

## **The Bardo of the Dream State**

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Before doing Dream Yoga, it is very important to generate the correct motivation. Dreams are a continuation of the lifetime of habitual patterns that one dreams even while awake. This bardo is referred to as being double-deluded. It is deluded in the sense that it arises within the previous bardo, which is deluded, and because itself is deluded. In the dream state we also reflect on our collective delusions. When trying to meditate we experience all sorts of distraction. The same thing occurs to us while sleeping, but this is only a problem if you think they are real.

The Bardo of the Dream State is similar to that when we die except that its duration is different. The six senses withdraw into the central alaya - the basis of all - and one's senses become dull, etc. Most beings then withdraw into a state of unawareness but if you are able to remain conscious you are able to make good use of this time. One's six senses still work at this time and objects still appear to them. One's accumulation of habitual patterns reflects even in the dream state. For example, in my waking state I see myself as a lama. Similarly, when I am dreaming, I see myself as a lama. Sometimes I dream I am sitting on a throne giving teachings. In this way it's possible to use one's time in the dream state to cultivate positive actions which in turn affect our waking state. These experiences don't exist inherently. Enlightened beings' recognition of this lack of inherent existence enables them to perform miracles. These aren't at all like a magician's deception.

Genuine practitioners recognize mundane activity as the mere appearances of a dream, whereas ordinary beings take ordinary appearances as existing inherently and get attached to them, causing tremendous dissatisfaction. To benefit from doing dream yoga a practitioner should realize the dream-like nature of appearances. They should also have a proper and strong motivation and the determination to use the dream state in their practice. Normally, if you experience drowning in a dream, fear arises. In dream yoga practice, you can change that condition by first recognizing you are dreaming and then by performing extraordinary activities, like miracles. Being able to do this is a sign of success in the practice of dream yoga, but success depends very much on your previous accumulation of positive actions. In other words, success depends on your mundane activities which in turn get reflected in the dream state.

Gampopa experienced many kinds of dreams which he shared with his Guru, Milarepa. Normally, dreams are a mark of delusion, but one dream he shared had much meaning. The dreams of a particular phase of the dream cycle may be of special significance in relation to the waking state. Dreams just prior to waking up sometimes indicate things which will make you happy or sad.

The dream and waking states have certain qualities in common. This is why it is possible to experience the clear light when practising dream yoga. Gampopa said that advanced practitioners don't experience dreams at all when doing dream yoga, as dreams are an illusion. Instead they experience the clear light on a constant basis. He proved this by cutting off his head in front of his students while saying "This is the last time I stop dreaming." Dreams are an illusion, a fault, and as such are something we need to remove. Only then will we be able to experience the fundamental clear light, the alaya. If the senses completely dissolve from the body during the dream state one can possibly die.

The bardo state between birth and death shouldn't be wasted. This is why we practice the yoga of the dream bardo. Both bardos are intimately interconnected. If one can constantly practice dharma, even during the dream state, then one establishes strong and positive habitual patterns. In this way you make use of your time to the fullest. One's dream state very much depends on the habitual patterns brought to it from the waking state.