

WORKS WITH THE LEVEL OF SLEEP IN THE SCHOOLS OF AWAKENING

India and the foothills of the Himalayas



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SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

This study —focused on the Indo-Tibetan region— was motivated mainly by the interest of discovering those mystical schools where the level of consciousness of sleep was an integral part of the work of Ascesis. The more personal interest was to compare the experiences and conclusions of the mystics with our own observations in this field; observations we have formulated under the following 7 "hypotheses":

1. In the context of Ascesis, dreams are indicators of our spiritual growth: psychological dreams tend to diminish while "significant" dreams increase.
2. Transforming natural sleep into intentional sleep, introducing direction, reversibility and lucidity, is not only possible but also of great interest.
3. When the Purpose occupies a central place, it invades all levels of consciousness, including our reveries and our sleep; dreams then become "spiritual experiences".
4. When the Ascesis is extended to sleep, the dreams may become sort of "allegorised Ascesis practices", that is, "the trains of oneiric images" lead us to the Profound.
5. In this case, the vanishing of the images/registers no longer corresponds to a "fainting" of the consciousness but to a "rupture of the levels" (suspension and suppression of the I); so, the vegetative dream of "diffuse vitality" is converted into an experience of Awakening.
6. Many of the significant dreams are but later translations of the reminiscences of this contact with the Profound during sleep.
7. The significant dreams should be studied and interpreted so that the consciousness can fully integrate their meanings and teachings.

At this point, we will comment some aspects of the methodology and documentation we used.

FIRST PART

In the three thousand years of Indian spirituality, we have highlighted three key periods in which mystics have put a particular intention in the study and control of the level of consciousness of sleep.

The first period is located within the classical Indian era, mainly between 700 and 500 BC, with early Hinduism, Jainism and Buddhism.

As a consequence of a deep crisis of the official religion —Vedism-Brahmanism— religiosity takes a new direction: many spiritual seekers abandon the "worldly" life and the external rituals in order to dedicate their lives to meditation, retiring to the forests as hermits, wandering ascetics or yogis. From these works of self-exploration and self-transformation of consciousness, yoga techniques will emerge, as well as a new mysticism, which has been developed in the *Upanishads*.

The power of the purpose —enlightenment and immortality— impels ascetics to study not only the psychophysical functioning of sleep but also its spiritual dimension. Procedures will be searched for to extend the Ascesis also to the level of sleep, in large part through the control of breathing and mental prayer. In the *Brihadaranyaka Upanisad*, the "Great Book of the Forest", we find a long description of an experience of mystical awakening during sleep. Although allegorical dreams are not presented in the *Upanishads*, in other writings of this epoch and also in later writings referring to this same period, several of them are related. Moreover, these texts mention "experts in the interpretation of dreams" working with so-called "keys of dreams", a kind of dictionary of symbols.

In that same period Jainism and Buddhism will emerge. Its founders, Mahavira and Buddha, both wandering ascetics, will build their respective paths of enlightenment filled with "great dreams". We present here some of them, focusing more particularly on the "five great dreams" of Buddha.

Finally, we will take a small leap in time, quoting an excerpt from a text of the 2nd century BCE —the dialogue between the monk Nagasena and King Menander—, which informs us about the Buddhist stance regarding dreams: for example, the difference between ordinary and significant dreams, between natural sleep and intentional and lucid sleep.

SECOND PART

The second period corresponds to the medieval era, more precisely the period between the years 800 and 1100, with the apogee of the Hindu and Buddhist Tantric currents in North India and Tibet.

Context. Tantrism is a metaphysic and mysticism based on non-dualism (unification of opposites), and above all, an initiatory teaching transmitted directly and orally from master to disciple. Although tantrism is an energetic path in its essence, it has also incorporated the mental dimension of Buddhism and various iconographic and morphological aspects, without forgetting the devotional component. The great novelty that Tantrism brings is the importance it gives to the "integral experience of life" as a constitutive part of the ascetic practice (*sadhana*): rather than despising the psychophysical mechanics, it is a matter of knowing and controlling its functioning to perfection, and then transcending it. The Tantric path is a complex and demanding discipline: indeed, the yogis we are presenting here carry out an uninterrupted practice of asceticism, day and night.

In the texts of the Shivaism of Kashmir —Hindu Tantric current— various procedures are referred to in order to provoke significant dreams; however, lucidity seems to prevail over oneiric content. Kashmiri yogis exercise with techniques of attention and consciousness-of-self. One of the techniques is to pay attention to the "in-between" —space/instant between two breathings, two postures, two thoughts, etc.— ; and in the context of "night asceticism", to the gap between levels, e.g. between semi-sleep and dream, with the aim of breaking the mechanics of the levels (this "level rupture" that permits suspension/suppression of the I). Of course, the experiences, even if they are frequent, will not be enough. What matters is the stabilisation of the state of Awakening, to progress from "partially enlightened" to "fully enlightened" i.e. permanently and definitively. Of course, the yogis have a "grid" to evaluate their progress. This framework proposes a "scheme of consciousness" which, although it may seem vague or incomplete to our eyes today, nevertheless represents a great advance in the knowledge of consciousness.

The texts of Tantric Buddhism, **Vajrayana** or **Tibetan Buddhism**, offer us more complete information about the work with sleep and dreams, which later on —thanks to the Indian mystic Naropa—, will become a full yoga: the "yoga of dreams". Naropa's teaching will reach Tibet, where it will take root and develop incorporating elements of the local religion (the Bon).

The **Yoga of Dreams and of Clear Light** aims to create a "double" capable of transcending. This is a lengthy process, the difficulty of which requires ongoing training. Like the Kashmiri Shivaists, the Buddhist tantrics strive to live in the Purpose all the time, day and night. Their yoga consists of complex procedures organised in successive steps. The preparatory work (so called "outer mandala") and the practices of perfecting ("inner mandala") —some of which remind us of those of our own discipline— propose a path of profound transformation. If during sleep, the yogi knows that he is dreaming (consciousness, lucidity), if he has also acquired the ability to transform his oneiric images at will (mobility, reversibility) and to give them a clear direction (intention, purpose), he will no longer be taken by them and will be able to transcend them and continue without "supports" (i.e. without images, forms). His dreaming will thus become a path of liberation and enlightenment. The lucidity that the yogi will have developed in his sleep will also be of use to him when he dies, since the *bardo post mortem* is assimilated to the dream state. Instead of getting lost in his own mental labyrinth, the practitioner will be able to avoid the traps of his "mental projections" to go towards the Light. But one must learn to distinguish the different "lights/voids" before arriving to the ultimate Light, to the Light to which the dead also approach, who often cannot integrate it because they are not able to endure its power. Of course, the yogis must exercise themselves in life; and in the context of sleep, they must learn to shorten or overcome the oneiric images in order to work with and in the "voids". If they succeed, they are

guaranteed entrance to Nirvana; and on earth they will enjoy a new quality of life, that of the "freed-alive", and will have the capacity to liberate other beings.

The following chapter presents the oneiric universe of the famous Tibetan mystic Milarepa and his lineage, whose process is full of significant dreams: premonitory, shared, inspired, guiding, etc. In his biography, the intentional aspect of his work with dreams is not developed in detail; however, the number of dreams described, interpreted and taken into account in order to advance in his Ascesis, informs us about his mastery.

THIRD PART

The third period corresponds to modern India in the 20th century, where some "syncretic" schools have reanimated the various ancestral practices, adapting them to the present times.

Context. Despite an unalterable background, Indian spirituality has been influenced by different cultures, which has also had an impact on the already existing mixed oneiric landscape (Hinduism-Buddhism-Tantrism-Shamanism). Over time, this syncretism became even more accentuated with the integration of elements from western currents, especially from C.G. Jung's psychology, which previously drew inspiration from Hindu philosophy.

Yoga Nidra or yoga of lucid dreaming, was "created" by Swami Satyananda Saraswati who took his inspiration from various traditions. He has reviewed ancient techniques and practices to make them more accessible to the general public. Over time, other yoga schools have brought their own developments and innovations to it. The formats of the preparatory sessions vary according to the schools and the influences they have received. But they all have in common the "guided meditations" (by means of an instructor or with audio CD's) aiming to the mastery of deep relaxation, the control of the breathing, the ability to cross and overcome the trance states that are part of the path; to become familiar with the allegorical and symbolical universe of the oneiric images; to educate the consciousness of self especially in the moment of "falling" asleep. Because if we are not able to remain conscious in the "little passages", what will happen at the moment of the "Great Passage" (death)? Once the different technical elements have been incorporated, the practitioner becomes autonomous and can build his/her own procedure. As always, the purpose is to reach *samadhi* (deep absorption) enabling true Awakening.

Sri Aurobindo and his spiritual companion **The Mother** are indispensable figures of the "night school". Like their predecessors, they exhort Consciousness of self, upon true awakening, to profound and irreversible transformation (to attain to the "Supramental" and to establish it on earth, to "deify" the human being and his life). But although both of them are inscribed in the long tradition of the conquest of the non-representable Reality, they do not fail to study the paradoxical sleep that allows the exploration and integration of all the "planes of being", as long as we consciously cross them. Dreams are a "bridge" with the Un-representable or "subsequent transcriptions" of that Un-representable. According to them, the very reason for sleep (in addition to its function of psycho-physical recovery) is the return to the Source, in order to regenerate, grow and transform oneself. But also to act in it! Indeed, if the transcendental planes operate within us, we also act within those higher planes.

In the abundant epistolary correspondence with their respective disciples, Aurobindo and the Mother will give a great deal of clarifying answers, theoretical contributions, recommendations, examples, testimonies, covering all aspects of the dream phenomenon; for example, how to distinguish significant dreams, how to provoke them, remember them, interpret them, etc. If in the above-mentioned schools we have found many points in common with our own experience, here all our assertions have been confirmed.

CONCLUSION / SYNTHESIS

In conclusion, the study of the different texts we have been consulting has confirmed all our hypotheses, although unevenly from one school to another. We are not going to take them up again one by one to

demonstrate their validity; rather, we prefer to highlight and comment on the aspects that seem most significant and inspiring for our Ascesis.

Mental irreverence. The mystics, who have worked with sleep as a path of Ascesis, have developed their work outside the official religion; or they refused to submit to the rules of the existing monastic orders; or they drew inspiration from doctrines of different currents (not only their own) in order to design their own paths. They are all independent, free, bold spirits. Not surprising at all: attempting to achieve true awakening during sleep itself, surely requires mental irreverence?

Double position. The "double nature" of consciousness —determined and at the same time intentional — will result in a "double mental position" with respect to the oneiric phenomenon. This double stance, is not contradictory, it is paradoxical. But surely paradoxical thinking is precisely the indicator of a different, superior mental form, beyond dualisms and opposites?

Non-stop Ascesis. The purpose of absolute Awakening implies a consolidated level of consciousness of self, a permanent inspired state, an inner centre of gravity that substitutes the old I-identity. In order to achieve this deep and irreversible change, an integral and permanent Ascesis is required, day and night. It is not surprising then if sleep becomes a "nocturnal Ascesis". Now, to produce the Awakening in deep sleep means a new triumph over natural law, the liberation of one more conditioning, the overcoming of one more limit, the widening of the field of freedom. And thus going "against nature", the yogi surpasses their human nature to find and assume their true nature: "fully human" or rather "divine".

Domesticate death. When we sleep deeply and lose all notions of ourselves, do we enter into death or the Profound? Does deep sleep prepare us to die or to transcend? If our ancestors were establishing equivalences between "sleep-meditation-awakening", they also did so for "sleep-death-transcendence"; the point of union being the Consciousness of self. Without consciousness of self there is no centre of gravity; and without centre of gravity there is no transcendence. And, when dreams are leading us increasingly often to the most beautiful Light, or when our dreams are the later translations of those increasingly frequent incursions into the Hidden City, we will no longer doubt our immortality. Then every night will be a return to the Source and every day a projection —in the world— of its deepest significations.

APPENDIX 1

In appendix 1 we present some analogies between phenomena commented on in Tibetan literature and our own experience. These similarities have given more credibility to the "extraordinary" dimension of Tibetan Buddhism; they have allowed us to better grasp the boundary between magical and inspired consciousness, between fantasy and the fantastic, between occultism and mystery, and to accept with more serenity the "unexplainable"... And finally: experiencing, more than a thousand years later, some Tibetan procedures, without knowing their existence, proves that they are still alive and operational.

APPENDIX 2

In appendix 2 we present the syntheses of the different study groups we have formed between 2011 and 2017 —with a total of 25 masters— and in which we have been investigating the relationship between our Ascesis and significant dreams.

INTRODUCTION

Interest and hypotheses

Dreams have always and everywhere played an important part in popular culture, although the attitude towards them changes from one population to another and from one era to another. Dreams are also present in the literature of the different religions —myths and sacred texts— where the divine manifests itself to make revelations, to announce the future, to give directions or commandments, to produce conversions. Finally, many artists, scientists, believers or ordinary people have had "great dreams" giving them the inspiration and strength to fulfil their destinies.

In the context of Ascesis, our interest was mainly to investigate the dream experience of those mystics who did intentional work in that field. We wanted to discover the "schools of sleep" mentioned by Silo, or more precisely, schools in which the work with the level of sleep was an integral part of the Ascesis of the mystics.

What kind of dreams did have the mystics who made history? How did they interpret their dreams and with what benefit for their Ascesis? And inversely, what impact did the Ascesis have on their dreams? What kind of work did they do with the level of consciousness of sleep? With what kind of procedures? Achieving what kind of significant experience and transformation? And with what kind of criteria did they evaluate it?

These questions have their origin in our own experience with dreams. It is a personal work of many years, which became even more intense during the disciplinary process and after that with the Ascesis, leading us to several observations, which we will summarise in the form of the following 7 "hypotheses":

1/ The more the work of Ascesis progresses, the more it produces changes in ourselves. This can be observed in our life-style but also in sleep: psychological dreams tend to diminish, while significant dreams increase. And these dreams, endowed with direction, reversibility and inspiration, then become "indicators" of our spiritual growth.

2/ Although it is more difficult to maintain lucidity at the level of sleep, it is not impossible: more than the level, it is the state of consciousness that matters.

And so the consciousness is equipped with mechanisms of reversibility that work according to the state of lucidity that the consciousness is in at that moment. We know that as the level drops, it becomes increasingly more difficult to voluntarily go toward the sources of stimuli. The impulses impose themselves, the memories impose themselves, and all of this starts controlling the consciousness with great suggestive power, while the defenceless consciousness limits itself to receiving the impulses. The level of consciousness drops, critical sense diminishes, self-criticism diminishes, and reversibility diminishes with all its consequences. Not only does this happen in a fall in level of consciousness, but also in altered states of consciousness. It's clear that we do not confuse levels with states. For example, we can be in the level of vigilic consciousness but in a passive state, in an attentive state, in an altered state, and so on. Each level of consciousness allows for different states. In the level of paradoxical sleep, the states of tranquil sleep, altered sleep and somnambulistic sleep are different from each other. Reversibility can also fall in one of the apparatuses of consciousness due to altered states, and not because the level has dropped.

Silo, *Notes of Psychology*, Psychology III, p. 90 pdf version.

http://www.silo.net/system/documents/89/original/Apuntes_en.pdf

On the other hand, according to Silo, it is not only possible but highly recommended to induce and control our dreams, that is to say to intentionally introduce direction and reversibility mechanisms that normally do not exist in this level of consciousness. Therefore, he recommends¹ procedures that have been tested and validated by several study groups² in various *Parks of Study and Reflection*, including the Park *La Belle Idée*.

3/ When the Purpose is at the centre of our life, it invades, from co-presence, all levels of consciousness³, including daydreams (reveries) and night dreams. Now, we know that the Profound can be accessed from all levels of consciousness and, therefore, from the level of sleep as well. In this case, our dreams may become true mystical experiences in the same way as the "visions" in vigil or semi-sleep that may arise after a "classical" practice of Ascesis, or after an irruption of the transcendental plane into the everyday life.

We must point out that when we speak of the "mysticism" in general we are considering the psychic phenomena of the "experience of the sacred" in its various depths and expressions. There exists a copious literature that speaks of the dreams, visions in semi-sleep, and the vigilic intuitions of those persons who are references for religions, sects and mystical groups.

Silo, *Notes of Psychology*, Psychology IV, p. 103 pdf version.

In the same sense, let us also remember that final dialogue in the story *The Day of the Winged Lion*, in Silo's eponymous book⁴, about the "vision" of the winged lion:

- *I saw it...* (says Mrs. Walker)
- *I dreamed it...* (says Mr. Ho)
- *It's the same* (responds Mrs. Walker).

4/ Insofar as our Ascesis is extended to sleep, dreams may become "allegorised practices of Ascesis" i.e. the "train of oneiric images" take us directly, or after some intermediate stops, to the final destination, the Profound. The dream then becomes a new possibility of Ascesis, a "nocturnal Ascesis", in addition to the daytime one.

5/ If the dream sequence leads us to the Profound, this implies that, in the dream itself, a "rupture of level" has taken place i.e. a suspension or even the suppression of the I. In this case, deep sleep without images (the cycle that mechanically follows paradoxical sleep with images/dreams) becomes a transcendent experience, an Awakening experience. In other words, the "natural" sleep (vegetative, of diffuse vitality) no longer corresponds to a "fainting" of the consciousness, but to a transcending of the consciousness (entrance to the Profound). In fact, after this type of "mystical slumber", we usually have the same indicators as after a "classical" practice of Ascesis (e.g. energy, lucidity, well-being of higher quality, a different way of structuring reality, comprehensions, inspirations, occurrences, concomitances / coincidences, etc. during everyday life).

6/ When in our sleep we enter the Profound, its deep impulses arrive to us through the intra-body and so the reminiscences of our immersion in the depths may translate themselves into inspired and inspiring dreams. These dreams would then be subsequent translations of the meanings of the Profound (unless we wake up without going through the paradoxical cycle with dreams, and so experience will be translated in semi-sleep or vigil).

¹ Silo, *School Notes*, chapter 4, Sleep and trance. Unpublished material for internal circulation.

² Pía Figueroa, *Investigations about Dreams* <http://www.parquepuntadevacas.net/prod.php>; Ariane Weinberger, *The oneiric landscape of 25 masters of the Park La Belle Idée as a translation of the work of Ascesis*. <https://www.parclabelleidee.fr/monographies.php>.

³ *Minutes of the School*, p.83/84; *Document of Ascesis*. Both, unpublished materials, for internal circulation.

⁴ Silo, *The Day of the Winged Lion*. http://www.silo.net/en/collected_works/index

We cannot say anything about this “void”. The recovery of inspiring meanings, of the deep meanings that are beyond the mechanisms and the configurations of consciousness, are carried out by my “I” when it returns to its normal vigilic work. We are speaking of a type of perception, different from the ones we know, of “translations” of deep impulses, which arrive from my intrabody during deep sleep, or of impulses that arrive to my consciousness at the moment of “return” to the normal vigil. We cannot speak of that world because we do not have registers during the absence of the “I”; as Plato mentioned in his myths, we have only “reminiscences” of that world.

Silo, *Notes of Psychology*, Psychology IV, p. 106 pdf version.

7/ It is useful to study our inspired dreams because it is only after a deeper understanding that we can grasp their teachings. The allegorical analysis of the oneiric images allows, in most cases, to detect the roots that have given rise to these images. Obviously, the interpretation of dreams seems to be essential to fully integrate the experiences and obtain the maximum benefit from them.

... learn to discover the truth behind the allegories, which on occasion lead the mind astray, but at other times translate realities that would be impossible to grasp without such representation.

Silo, *Silo's Message*, chap. XX Internal Reality, p. 30 pdf version.

In short, dreams are significant not so much as occasional and/or accidental phenomena, but as a consequence of the work of Ascesis; furthermore, as "intentional nocturnal practices", being an integral part of a global and continuous ascesis.

We therefore wanted to verify all these statements and find out whether the masters of the "schools of awakening working with sleep" had come to similar experiences and conclusions.

And indeed, we have found such schools in various spiritual traditions, but in this work we will only present the Indo-Tibetan schools.

Development of the study

In the three thousand years of Indian spirituality we have identified three key periods, in which mystics have put a particular intention in studying and controlling the level of consciousness of sleep.

1. The first period is located within the classical Indian era, mainly between 700 and 500 BCE, with early Hinduism, Jainism and Buddhism.
2. The second period corresponds to the medieval age, especially between the years 800 and 1100, with the apogee of the Hindu and Buddhist Tantric currents in North India and Tibet.
3. The third period corresponds to modern India in the 20th century, in which some "syncretic" schools have reanimated various ancestral practices, adapting them to the needs of the present times.

In the conclusion we will highlight and comment on the aspects that have most inspired and stimulated us in our Ascesis.

Finally, in the appendix we will present analogies between some personal dream experiences and those related in the chapter on Tantric Buddhism of Naropa and Milarepa.

Method

Instead of structuring the information in a thematic order, we have chosen the "compositional" method, presenting the different schools separately, one by one, at the risk of repeating from time to time certain considerations or techniques that they have in common. This way of proceeding, however, makes it possible to assess the particularity of each school.

As for the "relational" aspect, we will notice that there were interactions and influences between several schools, especially when they were contemporary and established in the same geographical region, but also over time. These influences led, in the 20th century, to an "oneiric syncretism", even integrating some elements of Western psychology such as that of C.G. Jung (who, previously, drew inspiration from ancient Hindu philosophy).

As to the aspect of "process", the chronological presentation also allows us to perceive certain continuity from one school to another, in terms of the basic approach to the oneiric phenomenon and in terms of certain techniques that have been maintained over time. As for the evolutionary aspect of this process, it is not so much the quality of the practices that is improving, but rather the understanding, interpretation and use of the dream phenomenon in relation to a better understanding of the mechanisms of consciousness.

Knowledge that will be masterfully developed⁵ by Silo, who offers us a complete scheme of the psychism and enables the School to make a new jump (e.g. the distinction between levels and states of consciousness, the development of the concepts of "space of representation" and "translation of impulses", the function of allegories and symbols, etc.). In fact, it is with this "pattern of reading" that we have tried to understand and appreciate the contributions of those who have preceded us and who have prepared the path...

Documentation

In the geographical area we have been studying, we have not found any work dedicated entirely to our subject of interest; this information is scattered in many texts that are often quite hermetic.

In general, the most important knowledge has been transmitted orally from master to disciple. This oral tradition has always been a characteristic of the School. Even today, many comments of interest referring to practices, procedures, experiences, are only found in materials of internal circulation (talks, conversations, correspondence with the master). In fact, the teachings of the different Indo-Tibetan masters have been transcribed by their disciples only partially and usually long after their death. In turn, these texts have been translated into English (from Sanskrit or Pali) much later still, which results in more or less important deformations. Furthermore, it should not be forgotten that a large part of the manuscripts were destroyed during the various invasions of India and, more recently, of Tibet.

Lastly, we wish to thank all the people, be they masters, disciples, biographers, researchers... who have transcribed, compiled, translated and published or made available the documents we have used in this study. Indeed, we refer in our work to sacred texts (e.g. the Upanishads), to foundational texts of schools (e.g. the Buddhist Canon or Tantric writings), to biographies (such as the life of Milarepa), to epistolary correspondence (the correspondence of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother with their disciples), not forgetting the books and monographs that have provided us with historical contexts or clarifying points of view on certain aspects of Indo-Tibetan culture and spirituality or on the dream phenomenon.

⁵ Silo, *Psychology Notes; Contributions to Thought*. http://www.silo.net/es/collected_works/index

**I. THE ASCETICS OF THE FOREST
IN ANCIENT INDIA**
7th to 2nd centuries BCE



I.1. ANTECEDENTS: DREAMS IN THE VEDAS

In India, the first references to sleep and dreams are found in the *Rig Veda*, the oldest of the *Vedas* (1500 BC)⁶. However, there is little mention of it and with much apprehension, as sleep is associated with death ("child of death") and considered to be a state of vulnerability in which the "forces of evil" can strike the unguarded sleeper with more force than in vigil. Therefore, one should distrust and protect oneself (with prayers, incantations, magical procedures) against these "external assaults". In the *Atharva-veda* (Hymn 4.9), it is recommended to anoint the eyes with a special ointment in order to prevent "seeing" nightmares. The expression "seeing" a dream (instead of "having" or "making" a dream) suggests, in addition to the primacy of the sense of "seeing", the "objective" character of the dream and the "passivity" of the sleeper's consciousness (cf Serenity Young).

However, while in the *Atharva-veda* the magical consciousness is in full swing, in its later exegesis (and more precisely in appendix 68), sleep becomes the object of study. These exegeses called *Aranyakas* or "forest books"⁷ do indeed contain a long treatise on dreams in which we are a long way from "magic". Obviously, here the authors are not the same, neither are their recipients.

This 3,000-year-old treatise is noteworthy especially because of its attempt to classify and interpret oneiric images in relation to the human type of the dreamer: the bilious associated with the element of fire, the phlegmatic associated with water, the airy or sanguine associated with air (correlations that will henceforth be found in the Greeks, especially in Hippocrates, and in the Arabs).

With this "psychophysical" interpretative framework —very similar to that of the Ayurvedic medicinal treatises, also associated with this Veda— sleep acquires all its value as a present diagnosis and/or future prognosis in respect of the dreamer's health, fears or desires.

Hence the importance of remembering dreams —it is said: "*dreams which are not remembered do not bear fruit*"— and of interpreting them correctly, with the help of the catalogue of images and meanings proposed there. Beyond the validity or invalidity of such interpretations, it is obvious that the explanations and analogies denote a great accumulation of observations and an innovative approach that shows the physiological root (translation of physical and coenesthetic impulses, we would say) of the oneiric images. Moreover, here most dreams are considered a purely human phenomenon, although there are also some allusions to "particular", very favourable dreams, which would be of divine origin, sent by the gods. But this point is not developed.⁸

⁶ The *Vedas*, sacred texts written between 1500 and 1000 BC (but composed much earlier). The four Vedas (*Rig-veda*, *Yajur-veda*, *Sama-veda* and *Atharva-veda*) each consist of: 1. the basic collection, the *Samhita* (in verse); 2. the *Brahmanas*, an explanation in prose; 3. the *Aranyakas* ('books of the forest'), appendices of a more esoteric character. Followed by the writings of the *Upanishads* (about 700 BC) that will reinterpret or develop each of the four Vedas in a new light.

⁷ The *Aranyakas*, lit. the "forest books". Because of their mystical-esoteric character, they were written, taught and studied outside of cities and classical religion (i.e. in the forest).

⁸ K. Bulkeley, *Dreaming in the world's religions*, p. 32; De Becker, *Machinations de la nuit*, p. 176).

I.2. THE MYSTIC SLUMBER OF THE SAGES (RISHIS) OF THE UPANISHADS



I.2.1. THE TRANSITION FROM VEDAISM / BRAHMANISM TO HINDUISM

With the emergence of the *Upanishads* (about 700 BCE)⁹, religiosity takes a new direction. In contrast to the official religion —Vedaism-Brahmanism, strongly ritualised and externalised— new spiritual movements will arise and develop a more internal and "experiential" religion. Moreover, the habit will spread of abandoning "worldly" life and settling in "the forest" in order to devote oneself totally to meditation. In the beginnings, a small circle of scholars, yogis, hermits and wandering ascetics will carry this phenomenon, but later on it will expand to a quite common phenomena during centuries.

The purpose of these rishis (ascetics, sages) is expressed in the following prayer:

From the unreal lead me to the real!
From the darkness lead me to the light!
From death lead me to immortality!

*Brihadaranyaka Upanishad I, 3. 28.*¹⁰

⁹ The *Upanishads* (lit. sitting at the feet of the master), composed between 800 and 500 BCE, close the Vedic cycle by bringing new interpretations and insights.

¹⁰ *Brihad-Aranyaka Upanisad* (lit. *The great book of the forest*), composed of about 700 BCE. It is one of the oldest of the 12 "major" Upanishads.

From now on, Vedic ritual sacrifices will lose credibility and notions of true identity and reality will be at the centre of concern. One aspires to Knowledge: philosophical speculation accompanied by mystical experience. Above all, one seeks to understand and abolish the law of *karma* (determinism, conditioning of human/cosmic existence) and of *maya* (illusion, ephemeral character of Creation); indeed, the simple fact of existing in time, of having duration, implies suffering. But this does not lead to pessimism, because if one knows how to do it, one can release and liberate oneself. This implies an absolute renunciation, a rupture, a “dying” to the human condition, and a rebirth to a way of being unconditioned. From there on, the Purpose prevails: to attain absolute Reality, no matter what name is given to it: the Self, Brahman, the unconditioned, the transcendent, the immortal, the indestructible, Nirvana, etc.; to live a life of a “liberated-while-living” (or “fully enlightened”), a “transpersonal” life where the “psychophysical I” is nothing more than an instrument of the Transcendent Self. But to conquer *Liberation*, it is necessary to find the right techniques, and this sum of means constitutes Yoga. The aim of Yoga is to suppress normal consciousness (i.e. to surpass the different levels of consciousness) in favour of a qualitatively different consciousness. This occurs when the yogi attains *samadhi*, the state of total absorption (rupture of the mechanics of the levels of consciousness).

Now, this quest, and above all its achievement, becomes —thanks to the Upanishads—, accessible to anyone who tries to penetrate into gnosis and obtain knowledge of the mysteries, until then in the hands of the priests. This will stimulate assiduous experimentation and, in turn, generate the development of a wide range of self-exploration and self-transformation practices. This is an epoch of the flourishing of meditation techniques, of numerous yogas, or rather proto-yogas (which *Patanjali*¹¹ will later collect and formalise in a systematised way). Of course, in this fertile landscape there also appear all kinds of eccentric practitioners, so-called “yogis of the left hand”, who are very inclined to magic and supernatural powers, however, the general Purpose will evolve imperturbably towards a “path of Awakening”.

Moreover, it is in this prolific Hindu landscape that Indian Jainism and Buddhism will emerge in the 6th century BCE (in temporary concomitance with Chinese Taoism and Confucianism, with the Greek pre-Socratics and Pythagoreans, and also, according to some authors, with Persian Zoroastrianism).

This is also an interesting period of transition for Hindu mythology and cosmogony, which undergoes big transformations. Some of its aspects deserve to be commented here, especially the progressive substitution of the Vedic trinity Agni (god of Fire), Indra (god of Lightning) and Surya (god of the Sun) by the Trimurti (in Sanskrit: ‘three forms’) Brahma-Vishnu-Shiva.



Trimurti — Elephanta Caves, India

¹¹ *Patanjali* (supposed to have lived between 500/200 BCE and to have been originally from Kashmir), considered the Father of Yoga, marked the religious and philosophical history of India due to the treatise he wrote: the “*Yoga Sutras*”. This was the first text in history to define and enunciate Yoga as a Philosophical Doctrine.

This is not without interest, since there is a close relation between the attributes of these three great gods —the three forms of *Brahman* the formless one¹²—, and vigil, sleep and deep sleep (without images). In fact, in most mythical versions, the universe appears and disappears according to the different levels/states of consciousness that are respectively incarnated by these gods.

Thus, in the *Epics* (Mahabharata and Ramayana), contemporary to the Upanishads —as well as in some Puranas, which are posterior¹³—, we are told that Vishnu, asleep in the primordial waters (on his big coiled serpent), contemplates, imperturbably, the worlds that appear and disappear within him. In fact, Vishnu is considered to be the god who dreams the universe.

Brahma is the one who makes the universe exist: when the lotus flower (having grown from the navel of *Vishnu*) opens, Brahma's eyes open too, and his awakening brings about the world he dreamed of before.



Creation myth: birth of Brahma (the world) from the navel of sleeping Vishnu

As for Shiva, when he lies intentionally like a corpse (Shavasana posture), under the furious Kali (destroyer of time), he represents the destruction of the world, the suppression of time and space, the collapse of the senses, the "death" of self, and also deep sleep (without dreams).

Thus, *Vishnu* would represent the dream (mental representation of the world), *Brahma* the vigil (manifestation, perception of the tangible world) and *Shiva*, the deep sleep without images (suppression of the self); the three gods lead to Brahman, to the absolute and ultimate formless Reality. Of course, given the great complexity of Hinduism, these gods and their multiple avatars, have many other characteristics, meanings and functions, but do not interest us here.

Are these gods representing the models that will guide the mystics in their ascesis with sleep? Or conversely, is it the accumulation of spiritual experience that will, over time, produce modifications in the mythical images and endow them with new meanings and interpretations?

Whatever the case, in this context of transformations, the attitude towards sleep and dreams will also change considerably. If in Vedaism and Brahmanism the positive function of sleep was finally admitted, from now on its psychophysical dimension (functioning of consciousness) will be deepened and its sacred dimension (spiritual growth and enlightenment) will be investigated.

¹² *Brahman*, the formless and nameless Absolute, ultimate and impersonal divine reality of the universe, from which all being originates and to which it returns; to be distinguished from god *Brahma* who is responsible for the creation of the manifested world.

¹³ Myths, legends and tales that convey the teachings of the *Upanishads*.

Sleep, as a "state" of consciousness (level of consciousness, we would say), thus becomes a field of research, and the Upanishads witness a leap of knowledge —observation and experience— in this field. The most significant descriptions come from the *Brihad Aranyaka Upanisad* —lit. the "Great Book of the Forest"—, a gold mine as far as our object of study is concerned. And it is not surprising because it is, once again, a text resulting from the experience of the ascetics of the forest (like the Aranyakas of the Atharva-veda mentioned above), that is, outside the official religion.

I.2.2. SLEEP: EXPLORATION OF THE CONSCIOUSNESS AND THE EXPERIENCE OF AWAKENING

Here is a first answer to the question: When someone is asleep, where is he? And from where does he return (once awake)?

When this man was asleep here, the purusha¹⁴, ... having gathered the cognitive power of the vital functions (prana) into his own cognitive power, was resting in the space within the heart. ... During that time the senses are absorbed within, the organ of smell is absorbed, the organ of speech is absorbed, the eye is absorbed, the ear is absorbed and the mind is absorbed.

Wherever he may travel in his dream, those regions become his worlds. He may appear to become a great king or an eminent Brahmin, or to visit the highest and the lowest regions. Just as a great king, taking his people with him and may move around in his domain at will, so he is also taking the vital functions with him and moves around in his body.

Brihadaranyaka Up., II, 1. 16-17.

Another paragraph talks about how dreams work:

This is how he dreams. He takes materials from the entire world and, taking them apart on his own and then on his own putting them back together, he dreams with his own radiance, with his own light. In that place this person becomes his own light. In that place there are no carriages, there are no tandems, and there are no roads; but he creates for himself carriages, tandems, and roads. In that place there are no joys, pleasures, or delights; but he creates for himself joys, pleasures, and delights. In that place there are no pools, ponds, or rivers; but he creates for himself pools, ponds, and rivers—for he is a creator.

Brihadaranyaka Up., IV, 3.10.

Dreams are explained by the withdrawal of the senses. In sleep, the consciousness is internalised and freed from the stimuli of the tangible world. It is endowed with a creative power (intentionality, active consciousness, we would say) that organises and constructs in dreams another reality, with impressions of the world of perception (vigil). Sleep is therefore a mental construction, a self-generated phenomenon. So, we are quite far from the external and magical conception of the Vedic era.

This discovery leads the *rishis* to establish an analogy between sleep and practices of internalisation in the level of vigil. Thus sleep becomes important as a possible way to access mystical experience and transcendence, and the ascetics will be looking for specific practices and rituals in order to provoke inspired dreams.

In the *Chandogya Upanishad* it is recommended, for example, that those who aspire to "greatness" (Knowledge) perform a ritual of sacrifice to fire, with prayers and incantations, ingest a mixture of herbs and honey; and, at the time of the full moon, sleep by the fire. This is reminiscent of the incubation rites

¹⁴ *Purusha* may designate the person, but in general it designates the "divine inner self". Mircea Eliade translates it as "spirit" (transcendent dimension of man). In some passages quoted here, it can also be understood as "consciousness" or "soul".

in ancient Greece¹⁵, with the difference that here it is the fireplace (not a temple) that serves as a sanctuary¹⁶.

In the *Kausitaki Upanishad*, it is even suggested that sleep time should be used for spiritual practice, through attention to continuous breathing and mental prayer. Indeed, mention is made of the "sacrifice to fire" (Agnihotra) that must be internalised (inner Agnihotra). This "ritual internalisation", as Eliade calls it, involves the practice of mental prayer and the control of uninterrupted breathing (*pranayama*).

If, in Vedic sacrifice, the gods are offered soma, melted butter, and the sacred fire, in the practice of asceticism they are offered an "inner sacrifice," in which physiological functions take the place of libations and ritual objects. Respiration is often identified with an "unceasing libation."

As long, verily, as a person is speaking, he is not able to breathe. Then he is sacrificing breath in speech. As long, verily, as a person is breathing, he is not able to speak. Then he is sacrificing speech in breath. These two are unending, immortal oblations; whether waking or sleeping, one is sacrificing continuously, uninterruptedly.

Kaushitaki Up. II, 5, in Eliade, Yoga – Immortality and freedom, p. 111-112 pdf.

And it is a well-known fact that control of breathing is a basic technique not only in yoga, but also in many practices of other spiritual traditions aiming for the mastery of attention and the alteration of consciousness, especially when mental prayer accompanies the breathing.

La *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* also contains a very long and explicit description of the mystical experience obtained in the level of sleep. Here are some excerpts:

Now, this purusha (cf. footnote 15) has just two places, this world and the other world. And there is a third, the place of dream where the two meet. Standing there in the place where the two meet, he sees both those places, this world and the other world. Now, that place serves as an entryway to the other world, and as he moves through that entryway he sees both the bad things and the joys.

This purusha... during his sleep he transcends this world and all forms of death. ...

As a large fish moves between both banks, the nearer and the farther, so this purusha moves between both realms, the realm of dream and the realm where one is awake.

Whatever he may have seen in that realm of dream does not follow him, because nothing sticks to this purusha.

As a hawk or an eagle, after flying around in the sky and getting tired, folds its wings and swoops down into its nest, so this purusha rushes into that realm where as he sleeps he has no desires and sees no dreams.

Now, this is the aspect of his that is beyond what appears to be good, freed from what is bad, and without fear.

As a man embraced by a woman he loves is oblivious to everything within or without, so this person embraced by the self (atman) consisting of knowledge is oblivious to everything within or without.

¹⁵ *Incubare*, Latin, from the Greek enkoimesis: sleeping in a sanctuary to produce sacred dreams, especially healing ones. The incubation of dreams was a widespread practice in ancient Greece, especially in the temples of Aesculapius (Asclepius), the Greek god of medicine. See monograph by Daniel Bustos, *Incubation Practices in Ancient Greece*, and by Claudie Baudoin, *Four Ways of Predisposition to Divination*. www.parclabelleidee.fr/monographies.php

¹⁶ The Vedic cult knew no sanctuaries. The rites were performed in the house or outdoors, but always close to a fire (Agni, god of fire, is the messenger between Heaven and Earth, and fireplace, a sacred space). Likewise, in that period of Hinduism, fire still served as a sanctuary.

Clearly, this is the aspect of his where all desires are fulfilled, where the self is the only desire, and which is free from desires and far from sorrows.

Here a father is not a father, a mother is not a mother, worlds are not worlds, gods are not gods, and Vedas are not Vedas. Here a thief is not a thief, an abortionist is not an abortionist, an outcaste is not an outcaste, a pariah is not a pariah, a recluse is not a recluse, and an ascetic is not an ascetic. Neither the good nor the bad follows him, for he has now passed beyond all sorrows of the heart.

Now, he does not see anything here; but although he does not see, he is quite capable of seeing, for it is impossible for the seer to lose his capacity to see, for it is indestructible. But there isn't a second reality here that he could see as something distinct and separate from himself.

He becomes the one ocean, he becomes the sole seer! This is the world of brahman. This is his highest goal! This is his highest attainment! This is his highest world! This is his highest bliss!

Brihadaranyaka Up., IV, 3. 1-32.

The dream is therefore a connection point between two worlds: that of representation and that of non-representation. It becomes a possible "entrance" into the "other world" which is experienced as a liberation from dichotomy (outside-inside, good-bad, act (subject)-object...); as a liberation from all fear and desire; as a state of suspension of the senses and all psychic activity; where there is no more individual identity and where the only remaining desire is the Purpose: the desire of the Self, to know and become *Brahman* (the Absolute, the Ultimate Reality, the Supreme Bliss, the void beyond the void... according to the names given to it).

The dream thus acquires its full value: it now represents a possibility, in addition to the practice in vigil, of accessing the transcendent experience while still living; and the fragment quoted from the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* is an obvious illustration of this.

It seems to us the various passages of the Upanishads —when put together— describe a process of interiorisation from vigil to dream, and then to dreamless deep sleep, and from there to "liberation", Awakening, formless transcendent Reality (Brahman).

This conception is summarised in the *Mandukya Upanishad* as follows: vigil (*jâgrat*) corresponds to the perception of the dense outer world; sleep (*svapna*) corresponds to the perception of the subtler inner world; deep sleep (*sushupti*) without dreams and desires corresponds to undifferentiated perception and bliss. These three "states" of consciousness must be transcended to access a "Fourth" (*Turiya*), where the *Atman* (self), liberated from all illusion and attachment, will fuse with its own Source (deep Self or Brahman).

Thus, the Upanishads consider that vigil, sleep (paradoxical sleep) and deep sleep (sleep without images), between which we constantly navigate, correspond to different "degrees" or "states" of consciousness. This leads to the conclusion that the rishis saw consciousness as One, as a single mental reality that manifests itself in different ways, depending on whether the consciousness is in one state (level, we would say) or another. In other words, we find here a first outline of a "scheme of consciousness".

I.3. THE ONEIRIC UNIVERSE IN EARLY JAINISM AND BUDDHISM



Odilon Redon, Buda in his youth

I.3.1. THE ONEIRIC LANDSCAPE OF FORMATION OF MAHAVIRA AND BUDDHA

In the 6th century BCE, two famous births took place in northern India: that of Mahavira, spiritual guide of Jainism and that of Buddha (or Siddhartha Gautama, as he was called before his enlightenment). Both became wandering ascetics in search of ultimate enlightenment. In addition, it seems that the young Buddha travelled through India for 14 years to follow the teachings of various masters, until he decided to develop his own procedures¹⁷. Thus, the cultural-spiritual landscape of formation of Mahavira and Buddha is that of the epoch we have just described.

But in order to better understand the "oneiric landscape of formation" of these two awakened ones, it is necessary to complete it more, in particular with the aspect of allegorical dreams that we have not mentioned in the previous chapter. And for a good reason: the Upanishads do not mention them. Perhaps because the entire charge of the *rishis* was placed on the liberation of the sensory world, considered illusory. On the other hand, the lack of allegorical dreams in these sacred texts could also be explained by the tradition of oral transmission. Indeed, the "science of dreams" was still strongly monopolised by the Brahmin priests, that is to say by the official religion in power, and so the advanced practice and study of dreams was probably done more discreetly, in the forest.

However, other texts attest that significant dreams and their interpretations were deeply rooted in the cultural background. In fact, dreams occupy an important place in the mythological *Epics*, the *Mahabharata* (including the *Bhagavat-Gita*) and the *Ramayana* which were more accessible and popular than the *Upanishads* (intended mainly for the spiritual seekers). The most frequent dreams are the premonitory dreams (e.g. victory/defeat in battle), those transmitting a teaching (e.g. relativity of reality and individual identity), the transferential dreams (e.g. the dream of the poet Tulsidas who, locked in a tower, invokes Januman, the monkey god, to free him, and who will indeed do so).

¹⁷ See Silo's comments on the Buddha in F. Granella's monograph: *Roots of the Energy Discipline - India and Himalayan foothills*.

However, several later Jainist and Buddhist texts referring to this period, also provide valuable information on the importance of allegorical dreams in different circles (popular, noble, religious); indeed, these writings mention the "specialists of great dreams" and "dream dictionaries" or so-called "keys of dreams" (*Svapna Shastra*) they work with.

I.3.2. SOME "GREAT DREAMS" AND THEIR INTERPRETATIONS

According to the *Kalpa-sutra* —a sacred Jainist text— Queen Trishala, mother of Mahavira, had had 14 great dreams; or rather, 14 successive visions in the same dream:

A white elephant, a white bull, a white lion (absolute royal/divine power), the goddess Sri (fertilisation), a garland of flowers (spiritual inspiration), the full moon (light), the radiant sun (enlightenment), a flag (victory, accomplishment), a golden vase with pure water (divine knowledge), a lotus lake (transcendence), the milk-ocean with powerful waves (the force, the infinite), a celestial abode (paradise), a heap of jewels (awakening), and a smokeless flame (the ultimate source).¹⁸

Kalpa Sutra (english translation by Herman Jacobi) <http://www.sacred-texts.com/jai/sbe22/sbe2283.htm>



Dream of queen Trishala, Jain painting

Flooded with joy, Trishala will tell her dream to the king, her husband, who will spontaneously interpret it as a prophetic message: the conception of a son "king"; interpretation confirmed by the "experts". Actually, from the various texts it can be deduced that the dreamers always sought confirmation from the "specialists" who worked with the *Svapna Shastra*, a dream dictionary, where the symbols of the "great dreams" were listed and coded.

The Kalpa-sutra also teaches us that the queen, very happy with her dreams, decides to listen to beautiful and inspiring stories about the gods and men of faith, in order to safeguard these dreams and not allow bad ones. This means, she knows how to cultivate the mental atmosphere to induce favourable dreams.

¹⁸ In parentheses there are our own interpretations based on our own understanding of the cultural meanings of that era.

As for the following "premonitory conception dream" of Queen Maya, the mother of the future Buddha, it is quoted in several texts (with minor variations), among which the *Nidanakatha* (text from the Theravada/Hinayana School):

The four Guardians of the world, lifting her up in her couch, carried her to the Himalaya Mountains, and placing her under the Great Sal-tree, seven leagues high, on the Crimson Plain, sixty yojanas broad, they stood respectfully aside. Their queens then came toward her, and taking her to the Jake of Anotatta, bathed her to free her from human stains; and dressed her in heavenly garments; and anointed her with perfumes; and decked her with heavenly flowers. Not far from there is the Silver Hill, within which is a golden mansion; in it they spread a heavenly couch, with its head towards the East, and on it they laid her down. Then the future Buddha, who had become a superb white elephant, and was wandering on the Golden Hill, not far from there, descended thence, and ascending the Silver Hill, approached her from the North. Holding in his silvery trunk a white lotus flower, and uttering a far-reaching cry, he entered the golden mansion, and thrice doing obeisance to his mother's couch, he gently struck her right side, and seemed to enter her womb.

Nidana-Katha (in *Jataka Tales*), T. W. RHYS DAVIDS, p. 149-150 pdf.



Dream of Queen Maya, medallion, 2nd Century BC.

The specialists, here Brahmin priests, will propose a double interpretation: the conception of a universal sovereign or a renunciant (ascetic), saviour of humanity.

For us, this allegorical itinerary evokes registers experienced in our Ascesis: elevation of energy to the "summit" (Himalayas); inspired consciousness (new attributes: baths, divine clothing, perfumes, flowers...); deep natural sleep becomes "mystical slumber" (the "profane" bed becomes a "heavenly" one); deepening interiorisation and the mind oriented towards the source of Light (eastward, i.e. where the sun rises); contact/fusion with the Divine or "spiritual fecundation" (penetration of the elephant trunk) and the posterior register of "birth" or "rebirth" (subsequent conception/birth of the Buddha) may mean, in an allegorical way, the "Buddhahood status", spiritual birth.

But above all, it is the context in which Queen Maya's dream takes place that draws our attention: the texts speak of a seven-day religious festival (Midsummer festival) and multiple rituals prior to sleep! This means that the dream didn't arrive by accident.

Apart from premonitory dreams of conception —omnipresent in sacred literature and more particularly, in the biographies of the great-awakened ones, whether they belonging to the Hindu, Jain or Buddhist tradition— there are also the "shared dreams". Indeed, several members of the Buddha's family (his mother, father and wife) will have similar dreams the same night (the day before Buddha leaves the palace). Shared dreams are highly valued, not only because they give more credit to the content of dreams —especially when the dream predicts the future— but also because they demonstrate the existence of a higher plane where souls share the same inner realities. In other words, these types of dreams permit the experience of what we call "communication of spaces", they help to broaden the notions of "reality" and "identity", to recognise the illusory character of the "individual I" and its supposed, equally illusory, separation from other human beings and from the divine.

But what interests us most among significant dreams are those related to the Ascesis: dreams where the Purpose is revealed, dreams that guide the path of enlightenment, dreams that lead to the Profound and/or translate contact with the Profound.

In this respect, here are some significant dreams of the Mahavira and the Buddha.

According to the *Bhagavati Sutra* —text of the Jain canon—, the Mahavira had ten oneiric visions, after a meditation (practice) and shortly before his total enlightenment. The interpretations of these dreams are also attributed to him.

1. *One big frightful and spirited Tiila-Pisaca (devil) defeated in dream: the mohaniya karma, which obstructs right faith and right conduct, is uprooted.*
2. *One big white-feathered male cuckoo: attaining pure meditation;*
3. *One big variously coloured-feathered male cuckoo: the teaching, explaining, instructing of twelve Angas (Jain Canon);*
4. *A pair of garlands endowed with all jewels: two kinds of Dharma, the religion for the householder and the religion for the houseless monks (wandering ascetic);*
5. *One big udder of a white cow: the Sangha consisting of monks, nuns, laymen and laywomen;*
6. *A lotus-lake furnished with flowers from all sides and on all sides: four classes of gods;*
7. *One large sea murmuring with thousand ripples of waves crossed by swimming with arms: crossing of the beginningless and endless world;*
8. *One big sun shining with rays: the attainment of the infinite highest, coverless, pure, unobstructed complete omniscience and self-awareness or intuition (Darsana);*
9. *One great Manusottara mountain covered with and surrounded by its own green and blue rays of colour: the noble glory attaining the celestial, human and Asura (demon-god) worlds;*
10. *One soul seated on a best throne on the peak of one great Mandara-mountain (Meru Peak).*

Later in this text, there are other examples of "dream visions", specifying that such images are "signs" or "indicators" that the dreamer will achieve liberation. Here are a few excerpts:

If he or she beholds one long rope stretching it to the east and to the west touching both the borders of the Universe, and then contracts himself or herself by contracting (it); If he or she beheld the vision of a great heap of gold or that of gem or that of diamond and thought himself or herself mounted by mounting it in dream; If he or she experienced the dream-vision of a large lotus lake furnished with flowers and thought himself or herself "plunged thus" by plunging into it in dream, or a great sea full of ripples of waves, thought himself or herself "crossed thus" by crossing it in dream, or a big house full of all kinds of jewels and thought himself or herself "gone up" and "entered" into it thus by entering into it during the dream-vision, or a large aerial house inlaid with all kinds of jewels and thought himself or herself mounted thus, by mounting it in dream, he or she would attain liberation and put an end to all miseries by that very life.

Bhagavati Sutra, 16, 6, 580 y 581, in Sikdar 1964, pp. 197-200.

Without entering here into personal interpretative speculations, we find it interesting to note that the descriptions of the registers accompanying these representations suggest an abolition of the usual spatial references (e.g. the "confusion" or coincidence between the internal-external, superior-lower...). In other words, registers that can be experienced when the consciousness is inspired, when one enters spaces governed by other laws, by paradoxes. It is therefore not surprising to conclude an imminent release of the system of representation and registers in favour of a new "mental form".

As for the Buddha, several texts state that dreams have marked his entire path of enlightenment, but only five great dreams are in agreement in all Buddhist texts, the main difference being the dating of these dreams. Thus, in the *Lalitavistara Sutra* (text from the Mahayana tradition) it is said that the dreams occurred the day before he left the palace (i.e. before he began his spiritual learning with different masters), and therefore they would be premonitory dreams. But, according to the *Nidana-katha*, the *Anguttara Nikaya* and the *Mahavastu* (older texts, the first two of the Theravada branch, the second of the Mahayana), dreams would have occurred the day before¹⁹ the absolute enlightenment; this means that these dreams are part of the Ascesis process: some dreams would be experiences of spiritual awakening, others would be premonitory dreams announcing the imminence of the definitive enlightenment and the respective consequences in the world.

In the *Anguttara Nikaya* (V.196; *Supina Sutta*, *Tipitaka*), it is said:

Monks, before the Tathagata, Arahant²⁰, had awakened to the full enlightenment, he saw five great visions in dreams.

Every dream will be introduced by the same formula. It also says there that, after these dreams, the "not yet awake" became "fully awake". This may mean that the awakening occurred after the dreams, in the temporal sense, but it may also mean that the enlightenment occurred after the dreams, as a consequence of them. In other words, he first experienced the Profound in his sleep and then confirmed the enlightenment in his waking meditation; and it does not matter whether that was fulfilled the next day, several weeks or months later; neither does it matter whether all the dreams occurred on the same night or separately over time. In all cases, these dreams would be experiences of contact with the Profound in the level of sleep; experiences validated in the meditation of the day. This seems quite plausible to us on the basis of our own personal experience: that of obtaining in dreams registers of different disciplinary steps, before being able to reproduce them in the "routines", or later, in the practices of Ascesis.

Concerning the dreams that describe the post-enlightenment achievements, this could be the expression of the projective Purpose. The premonitory or announcing phenomenon would be in this case rather a profound inspiration that is translated allegorically, oneirically, whose meaning and charge continue to operate and guide the dreamer until it materialises, until the act is completed.

Here are the five great dreams and their interpretations.²¹

Dream1

He dreamt that this great earth was a high vast bed to him. Sumeru (or Meru, or Himalaya), monarch of mountains, was his pillow. His left arm rested in the eastern ocean, his right in the western, and the soles of his two feet in the southern.

Explanations: Now when the Tathata awoke to perfect enlightenment, then was his great dream fulfilled. (Other versions: That first dream foretold his discovery of the supreme full enlightenment. This first dream was the manifestation of his perfect enlightenment, his Awakening).

¹⁹ We believe that "the day before" is an expression that should not be taken literally, but rather suggests above all the anticipation of dreams with regard to total and definitive enlightenment.

²⁰ *Aharant*: he who achieved *Nirvana*.

²¹ The version of the dreams and their interpretations we present here is a medley of different texts, mainly the *Mahavastu*, the *Anguttara Nikaya* (*Supina Sutta*), the *Lalita Vistara*. We have chosen the formulations that we found more inspiring.

We find it interesting that the allegories of this first dream refer precisely to sleep: physical posture reclined, the Earth as a bed, Mount Meru/Himalaya as a pillow. It is about "sleeping asleep". The head located on the highest mountain in the world, symbol of the *axis mundi*, the centre or navel of the universe, allegorises the Purpose or perhaps even the experience of the supreme elevation of the mind, the Awakening. Might this be a dream "translating" an ascetic practice during sleep?

On the other hand, the dimension of the Buddha's body proportions informs us about his possible psychophysical registers associated with his visual representations. If the sensations coincide with the images, the fact of feeling gigantic denotes the experience of the double; experience that can be made also in other levels of consciousness (awake and/or semi-sleep). For example, in the *Service*²², when the sensation of the sphere expands outside the body; or in Step 4 of the *Morphological Discipline*²³, when the register of oneself coincides with the shape of the space of representation (whose size has been intentionally amplified); in the so-called "isolation tank" "chamber of silence"²⁴, when, as a result of sensory suppression, coenesthetic deformations occur; and finally, in daily life, when we enter into states of inspired consciousness (in vigil).

So, being in such distension and altered consciousness, and in addition with the register of the energy at the top, at the centre of the head (the top of the mountain), suggests to us "the point of true Awakening"²⁵, as well as the 11th Step of the *Energetic and Morphological Disciplines*, and more precisely the "threshold of the Profound", the "meeting place with the Purpose", that is, the moment in which the Purpose is activated and takes over.

Dream 2

He dreamt that a creeper / arrow grew up out of his navel and stood touching the clouds / reared up to heaven / the world of Brahman.

Another version: *In dream a light was seen which showed that everyone on the earth was immersed in dense darkness. An umbrella was uplifted on the earth, and it was resplendent in the three regions, and on whomsoever its light fell he was freed from all distress, and was restored to peace.*

Explanations: This second dream that appeared to him foretold his discovery of the Noble Eightfold Path²⁶ and that he would proclaim it in the world of the devas and of the human beings.

This second dream, which seems to be the continuation of the first, is about "dreaming whilst dreaming"! If in the first dream the Buddha is on the axis or navel of the world, in this second dream he internalises it: the axis of the world (arrow, creeper, etc.) will emerge from within him, furthermore, from his own navel/centre. Here, the energy seems to rise even higher than in the previous dream. This dream version is very similar to the images in the myths of the god Vishnu who, in his dream, sees rising from his navel a lotus stem or creeper containing Brahma, the creator of the world.

As for the other version of the same dream quoted: the images of light (symbol of the Spirit, since the Rig Veda) and the radiant umbrella (symbol of royalty and protection against the "heat" of suffering and harmful forces), seem to express total enlightenment for everybody! In other words, even if we consider

²² Silo, *Silo's Message*. <http://silo.net/en/message/index>

²³ *The Four Disciplines*. <http://www.parquepuntadevacas.net/prod.php>

²⁴ We recommend the writing of Federico Palumbo, *Ascesis y cámara de silencio (Ascesis and isolation tank)*. <http://www.parquepuntadevacas.net/prod.php>

²⁵ "There is a point of control of being-truly-awake, and there is a way of bringing the Force to this point". Silo, *Silo's Message*, Chap.VIII. Control of the Force, p. 12 of pdf.

²⁶ In his first sermon, Buddha set forth the *Four Noble Truths*: 1/ life is suffering; 2/ the origin of suffering is desire (attachment); 3/ there is a path of liberation leading to Nirvana (cessation of all suffering); 4/ this path is Eightfold: right vision/understanding, right speech, right thought, right action, right lifestyle, right attention and right meditation (practice).

that the first dream is only a predisposition or condition for real awakening, in this second dream we can see the achievement of it. The first version of the dream would then express an introjective purpose (to reach the world of Brahman), while the second version would allegorise a projective purpose (to reach the whole Earth); in fact, the centrifugal form of the umbrella also suggests the projective direction (projection in all directions).

Dream 3

He dreamt that white grubs with black heads crawled from his feet to his knees and covered them.

Explanations: The third dream that appeared to him foretold that many white-clothed laymen would go for refuge to the Perfect One during his life.

Dream 4

He dreamt that four birds of different colours came from the four quarters, and, as they alighted at his feet, they all became white / gold.

Or: He dreamt that four vultures of different colours came flying through the air from the four quarters, and having kissed the soles of his feet went away all white.

Explanations: The fourth dream foretold that the four castes, the warrior-nobles, the brahman priests, the burgesses, and the plebeians would realise the supreme deliverance when the Dharma and the Discipline had been proclaimed by the Perfect One.

The third and fourth dreams thus allegorise the realisation of the projective purpose: the birth of the Buddhist school, the *Sangha*.

Dream 5

He dreamt that he walked upon a huge mountain of dirt without being fouled by the dirt.

Explanations: The fifth dream foretold that although the Perfect One obtain the requisites of robes, alms food, above, and medicine, yet he would use them without greed or delusion or clinging, perceiving their dangers and understanding their purpose. He is free from attachment and infatuation, and his heart is untainted.

Another interpretive version: This meant that the "kleshas" (negative emotions, desires, sufferings) would no longer take hold of him, leaving his mind clean of all dirt.

This fifth dream suggests the lifestyle of an enlightened/liberated person who possesses the attributes of the gods²⁷. Another allegory that expresses this same idea of unalterable purity is the lotus flower, whose roots are based on the mud and sludge of lagoons or lakes.

According to some texts, when the Buddha woke up, he concluded with enthusiasm: *These dreams are excellent. It will not be long before this noble being will become the god of gods and men.*

In some versions, the third, fourth and fifth dream appear as a succession of images forming part of a single dream. In addition, in the *Nidana-Katha* and *Lalita Vistara* (chapter XIV), two other complementary dreams are added:

²⁷ As to the fifth dream, it presents the future Buddha as a god hovering above the earth, his feet not being soiled, and recalls the description of the gods Indra, Yama, Varuṇa and Agni, in the tale of Nala and Damayanti included in the Mahabharata: "They do not sweat, they do not blink, dust is not stuck to their feet because these do not touch the ground, and their garlands of flowers do not fade, in short, they exhibit all the peculiarities proper to gods". (Biardeau 2002, I: 484 en Bautze-Picron 2003, 357).

6. *Again he saw in his dream a river full of water whereby were millions of beings, and he was ferrying them over and placing them on firm ground where there was neither fear nor grief.*

And in another version:

Again, he beheld numerous decrepit people, afflicted with disease, devoid of the capacity for recovery, and totally bereft of strength, and he, becoming a physician, was, by the administration of various medicaments, curing them by millions.

7. *He saw himself seated on a throne on the top of the Sumeru/Meru mountain, and disciples with folded hands were humbly saluting him. He saw himself victorious in the midst of a battle, and the immortals in the sky were cheering him with delightful sounds.*

These last two dreams obviously suggest to us 'the healing of pain and suffering', the central project of the Buddha—as well as of Silo (cf. his foundational speech of 1969)—; and, the overcoming of suffering is, of course, followed by the state of Buddhahood that dominates the universe and triumphs over the gods themselves²⁸.

On the other hand, if we were to make the symbolic reduction of the five dreams, as if they were one, we would obtain to a three-dimensional mandala (and our School symbol) composed of:

- Four cardinal points North, South, East, West: the four oceans and the birds coming from the four directions;
- Three axes: verticality and horizontality, this is the X/Y axes (body posture in the form of a cross) and the depth or so-called Z axis (Mount Meru, liana, stem, arrow or parasol mast);
- Two directions: the centrifugal look in all four directions, the centripetal look towards the top of Mount Meru; the light and the umbrella radiating centrifugally; the birds converging centripetally towards the centre of Buddha;
- The Centre (One): the Buddha's head (mind) as the centre of the universe; the liana (monolith) coming out of the navel (Centre) of his body (space/time). And of course, the Buddha is the Whole (everything).



²⁸ Buddhism denies the existence of a supreme god, but acknowledges the gods, who nevertheless are not immortal!

I.3.3. THE BUDDHIST “DOUBLE POSITION” ON DREAMS

For Buddhists, the four key moments in the Buddha's life are associated, in one way or another, with the issue of dreams. These four milestones are, in reality, births or “rebirths” on an increasingly higher spiritual level.

Buddha's biological birth is announced by premonitory dreams. His departure from the palace, which marks the beginning of a new life as an ascetic, is also preceded by premonitory dreams of several members of his family (the best known is that of his wife Gopa). Then there is the moment of his total enlightenment, preceded by the famous five dreams that we have just presented. Finally, the last crucial moment is his departure from this physical world and his entry into Parānirvāṇa (complete Nirvāṇa), one more “death/birth”. Of course, the Buddha will not have dreams at that moment, but he will set up a scene that explicitly suggests the posture of the “mystic sleeper”²⁹.



Buddha, Gal Vihara, Polonnaruwa, Sri Lanka

This body posture of the “reclining Buddha” (also called the “lion posture”) was largely represented in Buddhist art (paintings, friezes, statues); it was also adopted in the *yogas of sleep* a few centuries later.

We will never know the real place the dreams occupied in the Buddha's life and it doesn't really matter whether his dreams were premonitory, or indicators confirming previous experiences in vigil; or, conversely, dream experiences that were later confirmed in the vigil meditation. The fact is that the topic of dreams is very much present in the core texts and, especially, in the sacred biographies so characteristic of Buddhism, especially Tibetan Buddhism. Moreover, the awakening process of all Buddhist saints has been characterised by significant dreams; asceticism and dreams seem inseparable.

²⁹ *There the Lord said: 'Ananda, prepare me a bed between these twin sril-trees with my head to the north. I am tired and want to lie down.'* 'Very good, Lord', said Ananda, and did so. Then the Lord lay down on his right side in the lion-posture, placing one foot on the other, mindful and clearly aware. (The Buddha's Last Days, in *Long Discourses of the Buddha 'Digha Nikaya'*, p. 262, see bibliography).

The importance given to the work with dreams is certainly uneven in the different Buddhist traditions and their respective schools, yet they all have the same apparently ambivalent doctrinal stance. This position affirms that dreams, even significant ones, are only the product of a "not fully enlightened" consciousness, and in this sense illusory; therefore they should not be given importance. At the same time, dreams are regarded as valuable indicators of the spiritual progress of the practitioner; moreover, they are especially decisive for the consolidation of total enlightenment and immortality.

This double vision, which most of the authors describe as ambiguous or even contradictory, can nevertheless be understood in the light of the Buddha's "Middle Way". It is about avoiding the pitfalls of the two extremes: the surrender to the pleasures of the senses, on the one hand, and the excessive asceticism that requires radical renunciation, on the other. Applied to our object of study, it is therefore a question of valuing the oneiric images for what they are: translations that the conscience makes of what is not representable, in order to be able to fix its registers and significations and thus benefit from them; and finally, transcend them.

Learn to discover the truth behind the allegories, which sometimes deviate the mind but at other times translate realities that are impossible to grasp without representation.³⁰

Silo, *The Internal Look*, chap. XX "The internal reality".

M. Eliade clarifies this paradox very well when he exposes the Buddha's double position on "powers":

We add that the road to Nirvana —just like the road to samadhi in classic Yoga— leads to possession of "miraculous powers" (siddhis; Pali, iddhi). This confronted the Buddha (as it later did Patanjali) with a new problem. For, on the one hand, the "powers" are inevitably acquired in the course of practice and, for that very reason, constitute precise indications of the monk's spiritual progress: they are a proof that he is in the process of "deconditioning" himself, that he has suspended the laws of nature in whose pitiless mechanism he was being crushed. But, on the other hand, the "powers" are doubly dangerous, because they tempt the bhikkhu with a vain "magic mastery over the world" and, in addition, they may cause dangerous confusion among the uninitiated.

In the Digha Nikaya (1. 78 ff.) the Buddha states that the bhikkhu in meditation can multiply himself, become invisible, pass through solid ground, walk on water, fly through the air, or hear celestial sounds, know the thoughts of others, and remember his former lives. But he does not forget to add that possession of these powers brings with it the danger that they will deflect the monk from his true goal, which is Nirvana. In addition, the display of such powers in no way advanced the propagation of salvation; other yogis and ecstasies could perform the same miracles; even worse, the uninitiated might think that no more than magic was involved. This is why the Buddha strictly forbade displaying the "miraculous powers" before lay people.

Eliade, *A History of Religious Ideas*, vol. 2, pp.104-105 pdf.

This fragment could explain why most of the official texts, whether Hindu or Buddhist, refrain from developing in detail the subject of dreams, especially when these "powers" manifest themselves within them; that is, when certain dreams activate the "higher centre" and produce phenomena that transgress the established natural laws.

The official theoretical position of ancient Buddhism is well described in the *Milinda-pañja* (The Questions of Milinda, IV, 8.33-38), which relates the interview (2nd century BC) between the Indo-Greek king Milinda (Menander, in Greek) and the Buddhist monk Nagasena³¹.

³⁰ Silo. *Silo's Message*, chap. XX, The Internal Reality.

³¹ The monk *Nagasena*, a native of Kashmir, was an *Arhat* (lit. achieved Nirvana), an Awakened one.

Here are some brief excerpts.

— *O venerable Nagasena, ... What is this that men call a dream, and who is it who dreams it?*

— *O king, it is a « nimittam » (mental image, sign) coming across the path of the mind which is what is called a dream. And there are six kinds of people who see dreams: the man who is of a windy humour or of a bilious one, or of a phlegmatic one, the man who dreams dreams by the influence of a god, the man who does so by the influence of his own habits, and the man who does so in the way of prognostication of these. And, O king, only the last kind of dreams is true; all the rest are false.*

This explanation shows that nothing significant had changed since the Vedic-Brahmanic era in terms of the classification of psychophysical dreams. It also shows that only "prophetic" or "lucid" dreams³², those which depend on Objective Reality are worthy of interest in the eyes of the Buddhist spiritual seeker.

- *Venerable Nāgasena, when a man dreams a dream that is a prognostication, how is it? Does his own mind set out itself to seek the omen, or does the prognostication come of its own accord into the path of his mind, or does someone else come and tell him of it?*
- *His own mind does not itself seek the omen, neither does anyone else come and tell him of it. The prognostication comes of its own accord into his mind. It is like the case of a looking-glass, which does not go anywhere to seek for the reflection; neither does anyone else come and put the reflection on to the looking-glass. But the object reflected comes from somewhere or other across the sphere over which the reflecting power of the looking-glass extends.*

Perhaps should we understand in these words that a "sign of the Profound" cannot be sought, caught or obtained by the will of reason or the intellectual centre, nor can it be "given" to a passive consciousness by any external or alien entity. This signal will appear when the consciousness is like a mirror (void of thoughts, purified of representations) i.e. when the I is suspended. We also relate it with the intention that returns upon itself, or with the double that returns upon itself, or with the inner look that, by deepening itself, collides with its own source.³³

— *Venerable Nāgasena, does the same mind which sees the dream also know its meaning?*

— *No, that is not so, O king. After the omen has occurred he tells others, and then they explain the meaning of it.*

According to our understanding, this refers to the fact that the "sacred dream" is the experience of an inspired consciousness and cannot be explained by the ordinary waking consciousness (the I) unless the dreamer possesses the spiritual level necessary to understand its meaning. Therefore, when he does not have enough knowledge (experience), the dreamer must appeal to "specialists".

— *Venerable Nāgasena, when a man dreams a dream, is he awake or asleep?*

— *Neither the one, O king; nor yet the other. But when his sleep has become light and he is not yet fully conscious in that interval it is that dreams are dreamt. When a man is in deep sleep, O king, his mind has returned home and a mind thus shut in does not act, and a mind hindered in its action knows not the evil and the good, and he who knows not has no dreams. It is when the mind is active that dreams are dreamt. Just, O king, as in the darkness and gloom, where no light is, no shadow will fall even on the most burnished mirror...*

Under two conditions, O king, is the mind inactive though the body is there: when a man being in deep sleep the mind has returned into itself, and when the man has fallen into a trance. ...

³² Regarding the premonitory dreams, we recommend the monograph by Claudie Baudoin, *4 voies de prédisposition à la divination* (in french and spanish). <https://www.parclabelleidee.fr/monographies.php>.

³³ Silo, *Commentaries on Silo's Message*. <http://www.silo.net/en/message/commentaries>

Just, O king, as when a man self-restrained with collected thoughts, steadfast in the faith, unshaken in wisdom, plunges deep into the woods far from the sound of strife, and thinks over some subtle matter, he there, tranquil and at peace, will master the meaning of it, just so a man still watchful, not fallen into sleep, but dozing in a "monkey's sleep" will dream a dream. As the sound of strife, so, O king, are you to regard wakefulness, and as the lonely wood the "monkey's sleep". And as that man avoiding the sound of strife, keeping out of sleep, remaining in the middle stage, will master the meaning of that subtle matter, so the still watchful man, not fallen into sleep, but dozing in a "monkey's sleep", will dream a dream.

"Light" sleep ("monkey sleep") refers here to the first stage of paradoxical sleep (active consciousness); unlike heavy, vegetative sleep, where consciousness is passive (without images). This passive dream without images is, however, very different from the "lucid deep sleep", where the consciousness becomes intentionally passive and empty of images (contents), like the trance that can also be either crepuscular or under control. In other words, there is equivalence between a certain way of sleeping and mystical meditation.

We will see later that it is in Tantric Buddhism (Vajrayana), especially in Tibetan Buddhism, where mystics have made sleep an indispensable component of their ascesis.

II. – THE INDO-TIBETAN TANTRICS IN THE MEDIEVAL AGE 8th-11th centuries CE



Tantric Yantra

II.1. HISTORICAL CONTEXT: HINDU AND BUDDHIST TANTRISM

Tantrism³⁴ appears in India in written form around the beginning of our era, but its origin goes back to the Pre-Aryan religiosity of India, i.e. to the cults of Shiva and the Great Goddess (called "Mother"). Beyond being a metaphysics and mysticism —based on non-dualism, the unification of opposites, especially the masculine and feminine principles of Shiva/Shakti— Tantrism is basically a secret initiatory teaching, transmitted orally from master to disciple.

Tantrism becomes dominant from the 4th century CE onwards and reaches its peak between the 8th and 11th centuries, exercising its influence on all the religious currents of India. Thus a Hindu and a Buddhist Tantrism will appear, interacting and influencing each other, particularly in the foothills of the Himalayas (northern India, Tibet, Nepal, Bhutan). Tantrism is at its base an energetic path, but it will also integrate the mental dimension of Buddhism and develop some iconographic and morphological aspects, without forgetting the strong devotional component towards one's master (guru) and designated divinity (Yiddam).

According to M. Eliade, the rise and success of Tantrism can be explained by the invasion of popular spiritualities, both in Hinduism and Buddhism, and by the secular pressure within the Buddhist community; tantric *sadhana* offers the possibility for all people to access Nirvana during their lifetime (during a single lifetime, without going through several reincarnations). However, the disciple will need a very powerful purpose and the follow-up of a master, because the tantric path turns out to be complex, difficult and long.

From the 11th century CE onwards, Hindu and Indian Buddhist tantrism was abruptly interrupted, in particular by the Muslim invasions. Much of the writings were destroyed (what was left of it was rescued and translated only in the 20th century) and the oral knowledge transmitted from master to disciple was gradually lost or distorted. In reality, because of the interaction and reciprocal influence between Hindu and Buddhist tantrism, and also because of the fact that Tantric Buddhists brought their teaching to Tibet where it could take root, a large number of techniques have been preserved; although their origin is not always recognised as they were assimilated and repeatedly adapted. To give just one example, the work with yantras and mandalas is mentioned several times in Hindu Tantric texts, but we find not much explanation of their meaning or form of use in practice, whereas we do find them in Tibet.

The great novelty that Tantrism has to offer is the importance given to the "integral experience of life" as an integral part of Ascesis (*sadhana*), and this represents a rupture with the austerity of the traditional ascetism of classical India (Brahmanism, Jainism, early Buddhism).

Rather than despising human mechanics (the body, the senses, the emotions...), tantrism invites the ascetics to use it, to dominate it in order to transform it. Thus, the body is no longer considered as a "source of pain", but as the most effective instrument available to human beings to develop their path of enlightenment; this requires a perfect knowledge and control of its functioning (organs, *chakras*³⁵, breathing...). However, this path has also produced crepuscular or so-called "road of the left hand" extremism (ascetics living in crematoria, their abuse of alcohol and/or sexual practices, etc.).

³⁴ *Tantra*: (lit. weave, expand) which completes and expands knowledge, path of experience.

³⁵ The *Chakras* (lit. "wheel") are determined points or « centres » of the human body in which the vital energy concentrates.



In the same way, instead of eluding the images, the yogis will perfect their handling of them. This work of "visualisation" will be done initially with the representations of different deities, which the yogis will first visualise outside themselves and then within themselves. Then they will identify with the deities so as to experience the cosmic forces they symbolise. The work will continue with the construction of geometric figures, *yantras* (lit. instrument, device) and *mandalas* (lit. circle, sphere), which are actually the "symbolic reductions" of these deities. Of course, the *yantra* or *mandala* serves as an attentional support for concentration; but when the yogi internalises it and includes himself in it, it becomes an "operative container": it acquires an operative power independent of the practitioner. It becomes a true "machine"³⁶ within which the consciousness of the practitioner will undergo a profound transformation until it transcends itself.

Something similar happens with the auditive images, *mantras* (sounds, words or phrases). When these sacred formulas (highly charged and received directly from the master's mouth) are correctly pronounced, and when they are recited "in a loop" —uninterrupted repetition is fundamental— they will become the very objects they symbolise. These *mantras* will be effective, —just as the *yantras*/*mandalas*—, and will produce a significant transformation in the chemistry of the practitioner's body.³⁷

³⁶ See Silo's comments on the "machines", in Francesco Granella's monograph *Roots of the Energy Discipline - India and Himalayan foothills*.

³⁷ Ibid.

II.2. NOCTURNAL ASCESIS IN KASHMIRI SHIVAISM (HINDU TANTRISM)



Emblem of Kashmiri Shivaism

Shivaism, one of the most important spiritual expressions of Hinduism (along with Vishnuism) has developed several branches³⁸, but only the Kashmiri tradition matters to us here because it is in its schools that we find interesting information about the existence of “night practices”.

Tantric Shivaism of Kashmir (or *Trika*) is a generic name that actually includes several schools that flourished between the 9th and 11th centuries.³⁹

Despite its subsequent decline, the Kashmiri school survived in small circles until the 20th century —its last known representative was Lakshman Joo— and represents one of the main sources of inspiration for those who later on developed the techniques of *Yoga-Nidra* (yoga of “lucid sleep” also called “yogic or mystical slumber”).

³⁸ The Kashmir Shivaism was established in northern India, while the other three schools, Vira Shaiva, Shaiva Siddhanta and Shaiva Advaita, are mainly present in southern India. The first three schools can be considered “tantric”, while Advaita (Vedanta) is a philosophical school dedicated to learning the Truth through wisdom and knowledge.

³⁹ There is no place here to expound the specific doctrine of each of these schools of Kashmir, yet they share the same basic principles. See article by Alexis Sanderson, *Le Shivaïsme et les traditions tantriques*, in *Cahiers de l'Unité*, n°4, 2016. <https://www.cahiersdelunite.com/shivaisme-et-traditions-tantriques-1>

II.2.1. THE BASIC DOCTRINES

The sources that inform us about our area of interest can be found in the school that appeared with the mystic Vasugupta at the end of the 8th century. This school reached its peak around the 11th century, with the master Abhinavagupta (whose writings are a synthesis of the various previous schools; Hindu, Buddhist and even Jainist schools).

Several of the foundational texts contain valuable information about working with sleep, in particular the *Shiva Sutras* and *Spanda-karikas* attributed to *Vasugupta*. He founded the Spanda School (Vibration, primordial impulse), following the revelation he received in a dream with Shiva (the "Lord of yogis and sleep"). It is said that the god had appeared and revealed to him the doctrine he was to develop and teach.

The doctrine of Vibration (Spanda) postulates that the whole universe results from an original tremor (out of time), from a shock, vibration or pulsation. The universe beats and vibrates; it is really that pulse, that eternal vibration. It is the heart of the Supreme Shiva, also called the "Terrible", the "Ultimate Reality", the "Essence", the "Void", the "Ultimate Being", the "Absolute Consciousness", etc., and whose essential characteristic is Liberty.

And it is precisely because it is sovereignly free that this Consciousness can obscure its luminous essence by means of its *māya-shakti* (energy of illusion), divide itself into subject and object, "I" and "this", appear in the form of a multiple and changing world, in which it will "play" at losing itself and from which it will aspire to free itself later on. However, fundamentally, Shiva is immutable. He is undifferentiated, indivisible, unalterable light, as well as light-consciousness that shines with its own brightness and energy (*shakti*), that becomes conscious of itself in a first tremor, a pure and vibrant act (*spanda*), identical to the breath of life (*prāṇa*). But the most important thing is to understand that these two principles, symbolised by the divine couple Shiva-Shakti, are one, constituting the indissoluble reality of the Supreme Shiva or "Universal Heart".⁴⁰

The other two texts of interest for our topic of study are the *Vijñāna Bhairava Tantra* and the *Malini Vijayottara Tantra* by *Abhinavagupta*, the latter being a continuation of the *Doctrine of Recognition* (previously developed by *Somānanda* and his disciple *Utpaladeva*).

This second doctrine presents a way of Liberation through Recognition (*pratyabhijñā*). The individual will be delivered from the cycle of death and rebirth when he recognises his true identity, the ultimate Self (Shiva), which is out of time, form and space (the three enchainments). Liberation is the recognition that all this is internal to the consciousness, although it is represented as external. It is a fulgurant "awareness" that leaves no room for the alternative and doubt; it is a non-progressive, unprogrammed enlightenment, possible at every moment, in the perception of any object (one is "there" or "not there", one cannot be "half there"). But for this truth to strike us, we must leave abstractions behind and immerse ourselves in the fiery life of surprises and obstacles. Tantrism does not much value pure speculation and ascetic renunciation. It reveals its secrets only in practice, in a world it considers real, since Shiva is Total, transcendent and immanent, and nothing is external to Shiva. Creation is a projection of Shiva.⁴¹

The fact is that the common purpose of the Kashmiri mystics is to achieve the totalising and transforming Experience (called Awakening, Recognition, Union with Shiva, Pure Consciousness, Ultimate Reality, Supreme Identity, Self-realisation, Total Liberation and Enlightenment, Immortality, etc.). However, this Experience occurs in the "Fourth State" or *Turja*, which must be consolidated in order to become a permanent state: *Turyatita*.

⁴⁰ See articles by Pierre Feuga, *Connaissance des religions*, N ° 57-58-59.
<http://www.religioperennis.org/documents/feuga/Coeur.pdf>

⁴¹ Alexis Sanderson, *Cahiers de l'Unité*, n°1, 2016

... the rapturous delight of the Fourth (state) or transcendental consciousness becomes a constant feature even of the three states of waking (jagrat), dream (svapna) and profound sleep (susupta). It is not only in meditation but also in the usual, normal course of life that one experiences the delight of the transcendental consciousness.

Shiva Sutras I.7, in Singh p. 58-59.

The texts state that this "Fourth State" can be experienced in vigil, in dreams and in deep sleep without images, because it is a state that transcends them. Of course, all levels of consciousness will become "a gateway to the Divine" and all moments of life will become an opportunity to practice. Apart from the classical meditation that represents the central axis, the Experience can also occur at any other time, in a "spontaneous" way, because the Lord and/or the Goddess (Shiva-Shakti or "True Self") is free to manifest (irruption of the Transcendent) at any time of day and night (in all levels of consciousness) and in all forms (multiple translations).

It is important to point out that such spontaneity is not the "spontaneism" as it is understood today. The Trika is an initiation, a spiritual atmosphere, a framework, a purpose. Indeed, the yogis must do their part, i.e. learn to provoke, direct and control their levels/states of consciousness, and therefore also their dreams; they must train, day and night, to raise their level of consciousness, to live in consciousness of self and consciousness of the Self. This requires intentional and careful work without interruption. It is a permanent and integral Ascesis with an omnipresent Purpose, day and night practices, and a lifestyle based on attention.

The writings to which we are referring⁴² coincide or complement each other sufficiently as to give us an idea of the importance of the level of sleep in the ascesis of these mystics, and also to better understand the way in which they worked with it. Although the texts do not provide us with oneiric narratives or detailed descriptions of the procedures used—in fact, the comments are mostly concise and sometimes only allusive—there is no doubt that there has been an assiduous study and experimentation in this field.

On the other hand, in these schools, the content of dreams (oneiric images) seems less important than the degree of lucidity of the sleeper—the capacity to induce and direct dreams, to realise that one is dreaming—and, in a more advanced stage, to stop dreaming, that is, to transcend the images in order to enter the great void where enlightenment is produced.

However, we must make clear that for the Shivaïtes, as for all the other mystics we will present in this study, the notion of "lucidity in sleep" seems to embrace several mechanisms and phenomena:

- To remember the dream when waking up;
- Putting intentionality into giving direction to the dream with a previous purpose or asking (e.g. receiving answers/inspirations, communicating with beings from this plane and/or other planes, exploring sacred spaces, etc.);
- To have reversibility in the dream (e.g. to choose between various options, to understand and/or to modify contents of consciousness, to overcome fears, to give intentional, deferred, transferential responses), to maintain consciousness of self during the dream (to know that one is dreaming, e.g. to tell oneself that this will have to be remembered when waking up, to interpret the dream during the dream itself, etc.);
- To have inspired, luminous dreams (e.g. luminous beings and sceneries, elevated atmospheres, etc.) and, of course, to have dreams with mystical experiences;
- To experience the "true awakening", the contact with the "Self" and the profound revelations and transformations that these experiences bring.

⁴² We have used the English versions of J. Singh (a comparative study of the different commentators of the Kashmiri line) and the French version of L. Silburn and André Padoux.

II.2.2. SOME PROCEDURES FOR DIRECTING SLEEP

From the very beginning, it is said that the more the yogis meditate, the more they will have control over daydreams (reveries) and nocturnal dreams; and the more conscious they will be during the day, the more conscious they will also be during dreaming. The appropriate level of attention and reversibility will extend to sleep and enable them to have the dreams they want. This implies a powerful and constant Purpose, frequent practices and a lifestyle based on consciousness of self.

Indeed, in addition to the meditation practices, the yogis are supposed to be constantly pre-disposed in daily life, "[always on the alert for the discernment of the spanda principle](#)" (Spanda Karikas, J. Singh, p. 129) to seize every opportunity in order to provoke the Experience. It is even recommended to take advantage of the agitated, altered (disturbed) consciousness to turn it into an inspired consciousness!

In intense emotional state or a state of mental impasse, all the mental activities come to a dead stop. That is the time when one can have an experience of the spanda principle if one is properly oriented towards it. One should, therefore, have constant awareness of the spanda principle even in the common work-a-day world.

Spandakarikas I. 21-22, in Singh, Introduction p. 21.

To induce mystical experiences in dreams, the texts recommend the yogis to perform practices of inner devotion (by means of mantras and prayers whose formulas are not divulged in these writings).

As the sustainer of this universe (i.e. Siva) –when eagerly entreated with desire- accomplishes all the desires abiding in the heart of the embodied yogi who is awake after causing the rise of the moon and the sun. So also in dream, by appearing in the central nadi (madhye), does He surely reveal always and more vividly his desired objects to him who never desists from his zealous prayer.

Spandakarikas III. 1-2, in Singh, p. 130.

Besides, before falling asleep, the yogi should gather his thoughts into his heart and inhale several times, concentrating on what he wants to accomplish; his desire being no other than that of *Spanda* (divine principle). This reminds us of our practice of the Asking where we likewise concentrate the breath of inspiration in the depths of our hearts as we formulate our need or aspiration.

And, in order not to sink into the lethargy of ordinary sleep, the yogi should perform more complex attentional and respiratory exercises; turn the attention to the "energy of breath", directing the energy of inspiration towards the centre of the heart and propelling the energy of exhalation towards the top of the head (*dvadasanta*). This "energy of the breath", in principle coarse and loud, will become light and subtle due to its slowness. It is the type of energy activated which will determine the quality of sleep and dreams.

He who meditates on the energy of breath, fluid, full, but at the same time slow and very soft, at the top of the brain, and who, at the moment of falling asleep, penetrates his own heart, will obtain by this means the free power over his dreams and over death itself.

Reaching an intangible breath, concentrated between the two eyes (dvadasânta), then when the light is born, the Shakti energy descends to the heart and there, in the luminous presence, in the moment of falling asleep, he (yogin) reaches the mastery of dreams.⁴³

Vijñāna Bhairava Tantra 55, Silburn, p. 178.

The yogi must also focus his attention on the moment he passes from one level of consciousness to another, with the intention of not falling into a heavy sleep, but of remaining "on the border", in a very light sleep; we think it is the threshold between semi-sleep and sleep, that is a kind of "drowsiness".

⁴³ Personal translation.

When sleep has not yet fully appeared, i.e. when one is about to fall asleep, and all the external objects (though present) have faded out of sight, then the state (between sleep and waking) is one on which one should concentrate. In that state, the Supreme Goddess will reveal Herself.

Spandakarikas III. 1-2, Singh p.131.

The fully enlightened has, always and incessantly, the undeviating knowledge of the Self in all the three states; the other one (viz. the partially enlightened) has it only at the beginning and end of each state. At the beginning means: 'just when that state is about to start;' 'at the end means 'at its cessation when the perceiver's mind is withdrawn within.*

Spandakarikas I.17, Singh p. 86-87.

The texts explain that, in the interval, the "in-between" (between two breaths, two thoughts, two states, two images...), there is that empty instant/space in which one must slide in order to enter the "void of emptiness", and from there, the Profound.

Thanks to all these practices, the yogis would be able, during sleep, and thanks to sleep, to achieve what they want. They are supposed to have power not only over the kind of dream they "see", but also over the content of their dreams and the spiritual states they awaken.

In the words of Pía Figueroa (op.cit. p. 2), this is:

... a "look" that observes the dream sequences and provides a different quality of sleep than that of the heavier, more vegetative habitual sleep. This look is searching for images that coincide with the established interest, while the affective charge is driving the consciousness to dream in the defined direction.⁴⁴

Although the Shivaists —and the other mystics we will present in the next chapters— do not speak of the "rebound effect" as a possible consequence of this type of practice, we believe that they were not unaware of it; and that their "anti-nature" night practice was done only in the first cycles of sleep, as a "training", leaving the consciousness free to "do what it needs to do" during the remaining cycles (since in total there are between 4 and 6 phases of paradoxical sleep and deep sleep, depending on the duration of sleep). On the other hand, during the night the same phenomenon occurs as during the day: the practice of intentional asceticism has the effect of lucidity and inspiration "without effort" during the rest of the day and, in the present case, during the rest of the night. And if during "normal" sleep "psychophysical" dreams occur (i.e. based on translations of physical impulses and/or psychological contents), they will be welcomed because they are part of the process. Obviously, it is presumed that the "totally enlightened" individual has ceased to have contradictions and therefore has no more psychological dreams, or at least does not identify with them.

On the other hand, even if it is not the main purpose — this is well underlined! — the advanced level yogis will be endowed with supernatural powers, when in dream they unite with the Divine Energy. In the annotated translation of the *Vijnana Bhairava Tantra* (L. Silburn, p.100), it is stated that:

If the yogi wants to appear to a person who lives far away, he or she will see and/or hear him.⁴⁵

This suggests to us the "communication of spaces" or even the "projection of the double".

⁴⁴ Idem

⁴⁵ Personal translation

II.2.3.SLEEP AND THE INDICATORS OF SPIRITUAL PROGRESS

The texts assert that the type of dream is an indicator since any spiritual progress first manifests itself during a dream; it is the sign that purpose and lucidity invade the yogi's dream life. What is intensely desired, on the mystical plane, will be fulfilled in dreams and, in turn, dreams may come true, according to whether the meditation is introjective (*nimilana samadhi*) or projective (*unmilana samadhi*).

In fact, when the co-present Purpose begins to invade all levels of consciousness —orienting even the reveries and dreams— the yogi knows that the Purpose is "at the centre". If not, the Purpose should be clarified and strengthened or the impediments eliminated.

Kshemaraja, commenting on the *Shivas Sutras* 8-10, based on the *Malinivijaya Tantra* (in Singh, pp. 44-47), tells us that the yogis count on a reference grid to evaluate the quality of their sleep/dream experience and, consequently, their spiritual level. This grid describes the existence of "different states or phases of consciousness within the same state", e.g. "vigil in sleep". And although some of these descriptions may seem vague or questionable, they show a great deal of keen observation for the time.

Of course, we are still far from the scheme of consciousness developed by Silo in the *Psychology Notes* (p. 27-41; 79-91; 187-200), with the distinction between "levels" of consciousness and "states" of consciousness; the relationship between levels (inertia, rebound, dragging...), etc. However, the Tantrics of Kashmir had understood that the levels —which they call states or degrees of consciousness— are not sealed compartments, but work in simultaneous dynamics, thus laying the foundations for a more complete future scheme.

Here, in short, is the description given to us by the *Shiva Sutras* (Singh, pp. 45-46) of these "four states" in dreams and deep sleep (we will not dwell here on those that refer to vigil, and that of semi-sleep is not considered in the texts).

In dreams (svapna):

1. *Svapna-jagrat (waking condition in dream). When the dream world appears as very clear, precise and stationary*

This could refer to the "hypnagogic" images of the first stage of dreaming, but also to the force in the images.

2. *Svapna-svapna i.e. a dreamy condition within the dream state. When in the dream state, the entire dream-phenomena appear to be hazy, vague, and disorderly/chaotic.*

This suggests disturbed sleep; unless it is simply a lack of knowledge of the "capricious" sleep logics.⁴⁶

3. *Svapna-shushupti i.e. sleep within dream state. The dreamer enjoys full, peaceful sleep because the dreamer is able to establish a clear connexion between one dream object and another, he feels in this kind of dream a congruity or consistency among his dream-objects.*

This suggests transferential, reconciling, integrating dreams, which denote certain reversibility.

⁴⁶ "The material of these images is taken from daily life, though articulated capriciously. We will later see that "capriciously" is not quite the way it is, since when we get to the theme of the allegorical and other types of conformations in oneiric productions, we shall see that this is all subject to a set of laws that are quite precise". (Notes of psychology, Psychology II, chap.3 Levels of Work of the Consciousness, p.39 pdf www.silo.net ; and also: "The act-object structuring frequently appears with no correspondence among its elements. A specific object is searched for and another arises that completes the search in an extraordinary way. Likewise, climates and situations tend to become independent of each other, such that the acts of consciousness in the different levels do not coincide with the objects of consciousness, as occurs in vigil". (Ibid, chap.6 Space of representation, p.66 pdf).

4. *Svapna-turiya i.e. the Fourth state within dream. The dreamer does not lose hold of his self-consciousness, when he is fully aware of himself and knows that he is only dreaming; he abides in his own Self.*

This suggests lucid and inspired dreams.

In deep sleep without images/dreams (shushupti):

1. *Shusupti-jagrat i.e. waking within deep sleep. There is the residual impression of the entire objective world in a latent form.*

This refers to vegetative sleep.⁴⁷

2. *Shushupti-svapna i.e. dreaming condition within deep sleep. This state the residual traces of the experience of the objective world are fostered so that they become stronger.*

This could refer to vegetative sleep, with more powerful coenesthetic registers.

3. *Shushupti-shushupti i.e. sleep within deep sleep. The residual traces of objective experience become subdued and tranquil.*

This may refer to the absolute passivity of the consciousness: either its fainting (death), or the "suspension of the self" shortly before transcending (rupture of level).

4. *Shushupti-turya i.e. fourth state in deep sleep. In this state the yogi enters the full I-consciousness of Siva and is full of peace and joy.*

This refers to the suppression of the self, a transcended, lucid and inspired state of consciousness.

Thanks to the "fourth state", the dream of diffuse vitality would then become *samadhi* (absorption into the Divine), and produce enlightenment, from which there will be reminiscences.

When the yogi realises the spanda principle, he knows that this is his essential Self, and not his empirical self. The experience of void does not prove that there is no Experient, for without the Experient, even the experience of void would not be possible. This Experient is the spanda principle.

In the case of deep sleep, its nature as Experient is not similarly known directly, yet it is proved from subsequent memory of it (the deep sleep) which could not otherwise justifiably occur unless there was a previous experience of that deep sleep.

Spandakarikas, I.11-13, in Singh, p. 20, 35.

As for the brief descriptions of the Fundamental Experience, the terminology is sometimes phenomenological, sometimes metaphysical, sometimes energetic, sometimes ecstatic, etc., and it is not always easy to detect the degree of depth obtained, since the same term can designate different phenomena, and the same phenomenon can have different meanings.

Turiya, the Fourth State, sometimes seems to refer to the consciousness of self, sometimes to the suspension of the I and to the inspired consciousness: rapture ("*rapture*"), ecstasy ("*supreme bliss*"), recognition ("*total knowledge*"), sometimes even to the suppression of the I ("*total absorption*") and to the deep levels ("*non-describable realities*").

⁴⁷ "At some moments, sleep is completely vegetative and without images ; at others sleep seems to be under the total, absolute dominion of the vegetative centre, and it seems as though only this structure were working, giving responses to internal stimuli". (Ibid, Chap. 3. Levels of Work of the Consciousness, p. 39 of pdf version).

In any case, the texts state that the yogis who have attained *Turiya* will change profoundly: any external and/or internal phenomenon will appear to them as a simple form of their own consciousness, they are no longer subject to determinism, they unify everything that space and time have separated; for at this stage, the yogi has become Siva himself and perceives the "whole" as his own expression, as his own projection.

Consequently:

The fourth state should be poured like uninterrupted flow of oil in the three states.

One who experiences the delight of Supreme I-consciousness in the three states of consciousness (waking, dreaming, deep sleep) becomes the master of his senses.

Shiva Sutras, III.20; I.7, in Singh, p. 88.

M. Eliade comments on this:

One essential fact must always be borne in mind: the yogin works on all levels of consciousness and of the subconscious, for the purpose of opening the way to trans-consciousness (knowledge-possession of the Self, the purusha). He enters into "deep sleep" and into the "fourth state" (turiya, the cataleptic state) with the utmost lucidity; he does not sink, into self-hypnosis. The importance that all authors ascribe to the yogic states of super-consciousness shows us that the final reintegration takes place in this direction, and not in a trance, however profound. In other words: the recovery, through samadhi, of the initial non-duality introduces a new element in comparison with the primordial situation (that which existed before the twofold division of the real into object-subject). That element is knowledge of unity and bliss. There is a "return to the beginning," but with the difference that the man "liberated in this life" recovers the original situation enriched by the dimensions of freedom and trans-consciousness.

Eliade, *Yoga, Immortality and Freedom*, p. 99, pdf.

However, *Turiya* may be only an occasional experience, a temporary self-transcendence, an exceptional state that may occur more or less frequently, but after which one still can fall back into an ordinary state; therefore it is not permanent. The texts speak of a "fifth" state, called *Turyatita*, which in reality is not a different state, but rather the consolidation, the stabilisation of the Fourth state, which no longer fluctuates, which is no longer lost, which is present all the time, in all situations, this is the "permanent enlightenment". The Kashmiris do indeed distinguish between the "*partially enlightened*" (the one who regularly enters *Turiya*) and the "*fully enlightened*" (the one who has fixed the waking-state, *Turyatita*).

The assiduous practice of absorption in Shiva purifies the mirror of consciousness so well that the yogi, despite his sleep, immerses himself deeply in the divine energy, in Shiva, because he is never unconscious any more.

Silburn, *Vijnana Bhairava Tantra*, Silburn, p. 100.

Turyatita results from an accumulation of contact with the Profound, it is a process in which the level of consciousness of self is consolidated, the consciousness permanently inspired, the old identity replaced by the deep inner centre of gravity.

It is undeniable that the Kashmiri school represents a qualitative leap in the knowledge of the processes of "domesticating" the level of consciousness of sleep and using it to awaken and transcend. But we do not know whether or not the mystics studied their significant dreams (allegorical analysis, interpretation). These works do not appear in the texts, maybe because they were transmitted orally. It is also possible that, in this school, the main focus was not so much the content of sleep as the degree of consciousness and reversibility that the practitioner could achieve during sleep.

II.3. THE YOGA OF SLEEP IN TIBETAN BUDDHISM (VAJRAYANA)



Vajra / Dorje

Buddhism has two characteristics: an expansionist and a syncretising spirit. Thus it spread throughout the Asian continent (except in its land of origin, in India itself). After the Buddha's death, and as the monks travelled through India and neighbouring countries, the doctrine and techniques continued to evolve, assimilating the elements of local traditions and in turn influencing them. This gradually resulted in three main streams (and their respective schools, divided into different branches).⁴⁸

The current called *Vajrayana* was strongly influenced by Hindu Tantrism, especially by the *Shivaism of Kashmir*. The peculiarity of *Vajrayana* is, apart from the close master-disciple relationship, the skilful syncretic mixture of different procedures: mental, energetic, morphological, devotional. In addition, when *Vajrayana* arrives in Tibet, it interacts with the local religion, the *Bön*, from which it incorporates its strong shamanic component. And it is well known the great importance of dreams in this ancestral spirituality.

As we have already seen more than once, the shaman's instruction often takes place in dreams. It is in dreams that the pure sacred life is entered and direct relations with the gods, spirits, and ancestral souls are re-established. It is always in dreams that historical time is abolished and the mythical time regained—which allows the future shaman to witness the beginnings of the world and hence to become contemporary not only with the cosmogony but also with the primordial mythical revelations. Sometimes initiatory dreams are involuntary and begin even in childhood... Even if they do not follow a strict scenario, the dreams are nevertheless stereotyped; the candidate dreams of spirits and ancestors, or hears their voices (songs and teaching). It is always in dream that the candidate receives the initiatory regulations...

Eliade, *Shamanism*, pp. 103-104 pdf.

Vajrayana was brought to Tibet in the 8th century CE by the famous Indian spiritual master *Padmasambhava* (Nyingmapa lineage). A second wave of diffusion took place in the 11th century, with *Marpa the Translator*, who was of Tibetan origin. The latter will introduce and translate into Tibetan the teachings (the *Six Yogas*) of the Indian Tantric Master *Naropa*, of whom he was a disciple. There, Marpa laid the first foundations of the *Kagyütpa* lineage, which later developed and perpetuated by his disciple *Milarepa* and his successors. The mystics of this lineage (unlike the other three: the Nyingmapa, Sakyapa and Gelugpa lines, from which proceeds the present Dalai Lama), are wandering ascetics or hermits, or both in an alternating way, they are outside the monastic traditions and of any organised current. Like the Kashmiri Shivaïtes, they exercise uninterrupted asceticism.

⁴⁸ The *Theravada* (Ancient Doctrine), also called *Hinayana* (Small Vehicle), is based on the exoteric teaching of the Buddha, the Tipitaka (or Triple Basket), which are the Buddha's Sutras (agama). This branch considers that only monks, by their total renunciation of earthly desires, can reach Nirvana. *Mahayana* Buddhism (Great Vehicle) and Tantric Buddhism, *Vajrayana* (Lightning and Diamond Vehicle) refer to the same canon as Theravada, but also to other esoteric teachings: sutras that the Buddha would have transmitted orally to his more advanced disciples. They teach, among other things, that every man (and woman!) already possesses in him (her) the Buddha nature and therefore can attain enlightenment and access Nirvana.

II.3.1. THE TEACHINGS OF NAROPA (1016-1100)



Mahasiddha Naropa, Rubin Museum of Art

First of all, we must point out that the existing texts attributed to Naropa are commented and adapted translations; however, the different versions we have been consulting⁴⁹ do not necessarily coincide in all aspects. Therefore, we will present a summary based on what they have in common and what we think is most characteristic.

The Six Yogas

According to the authors, the Six Yoga or Six Dharma (Six Doctrines) would have different origins, derived from the oral tradition, which were then gathered and systematised by Naropa⁵⁰. These teachings are of particular interest to us since one of them (actually two) develops precisely the Yoga of sleep. Many of these practices, which represent the foundations of the Kagyütpa School, have been adopted and adapted by the other three Tibetan lineages mentioned above.

⁴⁹ Commented translations in English: Lama Tsong Khapa (1357-1419) of the Gelugpa branch (in C.C. Chang and Muses); Walter Evans-Wentz (English), Garma C.C. Chang (English), Takpo Tashi Namgyal French version (French translation and adaptation by Erik Sablé); additional comments by Tanzin Wangyal.

⁵⁰ There is a second similar treatise, The Six Dharma, attributed to Niguma, Naropa's sister or wife. Although the Tibetan texts refer only to Naropa, several authors claim that Marpa had been a disciple of both.

The six yogas of Naropa are as following:

1. *Dumo*: Yoga of the Internal Heat (also called "divine, mystical fire")
2. Gyoulé: Yoga of the Illusory-Body
3. Mi.lam: Yoga of Dreams
4. Eu.sel: Yoga of the Clear Light (also called yoga of the four Voids)
5. Bardo: Yoga of the Intermediate state (between death and rebirth or death and absolute Liberation)
6. Po.wa: Yoga of Transference/Transformation of consciousness

These practices are grouped in pairs and, according to *Namgyal*⁵¹, these three pairs represent the three "Buddhic bodies": the *Nirmanakaya*: Incarnated Body related to the sensitive world; the *Sambhogakaya*: Divine Body, Body of Enjoyment, connected to the fields of bliss of the intermediate world; the *Dharmakaya*: Body of Truth, manifestation of the void united to Wisdom.

According to our own understanding, the first two are mainly aimed at controlling the physical and energetic body (the double) in order to uproot the illusion of "I = body" identity. The next two, the yogas of Dream and Clear Light, are dedicated to deepening and perfecting the mastery of this energetic body through the mastery of allegoric and symbolic representations, in order to free oneself from the illusion of the "I = form" identity. The latter two lead to the handling of what we might call the projection of Force or the Double; or, in morphological language, the projection of the Pure Form.

Each of these six yogas consists of a set of procedures organised in successive steps. In addition, each yoga is related to the other five, forming a complex structure. And although each disciple, according to his/her tendencies identified by the master, specialised in one of the yogas (and sometimes several), had to be familiar with all six, which required long years of practice. For example, just the yoga of dreams required a three-year retreat.

In addition, these yogas were necessarily practiced under the supervision of a master and preceded by apprenticeship that also took place over several years. These preparatory exercises are called "practices of the outer mandala" and those of perfection "practices of the inner mandala". Its purpose is to train the yogi to gradually attain the "Ultimate Centre", called the "Great Symbol" or "Great Seal" (Mahamudra).

Dream-Yoga (Mi.lam)

The yoga of dreams is a path of transformation and transcendence. If the practitioners know how to recognise in a dream that they are in a dream (Maya, illusion), if they have also acquired the ability to transform their oneiric images at will (reversibility) and give them a clear direction (purpose), they will be able to escape from their domination, transcend them and continue without any "tangible support" (without images, without forms). Dreaming will then become a path of liberation and enlightenment.

The lucidity that the yogis will have developed during sleep will serve at the moment of their death; for the "post-mortem bardo" resembles the state of sleep. Then, instead of getting lost in their own labyrinth, they will be able—in this situation—to avoid the traps of the "projections of their own mind" and thus advance towards the Light.

In fact, the Yoga of Dream and the Yoga of Clear Light are inseparable, so we must consider them as a two-part entity: the first applies to the dream with images (paradoxical sleep, dreams), while the second works with the voids/lights (deep sleep without images), although in reality the light is still a representation (a "translation"). In short, the two yogas must be practiced successively and/or alternatively.

⁵¹ Takpo Tashi Namgyal (1511-1587) of the Kagyupa lineage (Naropa, Marpa, Milarépa, Gampopa...).

The main objective of Dream Yoga and Clear Light is to create the transcendent double (spirit). It is a long process, the difficulty of which requires 24-hour application. As in the case of the Kashmiri Shivaïtes, any event of daily life has to become a practice: one is supposed to live in the Purpose day and night.

a/ Preparatory training for Dream Yoga

The preparatory exercises, carried out in the waking level, correspond to imagery, attentional, energetic and morphological work. The objective is to acquire the knowledge and control of basic psychophysical functioning.

The posture and breathing exercises aim to unify and control the vital energy (*prana* - lit. blow, wind; also air, breath, energy current). Because if the content of the dream is formed by the mind, the vitality and animation of the dream are based on *prana*. This energy is composed of *karmic prana* (gross energy) and *wisdom prana* (subtle energy): the first prana must be refined and the second strengthened.

As for the "visualisation" exercises (visual representations), they are intended to educate the "look" of the yogi. Here is a typical sequence for the "novice":

1. Concentrating on a mental object, usually a deity that should be visualised outside of oneself as precisely and brightly as possible;
2. Internalising or incorporating (integrating) this representation, imagining it and above all feeling it within oneself (register);
3. Identification/fusion: becoming the represented deity, thus becoming the representation itself;
4. Making disappear all representations and keeping only their meaning, their essence.

The first two points remind us of some preliminary exercises to the *Energetic Discipline*⁵² (quality and charge of the mental representations) as well as several preparatory exercises of the *Morphological Discipline*⁵³, in particular learning to distinguish the three types of depths in which the representations are located:

- Representations "on screen". We look from "here" and the screen is "there";
- Integration (of the representation). The point of view goes backwards. The look is diffused, one has a circular vision.
- Inclusion. Now we are inside the sphere. The limit of the sphere must coincide with the limit of the space of representation.

As for points 3 and 4, they strongly remind us of the 3rd Step of the *Morphological Discipline* (Amplification: "I am the sphere", "I am the representation, the form") as well as certain aspects of the second "quatern": "the void".

But let's go back to the preliminary exercises of dream yoga. After this first sequence, the process continues with much more complex visualisation exercises, combining both figurative and abstract representations. Indeed, this form of Buddhism uses figurative representations (deities, lotuses, moon, sun...) as well as *yantras*, that is abstract, geometric diagrams (as symbolic reduction of one or more deities), uniting them in the same mandala. In other words, it combines allegories and symbols, the two forms with which the consciousness works.

⁵² *The Four Disciplines*. <http://www.parquepuntadevacas.net/prod.php>

⁵³ Ibid



Kalachakra Mandala, Sera Monastery, Lhasa, Tibet

This is the sequence for the most advanced yogis:

They should first visualise each part of the mandala and get to know it in detail ("compositional" vision). Then they should visualise it as precisely as possible in its totality ("global" vision). They will then learn to reduce the representation (miniature mandala) until it becomes a point and afterwards to amplify it at will, identifying the mandala with their own physical body, then with their energetic body (inner mandala), or, in our terms, with the double and the space of representation. These exercises obviously remind us of the first three steps of the *Morphological Discipline*: 1/ Entry (inclusion in the Form); 2/ Concentration (reduction of the form/register to a point: I am a point, my body/world is a point); 3/ Amplification (making the form/register grow: I am the sphere itself and I amplify myself).

But it doesn't end there. After the identification/fusion of the "content" with the "container", the yogi should empty the representation, then dissolve it and keep only its (co-present) meaning, and then transcend it; this may correspond to the Pure Form, the suspension of the I, in the third quatern of the *Morphological Discipline*.

Here is an example of the mental construction of an allegorical mandala. We quote it because of its great resemblance to the Buddha's dreams we studied previously.

Imagine the central part [or spinal-column] of thy body to be Mt. Meru, the four chief limbs to be the Four Continents, the minor limbs to be the Sub-Continents, the head to be the Worlds of the Devas, the two eyes to be the Sun and Moon, and that the five internal organs constitute all objects of wealth and enjoyment amongst gods and men.

After the mandala has been offered up in worship the yogin is directed as follows:

Having done so, mentally absorb the [visualised] objects of worship (the mandala) into thyself, and keep thy mind in the equilibrium [or quiescence] of the non-two state, the state of samadhi, in which all dualism is realised as being in at-one-ment. In other words, he must realize the All in One, and the One in All.

Evans-Wentz, *Tibetan Yoga*, p. 324-325.

This last sentence suggests the 12th Step of the *Mental Discipline*.

b/ The main practice of Dream Yoga

Of course, the dream yoga is a nocturnal meditation, but it should be completed with many other daytime practices, e.g. an assiduous and fervent work with the inner guide (visualisations, askings, prayers), the *Dumo practice* (energetic work, breathings,...), as well as multiple exercises to educate the look and the mobility of the images.

Here are a few examples:

In daily activities the yogis should identify all their experiences with the Buddha's Realm: houses and towns with the Mandala; the world with Buddha's Pure Land (Paradise); all people with Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. They should think that all sounds are the chanting of Mantras: all thoughts a play of the Dharmakaya; all desirable objects and enjoyments, offerings to the Buddhas. That is, an intentional look towards seeing the sacred in everything, fostering an inspired consciousness. Then, the yogis should consider that everything perceived, thought and done in the day is of the nature of the dream (illusion); and, before going to sleep, should review the day by considering the events as if they were memories of a dream.

Before going to sleep, the yogis perform purifying and relaxing breathing, then formulate a strong resolution: to keep the thread of consciousness between wakefulness and sleep. They reinforce their purpose by invoking their guide (teacher/guru) to help them recognise dreams as dreams and to remember them when waking up. Practically, they imagine the master/guru at the top of their head, getting in touch with him by sensing his presence, feeling a strong devotion for him (the heart opens and is filled with an immense love), praying with ardour and sincerity. Then the representation of the guide must be transformed into a light that penetrates the top of the head and descends to the throat and heart chakra. The intimacy felt towards the master is in reality an intimacy towards one's own nature. It is important to point out that when the yogis invoke their guide —be it their divinised guru or a divinity— they not only feel his presence within themselves, but they identify with him; for only the divine can see the divine!

The logistical aspect must also be taken into account in order to avoid heavy sleep, or rather to guarantee a sufficiently light sleep: not eating a rich meal, not being too tired before going to bed, making sure that there is not too much noise in the room, regulating the temperature (neither too cold nor too hot); using a high pillow and sleeping on one side ("lion's position", "Buddha lying down"). Sleep should be divided into several intervals, and each time the practitioner wakes up he should, without opening his eyes, remain in the dream state and remember it (if not, pray again or do other exercises).

The practice of the night itself consists of several stages: the stage of becoming conscious (recognising and remembering dreams), the stage of transformation and orientation of dreams; and finally, the stage of purification, the so-called stage of void and light which already corresponds to the Yoga of Light (also called yoga of the Four Voids).

Step one: practices to induce and remember dreams.

First of all, it is necessary to know that the yogis receive from their master well-guided procedures in which they have total confidence (the master-disciple relationship being based on devotion, submission, absolute obedience). However, the yogis have the freedom and even the responsibility to adapt these to their particular situation; this involves countless experiments and close communication with the master. Given the complexity of the exercises and the number of variations (depending on the practitioner's difficulties or tendencies), we will only cite a few examples to give a general idea.

During the sleep phase, the yogi should take the position of the "lion" and focus his attention on different *chakras* associating them with codified representations, e.g. four-petalled lotus with "coloured key-syllables", or a "Tiglé" (or "bindu", luminous point or small luminous sphere), and accompany them by mantras and certain types of breathing, in general "Vase-Breath" (belly breathing and complete breathing, we would say).

The representations and mantras associated with breathing serve to prevent the scattering of the mind, but to the extent that these symbols are charged with deep meanings, their effect or "operational force" will be even more powerful.

For instance, the visualisation of the "seed-syllables" AH, NU, TA, RA, HUM/OM represents one of the basic meditations. Now, the Sanskrit term for this four-syllable word is Anuttara, which means "the highest", or "the one above whom there is nothing else"; in other words, the purpose of the Absolute. This does not prevent each syllable from having its own meaning, depending on where it is located and of what colour it is. In the centre of the lotus (or mandala with the lotus as the centre) is placed the syllable OM (the Whole) or HUM (the Awakening).

Tenzin Wangyal comments that postures, breathing and visualisations focused on certain areas of the body have the function of activating the four *chakras* (energy centres) and the corresponding energy. For according to the quality of energy, consciousness will produce dreams of different natures. This means that the Tantrics knew how to choose and use the right supports in order to direct their attention and that they knew or had the intuition of what we would call "translation of impulses". Identifying the body with a deity or with a mandala that represents the deity, and "sprinkling" different parts of the body with mystical symbols, sacralises the physical body which then has to be transformed into a subtle, divine body (energy body, double), afterwards into a transcendent body (spirit), and finally into the Buddha body (the Mind).

One of the meditations consists of visualising a four-petalled lotus in the throat chakra. In the centre of the lotus, a white OM, on the front petal a blue A, on the right petal a yellow NU, on the background a red TA, and on the left a green RA. Then the yogi should visualise only one red OM in the centre of the throat (and accompany this by the "Vase-Breath" and the low voice pronunciation of the OM mantra).

According to Tenzin Wangyal⁵⁴, concentration on this chakra produces peaceful and inspired dreams:

... a dakini gently invites the dreamer to accompany her. She helps the dreamer onto a mystical bird (garuda) or a lion and leads him or her to a pure land, a beautiful, sacred place. But the dream need not be this specific. It may just involve a walk in a beautiful garden or in the mountains, guided by other people. The quality of dreams generated has less to do with particular images and more to do, at this point, with the feeling of peace.

Tenzin Wangyal, *Yogas of Dream and Sleep*, p. 85 pdf.

In other meditations, instead of representing lotuses and/or syllables, the yogi should imagine a "Tigl  " or "bindu", that small transparent and luminous sphere that symbolises the "Spirit", the "pure consciousness". For example, one can imagine a Tigl   in the upper chakra (located above and behind the forehead where the eyebrows meet); or in the heart chakra.

Tenzin Wangyal gives additional explanations: The image is not that of a round, static white light, it is a living image that we feel (feeling is more important than "seeing") and with which we will merge, until there is only clarity and brightness. The more light we absorb, the more the lucidity increases. It's an exercise, but it's supposed to turn into an experience.

This obviously resonates with "our" luminous and transparent sphere that descends until it comes to rest in the heart (cf. Service, in *The Message of Silo*, p.32 pdf) and begins to "operate" like a "machine" (in the sense that Silo gives it).

Tenzin Wangyal quotes several dreams, which he says represent the Force, for example this one:

... a powerful dakini directs the dreamer to sit on a throne, or the dreamer goes into a secure castle to receive teachings... (Ibid, p. 89).

He also points out that, what matters is the tone of the dream, not so much the allegories which can vary.

⁵⁴ Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche is a contemporary Tibetan lama, author of several books on the Dzogchen and Tibetan Dream Yoga.

Finally, when the focal point is the luminous black Tigl  —it is associated with the "secret chakra", the productive centre— it induces dreams in which the elements destroy the image of the I, and thus, different types of allegorised deaths of the I. We are familiar with this kind of dream, which often occurs before or after an important sacred experience.

But there will be variants. If sleep is too heavy and therefore impedes lucidity, the yogis should visualise a red OM or a red Tigl  radiating its light from the centre of the throat, filling their entire body and space (representation), or a white Tigl  between the two eyebrows. If they are too alert, or too easily awakened, they should visualise a blue-black Tigl , in the heart chakra. If dreams are too confused, the yogis should visualise a red Tigl  in the centre of the throat, radiating a bright light that spreads through the subtle channels (*nadis*) all over the body, etc. As we have said, there are many variations and possible adaptations.

Second stage: practices to act on sleep; transformations and detachment

When there is lucidity in sleep, one can act on it. This is the time to learn to modify the oneiric contents (image mobility, reversibility), and/or give them the desired direction (intention, purpose). The aim is to acquire flexibility and to overcome the adhesion/rejection mechanism (duality). It is about having control over images, whatever they are, rather than being controlled by them. The yogis will thus strengthen their understanding —thanks to their own experience—, of the unreality and non-permanence of forms.

Consequently, the yogis have to learn —during sleep— to transform the size, quantity and quality (attributes) of their oneiric images; to regulate speed (acceleration, slowness of time); to produce all kinds of transfers to overcome fear in difficult situations; to produce transformations in themselves by changing identity (which remind us our *Guided Experience* of "The Costumes"); to move to different places and provoke encounters in order to obtain teachings or answers, etc....

At this stage, the yogi will be able to travel through the Buddha Lands, the Fields of Bliss. Here's a illustrating it:

Visualize oneself as becoming the Patron Buddha, and instantaneously, like a shooting star, arrive in the Heaven of Indra, or some other Samsaric Heaven; observe the place before returning. When this is stabilised, one should then journey to one of the Buddha's Pure Lands (that not longer belong to samsara), such as the Pure Land of Vairocana, of Amitabha, or the like. Reaching Buddha's Pure Land, one should make obeisance and offerings to the Buddha and listen to His preaching

Chang, *Six Yogas of Naropa*, p. 93 pdf.

T. Namgyal⁵⁵ specifies that the yogis will at first tend to believe that their perceptions are reality, but later will understand that they are nothing but illusions. Paradoxically, by understanding this, the visions become clearer and clearer, as if their "status" of illusion allowed them to unfold fully. With time, the yogi will realise that *samsara* (dense world) and *nirvana* (subtle world) are both unreal mirages. Obviously, in order to understand this from experience, the yogis must already be very advanced in the process of awakening, and if this is so, they will be able to practice the Light-Yoga.

Of course, representations (dreams, visions) are either impediments that deviate or expel from consciousness of self and Clear Light, or, when they are controlled, they become facilitating supports leading to their own dissolution, i.e. to the Four Voids and their respective Lights, and finally to the Perfect Light of the Centre. Having no other support than itself, the consciousness returns upon itself and transcends itself! Light being then conscious of itself!

This means on one hand conquering consciousness of self and then extending it to all levels of consciousness; and, on the other hand, using formal (mostly visual) supports in order to convert obstacles into a genuine "path". Consciousness of self is the door to enlightenment, while formal supports serve as a springboard to catapult oneself into the Void of the Clear Light; or, in morphological

⁵⁵ Dakpo Tashi Namgyal (1511-1587), spiritual master of the Kagy pa School

language, into the Pure Form and profound spaces.

In fact, while the Dream-Yoga aims to generate inspired dreams (through allegorical and symbolic images), the Light-Yoga (yoga of dreamless sleep) aims to produce experiences of final enlightenment and awakening.

Clear Light-Yoga (*Eu.sei*) or Yoga of the Four Lights and Voids

This yoga is intended to achieve enlightenment, the "Clear Light". It is an allegory to designate the experience of awakening, since this Light cannot be described; it can only be "known" or "seen" (in Tibetan the verb "to see" means to know or experience something). In this yoga one learns how to "shortcut" the train of images of allegorical dreams (mechanism of association) and to work with and within the four lights/voids, i.e. the Lights of Revelation, Augmentation, Attainment and Innate-Born.

Consciousness translates this formless light as a "void" (absence of forms). According to the texts, this light is also the one to which the dead approach, and who often cannot bear its clarity, so they cannot integrate it. Since it is more difficult to experience and merge with this light after death (cf. *The Book of the Tibetan Dead*), it is most important to train oneself during lifetime, as assiduously as possible. If one succeeds, direct entry into the Paranirvana (Nirvana Ultimate) is guaranteed, and, on earth, a new quality of life (state of Buddhahood, of "liberated while living") can be enjoyed, enabling to help all beings to free themselves as well (from the wheel of incarnation, the *karma*, illusion, in short from the human condition synonymous with suffering).

The doctrine of the Clear Light is based on three aspects:

1. The Light-of-Origin or "Mother-Light";
2. The Light-of-the Path or "Son/daughter-Light";
3. The Light-of-Fruition that is the unification of both.

The "Light-of-Origin", or of "Reality", is the Innate Light that exists at all time, it represents our deep essential self. This "Mother-Light" is the source by which everything exists. It is always present, although for the consciousness it is veiled by *Maya* (illusory phenomenal world). However, one can experience it naturally, accidentally, during a gap, a "hole" in *Maya*. For example, in vigil, light can be revealed between two phenomena, in a small moment of silence between two thoughts, two forms, etc., but in general we are not sufficiently attentive and conscious to perceive it. It can also appear in sleep or in the *bardo* after death. But without preparation, one cannot endure its radiance and pressure: The sleeper will be expelled from sleep and will suddenly wake up, and the dead, for their part, will move away from the Light without accessing its centre to liberate themselves definitively.

Therefore, training is essential! This suggests to us what Silo also recommends in the *Guide to the Inner Road* and in the *Assistance* ceremony:

Do not fear the pressure of the light, which pushes against you with increasing strength the closer you draw to its centre. Absorb it as though it were a liquid or a wind; certainly, in it is life.

Silo, *Silo's Message*, p. 20, 40 pdf.

The Light of the Path (or "son/daughter-light") is the enlightenment the yogis achieve through intentional practice of the ascesis, in this case, the six yogas. On this road, the practitioner reaches a stage where he realises that the phenomenal world and the void are one, that they are two aspects of a duality that is in reality one, for "reality is One"; and which corresponds to the experience of Step 10 of the *Morphological Discipline*. It is the moment when the yogi transcends the "act-object" dichotomy (the "consciousness-world" structure or "inner-outer space"), the moment where, according to Naropa, the yogi "does not imagine, think, analyze, meditate, or reflect" (Evans-Wentz, p. 119 pdf), that is, the moment when he produces the silence of the suspension of the self. The Clear Light then appears as an experience of illumination of consciousness. Usually an ecstatic state that must be pushed further, in order to obtain total, absolute enlightenment.

Indeed, it only when both Lights are united (Mother- and Son-Light, or Light-of-the-Origin and Light-of-the-Path), that the yogi can “realise” the Light-of-Fruition or Two-in-One Ultimate Light, the perfect and complete Enlightenment of Buddhahood.

The night-practice will consist of recognising and distinguishing, during sleep, four voids which are the four degrees of Clear Light. And, although all the lights are an expression of IT, and therefore beneficial and transforming, only the Ultimate Light corresponds to absolute Awakening and Liberation. Of course, those who have developed and reached a state of deep *samadhi* and stability during their waking meditation will more easily transcend dreams and experience the Clear Light during their sleep.

However, before undertaking the nocturnal practice, it is crucial to strengthen one's desire of realising the Clear Light. In other words, the yogis will strengthen their purpose with repeated and intensely felt (emotional charge) prayers. From now on, the prayers will no longer be addressed to the master (gurú) but to the "Diamond Being" (Vajrasattva or Dorje-Chang), a deity symbolising ultimate, transcendental Knowledge.

The yogi should now adopt the typical body posture and the corresponding breathing, and then visualise the four-petalled lotus (with the syllables or the Tíglé) in the heart.

This is the recommended path to recognise the four voids/degrees of light.

During the Light-Yoga practice at night, the yogi should first concentrate on the *A* on one of the lotus petals in the Heart Centre. Through this practice the *pranas* of the Five Elements will gather in the Central Channel and the signs of smoke, mirage, firefly-light, etc., will emerge in turn.

And afterwards:

1. When the yogi feels sleepy, he/she should concentrate on the *Nu*, whereupon more *pranas* will be gathered, crude discriminating thoughts will dissolve, and the Initial Void, or Light-of-Revelation, will emerge; he/she will then experience a feeling as though seeing bright moonlight in a cloudless sky.
2. When the yogi becomes sleepier, he/she should concentrate on the *Ta*, more *pranas* will be gathered, all subtle discriminating thoughts will dissolve, and the Second, or the Extreme Void — otherwise called the Light-of-Augmentation— will emerge; now he/she will experience a feeling as though seeing sunlight in a cloudless sky.
3. When the yogi feels very sleepy, he/she should concentrate on the *Ra*, whereupon all the *pranas* will be gathered, the majority of the most subtle discriminating thoughts will dissolve, and the Third, or Great Void —otherwise called the Light-of-Attainment— will emerge; he/she will then experience a feeling as though seeing all-embracing darkness in a deep and cloudless firmament.
4. Finally, as the yogi falls asleep [or becomes un-conscious] while concentrating on the *Hum*, all the *pranas* of the Attainment and all the most subtle discriminating thoughts will dissolve, and the Fourth, or Total Void- otherwise called the Innate Light — will emerge; then he will experience a feeling as though seeing the vault of the clear sky at dawn, and all the Three Defilements of sun moon, and twilight will fade . . .

These are the Four Voids, or Lights-of-Sleep which the yogi should recognise and practice. At the start, he may not be able to recognise all these Four Voids, but with continual and persistent practice, he will eventually do so. Those who are not proficient in "holding" the Four Voids, should practice the Yoga during light sleep; those who are, should practice it in deep sleep.

If because of the agitation of *prana*, some dreams arise, these visions should be identified with the Patron Buddha (*yidam*) and his Mandala (symbolic reduction of the *yidam*). Then one should try once more to dissolve them into the great (Central) Void ...

The yogis who are not able to eliminate completely Samsaric thoughts, nevertheless can overcome drowsiness and discern clearly the transparent Illuminating-Voidness, i.e. the so-called "Lesser Light". Next to this is the "inferior" experience, in which the yogi can neither recognise the "perfect" nor the "lesser" Light, but experiences a clear and transparent mind in the state of sleep before dreams arise . . . This is called the experience of the "corresponding Light".

As for the yogis who have been able to eliminate crude and subtle thoughts and all forms of attachment, they will see the True Light that resides in the heart of the dream, as luminous as it is transparent. Then they can master the four voids and realise the four degrees of wisdom of the Light. At the moment of death they will be definitively liberated and at the time of earthly life they will know how to help all living beings to liberate themselves.

The six yogas of Naropa do not contain dream narratives nor methods of analysis. This knowledge might have been circulating orally. Some later Buddhist works of modernity offer some lists of oneiric images joined by explanations but these interpretations are inconsistent and even contradictory from one version to another. From which we conclude that the authors of the twentieth century did not have sufficient knowledge in this field; or, to put it more gently, in wanting to generalise too much or to codify the meanings of allegories, it seems that one falls into a simplification that is misleading. So we won't dwell on that.

On the other hand, in the biographies we can find numerous dream narratives, as well as interpretations made by the mystics themselves (or by their respective masters). They inform us of the contexts, of the experience, of the understanding of dreams and, above all, of how those mystics used dreams to advance in Ascesis or to help others on that path. These dreams then become aids, indicating where the obstacles are, or showing which way to go in order to progress. And of course, some dreams are deeply transformative because they anticipate, produce or confirm mystical experiences. Finally, there are the shared and the premonitory dreams.

As an example, we will present the " oneiric biography " of the famous Tibetan mystic Milarepa.

II.3.2. THE ONEIRIC UNIVERSE OF MILAREPA AND HIS LINEAGE



Milarepa, stone of rock carved and painted

Milarepa (1040-1123) was the major disciple and successor of Marpa the Translator (in turn a disciple of Naropa) who, in the 11th century, participated in the second and most important wave of spreading Buddhism in Tibet. Milarepa is the first great awakening of Tibetan origin, so he is revered as a great saint in the entire Himalayan region (along with 8th century Padmasambhava). The *Namthar* ("Life of Milarepa") and the *Gurbum* ("One hundred thousand songs"), hagiographical works that narrate his life and teachings, were written by his two most important disciples: Rechungpa and Gampopa, respectively.

Milarepa's biography is quite tough. In short, he first becomes a shaman who practices black magic to avenge his family who suffered violence. After acquiring great power and in turn causing harm, he will sincerely repent and aspire to a spiritually higher life. Finally, he will find "his" master (Marpa the Translator), thanks to whom he will be able to purify himself of his karma, of his inner contradictions, and become one of the greatest mystics in the history of Tantric Buddhism.

Milarepa's universe is a perfect synthesis of Buddhism and Bön: on the one hand the doctrine of voidness and renunciation with an austere, strict asceticism; and on the other, the world of enchantment and magic full of signs, coincidences, powers (this time for noble ends). Now, in the interstice of these two worlds is dream, participating of both.

Milarepa's path of ascesis from the oneiric viewpoint

Milarepa's ascesis process is full of significant dreams. And although his two biographies do not tell much about his intentional work with the level of sleep, the numerous dreams related, interpreted and taken into consideration for progress on the path of awakening, indicate their importance and mastery.

The following dreams illustrate the categories so characteristic of Tibetan Buddhism. There are the premonitory or announcing dreams, the shared dreams, the inspired dreams, those with the "inner guide"; and often all this combined. Of course, all dreams are indicators of spiritual progress (or of impediments).

As is usual in the Buddhist tradition, Milarepa's initiation is announced by a premonitory dream. In fact, it is very frequent that premonitory dreams and shared dreams (dreams of "communication of spaces") occur between a master and his future disciple. So, Master Marpa will dream of his future disciple Milarepa. This dream is interesting for several reasons. First of all because it is Naropa, Marpa's master, who announces this future initiation, which gives the dream the dimension of a "lineage" (spiritual family); and also because it is a shared dream (Marpa's wife has almost the same dream), which gives it even more weight.

The night before my arrival in Drowolung, Pañchen Nāropa appeared to Marpa in a dream and granted initiation. To Marpa he gave a slightly soiled five-pronged vajra made from lapis lazuli and a golden vase filled with nectar. Then he said, "Using water from the vase, cleanse the tarnish from this vajra and then mount it atop a victory banner. This will please the Victors of the past and make sentient beings happy, thus benefiting yourself and others." With this, Nāropa vanished into space. In accordance with the lama's instructions, he washed the vajra with water from the vase and then mounted it atop a victory banner. Light from the vajra permeated the entire universe. As this light struck beings throughout the six realms, they were filled with a happiness devoid of suffering. In such a state they bowed down before Marpa and the victory banner and presented them offerings. The Victors then consecrated the banner.

Marpa awoke from the dream with a slight feeling of pride. He was delighted and joyful, and at that moment his wife entered to serve his morning meal. She said, "O lama, last night I dreamt that two women, who said they were from Oḍḍiyāna in the north, appeared carrying a crystal stupa, slightly soiled on the outside. They said, 'It is lama Nāropa's command to master Marpa that the master consecrate this stupa and place it on the summit of a mountain.' You, master, replied, 'Pañchen Nāropa has already consecrated this stupa, but I must obey his command.' You then performed extensive consecration rites, washing the stupa with water from the vase and so forth. You then placed it on a mountaintop where it radiated light as dazzling as the sun and moon and replicated numerous copies of itself on the tops of neighboring mountains. The two women served as stewards for them all. Such was my dream. What does it mean?"

Although Marpa thought that these dreams were in accord and was elated, he said to his wife, "Since dreams come out of nowhere I do not know their meaning."

Heruka, *Life of Milarepa*, p. 66-67 pdf version.

Beyond appearances, Marpa immediately understands the meaning of these dreams and takes them so seriously that he changes his plans: he will go and prepare the reception of his future disciple (who will indeed arrive that same day). And later, his wife will understand by herself the meaning of her dream and will support her husband in the initiation of Milarepa.

Much later, at an advanced stage of his ascesis, after several years of uninterrupted practice in a solitary cave, Milarepa will have an inspired dream with a Dâkinî (female divinity, celestial messenger, manifestation of the "awakened spirit") who gives him instructions to follow. This means that Milarepa begins to be guided from within, from the sacred spaces.

... a woman appeared to me in a dream, blue in color, beautifully adorned in garments of pure and bone ornaments, her eyebrows and facial hair brilliant gold. "Son," she said, "you already

have the instructions on the Great Seal (Great Symbol or Mahamudra) and the Six Dharmas (Six Yogas or Doctrines of Noaropa) through which one becomes a buddha by meditating for a long time. But you do not have the special instructions on Transference of Consciousness (Drong-jug)⁵⁶ through which one becomes a buddha by meditating for a single instant. Request it!" Then she disappeared.

Thinking it over I wondered, "Although the woman appeared in the guise of a ḍākinī, is this a prophetic command of the ḍākinīs or a demonic obstacle? I don't know.

(Ibid, p. 99).



Vajra Dakini, goddess of supreme knowledge

To have certainty, he leaves his cave and asks his master Marpa for confirmation. One might be intrigued by this dream: if Milarepa has already received and practiced the "six yogas", as the dream says, one does not understand why he does not trust his own interpretation of the dream and why he needs the "Trong Jug" which is related to the sixth yoga. However, apart from the temporal differences that may result from linguistic transcriptions and translations, we are familiar with the difference between "messages as such" and the subsequent translations that the consciousness makes of them. It is then possible that the first part of the dream corresponds to the translation of an experience of Recognition and that the second part of the dream contains the missing piece to confirm this knowledge (the six yogas and the Great Symbol) in the practice of his "classical" asceticism, in vigil. If this is so, it can be deduced that Milarepa does not yet master all the techniques; which, at this stage, seems quite logical.

As for Marpa, although he reproaches Milarepa for having interrupted his practice (tradition obliges!), he takes his dream seriously enough to embark on a journey to India—a tiring and dangerous journey for his advanced age—in order to obtain the required manuscript from his own master, Naropa. The latter, upon learning the reason for Marpa's arrival, exclaims:

— How marvelous. In the gloomy land of Tibet lives a man like the sun rising over the snows. (Ibid, p. 100)

Later, when he loses his biological son who was to succeed him, Marpa will have to choose another disciple to ensure the perpetuity of the Kagyüpa order. He gathers his disciples and says to them:

— I, a descendant in the line of Nāro Paṇchen, have gained mastery over omens and dreams. I also have Paṇchen Nāro's excellent prophetic command regarding the Kagyu teachings. You, my foremost disciples, go await your dreams." Later, the senior disciples took note of their dreams and reported them. (Ibid, p. 101)

This indicates that the disciples knew how to induce dreams and how to remember them.

⁵⁶ The authors say that it refers to the sixth yoga of Naropa.

According to Marpa, the dreams of his disciples were all good, but none of them contained revelations about the future of the lineage, except Milarepa's dream which he considered excellent and which he would interpret in detail. The interpretation of this dream is of great interest, since it is the first time that we find such a precise allegorical analysis in a Buddhist text. However, given the extent of the dream and of its analysis, we will transcribe only parts of it.



*The surface of the earth in the world's northern quarter
Is the Buddha's teaching spreading here in Tibet.
The snow mountain standing upon it
Is your old father Marpa Lotsawa and
The complete Kagyu teachings.
The glacial summit touching the sky
Is the incomparable view.
The sun and moon coursing round its peak
Are luminosity and wisdom-compassion in meditation.
The light filling all of space
Is compassion dispelling the darkness of ignorance.
The base of the mountain covering the earth
Is enlightened activity pervading the world.
The rivers running down in the four directions
Are the ripening and liberating instructions of the four
initiations.
Satisfying all beings with their water
Is the ripening and liberation of disciples.
The rivers draining into the sea
Is the meeting of mother and son luminosities.
All manner of flowers blooming forth
Is the experience of unblemished fruition.*

(Ibid. p. 103).

He then continues to interpret the rest of Milarepa's dream, in particular the meaning of the four pillars erected to the east, south, west and north of the mountain. He also explains why at the top of each column are respectively a lion, or a tigress, or an eagle, or a vulture; and the significance of what these animals have in common. Indeed, Marpa will recognise in each one of the animals one of his four main disciples and their particularities; and he will conclude that the four will reach Liberation ("eyes gazing

towards the sky and flight in total freedom"). But it is only the part related to Milarepa that will provide him with the expected indicators (regarding the succession of the lineage).

Here is the interpretation of this part of the dream:

*The great pillar raised to the north
Is Milarepa of Gungtang.
The vulture hovering high on the pillar
Means his character is like that of a vulture.
The vulture's plume fanned open wide
Is his reception of the aural transmission instructions.
The vulture's aerie perched high on a crag
Means his life force will be firmer than rock.
The sole chick born unto the vulture
Is his one unrevealed son who will appear.
The small birds filling the sky
Is the spread of the Kagyu teachings.
Its eyes gazing toward the heavens
Are his waving good-bye to life's round.
The vulture's flying off through space
Is his journey into liberation's sanctum.* (Ibid. 105)

Several years later, Milarepa left his hermitage for the second time because of a dream that pushed him to return to his native land.

*In retreat, my spiritual practice proceeded well. Normally, I did not sleep, but at dawn one morning I fell asleep and had the following dream: I arrived at my village of Kyangatsa and found my house cracked like the ear of an old donkey. Of the valuables inside, leaking water had damaged the sacred scriptures of the Ratnakūṭa. Of the fields outside, Orma Triangle was overgrown with weeds. Of my family, my elderly mother was dead and my sister had gone off wandering as a beggar. Because my relatives rose up as enemies against us, mother and son were separated in misery while I was still young, and we never met again. This filled me with immeasurable sorrow. I called out the names of my mother and sister and wept. When I awoke my pillow was damp with tears.
Thinking this over brought my mother to mind. I shed many tears and resolved to do whatever I could to see my old mother again. Day broke. I tore down the door of my cell and went to see the lama. (Ibid, p. 108).*

At Milarepa's insistence, Marpa will give him permission to return home, knowing that they will never see each other again in this earthly life. Before separating, he will pass on to Milarepa what he will need to move forward autonomously and become a Guru. He will initiate him, among other things, to the "Mysteries of the Dream Symbols". This indicates that this "science" was part of the teaching.

My Teacher set himself to prepare the m andala diagram, while his lady decked the altar. Then, having conferred upon me the last and highest Initiations, and the Mysteries of the Dream Symbols, and the Tantras whispered in the ear of the Shishya by the Guru, he said, "Fix well your attention; upon you alone I confer these Texts, Mysteries, and Initiations, because I have been so commanded by my Lord Naropa. You too must transmit them to a single disciple, who will be prophesied by the ḍākinīs, with the seal that it be handed down through a line of single individuals for thirteen generations. If these Truths be exchanged for worldly vanities or for the currying of favour, thereby will the displeasure of the Deities be incurred, and dire will be the effect; therefore, guard them with the utmost care. If any shishya manifest innate aptitude for receiving these Truths, let them be given him, although he be unable to present any worldly wealth as the offering. Take all such shishyas in thy special care, watch and guard over them; develop them; and let them enhance the glory of the Faith. The method adopted by Tilopa⁵⁷, in disciplining Naropa, and by me in converting you, will not be very suitable for degenerate beings

⁵⁷ Tilopa (988-1069) was the master of Naropa.

of the future, who will be narrow of heart, and incapable of understanding the sublimest of the Truths. Therefore, beware of adopting that method of instruction.

Evans-Wentz, *Tibet's Great Yogi Milarepa*, p. 160-161.

That the teachings were to be protected from vulgar souls in future times shows that Marpa (or Naropa, via Marpa) had a perfect knowledge of the future regarding the degradation of the general spiritual level; a fact that we have confirmation of today.

Going back to Milarepa's "nightmare", when he returns to his homeland, he finds everything in exactly the state he had seen in his dream. This will obviously confirm that dream enables to enter a "space of truth" beyond the usual space-time limits. But this dream also has other interesting meanings. It shows that in certain moments of the Ascesis, the practitioners need to return to their past in order to reconcile, integrate and leave it behind. They need a purified memory and a unified consciousness/energy. This dream could also be an allegory of the "second quatern" (cf. The Four Disciplines), in which we must die to the attachments of the past: to one's biological, natural roots, to one's "landscape of formation". From this point of view, "devastated land of origin" and "devastated home of infancy", "dead biological mother", could be considered as allegories of this "rupture" of earthly ties.

And indeed, after a true "internal tsunami", far removed from the model of "Buddhist equanimity", Milarepa, first annihilated, then reconciled and liberated, will experience a profound rebirth: his Purpose will sprout again with renewed strength, he will meditate with a concentration of a hitherto unknown quality and, no longer in a cave, but in the middle of a field! In short, this dream turns out to be guiding, transforming and, in reality, indispensable for the continuation of the process. Moreover, this dream drives Milarepa out of his life as a hermit and catapults him into the world. And once he is "out" he will have to live, at least for some time, the life of a wandering ascetic, which will give him the opportunity to test his spiritual achievements, develop a lifestyle and train himself to convert others.

From now on, Milarepa will interpret his dreams himself; for example, the dream that we quote next, with his inner guide (his master Marpa internalised):

All this while, in spite of mine unremitting perseverance in meditation, I was unable to obtain signs of any improvement or growth in my knowledge or experience; and I was becoming anxious as to what I should do next. One night I dreamt that I was engaged in ploughing a very stiff and hardened plot of land, which defied all mine efforts; and, despairing of being able to plough it, was thinking of giving up the task. Thereupon, my beloved Guru Marpa appeared in the heavens and exhorted me, saying, "Son, put forth your energy and persevere in the ploughing; you are sure to succeed, despite the hardness of the soil." Then Marpa himself guided the team; the soil was ploughed quite easily; and the field produced a rich harvest. The dream gave me great pleasure on my waking up.

Thereby the thought arose in me that dreams, being illusory reproductions of one's own thoughts, are not regarded as real even by stupid and ignorant boors, and that when I thus allowed a dream to affect my temper I must be more silly than the greatest fool. But as it seemed to be a sign that if I continued to meditate with zeal and perseverance mine efforts would be crowned with success, I was filled with pleasure, and in that mood I sang this song to impress the true interpretation of the dream dearly on mine own memory. (Ibid, p. 188).

Let us clarify that, in this period of his life, Milarepa had given up his "material" field, offering it to his aunt (even though she had previously mistreated him). However, Milarepa does not think at any time that his dream could be related to this land: he immediately understands that it is an allegory related to his ascesis, especially since the image of plowing the field was linked, precisely, to the first encounter with his master Marpa. But the interesting thing here is not so much the interpretation he makes of this rather obvious allegory, but the way in which he resolves the "double Buddhist posture" on dreams: it is not dreams that are real, but rather the meaning that is given to the dreams and the teaching that is drawn from them. In this sense, singing a ballad/prayer, as a poetic way of interpreting his dream, indicates not only the inspired consciousness so typical after a significant dream, but also a technique for intentionally reinforcing and recording the positive charges and significations of the dream experience.

Here are some excerpts from this "ballad", too long to transcribe it entirely:

*I put upon the field of Tranquil Mind
The water and manure of a constant faith,
Then sow it with unblemished seed of a heart immaculate,
And over it, like pealing thunder, reverberateth sincere prayer;
Grace of itself upon it falleth, like a shower of rain.*

*Unto the oxen and the plough of Undistracted Thought
I add the ploughshare of [Right] Method and of Reason.
The oxen, guided by the undeluded person,
And with firm grasp of undivided purpose,*

*And by the whip of zeal and perseverance goaded on,
Break up the hardened soil of Ignorance, born of the Evil
Passions Five,
And clear away the stones of the hardened, sin-filled nature,
And weed out all hypocrisies.*

*Then, with the sickle of the Truth of Karmic Laws,
The reaping of the Noble Life is practised.
The fruits, which are of Truths Sublime,
Are stored within the Granary to which no concepts can apply.*

*The dream I thus interpret:
Words bring not forth True Fruit,
Mere expositions do not yield True Knowledge.
Yet those who would devote themselves unto the life religious,
In meditation must exert their utmost zeal and perseverance;
And if they will endure hardships and strive most zealously,
And seek with care, the Most Precious can be found.*

(Ibid, p. 189).

Thus strengthened with new energy, Milarepa will achieve the expected progress and reach *Nirvana*. Later, he will have his own disciples whose dreams he will interpret and with whom he will experience "shared dreams".

Regarding the explanations Milarepa will give to his disciples, let us point out that before engaging in any allegorical analysis of dream images, he will always begin, according to tradition, by reminding of Buddha's injunction about the illusory nature of dreams, and that there is not much interest in collecting and studying them. But immediately afterwards, he will change his "mental frequency" and delight in the beauty of the dreams in question, recall the fact that he was a "master of the art of dreams" and, by the very fact, undertake detailed interpretations, too long to be reproduced here (in deed, the interpretation are much longer than the dreams). We will mention only two short dreams and their respective interpretations (quoted in Young, *Dreaming in the Lotus*, pp. 101-102).

In one of the dreams of his disciple Rechung, the latter rides backward on a donkey, wearing a robe called 'Hope'. Milarepa's interpretation: Rechung turns away from *Samsara* (conditioned existence) and faces *Nirvana* the source of all hope. (Ibid. p. 103).

This backward movement suggests to us the interiorisation in the Profound of the Z axis, and more particularly a precise moment of Step 11 (of the Morphological Discipline), when the direction of the look is reversed: then we no longer look at our "form of representation" of the internal-external world — looking forward, so to speak—, but we turn our look (the attention) backwards, towards the Profound; and thus "advancing backwards", ever further backwards (and simultaneously silencing the mechanisms of the "I"), at a certain moment, we "plunge" into the Profound.

In another dream of Rechung's, a series of significant allegories will convince Milarepa of his disciple's spiritual achievement and his ability to teach others:

Rechung put a jewel on the top of his head and wore a spotless robe. Then he looked into a clear mirror. In the right hand he held a dorje, in the left a skull of food. He sat cross-legged on a lotus seat while light coiled around his back and his body was ablaze with a great fire. In front of him a fountain sprang up and the sun and moon rose in his heart. On his left stood many men and women; on his right was a lamb and a group of kids. That one lamb became many. (Ibid. p. 103).

Here, in short, the allegorical analysis made by Milarepa:

The jewel on the head: contemplation of the Guru; the pure white robe: Kagyu lineage; looking into the mirror: introduction of the teaching; the dorje in the right hand: destroying thought constructions; the skull full of food: experience of emptiness and bliss (the food for the spirit); the lotus seat: not being soiled with the faults of defilements; sitting cross-legged: abiding in *samadhi* (the ability to persevere in the profound; the "dilatation" in step 12 of the Morphological Discipline, we would say); the luminous aura around the back: achievement of Bodhi (true enlightenment); the fountain: receiving revelations, portents; the blaze like fire in the body: mystic heat (the Force we would say); the sun and moon in the heart: abiding, living in the state of realisation (internal centre of gravity, style of life, we would say); kids and lambs: rising up disciples; the increasing of the lambs: spreading of the oral teaching. (Ibid, pp. 103-104).

As for the shared and often premonitory dreams between masters and disciples, let us quote the oneiric encounter between Milarepa and Gampopa, who will become one of his greatest disciples. In fact, they dream of each other at the same time, while still not knowing each other and staying in geographically far away places. Thus, after intentionally inducing a dream to obtain information about his successor, Milarepa declares to his disciples that his successor would be a "physician" who would soon join them (in effect, Gampopa was a monk who lived in a monastery and, like his father, was a doctor). Then, referring to his future disciple, he'll add:

Last night I dreamed of his coming with an empty crystal vase, which I filled with nectar from my silver vase.

Almost simultaneously, though far away, Gampopa dreams that a green yogi⁵⁸ puts his hands on his head and spits. (Ibid. p. 93).

And, as S. Young points out, these dreams are not only typical indicators of communication on the spiritual level (communication of spaces, we would say), but they demonstrate that it is possible to transmit teaching in dreams; in fact Gampopa will comment that, after this dream, his meditation improved instantly and he that had an experience of "insight". Milarepa is thus capable to direct his dreams and use them.

Another great shared dream that we will quote is that of Rechung, at the time of the departure of his master Milarepa.

At that time, Rechungpa was staying at the hermitage of Lorodol. Late one night he experienced a combination of dreaming and luminosity. In this state he had a vision that, at Chubar, ḍākinīs held aloft a crystal stupa filling the sky with light and prepared to transport it to a pure realm. The ground was filled with people, headed by his vajra brothers and sisters and the Jetsūn's patrons, and the sky was filled with gods and ḍākinīs, all of whom were singing melodies and presenting an inconceivable array of offerings. As Rechungpa likewise offered prostrations to the stupa, the Jetsūn leaned out from within the chamber and said, "Rechungpa my son, although you did not come when I called you, I am delighted that father and son have met in this way. I do not know if we shall meet many more times, so let us appreciate the rarity of this meeting and talk." He repeatedly caressed Rechungpa's head and expressed his pleasure. Rechungpa thus understood the rarity of their encounter and was filled with a sense of devotion he had never felt before.

⁵⁸ Milarepa used to be called the "green yogi" because, in a time of intense and prolonged hermit life in a cave, the color of his skin turned green, so little he ate.

Then Rechungpa awoke. He recalled what the lama had said and wondered if he might already have passed away. (...)

The sky then filled with rainbow light and, inspired by this vision, he felt a great longing for the lama. "I must leave at once," he thought, and then he departed just as the cocks of Lorodol were crowing. Within a state of deep devotion toward his master, he took control of the subtle winds (control of the breathing) and departed to meet the lama like an arrow shot by a master archer. Thus in a single morning he covered the distance a traveler riding a donkey would take two months to traverse.

Heruka, Life of Milarepa, p. 193-193.

Once there, and after Milarepa's cremation, Rechung will have another series of visions:

The resident disciples and lay followers opened the entrance to the interior of the cremation cell. Then they all rested their heads beside the chamber and fell asleep with the joyful anticipation that a great many wondrous objects of devotion would manifest in the form of corporeal relics.

At dawn, Rechungpa awoke to a vision of ḍākinīs of the five classes, draped in silken garments and adorned with ornaments of bone and jewels, each surrounded by a retinue of goddesses of their respective colors: blue, yellow, red, green, and white. They held aloft innumerable offerings of the five senses and presented them before the cremation chamber. The central goddesses had shrouded the cremation chamber with white silk scarves and were removing a sphere of white light from its interior. Rechungpa was captivated by this spectacle, but then thought the ḍākinīs might be carrying away the remains and relics. As he went over to the cell, the ḍākinīs flew off into the sky. He roused his vajra brethren and fellow practitioners. When they peered into the cremation chamber, they found everything had been swept away so that not even a trace of ash remained. Disheartened, Rechungpa said to the ḍākinīs, "We must have a share of the relics."

The ḍākinīs replied, "If the remains and relics of mind identified as reality body (the Highest Truth) is not enough for you, the great sons, you should pray to the Jetsün (Milarepa) and he will grant you something out of his compassion. (...)

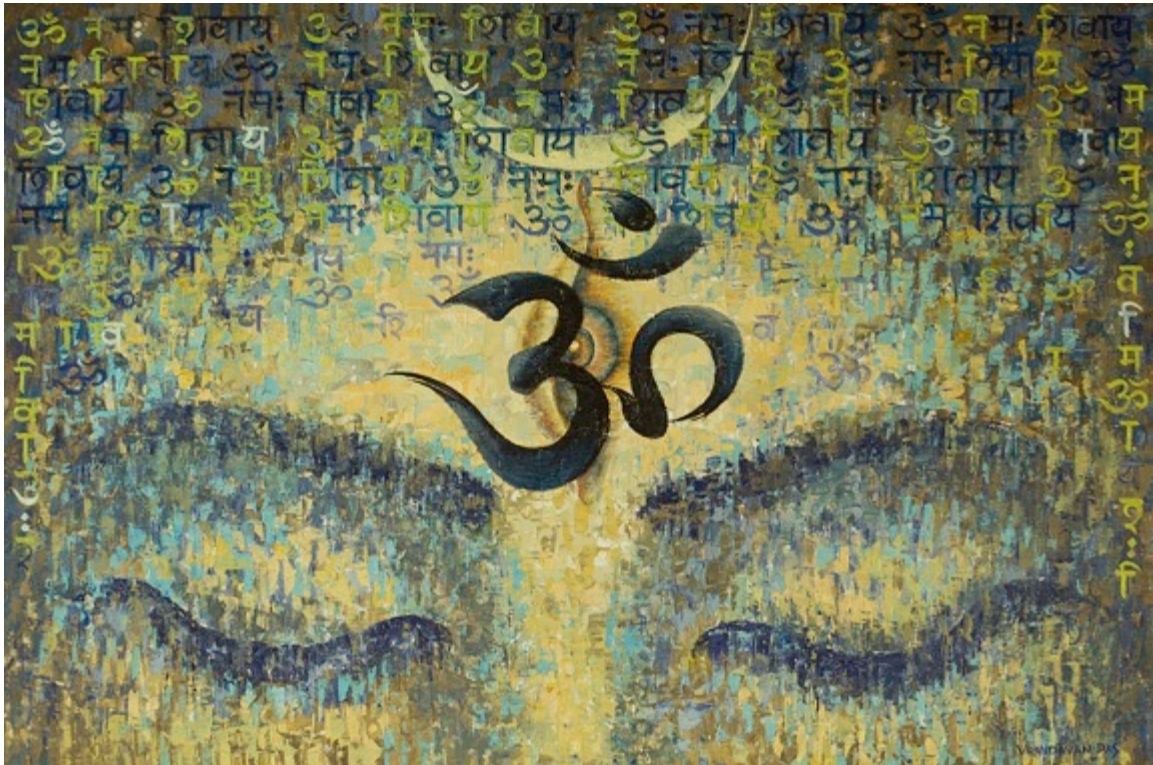
When Rechungpa finished this supplication in a melody of heartfelt longing and lamentation, a relic the size of a hen's egg descended from the sphere of light within the ḍākinīs' hands and rested above the cremation chamber, radiating five-colored rays of light. The senior disciples stretched their hands out shouting, "It's mine," each attempting to claim it for himself. The relic then returned to the heavens where it dissolved into the sphere of light in the ḍākinīs' hands. (...)

Two ḍākinīs guarding the stupa, accompanied by other ḍākinīs who were offering prostrations, sang this song:

*(...) Within the reality body's singular sphere
Lies this relic, the size of a hen's egg
An object for all beings devotion.
You won't get it by saying, "It's mine."
How could it last in a mundane locale?
If you offer up prayers
Its compassion will never diminish.
Such is the general pledge of the Buddhas.*

(Ibid, pp. 197-200).

III. - THE SYNCRETIC SCHOOLS IN MODERN INDIA 20th century



Painting by Vrindavan Das

III.1. HISTORICAL CONTEXT: ONEIRC SYNCRETISM

Along its history, India has suffered successive invasions: in the classical era by the Greeks (Alexander the Great, about 300 BCE), in medieval times by the Arabs (in the 7th and 11th centuries), then came the Mongols (16th century), then the Westerns (17th century).



Painting by M. F. Husain – Story of three cities - Delhi, Varanasi and Kolkata

Despite an unalterable background, Indian culture has experienced many foreign influences, and this has had repercussions on the already existing mixed dream landscape (Hinduism-Buddhism-Tantrism-Chamanism).

In fact, although the traditional concepts and practices have persisted —we are referring here only to the field of sleep— there are also many losses on the one hand and enrichment on the other and over time an undeniable syncretism has been created. This is expressed in the "schools of sleep" of modern India, which have revived ancient knowledge and integrated concepts from other cultures.

III.2. YOGA NIDRA — SWAMI SATYANANDA AND LATER SCHOOLS



Vishnu's mystical dream, the universe exists because he dreams it.

Nidra in Sanskrit means sleep in the broad sense, but it also refers to the state of absence of objects of consciousness or "lucid sleep", referring then to the mystical sleep, also called "yogic sleep". From a mythological point of view - as we have already said - it is the state of Narayana, identified with Vishnu; who, "consciously asleep", imperturbably contemplates the worlds appearing and disappearing within him.

Nidra also refers to Shiva intentionally reclined, like a corpse (shavasana), under the furious Kali (the goddess destroying time); and in this specific posture Shiva represents the destruction of the world, the suppression of space-time, sensorial collapse, the "death" of the I.

III.2.1. REVIVAL AND MODERNISATION OF ANCESTRAL KNOWLEDGE

Swami Satyananda Saraswati (1923-2009), founder of the Bihar Yoga School, is originally from northern India. Inspired by Patanjali's Raja Yoga, Kashmiri Shivaism and Tibetan Buddhism, and incorporating some aspects of Jungian psychology, Swami Satyananda creates a new "syncretic" yoga, *Yoga Nidra*.

As so often happens, this idea came to him after some experiences (described in the introduction his book *Yoga Nidra*) which impressed him and which he wanted to study better, and then share and transmit.



Although Swami Satyananda did not "invent" the concept of Yoga Nidra, he had the merit of reviving ancestral knowledge and making it accessible for the general public, especially in the West.⁵⁹ After him, other schools brought their own variants and developments, inspired by the teachings of Ramakrishna (Hatha Yoga), Aurobindo (Integral Yoga) —to which we will dedicate the following chapter—, Anirvan (Antara Yoga), as well as by "modern" Tibetan Buddhism.

Today, *Yoga Nidra* is a worldwide known practice, but in such a desacralised world, its mystical dimension is often confused with "personal development" (even therapeutic). We will not dwell on this and will comment only on the aspects related to our topic in the strict sense: Yoga Nidra in its spiritual/mystical approach, even though it has lost its vocation to be a continuous asceticism.

As for Swami Satyananda, his general purpose is the amplification of consciousness and the transformation of the mental scheme of the human being, which he considers incomplete, as long as there is no control of the levels of consciousness and no higher consciousness (*turiya*) has been achieved. Today's human beings live confined in vigil, and even if sometimes they remember their dreams, they do not understand them —still less when they are symbolic— and therefore cannot integrate them; moreover in deep sleep (without images) their consciousness completely vanishes. The human beings are thus deprived of a great number of psychic and spiritual experiences, in particular of inspired dreams which allow them to find answers to existential, spiritual or artistic/scientific searches. As a result, much of the good knowledge is also lost. In this context, he quotes Patanjali, the "father of modern yoga", who encourages meditation on the knowledge acquired in dreams.

Yoga Nidra, however, does not prioritise the content of dreams and their study (therefore, this issue will hardly be developed in the different writings), but rather educates consciousness of self during sleep, to realise that one is falling asleep and dreaming, to transcend the dream state to experience the Self. This work aims to shake certainties and then gradually expand the restricted notion of "who I am", to lead the sleeping practitioners, if they so desire, to deeper experiences and transformations. Thus we find everything that Tantrism had already proposed a thousand years ago, here of course in another temporal context and with another language, more impregnated with Western psychology.

⁵⁹ According to Satyananda, this method serves to relax deeply, to rebalance sleep if disturbed, to promote the learning of all kinds of knowledge, or to produce positive transformations in life. Yoga Nidra is also the source of inspiration for modern sophrology.

III. 2.2. PREPARATORY EXERCISES AND NIGHT PRACTICES

Preliminary exercises

Whether in a yoga centre, in a monastery or in one's bed at home, the practice of Yoga Nidra aims at such a deep relaxation — "*muscular, emotional and mental*" — that it acquires the characteristics of sleep. From the outside, the practitioner seems to be quietly asleep, perhaps even snoring, no longer reacting to the stimuli of the outside world. However, the "sleeper" has to remain "in full consciousness", as in a meditative practice in vigil. In other words, the goal is to achieve a degree of immersion in which sleep and meditation are one (they are the same).

The course of the preparatory sessions —which remind us of the preliminary practices of Buddhist Tantrism, in a "light" version adapted to today's world— will depend on each school and the influences it has received. This preparation consists of guided meditations (with an instructor or a CD), and aims to train the practitioner to deep relaxation; to transit through the trance states which are part of the path, and then overcome them; to become familiar with the allegorical-symbolic universe of dreams; to educate the attention and consciousness of self, until the practitioner acquires autonomy and can adapt the incorporated elements to build his own process. As always, the ultimate goal is to achieve *samadhi*, the deep immersion that enables the Fundamental Experience.

Here are some basic elements common to the different schools of Yoga Nidra.

a/ Preparations and body posture

It is recommended not to be too tired and to reach a first level of relaxation before going to bed so as to be as relaxed as possible: one should not go to sleep in order to relax, but to relax before in order to sleep better, since it is mainly the degree of tension or relaxation with which one enters into sleep that will determine its quality. The position adopted is that of the "corpse" (*Shavasana*: Shiva lying on his back, arms and legs down, totally immobile) or, in one's bed, the position of the "reclining Buddha", i.e. lying on one's side, legs bent. It is recommended to take always the same position so it will be associated with the practice and recorded this way.

b/ Predisposition, formulation of the purpose and asking/praying

First, the practitioner will be inclined to observe without judgment and to maintain consciousness of self, in order to be able to observe and direct operations, at least to some extent, instead of sinking directly into a heavy sleep without reversibility. At the same time, this intention must be accompanied by an attitude of surrender, which Shri Anirvan expresses in an inspiring way:

All day long, we are absorbed in our activities. Then we say to our Mother: "O Mother, we do not have a moment to invoke you. That's why we don't remember you. Where do I find time to stop and turn to you?" But the Mother doesn't forget us. In the depths of the night, She eliminates our world of feverish work and noisy thoughts. In her immense compassion, she takes us into the unfathomable depths of her yogic heart, into the original River of knowledge returning to its Source. What I don't know, Mother knows. Even if I can't offer her anything else, at least I can offer her my sleep! If only I could say to her, "When I rest, I am at your feet; while I sleep, I think only of you".⁶⁰

Shri Anirvan, *Antara Yoga, in Bonnasse*, p. 89.

⁶⁰ Personal translation.

Apart from this double predisposition (intention of maximum lucidity and total surrender) common to all practitioners, one must formulate one's *Sankalpa*, which means "resolution-desire". Sankalpa must be formulated in a brief, clear and positive way, for example: "I want to awaken the *kundalini*", that is, to bring the Force to the point of true awakening. Then, one should inhale and, keeping the air in one's heart, pronounce one's Sankalpa with the utmost sincerity. This must be repeated three times in a row. Then it is recommended to exhale and forget everything, to let go everything. It is convenient to keep the same Sankalpa until it is fulfilled, because it is always accomplished; for some people immediately, for others after several practices.

All of this reminds us of our working with the Asking, of clarifying and charging the Purpose that we then release so that it may operate from the co-presence.

Let's quote Pierre Bonnasse —a contemporary yogi, Yoga Nidra teacher in India and France— whose description resonates with our own experience:

*...with practice and experience, the desire becomes a non-desire, freed from personal thoughts and intentions. It is a memory without object, pure presence, without selection or form. There no other desire than to remain in the Self.*⁶¹

Bonnasse, *Yoga Nidra*, p. 101.

c/ Basic exercises: complete and deep relaxation, "visualisations".

1. *Deep physical, emotional and mental relaxation.* This relaxation, induced by the instructor or with the help of a recording, basically consists of the so-called "rotation of the consciousness": a route with a fixed protocol, in which attention is directed successively to different parts of the body, eventually associated with visual and auditory mantras.
2. *The control of the breathing:* become aware of the breathing and observe it, then learn to direct it according to certain rules that will change according to how the practitioner is progressing.
3. *Surpassing duality:* producing a kind of "mental massage" that stimulates experiences of contrasts —alternating heaviness/lightness; pain/pleasure; negative/positive thoughts or emotions, etc.— and then to overcome the opposites, detaching oneself from them.
4. *Visualisation of archetypes:* visualising landscapes, allegories, or symbols (e.g., garden, mountain, temple, fire, golden egg, and/or geometric shapes, mandala, chakras, etc.), or sequences that form a scenery or tour that facilitates the exploration of the deeper regions of the *chidakasha* (mental space). This induced or "guided dream" —we think it is the level of semi-sleep here— is punctuated by pauses during which the practitioner will evoke his own images and registers, to end, if possible, in *samadhi*; this last stage is obviously is not provoked, it happens or it doesn't happen.

These visualisation works remind us of the allegorical pathways of some *Guided Experiences*⁶², for instance the one called *Voyage*, as well as the *Exploratory Works*⁶³, which are carried out in semi-sleep.

⁶¹ Personal translation.

⁶² Silo, *Guided Experiences*. http://www.silo.net/collected_works/guided_experiences

⁶³ The mechanism of the *Exploratories* is similar to that of the *transferences* of contents (see Silo, *Psychology Notes*, chapter Psychology III; Luis Ammann, *Self-Liberation*, chapter "Operative Works"), with the difference that they are made with a spiritual interest and not to integrate psychological content.

d/ Recommendations for night practice

Here is an example of an "autonomous" nightly practice without an instructor or recording.

Regardless of the body posture, the course is always the same: to install a slow and light breathing, possibly synchronising it with a personal mantra; the medium gaze, aware of the infinite space behind the eyes.

Experiencing the first signs of sleep by observing physiological, respiratory and mental changes. Falling asleep should be as slow and long as possible; or as Shrî Anirvan would say, the flame should not be extinguished immediately, but fall asleep as daylight fades into the twilight....

The body and its tensions relax deeply, the state of relaxation settles in, the senses are internalised, and the body temperature decreases. This relationship with cold is important because it helps maintain a light sleep, unlike heat that causes numbness. The feeling of freshness also allows to wake up often.

It is, in fact, a matter of recording a new vegetative habit; a light sleep, marked by brief awakenings, at least during part of the night. With regard to these interruptions, P. Bonnasse recommends "natural" awakenings, for example during changes of body position, in order to avoid subsequent disturbances. We suppose he is referring to the "rebound" mechanisms that may occur during the day, when these nocturnal awakenings are caused artificially. The advantage of small awakenings is that they facilitate the observation of the transition from one level to another, between vigil/semi-sleep and paradoxical sleep. We must pay attention to this interval, to this space-instant of "in-between".⁶⁴...

...rather than about the phenomena themselves, yoga-nidrâ educates to observe the "in-betweens", the "gaps", the "transitions" from one position to another, from one breath to another, from one thought or sensation to another, from one state to another. Hence the fact of playing with the changes, the points of view, the dormancies, the awakenings and the suspensions. Yoga-nidrâ thus teaches us to identify the mental processes: how the consciousness passes from vigil to sleep, from paradoxical sleep to deep sleep, etc., even if the three are not really separated. ... The point is not seek the enjoyment of an experience, but rather the recognition of the underlying background in which the experiences take place. Experiences will pass, while this background always remains silent, free of the phenomena that appear and disappear in it.⁶⁵

(Ibid, pp. 67-68).

This background refers, of course, to the look observing the phenomena of consciousness from another depth, in other words, consciousness of self.

Another procedure to maintain attention: falling asleep and waking up in the ebb and flow of the breathing. The idea here is to fall asleep by keeping the breath as the ultimate consciousness, intimately linked to a subtle sensation and the sound that accompanies it, and to find them again as soon as one wakes up. It is a matter of paying attention to this "bridge" (connective) between the two levels of consciousness.

As for the preliminary visualisations, it is everyone's responsibility to practice carefully and see what works best for oneself, because the fact is that the images stimulate associative thinking, which may become an impediment. Obviously everything will depend on the *sankalpa*, the purpose, its clarity and strength. Swami Satyananda, for his part, affirms that the most effective way to convert the dream into *samadhi* (deep immersion) is to use a symbol as a support, that is, to enter sleep with a representation charged with a powerful meaning. He especially recommends mandalas, or luminous landscapes or objects (light, sun, fire, etc.) and especially the bindu (or *tiglé* in Tibetan language), this small light behind the eyes, which suggests awakening.

⁶⁴ This "in-between" will also be the object of attention in the vigil: the moment between two postures, between two breaths, between two thoughts, between two emotions,...

⁶⁵ Personal translation.

During the practice of yoga nidra, when you go into the state of sleep with a symbol, you are able to transcend the limitations of nature.

Therefore, in order to transform sleep into samadhi, in the beginning we use the symbol.

Anybody who wants to wake up in that dark night of the soul must have a symbol to guide him through the unconscious area of shoonya⁶⁶.

Swami Satyananda, *Yoga Nidra*, pp. 63-64.

In sum, it is proposed to use an allegorical or symbolic representation that can provide guidance, serve as a "Ariadne's thread" to reach the Centre. According to Swami Satyananda, allegories and symbols are "catalysts" of the impact on certain regions of the mind. He insists on the importance of the appropriate choice of the "visualisations" and, in this sense, encourages the study of dreams in order to better understand the nature and functioning of these "archetypes". This resonates with our Siloist "psychology of the image" (force of the image, its charge, signification and location in the space of representation). However, he points out that the most important thing is to take advantage of experiential impact of the images without being identified with them.

III.2.3. LUCID SLEEP AS TRAINING FOR DEATH

Swami Satyananda establishes equivalences between the different phases of lucid sleep and deep meditation. The common points being mainly the immersion in oneself (withdrawal of the senses), the changes in the representation of time and space, followed by the loss of all spatial-temporal references and, as a consequence, the loss of the individual self.

Pierre Bonnasse comments on this in his own way:

Tamasic sleep is unconscious, thick and can leave an impression of heaviness, stupor and numbness in the body and mind. In deep sleep, the cessation of mental activity is due to natural causes, occurs by itself, unlike meditation where an effort is required. Therefore, it is not a yogic state of consciousness, but this natural and blessed suspension can serve much of the purpose of yoga....

During yoga-nidrâ, the sensory system, the thought, the "I AM", collapses; but the consciousness is not identified. What remains is the "I AM", brilliant and full of happiness. ...

The mind-body structure sleeps, but the consciousness is neither lost in the darkness of deep sleep, nor trapped in the agitation of dreams, but remains in itself in its purity, both empty and luminous. This light illuminates the whole head like the moon that adorns Shiva's forehead...

The illusion of separation, whether there is an object separate from the subject or an "I" separate from the others, is dissolved. There remains only the Consciousness and Joy of Being (sat-chit-ânanda) inherent in the "fourth state" (turiya), Brahman, the Self (âtman) who are One.

The Flavour of this fourth quality of sleep makes it possible to clearly perceive the process of identification that makes me blindly attribute to myself a limited personality of my own that is composed of a body, emotions and thoughts. It allows me to recognise that in essence I AM infinite (ananta), eternal (amrita), unlimited and formless (arûpâ).⁶⁷

Bonnasse, pp. 35-36.

⁶⁶ Swami Satyananda reminds us that Lord Buddha spoke of shoonya, the unconscious state, which is generally interpreted as void. But there is a misunderstanding, because this void is not "nothing", nor "empty". *He reminds: If you read the Buddhist scriptures, in every passage Buddha speaks about 'mindfulness'. There is not one passage in the teachings of Buddha, which says to be mindless. He always uses the word 'mindfulness'. When you breathe in and out, be mindful. If your body fluctuates, be mindful. Whether your mind is concentrated or dissipated, be mindful. Follow all the experiences by the mind. Follow the mind by the mind. Buddha even said, "Be mindful of mindlessness." So, shoonya is not be misinterpreted.*

⁶⁷ Personal translation.

Thus, when practiced for the purpose of spiritual evolution and transformation, Yoga Nidra can become an "ascesis of awakening from the level of sleep". Sleep in order to awaken and transcend!

But in the same way that it is convenient to compare mystical sleep with the experience of awakening, it is also appropriate to make the analogy between sleep and death; sleep as preparation and training for death and transcendence. In this sense, Pierre Bonnasse raises again the old issue of Tibetan Buddhists: what is the "taste" of transit? If I can't stay conscious when I fall asleep, what will happen when I die? In other words, if I am not aware of the "little passages", how can I be aware of them at the moment of the Great Passage of death?

With yoga-nidra, breath after breath, I learn to make this fundamental difference between the process of death, inherent in every cell, every thought and every passing moment, and the precise moment when the body will definitely stop breathing. Little by little, imitating death through conscious sleep, I slide into this position of the spectator until the attention, so to speak, turns on itself and awakens me to the indescribable splendour of Consciousness. With the abolition of the "I" and of thought, fear of death disappears along with all other fears, the former being the key and the root of all others. I fear death only if I identify with the body and mind, if I do not recognise that death can be something other than extinction than what I think I am.⁶⁸

(Ibid, p. 61).

And then, he concludes by reminding the words of the god *Krishna*⁶⁹ in the *Bhagavad-Gita* (chap.VIII).

What you last think of, what you identify with when you leave your body, you certainly become that. Therefore, at all times remember Me...

In our context, we could say: "That which you identify with when you fall asleep is certainly what you become during your sleep. Therefore, remember your Purpose....".

We therefore understand the need for the questions "who am I" and "where am I going", as well as the practices that provide experiential answers (beyond philosophical speculation). The need for consciousness of self becomes more evident: a level that allows us to "come out of the dark cave into the light", giving life a new flavour; as if we were passing from a black and white movie to colour, from 2D to three-dimensionality, from mechanical enchainment to freedom of choice....

Moreover, when this centre of gravity becomes more permanent, it eradicates the usual register of the "psychophysical self" so that the coenesthetic register of the "divine self in myself" and the "divine self in all of us" can be established; that is the self that is able to transcend when we fall asleep forever....

Because, if we have some experiences of the "true self", the question "where am I going?" is also solved!

How could we fail to link this to the practices of accompanying the dying people in certain religious traditions, especially in Tibetan Buddhism (cf. *Bardo-Thödol, The Tibetan Book of the Dead*) and to our own ceremonies, in particular the Ceremony of Assistance⁷⁰?

⁶⁸ Personal translation

⁶⁹ Krishna is the god of love and compassion, he is the avatar of Vishnu.

⁷⁰ *Silo, Silo's Message*, p.40 pdf.

III.3. – THE INTEGRAL YOGA OF SRI AUROBINDO AND THE MOTHER



1878-1973

1872-1950

Aurobindo Ghose is an Indian philosopher, poet and mystic. He studied in England and when he returned to India he became an independence activist. After a stay in prison, where he had his first mystical experiences, he devoted himself completely to a life of Asceticism in Pondicherry (Puducherry). He retired from all public activities during the last 25 years of his life, entrusting the direction of his Ashram to his spiritual companion, Myrra Alfassa, better known as The Mother. Born in Paris to parents of Egyptian and Turkish origin and of Jewish faith, she met Aurobindo in India "by coincidence". But by recognising in him the spiritual guide who had appeared to her several times in her dreams, she became his disciple. In 1968, at the age of 80, she founded Auroville (city of Dawn), a city whose vocation would be to achieve human unity⁷¹.

Although he inscribed himself in the Hindu tradition, Sri Aurobindo was a "self-taught", working and advancing only with his "inner guide" and by studying the teachings of various schools (Samkhya, Vedanta, Tantra...). This independence permitted him to develop a "synthesis doctrine": the Integral Yoga.

Sri Aurobindo is a key figure in our field of interest. Thanks to his abundant correspondence with his disciples —collected and published much later under the name of *Letters on Yoga*, in several volumes— where he answers questions of all kinds, we learn that he has deepened quite a lot in the realm of dreams. The Mother, for her part, also left an abundant literature and correspondence —amongst other published under the title *Questions and Answers* and *Words of the Mother*— in which she clarifies Aurobindo's thought and completes it with her own experiences and conclusions. All together thousands of pages, in which we also find many valuable considerations about their work with dreams.

In his *Integral Yoga*, Aurobindo, like his predecessors, proposes the definitive liberation from the conditions limiting and enchainning the human being; the integral and irrevocable transformation of the consciousness. He also gives continuity to the tradition of the "night school":

Sadhana can go on in the dream or sleep state as well as in the waking. Once one is in full sadhana, sleep becomes as much a part of it as waking. Sleep cannot be replaced, but it can be changed; for you can become conscious in sleep. If you are thus conscious, then the night can be utilised for a higher working.

Aurobindo, *Letters on Yoga IV*, p. 444, 448 pdf.

But Aurobindo's purpose is twofold: introjective and projective. On the one hand the realisation of the individual inner self in the Divine Being, the conquest of the Supramental; and on the other hand, the realisation of the Divine in earthly life, the divinisation of the human beings and their lives, the establishment of the supramental consciousness in the world and its accessibility to all.

⁷¹ Auroville is situated in South India (Tamil Nadu), an hour from Pondicherry. <https://www.auroville.org>

We must enter into these inner and higher parts of ourselves by an inward plunge or disciplined penetration and bring back with us to the surface their secrets. Or, achieving a still more radical change of our consciousness, we must learn to live within and no longer on the surface and be and act from the inner depths and from a soul that has become sovereign over the nature.

Aurobindo, *Life Divine*, Chapter XIX, p. 762 pdf.

The outer nature has to undergo a change of poise, a quieting, a purification and fine mutation of its substance and energy by which the many obstacles in it rarefy, drop away or otherwise disappear; it then becomes possible to pass through to the depths of our being and from the depths so reached a new consciousness can be formed, both behind the exterior self and in it, joining the depths to the surface.

Ibid, chapter XXV p. 938.

Perhaps it is because of this powerful projective purpose and his non dichotomous attitude that Aurobindo is searching for the signs of the sacred also in the sensory world, and therefore also in dreams.

In this sense, while continuing the long tradition of the search for the ultimate non-representable Reality, Aurobindo will deepen the somewhat neglected aspect —by the Vedanta Hindus— of the study of paradoxical sleep, that is, with images; and he will emphasise the importance of dreams as "bridges" to the non-representable plane and/or as "transcriptions" (or "translations") of that non-representable plane.

III.3.1. CONSIDERATIONS ON DREAMS AND ASCESIS

According to Aurobindo, if we undertake a *sadhana* (ascesis), if it is progressing and then even extending into sleep, the ordinary dreams (fleeting, confused, representing translations of the physical state, of everyday preoccupations, of past events), become spiritual experiences in dream.

If we develop our inner being, live more inwardly than most men do, then the balance is changed and a larger dream consciousness opens before us; our dreams can take on a subliminal and no longer a subconscious⁷² character and can assume a reality and significance.

Aurobindo, *Life Divine*, Book II, Chap. V, p. 441 pdf.

Sleep like trance opens the gate of the subliminal to us.... beyond the veil into other planes of being which are connected with our own inner planes, planes of supraphysical existence, worlds of a larger life, mind or psyche which are there behind and whose influences come to us without our knowledge. Occasionally we get a dream from these planes, something more than a dream, — a dream experience which is a record direct or symbolic....

As the inner consciousness grows by sadhana, these dream experiences increase in number, clarity, coherence, accuracy and after some growth of experience and consciousness, we can, if we observe, come to understand them and their significance to our inner life. Even we can by training become so conscious as to follow our own passage, usually veiled to our awareness and memory, through many realms and the process of the return to the waking state. At a certain pitch of this inner wakefulness this kind of sleep, a sleep of experiences, can replace the ordinary subconscious slumber. It is of course an inner being or consciousness or something of the inner self that grows aware in this way, not, as it usually is, behind the veil of sleep, but in the sleep itself.

Aurobindo, *Letters on Yoga III*, p. 260-261 pdf.

⁷² According to Satprem (one of Aurobindo's disciples), Sri Aurobindo uses this concept in the etymological sense, meaning that which is historically sub-conscious, not below the level of our waking consciousness but below the conscious stage in the evolutionary sense, as in the animal or the plant.

There are other dreams that have not the same character but are a representation or transcription of things that actually happen on other planes, in other worlds under other conditions than ours

Aurobindo, *Letters in Yoga II*, chap. IV, 458 pdf.

But when one begins to live within, then the dreams are often transcriptions of one's experiences on the vital plane and beyond that there is a large field of symbolic and other dreams which have nothing to do with memory.

Aurobindo, *Letters on Yoga IV*, p. 471 pdf.

When Aurobindo speaks of "transcriptions" of experiences that take place on certain planes of consciousness, he refers to, what he calls in other occasions, "translations of vibrations". He specifies that "experiences vary according to the types of physical, vital, mental and even subliminal vibrations", i.e. in our Siloist vocabulary: "translations of more or less deep impulses", depending on whether they come from within the body, from memory or from deep mental spaces.

Actually, the advanced sadhak (practitioner) is supposed to go through the whole range of "planes of consciousness" during sleep; to finally attain, more or less quickly, the supreme Light of the Spirit (Sat-Chit-Ananda).

In the heights of Spirit this state of cosmic or infinite trance-sleep appears to our cognition as a luminous uttermost Superconscience: at the other end of being it offers itself to cognition as the Spirit's potency of presenting to itself the opposites of its own truths of being — an abyss of non-existence, a profound Night of inconscience.

Aurobindo, *Life Divine*, Book II, chap.I, p. 333 of pdf.

Without denying the importance of physical resting and recovery, Aurobindo claims that the very reason for sleep is "the return to the Source": to regenerate, grow and transform; but also to act there! Because if the transcendent planes act upon us, we also act in these higher planes; which resonates with our own reminiscences of the incursions into the Profound.

When you practise Yoga, the consciousness opens and you become aware —especially in sleep— of things, scenes, beings, happenings of other (not physical) worlds, and yourself in sleep go there and act there.

Aurobindo, *Letters on Yoga IV*, p.472 pdf.

Referring to the "nature" of sleep, the Mother repeatedly explains that the quality of sleep depends on "where" it occurs and where it is recorded, because one does not always dream in the same "place". This of course resonates with what we call the "spatiality of consciousness" and "localisation of our objects of consciousness in the space of representation". But one must not be mistaken:

There is a place —when one is identified with the Supreme— where one knows everything absolutely, in the past, the present, the future and everywhere. But usually people who go there forget what they have seen when they return. An extremely strict discipline is needed to remember. And that is the only place where one cannot make a mistake.

The Mother, *Thoughts and Aphorisms*, p. 124 pdf.

While some significant dreams have the function of leading us to a transcendental plane, other significant dreams serve to translate into images the contact with this non-representable Reality, in other words, dreams as the translation of deep impulses.

It is possible to become conscious deeper within our subliminal selves and we are then aware of experiences on other planes of our being or even in supraphysical worlds to which sleep gives us a right of secret entry. A transcript of such experiences reaches us.

Aurobindo, *Life Divine*, Book II, chap. V, p. 440 pdf.

But he warns against these translations:

The sleep-state ascends to a higher power of being, beyond thought into pure consciousness, beyond emotion into pure bliss, beyond will into pure mastery; it is the gate of union with the supreme state of Sachchidananda out of which all the activities of the world are born. But here we must take care to avoid the pitfalls of symbolic language.

Aurobindo, *The Syntesis of Yoga*, chap. Samadhi, p. 525 pdf.

In the sleep the consciousness goes into other planes and has experiences there and when these are translated perfectly or imperfectly by the physical mind, they are called dreams.

Aurobindo, *Letters on Yoga IV*, p. 455 pdf.

... it is behind this veil that the subliminal has its existence. But we receive the records of our sleep experience through dream and in dream figures and not in that condition which might be called an inner waking...

If we are still in the nearer depths of these regions, the surface subconscious which is our sleep-wakefulness records something of what we experience in these depths; but it records it in its own transcription, often marred by characteristic incoherences and always, even when most coherent, deformed or cast into figures drawn from the world of waking experience.

Aurobindo, *Life Divine*, Book II, chap. V, p. 443 pdf.

The Mother, for her part, expresses it like that:

There is an experience, something happens and there is also its translation in your brain. When you wake up it is a sort of interpretation of your dream which you remember. It is very rarely that one is conscious at the time the experience occurs and conscious of the experience as it really is. For that one must be very wakeful during the night, quite awake in one's sleep. Usually this is not the case. There is one part of the being which has an experience; when that part of the being which had gone out of the body re-enters it, brings back the experience, the brain receives a contact with this experience, translates it by images, words, ideas, impressions, feelings, and when one wakes up one catches something of this, and with that makes a "dream". But it is only a transcription of something that has happened — which has an analogy, a similarity, but which wasn't exactly what one receives as a dream.

The Mother, *Questions and Answers* 1954, p. 146 pdf.

III. 3.2. SIGNIFICANT DREAMS: indicators, procedures, interpretations

a/ Indicators of significant dreams

The category "dreams of experience" (inspired, mystical dreams) consists —just like the category "ordinary dreams" (psychophysical)— of different types and qualities of dreams.

If the subliminal thus comes to the front in our dream consciousness, there is sometimes an activity of our subliminal intelligence, — dream becomes a series of thoughts, often strangely or vividly figured, problems are solved which our waking consciousness could not solve, warnings, premonitions, indications of the future, veridical dreams replace the normal subconscious incoherence.

.... Finally, there can come to us the records of happenings experienced by us on other planes of our own being or of universal being into which we enter: these have sometimes, like the symbolic dreams, a strong bearing on our own inner and outer life or the life of others.... ; but sometimes they have no such bearing and are purely records of other organised systems of consciousness independent of our physical existence.

Aurobindo, *Life Divine*, Book II, chap. V, pp. 440-441 pdf.

These "dream experiences", as he states in another treatise, have their own life, structure, organisation, forms and meanings. Following this kind of dream, he adds, the sleeper will wake up with the impression of having bathed in a world of revelations whose significations never seem to be exhausted, so endless are their ramifications and depths.

He further specifies that the higher the sleeper rises on the scale of consciousness, the more the nature of the perceived luminosity will change; the quality of the light is a clear indicator of the mental place he dreamed of. There is a whole range of ever purer, more powerful and transforming lights to the glow of the "Supramental", in which the vision will undergo a radical change. All this reminds us of the different lights of the Light-Yoga of Naropa (which we developed in a previous chapter).

There is a whole range of increasingly pure, powerful and transforming lights until the radiance of the "Supramental", in which the vision will undergo a radical change. All this reminds us of the different lights in the Light-Yoga of Naropa (which we developed in a previous chapter).

The Mother adds other criteria to distinguish between significant dreams and ordinary dreams.

In a general way, an ordinary dream leaves a confused and fleeting impression, whereas an experience (in dream) awakens a deep and lasting feeling. But the shades of difference are subtle and many, and it is by a very attentive and sincere observation (that is to say, free from bias and preference) that one gradually learns to discern the one from the other.

The Mother, Some answers of the Mother I, p. 315 pdf.

Symbolic dreams are usually very coherent and when one returns from a symbolic dream, one remembers everything, all the details, and feels that one has lived for those moments a much intenser and truer life than the physical one. And it leaves a very deep impression upon you.

The Mother, Question and Answers 1954, p. 142 pdf.

One has the impression of entering into something that's vaster; and, for example, one feels that one can do more, that one knows more, one has a power and clear-sightedness which one doesn't have in the ordinary consciousness; ... for example, about the secret causes of things, about what a movement expresses... all that, one feels that one knows it. For instance, when one dreams of someone, one knows better what he thinks, what he wants, all these things, better than when one is in waking contact with him. This happens when one has entered the subliminal.

The Mother, Questions and Answers 1955, p. 108 pdf.

Of course, we must distinguish between "sleeping without remembering dreams" and "sleeping without dreams":

Generally, when you have what you call dreamless sleep, it is one of two things; either you do not remember what you dreamt or you fell into absolute unconsciousness which is almost death — a taste of death. But there is the possibility of a sleep in which you enter into an absolute silence, immobility and peace in all parts of your being and your consciousness merges into Sachchidananda⁷³. You can hardly call it sleep, for it is extremely conscious. In that condition you may remain for a few minutes, but these few minutes give you more rest and refreshment than hours of ordinary sleep. And you wake up with a feeling of an extraordinary force and a perfect joy.

The Mother, Questions and Answers 1929-31, p.16 pdf.

Indeed, on several occasions Mother and Aurobindo affirm that when we have been able to enter the Profound, to put it in our terms, we return much more energised and rested than after a whole night of ordinary dreams; which is undeniable, according to our own experience.

⁷³ *Satchit-ananda*, Absolute Consciousness and Bliss, sometimes translated as "Supreme and Ultimate Light".

b/ Recommendations, procedures for mystical sleep

Inducing experience in dream:

You have to start by concentrating before you sleep always with a specific will or aspiration. ...if it is sincere, strong and steady, it does reach after a time — so that an automatic consciousness and will are established in the sleep itself which will do what is necessary.

Aurobindo, *Letters on Yoga IV*, p. 451 pdf.

To sleep well one must learn how to sleep. If one is physically very tired, it is better not to go to sleep immediately, otherwise one falls into the unconscious. If one is very tired, one must stretch out on the bed, relax, loosen all the nerves one after another until one becomes like a crumpled cloth in one's bed, as though one had neither bones nor muscles. When one has done that, the same thing must be done in the mind. Relax, do not concentrate on any idea or try to solve a problem or ruminate on impressions, sensations or emotions you had during the day. All that must be allowed to drop off quietly: one gives oneself up, one is indeed like a rag. When you have succeeded in doing this, there is always a little flame, there — that flame never goes out and you become conscious of it when you have managed this relaxation. And all of a sudden this little flame rises slowly into an aspiration for the divine life, the truth, the consciousness of the Divine, the union with the inner being, it goes higher and higher, it rises, rises, like that, very gently. Then everything gathers there, and if at that moment you fall asleep, you have the best sleep you could possibly have. I guarantee that if you do this carefully, you are sure to sleep, and also sure that instead of falling into a dark hole you will sleep in light, and when you get up in the morning you will be fresh, fit, content, happy and full of energy for the day.

The Mother, *Questions and answers 1950-51*, p. 351-352 pdf.

So, a total relaxation, a sort of complete calm, without tension, in which everything is stopped. But this is only the beginning. Afterwards, you make a self-giving as total as possible, of everything, from top to bottom, from outside to inside, and an eradication, as total as possible, of all the resistance of the ego. And you begin repeating your mantra — your mantra, if you have one, or any word which has a power for you, a word leaping forth from the heart spontaneously, like a prayer, a word which sums up your aspiration. After repeating it a certain number of times, if you are accustomed to do so, you enter into trance. And from that trance you pass into sleep. The trance lasts as long as it should and quite naturally, spontaneously, you pass into sleep. But when you come back from this sleep, you remember everything; the sleep was like a continuation of the trance. ...Even for those who have never been in trance, it is good to repeat a mantra, a word, a prayer before going into sleep. But there must be a life in the words; I do not mean an intellectual significance, nothing of that kind, but a vibration. And its effect on the body is extraordinary: it begins to vibrate, vibrate, vibrate... and quietly you let yourself go, as though you wanted to go to sleep. The body vibrates more and more, more and more, more and more, and away you go.

The Mother, *Words of the Mother III*, pp. 379-380 pdf.

To remember the dreams:

It is easier to remember dreams when our sleep is light and, obviously, when the experience has strongly impressed the consciousness; also, if we wake up immediately after the dream experience.

Regarding the procedures for remembering, the Mother states that each person must find his own way of proceeding. But she provides us with some clues that seem effective to us because we have experienced them personally:

And so if you remain very quiet and observe attentively, without moving, you notice a kind of half-memory of an activity that took place at night, and if you remain concentrated on it, still motionless for some time, suddenly it may come back like that, like something that appears from behind a veil, and you can get hold of the tail of a dream. When you hold the tail — just a little

event — when you hold the tail, you pull it, like this, very gently, and it comes. But you must be very quiet and must not move, especially don't move your head. And usually these dreams are very interesting; these activities are very instructive.

The Mother, *Questions and Answers* 1955, p. 120 pdf.

You catch just a tiny end of the tail of your dream. You catch it and start pulling gently, without stirring in the least. You begin pulling quite gently, and then first one part comes, a little later another. You go backward; the last comes up first. Everything goes backward, slowly, and suddenly the whole dream reappears: "Ah, there! it was like that." Above all, do not jump up, do not stir; you repeat the dream to yourself several times — once, twice — until it becomes clear in all its details. ... After that you take notes.

The Mother, *Questions and Answers* 1953, p. 37 pdf.

In synthesis:

- Predispose and make an asking to increase awareness during sleep and remember it upon awakening.
- Relax the body, heart and mind, and let go, make a "gift of yourself".
- Enter sleep with the help of a meaning-filled image, or a mantra that concentrates aspiration (purpose); or with a practice that leads to trance.
- When waking up, remain still, without changing your posture, especially the position of your head, and try to remember the dream (sensations, emotions, images), keeping your body in the same position, letting the memory arise...
- Then tell it to yourself, and finally write it down.

Nevertheless:

But still there may be ranges above from which it can bring back no memory except that which says, "somehow, indescribably, I was in bliss," the bliss of an unconditioned existence beyond all potentiality of expression by thought or description by image or feature. ... That Self and Spirit cannot be expressed by the mind's abstract generalisations; all the inspired descriptions of the seers and mystics cannot exhaust its contents and its splendours.

Aurobindo, *The Synthesis of Yoga* p. 505, 282 pdf.

c/ Interpretation of dreams

In his book *The Future Poetry*, Sri Aurobindo states that, to understand meaningful dreams, one must know the symbols well. However, neither he nor the Mother proposes a method of interpretation or a "key to dreams" in the strict sense.⁷⁴

Usually, I give no "meaning" to dreams, because each one has his own symbolism which has a meaning only for himself.

The Mother, *Words of the Mother III*, p. 133 pdf.

However, in the abundant correspondence with their respective disciples, especially Mother's, we find a great number of comments on this subject; and, in our opinion, the answers provided to the questions asked are a testimony of great subtlety and accumulation of empirical knowledge.

Indeed, Sri Aurobindo and The Mother are cautious about interpretations: they should not be rushed or generalised, because while some dreams are obvious, others require experience to be decrypted and understood. Emphasising the personal and subjective nature of the meanings the dreamer gives to his

⁷⁴ Some disciples later developed a sort of "dictionary of symbols" based on interpretive commentaries by Sri Aurobindo and The Mother on some of their own dream experiences and/or their answers to some disciples' questions about theirs.. https://www.aurobindo.ru/workings/other/diccionario_sp.pdf

allegorical images (i.e. translations of experiences), they encourage their disciples to write down and study their own dreams.

It is a question of developing discernment and discovering its logic, its laws so different from the intelligence of vigil; of taking into account the contexts in which the dream occurred; of establishing relationships with the activities of the day and with the practice of Ascesis (difficulties, needs, aspirations).

They also recommend to put attention in the sensations and feelings that accompany the images (registers, we would say) —not only in the images themselves—, and considering various meanings and interpretations; especially because in a dream, elements from different planes may penetrate, thus producing a confusion of signs.

Finally, they warn against the "physical mind" (the I) which tends to interfere and distort, leading to misinterpretations. Obviously, they insist on the intention to become more conscious in the dream, because the more lucid we are, the more accurate will be the translation and then the interpretation of the experience itself.

Here are some inspiring extracts from the "questions-answers" (questions from the disciples and answers from Sri Aurobindo and/or The Mother).

About a dream in connection with the practice of Ascesis

Question: In dream I saw some people climbing up a mountain with great difficulty. I was also climbing with them. After a time I got tired, so I gave up climbing and began to think what was to be done. Then I felt that a force lifted me up lightly and carried me to the top of the mountain. On reaching the top, I saw that there were many beautiful houses of different colours and lights. Then I woke up. What does this dream signify?

Answer: It is a symbol of the two methods — one of self-effort, the other of the action of the Force carrying the sadhak.

Aurobindo, *Elements of Yoga*, p. 109 pdf.

About light and indicators of progress

Answers to several dreams of the same disciple:

The meaning of the dream is not very difficult to discover. Our house here represents the higher consciousness in which we live and from which its light must come to you. Between you and it there is what the old books call a lid — represented by the blinds of the windows — created by the mind and the ordinary consciousness. This lid is changed to glass which means that between you and the higher consciousness there is left only a transparent lid (probably the higher mind which is the first stage of the higher consciousness) and through that the light can come to you in your own Adhar. It is a kind of promise or prospect held out to you in answer to your prayer.

In the second dream the servant is the outer physical consciousness while you are your own inner being. The inner being awakes in the darkness of the physical obscurity but is not troubled. It knows and writes the mantra of the Truth and Light and which brings the beginning of the white Light, the highest True Light in the darkness, which once begun is sure to increase.

Aurobindo, *Letters on Yoga IV*, p. 477-478 pdf.

About premonitory dreams

Answer: *There are all kinds of premonitory dreams. There are premonitory dreams that are fulfilled immediately, that is to say, you dream in the night what will happen on the next day, and there are premonitory dreams that are fulfilled over varying lengths of time. And according to their position in time, these dreams are seen on various planes. The higher we rise towards absolute certainty, the greater the distance, because these visions belong to a region which is very close to the Origin and the length of time between the revelation of what is going to be and its realisation may be very great.*

The Mother, *Thoughts and Aphorisms*, p. 124 pdf.

About dreams with the Mother

Question about the meaning of this dream: *One day, when you were giving blessings, I went to you, you took me in your arms and embraced me for quite some time.*

Answer: *In your experience of the night which produced the dream, you entered into contact with these Forces... which are full of love and tenderness, which help and welcome all those who come — Forces which, in fact, are there, everywhere at work all the time. So you became aware of that. When you woke up, this was translated through images you know, that is, that you come to see me, receive blessings, and then as there was a new feeling — that of contact with this Force which envelops and helps — this gave you the impression that I was taking you in my arms and embracing you. It was translated in this way. The fact is there; the translation is that of your brain.*

The Mother, *Questions and Answers 1954*, p.148 pdf.

About what we would call “communication of spaces” (intersubjectivity)

Question: *When we see you in a dream, is it always a symbolic dream?*

Answer: *No, not necessarily. It can be a fact. This means that instead of seeing physically, one sees in the subtle physical or the vital or the mind. But one sees something of me: for instance, if I send out a force or a thought or a movement, an action to someone, in his atmosphere this takes my form, in his mental consciousness it takes my form. So he sees it. It is a fact. I send something and he sees it. It is not my whole being (there the interpretation goes wrong most of the time), but it is something of myself.*

The Mother, *Questions and Answers 1954*, p. 142 pdf.

Question from another disciple (transcription only of the answer, which is clear enough).

Answer: *For instance, when one sees somebody in a dream (I am not speaking of dreams in which you see somebody unknown, but of those where you see somebody you know, who comes to see you) there are all sorts of explanations possible. If it is someone living far away from you, in another country, perhaps that person has written a letter to you and the letter is on the way, so you see this person because he has put a formation of himself in his letter, a concentration; you see the person and the next morning you get the letter. This is a very frequent occurrence. If it is a person with a very strong thought-power, he may think of you from very far, from his own country and concentrate his thought, and this concentration takes the form of that person in your consciousness. Perhaps it is that this person is calling you intentionally; deliberately he comes to tell you something or give you a sign, if he is in danger, if he is sick. Suppose he has something important to tell you, he begins to concentrate (he knows how to do it, as everyone does not) and he enters your atmosphere, comes to tell you something special. Now if you are passive and attentive, you receive the message.*

And then, two more instances still: someone has exteriorised himself more or less materially in his sleep and has come to see you. And you become conscious of this person because (almost by miracle) you are in a corresponding state of consciousness.

And finally, a last instance, this person may be dead and may come to see you after his death (one part of him or almost the whole of his being according to the relation you have with him). Consequently, for someone who is not very, very careful it is very difficult to distinguish these nuances, very difficult. On the other hand, quite often imaginative people will tell you, "Oh! I saw this person — he is dead." I have heard that I don't know how many times. These are people whose imagination runs freely. It is possible that the person is dead, but not because he has appeared to you!... One must pay great attention to the outer forms things take. There are shades very difficult to distinguish, one must be very, very careful. For oneself, if one is in the habit of studying all this, one can become aware of the differences, but to interpret another's experiences is very difficult, unless he gives you in great detail all that surrounds the dream, the vision: the ideas he had before, the ideas he had later, the state of his health, the feelings he experienced when going to sleep, the activities of the preceding day, indeed, all sorts of things. People who tell you, "Oh! I had this vision, explain it to me!", that is childishness — unless it is someone whom you have followed very carefully, whom you yourself have taught how to recognise the planes, and whose habits, whose reactions you know; otherwise it is impossible to explain, for there are innumerable explanations for one single thing.

The Mother, *Questions and Answers* 1950-51, p.320 pdf.

Concerning dreams about death

Question: Mother, at night if one sees someone dying, and a few months later one sees again the same person dying, what does it mean? Is this person in danger?

Answer: I don't know; it depends absolutely upon the case. It can be a spiritual death, it can be a vital death, it can be the death of something in the being which ought to disappear (and then it means a progress), it can be a premonition, it can be lots of things. Unless you have the context of your dream one can't explain it. But you should have what we could call a jurisprudence of your dreams. You have never compared the dream with the events which occur?... for example, hasn't it happened to you — I know it has — that you see someone dying and this person really dies? But you don't see him dying again a second time. If you see the same dream twice, it means one of two things: either that he has lost once more another state of being, you see, that he has entered a vital consciousness or later from this vital consciousness he has gone out to enter a psychic consciousness. It can be that. But then there are sure signs. The dream cannot deceive you, and it cannot be similar. Or it may be simply that there was something which was profoundly impressed in the thought, in the brain, and that in certain circumstances which can have many causes... yet in certain circumstances... this impression begins to be active again and gives you the same dream once more. If it is an identical dream, it can be this, just a cerebral phenomenon.

The Mother, *Questions and Answers* 1955, p.123 pdf.

III. 3.3. SATPREM: SLEEP, DEATH AND TRANSCENDENCE

To close this chapter we will quote some excerpts from the book of Satprem (Bernard Enginger 1923-2007) —a disciple of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother—, who synthesises very well their conception of sleep, death, transcendence and, in general, of the evolution of consciousness.

Sleep, then, is a first tool; it can become conscious, increasingly conscious ultimately reaching a point of development where we will become continuously conscious, whether on this side of the veil or the other, where sleep, as well as death, will no longer be a return to a quiescent state or a

dispersion into our natural constituent parts, but merely a transition from one mode of consciousness to another. Because, although the line we have drawn between sleep and waking, life and death, may agree with external appearances, it has no more essential reality than our national borders have in terms of physical geography, or the external colors and fixed appearance of an object have in terms of nuclear physics. Actually, there is no separation anywhere, except for our lack of consciousness; the two worlds (or, rather, this one and countless others) coexist constantly, are constantly intermingled, and it is only a particular way of perceiving the same thing that makes us say, in one case, "I live," and in the other, "I sleep" or "I am dead" (provided we are conscious enough to realize this), just as we can experience the same object differently, depending on how we look at it, at the subatomic, atomic, molecular, or purely external level. "Elsewhere" is everywhere in this reality.

Without the knowledge of the other degrees of existence, our knowledge of the ordinary human world remains as incomplete and false as would be a study of the physical world that would exclude the knowledge of molecules, atoms, and particles. Nothing is understood unless everything is understood.

To become aware of these different planes of reality is therefore our fundamental work.

Once we have done this work integrally, the artificial boundaries that separate our different modes of existence will crumble; we will move without break, without any gap of consciousness, from life to sleep to death. More precisely, death and sleep will cease to exist as we understand them, to be replaced by different manners of continuously perceiving the total Reality, and perhaps ultimately by an integral consciousness that will perceive everything simultaneously. Our evolution is far from over.

This physical life in this physical body has, therefore, a special prominence among all our modes of existence, because it is here that we can become conscious; this is the field of work, as the Mother says, the meeting-point of all the planes in one body.

As a general rule, in sleep or in death, we go by affinity to those places or planes with which we have already established a relationship. This is the elementary stage when the consciousness.... it is merely a temporary aggregate whose continuity does not extend beyond the body in which everything is centered. When this bodily center dies, everything scatters into small vital, mental, and other fragments, which return to their respective realms, since they no longer have a center. And when the center is asleep, everything is more or less asleep, since the nonphysical mental and vital elements exist only in relation to, and to serve, the bodily life. In this primary state, whenever the consciousness falls asleep, it slips back into the subconscious (we use the word subconscious as Sri Aurobindo used it, in the etymological sense, meaning that which is historically sub-conscious, not below the level of our waking consciousness but below the conscious stage in the evolutionary sense, as in the animal or the plant); in other words, the consciousness returns to its evolutionary past, which may bring out an array of chaotic images made by random associations of many fragments of memories and impressions, unless it carries on its waking activities in a more or less incoherent way. From there, the consciousness sinks further into a vegetable or larval past, which is its actual sleep, like the sleep of plants and animals. Many stages are necessary before the true center, the psychic and its consciousness-force, are formed and impart some coherence and continuity to this volatile mixture. But from the moment the body ceases to be the main center, and one begins to have an inner life independent of physical circumstances and physical life, and especially when one does yoga, which is a process of accelerated evolution, life truly changes, as do death and sleep; one begins to exist.

Satprem, Sri Aurobindo or *The adventure of consciousness*, chap. IX)

These few lines remind us of some of the points developed in *Silo's Message inspire a profound religiosity*⁷⁵, from which we quote a brief excerpt:

The constant evolution of our world has produced the human being—a being both transitional and evolving. Human beings by incorporating social experience—in contrast to other species—modify themselves with increasing rapidity. Finally human beings reach conditions that allow them to go beyond the rigorous dictates of nature, transforming themselves, inventing themselves—remaking themselves both physically and psychologically. Within the human being there can arise a new principle generated by the double. Since ancient times this new principle has been called spirit. The spirit is born when the double returns on itself, it is made conscious and forms a “center” of new energy.

Human beings have not completed their evolution. We are incomplete beings but in our development we have the possibility of forming an internal energetic center... whether this does or does not occur depends on the type of life that has been lived. Conscious and unitive actions permit the structuring of a centripetal system of forces that we call spirit. If the actions have not been unitive and conscious, but rather contradictory, the system of Forces will be centrifugal, and therefore the spirit will not be born, or will only have an undeveloped elementary form. A human being can be born, live her or his life, die and dissolve for ever, another can be born, live her or his life, leave the body and continue to evolve without limits. Through kindness, through the elimination of internal contradictions, through conscious acts and the genuine need to evolve, the human being can give birth to the spirit.

⁷⁵ Unpublished material, for internal circulation.

CONCLUSION

The general interest of this bibliographical research was to discover the Indo-Tibetan Schools of Awakening and their mystics working with the level of sleep in their Ascesis. Our more particular interest was to discover whether these ascetics had reached similar experiences and conclusions to ours in this same realm.

After studying the various texts on this subject, we can state that our "hypotheses" —developed in the *Introduction*— have been confirmed, although unevenly according to the schools. However, we do not think that it is necessary to take them up again one by one to check their validity; rather we would like to highlight and comment on the most significant and inspiring aspects, in our eyes, for our Ascesis.

The mental irreverence

We were struck by a common characteristic concerning the spiritual masters who worked with sleep as a "path of ascesis": they either worked outside the official religion, or they refused to submit to the rules of the existing monastic orders, or drew their inspiration from various doctrinal and technical currents (not only their own) in order to trace their own roads.

In fact, the "ascetics of the forest" in ancient India were wandering hermits and mystics who practiced, studied and taught, outside of the established Vedism-Brahmanism religion. This applies to Hindu mystics as well as to the Jain Mahavira and the Buddha, who were contemporaries.

In medieval times, the Tantric Shivaïtes of Kashmir differed from classical Shivaism, as did the Tantric Buddhists of the Vajrayana tradition who distinguished themselves from classical Buddhism (Hinayana/Theravada); and what is more, within the Vajrayana branch, the mystics Naropa, Marpa, Milarepa and their successors —who constitute the Kagyuppa lineage— had never been ordained monks like the Yogis of the other three lines.

As for Swami Satyananda Saraswati (who was a monk), he studied with several spiritual masters, integrating into his yoga elements from different traditions (Hindu-vedantist, but also tantric and even the western psychology of C. Jung).

Finally, although Sri Aurobindo inscribed himself in the Hindu tradition, he was an autodidact and, basically, free of belongings. Moreover, he never took the status of "renunciant" (sannyasa or swami), although he dedicated his life entirely to "spiritual realisation", even renouncing the direction of his ashram to devote himself exclusively to meditation and to the production of writings during the last 25 years of his life.

In short, all these mystics are particularly independent, free and audacious spirits. No wonder: seeking the true awakening during sleep does that not imply a mental irreverence?

The double mental position

The "double nature" of the consciousness —conditioned and at the same time intentional— will be translated into a "double mental posture" with regard to the dream phenomenon.

Usually, when people believe they are awake, in reality they are lost in their reveries (daydreams), they "dream". At night, they get lost in their oneiric images, they "sleep". Finally, in their deep vegetative sleep, they lose themselves in the diffuse vitality, and "die". The human being must transcend vigil, dreams and deep sleep to realise their ultimate nature, to pass from illusion to Reality. In this sense, the content of dreams is not very important because oneiric images, even the most inspiring ones, are only illusions of a "not fully enlightened" consciousness. What matters most is the degree of lucidity in sleep, the awareness of oneself, the realisation that one is dreaming. Therefore, one should avoid paradoxical

sleep (with dreams) and slide into an "in-between" (gap between semi-sleep and sleep) or at least shorten the "train" of oneiric images to enter as quickly as possible into deep sleep without images and, from there, to Awakening.

Simultaneously, sleep is valued because it offers a simple way of immersion in oneself: by falling asleep, the stimuli of the external senses are naturally cut off, thus allowing us to explore the inner world and then the higher planes, if that is the purpose. In this case, dreams become a "bridge" with the transcendent plane.

Dreaming becomes a road to enlightenment as soon as we learn to educate our attention, to orient our images, to remain in a state of inner freedom in front of the illusions of the oneiric landscape. Dreams are considered as important indicators of spiritual progress, and, conversely, the progress of Ascesis should be confirmed in dreams. This progress is measured by its transforming power; the quality of the images/registers; the degree of lucidity; the ability to induce inspired dreams, to direct them towards the Light; to remember them upon awakening; to interpret them correctly; to benefit from their teachings. Among the significant dreams, the most valued are premonitory or "prophetic" dreams, shared dreams (of communication of spaces), dreams of inspired consciousness (rapture, ecstasy, recognition).

This double position is not contradictory, it is "paradoxical". But isn't the Ascesis itself full of paradoxes? To balance the "I" in order to better destabilise it; to strengthen its mechanisms in order to better silence them, to configure a powerful purpose while at the same time renouncing all desires, even the highest, and finally to "die" in order to "exist"?

Finally, wouldn't "paradoxical thinking" be precisely the indicator of a different and higher mental form, beyond dualisms, opposites and contradictions?

The "non-stop" Ascesis

The common purpose, in all the schools we have presented, is true Awakening. It is not enough to be "partially enlightened", that is, with more or less frequent experiences of which one can still fall back into an ordinary state. The point is to become a "fully enlightened" being whose state no longer fluctuates. This implies a process in which the level of consciousness of self is being consolidated; where the state of inspired consciousness is becoming permanent; where the inner centre of gravity replaces the "old" identity. To achieve this deep, essential and irreversible change, an integral and continuous Ascesis is required; a day and night Ascesis.

Therefore, it is not surprising that the level of sleep was to become a "nocturnal ascesis", completing the daytime practices. The Purpose, being permanently at the centre, will invade all levels of consciousness including sleep, transforming dreams into mystical experiences. "If day and night are inspiring to you, you are moving towards an awakened life," we might say...

But, although inspired, mystical dreams are no longer accidental at this stage of the Ascesis —they occur indeed thanks to a general predisposition and assiduous practice during the day—, our "excessive-obsessive" ascetics do not content themselves with significant dreams as a result of their daytime practices.

These mystics will additionally elaborate specific practices for the night, more or less complex procedures according to the schools, in order to transform the natural sleep into something intentional, into a profound meditation, into a genuine practice of Ascesis. And this requires, once again, an "anti-natural" mental attitude.

After studying the different yogi practices, M. Eliade concludes:

All of the yogic techniques invite to one and the same gesture — to do exactly the opposite of what human nature forces one to do. (...) The orientation always remains the same — to react against the "normal," "secular", and finally "human" inclination.

Eliade, *Yoga – Immortality and Freedom*, p. 96.

But isn't Ascesis itself an "unnatural" undertaking, which invites us to seek the void instead of fleeing it?

To control dreams by introducing reversibility and consciousness of self, and also to produce the Awakening from deep sleep, represents a triumph, one more, over a natural law, the liberation of one more conditioning, the overcoming of one more limit; in short, the amplification of the sphere of freedom. And, by going "against nature", the practitioners go beyond their human nature to find their true nature: "fully human" or, if you prefer, "divine"!

Domesticating death

When night after night we fall asleep and lose all notion of ourselves, where do we enter: into death or transcendence, does deep sleep prepare us to die or to transcend?

In the Vedic era, the attitude towards sleep is one of apprehension: sleep is seen as a state of weakness compared to vigil; worse, it is compared to death (it is the son of death; similarly, for the Greeks, the god of sleep "Hypnos" and the god of death "Thanatos" are brothers). This vision is understandable since in "natural" sleep, the reversibility of consciousness decreases during the paradoxical cycle (dreams) and our "I-consciousness" fades completely during the deep cycle (without images).

This was to change over time as religion became more internalised and outward religious rituals were replaced by practices of immersion, self-exploration and self-transformation of consciousness. Similarly, instead of using magic to protect oneself from harmful dreams or to obtain auspicious ones, sleep was now studied and techniques were developed to control it.

Equivalences are established between "sleep-meditation-awakening" on the one hand and "sleep-death-transcendence" on the other. Being the point of union, the consciousness of self! Without Consciousness of self, there is no inner centre of gravity; and without inner centre of gravity, there is no transcendence.

The lucidity that the yogis will have developed in their sleep will serve them at the moment of their death, for the "post-mortem bardo" resembles the state of sleep, as is widely reported in the *Bardo-Thödol*, *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* (cf. Bibliography). Instead of getting lost in their own labyrinth, the dreamers (or dead persons) educated in the consciousness of self, will know how to recognise the traps of the projections of their mind and will remain in a state of freedom when faced with the illusions of the oneiric landscape; they will know how to give direction to their images and then transcend them to go towards the Light.

The practitioners will also have to learn to recognise and distinguish the different types of light and to be prepared to withstand the radiation of the ultimate Light, because otherwise they will not be able to integrate it. If they are not trained to endure its dazzle and pressure, the sleepers will be expelled from their "sleep" into vigil; and as for the dead, they will turn away from the Light without accessing the final liberation. How could we ignore the connection between this and the *Assistance ceremony* in *Silo's Message* (p. 119)?

And when dreams will increasingly resemble the itinerary of the *Guide of the Inner Road* (Ibid, p. 53) — almost identical to the Assistance ceremony— to lead us into the most beautiful Light, or when dreams will be the subsequent translations of our increasingly frequent incursions into the Hidden City —our new "home"— we will know that we are immortal.

Then, every night will be a return to the Source, and every new day will be a "projection" of its profound meanings in the world. And once our mission is accomplished here, another mission will follow hereafter...

APPENDIX 1

SOME ANALOGIES WITH PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

During the readings for this research, I discovered many striking analogies between certain facts and dreams reported in Tibetan Buddhist literature and some of my own personal experiences (which date back to a time when I did not know yet about this Tantric universe). I will mention only a few of them, just as an example, without interpreting them.

Needless to say, these similarities have helped me to understand and integrate my experiences in a new way. But above all, it has made more credible to me the aspect of the "extraordinary" so typical for the Tibetan Buddhism. It also has helped me to better recognise the boundary between magical and inspired consciousness, between fantasy and the fantastic, between the occult and the mysterious; and finally, to accept with more serenity the "unexplainable"...

Finally, the fact of having experienced certain tantric procedures without knowing them in that moment shows that they are still "operative", "alive", more than a thousand years later...

In relation to the Four Voids of Naropa's Light-Yoga.

Personal Experience n°1 (Dream) - June 2010

This dream seemed very mysterious to me at the time it occurred, but it leaves me even more perplexed today, in 2017, by discovering the existence of the mystic Naropa and his "four voids" (cf. chapter The Yoga of Sleep and Clear Light or of the Four Voids).

I'm in an unknown place where I'm supposed to experience different kinds of voids. I slide down a kind of tunnel-toboggan in a first void, then in another,... in total four times, in four different voids. In each of the voids, a signpost tells me where I am, as if these voids had precise names because they correspond to determined places, or rather "indeterminate"!

Returning from the fourth void, I find myself in front of an Indian "yogi". I understand that this yogi belongs to a very ancient time and that I myself am in that distant past. The yogi is looking at me with piercing eyes and says that he doesn't understand how I could get so easily into the four voids. I can't say, I don't know myself. So he puts his two hands on my head, as if he were doing a scan to find out what is inside my brain. After a few seconds he begins to look at me differently, with an unspeakable kindness, a "complicit" smile, and says: "Now I understand, you are a disciple of this "Andean". I say, "Yes, I am a siloist!" I want to ask him how he can remember someone who lives a thousand years after him. But, the dream ends there, at least I don't remember what happened afterwards, or whether or not there was an after...

When I wake up, I have a very strange register, like a confusion of temporalities, as if the past, the present, the future were obsolete "categories". It is not the different voids that have destabilised me, what puzzles me is the relation between the yogi and Silo; it is a question of times and identities. I even consider whether they aren't a single being.... I say to myself that I will have to tell Silo this dream when I see him next time... but the opportunity will not present itself any more: two and a half months later, Silo left this time and space.

In relation to the premonitory dreams and the communication of spaces between master-disciple (e.g. between Marpa the Translator and his future disciple Milarepa, between the future disciple Gampopa and his future master Milarepa, etc.):

Personal Experience n°2 (Dream) - November 2005

Dream with my future Master (Agostino Lotti) in the Morphological Discipline.

I am in the centre of a sphere, flying towards elevated, unknown spaces. On the way, I see another sphere that also has in its centre a person in whom I recognise, to my great surprise, Agostino (at that moment, I didn't know that he was practicing a Discipline; moreover, we had no bond of friendship and I had never dreamt of him before).

The two spheres inter-penetrate, forming one single sphere, and in its centre, Ago and I merge with one another in ecstatic joy: we are One. Then, the sphere disappears, as well as its centre (i.e. Ago and I)... remaining only a register of a "void which not emptiness" and a vague memory of having entered an indescribable place...

Then I suddenly awake, like "in a shock". The dream impresses me, the experience is unknown. I relate it to my aspiration to do the Discipline of Morphology, the symbol of which is the sphere. But I don't understand why this connection with Agostino....

A year later, in an international gathering (the Portugal Forum), I find myself sitting next to Agostino; suddenly, the memory of the dream comes to my mind and I tell him about it. Obviously he's surprised, but he doesn't comment.... Our meeting is starting so we're changing the subject.... Two months after this brief meeting, I was called for the Discipline of Morphology and told that I would work with Agostino.... I am very surprised, and I wonder if this is because of my dream.... When I asked Agostino, he assured to me that he had not told anyone about my dream, that he did not even know that I had been signed up for Morphology, and therefore he did not imagine that one day I would be ascribed to him as a disciple.

But it was only at the time of my *Examination of Works*, three years later, that this dream was to unveil its deepest meaning. In fact, I will understand then that my dream had anticipated, precisely, this experience of the practical part of the *Examination of Works* where one must enter into the Profound, in front of and together with one's master! The dream obviously represented an experience of a "two-person" entry into the Profound, through the same procedure, at the same time, in a fully synchronised way; a shared experience that would take place more than four years after the dream.

In relation to the procedure through which Milarepa transmitted the Force (in a dream) to Gampopa (his future disciple).

Experience n°3 (in semi-sleep) - August 2010

"I receive" the Force in the same way Gampopa received it from Milarepa (he blew into a receptacle representing Gampopa, his future disciple whom he had not yet met). As for myself, I discovered the analogy (with my following experience) in 2017, when reading Milarepa's biography.

Context: I am in Mongolia for the first time (where there is a syncretic spirituality between Tibetan Buddhism and local shamanism). I am attending (with Hugo N. and Balazs S.), an initiation ceremony of a young shaman that lasts all night. At dawn —I had fallen asleep in my chair— I am proposed a shamanic session. I go like a "zombie", half-asleep. Here is the summary of the experience:

When the shaman (female) puts her hands on my head, the vision of an "Asian-type man" dressed in a golden costume emerges in me (the description I will later give of him will confirm that it is the "ancestor spirit" that the shaman had invoked for this occasion). Suddenly, this "golden being" turns more and more luminous and becomes a "stream of light" that rushes

towards me and drags me with him backwards, towards the Profound. This happens when the shaman blows into a receptacle, a gesture I can't see, as I am kneeling in front of her, with my head downwards (later on I will see it in a video; and I will also see that, at the same time, my body and especially my head will incline backwards, as if I were under a lot of pressure).

"I return to myself" when they shake me physically in order to make me drink precisely from this bowl into which the shaman had blown (or rather, into which the "Spirit" had blown, since in the trance there is a "substitution of the shaman's "I"). I don't know where I am, or what's going on, as if I had lost all reference and memory, and I will need a certain amount of time to relocate. As for the "re-construction" of this experience, it will be done thanks to the subsequent exchange with the shaman, completed by Hugo's observations and the video he had filmed. The cherry on the cake will come a few hours later: I receive an e-mail from a master of the Belle Idée (Park of France), telling me that he was dreaming about me that same night. The description he gives of his dream corresponds to the final part of my experience with the shaman, when we embrace each other with the typical emotion after a significant shared experience.

After this experience (of having received "this Force that meets no resistance in its path", "this light that leads to the most beautiful Light"...), I will notice a significant step forward in my process (just as Gampopa observed the same effect after his dream experience with Milarepa).

In relation to the communication of spaces between Rechung and his master Milarepa (at the moment of his departure from this space and time).

Experience n°4 (dream) - 16th September 2010 (the day before Silo's departure to other spaces)

Dream about Silo, who comes to give me an orientation.

Context: I know Silo is sick, he alerted us that he would soon be leaving... but for my consciousness, this "soon" was still far away... Two weeks after my homecoming from Mongolia, still completely under the impressions of this journey full of unusual experiences, I have the following dream:

I look at the sky, I see a huge condor flying towards me. As he approaches, I recognise Silo, dressed in his black poncho (as in the video of the transmission "The Places"). It's him who flies, like a condor. He is landing and now he stands before me, and looks like a very powerful shaman/magician. He holds in his hands, at chest level, the book 'Silo's Message', whose cover is also of a deep black. The title 'Silo's Message', in golden letters, begins to shine, more and more light comes out of the letters, and then from the whole book and then from Silo... The representation becomes more and more vague, only the light will remain more and more dazzling, and then this "being of light" flies away towards the sky like a comet.

All day long I am experiencing great lucidity and energy. I feel "the call" of the Park so I decide to spend the night in the Park. At about 5 a.m. I wake up for no reason, but a few minutes later we get a phone call announcing Silo's death. I immediately connect with the dream of the previous night and I interpret that Silo had come to inform me of his departure and to give me one more orientation: to work with *Silo's Message*.

APPENDIX 2

1/ SYNTHESIS OF OUR DREAM STUDY GROUP (2011)

Our main objective was to experiment with some procedures which help to induce and direct dreams; that is, to put intentionality and reversibility in the level of sleep. We drew our inspiration from the techniques that Silo recommends (cf. *School Notes*, Chapter 4 "Sleep and Trance") and that have been tested and validated by various study groups in different Parks of Study and Reflection (cf. Our bibliography: monograph of Pía Figueroa, *Research on Dreams*).

In our retreat, which took place shortly after the reception of Ascesis, we were particularly motivated to dream about the Purpose (to introduce or configure the Purpose in the dream, to record the coenesthetic register of the Purpose, thanks to the power of the oneiric images etc.) We succeeded and furthermore we experienced the phenomena of "communication of spaces" or "intersubjectivity" (similar translation, shared images, etc.).

During this same retreat we also made several allegorical analyses of significant dreams (inspired by the method recommended in Luis Ammann's *Self-Liberation*, cf our bibliography), and we concluded that interpreting together is more enjoyable and inspiring.

We are not going to develop here the procedures that we used in our retreat (for this, we recommend that you consult the above-mentioned works); however, here are some observations and/or conclusions that we drew.

Predisposition and validated procedures

The body position "on the back" to enter sleep (an unusual and uncomfortable position for most of us) proved to be appropriate because it impedes falling immediately into heavy, vegetative sleep. In addition, precisely because of this discomfort, we tended to turn our bodies during sleep in order to change position, a moment that we could associate with a "slight awakening" for writing down our oneiric images.

We also noticed the efficacy of some simple "rituals" before going to bed (for example, formulating the purpose by telling it to someone, and/or writing it down in the notebook, and/or making a previous asking, etc.). These "rituals" reinforce the clarity and the emotional charge of the co-present purpose (what we want to dream about).

Our experiments helped us to detect this "look" which observes the dream sequences, giving thus a higher quality to the dreams (in comparison with the usual, more heavy and vegetative dreams). This "look" is the one to observe and select the images coinciding with the fixed interest, while the "emotional charge" is what allows the consciousness to dream in the defined direction. We thus observe the oneiric sequences originating in the translations of different impulses, sensations and memories, all of them being at the service of the determined purpose.

All participants were able to remember at least one dream per night. Several participants continued to wake up from time to time (and could therefore note down more dreams), even without the help of their "partner" (who had the function of waking up their companion as soon as they detected the rapid eye movement, REM, that indicates the beginning of the paradoxical sleep cycle, i.e. with dreams).

We validated the importance of taking notes, without censorship or judgement, of everything we can remember about the dream (all types of images not just the visual ones, the location of the images in the space of representation, the associated registers, etc.). It is also important to take notes of the registers, thoughts, ideas and insights that arise immediately upon awakening or afterwards during the day, and eventually relate them to the dreams of the night. Finally, we observed that the fact of transcribing and/or telling the dream to another person helped the forgotten images or sequences to rise more easily.

Interpretation of dreams

For the interpretation of intentionally induced dreams, we can start from the premise that we dreamed about what we had set out to do. So the question is: how does this dream relate to our fixed interest? This helps to avoid hasty judgements and losing the meanings related to the aforementioned intention. It also avoids "psychological" interpretation when in fact one is dealing with another plane, a sacred plane. Consciousness always translates with the material it has available (stored in memory); therefore, one must go beyond the image in order to grasp the register and the deeper or "abstract" meaning that the consciousness tries to translate with that particular image.

The exchanges with other persons help a lot and widen the possibilities, both to understand the elements of the dream and to connect them with one another and also to relate them to the doctrine. In fact, until these significant dreams have not been understood more deeply, they remain "islands" (non-integrated contents), even if they are marvellous.

Discoveries and learning

During the retreat, we also observed the subtle registers of drop and rise in level, of the "sub-levels", of inertia, dragging, rebounds, etc.

We have learned to better detect co-presences and their associated charges; to intentionally select and charge these co-presences; we have been even introducing inspiring co-presences during the day so they would be operating at night (e.g. readings, music, etc.). We have validated that all levels, including sleep, provide access to inspired states of consciousness.

Dreams open up a new field of research, similar to the "disciplinary" frequency: when we set procedures in motion, we realise that there is a whole process full of impediments, advances, and successes, internal changes... In fact, thanks to some dreams, several people have been able to detect with greater precision their impediments for progressing in the work of Ascesis, and even find solutions to overcome them. Working with dreams turns out to be a way to strengthen Ascesis. In doing so, we are giving more direction to our co-presences and to our system of representations and registers.

In synthesis, dreams give us many indicators of "what our consciousness is in"; and the induced dreams offer us the opportunity to strengthen our mental direction, our Purpose, our lifestyle, to accelerate our process of change.

2/ SYNTHESSES OF THE DREAM STUDY GROUPS (2016-2017)

The common interest was to deepen our understanding of the "nature" of significant dreams and their relationship to our Ascesis. Apart from the doctrinal review, in particular of the functioning of the levels of consciousness (cf. Silo, Psychology Notes), we have focused mainly on three aspects:

- Relation between significant dreams and the work of Ascesis;
- Indicators of significant dreams;
- Analysis and interpretation of significant dreams.

As for the work of allegorical analysis and interpretation of dreams, this activity continued beyond the three "study group retreats", with other Masters of La Belle Idée (25 persons in total).

1/ The significant dreams and ascesis:

- The meaning of our dreams in the context of our Ascesis
Dreams are generally very useful indicators of our moment of process ("what is my consciousness in"?). They can confirm our progress and/or guide us to progress better (with the purpose, with the practice, with the lifestyle). In addition, because oneiric images are so powerful, they help us to record better the registers, which normally (in classical ascesis practice) are too fleeting, evanescent.
- The intentional nature of our significant dreams
The majority of our significant dreams are not "accidental". In reality this type of dream often occurs as a response to previously formulated askings, or as a consequence of the work of Ascesis carried out during that day or before; or because the Purpose is so powerful that it also invades the level of sleep; and finally, as a result of a lifestyle (accumulation of coherent actions, inspiring activities, consciousness of self, etc.).

2/ Indicators of significant dreams

These criteria are very similar to those of any significant experience we obtain in the other levels of consciousness (vigil and semi-sleep); the most frequent examples are as follows:

- Abstract contents with profound and multiple significations, atypical phenomena, paradoxes, different, unknown "laws" or parameters;
- Superposition or concentration of multiple meanings (coexistence of various planes, e.g. psychological, mythical, mystical, and therefore various possible interpretations of the same dream);
- Momentary loss of one's I (the "train of images" is interrupted in the middle of the dream all representations/registers disappearing— and then the oneiric sequence comes back);
- Awakening without the "I" and slow reconfiguration of the usual identity (who I am, where I am), and/or the register of "returning from somewhere very remote";
- The impact of the dream is unforgettable and persists (memories of the dream will impose themselves and/or strong emotion/commotion will arise when evoking the dream);
- Registers of certainty even if nothing can be proved;
- Waking up in a different state, of superior quality, that lasts all day long or even longer (different perceptions, more lucidity, comprehensions, occurrences, coincidences....);
- Registers of "Absolutes" (Love/Goodness/Force/Liberty/Joy/Faith...) and an imperative need for unity (reconciling, sharing/witnessing, giving, transmitting...).

3/ Interpretation of significant dreams

When interpreting, it is important to take into account the context in which the dream occurred, i.e. the events and activities of daily life, the lifestyle, the moment of process, the needs of the moment, the repeated requests... that is, the co-presences that have the most emotional charge. Sleep can also be influenced by the co-presences that operate during sleep itself: external stimuli (temperature, noise, smells, physical posture) and internal stimuli (digestion, breathing, etc.).

The contact with the transcendental plane occurs in the Profound, its translation into images occurs in a lesser depth. But when allegorical analysis and dream interpretation are made only by the psychological I, from a peripheral space in 2D, we run the risk of distorting this spiritual experience and losing its deep meanings. Therefore, it is necessary to find a deeper and more inspired space from which to decipher the dream. Interpreting a dream can be as important an experience as the dream itself. A deep understanding of the meanings that gave rise to the dream is an experience in itself.

Such understanding is indispensable for the integration of this content—which has strongly impressed and moved our conscienceness— so that it doesn't remain isolated but, on the contrary, becomes integrated into the process and strengthens it (as it also happens with the *transferences* and

exploratories that have to be analysed and interpreted in order to really take advantage of them). Indeed, our interest is profound change rather than the collection of extraordinary experiences. And, it is the integration of these significant dream experiences that permits us to use them in our ascesis work and in our lifestyle (and not just the fact of having such dreams).

There is no "right" or "wrong" interpretation. There is no only one interpretation, only one truth (the vision of "black and white" is only a way of structuring, a very western mental form). A dream can have several levels of interpretation and the same image can have various significations. However, the register of certainty (the flavour of revelation, of inner truth) as to the meaning of an oneiric experience should not be confused with the interpretation made of it subsequently. Mentally you can play with the meanings but, ultimately, what matters is the register of "it fits", "this is it".

Group interpreting enriches and broadens individual points of view because more connections are made (overall intelligence). Listening to others evoking their dreams produces resonances, awakens our own experiences. But in the end, only the dreamers themselves can decide of the proper interpretation, it is they who have the last word.

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