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ISLAMIC THEORY OF *FITRAT* OR THE PRISTINE HUMAN NATURE

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ARTICLE DETAILS	ABSTRACT
Article History: Published Online: _Published_ Keywords: Human Nature`, Spiritual Health, Effects of Religion	The discussion of the human nature is one of the most complex and important topics that has been discussed by Faith leaders, theologians, theologians, and even psychologists, with differing perspectives. Human Nature has distinct characteristics and has the ability to develop through education and training. That is why different factors can affect the flourishing of the Human Nature. Spiritual Health has been recognized as fourth pillar of Man over-all well being. As Man's Nature and the spiritual health both are connected with 'heart' (<i>qalb</i>) therefore spiritual fulfillment directly result in flourishing of the human Nature.

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	<p>Objective: To explain How can spiritual health help nature to fulfill its role?</p> <p>Hypothesis: The spiritual perfection and well-being result in actualization of potentialities of Man</p> <p>Methods: This study is based on the method of documentary studies, with a descriptive and analytical approach.</p> <p>Expected result: Achieving a series of recommendations, strategies and strategies based on spiritual health with an intra-religious perspective; Which leads to the flourishing of human nature</p>
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Introduction

The discussion of nature is, in fact, a discussion of the existential structure and the spiritual and spiritual dimensions of man. The theological issues involved is whether regardless of following a religion and its code of conduct by choice, r man has a natural and existential inclination to God or not?

Does man, in his inherent nature, tend to perfection and truth? Is religion rooted in the nature of human beings or not? But what is the main question in this article is, "Can spiritual health affect the flourishing of the human nature.

As a preliminary, we should define the human nature, its characteristics and differences with elements such as instinct and explain some of the obstacles and factors that hinder the flourishing of



nature. Then, we would try to clarify the role of spiritual health in the flourishing of the human nature and actualization of human potentials.

Definition of *Fitrat* (the Human Nature)

The word *fitrat* is from the root "*fatara*". Literally, *fatatra* means splitting and creation without having a history.² The word "nature" thus means special characteristics and quality that, at the beginning of creation, is made inherent for each phenomenon. Therefore, the nature of everything is all the features and characteristics, based on which it is created.³ Ayatollah Javādī Amolī in his definition of nature says: "Nature is the intuitive realization of the 'Pure' and 'Absolute' Existence, of man to pure existence and conscious inclination and existential attraction and humble obedience to HIM, ; It is a special way of creation in which the human being is

Nature is of the type of being and existence, not of the type of nature and because it has no nature; it has neither a limit definition nor a formal

1راغب اصفهاني(425) ، مفردات ، دار القلم
بيروت، 1412هـ.ق ، ص 640 ،
2 ابن منظور، (711) ، لسان العرب، دار صادر،
بيروت ، 1414هـ.ق ، پانزده جلدی، ج، 5، ص، 56
3 جوادى أملی، ، همان، ص 26.



definition; rather, it has a definition of a nominal description, that is, the special creation of man that has a special tendency and intuition in its institution. The criterion of instinct is that man naturally tends towards those things

After summarizing various theories about the human nature, Allāma Murtazā Mutahhari, says: The word "*fitrat*" implies original creation. It is different from *gharīzah* I (instincts) " Instincts are the inclinations and needs common to man and animals but *fitrat* refers to special higher human faculties and, desires and inclinations that has given birth to the human culture, civilization , religion and spirituality. ." "When we say that these inclinations are innate, it means that they flow from human nature and d like seeds has been sown and exists in the depths of man's being. If left to himself man is bound to take this course , unless hindered by external factors. Mutahharī says: Man has been created in a way of nature and nature that is ready to accept religion, and if he is left to his own state and natural state, he will choose the same



path unless external factors have diverted him from his path."⁵

There are two viewpoints about the issue whether Man is born with potential qualities. According to those who deny the human nature, man is like a *tabula rasa* at the beginning of birth, that is, a blank page. One can write whatever wants to write on it. According to those who believe in *fitrat*, man is like a seed. Because the seed is not a tree or a fruit now, but the potential of developing into a tree is inherent in it.⁶ "The Qur'an believes in the nature for man which signifies the special Islamic perspective about man."⁷ The idea of *fitrat* has special kinship with the idea of education and *tarbiyat*. Education" means to grow and nurture and these series of potentials and characteristics inherent in man "

The word *fitrat* and other words derived from this root, have been used in Islamic texts, including the Qur'an and Habit, to denote this special nature

4 مطهري (شهيد)، مرتضي، مجموعه آثار، فطرت، ص 32, 457, 467
5 مطهري، مجموعه آثار، فطرت، ص 451.
6 مطهري، مجموعه آثار، فطرت، ص 452.



of man. The Qur'an says "I turn my face to the Creator who created the heavens and the earth."⁸

This is also stated in the verses of *Sūrah* (17) *al-Isrā*, verse 51 and *Sūrah* (35) *Fātir* verse 1".

Imām Ali (عليه السلام) says while describing the mystery of the creation of an ant, : "... no creator in its creation (ant); "has partnered with God, and indeed the Creator of the ant is also the Creator of the palm tree."⁹

In this case, "the human nature" refers to all the plant, animal and human characteristics of man; However, most Islamic scholars and thinkers have used the word *fitrat* (the human" nature") in their writings and speeches to mean the transcendent tendencies and insights that distinguish man from animals and all phenomena of creation. They include potential to develop science, technology, philosophy, religion, morality and aesthetics; and characteristics such as development truth-seeking, perfectionism, justice, aesthetics, and so on.¹⁰

7 انعام (6) آية 79

8 نهج البلاغه، صبحي صالح - خطبة 185.

9 خميني، روح الله، شرح چهل حديث، مؤسسه تنظيم و نشر امام خميني (ره)، تهران، 1382، حديث اول، ص 5



Allama Tabātabāī has devoted sixteenth chapters of his Tafsīr *al-Mīzān*, to the topic that religion is inherent in the human nature. He has gone beyond the pre philosophical issues whether the argument of Nature is a valid philosophical argument or not and has considered the human nature as the fountainhead of religion nature has been defined as the bedrock of religion in human beings.¹¹

Though the word *fitrat* has been used only once in the Qur'an; but the topic of the divine nature of man has been described in various terms and expressions. It is declared

«فأقم وجهك للدين حنيفا فطره الله التي فطر الناس عليها لا تبديل لخلق الله ذلك الدين القيم»

"Turn your face towards the pure religion, "A religion on which God created man, , There is no change in the creation (i.e. created laws and the nature) . This is the firm path religion of the guardian.¹²

In addition to this verse, in other verses different dimensions of human nature are referred..

و نفس و ما سويها فالهما فجورها و تقويها

10 طباطبائي، (علامه) تفسير الميزان، جلد 16، ص 187.

11 روم (30) آية 30



I swear by the soul, and the One who created the soul and placed in it potential for sins and pious deeds; "Then he inspired her good and bad."¹³

فاذا سوئته و نفخت فيه من روعي فقعدوا له ساجدين

When I completed His (Adam's) creation, and I blew my spirit in him, (and the angels were directed) bow down before him.¹⁴ In this verse man is introduced as having the Divine 'spirit' or the spark.

In the slayings of the Prophet and the imāms of *Ahl al-Bait* (his progeny), , it has been emphasized that human nature has been made in such a way that it naturally tends to believe and obey God, and is inclined towards perfection and transcendence, and if the rusts are removed, man will go no other way than the path of monotheism and spiritual perfection. Imām Ali says:

. و فاطرهم علي معرفة ربوبيته الدال علي وجوده بخلقه¹⁵

God created them on His knowledge as the Lord , and the creation is the proof of His existence." This narration shows that the knowledge of God is

12 الشمس (91) آيه 7، 8

13 حجر (15) آيه 29

14 اصول كافي، جلد 1 / باب جوامع التوحيد، حديث 5



embedded in the nature of all human beings; everyone intuitively knows his God.

The Holy Prophet (PBUH) said: "

«كل مولود يولد علي الفطرة»¹⁶

Every baby is born on the true nature; "His parents make him deviant."

The inherent human nature and natural inclination of man for seeking religion and God is also emphasized by other religions and the Christian psychologists and theologians in various literatures. Many philosophers and theologians consider the "*consensus gentium*" or the 'general consensus of the human beings' as the source of certain ideas and teachings. Among those who have relied on such arguments are Cicero, Seneca, Clement of Alexandria, Herbert of Cherbury, the Cambridge Platonists, Gassendi, and Grotius.¹⁷

"The human soul is inherently religious in function," says Jung.¹⁸ Elsewhere, Jung says: "Religion is a state of consideration of certain influential (supernatural) factors which human

15 توحيد صدوق ، ص330

16 پل ادوارز، مقاله برهان اجماع عام، خدا در فلسفه، تج بهالدين خرمشاهي، مؤسسه مطالعات و تحقيقات فرهنگي، 1372.

17 مورنو، انتونيويو، يونگ، خدايان و انسان مدرن ص92.



beings refer to as the 'Dominant Powers', in the form of spirits, demons, gods, laws, etc. and idealize them as the ultimate goal and perfection.

¹⁹William James though does not appreciate the theological formulations of theologians about God but says: "I accept that the source of religious life is the heart."²⁰ Thus, the human nature is recognized in all religious and philosophical traditions and by theologians, philosophers and even psychologists. All of them agree that there is an urge inside man that drives him towards to perfection, religion, morality, aesthetics, and spirituality and to the realities of other world.

Signs and Characteristics of the Natural Inclinations of Man (*fitrīyāt*)

Since man consists of body and soul, he has different dimensions and different material and spiritual potentialities; each of these dimensions has its own characteristics. Man shares some of the characteristics with inanimate objects- 'some with plants and some with other animals. However, man has certain characteristics of his own which

18 يونگ، روانشناسي و دين، تـج، فؤاد روحاني، جيبى 1370 ص 8.

19 ويليام جمز، دين و روان، تـج، مهدي قائني، دارالفكر، قم، 1367، ص 122.



distinguish him from all others. These characteristics constitute *fitrat*, which is distinct from instincts and habits.

The common denominator between *fitrat* (*the human nature*) and instinct is that both have a general and universal aspect and are seen in all people. But there are following major differences:

(A): Instinct is common to both human and animal, but *fitrat* is the higher human nature is specific to man.

(B): Instinct are mainly concerned with physical-biological needs; they are rooted in biochemistry" and "physiology", while the human nature is concerned with the higher human inclinations and urges, just as the urge for beauty or truth.

(C) The human Nature concerned with the whole self and soul of man, but instincts are related to one of the components of the human body.

(D) Characteristic of *fitrat* is awareness and rationality. With rational approach man tames his instincts and proceeds towards the human perfection.. But if it is not accompanied, it becomes passive and overwhelmed by animal instincts of man.



Fitrīyāt (the human urges) have characteristics and criteria that we enumerate as follows:

Intrinsicity: *Fitrīyāt* (the human urges) spring from the soul and psyche of man; no external factor, outside of human existence, has created them and man has not learned or is learning them from anyone.

Universality: *Fitrīyāt* (the human urges) are common to every person of every race, nationality, time and place, with These human urges have existed in every age and geographical condition, has existed and exists.

Permanence: *Fitrīyāt* (the human urges) are not separated from anyone. They have always existed with human beings, and are innate. Although they may become weak and dormant due to external factors, but after the external obstacle removed, they reappear. (Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc is a relatively recent example)

Inner Stress /Torture, if not satisfied: Since *Fitrīyāt* (the human urges), are real and inherent need of man, inability to satisfy those leads to inner stress and anxiety. If they are not satisfied, man will becomes tortured from inward; he feels lost and



having no goal of life. Such a person does not have peace of mind.

Specific to Human beings: *Fitrīyāt* (the human urges are specific to man and distinguish man from other animals. The desires that are common between human and animal are called instincts.

Constitute Human Perfection: *Fitrīyāt* (the human urges) constitute the human perfection. With the manifestation of every aspect of *fitrat*, possibilities of perfection in the society are opened.

Natural Urges of Man

After defining and describing the characteristics, the question arises are all human desires related with instincts and social habits, or some of them arise from the *fitrat* or the higher human Nature?

Observation proves that man has physical and non-physical/ spiritual desires, To the same extent that man has instinctive urge for food, sex and procreation, he also has urge for power, dominance, love, truth seeking knowledge. These tendencies are called "spiritual matters" in psychology and the pleasures resulting from them are called "spiritual pleasures".



Existence of such urges and tendencies in human being are undeniable. The question is what is the source and shapes these non-physical desires of man? Do these urges spring from the Human Nature, or have other sources.

Here we enumerate such of these non-material or spiritual desires and urges of Man:

Truth-seeking: Every human being, without exception, is curious and wants to know the truth of every phenomenon and become aware of its secrets. This sense, which is called "truth-seeking" or "knowledge", is sought by all human beings who want to grow and develop. In psychology, this sense is called "sense of enquiry" and most of the educational problems of children are planned accordingly. The sense of "truth-seeking" is the goal of philosophy. The philosophers always seek to discover the truths of the universe.

God-seeking: Although man's truth-seeking urge ultimately leads him towards God. Inner urge of the human nature to know the 'Ultimate Reality' and 'Power' has existed always. Allama Tabātabāi says: Not only from the earliest period of the recorded history but since the earliest records of



pre-historic man that the Archaeology has discovered it is proven that from the first days of its existence, human beings have never rested in his quest for God and have been constantly the supernatural force and the source of creation and perfection.²¹

Urge for Beauty or Aesthetics: Every human being loves beauty and strives to attain objects of beauty

Urge for Perfection: Man is looking for absolute perfection and aspires for the Ultimate Perfection and Beauty and to find the Supreme Being Who is manifestation of Absolute Perfections.

Search of immortality: Every human being loves his life and its continuation and yearns for immortality.

Allegiance to Moral Values: Man's concept and feeling of admiration for moral virtues have been constant in history and is rooted in the Human Nature (*fitrat*). The Human Nature is its origin and human beings have admired and extolled such values just as: justice, humanity, service to others,



self-sacrifice, forgiveness, renunciation of material pleasures, etc.

Obstacles to the Flourishing of Fitrat

In view of what has been stated, human nature seeks goodness and perfection, but it faces obstacles that weakens its efficiency and hinders its manifestation and role. There are factors that cast shadow on the pristine human nature and veil it. Here we point to some of them using the verses of the Qur'an and *Hadith*

Following Carnal Desires:

The Qur'an says: Have you not seen the one who made his carnal desires his god? How God let him fall in error in spite of knowledge, sealed his ears and heart, and a veil hung over his eyes.²²

Imam Ali (عليه السلام) says in this regard: I am worried concerning you about two things- following the carnal desires and undue worldly longings. Following the carnal desires deviate man from the path of 'truth'. Worldly longing makes him forget the Hereafter.²³

21 جاڻيہ (45) آيہ 23
22 نهج البلاغہ ، خطبہ ، 42



Elsewhere, Imam Ali (عليه السلام) says: the domination of the carnal desires destroys religion and reason.²⁴ All misguidance lies in following the carnal desires.²⁵

Self-conceit and Coercion:

The Qur'an declares in *Sūrah Ghāfir*: Those who argue about the signs of God without a clear proof, this is condemnable in the sight of God and those who believe (the Prophet) and angers them. In this way, God seals the heart of every arrogant and wicked person.²⁶

Stubbornness and Unbelief:

In *Sūrah al-Baqarah*, it is stated: O Prophet! It is the same for the disbelievers to convey your message to them and to frighten them from opposing it or not; they will not believe. God has set a seal on their hearts and ears, and a veil over their eyes, and they will have a severe punishment.²⁷

23 غرر و درر. چاپ دانشگاه تهران ج 4، ص 383،
.6414

24 غرر و درر، چاپ دانشگاه تهران، ج 4، ص 408،
.6518

25 غافر، (30)، آیه 35

26 بقره (2)، آیه 6 و 7



Hypocrisy and Duplicity:

The Qur'an says: "They (the hypocrites) first believed, and then disbelieved. And after that, their hearts were sealed, and they did not understand.

28

Stubbornness against the Truth:

The Qur'an narrates: He (Noah) said: Our Lord! I called my people day and night, and my invitation only increased their distance (from the truth) ... They insisted on disbelief and stubbornness, and they practiced selfishness²⁹

Indifference to the Truth:

In *Sūrah al-Kahf*, it is stated: "Who is wicked than he who remembers the revelations of God and deviates from them? And he forgot all that he had done. And We have put a veil over their hearts so that they may not understand; And We made their ears heavy, then whatever whatsoever attempt you make to guide them, they will never be guided."³⁰

27 منافقون (63) ، آیه 3 و 1
28 نوح (71) ، آیات : 5 و 7
29 كهف (18) ، آیه 57



Avoiding remembrance of God:

The Qur'an says: Whoever avoids remembrance of me, his life will be full of torture and We will gather him blind on the Day of Resurrection.³¹

Accepting Satan's dominion:

It is declared: Satan has severely dominated them and has taken the remembrance of God out of their hearts. They are the party of Satan. ...³²

Corruption in the Land, Oppression and Seeking Supremacy:

The Qur'an says: When Our Verses Were Clearly Presented to Them, they said, this is obvious magic. Although they believed in the truth of our verses, they denied it out of seeking power and their arrogance.³³

Breach of covenant and Disbelief:

It is described: Whenever (in the sea) are faced with huge wave, like the mountains, they call on God sincerely and consider the religion to be His. When they are saved and reach the land, only a few remain in obedience to God. None deny Our

30 طه (20) ، آیه 126 و 124
31 مجادلہ (58) آیه 19
32 نمل (27) ، آیه 13 و 14



revelations except he who has made a breach of covenant and disbelief his way.³⁴

Allāma Murtaza Mutahharī's Theory of the

Allāma Murtazā Muttahharī, the great contemporary Iranian thinker was one of those who articulated the Islamic Theory of *Fitrat in the last decades*.

According to him, the concept of *fitrat* is at one side related with man and on the other side, related with God.. It is a key concept emphasized in the Qur'an and the *Hadīth both*.³⁵

He points out that the Qur'an has used three terms:

1. *Fitrat* (Nature)
2. *Sibghah* (colour)
3. *Hanīf* (pristine- truth-seeking)

The Qur'an says :

God's colouring, what is superior than the Divine colour³⁶

In the other famous verse , it is said: god's Nature on which God created man , this is the pristine religion.³⁷ According to the Qur'an,

33 لقمان (31) ، آیه 32

³⁵ Mutahhary, Murtaza, *Fitrat*, P 7

³⁶ Qur'an, Sūrah al-Baqarah, ayah 138

³⁷ Qur'an, Sūrah al-Rūm, Ayah 35



religion is one and the same. All men are inclined to common religions, the essence of religion is the same and that is *Touhīd*, belief that there is a God and that He is One. Mutahhari says:

Islam does not believe in the unity of religions but in the unity of religion.³⁸

Mutahharī has differentiated between three word`

1. *Tabī'at* (Natural properties)
2. *Garīzah* (instinct)
3. *Fitrat* (*the human Nature*)³⁹

The term *tabī'at* (physical nature is generally used for in animate matter. For instance, infallibility is the natural property of oxygen and so on. The word '*gharīza* (instinct is mostly applied to animals and also to those needs and urges of man which he shares with all animals. All those urges or knowledge, that is instinctively learned by animals, and by the human baby. The term *fitrat* is used only in case of man. That is that peculiar human nature which distinguishes man from animals. Like instincts, 'Nature' is also inherent and not learned from outside. It is more conscious than instincts

³⁸ Mutaharī, *Fitrat*, P 17

³⁹ Mutahharī, *Fitrat*, 20



Another difference between *gharīzah* (instinct) and *fitrat* (human nature is that instinct are all related with physical urges and material sphere, but *fitrat* (human Nature) consists of urges that are peculiarly human and non-material. Like urge for perfection, for truth seeking, knowledge -seeking, urge towards beauty, aesthetics, towards worship of Absolute Perfect or moral sense. Many of these are not for the sake of any material profit and pleasure, but another kind of inner pleasure ⁴⁰

Allāma Mutahharī has described some inclinations and abilities of man that spring from his *fitrat* (innate human nature. He classified these specially human distinct qualities and inclinations in the domain of knowledge and in the domain of human desires and urges. He deals with the question: does man has some innate knowledge or all is acquired knowledge. He refers to verse no. 78 of *Sūrah al-Nahl* which suggest when an infant is born he know nothing. ⁴¹ Another view is the Platonic view that man has knowledge of ideas when is born. The 3rd view which is the view of Mutahharī is that man has potential knowledge of

⁴⁰ Mutahharī, *Fitrat*. Pp 20-23

⁴¹ Qur'an, sūrah al-Nahl, verse 78



certain things. Even without teacher and Aristotelian logic every person has some innate knowledge as a seed . But when watered by experience or learning it becomes a tree.. This is also view of Muslim Philosphers and Aristotle also. Philosophy of Kant also supports it. ⁴² The idea that there is God, that, the story of human life does not come to end with death, that grace of God support us, that man is more than just body, these beliefs are innate to man.

Second domain is the domain of desires, what man wants. Mutahhari poses the question does man have supra-material urges which are not rooted in the animal instincts but in the distinct human nature (*fitrat*). He proves that man has such urges which are not connected with immediate physical needs. Even Psychology has recognized a category of spiritual pleasures. Among those innate urges of human nature is the urge to discover truth, Following are some of them

1. Urge to seek 'truth'-religion and spirituality
2. Urge for moral action and seeking 'goodness' or ethics
3. Urge for beauty and Aesthetics

⁴² Mutahhari, *ibid* , p35



4. Creative urge
5. Urge for Love and worship

Allama Murtaza Mutahhari has dealt in detail about all these urges. His book is the first detailed work of a modern Muslim thinker about this topic. So many have claimed that Mutahhari has presented the 'Theory of *Fitrat*' in modern Muslim Theology.

Conclusion:

Inter-relationship between Spiritual Health: and the Flourishing of Human Nature

In conclusion, we would like to point out that Spiritual health is the ground for flourishing of Human Nature.

Discussion of Spiritual Health has a long precedence in Islamic thought. Hundreds of the Qur'anic verses and *ḥadīth* (sayings of the Prophet and Imāms) have referred to its dimensions. It was introduced by the World Health Organization in the new medical science, in 1979 as the fourth pillar of health and was agreed upon by the European governments in the Copenhagen Treaty for Social Development.

An agreed definition has not been provided yet for Spiritual Health with an Islamic Perspective.



Present author has proposed a definition that is more or less accepted by the Academy of Medical Sciences. In this definition: "Spiritual Health, in the specific meaning, consists of taking benefit of spiritual matters in the physical health. But in the comprehensive view, it is: a state of security, confidence, peace and tranquility of heart and soul, which is a result of the belief in a benevolent 'super-Power that in Islamic culture cannot be other than God. This belief produces hope, satisfaction and inner bliss giving vitality, strength. This is the state of 'spiritual health'⁴³ Spiritual health is a state of bliss the main source of which is the heart; this state arises from the in a higher power that overrules material and environmental factors. When a person discovers this land of bliss amidst the desert of despair, his innate human nature, or *fitrat* flourishes. This vitality and hope, results in all-encompassing development and fulfillment of man and humanity in all dimensions, This state; It heals the patient's heart and promotes individual, social, environmental, and global health.

1. ابوالقاسمي، محمد جواد، مقاله مفهوم شناسي سلامت معنوي،



Spiritual health can blossom nature and remove stains, and as a result, cause the excellence and all-round health of man and humanity.

The heart, which is the main source of spiritual health, becomes enlightened; The eye of the heart opens on the world and man and can easily overcome obstacles and obstacles and the path to perfection. Perhaps it can be said that the main reason for the close relationship between spiritual health and the *fitrat* (the human nature) is that both have a common origin and position, which is the heart

Imam Ali (AS) considers the philosophy of the goal of the advent of the prophets as the flourishing of human nature and says: "After that, God sent his prophets one after the other, to ask the people to fulfill their natural covenant; And remind them of the forgotten blessings of God. "God inspired the prophets to invite the people to fulfill their natural obligations." The more perfect one becomes in this path, the more one enjoys insight and vision, enlightenment and deeper knowledge. In this regard, the flourishing of the divine nature in man becomes actualized.



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