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INSAN-I KAMIL AND THE SUFI VISION OF HUMAN PERFECTION

The concept of the «Perfect Man» (Insan-i Kamil) occupies a central place in the metaphysical and spiritual framework of Islamic mysticism, particularly within the Sufi tradition. Rooted in Qur'anic anthropology and developed through the writings of prominent Sufi thinkers such as Ibn Arabi, Gazali, al-Jili, and Rumi, Akhmed Yassawi Insan-i Kamil represents the fully realized human being-one who mirrors divine attributes and serves as the bridge between the Creator and creation. The perfect human being embodies perfect knowledge, uniting intellectual comprehension (ma'rifa) and experiential, heartfelt knowledge (ma'rifat al-qalb). Sufi epistemology, drawing on Insan-i-kamil, asserts that true knowledge arises not through rational reasoning, but through the ontological transformation of the subject, achieved through the practices of spiritual discipline. Achieving this state is only possible when a person reveals their potential, which is based on unity and love with the Creator. Relevance of the pattern of a perfect person is important personal growth and spiritual perfection.

Keywords: Insan-i Kamil, Sufism, tawhîd, divine attributes, Islamic mysticism

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Инсан-и камил және адам кемелдігіне суфийлік көзқарас

«Кемел адам» (инсан-и-камил) тұжырымдамасы ислам мистицизмінің метафизикалық және рухани құрылымында, әсіресе сопылық дәстүрде басты орын алады. Құран антропологиясына сүйене отырып және Ибн Араби, әл-Джили, Руми, Ахмет Ясауи сияқты көрнекті сопылық ойшылдардың еңбектерінде «инсан-и-камил» – бұл Құдайдың қасиеттерін бейнелейтін және Жаратушы мен жаратылыс арасындағы байланыс қызметін атқаратын толық кемел адам. Кемел адам интеллектуалдық түсінікті (марифат) және тәжірибелік, жүректен шыққан білімді (марифат әл-қалб) біріктіретін мінсіз білімді бейнелейді. Кемелдік тұжырымдамасына сүйене отырып, сопылық эпистемология шынайы білім рационалды ойлау арқылы емес, рухани тәртіп тәжірибелері арқылы қол жеткізілетін субъектінің онтологиялық трансформациясы арқылы пайда болады деп тұжырымдайды. Зерттеу сонымен қатар «кемел адам» идеясының білім, этика және космологияның сопылық тұжырымдамаларына қалай әсер ететінін қарастырады, сайып келгенде, бірлікке (таухид), махаббатқа және өзін-өзі жеңуге негізделген адам әлеуеті туралы түсінікті ашады. Сопылықта адам ғаламның жеке элементі ретінде емес, адам табиғатының барлық аспектілері құдайлық қасиеттерді бейнелейтін Құдайдың бірлігінің интегралды көрінісі ретінде қарастырылады. Бұл тәсіл адам дамуының бірегей түсінігін қалыптастырады, онда жеке өсу мен рухани жетілу Жаратушымен бірлікті түсінумен тығыз байланысты.

Түйін сөздер: кемел адам, сопылық, таухид, құдыреттілік сипаты, исламдық мистицизм

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Инсан-и камил и суфийское видение человеческого совершенства

Концепция «совершенного человека» (инсан-и-камил) занимает центральное место в метафизической и духовной структуре исламского мистицизма, особенно в суфийской традиции. Основанный на коранической антропологии и развивавшийся благодаря трудам выдающихся

суфийских мыслителей как Ибн Араби, аль-Джили и Руми, Ахмета Ясави «инсан-и-камиль» представляет собой полностью реализованного человека, который отражает божественные качества и служит связующим звеном между Творцом и творением. Совершенный человек воплощает собой совершенное знание, объединяющее интеллектуальное постижение (ма'рифат) и опытное, сердечное знание (ма'рифат ал-кальб). Суфийская эпистемология, опираясь на «инсан-и-камиль», утверждает, что истинное знание возникает не через рациональное рассуждение, а через онтологическое преобразование субъекта, достигаемое практиками духовной дисциплины. В исследовании также рассматривается, как представление о совершенном человеке влияет на суфийские концепции знания, этики и космологии, в конечном счёте раскрывая представление о человеческом потенциале, основанном на единстве (таухид), любви и самопреодолении. В суфизме человек рассматривается не как отдельный элемент мироздания, а как интегральное выражение божественного единства, где каждый аспект человеческой природы отражает божественные качества. Этот подход формирует уникальное понимание человеческого развития, в котором личностный рост и духовное совершенствование неразрывно связаны с постижением единства с Творцом.

Ключевые слова: Инсан-и-камиль, суфизм, таухид, божественные атрибуты, исламский мистицизм

Introduction

In Sufi metaphysics, the human being is not merely a creature among others, but a cosmic axis through which the divine becomes manifest. Achieving perfection is a state in which a person, through knowledge, has been able to discover for themselves the possibilities of cognition and virtue. The Insan-i Kamil is seen as the prototype of creation, the mirror of divine names and attributes, and the final cause for which the cosmos was created.

The aim of the study is to conduct a comprehensive cultural and philosophical analysis of the concept of the 'perfect human' in Sufism as a model of spiritual, moral, and anthropological perfection, as well as to reveal its significance for contemporary humanities and intercultural studies.

This article examines the multifaceted nature of the "Perfect Man" in classical and post-classical Sufi thought. By analyzing key texts and doctrines, it elucidates the role of Insan-i Kamil in bridging the apparent dichotomy between God and creation.

Scientific research methodology

The methodological basis of the study is determined by the interdisciplinary nature of the analysis of the concept of the 'perfect human' in Sufism and combines philosophical, cultural and textual approaches. Historical-philosophical method-used to identify the genesis and evolution of the concept of insan-i-kamil in different periods of Sufism's development. Hermeneutic method-used to interpret the primary texts of the Sufi tradition (Futuhāt al-Makkiyya, Fusus al-Hikam, Insān al-Kāmil, Divān-i Hikmet, Masnavi). Hermeneutics allows us to reveal

the deeper meanings, symbols, metaphors, and metaphysical categories that underlie the understanding of the perfect human being. Comparative-analytical method-used to compare different interpretations of the perfect human being in various Sufi schools (Arab-Persian, Turkic, and Indian). Comparison allows us to identify common structural elements of the insan-i-kamil model and regional features of its understanding.

Cultural-philosophical analysis-used to examine the concept of the perfect human being as an anthropological model significant for humanistic knowledge. The method allows us to identify the key values, ethical and metaphysical guidelines that shape the Sufi conception of human potential. Systemic-structural approach-used for the theoretical reconstruction of the internal structure of the Insan-i Kamil concept: levels of the spiritual path, the relationship between knowledge (ma'rifat), practice (amal), love (mahabbat) and unity (tawhid). This approach allows the model to be presented as a holistic system. Content analysis of contemporary research-used to summarise the results of contemporary works on Sufi anthropology and identify current scientific discussions on the nature of the perfect human being. This method has made it possible to determine the place of the concept in the contemporary humanities field. Together, these methods offer a well-rounded understanding of the "perfect man" in Sufi philosophy.

Theoretical and source analysis

The study of the concept of the perfect human being is based primarily on the works of classical Sufi thinkers. Ibn Arabi occupies a central place

among them, whose metaphysical system in *Futuh al-Makkia* and *Fusus al-Hikam* laid the foundation for the development of the idea of *insan-i-kamil* as the embodiment of divine qualities in human nature. Ibn Arabi viewed the perfect human being as a macrocosmic reflection of the Divine and as a link between the visible and invisible worlds. Another important author was Abd al-Karim al-Jili, who systematized the doctrine of the perfect human being in his treatise *Insan al-Kamil*. Jalaluddin Rumi made an important contribution to the anthropology of Sufism. In his poetic and mystical legacy, the concept of personal perfection is revealed through the categories of love, inner flame, spiritual quest, and creative transformation of the world. The importance of research on Sufism by famous medieval scholars such as Ibn Arabi, Ghazali, and Rumi showed that understanding of man himself comes through dissolution in divine love. Contemporary researchers (A. Schimmel, W. Chittick, M. Knysh, A. Karamanov, and others) emphasize how important it is for a person to strive for the fullness of being. The question remains: is it possible for every person to achieve full spiritual development? There is an answer to this question, this achievement is accessible through knowledge and education. Thus, analysis of the sources shows that the concept of the perfect human being is highly interdisciplinary and requires a comprehensive philosophical and cultural study.

Theological Anthropology and the Nature of Perfection

The origins of the concept of *Insan-i Kamil* can be traced to early Islamic sources, particularly the Qur'an and Hadith literature, which emphasize the elevated status of the human being as the bearer of divine trust (*amana*) and the vicegerent (*khalifa*) of God on Earth.

It is widely recognized that a significant portion of Greek scientific and philosophical literature was translated into Arabic during the ninth and tenth centuries. This period not only saw the emergence of the first substantial Arabic commentaries on Greek philosophical and scientific texts but also marked the introduction of notable scientific advancements in medicine, mathematics, astronomy, and philosophy (Dulles, 1973, p. 16). This methodical approach facilitated broader access to these works for everyone and played a significant role in the emergence of the "Muslim Renaissance." A. Nicholson posits that "Muslim asceticism evolved into a mystical practice under the increasing impact of Hellenistic thought: ascetic exercises transformed into a method for puri-

fying the soul, enabling it to know and love God and achieve union with Him" (Nicholson, 1961: 8). The Brethren of Purity were pioneers in expressing the significance of love as a pathway to attaining perfection. This collective of intellectuals was pioneering in establishing the purification of the spirit and the fortification of morality as their paramount objective. Their actions exemplified a profound moral transformation within society (Makhshulova, 2012, p. 84). They were confident that humanity possesses an intrinsic virtue, and individuals engage in acts of moral goodness. "The supreme virtue is love, which promotes a connection with the divine" (Zakuev, 1961, p. 36). W. Chittick asserts that in Islam, the pursuit of self-transformation is essential for attaining harmony with the Creator. It is essential to underscore qualities such as a pure heart, love, virtue, and perfection" (Chittick, 2012, p. 3). The concept of the ideal individual is intricately linked to two fundamental notions: the transcendent and the ontological (Shukurov, 2008, p. 247). It is generally recognized that those who pursue a journey toward the divine inevitably gain understanding and learn to manifest it in their actions. Through consistent spiritual practice, these experiences are assimilated and influence the individual's inner landscape. Viewed through the lens of personal development at the confluence of faith and logical exploration, Sufism is understood by its followers as a significant existential odyssey aimed at the cultivation and enhancement of ethical and spiritual qualities (Tanabayeva, Alikbayeva, 2015, p. 63).

Sufi ideas about knowledge are based on the idea of supra-rational knowledge, which is divinely gifted wisdom that is only available to a small group of spiritually chosen people (Knysh, 2004, p. 361). According to the Sufi view, perfection in human form is not available to everyone. Instead, it is only for those who go through a lot of inner change. This is why the spiritual guide or mentor plays such an important part. In many mystical traditions, the final goal of the spiritual journey is not just to understand the Divine intellectually, but to become one with Him personally. Different people have different ideas about what this union means. They range from the complete annihilation of the self in God, where individual consciousness disappears, to a relational unity based on love, where the seeker keeps their own identity while becoming close to the Beloved (Knysh, 2004, p. 359).

Within Sufism, such a transformative state is traditionally achieved through the practice of *zikr*, a ritualized remembrance of God. As Sufi commu-

nities expanded, their teachings gradually acquired a more systematic and intellectual character. The "Great Sheikh," the mystic philosopher Ibn Arabi, is linked to one of the most significant currents in this progression. The conceptual underpinnings of traditional Sufism were established by his foundational books, *The Bezels of Wisdom* and *The Meccan Revelations*, which are sometimes referred to as a thorough compilation of Sufi metaphysics.

Central to Ibn Arabi's thought is the doctrine of human perfection and the concept of the human being as God's vicegerent. He asserts that God, possessing absolute self-awareness and complete knowledge of existence, manifested the world as a reflection of His own reality. Humanity, in this framework, was created in a noble and comprehensive form that encompasses the structure of the entire cosmos. Man is portrayed as a mirror of the Divine, containing within himself both the elements of the macrocosm and the Divine Names present in the realm of God's Presence (Ibn al-Arabi, 1995, p. 95). Because the Perfect Man is conceived as a complete and harmonious reflection of the Divine, he legitimately assumes the function of representation and vicegerency within the earthly order. Ibn Arabi explicitly emphasizes that this elevated status is unrelated to the corporeal or instinctual dimensions of human existence. Rather, it refers to the essential ontological nature of the human being as a conscious, morally responsible subject entrusted with divine authority. It is through this metaphysical humanity and vicarious function that a person becomes a full manifestation of the Divine image in the created world (Ibn al-Arabi, 1995, p. 96).

In developing the doctrine of human perfection, Ibn Arabi consistently highlights the central role of the vicegerent (khalifa). According to his metaphysical vision, God, possessing absolute self-knowledge and complete awareness of creation, brought the world into existence as a reflection of His own reality. As a result, the cosmos appeared "in the likeness" of the Divine. Humanity, in this framework, was fashioned in an exalted form that unites within itself the structural principles of the entire universe. According to Ibn al-Arabi (1995, p. 95), man is a mirror of God, reflecting both the macrocosm's components and the Divine Names that appear in the realm of divine existence. The Perfect Man has the right to exercise vicegerency and representation in the earthly world because he is the fullest manifestation of the Divine image. Importantly, though, Ibn Arabi clarifies that by "man," he does not mean the biological or instinctual creature but rather the

human in his fundamental reality—that is, as the conscious representative of God. Scholars, in al-Ghazali's view, are "the heirs of the prophets," and prophecy itself is the historical and practical realization of a thorough transformation of the material and spiritual aspects of human existence—a process he called the "correction of souls and the healing of hearts."

Al-Ghazali further conceptualizes happiness and perfection as intrinsically interconnected. In his philosophical anthropology, the fulfillment of every being lies in the realization of its inherent perfection. Human happiness, therefore, manifests as intellectual and spiritual perfection achieved through rational comprehension of reality. Despite the many different ways that perfection can be attained, true bliss is described as the soul reaching its utmost potential (Al-Dzhanabi, 2010, p. 156). The philosopher represents the infinite nature of knowledge within this system. In *Mir'at al-Muhakkikin*, Mahmud Shabistari provides a thorough cosmological explanation of the Perfect Man. According to him, life is a hierarchical process wherein innumerable components are gradually improved upon until one person becomes the pinnacle of creation. A plant is created from countless particles of matter, an animal is fed by countless plants, and a human being is sustained by countless animals.

From among countless human components, a single seed is formed; from innumerable seeds, one enters the womb; and from countless births, one individual ultimately endures. Among those who endure, one accepts Islam; among Muslims, one possesses faith; among believers, one becomes a seeker; among seekers, one advances as a wayfarer; among wayfarers, one reaches unity; and from among those united, one attains the station of nearness. Shabistari concludes that the essence of existence is concentrated in a single perfected individual, while all others exist in relation to him (Shabistari, 1993, p. 36). This cosmological vision implies that human perfection is attainable only by a select few endowed with profound intellect and deep spiritual insight. Renunciation of material attachment (zuhd) and ascetic discipline are thus fundamental components of the Sufi path. Only through the rejection of base desires and the adoption of the wayfarer's discipline can an individual approach perfection. True happiness, well-being, and inner peace arise from the realization of perfection. Those who draw near to God experience paradise even within earthly existence, achieved through liberation from worldly bonds and complete devotion to divine contemplation (Al-Ghazali, 2004, p. 17). This path manifests itself in

continuous moral self-cultivation and inner transformation, structured through successive maqamat. All Sufi doctrines and practices are oriented toward purifying the seeker and transforming him into *Insan-i Kamil*-the Perfect or Completed Man. Importantly, Sufism is not an unstructured pursuit but a guided path, supervised by spiritual masters who have already traversed its stages (Shah, 2001, p. 86). A structured model of the Sufi path (*Tariqa-Sufiyya*) outlines five principal stages: *Murid* (the disciple's initiation), *Tarikat* (unity with the spiritual guide), *Arif* (the acquisition of spiritual knowledge), *Fana* (annihilation of the ego and realization of Truth), and *Baqa* (subsistence in divine presence and union with the prophetic spirit). At the highest level, the seeker attains the rank of *wali*-sanctity (Shah, 2001, p. 95).

Al-Ghazali himself acknowledged that a comprehensive understanding of Sufism requires the integration of theory and practice. The primary objective of Sufi discipline is the liberation of the soul from destructive passions and erroneous inclinations, ensuring that the purified heart becomes a vessel solely for divine presence and remembrance (Smith, 1954, p. 84). The condition of the heart and the sincerity of intention are thus fundamental prerequisites for human perfection.

From another perspective, Mutahhari suggests that the concept of the ideal individual in Islam may be approached in two ways. The first involves identifying the attributes of the ideal person as described in the Qur'an and hadith. While these sources speak of the "perfect Muslim" or the "perfect believer," these terms do not directly equate to the philosophical notion of the "perfect man." Rather, they indicate degrees of religious perfection. Consequently, it is necessary to discern the defining characteristics of the ideal individual as articulated in Islamic scripture and tradition (Mutahhari, 2008, p. 15).

An alternative approach considers the historical existence of individuals who embodied the qualities of the Perfect Man in lived reality. An ideal human being cannot remain an abstract or fictional construct; rather, such individuals must manifest concretely within cultural and historical contexts. In this regard, the Prophet Muhammad articulated the universal mission of moral perfection, declaring that he was sent to complete the nobility of character (Al-Ghazali, 2005, p. 12).

Khurramshahi further interprets *irfan* as experiential knowledge (*ma'rifa*)-the knowledge of God attained through love and spiritual journeying. For the gnostic (*'arif*), Sufi, or traveler (*salik*), this path

involves continuous self-improvement, assimilation of divine moral attributes, and eventual union with God, likened metaphorically to a drop merging with the ocean. In this sense, *tasawwuf* and *irfan* may be understood as conceptually equivalent traditions (Khurramshahi, 2016, p. 43).

In *Meccan Revelations*, Ibn Arabi distinguishes between the illumination of reason and the illumination of faith, emphasizing that reason enables comprehension of certain realities, while faith grants access to all truths when unhindered. Through rational illumination, one becomes aware of divine signs; through faith, the intellect perceives the essence of the Self and the attributes of the Absolute. Ibn Arabi further identifies three levels of knowledge: rational knowledge, which is subject to doubt; experiential knowledge, attainable only through lived states; and the knowledge of secrets, which transcends rationality and is infused into the soul by the Holy Spirit. This highest form of knowledge belongs to prophets and chosen saints and encompasses all other forms of understanding (Al-Ghazali, 2015, pp. 77-78). The concept of the Perfect Man, fashioned in the image and likeness of God, traces its origins to al-Hallaj and profoundly shaped Sufi interpretations of the relationship between divinity and humanity. Ibn Arabi argues that divinity and humanity are not separate substances but complementary dimensions present at every level of existence. Divinity corresponds to the hidden (*batin*) aspect of reality, while humanity represents its manifest (*zahir*) dimension (Nasyrov, 2012, p. 282). In Sufi anthropology, the heart is regarded as the center of emotional, cognitive, and spiritual capacities-perception, consciousness, reasoning, and volition. It is referred to as "human truth," while philosophers describe it as the "speaking self" (Gulen, 2006, p. 22).

According to Sufi doctrine, the human soul exists in a state of exile, separated from its divine origin. The body functions as a temporary confinement, and worldly life is perceived as estrangement from the true spiritual homeland. Prior to this exile, the soul existed in complete communion with the Creator (Shah Ali, 2005, p. 246). Khelminski concludes that the highest level of spiritual attainment is expressed by the term *insan-i kamil*, denoting the perfected human being. Such an individual is characterized by self-knowledge, disciplined will, objective understanding, deep insight, altruistic love, divine perception, and an enduring relationship with the Absolute (Khelminski, 2007, p. 35). These qualities are important and determinant also in the modern world to achieve happiness in both spiritual

and scientific aspects. This, in turn, proves that the concept of perfection is relevant and in demand, as it is an indicator of self-development of each person.

Insan-i Kamil is a profound symbol of human perfection and closeness to the divine in the Sufi worldview. It is far from a static or esoteric doctrine, but rather a dynamic process of self-realization based on love, knowledge and unity. In the context of the modern era, the model of perfection can serve as a basis for leadership, interfaith dialogue, a world without conflict, systemic education, social responsibility and harmony with the world. This confirms the enduring relevance of Sufi anthropology in addressing the spiritual and existential problems of the modern world. In this sense, Insan-i Kamil represents both a metaphysical archetype and an existential invitation: an invitation to overcome fragmentation, bring oneself into alignment with the divine order, and harmonize one's inner and outer life.

Results and discussion

During our research, we were able to highlight several important conclusions: Insan-i Kamil is not only a human condition, but also continuous growth through knowledge, spiritual growth, and perfection. Human perfection is the divine manifestation of a person, their connection with the universe. This is an important key point: the Sufi model of the perfect person can provide answers to many pressing questions in modern society.

Contribution to contemporary discussions on human development-this model resonates with contemporary discussions on integral psychology,

spiritual anthropology, and transformative learning. It offers a holistic concept of understanding human potential that complements but also critically expands Western paradigms of personal development.

The results of the study show that the concept of Insan-i Kamil can serve as a bridge between classical spiritual wisdom and contemporary humanities. The discussion shows that further interdisciplinary research could explore the applicability of this concept to contemporary therapeutic practices, peacebuilding initiatives, and educational methodologies. The dynamism, inclusiveness, and depth of the Insan-i Kamil paradigm confirm its enduring importance for both academic research and real-world transformations.

Conclusion

In the context of profound socio-cultural transformations and increasing existential uncertainty, the concept of Insan-i Kamil acquires renewed theoretical relevance that extends far beyond its original medieval mystical framework. Within contemporary humanities scholarship, it is increasingly interpreted as an integrative anthropological paradigm capable of addressing the challenges of fragmented identity, value disorientation, and the erosion of classical humanistic foundations. Recent studies demonstrate that this model possesses significant heuristic potential in the fields of intercultural communication, ethical leadership formation, transformative educational practices, philosophical anthropology, and psychologically oriented approaches aimed at holistic personal development.

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*Registered on May 25, 2025
Accepted on December 20, 2025*