

# MAN'S NATURE AND HIS POTENTIALITIES TOWARDS A GOOD MORAL QUALITY

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## Introduction

**I**slam is *ad-Din* revealed for the betterment of man. It teaches man to believe in Allah and to follow His guidance and Laws in order to achieve peace of mind and heart and then have a character that aims for perfection. In this way man may be able to maintain and harmonise his personality with other people and the living system in society. Moreover, Islam educates man to fear and love Allah Almighty, and to be responsible before Allah in all his actions, also always to seek Allah's pleasure and follow His divine guidance. It would be useful to look at some Islamic perspectives about man's creation, his nature and its development which may clarify the ideas about the moral development process because man is the focus of this processes.

## The Concept of Man's Creation and his nature

To have a comprehensive understanding of the concept of man's creation and his nature, we begin with the question "what is the purpose of his creation in this world?" From the Islamic perspective, man is not here accidentally without any mission and purpose in his life. This principle is clearly laid down in the Qur'an: "Did you think that We had created you in play (without any purpose), and that you would not be brought back to Us?"<sup>1</sup> This verse makes the point that man has to realise that his existence in this worldly life is very precious. In addition, he has a particular mission and vision, duties and messages, which need to be performed in both his life in this world and the life to come in the

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1. The Qur'an 23: 115

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Hereafter because he will be returned to his Lord to face the consequences of his actions. In this connection, another verse states the answer to what is the real purpose of man's creation, "And I (Allah) created not the *jinn* and mankind except that they should worship Me (Alone)."<sup>2</sup> The verse gives clear information that the main purpose of man's creation is to worship Allah Almighty.

The domain of worship here is full submission to what Allah has commanded in the type of action and attitude which is denoted as *'ibadah*. The Qur'an testifies to the sphere of full submission, "Say (O Muhammad), 'Verily, my *Salah* (prayer), my sacrifice, my living, and my dying are for Allah, the Lord of the *'Alamin* (mankind, *jinn* and all that exist).'<sup>3</sup> This means that the notion of *'ibadah* is extensive, not only in the performance of obligatory *'ibadat* such as *Salah*, *Sawm*, *Zakah* and *Hajj* but embraces all aspects of a man's life, for example his daily activities, thoughts, relationships and so on.

Further the concept of worshipping Allah implies that the structure of a man's life relies upon the instruction and guidance of the *Shari'ah*. In other words, a man's behaviour in every aspect of his life should conform to Allah's commandments and the purpose of his creation. On this basis, man often seeks Allah's pleasure in his heart, words and deeds which lead to benevolence and truthful speech, and then he will feel happiness in the context of worshipping Allah. In addition, man has to do good because the purpose of his creation also is to be *Ahsanu 'Amala* (best in deeds or actions).<sup>4</sup> This is among the crucial and noble ideals in man's potential, which may lead him to draw near to Allah and His pleasure, and to attain spiritual contentment.

### **The Origin of Man's Creation and His Nobility and Dignity**

In order to describe the origin of man's creation, let us examine views in the Qur'an on this matter. Islam states that the creation of man is a composite of the material and spiritual. This is based on the creation of Adam who was the first man on earth. The Qur'anic verse precisely explain that Allah says, "I am about

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2. The Qur'an 51 : 56

3. The Qur'an 6 : 162

4. The Qur'an 11 : 7, 67 : 2

to create man, from sounding clay from mud moulded into shape.”<sup>5</sup> This verse indicates that man was created from a material thing. The Qur’anic verses also explain that Allah has breathed into him His Spirit that make him higher than other creatures. Allah says “So when I have fashioned him completely and breathed into him (Adam) the soul which I created for him...”<sup>6</sup> Because man was created from a material thing, we may grasp the point that man is inseparable during his life from material provisions in order to survive. In other words, his tendencies and endeavours to obtain material benefits and satisfy basic instincts and achieve happiness in this world are very high.

Nevertheless, from the spiritual point of view the concept of man’s creation makes the crucial point that man has the potential implanted in him to be good, because the expression, “breathed His Spirit” into man implies that the sort of values which reflect the Names and Attributes of Allah such as Mercy, Patience, Creativity, stated in “*al-Asma’ al-Husa*” may enable man to actualise them. According to Amin Ahsan Islahi, “...this divine light ...gave man cognition of good and bad, virtue and evil and created in him a passion for the regard of higher values. This will distinguish him from the beast.”<sup>7</sup> In this connection M. M. Sharif also noted, “The sole aim of man is, therefore, a progressive achievement of life divine, which consists in the gradual acquisition of all divine attributes - all intrinsic values.”<sup>8</sup> The divine spirit, which has implanted in man the origin of good, may elevate him to attain a higher, more noble character and deeds. Therefore, as long as he preserves and keeps his spirit pure he may maintain good moral values, otherwise he will lose these values as soon as the spirit is corrupted.

Islam teaches man to keep material and spiritual aspects in equilibrium. This signifies that man’s dealing with material things should conform with spiritual values and vice-versa so that he is not greedy, selfish, proud and prone to transgress in worldly matters or spiritually nor to deny all material pleasures. This

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5. The Qur’an 15 : 28

6. The Qur’an 15:29, 32:9, 38:72

7. Amin Ahsan Islahi, *How to Attain True Piety and Righteousness in Islam*, translated by Sharif Ahmad Khan, (Safat, 1987) p. 165

8. M M. Sharif, *Islamic and Educational Studies*, (Lahore, 1964), p. 23

is because this type of behaviour may create problems in society in the context of social relations. Therefore the attainment of balance and harmony between the material and the spiritual is crucial to preserve man's superiority, nobility and dignity as attested by the Qur'anic verse, "And indeed We have honoured the Children of Adam, and We have carried them on land and sea, have provided them *At-Tayyibat* (lawful good things), and have preferred them above many of those whom We have created with a marked preferment."<sup>9</sup>

This Qur'anic verse clearly shows that the creation of man has placed him as the best and most noble of creatures. Mahar Abdul Haq has noted that, "Man's creation is for a more sublime purpose."<sup>10</sup> Thus, he has more special privileges before Allah on earth than other creatures, and he is superior to the angels because of his intellect, freedom of will and concept of responsibility. Further, verse four of Chapter ninety-five begins with the oath and also notes the high nobility of man who is created "In the best mould"<sup>11</sup> which signifies that he is a *ashraful makhluqat* (crown of creation) in his high position. Sayyid Qutb has commented on this verse that, "...the superiority of man's creation is most clearly apparent in the spiritual qualities. He is made in a way which enables him to attain a sublime standard, superior to that of the highest ranking angels."<sup>12</sup> Therefore, man is responsible for preserving his nobility with which Allah has made him, particularly through his belief in Allah and the doing of righteous deeds, otherwise he will fall to the lowest position. Actually, from these sublime images of man's creation, man is put in trust as *Khalifatullah* (Vicegerent of Allah).

### **Man as *Khalifatullah* (Vicegerent of Allah)**

Beside his mission to worship Allah, man was created to perform crucial and creative duties on earth as *Khalifatullah*. As Muhammad Tahir-ul-Qadri puts it, "This was the highest place that man was destined to hold in the whole of creation."<sup>13</sup> The Qur'an clearly illustrates the mission of man's creation as the

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9. The Qur'an 17: 70

10. Mahar Abdul Haq, *Educational Philosophy of the Holy Qur'an*, (Lahore, 1990), p. 207

11. The Qur'an 95:4

12. Sayyid Qutb, *In The Shade of The Qur'an*, vol. 30, translated by M. Adil Salahi and A. A. Shamis, (New Delhi, 1998), p. 213.

13. Muhammad Tahir-ul-Qadri, *Islamic Penal System and Its Philosophy*, (Lahore, 1998), p. 155

most superior and worthy among all creatures, and one assigned to be a *Khalifatullah* on earth, which was conferred upon the Prophet Adam (pbuh). Allah says, "And (remember) when your Lord said to the angels: 'Verily, I am going to place *Khalifah* (a vicegerent) on earth.'<sup>14</sup> One of the definitions of the word *khalifah* is " a successor : and a vice-agent, vicegerent."<sup>15</sup> According to Mawdudi, "*Khalifah* or vicegerent is one who exercises the authority delegated to him by his principal and does so in the capacity of his deputy and agent... A vicegerent is not entitled to do what he pleases, but is obliged to carry out the will of his master."<sup>16</sup> In order to be a vicegerent, man should adopt the belief in Allah, worship Him and follow the practices of the Prophet and perform good deeds, as attested in the Qur'anic verse, "Allah has promised those among you who believe and do righteous good deeds, that He will certainly grant them succession to (the present rulers) in the land, as He granted it to those before them..."<sup>17</sup> Nevertheless, man should acknowledge that Allah is most Powerful and he has no absolute power but only to hold the *amanah* that has been given to him.

As *khalifatullah*, man is given the *amanah* (trust) which the other creatures refused to accept because they were unable to bear its heavy responsibility.<sup>18</sup> In accordance with his noble characteristics, man has the potential to fulfil this *amanah*, although sometimes he may disobey Allah's commandments because of his freewill.

### **The Domain of Man's Freedom of will**

The Qur'an illustrates the domain of freedom of will in man since the beginning of creation. Adam and his wife were told not to approach a certain tree. Allah says, "And We said: 'O Adam! Dwell you and your wife in the Paradise and eat both of you freely with pleasure and delight, of things therein

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14. The Qur'an 2 : 30

15. Edward William Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, vol. 1, (Cambridge, 1984), p. 797

16. Sayyid Abul Acla Maududi, *Towards Understanding the Qur'an*, vol.1 translated by Zafar Ishaq Ansari, (Leicester, 1988), p. 59 - 60

17. The Qur'an 24 : 5

18. See: The Qur'an 33 : 72

as wherever you will, but come not near this tree or you both will be of the *Dzalimun* (wrong-doers)."<sup>19</sup> This verse describes the free will given to Adam and his descendants. The scenario of man's freedom is "eat both of you freely with pleasure and delight, of things therein as wherever you will"<sup>20</sup> but then Allah instructed him not to approach a certain tree. This signifies that his freedom should be limited by Allah's commandment and within the limits that Allah has laid down and to do otherwise is to be disobedient to Allah and commit sin.

The points made in the Qur'anic verses regarding the Prophet Adam, on whom was bestowed freedom of will within certain limits, is that man has the ability to commit sin even though clear instruction not to do so has been given. In this connection, Hasan al-<sup>c</sup>Anani has explained that,

"This great bounty involves the power of intention and the power to choose and follow the path of either good or evil. This freedom concerns man's intention, capabilities, and resources. The fact that man is completely free in this sphere in no way conflicts or contradicts the supreme or the absolute power of Allah."<sup>21</sup>

This articulation shows that from the Islamic point of view, man's freedom of will should not contradict the Will of Allah because as a servant of Allah he is still dependent upon Allah. The Qur'an says, "O mankind! It is you who stand in need of Allah. But Allah is Rich (Free of all needs), Worthy of all praise."<sup>22</sup> Abdul Hayy Alawi has noted that if man, "...consciously decides to submit himself to the will of Allah in the domain in which he has been given freedom of choice, he experiences no conflict in his personality."<sup>23</sup> Otherwise, if man does not submit to the will of Allah, he will face mental conflict. Moreover, the power to make that choice is given to man and this signifies that he will be responsible for the

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19. The Qur'an 2 : 35

20. The Qur'an 2 : 35

21. Hasan al-<sup>c</sup>Anani, *Freedom and Responsibility in Qur'anic Perspective*, translated by M. S. Kayani (Indianapolis, 1990), p.35.

22. The Qur'an 35 : 15

23. Abdul Hayy Alawi, "The Qur'anic Concept of Mental Health", in Zafar Afaq Ansari (ed.), *Qur'anic Concepts of Human Psyche*, (Islamabad, 1992), p. 93

consequences for every single act which he has done in his life before Allah on the Day of Judgment.

Because he will ultimately be responsible before Allah, man should be aware of the consequences of his behaviour and this awareness may ensure his good moral behaviour. Freedom of will allows him to choose whether to accept the true belief in Allah and reach a higher position than the Angels or to deny Him and behave as a beast. It is enough that man's freewill may allow him to develop his *akhlaq*, particularly when he is able to decide what is good and bad on the basis of guidance from the *Shari'ah*. Further, in order to make his choices, man has been equipped with intelligence.

### **Man's faculty of Intelligence**

The framework for illustrating the principle concerning man's intelligence began with the creation of Adam as stated in the Qur'anic verses.<sup>24</sup> Allah describes the idea that man has been equipped with intelligence, "And He taught Adam all the names (of everything)."<sup>25</sup> This signifies that man has been given the immense potential to gain knowledge. Man's intellect has the capacity to recognize wisdom and to make decisions about his actions.<sup>26</sup> In this regard, Sheikh Ali al-Tantawi has noted, "He is able to assess material matters, and differentiate between good and bad through the power of his intellect."<sup>27</sup> Intellect also is the chief instrument for the acquisition of knowledge and it may guide man to understand himself and the world.

Furthermore the importance of man's intellect from the Islamic view is its capability to realise the existence of Allah. Thus, intelligence is not merely a mental acumen but its meaning *al-'Aql* consists of both reason and intellect which lead a man to capture the real nature of God.<sup>28</sup> Therefore, "*Aql* is

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24. The Qur'an 2 : 30 – 38

25. The Qur'an 2 : 31

26. Allamah Sayyid M.H Tabataba'i , *The Qur'an in Islam; Its Impact & Influence on The Life of Muslim*, (London, 1987), p.72

27. Sheikh Ali al-Tantawi, *General Introduction to Islam*, (Jeddah, 1987), p. 167

28. S.Hosein. Nasr, *Ideals and Realities of Islam*,(London, 1966), pp. 21 – 22

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considered as a suitable tool for understanding revealed knowledge and acquiring new forms of it through reflection on Allah's signs in the self, the history of past generations and the universe."<sup>29</sup> Apart from this, man is also endowed with the faculties of hearing, seeing and understanding which elevate him to a higher level. If man does not employ these faculties properly he will not follow the right path. This is what the Qur'an condemns as *la ya'qilun* which signifies those who do not understand and "those who cannot use their intelligence correctly."<sup>30</sup> Sometimes, they are described in the Qur'an as deaf and blind people because of *la ya'qilun* even though, physically, they have no ear or eye defects. This equates man as stated in the Qur'an with cattle and possibly worse than that.<sup>31</sup>

Nevertheless, to some degree, intelligence in man is very limited and sometimes intelligence may cause confusions and therefore he needs Divine guidance to help him out. This is because man's intelligence, knowledge and experience cannot penetrate the mystery of the infinite being. Divine guidance provides the fundamentals and principles which enable man to understand the truth (religion) and to comprehend and practise a code of conduct that is based on religion. On this basis, man can live in a physical and spiritual way that reflects the purpose of his existence and models his behaviour on a better man. Hence, through his intellect man can build up a system of knowledge and direct his freedom of will and put into action whatever he wishes. Nevertheless, from the Islamic perspective this freewill should be instructed properly as well, so as to conform with man's *fitrah* to be good.

### **The *Fitrah* of man**

From the Islamic perspective, among the unique characteristics of man that are often discussed is the original goodness that has been in man from the beginning of his creation. This is called the *fitrah*. According to Yasien Mohamed, man's *fitrah* in Islam is the innate tendency of man to worship Allah and his

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29. Abdul-Rahman Salih Abdullah, *Educational Theory A Qur'anic Outlook*. (Makkah, 1982), p. 108

30. S.Hosein, Nasr, *Ideals and Realities of Islam*, (London, 1966), p. 21

31. The Qur'an 7:179



potential to be good and to perform right actions.<sup>32</sup> The Qur'an describes the nature of man's *fitrah* which intuitively acknowledges Allah as his Lord and was made with men without limits of time before their existence in the physical realm:

*“And (remember) when your Lord brought forth from the Children of Adam from their loins, their seed (or from Adam's loin his offspring) and made them testify as to themselves, (saying) “ Am I not your Lord?” They said: Yes! We testify,” lest you should say on the Day of Resurrection: “Verily, we have been unaware of this.”*<sup>33</sup>

These verses are evidence that man's primordial nature, namely *fitrah*, innately recognises *tawhid*, which signifies belief in and worship of Allah alone. This is a fundamental element of man's inner cognition which enables him to accept and follow true religion and bear witness that Allah is his Lord.<sup>34</sup> Yasien Muhammad has explained the passage in the Qur'an regarding the *fitrah* of man and his relationship with his Creator, saying, "...man, in his pre-existential state, acknowledges Allah as his Lord. He has sealed a covenant with Allah by which he is expected to fulfill his terrestrial career by worshipping Him."<sup>35</sup> This saying suggests that man by nature has made a covenant with Allah to be righteous and good. Moreover, to accept the covenant also signifies that man should live according to Allah's commandments.

Another Qur'anic verse about man's *fitrah* describes Allah's religion, and connects this to man's nature whereby he should whole-heartedly surrender himself as a servant of Allah and not associate anyone with Him. The Qur'an says, "So set you (O Muhammad your face towards the religion {of pure Islamic Monotheism} Hanif {worship none but Allah Alone}). Allah's *fitrah* (i.e Allah's Islamic Monotheism) with which He has created mankind..."<sup>36</sup> This verse implies that the *fitrah* of man inclines him to worship Allah; the way of the

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32. Yasien Muhammad, *Fitra: The Concept of Human Nature*, (London, 1996), p.13

33. Qur'an 7:172.

34. Hasan al-Anani, *Freedom and Responsibility in Qur'anic Perspective*, translated by M. S. Kayani, (Indianapolis, 1990), p. 43.

35. Yasien Muhammad, *Fitra: The Islamic Concept of Human Nature*, (London, 1996), p. 45

36. The Qur'an 30 : 30

*hanifa* (the straight way of belief in Allah without associating anything with Him) because Allah ordains man towards the *fitrah* that He created in him. In other words, as long as man preserves his *fitrah* he will remain in the *tawhid*.

The sense that determines this characteristic of *fitrah* is also explained by the tradition reported by Abu Huraira, "No baby is born but on *fitrah*. It is his parents who make him a Jew or a Christian or a Polytheist..."<sup>37</sup> This *Hadith* signifies that the *fitrah* of religion (Islam) is innate in man since his birth, when he was endowed with the potential to believe in Allah. Nevertheless, it is crucial to be clear about this, according to the *Hadith*, because upbringing and environment may distort this *fitrah*. In this connection Yasien Muhammad has noted the view of Ibn Taimiyyah on *fitrah* that, "...every child is born in a state of *fitrah*; in a state of goodness, and it is the social environment which causes the individual to deviate from this state."<sup>38</sup> The *Hadith* accurately postulates that the parents are the first people to have a great influence in shaping a child's character, particularly through religion. In this context, Abul-Wafa al-Ghuneimi al-Taftazani has explained, "...if a child is brought up in a religious atmosphere, seeing his family meditating on the Qur'an, fasting Ramadan and giving alms, or in short living their lives according to the precepts of Islam, they will become inwardly attached to Islam."<sup>39</sup> Thus, the parents should play their role to the best of their ability, creating a religious atmosphere in the family, by such things as love for family and others, and love for Allah and His Messenger and always seeking Allah's pleasure. Moreover, this *Hadith* indicates that the environment, for example, the various agents of education; the friends, the teachers, the schools, society, the media and so on also have a great influence on the development of the *fitrah* and a great effect on shaping a man's personality. Therefore, the parents, educators and leaders in society are entrusted with the responsibility for creating a good environment particularly on the basis of Islamic principles, in order to ensure that their children are safe from the influence of bad habits. Nevertheless, from the Islamic view, apart from this, there is also some inner aspect which influences and shapes a man's personality.

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37. Recorded by Muslim, *Sahih*, translated by Abdul Hamid Siddiqi, vol.4 B, no.2658, (Lahore, 1990), p. 216

38. Yasien Muhammad, *Fitra: The Islamic Concept of Human Nature*, (London, 1996), p. 41

39. Abul-Wafa al-Ghuneimi al-Taftazani, "Islamic Education: Its Principles and Aims," in *Muslim Education Quarterly*, Vol. 4, No. 1, Autumn 1986, p.73

### The inner nature of man from the Islamic view

The Qur'anic verses lay emphasis in various senses on the spiritual aspect of man. For example, they often employ the words *nafs*, *ruh*, and *qalb*. As previously mentioned concerning man's creation and nature, Allah has breathed the *ruh* into man. Human sense and knowledge cannot verify the detailed nature of *ruh*. Therefore, when the question concerning the *ruh* was raised with the Prophet, the Qur'an very clearly states that, "...Say: The *ruh* (the spirit) is one of the things, the knowledge of which is only with my Lord. And of knowledge, you (mankind) have been given only a little."<sup>40</sup> Nevertheless, the divine *ruh* which was being breathed into Adam underlines the idea that it gives man the potential to elevate himself to be of high noble character and have superiority, as previously discussed. Meanwhile, the *Qalb* has the role of transforming the spiritual potential into reality in the form of actions and personality. Further, the *Qalb* is "the seat of intellectual faculties and understanding as well as the seat of affections and emotions."<sup>41</sup> The Qur'anic verses frequently elucidate the idea that *Qalb* has a great capacity, along with other senses such as sight and hearing, to elevate man's dignity. Among them Allah says, "Have they not traveled through the land, and have they hearts wherewith to understand and ears wherewith to hear? Verily, it is not the eyes that grow blind, but it is the hearts which are in the breasts that grow blind."<sup>42</sup> According to William C. Chittick, "The heart is the place of intelligence, understanding, and every possible human quality. The heart's deviation and illness lead to ignorance, unbelief, and negative character traits."<sup>43</sup> The *hadith* mentioned that the *Qalb* is the main source of good and evil in man, and so his character might appear through these two products of motivation. The Prophet (pbuh) said: "Beware, in the body there is a piece of flesh; if it is sound, the whole body is sound, and if it is corrupt the whole body is corrupt, and truly it is the heart."<sup>44</sup> The commission of error, sin and crime, therefore, may emerge

40. The Qur'an 17 : 85

41. Absar Ahmad, "Qur'anic Concepts of Human Psyche" in Zafar Afaq Ansari (ed.), *Qur'anic Concepts of Human Psyche*, (Islamabad, 1992), pp. 32 – 33

42. The Qur'an 22 : 46

43. William C. Chittick, *Faith and Practice of Islam*, (New York, 1992), p.6

44. Recorded by Muslim, *Sahih*, translated by Abdul Hamid Siddiqi, vol.3 A, no.1599, (Lahore, 1990), p.56

from a 'diseased' heart. The great happiness of man lies in the knowledge and love of Allah through the purification of the *Qalb* of all vices. In fact, the *Qalb* is a spiritual faculty in the body which man should try his utmost to make pure and clean of evil.

According to Jamaal al-Din M Zarabozo,

"If the heart is completely pure it will contain only love for Allah, love for the things that Allah loves, fear of Allah and fear of engaging in something that Allah hates. Such a heart will abstain from all of the forbidden acts and will also abstain from the ambiguous matters out of fear that they are forbidden. If the heart is greatly evil it will follow its own desires and it will perform the acts that it loves regardless of whether Allah loves those acts or not."<sup>45</sup>

This articulation shows that the heart is a crucial part of man's spiritual faculty in the body and he should strive to purify it, particularly through *'ibadah*. When a man places his *Qalb* at rest, purified through *'ibadah* and properly functioning, then it may influence his personality in the state of awareness and generate positive behaviour.

In addition, the Qur'an mentions the word *nafs* which also shows a crucial aspect of man's spiritual nature. The Qur'an refers to three main categories of *nafs* which are: *nafs-ammarah*, which instigates evil such as may affect and paralyze the cognitive process.<sup>46</sup> Sometimes, man becomes *ghafil* (heedless or negligent) because of its instigation. When *nafs-ammarah* dominates man's spiritual space, he is likely to commit bad acts. Nevertheless, if he tries to struggle away from it, then this effort upgrades the *nafs* to *nafs-lawwamah*. According to Ahmad Farid, "The *nafs-al-ammarah* urges evil and openly opposes the *nafs-al-mutma'innah*. Whenever the latter presents a good deed, the former presents an evil one in return."<sup>47</sup> Therefore, *nafs-lawwamah* is a state of awareness in which when a

45. Jamaal al-Din M. Zarabozo, *Commentary on the Forty Hadith of al-Nawawi*, vol. 1, (Boulder, 1999), pp. 469 – 470

46. The Qur'an 12 : 53

47. Ahmad Farid, *The Purification of the Soul*, (London, 1993), p. 76

person performs some noble deed, it praises and encourages him, and, in the case of his committing an evil deed, it also reproves him for it, and if *nafs-lawwamah* wins its struggle, then this may achieve the stage of *nafs-mutma'innah*. This third type of *nafs* is at the stage of tranquility and peace in which one may successfully gain virtue in life in this world and salvation in the Hereafter.<sup>48</sup> The struggle between the person and his *nafs* will result in the ideal personality in man, particularly when he achieves the stage of *nafs-mutma'innah*. The outcome of this kind of *nafs* may develop a man's character because the *nafs* can be actualised to the fullest extent, which qualifies him to be elevated toward a higher plane of existence and to drive him closer to Allah. Therefore, man should realise that his success depends on himself by keeping his *nafs* often at the stage of *nafs-mutma'innah* and he is responsible for struggling to upgrade it. However, in the process of achieving a higher plane of existence and becoming close to Allah, man is sometimes forgetful and heedless because of *nafs-ammarah*.

### Man's Forgetfulness

This feature of man is repeatedly explained in several verses of the Qur'an.<sup>49</sup> Among them Allah says, "And indeed We made a covenant with Adam before, but he forgot, and We found on his part no firm will power."<sup>50</sup> His forgetfulness and heedlessness will make him forget who he is and what his mission in this world is.<sup>51</sup> He always forgets about his earlier covenants which he made with Allah Almighty and forgets to perform his duty as a servant of Allah. According to al-Naquib al-Attas, "Forgetfulness is the cause of man's disobedience, and this blameworthy nature inclines him towards injustice and ignorance."<sup>52</sup> The forgetfulness in man often leads him to follow his own lust and to commit evil deeds. In this connection the Qur'an reminds us that we should, "...obey not him whose heart We have made heedless of Our Remembrance and who follows his own lusts..."<sup>53</sup> Another verse states, "So follow not the lusts (of your hearts),

48. The Qur'an 89 : 27

49. The Qur'an 18: 24,57, 61,63, 83, 19: 23, 64, 20: 88, 115, 36: 78, 39:8

50. The Qur'an 20 : 115

51. S. Hossien Nasr, *Ideals and Realities of Islam*, (London, 1966), p. 23.

52. Muhammad al-Naquib al-Attas. *Aims and Objectives of Islamic Education*, (Jeddah, 1979), p.24.

53. The Qur'an 18 : 28

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lest you avoid justice...”<sup>54</sup> S. Hossein Nasr has noted, “...in his ordinary condition man is a weak and negligent being. He is usually subservient to his surroundings and a prisoner of his own lust and animal passions.”<sup>55</sup> Therefore man needs to be reminded about how he should behave and be educated so that he attains the highest point of his creation, particularly in the scope of divine revelation, in order to actualise the full potentiality of his being. Otherwise, he is exposed to the temptations of *Shaitan* who always takes advantage of any opportunity to prey on man’s forgetfulness and heedlessness and steers him away from the right path.

### Conclusion

The diverse features and qualities in man’s nature, as the foregoing discussion indicates, mean that man by nature has a great potential to become good. This is because Allah has fashioned him perfectly, and breathed His *ruh* (soul) into him. He has implanted into him the *fitrah* ready to accept truth and perform goodness. He has appointed him as *Khalifahtullah* and granted him superiority over other creatures. He has bestowed on him the ability to gain knowledge and has honoured him above other creatures. He has honoured him with the freedom to choose, and equipped him with intellect and senses such as hearing, eyesight and *qalb*, and granted him all sorts of blessings. In particular He has revealed the divine guidance in order to guide him to the right path and sent prophets and messengers to put this divine guidance into the normal human context as practical guidance.

However, all these features and qualities of man are still subject to change because of his freewill, the influence of the environment and his inner nature, forgetfulness and the whispers and temptations of *Shaitan*. Therefore, in order to balance his readiness to be good or ability to be bad, man physically and spiritually should be educated through divine guidance. In addition, throughout his life, man should develop properly through education and the instruction of the law in order to actualise his *fitrah*. Otherwise, he will turn away from it and follow his lusts.

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54. The Qur’an 4 : 135

55. Sayyid Hossein Nasr, *Ideals and Realities of Islam*, (London, 1966), p. 18.