A DREAM NEAR TO DEATH: A narrative case study based on retrospective

Naorem Binita Devi. Assistant professor, Department of Psychology, Mizoram University, Aizawl
binitaji@yahoo.co.in

Abstract

Throughout the history, the dreamer reported that dream say something about their future lives; some of which are very near to death. Dreams near to death are different from the dreams of normal dream, groaning as well as smiling after the dreamer woke up from the dream. The sound of the dream near to death is called “naheba”(in Manipur) and it produces the sound like “ heaa….heaa….”. While producing such sound from the dreamer, he or she has to be woken up by touching his or her body. For groaning, people can call the name of the groaning person; in naheba also you can call the name; here she or he may or may not hear the sound but unable to wake up from the stressful dream which she or he is struggling at that moment. At this moment the best thing to break the stressful situation dream is to wake him or her by touching until and unless the dreamer open his/her eyes and just ask what happened in the dream. This paper based on such finding from the investigator’s mother. This article explores how the dreamer dreamt at that moment to produce the sound of “naheba” and the dreamer tries to recall the name of “God” but most of dreamer are unable to trace the God’s name.

Keywords: Dream, naheba, groaning, death,heaa…heaa..

Freud’s The Interpretation of dreams, published in 1900, named the dream the via reggia, the royal road to the unconscious. Although much has been learned since then, and approaches have been tried, the dream continues to be at the very core of the psychoanalytic process.

Freud contended that every dream owes its content to both past and present-to early drives stemming from childhood as well as drives seeking satisfaction in the present; that dream is formed when a current event makes contact with an experience from the past; and that the content of the dream belongs to qualitatively different states of consciousness as well as to different periods of life. Freud saw the manifest dream as a cryptic message that requires deciphering, and he differentiated it from the latent dream, the ideas and feelings underlying the manifest content. He posited that understanding the latent content reveals the wish fulfillment present in every dream. The process by which the latent content is transformed into the manifest was called dream work and included the major mechanisms of condensation (the compression of a number of ideas into a single image), displacement(one person or part of a person standing for another), and symbolization(an individual selection of an object or creature to represent a set of ideas). The dream work, the disguising of the latent dream thoughts, is the function of ego. In dreams, pictorial metaphors express ideas. Spatial relationships are substituted for conceptual or temporal relationships.

Unlike Freud, who focused on latent content of the dream, Jung emphasized the manifest content as a source of true understanding. He said that he could not agree with Freud that the dream was a façade “behind which its meaning lies hidden—a meaning already known but, maliciously, so to speak, withheld from consciousness. To me dreams are a part of nature, which harbors no intention to deceive, but expresses something as best it can, just as a plant grows or an animal seeks its food as best it can.” (Jung 1961, p. 161) Alfred Adler (1917), consistent with his approach to personality structure as a response to basic inferiority feelings, looked to the dream as a reflection of the dreamer’s lifestyle, of his social and competitive strivings.

Maeder (1916), a follower of Jung’s, elaborated the challenge to the rejection of the manifest content as only disguise data. He stressed its value in communicating the current psychological functioning of the patient.
Within the Freudian framework, Erikson (1954) extended Freud’s formulations to include comprehension of the manifest dream. He warned psychoanalysts against discarding the manifest content, against mistaking “attention to surface for superficiality, and a concern with form for lack of depth.” (p. 16) He postulated that the manifest dream includes a style of representation that is “a reflection of the individual ego’s peculiar time space, the frame of reference for all its defenses, compromises and achievements.” (p.21)

Webb and Cartwright, 1978 defined that a dream is some sort of mental activity during sleep, usually reported as perceived in a visually imagistic manner.

Weisman (1972) proposes that for almost everyone, the meaning of death is that of a universal negative, repudiating and nullifying the objectives so sought. The negative aspects of death include separation, loneliness, illness, injury, failure, humiliation, and defeat.

Death may be seen as a leveler by some people (Kastenbaum, 1977b, p.41).

Death may be perceived as a relief for people who are pain, either physically or emotionally.

During a dream, “thoughts” take place in the absence of outside sensory information. These thoughts can vary from realistic and well organized to hallucinatory and grossly disorganized, and can still be classified as dreams. Dreaming has been one of the phenomena most closely associated with REM (= Rapid eye movement) activity.

Dement and Kleitman (1975) observed that subjects reported dreams 80% of the time when awakened during REM sleep. Hartman (1967) reported that dreams were occurred during NREM sleep only 20% of the time. Theorists in the interpersonal school emphasized different aspects of the dream.

Sullivan (1953) saw the dream as a parataxic distortion in the service of relief of interpersonal difficulties. He stressed that more important than finding cohesion in the dream elements is relating the dream to the current source of anxiety in the patient’s life.

Horney (1950) understood the dream’s potential for developing the parent’s awareness of his real self, and Bonime (1962) added to this the dream as confrontation with his own identity in daily life. Erich Fromm (1951) stressed the dreamer’s potential for revealing the patient’s struggle to avoid responsibility for himself, his tendency to live out false solutions, while indicating hidden potentials.

Tauber and Green (1959) saw the manifest symbolic activity as important in its own right, permitting the patient to experiment and expand his self-concept.

Caligor and May (1968) examined the development of basic personal symbols in the dreams of one patient during the course of a psychoanalysis. They demonstrated the reflection in the dream symbols of the growth in the self-concept and the ability to cope interpersonally.

Ullman (1959) focused on the adaptive significance of the dream occurring in an experimental eye of inner vigilance and partial arousal. Committed to existential philosophy, Medard Boss (1958) emphasized the value of experiencing dreams to the exclusion of either studying them or interpreting them.

Overall, the trend in clinical practice has been to move from the sole emphasis on latent content in Freud’s basic work to a major concern with the manifest content and the experience in the dream and associations to it as reflections of the patient’s personality structure and functioning. The dream, then, is not only a pathway to repressed memories and historical happenings but an immediate communication of the current situation in the patient’s functioning. With this it has become more feasible for the patient to become a more active participant in understanding and learning from his own dreams about his current as well as his past behavior. He is able to learn a style of thinking and approach his problem in daily living with insights gained through his dream life. The unconscious motivations are understood and seen in relation to the patient’s defensive structure and his current interpersonal behavior. The patient learns that through his dream he is stating something to himself about his current incapacities that he somehow half knew but can now confront.
OBJECTIVES:

Under the full responsibility of the family, the dreamer has more terrific dream that brought sound like “heaa…heaa…”

METHODOLOGY:

There are four sources of dream reports, namely,

1. The sleep laboratory;
2. The psychotherapy relationship;
3. Personal dream journals; and
4. Report written down on anonymous forms in group settings, of which the classroom is the most typical.

Here in this paper a case narrative approach is used. The investigator used personal dream journals based on the subject. The investigator found from her observation in her mother while sleeping producing some sound i.e. helplessness.

Dream journals are a third source of dream reports. The best known dream journals are those discussed by Jungian analysts, but journals kept for personal, artistic, or intellectual reasons have been studied with great profit as well.

For all their potential usefulness, dream journals are not without their drawbacks. Even after showing initial willingness, some people may not want to provide dreams for scientific scrutiny. Journals may have gaps or omissions. The journal writer may not be willing to reply to inferences about his or her personal life based on a blind analysis of the journal’s contents. Dream journals therefore are best used selectively and into the context of other dream samples.

Sample:
Dream of the subject: A case narrative

Case profile:

The subject who narrated her case was 45 year old at that time working as a business. She observed systematically (procedures using event sampling) whatever occurring in the Institution.

In this article I am trying to explore the dream of my mother who used to groaning at the time of sleep and a dream near to death. I am trying to find out the sound of groaning (dream may or may not be) and the sound of “Naheba” (dream trying to kill the dreamer) sound like “heaa…. heaa…. ” my mother is 65 years old now. She usually had the groaning whenever she touch her head to the pillow. The sound is so loud but I never afraid on such sound. But the sound of naheba brought me tremble on that day because such sound associates fear factor for the life of dreamer(my mother) near to death. Such naheba happen very rarely on some people as I think and I encountered once when my mother produced the sound of “Naheba”.

It is around 2:00 a.m. we all are sleeping. Suddenly I heard the sound of Naheba; I was trembled. Because if I did not touch the body of the dreamer during the sound it will bring a bad consequences for the dreamer and the whole family also. here I want mention about the difference between groaning and naheba. In groaning you can call the person and he/she was woke up very easily without touching the body. But in naheba you can call the dreamer; she/he will respond but it does not mean that she/he woke up totally or free from the dream. At this moment you have to touch the body of the dreamer.

In my mother case, when I heard the sound I was trembled and called the mother but I realized that I have to touch her body to break the dream at that moment. On that day I woke up and moved toward my mother’s bed side and touch the body and called “IMA”(mother). Then the first word she murmured her mouth after the dream was broken is “HARE KRISHNA”. I sat down in front of her bed side. Then the father was woke up and asked me INAOCHA(father used call me at home) “KARI
TOURE” (Manipur language means what happened?). I answered, “Ima Nahere”. (Means mother is in dream of Naheba). Then I started asking to my mother “KARI TOURAMLINO MANGDA” (what happened in your dream?). Then the mother narrated that the “roof of house (made of big wood) started falling down towards to her. I am trying to defend not to fall down it toward her. While doing such activities she produced the sound. Hare Krishna.”

After this incident I started giving advice to my mother, “Please do not sleep after you consumed a lot of rice. My mother has a little bit of blood pressure.” This is the moment I started thinking about the dream and its content, its effects to spiritual to the dreamer. Elders advised that in such dream, please try to remember the name of GOD. But whenever I encountered such dreamer they could not remember the name of GOD. Those who can remember any type of Mantra on that moment, need not to touch the body because the dreamer himself/herself can able to break the dream. I have my own experiences regarding on this matter. Such Naheba case I found in my 12th standard time while I had been staying in the Hostel.

Discussion:

Tedlock and Barbara (2004) has informed that dreams provide a valuable source of information about, and a compassionate understanding of, spiritual phenomena in Native North American Culture. The investigator has reported that dreams that begin as personal entities shift during dream telling or performing to provide a cosmic doorway into another dimension of reality.

Hollan and Douglas(2004) have discussed the concept of “selfscape” dreams, dreams that are emotionally and perceptually vivid and that reflect back to the dreamer how his or her current organization of self relates various parts of itself to itself, its body, and other people and objects in the world. They also have emphasized how the manifest contents of dreams can help reveal aspects of self-organization rather than disguise them.

Adams et al.,(2008) narrated that throughout history, people have reported dreams that have impacted upon their spiritual lives, some of which are related to death. Dreams related to death are not uncommon in childhood, and research showed that some children made meaning from them. Often this interpretation of a dream reflects a search for meaning about issues of life and death, as well as acting as a coping mechanism. This study explored how children make meaning from this type of dream by synthesizing the theory of spiritual intelligence with theoretical approaches to dreaming. Specifically, it explored the intersection between theoretical approaches to dreams related to death, children’s responses to those dreams, and a key function of spiritual intelligence to solve problems of meaning and value in life.

Montangero, Jacques (Dec 2009) had reported that Dream often facilitate becoming aware of cognitive distortions and schemas and help to proceed to cognitive restructuring. They also give to the therapists an opportunity to underline the patient’s resources. Adams, Kate and Hyde, Brendan(Mar 2008) reported that Throughout history, people have reported dreams that have impacted upon their spiritual lives, some of which are related to death. Specifically, it explores the intersection between theoretical approaches to dreams related to death, children’s responses to these dreams, and a key function of spiritual intelligence to solve problems of meaning and value in life. Szmigielska, Barbara and Holda, Malgorzata (Sep 2007) present study was an attempt to investigate the subjectively perceived role of dreams. It examined the private concepts of dreams and dreaming, attitude toward dreams, and the influence of dreams on behavior, which can manifest in sharing dreams with other people, trying to interpret one’s own dreams, believing they have special meaning, or behaving according to the clues given by the dream.

Najam, Najma et al. (Dec 2006)’s study investigated dream narratives as reflections of the emotional and psychological states of earthquake survivors. Dreams and dreams imagery have reportedly been affected by the emotional and psychological trauma that the dreamer goes through.
The result suggests that a closer study of dreams can be used to understand the underlying trauma for effective interventions.

Knudson, Roger M.(Mar 2006) reported that a case study is presented focusing on a dream of a severely anorectic woman. The dream occurred at a point when the disorder had become life threatening. The dream is discussed in terms of its significance in the dreamer's experience, its implications for the use of dreams in psychotherapy, and its relevance for the broader literature on psychopathology and dreams. Archetypal psychology's aesthetic, and phenomenological approach to dreams is presented as a framework for understanding the ongoing significance of significant dreams such as the one presented here. Punamäki, Raija-Leena et al.(Sep 2005) examined (a) how traumatic events are associated with children's dream structure and content and (b) which dream characteristics might moderate the negative impact of traumatic events on mental health. The results substantiated the hypothesis that children exposed to a high level of traumatic events would report dreams characterized by unpleasant atmosphere, fragmented flow, and low levels of bizarre narrative quality. Pleasant dreams containing complete narratives and happy endings moderated the negative impact of traumatic events on children's mental health. The authors argue that dreaming allows cognitive-emotional processing of traumatic events and may thus enhance child well-being in war conditions.

Conclusion:

In this present paper, the stressful situation to the dreamer produced the sound. In every bad dream, the dreamer started using the word of “GOD” when she or he was woken up from the dream. Sometimes I ask question myself “why?” It seems to me that “GOD” is the only way to solve any stressful situation. I felt that a good dream may not remember “GOD” very soon like the stressful dream. I did not mean that you never remember GOD. As I learnt from my parents, they use to tell me that in such stressful situation dream, do try to remember the GOD’s name or any “mantra”. Sometimes dreams are spiritual.

References:

3. DeCicco, Teresa L. (Dec 2007). What is the story telling? Examining discovery with the storytelling method (TSM) and testing with a control group. Dreaming, Vol 17(4),227-238.
5. George D. Goldman, Donald S. Milman, “The Dream in Psychoanalytic Therapy.”