



AWARENESS IN NEAR DEATH EXPERIENCES

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ABSTRACT

The reasons of Near Death Experiences are one of the experimental ways in proving the soul. Near Death Experience is a state in which the person's vital organs such as heart and brain stops working for a few moments. The person can understand some things during the death and revival time which is defined as Near Death Experiences. For Example: Getting out of the body and watch it from above, passing through a dark tunnel, entering to light, meeting those who have passed away, feeling happy or relaxed etc. In this writing, we try to analyze the nature of awareness using a Descriptive-Analytical method while representing a coherent look from Near Death Experiences. The result of this research is that due to the low level of consciousness and continuing awareness in Near Death Experience, it seems that awareness is nonphysical and is not limited to physical existence of the human. The states of Near Death Experiences are also the evidence to this matter.

Keywords: Soul, Near Death Experiences, Awareness.

INTRODUCTION

Awareness and life are two the most important components of human that have kept the minds of philosophers and authors busy from the beginning. The explanation and clarification of awareness is one of the most important fields in philosophical issues. In 19th century that psychology separated from philosophy, the awareness became unlimited to philosophy, and it expanded to philosophy and psychology. There are many definitions in dictionaries such as cons-ciousness, alertness, have knowledge, Discover, attention, information, intelligence, and wisdom. In this writing, our aim is to analyze the nature of awareness in Near Death Experiences while presenting a coherent look from the definition of awareness.

The Near Death Experience is one of the reasons that we can rely on them for proving the soul. The first person who has investigated these happenings, is Dr. Raymond Moody, founder of this theory. Common experiences among participants are:

Feeling Dead, Getting out of the body, feeling happy or relaxed, experiencing the tunnel or entering a darkness, meeting those who have passed away, meeting luminous people, reviewing life, reluctant to return, entering to light (Moody, 1994-1995, 19). In most of the cases, the thoughts of those who have such experiences changes and they do not fear death. Those who demonstrated the existence of soul and life after death on the basis of these experiences, know these experiences as strong reasons for existing the soul. (Akbari, 2003, 324)

The quiddity of near Death Experiences (NDE)

In researches carried out throughout the history regarding the near Death Experience (NDE), several definitions are given for these experiences. John Hick believes that in this kind of experience, the human falls in a state very similar to death. These are the moments that the human suffers from temporary (physiological) death which lasts for some moments. (Hick, 1992-1993, P267)

In another definition for these experiences, they say that People whose vital organs such as heart and brain stops working for a few moments, have some understandings during death and revival which is defined as Near Death Experience. With this introduction, it can be said that Near Death Experiences are state or conditions near to death that the person becomes on the verge of biological death or the irreversible death level. (Elsaesser, 1977, 1)

Raymond Moody believes that death in Near Death Experiences means the failure to return to vital activities. In this state, the person returns to life and is not dead. (Moody, 1994-1995, 135)

John Hick in his book, *Philosophy of Religion*, points that in Near Death Experiences the human's brain understandings will not become zero because in that case, the death is absolute and there will be no returns. (Hick, 1992-1993, 267) Bruce Garrison says: "deep psychological incidents with mysterious, spiritual and transcendental components that happens for those who becomes on the verge of death or severe physical injuries" (Greyson, 1983, 109)

Jenis Holden, is another researcher that points out about Near Death Experiences" metapsychological and spiritual memories are reported by people who became on the verge of Death." (Holden, Oramidis, 2018-2019, 86)

Jeffrey Long believes that these experiences occur for people who are dying and are clinically dead, and cannot present a comprehensive definition that is acceptable for everyone. Generally, people who have experienced it, are physically injured and do not have any heartbeat or breath. So, experience should occur in such condition." (Long, 2017-2018, 12)

At biological Death, the person who is conscious or aware of the outside world and his/her disorders can consist of the level of consciousness or its content, suffers from Cardiac arrest and automatically stops breathing. In information gathered from hospital examinations about people who have Near Death Experiences, the level of consciousness in these people become to the lowest level and as a result, it will completely stop, and will return to normal level after revival. (Ahmadi, 2006, 13)

The person who is experiencing the Near Death Experience, when having a heart attack, automatic apnea, brain function, and decreasing the level of consciousness (complete consciousness stoppage, awakening and awareness level), will return to life by choosing an appropriate treatment method (Resuscitation), restarting heartbeat, and breathing.

Betty (Jean) Eadie says that the results of her researches shows that a part of brain lets he human to tolerate these experiences easily. This means that Near Death Experiences are completely real. (Jean Eadie, 2000-2001, 35)

The main question that comes in this topic is that "what does the experiences that are expressed when having no brain function indicate?" This person knows that it should be clear that whether this awareness depends on the brain or depends on something more than brain.



Among those who reported a perception of awareness experienced a broad range of mental recollections in relation to death. (Kerssens, C, Sable, 2002)

States of Near Death Experiences

Near Death Experiences includes states in which most of the people tell the same experiences; although in some cases, some other experiences are also mentioned. Common states of these experiences are: Feeling Death, getting out of the body, feeling happy or relaxed, Experiencing tunnel or entering a darkness, meeting those who have passed away, meeting luminous people, reviewing life, reluctant to return, entering to light.

- *Feeling Dead*

When the person's vital signs stop, the understanding of the experienced people of the fact that this experience is related to death, is different. Some people feel they are dying, but some people only feel floating and do not recognize that they are getting close to death. (Moody, 1994-1995, 20)

Michel Saboom says in the result of his researches that not all the people report their experiences as the death feeling. Yet, many of the experienced people feel they are dead or are dying. In their opinion, feeling of death, is a strong feeling and sensation which occurs all the experiencing time (Saboom, 1987-1988, 42)

- *Out of Body (OBE)*

The second state which is expressed in Near Death Experiences, is getting out of the body. Usually, when Cardio Pulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) is done, the person feels he/she is rising and see his/her body from above. Most of the people watching their own resuscitation at this moment. Most of the people say that in this occurrence, feel themselves in a kind of body although they are out of their physical body. The experienced people say that Mental body has a completely different shape and form in comparison with physical body. Although most of the people cannot explain it in detail. (Moody, 1994-1995, 22)

Michel Saboom put up a category into discussion in Out of Body Experience, named travel of thought. In his interviews with people who have Near Death Experiences, he has said that three persons declared when they were out of their body, they were hanging and had Volitional Movement Power. He has called this movement "the movement of thought". Maybe, this is a state in which the person is floating on his/her own body and is able to see other parts of that place. In this regard, a security man stated that he could see other places of emergency ward when his heart stopped beating and his blood stopped circulating in Near Death Experiences (Saboom, 1987-1988, 74)

Jeffrey Long also mentions common states with examining over 160 cases of Near Death Experiences such as Out of Body Experience. He believes that Those who have Near Death Experiences are able to see and hear in Out of Body State, despite the fact that the experiencing person must not be able to see what is happening around because of clinical death and unconsciousness. He also mentions cases such as seeing the body, the efforts of the medical team for Resuscitation, and even observing what is going on in neighboring rooms. (Long, 2017-2018, 98)

Chris Karter believes that in the mind and body relation, Out of Body Experience is the most important aspect in Near Death Experiences. People frequently report this experience (Out of



Body) from Near Death Experiences, and according to the statements of people in this level (For Example: Seeing Doctors, reporting their words when reviving etc.), it can be confirmed.

The experiences mentioned above shows that Near Death Experience does not essentially occur during Resuscitation. Maybe the person had a Cardiac arrest in an accident and tells these experience.

- *Feeling Happy or Relaxed*

Third common experience in Near Death experiences is the happiness, relaxation, and analgesia. A few researchers such as Kenneth Ring mentions this feeling as the first experience of Near Death Experiences, and then, mentions the Out of Body Experience. Raymond Moody says that when the patient's soul is in his/her body, he/she may feel severe pains most of the time. But in Near Death Experiences, when the soul gets out of the body, the patient feels the true relaxation and painless feeling. (Moody, 1994-1995, 22) Michel Saboom, Chris Karter, and Kenneth Ring, have talked about the happiness or relaxation feelings in their researches. (Saboom, 1987-1988, Karter, 2015-2016)

- *Tunnel Experience or Entering a Darkness*

Tunnel experience or entering a darkness is one of the common experiences that experienced people have pointed out. Tunnel experience or entering a darkness most of the time are mentioned after getting out of the body.

Raymond Moody in Life after Life (Research on Near Death Experiences) says that the person in Near Death Experience, enters a corridor or a dark tunnel after getting out of the body. The experiencing person starts to move within this dark space. Some people go up the stairs instead of passing a tunnel, and at the end of the tunnel is a light, and the person finally enters a light and before reaching the light, returns to his/her physical body. (Moody 1994-1995,23)

Michel Saboom mentions the Tunnel or Dark Space with expressing the experiences of 14 people whose Near Death Experiences started directly by entering a dark space or vacuum. Sometimes, at the beginning of passing through darkness, some people feel confused or temporary fear. In this dark vacuum, they do not move and are hanging. (Sabom 1987-1988, 86)

The above mentioned experiences shows that the experiencing person may enter the darkness level directly and wont experience getting out of body. Passing through the paranormal territory are usually experienced in the form of passing through darkness or a tunnel. Chris Karter is highly affected by Raymond Moody in his researches. He points out in his researches that sometimes, people explain that they watch their revival from this dark area. (Karter, 2014-2015, 138)

According to the researches of the Near Death Experiences researchers, entering immediately to Darkness or vacuum or observing a tunnel are considered as Near Death Experiences which some people may enter them immediately.

- *Meeting those who passed away*

One of the most frequent and comprehensive Near Death Experiences that most of the Experiencing people have mentioned, is meeting those who have passed away. The experiencing people often tells that they have met people who have passed away and they have seen them in a body like their body in this world.



Raymond Moody in the result of his researches has showed that the person who has the Near Death Experience, generally, meets his/her friends and relatives who have passed away as well as a luminous creature. (Moody, 1994-1995,25)

Chris Karter says the experiencing person meet those who have passed away. In this meeting, he/she sees people who have passed away and exchange messages although being short. (Karter 2004-2005, 141)

Jeffrie Long says one of the components that distinguishes the Near Death Experiences from dream and hallucination, is meeting familiar people who are not alive at the time of Near Death Experience. In other words, familiar people who meet the experiencing person are all dead but the creatures that are seen in dream or hallucination are often unfamiliar and are alive most probably. (Long, 2017-2018, 154)

- ***Meeting Luminous People***

Meeting luminous people is another type of Near Death Experiences. Raymond Moody says that Usually, the experiencing person suddenly faces luminous creatures in the tunnel that shine strongly and beautifully. The experiencing person reported that the light does not hurt the eyes despite is shining. (Moody, 1994-1995, 24)

Raymond Moody says that people who believe in a specific religion, explain that person as a holy person. People who believe in Christianity, often explain him as the Christ. Other religions believers explain him as the persons of that religion. For example, Islam believers explain him as the Prophet Muhammad. But some other people have said that he is not the God nor Christ, but he is a holy person.

Chris Karter agrees with Moody and says that people who have such experiences, meet a luminous creature. In his opinion, passing through another territory of awareness signals with appearing a brilliant light, and sometimes it is in the form of a luminous creature. (Karter, 2015-2016)

Dr. T Booman have done some researches on observing light in Near Death Experiences. In his work *entitled God at the Speed of light*, that has examined the nature of Physical Light and the light observed in Near Death Experiences, says:

“I have founded that there is a transcendental element regarding the Near Death Experiences and the claim of observing heaver, and that is light. A light which is absolute capable, Scholar, and present everywhere.” (Vakili & Eghbali, 2007-2008)

- ***Reviewing Life***

Another common experience is reviewing the person’s life and past. The experiencing person see all his/her moments of life like a film on the cinema screen in a moment. This experience has some features according to the experienced people: Lack of Physical Environment, a set of transient images of life and examining from a third party’s look. Raymond Moody says that this is as if all the person’s life displays in a moment. (Moody, 1994-1995, 24)

The professor Jeffry Long also mentions the reviewing events of the past happened in the person’s life in his researches. He follows the trueness issue of Near Death Experiences in his researches. In his opinion, this review is by a luminous person like a dream, and in the third person’s view is explained to the experiencing person. (Long, 2017-2018, 48; long, 2004)

Chris Karter says that the person experiences reviewing the past events of the life after facing a luminous creature. This review is like pictures, almost instant, usually bright and abnormal from all the person’s life or some selected parts. (Karter, 2004-2006, 144)



- ***Reluctant to return***

In the beginning moments that the person returns from Near Death Experience, regrets from coming back due to the type of space and events he has watched, and blames the doctor who revived him, but after some time that becomes aware about what has happened, he becomes happy of his return. Raymond Moody in his book, *Life after life*, says that for some experiencing people, Near Death Experience is so pleasant that they do not want to come back. As a result, they are usually mad at their doctor because he returned them. This feeling is unsubstantial although they lose this pleasant feeling but they are happy that they can have another chance to continue their lives (Moody, 1994-2005, 29) Michel Saboom has also mentioned the reluctant to return in his criteria. He says this experience is in a way that they do not like to return. But in scary Experiences mentioned of Near Death Experience, the experiencing person does not tent to stay in those moments. (Saboom, 1988-1989, 103) Saboom says that Near Death Experiences start from getting out of the body. So, it essentially ends with the feeling of returning to the body. In many cases, this return is affected by another spiritual existence, or the familiar people who have passed away order him to return.

- ***Entering to Light***

One of the most attractive levels of Near Death Experience, is entering to light and watching a beautiful and bright space. Raymond Moody, Chris Karter, Jeffry Long, Michel Saboom, & Kente Ring have pointed the existence of light at the end of tunnel experience in their works. The element of light is one of the points that all the people who have Near Death Experience have mentioned it in their experiences. (Fenwick, 1995)

Chris Karter also knows the light experience as the deepest experience of Near Death and says that they describe it as “it is as if facing a world with unnatural beauty and watching gardens with terrific colors”. One third of Near Death Experiences includes this final level. (Karter, 2015-2016, 145) In the many researcher’s viewpoint, light is the most important reasons that enhances the reality of Near Death Experience. (Moore, 1995-1996, 243)

The total expressed experiences are the coherent list of the results of the researches of NDE researchers. The whole experiences are cited as the reasons of proving the existence of soul. In some people, there are not some experiences. But according to the researches carried out, it is obvious that these experiences are among most of the reports. In other words, these experiences have a common core of commons which is important as one of the reasons of believers of the trueness of these experiences. Based on the performed researches, it is clear that stroke, Cardiac Arrest, and apnea has happened. It seems that this is not a strong reason for occurrence of death in Near Death Experience. But given to out of body experience that the experiencing person sees all the things happens around him/her and after her/his return the authenticity of his claims are approved, are strong reason for the reality of near Death Experiences. The aware person that understands the Near Death Experiences are here the subject of discussion. It seems that a breife analysis on the nature of awareness in human, makes the awareness of Near Death Experience more clear.

Nature of Awareness

Awareness is one of the most important subjects that has kept the minds of thinkers and philosophers busy. Materialistic Explanations that are presented from the awareness of human, are the subject of many discussions and quarrels. Because in the reasons f NEAR Death Experiences, which is mentioned in proving the soul, the direct awareness of the experiencing



person cannot be known as kinds of chemical actions of the brain. What is related to the mentioned issue in this writing, is explaining the awareness in Near Death Experiences.

John Searle defines awareness as:

“Awareness are those feeling, understanding, information that starts from the morning when you wake up and continues up to the end of the day when you fall asleep or get into another form (Unaware).”

The researchers declared that awareness is understood like a feeling. A feeling which suggests that the act of understanding is done. Researchers have shown that the performance of brain increases based on the level of awareness. This means that when there is a subject for the person to be understood, the involvement of neurons of brain for transferring the received data increases to process the information, as well as the metabolism of the brain.

Awareness is performing the act of knowing and understanding the subject of our discussion, and here a question comes out “In Near Death Experiences, is the experiencing person’s understanding dependent on soul or brain?”

If awareness is not from brain, it means that the physical body of we humans, are not obligatory for continuing life. In fact, this is the soul that can bring about consciousness, and awareness for the human based on arguments. (Parnia, 2007, 935)

What is discussed and examined in Near Death Experiences, are experiences that their content cannot be explained with natural explanations at all. Dr. Bruce Greyson points that in his research period, some people could watch events when their brain did not have any activity. Dr. Gary Schwartz is another researcher of After Death Awareness. In his opinion, Philosophy of Materialism with the description that awareness does not depend on brain (Because the brain has awareness exactly when it does not have any activity) their knowledge and definition of the world and awareness cannot accept this topic as a separate concept of brain. He says that as the realities related to the submaterial dimensions in contradiction with the physical soul of the world, many experimental reasons must be available such as the separate of awareness from brain to be able to approve this issue for example, an experiment can be pointed that was performed on 344 patients under study. In this research, the brain of the patients did not have any activity and in fact, they were dead somehow. 18 percent of these people could remember somethings about the time they experienced death and were not consciousness. On the other hand, 21 percent of these patients (8 persons out of 1 person) remember subjects that are related to the time their brain did not have any activity.

The result of another Study in the University of Southampton shows that people remain aware for a long time after their brain becomes inactive and so called dead. So, it can be said that according to the researches carried out, the awareness of human after death still continues. In Near Death Experiences, the person dies for some moments, and they say that the events that the person reports, are related to the time that their brain did not have any activity, while they were able to see what is happening around them.

Professor Bahram Elahi about the getting out of body says that:

“The existence that we call soul, is not physical but it is made of a very soft substance which although it is not founded yet, but it is similar to electromagnetic waves that is able to carry voices and pictures. Accurate rules and regulations govern them.”

He says that brain is a tool which communicates the information of the outside and inside worlds but soul is a separate existence which is in communication with brain. As the human’s



soul is a separate and real existence that explains the main nature of human, continues his life after death and this existence presents the experience at Near Death Experience.

Sir John Eccles has similar results with professor Elahi. He says this thought that the brain does all the works and that aware experiences are the reflect of brain activities are completely different. Eccles says:

“If it was in that way, our consciousness was nothing more than a passive supervisor on the performance of nervous system and our beliefs that we can really make decision and control our actions were all hallucination.”(Cruse, 2011)

Brain is a tool that make the communication lines with the human’s outside world in its consciousness control. This happens by nerve fibers that creates brain impulses. These impulses are in the form of a coded information patterns that include receives, thoughts, beliefs, and memories at the experiencing moment become decoded and processed.

Max planck also says about awareness that:

“In my opinion, awareness is a basic and essential concept. I always remember the material as a derivation of awareness. We cannot drop behind awareness. Everything that we talk about, everything that we consider as a creature, is assumed as a conscious and aware existence.” (Geoffrey, 1988, 142)

Dr. Sam Parnia in the result of his researches says that medically, it is a normal thing that when the blood pumping to the brain stops, the brain cannot remember anything anymore. At least the first few moments after death, the time that we need to do analysis and return the person to life, consciousness, soul and mind or any other word that we use to describe “me”, continues the life. Finally, when the people express their experiences, the evidences shows that when these people had these experiences that their brain’s performance is completely stopped. (Parnia, 2007)

CONCLUSION

1. The experiment of Bruce Grisson on continuing awareness in Near Death Experiences is a minimum evidence on nonmaterialism of awareness in Near Death Experiences. It can be said that when Near Death Experiences occur, an aware existence more than our human’s physical body exists that at least sees what is happening around and reports it.
2. With respect to the fact that in the results of hospital researches of the people who had Near Death Experience, the consciousness of people become to its lowest level and as a result, it completely stops and becomes normal after revival. It is estimated that awareness is nonmaterial and belongs to the nonphysical aspect of the body.

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