

## ARE DREAMS TRUE?

Phorn Ratnasuwan

*While the study of paranormal phenomena is relatively new to the West, in ancient civilizations like India and China, there was a great deal of interest in these matters. Modern science is limited in some ways because it has tended to concentrate only on the tangible aspects of natural phenomena. In Buddhism, while attempts are also made to study the physical nature of things, a great deal of attention is paid to the more abstract occurrences which cannot be described or quantified so easily. Buddhism stresses that much can be learned not by describing or labelling but by understanding the real nature of things, through INSIGHT. In the matter of dreams especially, a true understanding of this phenomenon can be obtained if we are willing to discard at least some of the methods of scientific investigation in vogue today and resort to the more traditional approaches employed by the thinkers and spiritualists of the past. The following is an extract from a book "Towards Light" by Phorn Ratnasuwan. An excerpt regarding psychokinesis from the same book appeared in the DEC. 1984 issue of **Voice of Buddhism**.*

*Ed.*

**Dreams are real while they last.** Whatever happens to us in a dream is real and solid, and not shadowy, nebulous or dreamlike. During the dream we experience real feelings, both pleasure and pain; the things we see, hear, smell, taste and touch are all real. Our thoughts and deeds in a dream are much the same as those in our waking hours. What is more important, the dreaming "I" that experiences anything is exactly much the same i.e. as solid and real, as the waking "I". In fact the difference, if there is to be any at all, is only the time-factor involved in both cases. The life and experience of a dream lasts, it has been scientifically tested and experimented, only seconds or minutes, where the life and experience of the waking hours takes years and decades.

But such is only a superficial or seeming difference. The essence of both, however, can be said to be more or less the same. For one thing, years and decades are nothing but accumulated numbers of days and hours, which again are nothing but the accumulated numbers of minutes and seconds. In absolute terms, years and decades can be expressed in terms of minutes and seconds much the same way as light-years can in terms of

miles, feet and inches. For another thing, a dream is short and dreamlike only when we are awake from it and then pretend to compare it with the duration of our waking moments. But during the moments of dream it is long and lifelike. On this scale of observation isn't it quite logical to say that a dream is a short life and a life is a long dream? This brings us back to the earlier statement that life and dream are essentially the same, at least in connection with time.

The above argument, however obvious and undeniable in the light of reason, may still be too logical and philosophical to many who prefer to call themselves realists, thereby treating such a philosophical reasoning as merely idealistic. Well, it is not our attempt here to convert anybody, to change the mind of any who has no mind to change. But we just want to remind them of the facts that have been taken for granted, to bring to their attention that there is after all an essential similarity, however philosophical or idealistic it may seem to some, between the experiences of a dream and those of our waking moments.

**Our conscious life is also a dream.** For more evidence, we would like to quote a paragraph from a very good book that may make the readers stop to think how dreamlike is life which we now think is so real. The paragraph reads:

"Go to a cemetery and look at the graves of your parents or grandparents. Where are their bodies that you knew so well when they were 'alive'? They do not exist any more. **The same will happen to you** and some living consciousness clad in a still living shell (body) might have come to your grave and go through the same thoughts as you have done."

Having known this - being convinced that you yourself are also destined to the condition of a vanishing mirage, you may perhaps see, strictly speaking, how dream-like is this apparently solid and real life and body and, conversely, how lifelike is your dream.

**Not all dreams are non-sense:** Admitting that to many and on several occasions dreams are nothing but the confused workings of memory or result of physical disturbances, there is nevertheless a fact that there are some dreams that are far more than that. By this we refer to the prophetic dream which, however rare, deserves a place proportionate to its value. That some, or perhaps many, have never experienced any dream of this kind throughout their lives cannot be gainsaid any more than there can be any denying of the existence of the Himalayas or of a distant star in outer space although those who have seen them are obviously far outnumbered

by those who have not. The majority basis so glibly expressed in the saying, "Vox populi, vox dei: the voice of the people is the voice of God" cannot, we regret to say, apply here. For it must be admitted that in some cases and on some occasions, when and where specialized research is required, the voice of the few is the voice of Truth, if not that of God himself. Accounts of the pioneering research of such men as Darwin, Galileo, Copernicus and others speak for themselves how the traditional and general view held by the majority of people can be blunderingly wrong and the seemingly heretic declaration of the so-called hare-brained can be paradoxically right. In this respect perhaps the boldest saying is in a valuable book entitled "UNTO THEE I GRANT", wherein it is stated, "General opinion is no proof of truth; for the generality of men are ignorant. "

Our point in this paragraph is just to encourage more tolerance towards the less obvious, less general kind of dream: to support a trend towards its research in a more scientific spirit and not to brush aside its occurrence, however rare, as a mere non-sense, fantasy or a wishful thinking of some lunatics. In other words, may we bring you back to what we mentioned earlier once: what is generally true is not always universally or unexceptionally true.

**Reflection of mentality and/or materiality.** Another fact offered by dreams is that they can often be a telltale clue betraying the dreamers' mentality. A series of horrible dreams night after night will reveal some serious malfunctions either in the physical organs or the mental structure or both which are developing within and so far are unknown to the dreamers. In such a case it is advisable that they consult either their physicians or psychiatrists or, preferably, both. This is the case for the majority of people and is accepted by most people nowadays.

However, there is a significant truth underlying this phenomenon. It is that the mind although supposed to be a by-product of the assembled physical ingredients, can be a skillful detector giving a warning signal to us when we are temporarily detached from the body i.e. during our sleep, only if we are equally skillful to decode its system.

The other two kinds of dreams i.e. precognition, either through the help of unseen beings or that of one's own, is likewise an indicator of the dreamer's state of mind, which makes it possible at a particular moment to tune in to a different wave-length, thereby receiving the information which would otherwise not be passed through (in case of communication from other, unseen beings) or releasing the latent capacity of self-

knowledge and then expressing it in the form of symbolism. In both cases, therefore, there is present the capacity of the thought process (if you prefer this term to the mind) to change i.e. increase the frequency of its vibrations which enables it to obtain information from outer space, so to speak.

**We are all dreaming.** It should be noted that one of the Buddha's epithets is BUDDHO, which means "The Awakened One." This may be interpreted as one who has awakened either from sleep or from dreaming, both of which are equally reasonable in that, whether in a sleep or a dream, one is submerged in ignorance of the fact or reality. The difference is that in a sleep one is comparatively in a passive kind of ignorance, whereas in a dream one is spurred on by an active ignorance. In another sense, both are equally blind to the Truth, the difference being that one is lying still while the other is groping about in the dark.

And in this aspect i.e. **in point of the Absolute or Ultimate Truth**, sentient beings are all in a dream, whether they are in the highest realm of heaven or the lowest one of hell or the intermediate between both i.e. our world of human beings. Of course, the degree of being submerged in a dream may vary greatly with each individual, - which fact is due to the degree of Insight inherent in each individual at a particular moment. The greater the degree of Insight, the lesser the degree of being submerged in the dream. In the course of a dream, however, there are those who can sometimes get a glimpse of the Truth and appear to be waking up, only to fall back into a slumber and then more dream. And there are others who once they have caught a faint glimpse manage to shake off their drowsiness and work their way towards the condition of being full awake or fully enlightened.

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