

Biography of Nizam al-Mulk

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One of the benefits of studying the biographies of the people that went before us is that our predecessors inspire us by their lives and by their sacrifices. Among these inspirational people are the prophets, saints, scholars, and even righteous political rulers. One of the most righteous political rulers in the history of Islam was Nizam al-Mulk. He was the patron of the great Imam, Hujat al-Islam (the Proof of Islam), Al-Ghazali; may Allah be pleased with him. Nizam al-Mulk believed that Imam al-Ghazali had the potential to refute the esoterics, the anthropomorphians, and the philosophers that were causing so much confusion in the Muslim world at that time.

NIZAM AL-MULK IS called *al-Wazir al-Kabir* which means “The Great Minister.” His full name is Nizam al-Mulk, Qiwanu ad-Deen, Abu Ali al-Hasan bin Ali ibn Ishaq at-Tusi. He was originally from Tus, which is the city of Imam al-Ghazali. Nizam al-Mulk was a brilliant man, a brilliant political leader, and an expert. He was felicitous in his nature, deeply devout, religious, and of extreme modesty. He filled his gatherings with the great reciters of Quran and the scholars of his age and vicinity. He built the famous *madrasa* (university) in Baghdad which bears his name: *An-Nizamia*. He built other great schools as well, one in Nisapur and another one in Tus. He strongly encouraged people to study the Islamic sciences and arts, and he used to spend much money on the seekers of knowledge. He also recited Hadith himself and was well known as a great reciter during his time.

Nizam al-Mulk was born in 408H, and he died in 485H. His father was Dahaqin Bayhaq. Nizam al-Mulk grew up learning grammar, rhetoric, and political matters. After serving as a brilliant secretary in Ghaznah, he became the wazir of the sultan, Alab Arsalaan. Later, he also served as the wazir to the sultan’s son, Malik Shah. Nizam al-Mulk had a great ability in organizational matters and was also known for redressing the wrongs that occurred under his government. He was extremely gentle with the citizens of the state, and he built many

endowments. Many of the great people would seek him out, and he continued serving people in this manner for 20 years.

Nizam al-Mulk renovated the buildings of Khawarizam and the *Mashhad* of Tus, and he built hospitals. He also donated 50,000 gold dinars to a hospital and built schools in the cities of Marw, Harat, Balkh, Basra, and Isbahan. He was deeply forbearing, forgiving by nature, extremely generous, and upright in his understanding. He was a chivalrous man and demonstrated much bearing and patience. His benevolence was immense, and he was always extremely generous. It was said that he donated 100 gold dinars every morning. He was also extremely humble and manifested that in the presence of righteous people.

Nizam al-Mulk had finished memorizing the Quran when he was eleven, and he studied the *madhab* of Imam Shafi'. He was Shafi' in his jurisprudence and Asha'ri in his creed. He studied with Imam al-Qushari as well as with Abu Muslim bin Mihrbzud and Abu Hamid al-Azhari. In fact, 'Ali bin Tirad al-Zaynabi, Nasr bin Nasr al-Ukbari, and others relate on Nizam al-Mulk's authority. In addition, Nizam al-Mulk was brilliant at mathematics and was extremely eloquent in his writing. He was intelligent by nature, far sighted, vigilant, and upright.

It is said that Nizam al-Mulk never sat down unless he had *wudu*', and he never did *wudu*' except that he prayed two *rak'ats* after doing so. He also used to fast on Mondays and Thursdays. He had immense good in his nature and was devoutly pious. He had a strong inclination towards being in the company of righteous people. He was deeply moved by preaching and was always impressed by those who pointed out his faults to him and who caused him to feel humility or made him weep.

Nizam al-Mulk died on a Thursday night in 485H near Nurhawand. He was killed while fasting during Ramadan. The sus-

pected assassin, an esoteric, came in the form of a devout sufi and pretended to hand Nizam al-Mulk a gift. When Nizam al-Mulk reached out to take the gift from him, the man stabbed him with a knife in his chest, and Nizam al-Mulk died from the wound. His soldiers later killed the assassin. It has been insinuated that Nizam al-Mulk was murdered from within the government at the orders of a governor. This governor did not live for more than a few months after Nizam al-Mulk's assassination. The last words Nizam al-Mulk uttered were, "*Please do not kill my assassin because I have forgiven him. There is no god but Allah.*"

Ibn Aqil said about Nizam al-Mulk,

The biography of Nizam astonishes the intellect due to his generosity, his nobility, his justice, and his revivification of the symbols of this religion. His days were the days of the people of knowledge, and his end was by assassination while he was on his way to Mecca during Ramadan, so he died a king of this world and a king of the next world. May Allah have Mercy on him.

There is an extensive biography of Nizam al-Mulk in *Tarikh ibn an-Najaar*.

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