



An Esoteric Analysis of Dreams

What exactly are dreams? In this article, I want to focus more on an esoteric analysis rather than describing the physiological or psychological basis of dreams. By esoteric, I mean that there are dreams that reflect experiences of the dreamer in planes or dimensions of consciousness that transcend the physical realm.

By way of introduction, it may be useful to mention that there are seven dimensions of consciousness in esoteric cosmology. These planes are also "realms" with their own types of environments and inhabitants. The laws related to time and space do not apply to these dimensions in the same way that they apply to the material sphere.

We are all familiar with the physical plane of existence. Permeating this material plane is the etheric or pranic field; followed by the astral, mental and causal dimensions. The latter is the plane where all memories of past life experiences are stored in the form of seeds or sanskaras that impact the incarnated soul.

There is also a spiritual or bliss plane. In fact, there are several spiritual planes of consciousness, but for the sake of brevity, we shall group them all into one category. These planes have inhabitants that are of the finest and sheerest forms of pure light. They are considered the heavenly spheres in most of the world's major religions.

Finally, there is a dimension that is beyond all others, and that transcends all forms and phenomena. We can call it the dimension of absolute consciousness, or the cosmic plane. We connect to this final plane in very deep meditations. In fact, it is not a dimension at all, but the underlying essence of all manifestation.

The Mechanics of Sleep

With the exception of the pranic or etheric sheath, the subtle bodies separate from the physical organism during sleep. The etheric body initiates a process of regeneration that vitalizes the physical organism.

In deep sleep, when the body is most at rest, subtle energy channels called nadis circulate the vital prana without as much resistance or blocking as in the waking state. The chakras of the etheric body absorb the universal prana from the ether. Much physical healing transpires at this time.

During dreaming, the subtle bodies are active at different levels and intensities. They are connected by a cord to the etheric body. When this cord is severed, the etheric sheath disengages from the physical body and the latter dies and disintegrates.

The mechanics of a dream can be complex. Each subtle body offers a different dynamic. Dreams related to fears and desires are first experienced in the astral body; those related to memories of experiences are registered in the mental body; and past-life experiences as well as archetypal representations in dreams are associated with the causal body.

The cord I referred to above transmits these impressions to the etheric nervous system and the physical brain. It is an interactive process. Stimulations of the physical senses can also transmit impressions to these subtle bodies. A sound can be incorporated into a dream, as can stimuli associated with the sense of touch.

Who is experiencing all of these impressions during the dream state? It is the ego mechanism, the consciousness of the individual being. This consciousness achieves more independence from the physical brain and is more connected to the subtle planes during sleep.

On the other hand, the ego of the individual cannot assimilate much of the input from these planes, which it can only process in the form of symbolic content. Hence, much of our dreaming takes place in the form of metaphors.

Types of Dreams

The first type of dream represents random memories





that one has of experiences that transpired in the waking state. These memories are stored in the consciousness of the mental body, which contains the imprints of all our experiences since the moment of our birth.

Often, these memories are distorted or vague in the dream, since the ego has difficulty accessing them due to its limited functioning during sleep, and the fact that it would be too overwhelming to access more than a snippet or fragment at a time.

Experiences that make strong impressions on the mind during the waking state are more likely to be accessed and remembered vividly in dreams. They don't necessarily require any emotional content. For instance, if we are preoccupied by our job, we may dream about the details of our work.

Some dreams of deeper memories reflect our experiences in past lives. These are stored in the causal (or higher mental) body, which survives between incarnations. Past life dreams are usually not recognized as such, although they may have a vivid quality that will seem both eerie and familiar.

Most of our dream content reflects our feelings about certain experiences, rather than passive or neutral memories registered by our intellect. Memories of emotional content are stored in the astral body. The way emotional experiences are expressed in dreams depends on how the ego filters them.

In fact, the emotional content of most dreams is presented in symbolic, figurative or indirect ways. There are two reasons for this. First, the astral body stores emotional content in different ways than how the physical brain registers experiences. Material consciousness is dependent on a linear perspective of space and time, whereas astral consciousness has no such restrictions.

Second, the ego cannot handle certain emotional content because it would be too traumatic or overwhelming to directly experience it. The ego thus filters such content to protect its own integrity. It is a kind of defense mechanism employed by the ego during the dream state. Sometimes, such defensive posturing is not successful, and onerous or unpleasant emotions may take control of a dream and result in nightmares.

All of this is the purview of Freudian psychology, which seeks to investigate the symbolism behind dreams in an effort to uncover unconscious fears or latent desires. Of course, Freud never mentioned the astral body in his writings.

We can now consider a third type of dream related more directly to the subtle realms within which the subtle bodies interact. For instance, some of our dreams reflect experiences that we have in the astral plane, while our astral body is "tripping" in this dimension.

Although our astral body will spend a lot of time during sleep close to our physical form, it will sometimes go out on astral excursions, where it will meet other astral beings, both of a human and non-human nature. Most of these trips are not registered by the dreaming mind, although sometimes they may be represented in symbolic ways.

The simplest representation of an astral excursion is the flying dream. However, these usually represent limited forays into the astral world that do not stray very far from the physical body. Floating or falling dreams also often reflect activities undertaken by the astral body.

Excursions that represent activities that are more involved and remote from the physical body are usually only registered vaguely by dreams, unless the person can maintain a certain lucidity in their dreams, which takes practice to accomplish. When such excursions happen during deep sleep, they are not registered at all by the ego.

There are occasions when astral adventures come to the fore in our dream consciousness. We sometimes have encounters with deceased relatives or friends that seem quite vivid and real. Such encounters are often really happening in the astral realm, and they will be more likely to be remembered in the waking state because our ego may still be attached to these disincarnate souls.

Other excursions in the astral plane involve interactions with astral denizens that may or may not be pleasant. For instance, nightmares sometimes involve astral adventures in the lower astral planes, and encounters with unsavory or malevolent entities. Usually, people who live a gross consciousness in their waking state will gravitate toward such environments, where lust, fear and anger vibrations predominate.

Most of us spend time in higher astral plane activities that are more educational and which inform our lives here on earth. We may meet with wise beings who impart knowledge and wisdom. Whether we use what we have learned will depend on how evolved our soul is.

Other astral activities are of a helping nature. For instance, I have had dreams of my participation in a "way station" which helped recently deceased accident victims adjust to their new life in the astral plane. The dream was so vivid that I gained partial lucidity and later woke up in my bedroom with my astral body floating above my physical one.

A fourth category of dreams are cosmic ones that take place in more ethereal realms. Such dreams usually involve encounters with angelic beings, who impart deep insights and wisdom. In fact, their presence in our dreams "re-aligns" the atoms in our subtle bodies. Such experiences can be life altering, although often in subtle ways.

These dreams are usually exceptionally vivid and have an ethereal quality that is difficult to describe. I am not even sure whether we can refer to them as dreams, but rather celestial visions that happen during sleep.

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