

# The Majestic Dreams: Analysis of Dreams of Kings of Medieval India

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**Abstract:** A dream is a series of thoughts, images, and sensations occurring in a person's mind during sleep. One sleep cycle comprises of four stages and lasts for about 90-120 minutes. Dreams can occur in any of the four stages of sleep, but the most vivid and memorable dreams occur in the last stage of sleep. Why we dream is still one of the behavioral sciences' greatest unanswered questions. Researchers have offered many theories memory consolidation, emotional regulation and threat simulation. Nevertheless, people continue mining their nighttime reveries for clues to their inner lives, for creative insight, and even for premonitions. Not only the common man but the emperors also dream and look for their interpretations. Description of dreams is found in various ancient scriptures also. This paper is an attempt to analyze the dreams of the emperors and nobles of the medieval period of Indian history.

**Keywords** – Dream, Emperor, Interpretation, Medieval, Scriptures

## Introduction

The first known textual description of lucid dreaming dates to before 1000 BCE from the Upanishads, the Hindu oral tradition of spiritual lessons, philosophy and proverbs. The Vigyan Bhairav Tantra is another ancient Hindu tract that describes how best to direct consciousness within the dream and vision states of sleep. In the early centuries, Indian influence spread to the mountainous region of Tibet, where the animistic tradition of Bonpo maintains that lucid dreaming has been used in their meditations for over 12000 years<sup>1</sup>. In the Mandukya Upanishad, part of the Veda scriptures of Indian Hinduism, a dream is one of three states that the soul experiences during its lifetime, the other two states being the waking state and the sleep.<sup>2</sup>

## Classifications of Dreams

Broadly, the dreams have been divided into 3 categories

- Strange Dreams
- Premonition Dreams
- Dreams those Reflect Real Life

<sup>1</sup> Ryan, H. (2017) "History of Lucid Dreaming: Ancient India to the Enlightenment", Dream Studies Portal, Available at <http://dreamstudies.org/history-of-lucid-dreaming-ancient-india-to-the-enlightenment/>

<sup>2</sup> Krishnananda, Swami (1996). "The Mandukya Upanishad, Section 4", Available at <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dream>

**Strange Dreams:** As is apparent from the name, these dreams are strange in nature and produce strange feelings in the dreamer. The sequences that are played in such kind of dreams have no connection with reality such as one can see in a dream, a person with four heads, sixteen hands or with huge mountain-like body. One might even see elephants flying in his dream. Such sequences have no connection with reality but still people experience them. Sequences can be even stranger than one might expect.

**Premonition Dreams:** This category of dream can have two types- dreams that augur well, and dreams that augur ill. These are the most importance kinds of dreams, which have long-lasting effect on our daily life. Sequences seen in these dreams like visiting temples and places of pilgrimage, sighting holy people and having their blessings and many such things, which are pleasant to us. Contrary to such sequences, one might see a woman clad in red or black sari taking someone towards the south. This type of sequences always augurs ill. Similarly, sighting of shooting stars and breaking shoes also indicate some mishap.

**Dreams that Show Real Thing:** This type of dream also does not have much importance and materialize only rarely. These dreams however fulfill our incomplete desires. Such as for example, one might be desirous of becoming a king, so in his dream, he becomes a king. Similarly, a pretty girl might want to marry an extremely handsome man. So in her dreams, she sees herself becoming a queen. Effect of such dreams lasts as long as we are dreaming. Once the sleep is disturbed, these dreams and their effects also vanish altogether.<sup>3</sup>

### Causes of Dreams

The causes of dreams are many and they need not spring as products always merely of physical and mental states, though these two states have their primacy of importance.

**Physical and Mental:** Bad dreams are generally seen in fever or acute pain. Dreams are induced by external objects also. In an unfavorable or dirty atmosphere bad dreams occur. At the time of sleep sweet sounds give sweet dreams and hot words bad ones. Even an external sweet, hot or cool touch can show its reaction in dreams. An individual's disturbed mind can also be the cause for dreaming of two types:

- Due to experiences in the waking state.
- Due to desires (unfulfilled) buried in the mind. When man sleeps pondering over the objects he has seen, they appear as dreams. Sometimes even an unfulfilled desire appears as a dream.<sup>4</sup>

### Types of Dreams

There are basically two types of dreams-

- Auspicious dreams
- Bad dreams

**Auspicious Dreams:** Some of the auspicious dreams are riding or mounting the peak of a mountain, of a palace, of an elephant or a bull or climbing the\_top of a tree having white flowers, or flying skyward.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Vyas, A. S. (2006) "About Dreams", Available at <https://www.astrobhriyuvision.com/dreams.php>

<sup>4</sup> Kuppaswamy, L. (2008) "An Insight into Dreams", Journal of Astrology, Available at [https://www.journalofastrology.com/article.php?article\\_id=151](https://www.journalofastrology.com/article.php?article_id=151)

<sup>5</sup> Ibid

ShailaPraasaadanagashva Vrshabhaarohanam hitam

**Bad Dreams:** Instances of bad dreams of Kamsa and Kartavirya Arjuna have been referred to in the Puranas. Seeing all black things except the cow, elephant, horse, Brahmin and deity have been described as inauspicious.<sup>6</sup>

Sarvaani Krishnaanyati nindhithani go hasti Vaaji dvija deva varjyam

### Remedial Measures

The Hindu scriptures say that if bad dreams are seen, they should not be mentioned to anyone. After the bad dream, the person should either sleep again or take bath.

Theshamakathanam Shubham Bhuyayascha Svapnam Thadhvathkaaryam snaanam dvijarchana  
After the dream of Vishnu, Lord Shiva, Lord Surya or Lord Ganesha one should recite Purusha Sukta or Gayatri mantra. Prayers to the sacred river the Ganga is also mentioned as a remedy.<sup>7</sup>

### Relationship between Dream and Reality

Dream is a means and reality is an achievement. Dreaming is easier than the reality. Dream is ephemeral. Events in dream appear to be real. There is a close relationship between the dream and reality. The analysis of a dream can be done better on the basis of happenings in waking state. And on the basis of dreams, the experiences in the waking state can be understood better. Dreams are not useless. Even modern psychologists admit this. Good dreams gladden the heart. Bad dreams also serve as an outlet for the suppressed feelings with the result that the poise of the mind and the body is maintained. Dreams are helpful as they aid good sleep. Dreams occur due to external stimulants. If dreams do not occur, the external stimulants may affect sleep and memory. Even in ordinary life also, dreams aid achievement by enhancing the will-power. Man at first dreams of the goal. Constant dreaming over the goal provides will power and strength in overcoming the obstacles and transforms the dream into a reality. So dreams are a necessity in man's life. As long as the mind does not become pure, till then dreaming is natural and is needed for preservation of health.

### The Majestic Dreams

The Mughals gave a lot of importance to dreams and omens. A book called Falnama-6 that helped in understanding the dreams was quiet popular during the Mughal rule dreams were considered very important during the Mughal era. Several times even the emperor changed his decision based on dreams.<sup>8</sup>

### Dream of Islam Shah

Islam Shah Suri's original name was Jalal Khan and he was the younger son of Sher Shah Suri. He was the second ruler of Sur Dynasty of India. As he was fairly well-educated man and a poet in Persian at the time of his accession, it may be presumed that he must have been given a fairly

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid

<sup>7</sup> Kuppuswamy, L. (2008) "An Insight into Dreams", Journal of Astrology, Available at [https://www.journalofastrology.com/article.php?article\\_id=151](https://www.journalofastrology.com/article.php?article_id=151)

<sup>8</sup> Ahmed, A (2015) "Taj Mahal Or Mummy Mahal?: The First Indian Mummy", Evoco Publication, p.11.

high education in his early years. But he was primarily a soldier and had given proof of his military ability on more than one occasion before he was called to the sovereignty of Hindustan.<sup>9</sup> Dream of Mahummad Farmuli to Islam Shah (a sufi) - "O, my liege! two nights i dreamt that three bags descended from heaven, one containing ashes, another gold and the third papers. The ashes fell upon the head of the troops, the gold upon the house of the Hindus, and the papers fell to the lot of the treasury!"<sup>10</sup> After this Islam Shah declared second holy war or Jihad. It was war against hindu kingdom of Udaipur on pretext that Rana had given refuge to Kawas Kahn.

### **Dream of Humayun**

Nasiruddin Muhammad Humayun was born in 1508. On 30th December 1530 Humayun was chosen as a successor of Babur (the founder of Mughal dynasty in India) .He ruled till 26th January 1556 till his death. The Mughal emperor had a dream while sleeping. The dream appeared during the period when Humayun along with his forces was fleeing away in year 1540 after defeat from forces of Sher Shah Suri in 1539 in battle of Chausa. A Sufi, clad in a green robe, appeared in the dream, handing over his staff to Emperor Humayun, he urged him not to lose hope<sup>11</sup>. Humayun woke up in a state of elation. With a renewed earnestness, he resolved to continue his struggle for Hindustan.

### **Dream of Sher Shah Suri**

Sher Shah Suri was the founder of the Sur Empire in North India. After taking control of the Mughal Empire in 1540, he set up a new civic and military administration and implemented several reforms in the financial and postal sectors. After his victory at Chausa, when he was at the Mughal camp, Sher Shah, seeking to validate his expedient action as a divine dispensation, had spoken of a strange dream he had the previous night, of God taking the crown from Humayun and placing it on his (Sher Shah's) head, and advising him to rule justly<sup>12</sup>. This felicitous dream was fulfilled soon after at Gaur, when Sher Shah, then in early fifties, was formerly enthroned as king in a grand ceremony, legitimizing the royal title he had assumed the previous year.<sup>13</sup>

### **Dream of Hemu**

Hemu also known as Hemu Vikramaditya and Hemchandra Vikramaditya was a Hindu general and Chief Minister of Adil Shah Suri of the Sur Dynasty during a period in Indian history when the Mughals and Afghans were vying for power across North India. He fought Afghan rebels across North India from the Punjab to Bengal and the Mughal forces of Akbar and Humayun in Agra and Delhi, winning 22 battles for Adil Shah. Hemu had problems of different kind. Ill omens – morale depressants – beset him. On the way to panipat he had a nightmare, in which he

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<sup>9</sup> Mondal, S (2013) "History of Medieval India, Important India", Available at <https://www.importantindia.com/4568/islam-shah-suri/>

<sup>10</sup> Sarkar, S. K. (1994) "Himu, The Hindu Hero of Medieval India: Against the Background of Afghan-Mughal Conflicts", Atlantic Publishers & Dist, p.85

<sup>11</sup> H Ambrin,(2017) Humayun in Sindh,The Friday Times,online at - <http://www.thefridaytimes.com/tft/humayun-in-sindh/>

<sup>12</sup> Abramam E , Emperors of the Peacock Throne: The Saga of the Great Mughals,Penguin books India,2000,p. 58

<sup>13</sup> Ibid

saw that the elephant he was riding being swept away in a flood , and a Mughal soldier putting a chain around his neck and pulling him out as he was about to drown. The dream was analyzed by ‘the interpreters of dream’ as signifying the defeat and death of Hemu in the battle.<sup>14</sup>

### **Dream of Ahemad Bheg**

Ahmed Bheg was a general in Mughal army. He led the Mughals in battle of Panipat in 1555. While in battle of Panipat Omens didn’t favoured Hemu but they were in favour for Mughals for sure Ahemad Bheg a Mughal general dreamt of blade bone of sheep which was interpreted as feast on mutton and assured certain victory.<sup>15</sup>

### **Dream of Akbar**

Abu’l-Fath Jalal ud-din Muhammad Akbar, popularly known as Akbar and later Akbar the Great was Mughal emperor from 1556 until his death. He was the third and one of the greatest rulers of the Mughal dynasty in India. Akbar succeeded his father, Humayun, under a regent, Bairam Khan, who helped the young emperor expand and consolidate Mughal domains in India. Once Akbar saw a dream, that two of his elephants had died. He interpreted them as the death of two of his rebellious brothers. Eventually the same happened and both the rebellious brothers were killed.<sup>16</sup>

### **Dream of Jahangir**

Mirza Nur-ud-din Beig Mohammad Khan Salim, known by his imperial name Jahangir (Persian for “conqueror of the world” (31 August 1569 – 28 October 1627)), was the fourth Mughal Emperor who ruled from 1605 until his death in 1627. Emperor Jahangir once saw a dream that his father Akbar wanted Mirza Aza Kaka who was imprisoned in Gwalior jail released. The prisoner was instantly released on the orders of Jahangir.<sup>17</sup>

### **References of Dreams in Different World Societies**

Dream interpretations date back to 3000-4000 B.C., where they were documented on clay tablets. For as long as we have been able to talk about our dreams, we have been fascinated with them and have strived to understand them. In the Greek and Roman eras, dreams were seen in a religious context. They were believed to be direct messages from the gods or from the dead. The people of that time look to their dreams for solutions on what to do or what course of action to take. They believed dreams forewarned and predicted the future. Special shrines were even built where people can go there to sleep in hopes that a message could be passed to them through their dreams. Their belief in the power of a dream was so strong that it even dictated the actions of political and military leaders. In fact, dream interpreters even accompanied military leaders into battle to help with war strategy. Greek philosopher, Aristotle believed that dreams were a result of physiological functions. Dreams were able to diagnose illness and predict onset of diseases. During the Hellenistic period, the main focus of dreams was centered on its ability to heal. Temples, called Asclepieions, were built around the healing power of dreams. It was

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid

<sup>15</sup> Ibid

<sup>16</sup> Ahmed, A (2015) “Taj Mahal Or Mummy Mahal?: The First Indian Mummy”, Evoco Publication, p.11.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid

believed that sick people who slept in these temples would be sent cures through their dreams. Dream interpreters even aided the medicine men in their medical diagnosis. It was believed that dreams offered a vital clue for healers to finding what was wrong with the dreamer. In Egypt, priests also acted as dream interpreters. The Egyptians recorded their dreams in hieroglyphics. People with particular vivid and significant dreams were believed to be blessed and were considered special. People who had the power to interpret dreams were looked up to and seen as divinely gifted. Dreaming can be seen as an actual place that your spirit and soul leaves every night to go and visit. The Chinese believed that the soul leaves the body to go into this world. However, if they should be suddenly awakened, their soul may fail to return to the body. For this reason, some Chinese today, are wary of alarm clocks. Some Native American tribes and Mexican civilizations share this same notion of a distinct dream dimension. They believed that their ancestors lived in their dreams and take on non-human forms like plants. Also, they see that dreams as a way of visiting and having contact with their ancestors. Moreover, dreams also helped to point their mission or role in life. During the middle ages, dreams were seen as evil and its images were temptations from the devil. In the vulnerable sleep state, the devil was believed to fill the mind of humans with poisonous thoughts. He did his dirty work through dreams attempting to mislead us down a wrong path. In the early 19th century, dreams were dismissed as stemming from anxiety, a household noise or even indigestion. Hence there was really no meaning to it. Later on in the 19th century, Sigmund Freud revived the importance of dreams and its significance and need for interpretation. He revolutionized the study of dreams. Tracing back to these ancient cultures, people had always had an inclination to interpret dreams .The bible alone has over seven hundred references to dreams.<sup>18</sup>

### **Conclusion**

Dreams can be disciplinary, rewarding, and prophetic and all are given by the universal spirit, or god-head. Some dreams are read as predictions with some seen as punishments or rewards for certain actions. Others can be tied to various ailments. Mostly, dreams are seen as manifestations of evil spirits, though some good dreams are also given by the supreme lawgiver. It is believed that if a man leads a moral life and surrenders himself at the feet of the Divine he would be released of all evil dreams; in fact all his dreams would become a good dream reflecting his true nature. These dreams would happen in the early morning as he became receptive to the Divine nature within him. He would then experience these dreams within his waking life .Most of these dreams are consistent with the person's Karma a spiritually originated law comprising a person's total past and present actions e.g. what you have not dealt with in the past will come around again and again until you deal with. It is not fate, for man has free will and the ability to change the total of his actions. Not only the common man but even the emperor's dream and look for interpretations of their dreams.

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<sup>18</sup> Dream in history (2013) Available at <http://www.dreammoods.com/dreaminformation/history.htm>