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ANALYSIS OF IDEAS ON THE PHENOMENON OF THE “SOCIALLY ACTIVE INDIVIDUAL” IN THE SPIRITUAL HERITAGE OF SA'DEDDIN HAMAWI

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Abstract

Reinterpreting the views on the socially active individual within Sufi philosophy holds paramount relevance in modern scientific and philosophical discourse. During contemporary eras of globalization, spiritual crisis, and existential uncertainty, the socio-moral potential of Sufism serves as a crucial foundation for fostering individual responsibility, moral resilience, and social altruism. The paradigm of Sufi engagement liberates the human personality from egoism and utilitarianism, elevating it to the level of a perfect human being who comprehends their duty toward society and nature. Accordingly, the socially active individual in Sufi philosophy is not merely an isolated mystic focused on personal spiritual perfection, but a constructive and creative agent who enriches existence, builds society, and reforms socio-moral relations through knowledge and ethics. This paper systematically examines the ontological, epistemological, and ethical foundations of social activity in the teachings of the 13th-century Kubrawi master Sa'deddin Hamawi, alongside the development of these concepts in the works of his disciple Aziz al-Din Nasafi.

Keywords: Sufism, Sa'deddin Hamawi, Kubrawiyya, socially active individual, Perfect Human (al-Insan al-Kamil), sainthood (walayah), spiritual journey (sayr wa suluk), futuwwa, Aziz al-Din Nasafi.



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Introduction

Reinterpreting the views on the socially active individual within Sufi philosophy holds paramount relevance in modern scientific and philosophical discourse. During contemporary eras of globalization, spiritual crisis, and existential uncertainty, the socio-moral potential of Sufism serves as a crucial foundation for fostering individual responsibility, moral resilience, and social altruism. The paradigm of Sufi engagement liberates the human personality from egoism and utilitarianism, elevating it to the level of a perfect human being who comprehends their duty toward society and nature. Accordingly, the socially active individual in Sufi philosophy is not merely an isolated mystic focused on personal spiritual perfection, but a constructive and creative agent who enriches existence, builds society, and reforms socio-moral relations through knowledge and ethics.

Research Methodology and Approaches (Methods)

The problem of the socially active individual in Sufi doctrine constitutes one of the most vital and substantial layers of medieval Eastern philosophical and social thought. Although numerous researchers and primary-source scholars have provided a one-sided interpretation of Sufism as purely asceticism, reclusiveness, or an exclusive pursuit of individual spiritual purification and divine love, historical-academic sources demonstrate that this perspective is entirely unfounded.

The problem of the socially active individual in Sufi philosophy possesses a uniquely comprehensive ontological, epistemological, and socio-ethical foundation, particularly within the teachings of Sa'deddin Hamawi (1190–1252), a prominent 13th-century thinker and distinguished representative of the Kubrawiya order. While Western and Soviet Orientalism long interpreted Sufism as passive mysticism, absolute renunciation of the world (*zuhd*), and a doctrine



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of individual self-preservation, the writings and philosophical heritage of great gnostics like Hamawi prove the exact opposite. Sa'deddin Hamawi redefined the place of the human being in the universe and society within Sufi thought, conceptualizing the Perfect Human not merely as a mystic who has attained the highest stage of spiritual ascension, but as an enlightened, active subject who practically applies divine knowledge within social reality and reforms society.

The first and most fundamental idea intrinsically linked to the concept of the socially active individual in Hamawi's doctrine is the ontology of "walayah" (sainthood, divine friendship, and spiritual leadership) and the "Perfect Human" (*al-Insan al-Kamil*). In his treatise *Al-Misbah fi al-Tasawwuf* and other Sufi works, the thinker substantiated walayah as the spiritual and active continuation of *nubuwwah* (prophethood). According to Hamawi, while prophetic mission established outward religious law (*shariah*) and social regulations, walayah maintains the inner meaning and spiritual vitality of these laws within society. The individual who attains the rank of sainthood is not a recluse retreating into isolation, but rather the spiritual axis (*qutb*) of the cosmos and social reality. Manifesting divine attributes and meanings within themselves, they are responsible for preserving justice, enlightenment, and spiritual balance in society [7, p. 142]. Consequently, walayah in Hamawi's Sufism represents not a passive state of mind, but high socio-spiritual responsibility and continuous practical engagement.

Another important epistemological and educational basis for individual agency appears in the concept of spiritual perfection stages—"sayr wa suluk" (the spiritual journey)—developed by Hamawi. In Sufi experience, spiritual ascent comprises four stages: "sayr ila Allah" (journey to God), "sayr fi Allah" (journey in God), "sayr 'an Allah bi-Allah" (return from God to the creation through God), and "sayr fi al-ashya' bi-Allah" (journey through things through God). The central



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point of Hamawi's doctrine is that the ultimate goal of perfection does not lie in remaining submerged in the knowledge of the Creator during the first two stages. On the contrary, genuine perfection and maturity manifest in the third and fourth stages—returning to the midst of the people (society) equipped with the illumination of the Creator [7, p. 178]. Returning from God to the creation, the spiritually active individual engages with various strata of society, imparts wisdom, nurtures people ethically, and combats social vices through educational and practical means. Thus, in Hamawi's Sufism, social activity is evaluated as the definitive outcome and fulfillment of spiritual perfection.

In the views of Sa'deddin Hamawi, the notion of the socially active individual is also inextricably linked to the idea of "cosmic and social balance" (wholeness). Hamawi views reality as an interconnected, unified system. In his teaching, while the human being is the "microcosm" (*alam-i saghir*), the entire universe is the "macrocosm" (*alam-i kabir*). However, in terms of essence and potential, the human entity encompasses the macrocosm within itself. The thinker emphasizes that every thought, moral stance, and social action of the human subject directly impacts the balance of the entire universe and society. If an individual remains passive and indifferent, spiritual decline and disorder emerge within social existence. Therefore, Hamawi considers every human being—and members of the Sufi path in particular—as an active force responsible for social progress and spiritual stability [7, p. 215].

The practical and social expression of this idea found its detailed and systematic elaboration in the works of Hamawi's eminent disciple, Aziz al-Din Nasafi [1]. In his treatises *al-Insan al-Kamil*, *Kashf al-Haqa'iq*, and *Zubdat al-Haqa'iq*, Nasafi developed his master's socio-philosophical framework, setting forth four primary criteria for the Perfect Human: good speech, good deeds, good morality, and spiritual knowledge [8, p. 84]. Significantly, "good deeds" and "good morality"



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here define the individual's direct practical and social interactions with members of society [1]. Drawing upon his teacher's instructions, Nasafi asserts that the Perfect Human is not one who lives apart from society in mountains or caves, but one who abides among the people, benefiting others through honest labor, trade skills, and social grace [1]. This reinforces the inherently active and enlightenment-focused character of the ideas advanced by Sa'deddinHamawi.

A crucial aspect of social agency in Hamawi's teaching is closely linked to the ethical principles of "futuwwah" (chivalry/magnanimity) and "malamatiyya" characteristic of the Kubrawiya order. As a prominent figure of the Kubrawi school, Hamawi elevated futuwwah concepts to the level of spiritual and voluntary altruism. Futuwwah signifies setting aside personal interests and egoism to prioritize the well-being of society, the vulnerable, the needy, and the oppressed. The chivalrous individual considers it a sacred duty to establish social justice, offer selfless aid to people, and combat moral corruption in society [1]. Hamawi instructed his disciples not to confine themselves to remembrance (*dhikr*) and ritual worship, but to actively participate in community life and conduct educational and charitable works [7, p. 193].

Furthermore, Hamawi's Sufi-philosophical interpretation of "zuhd" (renunciation) directly resonates with social engagement. The thinker does not understand ascetism as fleeing from society, labor, or civic responsibility. In Hamawi's interpretation, true ascetism is the purification of the heart from worldly greed, wealth, and ambition; however, this does not imply severing ties with worldly affairs, honest work, or social activity. Human beings ought to live in the world, make productive use of its material and social benefits, acquire crafts and knowledge, yet refrain from making these things their ultimate spiritual goal. In other words, the world should reside in a person's hands and actions, but not take root in their heart. This approach enables the individual to actively



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participate in socio-economic relations while maintaining spiritual and moral integrity [7, p. 164].

Discussion

The historical period during which Sa'deddin Hamawi lived (late 12th century – first half of the 13th century) coincided with grave socio-political tragedies such as the Mongol invasions. Under such complex historical conditions, Hamawi and the Kubrawiya school demonstrated immense courage in asserting an active social and patriotic stance. While Hamawi's master, Najm al-Din Kubra, took up arms and was martyred defending the homeland during the siege of Khwarazm, Hamawi himself acted as a spiritual and intellectual leader, conducting active educational and social work to prevent spiritual despair, safeguard national and religious identity, and forestall social fragmentation [7, pp. 45–46]. The practical activities of the thinker prove that Sufi social agency is not merely a theoretical construct, but a real spiritual and practical force capable of rescuing society in times of crisis.

In Hamawi's doctrine, an individual's social activity is also defined by their educational and intellectual capacity. The thinker sought to create a synthesis between Sufi illumination (*irfan*) and rational-secular knowledge. In his view, ignorance is the primary cause of social decline. Therefore, a socially active individual must continuously acquire science and knowledge, disseminating this learning among members of society.

Hamawi himself trained numerous disciples, engaged with rich libraries and educational centers, and delivered lectures across key academic hubs of the Near and Middle East. These actions stand as a vivid example of channeling personal perfection and enlightenment into the service of social progress [7, pp. 52–53].



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In Hamawi's socio-philosophical views, the categories of "justice" and "compassion" emerge as ethical metrics of social activity. The thinker asserts that every action within society must be grounded in principles of equity and mercy. If individual social activity is directed solely toward personal or factional interests, it leads to social conflict and oppression. Conversely, the Perfect Human, partaking in the divine attributes of "al-Rahman" (The Compassionate) and "al-'Adl" (The Just), acts with mercy and fairness toward all humanity and all creation [7, pp. 210–211]. Today, this idea serves as a spiritual-philosophical foundation for concepts of humanism, civil society, and social responsibility.

Conclusion

In the doctrine of Sa'deddin Hamawi, the concept of the socially active individual appears as a logical and practical synthesis of Sufi ontology, epistemology, and ethics. The ideas advanced by Hamawi regarding the relationship between *walayah* and prophethood, returning from God to the creation (*sayr 'an Allah bi-Allah*), cosmic and social balance, *futuwwah*, enlightenment, and true ascetism necessitate viewing the individual not in isolation from society, but as its primary spiritual, moral, and social pillar:

- The spiritual heritage of Sa'deddin Hamawi is the spiritual property of the present day; preserving this heritage and utilizing every aspect of it is the duty of each individual.

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