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Between Sleep and Liberation in Indian Traditions: Lucid Dreaming, Out-of-Body Experiences, and the Architectures of Liminal Consciousness

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Abstract

This article examines the theoretical and practical frameworks surrounding liminal states of consciousness—specifically lucid dreaming and out-of-body experiences (OBEs)—within Indian religious and philosophical traditions. Through a comparative analysis of Vedāntic, Yogic, Buddhist, and Jain systems, the article argues that these states are not merely anomalous psychological events but deliberately cultivated "architectures of liminality" designed to investigate the nature of self, consciousness, and reality. Methodologically, this article offers a comparative analysis of models and categories of liminal consciousness across Indian traditions, critically engaging relevant neurophenomenological frameworks and incorporating a small set of representative first-person exemplars. The results reveal a spectrum of interpretations: from the mind-only projection model of Buddhist dream yoga to the subtle-material interaction model of Jain karmic ontology, and from the embodied cognition framework of modern neuroscience to the disembodied consciousness theories of classical Indian systems. The study concludes that a comprehensive understanding of liminal consciousness must integrate first-person phenomenological reports with the soteriological, ritual, and metaphysical contexts that structure their interpretation, thereby challenging reductionist approaches in contemporary consciousness studies.

Keywords: lucid dreaming; out-of-body experience (OBEs); Six Yogas of Nāropa; *Yoganidrā*; *utkrānti*; *samudghāta*; subtle body; disembodied consciousness; liminality

1. Introduction

The capacity to maintain reflective awareness during sleep has been recognized and systematically cultivated in contemplative traditions for over a millennium. Tibetan Buddhist dream yoga (*rmi lam*) developed methods for recognizing the dream state, manipulating dream content, and ultimately dissolving all phenomenal appearances into luminous awareness—viewing these practices not as curious neurocognitive experiments but as crucial training grounds for navigating the intermediate state (bardo) between death and rebirth (Wangyal 1998; Rosch 2014; Mota-Rolim et al. 2020).[1] Yet when laboratory verification of lucid dreaming emerged in the late twentieth century, it arrived largely detached from these soteriological frameworks, inaugurating a parallel scientific discourse that would reshape how such states are understood and valued.[2]

This disjuncture between contemplative tradition and scientific discovery raises fundamental questions: What is epistemically gained and lost when lucid dreaming migrates from a soteriological framework to a laboratory paradigm? How do different metaphysical

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commitments shape the interpretation and valuation of liminal consciousness states? And what can the rich philosophical archive of Indian traditions contribute to contemporary debates about the nature of consciousness, embodiment, and selfhood?

Contemporary consciousness studies typically locate lucid dreaming within a spectrum of altered states, alongside meditation, psychedelic experiences, and various dissociative phenomena (Hobson 2001). Out-of-body experiences (OBEs) have received similar treatment, with landmark studies demonstrating that disruption of multisensory integration at the temporoparietal junction (a multisensory integration hub involved in self-location) can induce the sensation of disembodiment (Blanke et al. 2004; Smith and Messier 2014). Such findings encourage reductionist interpretations: these experiences are nothing but misfirings of neural circuitry, illusory epiphenomena of brain states.

Yet this interpretive move occludes a crucial dimension. For practitioners within Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain traditions, lucid dreams and OBEs are not anomalous glitches but systematic technologies for investigating the nature of self, consciousness, and reality. They belong to what this study terms "architectures of liminality"[3]: structured intermediate states that function as disciplined sites of inquiry, making visible how ordinary waking experience is constructed and offering systematic methods for its transformation.

The present study undertakes a comparative analysis of these architectures across Indian religious and philosophical traditions. Section 2 establishes the fundamental theoretical divide between embodied and disembodied models of consciousness, contrasting neurophenomenological approaches with Indian traditions that posit various degrees of independence from the physical body. Section 3 examines how each tradition conceptualizes dream consciousness and the possibility of a "dream body," tracing the Vedāntic taxonomy of consciousness states, Buddhist theories of dream-body efficacy, and Jain suspicion of sleep as compromised vigilance. Section 4 traces the practical techniques developed to cultivate liminal consciousness, from Hindu *Yoganidrā* to Tibetan Dream Yoga and Sleep Yoga. Section 5 extends the analysis to death-focused practices—Hindu *utkrānti*, Tibetan *'pho ba*, and Jain *kāyotsarga* and *samudghāta*—revealing how subtle-body theories are operationalized as technologies of dying. The study concludes by reflecting on what a comprehensive understanding of liminal consciousness requires: the integration of first-person phenomenological reports with the metaphysical, soteriological, and practical contexts that structure their interpretation.

2. Two Approaches: Embodied Versus Disembodied Consciousness

2.1. Lucid Dreaming and OBEs as Embodied Consciousness: Neurophenomenological Approaches

Neurophenomenological approaches, pioneered by Francisco Varela, seek to correlate first-person phenomenological reports with third-person neuroscientific data (Varela 1996)[4]. Varela's seminal work on embodied cognition, developed with Evan Thompson and Eleanor Rosch in *The Embodied Mind* (Varela et al. 1991), challenged both cognitivist and reductionist paradigms by arguing that consciousness is fundamentally shaped by the living body's sensorimotor engagement with the world.[5] For lucid dreaming specifically, research has identified increased gamma-band activity(a high-frequency EEG marker often linked to conscious integration) in the frontopolar cortex during lucid REM sleep, suggesting reactivation of reflective metacognition (Voss et al. 2009).

It should be noted that the present study does not replicate Varela's neurophenomenological methodology in the strict sense of systematically pairing first-person reports with concurrent neuroimaging data. Rather, it draws on this tradition's commitment to the epistemic value of first-person experience while employing a comparative textual-philosophical approach that critically engages with neuroscientific findings and incorporates selected experiential accounts from practitioners within each tradition exam-

ined. The phenomenological dimension of the analysis thus consists not in laboratory-based first-person/third-person integration, but in attending to how each tradition's own phenomenological vocabularies structure the interpretation of liminal states. Accordingly, the methodology is best understood as a comparative analysis of models and categories of liminal consciousness, rather than as a strict neurophenomenological protocol.

Thompson's later work, especially *Waking, Dreaming, Being* (2014), extends the enactive and embodied framework to dreaming by arguing that dream consciousness remains embodied insofar as it arises from and is constrained by the sleeping brain–body system. Drawing on signal-verified lucid dreaming—where dreamers use prearranged eye movements during REM sleep to mark the onset of lucidity—Thompson emphasizes that intentional mental activity in dreams can be experimentally tracked and correlated with distinct neural dynamics without implying that phenomenology is reducible to physiology (Thompson 2014, pp. 154–57). He further reinforces this non-dualist stance by treating out-of-body experiences not as evidence for disembodied consciousness but as instances of "altered embodiment," in which the felt locus of perspective dissociates from the perceived body while remaining dependent on embodied processes (Thompson 2014, pp. 209–12). Philosophically, Thompson draws extensively on Indian Buddhist thought—especially Yogācāra accounts of mind and the continuity of consciousness—to articulate a non-reductive neurophenomenological approach that aligns first-person analyses of dreaming with neuroscientific findings while resisting neural reductionism (Thompson 2014, pp. 266–67; Varela 1996; Waldron 2003; Wallace 2012).

From a more practical standpoint, Mihael Raduga's empirical research on "the Phase" offers a technique-oriented approach to lucid dreaming and OBEs (Raduga 2011). Raduga defines "the Phase" as an intermediate zone between sleep and waking states—more precisely, a state situated between REM sleep and waking consciousness—that encompasses diverse phenomena including lucid dreams, OBEs, religious revelations, near-death experiences, and artistic inspiration. Crucially, Raduga maintains that lucid dreaming and OBEs are essentially identical consciousness phenomena, unified under the single experiential horizon he terms "the Phase." He treats these phenomena as trainable skills accessible to anyone, providing systematic methods for inducing and stabilizing such states. It is significant that rather than defining "the Phase" a priori as a neurophysiological phenomenon, Raduga designates as "the Phase" a horizon of experience that numerous practitioners encounter as experientially self-evident and offers techniques for entering this state to explore a form of altered consciousness. His approach remains largely agnostic regarding metaphysical questions, focusing on experiential accessibility and technical reproducibility rather than on the ontological status of the phenomenon itself.[6]

These contemporary approaches share a common presupposition: consciousness supervenes on physical processes. Whether articulated through Varela's "enaction," Thompson's embodied phenomenology, or Raduga's pragmatic approach, the underlying assumption is that lucid dreams and OBEs are ultimately brain-generated phenomena—experiences produced by neural activity within the physical body, however sophisticated our first-person access to them may be.

This modern supervenience thesis finds a striking parallel in ancient India. The Cārvāka (or Lokāyata) school, India's indigenous materialist tradition, articulated a remarkably similar position over two millennia ago. According to Cārvāka epistemology, only perception (*pratyakṣa*) constitutes valid knowledge; inference and testimony are rejected as unreliable. Consciousness (*caitanya*) is understood as an emergent property of the material body—arising when the four elements (earth, water, fire, air) combine in specific configurations, much as intoxicating power emerges from fermented ingredients that individually possess no such property (Bronkhorst 2025; Bhattacharya 2009).

As preserved in Mādhava's *Sarvadarśanasaṅgraha* (14th century), the Cārvāka position on consciousness is unambiguous. The text states:

> *"Out of these [four elements], when modified so as to take on the form of a body, consciousness arises, just as the power of intoxication arises from a fermenting agent. When those principles in the form of a body are destroyed, consciousness itself disappears. … It is consciousness, pure and simple, which arises from these elements and disappears when they disappear. There is no awareness after death"* (Bronkhorst 2025, pp. 28–29)[7]

This analogy of intoxicating power (*mada-śakti)* emerging from fermented grains that individually lack such a property became the standard Cārvāka argument for emergent consciousness—directly anticipating modern emergentist theories in philosophy of mind. The Cārvāka rejection of disembodied consciousness extends comprehensively to their definitions of liberation and the divine, and they appealed to naturalistic explanation rather than supernatural causation.[8] Dreams, on this account, would be mere residues of waking impressions, possessing no independent reality or significance—products of the material body's nocturnal functioning rather than evidence for a separable consciousness.

Having outlined the neurophenomenological approach that treats liminal states as fundamentally brain-dependent, we now turn to traditions that posit alternative models of consciousness—ones that allow for degrees of independence from the physical body.

2.2. The Possibility of Disembodied Consciousness: Another Approach

The modern supervenience thesis outlined above—shared in different ways by enactive, neurophenomenological, and laboratory-oriented accounts—has a close analog in ancient Indian materialism. Yet the Cārvāka position remained a minority voice, systematically contested by Vedāntic, Buddhist, Jain, Śaiva, and Yogic traditions that posited various models of consciousness capable of existing independently of—or at least being separable from—the gross physical body. The present study, therefore, adopts a critical stance toward brain-based reductionism while remaining open to neuroscientific contributions.

Three limitations of reductive approaches merit emphasis. First, although neurophenomenology aims to integrate first-person reports with third-person measures, in practice it often privileges third-person experimental categories and operational definitions, thereby recoding experience into standardized constructs and overlooking the sophisticated introspective vocabularies developed in contemplative traditions—including precise technical terminology for distinguishing waking (*jāgrat*), dreaming (*svapna*), deep sleep (*suṣupti*), and the "fourth state" (*turīya*).[9] Second, the explanatory move from correlation to reduction involves metaphysical commitments that exceed empirical warrant—showing that experience X correlates with brain state Y does not prove that X is "nothing but" Y. Third, an exclusive focus on individual-level cognition can obscure the social, ritual, and soteriological contexts that structure contemplative practice and govern what counts as progress, evidence, and transformation.

This framing clarifies how the present study departs from Evan Thompson's influential embodied interpretation. Thompson treats lucid dreaming and out-of-body experiences as brain–body dependent altered states and argues that OBEs are not experiences of disembodiment but of "altered embodiment"—a reorganization of bodily self-awareness in which the felt locus of perspective dissociates from the perceived body while remaining constrained by embodied processes (Thompson 2014, pp. 206–14).[10] While this analysis decisively challenges naïve substance dualism, the present study adopts a different approach, declining to treat the embodied reading as the final interpretive horizon, because the comparative archive includes traditions that explicitly theorize subtle bodies, intermediate states, and post-mortem continuities of cognition. Neuroscientific work linking OBEs to disturbed multisensory integration and self-processing (Blanke et al. 2004) is method-

ologically important, but such correlations do not by themselves adjudicate the ontological claims and soteriological functions ascribed to these states within Vedāntic, Buddhist, Jain, and Yogic systems; nor do they settle how trained practitioners understand the cultivation, stabilization, and deployment of liminal consciousness in relation to liberation. The following sections, therefore, examine how these traditions construct their respective architectures of liminal consciousness, mapping intermediate states as privileged sites for spiritual transformation through theories of subtle embodiment, taxonomies of consciousness states, and practical techniques for inducing and deploying lucid dreams and out-of-body states.

3. Dream Consciousness and the Dream Body in Indian Traditions

While contemporary neurophenomenology situates lucid dreaming within the brain's activation patterns, Indian philosophical traditions have long situated it within a complex cartography of consciousness states. For these traditions, the dream state is not merely a neurological event but an ontological plane where the relationship between the self (*ātman* or *jīva*) and the material world is fundamentally reconfigured.[11]

3.1. Dream Consciousness in Vedānta and Yoga

The foundational taxonomy of consciousness in Indian thought is articulated in the *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad*, which delineates four distinct states of the Self. This tetrad provides the structural logic for all subsequent Vedāntic analyses of dreaming (Radhakrishnan 1953, p. 698).

The first state, waking, corresponds to the Universal Man (*vaiśvānara*, whose consciousness is outwardly cognitive, engaging with gross objects through the physical sensory apparatus. The second state, dream, corresponds to the Brilliant One (*taijasa*). The *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad* (verse 4) states: *"The second quarter is Taijasa—the Brilliant One—situated in the state of dream, perceiving what is inside, possessing seven limbs and nineteen mouths, and enjoying refined things."* (Olivelle 1998, pp. 474–75).[12] In this state, consciousness becomes inwardly cognitive. Crucially, the *taijasa* self does not interact with gross matter but consumes "subtle" impressions. The dream world is sustained by the internal light of the mind, independent of external solar light.[13] The third state, deep sleep, corresponds to the Knower (*prājña*), a unified mass of consciousness and bliss, representing the causal seed of the other two states. The fourth, *turīya*, is the underlying reality that transcends and witnesses the three changing states (Olivelle 1998, pp. 474–77; Panoli 1991, pp. 309–11). Within this framework, the dream state can be analytically privileged as a mode of "subtle embodiment": although the *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad* does not use the term subtle body (*sūkṣma-śarīra*), the combination of *antaḥprajña* and *praviviktabhuk*, read through Śaṅkara's commentary, supports the claim that the dreaming subject's experiential "vehicle" is not the gross body but a subtle medium structured by mental impressions—thereby grounding the metaphysical possibility of a luminous and malleable "dream body.

The chapter on Pāṇini, the *Sarvadarśanasaṅgraha*, introduces Vedānta's views. The text explicitly parallels dream and waking experience: *"Just as a multitude opens up in me through illusion in dreams, just so a multitude opens up in me through illusion while awake"* (Bronkhorst 2025, pp. 358–59).[14] This parallel serves a specific philosophical function: demonstrating that phenomenal multiplicity in both states is an illusory manifestation of the unitary consciousness that is brahman.

Furthermore, Śaṅkara's chapter further employs the experience of waking from sleep as a key example for understanding liberation. The syllogism presented states: The system under discussion (i.e., Vedānta) has object and purpose, because it puts an end to the bondage resulting from nescience, like awareness in a person who wakes up from sleep.

The commentary elaborates: *"In the example, the 'object' is the body, peacefully at rest in bed at home, which presents itself to the awareness of a person who wakes up from sleep. This awareness puts an end to the bondage created by the woman or whatever else is imagined in his dream by force of illusion"* (Bronkhorst 2025, p. 461). Here, the transition from dreaming to waking serves as an analogy for the transition from bondage to liberation—both involve the dissolution of superimposed (*adhyāsa*) illusions through correct knowledge.

The Sāṃkhya–Yoga tradition reframes dream and sleep within its dualist ontology, distinguishing *Puruṣa* (pure witnessing consciousness) from *Prakṛti* and its evolutes, including mind (*citta*) as a refined mode of materiality. In Patañjali's *Yogasūtra*, sleep (*nidrā*) is not treated as mere absence but as a specific *citta-vṛtti* grounded in an "absence-supporting" cognition (*abhāva-pratyaya*) (Woods [1914] 1973, p. 30; Whicher 1998, p. 48). This definitional move is philosophically significant: rather than collapsing sleep into sheer non-experience, Yoga analyzes it as a positive (and recallable) mental modification, thereby making it a legitimate object for disciplined inquiry (Woods [1914] 1973, p. 30).

Within this framework, dreams are not dismissed simply as random mental residue; they become epistemically and soteriologically relevant insofar as they disclose how cognition can operate independently of gross sensory input, while still remaining bound to the *guṇa*-constituted mind. *Yogasūtra* 1.38 explicitly allows stabilization of the mind by taking as support the knowledge arising from dream or sleep, indicating that liminal cognition can be methodically recruited for concentration rather than treated as a mere disturbance (Woods [1914] 1973, pp. 76–77). Vyāsa's *Bhāṣya* underscores this point by interpreting the aphorism in terms of a definable cognition occurring "at the time of sleep," which—when recollected—can function as a practical support for steadiness (Woods [1914] 1973, pp. 76–77).[15] Later scholastic expositions reinforce the same analytic direction: Dasgupta's synthesis of the commentarial tradition (including Vācaspatimiśra and Vijñānabhikṣu) treats sleep as a determinate mental state "with the feeling of emptiness" as its objective ground and notes that memory and dream display the continuity of mental impression (*saṃskāra*) across waking and sleep (Dasgupta 1924, pp. 173–76).[16] In short, classical Yoga does not romanticize dreaming, yet it also does not reduce it to meaningless illusion; instead, it situates dream and sleep within a rigorous psychology of *vṛtti* and *saṃskāra*, thereby providing conceptual resources for later yogic techniques that aim to extend vigilance into liminal states without abandoning the tradition's commitment to embodied mind as *prakṛtic* transformation.

3.2. Dream and Subtle Dream Body in Buddhist and Tantric Traditions

Within Buddhist traditions—especially Yogācāra (Mind-Only)—dream becomes a master trope for the ontological status of perceived reality and the epistemic force of appearance. In later doxographical transmission, this line is preserved in formulations that deny the establishment of a "graspable" external object and, when the duality of grasper and grasped is absent, describe cognition as manifesting "by itself." (Bronkhorst 2025, pp. 58–61).

Meanwhile, Śaiva doxography supplies a more explicit vocabulary for subtle embodiment, offering a doctrinal bridge for speaking about a "subtle body" (*puryaṣṭaka*; eightfold body) in tradition-specific terms and for comparing graded vehicles of personhood that mediate between gross corporeality and liminal states (Bronkhorst 2025, pp. 216–18).

The Buddhist epistemological tradition pushes the dream analogy beyond metaphor by treating dream embodiment as a locus of causal efficacy. The 8th-century logician Prajñākaragupta, in his *Pramāṇavārttikālaṅkāra*, advances what later polemical sources label the "Theory of the Dream Body" (*svapnāntika-śarīra-vāda*). Prajñākaragupta argues that the body experienced within a dream possesses causal efficiency (*arthakriyā*): even if the

dream subject is "untrue" (*asatya*) relative to waking standards, it warrants a kind of ontological weight insofar as dream-events can induce physical alterations in the waking body. This point is stated in a paradigmatic example that the present study retains as a key node for theorizing liminal embodiment: "For instance, just as the dream body, by overcoming fear and running, exists to cause changes in the waking body—such as movement or striking—so too, in another life, [changes in the body of this life arise from the habits of another life]" (Hayashi 2000, pp. 51–52).[17]

Crucially, this line of argument also clarifies why Buddhist authors can treat dream embodiment as structurally analogous to intermediate existence. Prajñākaragupta explicitly compares the dream body to the body of the intermediate state (*antarābhava*), which is said to be knowable only to a yogin; non-perception "by everyone" does not entail non-existence, because the criterion at stake is not public perceptibility but efficacy and the relevant mode of access (Hayashi 2000, p. 53).[18] The dream body thus operates as a mediating model: it renders intelligible how an embodied locus of experience may be causally operative and experientially accessible under constrained conditions, while not being reducible to the waking body's ordinary perceptual field.

The term "true dream" (*satya-svapna*) further sharpens the epistemic side of this picture by showing that Buddhist epistemologists did not treat "dream" as a single undifferentiated class of error. In the Yogācāra-epistemological tradition, "true dream" is used in specific contexts—especially in relation to yogic/ascetic perception (*yogipratyakṣa*) and to debates over "non-deviation from truth" (*avisamvāditva*)—thereby complicating any blanket equation of dream with sheer falsity (Hayashi 2001, pp. 559–63).[19] For the purposes of the present section, the point is not to collapse these materials into a single thesis, but to show that Buddhist reflection on dream embodiment and dream veridicality yields a fine-grained spectrum: dreams can function as (i) paradigms of mind-only appearance, (ii) loci of causally efficacious embodiment, and (iii) in restricted doctrinal contexts, examples invoked to model specific forms of reliability without positing external objects as ordinarily conceived.

In Vajrayāna contexts, these frameworks are operationalized as somatic technology. Dream Yoga employs the "mind-made body" (*manomaya-kāya*) and trains the yogin to stabilize an "illusory body" (*māyā-deha*) formed from subtle energies, providing a soteriological basis for treating dream states as rehearsals for postmortem transitions. Where Buddhist materials often foreground "world-as-appearance," the Śaiva chapter supplies explicit vocabulary for subtle embodiment, describing bound souls as connected to an "subtle body" (*puryaṣṭaka*)—a subtle vehicle (*sūkṣma-deha*) that bridges gross embodiment and liminal modalities. Read together, Buddhist dream-body theory and Śaiva subtle-body provide complementary "architectures of liminal consciousness": the former emphasizes efficacy and epistemic conditions of access, while the latter furnishes a stable lexicon for graded embodiment, enabling comparative analysis of dream, OBE-like states, and intermediate existence.

The Buddhist and Śaiva frameworks share a tendency to valorize dream states as either laboratories for realizing emptiness or sites of subtle embodiment. The Jain tradition, by contrast, approaches sleep and dream with marked suspicion—a perspective grounded in its distinctive karmic ontology and its emphasis on vigilance (*apramāda*).

3.3. Jain Vigilance and the Ontology of Dream: A Realist Critique

In stark contrast to the Buddhist valorization of dream as a path, the Jain tradition historically viewed sleep with deep suspicion. For the Jains, the universe is a real theater of interaction between living souls (*jīva*) and non-living matter (*pudgala*). Within this rigorous dualism, sleep and dreaming occupy a fundamentally different ontological position than in Buddhist thought. As Balbir emphasizes, Jain ascetic discourse consistently frames

sleep as *pramāda*—a lapse of vigilance that undermines disciplined conduct and weakens the continuity of attention required for liberation (Balbir 2008, pp. 104, 121). Canonical exhortations sharpen this contrast. The *Ācārāṅgasūtra* famously declares that "those who are asleep are the fools, but the sages are always awake," while the *Uttarādhyayana Sūtra* enjoins the ascetic to remain "awake while others sleep" (Balbir 2008, p. 103).[20]

These injunctions do not merely moralize; they encode a soteriological anthropology in which dreaming is not a privileged "inner laboratory" but a compromised state that threatens the soul's capacity of consciousness (*upayoga*). In Balbir's reading, even monastic sleep is treated as a tightly controlled concession: the "release of sleep" (*nidda-mokkha*) may be limited to a brief interval (e.g., "three hours"), and some ascetics are described as avoiding deep sleep out of fear of *pramāda* (Balbir 2008, pp. 105–7).

This disciplinary suspicion is reinforced by Jain karmology. Sleep is not only a physiological necessity but can be theorized as a karmically conditioned obscuration: Balbir notes that Jain sources classify sleep phenomena within the scope of perception-obscuring karma (*darśanāvaraṇīya karma*), and she highlights a structured typology that reaches beyond "ordinary" drowsiness to include ethically risky altered states (Balbir 2008, pp. 132–33).

Regarding the Jain textual usage of somnambulism (*styānagṛddhi*), the *Tattvārtha Sūtra* 8.8 presents five stages of consciousness-obscuration (*āvaraṇa*): sleep (*nidrā*), deep sleep (*nidrā-nidrā*), drowsiness (*pracalā*), deep drowsiness (*pracalā-pracalā*), and sleepwalking (*styānagṛddhi*).[21] According to Pūjyapāda's *Sarvārthasiddhi*, these five types represent progressive degrees of consciousness-obscuration. Notably, in the final stage of somnambulism, the soul is described as capable of exerting greater physical force—"impetuosity"—than in the waking state (S. A. Jain 1992, p. 222). While this phenomenon bears a phenomenological resemblance to the causal efficiency of the dream body (*svapnakāya*) argued by Prajñākaragupta, Jain doctrine interprets it not as a positive projection of consciousness but as the manifestation of intense and uncontrollable karmic activity.

The significance of this classification extends beyond medical curiosity: sleepwalking and related "dream disorders" are treated as states in which agency and restraint falter, thereby increasing the danger of inadvertent harm and karmic influx—precisely the risk Jain vigilance practices are designed to minimize. Therefore, the ideal Jain ascetic is "the vigilant one", modeled after Lord Mahāvīra, who is described as sleeping very little. Lucid dreaming, in this context, is not cultivated for its own sake but may emerge, at most, as a byproduct of intensified vigilance. The monk strives to maintain a continuity of awareness that penetrates even the veil of physiological sleep, ensuring that no fresh karma is accumulated through inadvertent actions in the dream state. Consequently, the soteriological imperative in Jainism is not the manipulation of dreams but the attainment of permanent wakefulness through the annihilation of karma, thereby restoring the soul's innate "absolute knowledge" (*kevala-jñāna*) (Balbir 2008, p. 133).

This divergence between traditions culminates in opposing positions on the ontological status of the dream body. From the Yogācāra standpoint, the dream body is purely consciousness (*citta-mātra*). It has no independent material substance; it is a projection of karmic seeds manifesting as a coherent but empty experiential field. The goal of practice is to realize the dream body's emptiness—to see that both the "dreamer" and the dreamt body are devoid of inherent self-nature (*svabhāva*) and are constituted by dependently arisen processes. Jain philosophers, by contrast, argue for the substantial reality of subtle matter. For them, the soul in the dream state is not merely projecting images but is interacting with subtle forms of matter (*karma-pudgala*). Traditional Jain doctrine distinguishes several subtle bodies encasing the soul, among which the "fiery body" (*taijasa-śarīra*) and the "karmic body" (*kārmaṇa-śarīra*) are especially relevant—real material layers composed of ultra-fine *pudgala* that accompany the soul through waking, dreaming, and rebirth.

Jain thinkers such as Vādirāja, in his *Nyāyaviniścaya-vivaraṇa*, challenged Prajñākaragupta's theory by arguing that if the dream body were truly substantial (*vastusat*), it should be perceptible to others occupying the same space and time, just as a waking body is (Hayashi 2000, pp. 48–49). This critique highlights a critical fault line in Indian architectures of liminality. From the Buddhist side, lucid dreaming and out-of-body-like experiences are interpreted as journeys into consciousness—a progressive unveiling of the mind's own constructive activity. From the Jain side, such experiences reveal a finer stratum of embodiment: a journey into a subtle dimension of matter governed by precise laws of karmic physics.

Reframed in these terms, contemporary debates about the reality of out-of-body experiences and near-death experiences can be seen as echoing a much older Indian question: does embodied experience in dreams and liminal states point us primarily toward the mind's creative autonomy or toward a more expansive ontology of subtle material bodies? The Jaina–Buddhist discrepancy surrounding the dream body suggests that "embodiment" may extend far beyond biological boundaries. It can be construed as a cognitively projected field sustained by karmic impressions, as in Buddhist idealism; as a subtly embodied vehicle structured by *taijasa*-level luminosity and the impression (*vāsanā*) within Vedāntic models of dream consciousness; as a tradition-specific subtle-body framework (e.g., *puryaṣṭaka*) that traverses multiple embodiments under the influence of karma in Śaiva thought; or, in Jaina realism, as the soul's entanglement with increasingly fine strata of materiality that continue to bind and operate even in dream states. Having examined the ontological frameworks for understanding dream consciousness across these traditions, we now turn to the practical techniques developed to systematically cultivate and deploy these liminal states.

4. Beyond Lucid Dreaming: The Techniques of Dream and Sleep Yoga

4.1. Yoganidrā in Hindu Tradition

In contemporary yoga praxis, *yoganidrā* is widely recognized as a systematic technique for inducing deep relaxation. Etymologically a compound of *yoga* and *nidrā* (sleep), the term literally translates to "yogic sleep" or "spiritual sleep." While popularly associated with the 20th-century systematization by Saraswati, recent philological research by Birch demonstrates that prior to the medieval Haṭha Yoga texts, the term was predominantly employed in theistic contexts to describe a transcendent state of the deity—a time of cosmic convergence where the god withdraws from the phenomenal world into his essential nature.[22]

The earliest textual occurrences of the term *yoganidrā* appear not as a practice for human aspirants, but as a cosmic state attributed to the deity. In the *Mahābhārata* and *Purāṇic* literature, specifically the *Devī Māhātmya* section of the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa*, *yoganidrā* denotes the "divine slumber" of Lord Viṣṇu during the cosmic dissolution (*pralaya*). Reclining upon the serpent Śeṣa (Ananta) in the causal ocean, Viṣṇu enters this state while the universe exists in potential form. The *Devī Māhātmya* personifies *yoganidrā* as the Goddess herself: *"This is not a matter for wonder: She is Yoganidrā of the Lord of the Universe, Mahāmāyā of Hari—by her the whole world is deluded."* (Coburn 1991, p. 35).[23]

When Brahmā invokes *Yoganidrā* to awaken Viṣṇu, she is addressed in verse 1.67–68: *"He praised the Mistress of the Universe, Sustainer of the World, Cause of Preservation and Dissolution, the incomparable Goddess Nidrā of Viṣṇu."* (Coburn 1991, p. 37).[24] In this context, *yoganidrā* is not mere unconsciousness but is personified as the Goddess Mahāmāyā (Great Illusion), embodying the quality of illusion (*tamas*), yet simultaneously representing the dormant potency of creation.

The transition of *yoganidrā* from a mythological trope to a concrete spiritual practice (*sādhana*) is rooted in the Tantric tradition. The structural prototype of modern *Yoganidrā*

is found in the ritual of *nyāsa*. *nyāsa*, meaning "to place" or "to project," is a Tantric rite wherein specific mantras and divine energies are mentally placed upon various parts of the body. The *Mahānirvāṇa Tantra* describes *jīva-nyāsa* as transforming the physical body into a "mantric body" (*mantramaya-śarīra*), divinizing the flesh through the recitation of *bīja* (seed) mantras while touching the fingers, palms, chest, and head (Avalon and Woodroffe 1913, pp. 302–15).

The "Rotation of Consciousness," a pivotal technique in modern *yoganidrā*, represents a secularized internalization of this ritual. Whereas Tantric *nyāsa* involves the ritualistic imposition of mantras to sanctify the body, *yoganidrā* substitutes the mantra with pure awareness (*sākṣī* or witnessing consciousness). The practitioner moves this awareness sequentially through the body parts without physical movement, inducing a state of withdrawal of the senses(*pratyāhāra*) and generating a unique hypnagogic state where the body is deeply relaxed while the mind remains awake (Saraswati [1976] 1998, pp. 4–5).[25]

In terms of meditative technique, this hypnagogic state finds a classical precedent in the *śāmbhavī mudrā* or the preliminary stages of *samādhi* described in the *Haṭhayogapradīpikā*. Verse 4.36 describes: *"The focus is within; the gaze is outward; opening and closing of eyes suspended. This is śāmbhavī mudrā, preserved in the Vedas and Śāstras."* (Mallinson et al. 2024).[26]

Kjaer et al. (2002) found that experienced practitioners showed a substantial increase (65%) in the brain's natural dopamine released neurochemical shift linked to the heightened sensory imagery and reduced desire for action that practitioners report. Participants described becoming "neutral observers," losing conscious control of their actions while experiencing enhanced internal imagery (Kjaer et al. 2002, p. 257)—a phenomenological profile consistent with the pratyahara (sense-withdrawal) described in classical yoga texts. Moreover, Datta et al. (2022) documented a phenomenon they termed "local sleep": during *yoganidrā*, correlating significantly with increased EEG theta activity.[27] *yoganidra*, different brain regions simultaneously exhibited different states of arousal—some areas showing sleep-like activity while others remained fully awake—analogous to the way dolphins sleep with one brain hemisphere at a time while the other remains alert (Datta et al. 2022).[28]

Fialoke et al. (2024) found that experienced meditators showed significant Default Mode Network (a set of brain regions associated with self-referential processing) connectivity reduction during all four stages of *yoganidrā*, with pronounced bilateral thalamic activation—interpreted as the "gateway to consciousness"—absent in controls. These findings support the view that *yoganidrā* constitutes a traditional methodological framework that not only induces psycho-physical relaxation but also contributes to the scientific exploration and modulation of liminal states of consciousness.

First-person reports from experienced practitioners illuminate what these neurophysiological signatures feel like from the inside. Long-term meditators who report "witnessing sleep"—maintaining a continuous thread of awareness through deep dreamless sleep—describe a phenomenology that resonates closely with the *Maṇḍukya*'s description of turiya. One experienced practitioner reported: "It's not like I go away and come back. It's a subtle thing… You know it's like fizzing on top of a soda when you've poured it. It's there and becomes active so there's something to identify with. When I'm sleeping, it's like the fizzing goes down" (Travis 2014, p. 4). Another meditator described the experience as a state in which "awareness is there very strongly. The dream is a little dust flying about so to speak," adding that "the state of awareness is more satisfying" than any dream content (Gackenbach 1988, p. 276). Such reports suggest that the *turīya*-like awareness described in Vedāntic texts may correspond to an empirically identifiable phenomenological state rather than a purely theoretical construct.

Through this process, the practitioner hovers in the liminal space between waking anddreaming—a state correlated with Alpha and Theta brainwave dominance. This mirrors the *Upaniṣadic* concept of the "fourth" state (*turiya*) that transcends and witnesses the three states of waking, dreaming, and deep sleep (*suṣupti*). The *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad* (verse 5) describes deep sleep: *"Where one asleep neither desires anything nor beholds any dream: that is deep sleep. In this field, one becomes undivided, an undifferentiated mass of consciousness, consisting of bliss and feeding on bliss."* (Olivelle 1998, p. 289).[29]

Verse 7 defines *turīya* through systematic negation: *"Neither inward-turned nor outward-turned consciousness, nor the two together; not an undifferentiated mass of consciousness; neither knowing, nor unknowing; invisible, ineffable, intangible, devoid of characteristics, inconceivable, indefinable, its sole essence being the consciousness of its own Self—this is the Ātman, the Self; this is to be realized."* (Olivelle 1998, p. 290).[30]

Far from being a mere relaxation exercise, *yoganidrā* constitutes a form of "conscious sleep" designed to penetrate the veils of ignorance, allowing the practitioner to access the deeper strata of the self that remain awake even when the body sleeps.

4.2. Tibetan Dream and the Context of the Six Yogas of Naropa

In the Indo-Tibetan Vajrayāna tradition, the phenomenon of sleep functions not merely as a biological pause but as a critical soteriological threshold. The practice of Dream Yoga (Tib. *rmi lam rnal 'byor*) constitutes a methodology for transforming the one-third of human life spent in sleep into a means of realizing emptiness (*śūnyatā*) and preparing for the intermediate state of death.

The Six Dharmas of Nāropa (Tib. *na ro'i chos drug*), compiled by Tilopa (988–1069) and Nāropa (c. 956–1040 CE), form the basis of completion stage practices in the Kagyü and Gelug schools.[31] The six practices comprise: (1) inner heat (*gtum mo*); (2) clear light (*'od gsal*); (3) dream yoga (*rmi lam*); (4) illusory body (*sgyu lus*); (5) intermediate state (*bar do*); and (6) transference of consciousness (*'pho ba*) (Kragh 2015, pp. 345–65; Mullin 2005, pp. 47–52).[32]

Ulrich Timme Kragh's philological study of the *Dags po'i bka' 'bum*, specifically the manual *Khrid chos mu tig tsar la brgyus pa*, reveals a sophisticated fourfold structure of Dream Yoga.[33] The process commences with "seizing the dream" (*rmi lam bzung ba*), wherein the yogin visualizes syllables within the throat *cakra* to maintain awareness during the transition into sleep. The second stage, "training" (*sbyang ba*), involves actively manipulating the dream environment to verify the ontological malleability of phenomena. The third stage, "blessing [the dream] as illusory" (*sgyu mar byin gyis brlab pa*), requires confronting dream-threats to deconstruct fear and recognize the illusory nature of all appearances (Kragh 2015, pp. 353–54).[34]

The practice culminates in "meditating on reality" (*de kho na nyid bsgom pa*). Transcending mere lucidity, the yogin dissolves dream appearances to recognize the mind's nature as unborn, resting in *mahāmudrā* during sleep. This practice is functionally intertwined with the "Illusory Body"; by recognizing the dream self as unreal, the yogin trains to recognize the bardo body after death as a pure illusory body of the deity (Kragh 2015, p. 355).

The experiential dimensions of this practice are vividly illustrated in practitioner accounts. Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche recounts a personal dream in which a poisonous snake was lodged in his mouth; upon removing it, paramedics told him he was dying. Rather than succumbing to fear, he requested to see a sacred image before death and told the paramedics "There was no death"—a moment of partial lucidity. Upon waking with a racing heart, he deliberately re-entered sleep and, in a fully lucid dream, traveled to his teacher Lopon in Nepal to request an interpretation. He describes this as "an example of us-

ing lucid dream for something practical, for making decisions" (Wangyal 1998, pp. 13–17). Wangyal's account illustrates the fourfold training in action: the initial dream demonstrates seizing awareness; re-entering sleep shows dream retention; confronting death-fear exemplifies the third training; and the deliberate journey to the teacher's presence points toward the integration of dream and waking reality. As he writes elsewhere: "If we cannot carry our practice into sleep, if we lose ourselves every night, what chance do we have to be aware when death comes? Look to your experience in dreams to know how you will fare in death" (Wangyal 1998, p. 19).

A critical distinction exists between Dream Yoga and Sleep Yoga. Dream Yoga engages the throat *cakra*, focusing on syllables such as "AḤ" or "OṂ" to sustain dream lucidity (Mullin 2005, p. 145; Wangyal 1998, p. 102). Sleep Yoga directs attention to the heart *cakra*, visualizing a white "A" inside a *tigle* to induce entry into formless luminosity.[35] The culmination is the Yoga of Clear Light, rehearsing the process of death and recognition of Ground Luminosity (*gzhi'i 'od gsal*). Mastery of the "mental body" (*yid lus*) in dreams thus becomes direct preparation for the bardo state (Wangyal 1998, p. 165).

4.3. Ontological and Methodological Comparison

Despite procedural similarities, Tibetan Dream Yoga and Hindu *yoganidrā* differ profoundly. Tibetan Dream Yoga aims at realizing *śūnyatā*, seeing all phenomena as dependently arisen and empty of intrinsic existence. The Dalai Lama clarifies that the subtlest clear light mind "is not some unchanging substrate that is the *ātman-brahman* of other religions. It is… a momentary mind-stream."[36] Hindu *yoganidrā*, by contrast, seeks *turīya*, the "fourth state" transcending waking, dream, and deep sleep to unite with Brahman as the changeless ground of reality. Michael Comans demonstrates that while Gauḍapāda adopted Buddhist terminology, "the perspective is different because unlike Buddhism, Gauḍapāda is relying on the premise of *'brahman, ātman* or *turīya*' exist and are the nature of absolute reality."[37]

The soteriological orientations differ accordingly: Tibetan Dream Yoga directs toward Clear Light recognition in the bardo after death (Sheehy 2025, p. 130), while Hindu *yoganidrā* pursues Self-Realization through recognition of identity with Brahman. Tibetan Buddhist thought regards waking and dreaming as equally insubstantial projections (Mullin 2005, p. 143), while Hindu philosophy, grounded in the *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad*, depicts *turīya* as ontologically fundamental. Evan Thompson frames the self as an ongoing process of "I-making" that transforms during sleep and dream.[38]

Methodologically, Tibetan Dream Yoga requires rigorous tantric prerequisites—specifically *abhiṣeka* (empowerment) and Generation Stage training (*bskyed rim*)—as it belongs to the Completion Stage methodologies (Mullin 2005, pp. 49–54, 116–25; Kragh 2015, pp. 18, 50–55). In contrast, Hindu *yoganidrā* presents a more complex picture regarding initiatory prerequisites. The modern systematization by Saraswati ([1976] 1998) was explicitly designed as a democratized technique requiring no formal initiation, and contemporary *yoganidrā* is widely practiced outside tantric commitments. However, the traditional practices from which it derives—particularly Tantric *nyāsa* (ritual placement) and advanced tantric techniques—likely required *dīkṣā* (initiation) and direct guru transmission within their respective lineages (Birch and Hargreaves 2015, p. 7). The distinction, therefore, lies not in an absolute absence of initiatory requirements within the Hindu tradition per se, but in the modern reformulation of *yoganidrā* as a practice accessible beyond the esoteric frameworks that governed its antecedents. Eschatologically, the Tibetan practice explicitly prepares for post-mortem luminosity through a homological mapping of sleep stages onto death stages: falling asleep corresponds to the moment of dying; deep dreamless sleep to the luminous bardo of *dharmatā* (*chos nyid bar do*); the dream state to the bardo of be-

coming (*srid pa bar do*); and waking to rebirth (Thompson 2014, pp. 186–287). *Yoganidrā*, conversely, articulates its aim primarily in terms of transformative awareness (*turīya*) accessible within the continuum of life. These methodological distinctions—divergent initiation requirements, visualization techniques, and structural mappings of liminal states—reveal how each tradition calibrates its contemplative technologies to its broader soteriological framework.

5. Out-of-Body Experiences and the Subtle Bodies

Indian religious traditions share a fundamental recognition that the moment of death constitutes a critical juncture for spiritual transformation. Yet their approaches to navigating this transition diverge significantly based on underlying metaphysical commitments regarding consciousness, embodiment, and liberation. This section examines two related but distinct practices: meditation techniques for separating consciousness from the body, and the more radical discipline of voluntary meditative death: the Vedāntic-Yogic technique of yogic suicide (*utkrānti*; transference), the Tibetan Buddhist practice of consciousness transference (*'pho ba*), and the Jain methods of abandoning body (*kāyotsarga*) and soul projection (*samudghāta*). While all three traditions recognize liminal consciousness as soteriologically significant, their understanding of what departs, where it goes, and whether external assistance is possible reveals fundamental ontological divergences that resist easy syncretism.

Contemporary neuroscience has documented voluntary out-of-body experiences under controlled laboratory conditions. Smith and Messier (2014) studied a 24-year-old participant who reported that she had been inducing OBE-like states since childhood, initially as a distraction during preschool naptime. She described the experience as one of seeing herself rotating in the air above her body while remaining aware of her unmoving physical body below. Remarkably, she "appeared surprised that not everyone could experience this." Functional MRI (a brain-imaging method that tracks blood–oxygen changes) during these episodes revealed activations in the left supplementary motor area and the temporoparietal junction—regions associated with motor imagery and self-localization—while the visual cortex showed decreased activity, consistent with her report of kinesthetic rather than visual experience. This case illustrates how first-person phenomenology and third-person neuroimaging can jointly illuminate the structure of OBE-like states, while leaving open the ontological question of whether such experiences point toward genuine disembodiment or sophisticated neural reorganization.

5.1. Yogic Consciousness Transference (Utkrānti) in Hindu Tradition

The classical Vedāntic teaching ontransference is grounded in the Upaniṣadic passages describing the soul's exit from the body at death. The *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* 4.4.1-2 provides the foundational account, establishing that consciousness departs the body at death through different exit-points—"either through the eye, or through the crown of the head, or through other parts of the body" (Olivelle 1998, p. 119)[39]. While this passage does not itself specify which exit-point leads to liberation, the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* 8.6.6 explicitly identifies the channel passing through the crown (*mūrdhan*), indicating liberation (*mokṣa*) as the path to immortality: "Going up by it, one reaches immortality; the others, going in various directions, serve for departing" (Olivelle 1998, p. 279).[40] The subsequent commentarial tradition consolidated this teaching into the doctrine that departure through the crown aperture(brahma-randhra indicates liberation (mokṣa).

Sanderson (2004)'s comprehensive survey documents consciousness-transfer techniques across Upaniṣadic, Epic, Purāṇic, and Śaiva literature, demonstrating the persistence of these practices across diverse sectarian contexts. *Mahābhārata* (12.305.1-7) Describes the yogic ascent (*utkrānti*) where the vital energy is propelled from the body. De-

parting through the feet leads to the realm of Viṣṇu, through the knees to the Sādhyas, and through the head to Brahmā, establishing a homology between bodily exit points and divine realms (Mallinson and Singleton 2017, p. 507; White 2010, p. 328). Patañjali's *Yogasūtra* systematizes these teachings within the framework of breath exercises (*prāṇāyāma*) and the supernatural attainments (*siddhis*). *Sūtra* 3.39 states that mastery of the ascending breath (*udāna*) enables ascent at the moment of death.[41] Furthermore, *Sūtra* 3.43 describes "great disembodiment" (*mahā-videhā*), explaining that through this state the mind of a yogin may operate externally, providing the doctrinal basis for consciousness-transfer (Bryant 2009, pp. 378–79, 396; Mallinson and Singleton 2017, pp. 371–72).

5.2. Tibetan Consciousness Transference and Illusory Body

Tibetan Buddhism developed the Vedāntic-Yogic *utkrānti* tradition into the elaborate practice of *'pho ba* (The practice enables practitioners—or ritual specialists acting on their behalf—to transfer consciousness at the moment of death to a favorable rebirth, ideally to a pure Buddha-field such as *sukhāvatī* (Mullin 2005, pp. 174–75; Kapstein 2004, pp. 16–51).

The practice involves visualizing the central channel (*avadhūtī*) as a hollow tube extending from the crown to below the navel. Consciousness—visualized as a luminous syllable *hīṃ*—is located at the heart center. Through breath control, visualization, and mantra recitation, the practitioner trains to "shoot" consciousness upward through the central channel at death.[42]

Within the completion stage system, *'pho ba* is structurally integrated with the Illusory Body practice. The Illusory Body, constituted from the "very subtle wind-mind" (*shin tu phra ba'i rlung sems*), represents a consciously constructed meditation body that serves as the basis for Buddha-body realization.[43] Unlike the Hindu subtle body functioning as a vehicle for saṃsāric transmigration, the Illusory Body enables the practitioner to perceive their physical form as essenceless—a cognitive shift essential for consciousness transference.[44]

Kragh's analysis of *Khrid chos mu tig tsar la brgyus pa* (Segment 11) delineates a tripartite typology of transference tailored to practitioner aptitude (Kragh 2015, pp. 354–56). For the practitioner of the highest capacity, transference is achieved through the realization of "Radiance"; in this soteriological process, the yogin visualizes the syllable *HŪṂ* at the heart center, ultimately dissolving into the state of *mahāmudrā*, whereby the practitioner's intrinsic nature merges with the fundamental clear light (*rang bzhin gyi 'od gsal*) at the moment of death.

For those of middling capacity, the text prescribes transference via the "Illusory Body". This method is intrinsically linked to dream yoga, requiring the practitioner to train in projecting consciousness to the celestial stone "*armolika*" (*rdo a rmo li ka*) located in the *trāyastriṃśa* heaven (*sum cu rtsa gsum*), thereby establishing a habitual tendency for the post-mortem transition. The method for the lowest capacity relies on the "Generation Stage", utilizing bio-energetic manipulations such as "vase-breathing" (*bum pa can*; Skt. *kumbhaka*) to mechanically eject the consciousness through the Brahma aperture into the heart of the deity. Furthermore, Kragh highlights a distinct, auxiliary technique in Segment 12 termed "Forceful Transference" (*btsan thabs kyi 'pho ba*), or *haṭhayogasaṃkrānti*, which involves physical manipulation of the dying body to force the inner winds upward, serving as a contingency for those unable to perform self-ejection (Kragh 2015, pp. 355–57).

The practice of entering another's bodies (*grong 'jug 'pho ba;* Skt. *purapraveśa*) functions as an alternative to the standard transference methods prescribed for those of lower to middling capacity (Kragh 2015, p. 394). This is presented as a specialized, auxiliary technique within the broader system of Consciousness Transference. In the context of the bardo and the practitioner's capacity, this method serves as a contingency for a yogin who seeks to maintain continuity of practice by ejecting their consciousness into a "fresh corpse" (*ro gsar*

pa) rather than proceeding to a Pure Land or standard rebirth. However, the texts emphasize that this technique requires specific "mastery of the winds" (*rlung brtan pa*) and warn of the soteriological risk: if the consciousness is projected into an "old corpse" instead of a fresh one, the result is the creation of a *vetāla* (*ro langs*), or zombie, rather than a genuine resurrection (Kragh 2015, p. 368).

'Pho ba integrates within the broader bardo framework. The *Bardo Thödol* presumes a forty-nine-day intermediate period during which ritual assistance remains efficacious, delineating three primary bardos: *chikhai*, *chönyid*, and *sidpa* (Coleman and Jinpa 2007; Lopez 2011, pp. 15–45). This possibility of external ritual intervention—through the master's meditation, liberation prayers, or Amitābha's salvific grace—represents a fundamental structural difference from Jain death meditation, which categorically rejects such dependencies.[45]

5.3. Jain Disembodied Meditation: Kāyotsarga and Samudghāta

In Jainism, the technique of consciousness transfer (*utkrānti*; *'pho ba*) into another body is documented in the fifth chapter of Hemachandra's *Yogaśāstra*. However, it is categorized as a subordinate stage within the hierarchy of practices for achieving liberation.[46] Jainism developed these techniques of consciousness migration in a distinct manner, framed by its rigorous body-soul dualism and Karma theory.

The Jain tradition preserves a distinctive meditative discipline not found in other Indian religious traditions: *kāyotsarga*. Etymologically, *kāyotsarga* (Pkt. *kāussagga*) derives from *utsarga* ("abandonment") and *kāya* ("body"), thus signifying the abandonment of the body (Wiley 2004, p. 122; Yang 2026, pp. 4–5). The *Āvaśyakaniryukti* preserves the *Kāyotsargasūtra*, which establishes the practice's parameters: the practitioner stands in complete physical stillness, permitting only involuntary functions such as breathing, while withdrawing attention entirely from bodily awareness (Williams 1963, p. 213).[47]

Hemacandra classifies *kāyotsarga* among various *āsanas*, describing it as "the position in which one is indifferent towards the body [and in which] one is either seated or standing with both arms hanging down" (Qvarnström 2012, p. 192). The inner essence of *kāyotsarga* is succinctly expressed in Kundakunda's *Niyamasāra* (121): the practitioner withdraws psychic attention from the body and all external substances, concentrating unwaveringly on the essential nature of consciousness.[48] This orientation stands in sharp contrast to later developments in *āsana* within the haṭhayoga tradition, where seated meditation postures evolved into diverse bodily practices aimed at cultivating bodily energy. *Kāyotsarga*, by contrast, is not a body-dependent practice but a practice of abandoning the body entirely—its aim is to recover the pure nature of the soul, distinct from matter.

Contemporary Prekṣā Meditation literature provides detailed phenomenological descriptions of *kāyotsarga* that resonate closely with the classical texts. Acharya Mahapragya's published instructions describe the practice as a process in which "every muscle in each part of the body is persuaded to relax by autosuggestion," beginning systematically from the toes and progressing upward through every region of the body (Mahapragya 1994b, chap. 4). The practitioner is directed: "Starting with the big toe of your right foot, concentrate your mind on it. Allow your mind to spread throughout the big toe. Suggest to the muscles and nerves to relax. Relax… Relax… Relax… Experience that they are relaxing" (Mahapragya 1994a, p. 13). As the process deepens, the result is no longer merely suggested but experientially realized: "When the whole body has become relaxed, there is an acute and actual perception of rest and relaxation, which is no longer auto-suggestion, but is real experience. Thus *kāyotsarga* is not only deep relaxation but self-awareness and actual contact with the subconscious mind" (Mahapragya 1994b, chap. 4). The culminating phenomenological dimension—the sense of consciousness separating from the inert body—is

explicitly prescribed as the practice's telos: at the point of complete physical stillness, the practitioner is instructed to "recall the separation of the soul from the body and feel the separate existence of the soul" and to "completely forget your body and reach out to your inner self" (Adhyatm Sadhna Kendra n.d.). This experiential trajectory—progressive withdrawal of motor agency through autosuggestion (*bhāvanā*), culminating in an acute perception of consciousness as distinct from the body corresponds precisely to what classical Jain texts prescribe as the inner essence of *kāyotsarga*: the withdrawal of psychic attention from the body and all external substances and unwaveringly concentrating on the essential nature of consciousness (Kundakunda, *Niyamasāra* 121).

The tradition of *kāyotsarga* is intricately connected to the practice of *samudghāta*—the projection of soul-units (*ātmapradeśas*) outside the body. The concept is deeply connected with the Jain five-body theory, karma theory, cosmology, and soteriology. Balcerowicz clarifies the connection between projection and the body-shaped universe in his study of Jain cosmology, showing that classical Jain sources describe different regions of the *loka* using somatic terminology—"neck," "navel," "skin," and "womb"—and that subsequent visual traditions elaborate this into the anthropomorphic image of the *loka-puruṣa*, a body-shaped cosmic figure (Balcerowicz 2015, pp. 129–33).

Yogaśāstra 11.49-52 provides a detailed account of *kevali-samudghāta* (omniscient projection) as a kevalin's deathbed meditation technique. The practice must be performed within forty-eight minutes(one *muhūrta*) prior to death. The soul's spatial units expand through the cosmos in four instants: first as a column (*daṇḍa*) reaching the cosmic limit, then as a door (*kapāṭa*) east–west, then as a churning stick (*manthānaka*) south–north, and finally filling the entire inhabited universe (Qvarnström 2012, pp. 299–301).[49]

Māraṇāntika-samudghāta (death-projection), accessible to accomplished ordinary practitioners, represents an additional deathbed meditation method that projects the soul toward its next rebirth location while eliminating non-destructive karmas. A critical distinction must be drawn between *antarāla-gati*, the post-mortem transmigration of the soul, and *māraṇāntika-samudghāta*. While the former is characterized as a post-mortem event traversing a curvilinear trajectory, the latter is executed prior to biological death. Crucially, this projection is instantaneous and strictly linear, extending along a vector in one of the six spatial dimensions without deviation (Pragya 2021, pp. 63–70, 93; Yang 2026, p. 14).

5.4. Comparative Soteriological Framework and Subtle Bodies

While the preceding sections have examined how each tradition approaches consciousness-transfer techniques, a deeper structural divergence emerges when we consider the question of external soteriological assistance at death. Jaini (1979, pp. 227–33) provides a foundational comparative framework for understanding Indian mortuary ideologies, highlighting a sharp divergence in soteriological reliance. In contrast to Hindu traditions, which necessitate complex *śrāddha* rituals to sustain the ancestors (*pitṛ*), and Buddhist systems that developed elaborate liturgies for the intermediate state (bardo) to guide consciousness, Jainism is marked by a conspicuous absence of such intercessory mechanisms. In Hindu tradition, the dying person's final thoughts determine rebirth conditions; post-mortem *śrāddha* rituals and intermediate-state ceremonies provide ongoing support through external intervention. Buddhist traditions similarly developed elaborate support systems: Tibetan *'pho ba* enables consciousness transfer by masters, Pure Land practice relies on Amitābha's salvific grace, and the bardo teachings presume an intermediate state during which ritual assistance remains efficacious.

Predicated on a doctrine of radical self-reliance, Jain praxis fundamentally repudiates the efficacy of external soteriological aid. This theological commitment to individual autonomy naturally precluded the development of rituals designed to navigate an inter-

mediate state or beliefs in vicarious salvation, as the burden of karmic annihilation rests solely upon the ascetic's own agency (Flügel 2017, pp. 119–20, 128).

Unlike Hindu *utkrānti*—which may serve life extension, supernatural attainment, or entering another body—or Buddhist *'pho ba*—which transfers consciousness to a favorable rebirth—Jain *samudghāta* serves the exclusive function of accelerating karma annihilation for immediate liberation. The technique embodies Jain soteriology's core principle: liberation (*mokṣa*) achieved through autonomous spiritual agency (*svayaṃ-siddhi*), extended to its ultimate expression in death-moment meditation.

The Jain framework of five material bodies (*pañca-śarīra*) is inextricably linked to *samudghāta*. Central are the karmic body (*kārmaṇa-śarīra*) and the fiery body(*taijasa-śarīra*), conceived as subtle material entities accompanying the soul until liberation. *Samudghāta* is the mechanism by which the soul's spatial units expand outside the main body for expedited karmic annihilation. (Yang 2026, p. 12ff).

This attention to subtle body manipulation resonates with Tibetan Buddhist Vajrayāna technologies. Dream Yoga and Clear Light Yoga engage the vajra body to maintain awareness during sleep and navigate the post-death bardo. However, these techniques serve fundamentally different soteriological functions: while *'pho ba* transfers consciousness to a new locus of experience, Jain *samudghāta* expands the soul throughout the cosmos for karma annihilation, not continued embodiment.

Flood's (2006) *The Tantric Body* demonstrates how Hindu traditions developed the concept of the "entextualized body"—transformed through ritual and yogic practice. This contrasts with Jain approaches, where the body is to be abandoned rather than transformed. While Tibetan Buddhism developed dream yoga techniques to navigate mental projections in the bardo, Jainism's strict dualism precludes such intermediate states. The Jain practitioner cannot rely on post-mortem guidance; instead, *samudghāta* compresses karmic equalization into the final moments of embodied existence. This comparison of death-focused practices crystallizes the central question underlying all architectures of liminality: whether liberation requires the transformation of embodiment or its complete transcendence.

6. Conclusions

This study has examined lucid dreaming and out-of-body experiences as "architectures of liminality"—structured intermediate states cultivated within Indian contemplative traditions for investigating consciousness, self, and reality. Contrasting neurophenomenological approaches that treat such states as brain-dependent "altered embodiment" with classical Indian frameworks and drawing on both textual analysis and selected first-person experiential accounts from within each tradition, the paper traced how Vedāntic, Buddhist, and Jain traditions conceptualize dream consciousness and the possibility of awareness operating through subtle vehicles. The analysis extended from dream and sleep yoga practices to death-focused disciplines, revealing how subtle-body theories are operationalized as technologies of dying across these traditions.

Central to these architectures is the contested concept of disembodied consciousness. While Thompson's neurophenomenology treats OBEs as perspective-shifts within an embodied system, the Indian comparative archive reveals a spectrum of alternatives: Vedāntic models of the *taijasa* self-operating through luminous subtle vehicles; Buddhist theories of the causally efficacious dream body and the illusory body (*māyā-deha*) for bardo navigation; and Jain affirmation of the *taijasa-śarīra* and *kārmaṇa-śarīra* as substantial material realities accompanying the soul through transmigration. This diversity demonstrates that "disembodied consciousness" is not a single thesis but a family of positions—ranging from mind-only projection to subtle-material interaction—each embedded in distinct soteriological teleologies.

The significance of this comparative analysis lies in its challenge to reductionist approaches in consciousness studies. When lucid dreaming migrates from a soteriological framework to a laboratory paradigm, what is lost is the understanding that these states serve as waypoints toward liberation—training grounds for the ultimate liminal transition at death. Yet what Indian traditions contribute is precisely the recognition that liminal states are not anomalies to be explained away but systematic technologies for investigating the relationship between consciousness and embodiment. The textual and practitioner evidence examined across these traditions—from deliberate re-entry into lucid dreams for spiritual guidance in Tibetan dream yoga, to the progressive dissolution of bodily awareness in Jain *kāyotsarga*, to the maintenance of "witnessing" awareness through deep dreamless sleep—confirms that such experiences function as systematic reports that structure and validate the contemplative technologies from which they arise. The question of disembodied consciousness—whether dismissed as neural illusion, theorized as subtle embodiment, or affirmed as the soul's essential nature—remains a live issue requiring integration of phenomenological evidence with the metaphysical and soteriological contexts that structure its meaning.

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Notes

1 Nāropa's *Ṣaḍdharmopadeśa* (Six Doctrines; Six Yoga), transmitted through Marpa to the Kagyu lineage, includes dream yoga as one of the six practices, alongside inner heat, illusory body, clear light, transference of consciousness, and intermediate state yoga (Guenther 1963, pp. 128–56; Mullin 2005).

2 The watershed moment came in February 1975, when Stephen LaBerge, then a doctoral student at Stanford University, became lucid in a dream and used pre-arranged eye movement signals to communicate from within the dream state, providing the first laboratory verification of lucid dreaming. His doctoral dissertation established the methodology for subsequent research, using the pre-arranged LRLR (left-right-left-right) eye movement pattern to signal lucidity from within the dream state to laboratory observers monitoring polysomnographic recordings. See LaBerge (1980).

3 The term "architectures of liminality" draws on Victor Turner's anthropological concept of liminality (Turner 1969) while extending it to encompass the systematic, transmissible frameworks developed in contemplative traditions for navigating threshold states of consciousness.

4 Although the term "neurophenomenology" itself was first systematically presented by Francisco Varela in 1996, the thesis that body-environment interaction is the foundation of cognition was already developed in his earlier work, *The Embodied Mind* (Varela et al. 1991). In contemporary consciousness studies, Varela's approach emphasizes circularity, implying that brain states and phenomenal experience are mutually constitutive, not unilaterally reducible.

5 The "embodied cognition" paradigm represented a significant departure from classical cognitive science's computational model of mind. Varela, Thompson, and Rosch drew on Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology, Buddhist mindfulness traditions, and autopoietic biology to argue that cognition is not abstract information processing but emerges from the structural coupling between organism and environment.

6 Raduga's "Phase Research Center" has trained thousands of practitioners worldwide using a systematic protocol involving wake-back-to-bed techniques, separation methods, and deepening procedures. While his work lacks the philosophical sophistication of Thompson's neurophenomenology, it provides valuable empirical data on the prevalence and trainability of lucid dreaming and OBE-like states.

7 *Sarvadarśanasaṅgraha* 1.23: *tebhya eva dehākārapariṇatebhyaḥ kiṇvādibhyo madaśaktivac caitanyam upajāyate/ teṣu vinaṣṭeṣu satsu svayaṃ vinaśyati* || …… *vijñānaghana evaitebhyo bhūtebhyaḥ samutthāya tāny evānuvinaśyati na pretya saṃjñāsti iti* ||

8 The *Sarvadarśanasaṅgraha* summarizes the Cārvāka position: "Liberation is the destruction of the body" (*dehasya nāśo muktiḥ*), and "The king established in the world is the Supreme Lord; no other one is known" (Bronkhorst 2025, pp. 31, 33). The very notion of a soul surviving bodily death is dismissed; as the verses attributed to Bṛhaspati declare: "There is no heaven, no liberation, and no self-belonging to a higher world" (Bronkhorst 2025, p. 37). The text also records a pointed rhetorical question challenging any notion of consciousness persisting beyond bodily death: "If, once leaving the body, one goes to a higher world, why does one not return drawn by love for one's relatives?" (Bronkhorst 2025, pp. 38–39). Furthermore, they appealed to naturalistic explanation rather than supernatural causation: *"Fire is hot, water is cold, air has an even touch—what makes this world so diverse? Its varied state derives from its nature"* (Bronkhorst 2025, pp. 36–37).

9 In practice, "integration" often means that first-person reports are admitted only insofar as they can be standardized (e.g., via rating scales, task constraints, or pre-set phenomenological categories). This can unintentionally flatten tradition-specific distinctions that function as theoretical and soteriological discriminations rather than mere descriptors.

10 "Altered embodiment" is especially important here: it reframes OBEs as a systematic re-mapping of the body-as-subject and body-as-object (e.g., perspective, agency, and ownership), rather than as evidence that consciousness literally detaches from corporeality. The present study departs not by denying this explanatory power, but by asking how—and why—Indian traditions sometimes re-describe similar phenomenology in terms of subtle vehicles, intermediate domains, or post-mortem trajectories.

11 Medieval doxography confirms that "dream-experience" was widely treated as a privileged philosophical test-case for the ontological status of appearances. In the *Sarvadarśanasaṃgraha*—an Advaita-leaning compendium—dreaming is repeatedly mobilized to show that what is experientially vivid can nonetheless be sublated without remainder (Bronkhorst 2025).

12 *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad* 4: svapnasthāno'ntaḥprajñaḥ saptāṅga ekonaviṁśatimukhaḥ|praviviktabhuk taijaso dvitīyaḥ pādaḥ ||

13 *Gauḍapāda's Kārikā* 2.1–4: further elaborates that dream objects, though appearing real within the dream, are recognized as unreal upon waking—a key insight deployed in the tradition's analysis of waking consciousness itself (Panoli 1991, pp. 315–22).

14 *Sarvadarśanasaṅgraha* 13.260: yathā svapnaprapañco 'yaṃ mayi māyāvijṛmbhitaḥ|evaṃ jāgratprapañco 'pi mayi māyāvijṛmbhitaḥ ||

15 *Yogasūtra* 1.38: svapnanidrājñānālambanaṃ vā| Woods renders this as taking support from "the knowledge [that comes] from dream or sleep," and Vyāsa glosses the relevant cognition as occurring "at the time of sleep" (nidrā-samaye yaj jñānam), emphasizing its usefulness when recollected.

16 Dasgupta's discussion also links these mental states to the dynamics of *saṃskāra* and recall, explicitly noting the manifestation of memory in dreams and the strengthening of dispositions through repetition of mental states (Dasgupta 1924, pp. 174–76).

17 *Pramāṇavārttikālaṅkāra* 393: yathā hi svapnaśarīram api satyahīno 'satyasvapno 'pi vikārāya dhāvana-bhayātikramaṇād vinivṛttaḥ ||

18 *Pramāṇavārttikālaṅkāra* 398: antarābhavadeho 'pi yogimātragamyaḥ, svapnaśarīravan nopalabhyate, mithyāsvapnaśarīram iti cen na, arthakriyākāritvāt || On the analogy between the dream body and the intermediate-state body (*antarābhava*), and the claim that limited perceptibility does not entail non-existence.

19 For "true dream" (*satya-svapna*) as a technical term in the Buddhist epistemological tradition (its definition and major contexts, incl. *yogipratyakṣa* and *avisamvāditva*), see Hayashi's Introduction and outline of contexts (Hayashi 2001, pp. 559–60).

20 *Ācārāṅga Sūtra* 1.3.1.1: suttā amuṇī, muṇiṇo sayayaṃjāgaranti.; *Uttarādhyayanaūtra 4.6:* suttesu yāvi paḍibuddhajivī.

21 *Tattvārtha Sūtra* 8.8: nidrā-nidrānidrā-pracalā-pracalāpracalā-styānagṛddhayaḥ || (Dixit [1974] 2002, p. 297; Tatia 1994, p. 193).

22 Birch and Hargreaves (2015) trace the term *yoganidrā* through Epic, Purāṇic, Śaiva, Buddhist Tantric, and medieval *Haṭha*/*Rājayoga* literatures. They demonstrate that in medieval yoga texts (11th–18th centuries), *yoganidrā* functioned as a synonym for *samādhi*, while precedents for body-scanning appear in *Yogayājñavalkya* (14th century) through *pratyāhāra* via eighteen vital points (*marmasthāna*).

23 *Devī Māhātmya* 1.54: tannātra vismayaḥ kāryo yoganidrā jagatpateḥ|mahāmāyā hareścaiṣā tayā sammohyate jagat ||

24 *Devī Māhātmya* 1.71: viśveśvarīṃ jagaddhātrīṃ sthiti-saṃhāra-kāriṇīm|nidrāṃ bhagavatīṃ viṣṇor atulāṃ tejasaḥ prabhuḥ || The *Mahāvidyā* verse (1.71) further establishes yoganidrā within a matrix of consciousness-powers. 1.77: mahāvidyā mahāmāyā mahāmedhā mahāsmṛtiḥ|mahāmohā ca bhavatī mahādevī mahāsurī—identifying the Goddess as Supreme Knowledge, Great Illusion, Supreme Insight, Great Memory, and Great Delusion simultaneously.

25 Parker et al. (2013) propose an operational definition of *yoganidrā* distinguishing traditional practice (conscious entry into non-REM sleep) from modern relaxation techniques, noting the connection to tantric nyāsa ("to place").

26 *Haṭhayoga Pradīpikā* 4.36: antarlakṣyaṃ bahirdṛṣṭir nimeṣonmeṣa-varjitā|eṣā sā śāmbhavī mudrā veda-śāstreṣu gopitā || The subsequent verse (4.37) describes the resultant state: śūnyāśūnya-vilakṣaṇaṃ sphurati tat tattvaṃ padaṃ śāmbhavam—"that flashing forth is the true state of Śāmbhava." The critical edition of the *Haṭhapradīpikā* (Mallinson et al. 2024) produced by the Light on Haṭha Yoga Project is based on over 200 manuscripts, with the oldest dated 1496 CE.

[27] Kjaer et al. (2002) demonstrated the first in vivo evidence of neurotransmitter release during meditation using 11C-raclopride PET in 8 experienced yoga teachers during *yoganidrā*.

[28] Datta et al. studied 26 novices after two weeks of *yoganidrā* training using full PSG EEG. They termed this phenomenon "local sleep," analogous to hemispheric sleep-in dolphins and certain birds.

[29] *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad* 5: yatra supto na kaṃ cana kāmaṃ kāmayate na kaṃ cana svapnaṃ paśyati tat suṣuptam|suṣupta-sthāna ekībhūtaḥ prajñāna-ghana evānandamayo hy ānanda-bhuk ceto-mukhaḥ prājñas tṛtīyaḥ pādaḥ ||

[30] *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad* 7: nāntaḥ-prajñaṃ na bahiṣ-prajñaṃ nobhayataḥ-prajñaṃ na prajñāna-ghanaṃ na prajñaṃ nāprajñam|adṛṣṭam avyavahāryam agrāhyam alakṣaṇam acintyam avyapadeśyam ekātma-pratyaya-sāraṃ prapañcopaśamaṃ śāntaṃ śivam advaitaṃ caturthaṃ manyante sa ātmā sa vijñeyaḥ ||

[31] Kragh (2015)'s *Tibetan Yoga and Mysticism* provides the most rigorous philological analysis of the Dags po'i bka' 'bum corpus, demonstrating that 19th-century Tibetan traditions cited different canonical root-texts than earlier sources—a crucial finding for textual criticism.

[32] Mullin (2005)'s The Six Yogas of Naropa translates Tsongkhapa's *sKal bzang re ba kun skong* alongside root texts by Tilopa and Nāropa.

[33] Tsongkhapa's commentary systematizes dream yoga into four sequential trainings: (1) Retaining Dreams, (2) Controlling and Increasing Dreams, (3) Overcoming Fear, and (4) Meditating on Suchness. See Mullin (2005, pp. 175–83).

[34] Gampopa's *Mu tig phreng ba* (Closely Stringed Pearls) instructs: "The yogi is here instructed to think of whatever dream arises as being merely a dream and to relate to it without any fear. If he dreams of water, he should plunge into it or walk across it. He should jump into an abyss or sit down to be bitten by dream-dogs." (Kragh 2015, p. 354).

[35] Wangyal (1998, p. 219) Rinpoche distinguishes Dream Yoga from Sleep Yoga: "Dream yoga is followed by sleep yoga, also known as the yoga of clear light. It is a more advanced practice… The goal is to remain awake during deep sleep when the gross conceptual mind and the operation of the senses cease." Norbu ([1992] 2002, p. 41) emphasizes the white Tibetan letter A: "The most important point is that when you fall asleep, you try to have this A present."

[36] The Dalai Lama clarifies the Buddhist position: the subtlest clear light mind "is not some unchanging substrate that is the ātman-brahman of other religions. It is considered… to be a momentary mind-stream. Each moment of clear light consciousness is anew but dependent on a previous moment for it to arise." (Thompson 2014, p. 298).

[37] Comans (2000, p. 36) demonstrates that while Gauḍapāda adopted Buddhist terminology, "the perspective is different because unlike Buddhism, Gauḍapāda is relying on the premise of '*Brahman*, *Ātman* or *Turīya*' exist and are the nature of absolute reality."

[38] Thompson (2014, pp. 172–98) frames the self as an ongoing process of "I-making" that transforms during sleep and dream, describing lucid dreaming as "waking up within the dream without waking up from the dream."

[39] *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* 4.4.2: tasya haitasya hṛdayasyāgraṃ pradyotate|tena pradyotenaiṣa ātmā niṣkrāmati—cakṣuṣo vā mūrdhno vānyebhyo vā śarīra-deśebhyaḥ|| "*The tip of this heart becomes luminous. By that light, this Self (ātman) departs—either through the eye, or through the crown of the head, or through other parts of the body.*" The departure through the crown (mūrdhan) indicates liberation (mokṣa).

[40] *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* 8.6.6: śataṃ caikā ca hṛdayasya nāḍyas tāsāṃ mūrdhānam abhiniḥsṛtaikā|tayordhvam āyann amṛtatvam eti viṣvaṅṅ anyā utkramaṇe bhavanti. || "*There are a hundred and one channels of the heart; one of these passes up through the crown of the head. Going up by it, one reaches immortality; the others, going in various directions, serve for departing.*" This establishes the brahma-nāḍī as the path to liberation.

[41] *Yogasūtra* 3.43: bahir akalpitā vṛttir mahā-videhā tataḥ prakāśāvaraṇa-kṣayaḥ. "*The great disembodiment (mahā-videhā) is an external, non-imaginary fluctuation [of mind]; from that [comes] the destruction of the covering of light.*" This sūtra describes how the yogin's mind can operate outside the body, providing the doctrinal basis for parakāya-praveśa (entering another's body).

[42] Tilopa's oral instruction on 'pho ba: *rnam shes 'pho ba sems nyid kyi|rtsa dbu ma nas gyen du drangs|tshe 'phos sangs rgyas zhing du 'gro.* "Transfer consciousness—the nature of mind itself—drawing it upward through the central channel (avadhūtī). When life-force is transferred, one goes to a Buddha-field." (Mullin 2005, p. 175).

[43] On the Illusory Body, Tsongkhapa explains *shin tu phra ba'i rlung sems las grub pa'i sgyu lus ni|'chi ba'i 'od gsal las langs pa'i lha'i sku yin.* "The illusory body, constituted from the very subtle wind-mind, is the divine body (*lha'i sku*) that arises from the clear light of death." This subtle body serves as the basis for Sambhogakāya realization (Cozort 1986, pp. 42–46, 89–95).

[44] On the distinction between pure and impure illusory bodies in Geluk exegesis: The impure illusory body arises from the "fourth empty" (*stong pa bzhi pa*) during meditation, while the pure illusory body emerges only from actual Clear Light realization and is indistinguishable from the *Sambhogakāya* itself (Cozort 1986, pp. 62–68; Hopkins 1987, pp. 179–85).

[45] The concordance between sleep stages and death stages in Tibetan thanatology: Falling asleep corresponds to the dying process (dissolution of elements); deep dreamless sleep to the bardo of *dharmata* (clear light recognition); the dream state to the bardo of becoming (navigating karmic appearances); and waking up to rebirth (conscious re-embodiment) (Germano 1997, pp. 471–78).

[46] According to the commentary on *Yogaśāstra* 5.272, the technique of migrating to another body is ethically proscribed in Jainism. It is deemed a violation of the principle of non-violence (*ahiṃsā*) because it necessitates violence and results in the death of the host body (Qvarnström 2012, p. 236).

[47] *Kāyotsargasūtra* from the *Āvaśyakaniryukti*: ussāsanissāsehi|khamasamisasijambhilālapittapavanehi|suhumehiṃ aṃgasaṃcālehiṃ suhumehiṃ khellasicāehiṃ cakkhūṇiṃ pasalehiṃ|evamāīehiṃ ābāhābhiyaṃtarehi|neva me kāossaggo visujjhiissāmi. *"Except for inhalation and exhalation, subtle involuntary movements such as coughing, sneezing, yawning, hiccupping, passing wind, dizziness, fainting, movements of limbs… these shall neither destroy nor damage my* kāyotsarga." (Williams 1963, p. 213; Qvarnström 2012, p. 192; Kawasaki 2024).

[48] Kundakunda's *Niyamasāra 121*: jo kāyādo paraṃ davvaṃ jhāṇeṇa viuṇedi|tassa kāe asajjassa kāussaggaṃ ti ṇāmaṃ || *"He who, withdrawing his psychic attention from the body and other external substances (para-dravya), and unwaveringly concentrates on the essential nature of consciousness, is said to have relinquished attachment to the body* (kāyotsarga)." (J. P. Jain 2005, p. 177; Chakravarti 1975).

[49] *Yogaśāstra* 11.51-2: daṇḍakapāṭe manathānakaṃ ca samayatrayeṇa nirmāya|turye samaye lokaṃ niḥśeṣaṃ pūrayed yogī || samayaiś tataś caturbhir nirvatate lokapūraṇād asmāt|vihitāyuḥsamakarmā dhyānī pratilomamārgeṇa ||

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