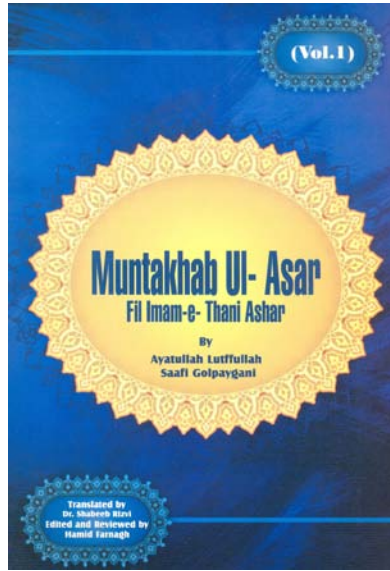




Munthakhab-ul-Asar

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More than fifty years ago, a learned scholar and valued researcher made a great effort in composing the most comprehensive and thorough work about Imam Mahdi (a.s.) and he named it “Muntakhab-ul-Asar”.

This book not only contains “selection of the immaculate Imams recorded works but also comprises “selection of compiled works on Imam Mahdi”. Truly, this book was considered as the best compiled work by gathering held in honor of the written works on Imam Mahdi (a.s.). the grand Ayatollah Haj Sheikh Lotfullah Safi Golpayegani who is today one of the most high-ranking ‘Marja’e’ (religious authority) manifested a novel and great masterpiece and gifted to the Shia world a comprehensive book in its most perfect and completely innovative manner fifty years ago with very limited resources.

1- One of the greatest religious scholars of Shia’s World

The honorable author has compiled this book in ten chapter and one hundred sections with great enthusiasm and excellent style and arranged the Prophet's and Imam's hadith in an innovative manner in one hundred chapters. He has narrated with utmost care the full text of hadith in its complete form with firm documentary support and taken from printed and handwritten books.

The big privilege this everlasting work enjoys is related to its complete innovative style such that readers familiar with writing style are aware that every hadith usually comprises of several phrases where each phrase pinpoints to one of the dimensions concerning Imam Mahdi (a.s.).

The grand Ayatollah has taken a new innovative step in this book. While narrating every hadith, he examines its various phrases; he selects one of them which according to him is the most rational, audible and important and records the full text of hadith in chapters that have closer connection with the contents of selected phrases. He recollects the chain of transmission, the text and source of hadith. Thereafter, he considers the other phrases of each hadith by means of one hundred chapters. At the end of each chapter, he reminds that the hadith come down in so and so chapter and so and so section gives guidance to this matter.

This excellent style has kept the traditions immune from dissection; the volume of book too has not increased while at the same time nothing has remained unsaid. This beneficial style and numerous other privileges of this book has always attracted the attention of researchers in the length of these fifty years and is considered to be one of the most important reference books on par with such invaluable works like "Ghaibat-e-No'mani", "Ghaibate-e-Toosi", "Kamaluddin' by Sadooq and Bihar-ul-Anwar' by Majlisi and is recognized as a trustworthy and reliable source all around the world.

Other features of book:

- 1- The rare comprehensiveness of this book: within limited volume and limited pages, this book pinpoints 6217 page titles.

- 2- Extensive broad-based research by author: 830 hadith has been compiled in this invaluable work and this is extremely high considering that the number of hadith come down in each of the books like *Ghaibat-e-no'mani*, *'Gheibat-e-Toosi* and *'Kamaluddin* by Sadooq is about 500 in number.
- 3- Access to numerous sources: despite limitation of time for writing the book, the author has utilized 94 Shiite sources and 63 Sunni sources for recording hadith.
- 4- Direct reference to sources and abstinence from recording narration of others: consequently, he has refrained narrating from such books like *Al-Musnaf Ibne Abi Shaibah* and *Abdol-Razzagh* that remained unprinted at that time.
- 5- Reference to different sources for recording sound and firm hadith: for this reason, the author has not limited himself in narrating the original source of reference; he pinpoints the differences in manuscripts.
- 6- Reference to handwritten manuscripts like various manuscript of *'Kefayat'ul'Athar* that was not published at that time.
- 7- Explanation of difficult hadith in footnotes: Numerous invaluable points have been described in the footnotes.
- 8- Explanation of numerous literary, lexical, interpretive and theological points in footnotes.
- 9- Observing the bounds of Imams' sayings with full explanation so that the author's sayings are not all mingled with the sayings of Imams (a.s.).
- 10- Narrating the sayings of renowned figures in footnotes for living greater strength to his points.
- 11- Strength, accuracy and firmness regarding contravention and perseverance of matters. For instance, un the last part of preface

where he wishes to refute Ibne Khaldun's feeble and senseless sayings he sets forth the precise and decisive words of Ahmad-bin-Mohammad Seddiq Hazrami from the book 'Abzaar al-Vahm al-Maknoon' transmitted from Ahmad Msri from the book 'Al-Mahdi wal-Mahdaviyah' so that it remains aloof from any fanatical doubt and misgiving.

The special importance and extraordinary greatness of this book will become manifest if we recollect that the honorable author compiled this book all by himself 50 years ago with the very limited resources of that time.

The titles of book:

Chapter one: sets forth hadith that clearly indicate the number of Imams and stipulates that the immaculate Imams were 12 in number equal to the number of chiefs of Bani-Israel where the first of them was Amirul-Muminin Ali (a.s.) and the twelfth amongst them is Mahdi (a.s.).

The honorable author has set out this chapter in eight sections. He has written down the full text of 243 hadith and referred to 663 phrases from hadith come down in other chapters.

Chapter two: Hadith giving glad tidings about manifestation of the last unseen savior coming from the progeny of the holy prophet (a.s.); from the descent of holiness Fatima (s); from the generation of Amir-ul-Mu'minin (a.s.); from the descendant of Imam Husain (a.s.) and from the offspring of Imam Hassan Askari (a.s.).

This chapter has been arranged in 49 chapters and contains the full text of 252 hadith had refers to 4076 phrases from other chapters.

Chapter Three: this chapter refers to the history of birth of Allah's Hujjah; brief account of this honorable Imam; his miracles and the story of fortunate people who earned the honor of visiting the holy Imam during Imam Askari's (a.s.) era.

This chapter has been arranged in 3 sections and contains 34 hadith. It also gives reference to 108 hadith.

Chapter Four: it refers to the 12th Imam's miracles during the minor occultation, the life of his special envoys and the story of those who regained Imam after the demise of Imam Askari (a.s.).

This chapter is arranged in 3 sections and contains 53 hadith and gives reference to 2 other hadith.

Chapter Five: Reference to the 12th Imam's miracles during the major occultation and the story of the fortunate figures who earned the honor of meeting their Imam during major occultation.

This chapter has been arranged in 2 sections and contains 16 hadith and gives reference to 9 other hadith.

Chapter Six: about the features of Imam's reappearance; the signs and disturbances before his manifestation; the month, year and place of reappearance; the revolt of Sufyani and Dajjal; the heavenly cry; the type of allegiance and prohibition of assignment of time (of reappearance).

This chapter has been arranged in 11 sections and contains 128 hadith and gives reference to 92 other hadith.

Chapter Seven: Unparalleled victories, manifestation of earth's hidden treasures, coming of prophet Isa (a.s.), killing of Dajjal, war with Sufyani, the perfection, the perfection of man's intellect, global flourishing and the earth overflowing with equity and justice are the topics of this chapter.

This chapter is arranged in 12 sections and comprises of 37 hadith and has given reference to 209 other hadith.

Chapter Eight: it concerns the virtues and good traits of his 313 companions and speaks about their bravery and rigour.

This chapter is arranged in 2 sections and comprises of 9 hadith and has given reference to 10 other hadith.

Chapter Nine: it discusses the period of his rule as well as his invitation, character, food, cloting and manner of living.

This chapter is arranged in 3 sections and comprises of 7 hadith and has given reference to 22 other hadith.

Chapter Ten: this chapter is about 'Entezar' (which means to await and look forward his coming and consequent triumph), duties of his Shiites during his 'Ghaibat' (unsees-ness), the virtue of perceiving him, belief and following his holiness, prohibition of disbelief, manner of our submission before him and several invocations that has come down from his holy self.

This chapter has been arranged in 7 sections and contains 51 hadith and gives reference to 77 other hadith.

Thus, the book contains 19 chapters, 100 sections, 830 hadith, 5387 references and the total number of hadith and referred phrases are 6217.

The honorable author has written this precious book half a century ago with limited resources at his disposal but with aforementioned state of specialty. He finished it on 28th Ramadan and during the same time managed to get it published in Tehran in 525 pages. During this half century, the book was reprinted tens of times in Tehran, Qom and Beirut and was referred to by great scholars and researchers.

The special care exhibited by researchers towards this valuable work motivated the respected author to once again turn over the pages of this book, examine the collection of hadith, insert new findings in every place of the book and present it with remarkable additions to those seeking their beloved one.

And now we are pleased and fortunate that the new edition has been printed in three volumes with numerous privileges.

Mentioning the privileges of this new edition itself calls for an independent report. Here, we shall only pinpoint that in the new edition,

the number of hadith has increased from 830 to 1294 hadith and the number of references has increased from 159 to 396 in number.

Explanations of author:

The respected writer has mentioned many invaluable points in the preface and footnotes of the book and here we shall refer to few of them along with their page number but as per the first edition:

- 1- Proof of successive transmission of hadith on Mahdaviyat as per the narration of great Sunni scholars such as Shukani, Ibne-Saban, Ibne-Abil Hadid, Zaini-Dehlan, Savid, Shablanji, Barzanji, Ganji Shafa'ei and others (pages 3-6).
- 2- Confessions by 65 great Sunni scholars that Imam Mahdi (a.s.) does exist and that he is the immediate son of Imam Hassan Askari (a.s.) [pages 320-340].
- 3- Disproving the improbability of longevity (pages 274-283).
- 4- Disproving the fable of 'Sardab' (cellar) [pages 371-373].
- 5- Disproving the devious thoughts of such figures like Ibne- Khaldon and Ahmad Amin Mesri (pages 5-7).
- 6- The secrets of 'Ghaibat' (occultation) [pages 266-269].
- 7- The mysterious behind secrecy of his birth (pages 286-287).
- 8- The mystery behind his comparison to the sun hidden behind the cloud during the period of occultation.
- 9- Disproving the generic Mahdaviyat and proving the personal Mahdaviyat (page 40).
- 10- Proving the non-conformity of hadiths of the twelve- fold Caliphs except with the immaculate Imams (a.s.) [pages 14-23].

- 11- The names of forty important Sunni personalities who have noted down the hadiths related to Imam Mahdi (a.s.) in the books on hadith (page 35).
- 12- Calling to witness the claimants of Mahdaviat by setting evidences on the originality of belief in Imam Mahdi (a.s.) [pages 32].
- 13- Explanation of difficult hadiths in numerous instances (pages 145,310,305,302,257,196).
- 14- Proving the originality of Mahdaviyat via books compiled during the era of Imam Baqir (a.s.) and Imam Sadeq (a.s.).

Munthakhab-ul-Athar in the works of others

Many renowned scholars in the Islamic world have expressed their views about Munthakhab-ul-Athar in their respective invaluable works. Hereunder, we mention few of them:

- 1- The authorin history, Allamah Tehrani in his “Alzarieh” after introducing the book and its author writes: “ this book arranged in 10 chapters and each chapter consisting of several sections and each section comprising of several hadiths is compiled in the best possible manner and in the most charming style from both Shiite and Sunni books. (Alzarieh, vol.22, page 367).
- 2- Allamah Sheikh Habib Mohajir Aamuli after words of praise for the style adopted by author in writing Munthakhab and his success in writing his treatise and explanation of chapters writes: “ the author has collected every matter related to Imam Mahdi (a.s.) in this book and has not left out any vital matter. This book is unparalleled with respect to its topic and its worthy for every believer to have one copy of it with them.
- 3- The grand teacher Allamah Sayyed Morteza Razavi in his valuable book while explaining his meeting with Sheikh Mohammad Aborieh one of the outstanding figures in Egypt writes: ‘ if you wish to do research in hadiths related to Imam Mahdi (a.s.). I have with myself the book

Munthakhab-ul-Athar written by the great Allamah Haj Sheikh Lotfullah Safi wherein he has narrated the views of great Sunni scholars about the source referred to by their traditionists and examined this topic in great detail.”

4- After reading the book Munthakhab-ul- Athar, this teacher i.e., Aborieh became amazed and expressed his wonder and praise before Allamah Razavi.

5- Martyr Motahhari too in his book “ A journey into the life of holy Imams’(a.s.) has earmarked one chapter for introducing the book Munthakhab-ul- Athar. After ample praise for this book and its author, he recommends one and all to read this book.

6- The honorable teacher, Ayatollah Haj Sheikh Ja’far Sobhani writes in this regard as such: “ Praise for this book is not exclusive to the Shiite scholars. Rather, groups of Sunni scholars and some of the Orientalists too have words of praise for this book. Besides, it’s an important source and reference for any writer who wishes to write any subject on Imam Mahdi (a.s) because the grand author has collected all the hadith about Imam Mahdi (a.s.) at one place and employed a unique style in its arrangements.

7- The author of Al-Zarieh, Allamah Tehrani in a letter addressed to the honorable writer of Munthakhab expressed that he had never seen such a comprehensive book like it on this subject.

8- All the index-writers have undertaken a descriptive introduction and bibliograghy of this book.

About 30 years ago, in an interview with this respected writer, queries were put forward before him about the collection of works on Mahdaviyat particularly Munthakhab-ul-Athar. In reply, he pinpointed 3 vital factors that were mainly responsible for investigating him to ponder on this subject:

1- I had a virtuous mother who was deeply found of this household (Ahl’ul-bayt). Love for this household along with the milk that she fed filled my heart’s content. She used to refer to the book ‘Najm-e-Saqeb”

and encouraged us to read this book. It was the first book I succeeded reading in my very childhood.

2- I had a father whose love for this household was always overflowing. Alongside guidance of the people, by setting forth verses from Quran, hadith and elegant poems, he made my heart leap towards this noble household.

3- I had a honorable teacher who out of good intentions and affection encouraged me to write a comprehensive book on Imam Mahdi (a.s.) together with Shiite and Sunni references.

It was the author's style to first note down the chapters and sections under consideration and then refers to authentic Shiite and Sunni books. He would place each hadith under its appropriate chapter and section. It took 3 years for completion of this invaluable work.

Viewpoint of author:

At the end of this article, for greater benefit to respected readers, we shall remind a few points that are actually the author's views concerning the subject on Mahdaviyat.

- 1- The issue of Mahdaviyat in Islam took shape by the hands of the holy Prophet (a.s.) during his own life-time.
- 2- Belief in the savior was something present in past eras among past nations and people, too.
- 3- From the viewpoint of numerousness of hadith, no topic can be found showing the same number as Mahdaviyat.
- 4- If deeper research is conducted, the number of hadith will cross two thousand in number.
- 5- Except for one or two cases, in all the specifications, the Sunnis have the same belief as we have.

- 6- Regarding Imam Mahdi's 'Vilayat' (mastership & authority), many of the leading Sunni figures have the same belief as we have.
- 7- Many of the outstanding Sunni scholars believe that Imam Mahdi (a.s) is the direct and immediate son of Imam Hassan Askari (a.s.).
- 8- Some of the Sunni scholars have narrated miracles and wonders for Imam Mahdi (a.s.) and in certain instances claimed to have met him.
- 9- Like other Islamic fundamentals, the matter of Mahdaviyat is mooted in the Sunni scholarly associations and cultural centers.
- 10- Numerous Sunni scholars have written independent books on Imam Mahdi (a.s.).
- 11- In the books written on Tafsir (interpretation), hadith (traditions), Kalam (theology), history, literature, etc... words have been expressed about Imam Mahdi (a.s.).
- 12- Considering the numerous recorded hadith and number of verses come down and interpreted in honor of Imam Mahdi (a.s.). No researcher can bear any doubt that belief in Imam Mahdi (a.s.) is a matter self-evident and obvious.
- 13- The mission of spirituality in spreading the belief in Mahdaviyat is very weighty. This is because spirituality is an organization belonging to Imam Mahdi (a.s.) and its existence, motive, power, influence, effects and services are all dependent on him.

All the fascinated Shiites and those awaiting his manifestation should strive hard in strengthening the matter of belief (in him); proving the authenticity (of Mahdaviyat); burying the doubts (about him); acquainting the society with their duties during the occultation era; holding in great honor the occasions related to him (a.s.) and other such related issues.