

SVAPNA TREATED IN SMṚTI TEXTS

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Abstract

The voyages the mind takes during sleep are fascinating, intensely personal, and unique. These sleep adventures in the form of dreams confuse, alarm, preoccupy, amuse or enlighten the dreamer. Man has two states of awareness in which the thought-activity or the process of knowing takes place – One is external perception and the other is internal perception. External perception is generally accepted as being derived through the five sense organs namely olfactory, gustatory, auditory, visual and tactual. Hence, it has been termed *jāgrat*, meaning *nidrākṣaya*, i.e., diminution of sleep. Under the second variety, namely the internal perception falls the *svapna*, the dreaming state, wherein the knowledge of the waking state is visualised as images, with only the mind to aid the cognition. The concept of *duḥsvapna* was very much dreaded by the Vedic seers; they considered them as highly inauspicious and as seen earlier; prayed to varieties of Gods for protection against bad dreams and their evil consequences. These *duḥsvapnas* were considered inauspicious due to their effects and unknown future.

Beginning from the Vedic literature the dreams have been associated with good or bad fortune. A testimony to this belief is found in Śaṅkara's commentary in *Brahma Sūtras*¹, wherein he remarks that, "those who have studied the Svapnādhyāya declare that to see oneself riding on an elephant and the like is auspicious and to see oneself in a chariot drawn by asses is unlucky".

Smṛtis and other Dharmaśāstra texts give guidance and help people lead a valuable social and personal life on the path laid down by the Vedas. In the course of the discussions, descriptions of portents and omens for divining the future course are also found.

The Smṛtis held the opinion which had already been accepted in the Vedas that though there was no conscious effort on the part of the dreamer, who has the visuals in the dream, still the dream is a manifestation of *manaspāpa*. Hence the dreamer had to exercise perfect control over his thoughts and in case of any prohibited act he had to perform expiation.

(i) Manusmṛti:

Manu specifically mentions expiation to deal with an involuntary nocturnal emission of semen during dream and calls for an act of expiation which is as discreet as it is simple *Manusmṛti* (II.181):

स्वप्ने सिक्त्वा ब्रह्मचारी द्विजः शुक्रमकामतः ।
स्नात्वाऋकमर्चयित्वा त्रिः पुनर्नामित्यृचं जपेत् ॥

Following Manu, Smṛtikāras such as Vasiṣṭa², Gautama³ Devala too prescribe expiation for the spilling of semen during the day or in dream in the night. Devala prescribes sixteen counts of *prāṇayāma* as *prāyaścitta* for this involuntary act⁴:

स्त्रियं दृष्ट्वा यदा स्वप्ने रेतः क्षरति वै क्वचित् ।
सवासाऽऽप्लुत्य शुद्धचर्थं कुर्यात् षोडशसंयमान् ॥
रात्रिशेषे यदा स्वप्ने रेतो मूत्रं च वापयेत् ।
स्नानं कृत्वा विशुध्येत षोडश प्राणसंयमैः ॥

For this reason too he ordains the *brahmacāris* to refrain from sleep during day time⁵:

स्वप्नमध्ययनं स्नानमुच्चारं भोजनं गतिम् ।
उभयोः सन्ध्ययोर्नित्यं मध्याह्ने च विवर्जयेत् ॥

(ii) Portent in *Devalasmṛti*:

Devalasmṛti makes clear even at the outset of the section on *Ariṣṭas*, that these portents have been given in accordance with the school of Yoga as well as by the principles of Āyurveda⁶. It proceeds to give a list of portents visualized in the dream which would materialize in a year and gradually to those which would result immediately. In this connection, Devala talks about various visions in dream which would certainly indicate the death of the dreamer on a time scale, depending on the intensity of the visual. Dreaming of urine, faces in golden or silver hue indicate the death of the dreamer in nine months; being led by terrible monkey in a chariot in the southern direction portends approach of death to the dreamer; if the dreamer is led towards the southern direction by a dark lady singing and in black attire, the dreamer shall not live for long; feeling the heavy smell of dead body or blackening of one's teeth portends death in twelve days (*Devalasmṛti*, p. 316) :

सदा मूत्रं पुरीषं वा सुवर्णरजतप्रभम् ।
 प्रत्यक्षं यदि वा स्वप्ने नव मासान् स जीवति ॥
 क्षुद्रवानरयुक्तेन रथेनाशां तु दक्षिणाम् ।
 गायन्नथ वजेत् स्वप्ने विद्यान्मृत्युमुपस्थितम् ॥
 कृष्णाम्बरधरा श्यामा गायन्ती वाऽप्यथाङ्गना ।
 यं नयेद् दक्षिणामाशां स्वप्ने सोऽपि न जीवति ॥
 शवगन्धं भवेद् गात्रं दन्तसादोऽपि यस्य च ।
 दृष्ट्वात्मानं मृतं स्वप्ने द्वादशाहं स जीवति ॥

If a person dreams of being struck by weapons or stones, he will live only for six months (*Devalasmṛti*, p. 329):

कृष्णैश्च विकटैश्चैव पुरुषैश्चोद्यतायुधैः ।
 पाषाणैस्ताड्यते स्वप्ने षण्मासान् न स जीवति ॥

Devala also adds that, seeing the *bhasma* (ashes) fire, hair, dried river and snakes in the dream, results in the death of the dreamer within the duration of ten days (*Devalasmṛti*, p. 329) :

भस्माङ्गरांश्च केशांश्च नदीं शुष्कां भुजङ्गमान् ।
छश्येद् यो दशरात्रं च न जीवेत् तादृशः पुमान् ॥

(iii) *Vīramitrodaya* on portent :

The digest, *Vīramitrodaya* lists the same ten prognostic visuals as given by *Aitareya Āraṇyaka*⁷ during the start of the king's expedition. To ward off the evil effects of these dreams, it prescribes the repetitive recitation of the hymn "*adya no deva savita*". He adds *kalka-snāna*, *tila homa* and listening to the Gajendra-mokṣa episode also to the list of *prāyaścittas*⁸.

Vīramitrodaya also gives a list of time duration in which good dream would fructify. In the process it also quotes from *Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa* and *Agni Purāṇa*.

(iv) Dream as Symbols :

P.V. Kane in his *History of Dharmasāstra*⁹ says that, "Various modes were employed to divine the future, viz., the position of planets and stars, individual horoscope, flight and cries of birds like Khaṃjana and crow, natural phenomena like eclipses and meteors, dreams, voices of animals". It is quite difficult to list out all the lucky and unlucky dreams as they are innumerable.

An account of dreams listed in the major digests is given here:

<i>Ācāramayukha</i>	<i>Dharma-sindhu</i>	<i>Vīramit-rodaya</i>	<i>Śaunaka-kārikā</i>	<i>Effect</i>
Crossing the river, ocean; flying in the sky; seeing constellation of moon and other planets, climbing on the peak or mansions;	-do-	—	—	Fulfillment of desire
Drinking liquor and eating meat; smearing worms and anointing with blood; eating curd rice, dressed in white clothes; bedecked with precious ornaments	-do-	—	—	Accomplishment of desires

Appearance of God, Brahmins and king with all paraphernalia, lady of luster with ornaments;	Appearance of king (without paraphernalia)	-	-	Attainment of wealth.
Ascending the bull, mountain ; climbing the top of trees (fruit bearing) ; seeing mirror, garlands	-do-	-	-	Acquisition of wealth, freed from disease.
Ascending the ant-hill, neem tree, <i>kimśuka</i> tree, <i>yūpastamba</i>	-do-	-	-	Illness, grief
Oil, cotton, oil-cake, Iron-ore	-do-	-	-	Disaster.
On seeing marriage, ceremony, wearing red clothes, red garland.	-do-		-do-	Disaster.
Time of dream:				
Dreamt in the first quarter of night.	-do-	-	-do-	Fruition will be in the span of a year.
Dreamt in the second quarter	-do-	-	-	Within eight months.
Dreamt in the third quarter	-do-	-	-	Within three months.
Dreamt in the fourth quarter	-do-	-	-	Within a months time.
At dawn	-do-	-	-	Within ten days.
Dreamt at the grazing time of the cows	-do-	-	-	Immediate fruition.
Characteristics of auspicious dream				
On seeing any of these- elephant, king, horse, gold, bull, cow.	-do-	-	-	Family prospers.
Ascending on cow, bull and elephant, peak or the mountain, mansion, tree, dead person.	-do-	-	-	Acquisition of wealth
A lone climber on a tree bearing fruits	-do-	-	-	Acquisition of wealth quickly.
Seeing himself standing in the water and bitten by serpent, water louse	White serpent (attainme	-	-	Indicates success, wealth

	nt of money)			
Ascending the peak, mansion, crossing the ocean, oneself drinking the <i>pāyasa</i> in a lotus-leaf.	-do-	–	–	Indicates the attainment of kingdom.
Seeing a mare, hen, <i>krauñcī</i>	-do-	–	–	Attainment of beautiful wife.
Being fettered in iron chairs	(indicates birth of male issue and immediate attainment of wealth)	–	–	indicates wealth
Being seated in the chair, sleeping couch, transport, house, body, blazing fire (awakened at the moment)	-do-	–	–	Attainment of wealth from all quarters
Seeing the constellation of sun and moon,	-do-	–	–	relieved from the diseases and attainment of wealth
Drinking liquor or blood	-do-	–	–	Knowledge, wealth
Embracing a woman clad in white garments anointed in white unguents	-do-	–	–	seeing such will result in benefit
On seeing sandals, shoe, sharp edged sword.	-do-	–	–	attains wealth.
On ascending a chariot yoked with bull.	-do-	–	–	benefits in immediate wealth.
On obtaining curd and ghee and drinking of curd, in a house represents (king of province), in city represents (king of small city)	Covered in visceral in a city (attainment of kingdom)	–	–	Bestowed with wealth and fame,
On consuming the ghee	-do-	–	–	Distress, grief
On eating the human meat				Attainment

or fawn;	-do-	–	–	of hundred gold coins
Eating the head portion of meat	On consuming the leg portion of human-meat (indicates the gain of hundred)	–	–	Attainment of kingdom or 1000 coins
Drinking the fresh milk with foam	-do-	–	–	attainment of soma and about happiness
On seeing wheat,	-do-	–	–	wealth
On seeing yava	-do-	–	–	<i>yagna</i>
On seeing mustard seeds	-do-	–	–	success
On seeing betel leaves, camphor, agarum sandal, white flowers.	-do-	–	–	Wealth or goddess Laksmi
All the white objects	-do-	–	–	Mark of auspiciousness excluding cotton, curd, rice and ash.
All the black objects	-do-	–	–	Mark of inauspiciousness excluding cow, elephant, gods, Brahmins, horse.
Characteristics of Ill effects				
Seeing the Sun and Moon without its brightness	-do-	–	-do-	Indicates illness to the dreamer
Falling of stars, meteors	-do-	–	-do-	Dreamer attains death and grief.
On seeing the flowers of <i>Aśoka, karavīra, Palāśa</i>	-do-	–	-do-	Dreamer attains grief

Crossing the ocean by boat	Crossing the ocean	–	-do-	Indicates the banishment of dreamer
Embracing a woman clad in red clothes	-do-	–	-do-	Indicates death
Anointment of oily substances, oil, ghee, milk etc	Anointment of ghee and oil	–	-do-	Results in ailments
Falling of hairs, tooth	-do-	–	-do-	Loss of wealth and son
Ascending the camel, buffalo, boar, yoked in a chariot and alone rider	-do-	–	-do-	Results in immediate death
Deformed ear, nose, hand, organs and immersed oneself in mire.	-do-	–	-do-	death

From the analysis of dream from various perspectives through the Smṛti and digest texts, one may observe that the passages and treatment of *svapna* is found to be elusive; that is, the Smṛtikāras wanted to avoid *duḥsvapnas* due to its unpredictable nature. Moreover the dreams as treated purely as portents and Smṛtis indulged in elaborate description of contents of the dream only to prescribe various expiations related to them.

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- ¹ Saṅkara's comm. on *Brahma Sūtra* III.2.4 : आचक्षते च स्वप्नाध्यायविदः - कुञ्जरारोहणादीनि स्वप्ने धन्यानि खरयानादीन्यधन्यानि इति।
- ² *Vasiṣṭasmṛti*, XXIII.4
- ³ *Gautamasmṛti*, I.2.19
- ⁴ *Devalasmṛti Reconstruction and a Critical Study*, Vol. I, p.30
- ⁵ *ibid.*, p. 22
- ⁶ *ibid.*, p. 316 : अथारिष्टं प्रवक्ष्यामि यथावद् योगकर्मणि । यथोक्तं ऋषिभिः पूर्वं आयुर्विज्ञानमादितः॥
- ⁷ *Supra* p. 53
- ⁸ *Vīramitrodaya*. pp. 338-89.
- ⁹ Vol. V.II, p. 774.
