



## DREAMING: A Cultural Aspect

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### I. INTRODUCTION

Human beings explain things that go beyond our understanding with religion or academic theories. Dreams is one of those concepts not completely understood by mankind. They are essential to some and ignored by others. A simplified definition of a 'dream' is a series of thoughts or images present in a person's mind while sleeping. This is the term that is quite irrelevant to the western society. But the word 'dreams' also known as aspirations is meaningful to this society where everyone who has dreams and goals is perceived as intellectual and ambitious. People from western societies will wake up from the most bizarre 'dreams' they had that night but move on to their day aspiring for their 'dreams' in life. The pun on that word is ironical as it can be inferred that because of our busy lives and never-ending zeal to accomplish our goals we cannot recall the details of things we find insignificant such as '*the dreaming experience*'. On the contrary, there are cultures like the Ongee people in the Andaman Islands who discuss their dreams and believe it has great meaningfulness. They take directions from their dreams which help them in bringing success to their occupation. Many indigenous cultures also associate dreams with religion, consider it sacred. Their dreams are actually assumed to be visions that guide them into a deeper connection with God. Dream images known as manifest content of the dream creates symbols for meaning of the whole dream. Symbolism is a huge part of dream interpretation in all societies. The symbols present in the manifest content are also culturally relative to each society. "We are buried in broken dreams", this lyric from a song I heard stuck with me as be it aspirations, visions, or nightmares we all our haunted by our dreams. They might not be always be nightmares in our sleep. But what breaks us is that lack of satisfaction when we cannot accomplish our goal or for some when they do not experience God in their dreams and feel unworthy. Either way that word 'dream' even if we do not realize consumes our daily life. The dreams we have are part of our perceptions and are important be it having nightmare that haunts you for a week in western society or naming your child after an animal you saw in a dream that happens in an indigenous society. This research is going to focus on dreaming as an individual experience and the role it has in a particular culture. I do not want to limit this study to comparison of 'dreaming experience' in western society and within indigenous cultures. Hence, I will try to do my best in analysing this activity, *dreaming* through an anthropological lens in each society individually as well. Here, I am going to explore dreaming in a qualitative manner to study its importance and meaning in different cultures. Sigmund Freud said, "The interpretation of dreams is the royal road to a knowledge of the unconscious activities of the mind." (Freud, 1900) Why we experience these unconscious activities in our sleep, called dreams is still a mystery. Researchers have come up with various theories but there still isn't one verified universally. Greek philosopher, Aristotle believed dreams were a result of physiological functions. Carl Jung said dreams represent "a spontaneous self-portrayal, in symbolic form, of the actual situation in the unconscious" (Jung C. , 1947, p. 505). But I feel James Hillman put it perfectly, "The dream is halfway between the poem and the paramecium. Like the paramecium it is a product of nature, not created by human's will. But like the poem, it is a product of art, dependent upon man's imagination" (Hillman, 1979). He does not limit dreams to being a scientific result but also reflects on it as a kind of *art*. Bringing together all these different theories and explanations of dreaming, I aim to put forth a comprehensive stance on dreams. Since dreams are experienced by everyone it must be a concept of great substance and to understand even a fragment of what it means is intriguing.

## II. METHODOLOGY

I will be relying completely on secondary data in the form of research articles and books about various theories on dreaming and its social and cultural aspects. I will also do an in-depth study of few cultures' views on dreaming through ethnographic data available. Various concepts and objects related to dreaming will be explored by analysing research papers.

### PROBLEM STATEMENT-

The aim of this research is to find out the meaning and significance of dreaming in different societies. To study about the nature of dreaming and how is it different in western society as compared to non-western societies. I aspire to achieve a wholistic view of dreaming from an anthropological perspective and learn how it is a culturally relative concept. I will also cover the limitations of various theories on dreams and its association with myths. Addressing how and why dreams are vital in some cultural worlds and not in others is an enduring topic that arouses newer and ever more subtle observations.

## III. LITERATURE REVIEW-

Dream research has advanced a great deal in the last few decades in anthropological, scientific, psychological and philosophical disciplines. Yet, there are areas in the world where dreams are neglected and insignificant. The different contradicting theoretical approaches to dreaming have left the so-called 'layman' unclear on what to think of dreams in western society. It may be a better circumstance in indigenous cultures where dreams are defined as either sacred or profane.

### Theoretical Approaches:

Theories on dreams have hit a broad binary between the **Freudian dream theory** and traditional dream theories. This dichotomy of two very distinct ways of dream interpretation come into play as the basis of all theories revolving around these two. The contrast can be seen in traditional dream theories being more 'progressive' and associating the manifest content of dreams to the future. Whereas the Freud argues the dreams are caused by unresolved conflicts and repressed urges of our past, making it a more back-ward looking approach. Digging deeper into Freud's theory of dreams, it is evident that his approach is reduced to western society. Freud being one of the first scholars to give emphasis to the study on dreams had set the foundation to dream theory. While many psychologists and scientist might claim dreams are simply a result of random brain activity, Freud assumes it is a mental phenomenon. He states that dreams are where the unconscious manifests itself. Freud believed that an individual's use of free association to fragments of their dream could reveal hidden wishes and desires present within the unconscious. Every dream has meaning and is connected to the normal waking life. Freud also highlights dreams are wish-fulfilment while the individual is unconscious. He argues that those wishes that are suppressed in the real, waking life are fulfilled in the sleeping period. Freud realized with further research (taking into consideration nightmares) that not all dreams can satisfy the individual's wish fulfilment and hence defined 'dream' as an actual or attempted wish-fulfilment. As the individual tries to adapt in a social environment and learns not to react aggressively even when upset, he/she may try to suppress those emotions which later on is satisfied in their unconscious thoughts which are dreams. "Seeing what wish it is that a dream expresses and fulfils is rather akin to breaking a complex code; it can only be done by the trained psychoanalyst, who can see that the events in dreams are symbolic, and who understands what the symbols stand for." (E. C. Cuff, 2005). Freud explains how an individual may not actually know what true psychological causes are behind their behaviour. The minute an individual tries to make sense of the unconscious they are getting further away from their actual unconscious thoughts. This is where **structuralism** comes into play when defined improved structures are used to describe a raw thought, thereby misinterpreting it. The unconscious impulses are ones which they—after the fashion of their culture and of the standards they have come to share—is not viewed as acceptable, the explanations that they give seek to present these 'low', improper motivations in improved, 'higher', generally acceptable terms; they therefore seek to explain behaviour as the product of the rational deliberations of the conscious mind rather than in terms of the irrational, impulsive, unconscious drives in which it actually originates. (E. C. Cuff, 2005). Freud's approach is very individualistic and limits modern culture. An individual is to find symbolism within her/his own dreams and not in anyway connect it to society. The western modern society has taken up Freud's views on dreams as dream sharing does not occur in any public setting and most people go through the experience of dreaming and interpretation individually. "Freud's own approach was firmly grounded in a discourse of modernity that included cultural assumptions which prioritize the individual, articulating for the individual a private interior or "inner self," and pathologizing and medicalizing the experience of distress and conflict." (Ewing, 2000)

Freud developed a few strategies of dream interpretation one of which was symbolization where the dream image has some connection to an underlying sexual desire. It is clear that symbolism is a huge part of dreaming. Even traditional dream theories would agree to the notion that the manifest content of dreams have an

underlying meaning and are symbols to uncover the latent content. “Freud’s strategies of dream interpretation are: condensation (the combination of multiple of ideas into a single image), displacement (the substitution of one image by a related, less disturbing one), considerations of representability (how dream thoughts such as negation can be expressed by images), symbolization (use of a neutral image that bears some kind of iconic relationship to a sexual thought), and the principle of overdetermination (the fact that a single image is linked to and evoked by several different dream thoughts).” (Ewing, 2000) This breakup of strategies has a great effect on western culture, mainly because Freud’s work is can be applied our daily thoughts as well. Although, Freud emphasized on sexual desires expressed by the latent content of the dream some other theorists disagree.

**Carl Jung** states that firstly the ‘whole’ dream is not caused because of past repression. While that may be the partial reason, he says dreams are also determined by the future. Jung argues that the unconscious materials voiced in dreams besides being a release of youthful and repressed desires is also advancing the individual’s adaptation. Jung is another modern dream theorist and follower of Freud. He agreed with Freud on the notion that dreams have a meaning and are a part of the unconscious but rejected the idea of dreams being secretive and a product of hidden sexual desires. The basic idea behind Jung’s dream theory is that dreams reveal more than they hide. They are a natural expression of our imagination and use the most upfront language at our disposal: mythic narratives. “They do not deceive, they do not lie, they do not distort or disguise ... They are invariably seeking to express something that the ego does not know and does not understand.” (Jung C. , 1947, p. 189) He saw the mind, body and feelings all coming together to form an individual’s psyche which attempted to send important messages to an individual through the process of dreaming. Even Jung’s approach like Freud’s is individualistic and not social and is applicable only to western society. He believed dreams help in an individual’s development of personality, a process called individuation. These two approaches are quite similar if you compare it to traditional dream theories and their significance given to society. Jung also believes that dreams need to be understood through the symbols expressed. He also showed the importance of dream imagery, motivating the dreamer to re-experience the dream images fully and not move away from it through free association (as opposed to Freud). Jung argued that the manifest was significant to examine carefully. Both these theorists were limited to their own dream experiences which may have to led to some disagreement in the approaches and an overall westernized theory.

**Herbert Spencer** concurs with Jung about the aspect of ‘growth’ that dream experiences bring about but he says it is attributed to the formation of the mental self rather than an individual’s personality. Dream-experiences necessarily precede the conception of a mental self; and are the experiences out of which the conception of a mental self eventually grows. (Spencer, 1898, p. 134). He also emphasizes on the dichotomy of the ‘mind’ and ‘body’ and distinguishes the primitive man from us claiming the ‘mind’ is a high-concept unknown to primitives. The savage cannot speak of internal intuition except in terms of external intuition. (Spencer, 1898, p. 135) Spencer states that primitives have no conception of the mind as an internal existence separate from the body. Thus, they do have the same thinking towards dreams as we do because they do not observe their thoughts or how they are having these thoughts. “Until there is a conception of Mind as an internal principle of activity, there can be no such conception of dreams as we have. To interpret the sights and sayings and doings we are conscious of during sleep, as activities of the thinking entity which go on while the senses are closed, is impossible until the thinking entity is postulated.” (Spencer, 1898, p. 135) He also talks about how the savage would describe their dream in a simplistic narrative structure as their language has words with only one concrete meaning. “We cannot but infer that by such undeveloped grammatical structures, only the simplest thoughts can be rightly conveyed.” (Spencer, 1898, p. 136). Jung exoticizes the primitives thought capacity and questions whether they can even accurately process the notion of dreams. He says that they may understand it as a person having two individualities, a sort of double existence as while the mind is away the body still remains in the same place. Spencer explained that those who believed in the reality of dreams lacked theory of mind. Since, primitives did not have an advanced language they could not seem to distinguish dream perceptions from normal perceptions. They are also considered less evolved for not creating barriers between the real and unreal (that is, dreams).

“We have but to imagine ourselves de-civilized—we have but to suppose faculty decreased, knowledge lost, language vague, and scepticism absent, to understand how inevitably the primitive man conceives as real, the dream-personages we know to be ideal.”(Spencer, 1898, p. 140). Even as Spencer basically lowers the intellectual status of primitives because they do not segregate their dreaming and waking lives entirely. We need to consider that even civilised societies believe in superstitions and theories not proven yet to be real. What makes us more right about the concept of dreams than them?

**E.B Tylor** proposed that dreams are evidence of introducing animism, that is, a belief in spiritual beings as a unique feature of primitive society. “The savage or barbarian has never learned to make the rigid distinction between imagination and reality, to enforce which is one of the main results of scientific education” (Tylor, 1871, p. 445). Similar to Spencer’s approach, he also stresses on the ‘lesser intellectuals’ that cannot divide reality and dreams. Both of them have an ethnocentric conception of dreams. The actual influence of

Freud's work can be seen as dreams have been looked at through the in-depth meaning of the manifest content instead of treating dreams like museum objects to glance at. All these theorists have not introspected their preconceived ideas and structures placed on the basis of which they analyse the primitives.

### **Dreams and Myth:**

In awareness of the limitations of the psychoanalytic theory of dreams, some early psychoanalytic anthropologists decide to look into the relation of myths and dreams. They wanted to explore the cultural dimensions of dreams outside western society. Research showed that certain dreams even produce social transformation. These dreams feature powerful overt content and narrative structure. (Ewing, 2000, p. 155). Anthony Wallace, a cultural anthropologist studied different kinds of dreams and stated that there are dreams that occur in the waking life as a hallucinatory experience or a trance state. Dreams like this contain manifest content that is rational with rich recollection of detail. These kinds of dreams become a social phenomenon when they lead to religious movements. Anthropologists have found that there is a high rate of myth-like dreams experienced by individuals. So, they analysed myths in the form of dreams and noted that 'myths are not timeless narratives, but rather creative works produced within specific historical circumstances'. (Ewing, 2000, p. 158). But myths and dreams are never given recognition for being creative works. To see this creativity non-western cultures, engage in dream-sharing and story-telling. They give equal importance to their dreams as compared to their religious beliefs and many interconnect them. 'Dreams are part of "folk healing;" dreams are a social phenomenon' in traditional cultures. (Ewing, 2000, p. 152) Myths and dreams are drawn parallel to each other as they both are connected to the 'soul'. Jung suggests that myth, dreams and visions are categorized together. He stresses that dreams are sources of the ancestral and the wisdom of the ages. "A dream of a certain kind, will as a rule contain mythological motifs, combinations of ideas or images which can be found in myths of one's own folk or in those of other races. The dream will then have a collective meaning, a meaning which is the common property of mankind." (Jung C. G., 1964). Research also shows myths and dream both have symbolic imagery and aim at wish fulfilment. "Myths are what survives of the psychic life of peoples; dreams are individual myths,". (Abraham, 1909). Hence, many scholars agree there is an immense connection and correspondence to dreams and myths.

### **Dream Catchers:**

It is basically an artefact related to dreams and expresses the cultural aspect through objects. Native Americans adopted the idea of 'dream catchers' which is a handmade object based on a hoop with a woven web of sinew strands in it that has feathers, beads and crystals attached in the 1970s. This object is associated with a legend that originated in the Ojibwa Chippewa tribe. They found spiders to be a symbol of protection and comfort. A mystical and maternal "Spider Woman" served as the spiritual protector for the tribe, especially for young children. As the Ojibwe people continued to grow and spread out across the land, "Spider Woman" found it difficult to continue to protect and watch over all the members of the tribe as they migrated farther and farther away. This is why she created the first dreamcatcher so that it could be a symbol of her protection even when she is not really around. Following her example, mothers and grandmothers would recreate 'the maternal keepsake' as a means of mystically protecting their children and families from afar. Hence, it became traditionally used to keep sleeping children safe from nightmares. Native Americans believe that the night air is filled with dreams, both good and bad. When hung above the bed in an area where the morning sunlight can pass through it, the dream catcher attracts and catches all kinds of dreams and thoughts into its webs. Good dreams pass through and gently moves down the feathers to comfort the sleeper below. But bad dreams are caught up in its protective net and destroyed, burned up in the light of day. Nowadays, these dreamcatchers seem to be ubiquitous. It is especially ironic to observe how Western society has come to fantasize it. The same society that would question the Native American cultural belief in dreams have objects hanging in their homes that represent that same primitive culture. Many Native Americans have come to see dream catchers as a symbol of cultural appropriation, over-commercialized and offensively misappropriated and misused by non-Natives.

### **Déjà vu:**

"We have all some experience of a feeling, that comes over us occasionally, of what we are saying and doing having been said and done before, in a remote time—of our having been surrounded, dim ages ago, by the same faces, objects, and circumstances—of our knowing perfectly what will be said next, as if we suddenly remembered it!" – Charles Dickens

'Déjà vu' is the French word for 'already seen'. While there are many theories behind the occurrence of Déjà vu, some suggest its linkage to dreaming. Déjà vu is when an incident is perceived to be familiar, without any clear memory of having experienced it before. This combination, remembering a situation without any clear memory why, is definitely more likely to occur during dreaming, where the whole experience is created from a web of memory traces. Research also presents that people with higher dream recall frequency



also report more *déjà vu* experiences (Brown, 2003). This concept coincides with tribal views of the reality of dreams and how they foretell the future. For instance, the Kalapalo of Brazil close the distance between dreaming and waking realities by treating dreams as causes of future effects in the waking life. They avoid sleeping the night before any big event to avoid bad dreams of that event which could be their future. Even the Zuni tribe from New Mexico have similar beliefs that any turn of events in the waking life have been preceded by a dream (Merrill, 1987).

#### IV. Conclusion:

Dreaming in Western society is clearly less significant and more restricted to Freud's psychoanalytic theory. Repetitive dreams or nightmares are seen as symptoms for various psychological disorders like depression, anxiety. Psychoanalysts record dreams and decode its symbolism in order to find a better understanding of the individual's disorder. Most of western society treats 'dreams' as a symptom rather than a myth. A result of biological process or a psychological conflict within the individual is the only explanation they can come up with for the causes of dreams. Some New Age groups believe in the psychotherapeutic process of dreaming and meditation. Religious people believe in visions that are a form of dreams which contain messages from God. Carl O'Neil (1967), observed dreaming was already devalued in the West at the time of the emergence of scientific thought. Until the development of Cartesian mechanistic dualism of 'spirit' and 'matter' in the 17<sup>th</sup> century when it was ultimately placed within the realm of fantasy or irrational experiences. The sharp dichotomy between dreaming which is an internal subjective reality and waking or external objective reality continues to persist in Western culture. The question really is where do we draw the line to reality, this is the primary factor that affects the way in which dreaming is valued in a certain culture.

#### DATA ANALYSIS

I have chosen two case studies by using secondary research to give detailed examples of the meaning and significance of 'dreams' within a particular culture. This will help me draw conclusions on the undervalued or overvalued experience of dreaming and the reasons behind it. The Raramuri society is the perfect example to portray how differently each culture views the experience of dreaming and the major contrast of reality in dreaming compared to western society. It shows how our minds are so restricted by westernized thought that we assume reality is a determinate concept. Hence, I have included the other case study of the North American society and their outlook on dreaming as an individual experience withing their culture.

##### Case Study 1: Raramuri Indians of Northern Mexico

"The Raramuri Indians of northern Mexico consider dreams to be *activities* of a person's principal soul during sleep." (Tedlock, 1987, p. 194). Similarly, among the New Guinea people, the Mae Enga, believed dreams to be in the context of action as seen in Meggitt (1962). It can be implied that most if not all indigenous cultures consider 'dreams' not as an object but an activity. This includes the Zuni and Kalapalo who have performative or active attitudes towards dreaming. Douglass Price Williams also reflected on this in the seminar on 'Dreaming' at the School of American Research by proposing that what anthropologists have been coding variously as dreams, visions or omens might better be described as part of a larger continuum between the dream in sleep and the dream in waking consciousness. He also suggested that emphasis be given to the *activity of dreaming* rather than to dreams as objects. (Tedlock, 1987, p. 29) Dreaming in indigenous cultures are part of life and regarded as equally important as activities that occur during the day their waking state of consciousness. The meaning of dreams to these cultures is an action that takes place during an altered state of consciousness. Even for the Raramuri dreams are *events*, not things. They have no noun that can be translated as 'a dream' but the verb *rimuma*, means 'to dream' (Merrill, 1987, p. 199). This itself expresses how highly these cultures value dreaming. Although dreams have the same fundamental kind of image-based thinking as myths and therefore the type of thought process characteristic of dreams is capable of high development and the expression and elaboration of complex ideas. (Kracke, 1987, p. 52) Dreams are still not highly significant to most western societies that value and accept mythology. "Dream thinking, or primary process, is not merely degenerate, regressive form of adult logical thought, but is rather a distinct form of thinking." (Kracke, 1987, p. 52). Dreaming in the Raramuri society is a *form of communication* and holds great magnitude especially while communicating with their deities, diagnosing illnesses, and acquiring information about the future. They start their mornings frequently on the topic of dreaming and share their vivid dreams with each other. The experience of dreaming becomes shared rather than individual in this society and other indigenous cultures because of the practice of dream-telling. The people of each society will hold the same meaning and significance of dreaming within that culture. For example, the Raramuri individuals even though highly valued have a negative connotation towards dreaming. In the fieldwork interviews conducted by Merrill, many interviewees considered dreaming during sleep to denote an unpleasant sleep. The Raramuri believe souls stay peacefully inside the body during a dreamless sleep but when a person dreams it means something evil will try to harm the dreamer. Their fearful picture of dreams is basically because of the threats that occur in their dreams. However, the ratio of

threatening dreams to non-threatening dreams is the same as or lower than recorded from other societies, many of which do not view dreams as negatively as the Raramuri (Merrill, 1987, p. 196). So, I concluded that even if the themes of dream content maybe similar different cultures are affected in various ways by dreaming. The Raramuri culture seems to be more triggered by the threats and evil spirits occurring in their dreams and while having a high regard for the act of dreaming they are at peace when they do not engage in it. Individuals in western society on the contrary will most likely neglect dreams even if they are evil or terrifying. The worst of nightmares experienced can be eminently disregarded by westernized individuals who have neither an extreme positive or negative view on dreaming. “The attitude that the members of society maintain toward dreams cannot be assumed to reflect in a direct and uncomplicated fashion the content of their dreams.”(Merrill, 1987, p. 196).

The Raramuri’s social organization was affected by the imposition of the Spanish colonial administration during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century. The emerging churches became the foci and had a sufficient influence on community life. As a result, Christian ritual and belief pervade Raramuri religion in certain ways. The Raramuri started believing in the God and devil opposition. Their Catholicism, like their way of life was a combination of Indian and European elements(Merrill, 1983). The opposition structured their thinking about many other topics, mostly ethnicity. This led to their ethnocentric thoughts of the Native American community including themselves are God’s children. While, non-Indians were the Devil’s children whom their society *othered*. This demonstrates that ethnocentrism does not cease to exist within indigenous cultures. Like how western society embraces their thought processes as superior than primary thinking that non-western societies engage in, when it comes to dreaming. Anthropologists should take a neutral stance with introspection of any biases to fairly explore the culture of dreaming within a society. They must be able to put aside the binary of reality and imagination. When one encloses the belief in the unreality of dreams, one is better able to appreciate one very significant and universal pattern in the phenomenology of dreaming cross-culturally—that in dreams, entities and forces that are normally invisible to waking life may become sensible, tangible, and even palpable during dreaming (Sumegi, 2008, p. 31). It has been already stated that to the Raramuri community dreams are *events* but what is more salient is that they consider dreams to be *real events*. In fieldwork conducted by Merrill, people elaborated on incredible personal experiences but failed to mention it was a dream until questioned. They talk about their dreams in the same context of their daily activities. They distinguish between dreaming and waking periods but they attribute comparable reality to both. The Raramuri culture do not even consider dreams to be a part of impaired perception or loss of control.(Merrill, 1987, p. 200) The soul is associated with dreams and according to them the soul determines everything. They use the concept of the souls within their body to make and abide by principles of their society. For example, when people drink alcohol, their largest souls leave because they dislike the smell of beer inside the body. They also believe that since the smaller souls remain inside the person during consumption of alcohol, they start acting like children. In this way they make explanations for things they may not understand with the notion of the soul. Dreams occur when the large soul is alert and is chiefly responsible for a person’s thought and actions.

Although the Raramuri think of dreams as real events they do not always act on it. Bennett and Zingg in 1931 conducted research among the Raramuri and through their dream reports they found out that dreams are never taken as sole evidence of an event occurring. Basically, if an individual dreams of a particular event happening upon awakening, he will definitely doubt its occurrence and at the same time try to receive a second confirmation. Merrill in his research, fifty years later found great consistency and concluded that two fundamental features in the Raramuri’s approach to dreams are – the tendency not to initiate action on the basis of dreams alone and a complete concern with the manifest content of dreams, which they interpret literally.(Merrill, 1987, p. 203) This still does not change the fact that the Raramuri perceive dreams in their spectrum of reality. Their thinking of the reality of dreams is linked with more basic ideas about the nature of the universe. They distinguish theoretically and lexically among different things they encounter in the world like water, dirt, etc. But they do not assume that the perceived or conceived diversity of the world can be reduced to a more fundamental level, that is a dichotomy between material and spiritual. They believe in one realm of the universe in which everything takes places including dreams and waking experience. They do not assume that there are separate spheres for natural and supernatural where communication may be restricted or impossible. This kind of reality they ascribe to dreams also comprises of waking experiences that may be termed as “hallucinations” from a certain Western perspective. (Merrill, 1987, p. 201) The striking difference between Western society here is that such dreams may be unusual and remarkable but people in the Raramuri experiencing them are not questioned for **sanity**. While in Western society individuals may doubt themselves of not being completely sane for having hallucinations and might even think they are mentally unstable. D’Andrade (1961) claims that in societies where dream experiences are regarded as 'real', dreams and the events of waking life tend to be more alike than in societies where dreams are viewed as fantasy (such as most of Western society). The Raramuri interpret any discrepancies like dream accounts being more violent than waking life, as evidence of the limitations of waking life instead of attributing it to the unreality of dreams like Western society.

This is still debateable as many times people even in western society where dreams are considered unreal can experience dreams that resemble normal waking life.

To conclude the Raramuri Indians of Northern Mexico have a certain meaning and importance towards dreaming that can be shown to resemble more with other indigenous cultures rather than Western society. They are not restricted in their views of dreaming and as a result this activity is given a primary standing. Ideas about the nature and significance of dreaming mediate between the personal dream experiences of the members of a society and public ideology. These ideas have an impact on how people remember and report dreams and they are influenced by processes of social interaction and interpersonal negotiation of meaning (Merrill, 1987, p. 215). I also noticed how change is an extremely gradual process and these views on dreaming in indigenous cultures are strongly bound. There was a fifty-year gap in two researches conducted among the Raramuri and shockingly their views on dreaming did not change. This could be a consequence of the dreaming activity being a shared experience within the culture as with other indigenous cultures. Due to the common interactions on dreaming, the ideology behind it is maintained over the years. The same cannot be said for Western society as it is always changing and dreams are more of an individual experience.

#### Case Study 2: North American society

From Western society, the North Americans I feel does the best job of representing western culture. Their distinctive outlook on dreaming as an experience will be portrayed and how they are more likely to regard dreams as objects. Individuals in American society who experience vivid dreams may allow them a certain reality during sleep, but upon awakening dispel or try to forget them (Collins, 1977). Dreams are often neglected and stereotypically believed to be meaningless fantasies in American society. When a dream is recalled, it may seem important or become a joke among close ones. For example, while interacting with an individual from western society I observed that sharing a dream experience seemed to be a humorous interaction. It was assumed that the dream is the most absurd thing and so unrealistic. On the contrary, we can see above how seriously indigenous cultures take dreams into consideration. In the study, by Bennittand Zingg (1931) an example given was a man who dreamed of his wife committing adultery and when he woke up, he questioned his wife and beat her when she confirmed it. While the individual from western society on sharing her dream did not seem to feel guilty about her going for ice-cream with her boyfriend in the dream but who was not actually her boyfriend in waking life. Most Americans claim that dreams are just confused mental imaginings with no true or lasting reality dimensions Seldomly, a dreamer in American society may remember a few details of a dream that might affect them emotionally. Then the cultural belief of dreams wavers slightly and the dreamer wonders if the dream he/she had actually means something(Tedlock, 1987, p. 8). But even individuals with that doubt the reality of dreams get shunned down by their western culture and the binaries that exist of supernatural and natural or real versus unreal. Dreamers have a difficult time even with dream-sharing because it is hard to express dream images in words. The process of describing the manifest content of dreams is also difficult cause the essence of the true meaning of the dream can be lost in translation. In Western society, there is no proper context for dream-sharing in public. Psychoanalysis is the most common ground for dream-telling in American society where dreamers tell lie on a couch and tell psychoanalysts about the dream. "Dream sharing is far from unproblematic in traditional psychoanalysis, where the surface of manifest content of a dream is insufficient and must be amplified by free association."(Tedlock, 1987, p. 9). Dreams lack public importance;therefore, psychotherapy is one of the private settings in which dream telling is customarily designated to occur (Dombeck, 1991).The dream is interpreted then by the structure of Freudian hypothesis of the four primary dream-work processes that is, condensation, displacement, symbolism, and secondary revision (Freud, 1900, p. 277-508).With Freud the universal phenomenon of dreaming found a limited place for itself in a profession dedicated to the art of psychological healing (Hillman, 1983). The American society is clearly restricted to Freud's approach on dreaming and hence individuals are either ignorant of their dreams or seek therapy regarding some nightmares. Few researchers like Kracke, Brown rejected Freud's irreducible oppositional dualism between latent and manifest content, as correlated primary and secondary thought processes, since this distinction ignores cultural effects on the symbolism of dreams.Ellen Basso claims that the Western dream theory is "regressive" as it uses dreams as a window through which can be seen the repressed desires and conflicts stemming from the individual's idiosyncratic personal history (Basso, 1987, p. 86) Freud tends to assumes primary thought process are more primitive and inferior which Kracke proves false as primary- process is equally capable of development as secondary-process thinking. In Western culture, Vincent Crapanzano (1981) has argued that the meeting between psychoanalyst and client is limited by a particular epistemological configuration, in which priority is given to the referential or indexical function of language and dream report as a reduction to that function. In order to try to avoid this, Masud Khan came up with "mutuality of playing dialogue" between himself and his patients to tell dreams in a way that does not kill the dreaming experience by reducing it to anecdotal narrative (Khan, 1976).

The nature of dreaming is changing in the West, although it is still oblivious to the majority. Some people who want to engage in dream sharing outside a therapeutic setting can now join dream appreciation groups across North America. There are associations, newsletters and journals as well like 'The Dreamwork Network Bulletin'. A partly structured organisation in New York called the 'Dream Community of New York' was started which encouraged people to go in the evenings and share their dream experiences. These were a major attempt to get dream sharing of a therapeutic setting especially in mental health centres to the city in public. The stigma of dream sharing being less progressive still exists so even though these groups exist most Americans do not engage in dream-sharing. In conclusion, the nature of dreaming in North American society is for the most part neglected and is otherwise restricted to the field of psychological science. Ethnographers have only recently started doing fieldwork on the cultural relativity of dreaming. Dream classifications as collective representations are prominently absent from Western tradition. Although there are dream theories, it is clear that we do invest as much culturally in dreams as compared to even Mediterranean people do or the ancient Greeks (Kilborne, 1987).

## V. CONCLUSION

The study of dreams in anthropological research is marginalized even today. There have not been any major breakthroughs in research of the nature of dreaming. But from all the secondary research I have looked at I can definitely state that there is big difference in the views of indigenous cultures and western culture towards dreaming. I cannot assume any to be inferior or superior but when it concerns dreaming, the indigenous cultures ascribe more significance to it as a whole experience. I made some prominent observations in the course of this dissertation on dreaming. Firstly, the meaning of dreams differs in both societies, to indigenous cultures it is an activity or an event where as to western culture it is an object. This itself highlights how much more importance indigenous cultures give to the act of dreaming while western culture objectifies dreams and either exoticizes or completely neglects them. The Western culture treats dreams as objects in a museum to be looked at with detail or to just pass by. Secondly, to indigenous culture dreams are part of their reality. On the contrary, the people of the West believe dreams to be fantasy and unreal. Lastly, dreams are a form of communication to indigenous people and are treated with respect. They are not restrictive in their approach towards dreaming. Western culture has structured mental frameworks that have imposed the Cartesian dualism dividing spirit and matter. The dichotomy of real versus unreal is the reason Western perspective is so limited in their approach towards dreaming. They do not see it as any form of communication. Only certain religions in Western society take dreams as visions seriously as signs from God. Dreams are most often neglected and not even given much thought to in western society. In Britain, as elsewhere in Europe, pre-Christian traditions involving dreaming, such as Wicca, shamanism, and magic, may be revived or reinvented (Luhmann, 1989; Woodman, 2003). Ultimately Ewing concludes on the Western thought of dreaming very accurately and says some people are able to find solutions sometimes through dreams or other means—while others are stuck and respond with depression, neurosis or other symptomatic behaviour. In order to see this creativity in the process of dreaming and story-telling, the interpreter must attend to both the manifest and latent content. (Ewing, 2000).

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