



A Study on the Value of Ear and Eye Based on Quran and Nahjolbalaghe Verses, and the Priority Philosophy of Hearing Sense Over the Vision

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ABSTRACT

Background: The ear, sense of hearing, as one of the blessings of God and an important organ in human life, has been considered by the Holy Quran. Ear is a cartilaginous, soft, plicate and twisty member of body which is composed of three parts: external ear, middle ear and internal ear. The most important part of the internal ear is the cochlea which includes auditory nerves, liquid and hair fibers. Auditory nerves and hair fibers transfer the received sounds or messages to the brain. The number of neurons receiving audio waves is around three thousand. Besides, other limbs also exist in the ear which play important roles in hearing.

Objectives: Audio and visual senses are two main bases of knowledge and thought. Speaking is based on hearing, and imagination is based on observation. Hence, ear and eye are very important. The current study, answered the basic question: "what is the philosophy and reason of precedence ear over the eye?"

Materials and Method: since the main question of research was "evaluating the philosophy and reasons of ear precedence over the eye in the Quran and Nahjolbalaghe", it was an analytical-descriptive library research, and the required documents were gathered from ear and eye related references.

Results & Conclusion: The words "hearing" and "seeing" have been repeated together in Quran 19 times among which 17 times "hearing" has preceded "seeing". For instance, the Quran mentions "not listening to advices" as one of the reasons to throw people into the hell. Precedence of ear over the eye in the Quran and Nahjolbalagha is almost a rule and it shows the special position of ear and hearing.

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► Implication for health policy/practice/research/medical education:

We could use the Quranic verses to understand the importance of the ear rather other senses. It can be used to be healthy and treated of some disorders such as sleep disorders.

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1. Background

Human is equipped with different external and internal senses by which he can understand the tangible world through him. He understands visible things through the eyes, audible sounds through the ears, edibles things through taste, smells through the nose, and feels rigidity, softness, coldness and warmness through the sense of touch. Besides, internal feelings such as grief and happiness are perceived through internal senses. God has created man with knowledge gadgets to understand right and wrong, tastes and smells, colors and objects (1).

Among sensory gadgets, ear and eye have the most important roles, since human typically understands the tangible matters through the ear and eye. Therefore, Imam Ali (AS) has emphasized on these senses more than the others and has given more precedence to the ears over than eyes "God gave you ears, to listen and remember the important words and also gave you eyes to discover the hidden" (2).

Imam Ali (AS) regarding human different senses stated that: "Heart is a place of faith and its way passes through the ears" (3). On the other hand regarding ears he has stated: "eye is a messenger, and reporter of heart" (4). The Imam also mentioned the ears and eyes as a path of faith and the reporter of heart, respectively. Imam Ali (AS) has referred to the ears and eyes as two main senses and gadgets to diagnose and communicate with the outside world, and it is because of the important role of these two organs in sensory perceptions.

The words "hearing" and "seeing" have been repeated together 19 times in Quran, among which in 17 times "hearing" has preceded "seeing", in such a way that the ear has been discussed before the eye.

Nahjolbalagha also mentioned the words "ear" and "eye" 27 and eight times, respectively which shows the importance and worthiness of these two sensory gadgets. The precedence of ear over the eye is a very important point of Nahjolbalagha like Holy Quran.

Sayyed-Alshohada (AS) in Arafah prayer stated that: "give me this advantage to enjoy all my body members, and make my ears and eyes as my heirs" (5), that means "protect me from deafness and blindness to death". In this prayer, ear preceded eye.

2. Objectives

Senses of hearing and sight are two main elements of knowledge and thought. Speaking is based on hearing and imagination is based on observation. Therefore, ears and eyes are highly important. In the current study, the following basic question was answered "what is the philosophy and reason of ear precedence over eye?"

3. Materials and Methods

3.1. Early Creation of the Ear and The Eye

Embryologists believe that the earliest symptom of ear

creation is usually visible in a 22-day embryo by thickened surface ectoderm in the both sides of "rhombencephalon". During the fourth week, internal ear separates from surface ectoderm (6). In a 22-day embryo, ears as on a pair of shallow downpipe appear on the both sides of anterior cerebral grooves, and by the end of fourth week grow as a pair of eye bulb on both sides of the anterior cerebral (6). In the embryo, audio sense activates begin before visual sense and this fact has been already proved.

3.2. The Relationship between Deep Sleep and Ears in the Story of "As'hab-e-Kahaf" (The Cave Owners)

The Almighty in the "Kahaf" surah indicates the important issues which any one of them needs several deep researches. For instance, how did As'hab-e-Kahaf (The Cave Owners) fall asleep just after entering the cave? (7) According to the Holy Quran, what is the relationship between their entering the cave and falling asleep with sunlight? (8). What is the relationship between sunrise and sunset with their rolling in bed? (8) Why does Holy Quran use the word "Roghood" for their falling asleep? (8) Why does the Almighty regard Asshab-e-kahaf says: "we appointed the sleep on their ears" (9) instead of "their eyes"? What is the relationship between a deep sleep and the ear? The Holy Quran says: for many years we sealed up their hearing in the cave (9). The mentioned verse is one of the kind which although with further discovers will open doors to new science, its ambiguous dimensions are still remained unknown. Interpreters have proposed some probabilities about "placing sleep on the ears":

First: Zamakhshari wrote in Kashaaf that: we set a curtain at the door of the cave so that their ears cannot hear any outside sound so that no sound would awaken them. That is, we dominated a deep sleep on them, not to be awakened by any noise. In this case, the object of the verb "set" is "curtain" which has been deleted from the text (10).

Second: probably the reason for a deep sleep of Asshab-e-Kahaf is their ears by which the meaning of this verse is: we dominated a deep sleep on their ears. This interpretation is extremely of eloquent, such as people say: "the God made him paralyzed" and also is said: Amir cut his hands from that job. In this regard, Ghotrob has said: this is a kind of untranslatable verse (11).

Third: To put sleep on the ears of Asshab-e-Kahaf points to what mothers do with their children when try to make them sleep, they knock on the children's ears slowly with their palms or fingertips to make them focus on something and fall asleep. This verse means the Almighty made them sleep with difficulty and patience. «*Senin adada*» means "a few". Some interpreters said the possessive has been deleted from the text, that is «*Senin zavat adada*» means "the numbered years" (12).

However it should be confessed that this verse is among the verses which can be translated with difficulty. Hope that by scientific researches some unknown angels of this Karima verse, like the relationship between deep

sleep and ear can be clarified.

4. Results

4.1. The Reason for Precedence of Ear over Eye in Quran and Nahjolbalaghe

The reality is that both audio and visual senses are among cognition gadgets and primary understanding channels through which human can communicate with the outside world, understand the conceptual matters, distinguish the objects with, and get familiar with them. According to the Karima verses of Holy Quran, mentioning "audition" before "vision" in the Quran and Nahjolbalaghe is based on a principle. Some philosophies regarding the precedence of ear over the eye are as follows:

4.1.1. In Embryo, Audio Sense is being Active Before Visual Sense

In the fifth month of pregnancy, the embryo can hear sever noises and show reactions. Some researches (13) indicate that indirect education of an embryo which starts from week 34 of pregnancy including telling stories and playing music, especially to stimulate the recognition ability of different kinds of sounds, can help the mental and physical growth of the child. By sending audible waves to pregnant women within the last days of pregnancy, scientists found that embryo can show physical reactions to these waves (14). Whereas the embryo cannot see before birth, the first sound which pacifies its ears is the heartthrob of mother (15).

The Almighty says: "he created him and (caused the angel to) breathe into him his (created) spirit. He gave you eyes and ears, and hearts, yet little do you thank" (16). "We have created the human from a (sperm) drop, a mixture, testing him; we made him to hear and see." (17).

This verse mentions the creation time of audio, visual and tactile senses, respectively. It is wonderful that this sentence is precisely compatible with the embryo development calendar. In the embryo, internal ear appears first and then eyes and brain are seen (18).

4.1.2. Function of Audio Sense at Birth

Audio sense is among senses which start working just as of the birth, because infants can hear voices just after birth. Infant at birth, by hearing strong voice blinks, moves and starts crying (19).

Infant needs more time to see the objects clearly. The sensitivity of human retina against light is weak at birth (20). Development of retina structure is almost complete by the end of the first six months of life, therefore the second six months of life infant can see the objects clearly.

4.1.3. Function of Visual Sense All the Time

Audio sense always can do its task without any pause,

but it doesn't apply for visual sense and it gets clear at darkness and sleeping time. Because the last sense that loses its sensitivity at sleeping time is the audio sense.

The Almighty in the story of "centuries-old dream of Asshab-e-Kahaf" says: "so into the cave, we have set the senselessness curtains on their ears for several years" (9) because when human falls asleep, he may wake up with just a little noise.

The ear can hear the sounds in sleep or even when one is unconscious. A skilled old famous surgeon found that the patients, who had undergone a surgery by him, hated him. By psychological researches it was found that the surgeon usually used insulting and humiliating words against the patients during the surgery (21).

4.1.4. To Learn and Understand, Ear is More Important than the eye

Because in the case of losing eyes, learning languages and sciences is possible, but losing of ears, learning a language and sciences is difficult. To show the strong relationship between the ear and the mind Holy Quran mentions the ear alone with the mind. "They will then say: 'if only we had listened and understood, we should not now be among the inhabitants of the blaze (22)". Imam Ali (AS) said: "If he were impressed by someone's speech, no one could force him to talk. He was keen on listening to others rather than talking to them" (23). This is very important that man is more interested in listening rather than talking, and this is the prevalence of audio sense over talking.

Imam Ali (AS) in part of his letter to Moavia stated that: "be considered that everyone has certainly heard about our Islam and during paganism era, everybody is aware of our honor and glories" (24).

4.1.5. The Effect of Ear and Eye on Physical Balance is Very Important

The task of the eye is just about the vision. Infants in 15-day of life distinguish the darkness and light. Besides controlling audition, ears have to control the physical balance (15, 25).

Imam Ali (AS) considering the limitation of audition and presence of invisible colors and very small objects says: "any audient, except God, is deaf to hear weak sounds, disable to understand strong sounds, can't hear the distant songs and any observer, except Him, is blind and unable to see invisible and unclear colors and very small objects (23).

This statement of Imam indicates the audiology and photology, because the human eye cannot see all the colors, such as sunlight colors which are visible through electronic devices. Ear also has some limitations. The human ear can understand the frequencies higher than 2000 decibels. The wonderful point is that Imam Ali (AS) had revealed these philosophical facts in the centuries

before understandings them.

Imam Ali (AS) regarding the visual illusion elsewhere says: "Thinking is not like seeing, because eyes sometimes cheat us. But the mind does not cheat the man who may need the mind's advice" (23). Visual illusion is a kind of misunderstanding of vision. An example of these mistakes is a mirage. The data sent through eye and ears come to the central nervous system (CNS) together with data from neck and other organs, and after required coordination, reach to the higher cerebral centers and then the body feels balanced. The eye is responsible for seeing, but the ear is responsible for hearing and keeping the physical balance.

4.1.6. More Shares for Ears Rather than Eyes to Learn Sciences and Knowledge

Audio sense somehow has prevalence over visual sense. For instance, memorizing the speech is primarily through audio sense. If an infant is deaf at birth, encounters difficulties to communicate with people, and coordination with the outside world, which can result in his mental and conceptual failures. Therefore, a few highly educated deaf people can be found. Because teaching, learning, understanding and talking are highly dependent on the audio sense. The man, who loses his talking ability, cannot talk. Hence, Quran has primarily related the science to the audio sense and then to the visual sense (23).

In contrast, many innate blinds could reach higher scientific degrees and even have had innovations. For instance, "Abolaala Moerry" a fluent Arab poet or "Tahaa Hossain" famous Egyptian lecturer and "Khazaeli" a departed Iranian lecturer can be named.

The Almighty in Nahl Surah says: "Allah brought you out of your mothers' wombs, and gave you hearing, sight and hearts, in order that you be thankful" (26). It is concluded that most of the data, knowledge and science regarding regular life are received through the ears. A newborn who doesn't know anything at birth is given gadgets such as ears and eyes respectively, base on the importance, to perceive the world science. The ear is the most common means of communication with the world. Use of radio, television and the like is almost impossible without ear. Worldwide telecommunication and other kinds of communicating systems are also related to the audio sense (27).

4.1.7. More Shares for Ears rather than Eyes in Purification of the Soul

Islam needs innocent soul and heart that means the heart is away from anything except God, and the ability of the ear in purification of the soul is more than I. The way to nourish body for being alive is the mouth, but the ear is the way to nourish the soul. Eye and other organs deliver their knowledge to the audition and vision devices to reach the soul. Here also ear is a more important route

than the eye. Because a man who can hear nothing and does not have the hearing ear, his tongue also gets dumb, and the obedience of tongue from the ear is more than that of the eye.

4.1.8. The Share of Ear in Soul and Heart Development is More than Eye:

«surely, in this there is a reminder for him who has a heart or listens attentively while witnessing» (28). In the present verse, just ear has been mentioned, without referring to the eye.

5. Discussion

Precedence of ear over the eye in the Quran and Nahjolbalagha, is almost a rule and principle.

- The Quran has mentioned the words "ear" and "eye" 19 times together which in 17 times hearing is preceded over seeing, and in Nahjolbalagha the word "ear" is repeated 27 times and the word "eye" seven times.

- Although human has two ears and two eyes, in the Quran and Nahjolbalagha the word "hearing" has been mentioned in a single form and the word "seeing" usually cited in plural form. This delicate point needs further investigations.

- Deep relationship between the ear and sleep in the story of "Ashshab-e-Kahaf" needs more researches.

- Referring to the verses and narrations, some philosophies regarding the precedence of ear over the eye, which talk about more importance of the ear than the eye can be perceived.

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