

## THE FOUR SPECIAL DEPUTIES

After the martyrdom of Imam Hasan Askari (a.s) the mantle of Imamate fell on the young shoulders of Imam Mahdi (a.s).

Due to the severe restrictions imposed by the reigning Caliph, Imam Mahdi (a.s) was forced to conceal himself from the eyes of the people. In the initial stages of the minor occultation, some very special and selected people among the Shias had the permission to meet their master whenever the need arose. They presented the problems of the Shias in the service of Imam who provided answers to them and conveyed them back to the people.

Such selected people were called as special representatives, deputies, doors of Imam etc. Four persons had the honour of acquiring this elevated status and all of them hailed from and resided in Baghdad. A part from them, there were representatives another cities also. The Shias either conveyed their messages to these representative or directly to the special ones for it to reach to the Imam. These special deputies performed innumerable extraordinary feats in the minor occultation which are preserved in different traditional and historical books.

### **(1). The first deputy:-**

#### **Abu Amr Uthman Ibne Saeed Amri:**

He was from the Bani Asad clan. Due to his ancestral links, he was called as Abu Amr but on the advise of Imam Hasan Askari (a.s), he changed his title from Abu Amr to Amravi. He was also addressed as Askari and some even called him as "**Sammaan**" (oil merchant).

He was also famous as the representative of Imam Ali Naqi (a.s). The title of "Sammaan" (Oil merchant) itself is historical. He used to deliver the wealth, possessions of Imam (a.s) in an oil can (In order that the intelligence personnel of the Government could not detect his activities, he posed himself as a businessman on Imam (a.s)'s order).

Till 254 A.H. he was the representative of Imam Ali Naqi (a.s) He (a.s) used to say "Abu Amr is a reliable and trustworthy person, whatever he narrates, its on my behalf and whatever he conveys is in fact my messages".

After the demise of Imam Ali Naqi (a.s) in 254 A.H. he

became the special representative of Imam Hasan Askari (a.s) who used to say **"Abu Amr is a reliable and trustworthy person. He was relied upon even by the previous Imams and in my life as well as after my death, he is reliable whatever he narrates is on my behalf and his messages are actually my messages"**.

Imam also says: **"Stand witness that Uthman bin Saeed is my representative. His son, Mohammad Bin Uthman is Mahdi (a.s)'s representative."** When a son (Hazrat Mahdi (a.s) was born to Imam Hasan Askari (a.s), he ordered Abu Mar to distribute ten thousand roties and ten thousand pieces of meat among the Bani Hashim and also sacrifice sheep and goats for Aqeeqah.

In a congregation of forty reliable and selected people of Imam Hasan Askari (a.s) he introduced Imam Mahdi (a.s) to them. He mentioned about his Imamate and occultation's. Then he emphasized about the representation of Imam Mahdi (a.s) by Usman bin Saeed, thus **"You (all) accept whatever he says for he is the representative of your Imam and affairs are with him"**.

He participated in all the funeral proceedings of Imam Hasan Askari (a.s) and executed all orders issued unto him. In 260 A.H. after the martyrdom of Imam Hasan Askari (a.s) he was appointed as the first special deputy of Imam Mahdi (a.s). For five years he held this auspicious position. Before his death, on the order of Imam (a.s) he appointed his son as Imam's representative in front of a group of honorable Shias and handed over all his responsibilities to him. After the death Uthman Bin Saeed his sons performed all the funeral proceeding and buried him in west of Baghdad.

Shaikh Toosi (A.R) says that till 447 A.H. people paid homage to him and read his Ziyarat as a pious and righteous person and also as the foster brother of Imam Askari (a.s). They also recognised him as the special representative of Imam Mahdi (a.s). This shows that the extent to which his deputyship was concealed that even after a passage of two hundred years, it was difficult for the people to recognised him. He was a contemporary of the Abbaside Caliph, Motamid.

## **(2). The Second Special Representative:**

### **Abu Ja'far Mohammed Bin Uthman Bin Saeed Amravi.**

He succeeded his father after the latter's demise. Imam Hasan Askari (a.s) himself had emphasized for his deputyship. In his Tawqee (a signed letter) to Mohammad Bin Mahziyar, Imam Zamana (a.s) said about Mohammad bin Uthman, thus: **"May God Protect him, He was our trustworthy person even during his father's life time. May God be pleased with him and his father and bless their souls. He is the successor to his father and has taken his place. Whatever he says on our behalf, are**

**our quotes and he follows our orders dutifully. May God help him. Deeply follow his instructions and seek our opinion through him".**

In his Tawqee to Ishaq Ibn Yaqoob Imam (a.s) said: **"May God be pleased with Mohammad Bin Uthman and his father He is my confidante and reliable man. His writings are my writings"**. He was the special representative of Imam (a.s) for approximately forty years. In the very first Tawqee which he received there was a condolence message on the demise of his father. It's contents were as follows: **"We have come from Allah and unto Him shall we return (Qur'an). We accept his orders and are satisfied with His commands. Your father passed a decent life and faced a decent death. May God have mercy upon him and enumerate him among His servants (Imams). He was always engrossed in their work. He always strove unceasingly in those works which elevated him in front of God and helped him gain approximately to the Imam (a.s) May God make him happy and condone his sins. May God increase your rewards and accept your difficulties. You are grief stricken, so are we, his death has affected us as much as it has affected you. May God make him happier in that life. It was due to his sincerity and decency that he was honoured with a son like you who has become his heir and successor. May God send mercies upon him. I praise the Almighty whose existence is clean from all indecencies of disbelief (and polytheism) whatever God has been entrusted to you by him, He will help you to achieve it. He will help you and grace you, for He is the Master, the Protector and the Sufficer.**

Ibn Nooh narrates from the **Abu Nasr**, the nephew of Abu Ja'far that he had written many books, one of which was on jurisprudence. He wrote whatever he had heard from Imam-e-Zamana (a.s) and his father Usman. One of these books was **"Kitab-ul-ashrabah"** which was passed on after his death to Husayn Bin-Rooh and after him, probably to Ali Ibne Mohammed Seymouri.

Shaykh Saduq (a.r) narrates the following tradition from Mohammed Ibne-Usman, **"I swear by God, Saheb-ul-Amr (A.J) comes to Mecca every year to perform the rituals of Hajj He sees the people and recognizes them but they do not recognise him even after seeing him"**.

Mohammad Bin Usman was once asked if he had seen Imam-e-Zamana (a.s). He answered **"Yes", the last time that I saw him was in the Holy Kaba, praying "O Allah fulfil what you have promised Me", then I saw him catching the curtain of Mustajaar-a door opposite to the main door of Kaaba and praying "O Allah" take revenge of your enemies through me"**. Abu Ali, Abul Hasan Ali Ibn Ahmed narrates, "One day Mohammed Ibn Uthman took me and showed him grave and said "I will die on such day. I will

be buried here and this tablet will be with me" (the tablet was inscribed with some Qur'anic verses and the names of Imams). When asked about the cause of showing his grave, he replied "I have been ordered to finish all my duties and set things straight".

A few years before his death whenever he was asked about his successor he used to send them to "Hussein Bin Rauh", he expired in the month of Jamdi-ul-Awwal, 305 A.H. He is buried alongside his respected mother in Baghdad, near Kufa Gate Where he resided. He lived during the reign of Motamid, Mukhtafi and Muqtadir, the Abbaside Kings.

### **(3). The Third Special Representatives:**

#### **Husayn Ibn Rauh Nawbakhti**

He succeeded Mohammad Bin Uthman, He was a leading personality from the family of Nawbakht. Ali Ibn Mohammad narrates from his uncle that I was sitting besides Mohammad Bin Uthman when he was in his death-bed and talking to him. He says, Ibn-Rauh was sitting near his feet. At that moment, Mohammad Bin Uthman told m. "I have been commanded to make a Will to Husayn Ibh-Rauh" I got up and made Husayn to sit in my place and myself sat near Mohammad Bin Uthman's feet. Mohammad Bin Uthman began making a Will **"Husayn Ibn Rauh Abu Ja'far, Nawbakhti, is my heir and successor amongst you after me. He is the medium and channel between you and Hazrat Saheb al Amr (A.J) You refer to him in your problems and rely on his in your affairs, I was ordered to convey this message and I've done my duty"**.

The First Tawqee received by Husayn Ibn Rauh, was as follow: "We know him (Husayn Ibn Rauh) May Allah grant him goodness, his recognition and grace. We received his letter. He is our reliable man he enjoys such a position near us with he is bound to be happy. May Allah increase His obligations on him. Certainly, he a masterful and powerful person. Praise be to the God who has no partner. Blessings of Allah be on Mohammad (S.A) and his progeny". Sunday 6th Shawwal 305 A.H.

To appoint Husayn Ibn Rauh after Mohammad Bin Uthman, had two basic reason

(1) This position was granted to only him who was sincere to such an extent that if the Imam was behind him, he would not reveal his where about even if cut into pieces. Husayn Ibn Rauh, was very sincere.

(2) To remove the doubt in some people's minds that only those who had blood relations or proximity with Mohammad Bin Uthman stood the chance of gaining successorship.

None could even imagine that Husayn Ibn Rauh would bag that coveted status. Even the spies of Bani Abbas could not

get a whiff of it because there were people who were very near to Mohammad Bin Uthman. Everybody considered Husayn Ibn Rauh to be a very knowledgeable person, whether friend or foe. He lived a life of dissimulation. (Taqiyyah). Many incidents concerning his discussion with the ruling kings are narrated. He won the hearts of the people through his methods. Many debates are also narrated from him and the source of all his knowledge is the fountain of Ahle Bayt's knowledge. Therefore, after one debate, he said **"Even if I am thrown from the sky or torn in to pieces by the vultures, I will not say a word of my own on the religion of God whatever, I say, I have learnt from the Divine Proof, God's Peace and blessing be on Him"**.

Whatever he did was based only on the instructions of Imam Mahdi (a.s). Abdu Sahl Nawbakht was asked as to why was Husayn Ibn Rauh appointed as the special representative and why not he (Abu Sahl)? He replied, **"The Imams knows better whom to appoint. I have debates with the opponents of Shiasim, If I was knowing the whereabouts of Imam (a.s) and during a debate if I could not prove my point, I would reveal his hiding place. But Abul Qasim is not like this If Imam was hiding behind him, he would allow himself to be scissored into pieces but would not show his Imam to the enemies"**.

Husayn Ibn Rauh was Imam (a.s)'s special representative for about twenty one years. He expired in Shaban, 326 A.H. and is buried in the courtyard of Ali Ibn Mohammad Nawbakht's house in Baghdad. He was a contemporary of Muqtadir and Raazi, the Abbaside Kings.

#### **(4). The Fourth Speical Representative**

##### **Abul Hasan Ali Ibn Mohammad Seymouri:**

He was appointed as the fourth special deputy of Imam Mahdi (a.s) after the demise of Husain Ibn Rauh. He is remembered as one of the companions of Imam Hasan Askari (a.s) and the special representative of Imam Mahdi (a.s) in Baghdad. For three years, he held the coveted post of deputyship. Unlike the previous deputies he could not perform any major task due to his truncated tenure. One of his extra ordinary feats was his prediction of Ibn Babway's demise.

The last Tawqee from Imam (a.s) received by Ali Ibn Mohammad announced the termination of the period of minor occultation Its contents are as follows:

**IN THE NAME OF GOD THE BENEFICIENT, THE MERCIFUL:**

**O Ali Ibn Mohammad Seymouri May increase the reward of your brothers on account of the difficulties born by you. You will die within six days. Regulate**

**your affairs and sum them up. Do not make a will to any body. After you, this chain (of special deputyship) will end and it will mark the beginning of the major occultation. Now, I will re-appear on divine command. But that will be after a long time when the hearts of the people will become hardened and the world will become full of injustice, tyranny and oppression. Yes! There will be some who will claim to be my special deputies. Whoever claims to consult me before the emergence of Sufyani and the heavenly Voice, he is a deceiver and liar. There is no power and strength except that of Allah, the Al-mighty the High".**

This is the last letter received from Imam (a.s) in the minor occultation. After three years of deputyship, Ali Ibn Mohammad Seymouri left this world in Shaban, 329 A.H. He is buried on the Khanlanji High way near Bab-jul-Mahool on the bank of the Abi Eqaab river. His last words were "For God is the Affair and He will himself execute it". He lived during the reign of Muttaqui, the Abbaside Caliph.

For 69 years between 260 A.H. till 329 A.H. four people acted as the medium between Imam (a.s) and his followers. This duration is called as the Minor occultation. Some people deem this duration to be 74 years. That is because they calculate it from the birth of Imam (a.s) in 255 A.H. It is certain that the birth of Imam (a.s) in 255 A.H. It is certain that the Imam Mahdi (a.s) did not shoulder the responsibility of Imamah in the life time of Imam Hasan Askari (a.s). Therefore, there was no need for Imam Mahdi (a.s) to be in contact with the people directly, since his respected father was executing it. Hence, the question of the commencement of minor occultation does not arise right from the birth of Mahdi (a.s).

### **Some peculiarities about special Representation:**

- 1). The name of the special deputies were not mentioned in the Tawqeeaat. This was done in order to prevent the Abbaside king's from knowing their names. Also, because this relationship was based on sheer trust and reliability, there arose no particular need to mention the names.
- 2). Alawis were kept away from deputyship and others were purposefully granted this status because the Alawis were clearly marked in the society and were under strict surveillance and scrutiny of the Government.
- 3). All of the affairs of the deputies were conducted in Baghdad for the following reasons: -
  - a) At the time of Imam Hasan Askari (a.s)'s martyrdom, those people who had come from Qum to Sammarra, were told that some-one would be appointed in Baghdad so that they could give their offerings to him and received Imam (a.s) letter from him".
  - b) Their apparent involvement was in business, therefore, they did not have the time to go out of Baghdad.
  - c) These deputies were rarely engaged in social work due to the following reasons

(i) By indulging in social work one's identity doesn't remain secret. And they did not intend to reveal themselves.

(ii) If they participated in social work, they would be marked and become as special representatives, while their aim was only to pose as businessmen. This is the cause for the rare information about their lives. Even historians have hardly mentioned anything about them. It is also possible that some historians have documented their biographies but these documents have been destroyed by the enemies of Shi'ism.

4). They performed only those tasks which were ordered unto them.

5). They were informed of the Hidden knowledge only with the permission of Hazrat Vali-e-Asr (a.s).

6). All the Tawqees received during the time of the four special deputies, had only one hand-writing and people were recognising it. This similarity in writing proved that all these letters were from Imam (a.s) and people followed them diligently.

7). About the Tawqees one can say: -

a) They follow the pattern of traditions.

b) They were answer to questions.

c) Writing and concepts were fixed.

d) They were coming about 2-3 days after questions.

8). These deputies were keeping themselves concealed from public eyes and lived in dissimulation (Taqaiyyah). For example when Husayn Ibn Rauh gave preference to the reigning caliph, on account of his dissimulation then people prayed for him and the Government could not become aware of his deputyship.

9). It was not necessary that everybody should have had direct contacts with the special representatives, they made their close friends and intimates as the medium between themselves and the masses. For example, Mohammad Ibn Husayn had appointed ten deputies in Baghdad to collect the offerings, among them was Husayn Ibn Rauh.

**The aims of Special representative can be summed up in the following words:**

(I) To prepare the people for the major occultation and habituate them to live with their Imam in concealment.

(ii) To take some steps in solving the problems and reformation of the Shia Society. Note: All reference can be found in "**Kitab-ul-Ghaibah**" of **Shaykh Toosi** and "**Kamaaluddin**" of **Ibn Babuwayh**.