

SLEEP AND DREAM

Strangely enough, Shakespeare has much to say about sleep and dream. He has at least nine comments or "psychological expressions" to make on sleep and at least thirteen on dream. These two phenomena are, therefore, no less important to him than such others as "Mind and Body", "Grief and Joy", "Youth and Old Age", etc.

(1a)

In the first Sc. of the first Act of Julius Caesar, Brutus is wide awake in the night hatching a plot to murder Caesar and establish the Roman republic. After conversing with the conspirators Cassius, Casca, Decius and others, when all the conspirators leave, Brutus finds his boy Lucius fast asleep, in contrast to his acute insomnia. He muses:

Enjoy the honey-heavy dew of slumber.
Thou hast no figures nor no fantasies
Which busy care draw in the brains of men;
Therefore thou sleep'st so sound.

(Julius Caesar, II,1, 230-233)

Brutus knows that cares and fantasies are detrimental to sound sleep.

Care is an enemy to sleep and old men can hardly sleep well. Contrarily, "unbruised youth with unstuff'd brain" is a place where "golden sleep doth reign", Friar Lawrence tells Romeo in Romeo and Juliet. In the third Sc. of the second

Act of the play, Romeo meets Friar Lawrence in the early morning : "Good morrow, father ! " Friar Lawrence supposes certain perturbation in the brain of Romeo, for

..... it argues a distempered head
So soon to bid good morrow to thy bed.
Care keeps his watch in every old man's eye,
And where care lodges sleep will never lie;
But where unbruised youth with unstuff'd brain
Doth couch his limbs, there golden sleep doth
reign.

(Romeo and Juliet, II,iii,33-38)

In King Henry IV, we find King Henry in the hot bed of a conspiracy hatched by Scroop, the archbishop of York, Lord Hastings, and Lord Mowbray to dethrone the King. Henry is heavily taxed of the brain and realizes that "Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown". The third Act of the play opens with the king, in night gown, ordering the page to "Go call the Earl of Surrey and the Earl of Warwick". The page obeys the order and Henry speaks to himself:

O sleep, O gentle sleep,
Nature -'s soft nurse,

(King Henry IV, III, 1, 5-6)

In King Richard III, while Edward IV is dying, six people stand between his brother Richard, Duke of Gloucester,

and the throne, Edward's two boys, Edward, Prince of Wales and the Duke of York, and his daughter Elizabeth; Richard's elder brother Clarence, and his young son and daughter.

Richard III succeeds in slaying Clarence and weds and marries Lady Anne who was betrothed to Henry VI's son, the Prince of Wales, who was stabbed by Richard himself. Anne in her wailing expresses bitter sentiment against Richard : "O, when, I say, I look'd on Richard's face, / This was my wish : 'Be thou' quoth I accurs'd' / For making me, so young, so old as widow; ..." She laments :

For never yet one hour in his bed
Did I enjoy the golden dew of sleep,
But with his timorous dreams was still awak'd.

(Richard III, IV, 1, 83-85)

Macbeth, after the murder of Duncan, King of Scotland, has been suffering the lingering qualm of conscience. The obsessive guilt-feeling leaves him bereft of the soothing touch of sleep :

Methought I heard a voice cry 'Sleep no more ;
Macbeth does murder sleep' — the innocent sleep,
Sleep that knits up the ravell'd sleeve of care,
The death of each day's life, sore labour's bath,
Balm of hurt minds, great nature's second course,
Chief nourisher in life's feast.

(Macbeth, II, 11, 35-40)

In King Lear, when Lear's "wits are gone", heart is broken, and life is in danger ("I have o'erheard a plot of death upon him"), Kent and Gloucester help the king have some rest in the "litter" at the outhouse of Gloucester's castle where Lear falls to immediate sleep. Gloucester speaks :

Oppressed nature sleeps.

This rest might yet have balm'd thy broken sinews,
Which, if convenience will not allow,
Stand in hard cure.

(King Lear, III, vi, 97-100)

In the fourth Sc, of the fourth Act of the same play, we find Cordelia staking all her resources to bring her father back to his senses. She invokes the help of a Doctor who assures her:

There is a means, madam,
Our foster-nurse of nature is repose,
The which he lacks;

(King Lear, IV,v, 11-13)

(1b)

Shakespeare, in all these lines, has two very important things to tell. Firstly, he says, sleep cannot ensue if the individual is scathed by stimuli such as cares, fantasies, qualms of conscience, etc. It is a common psychology that when mind is free from all these, sleep is easily induced.

J.J. Rousseau, speaking of the state of the primitive society said that there men could hardly sleep due to the incessant pouring down of the multifarious stimuli on the individual's brain from without, and so he was more prone to sleep :

"Solitary, indolent, and perpetually accompanied by danger, the savage cannot by be fond of sleep". (III). When, therefore, mind is no more subject to the continual bombardment of the external stimuli, one sleeps the sooner and well. G.

Konradi, in K.M. Bykov's Text-Book of Physiology, wrote :

"Sleep may be evoked by any factor connected with the conditions under which it usually sets in every life, for example, by lying in bed. The exclusion of positive conditioned and unconditioned stimuli acting upon the cerebral cortex is also important for the development of sleep (darkness, silence); likewise important is relaxation of the skeletal muscles which considerably reduces the flow of impulses, from their receptors". (IV). This is confirmed by what Ivanov Pavlov said about the waking state : "... the waking state is maintained by more or less rapidly changing stimuli on the cerebral hemisphere mainly from the external world" (V). Shakespeare, therefore, quite right here.

Secondly, Shakespeare calls sleep "nature's soft nurse". Yes, sleep applies balm to the wounded nerves of man. Without sleep man cannot revitalize himself by replenishing the founting of his elan. A. Platonov, in his

Psychology As You May Like It, wrote : "Sleep safeguards the brain cells against exhaustion". (VI). We may see the positive truth of this from some experiments on the deprivation of sleep. Robert Wilkinson, "who published many important experiments on sleep", said : "Thus with sustained and total loss of sleep a person gradually becomes a psychopathological case, .. After a terminal sleep of only twelve hours or so they appeared quite restored to normal". (VII). It is, probably, because of this soothing effect of sleep that Shopenhauer, in his essay 'On the Vanity of Suffering of Life' wrote : "whatever one may say, the happiest moment of the happy man is the moment of his falling asleep, and the unhappiest moment of the unhappy that of his awaking". (VIII).

(2a)

In The Tempest, Sebastian, brother to Alonso speaks of somnambulism or somnabulism (I,II). In the first Sc. of the second Act, Alonso, Sebastian, Gonzalo and others, being saved of the ship-wreck, loiter about the strange island. Gonzalo speaks of his Commonwealth which was "To excell the golden age", and then when Ariel plays solemn music, feels sleepy. Antonio feels disposed to sleep, yet remains waking to see (in his imagination) a crown dropping upon Sebastian's head:

Sebastian.

Why?

Doth it not then our eyelids sink? I find not
Myself disposed to sleep.

Antonio.

Nor I; my spirits are nimble.

They fell together all, as by consent;
They dropp'd as by a thunder-stroke.

What might,

Worthy Sebastian? O, what might!

No more!

And yet methinks I see it in thy face,
What thou should be; th' occasion speaks

This; and

My strong imagination sees a crown
Dropping upon thy head.

Sebastian. What, art thou waking?

Antonio. Do you not hear me speak?

Sebastian. I do; and surely

It is a sleepy language, and thou speak'st
Out of thy sleep. What is it thou didst say?
This is a strange repose, to be asleep
With eyes wide open; standing speaking, moving,
And yet so fast asleep.

(The Tempest, II,1, 191-206)

We find somnambulism or sleep-walking again in Macbeth. Lady Macbeth, since the murder of Duncan, has been showing certain abnormal behaviour. The fifth Act of the play opens with a Doctor of Physic enquiring of a Waiting Gentlewoman about the somnambulistie behaviour of Lady Macbeth, of which she earlier reported to the Doctor. The Waiting Gentlewoman says :

Since his Majesty went into the field, I have seen her rise from her bed, throw her nightgown upon her, unlock her closet, take forth paper, fold it, write upon't, read it, afterwards seal it, and again return to bed, yet all this while in a most fast sleep.

(Macbeth, V, 1, 6-8)

In Othello, Iago tells Othello that there are people who in their sleep speak out their minds. Iago is still in his pursuit of coaxing the simpleton Othello into believing that Desdemona has been having affairs with Cassio. The arch villain Iago tells Othello that Lieutenant Cassio is over head and ears in love with Desdemona, so so that the Lieutenant even speaks out his mind while in sleep :

There are a kind of men so loose of soul
That in their sleep will utter affairs :
One of this kind is Cassio.

In sleep I heard him say 'Sweet Desdemona,

then laid his leg

Over my thigh ——— and sigh'd, and kiss'd,

(Othello, III, iii, 480-483)

(2b)

Somnambulism is a real psychological phenomenon. It is "Sleep-walking in a stage of partial consciousness, followed by amnesia and often by other complex activities". (IX). James C. Coleman, in his Abnormal Psychology and Modern Life, describes the symptoms of children's somnambulism. We may quote here what he says, because children's somnambulism is not different from adult somnambulism. We will then find that Shakespeare's description of somnambulism is very true to fact. Coleman wrote : "The child usually goes to sleep in a normal manner, but arises during the second or third hour thereafter and carries out some act. This walk may take him to another room of the house or even outside, and may involve rather complex activities During the sleep-walking, the child's eyes are partially or fully open, he avoids obstacles, hears when spoken to, and ordinarily responds to commands, such as to return to bed". (X). Iago's description of Cassio's behaviour during sleep is also a variant of sleep-walking syndrome.

(3a)

In the fourth Sc. of the first Act of Romeo and Juliet, Romeo meets among others Mercutio to whom Romeo says that

he had had a dream the previous night. Mercutio explains to him how Queen Mab comes to produce dreams :

She is the fairies' midwife, and she comes
In shapes no bigger than an agate stone
On the fore-finger of an alderman,
Drawn with a team of little atomies
Athwart men's noses as they lie asleep;
Her waggon-spokes made of long spinner's legs;
The cover, of the wings of grasshoppers;
Her traces, of the smallest spider's web;
Her collars of moonshine's wat'ry beams;
Her whip, of cricket's bones; the lash, of film;
Her waggoner, a small grey-coated gnat,
Not half so big as a round little worm
Prick'd from the lazy finger of a maid
Her chariot is an empty hazel-nut,
Made by the joiner squirrel or old grub,
Time out of mind the fairies' coachmakers.
And in this state she gallops night by night.

(Romeo and Juliet, I,iv, 54-70)

That dreams are wish-fulfillments Shakespeare knows well. The above-quoted speech of Mercutio runs further thus:
Through lovers' brains, and they they dream of love;
O'er courtiers' knees, that dream on curtsies
straight;

O'er lawyers' fingers, who straight dream of fees;

O'er ladies' lips, who straight on kisses dream,

(Romeo and Juliet, I, iv, 71-74)

(3b)

Shakespeare fancies that sleep is induced by Queen Mab, the "fairies' midwife". This is nothing less than sheer mythology. According to psychologist Hess, There is a sleep-centre in the cerebral hemisphere which is responsible for sleep. But I.P. Pavlov questioned the validity of this theory. He wrote in 1935 : "It is clear that our daytime activity is the sum total of the excitation which cause a certain amount of exhaustion; when this exhaustion reaches a peak, it evokes automatically, in internal humoral way, a state of inhibition accompanied by sleep". (XI). However, whatsoever might be the explanation of sleep-induction, it is certain that Shakespeare's contention that Queen Mab induces sleep is entirely mythical and poetic. J.I.M Stewart, in his Character and Motive, wrote about "the Queen Mab speech" thus : "For the Queen Mab speech and advice to Laertes take us thus far at least : Shakespeare was in isolated places prepared to sacrifice the self-consistency of his character to the advantage of putting over matter attractive or impressive in itself". (XII). We may add : because Shakespeare is here more of a poet than of anything else.

The province of dream-interpretation is still a hot-bed of diverse contentions. Freud, in his famous book The Interpretation of Dreams (Die Traumdeutung), said that dreams are but wishfulfilments, but then these wishes are unconscious. Freud agrees with Shakespeare only in that dreams are wishfulfilments. "According to Aristotle's accurate but bald definition, a dream is thinking that persists (in so far as we are asleep) in that state of sleep". (XIII). Again, Aristotle knew "that dreams give a magnified construction to small stimuli arising during sleep". (XII). Shakespeare's contention about dreams, therefore, cannot be ignored altogether.

(4a)

There are dreams, Shakespeare knows, that cannot be recalled. In the third Sc. of the fifth Act of Julius Caesar, while Brutus is conversing with the ghost of Caesar, Lucius and Verrus, in deep sleep, cry out loudly. This must have been the effect of some experiences of dreams. Brutus asks the two to tell the cause of their crying aloud in deep sleep :

Brutus. Didst thou dream, Lucius, that thou so
criedst out?

Lucius. My lord, I do not know that I did cry.

Brutus. Yes, that thou didst. Didst thou see
anything?

Lucius. Nothing, my lord.

Brutus. (To Verres) Why did you so cry out, sire, in
your sleep?

Verres. Did we, my lord?

(Julius Caesar, IV, 111, 293-302)

Dreams, sometimes, may be so lively and naturalistic that these can hardly be differentiated from the experiences of the waking life. In The Winter's Tale, Antigonus, the lord of Sicilia tells the ship-wrecked child (Perdita):

Come, poor babe.

I have heard, but not believ'd, the spirits
o' th' dead

May walk again. If such thing be,

thy mother

Appeared to me last night: for ne'er was dream
So like waking.

(The Winter's Tale, III, 111, 18-19)

And, yet, Antigonus did not believe in the veracity of dreams:

Dreams are toys;

(The Winter's Tale, III, 111, 39)

We find this scepticism about the veracity or verisimilitude of dreams again in Romeo and Juliet. Romeo, the Montague, has fallen in love with Juliet. In the fourth Sc. of the first Act of the play, we find him with Mercutio,

Benvolio and others in the street. Romeo tells Mercutio :

Romeo. I dreamt a dream to-night.

Mercutio. And so did I.

Romeo. Well what was yours?

Mercutio. That dreams often lie.

(Romeo and Juliet, I, iv, 80-83)

Mercutio means to say that dreams tell nothing. But, elsewhere, we find that dreams has meanings. In Hamlet, we find a remark by Hamlet to this effect. In the second Sc. of the second Act, we see Hamlet with his "antic disposition" to effect a change in the rotten state of Denmark. Hamlet is dreaming of this change :

Hamlet. O God, I could be bound in a nutshell and count myself a king of infinite space, were it not that I have had dreams.

Guildenstern. Which dreams indeed are ambitious; for the very substance of the ambition is merely the shadow of a dream.

Hamlet. A dream itself is but a shadow.

(Hamlet, II, ii, 253-259)

(4b)

Lucius and Verro had had dreams, but when awoken, they cannot remember their dreams. This is quite natural. Freud, in his The Interpretation of Dreams, had given different causes of forgetting the contents of a dream.

Firstly, he says, dreams occur in a quite different frame of reference than that of the waking state. Secondly, though a dream may contain a plethora of contents which may require a considerably long time to be experienced, in the waking state, in the dream these are presented in a kaleidoscopic run for a very short time, ranging from a few seconds to not exceeding two minutes. Thirdly, dream impressions are made on the subliminal consciousness.

That dreams sometimes are very realistic is beyond doubt. But whether dreams are factual or not is debatable. However, if there be any truth in a dream, it is rather the truth regarding one's inner reality only: "Your dreams reflect your inner reality, hidden attitudes, fears and wishes — you are the best person to interpret them in the light of your life as it actually is". (XV). The psychoanalysts, the "individual psychoanalysts" and the "depth psychologists" agree on this point.

Hamlet says that "A dream itself is but a shadow". But, without any substance, there cannot be a shadow. A.W. Verity, in his, Hamlet, interpretes "the dream" thus: "... what the ambitious man succeeds in doing or acquiring is but a shadow of what he would like to do". (XVI). When Hamlet says "A dream itself is but a shadow", he must have meant that a dream is the shadow of something, say ambition. So, dreams are not all lies. Yet, we must say that modern

psychological knowledge is too inadequate to say anything about this for certain.

(8a)

Shakespeare says that dreams may sometimes forebode. In The Merchant of Venice, Shylock tells Jessica that he is afraid "some ill a-brewing" because he dreamt the previous night of his money-bags. In the sixth Sc. of the second Act, Lorenzo and Jessica fall headlong in love with each other. In the fifth Sc. of the same Act, Shylock is afraid of some elopement of Jessica, because he repeatedly persuaded her to keep inside : "But stop my house's eare ----- I mean my casements". And in the very next Sc. we see Jessica being eloped by Lorenzo : "But come at once, / For the close night doth play the runaway". Shylock had the foreboding of this elopement in his dream :

There is some ill a-brewing towards my rest,
For I did dream of money-bags to-night.

(The Merchant of Venice, II, v, 17-18)

The foreboding of a dream is much clear in The Winter's Tale. Leontes accuses Hermione of having a bastard by Polixenes, for nothing. In the second Sc. of the third Act, he says that he has dreamt of it :

Leontes. Your actions are my dreams.
You had a bastard by Polixenes,
And I but dream'd it.

(The Winter's Tale, III, ii, 80-82)

We find the vaticinating power of a dream again in King Henry VI. The protector Gloucester is angry at the cession of Anjou and Maine as the price of Margaret's marriage to Henry, and incurs the enmity of Margaret, Suffolk, York and others. They secure the banishment of the Duchess of Gloucester and plot a murder of Gloucester. In the second Sc. of the first Act, Gloucester has a foreboding of what is going to happen, in a dream :

Gloucester.
My troublous dreams this night doth
make me sad.

Duchess. What dream'd my lord? Tell me, and I'll
requite it
With sweet rehearsal of my morning's dreams.

Gloucester. Methought this staff, mine office-hedge in
court,
Was broke in twain; by whom I have forgot,
But, as I think, it was by th' Cardinal;
And on the pieces of the broken wand
Were plac'd the heads of Edmund Duke of
Somerset
And William de la Pole, first Duke of Suffolk
This was my dream; and what it doth bode
God knows.

Duchess.

That, this was nothing but an argument
That he that breaks a stick of Gloucester's
grove

Shall lose his head for his presumption.

(King Henry VI, I, ii, 22-34)

Prognosticative dream is also to be found in Julius Caesar. Cassius forms a conspiracy against Caesar, partly because he is jealous, partly because he fears the dictatorship of Caesar. Calphurnia, with her "sixth sense" foresees that Caesar's sky is gradually becoming overcast with clouds. Caesar says :

Thrice hath Calphurnia in her sleep cried out

'Help, Ho ! They murder Caesar ! '

(Julius Caesar, II, ii, 2-4)

Calphurnia interpretes her dream to be a foreboding for Caesar and so she forbids him to go out : "You shalt not stir out of your house to-day. "Angurers, too, will not like Caesar "stir forth to-day". But Caesar is not to be restrained. Enters Decius Brutus and Caesar communicates Calphurnia's dream to him, on which Decius comments : "This dream is all miss interpreted", and himself interpretes the dream in an altogether different vein. Caesar narrates Calphurnia's dream thus :

She dreamt to-night she saw my statue,
Which like a fountain with an hundred spouts,
Did run pure blood; and many lusty Romans
Come smiling and did bathe their heads in it.
Decius interpretes this dream of Calphurnia thus:

This dream is all amiss interpreted;

It was a vision fair and fortunate.

Your statue spouting blood in many pipes,

In which so many smiling Romans bath'd,

Signifies that from you great Roman shall seek

Reviving blood, and that great men shall press

Tinctures, stains, relics, and cognizance.

This by Calphurnia's dream is signified.

(Julius Caesar, II, ii, 93-90)

Othello eloped with Desdemona, of which Brabantio
is told. In the first sc. of the first Act of Othello,
Brabantio cries aloud :

Give me a taper; call up all my people.

This accident is not unlike my dream.

(Othello, I, i, 142-143)

Brabantio also has had a dream with a foreboding which will
come to be true.

(5b)

For long people have been treating dreams as pro-
phetic. In Greece, prophecy played a great role in the life

of the individual as well as in the society. We may find a parallel to Calphurnia's dream in John Webster's The Duchess of Malfi (III, v, 11-17) :

Duchess. I had a very strange dream to-night.

Antonio. What was't ?

Duchess. Methought I wore my coronet of state,
And on a sudden all the diamonds
Were chang'd to pearls.

Antonio. My interpretation
Is, you'll weep shortly ; for to me the
pearls

Do Signify your tears.

Regarding the fore-seeing power of dreams, Alfred Adler in his The science of Living wrote : "The justification for this method (of prophecy) is that our dream life is just as much a part of the whole, as our waking life — no more no less". (XVII). Adler continued : "Another way of saying the same thing is that there is the same interconnectedness revealed in dreams as in our waking life. If a person is keen and intelligent he can foresee the future whether he analyses his waking life or his dream life. What he does is to diagnose. For example if somebody dreams that an acquaintance has died and the person does die, this might be no more than that a physician or a close relative could

foresee. What the dreamer does is to think in his sleep rather than in waking life. "The prophetic view of dreams, precisely because it contains a certain half-truth, is a superstition. It is generally clung to by persons who believe in other superstitions. Or else it is championed by men who seek importance by giving the impression that they are prophets". (XVIII). On the other hand, "The most recent experimental work by Drs. Montague Ullman and Stanley Krippner at the Maimonides Hospital in New York claims to have found proof of telepathic and 'precognitive' dreams". (XIX).

But Soviet psychologists do not believe in the prophetic nature of dreams. K. Platonov, a noted Soviet psychologist, in his Psychology As You May Like It, wrote : "There has been a case of a person who dreamt that he was painfully bitten in the leg by a dog. He told his friends and relatives about it. After a while the site of the 'Bite' began to hurt and a malignant tumor developed. This fact was confirmed scientifically. "Such cases produce so strong an impression that the fairy-tales, legends and superstitions of every people in the world contain prophetic dreams, i.e., dreams that foretell the future. "These dreams are quite easy to explain. An incipient disease often fails to be noticed in the day time because the cerebral cortex is exposed to a large number of stimuli of different strength. But at night, when there are no external stimuli or their

number is at least considerably reduced, these pain sensation reach consciousness and assume the form of situational dreams". (XX). According to Platonov, therefore, prophetic dreams are thinking of the waking state carried through sleep at night. To support his views platonov quotes another authority. M.I. Astvatsaturov, the Soviet neuropathologist, wrote : " 'If disturbing dreams containing an element of fear of death are combined with a sudden awakening, it may arouse suspicion of a heart disease at a time when there are no subjective indications of such disease' " (XXI). Prophetic dreams, therefore, may be prophetic in the sense that it may indicate certain insight into some troubles, etc. of the waking life, in the above-mentioned sense, but never in the sense of Shylock, or of the Duchess (King Henry VI), or of Decius (Julius Caesar) or of Leontes (The Winter's Tale), who believe that dreams may tell of some events that may take place in the near future.

That dream is caused by no supernatural power and so it cannot be called a prophetic phenomenon was clear to Dostoevsky. In his Crime and Punishment, he wrote : "Dreams appear much more prominent and clear when the dreamer is in an unhealthy state ——— they have an extraordinary semblance of reality". Dostoevsky explained dreams in physiological terms and knew that dreams may be very realistic. Dement, who long investigated dreams very carefully

with up-to-date techniques, also did not believe in the vaticinating power of dreams. Robert Wilkinson, in his essay 'Sleep and Dream' wrote that Dement "concluded that dreams may indeed have some useful functions, possibly one of resolving the conflicts and frustrations which have built up during the day". (XXII). Dement believed that dreams are thinking in images pertaining to probable or surrogate solutions of the problems of waking life. He did not believe in the 'prospective' interpretation of dreams.

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