

# Discovering the Imperial Elegance of the Tughlaq Dynasty

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**Abstract-** *This paper examines the development and relevance of costume design under the Tughlaq Dynasty (1320-1414), a crucial juncture in Indian history characterized by changes in architecture, politics, and culture. The study looks at how the Tughlaq court's unique fashion practices reflected its imperial beauty, drawing on historical documents, architectural analyses, and literary sources. The article describes clothing, accessories, headwear, and footwear for men, women, and children, emphasizing the combination of Indian, Persian, and Central Asian styles. Clothes ranging from functional clothing for the common public to lavishly decorated clothes for aristocracy and royalty were made from materials including silk, brocade, and cotton. Particular focus is placed on ceremonial regalia, jewelry, and military clothing that represented prestige and authority. Furthermore, the paper examines the architectural patronage of the Tughlaqs and the diversity of their religious practices, positioning costume as an essential element of identity and imperial power. In conclusion, the research highlights how fashion during the Tughlaq period functioned as both a cultural artifact and a mirror of the sociopolitical environment of medieval India.*

**Index Terms—** *Tughlaq, Costume Design, Clothing, Accessories*

## I. INTRODUCTION

The Tughlaq Dynasty was a notable ruling dynasty of the Delhi Sultanate that ruled over much of northern India from 1320 to 1414. Ghiyath al-Din Tughlaq founded the dynasty, which is well-known for its ambitious kings and political obstacles. The Tughlaq period in Indian history is frequently distinguished by important administrative innovations, military expeditions, economic experimentation, and cultural advancements, as well as internal struggle and sometimes instability.

### A. History

In 1320, Ghiyath al-Din Tughlaq overthrew Sikandar Khilji, the last ruler of the Khilji dynasty, to take

control of Delhi and establish the Tughlaq dynasty. Although Ghiyath al-Din Tughlaq's reign was short—it ended in 1325 for unclear reasons—he laid the foundation for the dynasty's rule.

### B. Religion

The Tughlaq dynasty governed over a mixed population that comprised both Muslims and Hindus, just like previous Muslim monarchs in India. Islam was the most widely practiced religion under the Tughlaq dynasty, despite their diverse religious policies, and many of them sought to promote Islamic law, governance, and culture.

**Islam:** When the Tughlaq dynasty ruled the Delhi Sultanate, they followed the principles of Islamic government. Sharia law was often emphasised by the government, and the construction of mosques, madrasas (Islamic schools), and other places of worship was extensively promoted by the Tughlaq dynasty.

**Hinduism:** The Tughlaq rulers had a generally pragmatic attitude towards Hindus, even though they were Muslims. Firoz Shah Tughlaq, for example, was renowned for his tolerance towards Hindus. He is said to have built several Hindu temples and given to Hindu religious organisations. Leaders who were less tolerant, like Muhammad bin Tughlaq, levied taxes on non-Muslims, known as the Jizya.

**Sufism:** Thanks to a number of Sufi saints and mystics, Sufism gained popularity throughout the Tughlaq era, attracting adherents from both the Muslim and Hindu communities. In general, the Tughlaq rulers, particularly Firoz Shah, supported Sufi saints and often sought their advice. In order to reconcile

religious divisions and advance Islam in India in a more peaceful way, Sufism was essential.

### *C. Demographics*

A complex and diversified demographic structure was a defining feature of the Tughlaq empire, a dynasty that ruled over large regions with a mixed populace. The aristocracy and governing class were mostly of Turkic and Persian descent, while the majority of the populace was Hindu. Regional languages including Bengali, Punjabi, and Hindi were spoken by the majority. The administrative and commercial centres of the empire were the towns of Delhi, Daulatabad, and Multan. At the pinnacle of the highly stratified social system were military chiefs, nobility, and Turkic Muslim elites. Workers and peasants made up the majority, with artisans, traders, and officials in the bottom echelons. Hindus were traders, bureaucrats, and soldiers who contributed significantly to the economy. Between 70 and 100 million people were thought to live there during the Tughlaq era, with the bulk of them living in rural areas.

## II. METHODOLOGY

### *A. Men*

During the Tughlaq dynasty (1320–1414), men's attire and costumes reflected the heterogeneous character of the realm by combining Persian, Central Asian, and Indian elements. Many aspects of Central Asian nomadic culture were brought by the dynasty's Turkic and Central Asian monarchs, while Persian customs shaped the era's courtly and artistic styles. A more thorough examination of Tughlaq-era men's attire may be found here:

#### *Fabrics and Materials*

**Rich Fabrics:** For formal and ceremonial events, the nobility and elite used pricey materials like velvet, silk, and brocade. These textiles were frequently imported from Central Asia, China, and Persia.

**Cotton:** Cotton was used extensively, particularly in India's warmer environment. Both the aristocracy and the general populace like to wear fine muslin, a light cotton fabric, on a daily basis.

**Wool:** Robbes, tunics, and outer clothing were made of woolen textiles, especially in the cooler months.

**Embroidery:** Often influenced by Central Asian and Persian designs, intricate embroidery was widespread. Patterns such as geometric patterns, floral motifs, and abstract shapes were created using gold and silver threads for ornamentation.

#### *Clothing Items*

**Kameez (Tunic):** The kameez, a long, flowing tunic, was one of the most widely worn outfits. It had a round or V-shaped neck, straight-cut sleeves, and a loose fit that typically reached the knees or below. All socioeconomic strata wore kameez, although the quality differed, with nobles wearing costly silk and commoners wearing basic cotton or wool.

**Kurta:** Usually shorter than the kameez, the kurta was a garment that resembled a tunic. Additionally, it was worn with shalwars or trousers and was popular throughout all socioeconomic classes.

**Shalwar:** The tunic was worn over loose, baggy pants called shalwars. They were made of wool, silk, or cotton and were gathered at the ankle. The shalwar made it easy to move around and was a comfortable clothing.

**Choga (Outer Cloak):** Typically worn by the nobility, the choga was a long robe or cloak with wide sleeves. It was occasionally heavily embroidered and composed of silk or wool. It was worn as a formal outfit or as an additional layer of warmth over the kameez or kurta.

**Kaftan:** The kaftan was a long, form-fitting garment with a high collar that was frequently adorned with priceless stones or gold thread. High-ranking officials and the nobles supported it.

**Jubbah:** Another type of outer garment that was frequently worn by individuals of high rank was the jubbah. Usually embroidered and composed of opulent materials like silk, velvet, or brocade, it was a long, fitting coat or robe. The jubbah was a ceremonial garment with broad sleeves.

**Chadar:** The chadar was a big, rectangular piece of cloth that was wrapped around the torso or hung over the shoulder. Men wore it as a symbol of humility and respect as well as for warmth.

**Zarband:** Usually heavily embroidered, the zarband was a short, waist-length garment worn over the tunic. It was an indication of elite status and fit more rigidly than the flowing robes.

#### Military Attire

**Armor:** Under their clothing, the Tughlaq army used effective armor, particularly during Muhammad bin Tughlaq's rule. Chain mail, scale armor, and leather armor made for combat protection are a few examples. During official military processions or while soldiers were on duty, armor was occasionally displayed.

**Helmets:** To protect themselves in combat, both soldiers and aristocrats wore metal helmets. With ornamental features or inscriptions denoting status and ancestry, these helmets were very elaborate.

**Military Boots:** For warfare, soldiers wore useful military boots. These were strong and frequently had ankle or toe guards that were strengthened.

#### *B. Women*

A combination of Persian, Central Asian Turkic, and Indian designs shaped women's dress during the Tughlaq Dynasty (1320–1414), reflecting the dynasty's Turkic roots and the cultural exchanges between the Delhi Sultanate and the wider Islamic world. The Tughlaq era was distinguished by its unique fusion of ornate clothing for the aristocracy and functional clothing for regular women. Historical and archaeological sources, as well as references from subsequent periods, offer insights about the styles that were popular throughout this era, even though there are fewer surviving documents that expressly focus on women's fashion than men's.

#### Fabrics and Materials

**Silk and Brocade:** Rich women wore velvet, silk, and brocade. These textiles were frequently richly embroidered with calligraphy, geometric shapes, and elaborate floral designs. Precious stones and needlework with gold thread were frequent embellishments.

**Cotton:** Common ladies, in particular, wore cotton on a regular basis. Lightweight cotton cloth known as fine muslin was widely used, especially in India's hot environment.

**Wool:** Especially for the aristocracy, wool materials were utilized for robes and outerwear during the cooler months.

**Leathers and Furs:** Although leather and fur were also widely used, particularly for cloaks or outer layers, they were mostly worn by the upper classes and in colder climates.

**Clothes and Costume Items**  
During the Tughlaq dynasty, women's attire was characterized by a blend of Indian, Persian, and Central Asian elements. With several garments piled to create a beautiful, modest, and dignified image, the attire was both practical and elaborate.

**Sari-like attire, or draped cloth, and draped garments:** Although ladies wore draped clothing that resembled early variants of the sari, the modern sari as we know it today did not fully mature during the Tughlaq period. Occasionally, one end of these long lengths of cloth was slung over the shoulder and wrapped around the torso. Cotton or silk may be used, and it is frequently lavishly embroidered with floral patterns or gold thread.

#### Tunic and Trouser Ensembles

**Kurta:** Both men and women frequently wore the long tunic known as the kurta. For ladies, it occasionally had a flare at the bottom and a more fitting waist. Typically composed of silk, cotton, or wool, the kurta was lavishly embroidered with floral, geometric, or paisley patterns.

**Shalwar:** Women wore loose-fitting pants with an ankle gather to go with their kurtas. Comfort and mobility were made possible by the shalwar, especially in the hot and muggy weather. These pants were occasionally embellished with elaborate embroidery and could be composed of silk or cotton.

**Choli (Blouse):** Under the kurta or draped garment, a choli, or fitting blouse, was frequently worn. It was sleeveless or had short sleeves and a fitted bodice. The choli, worn by women of distinction, was adorned with silver or gold embroidery and was composed of exquisite textiles.

#### Outer Clothes and Robes

**Kaftan:** Women of higher social standing wore the kaftan, a long, baggy robe. Wide sleeves and a high collar were common features, and it was frequently composed of silk or velvet and intricately embroidered with golden thread. The kaftan was a symbol of nobility and luxury.

**Chadar:** A chadar was a big, rectangular piece of cloth that was worn as a headscarf or draped over the shoulders. This item of apparel was a sign of a woman's respectability in public and functioned as a modesty garment, covering the woman's head and torso. For elite ladies attending the royal court or going out in public, it was particularly crucial.

#### Fitted gowns and dresses

**Choga:** Over the tunic, the choga was a long, robe-like garment. The sleeves were loose and broad, and it was frequently composed of silk or luxurious wool. High-ranking ladies occasionally wore the choga during court events or in formal settings.

**Jubbah:** Another kind of outer garment used by the elite was the jubbah. It was worn for more formal or ceremonial events and was a fitting robe with intricate needlework.

#### C. Kids

During the Tughlaq Dynasty (1320–1414), the fusion of Central Asian Turkic, Persian, and Indian cultural traditions affected the fashion of the time and had an impact on children's attire. The typical clothes worn by both boys and girls, as well as the social, cultural, and utilitarian demands of the era, can be used to understand children's fashion, even if it is less extensively documented than that of adults.

#### Materials and Fabrics

The main factors influencing children's attire were practicality, climate, and social class. Because it was readily accessible, reasonably priced, and breathable, cotton was the most popular material for regular kids. Wealthier families utilized wool for coats and outerwear in colder climates. In royal courts, wealthier households wore brocade or velvet, frequently embellished with geometric or floral designs, while noble or royal families wore silk for festive wear.

#### Boys' Clothes

With elements from both Persian and Central Asian Turkic traditions, boys' attire during the Tughlaq dynasty demonstrated a harmony between functionality and prestige.

#### Kurtas or tunics

**Kurtas:** Boys wore loose-fitting tunics called kurtas that hung down to the knees or occasionally the calves. Usually, these kurtas had large sleeves and a straight shape. Depending on the socioeconomic class, either cotton or silk was used to make the tunics.

**Decorative Elements:** Using gold thread or valuable stones, kurtas for aristocratic or royal boys would have featured embroidered designs such as paisleys and floral patterns.

**Colors:** The wealthy frequently wore rich, deep shades of red, blue, green, and yellow with golden accents or patterns.

#### Trousers (loose pants or shalwar)

**Shalwar:** Shalwars were loose pants with an ankle gather that were worn by boys. The shalwar was a popular garment with Persian and Central Asian influences. These pants were useful for active kids since they made mobility easy.

**Material:** While some children wore basic cotton shalwars, wealthier youngsters would have donned silk or brocade ones.

#### Robes or Kaftans

Boys from noble households may have worn kaftans, which were long robes made of luxurious materials like silk or brocade, for formal events or ceremonial duties. Golden threads may have been incorporated into the fabric of these elaborately embroidered robes. Children's kaftans were probably shorter than adults', making them more suitable for young people while still denoting great status.

#### Clothing for Girls

During the Tughlaq era, girls' attire frequently featured designs derived from those of adult women but modified for a younger, more functional shape. Girls' attire was greatly influenced by modesty, a cultural characteristic that was highly valued throughout the

Tughlaq

era.

#### Choli and Skirt

Cholis, which were short blouses or bodices, were worn by young girls. These would have been fitting and composed of silk or cotton, with more intricate gold thread decorations for the affluent and simpler needlework for the common people.

Skirt: Girls wore long garments that were draped across their bodies, such as skirts or draped cloths. These flowing clothing resembled the sari worn by adult women, but the girls' skirts would have been shorter, easier to wear, and more functional.

#### Kurtas, or tunics

Kurtas were worn by girls much like by boys, however they were frequently longer and more form-fitting around the waist. Silk could be used for special events and cotton for daily usage in these tunics. Higher-status families frequently adorned themselves with gold embroidery, tassels, and tiny beads.

#### Loose or Shalwar pants

Girls also wore shalwars, or loose pants, particularly for play or everyday tasks. Depending on their social status, girls' shalwars were made of silk or cotton and gathered at the ankles, just like the boys' trousers.

#### Veil or Chadar (Shawl)

To cover their heads and shoulders, girls, especially those from aristocratic households, frequently wore chadars, which are huge, rectangular shawls. The chadar mirrored cultural standards of modest attire and functioned as a modesty garment. Noble girls, especially those of great standing, may cover their faces in public by donning a veil in addition to the chadar.

#### *D. Accessories*

Particularly among the royal and noble classes, jewelry played a significant role in Tughlaq dynasty fashion. Intricately designed jewelry was frequently worn to show off one's wealth and prestige.

#### Rings

Rings for signets: Men, particularly those in positions of power, wore signet rings frequently. These rings frequently had family crests or seals that were etched,

occasionally with Arabic or other ornamental symbols. Precious stones like rubies, emeralds, sapphires, and pearls could be used to further decorate rings, which were primarily made of gold and silver.

Rings Studded with Gems: Wealthier people, especially those from royal circles, wore rings set with gems. These rings were more than merely decorative; they were frequently used as authority seals and were emblems of power.

#### Necklaces and Chains

Gold and Silver Chains: Gold and silver necklaces were worn by both sexes, particularly by the affluent. Precious stones including diamonds, pearls, rubies, and emeralds can occasionally be used to ornament these necklaces, which can have simple or ornate designs.

Pendant Necklaces: Pendant necklaces were also popular, frequently showcasing huge, decorative pendants. Precious stones and gold may be used to create these pendants. Some have meaningful motifs, such family crests or religious emblems, written on them.

Beaded Necklaces: Pearls and semi-precious stones like coral, amber, and turquoise were frequently used to create beaded necklaces for ladies of distinction.

#### Armlet with Bracelet

Bracelets made of gold and silver were worn by both men and women, although the type and material used varied according to social standing. The wealthy frequently wore bracelets made of gold and silver, which could be simple or adorned with priceless stones or elaborate filigree.

Women wore bajubands, also known as armlets, especially those from the aristocracy. These were frequently made of gold and embellished with priceless jewels like emeralds and rubies. They were an essential component of royal regalia and were occasionally worn to denote royalty.

#### Earrings

Stud Earrings: Earrings were an important part of the attire, especially for women. Stud earrings made of gold or silver were common. They were sometimes

set with pearls, precious stones, or glass beads. Jhumkas: Jhumka earrings, with a bell-shaped design, were particularly popular in the Tughlaq period and were worn by the elite women. These earrings were often made of gold and embellished with pearls and gemstones.

Hoop Earrings: Large, hoop-style earrings were also worn by women of higher social status. These earrings were typically golden and adorned with decorative patterns or gemstones.

Accessories for the Waist and Belts Particularly for the rich and aristocratic, belts were essential accessories that not only supported garments but also functioned as ornamental accents.

Belts with leather and gold Gold belts: Royals and nobility wore golden belts, which were frequently embellished with priceless stones and elaborate patterns. These belts could be more intricate with etched designs or more basic with a single buckle adorned with gems. Leather Belts: Although common people and military men may don more basic leather belts, even these might be adorned with braided designs or metals.

#### Pouches

Leather Pouches: To store cash, tools, or personal belongings, both men and women carried tiny leather or silk pouches. Usually fastened to a belt, these pouches could be adorned with metal clasps or other decorations.

Ornate Purses: Women with better social standing frequently carried ornate purses, which were occasionally made of silk and embellished with priceless jewels or gold embroidery.

#### *E. Headgear*

From the early 14th century to the middle of the 15th century (1320–1414), the Delhi Sultanate was ruled by the Tughlaq dynasty, which had a particular and distinctive style for headdresses and regal clothing. Tughlaq kings and nobles' headdresses were a reflection of their social standing, cultural influences, and fashion of the time. During the Tughlaq dynasty, the following characteristics and styles of headwear were prevalent:

#### Turbans:

A significant component of the headdress, turbans represented both prestige and local customs. While most people wore turbans, the Tughlaq monarchs frequently wore intricately patterned turbans embellished with diamonds, fabric, and other decorations.

The rank of the wearer was frequently denoted by the turban's size, design, and fabric. The sultans' royal turbans were probably big and opulent.

#### Crowns or Diadems:

The sultans occasionally wore crowns or diadems, which were frequently fashioned of priceless metals and stones, particularly Ghiyas-ud-Din Tughlaq and Muhammad bin Tughlaq. During the Tughlaq era, these headdresses gained popularity after being less widespread in earlier Islamic Sultanates.

According to certain representations, the Tughlaq sultans' crowns might have combined Persian and Central Asian elements with regional Indian traditions in a more Indo-Islamic fusion form.

#### Kufis and headwear that resembles a cap:

The Tughlaq nobility also wore kufis, which are basic, rounded headgear, frequently adorned with elaborate patterns. These represented respectability and rank, but they were less ornate than crowns.

These caps occasionally had metallic embellishments or were composed of exquisite cloth.

#### Mitra

Sultans occasionally wore the mitra, a kind of crown or headdress, in a more ceremonial role. This kind of headdress was round or conical in shape and was embellished with embroidery and gems.

Because it resembled the headdress used by Indian royalty, the mitra was more frequently used in ceremonial settings and might have been influenced by past Hindu emperors.

#### Detailed Decorations:

The Tughlaq monarchs' headdresses might also have intricate embellishments that represented their riches and authority, including as feathers, precious stones,

and golden thread work. The magnificent royal regalia that symbolized the sultans' divine right to reign included these elaborate crowns or turbans.

The Tughlaq dynasty's headdresses combined Persian, Central Asian, and regional Indian styles. The sultans frequently used elaborate objects to convey power and grandeur, and their headdress was a part of their broader attempt to establish their regal character and legitimacy.

#### *F. Footwear*

Like other elements of their clothing, the Tughlaq dynasty's footwear was created to represent the social standing and cultural influences of the time. Both functional and symbolic footwear was frequently worn by the Tughlaq kings and nobles. The following are some important shoe styles connected to the Tughlaq dynasty:

##### *Mojaris (Juttis)*

During the Tughlaq era, mojaris, also called juttis, were a common style of footwear. These were flat, slip-on leather shoes that were frequently embellished with metal and artistically embroidered with designs.

The Tughlaq nobility's juttis were frequently adorned with costly stones, jewels, or golden threads and fashioned of premium leather, signifying their riches and prestige. The elite also frequently used luxurious materials for the upper portions of their juttis, such as silk and velvet.

The shoes were created to be both comfortable and useful for everyday wear, and their high-quality materials and decorations made them a symbol of affluence.

##### *Chappals:*

Chappals, or sandals, were also commonly worn, especially in the more casual or warmer seasons. These sandals had flat soles and were often open-toed, making them more suitable for the hot Indian climate.

The chappals worn by Tughlaq elites were made from leather and often decorated with intricate embroidery or metal fittings. They were more functional but still showed signs of the wearer's rank.

##### *Khadim Shoes:*

Members of the royal court and some Tughlaq aristocrats wore these shoes. Known for their styled pointed toes, the Khadim shoes were comfortable yet ostentatious because they were frequently composed of supple leather.

These shoes' designs occasionally featured metallic embellishments or beaded embroidery to improve their aesthetic appeal.

##### *Royal Footwear:*

The Tughlaq sultans' royal footwear may have been more elaborately decorated with jewel-studded embellishments, gold-thread embroidery, and occasionally silver plating. These opulent pieces were part of the sultan's royal regalia and were usually worn during ceremonial events.

The sultans' shoes were frequently a component of the broader ensemble of clothing that represented their position in the empire and their divine right to govern.

Tughlaq footwear was, all things considered, a blend of luxury and functionality that reflected the wearer's social standing as well as the cultural influences of the age.

### III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

From 1320 until 1414, Ghiyath al-Din Tughlaq established the Tughlaq Dynasty, which ruled India with considerable influence. It was renowned for its military excursions, administrative improvements, political roadblocks, ambitious kings, economic experimentation, and cultural breakthroughs. Islam was the most popular religion, and the dynasty reigned over a cosmopolitan population that included both Muslims and Hindus. Some of the Tughlaq rulers imposed the Jizya on non-Muslims, demonstrating their pragmatic attitude toward Hinduism. During the Tughlaq era, Sufism gained popularity and attracted adherents from both the Muslim and Hindu cultures. Delhi served as the capital of the Tughlaq empire, although most people lived in rural areas. At the top of the Tughlaq era's highly stratified culture were military chiefs, aristocrats, and Turkic Muslim elites. Between 70 and 100 million people were thought to live there during the Tughlaq era, with the bulk of them living in rural areas.

In medieval India, the Tughlaq dynasty brought about profound changes in governance, culture, and religion. Originating in Afghanistan, the Khalji dynasty gained popularity under Jalal al-Din and was thereafter governed by Muhammad Khalji, also known as 'Ala' al-Din. The architectural features and practices of the Firuzshah Tughlaq era in India are notable, especially the importance of mosques.

Men's clothing and costumes of the Tughlaq dynasty (1320–1414) combined Persian, Central Asian, and Indian features to reflect the realm's eclectic nature. For ceremonial occasions, the nobles and elite employed pricey materials like velvet, silk, and brocade, although cotton was widely utilized in India because of its warmer environment. During the colder months, woolen materials were utilized for outer garments, tunics, and robes. Kameez, kurta, shalwar, choga, kaftan, jubbah, chadar, and zarband were among the clothing items.

Military attire during the Tughlaq era included scale armour, chain mail, and leather armour for protection in combat. Military boots and helmets were worn by soldiers and members of the nobility. To convey the sense of beauty, modesty, and dignity, women's clothes were piled high with a blend of Central Asian, Persian, and Indian elements. Shalwars, cholis, kaftans, chadars, kurtas, and form-fitting gowns and dresses were all examples of garments that resembled saris.

Boys' attire demonstrated a balance between functionality and prestige, with both boys and girls donning kurtas, shalwars, robes, and chadars. Jewellery played a major role in Tughlaq dynasty fashion, with intricately designed necklaces, chains, and rings worn to show off wealth and prestige.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

In medieval India, the Tughlaq dynasty had a big impact on how clothes and fashion developed. Along with their own inventions, they included Persian and Central Asian styles, indicating a time of cultural blending and change. The clothing worn by the common people represented a more practical way of life, but the royal garb was a symbol of power. The introduction of certain cultural traditions, such as the alteration of royal dress standards that would shape later Mughal fashion patterns, was the responsibility of the Tughlaq monarchs, particularly Muhammad bin Tughlaq.

The dress of the Tughlaq era offers important insights into the cultural fabric of India in the fourteenth century by serving as a link between the more structured courtly style of the Mughal empire and the medieval era.

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