Chapter - V

Relations of Sultan Muhammad Bin Tughluq with

the foreigners
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The Turkish Sultans of Delhi did not believe in an isolated existence be it political social or even commercial. They appreciated fully the necessity of establishing diplomatic relations with the foreign powers. The Adab-ul-Harb of Fakhr-i Mudabbir very elaborately describes the ideals and ambitions of the Delhi Sultans in India and lays down certain rules regarding the qualifications of ambassadors and their functions. The way in which Fakhr-i Mudabbir has gone into every minute detail about external contacts shows that a considerable importance was attached to it in those days. The following is the summary of the account of Fakhr-i Mudabbir regarding the qualification and functions of an ambassador:

"When an envoy is dispatched from one sovereign to another, he should be of noble
lineage, should come from a scholarly and pious family, he should have been brought up before the King and must have become cultured and discriminating having learnt court conventions ......... He should be formidable, handsome eloquent, glib-tongued of tall stature and graceful so that he may command respect in the eyes of the people. An envoy should not be ugly or repulsive to sight, cripple, idle taker, disposed to laugh immoderately parsimonious or ill-tempered .......... He should be modest, sedate, lavish, charitable, magnanimous, spend-thrift, extravagant to a degree that nothing is too much in his eyes and a number of learned divines, a scholars and high born persons should accompany him. Plenty of wealth should be sent with him so that he may not lag behind from doing any good ........ An envoy should be such
that when he is dispatched to the court of a King he may be ready witted. So long as he is not asked about anything he should reply in a decent and befitting manner and should not cut a sorry figure. If any branch of knowledge is being discussed in the court he should explain it in a proper manner and is agreeable language if he knows it. If he does not know he should remain silent and should not begin it and show that he knows that branch of knowledge and he should not go to the extent that he is subjected to test and may not be able to acquit himself well as a result of which he may be regarded as fester and of mean profession .... ............ He should be a 'tearer' and at the same time a 'sewer', a 'maker' and a 'burner' Simultaneously he should speak with a vital force and in a vigorous manner and should not humbly or weekly................. when he is
asked about the King, the territory, the retainers
and the subjects, ' he should speak in such a way
as to place them in a superior position to all
others. He should never behave arrogantly ......
his mouth is the mouth of his master. He should
talk to the grandes and functionaries of that
country politely and softly and in an agreeable
manner so that all of them may be on friendly
terms with him. If necessity demands friendship
with someone he should send him rare gifts be­
cause much love and goodwill is acquired thereby
and many secrets are thus known."
be excellent even if he (that is the King whom those presents are sent for) does not deserve them by virtue of his rank; so that the sender's degree of generosity, ambicability and magnanimity may be estimated and the assertion of his magnificence should be the primary gain which may be achieved by sending those presents which are rarely found in his (i.e. the receivers) country."

Pakhr-i Mudabbir then gives a list of articles which should be sent as presents to foreign courts. The following is the list of such articles:-

1. The Quran.
2. The Commentaries on Quran written in good hand.
3. Cultured slaves.
4. Turkish, Rumi, Abyssinian and Indian slave girls.

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1 Op. cit., Adab-ul Harb-wa Shujat,

(Cf. K. A. Nijam's Rel. of Pol. in India during the 13th Cen., pp 308-329.)
5. Horses and Camels.
6. Gold and silver embroidered cloth.

7. Saddles and Bridles.
8. Swords.
10. Shields.
11. Arrows and bows.
13. Different types of coats of mail and armlets.
14. Vests worn under coats of mail.
15. Horse Armour.
17. Knives with handles made of khatu (bones of a Chinese bird).
19. Aloe wood.
20. Tusks of Elephants.
22. Turquoise.
25. Linen and woollen clothes.
26. Mats and prayer carpets.
27. Velvet.
29. Falcons.
30. Turkish Elephants.
31. Stockings.
32. Breeches.
33. Musk.
34. Camphor.
35. Leather table clothes.
36. Cushions.
37. Fox furs.
38. China vessels.

1 Op.cit., Adab-ul Harb wa Shujat,
Lastly Fakhr-i Mudabbir deals with treaties and agreements and draws attention to the following essentials in this context:-

(a) All agreements should be made in writing.
(b) Both parties should vow to act upon the agreement.
(c) All Qazis, Saiyyids, saints, celebrities nobles, officers put their signatures on this agreement.
(d) The agreement should be read out before both the parties.

Although throughout the fourteenth century we find the exchange of embassies and ambassadors between India and the Central Asia, West Asian, Persian and even Arab countries, but this trend is at its peak during the reign of Sultan Muhammad bin Tughluq. The account of Sultan's generosity
is given in details not only by the Indian writers
but even by the foreign historians. The fourteenth
century Arab accounts throws light on the diplomatic
activities most vibrant during the reign of Sultan
Muhammad bin Tughluq. Hamidullah Mustawfi writing
in 1340 A.D. noted "But recently Sultan Muhammad
Shah of Delhi has abolished the rule and in place
of hoarding treasure has been spending all the gold
he possessed and consequently no one now thinks of
bringing gold into India from these islands but
rather would carry away gold and treasure thence
to Iran, for it is now the most profitable commodity
to export from India." Badr-i Chach has immortalized
in his gasidas. "But for the danger of pirates
and robbers" writes Barani, "Muhammad bin Tughluq

1 Nuzhat-ul Qulub, tr. Le Strange, p. 222.
2 Qasaid-i Badr-i Chach, Kanpur, 1873,
K.A. Nizami, Studies in Medieval Indian
History, pp.
would have sent all the treasures of Delhi to Egypt."

By the middle of the fourteenth century the empire of the Il-Khanid Mongols of Persia founded by Hulaku Khan comprising Persia Mesopotamia and Armenia had collapsed. Though the Mongols still held sway over the vast territory from Pekin to Damascus and from volga to the North-west frontier of India their power had weakened. Far from playing the role of invaders of India, they were now anxious to develop friendly relations with the Delhi Sultans. We hear of embassies pouring in from different parts of Asia. The Iraq embassy was sent by Musa who was a cousin of Sultan Abu Sa'id, King of Iraq.

1 Barani, *Tarikh-i Firuz Shahi*, pp. 494-5.
The Chinese embassy sent by Toghan Timur, the Chinese emperor, the Khwarizm embassy sent by Princess Turabak, wife of the ruler of Khwarizm. All these were attempts on the part of these foreigners to maintain friendly relations. Other instances of similar objectives are found in the arrival at Delhi of Amir Saifuddin, son of Mulsanna Chief of the Arabs of Syria as well as of distinguished visitors from Damascus and Khurasan.

The generosity of Sultan Muhammad bin Tughluq had become proverbial throughout Western Asia. The author of Masalik-ul Absar as well as Ibn Battuta supply ample evidence which throws light on the generosity of the Sultan towards the foreigners. Ibn Battuta says, "The King of India . . . makes a practice of honouring strangers and showing affection to them and singling them out for governorships or high dignities of state. The majority of his courtiers place officials, ministers of state, judges, and relatives by 1 marriage are foreigners."

This influx of foreigners was not confined to the civil administration. The army likewise contained a large proportion of foreigners among whom Umari mentions Turks, "natives

of Khita", and Persians, while Ibn Battuta himself refers more than once to "the amirs of Khurasan."

These actions of Muhammad bin Tughluq were not directed simply at acquiring an unrivalled reputation for munificence. That this was a matter of deliberate policy is confirmed by his method of welcoming visitors to his empire. An elaborate intelligence network furnished the Sultan with detailed information on all new comers.

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1 Tr. Quartremere, p. 180; Tr. O. Spies, p. 38.
4 Ibid.
and immigrants from 'Khurasan' were obliged to sign a contract engaging them not to depart immediately. The Sultan was most reluctant to give any foreigner permission to depart, and severe penalties were inflicted on those who attempted to leave without his authorisation.

Besides Sultan Muhammad bin Tughluq's policy towards the refugees who came to him after Tarmashirin's murder by Qazan, the non-Muslim Chaghtai prince forced the Muslim Mongol Princes and other dignitaries to seek shelter in friendly India. Ibn Battuta and Barani mentions a few of them, while describing the Sultans generosity towards the foreigners. He writes - "when Bazun became King, the son of Sultan Tarmashirin, who

was Bashay Ughli fled, together with his sister and her husband Nauroz to the King of India. He (Sultan) received them as distinguished guests and lodged them magnificently, on account of the friendship and exchange of letters and gifts which had existed between himself and Tarmashirin...........

Similarly both Barani and Ibn Battuta refer to Malik Bahram, the ex-governor of Ghaznin upon whom the Sultan bestowed his favour on his arrival to India. He was accommodated in a Palace at Siri. He was paid one lac tankas annually. Likewise, Muhammad Al-Charkhi, one of the high nobles at the court of Tarmashirin was

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2 Ibid., p. 682.
3 Barani, Tarikh-i Firoz Shahi, pp. 461-62.
also shown consideration. Malik Sarjar Budakhshani was paid eighty lac tankas, were as the Qazi of Ghaznin was given to much in money and jewels that he could never have imagined in his life. Though the immigrants who came to India in the past also, largely belonged to the region of modern Afghanistan, how their large number seems to have increased considerably. The foreigners at the court of the Sultan seem to have been in such a large size that they constituted a force. According to the author of Masalik-ul Absar fi Mamalik-ul Amsar says that the liberality of this Sultan (Muhammad bin Tughluq) ruler of Delhi, is extra ordinary and his benefactions to foreigners is great. A learned

2 Barani, p. 462.
A scholar from Persia came to him and presented him philosophical books. Among which there was the 'Shifa' by Ibn Sina. It happened that as he stood before him a great load of precious gems was brought and presented to him. He took a handful from them for presenting them to him. They were worth 20,000 mithgals of gold. This besides other things he bestowed upon him.

Another incident by the same author says that nobody wore cotton cloth which is imported to India from Russia and Alexandria but those whom the Sultan supplies the dresses. As regards their gowns and dresses they are made of fine cotton. He said from it clothes are made which

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resemble the garments of Baghdad. "The Sultan (Muhammad bin Tughluq) is a generous and noble man who does good to the foreigners." One of the Amirs of Bahram has related, "Two men from us travelled to him and he granted them favours and honoured them with robes of honour and paid them huge wealth although they were Arabs of no position. Then he gave them the option between staying or returning one of them chose to stay and the Sultan gave him a great province and considerable gifts and many things from amongst cattle sheep and cows. The other asked to go home and the Sultan gave him 3000 gold tankas.

1 Al-Umari, Masalik-ul Absar, trans. Otto Spies, p. 46.

2 Ibid., p. 47.
Similarly he sent crores of tankas to be distributed in the sacred towns of Iraq, Ghaznin, remitted many taxes on import and patronized foreign scholars. People gathered at his court from Khurasan, Iraq, Mawara-un Nahr, Khwarazm, Sistan, Herat, Egypt and Damascus.

Barani says that in the later years of his reign, many distinguished Mongol and Mongol ladies - the great men of Mughulistan including Mongol amirs' of Tumans and Hazaras - used to come every year to offer their allegiance, service sincerity and loyalty. Some of them remained in his service, other went back. They got lacs and crores of tankahs, golden ornaments

1 Al-Umari, Masalik, Eng. tr. C. Spies, p. 40.
3 Barani, Tarikh-i Firoz Shahi, p. 462.
set with precious stones, diamonds, golden and silver vessels, basins full of gold and silver tankas, pearls weighed out by mams, 1 cloth of gold brocade and caparisoned horses. Hamdullah Mustaufi writing in 1340, noted, "But recently Sultan Muhammad Shah of Delhi has abolished the rule and in place of hoarding treasure, has been spending all the gold he possessed and consequently no one now thinks of bringing gold into India from these Islands; but rather would carry away gold and treasure thence to Iran, for it is now the most profitable commodity to export from India."

The Rehla of Ibn-i Battuta testifies to the charm of titles and worldly honours which were conferred upon by the Emperor on

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1 Barani, *Tarikh-i Firoz Shahi*, p. 462.
the distinguished visitors and persons of recognized merit.

Evidence coming from the Indian sources tends to reveal that Sultan Muhammad bin Tughluq's generosity towards the foreigners caused bitterness among the Indians. The foreigners were not only appointed at important posts in the administration of the Empire but also given huge treasures. The foreigners even played a leading role in quelling the rebellion of Ain-ul Mulk Mahru. The rebellion was so sudden that the Sultan had become despair of his survival because of rebel being of Indian origin was supported by the majority of Indians." The Amirs of Khurasan and the foreigners", says Ibn-i Battuta, "were in the

1. Rehla, trans., p. XXX.
greatest fear of this rebel (Ain-ul Mulk) because he was an Indian, people of India hold the foreigners, in hatred because of the Sultan's favouritism of them." It is clear from this remark of Ibn-i Battuta, that this policy of the Sultan aroused considerable opposition among the native aristocracy. Barani, too criticizes Muhammad's open handedness - especially to foreigners which led to the impoverishment of the treasury. Subsequently, he again singles out this policy for mention among the Sultans wasteful Projects, linking it specifically with his design of conquering Khurasan.

3 Ibid., p. 476.
Barani is very critical of Sultan Muhammad bin Tughluq's foreign policy because it had caused a heavy drain on the royal exchequer. He writes that every year the Mongol commanders of Tuman (ten thousand) Amiran-i Hazarah (Commanders of one thousand horsemen), the khatuns (royal ladies) and other notables arrived (in India) and crores and hundreds of thousands of tankahs in addition to robes, well equipped horses, jewels and pearls were given to them. Moreover every year banquets were hosted in their honour. Elaborate arrangements were made for their comfort and entertainment. The Sultan had no other work but to shower
favours upon them for two or three months in the 1 winter. It may also be pointed out that Sultan Muhammad bin Tughluq is reported to have enforced prohibition in his empire, but the Mongol emigrants could imbibe wine in their houses, even though 2 they had become Muslims.

In the final analysis it may be said that Sultan Muhammad bin Tughluq continued the policy of his predecessors in maintaining diplomatic relations with the foreign powers. But his patronage to the foreigners, his costly items as gifts to the foreign rulers and the people of Iraq and Egypt was an elaboration of this policy on his part. A very valuable manuscript of Salahuddin Safadi, Al-A'yan-ul Asr, preserved

1 Barani, p. 469.


Cf. I.H. Siddiqui's article on 'Sultan Muhammad Bin Tughluq'.
in Dar-ul Kutub-i Misri'a in Egypt contains interesting information about the Sultan's relations with the rulers and scholars of Egypt. Muhammad bin Tughluq was not satisfied with merely establishing contact with the governing classes; he was anxious to win the goodwill of the masses, particularly the saints and scholars of the foreign countries. Thus, his foreign policy as well as many of his measures like the Khurasan expedition, the Qarachil expedition, the token currency etc. will remain unintelligible unless considered in the broader context of political developments in the outside world. In his objectives the Sultan definitely succeeded for he became extremely popular in the West Asian countries as revealed by the Arab accounts.