

# THE VAISESIKA ACCOUNT OF THE PHENOMENON OF DREAM

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## Abstract

Dream is clarified as one among the four types of invalid knowledge and is technically *svapna*. Let us see how dream occurs. The Vaisesika-account is given in terms of a set of physiological factors and their activities together with non-physiological factors and their activities together with non-physiological and/or non-empirical components.

The soul of an animal becomes exhausted due to various types of work done at the waking state. When a man sleeps to take rest, the objects taken transform into a liquid substance. This transformation depends on some physical effort, which, again, depends on unseen factor (*adrsta*) i.e., merit (*dharma*) and demerit (*adharna*) of an individual being. Just as the previously taken substance transforms into a liquid one due to the physical effort of an individual, the contact between self and mind is also possible due to the same effort. As mind is connected with self and special state of heart known as *Midhyâ* or *Puritat*, good sleep (*susapti*) is not possible, for which various activities arise in mind. The mind having various activities has got no connection with external sense-organ and exists in self without any movement.

Though at this stage mind is not connected with external sense-organ, the knowledge in the form of dream is produced in a non-existent object due to the special type of contact between self and mind and latent impression (*samskâra*) through the help of mind, the internal sense-organ.

**Key words:-** Adrsta, Dharma, Adharma, Midhyâ, Susapti, Samskâra, Dhâtudosa, Vâsa, Asrk, Meda, Majja, Asthi, Dhâtu, Mâmsa, Slesmâ.

## I.

All of us are, more or less, acquainted with the world of dream which has been explained in various ways by the psychologists and modern scientists. The purpose of this discussion is two-fold: to deleanate the *Vaisesika-account* of the phenomenon of dream; and by way of rounding off the account, certain critical and comparative remarks with a view to bringing home the distinctive features of the *Vaiesika-analysis* will follow.

## II.

Knowledge has got an important and vital role in our everyday life. The distinction between animate and inanimate objects can be determined with the aid of knowledge. Rational animals are superior to others, as they have got knowledge, which will find support in the *Markandeya Purâna*. Just as knowledge is the criterion by which animate and inanimate objects are differentiated from each other, in the same way the existence of the special type of knowledge differentiates man from animals. Dream is clarified as one among the four types of invalid knowledge and is technically *svapna*.

Let us see how dream occurs. The Vaisesika-account is given in terms of a set of physiological factors and their activities together with non-physiological factors and their activities together with non-physiological and/or non-empirical components.

The soul of an animal becomes exhausted due to various types of work done at the waking state. When a man sleeps to take rest, the objects taken transform into a liquid substance. This transformation depends on some physical effort which, again, depends on unseen factor (*adrsta*) i.e., merit (*dharma*) and demerit (*adharma*) of an individual being. Just as the previously taken substance transforms into a liquid one due to the physical effort of an individual, the contact between self and mind" is also possible due to due to the same effort. As mind is connected with self and special state of heart known as *Midhyâ* or *Puritat*, good sleep (*susapti*) is not possible, for which various activities arise in mind. The mind having various activities has got no connection with external sense-organ and exists in self without any movement.

Though at this stage mind is not connected with external sense-organ, the knowledge in the form of dream is produced in a non-existent object due to the special type of contact between self and mind and latent impression (*samskâra*) through the help of mind, the internal sense-organ.

In other words, when our sleep is disturbed by some reasons, a kind of knowledge arising from mind is called dream: Knowledge generally arises in self which has got connection with mind which is, again, connected with sense-organ. When our mind, being separated from soul, enters into a special state of heart known as *Puritat* or *Midhyâ* there is a good sleep. When it comes out from that state, knowledge is produced. When sleep is disturbed due to some factors, our mind remains connected with that special state of heart as well as with self and it has got no connection with the external sense-organs. If that mind enters into the special state of heart and is not be connected with soul, there would be sleep instead of dream. It has been stated that the knowledge arising from mind and caused by the defect of sleep is described as dream so that the knowledge of colour etc. cannot come under the purview of dream. The *Vaisesika* distinguish between illusion and dream.

In the case of illusion (*viparyaya*) the external sense-organs serve as promoter (*prayojaka*). But in the case of dream these external sense-organs have no function at all, which differentiates it from illusion.

Defect is the cause of invalid cognition. When there is the illusory perception of yellow colour etc., the defect is an excess of bile etc. When the moon is mistaken as having a small size, the defect is the distance. In the same way, dream is produced when our sleep is vitiated by some defects. The factor that causes dream is of three *types*: (a) latent impression (*samskâra*), (b) defect of humor or affection of the body (*dhâtudosa*), (c) unseen factor i.e., merit and demerit (*adrsta*).

An angry or lustful person sees in a dream that what he thinks at the daytime and thinking when he falls asleep. A lustful person sees in a dream that he is embracing his ladylove or an angry person sees that he is killing his enemy. These dreams are due to the latent impression.

The Vaisesikas give a casual account of dream. That is to say, dream is a determinably mental phenomenon with physiological determinants. This implies that the Vaisesikas are of the opinion that a particular dream has got a particular cause. *Defect of humour or affection of the body is the cause of dream*. By humour or affection wind (*vâta*) bile (*pitta*) and phlegm (*slesmâ*) are to be understood. Let us explain it. The term '*dhâtu*' means the objects that preserve our body. The collection of seven objects, viz., brain (*vâsa*), blood (*asrk*), flesh (*mâmsa*), fat (*meda*), marrow of bones (*majjâ*) bones (*asthi*) and semen (*ocukra*) is called '*dhâtu*' as brain etc. protect our body. Due to the vitiation of these, wind, bile and phlegm existing in our body become vitiated, when someone sees that he is flying in the sky or he is afraid of tiger, etc., these are due to the excessive wind existing

in his body. When someone perceives a golden mountain or a person entering into Tire or the flash of lightening etc. all these are due to the effect of bile (*pitta*). Someone perceives the mountain like the Himalayas, crossing the river, heavy rain, mountain covered by silver etc. due to the defect of phlegm in his body.

Dream is produced due to the unseen factor (*adrsta*). By the term '*adrsta*' the merit (*dharma*) and demerit (*adharma*) are to be understood, as they are not seen. A person generally sees an object which may be familiar or non-familiar to him or may be seen or unseen by him before. One sees the auspicious incidents like obtaining royal umbrella, ascending an elephant's back or on mountain etc., due to the impression caused by merit. In the same way, the perception of the inauspicious incidents like ascending on the back of an ass, falling in a dark well, ceremony regarding one's own marriage is possible in a dream due to the impression caused by demerit (*adharma*). Dream as to an object or incident which is absolutely impossible in character is also produced due to the influence of the impression caused by unseen factor.

### III.

Dream is not an isolated phenomenon but it is determinable, The Vaisesika-philosophers are aware of the fact that the produced object must have some cause. As dream is a produced phenomenon, they have given the causal explanation of it. Moreover, they have tried to show that a particular type of dream is produced from a particular type of cause. So, their analytic insight in discovering the cause of dream can highly be appreciated.

The concept of *adrsta* has got an important role in producing dream. It serves to relate dreams in the personal history of an individual. One could say that a person dreams according to what sort of person he is. After knowing the particulars of dream of an individual, we may get an idea about what type of man he is. Like seen factors the unseen factors like merit and demerit have got a prominent role in building one's character and personality, as a social being generally we have to read other's character and personality and behave in a way which suite them. The dream due to *adrsta* can help us in reading other's character. So the causal explanation of this type of dream has got a social value.

Freud, the celebrated Western thinker, describes the inhibited desire as a causal factor of dreamer, which, I think, has been supported by the Vaisesika also. The inhibited desire can be explained by the latent impression (*samskâra*), one of the causal factors of dream. The above-mentioned examples of this type of dream like embracement of ladylove, killing of enemy prove the pre-existence of the desire (of the same) which leaves an impression from which dream is produced. As latent impression has been mentioned as a cause of dream, it is needless to mention again the inhibited desires as the cause of it. Let us explain it more clearly in the following way.

Freud's theory of dream as a physical theory of wish fulfilment may be described in the following way. A point of caution may be stated in this context. Freud's ontology of dream is ambiguous in this sense that it cannot be said to be completely psychical phenomenon in so far as many dreams are said to have physical determinants and it is not clear if one should call Freud's theory dualistic in the Cartesian sense, the interaction between body and mind in the case of dreaming cannot be said to be a case of psycho-physical parallelism.

According to Freud, the dimension of human personality is three-fold. There is the super ego or roughly speaking the social self which consciously controls our social and personal behavior, wishes and desires in terms of the concept of aught. In other words, super ego is the moral self. The *ego simpliciter* is under the control of the super ego in its conscious-existence and in this course of control all thoughts, feeling and desires that are not socially permissible are inhibited and relegated to the zone of the unconscious.

The unconscious is the basis on which the ego is supported. It is also the storehouse of all human memories, things that are forgotten and all our potentialities. The story of the control exerted by the super ego in the waking state of our existence is not the complete one. In sleep the control of the super ego becomes lax and the drive from the unconscious towards the level of the conscious ego takes place. This explains the mechanism of dream as explained by Freud. In short, man dreams when the unconscious seeks to push its entry into consciousness. It should be mentioned finally that taking the conscious and the unconscious together we find the psychological personality of man and of these the unconscious is of the largest dimension. That the unconscious is there is evidenced only by the phenomenon of dream and in this sense the unconscious is the necessary condition of the possibility of having dreams.

Freud says that desire remains in an inhibited condition while the Vaisesika-philosophers say that these desires exist in the form of impression. All inhibited desires or forgotten objects have got some impressions of their own by which we can remember those afterwards. These impressions produce dream in the sleeping state. It may be argued that the impression (*samskâra*) cannot exist in the unconscious as it has been accepted as the attribute of the consciousness or self by the Vaisesika. This view is not tenable. For, the individual self exists both in the unconscious and the conscious parts of body. So it is not contradictory to say that impression remains in the unconscious. Moreover, the relatively unconscious is to be taken into account as the meaning of the term 'unconscious'. So, a particular type of dreams is produced due to the impression (of the inhibited desire etc.) which exists in the unconscious. So both the impression and its substratum (i.e., the unconscious) are necessary conditions of the possibility of having dreams.

At last, it can be said that the causal explanation of dream has got a predictive and therapeutic value. If the physiological factors that cause dream are known, they can be removed through proper treatment. So, dream is the sign through which the excess of bile, wind etc. can be known. Hence, the diseases due to these factors can properly be diagnosed with the help of dreams.

### **Notes and Reference**

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