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The Perfect Human in Terms of His Relationship With the Universe Based on the Quran and Sunnah

Mohammad Mahmood Khalfan^{1*}, Mustafa Farhudi², Ali Fazli³

1. * Ph.D. Student, Faculty of Mysticism, University of Religions and Denominations, Qom, Iran. (Corresponding Author)

2. Assistant Prof, Faculty of Religion, University of Religions and Denominations, Qom, Iran. m.farhudi@urd.ac.ir

3. Assistant Prof, Mysticism group of Hikmat and Religion Research Institute, Research Institute for Islamic Culture and Thought, Qom, Iran. fazliamol99@yahoo.com

ARTICLE INFO		ABSTRACT	
Article History: Received: 05 August 2024 Revised: 10 October 2024 Accepted: 01 November 2024		SUBJECT & OBJECTIVES: Islamic Mysticism presents three fundamental ontological dimensions of the Perfect Human: the personal, the divine, and the creational. In this paper, our main focus will be the third dimension, which underscores his supremacy and sovereignty over the entire hierarchy of the self-disclosures of God. We aim to prove some of the fundamental characteristics of this dimension introduced by authorities of mysticism through subtleties drawn from the Quran and Sunnah based on the principles of esoteric interpretation as understood by authorities of mysticism.	
Key Words: Perfect Human Ontological Characteristics Spirit of The Universe Intermediary of Grace Supreme Intercession		METHOD & FINDING: This research tries to establish a dialogue between the characteristics of the mystical doctrine of the Perfect Human and the teachings of the Quran and Sunnah by using the comparative-analytical method and citing library sources. Evidence from the Quran and Ḥadīth appropriate to each characteristic and property of the Perfect Human after depicting its ontological status and providing a mystical exposition of the same is provided. Such evidence is not confined to mere explicit similarity apparent at the level of words but also considers content compatibility that resonates with the spirit of the religious text.	
DOI: https://doi.org/10.22034/imjpl.2024.10179		CONCLUSION: According to the Quran and Sunnah, the Perfect Human has ontological characteristics such as being <i>Rūḥ al-‘Alam</i> (the spirit of the universe), <i>Wāsiṭat al-Fayḍ</i> (the principal intermediary of divine grace), and <i>al-Shafā‘ah al-Kubrā</i> (the station of his supreme intercession). Whilst analyzing the Quranic verses and Ḥadīth, one realizes that the perfect human spoken about in mysticism is not different from the Infallible Imam of the Twelver Shi‘as.	
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Introduction

In general, Islamic mysticism is categorized by scholars into two main areas: ontology (often referred to as the 'unity of being') and anthropology (commonly understood as the 'perfect human being') (Ibn Turkah, 2002, p. 198). The human being realizing his potential is the most comprehensive manifestation of Allah, who unfolds and reveals all existence. It has three fundamental ontological dimensions: the personal, the divine, and the creational.

Muslim mystics have often tried to explain their mystical experiences and teachings with the Quran and the Sunnah. According to them, mystical experiences are nothing but the realization of the inner meanings of the Quran and the Sunnah. This is because the very origin of Islamic Mysticism is the Quran and the Sunnah (Yazdānpanāh, 2009, pp. 26-28).

In this paper, we shall focus on the third of the abovementioned ontological dimensions of the Perfect Human, which underscores his supremacy and sovereignty over the entire hierarchy of the self-disclosures of God. After explaining each of the various ontological characteristics of this dimension, we shall present evidence from the Quran and Ḥadīth as endorsements. In several cases, our comprehension of the teachings of the Quranic verses and Ḥadīth is based on the esoteric principles of interpretation.

The Perfect Human, having attained the zenith of his perfection through *al-Sayr wa al-Sulūk* (spiritual wayfaring)

or *al-Ġaḍbah al-Ilahīyyah* (divine attraction), *al-Fanā' fi Allah* (crossed the phases of annihilation in God) and *al-Baqā' bi Allah* (subsistence through Him), attains sovereignty and ontological domination over all the strata of existence. As a result, he acquires many exceptional ontological characteristics. Due to the limited scope of this paper, we shall consider only three of these here:

- *Rūḥ al-'Alam* (the spirit of the universe)
- *Wāsiṭat al-Fayḍ* (the intermediary of divine grace)
- *al-Shafā'ah al-Kubrā* (the Major Intercession)

Theoretical Foundations

1. The Perfect Human

The Perfect Human who is the primary reason for God's creation of the universe, is he who has realized his potential of becoming the vicegerent of God on earth by ascending to the highest Divine Realm of self-disclosures. It is he who in terms of existence is the last and in terms of purpose the first entity in the hierarchy of existence. It is also he who through the perfectional movement of intensity in *al-Qaws al-Ṣu'ūd* (ascending arc) covers the created and divine realms and attains *al-Wahīdīyyah al-Indīrājīyyah* (inclusive oneness) in *al-Ta'ayyun al-Awwal* (the first entification) and thus comprehends it as the self-disclosure of the Essence of the Non-composite God. In this way, He unites with *al-Nafas al-Raḥmāni* (the Breath of the All-Merciful), and akin to It, permeates throughout the order of existence.

The Perfect Human having ascended to the station of *Jam' al-Jam'* (the All-

Comprehensiveness of All-Comprehensiveness) possesses all the Divine Names. Hence, from one aspect he possesses an elemental dimension, and from another a Divine dimension. That is why it is said that the Perfect Human who is temporal, is eternal, perpetual, and everlasting (*Ibn 'Arabī, 2024, p. 89*). His relation to the world resembles the ring-stone in relation to the ring and the pupil of the eye in relation to the eye (*Ibid*).

2. Ontological Characteristics

Ontological characteristics are existential characteristics present in the Perfect Human, which are related to three of his ontological dimensions: his personal dimension, which constitutes *al-Nafas al-Raḥmāni* (the Breath of the All-Merciful), his ontological relation with God, the Glorious, which are his stations of Divine Representation such as the Greatest Self-disclosure, Greatest Vicegerency, etc., and his ontological relation with the creation, which constitutes of stations of his sovereignty over the entire creation, such as the Spirit of the Universe, Greatest Intercession, and the Intermediary of Grace.

Literature Review

The ontological characteristics of the aforementioned three dimensions of the perfect human have been dealt with meticulously and accurately in the works of Ibn 'Arabī (d. 1240), Ṣadr al-Dīn Qūnawī (d. 1274), and his students

but in bits and pieces. Although they have mostly delved into the Quranic verses, there is rarely any mention of the narrations of the Infallible Household of the Holy Prophet. Hence exploring the narrations from the Shi'i sources of narrations such as *'Uṣūl al-Kāfi, al-Iḥtijāj, and 'Uyūn Akhbār al-Riḍa* is significant.

In the works of the later masters of mysticism, some of the ontological characteristics of the Perfect Human in light of the Quran and the Sunnah have also been taken into consideration.

Examples of masterpieces in this regard that paved the way for our research are *al-Kalimāt al-Maknūnah* of Fayḍ Kāshāni (d. 1679), *Miṣbāḥ al-Hidāyah* of Imam Khomeini (d. 1989) and two significant works of Ayatullah Ḥasan Zadeh Amoli with the titles of *Insan-i Kamil az Didgah-i Nahj al-Balaghah* and *Nahj al-Wilayah*.

Nevertheless, extensive work has not been done on the subject of our research despite the abundance of Quranic verses and narrations of the Ahl al-Bayt on this subject.

Ontological Characteristics of the Perfect Human in Terms of His Relationship with the Universe

1. *Rūḥ al-'Alam* (the spirit of the universe)

1.1. The Flowing Spirit of the Universe

In the same way as a body without a spirit is lifeless, the entire cosmos

without the perfect Human Being is lifeless. This means that the Perfect Human manifests in all the elements of the universe (Ibn 'Arabī, 1997, Vol.2, p. 67).

Without the Perfect Human Being, therefore, the universe cannot exist. In simple terms, he is *al-ʿIllah al-Fāʾilīyyah* (the efficient cause) of the cosmos or, to employ a subtler and more accurate articulation, the reality that permeates the cosmos. Just as the human spirit permeates the entire human body, the Perfect Human being permeates the entire universe. In the mystical jargon, such permeation is called *Sarqān al-Insān* (lit. the flow of the human being).

This subtle phenomenon, however, must be understood in light of the principle of 'the oneness of being', and therefore one must not conjecture the existence of two different entities, 'the subject' that permeates and 'the object' in which it permeates. Rather the relationship is that of *Zāhir* (the manifest) and its *Mazāhir* (manifestations). The object of permeation is a sheer manifestation and self-disclosure of the subject of permeation itself. Therefore, it is a single reality that unfolds and discloses itself in the form of the cosmos and its entities.

This naturally transpires after the Perfect Human soars in the Ascending Arc to unite with the Lordly Realm and returns back to the created realm in the third spiritual journey, which in mystical jargon, is *al-Safar min al-Ḥaqq ila al-Khalq bi*

al-Ḥaqq (the journey from the Real to the creation through the Real). Qayṣarī, alluding to this in the prolegomena of his commentary on Ibn 'Arabī's *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*, says, "That is why it is said that the Perfect Human Being must flow in all the existents just as God flows in them, and that happens in the third spiritual journey which is 'from the Real to the creation through the Real', and upon this journey, his perfection is complete and he attains *Ḥaqq al-Yaqīn* (the truth of certainty)" (Qayṣarī, 1996, p. 118).

1.2. The Spirit of the Universe According to the Holy Quran and the Sunnah

- The Holy Quran says, "*Allah is He Who created seven heavens, and of the earth the like of them; the decree continues to descend among them, that you may know that Allah has power over all things and that Allah indeed encompasses all things in knowledge.*" (The Quran, 65: 12).

Tilimsānī in his *Sharh al-Mawaqif*, whilst commenting on one of *al-Niffari's* inspirations about how one witnesses himself as the heavens and the earth, says, "He means that of the signs of Your *Wilāyah* (guardianship) is that you see yourself differentiated the differentiation of the heavens and the earth. Indeed, God's word says, "*Allah is He Who created seven heavens... that you may know that Allah has power over all things and that Allah*

indeed encompasses all things in knowledge” (The Quran, 65: 12). In citing this verse *Tilimsānī* draws our attention to the reality of *Sarayān* (permeation) in the Quran. Thus, when one attains his perfection, he sees himself unfolding as the heavens and the earth unfold and realizes that his power and knowledge as mentioned by the verse are not different from God’s (*Tilimsānī*, 2007, p. 251).

- The Holy Quran says, “...and their footprints, and We have recorded everything in a clear writing.” (The Quran, 36: 12).

This verse alludes to the reality that the Perfect Human Being ontologically and epistemologically comprehends everything. The phrase *Ahsaynahu* which literally means ‘Addadnahu (we enumerated) (*Ṭabarsī*, 1993, Vol. 8, p. 654), signifies comprehension and encompassment (*Ṭabāṭabā’ī*, 1970, Vol. 19, p. 180), which in its accurate sense means both epistemological as well as ontological encompassment. In other words, the Perfect Human being ontologically possesses everything.

As for the word *Imam* in the verse, it is rendered as ‘a book of guidance’ (*Qommī*, 1984, Vol. 1, p. 360; *Suyūṭī*, 1983, Vol. 5, p. 261), because it is an object of attention and intention (*Ma Yutawajjahu Ilayhi wa YuqÒad*) (*Mustafawi*, 2006, Vol. 1, p. 149). The Holy Quran also explicitly

employs it sometimes to signify the same (The Quran, 11: 17). Just as the Quran is *al-Kitab al-Tadwinia* (written book) sent by God, the universe is a Divine Book too because it consists of Divine Words, which are existents that emanate from God. The Perfect Human being, likewise having united with the Divine Names unfolds the words of God which are the existential entities. In reality, he discloses himself as God’s ontological scripture. Just as God discloses Himself through His written and cosmological scriptures, the Perfect Human being likewise discloses Himself in these two forms.

In several narrations from the Household of the Prophet, *Imam* in the Quranic verse 36: 12 is interpreted as the Divine Guide who is the Perfect Human being par excellence. In his *Tafsīr al-Ṣafī*, *Fayḍ Kāshānī* narrates a *Ḥadīth* from Imam al-Baqir, from His father, from His grandfather Imam ‘Ali who said, “when the verse “...and we have enumerated everything in the manifest Imam” (The Quran, 36: 12) was revealed to the Apostle of God, Abu Bakr and ‘Umar stood and asked the Prophet, “O Apostle of God, does this [i.e. the word imam] refer to the Torah?” The Apostle of God replied, “No.” So they asked, “Therefore, does it refer to the Gospel?” The Prophet said, “No.” So they asked, “Then is it the Quran?” The Prophet said, “No.” Thereafter

the Commander of the Faithful approached the Apostle of God and He said, [whilst pointing to Imam ‘Ali], “It refers to Him.” Indeed, he is the Imam in which Allah has enumerated the knowledge of everything” (Fayḍ Kāshānī, 1994, Vol. 4, p. 247). It is noteworthy that the accurate import of ‘knowledge of everything’ refers to ontological comprehensive knowledge.

- The Holy Quran says, “...and We have made of water everything living, will they not then believe?.” (The Quran, 21: 30). The esoteric import of this verse reveals that *al-Wujūd al-Munbaṣiṭ* the extended existence or God’s *al-Nafas al-Raḥmānī* (the Breath of the All-Merciful) is the source of everything. This is because the most perfect extension of the reality of water is the All-Merciful Breath, which permeates the entire universe. The literal import of the verse suffices to make the insightful understand that since the entire universe is living in the true sense of the word, water refers to the All-Merciful Breath from which all the things [which in reality are alive] emanate. Hadī Sabzawārī in his understanding of the verse says that the adjective *Ḥayy* (living) which *Kulla Shay’* (everything) in the verse is qualified with, is not a *Ṣifah Mukhaṣṣiṣah* (distinguishing characteristic), but a *Ṣifah Kāshifah*

(revealing characteristic) of everything (Sabzawārī, 1995, p. 54). When the human being attains perfection and unites with this station, he becomes the source of everything and discloses himself in all the entities of the universe. Hence, He is the water that permeates everything (Shīrāzī, 1999, Vol. 6, p. 117).

- The Holy Quran says, “...and My mercy encompasses all things...” (wa *Ja’alna min al-Ma’i kulla Shay’in Ḥayy*) (The Quran, 7:156). This is another verse that reveals the reality of God’s pervasion in everything. And when the Perfect Human being dissolves in the station of His Comprehensive Mercy, he actually discloses himself in everything. Hence, he unfolds as the entire universe. A similar verse that speaks of how the Perfect Human being unfolds as the entire universe is the verse addressed to the Holy Prophet as follows: “And We have not sent you but as a mercy to the worlds.” (wa *ma Arsalnaka illa Rahmatan li al-‘Alamin*) (The Quran, 21: 107). In his *Hezar wa yek Kalimah*, Ḥasan Zādah Āmulī whilst introducing the Holy Prophet as ‘Mercy of the Worlds’ says that it refers to *Raḥmat al-Wāsi’ah* (comprehensive mercy) which is one of the names of the extended existence (Ḥasan Zādah Āmulī, 2002, Vol. 1, p. 152).

- The Holy Quran says, “Allah is the light of the heavens and the earth...”

(*Allahu nur al-Samawati wa al-Ard*) (The Quran, 24: 35). This verse tells us that Allah Himself is the very light of the heavens and the earth, which reveals God's permeation in the heavens and the earth. When the Perfect Human being attains the station of the Divine Names, he too becomes the light of the heavens and the earth. In some narrations of the Household of the Prophet there is an allusion that the Perfect Human being too can attain a station in which having united with the Divine Light, unfolds himself and the light of the heavens and the earth (Şadūq, 2020, p. 157).

- In section eight of the prolegomena of his *Sharh Fuşūş al-ḥikam* explaining the flow of the Perfect Human being throughout the cosmos, Qayṣarī, cites a narration from Imam 'Ali. He says, "What we mentioned is confirmed by the statement of the Commander of the Faithful, God's Close Servant in the lands, the Pole of the Monotheists, 'Ali ibn Abi Talib in a sermon that he presented to the people, "I am the dot of the *ba'* of *bismillah*, I am the vicinage of Allah which you were negligent about, I am the Pen, I am the Guarded Tablet, I am the Divine Throne, I am the Pedestal, I am the seven heavens and the earth (Qayṣarī, 1996, p. 38). Thereafter he says, "That is why it is said that the Perfect Human being

must flow in all existents just as God flows in them, and that transpires in the third spiritual journey which is from the Real to the creation by the Real. With this journey his perfection is complete and he attains *Ḥaqq al-Yaqīn* (the truth of certainty). At this point it [also] becomes clear [to him] that 'lastness' is the same as 'firstness' and the secret of '*He is the First and the Last, the Apparent and the Hidden, and He has knowledge of everything*' becomes apparent for him" (Qayṣarī, 1996, p. 142).

- In a salutation recital *Ziyārah al-Jāmi'ah al-Kabīrah* composed by the Tenth Imam, 'Ali al-Naqi, the Holy Prophet and His Successors, are addressed as follows, "Your names are in the names, your bodies in the bodies, your spirits in the spirits, your souls in the souls, your effects in the effects and your graves in the graves" (Qumsha'ī, 2015, p. 105; Khomeini, 1996, p. 60).

These expressions actually allude to the permeation of the Imam who is a perfect human being united with the All-Merciful Breath, through all the entities.

- In a supplication taught by the Twelfth Imam al-Mahdi for the month of Rajab, the following expressions appear, "O God, I ask You by the meaning of all that by which You are called upon by those who govern with Your authority: those who are entrusted with Your mystery, welcome Your command, extol Your

power, and proclaim Your majesty...There is no difference between You and them, save that they are Your servants and Your creation, their doings and undoings are in Your hand, their origin is from You and their return is to You...with them, You filled Your heaven and Your earth until it became manifest that other than You there is no god” (Majlisī, 1982, Vol. 95, p. 393).

As is clear, this supplication narrates the most profound truths about the Perfect Human Being. The expression ‘and with them you filled your Heaven and Earth’ is a clear allusion to their permeation in the heavens and the earth.

2. *Wāsiṭat al-Fayḍ al-Ilahi* (The Intermediary of Divine Grace)

Another ontological relation between the Perfect Human Being and the universe is his station of *Tawassuṭ* (mediation), the crux of which is self-disclosure for facilitating the flow of grace to all the succeeding entities (Gorjian et al, 2020, p. 65). Without the Perfect Human par excellence, who is the All-Merciful Breath, the universe cannot receive any grace whatsoever. In religious terms, he is the *Wāsiṭah* (the intermediary) of *al-Fayḍ al-Ilahi* Divine Grace. Due to his presence in both the Lordly and created Realms and his *Sinkhiyyah* (affinity) with them, he can receive Grace directly from God and bestow it to the lower levels of entification and existence. This is a natural process

without which the lower loci of Divine Manifestation can never receive any grace of existence. In the words of Jāmī in his *Naqd al-Nuṣuṣ*, “...was it not for him [Perfect Human being] in terms of his intermediate station that is not different from the two dimensions [the Lordly and other-Lordly], nothing from the cosmos would be able to accept the Single Divine Aid due to the lack of affinity and connection” (Jāmī, 1991, p. 97).

2.1. The Necessity of Mediation

Scholars of mysticism e.g., Qūnawī and Jāmī, endorse the well-known principle that says, “*al-Wāḥid la Yaṣḍuru ‘anhu illa al-Wāḥid* (Nothing but one emanates from the One)”, the crux of which is the principle of *Sinkhiyyah* (affinity) between *Zāhir* (the manifest) and the locus of *Maḥzar* (manifestation) (Qūnawī, 1992; Jāmī, 1991).

Hence the *Kathrah* (plurality) that is seen in the creation cannot emanate directly from the Essence of God. Rather it originates from *al-Ṣādir al-Awwal* (the First Emanation) or *al-Wujūd al-‘Am* (the Universal Existence) which discloses and manifests itself throughout the hierarchy of existence and is directly and immediately in contact with every entity of the entire hierarchy (Fanārī, 1995, p. 196). For the process of creation to transpire, therefore, there must be an intermediary which emanates from God and can manifest itself in the form of the realm

of plurality and has affinity with the latter. Therefore, according to this principle, an intermediary is essential for the creation to transpire and begin. In reality, God's action is only one (The Quran, 54: 49-50), within which the different strata of existence emanate.

2.2. The Intermediary of Divine Grace in the Holy Quran and the Sunnah

- The Holy Quran says, *"He sends down water from the sky whereat the valleys are flooded to [the extent of] their capacity..."* (The Quran, 13: 17). According to this verse, water is poured down in abundance, but each valley accepts it according to its own measure and limit. Although the literal import of the verse is a material phenomenon that transpires on earth, God describes it as a similitude that alludes to a higher reality. Water refers to, employing the mystical jargon, God's Grace and Universal Existence which manifests in the different entities throughout the entire cosmos according to their own capacities. Hence it serves as an intermediary between God and entities of the realm of creation. The past tense verb *Anzala* ('He' Sent down) in the verse refers to God. And water is an allusion to the Single Grace of God which in mystical terms is also called the All-Merciful Breath or the Extended Grace. It commences with the First Self-Disclosure of God flows through the different realms of

existence and finally culminates with the elemental human form (see: Shīrāzī, 2021, Vol. 2, p. 266; Khomeini, 1996, p. 86; Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1970, Vol. 11, p. 277). Since the Imam is united with this extended grace, He likewise serves as the intermediary of God's grace.

- The Holy Quran says, *"Indeed We have created everything in a measure, and Our command is but a single [word], like the twinkling of an eye"* (The Quran, 54: 49-50). In this verse, God's existentiating command is introduced as being one and akin to the twinkling of an eye. In other words, it is known to be non-composite and instantaneous. It is the Simple Divine Grace conditioned with universality and *Iṭlāq* (absoluteness) that manifests in every entity according to the entity's pre-eternal uncreated measure and essence. In this way, it serves as the Intermediary of God in bestowing grace to all the other entities. Depending on the measure of the entities, each is created and clothed with existence (see: Shīrāzī, 1981, p. 583; Sabzawārī, 1991, Vol. 4, p. 368).

Having understood that 'the single divine command' in the verse refers to the extended grace, the verse also refers to the Perfect Human Being who through spiritual wayfaring can attain this station. Hence the most deserving extension of the verse is the Imam who is the most perfect extension of the Perfect Human Being.

- The Holy Quran says, *"O you who have faith! Be wary of Allah, and seek the*

means of proximity to Him (Wabtagū ilayhi al-Wasīlah), and wage Jihad in His way, so that you may be felicitous” (The Quran, 5: 35). This verse speaks of *Wasīlah* (a means) to get closer to God. The fundamental means through which all other means are realized are the Holy Prophet and the Imams of his Infallible Household, who are united with the All-Merciful Breath and the Simple Divine Grace that flows throughout the universe. Hence it is through them that one can attain Divine Proximity.

‘Allamah Ṭabāṭabā’ī in his *Tafsīr al-Mīzan* after explaining the above Quranic verse opens a section on narrations that reveal that one of the extensions of *wasilah* in the verse refers to the station of the Holy Prophet and the Imams of his Household. For example, in a narration from ‘*Uyun* of al-Ṣadūq, the Holy Prophet is reported to have said, “The Imams are from the children of al-Hossein, whosoever obeys them has obeyed God, and whosoever disobeys them has disobeyed God; they are *al-Urwat al-Wuthqa* (the firmest handle), and the means of proximity to God” (Ṣadūq, 2000, p. 63).

Imam ‘Ali likewise is reported to have said commenting on the phrase “and seek the means of proximity to Him” that, “I am the means of proximity to Him.” Another report Ṭabāṭabā’ī mentions is from Abu Sa‘id al-Khudri

who narrates the following from the Holy Prophet, ‘If you supplicate to God, then ask Him that I attain [the station of] *al-Wasīlah*. Al-Khudri says, “So, we asked the Prophet what *al-Wasīlah* was” and He said, “It is my level in Heaven.” Commenting on this narration, Ṭabāṭabā’ī says, “If you were to ponder over this narration, and how the Quranic verse [5:35] refers to it, you will realize that *al-Wasīlah* is the station of the Prophet in the proximity of God by means of which he would gain Divine Proximity, and he would be followed by His Pure Household, and the virtuous ones of his nation respectively” (Ṭabāṭabā’ī, 1970, Vol. 5, pp. 333-334).

- The Holy Quran says, “*Whatsoever in the heavens and the earth ask Him. Every moment (Yawm) He is in a single task (Sha’n)*” (The Quran, 55: 29). This is one of the most profound verses of the Quran that speaks of every entity asking and supplicating to God by its essence and capacity every moment. The word ‘*Sha’n*’ literally signifies ‘one’ task or command. This alludes to the single grace that scholars of mysticism call *al-Fayḍ al-Munbasit* (the extended grace).

Akin to the aforementioned verses, this *Sha’n* which is interpreted as the Extended Grace of God, can also be reckoned to be a *Miṣḍāq* (extension) of the Perfect Human who existentiates everything in the universe moment by moment, and hence serves as the

Intermediary of Grace. Grand Ayatullah Javādī Āmulī in the book *Hidayat dar Quran* alludes to the truth that the spiritual wayfarer having attained the level of the *Kawn-i Jami'* (comprehensive being) is the complete self-disclosure of the verse "Every moment He is in a single task" (Javādī Āmulī, 2004, p. 298).

The well-known salutation recital *al-Jāmi'ah al-Kabīrah*, which is reckoned by some scholars of mysticism and tradition, as the most perfect and beautiful of salutation recitals in various places alludes to the principal role of mediation of the Imams. Following are noteworthy examples: "Through you, Allah has initiated [the contingent realm], and by you will He seal it. Through you, He brings the rains, and through you, He holds the heavens from falling to the earth, except by His will. Through you, He removes worries and relieves distress! ... Allah has given you what He has not given to any of the world's existents! ... everything is lowly before you. The earth shines with your light..." These and many similar verses allude to the fact that the Imams are the intermediaries of grace. The reasoning for this, as we mentioned earlier is that they have attained the station of the All-Merciful Divine Breath, and thus obviously serve as the Intermediary of Divine Grace. We should however not be oblivious to the fact that when we say that the perfect Human being is the

intermediary of Divine Grace, we are not referring to something parallel or 'other' than God. It is God Himself who discloses himself in the reality of the First Emanation (Qarā'ī, 2019, p. 542).

3. *Al-Shafā'ah al-Kubrā* (The Major Intercession)

The Perfect Human being, having attained the level of *al-Tajallī al-Awwal* (the First Self-Disclosure of God), occupies the ultimate form of *Shafā'ah* (intercession) because whatever happens in the lower realms of self-disclosure, does so by the leave of the Primary Self-Disclosure. The literal meaning of *Shafā'ah* is to join with another to assist him and intercede on his behalf (Iṣfahānī, 1991, p. 457). Its trilateral root *sh-f-* ' means *Muqāranatu Shay'ayn* (to make two things accompany one another) (Ibn Fāris, 1983, Vol. 3, p. 201), or *Dammu al-Shay' ila Mithlihi* (to join a thing to its peer) (Iṣfahānī, 1991, p. 457).

According to Iṣfahānī in his *Mufradāt*, *Shafā'ah* normally occurs when a person of higher standing assists one who is of lower standing than him (Ibid, pp. 457-458). The *Shafi'* in reality assists the *Mashfu' lahu* (the beneficiary of *Shafā'ah*) to get his objective fulfilled. In its religious context, *Shafā'ah* is when a stronger force joins a weaker force to attract benefit for him or repel harm from him. Hence, when the interceder becomes the means of forgiveness or elevation

for the beneficiary of intercession, the reality of *Shafā'ah* takes place.

Considering the spirit of the meaning of *Shafā'ah* in light of its religious context, it can be classified into two fundamental kinds: *al-Shafā'ah al-Takwīnīyyah* (ontological intercession) and *al-Shafā'ah al-Tashrī'īyyah* (legislative intercession) (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1970, Vol. 1, p. 171; Vol. 2, p. 333).

Both these kinds of intercession have been mentioned in the Holy Quran. Our emphasis in this section, however, is on ontological intercession, which in reality is the crux of both kinds of intercession. This is because, without it, no kind of intercession can take place. Every change that happens in all the strata of existence takes place with the permission of the Principal Controller, who is God. For this very reason, all intercession is attributed solely to Him. In the words of the Quran, “Say: to Allah belongs all intercession” (The Quran, 39: 44).

3.1. The Intercession of the Perfect Human Being

Since the perfect Human being is united with the First Self-Disclosure of God, which, as we learned earlier, is the single intermediary of all grace, only he is the primary *Shafi'* (intercessor) and it is only by him that intercession fundamentally transpires. Therefore, it is through him that the sinful are forgiven and through him that the faithful attain heights of perfection. It is also through him that every secondary

intercessor can intercede. Hence, all those who are allowed to intercede are primarily permitted him, who in turn is permitted by the Essence of God. In universal terms, he is the primary intermediary, who attracts benefit and repels harm in the entire realm of creation. In this way, he is reckoned to possess the station of *al-Shafā'ah al-Kubrā* (major intercession).

Ibn 'Arabī has alluded to this lofty prophetic station in his works with terms such as mastership of the children of Adam in the opening of the gate of intercession (Qayṣarī, 1996, p. 468). In other words, he is the primary sovereign over the children of Adam in the ontological sense. This is because he is at the pinnacle of perfection and resides to use the well-known metaphoric expression in the village of 'Abbadan, beyond which there is no higher abode. Here is the domain of Divine Comprehensive Mercy and the Origin of all power, control, and influence. This station is also known as the station of *al-Wasīlah* (Ibn 'Arabī, 1997, Vol. 2, p. 87; Baqli, 2008, Vol. 2, p. 368), which the Holy Prophet sought through the prayers of his followers (Ibn 'Arabī, 1997, Vol. 4, p. 404). He is reported to have said, “When you pray to Allah for something, ask Him to bestow me [with the station of] *al-Wasīlah*” (Fayḍ Kāshānī, 2004: 384).

3.2. Intercession in Accordance with Receptivity

If we study the Quran and the narrations of the Infallible Household of the Holy Prophet, we will realize that *Shafā'ah* is of a wide spectrum. Ontologically, since the entire creation is saturated by the cover of the All-Embracing Divine Mercy, they all are beneficiaries of intercession. This is because intercession signifies, as Ṭabāṭabā'ī explains in his *al-Mizan*, mediation, and causation (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1970, Vol. 1, p. 160). In simple terms, whatever benefit anyone receives or protection he enjoys, is primarily due to ontological intercession. In this way, intercession not only covers the faithful believers but also the defiant disbelievers and hypocrites as well. Legislative intercession, the crux of which also returns to ontological intercession, on the other hand, covers only the faithful who meet its specific conditions such as belief in the verities of religion. They can benefit from Divine Forgiveness, soar to higher degrees of perfection and even serve as secondary intercessors for others. However, they are of different levels, depending on their capacities and *al-A'yān al-Thābitah* (sempiternal archetypal realities). The ultimate level belongs to the perfect Human par excellence who resides in the highest station of God's Self-Disclosure and serves as the primary

intermediary of Divine Grace.

3.3. The Major Intercession in the Holy Quran and the Sunnah

Having understood the reality of the perfect human's station of Major Intercession in light of mysticism, we now turn to establish the same through the Quran and Sunnah:

- The Holy Quran says, "*Indeed, soon your Lord will give you [that with which] you will be pleased*" (The Quran, 93: 5). This profound verse of the Quran, which is addressed to the Holy Prophet, has some noteworthy allusions: Firstly, it speaks of a comprehensive bestowal that would please and satisfy the Muhammadan Reality. The phrase '*Yu'ti-ka*' (soon He – your Lord -- will give you) without any mention of 'the object of *al-Mu'ta* (bestowal)' does not set any limit for the bestowal. Secondly, since *al-Mu'ti* (the Bestower) introduced in the verse is *Rabbu-ka* (the Muhammadan Lord) both the Divine Name '*Rabb*' and the second person singular pronoun '*ka*' reveal that the bestowal is equal to the Muhammadan Essence or Archetype. Thirdly the phrase '*fa-Tardā*' (so that you are pleased) alludes to the fact that God shall Bestow Muhammad with whatever his archetypal reality seeks, for every archetype is pleased and satisfied when all its needs and requirements are fulfilled. Among the scholars of mysticism who have

tacitly or clearly interpreted the Divine Bestowal mentioned in this verse as God's All-Comprehensive and Absolute Mercy are Ibn 'Arabī in his *Futūḥāt* (Ibn 'Arabī, 1997, Vol. 3, p. 240). Others such as Mulla Hadi Sabzawārī (Sabzawārī, 2007, p. 626), conclude that it refers to the Prophetic Station of Major Intercession. Both interpretations are correct, for the latter is an essential corollary of the former. In simple words, the station of the all-comprehensive mercy is the primary intermediary of the existence, subsistence, perfection, etc. of all the entities of the different strata of existence. Hence it is also the primary ontological intercessor. Exegetes of the Quran have --- in line with the teachings of the Fifth Imam al-Baqir - - also called this verse the most hope-giving verse of the Quran.

- The Holy Quran says, “*And keep vigil for a part of the night, as a supererogatory [devotion] for you. It may be that your Lord will raise you to a praiseworthy station (Maqāman Maḥmūdan)*” (The Quran, 17: 79). This verse discusses one of the most fundamental practices of spiritual wayfaring that can transport the wayfarer to a very high level of perfection. Observing the night prayer which was made obligatory on the Prophet would make him ascend to the Praiseworthy Station. Many exegetes of the Quran have interpreted *al Maqāman*

Maḥmūdan (the ‘praiseworthy station’) as the station of the Major Intercession. It is known as praiseworthy in the absolute sense, without specifying the subject of Ḥamīd (praise), because it is praised by all. And the reason for praise is because, it is the station of the Divine Names in their highest realities, which necessitates praise. And being the highest station of the Divine Names, it is also the source of existence and the primary station of *Wasāṭah* (mediation) and *Shafā‘ah* (intercession). In the mystical jargon, it is the station of the All-Merciful, which breathes moment by moment with all the different entities throughout the strata of existence and entifications. Hence it is also *Shafi‘* (the primary intercessor) of whatever transpires in the realms of existence. Whilst explaining the fact that the Holy Prophet occupies the station of the leadership of intercession, Javādī Āmulī in the book *Adāb-i Fināy-i Muqarrabān* mentions the verse of the praiseworthy station (The Quran, 17: 79), as well as the verse of universal mercy (The Quran, 20: 107), and concludes on their bases that the Holy Prophet is *Walī Ni‘mat* (the provider) of the realm of contingency because he is the intermediary of Divine Grace to others. Hence in being an intermediary and intercessor, he is the Imam of all and the belongings of others are due to his bounty (Javādī Āmulī, 2010, Vol. 7, p. 330).

- The Holy Quran says, “*Say: To*

Allah belongs all intercession. His is the Sovereignty of the heavens and the earth. Then unto Him will you be brought back” (The Quran, 39: 44). If we reckon Allah to refer to the station of the comprehensive name of God, which is also the Muhammadan Reality, then all kinds of intercession belong entirely to the Muhammadan Perfect Human Being, who is the Primary Self-disclosure of Allah. Hence all the Imams of the Household of the Holy Prophet possess the same station. Obviously in this level, there is no sort of multiplicity whatsoever, and hence, it is God alone who exercises authority and intercession. Sultan ‘Ali Gunābādī alludes to this subtle interpretation in his *Bayan al-sa‘adah* saying that since the First Imam ‘Ali is the complete locus of the Name Allah, the verse can refer to him too (Gunābādī, 1987, Vol. 4, p. 11). An intricacy worthy of consideration is that *Shafā‘ah* which is ontological intercession, irrespective of its level and kind, solely belongs to Allah. In clearer terms, it is He Alone who is the main doer in all the levels of intercession, and there is no ‘other’ who has any kind of influence whatsoever. Gunābādī in his witty and clear expression in this regard says, “To ‘Ali belongs all intercession, meaning with all the levels of intercession and their particularities, no one has a share

in any of them” (Ibid).

- The Holy Quran says, ‘...Who is it that can intercede with Him save with His permission?...’ (The Quran, 2: 255). Scholars of mysticism such as Ṭabāṭabā’ī in his *al-Mizan* (Ṭabāṭabā’ī, 1970, Vol. 1, p. 160), define *Shafā‘ah* in the Quranic phrase, ‘...Who is it that can intercede with Him save with His permission? To be *al-Wasaṭah* *al-Takwīnīyyah* (ontological mediation). Baḥrānī in his *Tafsīr al-Burhan* narrates a *Ḥadīth* from Imam al-Sadiq who when asked about the mentioned verse, said, “We [the Infallible Prophetic Household] are those intercessors” (Baḥrānī, 1994, Vol. 1, p. 516). This narration alludes to a specific level of intercession, which is ‘the ultimate level’, because firstly there are many indications in different narrations that include the faithful in the category of intercessors depending on their levels of perfection. Secondly, the *Ḥadīth* clearly restricts the intercession mentioned in the verse to the Infallible Household of the Prophet. Thirdly, the third person pronoun *hu* in the phrase ‘*Inda-hu*’ alludes to the highest level of mediation and intercession, because it either refers to the Ipseity of God or the Station of His Exclusive Oneness. Hence, we can say that the verse speaks of the highest level of *Shafā‘ah* which is the Major Intercession.

• Of the well-known prophetic narrations that Muslim scholars of tradition have reported is that the last person to intercede is “the Most Merciful of the merciful ones”. If we comprehend this narration accurately, we will understand the reality of the Muhammadan Station of the Major Intercession. This is because, as understood earlier, the perfect Human being is *Khalīfat Allah* (God’s Vicegerent), and thus qualifies to possess all the Divine Attributes. We have already alluded to some narrations from the Prophet’s Household in this regard. One of the Divine Names is God’s comprehensive mercy, which actually is the Source of His Grace on everything and all strata of existence under its fold. It is also through this Divine Name that all levels of intercession transpire. Therefore, since the Holy Prophet and the Imams of his Infallible Household are all proven to be the Divine Vicegerents they also possess all the Divine Names, including the Name *al-Raḥmān*, which is the source of all intercession. Hence, they are the final interceders and it is only the likes of them who have the highest level of intercession which is termed as *al-Shafā‘ah al-Kubrā*.

Conclusion

In this paper, which considers the perfect man’s relationship with the creation the following three important

ontological dimensions have been explained according to theoretical mysticism and established through Quranic verses and Ḥadīths of the Holy Prophet and the Infallible Imams of his Household:

- 1) *Rūḥ al-‘Alam* (the spirit of the universe)
- 2) *Wāsiṭat al-Fayḍ* (the intermediary of divine grace)
- 3) *al-Shafā‘ah al-Kubrā* (the Major Intercession)

As for the ‘Spirit of the Universe’, after presenting a mystical definition of the same, which refers to the flow of the universal man through all the strata of existence, akin to the flow of the spirit in the body, reference was made to the Quran and Ḥadīth to establish this important relationship.

Concerning the Intermediary of Divine Grace, which reveals a fundamental role of the universal man concerning all the strata of existence, after presenting its definition in the mystical tradition, a discussion on proving the necessity of an intermediary was propounded, and thereafter reference was made to Quran and Sunnah to establish the same.

The Universal Man’s Station of The Major Intercession was another facet that was discussed in detail in light of the mystical tradition. Matters such as the kind of intercession, conditions of intercession, and the process of intercession were also

discussed. Thereafter to establish the reality of the universal man and the Imam's station of major intercession, verses of the Quran and Ḥadīth were referred to and analyzed to show how they refer to this great station.

Having discussed the aforementioned three ontological facets of the perfect human in light of the Quran and Sunnah we realize that contrary to the view of some orientalist who reckon the teachings of Islamic Mysticism to be foreign, the very sources of the reality of the perfect man as expounded in theoretical mysticism are the Quran and Sunnah.

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AUTHOR BIOSKETCHES

Khalfan, Mohammad Mahmood. *Ph.D. Student, Faculty of Mysticism, University of Religions and Denominations, Qom, Iran.*

✓ Email: mkhalfan@gmail.com

✓ ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0002-3427-3843>

Farhoudi, Mustafa. *Assistant Prof, Faculty of Religion, University of Religions and Denominations, Qom, Iran.*

✓ Email: m.farhoudi@urd.ac.ir

✓ ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0004-1418-2877>

Fazli, Ali. *Assistant Prof, Mysticism group of Hikmat and Religion Research Institute, Research Institute for Islamic Culture and Thought, Qom, Iran.*

✓ Email: fazliamoli99@yahoo.com

✓ ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0003-0768-3764>

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