



By Jane Carleton, published in Inspired Bali Magazine, Spring 2013

Almost every day I am reminded of the absolutely real and very rich connection I have to my inner voice of wisdom because I listen to my dreams. I live a life that is infused with magic because I remember I have a dreaming self and I honor and value this part of myself. I take the

time to nurture it. The first step is to catch dreams and log them in a journal, then look at them with an eye for the hidden gifts within.

I dream of Bali often when I leave the island...

In my dream, I am walking through a jungle, weaving through the emerald foliage and I hear a hauntingly beautiful gamelan playing like a soundtrack in the air around me. I come to a lovely Balinese goddess, who gives me a large round screen that I hold up and look through. As the light streams through the batik orange, brown, and green patterns I see the land and friends of Bali that are so dear to me.

I wake with the feeling that I was there, in a sacred Bali that feeds my soul. And far away, in California, I ready myself for my day with the knowledge that I am still connected to the life I love in Bali. I had a series of slightly different versions of this dream over the course of several weeks and each time I felt a deep appreciation for the sense of vitality it brought me. I awoke refreshed because I remembered the special sense of aliveness I feel when I'm in Bali, and each time I had the dream I happily carried this feeling with me during my busy day.

Studies show we may wake with a “dream hangover” – a feeling that carries over from the emotions experienced in the dream. If the feeling is pleasant, as in this dream, I can sustain it when I think about the dream and imagine my way back into the scene. If unpleasant, like the feeling of a scary dream, it is possible to move that sensation out of the psyche and body by doing something physical, like shaking it off, spitting it out into the ground, or wiping the feeling off the body. It may sound silly, but it can work if done with intention.

I use the first person present tense when I write my dreams and when I tell them to others. With this technique, used almost universally by fellow members of the International Association for the Study of Dreams, I step back into the dream as I write it and more details come through as I see myself move through the dream in my imagination. When I tell a dream to another in this way, I find it helps the listener journey through their own imagined version of the dream, and to facilitate insight that can then be shared. There is magic in this; when shared, any dream can provide valuable insight for all parties and dreaming can become a community activity.

Balinese cultural researcher Sugi Lanús studies temple dreams. He spoke to me of a temple in his village that was built after several of his neighbors had the same dream. They dreamt of meeting a holy man who was without shelter at the base of a sacred tamarind tree that grows in the village. After three spiritual leaders in the community had similar dreams, the village decided to devote the time and financial resources to build a proper temple there. Now, when young people who leave to work in Denpasar dream of this temple, they feel they are still a part of the village and are comforted with this vision of home. This group temple dream is alive because the dreamers have allowed it to manifest in the waking world.

So what happens when we dream? A dream addresses many layers of our integrated Self simultaneously, in different and coordinated ways. Dreaming is infinitely mysterious and creative and in order to better utilize and interpret our dreams it can be helpful to learn about a few different dream theories.

These categories are by no means mutually exclusive; rather, they are layered and are simultaneously present each time we dream.

## **Physiological**

The body changes during sleep to facilitate dreaming. Some scientists believe dreaming is nothing more than somewhat random effects of brain processes that help facilitate memory formation and information processing, but many hold something more is happening. Studies show our imagination can actually change our biology; our body responds to that which we imagine, including dreams. We are embodied consciousness and therefore need the tools of our physical body to do anything, including dream. Sometimes a dream will actually give us insight into the status of our physical health to enable our body to continue to serve us.

My goddess dream affected my physiology in a lovely way. In addition to the unconscious physical processes that always underlie dreaming, I woke from this dream energized, refreshed, rested, at peace, and happy. My body felt healthy and strong upon waking and the dream did not interrupt a good night's sleep. My emotions were positive and happy.

## **Day Residue**

These dream elements refer to waking life events. We live in a world of symbols, reflected in specific experiences, images and other sensations that make their way into our conscious awareness as well penetrating into the unconscious parts of ourselves. Images are predominant in the language of dreams and perceptions from the day that appear in our dreams can carry significance and provide insight. My own dream was rife with familiarity. From the colors of the batiks to the sound of the gamelan, elements of this dream were clearly called on from deeply etched memories. I have seen images of Balinese goddesses and I often admire the beauty of Balinese women dressed for ceremony. I have been in the Balinese jungle. All of these left a lasting impression on me and then later found their way into a dream of a place and a feeling I love.

## **Personal Psychology**

Dreams provide insight into our psychological state of mind and our life story. Daily challenges, joys, and concerns are regularly processed in dreams. In the language of Freud, when looking at a dream one image or feeling can lead to associations with another, leading to insights about one's life. The psychological view is the usual focus in the Western world when dreams are discussed, often in the therapist's office. When I think about my life from a psychological view, the dream reflects how much I miss Bali when away and that part of me yearns to return. This dream fulfilled my wish to be back in Bali. If I look at all of the elements of the dream as psychological aspects of myself, I know I have a beautiful, nurturing part of myself that guides me along, and that I can see deeply into the meaning of things. I know that during the period I had these recurring dreams I felt a little lost in the "concrete jungle" of my big-city home. I see this dream as a reflection of my search for the right path at this time in my life and the challenge of straddling two lives half a world apart.

## **Archetypal/Collective Unconscious**

Dreams are also collective. This is the territory of C. G. Jung's "amplification", wherein our understanding expands beyond individual lives into the world of living myths, the vast cross-cultural repository of living symbols. We can take our dream images and relate them to the big stories of our shared humanity. In order to interpret my own dream through the lens of archetype and mythology, I look for universal themes and unfamiliar symbols to explore. For example, the wildness of the jungle invokes the story of the hero's quest and the act of finding one's path alone in the deep unknown. The screen is a magic implement that will help me find my way, and the gamelan is a siren song enchanting me. The Goddess as she appears in this form is beloved by all who see her. In this way, my dreams connect me to symbols of beauty, wisdom

and earth magic and I have dipped into a ubiquitous source of knowing so that I may alchemically transform and grow.

### **Neo-Shamanic/Indigenous**

We travel in the imaginal realm when we dream. Dreams take us into the realm of the transpersonal and can connect us to living energies beyond our own. For example, Balinese beliefs speak of journeying beyond the body when we dream, and of visits with departed loved ones. Psychologist Stephen Aizenstat teaches the concept of “animation”: the idea the dream world and everything in it is alive and is available for dialogue, and in the dream a dreamer has an authentic experience that is every bit as valid as waking life events.

I have journeyed across time and space to be in this particular Bali, and I can revisit it any time I choose. I can go anywhere I like when I dream; I am unbound from my five physical senses. I use my dreaming self to explore and make contact with a guide who has come to show me something. The batik is a veil between the waking world and the multiverse and the music is the sound of the cosmos. This is a dream portal ripe for further exploration. The extent to which we interpret our dreams is a journey unto itself. Dream researcher Jeremy Taylor says we can work a single dream for a lifetime and still discover something new. We can unpack our dreams as much or as little as we like.

I take all of the above with a great breath of gratitude, and I intend to further inspire myself by bringing something from the dream into my waking life. Dream teacher Robert Moss says dreams require action and for me this series of dreams is so full of life I want to remember the feeling I had when I awoke. I can return to this beautiful dream place simply with the act of imagining myself there. But there is more that can be done. Perhaps listening to gamelan music will fuel further insights, or a phone call to a friend I saw in the dream will be timely. I may make a model of the batik screen to meditate on. Maybe I'll even return to Bali for a while. And again, with renewed gratitude, I'll sleep tonight and see what dreams may come.

### **About Jane**

Jane E. Carleton, G.G., M.A. specializes in dreams as an international consultant, educator, and workshop leader. She teaches a variety of contemporary and cross-cultural transformative dreaming techniques, including Robert Moss's Active Dreaming, and is a gifted intuitive facilitator of healing and personal transformation. She guides individuals on an inspiring experience of the power of dreams and imagination to enhance and transform daily life. She comes to Bali often to dream.