"Nothing you can explain exists."
- Robert Adams

"Consciousness is a singular of which the plural is unknown."
- Erwin Schroedinger

In these pages there is much use made of the analogy of the dream. To say that waking consciousness, and the world that appears as ‘real’ in waking consciousness, is actually more like a dream, is to use a metaphor. It goes hand in hand with the metaphor of awakening, and both are used to point toward the Understanding. But when taken literally these images can take on a life of their own and lead to thoughts and questions about how one can wake up from the dream, which are nothing but an extended and rather pointless detour.

In traditional Advaita, there is a conceptual distinction made between three states or levels of consciousness, and
then the Consciousness which is above or beyond or prior to the other three and which witnesses the three states of consciousness. The three states are the waking state, which is considered to be the least conscious state or the deepest stupor; the dreaming state; and the consciousness which is there in deep sleep which, ironically to most westerners, is considered to be clearest, the purest, the most ‘awake’ of the three. Then, there is Consciousness which perceives and experiences all three of these states, the Consciousness in which all these three states, waking, dreaming, and deep sleep, arise.

There is an inverse awareness here; the deeper one goes into what the West calls ‘unconsciousness,’ the Advaita model sees as more conscious. What the West calls waking up, Advaita sees as becoming more unconscious.

The western model is so programmed into our thinking, the waking state is given such priority and value, that the other states are valued only when they are interpreted in the context of waking consciousness. Thus the western psychological model is to make ‘unconscious’ processes ‘conscious;’ that is, recognized and interpreted by the waking consciousness. And the thought patterns that occur in dreaming consciousness are endlessly interpreted by the waking mind. The Advaita model would see this process as backwards, as dumbing-down the ‘higher’ levels of consciousness in a way that is amenable to the ‘lowest’ level.

This Advaita model of consciousness is examined by James Carse in Breakfast at the Victory: The Mysticism of Ordinary Experience. (Carse is professor of religion at New York University and, as far as I know, no relation. But with
a name like that, who knows? Who Carse?) In speaking of
the Consciousness in which waking, dreaming, and deep
sleep all arise, Carse points out that

"...while this deepest state is not directly known
to the other levels of consciousness, each of those
levels is perfectly known to it. In other words, self-
knowledge is not knowing who or what the true self
is; it is being known by that true self."

Dreams, and also other messages from what is called the
unconscious or subconscious, often seem very strange to
the waking consciousness, precisely because they do not
fit into waking 'reality.' Waking consciousness then must
interpret the dream to make sense of it in light of what it
accepts as 'reality.'

"This way the dream becomes the property of the
waking I, and the deeper consciousness that was at
work in it goes back into hiding.

"The usual way of interpreting a dream is to trans-
late its content into terms familiar with the waking
I. If we followed the Hindus' insight into levels of
consciousness, we would reverse this process. We
would ask ourselves what the dreaming I knows
about the waking I that the waking I cannot know
about itself."

Please notice here that it is evident that Carse is thinking
of the three levels of 'consciousness' as 'states' belonging
to an individual 'self,' and is interpreting the 'Hindu' or
Advaita tradition accordingly. He even seems to refer to ulti-
mate Consciousness, All That Is, as a fourth, 'deepest state'
of individual consciousness. Somewhat ironically, this is
exactly the kind of analysis the 'waking state' engages in,
to bring what seems like a strange but intriguing teaching
into alignment with the waking state's beliefs; in this case
the belief in separate individuals, each with their own levels of ‘consciousness.’

Nevertheless, the point of all this is that, *mutatis mutandis*, there is a useful insight here. Remember Maharaj; “The very idea of going beyond the dream is illusory.” It is not for the waking consciousness to go anywhere; the waking consciousness is the dream character. It belongs in the dream.

“The dream is not your problem.” Who you truly are is not the dream character, not waking consciousness, not a state, not even a ‘higher self’ of deeper but still individual consciousness. Rather, who you truly are is All That Is, Consciousness, the Absolute; in which the sleeping dream, and the waking dream, and the dreamlessness all appear.

Consciousness, All That Is, cannot be directly known by the waking consciousness you call yourself because it cannot be translated, it cannot “become the property” of this dream character. But you, the ‘you’ that you think you are, is perfectly known to it. It is what You are.