



## NUQTAH Journal of Theological Studies

**Editor: Dr. Shumaila Majeed**

(Bi-Annual)

Languages: Urdu, Arabic and English

eISSN: 2790-5330 pISSN: 2790-5349

<https://nuqtahjts.com/index.php/njts>

**Published By:**

Resurgence Academic and Research Institute, Sialkot (51310), Pakistan.

**Email:** [editor@nuqtahjts.com](mailto:editor@nuqtahjts.com)

## Unveiling Consciousness: Meditation Through Parapsychology and Sacred Traditions

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Published online: 30 Sep, 2025



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## Unveiling Consciousness: Meditation Through Parapsychology and Sacred Traditions

### **ABSTRACT**

Meditation, a practice rooted in ancient spiritual traditions, holds significant importance both in world religions and the field of parapsychology. In religious contexts, meditation is a method of inner contemplation, spiritual awakening, and union with the divine, as seen in Buddhism, Hinduism, Christianity, Islam (Sufism), and other faiths. Each tradition attributes unique goals to meditation, such as enlightenment, divine communion, or inner peace. From the parapsychological perspective, meditation is studied for its potential to enhance human consciousness and access altered states of awareness, sometimes associated with extrasensory perception (ESP), telepathy, or psychokinesis. Research in parapsychology suggests that meditative states may unlock latent psychic abilities or deepen intuitive insight. This paper explores the convergence and divergence between spiritual and scientific views of meditation, aiming to understand its multifaceted impact on human consciousness and transcendent experiences.

**Keywords:** Meditation, Parapsychology, World Religions, Consciousness, Extrasensory Perception, Spirituality, Altered States, Mindfulness, Psychic Phenomena, Mysticism

### Introduction:

Meditation, while traditionally rooted in religious and spiritual practices, has also garnered attention from parapsychology and secular psychology due to its potential effects on consciousness and well-being. World religions offer diverse perspectives on meditation, often linking it to spiritual development, enlightenment, and even extraordinary abilities, while parapsychology explores its potential connection to phenomena like telepathy or precognition. Secular approaches focus on the psychological and physiological benefits of meditation, such as stress reduction and improved focus.<sup>1</sup> Meditation, viewed through the lens <sup>2</sup>of **parapsychology** and **world religions**, offers a fascinating intersection of scientific inquiry into the paranormal and spiritual traditions rooted in centuries of human experience.<sup>3</sup>

Meditation has long been a subject of profound interest across spiritual, psychological, and metaphysical disciplines. From ancient religious traditions to modern scientific inquiry, meditation occupies a unique intersection where inner experience, altered consciousness, and transcendence converge. In the perspectives of both **parapsychology** and **world religions**, meditation is seen not only as a technique for relaxation or mindfulness but as a gateway to higher states of consciousness, psychic development, and spiritual transformation.

In the **parapsychological domain**, meditation is often studied as a means to access altered states of consciousness that may facilitate phenomena such as extrasensory perception (ESP), telepathy, psychokinesis, and out-of-body experiences (OBEs). Researchers such as Charles Tart and Stanley Krippner have explored how meditative states can expand human potential beyond the boundaries of ordinary perception. According to the **Ganzfeld experiments** and studies involving remote viewing, individuals who practice regular meditation show higher rates of success in psychic tasks, suggesting an enhanced sensitivity to subtle energy fields and non-local awareness.<sup>4</sup> Parapsychology views the meditative mind as a fertile ground for psi phenomena, where the usual cognitive filters are bypassed, allowing access to intuitive knowledge and subconscious processes. Religion is accepted as the most influential source and means of moral and social control, in the social as well as individual lives of human progeny. While Post enlightenment Western scholarship views religion as an object of study, not a basic set of directions to human race as theologians do.<sup>5</sup>

From the viewpoint of **world religions**, meditation is integral to spiritual practice, self-realization, and divine communion. In **Hinduism**, meditation (dhyāna) is a core component of yogic practices aiming to attain **moksha**, or liberation from the cycle of rebirth.<sup>6</sup> The *Bhagavad Gita* and *Yoga Sutras of Patanjali* emphasize the inward journey to unite the self (ātman) with the universal spirit (Brahman). Similarly, **Buddhism** teaches meditation (samatha and vipassana) as a path to enlightenment (*nirvana*), where the mind is trained to observe thoughts without attachment and perceive the true nature of reality. The **Eightfold Path**, central to Buddhist doctrine, includes right mindfulness and right concentration, underscoring the importance of meditative discipline.<sup>7</sup>

**Christian mysticism** also incorporates meditative practices such as contemplative prayer, *Lectio Divina*, and the "prayer of the heart," as seen in

the traditions of the Desert Fathers, Saint Teresa of Avila, and John of the Cross.<sup>8</sup> These practices aim at union with God through inner silence and surrender. Moreover, Lectio Divina is the monastic practice of Christianity in the West. It includes meditation, prayer, and scriptural reading which is intended to encourage closeness with Allah. It has consisted of four stages: read, pray, meditate, and contemplate.<sup>9</sup> Likewise, in **Judaism**, particularly within **Kabbalistic** traditions, meditation (hitbodedut) is practiced to connect with the divine presence (*Shekhinah*) and to experience prophetic or mystical insights.<sup>10</sup>

**Islamic Sufism** teaches *dhikr* (remembrance of God), which involves meditative repetition of divine names and often leads to states of spiritual ecstasy and mystical union. Interestingly, modern scientific interest in meditation intersects with both religious and parapsychological perspectives. Neuroscientific research using EEG and fMRI technologies has documented changes in brainwave activity, neuroplasticity, and hormonal balance during meditation, which correlate with reports of mystical experiences and heightened consciousness.<sup>11</sup>

The convergence of parapsychology and religious tradition about meditation highlights a broader, more holistic understanding of human consciousness. While religions provide a structured path and metaphysical context for meditative experiences, parapsychology offers a scientific framework to explore their mechanisms and implications. Both perspectives agree on the transformative power of meditation not merely as a stress-reduction tool, but to explore the deeper dimensions of existence, consciousness, and the cosmos. Dr. Andrew Newberg's work in neurotheology, for example, examines how spiritual practices affect the brain's structure and function, often leading to enduring states of peace and insight. These findings support the parapsychological view that meditation can tap into non-ordinary states of consciousness, while also validating the religious claim of contact with transcendent realities.<sup>12</sup>

### Western Parapsychology perspective of Meditation

Parapsychology is derived from three root words: para, psycho and logy or logos. Para, (παρά, pará) is a Greek origin prefix, meaning "beyond" in parapsychology.<sup>13</sup> Psychology; Psych, (ψύχειν, psúkhein) too Greek origin, meaning soul or mind.<sup>14</sup> Logy, (λόγος, lógos) also Greek meaning, word, reason, speech thought.<sup>15</sup> Keeping in view the comparison of scholarly spilled of opinion on parapsychology definition, a couple of varying definitions are as follows, In Oxford English Dictionary it appears in a concise and academic approach:

"Parapsychology /parəsʌl'kɒlədʒi/, the study of mental phenomena which are excluded from or inexplicable by orthodox scientific psychology (such as hypnosis, telepathy, etc.)."<sup>16</sup>

It is further defined in Oxford's dictionary of psychology:

"The study of apparently parapsychological phenomena or psi phenomena, especially extra-sensory perception (telepathy, clairvoyance, and pre-cognition and psychokinesis. Also called psychical research."<sup>17</sup>

Whereas Cambridge defines it:

“Parapsychology, a field of study like psychology that deals with communication that does not follow the laws of physics as presently understood. It includes extrasensory perception, clairvoyance, telekinesis, and telepathy. Research in the field has not been widely accepted, as findings have been weak, do not fit into any other established body of knowledge, and often have had glaring methodological flaws.”<sup>18</sup>

The Cambridge Dictionary of Psychology expands it further:

It includes clairvoyance, extrasensory perception, telepathy as well as telekinesis. “Research in the field has not been widely accepted, as findings have been weak, do not fit into any other established body of knowledge, and often have had glaring methodological flaws.”<sup>19</sup>

Some Parapsychologists have defined it as a science:

“Parapsychology is the science of the investigation of those borderline scientific phenomena we call 'the paranormal'. It is the attempt to prove, disprove, and to understand those phenomena which stand outside of modern scientific understanding. Ghosts, telepathy, or auras – all are fitting subjects for a parapsychological investigation.”<sup>20</sup>

And others as scientific study:

“Parapsychology is the scientific study of experiences that are out of the realm of human capabilities. These psychic experiences indicate the operation of factors unknown to orthodox sciences.<sup>21</sup> Parapsychology thereby refers to the strictly experimental approaches to the study of psychic phenomena<sup>22</sup>. The three principal methods in parapsychology are case studies, experiments, and field investigations.”<sup>23</sup>

They also emphasize it as the study of paranormal phenomena such as Extrasensory Perception (ESP): “The para cognitive, including clairvoyance, telepathy, and precognition. And Psychokinesis, telekinesis, or the paraphysical movement of an object without the use of physical force or energy.”<sup>24</sup>

Many Western scholars argue that parapsychology challenges the perceived adequacy of the materialistic worldview dominant in both modern and postmodern thought. Modern atheism is largely grounded in a mechanistic understanding of reality, one that dismisses the possibility of any genuine paranormal or supernatural interaction between the human or cosmic soul and the physical world. From this perspective, any credible evidence of paranormal phenomena could provide substantial support for a theistic or religious interpretation of reality.

One such area of interest is the concept of *real-time psychokinesis (PK)*, the idea that the mind can directly influence matter. Proponents assert that there is now a substantial body of experimental data suggesting that, under controlled conditions, individuals can mentally affect sensitive physical systems through intention, visualization, anticipation, or even by simply "wishing" for a desired outcome. Since the 1930s, carefully conducted laboratory research has consistently produced results indicating that such mental influences are possible and statistically significant.

In recent years, there has been a noticeable shift among social scientists and psychologists toward acknowledging the legitimacy of paranormal experiences. Increasingly, attention has turned to analyzing the broad cultural,

psychological, and social implications of such phenomena, rather than merely dismissing them as anomalies or superstitions.

Historically, scientific inquiry into the paranormal began even before the formal establishment of the Society for Psychical Research in 1882. Early investigations were often conducted under the umbrella of spiritualism. Foundational studies that helped shape the field include William Crookes's *Researches in the Phenomena of Spiritualism*, J. Maxwell's *Metapsychical Phenomena: Methods and Observations*, and Charles Richet's *Thirty Years of Psychical Research*. These pioneering works laid the groundwork for contemporary parapsychological studies and continue to be referenced in discussions surrounding the mind-matter relationship and the plausibility of a non-material dimension to human experience.<sup>25</sup>

In conclusion, meditation bridges the realms of science and spirituality. Parapsychology treats it as a laboratory of the mind, where the boundaries of human perception can be tested and extended. World religions regard it as a sacred practice that draws the soul closer to its divine source. Together, they affirm that meditation holds profound potential for inner growth, spiritual awakening, and perhaps even unlocking the latent faculties of the human mind.

From an Islamic perspective, the phenomena studied in parapsychology, such as telepathy, clairvoyance, extrasensory perception (ESP), and communication with unseen entities must be understood through the lens of the Qur'ān and Sunnah. Islam affirms the existence of the **unseen (al-ghayb)**, but it clearly states that complete knowledge of it belongs solely to Allah ﷺ: "Say, *None in the heavens and the earth knows the unseen except Allah*".<sup>26</sup> However, Allah has informed us of certain unseen realities, such as angels, jinn, and revelation, which interact with the human world in ways beyond ordinary perception<sup>27</sup>. Some abilities attributed to parapsychology may also be linked to the influence of **jinn**, as seen in the story of Prophet Sulaimān (عليه السلام), where a jinn offered to bring the throne of the Queen of Sheba instantly.<sup>28</sup> Likewise, dreams may contain glimpses of the unseen, as the Prophet ﷺ said: "*A good dream of a righteous man is one of forty-six parts of Prophethood*"<sup>29</sup>. However, Islam strongly prohibits practices such as soothsaying, fortune-telling, and attempts to contact the dead, as these often involve collaboration with deviant jinn or shayāṭīn. The Prophet ﷺ warned: "*Whoever goes to a fortune teller and believes what he says has disbelieved in what was revealed to Muhammad*"<sup>30</sup>. Thus, while Islam acknowledges the possibility of extraordinary experiences beyond normal sensory perception, it distinguishes between divinely permitted insights (e.g., true dreams, miracles of Prophets) and prohibited practices that involve shirk, deception, or reliance on jinn.

Islam acknowledges that experiences beyond ordinary perception are possible, but it emphasizes that complete knowledge of the unseen belongs only to Allah. Dreams, revelations, and Miracles represent divinely sanctioned glimpses of the hidden, while fortune-telling, sorcery, and parapsychological claims of independent psychic power are prohibited. Thus, the Islamic perspective provides a balanced approach: it accepts extraordinary experiences but anchors them firmly within the principles of tawhīd, Qur'ān, and Sunnah.

Ibn Taymiyyah (d. 1328) and al-Ghazālī (d. 1111) both addressed what may be described in modern terms as “parapsychological” phenomena such as dreams, visions, the influence of spirits, and extraordinary human experiences yet their approaches reflected differing theological and epistemological commitments. Al-Ghazālī, particularly in *Iḥyā 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, treated dreams and intuitive insights (*ilhām*) as legitimate sources of knowledge when consistent with revelation, viewing them as a bridge between the sensory and the spiritual realms.<sup>31</sup> He also engaged with Sufi discourses on unveiling (*kashf*) and extraordinary occurrences (*karāmāt*), allowing space for mystical experience to enrich religious understanding.<sup>32</sup> By contrast, Ibn Taymiyyah, in his *Majmū' al-Fatāwā*, adopted a more cautious stance, acknowledging the reality of dreams, visions, and spiritual influences, but emphasizing their susceptibility to deception by jinn or one's imagination if not anchored in the Qur'an and Sunnah.<sup>33</sup> While he did not reject the possibility of saintly miracles (*karāmāt al-awliyā'*), he insisted that such occurrences had no independent epistemic authority beyond revelation.<sup>34</sup> Thus, while both scholars recognized parapsychological dimensions of human experience, al-Ghazālī afforded them greater epistemic significance within a mystical framework, whereas Ibn Taymiyyah subordinated them strictly to scriptural verification.

### Conclusion

Meditation, traditionally rooted in spiritual and religious practices, has garnered increasing interest in the field of parapsychology for its potential to enhance altered states of consciousness and facilitate paranormal phenomena. From a parapsychological perspective, meditation is not merely a relaxation technique but a gateway to expand awareness, heightened intuition, and possible extrasensory perception (ESP). This abstract explores the theoretical and empirical intersections between meditation and parapsychological experiences such as telepathy, precognition, and out-of-body experiences (OBEs). Research suggests that long-term meditators may exhibit statistically significant differences in psi abilities compared to non-meditators, potentially due to increased sensitivity to subtle energy fields or consciousness modulation. Furthermore, meditative states are often associated with specific brainwave patterns, particularly alpha and theta, which are also linked to paranormal cognition.

Meditation serves as a powerful bridge between **science and spirituality**. In parapsychology, it is explored as a gateway to untapped human potential and PSI phenomena. In world religions, it is revered as a sacred path to the divine, enlightenment, or inner peace. Despite differing frameworks, both views recognize meditation as a profound and transformative practice that transcends the ordinary mind. Meditation, from the perspective of parapsychology, is often viewed as a method of enhancing altered states of consciousness and accessing non-ordinary cognitive and perceptual experiences that may include extrasensory perception (ESP), psychokinesis, and out-of-body experiences (OBEs). Parapsychologists have long explored the potential of meditative practices to facilitate psi phenomena an umbrella term used in parapsychology to describe psychic abilities. Meditation, particularly forms that encourage deep inward focus such as transcendental meditation, Zen, or

mindfulness, is believed to reduce sensory input and cognitive noise, thereby enhancing receptivity to subtle mental impressions and anomalous information processing.<sup>35</sup> Empirical studies have indicated that experienced meditators sometimes score significantly higher on tests of ESP, such as the Ganzfeld experiments, compared to non-meditators, suggesting a possible link between sustained meditative practice and psi performance.<sup>36</sup>

Furthermore, meditative states have been associated with brainwave patterns, such as increased alpha and theta activity, that are also correlated with enhanced intuitive and psi-related functioning.<sup>37</sup> While mainstream psychology often views such claims with skepticism, parapsychology continues to investigate meditation as a potential tool for exploring consciousness beyond the physical senses and understanding the mind's latent capabilities. Nevertheless, further research and replication are necessary to substantiate these findings within broader scientific paradigms.

The concepts of paranormal, supernatural, and mysticism, while often confused or used interchangeably, carry distinct meanings. Paranormal refers to inexplicable experiences beyond current scientific understanding, though not all unexplained phenomena are considered paranormal. Supernatural, in contrast, is defined as phenomena entirely outside the scope of science, governed by different rules, and often linked with religious or divine interpretations hence not interchangeable with paranormal. Mysticism, meanwhile, emphasizes direct, inner knowledge of reality and, though distinct from science, parallels it in its systematic quest for truth. Particularly in Islamic tradition, Sufism represents a unique and independent form of mysticism, with its own art, psychology, and spiritual science. Together, these distinctions highlight the complexity of how humans interpret experiences beyond ordinary understanding, whether through science, spirituality, or faith.

The exploration of consciousness through meditation reveals a profound intersection between parapsychology and sacred traditions. Parapsychology investigates altered states of awareness, psychic phenomena, and experiences that transcend conventional scientific explanation, while sacred traditions view meditation as a path to spiritual awakening, inner harmony, and connection with the divine. Both perspectives converge on the idea that consciousness extends beyond ordinary perception, holding transformative potential for human understanding and existence. By integrating scientific inquiry with spiritual wisdom, meditation emerges not only as a personal practice of mental clarity and self-discovery but also as a bridge to deeper realities that challenge materialist views of the mind. Ultimately, unveiling consciousness through these lenses emphasizes that human awareness is far more expansive, mysterious, and interconnected than conventional thought often admits.

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<sup>29</sup> (Şahīh al-Bukhārī, 6989; Şahīh Muslim, 2263

<sup>30</sup> Sunan Abī Dāwūd, 3904

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