

Upon The Features of Human Psychology in the Qur'an

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The Qur'an is not a book of psychology. But it is possible to find some analyzes about human psychology in the Qur'an. And also it doesn't neglect the human psychology in its messages. The foremost aspect of the Qur'anic message in terms of religious education and instruction is the fact that it always takes into account the psychology and biology. It is through preaching and teaching in accordance with human's innate nature that the human mind learns how to distinguish between good and bad.

The creation of human beings, their psychological states and the dynamic and unchanging aspects of their innate nature is mentioned in a number of Qur'anic verses. The Qur'an deals with both positive and negative characteristics of human beings. In doing so, it provides clues about what to take into account when a person is to be educated or given any responsibility. For example, sociological realities are not ignored by the Qur'anic message. These realities are crucial in better communicating with and knowing people whom religious education will be given. This plays an important role in establishing or improving the relevant methods and thereby arriving at the educational aims.

To know human psychology is the an indispensable essence of education and the management and administration of the activities related in education (cf. Elias, 1990: 9-14). Recognition of all aspects of human being, makes informing and teaching him/her with appropriate methods, easy because the training relates to all aspects of human beings. To know of which features and functions Man is created helps achieving the goal during the informational and instructional by providing turning to the functions or capabilities. In other words, recognition of human nature is directly related to and a significant factor in the creation of methods, curriculums and programs (cf. Betts, 1928: 24 and more, 30 and more). Achievements of great educators and the Prophets has been possible by acting in accordance with human psychology and the laws of nature. The aspect of divine training is determined according to the people's characteristics, capabilities and attitudes. Human beings, through education and training, perceive the responsibility of as required and tends to fulfill the requirements of this.

The structure of human beings incorporates the tendency towards both good thoughts. During the training of people, the Qur'an sets its principles, objectives and methods according to this structure. The Qur'an reveals that every human being has been created to Fitrat. This is expressed as follows in the related verse: "*So devote yourself to the religion of monotheism—the natural instinct God has instilled in mankind. There is no altering God's creation. This is the true religion, but most people do not know*". [Rûm: 30/30]*. "The natural instinct God has instilled in mankind" is called as "Fitrat/fitrah" in the Qur'an. This verse indicates that the key to effective teaching and training is to have an understanding human nature.

To plan certain activities for people without knowing them is like going down an unknown path, without guidance. Because of this, to educate people, we must recognize the human being with his/her desires, abilities, needs, weaknesses and all other aspects of the human condition. For instance, if a person has been created with the disability of forgetfulness, it shouldn't be expected that he/she will never forget. Humans and the introduction of human beings, take a large place in the Qur'an. Many verses of the Qur'an speak of the process of the creation of man, of various aspects of the nature of man, of psychological states and of changing and unchanging aspects of human nature.

Psychological Characteristics of humans as individuals

“God is He who created you weak, then after weakness gave you strength, then after strength gave you weakness and gray hair. He creates whatever He wills. He is the Omniscient, the Omnipotent.” [Rûm,30/54]. According to this verse, the human is created in a certain formation and evolution. This is a fact that should be taken into consideration in education and training.

The nature, spiritual condition, duties and the fate of man etc. are the main topics of the Qur'an (Izutsu, -: 69). According to the Qur'an, the human being is an indivisible unity (and whole). The Qur'an treats people within integrity in body and soul; therefore, it neither fails to neglect the spirit, nor fails to neglect the soul.

The Qur'an treats man as a human being. The Qur'an gives wide knowledge about the spiritual world of man, recognizing the value of the individual and giving individual responsibility to him. According to the Qur'an, the community should be composed of individuals who have responsibility and social consciousness. The Qur'an neither values the individual to society, nor society to the individual. In the Qur'anic perspective, the individual means the community. Because the individual is a part of society, the whole does not occur without the parts.

1. Negative Human Characteristics in the Qur'an

When looked in perspective of human behavior, psychological characteristics are reflected by many kinds of people in the Qur'an. Examples of the different spiritual moods reflected in the Qur'an are as follows.

For example, there are those people who remember God (Allah) when troubled; and once the trouble has gone away, so do their thoughts of God (Yunus, 10/21; Hûd, 11/9-10; Rûm, 30/36).

Another example is the spiritual mood of deniers. “Why are they turning away from the Reminder? As though they were panicked donkeys. Fleeing from a lion?” [Muddessir: 74/49-51]

A third spiritual mood are those who fear the face of danger (Enfâl, 8/6), exhibiting the behaviors of two-faced people: “Had the gain been immediate, and the journey shorter, they would have followed you; but the distance seemed too long for them. Still they swear by God: “Had we been able, we would have marched out with you.” They damn their own souls, and God knows that they are lying”. [Tevbe: 9/42].

Additionally, there is the spiritual mood of stubborn unbelievers (En'am, 6/7; Hicr, 15/14-15), as well as those with behavioral disorders brought about by old age: “O people! If you are in doubt about the Resurrection—We created you from dust, then from a small drop, then from a clinging clot, then from a lump of flesh, partly developed and partly undeveloped. In order to clarify things for you. And We settle in the wombs whatever We will for a designated term, and then We bring you out as infants, until you reach your full strength. And some of you will pass away, and some of you will be returned to the vilest age, so that he may not know, after having known. And you see the earth still; but when We send down water on it, it vibrates, and swells, and grows all kinds of lovely pairs”. [Hâcc: 22/5]

Another example of spiritual moods are those brought on by excitement, anger and physiological changes during remorse (Zâriyât, 51/29; Zümer, 39/23; Ahzâb, 33/10; Yusuf, 12/31; Nahl, 16/58; Furkan, 25/27-29).

According to the statements of the Qur'an, man has an unstable, variable, weak, ambitious and grumpy nature (cf. Nisâ, 4/128; Neml, 27/14; Meâric, 70/19-21; Haşr, 59/9; Teğâbun, 64/16; Zumer, 39/8, 49; Luqmân, 31/32). (Example: “When some adversity touches the human being, he prays to his Lord, repenting to Him. But then, when He confers on him a grace of His, he forgets what he was praying for before, and he attributes rivals to God, in order to lead astray from His way...” [Zumer: 39/8]. “God intends to lighten your burden, for the human being was created weak”. [Nisâ: 4/28]).

Again, according to the Qur'an; human nature is hasty and was created with an impatient (impetuous) nature (Enbiyâ, 21/37; İsrâ, 17/11). Human beings are impatient, and complain quickly (Meâric, 70/19-21) and tend to be ungrateful (Âdiyât, 100/6-8; Feccr, 89/15-16; Abese, 80/17; Şûrâ, 42/48; Zuhuf, 43/15; Fussilet, 41/50-51; Zümer, 39/8, 49; Ankebût, 29/10, 65; Rûm, 30/33; Furkan, 25/50; Hacc, 22/11, 66; İsrâ, 17/67; İbrahim, 14/34; Hûd, 11/9-10; Yunus, 10/12, 21) and forgetful (Baqara, 2/286; Tâhâ, 20/115; En'âm, 6/44; Mâide, 5/13-14; Haşr, 59/19; Sâd, 38/26; Kehf, 18/73).

2. Positive Human Characteristics in the Qur'an

The Qur'an mentions and expresses the many positive features of human beings that make him superior to other creatures. The Qur'an refers to "the human being is created in the best beautiful way". [Tîn, 95/4].

According to the Qur'an, man is the most important asset (creature) in the universe. Humans were rendered superior to other creatures. First of all, God (Allah) taught Adam all the names in the universe (Baqara, 2/30-34). This knowledge is a feature that makes man superior. With this knowledge, man was rendered the representative (Khalîfa) of God upon the earth. This superiority that depends on information (knowledge) has been accepted by the angels also (Baqara, 2/34). Knowledge is a fundamental feature that separates man from other living things.

The human has a willpower. One of man's superiorities over all the creatures is the will and this willpower is a factor that makes people superior. Willpower plays a role in encouraging people in the universe. Mevlana Rûmî says that the human being is responsible because of the willpower. Human beings have the right to choose due to their will. This freedom of choice ("good" or "bad") is an advantage for human beings. Because of this, according to the Qur'an, everyone is responsible for their own behavior (En'âm, 6/164). Everyone's kindness is in his/her own favor, and everyone's evil is against him/herself. If whatever goodness a person makes, it is in own favor; If whatever evil a person makes, it is against himself (Baqara, 2/286). It means everyone is responsible for own deeds.

The most important feature of the human is to be educatable. Many verses in the Qur'an also indicate this. People through education can use their will to change their behavior and in doing so, become responsible for their behavior. Through education, all the negative features/characteristics that people have can be converted into good or better, or can be developed. Therefore, training and education are very important for people because education is a process that makes human beings human. (For further more cf; Şanver, 2001].

As a result, the Qur'an treats people as human beings. Humankind is a dualistic (bi-directional) entity. On the one hand, the physical and mental-soul; on the other hand, the trend of good and evil. Therefore, human beings are complex structures, composed of many contrasting features. Humans have both negative features and positive features. All these features should be considered in education. Knowledge, willpower, wisdom, mind and the ability to think are distinctive features of human beings that make him/her superior.

. Footnotes:

*So set you (O Muhammad –SAW-) your face towards the religion of pure Islamic Monotheism Hanifa (worship none but Allah Alone) Allah's Fitrah (i.e. Allah's Islamic Monotheism), with which He has created mankind. No change let there be in Khalq-illah (i.e. the Religion of Allah Islamic Monotheism), that is the straight religion, but most of men know not. [Tafsir At-Tabari, Vol 21, Page 41]

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