

## DREAM SYMBOLS AND DREAM INTERPRETATIONS IN DIFFERENT CULTURES

### СИМВОЛЫ СНОВ И ИХ ТОЛКОВАНИЕ В РАЗНЫХ КУЛЬТУРАХ

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**Аннотациясы:** Макала ар түрдүү маданияттарда түш жорумдары, белгилери жана ишенимдери кандай кабылданаарын иликтейт. Түштөр тууралуу социалдык, религиялык жана психологиялык контекстте антропологдордун, психологдордун изилдөөлөрү каралып, ар бир маданиятта түштөрдүн мааниси изилденет.

**Негизги сөздөр:** түш, символ, белги, түш жору системасы, ишеним, илимийлүүлүк

**Аннотация:** В статье рассматривается интерпретация снов в различных культурах. Сны представлены как знаки, символы в культуре и как предмет изучения антропологии и психологии в социальном, религиозном и психологическом контексте.

**Ключевые слова:** сон, символ, знак, система интерпретации, вера, научный подход

**Abstract:** This paper deals with the emphasis on dreams and beliefs as signs, symbols, communications about them across cultures. The purpose of this paper is to seek the answer for how are dreams evaluated in different cultures, how are they examined by different anthropologists, psychologists in social, religious, and psychological contexts.

**Key words:** dream, symbol, sign, system of interpretation, beliefs, values, scientific approach

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Symbols are the language of dreams. A symbol can invoke a feeling or an idea and often has a much more profound and deeper meaning than any one word can convey. At the same time, these symbols can leave you confused and wondering what that dream was all about. Acquiring the ability to interpret your dreams is a powerful tool.

Even during the ancient civilizations dreams have had a high reverence in the different cultures all over the world. Some cultures regarded dreams as messages from the gods while some saw dreams as warnings and omens, and even one culture used dreams in order to cure illnesses and disease. In some cultures people consider dreams important sources of information-about the future, about the spiritual world, or about oneself. In others, dreams are considered to be a space for action like waking life, or a means for communication with other people or with the supernatural. The Assyrians believed dreams to be mostly omens of good or ill luck. Like the Babylonians they tried to deal with the possible fate following from bad dreams. In fact this sense of an ill fate being presaged by bad dreams was common to most ancient cultures. But this was gradually extended in Egyptian, Greek and Roman culture.

The *Babylonians* had a simple take on dreams. When dreams were good, they were from the gods, however when one had nightmares or bad dreams then these were generally interpreted as demonic. The Babylonians had a goddess of dreams named Mamu. The function of the priests of Mamu was to prevent bad dreams.

The *Romans* took dreams a little more seriously than the Babylonians. Dreams were subject to debate in the senate and were regarded as messages from the gods. The dreams were then interpreted and these were used as “guides” as to how the state proceeds with certain laws, actions and even war. The *Greeks* were even more accurate than their Roman counterparts. They would purify themselves for two days before sleeping in temples in order to receive messages from the gods. They would fast, abstain from sex and eat no meat or fowl. The potential dreamer would then sleep in the temple of the god which he wished to invoke. They believed that Hypnos would then send his son Morpheus in order to warn or give prophecies to those who slept at his temples.

The *Hebrews* like most other cultures believed that dreams were messages from the gods. However, the Hebrews were monotheistic and believed in only

one god. So when they dreamed, they believed that it was God who spoke to them. Lots of the Bible characters that we know used dreams to guide them and rally the Hebrews. Jacob for example, dreamed of a very tall ladder which reached the heavens where God stood at the very top. He was promised by God that Israel would forever belong to the Jewish people. It is these types of dreams and prophecy that had a great impact on the Hebrew religion and culture.

In many heroic epic songs of Central Asia, the parents of the hero are usually old and without children. In the beginning of epic *Manas*, Jakip, very much laments the fact that he is getting old and he has no son to inherit his livestock, protect and lead his people. Before his son Manas is born, Jakip also sees a special dream: *In my sleep I saw a sign, Not for nothing I slept all that time, I have seen a dream, Wonderful things in sleep I've seen One grey hawk with a brazen hood, Black was his breast, fat-necked he stood, On your right wrist you set him there, Then let him soar in the highest air. On your left wrist your hawk did take, Then let him soar in search of drake.* (E.Kochumkyl k.) This dream foretells the arrival or birth of a future hero who will take over the entire world.

Dream interpretation during ancient times was centered on the gods and omens. This is because man even during his infancy, sought to better himself and sought guidance from higher powers. The same is still true in our modern world. Dreams are thought of by some people as signs, communications from our subconscious mind or even our “inner selves” seeking attention. Man’s fascinations with dreams are still going on even with the varied explanations and studies as to why we dream in the first place.

Cultures in which dreams are taken seriously accumulate a depth of observations of their dreams, so their beliefs may be of value to understand dreaming. How dreams are dealt within different cultures may be examined from four perspectives: 1.beliefs people hold about the nature of dreaming; 2.conventional systems by which people interpret particular dreams; 3.the social context in which dreams are shared (or not shared) and discussed; 4.and the ways in which dreams are used in practice, especially in curing. In addition, a number of anthropologists have interpreted dreams psychodynamically, as expressing the dreamer’s inner wishes, fears, and conflicts.

Some of the most ancient written documents are about dream interpretation and are direct expressions

of the attempt to understand or interpret dreams. The Chester Beatty papyrus on dreams for instance, dates from 1250 BC, from Egypt. This contains records of 200 dreams and their interpretations according to the priests of Horus.

Most societies, ancient and modern, have had professional dream interpreters. India had its Brahmin *oneirocritics*; in Japan the *om myoshi*; the Hasidic rabbis in Europe fulfilled this role; in ancient Egypt the *pa-hery-tep*; ancient Greece had the priesthood within the Asclepian temples given to dreams; among the Aztecs, dream interpretation and divination were the prerogative of the priestly class *teopexqui*, the Masters of Secret Things; in today's world the Freudian and Jungian psychoanalysts fulfil this role – the author has worked as resident analyst for television's channel four Teletext in the UK, New Zealand Teletext, London Broadcasting Company, as well as a major national newspaper.

Dreams reflect the dreamer's feelings about events and relationships. If they are understood in terms of the very private code of expression that can only be unraveled through the dreamer's own associations to the dream, dreams can be used to get at a person's unconscious wishes, feelings, and fantasies about people and relationships. The wishes and fantasies may be incompatible with the person's cultural norms and values, although those values are not at all irrelevant to understanding the feelings and why they are repressed. Some of the most sensitive interpretation of dreams of North American Indians has been done by the anthropologist **Dorothy Eggan**. Eggan got several Hopi Indians to tell their dreams and their free associations to them. In a series of finely crafted articles, she uses the dreams to get at their inner subjective experience of their cultural beliefs and values.

The Huron and Seneca Indians of America had a view of the dreams which stands in the balance between the ancient world and the modern psychological concept of dreams. They saw dreams as expressing psychological tension and unexpressed desires. This was a definite forerunner of modern understanding.

Considered the father of psychoanalysis, **Sigmund Freud** (1856-1939) revolutionizes the study of dreams with his work *The Interpretation Of Dreams*. Freud begins to analyze dreams in order to understand aspects of personality as they relate to pathology. He believes that *nothing you*

*do occurs by chance; every action and thought is motivated by your unconscious* at some level. In order to live in a civilized society, you have a tendency to hold back our urges and repress our impulses. However, these urges and impulses must be released in some way; they have a way of coming to the surface in disguised forms.

According to Freud, dreams always have a manifest and latent content. The manifest content is what the dream seems to be saying. It is often bizarre and nonsensical. The latent content is what the dream is really trying to say. Dreams give us a look into our unconscious. Freud believes that we can chip through the dream's manifest content to reveal the underlying significance and its latent by utilizing the technique of "free association". Using this technique, you start with one dream symbol and then follow with what automatically comes to your mind first. You continue in this manner and see where it leads.

To interpret the cryptic images of our dreams, Freud classified the images into the following five processes: **Displacement**- occurs when the desire for one thing or person is symbolized by something or someone else. **Projection**-happens when the dreamer propels their own desires and wants onto another person. **Symbolization** is characterized when the dreamer's repressed urges or suppressed desires are acted out metaphorically. **Condensation** is the process in which the dreamer hides their feelings or urges by contracting it or underplaying it into a brief dream image or event. Thus the meaning of this dream imagery may not be apparent or obvious. **Rationalization** is regarded as the final stage of dream-work. The dreaming mind organizes an incoherent dream into one that is more comprehensible and logical. This is also known as *secondary revision*.

Although S. Freud is popularly thought of as the founder of modern therapeutic analysis of dreams, many other people set the scene for him by careful observation and experiment. Freud encouraged clients to relax on a couch and allow free association of ideas arise in connection with aspects of their dream. In this way he helped the person move from the surface images – manifest content – of the dream, to the underlying emotions, fantasies and wishes – latent content – often connected with early childhood. **Carl Jung** used a different approach. He applied amplification, helped the client explore their associations, used active imagination, and stuck to the structure of the dream. Because what arises for

the dreamer is frequently still shaped and presented according to the information and experience of the therapist, again the dream work might still be largely verbal and intellectual, rather than experiential.

Modern dream analysis is a very rich technique. It spans the best of the ancient cultures such as the use of dreams for help in decision making or healing of physical health. It incorporates techniques that enable dreams to be accessed by any intelligent person in order to be enriched by them. Many tools are available in this modern eclectic approach, tools that enable one to mine the various treasures from ones inner life of dreams. But foremost among the additions to the jewels of understanding garnered in the past, is that of insight into ones personal psychological history and personal traumas.

Dreams and their meanings are as individual as the people who dream them, but the following is a list of common dream symbols and some of them have common dream interpretation.

**Fog** in a dream can be a manifestation of a lost or confused waking life. Fog can also mean you are beginning to explore different parts of your life or your personality.

**A gate** can represent an entrance or an exit, depending on its context. It can also symbolize a beginning or an end.

**Illness** - Dreaming about illness can be your body's way of telling you there is something wrong. The subconscious mind can also sense things that the conscious mind is unaware of. It can also indicate your fear of something going wrong.

**Keys** - Dreaming of keys can indicate the keeping of a secret, or that you have been locking away your feelings.

**Mountain**-Dreaming of climbing a mountain can be symbolic of achieving a goal or reaching for higher levels of success. Dreaming of coming down a mountain can mean you have overcome insurmountable odds, while gazing at a mountain in a dream can mean you are contemplating a major life decision.

**An owl** is thought to be the symbol of knowledge and wisdom. In addition, the owl is often thought to represent the subconscious itself. Owls are often used to deliver important messages to dreamers.

**A road** in a dream can symbolize the direction or goal of the dreamer. A straight road may mean that everything is going smoothly, while dreaming of a bumpy or winding road can be a manifestation of perceived problems with your place in life.

**Stairs**-Dreaming of stairs can indicate a rise or a reduction in your stature, finances or your spiritual life. What stairs mean depends on which direction you are going in your dream.

**Underground** - Dreaming of venturing underground can represent a trip to the dreamer's subconscious mind, or mean that he or she is wrestling with issues that need to be faced. Going underground in a dream may mean that the dreamer is ready to deal with previously repressed issues.

**Angels** are of course a symbol of purity and goodness, and their appearance in a dream can often represent the quest for spiritual goodness and enlightenment. In addition, angels often appear in dreams as guides or teachers, and many people take the advice of these angel dream guides very seriously.

**Animals** in dreams are often seen to symbolize base, instinctual actions, emotions and desires. These base desires are often repressed so that we may live in a civilized society, but just the same they are there, lurking in the shadows so to speak. Different animals have different meanings in dreams. For instance, dreaming of cats may mean you have been repressing the intuitive, feminine side of your nature, while dreaming of lions could mean that you have been repressing anger. The key to taking meaning from animals in dreams is to think about the particular traits each animal represents.

**Black** - Dreams about black, or black objects can be signs of evil or darkness.

**Blood** in a dream can often be a representation of vitality and power. The meaning of blood in the dream is dependent on the context. For instance, violent and bloody dreams can indicate an emotional upheaval in your life or a loss of control, while dreams of bloody hands can indicate feelings of guilt.

**Cars** can represent a sense of freedom, and of being in control.

**Dancing** - Dreaming of a dance can have many meanings, depending on the nature of the dance and its context within the dream. Dancing can symbolize marriage, romance or sex. Dance can also symbolize the freedom of movement or cooperation.

**Eggs** in dreams can be symbols of birth or renewal, or wholeness and fertility. Dreaming of broken eggs, or breaking eggs in a dream, can represent a shattered faith, or a breaking out of your shell, depending on the context.

Nevertheless the main sources of modern dream interpretation lie in the ancient dream interpreters such as Artemidorus who wrote the *Interpretation of Dreams* – in AD 200; in the commentaries on dreams of Aristotle which so influenced Western thinking; and in the early criticisms such as we find in Cicero, in which he says – ‘Even if true interpretations of dreams could exist, it is certainly not in the possession of those who profess it, for these people are the lowest and most ignorant of the people.’ He reached this view by observing that **dreams were infinitely variable, and one could observe that different people having the same dream did not experience the same results.**

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