

# What Happens During Our Sleep State?

T017 The Inner Teachings 15th July 1936 Pembroke Hall, London

## Invocation:

Oh Divine Spirit, Thou Who art within, Thou Whose glory manifests in all creation, we pray for greater wisdom, for a grander and fuller life on all planes of being. We pray also that we may be receptive to the influence of the angelic ones who bring to us the sweetness of their love. May we see, not with the mind of earth alone, but with the spiritual understanding with which Thou hast endowed us—so in simplicity and humility learn of Thee. May peace be in this gathering.

So mote it be.

Greetings, dear ones. We are conscious of the presence of many dear friends—nay, more than that—brethren, and we want you to feel, not that you listen to a discourse or lecture, but that we take council together. We tell of that which we have experienced in the spirit life, and you pass on to us your experience whilst functioning in your earthly vehicle; may we both learn something which will help us all to a fuller life, for in these days of spiritual evolution and growth we must not be content to live on the one plane of being.

There are those who declare it enough to live and work on the physical plane alone, without bothering about elsewhere, but they forget that all must someday depend entirely upon their finer vehicles or bodies for the power to make contact with the world to which they pass after leaving this physical plane. Therefore it behoves every individual man and woman to learn not only the functions of the physical body, but the functioning of their finer bodies; unless this is done, then indeed the soul will be chained or limited in its capacity and work on the inner planes after the change called death.

Now many present are conscious of activity out of your physical body. This may occur during meditation, when you have by training brought yourself to quiescence and stillness of mind and body—stillness of the lower mind, the earthly mind, so that you can raise your consciousness. There are those on earth who will say ‘Oh, this is pure imagination; I can sit and imagine anything’. Foolish, foolish people; they know not what imagination means, they do not understand the activity of the higher vehicle, and dismiss it. But every detail of conscious life is of the utmost importance, and when man recognises that he is more than merely a physical vehicle, and gains control over his inner self—when he learns to attract through the great centres of wisdom, love and will—then he will find liberation from sorrow and fear, disease and poverty. A question was asked ‘What do we do in our sleep state?’ Some experience very peculiar dreams, some know nothing at all from the time they fall asleep till when they awaken. Others appear to sleep little, or at least remain conscious for a great part of the night—although when morning comes they feel refreshed and ready for the day’s work.

There are many books depicting all that happens during sleep, but we state that each individual experience illustrates for the individual the true state of his life during sleep, and what happens to my brother here may not happen to my sister over there. No hard and fast rules bind personal experience, as you discover in ordinary daily life. Each man certainly learns lessons which train him, but in the learning of these lessons experiences vary widely.

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It is said that certain initiations are taken by the candidate during the sleeping state of the physical body; against that it is said that unless the memory of the experiences comes through to the physical mind, unless the experiences take form as a clear-cut ceremony, it is not possible to experience initiation in sleep.

But let us remember that we possess more than one mind, and the mind which normally functions on the material plane of life is a very small part. You may go through experiences on higher planes, but only be conscious within your spirit of a quickening of consciousness, a new sensitiveness or awareness of spiritual forces. You may know only in your heart and in your inner self. If that spiritual self which is in direct contact with the universal spiritual power becomes illumined or quickened, the awareness is transferred to the feeling, the intuition of the individual, but not always to the brain.

First we will discuss what happens in sleep to the unawakened individual, then to the ordinary average person, and then to the one spiritually quickened.

In the first category, the individual is not removed very far from the physical body—I mean the real self is not removed. The etheric body that interpenetrates the physical, the denser etheric which is part of the physical and which is the medium to transmit to the physical the life force, this whilst interpenetrating the physical body, interpenetrates the higher aspect of man. Thus there is a connecting link with the spirit. Now when the body sleeps, the etheric body is still closely interwoven with the physical, and only the astral body (or desire body) is withdrawn during the sleep state, but by its very coarseness of texture remains still chained to the physical body. Both astral and etheric bodies are open and quickly register impressions from the physical body, and also from the etheric planes of life and the lower astral worlds. If you could see the individual during sleep clairvoyantly, you would note the astral body, perhaps a couple of yards away, distinct from the resting form. What happens? Sometimes dreamless sleep, sometimes vivid dream comes to the sleeper, either from impressions received from the etheric world around it, or from the sub-conscious mind of the sleeper, a mind chained, imprisoned and unable to function with clarity and freedom.

Now to the next, the average individual. I have not enlarged upon the unpleasant aspects, but leave you to work these out for yourself. The ordinary average person is beginning to develop a little because the soul is more refined, a little purer. The etheric and astral bodies are not quite so coarse or dense, and certain quickenings of the psychic centres are visible to the clairvoyant. Such men and women find release from the physical vehicle during sleep, and intermingle with other beings on the astral plane, but will not be conscious, will not wake up as it were. Their powers are only beginning to function, and they are able to observe certain things taking place on the astral plane. They may absorb much in this state.

The impression may come through to the physical brain, not clearly, but vaguely, although help is given from the spirit helpers. The astral body, as I have said, moving about on the astral plane, absorbs certain knowledge and sees the life and the denizens of the astral plane.

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In the waking moments however, the brain catches but fleeting glimpses, a vague memory only, unless the individual can immediately grip that memory.

You have awakened sometimes with the knowledge of an extraordinary dream, but try as you will, the experience will not return. It may be however that during the day an idea will come, and you will say ‘Now did I read about this, or did I dream it?’ And then it may gradually come— ‘Why! This must have been a dream I had.’

You would learn how to catch such elusive thoughts. During the sleep state, when you have given yourself to be trained and taught by the spirit helpers and teachers, you will be the subject of experiment. You need not fear. Certain pictures will come, you will be shown certain scenes, and the teachers will watch the effect of these pictures upon your mind and waking consciousness. You would be amazed if you knew the true picture, and the peculiar little muddle which you sometimes register and bring through.

Well, never mind. We are getting on. Whether in the kindergarten or in the university, we are all working and are as brothers in this great school of spiritual growth and education.

Now with the third condition, that of the individual who is about to gain liberation. These have some interesting experiences. Before an individual can be awakened to full consciousness on the astral plane during sleep, they must pass a series of tests: it would not do to be awakened on to the astral plane and then be unable to withstand the conditions there.

One of the important tests is that of fearlessness—how many of you have had the experience of coming up against something very undesirable in your sleep? Perhaps an animal may threaten to destroy you, with the result that you have had the feeling of running away as hard as you could go—and sometimes legs won’t go! Oh, the panic and the fearsome things which threaten you! If only the individual would turn round and face the pursuer, nothing could harm him; the pursuer would vanish. So long as you run, of course it will follow.

Translate this to life. Grasp your nettle boldly. People want to run from things they dislike, instead of facing up to them—face them, and the terror would go and you would say ‘How foolish I was to be frightened—why, it is nothing.’

There is nothing to fear. Fear is man’s worst enemy; therefore when the soul is being awakened on the astral plane, the tests of fearlessness have to be passed before it can be trusted with work. The tests come in many ways and different people experience them differently— great height perhaps: many dislike great heights, many fear to fall. You have to learn that if you fall whilst in your astral body, nothing can hurt you, albeit an instinct from the physical body suggests hurt. Nothing can hurt you, nothing touch you.

When these tests are passed and the individual is ready to be awakened on the astral plane, then he can be of great service to the bands of workers there who are untiring in their efforts to help the souls of the discarnate. I speak now of the astral helpers, those who still have physical bodies which are left sleeping.

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Now to refer briefly to a plane higher still. The more advanced of humanity, particularly at the present, can be instructed and taught in the Halls of Learning, of Wisdom, during their sleep. Certain ones who are ready are taken to the great teachers, to the Elder Brethren, and there hold council and receive instruction and directions about their work on the earth plane, work destined to help forward the great plan of evolution.

You can do much to help yourself and to help the invisible workers by purity of life, by purifying the physical vehicle. If your body is coarse and heavy it must limit you because it affects the subtler bodies. So many people think carelessly. Do you remember us saying that nothing must be haphazard? Be as perfect in thought, word and deed as you can. Train yourself, control the thoughts of everyday life—a difficult thing! I know, but you will only attain your object by patient perseverance and hard work. Do not force yourself, but just quietly and patiently bring your wandering little mind back to the object which you have selected for meditation. Sit alone in a comfortable position—with spine erect, or lying down, and having become comfortable and relaxed, find your centre of stillness. When your mind wanders off, bring it back again to the place of quiet and stillness—it is there, always, so be still, be ye still.

In time you will feel and find a well of perfect stillness and peace. When you find this well within you will know only love. In thus contacting that place of stillness you are actually contacting the universal life, the God within. As you grow in consciousness you will find these periods of stillness grow longer. As time goes on you will be able to sustain the contact with the universal.

This is the simplest teaching we can offer, but we know that it will be unailing, for from that centre, the will of God or the will of your spirit directs your work. Do not expect results immediately—get to foundations first and build on that, and one day you will be liberated from bondage and free to bring back a clear memory of all you do. Without cessation of consciousness you will step out of your body and away you will go, to function in your astral body. This is exactly what the elder brethren called masters are able to do. The physical body, whilst asleep, receives sustenance from that eternal God-spirit which controls and directs the functions of the astral body and feeds the physical body during the period of sleep or perhaps trance.

Q.Is it possible while still in the physical body to bring back to full consciousness what we have been doing in our sleep state?

A.Well, it is possible, but not usual. In all life there is the necessity for periods of activity and periods of passivity. Even in the spiritual world this is so. You remember that God rested on the seventh day? Sometimes you think ‘Oh dear, I have seen nothing for so long, I am not making any progress!’ A great deal is happening within. Learn to be still. So long as you desire with all your heart and soul to grow in godliness, you make progress.

Q.What does it mean ‘to be able to function on the mental plane’?

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A. It is very difficult to bring back a clear memory of the mental plane. You pass away from the body of desire and function on the inner planes of soul being, but it is impossible to put into earth words any idea of the mental plane.

Q. Cannot this be illustrated by the feelings and intuitions one gets, which are so hard to put into words?

A. Exactly. You will get more expressions from the mental plane through music than anything else.

Q. When your spirit is away, is there any chance of it not coming back?

A. There are cases—but not accidental. There is no such thing as accidental death. If the body does not wake up, it means that it is all in the plan. But there are certain shocks which may bring the soul flying back to the physical body with a jerk and it is not unusual for the astral body and etheric body to get a little out of alignment through shock or noise.

Q. What is the best time for meditation?

A. Always on waking in the morning. If on waking you attune yourself to the harmonies of the spiritual worlds, you are much better equipped at night to sleep under the direction of the will of the spirit. Early in the morning and before sleeping at night are the best times to meditate.

### Benediction:

Eternal Light, all power, all wisdom, all love, dwell with us; give unto us the will to serve and not to count the cost, to love without hope of reward, to continue on the path of life with courage, knowing that in Thee we have peace, justice and a perfect fulfilment. So may Thy life be fulfilled in Thy children here before Thee.

Amen.

*The search matches with either words and phrases, which appear in the text, or the following 'key' words and phrases, which are similar in meaning to those in the document:*

*Karma, opportunity, spirit world*