



They are enigmatic, elusive and yet a part of our innate nature.

In yoga, they are called the *siddhis* or powers of consciousness. They express themselves in various forms, and yogis and yoginis divide them into the lesser and greater *siddhis*—a distinction I will get to in a moment.

But before proceeding any further, I would like to note that the *siddhis*—although called by different names—show up in many of the world’s spiritual and religious traditions. There are many well-documented cases of Buddhist, Christian, Islamic, Jewish, and Taoists saints and mystics who have attained these states. In addition, it is well known among indigenous cultures that shamans often exhibit such powers as well.

Several years ago, I had an experience with the *siddhis* that were exhibited by a mystic in one of the most remote places on earth—a small island near Kodiak, Alaska.

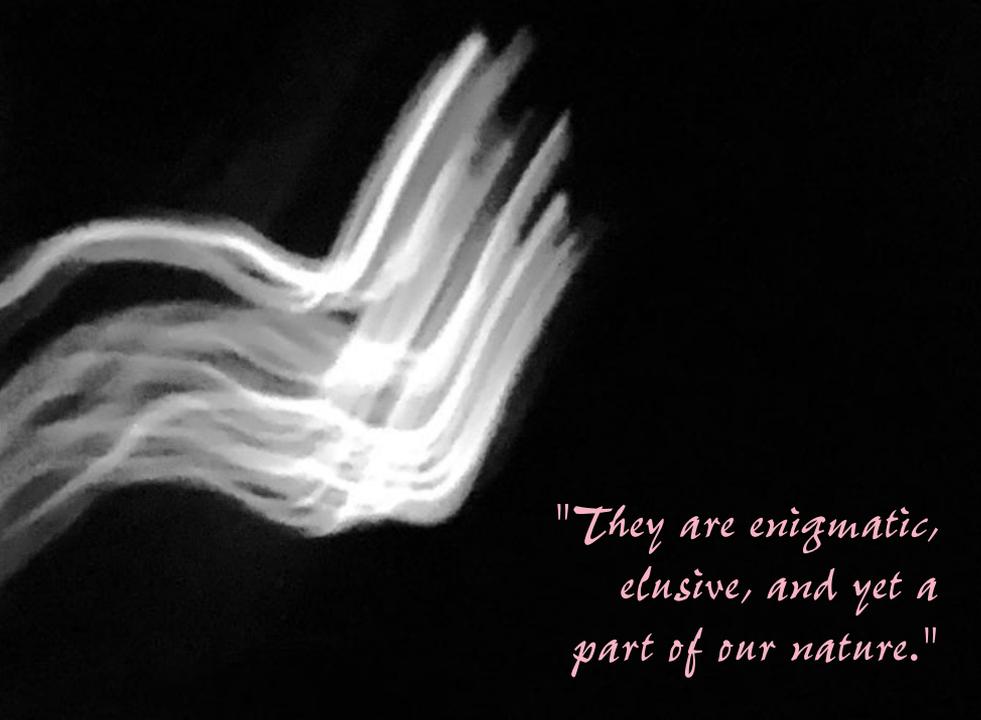
I had been invited to teach a workshop in Anchorage, and the following weekend I taught a workshop on Kodiak Island. After the final session on the island, I had a few days off. My organizer gave me a few options, and I chose the boat ride to a small island inhabited by Russian Orthodox monks where an Orthodox saint had lived. I was told that visitors more often than not had to turn back due to rough seas. In fact, I was told, the prelates of the Church in charge of the monastery had never been able to see it, as every time they went for a visit, high seas forced them back. This was a source of immense humor among the native peoples.

Our boat ride took us across an amazingly placid sea. Our host sat next to a boom, knitting, and commented how unusual it was to have such a calm passing. I sat looking out at the rich, unbelievably beautiful landscape of the neighboring islands as our boat chugged along at a fairly crisp pace. Seals followed us partway.

Passing an outcropping of boulders, we came into a small natural harbor. The water was too shallow for the trawler, so we got into a dinghy and headed to shore.

Stepping out of the boat onto the sand, we were greeted by someone who appeared to be in his early thirties and had the air of authority about him. Our host explained that I had come from Washington State to visit. The abbot smiled approvingly and proceeded to take us on a tour of the small monastery.

Near the end of the short tour, the abbot took us to a small chapel where the Saint had been previously buried. His body had since been removed but the site was still considered holy.



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The abbot caught me staring at a corner of the chapel. He asked me what I was looking at and I said I was seeing a column of white light coming out of the floor and going up through the roof. The abbot seemed to smile a bit and said that the Saint had been buried in that corner of the church.

For a while, time seemed to be suspended as we both stared at the empty grave. Seeming to rouse himself from some state of reverie, the abbot said, "There is one more thing I would like to show you."

He guided us back down the hill to a very small chapel. The inside of the building glowed from the gold pigments of recently painted icons, which depicted the lives of saints along with other prominent figures of the Russian Orthodox Church. In the back of the tiny chapel there was a very small altar with a bible in Russian.

The abbot pointed out the various icons and their meanings, and then he said that the tour had come to an end. He motioned us out of the chapel and closed the door behind us. I remember suddenly having a question about mysticism I thought the abbot might be able to clarify. I knocked at the door, but there was no answer. I knocked again; still no sign of anyone inside.

Gingerly, I opened the door to find the chapel completely empty. For a moment I stood in shock. Then my ever-skeptical

mind came in and I began to search for trap doors or other entrances. I even picked up the small rug on the floor to see if there was a secret exit. Nothing.

Still in a kind of shock, I wandered out the door and onto the beach where our party was waiting. There, clearly in view, was the abbot. He was talking to my host and as I stepped up, he nodded his head with a distinct twinkle in his eyes. We boarded the dinghy and headed back to the trawler. The sun was low in the sky and I stood on the deck looking over the stern as we headed back to sea. I was very quiet.

Halfway through the ride back, the fisherman's wife turned from her knitting and said, "You know, they do things like

that all the time!"

"Things like what?" I asked.

"Oh, you know. Teleporting, bi-locating. Things like that."

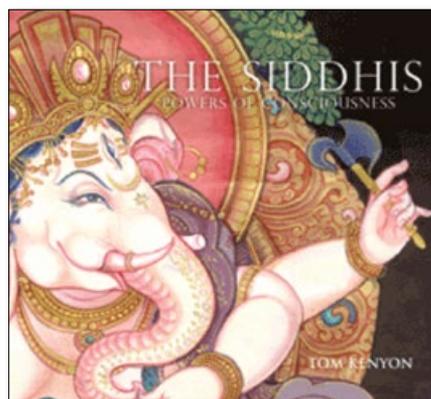
"Really," I said.

"Yes", she replied, not taking her eyes off her knitting. "That island is a remote place. There is no mail service. We see them sometimes in town picking up their mail and buying things. And," she said in a most conspiratorial tone, "they don't have any way of getting there!"

The siddhis cover a wide range of non-ordinary abilities from what are called the lesser siddhis to what are termed the greater siddhis. The lesser siddhis include such psychic abilities as *clairvoyance* (inner seeing), *clairaudience* (inner hearing), *clairsentience* (inner feeling), as well as *clairgnosis* (inner knowing), as in knowing something but not knowing how you know it. The first three powers, clairvoyance, clairaudience and clairsentience, are refinements of the physical senses.

As psychic powers unfold, the lesser siddhis often first present themselves in one of the above mentioned four forms.

Many yogis/yoginis, saints, and mystics have reported that they could see their disciples in distant locations when it was called for. In one account, the yogi Neem Karoli Baba suddenly asked for large amounts of food to be brought to him.



THE SIDDHIS: Powers of Consciousness (9 CD Set)
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Those present reported that he consumed a mind-boggling amount of food before going into samadhi (a form of deep yogic trance). When the yogi came out of meditation, his disciples asked him what had happened. He reported that he had suddenly seen one of his disciples dying in the desert. The last desire of the dying man was to eat. Baba said that the chela (disciple) had reached a level of attainment where there was no further need to reincarnate. But with the desire for food on his mind at the moment of death, he would have been brought back into the wheel of reincarnation just through the power of this one unfulfilled desire! Baba had taken upon himself the task of fulfilling the man's last wish for food, and using his yogic powers, he transmuted the desire.

The lesser siddhis also include such things as healing abilities and limited powers of prophecy. This class of yogic powers also includes the ability for awareness to become very small or very large—in other words, not confined by the limitations of the body.

The greater siddhis include such unusual abilities as levitation (in which the body floats or hovers in air). Again, this siddhi is hardly confined to Indian yogis or yoginis.

There are well-documented sightings of St. Francis of Assisi, for one, hovering in the air. St. Francis exhibited other siddhis as well. In fact, his physical remains still have spiritual powers even after his death. While visiting his shrine in Assisi, I was transported into the spiritual realms through the emanations from his crypt! I heard a sound like wind blowing through aspen trees when I stood near his body, and when I returned to my hotel room my skin was red as if I had a light sunburn.

In modern times, the Catholic priest, Father Pia, also exhibited the siddhis of levitation as well as understanding any language spoken to him. It is said that he sometimes had to hold onto the table where he was conducting mass to keep from levitating off the floor.

The greater siddhis also include such remarkable abilities such as *teleportation* (like the abbot I mentioned earlier) and *bi-location* (being in two places at once).

There are other abilities that fall under this category as well.

Siddhis or yogic powers are attained as a natural consequence of spiritual development. There is, however, a very real danger with the siddhis

A short story about the dilemma of siddhis will help to make this clear.

Many years ago, I met a very powerful yogi who was a master of the kundalini energy.

He shared a story about his younger days when he was in India after having attained some of the siddhis. He was resting against a tree, listening to the beautiful music of a master musician who was caught up in the fervor of *bhakti* (divine love), and due to the intensity of devotion within the music, our yogi was transported into a deep state of samadhi and experienced great ecstasies and bliss.

The concert ended abruptly when it started to rain. The young yogi caused the rain to stop, and the musician returned to his *kirtans* (sacred singing). Very quickly our yogi was transported back into samadhi, but his bliss was rudely ended by an old man kicking him in the side. The man was also a yogi, and in a furor he continued to kick the younger yogi, yelling obscenities at him.

"What are you doing?" he asked. "Don't you realize this area has been suffering from a drought? And you stopped the rains for your own selfish desires." The ancient yogi raised his staff in the air and pointed it at his younger peer. "Mark my words, if you don't stop this, you will pay a great karmic debt. You will spend a thousand lifetimes as a sea creature!" The old yogi then kicked some dust in the direction of the young man and left before he could respond.

Immediately the younger yogi returned the rains through his yogic powers and fervently prayed for his siddhis to be taken away, and miraculously they left him. But over the years they slowly returned to a much wiser and less flamboyant man.

I believe that the siddhis are a natural expression of our spiritual evolution.

And having worked with methods for generating *siddhic* powers from many diverse traditions, my assessment is that these powers can enhance the quality of our lives and those around us. But they should not—as many of the yogic sutras admonish—cultivate them for the pursuit of power.

Rather they are better understood as a natural blossoming of our innate spiritual potentials when the time is ripe. When the seed of a palm tree is placed into the earth, the mature tree is not yet visible. But when all the conditions are right, the palm tree will appear and bear coconuts. The siddhis are very much like this.

The seeds of *siddhic* powers are already within us, and it just requires tending to them within the garden of our minds for them to flourish.

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