



Do ‘Altered States of Consciousness’ have some correlation with Psychic Phenomena

Naresh Kumar

Independent Parapsychological Researcher

Doi: <https://doi.org/10.55248/gengpi.5.0624.1523>

ABSTRACT

Normal perception happens through the known five senses, viz seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting and touching. But worldwide, we have incidences of Telepathy, Clairvoyance, and Precognition. These are events of perception without using the five senses; hence these are called events of Extra Sensory Perception (ESP). We also witness instances where the mind has influenced matter—a glaring example is that of Uri Gueller who could bend a spoon using mental power. This is psychokinesis (PK).

ESP and PK together are denoted by the term ‘psi’. Psychic Phenomena comprise of ‘psi’ and post-mortem survival (life after death phenomenon). It is observed that mediums in a trance-like state talk to discarnate spirits; in a hypnotic state, one can transgress to past lives. The trance-like state and hypnotic state are examples of Altered States of Consciousness.

This paper explores whether there is some correlation between the Altered State of Consciousness and Psychic phenomena

Key Words: Psychic phenomena, Altered State of Consciousness, ASC, psi, ESP Life after death, Post-Mortem Survival.

Consciousness creates awareness in us and we perceive things. Once conscious, the perception happens through our five senses, i.e., Seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, and feeling. These five senses bring awareness about the world when we are fully conscious. Perception happens when the sense organs send signals to the brain where the signals get processed and bring us awareness about the environment and the world around us. We see things using our eyes, hear using our ears, taste using our tongue, and feel things through our skin. Perception manifests through the action of these sense organs. The world exists for us through perception which happens due to our sense organs.

Thus, for normal perception to happen there are two pre-requisites-Consciousness and the function of our sense organs. We can’t imagine perceiving things without either of them.

But we do observe sporadic and spontaneous happening where people have been able to perceive things without using the normal five senses. These phenomena where we perceive things without using the above five senses are not very common but these do happen.

There are occasions when a person suddenly has uneasiness about a loved one staying thousands of miles away and he then gets a phone call from his family informing him about the hospitalization of the loved one. None of the five senses were involved in this perception which manifested in him. The phenomenon is called ‘*Telepathy*’.

Sometimes people have a vision in their minds about an event happening miles away. One such person saw in his mind that a fire had broken in the locality where his family lived and fire had stopped just three houses before his house. He did get this confirmation a few moments later after getting this vision in his mind. This again is not a perception through the known five senses. Such a phenomenon is termed ‘*Clairvoyance*’

Occasionally, some people can foresee some events. None of the five senses is involved in this perception. The phenomenon is called ‘*Precognition*’.

All above phenomena are examples of perception without using the known five senses and hence are grouped under the term, “*Extra Sensory Perception (ESP)*”.

The placebo effect is evidence of the mind affecting the body. Mind can influence matter and the glaring example was demonstrated by Uri Gueller who could bend a spoon simply by the power of the mind and the spoon bent simply by intense gazing over it. We all feel uneasy when we feel we are stared at by somebody—this is again mind’s influence over us. The phenomenon of the mind’s influence over matter is termed *psychokinesis*.

The above phenomena are real, spontaneous and sporadic, spread across the world from time immemorial. These defy scientific explanation because scientifically perception can happen only through the known five senses when we are in a conscious state of mind. But these phenomena do happen

without the use of the known five senses (but whether we are in a normal conscious state of mind is not known) and we group these phenomena in a term called, '*psi*'. It comprises ESP (Extrasensory Perception), Precognition and Psychokinesis.

Apart from the '*psi*' phenomenon, there is another phenomenon that baffles mankind from time memorial. It is the phenomenon of *Post-Mortem Survival* (Life after death). There is evidence that our consciousness outlives death and that there is life after death.

The literature abounds in incidents which tend to indicate that life continues even after death.

Grof¹, tells about an incident in which Peter went on Scuba diving but did not return, his body was, also, not found. During a session with Grof, Penny (Peter's wife), reported after-death communication (ADC experience) with Peter, who explained that he was, in fact, dead. Peter gave Penny specific instructions concerning each of their children and requested that she get on with her life. Peter then asked Penny to return a book that he had borrowed from a friend, giving Penny the friend's name, the title of the book, and the location of the book in their house. All of this information was correct.

Dr Joseph Murphy² gives a narration of after-death communication in his book *Psychic Perception*-

A widow visited me last year, saying that her husband, shortly before his demise, had told her that he had made out a new will leaving all of his estates to her. But his lawyer knew nothing about it and he had a will made ten years back. She had searched everywhere but could not find the new will.

I suggested to her that she should believe in the sentence, 'Infinite intelligence knows where the will is and reveals to me.' And she should chant this sentence in her daily prayers.

She started praying and after three or four days of praying, she distinctly heard her husband's voice in the kitchen where she was doing ironing: 'Look up the 45th chapter of Isaiah.' She did that and there she found the new will, attested by two witnesses, all in legal phraseology, dated and signed.

It is bizarre that a voice from the late husband guides the wife to find the lost will. The incident sends a chill across our spine-Can dead really come back?

Incidents of reincarnation are reported from all over the world. Dr. Ian Stevenson and Dr. Satwant Pasricha investigated more than 500 cases only in India which proved that we are born again after we die.

Apparitions are witnessed sporadically and spontaneously across the globe. There are psychic mediums who, when in trance, can communicate with discarnate spirits.

Thus, Survival after death or Post-Mortem Survival is also a subject which is bizarre as '*psi*' events. Post-mortem survival together with '*psi*' constitutes what we call *Psychic Phenomena*

A vast literature is available on psychic phenomena about their manifestation but research on their causal aspects is rare. We observe the bizarre phenomena with awe but cannot reason out how these happen. How is it that we come to read a person's mind from great distances, see things from the mind's eyes, read the future, influence others through the power of our mind or communicate with discarnate spirits? All these phenomena defy scientific explanation.

Scientists and researchers across the globe are observing and studying these phenomena but are unable to reach the causal roots.

Normally, perception happens using the known five senses when we are conscious. Thus, there are two prerequisites for perception to manifest i.e., our sense organs must function and we should be conscious.

We have seen that even without the first prerequisite '*psi*' events do happen without using the five sense organs. Thus, the very assumption that perception can happen only with these two scientific prerequisites may not be necessarily true.

Maybe it is also possible that perception can happen when we are not conscious in the true sense; thus, maybe even the second pre-requisite of being in a perfect conscious state of mind may also not be a necessary condition for human perception. This view seems to be true on rare occasions when we have premonition dreams. In dreams, we are not conscious in the general sense of consciousness and when these dreams perceive future events, it can be said that perception has happened even when we are not conscious in the true sense. Thus, perception can happen even without sense organs and also without being in a perfect conscious state.

I have experienced that just before falling asleep, I am in a different state of consciousness and those moments throw up many creative ideas which help me in my research activity.

The above discussions throw up the idea that there may be some states of consciousness which deviate from general conscious states and these states enhance our perceptive ability.

We have discussed *Psychic Phenomena* at length and now let us explore the states of consciousness which deviate from normal consciousness.

Thinkers and researchers call these Altered States of Consciousness (ASC).

In this paper, we shall be exploring whether there exists some correlation of '*ASC*' with *Psychic phenomena*.

We have explored *Psychic Phenomena* and now we shall explore Altered States of Consciousness (ASC) before we take up the main topic of the paper

Altered States of Consciousness

Before we explore ASC, let us first agree that consciousness is not understood by Scientists and Researchers. Consciousness is considered a 'Hard Problem' as its causal roots are not known. Both Psychic Phenomena and Consciousness defy scientific explanation. We do not know where consciousness resides and how it manifests in living things. When we are in a coma, doctors are unable to predict when we shall regain consciousness. This is because no one knows from where consciousness comes and how it manifests. We do not know its causal roots.

What we know is that living things do have varying degrees of consciousness at different times and some insight is there on the causes which cause variation in such varying levels of consciousness. Variation in degrees of consciousness happens due to nature's powers and also can be induced artificially by humans.

For general understanding, we can say that ASC or Altered State of Consciousness is a deviation from the normal state of awareness.

Wikipedia³ elaborates on the meaning of ASC:

An altered state of consciousness (ASC), also called an altered state of mind, altered mental status (AMS), mind alteration, or "altered state of awareness".

It is any condition which is significantly different from a normal waking state.

There is no general definition of an altered state of consciousness, as any definitional attempt would first have to rely on a definition of a normal state of consciousness.

Definitions have been attempted which make use of comparison of normal state of consciousness.

Arnold M. Ludwig attempted the first definition in 1966.

An altered state is any mental state(s), induced by various physiological, psychological, or pharmacological manoeuvres or agents, which can be recognized subjectively by the individual himself (or by an objective observer of the individual) as representing a sufficient deviation in the subjective experience of psychological functioning from certain general norms for that individual during the alert, waking consciousness.

Charles Tart came out with a concise definition of ASC:

Altered states of consciousness are alternate patterns or configurations of experience, which differ qualitatively from a baseline state.

Farthing adds that an ASC is short-termed or at least reversible and might not even be recognized as an ASC at that moment. His definition relies only on subjective experience, leaving aside behavioural changes and physiological responses:

An altered state of consciousness (ASC) may be defined as a temporary change in the overall pattern of subjective experience, such that the individual believes that his or her mental functioning is distinctly different from certain general norms for his or her normal waking state of consciousness.

All attempted definitions do not provide a scientific precise definition because all rely on the 'Normal State of Consciousness' and they say that a condition that temporarily deviates from normal consciousness is ASC. The difficulty lies in defining the 'Normal State of Consciousness'. For practical purposes, the normal state of consciousness is taken as a 'General Waking State'

The ASC could be natural i.e. caused by the physiological or psychological state of our body or artificially induced by the use of drugs, hypnosis, meditation and other artificial means which calm the mind and make it clearer.

Let us have a deeper insight into the Altered State of Consciousness by exploring the nature of ASCs when caused by natural means or induced by humans.

Altered State of Consciousness occurring by Natural Process

Anne-Laure Le Cunff⁴ describes how ASC is achieved by natural processes:

1. **Physical and physiological.** Sleep is one of the most common ways to achieve an altered state of consciousness, where we dream and dissociate from reality. Two others are fasting and sex. Deprivation from food and drinks over an extended period of time can lead to a perceived dissociation from reality. Yet other physical and physiological inductive methods include sleep deprivation and oxygen deprivation.
2. **Illness:** Illness, sometimes, brings in an Altered State of Consciousness: schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and many others, can cause a person to experience an altered state of consciousness.
3. **Spontaneous Natural Processes.** ASC could also happen spontaneously through daydreaming and [mind wandering](#), or when people report a near-death experience.

Altered State of Consciousness artificially induced by humans

It is observed that humans can induce ASC by themselves through some means.

Hypnosis and meditation can lead to altered mental states. For instance, hypnosis can lead to reduced peripheral awareness as well as an enhanced capacity to respond to suggestions. Meditation can be hard to define, but it is used in many religious and spiritual practices to achieve a clear and calm mental state.

Drugs induce ASC----Wikipedia¹ elaborates how drugs can induce an Altered State of Consciousness:

There are many ways that one's consciousness can be altered, such as by using [psychoactive drugs](#), which are defined as chemical substances that pass through the [blood-brain barrier](#) and disturb brain function, causing changes in [awareness](#), [attitude](#), [consciousness](#), and [behavior](#).

[Cannabis](#) is a psychoactive drug that is known to alter the state of consciousness. Cannabis alters mental activity, memory, pain perception, paranoia, and increased sensitivity. Whereas [MDMA](#) (ecstasy) is a drug that also alters one's state of consciousness. It creates a rise in positive feelings and a reduction in negative feelings. [Opioids](#) (heroin, [morphine](#), [hydrocodone](#), and [oxycodone](#)) are drugs that produce analgesia and often feelings of [euphoria](#) in users. [Cocaine](#) affects the neurotransmitters that nerves use to communicate with each other and thus results in an altered state of consciousness, and, finally, [Lysergic acid diethylamide](#), or [LSD](#), results in feelings which may alter quickly through a range from fear to [ecstasy](#).

Thus, the use of drugs also results in an Altered State of Consciousness.

Lastly, trance-like states (other than meditation and hypnosis) which calm the human mind can be caused by creating a tranquil atmosphere and the person reaches an Altered state of Consciousness. Parapsychologists have created such a tranquil state and they call it 'Ganzfeld State' and they use this state in Ganzfeld ESP experimental studies. More of this when we take up the exploration of Psychic Phenomena and 'ASC' correlation.

Having an elaborate understanding of Psychic Phenomena and an 'Altered State of Consciousness', we can now prepare ourselves to explore whether there exists a correlation between Psychic Phenomena and 'ASC'.

Let me start by first explaining why this question cropped up in my mind. The phenomena which are having a clear scientific understanding clearly depict cause and effect leading to the manifestation of the phenomena. For example, take the case of Lightning. Lightning is a giant spark of electricity in the atmosphere between clouds, the air, or the ground. In the early stages of development, air acts as an insulator between the positive and negative charges in the cloud and between the cloud and the ground. When the opposite charges build up enough, this insulating capacity of the air breaks down and a rapid discharge of electricity that we know as lightning takes place. Thus the union of positive and negative charges causes lightning to happen. Thus manifestation of the phenomenon of lightning has a cause (interaction of positive and negative charges) and the effect is the manifestation of the Phenomenon of lightning

Another example of cause-effect for the manifestation of a phenomenon:

We are fascinated to see beautiful colours painted in the form of an arc in the sky i.e., A Rainbow. When sunlight hits a rain droplet, some of the light is reflected. The electromagnetic spectrum is made of light with many different wavelengths, and each is reflected at a different angle. Thus, the spectrum is separated, causing a rainbow. Thus, there is a cause-effect which causes the phenomenon of 'Rainbow'.

Similarly, when warm, moist air rises into cold air, the warm becomes cooler which causes moisture, called water vapour. The cooled air drops lower in the atmosphere, warms and rises again. This circuit of rising and falling air is called a convection cell. If this happens with a small amount of air and moisture, cloud forms but if the amount of air and moisture is large, a **thunderstorm** manifests. Thus, there is a cause which is responsible for the manifestation of the phenomenon 'Thunderstorm'.

All scientific phenomena have this cause-effect aspect which explains the phenomena.

But, the Psychic phenomena do not provide this relationship in clear terms at least not yet. I explored vast literature but could hardly find very few research papers which talk about causal aspects behind the manifestation of psychic phenomena and even those papers leave the question answered and as yet we have no clue as to what factors cause the manifestation of Psychic Phenomena.

We talked about Lightning, thunderstorms and rainbows; we have clear cause-effect links established and we know the causes for manifestation of these phenomena. But it was not so in primitive times. Primitive man used to call these events paranormal or acts of God since the cause-effect relationship, then, was not established. As science advanced and explained these, these phenomena no longer remained paranormal. Psychic Phenomena today is paranormal since we do not know what causes them but in future, we shall uncover the mystery and learn what causes them and these will become normal events. Till then scientists and researchers are speculating on their causes.

My speculation brought me to this topic.

Since 'psi' perception is different from normal perception which happens through the use of five senses when we are in a normal awakening state i.e., we are in a normal conscious state. I started pondering over what could be possibly causing the perception without the use of the five senses and that put an idea in my mind that since perception is happening without the normal five senses, could it be possible that these happen when we are not in normal conscious state or in other words could it be that deviation from a normal state of consciousness may turn out to be conducive for perception of events without use of five senses. Hence the question of the correlation between Psychic Phenomena and 'ASC' surfaced in my mind while I was speculating about the factors which could be conducive to the manifestation of these phenomena.

When I scrutinized literature to explore the answer to the above question, I found that many thinkers have worked on this question.

Let us now take this up for discussion:

Do Psychic Phenomena have some correlation with ‘ASC’

Telepathy, Clairvoyance, Precognition and Psychokinesis (constituting ‘psi’) have emerged as phenomena perceived without using any of the five senses. Also instances of incarnation signify that our consciousness outlives death. Post Mortem Survival and ‘psi’ together constitute Psychic Phenomena. We hardly know how Psychic Phenomena happen and are perceived. There are sporadic and spontaneous ‘psi’ events which happen across the globe and we are perplexed as to how these get perceived.

The field of Parapsychology is founded on the study of these queer phenomena.

A lot of advances in their understanding have happened during the last two centuries. Starting from Mesmer’s days ((1733-1815) when for the first time there established a possibility that there could be a possible correlation of ‘psi’ with ‘ASC’ we have come a long way where this aspect is now being tested in the laboratories.

Mesmer while experimenting on the effect of magnets on physiological functions of the body (e.g., blood flow rates) realized that there existed energy in the universe which flows in our body as well, and if the distribution of this energy is balanced, the body remains healthy. Imbalance leads to sickness and health disorders. He termed this energy in the body as “Animal Magnetism”. To treat health disorders; animal magnetism could be transferred from a healthy body to the patient to bring uniformity of this energy to cure the person. The transference could be done simply by touch.

He could cure many patients having fits and seizures. He and his disciples, while doing this therapy, found that their patients, during therapy went to sleep-like state and were responding to their commands. The phenomenon became popular as, “Mesmerism”.

Some of Mesmer’s patients, in a sleep-like state, were able to gain access to information/events that were inaccessible to them through normal means, e.g., describing actions done by a person in another room. These were the first ever known instances of Telepathy. The telepathic experiences, then, were manifesting in an altered state of consciousness when the patients were not awake. This appears to be the first known case which exhibited some correlation of ‘psi’ with ‘ASC’

Then came Frederik Myers’s days of founding the Society for Psychical Research (SPR) in 1882, when he put forth a concept of the subliminal state of consciousness (now termed ASC) and he was among the first scientists to draw attention to the links between ASCs and psychic phenomena, to be followed by many more distinguished parapsychologists.

Even two centuries ago, the theory of the subliminal mind was put forward by Myers who recognized the importance of an altered state of consciousness and maintained that the altered state of consciousness had a wider span than the normal consciousness which is our waking state. He propagated a view that our ordinary waking (or supraliminal) consciousness is but a small segment of a larger Individuality or Self, selected out of the latter in response to the demands of the environment. He was the first person to believe that our consciousness outlives death and we have life after death. He vowed that to prove this he would communicate to the world from the other side of death in a manner that no one would be able to wave it aside as fraud or trash. He did communicate after his death for 32 years in a way that people could not brush it aside as trash.

Myers took the broader view that all subliminal phenomena manifest a basic psychological process—namely, the loosening of the ordinary barrier between the subliminal and supraliminal regions of the mind.

He speculated that changes in states of consciousness induced the movement of psychic material from the ‘subliminal’ (unconscious) mind to the ‘supraliminal’ consciousness (above the threshold of awareness), in the form of ‘automatisms’ such as telepathic interactions.

Thus, Myers also felt that there existed a correlation between Psychic Phenomena and ‘ASC’

We have come a long way from philosophical speculation over the correlation between Psychic Phenomena and ‘ASC’ to the current era where this thought is being tested in laboratories. Since the causal roots of these phenomena are not known, we are exploring what factors could, possibly, be at the causal roots. In that process, ‘ASC’ as a factor emerged which could have some influence over psychic phenomena. This is not found to be a causal factor but has emerged as a factor which could be a factor which help in making manifestation of psychic events easy.

Let us explore this in detail.

Sleep as an Altered State of Consciousness and Psychic Phenomena

Myers’s thoughts on telepathy and altered state of Consciousness influenced parapsychologists of current times. [Montague Ullman](#) was one such Parapsychologist who agreed on a correlation of Telepathy with the Altered state of Consciousness.

Beloff J⁵ gives the details:

The [American Society for Psychical Research](#) (ASPR) for six years from 1948 maintained a committee specializing in psi in the context of psychoanalysis, in which telepathic dreams are sometimes reported. One member was [Montague Ullman](#), a New York psychiatrist and parapsychologist. Ullman’s interest was stimulated by his experiencing occasional dreams that he thought showed putative evidence of telepathy. He describes an instance in which he

dreamed that a heavily built, middle-aged classmate of his appeared, implausibly, as a ballet dancer in an opera. Shortly after this, he learned that the classmate was indeed a dancer and had just performed for the first time at the Metropolitan Opera House. Ullman also observed that occasionally his patients would report a dream with seemingly telepathic content. His reading of the work of [Frederic Myers](#), [Edmund Gurney](#) and others in the early years of the British [Society for Psychical Research](#) drew his attention to the relationship between apparent telepathy and altered states of consciousness.

The above discussion was on telepathy manifesting in dreams. Literature abounds in the spontaneous manifestation of other 'psi' events during dreams. One classical precognition event described in the literature is regarding Abraham Lincoln.

The former 16th president of the United States Abraham Lincoln had a prophetic dream predicting his own death. Three days before his assassination he spoke about the [nightmare](#) he had in the previous week to his close friend Ward Hill Lamon, and his wife Mary Todd Lincoln. His vivid dream troubled his mind as he felt something bad was going to happen to him.

"About ten days ago, I retired very late to bed. I had been up waiting for important dispatches from the front. I could not have been long in bed when I fell into a slumber, for I was exhausted. I soon as I started to drift off to sleep, there seemed to be a death-like stillness about me. I started to hear subdued sobs, as if a number of people were weeping. I questioned if I left my bed and wandered downstairs. An eerily silence was broken by the same pitiful sobbing, but the mourners were invisible. I then walked from room to room; not a living person was in sight, though the same mournful sounds of distress met me as I moved across. I saw light in all the rooms; every object was familiar to me; but where were all the people who were grieving as if their hearts would break? I was baffled and anxious. What was the purpose of this I wondered? Determined to find the cause of a state of things so mysterious and so shocking, I kept on going until I ended up in the East Room, which I entered. There I met with a sickening surprise. In front of me was a catafalque, on which a corpse wrapped in [funeral](#) vestments. I noticed there where stationed soldiers who were acting as guards; and there was a group of people, watching mournfully upon the corpse, unable to see the face as it was covered, others weeping pitifully. 'Who is dead in the White House?' I demanded of one of the soldiers, 'The President,' was his answer; 'he was killed by an assassin.' Then followed by a loud burst of sorrow from the crowd, which then I jumped out of my sleep. I was unable to sleep no more that night; and although it was only a dream, I have been strangely annoyed by it ever since."

Three days later after he spoke about his dream Abraham Lincoln was assassinated by renowned actor John Booth. Booth made his way to the private box that seated Abraham and his wife Mary as they were watching the play. As he entered he shot Lincoln in the back of the head with a .44 caliber derringer. (<https://www.dreamdictionary.org/dreaming/abraham-lincoln-predicted-his-death/>)

The above incident speaks loudly about the manifestation of a 'psi' event in an altered state of consciousness—namely during sleep.

Another 'psi' event during a dream:

Amongst famous precognition events, the following incident appears in an article by Caroline Watt⁶

"Stevenson recounts the precognition of the sinking of the Titanic. A New York woman had a vivid dream on the night of the sinking, so striking that she woke her husband to tell him about it: "I just saw the mother in a crowded lifeboat rocking in the ocean swell" (Stevenson, 1960, p 157). The woman didn't know her mother was on the ship. Her mother had boarded at Southampton and had intended to surprise her daughter. Fortunately, she had indeed been saved by a lifeboat and eventually made it safely to New York."

There are innumerable incidents quoted in literature which talk about 'psi' events manifesting during dreams. I just narrate one more before moving the discussion further:

Dean Radin⁷ talks about Precognition about the worst terrorist 9/11 attack on World Trade Centre Towers in the USA on September 9, 2001, where the twin Towers were brought to dust by the crashing of an aeroplane into the building by the terrorists, killing many people. There were more than 14000 cases of precognition of the event were reported and were collected at the Rhine Research Centre. One such case is given below:

On September 10, 2001 midnight, Dr. MacGregor was on a flight and managed to occupy vacant seats and tried to sleep as it was a long flight. In his own words, ".... I emptied my mind of all thoughts, focused my attention on the muted roar of engines, and lay very still—more awake than ever.

In the evening it was almost imperceptible, the strange feeling that started to come over me. It began with an awareness of how absolutely still my body was. I wondered vaguely why it was so perfectly motionless and felt a strong urge to move it. The more I tried to move, however, the more I detected a kind of resistance. Something hard and unyielding surrounded my body, immobilizing it. Yes, I felt it clearly now, I was encased and held fast in concrete.....

The feeling of being imprisoned in concrete intensified—with it now was a sense of dread. I could not turn my head or move my arms or legs or expand my lungs with a deep breath of air. I was hopelessly trapped and on the verge of claustrophobic terror. And then the pain began. The concrete was moving. From all sides it was pressing on me, tighter and tighter, squeezing me with unbearable force. My body was about to be crushed. There was nothing to hold on to, nowhere to run to. In another moment my life would be over.....

It was a long trip from Seattle to the island where we lived. We arrived home at 6 am on September 11.

Three thousand miles away, the World Trade Tower Centre was bursting into flames after being hit by aeroplanes. Thousands of lives ended that morning in the crush of concrete!!!!!!.....

Thus, we see that an altered state of consciousness in the form of sleep has rendered many Psychic events that are sporadic and spontaneous. Researchers, taking a cue from such incidents tried to bring the research into a laboratory where they tried to explore the manifestation of telepathy in a dream state in the laboratory.

[KM Wehrstein](#) and [Robert McLuhan](#)⁸ bring us an account of such experiments carried out at the [Maimonides Medical Center](#) in Brooklyn, New York. They mention that Successful ESP dreaming experiments were carried out in a sleep laboratory at the [Maimonides Medical Center](#) in Brooklyn, New York, between 1964 and 1978. In several instances, close matches were reported between the content of subjects' dreams and the imagery that another person in a separate room was trying to transmit to them.

David Luke⁹ describes the methodology as follows:

Maimonides's dream ESP research technique exploited the then-recent discovery that vivid dreams occur during REM sleep, monitoring participants' brain activity by means of EEG in a purpose-built dream laboratory. Typically, a sender in a nearby room would attempt to psychically transmit an image to the person sleeping in the sleep laboratory. When instruments indicated that the sleeper was in a REM period, he or she would be woken and asked to describe their dream imagery. The following day the dreamer, or an independent judge, would view a pool of art prints that included the target image and rank them according to how closely they resembled the previous night's dream. The selections were scored in a binary manner as either a hit (ranked in the top 50%) or a miss (ranked in the bottom 50%).

Of the more than 300 trials conducted throughout the Maimonides research program, the overall combined hit rate was 63% where 50% would be expected by chance. These results are highly significant, with odds against chance of about seventy-five million to one.

The results are startling and tend to indicate that there may exist a correlation between sleep (an ASC) and telepathy.

Along similar lines experiments outside laboratories were conducted to test Clairvoyance and precognition and these gave positive results. David Luke⁷ goes on to describe them:

Since the closure of the dream laboratory programme, a number of conceptual replications have been made using home sleeping protocols, without EEG monitoring. These later studies also incorporated both clairvoyance and precognition designs, as well as the original telepathy approach. A review of 28 studies published since 1977 demonstrates that the dream 'psi' effect remains positive overall. The size of the effect is somewhat smaller than in the original Maimonides series, but this is perhaps to be expected, as the latter used specially selected participants and was able to wake sleeping participants during REM periods when dreams are easier to recall. Motivation is also thought to be greater when participants sleep in the laboratory rather than at home. That said, both laboratory and home series show a small but consistent effect of dream 'psi' across numerous laboratories and researchers spanning fifty years of research.

All the above discussions reveal that in the dream state success rates of 'psi' attempts are mostly successful with success rates much above the chance level. There does appear a positive correlation between sleep and Psychic Phenomena.

Let us now explore some other altered states of consciousness and find out whether they also show some correlation with Psychic Phenomena

Meditation and Psychic Phenomena

[Serena Roney-Dougal](#)¹⁰ posits that

Traditional Yogic and Buddhist teachings state that a person who attains a higher state of consciousness will manifest psychic powers (siddhis). Psi awareness is said to occur at a certain stage in meditation attainment, as an aspect of the greater sensitivity and awareness that follows from removing the noise of the internal dialogue. All meditation traditions state that advanced meditators will exhibit reliable and strong psychic phenomena.

Forty-three meditation-psi experimental studies have been reported since 1992. Some of these involved more than one experiment, as many as twenty in one case. Twenty-seven of the studies gave significant positive results.

In 38 studies the participants had practised some form of meditation, sometimes over a number of years, and had been chosen to participate on the hypothesis that meditators are more psi-conducive than non-meditators. In 22 studies in which meditators were compared with non-meditators or beginners, thirteen found that the meditators exhibited enhanced positive psi scoring.

In 25 studies participants were asked to meditate as part of the procedure, on the hypothesis that a meditative state of consciousness would be psi-conducive. In eleven cases, these experiments gave significant positive results.

It is observed that many studies have shown that success rates of 'psi' (psychic phenomena) manifestation are higher in meditative states compared to ordinary states of consciousness.

Hypnosis and Psychic Phenomena

Hypnotic states are also altered states of consciousness. We have already discussed mesmerism which was the origin of hypnosis and during the hypnotic state the subjects were able to read other's minds.

David Luke⁹ observes that several ESP hypnosis experiments were performed throughout the twentieth century. When the results of 25 ESP experiments were combined, subjects who had been hypnotically induced were found to have scored significantly above chance, whereas those in the control (non-hypnosis) condition did not.

Apart from Extra Sensory Perception (a component of psychic phenomena) effects during hypnotic states of consciousness, there are innumerable instances of experience of life after death when hypnotic past life regression took subjects beyond their birth to their past lives, which, when verified were found to be true.

Post Mortem Survival and Altered State of consciousness (ASC)

The fact that we survive death is substantially proven by the great hypnotist of our time- hypnoterapist Michael Newton¹¹. He gives an account of his 29 subjects who were taken to subconscious states to recall their childhood memories and then they were encouraged to go further down to superconscious states which took them to states before birth into the spirit world which they described vividly and then they were made to transgress into their past lives. Thus, he made them recall memories of earlier life/lives and the intermediary period of the spirit world when they were stuck as ghosts before being born again. His subjects gave a similar account of their transcendence from death to the spirit world and their getting adjusted to the spirit world by following a standard protocol. The experiences narrated by different subjects in the hypnotized states had a striking resemblance to the spirit world as described by each of them and make us believe that their narrations were real-life journeys into the spirit world and beyond their previous lives. The trance-like state made the subjects describe their previous lives and hence went on to establish compelling evidence that life exists even after death.

Thus, Post-Mortem Survival - a psychic phenomenon does correlate with the Hypnotic state (a form of ASC).

Survival after death is also indicated by the communication of Psychic Mediums (when in a trance-like state) with discarnate spirits. Literature is full of anecdotes of powerful psychic mediums who in altered states of consciousness could communicate with discarnate spirits. Literature abounds in the feats of psychic mediums, some prominent ones are described in a paper posted in Keen¹²:

John Edward: Known for his TV show “Crossing Over with John Edward,” he has touched the lives of countless people by connecting them with their departed loved ones.

Theresa Caputo: Star of the reality show “Long Island Medium,” Caputo has charmed audiences with her engaging personality and her ability to relay messages from the spirit world.

James Van Praagh: A renowned medium and author, Van Praagh has written several books on mediumship and conducted countless readings that have provided solace to grieving individuals.

Allison DuBois: The inspiration behind the TV series “Medium,” DuBois is celebrated for her work as a profiler and medium, assisting law enforcement agencies in solving cold cases.

George Anderson: Anderson is recognized as one of the most scientifically tested and validated mediums. He has conducted extensive research on mediumship.

Tyler Henry: Henry is a well-known American medium and television personality. He gained fame through his show, “Hollywood Medium with Tyler Henry,” where he conducts psychic readings for various celebrities. He has been praised for his accuracy and ability to connect with spirits.

The above psychic mediums are a testimony to the fact that it is possible to talk to deceased persons at the will of mediums. The psychic mediums enter a trance or altered state of consciousness to make contact with the spirit world. In this state, they become more receptive to the energies and messages from the other side. While in this altered state, mediums may speak, write, or channel the messages they receive.

The above confirms that altered states of consciousness are necessary for the manifestation of psychic phenomena and hence they must be correlated.

In current times, parapsychologists have realized the importance of altered states of consciousness in Psi manifestation and have started to put the subjects under study in a relaxed state of mind while conducting psi experiments. These experiments are called Ganzfeld experiments. David Luke has the details:

Ganzfeld experiments

Psi researchers interested in ASCs observed that a state of relaxation was common to many of them. They decided to exploit this inward-oriented awareness as a means to generate ESP, using a new sensory attenuation technique termed ganzfeld (whole field). The technique limits incoming sensory information through the use of a comfortable reclining chair, diffuse red light reaching their eyes through half-cut ping-pong balls tied in front of their eyes, and white noise. After a period of systematic relaxation (guided by an audio recording played through the headphones), the percipient is encouraged to verbalize the perception of their inner landscape (and recorded via a microphone). The principle is that the 'sensory hunger' that follows from the reduced sensory input leads to an increase in spontaneous mental imagery.

Typically, an agent or 'sender' views a randomly selected image or video clip, and then attempts to transfer details about it psychically to the receiver, who is immersed in the ganzfeld in a separate location. Once the session is complete, the receiver's mentation is blind judged (by a person not otherwise involved in the experiment) for its similarity to the actual target, which is presented to the judge in a batch of four possible targets. (In some studies, the

receiver blind judges his/her own mentation against the target and decoy materials; in others, a non-sender clairvoyance design has been employed, in which the receiver simply tries to intuit what has been randomly selected as a target.)

In 2010, a meta-analysis compared the Ganzfeld technique of 29 studies carried out between 1992 and 2008 to a comparable group of sixteen non-ganzfeld ASC-induction free-response studies. Both sets of studies using ASCs were found to be significantly positive overall, with the ganzfeld being more effective than the non-ganzfeld ASC-induction techniques.

In the above discussions, we have seen that the altered state of consciousness is more conducive to the occurrence of psychic phenomena and results were more significant in the **Ganzfeld state** which is an altered state of consciousness than in the non-Ganzfeld state of consciousness.

We, now, approach the end of the paper after establishing that there is some correlation between ASC and Psychic Phenomena because the ASC are more conducive to the manifestation of psychic phenomena. It is interesting to note that the reverse is also true when it was found that in most cases where psychic phenomena occurred, the mental state of the subject is in an altered state of consciousness. There have been attempts to explore the mental states of persons who are in the process of exhibiting psychic feats. Brian J. Williams¹³ gives details:

It is found that the perpetually occurring electrochemical activity of the billions of neurons found within the cerebral cortex continuously produces electric waves emitting up from the cortical surface. One can detect and record these brainwaves through the application of electroencephalography or EEG. There are five main types of brain waves which are distinguished from each other through their respective frequency ranges, measured in cycles per second or Hertz, Hz

- *Delta waves(1-3Hz)—commonly present during periods of dreamless sleep*
- *Theta Waves(4-7 Hz)—present during drowsiness*
- *Alpha Waves(8-12 Hz)--- typically occur during moments of relaxed awareness*
- *Beta Waves (13-29 Hz)—often appear when a person is actively concentrating*
- *Gamma Waves(30-80 Hz)—when engaged in a complex process of sensory stimuli through behaviours like perception, memory, and motor skills. (pp-28-29)*

Of these waves, only Alpha waves are of interest to us as they correspond to the Altered state of Consciousness.

In ESP experiments EEG was used to see what type of waves are present during the successful manifestation of a psychic phenomenon. Bryan William gives the details:

Results obtained in several experimental studies seem to point out a correlation between relaxation and ESP, thus, lending credence to the idea that being in a state of relaxed awareness is ESP conducive. On the basis that brainwave activity in the Alpha range is often associated with this mental state, it seems reasonable to hypothesize that Alpha activity could somehow be correlated with ESP.

There have been a number of EEG experiments designed and conducted to explore this hypothesis since the early 1950s. These experiments took a straightforward forced choice approach by looking at Alpha activity in relation to their performance at successfully guessing the symbols in a shuffled pack of ESP cards. It was found that successful ESP performance was positively correlated with the amount of Alpha activity present in the participants.

In a clairvoyance study conducted by Stanford and Palmer(1975), 32 participants attempted to perceive the details of randomly selected target pictures which had been enclosed in aluminium foil jackets and placed inside folders made of opaque blackboard. Analysis of EEG data recorded from the right occipital region revealed that on average, participants who scored high on the task showed a significantly higher amount of alpha than the participants who scored low. (pp 32,33).

The above indicates that people who exhibit a psychic feat do have an altered state of consciousness while accomplishing the phenomenon.

We end this paper with the conclusion that since altered states of consciousness are conducive to the manifestation of psychic phenomena and also because the persons who had successfully accomplished the phenomenon were found in an altered state of mind, there does exist a strong correlation between Altered States of Consciousness and Psychic Phenomena.

A word of caution, the above does not mean that we have reached the causal roots of psychic phenomena. There is a correlation but this correlation is not **causal**. Thus, it is not sufficient for the manifestation of a psychic phenomenon that the person must be in an altered state of mind. There must be many more factors which may be needed along with ASC to make psychic phenomena manifest. We are still far from solving the causal roots of Psychic Phenomena. Maybe since psychic phenomena are related to consciousness and since consciousness is still a 'hard problem', the mystery still remains!

Reference

- 1) Grof, S. 1988. *The adventure of self-discovery*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- 2) Dr. Murphy Joseph, (2014). *Psychic Perception—The magic of Extrasensory Power*. Manjul Publishing House, 7/32, Ansari Road, DaryaGanj, New Delhi 110002.
- 3) Wikipedia-- Altered state of consciousness https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Altered_state_of_consciousness

- 4) Anne- Laure Le Cunff-- Altered states of consciousness: the elusiveness of the mind <https://nesslabs.com/altered-states-of-consciousness>
- 5) Beloff, J. (1967). Report on the Maimonides Dream Laboratory. *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* 44, 24-27.
- 6) Watt Caroline (2017). Precognition: From life to lab in magazine Promoting Excellence in Parapsychological Research and Education in Koestler Parapsychology unit. koestlerunit.wordpress.com/2017/06/06/precognition-from-life-to-lab/
- 7) Dean Radin (2006)- Book- 'Entangled Minds' published by Pocket Books, a division of Simon & Schuster, Inc. 1230 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10020 ISBN-13: 978-1-4165-1677-4 ISBN-10: 1-4165-1677-8
- 8) [KM Wehrstein](#) and [Robert McLuhan](#) (2023)- Marimonides Dream Telepathy Research—paper published in PSI Encyclopedia on July 4, 2023 <https://psi-encyclopedia.spr.ac.uk/articles/maimonides-dream-telepathy-research>
- 9) Luke, D. (2015). 'Altered States of Consciousness and Psi'. *Psi Encyclopedia*. London: The Society for Psychical Research. <<https://psi-encyclopedia.spr.ac.uk/articles/altered-states-consciousness-and-psi>>. Retrieved 26 May 2024.
- 10) Roney-Dougal, S. (2015). 'Meditation and Psi'. *Psi Encyclopedia*. London: The Society for Psychical Research. <<https://psi-encyclopedia.spr.ac.uk/articles/meditation-and-psi>>. Retrieved 11 June 2024.
- 11) Newton Michael (2013, 2021)-Journey of Souls—case studies of Life between Lives. Published by Jaico Publishing House A-2 Jash Chambers, 7-A Sir Phiroz Shah Mehta Road, Fort, Mumbai-400001 ISBN 978-81-8495-105-9 First Jaico impression: 2013; 12th Jaico impression: 2021
- 12) Paper posted in Keen titled- 'Well Known Psychic Mediums' <https://www.keen.com/articles/psychic/well-known-psychic-mediums>
- 13) Brian J. Williams – Monograph Psychic Phenomena and the Brain. Exploring the neuropsychology of psi. Published in Australia in 2015 by AIPR ISBN: 978-0-9870772-2-6