



## The Meaning of the Term *Fitrah* in the Quran: A Concept of Islamic Education

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### Abstract:

The concept of Islamic education began to be oriented towards Western theory, and the study of the Quran as a source of Islamic education began to diminish. This research examines (1) the meaning of the term *fitrah* in the Quran and (2) its implications for the concept of Islamic education. This literature review study uses *tafsir maudui* (thematic interpretation) and pedagogical approaches in analyzing the data. The data sources consist of Quran, commentary books, and several relevant books and journals. The results of the research show that *fitrah* in the Quran is the default factory setting for humans. *Fitrah* is a divine chip implanted by God in humans so that they are ready to believe in monotheism, purify themselves, and worship God. Humans who carry out their *fitrah* have three characteristics: accepting and practicing Islam, being sincere, and having a strong faith. Actualization of the concept of human *fitrah* in Islamic education can be carried out by (1) making *fitrah* a basic human potential that needs to be developed, (2) making education the main path in developing *fitrah*, (3) creating a conducive educational environment (helping the development of *fitrah*), and (4) cultivating a work ethic in which there is harmony and balance between the depth of religious appreciation and activities that lead to increased welfare.

## INTRODUCTION

The position of humans as creatures of Allah is very central, so almost all sciences make them the object of study. Not only the social sciences and humanities, but some natural and exact sciences also make humans their object of study (Miftah 2020). The difference between these sciences is the point of view of their respective disciplines about humans. For example, biology studies humans from their biological aspects; medical science examines them from the aspect of health; political science, economics, and others study according to their respective disciplines. Likewise, educational science discusses humans from the perspective of phenomena and their activities in education (Achmadi 2005).

Education that functions to help human growth and development towards a better normative direction is impossible without knowing human nature. Education based on the wrong understanding of human nature will have fatal consequences. Because the purpose of education is to increase all human potential (Holfelder 2019). Therefore, there should not be an education system that escapes human development as a whole. For example, consider humans

only as biological beings. This, of course, has implications for the curriculum and implementation of education, which only fully develops human biological abilities (potential) that are immanent in nature (Scarfe 2021). As a result, world civilization was built on luxury and sophistication but was empty of value. The evidence is cases of corruption, racism, intolerance, suicide (despair), etc. committed by educated people (Muniroh 2019).

Huston Smith, an American expert on religion studies, states: “I said that our loss of the Transcendent World has resulted from a mistake, and the mistake is this: We assume that the modern world has discovered something that throws the transcendent world into question, but this is not the case. It is not that we have discovered something. Rather, we have unwittingly allowed ourselves to be drawn into an enveloping epistemology that cannot handle transcendence” (Smith 1992). This statement can be used as a warning signal for people living in today's modern world, including those who are currently involved in the world of education. Maybe he regrets seeing Harvard University, which was once a “Protestant seminary,” or Georgetown University, which used to be a “Catholic seminary” but then turned into a modern university where most of its residents feel they no longer need to deal with God because they are so preoccupied with all the science things: politics, management, engineering, communications, law, and so on, which must be freed from all values (Arsyad 2011).

Apparently, Smith expressed his regret and felt that something was missing in the scientific context of today's modern people. He feels there is no correlation between the views of modern people and his findings about the Supreme Creator. Furthermore, Smith revealed that “instead of finding something, we lose something because we have allowed ourselves to be accidentally trapped in an epistemology that does not give space to divinity and recognition of the existence of life behind life in this world” (Smith 1992).

This view indicates a mistake by some Western educational experts who do not comprehensively see humans. So that the important potential in the form of spiritual values is not a concern in education. Ironically, Islamic studies—including Islamic education—have changed their orientation to a Western approach and seem to have forgotten the Quran as their basic concept. Even though the Quran introduces the term “fitrah,” which is owned by humans. Islam encourages all human beings to understand and develop their fitrah (Mrahorović 2023). Unfortunately, previous researches on fitrah only focuses on studying its meaning according to the Quran and hadith (Septemiarti 2023; Abadi and Khan 2023). Regarding the study of Islamic education, it only examines fitrah as a potential that must be developed (Mardliyah and Wedi 2022; Ghalib, Mujahid, and Suarni 2022; Burga 2019). There is no study that specifically and in-depth examines the meaning of the term fitrah in the Quran as the concept of developing fitrah education. This research will study this problem as a response to Islamic education towards managing modern civilization, which actually retreats from the value aspect.

This study aims to examine the meaning of fitrah in the Quran and its implications for the concept of Islamic education. This literature study uses *tafsīr mauḍūʿī* (thematic interpretation) and pedagogic approaches. The thematic interpretation approach is used to find the meaning of fitrah in the Quran. The pedagogic approach is used to find the concept of fitrah education as a solution to building a value-based civilization in the modern era. Primary data sources are the Quran, books of interpretation, and journals that study fitrah. Secondary data

sources are relevant books and journals that help in analyzing the data. The data was collected using documentation techniques and analyzed using content analysis techniques.

### VERSES OF THE QUR'AN ABOUT HUMAN'S *FITRAH*

The term “fitrah” is often interpreted as holy and potential (Suriadi 2019). Etymologically, the origin of the word “fitrah” comes from Arabic, namely *fiṭrah* (فطرة), plural *fiṭar* (فطر), which means temperament, character, event, origin, religion, creation (Samsuri 2020). According to Shihab (2007b), the term *fiṭrah* is taken from the root word “*al-fiṭr*” which means split. From this meaning, other meanings are born, including creator or event.

Based on searching the word “فطر” using the book *al-Mu‘jām al-Mufahras li al-Fāz al-Qur‘ān*, 20 (twenty) words “*fiṭrah*” were found in the Qur’an with various derivations (Al-Baqi 1945). As described in Table 1 below:

Table 1. The Word *Fiṭrah* with its Various Derivations in the Qur’an

No	Word	Surah and Verse	Verse Classification	Verse Subject	Verse Object
1	فطر	QS 6: 79	Makiyah	Allah	Heaven and earth
2	فطر	QS 30: 30	Makiyah	Allah	Human
3	فطرني	QS 11: 51	Makiyah	Allah	Human
4	فطرني	QS 36: 22	Makiyah	Allah	Human
5	فطرني	QS 43: 27	Makiyah	Allah	Human
6	فطرنا	QS 20: 72	Makiyah	Allah	Human
7	فطركم	QS 17: 51	Makiyah	Allah	Human
8	فطرهن	QS 21: 56	Makiyah	Allah	Heaven and earth
9	يتفطرن	QS 19: 90	Makiyah	Allah	Heaven
10	يتفطرن	QS 42: 11	Makiyah	Allah	Heaven
11	إنفطرت	QS 82: 1	Makiyah	Allah	Heaven
12	فاطر	QS 42: 11	Makiyah	Allah	Heaven and earth
13	فاطر	QS 6: 14	Makiyah	Allah	Heaven and earth
14	فاطر	QS 14: 14	Makiyah	Allah	Heaven and earth
15	فاطر	QS 35: 1	Makiyah	Allah	Heaven and earth
16	فاطر	QS 12: 101	Makiyah	Allah	Heaven and earth
17	فاطر	QS 39: 46	Makiyah	Allah	Heaven and earth
18	فطرة	QS 30: 30	Makiyah	Allah	Human
19	فطور	QS 67: 3	Makiyah	Allah	Heaven
20	إنفطر	QS 73: 18	Makiyah	Allah	Heaven

Source: Documentation Data

Table 1 shows that the derivation of the word *fiṭrah* in the Koran includes: 10 forms of *fi‘il māḍī* (past tense verb); 2 forms of *fi‘il muḍāri‘* (present tense verb); 6 forms of *isim fā‘il* (subject noun); and 2 forms of *masdar* (theme or verbal noun), namely 1 *mufrad* (singular) and 1 plural. After these verses were collected, we selected and determined several verses as an answer to the problem of human nature. As described in Table 2 below:

Table 2. *Fitrah* with Human Objects in the Quran

No	Word	Surah and Verse	Verse Object	Aspect	Verse Correlation
1	فطرة	QS 30: 30	Humans in general	Psychic	The religion of <i>ḥanīf</i> (Islam)
2	فطرني	QS 11: 51	Singular first-person pronouns	Physique Psychic	Call to worship God
3	فطرني	QS 36: 22	Singular first-person pronouns	Physique Psychic	Call to worship God
4	فطرني	QS 43: 27	Singular first-person pronouns	Physique Psychic	Worship God
5	فطرنا	QS 20: 72	Plural first-person pronouns	Physique Psychic	The sorcerer does not believe in Allah
6	فطركم	QS 17: 51	Plural second-person pronouns	Physique Psychic	Polytheists who reject the truth of the Day of Resurrection

Based on Table 2, it can be seen that there are six verses that explain human *fitrah* in the Qur'an. The detailed explanation of these verses is as follows:

#### QS al-Rūm/30: 30

##### *Verse Description*

فَأَقِمْ وَجْهَكَ لِلدِّينِ حَنِيفًا فِطْرَتَ اللَّهِ الَّتِي فَطَرَ النَّاسَ عَلَيْهَا لَا تَبْدِيلَ لِخَلْقِ اللَّهِ ذَلِكَ الدِّينُ الْقَيِّمُ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ (٣٠)

Translated:

So keep your face straight towards Allah's religion; stay on the *fitrah* of Allah, who has created human beings according to that *fitrah*. There is no change in the *fitrah* of Allah. That is the straight religion, but most people don't know (Departemen Agama RI 2010).

##### *Mufasssirin Opinion about the Meaning of Fitrah in QS al-Rūm/30: 30*

In interpreting a verse, each *mufasssir* has different opinions. Differences in interpreting a verse are influenced by socio-cultural conditions, scientific background, the conditions of the time, and the interpretation methodology used. In the following, the author presents some of the opinions of the *mufasssirin*, including the following:

##### 1. Mustāfa al-Marāgī

According to al-Marāgī:

الزموا خلقه الله التي خلق الناس عليها. فقد جعلهم بفطرتهم جانحين للتوحيد وموقمين به لكونه موافقا لما يهدى إليه الفعل ويرشد إليه صحيح النظر (Al-Marāgī 1974).

It means:

Keep all of you on *fitrah* that has been created by Allah in humans, because in fact it is He who makes humans according to His *fitrah* which tends to the teachings of monotheism and convinces them because the teachings of monotheism are in accordance with what is shown by reason and guides them to sound thoughts.

Based on this explanation, it can be understood that *fitrah* in this verse means the teaching of monotheism. Trying to unite Allah swt. by not associating it with anyone.

## 2. M. Quraish Shihab

The word *fitrah* is taken from the word *fatara* which means “to create.” Further by quoting the *mufassir* he added, *fitrah* is “creating something the first time or without any previous examples.” Thus the word can also be understood in the sense of “origin”, or “congenital”. The word *patron* used in this verse refers to the circumstances or conditions of that creation, as also implied by the continuation of this verse which states “who created man upon him” (Shihab 2007a).

## 3. Al-Biqā’i

In interpreting the word *fitrah*, al-Biqā’i does not limit it to beliefs about the oneness of Allah SWT. According to him, what is meant by *fitrah* is the first creation and the initial character that God created man on the basis of. This scholar then quoted Imam al-Ghazali in *Ihyā ‘Ulūm al-Dīn* that “every human being has been created on the basis of faith in Allah even on the potential to know problems as they are, that is, as if covered in him because of the potential knowledge (on him)” (Shihab 2007a).

Al-Biqā’i then explained the intention of al-Ghazali that what is meant is the ease of obeying (God’s commands) and the nobility of character which is a reflection of Islamic *fitrah*, so he concluded that what is meant by *fitrah* is the acceptance of the truth and the stability in accepting it.

## 4. Ṭahir Ibn Asyur

In explaining the meaning of *fitrah*, Ibn Asyur cites the opinion of the commentator Ibn Athiyah who understands *fitrah* as a condition of creation contained in human beings that makes it potential to being able to distinguish Allah’s creations and know God and His Shari’ah. *Fitrah* according to Ibn Asyur are the elements and systems that Allah bestowed on every creature. Human *fitrah* is what God created in man which consists of body, mind, and soul (Shihab 2007a).

## 5. Al-Mawardi

According to al-Mawardi, the word of God which reads “*fiṭratallāh al-latī fatara al-nasa ilaiḥā*” has two meanings. First, God’s creation that was created for humans; Second, it means God’s religion which has been given nature to his creatures (humans), namely Islam. the first opinion is held by al-Tabari, while the second opinion is held by Ibn Abbas and Kalabi (al-Mawardi 1980).

Based on this explanation, it can be understood that God created humans in this world as recipients and implementers of God’s teachings. Therefore God does not leave humans alone without adequate provisions, but God with the nature of His *Raḥmān* and *Raḥīm* gives gifts of very high value, namely various abilities or potentials which are called *fiṭrah*, that allow humans to be able to assume that responsibility.

There is a difference in giving the meaning of the term *fiṭrah* in QS al-Rūm/30: 30 among *mufasir*. Apart from being interpreted as a tendency towards monotheism and the truth

of accepting Islam, more broadly, it also means character or innateness as well as the elements that exist in humans, which consist of body, mind, and soul.

## QS Hūd /11: 51

### *Verse Description*

يُقَوْمٌ لَا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ أَجْرًا إِنْ أَجْرِيَ إِلَّا عَلَى الَّذِي فَطَرَنِي أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ (٥١)

Translated:

O my people, I do not ask you for a reward for this call of mine. My reward is nothing but from Allah who has created me. So don't you think about (it) (Departemen Agama RI 2010).

### *Mufasssirin Opinion about the Meaning of Fitrah in QS Hūd /11: 51*

#### 1. Wahbah Zuhaili

Zuhaili (1991) explained that:

(فطرنى) خلقني على الفطرة السليمة, فطرة التوحيد الله والمقصود من الآية بيان اخلاصه في النصيحة, فإنها لا تفيد ما دامت مثوبة بالمطامع (Zuhaili 1991).

It means:

The meaning of the word “*faṭaranī*” is that He has created me on *fitrah* pure (clean heart/sincere), *nature* monotheism (revealing Allah) and the purpose of this verse is to explain his sincerity in advising (preaching), because advice is useless if it is mixed with something that is greedy.

The meaning of *fitrah* in this verse by Zuhaili (1991) is interpreted as sincere to Allah and *fitrah* monotheism (oneness of Allah). *Natural* actions are actions that are done only because of Allah (sincere).

#### 2. Al-Marāgī

According to al-Marāgī (1974), the meaning of the verse is that Prophet Hud’s call to his people his people to worship Allah sincerely and being free from—worshipping—idols, but his people accused Prophet Hud of doing so only because he wanted to benefit himself. Prophet Hud’s true intention is explained in this verse: “I hope for no reward for my da’wah except (please) Allah who has created me on a pure *fitrah*,” safe from worshipping idols that Hud’s people had done when they made statues. Then satan adorned them by exalting the statues, and they worshiped them (the statues), so don't you think about what you are told to distinguish between something that is harmful and something that is beneficial. And verily, I (Prophet Muhammad), for you are an honest and true adviser, so I have never deceived you with what I have called for (Al-Marāgī 1974).

Al-Maragi agrees with Zuhaili regarding the meaning of *fitrah* in this verse, namely something pure (*salīmah*). That is, the intention of a pure heart (sincere) because of Allah swt. Apart from that, it is also interpreted as pure worship/free from idols or polytheistic acts, namely always monotheism (the oneness of Allah swt). So the meaning of *fitrah* is to purify the heart, mind, and actions from intentions other than Allah.



### 3. M. Quraish Shihab

*Fataranī* ward is a past tense verb taken from the word *faṭara* which originally meant splitting. From there the word *fiṭrah* is taken. The *fiṭrah* that Allah does, is His creation in a form that makes it capable of doing certain jobs or tasks. This makes *fiṭrah* or human creation by Allah swt implies the bestowal of human potential to believe in and know God.

Shihab cites Raghīb al-Isfahani's opinion that this gift can be seen from the human potential to know and acknowledge Allah as in QS al-Ankabut/29: 61. "Indeed, if you ask them: "Who made the heavens and the earth and subjected the sun and the moon?" of course they will answer: "Allah" (Shihab 2007a).

### 4. Teungku M. Hasbi ash-Shiddieqy

In interpreting the word *faṭaranī*, ash-Shiddieqy revealed that humans were created by Allah with *a holy disposition*, that is, apart from worshiping idols (Ash-Shiddieqy 2000). In contrast to the word *fiṭrah* in QS al-Rūm/30: 30, which is interpreted as the potential to receive and carry out God's commands. In this Hud letter, the editor *is fiṭrah* more interpreted or inclined to the holiness or purity of humans than worshiping idols, in the sense of *fiṭrah* human beings are monotheistic, that is, oneness of Allah swt.

## QS Yāsīn/36: 22

### Verse Description

وَمَا لِي لَا أَعْبُدُ الَّذِي فَطَرَنِي وَإِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ (٢٢)

Translated:

Why don't I worship (God) who created me and to Him you (all) will be returned (Departemen Agama RI 2010).

### Mufasssirin Opinion about the Meaning of Fiṭrah in QS Yāsīn/36: 22

#### 1. Wahbah Zuhaili

According to Zuhaili (1991), the meaning of this verse is:

أي مانع يمنعني من عبادة الله الذي خلقتني، وكذلك أنتم، ما لكم لا تعبدون الله الذي خلقكم؟ (واليه ترجعون) بعد الموت (Zuhaili 1991).

It means:

What obstacles prevent me from worshiping (worshipping) Allah who has created me, as well as you, why don't you worship Allah who has created you? Whereas (why did you return) after death (He will repay your disbelief).

Further in his commentary, he explained that what prevented me from sincerely worshiping Allah who created me, and to Him is the place of return and reward on the Day of Judgment, and He will repay all your deeds, if your (charity) is good, then the reward is good, and if your (charity) is bad, then the reward will be bad (Zuhaili 1991).

In general, Zuhaili interprets the word *fiṭrah* in this verse is the same as creating. This means that humans were created in a condition ready to worship. In a sense, humans are set in their creation to be ready to carry out worship. It can also be interpreted that basically, human nature is to like to worship Allah.

## 2. Al-Marāgī

Al-Marāgī interpreted this verse globally. In his commentary, it is said that nothing prevents me from sincerely worshipping God, who created me, and only to Him is the place to return for recompense on the Day of Judgment. He will repay all your deeds; if your deeds are good, then the returns will be good, and if your deeds are bad, then the reward will be bad (Al-Marāgī 1974). This is a reproach or a strong rebuke for those who leave the worship of the Creator and even worship other than Him. As well as threats to them that they will return with severe punishment (Al-Marāgī 1974).

## 3. Al-Razi

Al-Razi interpreted the term fitrah in QS Yāsīn/36: 22, that actually the popular opinion interprets “*fataranī*” as creating and starting, and a small part or *qaul garib* said that *fitrah* (*fataranī*) is defined as I make according to the word of Allah (*Fitrah* of Allah who created humans on His Nature/*Fitrah*), therefore this verse says “Why do I not worship God” meaning there is no obstacle, so I stick to fitrah My Lord, a fitrah that is sufficient in witnessing and also worshipping Him. When a definition like this is said, then the meaning of fitrah in the word *fāṭirissamāwāt* becomes different. So we say that the word *fāṭirissamāwāt* also comes from the word al-Fiṭr which means to divide, or we say that the meaning of the two is one, just as it is said that humans are made of their own *fitrah* and the heavens are made of their own *fitrah*, and the initial interpretation is clearer (Al-Razi 1998).

## 4. M. Quraish Shihab

*Faṭara*, which means creating for the first time, implies that Allah, who created humans for the first time, is also the place to return for the last time. Thus, the first to last humans belong to Allah and should devote their whole lives to worship and devotion to Allah. The verse above employs the first persona singular, specifically the word “I,” to create “me,” and then concludes with the second persona, which is plural (you come back). This shows that the word “I” used by the reader contains the meaning “I am a human being,” and thus, apart from the speaker, who is also a human being, it is automatically included in it. Therefore, the end of the verse above mentions the word you by addressing all humans as well.

The verse uses the form of a question regarding the causes that prevent a person from worshipping Allah. ‘This kind of question’ will not be born except from a soul that maintains its pure *fitrah* so that it feels the presence of the Creator and is drawn by it to the source of all beings, namely Allah. With the purity of *fitrah*, a person will also realize that there is an end to his life journey in this world, and that his place of anchorage is God Almighty (Shihab 2007a).

Based on some of the explanations above, the term fitrah here is basically defined as creating or starting. However, in further explanation, *Mufasssirīn* explains that humans were created by God to serve Him, so from this, it can be concluded that human nature is basically to worship God.

Besides that, Shihab (2007a) explained that recognition for worshipping only Allah can only come from people who maintain their pure fitrah (*al-Ṭūr*). Thus, it can be understood that the fitrah in this letter, according to Shihab, is holy (*al-Ṭūr*).



## QS al- Zukhruf /43: 27

### Verse Description

إِلَّا الَّذِي فَطَرَنِي فَإِنَّهُ سَيَهْدِينِ (٢٧)

Translated:

But (I worship) God who made me; because in fact He will give guidance to me (Departemen Agama RI 2010).

### Mufasssirin Opinion about the Meaning of Fitrah in QS al- Zukhruf/43: 27

#### 1. M. Quraish Shihab

The term *Fatara* in this verse means to create for the first time without any previous examples. According to Shihab, Prophet Ibrahim a.s. is presumably using this word to imply that the God whom he worships is the God who creates and maintains because the creator of something must be He who also has the power to protect it, and thus only to the Creator should all worship be directed (Shihab 2007a). In this case, Shihab describes the meaning of this verse as a whole means *lā Ilāha illallāh* (Shihab 2007a).

#### 2. Mohammed al-Rifa'i

Through this verse, Allah swt informs about His servants, messengers, and lovers (Prophet Ibrahim a.s.), priests of Hunafa, that he broke away from his father and his people regarding their worship of idols. So in the previous verse, namely verse 26, "Ibrahim a.s. said: In fact, I am not responsible for what you worship." Then he continued his words in verse 27 "But (I worship) God who made me; for verily, He will guide me."

Regarding the meaning of fitrah in this letter, al-Rifa'i does not give a definite meaning. However, in his interpretation, he clearly states that the prophet Abraham uses the sentence in verse 27 to indicate that he acknowledges that there is no God but Allah (Ar-Rifa'i 2000). Thus, implicitly, it can be understood that the meaning of fitrah here is the oneness (Tawhid) of Allah from idols.

#### 3. Mustāfa al- Marāgī

Generally, this verse explains that I (Ibrahim) worship God, who made me, because He will guide me. According to al-Maragi, Prophet Ibrahim said this with the stability of faith in Allah and strengthened belief in Him, and as a warning to his people that guidance was from Allah (Al-Marāgī 1974). He is the one who gives instructions or makes me obedient. It can also be interpreted that nothing gives the slightest benefit or harm except Allah swt.

#### 4. Al- Razi

Al-Razi explains in his commentary, that this verse intends that I (Ibrahim) broke away from all that you worship except Allah. He said here it has the meaning of *lākinna* so that the meaning becomes 'but' the One who gives me *fitrah*, actually he will give guidance or guide me to His religion and make me obey Him (Al-Razi 1998).

#### 5. H. Abdul Malik Karim Amrullah (HAMKA)

According to HAMKA, the sentence *إِلَّا الَّذِي فَطَرَنِي* "except that which made me" (verse 27 based), namely Allah the One and Almighty, in whom I believe, even though I am free from

the actions of my father and my people. “He’s the one who will give me a hint” (end of verse 27). In other words, it is free from other influences and only to Allah, the One and only all offerings, worship, and devotion (Amrullah 1999).

Based on the explanation regarding QS al-Zukhruf/43: 27, the basic meaning of fitrah is defined as creating or making but already leading to the recognition of the Oneness of God, this can be seen in the sentence uttered by Prophet Ibrahim that he had separated from his people who worshiped idols. Thus, the author understands that the fitrah here is the nature of monotheism, namely the oneness of Allah as expressed by Shihab, al-Rifa’i and HAMKA.

## QS Thāhā/20: 72

### Verse Description

قَالُوا لَنْ نُؤْثِرَكَ عَلَىٰ مَا جَاءَنَا مِنَ الْبَيِّنَاتِ وَالَّذِي فَطَرَنَا فَاقْضِ مَا أَنْتَ قَاضٍ إِنَّمَا تَقْضِي هَذِهِ الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا (٧٢)

Translated:

They said: We will never give priority to you over the clear evidence (miracles) that have come to us and from God who created us; then decide what you want to decide. In fact, you will only be able to decide on life in this world (Departemen Agama RI 2010) .

### Mufasssirin Opinion about the Meaning of Fiṭrah in QS Thāhā/20: 72

#### 1. M. Quraish Shihab

Shihab revealed in his commentary that some scholars understand the letter و (*wawu*) in the sentence “*wa al-lazi faṭaranā*” in the sense of an oath, so that they understand the verse above in the sense of: “we swear, by God who created us” (Shihab 2007a).

The faith of the magicians was considered by some scholars to be something very sudden and completely unexpected. Sayyid Qutub, for example, wrote that “it is a touch that hits the center of feeling so that the whole body rises instantly.” Sayyid Qutub likens it to touching a small button (on an electric current) so that it emits light, which immediately disturbs the darkness. It is the touch of faith on the human heart that switches it in an instant from disbelief to faith (Shihab 2007a). Shihab (2007a) added that their faith was an amazing event, but in essence, the seed had been planted in their hearts, or at least some of them, long before their birth.

#### 2. Al- Razi

According to al-Rāzī, the word “*wa al-lazi faṭaranā*” contains two meanings, namely: *First*, we will never give priority to you, O Pharaoh, over clear evidence that has come to us from God who created us in the sense of obeying God who created us and worshipping Him. *Second*, here means keeping promises or oaths (Al-Razi 1998).

#### 3. HAMKA

When someone has come to a belief, they don't let it go anymore. Even for that, life is at stake. Therefore, they emphatically replied, “We will not prioritize you anymore on the basis of clear evidence.” This is an unequivocal answer: their relationship with Pharaoh has been broken since they witnessed the greatness of Allah. So, they swear, “By those Who Created us.”

This is a form of challenge to Pharaoh by magicians who have faith in Allah. With a firm faith, because of a steady belief that they swear “By those Who Created us!”. This was a heavy blow to the soul of the Pharaoh, who had threatened them (believers in Allah) with grievous torments (Amrullah 1999).

Based on these various explanations, it can be understood that the above interpretation implies that long before man was created, he was equipped with a set of potentials called *fitrah*, including the *fitrah* of faith, as in this verse. This is in accordance with another word of God, QS al-A‘raf/7: 172.

وَإِذْ أَخَذَ رَبُّكَ مِنْ بَنِي آدَمَ مِنْ ظُهُورِهِمْ ذُرِّيَّتَهُمْ وَأَشْهَدَهُمْ عَلَى أَنْفُسِهِمْ أَلَسْتُ بِرَبِّكُمْ قَالُوا بَلَى شَهِدْنَا أَنْ تَقُولُوا يَوْمَ الْقِيَمَةِ إِنَّا كُنَّا عَنْ هَذَا غْفِيلِينَ (١٧٢)

Translated:

And (remember), when your Lord brought forth the offspring of the sons of Adam from their sulbi and Allah bore witness against their souls (saying): “Am I not your Lord?” They replied: “Yes (You are our Lord), we are witnesses.” (We do that) so that on the Day of Resurrection you will not say: “Verily, we (bani Adam) are the ones who are heedless of this (Oneness of God)” (Departemen Agama RI 2010).

Nashori (2003) explained that the spirit in humans is *the Spirit of God*. Only humans are creatures in which the element of creation contains the divine spirit. With the existence of His spirit, humans have divine potential within themselves.

#### QS al-Isra’/17: 51

##### Verse Description

أَوْ خَلَقَا مِمَّا يَكْبُرُ فِي صُدُورِكُمْ فَسَيَقُولُونَ مَن يُعِيدُنَا قُلِ الَّذِي فَطَرَكُمْ أَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ فَسَيُنْغِضُونَ إِلَيْكَ رُءُوسَهُمْ وَيَقُولُونَ مَتَى هُوَ قُلْ عَسَى أَنْ يَكُونَ قَرِيبًا (٥١)

Translated:

Or a creature from beings that is impossible (to live) according to your mind. Then they will ask: “Who will bring us back to life?” Say: “Who has created you in the first time”. Then they will shake their heads at you and say: “When will that (happen)?” Say: “Hopefully the time to rise is near” (Departemen Agama RI 2010).

#### Mufasssirin Opinion about the Meaning of *Fitrah* in al-Isra’/17: 51

##### 1. M. Quraish Shihab

Shihab (2007a) stated that globally this verse explains the answer to the question raised by the polytheists about who will bring them back to life, so Allah revealed this verse. Word “*fatharakum*” in this verse is interpreted as the creation of the first time before humans there was any smallest part of his being (Shihab 2007a).

Shihab (2007a) stated that generally, this verse explains the answer to the question raised by the polytheists about who will bring them back to life, so Allah revealed this verse. The word “*faṭarakum*” in this verse is interpreted as the creation of the first time before humans there was any smallest part of his being (Shihab 2007a).

## 2. HAMKA

Similar to Shihab, HAMKA interprets the *faṭarakum* verse, i.e., who created you in the beginning, from the time you were still a drop of male sperm and a drop of female sperm, then merged into one, then became a clot of blood (‘*alaqah*) until it became a lump of *flesh* (*mudḡah*) until it became bone, then it was covered with skin and born into the world (Amrullah 1999).

Based on the explanations of the commentators, the meaning of *fiṭrah* in this verse is the first creation (there is no creature like that creation) and no creature can think about that creation because it considers it impossible.

## THE MEANING OF HUMAN FITRAH IN THE QUR'AN

From the various explanations above, it has been stated that human beings in their creation are not necessarily in a weak position, meaning that humans, apart from being recipients and implementers of Allah's teachings whose main duty is to worship the Creator, also serve as leaders of the earth's creatures (*khalīfah fī al-ard*) (Burga 2019).

It is in this leadership task that Allah equips humans with a set of tools called *fiṭrah* (Purnama and Ulfah 2020). Meanwhile, in interpreting the word *fiṭrah*, the *mufasssīrīn* (commentators) and education experts have different views and arguments from the interpretation that the author has put forward above.

Mubarak (2003) explains that in Arabic, *fiṭrah* means division, emergence, occurrence, and creation. If *fiṭrah* is related to humans, then what is meant by human *fiṭrah* is creature, whether it is innate from birth or natural conditions. Meanwhile, in the book “Social Interpretation,” another definition of *fiṭrah* is the potential to evolve towards height, nobility, and perfection. Because of that, *fiṭrah* is only possessed by humans who can be developed as well as possible or decreased as low as possible, so that humans can live based on their *fiṭrah* or vice versa, instead leave it (Ghafur 2005).

Langgulang (2005) provides an interpretation of the meaning of *fiṭrah* based on a hadith of the Prophet:

عن أبي هريرة، قال رسول الله صعم: ما من مولود إلا يولد علي الفطرة، فأبواه يهودانه و ينصرانه و يمجسانه (رواه مسلم) (An-Naisaburi 1997).

It means:

From Abu Hurairah, the Messenger of Allah saw said: “No child is born but has a *fiṭrah*, so his parents make him a Jew, Christian, or Zoroastrian” (H.R. Muslim).

According to Langgulang (2005), what is meant by *fiṭrah* has good potential because the notion of being a Jew, Christian, or Zoroastrian is misleading. It means the parents are the ones who destroy and mislead *fiṭrah*, which is originally pure and should develop in a good direction. In addition, he added that in Arabic, *fiṭrah* means “holy or good character” (Langgulang 2005).

Meanwhile, Tafsir (2002) gave his understanding of the above hadith of the Prophet on which Langgulang relied, namely that the nature mentioned in the hadith is potential. Potential is ability; so, the *fiṭrah* that is meant is innate (Fadilah and Tohopi 2020). Father and mother in

this hadith are the environment, both of which can determine a person's development (Tafsir 2002).

Based on the many meanings of *fitrah*, Muhaimin and Mujib (2003) try to formulate the meaning of fitrah as follows: (1) Fitrah means holy (*ṭuhr*); (2) Fitrah means Islam (*dīn al-Islām*); (3) Fitrah means acknowledging the Oneness of Allah (al-Tawhid); (4) Fitrah means pure (al-*ikhhlās*); (5) Fitrah means the condition of human creation, which has a tendency to accept the truth; (6) Fitrah means the basic human potential as a tool to serve and *ma'rifatullāh* (know God); (7) Fitrah means provisions or events of human origin regarding happiness and misery; (8) Fitrah means the natural character possessed by humans (human nature); (9) Fitrah means *al-garīzah* (instinct) and *al-munazzalah* (revelation from Allah).

Based on this description, the author can understand that *fitrah* is a set of tools or human potential that is not limited to the oneness of God and the truth of accepting religion, but is more complex than that; *fitrah* is all the potential or abilities inherent in human beings. Allah gave it as a provision for his caliphate to prosper in life in the world, apart from being a tool for *ma'rifatullah* (know Allah).

When associated with the explanations of the *mufasssir* regarding the meaning of human *fitrah* in the previous discussion, the authors understand that *fitrah* is the default factory setting of humans. Where the hardware (outer body) is made in such a way as to carry out routine worship of Allah. Likewise, the software has been set with faith in Allah, readiness to accept and carry out Allah's religion, as well as the purity of the soul from things other than Allah (*tawhīd*) (Burga 2019).

## CHARACTERISTICS OF HUMAN THAT ACTIVATES THEIR FITRAH

### Accepting and Implementing Islam

The general concept of human as explained in QS al-Rum/30: 30, human here is correlated with *ḥanīf* (straight) religion (Murthahari 1999). This means that the depiction of the human concept cannot be separated from the hanif religion, because in the human spirit has acknowledged and declared the existence of the hanif religion as implied in QS al-A'raf: 172.

Humans who carry out their nature are those who accept Islam as their religion and are willing to carry out the various rules that have been determined in it. So that human actions that are in accordance with their nature are all kinds of behavior that are in accordance with Islamic norms.

### Sincere

Paying attention to the meaning of fitrah which can also be interpreted as holy or pure, so that a sincere attitude becomes a characteristic of humans who carry out their nature. This is based on the word of Allah QS Hud/11: 51.

Zuhaili interprets *fitrah* in this verse as sincerity to Allah and *fitrah* monotheism (oneness of Allah). *Natural* actions are actions that are done only because of Allah (sincere). In line with this opinion, al-Maragi, explained the meaning of the verse that the Prophet Hud's appeal to his people (because of) sincerity was not to benefit himself.

Emphasized by Wahbah Zuhaili regarding the meaning of *fitrah* in this letter, namely something pure (*salīmah*). That is, the intention of a pure heart (sincere) because of Allah swt. Apart from that, it is also interpreted as pure worship of idols or polytheistic acts, namely always monotheism (the oneness of Allah swt). So people who carry out their *fitrah* are purifying their hearts, minds and actions from intentions other than Allah.

### **Have Strong Faith**

The characteristic behavior of people who carry out their nature is not to pawn their faith, including the religion they adhere to because of any pressure. This is described in QS Thāhā /20: 72. The verse tells of Pharaoh's threats to the people of Prophet Musa for those who did not follow his orders, and even wanted to be tortured and killed if they did not acknowledge them as God. However, the magicians (the people of Prophet Musa) were not afraid of this threat. They continued to believe in Allah after seeing proof of Allah's Almighty power.

Shihab (2007a) mentions that their faith was an amazing event, but in essence the seed had been planted in their hearts, or at least some of them long before their birth. According to Amrullah (1999) if someone has come to a belief that is true, they will not let go again. Even for that life is at stake. Therefore, they emphatically replied: “we will not prioritize you anymore on the basis of clear evidence”. So that it can be understood that it will not violate someone as long as he has faith (Nurlaela and Naan 2020).

## **THE CONCEPT OF HUMAN FIITRAH IN ISLAMIC EDUCATION**

### ***Fitrah* as Human Basic Potential**

There are differences of opinion among *mufasssir* regarding the true meaning of *fitrah*, we can see this in the verses of the Qur'an, as the author stated in the previous discussion. Shihab, for example, in interpreting the word *fitrah* contained in QS Al-Rūm/30: 30, by departing from the basic word *faṭara*, he interpreted that the meaning contained in it was that human beings were created from the very beginning and had been equipped with various “natures” that became provisions to continue their lives.

While al-Maragi is based on QS al-Rūm/30: 30, interpreting *fitrah* is monotheism. Since human beings were created, they have had a tendency towards the teachings of monotheism, following what is intended by reason (Al-Jurjani 1991). Other than that, it seems that al-Biqā'i provides a broader interpretation of *fitrah*, in the sense that it is not limited to belief in the oneness of Allah but rather that the *fitrah* in question is the first creation and the initial character that Allah bestowed on all mankind (Shihab 2007a).

Zuhaili is no different from al-Maragi in interpreting the term *fitrah* contained in QS Hud: 51 is holiness (*al-Ṭuhr*), purity, and monotheism. In this case, it can be explained that the beginning of human beings created for the first time is still sacred and has not been affected by anything that causes them to leave the initial sacred provisions, namely purity from polytheism in the form of worship of others than Allah.

Meanwhile, according to al-Razi and al-Maragi, the meaning of *fitrah* in QS Hud/11: 51 is the sincerity of worshiping Allah, who has created human beings based on his nature. The meaning of *fitrah* like this is the same as the meaning given by HAMKA, which is to face all offerings



only to the one and only God. Thus, the author can conclude that the direction of interpretation of the term *fitrah* expressed by HAMKA and al-Razi is towards the recognition of the Oneness of Allah (*tawhīd*).

Likewise, when HAMKA and Shihab interpret the term *fitrah* contained in QS Al-Isra': 51, differences occur again. On this occasion, the term *fitrah* is interpreted by HAMKA and Shihab as the process of the initial creation of humans, namely starting from a drop of male and female sperm that merge into one, then becoming a clot of blood (*'alaqah*), then a lump of flesh (*mudḡah*), then a bone, and then covered with skin until finally we were born in this world.

From several descriptions regarding the meaning of *fitrah* that have been expressed by commentators, the author can conclude that in essence human *fitrah* is not only limited to the oneness of Allah (*tawhīd*), but *fitrah* is all the basic human potential bestowed by Allah to mankind humans as a provision for his caliphate in the world (Khairunnisa and Bustam 2023).

Regarding the differences in the interpretation of the meaning of *fitrah*, Rosyadi (2004) assumes that the differences are basically not due to substance but are more technical and conditional. Perhaps these differences are motivated by the scientific paradigm of each interpreter, the models of interpretation, and the conditions of space and time that surround them. However, what is clear and most important to note is that *fitrah* must still be guided and directed so that it grows and develops into *fitrah* as intended in the Qur'an.

With this understanding, in order for *fitrah* to develop, it must interact and dialogue with the external environment. To be able to dialogue requires an institution that is more conducive to the growth and development of this *fitrah*, therefore education is the most strategic institution to direct this *fitrah*.

### **Education as *Fitrah* Development**

As mentioned in the previous discussion, humans were created by Allah swt. In this world, humans are the recipients and executors of God's teachings and have the main task, that is, to worship his Creator (*li ta'abbudi ilallāh*), who also serves as leader/manager on earth (*khalīfah fī al-ard*). For this reason, Allah does not leave humans alone without adequate provisions, but Allah, with His Rahman and Rahim attributes, gives gifts of very high value, namely various abilities or potentials that enable humans to be able to assume this responsibility (Burga 2019).

Since birth, humans have been equipped with potentials or tools and abilities that will become the strength to survive in this world and to achieve eternal happiness, namely the life hereafter. The potential in the form of *fitrah* is mentioned a lot in the Qur'an, as discussed earlier. Therefore, *fitrah* must interact and dialogue with the external environment. To be able to dialogue requires an institution that is more conducive to actualizing and developing its *fitrah*. So education is the most strategic institution to direct that *fitrah* optimally and integrate throughout his life. The concept of *fitrah* also demands that Islamic education must aim at directing education toward the establishment of a strong human bond with Allah (Muhaimin and Mujib 2003).

This implies that the role of education is very decisive in human life because, with education, humans will know what is good and what is bad; they will know right and wrong. Without knowledge, humans will not be able to understand what it really means to live in this

world because, basically, humans born in this world, still pure and in an empty state as it is, do not know anything (Nashori 2003). As the word of God in QS al-Nahl/16: 78.

وَاللّٰهُ أَخْرَجَكُمْ مِنْ بُطُونِ أُمَّهَاتِكُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ شَيْئًا وَجَعَلَ لَكُمُ السَّمْعَ وَالْأَبْصَرَ وَالْأَفْئِدَةَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ (٧٨)

Translated:

And Allah brought you out of your mother's belly in a state of not knowing anything, and He gave you hearing, sight, and heart, so that you will be grateful (Departemen Agama RI 2010).

Thus, education is seen as a very decisive endeavor in keeping human beings in accordance with their *fitrah*, both the *fitrah* of acknowledging their God, the *fitrah* of religion that is hanif, and all the potential that exists in them, so as not to deviate from the natural line that has been determined. Considering that the child is in a dynamic life and that its growth often has a positive or negative influence (Kopnina 2020).

Basically, human *fitrah* does not experience changes but only deviations (Hamzah 2004). Deviations can occur anytime and anywhere and are influenced by any factor. Hamzah (2004) informs us that there are two main factors that cause deviations, namely, both parents and the devil, which is considered a real enemy.

In this case, both parents are seen as a picture of the environment, which is one of the factors that can have a good or bad effect (Nashori 2003). As the Hadith from Abu Hurairah narrated by Muslim, it is parents who influence children to violate or deviate from their *fitrah*. Because the environment is very influential on human beings, in the process of education, they must always provide and create conducive environmental conditions so that *fitrah* remains in its initial state and can even develop in a better direction so that educational goals can be achieved properly, leads to the formation of perfect human beings.

### Growing Work Ethic

One of the main requirements for humans to survive in association with others is that they must continuously plan to develop and improve themselves to create a better tomorrow than the previous day in terms of life. In Islam, self-development is one of the things that is of concern, so Islam says that the people who lose the most are people who experience no change at all (passive) between today and yesterday, while the lucky people are people who always experience changes and developments in the past, present, or future (Villanueva et al. 2022).

Building and developing oneself, family, community, nation, and even more broadly, the scope of the world, so that it is more prosperous. Happy, just, prosperous, and peaceful is the mission carried out by the religion of Islam. As the word of God in QS Al-Anbiya/21: 107.

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ إِلَّا رَحْمَةً لِّلْعَالَمِينَ (١٠٧)

Translated:

And We did not send you, but to (become) a mercy to the universe (Departemen Agama RI 2010).

The most ideal believing man is when in his life there is harmony and balance between the depth of religious appreciation and activities that lead to increased welfare. So, for a man who says he is Muslim, he must be more dynamic and advanced in his life.

In order to keep humans “surviving,” there must be a real correlation between faith, piety, and enthusiasm for seeking the welfare of life. This is what drives or motivates the growth of “work” or work enthusiasm with the term “work ethic.” Work or charity must be intended to serve Allah (*li ta‘abbudi ilallāh*). Departing from that, work can be worth worship. Therefore, faith and piety must be lived seriously so that they can foster a work or charity attitude with full sincerity, discipline, order, and responsibility.

The attitude of hard work, trying to change fate, and sincerity in doing work is a recommendation and an obligation for human beings who are Muslims. Religion is the motivation and source of movement and dynamics in realizing a work ethic. Because Islam instructs its people to work and change their own destiny, as Allah said in QS Al-Najm/53: 39, “a human being gains nothing but what he has worked for.”

Islam respects all forms of lawful work, starting with those who work with their knowledge (scholars and scientists), rulers and bureaucrats (*ulu al-amri*), traders, farmers, craftsmen, and so on. All of these jobs are considered good because, in Islam, the level of human beings is not based on job status but on piety.

In Islam, every human being is given the freedom to try and work for the best interests of his life. However, besides emphasizing individual rights and freedoms, Islam also emphasizes the spirit of togetherness (*jamā‘ah*). Because of that, each individual must manage his life activities in a spirit of cooperation and mutual help (*ta‘āwun*); vice versa, Islam does not like an unhealthy competitive spirit or uncontrolled rivalry. Because of that, good Muslims should not instill the spirit of free fighting (*laissez faire*) by sacrificing togetherness (*jamā‘ah*), so that in the end only those who are strong will survive the survival of the fittest, as is the principle of most western societies. the law of the jungle (Azra 2002).

From what has been described regarding the work ethic, we can draw an understanding that humans are required to utilize their basic potential (*fitrah*), so that in utilizing their potential they can reach set limits (targets) successfully, and then humans must carry it out in earnest (ethos work) based on religious motivation, so that all of that can be of worship value.

## CONCLUSION

The meaning of human *fitrah* in the Qur’an is the default factory setting for humans. The condition of the human body and soul that is created in such a way as to worship Allah. The human body is set to carry out worship, as is the human soul, which is set to believe in Allah, accept and practice His religion, and purify oneself from the assumption of any power other than Allah (*tawhīd*). Humans who carry out their nature have three main characteristics: accepting and practicing Islam, being sincere, and having strong faith.

Actualization of the concept of human *fitrah* in education can be carried out by (1) making *fitrah* the basic concept of human potential that needs to be developed, (2) making education the main path in its development so that the system is oriented towards *fitrah*, (3) creating a conducive educational environment (assisting the development of *fitrah*), and (4) cultivating a work ethic in which there is harmony and balance between the depth of religious appreciation and activities that lead to increased welfare.

This research has implications for the importance of *fitrah*-oriented education. Students in Islamic educational institutions should not be shackled by religious knowledge and weak in science and technology. Likewise, students in public educational institutions not only have science and technology but also faith and piety. In this way, scholars who excel in science and technology or modern human beings, will be printed. The limitation of this research is that it only examines *fitrah* verses related to humans. Therefore, further relevant research can be developed by thematically examining the term *fitrah* in relation to all objects.

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### Authors' Contribution

Ruslan, as the first author, is a Professor of Arabic language and literature. He determined the research title and collected the data. Ahmad Sykron Latif holds the position of Associate Professor in the Tafsir field. He carried out the data collection and prepared research reports.

### Disclosure Statement

The authors declares that there is no conflict of interest in this research.

### Data Availability Statement

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