

SLEEP AND DREAMS

There is something in each of us which enters the state called dreams, the state called sleep, and the state called death. No understanding whatever can be had of the states into which we pass and from which we emerge save under the idea that there is an Ego, a thinker, a perceiver, a knower, an experiencer, who enters the states and re-emerges there from, and that this Ego, the real man, retains his integrity throughout them all.

We are more than any of the states we enter into, no matter how highly we may have considered any of those states. Even if we imagine that we have reached, or can reach, the highest state of intelligence and action—that which we call the divine—it is we who enter it. So an understanding of the states into which we go cannot be had until we recognize that there is That in us which goes through them all; then we must try to understand what that something is, and in this endeavor begin right where we now are; we cannot start from any other place or position than where we are at any time.

What do we find, then? That we are a continuing identity. We have passed through many changes from birth up to now, but our identity has not changed, no matter through what changes it may have passed, or may pass. When we get this fact firmly fixed in our minds we will have reached the point of understanding that there is an immortal nature in each of us; that it is divine in its essence, not subject to change; for It is changeless.

The dreaming state we enter just as we let go of the body, before we pass into the state of dreamless sleep; and on awakening is, again, the transitional state into which we return before resuming waking state in the body. We know that we have all the senses in dreams, although the body is quiescent, and the sense organs are not in use. We can see and feel, we hear, talk, and act, just as we do in waking state, without using the physical organs associated with those sensations and actions. This shows that we are conscious, alive, existent, although the body knows nothing. We know further that our identity is not disturbed by entering dream-state; it is we ourselves, and none other, experiencing that state.

Dreaming state is known to be a very short state as contrasted with the waking state. It is known that we can dream and experience through what seems to represent a very long period of time in the dream, though the state lasts but a few seconds by the clock. There is a portion, by far the greater portion, of the “night’s rest” which is only known to us (in waking state) as “dreamless sleep.” This is merely the slumber of the body. The body is then almost as if one had left it entirely. Yet the entity must be in contact somewhere, for he is existent all the time, and is conscious—the same identity. Were this not true, we would not wake, or on awakening there would be a new being altogether.

Further than these ideas as to dream and sleep Western psychologists have not gone. They do not know what was known ages ago, and what is known to some today, that the Ego, the man, the thinker, is more fully occupied, more his real self, during the dreamless slumber of the body than at any other time. So it was said that the day-time of the body is the night-time of the soul, and the night-time of the body is the day-time of the soul. When the body sleeps, the real man is most active, with the greatest degree of intelligence, but thinking and acting on another plane altogether, in a different state altogether, from any known to us in ordinary waking human existence.

We know nothing about sleep, although we say that we experience it. What we know is that we are going sleepy—that is, that the body is growing exhausted—but sleep never comes to us. We are awake in the day-time; we are conscious; we think. But our power to see and know when awake is applied almost exclusively to external things of a material kind, so that what we call knowledge—waking knowledge—is, practically, an application of all our powers to physical existence, and to that alone. When we sleep, what takes place?

During that interval we know that the body is absolutely irresponsive in regard to anything external. We do not know nor feel anything that happens to our friends. The most frightful calamities might occur around about us, and we would know nothing about them until we resumed control of the body. Yet we must have been alive, conscious, with an unchanged identity. This

brings our minds to the question as to why or how it is that we know nothing when awake of that activity on higher and altogether different planes during the deep sleep of the body.

We have within us in abeyance, but not forgoen, not inaccessible, all that knowledge. It is recorded, impacted, in our imperishable nature as truly as any record can possibly be made—every thing that we have been through, every degree of experience, of knowledge, that we have ever acquired. When we sleep—that is, when the body sleeps—we go back to that fountain of knowledge which is within ourselves; and “wake up” in the morning none the wiser. How can it be that, possessing such knowledge, possessing the powers that belong to immortal Spirit, to divine Intelligence, we nevertheless cannot use them, are not even aware of their existence in us?

There is a law known as Karma, the law of action and reaction, which has been stated: “Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.” We have so thought and acted while in the body as to produce finally an instrument that is not in accord with our own real nature. We have put the power of our intelligence upon a consideration and use of material things—things that appertain to a lower state of being than our own—and so have become involved in them. The brain that we use is responsive almost entirely to these lower ideas; so that when we return into it, upon awakening, there is nothing in that brain which will take the slightest impression or record of those states of consciousness through which we have passed.

If we are beings who have passed through higher states during sleep, how are we ever going to regain a knowledge of these possessions? If we are told that we are divine in nature, not earthly; that we have an immense past; that we have planes of consciousness higher than this and powers of action on those planes—what does that do for us? What does that impart to us? What does that arouse in us? Does it not make us look at life from a different standpoint than the one we have hitherto been accustomed to take?

Everything that we do in life, every result that we experience, is governed by some attitude of mind which we hold in regard to life. If one is an atheist, let us say, or a materialist, who thinks that life began with this body and will end with it, then all his thoughts and acts will be on that basis. But if he changes that idea, as he may, for the idea that he is immortal in essential nature, then that of itself begins to work a transformation.

It is not what we go through that counts; but what we learn from it. Knowledge is what we should desire; not comforts nor station. We desire to know, for in knowing we perceive the right things to do, the right thoughts to hold. As we are thinking all the time, we are thinking either good or evil or indifferent thoughts; our actions are good, evil or indifferent according to our thoughts. If we begin to think aright, we give direction to that Spiritual Force which is the very essence of our nature. Let a man think aright, let him think and act unselfishly, and just so surely as he does that he opens up the channels of his brain to a greater and greater perception and realization of his own nature. When he reaches a certain point he is able to perceive that whether the body is awake or asleep or dreaming, or whether the body has passed through the state called death—there is no cessation for him.

Supposing we were able to pass from waking to dreaming, from dreaming to sleeping, from sleeping to death, from death to re-birth in another body—and able to go through all these states and changes without a single break of memory, so that we could not only carry the memory intact from lower to higher states, but bring it through with us from higher to lower states, through every plane, bringing back the knowledge into this or an other body—what would we be? Then we would know just what we are. We would know the relation of this plane to every other. We could read the hearts of men. We could help them to take a greater and higher stand. We should no longer be deluded by the ideas which impel the majority of men. We would no longer struggle for place or position. We would struggle only for knowledge, for possessions of every kind in order that we might be the better able to help and teach others. We would sojourn with Deity all the time, whether in a body or out of it.

It is to arouse man to an understanding of his own nature and to the right use of his powers that Theosophy has been brought to him again, as it has been brought in period after period by Those who are greater than we are—Those who have passed through the same stages we are now

passing through—our Elder Brothers, the Christs of all times, the Divine Incarnations. It is They who come to remind us of our own natures; to remind us and to arouse us to action, so that what we really are may be known to us and expressed by us here on this lowest physical plane, on which we are working out our destiny—a destiny made by ourselves, a destiny which can only be changed by ourselves, by the very power of that Spirit which we are.

No one can know anything for another. Each one has to know for himself. Each one has to do his own learning. The object of Theosophy is to teach man what he is, to show man what he is, and to present to him the necessity of his knowing for himself. No vicarious atonement, no vicarious transmission of knowledge, is possible. But the direction in which knowledge lies may be pointed out; the steps which will lead us in that direction may be shown, as can be done only by those who have passed that way before. It is exactly what is being done. It is the course of all Saviors of humanity. It is the doctrine of Krishna, of Buddha, of Jesus, no less than the doctrine of H. P. Blavatsky. The two teachings that the West is most urgently in need of are those of Karma and Reincarnation, the doctrines of hope and responsibility—Karma, the doctrine of responsibility means that whatever a man sows he shall also reap—Reincarnation, the doctrine of hope, means that—whatever he is reaping—there never will be a time when he may not sow seed. The very fact of suffering is a blessing. Karma and Reincarnation show us that suffering is brought about by wrong thought and action; through our suffering we may be brought to a realization that a wrong course has been pursued. We learn through our suffering.

Life is one grand school of Being, and we have come to that stage where it is time for us to learn to understand the purpose of existence; to grasp our whole nature firmly; to use every means in our power in every direction—waking, dreaming, sleeping, or in any other state—to bring the whole of our nature into accord, so that our lower instrument may be in line” and thus more and more fully reflect our divine inner nature.

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