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THE KEY FACTOR IN SHAPING A NOBLE CHARACTER: THE SIGNIFICANCE OF SELF-DISCIPLINE

The questions of human nature, being fundamental philosophical issues, have never lost their significance throughout the entire history of the development of philosophical thought. Analyzing the concept of the "perfect human" in Islam is necessary for the development of contemporary religious anthropology and for offering solutions to the problems of comprehensive human studies. The article examines and reveals the essence of such concepts as the stages of achieving perfection in Islam: spirit, intellect, heart, morals, character, and ego. Their place in the Muslim worldview is determined. From the existential philosophical perspective, the stages of transformation of human consciousness reflected in Islam are analyzed. The philosophical content of the concept of "nafs" is revealed, encompassing the unity of the concepts of soul and consciousness. The author determines that the human nature weakness hinders the full fulfillment of religious duties. To achieve the "perfect human" level in Islam, a person must go through a spiritual stage series. The article includes the study of the third education - the education of lust, which combines faith and Islam as its title. The author proves the relevance of the teaching on the cultivation of nafs in Islam in the modern era, linking it to the method of self-education in psychology. The knowledge of the conditions of faith by Muslims and their belief do not fully reflect in their behavior in everyday life. Because of the ignorance of one's ego a person's inner faith, i.e. faith, and Islam are not interconnected. The article aims to form a correct religious understanding, emphasizing that Islam includes not only strict rules limited to external forms but also places special importance on the inner world and spirituality of the person. The author draws conclusions by analyzing the valuable works of Kazakh thinkers and foreign scholars written in this field.

Key words: character, Quran, desire, boastfulness, arrogance.

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Көркем мінезді қалыптастыратын фактор: нәпсі тәрбиесінің маңыздылығы

Адамтану мәселелері негізгі философиялық мәселелер бола отырып, философиялық ойдың даму тарихында ешқашан маңыздылығын жоғалтқан емес. Исламда «кемел адам» тұжырымдамасын талдау қазіргі діни антропологияны дамыту және адамды жан-жақты зерттеу мәселелерін шешуді ұсыну үшін қажет. Мақалада Исламдағы кемелдікке жету сатылары: рух, ақыл, жүрек, көркем мінез, эго сияқты ұғымдар қарастырылып, мәні ашылады. Олардың мұсылман дүниетанымындағы орны айқындалады. Экзистенциалды философия тұрғысынан Ислам дінінде көрініс тапқан адам санасының өзгеру кезеңдері талданады. Жан мен сана ұғымдарының бірлігін қамтитын "нәпсі" ұғымының философиялық мазмұны ашылады. Автор діни міндеттердің толық орындалуына адам табиғатының әлсіздігі кедергі келтіретінін анықтайды. Исламда «кемел адам» дәрежесіне қол жеткізу үшін адам бірқатар рухани сатылардан өтуі тиіс. Мақаланың атауы да осы тұжырыммен байланысты әрі иман мен исламды біріктіретін, үшінші тәрбие бұл - нәпсі тәрбиесін зерттеуге алады. Автор исламдағы нәпсіні тәрбиелеу ілімінің қазіргі кезеңдегі өзектілігін психологиядағы өзін-өзі тәрбиелеу әдісімен байланыста дәлелдейді. Мұсылмандардың иман шарттарын білуі және оларға сенімі күнделікті өмірдегі ұстанымында толық көрініс таппайды. Адамның ішкі сенімі, яғни, иманы мен ислам байланыса алмай жатыр. Себебі, оның нәпсісі тәрбиеленбеген деген тұжырым жасайды. Мақалада ислам формасымен ғана шектелетін қатаң қағидалардан тұрмай, адамның жан дүниесі мен руханиятына да айрықша мән беретіндігін тереңінен аша отырып, дұрыс діни түсінік қалыптастыру мақсаты қойылды.

Автор осы бағыттағы жазылған қазақ ойшылдары мен шетелдік ғалымдардың құнды еңбектерін талдау арқылы қорытындылар жасады.

Түйін сөздер: мінез, құран, нәпсі, мақтаншақтық, тәкаппарлық.

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Факторы, определяющие формирование нравственного характера: важность воспитания нафса

Вопросы человековедения, являясь фундаментальными философскими вопросами, никогда не теряли своей значимости на протяжении всей истории развития философской мысли. Анализ концепции «совершенного человека» в исламе необходим для развития современной религиозной антропологии и предложения решения проблем всестороннего изучения человека. В статье рассматриваются и раскрывается сущность таких понятий, как этапы достижения совершенства в Исламе: дух, разум, сердце, нрав, характер, эго. Определяется их место в мусульманском мировоззрении. С точки зрения экзистенциальной философии анализируются этапы трансформации человеческого сознания, отраженные в Исламе. Раскрывается философское содержание понятия «нафс», включающее в себе единство понятий душа и сознание. Автор определяет, что полному выполнению религиозных обязанностей препятствует слабость человеческой природы. Чтобы достичь звания «совершенного человека» в исламе, человек должен пройти ряд духовных ступеней. Автор доказывает актуальность учения о воспитании нафса в исламе в современную эпоху, связывая его с методом самовоспитания в психологии. Знание мусульманами условий веры и их вера не находят полного отражения в их поведении в повседневной жизни. Практическое выполнение исламского закона определяет истинную ценность человека. В статье поставлена цель формирования правильного религиозного понимания, подчеркивая, что ислам включает не только строгие правила, ограниченные внешней формой, но и придает особое значение внутреннему миру и духовности человека. Автор сделал выводы, анализируя ценные работы казахстанских мыслителей и зарубежных ученых, написанные в этом направлении.

Ключевые слова: характер, Коран, нафс, гордость, высокомерие.

Introduction

Many people who have been encouraged to change their character for the better often respond with phrases like, “This is just the way I am,” “That’s how I am,” or “No one can change that aspect of my character,” and so on. However, a person who sincerely intends, with eagerness and determination, can rid themselves of any bad trait and replace it with a beautiful character that God loves. This is because it is stated in the Quran: “God does not burden a soul beyond that it can bear” (Anarbayev, Akimkhanov, 2021: 286). This verse is a significant principle in our religion, as the Sharia only demands from people what they are capable of. If it were impossible to change one’s behavior, the religion would not demand it from us. In one of the wise sayings of our ancestor Abai, who integrates every word with faith, said: “If I had the power of the law in my hands, I would cut out the tongue of anyone who says that it’s impossible to correct a person’s character” (Kunanbayev, 2022: 48). This suggests that if character improve-

ment were impossible, Prophet Muhammad would not have stated, “Indeed, I was sent to perfect the best of all manners and character”. A person can, through continuous struggle with his inner self, educate it, get rid of bad traits, and develop good character. Our religion particularly emphasizes the importance of disciplining the soul for this purpose.

Justification of the choice of articles and goals and objectives

The article analyzes from the point of view of existential philosophy the stages of transformation of human consciousness reflected in the Islamic creed. The philosophical content of the concept of “Nafs” is revealed, which includes the unity of the concepts of soul and consciousness.

There are a lot of sins committed by the heart. One of these sins, which most harms a person in this World and in the Ahirate, is arrogance, because it can become an obstacle to any good and good. In fact, it is known that people are prone to both good and

creed. The philosophical content of the concept of “Nafs” is revealed, which includes the unity of the concepts of soul and consciousness.

There are a lot of sins committed by the heart. One of these sins, which most harms a person in this World and in the Ahirate, is arrogance, because it can become an obstacle to any good and good. In fact, it is known that people are prone to both good and evil. The set of noble qualities leading to the peak of humanity in a person is called «conscience», and the opposite force that pulls him back and removes him from humanity, we call nafs. Moral qualities such as modesty, honesty, decency and compassion belong to conscience, while negative traits such as arrogance, jealousy, pride, laziness and worldly behavior are characteristic of nafs. Nafs is insatiable because it has passion. Only a person who has curbed his nafs can be called «takua» (God-fearing) (Ahmad, 2014: 55-84).

So, the nafs needs to be educated. And if a person leaves his nafs to the mercy of fate, he will be lazy, and will always strive for idleness and carelessness. By giving his nafs free rein, a person gives him the opportunity to rush into any pleasure and enjoyment of worldly life, like a hungry beast. And as a result, he will step beyond the bounds of decency and conscience, directing his gaze to shameless actions and deeds. Therefore, it is necessary to discipline your nafs and teach it to serve iman and reason. Allah reminds us that no matter how arrogant we are, we will not be able to open the earth. The earth is stronger than you. It holds you when you step on it. You live on earth, collecting your risk. Allah has made you dependent on the earth. No matter how arrogant you are, you are no stronger than the earth that lies humbly under your feet. No matter how much you turn your nose up, consider yourself better, more special than others, you will not be able to reach the height of the mountains. You’re just a little slave. If each of us, who sees a bad, shameful act being committed, goes and tries to explain and correct it, then this is how to correct it with language. And if you can’t do that either, then be against it with your heart. This is a sign of Iman’s weakness. Allah Almighty has ordered a person to strive for the good and avoid all evil that will harm him or others. Arrogance is like a veil that covers a person’s heart and does not allow him to consider the good in people, his own and others’ spiritual beauty. For the arrogant, the whole life is like a race and a comparison, in which he sees only his superiority. But the one who assigns the prerogative of the Sole Owner of Absolute Perfection is greatly mistaken.

Scientific research methodology

Research was conducted based on scholars’ views to study the spiritual and moral values of the individual. The study presented the methods for treating afflictions such as excessive self-admiration, vanity, boastfulness, gossip, and lying. The main goal of the research is aimed at explaining the importance of disciplining the soul in shaping a beautiful character among today’s youth.

The article used the following methods to study morality in Islam:

- Content analysis – texts of sacred writings, such as the Quran and Hadith, were analyzed to identify key moral principles and norms of behavior.
- Historical method – historical contexts of the formation of Islamic morality were studied, which allowed for an understanding of how it developed and adapted over different eras.
- Ethnographic research – observation of practices and rituals in Muslim communities provided insight into how moral values manifest in the everyday lives of believers.
- Comparative analysis – a comparison of Islamic moral norms with the moral systems of other religions helped to identify unique and common features.

In the article, various research methods were used to gain a deeper understanding of the importance of nurturing the nafs in Islam. Content analysis allowed for the identification of key concepts and principles related to the moral development of the individual. The historical method helped trace the evolution of teachings about the nafs and their influence on Muslim practice. Ethnographic research provided the opportunity to observe how the nurturing of the nafs manifests in the daily lives of believers. As a result, these methods collectively revealed the significance of moral education within the context of Islamic tradition.

Results and discussion

The soul is a dual natured entity within humans, capable of reaching the highest or lowest levels of existence: if cultivated, it leads to righteousness, and if neglected, it leads to wickedness (Osman, 2014: 24). In the Quran, the creation of the soul is described as being inclined towards both righteousness and wickedness, and it is noted that through nurturing, a person can attain a desired state, but conversely, neglecting it can lead to astray: “But as for he who feared the position of his Lord and prevented

the soul from inclination, then indeed, Paradise will be his refuge. But as for he who desired the worldly life and its adornments, then he will have Hellfire [as] his refuge” (Anarbayev, Akimkhanov, 2021: 101-102). In Islam, particular emphasis is placed on striving against one’s soul. In a hadith, it is stated: “The struggle against oneself is the greatest jihad.” Furthermore, it is said in another hadith: “The one who struggles against his own self is a true warrior.”

A person is endowed with three inherent qualities from birth: faith, intellect, and soul. These three qualities play a significant role in shaping one’s future destiny. As Prophet Muhammad said: “Every newborn is born with a natural disposition,” indicating that faith is inherent in human nature (Ahn, 2008: 101-113). However, this disposition requires cultivation from an early age. Hence, the quality of the soul develops later. These three qualities, as mentioned in the Quran, have a profound impact on human behavior. Therefore, the Companions of the Prophet used various games to go without food during Ramadan, to nurture the moral character of children. The hadith of the Prophet: “Teach your children to pray at the age of seven, and discipline them if they do not so at the age of ten,” emphasizes the importance of ingraining religious practices into a child’s routine from a young age (Bartkus, 2021: 64-73).

In the book “Munabbihat,” it is stated: “If someone thinks he has a friend superior to Allah, it is because he knows Him less, and if someone thinks he has an enemy greater than his soul, it is because he does not know it properly” (Birkvad, 2015: 145).

What is the soul? Should it be eradicated entirely for one to become a true Muslim, or should it be nurtured? The soul is a part of us. Even in death, it is through this soul that we enter paradise. Therefore, it cannot be entirely eradicated or neglected. The soul is us. It just needs to be nurtured. Often, the soul inclines towards negative qualities (Boros, 2009: 133). An untrained soul tends to be lazy. If asked to carry a load, one says, ‘I am not a camel, I am a bird.’ Then, if asked to fly, one says, ‘No, I am not a bird that can fly, I am a camel.’ If desires are given free rein, they always seek to escape responsibility.

The diseases of desire arising from excessive self-love include:

1. Vanity and a love of praise

This fundamentally ties back to egoism and arrogance. A person who is vain and craves praise is afflicted by a dangerous disease of desire. This condition stems from an attempt to conceal one’s

weaknesses and deficiencies. That is, a vain person tries to hide his weaknesses, deficiencies, or shortcomings by boasting about things he does not possess, presenting them as if he does, in order to appear superior in front of others (Cynarski, 2016: 1-7). In this pursuit, they squander wealth, expend energy, and may even engage in forbidden actions if necessary. The true root of this issue is weak faith. A person with strong faith understands that life’s achievements should lead to gratitude, not boasting, and that weaknesses and deficiencies should not be beautified and falsely presented as strengths, but rather should be eliminated and fought against. In essence, a vain person is a very weak individual. They might dream of achieving something or attaining success without any effort, deluding them into feeling accomplished, and then boast about it to others. Not only do they boast, but they also derive temporary pleasure from this falsehood. However, since they subconsciously know it’s a lie, they live in fear of others discovering their deceit, eventually leading to a troubled inner self. The initial drive behind their boasting was to hide their weakness in front of others, presenting themselves as strong and successful.

2. Arrogance

Arrogance is the refusal to acknowledge others and the truth. An arrogant person considers him superior to others due to reasons such as knowledge, wealth, beauty, kinship, or racial differences (white, black, red skin). Boasting about these things is a sign of a spiritual disease within a person. If we consider this from a Sharia perspective, all these are blessings given by Allah to humans. Thus, there’s nothing inherently belonging to a person that should induce arrogance (Dar, 2011: 281). This concept is explained properly by wise Abay in one of his poems:

People are heedless, claiming the world as their own,

Yet everything they claim as theirs belongs to Him.

When flesh and wealth are left behind upon reaching the grave,

Then what, truly, can be considered yours?

In the Islamic view, arrogance incurs the wrath of Allah and the resentment of people. One of the Quranic verses states: “Indeed, Allah does not like anyone who is self-deluded and boastful” (Anarbayev, Akimkhanov, 2021: 203). The Quran specifies three traits characteristic of an arrogant person: looking down upon others, behaving like a VIP, and speaking loudly in a manner meant to belittle or insult others. These are described in the verse: “Do not turn your nose up at people, nor act like a VIP. When you speak, do not raise your voice;

the ugliest of voices is the bray of the donkey” (Anarbayev, Akimkhanov, 2021: 78). Hadiths mention that arrogance is a quality only befitting Allah. Arrogance belongs to the Supreme Being, who is free from all imperfections and beyond reproach in any action taken. For humans, who are inherently flawed and prone to error, arrogance is utterly unbecoming. Hasan al-Basri once said, “Without poverty, illness, and death, humans would never be cured of the disease of arrogance.” Abay in his poem states:

Human is just a sack carrying filth,
Becoming even more repulsive upon death.
You boast as if you and I are not equal,

Ignorance is indeed the old sign – highlighting that there’s nothing in humans that warrants arrogance. Therefore, arrogance is strongly condemned in Islam. Allah Almighty says in a sacred Hadith (Qudsi): “Pride is My cloak and greatness is My robe; and he who competes with Me in respect of either of them I shall cast into Hell-fire.”

3. Excessive self-admiration

The most dangerous aspect of arrogance is that it enslaves a person to the material world. Because of their excessive self-love, such individuals consider themselves superior to others. For this reason, they cannot tolerate anyone advising them and are extremely jealous of others’ achievements. Arrogance drives a person towards excessive freedom. As these individuals regard themselves higher than others, they perceive all their actions as correct (Hung, 2016: 85-96). They give free rein to their desires, do as they please, and do not consider it wrong. In their view, there is no one superior to them in this life, and they become enemies to those who criticize them, striving to bring them down at any opportunity. For such a person, the addition of wealth or power only compounds the problem. If arrogance is fueled by wealth and power, it blinds them to the extent that they may not even shy away from claiming divinity for themselves. The stories of Nimrod and Pharaoh are testament to this. For a person afflicted with the disease of arrogance and who has surrendered to their desires, this world is a true comfort zone from which they do not wish to part. As a result, they fear death as if it were the greatest calamity. Those who speak of the afterlife and the reckoning of Judgment Day are considered by them to be insane or fanatical. Through this, they distance themselves from the realm of truth.

Ibn Hazm offers several strategies for overcoming the disease of self-admiration.

Ibn Hazm has many teachings. He shares his life experience in relation to the disease of vanity present in people. According to him, to get rid of this

disease, one must first identify his flaws and then adopt humility, considering all actions as simple. From this, we see that Ibn Hazm cured the disease of vanity by engaging in actions contrary to it. The method used by Ibn Hazm resembles the approach of Abu Hamid al-Ghazali in treating the disease of bad character and self-admiration (Al-Tusi, 2011: 309). Ibn Hazm offers several methods to overcome this disease (Frolova, 1998: 98).

- Whoever suffers from this ailment should first search for flaws within themselves. Knowing the flaws of the self helps rid oneself of this disease. After recognizing one’s flaws, it’s essential to learn how to distance oneself from them and gradually eliminate them.

- If you are amazed by your own intellect, immediately remember all your flaws and the times you thought you were right but were mistaken. This will reduce your self-amazement.

- If you marvel at your knowledge, remember that your knowledge is a privilege given to you by God. Thus, marveling at yourself is unjustified. You do not know; perhaps for some time, that knowledge could be taken away from you. Also, consider those with far greater knowledge than yourself. You’ll see there are many, and this will humble you.

- If you are proud of your bravery, think of those who surpass you in courage. Do not forget that with age, bravery diminishes. In old age, you will become weak, like a child, dependent on others. Only the name of your past bravery will remain (Ibn Hazm, 1978: 69).

- If you are astonished by your wealth, remember how many people, richer than you, have lost all their wealth and fell into misery. The wealth you have will eventually vanish, whether sooner or later. Boasting about something that is bound to disappear tomorrow is sheer foolishness.

- If you marvel at your beauty, do not forget that beauty fades as you age.

- If you are surprised by your friends’ praises, remember your enemies’ disdain towards you.

- If you are proud of your lineage, understand that it brings no benefit in this world or the hereafter. Engaging and boasting about something useless does not benefit a rational person.

- If you marvel at your strength, remember that oxen and donkeys are much stronger than you. They carry burdens you cannot bear.

- If you are impressed with your agility, know that in this matter, hares and greyhounds will surpass you. It’s inappropriate for a person, who cannot compete with animals in some aspects, to indulge in self-admiration and praise.

From the teachings of Ibn Hazm, we learn that he used the “contrary” method to treat the disease of self- admiration in humans. This method was also adopted by Abu Hamid al-Ghazali after Ibn Hazm.

4. Fame addiction

This disease inherent to the self is underpinned by an excessive desire to hear praise from others and an illness of wanting to dominate over others.

Ungratefulness (a person lacking gratitude)

When a person begins to love themselves excessively, they do not recognize the kindness shown to them by others as a “gesture of respect” but rather see it as an “obligation.” In their view, everyone is obliged to do good to them, to grovel before them, and to honor them (Meir, 2013: 12). They do not care if the rights of others are infringed upon or their dignity trampled. They are indifferent to the sorrows and troubles of others. Their entire focus and effort are devoted to satisfying their own desires. To them, it does not matter as long as they get what they want. Therefore, such a person does not understand the concept of responding to kindness with kindness or expressing gratitude. There is no point in expecting kindness or gratitude from them. They are a person afflicted with the disease of egotism. They need to be cured.

The disease of a soul that leads to the interfering to others’ affairs:

1. Gossip

Gossip is the act of spreading words among people, revealing secrets and faults of others that they wish to keep hidden. This aims to create rifts in relationship and sow discord among people. Gossip is a social harm and a disease with significant negative consequences. Therefore, it is considered a major sin in Islam. Whether the gossip is true or false, the act of spreading it qualifies as gossip. Scholars have stated, “The truth that leads to hell is gossip, while the lie that leads to paradise is reconciling between two people, even with false words.” The Prophet Muhammad stated in a hadith: “A gossip will not enter paradise”. Another form of gossip is spreading unfounded rumors, though there is a difference between the two. Gossip involves spreading true or perceived faults and deficiencies of people and events, while spreading rumors involves fabricating these entirely. Both are considered major sins from a religious perspective (Kharisova, 2001: 39-40).

2. Backbiting

Backbiting is when a Muslim mentions another Muslim brother with a trait that is displeasing to them. If the mentioned trait exists in the person, it is considered backbiting, and if it does not, it is con-

sidered slander. The Prophet Muhammad said in a hadith: “Backbiting is mentioning something about your Muslim brother that they would dislike (if they heard it).” One of the companions asked, “What if what I say is true and the flaw or deficiency I speak of is present in that person?” To which he replied, “If the flaw or deficiency you speak of is found in him, you have backbitten him. And if it is not found, you have slandered him” (Frantz, 1978: 240). Scholars have described a person who backbites another behind their back as spiritually weak.

3. *Eavesdropping and spying*

Eavesdropping and spying – once a person habituates themselves to this behavior, they start deriving pleasure from it. This disease is characteristic of weak individuals. Such people, failing to find their place in life, seek to gain attention by exposing the faults of others. Through this, they aim to accumulate points and curry favor with someone. Scholars have firmly closed the door on this issue, saying, “Know that if someone reveals another’s faults to you, they will just as easily expose your faults to them or others.” Searching for and exposing someone’s flaws, eavesdropping, and spying are prohibited in Islam. Indeed, a true Muslim aims not to expose but to conceal the faults of others. The Prophet Muhammad has encouraged Muslims to guard against this disease, stating in his hadiths: “Whoever conceals the faults of a Muslim in this world, Allah will conceal his faults in this world and in the Hereafter.” The Quran also warns Muslims against this disease, saying: “Do not spy on each other!” (Anarbayev, Akimkhanov, 2021: 108). Eavesdropping or spying is only permitted in situations of war and to avert impending dangers. In times of peace, such actions are strictly forbidden.

Conclusion

A person is a mirror of life. If there are beautiful morals, it’s the mirror of a person’s life. Just as life seems meaningless without people, a person’s life loses its essence without beautiful morals. When a person is enriched with the secrets of beautiful conduct and his heart is filled with wisdom and values, his life and actions gain purpose. A person living with beautiful character attains the happiness of life. They comprehend their worth and unlock the keys to the wonders within them. The primary value and main strength of any culture and civilization is the person. Thus, any culture that does not prioritize human development will eventually lose its stature. Likewise, a person who does not make refining his character a primary goal will eventually succumb to

his desires, undermining the progress of his spiritual world. In Islam, the comprehensive development of a person – intellectually, socially, physically, and materially – is crucial to shaping a perfect individual and thereby creating a perfect society. The impor-

tance of nurturing the self and holistic development of a person is as significant for forming a “perfect society” as is the development of perfect individuals. A perfect individual is also a guarantor of a perfect society.

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