

1- Nigel Hamilton, Camp Zenith 2002

Alchemy and dreams

Monday, 29 July 2002

Sufism has been associated for a long time with alchemy and also with the interpretation of dreams. In fact, there are some Sufi orders that guide people only through their dreams.

What that means is they will not initiate you unless you've had a certain kind of dream.

Certain dreams are recognized as initiations.

Story of a Sufi who was a master of the dream state, and he met his colleague in the dream, and his colleague was dreaming too. So he said to his friend: are we dreaming? And his friend said: no, we are awake. - That is **the purpose of this dreamwork, to awaken in your dreams**. It's a path, about learning to wake up in your sleep and learning to see the kind of illusion that you are caught up in your dream, and then when you awaken in your dream, you have the possibility of God realization.

This is no different to other spiritual traditions, in **Tibetan Buddhism** they teach the same thing. The only difference is, in Tibetan Buddhism they talk about dreams which are part of our illusion and then they talk about clear light. And then there is a third state in between: **clear dreams**. So there are unclear dreams, which are illusory dreams, when you are caught up in your own inner world. A psychotherapist tries to interpret your dream to help you sort out your own inner world. This even includes symbolic dreams, where you have symbols appear in your dreams. The breakthrough is when you break through symbolism and what you see in the dream is real. In Sufi terms, Pir Vilayat has given different stages of realization. He talks about the stage of Mithal. The word mythology comes from that, so mithal is a kind of state of the universal mind where you go beyond yourself and you can see what's happening to other people that's real. And then one can also have dreams about your future, sometimes we call these psychic dreams, and also in this category of clear dreams is when you begin to see light in your dreams. So you may have had the experience where you felt that you were in a place of light in your dream, but it was an impersonal dream, you could not see yourself in it or your personal life, it was beyond your personal life. All this comes under the heading of clear dreams. The third category, which is clear light, can happen when you are asleep. The experience is that you experience yourself as a being of light, or **you see the most brilliant light in your dream, and when you wake up, the light is still there**. That's the state of a kind of enlightenment, an enlightened state.

Hazrat Inayat Khan also talks about a fourth kind of dream: a dream that shows you the opposite of what is true. You may say: how is that possible? How can you see the opposite of what is true in your dream? This can happen when your mind is very confused, it's as though your mind acts as a reverse mirror. In psychology they call one class of these dreams compensatory dreams. What it means is that if you are very poor, you dream that you are very rich. If you are unrecognized in the world, you dream that you are a king or a queen. But these dreams don't come very often, they come at a stage of life when you are very confused. For the most part, even though the Tibetans say that some dreams are illusory, even those dreams can be useful. They are called illusory because there is no sign of enlightenment in them, that's why. But I mean, we are all in a state of illusion right now, and that doesn't mean we can't learn anything. So one can even learn from illusory dreams, as far as you and I are concerned, most of our dreams are illusory. So much for the types of dreams.

Why we dream

The other thing we need to put into place is some understanding where dreams come from. Why do we dream? There are lots of theories about that, but in Sufism and many other spiritual disciplines, the reason why we dream is because **the dream state is a connection between the spiritual world and this world**. What that means is we recognize three states of reality, one is the enlightened state, one is the intermediary state, the dream state, and then there is this world. Now there is a constant influx of impulses from the spiritual world into this world via the dream state. Literally, in terms of the chakras, what is happening, it's coming down from the crown center down into the lower centers. And then, when we are in the physical world, things are coming to us from the physical world and enter into our dream state. So both sides meet in the dream. When they meet, your dream is the result of the spiritual and worldly impulses together.

This is a fundamentally different view of dreams compared to psychology. In psychology we recognize that dreams are the result of our social relationships and social interactions with people, and also our thoughts about ourself. The spiritual perspective on dreams is that there is another dimension, the dimension of light, and that also is present in our dreams. So we do not deny the psychological impact of the world, but we also affirm the presence of the spiritual in the dream. What that means is: every single dream has a spiritual dimension to it, even illusory dreams. It's a bit like a painter who paints a canvas, and first it's all light and very beautiful, and then along comes a cleaner who doesn't recognize art and washes over it with a mop and dirties the canvas. So you no longer recognize the painting, it just looks like a dirty canvas, until someone says, well, there is something in that canvas, and they start cleaning away, to find something underneath it. That's the work we do with dreams. We hope to do a little bit of cleaning up.

The stages of awakening in the dream

An interesting thing is that when you begin to pay attention to your dreams, then it seems as though the spiritual impulses that come through to us get stronger. That is the **beginning of spiritual awakening**. Because when I began I said that you wake up in your dreams; what actually happens is the light gets stronger and that's what makes you conscious in your dreams. You could then say that there are stages of awakening in the dream, as we name them in Sufism, Nasut (earth), Khayal (imagination), Arwah (state of the spirits), Mithal (beyond yourself), Malakut (soul level, you actually see soul landscapes in the dream, and when you wake up and still see them, then it is a clear dream), Jabarut (beyond the human dimension, purely angelic, cp. stories in the Bible when angels appear to prophets and saints), Lahut (you see the qualities in the landscapes: you can look at a landscape and you recognize it because you saw it in a vision before, in other words, you saw the pattern of light that has been written into that landscape by God.) That's the beginning of union with God, Hahut, the experience of union with God.

Quite simply, you can experience all these states of consciousness that we talk about in Sufism in the dream. That's what the Sufi guide of the Pir looks for, these signs in the dreams. Accordingly we will give you spiritual practices.

The four elements

There is one last thing to mention, which is the four elements in the dreams. I mention those because this is a kind of semi-retreat process that we are in. And so what you will find is your consciousness moving slowly through **the earth, the water, fire and air** through the retreat.

We begin with the **earth element**, because the earth is connected to our bones, that's the mineral level of our being. We are connected to the earth not so much through the flesh or the eyes or the ears, but through the bones. The earth connects to the **base chakra**. So when the Sufi sees that you have dreams about sustenance for your survival, then we are talking about the earth nature. Or when you have dreams in which you crash into the earth, come to the earth with a bang, hitting something solid, that's the base chakra, meeting the base chakra. In the retreat process the earth element is the first element to go. You lose consciousness of your bones. When you are sitting in meditation and you are so uncomfortable, and eventually you forget about it. Also you lose weight on retreat. You become less substantial.

The **water element**, which is the vegetable level, is connected with the **sacrum center** (second chakra). That's connected with our flesh, in Sufism we talk about **nafs**, the appetites, that really begins at this level. You feel hungry for food, for recognition, a desire for power, food, sex. There is no end to it, because the more you have the more you want. There is nothing wrong with the appetites in themselves, like food and sex, it's alright, but it's when our desire for those things takes over everything in us, then we become the slaves of the appetites. But also the water element connects to our creativity and sensitivity. The bones are reliable, strong, patient, the water element is very sensitive, flexible, fluid. So one the one hand you could see in your dreams how you are hungry, greedy for something, like somebody who always wants more, they would see themselves as very big, bloated in a dream. One the other hand, without water there is no life, so water is crucial to the birth of things. When a person is dry in their nature, then they can't give birth to anything. Their dreams would be dry, no water. If there are plants, they are withered and dry, desert-like landscape. And when a person **connects to the life force, the greenery appears** in the desert. A sign of new life. It's as though the soul is connecting to spirit when the water begins to appear in a person's dreams. Spiritually it also means that the more subtle spiritual forms cannot come through to you unless the water element is present. So you think of certain plants that grow only in water, they don't even need earth.

The **fire element** connects to the **solar plexus**. That's the part of you that holds on to your hats, keeps your car and keeps your fences around the house, it's territorial. How extraordinary we are when we say: this is my place. It's just where you normally sit, but it's not your place, you've taken it over in your psyche. That's the dominance of the animal nature, it's also very aggressive. But fire also is connected to light, and fire, when harnessed, can be most useful. So we can either be caught up in our fire, our anger, then we are self-involved, or we can **turn our fire into light** and connect to the angels. Sometimes you see fire appearing in a person's dreams, and it's a sign that the fire nature is becoming more predominant, or it could mean that fire is beginning to take over you, it's out of control.

The **air element** is connected with the heart center. That's when we think of the ability of our minds to transcend the human state. You don't have to get into war with everybody, you don't like it, but you don't need to get involved with it.

Those are the four elements, which appear in people's dreams, like the different states of consciousness. So you may find in these next few days that your dreams change as you go through from day to day, because the different elements are emphasized from day to day.

Questions:

Q: how can I know in which state of dream I am? - Ok, so we start with the most advanced dream first, which is the clear light dream. The **clear light dream** is very easy to recognize, you have an experience of total light in your dreams, or in one dream. There is no sense of being asleep, so when you wake up there is no difference between waking and sleeping. The next kind of dream is a **clear dream**, the whole mark of a clear dream is that it is so real that you didn't think you were dreaming, but it has a landscape, it has people in it. Also there can be light in that landscape, like sometimes people see somebody like a guide figure, and that person becomes light. But remember I also said there is other kinds of dreams, like you have a dream that your child is sick, and your child is far away, and indeed it turns out that they are sick, so what you see in the dream is true. So a clear dream is one in which you go beyond your personal self. When the spiritual archetypes come through, it's like they have broken through to your personal consciousness. Then the third dream, the **illusory dream**, you dream about your life, it's usually symbolic. Like you dream of looking for something in your dream and you are looking for something in your life. It can include nightmares. Actually in Buddhism they talk about six realms, and they say: you can dream about any one of the six realms. Those six realms don't quite correspond to the sufi planes, but the idea is similar, the higher realms seem to be more god-like, like the Greek myths, and the lower realms are more like the hell realms where you get nightmares.

Q: are nightmares always dark side dreams? - Yes. It's the distorted light that you see, your light has become distorted. **When you're scared, the lights become distorted** and you see all the things that you are frightened of come alive. That's what we mean by nightmare. It's usually very disturbing, because it seems very foreign to you, the opposite of a dream when you feel: I'm at home, I love this place. Which means you've got yourself into a state that is not really you. You got yourself in a situation that is completely out of harmony with who you are.

Q: if I become conscious in the dream and can go out of the dream, what does it mean? - You don't have to go out of the dream if you become conscious in a nightmare. All you have to do is to realize: this is my nightmare and it doesn't have to be this way, and that will change the dream.

Q: Tibetan view of lucid dreaming: embracing the enemy, so that the enemy will be the friend. - Yes, the same thing in Sufism. **In Tibetan Buddhism they don't make a distinction between psychology and spirituality**, it's the same for them. Where as here in the West we do make this distinction, which I think is an unfortunate thing to do. Because what we normally would say: if you see your enemy in the dream, your enemy is a reflection of yourself. So to push it away or to fight with it is to fight with yourself. So in psychology we say you learn to embrace that aspect of yourself. So there are ways in which we see that actually both sides are talking about the same thing.

Q: Difference about nightmares and dreams with enemies? - Well, I would think they are much the same, if somebody is threatening you then it becomes a nightmare sometimes, until you realize that you don't have to be threatened by that person. Even if the person in reality is an enemy of yours, you can reach them on another level and befriend them. In that way you can turn the nightmare around and heal yourself. In fact, what we have done in our work with dreams: when somebody has a dream about an enemy, when we work with the person you work with them in a waking state, we go through the dream, and you find a way of relating with that enemy, or a way of being with that person, instead of fighting with them, and then **we find that in real life the relationship changes**. They start becoming friendlier. So the work that you do in the dream state is real. You can bring about healing in the dream state, changes in your life or in other people's life, but you must remember: the same spiritual laws still apply as in the waking life, which is, if you start manipulating things for your own advantage in the dream state, then you become incased in your own darkness. You will lose

your ability to manipulate. **But the more your heart opens and you help people, the greater the power of your dream.**

Q: what about nightmares that reflect real things, like **traumas**? - It's quite common that people have been traumatized, and they can't be free of that trauma. Then it doesn't take much for that trauma to come alive in their dream. What you have to do in that case: you have to embrace the trauma. What happens when you embrace the trauma? **Your heart becomes big enough to hold the pain and the suffering of the trauma.** The reason why people cannot overcome trauma is that they are so horrified by it that they close up, and so they lose their light. One becomes overwhelmed by the trauma, you become small. I know it's a difficult thing, but we encourage the person to face the trauma and give them as much support as possible. There are lots of ways of helping in the imagination to do that. But there comes a time when you discover that your trauma does not annihilate you, then slowly you become bigger than the trauma. And if you continue to integrate it more and more, it becomes smaller and smaller. Eventually it becomes something that you can recognize in your dream that was triggered by life, but it's not a nightmare any more. **The problem with trauma is that it taps into all the negativity in us.** In other words, the trauma itself is bad enough, but then it seems to tap into a huge negative potential in us that we then put on to the trauma, so that it becomes bigger. So one must work with it to take back all those bits of yourself that make it bigger, that will help.

Q: how can I remember my dreams? - Something to do here on retreat, don't do it in life. Tonight there are two possibilities. As you go to sleep, you imagine a very bright red dot by the third eye. You concentrate on that for at least 20 minutes. Then it is very likely you remember your dreams. The other possibility: you picture the picture of Hazrat Inayat Khan and imagine him in your heart, and then you silently say the Zikr whilst you are going to sleep. But you must picture Murshid in your heart. These are the two eyes that we see with: the heart and the head. You mustn't do this outside of retreat, you might get swamped with dreams and get exhausted.

[Individual dreamwork starts]

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Stages in Alchemy

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The names of the stages will vary from tradition to tradition, because **alchemy is transcultural**. Chinese alchemy, Indian, Arabic, Japanese, European alchemy, even in Africa, although they don't call it alchemy, if you look at their traditions of training the shaman, you realize that it is based on alchemical principles. So the names I am giving you of course are from European alchemy, but remember, the stages are the same in whatever tradition.

Nigredo: the dark state, blackened

In Sufism they have an image of going down a well, being dropped down. Some Sufis actually used to do retreats down at the bottom of a well, didn't come up for anything, just stayed down there. You stay there until you experience the green light, know as the most advanced stage, the green light in the heart. In alchemy it was called the **emerald tablet of Hermes**. You experience the green light, it's the same thing as the green tablet. When you are in the state of the green light, then you come up, up into the daylight.

You must naturally expect, when you begin a retreat, that things become darker. A real retreat is not just a smooth ride into light. You turn within and you go down, into the darker part of your being. This is where **you are confronted with your nature, the nafs**: your appetites, aggression and so on. In terms of dreams, the way we experience this on retreat is a shock. You think you go on a spiritual retreat, and your first dreams are wild, you encounter the nature that earth has given you. The reason why the experience is negative and not positive is because usually we are out of touch with that nature. You have to struggle with your nature to be free of it, and then when you are free of it, you reenter it. In the final stage of alchemy, you come back to your nature, but now your nature is transformed, you are transformed, so it's a very different relationship to the earth when you come back.

Dreams in nigredo would typically involve experiencing angry people or being angry or being frightened by things. I remember somebody having a terrifying dream about this dark figure that they couldn't see who it was, and it was just standing there and looking at them. Of course eventually it turned out it was the person's angel, but that was much later in the retreat, in the beginning it was experienced as dark and frightening. And then there are dreams about thoughts that preoccupy you, your everyday life, dreams about sex. If you are a man and you are not in touch with your masculinity, then you encounter men in your dreams sometimes in a sexual way, because it's a way of coming closer to that part of your nature. Same principle for women. Sometimes there is a fear of the opposite sex, then you meet the opposite sex in your dream, you have to encounter that aspect of your nature. All this is to do with our earth nature that's been given us, that's in nigredo.

One of the signs of completing that stage of nigredo is you begin to dream of nature in its wild state, like being in Africa. People often have dreams of wild animals, they are quite harmless and come up to them one by one, it's a way of letting go of that nature and moving on to the next stage. When we work with people's dreams in retreat, we don't pay too much attention to the dreams in nigredo. Not because we are not interested in the person's nature, but because it's **a fairly short stage in retreat**. Of course in the world of psychology and psychotherapy, that's usually **the stage that the therapists work on, only nigredo**. Then we make a transition to a new stage:

Albedo, the white stage

The colors that we are using for the stages are transcultural, so don't think they are colors only for white people, they are found all across the board. The names differ, that's all.

The white stage refers to the light of the soul. So having been freed of the earth nature, which in a sense veils the soul's light from you, then you enter a stage where you begin to experience something of the nature of the soul. The consciousness is now relatively free of the earth nature, so you can experience the soul nature. It is the stage where you meet the landscapes of the soul, as Pir Vilayat often emphasizes in retreat. Each landscape has a different attunement, you reach a different plane of consciousness.

This is also a **stage of rising**, whereas in nigredo it felt like we were descending. Sufis often **symbolize that stage with the bird**. Cp. Mohammed who ascended **Mount Khaf, the green mountain**, on a horse, Buraq. Mount Khaf is a cosmic mountain, it's the mountain of your own being, and to ascend that mountain, you need a certain kind of energy, which is the **energy of spirit**.

In your dreams, in this stage, your guidance shows you the state of your energy in each dream. Mostly what you find, especially in a close encounter, is that your guide is the opposite sex. But the contact is no longer so physical, it's more to do with closeness. The Sufis say **the Beloved is constantly meeting us, we don't recognize the Beloved** and want to run away, but the Beloved is there, trying to get close to us. This is the stage of albedo: we don't recognize that the guidance is trying to get close to us, our own angel is trying to be close to us, and because we don't recognize him as such, we sometimes are afraid and move away from it.

Albedo is the **stage of the moon. Receptive stage**, you go very quiet. Pir was talking this morning about consciousness and intelligence, you become more conscious of things, of emotions and deep feelings in you, qualities, that's the way you become more moon-like, more receptive.

Each stage has four things in it: a birth, purification, marriage and death:

Birth: you have dreams of giving birth, also men, or experience of being pregnant, or suddenly there is a baby in your arms.

Then **purification:** you have to go through purification in each stage of the process, and in each successive stage it becomes more intense. Specifically we are purified by the four elements. Purification by fire is present in all four stages, and the purifying fire becomes stronger and stronger through the process. That's why the Sufis of the past speak about burning, they want to be on fire.

Then **marriage:** in nigredo you marry your earth nature, through an intimate contact with it, physical or sexual contact. If you meet your anger, then it really takes you over, or your fear, or your sexuality, it takes you over. This is not a bad thing, because most of your spirit is

caught up in your earth nature. People are afraid of losing something, they want to hold on to things, it's the earth nature, so much energy is caught up in that. So when you meet that earth nature, you must not think of it as a negative experience. You have to be close to it in order to embrace it and transform it. Often **people who are more spiritually inclined are**

afraid of their earth nature, so they get stuck, because they don't have enough energy to really take off. We can use the cooking metaphor here: it's difficult to eat raw food, so you heat it and cook it, then the energy is transformed and you can assimilate it, so you are making yourself cook.

Death: in order to enter into a new stage, something has to be born in you, in order to pass out of it, something must die.

Back to albedo: **birth of a child is the birth of soul consciousness.** Little children are around in the dreams: atmosphere of innocence. We are remembering our innocence. You also start to have dreams about being naked, nothing to do with psychological problems, like sexual theme or you are embarrassed about being naked, but it's do with being **stripped of all your defenses, then you are innocent, naked.**

Also albedo is the stage where you encounter the **levels of consciousness in your psyche, and they correspond to the chakra points.** It's like making many shifts in a retreat: when you first experience it, it's dark, so your energy goes down, then when you go into it, the energy starts coming through, you feel good again. And you suddenly feel different now. Ex: when you first experience truth, it's dark, but when the fire comes through, you feel powerful. Very often these dreams will still relate to your life, although there will be more impersonal elements in them, but there is a new quality trying to come through that you encounter in the dream state, in the form of a person or an experience. The advantage in working with the dreams on retreat is that you **become conscious through the dream what qualities are trying to come through** to you, and you become conscious of what is standing in the way.

At the end of albedo there is a marriage, and the marriage is with the soul. Your attunement gets finer and finer until it's beyond the mind and you are beginning to experience soul consciousness. In our European culture that custom is symbolized by the **white wedding.** In people's dreams you find weddings and they are dressed in white, and they say: what is that about? It's about not only becoming soul conscious, but uniting with your soul nature.

Following the marriage is a death. I remember one retreatant said: I had a funny experience in my dream last night, I got married, and the moment after I got married someone came out and shot me dead with a gun. What does that mean? - What it means is, the person reached a certain stage, the end of albedo, so there must be a death, the self must die.

So you should not be afraid of dreams of dying and death. In our culture we have such a fear of death, but really there is nothing to be afraid of. It's about transition.

Citrinitas: the orange state (or very bright yellow)

The color of the **sun**, so you go from the moon to the sun. You really start to burn up in citrinitas. Very few people actually experience this stage on retreat, but if you do experience it, you go very dry, like walking through the desert. Your throat is on fire and you feel very weak. What it is: your self is dying. The Tibetan Buddhists describe this process in great detail, stage by stage by stage, like 200 stages they define in this process of dying.

You have experiences like you lose the ability to think, and you have great difficulty in breathing, your breath starts to shake. In people who are dying, the same thing is happening. The solar plexus really starts to open, you experience the fire in you, and then suddenly you have fantastic energy, you feel like the sun.

In the dreams you experience lots and lots of light. This is the stage of the retreat when it is possible to have a transcendental experience. When the Sufis speak of the seven valleys, there is one valley called the valley of unity, this is the experience of it. It's not complete union with God, but you are no longer conscious of yourself. And your dreams are about other people, you get into the soul consciousness of other people. And your dreams become visions, you experience something in the dream, and when you wake up, the dream continues: it's a vision, so you realize how real it is. There is no difference between waking and sleeping.

Most people experience citrinitas simply as a high point in the retreat, or the moment of sudden intuition or realization about something. Mostly it's omitted, we don't really consciously experience it. It is the stage in which the **royal alchemical marriage** takes place, the marriage between soul and spirit. **Your soul is your individual consciousness, and your spirit is universal consciousness.** But you still go through those four things: birth, purification, marriage, death.

Citrinitas is the phase of fire, air, and ether. The **stage of ether is the stage of nothingness**, emptiness. What the Buddhists call **satori**. From ether, when you come into rubedo, all the elements start to come out again: air, fire, water, and earth.

Rubedo, the red stage

This is the final stage of the process which leads to completion. The color red comes up in the dreams. Somebody worked with a man for 15 years, to work at his dreams, and then the man died; they looked at the dreams, and they found the four colors present, as though the man was going through the stages of this process over 15 years. So when we start experiencing red, it could be red as blood or the color red, or red flowers, wearing red clothes, that's the sign of entering rubedo. It's about being reborn into life.

In your dreams, you begin to experience **coming down through all the planes** and coming back into life. You begin to see the world appearing in your dreams again. It's usually indicated by scenes of being back in the city, having a meal, eating, celebrating.

The marriage is marriage with the earth again, but your earth nature has been transformed now. **The transformed earth: the soul, the spirit and the body are together.**

You can use the dreams as a means of knowing where the person is in the process. And that applies not only to retreat, but also to cycles in life.

When you get to rubedo, that doesn't mean it's the end. It's the end of a cycle, not the end of your spiritual path. Each retreat you do, and you should do one retreat every year, then you see that cycle, and you see yourself progressing from retreat to retreat. For a while, the stage of nigredo gets longer and longer, and then of course it gets shorter and shorter, but albedo gets longer. Then citrinitas gets longer and albedo gets shorter. All those three stages are to do with the first spiritual awakening, awakening to God. The fourth stage, **rubedo, is the stage in which God awakens through us**. So eventually rubedo becomes the longest phase.

You are going through the cycle again and again and again, but the way you experience the cycle keeps changing.

Questions:

Q: Initiation, then experience of shaking. - The experience of initiation very often is a very powerful one, sometimes we are **filled with spirit for that short while**, we experience the real spirit in us, and that's what makes us shake, makes us walk on air. So it can be an almost frightening experience, but also very beautiful. Usually it gives us an indication of **what our potential is spiritually in this life**. Pir Vilayat opens a window for you, and you see, and then it closes. And then what you need to do for the rest of your life is work towards that window opening again voluntarily.

Monika on the ritual of the sema: also the four phases in the four salams. First: you go on your way and accept your condition as human being. Second: you fall in love. Third: you burn. Fourth, the most important: return to humanity and the earth to serve.

Q: why don't you work with nigredo dreams in a retreat? - The reason is that the retreat will take care of that stage by itself. Unless it's a very frightening dream that disturbs the retreatant, then by helping them understand what's going on, they are not so frightened or disturbed by it. Otherwise we usually leave it, because the dreams that come later on will need much more attention and they will be more fruitful. Nigredo dreams are important, but it's mostly just remembering your outer life, so there is no point working with it. But when you have a dream for example where you receive some guidance, then you would want to work with that to understand it better.

Sometimes the first dream people have foretells what will happen in the retreat. When you look back, you see the guidance at the beginning, but that is not a nigredo dream, more like a clear dream that shows the path ahead of you.

Q: how to recognize the phases. - In **nigredo**, the person is down, in a bad mood, everything is wrong. The person is involved with themselves, haven't broken beyond themselves.

Then in **albedo** suddenly they are peaceful, friendly, and they don't give you a hard time. (Story of the retreatant who got locked for 24 hours in his hut).

The way you know a person is in **citrinitas**: they are absent, not there. When you sit with the person, of course you make yourself very receptive and feel the consciousness of the person, you experience nothing. You have to open your eyes to see the person is really there. That's the sign of the transcendental state.

Rubedo is a joyful, rich state, there is a sense of completion. That's how we experience the attunement of those four stages.

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Souls in us

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The seven different kinds of souls in us:

Mineral soul
Vegetable soul
Animal soul
Human soul
Djinn soul
Angelic soul
One Being, the Beloved

Traditionally the Sufis interpret dreams according to the soul that is speaking in you. For example, if your **greed** is showing itself in a dream, that will be shown through the *vegetable nature*.

If it's your **aggression or fear**, it will be shown through the *animal nature*.

The **dramas of life** are shown through the *human nature*.

The *Djinn soul* in us is shown through our **interests and our gifts**, sometimes called creativity. Sometimes you have dreams in which you are discovering new ways of being, new treasures, new bits of knowledge. If your angelic nature wants to express itself, it may also speak through the Djinn soul, for example you may not be gifted in singing, but something of your angelic nature may feel it's good to be expressed through the voice, so you have a dream about singing. Of course artists, writers, painters, musicians, philosophers, mathematicians, often get their knowledge through dreams, and this is the Djinn soul speaking.

Then there are dreams that show the *angelic nature*, in which the beings that appear are very **beautiful or very powerful, very majestic, pure, light**. They will take on a form that is familiar to you, and they speak to you in your language. But as you become more conscious that it is your own angelic nature speaking, the need for the form disappears and one begins to see them more as they really are, which is a being of light. This is when the dreams become what Tibetans call clear light dreams. The need for imagery and form disappears.

Ultimately there is the experience when there is **no duality** in the dream, there is only one being, and of course that is the seventh level.

The mineral soul: earth, base chakra

Now to come back all the way down to the mineral level: it is related to the bones in the body. So when one is receiving some kind of message from this level, it relates to the structure in your life. So when you are unaware of the base chakra, that awareness is missing, then the guidance in the dream brings you down to earth.

Each of us has an individual nature on each level. So for some people their mineral nature is like wood, for some people it's rock or stone, a particular type of stone, might be ruby or a diamond, limestone, a soft stone, or very strong like granite. But you see that in the dream. Over a period of time you begin to recognize that in a person's dream, whenever the mineral nature comes, a certain kind of form is presented. This is why we feel more comfortable with certain kinds of materials, like you move into a house and you say: I don't like that kind of floor, or wall, or door. In the modern world, where so much is artificially made, like plastics, it's difficult for us to feel comfortable with on a mineral level, because the mineral soul is not yet used to plastics. The chemicals, like plastic, are a more unevolved form of mineral, a denser form, whereas the more natural mineral forms are more in tune with the soul.

And even in the mineral kingdom there is evolution, it starts with the fairly dense rocks like granite, but eventually it becomes a crystal. So even in the mineral kingdom you see that the soul is asleep, as Rumi said, there are veils, so the granite soul is more veiled than the crystal soul. So the more easily the mineral is able to pass light, the more evolved is the structure of the mineral. And in fact, scientifically, granite is denser than crystal, or diamond, heavier. The same is true with metals, gold is the most advanced metal, because it conducts electricity most easily. So when we dream of gold, the alchemists often talk about gold, something very precious and eternal is coming out in the consciousness. That's why the alchemists of old times used gold as the metaphor for a certain kind of eternal consciousness in the human being, and they recognized, when that was coming out, that was the real gold.

Minerals even have feelings, a certain kind of vibration, like if you sat on retreat in a hut made of steel, that would be a different feeling to sitting in a hut made of wood, even if you are blindfolded and have no hearing, you sense it, feel it. If it were a hut made of pure crystal, that would be very different from a hut made of granite.

Now each of us has a particular kind of mineral consciousness. So for some people the mineral consciousness is very fragile, it's like limestone, you hit it and it can break easily. Other people have bone structures like granite, so the bus hits them and the bus gets dented. Not only do our mineral natures speak to us in the dreams, like the imagery comes up in the particular mineral form that the person has, but when you are working with someone and **you recognize their mineral nature, you must take it into account.** So somebody who is rock-like would be very solid when it comes to finances, but someone whose mineral nature is more like sand, when it comes to money, it just comes and goes. So you can see how there would be conflicts there.

Vegetable nature: water, sacrum chakra

Some people have a vegetable nature that is like a big, tall tree, and they sink their roots down and grow very tall upwards, and they are very independent. Some people's vegetable nature spreads along the ground, so they stay very close to the earth, their nurturance come more from the earth than from the sky, like the big tree. Actually if you look at people's hairstyles, you see different kinds of vegetable natures [laughing], someone is like a bush and someone more like asparagus, some grow very straight and some go very wild.

Some plants can grow in the desert, so they don't need much water, they are very independent. And some people's nature, like the lily, needs water all the time. Remember we have all kingdoms in us. So you put someone on retreat and you say to the person with the desert vegetable nature, like a cactus: you must fast, no water; they say: fine. And then you say to the lily type: you must fast and no water; they say: it's impossible, they will die. So each must have their own environment, it's important to take this into account in working with

people, looking at their natures, how they are coping with their living circumstances, their work, being in the world, being nurtured. You see it in dreams. The person who has a lot of water in their nature, but somehow they have been persuaded by life to ignore that, to be out of touch with their water nature, then in the dreams you might see a plant which is withered and dying, because it has no water.

Now though spirit is in all the elements, earth, water, fire and air, **spirit is most easily perceived through water**. This is why the image of the tree is so important in Sufism and in dreams, because there is two kind of trees: the **tree of knowledge**, that was spoken about in the Bible, Adam and Eve ate the fruit of the tree of knowledge, but then there is the **tree of life**, that's what the Jewish Kabbala is based upon. **The tree of life is about the holy spirit coming into form**. So what you find on retreat when you watch someone's dreams, that for a while, in the early stages, nigredo, things begin to get very dry, or if there is water, it's bad water, muddy, dark. Usually the imagery is that there is no sign of plant life, vegetable life, that's usually a sign they are still in the head, it's arid and dry. Then there comes a point when suddenly the person can turn within and they discover the spirit within them. In alchemy the term is: the water of life, **aqua vivens or aqua vitae**. It's a reference to the holy spirit in you, but it's when you actually move from the earth consciousness to the water consciousness in your retreat. And then in the dreams, vegetation starts to come, like flowers, trees, bushes, green pastures, which is a good sign, a sign of new life, and in themselves they will feel much better, stronger, more optimistic. Another indication of discovering the water is when the person in retreat gets dryer and dryer and more and more angry, and then suddenly they touch on something vulnerable in themselves, and they begin to cry. You have discovered the water in you. The alchemical operation is solutio, dissolving.

Animal nature: fire, solar plexus chakra

As you know, Rumi said: God slept in the rock, dreamed in the vegetable kingdom (water coming in, water is associated with dreaming, reflection in the water is dreamlike), awakens in the animal nature. **The animal nature is related to our fire nature and associated to the solar plexus chakra**. It's the quality of the divine action, kun! Be! Also about being able to be free, to move, walk, run. It's differentiated: only the birds can fly, the lions can run, the elephants can knock down trees. Each animal soul carries a particular quality, like the bull has power and the lion has courage and the eagle has insight. Only the human being has all those together, and yet each one of us has one particular animal soul that is more conscious than the others.

You see this in people's natures and what people eat: some people pick away their food like a bird, lots of those are vegetarians, they like seeds and nuts, and then the dog, eats very fast and dives into the food, doesn't have as much discrimination about the type of food, the cat is very fussy about their food, if it's not right they won't touch it. Big people like the rhinoceroses, they eat only one type of food which is grass. It makes a good meditation to meditate on the variety of God's manifestation. It's much easier for a psychotherapist to understand why people can't get on with each other, because most people are more centered in their animal consciousness, so if one person is a dog and the other is a cat, they always fight. Or the eagle and the snake, they are enemies. Of course we are meant to transcend these differences, but when things get difficult in our lives, we tend to fall back into those natures and the differences come out.

When you meditate on it, you realize that the different animals not only carry unique qualities, but those qualities come from particular planes of consciousness. So you find that the birds often illustrate the astral consciousness, they can fly, so there are dreams of flying. The elephant and the tiger have majesty, fifth plane consciousness, which relates to the throat

chakra; in the mineral kingdom it would correspond to jewelry, people wear valuable jewelry around the throat because it reflects majesty. The deer is gentle and beautiful, it's third plane, can be very loving and sensitive. Cats, especially big cats like lions, tigers, relate to fourth plane, a plane of conflict. It is easier to see when you look at sports, there you see the different animal natures: like the one that throws the shot-put is very big, like a bull. The person who does the high jump is tall and thin, can lift up easily and fly. It's just a way of saying that the different natures are shown in the different kingdoms and we can see the planes of consciousness even in the different kingdoms. It's an interesting exercise, you can even do it with food, like you tune in to the plane the bananas come from, or oranges, or apples. **Everything carries a divine quality, and when you see that, it helps you to read dreams.** What you see in the dream, you see in the world, and you also see in heaven.

Human souls, Djinn souls, angelic souls

Murshid talks about different kinds of souls, some **souls are more animal-like**, some souls are more **human-like**, they seem to be souls that are very happy to be here in the world, they don't question their existence, they don't seek understanding, they enjoy life and what the world has to offer. Earth is their home.

And then he speaks of the **Djinn souls**, genius comes from Djinn. Cp. the genie in the bottle. All the stories about genies in the bottle are a way of talking about the Djinns. Some souls show the Djinn quality very strongly, you see it in their life and in their dreams. There is a distinct difference in the dreams of people who are human souls, they dream more about worldly things, and the people who are Djinn souls, their dreams are about things that are not worldly. Their dreams are more like science-fiction. You see it amongst the artists, their dream life has a lot of beauty in it, maybe conflict too. And in people who are brilliant in mathematics, that comes through in their dreams. **What's happening in the dream life: the soul's consciousness goes to the place it's most familiar with.** So if you're conscious just on the human level, then that's the level you are on when you dream. But if you're like the crazy artist and you are unworldly, then you are in some other world in the dream.

It's the same for the **angelic souls**, they tend to have more angelic-like dreams.

So when you are working with people and you are working with spiritual awakening, then the angelic souls have to incarnate into life, same for the Djinn souls, they need to find a way of coming into life or expressing themselves in life. Human souls who are interested in progressing and evolving, they will need to wake up to the higher planes. But of course as **human beings we have all those souls in us, from the mineral right through to the angelic.** For the Sufi guide or the Pir it is important to see in which consciousness the soul is residing. And then according to that, when the person's dream is presented, then they interpret the dream according to that soul nature. So when you dream of a snake and your nature is an angelic nature, the snake means one thing, and when your nature is more an animal or vegetable nature, the dream of a snake means something very different.

Awakening means becoming awake on all those levels at the same time.

Questions

Q: could it be that the various souls in one person don't get along easily? - Yes, that's a very interesting subject. I'm not completely sure about the answer, because the implication is: how do we get the different souls? Is it just one consciousness that opens up and becomes different souls, like when you are born and you grow, or it like an inheritance, like from the heavens you have the angelic soul, from your parents you have the mind and maybe the

animal soul. So it's not an easy question to answer, but what is true is that you can see in some people the **different souls in them are in conflict**. So a person could have an animal soul showing in the body and an angelic soul in their spiritual soul. The animal soul might be heavy or gross at the physical level, but in their mind or spirit the angelic soul is very sensitive. You could have a soul that is very sensitive on one level, but on the animal level the soul is very aggressive. You think of some of the great people like Mozart: his music was sublime, but his behavior was not. It's fascinating. What you try to do is to help the person become conscious of that and find a way for the different parts to cooperate.

Q: if someone is an idealist, can this ideal prevent him from living his soul nature? - Idealism is an expression of the angelic nature. It might be that the person may not have sufficient resources to do what might be a struggle to fulfill the ideal. They may not have good health, or they could have psychological problems, then there is a real struggle, a conflict in the soul. But it's to learn to find out how those different parts can work together, synthesize together. So in working with the dreams, you don't have to remember all this stuff in your head, because it's far too much, but you learn to recognize these things instinctively when you are working with dreams. You can see when there is a conflict between two natures in a dream. It's acted out sometimes through the animal, or the animal and human being, but there is a way for them to understand each other. Just as two people can be in conflict or they can learn to understand each other and work together.

Q: what about the qualities in a decathlon champion? - They are much more allrounders, yes, just because we are interested in retreat, it doesn't mean to say sport is not a spiritual activity. The souls who have great sportive abilities, they get their inspiration from the fourth plane. It's to do with great accomplishments. Lots of fire.

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The alchemical operations

Thursday, 1 August 2002

There is a spiritual principle which says: **If you send a call from your heart, then you get a response.** Murshid says in the Gayan: If you stretch out your hand towards us, we will come to meet you. (Sufi story: the cry from a pure heart is answered.)

Imagination

Ibn'Arabi on the scope of the imagination in the human being, quoting a revelation given to him by God: **In the imagination of the heart of my devotee you will find heaven and earth.** This implies that in the angelic world, there is the light, and in the physical world there is the created universe. The one who is the disciple of God, when the imagination takes on the spiritual path, then the heart opens up and reveals heaven and earth together. We mustn't think of imagination as being limited to human imagination. Here we are talking of dreams as imagination too. This is why the prophet Mohammed was said to have had the heavens revealed to him in a dream, famously known as the Mirage of the Prophet.

Let's remember that, because we underestimate imagination. When your consciousness moves from the outside world and begins to turn within, then the imagination becomes unlimited. That's when our imagination becomes a co-creator with God, as we begin to see what has been created and what is constantly being created. This is also the potential of the dream. **What we are aiming for in the dream, is to wake up in the dream.**

If you are able to journey through the planes of consciousness, then you have an opportunity in this panorama to see all the places where everything is contained. Every place that has been created will reveal itself to you, one day. Ultimately what you get to see is that even the attributes of God, the qualities, sifat, the actions of God which create the universe and even the essences of God can be contained in houses. God then invites you into his houses to see his treasures. So this is the possibility of imagination. Remember imagination comes from the word image, and so **the creation is in the image of God.** That's why Hazrat Inayat Khan, after he had reached unity with God, he said: In every hill and valley I see Thy beloved face.

Alchemical Operations

The operations make the process of transformation possible. It's not just the landscapes or the journey that is shown in the dream, but also the actions of God, which are the alchemical operations. **Always behind these actions is the divine guidance.**

I'll speak about the 7 major operations, major actions that happen in transformation. Four of them are to do with the elements, and they are purifications.

Coagulatio: purification by earth.

Something coagulates in you. Think of the process of blending of metals together in metallurgy, they melt the metals first, then when they have the right mixture of the two, they fix the mixture; it's called quenching, you dip it in water. That hardens the mixture. That is coagulatio. So what it means is the formation of a body. The establishment of the right mixture in a body.

This can happen in lots of different ways, not just coming down to earth. E.g. when you learn to meditate, what happens is, you learn to offset your attention from the body and from the mind to something more subtle. At first, that subtlety is not graspable. Until one day you find yourself able to meditate, and you're conscious of it. You know: I am meditating. You have the realization: this is meditation. In other words, you have grasped the subtle consciousness, and the reason why you grasped it is that it coagulated *in* you. It's clear enough that you can recognize it, you can feel it and you can hold on to it. You have created a pure body to meditate on. You've moved from this body, the physical body, to a subtle body, and you have become conscious of it, it has solidified in you. First you begin to feel it, then you begin to see the light-body, and then you begin to hear it make sounds, you begin to smell it and you begin to taste it. This is what we mean by coagulatio, it's about this **formation of something that has a consciousness that we can sense with our psychic senses**, not the physical senses.

I started with this, because it's the most difficult operation to understand. Once you have understood it, it is helpful in your meditation, you begin to recognize what's happening.

The other experience of coagulatio is not when the consciousness is becoming subtle, it's the opposite, when the consciousness becomes gross. In alchemy, there is a formula that says: **the spiritualization of matter, and then the materialization of spirit**. Spiritualization of matter means that the spirit that was coagulated as matter reverts to spirit, not solid, but fluid. Then the opposite, the materialization of spirit, means the subtle spirit becomes gross. The key is in the word consciousness, because that is what you are aware of, you realize what's happening. First you become conscious that your body is becoming subtle. Later, when we come back into life, that's God awakening through us, then spirit becomes material. So coagulatio is like a coin which has two faces.

Solutio: purification by water. Calcinatio: purification by fire.

Solutio: You dissolve, dissolving of the ego / the self, because that form is no longer needed, and water is a gentle way of changing that sense of self. It's like the monk who was learning to meditate, and then his teacher said: you're stuck. Go and fall in love. - The monk said: but I'm a monk. - He said: go and do what I say. - So he went and fell in love. And then he came back and the teacher said: now I can teach you, because **your heart has dissolved**. That's solutio.

Solutio is one of the two most important operations in alchemy. The transformation process will always begin either with solutio or with calcinatio (fire). On retreat you get to the point where you feel desperate, and then your guide comes along, and you burst into tears, and that's solutio. It's the point of change, even if you don't realize it: your mind gives up and everything starts to flow. Or the opposite: you get more and more impatient and angry, you get given the Zikr and suddenly you are on fire. And then, surprisingly, all **the things you are angry about disappear** and you are all into light. That's calcinatio, purification by fire.

Sometimes solutio and calcinatio can come in more extreme forms. Like a person will say: things have happened in my personal life which feel as if my whole life is falling apart, my marriage is ended, my job too, everything is dissolving (solutio). That's a sign that a big change is about to take place and a new process will begin.

With calcinatio it could be a terrible accident, like a car crash and you are badly injured, or your beloved dies and you are struck down with grief, that's calcinatio. You get hit by lightning, blitz.

Sublimatio: purification by air

Everything expands and rises. Ex. you have been caught up in a problem, a psychological complex or an argument with yourself or a partner, and **suddenly you have an insight and you can look and see the whole problem from above**. You get an overview. Your consciousness is freed up from the constraints of that conflict. Wasifa: wasi, the encompasser, you have been freed up from something constricting and you can expand and see a bigger picture.

You rise into a more subtle state, and when that state becomes conscious, that's the real sublimatio.

False sublimatio: a person goes high, but then comes crashing down again: the process was not completed, it was started and they took off, but then crashed down again. That can be very damaging to the psyche. If a person is not ready for transformation, that can happen, a person suddenly takes off but they are not ready for it, so they get scared and crash down. So we have to be careful of that in the spiritual path because that's what can lead to psychosis. But usually false sublimatio is just a person who manages to escape into their fantasy and then they come down again into reality.

But the true sublimatio is when you rise and then it carries on, doesn't stop. Dream: you go up in a lift, and the lift goes up, and up, and up, you think: where is the top floor? And it goes up, and up and doesn't stop. If you can stay conscious with that and not be scared, then you move really into the spiritual realms. It's the true sublimatio: you cross the interval from this world into the heavens. **The experience of it is a purification, because once you experience that subtlety you never forget it.** Even when you come back, your consciousness has changed.

These were the four alchemical operations associated with the elements. The other three operations are:

Separatio: dividing, cutting

Imagery of a knife, sword, sometimes not so obvious, maybe yourself and another person separating. **Sometimes it goes together with mortificatio, death.** You have a dream in which your mother dies, what has happened is that you have been too close to your mother, so you needed to separate: the mother in you has to die so you can separate out.

Sometimes people are a bit scared, because they even have dreams in which they kill the mother or the father. They say: but that's not what I want to do. But they do recognize that they are angry and that they can't get free. So in the dream, that is what happens, through mortificatio they can separate out. Anger is supposed to be a defensive mechanism, helps you to protect your territory, that's what the animals have, but it can also act psychologically in helping you to individuate. That's why the adolescent gets angry with the mother or father, and whatever they say or do, it's wrong. So they can separate.

Q: what is if someone wants to kill you in the dream? - That's different, that's not separatio. It can be that it's your own anger that you are not recognizing and that's trying to get your attention, or it could be literally that somebody else doesn't like you. A psychic attack.

So it's important to reassure the person who is scared: it's just that you are needing to separate out, part of your process now is to **be mature, more independent, find out who you are**, not just being merged with the family. Or too submerged in a relationship and something in you feels that has to end, so a separation has to take place. Sometime only a temporary separation is needed, just to establish your identity, and then the relationship can continue.

Separatio is also helpful in learning to discriminate. Learn to know the difference between what is good and not so good, crude/gross and subtle, like somebody who thinks that being in ecstasy is the same thing when you're drunk or in meditation or eating ice-cream, it's all the same. There is no discrimination there. So you learn to appreciate through discrimination the different experiences. That comes about through separatio. As you learn to discriminate finely, it's a sign of evolution, because then you can tell subtle things that are different from not so subtle things.

Mortificatio: death

In every stage in alchemy, when the stage is completed, we must experience a death in order to move on to the next stage. It's like the silk worm who enjoys to be a silk worm, likes the green leaves of mulberry trees, but then they go to a long sleep, and when they wake up, they are a butterfly. They go through a mortificatio change. Life was pleasant as a silk worm, but in order to become a butterfly they had to die. Of course death is the very thing that we are afraid of, even if our reality is unpleasant. We are reluctant to let go of it. Cp. depression, the client doesn't want to let go of it. It's the only thing they have. That's why death is necessary, we are afraid to change. But if you want to take the spiritual path, you must be prepared to change.

Q: where from comes the fear of death? - Fear is a natural experience, it's a very important quality of God. If you didn't have fear you probably wouldn't live. Fear is a protector, if you walk towards fire, it makes you stand back from the fire. But we get so used to being safe that we don't want to change, safety becomes the priority, then **fear and safety go side by side**. That's why there is so many insurance companies: the more people get scared, the more money the insurance people make. You have to learn: **safety is good, but it is not always the answer**. Then you must face fear, overcome your fear, take a risk, then you can change. Fear is always there and *will* always be there, that's natural. But you mustn't always listen to it.

The way to deal with mortificatio: **take the bull by the horns**. A bull is quite scary, especially when it is angry and facing you. That's what it is like, you have to actually believe that you can get hold of the horns and hold it. You take the risk that you'll be thrown. That's how hard it is to deal with fear. And with mortificatio.

Coniunctio, the most important operation: marriage

Marriage of the opposites in you: masculine - feminine, spirit - matter, dark - light, sun - moon, love - hate.

Q: isn't the opposite of love fear? - yes, but with fear often comes hate. What people hate is what they are so angry about, and they are angry about it because they've been made so scared. **The root of hatred and anger is fear.** So the answer to fear is love.

In alchemy they recognize that the opposites oppose each other rather than coming together.

Example: tonight I'll go to sleep early in order to go to the early meditation tomorrow. I need a good night's sleep. Then you hear the bell in the morning at 6am, and you think, I'm still tired, perhaps I need a little more sleep, and you feel very happy with that decision, just a little more sleep. But life is not as simple as that. You don't hear the second nor third bell, you wake up and realize: you've missed the early meditation. Then you are angry with yourself and you think: I'm so bad. So one side is disciplined, wants to meditate and be spiritual, the other side is concerned for your body, your health. Both sides are right, and both are wrong. You have to find a way where they can be together, so that you get enough sleep and feel well and you also get up to meditate. That involves a struggle, a process in which you sometimes sleep in and sometimes get up, but in the end you sleep enough *and* you go to early meditation.

Another example of opposites: relationships. You are attracted to someone and fall in love, and then you come to be together. Then you discover differences, male and female are different, different points of view. Lots of coming together and going apart, until finally there is **resolution of the opposites in you**, then the relationship can work.

Coniunctio begins with the more superficial opposites, ends with **the greatest opposites: spirit and soul**. When you come to face those two, that's the greatest spiritual challenge. That's about union with God, and that's what alchemy is all about: helps you to overcome opposites. So throughout the process you experience problems and opposites, and you always have to go through coniunctio in order to progress. Like you might have a purification, separatio, coagulatio, but you have to go through coniunctio before you can really go forward.

The Operations working in the process

At every stage: birth - purification - marriage - death.

In nigredo: At the beginning is a **birth**, so the process can start. Then you go through either calcinatio or solutio or both, as a way of starting your process. These act as **purifications**. Then you have to experience a marriage, **coniunctio**, with your earth nature, you have to confront your earth nature and marry it. If you are a very sensitive and spiritual soul and you dislike sexuality, you may have to encounter sexuality in order to progress on the spiritual path. It will have to be encountered and transformed, you can't bypass it. If it's your anger you are afraid of, you'll have to meet it, face it, wrestle with it and then transform it. If it's your fear, which is even worse, you have to meet it, face it, wrestle with it, and then it will be transformed. That's coniunctio. After that comes **mortificatio, together with separatio**. The old self must die, which is the identification with your body, then there must be a separation from your body in order to discover the subtle body. Very much like the story of the stations of the cross of Christ. There was the crucifixion, Christ died, his body was put in a cave, then came resurrection in the subtle body: mortificatio, separatio, subtle body.

In albedo: the soul consciousness, moon state, more receptive. There will be a birth of a child first: the birth of innocence, the first appearance of soul consciousness. Then we experience calcinatio again, also lots of water dreams, solutio, then you move into a very subtle state in which you discover your soul and your soul qualities. You get to know yourself in a way you never knew yourself before. It's as though you get closer to your essence. And then comes the end of albedo, in which there is a marriage, the white marriage. In our European culture we have that in the wedding, bride dressed in white. Then mortificatio, death, but this time no separatio, because you are no longer separating from a body. It's the death of the Self, death of soul consciousness, ending of individuality.

Citrinitas: you don't experience the birth in the conventional sense of giving birth to a child, but it's the birth of the sun forces in you. You experience something swelling and coming out, like a pregnancy, it's the **sun forces coming out from the solar plexus**. Then purification, but now no solutio, only calcinatio, because it's to do with the sun, fire. It's the fire of spirit, not the physical sun. Then a marriage: the royal alchemical marriage of soul and spirit. Then a death, that's when you experience nothing. **Avidia** is the Vedanta expression, the state of nothingness.

Rubedo: Birth of a child again, the alchemical philosopher's child. Purification through solutio, calcinatio, then coagulatio, you come back into the body, marriage, and then the process is complete.

That's how the operations feature in the process. I'm sure you have lots of questions.

Questions

Q: is alchemy not dependent on **cultural background**? Individual consciousness dissolves, but how about cultures where there is no construct of individuality, where they identify with groups or clans?

Yes, there are some cultures, not very many now, in which individuation is not strongly emphasized. That is what I would call **unconscious union**. What we are talking about is conscious union. So once upon a time on the planet everyone was in that state. Your identity was with the community. But it's still an identity. So whether you go from that identity to God-realization or whether you go from an individual identity to God-realization doesn't matter, it's still a process. And although I cannot think of examples of people doing that, I'm sure it has happened, I'm sure there were people born into a community and that was their identity, but then they had a spiritual awakening and that meant the disintegration of the tribal identity in God-realization. So there are degrees of individuation, it could be the community, the family, the individual. **But with God-realization comes union with everything**. There is conscious union with the community, conscious union with the family, conscious union with yourself. Maybe [laughing]. I can't say for sure, but that would be my answer.

Q: What is the difference between ego and self for you? - It's the same. Those two words are a little different, but I meant the same thing.

Q: Fear: you said you have to **fight** with it. I find it easier to integrate it when I am no longer in fight with it. - There are different ways of approaching the same problem. Some souls do better through struggling. H.I.Khan calls that the **Path of Mastery**, like in the life of Shiva, he demonstrated mastery. For some souls, it's surrender, not struggle. So that would include what you suggest, learning to integrate slowly. It's called the **Path of the Saint**. But in truth I think both ways involve a kind of struggle. The first one involves courage and your *will* to tackle things, the other is surrender of the will. Both paths are equally good.

Q: Are we always going forward and then fall a little back, or is it a linear progression up? - When you go from here to here, it's the same path, you have to climb uphill, whether you slip back or not doesn't matter, you still have to go forward. If you haven't learned the lesson, you slip back, but then I don't know anyone who hasn't slipped. Eventually we get there. So remember from the story of Christ: one of the stations of the cross, where Christ is carrying the cross, and he falls, three times he falls. That's like slipping back three times. To me that means, we can make mistakes, we can be human, and we can fall. But each time Christ got up. You can't give up, that is the spiritual teaching for us.

Q: Could you speak a little more about **death**? Is it always a prerequisite before the next step? - Yes. You can't move from one spiritual station to the next unless something ends, that's a death. Another way of thinking about death is transformation. Death is not the end, it's the end of the old and the beginning of the new, cp. the silkworm and the butterfly. It's the silkworm that died but not the butterfly. Something always lives. Spirit always lives, it's only the body that dies.

Q: The deepest conflict is between soul and spirit. Please say more about that. - It's because the first and last experience is separation from God. It's in the beginning, it's always there, right to the last moment when there is union with God. It's the first lesson and the last lesson. Cp. the Sufi Bastami: When he was very close to God, he was aware of the presence of God, but he was also aware of himself, so he realized there was still duality. So he said: Oh Thou, take away my I-ness (my *nasutyat*) so that it may become Thy union (*hahutyat*). It's a lifelong struggle, that's why we are afraid of death. It's the biggest death. Small deaths are things like end of childhood, end of your job, end of a relationship, losing a physical ability. Bigger death is your body dying, **biggest death is the death of soul, so that it unites with spirit, and that invokes the biggest fear.** When we face what we call death, it's simply the end of *this* existence. But that's not the biggest fear. Freud said the basis of neurosis is fear, but then the existentialists said no, fear is natural because it is fear of death.

(Story of the woman lawyer who had the experience of union with God. First going through the black hole without end, utmost terror and fear. Dying not only physically, but spiritually. Then peace, ecstasy, and in a flash of realization she saw everything as One.)

She could not communicate that message. Some souls have been created to bring a message, and some souls have been created **not to give a message, and that is the Gnostic.** She had the experience of a Gnostic. Even though she could see what needed to change, the purpose of her life was not to bring that as a message.

She became the only psychotherapist I know who was enlightened *first* and then became a therapist later. So she was highly qualified. Most people sign up for psychotherapy to get enlightened, and they spend years on the couch getting no answer. Anyway, there is nothing I can do about that.

To look into her eyes was to look into Truth, that's what she worked with.

The moral of the story is: that's not the end of your problems. Some people think, I used to think that too, **if I only could be enlightened, it would be much easier. That's not true.** It's very wonderful to be enlightened, but it's not the end of your problems. -

Q: So why should we be enlightened at all? - Quite right, we don't have to be, we have the freedom of choice. All I can say to you is that the spiritual path makes your life richer. I could have thought of an easier life for myself, with much less hassles and problems, but then something in me wants to understand and to know, something in me is dissatisfied with ordinariness, wants to experience God even though it's not the end of my problems. That's not coming from my head, it comes from my soul, and I can't explain it. It's there because God put it there, and God put it there in all of us. The Sufis say: actually **it's God in us that wants to discover who we are**. It's the mind that says this is crazy, aren't you satisfied with a good job and a happy family? So whatever the mind says, it can't answer the soul. One day the soul will awaken, and when that time comes, there is no stopping it.

5 - Nigel Hamilton , Camp Zenith 2002

Spiritual awakening in dreams.

Friday, 2 August 2002

Today we look at a new subject in dreams. Just to remind you: we have talked about dreams in terms of a process, four stages in the process. And we talked about alchemical operations in the process, and then we spoke about the planes of consciousness, because they can appear in the dreams. Today we talk about spiritual awakening in dreams: what happens in the dreams when you experience leaps in consciousness.

We'll stick with the Sufi system. They speak of the **stages of awakening in terms of the spheres: Nasut - Malakut - Jabarut - Lahut - Hahut**. Pir Vilayat has added in three stages between Nasut and Malakut: Khayal - Arwah - Mithal.

Nasut

Right now, most of us are experiencing reality in terms of Nasut, physical consciousness. It's possible to experience the whole process of alchemy in terms of Nasut. More a physical experience. In the early days of our spiritual journey we experience the planes, which really are related to the chakras, more physically. The way this works in terms of the process is:

In the first stage, nigredo: you remain in the earth plane.

When you get to albedo, you ascend in consciousness. So you tune in to the planes, but you experience the planes in terms of Nasut. Each plane has a different feeling. Like you feel the planes in different parts of your body, which is why we ask: where do you hold this part of the dream in the body? As you are moving in the process, you are moving in the body. The body really is a temple of light. So you don't see any lights, don't hear any voices, no angels, but you feel very good, clear, peaceful, and you sort of begin to break through your personal consciousness. This means that something of the subtle planes comes through to you, but it's very vague. You can sort of feel it, but can't quite grasp it, you sort of tune in.

So in your dreams in albedo (Nasut), the planes show themselves in more worldly terms. (There are **three basic planes: Earth - Astral - Angelic**. Cp. Hazrat Inayat Khan in *The Soul Whence and Whither*.)

Astral planes: the dreams show your **talents**, what you are interested in. Still in personal terms. If you were good at football in school, then you will have a dream about playing football with your friends; it comes up on retreat and you think it's strange, but that's when you move into the astral plane. Not only **creativity**, but also **ideas, knowledge** come in this level, so you dream of libraries, books, you go to a special place with very special books, knowledge. It's not a worldly library, this is the place where the genius gets their inspiration from. In early stages of the retreat, when I get to this level, I start to get ideas coming to me whilst I'm doing the Zikr. It seems very meaningful, I write it down, but by the end of the retreat, when I'm in a different consciousness, I look at it and think, ah, it's not so interesting as I thought it was earlier. Because your consciousness has moved to a different space. But if you want ideas or solutions to your problems, that's the time to write it down. Even though when you finish the retreat you look at your notes and you think: mh, I don't see as much in it as I did when I wrote it down, still it's valuable. The more conscious of it you become the better.

Angelic planes (3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th plane):

Third plane: you experience dreams where everything is fresh, innocent, young. This is the phase you feel very good in retreat, still in albedo, rising, and then comes

fourth plane: you experience it negatively at first. You dream about fighting, wars, and you think: I've lost my attunement.

On the fourth plane, the dreams initially show **distortions** that the soul picks up from the world, sexual distortions, being manipulative, dishonest. (Difference to astral planes: there you see the manifestations of your *thoughts* in symbolic form. Things you're scared about you see, things that your mind is caught up in, even things you are angry about you see on the level of thought. Even things like alcoholism or sex abuse, you see that on the thought level.) But when you get to the 4th plane, you see it at the level of the soul. Much deeper, what you see is what is happening to the soul. It's when you have crazy dreams, it shows itself in distortion. Like you see someone in your dream who is very sick: your soul is sick.

Positive side of the 4th plane: **more sun-like**. Dream images of carnivals, circus, **celebrations**. Golden colors start to appear. Gold is symbolical of the eternal aspect of you. On that level it first starts to show itself. Also the sign of wisdom, cp. King Solomon and the gold mines: Solomon was associated with gold because he was very wise.

In 4th plane all the conflicts emerge in you. And when you overcome them, it shows wisdom. You see it on retreat: a person is in conflict, don't know what to do, the practices aren't working, they are in state of anguish, the soul is anguished. It's painful, the soul is in pain.

The soul doesn't want to be here. If you do overcome that conflict, then you feel committed: you discover your purpose. So you know now what you want to do in life. You discover the truth of your being, 4th plane is plane of **Truth**.

That's when you meet **Khidr, the green man**, because you've discovered something deep and true in yourself, you've touched something essential, true in yourself. That comes from the highest point in you, which is the green light. You come to know why you were created, the essential level, which comes from **the green light, the original light**. Khidr doesn't have to appear as a man, or a woman, but it appears as a green color. Sometimes you don't have to be sleeping, you just see a flash of green, just comes across you, and know: that's Khidr, the Khidr of *your* being, your inner guide. So 4th plane ends up a good place after all.

That's where the schools of spiritual wisdom often come from. The ancient Greeks, Confucians, Sufis, Buddhists, all the wonderful schools. These are places where you learn things at the soul level.

5th plane: much more angelic, peaceful. The light becomes more ethereal. Color: light green and light purple. Attunement of the big forests of the world.

6th plane: very remote, like the high Alps, snow.

Planes are not the same as spheres. **The planes are the internal structure of one's inner world, like the chakras are the inner structure.**

The alchemists used to relate the planes to the planets:

Astral	Moon, Mercury
3 rd plane	Venus
4 th plane	Mars (warrior, red), Sun (intense, gold). First negative, then positive aspect.
5 th plane	Jupiter (expansive, felicitous, optimistic), Saturn (mixture of constrictive, controlling side and also very good.)

These ideas (two opposed sides in one plane) roughly correspond to the heavens and hells in the higher planes. Not: hell is down there and heaven up there, but as you progress you get good spaces and bad spaces, right up to 6th plane. When you go beyond 6th plane, there is no more duality.

You can tell a soul type from the plane. The alchemists didn't relate the planets after Jupiter. After that plane it was all God.

The manifestations of the planes in the world:

Lower astral: city (active mind), especially big cities with underground trains. Shopping places, supermarkets. Almost robot-like. In the dream it can be scary and frightening, you see how inhuman it is, impersonal computer-consciousness, everything is a machine, even people are like machines. Very little human feeling comes through.

Upper astral: more beautiful, beautiful architecture in a city, the great ideas, institutions, schools in a city. You see the genius of humankind.

Third plane: Landscape is the Mediterranean, where we all go for a holiday. Nice, not too big, little hills, a little sandy beach, idyllic.

Fourth plane: Big landscapes in the world: Deserts, big mountain ranges (Rocky Mountains, Alps, Himalayas), big Savannah lands in Africa. Big, impressive, makes you feel very small.

Fifth plane: Big forests of the world. Sacred spaces.

Sixth plane: very high up, above the snow line, north pole, south pole, perfection. Ex. Snowgoose.

You can experience these planes in terms of Nasut, so you just get the *feeling* of each one, you don't see them. Those are the landscapes Pir Vilayat talks about. You see it in the stage of retreat which is albedo.

Spiritual awakening

What happens when you start to awaken spiritually? As you move from Nasut to Lahut, you experience the planes more consciously.

In **Khayal** or **Arwah** you start to see images through your imagination, images of landscapes. In your dreams the landscapes become more pronounced and your dreams become less personal, less worldly. In **Arwah** you start to see the spirits, the souls of people. Mainly in the astral planes, you start to see souls there, when we come to upper astral you start to see all the great souls who were great thinkers, like Archimedes and Einstein and people like that, you see all these beings, their faces come to you. That's when you start seeing the souls who have departed from this world. You can see even souls on the 4th plane, but you don't see 5th or 6th plane beings, because your consciousness can't perceive that yet.

Malakut

When you awaken to Malakut, which comes after **Mithal**, you actually start to see the landscapes of the planes, for the first time you see them clearly. You see the planes as they are in the landscapes. You see the different aspects of your own world, the aspects that your soul is made up of. You see the souls.

Jabarut

Then you awaken to Jabarut, and you start to see: everything is made of light, all the planes are made of light. Pir Vilayat talks about transfiguration of light, which means you see this world and the other worlds in terms of light of splendor. And you start to see the angels, the beings of light. No longer just souls, but now beings of light.

Lahut

In Lahut you see the landscapes in terms of their qualities. You see other things too, but you start to see the qualities, the wasifas in the landscapes.

In terms of dreams, when you go from **Nasut** right through to **Lahut**, this awakening changes your dreams. In **Nasut** you see your dreams in terms of your psychology, your psyche, your personal world, but in **Malakut** the dreams change radically, they are much more impersonal. You get a lot more guidance in your dreams, the dreams show a lot more color, the light of your soul is starting to emerge. And you have dreams about other souls too. In **Jabarut**, dreams become more and more strange, it's very hard to remember those dreams, it's like you go to a very far off place, and the dreams are very simple. Guidance comes directly, like people speak to you in your dreams and they say: you must do this, you mustn't do that. You start to see light, the start of clear dreams. The dreams are very profound, like you can't forget them. They are very simple, very short, quick. Sometimes they come in a flash, and there is lots of light. And they are very mysterious. Do you know why? **Because the treasure of God is being revealed for you, the hidden treasure of your being is starting to be revealed** to you. It's stunning, it's amazing, it's magnificent, all those kinds of emotions.

What we are trying to communicate in this seminar we have had in the last few days is two pieces that come together. They are like two halves of a whole. One half is the **big picture**: the planes, the operations, the stages of alchemy and so on. That's one half of the picture. The other half is more personal, more feminine, it's the part that communicates, goes directly, **heart to heart**. So those are the two bits, and when they come together, it works very well.

God bless.

[End of seminar]

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