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Concept of Dream in Vaiśeṣika philosophy

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Abstract

The term 'Dream' is defined in a simple way that is: "a series of thoughts, images, and sensations occurring in a person's mind during sleep". Dreaming is a mental activity that occurs while we sleep. Whatever we go through during the day is recorded in our mind and replayed without that specific order during sleep, which we call a dream. According to Indian philosophy 'स्वप्न' is the Sanskrit word for dream. In Hindu philosophy, dream is a state of consciousness when a person is dreaming or asleep. In this state, he cannot perceive the external world through the senses. This state may involve conscious operations of memory to the state of waking consciousness (*jāgrata*) deep sleep in which no awareness occurs as *turiya*. These four states of consciousness are described in the Chandogya upaniṣad and are commonly repeated in yoga literature. In the Vaiśeṣika system, Praśastapāda, who was the author of Praśastapādabhāṣya included dream as a fourth variety of false cognition.

Topic – The work entitled 'The concept of Dream in Vaiśeṣika philosophy' deals with the interpretation of dream and their division from the perspective of Vaiśeṣika Philosophy.

Keywords- Svapna, Cognition, Prāṇa and Apāna, Bodily humours, Vāyu, Tamoguṇa, Rajoguṇa, Upaniṣad, Ayurveda

Introduction

According to Sigmund Freud, The dream has a meaning. After waking up from sleep we remember the scenes and images in the dream¹. Freud called it the manifest content of a dream. Freud says that these manifest content means more than they seem to be saying. Those dreams may have a deeper and hidden meaning and it is also showing the sources of desire coming from us.

In Ayurveda, Acārya Suśruta states that when a sleeping person collects his past experiences caused by Rajoguṇa in his mind, it is called a dream. In sleeping conditions, the effect of Tamoguṇa reduces then Rajoguṇa

is effective then sense organs cannot get connected with the mind. In this stage, our desires which are gathered in our memory start to appear as dream².

Upaniṣads give a brief explanation of the interpretation of dreams. The Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad goes through a deep analysis of dream. The second chapter of Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad starts with the explanation for the existence of dream in the body. It is said that the dream happens within the body. The dream is a function of the mind, mind is regarded as within the body. Therefore the things seen in dreams are considered to exist in the body.³ Vaiśeṣika philosophy gives more explanation about dream. According to them, dream is mental experience with the connection of sense organs and it is caused by various reasons like bodily humours, etc.

The concept of Dream in Vaiśeṣikasūtra

Kaṇāda accepts dream as a false cognition. He says that 'तथा स्वप्नः'⁴, which means that as remembrance results from a certain connection between the soul and the mind, and from the impression, so also does cognition in dreaming. Cognition in dreaming is the mental experience, through the connection of senses. He also states that consciousness along with dreaming appears from a certain conjunction between soul and the mind and also the impression or retention⁵. The difference between the two cases is that the first dream cognition is due to the impression or retention by previous experience, in the case of consciousness along with dreaming caused by impression created by experience.

Kaṇāda adds another reason for dreaming and consciousness along with dreaming- 'धर्माच्च',⁶ he defines that merit is also the cause of these kinds of dream cognition.

The Treatment of Dream in Praśastapādabhāṣya

Praśastapāda defines dream as 'उपरतेन्द्रियग्रामस्य प्रलीनमनस्कस्येन्द्रियद्वारिणैव यदनुभवनं मानसं तत् स्वप्नज्ञानम्'⁷ when the sense organs cease to function, and the mind retires, there occur certain mental cognitions as if through the external sense organs. This is called a dream. Sometimes the dream becomes real. But the experience of objects in the dream is unreal.

Praśastapāda defines the process of creation of dream 'The living beings exhausted by their work during the day, created by their conscious bodily motions, secession at night with a view either to relax or to enable their food to be digested; and then the contact of the self and the internal organ, brought about by an effort caused by the force of certain unseen agencies creates certain action in the mind.⁸ Then the mind rests peacefully in the heart which is considered the region of the soul devoid of the external organs of perception, and it is also regarded as "retired".

When the mind has to take the rest then the sense organs of a man also stop the function. In this state, the function of Prāṇa Vāyu and Apāna Vāyu goes on smoothly, from such leads as (1) 'sleep' which is the name of the particular state of contact of the soul with the mind and, (2) impressions of previous cognition- there arises, through the sense organs, a dream cognition, with consideration to objects that have no real existence⁹.

Praśastapāda presents a threefold division based on the reasons for dream (1) the strength of mental impression (संस्कारपाटवात्), (2) the disorder of bodily humours (धातुदोषात्) and, (3) merits and demerits (अदृष्टात्)¹⁰.

- (1) The first cognition is caused by the strength of impressions, it frequently happens that a man, has a huge desire for a particular thing and constantly thinks about it and then goes to sleep, that same desiring thought and mental images arise again in the form of sense cognitions.
- (2) The bodily humours are serum, flesh, fat, marrow, bone, and semen; and these are known as 'dhātu', they support the body and when these are disordered by vāyu, bile, and phlegm, there arises certain misapprehension.¹¹ A man who has a vāyu type of body (वातप्रकृतिः), disturbed by the vāyu in his body dreams frequently that he is flying in the sky. Similarly a man who has bile type body (पित्तप्रकृतिः) and also troubled by bile, dreams about stepping into the fire and is also sees a golden mountain and other things. The one who has a phlegm nature (कफप्रकृतिः), and is disturbed by it sees in his dreams such things like crossing rivers and oceans, and mountains of snow and so on.¹²
- (3) The third variety (अदृष्टात्) is caused by unseen forces. The dreams are about particular things which are previously seen or never seen by person himself and others before. When it comes to dreams, riding on an elephant, and seeing of umbrella are considered auspicious dreams which is a good sign of the coming of something desirable. These are brought by impression and merit(dharma). And the dream about rubbing oil and the asses and camels etc, are considered a bad sign and it is caused by the demerit and impression of the person.¹³

The author also states that dream-end cognition (I have been dreaming certain things, and this being the end of the previous dream is called dream-end cognition), this cognition also happens in one whose sense organs have ceased to function, yet, we recall the previous cognitions, it is nothing but the form of remembrance.

The concept of Dream in other Vaiśeṣika works

Śivādityamiśra, the composer of Saptapadārtī, defines dream as 'निद्रादुष्टान्तःकरणजं ज्ञानं स्वप्नः'¹⁴ the cognition created by mind depraved by the influence of sleep. Sleep consists in the relaxing of the mind in a region where is it devoid of all contact with the external sense- organs. The mind is not possessed of the strength gained by yoga.¹⁵

Śankaramiśra, the author of Vaiśeṣikasūtrōpaskāra, takes dreams as the cognition that occurs in the mind at sleep¹⁶. According to Tarkabhāṣa, all cognitions appearing in dreams are incorrect recollections as all that grasped in the cognition arise as in the dream are caused by certain effect¹⁷. Annambhatta, presents a dream in his Tarkasaṁgrahadīpika as a mental misconception (मानसविपर्ययं), though he argues against the acceptance of it as a fourth variety of knowledge¹⁸.

Conclusion

Dream cognition functions either from the force of impressions, or from the derange of humours or unseen potential. We can see more explanations about dream in Upaniṣads and Ayurveda. Almost all systems of philosophy seem to have an interest in the topic of dream. Vaiśeṣika seems to be more interested in the concept of dream especially, Praśastapāda. Praśastapāda gives a deep analysis of the concept of dream.

Praśastapāda and Suśrutha have the same thoughts about the division of dreams based on the temperament of a man. In Suśrutha samhitha, Suśruta mentions three kinds of body types they are Vātaja, Pittvaja, and Kaphaja constitution. Who has a Vataja types of body, he dreams of moving in the sky in his sleep. A man who has a Pittaja constitution dreams such things as meteors, and lighting flashes. Fire, etc. The Kabhaja nature of a man dreams in his sleep of such things as a large lake with numerous blown lotus, swans, and cakravākas. The explanation seems to be little different in Praśastapādabhāṣya (it is already mentioned on page no-3). These similarities show that Praśastapāda was influenced by Ayurveda.

End notes

1. Freud second edition P.96-97
2. Suśruta Samhita P.155-156
3. वैतथ्यं सर्वभावानां स्वप्न आर्हूर्मनीषिणाः।
अन्तः स्थानात्तु भावानां संवृत्तेन हेतुना। 2-1 Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad P.91
4. Vaiśeṣikasūtra 9.2.7 P.320
5. स्वप्नान्तिकम् । 9.2.8 Vaiśeṣikasūtra ज.321
6. Vaiśeṣikasūtra 9.2.9 P.322
7. Praśastapādabhāṣya, svapnaprakaraṇam(17) P.249
8. Padārthasadarmasamgraha of Praśastapāda with the Nyāyakandali of Śrīdhara P.386
9. Ibid
10. तत् तु द्विविधम्। संस्कारपाटवात् धातुदोषात् अदृष्टात् च। Praśastapādabhāṣya , svapnaprakaraṇam P.250
11. धातुदोषात् वातप्रकृतिः तत् दूषितो वा आकाशगमनादीन् पश्यति। Praśastapādabhāṣya , svapnaprakaraṇam P.250
12. Padārthasadarmasamgraha of Praśastapāda with the Nyāyalandali of Śrīdhara P.387
13. The critical study of Praśastapādabhāṣya P.136
14. निद्रादुष्टान्तःकरणजं ज्ञानं स्वप्नः। योगजधर्माननुग्रहीतस्य मनसो निरिन्द्रियप्रदेशावस्थानं निद्रा। (138)
Śivāditya's Saptapadārthī P.82
15. Ibid
16. Vaiśeṣikasutropaskāra P.514
17. Tarkabhāṣa P. 219
18. Tarkasamgrahadīpika P.17

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4. The Māṇḍūkya Upanishad with Gaudapāda's Kārika and Śankara's Commentary Translated by Swami Nikhilananda, Sri Ramakrishna Ashrama mysore, 1949 P.91
5. Sree Narayana Misra, Vaiśeṣikadarśana with Praśastapādabhāṣya, Chaukamba Sanskrit Sansthan Varanasi, 2002 149-152
6. S. Peeru kannu, The critical study of Praśastapādabhāṣya , Kanishka publishing house, Delhi 1992 P.134-136
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8. Saptapadārtī of Śivādityamiśra edited by Amarendra Mohan Tarkatirtha and Narendra Chandra Vedantatirtha, Published by Metropolitan Printing & Publishing House, Limited Calcutta, 1934 P.82
9. S.R Iyer, Tarkabhāṣa of Keśavamiśra, Chaukambha Orientalia, Varanasi 1979, P.219
10. Vaiśeṣikasūtropaskāra of Śrīśankaramiśra with 'Prakāśika' commentary of Ācārya Dhunḍīsāstrī, edited by Sree Narayana Misra, Chaukamabha Sanskrit Sansthan, Varanasi, 2002, 513-517
11. Dr. T. Aryadevi, Tarkasamgraha and Deepika by Annambhatta, Kerala Sahitya Academy, Thrissur 2009 P.175