

Taghlaq

Girish Karnad

1. In which language was Taghlaq originally written?
Ans: Kannada
2. In which year was Taghlaq first published in its original language?
Ans: 1964
3. Who translated into English?
Ans: Girish Karnad
4. Which year Taghlaq was coroneted?
Ans: 1325
5. Who was Taghlaq's father?
Ans: Ghazi Malik
6. What was Tghlaq's real name?
Ans: Juna Khan
7. When and where is Scene One set?
Ans: A.D. 1327, in the yard in front of the Chief Court of Justice in Delhi.
8. Who makes up the crowd in Scene One?
Ans: Mostly Muslims, with a few Hindus.
9. Which Sultan is being discussed?
Ans: Muhammad bin Tughlaq.
10. What tax is debated here?
Ans: Jiziya tax.
11. Who is Vishnu Prasad?
Ans: A Brahmin of Shiknar who filed a case against the State.
12. What was Vishnu Prasad's complaint?
Ans: His land was illegally seized by State officers.
13. What was the verdict?
Ans: The Brahmin's claim is just; he got compensation.
14. What punishment does Tughlaq give Imam-ud-din?
Ans: Banishment to the frontier.
15. Who advises Tughlaq against banishment?
Ans: His Step-Mother and Najib.
16. What game does Tughlaq play here?
Ans: Chess with Barani.
17. Who is Barani?
Ans: A historian and Tughlaq's friend.
18. Who is Aziz?
Ans: A dhobi disguised as Brahmin Vishnu Prasad.
19. Which name Aziz takes to deceive people?
Ans: Vishnu Prasad
20. Who is Aazam?
Ans: Aziz's friend and partner.
21. How much money did Aziz get?
Ans: 500 silver dinars plus a government job.
22. What job did Aziz get?
Ans: A revenue officer.
23. Which city does Taghlaq decide to move his capital to?
Ans: Daulatabad

24. What major decision does Tughlaq announce in scene 4?
Ans: Shifting the capital from Delhi to Daulatabad.
25. What reasons does he give?
Ans: Hindu-Muslim unity and safety from Mongols.
26. How much time is given to leave Delhi?
Ans: A fortnight.
27. Who opposes the decision of shifting the capital from Delhi to Daulatabad?
Ans: Barani and the Step-Mother.
28. Who plans to assassinate Taghlaq?
Ans: Shihab-ud-din.
29. What does Barani say about Daulatabad?
Ans: "It's a city of the dead."
30. Who killed Najib?
Ans: Step-Mother, though not stated openly.
31. . Why is it called a 'historical play'?
Ans: Because it uses a real historical setting, real ruler, and real events as its framework.
32. How does Taghlaq attempt to solve the problem of counterfeit currency?
Ans: By introducing new currency.
33. How does Tughlaq punish her step-mother
Ans: Orders her to be stoned to death.
34. How does Tughlaq's step-mother die?
Ans: Killed by Tughlaq's men when she discovers his role in her son's murder.
35. What new reform is introduced Daulatabad?
Ans: Copper token currency equal to silver dinar.
36. Why does Tughlaq introduce it?
Ans: Shortage of silver; to make money available to all.
37. Who starts forging coins?
Ans: Ans: Aziz, Aazam, and thousands of common people.
38. What happens to Sheikh Imam-ud-din in the play?
Ans: He is assassinated.
39. Who disguises himself as Ghiyas-ud-din Abbasid to meet Taghlaq?
Ans: Aziz
40. Who arrives in Delhi claiming to be Khalifa's heir?
Ans: Ghiyas-ud-din Abbasid
41. What is Tughlaq's condition at the end of the play?
A: Sleepless for five days, dazed, and alone. He falls asleep on his throne while the prayer call goes on, shows his complete isolation.
42. Why does Tughlaq's copper currency fail?
Ans: People start forging copper coins easily. Aziz and Aazam mass produce fake coins, making the currency worthless and emptying the treasury.
43. Name 2 real historical events shown in the play.
Ans: Shifting capital from Delhi to Daulatabad, and introducing token copper currency.
44. What happens during the exodus to Daulatabad?
Ans: Thousands of people die on the road due to heat, hunger, and exhaustion, turning Tughlaq's ideal city plan into a disaster.
45. How does the play Taghlaq end?
Ans: After a series of murders including the death of his stepmother and Najib, failed policies, and the death of his close friend Aziz, Tughlaq is left profoundly isolated, disillusioned, and almost insane, realizing his failure to unite his people.
46. Give two reasons Tughlaq shifts the capital to Daulatabad.

Ans: 1) For Hindu-Muslim unity, as Daulatabad is centrally located. 2) For safety from repeated Mongol attacks on Delhi.

47. Describe the suffering of the people on the way to Daulatabad from Delhi?

Ans: In Girish Karnad's play Tughlaq, the forced migration from Delhi to Daulatabad is one of the central tragedies that expose the gap between Tughlaq's idealism and the human cost of his policies. Tughlaq orders the entire population of Delhi to shift to Daulatabad, a distance of over 700 miles. In the 14th century, with no proper transport, this meant walking in scorching heat and harsh terrain. The play describes families carrying whatever belongings they could, with the old, sick, and children collapsing on the roadside. Many die of exhaustion, thirst, and exposure. Because the move was sudden and poorly planned, there were no arrangements for food and water along the route. People starve. In Scene 9, characters like the Hindu woman describe how her husband died on the road and she had to abandon his body because she couldn't carry him. Crowding, lack of sanitation, and the strain of travel lead to outbreaks of illness. Dead bodies are left unburied.

The play doesn't show the march directly but uses accounts from survivors and common people to paint the picture the road to Daulatabad becomes a trail of graves. Beyond physical pain, there's deep anger and loss of faith. People abandon homes, graves of ancestors, and temples/mosques in Delhi. The old man in the play curses Tughlaq, saying "May God destroy you as you have destroyed us." The march breaks the people's trust in the Sultan. Even those who survive reach Daulatabad broken, disillusioned, and hostile. After all this suffering, Daulatabad fails as a capital. Years later, Tughlaq moves the capital back to Delhi. The suffering achieved nothing. This makes the march symbolize not just bad governance, but the tragedy of idealism detached from reality.

48. Tughlaq was a visionary who failed because he was ahead of his time. Discuss with reference of Girish Karnad's Tughlaq. [10 marks]

Answer: Girish Karnad's Tughlaq presents Muhammad bin Tughlaq not merely as a "mad king" of history, but as a deeply idealistic, brilliant, and tragic figure whose visionary policies failed due to their impractical implementation and his own psychological impatience, making him a leader "ahead of his time." The play shows that while his goals were noble, they were too advanced for the 14th-century political and religious landscape, causing him to degenerate from a visionary into a cynical, paranoid, and lonely tyrant. Muhammad bin Tughlaq in Karnad's play is a complex mix of idealism and tyranny. His failure lies not in intention but in execution.

Policy of Religious Tolerance & Justice: In Scene 1, he exempts Hindus from jiziya and lets Brahmin Vishnu Prasad win a case against the State. This shows his dream of Hindu-Muslim equality. **Failure:** Aziz, a dhobi, exploits this justice by filing a fake case. Tughlaq's blind faith in human honesty is misused, proving society wasn't ready for such idealism.

Shifting the Capital to Daulatabad: **Vision:** Shift from Delhi to Daulatabad for 2 reasons: a) central location for Hindu-Muslim unity, b) safety from Mongols. He gives a fortnight to move. **Failure:** The march kills thousands due to summer heat and hunger. "The road to Daulatabad" becomes a road of corpses. Barani's warning that it is a "city of the dead" comes true. A good idea, implemented with brutal haste, becomes a disaster.

Copper Token Currency: **Vision:** Introduce copper tokens equal to silver dinars to solve silver shortage and make money available to all. A modern economic idea. **Failure:** He doesn't secure the mint. Aziz-Aazam and common people start forging coins in every house. The treasury is bankrupted. When he withdraws it, he pays silver for copper, causing famine.

Need for Khalifa's Sanction: Vision: Wants legitimacy from Abbasid Khalifa to unite Indian Muslims under one spiritual head. Failure: Aziz exploits this by coming disguised as Ghiyas-ud-din Abbasid. Tughlaq, desperate for approval, welcomes the cheat. It shows how his need for validation blinds him.

Treatment of Dissent: Vision: Starts as a democrat who admits mistakes. Says, "I am not afraid to be human." Failure: Ends as a tyrant. He banishes Imam-ud-din, stones his Step-Mother, and displays rebel corpses. Power isolates him.

Conclusion: Tughlaq's policies were progressive – secularism, centralization, token currency – but he ignored ground reality and human nature. As Barani says, "You are in love with your vision." He was ahead of his time, but his impatience and suspicion turned vision into madness. Karnad suggests that a leader needs pragmatism more than brilliance.

49. Discuss how does Karnad use the play Tughlaq to comment on contemporary Indian politics? [10 marks]

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Idealist Leader vs Reality Nehru Parallel: Like Nehru, Tughlaq is Oxford-educated, secular, and dreams of unity. His Daulatabad plan mirrors Nehru's big dams and Five-Year Plans – visionary but detached from people's suffering. Failure of planning: Shifting capital without preparation rapid industrialization without infrastructure. Both cause mass displacement and death. The play mirrors the transition from high optimism in 1947 to deep disillusionment in the 1960s. Tughlaq's character represents the idealistic, intellectual leader like Nehru whose utopian visions—such as moving the capital to Daulatabad—fail due to practical mismanagement and a lack of connection with the populace, leading to chaos and frustration

Secularism Exploited: Tughlaq's jiziya removal and prayer with Hindus mirrors Nehru's secularism. But Aziz exploits it by fake conversion. Commentary: Karnad shows that secular ideals are misused by opportunists if not backed by strong administration. Tughlaq attempts to unify Hindus and Muslims through secularism, but this idealism is exploited by opportunistic characters like Aziz, a Muslim who poses as a Brahmin to trick the state, highlighting the corruption, deceit, and manipulation of public policy for personal gain. The play showcases the struggle of a secular ruler facing pressure from religious extremists. Tughlaq's inability to reconcile his modernizing vision with traditionalist, orthodox demands mirrors the conflicts between secular ideals and religious fundamentalism in Indian politics.

Rise of Corruption: Copper currency post-independence licence-permit raj. Good idea, but forging black market. Every house a mint corruption in every office. Aziz's rise 1960s Indian politics where clever, amoral men replace honest freedom fighters. Barani leaving idealists quitting politics.

Disillusionment and Tyranny: Tughlaq starts democratic but ends with corpses on display. This mirrors how leaders who face failure turn authoritarian. Sleeplessness: His final isolation reflects the loneliness of power. When vision fails, leaders trust no one but cheats like Aziz.

Timeless Political Truth: The play's line "What is the use of such a prayer?" after Imam-uddin's death questions ritual without meaning – like political slogans without action. Final sleep: Tughlaq asleep on throne while prayer call goes on = leaders becoming deaf to people's voice.

Conclusion: Karnad is not writing history but allegory. Tughlaq is every modern leader who has "big visions" but forgets "small people." The play warns that India's biggest danger is not external enemies but the gap between policy and practice. When Barani exits and Aziz enters, Karnad predicts the future of Indian politics. Through these themes, Karnad suggests that the lofty, secular ideals of early post-independence India were undermined by a lack of political pragmatism and the moral corruption of the political system, leading to a tragic, chaotic reality. The play does not merely present a picture of the past, but highlights its implications for the present. An analogy is developed between Tughlaq's reign in the play and the political situation of the Nehruvian era. This analogy and its appropriateness make the play unique in terms of contemporary relevance.

50. Taghlaq as historical play. Do you agree? Give reasoned answer.

Ans: The play is built on the life of Muhammad bin Tughlaq, Sultan of Delhi from 1325–1351. Karnad takes several well-documented events from history. A historical play seems to be a contradiction in terms. History requires truth to the events of the past, but art require imagination and concentration on needs of art. In other words that the writer of a historical play, must use the facts of history with discretion to suit the needs of his drama while maintaining overall truth to history. He has to deviate from the facts of history, and even introduce new characters in the interest of dramatic effectiveness. This is what Karnad has also done in the play.

Girish Karnad closely follows historical sources in this respect. In the opening scene the old man represents the orthodox clerical class which vehemently opposed Tughlaq's liberal and rational policies. He says, It's an insult to Islam. The young man who defends the liberal attitude of the Sultan appreciates his devotion to Islam, which has also been mentioned in the aforesaid words of Ibn-i-Buttuta. He says now you pray five times a day because that's the law, and if you break it, you'd have the officers on your neck. Can you mention one earlier Sultan in whose time people read the Koran in the streets like now?" Karnad follows the history in making Tughlaq guilty of parricide and fratricide. The third man in the first scene has heard that the Sultan is guilty of killing his father and brother.

Girish Karnad adroitly employs historical evidence about Tughlaq's rash decision to change the capital from Delhi to Daultabad. It is a turning point in his carrier and it causes inexpressible suffering to the common people. Historic evidence also proves that Tughlaq took the drastic step to shift the capital for effective administrative control of south. The contemporary historians' emphasis on mass exodus, which Girish Karnad also presents in Tughlaq, is not correct. In fact the upper classes comprising nobles, courtiers, sheikhs, ulema and the elite were shifted to Daultabad. The general Hindu public remained unaffected by this project. In order to prove that Sultan Tughlaq was a devil, Karnad greatly alters the historical facts of the rebellion of Ain-ul-Mulk. Karnad makes Tughlaq weak. So this play at last considers a classic play and a regarded as a famous historical play.

Tughlaq is the central character in the play. Historians had already said much about Tughlaq's scholarships, religious tolerance and poetic gifts. Karnad closely follows historical sources in the presentation of these qualities. He portrays Tughlaq as a generous and charitable Sultan in the very first scene. He accepts the kazi's judgment graciously in which he himself is held guilty of confiscating the land of a Brahmin, Vishnu Parsad. The Sultan is shown making a grant of 500 silver dinars to the Brahmin and also giving him a post in the civil service. The Sultan also invites

non-Muslim scholars for discussion. He used to have discussions with Muslims, Hindus and Jain scholars. This shows the liberal attitude of Sultan in case of religion. The shifting of the capital from Delhi to Daultabad was an important decision on the part of the Sultan. Karnad gives great importance to this incidence in giving the account of that period in the play. The incident is presented as turning point in his career and it causes great suffering to the common people. However, Tughlaq has his own logic behind the decision of shifting the capital. He explains the reasons in the very first scene and says, 'My Empire is large now and embraces the south and I need a capital which is at its heart. Delhi is too near the border and as you well known its peace is never free from the fear of invaders'.

In many other respects, Karnad uses history very effectively. He affects alteration of the facts to suit his artistic design. He refers to numerous problems faced by the Sultan both natural and manmade. It is just to highlight the idea that Tughlaq was losing his grip over the thing. The various problems like lawlessness, corruption, rebellions and draught etc. are highlighted for the same purpose. The dramatist aims to present a particular picture before the reader eyes to suit his dramatic design. Karnad has portrayed Nazib as an important character who exercises great influence on the character of Sultan. He is later murdered through the intrigue of his stepmother. In history, he is not a very important figure. Karnad has given him much importance just for the dramatic purpose. The episode of Aziz and Azam has also been included with the purpose of creating humour. It is also to exhibit the failure of Tughlaq's administration. The two comic characters also suggest the rampant corruption in Sultan's kingdom. It can be safely said that Karnad has made great use of history. But he is guided by a particular artistic and 'Tughlaq' is a play revolving around a historical character rather than particular history.

In conclusion we can say that Taghlaq is a historical play because historical setting 14th-century Delhi/Daulatabad, costume, court, political language all period-specific. Historical figure as protagonist Tughlaq is not just a name his real policies and contradictions drive the plot. Major historical events Capital shift, token currency, rebellion, murder of enemies – all included. Comment on history shows how power corrupts, how ideals fail without execution, how history repeats.