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Husain b. Rauh (r.a.) During the Period of the 2nd Special Deputy

According to popular narrations, he was amongst the companions of Imam Hasan al–Askari (a.s.) and was considered amongst the close companions and supporters of the 2nd special deputy Janabe Muhammad b. 'Uthman (r.a.). Husain b. Rauh (r.a.) enjoyed the unequivocal confidence of the second deputy so much so that the latter divided the chiefs of the Imamia sects into various levels and grades and appointed Husain b Rauh (r.a.) at the highest and the foremost group. He was the first amongst the chiefs who was permitted to directly meet him (2nd deputy).

Note

A critical aspect of the lives of the deputies of Imam (a.t.f.s.) is underscored in the above discussion. They were special Shias who performed their administrative duties in an extraordinary manner. Although they were in close contact with Imam (a.t.f.s.) and knew his residence, they ensured that it remained a secret from the prying eyes of others around them.

This trait is even commendable when we consider that the period of short occultation was not a period of 1 or 2 years, but a long era spanning more than 7 decades. Over this prolonged duration, to keep constant touch and contact with Imam (a.s.) and at the same time to regularly communicate the problems of the people to Imam (a.s.) and seek a solution from him (a.t.f.s.) underlines their capabilities.

They had to deal with constant requests and pressures from the people for being allowed to meet Imam (a.t.f.s.) and they had to all along be careful never to disclose Imam's (a.t.f.s.) location to the people.

The readers will appreciate the fact that if we try to conceal something, while the people are aware that we are trying to hide something from them, and we are also aware that people are trying to discover the hidden thing, then it is indeed a difficult task to conceal that hidden object from the inquisitive eyes of the people. It may be possible to divert their attention and delay the matter for a few days, but certainly not for a year or years or decades. These points will help us appreciate how well Imam (a.t.f.s.) must have

trained the deputies.

Muhammad b. 'Uthman (a.r.) had made Husain b. Rauh (r.a.) a link between himself and the agents around Baghdad. During this period, Husain b Rauh (r.a.) came to establish an influential presence in the court of the Bani Abbas rulers by virtue of a pre-determined plan. Consequently he even succeeded in solving some problems prevailing in the government. Readers are requested to read the following incident carefully:

1. Shaikh Sadooq (a.r.) has narrated from Abu Muhammad Hasan b. Hasan b. Yahya Alawi that Abul Hasan Ali b. Ahmed b. Ali Aqiqi in the year 298 A.H. came to meet Ali b. Esa b. Jarrah who was the vizier at that time, so that he could advise him regarding his government and to advance his needs to him.

The vizier replied, 'You have many relatives in this city and if all of them start asking their needs and if we decide to entertain all of them, then it will become a huge task and we will never be able to resolve this matter.' Aqiqi replied, 'Therefore I am asking my need from the One through whom difficulties are solved.'

Ali b. Esa queried, 'Who is he?' He replied, 'Allah, the Almighty.' With this he went out of the room angrily. Aqiqi used to say, 'I came out angrily and was saying, 'Allah, the Lord of the Universe, gives patience on every destruction and solves every difficulty.' Uttering this statement I left from there.

Then a messenger from Husain b. Rauh (r.a.) came to me with a message from him. I complained to him about the vizier and he in turn narrated my complaint about the vizier to Husain b. Rauh (r.a.). That messenger returned and gave me 100 dirhams. I counted all of them and weighed them. He also gave me a handkerchief and some quantity of Hunoot (camphor) and a few shrouds and declared, 'Your master has conveyed salutations to you and said that whenever any difficulty or sorrow befalls you then at that time wipe this handkerchief over your face.

This is your master's handkerchief. Take this money, camphor and shroud along with you and know that tonight your wishes will be fulfilled' He also said, 'When you reach Egypt, Muhammad b. Ismail will die 10 days before you and then after 10 days, even you will leave this world. This shroud and camphor are for you.'

I took it from the messenger and he left. At that moment, all of a sudden, I saw myself at the doorsteps of my house. At that moment a voice called out. I asked my servant 'Is everything alright? Go and see, who is there.' He went to see and replied, 'Everything is fine. The vizier's paternal cousin Hamid b. Muhammad Kaatib's servant has come.'

He brought him to me. The servant said to me, 'The vizier and my master Hamid have called you.' I mounted my horse and went ahead till I reached the lane of 'Vazzaneen' and saw that Hamid was sitting and waiting for me. When he saw me, he advanced towards me and shook hands with me and both of

us headed for the vizier's house. The vizier said to me, 'O old man! Allah has fulfilled your wish.' Then he apologised to me (for his past behaviour) and gave me some official papers bearing his seal. I took them and came out. 1

Reminder

From the above incident we can gauge the degree of influence that Husain b. Rauh (r.a.) exerted in the court. We can also conclude that Husain b. Rauh (r.a.) was the beneficiary of Imam's (a.t.f.s.) special care and attention, while he had not yet become a special deputy as this incident occurred in 298 AH – 7 years before Muhammad b. 'Uthman's (r.a.) demise, after which Husain b. Rauh (r.a.) assumed special deputyship.

Selection of Husain b. Rauh (r.a.)

More than 3 years before his own death, Muhammad b. 'Uthman had started directing some of the Shias who were bringing Khums and other monies for Imam (a.t.f.s.) to Husain b. Rauh (r.a.). In this manner he was preparing the ground for the appointment of Husain b. Rauh (r.a.) to the position of special deputyship.

If someone raised any doubt or objection to this practice, Muhammad b. 'Uthman (r.a.) would affirm that this was on the order of Imam (a.t.f.s.) himself. In this regard, there are several traditions, of which, we narrate just one:

Muhammad b Ali Aswad narrates, 'When some financial donations (waqf) used to be brought to me, I would surrender the same to Muhammad b. 'Uthman (r.a.) and he used to accept it from me. Once, during the last days of his life, I took some monies and went to him, but Muhammad b. 'Uthman ordered me to hand over the wealth to Husain b. Rauh (r.a.).

I went to Husain b. Rauh (r.a.) and handed the money to him and asked him for a receipt. Husain b. Rauh (r.a.) complained about this to Muhammad b. 'Uthman, so Muhammad b. 'Uthman ordered me not to demand a receipt from Husain b. Rauh (r.a.) in future. He stressed, "Whatever wealth you deposit with Abul Qasim Husain b. Rauh (r.a.), it is as if you have deposited the same with me." After this incident, I never sought a receipt for any amount deposited with Husain b. Rauh (r.a.).

A similar incident has been narrated by Abu Abdillah Ja'far b. Muhammad Madai famous as 'Ibn Qazooda'. Shaikh at-Tusi (r.a.) has narrated it in his book 'Al Ghaibah', pg 367.

Muhammad b. 'Uthman (r.a.) took particular care in appointing Husain b. Rauh (r.a.) as his successor. He endorsed his successorship while he was alone with him, at times in the assemblies of sincere Shias and at other times in front of his representatives.

The reason for adopting such an approach was because there were no clear narrations from the holy

Imams (a.s.) about the reliability and the trustworthiness of Husain b. Rauh (r.a.). Neither the representatives of Baghdad nor the special and common Shias expected the deputyship of Imam (a.t.f.s.) to fall on the relatively unknown and unfamiliar shoulders of Husain b. Rauh (r.a.). Hence Muhammad b. 'Uthman (r.a.) took advantage of every opportunity to impress upon the Shias the deputyship of Husain b. Rauh (r.a.).

Ja'far b. Muhammad b. Qoolwyah relates: 'Our teachers used to say that we had no doubt that after the demise of Muhammad b. 'Uthman (r.a.), none other than Ja'far b. Ahmad b. Muttayal or his father would succeed him. This was because he possessed characteristics similar to Muhammad b. 'Uthman (r.a.). Also, we were aware that he stayed frequently in his house. In addition to that, in his last days, Muhammad b. 'Uthman (r.a.) ate food, which was prepared in the house of Ja'far b. Muttayal and his father or personally visited their house for food.'

There was no doubt whatsoever in the minds of the special Shias that in the case of any eventuality, Ja'far b. Muttayal would succeed Muhammad b. 'Uthman (r.a.). However, when Muhammad b. 'Uthman (r.a.) appointed Abul Qasim Husain b. Rauh (r.a.) as his successor, everyone submitted to him and accepted him and their conduct towards him was like their conduct towards Muhammad b. 'Uthman (r.a.). Ja'far b. Muttayal worked in a similar manner (with Husain b. Rauh (r.a.)) as he had worked during the deputyship of Muhammad b. 'Uthman (r.a.).

'This is a characteristic of Imam's (a.t.f.s.) chosen servants, whose actions do not alter with the change in personality.'

Ja'far b. Muhammad b. Qoolwayh Qummi says:

'Then whoever speaks evil of Husain b. Rauh (r.a.) has in fact maligned Muhammad b. 'Uthman (r.a.). Whoever maligns Muhammad b. 'Uthman (r.a.), in reality he has spoken ill about Imam az–Zaman (a.t.f.s.) and has criticized him (a.t.f.s.).2

The abovementioned chronicles underline the fact that some of Muhammad b. 'Uthman's (r.a.) deputies were closer to him than Husain b. Rauh (r.a.). Muhammad b. 'Uthman (r.a.) spent more time meeting these deputies than he did in meeting Husain b. Rauh (r.a.). This led the Shias to believe that one of these proximate deputies would eventually succeed Muhammad b. 'Uthman (r.a.). Also, it is clear from the previous quotes, that although Muhammad b. 'Uthman (r.a.) was subtly appointing Husain b. Rauh (r.a.) as his successor, this fact was not well–known among the general Shia populace.

Abu Ali Muhammad b. Hamala says that before his demise, Muhammad b. 'Uthman (r.a.) gathered the leaders and chiefs of the Shias and announced, 'After my demise, Husain b. Rauh al-Nawbakhti (r.a.) will be my successor. I have been ordered to appoint him in my place. Therefore, turn towards him and have faith in him regarding your works.'3

First Tawqee (A Signed Letter) to Husain b. Rauh (r.a.)

Abul Abbas b. Nuh states that Muhammad b. Nafees wrote a letter from Ahwaz. I read the very first tawqee concerning Husain b. Rauh (r.a.) from Imam az–Zaman (a.t.f.s.). In it was written:

'We know (Husain b. Rauh), may Allah confer all His Goodness and Pleasure on him and bestow His Bounties on him. We are aware of his letter, which is the cause of our reliance and certainty (upon him). We deem him meritorious, which makes him happy. May Allah increase His Favours and Goodness on him.'4

This tawqee reached Husain b. Rauh (r.a.) on Sunday, 6th of Shawwal, 305 A.H.

The rationale behind the appointment of Husain b. Rauh (r.a.) as deputy of Imam Zaman (a.t.f.s.) can be enumerated as follows:

- 1. He was appointed as the deputy largely due to his faith, intelligence, patience, generosity and sincerity. These qualities were to prove very useful in that political environment so as to stifle jealousy and enmity. There were numerous jurisprudents and theologians in that period and the people had their eyes fixed on them.
- 2. He was the wisest among Shias and Sunnis. Also, he had placated the enemies and also pleased his friends. In the last tawqee received by Shaikh at-Tusi (r.a.) through Husain b. Rauh (r.a.), Imam (a.t.f.s.) asserted,

'Abul Qasim (r.a.) is the wisest of the people, for foes and friends and his practises dissimulation (Taqaiyyah).'5

There are numerous incidents of his Taqaiyyah. Shaikh at–Tusi (r.a.) in his book 'Al Ghaibah' narrates from Abu Nasr Hebatullah b. Muhammad that in the house of Abu Yasaar, the vizier of Muqtadirbillah Abbasi, in the presence of Husain b. Rauh (r.a.), there were five Ahle Sunnah scholars discussing the most superior Muslim after the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.).

One of them said: The superior one after Holy Prophet (s.a.w.a.) was Abu Bakr, then Umar, then Ali (a.s.). The other claimed this superiority for Ali (a.s.). Husain b. Rauh (r.a.) solved the problem in a manner placating the Sunnis and also safeguarding the Shias in the process. The people present in that gathering became the adherents of Husain b. Rauh (r.a.).

3. Another reason for Husain b. Rauh's (r.a.) selection was the possibility of people accusing Muhammad b. 'Uthman (r.a.) of appointing his close relatives according to his own whims and Imam az-

Zaman (a.t.f.s.) not being involved in the decision. (We have mentioned earlier that Husain b. Rauh (r.a.) was very close to Muhammad b. 'Uthman (r.a.) but apparently it seemed that Muhammad b. 'Uthman (r.a.) was closer to other people)6

Commencement of his Deputyship

After the demise of Muhammad b. 'Uthman (r.a.), as per his will, a gathering was organised at Daarul Niyaabah in Baghdad where along with the leaders of Shias, Abul Qasim Husain b. Rauh Nawbhakti (r.a.) was present. This incident has been narrated by Sayyid b. Taoos (r.a.) in his book 'Mohajud Daawaat'. After the expiry of Shaikh Abu Ja'far Muhammad b. 'Uthman b. Sa'eed Amri (r.a.), Shaikh Abul Qasim Husain b. Rauh b. Abi Bahr (r.a.) went to the house of Muhammad b. 'Uthman (r.a.). A servant named Zuka of Muhammad b. 'Uthman (r.a.) handed over him the following:

- 1. Some documents that were wrapped together and a scroll.
- 2. A staff.
- 3. A painted wooden trunk.

He took them and said to the inheritors of Muhammad b. 'Uthman (r.a.), 'In this scroll are narrated the sayings of Holy Imams (a.s.).' He opened it and showed them the same. It contained supplications and Qunoot of the Infallible (a.s.).

The inheritors left it and said, 'Certainly the trunk contains gold and jewelry.' Husain b. Rauh (r.a.) asked them whether they would like to sell the trunk to him. Husain b. Rauh (r.a.) signaled Abul Hasan i.e. Ibn Shabeeb al–Kooshari to give them 10 dirhams in exchange for the wooden trunk. They were not satisfied with it. Husain b. Rauh (r.a.) increased it till it reached 100 dirhams.

Yet, they were not satisfied with the amount. Husain b. Rauh (r.a.) warned them that if they do not close the deal at that rate they would regret later. On his insistence, they finalised the deal at 100 dirhams.

Husain b. Rauh (r.a.) put aside the staff and scroll and picked up the trunk. When the matter of the trunk was resolved he explained: This staff belongs to Abu Muhammad Imam Hasan al–Askari (a.s.). He had given it to Shaikh 'Uthman b. Sa'eed (r.a.) as his will at the time of his death. The staff is still present and regarding the trunk, it contains the rings of the Holy Imams (a.s.). The rings have special characteristics and then he showed it to the people.'7

It is clear from the aforementioned incident that the period of Husain b. Rauh's (r.a.) deputyship was more prominent among the common Shias than the period of the first and the second deputies. Due to this, many Shias directly contacted Husain b. Rauh (r.a.) instead of his deputies in their areas. In his period of deputyship, he witnessed lesser opposition compared to the previous deputies.

Deniers of Deputyship

In the year 307 A.H., Muhammad b. Fazl Mosuli denied the deputyship of Husain b. Rauh (r.a.). However, with the guidance of Hasan b. Ali Wajnaa and after witnessing some of the affairs of Husain b. Rauh (r.a.), he repented.

It is necessary to point out over here that some people have written that Hasan b. Wajnaa rejected the deputyship of Husain b. Rauh (r.a.). Some have written his name as Hasan b. Ali Wajnaa and some have recorded it as Husain.

In this regard, Ayatullah al-Uzma al-Khu'i (r.a.) in his book 'Mojam-o-Rejaalel-Hadees' vol. 5, pg. 130 has recorded his name as Abu Muhammad Hasan b. Muhammad Wajnaa Nasibi. He has narrated traditions from Imam Hasan al-Askari (a.s.) and he had met Imam az-Zaman (a.s.).

Shaikh at–Tusi (r.a.) has included him as the supporter of Husain b. Rauh (r.a.). Hasan Wajnaa was deputy of Husain b. Rauh (r.a.) in the area of Nasibeen. He was also writing letters for the people of Egypt. Similarly, Qasim b. Alaa and his two friends Abu Hamid Imran b. Mufleen, Abu Ali Hajdar in Azerbaijan and Muhammad b. Ja'far Asadi were deputies till 312 A.H. in the city of Rayy (Teheran). Muhammad b. Hasan Sairafi was in Balkh. They all were the media between the people and Husain b. Rauh (r.a.).8

Political Aspect (295 - 320 A.H.)

In Muqtadir Abbas's reign, Husain b. Rauh was highly respected by the ministers (Viziers). But he was subsequently arrested in the reign of Muqtadir. Muqtadir donned the mantle of Caliphate at a very young age.

Till the time the post of Vizier was in the family of Furat, Husain b. Rauh (r.a.) had a say in the government's decision–making. But this changed when Hamid b. Abbas, an evil person who thought nothing of abusing people when he was angry, became the Vizier. He harassed the family of Furat and the Shias were imprisoned. At that time Husain b. Rauh (r.a.) had to face increased difficulties under very hostile conditions.

The hostility persisted for approximately five years i.e. from Jamaadiul Aakhar 306 A.H. till Rabiul Aakhar, 311 A.H. During this period, Husain b. Rauh (r.a.) lived a secluded life and his activities were largely clandestine. After the difficult era of Hamid b. Abbas, the conditions of the Shias improved. Husain b. Rauh (r.a.) recommenced his activities openly. In the year 314 A.H., the government arrested him. The historians have cited the following reasons for his arrest:

1. Husain b. Rauh (r.a.) was blamed of promoting links with the Qaraameta. He had written a letter to Abu Tahir Qarameta and invited him to Baghdad so as to lay siege to it. Abu Tahir had attacked pilgrims

(Hajis) of Baghdad and imprisoned them. Among the Hajis were the relatives of Caliph Muqtadir.

2. Husain b. Rauh (r.a.) was accused of accepting money from the people. Some have written that the government had demanded wealth from him, which he refused to pay.

Husain b. Rauh (r.a.) was once again imprisoned in Zilhajj 312 A.H. till Mohaaram 317 A.H. After being released from prison, he got engrossed in his activities. The conditions improved for him because people from the family of Nawbakht viz. Abu Yaqub Ishaq b. Ismail (killed in 322 A.H.), Abu Ali Nawbakhti (244 – 324 A.H.) and Abu Abdullah Husain b. Ali Nawabakhti (d. 326 A.H.) were appointed at senior positions in the government.

His Knowledge

Indeed what can be said about the knowledge of the one who had unrestricted access to the Proof of Allah (i.e. Imam az–Zaman (a.t.f.s.)) and his bestowals, attention, care and respect!

Muhammad b. Ibrahim b. Ishaq Talaqi asked the questions of Ali b. Esa Qasri to Husain b. Rauh (r.a.) that whether Imam Husain (a.s.) was Wali (appointee) of Allah? And whether his killer was enemy of Allah? Husain b. Rauh (r.a.) replied in the affirmative.

Then he was asked whether Allah allows His enemy to overpower His appointee? After receiving the replies, Muhammad b. Ibrahim fell in doubt as he could not digest this subtle point. The next day when he went in the presence of Husain b. Rauh (r.a.), before he could utter anything, Husain b. Rauh (r.a.) exclaimed: 'O Muhammad b. Ibrahim! It would have been better had I fallen from the sky and became a morsel for birds than advance my views concerning Allah's Religion. Whatever I had replied, its source was the Proof of Allah (i.e. Imam (a.t.f.s.)) and I myself heard this from him.'9

Husain b. Rauh's (r.a.) discussion with Muhammad b. Ibrahim on Allah's Enemy and His Wali can be summarised in a simple manner. Allah does not converse with the people openly like we do.

Rather, He converses through the Prophets (a.s.), who are mortals. He bestows miracles upon them, which are beyond all others in their respective nations. Despite evident miracles, few people from their nations testified to their claims, while others rejected them outright. So, sometimes Prophets (a.s.) overpower the enemies and sometimes they were vanquished and confronted with calamities.

If Allah made the Prophets (a.s.) defeat all their adversaries in all matters, then the people would have taken them as Allahs and patience, calamities and examination would have no meaning and purpose.

Hence, Allah has conferred characteristics on these mortals that they should be patient at all times be it in comfort or difficulties. In times of ease and triumph (over the enemy) they should thank Allah. They should be humble in all situations and abstain from rebellion and disobedience. In this way, people may understand that Allah is the Creator and in all affairs, He has some purpose and wisdom. 10

For more details on Husain b. Rauh's (r.a.) knowledge, the following books of traditions may be referred to:

- 1. Al Ghaibah of Shaikh at–Tusi (a.r.) pg. 390 tradition 356, pg. 378, tradition 346 and pg 373, tradition 345
- 2. Kamaluddin of Shaikh Saduq (a.r.) Vol. 2, pg. 519, tradition 48
- 3. Bihar al-Anwar of Allama Majlisi (a.r.) Vol. 53, pg. 192, tradition 20

The aforementioned volumes of Kamaluddin and Behaarul Anwar have been translated into Urdu.

Miracles and Manifestations

There are many incidents that highlight the abovementioned traits of which we are narrating only two:

1. Husain b. Ali Babawayah (r.a.) (brother of Shaikh Saduq (r.a.)) narrates:

Some people from the city of Qum (in 311 A.H.), prepared to go for Hajj, when the Qaraamatah attacked the Hajis. My father (Ali b. Babawayah (r.a.)) wrote a letter to Shaikh Abul Qasim Husain b. Rauh Nawbakhti (r.a.) to present it to Imam az–Zaman (a.t.f.s.) and seek permission for Hajj that year. Imam az–Zaman (a.t.f.s.) ordered him not to go for Hajj. My father wrote another letter saying that the Hajj was obligatory and whether it is permissible to stay away from it? Imam (a.t.f.s.) replied: 'If you cannot avoid it, then travel with the last caravan.'

As my father left for Hajj with the last caravan, he was saved while the people with the earlier caravan were killed. 11

2. When Ahmed b. Ishaq Qummi requested for permission to go for Hajj, Husain b. Rauh (r.a.) granted him permission and gave him a cloth. When Ahmed b. Ishaq saw the cloth, he exclaimed, "This is the news of my death." On his return from Hajj, he expired at a place called Halwaan. 12

His Demise

He was appointed as a deputy in the year 305 A.H. and departed from this transitory world in the year 326 A.H. He served as a direct deputy of Imam (a.t.f.s.) for 21 years. If we add another 2–3 years, during which he served as a deputy during the deputyship of Muhammad b. 'Uthman (r.a.), it adds upto 23 years.

His grave is situated in Baghdad in Nawbakhtia, near the door of the house of Ali b. Ahmad Nawbhakti. He expired on Wednesday, 18 Shabaan, 326 A.H. His grave is still there. However, the place is now known as Sug Al-Attaareen.

Visitors should not forsake the visitation of this great deputy of Imam az–Zaman (a.t.f.s.) when they visit Kazimain for Ziarat. Nowadays, the caravan of visitors do not visit his grave due to the stringent traffic system of Baghdad. However, his Ziarat can be done on Fridays, which is a holiday in Baghdad.

- 1. Kamaluddin; chapter of Tawqee'aat; pg. 32
- 2. Zindagaani al-Nawwab al-Khaas, pg. 243
- 3. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 51, pg. 355
- 4. Al Ghaibah of Shaikh at-Tusi (r.a.), pg. 372, tradition 344
- 5. Al Ghaibah, pg. 384
- 6. Zindagaani al-Nuwwab al-Khaas, pg. 252
- 7. Zindagaani Nuwwab al-Khaas, pg. 252-254
- 8. Tarikh al-Siyaasi al-Ghaibat al-Imam al-Devazdahum, pg. 196-198
- 9. Isbaatul Hudaat, vol. 1, pg. 117, tradition 168
- 10. Zindagaani al-Nuwwab al-Khaas, pg. 265
- 11. Bihar al-Anwar, vol. 51, pg. 293, tradition 1
- 12. Bihar al-Anwar, vol.51, pg. 306, tradition 21

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