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The Great Emissaries of the Imam of the Time (a.s.)

His Eminence, Imam Mahdi (a.s.) appointed some prominent scholars and worthy people as his emissaries so that they may act as medium between the Imam (a.s.) and the Shias. Their function was to convey the problems and queries of the Shias to His Eminence (a.s.) and seek their solution from His Eminence (a.s.). We have already mentioned some of these queries in the past pages. In the following pages we shall provide some details about the special representatives of the Holy Imam (a.s.).

Uthman bin Saeed Amri

He was the first representative and ambassador of His Eminence (a.s.). He had the honor of being the Imam's (a.s.) representative for a long time. He was a very worthy personality and most trustworthy and reliable gentleman. Let us briefly discuss the life and times of Uthman bin Saeed.

Uthman bin Saeed's Services to the Imam (a.s.)

Uthman bin Saeed remained in the service of the Holy Imam (a.s.) for many years. He joined the services of the Infallible Imams (a.s.) when he was just a lad of eleven.

At that time, the situation was very tense and especially during the rule of the Bani Abbas and Mutawakkil, the tyrant Abbaside who was absolutely cruel and atrocious on the Holy Imam (a.s.), and he subjected them to constant surveillance and surrounded them with police and kept them under house arrest.

Uthman bin Saeed for the sake of their holy mission of Imamate and Wilayat (Guardianship) posed as an oil-vendor till he got the appellation of "Samman". And in this disguise he became a link between the Shias and their Imam (a.s.).

The Shias sent to him their religious payments and he also put these monies in the oil containers and

delivered them to His Eminence, Imam Hadi (a.s.) and after that to Imam Askari (a.s.) and thus by this he used to solve the financial problems of the Holy Imams (a.s.). And after those two Imams (a.s.), he also received the honor of representing His Eminence, the Awaited Imam (a.s.).

Trustworthiness and Reliability of Uthman bin Saeed

According to historical sources and biographical sciences, Uthman bin Saeed was among the trustworthy, pious and just people. So much so, that His Eminence, Imam Hadi (a.s.) has certified his reliability and introduced him to be a trustworthy person:

Ahmad bin Ishaq has narrated that he asked Abul Hasan, Imam Hadi (a.s.) from whom should he take the material of Imam (a.s.) and whose statement should be accepted?

His Eminence, Imam Hadi (a.s.) guided him to the course of truth and reality and said: “Amri (Uthman bin Saeed) is my trustworthy associate, so whatever he conveys to you on my behalf it is in fact from myself, and whatever he has said on my behalf, it is in fact what I have said. Thus listen and obey him because he is trustworthy and reliable...”^{[1](#)}

These certifications of the master of Wilayat (Guardianship) and infallibility, His Eminence, Imam Hadi (a.s.) regarding Uthman bin Saeed Amri prove that Uthman bin Saeed held an esteemed position and trustworthy status with the Imam (a.s.).

A person inquired from His Eminence, Imam Hasan Askari (a.s.) regarding Amri.

His Eminence replied: “Al-Amri and his son, both of them are trustworthy and reliable. Whatever they convey to you from me is in fact from me, and whatever they say on my behalf is actually what I have said. Thus listen to them and obey them because they are worthy of trust and are reliable.”^{[2](#)}

A matter that proves the position and elevated status of Uthman bin Saeed and confirms his trustworthiness and reliability is that letter of His Eminence, Imam Hasan Askari (a.s.) that he sent to Ibrahim bin Abde Nishapuri, commanding him to obey and follow Uthman bin Saeed: “Do not leave the town till you meet Amri and be in his charge and obedience. Recognize him and let him also recognize you. Because he is a pure, chaste and trustworthy man in our view...”

These statements and other certifications, all inform us of the piety and elevated status of Uthman bin Saeed.

Deputyship of Uthman bin Saeed from His Eminence, the Awaited Imam (a.s.)

Uthman bin Saeed was having the absolute deputyship and general representation of His Eminence, Imam Mahdi (a.s.). He was a link between His Eminence (a.s.) and his Shias. He used to convey their letters, rights and religious payments to His Eminence (a.s.). And no one else had received such trust and deputyship among the Shias from His Eminence (a.s.).

Death of Uthman bin Saeed

The blessed grave of Uthman bin Saeed is in Baghdad besides Rasafa where the believers and religious people visit it.

Shaykh Tusi says: “We used to visit the grave of Uthman bin Saeed and the Ziyarat was performed openly. This practice continued from the time I arrived in Baghdad in 408 A.H. till the year 430.”

Shaykh Tusi further says, “The Governor, Muhammad bin Faraj had a metal enclosure constructed over the grave of Uthman bin Saeed and the neighbors and people visit the grave and obtain blessings therefrom.”³

Condolence of the Awaited Imam (a.s.)

After the death of Uthman bin Saeed, His Eminence, Imam Mahdi (a.s.) sent condolence letter to his knowledgeable son, Muhammad bin Uthman as follows.

“Indeed we are from Allah (SwT) and to Him we shall return...We submit to His command and are satisfied with His decree. Your father has lived in good fortune and has passed away with dignity. May Allah’s (SwT) mercy be upon him, he has joined his friends and masters. Your father was always in the affair of the Imams (a.s.) and whatever would bring him near to Allah (SwT). May Allah (SwT) brighten his countenance!

May Allah (SwT) give you more reward...and from the success of that departed one it is sufficient that he had a son like you, who would succeed him in his place and invoke mercy for him. And I also say that thanks be to my Lord because the hearts of the Shias are happy because of what Allah (SwT) had made in you. May Allah (SwT) help you and make you succeed. May He be your guardian and protector.”

Just as the sorrowful statements of His Eminence, the Master of the Age (a.s.) prove the trustworthiness and elevated status of Uthman bin Saeed, in the same way they confirm the reliability and trustworthiness of his son, Muhammad bin Uthman, who also possessed great merits and good manners.

Muhammad bin Uthman

After the death of his father, Muhammad bin Uthman succeeded to the post of the special deputyship of the Awaited Imam (a.s.). Muhammad was among the trustworthy and reliable persons and was a dignified personality of the Shias in his knowledge as well as his actions.

Since everyone also trusted him like his father, the Shia people now forwarded their queries and religious payments through him to the Holy Imam (a.s.). Muhammad bin Uthman then conveyed the replies of the Imam (a.s.) to his Shias.

Justice and Trustworthiness of Muhammad bin Uthman

All biographers of Muhammad Ibn Uthman are unanimous about his work, position and elevated status among the Shias. And this distinction is sufficient for him that he was a special deputy of the Proof of Allah, and the Awaited Imam (a.s.). A position held by his father during his lifetime, which after his passing away was transferred to Muhammad Ibn Uthman.^{[4](#)}

The written communication of His Eminence, the Master of the Age (a.s.), proves his position and elevated status and the letter is as follows.

“And as for Muhammad bin Uthman Amri, may Allah (SwT) be pleased with him and his father before him, is my trustworthy and reliable associate and his writing is my writing.”^{[5](#)}

Imam Hasan Askari (a.s.) was asked regarding Uthman Amri. He replied: “Amri and his son, both are trustworthy and reliable. Whatever they do on my behalf is in fact from me. And whatever they say on my behalf is in fact my saying. Then listen to and obey them because they are trustworthy and reliable.”^{[6](#)}

Regarding him, His Eminence, the Master of the Age (a.s.) writes in a letter to Muhammad bin Ibrahim bin Mahziyar Ahwazi: “Muhammad was always in the time of his father, may Allah (SwT) be pleased with him, worthy of our trust. He is like his father in our view and he is appointed to his post and he acts according to our commands. May Allah (SwT) protect him. So act upon what he says.”^{[7](#)}

And Muhammad bin Uthman has narrated that His Eminence, the Master of the Age (a.s.) performed the Hajj Pilgrimage every year. He says, “By Allah! His Eminence, the Master of the Affair (a.s.) is present every year in the Hajj season and he sees the people and recognizes them, but the people do not recognize him.”^{[8](#)}

Writings of Muhammad bin Uthman

Muhammad bin Uthman has compiled a book on Islamic Jurisprudence and traditions that he heard from Imam Hasan Askari (a.s.), Imam Mahdi (a.s.) and his father, Uthman bin Saeed who had also heard them from the Holy Imams (a.s.). Umme Kulthum daughter of Abu Jafar has mentioned that her father's books reached Husain Ibn Ruh.^{[9](#)}

Deputyship of Muhammad bin Uthman from Imam Mahdi (a.s.)

Muhammad bin Uthman had the absolute deputyship and general representation from His Eminence, Imam Mahdi (a.s.) for fifty years. The Shias came to him from all corners and sent to him their religious payments so that he may convey them to the Imam of the time (a.s.). They also received replies to their numerous juristic inquiries through him from the Imam (a.s.).

Death of Muhammad bin Uthman

Abu Jafar Muhammad bin Uthman had gained much from faith and piety, therefore when he perceived that his death was near and that he must move towards meeting with Allah (SwT), he dug a grave for himself and once in a while descended into it for reciting Quran therein.

So much so, that he had inscribed some verses of Quran and names of the Holy Imam (a.s.) on a tablet and had made a bequest that it be buried with him. After a few days his illness worsened and his soul flew away to the ethereal world and he submitted his life to his creator. This occurred in the end of the month of Jamadi I in the year 305 A.H. [10](#)

Husain bin Ruh

Husain bin Ruh was the third special deputy of His Eminence, Imam Mahdi (a.s.) during the period of minor occultation. He was a worthy personality, a pious, intelligent and a knowledgeable man. In this way he was greatly respected among all Muslims, whether Sunnis or Shias. When Muhammad bin Uthman was on his deathbed he was surrounded by the Shias of his time. They asked him: Who is the deputy of His Eminence, Imam Mahdi (a.s.) after you?

He replied: This Abul Qasim shall take my place and he would be the link between you and the Master of the Age (a.s.). He is the deputy and representative of His Eminence (a.s.). He is a trustworthy and a reliable person. Therefore, refer to him in your affairs and seek his counsel in your problems. I have been ordered to convey this message to you and I have done so.

Debate of Husain bin Ruh with the Opponents

A person from among the opponents had a debate with Husain bin Ruh Nawbakhti that shows the intellectual level and powerful knowledge of the latter. The opponent said to Husain bin Ruh, "I wish to pose some questions to you."

He replied, "You may ask."

He asked, "Please tell me if Husain (a.s.) is the Wali (saint) of Allah (SwT)?"

He replied at once, "Yes."

He asked, "Is it possible for Allah (SwT) to give power to His enemy over this friend?"

Husain bin Ruh said, "Pay attention to what I am saying and remember it. You should know that the Almighty Allah (SwT) does not speak to the people directly. But He sends some prophets (a.s.) of His to them. If He had sent non-humans as prophets they would not have gathered near him, they would have shunned him.

That's why the prophets were from the people (human). They used to eat like humans and walked in the streets and bazaars. People used to say to him: You are like us and we are like you. We do not accept that you are a prophet but that you present some miracle. If you show a miracle we would know that you have a special distinction from Allah (SwT), which we do not have. Thus the miracles of the prophets (a.s.) are the greatest proof of the veracity of their claims.

Therefore some of them after warnings and completion of proof presented the miracle of the flood and storm and the arrogant were drowned. Some were such that when thrown into the fire, it became cool and comfort for them. For some of them the sea split and the enemies drowned in it. The Almighty Allah (SwT) turned the dry staff into a python. Of them were such through whose hands the Almighty enlivened the dead and for some split the moon and in the same way gave speech to animals like camel and wolf, etc.

In other words the divine prophets (a.s.) presented such miracles that people were not capable of performing them. The wisdom of the Almighty was such that the prophets, though they possessed the miracles sometimes they achieved victories and sometimes they suffered defeat.

If they had always been victorious and had never suffered defeat and calamities the people would have mistaken them for being god and considered them all-powerful. Thus the prophets (a.s.), despite their miracles were sometimes victorious and successful and sometimes vanquished.

Therefore the people did not perceive them to be omnipotent and realized that there was a power above the prophets (a.s.) Who is the creator and Nourisher of the Universe. They were compelled to confess to Him and obey His prophets (a.s.), who are the proofs of Allah (SwT) over the people.

Anyone who saw their propagation, warnings and signs, decided and confessed that it was truth and worth obedience. In this way they secured their salvation and those who deviated from this and became inimical to the divine messengers fell into everlasting chastisement.”

This reply and debate shows the powerful rational capability and knowledge of Husain bin Ruh. The opponent was so much affected by the discourse that he fell into bewilderment. Therefore, Muhammad bin Ibrahim bin Ishaq who was present in the gathering says that the reply of Husain bin Ruh was so astonishing that the next day I went to him to ask him whether it was his own reply or he had learnt it from the Infallible Imam (a.s.). Husain bin Ruh told him: “O Muhammad bin Ibrahim! I never say anything on my own even in the most difficult circumstances. Rather the source of all the things is from the favors I have received from the Proof of Allah (SwT) and heard from him...”^{[11](#)}

Steadfastness of Husain bin Ruh

Husain bin Ruh had a powerful determination on the path of truth and possessed great steadfastness and bravery. Abu Sahl Nawbakhti says: “If Abul Qasim had the Imam (a.s.) underneath his garment, and even if his flesh was being cut into pieces to make him reveal his whereabouts, he would not yield or

reveal his presence to his foes.”[12](#)

Dissimulation of Husain bin Ruh

Husain bin Ruh was living in a time when the society was full of hatred and malice towards the family of the Messenger of Allah (S). Therefore he was compelled to secure his life. So that he may continue to fulfill the great duty and heavy responsibility of the deputyship of the Imam of the time (a.s.).

Thus he used to act in dissimulation. Historians state that one day a sentry of his cursed Muawiyah, therefore Husain bin Ruh terminated his services and though many people interceded that he be reinstated he was not taken back by Husain bin Ruh ever. [13](#)

Husain bin Ruh with Ali Qummi

The great Allamah, Ali bin Husain Qummi wrote a letter to Husain bin Ruh that he request His Eminence (a.s.), to pray that the Almighty Allah (SwT) may give him a child who may become a scholar of religion from his present wife, who was the daughter of his uncle.

Husain bin Ruh also conveyed his request to His Eminence, Imam Mahdi (a.s.). The reply came that he would not have any children from this wife. But soon he would become a master of a bondmaid through whom would be born two sons, deeply knowledgeable about religion and religious law. Not much time passed but that he became a master of a Dailamite lady.

The Almighty Allah (SwT) gave him three sons from this lady, Muhammad, Husain and Hasan. But Muhammad and Husain became prominent scholars of Shia Islam having few equals. They were experts of religion and memorizers of the verses of Allah Almighty (SwT) and their powerful memory astonished the people and people say that this distinction was due to the blessings of His Eminence, Imam Mahdi (a.s.). However Hasan was an ordinary man and was always engrossed in prayers, away from the company of people. [14](#)

Death of Husain bin Ruh

Husain bin Ruh was the sole deputy and emissary of His Eminence, Imam Mahdi (a.s.) for 21 or 22 years. He was the sole link and medium between Shias and His Eminence (a.s.). He used to convey the queries and religious payments to His Eminence (a.s.) and obtain their replies from him.

After this period he fell ill and in the year 326 A.H. he passed away from this world and was buried in Baghdad with elaborate funeral arrangements at Bazar Shorja, which is an important business center and court of law. People go for Ziyarat to his grave and obtain blessings therefrom.

Ali bin Muhammad Samari

Ali bin Muhammad Samari was a man of faith and piety and had a very special and elevated position of spirituality among the people. It is sufficient for his distinction that he had the honor of being the special deputy of His Eminence, the Master of the Age (a.s.).

In spite of the fact that in his time there existed many worthy and capable people among the Shias, he became the last special deputy of His Eminence (a.s.). And with his passing away commenced the Major Occultation of the Twelfth Imam (a.s.). Now the general deputyship of His Eminence (a.s.) became the share of the great scholars of Shia religion.

Narrators have reported that His Eminence (a.s.) wrote an epistle to Ali bin Muhammad Samari before his death as follows.

“O Ali bin Muhammad Samari, may Allah (SwT) reward you. You are going to die in six days. Tie up your affairs and do not appoint any successor to carry out your duties after your final transfer. The full occultation has begun and there shall be no appearance but after Divine permission, high His name is, and that shall be after lengthy times, and the hardening of the hearts and the earth being replete with inequity. Individuals who claim to have seen me will come to my Shia. Behold, whoever claims seeing me before the rise of Sufyani and the Call, is a liar and a slanderer. And there is no power except through Allah, the Lofty, the Great.”^{[15](#)}

We learn from this epistle that if anyone after the major occultation claims to meet His Eminence, Imam Mahdi (a.s.) he would be a blatant liar. On the other hand we have historical records of many people and many great scholars meeting the Imam (a.s.). Now how can we reconcile the two things?

The explanation is that one who claims to meet the Imam (a.s.) at will and also says that he is an agent of the Imam (a.s.) like some people did during the minor occultation is a liar. However, if one reports without such a claim there is no harm in it. This according to me is the apparent explanation of this puzzle.

Death of Ali bin Muhammad Samari

Ali bin Muhammad Samari became indisposed and the Shia people visited him and inquired, “Who is your successor after you?”

He replied, “The affair rests in the hands of Allah (I do not have a successor).” Samari entered into the mercy of the Lord on 15th of Shaban 328 A.H. ^{[16](#)}

^{1.} Tanqihul Maqal, 2/245, Usool al-Kafi

^{2.} Mawaqidul Maarif, 2/63

^{3.} Moraqidul Maarif, 2/63

^{4.} Tanqihul Maqal, 3/149

- [5. Tanqihul Maqal, 3/149](#)
- [6. Bihar, 13/97](#)
- [7. Bihar, 13/97](#)
- [8. Bihar, 13/97](#)
- [9. Bihar, 13/97](#)
- [10. Bihar](#)
- [11. Muntakhabul Athar, Pg. 397–399](#)
- [12. Bihar, Maraqidul Maarif, 1/25](#)
- [13. Bihar](#)
- [14. Ghaybah, Shaykh Tusi, Pg 188](#)
- [15. Mojam Rijalul Hadith, 13/186](#)
- [16. Ghaybah, Shaykh Tusi](#)

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