

## THE TUGHLUQS : MUHAMMAD TUGHLUQ'S INNOVATIONS

The Tughluqs came to power in Delhi in 1320 with Ghiyasuddin Tughluq being the first ruler of the dynasty. When he ascended the throne, the Sultanate was suffering from unsettled political conditions and demanded immediate measures. The outlying provinces had proclaimed independence as the effective control of the Sultanate had shrunk only to the heartland. The administrative machinery was completely out of gear and the treasury had been completely depleted. Therefore, at first, Ghiyasuddin addressed himself to the task of restoring the exchequer and the administration. In particular, the political condition in the Deccan was most disturbing. Devagiri had been annexed to the Sultanate by Mubarak Khalji earlier, but the southern states beyond Devagiri like Telingana had completely revolted against the Sultanate. Therefore, Telingana drew Ghiyasuddin's immediate attention. In 1321, Ulugh Khan, who later ruled as Muhammad bin Tughluq, started for the south with a large army. Without much resistance in the way, he reached Warangal. After two sieges, each lasting four to five months, the ruler Rai Rudra Dev finally decided to surrender. Rai was made a prisoner and escorted to Delhi and Warangal was annexed to the Sultanate under the direct imperial administration.

Bhanudeva II, the ruler of Jajnagar in Orissa, had given support to Rai Rudra Dev of Warangal at the time of imperial offensive against the latter. Ulugh Khan, therefore, after leaving Warangal sometime in the middle of 1324 AD, marched against Jajnager which was annexed and made a part of the Sultanate. In 1323-24 AD, a quarrel broke out in Lakhnauti in Bengal after the death of Feruz Shah, the ruler of this independent principality. Some nobles from Lakhnauti came to Ghiyasuddin for help who responded and decided to march to Bengal in person. The ruler of Lakhnauti was defeated and one of the warring groups led by Nasiruddin was given a tributary status.

Thus, after Alauddin Khalji the subsequent Sultans were mostly occupied with the affairs of the south and Gujarat. It was only after Muhammad Tughluq ascended the throne that attention was paid to the northwest frontier. Soon after his accession, Muhammad Tughluq led campaigns to Kalanaur and Peshawar. Probably it was a sequel to the invasion of the Mongols under Tarmashirin Khan in 1326-27 AD and was aimed at securing the northwestern frontier of the Sultanate against future Mongol attacks.

### Muhammad bin Tughluq (1325-1351)

Muhammad bin Tughluq was earlier known as Prince Jauna while Ulugh Khan was the title he received from Ghiyasuddin for his meritorious services. *Futuh-us Salatin* informs us of his declaration, "Every old man in my territory is like a father to me and every young man is like my brother." The contemporary accounts of Muhammad Tughluq's period inform that he ascended the throne at Tughlaqabad around November-December, 1324 and his coronation was held in Delhi 40 days later in 1325 and soon after, he adopted the name Muhammad.

The five projects taken up by Muhammad Tughluq during his reign were: Raising the taxes in Doab to fill the depleted treasury; Transfer of capital from Delhi to Daulatabad, 1328; Introduction of the token currency, 1329-30; the Khorasan campaign; and the Qarachil campaign.

### Currency System Under the Delhi Sultanate

The establishment of the Delhi Sultanate was marked by a considerable growth of money economy which accelerated particularly in the first half of the 14th century. Since the growth of money economy in simple would mean larger use of currency in transactions (monetisation is another term for this phenomenon), a larger scale minting of gold, silver and copper coins that followed the foundation of the Delhi Sultanate was an attendant process of the monetisation of Indian economy.

The period prior to the foundation of the Delhi Sultanate was marked by the scarcity of coinage particularly of pure silver. The early Ghorian conquerors found mints uttering coins stamped, no changes were introduced in the beginning. The coins continued to bear the image of goddess Lakshmi or bull-and-horseman, etc. Only the name of the new ruler in a corrupt form got inscribed over it in Nagri script. These coins were called *delhiwal*.

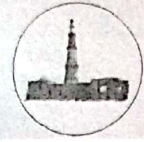
Iltutmish (1210-36) is credited for standardising the coinage of the Delhi Sultanate. The currency system established by him in its essentials survived the Delhi Sultanate. He introduced gold and silver *tankas* and a copper that was reckoned at 1/48th of a *tanka* in north India and 1/50th in the Deccan after the conquest of Devagiri.

A firm ratio of 1:10 between gold and silver appears to have been established.

The equation between these currencies in the north has been worked out as:

1 silver *tanka* = 48 *jital* = *dangs*  
= 480 *dirams*

The silver currency remained dominant till the reign of Alauddin Khalji. From Ghiyasuddin Tughluq's reign, a decline in silver coinage in relation to gold and billon set in. Under Muhammad Tughluq,



gold coinage overshadowed the silver, and silver coinage practically disappeared under Firuz Tughlaq. In the 15th century, billon coinage dominated (the Lodhis (1451-1526) uttered no other coins).

### ■ Muhammad Tughluq and Religion

An ardent student of philosophy and religion, Tughlaq experienced all forms of religious attitudes, including atheism and agnosticism. He started to examine all religious postulates, in the light of rationalism. It did not mean that Muhammad had lost faith in Islam. Ibn Battuta says that discussions on religious and philosophical matters took place every morning after prayers in which non-Muslims also took part. Battuta further says that he had private discussions with *jogis* which is confirmed by Jain records discovered recently. These records show that the Sultan had close contact with Jain scholars, like Jinaprabha Suri. Raja Sekhara was another Jain scholar who enjoyed his patronage. Surprisingly, they could not influence him with the Jain ideal of *ahimsa*.

Though he was very particular about prayers and other religious rites enjoined by Islam, Muhammad also took part in the religious festivities of other communities. He is presumably the first Sultan who participated in the Holi festival and records of the time confirm it. A number of *jogis* roamed about with their Muslim followers to which he never objected. Firuz Shah's *Futuhat* tells us that a large number of heterodox religious groups and individuals flourished, which would have been possible only in an atmosphere of intellectual and religious freedom. It seems that he visited the Satrunjay temple at Palatina and the idol houses of Girnar. By a *farman* under royal seal, he ordered the construction of a new *basati upasraya* (a rest house for monks).

K.A. Nizami feels that our main source of information on Muhammad Tughluq is Ziauddin Barani who, unfortunately, was a reactionary in politics and a traditionalist in religion. It was hardly possible for such a person to understand someone who is progressive in religion and, an innovator in politics. It is only in the interaction and interplay of these trends of Muhammad bin Tughluq's thought that an assessment of his policies can be attempted.

## Muhammad Tughluq's Innovations

### Raising the Taxes in the Doab

The Sultan introduced these measures during the early years of his reign. Mahdi Hussain says that the finances of the empire were in a bad shape due to the failure of the token currency and, as a consequence, the tax in the Doab had to be increased to replenish the treasury. Actually, the scheme was not altogether bad. The Doab was the most fertile region of the empire and under normal circumstances could have borne the increased level of taxation. Then, there was the previous example of Alauddin levying 50 percent of the produce as tax which incidentally was the maximum permissible under the Islamic law. The scheme, however, failed because of the extreme rigour with which it was implemented without any regard for the conditions prevailing at that time.

Although the sequence of events is not clear, the following reasons might have also contributed towards its failure. Shifting of the capital from Delhi to Devagiri must have affected the markets adversely. Delhi was the largest consumer market of the region and the uncertainties resulting from a transfer of the capital influenced the people's buying habits leading to a drop in agricultural production. Consequently, it resulted in a loss of revenue. Coming back to Delhi for a while in 1332, the Sultan found unsettling conditions everywhere. To rectify matters, he used coercive methods; this, in turn, resulted in a loss of production.

In 1337, after the capital was brought back to Delhi again, agricultural supplies were found to be falling considerably short of the civilian and military demands. Somewhat belatedly, the Sultan decided to encourage cultivators and set up a special ministry for the purpose. The peasants were given loans and the officials were told to go all out to increase agricultural production. Apparently, the slogan was: "Not a span of land is to be left unfilled." This also failed, because the officials lacked the motivation and zeal. As usual, corruption raised its malignant head. Before Muhammad could crack the whip over the venal officers, he was required to be present at the Deccan.

### Transfer of Capital from Delhi to Daulatabad (1327)

According to Barani, the Deccan experiment of Muhammad Tughluq was motivated because he believed that Daulatabad or Devagiri was more centrally located and was equidistant from Delhi, Gujarat, Lakhnauti, Satgaon, Sonargaon, Telangana, Malabar, Dwarasamudra and Kampilla. According to Isami, the Sultan's hatred of the people of Delhi was the motive. Suspicious of the people of Delhi, the Sultan thought he would break their power by driving them towards Maharashtra. Probably during or after the rebellions against him, the Sultan felt the need for a strong administrative centre in the south to deal with all sorts of emergencies that could arise in the region. His ministers suggested Ujjain for this purpose, but the Sultan finally decided on Devagiri. It is also possible that the natural beauty of Devagiri and its pride of place in the cities of the world, as mentioned by the poet Amir Khusrau in his *Masnavi*, made Sultan choose Devagiri.

Gardner Brown, however, felt that when Muhammad Tughluq ascended the throne, the centre of gravity of the empire had shifted from the north to the south. More than a hundred years of Mongol invasions had left Punjab devastated and shorn of its importance. In other words, the Sultan's act of shifting the capital from Delhi to Devagiri was the act of an agent of certain economic forces, which were actively operating in the life of the country and demanded the transfer of the capital to a region economically more prosperous to sustain the structure of an all-India government. In fact, taking into account all contemporary and modern interpretations, the reason behind the move appears to be political exigency.



Few historians feel that Devagiri was the second capital or second administration centre. They say that it is wrong to think that Muhammad shifted the capital to Daulatabad, even though that appears to be the general impression. Actually, Muhammad made Devagiri, or Daulatabad, his second administrative centre. Thus, the Tughluq empire had two capitals, Delhi and Devagiri. A coin issued in 1330 refers to Delhi as *Takhghah-i Delhi*; another minted in 1331 indicates Daulatabad as *Takhghah-i Daulatabad*. Incidentally, Daulatabad or Devagiri (the hill of the gods) was once the capital of the Yadavas which Mubarak Khaliji renamed as Qutubabad and established a mint there. The words Qubbatul Islam appeared in the coins first in the year 1326-27. In 1327-28, the place was renamed as Chitbad. So, it was Chitbad whose name was changed to Daulatabad and not Devagiri.

The project of transfer of the capital was carried out in stages with due regard to the convenience of the people. Apparently, there was a gestation period of two years. Sirhindi says that in 1326-27, halting stations were constructed at a distance of every *karohs* (two miles) along the road from Delhi to Daulatabad (Devagiri) and the entire uninhabited area was turned into a habitation. People living in those regions were given dwelling lands, the income from which was to be accounted for in their salaries. Also, trees were planted on both sides of the road. It seems the Sultan's mother Makhduma-i Jahan and the entire royal household shifted first to Devagiri and then the *sayyids*, *shaykhs* (mystics), *ulema* and other prominent groups of Delhi.

Muhammad Tughluq dropped the idea of developing Daulatabad as a second or alternative capital and returned to Delhi, because "the *raison d'être* of keeping Daulatabad as a second capital disappeared." There was a rebellion in Malabar (modern Coromandal in Tamil Nadu) in 1334-35 and the Sultan marched to the south to control it. When Muhammad reached Bidar, there was an outbreak of bubonic plague in which many of his soldiers were killed and Tughluq himself was taken ill. He had to come back to Daulatabad to recover when rumours spread that the Sultan was dead. As a consequence, the entire southern part of the empire consisting of Malabar, Dwarasamudra (Karnataka) and Warangal (Telingana) revolted against the Delhi Sultanate. Muhammad then decided to go back to Delhi. The Sultan's return with his plague stricken army to the famine-stricken north was the signal that he would not be able to control the far south any more. Harihar and his brother Bukka established a Hindu principality in 1336 down south of the Krishna river which later on developed into the Vijayanagar Empire. Muhammad gave up his idea of an all-India administration, because from this time, excepting the home provinces of the empire, only Gujarat and Devagiri remained in his hands.

There was no further need to keep a strong presence in Daulatabad and hence the people were allowed to return to Delhi. The Daulatabad experiment was a costly failure and made a large number of people utterly miserable, especially people belonging to the upper class. However, quite a number of Sufis and scholars decided to stay back and, in the years to come they made Daulatabad a centre of Islamic learning. The benefits of this presence of Sufis and scholars were reaped by the Bahmani rulers later on.

### Introduction of the Token Currency (1329)

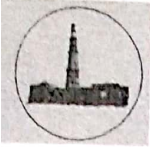
Under Delhi Sultanate, a silver coin was known as a *tanka*, while a copper coin was called a *jital*. Muhammad Tughluq came out with the idea of issuing a bronze coin in place of the silver coin. The token coins also contained an Arabic inscription reading: "He who obeys the Sultan, obeys God"; "Obey God, obey the Prophet, obey those in authority amongst you." This was probably to win over the religious sentiments of the people to make them honour the token currency.

According to Barani, the token currency was introduced because the Sultan was facing bankruptcy. The Sultan's habit of bestowing lavish gifts on people and the costly projects to conquer foreign lands almost completely depleted the treasury. He was compelled to take this measure to check an impending crisis. But Barani's conjecture was only partially correct. It is true that the expenditure incurred for the Khurasan project as also in the subsequent Qarachal disaster had strained his economy greatly, but it did not make him bankrupt. It is known that when the token currency did not work, he promptly redeemed in gold and silver the bronze coins manufactured in his own mints.

### Impact of Capital Transfer

Contemporary historians had conveyed the impression that the process led to a mass exodus, which is not true. Actually, only the upper classes consisting of nobles, *ulema*, *shaykhs* and the elite of the city shifted to Daulatabad. The general Hindu public was not affected at all. Two Sanskrit inscriptions dated 1327 and 1328 show that the Hindus of Delhi were living in peace at that time.

The Sufi leaders also did not wish to shift to Devagiri. The mystics' reaction to the Sultan's project had some ideological connotations, because the concept of *walayat* was a lynch-pin of their organisation. Under this concept the masters assigned spiritual territories to the disciples where they worked for the moral and spiritual upliftment of the people regardless of the difficulties that they faced. The Sultan's order to move was to them an unwanted and uncalled for interference in their chosen religious duties, a blow to the spirit of the *khanqahs*. Naturally, they were hesitant which the Sultan interpreted as rebellion. So, he came down heavily on them, his counter-ideology was that the state and religion were twins. They were forced to migrate and they had to comply excepting people like Shaikh Nasiruddin Chiragh who held on to his *silsilah* facing all the punishments and tortures the Sultan inflicted on him.



Then why did he introduce it? One possible reason was the worldwide shortage of silver at that time, when the relative values of gold and silver fluctuated between 7:1 to 10:1. Presumably, for this reason, there was a gradual decrease in the weight of silver in the *tanka* and a corresponding increase in the weight of the gold coin during this period. It should also be stated here that the establishment of new mints and the enormous expenditure resulting from the Deccan exodus as well as the military expeditions considerably worsened the situation arising out of a shortage in silver.

#### Box 11-12.8

##### The Idea of Token Currency

Before Muhammad Tughluq, token currencies in Asia were tried by Qublai Khan (1260-94) in China and Kaikhatu Khan (1293) in Iran. The Iranian currency failed while the Chinese one succeeded. Qublai Khan introduced a paper currency called the *chao* which succeeded, because Khan had made arrangements if the people wanted to use gold and silver, and secondly, the ink and paper were manufactured by the state and could not be forged.

The experiment of token currency was, however, a major failure. People started minting the coins in their homes. Probably, officers of the mint worked with precisely the same tools as the ordinary workman, and operated upon a metal, so to say, universally available. There was no special machinery to mark the difference of the fabric of the royal mint and the handiwork of the moderately-skilled artisan. As a result, forged coins started circulating with treasury coins and since the state was unable to prevent this, more and more coins were forged. Too many forged coins were in circulation creating havoc in the market and the situation went out of the control of the state. Further, considerable quantity of silver went out of circulation as people started hoarding silver while making their purchases in forged or token currency. Spurious token currency was used in paying the revenue making the *khuts*, *muqaddams* and *chaudhuri*'s powerful and defiant. Rebellious and disgruntled elements started purchasing weapons and such with the forged currency. The foreign trade and imports were severely affected as the merchants stopped bringing their wares for sale in India.

#### Box 11-12.9

##### Highlights of Muhammad bin Tughluq's Rule

- Heavy taxation in the Doab at a time when rains had failed and there was a famine.
- Transfer of the capital from Delhi to Devagiri.
- Introduction of token copper currency to replace gold and silver coins as there was shortage of real currency.
- Tremendous waste of resources due to unsuccessful Quaranjal (region identified as the modern Kulu) in Kangra district of Himachal Pradesh) expedition as part of the plan to fortify north and northwest frontier.
- Futile plan to conquer Khurasan and Iraq.
- Creation of an agricultural department called *Diwan-i-Kohi*.
- Independence of Bengal and Deccan states.
- The appointment of Ibn Batutah as the chief *qazi* of Delhi.
- Creation of some additional *abwabs* (cesses) such as house taxes, grazing taxes, etc.
- Introduction of a gold coin called *dinar* and silver coin called *adl*.
- Effort to organise the army on the decimal system after the Mongol pattern.
- Formulation of the 'Famine Code' to provide relief to the famine-affected people.
- Creation of the post of *wali-ul-kharaj* for collection of revenue at all the provincial levels.

### Experiments In Agriculture

The precarious economic situation under Muhammad Tughluq was further complicated by the failure of rains which led to famine. The shortage in Delhi was due to this as also the reduction in the number of grain carriers (*banjara*) and the consequent failure of grains to reach the markets. Relief was therefore arranged, a sort of rationing was introduced and grains were obtained from Awadh where there was no famine. Agricultural loans were advanced to dig wells and to buy seeds and agricultural implements. Apparently, that was how the idea of a department to increase agricultural production was born. An official with the title of *diwan-i Amir-i Kohi* was made in charge of a large tract of land. Over a hundred people were engaged, given large sums of money and asked to begin agricultural operations. The scheme had two objectives: to improve agriculture and to raise more revenue. It also

failed. The men had no idea of the local conditions and spent the money for their own purposes. It was their good luck that Muhammad did not return alive from Thatta to extract vengeance. The scheme was not entirely a failure. The policy of extending loans (*sondhar*) to improve agriculture became a standard practice with the later Sultans and became a part of the agricultural policy of the Mughals.

### The Khurasan Campaign (1330)

According to Barani, Muhammad Tughluq raised an army of 370,000 soldiers to conquer Khurasan and Iraq. But the end result was that he wasted his resources, weakened his control over his own territory and could not gain anything from those areas outside India.

Probably, the Khurasan expedition was undertaken with the Sultan's desire to make Punjab and Sindh safe for all times by making them free of the recurring Mongol attacks.

But soon he had to abandon the scheme. Of the 370,000 soldiers, about 10,000 was retained for the Qarachil campaign and the rest disbanded. These men without work resorted to plunder and robbery thereby adding to the Sultan's troubles.

### The Qarachil Campaign (1333)

The Qarachil area is identified with the mid-Himalayan tract of Kulu in the Kangra district. Muhammad wanted to have a chain of fortifications across the north and Qarachil was an area falling within the scope of the plan. Further, the Chinese were encroaching into the areas held by independent Rajput kingdoms in the Himalays which caused some alarm in the Sultanate. The Chinese apparently constructed a shrine in that area and were trying to increase their influence. Thus, Muhammad's intention was to secure frontier areas and to compel the chiefs ruling there to accept his overlordship. This would have enabled him to strengthen his position in an area of considerable strategic importance. An army of 10,000 soldiers under the leadership of Khusrau Malik, the Sultan's sister's son, was despatched for this purpose. Muhammad's advice to Khusrau regarding the strategy was elaborate and meticulous. But this expedition failed as well due to natural calamity. Muhammad was not responsible for the calamity that descended upon his army due to Khusrau's over-enthusiasm.

#### Muhammad Tughluq's Nobility

Tughlaq's nobility was very heterogeneous in character, and could not be an instrument on which the Sultan could lean on times of difficulty. Bureaucracy or the governing class underwent a sea change in character and composition under Muhammad-bin-Tughlaq. Not only did he promote the Khaji concept of a governing class based on loyalty and efficiency (ignoring racial considerations), but he also introduced new elements to it, like the mystics and

**A**lauddin Khalji had followed a policy of indirect rule in the more distant regions. They were conquered for two main reasons—the acquisition of wealth and according the status of a protectorate rather than making them a part of the Sultanate. This was particularly true of kingdoms conquered in the Deccan and in far south. This policy was changed by Muhammad bin Tughluq. The question of effective administrative control was addressed by Muhammad Tughluq by making Devagiri the second administrative seat of the Sultanate. But that experiment was shortlived and failed partially due to the unwillingness of the ruling and other classes of the Sultanate. Nonetheless, under Muhammad Tughlaq's reign, the boundaries of the Sultanate were at their apex touching Peshawar in the north west and Malabar in the south, and Gujarat in west and Jajnagar in Orissa in the east. It was, however, an irony of fate that in the closing years of the reign of the same Sultan, the boundaries of the Sultanate shrank nearly to what it was in 1296 AD.

#### Box 11-12.10

#### Alauddin Khalji Vis a Vis Muhammad Tughluq