



ISSN : 2393-8900
IMPACT FACTOR : 1.9152 (UIF)

Historicity

International Research Journal



VOLUME - IV
January 2018
SPECIAL ISSUE

Theme

Postcolonial Studies





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Treatment of Theme and Techniques in Karnad's Tughlaq

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Abstract:

The term post colonialism gained currency in the closing decades of the 20th century. After the Second World War, many countries in Asia and Africa continent became free and these newly independent (cultural and political) nations started to assert their independent political, historical and cultural identity through literature. The post-colonial writers like Girish Karnad, Vijay Tendulkar, Badal Sircar etc. wrote about the various social, historical, political, religious, and familial problems faced by men and women by common men and women. These people had experience not only with the themes but also with the techniques. This present paper throws light on Girish Karnad's (a versatile living) historical play Tughlaq (1962) by Girish Karnad himself. His play Tughlaq is about a Muslim Ruler in 14th century. In this play Karnad a post colonial dramatist, a versatile genius & actor, compares a play on a king of medieval India.

Keywords: Historical, Religious, Versatile, King, Independent

Introduction:

Girish Karnad's Tughlaq is a historical play about Muslim king in 14th century. Muhammad-bin-tughlaq who was ruling in Delhi. In this play used historical, legendary, convention and motif of folk art, like masks and curtains to project able denouements. The so called 'mad' Tughlaq comes fully alive on the stage with all his plus and minus points with his ideas and short comings & his dreams and day dreams. However it has been regarded as a political allergy or a contemporary play about contemporary situation. Though Karnad had not intended it was struck by the parallelism between religion of Tughlaq and contemporary Indian history Karnad himself said:

"What struck me absolutely about Tughlaq's history was that it was contemporary. The fact that here was the most idealistic, the most intelligent king ever to come on the throne of Delhi and one of the greatest failures also. And within a span of twenty years this tremendously capable man had gone to pieces. This seemed to be both due to his Idealism as well as the shortcoming within him, such as his impatience, his cruelty, his feeling that he had the only correct answer. And I felt in early sixties India had also come very far in the same direction-the twenty-year period seemed to me very much a striking parallel." - Introduction-(viii).

Although Karnad himself admits that what struck him about Tughlaq's history was that it was contemporary, it has to be affirmed that Tughlaq is basically concerned with the tragedy of limits of human power in a predominantly psychological context. In Tughlaq the focus theme of human power in respect of a self righteous idealist armed with absolute power over his subjects. Tughlaq begins with a scene that present on exposition of character and human motives.

Young man: This king now he isn't afraid to be human.

Third man: But does he have to make such a fuss about being human? (Page.- 03)

In this scene there is a hint at the lurking suspicion between two religions that is the Hindus and the Muslims in that period (A.D 1327). It also shows that the king Tughlaq is deeply religious he strives for Hindu-Muslim unity and that he has no partiality for any particular community. According to him all are equal in his kingdom he wanted peaceful society without a quarrel among the people, various religions and castes, creed etc. That all are equal before justice is



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evident from the announcement to restore the property of Vishnu Prasad, A Brahmin of Shiknar whose land has been illegally seized by the officers & the state. The king's sense of justice and fair play is so strong that besides restoring the land to Vishnu Prasad he announces his decision to appoint the Brahmin in the service of the state. When Tughlaq appears on the scene, he makes yet another startling announcement:

"Later this year the capital of my empire will be moved from Delhi to Daulatabad. Your surprise is natural, but I beg you to realize that this is no mad whim of a tyrant... But for me the most important factor is that Daulatabad is a city of the Hindus and as the capital it will symbolize the bond between Muslims and strengthen in my kingdom." (3-4).

We are also introduced to Aziz and Aazam who are common rascals, but who would play such an important part in the action of the drama. As we see the conversation between them.

Aziz: Come along. It won't be long.

don't intend to be a Brahmin, all my life!

There's money here and we'll make a pile by
the time we reach Daulatabad.

Aazam: And then?

Aziz: How Should I know? - (08)

As far as to scene second is concerned we are shown that the sultan theatrically confiding to his step mother:

'I pray to the Almighty to save me from sleep.

All day long. I gave to worry about tomorrow but it's only

When the might falls that I can step beyond all that.' - (10)

The problems of Muhammad are mounting and the people are critical of him. Ain-ul-Mulk, a trusted friend is in revolt and marching on Delhi. Sheikh -Imam-ud-din is inciting people to revolt.

The third scene is a short in which we find the sultan and sheikh imam-ud-din in front of the big mosque. The clever manipulator that he is the sultan has arranged prayer meeting here in honour of sheikh and also to listen to him it is actually a trap laid cleverly by the sultan, and the people seeing through this, stay away from the meeting. When the sultan asks her servant to tell the vizier to call the khans, Amirs and sardars to the meeting. Imam-ud-din remarks that he has not come there to speak to a collection of courtiers. Here Imam and Sultan are in conversation.

Mohammad : And I am afraid I can't go now

from door to door asking people to come.

I should have been waiting for over half an hour and
not a soul has come yet!

Imam: They say we look alike but we don't think alike do we?

What's the point in my addressing a gang of bootlickers?

I want to speak to the people who are willing to act. Who
are willing to do something for Islam and the country well

no matter. I'll go to the market-place tomorrow & speak there. (19-20)

Scene four takes us back to the sultan's palace where Muhammad returns when his step mother asks him about sheikh, Imam-ud-din the sultan freezes and then speaks.

'It was a terrible sight. They brought his body into my tent and I felt - as though it was I who was lying dead there and that he was standing above me looking at me'. (27)

The Sultan is indeed a master of tactician for he just dies not set- Ain-ul-mulk free but



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gives him back. The kingdom of Avadh and even promises not to send him to Deccan. He also announces a state mourning for Imam-ud-din, observing that when men like him die, it is a sin to be alive.

When we talk about scene fifth we see that how the sultan is a crafty nature. He organized a meeting of sheikh imam-ud-din to address the people and at the same time asked his soldiers to see to it that none dared to come to listen to him. He made good use of him as an envoy and craftily so arranged matters that he was killed in the battle.

Now a revolt is brewing against him. The religious leaders are all against him and a clever plan of action is prepared. Shihab-ud-din is persuaded to take part in the revolt. It is hinted that Ratansingh through his adopted brother is secretly planning to have his revenge on him.

In the sixth scene we are taken back to the palace of sultan. Barani informs the sultan that a descendant of the last Khalif is going to visit him, and Shihab-nd-din compliments Muhammad on his wisdom when Amir I observes that the sins of Delhi will be washed clean by the visit of the sultan observes that by then they will be in Daultabad. This makes Shihab-nd-din implore His majesty not to move the capital to the Daultabad. But the sultan will not budge. In fact he next year they shall have copper currency in their empire along with silver dinars and a copper coin will have the same value as a silver coin as it he says.

Muhammad : Exchange it for a silver coin. A copper coin will have the same value as

A silver dinar.

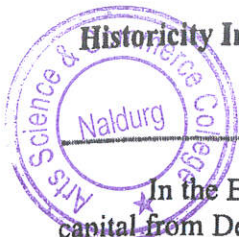
Shihab-ud-din : But I don't understand your majesty how can one expect a copper

Coin to have the same value as a silver one

The hour of prayer arrives. As soon as the muezzins call begins Muhammad unbuckles his sword and places it on the throne. Half way through the prayer a commotion is heard off stage. Taking this as a cue Shihab-ud-din and the Amirs get and pull out their daggers. But suddenly from behind the Curtin about twenty Hindu soldiers rush in with spars and surround the Amirs and drag them away all except Shihab-ud-din. While all this is going on the sultan goes on praying unconcerned. Muhammad steps down from the throne only after completing his prayer. He stabs Shihab-ud-din to death telling him that he liked him "too much." He orders Najib to see that all those involved in the conspiracy are caught and beheaded their bodies stuffed with straw and hanged up in the palace yard. He further orders that a public announcement shall be made in which it should be made known that a rebellion had taken place in the palace and that the nobles of the court had tried to assassinate the sultan during prayer. He was saved by Shihab-ud-din, who died a martyr's death. The father of shihab-ud-din while all this is going on the sultan hoes on praying unconcerned Muhammad steps down from the throne only after completing his prayer. He stabs shihab-ud-din to death telling him that he liked him "too much". He orders Najib to see that all those involved in the conspiracy are caught and beheaded there bodied studded with straw and hanged up in the palace yard. He further orders that a public announcement should be made known that a rebellion had taken place in the palace and that the nobles of the court had tried to assassinate the sultan during prayer. He was saved by Shihab-ud-din who died a martyr's death. The father of Shihab-ud-din a powerful man, is to be invited Delhi to the funeral. And the sultan wants Delhi to be vacated immediately. Every living soul in delhi will leave or Daulatabad within a fortnight. There will be no more praying in the kingdom. Muhammad says:

'You are a hopeless case you know pathetic! You've been in delhis for so many years and you're as stupid as ever look at me only a few months in delhi and I have discovered a whole new world politics. My dear fellow that's where our future is politics. It's a beautiful world, wealth, success, position, power'. -(50)

The scene ends with Aziz telling Aazam that instead of stealing copper coins they will make counterfeit copper coins.



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In the Eighth scene we are taken to 1332 A.D five years have passed. The shifting of the capital from Delhi to Daultabad has been a painful experience for everybody. The sultan cannot sleep and he is fully aware that only one industry flourishes in his country and that is of making counterfeit copper coins. His subjects even call him "Mad Muhammad" and the sultan wants to become "wise" again. But he also can not admit that he has been wrong all those years. For he still feels that he has something to give something to each. The scene ends with the old man coming to inform the sultan that vizier Muhammad Najib has been found murdered in his bed.

Scene nine offers some dramatic relief in which Aziz tells some "honest" things to Aazam.

'If you remain virtuous through your life no one will say a good thing about you because they won't need to. But start stealing and they say:

'What a nice boy he was! But he's ruined now' - (57).

This apparently jovial remark can be also taken as an indirect comment on the fell of the sultan himself, and Aziz in some ways reminds us also of the Fool in Shakespeare's King Lear Ghiyas-ud-din a descendant of Khalif Abassid is on his way to Daultabad. Aziz and Azam happen to see him and they murder him. Aziz opens Ghiyas-ud-din's bundle and prepares to make his entry into Tughlaq's palace as the 'grandson of the Khalif'.

Scene ten takes us back to the palace where the sultan realizes that if he does not withdraw the copper coins now the whole economy of his dilapidated kingdom will be in a shambles. His step mother shocks Muhammad when she tells him that it was she who had got Najib murdered. She makes him conscious of his degeneration when she says:

"Its only seven years ago that you came to the throne. How glorious you were then, how idealistic, how full of hopes. Look at your kingdom now. It's become a kitchen of death.' - (65)

The sultan orders that he wants her stoned to death publicity the next day. Barani brings some joyful tiding Ghiyids-ud-din Abbasid is to arrive within the nearest or so.

In the eleventh scene we are taken to a plain outside the fort of Daulatabad where crowds of dejected citizens have gathered. They do not want prayer now they want some food. Just then Aziz (disguised as Ghiyas-ud-din) and Azam and their entourage enter and Muhammad steps down from the front welcoming this holiness as the only person when a Hindu woman identifies Aziz as the one who killed her son, people should that they want food not prayer. The riots begin and the scene ends.

Scene twelve takes us to the palace where Azam wants to escape and Aziz knows that he cannot get on without him. Aazam asks Aziz to come along with him too but Aziz will not budge.

Scene thirteen concludes the play Azam has been found murdered at the mouth of the secret tunnel from the place. The sultan is stunned. The famine, riots have already spread. Daultabad is in a shambles. Even Barani wants to leave the place. In a sudden flash of realization, Muhammad asks Aziz who he is. Aziz is obviously frightened and he confesses his guilt but adds with his characteristics with and humour:

"What if I am a dhobi, your majesty?

When it comes to washing away fifth no saint is for a dhobi". - (82)

Muhammad laughs and acknowledges that the man is a genius. When the sultan asks aziz what punishment should be given for his crimes, Aziz replies that he should be made an officer in his state. The sultan appoints Aziz as an officer in the army in Deccan, Saying that perhaps a state officer really would be the best punishment for him. Muhmmad also announces his decision to shift the capital back to Delhi. He suddenly feels hired and sleepy. For five years sleep has avoided him and now suddenly it is coming back. The muezzins call to prayer is heard and as that



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call folder away the sultan suddenly opens his eyes and looks around, "dazed and frightened, as though he cannot understand where he actually is". Has he gone mad? It is for us to conjecture for the author has provided no answer to the questions.

Girish Karnad employs the devices of dialogue contrast, parallelism & irony for character delineation. Characterization and plot are correlated and only those points of character are emphasized which develop the plot. Karnad's character use language which suits their status and temperament. The cheat Aziz uses matter of fact language devoid of Tughlaq's imaginative expressions:

"My dear fellow that's where our future is – politics! It is a beautiful world wealth success position power and yet it's full of brainless people, people with not an idea in their head. When I think of all the tricks I used in our village to pinch a few from clothes from people if one used half that intelligence here one can get robes of power. And not have to rich them either - get them! It's a fantastic world." - (50)

Karnad has also used symbols. He uses chess and python as symbols in Tughlaq. The chess suggests the intrigue in Tughlaq's nature. A skilled chess player he uses his political opponents as pawns on the chessboard of politics python suggests Tughlaq's barbarity and inhumanity. The vultures who are always with him and pierce their beaks into his flesh are symbols of his noble ideas which have been frustrated but which ever continue to torture him. His spirit knows no respite or peace.

Indian atmosphere is another feature of Tughlaq because Girish Karnad as an Indian English writer in English and he has succeeded in creating a proper Indian atmosphere. He has Indian language into his English. He has suitably Indianised his English. In Tughlaq he freely uses Arabic and Indian words for creative atmosphere of 14th century India when Tughlaq reigned. For example 'sultan', 'jizya', 'kazi'-i-mumalik, dhobi, Darbar-i-khas and muezzins call for prayer has been twice given in Arabic Karnad has successfully paraphrased some typical Indian expression into chaste English.

Plot, characters, setting, style, and language contribute to create the unity of effect in the play. This makes him one of the greatest dramatists in Indian English literature. A talented playwright he has the knack to transform any situation into an aesthetic experience. His dramatic technique is conspicuous for its excellence. Girish Karnad's Tughlaq is an immortal play which shall be read and acted as long as English is read and enjoyed. It is a great classic of Indo-English drama. There is a critical exploration of the psychic structure of the characters. The moral and the manners of the political world of power have been sensitively commented upon the struggles of the sultan pleasantly flowing at its own sweet will. Tughlaq presents a rich orchestration of themes and techniques subtly interlocked with one another, with a rapid progression of events.

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