

SYMBOLISM IN KARNAD'S THREE HISTORICAL PLAYS -*TUGHLAQ, TALE DANDA AND THE DREAM OF TIPU SULTAN*

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Abstract

Girish Karnad is one of the greatest living dramatists in India. He is the foremost playwright of the contemporary Indian stage. He has represented India in foreign lands as an emissary of art and culture. His plays Tughluq, Tale Danda and The Dreams of Tipu Sultan consummate excellence of dramatic technique – Symbols. He knows how to use symbolist techniques in the play. He has employed numbers of symbols in this three historical plays. In Tughlaq he use symbols like Daulatabad symbolizes Hindu-Muslim unity, Aziz and Aazam symbolize opportunistic and unprincipled people, Prayer symbolizes the religious idealism of Tughlaq, Python symbolizes Tughlaq's utter barbarity and inhumanity, Disguise is a very effective symbol for hypocrisy, roll-playing and all imitations, Chess symbolizes a political game. In Tale Danda , Caste symbolizes the class, Marriage symbolizes union of two but in the play it symbolizes equality of castes and Sharanas symbolizes equality of sex, creed, and caste and in The Dreams of Tipu Sultan , Tiger symbolizes the projection of his determination to destroy the 'white demon from across the sea' and Four Dreams symbolise an indication which focuses on his downfall in the future.

Key words: Tiger, Daulatabad, dreams, Sutradhara, Shudra, Bismillah, Vysya, etc.

INTRODUCTION:

Girish Karnad is one of the greatest living dramatists in India. He is the foremost playwright of the contemporary Indian stage. He has given the Indian Theatre a richness that could probably be equated only with his talents as an actor director. His contribution goes beyond theatre. He has directed feature films, documentaries and television serials in Kannada, Hindi, and English, and has played leading role as an actor in Hindi, Kannada art films, commercial movies and television serials. He has represented India in foreign lands as an emissary of art and culture.

Karnad is a contemporary Indian playwright who has created true drama in his plays in the Priestleyan sense. He is a great and gifted dramatic craftsman. His plays have “the tone and expression of great drama”. His plays *Tughluq*, *Tale Danda* and *The Dreams of Tipu Sultan* consummate excellence of dramatic technique - symbols. There has been an unbridgeable hiatus between theatre and plays in Indian English drama. His plays have been successfully staged in India and abroad. He imparted real dramatic verve to the technique of drama in Indian English. Drama cannot remain in isolation from the stage. He deftly uses various theatrical devices for developing with plot and for creating the desired dramatic effect. He is well-versed in Indian stage techniques and he uses them for creating dramatic effect. Karnad's plays are conspicuous for the use of various dramatic conventions of Indian dramaturgy as Prologue, Epilogue, Chorus, Masks, the presence of a narrator in the form of Sutradhara, Bhagavata or vachaka; the seemingly unrelated comic episode, the mixing of human and non-human worlds. He does so in order to create dramatic effect and bring out the meaning of the play. He uses many symbols in this three historical plays.

SYMBOLS IN TUGHLAQ:

Symbolism is the technique Karnad employs to make his plays powerful on the stage. He knows how to use symbolist techniques in the play. He has employed numbers of symbols in this three historical plays. In *Tughlaq*, Aziz and Aazam symbolize opportunistic and unprincipled people who exploit the liberal ideals and welfare schemes of the democratic government to fulfil their own pocket. They are unscrupulous and they feel delighted in misappropriating huge public funds sanctioned by the government to relieve people's suffering. They feel pleasure when people die of hunger and starvation. Aziz who symbolises the class of opportunist exploiters says:

My dear fellow that's where our future is politic. It's a beautiful world wealth, success, position, power and yet it's full of brainless people, people with not an ideal in their head. When I think of all the tricks I uses half that intelligence here, one can get robes of power. And not have to pinch them either get them. It's a fantastic world. [Tughlaq: 50]

The *Chess* symbol has a unique significance as it runs through the play. In scene II Sultan is bent over a chess board, smiling with suppressed excitement. His step-mother comes in and Tughlaq happily tells her that he has just solved the most famous problem in chess. Even Al-Adli and Sarakhi said it was insoluble. And it's so simple. It implies that Tughlaq manipulates his political rivals and opponents as pawns on the chess board of politics according to his sweet will. He has deftly got rid of Sheikh Imam-ud-din, as well as of Ain-ul- Mulk too by making him as a friend. It is a popular game in India. It also symbolizes a political game in which the most intelligence and clever politician is checkmated by an ordinary washerman.

Prayer is another symbol he employs. At the micro level, prayer symbolizes the religious idealism of Tughlaq. At the macro level, it connects men's unconscious needs for divine protection and guidance in an hour of anguish. Muhammad Bin Tughlaq was actually a brilliant man, with great vision and surprising insight. In fact, many historical writers are of the view that he was far ahead of his time, intelligent person whose way of thinking is not understood by the average man and he is taken to be a foolish and impulsive king by the people of his kingdom, though Barani seems to suggest that Muhammad was not so much ahead of time. Muhammad was a deeply religious man and had learnt *Holy Quran* by heart. He used to quote verse of the *Quran* during his conversation. He was a practicing Muslim who never missed his prayer and fasted regularly. During his regime, it was made compulsory to pray five times a day. But the people said he was guilty of killing his father and his brother during prayer. Sultan didn't care for what the people said. His step mother believed that he was responsible for the death of his father and brother. She considered him as a murderer.

Muhammad Tughlaq used prayer as politics. Sultan told to his step mother that his dear friend Ain-ui-Mulk, the companion of his childhood, his fellow champion in chess, was at that very moment marching on Delhi with an army of thirty thousand. He didn't know. He revolted against him. He didn't ever have six- thousand soldiers to fight. He also knew Iman-ud-din a great saint, who revolted against Sultan Tughlaq at Kanpur. Sheikh Iman-ud-din was his greatest critic. He aroused the people of Kanpur with his fiery speeches. Sheikh told them that the Sultan was guilty of patricide and fratricide and that he was a transgressor of Islamic-tenet. Iman-ud-din is caught in the trap.

Sheikh is flattered by Sultan and his request to be the royal envoy to the Nawab of Avadh to plead for peace of Islam. Sultan says that he, like every other Muslim of India, has great respect for saint (Iman-ud-din). He will believe in what saints tell him. Therefore, Sultan requests Iman-ud-din to help him in establishing peace. Iman-ud-din feels delighted about being the Sultan's peace emissary. He looks gorgeous all dressed up in royal robes, a royal turban, even royal slipper, and sitting on royal elephant. Infact, he looks exactly like the Sultan. All of a sudden the charge is sounded and the battle begins. His face becomes twisted with fear but he shouts at the top of his voice asking to stop. He didn't stand a chance. Arrows pour into him and within minutes he looks a gory human porcupine. He doesn't know that Sultan was hiding behind some hill with the rest of the army. The Iman-ud-din plunged down from the elephant and over his corpse fled in confusion. The enemy was convinced that the Sultan was dead and they pursued them. It was the bloodiest massacre. The battle was won. Sheikh Iman-ud-din was murdered. Muhammad's prayer has also been used politically for the death of Sheikh Iman-ud-din. U.R.Anantha Murthy says that the use of prayer for murder is reminiscent of what Tughlaq himself did to kill his father.

Sultan is disillusioned and he realizes the futility of prayer and prohibits prayer in his kingdom. He says he had wanted every act in the kingdom to become a prayer, every prayer

to become a further step to knowledge, every step to lead as nearer to God. But our prayers too are ridden with disease, and must be exiled. There will be no more praying in his kingdom, Najib. Anyone caught praying will be severely punished. Karnad has repeatedly used the word “prayer” and its polluted form at the very source, and so it no longer has the efficacy of prayer.

Python symbolizes Tughlaq’s utter barbarity and inhumanity. It also symbolises increase fierceness, brutality and blood-thirstiness of the Sultan. It is symbolic of the complete degeneration of his personality. From a human being, he has degenerated into a wild beast, a huge snake.

Daulatabad is also a symbol in *Tughlaq*. Daulatabad is a Hindu city. It symbolizes Hindu-Muslim unity. The Hindus and the Muslims did not trust one another. The Muslims called the Hindus bloody infidels who deserved to be kicked. And the Hindu suspected the Muslims and could hardly believe that a Muslim was going to see them prosper and to exempt them from taxes without having his own benefit in view. Despite the best efforts of Muhammad to bring the Hindu and Muslim together, he fails. The fact of fourteenth century still holds ground. Gandhi, the idealist, made attempts to unite the Hindu and the Muslims. Nehru followed Gandhi’s footsteps as a Prime Minister. So he shifted his capital to Daulatabad Hindu city in hope of Hindu Muslim unity. History also proves that after two years of making capital in Daulatabad, he shifted back to Delhi. Sultan says there is only one place to go back to now. Delhi. Back to Delhi.

Disguise is also a symbol in the *Tughlaq*. The play begins with the disguise of Aziz, who comes at the end of play as Ghiyas-ud-din. Shaikh Imam-ud-din is killed while he goes in disguise. Disguise is a very effective symbol for hypocrisy, roll-playing and all imitations.

SYMBOLS IN TALE DANDA:

In *Tale Danda*, *caste* symbolizes the class. The caste system persists even today. It has done great harm to the unity and cohesion of society. Aparna Bhargava Dharwadkar writes, as quoted in collection plays:

With caste and communalism persisting as the dominant sources of present day political violence in India, the relevance of *Tale-Danda*, like that of *Tughlaq*, appears over determined and unexhaustible, and both plays have taken on cautionary and prophetic qualities of a similar kind. [Collection Plays: XIII]

In the Hindu society caste system was divided broadly into four categories known as Varnas viz Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vysya, and Shudra. The Shudras were divided into touchables and untouchables. Untouchables were treated in a most inhuman way. Basavanna fought against this practice of caste system and some rituals in the Hindu society and his life was dedicated to abolish the caste system. He established a spiritual institution in the Kalyan city called *Anubhava Mantapa*.

Brahmin belongs to upper caste in Kalyan and Shudras to lower caste. Even in the 21st century in some places of India still people take Brahmin as an upper caste. Damodara says:

The Rig Veda tells us that... Brahmin form the head, the Shudras form the feet [Tale Danda: 55].

Marriage is another symbol he employs in the play. Generally marriage symbolizes union of two but in the play it symbolizes equality of castes. In the play the marriage between Kalavati, the daughter of Madhuvarsa, the Brahmin and Sheelvanta, the son of Haralayya untouchable boy was to show that there was no difference of castes. All are equal and it hardly opposes an inter-caste marriage. It was to escape from the coil of caste. This marriage introduced the dramatic tension in the play and subsequently results in caste conflict.

Karnad employs *Sharanas* as a symbol in the play. The Sharana shed their caste and form one community. The Sharana movement is based on human consideration and non-violence. Hard work, honesty and integrity in personal and public life, and discipline are the main tenets of the Sharanas movement. Sharanas are rational in their approach to religion. They shun all rituals and superstition. They are deeply religious. They practice what they preach. They are worshippers of Lord Shiva. They do not discriminate between the sexes. They are concerned with the improvement of the quality of life, especially of the depressed classes of society. It symbolizes equality of sex, creed, and caste. Kakkayya says;

“There is no caste among Sharanas, neither creed nor men and woman all are different among Sharanas.” [Ibid: 38]

SYMBOLS IN THE DREAMS OF TIPU SULTAN:

In *The Dreams of Tipu Sultan*, Tiger symbolizes the projection of his determination to destroy the ‘white demon from across the sea’. Tipu’s love of the tiger bordered on an obsession. He made the tiger his personal symbol and on his succession to the throne in 1782 the official emblem of the state of Mysore. Throughout India and the rest of the world, he was known as ‘The Tiger of Mysore’ as tiger appeared on his weapons, banners and coin. Naturalistic tiger forms appeared on sword, gun, barrel, bayonets and cannon and hilts and so also on wooden carving or tiger mezzle. Tipu’s golden throne was surmounted by eight tiger heads and the whole was set as though the back of a tiger with a huge head with a dropped jaw revealing a gold tongue and crystal teeth. Live tiger guarded the entrance to Tipu’s palace, the Lal Mahal. Inside the palace there were more tigers, some in cages and some on chain. They guarded the narrow passage to Tipu’s bed chamber. The tiger was created for Tipu to use as his personal emblem and expression of his hatred of his enemy, the British of the East India Company. Tiger being a ferocious beast is an obvious choice of emblem in order to strike terror into the minds of enemies and subject alike. The tiger feature in Tipu

Sultan's personal seal and also a tiger mask made up of the words of Bismillah, used as decoration on his arms and banner.

Dreams are another symbol Karnad used in play *The Dreams of Tipu Sultan*. The *Dreams* of Tipu Sultan uses the concept to indicate his downfall through his dreams. The dreams can be interpreted as symbol or an indication which focuses on his downfall in the future. The first dream symbolized his respect for worship. Tipu's magnanimity in rebuilding the ruined temple, as seen in his dream truly speaks volumes about the man, the secular outlook he had toward the priest of Chennapatam or Sringeri, his generous gift to temple priests. This well hit at the Hindu-Muslims rift that was a covert by product of the British divides and rule policy. Kausar says:

"The plunder of the monastery caused much distress to Tipu as he believed in the oneness of God and brotherhood of man." [Kausar: 314]

The second dreams symbolized his clear perception and sharp vigilance as far as military strategies are concerned. Yet another facet of Tipu's personality may be noted in his dreams wherein a maimed Haider ask him why he let a retreating Cornwallis escape without killing him. Tipu's answer was amazement that English soldier fought for a dream a dream called England, not for a religion or a land that feeds them. Tipu wished to follow a similar dream, a similar belief in the destiny of a race, to touch this dream to his own countrymen.

The third dream symbolized his reference to the self inflicted lashes and the severe beatings which his father in a fit of unbridled anger and beastliness had inflicted on Tipu and his reporting to duty the next day goes to prove his extent of fearlessness of suffering and pain.

The last dreams symbolized unfulfilled desire or hallucination of a betrayed leader. It also suggests a new era. But this dream is the most tragic of all because what actually happened was a violent contrast. Karnad juxtaposes this blissful dream with the horror of Tipu's bloody end. It jolts us into realizing how this dreamer was misunderstood all along. The wailing in the palace and the tears of his people washed away the last dream of Tipu Sultan. These four dreams offer a whole new perspective to Tipu Sultan.

CONCLUSION:

Karnad has known how to make play more effective so he use symbolist techniques in the play. He has employed numbers of symbols in this three historical plays. In *Tughlaq*, Muhammad Bin Tughlaq tries his best to unit Hindu-Muslim unity so he changes capital from Delhi to Daulatabad – hindu city as a symbol of unity. In *Tale Danda*, Basavanna fought against the practice of caste system and some rituals in the Hindu society and his life was

dedicated to abolish the caste system. Even in the 21st century in some places of India still people take Brahmin as an upper caste. In *The Dreams of Tipu Sultan*, Tipu is known as ‘*The Tiger of Mysore*’ as tiger appeared on his weapons, banners and coin. Four dreams offer a whole new perspective to Tipu Sultan.

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