



UNIQUE JOURNAL OF AYURVEDIC AND HERBAL MEDICINES

Available online: www.ujconline.net

Review Article

UNDERSTANDING SVAPNA OR DREAM

Dhanya T^{1*}, Haroon Irshad², Ramdas PV³, Jaya Shankar Mund⁴

¹PG scholar Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham Deemed University, Department of Samhita, Sanskrit and Siddhanta, Amrita School of Ayurveda, Clappana P.O., Kollam Dist, Kerala, India

²Assistant Professor, Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham Deemed University, Department of Samhita, Sanskrit and Siddhanta, Amrita School of Ayurveda, Clappana P.O., Kollam Dist, Kerala, India

³Sanskrit professor Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham Deemed University, Department of Samhita and Siddhanta, Amrita School of Ayurveda, Clappana (PO), Kollam Dist, Kerala, India

⁴Professor and HOD, Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham Deemed University, Department of Samhita and Siddhanta, Amrita School of Ayurveda, Clappana (PO), Kollam Dist, Kerala, India

Received 21-10-2016; Revised 19-11-2016; Accepted 17-12-2016

*Corresponding Author: **Dhanya T**

PG scholar, Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham Deemed university Department of Samhita, Sanskrit and Siddhanta, Amrita School of Ayurveda, Clappana P.O., Kollam Dist, Kerala – 690525

ABSTRACT

Svapna a physiological phenomenon, according to Ayurveda all individual spent one –third in a state having *Svapna* or dream. Dreams are doorways to a mysterious world. *Svapna* as dream is a series which evolves in various stages. In ancient time when no advanced tools and technologies were available, the concept of *Svapna* was popular in clinical practise for diagnosis and prognosis as well as maintaining health. All four components of *Ayu* (*Atma*, *Manas*, *Indriya* and *Sharira*) plays an equal part and have their own function in genesis of *svapana*. Acharyas have described about sleep in Ayurveda classics. Also in all *Astika* and *Nastika Darshanas* there is mentioning of *Svapna*. Only *Charvaka Darshana* has not mentioned about *svapna*. In *susruta samhita* there is mentioning of dreams by pregnant lady which helps in determining sex of child. *Caraka samhita* utilises *Svapna* as a prognostic and diagnostic tool and it helps to know about the impending death. Also helps to analyse the *Prakriti* of a person from the dream they see. Ayurvedic texts gives an elaborate description of *Svapna*. In Vedas, puranas and Upanishads also there is description of *Svapna*. *Svapna* requires a lot of explanation and interpretation and has to be analysed with sincerity and patience. Sigmund Freud known as father of dreams has done work on interpreting dream. In-depth evaluation of these descriptions could open more doors to the understanding of the physiology, pathology, and the utility of dreams.

Keywords: *Svapna*, Dream, Diagnosis, Prognosis, *Darshana*

INTRODUCTION

Ayurveda is a science whose principles and concepts have stood even with changing era and modernization. *Svapna* is the Sanskrit term for dream. Etymologically the term *Svapna* is derived from Sanskrit root *Svap* + *Nak*¹ which means to sleep, fall asleep, to lie down, dreaming or dream². Dr Edwin Dismond the eminent American dream scientist, has shown that a normal healthy person experiences about 5 to 6 dreams in sleep. A person dreams for about 20 minutes and is essential for maintaining health. Acharya Charaka describes *Svapna* as a state in which there is no contact of *Arthas* with *Indriyas* and at this stage the *Rajas* and *Tamas* are increased³. Acharya Caraka mentioned *Svapna* literary means loss of touch or ignorance. It is the subjects experience in different states of sleep (*Nidra*).

The dream manifests when the *Manovaha Srotases* are filled with aggravated three dosas. It is in a half awakened state that a person controls the sense organs, to have either meaningful or meaningless dream⁴. Seven types of dream relating to seven factors are told in *Caraka samhita*; visual perception, auditory perception, experience through other means, ones's own desire, imaginary, as premonitions, caused by aggravated dosas⁵. *Svapna* has been described by *Rishis* long back evidence can be seen from description of dreams in *Veda*, *Upanishads* etc.

In *Vedas*: The earliest reference on dreams seen in *Rig Veda* (4000or 6000BC). Reference regarding *Svapna* also seen in *Sama Veda*. Also in *Atharva Veda* (1500 BC) there is mentioning of physical temperament of dreamer and time of dream at night similar to that mentioned in ayurvedic texts.

In Upanishads : (700BC) *Mandukya upanishada* describes four states of *Atman* –*Jagrata, Swapna, Supta, Turiya* and *Mandukyopanishada* has given nomenclature for *Atma* in each of the stages.

In puranas : The Hindu Epics and Puranas have described many traditional dreams and analyzed them. In Valmiki's Ramayana the ogress Trijata had a dream symbolizing the defeat of Ravana when Sita was stolen by Ravana. The dreams of Bharata symbolizing the death of his father and that seen by Lord Hanumana also are described in detail.

In the Mahabharata the Swapna of the Kaurav signifying their defeat by the hands of the Pandavas is described just as that those of Parsurama and King Krtavirya heralding their success and defeat respectively. The dreams of Bharata symbolizing the death of his father and that seen by Lord Hanumana also are described in detail.

In *Darshanas*:

All the *Astika* Darshanas have described the *Svapnawastha*. Kanada propounder of *Vaisheshika Darshana* defines dream-cognition as the consciousness produced by a particular conjunction of the self with the manas (mind) in co-operation with the subconscious impressions of past experience, like recollection. The commentators of *Vaisesika Darsana* namely,

Prasastapada, Sridhara, Samkara Misra, Sivaditya and others also recognize the central origin of dreams. Gautama propounder of Nyaya Darshana does not include dream cognition in recollection. Patanjali in the *Yoga Darsana* also gives the describes *Svapna* when describing *Prasanna Citta Sthairyopaya*. The *Mimansakar*s also recognized the representative character of dreams. Kumarila Bhatta, Parthasarathimisra, etc, support this theory. Prabhakara has added the theory of obscuration of memory (*Smritipramosa*). Among the *Nastika Darsanas*, the *Bauddha Darshan* texts carry described of the several significant dreams seen by Lord Gautam Buddha before his enlightenment, and these were corroborated by the dreams of his father and wife on the night before his departure from the palace⁶.

In *samhitas*: Ayurvedic texts like *Brihatrayes* and *Laghutrayes* have described *Svapana* in detail. The *Samhitas* describe the relationship of dreams with *Tridosas (Vata, Pitta, Kapha)* which control the internal and external functions and conditions of the body. It emphasises that the implications of dreams may vary as per nature of psychology of dreamer.

Svapna as per *Prakriti* of person- These dreams helps in finding *Prakriti* of person.

A.Vata Prakriti	S.S.⁷	A.S.⁸	A.H.⁹	S.Sa¹⁰	Bhela¹¹
1.dried and crooked trees and rivers	--	+	--	--	--
2. climbs trees or mountains	--	+	+	--	--
3.rides camels(animals)	--	--	--	--	+
4. flies or rises high in sky	+	+	+	+	+
B.Pitta Prakriti					
1.sees sun	--	+	+	--	--
2. sees gold	+	+	--	--	--
3.sees bright flame of light	--	--	--	+	--
4.Red coloured sky	--	--	+	--	--
5.sees palasha and palasha					
6.sees fire, falling meteors, and lightening	+	+	--	--	+ (only fire)
C. Kapha Prakriti					
1.sees lotus	+	+	+	--	--
2.sees ponds	+	+	+	+	+
3. sees clouds	--	--	+	--	--
4.sees birds like hamsa and chakravaka	+	+	+	--	--

Classification as per effect of dream¹²

1. Subha and 2. Asubha

Garbha linga dharana according to prakriti Male gender¹³

Sl. No.	Svapna	C.S.	S.S.	A.S.	A.H.	B.P.
1.	Takes food and drink as that of a male	+	--	--	--	--
2.	Does activities as that of male	+	--	--	--	--
3.	Sees padma, utpala, kumuda	--	+	--	--	+
4.	Sees Amrataka etc. fruit denoting male gender	--	+	--	--	+
5.	Sees Padartha which denote male gender	--	--	+	+	+

Svapna signifying female gender

Sl. No.	Svapna	C.S.	S.S.	A.S.	A.H.	B.P.
1.	Takes food and drink as that of a female	+	--	--	--	--
2.	Does activities as that of female	+	--	--	--	--
3.	Sees taruni, japa flowers	--	+	--	--	+
4.	Sees fruits denoting female gender	--	+	--	--	+
5.	Sees Padartha which denote female gender	--	--	+	+	+

Charaka samhita mentions time of seeing swapna and duration of results¹⁴

Time of seeing <i>Svapna</i>	Duration of results
1. First part of night	One year
2. Second part of night	Six month
3. Third part of night	Three months
4. Fourth part of night or early morning	Ten days
5. During day time/rainy season	Six months

Svapna is described in context of premonitory symptom of *Rajayakshma* in *Laghutrayi Madhava Nidana*. Dreams indicating imminent death¹⁵

<i>Svapna</i>	Future predicted as
1. Person travelling towards south riding dog, camel, ass	Die of <i>Rajayakshma</i>
2. Person drinking wine in company of ghosts	Die of serious type of fever
3. Person wears red dress, looking red, laughs frequently dragged by woman	Die of <i>Rakta Pitta</i>
4. Person grown spiky creeper on chest	Fatal type of <i>Gulma</i> afflicts
5. Person becomes naked anoint with ghee, offers oblation to fire without flame has grown lotus flowers on chest	Die of leprosy
6. Person drinking unctuous drinks in company of <i>Candalas</i>	Fatal type of <i>Prameha</i> afflicts him
7. Person drowned in water while dancing with demons	Acute attack of insanity
8. Person taking <i>Saskuli, Apupa</i> in dream, vomits similar substance while awake	Wont live long
9. Growth of bamboo, shrubs creepers in head and disappearance of flying birds into them.	Indicate death or affliction by serious type of disease
10. Circumvention by pretas, owls, dogs, women and <i>candalas</i>	Indicate death or affliction by serious type of disease
11. Falling down while walking	Indicate death or affliction by serious type of disease
12. Lying down on ground with dust as pillow, on ant-hill or ashes or ditch or cemetery	Indicate death or affliction by serious type of disease
13. Drowning in dirty water	Indicate death or affliction by serious type of disease
14. Loosing of both shoes, peeling of skin out of feet, insult by angry forefathers	Indicate death or affliction by serious type of disease
15. Vision of a sinful black colour women devoid of conduct with long hair, nails, breasts with apparel and garland devoid of colour	Indicate death or affliction by serious type of disease
16. Entry into a forest full of red flowers, funeral pyre or cave of dense darkness	Indicate death or affliction by serious type of disease
17. Vision of person wearing ochre coloured dress naked, terrific in appearance black and white red eyes	Indicate death or affliction by serious type of disease
18. Fall or extinction of teeth, moon, sun, stars, cracking of hill	Indicate death or affliction by serious type of disease

Notable dreams in history¹⁶

The great king Chattrapati Shivaji, had a dream of treasure in dream. The next day he found a stock of wealth in same spot as seen in dream. Lord Buddha's mother Rani Maya had experienced a dream of elephant with six teeth and body mightier than iron, whiter than silver and snow, brighter than sun and moon, had entered her womb. She narrated about her dream to her husband and the astrologers explained that this dream implied as a symbolic indication of the birth of an extraordinary and enlightened child. The dreams of Tipu Sultan were significant he was often amazed by intimations of future events. The Prince Vardhaman when in his mothers womb, saw a sequel of celestial dreams with unprecedented experiences, it was interpreted by wise men as birth of a divine child and later proved that it was true from the birth of Mahavir swami the 24th Tirthankara of Jainism. The dream by

president of America Abraham Lincoln that he had been assassinated by bullets. It proved true after a short span of four days that he was shot dead by an actor on stage. Edger, Mozart, Einstein and many other scientists, writers, poets had dreams that contributed significantly to extraordinary accomplishments. The popular stories cited in Betel Pachisi are based on the experiences of king Vikramaditya or Ujjayani in a subconscious state of dreams.

Western approach to dream

Earlier people believed that soul travels into new world out from body during sleep. The Greek Philosopher Aristotle had the view that when the external excitement and the agility of the conscious mind diminish and mental power moves introvert, it can bring immense knowledge from depths of inner self. Platos describes dreams giving importance to possibilities of divine origin of dreams, also accepted the role

of inner instincts and suppressed desires in some of the dreams. Sigmund Freud the western psychologist after analysis of 3000 dreams concluded that dreams are the suppressed emotions, unfulfilled desires, and aspirations in the personal and professional life. These trigger reactions in conscious and unconscious domains of mind, and is expressed in the imaginary world of dreams. The research on dream conducted by psychologists of west in 20th century affirmed the hypothesis of the vital role of the unconscious mind and its hidden connection with one's inner self.

VARIOUS VIEW ON DREAM AS PER RELIGION

Hindu religion's view on dream¹⁷

In Hinduism, certain dreams are believed to originate from the gods, but most are believed to be natural products of the human mind. Hindus attribute several valuable functions to dreaming, among them the powers of prophetic warning, medical diagnosis, divine guidance, and the heralding of new birth. Dreams are analyzed symbolically to identify auspicious or inauspicious messages about the future. Dreams are interpreted as illusory creations with no ultimate meaning. In this view, to interpret a dream is to see through it and move beyond it. Hinduism have maintained a generally favourable attitude toward the spiritual potency of dreaming through most of its history and right into the present day. However, the mystical teachings of the Upanishads encourage Hindus to look past the illusions of their dreams to achieve a higher state of awareness that transcends both sleeping and waking.

Christian religion's view on dream¹⁸

Most Christian authorities seem to have accepted the supernatural origins of dreams, but as the power of the Church grew these authorities focused more on the dangers of demonic night-mares than on the blessings of heaven-sent visions. In their actual lives and religious practices, ordinary Christian laypeople have looked to their dreams for various purposes, including prophecy, healing, inspiration, guidance, and reassurance in times of fear. Christianity has never developed an official method of dream interpretation, but in practice people have relied heavily on pre-Christian approaches translated from Greek and Roman sources. The other people's dreams cannot be easily controlled or extinguished. But the authorities have almost always insisted on one requirement for Christians trying to interpret their dreams any message discerned in a dream must conform to the revealed truths of the Bible and the teachings of the Church.

Islam religion's view on dream¹⁹

According to Ibn Khaldun's version of this theory, dreams are formed in one of three ways: by God, by the angels, or by the Devil. The first is a clear dream vision, and it functions to provide true knowledge, guidance, and inspiration. The second is an allegorical dream, and it uses images and symbols from the human mind to express its divine messages. The third is a confused dream that has no meaning and is merely sent to tempt and mislead the dreamer. Only the second type of dream requires interpretation, and through the centuries Muslims have written numerous books to help people analyze the meanings of their allegorical dreams. Most of these books emphasize the importance of contextualizing the dream within the specific life circumstances of the dreamer associating the dream's images to verses from the Quran and sharing the

dream only with competent, respectful people whom the dreamer trusts.

DREAMS OF ANIMALS AND THEIR INDICATION²⁰

Ants: Ants in dream symbolizes that something is irritating one. If they are crawling body, this could mean an unfinished business that need to be attended. Ants represent hard work and community. If in dreams one sees an anthill, it indicates one has a strong circle of family and friends to support.

Bears: Bears are symbolises calm, strength. Bears also indicate a time of introspection. If in are dreams one sees a bear sleeping or hibernating, this is a message to do a little soul search. If a bear is seen chasing one, this means you are avoiding a big issue in life, and it is time to deal with it. If the bear is standing up, this is a sign one needs to defend beliefs.

Bees: Bees in dreams indicate a buzzing network of communication. They may also point our attention to ideas that are pollinating successfully in our lives.

Cats: Cats in dreams represent feminine power. Cats also deal with esoteric knowledge, and spiritual guardianship. White cats represent heightened spiritual awareness. Black cats signify hidden secrets or hidden powers within the dreamer. Wild cats encourage us to exercise our will power more. Tame cats indicate a place of comfort in our lives.

Dogs: Dogs in dreams deal with friendship and loyalty. Hearing dogs bark in dream may represent damaging gossip in life. Being bitten by a dog indicates one may be dealing with a guilty conscience. The dog is also a dream symbol for instinct. Being attacked by a dog may suggests one may be acting too much on impulse – think twice before one act. If one is being led by a dog in ones dream, it suggests one is comfortable with oneself.

Elephants: Animals in dreams such as Elephants come into our dreams, it is a message that we are able to deal with any obstacle we are faced with at this time. Dreaming Elephants represent power, sovereignty, stability, and steadfastness. If one dreams that one is riding an elephant this suggests one has a tendency to be the leader of the family.

Frog: Animals in dreams such as Frogs represent blessings, love, and prosperity. If one dreams of holding a frog in hands, it suggests one's fondest wish shall come true. Dream Frogs also symbolize spiritual and emotional transformation. If one hear Frogs croaking in one's dreams, it is a call to learn more about spiritual matters. If the Frog in dreams is in the water, this suggests one is going through some emotional turmoil but one have the ability to see ones way out of it.

Hawks: Dream Hawks represent our yearning for freedom. If one dream Hawk is flying in the air, it suggests one's plans are ambitious and one need courage to see one's vision to the end. If Hawk is in a cage or trapped, one may be feeling like one is not allowed to express yourself at this time or one is caught in a restricting relationship. The Dream Hawk is a message to use one's intellectual power to obtain the freedom one desire in life.

Lizards: Dream Lizards come to us with a message to be cautious in our dealings with others. Lizards also encourage us to remain grounded in tense situations. If the Lizard is running away from one in one's dreams, this could mean that one is afraid of some issues in one's life - back off, and re-evaluate the situation. If the Lizard bites one this is a message for one

to put a hold on any plans one might be making. If one dream Lizard is in a tree, this is a good sign, and plans should be carried out.

Peacocks: Peacocks in dreams represent confidence and ego. Sometimes the appearance of the Peacock may be a message that we are being overconfident, and should perhaps humble ourselves a bit. If the Peacock is making noises in one's dream, this indicates one is trying too hard to impress people. If the Peacock's feathers are all fanned out, this is a message that an invitation to a new project is on its way.

Serpents: Serpents in dreams represent psychic energy. When one dream of the Serpent, it is a message for one to awaken one's unconscious energies that influence one's feelings, urges, and instincts. By bringing these energies up to the surface, one will further shape one's personality and destiny. If the Serpent bites in dream, don't be too trusting with new people one meet. If one dream Serpent is shedding its skin, this indicates one is feeling limited, or have outgrown one's present condition.

CONCLUSION

The theories of *Svapna* were known to all ancient civilization all around the world and it is a physiological process that occurs in every individual. In ancient time when no advanced tools and technologies was popular in clinical practices and helped in diagnosis and prognosis of diseases. Accordingly there is description of dreams by different religions all over the world. Dreams requires attention for exploration, interpretation and application with sincerity and patience.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We acknowledge Dr Parvathy Rajeev Consultant Physician Chakrapani Ayurveda Hospital, Jaipur, Rajasthan for the help during the preparation of the article as well as for the suggestions to improve the article

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Source of support: Nil, Conflict of interest: None Declared