



Muslim and Western Theories of Dreams Interpretation: a Comparative Study of Sigmund Freud and Ibn-e-Sirīn

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The present study shows a scientific comparison between psychoanalytical dream interpretation and Ibn- e- Sirīn (R.A)'s theory of dream interpretation. A sample of 100 subjects (male& female) was taken from Islamabad region comprising 50 subjects belongs to Practicing Muslims and 50 common Muslims. Their recent dreams are recorded and their interpretation was made¹. It is concluded that:

Majority dreams are wish fulfillment² rather than anxiety³ and symbolic⁴.

In Ibn- e- Sirīn (R.A) interpretation of wish fulfillment dreams' ratio is greater than Freudian interpretation. We may say $58 > 47$. In Ibn- e- Sirīn(R.A)'s interpretation of anxiety dreams' ratio is less than Freudian interpretation. We may say $25 < 37$. In Ibn- e- Sirīn (R.A)'s interpretation of symbolic dreams' ratio is greater than Freudian interpretation. We may say $17 > 9$. There are 69 dreams in which dreams of both categories⁵ are common and in 31 dreams are different.

Key Words: Dreams, Interpretation, Western Theories Sigmund Freud, Ibn-e-Sirīn.

¹ See Annexure list of dreams.

² In dreams we fulfill those wishes which cannot be fulfilled while we are awake as we cleared earlier.

³ Such as death of a beloved persons, hysteria, phobia, waking caused by dreams, punishment dreams and fear.

⁴ Symbolization means that dreams are usually expressed in images that are symbolic.

⁵ Practicing Muslims and common Muslims.



Introduction:

Islam is the complete bundle of instructions. In Islam, the concept of dream is based upon Qur'ān and Hadīth text. When we see history of psychology, Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) presented many theories regarding interpretation of dreams. His theories about dreams became very popular and are taught at universities throughout the world. The said study expressed a comparative analysis between the Freudian theories and the Islamic concepts of dreams.

In Islamic perspective, Qur'anic teachings and Hadīth (Bukhārī & Muslim) having different chapters about dreams are included. First chapter from the famous book *Ta'bīr-Ru'ya* by Ibn-e-Sirīn (R.A) is included giving some description about dreams from Islamic philosophy.¹ 'Allāma Thanāullah Pānīpattī (1225H) discussed a philosophical discussion of 'Allāma Bedhawī (R.A).² Ibn-e-Sirīn (R.A) has described three types of dreams³. 'Allāma Yusuf Nabhānī (1876-1932) has also highlighted dreams and its importance.⁴

What is the difference between visions and dreams discussed by Abu 'baidah and Abu ṭalha in their book?⁵ They premise that a vision is from Allah while dream is from Shaitān(Satan)⁶. Allama Qurtubī discussed Ibn-e-'arabī about visions in his tafsir.⁷ In western perspective, Sigmund Freud wrote a theory of dreams. He was a clinical psychologist. Kelly Bulkeley worked at this topic.⁸ He mentioned the dreams of Quran and hadith⁹

¹ Ibn-e-Sirīn, *Ta'bīr-Ru'ya*, published by Kutub Khāna Shān e Islām Lahore, p-10-40

² 'Allāma Sanāullah Pānīpattī, *Tafsīr Mazharī*, Vol-5, published by Maktabah Qādriyah Lahore (1973), p-134-142

³ Such as: 1-from Allah 2-from Satan 3-from your own self

⁴ Yusuf Nabhānī, *Al-Anwar-ul-Muhammadiyah*, published by Maktabah Nabwiyah Lahore (1982), p-578-584

⁵ Abu 'baidah and Abu ṭalha, *Introductory Salafi Themes In The Interpretation Of Vision And Dreams* (2009), p-87

⁶ Actually they divided in visions and dreams according to them.

⁷ James A. Hall, *Clinical Uses of Dreams*, Grune & Stratton, p-91

⁸ Kelly Blakeley, *Reflections on the Dream Traditions of Islam*, Kensington, CA 94708, USA

⁹ Because dreams give us a knowledge of behavior.

Sigmund Freud (1856-1939 AD) presents psychological perspective of the subject. The main purpose of Freud is only the investigation of dreams through clinical psychology.

The main objective of Ibn-e-Sirīn (R.A) was to express the pure Islamic concept of dreams through Qur'an and Sunnah. Ibn-e-Sirīn (R.A) said in his famous book *Ta'bīr-Ru'ya* that there are mainly two types of dreams:

a- *Adghās wa Ahlām* (hulum - bad dreams)

1-Wish-fulfillment

2-From Satan

b- *Ru'ya Saliḥah* (From God).¹⁰

While Freud said in his famous book *Interpretation of Dreams*

“We dream what we have seen, said, desired, or done”.¹¹

So, actually, his theory is based upon the premise that dreams are only wish-fulfillment.

Western Theories about Dreams

(A Brief Historical Sketch)

Western theories of dreams have their roots in the history. First of all Aristotle (384-322 BC) maintained that the dream is a presentation based on the movement of sense impressions when such presentation occurs during sleep.¹² In 203 AD Tertullian termed dreams to be movement of the soul when separated from the body coming in contact with realities reflecting God, nature or demon.¹³ In 330 AD Lamblichus divided dreams into good and bad dreams. In the Middle Ages question was raised by different scholars as to whether dreams were sent by God and reflect true events.

From 11th to 13th century another question captured the attention of then scholars as to whether dreams of Prophets true or not. Similarly, are dreams of ordinary persons true or not? Can they effect the future? According to saint Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179 AD) the dreams of Prophets were true. Theologian Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274 AD) men-

¹⁰ Ibn-e-Sirīn, *Ta'bīr-Ru'ya*, published by Kutub Khāna Shāne Islām Lahore, p-17

¹¹ Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams* (3rd edition) Translated by A. A. Brill (1911), International Bureau of Education, (2000), P-25

¹² James A. Hall, *Clinical Uses of Dreams*, Grune & Stratton, New york, 1977, p-6

¹³ James A. Hall, *Clinical Uses of Dreams*, Grune & Stratton, p-10

tioned that dreams can take place by natural causes either within or without body and also affect the future.¹⁴

From 13th century onwards another debate has taken to roots that dreams are affected from astrological signs or not? At the First Vincent of Beavars discussed this issue that dreams are powerfully affected by motions of the stars.¹⁵

This point was also raised by Albert Magnus (1280 AD) who was the teacher of Thomas Aquinas that dreams are linked with magic and astrology and interpretation of dreams is possible. Many scholars followed this point such as cecco d' Ascoli (1327 AD) and Thomas Hobbes (1599-1679 AD).¹⁶ William James (1842-1910 AD) said that world of dreams is our real world.¹⁷

Sigmund Freud (1856-1939 AD) was a medical doctor .he pointed at dreams psychology and wrote a book.¹⁸ He pointed out dreams process which based upon Condensation, Displacement, Symbolization and Secondary elaboration.¹⁹ He introduced also dream analysis.

Carl Jung (1875-1961) also elaborated about dream.²⁰ Many scholars wrote different theories of dreams like cognitive model (1966 AD) by David, Active-synthesis theory (1977 AD) by Allan Hobson and Robert McCarley, Cognitive-Experience theory (1996 AD) by Crala Hill.²¹

Regarding criticism of Freud theory we do not have a complete rejection of this theory; scholars rejected some points at some places after the discovery of REM sleep. In

¹⁴ James A. Hall ,*Clinical Uses of Dreams*, Grune & Stratton, p-12

¹⁵ James A. Hall ,*Clinical Uses of Dreams*, Grune & Stratton, p-13

¹⁶ James A. Hall ,*Clinical Uses of Dreams*, Grune & Stratton, p-13

¹⁷ Paul Edward, *Principles of Philosophy*, vol-1, The Macmillan Company, New york, 1972, p-41

¹⁸ Freud, *The interpretation of Dream*, Translated by A.A.Brill (1911 AD), 3rd Edition, 1997, Wordsworth Editions Limited, Crib Street, ware, Hertfordshire

¹⁹ G.William Domhoff, *The Scientific Study of Dreams*, American Psychological Association, Washington, DC

²⁰ Vilmore Voigt, *How Dreams Reflect Place and Location*, p-49-59

²¹ Imants Baruss, *Alteration of Consciousness*, American Psychological Association, Washington, DC, 1952

1952 AD, there was a discovery of “REM Sleep” which was based upon the laboratory studies. It was introduced by Eugene Aserinsky and Nathaniel Kleitman.²²

There are two states of sleep REM & NREM. REM (rapid eye movement) is strongly associated with dreaming. A REM sleep total only about 1.5 hours per night. REM sleep is time of high emotion. Dreaming has been called paradoxical sleep.²³

REM & NREM sleep duration is approximately between 70-120 minutes. Dreams activate in both REM & NREM sleep.²⁴

Interpretation of Dreams in Muslim Tradition

(A Brief Historical Sketch)

Qur’ān & Hadīth mentioned different dreams of Holy Prophets (peace be upon them).²⁵ According to Prophet (PBUH) said that ‘dream of Mo’min is 46th part of prophecy’.²⁶

Dreams of Prophets were true and revealed from God. Second source of Muslim theories of dreams is Hadīth. In this way a complete description has been given by ‘Allāma Abdullah Muḥammad bin Ahmed Al Qurtubī (R.A).²⁷

There is a wide guidance from our Prophet (PBUH) on this science. Moḥadithīn specified different chapters.²⁸ Teachings of Prophet (PBUH) are that if you see a good

²² Wallace B.Mendelson, J.Christian Gillin and Richard Jed Wyatt, *Human Sleep and Its Disorders*, Plenum Press, New York ,1977

²³ Dennis Coon, *Introduction to Psychology*, West Publishing Company, 50 West Kellogg, Boulevard, 1986

²⁴ Imants Baruss, *Alteration of Consciousness*, American Psychological Association, Washington, DC, 1952,p-80

²⁵ Qur’ ān, *surah yusuf (12:4-5), yusuf(12:6),yusuf(12:36-41),yusuf(12:43-44)yusuf(12:47-49)*, Qur’ ān,*surah Qasas(28:7),surah Taha(20:39)* Qur’ ān,*surah Saffāt(37:99-109)*
, Qur’ ān,*surah Al-Anfāl(8:44-46), surah Al-e-Imārīn(3:12)*

²⁶ *Sahīh Bukhārī*, vol-2,Noor Muhammad karkhana,Karachi,1961 –P-1035

²⁷ Abu Abdullah, *Tafseer Qurtubi*, vol-9, Dārul kutub al Arabi,Egypt,1968

²⁸ Bukhārī, *Sahīh Bukhārī*,vol-2,Noor Muhammad karkhana,Karachi,1961,
Imām Mālik, *Al Mo’atta* ,P-723uhammad Kutub Khāna, Karachi

Imām Muslim , *Muslim*,vol-2,Qadeemi kutub Khāna, Aram Bagh,Karachi,1956

Abu Dawood, *Sunan Abi Dawood*,vol-2,p-352,Māktabah Haqāniyyah, Multan

Tirmidhi ,*jāmi ‘ Tirmidhi*,vol-2,p-52-54,HM-Saeed company, Karachi

Ibn e Majah, *Sunan Ibn e Mājah*,p-286-289,HM Saeed company, Karachi

dream, tell your friend or a person that you like. If you see a bad dream then you recite Ta'woz and do not tell it to any person.²⁹ There are two types of dreams such as true dreams from God and bad dreams from Satan.³⁰

‘Allāma Ibn -e -Sirīn (R.A) (30-110 Hijrī) was from Tābi ‘īn³¹. He discussed the-ory of dreams, dreams may be good or bad.³² In Arabic language good dream are (R’uyāh Sālihah) and Bad dreams are (Adghās wa Ahlām). Ibn e Khaldoon (1332-1420 Hijrī)³³, ‘Allāma Aloosī(R.A)³⁴ and ‘Allāma Sanuāllah Pānipattī(R.A)³⁵ followed this division. Kelley Bulkeley interpreted an old and a modern concept of dreams³⁶. Ibn- e- Khaldoon defined dreams medically.

According to Qur’an, Prophet Yusuf (A.S) was first interpreter of dreams. Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) organized this valuable knowledge. Ibn- e -Arabi, Ibn- e- Khaldoon, and Imām Ghazālī (R.A) also worked in this field.³⁷ Imrān H. Husain also dis-cussed to this knowledge³⁸

Abdullah, *Al kiātb ul Mosannif*, vol-11, Al Dārusalfiyyah, Bombay, India, 1981

Al Husain, *Sharhusunnah*, vol-12, Al Maktab ul Islāmi, Beuroot, 2nd edition, 1983

²⁹ *Sahīh Bukhārī*, vol-2, Noor Muhammad karkhana, Karachi, 1961 –P-1034

³⁰ *Sahīh Bukhārī*, vol-2, Noor Muhammad karkhana, Karachi, 1961 –P-1036

³¹ See Glossary.

³² Ibn- e -Sirīn, *Ta ‘bīr ur Ru’ya*, ch-1, Madinah Publishing Company, Karachi

³³ Abdur Rahmān, *Tareekh ibn e khaldoon*, vol-1, Moassisat al jamal, Beuroot, Lebanon, 1979, p-397-399

³⁴ ‘Allāma Shabudeen Aloosi, *Tafseer Rooh ul Ma ‘ani*, vol-10, Matabah Rasheediyyah Lahore, Pakistan

³⁵ ‘Allāma Sanāullah, *Tafseer Mazhari*, vol-5, Maktabah Qādiriyyah, Lahore

³⁶ Bulkeley, *Reflection of Dreams in Islam*

³⁷ *Ahmed bin Abdur Rahman, Al Badr ul Munīr fī ilm e Ta ‘bīr*, Moassisatur Rayyan, Beuroot, Lebanon, 2000

³⁸ Imran, *Dreams in Islam*, Masjid Darul Qur’an long island, New York, new edition, 2001

Experimental Designing (A comparative analysis on practical basis)

I did my research work on experimental basis involving a large section of the society.

Methodology:

Sampling Data

I collected dreams of 100 people including both the sexes¹. Further categorization is as under:-

1- Practicing Muslims (50 people)

The general characteristics of purely religious people are as followings:

- a- Muslims
- b- Regular in prayers, fasting, zakah and hajj.
- c- Dislike irreligious events.
- d- Disciplined according to religious context having beard, covering their head with a cap or Amamah(turban), recite Quran regularly, offer extra prayers in the form of Nawafil.

2- Common Muslims (50 people)

The general characteristics of neutral people are following:-

- a- not strict adherent of religion
- b- Sometimes they pray and some time they ignore
- c- Give us a feeling that they are secular minded people or not bothered about religion
- d- Sometimes involved deeply in religious activities

For this purpose I used survey method for collecting the data. I devised a Performa requiring information of the dreamer.

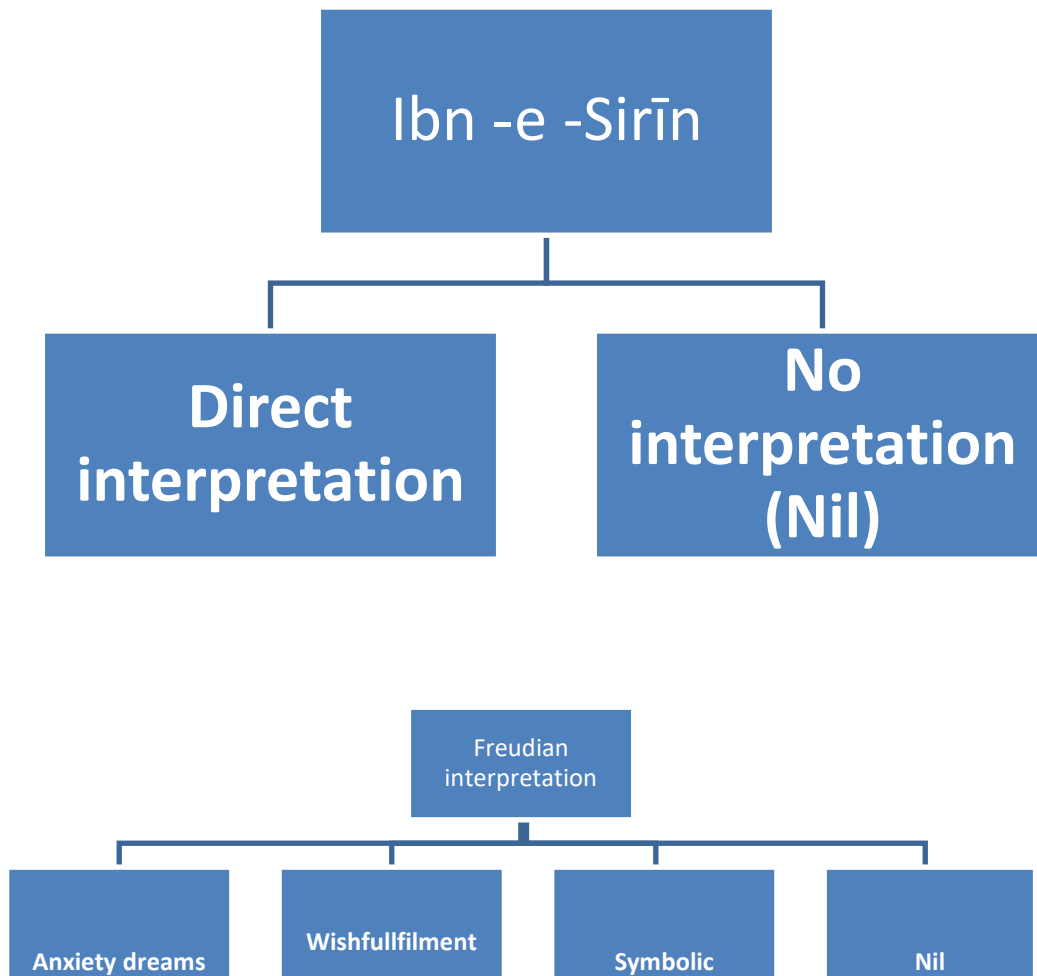
Information Sheet

It has the following instruments: Category, Name of the dreamer, age, time of the dreaming, Line of dreaming and Interpretation by the dreamer.

I surveyed each individual, gathered educational faculties and collected their dreams. After that I analyzed their interpretation on the lines of Ibn-e-Sirīn (R.A) and Freud / psychoanalytical context.

Diagrammatic division:

¹ See Annexure, list of 100 dreams



Explanation of diagrams:

1- Direct interpretation: it means that Ibn -e- Sirīn interpreted the dream in accordance with the teachings of Quran, Hadīth or formed his own opinion.

2-Nil: it means no interpretation

3-Anxiety dreams: it means Freudian opinion about anxiety dreams.

Some key points:

Most terrible of all the painful emotions torment us while we are awake.² The dream actually has a secret meaning which proves to be a wish fulfillment. Some of them are dreams of hysterical subjects.³ Conditions of anxiety dreams and their com-

²Freud, *The interpretation of Dream*, Translated by A.A.Brill (1911 AD),³rd Edition,1997,Wordsworth Editions Limited, Crib Street, Ware, Hertfordshire, Ch-4,p-46

³ Freud, *The interpretation of Dream*, Translated by A. A. Brill, P-55

patibility relates to the theory of wish fulfillment.⁴ The dream is the (disguised) fulfillment of a (suppressed, repressed) wish.⁵ Such as death of a beloved person, hysteria, phobia, waking caused by dreams, punishment dreams and fear.

4-Wishfulfillment: Actually, a wish fulfillment may be enrolled in the continuity of the intelligible psychic activities of the waking state: it is built up by a highly complicated intellectual activity - meaning of the dream may not be the same in every dream;

1-may be considered as the wish fulfillment

2-the realization of an apprehension

3-a reflection as its content

4- Reproduce reminiscence.⁶ The wish manifested in the dream must be an infantile wish.⁷

5-Symbolic: a symbolizing activity of the psyche is operative in the dream formation, the dream makes use of such symbolizations as are to be found readymade in unconscious thinking.⁸ Male genitals may be represented in dreams by other parts of the body, the male member by the hand or the foot, the female genitals orifice by the mouth, the ear, or even the eye. The secretions of the human body-mucus, tear, urine, semen etc. may occur in dreams interchangeably.⁹ Representation of the genitals by buildings, stairs and shafts.¹⁰

Valley is a common feminine dream symbol.¹¹ Flower symbolizes the human organs; by flowers, the sexual organs of plants.¹² These dreams may also represent impressions of our childhood.¹³ Fire justifies a prohibition of the nursery.¹⁴

Statistical calculations:

Table-1: Ibn- e -Sirīn (R.A) - Interpretation

⁴ Freud, *The interpretation of Dream*, Translated by A. A. Brill, P-65

⁵Freud, *The interpretation of Dream*, Translated by A. A. Brill (1911 AD),3rd Edition,1997,Wordsworth Editions Limited, Crib Street, ware, Hertfordshire,P-68

⁶ Freud, *The interpretation of Dream*, Translated by A. A. Brill, Ch-3,p-34-35

⁷Freud, *The interpretation of Dream*, Translated by A. A. Brill, P-393

⁸ Freud, *The interpretation of Dream*, Translated by A. A. Brill, P-229-230

⁹Freud, *The interpretation of Dream*, Translated by A. A. Brill, P-288

¹⁰Freud, *The interpretation of Dream*, Translated by A. A. Brill, P-242

¹¹Freud, *The interpretation of Dream*, Translated by A. A. Brill, P-247

¹² Freud, *The interpretation of Dream*, Translated by A. A. Brill, P-248

¹³ Freud, *The interpretation of Dream*, Translated by A. A. Brill, P-255

¹⁴ Freud, *The interpretation of Dream*, Translated by A. A. Brill, P-258

	Interpretation	Nil	Total
Practicing Muslims	32	18	50
Common Muslims			
Total	22	28	50
	50	50	100

Results:

Total Samples	Interpretation	No interpretation (Nil)
100	54%	46%

Table 2: Psychoanalytical Interpretation

	Anxiety Dreams	Wish fulfillment	Symbolic	Nil	Total
Practicing Muslims	19	21	5	5	50
Common Muslims	18	26	4	2	50
Total	37	47	9	7	100

Results:

Nil	Anxiety Dreams	Wish fulfillment	Symbolic	Total Samples
7%	37%	47%	9%	100

Table 3: Screening 100 Interpretations

by Ibn-e-Sirīn (R.A)

	Wish fulfillment	Anxiety	Symbolic	Total
Practicing Muslims	26	13	11	50
Common Muslims	32	12	06	50
lms Total	58	25	17	100

Ibn-e-Sirīn interpretation of dreams in three dimensions and concluded.

Results:

Wish fulfillment	Anxiety dreams	Symbolic	Total dreams
58%	25%	17%	100

Table 4:

Comparison & Differences

Dream no	Ibn-e –Sirīn	Psychoanalytic	Common or difference
1	W= wish fulfillment	Nil	Difference
2	W	Nil	Difference
3	W	Nil	Difference
4	W	Nil	Difference
5	Nil	Nil	Common
6	W	Nil	Difference
7	S= symbolic	S	Common
8	S	S	Common
9	S	S	Common
10	S	S	Common
11	S	S	Common
12	W	W	Common
13	W	W	Common
14	W	W	Common
15	W	W	Common
16	W	W	Common
17	S	W	difference
18	W	W	Common
19	S	W	difference
20	W	W	Common
21	W	W	Common
22	W	W	Common
23	S	W	difference
24	W	W	Common

25	W	W	Common
26	W	W	Common
27	W	W	difference
28	W	W	Common
29	W	W	Common
30	W	W	Common
31	W	W	Common
32	W	W	Common
33	A	A	Common
34	W	A	difference
35	A= anxiety	A	Common
36	W	A	difference
37	W	A	difference
38	S	A	difference
39	A	A	Common
40	A	A	Common
41	S	A	difference
42	A	A	Common
43	A	A	Common
44	A	A	Common
45	A	A	Common
46	A	A	Common
47	A	A	Common
48	S	A	difference
49	A	A	Common
50	A	A	Common
51	A	A	Common
52	A	A	Common
53	A	A	Common
54	A	A	Common
55	A	A	Common
56	A	A	Common

57	A	A	Common
58	A	A	Common
59	W	A	difference
60	S	A	difference
61	W	A	difference
62	S	W	difference
63	W	W	Common
64	W	W	Common
65	W	W	Common
66	W	W	Common
67	W	Nil	difference
68	W	Nil	Difference
69	S	S	Common
70	A	S	difference
71	S	S	Common
72	W	S	difference
73	W	A	difference
74	W	W	Common
75	W	W	Common
76	W	W	Common
77	W	W	Common
78	W	W	difference
79	W	W	Common
80	W	W	Common
81	W	W	difference
82	W	W	difference
83	W	W	Common
84	W	W	Common
85	W	W	Common
86	W	W	Common
87	W	W	Common
88	W	W	Common

89	W	W	Common
90	W	W	Common
91	W	W	Common
92	W	W	Common
93	W	W	Common
94	W	W	Common
95	A	A	Common
96	A	A	Common
97	W	A	difference
98	W	A	difference
99	W	A	difference
100	W	A	difference

Comparative Analysis:

Table-1 indicates that Ibn -e- Sirīn (RA) was selective in interpreting dreams. He interpreted dreams in a specified manner symbolically.

Table-2 indicate that majority interpretation of those dreams which are wish fulfillment means that people mostly see dreams of their desires of waking state. Then they see anxiety dreams of fear, terror or anxiety. These statistics prove that Freudian theory of dreams is based upon wish fulfillment in reality because most people see these dreams.

Table-3 indicates same result as Freudian interpretations. Wish fulfillment dreams are mostly the result of anxiety and symbolic.

According to the above results we can draw the following analysis:

1-We can assume that in both lists majority dreams are wish fulfillment rather than anxiety and symbolic.

2- In Ibn -e- Sirīn interpretation of wish fulfillment dreams' ratio is greater than Freudian interpretation. We may say $58 > 47$

3-In Ibn -e- Sirīn interpretation of anxiety dreams' ratio is less than Freudian interpretation. We may say $25 < 37$

4-In Ibn -e- Sirīn interpretation of symbolic dreams' ratio is greater than Freudian interpretation. We may say $17 > 9$

Table-4 indicates that there are 69 dreams in which both the categories are common and in 31 dreams are different.

Conclusion

Islamic concept of dreams is a broad science. Ibn-e-Sirīn's clarified different discussions about dreams and organized the concept of Quran and hadith.

Sigmund Freud was psycho-analyst. He shaped his theory of dreams based upon his observation.

REM and NON-REM sleep is a new discovery in psychology after Sigmund Freud.

An experiment performed for both theories and collected 50 dreams by practicing Muslims and 50 dreams by common Muslims. The study shows;

a-Practicing Muslims see meaning full dreams

b-Common Muslims see mostly anxiety and wishfully dreams

c-People feel very happy to tell religious dreams

Experimental data proved that Islam is close to inner self and people can solve their problems' by using dreams ideology.

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