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**Mensur Valjevac, PhD.**

The Islamic Pedagogical Faculty of the University of Zenica

[mensur.valjevac@unze.ba](mailto:mensur.valjevac@unze.ba)

## **THE PERFECT MAN (*AL-INSAN AL-KAMIL*) IN THE QURANIC EXEGESIS, HADITH TRADITION AND TAŞAWWUF**

### *Abstract*

*The Qur'anic verses and prophetic traditions confirm the physical, ethical and universal perfection of a man. The highest level of perfection belongs to Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, and to his righteous successors. Every man, according to the Sufi teaching, can potentially become perfect, while the main purpose of a perfect man is to serve others making them happy in this world and hereafter. Perfect men are teachers and guides to other people. Inspired with other Sufi scholars, Bosnian Sufis wrote about the Perfect Man. Their teachings greatly relied upon Ibn 'Arabi and Al-Rumi. They clearly deny any form of pantheism, panentheism, anthropomorphism (a combination of God and man), the embodiment of the God, the God becoming a man etc. Shaykh Mustafa Colic, in his teaching of the Perfect Man uses a new term in the Bosnian language 'Allah's Revealed Entirety'. His teaching, also, relies on the teaching of early Sufis but it contains some new aspects as well.*

**Keywords:** taşawwuf, the Perfect Man, Ibn 'Arabi:, Sheikh Mustafa Colic (Čolić), Allah's Revealed Entirety.

### **PREFACE**

One of the most important concepts (*maḥmūd*) that emerged within the Islamic thought, and developed within the Islamic spirituality (*taşawwuf*) is teaching about the Perfect Man (*Al-Inṣān al-Kāmil*).

One of the most important concepts (*mafhu:m*) that emerged within the Islamic thought, and developed within the Islamic spirituality (*taṣawwuf*) is teaching about the Perfect Man (*Al-Insa:n al-Ka:mil*).

Teachings about Perfect Man, within Islam, will find its fullest expression in the science of *taṣawwuf*. The term Perfect Man was not in use before Muhyiddi:n ibn ‘Arabi:, although some earlier indirect indication about this teaching can be found. He is the first great Sufi that not only used the expression in such a way but also defined it and determined it systematically. Subsequently, besides Ibn ‘Arabi:, some other Sufi scholars such as Al-Ji:li:, Al-Ru:mi:, Sadruddi:n Kuniyavi:, ‘Azi:zuddi:n Al-Nasafi: and others used the term and developed it further.

## THE PERFECT MAN FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE QURANIC EXEGESIS AND HADITH TRADITIONS

Some Quranic verses indirectly and directly point towards physical, ethical and universal man’s perfection.

Ibn Kathi:r, as a fine example of traditional commentating and explaining the meanings of the Qur’an, in his commentary of these Quranic verses mentions many narrations related to its meaning which were recorded by the *mufassirs* (Quranic exegesis scholars) before him. Ibn Kathi:r frequently explains these Quranic verses even though he is undoubtedly representative of the traditional school of thought. Further on, he claims that these Quranic verses express physical, intellectual perfection and superiority of a man over all other creations, even angels (Ibn Kathi:r, 1994).

On the other hand, Al-Suyu:ti:’s tafsir is traditional in a true sense. He does not give his own interpretations but limits his tafsir to narrations from the Prophet Muhammad s.a.w.s. and the first generations of *Sahaba* (Prophet’s companions) and the two subsequent generations. Al-Suyu:ti: mentions narrations which point out that practicing of faith in Muhammad’s s.a.w.s. time reached its peak, climax and perfection. Thereafter, through time, it will unavoidably come to a decline and the latter generations will be less perfect in the way they see their religious life. Thereafter,

Al-Suyu:ti: mentions narrations that indicate man's physical perfection (Al-Suyu:ti:, 1990).

Al-Zamakhshari: is categorical that men do not possess any advantages over angels and it is merely the case of man's physical perfection (Al-Zamakhshari:, n.d.).

Al-Ra:zi: believes that man's spiritual excellence over other creations is the most valuable, as well as the physical perfection (Al-Ra:zi:, 1981).

Ibn 'Arabi: did not comment on many Quranic verses, or he would add just a short commentary. He claims that generally a man is the most perfect creation in terms of appearance and essence (Ibn 'Arabi:, n.d.).

Al-Haqqi:'s explanations are very close to Ibn 'Arabi:'s. He claims that in every time there is only one *Perfect Man*. The first was Adam a.s. and the last will be Isa a.s. (Jesus). On one hand, Perfect Man is the representative of creations because Allah has unified all worlds such as: spiritual, physical, heavenly, earthly, Worldly, Hereafter, mineral, vegetal, animal and divine. On the other hand, he is the representative of Allah All Mighty as the representative in all worlds. Only individually, a *perfect man* is more valuable than angels, because he is created '*in the best of stature*' and that is his readiness to accept directly outpour of Allah's light (Al-Haqqi:, n.d.).

Al-A:lu:si: believes that the term *Khali:fa* – *Allah's representative*, is applied only to Adam a.s., as a *Perfect Man* (*Al-Insa:n al-Ka:mil*) and that representation (*Khila:fa*) will be with the men until the Last Day. *Perfect Men* are Allah's messengers and chosen men whose duty is to maintain the Earth, lead men, perfect their character and fulfil His will among people (Al-A:lu:si:, 1987).

Recorded narrations from the Allah's Messenger s.a.w.s. explicitly indicate the possibility of individual man's perfection, as well as Muhammad being the crown of that perfection, considering that during his life all the noble Quranic virtues came to light (Al-Bukhari:, 1987: 3/1252; Hanbal, (n.d.), 6/163).

According to some narrations, one of the main duties of Muhammad s.a.w.s. is perfecting good manners in people. One sent to do that, must himself be an example of that ethical completeness and perfection (Hanbal, [n.d.], 2/381).

Allah All Mighty is absolutely Perfect and Complete. Adam a.s. is the great grandfather of all people, created in His image, respectively in His attributes in the meaning of tribute and privilege, not in the meaning of anthropomorphism. As such he is a reflection of completeness and perfection (Al-Bukhari:, 1987: 5/2299).

Muhammad s.a.w.s. as the person who was, by some narrations, the reason for the creation of the worlds by itself is an example of Completeness and Perfection (Al-Naysabu:ri:, 1990: 2/679).

Certain narrations point towards beginning of creation and prehistoric excellence of the prophet Muhammad a.s. and therefore to his excellence and higher eminence in relation to other prophets (Al-Tirmidhi:, [n.d.], 5/585).

## THE PERFECT MAN IN THE TEACHINGS OF TAŞAWWUF

Islamic science of *taşawwuf* is a legitimate discipline within traditional Islamic sciences in its full meaning with its history, chronicles, literature, experts, disciplines and terminology. Also, it is founded at the same time as other traditional Islamic sciences. Its etymology is linked to *al-Şu:fe* (الصُّوفِيَّة) people who devoted themselves to 'iba:da (prayer) and served the pilgrims by the Ka'ba (Al-Işbaha:ni:, [n.d.], 298).

Generally, Sufis talk about two dimensions of human perfection: universal (cosmic) and individual (ethical), with a special reflection onto the most complete perfection of Muhammad s.a.w.s. in which both dimensions were combined.

As for the *Perfect Man* as a universality, according to Ibn 'Arabi:, the crown of creation of all worlds and all beings is *Perfect Man* who had its first realization in Adam a.s. *Perfect Man* is the all-inclusive manifestation of Allah's countless names. He is the place or manifestation in which Allah, The True, sees Himself in the reflection of all of His names. He is the heart and soul of the World (Universal or macro cosmos) that was brought to its full light with *Perfect Man*. In relation to the World, *Perfect Man* is the representative of The Truth in him, because he is like the pupil of the eye (إِنْسَانٌ أَلْعَيْنِ) or an engraved jewel on the ring with

which Allah used to seal that very World. Because the exterior of the *Perfect Man* is created according to the world and its characteristics and the interior according to the *Character* of the All Mighty as well as being the only one who combines all that exists, it is him who is the only one deserving to be Allah's successor (khali:fa) over all other creations and His representative (na:ib). On the one hand, *Perfect Man* is a manifestation of the meaning of Allah's names and attributes. On the other hand, he is a copy of all created worlds. As such, he is the bond between the divine and created world. Only the *Perfect Man* truly understands Allah All Mighty. Through the understanding of *Perfect Man*, we understand the Allah All Mighty because Allah All Mighty is hidden (present) in the *Perfect Man* (Works of Ibn 'Arabi: in references).

According to Al-Ji:li:, every man is another man's copy if there are no physical deficiencies and they are like two mirrors opposite each other, one containing everything that the other has. Perfect amongst people are messengers and pious, but they differ in their perfection with some being more perfect than the other. However, the perfection in existence that differs Muhammad s.a.w.s. from others is unique and distinctive to him only. This can be witnessed through his characteristics, spiritual states and some of his sayings. Therefore, it is only him that is truly *Perfect Man* and all the others, from messengers and pious, are linked to him as perfect to the most perfect. Further on, Al-Ji:li: claims that because of his highest level and most perfect place, it is only Muhammad s.a.w.s. that is included under the term of the *Perfect Man*. *Perfect Man* is by its personality equal to all existential realities, but he is also a copy of The Truth, worthy of names and divine attributes, the mirror in which The Truth (الحق) sees Himself (Al-Ji:li:, 1981).

In each time, according to 'Azi:zuddi:n Al-Nasafi:, there is one universal *Perfect Man* who is the heart of the whole world. Heart of *Perfect Man* is the reflection on which the whole world is maintained in its entirety and through which all forms of existence come out from the world of total latency. Just as the reason controls and runs man's body, similarly *Perfect Man* controls and governs the world (Nasafi:, 2005).

Firthjof Schoun is one of the most famous representatives of perennial philosophy in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. He strongly emphasizes that the Islamic teaching of perfection of the Seal of Prophethood is different than the understanding of the Christians or Buddhist (Schoun, 2008).

Ibn 'Arabi:, as well as other Sufis, write about universally perfect people as individuals within the human race. Same as the *Perfect Man* is representative of the All Truthful, the individually perfect men are representatives of the *Perfect Man*. Perfect men attest Allah in all realities, in -each occurrence and each appearance. Individually perfect men are practitioners who have unified the form and essence. They are considerate towards divine laws that He established in the world and they are in permanent presence with Allah All Mighty. Individually perfect men are generally better than the angels and potentially every man can become individually perfect (Works of Ibn 'Arabi: in references).

Individually perfect men, according to Al-Nasafi:, are the owners of comprehension. They serve other people striving to make them happy in both worlds and they are the inheritors of the prophets (Nasafi:, 2005).

According to Al-Ru:mi:, one of the exceptional abilities that perfect men possess is the power to give knowledge. Perfect men are teachers and guides to other people. Mawla:na: Al-Ru:mi: compares those who have not yet reached the level of perfection to little children and recommends them to eat little and keep silent a lot. Perfect teachers are like mirrors that, without any signs, see other people's states. Mawla:na: talks about perfect women, whose main preoccupation is not the pain of giving birth but they are wise and ponder about other eternal matters (Works of Al-Ru:mi in references).

Sufis are unanimous that the Most Complete is Allah's Word and His Most Highest Name is Muhammad s.a.w.s. hence the most *Perfect Man* of which there is no one more complete or perfect. Qur'an is the most complete and most perfect Allah's revelation and Muhammad s.a.w.s. is the living manifestation of Quranic words. Considering that Muhammad s.a.w.s. is given all-encompassing words in which Allah's names are included and him being the most complete Allah's word and His highest Name, while other Allah's messengers and *Perfect Men* are only the

representatives of the most *Perfect* amongst them. He is the support to every one of them and from him, they derive their perfection (Al-Ka:sha:ni:, 1987; Al-Ja:mi:, [n.d.], Al-Ḥaki:m, 1981).

## THE PERFECT MAN IN BOSNIAN SUFI THOUGHT

Ali Dede Bosniak's teachings about the *Perfect Man* are on the same footpath as Ibn 'Arabi's teaching. He believes that Muhammad s.a.w.s. as universally *Perfect Man* is the first seed and originator of all that exists. Ali Dede also talks about universal individuals (*Perfect Men*) and their hierarchical levels. Most *Perfect Man* who is at the same time spiritual axis throughout the time is Muhammad s.a.w.s. After his, s.a.w.s., departure most perfect among people is the spiritual pivoting point, but only as a representative of the Seal of prophethood s.a.w.s. Besides this spiritual axis which is the direct representative of Muhammad s.a.w.s. there are other perfect men whose number, along with him, is 364. Ali Dede also talks about the principle of equivalence between macro cosmos and any other man from the micro cosmos (Al-Musta:ri:, 2007; Kasumović, 1994).

Shaykh Abdullah Bosniak underlines that *Perfect Man* is the inner pace or the connection between the existence that connects and disconnects the world and divine names, as such acts as their reflection. Besides some similarities and possibilities of comparing divine personality and *Perfect Man*, Shaykh Abdullah Bosniak negates any kind of pantheism, panentheism, the unification of man and God, embodiment, God becoming a man etc. Besides discussing universally *Perfect Man*, Shaykh Abdullah Bosniak also discusses individually *Perfect Men* being the only ones deserving to be representatives and guides to other people as absolute teachers who must be obeyed and listened to. The highest individual level of perfection is the most complete perfection that belongs to Muhammad s.a.w.s. and his perfect successors. As an implication or a result of individual perfection divine understanding and epiphany occurs. The most perfect individual in each time is like a heart, other perfect men are like body organs (Bošnjak, 2008).

Fevzija Mostarac, in the thought trail of Al-Rumi:, writes about individually perfect men who are most frequently present as

spiritual guides to other people who strive to perfection. Relationship to *Perfect Men*, as Allah's chosen men (*awliya:* '), is the cause of someone's guidance towards Allah or his distancing away from Him. Fevzija claims that Allah made available to *Perfect Men* the imperative of creating '*Kun fa yaku:n*'. Secrets of men's hearts are not hidden from *Perfect Men*, as Allah's chosen men (*awliya:* '), while at the same time they are their best spiritual healers (Mostarac, 2003).

### THE PERFECT MAN ACCORDING TO SHAYKH MUSTAFA EFENDI COLIC (ČOLIĆ)

In a discussion about *Perfect Men*, Shaykh Mustafa effendi Colic (Čolić) introduced a new term in his works that was never used by any of the Bosnian Sufis before him, according to our findings. When discussing *Perfect Men* he uses a phrase *Allah's Revealed Entirety* (Works Shaykh Mustafa Efendi Colic in references).

Shaykh claims that the expression of *wahdat al-wuju:d* (وحدة الوجود) points to inseparability of Allah's Existence from Himself. Similarly, we do not share our existence with anyone, knowing that Allah is above any comparison. Therefore, there is no place for pantheism here in any shape or form, but only projections of Allah's reality in the reflections of His creation (of which first is *His Revealed Entirety*) with the reflections that are not and cannot be Him (Čolić, 1998).

All that exists, including *Allah's Revealed Entirety*, exists only in Allah's knowledge. However, that existence for us is real, but to Allah that is relativity. Therefore, *Allah's Revealed Entirety* is only a picture (*ṣu:rat*) of Allah's Existence, not at all His Existence itself nor Himself Personally. Henceforth, other existing things are, according to one teaching as the Shaykh highlights, reflections of Allah's reflection. Another teaching claims that is His direct reflection. *Allah's Revealed Entirety* exists thanks to Allah's remembrance of him. Shaykh highlights that every existence is a consequence of Allah's remembrance of the same, but also the one who remembers Allah, Allah remembers him (Bergivija, 1998; translation and commentary by Shaykh Colic).



Henceforth, *Allah's Revealed Entirety* exists only in Allah's knowledge (he is only His symbol 'alam), he does not have his own existence nor his own personality hence he is only His servant and His creation. As such, in relation to Allah's personal name 'Huwa' (هو) and existential 'Alla:h' (الله) are always independent, belonging position (*ida:fat*) (Bergivija, 1998; translation and commentary by Shaykh Colic).

*Allah's Revealed Entirety* has its three dimensions and meanings. He is *the subject*, the one who reveals himself in relation to other worlds which are his direct revealing and Allah's indirect. He is also *the object* in its relation to Allah All Mighty because he is His revealing and symbolism. At the same time, he is also the *predicate* as the actual act of action through which he realizes revealing of Allah All Mighty (Čolić, 1998).

Shaykh points that all Allah's names without the definite article are actually names of *Allah's Revealed Entirety* such as *Raḥma:n*, *Raḥi:m...* in *object/predicate* meaning in relation to Allah but in subject meaning in relation to the world. In Shaykh's teaching of Al-Raḥma:n (الرحمن) with the definite article, it is the subject name of Allah. Indefinite *Raḥma:n* or in genitive connection *Raḥma:n Al-Alla:h* (رحمن الله) it is Allah's predicative name, respectively name of the *Revealed Entirety* that is in relation to *Huwalla:hu Aḥad* (هو الله أحد) *Alla:h Alone* is an object but in relation to Allah personally, it is predicate but subject in relation to the worlds (Čolić, 1998).

Speaking about the subject-predicate-object (*Dha:kir*, *Dhikr*, *Madhku:r* or *'A:lim*, *'Ilm* and *'A:lem*) role of *Allah's Revealed Entirety*, Shaykh explains that he is the **Subject** in relation to his symbols through which He is revealing and projecting himself. He is also the **Predicate** as the actual act of the action through which Allah's names are being revealed, overflow and project. He is the **Object** in relation to Allah considering that he is the polygon of revealing or projection of His Names, Existence or Himself. Hence, he is *Entirety's* Subject, Predicate and Object (Čolić, 1998).

Shaykh Colic, just as his predecessors, records names of *Perfect Man* or *Allah's Revealed Entirety* (Čolić, 1998).

Through creations of the worlds, Allah has revealed His *Revealed Entirety*. Therefore, global factors are his direct revealing and indirect Allah's revealing. *Perfect Man* or *Allah's Revealed Entirety* is just a manifestation, reflection and revealing of Allah All Mighty through which He represents Himself and not that he shares or takes part in All Mighty's Personality or Existence (Bergivija, 1998; translation and commentary by Shaykh Colic).

To *Allah's Revealed Entirety* all the worlds are subjected. He is in relation to Allah All Mighty His personal slave and in relation to all the worlds their ruler and administrator. However, even with such 'privileges and prerogatives' Allah's *Revealed Entirety* he is not and cannot be identical to Him (Ibn 'Arabi:, 2000; translation and commentary by Shaykh Colic).

Considering that *Allah's Revealed Entirety* is His khali:fah in the world, Christians and Jews have actually attributed to Allah's khalifa:h and His Revealed *Entirety* divine prerogatives (Al-Jaylani:, 2000; translation and commentary by Shaykh Colic).

## CONCLUSION

Arguably, the comprehension of Allah All Mighty is essentially impossible, we are introduced to Him through *His Revealing Entirety* which Shaykh denotes as being marked as 'subject, predicate and object of Allah's names and symbols'. First *Revealing Entirety* is Allah's revealing and the worlds are revealing of that *Entirety*. Through the understanding of revealing of *Allah's Revealing Entirety* indirectly, we understand Allah All Mighty as well. *Allah's Revealing Entirety* is a Mighty Man, while people are his copies. He is the great seed of all people. Only this Great Man is created directly, while the other creations are his revealing and events. Similarly, just as the previous revelations are only partial parts of the universal Revelation (the Qur'an) therefore all people are just a sample of that most perfect man. Shaykh highlights that only individually perfect man can be considered as complete micro cosmos and only those individually perfect men are enabled to comprehend the Universal Allah's Slave and Man.

(Translated by Mevludin Šahinović, MA, MEd, QTLS)

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## SAVRŠENI ČOVJEK (AL-INSĀ:N AL-KĀ:MIL) U TEFSIRU, HADISKOJ TRADICIJI I TESAVVUFU

Prof. dr. sc. Mensur Valjevac

### *Sažetak*

Kuranski ajeti i vjerovjesniče predaje potvrđuju fizičko, etičko i univerzumsko savršenstvo čovjeka. Najveći stepen individualnog savršenstva je najpotpunije savršenstvo koje pripada Muhammedu, sallallahu alejhi ve selleme, i njegovim potpunim i savršenim nasljednicima. Svaki čovjek, prema sufijama, potencijalno može biti individualno savršen, a zadaća tako savršenih ljudi je da služe drugim ljudima, nastojeći ih usrećiti na oba svijeta, te su oni pravi nasljednici vjerovjesnika. Savršeni ljudi su učitelji i vodiči drugim ljudima. I bosanske sufije nadahnute drugim sufijskim učenjacima, također, su u svojim djelima govorili o Savršenom Čovjeku. Njihova učenja su uveliko naslonjena na Ibn Arebija i er-Rumija. Oni jasno negiraju bilo kakav vid panteizma, panenteizma, sjedinjenja Boga i čovjeka, utjelovljena, postajanja Boga čovjekom i sl. Šejh Mustafa efendija Čolić, u svome naučavanju o Savršenom Čovjeku, upotrebljava jedan novi termin u bosanskom jeziku, tj. Allahov obznambeni Univerzum. Njegovo učenje, također, je naslonjeno na učenja ranijih sufija, ali ima i neke nove aspekte.

**Ključne riječi:** Savršeni Čovjek, Ibn Arebi, šejh Mustafa-ef Čolić, Allahov obznambeni Univerzum.

د. منصور والواتس، كلية التربية الإسلامية - جامعة زينتسا

## الإنسان الكامل في التفسير والحديث الشريف والتصوف

### الملخص

تؤكد الآيات القرآنية والأحاديث النبوية كمال الإنسان الجسدي والأخلاقي والكوني. وإن أعلى درجات الكمال الفردي هو الكمال الأكمل لمحمد صلى الله عليه وسلم وخلفائه الراشدين. ووفقاً لرأي المتصوفة يمكن لكل شخص أن يكون مثاليًا بشكل فردي، ومهمة هؤلاء الأشخاص الكاملين هي خدمة الآخرين، ومحاولة إسعادهم في كلا العالمين، وهم الورثة الحقيقيون للنبي، صلى الله عليه وسلم. والأشخاص المثاليون هم المعلمون والمرشدون لأشخاص آخرين. كما تحدث المتصوفة البوسنيون المستوحون من علماء الصوفية الآخرين عن الرجل المثالي الكامل في أعمالهم. وتعتمد تعاليمهم بشكل كبير على ابن عربي والرومي. إنهم ينكرون بوضوح أي شكل من أشكال وحدة الوجود، واتحاد الله والإنسان، والتجسد، وصيرورة الله إنساناً، وما إلى ذلك. يستخدم الشيخ مصطفى أفندي تشوليتش في تعاليمه عن الإنسان الكامل مصطلحاً جديداً في اللغة البوسنية، وهو عالم الله ذو المعنى. ويستند تعليمه أيضاً على تعاليم المتصوفة الأوائل ولكنه أضاف بعض الجوانب الجديدة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الإنسان الكامل، ابن عربي، الشيخ مصطفى أفندي تشوليتش، عالم الله ذو المعنى.