

# Dream Interpretation as an Aid to Psychic Wholeness



## Neera Kashyap shares two letters from Sri Madhava Ashish

*Below are two letters I received from Sri Madhava Ashish in response to two of my dreams. While chronologically they date from the 1980s, their timeless significance and deep psychological content helps us 'to clear the ground floor', as it were, before trying to climb higher. Once clarity is achieved, they also point to the universal methods of meditation practice, Japa and Dhyan to heal and achieve psychic wholeness. They underscore the importance of one-on-one communication in the subtle issues of personal psychology and dream interpretation.*

## Letter 1: On Womanhood and Taking Responsibility

October 1983

What is it in the lives of women, such that they start by being laughing and happy, and then ‘get it in the neck’ – painfully – so that they feel ‘afflicted, dazed, helpless’? *[Note that throughout these letters, the phrases in quotation marks are all from the dreams.]*

I believe the situation has something to do with the business of growing up and learning to accept the harsh aspects of adult life. In the modern world, girl children are brought up without very strict discipline and without responsibility. Marriage is seen as an escape from whatever restrictions the home imposes, and is expected to be all happy and beautiful. Then they ‘get it in the neck’ – tired, harassed, anxious, demanding husbands; much loneliness; childbirth. And they bring much of it onto themselves, simply because they cannot accept that life necessarily contains hard work, tough problems, disappointment and pain. A man is forced to accept these things (though men struggle not to accept them) because society demands that he play the role of worker and supplier. There is therefore the sense that many women do not see they have to accept what the man has to accept: their ‘man’ is ‘invisible’.

Many women, represented by women’s lib, misunderstand the problem and think the answer to lie in becoming **like** men – ‘tough, competent, successful – ‘harsh and unfeminine’ (an attitude that is represented in your dream by the figure of Prabha, the journalist) or ‘tightly controlled, correct, cold and ambitious’ (represented by the dream figure of Sigrun, the artist). Sigrun and Prabha represent two modes in which women think to escape – the independent artist, and the professional journalist. Prabha (evidently representing your attitude to your mother-in-law) is prepared to smash the social structure if it will help protect her against the pain of family demands.

The letters of consolation in the dream seem to imply recognition of the fact that the problem is common to women and is not private or exceptional. This is the first step to finding a solution, because it cuts through the self-pitying attitude that ‘I have been picked up for suffering. Poor little me.’

The man’s black cape [as a dream image] reinforces the ‘invisibility’, which means that he is the male content of the female unconscious. He divides the group of women. The majority remain in his power – suffering unhappily. The ones who escape him are, it seems, the ones who are earning a little money. They are identified by the independent artist, though they are not like her. A woman in the modern world who ‘earns a little money’ learns to come to terms with the real world of competitive business, but need not thereby lose her femininity.

The Parsi woman in the dream? ‘Good thoughts, good words, good deeds’. She seems to be on her own – [in the dream she is] ‘on an island’. But ‘no man is an island unto himself’. It is out in public – conscious. Perhaps it implies that one can maintain an island of sanity in the midst of the traffic of life.

## Letter 2: Working through a Powerful Animus with the Powerful Counters of Understanding and Dhyana

September 1982

My guess is that the sort of ‘possession’ of your mind and feelings by a man would be analysed by Jung as a projection of the animus – the male principle in the feminine psyche, corresponding to the anima, the female principle in the man’s psyche.

It may fit one of the possible relationship patterns between man and woman, which Jung describes as ‘a relationship of the feminine animus to the man (which happens when the woman is identical with her animus)’. This would not mean that this is the

sole component of your make-up, but that it is a strong one.

Not being a Jungian psychotherapist, I can't take this much further. But I gather it would have something to do with there being, as it were, a weak dividing wall between your waking, conscious ego-integration, and 'The Unconscious'. This would mean that the unconscious male animus – translatable as the woman's need to find wholeness in relationship with a man – takes on or borrows the male form and (imaginal) characteristics of a particular man, and invades your conscious mind.

The projection of the animus onto a man is completely normal, and happens all the time in varying degrees – the very basis of all relationships between woman and man. But the invasion of the mind (which is quite different from the degree of projection experienced when one falls in love) is due to what Jung calls 'the woman is identical with her animus'.

The cure seems to lie in strengthening the waking identity. In this context it appears highly relevant that you experience a 'lull' or remission just when you have asserted your independent power of decision NOT to fall in with P's (husband) plans. While not to be interpreted as being 'anti-P', it is an assertion of your right to be an individual. Indeed, it appears that it is only the strength of 'crystallisation' of the waking identity that forms the barrier between conscious and unconscious in any of us. If that barrier breaks down completely, so that we are wholly ruled by the unconscious, then we are considered mad.

All sorts of things/events in your childhood will have contributed to making you vulnerable to what has happened – from your position in the family (which determined how much attention and reassurance you obtained), to educational opportunity, to your father's character and behaviour. Enquiry into and analysis of all this could help. But the important and crucial component is your own wish to break the spell that has bound you to the projection – the spell of the anima.

All honour is due to your earlier efforts to make something of yourself, prior to the current trouble, by taking your degree, taking jobs etc. They have helped you by giving you more self-confidence, but they did not and could not take the process far enough. The more recent efforts of self-discipline, even though not wasted efforts, appear to have been too much like repression. Real control of the mind has to be supported by some sort of understanding of the nature of the compulsion.

This accounts for the negative effects on D (son). As your son, he inevitably carries some part of your anima projection. So it seems that in trying to discipline your main projection, you have also acted it out on poor D. Unhappy though this is, something of great value can come of it, for it gives you an incentive to break the spell. If you can get yourself right, D will be all right.

And I must emphasise that it is you yourself who have to do it. No analyst can do it for you, even though a wise analyst would be of great help in guiding your efforts.

I note how the last word of your letter, 'anonymous', supports the idea that your sense of identity needs reinforcing. In the context of the inner path, this may seem contradictory. But in general, it is as if one has to have a respectable ego-identification before one can surrender it.

In theory, you could also beat the anima by withdrawing beyond it in meditation. Viewed from that higher position, compulsions can be seen for what they are.

Yet it is better to get the ground floor into some sort of order, before climbing upstairs. However, the general practice of Japa, Dhyan and self-remembering should go on, because they activate the Self and give you a centre around which the rest can be organised.