Parapsychology and Buddhism –

to afford a comparison between descriptions of psychic experiences in

Buddhist works and in parapsychological research

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Abstract

The presented research project is aimed at affording a comparison between the description of psychic experiences in Buddhist works and Parapsychological research. As such, this thesis scholastically outlines the Buddhist Pāli Canon's perspective on the phenomenon of psychic power or psi. This particular Theravadin Buddhist scripture has long been available but has not been scrutinised until now to academically research the instances of psi contained within it. Moreover, no previous attempt has been made by Buddhist academics and parapsychologists to gather all such instances in a separate collection. Therefore, during the first phase of this research project, all the psi incidences from the Pāli Canon in English were collected and were then analysed qualitatively, using the content analysis method. The analysis identified 257 instances of psi and drew out several themes which linked the possibility of psi with the concept of merit, which is the central finding of this thesis. During the second phase, fifteen expert Vipassana meditators across India were interviewed, not only to get their perspectives on psi but also to compare the findings from the Pāli Canon analysis with contemporary living practitioners. The interview data analysis was carried out using the thematic analysis method; these results were consistent with the findings of the first phase of the research and formed the basis for the proposal of an experiment that can be implemented in the future to test psi in a novel way. The body of research represents a strong response to the aim of this study by critically justifying the nature of psi based on merits, in contrast with parapsychologists' description of psi as spontaneous or as that which can be elicited with the help of psi-conductive states. Accordingly, this thesis adds valuable knowledge

to the academic disciplines of parapsychology and Buddhist studies, in which the theme of merit has not previously been linked to the possibility of psi, although there was some parallel understanding from both the fields to some extent. This research suggests the possibility of providing evidence for psi with a proposal on the idea of the act of truth (pāli: saccakiriya, meaning assertion of truth speech), which can be carried out in future. The time required and the huge and complex nature of the Pāli Canon was perceived as one of the limitations. This PhD research finds its place in various psychology and theology related subject areas.

Key Terms

Iddhi: Iddhi stands for power in a general sense and for the exercise of supernatural power in particular. Early Buddhism holds that through systematic cultivation of the mind it becomes possible to develop various types of supernatural powers, ranging from reading the minds of others to performing feats like levitation, etc. (Anālayo, 2017)

The Pāli canon: The Pāli canon, also called as the Tipitaka or "Three Baskets" (of doctrine), is divided into three major parts:

    a) Vinaya Pitaka: The Collection of Disciplinary Rules

    b) Sutta Pitaka: The Collection of the Buddha's Discourses

    c) Abhidhamma Pitaka: The Collection of Philosophical Treatises (Jayatilleke, et al., 2012, p. 35).

Merit: Merit is a form of spiritual insurance or investment made with expectation of lessening the suffering. The kammic (related to karma) theory of action centers thus on merit-making. (Daniel and Keyens, 1983, p. 267)

Levitaiton: Levitation refers to the phenomenon that objects or human beings levitate in the air without the involvement of any physical power. (Xiong, 2010, p. 157).

Theravada Buddhism: Theravada ("The School of the Elders," the most important and only remaining school of the "Hīnayāna" tradition, meaning "The Small Vehicle") is the

oldest surviving Buddhist school and has a widespread following in Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia. Accordingly, it is relatively conservative and generally closer to early Buddhism. Theravada implies meditation techniques like samatha and vipassana (Fathi, 2013).

Psi: "psi" phenomena is the apparent ability to receive information shielded from the senses (ESP) and to influence systems outside the sphere of motor activity (PK) (Rao and Palmer, 1987). 'Psi' is mainly divided into three domains known as ESP, PK and Survival. The Parapsychological Association's website mentions that "Parapsychology only studies those anomalies that fall into one of three general categories: ESP (extra-sensory perception), mind-matter interaction (also known as psychokinesis), and phenomena suggestive of survival after bodily death, including near-death experiences, apparitions, and reincarnation (Parapsychological Association, 2020).

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1   Chapter I Introduction

1.1   Thesis Aims

The current thesis is an attempt to afford a comparison between descriptions of psychic experiences in Buddhist works and in Western scientific parapsychology. This idea is intended to contribute to the current body of knowledge about practical Buddhist supernormal powers as described in the Buddhist Pāli Canon and to explore how these might be synthesised with conceptualisations of phenomena from modern parapsychology. The rationale behind this is the possibility of broadening the horizons of the understanding of psychic powers (referred to in Pāli as 'iddhis' and in Sanskrit as 'siddhis') by means of addressing the literature on psychic powers from the Buddhist Pāli Canon that has been available for a long time but has never been thoroughly investigated within parapsychology. The aim of this thesis has been fulfilled in four stages:

a. Literature review of the understanding of psi phenomena (more in section 2.2) from the perspectives of parapsychology and the Pāli Canon

b. Conducting a systematic thematic analysis of incidences of psychic powers from the Pāli Canon

c. Exploring whether these understandings of psi phenomena remain contemporaneous by conducting and analysing interviews with expert meditation practitioners

d. Translating these real-world observations into proposals for more ecologically valid methods of investigating psi

1.2 Reflexivity

Reflexivity has been used in the academic discussion for knowledge production for many decades (Charmaz, 2006; Charmaz and Mitchell, 1996; D'Cruz et al., 2007; Etherington, 2004; Finlay and Gough, 2008; Gergen and Gergen, 1991; Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). We find that in many academic theses this has been used as a common practice to specifically emphasise the position of the researcher and their influence on research. In qualitative research, the intention of using reflexivity is to evaluate the quality and rigour of research (Cohen and Crabtree, 2008; Hall and Callery, 2001; Jootun et al., 2009; Koch and Harrington, 1998; Sandelowski, 1993). This has helped to address the question of subjectivity by providing an opportunity to acknowledge the researcher's influence on the research process (Finlay, 1998; Finlay and Gough, 2008; Gentles et al., 2014; Guillemin and Gillam, 2004; Pillow, 2003; Stronach et al., 2007).

The main inspiration to conduct this PhD study came from my own experience and my passion to understand the nature of the human mind and its potential to surpass the normal boundaries of the body. Additionally, having a Buddhist family background was a great help in schooling into me the teachings of the Buddha which underlie my personal and academic career.

Due to my Indian background, I had a strong base in the practice of Theravada Buddhism especially with Vipassana meditation as preached in the Goenka tradition. Academically I did not start learning English until the age of 21; however, in the pursuit of learning Buddhism, I went to Hong Kong University where I enrolled in the master's program in Buddhist studies. There I learnt the three main traditions of Buddhism and started contemplating them. My personal experiences of out of body experiences,

synchronicities and higher meditative states made me interested in researching parapsychology. These experiences came as a shock to me, and I could not make sense of them by myself; I was inspired to investigate further. I started practising more meditation and that led to more insights. Sometimes I feel that there is a huge space in my mind, and sometimes I felt that my body was so light that it could fly. I also experienced an existential crisis and started to question the purpose of being alive. In this way, I also started to reflect more on death and wanting to learn about the truth of these phenomena. I wanted to take an intellectual and experiential approach, so I decided to engage in more academic material and at the same time, I kept learning about meditation from different traditions. I became particularly interested in Theravada because mysticism is not seen as particularly significant in this tradition, and it is also considered as the tradition that is closest to Buddha's words. When I started drafting my proposal, I found that there was little or no research that has been done on the Theravada tradition. Being a practitioner and experienced meditator of Vipassana tradition myself, I thought it would be interesting to explore this potential source of treasure in order to benefit both parapsychology and the field of Buddhist studies. This thesis is the outcome of this endeavour.

I faced many challenges during the writing of this thesis. Firstly, because English is my third language, and one which I only started learning in the last 7 years, I encountered a lot of writing issues. Secondly, due to limited access to published research, I needed to educate myself from a low starting point to achieve high standards in very limited time during my PhD. There is also a dearth of knowledge within parapsychology on my particular topic of research, as very limited work has been done on the Theravada tradition. Connecting my findings and results was another challenge. Thirdly and lastly, I

experienced financial and other issues which were challenging to my goal of completing the PhD. However, the biggest source of help came through my meditation practice which kept me uplifted and kept me going. Most of the issues were resolved during my PhD journey as I matured with the language and research practices.

My PhD journey was not easy; however, I think that what I have achieved in the last 5 years or so is miraculous. I say this because, having come to the UK with no formal background in research and limited knowledge of English, I feel both proud and amazed when I see this thesis completed. I would also like to acknowledge that my background may leave me with particular views about the value of siddhis (or iddhis) reported in the Buddhist tradition, but the purpose of the thesis is to adopt a formal scientific-academic structure that provides checks and balances against any inherent bias I may possess.

1.3   Justification and Outline of PhD Research Thesis

In this section, I will argue that there is a gap in the way in which psi phenomena are understood between Buddhist scholarship and parapsychology, and I go on to explain the need for this project in improving the understanding of psychic powers from Buddhist and parapsychological perspectives.

According to Peter Harvey (2013), almost 530 million people around the world are Buddhists, of which 360 million are Mahayana adherents, 150 million are Theravada adherents and 18.2 million are Vajrayana adherents. This demographic represents almost 8% of the world population. However, Dr. Hewapathirane (2014) in her article "World's Buddhist Population: Pre-eminence of the Mahayana Tradition" reports that in July 2010, the estimate of the Buddhist population has grown to 1.6 billion, which comprises 22% of

the world population. This is a liberal estimate in which practising Buddhists are also

included. This census includes China's Buddhist population where almost 80% (1 billion)

Chinese are reported as practising Buddhists along with other Chinese spiritual traditions.

This would suggest that Buddhism now may be the second-largest spiritual path in the

world, after Christianity.

Buddhism's sacred text is the Buddhist Tripiṭaka which was translated into local

languages (Lancaster, 2005). Within these sacred texts, there are numerous instances of

psychic powers and Buddhists believe that many such abilities were developed by the

Buddha through long and intense training in meditation. (Dhammananda, 2002).

Parapsychology also aims to understand such psychic phenomena, and within

parapsychology, an influential strand has drawn on Eastern religious traditions as a

source of validation and understanding. Mainstream science, however, is relatively silent

on the subject of such phenomena, which can make it difficult for people to make sense

of, or integrate such experiences. Modern religious scholars also eschew paranormal

aspects of religious experience to the extent of creating a taboo on the subject. Therefore,

we have a mismatch between the ways in which parapsychology and religious (including

Buddhist) scholarship regard psychic powers (psi or iddhi). In this section, I have taken a

systematic approach to further justify my claims of a gap in psi understanding between

Buddhologists and parapsychologists so that the necessity of exploring the nature of psi

as presented in parapsychology and Theravadin Buddhism can be understood.

The second and third chapter of this thesis describes various studies in

parapsychology which are taken into account meditation or Eastern traditions. Among

these, I found a considerable gap between this PhD project and previous research in

dealing with the original sources of Buddhist traditions. It is evident that Tibetan Buddhists and yogis have been involved in previous parapsychological studies but the main essence of the Buddhist tradition in considering the purification of the mind is not mentioned. Vipassana meditators from the Theravada tradition of Buddhism are also omitted, and the theories of Shila, Samadhi and Prajna, along with the accumulation of merits are yet to be studied intensively. Modern parapsychologists need to look more deeply into the Theravada tradition, and the content and context it provides should be given a more thorough analysis. I would like to emphasise this argument further and provide the readers with the key three aspects of it.

The first key aspect is that, within Buddhist scholarship, there is a blind spot concerning the research in psychic powers offered by Buddhism. Nyanaponika's (2003) chapter in his book on Mahamogallana, *The Great Disciple of the Buddha*, is the only collection in academia that focuses on psi, as far as the Buddhist Theravada tradition is concerned. Mahamogallana is just one example of a monk among many others who claimed to possess psychic powers. The question of why other monks who had such abilities are overlooked, and why Buddhist scholars have not taken more interest in combining every possible aspect of iddhi / psi in order to understand them better still remains unresolved. Buddhist scholars have acknowledged psi incidences from Buddhist scriptures but have not connected them within Buddhist academia, nor with other academic disciplines. For this reason, it would be useful to extract this material from the Buddhist canon in order to research such phenomena more deeply and intensively. From my academic literature review and knowledge of Buddhist scholarship, it can be

concluded from the coverage that there is a need for research into the Pāli Canon source, and this would lead to a better understanding of psychic phenomena.

The problem consists in the fact that even the treatment of claims for psi phenomena within Buddhist traditions lacks depth when being addressed by modern Buddhist academics. In some way, this may bear a resemblance to the lack of thorough assessment typical of parapsychology as well. This idea is supported by the fact that the notions of abhinna and iddhi (higher powers and psychic powers) are not particularly studied, and their significance in terms of Buddhist studies has yet to be considered. Not surprisingly, this situation can be currently witnessed in a number of regions, including the USA, UK, Germany, China, India, Tibet, and Japan. For the most part, those academics that do pay attention to Buddhist studies usually turn to studying either the Mahayana or Vajrayana traditions rather than the Theravada tradition.

Buddhist academics also do not seem interested in research beyond textual work. Cabezon (1995) poses the telling question: 'is Buddhism a text-based doctrine or behaviour-based praxis?'. To say that we all work on Buddhism is not to point out a similarity but a difference. While questioning the methodology, he says that there is an obstacle to the emergence of critical dialogue on method in the scepticism with which theory, in general, is regarded, and the way in which it is considered as a distraction to the 'real' work of Buddhologists. He points out some of the stereotypes which can be found in today's research of Buddhism:

1. The object of academic analysis cannot be reached. In other words, the Buddhists do not have a critical distance from Buddhism because of their religious commitment.

Hence, the Buddhists are not good Buddhologists in that, due to their beliefs, they are not neutral and do not wish to question scientific assertions.

2. Interesting or serious Buddhist studies only take place in the Northern hemisphere.

3. Northern Americans are poor philologists, and their textual analysis is vague.

4. German and earlier French studies are mostly based on textual criticism and do not aim to, or are not capable of, achieving any kind of broad overview of the meaning of individual texts.

5. Eastern and Indian schools are strained by the years of neo-Vedantic influence and therefore do not perceive Buddhism as a discrete entity.

6. Chinese and Taiwanese schools deal primarily with the history of Buddhism.

7. Japanese schools focus mainly on philological work such as cataloguing.

All above criticisms show that there are issues related to Buddhist academics resulting ultimately in a lack of work being done on the Pāli Canon, as far as psi phenomena are concerned. Cabezon's (1995) criticism can be further supported by Harvey (1971) who shared similar concerns as a Christian theologist. In his paper "The Alienated Theologian" he proposes the term 'alienated theologian' to describe those who are concerned with the articulation of faith but who are doubters as much as believers (Harvey, 1971). In comparison, the position of Buddhist academics as doubters needs to be clearer, in accordance with Cabezon's (1995) criticism. Abraham (2013) talks about seven issues that theologians need to address when it comes to analytical theology in his journal article "Turning Philosophical Water into Theological Wine". In the case of this research, it is Buddhism's Pāli Canon that needs to be addressed. He attributes them to resistance within theology itself and provides a catalogue of objections. Firstly, he

condemns the way in which analytic theology appears totally unrealistic in its dealings with theology itself. However, he acknowledges that interdisciplinary research and extending the realms of knowledge with other disciplines have proven worthwhile. Secondly, he argues that theology is not a small set of topics, but it is rather a complicated interconnection of loci. Thirdly, it is not possible for theologists to be dependent on religious experience or divine inspiration. Fourthly, theologists' potential goals need to be considered. Fifthly, he criticises theologists for not beginning from scratch but relying on tradition (similar can be found in Buddhist academics where they usually stick to one or another tradition or sect of Buddhism). Sixthly, their audience is very unspecific, ranging from the strictly academic to wider social or national levels. Lastly, he argues that the work of theology is simultaneously a human, spiritual and intellectual enterprise. His objections equally apply to Buddhist academics. Therefore, I argue in the next section that psychologists, especially parapsychologists, who study the human and spiritual enterprise empirically, would do well to study theology from a scientific perspective. However, in the case of parapsychologists, there are some significant omissions. In the next section and in Chapter One, I will expand on the gap in parapsychology in relation to Buddhist sources on the subject of psi.

The second key aspect is that parapsychology's treatment of the Buddhist tradition is partial and does not do justice to the sophistication of the understanding of the relationships between refinements of consciousness and the expression of psychic powers. Braud (2006) and Radin (2013) have looked into Patanjali's yoga sutras, and Rao and Puri (1978) conducted experiments related to meditation in the 1980s. Schmeidler (1994) concludes that meditation has the ability to induce psi-related

experiences, and Braud (1990) obtained significant results in his research into psychokinesis with meditation. However, as meditation is such a wide concept, with different traditions and ways of practising, it can yield different results. Parapsychologists have not made sufficient effort to understand what the Buddha really taught on meditation by looking into the original sources of the Pāli Canon. Currently, in the West, Buddhism is mostly understood as Tibetan or Mahayana Buddhism, which has teachings that contradict those of early Buddhism. This may be due to the influence of Tibetan Buddhist teachers in the West (Coleman, 2001). It is important to ask, therefore, to what extent modern studies have actually considered the original or main Buddhist sources? As far as my review of the literature is concerned, it is clear that all these questions are still untouched, and there remains wide scope for scholarly examination through systematic research.

Lastly, the third key aspect is that it would be advantageous for psychologists to go back to original Buddhist teachings because there is a treasure trove of material in Buddhist academia that relates to what it is to be a human being and what it is to refine, develop or evolve human states or conditions, especially those which relate to psi phenomena. Therefore, psychologists need to know more about Buddhist traditions because these traditions have a history of interest in what it is to be a conscious being. Within Buddhism, it is surprising that even though psychic powers are noted in the scriptures, they have not yet been the focus of intensive study, and as a consequence of this, parapsychology, which is concerned with such abilities, has not benefited from these traditions.

To summarise, I have found that there is an omission in current parapsychological research in that it has not yet addressed the Buddhist Pāli Canon as a source of understanding of psi phenomena. Even though modern parapsychological scientists have made an effort to investigate some Buddhist traditions, there are still wide areas to cover. Buddhist traditions perceive psi phenomena as an outcome of meditation practice. In Theravadin terms, this relates to getting rid of the suffering of the mind (Holmes, 1997). This understanding contrasts with the parapsychological view whereby psi phenomena are either spontaneous in nature (Rhine, 1962a) or can be achieved by entering into a psi-conducive state (Braud, 1975). The Theravadin view remains unexamined. Therefore, I conclude that a project focusing on combining the Theravada tradition with modern parapsychology can provide a new dimension to the subject area, and research in this area has the potential to create new and authentic academic knowledge.

This justifies the need for my research and summarises the development of the aims of this thesis, presented in an earlier section. The achievement of the stated aims of the thesis is described in the following sections.

1.4   Outline of Thesis Structure

The thesis has seven chapters. The first chapter of this thesis outlines the thesis aims and provides reflexivity of me as a researcher. I also provide an initial justification and outline of this research which is then followed by the outline of thesis structure. 'Aim of Study' outlines the main aims. The introduction and justification section provides an overview on why this thesis is important and identifies the gaps in current research, with proper justification. This section also provides the reasons for this project by noting the

Buddhist academics' limited contribution to the field of psychic phenomena and the parapsychologists' omissions with regard to consideration of the Theravada tradition. This also further, therefore, clarifies the need to compare the parapsychological understanding of psi with Buddhist attitudes towards the higher abilities of mind, known as *iddhis* or psychic powers.

The aim of chapter Two is to provide an overview of the approaches and findings of parapsychology. Chapter Two outlines parapsychology's history followed by field work done by parapsychologists. This is not intended to be a comprehensive historical review. Rather, I focus on those aspects that claim inspiration from Eastern understanding of psi in order to demonstrate that that understanding is partial and shallow so as to justify the research I conduct later in the thesis. Firstly, I define parapsychology and provide its taxonomy (section 2.1 and 2.2). In section 2.3 I give a concise history of parapsychology followed by section 2.4 which is about informing the modern developments in parapsychology. I then focused on to work of parapsychology in India, specifically by K. R. Rao who believe that Indian psychology has much more to offer and can give new direction for the research in parapsychology. Until this, I make a point that parapsychological research is influenced by eastern traditions but there is more scope of research as there is firstly lack of work in Buddhist tradition and secondly, their understanding of eastern traditions seems shallow. Thus, there is a need for further research. I then move my focus on the fieldwork done by parapsychologists by providing real-life examples of psi (section 2.6) and then I provide Louisa Rhine's perspective on parapsychology to further investigate how psi is seen in the fieldwork. In this chapter, I make a point that psi phenomena are perceived as spontaneous in nature. This is

important because later I make a point about the different understanding of such phenomena from the Buddhist point of view, whereby psi occurrences are understood to be the result of following the path to the eradication of suffering. Louisa Rhine's perspective on parapsychology as a background to her work was important as she played an important role in parapsychological literature by collecting accounts of spontaneous psi cases. Here the spontaneous nature of psi was revealed along with the possibility of psi occurring at an unconscious level. By the end of the first chapter, I found that parapsychologists see psi as either spontaneous phenomena or that which can be induced with experiments. Thus, in the next chapter, I shift attention to experimental work and inform parallels with Buddhism.

In Chapter Three, I argue that parapsychological theory and practice (i.e. the ways in which psychic effects are understood and captured in experimental settings) has been strongly influenced by Eastern (particularly Buddhist) thought on these phenomena. However, I also show that this is based on a very superficial understanding of those Eastern traditions and teachings. Therefore, I go on to argue that there is a need for a more fleshed-out and nuanced understanding of the ways in which iddhis occur and are interpreted if this is to provide a basis for practice in modern-day parapsychology. In section 3.1, I present Honorton's noise reduction model (NRM) which was inspired by meditation and dream studies. Here, I also make a comparison between the NRM model of psi and the Buddhist understanding of psi with the main distinction being that NRM focuses on shutting out sensory input, while Buddhism focuses on the inner chatter of the mind. The study of meditation is a vital factor within the framework of this thesis as the Buddhist Pāli Canon is identified as a significant source of data on psychic powers which

is being overlooked or neglected by modern parapsychologists. Section 3.2 is dedicated to describing meditation and psi research in which I identify different investigations involving meditation in the parapsychological literature. In conclusion, I found that despite much research, the Buddhist view of psi as a result of refinement of consciousness is not addressed fully in parapsychological literature, and the Buddhist Pāli Canon still remains untouched as a source. It is important to include the work of Serena Roney-Dougal, a parapsychologist who has done most of her research looking into Buddhist meditation traditions. Hence in section 3.3, I provide an overview of her view of meditation and note her conclusion regarding the correlation of psi abilities with the number of years of experience in meditation. Presenting this is important because later in the analysis, I problematise it by providing the criticism that Roney-Dougal's work does not take into account the different understandings of psi from the early Theravada tradition. Section 3.4 is dedicated to exploring parapsychologists' examination of Buddhism and meditation, followed by a section in which I explain parapsychologists' treatment of Eastern traditions. All the sections up to this point make the case that parapsychologists are looking into Eastern traditions seriously and therefore further research effort in the Eastern traditions in regard to parapsychology is crucial. Hence, in Section 3.6 I explore the alignment of Buddhism with parapsychology. I then shift my focus to section 3.7 where I provide a modernist trend of western Buddhist scholars in Theravada tradition to point out the gap that even modern Buddhist scholar's understanding of psi is partial due to the modernist movement. All of these sections justify the need for research.

In the first two chapters of this thesis in which I review the relevant literature, the core objective is to provide an overview, with the aim of identifying the degree to which

understandings regarding psi are consistent with Parapsychology and the Buddhist Pāli Canon. I further argue that parapsychology has been influenced by Buddhist thought concerning paranormal phenomena. Then I continue to raise concerns about the adequacy with which parapsychology represents that Buddhist understanding, and similarly problematise the antipathetic stance adopted by many Buddhist scholars to paranormal powers in sacred texts. This is very important because this PhD project is an attempt to make a comparison between the understanding of psychic power phenomena as perceived in Buddhism, and in parapsychology. This is necessary in order to outline the most important points in the current understanding of these concepts and to build the knowledge base necessary for the development of research in this area. I also provide a taxonomy of parapsychology which itself is affected by Eastern thought and tradition. This will provide critical analysis of the basic concepts used in this study so that I will be able to discuss them in further detail throughout the thesis. The aim of this literature review in the first two chapters is to show that the understanding of psi derived from academic parapsychology is in part based on Eastern scriptural material and practices in a manner that potentially misunderstands or misinterprets them. As such I am willing to test that hypothesis by comparing the accounts of academic parapsychology with those found in the Pāli Canon. In order to achieve this, I will outline the current understanding of psi in academic parapsychology and its claimed origins.

Chapters Two and Three of this thesis have two key threads in the narrative: the link between fieldwork and experimental work, with insights from the former informing the designs of the latter so that they are ecologically valid and authentic; and the lesson that parapsychologists' conceptualisation of psi, theorising and experimental methods have

all been influenced by their understanding of the great Eastern traditions but that this understanding is partial and shallow. Up to this point, I have found that the Pāli Canon is an important source to investigate as it has a treasure-trove of material on psychic powers which has not yet been extensively explored by parapsychologists. This also inspired the creation of a methodology for further research on this aspect of psi.

The main aim of Chapter Four is to justify the choice of content analysis as a methodology for analysing the incidences of psi in the Pāli Canon. Firstly, I provide aims and objectives followed by a brief rationale for data analysis. Then I discuss various advantages and disadvantages of different qualitative methods and conclude that content analysis is the best choice of method for Pāli canon analysis. Before discussing content analysis fully, I also inform of parapsychologist's accounts of using qualitative research and make a point that parapsychologists have been using similar approaches that I am taking for my analysis. After this, I discuss the content analysis method itself and provide further justification for its selection as the most suitable methodological approach. I then describe the various coding categories which can be formed through the use of content analysis in order to address the research questions. Here, I also make a point that, as a researcher, I have to be open to the idea that in the later stages of analysis I may have to adapt the coding structure to fulfil the aims of the thesis. The use of NVivo software is important to describe, as this was one of the main tools of coding and analysis along with a manual strategy. After this, I provide the data from the initial analysis, which was conducted via TextStat. This was important as it reconfirms that the Pāli Canon is a rich source of documentation regarding psi phenomena and that further effort in this direction will be useful. I found that almost 297 instances can be found in the canon regarding

iddhis. This analysis also informed possible strategies for immersing into the data collection which I discuss in section 4.10. Here, I justify my choice of a manual strategy as a method to collect psi incidences from the Pāli Canon.

Chapter Five describes the analysis. Here I show the use of content analysis to identify incidences of psi phenomena, their characteristic features and the circumstances of iddhi in the Pāli Canon. Firstly, I give readers an overview of the Pāli Canon and provide a logical justification for research into this source, after getting confirmation from initial observations that this source has rich data on psi phenomena. In this section, several psi incidences are presented so that readers can understand how they appear in the Pāli Canon. This section also details the different nodes and codes which were formed as a result of content analysis. The themes are derived from the Pāli Canon's instances and were then further synthesised with the literature discussed in Chapter Two and Three. Here I compare and contrast the selected literature from parapsychology with the findings of the Pāli Canon and provide a synthesis. Following this, the importance of paramitas as a tool for psi is explained and the link to Saccakiriya (act of truth) is discussed. The chapter ends with conclusive remarks and a recap.

The themes that were found in the analysis needed to be supported by evidence gathered from the contemporary experiences of living practitioners. Therefore, the next chapter documents interviews with fifteen meditation experts in India. The interviews complement the Pāli Canon analysis and connect the historical textual account with accounts of contemporary lived experience. This also allowed me to explore whether iddhis in the canon are relevant to Buddhists practising today. At the beginning of the chapter, I explain the importance of interviews, followed by a consideration of the social

structure, and the justification for the use of semi-structured interviews. I then describe the participants and justify the interview guide that was created for use in this study. In the process of analysis, the procedure, ethics and justification of thematic analysis as a tool of data analysis are explained. I then present the main themes found in the analysis and discuss them in detail in the following sections. The next section is dedicated to the description of some of the interviewees' psi experiences, followed by more contemporary accounts from Theravada literature to support the interview analysis.

The last chapter presents the conclusion. Firstly, I provide an overview of all the chapters and confirm that the empirical strategy used in this thesis allowed me to achieve the stated research aims and objectives. I also reflect on the methodological choices I made and the ways in which these impacted my findings. I discuss the limitations of this project and discuss the future of parapsychological research. In this chapter, I also present limitations and provide directions for future research by discussing the overall state of research in this area. Finally, I provide an overall verdict of the thesis by concluding 'merits' (or good deeds) form a base for psychic powers.

In this way, the aim of comparing the Buddhist understanding of psi with parapsychological research is fulfilled and new knowledge of psi has been found, the central finding of this thesis being the discovery of the concept of merits as a basis for psychic powers.

2   Chapter II Approaches and Findings of Parapsychology

2.1   Definition of Parapsychology

In this section, I will engage with several definitions of parapsychology outlined by scholars and draw out a standard meaning which will be utilised whenever I discuss or mention psychic powers (or psi) throughout the thesis.

"To communicate and transact with the world, humans use a number of senses to gain information from it and muscles to work upon it." (Cardeña et al., 2015, p.1) This is the opening statement of *Parapsychology: Handbook of the 21st Century*. Such information is commonly reported as being received not necessarily through a known sense or a logical medium and these are usually referenced as psi phenomena (Bem and Honorton, 1994). Nagel (2012) however argues that parapsychology studies scientific phenomena which could contain normal psychological explanations in addition to explanations that are not reducible to reality. This suggests that parapsychology is interested in studying phenomena that have the potential to get information from other worlds whose explanation can be given scientifically, although such phenomenon may not be reducible to reality. Accordingly, psi may also go beyond the limits of the body (Sidgwick, 1932).

Cardeña et al. (2015) suggest that parapsychology is discussed separately from the discipline of science and that this field is closely related to the transdisciplinary topics which have relevance to its study. These include psychology, anthropology, physics, biology and other humanities subjects (Cardeña et al., 2015, p. 2). This also suggests that although parapsychology is a separate discipline, its areas of interest can be

overlapping and could be found in other fields. Basically, getting information through the means of the mind and making sense of it can be summarised as the crux of these definitions. These definitions clarify that parapsychological science is interested in making sense of the phenomena that are considered to be outside the normal perceptions of the human mind.

In the introductory chapter of the parapsychology textbook *An Introduction to Parapsychology*, there is a statement that "parapsychology is a scientific study of experiences which, if they are seen to be, are in principle outside the realm of human capabilities as presently conceived by conventional scientists." (Irwin and Watt, 2007 p. 1). It is an interesting statement which generates curiosity and a desire to investigate the achievements of researchers in parapsychology so far. As such, in the next section of the chapter, I will discuss some phenomena that parapsychologists study. Then, I will provide a concise history of parapsychology, in order to give an overview of the work done and to find any omissions relevant to the main aims of this thesis.

2.2   The Taxonomy of Parapsychology

In this section, I will explain different types of psi phenomena which are the main interest of the study of parapsychology. It is rather an important discussion as in later phases of research my intention is to make connections to these phenomena with a similar Buddhist understanding.

'Psi' is mainly divided into three domains known as ESP, PK and Survival. The Parapsychological Association's website mentions that "Parapsychology only studies those anomalies that fall into one of three general categories: ESP (extra-sensory

perception), mind-matter interaction (also known as psychokinesis), and phenomena suggestive of survival after bodily death, including near-death experiences, apparitions, and reincarnation (Parapsychological Association, 2020). ESP contains three categories namely, precognition, clairvoyance and telepathy. Psychokinesis (PK) also has three categories which are MicroPK, MacroPK and RetroPK. Survival studies can be categorised in four, viz., mediumship, apparitions, NDEs/OBEs (near-death experiences and out of body experiences) and past lives (also known as reincarnation).

In the following subsection, I will be providing accounts of some main phenomena which are studied in parapsychological research. According to Irwin and Watt (2007), PK and ESP are said to be the two fundamental forms of psi. In the following section, I will discuss three classical domains of parapsychological research which are ESP, PK, and Survival research. In section 2.4 I have given recent developments of these phenomena to show where the research stands now.

2.2.1 ESP

2.2.1.1 Precognition

According to Bem (2011), precognition is an abnormal process of transmitting information or energy about events that will happen in the future, that is currently inexplicable from the point of view of known physical or biological mechanisms. In his research study, the author argues that people are able to feel the future. The article reveals the statistical data obtained during the study of precognition. His work allowed researchers to challenge contemporary scientific concepts of the linear nature of time.

Roig, Icochea, & Cuzzucoli (1991), along with Zusne and Jones (1982) also emphasise the existence of precognition and its role in parapsychology.

In precognition, information appears to be received from a future event, such as dreaming about a disaster that occurs later that same day. In retrocognition, a person may seem to know what occurred in the past without using the senses or logic, as in providing precise information about a crime that occurred earlier (Cardeña, et al., 2015, p. 2). Schriever (1987) investigated the precognition experiences of a single individual over several decades. Nowadays the most common methodological paradigm is presentiment, a precognition procedure in which differential electrodermal responses to observed emotional or neutral pictures have been found 3 seconds before the picture selected by the random event generator (Palmer, 2015).

2.2.1.2 Telepathy

Telepathy is the ability of the human brain to transmit information to other people or to receive information from them without using any known means of communication. It should be added that this communication can be performed at a distance and without the participation of known sensory systems such as the senses of hearing, smelling, touching, and so on and so forth. According to the nature of the manifestation, Rhine and Pratt (1957) distinguish between spontaneous telepathy and experimental telepathy. The first occurs when the psi phenomenon appears in addition to (or even without) the will of its participants (the sender (the person from whom telepathy originates) and the recipient (the person to whom it is directed)) (Rhine & Pratt, 1957). Experimental telepathy is

marked by the fact that a researcher creates an artificial situation in order to try to create a telepathic occurrence.

"The term telepathy is coined by Frederic Myers to refer to the paranormal acquisition of information concerning the thoughts, feelings or activity of another conscious being the word has superseded earlier expressions such as "thought-transference." (Parapsychological Association, 2020). In parapsychology, types of telepathy may be differentiated in various ways. One of these is the distinction between conscious and unconscious telepathy. In conscious telepathy, both people involved in the process are deliberately attuned to a telepathic dialogue. During unconscious telepathy, the transmission of thoughts, and, more often, images or emotions occurs spontaneously and without deliberate intention. Depending on the time-binding, telepathy can be either cognitive or intuitive (information about the present). In addition, there is also a distinction between sensual telepathy (transmission of sensations) and conceptual telepathy (communication of thoughts). It is said that ancient shamans were able to relieve pain with the help of telepathy (Krippner, 1980; Harner, 1988). Telepathic abilities often arise between people with a strong emotional connection, and they do not weaken even at a distance (Sheldrake, 2014).

2.2.1.3 Clairvoyance

"Paranormal acquisition of information concerning an object or contemporary physical event; in contrast to telepathy, the information is assumed to derive directly from an external physical source (such as a concealed photograph), and not from the mind of another person." (Parapsychological Association, 2020). Clairvoyance denotes a form of

sensory perception akin to intuition, according to which a person gains knowledge, without using learning, experience, or physical sources. In other words, clairvoyance is the ability to know while not knowing how or why one knows something, while the mind is only able to observe and remember. Clairvoyance may be objective or subjective and is one of the types of extrasensory perception that helps a person to receive information in beyond normal physical senses. In the Buddhist teachings, it is stated that when one reaches a certain level of enlightenment, clairvoyance manifests (Conze, 1995). Essentially clairvoyance is the ability to perceive information at a distance, such as descriptions of hidden objects or perhaps documents, through to detailed descriptions of specific locations and landmarks. Clairvoyance has further also been known in the others forms such as – clairaudience, clairsentience, and claircognizance (Wahbeh et al., 2019).

2.2.2 Psychokinesis (PK)

"Paranormal action; a term coined by Henry Holt and adopted by J. B. Rhine to refer to the direct influence of mind on a physical system that cannot be entirely accounted for by the mediation of any known physical energy." (Parapsychological Association, 2020). The term "psychokinesis" literally means movement by the mind or psyche (Irwin and Watt, 2007, p.94). Parapsychologists often differentiate between MicroPK and MacroPK. This has to do more with methodology than the theoretical principle. MacroPK effects are largescale and detectable with the naked eye (e.g., metal-bending, table-tilting). MicroPK effects are small-scale, and thus the use of statistics is needed to detect them (e.g., psychokinetic influence upon the output of an electronic source of randomness). (Irwin and Watt, 2007, p. 94). RetroPK is psychokinesis occurring in such

a way as to be an instance of retroactive causation; to say that event A was caused by retroactive PK is to say that A would not have happened in the way that it did had it not been for a later PK effort exerted so as to influence it. Sometimes abbreviated to "retro-PK;" also referred to as "backward PK" or "time-displaced PK." (Parapsychological Association, 2020). Psychokinesis (also called telekinesis) is a person's ability to influence objects through exclusively mental effort that manifests itself consciously or spontaneously. The term psychokinesis also designates the section of parapsychology which studies the control of mind over matter (Rogo, 1986). Sometime during the 1890s, Alexander Aksakof, a German-Russian psychical researcher coined the word *telekinesis* meaning "mind over matter." However, Holt changed this term into psychokinesis in his book *On the Cosmic Relations* in 1914. The ability of people to control the chaotic movement of beads scattered on the floor and other non-heavy objects is the simplest form of psychokinesis that has been demonstrated. Among the types of the above phenomenon, one may note telekinesis, hydrokinesis, cryokinesis, etc. Telekinesis relates to the ability, by which a person moves objects without direct contact with them (Holt, 1914). Hydrokinesis represents the ability to manipulate water, something that seems to be extremely difficult to master. Cryokinesis indicates the ability to manipulate body temperature as well as to heat or cool objects or substances.

2.2.3 Survival Hypothesis

The survival hypothesis concerns the notion of postmortem survival, that is, that a disembodies conscious or some such discarnate element of human personality might survive bodily death at least for a time. (Irwin and Watt, 2007, p.138). Mediums who claim

to be able to communicate with deceased loved ones form the interest in the investigation in this category. A substantial proportion of the population reports belief in parapsychological phenomena, including belief in an afterlife, with personal experience being a common reason cited for belief (Roe and Roxburgh, 2014). Another category in survival studies is an apparition. An apparition could be defined as a visible but non-physical phenomenon closely resembling a particular human being (Dilley, 1995). The next category is near-death experience/ out of body experience (NDE/OBE). Irwin and Watt (2007) many people experience a state where they suddenly face death experience having a distinctive state of consciousness in which the existence seemed to be bound neither to a physical body nor to earthly environs. Such a state is termed as near-death experience and can be defined simply as a transcendental experience precipitated by a confrontation with death. Many experiences report being the impression of being outside of the physical body (OBE) during NDE. Parapsychologists have studied this phenomenon extensively and several books on NDEs are now available by Ring (1980, 1984), Sabom (1982), Greyson and Flynn (1984) and Morse (1990). The last category in the survival hypothesis is past lives or reincarnation study. Reincarnation may be defined as the return of a nonmaterial essence (soul, mind, consciousness) to another physical body after death (Matlock, 2018). Parapsychologists have incorporated research into this area extensively and informed cases suggestive of reincarnation (Stevenson, 1980, 1987, 1987).

2.3   Concise History of Parapsychology

In this section, I will deal with the concise history of parapsychology. This is important as in this section I will evaluate the field from its historical roots forward, including the ways in which parapsychology is perceived in the world, particularly in the West, and then looking at parapsychology research in the East, particularly in India. The purpose here is to identify whether parapsychology thinking, and practice shows any evidence of being influenced by Eastern traditions, particularly Buddhism.

It is clear from the definition that parapsychology attempts to study psi phenomena or the mechanism by which the psi phenomena can be accessed. This is reflected by the history of parapsychological investigation. Historically we can find mention of mediums in the Bible (Samuel 28:7-12, 1010BC) and mentions of houses in ancient Greece which were considered to be haunted (Pliny the younger, 61-155AD). Although parapsychological phenomena have caused both fear and fascination throughout history, parapsychologists have attempted to understand them in a scientific manner. Here I will specifically mention the work and research methods of some prominent researchers such as Anton Mesmer (1734-1815), Frederic Myers (1843-1901), J.B Rhine (1895-1980) and John Beloff (1920-2006) to provide a concise history of parapsychology as a discipline.

2.3.1   Mesmerian Era

In the book *Parapsychology: A Concise Hisotry*, Beloff (1993) begins with a chapter on mesmerism, which he sees as an important precursor to psychical research, not least in being able to generate psi phenomena in the course of their experiments.

Franz Anton Mesmer (1734-1815) popularised the idea of animal magnetism (Bloch, 1980). Mesmer qualified in medicine in 1766 with a dissertation on the influence of heavenly bodies on human health (Mesmer, 1766, 1980). So as planets are held by the force of gravity, Mesmer believed that human bodies are affected by another mysterious force-carrying aither, 'animal gravity'. (Smith, 2007, p.22).

This idea recurred in his later work when he was introduced to a new type of treatment using magnets by Jesuit priest, Father Maximillian Hell. Here, he replaced 'animal gravity' with 'animal magnetism. (Lanska & Lanska, 2007). He further agreed with George Cheyne in regarding the human body as 'a a Machine of an infinite Number and Variety of different Channels and Pipes, filled with various and different Liquors and Fluids, perpetually running, gliding (sic) or creeping forward, or returning backwards, in a constant circle' (Cheyne, 1733, p. 4). He believed that when these channels were blocked, illness is the result. In 1774 Mesmer successfully treated a patient by getting her to swallow a solution containing iron and then attaching magnets to various parts of her body. Mesmer believed that he had found a new type of energy while experimenting with the healing effect of magnets and their influence on physiological functions such as blood flow, etc.

A defining case for Mesmer's career was that of Franziska ("Franzl") Österlin, a 28-year-old woman with hysteria (she would now meet diagnostic criteria for somatization disorder) (American Psychiatric Association, 2000), who "since her childhood, seemed to have a very weak nervous manner, had undergone terrible convulsive attacks since the age of two . . . [and] had a hysterical fever to which was joined periodically, persistent vomiting, inflammation of various visceral organs, retention of urine, excessive

toothaches, earaches, melancholic deliriums, opisthotonos . . . blindness, suffocation, and several days of paralysis and other irregularities" (Mesmer, 1775, 1980, p. 26). Mesmer initially tried to treat the young woman in his home using "the most accredited remedies to counteract these different ailments . . . without, obtaining, however, a lasting cure, for the irregularities always returned after some time" (Mesmer, 1775, 1980, p. 26). There was no progress over 2 years despite Mesmer's efforts using orthodox medical treatments, including blistering, bleeding, and various medicine.

Taking Father Hell's advice, Mesmer attached Hell's magnets to Miss Österlin's feet and another heart-shaped magnet to her chest with dramatic results. "She soon underwent a burning and piercing pain which climbed from her feet to the crest of the hip bone, where it was united with a similar pain that descended from one side – from the locality of the magnet attached on the chest – and climbed again on the other side to the head, where it ended in the crown. This pain, in passing away, left a burning heat like fire in all the joints." (Mesmer, 1775, 1980, pp. 26–27)

Even though Mesmer initially used magnets, he later discovered that they are not important, as the energy could be passed on by lightly touching his hands on patients, and the same effects were obtained (Beloff, 1993).

The same technique later became the foundation of hypnosis; however, Mesmer is noted in the field of parapsychology for the behaviours which were displayed by his patients, which could be termed higher phenomena. His patients reported that they had the ability to access information beyond the normal senses. This includes mentioning events occurring in other rooms, or telepathy, clairvoyance, etc. When his claims were examined, some of the claims were upheld (Beloff, 1993). This research is also

considered as the first investigation of parapsychological phenomena which involved controlling the test conditions to enable researchers to establish the authenticity of experiences or phenomena. "The activities of Mesmer's followers raised the possibility that through careful manipulation of test conditions a researcher might be able to ascertain the authenticity of parapsychological phenomena." (Irwin & Watt, 2007, p. 12). Beloff (1993) mentions mesmeriasm can be regarded as the "forerunner" of parapsychology.

2.3.2 Spiritualism and SPR Era

The spiritualist movement gave rise to parapsychological research as a coherent discipline. This began in America in the middle of the nineteenth century. Although many philosophical antecedents can be pointed out (see Anderson, 1987; Leahey & Leahey 1983, p. 162-164), spiritualism gave given impetus and became popular by events in the household of a family named Fox (E. Isaacs, 1983; Weisberg, 2004). With the Fox sisters, the new spiritual movement of mediums began in 1848. It became more popular as new aspects of psi came to light, such as mediums contacting the departed and physical evidence of abilities (known as physical mediumship). Mostly due to the increasing claims of such abilities, a meeting between physicists and spiritualists took place in January 1882 resulting in the formation of a small group. They included Sir William Fletcher Barrett (1844-1925) and Dawson Rogers (1823-1910). This group took up the challenge of investigating the claims in a scientific way (Gauld, 1968). Turning to spiritualism, the first major experimental investigation was that of Robert Hare, a chemistry professor at the University of Pennsylvania. His Experimental Investigations of the Spirit Manifestaion

(1955) describes many ingenious pieces of apparatus invented for quantifying the force of physical phenomena and for isolating medium from recording unit (Mackenzie, 1981). Crookes, a British chemist used this Hare's equipment and procedures and proceeded to successful experiments with two of the best-known mediums of the time, D. D. Home and Florence Cook (Medhurst, 1972).

Society for Psychical Research (SPR) was established in February 1882. This was a diverse group of scholars, poets, philosophers, and spiritualists, including Henry Sidgwick (1838-1900), Frederic Myers (1843-1901), Edmund Gurney (1847-1888) Reverend William Stainton Moses (1839-1892). This group saw their work as a service to science and the general public (Hamilton, 2009). In its opening manifesto of 1882, the SPR announced the formation of committees to investigate thought-reading or telepathy, or more generally "any influence which may be exerted by one mind upon another, apart from any generally recognised mode of perception". (Society of Psychical Research, 1882). Parapsychology is commonly seen to have begun with an academic interest in the phenomenon of mediumship and the establishment of the SPR. This was the first organisation that was established for scientifically investigating the claims of psychic phenomena. Research carried out in this society led to the conclusion that telepathy occurred authentically. The concept of telepathy was conceptualised on an evidential basis by experiments during the winter of 1882/3. (see Luckhurst, 2002, p. 69-75).

The SPR subsequently encountered issues that threatened their existence. One of these was from mediums that SPR endorsed who later proved to have been using some fraudulent methods (for example, Florence Cook, the Creery Sisters) (Neher, 1980). Although it continued to grow and American SPR was established in 1885 by the

eminent psychologist William James (1842-1910) among others. The SPR can be considered as the first and largest body dedicated to the research on psi phenomena using scientific means and methods. It also publishes journals and books to disseminate its findings on this subject. Alongside, their conferences are lectures are also organised to reach international audiences. This organisation is still active today and still promotes research. I have presented at SPR's annual conference about the interview findings of this PhD research (see Chapter 6). (Nangare, 2018).

2.3.3 The Rhine Era

J. B. Rhine is seen as the father of modern-day parapsychology. He introduced standardised experimental methods and terminology that shaped the direction of the field. In this context, it is important to mention that in his early encounters he engaged with mediums as a way of showing how we moved from sitting with mediums to conducting experiments.

In July 1926, after attending an appointment with a medium with a typical seance, Rhine was convinced that all that he had witnessed was just shameless trickery and wrote about it in an article published in the *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology* (Beloff, 1993).

Rhine in 1929 started working at Duke University as an assistant professor under McDougall (Irwin & Watt, 2007). In the summer of 1930, Rhine tested groups of children having them guess the number from 0 to 9 printed on a card concealed in his hand. There was no interesting result but in fall 1930, Helge Lundholm, a new member from the Duke psychology department suggested he hypnotise students to test their telepathic ability in

the hypnotic state. They tested 30 students in this way, with no result (Mackenzie, 1981, p. 80). With the help of Karl Zener (1903-1964), he wanted to develop a scientific method that can be utilised on a larger group. Rhine asked Zener to design cards with more distinctive symbols than ordinary numbers or letters (Mauskopf & McVaugh, 1980). They focused on card design and invented the Zener card which forms the basis for various experimental techniques. They also re-examined a card-guessing experiment conducted by SPR member Ina Jephson (1924-1928) which claimed to have demonstrated results of clairvoyance (Jephson, 1928). Rhine also published a brief report of 37,377 tests in card-guessing made under conditions planned to exclude the known sensory functions. He mentions that the results of these tests have remarkably surpassed "chance" expectations. (Rhine, 1934, p. 151)

The results of card-guessing using the basic technique showed significant results (1850 trials, 558 hits) and provided evidence for what Rhine called ESP (Beloff, 1993). However, Rhine's report was criticised by Hansel (1980) on the grounds that Pearce (one of the testers) was the only person who observed the final session, thus challenging the authenticity of the results through a potential leak of information. This was important because it introduced a standard approach for identifying and ruling out normal explanations and it used outcomes that were objective and could be statistically analysed.

A conference on the life and work of Rhine was held at the Foundation of Research on the Nature of Man on Nov. 28, 1980. Rao (1982) collected and published this as a book: *J.B. Rhine: On the frontiers of science*. J.B. Rhine has a key place in the history of parapsychology as his numerous technical and professional contributions made parapsychology into a scientific discipline (MacKenzie, 1981, p. 82).

In conclusion, the development of parapsychology and its research although it can be considered to be new as rigorous scientific research only started over a century ago, the commitment of this discipline to understanding psi phenomena cannot be denied. The field is rapidly growing with the establishment of the Parapsychological Association (PA) in 1957. This association promotes the advancement and integration of parapsychology in science. PA also became an affiliated organisation of the Americal Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) by 1969. The Koestler Parapsychology Unit at Edinburgh University was formed in 1984. This also inspired other university research departments to start their centres or research in parapsychology, such as Goldsmith University and the University of Northampton in the UK. With all its growth and advancements, the field of parapsychology is growing in its research and scientific study researching various psi phenomena.

With this concise overview of the history of parapsychology, we can understand that the study of psi phenomena has been a subject of extensive research in this discipline.

2.4   Modern Developments in Parapsychology

In the modern development of parapsychology, a number of things are worth mentioning here to get an overview of extensive research performed by modern parapsychologists.

2.4.1 ESP Experiments

Similarly to the pre-1977 era, in modern developments, most of the experiments have been focused on ESP, but they have largely been focused on conceptual and methodological extensions or conceptual replication attempts (Cardeña, et al., 2015). Some studies are focused on forced-choice methodology (Carpenter, 1983), while most studies are focused on free-responses, involving experiments with mediums (Kelly & Arcangel, 2011) or the use of ganzfeld techniques (Williams, 2011). Another important research trend is research on the question of whether psi-conducive states, especially altered states of consciousness, have any influence on experimental results. For example, this notion has been extensively studied in ganzfeld experiments (Bem and Honorton, 1994), in dream ESP studies (Sherwood, Dalton, Steinkamp & Watt, 2000), assessment of hypnotizability and disassociation and their impact on ESP (Marcusson-Clavertz & Cardeña, 2011) and by correlation of EEG measurements with ESP tasks (McDonough, Don & Warren, 2002). It is worth noting here that psi-conducive states are being examined extensively. I will talk more about this in section 3.1 where I will draw links showing that approaching the notion of psi-conducive states from a Buddhist outlook will be beneficial to the understanding of psi, which is also the central aim of this thesis.

2.4.2 Psychokinesis (PK) Experiments

Similarly, to the previous period, PK in modern research is less studied than ESP (Zingrone, et al., 2015, p. 13). When observing this textbook (of Cardeña et al., 2015), I also discovered few chapters dedicated to PK. The most notable PK work involves random number generators (Bosch, Steinkamp, & Boller, 2006; Jahn, Dunne, Nelson,

Dobyns & Bradish, 1997; Nelson 2013). PK effects on target systems have been also explored in various areas of behaviours and biology (Braud, 2003). Other experiments related PK scores to the lability of targets (Braud, 1980), geomagnetic field activity (Braud & Dennis, 1989), a relaxed mindset (Debes & Morris, 1982), visual imagery strategies (Morris, Nako, & Phillips, 1982) and neurophysiology (Roll et al., 2012).

2.4.3 Near-Death Experiences (NDEs)

NDE studies are conducted in the modern world to understand the content and circumstances of the NDE, as well as its relation to physiological, psychological, and cultural variables (Hou, Hang, Prakash & Chaudhury, 2013; Owens, Cook, & Stevenson, 1990, Van Lommel, Van Wees, Meyers & Elferich, 2001). Some NDE work has also been devoted to the important, but generally neglected, issue of veridicality (Ring & Lawrence, 1993). Beloff (1993) argues that there is by now overwhelming evidence that NDE can be a powerful spiritual experience where an experiencer leads to more meaningful and compassionate lives.

2.4.4 Mediumship

The study of mental mediumship has re-emerged recently (Zingrone, et al., 2015, p. 14). Few works have also been focused on veridicality (Beischel & Schwartz, 2007; Kelly & Arcangel, 2011) and other psychological variables (Moreira-Almeida, Neto & Cardena, 2008; Roe and Roxburgh, 2011) and psychological and neurophysiological variables (Delorem et al., 2013; Peres, Moreira-Almeida, Caixeta, Leao, & Newberg, 2012).

Another current research trend involves experiments using unselected participants, who may not have special abilities, with some interesting exceptions including experiments involving healers (Higuchi, Kotani, Higuchi, Minegishi, & Momose, 1999), psychics like Matthew Manning (Braud, Davis, & Wood, 1999) and Alex Tanous (Osis & McOrmick, 1980), mediums (Beischel & Schwartz, 2007), and suspected poltergeist agents (Roll et al., 2012). There is also research in which samples have been recruited based on the likelihood of their claiming certain specific experiences, including readers of New Age publications (Alvarado & Zingrone, 1999), twins (Parker & Jenesen, 2013), and performing arts students (Schlitz & Honorton, 1992).

2.4.5 Where is Parapsychology Today: Modern Developments

Over the last four decades, it is safe to say that there is growing emphasis on the experimental studies of ESP and PK (Zingrone, et al., 2015, p.13). They have commonly involved unselected participants, not necessarily had special abilities and constituted healers (Higu chi, Kotani, Higuchi, Minegishi, & Momose, 1999), mediums (Beischel & Schwartz, 2007), and suspected poltergeist agents (Roll et al., 2012). Potential PK effects have also been explored in different areas with various target systems. This includes cancer cells in mice (Bengston & Krinsley, 2000), outcomes in patients with bloodstream infection (Leibovici, 2001), and the growth or deterioration of vegetables (Minami, Usui, & Kokubo, 2014). Modern out-of-body experience (OBE) studies have been conducted via questionnaires studies of spontaneous experiences (Murray, 2009). More recent research has attempted to redefine the OBE in terms of the effect of neuropathology on

body image (Blanke, Landis, Spinelli, & Seeck, 2004), and other proprioceptive disturbances (Braithwaite, Samson, Apperly, Broglia, & Hulleman, 2011).

In the recent era, new forms of research on reincarnation have taken a shift from a primary emphasis on veridicality and other features to the psychological profile of children who report these experiences (Haraldsson, 2003). Moga (2014) has related the effectiveness of psychic healing to magnetic field activity. Zingrone, Alvarado, and Agee (2009) have further studied the relation of aura vision to other types of phenomena and to the psychological states/traits of aura viewers. Colvin (2010) conducted a unique study where raps were recorded and analysed. At last, Sherwood (2000) started a multi-method investigation of apparitions of black dogs.

Apart from this, Mayer (2003) has attempted to cover the depiction of parapsychology and other disciplines in specific popular German publications. Hansen (2001) has put forth an argument that psychic phenomena are intrinsically associated with patterns of disorder and destructuring that prevent both systematic study and acceptance. Lamont (2013) recently examined aspects of the acceptance and rejection of "extraordinary" beliefs using conjuring theory, frame and discourse analysis. When it comes to religion, many authors have discussed phenomena reported around Christian saints. For example, Bouflet (2001–2003) compiled a three-volume work of such phenomena as immunity to fire, inedia, incorruption of the physical body, levitation, lights, multiplication of food, the odour of sanctity, stigmata, and walking on water. More interestingly, recently there is significant attention has been given to clinical parapsychology. Issues raised by ostensible psychic phenomena has grown significantly in recent decades. Among the specific concerns voiced are experients' worry about their

psychological health, and the differentiation of pathological from nonpathological experiences (Belz, 2009; Evrard, 2014; Iannuzzo, 2008; Kramer, Bauer, & Hövelmann, 2012). Long discussed the connection of Shamanism and psi, (Bernardi, 1986) have been subjected to sustained research in recent years (Hunter & Luke, 2014). Several authors have argued for the utility of an anthropological approach (Caswell, Hunter, & Tessaro, 2014; Hunter, 2010). They have noted relations between anthropology and parapsychology (Luke 2010) and informed the importance of taking the beliefs and experiences of other cultures seriously (Turner, 2006). In 2010, Jack Hunter and colleagues founded the journal Paranthropology (Anonymous, n.d.).

Parapsychology recently has also grown stronger as an international community. Still, many efforts are needed to grow this relationship even stronger, an important and very positive change has been the increase in non-Anglo-American venues for the Parapsychological Association's annual convention, for example, Iceland (1980), Germany (1991), Holland (1994), Austria (200 4), France (2010, 2019), Brazil (2011), Italy (2013), and Greece (2017). Similarly, there is a positive increase in the presence of non-native speakers of English on the PA Board of Directors. In the last two decades, more English-language articles have been published by non-native speakers of English as well (MoreiraAlmeida, Neto, & Cardeña, 2008; Parra & Villanueva, 2003). New organisations have been established including the Instituto de Psicología Paranormal (Institute of Paranormal Psychology, Argentina), the International Society for Life Information Science (Japan), and the Windbridge Institute for Applied Research in Human Potential (U.S.). The presence of university-based research has also seen a change. Some units have disappeared, others persisted, and new ones have been founded. By comparison, a

recent review (Zingrone, 2011) found that 43 universities offered some form of formal education in parapsychology or anomalistic psychology: 13 of these providing a single course, 18 post-graduate degree supervision, and 12 a combination of both. New opportunities have sprung up. New opportunities are available in the UK at the Universities of Greenwich, Hertfordshire, London (Goldsmith's College), and Northampton (among others), and in Sweden at the Universities of Gothenburg, Lund, and Stockholm, as well as at other universities in other countries.

In the last few decades, some journals have been established and still exists today. This includes the Australian Journal of Parapsychology (Australia), E-Boletín Psi (Argentina), Journal of Exceptional Experiences and Psychology (U.S.), Journal of Near-Death Studies (U.S.), and Paranthropology (England). Other journals—in the U.S., explore The Journal of Science and Healing, and the Journal of Scientific Exploration (JSE), and in Germany, Zeitschrift für Anomalistik (Journal of Anomalistics)—publish papers relevant to parapsychology but also cover other topics. Several other journals, such as the European Journal of Parapsychology, the Journal of the American Society for Psychical Research, the Journal of Theoretical Parapsychology (formerly Psychoenergetic Systems), Revista Argentina de Psicología Paranormal, and the Synchronicity Research Unit Bulletin (SRU Bulletin), ceased publication at various points over the last forty years. The International Journal of Parapsychology restarted in 2000, but only two volumes were issued before it ceased publication. (Zingrone, et al., 2015, p.22).

In conclusion, it is safe to say that parapsychological research today is more varied, interdisciplinary and international than in earlier periods. The research areas have

broadened and specific interests have also been extended. Regardless of the information as presented above, in the modern development of parapsychology, efforts to understand psi from other paradigms especially from the Eastern Buddhist traditions have more scope to investigate. In the next chapter, I focus more on pointing this out, but it is safe to say that the area covered still needs lacks in-depth research of Buddhist Theravada tradition, especially the early scriptural source of the Pāli canon. The point to note here is that modern developments are beneficial in terms of understanding the growth of parapsychology as a discipline, but much can be accomplished by taking help from other academic fields, especially that of Buddhism.

2.5   The Work of Parapsychology in India

Indian psychology is mainly based on the practices of Yoga and other Indian classical thoughts which were prominent in this part of the world for thousands of years (Rao, 2013). Rao (2001) believes that Indian psychologists have confined themselves to, and are preoccupied with, the most mundane issues of psychology. He believes that empirical research in phenomenological consciousness and information processing, ESP, PK, implicit memory, subliminal perception, yoga theory and practice, transcendence, meditation, near-death experiences, and reincarnation should be the focus of Indian psychologists. Rao (2013) also argues that the base of spiritual psychology is in Indian psychology. That's why both resonate with one another. The work of parapsychology in India is recognised with the effort of K. Ramakrishna Rao. The department of psychology and parapsychology was formed in Andhra University in India in 1967 by the University Grant Commission, India. Students were admitted for graduate

studies and also awarded PhDs. This establishment also publishes the Psi Newsletter for private circulation (Andhra University, 2021; Encyclopedia, 2021).

Rao's main two books called '*The Basic Research in Parapsychology*' (Rao, 2008) and '*The Elements of Parapsychology*' (Rao, 2017) make the clear point about Indian parapsychology that it has in recent times been Western parapsychology practised in India. Those books also recognise the cultural heritage of Indians, particularly from the spiritual traditions, that give us a deep insight into the nature of our psyche.

It is an important point worth noting because it also emphasises that parapsychology is not paying attention to the wisdom of those traditions when it comes to understanding psi. Roe (2009) points out that parapsychologists have been mostly criticised for considering all the meditation techniques as similar. Moreover, Rao's handbooks still do not make proper reference to the Theravada tradition of Buddhism, and mostly focus on other spiritual traditions of India. Rao (2013) in his article 'Indian psychology, parapsychology and spiritual psychology' informs that there are two valid senses that are relevant to the study of parapsychology. First is the Indian understanding that parapsychology is the science of *siddhis*. The second is the western professional description that which is the study of cognitive anomalies (Rao, 2013). After researching 60 years in the field, he further raises concerns that the western paradigm of studying psi is inappropriate for understanding psi in its various forms and suggests Indian psychology can offer more and provide a fresh impetus to parapsychological research. (Rao, 2013)

Indian researchers have made some preliminary contributions to parapsychology as it relates to extrasensory perception and personality factors, neuroticism, meditation, and reincarnation (Stevenson & Pasricha, 1980). From the Indian Journal of

Parapsychology (est. 1959) to more recently the International Journal of Yoga: Philosophy, Psychology and Parapsychology (IJOY-PPP) (est. 2013), plenty of research can be found to acknowledge the work of Indian parapsychologists. Prasad and Stevenson (1968) administered Zener cards to 2500 Indian 11-13 yr. old children, to determine the frequency and types of ESP in various cultures. Results showed that 36% had psi experiences. Prasad (1971) in the article 'Parapscyholgy in India', provides a comprehensive overview where he writes, "Parapsychology in India has a long past but a brief history" (p.43).

In IJOY-PPP, many recent accounts of parapsychological efforts can be found. Some of the most cited and popular articles contained information on the relationship between Triguna theory and wellbeing indicators (Khanna et al., 2013), the physiological effect of *kriyas*: Cleansing techniques (Patra, 2017), The concept of Jnana, Vijnana and Prajnana according to Vedanta philosophy, (Sridhar, 2015), etc. The point here to note is that most of them have ignored the approaches of Buddhist Theravada tradition. Ramachandra Bhat, a vice-chancellor S-Vyasa University suggests that the three subject domains like Philosophy, Psychology and Parapsychology (PPP) originated from the traditional knowledge sources like Vedanta = Spiritual science, Yoga = Eco-friendly life science, Jyotishya = Celestial science and Dharmashastra = Legal and social ethics and conducts (Bhat, 2013). Interesting that he does not emphasise Buddhism which has was originated in India about 2500 years before (see section 5.1). Most of the articles in this journal are surrounded by Yoga or Hindu (Vedic) philosophy.

The status of Parapsychology as an academic discipline in India is growing but still limited, however, the Indian religions have always talked about the interests of

parapsychological topics. If we look at Indian parapsychologists (such as Rao), it can be noted that most of the research is being conducted into Hindu Yoga or the Buddhist Tibetan traditions (more in section 3.2) rather than on the early Buddhist tradition such as Theravada. Rao (1978b) emphasises that in yogic literature, the intense concentration is accompanied by a completely relaxed state of mind and similar ideas are also found in early Buddhist writings of the Theravada school. Although pinpointing this parallel, thorough research on Theravada tradition is missing from parapsychological efforts.

The Pāli Canon, which is a religious text of Theravada Buddhism, has not yet been scrutinised by them, thus it is open to the possibility of research. In the next section, I will provide some of the real-life examples of psi to illustrate parapsychologists' efforts in understanding psi as a spontaneous event from people's life experiences.

2.6   Real-Life Examples of Psi

In this section, I will provide real-life examples of psi so that it can be understood that psi is a spontaneous occurrence and not just something that parapsychologists research in experimental settings. For this purpose, I am going to investigate real-life examples and evidence from parapsychology literature and align them with the key objectives of the thesis. This is an important step because it will allow me to evaluate the influence of these findings on the field of parapsychology. It is also very important because this further emphasises the point that there is a genuine value in investigating real-life examples as psi is also seen as a spontaneous phenomenon. Roe and Linnett (2017) published a paper on 'content analysis of spontaneous cases of psi included in the Alister Hardy religious experiences research centre database.' Here they argued that

research should be grounded in the experiences of real people so that we can ensure the findings have ecological validity. This also helps in avoiding artefacts that have no real-world point of contact. Roe and Linnett (2017) dwelled upon 6000+ cases. Taking guidance from their research, I have also decided to follow a similar methodology and examine the selective real-life instances of psi which can further be connected with my research.

The examination of the evidence of psi phenomena within the framework of this thesis is also very important in order to understand that psi is something that occurs in people's lives spontaneously and therefore, the concern of parapsychology to investigate such phenomena academically has a real value in the field of research. In the following subsections, I will provide some categories of real-life psi examples to provide evidential understanding from parapsychological literature. The main point to stress in the next section is the spontaneous nature of psi.

2.6.1 Hallucinatory Experiences

Hallucinatory experiences can be highly vivid spontaneous experiences as far as extrasensory perception is concerned. They include experiences such as visions of people at the point of death, also known as crisis apparitions, auditory hallucinatory experiences such as hearing one's name being called, and hallucinations relating to the senses of smell or touch. One interesting case reported by MacKenzie (1995) about the sight of a deadly fire on 27th October 1971, is important to mention here to illustrate this type of experience with a real-life example. A young boy of six years reported watching a fire from the window while he was at his aunt's house. His aunt reported him shouting

"Look at the fire over there – get some water quick!" When the aunt went towards the window, she could not see a fire and thought the boy must be tired so she should take him home. The boy in this case was interviewed as a grown man by McKenzie in 1995. Further investigation by McKenzie found that on 28th October 1971 a report about a fire in the house was published in the Bolton Evening Newspaper; two brothers had died in the fire. This is a real-life example confirming the incidence of premonition as experienced by the boy. A further example of hallucinatory ESP is taken from an investigation by the Society for Psychical Research:

> On Thursday evening, 14th November 1867, I was sitting in the Birmingham Town Hall with my husband at a concert, when there came over me the icy chill which usually accompanies these occurrences. Almost immediately, I saw with perfect distinctness, between myself and the orchestra, my uncle, Mr. W., lying in bed with an appealing look on his face, like one dying. I had not heard of him for several months and had no reason to think he was ill. The appearance was not transparent or filmy, but perfectly solid-looking; and yet I could somehow see the orchestra, not through, but behind it. I did not try turning my eyes to see whether the figure moved with them, but looked at it with a fascinated expression that made my husband ask if I was ill. I asked him not to speak with me for a minute or two; the vision gradually disappeared, and I told my husband, after the concert was over, what I had seen. A letter came shortly after telling of my uncle's death. He died at exactly the time when I saw the vision (Gurney, Myers & Podmore, 1886a, p. 194).

2.6.2 Intuitive Experiences

Another category that can be explained within the framework of this thesis is that of intuitive experiences. Normally these occur in the waking state and have characteristic

feelings associated with them. These experiences can be highly emotional. The case of

intuition below is derived from Stevenson (1970b):

> Around the middle of June 1964, Linda and I decided to visit the Travis' [sic] to congratulate them on their new child. After supper, we put the children to bed, and we asked Linda's grandmother to babysit for a while. We arrived there, and Paul Travis fixed our drinks. As he was showing me the blueprints of his new house, I stopped and had a feeling as if something bad had happened at home, the nature of which I was not aware. I asked Linda to call home. She said: "I will in a few minutes." I said: "You'd better call now. Something is wrong." Linda went into the bedroom where the phone was, and I followed, and my feelings were then of distress. Our…neighbor answered the phone. Both children were screaming in the background. She informed us that Linda's grandmother had hurt her back just a few minutes earlier and [that] the children were so frightened…We arrived home, and the neighbor met us at the door, saying that Linda's grandmother had called upon her after she hurt her back. Scott, my son, was frantic and refused to go to Linda and clutched me for comfort. What is surprising about this incident is the sudden feeling of distress and my insistence on Linda to call home and my premonition that something bad [had] happened. (Stevenson, 1970b, pp. 49-50).

The above is a very typical example of intuitive experiences which often result in

strong feelings about something. Again, here I would like to stress that this psi example

is derived from a real-life experience and is spontaneous. Many similar examples of psi

experiences, in these and other categories, can be found in parapsychological literature,

and the way parapsychologists treat this information shows their interest in dealing with

normal people in social settings, rather than purely in laboratory work. The next example

presented relates to dreams.

2.6.3 Dreams

One of the major categories that occur in this section is dreams. Although there are different parapsychological classifications of dreams, my intention here is to provide a real-life example so that the spontaneous nature of occurrences of psi can be better understood. The following is an example jotted down from Louisa Rhine's collection of cases (Rhine, 1961):

> The night before they were to return home, the district manager had a dream, so clear, so vivid, he could not sleep afterward. In it, he writes, "one of our locomotive cranes that were unloading a car of scrap iron, together with the car, was on the track near the bank of a river alongside the water tower which served the locomotives. For some unaccountable reason, as the huge magnet swung around with a heavy load of scrap, it suddenly toppled over the river bank. The operator, whom I called by name, jumped clear of the crane and landed below it as it came bounding, tumbling and bouncing down the river bank, and he finally disappeared from view as the crane came to rest twenty feet below at the water's edge. I particularly noted the number of the crane and the number and positions of the railroad cars and was able to tell how the crane operator was dressed. Furthermore, I noticed the approximate damage done to the crane. I did not know, however, what had finally happened to the operator. He had disappeared under or behind the crane after it had come to rest. In other words, I was observing the accident from somewhere in or across the river. Upon my return to the mill the following day, the first man I met was the master mechanic. He told me to come with him to inspect the crane of my dream, to talk with the operator who had emerged from the accident without a scratch. The operator explained his lack of injury by the fact that the crane had fallen over in front of him as he made his last jump and as it made its last bounce. The record showed the smallest detail to be as I had dreamed it, with one exception. The exception was that the accident had happened two hours after the dream" (Rhine, 1961, pp. 43-44).

The example presented here shows us that in dreams, the precognition phenomenon is present. This is an excellent example because the accident happened was just two hours after the dream. Although a scientific explanation for these kinds of experiences may or may not be possible, the efforts of parapsychologists in collecting such cases and analysing them are very important. The examples of psi as real-life occurrences provided here give positive support to my thesis; however, I will include a further example contributing to the ways in which spontaneous psi occurrence can be understood.

2.6.4 Physical Effects

Louisa Rhine categorises physical effects as the second major phenomenon after dreams. It includes different events such as the stopping of a clock when someone is dying, or the falling of pictures from the wall around the time of a person's death. This can be shown by means of the following example as presented by Rhine (Rhine, 1981):

> A woman in New Hampshire reported that when she was a girl of about 12 she came home from school one day and her mother told her about a queer occurrence. Her mother said she was sitting knitting in the kitchen about 2 o'clock that afternoon when the clock stopped for no apparent reason. It was not run down for it soon started running again and kept going until evening, the time that it usually was wound. Three days later a cable came from overseas saying that her mother's sister had died. It was the day and hour the clock stopped (Rhine, 1981, p. 196).

The stopping of the clock in the above example shows the relationship between that and a person dying. Such cases can be found widely in parapsychological literature, and I would like to suggest that the evidential experiences from people's normal lives

cannot be overlooked. One of the efforts from parapsychologists' efforts over the last century was to understand psi occurrences are based on experiences of living examples. This confirms that, as perceived in parapsychology, psi occurrences are spontaneous phenomena. The question of whether other traditions, especially those of the East, perceive psi as spontaneous or as something else will be explored in the upcoming sections. Before this, I intend to explore more literature from parapsychology itself to get an in-depth overview of the dealings of modern parapsychology with psi phenomena.

All the above are different real-life examples of psi incidences. These examples provide insight into the possibility of psi and provide justification for the efforts of parapsychologists in using academic and scientific approaches in trying to understand them. In the next section, I will provide an overview of Louisa Rhine's approach to parapsychology. Over several decades, she collected over 10,000 cases of paranormal activities. Therefore, it will be important to look at her approach towards parapsychology and its phenomena in order to gain more insights into the nature of psi as a spontaneous occurrence.

2.7 Louisa Rhine's Perspective on Parapsychology

I will now focus on how we go from occasional odd incidents to a systematic assessment of a collection of cases to see what we can learn about the features and circumstances under which they occur. This is a crucial point since it underpins my analysis of the Pāli material.

In this subsection, I will investigate Louisa Rhine's findings and align them with the key objectives of the thesis, which is first to understand psi phenomena and then to

compare them with similar concepts from the Buddhist Pāli Canon. This is an important step because it will allow me to evaluate the influence of L. Rhine's findings on the field of parapsychology as Rhine's collection of cases of psi plays a major role in understanding the nature of psi as spontaneous. One of the reasons for this investigation is to look at the contemporary understanding of psi within parapsychology.

In one of her first works, Rhine (1953) reviewed approximately one thousand cases of different psychic experiences that were spontaneous in their nature. She analysed those cases in order to identify the most common forms of these psychic experiences and make necessary generalisations. Rhine (1953) was able to identify four main types of psychic experiences. First, there were intuitive experiences that involved simple experiences that were nothing other than an unreasoned expression (Rhine, 1953). The second type of experience she termed hallucinatory. In that case, the experience was projected as a sensation (Rhine, 1953). The third type of experience is related to unrealistic dreaming. In other words, those psychic experiences were underlined by fantasy (Rhine, 1953). The last type of most common psychic experience included realistic dreaming. Those cases were highlighted by photographically realistic dreaming experiences (Rhine, 1953). It was found that the first two groups of experiences were only possible in the waking state. This finding relates to the tradition of meditation and the Pāli Canon, as the awakened state of mind is one of the practices inherent in this discipline. Rhine (1953) mentioned that generalisation was necessary to understand the processes inherent in the four types of psychic experiences as mentioned above, and the ways in which they contributed to the mental life of an individual. For Rhine, these generalisations generated a lot of new questions to be answered. In particular, she was interested in

investigating the parts of a personality that could support the display of psychic powers, and the ability to expose oneself to spontaneous psychic experiences (Rhine, 1953). In the end, she concluded that the process of acquiring psi-generated knowledge had to occur on an unconscious level. She also concluded that the mechanisms of attaining that knowledge had to cross a threshold in order to contribute to the conscious perception of such experiences. She, therefore, concluded that, with regard to psychic experiences, a process of selective judgment occurred beneath the level of consciousness (Rhine, 1953). This approach might be beneficial when contrasting this data with the instances of psi identified in the Pāli Canon.

Another of Rhine's research projects (1962a) aimed to investigate the process of research on psi abilities and expand it by means of experiments. She claimed that the progress was rather slow and partially limited. In most cases, Rhine (1962a) identified only negative effects of psi displays and perfect scores were infrequent. Nonetheless, she mentioned that one of the key points of psi research was the consistency of scores showed by the participants in such experiments. Rhine (1962a) stated that extrasensory perception might be seen as a sporadic phenomenon that was restricted and was exercised with difficulty. However, she associated those limitations and restrictions with the possibility of improving the understanding of psi processes (Rhine 1962a). She analysed a number of spontaneous cases in order to reach the possibility of generalising the information regarding psi that was available to her. Rhine (1962a) was interested in identifying whether there were any prospects of deducing the steps that allowed the information available for extrasensory perception to be transported to one's consciousness. In her 1962 report, Rhine concentrated on waking experiences as she

believed that those psi phenomena could be the answer to understanding parapsychic abilities. Her findings allowed her to conclude that extrasensory perception that took place below the level of consciousness could be divided into different elements (Rhine, 1962a). On a larger scale, some elements could easily cross the threshold of consciousness and some could not. According to these findings, Rhine (1962a) decided that such pseudo-sensory and hallucinatory experiences could be explained by means of demonstrating that there was a direct relationship between the form of the extrasensory perception and intuitive experiences. It was found that those results could be considered relevant within the framework of research on psi. This means that the instances of psi that were spontaneous could probably be deliberately elicited.

This led to Rhine (1962b) conducting the second part of this research project in which she completed an analysis of the impact of realistic dreams that related to extrasensory perception. She was able to identify that there were numerous personal factors that could influence the formation of either an automatic reproduction of content-bearing imagery or incomplete realistic dreams. Rhine (1962b) also mentioned that there were several devices that contributed to the development of a greater magnitude of the phenomenon. Her findings supported the hypothesis that before an image is formed, unrealistic dreams could lead to an association of ideas that were below the level of common consciousness (Rhine, 1962b). This helped her to understand that even the nature of that imagery could be influenced by personal inclinations. The imagery was found to be re-interpreted after the process of receiving the imagery from below the conscious level. The transmission of an incomplete realistic dream relied heavily on the personal motives of the individual going through such psi experiences.

Rhine's (1962b) study of the four forms of psi experiences (intuitions, hallucinations, realistic or unrealistic dreams and physical effects) showed that numerous psychological processes took place in the brain below the level of consciousness. Initial judgment turned out to be one of the first processes while re-interpretation was one of the final stages of extrasensory experiences.

Here two points can be noted in relation to the findings of L. Rhine. Firstly, she talked about waking states and secondly, she mentioned the psychological processes that are happening below the level of consciousness. Both these findings have connections with Buddhist understandings of mind and therefore, this overview of Rhine's approach should be further investigated in relation to the Eastern tradition of Buddhism.

This subsection of the chapter provided the reader with the idea that psi phenomena are not merely elicited by means of experiments but are, for the most part, spontaneous. Later in the thesis, I will discuss the main concepts of the Pāli Canon so as to make sure that the parapsychological context of this extensive body of literature can be related to Rhine's findings regarding the process of transmitting and receiving information on levels that are lower than, or different from, the level of common consciousness. I believe that the information presented by Louisa Rhine can be used when dealing with the psi instances from the Pāli Canon because it provides us with insights regarding the display of psychic powers that are not in line with the concept of a materialist world, or the concepts of mainstream sciences, in which such abilities are viewed as unorthodox in nature. Therefore, further investigation of understanding psi approaches with the help of meditation is needed. In the next chapter, I will discuss Honorton's Noise Reduction Model along with specific research which is inspired by

Eastern traditions of meditation. Honorton was inspired by Eastern traditions and developed experiments based on this model. This section will also make the point that those parapsychologists are making significant efforts to understand the nature of psi using different possible methods. The main point here is to describe parapsychologists' efforts in dealing with Eastern traditions such as meditation and Buddhism.

2.8   Recap

In this chapter, I have outlined the definition and taxonomy of parapsychology. I provided a concise history of parapsychological research and made a point that researchers are keen on investigating psi phenomena. In more modern development too, there are many studies that show the keen engagement of modern academicians in parapsychological research. However, till this point, I noted that there is less research being conducted in the early Buddhist tradition. Indian parapsychologists believe that Indian psychology can offer a new direction and fresh impetus to the field but still there is limited research in India too when it comes to Buddhist traditions. Thus, I justify the need for research. Later in the chapter, I surveyed the fieldwork done by L. Rhine and found that parallels the aims of this research. Louisa Rhine's perspective on parapsychology as a background to her work was important as she played important role in parapsychological literature by collecting accounts of spontaneous psi cases. Here the spontaneous nature of psi was revealed along with the possibility of psi occurring at an unconscious level. By the end of the first chapter, I found that parapsychologists see psi as either spontaneous phenomena or that which can be induced with experiments. Thus,

in the next chapter, I shift attention to experimental work and inform parallels with

Buddhism.

3   Chapter III Parapsychology and its Relation to Buddhism

This chapter is on parapsychology's relationship to Buddhism. I begin with Hornton's NRM. In this chapter, I want to show that parapsychology claims that its methods and conceptualisation of psi phenomena are influenced by Buddhist and Hindu, aka eastern thought. I will as such introduce the Noise Reduction Model which was influenced by eastern traditions (such as Patanjali). Later in this chapter, I will also discuss more research in relation to meditation or eastern thought with the view of finding the gap in research. Additionally, in section 3.7, I have cited the work of McMahan and Lopez to develop an argument that Buddhist scholars' modernist movement (also known as protestant Buddhists) do not do justification to the early text of Theravada and appears to be biased in their approach. Thus, it may significantly neglect the Buddhist approach of psi. This will provide further justification and the need for this research.

3.1   Honorton's Noise Reduction Model

Before switching my attention in this chapter to Eastern accounts of anomalous phenomena, it will be useful to review Honorton's Noise Reduction Model (NRM). While this model is used extensively in parapsychological research, we do not find many applications of this model to research or experiments with Buddhist meditation, especially the meditation of Theravada tradition. From the previous chapter, the link can be connected through Louisa Rhine's point that altered states of consciousness are psi conducive and also here I focus on the spontaneous experience. These are both influences on Honorton's model.

The Noise Reduction Model proposed in 1971 by Honorton was intended for the study of paranormal abilities. The core of this model were the observations regarding the occurrence of psi powers. Two of the most prevalent types considered were meditation and lucid dreaming. The main objective of the Noise Reduction Model was to investigate the underlying mechanisms of psi phenomena and study their nature.

Honorton (1985) undertook meta-analyses of the ganzfeld studies which were produced by the mid-1980s. Honorton reported that 23 studies out of 28 had positive z scores. The second major meta-analysis was carried out on 11 'autoganzfeld' studies in which methodological flaws by using computer-controlled target randomization, selection and judging were avoided (Honorton et al., 1990). Later, Bem and Honorton (1994) reduced the Honorton et al. (1990) dataset to 10 studies by removal of one study that was not methodologically comparable to others. They also reported a hit rate of 32.2% for those 10 studies.

As a parapsychologist, Honorton used automated methods in his experiments. His central hypothesis was that the reduction of ordinary sensory input leads to enhanced psi mediation (Bem & Honorton, 1994). This model presupposes that the positive effect of the ganzfeld state is a phenomenon of visual and auditory perception manifested while looking at homogeneous fields of colour or sounds. A period in a uniform colour field without any details can make psi abilities manifest more easily and are similar to dreaming during sleep since the brain lacks external visual information in both states. Honorton's idea was that telepathic abilities are drowned out in the contemporary world by a stream of external stimuli while the majority of psi states can only be reached when being calm

and relaxed. Here one point to be noted is that being calm and relaxed is emphasised for psi states. This understanding is very similar to meditation traditions.

According to the assumption articulated by Bem and Honorton (1994) in their research study, if someone receives a telepathic signal, they may experience difficulties in noticing it. The results of the work of Honorton and his collaborator Bem were published in the Psychological Bulletin in 1994 (Bem & Honorton, 1994). The tone of the publication was moderately optimistic. The Noise Reduction Model developed by Honorton encouraged researchers to try to reproduce the effect of telepathy and investigate it in an in-depth manner. Honorton's Noise Reduction Model of psi is regarded as one of the dominant theories of modern parapsychology as it serves as a goal-oriented approach, taking into account both the mind's inner chatter and environmental sources of noise. To conclude, Honorton's Noise Reduction Model is a comprehensive one that could be utilised within this research depending on the needs of the next phases and the outcomes of further analysis. However, I would like to make two points here as far as NRM is concerned. My main point has to be that Honorton saw meditation phenomena as telling us something important about how psi works and that it was influential in his NRM. My second point is to question how deep his understanding of that tradition is.

The first one is that this model proposes that a reduction in noise from the outside world will help in inducing relaxed states of mind which can be the base of psi states. However, Honorton's understanding here in relation to inducing a relaxed state of mind seems limited from the perspective of Eastern traditions, especially that of Buddhism. In the Theravada tradition, the inner noise (the chaotic mind) can be higher (or more disruptive) than the noise of the outside world, and as such the notion of suffering and its

complete eradication is proposed in order to get rid of that chaotic nature of mind as far as the practice of meditation is concerned (see section 3.8).

The second point is, therefore, that parapsychologists, even though they have looked into Eastern traditions and developed models, have knowledge that can only be regarded as partial because the basic underlying thoughts behind the Eastern practices are not fully understood. The psi induction phenomena in the Theravada meditation tradition is mostly based on the purification of the mind by removing its defilements. Only then is psi being possible (there is more on this in section 3.8). This understanding is not widely visible in parapsychological literature and therefore in the next subsections, I will further discuss parapsychologists' treatments of the East, especially with regard to the traditions of meditation.

To conclude, the NRM proposes the relaxation of the mind as the basis of the psi-conducive state. Researchers of parapsychology are seriously looking into the approaches of the Eastern spiritual traditions and trying to understand and develop experiments for psi phenomena. Such explorations have a few elements relevant to the Theravada tradition's views on psi, such as the focus on a calm and relaxed mind, but these are not well enough understood. That is why I would like to make the case for further investigation into the Theravada tradition and the Pāli Canon. In the next section, I will provide an overview of psi and meditation but at the end, I will argue that this research has still not incorporated the Theravada tradition's views as far as the development of psi and the refinement of consciousness is concerned.

3.2   Parapsychology Approaches to Research into Meditation

Until now, I have found that parapsychologists' work is inspired by concepts that link to the understandings of meditation traditions, such as L. Rhine's findings relating to the waking state and psychological processes relating to psi at an unconscious level, or the relaxed state of mind incorporated into Honorton's NRM. Therefore, the objective of this section is to provide the reader with an in-depth overview of parapsychologists' research work in the meditation traditions. This is important as meditation is one of the main areas related to this research project. I will first showcase the meditation research from parapsychology, and at the end, I will problematize it by noting the neglect of the Theravada tradition and its understanding of psi within the history of parapsychology research on meditation.

A concept called the *psi-conducive state* was first proposed by Braud (1975), leading to subsequent parapsychological research regarding altered states of consciousness and the ways in which these states may produce psi experiences. The resulting model of psi-conducive states describes several elements which combine to enhance psi functioning, including cortical arousal at a level necessary for consciously maintaining awareness, physical relaxation, increased awareness of phenomena occurring within the body such as sensations, thoughts, and emotions, and minimising sensory arousal such as visual and auditory stimuli. In the resulting state of sensory relaxation, the influence of ordinary perception on a receiver is minimalised. Subsequent reviews of the model have been proposed by Braud (2002), Roe (2009) and Holt, Simmonds-Moore, Luke and French (2012).

Another important model known as 'Internal Attention States' was proposed by Honorton who found that various psycho-physiological factors change as a result of meditation, for example, certain changes in alpha brain waves detected by electroencephalography (EEG) and galvanic skin responses (GSR), were associated with greater psi scoring (Honorton, 1977). While meditation fundamentally involves the reduction of both internal and external noise, sutras from the Indian Yoga text called Patanjali's sutras state that *siddhis* (physic powers) – will manifest when a meditator attains *Samadhi* (a state of meditative consciousness) (Satyananda, 2000). The teachings of these Yogic sutras are also found in Buddhist traditions, which state that psi phenomena start to occur as one advance in meditation practices. A more in-depth evaluation of this relationship was considered by Roney-Dougal (2010), while Braud (2006) presents an extensive discussion regarding psi research and Patanjali's Yoga sutras.

Various experiments regarding the relationship between meditation, psi-conducive states and effects on psi were conducted in the 1970s. Researchers such as Schmeidler (1970), Dukhan and Rao (1973), and Roll and Zill (1981), found that psi-scores measured after meditation were generally higher than those measured before meditation, supporting the notion that meditation constitutes a psi-conducive state.

Some studies began to utilise 'free-response techniques' during experiments, asking participants to either describe in words and/or draw their experience of a psi target before viewing the target, in contrast to other studies which had measured only participants' physiological responses to a target. Another technique known as forced-

choice was used in other studies, asking participants to guess a target that could appear within a set number of potential targets, for example, guessing the symbol on a card.

Honorton conducted a meta-analysis of meditation-psi research which had been accumulated by 1976. This analysis found that the results of nine out of the total of sixteen experiments considered were significant, with a corresponding $p = 6 \times 10^{-12}$ overall (Honorton,1977). After summarising six additional studies conducted between 1978 and 1992, Schmeidler (1994) found that four out of those six studies gave significant results. Subsequent research is known as the 'Ganzfeld study' found no significant difference between the meditator and non-meditators abilities in accurate target identification (Symmonds and Morris, 1997). Other research called the 'presentiment experiment' investigated subconscious physiological responses before a target was presented, finding that experienced meditators (defined as those having practised for 20 years or more) showed significant changes in alpha brain waves (EEG response) before a stimulus was presented to them, compared with control subjects who produced no significant EEG response under the same conditions (Radin, Vieten, Michel, & Selorme, 2011). Much of the more recent research since 2011 has investigated the effects of meditation on active psi.

The term 'meditation' thus far has been used to encompass many different types of practices such as *pranayama* (controlling the breath in various ways); *mandala meditation* (involving concentrating on a specific type of geometric pattern); *kundalini yoga* (concentrating on energy points called 'chakras'); *mantra yoga* (where specific words are repeated out loud or silently within the mind); and various awareness practices. Given that each technique may produce different states of awareness, much research

surrounding meditation has received criticism for inaccurately assuming the equivalency of techniques (Roe, 2009; Schmidt, 2012).

Roney-Dougal, Solfvin, and colleagues conducted a series of studies working with both Yogis at an ashram in India (Roney-Dougal & Solfvin, 2006) and Tibetan Buddhist monks (Roney-Dougal, Solfvin & Fox, 2008; Roney-Dougal & Solfvin, 2011). Results from these studies strongly supported a relationship between meditation and conscious psi awareness. As stated in various Yogic and Tibetan teachings (asserting that the psi produced by a more experienced meditator will be more reliable than spontaneous psi produced by natural psychics), in comparison to beginners in meditation, meditation practitioners with twenty or more years of experience manifested constant psi-hitting when it came to a receptive psi task. Correlation for the Tibetan studies ($r = 0.74$, $p = 0.0005$) agreed with findings from the Yogic studies ($r = 0.57$, $p = 0.02$).

In addition to comparing meditation with conscious psi awareness, these studies took the type of meditation techniques into account. A kundalini meditation called *Ajapajapa* was practised in the ashram, where Yogis believe that this technique activates the third eye chakra, also known as one's psychic centre. The Tibetan studies compared visualisation and mantra meditation techniques, and while no difference was found between the techniques themselves, normal visualisation and years of experience in visualisation showed the strongest correlation with psi score although it was not statistically significant ($rho = 0.49$).

As previously mentioned, Patanjali's Sutras state that physic powers will manifest when a meditator attains the state of consciousness known as Samadhi. Teachings from original Buddhist texts make similar statements but assert that it is the fourth stage of

Samadhi, which, when attained, can yield the manifestation of supernormal powers. In summary, meditation techniques induce a heightened state of consciousness (also known as a heightened state of awareness).

Meditation can generally be separated into two main categories of concentration (Pāli: *samatha*) and bare awareness (Pāli: *vipassana*), in which one observes things as they are. During the initial stages of meditation, bare awareness is often combined with observing something in particular, such as the natural breath, bodily sensations or the mind. It is typical to learn samatha techniques first in order to concentrate and calm the mind sufficiently enough to enable vipassana practices. Many Buddhist and Yogic meditation techniques involve awareness of the breath. A concentration technique called *Transcendental Meditation* (TM) involves chanting (repeating) a particular word, sound or mantra. Mantra and visualization meditation techniques are frequently combined in traditional Tibetan Buddhist and Yogic practices. A method known as *Mindfulness* is used in samatha practice, requiring the meditator to be vigilant as to the wanderings of their mind and repeatedly return their attention to awareness of the session in progress. The session will often involve observing the mind itself, such as *Mahamudra* or *Dzogchen*.

To conclude, section 3.2 provides an overview of different research done in the field of meditation related to the psychic phenomenon. Although all this research is done principally with regard to Eastern traditions or meditation practices, the specific information on the Theravada tradition's views on meditation remains under-investigated by parapsychologists. Serena Roney-Dougal has spent much of her life investigating the Buddhist meditation practices of mainly Tibetan and Hindu Yogis, however, again, the Theravada tradition is not sufficiently acknowledged. In the next section of this

dissertation, I will describe Roney-Dougal's view and research on meditation to show how seriously parapsychologists are researching Eastern traditions. Roney-Dougal's work is important to note as she is the only researcher who has spent much of her time researching the Eastern traditions of Buddhism, focusing mainly on the Tibetan tradition.

3.3   Serena Roney-Dougal's View of Meditation

This subsection of the chapter is intended to provide more information on the interest of parapsychologists in the concept of meditation. This can be done best by means of addressing the work of Roney-Dougal, whose research in terms of the benefits of meditation and its association with parapsychology is both extensive and vivid. By means of this review, I aim to gain more insight into the issue of the relationship between Eastern traditions and parapsychology. One of the most extensive research projects in the area was conducted by Serena Roney-Dougal as she tried to connect psi and meditation. One of her first experiments revolved around the idea that it might be possible to determine whether there were any differences between precognition and clairvoyance (Roney-Dougal, 2015). She believed that clairvoyance was not easier to elicit simply because the practice target was already there. Roney-Dougal (2015) claimed that similar concepts could be found in parapsychology and Eastern meditation practices (such as both spontaneous precognition and clairvoyance, for example). Her findings are of interest for my research because Roney-Dougal (2015) found that the ability to achieve high scores in psi testing depended principally on the number of years devoted to meditation practices. For the most part, the participants of Roney-Dougal's (2015) experiment had less than ten years of meditation experience and could be described as

relative beginners. It is also interesting that those monks who had more than a decade of experience in terms of meditation showed better psi results (Roney-Dougal, 2015). The monks whose experience reached at least 30 years, showed some exceptional results. I was able to identify a trend in Roney-Dougal's (2015) research that revolved around the 'psi-missing' concept. 'Psi-missing' describes the situation in which the experimental subject consistently misses (rather than hits) the target with results that differ significantly from chance. The phenomenon of 'psi-missing' is used by Roney-Dougal (2015) because she believes that the subject's attitude may seriously impact their psi results. According to Roney-Dougal (2015), there are certain blocks that may serve as defence mechanisms that limit one's ability to elicit unconscious psychological processes.

The connection between meditation and psi can also be extended if we decide to consider the possible reasons for psi-missing behaviours. One of the most important contributors to the 'meditator's block' is the monks' exposure to scientific knowledge (Roney-Dougal, 2015). Knowing that few monks recognise the importance of science and its premises because of their belief that science may break down their spiritual traditions, I can conclude that a meditator's experience can play a significant role. At the same time, it should be noted that some Buddhist teachings are inextricably linked to scientific findings. Roney-Dougal (2015) mentioned that the Dalai Lama supports meditation research regardless of this being something very outlandish to the monks concerned. Some of the most thought-provoking findings concerned the fact that the three best-performing participants of the experiment (two were Rinpoches (their previous incarnations are believed to be high lamas as they reincarnated to enlighten people surrounding them) and one was Geshe (having a PhD in Buddhist philosophy), all

reported several identical memories regarding previous lives and the Chinese invasion (Roney-Dougal, 2015). Interestingly, they reported those findings independently of each other, and the outcomes of their past lives were identical as well. No other participant of the experiment came close to such reports or outcomes. This led Roney-Dougal (2015) to the idea that there might be a kind of a psi block that elicits the psi-missing responses.

From the reviewed material, I can conclude that meditation can be a serious contributor to both psi abilities and psi-missing behaviours. According to the conclusions made by Roney-Dougal (2015), only the most experienced meditators may be able to demonstrate psi abilities. Her study showed that there was a significant correlation between their meditation experience and the correct choice of the target during the experiment. Nonetheless, Roney-Dougal's (2015) findings can only be validated if more participants take part in similar experiments and confirm these findings. If I were to characterise this contribution to my research, I would describe it as an incomplete, but successful and thought-provoking project. One of the biggest concerns should be psi missing in the younger people or new / less experienced meditators (a rather low correlation was identified by Roney-Dougal (2015)). The significance of a higher level of correlation between psi-missing behaviours and meditation has to be researched further because the majority of younger participants tended to want to fulfil the experimenters' desires to witness psi abilities and validate their hypothesis regarding the interconnection between meditation practise (or experience) and psi abilities (Roney-Dougal, 2015). I can also conclude that Roney-Dougal's (2015) experiment directly supports the hypothesis that years of meditation practise can positively affect one's awareness and help the individual to develop precognition and clairvoyance. This becomes interesting when we

connect this hypothesis to the idea from the Buddhist teachings that meditation attainment is the key catalyst of psi abilities. The value of Roney-Dougal's (2015) research may be undermined due to the numerous psi-missing subjects who may have been too inexperienced in meditation to display any psi abilities.

To get more insight into this issue and the role of meditation for Buddhism and psi, I continued studying Roney-Dougal's (2015) experiments. She claims that the majority of research projects in parapsychology are focused on eliciting subconscious processes and explains these processes as a set of physiological responses to external stimuli. This may help us to understand the nature of meditation in Eastern tradition and its probable parapsychological connections because Eastern meditation practices were shown to contribute to the display of psi powers among Eastern monks (Roney-Dougal, 2015). In terms of the connection between psi and meditation, one of the experiments that she described in her article included a set of physiological measurements (heart rate, blood pressure, body sweat) that had been made before a consciously felt stimulus. This allowed her to test the subconscious nature of psi effects.

Roney-Dougal (2015) summarized her findings by suggesting that the presence of psi abilities varies from one person to another. This variation may be a sign of the fact that spontaneous cases of psi relate to the personal experience of each participant. It is important to mention that both non-meditators and active Zen meditation practitioners with twenty years of experience participated in the experiment. (Zen meditation is a type of meditation where both the posture and state of mind are essential if the practitioner wants to concentrate properly). The results showed that there are pre-stimulus differences between non-meditators and practitioners ($p < .005$) (Roney-Dougal, 2015).

Also, it was found that there is a critical difference between these two groups in terms of habituation (this score was smaller among the practitioners). Roney-Dougal (2015) discussed the process of interaction between the type of stimulus and the subsequent state of consciousness. She concluded that a presentiment effect could be validated within the framework of such experiments for both meditators and non-meditators. This allows me to conclude that Eastern traditions (and meditation in particular) should be investigated further due to the fact that the impact of these practices on the human mind is under-researched while potentially being of critical relevance to academic parapsychology.

The interest in meditation can also be supported by a growing body of information regarding the idea that spontaneous cases of psi may affect our knowledge in terms of the impact of meditation, and its connection to parapsychology. Taking this into consideration, I conclude that parapsychologists should be willing to investigate meditation more thoroughly because on the one hand meditation traditions have experiential and practical implications for psi experiences, while on the other hand parapsychology claims psi as spontaneous in nature. I would therefore like to address this distinction within the framework of this research.

It can be concluded that Roney-Dougal's approach to meditation has shown a positive connection with regard to Buddhist traditions and psi. Therefore, in the next section of this chapter I will further explore parapsychologists' research into Buddhism. This is important because the logical links between Buddhism and parapsychology will be established, and further research on the Theravada tradition can be justified.

3.4   Parapsychologists' Examination of Buddhism and Meditation

The key objective of parapsychological research is to identify the elements that contribute to the success of psi display (Roney-Dougal & Solfvin, 2011). We may also connect this to the concept of meditation in Buddhism and other Eastern traditions and address the question of understanding that hints at the fact that there are things which heavily influence the occurrence of different supernormal events (and that can be associated with the concept of psi either directly or indirectly) (Radin, 2006). This connection can be made on the basis of ideas shared by Roney-Dougal and the extemporaneity of psi.

One of the underlying elements that are believed to contribute to psi experiences is the subject's state of mind. It is hypothesised that a subject may be able to demonstrate psi phenomena only if they are relaxed and attentive during the process of meditation (Radin, 2006). This claim is made on the basis of the ideas of Honorton described in his Noise Reduction Model. Parapsychologists believe that the use of such an approach may be considered to be one of the best ways to discover psi (despite the lack of overall reliability) (Bem & Honorton, 1994). This is why I believe that attempts to elicit supernormal powers through meditation may still be reasonable. One of the best-known hypotheses in parapsychology regarding the benefits of meditative practices was tested for the first time in the 1970s (Rao, 1978). The problem for parapsychologists in their research into the benefits of meditation is that those taking part in the experiments are not necessarily experienced meditators. At first, parapsychologists were keen on merely finding out if meditation was actually a tool that increased the chances of occurrence of a variety of psychic effects (Radin, 2006). With time, parapsychologists were able to confirm

that the validity of the research results had grown significantly. This led to a situation whereby parapsychology now uses meditators to investigate different parapsychological questions instead of conducting experiments simply to demonstrate the existence of psi. One of the aspects of meditation that still has to be examined by parapsychologists is the real-life effect of meditation and how it can be used in parapsychological research. Parapsychologists do not have a clear picture regarding a number of concepts (mindfulness, for example) (Rao & Palmer, 1987). This has led to a situation whereby they have been criticised by mainstream psychologists (for example, Ray Hyman) for not investigating different meditation techniques. The rationale for this criticism lies in the fact that different meditation techniques trigger the advent of diverse brain patterns. For instance, there are meditation practices that may produce alpha brain waves (such as transcendental meditation), beta waves (concentration), and theta waves (open awareness). In comparison to other states of consciousness, parapsychologists believe that meditation is the most psi-conducive practice (Roney-Dougal & Solfvin, 2011). Also, parapsychologists point out the value of the state of Samadhi and dwell on the ecstasy trance state which may be significant within the framework of parapsychological research on supernormal powers possessed by powerful meditators (Baijal & Srinivasan, 2010). The key to successful experiments is the use of experienced meditators who know how to control their minds at all times. As this research project is also interested in the comparison of parapsychology with Buddhism, the meditation aspect that has been proclaimed by the Buddha is very important in order to make further connections. This review adds to my knowledge and understanding concerning the gap in research with relation to the Theravada Buddhist tradition, as this tradition has not been examined by

parapsychologists. The Pāli Canon is the main scripture of this tradition (as discussed in Chapter Five) and it will be of further interest to review the Pāli Canon so that the critical understanding of psi phenomena from this tradition will be securely obtained.

In the light of the above issues, the next section is dedicated to further discussion of parapsychologists' treatment of Eastern traditions in order to provide more information on this topic before switching the focus to the alignment of Buddhist and parapsychological concepts, and more specifically, the Theravada tradition of Buddhism.

3.5   Parapsychologists and Eastern Traditions

There are two kinds of traditions known to parapsychologists: Western and Eastern. These are subdivided into a number of directions and schools. The pivotal difference between these approaches lies in their attitudes to an individual. Parapsychology in Eastern traditions is an extended form of esotericism (a concept of science regarding secret knowledge that is based on mystical viewpoints), through which modern science attempts to reconcile parapsychology built primarily on super-sensible methods of cognition and the predominantly rationalistic ideology dominating the contemporary world (Barash, 2017). According to Barash (2017), the purpose of Eastern traditions is to live in harmony with oneself and the surrounding world along with the fullest realisation of one's abilities. It is the health of the body, mind, and soul requiring only persistent and independent work on oneself (Radin, 2009).

While aligning Eastern traditions to parapsychology, it is possible to mention that the combination of these components forces a person to look inside and focus on internal psi-conducive states rather than to explore those of others (Rao & Paranjpe, 2015).

People living according to Eastern traditions tend to prefer to work on their condition to continuously improve and understand themselves better. In particular, raja yoga, bio-feedback, and other Eastern techniques are utilized to concentrate on one's internal state and establish paranormal connections (Rao & Paranjpe, 2015). It is considered, therefore, that Eastern traditions are closer to and more aware of, parapsychological manifestations. Since such practices as meditation and breathing control exercises are familiar to the majority of Orientals, it becomes evident that Eastern scholars and practitioners are more likely to discover new opportunities and challenges in the field of psi-related issues (Rao & Paranjpe, 2015). This is in line with the idea that mediation is one of the main contributors to an unconscious display of psi powers.

Considering that psi-conducive efforts help a person to reveal his or her parapsychological capability, it is the practice to train children in the East in special centres. May and Marwaha (2014) review the results of several studies and conclude that 47% of children aged between six and twelve are trained to discover their psi ability by means of the qigong system. This system presents special exercises aimed at breath control and energy reflection. McConnel claims that despite the widespread nature of qigong and alternative medicine, the attitude of the government is controversial (as cited in May & Marwaha, 2014). Another study by Dean Radin and Jong Shiah should also be mentioned since it aligns with Western and Eastern traditions based on the intention of the treatment involved. Radin (2009) also emphasises the increase in attempts of Eastern scholars to investigate such Oriental concepts as religion and the alternative healing traditions from the point of parapsychology. It may be claimed that the study of psi-conducive states and techniques from this point of view sheds light on the essence, origin,

and the role of psi-factors for a person and humanity in general. Ultimately, one may argue that both Western and Eastern traditions tend to become more extensive and focused on international concerns rather than exclusively regional issues. As such, the idea of aligning Eastern parapsychology, especially that of Buddhism, with Western parapsychology may be fruitful.

One more point of addition to emphasising the relation of parapsychologists with eastern traditions is the work of Paricha and Stevenson (1986) in India. In their paper 'near-death experiences in India: a preliminary report,' the authors report 16 cases of near-death experiences. The main point they emphasise is that the Indian cases differ from the larger sample of American cases. They mention that some of these features seem culture-bound and are derived from culture-bound beliefs. Some of the differences are also from a person's belief in what happens after death. This finding also suggests that eastern accounts have a cultural viewpoint and needed to study extensively.

In this section, I have elaborated on the Eastern approach towards psi conducive states and therefore as far as the traditions of meditation and especially that of Buddhism is concerned, it will be a useful undertaking to align this discipline with parapsychology. Early Buddhism, also known as Theravada Buddhism, is my main research interest in this project as it has been neglected and not yet been fully treated by both Buddhist academics and parapsychologists.

3.6   The Necessity of Aligning Buddhism and Parapsychology

The connections between Buddhism and parapsychology seem to be important in the exploration of Eastern traditions and experiences with regard to discussions so far.

The review of the treatment of Eastern traditions indicates that the Oriental approach is characterized by deeper understanding, study, and practice of psi-conducive states (Verdu, 1981). Taking into account that Buddhism is one of the most representative religions of the Eastern world, it is expected that the proposed study would outline the key assumptions and reveal existing trends. The fact that Buddhist traditions are characterised by a high level of spirituality and self-reflection is likely to promote the effectiveness of the study, resulting in the discovery of the aforementioned points. In order to highlight the key characteristics that are significant to consider in terms of parapsychology, it is essential to focus on one's personality and meditation as a source of power. Harnessing my enthusiasm, psi-conducive states will also be scrutinized.

On a global scale, by aligning Buddhism and parapsychology, I will contribute to the international field of parapsychology and encourage a comprehensive dialogue between West and East. Buddha's teachings present fertile grounds for studying parapsychology from a perspective other than that of material knowledge which is, in one way or another, inherent in contemporary science, as noted by Wiltshire (1990). It may be assumed that the results of the potential study will be of interest to both scholars and ordinary readers. To sum it up, the overarching idea of this study is to critically analyse and evaluate Buddhist-based parapsychology, to justify it and to provide the basis for investigations into the ways in which paranormal phenomena operate. In this connection, the growing body of research needs to be extended with regards to the Pāli Canon's information on supernormal powers, therefore current understandings of parapsychology and Buddhism on psi will first be evaluated. The establishment of the association between Buddhist and parapsychological understanding of psi conditions is the pivotal goal of my

research, which is based on the examination of parapsychological events from the available literature.

3.7   Modernist Trend of Western Buddhist scholars in Theravada Buddhism

In this section, I will elaborate on how Buddhism has been perceived by modern Buddhist scholars, especially concerning parapsychological phenomena. I will make the point that they have typically excluded the study or perception of the 'paranormal' elements. Secondly, I will further support this idea by analysing how colonialism has shaped the Protestant and Modernist trends in Theravada Buddhism, which has resulted in the censorship and removal of any cosmological or paranormal elements. This will further support the claim that it is not only modern science that has neglected or denied the existence of psi, but that Buddhist scholars have also been biased in this regard.

Wangyal (2018) in his foreword to David Presti's book called *Mind Beyond Brain: Buddhism, Science and the Paranormal* write that mainstream science has been slow to concede what this book proposes. He further emphasises that the investigation of siddhis or extraordinary powers present an important view of mind and reality. Although the practical effects of such Buddhist practices are found to be positive by other mainstream scientists (as seen in Presti's work), the question remains as to why there is a notable lack of attention paid by Buddhist scholars to the subject of psi. The same book has a chapter on paranormal phenomena written by Edward Kelly. He describes 'psi' as parallel to '*siddhis'* which are registered in the vast literature on yoga and meditation in the eastern tradition*.* (Kelly, 2018) mentions that "*siddhis* denote an immense variety of unusual capacities thought to be acquired through means such as psychoactive plants or fungi,

magical rituals and, especially, the intense practice of meditation in various forms. (Kelly, 2018, p. 92). He further raises concerns over Patanjali's statement that such powers in the worldly state are an obstacle to Samadhi. He concludes that "this negative attitude towards psi and the *siddhis* pervades the Vedantic tradition and has now passed through to Western transpersonal psychology, with the result that many of the people that we and other sympathetic scientists would love to work with – advanced meditators, in particular – seem unwilling to become involved." (Kelly, p. 94) This justifies that there is a reservation on researching such phenomena intensively. Interestingly, at the end of this chapter Kelly suggests that the currently prevailing mainstream scientific worldview needs to be expanded in directions that will bring it into a closer relationship with traditional spiritual worldviews including that of Buddhism. These phenomena deserve to move toward the centre of the evolving contemporary dialogue with Buddhism (Kelly, 2018, p. 120). Presti (2018) cites Allan Wallace, a meditation teacher in the Tibetan Buddhist Tradition, in a similar notion and suggest that highly refined techniques of meditation described in various ancient Buddhist texts can be conceived as "telescopes of the mind". Alan Wallace is particularly interested in Buddhism-Science dialogue. An organisation called 'Mind and Life Institute' is further engaged in this dialogue (Mind and Life Institute, 2021). Moreover, Presti also suggests the link between *siddhi*s and psi as the development of refined states of consciousness by the contemplative path. (Presti, 2018, p. 143). However, as far as research in this area is concerned, there is a reservation from Buddhist scholarship as well to investigate psi phenomena due to the modernist trends.

Buddhism has exploded in recent years into various American cultures (McMahan, 2008). McMahan further argues that the traditional forms of Buddhism that have existed

in Asia for centuries are quite distinct from those present in the contemporary world due to their long and varied histories. He states that "It is, rather, an actual new form of Buddhism that is the result of a process of modernization, Westernization, reinterpretation, image-making, revitalization, and reform that has been taking place not only in the West but also in Asian countries for over a century." (McMahan, 2008, p. 5). Additionally, McMahan (2008) suggests that the emergence of modern Buddhism has many different facets, which include the confluence of cultures, people or individuals and many different institutions which are constantly transforming society. Due to this, most importantly, he claims that "the Buddhism that has become visible in the West among urban, educated populations in Asia involves fewer rituals, de-emphasizes the miracles and supernatural events depicted in Buddhist literature, disposes of or interprets image worship, and stresses compatibility with scientific, humanistic, and democratic ideals. At the same time, these recent forms of Buddhism have not simply dispensed with all traditional elements in an effort to accommodate to a changing world but have re-invented them." (McMahan, 2008, p.5, 6).

        The above quotation is significant as modernist Buddhist movements suggest that there is a shift in the 'ancient' or 'authentic' form of Buddhism, but also, due to re-invention, it can be now difficult to understand the true essence of Buddhism. The start of this shift can be traced back to the era of colonisation. In fact, the term "Protestant Buddhism" originated in Victorian English, suggesting that this modern outlook has protested against European colonization and Christian modernization, thereby adopting the element of Protestantism. This has resulted in the rejection of many-core Buddhist concepts or rituals including an over-emphasis on the individual seeking the ultimate goal,

spiritual egalitarianism, and the importance of sangha as laypeople are given importance, and so forth (McMahan, 2008). This assertion has support from another Buddhist scholar, Richard Gombrich, who states that the rise of Protestant Buddhism was also connected with urbanization and the rise of the bourgeoisie in Asian nations and mingled traditional Buddhist ethics with Victorian social mores (Gombrich, 1988, p. 172-97).

This has largely impacted scientific Buddhism, in a sense that the science behind the notions such as siddhis has been neglected to fit in with the views of Protestant Buddhism. The article entitled "Religion without Speculation" published in the *International Encyclopaedia of Buddhism* contrast Buddhism to unscientific or speculative religion, because it is non-speculative and scientific. In their view, Buddha did not formulate a system but he discovered a law, which may be compared to Copernicus or Galileo in physical science. Buddhism extends the natural laws, the laws of causality to the mental or psychic domain (Singh, 1996).

> "Intellectual enlightenment, supreme intuition. And it is this which differentiates it from all other religions or philosophical systems: it is non-speculative, scientific… What Gotama did was not to devise a law or formulate a system but to discover a law, to perceive a system. His part may be compared to that of Copernicus or Galileo, Newton or Harvey, in physical science… Buddhism extends the natural laws, the laws of causality to the mental or psychic domain, or, more exactly, perceives their operation in this sphere, and thereby disposes of the idea of supernatural or transcendental agencies working independent of or in contravention to the natural laws of universe." (p. 47-48).

This quotation exemplifies crucial ways by which Buddhism has been acknowledged in the West when it was introduced in the nineteenth century. Further, this was also an important idea for Buddhist reform movements in Asia (Sri Lanka) and Japan.

In this way, Buddhism was incorporated into a pre-existing network of concerns, assumptions, ideas, agendas and practices that characterised certain features of late nineteenth-century life (McMahan, 2004). The questions these authors asked of Buddhism were outlined in terms of Christianity in a period of modernisation. This was then adopted the protestant emphasis on text, personal experience and social activism (McMahan, 2004). In this way also the Western narrative of modernity got reconfigured and incorporated into the Buddhist narratives (McMahan, 2004).

McMahan (2008) argues that this representation is very important to Buddhist reforms in Asia as it has made the discourse of scientific Buddhism in the late twentieth century not only more voluminous but also far more sophisticated. In the last few decades, Buddhism has come to be seen more as a science and many popular books have addressed the subject of aligning science with Buddhism (Austin, 1998, 2006; Dalai Lama 2005; Davidson and Harrington, 2001; Goleman, 2003a; Hayward 1987; Hayward and Varela 1992; Wallace, 2007).

This reform has also produced a number of experimental studies in relation to scientific Buddhism, although McMahan (2008) believes that there is still bias in acknowledging the science of Buddhism which contrasts with Protestant Buddhism's faith. For example, McMahan discusses the theosophical Buddhism of Olcott (a founder of the Theosophical Movement and one of the first Americans to formally become a Buddhist) and Olcott's science (p. 97-101). Here he mentions Olcott's statement that "we [Buddhists] do not believe in miracles" and further provides references to Olcott's rejection of iddhi. For example, Olcott claims that the bhikkhu in the tale who makes his body appear as three hundred identical bodies was using his mental powers to impress an

image on the mind of the viewer and did not actually create other physical bodies for himself (Olcott, 1881, p. 115-118). In another passage Olcott states that human beings do in fact have "latent powers for the production of phenomena commonly called 'miracles' " but these are "natural, not supernatural" (p. 119-20). Prothero (1996) argues that Olcott's interpretation of Buddhism was highly influenced by his Theosophical worldview and the long tradition of alternative American spirituality that affirmed the existence and the value of clairvoyance, faith healings and communications with the dead and with the mysterious mahatmas (p. 108).

McMahan (2008) believes that Olcott aligned Buddhism with modern rationalisation by implicitly criticising orthodox Christianity, and also went beyond conventional science. Still, Olcott's rejection of miracles in Buddhism, and the scientism and rationalisation underlying his explanations are highly influenced by existing Western culture. Therefore, it is important to revisit the original Buddhist source to make sense of this literature with an open-minded and perhaps more unbiased view.

This makes a clear point that there is a cultural bias in the understanding of the Buddhist traditions of Western scholars. This has been rightly pointed out in a book edited by Donald Lopez, Jr: *Curators of the Buddha: The Study of Buddhism Under Colonialism*. In one of the papers on colonialism, Hallisey (1995) raises concerns about difficulties in developing the 'insights of Orientalism'. His paper centres on the Theravada tradition and argues that the discourses about Buddhism reflect not only the Orient but also the Victorian world (p. 31, 32). He also raises issues regarding the translation of the Pāli Canon and confirms that the student of Theravada Buddhism has no access to translations later than that of Rhys Davids (the founder of the Pāli Text Society). Almond

(1988) described a process of translating and inserting textual attitudes as "textualization" whereby the essence of Buddhism came to be seen as expressed 'out there' (possibly comprehending Buddhist teaching by this process but ideologically controlled by West). However, in the West, this essence has the authority of Buddhism's textual past. As Almond explains, "Through the West's progressive possession of the texts of Buddhism, it becomes, so to say, materially owned by the West; and by virtue of this ownership, ideologically controlled by it" (p. 24). This allowed Westerners to "combine a positive evaluation of a Buddhism textually located in the West with a negative evaluation of its Eastern instances" (p. 37). After discussing more translation-related concerns regarding the West and Orientalism, Hallisey (1995) points out in his paper that there was something like a productive "elective affinity" between the positivist historiography of European Orientalism and the Buddhist style of self-representation. Overall, this has led to a different style of Buddhism whereby making sense of the true essence of this tradition has become awkward.

The point to make here is that Buddhism as it now stands in the view of the West, including the translation of the Pāli Canon, may not represent Buddhist teachings in its original or true form. Furthermore, the movement of 'Protestant Buddhists' in the West and their affiliation with modernity have significantly neglected the supernatural aspects of Buddhism.

I would like to clarify that I do not make any assumption that there is an authentic or pure form of Buddhism which can be traced. The discussion above rather focuses on elaborating how the tradition is transformed. This transformation is not only a Western imposition, but it is reflected in the east (in Burma, Thailand, and Sri Lanka) to modernise

– the transformation of Buddhism into a 'mind science'. Crosby (2020) emphasises this point in her book '*Esoteric Theravada': The Story of the Forgotten Meditation Tradition of Southeast Asia*'. According to Crosby (2020), social and political shifts in Southeast Asia emphasised textual study, scientific rationalism and commonsense understanding of texts and eventually gradually superseded *Borān Kammaṭṭhāna* (the old meditation practices). The widespread practices that we see today are a testament to works accomplished by important activists who revived and popularised meditation by often focusing on texts from the early centuries of Buddhism. This has also spread throughout the Theravada region of mainland Southeast Asia and Sri Lanka, and across the world after European colonialism (Crosby, 2020).

In this section, I have pointed out the ways in which colonialism has affected the Buddhist outlook and why Buddhologists' research to date have not considered paranormal phenomena extensively.

3.8   Theravada Buddhism's Contribution to Parapsychology

In this subsection of the thesis, I will be evaluating the core concept that contributes to the Theravada Buddhist understanding of parapsychology and its contribution to this discipline. In their article, Walpola, Walpola, Walpola, and Toneatto (2017) discuss the implications of Theravada Buddhism and propose a model that could explain the functioning of the mind on the basis of Theravadin outlooks. In order to do that, Walpola et al. (2017) conducted a literature review. The investigators explained the concept of mental proliferation and discussed the significance of clinging and craving to the concept of higher knowledge and psi powers. They also expanded on the topic by validating the

hypothesis that there are five key aggregates (Pāli: *skandha*) of the world that are personally formed by each given individual (consciousness, form/matter, perception, sensation, and mental formations). Another important idea discussed by Walpola et al. (2017) was that Buddhism is based on a number of contemplative traditions that could facilitate the internal investigation of psi phenomena. From my perspective, Theravada Buddhism practices, like that of the purification of mind, allow practitioners to cultivate certain abilities that are mentioned in Pāli sutta texts from the Pāli Canon, which is the main scripture of the Theravada tradition (for more details see section 5.1 and 5.2). Walpola et al. (2017) were able to process Theravada Buddhist texts and design a model that could explain the functioning of our mind by means of the concept of careful attention. These findings can be supported by the fact that the willingness to realise how the mind works and the ways in which we create our own suffering are the two key goals of meditation practice (Walpola et al., 2017). The authors of the article also propose a visual representation of the functioning of the mind which represents the causal relations and processes operating in the brain. Overall, the Buddhist concept of contact (Pāli: *phassa*) was perceived as one of the key features of the mind because it paves the way for the cognitive flow of mental phenomena that can also be regarded as psi (Walpola et al., 2017). In Theravada Buddhism, the notion of contact is also called a gateway that one should approach with the right mindfulness and awareness in order to be exposed to psychic phenomena. It also states that the concept of careful attention is different from mindfulness. Any practitioner should be skilful at the necessary moment if they want to demonstrate the right mindfulness (Walpola et al., 2017).

Walpola et al. (2017) emphasise that even personal practice can be used as a supportive tool in terms of studying the Buddhist roots of parapsychology and the connections between Theravada Buddhism and psi phenomena. I support this idea that mental processes that occur in our minds have to be assessed either through our personal experiences or research on sutta texts. This may be necessary in order to free ourselves from suffering, as the latter is one of the core concepts of Buddhism. These findings implicitly hint at the fact that I will have to apply the concept of careful attention in order to be able to get rid of ignorance (which is the cause of misery according to the Buddha) and free myself of the suffering that can be generated in the mind. Then, I will have the ability to investigate the mental processes discussed in Theravada Buddhism and evaluate the impact of contact on the occurrence of psi phenomena. These insights will have to be addressed in real-time because otherwise, I will not be able to perceive the information contained in the Pāli Canon correctly. Based on this, I can hypothesise that in order to elicit psi abilities the eradication of suffering is one of the important steps. At the level of the concept of contact, experienced Buddhist practitioners stop their cognitive processes in order to lessen the burden of suffering and clear the mind. Therefore, I, as the author of the thesis, believe that the practical application of Theravada Buddhism concepts may be helpful within the framework of the current research project. Walpola et al. (2017) also shared the idea that Theravada Buddhism pays special attention to extinguishing suffering at its source so as not to let suffering interfere with the possibility of higher knowledge (such as psychic abilities). Based on Walpola et al.'s (2017) ideas, I can also conclude that the underpinnings of human mental activity have to be entirely understood while addressing the incidences of psychic powers mentioned in the Pāli

Canon. The model outlined by Walpola et al. (2017) can be considered as one of the most useful instruments in the achievement of this objective. This subsection discussed Theravada Buddhism's approach to psi. It can be concluded that the Pāli Canon (the main written source of Theravada Buddhism) should be investigated further to investigate reported cases of psychic abilities.

Another reason for using the Pāli Canon in the framework of this thesis will be, as far as Buddhist academics are concerned, that we do not have any separate collections of the writings on psychic powers that are found in the Pāli Canon except for one book written by Nyanaponika Thera (2003). In this book (*The Great Disciples of the Buddha*) I found only one separate chapter dedicated to psychic powers, and that is written on Mahamogallana, who is considered as a master-disciple of psychic powers. When I conducted the review of the Pāli Canon as part of my research (section 4.9.2) it was suggested that there are many more examples of psychic phenomenon that could be found within the Pāli Canon but lack of attempts to accumulate them on behalf of Buddhist academics to date opens up the possibility of further research in this area.

The above section evaluates the approach of Theravada Buddhism to the parapsychological realm. The main source of Theravada Buddhism is the Pāli Canon which is a major source of information on dealing with different aspects of mind from the Buddhist perspective. The refinement of human consciousness by following the three conducts – *Shila* (precepts), *Samadhi* (concentration of mind) and *Prajna* (purification of mind) is explained widely in the Pāli Canon. The noble eightfold path for the purification of mind and the concepts of merits (Pāli – *parami*) is also extensively dealt with. Therefore, the Pāli Canon constitutes the main source material for this research. I will

discuss the Pāli Canon in detail in chapter Five and report my findings. The literature review up to now has demonstrated the need to proceed towards establishing a suitable methodology so that a suitable method of analysing the data in the Pāli Canon will be identified, and a complete analysis of the connections between the Pāli Canon and parapsychology can be undertaken.

3.9   Recap

In this chapter, I begin by focusing on the experimental work of parapsychologists. The reason was to investigate parapsychologists' understanding of eastern tradition and draw parallels. This made the point that psi may occur spontaneously or can be elicited deliberately by achieving psi-conducive states and that parapsychologists are making serious efforts to understand this phenomenon from various angles, including through the understanding of Eastern traditions.

By focusing on the work of influential parapsychologists such as Charles Honorton (section 3.1) and Serena Roney-Dougal (section 3.3) I have demonstrated how their thinking and their research designs reflect an understanding of psi phenomena that is grounded in the meditative traditions of the East, particularly in Buddhism. However, in scrutinising their understanding of Buddhist accounts of paranormal powers, I concluded that their understanding was relatively shallow and lacked much of the subtlety of the original texts. There is also a concern that their accounts are selective rather than being representative of these texts as a whole. I further also engage in more research from parapsychologists with eastern traditions and raise concern that both parapsychologists

and Buddhist academicians have not engaged fully in psi investigation with early Buddhist Theravada tradition.

Most importantly in the section on the modernist trend of western Buddhist scholars in Theravada Buddhism, I discovered that the movement of 'Protestant Buddhists' in the West and their affiliation with modernity has entirely neglected the supernatural aspects of Buddhism. I have also pointed out the ways in which colonialism has affected the Buddhist outlook and why Buddhologists' research to date have not considered paranormal phenomena extensively. This further justifies the lack and need for parapsychological research with Theravada tradition.

To conclude, parapsychologists are very keen to investigate psi by researching meditation as a psi-conducive state. However, they also show few parallel understandings of Buddhist concepts such as awakening states, calm states, and so forth. It can therefore be argued that scrutiny on the Pāli Canon's is very important in order to fully explore so that a firm conclusion can be made regarding the Theravadin understanding of psi. To do this, it is necessary to identify a suitable methodology for further investigation into this source, which I will discuss in the next chapter.

4   Chapter IV Methodology

The Introduction and Chapter One identified the need for a more thorough exposition of the description and explanation of iddhis as they appear in sacred texts of the Pāli Canon to establish whether these are consistent with parapsychologists' characterisations. This provides the impetus in this chapter to establish a methodology by which the outlined research aims can be addressed. The aim is to systematically review the instances of iddhis in the Pāli Canon with the help of proper methodology which will enable exploration of the types and frequencies of iddhis. I would also want to identify any necessary or sufficient conditions or circumstances that seem conducive to iddhis. Therefore, in this chapter, I will consider methods that might be capable of achieving these aims.

This chapter will identify the best empirical strategy for addressing the research aims that have already been described in the thesis. I will also justify the choice of methodology throughout this chapter.

From the perspectives identified in the literature that I will review in this chapter, I will demonstrate to readers that the method of content analysis is an adequate tool that can be used in the current research project to synthesise psi events from the Pāli Canon. The first objective of this chapter is to provide evidence for the efficacy of the content analysis methodology. It will also be necessary to determine whether any pragmatic conclusions can be made based on the content analysis of the Pāli Canon. A further objective is to produce a systematic or in-depth review of the preliminary findings from the Pāli Canon.

There are three key steps that I will follow to achieve the two objectives outlined above.

- First, I will determine an appropriate strategy to collect the data from the Pāli Canon so as to compare iddhis with parapsychologists' understanding of psi.

- Second, I will conduct an in-depth study of Theravadin Buddhism's Pāli Canon and the incidences of psi phenomena therein. The aim of this is to facilitate the process of content analysis and help to understand the concept of psychic powers better.

- Third, I will identify several common themes and concepts in the Pāli Canon that can contribute to the understanding of psi abilities. This requires an appropriate methodology, and I am going to justify the choice of content analysis by explaining its advantages over other possible methodologies. The identification of common themes is a considerable challenge and needs to be carefully addressed. Through this process, I expect to evaluate the Pāli Canon, which is a necessary part of the research project.

4.1   Aims and Objectives

I have concentrated on the three key aims and objectives so as to organise the findings of this study. The first objective is to collect, synthesise, and analyse the data that will be found in the Pāli Canon regarding the occurrence of psychic powers. This part of the research will be done systematically. The second objective is to introduce the content analysis method so as to compare and contrast the obtained data appropriately.

The last objective outlined is the justification of content analysis. The latter is important because the content analysis is not always the main analytic approach and I aim to make the best use of this particular methodology.

4.2   Brief Rationale for Data Analysis

After the process of data collection from the Pāli Canon, it will be necessary to analyse the obtained data and approach the materials from both academic and systematic perspectives. Therefore, I will be keen to implement several research techniques that will contribute to the research process in a number of ways. First of all, the obtained content will become subject to both qualitative and quantitative analyses using a systematic approach to the data contained in the Pāli Canon. However, I am more interested in the qualitative aspect because the pre-eminent goal is to understand the nature of psi as presented in the Buddhist Pāli Canon. Second, I will gain access to certain information contained in the Canon that relates to psi. Third, I will be able to categorise the results of the research and identify the patterns and themes that can serve as codes. Fourth, this methodology will be beneficial in terms of answering the research question and contributing to the chosen field of study with the use of significant evidence. Here, it is possible to argue that content analysis can be considered to be one of the best research methods for summarising a body of data and reaching pertinent conclusions. The information regarding the method of content analysis is provided later in this chapter (see section 4.5). However, before justifying this choice properly several other methodologies should be discussed in order to give an overview of the analytic process along with its advantages and disadvantages.

The researcher is required to select a methodology that will serve as a data reduction tool. Therefore, in order to investigate the occurrence of psi in the Pāli Canon texts, I will have to find an unobtrusive methodology that can easily manage large volumes of text. At the same time, the methodology will have to be more than a mere word frequency count because there are numerous limitations (discussed in section 4.10) that will not allow me to develop the necessary knowledge base from the existing Pāli Canon. It is also critical to point out any flaws that could seriously damage the usefulness of the findings. This led me to the conclusion that there is a need to compare the advantages and disadvantages of two alternative approaches for analytic reviewing of literature, in order to better justify the choice of content analysis. These two alternative approaches are the literature review methodology and the systematic review methodology.

The purpose of qualitative research is to provide unbiased and reliable information in a format that is relevant and meaningful to the target audience (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Quantitative research attempts to provide an objective investigation in a controlled environment whereas qualitative research is by definition subjective in nature. Qualitative researchers examine this subjective experience to explore common themes and extract the information from language, behaviours and implied meaning that is expressed in everyday life (Kruth, 2015). Qualitative researchers utilize a variety of methods to gather, analyse, and report on information that enhances the quality of research in the social sciences.

In this section, I will first elaborate on possible types of methods which are available for qualitative analysis, namely literature review, systematic review, grounded theory and thematic analysis. I will discuss their advantages and disadvantages first and then justify

the selection of content analysis as the most valuable approach. I will also explore the

parapsychological literature to identify previously used methods of qualitative analysis.

This will help me to determine the best approach for engaging with the Pāli Canon

analysis.

4.3   Advantages and Disadvantages of Different Qualitative Methodologies

4.3.1   Literature Review Methodology

First, I am going to consider the characteristics of the literature review method.

Here the Pāli Canon is the source of literature that I would intend to describe using the

literature review method. The literature review serves as a critical part of a research

proposal that suggests research methods and research hypotheses. Literature reviews

can be a strong starting point for a particular area or topic of interest which does not

necessarily have to be the researcher's own work. In this light, it can also serve as a

methodology. Therefore, it can comprise valuable and original research work in and of

itself (Paré et al., 2015). This method usually has six stages: formulating the research

question and objective, searching the literature, screening for inclusion, assessing the

quality of primary studies, extracting data and finally analysing data (Tamplier & Paré,

2015). Therefore, there may be quite a few advantages identified that can have a

significant impact on the process of research on the Pāli Canon and instances of psi. One

of the key aspects of literature reviews that can be advantageous for the existing research

project is the possibility of obtaining a clear idea of what is included in the Pāli Canon in

relation to psi (Levy & Ellis, 2006). On the one hand, this may be helpful because the

information contained in the Pāli texts may generate further research questions and

discussions. On the other hand, there is also the concept of cost-efficiency that seriously affects the amount of time spent on looking for resources (Webster & Watson, 2002). In the case of the Pāli Canon, no other work is widely available on the subject of psi content, as far as this resource is concerned. The biggest advantage of literature reviews is the ability to learn through conducting them. On a larger scale, this means that I would be able to critique the literature on the Pāli Canon and conceptualize the identified textual data on psi. By doing this, I will be able to develop new research findings and contribute to the knowledge regarding the Pāli Canon. In addition to this, literature reviews also offer the possibility of examining methodological assumptions. The use of literature review methodology presupposes that the researcher has to have certain knowledge in the field in order to be able to conduct all-inclusive literature reviews that disclose new information.

There are also several disadvantages of literature reviews that will have to be taken into account for the current research. First, I do not have online access to certain Pāli Canon texts therefore the data will be scanned by hand (see section 4.10 for more on this topic). This has a significant impact on the time spent processing data and identifying pivotal points in the literature. Knowing that literature reviews are typically divided into several stages, it is safe to say that the time spent on a literature review may vary considerably (Cronin, Ryan, & Coughlan, 2008). Considering the size of the Pāli Canon, a great deal of time may be needed to identify all the necessary points required. The lack of online access to information may lead to unnecessary resource expenditures (such as time searching for reviews and primary sources, which in the Pāli Canon case are not available) (Boote & Beile, 2005). After all, a comprehensive literature review could become a concrete focus for the research on the Pāli Canon. The transition of the Pāli

texts from the library to the research project may be rather complex. Collecting a lot of different information may paralyse the research project because of the lack of focus and unrewarding research directions (Randolph, 2009). The use of the literature review methodology may be disadvantageous because it may lack focus throughout the whole research process. The information contained in the Pāli Canon may be hard to conceptualise. The latter presents a particular challenge for me as a researcher because there will be a need to evaluate extensive cross-sections of the Pāli Canon texts (Jesson, Matheson & Lacey, 2011). This means that to evaluate all of the sections in the Pāli Canon, I cannot have an all-inclusive view but rather a focused view with a set objective while reviewing. To conclude, the aim of the methodology within this project is to understand the nature of psi as presented in the Pāli Canon by doing the analysis of information already contained in the Pāli Canon rather than an overall review of literature on the Pāli Canon. The literature review methodology does not, therefore, seem suitable for the intended purpose. The literature review methodology can be considered an overall approach rather than an approach specific to dealing with the instances of psi in the Pāli Canon, so I decided to investigate the advantages and disadvantages of the methodology of systematic review so as to evaluate its suitability for the current study.

4.3.2 Systematic Review Methodology

This subsection of the thesis is devoted to an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of systematic reviews that can be either beneficial or damaging to the existing research project. One of the most important benefits associated with systematic reviews is that the guidelines of the research process are relatively easy to follow

(Tranfield, Denyer, & Smart, 2003). At the same time, this research methodology can be seen as one of the best ways to improve methodological transparency. This leads the researcher to the idea that systematic reviews may elicit the opportunity to replicate certain findings in the future (Popay, Rogers, & Williams, 1998). Systematic reviews may also significantly contribute to the process of eradicating research bias by means of peer review. Within the framework of the current project, this may create a comparatively objective baseline that will support future research on the concept of psi in the Pāli Canon. I will be able to evaluate the level of knowledge contribution and possibly prove the necessity of studying the psi incidences that can be found in the Pāli Canon. Compared to classic literature reviews, the systematic review method has a number of advantages. First, the principles of systematic reviews are much more sensitive (Khan, Kuntz, Kleijnen, & Antes, 2003). This has a direct impact on the transparency and breadth of the study. A systematic review may be used within the framework of the current research because it minimises the level of implicit researcher bias and encourages the researcher to develop a more critical view of the evidence. However, in the case of the Pāli Canon, a systematic review may be problematic to apply for a number of different practical reasons.

The three issues that may have the greatest impact on the research process are searching, transmitting, and synthesising (Manolov, Guilera, & Solanas, 2017). In order to be able to conduct a successful systematic review of the Pāli Canon, I have to have access to an extensive number of peer-reviewed journals and database entries. However, this may be problematic, as it is difficult to identify an acceptable number of sources that contain information regarding the Pāli Canon and psi. The evidence that expects to use may be difficult to obtain but systematic reviews are still making a positive contribution to

the process of evidence building. Yet, the problem of the breadth of the study remains because information regarding the Pāli Canon and instances of psi therein cannot be found through peer-reviewed channels only. Even though the use of a systematic review may disclose the gap in research, this has already been identified and therefore, the objective of the study has to be achieved by means of methods other than a systematic review (Lichtenstein, Yetley, & Lau, 2008). Moreover, the use of a systematic review may be subject to researcher bias because the researcher may lack particular knowledge of a subject or be constrained by time or resources. In the case of the Pāli Canon, this can seriously limit the number of studies that can contribute to the understanding of psi and help me to close the knowledge gap. Also, considering the low number of studies on the Pāli Canon, a systematic review can become inconsistent. This may lead to a situation in which the findings will be too broad to take them into consideration and too research-oriented to close the gap in research (Pullin & Stewart, 2006). In addition, the quality of reviewed studies may have an effect on the methodological consistency of the current research; the problem consists in the fact that the review of the Pāli Canon may become too resource-intensive with time. I will be exposed to the problem of conducting a systematic review that is overly time-consuming and demanding (Bearman et al., 2012). In order to obtain relevant findings regarding the Pāli Canon, an enormous array of data will have to be reviewed. In the case of a systematic review, the size of that array is even bigger because there should be a definite protocol that supports the process of each review. Consequently, each of the identified sources will have to be evaluated with excessive thoroughness and the original anticipation in terms of the time that will be spent on the project is likely to be violated (Harden et al., 2004). To conclude, the use of a

systematic review in the case of addressing the Pāli Canon is an over-specific and resource-intensive task that may not exceed or even meet my expectations in terms of the breadth of this research project. This raises the idea that it may be necessary to come up with another option for the current research project that would combine the best points of literature reviews and systematic reviews. Given this, I chose to use the content analysis method. In the next subsection 4.5, I will describe the content analysis and the ways in which it can benefit the study from several different perspectives. Before this, in order to justify the choice of content analysis, I will look at the methods of thematic analysis and grounded theory and address their advantages and disadvantages, and I will also consider other forms of qualitative analysis used in parapsychology.

4.3.3 Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis is another type of qualitative methodology that can be used to investigate the nature of psi phenomena and address the underlying parapsychological concepts that can be found in the Pāli Canon. One of the main strengths of this method is the fact that it does not require the researcher to possess any technical knowledge or particular hypothetical details (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Nonetheless, this simplistic view may critically damage the validity of the data found in the Pāli Canon and turn the analysis into a series of unconvincing facts. One of the key contributors to the development of this weakness is the inability to narrow down the themes found in the data and remove any inconsistency caused by lack of coherence (Boyatzis, 1998). The problem with the use of thematic analysis within the framework of the Pāli Canon also relates to the idea that there should be a single main concept that will support the whole process of data analysis.

This is impossible within the framework of the current research because all the content has to be aligned against several themes that cannot be unified for the reason that they will provide me with more relevant findings when being treated separately (Guest, MacQueen, & Namey, 2011). Even though the use of thematic analysis may have positive aspects, I am not certain that it will help me to provide a description of the desired psi phenomena that will be rich enough and appropriately interpreted. Moreover, thematic analysis works best in the analysis of people's experiences. In the case of the Pāli Canon, I am only dealing with textual data, for which, content analysis is the best. In addition, there will always be shortcomings relating to the language that is used throughout the process of data analysis. Thematic analysis is a powerful tool, but it cannot be used for the Pāli Canon as it will limit me in terms of investigating particular phenomena while paving the way for a more generalised approach that will not help me to answer the research questions regarding the notion of psi phenomena as they appear in the Pāli Canon.

4.3.4 Grounded Theory

One of the methods that can also be used to investigate the psi phenomena found in the Pāli Canon is grounded theory. In this subsection, I will investigate its key features and decide whether it can be useful in terms of the future analysis of the Pāli Canon when compared to other methodologies (Charmaz & Belgrave, 2007). Given that the previous research projects in the area did not attract enough attention from Buddhist scholars, grounded theory can be successfully used as an exploratory method that will add more depth to the existing information on the subject. Also, it may help in terms of identifying a

number of other perspectives that may lead to the discovery of other points of view and promising topics of discussion (Strauss and Corbin, 2007). Grounded theory is based on the conditional nature of practice and that may be helpful if I decide to investigate the nature of psi knowledge and other related topics. Nonetheless, as a researcher, I may face a situation in which I am limited by contradictions generated by the methodology of grounded theory. For instance, it should be noted that grounded theory only works when the events that take place are taken into consideration. There are also several other disadvantages. One of them is the probable unsuitability of this method for the interpretation of the data that will be acquired from the Pāli Canon (Charmaz, 2014). This will consequently lead to a failure in terms of embedding the process of investigation. Another weakness of this method consists in the fact that grounded theory produces large data sets that may cause issues in terms of data management. This leads me to the conclusion that the identification of categories and the level of necessary research skills may turn grounded theory into an unusable methodology that will not contribute to the study of psi phenomena and the Pāli Canon.

4.4   Parapsychologists' Accounts of Using Qualitative Research

Parapsychologists have used various qualitative methods in the past. John Kruth (2015) lists five qualitative research methods and their application in parapsychology. The qualitative approaches that he outlines are narratives, case studies, phenomenology, grounded theory and ethnographies. He further says that all these research types described provide an opportunity for parapsychologists to explore psi utilizing methods

that are not typically employed in the laboratory environment. These methods are also very common in social science research.

Narratives are related to biographies and historical information. For example, Mauskopf and McVaugh's (1980) *The Elusive Science* reviews the origin of parapsychological laboratory research, and Louisa Rhine's (1967) *ESP in Life and Lab* provides a clear narrative of the Duke parapsychology laboratory along with other insights. In the case of the Pāli Canon, the accounts are neither related to biographies nor something that can be considered historical. Thus, this approach will not be useful.

Case studies are based on the exploration of a bounded system from multiple perspectives. The case is the object of the study, and that case may be an individual, an event, or a series of events clearly bounded and differentiated from other events. (Kruth, 2015). Kruth (2015) emphasises that case studies are very helpful for analysing the experiences of mediums or investigating the reported cases of anomalous activities, such as haunting, apparitions, etc. Data collection in the case study typically includes multiple sources, including interviews, observations, artefacts and documents. In the case of the Pāli Canon, it is the only source of data on iddhi used for this research. So, the case studies method may be helpful.

Phenomenology is aimed at understanding the essence of experience. The major methods of phenomenological analysis are the Empirical Phenomenological method described by Giorgi (1985) and the Transcendental Phenomenology of Moustakas (1994). Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) is also a very popular phenomenological method that has often been used by parapsychologists (e.g., Drinkwater, Dagnall, & Bate, 2013; Rock et al., 2013; Roxburgh & Roe, 2013; Wilde &

Murray, 2010). IPA researchers approach experiences in context and recognize that no experience can be understood without first recognizing that the experience is being interpreted by an individual (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). Kruth (2015) states that while IPA is a very popular approach to qualitative analysis, it is by no means the best way to study the paranormal because each situation must be evaluated individually, and the appropriate approach must be selected for each situation. This can make it difficult to make the sense of the data as a whole.

Grounded theory is concerned with analysing data in order to develop theory. The problem being addressed focuses on the creation of the theory rather than a description of an experience or an exploration of a specific case. Data collection for grounded theory research must be broad in nature and include interviews with numerous participants, typically 20–60 people. (Kruth, 2015). In the case of the Pāli Canon, it is not a collection of interview data. Thus, the grounded theory will not be the best approach. Besides, creating a theory is not the aim of my data collection; I am aiming to make sense of all the data.

Similarly, ethnographic research is aimed at describing a shared cultural phenomenon experienced by a group and exemplified by patterns of behaviour or attitudes within a culture. Data collection in an ethnographical study is typically done through observation and interviews (Kruth, 2015). This research method is commonly used in parapsychological research and Kruth (2015) states that there are many opportunities for ethnographical research within parapsychology. However, studying the cultural aspect is not the goal of my data collection thus, this method cannot be applied to the Pāli Canon analysis.

The above discussion informs the need to utilising different methods by which the research aim shall be addressed properly. Roe and Linnett (2017) have recently used the method of content analysis on the Alister Hardy collection which was based on the religious experience. They have taken selected samples from over 6,000 firsthand accounts archived by the Alister Hardy Religious Experience Research Centre and analysed them using sophisticated and sensitive coding systems of content analysis for developing and considering the details and circumstances of the experiences. This research further emphasises the critical importance of experimental designs that are robust enough to accurately capture the reported phenomena. L. Rhine (see section 2.7) has very much pioneered its use in parapsychology (without directly naming it content analysis). She looked at a large number of cases. (Haight & Weiner, 1983). The same has been utilised effectively by Elendur Haraldsson (2012) with his studies of apparitions and healing. He sought an answer to his question, " Have you ever been aware of the presence of a deceased person?" he conducted this extensive survey with over 450 people who reported with a yes for this question. For this large collection, he has utilised the content analysis (without naming it) very effectively. Haraldsson's work in parapsychology has covered many areas such as surveys, individual case studies, the examination of historical cases and experiments. Around 1974 in Iceland, Haraldsson conducted a large-scale (N = 902) representative survey of psychic and religious experiences, various folk beliefs and beliefs in such phenomena (Haraldsson, 1985).

In conclusion, parapsychologists have used several qualitative methodologies, however, for large textual and religious work, the method content analysis has been utilised successfully. Thus, in the next section, I have referred to the method of content

analysis to address its value and how it can benefit the study from several different perspectives.

4.5   Content Analysis

4.5.1   What is Content Analysis

When data is collected from a number of documented sources, the main objective of a researcher is to reduce the amount of information without affecting the quality and reliability of the data (Drisko & Maschi, 2016). A further rationale for data reduction is the necessity of deducing meaning from the obtained data to answer the research questions posed at the beginning of the study. The result of this deduction typically involves the process of analysing evidence. This research methodology is referred to as 'content analysis'. Content analysis can be seen as an umbrella term that includes various strategies used to analyse texts (Powers & Knapp, 2014). On the other hand, content analysis can also be described as a categorising approach to the process of going through large amounts of textual data. While using it to address the Pāli Canon, this action has to be performed in a sensitive manner so as to be able to identify relevant patterns and determine the key trends regarding word usage, relationships among words, frequency of certain word phrases, and the most prevalent structures of communication (Grbich, 2013). In other words, content analysis is useful when it is necessary to evaluate the content of a text document and define the effect of the words and word combinations that can be met in that document (Bloor & Wood, 2006). The concept of content analysis is close to the notion of documentary analysis. The latter presupposes that the analysis of the evidence present in the processed text is an efficient operation. Content analysis is

an important research methodology because it can help the researcher to determine the underlying ideas inherent in the text and compile a number of communications on the basis of these ideas. The first definition of content analysis was provided by Holsti (1969) who believed that this methodology could be perceived as a scientific method that could be applied to textual evidence to point out the core structures comprised in the data. The outcome of content analysis is usually mixed (meaning that it is both qualitative and quantitative) but there may be cases in which the end results are either exclusively qualitative or quantitative (Guthrie, Petty, Yongvanich, & Ricceri, 2004). When the content analysis is done quantitatively, the key focus of the study is the frequency of a particular event. In its qualitative counterpart, the key objective of the study is to address the subjective contents of the reviewed data so as to realise the rationale behind values, interests, and attitudes. As a research methodology, content analysis is one of the best approaches in the academic field because it can be introduced within the framework of any given investigation – be that an analysis of a written text, digital articles, or some kind of digital media (Marks & Yardley, 2004). It is also interesting to note that content analysis can be used when addressing both overt and covert contents of the chosen text. The explicit data relates to the observable elements of the message while the implicit focus on the data that has to be deduced from the existing information blocks. The concept of content analysis can also be closely associated with the substantive and formal features of bodies of textual data. The former typically relate to the information that is conveyed within a particular message. The latter requires the researcher to investigate the way in which the message was communicated (Schreier, 2013). It will be used to record the data that is of interest to the investigator. Fundamentally, the concept of content analysis

presupposes that the researcher has to develop a relevant system of classification of text segments so as to elaborate a structured coding system (Murray, 1956). On the basis of such content analysis, adequate conclusions can be made. To conclude, it can be said that content analysis should be conducted in a way that would make it replicable and allow other academics to reproduce the study. After considering the options described above, I have reached the conclusion that content analysis is the most appropriate methodology for the Pāli Canon analysis primarily because it is very useful for the analysis of textual data and parapsychologists have also utilised this methodology for textual analysis (section 4.4). Secondly, the ability to address the overt and covert nature of psi is necessary to fully understand it. Content analysis helps in this very effectively.

4.5.2 Types of Content Analysis

There are two types of content analysis that are generally distinguished by researchers. They include relational and conceptual analyses. The latter can be perceived as a means of establishing the frequency of occurrence of certain concepts in a definite text. The former is formed based on conceptual analysis because it helps to evaluate the relationships between the concepts that are identified within the given text (Franzosi, 2011). Conceptual analysis is one of the oldest ways to analyse content. When we take a recorded text, we can use conceptual analysis to examine the occurrence of the chosen concept in the text. In order to minimise the possibility of bias and subjectivity throughout the process of concept definition, I will make use of specialised dictionaries (such as a Pāli-English dictionary) (Hansen, 2009). Similarly to any other research method, conceptual analysis is based on the process of identifying research questions

and finding a relevant research sample. As soon as the sample is identified, I will be responsible for coding the text into controllable content categories. I may use the method of selective reduction (this concept is synonymous with the process of coding) (Neuendorf, 2016). Conceptual analysis can be a powerful asset when it is necessary to analyse certain characteristics of the text and interpret them in accordance with the use of pertinent units of information that can be achieved by breaking down the existing content into equivalent parts. One of the basic examples of conceptual analysis is the process of examining a certain text and coding it that relies on the existence of predefined words in the text itself. For this reason, the use of conceptual analysis is more appropriate for the purpose of analysing the Pāli Canon. One of the most popular approaches to this type of content analysis is the examination of both positive and negative arguments related to the research question (Weber, 2008). This is done in order to describe the status of the issue. Therefore, my key concern will be to identify and analyse the relationships between the words in order to quantify them. The relationships between words are obviously addressed by means of relational analysis. Conceptual analysis is based on the idea that the researcher's objective is to examine the occurrence of positive and negative words that can either validate or refute their research question in terms of a specific argument (West, 2001). The relational analysis depends on conceptual analysis because the former has to have access to the words and concepts in order to analyse them. Similarly to other types of research, the initial decision to study a certain area always affects the options available to the researcher. Within the framework of relational analysis, it is crucial to first identify the concepts to be analysed. The number of concepts that can be included in a relational analysis may include from one to five hundred concept

categories (Cole, 1988). One has to always take into consideration the possible limitations

of the number of categories because too many categories may overload the research

results while too few categories may generate untrustworthy outcomes and unacceptable

conclusions. Accordingly, the coding procedure that is applied within the framework of

this research will have to take into account my needs as a researcher, and the context of

the investigation. Due to its flexibility, relational analysis became one of the most popular

techniques for all kinds of research (Vaismoradi, Turunen, & Bondas, 2013). Nonetheless,

the comparison among samples can only be made after the procedure is meticulously

tested. The process of relational analysis is fairly resource-intensive in terms of the time

spent on the analysis (regardless of computer automation that significantly affects the

process). Some of the benefits of using relational analysis include its statistical

consistency and the high level of detailisation in comparison to other qualitative methods.

I decided that the conceptual model of content analysis would be the primary method

used to investigate the Pāli Canon because while doing content analysis my goal is to

understand the concepts that relate to the psi. In the later stages, this will also help me to

reveal the relationships among the concepts.

4.5.3 Advantages and Disadvantages of Content Analysis

The major benefit associated with content analysis is that it becomes possible for

me as a researcher to make use of the discrete means and measures (in the form of

available literature) for collecting information or data regarding my research questions

(Hennink, Hutter, & Bailey, 2011). It will help me to distinguish the presence of concepts,

theories, and facts hidden in the texts. It can also allow me to conduct both qualitative

and quantitative operations. The analysis can also reveal valuable insights. Another advantage of content analysis is that it will help me to identify the communication trends. I will be able to discuss behavioural responses to the latter and outline attitudinal trends based on this information within the Pāli Canon. According to Morgan (1993), content analysis can determine the individual or group's emotional and psychological state. This is important in relation to the Pāli Canon analysis as, while understanding the nature of psi, the context of incidents as presented should be understood, and content analysis will help in this approach. Another advantage is the ability for me as a researcher to gain a better understanding of the models of human thought. When the content analysis is done correctly, it can be exceptionally precise. One of the biggest advantages associated with content analysis is the fact that I will not be obliged to contact any person directly. In the case of the Pāli Canon, I am dealing with textual data, but it is important to mention it, as the undesirable impact on the outcome of the investigation is negligible. However, there are several disadvantages of conceptual analysis which may have critical implications for the current study.

One of the key disadvantages of the method of content analysis is that there are numerous issues related to the difficulty of obtaining suitable evidence while going through the available sources of information. In addition to that, I will have to ensure that the data is genuine so as not to negatively affect the validity and reliability of the content available within the framework of the Pāli Canon. A further disadvantage is a fact that usually, the researcher is limited to the information regarding the events that had already occurred (Altheide, 2013). This means that I will have to investigate the Pāli Canon only on the basis of events included in these texts. Another disadvantage associated with

content analysis is that this methodology is purely descriptive. It can describe the available content and information regarding what is available in the data, but this method does not contextualise original motives or intentions relating to the patterns which are being observed. In the case of the Pāli Canon, I will have to draw out similar themes or codes while doing the analysis of psi occurrences. Without understanding the original context behind the psi incidences as presented, it may be challenging for me to address the process of content analysis thoroughly.

Also, content analysis is always limited to the available material from the resources. Therefore, I have to rely on the Pāli Canon itself which does not give enable me to obtain help from other sources. While doing this, I have to make relevant coding and at the same time produce categories that need analysis. If the coding is not right, then the findings will become invalid. The coding of psi incidences in the Pāli Canon will need careful categorization. By taking these disadvantages into account I will be aware of the need to be careful while performing actual content analysis.

4.6   The Process of Content Analysis

According to Elo and Kyngas (2008), the process of content analysis consists of three steps (see Table 2.1). Completing the analysis while adhering to the steps presented below may significantly facilitate my efforts. I aimed to review the whole process of content analysis here and explain how it can help review the Pāli Canon in the search for instances of psi occurrences.

Table 4.1 Process of content analysis

Preparation	Being immersed in the data and obtaining a sense of the whole, selecting the unit of analysis, deciding on the analysis of manifest content or latent content.
Organising	Open coding and creating categories, grouping codes under higher-order headings, formulating a general description of the research topic through generating categories and subcategories as abstracting.
Reporting	Reporting the analysing process and the results through models, conceptual systems, conceptual map or categories, and a storyline.

Figure 4.1 Graphic representation of content analysis
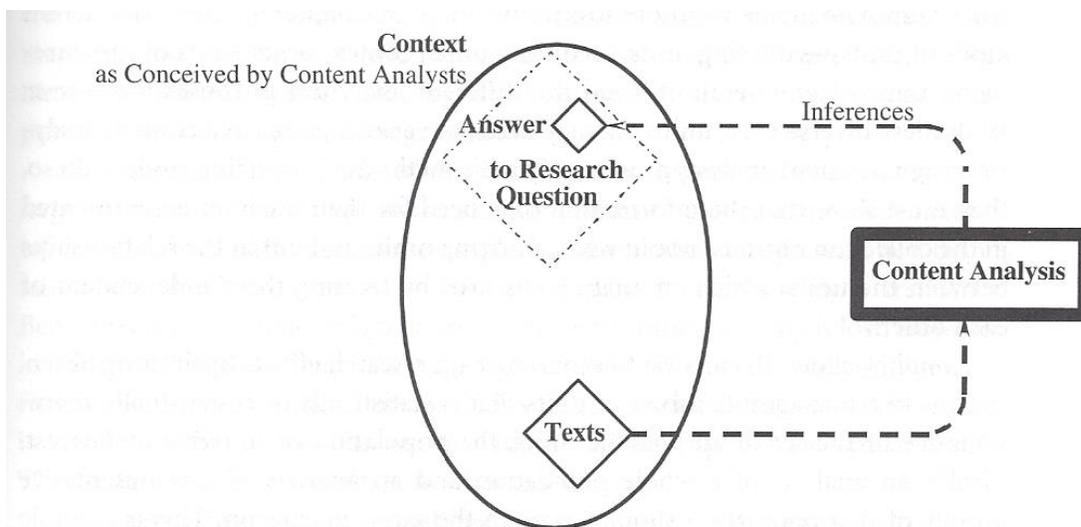
The process of observation was theorised by Krippendorff (2013). He also produced one of the simplest models for content analysis (see Figure 4.1). By means of the figure presented above, I expect to provide a brief explanation of the content analysis methodology that will be employed within the framework of the current thesis. The texts that will be analysed are all related to the Pāli Canon developed by Buddhists. The process of content analysis will be connected to relevant parapsychology studies. Out of all the extrapolations which can be drawn here, I point out that there are numerous dimensions and contextualisation areas that can be utilised within the framework of the current content analysis (Stemler, 2015). Consequently, one of my objectives is to generate answers to research questions by the analysis of psi in the Pāli Canon. In order to do this, I have to rely on the texts of the Pāli Canon in English (see section 3.2). Even though the diagram above (Figure 4.1) shows the data input and output of the research project, there are numerous additional steps that have to be fulfilled in order for the investigator to come up with relevant analytical content analysis, according to Krippendorff (2013). The first step is to unitise the data; this means that I will have to count the descriptions of the units that have previously been identified (this is discussed in more detail later in this section). Another aspect of efficient content analysis is coding: this means that I will have to comply with the instructions specified during the first step. This step typically occurs when I have to list my experiences via an analysis of the observed elements. The process of coding usually transpires when the observer-independent rule is followed (Krippendorff, 2013). As is evident from the name of the procedure, this provides different codes that will allow me to sort the initial data which is expected to provide answers to the research questions posed earlier in the thesis. The

adherence to the major and minor characterisations will be achieved by means of assigning codes for the sampling procedure. With the use of coding, I will be able to come up with a relevant sorting procedure (White & Marsh, 2006). Within the framework of the current research, I am going to allocate different codes for various instances of psi. For example, the section with psychic powers will be categorised as "Iddhis" while the subdivisions will be WW, WWI, TR, and TP, which are walking on water, walking through walls, transformation, and teleportation respectively (detailed possible coding will be explained in section 4.7 in relation to parapsychology).

After that, I will scrutinise the statistical techniques that are currently available and simplify this data (Krippendorff & Bock, 2009). This step is also called data reduction because I will have to transform vast bodies of data into manageable representations. The above steps will be helpful in simplifying the process and providing the research data for proceeding towards the actual analysis. The ultimate decision regarding the utilisation of data reduction is mine, as the content analysis process does not initially require me to employ data transformation techniques. The last aspect described by Krippendorff (2013) is the ability to align the outcomes of the research project with the conventions and traditions established within the theory of efficient content analysis. Evidently, this step can be accomplished relatively easily as soon as all the contextual phenomena are identified and all the answers to the research questions are provided (White & Marsh, 2006). All of the steps described above will be completed with the help of the computer software called NVivo, which will be discussed in detail later in this chapter (see section 4.8). It is safe to say that this program is widely used by academics who specialise in conducting analytic studies (White & Marsh, 2006). I believe that abductive surmising can

close the gap between the descriptive and inferred meanings of the Pāli Canon texts. The utilisation of this strategy will positively affect the process of analysing phenomena that have not previously been the subject of research. My ability as a researcher to narrate the answers in line with the research questions significantly facilitates the process of content analysis (Krippendorff, 2013). One of the key objectives that have to be accomplished within the framework of the current research project is the generalisation of the findings and their presentation, based solely on the results of the content analysis procedure (Harwood & Garry, 2003). It can be concluded that content analysis is a potent data analysis method (especially when there are only two different streams of information that have to be analysed) (Matthes & Kohring, 2008). On a bigger scale, the content analysis will enable me to reveal the connections between the Pāli Canon and parapsychological science irrespective of the data presentation style and the different approaches to knowledge.

It can be noted that the steps outlined above are mainly descriptive. I can assume that the application of content analysis methodology in practice will positively affect the contribution of this thesis to the topic of parapsychology and its ultimate association with Buddhist concepts. The systematic application of these steps will depend on the project plan and the effectiveness of the chosen methodology. As has been mentioned earlier, the process of unitisation will allow me to count specific definitions of appropriate units (Strijbos, Martens, Prins, & Jochems, 2006). Within the framework of this thesis, I will designate various psychic powers as units and make the appropriate associations between Buddhist perspectives and the relevant parapsychological concepts. While doing this analysis with Buddhist perspectives, I will be able to gain more insight into both

these academic areas (Harwood & Garry, 2003). One of the questions that I expect to answer is whether there is a research gap which can be identified at this stage of the research project and can be filled during the practical experiments (Harwood & Garry, 2003). I will address this question in the upcoming chapter where the actual content analysis will be performed. In order to conduct the research project successfully, I will utilise the context unit technique. This will help me to validate the systematic unitisation of the textual data (Bowen, 2009). According to Krippendorff (2013), context units can be found in the descriptions of several recording units at once.

Knowing that I will review the incidences of psi in the Pāli Canon, it may be necessary to introduce some of the concepts inherent in the Pāli Canon which will also form units. First of all, there are six basic types of higher knowledge that are typical of Buddhism (Clough, 2011). Knowing that there are numerous psi sources in the Pāli Canon, this unitisation of higher knowledge can be effective. The six types of higher knowledge (also known as *Chalabhinna*) which can form units are as follows: *Iddhi-viddha* (walking on water, going through walls, and so forth, also known as "higher powers"), *Dibba-sota* (divine ear or clairaudience), *Ceto-pariya-nana* (this is also known as telepathy or mind-penetrating knowledge), *Pubbe-nivasanussati* (recalling one's past lives), *Dibba-cakkhu* (which means that a person knows about others' karmic termini; it is also called the divine eye), and *Asavakkhaya* (also known as the extermination of mental fetters or impurities). The collection of these six instances of higher knowledge can be supported by the idea that these six segments are repeatedly occurred throughout the Pāli Canon. Because of this, these six aspects can be considered to be the most "popular" and are described in high detail in the literature. These six groups that I have identified

can be supportive in terms of analysing the psi phenomena documented in the Pāli Canon as these categories also comprise iddhi and abhinna. However, as the actual analysis process begins, I will identify other categories and include these in the analysis. This list of concepts can be modified at any time if it is necessary to either add or remove any item, depending on the information obtained from the Pāli Canon. The sampling of the data will be done only after the process of unitisation. This strategy presupposes that the units have to be identified in terms of their similarities. According to this strategy, the initial psychic powers will be unitised and then repeatedly scrutinised so as to analyse the phenomena and divide the incidences of psi into major and minor representations.

When comparing content analysis with literature review methodology and systematic review methodology, it is evident that content analysis has major benefits in dealing with the content in the Pāli Canon. Content analysis is not an all-inclusive approach like literature review and it also it has better implications and applicability for the Pāli Canon analysis when compared to the systematic review method. The process of content analysis is well formulated and to the point for the objectives of this research project.

4.7   Coding Categories

Within the framework of this research, as far as parapsychological coding is concerned, I have created Table 4.2 showing a few coding themes. Various questions can be addressed in accordance with the help of Table 4.2. While the possibility of generating the coding in the NVivo software is discussed in detail later in this chapter, I will address a number of specific questions here.

Table 4.2 Coding categories for NVivo

Psychic ability group	Psychic abilities
Clair-related abilities	Clairvoyance, claircognisance, clairaudience, clairolfactance, clairgustance, clairsentience
Divination	
Healing	
Abilities associated with different types of movement and control over elements	Levitation, teleportation, psychokinesis, pyrokinesis, walking through walls
Mental abilities associated with the concept of time	Precognition, retrocognition, prophesy
Mental abilities based on the power of mind and thoughts	Mediumship, telepathy, remote viewing, mental projection
Manipulative abilities	Health manipulation, dream manipulation
Different Beings	Ghosts, devils, gods, angels, and so forth

First of all, I am looking to gain more insight into the nature of the clair-related abilities as presented in the Pāli Canon, such as clairvoyance, claircognisance, clairaudience, clairolfactance, clairgustance and clairsentience. I will review the process of the establishment of these psi abilities and re-evaluate the occasions that may trigger the occurrence of these phenomena. Another area of interest is the presence of connections among the coding categories defined as clair-related abilities. Third, I am looking to test to see if a thorough understanding of psi and an all-inclusive review of psi

that can be met in the Pāli Canon may help in understanding the occurrence of psi phenomena and the basis of these abilities (for instance, to identify if there is a possibility of defining the necessary conditions that would contribute to the display of psi).

For the divination category, the same questions can be reviewed. Additionally, I can also address the question of whether divination or divine-eye psi can be exercised and how far the vision may extend (also, how it is perceived). I can pay more attention to the detailed level of characteristics of this psi ability and all the underlying processes that led to its manifestation. The last question will be the relation between the religious practices proclaimed by the Pāli Canon and how these were perceived by the population within the text.

For the healing category, I will review the information regarding the ways in which healing was performed and what elements were used in the performance. I will pay close attention to the state of mind that was used and to what extent the effect of the healing was positive. It may also be important to study how the receiver of healing perceived it and to establish their condition before and after the healing.

The abilities associated with different types of movement and control over elements can be addressed in the same way. Additionally, if levitation or psychokinesis were performed, I can ask about the extent of movement and how it was done. I will look for the explanations of these abilities in the Pāli Canon and try to align them with modern parapsychology.

Mental abilities associated with the concept of time such as precognition, retrocognition, and prophesy will again be addressed by means of the set of questions presented above. Additionally, it will be interesting to identify the core aspects of such

abilities and how they usually occur. For instance, I will investigate the question of whether these experiences can be spontaneous or controlled. In addition, the accuracy of these abilities can be evaluated and the difference between the Pāli Canon and parapsychological understanding can be studied more in more detail.

All these types of questions can also be associated with the next two categories (including the mental abilities based on the power of mind and thoughts and manipulative abilities). The category of different beings can also be formulated and any event that is relevant to parapsychological interests will be addressed through a variety of possible questions.

During the process of content analysis, I will need to be open to the possible necessity of creating new categories or asking different questions. The most important part of this analysis will be to identify the crux of these abilities in a few themes and produce an outcome in the form of a set of cogent themes which are distinct in the fields of Buddhism and parapsychology. Reducing this huge body of data and finding consistent themes across all psi occurrences will also be one of the goals of this analysis.

The main goal of this analysis will always be to understand the nature of psi from the Buddhist perspective, and the gap in parapsychology's understanding of psi and in research will be addressed from the Pāli Canon's perspective. In this way, the Eastern understanding of iddhis in Buddhism will also profoundly contribute to the understanding of psi. This will enable me to develop interviews in the later stages of this project in order to gather evidence from current meditation practitioners and propose any experiments which would fit within the framework of this research.

4.8   NVivo Software

Taking into consideration the previous discussions in this chapter, I concluded that there is a need to use certain software in order to facilitate the process of research. Therefore, this subsection is devoted to a detailed description and review of NVivo software. NVivo is widely used as an aid to qualitative analysis. It is a software package produced and marketed by QSR International (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013). This program is of interest to researchers working with large data sets and rich text-based data sources. NVivo is a perfect option in situations requiring a deep level of analysis and involving large amounts of data (Gibbs, 2002). This is very similar to the Pāli Canon which constitutes a large data source.

After collecting data from the Pāli Canon, I can import the data into NVivo. In NVivo, all these sources and materials can be kept together. After making specific links within the software, it will become easy to locate the file or data and retrieve its source to make comparisons. Likewise, it is also easier to reshape and reorganise the required material. I have to ensure that I use codes and create nodes in NVivo. This will provide more space for me in terms of focusing on the data and finding underlying themes and interpretations when compared to manual coding (Auld et al., 2007). Computers are crucial for the process of content analysis because they provide the end-users with the capacity to process vast data sets at enormous speeds. The second reason why computers are useful in content analysis is their ability to process textual material consistently (Krippendorff, 2013). After entering the data from the Pāli Canon into NVivo, I will create nodes in accordance with the psi phenomena. This stage will consist of two steps:

unitisation and sampling. At later stages, it will also be possible to assign the same nodes

to the data found in the parapsychological literature. Once this is done, the software itself

can be used for convenient content analysis (Zamawe, 2015). However, the main

objective will always remain focused on the content analysis of the Pāli Canon's psi

incidences. Krippendorff (2013) suggests that the research must construct the world in

which the texts make sense and answer the research questions. NVivo will serve as the

tool that can help me to address the research questions systematically to successfully

carry out the content analysis process of the research project.

4.9   Method of Initial Observation

This subsection of the thesis outlines the method which was used to determine the

occurrences of psi in the Pāli Canon. One of my observations is that in the Pāli Canon,

the word *iddhi* is used at all times when the subject of discussion is psi. Within the

framework of any given Pāli text, the word "iddhi" means that some kind of psychic power

is involved. In order to generate the initial findings, I used concordance software called

TextStat to record the incidences of the word "Iddhi" in the Pāli Canon in a quantitative

manner. I also paid close attention to the word "abhinna" which outlines the higher

knowledge in the Pāli Canon. Abhinna has six major groups and of those six groups, the

first is iddhi or psychic powers. Taking this into consideration, I decided to search for both

these words at the same time for a better overall result. There were several other terms

that could also be included in the search query within the framework of the existing

quantitative analysis: *Iddhi-viddha* (higher powers), *Pubbe-nivasanussati* (remembering

one's past lives), *Dibba-sota* (divine eye), *Asavakkhaya* (the extermination of spiritual

intoxicants), and *Ceto-pariya-nana* (also known as mind-penetrating knowledge). As 'psi' is related to these abilities and because all these concepts represent the key Abhinnas (which also include iddhi), it was sufficient to search for only Abhinna and Iddhi through the Pāli Canon by means of TextStat. TextStat helped in this process in several ways. First, it enabled me to count the overall number of pages and words comprising the Pāli Canon. Second, it helped me to identify all the cases of Abhinna and Iddhi that are present in the Pāli Canon. Third, I was able to reach a conclusion regarding the effectiveness of TextStat within the framework of the next stages of this research project and the question of whether other requirements might necessitate a new analysis.

The specifics of the Pāli Canon led me to the conclusion that psi cannot be found in just one of the baskets, but it is distributed unequally among all three of the baskets comprised in the Pāli Canon. The main reason for this unequal distribution is that when the Pāli Canon was written, the goal was to collect the sutra regarding the practice of dharma rather than only psychic powers. As the collection process was done from oral transmittance to written, sections were created according to length or to the basket. Therefore, as recording incidences of psi were not the ultimate rationale for the writing of the Pāli Canon, the accounts of psi that occur in the Pāli Canon are in accordance with the sutras as recited randomly. I will expand further on the next section where I will discuss strategies for collecting the incidences of psychic powers from the Pāli Canon. Before performing the analysis, it was important to determine whether it is worth researching the Pāli Canon and looking at the evidence of psi that is available there. If the initial observations suggest that there are few mentions of psi, then the effort of analysing instances of psi from the Pāli Canon would not constitute a worthwhile research

project. However, if a significant number of psi incidences can be found, then their analysis can be justified on the grounds that they may provide new routes to the understanding of psi. That is the reason for my decision to use TextStat software to perform the initial analysis which is presented in the next section.

4.9.1 Text-Stat

TextStat is a simple concordance computer program that requires only a basic computer operating system in order to function. It features a user-friendly design that assumes that the data can be organised based on the obtained information and later stored in the program's memory. These text frames can be analysed further so as to identify concordances and come up with word frequency lists. The program was developed with the use of Python programming language and is currently available in the form of a Windows-compatible application. Within the framework of this freeware program, one may analyse any text of any size. TextStat was useful in terms of providing information regarding the occurrence of a certain word or the context in which that particular word is used. This application can also evaluate different word combinations (Huning, n.d.). As explained above, for the initial analysis, I used TextStat software in order to count all the incidences of Abhinna (higher knowledge) and the Iddhi (psi, psychic powers) that can be found in the Pāli Canon. This was important to show initially whether incidences of psi can be found in the Pāli Canon and if so, how many references can be found, and their exact location in the Pāli Canon. One of the specifics of TextStat is that it only processes MS Word documents (such as .txt and .doc) that are written in Roman script. Therefore, collecting all the Tipitaka chapters that comply with these requirements

was of critical importance. The research process showed that the only online available source of the Pāli Canon texts is the canon in the Pāli language compilation. The English translations were not available in any online or PDF format. One of the most accurate sources of the Pāli Canon in Pāli is *Chatta Sangayana* produced by the Vipassana Research Institute, which offers the Pāli Canon in an online format and PDF. The existence of a web version of the Pāli Canon allowed me to copy the required text to a separate MS Word file so that the analysis of the data in TextStat could be carried out. The creation of a Word file that contains the whole Tipitaka in Pāli from the Pāli Canon has led to its further analysis by means of TextStat. I was able to identify several initial queries that were required to complete the first stage of this research project.

4.9.2 Findings from the TextStat

Table 4.2 TextStat overall findings

	Total Words	Total Pages
Approximate total number of words and pages of the Pāli Canon in Pāli (PCP):	2,856,496	14,597
Vinaya	411,994	1,852

Sutta	1,641,245	8,097
Abhidhamma	803,257	4,649
The total number of times the word Iddhi occurred in PCP	298	
The total number of times the word abhinna occurred in PCP	19	

From the findings above (see Table 4.2), it can be understood that the occurrence of incidences of psychic powers is rather high in the Pāli Canon. Overall, I was able to identify more than three hundred occurrences of the words "Iddhi" and "Abhinna" in the Pāli Canon. It may be concluded that the data source that I selected is both huge in size and relevant to my research aims. The analysis by means of TextStat was useful because it showed the Pāli Canon to be a rich source of information regarding psychic powers or paranormal phenomena. It was fruitful to collect and deal with this source automatically so that the research activity progressed more quickly and the aims of this project were able to be addressed. In order to be able to use these findings, there was a need to review further strategies of data collection, however, the method of content analysis described will be used to proceed with the final analysis of iddhis in the Pāli Canon. While doing this, I had to be flexible in formulating the analyses and adjusting them as necessary. To

conclude, I have confirmed that there were sufficient occasions in which iddhis were mentioned in the Pāli Canon for it to be deemed worthwhile to conduct a more systematic study of the types of phenomena to which they referred and the circumstances under which they occurred.

4.10 Strategies for Collecting Data from the Pāli Canon and Associated Problems

This section justifies my approach towards collecting data from the Pāli Canon in English. I intended to use the iddhi / abbhinna search as the means of locating references to psychic powers. However, I noted the dangers in this strategy of missing some potential instances, and therefore despite the greatly increased demand on human resources, I opted for a manual search.

There are two main strategies that I identified as effective. The first strategy presupposes that it would be useful to search for the words "Abbhinna" (higher knowledge) and "Iddhi" (psychic powers) in the Pāli Canon written in Pāli language (PCP) and then to try to locate the same records in the English translation of the Pāli Canon (PCE). The second strategy involves a close reading of the whole PCE and noting all mentions of psychic powers throughout the original the Pāli Canon. One of the main reasons why I focused on these two particular words was that they could be translated as "psychic power" and are connected to the idea of psi (as referenced in Buddhist scriptures). In the case of the first strategy, it would be difficult to introduce other search queries in the research process. Even though the two words identified above are enough for thorough data analysis, the process was becoming complicated due to the fact that I was not fully aware of the contents of the Pāli Canon. Therefore, the second strategy was

used for this research project. As the researcher, I proposed to look through the whole canon, reading the entirety of the canon and highlighting all the incidences of psychic powers.

The advantage of this strategy consists in the fact that one does not have to have any knowledge of the Pāli Canon in order to be able to complete this assignment. On the other hand, the implementation of the first strategy revealed a number of shortcomings of this method. Firstly, the lack of knowledge regarding the Pāli language became one of the key contributing factors that limited understanding of the obtained data. In addition, I had to go back and forth from the PCE to PCP in a very time-consuming process. The second shortcoming relates to the fact that this research project was not intended to be limited to mining the data regarding the incidence of psychic powers in the Pāli Canon. The aim was also to understand how Buddhists interpret psi and as such a good knowledge of Buddhism as a whole was also important.

Knowing that all the concepts and theories listed in the Pāli Canon are not given within one separate section, I had to address all three baskets of the Pāli Canon in order to understand the basis of psychic powers in Buddhism. Consequently, this led to a situation where I was able not only to spot all the incidences of psychic powers in the English translation of the Pāli Canon but also to comprehend the content of Buddhist theories appropriately. By doing so I was following the first step of content analysis in which I was understanding the data and drawing preliminary conclusions. This activity was based on the idea that as a researcher, I should possess the necessary knowledge in the areas of both parapsychology and Theravada Buddhism. Therefore, studying the latter was beneficial because I gained more insight into several aspects that are critical

to this study, including the paradigm of knowledge, Buddhist outlooks, and psi in Buddhism. It can also be noted that quite a few incidences of psi and psychic powers could be missed if I had decided to pursue the first strategy. This may happen because the incidence of psychic powers may be described in the text but not associated with the word 'iddhi'. Therefore, numerous psi references could be overlooked, and this will affect the results of the study.

At the beginning of analysis or even data collection, I was not aware of how the Buddha's teachings are structured and what exactly can be found within the Pāli Canon. Owing to this, I believed that the second strategy would be more beneficial, which proved to be correct. To justify this approach, one of the shortcomings of the first strategy can be supported by a real-life example.

One of the sermons of the Buddha contained information regarding the Iddhi but it was complicated to align the concepts presented there with spiritual powers because the other concepts were unknown to me at the time of reading. The key idea that I identified is that the Buddha provided in-depth descriptions of the ways in which a meditator (also known as a monk or a bhikkhu) can cultivate the Noble path and develop consistent psychic abilities, which can also be perceived as spiritual powers. Addressing only a single paragraph from the Pāli Canon, I was now able to realise the basics of the Noble path and other attainments that are associated with it. The latter included five spiritual faculties, four institutions of mindfulness, and seven aspects of enlightenment. It was then necessary to look for all these terms individually in the PCP and then come back to the PCE and complete the search process again. Consequently, this was triggering a

number of additional search queries that would underline the time-consuming nature of this approach.

What is even more important, it was proving rather confusing for me to keep going back and forth from the PCE to PCP and vice versa when searching for the required items. On the basis of the above findings and drawbacks, I came to the conclusion that if it was necessary to simply find the incidences of psi in the Pāli Canon and understand them, this strategy would be perfect. However, I am intending to do a deeper analysis so that the exact meaning of iddhi and its underlying condition of occurrence can be discovered. Thus, hand strategy will be more useful.

To support this further, another example that can be used here to help the readers have a better insight into this issue involves the information regarding a monk's psychic abilities that can be located in the Jataka. Initially, the reader will only be aware of the fact that some kind of psi is performed. For example, we may learn from the analysis that a Bodhisatta reached five supernormal institutions. At the same time, we do not have any answers regarding the nature of these five institutions and how these accomplishments can be explained. One of the suppositions that can be made here is that the latter was able to exercise a heavenly vision that is synonymous with the existing parapsychological phenomenon known as clairvoyance. However, the questions regarding any psychic powers referred to in the Pāli Canon cannot be answered using the first methodology because it provides me with numerous references but with no background. The same situation can be described when it comes to the facility of levitation. Despite the fact that the first strategy can be effective in some situations, it was not suitable for the current research project because it did not provide me with clear information regarding

Theravadin Buddhism and any additional concepts that are significant in this literature. Therefore, it can be concluded that the analysis of the Buddhist Pāli Canon is necessary to develop a complete understanding of the Buddha's perspective on the development and cultivation of psychic powers.

The Buddha's teachings are based on the idea that the whole concept of psychic powers revolves around the states of consciousness which allow the individual to go beyond the normal senses (Sandelowski & Barroso, 2003). I later identified this state of consciousness as the process of purification of the mind. The purified or refined state of mind is made possible by following the path of liberation. This shows that it was important for me as a researcher to scan through the whole Pāli Canon by utilising the second strategy.

One of the major drawbacks associated with the second strategy is its time-consuming nature and excessive human resource costs. The latter can be explained by the fact that to read all the Tipitaka, takes at least twelve months (the ultimate time frame depends on the level of dedication and reading speed). Currently, there are forty-two books of the Pāli Canon that can be accessed in English. The second strategy may seem more difficult, but I believed that it would help me to gain more insight into the necessary teachings and categorise the existing materials appropriately. The conclusion that can be drawn here is that these insights were the only justifiable distinction between the two strategies. The accurate nature of the second strategy made it more appropriate in terms of carrying out the current research project. The process of sorting and processing the obtained information throughout the first stage of conducting this PhD study was highly contingent on the use of the second strategy. In the end, I was able to understand and

improve my knowledge of the Pāli Canon and gather all the data accurately with a systematic analysis which could adapt as I progressed.

4.11 Recap

Within the framework of the fourth chapter of the thesis, I validated the choice of a strategy that would allow conducting data analysis efficiently. The key objective was to demonstrate that content analysis methodology is the most appropriate method to conduct data analysis for the current research. As part of this demonstration, I addressed literature review and systematic review methodologies so as to validate the effectiveness of content analysis when compared to other research methods. This was further justified by providing two more analytic approaches: thematic analysis and grounded theory. Additionally, I also dwelled upon the parapsychologists' accounts of using qualitative research and found that they have utilised similar methodology for scriptural research. The process of content analysis was explained and possible coding for the instances of psi was provided. I also concluded that content analysis is a powerful methodology that can be used to analyse such extensive bodies of literature as the Pāli Canon.

The method of content analysis will help me to understand the nature of psi as presented in the Pāli Canon. This will assist me to make expositions of the description and explanation of iddhis as they appear in sacred texts of the Pāli Canon, which will enable me to determine the frequency of their occurrences and will help me to identify relevant themes and the circumstances in which they appear. Most importantly, it will help me to establish whether the understanding of iddhis from the Pāli Canon is in fact consistent with parapsychologists' characterisations.

The NVivo software as a tool for data analysis was discussed in detail and it was found that this software can assist well in the process of analysis. The advantages and disadvantages of NVivo and their practical implications were explained.

5   Chapter V Analysis

The main analysis of this chapter is drawn from the methodology as presented in Chapter Four. There was a need to scrutinise the Buddhist Pāli Canon in order to collect and analyse the occurrence of psi incidences so that they could be compared and contrasted with modern parapsychology research concepts. Psi occurrences as understood by parapsychologists in the West are seen as either spontaneous in nature or as elicited through the use of psi conducive states. The question of whether this understanding is similar or different when compared to the Eastern Theravadin Buddhist tradition can only be answered through proper research. As such, I applied a content analysis strategy, the findings of which I present in the current chapter. This will enable readers to comprehend the ways in which psi is understood differently in the Pāli Canon and what new insights it may be able to offer to parapsychology research.

The previous chapter justified the use of content analysis as an appropriate methodology to address the analysis of psi instances from the Pāli Canon. In this chapter, I will first introduce the Pāli Canon and explain why it is important to consider this source in relation to the concept of psi. Later I describe the research using the methodology as described in the previous chapter. Readers will be familiarised with the Pāli Canon. This is followed by a description of the resultant findings, and by the presentation of psi instances. I will make a case that each instance is dhamma, or merit related, and I present the concluding outcome of the chapter as the utilisation of merits as the basis of psi in the Theravadin Buddhist tradition.

5.1   The Pāli Canon

This subsection of the thesis concentrates on the definition and description of the Pāli Canon. I will acquaint the reader with the nature of the Pāli Canon and discuss the ways in which one might draw parallels between the science of parapsychology and the Buddhist Pāli Canon. It is the case that, if the religion of Buddhism is involved in the discussion on the topic of parapsychology, it is critical to address the Pāli Canon. The latter (also known as the Tipitaka) comes from the "Pāli ti" meaning "three" and "pitaka" meaning "baskets" (Maurice, 1967). The Pāli Canon is an assortment of language texts that are founded on Theravada Buddhism. The overall body of fundamental Theravada texts consists of the paracanonical Pāli texts and the Tipitaka. When translated into English, the Pāli Canon may run to thousands of pages. The majority (but not all) of the Pāli Canon texts are already published in English. There are three main divisions of the Pāli Canon that can be outlined:

1. *Vinaya Pitaka*: this collection of texts dwells on the rules of conduct within the Sangha (including the ordained monks (also known as bhikkhus) and nuns (also known as bhikkhunis)) (Webster, 2005). Besides being a simple set of rules and guidelines, the Vinaya Pitaka is also an in-depth description of the origin of each rule. In this division of the Pāli Canon, Buddha's solution to being in harmony with the exterior is provided.

2. *Sutta Pitaka*: essentially, this is a collection of sermons (suttas) that are commonly associated with Buddha and a number of his closest followers (Webster, 2005). These suttas are known to comprise the fundamental teachings of Theravada Buddhism. There are five main nikayas that are included in the suttas:

    I.   *Khuddaka* – little texts

    II.   *Majjhima* – middle-length texts

    III.   *Digha* – long-length texts

    IV.   *Samyutta* – grouped texts

    V.   *Anguttara* – further-factored texts

3. *Abhidhamma Pitaka*: this division of the Pāli Canon is focused on the doctrinal principles that are inherent in the Sutta Pitaka. Within the framework of this division, these philosophies are rationalised and revised so as to apply Abhidhamma to the study of the nature of matter and mind (Webster, 2005).

Buddha Shakyamuni was from Northern India, and he taught and lived there approximately 2,500 years ago (Bodhi, 1972). One of the most important points about the teachings of Buddha was the fact that he never let his disciples record or write them down. The only way was to memorise his teachings and this job was designated to Ananda (Hecker, 2006). After the Buddha's death, the memorised versions of his teachings were transferred orally. The first assembly of ascetic Buddha followers occurred shortly after his death and all of Buddha's oral teachings were approved during that council. The council was organised by Mahakassapa (one of the Buddha's foremost followers). Ananda, another of Buddha's loyal disciples, also recited some of the Buddha's teachings. His recital usually started with the words "thus have I heard" (Sinha, 2009). Consequently, these gatherings grew into a canon of Buddha's wisdom. Despite the regular nature of these meetings, Buddhism divided into different schools over the next several centuries. Each of those schools can be characterised by a specific set of teachings and traditions. History says that all of the canons that have been developed

after the death of Buddha were written down. Nonetheless, the Muslim invaders destroyed them completely throughout the 11th and 12th centuries (Webb & Bhikkhu, 2011). One of the canons, written in the Pāli language, survived the invasion and became the last record of Theravada Buddhism. This language is believed to be the one that the Buddha himself was speaking when transferring the knowledge. The Pāli Canon was transported to Sri Lanka somewhere around the third century BCE, and this was the main reason why the Muslim invaders were not able to destroy it. There is also a Chinese translation of the Canon that is very similar to the Pāli Canon in terms of its contents (this version is also known as the Agamas) (Sinha, 2009). The Pāli Canon is the oldest collection of the Buddha's teachings that are currently available to the public. Unfortunately, there is no other evidence of the Buddha's speeches that took place 2500 years ago (Woodward, 1973). More importantly, the Pāli Canon serves as the backbone for the practice of more than 150 million Buddhists across the area that includes South-East Asia, America, Europe, Myanmar, and Sri Lanka. The Tibetan Buddhist canon (also known as Kangyur) comprises only a small number of the Buddha's teachings that can be found in the Pāli Canon and the Agamas (Kingsbury, 2006). This happened because the majority of the Buddha's wisdom included in the Agamas and the Pāli Canon were not translated into Tibetan. One of the books that dwelled on the teachings of the Buddha in-depth ("In the Buddha's Words") was written by Bhikkhu Bodhi (2005). According to Dalai Lama, the Pāli Canon should be acknowledged for the reason that it is the fundamental Buddhist doctrine that underlies all subsequent Buddhist literature (Bodhi, 2016). This information is necessary to understand why the Pāli Canon is the main source of my inquiry and to show that the Buddhist Pāli Canon is an authentic source of Buddha's

knowledge. My finding also suggests that there are numerous psi experiences in the Pāli Canon which would be of interest to parapsychologists. Therefore, more inquiry into this source is worthwhile.

5.2   The Pāli Canon in English

The Pāli Canon was originally written in the Pāli language but is now available in Pāli (with roman characters) and in English (with translations) along with other languages. One of the biggest contributors to the translation of the Pāli Canon (Pāli was the language of the Buddha and quite a few other Indians of that time) is an organisation that is currently known under the name of the Pāli Text Society (PTS). The problem for Pāli scholars is that Pāli is not a contemporary language and those who wish to understand it has to learn it systematically. My knowledge of the Pāli language is rather limited, so it was important to locate an English translation of the Pāli Canon (which is the only obtainable source provided by the PTS). The PTS was established at the end of the 18th century in 1891 by Thomas Williams Rhys Davids (Pāli Text Society, n.d.) The core objective of the Pāli Text Society was to promote the research on the topic of Pāli texts and provide translations for the existing texts from the canon. The members of the society publish English translations for the students of Pāli in Roman characters (including books, dictionaries, and journals). The majority of the classical texts from the Pāli Canon were translated into English and commented on by the PTS (Pāli Text Society, n.d.). The Pāli Text Society is the biggest contributor to the process of translating the Pāli Canon works into the English language (Pāli Text Society, n.d.). For this reason, the materials provided by the PTS were the primary source of data for this research.

There are two key reasons that can explain the rationale behind using English translations of the Pāli Canon provided by the PTS in this thesis. First, it is the most complete version of the Pāli Canon that is currently available in English. Second, there is another source of Pāli text which is online, but it is not considered reliable by the majority of Buddhist scholars (compared to the PTS publications). There are also other websites that display partial translations of the Pāli Canon, but there is no other collection of systematically assembled Pāli texts as complete as the one provided by the Pāli Text Society.

The following 42 books that have been translated by the PTS from the Pāli Canon are used in this research:

1. Book of Analysis

2. Book of Discipline, Volume 1

3. Book of Discipline, Volume 2

4. Book of Discipline, Volume 3

5. Book of Discipline, Volume 4

6. Book of Discipline, Volume 5

7. Book of Discipline, Volume 6

8. Book of Gradual Sayings, Volume 1

9. Book of Gradual Sayings, Volume 2

10. Book of Gradual Sayings, Volume 3

11. Book of Gradual Sayings, Volume 4

12. Book of Gradual Sayings, Volume 5

13. Book of Kindred Sayings, Volume 1

14. Book of Kindred Sayings, Volume 2

15. Book of Kindred Sayings, Volume 3

16. Book of Kindred Sayings, Volume 4

17. Book of Kindred Sayings, Volume 5

18. Buddhist Manual of Psychological Ethics

19. Conditional Relations, Volume 1

20. Conditional Relations, Volume 2

21. Designation of Human Types

22. Discourse on Elements

23. Dialogues of the Buddha, Volume 1

24. Dialogues of the Buddha, Volume 2

25. Dialogues of the Buddha, Volume 3

26. Elders Verses, Volume 1

27. Elders Verses, Volume 2

28. Group of Discourses

29. Jataka or Stories of the Buddha's former Births, Volume 1/2

30. Jataka or Stories of the Buddha's former Births, Volume 3/4

31. Jataka or Stories of the Buddha's former Births, Volume 5/6

32. Middle Length Sayings, Volume 1

33. Middle Length Sayings, Volume 2

34. Middle Length Sayings, Volume 3

35. Minor Anthologies, Volume 3

36. Minor Readings and the Illustrator of the Ultimate Meaning

37. Path of Discrimination

38. Peta Stories

39. Points of Controversy

40. Udana and Itivuttaka

41. Vimana Stories

42. Word of the Doctrine

5.3   Findings from the Pāli Canon

The analysis of the Pāli Canon was mainly accomplished manually and also with the use of NVivo software. It revealed a number of important facts. I discovered that the information in the Pāli Canon contains numerous instances of supernormal powers and events that are miraculous and are not often seen in today's world. To be specific, I found a total of 257 instances of psi incidences in the Pāli Canon. Interestingly, TextStat mentioned 298 references, however, the Pāli Canon in Pāli was utilised for TextStat as the Pāli Canon in English is not available online. It should be noted that not all the Pāli Canon is fully translated yet, therefore the difference of 41 other instances may be found in that untranslated work. However, I do not stress the accuracy of this specific number of 257 instances because what constitutes 'psi' may differ from researcher to researcher and can be very subjective. In this context, I have referred to the definition of parapsychology proposed by Irwin and Watt (2007) to determine psi, in which abilities that are commonly considered outside of the orthodox realm are taken into consideration (section 2.1).

The ways that psi is presented in the Pāli Canon seem to indicate that acceptance and the occurrence of such abilities in that era was normal. There does not appear to be a common perception of something extraordinary about psi incidences. However, the common ground of psi performance seems to be always related to dhamma practice. In the beginning, when I started coding and categorising the instances as per the plan in Chapter Four (section 4.7), I found that it was time-consuming, and no common ground was found; simply the quantification of instances. As a researcher, my main goal was to understand the reason for the possibility of psi: why and how it occurs. That is why I found it useful to engage qualitatively in content analysis, rather than simply to avoid confusion caused by a large amount of data in the Pāli Canon. For this reason, I did not focus on formulating too many themes or categories. For example, it seems in the Pāli Canon that commuting between different realms of existence, such as gods, Brahmas, yakshas or ghosts, and so forth, is very common. If I have to quantify all these from the Pāli Canon it will take a considerable amount of time, given the huge and complicated nature of the canon. However, if I focus on the specific question of understanding psi and the possible theories behind it, then although I found it time-consuming, it was sufficient to address the posed research goal of this analysis. Therefore, the main focus changed from quantification to qualitative analysis. This shift proved helpful in understanding the ways in which psi is presented in the Pāli Canon, and in understanding what specific conclusions can be drawn which will be both logical and justifiable and can be taken further in the next phases of research.

While reading the Pāli Canon and simultaneously analysing it, my main aim was to understand the underlying theme or themes which are related to psi occurrences. While

collecting all the instances of psychic powers from the Pāli Canon, I was noticed that whenever a psi incidence is presented in the canon it will always relate in some way to merit or dhamma teaching. I further discovered that the incidences only relate to several typical themes (as presented in Figure 5.1) which are directly related to dhamma teaching. Based on manual analysis and also on the NVivo analysis, I was able to deduce findings in three main categories directly related to dhamma (which was my first concrete node in Nvivo) and looking systematically at the basis of this analysis, two more themes could be identified. The three main categories are Shila, Samadhi and Prajna, which are directly related to the dhamma node. It can be shown that most of the incidences were either related to Shila, Samadhi or Prajna. Another separate category was related to merits or good deeds and this formed the second concrete node of merits in Nvivo (see the quantification provided in Tables 5.1 and 5.2). This was enough to determine the central finding that psi occurrences are always related to dhamma or merits. Although a significant amount of time was needed to confirm this, as most of the incidences were quite complicated in nature and the amount of information represented needed more critical thinking and analysis. Because my research question was focused and clear, (to understand psi from the Pāli Canon) the analysis became smoother, and the approach became narrower and goal-oriented. While performing the manual analysis, I was able to confirm that all the psi incidences are related only to the three aforementioned categories of dhamma, and additionally, they are related to merits. I will now justify this in the next section with illustrative examples of psi from the Pāli Canon. It is not possible to present all the instances however the following findings and interpretations will help the reader to understand the ways in which psi is related to dhamma or merits.

In the following section, I provide various examples where psychic potency is mentioned in the Pāli Canon, and it is apparent in every section that the sutras concerned will always discuss and emphasise the teaching of dhamma and merits, rather than simply describing incidences of psychic powers. I have described several instances illustrating that the Pāli Canon is mostly concerned with stressing the importance of dhamma. Although the main identified themes may look generic in nature, such themes have not been previously formulated in relation to the academic perspective on psi. It is especially the case that we do not have any similar academic findings asserting that merits can be the basis for the induction of psychic powers. This opens up the possibility of designing experimentation with relation to the theme of Saccakiriya which is another significant finding from this analysis. Before I present examples, the following chart outlines the main theme which will help readers to understand the data reduction from the analysis to the central finding of merits.

Figure 5.1 Main Themes
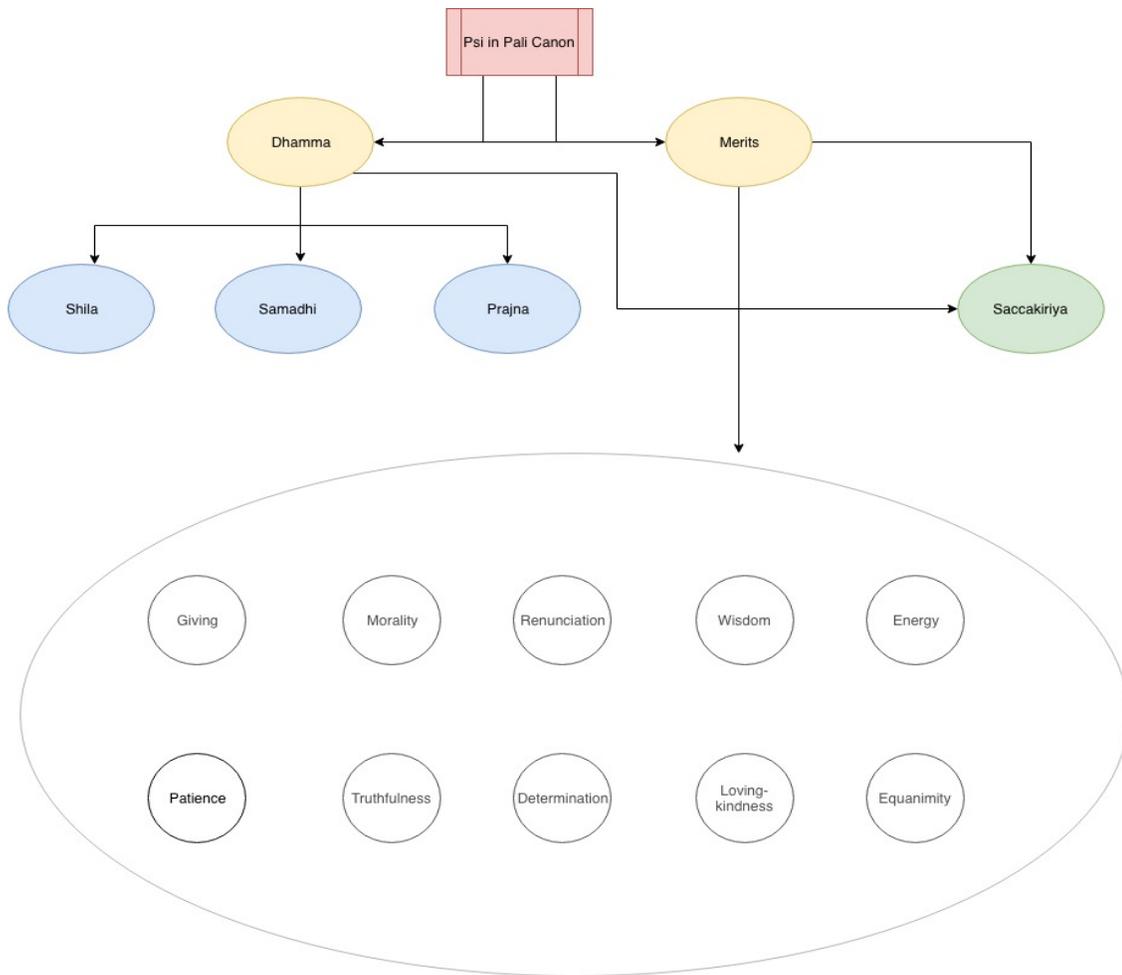
The above figure 5.1 shows the 5 main themes I obtained from the analysis. Shila, Samadhi and Prajna are related to the Dhamma, however, Merit stands alone. Additionally, the Merit theme can be considered in line with Dhamma. As it is found that good deeds are basically actions of following the norms of Dhamma which I found in the theme of Shila, Samadhi and Prajna. The fifth theme of Saccakiriya has relation to Merit and to psi, therefore, I have outlined Saccakiriya as an additional main theme.

Table 5.1 Number of Frequency the main Node occurs

Main Node Name	Frequency/ References
Dhamma	191
Merit	89

Table 5.1 shows the number of times that the nodes Dhamma and Merit were created. As explained, these two nodes are assigned references that evidenced a connection to psi, either with Dhamma or Merit or both. The following table shows the number of times words related to psi occurred in the Pāli Canon's collected data only. Although, it is possible that there will be more frequencies of psi evidence when the whole Canon is considered (where the untranslated work of Pāli Canon is included). The following (Table 5.2) also assigned sub-nodes where appropriate. However, for the purpose of understanding psi from the Pāli Canon; the two main nodes - Dhamma and Merit were sufficient.

Table 5.2 Words related to Psi (Sub-Nodes Frequency)

Word	Frequency/ References
Power	1073
Mind	589
Spiritual	281
Knowledge	281
Concentration	232
Beings	217

Psychic	172
Brahma (Highest Being)	163
Magic	145
Wisdom	120
Devas (Gods)	116
Good Deed	109
Wonder	103
Potency	95
Divine	94
Supernatural	83
Sakka (King of Godly Realm)	78
Supernormal	74
Purification	73
Enlightenment	62
Truth (Act of)	55
Merit	54
Meditation	45
Reborn	44
Virtue	42
Hell	39
Consciousness	36
Morality	33
Nibbana	32

Marvellous	25
Peta (Ghost)	22
Yakkha (Spirit)	21

The codes as presented here were created both with NVivo and by hand. Analysis by hand was particularly useful with the Pāli Canon collection, as although the psi was collected in a separate file, still, I needed to refer to the main Pāli Canon periodically to understand the context. As such, all the formation of coding and its interpretation was carried out with both NVivo and by hand. For example, the word Brahma (highest being) and Deva (God) appeared 163 and 116 times simultaneously, it was always important to understand whether it was presented in order to describe the theory behind psi as seen normally, or that the connection with such beings has been established to preach dharma. For clarification, I always referred to the main Pāli Canon and re-read the instances with the previous context to make sure it predominantly related to the main nodes that are present in the thesis. As such, I can confirm that the analysis by hand proved somewhat more useful for qualitative purposes than the NVivo. However, the NVivo proved to be valuable for organising such a huge amount of material in one place. Analysis by hand also helped me to create a thematic map (Appendix C) which enables the reader to understand how the nodes and codes help in concluding Merit's role with psi.

In the next section of this chapter, I will be discussing several examples from Pāli Canon and explain how they enabled me to formulate the above themes (Figure 5.1). It will be clear for the reader to understand that each explained incident below has a

connection with at least one (or more) themes as outlined in the diagram. All the incidences (appendix A) can be seen in the same light.

5.4 Psi Incidences

1. In the following incident, various devas and disciples are praising the Buddha and his ability of psychic potency along with perfection in teaching. Numerous references are also given to Dhamma practice; however, the section ends by the mention of Merits (perfections). This is a good example that shows that although the main ontology, epistemology or theory behind psychic powers is not given, the importance and connection of Dhamma or Merit is apparent.

> *"Of what kind, great hero, supreme among men, was your resolve? At what time, wise one, was supreme Awakening aspired to by you? Of what kind were giving, morality, renunciation, wisdom and energy? And of what kind were patience, truth-speaking, resolute determination, loving-kindness, equanimity?*
> *Of what kind, wise one, leader of the world, were your ten perfections? How were the higher perfections fulfilled, how the ultimate perfections?"*
> (Minor anthologies of the Pāli Canon, Vol. III, page 1 – 9)

2. In this example, a naga-king; Atula is talking about his psychic potency, his great donation and how the Buddha Sumana foretold that in the future, after innumerable aeons, Atula will become a Buddha. Atula then mentions that he devoted the rest of his life to achieving the ten perfections. Again, the forecasting is mentioned, however, the main importance is given to Merit. I found that merits are important and in order to become Buddha in the future, Atula must focus on the merits, or 'the ten perfections. In the process of Buddhahood, one also achieves psychic powers, therefore, it provides an indication that if Merit can be the base for Buddhahood, it can also yield psi which is inherent in it.

That Buddha Sumana, leader of the world, also declared of me: "Innumerable eons from now this one will be a Buddha.
When he has striven the striving, carried out austerities . . ." ". . . in the distant future we will be face to face with this one".
When I had heard his words too all the more did I incline my mind. I resolutely determined on further practice for fulfilling the ten perfections.
(Minor anthologies of the Pāli Canon, Vol. III, page *36 and 37*)

3. Inspired by the above incident, a yakkha (spirit) also devoted his life to the ten perfections. This incident demonstrates the importance of merits to other beings as well.

When I had heard his words, exultant, stirred in mind, I resolutely determined on further practice for fulfilling the ten perfections.
(Minor anthologies of the Pāli Canon, Vol. III, page *44 and 45*)

4. In the next example, a deva has taken control of a woman and taken her with him using his psychic potency and dwelled with her for seven days. He then returned her. Upon her arrival, she told the people what had happened to her as her mother was anxious about her. Upon reporting, people could not believe that such a man could become a deva (godly being), as he was known for his bad deeds. However, she explained to them that the man gave a meal as a donation (Merit of giving) to Mahamoggallana (one of the great disciples of the Buddha), which in turn became a meritorious act that caused a birth in the deva realm.

"He gave to the worthy elder Mahamoggallana the sweetmeats and water that I had given to him; it was by means of this Meritorious deed that he came to arise as a deva.' When the people heard this, their hearts were filled with wonder and surprise and they felt the highest joy and satisfaction at the thought, 'The arahants are indeed the world's unsurpassed Merit-field — even the slightest service done for them brings it about that beings arise as devas.!
(Peta Stories, Page 7)

5. Similarly, a peta (ghost) arose because of the good deed of a food donation given by another human being. All those possessed psychic potency. The incidence also mentions that the person (named Devaputta) was then teleported to the Buddha and lastly Buddha gave teaching on Dhamma. As it can be seen; this incident is connected with the Dhamma, and the good deed is consistent with previous incidences. Notably, all incidences mention psychic powers such as teleportation, or heavenly elements, etc., in them but not the theory behind it. However, my main objective is to understand or draw a theme that demonstrates consistency, therefore Dhamma and Merit appear to be the only consistent factors for my query.

> *"If alms be given to a monk or to but one member of the Lord's Ariyasarigha and then dedicated to her and she shows her appreciation there will thus be freedom for her from this misery here.' When he heard this the devaputta gave to the monk the finest food and drink and assigned that donation to the peta!"*
> (Peta Stories, page 48)

> *"If you now give a gift to these layfollowers and recall the virtues of the Teacher you will be freed from having to arise in hell."*
> "On the following day those layfollowers gave a great alms giving to the order of monks with the Buddha at its head and assigned the donation to her. When she fell from the world of the petas she arose in a golden mansion in the realm of the Thirty-three, resplendent with various jewels and with a retinue of a thousand nymphs."
> (Peta Stories, page 55 and 56)

6. In the following incident, bad deeds caused a bad birth; demonstrating the impact of deeds on life. Therefore, it is critical that deeds play a role in the power of the mind. It is important to note that the Buddha and his disciples have used their psychic powers to make peta visible to common people so that they can see the effects of wicked deeds. However, their main goal was always to preach the Dhamma.

"Now at that time those two devaputtas were going, together with their sister, along that same road to attend an assembly of the yakkhas. Their mother and father followed them with clubs in their hands and with harsh speech. They were of dark appearance, burdened with thoroughly tangled, coarse, flying hair, and resembled the burnt trunks of palm trees (struck by) lightning. They were dripping with blood and pus and their bodies were wrinkled - they were an extremely loathsome and disgusting sight. The venerable Samkicca then worked his psychic powers in such a way that the novice could see all of them going along and, when he had done so, said, 'Do you see them going along, novice?' 'Yes, sir, I do see (them)'(he replied). 'Well then, question them about the deeds they did."
(Peta Stories, page 59)

"The Lord then worked his psychic powers in such a way that they all gathered in the same place and declared to the people the wicked deed they had done."
(Peta Stories, page 181)

"Now what evil deed was done by you by body, speech or mind? As a result of which deed do you undergo this misery?"
(Peta Stories, page 222)

7. In the following example, a yakkha (spirit) clearly mentions how he has attained

psychic powers. It again emphasises the merits.

A yakkha am I attained to the highest of psychic powers (yakkho ham asmi paramiddhipatto): by way of my own Meritorious deeds I have entered the state of a yakkha. There is none who is equal to the yakkha. Moreover I have attained to the highest of psychic powers, I am possessed of the highest, the utmost, psychic power of the yakkha. Far-ranging (durahgamo): able to go to far off places in an inkling.
(Peta Stories, page 123)

8. In the following incident, along with the mention of how deeds are important, it

also states how a yakkha changes his form to human and gives advice to Paccekabuddha

about obtaining thread to make a robe as a donation to fulfil his desires. He had done

many skilled deeds on account of his support to Paccekabuddha, yet because of his

attachment to the girl; he arose as a vimanapeta (a flying ghost) of great psychic power

and majesty.

> *"He went in human form and saluted him and asked, 'Do you have any need of thread, sir?' 'We are making robes, layfollower' (he replied). He pointed out the home of the girl, saying, 'Well then, you should go and beg some thread at a place such as that.' The Paccekabuddha went there and stood at the door of the house. When she saw the Paccekabuddha standing there, she realised that the worthy one was in need of some thread from her and, with devotion in her heart, gave him a ball of thread. Then that non-human in human form went to the house of the girl, begged her mother and dwelt with her for a few days. To help her mother he filled all the vessels in their home with money and gold and wrote above his name on them all, saying, 'This wealth that has been given by the devas is not to be taken by anyone', and then took the girl and went to his mansion."*
> (Peta Stories, page 152 and 153)

9. The following incident shows that even if one has done good deeds, if his

intensity of attachment or desire is high, it can shape the next birth from positive to

negative. Here, because of his attachment towards a woman, this person instead of taking

birth in devaloka (godly realms) took birth as peta (ghost). However, in the incident, he

manages to fulfil his wish by his psychic powers after becoming a peta.

> *"Though he had done skilled deeds he did not arise in the devaloka but instead arose as a vimanapeta in the middle of the ocean on account of his attachment to that woman."*
> (Peta Stories, page 282)

10. This incident provides a clear statement of Merit as a base. It is noted that until
this point, Merit's mention is quite prevalent and that it also relates to psi.

> *"It is possible by iddhi to effect a transformation of one character into another in the continuity of anything, or to prolong it in its own character. This may be accomplished through Merit or other causes."*
> (Points of controversy, page 358)

11. In the following incidences, the Buddha talks about increasing one's life span

by iddhis, however, this potency is developed only by Dhamma.

> *"Lastly, if all things are applications of mindfulness, they must be equally other of the (thirty-seven) things pertaining to enlightenment, such as the supreme efforts, the steps to magic potency, the controlling faculties and forces, the factors of enlightenment. To this admission are you committed."*
> (Points of controversy, page 108)

> *"knowing that his vital principle or functioning is but the result of karma, has to deny that his vital functions are determined by iddhi. All that magic potency can effect is to avert things that would bring about an untimely death"*
> *"Ananda, whosoever has cultivated, developed, established, built up, and persistently practised the four Steps to Iddhi,?so as to be able to use them as a vehicle and as abasts, he, should he desire it, could remain in the same birth for a kappa, or for that portion of the kappa which had yet to run."*
> (Points of controversy, page 258 to 260)

12. The following sutra clearly gives a theory for the foundation of psychic powers.

Again, this is related to Dhamma or Shila, Samadhi and Prajna.

> *"He develops the basis for spiritual power consisting in concentration due to zeal and determined striving; he develops the basis for spiritual power consisting in concentration due to energy and determined striving; he develops the basis for spiritual power consisting in concentration due to [purity of] mind and determined striving; he develops the basis for spiritual power consisting in concentration due to investigation and determined striving."*
> *"These things that I have taught you after directly knowing them—that is, the four foundations of mindfulness, the four right kinds of striving, the four bases for spiritual power, the five faculties, the five powers, the seven enlightenment factors, the Noble Eightfold Path."*
> (The book of analysis, page 1145)

13. Referring to the concept of killing; the Buddha acknowledges various ways of

doing it, including psychic powers. In the same passage, the Buddha talks about the

power in merits and its usefulness for the path of happiness. The mention of psi is also

notable here because it demonstrates that one can cause harm, like killing, by means of

psi as well. However, the right justification of such acts is only provided in accord with

Dhamma.

> *"By means ': in the case of killing-breathing-things there are six kinds of means: with one's own hand, by command, by missile, by fixed contrivance, by [magical] science, and by supernormal power."*
> (The minor readings, page 25)

> *"[Magical] science as means' is the pronouncement of the incantations of [magical] science for the purpose of causing death.?*
> *Supernormal power as means ' is the causing of alterations by the supernormal power that is the ripening of action, such as the sharpening of the tusks, etc., of those that have tusks as weapons, and so on."*
> (The minor readings, page 27)

14. The following passage is particularly important. Here, the Buddha is providing

many accounts of psychic potency which can be developed only by purification. This

stance is different from concentration itself because clearly, Buddha is approaching

concentration by purification, not by suppression of defilements. It is important to note

that according to this passage, even for the practice of concentration, only that which

purifies or makes one tranquil can be useful for psi. Again, concentration is a part of

Dhamma and also one of the merits. The next passage will also confirm this. Thus, I

would conclude that again these two nodes can be considered as the base for psi.

> *"But, bhikkhus, there comes a time when his mind becomes internally steady, composed, unified, and concentrated. That concentration is peaceful and sublime, gained by full tranquilization, and attained to unification; it is not reined in and checked by forcefully suppressing [the defilements]. Then,*
> *there being a suitable basis, he is capable of realizing any state realizable by direct knowledge toward which he might incline his mind.*
> *"If he wishes: 'May I wield the various kinds of psychic potency: having been one, may I become many; having been many, may I become one; may I appear and vanish; may I go unhindered through a wall, through a rampart, through a mountain as though through space; may I dive in and out of the earth as though it were water; may I walk on water without sinking as though it were earth; seated cross-legged, may I travel in space like a bird; with my hand may I touch and stroke the moon*

and sun so powerful and mighty; may I exercise mastery with the body as far as the brahma world,' he is capable of realizing it, there being a suitable basis.

"If he wishes: 'May I, with the divine ear element, which is purified and surpasses the human, hear both kinds of sounds, the divine and human, those that are far as well as near,' he is capable of realizing it, there being a suitable basis.

"If he wishes: 'May I understand the minds of other beings and persons, having encompassed them with my own mind. May I understand a mind with lust as a mind with lust and a mind without lust as a mind without lust; a mind with hatred as a mind with hatred and a mind without hatred as a mind without hatred; a mind with delusion as a mind with delusion and a mind without delusion as a mind without delusion; a contracted mind as contracted and a distracted mind as distracted; an exalted mind as exalted and an unexalted mind as unexalted; a surpassable mind as surpassable and an unsurpassable mind as unsurpassable; a concentrated mind as concentrated and an unconcentrated mind as unconcentrated; a liberated mind as liberated and an unliberated mind as unliberated,' he is capable of realizing it, there being a suitable basis.

"If he wishes: 'May I recollect my manifold past abodes, that is, one birth, two births, three births, four births, five births ten births, twenty births, thirty births, forty births, fifty births, a hundred births, a thousand births, a hundred thousand births, many eons of world-dissolution, many eons of world- evolution, many eons of world-dissolution and world-evolution thus: "There I was so named, of such a clan, with such an appearance, such was my food, such my experience of pleasure and pain, such my life span; passing away from there, I was reborn elsewhere, and there too I was so named, of such a clan, with such an appearance, such was my food, such my experience of pleasure and pain, such my life span; passing away from there, I was reborn here"—may I thus recollect my manifold past abodes with their aspects and details,' he is capable of realizing it, there being a suitable basis.

"If he wishes: 'May I, with the divine eye, which is purified and surpasses the human, see beings passing away and being reborn, inferior and superior, beautiful and ugly, fortunate and unfortunate, and understand how beings fare in accordance with their kamma thus: "These beings who engaged in misconduct by body, speech, and mind, who reviled the noble ones,

held wrong view, and undertook kamma based on wrong view, with the breakup of the body, after death, have been reborn in the plane of misery, in a bad destination, in the lower world, in hell; but these beings who engaged in good conduct by body, speech, and mind, who did not revile the noble ones, who held right view, and undertook kamma based on right view, with the breakup of the body, after death, have been reborn in a good destination, in the heavenly world"—-thus with the divine eye, which is purified and surpasses the human, may I see beings passing away and being reborn, inferior and superior, beautiful and ugly, fortunate and unfortunate, and understand how beings fare in accordance with their kamma,' he is capable of realizing it, there being a suitable basis."

(The numerical discourses of the Buddha, page 336 and 337)

15. Following on from the previous passage; it is also found in the same book that Buddha talks about the importance of concentration by purification leading to the attainment of psi in the next several passages. He also gives the example of himself in his past life as a seer called Rohitassa, in which he had the psi potency of travelling fast. Still, in the end, he says he was subjected to death and thus subjected to suffering. So, in this way again the psi is related to suffering and teaching Dhamma.

> *"If a bhikkhu devoted to the higher mind attends exclusively to the mark of concentration, it is possible that his mind will veer toward laziness. If he attends exclusively to the mark of exertion, it is possible that his mind will veer toward restlessness. If he attends exclusively to the mark of equanimity, it is*
> *possible that his mind will not be properly concentrated for the destruction of the taints. But when from time to time he gives attention to the mark of concentration, from time to time to the mark of exertion, and from time to time to the mark of equanimity, his mind becomes malleable, wieldy, and luminous, not brittle but properly concentrated for the destruction of the taints. Then, there being a suitable basis, he is capable of realizing any state realizable by direct knowledge toward which he might incline his mind.*
> *"If he wishes: 'May I wield the various kinds of psychic potency'... [all as in, down to:]... If he wishes: 'May I, with the destruction of the taints, in this very life realize for myself with direct knowledge the taintless liberation of mind, liberation by wisdom, and having entered upon it, may I dwell in it,' he is capable of realizing it, there being a suitable basis."*
> (The numerical discourses of the Buddha, page 339)

> *"In the past, Bhante, I was a seer named Rohitassa, son of Bhoja, one possessing psychic potency, able to travel through the sky. My speed was like that of a light arrow easily shot by a firm-bowed archer—one trained, skillful, and experienced'—across the shadow of a palmyra tree. My stride was such that it could reach from the eastern ocean to the western ocean. Then, while I possessed such speed and such a stride, the wish arose in me: 'I will reach the end of the world by traveling.' Having a life span of a hundred years, living for a hundred years, I travelled for a hundred years without pausing except to eat, drink, chew, and taste, to defecate and urinate, and to dispel fatigue*
> *with sleep; yet I died along the way without having reached the end of the world."*
> (The numerical discourses of the Buddha, page 435)

16. In the following passage, the act of donation is done with expectation and a wish has been fulfilled. In this instance, when karma is exhausted, Sariputta returns to the normal state of being, in the state of suffering. Here again, even though there is mention of psychic ability, still, the dharma aspect is more important. Contrary to this; in the next passage, the Buddha explains that one who gives with a purified mind, without expectation, will not return to a state of being.

> *"In that case, Sariputta, he gives a gift with expectations, with a bound mind, looking for rewards; he gives a gift, [thinking]: 'Having passed away, I will make use of this.' Having given such a gift, with the breakup of the body, after death, he is reborn in companionship with the devas [ruled by] the four great kings. Having exhausted that kamma, psychic potency, glory, and authority, he comes back and returns to this state of being.*
> (The numerical discourses of the Buddha, page 1042)
>
> *He does not give a gift, [thinking]: 'I cook; these people do not cook. It isn't right that I who cook should not give to those who do not cook.' He does not give a gift, [thinking]: 'just as the seers of old... held those great sacrifices,*
> *so I will share a gift.' He does not give a gift, [thinking]: 'When I am giving*
> *a gift my mind becomes placid, and elation and joy arise.' But rather, he gives a gift, [thinking]: 'It's an ornament of the mind, an accessory of the mind.' Having given such a gift, with the breakup of the body, after death, he is reborn in companionship with the devas of Brahma's company.*
> *Having exhausted that kamma, psychic potency, glory, and authority, he does not come back and return to this state of being.*
> (The numerical discourses of the Buddha, page 1043)

17. From the following passage it is important to note that Buddha has used psi only to teach Dhamma.

> *On that occasion, when he had attained arahantship, the Venerable Anuruddha spoke these verses: "Having understood my thoughts, the unsurpassed teacher in the world came to me by psychic potency? in a mind-made body.*
> *"He taught me more than my thoughts contained, the Buddha, delighting in non-proliferation, instructed me in non-proliferation.*
> *"Having learned his Dhamma, I delighted in his teaching. I have gained the three true knowledges; the Buddha's teaching has been done."*
> (The numerical discourses of the Buddha, page 1165)

18. From pages 379 to 384, the Buddha talks about various forms of success, and it includes several accounts of psi abilities such as mind-made body and preaching the Dhamma to gods and Brahmas. Again, although the theory is given by which proper psi is explained, it all relates to Dhamma.

(The path of discrimination, page 379 to 384)

19. The Buddha talks about two forms of psychic powers in the following passage, and both are related to Dhamma discussion. These two supernormal powers are *ignoble* and *noble*. The latter is described as "incompatible with mental intoxicants or with world aims" and is therefore only achieved by following Dhamma. The main crux of this passage that is to be understood is the emphasis on Dhamma. Even at this stage, it is quite hard to understand the psi in light of specific theory, however, the mention of Dhamma or living a good life and attaining good deeds is consistent, which then confirms the finding of an analysis of merits connection with psi.

> *Moreover, lord, unsurpassable is the way in which the Exalted One teaches the Norm concerning modes of supernormal power, that there are two modes, to Supernormal power which is concomitant with the mental intoxicants and with worldly aims. This is called ignoble [power]. Supernormal power which is not so concomitant. This is called noble [power]. And what, lord, is the former, the ignoble supernormal power? When, lord, some recluse or brahmin, by the means aforesaid, reaches up to such rapture of mind, that rapt in thought he becomes able to enjoy divers modes of supernormal power :—from being one he becomes multiform, from being multiform, he becomes one; from being visible he becomes in visible; he passes without hindrance to the further side of a wall, or a battlement, or a mountain, as if through air ; he penetrates up and down through solid ground as if through water ; he walks on water without dividing it as if on solid ground ; he travels cross-legged through the sky, like a bird on the wing ; he touches and feels with the hand even the moon and the sun, of mystic power and potency though they be ; he reaches even in the body up to the heaven of Brahma. This, lord, is the supernormal power, concomitant with the mental Intoxicants and with worldly*

aims, that is called ignoble. And what, lord, is the second mode, called noble? This is when a bhikkhu can, if he so desire, remain unconscious of disgust amid what is disgusting ; or conscious of disgust amid what is not disgusting ; or unconscious of disgust amid what is both disgusting and the opposite ; or conscious of disgust amid what is both disgusting and the opposite ; or, avoiding both that which is disgusting and the opposite, should remain indifferent to them as such, mindful and understanding. This, lord, is the super normal power, incompatible with mental intoxicants or with worldly aims, which is called noble. Unsurpassable, lord, is this concerning modes of super normal power.
(Dialogues of the Buddha Vol. III, page 106 and 107)

Which Two are to be realized? Supernormal knowledge and emancipation.
Now these Twofold things are genuine, true, thus, not otherwise, not different, and perfectly comprehended by the Tathagata.
(Dialogues of the Buddha Vol. III, page 252)

20. More findings confirming psi with Dhamma.

Bhadda Kapilan? Kassapa, the son, the heir of the Buddha, well concentrated, who knows his former habitation and sees heaven and hell,
and has attained the destruction of rebirths, is a sage perfected in supernormal knowledge. Because of these three knowledges he is a brahman with triple knowledge.
In just the same way Bhadda Kapilan, with triple knowledge, having left death behind, bears her last body, having conquered Mara and his mount.
Having seen the peril in the world, we both went forth; with asavas annihilated, tamed, we have become cool, quenched.
(Elders verses III., page 10)

21. Monk Pindalavaccha exercises psychic power to make an ornament of gold for a crying girl. Additionally, he also makes the palace of a king golden, by volitional force, to prove to the king that the girl's ornament is created by psychic potency by him and that she had not stolen it. (The book of the discipline Vol. II, page 128 to 130)

22. From pages 32 to 45 is the incident of Uruvella Kassapa with Buddha. Here Buddha has shown many magic potencies such as mind-reading, mind's influence over

matter (like chopping wood in seconds), fighting with angry serpents, etc. However, he did this all to finally show Kassapa the greatness of the Buddha, and in the end, he got ordination into the Dhamma. (The book of the discipline Vol. IV, page 32 to 45)

23. In the following incident the Buddha exercised healing power to Suppiya who took her flesh from the body for making soup for an ill monk. Her donation was considered meritorious and following this magic potency, many who were present there became a great followers of the Buddha.

> " How is Suppiya ? "?" She is ill, Lord."?"Well then, let her come."?" She is not able to do so, Lord."?"Well then, having taken hold of her, bring her along."
> Then the layfollower Suppiya, having taken hold of the woman layfollower Suppiya, brought her along. When the Lord saw her, even that great wound became healed, the skin was (made) good with (small) hairs growing on it.
> Then the layfollower Suppiya and the woman layfollower Suppiya, saying : " Wonderful indeed, marvellous indeed are the great psychic power and the great potency of the Truth- finder, inasmuch as when the Lord sees (someone) even a great wound will be healed, the skin (made) good with (small) hairs growing on it," and joyful, elated, having with their own hands served and satisfied the Order of monks with the enlightened one at its head with sumptuous foods, solid and soft, when the Lord had eaten and had withdrawn his hand from the bowl, they sat down at a respectful distance. Then the Lord having gladdened, rejoiced, roused, delighted the layfollower Suppiya and the woman layfollower Suppiya with talk on Dhamma, rising from his seat, departed.
> (The book of the discipline, Vol. IV, page 296 to 298)

24. The following incident describes monk Pindola Bharadwaja levitating in order to bring down a sandalwood bowl but is later scolded by the Buddha. Buddha makes a rule which prohibits any public display of psychic powers, and he suggests that the monks are not to use the bowl as it is an offence of wrong-doing, because the bowl is not earned by the correct means but instead by psychic powers. This thought again confirms the importance of Dhamma.

" The venerable Pindola the Bharadvaja is a perfected one as well as of psychic power. Go along, reverend Bharadvaja, fetch down this bowl; this bowl is for you." Then the venerable Pindola the Bharadvaja, having risen above the ground, having taken hold of that bowl, circled three times round Rajagaha. Now at that time, the (great) merchant of Rajagaha was standing with his wife and children in his own dwelling holding up his joined palms in salutation, paying homage, and saying: " Honoured sir, let master Bharadvaja come to rest just here at our dwelling." Then the venerable Pindola the Bharadvaja came to rest at the dwelling of the (great) merchant of Rajagaha. Then the (great) merchant of Rajagaha, having taken the bowl from
the hand of the venerable Pindola the Bharadvaja, having filled it with costly solid foods, bestowed it on the venerable Pindola the Bharadvaja. Then the venerable Pindola the Bharadvaja, having taken hold of that bowl, went off to the monastery."
" Monks, a condition of further-men, a wonder of psychic power is not to be exhibited to householders. Whoever should exhibit them, there is an offence of wrong-doing. Break, monks, this wooden bowl; having reduced it to fragments, give them to monks as perfume to mix with ointment. And, monks, a wooden bowl should not be used. Whoever should use one, there is an offence of wrong-doing."
(The book of the discipline, Vol. IV, page 149 to 152)

25. In the following incident, Devadatta's psychic powers diminished the moment he had impure thoughts to use them. It is important to note here that psi abilities will diminish if one has impure thoughts to use them. The most important element to draw from this theme is the importance of purification, which in turn, is in line with Dhamma.

Then there arose to Devadatta, overcome by gains, honours and fame, his mind obsessed by them, some such longing as this: "It is I who will lead the Order of monks." But at the very occurrence of this thought Devadatta declined in his psychic power.
(The book of the discipline, Vol. IV, page 269 to 271)

26. The Nalagiri elephant was tamed by the Buddha with loving-kindness. This incident is similar to the incident of Suppiya (no.23) where the power of loving-kindness (which is again one of the merits) was used to exercise mastery over an outer object, using the power of the mind.

Then the elephant Nalagiri, having taken the dust of the Lord's feet with his trunk, having scattered it over his head, moved back bowing while he gazed upon the Lord. Then the elephant Nalagiri, having returned to the elephant stable, stood in his own place; and it was in this way [195] that the elephant Nalagiri became tamed. Now at that time people sang this verse :
"Some are tamed by stick, by goads and whips. The elephant was tamed by the great seer without a stick, without a weapon."
(The book of the discipline, Vol. IV, page 272 to 274)

5.5   Analysis Results Discussion

The above instances give the reader an understanding of how iddhis (psychic powers) are presented in the Pāli Canon. The analysis showed that psi is present within the literature, however, much of the importance is given to the preaching of Dhamma rather than explaining the mechanism or scientific phenomena that occurs when one exercises psi. Although selected incidences are mentioned here, the aim was to evidence that similar structures are found in other instances too. It is also important to consider this literature in connection to the literature that was previously reviewed with regards to parapsychology's understanding of psi earlier in Chapter 1 and see what connection can be drawn. In order to do this, I will discuss using four different main sections: Louis Rhine's accounts, Honorton's noise reduction model, Serena Roney-Dougal's research outcomes, and Dean Radin's view on eastern understanding of supernatural powers.

5.5.1   Louisa Rhine

Louisa Rhine's perspective (section 2.8) was evidenced earlier in Chapter two where she stresses that the first two groups of psi experiences, i.e., hallucinatory and intuitive, are only possible in the waking state (Rhine, 1953). As I noted before; this waking state also has a relation to the tradition of meditation. From the analysis of Pāli Canon, it

was found that the waking state is possible with the purification of the mind. In order to purify, one needs to follow the path of the Dhamma. In the process, one also strives to accumulate ten perfections. Louisa Rhine also came to the conclusion that psi is possible with waking states, however, she does not stress the importance of purification of mind from its defilements in order to achieve this state. Furthermore, Rhine (1953) also acknowledges that the process of acquiring psi knowledge had to occur on an unconscious level. She emphasised that the mechanism of attaining that knowledge had to go over the threshold in order to contribute to a conscious perception of such experiences. In simple words, she concluded that this process occurs underneath the level of consciousness. The main difference here that I would like to highlight is how the process of psi appears. For Louisa Rhine, the psi is spontaneous, however, in the Pāli Canon, this process can be mastered with the help of the practice of meditation. Not only this but the psi can also be used in accordance with one's desire.

Rhine (1962a) identified that extrasensory perception might be seen as a sporadic phenomenon that was restricted and exercised with difficulty. This again is in contrast with the Pāli Canon where such occurrences are exercised easily, and they are not sporadic. The conclusion according to my understanding would be that 'mastery over the mind' plays a considerable role in the performance of psi. Psi in everyday life might be the product of the unintended practice of Dhamma, however, it still helps to develop psi through purification and therefore the accumulation of merits is taking place as well. However, in the case of meditation, as seen in Pāli Canon, the psi performance solely depended on the various stages one achieves on the path. Rhine (1962a) also states that extrasensory perception that takes place below the conscious level can be divided into

separate elements, she also makes a case that the instances of psi that were spontaneous could probably be elicited on purpose. She mentions that there may be numerous personal factors that could influence the formation of psi and that they can be manipulated with personal inclination. I consider this finding of Rhine's to be very useful, as the parallels can be drawn here with the Pāli Canon's understanding. Although Rhine was not entirely clear how those personal motives can be developed for full control over psi, the Pāli Canon answers this by confirming that psi and personal motives are possible if one has accumulated enough merits. The numerous psychological processes that Rhine emphasises are the ten perfections from the Pāli Canon. Although Rhine fails to address this, her understanding is similar to some extent with that of the Pāli Canon.

Two things can be well noted with the above examination; firstly, the waking states, and secondly the psychological processes which are happening below the conscious level of the mind. In my view, the analysis of Pāli Canon broadens our understanding of them both by concluding that psi is possible with an awakened state of mind and with various psychological actions which consist of both the Dhamma aspect and of purification and merits.

5.5.2 Honorton

Another main aspect from the literature review which can be compared sympathetically with the Pāli Canon analysis is Honorton's Noise Reduction Model. As discussed earlier (section 1.4) this model of psi is regarded as one of the dominant theories in modern parapsychology because of its goal-oriented approach. Ben and Honorton (1994) emphasised that the reduction of the ordinary sensory input leads to the

enhanced psi mediation. In the Pāli Canon, I found a similar understanding when it describes achieving one of the stages of jhana (it's the fourth stage) and how it can lead one to achieve psi (The Connected Discourses of the Buddha, Vol. I, p. 671 to 674); Appendix A, p. 98 to 100). Within Pāli Canon, it is also observed that the fourth jhana also has the characteristic of neither perception nor non-perception (Discourse on Elements, p. 73; Appendix A, p. 56). Once this fourth jhana is achieved, according to Pāli Canon, many psychic powers are possible as I presented them in the analysis. However, this fourth jhana is not achieved by shunning the ordinary senses only. In fact, in the fourth jhana all the bodily senses stop working except the mind and that too had an extreme concentration usually described as one-pointedness of the mind (Yogi, 1997). In Pāli Canon it is seen that this jhana is achieved by the abandoning of pleasure and pain, and with the previous passing away of joy and displeasure. The characteristic of this fourth jhana is described as neither painful nor pleasant and it includes the purification of mindfulness by equanimity (Appendix A, p. 98). The state is often described as the transformation of mind from the pure to impure and has higher ecstasy and equanimity. Yogi (1997) also mentions that right mindfulness fortifies the mind with good qualities and the right concentration ensures its development. Both are in the realm of Samadhi and Vipassana. In this stage, the thoughts are minimal or cease to exist. Honorton's understanding of exiting from normal ordinary senses can be seen as parallel to Yogi's inputs and is also reflected in the Pāli Canon. However, Honorton limits psi to ordinary senses whereas Pāli Canon exceeds this understanding by stressing the importance of achieving the fourth jhana, where a higher inner sense of one-pointedness is achieved by purification of mindfulness by equanimity.

Both can be compared with Braud's (1975) psi-conductive state, where he proposes that altered states of awareness if achieved, can form a basis for psi. Parapsychological findings have previously shown positive results when attempts to exhibit a psi conductive state with meditation has taken place. Researchers such as Schemeilder (1970), Dukhan and Rao (1973) and Roll and Zill (1981) found that psi scores measured after meditation were generally higher than those measured before meditation. However, Pāli Canon's analysis offers a somewhat different understanding of this where meditation is also an act for the accumulation of merits and purification of mind. In this process, the fourth Jhana can be achieved, which is similar to the psi-conductive state that Braud offers. However, previous researchers do not show such explanations for psi, including Honorton's meta-analysis of meditation-psi research in 1976.

5.5.3 Serena Roney-Dougle

The analysis now can be taken further by Serena Roney-Dougle's research outcome. Roney-Dougle, along with Solfvin and Fox (2008, 2011), showed a strong connection between meditation and conscious psi awareness. They claimed that psi produced by more experienced meditators would be more reliable than spontaneous psi produced by natural psychics. In comparison to beginners, meditation practitioners can have 20 or more years of experience. There is an interesting correlation here, analysis of Pāli Canon also shows a similar understanding; the more time spent on Merit's accumulation, the better are the chances for psi. However, in the Pāli Canon, psi isn't the goal, and merits are often needed or used to achieve the final goal of Nirvana. In the above instances, I have informed how merits are also used for psi purposes. Roney-

Dougle's research is interesting however as she does not acknowledge the role of merits or purification in relation to the manifestation of psi. Meditation itself is a meritorious act in Pāli Canon's view, however, parapsychologists seem to be missing the core mechanism or an acting agent of Merit as a base for psi.

Serena Roney-Dougal (2015) found that the ability to achieve high scores in psi testing depended considerably on the number of years that were devoted by the monks to the meditation practice. It is also noticeable that practitioners of 10 years' experience are considered to be relative beginners. Exceptional results were obtained by the monks with 30 years of experience. Pāli Canon always emphasised devoting the whole life to the path of Dhamma, and often psi abilities are gained with the more experience one has. As seen in the examples above, some beings also get psi in another life as a result of practice in this life. However, a considerable difference to point out here is the missing links that Roney-Dougle's research does not show which Pāli Canon manifests. Roney-Dougal (2015), while explaining the phenomenon of 'psi-missing', states that there are certain blocks that may serve as defence mechanisms that limit one's ability to elicit unconscious psychological processes. One of such blocks is a monk's exposure to scientific knowledge. However, blocks such as scientific knowledge are not present in Pāli Canon's analysis. Additionally, the example that is seen in section 3.7; the example of Devdatta (The book of the discipline, Vol. IV, Page 269 to 271) where he was not able to perform a psychic power because of impure thought, describes that his powers declined because he developed the ego and greed for honour, fame and gains. Here, the Pāli Canon suggests that an impure mind can be considered as an obstacle to achieving psi. Such understanding for 'psi-missing' is not present in Roney-Dougal's work.

Roney-Dougal (2015) also later claims that the majority of research projects in parapsychology are focused on eliciting the subconscious processes. She explains these processes as a set of physiological replies to external stimuli. As such, in terms of the connection between psi and meditation, one of the experiments that she described in her article included a set of physiological measurements (heart rate, blood pressure, body sweat) that had been made before a consciously felt stimulus. This allowed her to examine the subconscious nature of psi. This is rather interesting because as far as Pāli Canon analysis is concerned no such explanation and relations to psi are given. In the Pāli canon, psi is purely a psychological process that occurs in the mind and can be elicited with purity and merits. Although Roney-Dougle's research on meditation and psi have similarities with the correlation of time of practice with psi, her findings still do not acknowledge the importance of merits. Moreover, Roney-Dougle's research is influenced by the Tibetan tradition of Buddhism where the Pāli Canon's understanding can contrast with this at some level. To conclude, Serena Roney Dougle's contribution could be extended using the themes that are produced by Pāli Canon's analysis, as the emphasis on Shila, Samadhi and Prajna is not explored fully in her research. Additionally, Saccakiriya, which is a distinct factor of analysis, is not mentioned anywhere.

5.5.4 Dean Radin

Dean Radin's (2013) contribution to psi with meditation is reflected in the chapter from his book called "Supernormal". He has contributed a separate chapter on this and has covered studies that are already mentioned in the thesis. In this book, he states that similar to the yogic tradition, Tibetan Buddhism's tradition also maintains the

understanding that siddhis or iddhis arise as a result of deep absorption of Samadhi. Although, he does not mention which stage of absorption. In Theravada tradition, it is the fourth stage. Thus, Radin's book does not really emphasise various aspects of Samadhi. Furthermore, the refinement of the consciousness aspect is not considered in order to achieve those states. However, it is interesting to note that while talking about the outcome of ganzfeld experiments he mentions empirical studies from Storm, et al. (1992-2008) which confirm that participants with prior experience in meditation or those with meditative experiences performed significantly better than those who lack this experience (Radin, 2013). This finding corresponds with Roney-Dougle's findings as explained in section 3.3.

Apart from this Radin hypothesizes that a relaxed and attentive state of mind during meditation can demonstrate the psi phenomenon (Radin, 2006). This claim was made on the basis of Honorton's Noise Reduction Model. Regardless of numerous states of consciousness, parapsychologists believe that meditation is the most psi-conductive practice of all (Roney-Dougle & Solfvin, 2011). However, the approaches to achieving these psi-conductive states do not seem clear. Although evidential trials such as Schmeilder's meta-analysis have strongly supported the notion of relating meditation with psi, the meditation has other therapeutic effects too (Radin, 2013). In the book Supernormal, Radin (2013) asks whether meditation is just a relaxation technique and answers that it might be the commonalities of both psi and relaxation. Still, Radin's view on meditation is considered incomplete, as he does not take into account the Pāli Canon's approach to meditation. Here the goal is neither the relaxation nor the psi, but it is to end suffering via purification of mind. Both psi and relaxation come as a bi-product, although

they can be elicited with an earnest wish based on merits. This is a distinctive factor in the comparison of Radin's examination of meditation and psi, and what I found in Pāli Canon analysis. A recent meditation experiment's publication by Radin et al. (2012) claims that there are various meditation styles, however, no attempt has been made in the present studies to conduct a thorough assessment of differences among meditation styles, nor do they independently measure participants' capacity for sustaining focused attention. He further suggests that it can be expected in the future that studies will be carried out with various meditation styles which may have different outcomes. Here, I see that Radin's view is optimistic as far as my research is concerned. I would like readers to note two points: first, that he mentioned sustained focused attention, which is similar to the notion of Samadhi or mental absorption as found in the Pāli Canon, however, the longevity is also dependent on the purification of mind. The path shown in the Pāli Canon can be perceived as one way, in fact, the Buddha stresses that it is the only way. Secondly, in my view, Radin is suggesting the future direction of meditation research. Here, I see that the contribution of this thesis (particularly Pāli Canon analysis) is potentially very important, where the connection of Merit is established not only with sustained focused attention (Samadhi) but also with purification (prajna or wisdom). Radin et al. (2012) in their work do not showcase this viewpoint, however, I can confirm that there is a parallel understanding to some extent.

5.6   Paramitas as a Tool for Psychic Powers

The analysis showed that the Paramitas (Merits) can become a strong connection to the development of psychic powers. In turn, this may lead to the expansion of the

understanding of the topics of psi with regards to Buddhism and parapsychology. The analysis of the Pāli Canon showed that there are ten basic paramitas that commonly led a bodhisattva toward the path of becoming a Buddha, and those were also common themes found under the code of merits. The Theravada tradition recognizes ten, although only seven in the Cariyapitaka and the remaining three (wisdom, energy and patience) are mentioned in the closing stanza (Horner, 2000). Horner (2000) informs us that the remaining three perfections are implicit in the Pāli Canon's stories. Nevertheless, I was able to locate all ten in context with psi while doing analysis. The ten perfections in the Theravada tradition are (1) generosity (dana), (2) morality (sila), (3) renunciation (nekhamma), (4) insight (panna), (5) energy (viriya), (6) patience (khanti), (7) truthfulness (sacca), (8) resolution (adhitthana), (9) loving-kindness (metta), and (10) equanimity (upekkha). This list differs from the list of ten perfections found in Buddhist Sanskrit literature. A set of six perfections became common among some genres of mainstream Buddhist literature and were developed into a standard list in a number of Mahayana sutras. (Apple, 2016). The ten paramitas can be understood better as follows (Walsh, 1983):

The first paramita is called generosity. It means that the path to enlightenment cannot occur without helping others even at times when we do not have enough resources for ourselves. The key objective of the Theravadin path is to help others as much as we can. It is always necessary to assist those in need – for instance, those who are alone and hungry. The interesting fact found was, the paramita of generosity does not apply solely to humans – it relates to all sentient beings. Often it is seen that different sentient

beings offer generosity (dana) to accumulate this paramita. However, the common goal of doing such action is to seek liberation, rather than psi.

The second paramita is called morality. This means that the person that follows the Theravadin path has to be able to live an ethical life that will help them to do only good acts. Moreover, it also signifies internal integrity and motivates humans to do the right thing even when we are not observed by other sentient beings. Therefore, the paramita of morality is used to ensure that only the right things are done at all times. I found that from the point of Theravadin Buddhism, the one who is being moral should never look for benefits out of it, but he always chooses to be moral because it brings happiness. This paramita is accomplished by adhering to the Buddhist precepts rigorously.

The next paramita is called renunciation. The key idea behind this perfection is to abandon anything that is too sophisticated and cannot be used to follow the path of enlightenment. Renunciation is a Theravadin Buddhism concept that relates to the strength of attachment or detachment to the existing world. The person that is willing to follow the path of enlightenment should live in a way that would allow them to enlighten instead of desiring to live and holding on to the life itself. Usually, renunciation is linked with the ordination of monkhood as it helps one to follow the path and attain Nibbana easily.

The next paramita is wisdom (also known as Prajna). This paramita relates to the ability of a human being following the path of enlightenment to hold discernment in their heart. The ability to make reasonable decisions in times of confusion is also a sign of wisdom. Choosing the right path instead of following the wrong one is also related to Prajna. However, prajna is always related to purification in the Theravadin context where

it is found that the refinement of consciousness brings a lot of merits, which in turn, can help in the final goal of salvation.

The next paramita is called energy (Virya). In the Theravadin context, the energy of effort which is given for liberation or attaining enlightenment is the right effort. All the intentional energy given for this cause becomes Paramita. It is necessary and meritorious to concentrate on the right things and only contribute one's time to the acts that lead to enlightenment.

Another paramita that is critical in Theravadin Buddhism is patience. One of the main concepts that were shared in the Pāli Canon at all times was to be patient or practice tolerance. However, the patience that is practised within for the meditation time earns huge paramita.

The next paramita is called truthfulness. The path of enlightenment cannot be completed without honesty. The concept of truthfulness obliges any person that is following the path of enlightenment to say all the right words regardless of the outcome. Only by declaring things that are real will one be able to be in line with truthfulness. When a person follows the path of truthfulness, they help themselves to live a life that is free of unwholesome verbal action. Analysis showed that the theme of truthfulness within paramita has a unique place as I was able to find that it has elements of merits that serve as a basis for psi. (Section 5.7)

Another Theravadin paramita is determination. This means that in order to attain one's spiritual and lifetime goals, one should work hard as possible. Determination is synonymous with achieving spiritual freedom and the ability to walk toward the path of enlightenment freely.

Another important Theravadin paramita is loving-kindness. It is also largely taken into consideration because it is a component of the Four Sublime States. This paramita is responsible for meek love that is gentle at all times and represents a pure feeling. It is all about kindness and the ability to give or sharing. This paramita is also accomplished by loving-kindness practise and considered as one of the most important merits as well.

The last paramita that is characteristic of Theravadin Buddhism is equanimity. The main idea of this teaching is that all sentient beings are equal, and they should be treated respectfully. It is found that within a meditation context the equanimity becomes paramita when practised for liberation. The effort of equanimity whilst achieving purification is considered as most important because the development of all other paramitas are based on equanimity. Moreover, if the perfection of equanimity is achieved, the other perfections can be gained easily.

Among these ten paramitas, I found that two paramitas are very important and can be linked with Theravada's samatha (concentration) and vipassana (insight) meditation practice directly. These two perfections have already been mentioned in the chapter and they are the most important within the framework of the development of psychic powers which may transpire in the form of psi. I will combine those both as it is found in the analysis that both paramitas are also main types of meditation and they are always practised together. The first one is *Perfection of concentration* and the other is the *Perfection of Wisdom* (originally Prajna) which revolves around the concept of meditating over an object and is often linked to the concept of purification. The perfection of concentration helps to achieve perfection of wisdom thus these paramitas can be combined with 'Prajna-Paramita' because both have a base of meditation in it. Prajna-

Paramita is also very close in subject matter to the other tradition of Buddhism, especially to Mahayana Buddhism (Hixon, 1993). Analysis showed that Prajna-Paramita has the element of concentration and wisdom inherent in it. This paramita is significant in both conventional human life and Dharma practice (Ruhe, 2005). From Tibetan, the word that means concentration and meditation is zhinay where "nay" means "to stay" and "zhi" stands for "peacefully" (Stoeber & Meynell, 1996). If we put the two words together, we get the notion of a "calm abiding" (which might be linked to the psi-conductive states). It is crucial to discuss the paramitas or merits critically as they appear in Pāli Canon because the concept of Merit has emerged continuously within it in relation to psi. The perfection of Merit by the means of Dhamma practice was seen as prominent in most of the psi incidences. The Prajna-Paramita helps one to understand the path of Dhamma, the ultimate nature of reality, and how to accumulate merits (Kyabje, 2000). As such, I will now explore a few examples and explain how merits ultimately result in psi, as seen in the Pāli Canon.

Within the Pāli Canon, it states that not only human beings but also other beings such as gods or even animals have psychic potency. For example, the nagas (snakes) had a long lifespan and they were meritorious. In the same incident, many other beings such as gods (devatas) were exercising powers as well by playing a musical instrument in mid-air and seeing the wonder in the zenith (Appendix A, p. 3). The kind of psi stated in the incident is unbelievable, however, and the way in which they performed it was not given. Although, one factor in common is that they are delighted by the Buddha and Dhamma. In yet another incident a naga-king named Atula had a psychic potency too. Here again, it was seen that his meritorious nature was mentioned. Interestingly, this

snake-king was subjected to a declaration where a Vipassin Buddha (one of the Buddha from the past) makes a prophecy about him that 'Ninety-two aeons from now this one will be a Buddha" (Appendix A, p. 12). This incident tells us about the past lives and also a prediction of the future (in parapsychological terms it is past lives or survival after death and precognition). How it was calculated remains unclear, but the idea of perfecting merits remains the same. From the parapsychological literature I reviewed earlier (in chapters Two and Three), it is dubious to call this incidence spontaneous or happening below a conscious level as per Rhine (Rhine, 1962a). The nature of it looks firmer to me as far as its occurrence is concerned. Although validation of such phenomenon from the point of view of modern parapsychologists such as Braud, Radin, etc. may not be given, it appears that those beings exercised psi very naturally rather than entering into Braud's psi conductive states (1975). It appears that they either live in such states continuously or psi is possible for them as a matter of merit's perfection.

It was also seen in the Pāli Canon that one can enter into a different realm of existence by the means of meritorious deeds. This is also one of the psi elements that are recognised by parapsychologists. For example, a yakkha (spirit) claims that by way of his own meritorious deeds, he has entered in the state of a yakkha (Appendix A, p. 19). Many similar examples can be found in the Pāli Canon. Again, they appeared to happen naturally as a result of merits rather than spontaneous or entering a certain psi-conductive state. In one of the commentaries, there is clear mention that iddhi may be accomplished through Merit or other causes, as when, to feed bhikkhus (monks), water was turned into butter, milk, etc., (Appendix p. 26). In Christianity, Jesus turning water into wine was a very famous miracle (Larmer, 1988). Had he used merits to do so or simply his divine

authority is a matter of investigation. However, the literature suggests that he performed such a miracle for a wedding feast rather than as seen in the Pāli Canon to emphasise the accomplishment of Merit or glory of Dhamma. One important thread though is compassion which is also one of the merits. Christians believe that this, and also other miracles performed by Jesus, was a compassionate act (Cooper, 1979). From my analysis, I can conclude that the element of compassion also forms the base of Merit which forms the base for psi. Modern practitioners of meditation also believe that psi is possible with compassion (section 6.7.2).

Now when linking the literature of precognition, telepathy and clairvoyance and PK (section 2.2) with the Pāli Canon analysis; a number of conclusions can be made. Firstly, Bem (2011) emphasises that precognition is a process of transmitting information or energy that will happen in the future. In the above example of the Naga king (Appendix A, p. 12), the Vipassin Buddha made a prophecy about him that he will be a Buddha after ninety-two aeons from the time of prophecy. This seems quite a specific prediction. According to Bem (2011), the medium of knowing this information shall be a transmission of a certain type of energy. In the Pāli Canon, it wasn't clear how the Vipassin Buddha made this declaration, however, the Naga king afterwards indulged in accumulating merits in order to become future Buddha. This also suggests the fact that such kind of psychic potency (and others) is actually a result of Buddhahood which needs the accumulation of merits for a considerable amount of time. Nonetheless, such understanding is not showcased in parapsychological literature as far as precognition is concerned. Secondly, I discussed telepathy earlier (section 2.2.1.2) where I also explored various types of telepathy. From the findings presented in this chapter, it is clear that

telepathy was very much practised in the psi incidences in the Pāli Canon. It is predominantly conscious telepathy that was taking place where both people (or beings) were involved in the process of telepathic dialogue. The telepathy in Pāli Canon is not seen as spontaneous as Rhine and Pratt (2010) state, however, it is more natural and conscious. We have also seen sensual telepathy where an elephant's pain was relieved by the Buddha by compassion (Appendix A, p. 88; The Book of the Discipline, Vol. V, p. 272 to 274). One more example can also be given where Buddha was able to heal Suppiya and miraculously newly healed flesh on her body was produced (The book of the discipline, Vol. IV, page 296 to 298). Similar explanations can be given for clairvoyance (section 2.2.1.3) where various parapsychological abilities are apparent in the Pāli Canon. They include clairaudience, clairsentience, claircognizance, etc. Again, this was accomplished naturally by undertaking the path of destruction to the suffering and accumulating merits. As far as psychokinesis experiences are concerned, we have seen the levitation phenomena where a monk was able to lift himself to collect the sandalwood bowl at a distance (The book of the discipline, Vol. IV, page 149 to 152).

Another critical dialogue here would be considering L. Rhine's perspective (section 2.8) where she talks about experiences of hallucinatory, intuitive, dreams and physical effects. Where the Pāli Canon's incidences are hallucinatory or intuitive is a different question, however, I am certain to the fact that at the scriptural level, its validity will be difficult to verify. It is for this reason that the analysis also extended to interviewing living practitioners in order to ascertain their thoughts, feelings or experiences with regards to the Pāli Canon's account.

To conclude, merit's base for the occurrence of psi is a central finding of the Pāli Canon. In the next section, I will explain how the merits are found to be connected with the notion and act of truth where both are utilised for the display of an earnest wish or psi. This will help the reader to understand the theme of Saccakiriya and evidence why it is important to consider this in more depth.

5.7   Saccakiriya as a Link between Psychic Powers and Buddhism

In the ancient Buddhist Theravada tradition, the notion of the proclamation of truth was often used for morally important or mortally pressing purposes. This concept was termed as Act of Truth in the 19th century by Eugene Burlingame. He defines a truth utterance as 'a formal declaration of fact' (Burlingame, 1917). The Pāli name for the Act of Truth is Saccakiriya. *Sacca* means true speech and *kiriya* means to act or process of doing or performing something. For example, when a certain monk in the suttas was returning to the monastery, he saw a woman in intense pain having difficulty delivering a baby. After coming to the monastery, this monk reported to the Buddha about the woman. Buddha advised the monk to perform a Saccakiriya, proclaiming that since becoming a monk, the man had not killed any sentient being. The Buddha further instructed the monk to utter that, based on this soundness of this fact, may the woman find ease from pain and safely deliver the baby. Upon the monk's proclamation of the true statement three times in her presence, the woman delivered the baby safely and survived. (Kong, 2005)

Modern scholars have different opinions along with literature-based evidence about the actual intentions and processes involving Saccakiriya. In the Buddhist tradition, Saccakiriya is always performed on high moral grounds, where the performer recollects

the thoughts of good deeds done in the past. Burlingame (1917) suggests that it is not always the case and that the actual process itself should be of truth. For example, an ascetic, a householder and his wife referred to their bad qualities for Saccakiriya (Jataka no. 444). Brown (1968, 1971, 1972) however, does not agree with Burlingame. He says that truth should be the absolute performance of one's own duty (*vrata*).

A renowned Buddhist scholar Richard Gombrich (1971) describes that Saccakiriya is "a solemn asseveration of one's righteousness" Gombrich, 1971). Gombrich's explanation seems logical in accordance with the Buddha's teaching where importance is consistently given to achieving purity of mind. For this aim, according to Buddha, one has to follow the universal path of righteousness, wherein one earns good deeds and merit. This merit can be the source and fount of making an earnest wish. In Mahayana and Vajrayana traditions, it is commonly said that one should not just earn the merit but use it as a type of income for other beings. It is also interesting to note that modern scholars believe the Buddha disapproved of the performance psychic powers by his disciples yet was nonetheless positive about using Saccakiriya. In general, however, the Buddha deplored their use, preferring to spread the Dhamma by the 'miracle of teaching' and the self-propagating power of truth (Mahathera, 1975).

While performing psychic powers is prohibited by the Buddha, there are many incidences in Buddhist literature where the psi phenomenon is occurring by performing the Act of Truth or having the essence of Saccakiriya. The following show examples where such phenomenon occurred after performing Saccakiriya. (Kong, 2005):

1.   When Sirima flung boiling ghee on Uttara's head, the ghee became like cold water.

2.   The King meditates on the qualities of three jewels and wishes by their supernormal power; let the water be to him, unlike water in order to cross the flooded river.

3.   Narada put forth the magical power to prevent the sun from rising.

4.   At the moment when Buddha saw Suppiya, her wound healed.

5.   When the poor farmer and his wife had offered some food and water to the elder Sariputta, they discovered the broken-up soil which Punna had ploughed in that early morning had all turned into pieces of gold.

6.   May all women who see me, other than my kinsmen and blood relatives, fall in love with me.

Along with this, many other examples can be found in the Buddhist literature of the Pāli Canon. The Saccakiriya is performed by uttering true words and it manifests its occurrence when it is done on the basis of merit. In my investigation, I found that the theme of Saccakiriya was common in both Pāli Canon analyses.

Roney-Dougle (2015) found that the ability to achieve high scores on psi is significantly co-related with the years of practice in the meditation (section 3.3). In the Pāli Canon analysis (section 5.4) Vipassin Buddha made precise predictions about the Naga king Atula becoming a Buddha in the future. For this course, he will have to accumulate merits for the next ninety-two aeons. In another example, Devaputta gave donation to a monk and recalled his virtues to free a peta (ghost) from hell (Appendix A. p. 18; Peta Stories, p. 55 and 56). A similar type of reference can be commonly found in the Pāli Canon where the virtues or merits have been used to exercise any type of iddhi or at least, an earnest wish causing births in different realms (Appendix A).

Within the analysis, I draw parallel that psi conductive states proposed by Braud (1975) (section 5.5) has similarities with Pali canon's understanding of psi where psi conductive states are achieved by refinement of consciousness and on the base of merit. Braud has conducted several PK studies in regard to meditation from 1971 to 1988 where meditation practitioners have demonstrated a stronger PK effect in almost seven out of eight studies. Interestingly, Braud (1990) noted that the psi-conductive factor was not identified by any of the research among these. He also outlines the taboo in eastern traditions where one follows the path to achieve progress in one's spiritual goal rather than aiming to achieve psi. From 1976 to 1992 there were 14 studies conducted in regard to meditation with psi. Nine of these studies were aimed at testing ESP and the remaining five were carried out to test PK. One of the studies also aimed at testing both. The results were very positive were five studies of ESP out of nine showed significant outcomes and three out of five from PK studies demonstrated the same. The point here to note is that the successful studies confirmed that meditation forms the base to be a psi-conductive state. Although Braud (1990) came to the conclusion that meditation and psi can be connected together, he does not take into consideration the Pali canon's understanding of psi. On a conclusive remark, the analysis suggests the strong connection of Saccakiriya with psi where the central finding of merit's base is vital. This notion can be investigated in future research with modern clinical trials.

5.8   Conclusions

The analysis of the data leads me to an important conclusion: regardless of the differences in the approaches applied by Buddhists and parapsychologists, there are

numerous factors that play a critical role in the process of displaying paranormal phenomena or psychic powers. It was critically explained that the merits can be the base of psi, which is a primary point of investigation of modern parapsychologists. This concept is central to the idea that the existence of psi is possible with the perfections of merits and meditation. I am certain of the fact that even though modern parapsychology differs critically from the conformist Pāli outlooks, several parallel understandings can be drawn. The key element that has been realised through this data analysis is that the way in which psi happens, either through conscious or unconscious processes, is understood in both parapsychological research and the Pāli Canon.

Parapsychologists regard them as psi conductive states and Buddhist Pāli Canon sees it as a development of mental state via merits, which bears much resemblance to psi-conductive states. Nonetheless, the true existence of such powers and the ability to obtain evidence of them remains to be one of the most serious concerns encountered by parapsychologists. The concept of merits and Saccakiriya can address these issues effectively, therefore, before designing any experiment it is imperative that modern Buddhist practitioners are interviewed and consulted to see whether their experiences are reflective of the accounts within the Pāli Canon.

The most important elements that have been gained from this chapter are very profound. Firstly, I would like to confirm that the psi as perceived from the Buddhist Theravadin Pāli Canon is not seen as spontaneous at all. This finding contradicts L. Rhine's (1962a) claims of psi being spontaneous. However, Rhine's (1962a) assertion that extrasensory perception taking place below the conscious level could be considered to have some parallels. Firstly, the data has shown that whenever the psi is performed in

the Pāli Canon, the power of concentration (jhana), Dhamma or Merit has been used. Whether this happens at a conscious or unconscious level however is not given. It may be the case that modern science has yet to fully understand the entire capabilities of the unconscious mind. Nonetheless, there are some passages that also confirm the Samadhi states, where psi can be possible if certain jhanic stages are achieved, particularly the fourth stage. This can be considered in line with psi conductive states, however, those who have attained such states appear to exercise psi naturally rather than needing to make an effort to enter into them.

One of the aims of this investigation was to identify any gaps in the research which arose from the content analysis. It appears that that Pāli Canon's descriptions are rather hard to validate without proper interviews or experimentation. As such, I propose that there is a gap in the research with regard to the validation of the accounts in the Pāli Canon. To conclude, this investigation has demonstrated that the Shila, Samadhi and Prajna, which were coded for the node of Dhamma, are directedly related to the accumulation of Merit. Merit is seen as the base of psi. However, this finding is only at the level of scripture and does not validate a contemporary reflection of living practitioners. As such, in the next stage of this research, expert Theravadin Buddhist meditators will be interviewed in order to evidence whether or not they demonstrate a similar understanding of psi.

5.9   Recap

Initially, I discussed the results of the NVivo analysis. The content analysis is in full compliance with the methodology that was described within the framework of the previous

chapter. However, the coding presented before differed from what emerged from the analysis itself. I as a researcher have incorporated the themes which address the research question of understanding psi better from a Buddhist perspective. I successfully aligned the current chapter with the main three themes that play a critical role in the analysis of psi occurrences: viz., Dhamma, Merit and Saccakiriya. However, the theme of Merit in association with psi was consistent among all three themes. I was also able to confirm that these three Buddhist principles may serve as the core scientific cause of the psi-related incentives. I then provided examples of the psi incidences that are evidenced within the Pāli Canon. Here, the node of Dhamma was created under which, three themes of Shila, Samadhi and Prajna were presented. The second node; Merit, had ten perfections under it. The separate third node of Saccakiriya was also presented. This can be found and understood clearly with figure 5.1. The subsequent sub-codes were presented in table 5.2. These findings were then aligned with the literature presented in the first chapter. The analysis highlighted several similarities and distinctions from the understanding of Rhine, Honorton, Roney-Dougal and Radin. The analysis in the light of Dhamma and Merits led me to a number of conclusions regarding the notion of Paramitas. The conclusion that was made here revolves around the idea that the merits are rather effective as a means of developing, cultivating, and displaying psychic powers. Their connection to the practice of meditation was also highlighted. Then, I addressed the information contained in the Pāli Canon regarding the Paramitas via Saccakiriya and perceived them as a possible tool for psychic powers. Throughout this subsection of the thesis, I thoughtfully discuss the concept of merits and evaluated the link that can be created between wishful thinking and the occurrence of psi. According to the results of

the content analysis, the Saccakiriya can be perceived as a possible link between the notion of psi and Buddhism. The purpose of the content analysis was to reveal the fact that the Buddhist understanding of psi is not reflected totally within research by parapsychologists. Because psi evidence within the Pāli Canon is at the scriptural level, it cannot be interrogated any further. In order to draw a contemporary understanding of this psi, it is very important to interview living practitioners of the Theravada tradition. Therefore, the analysis provides impetus to approach experienced meditators who can show evidential authority on the textual accounts of the Pāli Canon. As such, the next chapter in this thesis will provide more information about the interview phase.

6   Chapter VI Interviews

This chapter outlines how the scriptural work of the Pāli Canon is complemented by the interviews with living meditation practitioners. In the previous chapter, I discovered that the sacred texts of the Pāli Canon have 257 instances of psi. I also reported on the emerged themes from them such as Shila, Samadhi and Prajna which constitute Dhamma and the ten Paramitas which make the base of Merit. However, I acknowledge that the Pāli Canon is an ancient text (2500 years old) and it may not reflect contemporary practice for two reasons: firstly because of the huge time gap and secondly because it is a written material it cannot be questioned (for example by being able to ask follow-up questions). The time gap is a considerable issue within this framework because the instances we see in the Pāli Canon are no longer seen occurring in today's world. This also raises matters such as the credibility and authenticity of such phenomena. Additionally, the instances in the Pāli Canon occur naturally (at least for those who seem to have perfected their conduct of Merit and Dhamma) and are portrayed as something which is easy to perform with an almost 100 per cent success rate, this is in contrast with parapsychological literature which suggests the success rate of psi occurrence (either spontaneous or with achieving psi conductive state) is not consistent. The other problematic issue with the Pāli Canon is that it cannot be explored any further, as this is impossible with written material. Therefore, in order to clarify the findings and doubts from the Pāli Canon, it is of the utmost importance to validate them, at least at an experiential level, from modern-day living meditation practitioners. This will enable me to make firmer

conclusions regarding the understanding of psi from the Pāli Canon which has been analysed in the previous chapter.

As such, in order to confirm whether the spiritual scriptural work can be complemented by the living practitioners, the need for interviews with living practitioners was identified. That is why I planned to conduct interviews.

To justify the methodological choice (along with further detailed justification given in section 6.5.1) of an interview, it is also important to give an overview of the main reasons for conducting phase one and presenting the analysis as per the previous chapter. The analysis of the Pāli Canon's understanding of psychic powers was one of the main phases of this research project. The core categories and themes, as found in the Pāli Canon analysis, lead me to understand psi better and draw several conclusions regarding its occurrence. The analysis showed the theme of merits or good deeds as the base for developing psychic powers. Based on that analysis, it was important to gather further evidence from living meditation practitioners.

The aim of this chapter is to emphasise the relevance of the theme of merits that was found previously in the Pāli Canon analysis, which can come into operation in psi experiments, along with the notion of the Act of Truth. Hence, this chapter will justify the outcome of this analysis, that is, merits as the base for psychic powers.

The aim of this chapter is also to inform readers about the themes which have many similarities with the findings from the Pāli Canon. This will be presented by providing information about the interviewees first, followed by the process of analysis, themes found and critical discussion.

6.1   Introduction to Interviews

Interviews play a rather important role in our everyday life. There is surely not a single person that has not been interviewed in some form throughout their lives, be that at university, in a medical environment, or for a job. Of course, many of us encounter interviews by reading other people's interviews. Nowadays, interviews have become increasingly popular. One of the potential reasons for this is the confessional basis of modern interviews, which enables intimate matters to be openly shared by an interviewee throughout the process of the interview. This is an important aspect with regards to this research project as I will be asking for potentially sensitive information during the process of the interview. It is this type of information that may also reveal the underlying thoughts of psi from the perspective of the individual.

Most of us are familiar with the role of interviewee while some of us may also be no stranger to the role of interviewer as well. For the purposes of this research project the interviews are considered to be a qualitative research method, this is because they involve each person being asked a number of questions regarding a certain topic. Qualitative interviews are the best tool to discover what other people feel and think about a specific set of information or topic (Rubin, Herbert & Irene, 1995). There are different types of interviews that differ based on the experience – it may be either a relatively private medical interview or an aggressive interview turned into a debate with a politician on live television. For an interview, both its context (broader and immediate) are important because they may impact the way an interview is conducted and perceived. Within the framework of this research, I use interviews as a means of connecting personal everyday experiences and qualitative research. This is done in order to signify the methodological

use of qualitative interviews. For psychology and parapsychology, interviews are one of the most frequently used scientific methods to obtain qualitative data. The way that qualitative interviews are currently perceived has also changed over time, as numerous academics in different scientific fields applied them to their research projects. Of course, the presence of flaws in interviews (from a philosophic perspective) has also affected the development of qualitative interviews and understanding of the world. These limitations changed the way in which the researchers developed and applied interviews. Therefore, the problem consisted of the fact that the researchers might have been affected by their own understanding of the data, and that that could be obtained throughout an interview (Rowley, 2012). I, however, see interviews as a way to give voice to the persons who are being interviewed. The issue is rather debatable, but it does not affect the main focus of the framework of the current research. Instead, I want to discuss this methodological approach from the perspective of qualitative interviews being the focus of the research. Before applying interviews to their research, one should make sure that the theoretical framework of their project is in line with the research questions and topic. When using interviews, the researcher must be proficient, so as to be able to transform their research concerns into research questions. Additionally, as the researcher, I will need to connect theoretical approach and philosophical standpoint to the appropriate type of interviews (King & Horrocks, 2010). As such, as a researcher, I will narrow down the search for a perfect type of interview methodology and discuss the tools which can be used to obtain the necessary information. Here, my key objective is to link the main aims to the interviews.

It is evident that the art of interviewing is undergoing constant changes due to the challenges inherent in the practice and the development of new technologies (Patton, 2005). On the other hand, there are also certain issues connected to the "communication" between the interviewer and interviewee. The latter can also be defined as interviewee relations and perceived as one of the most powerfully impacting social factors. The introduction to this research defines qualitative interviews and describes the way in which a research subject should be treated. Within the next subsection of the chapter, I will consider the contexts of qualitative interviews, so as to ensure the qualitative interview is the best means of obtaining information.

6.2   The Social Context of Interviews

The concept of qualitative research is rather multidimensional so I will have to consider the broad social context in order to obtain as much relevant information as possible (Knox & Burkard, 2009). The regulations of conducting interviews are always aligned with the research control administration (which has become rather authoritative within the last decade). Also, the social context of the interviews that are conducted within the framework of this PhD project presupposes that there are numerous ethical considerations that will be observed. One of the most imperative ethical principles to consider is that no damage is to be caused to the participants during their personal interaction with the researcher. I will gain informed consent from the subjects of the research and emphasise the importance of ethical practice in parapsychology and focus on the individuals who are being researched. I will also protect the participants from being exploited or exposed to any type of risks. I believe that the qualitative interview that will

be conducted may also impact me, I highlight this as a potential issue because the fieldwork experiences may have an extensive influence on my well-being as a researcher, and my relations with the participants of the study. Evidently, the social context of qualitative interviews is supported by numerous vulnerabilities which transpire due to potentially inconsistent emotional labour and emotion management (Marshall, Cardon, Poddar, & Fontenot, 2013). As a researcher, I will pay close attention to any emotional issues while conducting interviews so as to obtain data which is as unbiased as possible. It is important to mention here that interviews may be contradictory in many ways, but I will try to find a way to conduct the interviews in synchronisation with the immediate and social contexts which are rather demanding. The intricacy of social interactions may be considerably involved in the process of the current research project, so it is rather important to practice possible negotiation. Therefore, I will next discuss the type of interviews that will be used specifically for this PhD project.

6.3   Semi-Structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews can be defined as a uniform interview process. The homogenous nature of this methodology allows qualitative researchers to obtain the data and present it in an identical way (Wengraf, 2001). The objective of this type of interview is to present the interview itself in an unchanged mode. I will discuss this research methodology further in order to explore the procedures inherent in this methodology. The name of this research method hints at the implicit meaning of any given semi-structured interview. However, not all of the questions asked by the interviewer will be prepared before the interview. In unstructured interviews, for example, there are no questions

specified and the interviewer has free reign, giving them the option to change questions and come up with specific follow-up questions while relying exclusively on an interviewee's replies. Within the framework of a semi-structured interview, there are several open-ended questions and variations in responses. As a researcher, regarding participants understanding of psi, I will play a neutral role as my key objective is to remain friendly and ask questions. It is also critical that I do not reveal my personal opinions throughout the duration of an interview (Schmidt, 2004). Technological progress allows one to conduct an interview on the Internet or use specific computer programs (for example, Skype). However, for the purposes of this research project, I wanted to hold the interviews in person, therefore I travelled to India and made contact with the participants. This was important because not all of the participants had a good internet connection or even a computer facility, as the social and economic background of some of those areas still remain untouched with technological advancements. Overall, it can be concluded that semi-structured interviews are the best option within the framework of the current research project because they will allow me to collect specific data on predefined topics and eliminate vagueness which may hamper the results of these interviews.

6.4   Participants

The following sample was chosen purposefully. It was important to interview practitioners of the Theravada tradition who have also dedicatedly practised meditation for several years. The Goenka tradition's Vipassana practitioners are among those who can be located for this purpose. However, when I contacted the Vipassana centre the permission for interviews was not given for obvious reasons. Fortunately, one of the

managers from the Vipassana centre is my friend and had contacts with serious meditation practitioners around the location. Thus, it was easy to recruit them. The inclusion criteria were that the interviewee must have attended Vipassana courses and had been dedicatedly practising Vipassana at least for 5 years. This inclusion criterion was designed by considering Roney-Dougle's (Section 3.3) research outcome of the high correlation of meditation experience with psi performance. Fortunately, I was lucky to exceed this criterion by recruiting 13 out of 15 participants having at least ten years of experience, with the remaining two participants having five and six years' experience respectively, however, they were quite young as well. Although Vipassana practitioners could be found in other parts of the world, for me, the Indian population was an obvious choice for finding participants and asking them to take part in parapsychological research. I found that it was relatively easy for me, despite not getting permission to approach members of the Vipassana Centre, because India is my home country, therefore it was easy for me to find contacts, travel and communicate with participants. This approach proved successful, and I was able to complete 15 interviews in one month. All the participants were located within the Maharashtra state of India. Mainly I travelled to the regions of Mumbai, Pune, Nashik, Aurangabad, Nagpur and Nanded covering almost 700 kilometres.

Table. 6.1 The list of Vipassana meditators.

Name	Age	Practices Duration	Merits as the base of Psi
Mr. Akash Tamboli	27	10	Yes
Mr. Ajay Bhave	58	25	Yes
Mrs. Archana Londhe	45	12	Yes
Mr. Mayur Vaghela	25	6	Yes
Mr. Amey Deshpande	37	10	Yes
Mrs. Nitu Kandhare	45	11	Yes
Mr. Raman Parmar	52	26	Yes
Ms. Shraddha Anurkar	40	10	Yes
Mr. Animesh Dongare	26	5	Yes
Mr. Kiran Bansode	37	12	Yes
Mrs. Pournima Veerkar	50	20	Yes
Mr. Nainish Kothari	40	15	Yes
Mr. Dheerajlal Soni	60	30	Yes
Mrs. Asawari Gupchup	45	15	Yes

Mr. Ram Varma	62	21	Yes

As shown in table 6.1, the sample was not considered large and given the time in hand, only 15 interviews were possible although all the participants were committed to the practice of Vipassana with a minimum of 5 years of experience of meditation. Each interview lasts for approximately 30 mins. One of the major problems I encountered when taking the interviews was the different locations of the meditation practitioners. They were not from the same region, and I had to take the interviews in their home or in a hotel or restaurant, this is because the Meditation Centre did not provide permission to use their premises or facilities to conduct interviews. This is mainly because doing research on psi is not the objective of these centres, so I had expected them to decline the proposal. However, I was able to gather participants with the personal help of one of the managers in the centre who then arranged the time and location for the full interviews. Although, it was quite hard as I had to cover an area of around 700 kilometres within one month. For this, sometimes I travelled overnight in my car, and it also meant I had to finish some interviews faster as the next appointment would be on the same day, and I would have to travel to meet them. Nonetheless, I was able to concentrate on the most important topics and make the most out of the interviews. The data that was coded throughout the process of the interviews were divided into several categories, these categories reflect the common themes and different elements that were found during the discussion. I believe that these themes shed some light on the understanding of supernormal abilities and events because the majority of the practitioners provided exclusive incidences of psychic powers which still have a lot of scopes to be fully explored by mainstream sciences.

Before the interviews, I decided to form interview schedules as to test the hypothesis that merits are the basis for the development and showcasing of psychic powers. Implicitly, I set up the interview list in a way that led the interviewees to answer whether these are the merits that contribute to the incidence of supernormal experiences. Although intended questions were not asked directly during an interview, I lead the conversation in order to gather evidence about merits and its role in psi. In the next section, I will discuss the interview guide and justify my approach.

6.5   Materials

In order to accomplish the goal of interviews, I formed the interview guide or schedule as follows and took semi-structured interviews. This method was useful to gather focused and qualitative data. The nature of interviews is such that quite often when one question is answered, this naturally can lead to another question, thus, the structured type of interview is not helpful. As such, I needed a methodology that could offer flexibility and open-ended nature, it is for that reason that I used semi-structured interviews. The following is the complete interview guide that I outlined before travelling to India and holding the interviews. Ethics was sought fully and I as a researcher adhered to all ethical standards as required.

1. Demographics (India)

      a. Gender, age, ethnicity, nationality

      b. Religious / spiritual background (brief)

      c. Views on psi phenomenon / iddhis (?)

2. Details of practice

      a. Length, frequency and usual duration of practice

      b. Form(s) of practice (giving specific descriptions)

      c. Context of practice (community, teacher, group, etc)

      d. Courses, retreats, etc.

3. Personal reflections of practice

      a. Importance of meditation in your life

      b. Benefits of meditation (physical, mental, etc)

      c. (for you what is the most important part of being a meditator?) - in (a) already

4. Meditation/other experiences relevant of iddhis

      a. Personal experience of paranormal phenomena generally

      b. Specific iddhi-like experiences

5. Conditions for iddhis

      a. Participant's view on what is necessary for performance of iddhis (unguided)

      b. Participant's understanding of Shila, Samadhi, Prajna (SSP)

      c. Participant's understanding of Merit

      d. Participants views on Saccakiriya (Act / Assertion of Truth)

      e. What is Shila, Samadhi and Prajna and do you believe that all three help each

other?

      share experiences

      f. Do you believe that the practitioner of SSP develops mental power?

6. Development of iddhis

a. What are your views of psychic powers? Can they be developed through meditation?

b. Do you believe that sharing of merits can induce conditions to fulfil wish or psi experiences?

c. In Buddhist Pāli Canon it is found that achieving different jhana's or mental absorption states (Samadhi's) one can gain ability to perform psychic powers. Although, the process of achieving these states is accomplished by meditation which itself is an act of merits. So, participants view on link of merits with jhana's. (Is jhana achievable because of the past Merits gained through meditation?)

7. Theoretical Understanding

a. Samadhi / concentration and Iddhi

b. Jhanas / mental absorption states and Iddhi

c. Metta / loving- kindness and Iddhi

d. Paticcasamuppada / law of causality and Iddhi

(relation of these theories with Merits and iddhi)

8. Relationship of iddhis to practice

a. As a Buddhist meditator, what will you do if you come across iddhi's in your spiritual path?

9. Anything else participant would like to share

6.5.1 Justification of Interview Guide (Materials)

As explained at the beginning of the chapter, after analysing Pāli Canon and finding the key themes, as presented in chapter three, I also expected to support my hypotheses

of examining merits as a base of psi by means of conducting a series of interviews. As such, I chose to interview 15 Vipassana meditators from India around Aurangabad, Mumbai, Nashik and the Pune region of Maharashtra state. These interviewees are dedicated Vipassana meditation practitioners as taught by S. N. Goenka under the tradition of Sayagi U Ba Khin. A school in Theravada tradition, Goenka's ten-day Vipassana course is a standardized course that utilizes traditional mindfulness meditations to teach mindfulness without a religious requirement (Zeng, et al., 2015). This research is being done on the Theravada Buddhist scriptures known as Pāli Canon. That is why the practitioners of the Theravada tradition, particularly of Goenka school were chosen for interviewing purposes. Followers of this tradition are strictly expected to observe the five precepts and meditation routine of sitting in mediation daily for at least two hours. The participants involved in the interviews were required to have at least 5 years' experience of this tradition.

I would like to justify my approach for using specific interview questions. Some readers may find this obvious, however, they have a different perspective. The interview was also created in order to evidence the findings from the Pāli Canon. I found that the Pāli Canon and its content is not very different to the practices of the Vipassana tradition. This tradition always follows the guidelines set by Pāli sutras. The reader may find that obvious questions such as "Do you believe that sharing of Merits can induce conditions to fulfil wish or psi experiences?" and "Is jhana achievable because of the past Merits gained through meditation?" can provide highly biased answers. However, one important point readers need to understand is that in the Pāli Canon it was found that psi is not discussed extensively in line with merits nor was the sharing of merits always justified for

psi occurrence. The theories which are described psi in Buddhism are mostly about achieving jhanas or mental absorptions through meditation practice of concentration. This does not necessarily have the connotation of merits inherent in it. What I found in my investigation of Pāli Canon is that the moment any meditative technique is being practised, may it be concentration or purification (Shila or Samadhi), the merits are either automatically accumulated, or they are inherent within the practice. However, is it the meditation practice itself that can provide psi conductive states, or is the merits which are helpful to achieve psi conductive states? This was not entirely clear in the Pāli Canon. Thus, taking contemporary meditation practitioners to view on this approach in an obvious manner was important. Many of the interviewees showed surprise and remarked that they had never thought about it, although at the end they confirmed that it is possible that the merits are helpful in achieving jhanas. There were similar findings when I analysed the Pāli Canon thoroughly. Therefore, the interview was taken as further confirmation of these findings. From the chosen phrases in the interview list, one may find that to some extent they are suggestive. However, the meditators themselves were happy that I came to the obvious conclusion which is not clearly discussed in the Pāli Canon. For this reason, even though the fact that various Buddhist sources identify absorption states (jhanas) as the key factor for attaining iddhis, not all have a clear understanding about considering Merit to be the key factor. In other words, not many have thought that it is Merit that might be playing role in achieving absorption states rather than meditation itself. Thus, I had a dilemma to clarify; whether it is the concentration practice that led to the absorption of the mind to jhanas or was it the merits that are equivalently or simultaneously earned while

practising meditation. Thus, asking clear questions was important and I found this approach very useful.

Most importantly, I have developed a perspective by analysing the Pāli Canon with the view of understanding psi. This is a pioneering work and I believe my understanding can be useful to create a bridge between Pāli Canon's perspective on psi with that of a living meditation practitioner's understanding of psi. During the interview, I could pose questions in a manner that may help meditators think about psi from Pāli Canon's perspective. Again, it is for this reason that the use of semi-structured interviews was more appropriate.

6.6   The Process of Analysis

6.6.1   Procedure

The interviews were conducted at a convenient place for the participants. Firstly, the PIS and consent form was given (Appendix D), and proper consent was sought. After establishing a proper rapport, general questions were asked, and their oral confirmation was taken to make sure that participants are happy to take part. Then as per the interview schedule, the questions were asked. After the interviews, the participants were thanked and they were informed that the data obtained will be utilized for research purposes, including publication. Collected data was initially collected in Hindi and Marathi languages and then was later translated into English. After this record, the data was analysed using a Thematic Analysis method.

6.6.2 Ethics

Ethics approval was taken from the University of Northampton's Research Ethics Committee prior to travelling to India for the interviews (Appendix E). As per the ethics requirements, no participants were involved without their consent. The names of participants were given pseudonyms to prevent their identity. The interviews took place at a safe and convenient place. As a researcher, I was covered by the University of Northampton's policy regarding safeguarding. Participants did not receive any incentives for their input. They were recruited by personal contact of one of the managers of the Vipassana Research Institute, India. All the data collected was kept safe in the locked and encrypted computer network of the University of Northampton. The data was destroyed once the analysis was completed.

6.6.3 Thematic Analysis

After the interview data was collected, it was critical to do an analysis of the interviews. My main objective in collecting interview data was to formulate the relevant themes which could account for the reflection of the understanding of psi from contemporary practitioners and to seek parallels with the incidences as presented in the Pāli Canon.

The data was collected using qualitative, semi-structured interviews to obtain participants' perspectives on psychic powers. Qualitative interviews give new insights into a phenomenon as they allow the respondents to reflect and reason on a variety of subjects in a different way (Folkestad, 2008). In this research, the phenomenon in

question was the nature of Iddhis and its representation, understanding and reflection by interviewees.

The method of analysis which I chose for this study was a qualitative approach called Thematic Analysis [TA]. This method is one of the most widely used qualitative approaches for the analysis of interviews and I have drawn on the widely used work of Braun and Clarke (2006) as the main conceptual and theoretical source for this analysis. Braun and Clarke describe TA as a "rigorous thematic approach which can produce an insightful analysis that answers particular research questions" (2006). According to them, thematic analysis is a method used for "identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within the data". It was particularly useful because the themes or codes that were generated in the analysis of the Pāli Canon proved to be connected to the interview analysis as well. Thus, identifying themes, their analysis and reporting the conclusion in order to justify the Pāli Canon analysis was important. Moreover, using thematic analysis gives balance to and compliments the other research methodology of coding, which for the purposes of this research project gives a better overall understanding of the data.

After this, the crucial phase was to identify themes from the data collected from the interviews. What counts as a theme is that it is something which captures the key idea about the data in relation to the research question and which represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Here, the main goal was to analyse data carefully by simultaneously understanding the manifesting themes in relation to psychic powers. As Bazeley (2009) explains, themes only attain full significance when they are linked to form a coordinated picture or an explanatory model: 'Describe, compare, relate' is a simple three-step formula when reporting the results. As

Braun and Clarke (2006) explain, themes or patterns within data can be identified either in an inductive 'bottom up' way (citing Frith and Gleeson, 2004), or in a theoretical, deductive 'top down' way (citing Boyatzis, 1998; Hayes, 1997). According to Thomas (2003), the primary purpose of the inductive approach is to allow research findings to emerge from the frequent, dominant or significant themes inherent in raw data, without the restraints imposed by structured methodologies. Thomas (2003) points out three main purposes for using an inductive approach: (1) to condense extensive and varied raw text data into a brief, summary format; (2) to establish clear links between the research objectives and the summary findings derived from the raw data; and (3) to develop a model or theory about the underlying structure of experiences or processes which are evident in the raw data.

Here, I have taken that top-down or theoretical thematic analysis approach because it was logical and useful to address the aim of the analysis. The research questions were addressed with the purpose of identifying relevant themes inspired by the theoretical framework. My analysis was driven by the specific research query more than by the data itself (if so, then inductive or bottom-up TA will be used). Therefore, I believed the top-down approach was most appropriate, and it also served the purpose of analysis adequately.

The data collected by qualitative interview from Vipassana practitioners were analysed in a similar way based on a three-stage procedure suggested in the literature (Creswell, 2007; Miles & Huberman, 1984): preparing the data for analysis by transcribing and reducing the data into themes through a process of coding and representing the data. Braun and Clarke (2006) point out that patterns are identified through a rigorous process

of data familiarisation, data coding, and theme development and revision. The main procedure that was used for the analysis follows these guidelines from Braun and Clarke (2006).

The first step in the process was the familiarisation of the data by the means of transcription and the translation of the interviews, as all the interviews were conducted in the participant's first languages (here, Marathi and Hindi) and translated and transcribed into English. The fifteen audio recordings carefully listened to several times in order to fully familiarise me with the meaning of the data, rather than the language itself or its linguistic features. Such careful listening and transcription provided a strong foundation to formulate initial codes in the next phase.

The second step according to Braun and Clarke (2006) was to generate initial codes. In order to do this, the transcriptions were imported into NVivo, a "computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software" [CAQDAS] package. CAQDAS was an important tool for qualitative analysis, allowing a researcher to create "nodes" and "sub-nodes" (NVivo's terminology for codes) while working through the data. It helped in formulating the codes, identifying various patterns, their meanings, themes and sub-themes and allowed me to easily verify that interpretation is well-grounded in the data. Alongside this, I also engaged in manual coding to aid the analysis further.

At the third step, the theme development took place, this is also known as a search for themes. Here the nodes were organised into a hierarchical structure using NVivo. Part of the flexibility of thematic analysis was that it allowed the themes and their prevalence to be determined in a number of ways (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Interestingly, these steps

look very sequential in nature; however, in practice, it is more cyclical and reflective, and always being developed on the previous steps.

At the fourth step, the data reduction and meaning extraction took place. Here the main objective was to review the themes so that they can be linked with the posed questions of an overall analysis of understanding psi. All the codes which were similar in nature were given another code and reduced until the point where the main crux of the data is formulated. Thomas (2003) points out that "most inductive studies report a model that has between 3 and 8 main categories in the findings". Moreover, as I became more experienced, I found several "buttons to push" in order to get the final results – information – that they are searching for (Folkestad, 2008). Although I did not have a specific number in mind while reducing the data and obtaining themes, I tried to simplify the data into as few categories as possible, while still retaining enough complexity to adequately account for the participants' experience.

The fifth step involved defining and finalising themes and naming them. Here, I determined the main essence of what each theme was about, also rechecked that all the aspects of the previous themes were aligned for that particular theme or themes.

The final stage in Braun and Clarke's scheme was to present the main themes and the conclusions of the data analysis in a report.

In order to confirm the final stage, I performed a manual recoding again in order to double-check that the NVivo analysis reflected the results of the manual recoding and that the analysis was achieved accurately. Although NVivo is a very efficient package for analysis, any form of data analysis may still have limitations, and these should be addressed in research. Ishak and Bakar (2012) state that NVivo is just another set of tools

that will assist a researcher in undertaking an analysis of qualitative data. However, regardless of the type of software – or manual technique – being used, I had to dutifully make sense of all the data myself, without damaging the context of the phenomenon being studied. Inevitably, the software cannot replace the insight that I bring to the research because at the back of my mind lay my life history that would influence the way I see and interpret the analysis. As such, at the final stage, I used additional alternative methods in order to confirm the trustworthiness, credibility and validity of the findings.

As Braun and Clarke highlight, 'Analysis is typically a recursive process, with movement back and forth between different phases. So, it's not rigid, and with more experience (and smaller datasets), the analytic process can blur some of these phases together' (2006). The rigorous and repetitive immersion into the data allowed me to construct a thematic structure that adequately answered the research question.

Once the thematic analysis was concluded, I was able to make connections with the previous findings on the traditional understandings of Iddhis, as well as to similar concepts within the field of Western parapsychology. This needed to be done in order to ascertain whether the contemporary practitioner's experience was reflective of the models of the ancient scriptures of Pāli Canon and more modern accounts of such phenomena.

6.6.3.1 Transcription and Translation

I followed the above process very extensively. I recorded the interviews in audio format and then transcribed and translated them into a word document. Among the 15 interviews that were recorded; 11 were recorded in the Marathi language and 4 were recorded in the Hindi language, although a few of them used mixed language. My

command of both of these languages is fluent, therefore I was able to transcribe and

translate this data into English with ease, and subsequently, perform further analysis

using the steps above. The whole transcription created about 143 pages with 10 pages

on average for each interview. The total word count was 37,890. Each interview lasted

for about 30 minutes and the thematic analysis method as explained above was used for

the precise analysis of data collection.

6.7   Themes

This data was read and re-read at least 10 times, and with the help of NVivo and

manual coding, the analysis was performed. The following figure is the representation of

the main themes or elements which were found as an account of interview analysis.

Figure 6.1 Interview Themes
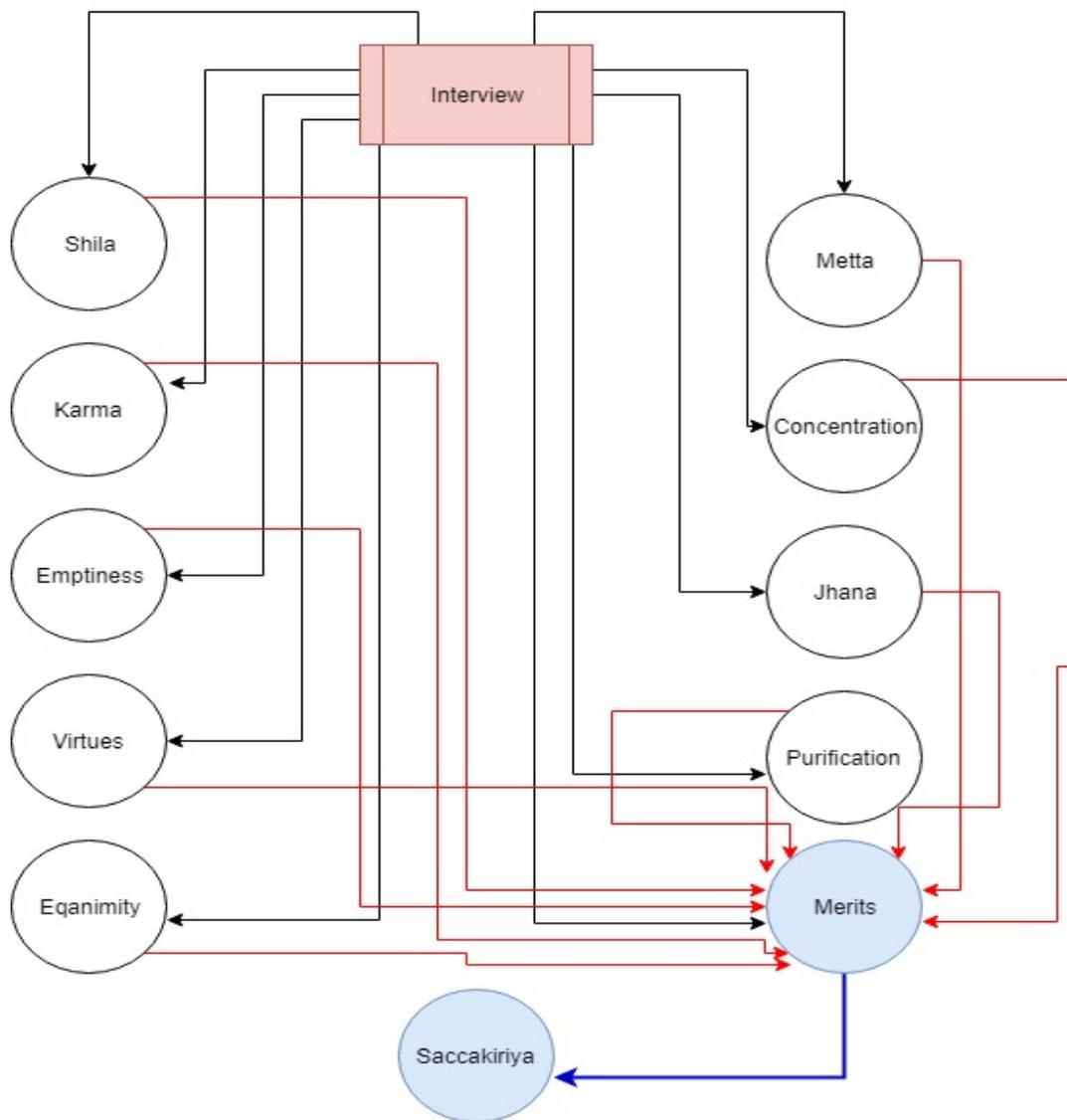
Figure 6.1 shows the main themes as found or drawn from the analysis of the interviews. All the themes are very much in line with the findings of the Pāli Canon analysis. This will be justified in the next section. In total, I was able to find 10 main themes from the interviews, however, the theme of Merit was consistent in all the interviews. It was found that similar to the analysis in the Pāli Canon, all the themes suggest merits directly or indirectly. Therefore, in the figure I have highlighted the arrows pointing towards 'Merits' in red, this enables easier recognition of the way in which this data analysis of the

interviews supports the findings from the Pāli Canon. In the next section, I will present the examples from the interviews which formed the main themes.

6.7.1 Shila/ Precepts

Almost all the participants confirmed that Shila is very important in the practice of Dhamma and agreed it does have a connection to the development of mental power. This development is also responsible for the base of psi. This can be seen in the two examples below:

> I: And do you think SSP can develop lot of mental power?
> P: I think that Samadhi, Shila, and Prajna do contribute to the development mental power so as to Iddhis.
> (Gupchup, p. 131)

> I: Okay! I understand your point. Thanks for clarifying. So now because you said that path of purification can help in attaining Iddhis, please tell me what is path of purification?
> P: It is Shila, Samadhi and Prajna.
> (Verma, p. 139)

In the above two examples (a similar understanding can be found in other interviews too. See appendix B), Gupchup confirms that Shila, Samadhi and Prajna (SSP) can contribute to the development of mental power, including iddhi. Verma, however, links the path of purification to the SSP. When I explored this further and asked Verma what he thinks about how it helps in developing psi, he replied that SSP contributes to the level of concentration and purification, which is also linked with psi. As such, the theme of Shila is very important in relation to this research because Shila also forms the part of one of

the merits (as seen in the analysis of Pāli Canon), plus interviewees believed that Shila

is important for the induction of psi. In the literature (section 3.5), I mentioned Barash

(2017) who states that the purpose of Eastern tradition is to live in harmony with oneself

and with the surrounding world, along with the fullest disclosure of one's ability. Radin

(2009) also states that it is the medicine of the body, mind and soul requiring only

persistent and independent work on oneself. What interviewees have suggested here is

similar to what Barash and Radin understand. The basis of Shila is to live in harmony

within oneself and with others. However, the interviewees believe that the process of

observing Shila generates the possibility of psi. None such reflections can be seen within

the parapsychological or Buddhist literature as well where Shila is linked with psi. As such,

the theme of Shila is distinct in its own authority.

6.7.2 Compassion/ Metta

The purification and Dhamma practice can be seen to provide a base, and

compassion came up as a distinctive determinant for psi according to Tamboli. Bansode

believes that a pure or compassionate mind can do anything, and it creates a vital role in

developing the grounds for iddhis.

> I: So what you think is important to induce psychic power?
>
> P: I think that to display Iddhis, one will have to be placed in a quiet place that
> cannot be reached by outside stressors and noises. Additionally, calmness of the
> mind and not having aggression is important. One need to focus on right thinking
> as well or Samma Sankappo. As far as Buddhist understanding or vipassana is
> concerned, I think the purity of the mind must be achieved. For this, five precepts
> must be followed rigorously, and virtues must be accumulated. It is like the base if
> you want to develop any mental power. Along with this, I know that metta has lot

of powers too. Compassion based approaches are very important for developing mental abilities. The middle way is to be perceived, which is not something extra-ordinary but very ordinary to this life. The path should be followed in normal life. (Tamboli, p. 5 & 6)

I: Absolutely, no worries. Okay, now can you tell me your view on what is necessary for performance of Iddhis.

P: Iddhis can be elicited by individuals that perform Meritorious deeds and pay close attention to the broadness of their mind. The cessation of desire or *Trishna* is must and it allows a bodhisattva to meditate properly. *Karuna* must also be cultivated as a pure, compassionate mind can do anything. I also think that virtues play a very vital role in developing the grounds for Iddhis.

(Bansode, p. 93)

In the above two examples, it can be clearly seen that Tamboli believes that Shila can be the base of psi, however, he also mentioned compassion. Similarly, Bansode believes that compassion can do anything. In the Pāli Canon analysis, the sub-theme of compassion comes under the Merits. It is interesting to see how these themes are connected to each other. When I asked Tamboli what he thought about the Dalai Lama's psychic abilities, he replied positively saying that he is a very compassionate person and compassion is also very important in order to make miracles happen. Interestingly, he also believed that Jhanas (a theme in section 6.7.6) can be achieved with compassion and wisdom. When asked further, he said that in relation to compassion; if one keeps thinking about loving-kindness for all, it can lead to the development of concentration. Concentration achieved in this way can help in developing Jhana's which can form the base of psi. (Appendix B, Tamboli, p. 11). This understanding of Tamboli is very much reflected in the Pāli Canon too where the practice of Metta is believed to be miraculous.

For instance, the mad Nalagiri elephant was tamed by the Buddha using his psychic power of compassion. In the Pāli Canon, it is described as, "Then the Lord, suffused the elephant Nalagiri with loving-kindness of mind." (Appendix A, p. 88; The Book of the Discipline, Vol. V, p. 272 to 274) Bhave and Dongare (Appendix B, p. 22, p. 86) also mention compassion as the highest Merit and said that it is actually an outcome of Dhamma practice. Similarly, Vaghela (Appendix B., p. 44) believes that an SSP practitioner develops compassion or loving-kindness and confirms that such factors are important for mental power. From the interviews of others as well, it was very clear that they believe in the power of compassion which can be linked to psi. As such, the theme of compassion was formed. When we compare this with Parapsychological literature, the understanding of Merit of compassion is not reflected, however, linking psi with psi conductive states by achieving a relaxed state (Braud, 1975) may have elements of compassion in it. It is because compassion, being a positive trait, can help to alleviate the suffering which ultimately can bring relaxation from the outer and inner world. To conclude, compassion as a theme also had Merits inherent in it and the interviewees were very positive in showcasing compassion's link with psi.

6.7.3 Karma

Kandhare confirms that karma is a good deed and also has a psi effect. She explains that whatever one is doing in meditation (meaning *any* form of meditation) is a good karma and it helps one to gather Merits. Tamboli however, at the end of the interview said that karma and its effect on deeds are to be realised with the proper intention, because intention if it is not proper, can mislead psi. Here, it is very important to note that

Karma is linked with deeds and in almost all interviews' deeds have a direct relation to

Merits – which most of the interviewees confirmed as the base of psi.

> I: Is there anything else you would like to share?
>
> P: I truly think that the Iddhis exist and mental powers are not a joke, so it is reasonable to study the phenomena. I also would like to emphasise that deeds plays very important role in the development of psi. The karmas and their effects on deeds are to be realised with proper understanding. If the intention in developing psi is not proper, then it can be an obstacle on the path of purification itself and at the end, no ability will be gained.
>
> (Tamboli, p. 12)
>
> I: So, what is karma then?
>
> P: Karma is good deed or bad deed. Do good - get good. Do bad, get bad. Simple! (laughs)
>
> I: Perfect! And do you think that this Merits or karma plays big part in psi?
>
> P: Absolutely. Whatever you are doing in meditation is a good karma and eventually your Merits.
>
> (Kandhare, p. 62)

As it can be seen from the above two examples, participants had a clear

understanding of karma and its role with psi. Dongare mentions that all Dhamma is about

karma and Merit. Merit is good karma, and it can be linked to SSP too which in turn can

help achieve psychic powers (Appendix B, Dongare, p. 82). Veerkar (Appendix B, p. 106)

believes that merits give good births and karma determines our birth. The study of birth

or survival after death is one of the main topics in the parapsychological study. However,

karma's role in the birth and its ability for psi is rarely discussed in parapsychological

literature. In the Pāli Canon analysis (section 5.4) we have also seen various beings who

also possessed psychic powers even after their birth in a new realm of existence and physical death from the previous one. All in all, karma plays important role in both existences and in parapsychological literature, the survival after death is a form of psi too. As such, this theme was formulated. A similar understanding can be seen with the other participants.

6.7.4 Concentration/ Samadhi

Samadhi or concentration of mind as a link for psi was expected from the interviewees. Bansode spoke of Aghoris who practice Samadhi in the form of negative practices, but he believes that any Samadhi practice is part of Dhamma anyway and it can induce iddhis. However, Deshpande confirmed that Samadhi induces Jhana and that they are responsible for psi. The surprising factor was the participant's positive reflection regarding concentration's link with Merit. Here, most of the participants show a positive response to the question of whether Samadhi helps in accumulating Merits. They also affirmed that because Samadhi helps in Merits – it may actually be merits that helps with psi.

> I: So, do you think there are any other ways as well apart from Dhamma to develop Iddhis?
> P: It is a hard question; however, you know aghoris and all, they claim to have Siddhis, but I don't know. Also, I think that those aghoris always practise Samadhi, which again a part of Dhamma anyway.
> (Bansode, p. 93)

> I: Okay! So, tell me more about your views on Samadhi, Jhanas, Metta, and Paticcasamuppada:

P: From my practice, I have learned that Samadhi and all the related concepts can significantly contribute to one's ability to meditate and reach certain meditation states. Jhanas are very interesting. I think it is a fourth Jhana which will have capacity to develop the iddhis. I believe that this concept is very much related to Mahayani concept of emptiness. I think it is the most impacting source of all time. (Deshpande, p. 53)

The above examples demonstrate that the participants are relaying their view of concentration or Samadhi practice with Jhana. Bansode believes that any form of meditation, may it be positive or negative, has a concentration element to it, and in turn that forms the base of the Merit. This is quite surprising because negativity is not linked with Dhamma practice however my understanding of Bansode's remark critically points out that as far as concentration is achieved because it is a part of Dhamma (also one of the Merits), this can be related to Dhamma practice at some extent. Veerkar (Appendix B., p. 108) mentions that jhanas are actually achieved through merits only. She also emphasises that anything can be achieved through merits. Soni (Appendix B., p. 124) believes that concentration plays a central role in the development of iddhi or psi. Most of the participants showed a similar understanding during the interviews. In chapter three, (section 3.2), I discussed that Satyananda's (2000) understanding of psi where he discusses "siddhi" or iddhi as described in Patanjali's sutras. Here, it is believed that psi can manifest when one attains the "Samadhi" which is a state of meditative consciousness. A more in-depth evaluation of this relationship was considered by Roney-Dougal (2010). Braud (2006) has provided an extension to the discussion regarding psi research and Patanjali's yoga sutras too. However, they do not give any indication of the role of Merits in achieving the state of Samadhi or concentration. In the above example,

Deshpande also confirms that it is the fourth jhana which may be a zone where psi is possible. This is very similar to psi-conductive states by Braud (2005). The Pāli Canon analysis has a similar understanding too. The distinctive factor here in the interviews is the discovery of merits as the base for concentration and in turn a possibility of psi.

6.7.5 Emptiness

The concept of emptiness came as a surprise for me at the interview as I was not expecting this. However, it was interesting to know that emptiness is linked with Samadhi or with the Jhana states, and the interviewees stressed that perhaps emptiness can form a base of psi as well. It was also surprising to find from the participants that they were linking the fourth jhana state to emptiness, however, in the Pāli Canon as described earlier, it is the space of neither perception nor non-perception (section 5.5.2). Nevertheless, they confirmed that emptiness can be achieved by purification and following the path which is a similar understanding to that in the Pāli Canon. The following examples will evidence this:

> I: What is fourth Jhana then and why emptiness.
> P: I actually don't know but I read somewhere about emptiness which can be fourth Jhana.
> (Deshpande, p. 53)

> I: Yes, but I have few more direct questions to get your views on technical terms. So, starting with Jhanas and Merits, do you think there is link between both?
> P: Moral training and purified livelihood that are characteristic of Jhana can be seen as a link between the latter and Merits. Jhana can be one of the stage of emptiness which is very powerful.

I: I am quite getting emptiness from few participants before as well. Why you think emptiness?

P: Because emptiness is one of the state in Jhana and other traditions of Buddhism quite emphasise a lot on this. Thus, I believe that emptiness may also be one of the key factors in psi. Although, I don't have any experience of this, so I wouldn't be able to describe more. All this is my intellectual understanding and not experiential.

(Parmar, p. 73)

In the above examples' participants are showcasing an understanding of emptiness with psi. It was quite surprising because this is one of the themes (alongside karma) which was distinct from the themes of the Pāli Canon analysis. Plus, Vipassana practitioners' validations of other traditions, such as Mahayana's emptiness with psi was quite impressive. Tamboli (Appendix B, p. 11 and 12) clearly states that Shunyata or emptiness plays a very important role in psi and claims that this Mahayani (relating to Mahayana) concept has a relation to psi because it forms the part of jhana where emptiness has a lot of importance. Although he says that this is his belief and not experience, such belief was interesting from a vipassana practitioner who is following the Pāli Canon's Theravada tradition. Additionally, he linked emptiness with compassion too. Similarly, Bhave, Veerkar, Kothari, Gupchup and Verma (Appendix B, p. 21, p. 108, p. 113, p. 134 and p. 140) seemed to be influenced by a parallel understanding. Bhave (p.21) says that emptiness is one of the jhana which Mahayanists (people following Mahayana Buddhism) confuse as Nirvana. He maintains the understanding that emptiness is just a space that can be achieved through meditation, and once achieved, in that space anything you wish can come true. Thus, emptiness is one of the tools for psi

conditions. When asked how to achieve this emptiness, he explained by practising dharma, which is nothing but the practice of SSP and Merits. All in all, most of them confirmed that emptiness has a relation with Dhamma and Dhamma can be the base for the development of psi. Although different themes of emptiness were formed, it still connected with the Pāli Canon findings. In parapsychology, the connection of emptiness with psi is not reflected, even though parapsychologists have done studies with Tibetan monks (Roney-Dougle, Solfin & Fox, 2008; Roney-Dougal & Solfvin, 2011).

6.7.6 Jhana

Jhana is always linked to Samadhi. Participants also mentioned that jhana can be the base of psi, however, jhana can be a reflection of Dhamma practice. Deshpande emphasised that Merits and jhana can go together because meditation is a Merit too (as a practice of meditation).

> I: Okay fantastic! Sorry just this curiosity pop in my mind about your experience. When you had this telepathic experience, do you think the state you are mentioning can be Jhana state?
> P: I am not sure but perhaps it may be Jhana like experience where there is lot of calmness and equanimity.
> (Veerkar, p. 105)

> I: Okay! Fantastic. I just wanted to have that positive confirmation from you to get your view. Now I will ask you about some deep Buddhist concepts. Tell me your views on views on link of Merits with Jhanas.
> P: Jhanas are a reflection of Merits due to the fact that there is no way to become closer to enlightenment without being Meritorious. Although, concentration meditation is base for Jhanas as I have explained before. I believe that Jhana and

Merits can go together because meditation is a Merit too. So even if you are practising concentration you are developing Merits.

(Deshpande, p. 53)

The discussion on Jhana is a rather critical one in the interview. Jhana is also related to Samadhi as per Satyananda's (2000) understanding of a state of meditative consciousness. This state of meditative consciousness is similar to the concept of the stages of mental absorptions in Theravadin tradition. As explained in section 6.7.4, some of the participants confirmed that it is the fourth Jhana where psi is possible. However, most of them (such as Deshpande above) related Jhanas with Merits and said that when one practises Samadhi, one is also acquiring Merits. Tamboli (Appendix B, p. 9) said that jhanas are the different stages of concentration and also believes that he might have achieved the first or second jhana, which he relates mostly with getting one's negative thoughts away and experiencing peace and pleasurable sensations within. Then he links such achievements to merits, which in turn forms a base for psi. Londhe (Appendix B, p. 33 & 34) said that jhanas cannot be left out because they are directly related to merits. He goes on to explain that jhanas can be achieved by both meditation and merits but links meditation with good deeds, which, according to him, is a Merit anyway. Verma (Appendix B, p. 142) however, believes that appropriate concentration can be achieved when the person tries his best to be ethical, moral and compassionate. This helps to achieve stability and then to achieving Jhana.

To conclude, most of the interviewees showed a similar understanding about Jhana and gave a positive connection to jhana with Dhamma. Interestingly, I discovered through the analysis of interviews, that merits can form the base of jhana as well in a

similar way to Samadhi. This finding can provide a new direction to parapsychological research models, such as noise reduction by Honorton (Bem & Honorton, 1994) where attempts have been made to attain psi conductive states, but the emphasis was not given to achieve jhanas. The interviewees firmly believed in the possibility of psi through jhana and Merit. Thus, jhana was created as another theme in the analysis of the interviews.

6.7.7 Virtues

The next theme I would like to mention here is Virtues. Virtues and Shila can go together, however, I chose to put virtues as a separate theme because Shila can only be related to the precepts or vows one take. In the interviews, however, it is evidenced that virtues can be anything that is good. However, both the themes are very common with each other.

> I: Okay and then do you believe that practitioner of SSP develops mental power?
> P: Yes, I believe that mental powers only transpire in the persons that pay attention to Shila, Samadhi, and Prajna. Following five precepts is a must for any practice of meditation in the world. Virtues have lot and lot of powers.
> (Anurkar, p. 79)

> I: Yeah definitely. So, do you believe that SSP develops mental power?
> P: I believe so. Virtues are the base of Dhamma and so as for the psychic powers. Because Shila will lead Samadhi and then Prajna, and this is Dhamma.
> (Kothari, p. 116)

Within the theme of virtue, a similar discussion can be provided as per section 6.7.1. Anurkar (Appendix B, p. 81) states that there is no higher power than the power of virtue. Thus, without developing virtues first, psi would not be developed. Dongare

(Appendix B, p. 89) suggests that psi cannot escape karma and one has to pay the debt of karma, that is why it is very important to accumulate virtues with the right understanding and intentions. Bansode (Appendix B, p. 93) thinks that virtues play a very vital role in developing the grounds for iddhi, according to him, the way to develop virtues is to follow the Dhamma. Most of the participants were in agreement with the fact that virtues are very important, and that they can be developed by practising Dhamma. They often linked the virtues with merits as well.

Here, it can be concluded that virtues are also linked with psi and that this theme is interconnected with the other themes. That is why I decided to form the theme of virtue separately, but alongside Shila, which also highlights the importance of merits for the possibility of psi.

6.7.8 Purification

The theme of purification is something that was stressed by almost all the participants. However, the main practice of purification, as informed by the interviewees, is Vipassana. This is very much reflected in the interview examples below. Additionally, the notion of purification leading to Merits and Merits to the psi is also supported by most of the participants.

> I: So, what is that hard work to achieve iddhis?
> P: Vipassana to be honest. In my view, purification of mind is more important, it gives can then have potential to have Iddhis.
> I: I am little confused here. Don't you said that one whose mind is not purified will invite danger with Iddhis? So, does Iddhis comes during purification or after purification?

P: It can come anytime. It is a biproduct of your practise depends on your Merits and metal stock. The one whose all impurities are gone, he will not crave for Iddhis, but if he wants to develop and exercise those, he can do so without danger, even though he would not want to do it. However, if one is on the way and gets Iddhis and still not totally purified, if such person started exercising or enjoying Iddhis, then he will crave for it and then distract from the path of the Dhamma. Does that make sense?

(Soni, p. 122)

I: So, you think by practising Vipassana only Iddhis can be reached?

P: From what I have seen throughout my practice, I can tell that Iddhis cannot exist without meditation. But one needs to be attentive about iddhis because, as Guruji says, it can be an obstacle in the path of purification.

(Verma, p. 139)

The path of purification is widely known as Dhamma. The interviewees maintained this understanding throughout the interviews. However, they stressed that Vipassana practice is the way to purification. The process of purification also helps one to earn merits. Tamboli (Appendix B, p. 6) says that the mental stock of sankhara as Goenka says in the Vipassana tradition that it is related to impurity. One has to work on purifying it. This helps in inducing psychic powers. Tamboli (p. 8 & 9) also said that the whole path of SSP is the path of purification. It is meritorious in the beginning, meritorious in the middle and meritorious at the end which helps in attaining mental strength. Bhave (Appendix B, p. 16) shows a similar understanding and distinguishes this from the practice of purification with other religions, such as Hinduism, where getting rid of one's suffering by purifying all the restrictions of the mind is not the goal. He says that Hindu practices are often limited to concentration only and gives his own example of practising Mantra

and then goes on to clearly link the practice of Vipassana with purification. Bhave's understanding is rather interesting because parapsychologists such as Rao & Paranjape (2015), Braud (2006), Radin (2013) and Roney-Dougal & Solfvin & Fox (2008, 2011) have concentrated mostly on the Hindu traditions, where concentration meditation is central for psi achieving states. The Pāli Canon analysis and the interview analysis emphasise that purification and Merit are important for attaining psi states. This big distinction was achieved by this research project and thus, purification was formed as a separate theme.

6.7.9 Equanimity

Equanimity can be considered the main practice of the Vipassana tradition. I was expecting participants to mention equanimity, however, it was interesting to know that equanimity is linked with Dhamma and then Dhamma with iddhis. Thus, I decided to form equanimity as one of the main themes too. Both Bhave and Kandhare believe that equanimity plays a vital role in the development of psi.

> I: Wow! That's really interesting. So, coming back to iddhi's question, can you tell me what is important for performance of having any sort of iddhi or iddhis?
> P: To me, the most important point is to be able to concentrate on your wishes and feelings before trying to elicit Iddhis. I think equanimity plays a very important role in order to achieve anything whether it a worldly achievement or not. In order to do that, the middle way should be followed very diligently. Following of precepts has power too which in turn can help in accumulation of Merits.
> (Bhave, p. 20)

> I: So, do you think SSP can induce mental powers?
> P: I believe so. But most importantly, the equanimity of mind is important as well.
> I: Why equanimity?

P: Because Dhamma is equanimity too (laughs).

I: Haha! Yeah, I get what you mean. So, you believe that meditation can induce psychic powers?

P: I think that Iddhis are based on meditation so no one can acquire mental powers without reaching a definite state of mind first.

I: Definite state of mind?

P: I mean any concentration states or something. Just do meditation and the power of meditation will work.

I: What is power of meditation?

P: Power of meditation is purity, Merits, good deeds, etc. As Buddha says, do all good things, avoid bad ones and keep purifying your impurities, this is Dhamma.

I: Wow! So if someone is doing this he can induce mental powers.

P: I think so, because mind gets powers because of Dhamma, so the same mind can do anything I suppose.

(Kandhare, p. 61)

To extend the discussion of Vipassana from the previous section, it is important to mention the theme of equanimity. According to the interviewees, the process of purification is only possible when one practises equanimity. Interestingly, equanimity is also one of the paramita (perfection) as found in the Pāli Canon. As readers can see from the above example of Kandhare, where she developed the case of equanimity through meditation, which then ultimately lead to iddhi or psi. Interestingly, Parmar (Appendix B, p. 72) says that one must be equanimous as iddhis can be dangerous at some point, and it can make one distracted from precepts. He also states that it is the middle way that develops the equanimity and that this is the most important aspect of practice. Parapsychologists have also acknowledged the fact that iddhi or (siddhi) is believed to be a distraction (Radin, 2013) but they do not emphasise that equanimity can be a tool to

avoid this distraction. Dongare (Appendix B, p. 85) believes that equanimity is nothing but seeing sensation on the body and understanding its impermanent nature without reacting. He further said that impure mental stock can be an obstacle for iddhi, and links pure mental stock to Merit which can help in inducing psi. Vaghela (Appendix B, p. 37) says that it is important not to experience paranormal phenomena, as they can be a distraction from meditation. He believes that such a distraction can lead one to exercise iddhi and not establish equanimity. According to his understanding of equanimity, it may be the case that if one develops iddhi and still practises equanimity, it will be possible to sustain iddhis as well as non-distraction from the meditation's goal of purification.

To conclude, equanimity is seen as central to achieving purification, and without purification, the Merits are not possible, as we have seen in the previous section. Therefore, equanimity also forms the basis for psi.

6.7.10 Merits

The theme of merits is the most important because all the other themes are directly or indirectly connected to merits. All the participants, at the end of their interview, confirmed that it is Merits which is the basis of psi. The questions about merits are also discussed in line with the notion of Saccakiriya or Act of Truth. When this concept was explained to the participants, they all gave positive feedback for it. When I say Merits here, I also refer to the inherent meaning of sharing the Merits. Although many were not aware of the sharing of Merits, they were practising it unintentionally or intentionally.

I: Okay! Can you tell me if you believe in psychic powers and what is necessary for the performance of Iddhis?

P: Yes, I do believe that psychic powers and can be triggered by correct behaviour and the display of merits.

I: What do you mean by right behaviour and display of merits?

P: Right behaviour is nothing but living the life of Dhamma and display of Merits I mean making Merits, deliberately accumulating good deeds as they have powers. (Dongare, p. 84)

I: Okay perfect. Do you believe that sharing of Merits can induce conditions to fulfil wish or psi experiences?

P: Sharing Merits is essential because one cannot reach high results in terms of psi if they will not share Merits and do more positive deeds.

I: Okay, so you believe that psi is possible with Merits?

P: Yes yes.

(Bansode, p. 98)

It is clear that merits have a higher impact on the potency of the mind, and thus, the theme of Merit is a very important one within the framework of the interview analysis. It is clear that until this point, parapsychologists have not taken into consideration this area of psi development. Interviewees were quite sure about the possibility of psi on the base of Merits, which can be developed by following the path as shown in the Pāli Canon. Moreover, all participants gave a positive remark to this valuable link as discovered in the Pāli Canon analysis and further evidenced by the analysis of contemporary living practitioners. The Merit theme and all the interview analysis, in general, have also suggested the theme of Saccakiriya, which again, is based on Merit.

The above sections evidence the various themes as drawn from the interviews, providing clear examples of each theme's relation to psi. We can see that merits as the base of psi was consistently agreed with by all the participants (see appendix B of

interview for more information). These findings support my proposition, as both the analysis of the Pāli Canon and the interviews support the new finding; that Merits are accumulated when one practices Dhamma or Shila, Samadhi and Prajna. This practice helps one to gain Merits which then can be utilized for the performance of psi. The ontology of this claim can be confirmed with further experimentation and the interviews have provided new insight into the science of psi, which adds value to parapsychological studies.

Now, in the next sections, I will give a critical discussion and evaluate these themes in the subsequent sub-sections with guidance from the interviews. The discussion as presented below within section 6.8 also shows findings from the interviews. I have first categorised them within the elements of paranormal, followed by interviewees views on psi. I decided to discuss karma and virtue separately as they both are connected closely. The concept of emptiness is also presented in a different section because this theme, although found in interviews, corresponds to the Samadhi theme in the Pāli Canon analysis. Further discussion is provided in that section. Following this, I discuss some exclusive incidences where participants reported psi experiences. Lastly, I will discuss the importance of meritorious acts and their justification.

6.8   Exclusive Incidences of Psychic Powers from Interviewees

Within the framework of this subsection of the chapter, I will enumerate the incidences of psychic powers that were mentioned, during the interview, by the individuals who took part in the research project.

The very first occurrence of psychic power is levitation. It was retold by Raman Parmar, a lecturer of Pāli (also confirmed by Anurkar). One time he witnessed a Thai monk performing levitation. This happened in the Aurangabad district and two of his friends are believed to have also witnessed the levitating monk. According to Parmar's words, this Iddhi experience is one of the most intense that he has ever had in his life.

The next example is the event where wishful thinking significantly impacted an individual's life. Akash Tamboli, a stenographer by profession, did not have any knowledge regarding the technical term of Saccakiriya (the notion of Act of Truth) prior to the interview but told the interviewer that the experience he went through is completely in line with its meaning. Tamboli wanted to get a specific job and during his everyday meditation practice sessions, he used to direct all his thoughts on acquiring that position. Also, he used to think about all the good deeds that he had done before. Eventually, Tamboli got the job because the candidate that had been initially chosen decided not to join the organisation of interest.

The next instance relates to the divine eye experience. Nitu Kandare, a housewife, shared her story regarding her husband being harassed by his boss. Throughout her meditation sessions, she was able to see small "video clips" where her husband was having conversations with the boss and was asked to work overtime. On one of those days when her husband was working overtime, Kandare decided to visit the office and meet with the boss. After some arguments, things went on much better than expected.

Another unbelievable experience was shared by Dheerajlal Soni, a district judge. It relates to the ability to be able to affect the elements. Soni told the interviewer a story

of the former Vipassana teacher who applied Saccakiriya in order to stop the rain which allows the workers to load the grains in the ship effortlessly.

6.8.1   Psi Experiences from Transcript

Some of the experiences of psychic powers that the interviewees shared are as follows:

6.8.1.1 Levitation

"I am not sure if I can tell you this but one time I visited the Buddhist monastery nearby (In Aurangabad District) and there was a Thai monk. He performed levitation in front of me along with my two friends. This is one of the major iddhi experience I had up to now."

- Mr Raman Parmar (lecturer of Pāli) (Appendix B, p. 67)

6.8.1.2 Wishful Thinking

"After you are telling me about saccakiriya, I have actually used it to get my current job, even though I was not aware about the technical term. After my everyday meditation practice, I will direct my thoughts to happen situations according to my wish and on for this job. I will also think about the good deeds I have done. Fortunately, even though I was not selected, I got the job because the person who was successful decided to not to join for some reasons, I do not know what."

- Mr Akash Tamboli (stenographer) (Appendix B, p. 5)

6.8.1.3 Divine Eye

"My husband was in an office trouble which he did not shared with me. During meditation I saw sights like video clips of YouTube ads (laughing) that after his office

hours deliberately his boss will tell him more work in order to harass him. One day I decided to visit his office when he was working even after office hours are finished and I met the boss. It was a real fight that day. I kind of threaten the boss that if he continues like this I will file a police complain (laughs). Since then, things are much better."

- Mrs. Nitu Kandhare (house wife) (Appendix B, p. 57)

6.8.1.4 Affecting Elements

"I know one incidence of the former principle Vipassana teacher, U Ba Khin. He performed saccakiriya and stopped the rain for a while in order to load the grains in the ship and make ease for the workers."

- Mr Dheerajlal Soni (District Judge) (Appendix B, p. 123)

6.8.1.5 Healing

"One day I was driving car and it was a really hot day. We were stuck on Mumbai Pune highway and because of heavy traffic due to accident. Suddenly my chest started paining and I feel like I am having heart attack (silent for few seconds). Then I called Asst. Teacher Mr. Bharat Grover and he gave me maitri (loving-kindness) and within 10 minutes I was fine and refreshed. I thought of doing this because I know similar situation happened with Mr. Subhash Chandra and he called Guruji for maitri."

- Mrs Asawari Gupchup (House-wife) (Appendix B, p. 135)

6.8.1.6 Precognition

"I was in meditation one time having my morning sitting, that day I was had to meet my friends in the afternoon, but my motor scooters tire was punctured from last 2 days. I thought how nice it would be if Rohit (her son) would have been here. My husband usually is very busy, and my son lives in Mumbai. It was week day, so I was not expecting Rohit to visit me anyways. I just had this thought in the morning and after I finished my meditation, I started cooking. Within an hour or so, someone ring the doorbell. I thought it must be some children came to ask donations in the morning for Ganesha festival. When I opened the door, it was Rohit. He gave me surprise visit. He had some office related work in Pune that day and had meeting in afternoon. I was so happy and said him I was thinking about him. Then he took my bike and fixed the puncture but also offered to drop me at my friend's house in afternoon and picked in the evening after his meeting."

- Mrs. Pournima Veerkar (secondary school teacher) (Appendix B, p.102)

6.9 Contemporary Account from Literature

In this section, I will explore how the insights shared by the interview participants are relevant to this project with examples from contemporary literature. The paranormal events I represent here are an indigenous narrative that appears to resist/ challenge the more modernist/ protestant Buddhist version of Buddhism. This is full of miracles and Buddhist cosmology.

One of the most prominent references can be found in a book on Ven Acariya Mun Bhuridatta Thera which is full of paranormal events. He was a Thai Buddhist Vipassana practitioner with the highest calibre of this present age (Nanasampanno, 2003). His life

was devoted to practising the Dhamma (in the context of Shila, Samadhi and Prajna) and

he believed the virtues to be a central part of his practice. He said, "Each virtuous person

is more precious than any amount of wealth, and each realizes that good deeds have far

greater value than money." (Nanasampanno, 2003, p. 290). For him, the 227 rules set

out by the Buddha for monks can be summarised in one act of not allowing the mind to

indulge in any wrongdoing.

> Question: "I understand that you maintain only one rule instead of
> the full 227 monastic rules that all other monks keep. Is that true?"
> Ãcariya Mun: "Yes, I maintain only the one rule."
> Question: "Which one do you maintain?"
> Ãcariya Mun: "My mind."
> Question: "So, you don't maintain all 227 rules?"
> Ãcariya Mun: "I maintain my mind by not allowing any wrong
> thoughts, speech, or actions that would violate the prohibitions laid
> down by the Buddha, be they 227 in number or even more than that.
> Those who doubt whether or not I maintain the 227 monastic rules
> can think and say what they please. As for me, from the day of my
> ordination I have always maintained strict control over my mind, as it
> is the master of body and speech." (Nanasampanno, 2003, p. 283)

Furthermore, he also explains what morality or Shila is. His answer is very important

as it also emphasises morality as a source of virtue. Accordingly, he answers:

> Question: "I've heard it said that keeping our actions and speech
> in good order is called morality, which lead me to understand that it's
> not really necessary to look after the mind. That's why I asked."
> Ãcariya Mun: "It is quite true that morality entails keeping our
> actions and speech in good order. But before we can put our actions
> and speech in good moral order, we must consider the source of moral

virtue. It originates with the master of body and speech – the mind
– which makes them behave properly. (Nanasampanno, 2003, p. 284)

It is worth mentioning that the Dhamma practice is linked to virtue and control over the mind followed by body and speech. This led Acariya Mun to develop the potential of the mind in order to exercise Iddhis. Although it was the advice given to monks, that if they wish to meet him, they must not ask for magic spells, powerful amulets or lucky charms, as they are outside the way of practice. Acariya Mun is a genuine monk whose teachings never deviate from the path of Dhamma (Nanasampanno, 2003, p. 146). There are however several references in this book for the supernatural powers.

On one occasion Acariya Mun wanted to live in Sarika Cave which was the domain of a spirit of immense size possessing many magical powers. Whoever lived there will fall ill. The only person who could live there was one with pure virtues. When Acariya Mun asked the villagers to take him to Sarika Cave "straightaway they warned him that it was a very special cave possessing numerous supernatural powers, insisting that no monk could possibly live there unless his virtue was pure. Other monks who had tried to live there quickly fell ill with a variety of painful symptoms – many had even died before they could be brought down for treatment" (p. 24). The villagers pleaded with him not to go, they said that any trespasser will be turned away by the spirit except a person of impeccable virtue and a loving compassionate heart, who extends these noble qualities to all living beings (Nanasampanno, 2003, p. 25). Many monks tried to live there before with no success and sometimes never returned because of a dreadful death. Despite this, Acariya Mun decided to go and live in the cave. He became severely ill in the first few days with stomach pain and passing blood in his stool. After trying different medicines

with no results and when the condition was not getting better, he made an emphatic

decision to treat his stomach disorder using the 'therapeutic properties of the Dhamma'.

> "I'm a Buddhist monk. I've certainly practiced meditation long enough to
> recognize the correct path leading to magga, phala, and Nibbãna. By now
> my practice should be firmly anchored in this conviction. So why am I so
> weak and cowardly when faced with a small degree of pain? It's only a slight pain,
> after all, yet I can't seem to come to grips with it. Becoming weak all
> of a sudden, I now feel defeated. Later, when life reaches a critical juncture
> – at the moment of death as the body begins to break up and disintegrate –
> the onslaught of pain will then crush down mercilessly on body and mind.
> Where shall I find the strength to fight it so I can transcend this world and
> avoid being outdone in death's struggle?" (p. 27, 28).

With this solemn determination, he stopped taking all medicines and began

earnestly focusing on meditation as the sole remedy for all spiritual and bodily ailments

(Nanasampanno, 2003, p. 28). Eventually, his mind withdrew from the fear of death and

established into Samadhi. Seeing this, the giant spirit made himself visible in front of

Acariya Mun and asked him to flee in that instant if he wished to remain alive, as he wants

to exercise his only authority in the cave. Acariya Mun said:

> "I am a man of virtue. I have come here with the purest intentions
> – to practice Dhamma for my own spiritual benefit, and the benefit
> of others. Despite that, you threaten to pound me into the ground,
> giving no thought to the consequences of such an evil deed. Don't you
> realize that it will drag you into hell where you will reap the terrible
> misery you have sown? Rather than feel concerned for myself, I feel
> very sorry for you – you've become so obsessed with your own authority
> that it's now burning you alive. Can your potent powers withstand the
> effect of the grave act you are about to commit? You say you exercise

sovereign authority over this mountain, but can your magic powers override Dhamma and the laws of kamma? If your powers really are superior to Dhamma, then go ahead – pound me to death! I'm not afraid to die. Even if I don't die today, my death remains inevitable. For the world is a place where all who are born must die – even you, blinded as you are by your own self-importance. You are not above death, or the laws of kamma that govern all living beings." (p. 30)

As a result of this discussion, followed by the importance of Dhamma, the spirit offered Acariya Mun his full protection and the opportunity to care for him. It then became apparent that the spirit was actually the chief leader of all terrestrial deva (heavenly being). Acariya Mun that night also communicated with other devas by the means of Samadhi. In total, he spent 3 years in the Sarika cave. The mention of Samadhi is noticeable here as it has been stressed previously too in parapsychological literature. In chapter three, (section 3.2), I discussed that Satyananda's (2000) understanding of psi where he discusses "siddhi" or iddhi as described in Patanjali's sutras. Here, it is believed that psi can manifest when one attains the "Samadhi" which is a state of meditative consciousness. A more in-depth evaluation of this relationship was considered by Roney-Dougal (2010). Braud (2006) has provided an extension to the discussion regarding psi research and Patanjali's yoga sutras too. It is apparent that Acariya Mun was able to communicate with other devas due to the attainment of Samadhi. This phenomenon can be linked with telepathy in parapsychology. Sheldrek (2014) informs that telepathic ability often arise between people with a strong emotional connection, and they do not weaken even at a distance. While meditating, one of the interviewees claimed a divine eye like experience when her husband was going through trouble (section 6.8.1.3). However,

Acariya Mun has exercised this phenomenon with the mean of Samadhi. In the interviews, I discovered that merits or virtues are important for achieving Samadhi (section 6.7.4). In the hagiography of Acariya Mun, I found many instances and references that were similar to this discovery, and there was one common point that was being stressed; that it is the power of virtue that is being developed by following the path.

This can also be supported by another example from the book; when a hill-tribe approached Acariya Mun to get the magic formula for warding off and chasing away ghosts, he gave them the formula "Buddho, Dhammo and Sangho" and also the method of using it. With this, when they began practising, they attained Samadhi resulting in the ghosts in the area becoming terrified and running away (p. 210). When Acariya Mun instructed them to meditate each day, they practised seriously and subsequently developed the ability to read minds and were able to instruct others accordingly (p. 211). In section 3.2, I mentioned Roney-Dougal, Solfvin, and colleagues who conducted a series of studies working with both Yogis at an ashram in India (Roney-Dougal & Solfvin, 2006) and Tibetan Buddhist monks (Roney-Dougal, Solfvin & Fox, 2008; Roney-Dougal & Solfvin, 2011). The Tibetan studies compared visualisation and mantra meditation techniques, and while no difference was found between the techniques themselves, normal visualisation and years of experience in visualisation showed the strongest correlation with psi score although it was not statistically significant. Acariya Mun's magic formula here is also to chant: "Buddho, Dhammo and Sangho". The idea behind this practice seems to be leading towards Samadhi.

Acariya Mun also was visited by the devas of various realms. He usually knew their time of arrival and would prepare beforehand to enter into Samadhi (p. 211 - 213). The

devas also complained to Acariya Mun that humans were unaware of their existence and that they do not show any interest in knowing of their existence due to the principles of karma. Rarely did devas encounter a man of supreme virtue, like Acariya Mun. "Still, devas remain a mystery to people who lack the proper psychic skills. For those skilled in the ways of the citta, psychic communication is just as normal as any other aspect of human experience. (Nanasampanno, 2014, p. 214). Interestingly, Acariya Mun was also visited by devas from Germany and they reported that devas from Thailand often visited them. "Whereas humans travel by foot or by vehicle, devas transport themselves by means of a supernormal power that is equivalent to transferring consciousness to a particular destination – it arrives there instantly" (p. 216).

The discussion up to this point confirms the findings from the interviews; that virtue or merits is at the forefront of practice and it yields the various stages of Samadhi, by which attaining iddhis is possible. Whether the iddis relates to reading others minds or knowing beings from different existences, this is only possible when one has established the merits by the means of meditation practice.

In this discussion so far, I have explored the famous contemporary account from the Theravadin Buddhist hagiography of a monk called Acariya Mun to further support the results of the interviews. Similar accounts of experiences can be located in other hagiographies which also contextualise the essence of merits as the main requirement for attaining any higher ability. One of the contemporary western Theravadin monk named Ajahn Achalo in his discourse describes many unusual experiences and attribute them as a result of merits and Dhamma practice (Achalo, 2014).

In the book *"Buddhist Cosmology"* written by contemporary Theravadin monk Punnadhammo Mahāthero, many references can be found where merits are identified as the base of psi. For example, acquisition of more or relatively less sense of pleasure in worldly existence is directly related in accordance with merit one has made (Punnadhammo, 2018, p. 437). Moreover, the glory and happiness of deva (heavenly being) are described by the description of the kamma (or karma) done in his or her previous human existence which merited them the divine reward (p. 459). I also found a reference where aspiration is made while offering a donation. A woman who made an offering to Sāriputta (one of the great disciples of the Buddha) wished that by the power of her meritorious offering, in her next birth may there be a divine elephant with a splendid pavilion and seat on his back with divine bliss and lotuses. According to the scriptures, upon her deceased, she found herself in Tāvatiṃsa (one of the heavenly realms) mounted upon an elephant (p. 462). This could be linked to the experience narrated by one of the interviewees in regard to wishful thinking (section 6.8.1.3). In fact, in this book of *Buddhist Cosmology* author argues that the cause of rebirth is directly related to one's merits. This shall be linked with the phenomenon of reincarnation which is defined as the return of a nonmaterial essence (soul, mind, consciousness) to another physical body after death (Matlock, 2018). Parapsychologists have incorporated research into this area extensively and informed cases suggestive of reincarnation (Stevenson, 1980, 1987, 1987). However, merit's importance is not pointed in parapsychological rigour.   In conclusion, contemporary practitioners and authors draw a parallel of merit with psi, which I found as a result of an inquiry into the Pāli canon and in interviews.

6.10 Recap

This chapter evidenced and discussed the interviews that were conducted with 15 Buddhist Vipassana practitioners. Here, I addressed several points regarding the importance of merits for the successful meditators' experience, and I gave a rationale for choosing a specific type of interview (semi-structured). The interviews were conducted in a manner that helped me to obtain the information that was later coded into a set of categories. On reflection, whilst the interviews turned out to be time-consuming, they allowed the findings to be discussed in detail and allowed numerous conclusions to be made. Firstly, it was found that merits have a direct impact on the development and cultivation of supernormal abilities, this is believed to be because they are part of the multifaceted chain of practices leading to the Nibbana. Second, the connection between wholesome actions and psychic powers is apparent from the interviewee's point of view. Further to this, the interviews disclosed an array of information regarding the presence of psychic abilities. It is important to mention here that all the findings also support the idea that the concept of Iddhi can be connected to parapsychology with the link of merit and.

The aim of this chapter was to justify that merits as a base for psi was significantly found as an outcome of the interview phase and was demonstrated several times throughout the chapter. I also afford a comparison to the earlier discussion which was provided in chapters Two and Three which evidenced the meditator's point of view. Altogether, 10 themes were formed and their links with each other were described. I also established that emptiness is understood as the fourth jnana by meditators and that some of them believed that this can also be a basis for psi. However, they agreed that in order

to achieve emptiness one needs to follow the path of purification, which according to them is also a tool to accumulate good deeds or merits.

This chapter provided the reader with an extensive overview of the outlooks of different Buddhist practitioners which proved to reflect the Pāli Canon scripture. This may be the consequence of following the Noble Buddhist eight-fold Path, by practising the same meditation of Vipassana, however, the outcome is still the same – if psychic powers exist then merits are the main role payers, and thus it is critical to test their existence thoroughly in order to write a new milestone in the history of parapsychology.

An important point that I feel warrants stating, is that despite the results appearing highly subjective to me as the researcher, I feel that my own engagement and understanding of them was imperative to this project, therefore I defend my belief that the findings revealed through this project are a true reflection of personal experience, however, I appreciate that some may have a difference of opinion. I do however believe that my interpretation has strong validity and that my interpretation is reasonable, even if it may not be the only true possible interpretation. As explained in table no. 6.1; all of the interviewees gave positive confirmation that psi has to do with merits and not just meditation practice of mental absorption or purification. I am quite confident that this main outcome can be taken further as a precise conclusion of this analysis and that it may open new avenues of practical research in parapsychology.

I have also concluded that examining the possibility of psi with the theme of 'Act of Truth' or Saccakiriya, could potentially warrant future implications of the study. There is an opportunity for developing a proposal for any experimentation to testify the power of good deeds or merits and their impact on the psi phenomena.

7   Chapter VII Conclusion

7.1   Introduction

This chapter is dedicated to synthesising and interpreting the findings of the thesis and put forwarding suggestions for future work so that current research can be carried on. The central aim of this PhD project was to afford a comparison between the descriptions of psychic experiences in the Buddhist works of the Theravadin Pali canon and those found in western parapsychology. The main rationale was to expand the understanding of the notion of psychic powers as found in the Pāli canon which has been available for a long time but has had little influence on the conceptualisation of phenomena in academic parapsychology.

Chapter 1 of this thesis was dedicated to identifying the thesis aims in detail and providing an insight into the motivation to conduct this work by including a reflexivity section. The thesis aims served as main directional points which were helpful in achieving the object of this research. A reflexivity section summarises why I have undertaken this PhD project and how it has been relevant to my personal and academic background. This was then followed by a section where I justified and outlined the need for the research. Within the justification, I made a point that both Buddhist scholars and parapsychologists have done partial research on the psi phenomena and thus there is a need for further investigation. The main criticism I identified revolves around the observation that parapsychologists do not have a detailed understanding of psi as understood within religious traditions such as Buddhism despite claiming to have inherited some of the insights (such as a focus on meditation and ASCs) while Buddhist scholars have

neglected the psi component of the scriptures. I critically evaluated Cabezon (1995) and Harvey's (1971) criticism of sharing worries on theological studies where most Buddhologists are western scholars thus they are having a cultural influence on their understanding of these traditions. Moreover, Buddhist academician's stand as a doubter needs to be clearer (Cabezon, 1995). This helped me to understand that western Buddhist scholars have not shown much interest in researching the psi phenomenon and thus this paradigm remains untouched. I later justify this in detail in the third chapter as well in point 3.7 regarding the modernist trend of western Buddhist scholars in Theravada tradition. This allowed me to establish the case for the proposed empirical work of the thesis on the grounds that the huge amount of neglected psi material available in the Pāli canon could be of great value conceptually and practically if studied more systematically.

Chapter 2 was written to concentrate on approaches and findings of parapsychology in relation to this thesis's interest. This is to provide an accurate representation of how psi is understood from this perspective. I first briefly summarised the history of parapsychology and also provided a taxonomy of parapsychological phenomena. Then I engaged concisely on modern developments in parapsychology. In this comprehensive survey, learned that this field has extensive research done in field work and in laboratory work. Key points were that this review showed that parapsychologists do claim a linkage to Eastern religious traditions and have adopted terms like 'siddhis' but my evaluation of this material was that it was superficial and inconsistent. In particular, it showed very limited familiarity with the core material of early Buddhist tradition, and this prompted me to investigate and map that material in more depth so as to provide a resource for parapsychologists. I decided to investigate further

on field work in this chapter mainly because several pieces of literature were suggestive that they might link with descriptions in the pali canon. That's why in section 2.6 I talked extensively about real-life examples of psi and linked them to Buddhist understandings.

In Chapter 3, I talked mainly about experimental work from parapsychologists and its relation to Buddhist scripture. I found that modern parapsychologists have claimed that strands of their research are based on Eastern tradition's understanding of psi. However, I found that their understanding is incomplete, especially when compared with the Pāli canon's viewpoints. In this chapter, I pointed out that Honorton's experimental parapsychological research is rich in detail and his Noise Reduction Model (NRM) has clear links with the pali canon in the aspect of psi conductive states achieved through relaxation as a tool to induce psi. NRM model proposes that a reduction in noise from the outside world will help in inducing relaxed states of mind which can be the base of psi states. However, Honorton's understanding here in relation to inducing a relaxed state of mind seems limited from the perspective of Eastern traditions, especially that of Buddhism. In the Theravada tradition, the inner noise (the chaotic mind) can be higher (or more disruptive) than the noise of the outside world, and as such the notion of suffering and its complete eradication is proposed in order to get rid of that chaotic nature of mind as far as the practice of meditation is concerned. This informed me that there is a parapsychologist's understanding of eastern tradition appear to be shallow. Later, I also dwelled upon the work of Roney-Dougal with swamis and sannyasins to show how their research designs reflect an understanding of psi phenomena that is grounded in meditative traditions of the east, including Buddhism. However, I identified that their understanding of Buddhist accounts of psi is relatively shallow and lacked an in-depth

overview from the original text of Pāli Canon. I found that Roney-Dougal's work in ashrams in India is from the Hindu tradition and her work with Tibetan Buddhist monks, both do not entirely represent the Theravada tradition. Although, it is worth mentioning that their results from studies supported a strong relationship between meditation and conscious psi awareness (section 3.2 and 3.3). After understanding the gap of research from parapsychologists on the Pāli canon, I further investigated more into finding the gap from Buddhist academicians. I found that contemporary Buddhist scholars have shown little interest in psi phenomena or parapsychology despite the many references in the Pāli Canon to paranormal powers. In section 3.7, I explored the reasons for this neglect and linked it to justify that why Buddhist academicians are not fully engaged in psi for being modernist in their approach for several reasons. One of these suggests that there is a taboo in Buddhist scholarship within the modernist tradition, also known as protestant Buddhists. I elaborated on how the tradition of Buddhism has been transformed to fit its host culture due to the influence of modernist trend simply a Western imposition but reflected indigenous (in Burma, Thailand and Sri Lanka) efforts to modernise – in particular for transforming Buddhism into a 'mind science'. I found that the discussion on supernormal phenomena has been neglected. All these points so far provided sufficient ground to carry forward my research. Because of these observations, I concluded that it would be valuable to bridge the gap I had identified by analysing accounts of paranormal powers in the Pali canon to see how they might help inform parapsychology's understanding of psi. This chapter also informed me of the need of finding a proper methodology to carry on the research. That's why in the next chapter I focused on explaining the choice of methodology with its justification.

Chapter 4 was a methodology chapter, in which I first briefly explained the aims of this chapter and provided a brief rationale for data analysis. As the Pali canon is a huge piece of literature, I made the point that content analysis would be an appropriate methodology for analysing instances of psi phenomena found there. Content analysis is predominantly used in the research for analysing the scriptural accounts, thus it was a proper methodology to utilise for Pali canon analysis. Before justifying this approach, I first surveyed other relevant methods such as thematic analysis and grounded theory. I dealt with their advantages and disadvantages. In section 4.4, I also surveyed parapsychologists' use of qualitative research and was able to show that content analysis had been used by them previously for similar research. This further justified content analysis as the best fit for this research. I provided the initial findings of an analysis using text-stat to see whether enough instances of psi can be found to put efforts in curating and analysing cases from this huge source. In the initial analysis, I discovered that those 298 instances can be found. This suggests that I would have lots of material for analysis that should give a deep or detailed description of how paranormal powers are understood in the Pali canon. As such, I then focused on strategies by which I could collect data and also discussed associated problems with it.

Chapter 5 was dedicated to reporting findings from the Pāli canon analysis. This was achieved by following the steps described in the previous chapter. Analysis of the cases produced two themes that I labelled Dhamma, and Merits and these themes suggested another theme called Saccakiriya (the act of truth). Dhamma consisted of three sub-themes which are Shila, Samadhi and Prajna. The Merits theme consisted of 10 sub-themes as outlined in section 5.3. All these themes also suggested one more important

theme called Saccakiriya which encompasses the essence of the Pāli canon and can act as a tool for testifying psi in experimental settings ahead. I discussed these findings and analysed them in detail with previous literature of parapsychologists.

In conclusion, I have identified that as the underpinnings of the expression of psi from a Buddhist perspective, it isn't a simple function of spiritual development or of psi conducive conditions (such as entering an altered state of consciousness or focusing on inner sources over external stimuli) but instead seems to reflect a contractual relationship in which merits are accumulated that can be 'spent'. This is one of the main conclusions because it is the focus of my subsequent interviews. I identified a limitation in my scriptural analysis, which is that it could simply reflect a historical perspective that is now outdated. It is conceivable that modern-day practitioners do not take seriously these mentions of paranormal powers and that they are not a part of current practice. That's why in the next phase of this research I interviewed 15 Vipassana meditators so that I could develop an understanding of contemporary beliefs and practices in relation to iddhis.

In Chapter 6, I present the findings from the interviews. I also justify the choice of using thematic analysis as the main method of analysis. Interviewees were expert Theravadin vipassana meditation practitioners with a minimum of 5 years' experience. I needed these interviews to see whether a picture painted from scriptural accounts is consistent with more contemporary descriptions of personal lived experiences. In order to analyse the interviews, I used thematic analysis as the main method of analysis. The analysis revealed 11 themes altogether which were in conjunction with the themes found in Pāli canon. Themes were Shila, Karma, Emptiness, Virtues, Equanimity, Metta, Concentration, Jhana, Purification, Merits and Saccakiriya. These themes reiterated the

findings from the Pāli canon. It suggested that by following these different qualities, merit is gained which ultimately helps in the condition of psi. More prominently, all interviewees agreed that merit is a necessary factor for iddhis. This chapter further evidence that ancient accounts of the Pāli canon are still relevant and contemporary meditators show similar experiences and understandings. Furthermore, I also provided more contemporary accounts of Theravadin monks (such as from Acariya Mun) to support my findings. The new knowledge or addition is that meritorious deeds that a person has accumulated are regarded as providing the base of psi on the contrary where parapsychologists claim it as either spontaneous phenomenon or induced by psi-conductive states. This also fulfils the aim of this PhD of affording a comparison between the description of psychic experience in Buddhist works of Theravadin Pāli canon and in western parapsychology.

7.2 Limitations of the Study

This PhD project was not without limitations. With respect to analysing the Pāli canon, there is potential for bias in terms of quantifying the various terms which are related to psi and making a thorough quantitative analysis of this. The purpose of the study was qualitative (understanding psi only conceptually and qualitatively) and thus, it was not possible to provide more quantitative analysis. However, this research can be a base for thorough quantitative analysis in future. There is also a lack of an English translation of the Pāli canon which is available electronically. Only hard copies are available. Thus, firstly due to lack of knowledge in Pāli I only used the translation of the Pāli canon which may introduce ambiguity in case the translation is not accurate.

Secondly, the lack of an electronically searchable version required me to hand search and so enormously increased the magnitude of the task. In this respect, my recommendation is for a searchable electronic version to be created. Alongside, the Pāli language barrier was also perceived as one of the limitations because of which the extensive hand strategy was used to collect psi from Pāli canon translations in English. This didn't allow me to collect psi from the untranslated work of the Pāli canon. Thus, in future, untranslated work can be scanned and this gap can also be fulfilled. Furthermore, there are *atthakathas* (commentaries) of Tipitaka referring to the commentaries written on the Pāli canon. This collection is also vast which further can be scrutinised in relation to the psi and findings from this thesis. In this thesis, I have only concentrated on the Pāli canon which is one of the versions of Tipitaka available from the Pāli language. The nature of data collection was pioneering, and such collection was not done before in academia. Although it took a lot of time it also bears many fruitful outcomes. In the future, I will be organising the collected incidences of psi in a manner that a separate collection can be published in a book format. A number of scholars from Buddhist academia and also from parapsychology can take huge benefits out of this. The material can serve as a basis for further research. The Tipitaka is also available in other languages such as Chinese, Burmese, Sinhalese, and Thai (Lancaster, 2005). Linking the findings of this thesis with said version will be worthwhile as well, especially to determine the validity of translation and understanding of Tipitaka from various countries and sources.

There was a lot of positive aspects to working with the whole Pāli canon with a hand search strategy. One of the reasons I decided to employ this is simply because the electronic English version of the Pāli canon is yet not available. However, the main reason

was to build my personal understanding of the dhamma as well which has a vast and complicated nature. In this process, hand strategy helped me to pick each and every psi reference however while doing so it may be possible that I might have understood the dhamma incorrectly because of either personal excitement or the researcher's bias. Although, I tackled this issue with the process of content analysis still there might be some methodological flaws that may have remained unnoticed inadvertently. One of which can be the thorough quantitative analysis which I have acknowledged earlier too. The Pāli canon itself is complicated in nature and while reading it there were many passages that can be hard to comprehend for someone who lacks a basic understanding of Buddhism. Although I have been studying Buddhism for more than half a decade, it is possible that I may have miscomprehended few things unintentionally due to the lack of my full wisdom in Buddhism.

Another limitation can be cultural bias from the interviewees. I also chose to recruit interviewees in India because that would be more consistent with the prevailing culture of the scriptural accounts (Western practitioners from London would be different in so many ways) and there are more people whose practice is a way of life rather than an adjunct (which may be more typical in the West). Nonetheless, working with this sample may restrict the generalisability of my research findings – particularly because meditation centres were unwilling to permit me to do research that involved talking about psi (reflecting the taboo that I observed in the literature), which could have skewed my sample. Other populations may show a different understanding of vipassana and psi which may form a contrast with the Indian population. It could be valuable to spend more

time securing permission to recruit from meditation centres (including monks) to see their views of psi and Saccakiriya.

There might also be a possible bias in the interview process from the development of the interview schedule through the way I interacted with the participants. I was aware of this as a possible bias and to point to the care you took in designing the interview questions so that they would not be 'leading' (i.e., would produce the results you expected, given the findings from the content analysis). For example, it was pleasing that interviewees mentioned the need for merit as a tool for psi without me pointing this out to them. The choice of thematic analysis itself served better to come up with themes from the interviews which were easy to relate with Pāli canon. However, the result may be different if would have chosen to do any other analysis method with interviews data. The notion of Saccakiriya itself can be the biggest implication and it can be set up in a clinical or experimental trial to determine the existence of psi at a tangible level, which can also be acceptable for the wider scientific and academic community in general.

Another limitation could be to consider whether my deep involvement might have affected the outcomes. I tried to control against analyst bias in a number of important ways. I took care to ensure the interview schedule questions were neutral and not leading. I also followed a rigorous analysis process, and in presenting the analysis the onus was on me to demonstrate how themes I generate were grounded in the data.

The biggest limitation I found was the limited reference source in academia regarding this topic. It was thus many a time hard to connect the findings with already existent knowledge and scholarship. However, the finding I present in this thesis is entirely new for the Buddhist and Parapsychological realm, thus in due course when more

research can be engaged in this area, it will be possible to have more publication for Buddhism and parapsychology and establish needed knowledge and scholarship. In future, it will also be very worthwhile to compare and contrast the finding of this thesis with other religious philosophies and doctrines. Christianity for instance where Jesus turning water into wine is a very much proclaimed phenomenon. The ontological comparisons can be drawn, and interesting critical analysis could be carried out to determine whether this has any relation with merits and Saccakiriya. All in all, this research project is a worthwhile addition to the academic world which not only bears the value of evidential theories regarding psi but also propagates the possibility to conduct an experiment by which psi can be evidenced practically.

I would also like to acknowledge the limitation of me as a researcher where English is my third language – it might be the case that I took a longer time than the average native person to accomplish this research. It was exhaustive in terms of human resources. As such, any unconscious bias or misunderstanding for this reason if located could have happened inadvertently. One of the beautiful things I found in the analysis is that all themes are interconnected with each other and can be linked likewise. However, this may be a limitation if the research is to carry out with just one or other specific element in future (just concentration for instance) and examine it thoroughly for any other purpose of study (such as the effect of concentration on the accumulation of merit, etc.). In future though, the findings from this research project can provide different dimensions to the research on psi, or even dhamma so that the implication has a wider scope for new and interesting research.

7.3 Future Implications

Based on my findings, I would like to see more research on the early account of Buddhists from parapsychologists. Further investigation can be done with various Theravada traditions in the country of Burma, Thailand, Sri Lanka, etc. To build upon my work, the concept of merit can be operationalised with proposed any experimentation on Saccakiriya where PK phenomenon (or any other psi phenomenon) can be testified in a clinical trial. Moreover, parapsychologists can take help from my work to experiment on the notion of merit with various existing research efforts such as ganzfeld, NRM, etc. One way would be to select the participants by scrutinising the merits they had earned. I would also change the design of NRM by adding meditation sessions in the beginning and dedication of merit for achieving success in targeted stimuli. I would like to see the change in the research of parapsychology where new concepts and research (such as those produced by this thesis) are taken forward and research intensely. Overall, the concept of merits might affect the way that research in parapsychology is conducted, and I would like to see that change in the field as emerging new research.

The contribution of my thesis lies in its new finding that psi is the ultimate result of the acquisition of merits. This new knowledge can be applied in future to provide a new dimension for parapsychological research so that the field of psychology and academia overall can be benefitted.

7.4   Overall Verdict and Thesis Contribution to Knowledge

This PhD research contributes to the parapsychology and Buddhism academic literature by introducing a new understanding of psi phenomena. Psi as it was seen in parapsychology is often spontaneous and sporadic in nature or can be elicited with psi conductive states. In contrast, from the Buddhist point of view, it can be the cultivation of concentration practices such as I found in the interview theme of Samadhi. Unexpectedly, with the help of research analysis in Pāli canon and analysis of interviewees accounts, I found that merits are thought to form the basis of psychic powers. This also further informs that with the notion of Saccakiriya - the proclamation of truth, the merits notion can be testified in modern clinical trials to examine its effect on psi. Overall, the findings of this research can be very beneficial to the academic understanding of psi, in offering an alternative view of the necessary or sufficient conditions needed for psi to occur.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Psi from Pāli Canon

Appendix B: Interview Transcripts

Appendix C: Thematic Map of Pāli Canon Analysis

Dhamma

Shila, Samadhi, Prajna

Merits

Saccakiriya

10 Perfections

Dhamma

10 Perfections
Purification (Nobel Eight-fold Path)
Saccakiriya

Dhamma

10 Perfections
Merits
Purification
Saccakiriya

Thematic Map of Pali Canon Analysis
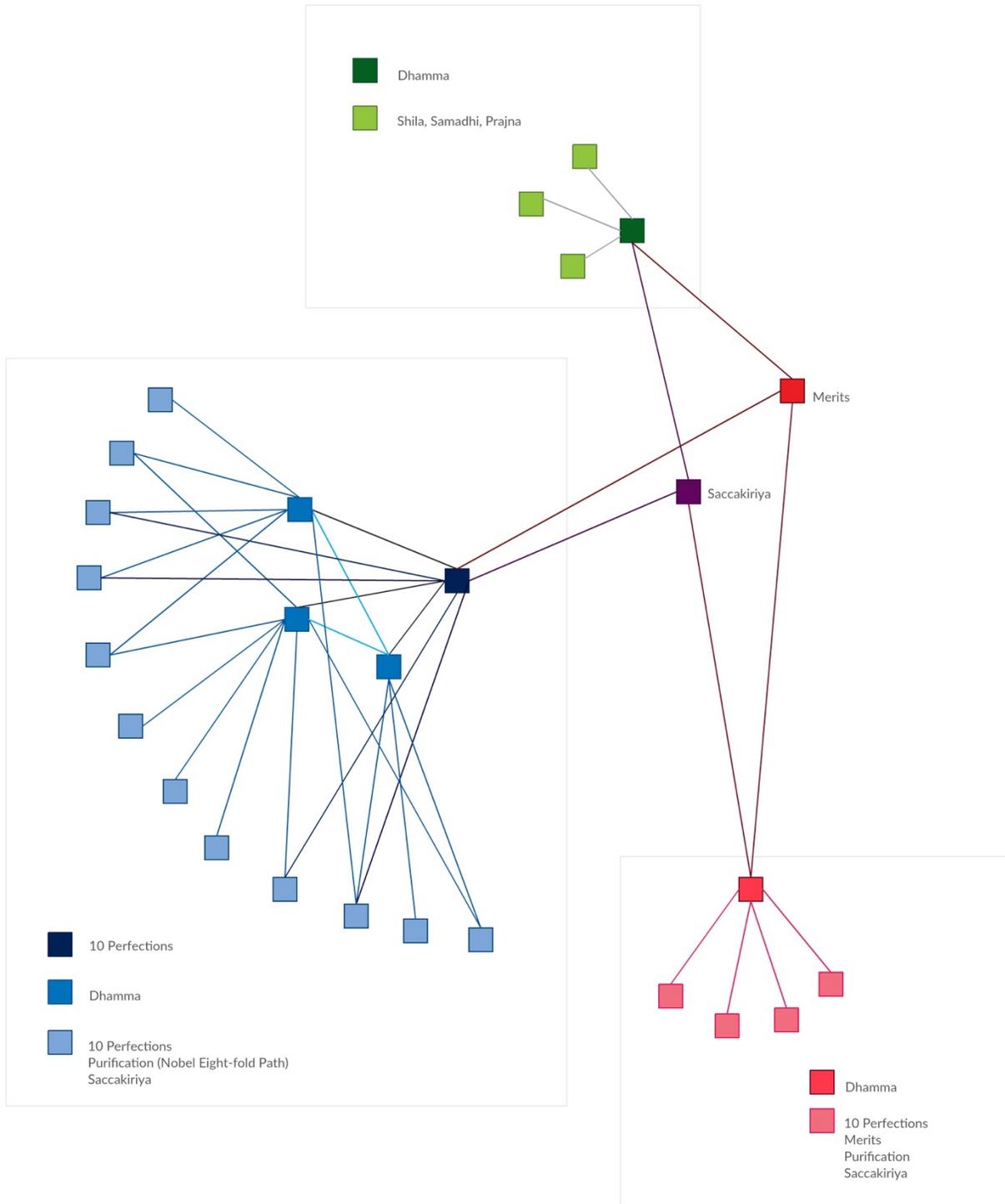
Appendix D: PIS and Consent Form for Interviews

Research Project Description and Consent Form
Parapsychology and Buddhism -- to afford a comparison between
descriptions of psychic experiences in Buddhist works and in
parapsychological research

This PhD project at the University of Northampton, UK focuses on the relation of Buddhist notion of iddhi or psychic powers with today's modern parapsychology. Many incidences of iddhi's are found in Buddhist Pāli Canon and this needs to be synthesised with conceptualisations of western psychology in order to gain in depth understanding of this phenomenon.

The emphasis is also on understanding the relation of iddhi's or psi with buddhist meditation practices as this is the main subject of the study. In the experimental phase of this research eligible participants will be employed to testify psi phenomenon in a standard clinical type of model.

If you would be interested in taking part in the experimental or third phase of this study please let me know, you are under no obligation to take part in any further aspects of this study if you do not wish to.

This project is being funded by the Government of India.

Why should I take part?
One of the main aims of this project is to build bridge between ancient Buddhist literature with modern parapsychological investigations. Researcher also making efforts to testify whether scientific spiritual theories offered by Buddhist sources can satisfy modern mainstream science as far as proving existential account of psi is concerned. Initial enquiry of this research has suggested that the accumulated stock of Merits can be used to fulfil one's wish or induce psi phenomenon. The practice of meditation or Dhamma is considered as the most Meritorious act in Buddhist Pāli Canonical scriptures. Thus, the partial aim of this interview is also to find out relation between meditation practice and psychic powers. To explore this, researcher would like to interview experienced meditators about their experiences to see if they have direct knowledge of such phenomena and any insight into why and how they might occur.
As such, to support this project, researcher requests you to take part and contribute your valuable knowledge through interview.
What you will be expected to do
You will be asked to take part in an interview in which you will be invited to share your experiences of meditation practice in general and specifically of your experiences in regards with any psi or similar phenomena as appropriate. All interviews will be audio recorded with your permission and will take place in a mutually agreed upon,

private, comfortable and safe place, to be arranged prior to the interview. You will not be asked to discuss anything you do not wish to due to either personal preference or the values of your tradition. You will be given a copy of the transcript of your interview and a summary of the themes derived from the interviews, which you will have the opportunity to comment on. Whilst there is no specific time limit on the duration of the interviews they are expected to last roughly one hour. If you would like to see the list of interrogations to be asked, before the interview, please contact the researcher. Researcher is happy to share the information before hand.

Participation is voluntary

Participation is entirely voluntary. You may withdraw from the interview at any time without having to give a reason. If you wish to withdraw from the study after the interview is completed, you have one month from the date of your interview to do so, again without having to give a reason. If you do choose to withdraw after the interview has taken place, your information and interview data will be destroyed. Please contact researcher if you choose to withdraw from the study.

Confidentiality and Data Protection

Data will be collected using audio recording device. Data from the interviews (e.g. recordings, transcripts and analysis, etc) will be stored in a locked filing cabinet or password protected computer, which only the researchers have access to. Once transcripts have been produced, the audio recordings will be destroyed, the transcripts will be stored for an indefinite amount of time. Raw recordings will be destroyed as soon as purpose of the interview is fulfilled. Tapes will be transcribed by researcher using manual typing on computer.

Although we ask you to sign a consent form, this will be kept separate from the rest of your data, if you wish to receive a copy of your transcript or to withdraw your data, you only need to contact me to let me know and mention what your pseudonym is.

Your identity will be anonymised using a pseudonym. Where quotes are used within the study, all identifying details will be removed or anonymised**.** Quotes may also be used at academic conferences and/or published in academic journals, there is also a possibility that study findings may be the subject of university or community talks/lectures and may also be reported in newspapers, magazines or online. Any quotes used will also be anonymised to protect your identity. it is this anonymised data that will be used in presentations and publications. If you do not wish for your quotes to be used in this manner, please indicate on the consent form.

Contact Information

If you wish additional information about this research project please contact me:
chetak.Nangare@northampton.ac.uk (01604) 892964

If you wish to know more about the project as a whole or my registration at Northampton University please contact one of my supervisors:

Prof Chris Roe:
Chris.Roe@northampton.ac.uk
(01604) 892623

School of Social Sciences

Dr Alasdair Gordon-FInalayson:
alasdair.Gordon-Finlayson@northampton.ac.uk

The University Of Northampton

Park Campus

Boughton Green Road

(01604) 892623

Parapsychology and Buddhism -- to afford a comparison between descriptions of psychic experiences in Buddhist works and in parapsychological research

Consent Form

Please Tick

	Y	N
I understand that I must be 18 or over to take part and confirm that I am	☐	☐
I understand the nature of the study and how my data will be used	☐	☐
I understand that I may withdraw from the study at any time	☐	☐
I understand that I may withdraw my data up to one month after the date of my interview	☐	☐
I have been given a copy of this description for my own records	☐	☐
I agree to quotes from my interview being used in academic conferences and journals	☐	☐
I agree to my interview being audio recorded	☐	☐

Signed_____   Date _____

Pseudonym_____

Would you be interested in taking part in the experimental third phase of this study? (details will be shared about this part later)

☐ Yes   ☐ No

If you would like a copy of the transcript of the interview, please leave your email address below:

_____

Appendix E: Ethics Approval from University of Northampton's REC

Northampton Gateway

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Ethics Application - Mr Chetak Nangare

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Title	Ethics Application - Mr Chetak Nangare
Project	Parapsychology and Buddhism -- to afford a comparison between descriptions of psychic experiences in Buddhist works and in parapsychological research
Researcher	Mr Chetak Nangare
Date	24 May 2016
Academic year	2015 - 2016
Committee meeting	Research Ethics Committee meeting

STATUS
Approved

APPLICATION
Ethics application form

OUTCOME
Ethics committee decision

RELATED APPLICATIONS

RELATED APPLICATIONS
Application to Transfer

Application to Transfer

Tasks

Ethics application workflow	
Chetak Nangare started ethics application	24 May 2016, 13:50
Chetak Nangare confirmed details	24 May 2016, 13:50
Chetak Nangare submitted ethics application form	24 May 2016, 13:54
David Watson added a note:	03 Jun 2016, 15:09
Dear Philip, please check/edit amend the feedback. thank you	
David Watson forwarded application to committee Chair	03 Jun 2016, 15:09
Philip Garner progressed the application	07 Jun 2016, 17:41

Created 24/05/2016, last modified 24/05/2016. Created by Chetak Nangare, last modified by David Watson.

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