

The Outcome of Introduction (The Characteristics of Fitrat)

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Abstract: *Fitrat which is given to the all mankind by God is the basis and foundation of Divine theology as the real gnosis of God would become something impossible without it.*

In this essay the most important characteristics of fitrat by citing some Hadiths and Qur'anic verses are fully described of which are the following:

A way of gnosis and recognition of God, God's creation (not man's action), explicit, clear and unambiguous recognition, simple and not compound and heart-related. It is the only true gnosis and the basis of divine faith as well.

Key words: *Fitrat, Ma'refat (gnosis), Innate disposition, Innate knowledge of God, Hanif, Innate Ma'refat, Ilm (knowledge), A'rafa, Irfan*

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Introduction

In the previous article, while denoting to the divine theology of the holy prophet and its process, it was said that the bases and fundamentals of divine theology is the innate knowledge of God, which is given to all mankind in the previous worlds, and this knowledge is present in all hearts and natures of all mankind in the present time. In this essay, the most important characteristics of Fitrat are discussed.

1. Fitrat (innate disposition) is a way of gnosis and recognition of God, and not belief or inclination

As mentioned in the discussion on the verse of covenant, the outcome of introduction is the lofty gnosis and recognition of God. Hereunder, we shall set forth a few more verses and hadiths concerning this matter:

"Then set your face upright for religion in the right state-the nature made by Allah in which He has made men; there is no altering of Allah's creation; that is the right religion, but most people do not know." (Qur'an; 30: 30)

The holy verse calls man towards Din-e-hanif (religion in the right state)¹ and propounds this to be the Fitrat (innate disposition) made by God in which He has made men.

¹ The term "hanif" in the verse, literally describes "din" (religion) or the addressee in the holy verse. Lexically, it should be said: "Hanif" which is derived from "Hanaf" means inclination and tendency towards some side. "Hanif" has also been interpreted to mean the straight path and someone who has a tendency towards the religion in the right state or has a dislike towards the crooked religion. A Muslim is called a "Hanif" because he is inclined to the straight religion. In this regard, refer to Mu'jam Muqaiyes al-Lugha 2/110; Al-Sihah 4/1347; Mesbah al-Monir; page 154 and A'sas al-Balagha; page 97.

In the traditions, "Hanafiyah" has been interpreted as Fitrat (innate disposition), Ma'refat (gnosis) and Islam (submission). Under the verse of Fitrat, one tradition declares religion to mean Salat (prayers) and hanif to mean "inattention to the left

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Thereafter, it emphasizes that this Fitrat is unalterable, and it is the right and steadfast religion.

In the traditions which have come under the verse 31 of Sura Hajj the Imams have interpreted hanif as Fitrat:

Zorareh said: "I asked Imam Sadeqh (p.b.u.h) about what God states in Qur'an:

"Then set your face upright for religion in the right state-the nature made by Allah in which He has made men"

And asked: what is Hanafiyah?" He answered: "That is Fitrat."¹

The narrator asked: "What is Hanafiyah?" Imam said: "That is the Fitrat on which is based people's creation. People's Fitrat is the gnosis of God."²

In the second tradition as well as few other traditions³, hanif has been interpreted as Fitrat and Fitrat has been described as the gnosis of God. In the books on hadith, numerous traditions have come down below the verse of Fitrat. Shaikh Hurr Aameli has compiled in his book "Esbat al-hoda" a chapter under the title:

That contains fifty-six traditions.

About the nature Fitrat, Imam Baqir (p.b.u.h) said: At the time when Allah took the covenant from man, concerning His Divinity, He made man based on monotheism. Narrator asked Imam: "Did Allah address men?" Imam lowered his blessed head and then said, "If it was not for this address, the human beings would not have recognized their Lord and Sustainer."

and right". According to other traditions, religion means qibla (direction of prayer) and hanif means sincerity in worship and aloofness from polytheism. Refer to Al-Burhan 3/262.

¹ Ma'ani al-Akhbar; p.350, tradition 1.

² Al-Mahasin 1/375; tradition 824

³ Kafi 2/12; tradition 4.

From the above hadith, it becomes obvious that the word "Fitrat" implies the very monotheistic nature which was acquired at the time of "covenant". Moreover, this covenant took place in the form of conversation, and if it was not for that gnosis (Ma'refat), nobody would have succeeded in recognizing his God and Sustainer.

About the verse of Fitrat, Imam Sadiq (p.b.u.h) said:

"Allah has created the human beings on monotheism"¹.

As it can be seen from the above traditions, in some instances Fitrat has been interpreted as the gnosis of God; while in other cases it is described as monotheism. It must be said that gnosis of God and monotheism are the same, and God has uniquely introduced (defined) Himself to the people.

In the preceding tradition of Zorareh, too, it has come down that:

"At the time when Allah took covenant from the people concerning His recognition, He made them on the basis of monotheism."

This is one of the differences between innate gnosis and philosophical recognition. Most of the logical reasoning about God's existence only proves the existence of God, whereas for proving monotheism, other proofs and reasoning are necessary.

It is worthy to mention that in the Sunni books, too, Fitrat has been interpreted as "gnosis of God", "Din (religion) of God" and "Islam".²

The verses of Qur'an too explicitly mention that there exists no doubt and uncertainty about God's existence, and if the

¹ Kafi 2/12, tradition 3. Also, refer to Kafi 2/13, tradition 5; Tauhid-Saduq, page 329; tradition 5 & 6 and Al-Mahasin 1/375, tradition 823.

² Al-Durrul Manthur, vol. 6, PP. 492-4.

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people were asked who is the Creator of the heavens and the earth, they shall reply: God!

"Their Apostles said: Is there doubt about Allah, the Creator of the heavens and the earth?" (Qur'an; 14: 10)

"And if you ask them who created them, they would certainly say: Allah" (Qur'an; 43:87)¹.

The honorable Prophet said:

"Every born child is born on the basis of his Fitrat, and by Fitrat is meant his gnosis that Allah is his Creator. And the verse: *"If you ask them who created them, they would certainly say: Allah"* gives hint of this very matter."

As can be observed, the verses and traditions reveal that, Fitrat which is the fundamental of all divine religions is the gnosis and monotheism of God and this gnosis is the outcome of God's introduction.

Thus, Fitrat is not belief in God. This is because- considering that the present world is a place for trial and examination, and considering that man on the one hand possesses carnal desires, and on the other hand possesses will-power and authority- **we cannot say that all the human beings necessarily believe in God.** This is in spite that man bears a lofty Ma'refat (gnosis) from God, where the reminding and propagation of the evangelists may alert him or even encourage him to have faith.

Therefore, no more remains for this question that why some people in this world deny the existence of God. This is because Fitrat is Ma'refat (gnosis), and the authority of confession and denial has been entrusted to man where reward and

¹ Also refer to the holy verses of Qur'an 31:25,29:63, and 39:38

punishment springs from this very authority! Aside from the fact that this very Fitrat remains concealed by means of other factors, the reality is hidden before man. This point will be elaborated in the chapter concerning "Submission and faith".

Another point which we can conclude, from the above discussion, is that Fitrat is not "inclination" toward God. In spite of this, inasmuch as man perceives the Merciful, Compassionate, Munificent, Gracious and Graceful God with his divine Fitrat, he becomes inclined towards God and loves Him. Thus, inclination (to God) comes after Fitrat. As such, the one who witnesses his God in the light of Fitrat, submits to Him only, and none others.

Basically, true love can be found in the true lover, and everything other than Him is carnal desire and egotism although they may be expressed in beautiful words. The one who reckons figurative expression to be the castle of truth is far from truth:

Verily, the one who possesses carnal desires, arrogance, vanity, obstinacy and darkness does not have any inclination towards God. Thus, the question why some human beings have no tendency towards God is irrelevant. This matter will be elaborated in the stage of "submission".

Another conclusion which we can derive from the above discussion is that Fitrat is not "potentiality for knowing God". Basically, the power or potentiality for knowing God will be given to man only when he is unaware of his God where in this case, he will be given this power so as to make him recognize his God. Therefore, considering that the Ma'refat (gnosis) of God is present in man (although in simple and concealed form) at its highest level, the question of potentiality does not arise at

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all since the outcome of this potentiality would be the achievement of something which is already acquired.

However, if it means that man possesses the ability to remember the original innate gnosis through the reminding of the reminders and divine grace or is capable of preparing the ground through spiritual endeavors and sincere worship for knowing God or is able to argue and dispute by means of extroversive and psychical signs in proving God, this matter is correct and indeed man possesses such powers. However, these have no relation with Fitrat which is the fundamental of religion and should not be utilized for explaining and justifying Fitrat.

2. Innate Ma'refat (gnosis) is God's creation and not man's action:

In numerous verses of the Qur'an, God Exalted be He, has introduced guidance as one of His exclusive acts where nobody has any share in it.

These verses declare that the real guidance is from God only:

"Surely Ours is it to show the way" (Qur'an; 92: 12)

"Surely you cannot guide whom you love, but Allah guides whom He pleases" (Qur'an; 28:57)

"To make them walk in the right way is not incumbent on you, but Allah guides aright whom He pleases" (Qur'an; 2:272).

"Surely the guidance of Allah, that is the (true) guidance" (Qur'an; 6: 71 and Qur'an; 2: 120).

"Surely the (true) guidance is the guidance of Allah" (Qur'an; 3:73)

In the old and new testaments too, such meanings concerning the gnosis of God can be found. As a specimen, we narrate here a short expression:

"God has introduced (defined) His Self".¹

In numerous invocations and traditions too, the gnosis of God has explicitly been introduced as God's deed and act where none have any role in it.

In these traditions it has come down that the Exalted God, has not kept at man's disposal any means for acquiring the Ma'refat (gnosis) of God. Man in no way is responsible for acquiring the gnosis of God. Rather, God has made it incumbent upon Himself to introduce (define) Himself and it is for man to submit before Him and obey His commands. On the Day of Judgment too, God shall argue with the people on the basis of this very gifted Ma'refat (gnosis).

These matters have come down in the traditions which we narrate as follows:

Someone asked Imam Sadiq (p.b.u.h.), "Who has created Ma'refat (gnosis)? Imam (p.b.u.h.) said: It is among the things made by God and people have no share in it."²

In another place, Imam Sadiq (p.b.u.h.) said:

"It is not the right of Allah on His creatures that they should know Him. Rather, it is the right of His creatures on God to make known Himself. But once God makes known Himself to His creatures, then it is His right over His creatures that they accept Him"³.

Imam Reza (p.b.u.h) was asked: "Do people have any role in the gnosis of God?"

¹ Old Testament; Psalms, chapter 9 / page 16

² Kafi 1/163

³ Kafi 1/164

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Imam (p.b.u.h.) replied: "No."¹

Imam Sadiq (p.b.u.h.) said:

"Allah has not made the human beings responsible vis-à-vis His gnosis and has also not kept at their disposal any means for acquiring His gnosis".²

Amir ul-Momenin (p.b.u.h.) was asked: How did you recognize your God? He replied: By that through which He made Himself recognized by me.³

Narrator says: I heard Imam Sadiq (p.b.u.h.) saying: "Every affair of Allah is strange except that he has finalized the argument upon you through His introduction"⁴

Narrator says: I inquired from Imam Sadiq (p.b.u.h.): Is there any means with the people by which they can acquire the Ma'refat (gnosis)? The Imam (p.b.u.h.) replied: "No." I inquired further: Have they been made responsible for acquiring this gnosis? Imam (p.b.u.h.) replied: "No, not so. Rather, it is for Allah to apprise first."⁵

Amir ul-Momenin (p.b.u.h.) said:

"Recognize Allah through Allah Himself and the Messenger of Allah through his messenger ship (i.e., through the message delivered by him), and recognize those who have been vested with divine authority through their righteous commands, their justice and their good deeds."⁶

"O the One who manifests Himself by means of Himself."⁷

¹ Bihar al-Anwar 5/221

² Al-Mahasin 1/315; tradition 624.

³ Kafi 1/86. Also refer to page 162; tradition 1 and page 164; tradition 4.

⁴ Same reference; page 163

⁵ Same reference; page 163

⁶ Kafi 1/85.

⁷ Dua-e-Saba; Mafatih al- Jinan

3. Innate Ma'refat (gnosis) is an explicit and clear gnosis; not an ambiguous recognition

As mentioned in the first chapter, God, Exalted be He, gifted His real recognition to all the human beings in the world of pre-existence where He took confession from them regarding His Divinity. While introducing Himself, God, Exalted be He, did so in a very holy and lustrous sphere.

And all the human beings witnessed Him by the divine eyes in such a way that there remained no doubt and uncertainty whatsoever. The intensity and lucidity of this gnosis was of such magnitude that it is recalled in the traditions by such names as "observation"¹ and "vision"². Verily, this observation does not mean looking by the physical eyes nor does it mean the incarnation of God.

In this world too, God causes the human beings to remember this innate gnosis via various channels. However, the degree of remembrance varies from person to person and usually; the Ma'refat (gnosis) is not manifested in its exact original form. Rather, it is partly manifested where in this case too, it is the Act of God. At the time of remembrance and manifestation, it is the All-Generous God who converts this innate gnosis from its "simple" level to the "compound gnosis"

It is worthy of mention that although man and man's authority have no role in the original compound gnosis and that the manifestation of innate gnosis is God's Act, nevertheless man's authority has some sort of an effect in this matter. This is because if man, after remembrance, (which is the moment of finalization of argument) submits himself before God and turns devout, God too shall gift him with a

¹ Al-Mahasin 1/376

² Tauhid-Saduq; page 117

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much higher divine gnosis so much so that He may even for a few moments manifest in his heart the exact observation and vision of the preceding worlds. This indeed is the loftiest level of divine and pure gnosis.

Thus, man's will and authority is not effective over the original gnosis and its remembrance. Rather, God bestows man with different levels of Ma'refat (gnosis) depending upon his authority and selection of path.

This matter reveals the role which will-power, worship and ethics can play in gnosis. Thus if (gnosis of God) is attributed to man and is placed in the domain of man's voluntary actions, it is because of this very reason. This matter will be pursued in the topic on "Submission".

4. Before getting reminded, innate Ma'refat (gnosis) is "simple" and not "compound"

Man is unaware and neglectful of the innate gnosis. When we say that the innate gnosis has turned "compound" it means that man has become heedful of the innate gnosis.

As a result of man's involvement in daily affairs, man often tends to neglect God and this is divine wisdom. Basically, the world is a place of deceit where people tend to become heedless of God and if it was not so, the world could not have become the means of trial and examination and the worship of God could not have held such significance which could drive people in reaching the position of "Khalifa tullah" (representative of God) and gaining proximity to God. In spite of this, following to the reminding of the Prophets and divine evangelists, the human beings become aware of the divine Ma'refat (gnosis) and the argument is finalized for them. Thereafter, they either submit themselves before God and

choose the path of devotion or follow their carnal desires and select the path of disobedience.

5. The focal point of innate gnosis is the heart, not mind

The innate gnosis is God's creation, and man's intellect and conception have no role in this gnosis. In other words, God, without any intermediary (man's conception and mental activity) has introduced Himself to man's mind and soul. This subject is remembered in the traditions as "gnosis and heart-related vision". We set forth below some other traditions with respect to this matter:

Amir ul-Momenin, Ali (p.b.u.h) was asked: Do you see your God while worshipping Him? The Imam replied, "I am not the one who worships God whom I do not see."

He was asked: "How do you see Him?"

Amir ul-Momenin (p.b.u.h.) said: "Eyes do not perceive Him with the faculty of sight; but hearts see Him through the realities of faith."¹

Imam Baqir (p.b.u.h) was asked: Whom do you worship? He replied: The Exalted God. They asked: Have you ever seen Him? Imam replied: "No eyes see Him with the faculty of sight but the hearts see Him through the realities of faith."²

Imam Sadiq (p.b.u.h) was asked: Will the believers see God on the Day of Judgment? Imam said: "Yes! They have seen Him even before the Day of Judgment." He was asked: When? Imam replied: When they were addressed, "Am I not your God?" They replied yes! Thereafter, Imam kept silence for a few moments and then said: Verily, the believers see Allah in this world i.e., before the Day of Judgment. Aren't you seeing

¹ Kafi 1/98, tradition 6; Nahjul-Balagha: Sermon 179, page 258

² Kafi 1/97, tradition 5; Tauhid-Saduq, page 108

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Allah at this very moment.....seeing by heart is not the same as seeing by the faculty of sight.¹

6. Innate gnosis is the only true gnosis and the basis of divine faith

In the traditions mentioned about the verses of Covenant and Fitrat, the point worthy of notice is that if there had been no such innate gnosis, nobody would have recognized his God, Creator and Sustainer.

From such interpretations it becomes obvious that Fitrat is the basis and foundation of divine theology and without it the real gnosis of God would impossible.

Basically, the real gnosis of a thing is the recognition of the essence of that thing, and the mental recognitions can not be construed as real gnosis.²

In some traditions, too, the heart-related gnosis has been reckoned to be the basis of faith:

"Belief means recognition with the heart, acknowledgment with the tongue and action with the limbs".³

¹ Tauhid-Saduq; page,117

² Abu Halal Askari says: The difference between Ma'refat (gnosis) and Ilm (knowledge) is that Ma'refat in its strict sense is (derived) from Ilm and it means knowledge about the essence of a thing in such manner that it is distinct from other things. (Al Furuq al-Loghaviyah/62) According to this explanation, Ilm comprises general recognition as well as personal recognition. But, Ma'refat applies to personal (specific) recognition only.

Faiyumi reckons Ma'refat to be sensory recognition perhaps in the sense that sensory recognition is personal recognition and not general recognition where the essence of a thing is perceived and not its general conception

(Al Mesbah al-Monir)

Fars-ibn-Zakariyyah says: A'rafa in reality has had two meanings: The first, "Two things coming in.

³ Nahjul-Balagha: Sermon 227I; page 508

Gnosis is a root, and faith is its branch.¹

I bless you, I bless you with gnosis.²

¹ Bihar al-Anwar 3/14

² Bihar al-Anwar 3/14