

TUGHLAQABAD



दिल्ली विरासत
DELHI HERITAGE



© The British Library Board

Tughlaqabad is considered to be the third extant city of Delhi, after Lal Kot (built in mid-eleventh century by the Tomars) and Siri (built by the second ruler of the Khalji Dynasty, Alauddin Khalji).

The Tughlaq Dynasty that ruled a large part of India from Delhi enjoyed the prowess of three prominent rulers: Ghiasuddin Tughlaq, his son Muhammad bin Tughlaq, and his nephew Firoz Shah Tughlaq. The dynasty that stayed in power for almost a century (AD 1320–1412) constructed major areas on the southern outskirts of the capital, including the three cities, Tughlaqabad, Jahanpanah, and Firozabad, as well as other forts, tombs, and mosques. Ghiasuddin Tughlaq, the founder of the Tughlaq Dynasty was the slave of the last sultan of the Khalji Dynasty and had dreamt of raising a city from those days. Gaining power after the ruler's death in AD 1320, Ghiasuddin Tughlaq, during his short reign (AD 1320–24), built Tughlaqabad, the second fortified city, spanning across nearly 6.5 km, over a period of only four years. Tughlaqabad, located along Mehrauli-Badarpur Road stands on a high outcrop of rock towards the south-eastern edge of Delhi.

The fortified city is easily accessible from the nearby metro station, named after the city itself.

Ghiasuddin's city is distinctly divided into three parts: the wider city area, originally built along a rectangular grid towards north, the citadel, and the adjacent palace that once held the royal residences, towards south-west. The city area, with residences

and commercial settlements is now mostly in ruin with recent developments towards north-east. The fort with remarkable, massive stone fortifications surrounds the irregular ground plan of the city. The walls built of random rubble masonry in places rise to a height of nearly 30 m and have a pronounced batter with frequent bastions and numerous slits.

A mausoleum, probably built during Ghiasuddin's own lifetime, is sited within a vast (now dry) water reservoir along the south of the city. Constructed of finely cut red sandstone and white marble, the mausoleum is connected to the city through a causeway that spans across a length of approximately 120 m.

Along the same side, lies another fort named Adilabad that was built by Muhammad bin Tughlaq. The fort, similar in style, with an outer and inner fortification is much smaller in scale than Tughlaqabad Fort. About 800 m south-east of Adilabad, is yet another fort known as the Nai ka Kot that is believed to have been built by Muhammad bin Tughlaq as a private residence before he built Adilabad. These forts and mausoleum, maintained by the Archeological Survey of India (ASI) are a testimony to the city's grandeur and give an interesting peek into Delhi's glorious past.

Timings: 7.00 am–6:30 pm

Entry: Indian Citizens–Rs 5, Foreign Nationals–Rs 100, free for children upto 15 years. Entry to Adilabad Fort is free.

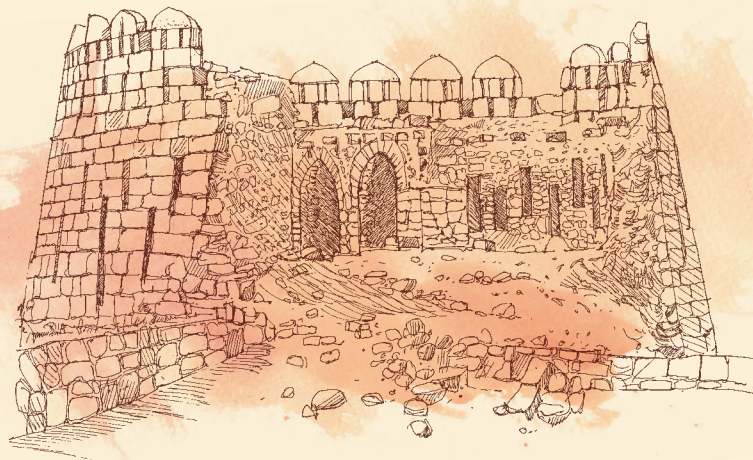
1. TUGHLAQABAD FORT

The great tradition of building in stone is reflected in this magnificent fort that stands on a rocky hill which is part of the Aravallis and spans across a stretch of approximately 6.5 km. Now entered from the Mehrauli-Bardarpur Road, the fort was commissioned by the founder of the Tughlaq Dynasty—Ghiasuddin Tughlaq—in the year 1321, and was completed in a very short span of four years.

The fort, commonly known as the cursed fortress was in fact abandoned within a few years after its construction and remained uninhabited ever since. It was essentially built to serve a dual purpose—one, to resist the threat of Mongol attacks and second, to serve as the capital of Ghiasuddin Tughlaq.

Double-storied bastions and the tapered rubble-filled walls surfaced over with Delhi quartzite present a composition of extreme grandeur revealing the sensitivity and proficiency of both the patron and craftsmen during that time. The greater slope served to buttress the higher walls and increase security and the bastions facilitated active defense against invading troops.

The layout of the fortified city seems to be rectangular in plan, divided distinctly into three segments as mentioned earlier. The



eastern part entered through the Qutb-Bardarpur Road comprises the city area with the houses; the palaces lie towards south-west; and a rectangular area enclosed within high walls and bastions towards the south-east served as the citadel.

The main entrance to the fort today is on the southern side, immediately facing the causeway that once linked it to the



mausoleum of Ghiasuddin. This causeway, which has now been pierced by a road, originally stood in a vast water reservoir created by erecting bunds between the hills. The water has now dried up and the causeway and fortifications rise up from dry ground. Approximately 13 ft above the entrance gate to the fort, originally a side entry used by Ghiasuddin to visit the site of the tomb, the causeway takes one through an enclosed, vaulted alley that terminates into a vast open ground overlooking a now dry kund (tank). Walking ahead towards the east, past a few steps and a raised walkway, is a large open space that gives a glimpse of the overall layout and the architectural style that then prevailed. The walls here are the thickest you can find in any of the forts in India, at places about 10–15 ft thick, rising up to 50–100 ft, strengthened by double-storey bastions and gateways in between some of them. The city is believed to once have had fifty-two gates of which a few remain till today.

On the right, a natural pathway leads to the citadel, fairly square in plan, which is about 25 ft above the inner entry. With a number of fascinating structures inside, the mosque and remains of houses on either side are the first to appear. The remains of the Mughal houses covering an extensive area show that this place was inhabited during Mughal times. Close-knit, straight-lined interlocking planes at places also reveal signs of plaster over stone, which is the otherwise dominant building material in the rest of the fort. Storage tanks for construction materials, a linear market street underground, and a large mound towards extreme east are a few features that are of particular interest.

The market street below, quite well maintained till today, has partitions on either side with additional room for storage beyond every unit. Openings at regular intervals along the passage possibly

allowed for ample light and easy access from above. Arched niches inside suggest a concern for artificial lighting as well.

Above the market street is a large open court that looks over to the Burj Mandal more towards the east, which possibly is the highest spot within the entire complex. Passing over the steps and an elevated walkway, the Mandal offers a comprehensive view of the entire city from a single point. Almost reduced to rubble, this mound even today rises up to a height of 70 ft from the road and commands a panoramic view of the vast fort. On the south this provided a bird's eye view of the surrounding countryside and enabled advance warning of an approaching enemy.

Leaving the citadel and turning right is a walkway that leads to the once existing royal palaces. Amidst dense thorny vegetation is a vast excavated area, possibly a lake that separates the private palace area from the populated citadel which is about 160 ft across. It is advised to be escorted by guides or travel authorities especially along this route as the undulating platforms, broken stones, and mounting vegetation makes it difficult to access. The stripped walls, arched gateways, and remains of the intersecting fabric of the palaces, residences, audience halls, and intersecting courtyards sprawl over an area of 120 acres symbolizing the power and opulence of the Tughlaqs.

The outer fortification walls and bastions include loopholes, designed ingeniously for ventilation, light, and specially defense. Follow the 20 ft wide walkway along the lake to get back to the main entry of the fort and complete the visit to this magnificent fort.

Even though in an advanced state of ruin, the massive fortifications, numerous palaces, residences, and several structures reflect the romance and glory of a bygone era.



ARCHITECTURE OF THE TUGHLAQs

The Tughlaqs left their stamp on Delhi's cityscape rather emphatically. They were definitely the most prolific of builders, for within their tenure of seventy-seven years and ten rulers, they built many civil structures, religious institutions, and infrastructure like roads, bridges, dams, canals and step-wells, hospitals, and other amenities for travellers like caravan *sarais* (inns), gardens, and orchards.

Tughlaq buildings are an interesting reflection of the age. Ghiasuddin Tughlaq won Delhi during a turbulent period. Ghiasuddin's city, Tughlaqabad, while it had palaces and bazaars, was first and foremost a fortification, a city that reflected a military officer's understanding of the need for providing protection to his people. Its bastions, battlements, multiple gateways, and large reservoirs for grain and water were made to withstand the attack.

While a fort had to be a defensive structure, one would not expect similar architecture in a mausoleum—but Ghiasuddin Tughlaq's tomb complex is no less than a small fortress as much as it is a mausoleum. The red sandstone and white marble of the cenotaph is beautiful, but the battlements enclosing the cenotaph are functional. The zigzag pathway with multiple gateways, is obviously designed to hinder invaders.

It is interesting to note that most of the Tughlaq mosques — such as Khirki, Begumpuri, and the Kalan Masjids of Nizamuddin and Shahjahanabad—also resemble fortifications, to some extent or the other. The Khirki Masjid, with its bastion towers and formidable gate, is a good example of 'fortress architecture' carried over into a religious structure.

Buildings within the Tughlaqabad Fort including the citadel and the palace complex, Delhi



Bastion detail, Ghiasuddin Tughlaq's Tomb, Delhi

An architectural element that became synonymous with the Tughlaqs was the battered wall, its base much wider than its top. A wall with a 'batter' was necessary when building with earth: the base was reinforced to support the weight of the wall. For the Tughlaqs, who built in stone, it was an architectural element, not a necessity. They certainly had an inclination for the style: you can see tapered walls all across their buildings.

Another significant feature of Tughlaq architecture is the use of grey quartzite, abundant and easily quarried in and around Delhi. It provided a strong and popular building material but it was also hard and notoriously difficult to carve. The Tughlaqs, who were more keen on quickly building their forts rather than focussing on beauty, were happy to use quartzite. Perhaps that explains why Tughlaq buildings are often of plain, solid grey stone (sometimes with the original outer plaster still to be seen), and more practical than pretty.

Tughlaq architecture is not devoid of ornamentation and it reflects a step in the evolution of Indo-Islamic architecture: the blending of indigenous elements with elements imported from Central Asia. For example, a door lintel was used in India to shore up a doorway; exactly the same function was performed by the true arch in Central Asia. So, by the time of the Tughlaqs (when Indian stonemasons had become familiar with the workings of the arch), using a lintel and an arch was unnecessary. But the lintel remained, now as a decorative element. The doorways at Ghiasuddin's Tomb feature this 'redundant lintel' style.

Similarly, indigenous elements like the *kalash* (a small round pot) and carved lotus buds had become common. So were the carved brackets traditionally used with lintels. These, combined with arches and domes, carved *jali* (screen with ornamental patterns) screens on windows, comprised much of the relatively spartan decoration on Tughlaq buildings.

2. GHIASUDDIN TUGHLAQ'S TOMB

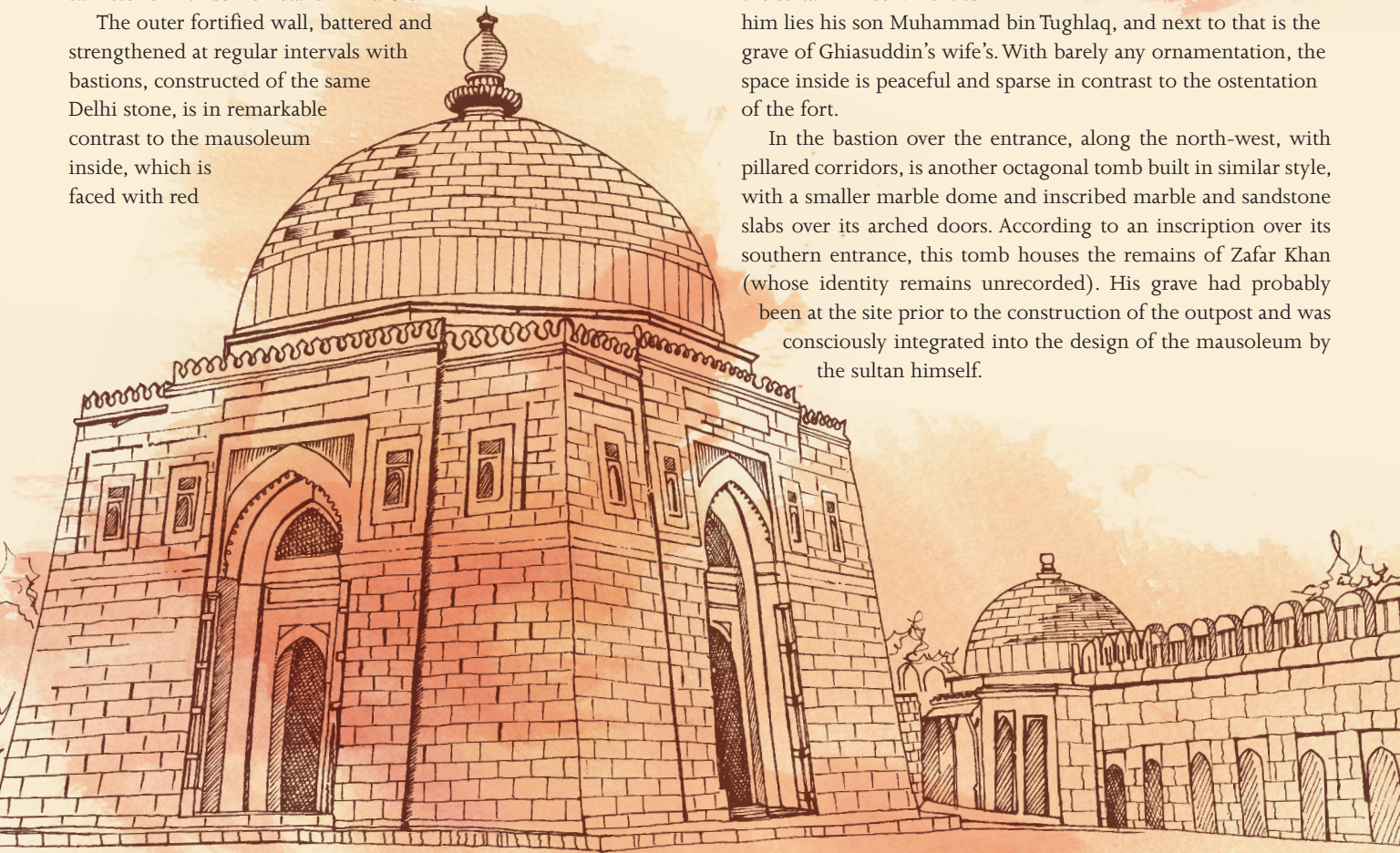
The founder of the Tughlaq Dynasty, Ghiasuddin Tughlaq built his tomb, which is one of the early examples of Indo-Islamic architecture, and was possibly finished by his son and successor Muhammad bin Tughlaq in the year 1328.

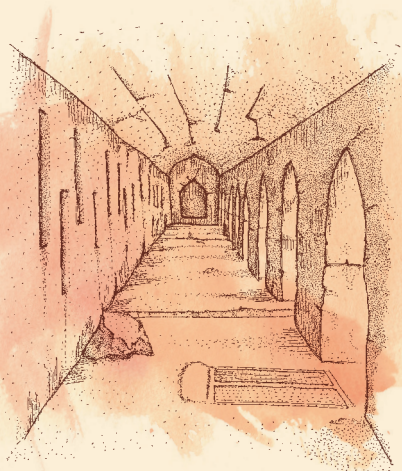
Located on the southern side of the fort, the tomb is approached through a causeway that runs over a vast, now dry water reservoir that is now left free for undergrowth and is usually made use of by children for informal games. The elevated causeway that connects both the fort and the tomb, pierced by the Mehrauli-Bardarpur Road, till today retains its original character. The tomb enclosure is approached over the causeway, which leads one to the entrance platform about 8 ft above the road level, shaded by a pipal tree. In front is a massive gateway, made of finely cut red sandstone with some details in marble.

The outer fortified wall, battered and strengthened at regular intervals with bastions, constructed of the same Delhi stone, is in remarkable contrast to the mausoleum inside, which is faced with red

sandstone and inlaid with arched borders and intricate jali of marble. Simple but elegant, this tomb sits in the middle of a lush green private courtyard, with arched openings, battered walls, crowned by a huge dome made entirely of white marble. Fairly symmetric in plan, this (8 m x 8 m) square mausoleum inside encloses three graves. The one in the centre of the room is that of the sultan himself. Next to him lies his son Muhammad bin Tughlaq, and next to that is the grave of Ghiasuddin's wife's. With barely any ornamentation, the space inside is peaceful and sparse in contrast to the ostentation of the fort.

In the bastion over the entrance, along the north-west, with pillared corridors, is another octagonal tomb built in similar style, with a smaller marble dome and inscribed marble and sandstone slabs over its arched doors. According to an inscription over its southern entrance, this tomb houses the remains of Zafar Khan (whose identity remains unrecorded). His grave had probably been at the site prior to the construction of the outpost and was consciously integrated into the design of the mausoleum by the sultan himself.





The south-eastern bastion of the fortified wall entered through arched corridors, rises to a height of 24 ft above the ground. The outer walls are punctured ingeniously with loopholes and this space was perhaps the most suited to spot approaching invaders. Wide arched corridors along the fortification,

facing the road and courtyard on either side add to the austerity and wonder of this beautiful tomb that overlooks the Tughlaqabad and Adilabad forts from the north and east respectively. The cells underground find access from the peripheral corridor at places which now have been blocked with wire mesh doors to ensure security.

With a smaller and cleaner layout, this absolutely green, incredibly maintained tomb is certainly worth a visit along with the rest of Tughlaqabad.

3. ADILABAD FORT

The fort of Adilabad was built in AD 1327–28, soon after the death of Ghiasuddin Tughlaq, by his son Muhammad bin Tughlaq, allegedly as a symbol of his own might and power. As narrated by some, Muhammad bin Tughlaq was suspected to have been involved in plotting his father's death to seize the throne as the supreme ruler of the Tughlaq Dynasty. Perched over a hillock, the fort in fact seems to be an extension of the Tughlaqabad Fort, built in the same period with a similar style, materials, and type of

construction. In spite of being one of the oldest forts in the capital and one of the few remaining worthy examples of Tughlaq-era architecture, the fort has remained unexplored / hidden for years. Lack of proper signage and clarity of its entrance has possibly added to its obscurity amongst rest of the heritage buildings in Tughlaqabad.

After passing Tughlaqabad Fort, across the road is Adilabad Fort. A common entry adjoining an ayurvedic hospital leads to the car park facing a vast open ground that is commonly used as a playing field. Walking down a few steps and following a natural path along a lake leads you to the main entry of the fort, with the famous tomb of Ghiasuddin on its right. A massive ramp, perhaps a recent intervention, crafted with the same stonework as the rest of the construction rises up to nearly 23 ft over the ground. Slightly steep and strenuous for the elderly, the ramp leads to an arched entrance from where an elevated walkway along with a few steps lead you to the main entry, about 30 ft above the ground.


The fort though much smaller in scale than Tughlaqabad, has a similar layout with the outer and inner fortifications strengthened with double storied bastions and gates at regular intervals. About a kilometre in length and half as wide, the fort from its north side offers an impressive view of Tughlaqabad Fort as well as the tomb on its left. With barely any signs of building around the outer wall, it is difficult to imagine that there was once a major settlement here. The inner wall however houses remnants of a palace complex, centrally aligned within the overall layout. A walkway along the inner enclosure travels around the double-storied cells along the fortification, with a cluster of underground cells on the east side for storing grains and recently developed landscaped courts on either side of the palace. An opening from the south-east looks over to the vast open ground with no direct access for the fort inside, leaving a single entry-exit from the north-west to the fort.





Nearest Bus Stops

- (i) M.B. Road: 34, 34 extra, 414, 511, 525, 544, 714, 717, 874
- (ii) Tughlaqabad: 34, 34 extra, 414, 511, 525, 544, 714, 717, 874

-  Bus Stand
-  Parking
-  Toilets



This publication has been made possible by World Monuments Fund's Sustainable Tourism Initiative, sponsored by American Express.

SPONSOR



Created by



INTACH

Delhi Chapter