



Journeys into the far reaches of the mind

From time immemorial people have been interrogating their dreams in excursions into the far reaches of the mind. Should we venture beyond the wall of mystery we find ourselves confused and often shattered by the profusion of bounty flooding the skylight of our mind. The human mind is in its developmental stage and still has a long way to go until it grasps the thinking of the universe, which is however enfolded in it.

The veil shielding our minds offered by sleep is a protection. By blanking out large areas of the psyche our programming protects us from realizations which our minds fail to encompass. Yet clues regarding wider dimensions of realization sometimes trickle through, particularly when one is poised upon the threshold between the diurnal (waking) condition and sleep with dreams.

Skills are taught in various esoteric traditions to learn how to maintain ourselves at that threshold between the diurnal and the dream state. At that juncture the door is open between the perceptions of reality manifesting at the physical level and the unbridled effusion of imagination ranging from the fanciful to the congruent. In Yoga you will find the carefully guarded practice of *Yoga Nidra*; in Buddhism, the art of freeing oneself from the illusion of the appearance of the world in order to create the 'illusory body'; in Sufism, the act of imagination to work creatively with our personality.

Holistically implicated

In that twilight of consciousness, the difference between the incoming impressions hailing from our memory of perceptions or interpretations and the free wheeling of our creative imagination blurs. When consciousness is off set from its usual focus, the environment overlaps with the psyche in an ambiguous fashion. This is because our psyche is holistically implicated in the whole existential realm at all levels including the physical.

'The content of consciousness of each human being is evidently an enfoldment of the totality of existence.' - David Bohm.

When reminiscences of the physical or psychological environment lose their compulsive impact upon our awareness and get assimilated by the psyche, their outer appearance seems deluding. This accounts for the theories of *maya* and is precisely what makes for the dream perspective. Here lies the clue to shifting into the dream perspective while maintaining the door open into the existential realm.



The art of so doing, and in general of meditation, consists in avoiding to turn the spotlight towards the overt impressions. In this sub liminal perspective a deeper level of the psyche espies '*that which transpires behind that which appears*' - Ibn 'Arabi. This discovery of the mystics is borne out in our day and age by those physicists who are at the prow of advances in scientific thinking.

Implicate and explicate states

The model that is most likely to help us understand what happens to our minds in sleep is Dr David Bohm's model of the implicate and the explicate states.¹

In the diurnal perspective, illustrated by the explicate mode, our intelligence earmarks waves in the sea. It takes the mystic or the scientist to see that it is the whole sea that emerges as each wave. This puts our commonplace ideas about causality totally in question. According to Bohm a wave is not the sequel to the wave preceding it, but each wave is projected out of the whole sea and introjected back into the sea and it is the whole sea that is projected in the next wave. Another example is the way a radio extrapolates the immense variety of interspersed radio waves which extend in space as an inter woven web (wave interference pattern) in such a manner that our intelligence is able to make sense of it. A lens, the eye and the brain function in like manner; they focus a large panorama to make it accessible, however thereby reducing much detail.

In contrast, in the dream state, thoughts are so fine woven that one cannot distinguish them, but one gains an overall sense of meaning implied behind the variety of thoughts. This is the implicate state. However to explain that meaning, one would have to project ones mind back into the explicate state; the meaning would be reduced, and our verbal expressions seem inadequate.

A readily understandable illustration of this would be contrasting the way things look swimming at the surface of a lake where one perceives clearly distinct water lilies, or swimming underwater, in which case one sees a network of roots emerging at the surface as distinct lilies.

Holo movement

It is helpful to discern this two way motion of our minds, which David Bohm calls the holo movement. To train yourself to do this intentionally, while poised at the threshold, keep on reminding yourself that what you see is only the 'tip of the iceberg'. If you persist, you will get used to espying how things would look if viewed from within.

¹ Bohm, David, *Unfolding Meaning* Ark, 1985.



Under cover of sleep, the mind digests the diurnal impressions, breaking them down rather as our liver breaks down the amino acid chains. The unconscious then builds up new thought patterns just in the way the RNA builds new amino acid chains in keeping with the template of the RNA. Then our psyche projects these nascent thought forms to enrich our conscious psyche if they are able to cross the barrier between unconscious and conscious.

'Separate entities are relatively constant and independent behaving forms abstracted by the mind from the whole in perception and in thought... The state of the whole organizes the parts.'
- David Bohm.

Should we peer into the phantasmagoria of our dream world, or the state of reverie when poised between the diurnal state and the dream state, we find that thoughts are blurred. But if we capture the nascent thought patterns as they try to break the barrier into real life, then we access an enormous and invaluable pool of resourcefulness revealing a new meaning to our problems or personal development or inspiring us in our creativity.

The light of intelligence

There is still a further dimension in the dream process, which is to cast the light of our awareness and intelligence upon the nebulous regions of our unconscious psyche as we sleep. At first we cannot make sense of the paradoxical thought-wave-interference pattern opening to our view and our natural tendency is to blank out, or at best to find our understanding stunned and our will stymied. With determination and by repeated exercise, we can train our mind by stretching our intelligence beyond its normal frontiers. Our mind now switches to its implicate mode which is precisely what we mean by intuition. Should we wish to remain poised on the threshold, we learn to toggle between this mode and the explicate mode.

'So implication has a much wider range of meanings, going from mere association to a sense that one thing goes with another, and to a tacit or unstated ground of reason supporting the thought that is implied.' - David Bohm.

This is illustrated by a holograph. In every part of that construct of light that is the holograph, the light wave patterns of every feature of the original object are interspersed with those of every other feature. Our eyes and brains could not make sense of this wave interference pattern. But when a laser beam (that is a beam of coherent light) of the same frequency as the original beam is thrust across the holograph, it extrapolates between the enormous variety of waves in a coherent way that makes sense to our perceptual faculty.



The super implicate state

Let us remember that understanding is the act that coheres thoughts just like the laser beam. This is the role of the coherent light of our intelligence.

As it projects into the nebulous region of the unconscious, it coheres the paradoxical wave interference pattern of our mind in its implicate format into an understandable sense of meaningfulness, however failing to account for the many splendoured richness lying in wait in our psyche. This is the action of this further dimension of our mind, that Dr David Bohm calls 'the super implicate state'.

'If you apply this model, the enfoldment is now seen on two levels: first an enfolded order of the vacuum with ripples on it that unfold; and second a super information field of the whole universe, a super implicate order which organizes the first level into various structures.' - Renee Weber.²

Indeed we find as we practise *Yoga Nidra* that by zooming the beam of our consciousness upon nebulous thoughts and emotions, we actually extricate them from their concealed condition and capture them unfurling as the focus of our consciousness shifts from the implicate state into the explicate.

The secret of maintaining oneself on the threshold consists in being able to toggle between the diurnal state on the one hand where one clearly distinguishes between one's consciousness as the spectator and the object of one's awareness (either the physical world or one's psyche, or thoughts); and the dream state on the other hand in which spontaneous imaginings flow from one's consciousness unawares. By spotlighting our emergent thoughts, we slip back into the diurnal subject/object format and lose our spontaneity. Therefore to tune into a state of reverie, we have to lose our identity in the flow of thoughts.

According to Yoga, in *Nirovecara Samadhi* consciousness espouses the forms of the emergent thoughts of the subtle creative mind, manifesting the nature of the timeless essence of our being, *purusha*.³

Double exposure

This brings further clues to switching off from the diurnal perspective: having realized that not only the physical world is not what it appears to be, but your self image is not your true identity, realize further that the forms assumed by your imaginings are not your imaginings, but only projections - the tip of the iceberg.

² Weber, Renee, *Dialogues with Scientists*. Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986.

³ Eliade, Mircea, *Yoga, Immortality and Freedom*, Princeton Univ. Press 1969.



Consequently let the forms emerge out of the flow without trying to spotlight them, but while this occurs, try to remain aware of their trace in your remote diurnal memory. When you have got used to toggling between the two perspectives, you reach a point where you are capable of countenancing a double exposure. That is where your creative ideas gel so that they may be communicated to others and furnish your conscious psyche with their resources.

'Perception would separate him from many things which he would perceive if not for this obstruction. God places within each thing, including the soul of man, a manifest and a non manifest dimension. Through the manifest dimension man perceives entities; through the non manifest dimension, knowledge. Self disclosure consists of His manifestation to the one to whom He discloses Himself.' - Ibn 'Arabi.

A further clue to retaining your memory of the diurnal state while in the dream state is to consider the forms of the physical world to be the way that the reality of which you are aware inside appears when projected to the surface. This could best be illustrated by imagining that a plant is just the way that its DNA manifests at the surface but this manifestation is secondary and derivative, its reality being the DNA.

'The seed has information which is transmitted to the matter of which the plant is eventually formed.' - David Bohm.

At this point, to keep maintaining yourself at the threshold you have to keep reminding yourself that mind and matter are not separate realities. To achieve this, train yourself by repeated auto suggestion prior to going to sleep - it needs to be drummed into the mind until it is taken for granted.

'But there is still a mental pole at every level of matter ... and eventually if you go to infinite depths of matter, you may reach something very close to what you reach in the depth of the mind.' - William Chittick.⁴

From energy to subtle bodies

For the Tibetans, as one falls asleep, one shifts from the activity of the gross faculty of the mind which is based upon the input from outside, to the activity of the subtle faculty of the mind which grasps meaning without resting upon perception. Simultaneously one shifts from identifying with the gross wind (energy) to the subtle wind (actually ones subtle bodies).

As you begin to become more familiar with the dream world, you distinguish several factors and levels:

(I) the simple regurgitation, digestion and storage of imputed impressions,

⁴ Chittick, William, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*. State of NY Univ. Press, 1989.



(II) the aspirations, nostalgia, repressed emotions trying to make themselves known by crossing the barrier or censorship between the covert and overt zones of the psyche,

(III) out of body travel,

(IV) uncanny impressions of the heavenly spheres, even communication with celestial beings or people's minds (one distinguishes different levels of bodiness that spark pre natal memories which one ascribes to celestial spheres), and

(V) the spontaneous creative thoughts that appear as inspirational.

To switch over from the diurnal into the dream state, disidentify from your body, now considered perfunctorily as a shroud, and feel yourself as an effigy of subtle unstable fabric – like gossamer. However, to balance yourself on the threshold, maintain a remote memory of the profile of your body while superimposing upon it the countenance of your dream body. Now you will notice a correspondence between them, in a kind of double exposure. It becomes clear that one's subtle bodies arise out of the configurations of one's thinking and that a grasp of meaningfulness or a strong emotion in turn affects the formative processes active within physical matter.

The Sufis teach their pupils to mould the features of their subtle bodies in the shapes that are expressive of their emotional attunements or paramount thoughts. They distinguish between various subtle bodies and corresponding spheres highlighted as one shifts from one stage to the next.

As you become more conversant with these nebulous regions, you learn to distinguish between a state in which you feel like an ethereal elusive body called *Ajsam* (the body of resurrection, or illusory body of the Tibetans), and a state in which your body seems to be hewn in the fabric of light, the celestial spheres called *Malakut* (the emanation body of the Tibetans), and a state in which you have lost any sense of form, called *Jabarut* (which Buddha calls a being of pure splendour, corresponding to the enjoyment body of the Tibetans), and the infinitely transcendental levels called *Lahut* and *Hahut* (the truth body of the Tibetans).

'Thus the ascensions of the saints are the ascensions of their spirits and the visions of their hearts, the vision of forms in the intermediate world and of embodied spiritual realities... You will find yourself in company with the celestial Assembly.' - Ibn 'Arabi.

Let us look into the methods used to shift ones body identity from one level to another. It is like finding the underpinning of energy serving ones mind from one level to another. We need to remind ourselves of weaving the Ariadne thread of consciousness over the threshold, saddling several levels. The rationale behind this consists in grasping how somehow the different bodies intersperse rather than fan out in different locations in space (as in astral projection).



To achieve this, compare the feel of the kind of energy you sense at the periphery of your being as compared with the kind of energy you feel as you close into the centre. Think of your energy field as a vortex and realize that the centre which corresponds with your solar plexus is a vacuum. Now you will notice that, while on one hand the grosser energy tends to get scattered at the periphery in a centrifugal action, on the other hand some measure of energy gets sublimated (the alchemists say 'distilled') as it gets sucked into the centre. In addition, as you turn outside it is the grosser functions of your mind that are active, whereas as you turn within it is the subtle mind (the creative mind) that takes over. To maintain yourself at the threshold, rather than dismissing the memory of your gross mind, unmask the hoax of your commonplace thinking, thereby correcting your assessment of situations.

If you identify with your aura, you will find that the further you turn within, the subtler the nature of the light until you reach what Hazrat Inayat Khan calls the 'all pervading light'. This term is eminently appropriate, since in the implicate state everything intersperses with the light-wave-interference-pattern of the stars. As you move up from one sphere to the other in *Yoga Nidra*, you are encountering what the Sufis call the 'light that sees' rather than the light that can (or could) be seen.⁵

Yoga looks upon the state of illumination as comparable in many ways to deep sleep without dreams, since consciousness is voided of both perceptual and conceptual content. Thanks to the skills developed in *Yoga Nidra*, one is able to recall the state thus reached back into one's existential awareness and intersperse it with one's diurnal perspective in what one might call stereoscopic consciousness. In Mircea Eliade's words, one is 'saturated with a direct and total intuition of being.'

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<http://www.caduceus.info/>

⁵ Corbin, Henry, *The Man of Light in Iranian Sufism*. Boulder and London: Shambala.