DreamBirth

TRANSFORMING the JOURNEY of CHILDBIRTH through IMAGERY

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PART ONE

The Journey of Conception
I

PRE-CONCEPTION

Clearing the Way

Nothing happens unless first a dream.
CARL SANDBURG

HAVE YOU EVER heard your unborn children calling?
Long before my son was born, I could hear him! You may think me crazy, but there he was, a sweet cherub standing on a fluffy pink cloud in the sky, waving his chubby hand and smiling. “Mom, Mom, are you ready?”

But I wasn’t ready. I hadn’t yet met my soul mate. And to be honest, I wasn’t prepared to give up my all-consuming and precious time with my teacher, Colette. Leaving my spiritual mother to start a family was not on my immediate agenda. Still, my biological clock kept ticking.

Colette had also heard her children calling, as had her mother and grandmother. I was well aware that we may have a destined soul mate or a destined child, but that the choices we make along the way can change our destiny. I accepted that my priorities had changed and that, given the time constraint of my biological clock, I might never become a wife or a mother.
THE WOMAN WHO MAKES BABIES

It is said that in Jerusalem, where I lived at the time, sky and earth meet like a saucepan and its lid. The earthly city is a microcosm of the heavenly one, a mirror image, a map of the celestial qualities it strives to embody. In this cauldron of spirituality, where the three great Western religions vie for room, I had found my own private womb within a womb. To get there, I walked down a long, winding street bordered by a variety of magnificent trees. Hidden among bushes and lilac trees halfway down the street was a little blue gate. Beyond the gate were seven stone steps leading into a garden with a small terrace shaded by a large jasmine tree. Entering my teacher’s space felt like returning to the lost garden of Eden. There, I was safe again in metaphorical amniotic waters, cradled by love, listening to words and heartbeats that structured the world for me. My teacher never left her house so I was sure to find her there.

Colette was the last lineage holder of an ancient Sephardic family of Kabbalists. Her work restored receptive, surrendering qualities to women—qualities that are embodied in the word kabbalah, which means receiving. She was famous for curing barrenness, whether of mind, heart, or body, and for igniting the creative flow. She was known as “the woman who makes babies.”

Closing my eyes at her request, I entered into the womb of my body and, in the dark, discovered the spark of light that begins all creation. From that light unfolded many offshoots of my imagination: wonderful, terrifying, awe-inspiring waking dreams that echoed the dreams I had at night. Was I indulging in fantasies? My family, far away in France, thought so and warned me against dreaming my life away.

But I was mesmerized. I found in those inner images an ever-flowing source of inspiration and joy. When I had first met Colette, my life was in shambles. I had lost all purpose and direction in life. I was closer to despair than I had ever been before. I was sick in body and soul. In one of the first exercises she had me do, she asked me to close my eyes and image catching a ray of light. “Draw a circle in the upper right-hand side of the blue sky. What appears out of the circle?”

I saw coming out of the circle a huge being of light accompanied by thousands of white doves, all flying toward me. The being gave me his name and assured me that I had nothing to fear, that my life’s work
was beginning. I felt immeasurably comforted and reassured. Meaning and purpose returned to my life. The images sustained and guided me. The more I practiced dreaming, the more grounded I felt, as if my images directly affected my body as well as my soul. For the first time, I had glimpses of feeling united within myself, of becoming a healed and whole being. I began to manifest my creativity. Under Colette’s guidance, I gave birth to myself.

CHILDREN OF OUR IMAGINATION

How powerful are these children of our imagination? Are they pure fantasy and, if so, a self-indulgence? How do we know the images from our dreams are actually relevant to our lives and not some random firing of our brains? And is there more to making images than meets the eye?

Today many self-help books incorporate visualizations with other forms of self-care. For the most part, these visualizations are suggested to facilitate relaxation and well-being.

But I was beginning to realize that the images in my mind that Colette’s exercises generated were much more than simply agents of relaxation and well-being. Short and jolting to the imagination, they provoked revelations and brought up information I never knew was in me. They showed me talents and abilities I didn’t know I had. Where I thought I would never have the courage to go out into the world, to have my own business, to support myself through teaching, to write, my images showed me doing just that. Because I had seen that I could and had experienced what these pursuits meant (albeit only in my imagination), I went out and did it. My images were the messengers and engine of my development. Where there had been darkness, now I was being in-formed and re-formed! I saw transformation in all my bodies—mental, emotional, physical—elevating my spirit to heights I had never envisioned before. Like a seed packed with the potential of its own growth, I felt the darkness in me holding the secret to my embodiment, past and future. I was becoming more vibrant, more alive, more present.

But what exactly had happened? What comes first? Out of the darkness comes the light, and in the light is programmed creation? Or is it that in the triggering of light comes knowledge of selfhood from
which our brain, spine, organs, limbs, and every part of ourselves—body, mind, and soul—emerge? I noticed that if I looked back even further, to before I’d met Colette, there were dreams that revealed much of my life’s journey. My imagination had always guided me.

**SEMINAL DREAM**

The long journey toward my child was ignited in my work with Colette but started much earlier when, as a little girl, I imagined my belly swelling my dress. Holding my doll, smiling at her full face, imagining that she was smiling back, I knew I was born to be a mother. I was rehearsing my seminal dream of motherhood as far back as I can remember. Seminal dreams are what propel us forward. We can reject them, think we kill and bury them, but they will come out, showing themselves in clear or twisted ways depending on whether we have chosen to honor or ignore them. So many women are impregnated with this dream of motherhood that we can safely say it is imprinted in our genes. As far back as we can remember, society, our cultural expectations, and our spiritual texts have urged us to “be fruitful and multiply.” It is both our nature and our task. Each feeds upon the other to manifest women’s inescapable fate: that of furthering our species.

But today that seminal dream has been called into question by a changed sexual context. Scientific breakthroughs in obstetrics and reproductive endocrinology have given us control over our reproductive cycle. Women educated in modern fertility methods need no longer be enslaved to their natural condition as reproductive wombs. We are free to decide when and whether to become pregnant. While this newfound freedom is gratifying, it does put the onus on us to decide whether or not to have children.

Have our priorities shifted? Do we want to have children? It is a question we need to address sooner rather than later. As more and more of us go to college and enter the workforce, our priorities shift and we tend to postpone having children until later in our fertile cycle—with the result that in the US, 20 percent of women ages forty to forty-four have no children, double the rate of thirty years ago, according to the latest Census Bureau report; 27 percent of these women have graduate or professional degrees. We find this trend toward lower birth rates in
all the developed countries. While world overpopulation—by the year 2050 we will have grown from an estimated 6.6 billion people to an unbelievable 9.3 billion—is taxing our natural resources to the straining point, first-world countries are battling with decreasing birth rates. Already today in Britain and soon in the US, our birth rate will not be high enough to replenish our dying populations.

The contradictions we endure are further fueled by knowledge of environmental threats, global warming, world hunger, collapsing financial markets, wars, and weapons of mass destruction. Other serious factors are adding to our general malaise about procreation: sperm counts have been falling over the last century (an estimated one in ten men is affected for reasons unknown, although environmental and food pollution is suspected); marriage percentages are in decline; homosexuality is on the rise. We are left to wonder whether we are witnessing an unprecedented evolutionary trend away from the traditional need to “fructify and multiply” toward a need to limit procreation. Is it surprising that, in this atmosphere, the thought of conceiving is fraught with anxiety?

It therefore becomes imperative for us to have a way to silence work and financial pressures long enough to access our inner truth. To become conscious of our true desires and personal seminal dream is not a luxury. Will we allow ourselves to become the victims of fate, manipulated by the pressures and accidents of life, or will we choose our own destiny?

CONSCIOUS CONCEPTION

For some of us, conception just happens. It is an unwanted accident. We accept the irrefutable, or we decide to get rid of the unplanned pregnancy. In either case, we are put on notice that ignorance and lack of awareness are no excuse.

We don’t have to be the puppets of fate: we have advantages over previous generations, foolproof tools to prevent or interrupt gestation. Our particular challenge is the freedom to choose conception or avoid it. Should we follow the trend and decide not to have children? Should we risk bringing children into this dangerous new world? Do we have the resources? Will having a child disrupt the lifestyle we
are accustomed to? Should we simply put off the decision, with the risk that we will regret our decision if it turns out to be too late? Our freedom to choose does not, of course, guarantee that we will get pregnant. But at least we have the power to become proactive.

Freedom requires much more of us. It is easier to resign ourselves to the vagaries of fate than it is to become our own self-creators. Easier to be told what to do than to take a leading role in the drama of our own lives. The openness of freedom begs the question *What do I really want?* Becoming proactive means becoming conscious of our own inner needs. Is choosing to have a child the right and good thing for me to do now? Is it right for my partner? My family? The need to look within, to wake up to our own personal dream—whether that dream says to conceive, to adopt, or simply to abstain—is paramount. We must open our eyes to our truth and make our decision not based on circumstances or the needs of others but on informed choices. By “in-formed,” I mean formed from within! For it is ultimately our dreaming body that tells us what is right for us.

**THE STILL SMALL VOICE**

The voice of the dreaming body is simple and quiet. In the Bible it is called “the still small voice.” It has no drama, no anger. You know it because it doesn’t come with a tidal wave of emotion.

“The voice” is not always just a sound. It is often an image. It can also be a smell, taste, touch, or kinesthetic movement. For some, the voice ignites instantaneous change or manifestation. For others, the voice is heard but manifestation lags. Without the perfect vibrational alignment of your whole being with what you are asking for and hearing from the voice, the dream cannot come into reality. More is required.

We need to identify the “voice” among all the other voices competing in our heads. Visually this is akin to when ripples agitate a pond. It can be quite difficult, if not impossible, to see the fish below the surface. To hear or see, we must stop all agitation. When the pond is still, we can see the fish moving, hear the flapping of their tails in the water. When the mind is still, free of clutter, we can begin to hear that one guiding voice.
Like fish, the voice/image must be lured to the surface. The bait here is your question. Without a question, the answer cannot come. For some, the question remains subterranean, never formulated but floating just below the surface. For others, the act of “hovering over the waters” of our chaos and confusion—as God does to bring forth creation—has not even occurred. Learning to become conscious starts here. By asking the question or, if that is too confusing, by asking, “What is the question?” you inevitably call for an answer. This is where creativity begins.

REMEMBERING OUR DREAMS

You can take advantage of your dreams starting now. But first there are things you can do to help yourself remember your dreams. Tell yourself that you want to remember your dreams. Share your dreams with your partner upon waking up. When someone else expects you to remember your dream, you will. Immediately upon waking, write down your dream. It is good to have a notebook next to your bed.

REMEMBERING YOUR NIGHT DREAM

exercise I

Go out and buy yourself a blank notebook. Pick a notebook that you love; this is going to be your book to record your dreams. The nicer it is, the more convinced your dreaming will be that you are interested in hearing from it. Bring your notebook home and open it to the first page. Write on it, Dream Book. Put it on your nightstand next to your bed. Just before you go to bed, open it to the next page, write at the top of the page that night's date, and then leave the book open and place your pen inside. You have established your intention to remember your dream. As you go to sleep, remind yourself that you want to remember your dream. It is useful at first to remind yourself to wake up at the time you have the dream
so you can catch it and write it down when it is fresh in your memory. If this doesn’t work for you, write down your dream in the morning. Record everything you remember, even if you think it is not important. Later you will see that your dreams know best what is important. Do the particular task of asking the question—your “bait”—for a week. (Of course, it is good to continue recording your dreams beyond the first week. You will learn so much about yourself if you do.)

The moment you get wrapped up in your day, you become more likely to forget pieces of your dream. So when you wake up in the morning, give yourself a little time before jumping out of bed. Relax in the same posture you were in when you were dreaming. This helps stimulate recall. Write down exactly what you saw, heard, and felt in your dream. If the answer you receive from the dream seems unclear to you, let it resonate in your mind for a few days. Do not try to analyze it. Dreams should not be interpreted but simply felt. Just sit with it like you would a mysterious painting. Soon its meaning will open up to you.

After the week is over and you have managed to write down the dreams you remember, you are ready to ask a question of your dream. Here you are using your conscious mind to focus your dreaming mind. In focusing, you narrow the field of stimuli. You create the window, circumscribe your field of interest. Your dreaming, true to form, will respond to the stimulus.

ASKING A QUESTION OF YOUR NIGHT DREAMS
exercise 2

As you are lying in bed just before going to sleep, limbs uncrossed, eyes closed, breathe out slowly three times, with
your mouth slightly open. (Don’t worry about breathing in. If you are empty, the breath will fill you.) Count from 3 down to 1, seeing the numbers clearly in your mind as you exhale. Now imagine that as you breathe out once again to zero, the zero appears as a circle of light in front of your eyes. Imagine writing your question within the circumference of the circle. Make the question simple, direct, and short.

Your attitude behind your question is important. If you are sincere and ask the question that is foremost in your mind, you will get a clear answer from the dream. If you have asked a question but your true interest lies elsewhere—or if you need to address something else within yourself before your dreaming can answer this specific question—your dream will show you that as well. Either way, do not dismiss your dream. But the next night, try to reformulate your question in view of what your dream has shown you. You can continue in this way until you get an answer.

Here is a dream from one of my students that clearly answers her question: “Am I ready to be a mother?”

I speak with my mother, who tells me she knows she is going to die today. I feel very sad. She gives me the codes to access her accounts. There are three codes: today’s date, which is the date of her death in the dream; the date of my birthday; the date of my child’s birthday.

As you can see, the dream is communicative and to the point. To be reborn as a mother, the dreamer must give up being a little girl. And then after her birthday—after she is born to herself and/or after her birthday—she will conceive and have a child. The future verified her dream, as she did indeed conceive right after her birthday.

If asking your dream feels too confusing for you, or if after three weeks you have gotten no clarity, then proceed to the next exercise.