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A Summary of the Life of Hadhrat Ayatullah al-`Uzma al-Hajj ash-Shaykh Lutfullah as-Safi al-Gulpaygani

Hadhrat Ayatullah al-`Uzma al-Hajj ash-Shaykh Lutfullah as-Safi, a renowned Faqhi, Scholar of Islam and one of the greatest thinkers of our time, was born in the year 1337 Hijri (1917) in the city of Gulpaygan, Iran.

His Parents

His father, the late Ayatullah Akhund Mulla Muhammad al-Jawad as-Safi (b. 1867) was a wellknown 'Alim and an 'Arif. He, along with being a specialist in Islamic studies, was also a researcher, writer and a teacher in various fields of Islamic sciences such as: Fiqh, ¬sul, Kalam, Akhlaq, Hadith, and other areas. He was also well versed in Poetry, and Calligraphy.

His deep level of piety, love for the *Wilayat* of the Ahlul Bayt (peace be upon all of them), the excellence in *Akhlaq* of this great man and his firm position of upholding the concept of "*Amr bil Ma'ruf wa Nahi anil Munkar*" (Enjoining the Good and Forbidding the Evil) and taking a stand against those who had deviant thoughts and the oppressors and despotic rulers of his time had a tremendous effect on his son.

The setting of the sun on the life of this great scholar was on the 25th of Rajab, in the year 1958, which corresponded to the night of the Shahadat of the 7th Imam, Musa al-Kazim ('a).

His mother was Fatima, a noble woman, poet, and a lover of the Ahlul-Bayt (peace be upon all of them) and the daughter of Ayatullah Akhund Mullah Muhammad 'Ali – the roommate and study partner of the late Ayatullah al-Uzma Mirza Shirazi (May Allah raise his status).

Sincerity, piety, bravery, frankness and outspokenness, patience in the upbringing of her children, the remembrance of Allah, recitation of various *Dua*, and *Salatul Lail* are some of the particular spiritual and

ethical traits of this now deceased woman.

In reality, Agha Safi Gulpaygani, inherited his love and sincerity for the Ahlul Bait (peace be upon all of them) from parents like this.

His Studies

Ayatullah al-'Uzma as-Safi stepped into the garden of knowledge while in his youth. He started his primary Arabic studies in the city of Gulpaygan (Iran) under the tutelage of the great Scholar, Marhum Akhund Mullah Abul Qasim, better known as "Qutb". He continued his studies in the fields of *Arabic*, *Kalam*, *Tafsir of the Quran*, *Hadith*, *Fiqh*, and *Usul* until the end of *Suth* (the second major level of Islamic studies) in this city. During this period, he was also being taught by his father, Ayatullah Akhund Mullah Muhammad al-Jawad as-Safi in the above mentioned sciences of Islam.

In the year 1940, Ayatullah as–Safi left the city of Gulpaygan, a move that until today, he still feels upset about having to make, but none the less, with all the difficulties involved, he made the migration to the city of Qum. It was here in Qum that he took take part in the classes being offered by the greatest Scholars of the Hauza Ilmiyyah of Qum, and the place where he was able to continue on the road of completing his studies and research in Islam.

A few years later, Ayatullah as–Safi made the journey to Najaf al–Ashraf and for one year, took part in the lessons being offered by the Great Maraja' of that religious institution. The exceptional power of understanding, and the intense struggle and serious–mindedness in pursuing his studies were some of the reasons that the great teachers in Qum and Najaf paid special attention to him.

Some of his teachers while in Najaf al-Ashraf:

- Ayatullah al-Uzma ash-Saykh Muhammad Kadhim Shirazi (d. 1367)
- Ayatullah al-Uzma as-Sayyid Jamal ad-Din Gulpaygani (d. 1377)
- Ayatullah al-Uzma ash-Shaykh Muhammad 'Ali Kadhimi (d. 1364)

After studying in the city of Najaf, Hadhrat Ayatullah Lutfullah as–Safi returned to Qum. It was there, that for more than fifteen years, he attended classes on *Akhlaq* and *'Irfan*, then being taught by the former Marja' of the Shi'a world, Hadhrat Ayatullah al-'Uzma al-Burujerdi (May Allah raise his Status).

It was at this time that Ayatullah as–Safi was chosen to be one of the special advisors to the late Ayatullah al–Burujerdi, and was also one of the few selected people who worked on answering the religious questions that were being sent in by the *Muqallidin* of the late Ayatullah.

Ayatullah al-Burujerdi, after recognizing the level of knowledge and the ability that Ayatullah as-Safi possessed, then decided to keep him in charge of answering the important questions that were coming

into the Late Marja's office in the fields of *Figh*, and *Kalam*.

It was also through the encouragement of Ayatullah al-Burujerdi that ash-Shaikh as-Safi was able to compile the valuable book, or rather an encyclopedia in the study of the 12th Imam, al-Mahdi ('a), which later took on the name of "Muntakhab al-Athar fi Imam Thani al-'Ashar".

Some of his teachers while in Qum:

- Ayatullah al-Uzma al-Hajj as-Sayyid Muhammad Taqi Khansari (d. 1371)
- Ayatullah al-Uzma as-Sayyid Muhammad Hujjat Kuhkamri (d. 1372)
- Ayatullah al-Uzma al-Hajj as-Sayyid Muhammad Sadr ad-Din Sadr 'Amili (d. 1373)
- Ayatullah al-Uzma al-Hajj as-Sayyid Muhammad Hussein Burujerdi (d. 1375)
- Ayatullah al-Uzma al-Hajj as-Sayyid Muhammad Reda Gulpaygani (d. 1414)

Characteristics of Ayatullah al-'Uzma as-Safi

Piety, sincerity, reliance on Allah in all matters, frankness in speech, and Enjoining the Good and Forbidding the Evil are some of the spiritual and ethical traits of this Faqhi.

His presence is a boundary less ocean of love for the Pure Lights of the Sinless Progeny of the Prophet ('a), and every morning, after his Salat, after the recitation of Dua' al-Ahad, those around him hear his heart crying out in love for the Hidden Imam, with the plea:

It has also been noted that on Friday afternoons, he can be spotted in Masjid Jamkaran, which is just outside the holy City of Qum, sitting among the faithful lovers of Imam al-Mahdi ('a) engrossed in prayers.

Some of the academic achievements of this scholar include teaching and research in various fields of Islamic Studies, such as *Fiqh*, *Usul*, *Kalam*, *Hadith*, *Rijal* and other areas. It suffices us to mention that along with all of this; he is also the author of over 100 valuable books, both in Farsi and Arabic, of which some have been translated into various languages.

Level of knowledge of Ayatullah al-'Uzma as-Safi

Ayatullah as-Safi, during his studies in the Hauza of Qum, was ranked with high esteem as one of the greatest scholars by leading figures of the Muslim world, such as: Sayyid Jamal ad-Din al-Gulpaygani,

Ayatullah al-Burujerdi, Imam al-Khumayni, Sayyid Muhammad Rida al-Gulpaygani, and various others.

Some 45 years ago, on the 3rd of Jumad al-Awal, Ayatullah al-Udma al-Hajj as-Sayyid Jamal ad-Din al-Gulpaygani, one of the biggest and most well known Marja' of his time in Najaf al-Ashraf, bestowed the highest honor on Ayatullah as-Safi by announcing his reaching to the level of *ljtihad*.

Not only did he confirm Ayatullah al–Uzma as–Safi's reaching to this level, but in the letter which he wrote, which is still available today, he went on to say that Ayatullah as–Safi Gulpaygani was at the highest level of Ijtihad – in comparison to the other scholars of his time. This is the final level in Islamic studies, where, after completion, a person is allowed to make his own independent decisions, with the help of Qur'an, and ahadith in matters of Islamic law.

For many years during the lifetime of Marhum Ayatullah Burujerdi, and even after his death, Ayatullah as–Safi was one of the few people who were responsible for taking the exams of the students in the Hauza. These included the students who were at the highest level of their studies, including those involved in the studies known as 'B'ath al–Kharij' (the final level of Islamic studies, after which, if successfully completed, entitles a person to formulate his or her own opinion on Islamic matters, in the light of the Qur'an and Sunnah).

It should be noted that a large number of the Mujtahidin and teachers who are presently in the Hauza 'Ilmiyyah of Qum have taken their exams at the hands of this noble scholar.

This valuable Faqhi, in addition to what has already been mentioned, has also done extensive research in the area of Arabic Syntax (the rules of Arabic Grammar), and in the History of Islam and Iran. He is also well acquainted with the various forms of poetry, and is well versed in composing verses of poetry.

Even today, this learned Marja', with all the responsibilities that lie on his shoulders, still finds the time to keep himself informed on a day to day basis of the news of the world, with special attention taken to the news of the world of Islam, by all means and methods at his disposal.

With the large amount of information on history and politics that is continuously being passed on to him, and with his ability to be able to analyze all the events that are occurring in the world today in their respective regions, it is no wonder that he is often referred to as "The Scholar of our Time."

Before the victory of the Islamic Revolution of Iran, Ayatullah as–Safi's presence in the various areas of struggle and opposition against the Shah's corrupt regime was well known. It was with the confiscation and banning of one of his books by the Shah's secret police, known as the SAVAK, that added to the friction between this Faqhi and the former Government.

Ultimately, the printing of some of the most important books that Ayatullah al-'Uzma as-Safi had written, in defense of the teachings of the Shi'a' were banned (in Iran). At the same time, the Leaders of some of the Arab countries, who were working hand in hand with the Colonialists, and who were not able to hide

their anger and hatred from these conscious writings which had the potential of awakening others, were ultimately forced to ban his books.

With the victory of the Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979, Ayatullah as–Safi, on behalf of the Late Imam al–Khumayni, was placed in charge of the "Shura Negahban" or the "Council of Guardians of the Islamic Revolution". For eight years, he served as the Secretary General of the "Council of Guardians". He had provided his valuable assistance in establishing and preserving the social order in Iran, and to the service of the people of this nation, in guarding the sanctity of Islam and the Qur'an. During this eight years, not even once did he entertain any sort of doubt or uncertainty in his mind concerning his role in the Government.

Ayatullah al-'Uzma al-Hajj ash-Shaykh Lutfullah as-Safi al-Gulpaygani, who, over 20 years ago, possessed all the conditions necessary for Marja'iyat, generously and nobly passed it by.

With the untimely demise of his teacher, the *Late Ayatullah al-'Uzma as-Sayyid Muhammad Rida al-Gulpaygani* in 1993, ash-Shaykh as-Safi was flooded with requests from the 'Ulama and people all over the world to accept the responsibility of guiding the Shi'a world. Finally, after repeated requests, he humbly accepted the Marja'iyat, and today, is counted as one of the leading and outstanding Marja', and one of the main pillars of the Hauza Ilmiyyah of Qum.

The leader of the Islamic Revolution of Iran, Ayatullah al-Uzma as-Sayyid Ruhullah al-Musawi al-Khumayni (May Allah raise his status) had personally told Agha Safi Gulpaygani that he is constantly praying for him and in addition, he never forgets to pray for him in his Salat al-Lail.

The great scholar, and Marja' Taqlid of the Shi'a world, the late Ayatullah al-Uzma as-Sayyid al-Hajj Muhammad Rida al-Gulpaygani (May Allah raise his status), in regards to Ayatullah as-Safi al-Gulpaygani had written the following in his will to his family:

"...Any time you need the permission of a Faqihi (for religious issues), refer to Ayatullah Agha Hajj Shaykh Lutfullah Safi, since, without doubt, I consider him to be a Mujtahid, and 'Adil."

One of the most well known teachers in the Hauza 'Ilmiyyah of Qum, who has written countless books on topics ranging from Usul al-Fiqh, 'Aqaid, History and other areas many of which have been translated into English, Urdu, and other languages, Ayatullah al-Hajj Mirza Ja'far Subhani, at the funeral ceremony of the late Ayatullah al-Uzma as-Sayyid Muhammad Rida Gulpaygani, said the following about Agha Safi:

"...A person whom, in his life, has continuously been busy with pen in hand, writing and offering his services to Islam – one who is counted as of the 'Arifs and upright 'Ulama, and one whom just looking at his face, is reminded of Allah (SWT)..."

A Sample of His Writings

To date, this Marja' Taqlid and scholar of Islam has over 100 books to his name, some of which are:

Muntakhab al-Athar Fi al-Imam ath-Thani 'Ashar

- Imamate and Mahdiwiat
- Glimpses of the greatness of al–Hussain (Peace be upon him)
- Divinity in Nahjul Balagha
- Tawdhiul Masail
- Manasik Hajj (Farsi)
- Medical Questions and Answers
- The History of the Shi'a Hauza
- The Epic of Karbala
- Answers to Ten Questions regarding Imam al-Mahdi
- A Discussion regarding the famous Hadith of the Splitting of the Muslim Ummah into 73 Sects
- The Qur'an : Protected from Corruption
- The Call of Islam from Europe
- Discussion concerning the Ayah of Tathir
- The Necessity of Islamic Government or Wilayat al-Fugaha during the 'Asr al-Ghaybah
- The Relationship and Connection between the World and al-Imam az-Zaman (Peace be Upon Him)
- Tafsir of Ayah al-Fitrah (30:30)
- Answers to questions from a Muslim Woman
- A Reply to "The Belief of Mahdiism in Shi'a Imamia" (Reply to the doctorate thesis written by Mr. Abdul-Aziz Sachedina)

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