The International Journal of Indian Psychology
ISSN 2348-5396 (Online) | ISSN: 2349-3429 (Print)
Volume 12, Issue 3, July- September, 2024
DIP: 18.01.093.20241203, DOI: 10.25215/1203.093
https://www.ijip.in

Research Paper

Dreams and their Significance in Our Lives

Naresh Kumar[1]*

ABSTRACT

Dreams are a part of our daily life. Every night when we slip into sleep, dreams take over. Have you ever imagined how our lives would be if dreams were not there? You will be astonished to learn that research shows that if we do not dream we would approach insanity. Dreams are taken as a way of life but these hold a lot of significance in our lives. This paper explores the anatomy of dreams, what causes them and how they have so much significance in our lives. It is an interesting read which brings you a lot of awareness about dreams.

Keywords: *Sleep, Dreams, Subconscious State of mind, REM Sleep, Alternate States of Consciousness*

We all dream. I can't disagree with Ms Sudha Chandran who says, "My bedroom is my favourite chill-out zone, where after a hectic day, I sign off to land in my dreams." Every night I enter the world of fantasy where I weave a strange world for myself resting on unreal deductive logic. The dreams constitute a movie flickering before our closed eyes depicting a coherent series of events that are tied with unmeaningful logic. John Locke echoes these words when he says, "*Where all is but dream, reasoning and arguments are of no use, truth and knowledge nothing."*

Alfred Lord Tennyson feels that *"Dreams are true while they last, and do we not live in dreams?"* While in the dream, we feel that we are in the real world and soon after we forget the whole chain of events when we wake up. This happens every night and the next morning.

I agree with Joshua Miles[1] who feels, '*For the majority of us, dreams are an ongoing part of our lives. Some of them we remember, some we don't. We may consider them to be highly meaningful and feel greatly impacted by them, or we may view them as a collection of the day's events; an amalgamation of useless images or random neurons firing in the brain. Throughout our waking lives, we can have a tendency to push into the depths of our minds, those thoughts, feelings and ideas which disturb, shock or worry us the most. However, our unconscious mind is not a locked vault and nothing we place there is ever truly hidden from view. These difficult and distressing thoughts and ideas often have a way of showing themselves in a variety of different ways, such as through our dreams".*

Indeed, dreams have a meaning if we decode them. I recall that when I quit my hectic professional life at the age of 70 years, one dream kept haunting me for a year:

[1]Independent Researcher
*Corresponding Author

Received: July 03, 2024; Revision Received: August 06, 2024; Accepted: August 10, 2024

In my first job 50 years ago, I was working in a glass factory which was part of a group of companies which had a big pharmaceutical factory adjoining the glass factory. Between the two factories, there was only a fence and along the fence there was a road leading to the factory gate and outside at a distance of 200 yards, there was the Glass Factory colony where I lived. At the backside of the glass factory, there ran a common road perpendicular to the fenced road which ran along the boundary of the two factories. There was no fence extended at the intersection of the road which separated the two factories. We could walk on that road and could go across from the glass factory to the backside of the Pharma factory without crossing the boundary or any fence and the road was quite long.

In my dream I found myself walking on that road in search of the intersection to the road which would take me to factory gate and to my residence in Glass Colony after my duty hours. I always missed the intersection of the fenced road which led to the factory gate. I found that I could never reach my colony and was lost on that long road running along the back boundary of the pharma company. This dream kept me haunting almost every night in the first month after quitting my professional life and thereafter frequency went on reducing but this dream was with me for almost a year.

Today when I analyse this dream, I can relate it to my predicament of how to pass the time after leading a very hectic life while managing factory operations of multilocational factories of the big group of companies where I was working. Suddenly there was a vacuum in my life. I was really lost as I could not find a solution. The dream symbolized my wandering situation where I was looking for some activity which could keep me busy. I felt that I had lost my way and was wandering aimlessly. The dream reflected my wandering in a symbolic way. And then I took to researching and writing and I got totally immersed in it and then the frequency of dreams reduced and once I got used to my new way of life, the dream withered away.

I think a dream lives its life with our mental condition and in a way prepares us to face the situation by persisting with the dream subject till a solution is found. The dream reflects our mental condition and guides us. It might be a survival tool for mankind.

Another interesting observation I had about dreams was that when a particular aspect of my research effort was bothering me and I could not get ideas which could remove the block in the way of research and I slept thinking about it; I found the solution when I was at my laptop next morning. Maybe the dream state led me to the solution. Maybe dreams enhance our creative instincts.

I remember lines from a paper by Balvir Singh Tomar[2] whose words echoed in my mind when I wrote the above paragraph:
"The importance of dreams lies in promoting creative inspiration. Many famous artists, writers, and inventors have attributed some of their best ideas to dreams. Dreams can be a powerful source of inspiration, as they can help unlock the unconscious mind and allow for free association and nonlinear thinking. It is often said that if you want to solve any problem or if you are stuck in your creative project, let your mind wander and dream about it, the solution will come to you in a dream."

How true!!! My own experience speaks volumes about this fact!!
Dreams are an integral part of our existence; they must have a specific role to play in our existence. Dreams must have significance to our physiological systems, otherwise, how we get refreshed in the morning after being engrossed in the dream. Dreams must also have

psychological significance and they may often be an unconscious reflection of our internal anxieties, fears, desires, hopes and fantasies. Dreams may be a vent for the internal pressures building in our psyche. Dreams may reflect our past, and present and may also capture the future; how else do we have precognitive dreams?

This paper will explore the various aspects of dreams starting from their anatomy, causes and their significance in our lives.
To begin with we must understand dreams:

Anatomy of Dreams

Dreams occur in sleep. During sleep, we drift into a fantasy world created by thoughts embedded in our subconscious mind. Fantasy does take shape even when we are awake and proverbially, we call it daydreaming. We are not concerned here about daydreaming and shall restrict our discussions to dreams that happen in sleep. How do dreams happen in sleep?

Sleep is a period of rest that alternates with wakefulness. You have internal body clocks that control when you are awake and when your body is ready for sleep. These clocks have cycles of approximately 24 hours. Once asleep, you cycle through the stages of sleep throughout the night in a predictable pattern.

When you sleep, you cycle through two phases of sleep: Non-rapid eye movement (NREM) and REM sleep. The cycle starts over every 80 to 100 minutes. Usually, there are four to six cycles per night.
Sleep begins with Non-REM sleep which has four stages:

- ***Stage 1.*** This stage is the transition between wakefulness and sleep. This is Drowsy state -it lasts for 5-10 minutes
- ***Stage 2.*** When you reach stage 2, you are having light sleep for about thirty minutes.
- ***Stage 3.*** Moderate sleep
- ***Stage 4.*** This stage is called deep sleep or slow-wave sleep, after a particular pattern that appears in measurements of brain activity. You usually spend more time in this stage early in the night.

Within 90 minutes after sleep begins, adults progress through all four stages of NREM sleep and then proceed into the first of a series of REM periods of sleep.

REM Sleep

During REM sleep, your eyes twitch and your brain is active. Brain activity measured during REM sleep is similar to your brain's activity during waking hours. Dreaming usually happens during REM sleep. Your muscles normally become limp to prevent you from acting out your dreams.

In addition to the rapid eye movements that can be observed through closed eyelids, REM sleep can be recognized by complete relaxation of the lower jaw. Convulsions, myocardial infarction, and cardiac arrhythmias are more likely to occur during REM sleep. This is probably because of increased autonomic activity, irregular pulse, and fluctuations in blood pressure, which are all typical of REM sleep.
(Source: *https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/sleep/stages-of-sleep*)

The sleep cycle which was discussed above is pictorially explained below:

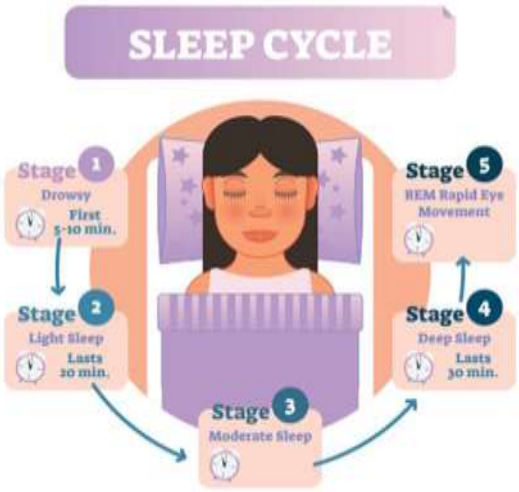

Figure 1—Sleep Stages and Sleep Cycle Explained
***(source:** sleepassociation.org/about-sleep/what-is-sleep/)*

We cycle between the NREM and REM phases during the night till we wake up in the morning.
My paper[3] on 'Sleep' captures details of dreams in sleep.
Despite numerous studies into sleep and dreaming, there is still no exact reason why we dream. What is clear however is that there is an enormous amount of neurological activity occurring during sleep, especially when we are in REM (rapid eye movement) sleep. This is the period of sleep which happens usually during the latter half of our night's sleep and in this phase, the dreams manifest.

Brief cycles of about 10 to 30 minutes of REM sleep recur throughout the night, alternating with various stages of NREM sleep. With each cycle, NREM sleep decreases and REM sleep increases so that by the end of the night most of the sleep is REM sleep, which is when dreams occur.

While everyone dreams every night, many do not remember dreaming; most people are aware, however, that they dream more just before rising.

While we sleep, we keep on drifting between the 4 stages of NREM states and REM states and a lot of changes happen in the body when we drift to sleep and go to the dreaming state. The bodily changes are further explained by Adler Lana[4]:

What happens to Our Bodies While We sleep and dream*?*
Several things happen in your body during sleep and dreams, including

- ***Rapid Eye Movement:*** Your eyes move rapidly behind your eyelids when you dream. During this time, your eyes do not send visual information to the brain as they usually do during waking hours. Rather, eye motion during dreams is likely involved with visual processing during deep sleep, and possibly even how you visually experience your dream space.
- ***Temporary Paralysis:*** When you enter into REM sleep, your body is mostly immobilized. You lose almost all muscle tone, except for the muscles under your

eyelids and in your diaphragm. This state is called ***Atonia*** and is caused by a change in the neurons in the base of the brainstem, which is in contact with the neurons that stimulate muscle movement. Atonia may be the body trying to keep you from physically acting out your dreams in your sleep or accidentally waking yourself up.

- ***Twitching Muscles:*** While many of the muscles in your body are inactive during REM sleep because of Atonia, it is common for people to involuntarily twitch, especially in the fingers and toes. While twitching was originally thought to be a part of the body's reaction to what's happening within a dream, it is now thought that it may have to do more with processing and mapping the neurons that connect the body to the mind.
- ***Breathing Changes:*** Breathing during REM sleep often becomes irregular, involving dramatic rising and falling. REM sleep is also characterized by brief apneas or pauses in breathing. Apneas during REM sleep correspond to bursts of rapid eye movement and are linked to the body activating the respiratory control system during REM sleep.
- ***Fluctuating Heart Rate and Blood Pressure:*** During the NREM stages of sleep, heart rate and blood pressure usually decrease by around 20%. However, during REM sleep, heart rate and blood pressure can fluctuate wildly, sometimes dipping to NREM rates, and sometimes rising to an average or higher rate of breathing found in everyday life.

We have so far understood that dreams happen during sleep and that too only in REM Phase but we do not know what causes the dreams. Let us explore this.

Why we dream

Hannah Nichols[5] posits that Dreams are a universal human experience that can be described as a state of consciousness characterised by sensory, cognitive and emotional occurrences during sleep. The dreamer has reduced control over the content, visual images and activation of the memory.

Following are some startling facts about dreams:

- We may not remember dreaming, but everyone is thought to dream between 3 and 6 times per night
- It is thought that each dream lasts between 5 to 20 minutes.
- Around 95 percent of dreams are forgotten by the time a person gets out of bed.
- Dreaming can help you learn and develop long-term memories.
- Blind people dream more with other sensory components compared with sighted people.

The mind is a great storyteller, it assimilates our experiences, memories, emotions, and thoughts and weaves stories every night in our dreams. The unconscious mind has a treasure of stories woven with logical fantasy and the writer within the mind stretches the story to extend to a long dream. (*Here I intervene to put before you my experience in the dream as to how dreams get extended—I am a diabetic and a senior citizen and hence my sleep is often interrupted because of an urge to urinate. After I get up and come back to sleep after passing the urine, I find that the dream takes over from where I had left it when I got up. This is how we have an extension of dreams during our sleep*!!)

What causes the mind to manifest dreams every night? Philosophers and researchers have been exploring this topic from time immemorial but to date there is no universally accepted answer to this vital question.

Many theories have cropped up to explain this. Kendra Cherry[6] brings to us some of these theories:

"*The question of why we dream has fascinated philosophers and scientists for thousands of years. Traditionally, dream content is measured by the subjective recollections of the dreamer upon waking. However, observation is also accomplished through objective evaluation in a lab.*

In one study, researchers even created a rudimentary dream content map that was able to track what people dreamed about in real time using magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) patterns. The map was then backed up by the dreamers' reports upon waking.

There is no single dream theory that fully explains all of the aspects of why we dream.
The most prominent theory is that dreams help us to process and consolidate information from the previous day. However, other theories have suggested that dreams are critical for emotional processing, creativity, and self-knowledge.
Some theories suggest that dreams also have symbolic meanings that offer a glimpse into the unconscious mind.

Some prominent theories discussing the causes of Dream put forth by Kendra Cherry[6] are as follows:

Activation-Synthesis Dream Theory

According to the activation-synthesis model of dreaming, which was first proposed by J. Allan Hobson and Robert McCarley, circuits in the brain become activated during REM sleep, which triggers the amygdala and hippocampus to create an array of electrical impulses. This results in a compilation of random thoughts, images, and memories that appear while dreaming.

Self-Organization Dream Theory

This model, known as the self-organization theory of dreaming, explains that dreaming is a side effect of brain neural activity as memories are consolidated during sleep.

During this process of unconscious information redistribution, it is suggested that memories are either strengthened or weakened. According to the self-organization theory of dreaming, while we dream, helpful memories are made stronger, while less useful ones fade away.

Research supports this theory, finding improvement in complex tasks when a person dreams about doing them. Studies also show that during REM sleep, low-frequency theta waves are more active in the frontal lobe, just like they are when people are learning, storing, and remembering information when awake.

Continuity Hypothesis Dream Theory

Under the continuity hypothesis, dreams function as a reflection of a person's real life, incorporating conscious experiences into their dreams. Rather than a straightforward replay of waking life, dreams show up as a patchwork of memory fragments.

Under the continuity hypothesis, memories may be fragmented purposefully in our dreams as part of incorporating new learning and experiences into long-term memory. Still, there are many unanswered questions as to why some aspects of memories are featured more or less prominently in our dreams.

Emotional Regulation Dream Theory

The emotional regulation dream theory says that the function of dreams is to help us process and cope with our emotions or trauma in the safe space of slumber.

Research shows that the amygdala, which is involved in processing emotions, and the hippocampus, which plays a vital role in condensing information and moving it from short-term to long-term memory storage, are active during vivid, intense dreaming.

This illustrates a strong link between dreaming, memory storage, and emotional processing.

Other Theories About Why We Dream

Many other theories have been suggested to account for why we dream.

- One dream theory contends that dreams are the result of our brains trying to interpret external stimuli (such as a dog's bark, music, or a baby's cry) during sleep.
- Another theory uses a computer metaphor to account for dreams, noting that dreams serve to "clean up" clutter from the mind, refreshing the brain for the next day.
- The reverse-learning theory suggests that we dream to forget. Our brains have thousands of neural connections between memories—too many to remember them all—and that dreaming is part of "pruning" those connections.
- In the continual-activation theory, we dream to keep the brain active while we sleep, to keep it functioning properly.

Exploration of dreams has been going on from time immemorial. For centuries people have pondered the meaning of dreams. Early civilizations thought of dreams as a medium between our earthly world and that of the gods. In fact, the Greeks and Romans were convinced that dreams had certain prophetic powers. While there has always been a great interest in the interpretation of human dreams, it wasn't until the end of the nineteenth century that several theories were put forth by eminent thinkers and are known as modern theories of dreaming. We discussed some of those theories in the above paragraphs.

We have explored some important theories which take up the question of what causes dreams. To date, there is no universally acceptable theory. If we consolidate the thoughts provided in the above theories, we can say that there are many reasons responsible for generating dreams while we sleep:

Maybe circuits in the brain become activated during REM sleep, which triggers the amygdala and hippocampus to create an array of electrical impulses which result in a compilation of random thoughts, images, and memories that appear while dreaming. It is of interest to note that even though there is a logic in the content, yet, there is a disconnect with reality and the logic many times is meaningless. Thoughts are incoherent and one thought comes and gets extended through logic leading to another thought and we keep wandering in our dreams from one event to another which seem disconnected.

During dreams, memories from the subconscious mind surface up and helpful memories gain more prominence, while less useful ones fade away and the mind keeps on weaving a story which like a movie keeps flickering before us and we get carried away with the scenes created by our helpful memories. The memories are driven from our past experiences as fragment components and dreams function as a reflection of a person's real life, incorporating conscious

experiences. The memories are fragmented purposefully in our dreams as part of incorporating new learning.

While memories do surface up from the unconscious mind, the emotions also hover in the background during the dreams. The function of dreams is to help us process and cope with our emotions or trauma in the safe space of slumber. The emotions are processed in the amygdala, and the hippocampus condenses information from the amygdala and moves it from short-term to long-term memory storage to create vivid and intense dreaming.

This illustrates a strong link between dreaming, memory storage, and emotional processing. Memories in the unconscious mind and our emotions lurking in the background help in the manifestation of dreams.

I reiterate that the cause of dreams is discussed in various theories but to date, there is no universally accepted theory. The universally accepted fact is that dreams happen every night. A thought comes to mind that if they happen every night, there must be a purpose for it and there must be some significance of dreams to our lives.

In the next paragraphs, we shall explore the significance of dreams in our lives:

The Significance of Dreams in Our Lives

I discussed my dream which haunted me for a year after I had quit my professional life at the age of 70 years. As I analysed, the dreams were persistently pushing me to find a solution to stop my wandering in search of some occupation so that I could become usefully occupied. The dream persistently told me symbolically that I had lost my way and when I found my way (i.e., I took to researching and writing), the dreams stopped. These dreams had great significance for me. The dreams also helped me in finding creative solutions whenever I got stuck in my research.

I feel that dreams go a long way in preparing us to fight back. They prepare us for fighting against adverse situations.

City Mattress Staff[7] researched and found that "*Dreams help you "train" your fight-or-flight reflexes. The amygdala is the part of your brain associated with your survival instincts, also known as the "fight-or-flight response." Maybe not so coincidentally, this is also one of the areas of the brain that is most active during dreaming. One popular theory states that because the amygdala is more active during sleep than in your waking life, it may be the brain's way of preparing you to deal with a threat one day. It is also worth noting that the brainstem sends out nerve signals during REM sleep that relax your muscles. That way you don't try to run or punch in your sleep to act out your dreams. It is almost like your brain is running through a simulation, so you're prepared to deal with anything life throws at you."*

Many more ways dreams help us. Dorothy Gilman, once said, "People need dreams, there's as much nourishment in 'em as food".

Joshua Miles[1] suggests that dreams could be crucial to our emotional and mental health and can be a means by which we solve problems, and deal with emotions and thoughts. It is thought that dreams play an important role in providing us with the ability to function psychologically. Therefore, there are clear benefits to dreaming and understanding our dreams and their meanings. Not being able to dream may harm our mental health and capacity to deal with difficulties in our waking lives.

Furthermore, many more benefits of having dreams are listed by Dr Sruthi M[8], who brings out the following benefits :
Researchers believe that dreams are a type of mental cleansing whose primary goal is to help us forget. However, many people have argued since ancient times that the content of dreams is genuinely relevant.

She believes that there are six benefits of dreaming:
Improves memory:
Some studies proved that sleep aids in the retention of new knowledge, and there is some evidence that dreaming helps reinforce memories.

A study was conducted on 99 participants to play a virtual reality maze. The researcher put the participants' memory to the test by asking them to recall things in the maze. Half of the participants then fell asleep, and when they awoke, the scientists retested everyone's memory of the maze. People in the napping group performed better on the exam than those in the non-sleeping group. Those who experienced dreams of the maze during their naps improved 10 times faster than the rest of the sleeping group.

Helps you learn and memorize:
There is scientific proof that you do learn while you are asleep. While you sleep, the brain reactivates and consolidates freshly acquired memories and information snippets.

Assists emotional healing:
According to recent studies, people are more likely to dream about emotionally powerful situations, and theta brain waves during rapid eye movement (REM) sleep are one mechanism for the brain to consolidate such memories. Although what you encounter in your dreams is fictitious, the feelings that accompany them are quite real, and dreams may help you heal those emotions.

Offers a new perspective on things:
Dreams do more than just replicate what you have seen or learned; they generate whole new mashups and free linkages between what you have seen and what you know. As a result, your dreams provide a window into your most untamed creativity, as well as new methods of problem-solving.

Many prominent artists and philosophers who attribute their greatest works to their dreams have testified to this.
Indicates overall health:
REM sleep is considered the most essential type of sleep. As most vivid dreams occur during REM sleep, a lack of dreams indicates sleep deprivation.

Nightmares do have their share of benefits:
Researchers now believe that experiences such as an emotional "dress rehearsal" are the brain's way of preparing you for horrible things that may happen. It is almost as if the mind is expecting unpleasant things and then attempting to come up with answers.

Some scientists feel this is a primitive protection mechanism; if something horrible happened once, there is a risk it would happen again. As a result, experiencing reoccurring nightmares about that incident may keep you on guard.

Dreams are necessary for the survival of humans. Dreams are essential for our sanity. This is the theory projected by William Dement, in a 1961 article called "Dream and Stay Sane." Dement's studies asked the important question of "whether a substantial amount of dreaming is in some way a necessary and vital part of our existence." Dement and his colleagues theorized that the hallucinatory nature of dreams gave the mind a sort of recess each night that could protect it from insanity during the day.
(*Source: https://www.saturdayeveningpost.com/2019/02/how-dreaming-can-save-your-life/*)

If we have to remain sane we must have dreams to cleanse the brain and not only that thinkers say that dreams are needed for the very survival of mankind. Nicholas Gilmore[9] gives research details confirming this:
Since dreaming is such a universal human experience, we've long figured these nightly hallucinations must have some sort of meaning or utility. The serious study of dreams, or oneirology, is a relatively new field that offers new insights each year into why we dream. Some new research is pointing toward our own survival as a reason for dreaming.

Dr. Joseph De Koninck, emeritus professor of psychology at the University of Ottawa, has been studying dreams for much of his career, and he says we've come a long way since those early days.

De Koninck says that an impactful discovery is the realization that the frontal lobe is at rest during dreams while other parts of the brain like the amygdala are active. Because the frontal lobe is responsible for functions like judgment and mathematics and the amygdala houses emotions — especially fear — this explains why we find it difficult to plan or think critically in dreams yet experience emotions like joy and fear in abundance.

De Koninck was involved in one study that tested part of a theory of why we have bad dreams, the Threat Simulation Theory. The TST posits that "the function of the virtual reality of dreams is to produce a simulation of threatening events, the sources of which are derived from situations experienced while awake and associated with a strong negative emotional charge." Our ancestors' brains adapted to simulate real-life threats in our dreams so that we would be prepared to cope with such dangers in waking life. The dangerous situations in dreams exist to prepare us for such threats in the world for our own survival.

Threat Simulation Theory suggests that threatening dreams help us prepare ourselves for facing threats in real life. I had personally experienced it and I shared my experience of that haunting dream which prepared me to solve my predicament. Indeed, dreams are significant in the sense that they help in our survival.

Dr Jason M Holland[10] adds some more significance that dream has to our lives:
Dreams help consolidate memory
Have you ever crammed for a test, gone to sleep, only to wake and find that your memory for the material had strengthened during the night? Several studies have shown that these post-sleep memory boosts are real, indicating that one important function of sleep is to consolidate new memories into more permanent forms of memory storage. Many have theorized that this memory consolidation process during sleep is what we experience as dreams. Some research has emerged supporting such a claim, demonstrating that recall of new information after sleep is stronger if it is incorporated into a dream. From this perspective, dreams may then be thought of as a rehashing of what's important and needs to be remembered.

Another important significance of dreams in our lives is that they many a time they help in forecasting the future. Holland has some views on this:

Dreams may help forecast the future

The American 20th century mystic, Edgar Cayce, once remarked that "Dreams are today's answers to tomorrow's questions." Recently, this notion of dreams forecasting possible future problems in one's life has seen a revival of sorts. According to the psychologist and dream expert, Dr Sue Llewellyn, in a recent piece for Aeon, "we are better at making non-obvious…associations after REM sleep because our brains are primed during that sleep – by our dreams – to spot non-obvious, probabilistic patterns of experience and events."

Dreams do bring out probabilistic events, how else, do we explain Precognitive Dreams?
We have come far in discussions on dreams, we have understood how dreams happen, viewed the anatomy of dreams and also seen how dreams are caused and their significance to our lives. It cleanses our brain, thus, preventing us from insanity, improves our creativity and is also helpful in aiding us to fight against threats. My own example was a personal experience of this fact. We have seen that dreams help us astonishingly both mentally and bodily.

We are approaching the end of the paper but discussions on dreams will not be complete without discussing one important aspect related to Dreams i.e., premonition and telepathic dreams and the relevant research.

Literature is full of dreams in which people can foresee future events. The most prominent incident is that of Abraham Lincoln, the U.S. president who had a precognitive dream about his death:

Just days before Lincoln was shot, he told his wife of a dream that he had:
"He was woken up by the sound of crying and went into the East Room of the White House, where a casket was laid open. There was a throng of mourners as well as several men guarding the casket. When he asked who was in the casket, one of the soldiers told him that it was the President, who had been killed by an assassin."

Three days after telling his wife this dream, Lincoln was shot and killed by John Wilkes Booth. https://biography.yourdictionary.com/abraham.lincoln)

Another incident of precognition dream is posited by Caroline Watt[11]:
"Stevenson recounts the precognition of the sinking of the Titanic. A New York woman had a vivid dream on the night of the sinking, so striking that she woke her husband to tell him about it: "I just saw the mother in a crowded lifeboat rocking in the ocean swell" (Stevenson, 1960, p 157). The woman didn't know her mother was on the ship. Her mother had boarded at Southampton and had intended to surprise her daughter. Fortunately, she had indeed been saved by a lifeboat and eventually made it safely to New York."

Dreams, many a time, have precognitive content. It is observed that when a calamity is about to happen, people get precognitive dreams. When the Twin Tower collapse was about to happen, more than 1400 cases were reported where people had dreams which cautioned about this terrorist attack.

It is of interest to note that precognition is a phenomenon which brings the perception of future events without the use of the known five senses. There are other phenomena which bring the perception of events without the use of the known five senses, i.e., seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling and feeling. Such perceptions are termed as Extra Sensory Perception or ESP. ESP

includes Telepathy, Clairvoyance, Remote Viewing and Precognition. ESP is being extensively researched and the field of research is Parapsychology.

In Parapsychological research, it is established that altered states of Consciousness are conducive to the manifestation of ESP phenomena. The dream state is an altered state of Consciousness and hence we see precognition events happening in dream. Not only does Precognition happen in dreams, there are telepathic events also reported during dreams.

Dreams are extensively researched in the laboratory. We shall conclude the paper after exploring the laboratory dream research carried out in Maimonides's laboratory.
Dreams have been a subject of laboratory studies and Precognition and Telepathy in dreams have been deeply researched in Maimonides's Dream Research.

Maimonides Dream Research
Successful ESP dreaming experiments were carried out in a sleep laboratory at the Maimonides Medical Center in Brooklyn, New York, between 1964 and 1978. In several instances, close matches were reported between the content of subjects' dreams and the imagery that another person in a separate room was trying to transmit to them. Also, Dream ESP Studies revealed that some dreams perceived future events and hence they were called Precognitive dreams.

The sleep laboratory at the Maimonides Medical Center was founded by Montague Ullman (September 9, 1916 – June 7, 2008).

He was a psychiatrist, psychoanalyst and parapsychologist who founded the Dream Laboratory at the Maimonides Medical Center in Brooklyn, New York and for over three decades promoted public interest in dreams and dream-sharing groups. He was joined by famous parapsychological researcher Stanley Krippner in 1964 and together they extensively experimented on dreams in the laboratory.

Stanley Krippner explains in his own words the methodology of dream research in the laboratory as follows:
"In 1964 I accepted Montague Ullman's invitation to direct the Dream Laboratory at the Maimonides Medical Center in Brooklyn, New York. I had met Monte at various conventions of the Parapsychological Association and had told him about my lifelong interest in dreams and anomalous phenomena.

At Maimonides, the basic research procedure developed by Monte was to fasten electrodes onto the head of a research participant, and then take her or him to a specially designed soundproof room where the electrodes were plugged into a receptacle. In the meantime, a staff member would throw dice, add up the total, and go to a stack of envelopes, each of which contained a vividly coloured art print. The envelope was given to another staff member who would take it to a distant room, open it, and spend much of the night attempting to "transmit" the images to the sleeping research participant.

The participant knew that the task was to incorporate these images into her or his dreams, and would be awakened and queried whenever the electroencephalograph tracings indicated that dreaming was probably taking place. In the morning, the participant would be interviewed regarding associations with her or his tape-recorded dream reports. The final step was for the participant to inspect copies of all the art prints in the "pool", ranking them

in terms of their similarity to the recalled dreams. Over the course of the decade that we worked together, we amassed data indicating that some anomalous "transmission" and "reception" had taken place at statistically significant levels. Together, we wrote dozens of research articles and a popular book on this investigation.

As a psychoanalyst, Monte had a repertoire of so-called "telepathic" and "precognitive" dreams concerning his clients, and bringing these experiences into a laboratory setting will be known someday as a major contribution to psychological science.

Monte is too modest to admit it, but—more than anyone else—he pioneered what has been known as the "grassroots dream movement," an interest in dreams that has spawned the International Association for the Study of Dreams, as well as "leaderless" dream groups all around the world. These groups follow the procedures outlined in Monte's weekend seminars as well as his books on the topic."
(Source: *https://dreamnetworkjournal.com/bcpoz4zmwwmu/working-with-monte-ullman-at-maimonides-reflections-on-a-dream-relationship)*

The pioneering work on dream research by Ullman and Krippner has been pursued further. Dr Lance Storm and Adam j Rock[12] wrote in 2015:

For more than half a century, considerable research has been conducted into what is now referred to as "dream-ESP". This domain had its greatest impact on the research work done at the Maimonides Dream Laboratory (Ullman, Krippner, & Vaughan, 1974). It originated in the idea that many people report telepathic and premonitory dreams, to which J. B. Rhine's wife, Louisa Rhine, attested on the basis of her vast collection of unexplained anecdotal accounts (Rhine, 1962). In some sense, psi (Le., psychic functioning) is encapsulated in the dream process, with the psi target seemingly embedded in the imagery that is the dream content. It can be seen that today's ongoing and generally successful dream-ESP research has its humble beginnings at the Dream Lab, thanks to the pioneering work of Stanley Krippner and his colleagues.

Dream research at the laboratory was not restricted to telepathy but extensive successful research was done on Precognition as well.

The laboratory studies on dreams not only paved the way for researching dreams in laboratories but the results proved that dreams were very significant to humans, especially from a psychic angle.

Maimonides's research has led us to the fact that dreams are significant to understanding human psychic phenomena. Their significance assumes a very high influence on Parapsychological Research. In Parapsychological research, it is found that an altered state of consciousness is conducive to manifest Telepathy and Precognition phenomena. Dreams being a part of an altered state of consciousness is conducive to manifesting these psychic phenomena and hence dreams become an important field of study for ESP research.

With this, we conclude the paper on the fascinating topic of 'Dreams'.
While we are yet to have a universally acceptable theory which explains dreams, it is proven beyond doubt that dreams are very important for us and our survival and can lead to a startling expansion of knowledge of the human psyche.

We look forward to thinkers worldwide probing deeper into the dreams and expanding the knowledge base of mankind!!

REFERENCES

1) Joshua Miles (2015) The significance of dreams and what they can represent. Paper published on December 14, 2015. *https://www.counselling-directory.org.uk/memberarticles/the-importance-of-dreams-what-they-can-represent*
2) Balvir Singh Tomar (2023) Unlocking the Power of Dreams: Discovering the Importance of Dreams in Emotional, Psychological, and Physical Well-being. Paper published on January 11, 2023. https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/readersblog/drbstomar/unlocking-the-power-of-dreams-discovering-the-importance-of-dreams-in-emotional-psychological-and-physical-well-being-49094/
3) Kumar. N (2021) Sleep-Some Perspectives Common People May Not Be Familiar With. The paper published in The International Journal of Indian Psychology ISSN 2348-5396 (Online) | ISSN: 2349-3429 (Print) Volume 9, Issue 2, April- June, 2021 DIP: 18.01.127.20210902, DOI: 10.25215/0902.127 http://www.ijip.in
4) Adler Lana (2021)-Dreams- what they are & why they happen sleep.org/dreams/
5) Hannah Nichols (2023)- Dreams: Causes, types, meaning, what they are, and more. Paper published on October 13, 2023. *https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/284378#vision-and-hearing-loss*
6) Kendra Cherry (2024)-- Why Do We Dream? Understanding Dream Theory. Paper published on May16, 2024 *https://www.verywellmind.com/why-do-we-dream-top-dream-theories-2795931*
7) City Mattress Staff-- The Purpose of Dreams: What They are, why we Have Them, and How They Tell us About our Sleep *https://www.citymattress.com/blogs/news/the-purpose-of-dreams-what-they-are-why-we-have-them-and-how-they-tell-us-about-our-sleep*
8) Dr Sruthi M--- What are the Health Benefits of Dreaming? *https://www.medicinenet.com/what_are_the_health_benefits_of_dreaming/article.htm*
9) Nicholas Gilmore (2019)The Role of Dreams in Human Survival | The Saturday Evening Post. *https://www.saturdayeveningpost.com/2019/02/how-dreaming-can-save-your-life/*
10) Dr Jason M. Holland---Importance of Dreams – 5 reasons why they are significant -- https://www.infinumgrowth.com/importance-of-dreams/
11) Watt Caroline (2017). Precognition: From life to lab in the magazine Promoting Excellence in Parapsychological Research and Education in Koestler Parapsychology unit. koestlerunit.wordpress.com/2017/06/06/precognition-from-life-to-lab/
12) Dr. Lance Storm and Adam j Rock (2015)--- Dreaming of Psi: A Narrative Review and Meta-Analysis of Dream-ESP studies at the Maimonides Dream Lab and Beyond. https://rune.une.edu.au/web/handle/1959.11/17831

Acknowledgment

The author(s) appreciates all those who participated in the study and helped to facilitate the research process.

Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

How to cite this article: Kumar, N. (2024). Dreams and their Significance in Our Lives. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, *12*(3), 969-982. DIP:18.01.093.20241203, DOI:10.25215/1203.093