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An Analytical Overview of ‘*Abaqāt al-Anwār* by Allameh Sayyid Mir Hamid Hussain Hindi

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Abstract

This article presents an analytical overview of ‘*Abaqāt al-Anwār* a seminal work in Islamic scholarship authored by Allameh Sayyid Mir Hamid Hussain Hindi. The paper delves into the book's thematic explorations, historical context, and its enduring relevance in contemporary Islamic discourse, particularly in addressing sectarian critiques. ‘*Abaqāt al-Anwār* serves as a critical rebuttal to *Tuhfa Ithnā ‘Asharīyah* by Mawlawi Abdul Aziz Dehlawi, a prominent Sunni scholar whose work is noted for its biased representation of Shia beliefs. The analysis highlights the scholarly rigor and objectivity employed by Mir Hamid Hussain in systematically addressing the claims made by Abdul Aziz, utilizing logical reasoning and well-researched arguments to clarify misconceptions surrounding Shia Islam. The article also outlines the significant contributions of Mir Hamid Hussain to Islamic thought, including his extensive library and diverse writings that reflect his engagement with theological, jurisprudential, and literary themes. The methodology employed in ‘*Abaqāt al-Anwār* is characterized by a structured approach, addressing critical aspects of Shia theology, history, and sociopolitical dimensions through twelve comprehensive chapters. In conclusion, the article posits that ‘*Abaqāt al-Anwār* is not merely a rebuttal to sectarian critiques but a significant scholarly endeavor that enriches the understanding of Shia Islam and its theological foundations.

Keywords: ‘*Abaqāt al-Anwār*, Mir Hamid Hussain Hindi, *Tuhfa Ithnā ‘Asharīyah*, Mawlawi Abdul Aziz Dehlawi, Shia Beliefs, Imamate, Shia Theology.

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Introduction

‘*Abaqāt al-Anwār* stands as a pivotal contribution to Islamic scholarship, particularly within the Shia tradition. Authored by Allameh Sayyid Mir Hamid Hussain Hindi, the work serves as a scholarly rebuttal to *Tuhfa Ithnā ‘Asharīyah* by Mawlawi Abdul Aziz Dehlawi, a prominent Sunni scholar known for his biased portrayal of Shia beliefs. This paper aims to elucidate the contributions of ‘*Abaqāt al-Anwār* to the understanding of Shia Islam and its theological foundations. This article aims to encapsulate the essence of ‘*Abaqāt al-Anwār* and its contributions to Islamic scholarship, highlighting the importance of scholarly discourse in addressing sectarian differences.

Problem Statement

The discourse surrounding sectarian differences within Islam, particularly between Sunni and Shia traditions, has often been marred by misunderstandings and biased portrayals. One significant example is the work *Tuhfa Ithnā ‘Asharīyah* by Mawlawi Abdul Aziz Dehlawi, which presents a critical view of Shia beliefs, leading to misconceptions and heightened sectarian tensions. In response, Allameh Sayyid Mir Hamid Hussain Hindi authored ‘*Abaqāt al-Anwār* a comprehensive scholarly rebuttal aimed at clarifying the theological foundations of Shia Islam and addressing the inaccuracies propagated by Dehlawi's work. This article seeks to explore the contributions of ‘*Abaqāt al-Anwār* to Islamic scholarship, emphasizing the importance of rigorous academic discourse in mitigating sectarian divides and fostering mutual understanding among Muslims.

Historical Context:

Allameh Mir Hamid Hussain was born in 1246 AH in Lucknow, India, into a family deeply rooted in religious scholarship. His upbringing in a scholarly environment fostered a profound commitment to Islamic studies, leading him to engage with various disciplines, including theology, jurisprudence, and philosophy. His scholarly journey was marked by resilience and dedication, as he sought to acquire knowledge even under challenging circumstances.

Allameh Mir Hamid Hossein, emerged from a lineage steeped in religious scholarship, specifically within the Imamiyah tradition. (Tehrani. Agha Bozor. p. 347.) His father, Seyyed Mohammad Qoli Mousavi

Lucknowi, was a distinguished theologian, which significantly influenced Seyyed Hamid Hossein's intellectual and spiritual development.

Growing up in a household characterized by a profound commitment to Islamic scholarship, Seyyed was immersed in a rich educational environment that fostered his pursuit of knowledge. From an early age, he engaged with various disciplines, including theology, jurisprudence, principles of Islamic law, and philosophy. His education was further enriched by the tutelage of esteemed scholars, including his grandfather, who played a pivotal role in shaping his understanding of the Shia faith.

This foundational period of his life not only equipped him with a robust theological framework but also instilled in him a lifelong dedication to the study and dissemination of Islamic knowledge. Allameh Mir Hamid Hossein's early experiences in this spiritually charged environment laid the groundwork for his future contributions to Islamic thought and scholarship. Mir Hamid Hossein's scholarly life is characterized by a profound spirit of inquiry and a relentless pursuit of knowledge. As noted by Sheikh Agha Bozorg Tehrani, he was distinguished by his commitment to research and investigation, demonstrating extensive expertise across various disciplines. His commendable familiarity with hadiths, historical narratives, and Islamic culture underscores his intellectual breadth. (ibid)

Moreover, an essential aspect of his academic journey is his resilience in the face of numerous challenges. Mir Hamid Hossein's dedication to the acquisition of scientific resources and literature is evident in his willingness to undertake extensive and arduous journeys. His commitment to scholarship was so profound that he even served in the household of a Sunni scholar to gain access to critical texts. This determination not only highlights his dedication to his research but also reflects the lengths to which he would go to enrich his understanding and contribute to the field of Islamic studies.

At the end of his life, the Sayyid experienced significant physical ailments attributed to his extensive scholarly pursuits. The prolonged practice of placing large and thick books upon his chest resulted in the development of calluses, indicative of the physical toll exacted by his dedication to study. Furthermore, the repetitive strain from excessive writing rendered his right hand completely incapacitated, necessitating a transition to writing with his left hand in his later years. After a lifetime

characterized by prolific scholarly contributions, the Sayyid passed away on the 18th of Safar in the year 1306 AH, at the age of sixty. His remains were interred in the Ghaffaran Hosseiniyah, located in the city of Lucknow, marking the end of a significant intellectual legacy .(Amin, Mohsen, v4. p.381.)

Methodology and Themes:

In ‘*Abaqāt al-Anwār*’ Mir Hamid Hussain adopts a rigorous and scientific approach, characterized by fairness and objectivity. He systematically addresses the claims made by Abdul Aziz, employing logical reasoning and well-researched arguments to clarify misconceptions surrounding Shia Islam. The work meticulously examines the authenticity of hadiths and scriptural sources, particularly those related to the Imamate, countering the assertion that Shia reliance is limited to a few texts. The book *Tuhfa Ithnā ‘Ashariyah* (the Gift of the Twelver) is structured into twelve comprehensive chapters, each addressing critical aspects of the Shia sect and its theological, historical, and sociopolitical dimensions.

1. The first chapter delves into the origins of the Shia sect, exploring its emergence and subsequent fragmentation into various factions.
2. The second chapter critically examines the strategies employed by Shia groups, focusing on methods of misguidance and deception.
3. The third chapter provides an overview of the Shia's ancestral lineage, highlighting notable scholars and significant texts within their tradition.
4. The fourth chapter assesses the conditions surrounding Shia narrations, including an analysis of their narrators' credibility.
5. The fifth chapter is dedicated to theological discussions, addressing core beliefs and doctrines.
6. The sixth chapter focuses on the concept of prophet hood, exploring its implications within Shia thought.
7. The seventh chapter discusses leadership, particularly the notion of Imamate and its significance in Shia Islam.
8. The eighth chapter contemplates the afterlife, examining Shia eschatological beliefs.
9. The ninth chapter addresses jurisprudential issues, outlining legal principles and practices within the Shia framework.
10. The tenth chapter presents critiques of the three caliphs, the Mother of the Believers, and other companions, reflecting on historical tensions.

11. The eleventh chapter characterizes the Shia sect through three distinct sections: misconceptions, biases, and errors, providing a critical lens on common misunderstandings.

12. Finally, the twelfth chapter discusses the concepts of loyalty (Tawallá) and disavowal (*Tabarrá*), incorporating ten preliminary discussions that elucidate their significance in Shia identity. (Mir Hamed Hossein, v 6. p 1200) This structured approach allows for a thorough academic exploration of the Shia sect, facilitating a deeper understanding of its complexities and nuances.

In examining the work of Molawi Abdul Aziz, it is essential to note that his critique primarily targets the discourses of prominent figures within the rigid Sunni tradition, including Ibn Taymiyyah, Ruzbihan, Jowzi, and Kabuli. While his analysis provides a critical perspective on these scholars, it appears that Aziz does not contribute novel insights or original arguments to the discourse. Instead, his work serves as a commentary on existing interpretations rather than an advancement of new ideas within the field. This raises questions about the originality and scholarly impact of his contributions in the context of contemporary Islamic thought. (Milani, Seyyed Ali Hosseini, (1404), v1. p 111).

In his commentary on the book, Mir Hamad Hossein explicitly acknowledges that the text in question is a translation and characterizes it as a derivative work, asserting that it constitutes a form of intellectual appropriation from an earlier source. The original manuscript is attributed to Sawaqi Khwaja Nasrullah Kabuli, whose contributions predate the translated version. Abdul Aziz undertook the task of translating this original work into Persian, initially releasing it under the title "Musta'ar" before subsequently publishing it under his own name. (Mir Hamed Hossein, (1338), v6. p 1199). This situation raises important questions regarding authorship, translation ethics, and the preservation of intellectual heritage within the context of literary scholarship. (Milani, Seyyed Ali Hosseini, (1404), v1. p 158).

The text critically examines the influence of a specific book on the dynamics between Sunni and Shia Muslims, highlighting its role in exacerbating sectarian tensions and fostering suspicion within the Muslim community. It posits that such divisions not only undermine social,

political, and cultural relations among Muslims but also serve the interests of foreign adversaries who may seek to exploit these rifts.

The book in question is characterized by its use of disrespectful language and rhetorical tactics that deviate from established norms of scholarly debate. This approach is noted to be more aligned with polemical discourse than with reasoned argumentation, resulting in a narrative that is laden with slanders and serious accusations against Shia beliefs. (Mir Hamed Hossein, (1338), v6. p. 1198)

In response to the contentious claims made in *Tuhfa Ithnā ‘Asharīyah* a number of scholars have produced counterarguments, with "Ibaqat al-Anwar" being recognized as the most comprehensive and significant rebuttal. While the text does not delve into the specifics of these scholarly responses, it underscores the importance of academic discourse in addressing and mitigating the divisive narratives propagated by such works. This highlights the ongoing need for constructive dialogue and mutual understanding within the broader Muslim community.

Significance of ‘*Abaqāt al-Anwār*.

The significance of ‘*Abaqāt al-Anwār* (The Fragrances of Lights) lies in its comprehensive rebuttal of the claims presented in *Tuhfa Ithnā ‘Asharīyah* particularly those concerning the Shia evidential basis for the Imamate of the Imams (as). The author of *Tuhfa Ithnā ‘Asharīyah* posits that the Shia reliance on scriptural and prophetic sources is confined to merely six verses and twelve hadiths, a claim that ‘*Abaqāt al-Anwār* seeks to challenge through a meticulous analysis of the authenticity and implications of these texts. (Mir Hamed Hossein, (1338), v1. p. 128).

The absence of a formal written response from Sunni scholars to ‘*Abaqāt al-Anwār* further underscores the work's importance within the discourse on Shia-Sunni theological debates. Notably, Mir Hamid Hussain's contributions regarding the contested verses remain unpublished, as noted by Agha Bozorg Tehrani, who indicates that the manuscript is preserved in a library located in Lucknow, India. This context not only highlights the scholarly engagement with the topic but also points to the ongoing need for critical examination and dialogue within Islamic scholarship. (Tehrani, Agha Bozorg, (1408), v15. p .214).

The text in question provides a comprehensive examination of twelve hadiths that pertain to the Imamate of the Imams (as). It specifically

addresses the objections and critiques posed by Sunni scholars, with a notable focus on Mawlawi Abdul Aziz Dehlavi's work, *Tuhfa Ithnā 'Asharīyah*. This scholarly endeavor is currently encapsulated in a substantial collection of twenty-three volumes, some of which have been completed and published by the descendants of Mir Hamid Hussain.

The volumes not only serve as a critical response to the aforementioned objections but also delve into the theological underpinnings of the Imamate within Islamic thought. Furthermore, these texts have been integrated into Islamic Theology software, enhancing accessibility and facilitating academic discourse on the subject. The organization of topics within these volumes is methodical, allowing for a systematic exploration of the Imamate and its significance in Islamic theology. This scholarly work is essential for those seeking a deeper understanding of the Imamate and the historical and theological context surrounding it, particularly in relation to Sunni-Shia discourse.

The collection under discussion spans from the first to the thirteenth volume, each dedicated to a significant Hadith that holds considerable importance within Islamic tradition. The initial ten volumes focus on the Hadith of Ghadir, which emphasizes the relationship between the Prophet Mohammad and Ali, asserting Ali's position as a leader and guide for the Muslim community. This Hadith is analyzed in terms of its chain of transmission and its broader implications for Islamic leadership and authority.

The eleventh volume shifts attention to the *Hadith Manzilah*, which draws a parallel between the roles of the Prophet Moses and his brother Aaron, underscoring the unique status of Ali in the absence of subsequent prophets. The twelfth volume is dedicated to the Hadith of Wilayah, which articulates the intrinsic connection between the Prophet and Ali, reinforcing Ali's role as the guardian of the Muslim community after the Prophet's passing.

Finally, the thirteenth volume examines the Hadith of the Bird, which narrates an event where the Prophet requests the most beloved creature of Allah to join him for a meal, with Ali being the one who is brought forth. This Hadith further illustrates the esteemed position of Ali within the Islamic narrative. Overall, this collection provides a comprehensive analysis of these pivotal Hadiths, contributing to the understanding of



Islamic leadership and the theological underpinnings of Ali's role in the early Muslim community.

The text outlines a structured examination of significant hadiths attributed to the Prophet Mohammad, with a particular focus on the esteemed figure of Ali ibn Abi Talib. The fourteenth and fifteenth volumes are dedicated to the hadith known as "Medina of Knowledge," which emphasizes the pivotal role of Ali as the gateway to knowledge. The sixteenth volume presents the hadith of comparison, illustrating Ali's virtues by likening him to prominent figures such as Ādam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Jesus, each representing distinct qualities of knowledge, piety, forbearance, strength, and worship, respectively.

The seventeenth volume delves into the hadith of light, which posits a pre-creation existence of both the Prophet and Ali as divine lights, suggesting a profound spiritual connection that predates humanity. Volumes eighteen through twenty-two are dedicated to the hadith of Thaḳalayn, which underscores the importance of adhering to both the Qur'an and the Prophet's progeny as essential guides for the Muslim community, with the latter being described as greater than the former.

Finally, the twenty-third volume addresses the hadith of the Ark, drawing a parallel between the Prophet's household and Noah's Ark, indicating that salvation is contingent upon allegiance to the Prophet's family. This volume also includes appendices that may provide further context or commentary on the discussed hadiths. Collectively, these volumes contribute to a deeper understanding of the theological and historical significance of Ali ibn Abi Talib within Islamic tradition.

The ongoing contributions to the scholarly legacy of Allameh Mir Hamid Hossein are notably significant, particularly through the efforts of his descendants and other scholars, such as Mr. Hosseini Milani. These individuals have undertaken the task of completing his unfinished works, ensuring that they adhere to the stylistic and methodological framework established by the late scholar himself.

In this context, Allameh Seyyed Ali Hosseini Milani has made a noteworthy contribution in the twentieth volume of the newly published edition of *'Abaqāt al-Anwār* which he has titled *Nafahāt al-Azhar*. In this volume, he meticulously analyzes the implications of six specific verses from the Qur'an, employing the interpretative methods characteristic of

Allameh Mir Hamid Hossein. This scholarly endeavor not only honors the intellectual heritage of Allameh Mir Hamid Hossein but also enriches the contemporary understanding of Qur'anic exegesis within the framework he established.

The scholarly contributions to the compilation of hadiths by Sayyid Nasir Hussain and his son, Sayyid Mohammad Saeed, reflect a continuation of the intellectual legacy established by Allameh Mir Hamid Hussain. Sayyid Nasir Hussain successfully completed four significant hadiths, namely *Hadith al-Ṭayr*, *Hadith al-Bāb*, *Hadith al-Thaqalayn*, and *Hadith al-Safinah*, employing a methodology consistent with that of his predecessor. Following this, Sayyid Mohammad Saeed added to the corpus by completing two additional hadiths: "Hadith al-Munasaba," which asserts that opposition to Ali's caliphate equates to infidelity, and *Hadith Khaybar*, which prophesizes the granting of a banner to a beloved companion of God and His Messenger, signifying divine support in battle.

However, it is noteworthy that the compilation remains incomplete, as the hadiths *Ḥaq*, which invokes divine mercy upon Ali, and the second part of *Khaybar* have yet to be documented. This gap highlights the ongoing nature of hadith scholarship and the importance of continued efforts to preserve and articulate these significant religious texts.

Scholarly Contributions and Legacy.

Mir Hamid Hussain's extensive body of work, including 'Asfar al-Anwar' and 'Istiqsa al-Afham,' reflects his profound engagement with theological, jurisprudential, and literary themes. His legacy is preserved in a substantial library in Lucknow, housing approximately thirty thousand volumes, which serves as a vital resource for future scholars. The ongoing efforts of his descendants and other scholars to complete and publish his unfinished works ensure the continuation of his intellectual legacy.

In the scholarly work of Mir Hamad Hossein, the author meticulously engages with the claims presented in *Tuhfa Ithnā 'Asharīyah* offering a comprehensive examination of the original arguments alongside their supporting documentation. His responses are grounded in reputable sources from Sunni scholarship, which enhances the credibility and depth of his discourse.

Mir Hamad Hossein is recognized as a distinguished scholar, demonstrating profound expertise across a range of disciplines, including



exegesis, theology, hadith studies, criticism, biographical research, history, and literature. This multifaceted knowledge positions *'Abaqāt al-Anwār* as a valuable resource for exegetes, theologians, historians, literary scholars, and hadith specialists alike.

In his work, Mir Hamad Hossein systematically catalogs the narrators of each hadith from the second to the thirteenth century, providing detailed information regarding their respective lifespans. He presents the text of the hadiths and engages in a thorough analysis of their implications from a Shia perspective, while also addressing and countering any doubts raised against them. Notably, both *Tuhfa Ithnā 'Ashariyah* and *'Abaqāt al-Anwār* are composed in Persian, reflecting the linguistic context of the discourse. This scholarly endeavor not only contributes to the field of Islamic studies but also fosters a deeper understanding of the theological and historical nuances within Shia and Sunni traditions.

In his scholarly work, Mir Hamad Hossein employs a diverse array of sources that encompass various domains of Islamic literature. His references include hadith collections, notably the Six Authentic Books and their respective commentaries, as well as other significant texts such as the books of Sunnah, *Kanz al-A'māl*, *al-Muwatt'a* and its commentaries, and *al-Mishkāt* along with its commentaries.

In the realm of exegetical literature, Hossein draws upon esteemed works including *Tafsīr ibn Kathīr*, *Jalālayn*, *al-Kashāf* by Zamakhshari, *al-Durr al-Manthūr* by Suyuti, *al-Ṭabarī*, and *Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī*. His historical and biographical references are equally comprehensive, incorporating notable biographies of the Prophet Mohammad by ibn Hisham and Dihlan, as well as *Sabil al-Hudá wa al-Rashād*, alongside historical accounts from Al-Tabari, ibn Athir, ibn Khaldun, al-Yaqoubi, and *Murūj al-Dhahab* by Mas'udi.

Furthermore, Hossein's jurisprudential framework is supported by authoritative texts such as *al-Mabsūt* by Shams al-Din Sarakhsi, *Nail al-Awtar* by Shawkani, *Ahkam al-Ahkam* in the explanation of *Umdat al-Ahkām* by Halabi, and *Bada'i al-Sanā'i* by Kashani. He also engages with hadith criticism through sources like *Tahdhīb al-Kamāl* by Amzi, *Tahdhīb al-Tahdhīb* by Dhahabi, *al-Kamāl fī Asmā al-Rijāl*, and *al-Thiqāt* by ibn Hayan.

Lastly, his theological discourse is enriched by works such as *Sharh al-Maqāsid* by Tafdazani, *Sharh al-Mawāqif* by Jurgani, and *Sharh al-Tajrīd* by Qushji, among others. This extensive utilization of varied sources underscores the depth and rigor of Hossein's academic inquiry, reflecting a comprehensive approach to Islamic scholarship.

Seyyed's scholarly contributions encompass a diverse array of writings that reflect his profound engagement with theological, jurisprudential, and literary themes. Other significant texts include *al-Shari'ah al-Gharra*, *Al-Shu'lah al-Jawālah*, and *Sham' al-Maāalis*, the latter being a poetic tribute mourning Imam Hussain (peace be upon him). Additionally, *Sham' wa Dama'* presents further poetic expressions, while *Safhat al-Mas* in al-Irtimas" delves into jurisprudential discussions. His works *al-'Asharah al-Kāmilah*" and *al-Zill al-Mamdūd* further contribute to his intellectual legacy.

Moreover, Seyyed's comprehensive multi-volume treatise, *Afhām Ahl al-Main fi Rad al-Izalah al-Ghayn*, underscores his commitment to scholarly discourse. (ibid) His legacy is preserved in a substantial library located in Lucknow, which houses an impressive collection of approximately thirty thousand volumes, comprising both handwritten and printed texts. This repository not only reflects his scholarly endeavors but also serves as a vital resource for future generations of researchers and scholars in the field. (Hakimi, Mohammad Reza, p. 136)

Conclusion:

'*Abaqāt al-Anwār* is not merely a rebuttal to sectarian critiques; it is a significant scholarly endeavor that enriches the understanding of Shia Islam and its theological foundations. In fact, '*Abaqāt al-Anwār* stands as a monumental contribution to Islamic scholarship, particularly within the Shia tradition, by providing a thorough and well-researched rebuttal to the claims made in *Tuhfa Ithnā 'Ashariyah*. Through his meticulous examination of hadiths, theological principles, and historical narratives, Allameh Mir Hamid Hussain has not only defended the Shia perspective but has also enriched the broader discourse on Islamic thought. His commitment to scholarly integrity and rigorous inquiry serves as a model for future generations of scholars, highlighting the necessity of constructive dialogue in addressing sectarian differences. Ultimately, '*Abaqāt al-Anwār* is not just a response to criticism; it is a vital resource that fosters a deeper

understanding of Shia Islam and encourages a spirit of inquiry and collaboration within the Muslim community.

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