



Fazl Ibn Ahmad: Philosophical Reflections on The Socio-Political Context of His Era

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Abstract: This article provides information about the philosophical analysis of the social, economic, political, and cultural environment during the time of Fazl ibn Ahmad. The work “Iddatul Uqul” and “Umdatul Ma’qul” (The Promise of the Intellects and the Basis of What is Pleasing to the Intellect) presents thoughts on the soul, purity, spirit, and knowledge. In the process of building New Uzbekistan, the ideas of Fazl ibn Ahmad remain crucial in today’s complex era, particularly in nurturing the youth into spiritually developed individuals and raising them morally. In the current context, the effective use of Fazl ibn Ahmad’s “Iddatul Uqul” and “Umdatul Ma’qul” (The Promise of the Intellects and the Basis of What is Pleasing to the Intellect) is highlighted as a priority in social development, societal well-being, and the fulfillment of human needs.

Keywords: Islam, Sufism, Spirituality, Philosophy, Culture, Development, Science, Democracy, Tradition, Civilization.

Introduction

From a philosophical point of view, culture is action, thinking, experience, and adaptation to new circumstances. Each generation must critically reinterpret culture and bring innovation to it. Otherwise, culture turns into a burden rather than a heritage.

Nowadays, when people think about science and culture, modern individuals often regard culture as a continuation of previous cultures and merely a repetition of them. They imagine culture to be the reproduction of cultural forms that existed in the past. In their view, the essence of culture lies in repeating the deeds and traditions of previous generations.

In the cultural heritage of Eastern people, the unparalleled power of intellect and spirituality is celebrated with a special passion. The teachings of Abulqosim Firdavsi, Nizami Ganjavi, and Alisher Navoi serve as vivid evidence of this.

Foresight – the ability to anticipate the future, analyze and predict it – is one of the key tasks of science, and especially of philosophy. Science and philosophy do not study random events or isolated occurrences, but rather the fundamental, stable, and consistently recurring patterns and relationships behind them. By analyzing the past and the present situation, they make scientific forecasts about the future.

Over time, unprecedented changes can occur among the nations and peoples of the world – great empires may decline, khanates may collapse, and powerful states may unexpectedly rise in

unforeseen regions. Anyone who has studied world history has witnessed many such events, and any historian can provide at least dozens of examples of these occurrences.

Methodology

The period during which Fazl ibn Ahmad lived corresponds to the rule of the Seljuks, that is, the late 11th and early 12th centuries. The thinker himself stated that his work "Iddat al-'Uqul" was written in the year 558 AH. Therefore, it can be concluded that the period in which the thinker lived and created falls at the end of the 11th century and the beginning of the 12th century. Notably, the Iranian researcher Najib Moyil Khorawi also mentioned in his research that Fazl ibn Ahmad lived in Khorasan during the late 5th century and early 7th century AH.

Fazl ibn Ahmad was a native of Khorasan and lived during the second half of the 5th century AH and the first half of the 6th century AH. Like many scholars of Khorasan, he belonged to the period before the Mongol invasions and is among the lesser-known and little-studied scholars, much like many other aspects of Khorasan's culture and civilization.

Thus, in the person of Fazl ibn Ahmad, we see a representative of those scholars who achieved great heights in science, literature, and culture, yet have not been sufficiently mentioned in the pages of history. This situation applies not only to the thinker himself but also to many other distinguished scholars from Khorasan.

Result and Discussion

According to our research, the reason why such thinkers did not remain on the stage of history may be the impact of the Mongol invasion. During the Mongol conquests, many nations experienced the loss of their scientific and spiritual heritage and values, which led subsequent generations to face serious obstacles in studying their own history and traditions.

After the Mongol invasion, Khorasan lost its former material and spiritual strength, and its influence on the region's language and culture diminished, eventually becoming insignificant.

Discussion

The approach of some researchers influences the way history is studied and analyzed. Throughout history, many cultures have recovered even after severe disasters, and new doctrines have contributed to the emergence of progress. In this regard, the scientific heritage of Khorasan is no exception. This means that the scientific legacy of Khorasan has not yet been fully studied. This may be related to the challenges faced by the region in later periods.

This is undoubtedly a weak and incorrect perception. With the decline of Balkh, Bukhara, Ghazni, and Nishapur, the economic and cultural life of Khorasan became centered around Herat. At that time, Herat developed to such an extent in terms of socio-economic, political, cultural, and scientific aspects that, on one hand, it encompassed

Transoxiana, and on the other hand, it extended its influence to the eastern and western regions of Iran.

Thus, Khorasan's culture did not end with the Mongol invasion – it transformed, adapted, and continued in new forms. Seeing history only through destruction means forgetting the living nature of culture. The Mongol invasion was a harsh trial for Khorasan, but it overcame this trial and brought its spiritual and cultural heritage into a new era.

For this reason, conducting more research on Khorasan during and after the invasion is necessary to expand the academic horizons of contemporary scholars.

When discussing Khorasan, as well as Eastern languages and culture, the conversation often revolves around certain famous figures, and opinions tend to center around them: Bayhaqi, Asadi, Firdawsi, Nasir Khusraw, Rudaki, and the poets of the Shahid Balkhi era, the orators of Ghazni, Abu Yazid Bastami, Abu Said Mehnayi Kharaqani, the sheikh of Herat, and several other notable figures. Thinkers have provided information about the language, culture, customs, values, and sciences of their time. However, in order to present Eastern culture as a system, an existing cohesive form, and a mechanism that reflects its historical essence, we must not forget that we need to study the history, language, and culture of Khorasan in a broader context than what is currently known.

Thus, the fact that information about science, culture, and socio-economic realities in the 11th-12th centuries is only reflected in the works of three or four poets and scholars indicates that this is insufficient to demonstrate the reforms of that time. From this perspective, this topic is methodologically relevant and serves as an object of study for contemporary researchers. This is important because introducing the contributions of unknown scholars like Fazl ibn Ahmad and others to world science, as well as acquainting the general public with their ideas and teachings, which can influence the development of today's youth, holds significant value.

The regions close to Herat and its surroundings, such as Sabzewar and Nishapur, were within Herat's sphere of influence. Similarly, areas like Sarakhs, Khvafs, Birjand, Jam, Toybod, Turbat, and Tun were dependent on Herat, with everything in these regions being directly influenced by Herat.

The name of the Seljuk state is derived from the leader of the nomadic Turkic Oghuz tribe, Saljuq, and is considered to be linked to the Iranian territories. These were a nomadic tribe, and their most important wealth consisted of flocks of sheep and horses. Some researchers have noted that the Seljuks' warhorses astonished people with their hard hooves and eagle-like speed. Abulfazl Muhammad ibn Husayn referred to the Turkmens as "camel herders", indicating that camels held an important place among their wealth. The main trade activities of the nomads involved meat, milk, and wool.

During the Seljuk rule, the formation of their state in Khorasan, a region where urban culture had flourished, only took place after they developed a protective stance toward settled life and urban civilization. The political center of the Seljuk state was Nishapur, the most important city in Khorasan, which occupied an area of about 1,680 hectares during this period. The population of Nishapur ranged from 110,000 to 220,000

people. During the reign of Tughrul Bey, Nishapur lost its position to the city of Ray as a result of the state's westward expansion policy. During the reign of Sultan Malik Shah, the capital was moved from Ray to Isfahan. At that time, Isfahan became the largest city of the Seljuk state. After Sultan Sanjar ascended to the Seljuk throne, the state center was moved to the city of Merv. During Sultan Sanjar's reign, Merv became the most important cultural center of the Seljuk state. At its peak, the population of Merv reached approximately 150,000 people. In addition to these cities, other major population centers included Herat, Balkh, Qazvin, Hamadan, Yazd, Qum, Merv, Baghdad, Ahvaz, and Mosul. Important cities such as Bukhara, Samarkand, Ghazni, Damascus, Aleppo, and Urfa, which were located on the borders of the states under Seljuk control, can also be added to this list. After the 12th century, scholars, poets, craftsmen, and various professionals migrated from Herat to the Indian subcontinent. They brought science and culture to those lands and developed them further. Some went to Central Asia and Turkestan, where they established their own "homes of existence" based on science and culture. Many moved to Tabriz and Isfahan, where they also contributed to the development of science. Some even went to Asia Minor, where they created vast opportunities for the development of Islamic sciences, as first initiated by Bahouddin Valad, Muhaqqiq Termezi, and Jalaluddin Balkhi.

As history shows, powerful centers do not remain stagnant; rather, the doctrines created by people play a role in the development of science and culture in other periods, where they evolve and progress.

During the Seljuk rule, science and culture spread to the following regions after the Mongol invasion:

1. First, in the Central Asia region, it laid the foundation for the emergence of Sufism, jurisprudence, and literature;
2. Second, in Isfahan and Tabriz, it became part of the classical Iranian culture;
3. Third, in Asia Minor, through thinkers like Bahouddin Valad, it influenced the development of the Mevlevi order, Sufism, and philosophical sciences.

Because the first step in utilizing such a legacy requires understanding the content and form of the countless chains that formed the circle of Eastern written works both within and outside the Eastern region. One of these chains is the collection of treatises that were created around a hundred years before the Mongol invasion and still exist today.

Thus, there are two approaches to scientific heritage:

- 1) First, from the perspective of intellectual cognition and systematization. That is, our cultural wealth exists, but in order to make use of it, we need to understand how it was created, how it is interconnected, and how it relates to various periods and regions.
- 2) Second, from the perspective of written sources. That is, the reforms in the socio-economic, cultural-educational, and political fields of each era are engraved in history through written sources.

Using scientific heritage is not about loving it, but rather analyzing it and understanding the customs of nations through study.

Conclusion

The teachings of Fazl ibn Ahmad are also underexplored. In some teachings, the thinker is referred to as “Hakim” or “al-Hakim al-Fozil” (meaning a wise and virtuous scholar).

The author of Persian and Arabic treatises, as we mentioned, is not fully recognized. His name and information are not recorded in any sources or works from his time, nor in medieval or later sources. In the copies of his collection of treatises, he is consistently referred to as “Hakim” or “Hakim al-Fozil”.

Thus, although the thinker is remembered as “Hakim” and “The Virtuous Scholar”, there is no clear information about his true name, life, or activities. In any culture, greatness is not measured solely by fame. Invisible scholars can also be the vital lifeblood of cultural heritage.

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