



ISLAM AND HUMAN NATURE



Fall 2023

Islam and Human Natures

Objectives

After working through this session, the youth will be able to:

- recognize and differentiate two distinct natures of human beings
- understand the relationship between the two natures
- understand the relationship between Islam and human nature.

Summary

Activity	Description	Length
Introduction	Is Islam consistent with human nature?	5 minutes
Question 2	What is human nature?	5 minutes
Question 3	What is the difference between Animals and Humans?	10 minutes
Question 4	What is the relationship between these two natures?	5 minutes
Conclusion	What do you now think of our first question?	10 minutes
Total		35 minutes

Introduction

The teacher can start by asking, "Is Islam consistent with human nature?"

The teacher should entertain various answers and go along with them. S/he can follow up by asking to explain why and give an example. After entertaining a few comments, without agreeing or disagreeing, the teacher can ask "*but what does human nature mean in this context? Before knowing whether we have consistency, we need to know what human nature is?*"

Question 2

Q: What is your understanding of human nature?

Some of the youth will point to “instinct” and provide examples about natural aspects of human nature. The teacher can give it the Arabic term “طبيعه” and articulate characteristics of this type of human nature.

First nature: طبيعه

- We need to satisfy it, to some extent, to be able to survive here (in this world) before going to our destination (hereafter).
- We have a physical body, driven by instinct, like animals.

How similar is it to animals?

This type of human nature is similar to animals. We both forage search for food, whether that be a lion hunting for food, or an individual commuting to work. We fight for survival, we have eating and sleeping habits, we reproduce, we relieve ourselves, we are in search of pleasure and flee from pain.

To make sense of why we need it, think about the example of **an alien**. When an alien is brought to Earth, what does he need to do to survive?

To survive in harsh environments, we as aliens should come into **a body**: Breathe the air, and eat the food on this planet. To do so, *we should live in a very humble life that is weak but perfect for this environment.*

To make sense of it. Think about this: We crop and harvest, kill animals, clean up the blood, then put in a hole called mouth and it goes down a pipe. Why are we so weak and humble?

Because we are alien! We need this body to carry the Soul. It is a carrier. To summarize, one type of human nature is the **طبيعه** that is shared with animals. It is important; we need it for survival. It is the carrier of our soul! Having that said, we now think differently: “I am from somewhere else, I’m not here just to live in this planet!”

Question 3

Q: What is the difference between Animals and Humans?

From the youth comments, the teacher should elaborate on the second type of human nature called فطره

- To ensure we are not forgetting our identity.
- Allah *wired us* with a *superior nature* that is more innate and deeply ingrained in us.
- Instinct is not the best word for this, but we define it as a divinely inspired nature unique to human beings.

فَأَقِمْ وَجْهَكَ لِلدِّينِ حَنِيفًا ۚ فِطْرَتَ اللَّهِ الَّتِي فَطَرَ النَّاسَ عَلَيْهَا ۚ لَا تَبْدِيلَ لِخَلْقِ اللَّهِ ۚ ذَٰلِكَ الدِّينُ الْقَيِّمُ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ

(آيه 30 سورة روم)

Set your direction upon the pure Faith, that divine nature that Allah has set humankind on, you will not find any change in how Allah has created this. That is the upright religion. But most people do not know this.

Let's go with another example to understand better: **Caterpillar!** What is a caterpillar's goal? To turn into a butterfly! It aims for it and succeeds only if it acknowledges and foresees the future. But if it aims for the cozy place that it is currently in, it will never turn into a butterfly!

Another question: Does this mean that طبيعه is like we coming down to a lower-base form? Probably yes! Our فطره is our real self. What did Allah SWT tell Adam and Eve in Quran when they ate from the Forbidden tree? Did not say "go to the world," he said, "descend and go down to where you will be enemies to each other. On the Earth, you shall stay and have residence and have some sustenance and provision for a short while"

وَقُلْنَا اهْبِطُوا بَعْضُكُمْ لِبَعْضٍ عَدُوٌّ ۖ وَلَكُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ مُسْتَقَرٌّ وَمَتَاعٌ إِلَىٰ حِينٍ

(آيه 36 سورة بقره)

This will lead us to another important question.

Question 4

Q: What is the relationship between these two natures?

Entertain a few answers!

A good way to see the relationship is through an example: **A Ship in the ocean**

- A ship is heading toward a specific destination in the ocean.
- The ship gets into an storm.
- The storm changes the ship's direction.
- The captain needs to find the direction toward the destination.
- How can the captain check the right direction to go?

After a couple of comments, the youth will point to GPS or Compass. The teacher can mention that

The compass direction is always toward the destination. Regardless of the storm and spinning of the ship, compass is not affected. The storm is طبعی, or natural, but we still need the compass. The compass is our فطره! That is what Allah SWT has ingrained in us to make sure we are not lost. It always points toward Allah SWT. We still need the ship that is our carrier while on the journey to destination. Ship is the body that is driven by طبعه!

Conclusion

Many of today's problems and crises emerge from ignoring فطره and allowing طبعه to take over. In today's discussion we differentiated the two. If we can recognize the difference and the importance of فطره over طبعه, then the potential for change within us is massive, similar or more than the transformation of the metamorphosis of a caterpillar to a butterfly.

So let's get back to the first question. **Is Islam consistent with human nature?**

The youth should be able to point that Islam is consistent with our فطره but not always طبعه. The فطره within all of us is the COMPASS that always points to Allah SWT, during storms. It is something you cannot change. You can hide it, you can deny it, you can try to skew it, you can justify it, but you cannot change it. It always points to Allah SWT.

We all come to this world as caterpillars. Our mission is to evolve into that butterfly. It would be interesting to think about

- what are the characteristics of a فطره vs. طبیعه oriented individual?
- What difference does it make to individuals when they live under a فطره-oriented versus a طبیعه-oriented government?

In Islam we assume that **our true self is our Soul, not our body**. Body is a carrier for the Soul. Then it would be safe to argue that فطره drives your Soul. طبیعه drives your body.

Most of the challenges we face, for example, temptations for younger ones against the opposite gender! It is difficult to resist temptation. It is natural (طبیعی). If we do not distinguish between فطره and طبیعه, we tend to be طبیعه-driven because that is more instinctive, accessible, and powerful at the moment (when we are on Earth). In other words, when you do not recognize فطره then you recognize your body as the real self!

Our challenge is to disidentify SELF from the BODY. *"I know that I am not the body; I know this body will die, and I am going to live forever, and my body is the carrier."* Living the life with this awareness is not easy.

References

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xm276sWckUY>