



Svaroopā® Vidya Ashram

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Quick Fixes #8

Who Sees Your Dreams?

By Sadguru Swami Nirmalananda Saraswati

Your mind works hard day and night, even in your sleep. Dreams clearly involve your mind. Yoga says that even deep sleep is a type of mental activity, with your mind full of nothingness, a black, dense, heavy emptiness. You know this if you've slept "too heavy" or had trouble getting up after an afternoon nap, especially if you slept "too long." It's hard to get moving because your mind is still dense and heavy with sleep.

Yet the yogic sage Patanjali says you can contemplate your experience of dreaming and deep sleep in order to calm and quiet your mind:

svapna-nidraa-j~naana-alambana.m vaa. — Yoga Sutras 1.38

Or contemplate your experience of dreaming or dreamless sleep [when your mind is distracted or disturbed].

Researchers tell us that everyone dreams, whether they remember their dreams or not. Most dreams feature people or places from your waking life, though often disjointed or fantastical. Yet some dreams are profound and significant. My first vision of Shiva came in a dream, though it didn't feel like a dream at all. I was aware that I was dreaming. It seemed more real than my waking life. I've contemplated that experience many times since, benefitting more from it each time. I was delighted when I found out that this is a yoga practice!

Carl G. Jung recognized the value of paying attention to your dreams. Analyzing dreams is a key tool of Jungian psychology. Dreams featuring universal archetypes are of special significance. Jung used them for the purpose of increasing awareness of "Self," which he defined as the "Archetype of Psychic Totality." It's like he was livestreaming the insights of the sages, though filtered through early 1900's Freudian theory. However, when Jung visited India, he concluded that the field of Western psychology was not competent to understand the Atman (inherent Divinity).

Yoga uses dreams differently than psychology does because yogic science is exclusively focused on your inherent Divinity. Every yoga practice, including poses, is for the purpose of giving you an experience of Atman or svaroopā, also translated as "Self." The ultimate goal is to live in the Knowingness of your own Beingness, called "Self-Realization."

When you're not experiencing your Divine Essence, it is because your mind is distracted from it. By applying a "quick fix," you can get centered and grounded again, based in your own essence. This month's quick fix is to contemplate your experience of dreaming or dreamless sleep. But it's not psychology.

The difference is that yogis contemplate their experience of dreaming and of sleep, rather than analyzing the content of their dreams. Analysis is an intellectual process of comparison and evaluation. Contemplation is a way of getting beyond your mind to a deeper inner knowing, indicated by the word "j~naana" in this sutra. Yoga's purpose is that you find who is experiencing your dreams and sleep.

When you're dreaming, you're asleep. Your conscious mind is not functioning; otherwise, you'd know that there's no tiger chasing you. When you wake up, you remember that you had a dream. Consider, how do you remember? Your conscious mind was not watching your dream, so it cannot remember. Who was watching it? Who reports your dream to your mind?

In deep sleep, your conscious mind is asleep. Yet, some mornings you say, "What a good sleep I had!" You might even be able to remember the deep peace or the darkness you experience in sleep. But how do you remember something that your mind didn't perceive? Who experiences your sleep and reports it to your mind?

There is a deeper dimension within you. Always aware, your own Self is the one experiencing your dreams and sleep. Your Self reports them to your mind, once you're awake. Unfortunately your mind

is not very good at tuning in to your Self, thus your understanding of the experience is garbled or even lost in the light of day. The very point of contemplating your dreams and sleep is to improve your mind's ability to attune itself to your Self.

What is this "Self" to which your mind needs to attune? Your own Self is the One Self. This means that the One Reality who is being all is being you. Yogis call the One by the holy name, "Shiva." Your inherent essence and beingness is that Beingness who is being all, Shiva. While you are already Shiva, you are currently in the condition of not-knowingness, experiencing a "Divine Amnesia."

Yoga is the cure. Especially once you've received Maha-Shaktipat, dissolving the not-knowingness happens from the inside out. Each meditation opens you more, so the bliss and knowingness of your own Shivaness arise within. The light of Consciousness shines through your mind, illumining you from the inside out. This is a whole new way to live, in the mystical reality of your humanity and Divinity simultaneously.

Your mind needs massive retraining. Driven by need, greed and fear, your mind primarily focuses on the world. Seeking to obtain security, self-worth and fulfillment, your success is temporary when it comes from outside. You are truly satisfied only when you find the inner source, which is your own Self.

While your mind is chasing worldly experiences, yoga says you're "distracted" from the Self. Using this quick fix turns your attention inward again, attuning you to the One who remembers your dreams and even remembers your sleep. Yet it's not the content of your dreams or sleep that is so important. It's your ability to remember, for the memory is information given by your Self to your mind. This attunes your mind within, so it's not distracted any more. Now you can use your mind to participate in the world while knowing your own Self, fully centered and grounded in your own inner infinity.

This knowing of your Self is not a thought, nor a memory. It is an inner knowing, your own Self knowing your own Self. In many traditions, this is described as "knowing God." Swami Muktananda, my teacher, was described as both "Self-Realized" as well as a "God-intoxicated being." There's no difference. The One Reality who is being all is being you. Perceiving the One as being outside, you call that reality by the name "God." But the mystics of all meditative traditions and religions agree, when you perceive the One as being inside, you call that reality by the name "Self."

Jung knew he was working in the grey zone between science and religion. In addition to his research in Greek and Latin treatises, he explored archetypes, fairy tales, alchemy and other mystical traditions. In a 1959 BBC interview, he was asked if he believed in God. Surprised by the question, Jung replied, "I don't need to believe, I know." Can you say the same? Beyond belief, do you know God? If not, it's because you've been looking outside. It's time to begin looking inward. You don't have to change your life, merely add a new dimension to it — your own Self.

One of the wonderful things about this quick fix is that it's not quick. While you can begin it immediately, it's something that grows on you. You get better at it as you continue, just like with anything. Yet there's a mystical force at work in the process. Once you decide to remember your dreams, they become easier to remember. They may also become more vivid or feature more archetypal themes. Now you're in the danger zone. You can get so interested in your dreams that you begin analyzing the content, like you try to analyze your life. This is not the mystical yogic practice that Patanjali recommends.

It's easy to understand the difference if you've experienced that you knew you were dreaming while you were dreaming. Called lucid dreaming, this ability interests many people so they can control their dreams. Again, they're focused on content. Yoga's focus is on, "Who is perceiving the dream?" The Self, experiencing your dreams, is the same Self that is experiencing your life. To be the Self while you are living your life is yoga's goal. Do more yoga.

THIS IS AN ARTICLE IN A YEAR-LONG SERIES ON "QUICK FIXES"

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Svaroop[®] Vidya Ashram ♦ www.svaroop.org ♦ info@svaroopayoga.org ♦ 610.644.7555