

4/15/14  
Verse 55

A long dream is this; like sleep, this perishes every day;  
in the same way, dream also;  
the perishing intelligence does not see  
what belongs to aloneness, and hence is constantly confused.

Free translation:

Our wakeful experience is also like a long dream. Both waking and dreaming terminate after a period of time. Because of the confusion generated by this alternation, no one sees the aloneness of the universal substratum.

Nataraja Guru's translation:

A long-drawn-out dream is this, and like sleep each day,  
It gets extinguished: dream too likewise!  
We can never see extinction thus to this: as it is  
Hitched on to the pure aloneness, it goes round for ever.

The verse 55 commentary is very long. In my preparation for the class I tried to determine any parts that could be left out to shorten the reading. There were none. The whole meditation brims with essential ideas that flow seamlessly into one another, so any lacunae would disrupt the symmetry of this masterpiece. We used the long reading as an opportunity to go deeply into the aloneness it highlights, guided by Nitya's illuminating presentation.

All of us from the West know the nursery rhyme that instructs us to row our boat gently down the stream because life is but a dream, but now we are being directed to really think about what it means. All we can perceive of life, both awake and asleep, is temporary, which is the dreamlike feature. An event comes, impresses us for awhile, and then vanishes with hardly a trace. We are now redoubling our efforts to ally

ourselves with the lasting basis underlying the temporary flux, which should accomplish at least two crucial things: restore us to us full confidence in the midst of chaos and give us a clue as to how to not be drawn into dead ends, or in Indian terms be seduced by Maya (over and over again). Nitya draws us right in:

The process we are undergoing in this work is a transference from maya, the seeming first cause of the transactional world, to an ultimate cause. If maya both is and is not, it has no proper basis. For anything to be, it should have a real basis. So an existential ground is to be established for any experience. An experience may be an illusion of something, but there still should be a ground for that illusion. When you say something is superimposed, the question arises, “Superimposed on what?”

This is slightly misleading, because maya itself is an aspect of the eternal ground. It doesn't come and go, it's the very way existence is brought into being. Remember last week we were taught that maya is unitive at one end and dual at the other. It's what maya produces that occurs, lasts awhile and then disappears, not maya itself. But no matter. The point is that we are aiming to reacquaint ourselves with the stable ground of the Absolute, or at least the normative notion of the Absolute, since the Absolute is not anything we can be acquainted with in the ordinary sense. If it was, this project would be a piece of cake.

And why should we bother to sort through this complex business? Because we get fooled every time we superimpose our affinity for joy and beauty on the illusory aspect, and sooner or later find ourselves barking up the wrong tree, worshipping a dead horse, to mix a few metaphors. If we can just make our way to the unitive end of the spectrum, then the ground of life will stand revealed. Until then we run after one chimera after another, and nurse our wounds when the object of our attentions disappears once again.

I remember an image from one of Nitya's early Bhagavad Gita classes. He said we are standing around looking at an egg. It's very symmetrical and perfect. Suddenly there's a crack! The egg moves.

Another crack! Quickly cracks appear all over, and pieces start to fall off. It looks like a terrible tragedy. How can we stop it? But inside the egg is a baby chick that needs to be born. It also wants to stay safely in its artificial womb, but it has grown too big. It has to come out. When it does we are relieved to find the apparent tragedy was not a tragedy at all: it has produced a beautiful baby bird that will soon learn to fly.

That tells us in order to grow we first have to break out of the mold we currently inhabit. Depending on your perspective, the natural stages of growth can look either beautiful or terrifying. From a limited viewpoint, there is disaster. An eggshell has been destroyed. From a wider purview, what happened was a natural promotion of essential development. Nitya was speaking optimistically of the social upheavals of the early 1970s, but it equally applies to the stages of personal maturation.

Bill reminded us that since our confusion arises from the inadequacy of both dreams and intellectual reductions, understanding the principle of the Absolute helps. It is the wider purview we need, the firm ground we can stand on through all the turmoil. It sounds easy enough, but how do we actually carry it off?

One trick Nitya mentions is that when we awaken from a dream, we compare it to our present state and realize it was “just a dream.” Unfortunately we don’t have that option in the dream, but we can imagine it when we are awake. We can presume that our waking state has the same existential reality as a dream, and then we can begin to treat it the way we treat our dreams, lovely and interesting, but evanescent. We can teach ourselves to let go. And remember, letting go doesn’t mean dismissing or ignoring anything. Letting go of our conditioned responses allows us to be more present than ever, because we’re not being thrown off by our attachments. We become much more effective even within the waking dream of life when we develop a detached perspective. This is a crucial place where spiritual seekers make mistakes, by believing we can just tune out the world and become realized in consequence. There’s a bit more involved.

What was the stillness of aum in the last verse is here described as *kaivalya*, aloneness, which, you may recall, is a contraction of all

oneness. In the unitive state, everything we identify as 'I' or 'mine' is effaced. That means if we do dip into it, we don't stay there long. We become confused and return to our familiar state of separateness. Since the gurus are trying to blast us out of our complacency and into a unitive state, they aren't letting on that this is normal, that almost no one remains permanently in pure unity, we all go back and forth and integrate the confusing state of unity into our much more confusing state of duality. The more we bring unity into our everyday lives, the more the conditionings, the memory retentions, are softened, worn down, washed away. Where the fearful cling to their little definitions of who they are, seekers are happy to expand their definitions toward the ultimate.

The "bit more involved" is our accumulation of static definitions on which we base our orientation to the world, including ourself. These dictate our behavior almost totally, while providing us the illusion of control. The ego always thinks it is running the ship, but that is one of Maya's little jokes. She supplies all our impetus, plus the delirium that we are making our own decisions. That makes us willingly complicit in all her schemes, and highly defensive about any suggestion that another option is worth considering. In other words, it makes us docile slaves. We willfully fight off ideas and attitudes that might be vast improvements on our "chosen course." Chosen by our conditioning, that is. This is not a new concept, but Nitya puts it very well here:

In the dream an unknown force influences your mind so that you behave in a certain way despite yourself, and yet you know that at that time it looked as if it were your decision. Like that, you can see that the wakeful experience is also not free of an overall dominating principle. This directing or dominating principle could be taken as the operation of a collective mind of which your individual mind is just a part. Or perhaps there were long stored up incipient memories which were looking for an opportunity to actualize.

What we are seeing as the here and now are the accumulated urges which were lying dormant for a long time finding opportunities to influence segments of your experience from within. Although it appears to be the individual's experience, the actual content belongs

to many previously suppressed occasions in a temporal series; in other words, what you tried to accomplish on a subject four years ago, three years ago, one year ago, a few months ago, last week. The same thing has come up many times, but something in your ego repressed it. Finally it gets to a breaking point where that repression is no longer possible, because all the resistance is worn down. Then it comes out as an experience in the wakeful. In this way almost all our wakeful experience has an unconscious history behind it, which is impelling its operation.

This made Andy think of how most of the time we unquestioningly assume we are in charge, but the verse locates the motivation for our experiences far beyond the dream and waking states, a truth recently ratified by neuroscientists with their fMRI experiments.

Interestingly, if you read this extract closely, both positive and negative vasanas battle our resistance to try to get expressed. I suspect as children we first learned to repress our bad urges, and pretty soon just decided to repress them all, since most of them were unwelcome to those around us anyway. An empowered ego could make reasonably wise decisions about which ones to not suppress, but since we don't even acknowledge the mechanism, we don't know how to reinstate our creativity. We do art projects and such like because they sometimes permit a trickle to seep through the barricades, but we generally are fully bound up. Getting it right requires a dramatic change of focus that would allow us to penetrate to the essence through all the glamour of appearances. This is eminently doable, and we'll be working on it for most of the second half of *Atmopadesa Satakam*.

All this talk about dreams was right up Nancy's alley. She is very fond of "dozing Zen," of lying in bed half asleep in the morning. She knows from experience that dreams can point out problems when she's going through a crisis. She likes to prolong the dream state into her waking time in bed, so the two states can neutralize each other. She goes back and forth across the borderline, and learns many wondrous things. (I use this adjective, wondrous, not she. She's also very modest.)

Scotty has been working from the other side of night: before he goes to sleep or during the day he sends little mental packets of love to his father, who is estranged from the family. Recently he had a dream similar to Deb's reported in the verse 53 notes, where he watched his father and felt sure he was okay, and then he became a third person witness, smilingly looking at both himself and his dad together in a store. Like Deb, he took away a lasting sense of peace and happiness from the dream.

This cued Bushra to talk about how she sometimes found herself in a kind of "third person" state of the neutral ground. She knows if she can be a witness and remove a certain level of involvement, she can be a witness to her own pain, anger, happiness, and so on, and reach neutrality. She sometimes stands outside herself and thinks, "Oh look! Bushra is suffering." It lets her feel there is more in her than just her 'I'.

Paul added that the idea of becoming liberated from our retentions doesn't mean we are supposed to stop existing. He cited the sentence, "Narayana Guru said that knowledge, to know its own state, has become all this phenomenal world, so that through this intelligence it can see what it is." We are essential to the game, and it's more than just a game, it is a teaching tool. We should be like the Native American shaman Fools Crow, who taught people to become like a hollow reed for the winds to blow through and make music.

Along these lines, Nitya here suggests an attitude that often causes revulsion, because our self-identity is bound up with the excitement and misery of events:

According to this instruction, you come to a place where you are no longer excited about experiences. You do not treat them as good or bad even though previously that may have been very important to you. You no longer attach a moral tag that makes you feel guilty or benevolent. You don't treat things as bright or dull, or true or untrue in the relative sense. You just treat them as phases flowing past. And because you are no longer excited you are no longer terrified. There is no threat in anything. Insecurity could only be about the things that are passing away, so that ceases to eat at you. There is no gain you

can retain. It is all just passing phenomena, to which you have a feeling of “Let it be.”

This attitude brings you to live in the present, in this very moment, because that is all that is possible. There comes a kind of sameness. What once seemed very painful as well as what seemed very sweet become mere relative factors. The retention of the painful and the sweet are only two models. By themselves they are no longer sweet or painful when they are recalled to mind. The sameness that is in the recall of the retention is also experienced as it is taking place. That is how it should be. Narayana Guru says you fumble at the termination and do not realize it is all happening within the total oneness. You are still confused. He will examine it further in the next verse.

Nitya is downplaying the bliss of the state of sameness—samadhi—for a very good reason. Many of us in the original class had already converted samadhi into just one more transactional accomplishment. It was something you went out and got. It was the goal of spiritual life. But thinking of it in this way converts it into something it isn't. So Nitya didn't sell realization as some great accomplishment we should all try to attain. The Gurukula gurus figured that if we could be weaned away from our cravings for peak experiences and brought to a state of normalcy, it would allow us to ease into all-oneness, since it is already our native state, our native place.

Narayana Guru encourages us to closely examine our experience in order to reveal its essence. Nitya closed his discourse with a subtle plea for us to get over our habitual reactions dictated by our vasanas and samskaras, our various memory constructs:

The meditation of this verse requires a very deep introspective analysis of one's personal experience, at a time when you are passing through a crisis. At the same time, the crisis can be seen as a phantom even while you are living it. This can be accomplished only when you can detach your mind in the thick of actual situations and can see how the exciting elements are passing into a retentive [memory] world even as you are living them in the here and now.

On certain occasions in my life when I had a physical or mental affliction, I took the opportunity for the meditative purpose of evaluating the actual pain, the actual agony to which the body or mind was subjected. I quietly watched the body's pain and wrote descriptions of exactly how I felt it to be painful. Immediately there came a psychological turnover of my interest from the pain itself to the norms of pain, intellectually conceived. That made the pain already a phantom.

The pain became less painful because my interest was of a critic making a critique of it. When you become a critic of your own pain, half of it goes away. Then you question whether the other half is real, because the first half already left. This is even more poignant when you are in an angry state and you make a journal of your anger. The bulk of the anger immediately dies down and becomes even humorous. You pose as the angry person and make a caricature of your anger. It becomes so satirical of your own state of mind that you see yourself as a big fool to get angry like that. There is so little content in it. It is blown all out of proportion. Once you see this, the whole thing leaves you and you wonder, "What is this thing called my anger? What is this thing called my pain? What are these things called my excitement, my sense of fame, my sense of importance?" All of it is reduced to an evenness. Somehow, up to now you have not cultivated that acumen. You can try it and see what kind of difference it makes.

Since Nitya was a philosopher, he makes it sound almost easy, but being able to examine our mental states when we are in a crisis is anything but. It helps—I'd say it's essential—to have encouragement and support. But a crisis is a crisis precisely because we are helplessly carried along by our demons, and we swear by them. Hey, it might be dangerous to challenge our demons! They might bite us. So look out everybody! Here I come! Roaaaar!

As is often the case, life provided crystal clear examples this week for the verse. A dear friend who has gallantly repressed his ferocious demons all his adult life has finally surrendered to their power, and their



eruption is like an atomic blast. Every word of Nitya's exegesis seems so germane and well-considered in respect to his condition. Of course, it's the last thing our friend would ever think about or accept. The normal reaction to a crisis is denial first of all, followed by blaming others, and if that isn't enough, furious violence. Anything but accept that the crisis emerges logically from our own derangement. Anything but dare to open our eyes to the toxic retentions we have been carrying around and secretly nurturing.

Remember Morbius, in the movie *Forbidden Planet*, whose subconscious demon has been unleashed and is wreaking havoc all over the alien world Altair IV? At the climax it is breaking down the steel door and coming to kill the survivors huddled inside. At first Morbius can't admit this lethal eminence has anything to do with him, an outwardly kind and gentle soul. But when another spaceman insists that the problem is "Monsters from the id," meaning the subconscious, he begins to suspect himself. He vaguely recalls the same monster lived in the past, but now he sees it "Only in nightmares of those times. And yet always in my mind I seem to feel the creature is lurking somewhere close at hand, sly and irresistible and only waiting to be reinvoked for murder." Close at hand indeed. But at the last minute he realizes the creature is him: I'm "Guilty! Guilty! My evil self is at that door, and I have no power to stop it!" Yet he can stop it. Shouting, "I deny you, I give you up!" the energy drains out of the chimera and the crisis is over, other than the Hollywood excess.

Why is giving up our obsessions so darned difficult? Why does it take a crisis to give us the energy to honestly look at ourselves, and yet that is also the time we are most resistant to doing so? The time we most need a wise helpmate, and yet we want to push everyone as far away as possible? Maya is a pro at keeping the veil in place, that's for sure.

Bushra is an unusually balanced person, and has no apparent connection with spiritual teachings, so I asked her how she got there. I suspected she was a natural yogi-type, but that wasn't it. She told us that some years ago, not too long though, she was in a crisis of her own, and a friend (Johnny Stallings, in fact) told her you can step back and watch yourself, and it clicked, spectacularly it would seem. The right word at

the right time. But without that word, would she have been able to change her life?

Bushra added a great idea: that dreams are extraordinary, but when we are awake we domesticate our dreams, we tame them into the narrative we use for day-to-day living. But we shouldn't domesticate our dream life. Leave it wild, uninterpreted. I added that wakeful experience was also like that—an extraordinary series of experiences that we convert into a boring narrative to fit our preconceptions. Andy added that highlighting experience into a shadowy form is a great thing to take away from this.

So we very often grow through crises, and it doesn't have to be our own crisis, either. Susan said she always based her life on how she thought her brother would judge her: "What would Philip say?" He was her model for behavior. Then eighteen years ago he had a serious mental breakdown, and she realized she shouldn't look to him like that anymore. It began the gradual process of restoring her self-reliance.

Susan's is a classic retention, usually unrecognized. All of us have parents, siblings, grandparents, teachers, guest speakers, TV stars, you name it, compressed into the form of memories, who are directing our steps. Where is our own voice to be found in all the hubbub? If we can get them to be quiet even for a moment, we can make great strides.

Our closing meditation was to sink into the confusing, 'I' eradicating aloneness for a brief period. Accompanied by our fellow travelers, we dared to dive deep into nirvana, and the joy of it lingered long into the night.

## Part II

### *Neither This Nor That But . . . Aum:*

Where do we draw a line between the wakeful and the dream state? If dream is a mythically structured image that can be placed between a haphazard caricature and an ingeniously fabricated short story, our wakeful consciousness is vastly interspersed with many such caricatures and mentally visualized myths and parables. What is common to both

the experiences of the wakeful and of the dream is the subjective identity of the I-consciousness relating itself to time-sense, space-sense, thing-sense, and a general orientation of events. The main differences between the two are the absence of perception in the dream and the contiguity of events in the wakeful. The memory of the wakeful comes in handy to relate today's wakeful programme as a meaningful continuation of yesterday's and the day before yesterday's. The programming of tomorrow and the day after tomorrow can also be tabulated in today's wakeful state. Dream is chaotic and defies all the set conditional rules of the wakeful world. When we are in the dream we do not experience any lack of perception. No one feels any compunctions about having a haphazard, vulgar or lazy dream. In the present verse, the Guru treats both the wakeful and the dream as a grand dream and he contrasts it to deep sleep.

In the wakeful state we question, make critical judgements and have volitions to act. In the dream these are faked, but we do not notice the least difference between a wakeful questioning and the fake questioning of the dream. The same is also true of fake judgements and fake volitions. Both the wakeful and the dream become of no consequence in the deep sleep state. The senses, the mind, the intellect, memories and the ego are all obliterated

In deep sleep everything disappears, but nothing is annihilated. Like the winter trees sprouting new leaves in the lush green of spring or the seeds that reappear after lying buried in the good earth, whatever is obliterated by deep sleep reappears in the dream and the wakeful as if it had never disappeared in the gap of deep sleep.

Narayana Guru treats the transcendent Absolute and phenomenal existence as the two faces of the same truth. The fag end of phenomenal existence is symbolically marked by the vanishing sound  $\beta m m m \hat{u}$  of aum. When aum is articulated a long silence follows the half intoned sound  $\beta m m m \hat{u}$ .  $\beta M \hat{u}$  symbolically represents the deep sleep and the causal consciousness of the phenomenal alternation between the wakeful and the dream.

The intellect, which fades out at the termination of dream, has no power to go beyond the opaque walls of deep sleep to estimate the

change that comes over the consciousness. The aloneness that the Self enjoys beyond the last part of deep sleep is an eternal mystery. Recurring wakefulness and sleep turn one again and again from the aloneness of the Self and perpetuate the confusion of the phenomenal as the only reality that is experienced. The flight of the alone to the alone is thus only the privilege of the few.

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Nataraja Guru's commentary:

THE continual flux of becoming implied in the creative evolution of the process of Nature in the phenomenal world, not excluding the psychic states of dreaming or waking that belong also to the more subtle aspect of the same, are pictured here together in living terms.

This is to be understood psycho-dynamically and in neutral psycho-physical terms, in keeping with the neutral monism implied in the contemplative way belonging to Vedanta (or contemplative absolutism). The parity that exists between sleep and waking in terms of their common creative content, which we have tried to explain in commenting on the previous verse, using the expression 'Maya' – this parity is what is meant to be expressed here. In verse 7 the same process was scrutinised once though from an ontological angle.

In order to see this in its proper perspective, we have first to think neutrally and see that both dream and the waking events of life are subject to extinction each day. When one leaves operating on the consciousness, the other takes over; and between these two modes of creative activity of the psycho-physical apparatus we have a long-drawn-out dream which belongs to Maya kept on everlastingly.

This Maya has to be imagined as being in relation to the vertical axis of becoming in pure time. Pure time in reality belongs to the context of the Absolute, which is here referred to as kevala, which we have rendered as ‘aloneness’, referring to the unique status of the Absolute, as known in contemplative literature such as that of Plotinus where spiritual progress is described as ‘the flight of the alone to the Alone’. ‘Kaivalya’ (which is the noun form of the adjective ‘kevala’), as the goal of contemplative progress, is also used in the context of Patanjali Yoga, and is to be treated as synonymous with ‘nirvana’, which refers to ultimate release of the soul from all bondage. There are many other terms like ‘apavarga’, ‘moksha’ or ‘nihsreyasa’, etc. which refer to the same pure state of ultimate release or salvation.

Careful re-reading of the first half of the verse, and keeping in mind the parity of dream and the wakeful states intended to be explained, will reveal the subtle interplay of vertical positive factors which are meant to be unitively and neutrally understood here.

### Part III

This verse is a good place to reprise the quote from neuroscientist David Eagleman about the ocean liner I’ve made much of, from *Incognito* (2011). I’ll throw in the other paragraphs I typed up. I know you’ve seen it already, but this is definitely worth seeing twice:

If you ever feel lazy or dull, take heart: you’re the busiest, brightest thing on the planet. (2)

The first thing we learn from studying our own circuitry is a simple lesson: most of what we do and think and feel is not under our conscious control. The vast jungles of neurons operate their own programs. The conscious you—the I that flickers to life when

you wake up in the morning—is the smallest bit of what’s transpiring in your brain. Although we are dependent on the functioning of the brain for our inner lives, it runs its own show. Most of its operations are above the security clearance of the conscious mind. The *I* simply has no right of entry.

Your consciousness is like a tiny stowaway on a transatlantic steamship, taking credit for the journey without acknowledging the massive engineering underfoot. (4)

You’re not perceiving what’s out there. You’re perceiving whatever your brain tells you. (33)

In the traditionally taught view of perception, data from the sensorium pours into the brain, works its way up the sensory hierarchy, and makes itself seen, heard, smelled, tasted, felt—“perceived.” But a closer examination of the data suggests this is incorrect. The brain is properly thought of as a mostly closed system that runs on its own internally generated activity. We already have many examples of this sort of activity: for example, breathing, digestion, and walking are controlled by autonomously running activity generators in your brain stem and spinal cord. During dream sleep the brain is isolated from its normal input, so internal activation is the only source of cortical stimulation. In the awake state, internal activity is the basis for imagination and hallucinations.

The more surprising aspect of this framework is that the internal data is not *generated* by the external sensory data but merely *modulated* by it....

The deep secret of the brain is that not only the spinal cord but the entire central nervous system works this way: internally generated activity is modulated by sensory input. (44-5)

The first lesson about trusting your senses is: don’t. Just because you *believe* something to be true, just because you *know*

it's true, that doesn't mean it *is* true.... This is because your senses will tell you the most inglorious lies....

After all, we're aware of very little of what is "out there." The brain makes time-saving and resource-saving assumptions and tries to see the world only as well as it needs to. And as we realize that we are not conscious of most things until we ask ourselves questions about them, we have taken the first step in the journey of self-excavation. We see that what we perceive in the outside world is generated by parts of the brain to which we do not have access.

These principles of inaccessible machinery and rich illusion do not apply only to basic perceptions of vision and time. They also apply at higher levels—to what we think and feel and believe. (53-4)

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Jake's comments:

In the concluding paragraphs of his commentary on verse 55, Nitya begins outlining some specific steps we can take on our journey to realizations once we hesitate long enough to re-alize we are on that voyage of becoming aware of it or not (as he pointed out in his previous commentary on verse 54). He prefaces his instruction by dissecting the Guru's verse, which is concerned, for the most part, with the dream state. Having focused on the relationship between the wakeful and deep dream states in the previous few verses, the Guru, in the present one, notes how the awake and dream states combine in such a way as to operate as a unit that essentially blurs in our memory as a single continuous dream. In this natural dissolving, they reveal the canvas of the Absolute on which we have painted our lives. It is in this awareness that we can find the space to locate our *I* as we go about our business in the world, a position from which all activity can be seen for what it is—distinct from the ego-I values we have attached to the various objects coming and going. In that balanced

vision, we have the opportunity to act in the world according to what *is* rather than *what ought to be*, to act according to our clarity of vision and make choices as they legitimately present themselves and not act because we are compelled to do so, never knowing why.

Nitya begins his commentary with a discussion of the dream state and its correlation to the awake state. In both, the mind is at work and there exists a sense of *I* around which thoughts circulate. Both, however, rely on an unknown critical faculty by which we measure any experience. Awakening from a dream, we discover we have been dreaming and place the memory of it in the “dream” category. In our wakeful state, we likewise verify experiences as belonging to that wakeful state by way of the same faculty. In this process we compare the two states and continuously make judgments as to the dream experiences’ authenticity by comparing them with those experiences we have in the wakeful state, thereby reducing the former to “not real.” The possibilities raised by reversing this trajectory, says Nitya, are, for the most part, “left unexamined” (373).

Drilling down into this alternative, Nitya connects it with our mind’s creation of space and time. As he has noted previously, it is the mind that manufactures space and time so that the *I* can locate itself, affording it the ability to recognize phenomenal arising. As these experiences are lived through, the mind to various degrees compulsively attaches to the memory of them thereby perceiving a ghost of the past in the present. As Nitya writes, there really is no past other than those fragments of memory contained in the present that can be retrieved now and then. In this subjective and diaphanous perceived state, the content of what was determined to be a dream (somewhere in the “past”) assumes the very same form. In other words, the content of the past-dream or event of the awake-state transform into the same entity and both are manufactured by the mind in the present



moment only.<sup>1</sup> (Footnote: Sometimes, pictures, books, films, and so on are offered *as* the past rather than as what they are: artifacts, etc. experienced only in the present moment and always subject to deterioration as is all manifestation.)

In both states, we act out our roles according to a script we rarely recognize. In the dream state, our mysterious motivation is a bit easier to perceive than it is in our awake state. In a dream, we can often find ourselves doing ridiculous activities that jump elliptically among absurdities. Something there is guiding those scenes, and the work of much psychoanalysis is devoted to dream interpretation (more often than not explained by *samskaras* established early in life). Likewise, in the awake state, excavating the source for our various “decisions” constitutes the work of that same talk therapy. As Nitya writes, “our wakeful experience has an unconscious history behind it, which is impelling its operation” (p. 376). The same process functions in our dream state, and both constitute our attempts to actualize a desire in order to see it. By experiencing it, we “re-alize” it as our own.

The uncovering or exposing of this constant process opens for us a path to uncovering those influences that can be associated with one’s biological history, including the influences of one’s predecessors. In Western medical convention, however, moving beyond that dimension presents a domain conflict; we move from “science” to mysticism. Exploring *samskaras* and their influences on our lives can be practically verified whereas *vasanas* constitute that which cannot be empirically measured by number. And the interaction between the two, their constant intermingling (according to Eastern thought), further removes the combination from being reduced to quantitative measure, the bedrock of Western science. Both the psychologist and the Vedantist, however, share the realization that influences outside conscious

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<sup>1</sup> Sometimes, pictures, books, films, and so on are offered *as* the past rather than as what they are: artifacts, etc. experienced only in the present moment and always subject to deterioration as is all manifestation.

awareness play a necessary role in determining how people act and what they think they choose to do.

In the last few pages of his commentary, Nitya offers a way forward that includes both approaches and does so by associating them with the awake and dream states. In both the awake and dream states, the mind continuously and instantaneously retains experiences as memory. It is this “process of a retention of retention [that] transforms things into shadowy substances” (p. 377). At this point, that substance replaces the experiences and we begin to parse the “historic, mythical, legendary or fantastic aspects” as items of interest and study. In short, the map replaces the territory, but that retention is actually the mind recreating the past in the present, a process that magnifies with each memory and constructs an endless chain of retention retaining retention wherein the distinction between dream and awake experiences dissolve.

Our mind works always in the present, however much it insists on its time/space compartmentalization. It will do what it will do, but our Self does not necessarily need to buy into the illusion. By critically analyzing our experience, by staying in the present—the only legitimate time tense—we can, as Nitya counsels, see that our unified experience has the “same kind of content which dreams have” and end our manic attachment to them (p. 378). They will come and go, but we cannot ignore them because they do temporarily present themselves to our senses in the world of necessity. From a position of present-centering, we have the option of responding or not according to what *is* happening rather than what appears to be happening: “according to this instruction . . . there is no threat in anything” (p. 379).

#### Part IV

Susan isn't lagging behind like many of you (it's fine!), but she wrote this and then forgot to send it for a stretch. That's okay too.

“Where the fearful cling to their little definitions of who they are, seekers are happy to expand their definitions toward the ultimate.”  
(From the class notes, verse 55)

As I anticipate big changes in my life, I am really looking at how I define myself and how to let go of those definitions. I am finding many roadblocks. First, my life is very busy and full of distractions so that I don't take the time to ponder. Of course there is time as I'm in the midst of all the busyness to think about these things but it's not the same as really giving my mind to it as I am doing right now. I enjoy this time so much – reading through the class notes and thinking about my reactions and revelations. So why can't I get around to doing this more? Second, the definitions of who I am are quite entrenched at this point: wife to Rick, mother to Sarah and Peter, sister to Philip, etc. Of course I want to be all these things but I don't want them to define me. Third, I keep thinking that I am going to transition and change into a new definition rather than just letting my definitions expand. How freeing to not think of having a goal in mind. I must trust the process, as Bushra said a few weeks ago.

Nitya: “According to this instruction, you come to a place where you are no longer excited about experiences. You do not treat them as good or bad even though previously that may have been very important to you. You no longer attach a moral tag that makes you feel guilty or benevolent. You don't treat things as bright or dull, or true or untrue in the relative sense. You just treat them as phases flowing past. And because you are no longer excited you are no longer terrified. There is no threat in anything. Insecurity could only be about the things that are passing away, so that ceases to eat at you. There is no gain you can retain. It is all just passing phenomena, to which you have a feeling of "Let it be."

As I am growing older, I am thinking of a time when I will no longer be here, I am trying to let go of any material things and also

adjust my feelings about letting go in general. I feel that I have come a long way in this area. I used to be so attached and so terrified of loss. Now I feel that I can at least entertain an understanding of its natural and inevitable beauty, like the turning of the autumn leaves. But of course I still alternate between clinging and letting go and I do understand about the confusion of this.