



Contemporary History in Tughlaq by Girish Karnad

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ABSTRACT

Girish Karnad uses India's myths, fallacies, and records to amplify India's artistic heritage. He does this by using them as a base for beliefs, non-temporal questioning, political rumbling, and civil values. Socio-artistic influences are the lesser lift forces that live within societies and communities that have the eventuality to impact the ideas, passions, and behaviours. Girish Karnad, a seminal figure in Indian English drama, consummately weaves together tradition, history, and contemporary socio-cultural issues in his plays. By reimagining history and reinterpreting ancient myths within an ultra-modern frame, Karnad offers profound perceptivity into the complications of Indian society. This paper explores the intricate interplay of Tughlaq's history demonstrating how he uses these rudiments to notice and illuminate contemporary Indian realities. Karnad's plays frequently serve as a glass reflecting the sociocultural geography of India. In *Tughlaq*, he delves into the literal figure of Muhammad bin Tughlaq, but the play is further than a bare literal chronicle. It becomes a conceit for the threats of dictatorship, the complications of leadership, and the socio-political climate of India. By lacing literal events with contemporary enterprises, Karnad invites the followership to draw parallels between the history and the present, pressing the enduring nature of certain social issues.

KEYWORDS: Legacy, complexities, temporal, chronicles, Mythology, Socio-cultural.

In his plays, Girish Karnad examines the cultural and social life of contemporary India via the use of storytelling techniques such as folktales, mythology, and historical accounts. He does a masterful job of combining the timeless lessons about human nature and emotions that can be found in traditional Indian stories with the ever-evolving societal mores and moral standards that are prevalent in modern society. His plays, in particular, concentrate on the psychological problems, moral conundrums, and conflicts that modern Indian men and women experience in the many social circumstances in which they find themselves. His plays *Yayati*, *Hayavadana*, *Naga-Mandala*, and *Bali-The Sacrifice* are excellent examples of his skillful use of myth, legend, and folktale, respectively. In addition, *Tughlaq*, *Tale-Danda*, and *The Dreams of Tipu Sultan* are all performances that are considered historical plays that focus heavily on the past.

In the years after India's independence, his second play, *Tughlaq* (1964), helped him establish himself as a significant playwright in Indian English dramatic scene. He became more well-known as a dramatist as a result of this contributory factor. The play is considered to be a literary masterpiece in the Kannada language. The request for an English translation was made by Alyque Padamsee in 1970, and Karnad himself translated it. Furthermore, the first performance of the translation took place in August of 1970 at the Bhulabhai Auditorium in Bombay for the first time. The fact that Karnad's plays have been translated into a number of European languages as well as Indian languages, has contributed to its rise to prominence on a global scale. A significant number of performances have been given across Europe, North America, and Australia. Its great popularity on stage may be attributed to the exceptional dramatic qualities it has as well as the public appeal it possesses.

One of the most renowned works in Kannada literature is *Tughlaq*. The languages Bengali, English, Marathi, and Kannada are often used in the production of it. It is possible to enjoy and interpret this piece in a number of different ways. U.R. Anantha Murthy does an excellent job of identifying the factors that contributed to the positive reception of the play. "The play uses conventions like the comic pair, Aziz and Aazam (the Akara and Makara of Natak performances), to which theatre audiences respond readily," according to the performer. "It has an interesting story, an intricate plot, scope for spectacle."

The narrative of how the play came to be made is an interesting read. During the time that Karnad was working on writing plays for Manohara Granthamala, he came across Kirtinath Kurtkoti's remark that Kannada was restricted to costume plays and lacked historical plays that may potentially appeal with modern audiences. Karnad enthusiastically accepted the task, and as a consequence, he started reading a great deal of historical literature. When he first started reading *Tughlaq's* history, he immediately saw that the story of his reign had the potential to be dramatic and that it was pertinent to the conditions that were occurring at the time. So he made the decision to utilise history as a foundation to comprehend our lives and the periods in which we are now living aspect. Karnad himself makes a comment regarding the contemporaneity of *Tughlaq's* history, stating, "What struck me absolutely about *Tughlaq's* history was that it was contemporary" While standing here was the most idealistic and educated king who had ever ruled Delhi, he was also one of the most unsuccessful rulers in the history of the city. Furthermore, during the span of twenty years, this extraordinarily gifted individual had completely disintegrated. This seemed to be the result of both his idealism and his weaknesses.

In 1971, Karnad personally translates *Tughlaq* into English, and the book is made available to the public. Approximately 26 years of Muhammad bin Tughlaq's leadership are the subject of this historical play, which focuses on his challenging existence. Because of the artistic goal and the length of the

work, Karnad has only picked the first five years of the dramatic framework, which span from 1327 to 1332. In the year 1327, the action of the play takes place in Delhi. It also takes place on the way from Delhi to Daulatabad, and then again in the vicinity of the Daulatabad fort five years later. In order to show the complexity of Tughlaq's personality, the author relies mostly on contemporary historians. These historians include Badoni's *Tarikh-i- Mubarak Shahi*, Al-Marshi's *The Maslik-al-absar*, Ibn-i-Battuta's *Travels*, and Zia-ud-Din Barani's *Tarikh--Firoz Shahi* (1351). More specifically, "Karnad arranges the thirteen scenes of Tughlaq as a sequence of self- cancelling actions that articulate both political and psychological ironies, using Barani's basic narrative, his attitudes, and portions of his text. According to Dharwadker , The play looks into the paradoxical sides of Tughlaq's leadership, which is considered to be one of the most amazing times in the history of the world.

Tughlaq is portrayed by Karnad in a variety of different ways. Tughlaq is a symbol of the establishment of a society that is well-balanced and in which everyone will have the opportunity to enjoy freedom, justice, equality, and fundamental human rights. It also symbolises administrative reforms, harmony between Hindus and Muslims, the recognition of merit regardless of caste or creed, and the restructuring of the administrative apparatus and taxation system. Being a man of letters, he makes an effort to implement a new organisational system inside his administration. He is a rationalist and philosopher, and when it comes to matters of administration and politics, he completely breaks from the teachings of religious institutions. As a consequence of the Sultan's divergence from the essential teachings of Islam, the leaders of the orthodox Muslim community have declared their strong opposition to him. Due to the fact that he does not pay the *jizya* tax, they observe him as a non- believer in Islam. There is a lot of criticism directed at Tughlaq because of his tolerance towards Hindus. The first scene of the play, which takes place during a conversation between an Old Man and a Young Man, demonstrates the tension and dramatic conflict that exists between those who support Tughlaq and those who challenge him.

The elderly man said, "My God, what is this nation turning into?"

The young man asked his grandfather, "What exactly is wrong with you?" When it comes to the country, you are in the care of the most trustworthy people you have ever been in. When it comes to this particular scenario, the Young Man represents the liberal position of the Sultan, whereas the Old Man represents the traditional Muslim perspective. It should come as no surprise that the story begins with a conflict between the traditional and the contemporary, modernity and traditional religion practices. Furthermore, as the narrative develops, the conflict also develops at this time. Because Tughlaq is accepting to Hindus, the orthodox fear that the country is not in safe hands because of this characteristic. As a result of their lack of awareness of Tughlaq's idealistic and reformative fervour, they are enraged by the abolition of the *jizya* tax that was administered to Hindus. As a consequence of this, they describe him as an adversary of Islam. In spite of this, the young people view the Sultan's policies, which are liberal and secular, to be commendable and helpful.

However, despite the fact that Tughlaq seems to be a devout Muslim who has a deep faith in the holy Koran, the orthodox are unable to appreciate the idealistic and rationalistic perspectives that he has. His objective is to establish a society in which people of a variety of cultural backgrounds may happily coexist. It is his contention that in order to develop a society that is just, it is important to restore Vishnu Prasad's property to him. Vishnu Prasad is a Shiknar Brahmin, and state authorities have confiscated his property without his permission as a result of their actions. In addition to this, the Sultan honours him with a job in the public service and provides him with a monthly allowance of five hundred silver dinars. His spirit of kindness and justice is abundantly shown by this incident's occurrence. "My beloved people, you have heard the judgement of the Kazi and seen for yourselves how justice works in my kingdom without any consideration of might or weakness, religion or creed," he informs them, offering them his true assurance. I pray that this moment shines brightly and sheds light on the path that leads to greater justice, equality, progress, and peace-not just peace, but also a life that has a deeper purpose.

The story demonstrates that the conflict between Hindus and Muslims is not an issue that has emerged in recent times. On the other hand, it has been a component of civilization for a considerable number of centuries! In an effort to further their personal agendas, politicians continue to make efforts to divide the country along religion, caste, or creed lines in order to achieve their goals. As a result, the principles held by the Sultan are decades ahead of their time.

Therefore, the community that is founded on strict religious convictions is unable to acknowledge the democratic ideals that he upholds. The Sultan is responsible for a lot of reformative efforts, which are carried out for the benefit of his inhabitants. The only individual who benefits from this utopian step is Aziz, a low-caste Muslim washerman who pretends to be a penniless Hindu Brahmin in order to get a position at the court and win a false ruling against the Sultan, Aziz is the only character to benefit from this step. The Sultan, on the other hand, is unaware of the fact that con artists like Aziz, who pretends to be Vishnu Prasad, hijack reformative efforts in an unlawful manner, so preventing them from reaching the people who are supposed to receive them.

Karnad advances the claim that corrupt persons like Aziz are still present in today's society and take advantage of social initiatives that have been launched by the government, therefore denying the less fortunate access to these benefits. In the opening scene, the Sultan makes one more proclamation beyond the one that was already mentioned. He declares his historic plan to relocate the capital of his kingdom from Delhi to Daulatabad .At this announcement, his people are completely taken aback , and their reactions are one of uncertainty. By stating,

"I need a capital that is at the centre of my empire, which is now large and embraces the south," the Sultan makes it quite obvious why he wants to shift the capital. As you are well aware, Delhi is perilously near to the border, and there is always a perpetual fear of invasion. This is something that you recognise. However, the fact that Daulatabad is a Hindu city and will serve as the capital of the country is the thing that concerns the most to me. This is because it symbolises the connection between Muslims and Hindus, which is something that I want to strengthen and improve even more inside my kingdom."

The Sultan takes this decision in order to construct a Deccan administrative centre that is both functional and efficient. However, many people are pretty furious with him because of the reckless decision he made. The anguish that it causes them is unimaginable and excruciating. A thorough examination of the Sultan's decision to relocate the capital from Delhi to Daulatabad is carried out by Karnad, who makes adept use of historical material. There is evidence from the past that suggests that Tughlaq took the courageous decision to shift the capital in order to acquire effective administrative power over the southern area. Due to the fact that the Sayyids and Amirs were hostile to the Sultan, he attempted to alleviate their power by relocating the capital to Daulatabad, which was a town with a majority Hindu population. Karnad makes an attempt to bring attention to the inadequacies and failures of the Sultan.

An accomplished playwright named Karnad draws attention to the psychological study of Tughlaq's character in this play. He creates a visual representation of the gradual changes that take place in Tughlaq. The fact that Tughlaq's idealism is greatly hampered is a remarkable thing to see. It has come to light that he is a shrewd politician, a cold-blooded killer, and a crafty leader who used religion as a method of maintaining his grasp on power. According to S.T. Kharat, the following are some appropriate phrases that may be used to summarise the effects of the plot: The hypocrisy of the chieftains is shown throughout the whole plot. Praying is forbidden by the Sultan, who is in a frenzy. A violation of the prayer is committed by both the conspirators and the Sultan. Having an inordinate desire for wealth and power is a source of contamination and taint that may be found in prayer and religion.

As a result, prayer takes on a symbolic significance inside the play. The leitmotiv of the play is derived from this. It is quite unfortunate and ironic that the prayer that is being used in this situation has a negative intention, because it is supposed to be employed for the purpose of adoring God and achieving mental peace.

Paradoxes and opposites are abundant in life. In addition, the actions of Tughlaq provide a clear illustration of the terrible reality that existed at the time. In light of this, Karnad sheds light on the paradoxical and opposing nature of Tughlaq by conducting an exhaustive investigation into its past. The play's actual dramatic genius may be attributed to these tensions and inconsistencies. The remark made by Anantha Murthy is correct in every respect with regard to this specific circumstance. Even though Tughlaq and his opponents give the impression of being idealists at first glance, he argues that they really act in a manner that is contrary to the ideal throughout the whole of the play. The structure is comprised of these contrasting elements: the ideal and the real, the holy desire and the skilled intrigue. As the Sultan comes to the realisation that his people do not cooperate with him and do not agree with the decisions that are taken for the welfare of his realm, he develops feelings of resentment and vindictiveness. The clash between the fundamentalists and the Sultan, which we have seen in the past, is the first event that takes place in the play. All of the judgements made by the Sultan are turned down one after the other. The decision of the Sultan to relocate the capital, as well as his decision to do away with the jiziya tax, is something that they object to. As a result, it is of the utmost importance to comprehend, from a psychological point of view, the manner in which the Sultan, who greeted his people with affection and generosity upon their arrival in the new capital city, makes the migration inevitable. Najib receives a directive from him that is irresponsible in nature, stating, "I want Delhi evacuated right now." Within the next two weeks, every single person who is still alive in Delhi will be leaving for Daulatabad. Now I can see how immature I used to be. They are just going to get the whip. Everyone is required to leave. There should not be even a single light that can be seen through the windows of Delhi. There must be no traces of smoke emanating from the chimneys of the building. Now, the only thing that would make me happy is if the cemetery were completely empty.

Karnad's Tughlaq is based on the thoughts of contemporary historians who strongly disagreed with the Sultan's position. Consequently, Karnad argues that the shift of the capital is a large-scale migration. Ibn-i-Battuta, a historian, uses the following statement to emphasise the cruel deeds of the Sultan: "One evening, the Sultan climbed the palace roof and took a look around." He said, "Now my heart is pleased and my soul is at rest," despite the fact that he was unable to see a lamp, there was no smoke, and there was no light. In reality, the failure of this strategy was brought about by a variety of different circumstances. It would seem that his people are on the fence about leaving their national motherland. They go so far as to proclaim their unwillingness to live in a region where Hindus constitute the predominant population. It is quite clear that they endured a great deal of suffering and were agitated as a result of the move of the capital. As a result, "It is a historical fact that the forced relocation of the elite to Daulatabad caused the Sultan more unpopularity and notoriety than any other measure or reform.

One of Tughlaq's followers in Karnad is aware that he is referred to as Muhammad the crazy by his supporters. After that, he continues by saying to Barani, "I'm on the verge of going insane," because his vision and welfare projects have not been successful, he is much more isolated and despairing than he already was. It is because of this that his odd conduct, which demonstrates his tremendous anxiety, may be explained. His mental condition has been thrown off by the outbreak of rebellions around the realm. Hunger has spread across Doab, from one community to the next. The level of corruption is continuing to increase. The catastrophes befall from every conceivable direction. So much so, that the Sultan loses his composure. Karnad's understanding of existential philosophy and ludicrous theatre has been of great use to him in his portrayal of the numerous layers that comprise Tughlaq's character's identity.

The stepmother of the Sultan is seen confessing that she was the one who was responsible for Najib's death. By making the statement, "It's only seven years ago that you came to the throne," she brings to his attention the fact that he is deteriorating. I am so impressed by how kind, idealistic, and optimistic you were back then. Observe your kingdom at this moment. All of a sudden, it has become the kitchen of death. Tughlaq's idealistic past is shown by Karnad in a highly creative manner, and it is contrasted with his decadent and filthy present.

It is clear to her that Tughlaq is working tirelessly to determine who is responsible for the death of Vizier Najib. His suspicions are directed on the Khans and Amirs. The fact that she committed the crime in order to protect them is something that she readily admits to having done. In spite of the fact that her admission of guilt absolves her of the accusation, the reality remains the same. It would seem that she took the life of Najib in an attempt to put a stop to Tughlaq's propensity for treachery, violence, and slaughter. There are only three persons whom Tughlaq loves in the play. These are Barani, his

stepmother, and Najib. However, the fact that she was responsible for the wicked death of his trusted friend, has left him with a profound wound. Ultimately, after the conviction of her crime, she is stoned to death, which is the last punishment. An egregious illustration of Tughlaq's lack of empathy, common sense, and discretion is the fact that he was responsible for the death of his stepmother.

Throughout the course of this play, Tughlaq has a number of instances in which he is confronted with an existential crisis. In the first place, he seeks to forge his identity via the adoption of progressive policies and high concepts. The Sultan is placed in a quandary that threatens his very existence as a result of the persistent hostility of the orthodox Muslims. In order to conduct his life in accordance with his values, he takes every effort. His ideal society would be based on the principles of secularism and peace between Hindus and Muslims working together. "Greater justice, equality, progress, and peace not just peace but a more purposeful life," is what he aims to accomplish in the future. According to Satish Kumar, who makes an excellent observation, the Sultan's goal is to make sure that his people are able to make their own decisions and live lives that are satisfying. As a result, he makes an attempt to extend our understanding of how people cope with the suffering and unpredictability that they experience. The Sultan is forced to consider a difficult choice. It involves hardship and obligations that have a significant impact on the person who makes the choice in addition to the sense of freedom that it provides. In the process of reaching his choice, the Sultan always considers what is in the greatest interest of his people, in spite of the formidable resistance he faces from those who have narrow-minded views, he has made up his mind that he will not back down from his choice. It is a direct and compelling method in which he conveys his existential conclusion.

The joy of finding a new universe that I had not found in the Arabs or even in the Koran is still there in my mind all these years after. I can still vividly remember the days when I read the works of the Greeks, such as Sukrat, who ingested poison in order to provide the world with the drink of gods, and Aflatoon, who criticised poets while writing some of the most breathtakingly beautiful poetry of all time. Tore me to shreds with their hands. To regain my sense of wholeness, I will have to eliminate the part of myself that was responsible for singing to them. Furthermore, there is also my realm, which has been shattered by images whose veracity I am unable to contest. You want me to get rid of the Greek aspect of myself so that I may be whole, and you tell me that my people can be brought together if they don't believe in the visions that lead either Zarathustra or the Buddha.

Tughlaq is purposely portrayed by Karnad as an existentialist who was inspired by Plato, Aristotle, Buddha, and Zarathustra. Karnad was profoundly impacted by existential philosophy. On the other hand, Islamists and Hindus both have a misunderstanding of Tughlaq's kindness and idealism. As soon as he learns that his people are preventing all of his progressive ideas from being implemented, he has feelings of anger and depression. This causes him to go in the direction of being more distant people around him on an interpersonal level. Rather considering individuals as human beings, he treats them more like objects, and he uses them for his own benefit. He lacks the ability to interact with other people in a manner that is meaningful. The manner in which he interacts with certain individuals, such as Sheikh Imam-ud-din, Shihab-ud-din, Ain-ul-Mulk, Sayyids, and Amirs, reveals his distant point of view. "Tughlaq sees others through an alienated vision not as persons but as pawns in a political game of chess, objects to be used and discarded," Christine Gomez says in this context, and she is absolutely true in her assessment of the reality of the situation.

Tughlaq commits a variety of planned crimes of his own choice in order to further his aims and policies. These crimes include fratricide and patricide, a hasty shift of the capital, assassinations of his opponents without regard for their safety, and, finally, the exploitation of religion as a political instrument. Given the breadth and depth of his feelings, it is possible that his obstinate behaviours might be seen as existentialist choices. When one makes any of these decisions, they will always result in self-deception, humiliation, loneliness, anguish, fear, dread, and despair. His remarks are brilliant, yet they have an existential significance behind them:

God, God in heaven, I beseech you to help me. Hold on to my hand, if you please. I am unsure of the proportion of the blood that seeps through my skin that belongs to me and the proportion that belongs to someone else. Lord, I started out on your path; why am I now wandering about in this desert naked and disoriented? My mission was to locate you. I am slithering about like a pig in this horrible mud, but I don't understand why.

As a result, the Sultan is symbolic of the estrangement and near-despairing state that mankind is now facing. In his work Tughlaq, Karnad makes the argument that the problem that mankind is now confronting is one of action, rather than one of contemplation or meaningless abstraction. The essence of the problem is that it is existentialist. In order to participate in life, man must make decisions, use his free will, and make choices. Exactly this sort of proactive participation has the potential to help unveil the secrets of existence and cultivate the right climate for a moral revolution and profound understanding among human beings show the continuous power struggle that exists between matters of religion and politics. Indeed, this is something that can be seen in people of all ages. This is the reason why this play is so popular all around the globe. Tughlaq is appealing to people all over the world and does not reflect the sentiment of a certain era. When religion is exploited in politics as a means of gaining support from the general population, it often results in a power struggle that is not morally sound. Furthermore, regardless of whether the game is being played at the time of Tughlaq or in our own, it is being played for the advantage of the few who have the power.

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