

SUBJECT: HISTORY BA 1st YEAR 2nd Sem. PAPER: History of Delhi Sultanate (1200-1556)

Unit- II Topic: Muhammad-bin-Tughlaq, the Greatest Enigma of Indian History.

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The Origin of Muhammad-Bin- Tughlaq: Khusro Khan and Mubarak were the powerful generals of Alaudin Khilji, they had won many battles for the Khiljis. During the last days of Alaudin Khilji and after his death in 1316 many palace intrigues and assassinations took place. Khusro Khan killed Mubarak, the licentious son of Alaudin Khilji and thus Khusro Khan occupied the throne of Delhi. The nobles of Delhi were not satisfied with Khusro Khan on the throne, so they invited Ghaji Malik, the then Governor of Punjab. In 1320 Ghaji Malik marched to Delhi and attacked Khusro Khan defeated him and thus Ghaji Malik ascended the throne of Delhi assuming the title, Ghiyas-ud-din in 1320.

Muhammad-Bin- Tughlaq was the son of Ghiyas-ud-din Tughlaq born in 1290 AD. He succeeded Ghiyas-ud-din and ascended throne on 1st February 1325 and ruled till 1351 AD. When he ascended the throne, his kingdom consists of 23 provinces but many writers and historians remarked that he misruled for 26 years (1325-1351 AD). Many writers give different accounts on him. He was well known for his wisdom and character, highly profiled gentleman, humane and well cultured but not successful as a ruler and administrator. His rule was full of strife and rebellions. Elphinstone raised doubts whether he was not affected by a degree of insanity. Sir Wolseley writes that he was a genius with an unusually large share of that madness to which great wit is nearly allied and the contradictions his character were an enigma to those who knew him best.

Barani and Ibn Batutah were his contemporaries, they described that his reign was full of many surprises; his arrogance, piety humility pride lavish generosity, his care for his people and hostility to them, his preference for foreigners, his love of justice and his ferocious cruelty. Moreland remarked that his conduct was a mass of inconsistencies. He was deeply devoted to Islam, tolerant towards other sects. He was industrious and took a great deal of interest in administration, a brave and experienced general, won many battles and lost few campaigns. He was a man of great ideas far beyond his age, however when put to practice he couldn't execute successfully. For instance, the change of capital, minting of copper coins etc. were of complete failure. These remarks of writers on him and his actions, one can say that he was a man of mixture of opposite.

Reasons for his failures: His counselors in Delhi were not co-operative to his plan and policies. He was too hasty to put his plan in action, He gave his comment about his failure to Barani, " I visit them(people) with chastisement upon the suspicion or presumption of their rebellions and treacherous designs, and I punish the most trifling act of contumacy with death. This I will do

until I die, or until the people act honestly, and give up rebellion and contumacy. I punish the people because they have all at once become my enemies and opponents.” His contemporary Badauni remarked, “the king was freed from his people and they from the king.”

Domestic Policy/Administration of Muhammad- Bin- Tughlaq: For revenue collection, he ordered for maintaining register of income and expenditure of all the provinces and keep proper recording. All provincial governors were to submit reports of their concerned provinces to the centre. His aim was to bring about a uniform standard of land revenue throughout his empire and to see that no village was left unassessed.

Taxation in Doab: He levied taxation in Doab by increasing 10 to 20 times more than before. Dr. A. L. Srivastava, the sultan desired to raise 5% to 10% through house tax and grazing tax. There was no rain, the price of food grain grew dear and famine was grievous. Thousands of people died. The increase of taxation and collection was vigorously enforced. Enhancing of revenue taxation during such perilous time led to the death of thousands of people and there were riots and rebellions. He regretted for the miss-governance and took up measures to improve the condition of the people, however the remedial policies were too late.

Attempt to improve agriculture: He gave out loans to the farmers, dug wells to bring about uncultivated land under the management of the state. He established Agriculture Department and appointed Minister, Amir-i-rohi and also aimed at increasing the land under cultivation. According to Dr. A. L. Srivastava “ A large tract of land 60 sq. miles in area was chosen for state farming. The government spent 70 lakh tanka in 3 years but this experiment failed and it was abandoned after 3 years. The reason for the failure was the officers in charge were corrupted; poor quality of land for farming was selected. Another setback was that the policy was applied only for 3 years and hastily withdrawn.

Transfer of the capital (1326-1327 AD) : He ordered for the transfer of his capital to Devagiri renamed as Daulatabad. There were reasons for the transfer of the capital.

1. According to Ibn Batutah, the citizens of Delhi wrote letters of abuses and scandals to the sultan. The Sultan in reaction decided to lay Delhi waste in order to punish them.
2. According to Professor Habibullah, he wanted to extend Muslim culture to the south.
3. He also claimed that the Southern India was more prosperous and more convenient for all development.
4. He wanted that the capital should be safe from Mongols invasion and as such he opined that Daulatabad was convenient and central for a capital to administer his empire.

However, the execution of his scheme was a complete failure. The execution of this policy brought immense sufferings to the people. There were reasons for it.

Disadvantages of shifting of Capital:

1. Daulatabad is 700 miles away from Delhi, he ordered for transfer of his court and people along with properties from Delhi to Daulatabad.
2. No proper construction of road on such a long distance of 700 miles.
3. Not enough plantation of shady trees on both sides of the road to provide resting place for the people.
4. No regular establishment of posts between Delhi and Daulatabad.
5. The inhabitants of Delhi felt remorse leaving their homes. Daulatabad being to the south was too far to administer the North west of India to even defend from the Mongol's intrusion.

Seeing the immense misery and the blunder of his action, he ordered for retransfer of the capital back to Delhi in 1327. Many did not make it back to their homes. It takes many years to recover Delhi from its solitude. It was a wrong choice, wrong method, transfer of capital from Delhi to Daulatabad thus proved to be a "moment of misdirected energy".

Introduction of Token Currency: Edward Thomas described Muhammad-bin-Tughlaq as "Prince of Moneyers". He remodeled the coinage and issued new coins: a new gold piece 'Dinar' weighing 200 grains and a silver coin 'Adali' with a weight of 140 grains. The new coins were designed to be equal to the altered values of the precious metal. He also made a new venture of introducing a token currency. Regarding this, he issued a decree of legal tender for minting copper coins and putting them equal value with gold and silver. This policy could not work as there was no special machinery to mark distinctly of the royal mint. According to Barni, this decree turned, 'the house of every Hindu became a mint', crores of copper coins minted. The people paid tributes in copper coins, purchase horses, arms and other properties. The village headman and landowners grew rich and strong whereas the state was impoverished. Gold and Silver were squeezed out of the market, trade and commerce suffered. He realized the mistakes and repealed the edicts, he paid for every copper coin presented to the treasury at its face value in gold and silver coins. These coins were accumulated at Tughlaqabad(tomb of Muhammad –bin- Tughlaq) and could be seen there even 100 years later.

His Conquest: He was fond of foreign conquest, raised 3, 70,000 strong army. He attempted to conquer Khurasan, however, this was not pragmatic and was abandoned. He led a disastrous expedition against the chieftain of Garhwal (Himachal). Due to geographical reasons, many died in this expedition and few returned to Delhi. However, the hill men came to terms with paying tribute to the Sultan of Delhi. The aimless and disastrous expeditions brought immense misery to the people. It resulted to open revolts of provincial chiefs, causing dismemberment of many provinces from the Sultan's dominion. Out of 23 provinces, only the northern India and Gujarat remained loyal. Bengal, Deccan, Mysore, Telangana permanently lost to the Empire. The Kingdom of Vijayanagar took their birth. Muhammad-bin-Tughlaq died on 20th March 1351 and was buried at Tughlaqabad Fort, Delhi.