

Designer dreams through Yoga

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In 1953 three major events took place. The Everest was conquered by Hillary and Tensing Norgay, Watson and Crick discovered DNA's structure and a young Ph.D. student Eugene Aserinsky in U.S. discovered rapid eye movement (REM) sleep. During REM sleep the brain is extremely active and produces dream. This was the beginning of whole area of research in sleep and dreaming. Now almost 50 years later there has been tremendous progress in mountaineering and genetic engineering but sleep and dream remains as much a mystery as before.

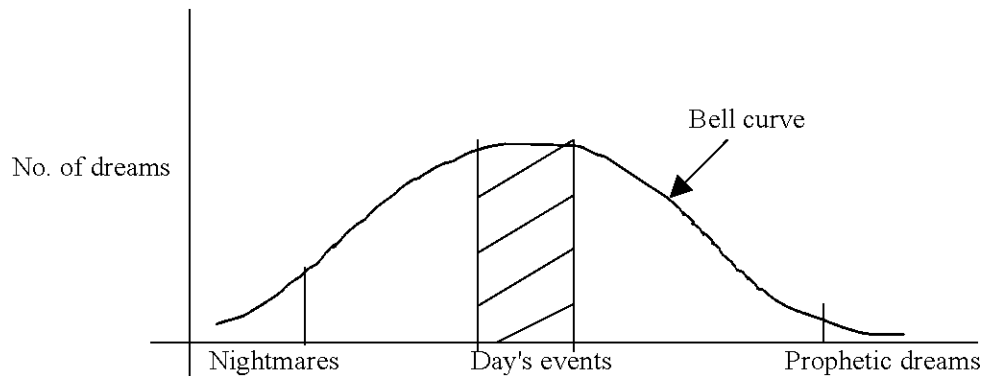
Yet in every religion and society dreams and sleep have been thought to be mechanisms to connect the present physical world to that of supernatural. Thus before Buddha's birth his mother Queen Maya dreamt that a white elephant has entered her body. Similarly the mother of Shri Ramakrishna dreamt that a small green figure, whom she identified as God, was telling her that he will be born in her house or mother Mary dreaming about the birth of Christ. There are other innumerable instances of prophetic dreams in the annals of history of mankind.

Similarly there are many celebrated cases where persons have produced wonderful solutions through their dreams. Kekule's benzene structure, Mendelyev's invention of periodic table, Howe's invention of sewing machine, Neils Bohr's atomic model and Mahatma Gandhi's idea of Dandi March came in their dreams. There are also large number of examples where scientists, inventors and technologists have literally dreamt up solutions to problems which they could not find in the waking state.

How does mind produce such prophetic and solution dreams? During dreaming there is blockage of sensory inputs and thus the ego sense 'I' is absent. The sense of identity 'I' comes with the body and the sense organs like eyes, nose, ears, etc. In the absence of 'I' during sleep the brain allows free reign to random thought patterns. These thoughts emanating from existing memories from different parts of the brain produce dreams. The dreaming process therefore follows the Maxwellian distribution (the bell curve), where majority of people generally dream about a day's events and activities. Scientists claim that the day's learning process is consolidated in the memory during sleep. This type of dreaming process produces disjointed and sometimes nightmare dreams since the random thought patterns produce a surreal movie. Scientists claim that in REM sleep the brain somehow ignores the obvious in favor of the crazy, the unexpected or the bizarre. It is somehow biased towards activating the weak neural connections.

However under certain circumstances, about which very little is known, the brain synchronizes the random thoughts into a powerful single thought. This is almost like a Samadhi where 100 billion neurons of the brain synchronize in a laser like fashion to produce a higher dimensional thought signature. This thought connects us to the higher dimensional space – time continuum from which we get the knowledge and powers of clairvoyance. The probability of this type of synchronization is very small but still is finite and lies at one end of the bell curve (Figure below). This synchronized thought leads to prophetic and solution dreams. Quite a number of people sometime or the other in their lifetime are blessed and do get such dreams, which

help us understand the existence of higher thought and reality. However such prophetic and solution dreams come to those who have a prepared mind and have been thinking deeply about these problems.



What can we do to produce prophetic and solution dreams? Since the ever present director-the ego sense 'I' is absent during the dreaming process, we have no control of our dreams. However, we can control our day's events which ultimately are reflected in our dreams. Yogi's have all along claimed that Sanyam which is a combination of contemplation, reflection and Samadhi helps in producing a powerful thought process which ultimately leads to a non-REM or dreamless sleep. Recent evidence from sleep research corroborates it. Scientists have discovered that REM and non-REM sleep are totally dependent on how active the brain is during daytime. The MRI scans of sleeping volunteers brain show that most of the dreaming activity takes place in the region of the brain which was most active during the day time. Scientists have also discovered that non-REM or slow-wave dreamless sleep occupies the central position in the sleep process. The information and memory consolidation process takes place in the brain only during non-REM sleep. Hence REM sleep is simply a mechanism for the brain to check whether the memory consolidation has taken place. Besides it also helps us remember dreams.

Thus to produce happy and productive dreams one needs to be very active mentally and physically during waking hours. Whatever memories we make during daytime are reflected in the dreams including the prophetic dreams. Probably the solution dreams of great inventors also came because of the very active prepared mind during waking hours. There is still no single definite theory of sleep and dreams. However the jigsaw puzzle is slowly being assembled by research inputs from all over the world. As our science and technology advances we will probe deeper into the mysteries of sleep and dream because they provide the best windows for getting a peep into the workings of human mind and ultimately will lead to the discovery of what is thought.

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