Physical sleep therefore well deserves our attention. I said “physical sleep”, for we are inclined to believe that the whole of our being goes to sleep when the body is asleep.

“It is often said that in sleep men’s true nature is revealed.”

Ibid.

Their true nature does not mean their deeper nature but their spontaneous nature which is not under control, for the control of the will ceases during sleep. And all that one does not do in the waking state, one does during sleep because the control of the will is removed.

“All the desires that have been repressed without being dissolved ... try to seek satisfaction while the will is asleep.

“And as desires are veritable dynamic centres of formation, they tend to organise in and around us an assemblage of circumstances most favourable to their satisfaction.”

Ibid.

In another lesson we spoke of the power of mental formation: the mind shapes entities which have a more or less independent life and try to manifest themselves. Here I do not speak of thought but of desire. Desire belongs to the vital domain but at the core of this desire there is always a thought, and
the desire becomes all the more active and dynamic when it holds in itself this power of mental formation and the power of vital realisation. The vital is the centre of dynamism of the being, of active energy, and the two combined make something very strong which has a considerable tendency towards realising itself. Besides, everything in the universe tends towards manifestation, and things which are prevented from manifesting lose, by that very fact, their force and capacity. Most of the methods aiming at self-control have indeed made use of repression, of the suppression of movements with the idea that if one continues this suppression long enough, one succeeds in killing the element that is not wanted. This would be quite true if it were a question only of the physical world, but behind the physical world there is the subconscious world and behind the subconscious world there lies the immensity of the Inconscient. And what you do not know is this that unless you destroy within you the desire itself, that is, the seed of the formation, this formation which you are preventing from manifesting is so to say repressed in the subconscious—driven down and repressed right at the bottom—and if you go and search in the subconscious you will find that it is waiting there to do its work. That is why so many people who have for years and years been able to control an unwanted movement are suddenly taken by surprise when this movement rushes up from below with all the greater force the longer it has been repressed. Hence dreams are of great use because this movement of repression exists no longer, the conscious will not being there (for it falls asleep or goes elsewhere) and the desire repressed below leaps up and manifests itself in the form of dreams, so much so that you come to know a good many things about your own nature; that is why it is said that man can discover in sleep and dreams his true nature; it is not his true nature, his deeper nature, which is his psychic nature, but the spontaneous, uncontrolled nature.

“Thus is destroyed in a few hours of the night the fruit
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of many efforts made by our conscious thought during the day....

“We should therefore learn to recognise our dreams and, above all, to distinguish between them, for they vary greatly in their nature and quality. Often in the same night we may have several dreams which belong to different categories, depending on the depth of our sleep.”

“On Dreams”, Words of Long Ago

I do not know if anyone here has observed the phenomenon, but according to the hours of the night or according to how long you have slept, your sleep changes its quality. If you take the trouble of observing (there are very few people however who do take the trouble), it may happen that roused suddenly at an abnormal hour, you have noticed that you were not in the same state of sleep twice. There are also hours when you have different types of dreams; if you are careful you will see this very clearly. There are hours when it is very difficult for you to wake up, for you are in deep sleep, you are altogether unconscious of external things. At other times, on the contrary, just a little noise, however slight, is sufficient to startle you out of your sleep.

During the night I am not afraid of certain things, but during the day I am afraid of them. Why?

That means your vital being is older than your physical being.

“There is no doubt that from many points of view our subconscient has greater knowledge than our habitual consciousness.”

Ibid.

Here I am going to correct one word: it is not the subconscient which has more knowledge than our normal consciousness but the superconscient, that which escapes our consciousness, not
because it is lower but because it is higher. When at night we put a problem to ourselves, the problem goes to the higher regions of our being and in the morning we get the answer, the solution, because there, in the depths of our consciousness, we know things which we do not know in our external consciousness.

During sleep one has often the impression of entering into a region of light, of higher knowledge, but on waking up one brings back only the impression, the memory. Why?

That is because in the ladder of being which climbs from the most external to the highest consciousness, there are gaps, breaks of continuity, and when the consciousness rises, descends and goes up again, it passes through some kind of dark holes where there is nothing. Then it enters into a sleep, a sort of unconsciousness, and wakes up as best it can on the other side and hardly remembers what it has brought back from above. This is what happens very frequently and particularly in the state called samādhi.1 People who enter into samādhi find out that between their active external consciousness and their consciousness in meditation, there lies a blank. Up there, they are almost necessarily conscious — conscious of the state in which they find themselves — but when coming down again towards their body, on the way they enter into a kind of hole where they lose everything — they are unable to bring back the experience with them. Quite a discipline is needed to create in oneself the many steps which enable the consciousness not to forget what it has experienced up there. It is not an impossible discipline but it is extremely long and requires an unshakable patience, for it is as if you wanted to build up in you a being, a body; and for that you require first of all the necessary knowledge, but also such a prolonged persistence and perseverance as would discourage

1 Ecstasy or yogic trance.
many. But it is altogether indispensable if you want to take part in the knowledge of your higher being.

*Is it useful to note down one’s dreams?*

Yes, for more than a year I applied myself to this kind of self-discipline. I noted down everything — a few words, just a little thing, an impression — and I tried to pass from one memory to another. At first it was not very fruitful, but at the end of about fourteen months I could follow, beginning from the end, all the movements, all the dreams right up to the beginning of the night. That puts you in such a conscious, continuously conscious state that finally I was not sleeping at all. My body lay stretched, deeply asleep, but there was no rest in the consciousness. The result was absolutely wonderful; you become conscious of the different phases of sleep, conscious absolutely of everything that happens there, to the least detail, then nothing can any longer escape your control. But if during the day you have a lot of work and you truly need sleep, I advise you not to try!

In any case, there is one thing altogether indispensable, not to make the least movement when you wake up; you must learn to wake up in a state of complete immobility, otherwise everything disappears.

*Has the mind need of rest apart from the physical body and the physical brain?*

Yes, an absolute need. And it is only in silence that the mind can receive the true light from above. I do not think that the mental being is liable to fatigue; if it feels tired, that is rather a reaction of the brain. It is only in silence that it can rise above itself. But from the point of view of sleep and dreams of which we were speaking, there is a very remarkable phenomenon. I have tried it out. If you are able to establish not only silence in your head but also repose in your vital, the stoppage of all the activities of your
being, and if coming out of the domain of forms you enter into what is called Sachchidananda, the supreme consciousness, then with three minutes of that state you can have more rest than in eight hours of sleep. It is not very easy, no.... It is the consciousness absolutely conscious but completely still, in the full original Light. If you get that, if you are able to immobilise everything in you, then your whole being participates in this supreme consciousness and I have well observed that as regards rest (and I mean by rest bodily rest, the repose of the muscles) three minutes of that state were equivalent to eight hours of ordinary sleep.

*Does the vital body also need rest?*

Yes. The vital body surrounds the physical body with a kind of envelope which has almost the same density as the vibrations of heat observable when the day is very hot. And it is this which is the intermediary between the subtle body and the most material vital body. It is this which protects the body from all contagion, fatigue, exhaustion and even from accidents. Therefore if this envelope is wholly intact, it protects you from everything, but a little too strong an emotion, a little fatigue, some dissatisfaction or any shock whatsoever is sufficient to scratch it as it were and the slightest scratch allows any kind of intrusion. Medical science also now recognises that if you are in perfect vital equilibrium, you do not catch illness or in any case you have a kind of immunity from contagion. If you have this equilibrium, this inner harmony which keeps the envelope intact, it protects you from everything. There are people who lead quite an ordinary life, who know how to sleep as one should, eat as one should, and their nervous envelope is so intact that they pass through all dangers as though unconcerned. It is a capacity one can cultivate in oneself. If one becomes aware of the weak spot in one’s envelope, a few minutes’ concentration, a call to the force, an inner peace is sufficient for it to be all right, get cured, and for the untoward thing to vanish.