

Problems of Dreams in *Theravāda* Buddhist Psychology

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ථෙරවාද බෞද්ධ සම්ප්‍රදාය සිය අන්‍යන්‍යතාවය තහවුරු කරගැනීමේදී මුහුණ පෑ විවිධ ගැටලු අභියෝග අතර සිහින දකින අවස්ථාවෙහි පුද්ගලයාගේ මනසෙහි ස්වභාවය පිළිබඳ ගැටලුව සුවිශේෂී වේ. මෙම ගැටලුවට මුලින් ම මුහුණ දී ඇත්තේ නාගසේන හිමියන් ය. මිලිඳු රජු නාගසේන හිමියන්ගෙන් සිහිනය සම්බන්ධ පැනය නගයි. උන්වහන්සේ එයට පිළිතුරු ලෙස භවබලවිත්තය හඳුන්වාදෙයි. එහෙත් සිහිනය හා භවබලවිත්තය අතර සම්බන්ධය පිළිබඳ ගැඹුරු විග්‍රහයකට උන්වහන්සේ නොගිය බව පැහැදිලිව පෙනේ. එබැවින් පසුකාලීනව බුද්ධසෝඡ හිමියන්ට ද මෙම ගැටලුවට ම මුහුණ දීමට සිදු වූ බව විභවබලවිත්තය තුළ දැක්වෙන සිහිනය පිළිබඳ උන්වහන්සේගේ විග්‍රහයෙන් හඳුනාගත හැකිය. එහිලා ඉතා හොඳින් ප්‍රකට වන කරුණක් වන්නේ බුද්ධසෝඡ හිමියන් විසින් නාගසේන හිමියන් ඉදිරිපත් කළ භවබලවිත්තය පිළිබඳ සංකල්පය තවදුරටත් සංවර්ධනය කොට ඇති බවයි. බුද්ධසෝඡ හිමියන් විභවබලවිත්තය තුළ දැක්වෙන භවබලවිත්තයේ

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ස්වභවය පිළිබඳ විග්‍රහයෙන් එකී කාරණාව හොඳින් තහවුරු වේ. නිදසුන් ලෙස “තඤ්ච රූපනිමිත්තාදිආරම්මණං රාගාදිසම්පයුත්තං වා න හොති.” යන ප්‍රකාශය තුළින් පූර්ණ නිද්‍රාගත මනසෙහි ස්වභාවය ලෙස රූප නිමිති වැනි අරමුණු හෝ රාගාදි ස්වභාවයක් හෝ නොමැති බව පෙන්වා දී ඇත. මෙම ප්‍රකාශය අනුව භවඛගචිත්තය වූ කලී මනසෙහි හුදු අවිඤ්ඤාණික තත්ත්වයක් නොවන බව පෙනේ. එනිසා බටහිර මනෝවිද්‍යාවේ දැක්වෙන අවිඤ්ඤාණය හා භවඛගචිත්තය අතර පරතරය දැක්වියහැකි තවත් සුවිශේෂී නිදසුනක් ලෙස ද මෙය දැක්විය හැකිය. එයින් පැහැදිලිවන තවත් වැදගත් කරුණක් වන්නේ පුද්ගල මනසෙහි සුවිශේෂී ක්‍රියාකාරිත්වයන් පැහැදිලි කිරීමේදී ථෙරවාද බෞද්ධ සම්ප්‍රදාය භවඛගචිත්තය පුළුල් සංවර්ධනයට ලක්කොට ඇති බවයි. මෙම ශාස්ත්‍රීය පත්‍රිකාව තුළින් සිහිනය පිළිබඳ ථෙරවාද විග්‍රහය විභවිගට්ඨකථාව ඇසුරින් සාකච්ඡා කෙරේ.

ප්‍රමුඛපද: සිහින පිළිබඳ ගැටලුව, සහින පිළිබඳ ථෙරවාද
අර්ථකථනය, භවංග සිත, සිතෙහි ක්‍රියාකාරිත්වය

Introduction

In a sense, it seems that in cause of time psychology of dreams in *Theravāda* Ābhidhammic Psychology has minutely and profoundly been enlarged by the *Theravāda* Buddhist philosophers perhaps as a response to inescapable arguments of dreams existed amidst rival and none Buddhist schools of India. It is apparent that if one who studies philosophical currents of Indian thought, this fact will evidently be conceded. Hence, at the outset, it should be noted, of this brief reflection, the concept of dreams is expected to examine following the *Theravāda* Ābhidhammic perspective with reference to the *Sammohavinodanī* or *Vibhaṅgaṭṭhakathā* (commentary on *Vibhaṅgappakarāṇa*)

in order to construe the problem of dreams in the *Theravāda* Buddhist Psychology in brief. It is also worthy to mention that this article is of two parts and a conclusion therein the *part I* scrutinizes the *Theravāda* Ābhidhammic notion of dreams according to the view of *Vibhaṅgaṭṭhakathā* and the *part II* endeavours to be aware of the problem of dreams from the early history of *Theravāda* Buddhist psychology and how the problem was treated and overcome by venerable *Buddhaghosha* while glossing his commentary of *Sammohavinodanī* in 5th century A.D in Ceylon.

Part I

Indeed, in explaining the process of dreaming², venerable *Budhaghosha* says in *Sammohavinodanī* that the mind-door consciousness (*Manodvāracitta*), instead of five doors consciousnesses (*Pañcadvārikacitta*), is the forerunner in the moments of falling into the sleep, waking up and dreaming.³ Whatsoever, according to the commentary, four reasons cause in dreaming viz. stirred up *Dhātus* (*Dhātukkhobhato*), an experience (*Anubhūtapubbato*), a mediating of deities (*Devatopasaṃhārato*) and an omen (*Pubbanimittato*).⁴ Indeed, venerable *Buddhaghosha* elucidates each of these four in the commentary in which stirred up *Dhātus*, which is a bodily principle or humour,

2 Vbh. P. 307.

3 Vbh.A. p. 405.

“Na supati na paṭibujjhati na supinaṃ passatīti sabbenāpi ca pañcadvārikacittena neva niddaṃ okkamati, na niddāyati, na paṭibujjhati, na kiñca supinaṃ passatīti imesu tīsu ṭhānesu saha javanena vīthiccitaṃ paṭikkhittaṃ.”

4 Vbh.A. p. 406.

“Tañcapanetaṃsupinaṃpassanto catūhi kāraṇehi passati – dhātukkhobhato vā anubhūtapubbato vā devatopasaṃhārato vā pubbanimittato vāti.”

there are three, phlegm, wind and bile, are amplified adopting instances such as dreaming alike falling from a rock, chased by wild animals etc.⁵ Further, in the commentary, the second method of dreaming explains as a result of remembering a past experience.⁶ In the third method, the involving of deities intends that deities can, sometimes, mediate individuals for gaining improvements as well as for getting individuals victimized.⁷ The fourth, owing to the omen, is imparted adducing three instances in the commentary viz. (1) the dream of a white elephant was dreamt by queen *Mahāmāyā* (2) five dreams were dreamt by the *Bodhisatva* and (3) the sixteen dreams were seen by King *Kosala*.⁸

5 *Vbh.A.* p. 406.

“*Tattha pittādīnaṃ khobhakarapaṇapaccayayogena khubhitadhātuko ‘dhātukkhobhato’ supinaṃ passati. Passanto ca nānāvidhaṃ supinaṃ passati pabbatā patanto viya, ākāseṇa gacchanto viya, vālamigahatthacorādīhi anubaddho viya ca hoti.*”

6 *Vbh.A.* p. 406.

“*Anubhūtapubbato’ passanto pubbe anubhūtapubbaṃ ārammaṇaṃ passati.*”

7 *Vbh.A.* p. 406.

“*Devatopasaṃhārato’ passantassa devatā atthakāmatāya vā anathakāmatāya vā atthāya vā anathāya vā nānāvidhāni ārammaṇāni upasaṃharanti. So tāsāṃ devatānaṃ ānubhāvena tāni ārammaṇāni passati.*”

8 *Vbh.A.* p. 406.

“*Pubbanimittato passanto puññāpuññavasena uppajjitukāmassa atthassa vā anathassa vā pubbanimittabhūtaṃ supinaṃ passati bodhisattamātā viya puttapaṭilābhanimittaṃ, bodhisatto viya pañca mahāsupine kosalarājā viya ca soḷasa supineti*”

As recorded in the commentary, it is also noteworthy fact to concern here that occurring of dreams, as a result of stirred up *Dhātus* and the experiences, will never become true.⁹ Nevertheless, sometimes, varied dreams can be occurred because of mediating deities and such sorts of dreams may be effective or ineffective. It also records in the commentary that if deities' lives are disturbed, they may use the dream as a weapon to respond for those individuals. The following story is exemplified in the commentary for it. "One elder monk who lived in *Rohaṇa-dasha*, today it is known as southern province of Sri Lanka, got one tree, which tree is known as *Nāga* in *Pāli* and two meanings, cobra and elephant, are probably given in Buddhist dictionaries, cut down without acknowledging of other monks in the temple. One high-powered deity who was the in-charge of that particular tree became angry with monk and decided to retaliate. Thereafter, at the mid night the deity came and predicted to the monk that the "King would be killed by a servant within seven days counting from today." The monk in return been aware of the harem about this prediction. As soon as they heard about this, they lamented and were questioned by the King. They related to the King about what they heard and the king counted seven days from there and got the monk amputated for giving false prediction."¹⁰

9 *Vbh.A.* p. 406.

"Tattha yaṃ dhātukkhobhato anubhūtapubbato ca supinaṃ passati, na taṃ saccaṃ hoti."

10 *Vbh.A.* p. 407.

"rohaṇe kira nāgamahāvihāre mahāthero bhikkhusaṅghaṃ anapaloketvāva ekaṃ nāgarukkhaṃ chindāpesi. Rukkhe adhivatthā devatā therassa kuddhā paṭhamameva naṃ palobhetvā pacchā 'ito te sattadivasamatthake upaṭṭhāko

What is important here is that dreams, which are seen as an omen, become true. Further, it should be taken into consideration that the aforementioned four types of dreams are dreamt only by ordinary men (*Sekkhaputhujjanā*).¹¹ The commentary explains the reason for that because of there are uneradicated perversions with ordinary men.¹² According to the commentary, dreams are never dreamt by an *Arhant* or noble one because of the fact that they have already eradicated all kinds of perversions.¹³ Moreover, it is also a salient point to apprehend that the nature and condition of mind on the occasions of dreaming. The commentary says, in this connection, that if one says that dreams are dreamt during the state of deep sleep, it will entirely be opposite to the psychology of mind in *Abhidhamma*.¹⁴ In fact, according to the *Abhidhammic* psychology, if someone is in sleep, he

rājā marissatī'ti supine ārocesi. Thero naṃ kathaṃ āharitvā rājorodhānaṃ ācikkhi. Tā ekappahāreneva mahāviraṃsaṃ viraviṃsu. Rājā 'kiṃ eta'nti pucchi. Tā 'evaṃ therena vutta'nti ārocayīṃsu. Rājā divase gaṇāpetvā sattāhe vītivatte kujjhītvā therassa hatthapāde chindāpesi."

11 *Vbh.A.* p. 406.

"Yaṃ pana pubbanimittato passati taṃ ekantasaccameva hoti."

12 *Vbh.A.*, p. 407.

"Tañca panetaṃ catubbidhaṃ supinaṃ sekkhaputhujjanāva passanti appahīnavipallāsattā; asekkhā na passanti pahīnavipallāsattā."

13 *Vbh.A.*, p. 407.

"asekkhā na passanti pahīnavipallāsattā."

14 *Vbh.A.*, p. 407.

"Kiṃ pana taṃ passanto sutto passati, paṭibuddho? Udāhu neva sutto passati na paṭibuddhoti? Kiñcetha yadi tāva sutto passati, abhidhammavirodho āpajjati."

will sleep in *Bhavaṅga-citta* itself in which, the nature is properly explained in the commentary, neither sign of visual etc. objects (*Rūpanimittādiārammaṇaṃ*) nor mixing up with lust etc. (*Rāgādisampayuttaṃ vā na hoti*) include in it.¹⁵

Nevertheless, if one says that the dreaming occurs in the state of non-sleep, it will apparently be against the discipline (*Vinaya*). Indeed, if one dreams, when he is in the state of non-sleep, then, he will undoubtedly dream only when he is in the state of natural condition. If it says that the dreaming is occurred in the natural condition, it will be opposite to the discipline and there will immediately occur *Āpatti* (offences) for false actions which done in the natural condition. Nevertheless, false deeds, done in the dreams, do not have *Āpatti* or in other words there will be *Anāpatti* (free from guilts or offences). We cannot, therefore, say that dreams are seen in the natural condition.¹⁶ Owing to these facts, it cannot also be said that there are no dreams.¹⁷ The commentary says, in this connection, that dreaming occurs in the state of monkey sleep.¹⁸ In fact, the nature of monkey

15 *Vbh.A*, p. 407.

“*Bhavaṅgacittena hi supati. Tañca rūpanimittādiārammaṇaṃ rāgādisampayuttaṃ vā na hoti.*”

16 *Vbh.A*, p. 407.

“*Atha paṭibuddho passati, vinayavirodho āpajjati. Yañhi paṭibuddho passati, taṃ sabbohārikacittena passati. Sabbohārikacittena ca kate vītikkame anāpatti nāma natthi.*”

17 *Vbh.A*, p. 407.

“*Supinaṃ passantena pana kate vītikkame ekantaṃ anāpatti eva. Atha neva sutto na paṭibuddho passati, na supinaṃ nāma passati. Evañhi sati supinassa abhāvova āpajjati? Na abhāvo.*”

18 *Vbh.A*, p. 408.

sleep (*Kapimiddha*) explains as escaping from *Bhavaṅga* from time to time therein, the natural process of mind is constantly being hindered by external objects. In other words, it means, that one's cognitive process (*Cittavīthi*) becomes vital function in consequence of breaking natural state of mind (*Bhavaṅga*).¹⁹

It is also noteworthy to examine that vital function of consciousness, when one is in sleep, creates a number of questions. Because of the fact that deeds, which are done in dreams, occur owing to escaping from *Bhavaṅga*, then, there are a few of questions such as how does it produce consequences such as merit (*Puññaṃ*) and evil (*Pāpaṃ*), wholesome (*Kusalo*) and unwholesome (*Akusalo*) as well as can it get retribution? With respect to these ambiguous questions, what is recorded in the commentary itself that the dreams exist as wholesome (*Kusalo*), unwholesome (*Akusalo*) and undefined (*Abyākatopi*).²⁰ If someone does worshipping Pagoda, listening to discourses etc. in the dream, it will exactly be wholesome deeds (*Kusalo*).²¹ Deeds, such as killing, stealing, sexual misconducting etc. occurring in the dream, are known as unwholesome deeds

*“kapimiddhapareto kho, mahārāja, supinaṃ passatī”ti
‘Kapimiddhapareto’ti makkaṭaniddāya yutto”*

19 *Vbh.A.* p. 408.

*“Yathā hi makkaṭassa niddā lahuparivattā hoti, evaṃ yā
niddā punappunaṃ kusalādicittavokiṇṇattā lahuparivattā;
yassā pavattiyaṃ punappunaṃ bhavaṅgato uttaraṇaṃ hoti,
tāya yutto supinaṃ passati.”*

20 *Vbh.A.* p. 408.

“supino kusalopi hoti akusalopi abyākatopi.”

21 *Vbh.A.* p. 408. *“Tattha supinante cetiyavandanadhammassav
anadhammadesanādīni karontassa kusalo”*

(*Akusala*).²² Both of these deeds occur during the vital function of cognitive process. The dream, which is free from the *Āvajjana* (advertence) and *Tadāraṃmaṇa* (registering), becomes undefined (*Abyākatopi*).²³ In other words, all deeds, which are not included in the above two sorts of *Kusala* and *Akusala*, are put into the category of *Abyākata* (actions with free of consequences). Its nature is indicated as dreams which remember as an uncompleted dream after waking up.²⁴ It is equally important to examine whether these *Kusala* or *Akusala* can produce retributions? It explains in the commentary that deeds, done in dreams, will not be able to bring about a new birth as their results are very weak. Nevertheless, when another Kamma is retributing, those Kamma will be yielded as a suffering (*Vedanā*).

Part II

When it scrutinizes the above exaggerated facts explained in the commentary in relation to dreaming and dreamless sleep or deep sleep, it seems that venerable *Buddhaghosa* had been to explain process of dreaming at large perhaps in order to respond for the problem of dreams. In fact, when considering the *Vedānta* and *Upaniṣad* teachings in which they have identified three states of consciousness such as waking (*Jāgrat*), dreaming (*Svapna*),

22 *Vbh.A.* p. 408.

“*pāṇātipātādīni karontassa akusalo*”

23 *Vbh.A.* p. 408.

“*dvīhi antehi mutto āvajjanatadārammaṇakkhaṇe abyākatoti veditabbo.*”

24 *Vbh.A.* p. 408.

“*Supineneva ‘diṭṭhaṃ viya me, sutam viya me’ ti kathanakālepi abyākatoyeva.*”

and deep sleep (*Suṣupti*) in relation to the individuals.²⁵ However, this teaching is evidently imparted in connection with the monotheism of Brahman which was bodily rejected by Buddhism. On the other hand, within several centuries after demise of the Buddha, fundamental Buddhism was elaborated from diverse perspectives in order to explain the path of immortality (*Nibbāna*). As a result of this sophisticated situation, the scholastic Buddhism was begun introducing Buddhist Philosophy therein, the psychology of mind and problems related mind were widely focused. In order that the problem of dreams can evidently be distinguished as one of predominant issues arisen in connection with the nature and function of individuals' mind. In responding to this question, it precisely seems that *Theravāda* tradition has innovated their preexisted idea of *Bhavaṅga-citta*²⁶ so as to resolve the problem accurately. It is, therefore, very important to pay our pivotal attention at this matter in brief with a view to getting the above made speculation attested.

In fact, this problem was, at first, faced by venerable *Nāgasena* in *Milindapañha* the place where king *Milinda* raises the question of psychology of dreams.²⁷ In answering to the question, venerable says that at the time of deep

25 Sharma, Aravind, *Sleep as a State of Consciousness in Advaita Vedānta*, p. vii. "One of the well-known doctrines associated with *Advaita Vedānta* is that of *avasthātraya*, or of the three states of consciousness: waking (*jāgrat*), dreaming (*svapna*), and deep sleep (*suṣupti*)."

26 *Encyclopedia of Buddhism Part III*, p. 17.

27 *Encyclopedia of Buddhism Part III*, p. 18.

"This is the first attempt on the part of *Theravāda* Buddhism to face a problem that had been left unsolved in early psychology, rich as it was in other respects."

sleep his mind has gone into the state of *Bhavaṅga*.²⁸ Further, in taking full discussion of dream, which includes in the *Milindapañhā*, into consideration, it is apparent that venerable *Nāgasena* has not given a detailed account of nature of mind when one's mind is in states of dreaming and dreamless sleep. Now, indeed, the reason is properly implied itself that why venerable *Buddhaghosha* had to provide such kind of profound explanation with respect to the psychology of dreams while composing the *Theravāda* Abhidhamma commentaries. In fact, in the light of the above noted philosophical background, it seems that venerable *Buddhaghosha* could not be able to skip the problem without giving adequate exposition to the subject from the *Theravāda* perspective. Therefore, it can be surmised that in answering to the issue, venerable *Buddhaghosha* has properly innovated the idea of *Bhavaṅga*, which was previously introduced by venerable *Nāgasena*, in order to amplify the nature of mind in the states of dreaming and dreamless sleep. Indeed, the idea of *Bhavaṅga-citta* has been innovated in the commentary as thus; “*Tañca rūpanimittādi-ārammaṇaṃ rāgādisampayuttaṃ vā na hoti.*” According to the dictum, the nature of *Bhavaṅga* mind, in the state of deep sleep or dreamless sleep, is explained as devoid of signs of visual etc. objects as well as devoid of mixing up lust etc. According to the interpretation, the *Bhavaṅga* mind intends far beyond than the sense perceptual process. Indeed, it may also be a significant point to distinguish the length between

28 *The Question of king Milinda Part II, p. 159.*

“When a man is in deep sleep, O king, his mind has returned home (has entered again into the bhavaṅga) and a mind thus shut in does not act, and a mind hindered in its action knows not the evil and the good, and he who knows not has no dreams. It is when the mind is active that dreams are dreamt.”

Bhavaṅga-citta and western concept of “Unconsciousness” which introduced by *Sigmund Freud*.

In fact, it seems that this notion of *Bhavaṅga* has been exploited to solve the problem of dreams by following the Early Buddhist teaching of radiant mind (*pabhassara cittaṃ*) by *Theravādins*. According to the commentarial exegesis of this canonical dictum of the Buddha, “*pabhassara*” is interpreted as “*paṇḍaram parisuddham.*” which can simply be translated as ‘the purest state’ and “*cittaṃ*” is apparently interpreted as “*Bhavaṅga-citta*” and which has been given a number of meanings such as life-continuum, factor of existence, unconsciousness, sub-consciousness etc. Whatsoever, in considering this interpretation of *Bhavaṅga* mind, it is precise that venerable *Buddhaghosha* has successfully overcome the problem of psychology of dreams existed among contemporary philosophical currents of India innovating venerable *Nāgasena’s* answer of *Bhavaṅga-citta* by linking with Early Buddhism.²⁹ Therefore, in the *Theravāda* Abhidhamma, the scope of *Bhavaṅga-citta* is not confined to a single mental activity of mind inasmuch it covers a large area of psychological process of mind. In fact, the *Bhavaṅga-citta* can, therefore, be identified as the kernel of *Theravāda* Buddhist philosophy and *Theravādins* have employed it in order to face all sorts of problems arisen in conjunction with the mind.³⁰

29 An.A. p. 159.

“pabhassaranti paṇḍaram parisuddham. Cittanti bhavaṅgacittam. Kiṃ pana cittassa vaṇṇo nāma atthīti? Natthi. Nīlādīnāñhi aññataravaṇṇam vā hotu avaṇṇam vā yaṃkiñci parisuddhatāya “pabhassara”nti vuccati. Idampi nirupakkilesatāya parisuddhanti pabhassaram. Tañca khoti taṃbhavaṅgacittam. Āgantukehīti asahajātehi pacchā javanakkhaṇe uppajjanakehi. Upakkilesehīti rāgādīhi upakkiliṭṭhattā upakkiliṭṭham nāmāti vuccati.”

30 Wijayawimala, S. Some Aspects of Buddhist Philosophy, pp. 58-59.

Indeed, the dreaming is considered as an active state of mind. Hence, it is said that if mind is active equally mind-action (*Mano-kamma*) will also be activated spontaneously. Indeed, the main intention of this profound explanation is to refrain individuals from evil actions which do even in the state of dreaming for the benefit of individuals themselves. In a sense, this exposition can undoubtedly be taken into consideration as an elaboration of early Buddhist teaching therein, before sleeping, the Buddha has, therefore, advised to cultivate the loving kindness towards all beings in the world in order to obtain an enjoyable or pleasurable sleep. It further indicates that it brings about not only to get a good sleep and wake up (*sukhaṃ supati sukhaṃ patibujjhati*) but also to prevent individuals from evil dreams during his sleep (*na pāpakaṃ supinaṃ passati*).³¹

Conclusion

When it concludes the former, it is apparent that a profound exposition can explicitly be identified with respect to the psychology of dreams in the *Theravāda* Abhidhammic psychology. In fact, their notion has systematically been advanced so as to react for the issue of dreams which emerged in the philosophical current of contemporary India. Further, the above discussion can extensively be assisted to conceive the nature of those philosophical arguments too.

“It is very interesting to mention that as the object is begun and finalized by mediating the *bhavaṅga citta*, it has been more advanced by the philosophers of the *theravāda* tradition so as to resolve all most all problems arisen in relation to the mind in the *theravāda* Abhidhamma such as to explain the nature of mind at times of dreaming and dreamless sleep or deep sleep, deep trance, survival of individuality in a innumerable existence, memory, Kamma and rebirth, to indicate the purest state of mind etc.”

31 An. V. p. 342

At last, the question of dreams in the *Theravāda* Buddhist Psychology can elaborately be distinguished by one who studies the philosophical currents and background of India with reference to the *Vedic* and sectarian Buddhist thoughts.

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