

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF INTERPRETATIONS OF THE "BASMALA"  
SECTION IN HAYRAT UL-ABROR

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**Abstract**

Significant scientific research has been conducted on the "Khamsa" by Alisher Navoiy, the great statesman who continued the tradition of Khamsanavislik while elevating Turkic classical literature to its peak of refinement. Nevertheless, this article provides a scientific-critical review of the modern approaches used by Navoiy scholars regarding the "Basmala" section of the epics and its reflection in prose interpretations.

**Keywords:** Basmala, "Khamsa", Khamsanavislik, poetry, prose interpretation, lexical, modern approach.

**Introduction**

When referring to Eastern classical literary sources, one directly encounters the "Basmala" chapter in the preface of most works. Why was the Basmala chapter necessary in classical literary works five or six centuries before or during Navoiy's era? The question of why these works are presented to modern readers without the Basmala chapter also warrants separate investigation. Below, we shall first discuss the scientific-lexical meaning and religious significance of the word *Basmala*.

The term Basmala (Arabic: بسملة) holds a central place in Islamic culture, language, and creed; it is the abbreviated name for the phrase "*Bismillahir-rahmanir-rahim*." This phrase can be defined scientifically, lexically, and religiously as follows:

The word "Basmala" was formed using the Arabic method of *naht* (forming a single word from several words). This phrase consists of four main elements:

1. **Bi (بِ):** A preposition meaning "with," "by means of," or "in the company of."
2. **Ism (اسم):** Meaning "name," referring here to the sacred name of Allah.
3. **Allah (الله):** The proper name of the One God in Islam.
4. **Ar-Rahman (الرحمن) and Ar-Rahim (الرحيم):** Two great attributes of Allah, meaning "The Most Gracious" (whose mercy encompasses all creation) and "The Most Merciful" (whose specific mercy is for the believers).

It is well known in Islamic tradition that no auspicious deed begins without the phrase "Bismillahir-rahmanir-rahim." According to the Quran and Hadith, every good deed should start with the name of Allah. This blessed phrase contains the beautiful names of Allah, and through their grace, blessings enter the work commenced. In this phrase, the names of Allah are

arranged by greatness: the attribute "Rahman" is greater than "Rahim," and the name "Allah" is greater than "Rahman." This order must be observed when reciting the Basmala.

Almost all of Navoiy's scientific, historical, and artistic works begin with this phrase. However, in "Hayrat ul-Abror," the first epic of his "Khamsa," Navoiy devotes an entire chapter to the Basmala. Through a poetic style and supreme skill, he describes every single letter of the word *Basmala*. It would not be an exaggeration to say that through this work, Navoiy demonstrated the immense importance he placed on the "Khamsa" compared to his other works. The inclusion of this chapter in "Hayrat ul-Abror" and its absence in the other epics signifies that this poem serves as the opening section of the entire Turkic-language "Khamsa."

The fact that the scholar Alibek Rustamiy created a treatise on the poetry Navoiy wrote specifically for this Basmala section is noteworthy. In his treatise "The Meaning of 'Bismillah'," the scholar provides an explanatory dictionary of the Turkic words in Navoiy's verses and interprets them into the modern Uzbek literary language. However, a minor shortcoming is observed: the content of the verses is not explored with deep, comprehensive commentary. Rustamiy briefly explains the fifty-one verses Navoiy wrote for the Basmala, which is a difficult task for a reader to fully grasp. Nevertheless, the scholar himself notes at the end of the treatise: "Dear readers, in this treatise, you have received elementary information about the Basmala and Navoiy's poetic commentary on it."

Furthermore, we can observe the book "Jon Javhari" text scholar Nafas Shodmonov, dedicated to the introductory chapter of "Hayrat ul-Abror." In this book, Shodmonov skillfully translated the description of "Bismillah" into prose. Although he did not provide an explanatory dictionary, he succeeded in widely illuminating the commentary on Navoiy's lyrics. For example, regarding the first verse, Professor Rustamiy provides only the word-for-word explanation:

*Bismillahir-rahmanir-rahim,*

*Rishtag'a chekti necha durri yatim.*

*(He strung several unique pearls onto a thread.)*

He explains *rishta* as "thread," *rishtag'a chekmak* as "to string," and *durri yatim* as "large unique pearls." He notes that the Basmala phrase is likened to a string of pearls, and "several unique pearls" refers to the meaningful words within the Basmala. In contrast, Nafas Shodmonov opens the significance of the verse by citing Hadiths to show how exalted the word "Bismillah" is in religion: "Kullu amrin zi balin lam yubda bi-bismillah fahuva abtar" (Any deed not started with the name of Allah is incomplete/without an end).

Regarding Akrom Malik's interpretation, signs of high intellect are clearly visible in the young text scholar's work. According to him, the interpretation of the first verse is as follows: "Bismillahir-rahmanir-rahim" is like pearls strung by Allah. What kind of pearls or thread are these? The thread and each pearl therein are more precious and valuable than one's soul, or even both worlds.

If we pay special attention to the editions of the "Khamisa" beyond the Basmala chapter, we see that 21st-century Navoiy scholars have focused on prose interpretations. In the 2019 edition of "Khamisa" prepared by Anvar Hojiahmedov (published by "Yangi Asr Avlodi"), not only the Basmala chapter but the entire introductory part was omitted. There is no doubt that a reader taking this book might struggle to recognize it as the true "Khamisa." Presenting a shortened version to the younger generation without introducing them to the original state of the work may lead to a perceived decline in the sophistication of a perfect writer like Navoiy. Although Hojiahmedov stated that "since the book is being published as an experiment, there may be some shortcomings," the reality is that readers do not often return to the same work repeatedly. After an edition that makes the work feel like a simple folk tale, readers may be less likely to seek out the complete, perfect edition.

Similarly, the version of Navoiy's "Khamisa" published in 2025 by Azamat Qurjonov, a graduate of Samarkand State University (published by "Gold Print Pres"), is no different from Hojiahmedov's. Qurjonov also omitted the Basmala and the introductory sections. Such publishing trends often point to one factor: financial considerations. We will not dwell on this, as we are not literary critics in that sense.

The 2024 edition of the first epic by Akrom Malik, based on the scientific-critical text created by Porso Shamsiyev, can be considered a perfect modern prose interpretation. Although there are minor, almost invisible errors in this edition, the most gratifying aspect is that the work can be read in three ways: the scientific-critical text (in Old Turkic/Chagatay), the poetic version in Cyrillic, and the prose interpretation. This allows the editor to offer a broader understanding of the work, making it accessible to people of all ages and allowing other Turkic peoples to include this book in their libraries. The inclusion of an explanatory dictionary for the words used in the epic in the third part of the book further enhances its utility for scientific research and for enriching the lexical layers of the Uzbek language.

Reflecting on the editions of *Khamisa* published in the decades following the 20th century, it is evident that scholars of this period transformed Navoi's poetic masterpieces into the prose genre through their own interpretive methods, primarily basing their work on the scientific-critical texts established by Porso Shamsiev. Notable contributors to this process include Shuhrat Sirojiddinov, Abduqodir Hayitmetov, Dilnavoz Yusupova, Anvar Hojiahmedov, Aziz Qayumov, Vahob Rahmonov, Olimjon Davlatov, Sirojiddin Sayyid, Abdulhamid Pardayev, Ibrohim Haqqul, Nurboy Jabborov, Akrom Malik, and Azamat Qorjonov. Regarding the *Basmala*, there exists a wide diversity of opinions and varying interpretations provided by these editors and scholars-in-charge."

## Conclusion

In conclusion, this article was written to strengthen our attention toward our scientific-literary heritage in modern life and to eliminate problems and shortcomings in their interpretation. We hope it serves as a motivation for current and future scholars. Maintaining the authenticity of the text and the depth of the author's meaning or elevating it by recognizing its greatness is a major responsibility for text scholars, Navoiy scholars, literary critics, and linguists alike.



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