evidence of psi phenomena, and thereby *siddhis*, throughout various sociocultural contexts, the inclusion of *siddhis* in Padas III and IV of the *Yogasūtra* provides a basis to reject the classical materialist worldview. Considering the broad range of human experience paints an impressionistic view on the evolution of consciousness, a collage of imperfection that is more beautiful because of its ambiguous, murkier areas— an idea that this paper hopes to embrace. Shifting away from a fixed, mechanistic universe towards a creative, quantum universe would significantly impact the way humanity approaches problems and their potential solutions. As Kripal echoes in “The Evolving *Siddhis*”:

We can simply deny that magical powers, *siddhis*, and paranormal events exist at all. This, of course, is the traditional skeptical or allegedly ‘rational’ or ‘empirical’ approach. It is not very convincing. It is also neither empirical nor rational, as anyone who has taken the trouble to read into the immense modern literatures on psychical and paranormal phenomena—and I mean really read these multiple literatures—knows. We need to be reminded here, again and again (and again), that materialism and rationalism are not the same thing, and that if we are going to be empirical, we need to be empirical about everything, including and especially the astonishing and often very strange spectrum of human experience. Once we finally adopt such a truly radical and truly consistent empiricism, that is, once we admit that paranormal events are indeed a fairly regular feature of this world, it is easy to see that one can be perfectly rational and finally reject materialism (and, I would add, the attending pure contextualisms, constructivisms, and cultural relativisms that follow from such a metaphysical commitment) as an ontology and a set of methodologies that are simply inadequate to the full sweep of the comparative data at hand. Certainly the phenomenology of *siddhis* and the modern history of superpowers suggest as much.²²¹

²²¹ Kripal, “The Evolving *Siddhis*,” 506.

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