

## **Meditation and Lucid Dreams**

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Eighteen regular meditators in various meditative traditions completed a 30—day: dream diary and gave information regarding previous dream experience and meditative practice. They rated each dream as lucid, partially lucid, control or none of these, and for each dream indicated whether they had actually heard voices, heard other sounds or felt bodily movement.

Dreams were analyzed for perceptual, emotional and cognitive anomalies and, from this analysis, dream profiles were established which were compared to various dream profiles of non—mediators. Correlations and a factor analysis were performed to find relationships between measures of meditation in years, daily meditation during the study, dream anomalies from the analysis, dream recall and other dream experience as indicated in the questionnaires. Lucid and control dream experience in this group was compared to the dream experience of a group of non—mediators but good dream recallers.

The length of time spent in daily meditation correlated significantly with four measures of sensory detail, one taken from an analysis of the dreams themselves, and the other three taken from the questions asked after each dream about hearing voices, hearing other sounds and being aware of bodily movement. In other words, the longer the time spent in daily meditation the more visual, auditory and somatic vividness was reported in dreams.

The length of time in years of regular meditation correlated with the lucidity of the dreamer in this dream sample and also with his estimates of lucid dreams and control dreams over the preceding year. Lucidity did not correlate with whether dreamer had attempted to become lucid in his dreams. Lucidity and control (which was highly related to lucidity in this study) seem to be general effects of years of regular meditation regardless of whether the dreamer tried to become lucid or to control his dreams.

A third factor seemed to indicate that for some meditators the longer they spent meditating per day the less meaningful their dreams were and the less they recalled them. This may relate to an effect that many meditators mentioned in their comments. After they began meditating their dreams were calmer and less dramatic, conflicted and anxious. This may perhaps make dreams for some less meaningful and less memorable.

The dreams of meditators as a whole showed more examples of perceptual bizarreness and more mythic content than a sample dreams of non-meditators. Unexpectedly they also showed more clouding in thought and memory.

Meditation in years and lucidity and control all correlated as well with examples of the

most extreme kinds of perceptual bizarreness, visual and somatic form changes. These are qualitative form changes similar to those which sometimes occur in altered states induced by drugs. Visual form changes would include objects or forms with geometrical patterns, objects taking on a crystalline appearance, altering in perspective, becoming very large or very small, multiplying, glowing, or objects and scenes which are condensed or superimposed. Somatic form changes related to such changes touched or sensed in the dreamer's body. These include sensations of flying.

The number of lucid dreams in the meditators was not significantly higher than in a group of good dream recallers. The meditators, however, did have a significantly higher number of control dreams, while the dream recallers had significantly more parital lucid dreams.

The connection found between meditation and lucidity supports the idea that lucidity in a dream is the sleeping equivalent of the meditative state in waking life, a theory held by some psychologists and supported by the meditative traditions. Just as the lucid dreamer knows that he has in some way created the dream world he experiences — it is his dream — so the successful meditator, at least in the Buddhist tradition, does not see himself and his environment as separate, but as “two poles of a constant and ongoing dialogue”. The above quotation is from Reginald A. Ray in his introduction to Karma Thinley's The History of the Sixteen Karmapas of Tibet. He continues: “from the Tibetan view point, reality presents itself as an, accurate, apt and timely mirror, and as a challenge, encouragement and critic. One has the opportunity to learn about one's blindness and rigidity from everything that happens.” It follows that “we are entirely responsible for our world. Everything that arises in our world has to do with us, and we must assume responsibility for it.”

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