

# The Tughlaq Dynasty (1320-1414) Part-2

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## MUHAMMAD-BIN-TUGHLAQ (1325 – 1351)

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Ulugh Khan succeeded his father under the title of Muhammad-Bin-Tughlaq. He *ruled for twenty six years*. During this period he *introduced several new and novel experiments* and also experienced the impact of the same. It may be stated here that no ruler in medieval India has evoked so much criticism and discussion concerning his policies and character as Muhammad-bin-Tughlaq.

Muhammad-bin-Tughlaq was one of the most remarkable rulers of the age. A careful study of his character will enable us to state that *he was an admixture of opposites*. In other words he was a *combination of kindness and cruelty*. So far as personal life is concerned, he was simple and free from all the vices of the age viz drinking, debauchery etc. The Muslim historians inform us that he was highly generous even to his enemies.

# MUHAMMAD-BIN-TUGHLAQ (1325 – 1351)

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He was

- ❑ *a great scholar of Persian and Arabic and was well versed in various branches of learning, such as astronomy, philosophy, mathematics, medicine, logic etc.*
- ❑ In religious and philosophical matters he was a rationalist. He anticipated Akbar in holding religious discussions with Hindu Yogis and Jaina Saints such as Rajasekhar and Jinaprabhasuri.
- ❑ He offended the orthodox Muslim Ulema by curbing their political influence and tried to resolve secular problems through secular methods.
- ❑ He believed in the principle that all offices are open to talented person.
- ❑ He had been described by his contemporaries, as ‘one of the wonders of the age in which he lived’. But all these great qualities were over shadowed by his cruelty and obstinacy.



# MUHAMMAD-BIN-TUGHLAQ (1325 – 1351)

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Muhammad-bin-Tughlaq, in spite of all these rare qualities and scholarship, was a failure as a ruler. Normally, his plans were endowed with remarkable political foresight but in practice they let loose hell. Muhammad-bin-Tughlaq was hot-headed, proud to the very core, poor judge of human nature and above all never bothered to give weight and value to the suggestions given by his ministers.

The contradictory qualities of Muhammad-bin-Tughlaq were obvious in all the *‘five ambitious projects’* that he had undertaken in his twenty-six years of reign period.

# TRANSFER OF THE CAPITAL (1327)

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The most controversial step which Muhammad-bin-Tuglaq undertook soon after his accession was the transfer of the capital *from Delhi to Daulatabad (Devagiri)*. The main motive for the transfer of capital to Daulatabad was its central location and close proximity to the south, which was a newly conquered region and required regular and close supervision. The scheme of the transfer of the capital was properly executed. The Sultan ordered many officers and leading men, including many Sufi saints, to shift to Daulatabad. No attempt was made to shift the rest of the population. Delhi remained a large and populous city in the absence of the Sultan.

# TRANSFER OF THE CAPITAL (1327)

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*It is wrong to assume that the transfer of capital was a mass exodus and the city of Delhi was completely deserted. Though Muhammad-bin-Tughlaq had built a road from Delhi to Daulatabad and set up rest houses on the way to help the travelers, Daulatabad was more than 1500 kms away. Many people died during rigorous journey and the heat, since this movement took place during the summer season. The people who were brought to Daulatabad did not like the new environs and there was widespread resentment against the Sultan. After two years, the Sultan abandoned Daulatabad and decided to retransfer the capital to Delhi.*



# TRANSFER OF THE CAPITAL (1327)

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The immediate impact of the experiment was that

- ❑ it reduced the prestige and prosperity of Delhi. But it was for a short period. Ibn Battuta who came to Delhi in 1334 found it in a fairly flourishing condition.
- ❑ The Sultan lost his prestige in the estimation of the people and could never win back their confidence all his life- the bad execution of the project. Therefore, it resulted in the personal loss to the Sultan.
- ❑ But, this resulted in a number of long range benefits. It helped in bringing north and south India closer together by improving communications. Many people, including religious divines who had gone to Daulatabad settled down there. They became the means of spreading in the Deccan the cultural, religious and social ideas which the Turks had brought with them to north India.

# INTRODUCTION OF TOKEN CURRENCY

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The introduction of token currency was the second controversial project of the Sultan. The token currency meant the *introduction of Copper tankas in place of Silver tankas*. The value of the token coin was deemed to be equal to a silver coin. There was a shortage of silver in the world in the fourteenth century. Moreover, Qublai Khan of China had already successfully experimented with a token currency. The idea of a token coin was a new one in India, and it was difficult to induce the traders as well as the common man to accept it. Finally, Muhammad-bin-Tughlaq *introduced this in 1329-1330*, which remained in circulation for two years.



# INTRODUCTION OF TOKEN CURRENCY

But in executing, the plan failed miserably because

- ❑ The Sultan did not make the issue of token copper coins as the monopoly of the state. Hence, every house of a copper-smith and gold-smith became a mint. The goldsmiths began to forge the token coins on a large scale. But he could not able to prevent forging the new coins.
- ❑ Soon the new coins were not accepted in the markets. *The Khuts and Muqaddams* paid all the land revenue in token currency.
- ❑ Consequently the Sultan was compelled to withdraw the token currency. He offered to exchange all the token coins for silver coins. Many people exchanged the new coins but the treasury became empty. According to Ziauddin Barani the heap of copper coins remained lying on roadside in Thuglaqabad.

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- ❑ Though this experiment failed, *Edward Thomas* described the Sultan as “*the Prince of Moneyers*” for this innovative idea.
- ❑ The failure of these two experiments affected the prestige of the sovereign, and also meant wastage of money. However the government quickly recovered.

## KHURASAN EXPEDITION (1332 – 1333)

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The Khorasan region was a part of the Persian empire. *Abu Said* was the Mongol emperor of Persia. He was a minor. *Muhammad-bin-Tughlaq* along with *Tarmasharin* the ruler of *Transoxiana* and also the ruler of *Egypt* entered into a “*Triple alliance*” to *dismantle the Persian empire*. Muhammad-bin-Tughlaq created a large army, known as ‘*Khurasan army*’. Ziauddin Barani says that 3,70,000 men were enrolled and paid for one whole year. But the army never pressed into the action. The scheme was abandoned, due to lack of adequate finances, the difficulties in crossing the Snow Mountains and when the Sultan learnt that the conditions in Khurasan had improved. It should be noted here that the position of the Sultan was not very stable in India itself and hence it was foolish on his part even to think of conquering foreign lands. The soldiers, who were suddenly thrown out of employment, took to plunder and robbery and proved a nuisance to the Sultan as well as to the public.



# QARACHIL EXPEDITION

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The next scheme of the Sultan was the conquest of Qarachil. It is known through the account left by Ziauddin Barani that the Qarachil expedition was a part of the project of the Khurasan expedition. *The Qarachil region is located between India and china and this in all probably Kumaon-Garhwal region. This was inhabited mostly by the Rajputs and by some Himalayan turbulent tribes.* However, it never aimed at the conquest of China, as some later historians have suggested. These hilly tracts usually served as the place of refuge for rebels and therefore the Sultan wanted to bring them under his control. The Sultan's nephew Khusrau Malik was the commander in-chief of this expedition. After some initial victories, the imperial army marched into Tibet, where the entire army was annihilated in winter, followed by an outbreak of plague.

# QARACHIL EXPEDITION-(1333)

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*According to Ziauddin Barani, from an army of 10, 000 only 10 horsemen came back to Delhi to tell the story of the disaster. However, it seems that the hill Rajas accepted the over lordship of Delhi. Here the main aim of Sultan was sound and grand but the selection of the season shows lack of proper judgement.*

# ENHANCEMENT OF LAND REVENUE IN THE DOAB

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The failure of earlier four projects had catastrophe effect on the economy of the state. In **1328 – 1329**, in order to overcome financial difficulties, Muhammad increased the land revenue in the Doab. Here *the main motive of the Sultan was to increase the revenues of the state to build a strong army and to introduce sound administration.* The actual rate of increase of revenue is not definitely known, but it proved to be ill-timed, because the Doab was then passing through total famine, which was followed by plague. *It had resulted in a series of peasant revolts.* According to Ziauddin Barani, the farmers set fire to their grain barns and abandoned their fields. Bulandshahar and other towns witnessed open revolt. They fled from the villages. But Muhammad-bin-Tughlaq took harsh measures to capture and punish them.



# ENHANCEMENT OF LAND REVENUE IN THE DOAB

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The revolts were crushed. However, the Sultan realized the gravity of situation undertook a number of relief measures to improve agriculture. He **launched a scheme to extend and improve cultivation in the Doab.** Consequently, **huge sums were advanced as *takkavi loans* to enable the cultivators to buy seed and cattle, to sink wells and to extend cultivation.** During his stay in Delhi the Sultan introduced new regulations to improve farming. He *created a department of agriculture called the Diwan-i-Kohi.* The main object of this Dept. was to bring more land under cultivation by giving direct help to the peasants. A large tract of land, 60 square miles, was chosen for land reclamation. Land was to be cultivated and different types of crops were expected to be cultivated in rotation. Superior crops were given preference. In two years the government spent 70 lakhs of tankas. Land was given to those who were in need of it.

# ENHANCEMENT OF LAND REVENUE IN THE DOAB

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The measures he advocated had a long term impact, but they failed disastrously during his reign. Thus *the Doab experiment departed the glory of Sultan Muhammads empire and his administration lost its very vitality. It also marked the beginning of country wide disorders and popular upsurge against the un popular rule of Muhammad -bin-Tughlaq.*

# REBELLIONS

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The visionary schemes of Muhammad created a wide spread discontent and misery among the peoples. Another problem which sultan had to face was the *problem of nobility*. The rebellions took place one after another in different parts of the empire.

During the last decade of his reign (1340 – 1351), the Sultan's time and energy were spent in dealing with rebellions. *He faced as many as thirty four rebellions during his reign, twenty seven of them in the south alone.* The rebellions of south India were the most serious. The whole of south India became independent during his lifetime.

- ❑ The rebellion of *Hasan Shah* resulted in the establishment of the Madurai Sultanate.



# REBELLIONS

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- ❑ In 1336 the *Vijayanagara kingdom* was founded by Harihara and Bukka at Hampi. The Vijayanagara principality which gradually expanded and soon embraced the entire south.
- ❑ In 1347 *Bahamani dynasty* was established by Alauddin Bahamani Shah near the principality of Daulatabad with capital at Gulbarga.
- ❑ The governors of Oudh, Multan and Sindh revolted against Muhammad Bin-Tughlaq.
- ❑ In Gujarat Targhi rose in revolt against the sultan who spent nearly three years in chasing him.

He restored law and order in Gujarat, but while moving towards Thatta, in Sindh, his health became worse and died in March 1351.

# ESTIMATE OF MOHAMMAD -BIN- TUGHLAQ

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Muhammad Bin-Tughlaq had best intentions, excellent ideas, and exemplary qualities but he failed as ruler. His intention in the above policies and experiments were sound and grand. *Abolition of Sati, constructing hospitals, organization of poor relief, and establishment of the Department of Agriculture were the other grand projects of the sultan. But in implementation of these projects he lacked the balance and sense of proportion.* Thus, the reign of Muhammad-bin-Tughlaq, while making the zenith of Delhi Sultanate also saw the beginning of the process of its disintegration.

*Badauni* has rightly remarked - “*The king was freed from his people and they (people) from their king*”

*(To be continued)*