THE PIONEER OF REFORM IN ISLAMIC SOCIETIES: A REVIEW OF SAYYID JAMĀL AD-DĪN ASADĀBĀDĪ'S IDEAS

O PIONEIRO DA REFORMA NAS SOCIEDADES ISLÂMICAS: UMA REVISÃO DO SAYYID JAMĀL AD-JAMĀL ASADĀBĀDĪ'S IDEAS*

MOHAMMAD VAZIN**
MAHDI GOLJAN***
ISLAMIC AZAD UNIVERSITY, IRAN

Abstract: The present study delves into the ideas proposed by Sayyid Jamāl ad-Dīn Asadābādī about social changes. To understand the notion of change in his philosophy, one must first inquire into what constituted a problem in society in Asadābādī's opinion and what certain disorders and deficiencies he attempted to address. The crises he intended to identify, scrutinize, and address had cultural, political, and social manifestations in his opinion. This paper aims to examine the idea of Islamic unity and the achievements made or the failure faced by this idea as reflected in Asadābādī's thoughts. It takes an analytical approach to studying this subject by drawing on authentic resources. Methodology: Within a conceptual framework, this study adopts an analytical-descriptive approach toward the research objective while focusing on relevant evidence. For this purpose, in addition to the concept of Islamic unity, a conceptual discussion is also presented on success and failure of this idea along a targeted analytical review of literature on this approach. Findings: Historical background and history of Islamic unity within the Islamic World. Conclusion: Different theories have been put forward on the decline and collapse of the theory of Islamic unity. The present essay looks into the ideas proposed by Asadābādī's to identify internal and external forces involved in the decline of Islamic societies.

Keywords: Sayyid Jamāl ad-Dīn Asadābādī (Afghānī). Reform. Islamic societies. Social changes. Islamic Unity.

Resumo: O presente estudo mergulha nas ideias propostas por Sayyid Jamāl ad-Dīn Asadābādī sobre mudanças sociais. Para compreender a noção de mudança na sua filosofia, é necessário primeiro investigar o que constituía um problema na sociedade na opinião de Asadābādī e que certas perturbações e deficiências ele tentou resolver. As crises que ele pretendia identificar, escrutinar e abordar tinham manifestações culturais, políticas e sociais na sua opinião. Este documento visa examinar a ideia de unidade islâmica e as conquistas alcançadas ou o fracasso enfrentado por esta ideia, tal como reflectido no pensamento de Asadābādī. Adopta uma abordagem analítica ao estudo deste assunto, recorrendo a recursos autênticos. Metodologia: Dentro de um quadro conceptual, este estudo adopta uma abordagem analítico-descritiva em relação ao objectivo da investigação, concentrando-se ao mesmo tempo em provas relevantes. Para este efeito, para além do conceito de unidade islâmica, é também apresentada uma discussão conceptual sobre o sucesso e o fracasso desta ideia ao longo de uma revisão analítica orientada da literatura sobre esta abordagem. Conclusões:

Contexto histórico e história da unidade islâmica no seio do Mundo Islâmico. Conclusão: Diferentes teorias foram apresentadas sobre o declínio e colapso da teoria da unidade islâmica. O presente ensaio analisa as ideias propostas por Asadābādī para identificar as forças internas e externas envolvidas no declínio das sociedades islâmicas.

Palavras-chave: Sayyid Jamāl ad-Dīn Asadābādī (Afghānī). Reforma. Sociedades islâmicas. Mudanças sociais. Unidade Islâmica.

Introduction

Islamic awakening is a social phenomenon which refers to revival and awareness of the Islamic *ummah* (community) that has regained its self-confidence and its pride in its religion, dignity, and ideological and sociopolitical independence, striving to play its natural role as the best community for people (Yazdan Panah, 2011: 348). The rise of Islamic awakening which recently brought changes to a number of Islamic countries raises a question about its theoretical background and the individual(s) whose ideas and actions fed this trend. Given the pioneering role of Egypt and the Ottoman Empire in the events that have taken place in the past two centuries, particularly after Napoleon invasions, attempts to answer this question may shift toward Asadābādī and the people around him, which of course is to some extent a right course of investigation.

It is essential to examine social changes based on social theories developed by various thinkers. Theories proposed by Muslim thinkers, including Asadābādī, analyze many social changes through the lens of changes in social and individual ideals. Based on such analyses, social changes are changes in ideals; that is, transformations of human ideals caused by changes in their thoughts and intents.

Sayyid Jamāl ad-Dīn Asadābādī is a well-known figure as a political fighter, social reformist, and the founder of political thinking process in Islamic countries. He was among the insightful socially committed intellectuals (Borujerdi, 1998: 44) with a dynamic mentality and a modern way of thinking. His writings evidently reflect his opposition to superstitions, ignorance, oppression, and cruelty. Throughout his lifetime, Asadābādī had only one goal, one mission in mind: to awaken the people of the Islamic community. As a responsibly engaged intellectual who sought justice, he never forgot freedom and instilled cultural-political transformations in Islamic societies (ibid.).

The solutions he proposed to lead the Islamic societies out of their problems were based on an intellectual point of view. He noticed the weaknesses of these societies,

suggesting revival as a cure for these defects. In his view, the fundamental factor contributing to these weak spots was interventions in Islamic countries by states that sought colonization of these countries to install despotic rulers. Asadābādī fought cultural colonization in the same way he opposed political colonization by west.

Methodology

This qualitative study is not based on statistics and experience; rather, based on a number of assumptions, it investigates Asadābādī's ideas to discover truth by raising some meaningful questions. A desk research approach was adopted to gather information from books, articles, and other publications.

Sayyid Jamāl ad-Dīn Asadābādī

Born in Sha'ban, 1254 AH/1839 in the village of Asadābād, Hamadan, Asadābādī accompanied his father (Sayyid Safdar) in a journey in 1264 AH to Qazvin where he started studying at seminaries. In the early 2166 AH, he moved to Tehran to reside in Sanglaj, a neighborhood in this city (Mohit Tabatabaei, 1991: 56). He owed his academic progress to his presence in Tehran and studying before great masters like Sayyid Mohammad Sadeq Tabatabaei, a distinguished scholar of the time, who helped him achieve the honor of wearing clerical apparel. In the same year, Asadābādī moved to Borūjerd where he stayed for three months and learned from Mirza Mahmūd Borūjerdī, before leaving the city accompanying his father in a journey to Najaf. After four years of education in Najaf, he received an authorization for *ijtihad* in religious matters from Sheikh Morteza Ansarī (Vaseghi, 1969: 20-22).

When he was 17, Asadābādī moved through Būshehr to India where he stayed for a year and a half and in 1273 AH, he traveled to Mecca on a ship. Following his pilgrimage, he went to Najaf and after four years left the city for Iran where he stayed for 5 months and then left the country for a journey to Afghanistan. In 1285 AH, Asadābādī left Afghanistan for India and resided in Mumbai (then Bombay) (Mohit Tabatabaei, 1991: 56-57).

Facing pressure from the British state and local officials, Asadābādī left India and in 1285 AH moved for the first time to Egypt and stayed in Cairo for forty days after which he was deported to Istanbul following a plot intrigued by his opponents and enemies. He was then deported back to Egypt where he taught for 9 years at Al-Azhar University. He then moved to Heydar Abad, India, and from there to Kolkata. His journey continued to London, Arabia, and then Tehran. Failing to make a good first impression on Naser al-Din Shah Qajar, Asadābādī went to Saint Petersburg to unite the Russian and Islamic states against England. During his 2-year residence in Saint Petersburg, he also paid a number of visits to the Russian Tsar (Garaudy, 1997: 11).

In 1306 AH, Asadābādī travelled to Germany where he met Naser al-Din Shah who officially invited him to return to Russia and offer his assistance for the process of legislation in Iran. In 1307 AH, Asadābādī returned to Iran, but again facing a plot schemed by courtiers, he had no choice but a 7-month sit-in at Abdul Azim Shrine. After being expelled from Iran, he stayed for a while in Basra and then travelled to London for treatment. In response to an invitation by Sultan Abdul Hamid, Asadābādī went to the Ottoman Empire in 1310 AH where he stayed for 4 years and 9 months and died in Istanbul on Tuesday, in Shawwal, 1314 AH. Asadābādī was buried in Istanbul Sheikh Cemetery (Iqbal, 1991: 25).

More than a politician, he was a man of pragmatic action with an influence that came from his charismatic personality (Enayat, 1993: 78). Asadābādī's political solution to the problem of decline of Muslim societies lied somewhere between Islamic unity under the auspices of the Ottoman Empire and implementing reforms within Islamic states, shifting toward either end of the spectrum (Tabatabaei, 2010: 410).

An important aspect of Asadābādī's thoughts was an endeavor to stand against colonialism and exploitation of nations which he opposed in all Islamic countries using every bit of his power; "for years, the European states have longed for an influence over Iran. They have used any opportunity - even the smallest windows - to contrive deceitful schemes, attempting to spread their influence across the country and set the stage for ruling over this land" (Khodakarami, 1996: 43).

Asadābādī's Character

A key to Asadābādī's character can be found in his ambitious endeavor that led him to many places, calling out his words without any fear of what might have come in his way, devoting his life to his ideals for reform, and hoping to see the revival of the eastern nations (Vaseghi, 1969: 348) and raising the Islamic world to power (Ranjbar, 2007: 23).

Asadābādī believed that the geopolitical borders would soon go through some changes bringing about fundamental transformations in the global policies and disrupting the international relations (Asadābādī's, 1979: 248). He could see "a fast-flowing stream of modernity flooding into the east" (Vaseghi, 1969: 349).

His unique personality was a product of a combination of nature and nurture. He was extraordinarily smart and talented, with a creative dynamic mind. Throughout his life, Asadābādī experienced many developments in his thoughts and knowledge (Motahhari, n.d.: 34). He was also a very influential figure with strong words and ideas that would penetrate every mind (ibid.). The culture he acquired made him familiar with the Islamic culture under whose influence Asadābādī never fell for the western culture. Another positive aspect in his acquired character was his familiarity with the world and the languages spoken at his time (ibid: 35). Through his numerous journeys around the world he acquired a good knowledge of the Islamic world and made great efforts for emancipation and salvation of this world. As Asadābādī was familiar with the culture and spirit of Muslims around the world, he knew very well the nature of movements, uprisings, and icons then leading the Islamic countries (ibid.). He was also sufficiently aware of the political, economic, and geographical situations of Islamic countries (ibid: 36).

Asadābādī's Methodology

A major part of disagreements on Asadābādī's character, ideas, and practice arises out of what he did in practice since he hid his true character for different reasons arising out of different political and geographical situations which led him express different ideas at different places. At Egypt's Al-Azhar, where most people were Sunni Muslims dominated by Ash'arī school of philosophical thought, he spoke of philosophy while in Iran, where

philosophy was taught and learned, he talked about exploitation, colonialism, and the need to fight superstitions and in India, where scientism was the dominant current particularly because of a movement led Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, Asadābādī wrote in refutation of naturist religion and in criticism of excessive scientism. In fact, in any society Asadābādī followed a path to Islamic awakening by focusing, in practice and theory, on the problems faced by that society (Saghafi, 2008: 17; Rahmanian, 2008: 61).

This is why he is often referred to as a man of politics and, above other descriptions, a man of pragmatism. "Undoubtedly, Asadābādī is among those people who, in André Gide's words, employed their talent to develop their lives, not to develop as set of written materials. Asadābādī way of life reflects an epic story that needs extraordinary talent and ability to develop" (Mojtahedi, 1983: 17).

In fact, Asadābādī was a committed scholar and thinker who sought knowledge, philosophy, and theories not for sake of knowledge itself, but to politically lead the Islamic community and help the oppressed *Ummah* grow. He wanted everything to serve an ultimate goal, a great ideal he developed in his ideas and thoughts: realization of happiness and transcendence for the Muslim people (ibid: 19-20). Even when it came to philosophy, Asadābādī used it in its pragmatic sense. "It is philosophy that communicates human to human, expresses the dignity of human, and shows him the decent ways. Decline of any community originated from a defect in its philosophical spirit; a defect that then spread into other fields of knowledge, literature, and communications" (Asadābādī, 1976: 62-63).

Asadābādī's goals, ideals, and religious-sociopolitical reforms:
Scholars believe that Asadābādī pursued three clear goals:

- Revival of religious thinking

- Uprising of the East against the dominance by the foreigners

- Establishment of a constitutional state in Islamic countries (Albahi, 1998: 180)

Asadābādī was the leader of sociopolitical reforms in Islamic societies. He believed that reforms in culture, religious beliefs, and policies can be realized by standing against or fighting the foreign invasion (Kafi, 2010: 49). He emphasized that not only political or legislative systems but also the whole social conditions of the world were far

from transcendental values and that Islamic societies needed transformation (Albahi, 1998: 186).

Asadābādī's reformist movement targeted ways of thinking, social dimensions, and religion (Sahebi, 1988: 81). For him, the pivotal role played by religion in development of Islamic societies rooted in its influence over the society, and that is why he emphasized revival of religious life and reforms and revitalization of society based on religious teachings to address domestic problems (Kafi, 2010: 50).

Pathology of Islamic Societies

It can be inferred from Asadābādī's words that decline of Muslim societies rooted in:

- Ruling despotism
- Ignorance of masses in Islamic societies and lagging behind the fast-moving wheels of science and civilization
- Penetration of superstitions into Muslim thinking and their departure from the original Islamic thoughts
- Division among Muslims for religious and non-religious (*e.g.* ethnical) reasons
- Western colonialism
- Sectarianism and sectarian movements
- Abandonment of ethical virtues and attachment to ethical vices (Movasaghi, 1996: 289)

Asadābādī saw despotic rulers as a factor contributing to disintegration in Islamic unity and that is why, in his next steps, he fought despotism that ruled over Islamic nations (Nasri, 2007: 171). The second factor contributing to division among Muslims, in Asadābādī's view, was squander, luxury, and focus on the material life: "What is it that stops us from thinking and stops our ideas from moving forward? It has suppressed any form of uprising. The reason is nothing but those who lead a wasteful life, only think of

what to eat joyfully and where to sleep comfortably. These are led by greed, have their hands on properties of the others, and are proud of having servants around them" (ibid, 173).

The third factor contributing to division in Muslim nations, for Asadābādī, was neglecting religious interests of Muslims. He regarded religion as a force stronger than ethnical and language ties in uniting Muslims and wrote extensively to defend the religion against attacks. And probably this is why he extremely emphasized the role of scholars who, in his opinion, were responsible for failure in realization of Islamic unity: "What excuses do scholars, as the guardians of religion and knowledgeable persons in religious matters, have to offer? Why do they not try to raise awareness among Muslims and resolve their disputes? Why do they not use their best efforts to reinforce what Muslims wish for?" (ibid: 173-174).

A number of scholars see the Islamic unity movement as a movement for "unity of religions" toward a single religion defined under Islam: "The idea of Islamic unity means to bring the "seventy two nations" back into a single community of Muhammadic *Ummah* with a single set of religious rules and customs..." (Tabari, n.d., 135)

And this can be the result of a confusing the notion of "alliance among religions" with the notion of "unity of religions" (For more on the difference between the two notions see Farasatkhah, 1998, p. 275).

External Factors

A fundamental factor contributing to decline of Islamic society is the political, military, economic, and cultural attacks of the colonialist foreigners onto the Islamic community. Unconcerned of any consequences, the colonialists plunder the Islamic countries and, if the situation permits, use military invasion or otherwise rely on economic and cultural attacks, sanctions, and cultural transubstantiation to suck the bloods of the Islamic community. As Asadābādī noted, "well-established states did not collapse, neither did they disappear, unless as a result of intervention by foreigners who installed themselves at sensitive positions of governance since any subverted state showed signs of foreign intervention, particularly in cases where there existed disagreements between the foreigners and the targeted state; a disagreement which turned into dispute and spite becoming rooted

in their nature, or in cases where these people have longstanding habits of envy and spite" (Movasaghi, 1998: 92).

Asadābādī was concerned about the increasing influence and power of enemy over the Islamic lands: "What a misfortune! What a failure! What is this? What a catastrophe is this? England has invaded Egypt, Sudan, and the great Indian Peninsula, all belonging to the great Islamic world. Morocco, Tunisia, and Algeria have been invaded by France. Java and the islands in the ocean have been possessed by the Netherlands. The western Turkistan, the vast lands of the Transoxiana, Caucasia, and Dagestan have been captured by the Russian. The eastern Turkistan have been conquered by China and nothing is left as an independent land belonging to the Islamic community. Even these are exposed to a great risk" (Vaseghi, 1969: 66).

He wrote elsewhere, "the population of the Islamic *Ummah* now is close to four hundred millions. The land belonging to this population extends from the coasts of the Pacific Ocean to the heartlands of China. These are wealthy and highly productive lands. Yet I see these lands invaded and the nations residing at these lands plundered by the foreigners. Most parts are now ruled by foreigners who – unwilling to listen to the words and pay attention to the interests of the inhabitants – have shared these lands among themselves" (Asadābādī and Abduh, 1976: 129).

Internal Factors

The internal factors contributing to decline of Islamic societies can be classified as cultural, economic-political, and social factors each briefly discussed below.

Political-Economic Factors

The most significant weakness and contributing factor to decline of Islamic societies was division. As Asadābādī noted, "Muslims at east and west are divided and in disagreement; the religious tie between Islamic societies has been broken. Brethren do not care what their brethren or neighbors are going through. No individual Muslim keep the word they give to another" (ibid: 131).

Bad intentions and unscrupulous schemes devised by the rulers and leaders of Islamic lands fanned the fuel of religious divide. "The division between Sunni and Shiite Muslims is the product of years of greed and wickedness practiced by rulers of Islamic lands" (Halabi, 2004: 55).

In Asadābādī's view, the disintegration of the Islamic *Ummah* which set the stage for ruling by incompetent rulers was the result of two major events: the landsliding and devastating Mongol conquest and the catastrophic European invasion. "The two events installed incompetent rulers over the Islamic states. Those completely ignorant of politics reigned over the governments. The rulers and monarchs were ethically corrupted and naturally added to the catastrophes and hard times experienced by the Muslim societies. This led to a reign of incompetence and ethical and social corruption (Asadābādī and Abduh, 1976: 57).

On abjection and contemptibility of these rulers, Asadābādī noted "They were dominated by fear of foreign powers, giving up hope to desperation" (ibid: 129).

Some rulers of Islamic lands were so dependent on foreign powers that they delegated their political and official affairs to these powers (ibid: 91).

Asadābādī explains the economic conditions of the Islamic societies: "This farmland is used to grow good quality dates, pomegranates, wheat, and barely. Iran holds good coal mines but there is no one to work at these mines. The country is abundant in iron yet there is nobody to extract it. There exist copper and turquoise stones and oil wells. The land is so fertile that anything can be grown on it. It can be used for crop rotation. The deserts can also be used as farmlands if sufficient water is supplied. But the whole land has been abandoned. As no measure is taken to improve these lands, the population is constantly falling. Formerly habitable rural areas are now deserted and abandoned places with thousands of people forced to leave their own lands to migrate to Caucasia where they hopefully can find a place to rest and reside. Thousands of people have migrated to other countries including the Asian and European lands of the Ottoman Empire, Arabia, and Anatolia. In Istanbul, I met a number of Iranian people engaged in the most indecent jobs" (Mohit Tabatabei, 1991: 65).

Cultural Factors

Asadābādī believed that Muslims were left hopeless because they forgot the promise made to God, became indifferent to their own situation, and stopped using reason (Asadābādī, 1969: 56; Asadābādī and Abduh, 1976: 128).

He linked the state of underdevelopment of Muslim societies, among other things, to deviation from the authentic, true Islam: "In the early days of Islam, Muslims were united around their belief in the original powerful principles and well-established rules of Islam which covered all aspects of individual and social life, moving toward greatness and power. However, the foundations of the Islamic *Ummah* started shaking into a deteriorating state when Muslims abandoned the true principles and strong rules of Islam, replacing them with arbitrary rules which although not initially significant eventually replaced the true original principles of Islam, forming deviations from the path of truth. Muslims started to throw away everything the religion was supposed to cover and all rules of felicity contained in the religion, with only a shell left of Islam with no true substance. All that was left was a set of words and phrases with arbitrary rules and practices that led the Muslims away from the truth; a truth that sometimes can be heard in some regions of the Islamic community (Asadābādī and Abduh, 1976: 20).

Extremely surprised that Muslims' way of life was no longer based on Islamic teachings, Asadābādī noted "With all these teachings and rules, one is intimidated by the current sittuations faced by the followers of Islam. Not only have Muslims lost power but also they seem reluctant to follow the very first order of the religion; that is to gain power and the ability to defend...other nations have taken the lead and some of them even surpassed the Muslim nations they have under their domination" (ibid: 26).

The knowledge crisis was also very important in decline of Islamic societies as both seminaries and the new education institutions suffered from lack of knowledge. Scholars and experts at the centers of knowledge excellence in the Islamic world totally ignored the developments in the outside word and "the lessons never went beyond mere words and reviews of older texts or discussions over probable matters. There was no sign of what the outside world was doing in history, geography, mathematics, and chemistry. Anything outside the established customs or habits was anathematized or denounced. Installing water taps or valves at dirty ablution places or reading books on geography,

natural science, or philosophy was forbidden and wearing boots was considered against the rules of religion. Obviously, in this situation anyone who tried to bring reforms to the religious thoughts would be accused of being a disbeliever" (Enayat, 1993: 116).

The colonial movement relied on a variety of tools to transform people into what it wanted them to be, a generation void of any identity and completely receptive of the messages instilled by the invading colonial culture. Therefore, Asadābādī addresses the intellectuals who mindlessly brought the western science and technology into the Islamic world: "These people are like a stupid mother who feeds her suckling baby with anything she finds delicious even if it is not compatible with the baby's digestive system. These apparently civilized people open the gate to an enemy who divide and rule. They help the enemy invade the nation under the guise of reform, philanthropy, and advice. In this way, they lead the nation and the *Ummah* to the verge of fall and decline. What an unfortunate fate!" (Asadābādī and Abdu, 1976: 208).

Social Factors

The increasing prevalence of nationalism in Islamic societies, promoted by the western colonialism, together with the Shiite-Sunni religious conflicts and balkanization of Islamic countries were all intended to eradicate Islamic unity. On division among the Muslims Asadābādī noted, "the ordinary people may justify their ignorance and laxity in doing what they are required to do by God, but what excuses can scholars cite for their ignorance? They are supposed to gain knowledge and to protect the divine religion. Why do these scholars and leaders not try to fight division? Why do they stop trying to bring unity to the Muslim community? Why do they not rely on their authority and knowledge to support the Muslims' dreams? (ibid: 86).

Implementation of western culture and values in Islamic societies not only failed to produce any fruitful results, but also helped "some of those who educated in foreign academia bring and implement in their countries what they learned in the area of science and technology. Consequently, they changed the state of ethical foundations and situations of their countries. They even transformed the way people used to eat, the clothes they used to wear, and the flooring and utensil they used to utilize. In doing so, they became more

catholic than the European pope. They were proud of doing this and showed it off to people, unaware of the fact that they effectively handed their national wealth to other countries in return for ephemeral luxuries. They depleted the financial resources of the national industries and destroyed businesses that lacked the power to compete the modern equipment. This is like cutting the nation's nose, giving it an ugly face" (ibid.)

An important point to note in Asadābādī's failure is that his involvement in the political games of his time and his efforts to take advantage of the conflicts of colonial interests (particularly among England, France, and Russia) to the benefit of the Muslim society, did not produce fruitful outcomes and, despite his good faith and tactfulness, set the stage for charging him with a number of accusations (Vaseghi, 1969: 111, 106). In his late life, Asadābādī himself regretted this overly optimistic approach: "I wish I had sown the seeds of my ideas completely in the fertile land of my nation's mind. I had better avoided wasting my useful ideas on the wasteland of monarchy. What I planted in the nation's mind grew and bore fruits while what I planted on monarchy perished in vain. No monarch of the east throughout these times heeded to my well-intentioned advice. They all refused to hear my words because of being ignorant and lustful." (ibid, 348)

Therefore, Asadābādī's endeavor neither persisted long enough in a particular society to produce fruitful results nor did they reach the profoundness and vastness needed in all Islamic states to nearly realize the ambitious ideal of "Islamic unity" (Eghdami, 1978: 39). Of course the journey to realization of this ideal was further complicated by other factors including the historical divide among the eastern societies, in particular Islamic societies, as well as the agents of colonialism and monarchism (Esmaeelnia, 2004: 155).

Conclusion

Islamic societies, dominated by the greedy colonialist states, were in a steady state of decline. The rulers and leaders of Islamic lands were only concerned about their own power and state of ruling, with no constructive tool or action in place to reform or correctively transform these societies. Whether through domination or oppressing Muslims to strip them of their identity, these colonialists started to approach their goals in by inch while Islamic societies, unaware of the risk to which they were exposed, were fanning the

fuel by deepening the divide among various groups. Within these societies, there existed poor knowledge and insight to religious teachings which together with reluctance to progress in science and culture pushed the societies further back into the abyss of total collapse.

The situation prepared everything for the enemy to push for its plans. With its special means and techniques, the enemy targeted the Muslim territories, extending its dominance and influence over a vast land from the Indian Peninsula to Albania, from Tunisia to Maldives. Enemy from the outside and the despotic dissolute rulers from the inside were destroying this formerly great structure, doing anything they could do to make the Islamic magnificence disappear in history.

Economic decline, natural disasters, oppression and cruelty, and many more sowed the seeds of despair in the eastern nations. This strengthened the enemy's determination in seeking dominance over the Islamic lands. To quote Adīb Ishāq, "[as if] the east was destined to fall following an age of magnificence and prosperity, to descend into a contemptible state following an age of greatness and elegance, and to fall prey to greedy predators who would have it in the palm of their hands."

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