

ALI 596: The God-Seeking Nature (Fitrah)

ACADEMY FOR LEARNING ISLAM

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Outline

- ▶ Importance of the Discussion
- ▶ Introduction to Terminology
- ▶ Conceptualization of Fitrah
- ▶ Characteristics of Fitrah.
- ▶ Posing Critical Questions

Importance of the Discussion

- ▶ Formulates an important means of knowing Allah (S).
- ▶ Formulates an important source of ethics and morality.
- ▶ Formulates an important force within human being towards perfection.

Introduction to Terminology

- ▶ The Qur'an describes man's primordial nature through different terms.
- ▶ The word used in the Qur'an is fitrah (30:30)
- ▶ The word fitrah comes from the word fa-ta-ra, meaning to originate.
- ▶ The form of the word is fit-rah, on the measure of jil-sah.
- ▶ Just as jil-sah describes a type of sitting, fit-rah describes a type of creation.

Conceptualization of Fitrah

- ▶ Beings are categorized into a hierarchy by Muslim philosophers.
- ▶ Each hierarchy is also given an appropriate disposition.

Being	Disposition
Non-animate	Tabi'ah (nature)
Vegitative	Tabi'ah (nature)
Animalistic	Garidah (instinct)
Human	Fitrah (disposition)

Characteristics of Fitrah

So set your heart on the religion as a people of pure faith, the origination of Allah according to which He originated mankind. There is no altering Allah's creation. (30:30)

First: Sense of direction to certain truths.

Second: Common to all human beings (across cultures and eras).

Three: Cannot be taught or effaced.
Can be strengthened or weakened.

Conceptualization of Fitrah

Question: Is it knowledge of tawhid and universal truths?

Answer: No. A human being is born without knowledge of any concepts. (Tabula Rasa).

Allah has brought you forth from the bellies of your mothers while you did not know anything. (16:78)

Fitrah is a structure of thought that inclines towards certain truths.

...in such a manner that if these truths were to be presented to him, without seeking recourse to proof, the mind would accept it. (S.M.)

Conceptualization of Fitrah

- ▶ Man also has a nature that seeks certain states:

Those who have faith, and whose hearts find rest in the remembrance of Allah." Look! The hearts find rest in Allah's remembrance! (13:28)

- a. Seeks to know and has a sense of curiosity.
- b. Seeks beauty and has a sense of beauty.
- c. Seeks absolute perfection.

Questions about Fitrah

- ▶ If we have a fitriyy ability to know Allah (S), do we need traverse a rational path to know Him?
- ▶ Do we have scientific proof that some inclinations are fitriyy?
- ▶ How does an inclination towards absolute perfection prove the existence of an absolute perfect being?