

Q. 2. Sketch the character of Mohammad-Bin-Tughlaq.

Ans. Introduction—Sultan Muhammad-Bin Tughlaq has an important place in the history of medieval India. He remains on the stage from beginning to end. He is the most wonderful king. He is a visionary, an idealist, a great scholar and a crafty politician, who can hold his own against all odds. Ishwari Prasad a famous historian writes about him—**"Muhammad Tughlaq was unquestionably the ablest man among the crowded heads of the middle ages of all kings who had sat upon the throne of Delhi since the Mohammad on conquest he was undoubtedly the most accomplished and learned"**.

Girish Karnad in this play brings into light **"the curious contradictions in the complex personality of the Sultan who was at once a dreamer and a man of action, benevolent and cruel, devout and callous"**.

Barani very correctly estimates about his character, **"Muhammad is a man who above all others is fond of making presents and shedding blood. In spite of this he is the most humble of men and one who exhibits the greatest equity"**.

A Highly Learned Man—No doubt Tughlaq was a learned Man of his time. Barani writes the learning of the Sultan. **"You are a learned man. Your Majesty, you are known the world over for your knowledge of philosophy. History is not made only by common man, that where you belong. Your Majesty, in the company of learned men"**.

He has deep knowledge of Greek, Persian and Arabic literature. He has the knowledge of the teachings of Buddhism and Zarastrianism. He has much knowledge of the views of Socrates and Plato as he has of the poetry of Sheikh Sadi of Persia. Tughlaq knows asronomy. He has planted a rose garden in imitation of the rose garden of the poetry of Sadi. He claims to have solved the difficult chess problem which even Al-Adil and Sarakhi could not solve.

Ishwari Prasad writes about him **"He knows the Holy Book by heart and also the Hedayah. He has mastered philosophy and logic and is a fine calligraphist. He himself is no mean poet, he**

appreciates the excellence of poetry and holds converse with Persian poets and criticizes their production".

An Idealist and Visionary—Tughlaq has been portrayed as an idealist and visionary, a rationalist and forward looking emperor. Tughlaq's knowledge of different religions and of the works of the great scholars of the world make him a visionary. After going through the scholars of the world he feels the thrill of finding a new world, a world which he could not find even in Arabs and the Koran. He says to Imamuddin—**"They have torn me into threads. And to be whole now, I shall have to kill the part of me which sang to them"**. His tolerance for Hindus was bitterly condemned. The abolition of the Jijaya tax was badly opposed. He remained an idealist and visionary. He wants to see a better India. He says—**"I have hopes of building a new future for India and I need your support for that. If you don't understand me, ask me to explain myself and I'll do that. If you don't understand my explanations, bear with me in patience until I can show you the results. But please don't let me down, I beg you, I kneel before you if you wish but please don't let go of my hand"**.

A Crafty Intriguer—Muhammad Tughlaq is a crafty intriguer, who stoops to trickery, cunningness and firmness. He has been generous and charitable but he is guilty of patricide and fatricide.

Tughlaq's period has been a period of revolt and hatred. There is an uprising in the Deccan. In Malabar, Ehsansheh has declared himself independent. Bahal-uddin Gashtap is collecting an army against him. Sheikh Imamuddin stirs people in Kanpur. Shihabuddin stirs people with the Amirs. His step mother holds that the Sultan is playing in the hands of his Vizier, Najib and so she poisons his favourite and trusted Vizier. He is clever enough to smell the treacherous plan of the rebellions. Tughlaq considers state craft as a game of chess. He is seen absorbed in chess when it is reported that Ain-ul-Mulk the companion of his childhood is marching against him. He forgives Ain-ul-Mulk when he detects a flaw in famous problem in chess solved by him. He keeps balance and catches Shihabuddin and the Amirs in the trap. Then plan of killing the Sultan fails and they are killed by the Sultan's soldiers. The Sultan stabs Shihabuddin to death. He orders his step mother to be dragged and stoned to death.

A Man of Lofty Ideals—Sultan Muhammad has his own ideals and he wants to translate them into action. His ideals are not impracticable but the problem is that people are too ignorant to understand his lofty ideals. The Sultan is fully aware how unjustly and cruelly the former kings behaved with their subjects. He believes in love, in peace, in God and asks Barani. Why people have deserted

these ideals? The Sultan has an over-mastering sense of justice and deals with the offenders with unusual severity. Modern investigations and researches prove that Muhammad was no monster who took delight in shedding blood for its own sake and those who stigmatise him as a callous tyrant forget the age he lived in and the circumstances he was placed in.

A Complex Character—The famous critic M.K. Naik observes—**“Karnad projects the curious contradictions in the complex personality of the Sultan who was at once a dreamer and a man of action, benevolent and cruel, devout and callous”.**

A Just and Impartial Sultan—Sultan Muhammad bin Tughlaq is just and impartial king. His impartiality is not liked by some ignorant Muslims but he does not care for them. He is a great supporter of Hindu Muslim Unity and treats them equally. He has exempted Hindus from Jijya. In his kingdom even Hindus are treated equally. In the beginning of the play, Aziz a dhobi filed a suit against the Government officials in disguise of Vishnu Prasad, a Brahmin of Shikhnar and he wins the case. He says—**“My beloved people, you have heard the judgement of Kazi and seen for yourselves how justice works in my kingdom without any consideration of might or weakness, religion or creed. May this moment burn bright and light up our path towards greater, justice, equality, progress and peace not just peace but a more purposeful life”.** Muhammad Tughlaq is very much worried about the future of his kingdom and about the ignorance of his people. He is fully aware of the injustice, violence and hatred prevailing in his kingdom. He expresses his anxiety to his step mother regarding the sufferings of his people. Before Imam-ud-din he tells, **“My kingdom has millions—Muslims, Hindus, Jains. Yes, there is dirt and sickness in my kingdom”.** In order to bring about safety and prosperity to his people he plans to transfer his capital to Daulatabad. He tries to convince his people—**“My empire is large now and embraces the South I need a capital which is at its heart. Delhi is too near the border and as you well know its peace is never free from the fear of invaders”.**

His Loneliness and Frustration—The idealistic visions of the Sultan are miserably shattered to pieces. His people began to call him ‘Mad Tughlaq’. In a fit of melancholy he ironically tells Barani. **“I am incompetent fool”** and further **“I am teetering on the brink of madness”.** He is not really mad but it is the expression of his frustration issuing from the failure of his visions and plans. What he needs now **“is myself and my madness—madness to brance in a field eaten bare by the scare-crow violence. But I'm not alone Barani”.** By the end of the play Tughlaq realises that his decisions to shift the capital of

Daulatabad and introducing the copper coins which have the same value as silver dinar were his great mistakes that have shattered his dream of building a vast, ideal and strong empire. The Hindus whom he protects deceive him by making counter feit coins. These failures tear his soul so much so that he cries in pain—**“God, God in Heaven, please help me. Please don't let go of my hand. My skin drips with blood and I don't know how much of it is mine and how much of others. I started in your path, Lord. Why am I wandering naked in the desert now?”** In deep anguish he desperately says—**“I can only beg, have pity on me. I have no one but you now. Only you. Only you you you”**