

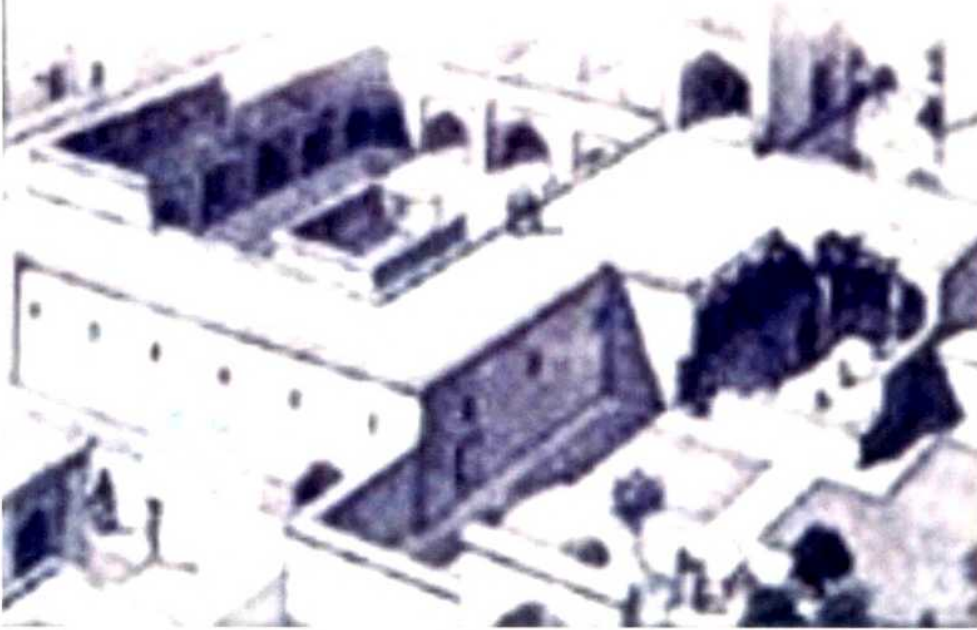
CHAPTER 3
Tughlaq: Themes and
Techniques



OXFORD

TUGHLAQ

GIRISH KARNAD



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Girish Karnad's second attempt, *Tughlaq* is certainly a historical play which deals in depth with the last five years of chequered reign of Muhammad-Bin-Tughlaq. This play was originally written in Kannada (1964) and translated into English (1976) by Alyque Padamsee. It was first staged at Bhulabhai Auditorium at Mumbai in August 1970 with a great success. *Tughlaq* brought him name and fame at once. As U. R. Anantha Murthy in his Introduction to *Tughlaq* stated:

It is not hard to account for the immediate response the play has received from Kannada as well as other audiences. One can enjoy the play, on the stage without paying much attention to its rich and complex symbolism and the subtle weaving of its different motifs. The play has an interesting story, an intricate plot, scope for spectacle and dramatic conventions like the comic pair, Aziz and Azam, to which theatre audiences responded readily. (vii)

The action of the play *Tughlaq* takes place first of all in Delhi in the year 1327, then on the road from Delhi to Daultabad, and lastly five years later, in and around the fort in Daultabad. Before he wrote *Tughlaq*, Girish Karnad started reading history widely. In an interview, Karnad says:

When I read about Mohammed-Bin-Tughlaq, I was fascinated. How marvelous this was, I thought. Tughlaq was a brilliant individual yet is regarded as one of the biggest failures. He tried to introduce policies that seemed today to be farsighted to the point of genius, but which earned him the nick name — “Mohammed the mad” then. He ended his career in bloodshed and chaos. (Mukherjee 35)

Karnad closely sticks to history in his portrayal of Muhammad-Bin-Tughlaq and his kingdom, though there is a certain deviation for the sake of artistic and dramatic purposes. In the very opening scene, he portrays Tughlaq as a generous and charitable king. Tughlaq is shown to accept the Kazi's judgment graciously in which he is held guilty of misappropriating the land of a Hindu, Vishnu Prasad. Tughlaq also sanctions him a grant of five hundred silver dinars and a post in Civil Services. In the crowd, the old man representing the orthodox class, criticizes vehemently Tughlaq's liberal and rational policies. He says, "It's an insult to Islam" (Karnad, *Tugh*. I.1). But the young man who represents the liberals says,

Now you pray five times a day because that is the law if you break it, you'll have the officers on your neck. Can you mention one earlier Sultan in whose time people read Koran in the street and like now?
(Karnad, *Tugh*. I.1)

Karnad projects the humanism and idealism of Muhammad-Bin-Tughlaq excellently in his play. In the opening scene, Tughlaq, who is portrayed as a man totally estranged from the society, is not understood in the proper perspective, because his ideas were far above the reach and comprehension of the common people. There was devoid of religious tolerance in the age of Tughlaq. The Hindus and Muslims looked at askance. They were unable to understand the broad minded religious tolerance of Tughlaq. His confidence building measures were not appreciated. All his attempts to bring about an understanding between the two varying communities brought distrust. The changes brought about by Tughlaq post a great threat to the time honored conventions. Tughlaq's frustration at the people's non-comprehension is convincing. Tughlaq is frustrated because his idealistic dreams could never reach their destination, because they lacked the firm support of the people. He is fully aware of his mental

predicament when he says: "But how can I explain tomorrow to those who haven't opened their eyes to the light of today?"(Karnad, *Tugh.* VI.39).

At bottom as a visionary, in Karnad's *Tughlaq*, Muhammad is at war with himself. He loves chess, rose garden, and enjoys the poems of Sadi, he reads much Greek and he is very much aware of "Greeks in me". He speaks of his vision of finding a new world, 'a world I had not found in Arabs or even in the Koran'. He builds a Utopia in his visions. His visions are like "the visions, which lead Zarathustra or the Buddha". He constantly talks about "tomorrow", "a new future". He worries about the welfare of his subjects even in his sleeps. He wants to exploit every single moment to read and understand the Pleiades and Ibn-ul-Mottazz to make his subjects happy and prosperous.

According to some historians Tughlaq was a great lover of learning, particularly Greek. This is also perceived in Karnad's *Tughlaq*. As a protagonist, he speaks about his inclination towards great philosophers. He was also well versed with the poetry of Rumi. His rational philosophy was not liked by the orthodox. There is no doubt Mohammad Bin Tughlaq shows learning and scholarship in his behavior. Barani, the chief advisor of Tughlaq rightly tells about the learning of Sultan: "You are a learned man. Your Majesty, you are known the world over for your knowledge of philosophy and poetry" (Karnad, *Tugh.* VIII.55).

The play can be seen as historical only in a very special sense, that is, it could be seen embodying the Muslim idea of history as biography. Like *Babernama* and *Akbarnama*, the serial enactment of the twenty years reign of Tughlaq could be seen as *Tughlaqnama*. To reinforce the sense of the mirror of history, a character has also been introduced by Karnad, a court historian called Barani; but perhaps not importantly, the play can be read as an enactment of "Projective Memory". The past

viewed as a projection of the presence. The tremendous popularity of *Tughlaq* and its reception as a classic in Kannada Literature is mainly due to the contemporary sensitivity. *Tughlaq*, in fact, enacts an Indian situation of an alien emperor, a dream of cities and empires, subjecting the culture of the people to colonial strain.

Barani's definition of history aims at two points, the first one is lasting results and the second point is that it is produced by learned men. Both these conditions are fulfilled in Karnad's *Tughlaq* which is a historical play as Shakespeare's *Richard II* and Christopher Marlowe's *Edward II*. Both these plays are mirror to the monarchy which was an institution in itself during the 16th century. Neither Richard II nor Edward II was the monarch of the Elizabethan Age; they had lived much earlier with their virtues and vices, strengths and weaknesses. Shakespeare and Marlowe made them acceptable to their own period. Karnad also, with his aesthetic and artistic adeptness has presented *Tughlaq* which has great interests for the populace and the political magnates of contemporary India. In *Tughlaq*, a historian may find lapse with regard to the accuracy of the facts of history. In fact, Karnad has made use of the Sultan's character to suit his theme that an idealist ruler can't remain idealist if he is ambitious of perpetrating his own power.

Karnad uses the Sultan only as a background to make the people understand, judge and interpret contemporary realities. His purpose is to show that in history, faces change but forces don't. Karnad's *Tughlaq* should be studied to find parallelism between the realities of the 14th century India, ruled by a Sultan and the 20th century democratic country governed by a Prime Minister and his colleagues in the Cabinet. Karnad's own statement which is quoted by U. R. Anantha Murthy in his introduction to *Tughlaq*:

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 the 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 short-comings within him, such as his impatience, his cruelty his feeling that he had the only correct answer. (viii)

Karnad mentions some facts of history and places them in the midst of imaginary incidents and situations to dramatize history in order to be of contemporaneous interest. During the reign of Mohammad-Bin-Tughlaq, the Hindus and the Muslims did not trust one another. The Muslims called the Hindus bloody infidels who deserved to be kicked, and the Hindus suspected the Muslims and could hardly believe that a Muslim ruler was going to see them prosper and to exempt them from taxes without having his own benefit in view. A Hindu says: "We didn't want an exemption! Look, when a Sultan kicks me in the teeth and says, 'Pay up, you Hindu dog' (Karnad, ^{Tugh}1.2).

This speech reflects the Hindus are molested and wrongly behaved by the Sultan while the Sultan declares about the equality in the country. People are not in his favor completely. In an age of religious fanaticism and hostility between Hindus and Muslims, his broad minded religious tolerance seems foolish to the Muslims and cunning to the Hindus who suspect his motives. The young Muslims reacted sharply and violently to this statement of the Hindus and called him, "an ungrateful wretch", the old Muslim warned the young Muslim becoming a friend of the Hindu and said,

“Beware of the Hindu who embraces you. Before you know what, he’ll turn Islam into another caste and call the Prophet an incarnation of his God...” (Karnad, I.2).

Despite the best efforts of Muhammad to bring the Hindus and Muslims together and unite them in one bond of brotherhood, he failed. The reason of Tughlaq’s failure is, as mentioned by Veena Noble Dass:

All his brilliant ideas were doomed to fail because they were implemented impulsively without weighing all the aspects involved. None of his schemes, however well intentioned, was understood or appreciated by his people and none of them succeeded. (92)

Tughlaq’s ideas of creating a spirit of unity between Hindu-Muslim of 14th century still holds good. Gandhi in twentieth century made attempts to unite the Hindus and the Muslims; Nehru followed Gandhi’s footsteps. As a Prime Minister, he wanted the two communities to be two bodies with one soul, but he failed. There were Hindu-Muslim riots in Post-Independence India and deep rooted suspicion, doubt and distrust diseased the blood in the veins of these communities.

Karnad makes Tughlaq an idealist, and establishes that in politics idealism does not pay. It is bound to fail, especially when the idealist is impulsive. Tughlaq is an intelligent man and works meticulously for the people. Karnad astutely depicts the predicament of Muhammad-Bin-Tughlaq, the 14th century Monarch of Delhi. The idealism of Tughlaq and the subsequent political disillusionment of the period are often compared to those of Nehru era. Karnad himself suggests this parallel in an interview quoted in his introduction to *Tughlaq*, “And I felt early in the sixties India had also come very far in the same direction- the twenty year period seemed to me very much a striking parallel”(Anantha Murthy,viii).

Jawaharlal Nehru indeed shared with Tughlaq an over ambitious dream to build a glorious India. Tughlaq forsook his rest and sleep to fulfill his dreams but his idealism and vision were probably ahead of times and his subjects could not fit into his scheme of things, resulting in widespread social, economic and political upheaval and chaos. Tughlaq paradoxically restored to violence and cruelty for the implementation of his idealistic plans meant for public welfare. Aparana Dharwadkar considers this later phase in Tughlaq's career as bearing a resemblance with the rule of Indira Gandhi in contrast to the earlier phase resembled the Nehru era:

The analogies with Mahatma Gandhi and Nehru thus foreground the more or less well-intentioned idealism of Tughlaq-Barani in the play's first half and suppress the cruelty, repressiveness and cunningness of Tughlaq-Aziz in the second. The analogies with Indira Gandhi (and her political successors) reverse this emphasis and bring the two halves of the play together...She is closest to Karnad's protagonists in her propensity for choosing evil out of a compulsion to act for the nation in the self destructiveness of her authoritarianism. (Dharwadkar 111, 112)

The play demands a reading at two levels - one historical and the other psychological/personal. However, it can be argued that the play is not only about reading recent Indian history in the light of the period of Tughlaq, but also about the nature of subjectivity. It is to be noted that audiences/readers are led repeatedly into the consciousness of Tughlaq and the mind of Tughlaq has an overpowering presence in the play. The two approaches intersect and lead to arguably the most fruitful reading, if a critic attempts to understand subjectivity in the specific context of its formative historical situation.

The political decisions and innovative ideas of Tughlaq are way ahead of his times. His Amirs and subjects fail to follow him and become apprehensive about his motives. He pleads with them to co-operate.

I have hopes of building a new future for India and I need your support for that. If you don't understand me, ask me to explain myself and I'll do it. If you don't understand my explanations, bear with me in patience until I can show you the results. But please don't let me down, I beg you. (Karnad, *Tugh.* VI.40)

Tughlaq tries to bring about religious equality but fanatics, like Imam-ud-Din, oppose him. The decision to move the capital from Delhi to Daultabad is a step in the same direction but the impracticability of the decision puts off the people and they vehemently oppose the Sultan. Faced with opposition from his own subjects, Tughlaq declares, "I was too soft, I can see that now. They'll only understand the whip". (VI.44). He becomes ruthless after this experience and orders everyone to move to Daultabad. He killed all opponents of his project mercilessly. But he is soon hound by a profound sense of guilt, and turns to God:

God! God, in Heaven, please help me. Please don't let go of my hand...I started in your path, Lord, why am I wandering naked in this desert now? (Karnad, *Tugh.* X.67).

His words reveal his utter disillusionment and spiritual agony. He started on the path of benevolence but his was, being tragically ahead of his times, made him a tyrant against his will. Similarly, his vision of starting copper currency also ends in a fiasco. His over idealism brings about his downfall and his own people call him a mad man and tyrant.



Tughlaq with Barani

Source: http://sunday-guardian.com/administrator/iupload/tuglaq260_1351948759.jpg

The playwright thus depicts Tughlaq as a divided subject who has acted cruelly, but is not happy with the acts. He is a historical figure, but he is a symbol of the recent Indian leadership. Indeed, the most important issue is how subjectivity and history crisscross. Subjectivity can only be understood by grounding it in history. The relationship between subjective consciousness and history is complex and dialectical. Historical circumstances in which Tughlaq's thinking is embedded should be viewed. His subjective consciousness and the circumstances of history are inextricably interconnected. Perhaps, it is the problematic relation between the two, that what he thinks and where he finds himself not matching. And probably this is the genesis of his tragedy. The issue that the play brings up is that subjectivity is as much a matter of consciousness as the historicity of consciousness.

Critics have noted that characters like Aziz, Barani, Najib and Sheik Imam-ud-din are just various facets of Tughlaq's persona. U. R. Ananthamurthy in his Introduction to *Tughlaq* emphasizes this: "All the other characters are dramatized aspects of his complex personality" (11). Sheikh's religious nature, Najib's political attitude and Barni's spiritual thoughts and sense of history collectively coin Tughlaq's personality. These elements work as formative factors in the development of this variegated persona.

Nevertheless, to be fair to Karnad's characterization, each of the character has an independent existence and is not merely an aspect of Tughlaq. Sheikh Imam-ud-din is an orthodox, theo- logician and fanatic who tries to undermine Tughlaq's vision of secularism and communal harmony. Tughlaq invites him to address a meeting and offers some observations on his administration, but forbids his subjects to attend the meeting. The meeting thus becomes only a trap to capture Imam-ud-Din. The Sheikh

resembles the Sultan and taking advantage of this fact, he is sent as a peace emissary to Ain-ul-Mulk who, in turn, kills the Sheikh, mistaking him to be the Sultan himself. Sheikh thus, appears to be the fanatic self of Tughlaq and he is killed, so that Tughlaq could be a generous, secular politician. One can see shades of Kautilya and Niccolo Machiavelli in Tughlaq, politically cunning. Without explicitly acknowledging it, Karnad has brought a politician and political philosopher of the golden period of ancient India into his exploration of the history of medieval India. Kautilya and Tughlaq merge, creating a kind of fictional subjectivity which is nevertheless grounded in history.

Aziz is another character whose story runs parallel to that of Tughlaq. He is the one who has a realistic grasp of the political situation of the times. He understands the motives and flaws of Tughlaq's plans and subverts each of the Sultan's well-intentioned moves for his own selfish ends. He is as ahead of his times as Tughlaq is, but he is far more cunning and far-sighted than the Sultan. He takes the guise of a Brahmin to subvert Tughlaq's secularism, becomes a civil servant to loot people on their way to Daultabad, mints counterfeit coins when Tughlaq announces the new currency and masquerades as the Khalifa, who is supported to restore the freedom of prayer in the kingdom. Tughlaq, who treats other people as pawns and manipulates them to his own advantage, himself, becomes a pawn in the game arranged by Aziz.

Similarly, Najib and Barani are in constant conflict, depicting the internal turmoil that Tughlaq is going through. Najib's is the voice of the shrewd politician in *Tughlaq* who may flout values, like morality and truth, if the safety and welfare of the monarch or his subjects are at stake. Barani, on the other hand, is the upholder of values such as peace, love and religion. Tughlaq becomes ruthless after Najib is killed and is hovering on the verge of madness and Barani leaves his court. Thus, the characters of

Najib and Barani are the extension of Tughlaq's personality. Dharwadkar rightly comments, "Tughlaq's madness and tyranny –the only qualities his subjects attribute to him-are thus forms of powerlessness posing as power" (111).

Tughlaq who wanted to change the course of history, is himself distorted by the course of events. From a sensible logician full of the energy and passion for reform, he goes on to become a mad tyrant, who is frustrated by the turn of the events and brings out his frustrations on his subjects. Tughlaq is driven by a desire to improve, he is much cunning to put his ideas into practice; he spells out to guard an epiphany that he had experienced when he was young. But his enthusiasm and vision are shattered when things do not quick fall into place and he is forced to admit that his subjects are not yet ready for the leap that he wants them to make. He refuses to admit defeat, and brings extreme cruelty into his mission, whipping, lashing and killing the subjects who lag behind.

But this, too, does not take his mission very far. He has to admit defeat and retrace his steps back to return from where he had started. But his defeat does not come alone; it brings utter disillusionment and a kind of madness which causes him to suffer alone and renounce all company. "All I need now is myself and my madness-madness to prance in a field eaten bare by the scarecrow violence" (Karnad, ^{Tug.} XIII.85). Like Nietzsche, Tughlaq too was not the one to submit to any limits and he too goes mad when the world fails to follow his vision. He also has some qualities of Nietzsche's Superman who wishes to overcome the limitations of the human beings and to be free from ideas received through generations. He might have recreated himself without being blocked by any metaphysics like Nietzsche.

Here, one finds Tughlaq's another intersection between the subjective consciousness and history, where the nature of subjectivity can be explored in terms of the subject's

cunningness, to use history as a resource. Karnad has portrayed Tughlaq as a bundle of contradictions. Karnad has made a clever use of Tughlaq paradoxes for dramatic success. He has brought out the dramatic beauty of the play by using paradoxes of Tughlaq to the maximum extent possible. Karnad beautifully depicts the psychological state of Tughlaq and also reveals Tughlaq's determination and anguish intelligently. M. K. Naik feels, "Tughlaq is basically concerned with the tragedy of the limits of human power in a predominantly psychological context" (*Studies in Indian Literature* 556).

Tughlaq, being an existentialist character, believes that man is the creator of his own destiny and has the power to turn the face of the world. If a man has a strong will power and firm determination, he can do anything. But man cannot avoid the reality of life. According to Sartre, there are a lot of things which control man's freedom. In his book '*Being and Nothingness*', he presents five facilities: (i) place of human and man, (ii) his past, (iii) circumstances, (iv) friends and (v) death. Man lives within the limits of these five facilities which create a great obstacle on the road of human freedom. But according to Sartre, these facilities are not obstacles but within these facilities freedom reflects character and behaviour. Therefore, Tughlaq, within such facility proves his existence as a ruler of his countryman. His personality will be a mile stone for future kings, "The responsibility of true for itself extends to the entire world as a people world" (Sartre 556).

Tughlaq takes action according to his own choice and freedom. Therefore, he is held responsible for the results of his action. According to Sartre, "Man being condemned to be free, carries the weight of the whole world on his shoulders, he is responsible for the world and for himself as way of being" (Sartre 553). In this way, Tughlaq exists as a being for which he is held responsible. Man's existence is established due to his

essence. It is none but man and his will power who decides essence for himself. Tughlaq chooses some ideals for himself and makes them as the part of his existence. In order to fulfill his ideals, he does something right and something wrong. He also adopts a dual character and betrayal motif in order to retain his existence. Sheikh-Imam-ud-din, a great reverent, seems a big hurdle in the way of Tughlaq, because he says that the Sultan is guilty of killing his father and brother at prayer time. Tughlaq feels that he is dissuading his country man from the path assigned by him. Sheikh-Imam-ud-Din thinks that he (Tughlaq) has neglected the rules of Koran, so there is a great conflict between Imam-ud-din and Tughlaq. Ain-ul-Mulk was once his (Tughlaq's) close friend and has turned as the greatest enemy. But Sheikh does not sympathize with him and accuses him to great scores of transgressions. The Sheikh believes that the Koran is the only guide and that "If one fails to understand that the Koran says one must ask the Sayyids and the Ulema." (Karnad, *Tugh.* III.20)

But Tughlaq opposes him and tries to prove that religion cannot help to find the final solution. Tughlaq asserts his allegiance to the Koran as the Word of God: "I have never denied the word of God, Sheikh Shahib, because it's my bread and drink." (Karnad, *Tugh.* III. 20)

Tughlaq loves his ideals more than anything which has been made the basis of his existence. He also has a great adherence to his ideals. He does not wish to sleep as it will waste his valuable time. He passes several sleepless nights. He replies his stepmother as the reason of his uneasy and sleepless nights. Even he does not marry only for the sake of his dreams. He thinks that marriage may prove a great hurdle in his way of progress. He has made his ideals the essence of his existence and essence is the shadow of man. He wants to build a Utopian world on the earth. His plan of changing his capital and the introduction of copper currency are sound and

reasonable, but it could not convince Tughlaq and his countryman and he says: "They are only cattle yet, but I shall make men."(Karnad, *Tugh.* III.21)

Tughlaq is a king, full of power, learning and intelligence. When he finds that Ain-ul-Mulk and Shiekh are big hurdles in achieving his goal, he thinks if they are alive, his idealistic dreams will never be fulfilled. He makes Sheikh assure of his honesty. He betrays him in his way: "You can't deny that this war will mean a slaughter of Muslims at the hands of fellow Muslims. Isn't that enough for the great Sheikh Imam-ud-din?"(Karnad, *Tugh.* III.23). By using a diabolically clever strategy, he gets rid of both his enemies – Sheikh Imam-ud-din and Ain-ul-Mulk at one stroke.

When he finds that countryman do not agree with him, he turns from idealist into cruel king. The turning point in Tughlaq's life is crucial and existential, which hurls him down the abyss of existential alienation. The treachery of Shihab-ud-Din, whom Tughlaq genuinely liked and trusted, turns Tughlaq against the world. His anguish at not being understood by his people, at being betrayed by those who he loved and trusted, is revealed in his tortured question to Barani, faithful servant of Tughlaq. This revelation of an intense awareness of the futility and absurdity of human existence, similar to that of Macbeth who sees human life as, "A tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury signifying but nothing"(Shakespeare V.V Line26-28).

Tughlaq's tyranny is an act of his frustration and alienation that turns it as a means of teaching his lesson to his people for which he adopts cruelty and violence to realize his end. Murder of Shihab-ud-Din by Tughlaq is the result of his existential anguish. Tughlaq's reason for great anguish turns into the conspiracy of Sultan's murder, who was close and his faithful friends. His treachery comes to him as a shock. Shihab-ud-din's protest at the time when he was being killed is remarkable: "Where will you

hide my corpse? How will you gag my voice? Kill me-but you won't stop this-this will go on." (Karnad, *Tugh.* VI.43)

His end of life does not mean that all voices against Tughlaq will be stopped. Though he has many opponents, yet he has indulged himself into cleaning his way by murdering in anguish. His extreme cruelty appears and he frightens his subjects with his dance of death.

Tughlaq's kingdom has become 'the kitchen of murders'. As a result, his countrymen are frightened and unhappy with madness and absurdity of his ruler. His step mother takes Najib to be the backbone of all unpleasant happenings in kingdom. She wishes peace for sultan. She murders Najib. But killing of Najib does not bring the end of all troubles, which always inspired Tughlaq to act conspiracy of betrayal and murder. Tughlaq realizes the vast gulf between the aspiration and fulfillment, ideals and reality. Karnad has unique caliber to create beauty out of evil. Most of his plays end unhappily and violence, bloodshed, murder, impersonation, treachery, bribery and adultery seem to have an upper hand in his plays. In his play *Tughlaq* also, evil is manifested through violence, bloodshed, murder, impersonation and treachery. According to Karnad, Sultan Muhammad-Bin-Tughlaq of the 14th century was "Certainly the most brilliant individual ever to ascend the throne of Delhi and also one of the biggest failures" (Karnad, *TP*, 7). Initially Tughlaq was a man imbued with lofty idealism. Due to the willful implementation of his policies, though far-sighted they were, his career ended in bloodshed and chaos Tughlaq is not only dried up of human emotions, he is emptied of spiritual sentiments also. His ambition for power and money vitiates his noble objectives and afflicts the prayer and the body politics. Prayer is used as a means to an end, but it is not an end itself. Only the powerful, prosperous and the rulers can pray in peace.

The atmosphere is full of atrocities, cruelty, killing, sobs and sighs, wailing and tears. It becomes highly impossible for the people even to pray. The citizens gather outside the fort of Daultabad and vent their anger and displeasure as follows:

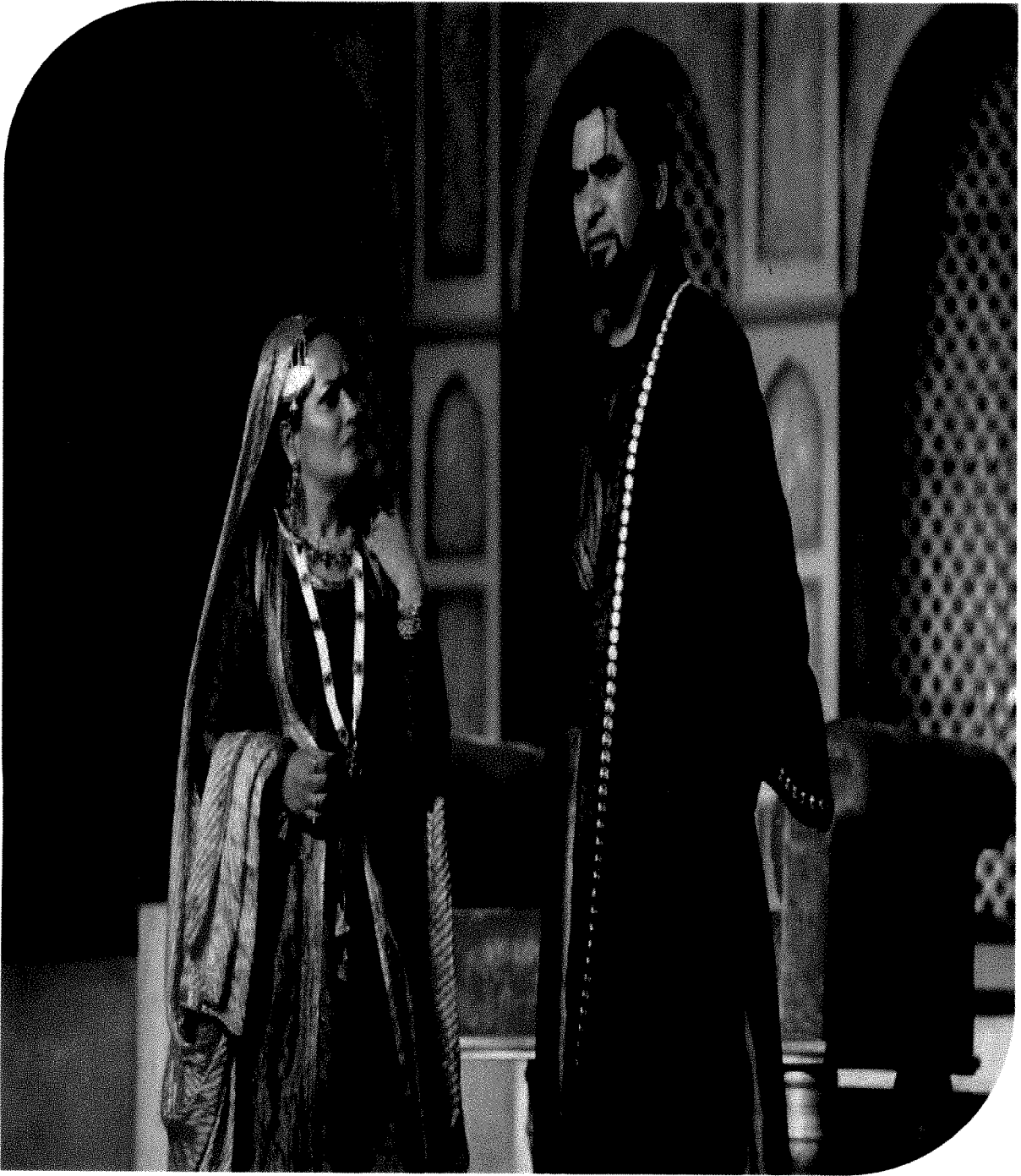
FIRST MAN. Prayer! Prayer! Who wants prayer now?

SECOND MAN. Ask them to give us some food.

FIRST MAN. There is no food. Food is only in the palace. It's prayers for us."(Karnad, *Tugh*. XI.70)

Tughlaq is a usurper and he ascends the throne after getting his father and brother murdered during prayer time and has blood on his hand at such a young age. In this way prayer, which is to be left to the discretion of the individual, is debased since it is dragged into the domain of power politics. Prayer is meant to pure the mind, but here it has become the dirty political game of Mohammad Tughlaq. Religion defies politics because it preaches morals and expects morality from the people; whereas, politics thrives on craftiness, insidiousness, intrigue and deceit. Tughlaq is not an exception. Even Hamlet, the prince of Denmark, who had every reason to kill his uncle for the murder of his father and the incestuous marriage with his mother, did not kill his uncle at the prayer time. He did not pollute prayer. But Tughlaq exploits prayer by using it as a means for political ends. At the first he decrees religious punishment for failure to pray five times a day. Later he bans prayer itself and punishes those who pray. Again after sometime, he announces that, "Henceforth every Muslim will pray five times a day as enjoined by the Holy Koran and declare himself a faithful slave of the Lord." (Karnad, *Tugh*. X. 69)

It has been aptly said by Sethumadhava Rao, "that prayer, which is most dear to Tughlaq is vitiated by him as well as his enemies, is symbolic of the fact that his life



Tughlaq with his step mother

Source:

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is corrupted at its very source”(103). Prayer which is deeply allied to religion is used for murder in the play. Prayer halls are being polluted with the discussion on politics. Shihab-ud-din and the Amirs also conspire to murder the Sultan at prayer time, but Tughlaq foils the plot with the help of his Hindu guards and stabs, the Sheikh who is known throughout India for his courage and integrity with such ferocity that his soldiers get terrified. But coolly and publically, he announces that Shihab-ud-din died a martyr, defending Tughlaq against the nobles who tried to kill him at prayer time. He even assures that Sheikh will be given a grand funeral.

The Sultan does not spare even his sister's son, Gurusahab. He orders the flaying of Gurusahab, the leader of rebellion, alive. Then mercilessly his flesh is cooked and sent to his wife and children. Still dissatisfied, he has his skin stuffed with straw and exhibits it in the important cities of his kingdom. This ghastly incident reminds us of Atreu's action in the story of Agamemnon. He is every inch a bloodthirsty murderer. His other fanatic actions include the introduction of Copper currency and imposition of high taxes at the time drought.

He commits the greatest blunder of shifting his capital to Daultabad and insisting in the people to vacate Delhi immediately. The journey to Daultabad becomes a nightmare; his subjects suffer from starvation, disease and death; even after a span of five years, Tughlaq's subjects suffer from a life of loneliness, punishment and cathartic violence. Truly speaking, Delhi is no more secure. That's why Sultan works to shift his capital to Daultabad, a safer place. But Tughlaq speaks lie to his subject and attributes it to the noble cause of Hindu Muslim unity.

The Sultan is a liar and hypocrite. Many people die and those who survive die while returning to Delhi. Uncountable people die and roads are lined with skeletons. Man, historians and thinkers feel that it was Sultan's unwise (mad) decision. It seems that

he fails to understand the emotional attachment of the people of Delhi to their soil, and obviously it is the alienation of Tughlaq from his people. In the end, Tughlaq is left solely to contemplate in dismay; famine; rebellion and economic chaos collapse his empire. Tughlaq was clever, devout but cruel and rigid and at the same time, he enjoyed the moment when he saw no lights in the empty city of Delhi, with sadistic pleasure.

All these instances are the acts of cruelty and tyranny rising out of his existential anguish. He gives up the method of rational explanation and persuasion. Instead, he is determined to rule his people with an iron hand. He himself admits the fact that his people need strong administration.

Tughlaq is a formidable leader who would not let anything of anybody come in his way of the pursuit of power. His answer to resistance is his sword. Tughlaq perishes everyone who happens to be a stumbling block on his way. Sheikh Imam-ud-Din is an arch-enemy and a great critic of Tughlaq. He knows that the very existence of the Imam is harmful to him. He arranges a meeting in front of Big Mosque in which the Sheikh is to speak.

At the same time, by sending his courtiers, he exercises that people stay away at the points of bayonets. Then the Sheikh getting depressed does not wish to speak to the bootlickers of Tughlaq. Then, he tactfully sends Sheikh-Imam-ud-din to pacify Ain-un-Mulk who has revolted against him. Utter betrayal is involved in trapping Imam-ud-Din and getting him killed. After the death of Imam-ud-din, he orders mourning in the state.

This dual mouth attitude of the Mohammad very much resembles the two faces of the politicians of today. The craftiness of Tughlaq has a parallel in the arch-trickery and cunningness adopted by those people who are in power, who long to wipe out of the

opposition, and also that of the opposition to throw out the rulers. Even the modern rulers of the present era, are identical in all respects with the monarch of the 14th century India. In India, since independence, the longing to rule by all means has been spreading as it was during the reign of Tughlaq.

The cruelties of Sultan reach its height when he comes to know of his step mother's killing of the Najib, he mercilessly orders that she should be stoned to death. When his step mother taunts him for killing his father, brother and Sheikh, Tughlaq claims that he has killed them for an ideal, perhaps the ideal of building a Utopian empire, which he considers to be his life's mission. He himself says, "I killed them –yes-but killed them for an ideal." (Karnad, *Tugh.* X.65) And then he asserts that those deaths were not futile, "They gave me what I wanted-power, strength to shape my thoughts, strength to act, strength to recognize myself." (Karnad, *Tugh.* X.66)

For Tughlaq, violence is no longer under his control. Once he has tasted the exhilarating power of killing, it has become a compulsion for him to act violently. He begins to believe that the most powerful argument laid not in words but in the sword, in cruelty, violence and murder. He has therefore, to adopt a tyrannical way of life as a means to an end, a vehicle to fulfill his mission. To have the reigns of power firmly in his hands all formidable foes are silenced one by one. Geeta Kumar aptly says that

A discriminating study of power politics in Tughlaq would make it amply clear that to survive in the game of snakes and ladders, the merely competent like Shihab-ud-din, the upright saint like Sheikh Imam-ud-din and later the slightly independent step mother have to be weeded out ruthlessly.(93)

Christine Gomez is of the view that, "though he is in the whirlpool of violence and blood-shed, he is able to maintain his objectivity and is not sucked into the

vortex”(149). It is very difficult to accept this assessment of Gomez. In fact, Tughlaq ultimately becomes every inch a bloodthirsty murderer and is drawn into the whirlpool of violence.

The central plot is filled with violence and blood-shed and the sub plot is impregnated with impersonation, bribery and treachery. Aziz a comic figure, modeled on Shakespeare’s Falstaff, goes on impersonating one person after another. At first, Aziz impersonates Vishnu Prasad, the Brahmin and takes advantage of the royal law that all are equal before law and that the people can file a suit against the Sultan and gets five hundred silver dinars and a job in the civil services.

When the people of Delhi move to the new capital Daultabad, he takes bribe from them mercilessly and in his Brahmin disguise exhorts money from the sick and dying travelers. A poor woman’s child dies because she does not have money. Since he is an officer, he gives small concessions to the people. When the king attempts to revive the imperial economy by introducing Copper currency, which has the same token value as that of the silver dinars, Aziz becomes a counterfeiter.

In despair, as a last attempt, the king tries to bring peace and legitimacy to his kingdom and invites Ghizas-ud-din Abbasid, a descendent of Baghdad Khalifas, to visit and sanctify his new capital. But Aziz, now a highway robber kills Ghizas-ud-din and stands in front of the king disguised as Ghizas-ud-din. The Sultan identifies his masquerade but Aziz pleads for mercy.

Since your majesty came to the throne, I have been your most devout servant. I have studied every order, followed every instruction, considered every measure of Your Majesty’s with the greatest attention. I insist I am Your Majesty’s true disciple. (Karnad^{Tugh,}XIII.80)

Instead of punishing Aziz, the Sultan offers him a high position in the army. Emboldened by the royal patronage, Aziz goes to the extent of killing his bosom friend Azam and escapes from the law. Life is degraded in all possible angles. Tughlaq, being a master intriguer is never at peace with himself. He is a betrayer for whom life brings only restlessness and mental agony. That he has no concerns for human relations, is quite clear from the fact that the near and dear ones fall a prey to his evil designs. He is unable to tolerate any criticism and feels confident that he can never go wrong. Murders don't taunt him and he easily jokes about killing without any prick of conscience.

The people who had suffered hunger, starvation, and other indignities, for long were rebellious and Tughlaq inflicted very harsh punishments upon them. There were numerous rebellious all over Tughlaq's realm. K.A. Nizama, a modern historian says,

The Sultan began to punish both the guilty and the innocent on mere suspicion in the hope that blood-shed on a large scale would terrorize his officers and make them obedient; on the other hand, his officers, knowing his military weakness, preferred rebellion to punishment without trial. (qtd. in Kumar *547-548* 64)

Karnad follows history as regards many rebellions- revolt of Bahuddin Gurshap, revolt of Bahram Aiba, Kamalpur insurrection revolt of Shewan etc. It was not possible for Karnad to deal with all these rebellions from the view point of maintaining artistic lucidity and unity of impression. He deals in detail with the rebellion of Ain-UI-Mulk, the Governor of Awadh and Zafrabad, who was transferred to Deccan. The Sultan crushed the rebellion. In order to stress the inhumanity of Tughlaq, Karnad greatly alters the historical facts of Ain-UI-Mulk's rebellion. He sends Sheikh Imam-Ud-din as his official ambassador. The Sheikh, who resembles

the Sultan, puts on the royal robes and marches towards Ain-ul-Mulk's army. The Sheikh is deceitfully killed by the machination of Tughlaq and so he gets rid of his enemy who provoked rebellion against him in Kanpur. This episode is a deviation from history.

Indeed, history says, Ain-Ul-Mulk was defeated and after a few days of humiliation he was released and was appointed the Superintendent of a royal garden. But here in the play *Tughlaq* Ain-Ul-Mulk's governorship is restored to him the ghastly murder of Shihab-Ud-Din is also a deviation from history. In an atmosphere of continuous distrust and rebellion, Tughlaq became suspicious and malicious. He ruthlessly punished people around him even on the slightest suspicion.

The scene in *Tughlaq* reminds us of Macbeth who kills King Duncan, Banquo and others who stand in the way of his establishing himself as the King of Scotland in Shakespeare's play *Macbeth*. The situation in the kingdom is also far from rosy as, "the roads are lined with skeletons. A man starved to death in front of his eyes. In Doab, people are eating barks of the trees. Yes, and women have to make to do with the skins of the dead horses" (Karnad, ^{Tugh}XI.70). Seeing all this, the Sultan feels that there is no point in hanging on there and so he decides to quit forgetting all the wealth, courts and luxury. However, later on towards the end, he admits his mistake and the wisest fool in the empire that he has become, he cries for God's help.

Thus, Karnad has projected a historical character, namely Muhammad-Bin- Tughlaq, who though gifted with many good qualities, slides due to certain whimsical infirmities, into unrelieved wickedness. It seems that, in *Tughlaq* evil dominates in the form of violence murder, treachery and impersonation. The greatest irony is that fate and situation mixed together to make the mighty and powerful Sultan fall at the feet of a washer-man (Dhobi) masquerading as Ghizas-ud-din Abba Sid. The greatest

politician of the day does not fall at the feet of a religious man not knowing that the dust of the feet that he is taking on his head is a very common man's dust. Dreams of the monarch are shattered, his politics fails, the common man becomes more powerful than the Sultan and politically the royalty has to bow down to him to save himself.

The Sultan's awareness that life is ephemeral and the stunning task before him make him to dedicate his life for the well being of his subjects. A king is no king, Muhammad claims if he is not one with his subjects. The greater the struggle he undergoes to define himself as a unique king, the more he becomes diverse and fragmented. The drought in Doab causing cracks in the soil is symbolic of fragmented king and his fractured kingdom.

Karnad uses symbolism and allegory to focus the contemporary history and reality. The beginning of prayer and its rise and fall symbolize the fact that life is corrupted at the very source. Politics deprives the man from prayer, which alone can save. One can observe that the idealism of a ruler can fail and ruin him. Secularism, equality and unity in a country like India are the concepts that are very much alien and ahead of the times. But it is pathetic that the Indians are led away not only by self serving politicians, but by the saints and religious heads also who meddle with politics which is a game of sea-saw. Here, the message is clear from Karnad's side that he never wants to allow the interruption of religion in politics.

The fictional Muhammad leaves impression in reader's minds not one but many political figures of the colonial and post colonial India. At the same time, he represents Gandhi who experimented with truth, Nehru who aimed at cultural modernity and Indira who chose self destructive authoritarianism for their respective concept of national well being. His hopes of building a new future for India reminded the readers of the anxiety of Nehru to give the garb of modernity. Indira Gandhi's



Tughlaq playing Chess

Source: http://i.dailymail.co.uk/i/pix/2012/10/25/article-2223194-15AFACDE000005DC-633_468x303.jpg

mercurial, manipulative and brilliant leadership quality is reflected in the Sultan. Her yearning to modernized and disciplined India and her serious reformative urges made her the most controversial political figure of her time. By evoking Gandhi, Nehru and Indira Karnad's protagonist tends extemporary relevance to the multiple aspects of his personality.

Moreover, the dual role played by Mohammad convincingly resembles the politicians of the contemporary world. The craftiness of Sultan is similar to the trickery and meanness adopted by those in power to demolish the opponents, and also that of the opponent to destroy the rulers. In India after independence, especially in the eighties, the longing to rule by all means and the urge of the aspirants to put an end to the incumbent rulers was and is as true as it was during the reign of Tughlaq. In *Tughlaq*, the administrators behaved indifferently and caused a lot of inconvenience to the subjects by demanding bribes, from them. Even in the present times, millions of rupees are spent to check the natural calamities and for the improvement of the poor and the depressed, but conditions remain the same as most of the money is swindled by the politicians and administrators. The state of affairs of today's India is in no way different from that of the conditions that prevail during the reign of Tughlaq.

Tughlaq is more than a political allegory. Allegories are written to give a moral lesson to the people. It is an art of saying one thing in the guise of another. Chaucer's *Nun's Priest's Tale*, Langland's *Piers the Plowman*, Spenser's *Fairy Queen*, Addison's *Vision of Mirza*, Bunyan's *Pilgrims Progress* and also Dryden's *Absalom and Achitophel* are some of the important allegories in English. Their allegories satirize the social and political evils of the contemporary society.

Tughlaq has very great puzzling qualities which can not be reduced to the minimum. These qualities come from the ambiguities of the character of Tughlaq who is the

dominating personality of the play. All other characters exist themselves but are the dramatized aspects of Tughlaq's personality. The critics have successfully analyzed this play and have paid special attention to the symbolism of the game of chess, the theme of disguise and the ironic success of Aziz who's interesting and amazing story runs parallel to the story of Tughlaq. The dualism of the man and hero in *Tughlaq* is in fact, of the source of the entire tragedy.

No critical examination of the play is exhaustive. Much more and more can be added to it always because the play has an elusive and haunting quality drawn from the character of Tughlaq, who has been portrayed psychologically reaching the depths of the working of the mind. The character of Tughlaq is related to philosophical questions on the nature of man and the destiny of a whole kingdom which is controlled and swayed by a dreamer and a visionary like Tughlaq.

The theme of the play is historical but Karnad's treatment of the theme is in no way historical. The leitmotiv of the play is prayer. The father of Tughlaq was murdered at the prayer time. The Muslim courtiers and chief alongwith Sheikh Shamsuddin and Shihab-ud-din conspire to murder the king at the time of prayer, which is the dearest to Tughlaq, is corrupted by him as well as his enemies. It symbolizes the fact that his life is corrupted at very source. The whole episode is full of irony. It involves Shihab-ud-din who is an idealist and who has great trust in and appreciation of Tughlaq's rule but he is himself betrayed by his adopted brother, Ratan Singh, who is the master mind behind the plan of murder of the King. The intrigue enhances the theatrical interest of play. Along with this it is a dramatized projection of Tughlaq's tortured and divided self. Thus, the external action enacts the inner drama of the life of Tughlaq. Both Tughlaq and his enemies appear to be idealists, but in the pursuit of their ideal they continue doing the opposite. The whole play is an exhibition of

paradoxes. Karnad juxtaposes the ideal and the real, the longing for divinity and the clever and skilled intrigue, prayer and murder and benevolence and atrocities. The king remains to be what he is in spite of his self knowledge. He is aware of the irony of his life when Aziz kills Ghizas-ud-din and comes to the Sultan as a messenger of peace to purify the corrupt country and to revive the prayer which has been banned by him for the last many years. The irony is full of tragic notes. In the end, Tughlaq is as much in chaos and confusion as is his kingdom. U. R. Anantha Murthy, in his introduction to Girish Karnad's play *Tughlaq*, points out:

The external action throughout enacts the inner drama of Tughlaq and his enemies initially appear to be idealists; yet in the pursuit of the ideal, they perpetrate its opposite. The whole play is structured on these opposites: The ideal and the real; the divine aspiration and the deft intrigue. (Karnad 10)

The conflict with the opposites begins with the very first scene. The old felt that Sultan Muhammad-Bin- Tughlaq was leading the country downward. The Sultan was not working according to the tenets of Islam. But the young thought that the country was in safe hands. The Sultan was near to the people. He was not afraid to be humane. Under the cloud of suspicion and doubt between the Hindus and the Muslims, Tughlaq wanted justice and brotherhood in his country. He wishes to work in his kingdom without any consideration of might or weakness, religion or creed. He longed for equality, progress and peace and more purposeful life. But what he found was that all his idealism was caught in a farce. The act of Aziz in disguise of Vishnu Prasad, and the Sultan's decision in his case provoked the orthodox Muslims. The old Muslims called this action a folly and the Hindus smelt a trap in it. Apparently justice was done to a Hindu but in reality it was a Muslim who got it. The irony was that

neither Muhammad nor Kazi-I Mumalik knew of it. Only Azam, the common pick pocket and thief could know of it. The court's order must have caused a surprise and an under-current of humor- to the audience after the Aziz's admittance that he put on the robes of a Hindu to test the justice of Sultan. From then onwards Aziz as a Brahmin, and Azam decided to live together showing outwardly that a Brahmin and a Muslim sailed together.

Muhammad was an idealist, and wanted Hindu-Muslim unity, and equality in the land. Everybody was equal, in the eyes of law. Aziz as a Brahmin had come forward to prove the equality between the Hindus and the Muslims. It was a rare act on the part of the Sultan to do justice and therefore, a huge crowd gathered to see the Brahmin and hear the pronouncement of the Kazi.

Muhammad-Bin- Tughlaq took a new step to bring about Hindu-Muslim unity. He transferred the capital of his empire from Delhi to Daultabad. Delhi, according to him, was too near to the border and its peace could never be free from the fear of invaders. But the most important factor for him was that Daultabad was the city of Hindus and as the capital it would symbolize the bond between the Muslims and the Hindus which he wished to develop and strengthen in his kingdom. He wanted to build an empire which would be the envy of the world. But all his wishes were shattered. He met with a severe opposition and resistance by the Amirs and the religious priests of the empire. Peace was shattered by the uprising in the state including the city of Jaunpur where people were instigated by Sheikh-Imam-ud-din who was revered as the greatest saint of India.

Avadh was also in turmoil and rebelling against the Sultan. Ain-ul-Mulk was marching with an army to teach Muhammad a lesson against his wisdom of transferring him from Avadh to Deccan. The Sultan's friend Ain-ul-Mulk and the

most trusted Shihab-ud-din, were ready to stab him in the back. The Amirs, in collaboration with Shihab-ud-din, hatched a plan to murder the Sultan. The plan being out, there was a river of blood flowing through the palace of Sultan.

Najib, the Sultan's confidant, was killed and followed by the death of step mother of the Sultan and also of Azam, the lieutenant of Aziz who appeared as Abbasid, the descendant of the Khalifa of Baghdad. There was so much confusion and turmoil; there were so many deaths in the state that the peace was hard to seek. Hindu-Muslim unity could only be achieved in their resistance to shift the capital from Delhi and also in their being tortured and starved during the drought in the Doab. All the people wanted food and nothing else. This was the unity of the dead, in the silent courtyard of death.

There was so much opposition to Tughlaq's move of shifting the capital from Delhi to Daultabad that even after it was shifted, the people could contain themselves no longer. They rose against the Sultan and after great bloodshed, he had to change his mind and go back to Delhi. Tughlaq's failure to execute his ideals and plans successfully informs the lack of a touch of reality against which they are to develop into a meaningful discourse. In this respect, the play also gains contemporary relevance. It shows how the ideals and ideas in their institutionalized form are doomed to failure.

By simple extension, it implies that the introduction of democratic set up in India failed to produce the desired results in the absence of dialogic negotiations. Instead of nurturing brotherhood, equality and freedom to all, it has resulted in opportunistic politics communal divide, internal turmoil, disappointment and frustration. Through the dramatization of the failure of the environment of a dialogic process the dramatist has been able to comment on contemporary reality. In this context L. S. Gill, points

out certain parallels in Tughlaq's reign and post-independence Indian political and social reality:

His (Tughlaq's) policy to shift the capital from Delhi to Daultabad and change the currency, etc. remind of the new experiments introduced in the independent India. The socio-economic measures in the form of five years plans, the introduction of democracy, the rough newly framed constitution and many more new national and international policies formulated by its rulers and the inherent contradictions to them are implicitly commented by the playwright. (Gill n pag.)

Like all the idealist rulers, the Sultan claimed his state to be free from corruption. But it was not so. The officials of the state took bribes and fattened themselves on the earnings of the poor. Aziz, dresses as a Brahmin, told the Hindu woman crying for her deceased child, that she must pay him some money so that he could bribe his senior officials. The poor woman had no money. Her child died. Azam thought that she should report the matter to the Sultan, but Aziz told his friend that a Hindu woman could not and would not lodge any complaint against another Hindu. The Hindu could complain against the Muslims and vice-versa. So far, unity amongst the Muslims and Hindus was unknown. The Muslims and the Hindus lived apart, thought separately and acted severely.

There was religion against the politics. Muhammad did not want the Sayyids and Ulemas and the Sheikhs to dabble with politics and so when they did, he put them behind the bars in the name of justice. When Imam-ud-Din told him that these verbal distinctions would rip him into two, he said he knew of that. He had read "Sukrat" who took poison so he could give the world the drink of gods, Aflatoon (Plato) who condemned poets and wrote incomparably beautiful poetry himself.

Muhammad himself, on the word of Imam-ud-din, had power, learning, intelligence and talent, yet he was cruel and crafty; people called him "Mad Muhammad". In the play, even the enemies of Muhammad were idealists. Imam-ud-din and Shihab-ud-din were the saintly and worldly enemies respectively, yet they had their own weaknesses and could become his friends. The friend and foe combined in them, Sheikh Imam-ud-din said that he did not want to be mixed up in the game of politics, yet he got ready to be the royal envoy to go to the king of Avadh and persuade him to shirk from war. He had to pay the price for it with his life. No doubt, Muhammad had divine aspirations but he was a deft intriguer. Excessive divine inspirations frustrated him and he went mad, and was doomed. He may rightly be called the wisest fool in the empire.

The plot of *Tughlaq* can, by no means, be called Aristotelian. The playwright has flouted the unities of time and place. The unity of action implies that all the episodes in the play must be knit together to form the whole. Not a single episode or incident can be removed from the structure without a loss to the beauty of the plot. In *Tughlaq*, there are many superfluous incidents. The episode of Aziz and the Hindu woman and also of Aziz and the man and woman with six illegal children can be removed from the play without any loss of interest in the play.

Karnad in constructing the play has taken recourse too much reporting than presenting action on the stage. The characters are shown conversing with one another and giving information about the patricide and fratricide by the Sultan, about the death of Sheikh Imam-ud-din and thousands of men and women on their way to Daultabad and also about the murder of Najib, the Sultan's political advisor. Only the gruesome murder of the trusted lieutenant, of Shihab-ud-din is enacted on the stage by the Sultan. The

step mother of Sultan is shown being dragged by the soldiers for causing the murder of Najib. The Khalif's descendant is murdered by Aziz during his hide out in the hills. The reported and the staged murders constituting the very fabric of the play make it a horrible tragedy. Had it not been for the interweaving of the comic in the play, Tughlaq would have left the audience crying. Karnad weaves the story of Aziz and Azam with the main tragic story of Tughlaq, the idealist monarch, so cleverly that one gets time to breathe before and after each murder. The playwright makes Tughlaq aware of the irony of his life when Aziz, the only character in the play who has skillfully used all the schemes of the Sultan for his own designs, kills Ghizas-ud-din and comes in his guise as a holy messenger of peace to purify the land and revive the banned prayer. The irony is deeply tragic. However as Prof. M. K. Naik remarks:

Tughlaq fails to emerge as a tragedy chiefly because the dramatist seems to deny himself the artist's privilege to present an integrated vision of characters full of conflicting tendencies. (*History of English Literature* 262,263)

While discussing about the techniques of the play *Tughlaq*, the structure of the plot cannot be ignored because plot is an essential element of drama. It is that framework of incidents, however, simple or complex upon which the play is constructed. The events and incidents are organized into an artistic whole with a view to creating unity of impression of effect. In this play, events and incidents which originate from the paradoxical actions of the protagonist Tughlaq and his opponents have been organized into an artistic whole. The devices of parallelism and contrast have been vividly employed in both *Tughlaq* and *Hayavadana*. The plot of *Tughlaq* is based on opposites and paradoxes. Intrigues coherently brought under the discipline of art, form its main basis. U.R. Ananatha Murthy says,

Both Tughlaq and his enemies initially appear to be idealists; yet, in the pursuit of the ideal, they perpetrate its opposite. The whole play is structured on these opposites; the ideal and the real; the divine aspiration and the deft intrigue. (x)

The playwright introduces tensions and conflicts, which are essential for plot, in the very beginning all the events and actions of characters intensify conflict until it reaches climax and resolves into denouement. Girish Karnad dexterously in his play *Tughlaq* introduced double plot, the main plot and the subplot which run parallel. They are interlinked and independent and isomorphic too. The sub plot is a parody or caricature of the main plot. All the thirteen scenes are divided and alternated between “deep scenes” and “shallow scenes”. While the shallow scene is on, the deep scene is prepared and in shallow scene some comic relief is presented like that of Shakespearean plays.

In the main plot, Tughlaq serves as the king or the Sultan throughout the whole play; while Aziz, whose actions have exploited the Sultan’s idealism, becomes a powerful officer when the subplot merges the main plot. The function of the dual plot structure thus becomes evident. The play is about the betrayal of a king by his people and his officers like Aziz. The problem, the play presents is of the rulers who are idealists and visionary but impulsive, who fail to understand the political pulse of their time. Tughlaq becomes a signifier for such rulers who are idealists and visionary but impulsive who fails to understand the political pulse of their time. The play appears as a tragedy of idealism in which the binary oppositions of the play function to signify the fact, that the mischief and mongers and trouble makers get recognition and reward; while the virtuous have to suffer exploitation and frustration.

In *Tughlaq*, plot begins by identifying Tughlaq as an idealist with absolute power, in particular the idealist who intends to bring about a radical change in his kingdom and to build new future for India based in “greater justice, equality, progress and peace-not just peace, but a more purposeful life”. Well-versed in philosophy and poetry, Tughlaq gets thrilled by his vision of, “a new world which he intends to rule not with the power of the scepter in the style of a Muslim fundamentalist tyrant but by emulating the visionary idealism of the Greeks, Zarathustra and the Buddha.” (Ghosh 113) But Tughlaq’s idea of building an ideal republic fails. What he finds is that all his idealism is caught in a travesty. He is not understood by the society he lived for. His ideas and ideals that of abolition of Jiziya tax imposed on Hindus, due consideration to Hindus; tolerance for all religions; change of the capital from Delhi to Daultabad, a symbol of strengthening Hindu-Muslim unity; and the introduction of Copper currency are sound and reasonable, but fail to convince his people. The very first scene opens with a conflict between the followers and opponents of Tughlaq.

From the beginning to the end, the play consists of the signs of kingship and non-kingship, idealism and trickery. In order to have a firm grip over his state and the subjects, Tughlaq too stoops to trickery, firmness and wickedness. By committing one murder after another, he emerges as a shrewd politician who has learnt the art of transforming every adverse situation to his advantage. It is very clear, when he praises his adversary Sheikh Imam-ud-din as a great saint and adds further “...you have risked your life by speaking out against the Sultan” (III.22). Then he gets Imam-ud-din killed and declares the state mourning on his death, saying “When men like him die, it’s a sin to be alive.”(Karnad, *Tugh*. IV.28)

The opening move in the Tughlaq’s main plot from indifference to difference, the Sultan’s transformation from idealism to cruelty, serves the function of defining

power politics, the power to control the opposition to throw out the rulers. The initial plot moves serves the function of indicating danger-that cruelty might overwhelm idealism; communication might not take place properly; and the ideal policy might not be executed properly. When Tughlaq goes away with his opponent, Sheikh Imam-ud-din by setting him against the approaching army of Ain-ul-Mulk, the rebel governor of Avadh, he places himself on the side of the treacherous characters by betraying his idealism. He acts against “democratic theories” the very ground of his idealism.

As a shrewd politician, he handles the two separate threats posed by Ain-ul-Mulk and Sheikh Imam-ud-din. He stabs Shihab to death with ferocity and then makes a public announcement that Shihab-ud-din died a martyr’s death while defending the Sultan against the attack of the noble who attempted to kill the Sultan at prayer time. He also puts a false charge of adultery on his step mother and orders her to be stoned to death publically and thus committing matricide too, as already he was suspected and charged with patricide and fratricide. Far from being the savior monarch of his people as he wished to be, he becomes a tyrant. Scene Ten contains another example of binary opposition of his part idealism from the present corruption when his step mother says:

It’s 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. (Karnad, *Tugh*. X.65)

Tughlaq’s innovative measures like the change of capital and the introduction of token copper currency have proved themselves to be hopeless failure.

The rose garden which he had envisaged as a visible symbol of visionary hopes to create a Utopia becomes a rubbish dump where fake copper coins are piled up. He

also knows people call him “Mad-Mohammad”. But Tughlaq is not steady to eschew tyranny as a way of life, a vehicle to fulfill his mission in life. He even admits to having killed his father, brother and Sheikh Imam-ud-din for an ideal. Since Shihab’s murder, killing becomes a compulsion for him. Soon after condemning his step mother to death in an agony of despair, helplessness and bewildered in comprehension, Tughlaq tries to pray, an act forbidden by him in his kingdom. He realizes his own self estrangement and that he have reached its extreme edge, which is madness. Tughlaq’s only hope lays in the coming visit of Ghijas-ud-din Abbasid, the descendent of Khalifa that to resume the banned prayer in the state. Ironically, the scoundrel Aziz, who having murdered Ghijas-ud-din, enters Tughlaq’s palace in the guise of Ghijas-ud-din Abbasid. Tughlaq too, welcomes him as a Ghijas-ud-din publically. When the Sultan identifies his masquerade, Aziz pleads for his mercy. Instead of punishing Aziz the Sultan gives him reward. The ending move in the Tughlaq’s main plot serves the function of indicating Tughlaq’s madness and gradual extinction. He is seen looking around dazed and frightened as though he can’t comprehend where he is” (XIII.86) His words to Barani, are highly indicative of his disillusionment. He says,

I am teetering on the brink of madness, Barani, but the madness of God still eludes me, (Shouting). And why should I deserve that madness? I have condemned my mother to death and I’m not even sure she was guilty of the crime...” (Karnad, *Tugh.* X.68)

Tughlaq is seen completely shattered in mind and body, when he announces his decision to shift the capital back to Delhi and succumbs to sleep.

The purpose of the Aziz-plot is to provide a crafty, shrewd and rather more capable politician even than Tughlaq. The dual narrative structure thus serves a major function

to signify a move from kingship to parliamentary dominion as the basis of exploitation, cruelty and manipulation. Tughlaq satisfies the first criteria, while Aziz, the second. Moreover, the parallel plots place Aziz in the same position as Tughlaq in regard to the state of arch-trickery. Aziz, who is a Muslim dhobi and a comic figure. At first, Aziz disguises as Vishnu Prasad, the Brahmin and takes advantage of the royal decree that all are equal before law and that the people can file a suit against the Sultan himself for the misbehavior of his officers.

The structural equivalence between Tughlaq and Aziz plots establishes a relation of binary opposition between the two. The characters are coded positively through signifiers connoting binary opposition. Each character has the qualities the play assigns; and each is posed against characters that represent contrary qualities. Along with Tughlaq, all other characters are signifiers linked to signified concepts. Tughlaq would be described as a signifier of his psyche as well as the psyche of others. He has been portrayed as a bundle of contradiction and paradoxes.

Aziz's indifference to his duty and irresponsibility as an officer or public servant that to serve the public in the state, contrasts with Tughlaq's passing sleepless nights for the welfare of the people. It operated both as quality defining idealism- Tughlaq desires to build a new republic and as the quality defining cruelty, the impersonation that Aziz goes on doing throughout the play. Aziz, a notorious cheat who signifies all those who take unlawful advantage of Tughlaq's idealism as well as the crafty nature of Tughlaq is made parallel to Tughlaq as a shrewd politician and as a man of treachery. His meanness and shrewdness is posed against Shihab's trust and pride. Najib, who appears as an evil genius of Tughlaq, is parallel to Barani, who is a true and ideal adviser and as a man of humanity. Shihab-ud-din placed in the position as Imam-ud-din. Both are concerned with Tughlaq's use of improper methods of curbing

the opposition. Karnad has skillfully woven the plot and knit together the story of Aziz and tragic tale of the life of Mohammad. By his use of irony, parallelism, contrast, romance and tragedy, suspense and the unexpected denouement, the playwright has succeeded in getting popularity.

Girish Karnad is skilled in the art of characterization. His characters are of various kinds. Politicians like Najib, historians like Barani, the religious like saint Imam-ud-din and the Khalifa, the thinkers like step mother who gets things done, friend turned foe like Shihab-ud-din, the comic like Aziz and Azam, the idealists like Muhammad and Shihab, the announcers and the Hindu and Muslims-men and women who remain anonymous, play a very important role in forming an opinion of the man hero-Tughlaq of the play.

In *Tughlaq*, the characters are not either all good or all bad. They are a mixture of opposites-vices and virtue. They elicit two or more opinions about themselves, Muhammad the chief amongst them. The common people hold contradictory opinion about him. The old find him irreligious, anti-Islam and romantic. The young opine that he is truly religious, human and an idealist. This ambiguity about him is so dominating in his characters, that it becomes difficult for a critic to assert if Tughlaq was a wise or a cruel king. One has to conclude that he was a main hero, a mixture of the frailties of man and the virtues of a hero, who met his tragic end because of his thinking that whatever he thought or did was right.

The same is the case with Sheikh Imam-ud-din who was considered to be the greatest saint of India and who resembled the Sultan very much in appearance. He was a fanatic and indicated Muhammad against his giving the Hindu's concession in taxes and in matters of justice. He could not tolerate the infidels being treated equally, and so he stirred the people to rebel against the Sultan. But soon he put on the robes of

the Sultan's emissary to go and seek peace with Ain-ul-Mulk. This duality of his character is a dramatized aspect of the complex personality of Muhammad.

Again, Shihab-ud-din the prince of Sampanshahr who was called by Muhammad to look after the state in the Sultan's absence as a gesture of good will and generosity towards his mighty father whom the Sultan feared, was an idealist and most loyal to Muhammad. But his adopted brother played upon him in the name of Islam to fall a prey to their intrigue and play the murderer of the Sultan. His unflinching loyalty to the Sultan was shaken and he had to pay for it with his life. His gruesome murder at the hands of the Sultan himself tore the Sultan from within and the Sultan became the greater murderer of men and women of the state. Shihab turning away from loyalty to treachery was a reflection of the Sultan's character that, for his own principles turned a foe into his friend.

Karnad's art of characterization is based on the principles of life which is an amalgam of contrasting elements-fire and water, earth and sky etc. Also in the play, we have a number of characters who present this contrast. The Sultan himself is a contrast to all the people of the state-the idealist against the practical human beings, the intellectual and truly spiritual against the earthly matter of fact ones. There is the mother of the Sultan unconcerned about her son as against the step mother of Muhammad who is always concerned about his health and welfare. The passive mother of Muhammad who took him to be guilty of patricide and fratricide is most unlike his step mother who denies believing that Muhammad murdered his father and brother. The mother keeps herself aloof from politics while the step mother is very much in it and gets Najib murdered when she feels that Najib was advising the Sultan against the interest of the state and Muhammad.

Najib and Barani also are contrasting characters. Najib is a politician while Barani is a historian. Barani has faith in courage, honesty and justice. While Najib mocks at these words and feels that in dealing with a political problem, these qualities are irrelevant. Najib wanted the present moment to be firmly grasped, but Barani's ways of thinking were different. Najib thought it his job to suspect everybody including the Sultan, but Barani dealt with the people without any prejudice. The contrast in the thinking of Aziz and Azam enhances the interest of the play-Aziz in disguise acts on the orders of the Sultan; Azam most unwillingly follows his friend and does disguise himself.

The contrast between Islam and Hinduism, between idealism and practice, between the real and the unreal, between loyalty and treachery, between religion and politics along with parallelism is highlighted by Karnad to make the play interesting and to show that in politics, idealism does not work and their trust does necessarily beget trust. The playwright makes the play acceptable in the present age, by his presenting the universal trails of men in power and the people in general.

Girish Karnad introduces the comic elements in the middle half of the first scene and carries it till the end of the scene. This is a noble technique, but the playwright has in mind the gruesome murder of Muhammad's father and brother during the prayer. Girish Karnad introduces the comic elements for the entertainment as well as for relieving the tension created by the horror (murder) scene of the play. In this way, he appears to be adhering to the principles of the folk drama in India and also following Shakespeare. The porter scene after the murder of Duncan by *Macbeth*, the grave digger's scene in *Hamlet*, the fig bearers' scene in *Antony and Cleopatra* and the fool in *King Lear*, appear to lessen the horror and terror in the play, and entertain the audience in Shakespearean tragedies.

Girish Karnad in his plays tries to distinguish the spiritual and corporal aspects of human life in the themes and in his characters. This difference of spirituality and worldly attitudes are shown in his plays. For further and thorough interpretation an effort has been made to analyze his characters on the canons of Mandala Theory.

It is very interesting to analyze the complex personality of Tughlaq on Mandala Theory. Utmost every critic agrees that his personality is mysterious in nature, the term Mandala is also considered a mystic knowledge in ancient Sanskrit scripts. The Mandala is made of infinite series of circles and squares embedded in each other, where circles represent the spiritual side of the Universe and squares indicate the materialistic aspects of the world.

As per the Mandala Theory Tughlaq has both the qualities in his personality, but not in an equilibrium state. On one hand, his vision and thoughts seem spiritual. He dreams for an Utopian kingdom where his subjects would be happy and prosperous. As he utters in the scene fourth "What hopes I had built up when I came to the throne! I had wanted every act in my kingdom to become a prayer, every prayer to become a further step in knowledge" (Karnad, *Tugh.* XI.44).

He seems to be a visionary king who wishes for the welfare of his people. He nourishes vision of a better world. His study of the great scholars made him a visionary who finds thrilling joy in entertaining vision of new world. The Sultan does not want to waste his life in sleeping. He tells his step mother, "I pray to the Almighty to save me from sleep" (Karnad, *Tugh.* II.10).

It seems that he invests every moment of his life for the benevolence of his kingdom. He plans for this. He orders to shift the capital of his empire from Delhi to Daultabad and launches new copper currency in place of Silver Dinar. Tughlaq's plans were democratic, not tyrannical when he orders the shifting of his capital from Delhi to

Daultabad, he goes to his people tells them, "I beg you to realize that this is no mad whim of a tyrant. My ministers and I took this decision after careful thought and discussion" (Karnad, ^{Tugh,} I.3, 4).

He allows the people to criticize him openly and not to be afraid the people have been told that they have a right to criticize the Sultan openly. He goes to the people and talks to them. Like Pandit Nehru, he wants to be with them and listens to their miseries and sorrows, their pain and suffering. In this way, he may be considered a spiritual personality and an angel like king. But these aspects of his personality are virtual rather than real.

On the other hand, his actions, desires, ambitions and intrigues plotted by him show his materialistic and corporal longings. He is a prudent and shrewd man of action and enjoys all his privileges for his pleasures and for the extension of his empire. He is a crafty politician who badly exploits his friends as well as enemies. Out of the frustration to a great extent Tughlaq became cruel and insensitive to finer human feelings. Those who tried to disregard his decisions paid the heavy penalties, even the penalty of death.

On the basis of above interpretation it may be concluded that his corporal side is mightier and he is a spiritually hallow- man. He is a perfect hypocrite who disguises in the form of a religious and benevolent king where as he never concerns about the common man.

Its graphical representation would be as follows:

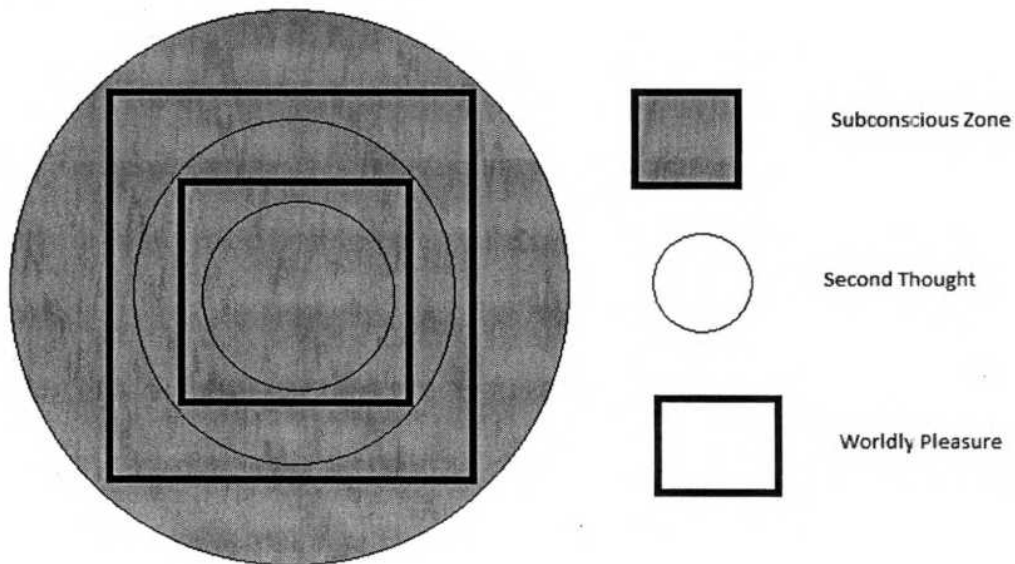


Fig. 7

Here circles are dimmer as his spiritual side is not perfect. He is virtually a spiritual and religious man. On the contrary, squares are given sharper tone which symbolizes his material approach which is much practical in approach.

Unlike Yayati, any shift or change cannot be observed in his character. Yayati, in the last phase of his life gives up his youth which shows his second thought whereas Tughlaq exploits even second thought for his selfish and utilitarian plans. In Yayati, the protagonist ultimately reconciles and chooses Van-Prasth, leaving, the temptation of physical pleasures, but Tughlaq remains shrewd and polished and does not reach to the genuine conclusion, due to his ambitions and worldly desires. It can be categorically concluded that the sharp squares dominate through-out the life of Muhammad-Bin- Tughlaq.

One of the features of Tughlaq's dialect is that it is marked by literary tropes-figurative language, metaphors, alliterations, rhyme and rhythm. He utters everything obliquely and often means more than he utters. He also infers pragmatic meaning in the utterances of others even though they do not intend it. His first speech on the

announcement of the transfer of his capital is not only a fine example of political rhetoric but also a poetic piece, "May this moment burn bright and light up your path towards greater justice, equality, progress and peace-not just peace but a more purposeful life"(Karnad, *Tugh*. I. 3). This poetic expression of Tughlaq's ambitious dream is marked by the poetic register, imagery, symbolism, rhetorical questions and suggestiveness.

Karnad's comic element brings out the absurdity of the situation and makes the audience relieved. The actions of Aziz and Azam are uncommon leading force. They remind us of a magician who turns a baby into a girl and who takes out a ten rupee note from other man's pocket and shows it coming out of his own pocket, yet they go undetected by the king's men. They befool them and there lies the cause of mirth, humour and fun. Tughlaq's humour is ominous and sarcastic, callous and ironical. The following remark is suggestive of irony and ruthlessness: "I have just solved the most famous problem in chess"(Karnad, *Tugh*. II.9). It means that Tughlaq intends to use Ain-ul-Mulk and Sheikh Imam-ud-din as pawns on the chess board of politics.

The sub plot of the play is full of ironic humour. It seems to lessen the stress and strain caused by the serious scenes in the play. Irony is a technique, which he employs to make the play highly theatrical. It is not merely situational but also verbal. The manner in which prayer is sought to be used as an instrument of murder against the very man who has made prayer compulsory in the state and the role played by Aziz are examples of the irony of situation. A few instances of verbal irony are, "The past sultans of Delhi could not bear the weight of their crown. They couldn't leave it aside. So they died senile in their youth or they were murdered"(Karnad, *Tugh*. II.11). It is also ironical that Tughlaq and the Sheikh look alike but they do not think alike. Karnad's use of irony is remarkable when his protagonist expresses his views that

why he has banned prayer in his kingdom. He says, "Our prayers too are ridden with disease, and must be exiled" (VI.44). Honest scoundrel (IV.28) and enjoys the feeling of guilt are also finest example of Karnad's irony.

Symbols speak themselves the playwright knows how to exploit technique of symbol, which reveals the inner landscape of the dramatic persona. Karnad frequently makes use of symbols. These symbols make the play powerful on the stage. One can find some major symbols in the play, like prayer, sleep, the game of chess, rose and the python etc. In the words of P. Bayapa Reddy:

At the micro level, prayer symbolizes the religious idealism of Tughlaq. At the macro level; it connects man's unconscious need for divine protection and guidance in an hour of anguish. In the beginning, prayer is made compulsory but later it is banned for a few years and again it is revived. It is reduced to a mockery when the Sultan's life is threatened at the time of prayer. "Sleep" on one level represents the need for rest in man's life. At the macro level, it become symbolic of peace which eludes man often. The rose is a symbol of the aesthetic poetic susceptibilities of Tughlaq. It later on becomes a symbol of the withering away of all the dreams and the ideals of Tughlaq. At the macro level the game of chess is an ordinary game, which is popular in India. It symbolizes a political game in which the most intelligent and clever politician is checkmated by an ordinary washer- man. Through this symbolic technique, the playwright has succeeded in creating the right political atmosphere. (155)

Karnad tried to strengthen his play with the help of rich symbolism. However, it is said that *Tughlaq* is a historical play dealing merely with the life and reign of

Muhammad- Bin- Tughlaq, but this is true only when the play is read on the superficial level. When it is taken thoroughly, one feels surprised by Karnad's use of symbols. The playwright beautifully exploited prayer, which is a symbolic of religious nature and which depicts religious idealism of Tughlaq. In fact, Karnad uses prayer as a veil behind which Tughlaq tries to hide all his guilt and sins. In *Tughlaq*, prayer is also associated with man's unconscious need for divine protection and guidance in the hour of anguish. Another significant fact about prayer is that in this play, prayer becomes a puppet in the hands of Tughlaq. It is up to Tughlaq to allow his subjects to pray or not to pray. Initially, prayer was made compulsory for all but later it was banned for few years and again it was revived. Prayer becomes a subject of mockery also because most of the crimes particularly murders were, committed at the time of prayer. The life of Sultan himself was threatened at the time of prayer.

Karnad has presented chess as a symbol. It symbolizes that the whole kingdom is as complicated and full of problems as the game of chess. The chess suggests duality in Tughlaq's nature. As a skilled chess player he uses his political opponents as pawns on chess board of politics. The game of chess has a great significance in the play *Tughlaq*. In Scene II, his conversation with his step mother, Tughlaq considers himself the greatest chess player.

The two rogues Aziz and Azam are also used as symbols. They stand for opportunistic and unethical people who exploit the liberal ideals and welfare schemes of the democratic government and fulfill their own pockets. Karnad has presented Python as a symbol in the Scene VIII of the play *Tughlaq*. It suggests Tughlaq's utter barbarity and inhumanity. The young man and old man talk about the strange and secret passage in the fort of Daulatabad.

YOUNGMAN. Tell me more about this fort, grandfather. Is it true there is a strange and frightening passage within this fort? Dark, they say, like the new moon night.

OLD MAN. Yes, it's a long process, a big passage, coiled like an enormous hollow python inside the belly of the fort. And we shall be far, far happier when that python breaks out and swallows everything in sight-every man, woman, child and beast. (Karnad, *Tugh*. VIII.52)

This Python can be seen as a symbol of Sultan's increasing fierceness and brutality and blood thirstiness. It is a symbolic of a complete degeneration of the personality of Muhammad-Bin- Tughlaq. From a human being, Tughlaq degenerated himself into a wild beast like a Python. Sleep is another symbol which has been exploited by the playwright. Sleep is a symbolic representation of peace, which is often away from man. In the Scene XIII, Tughlaq wants to take rest in the lap of sleep. I am suddenly feeling tired. And sleepy. For five years sleep has avoided me and now suddenly its coming back (XIII.83). Girish Karnad uses rose as a symbol of Tughlaq's poetic sensibility. He is a learned man. He is also deeply influenced by the beautiful poems of Sheikh Sadi of Persia. He plans a beautiful rose garden through which he envisions the garden of ideals which has dried towards the end. Later on, it becomes the symbol of his withering dream. On the basis of above discussion it can be said that every symbol used by Karnad has two sides one is negative or pessimistic another is positive.

The graphical representation of both aspects (Positive and Negative) of Karnad's use of symbols is as follows:

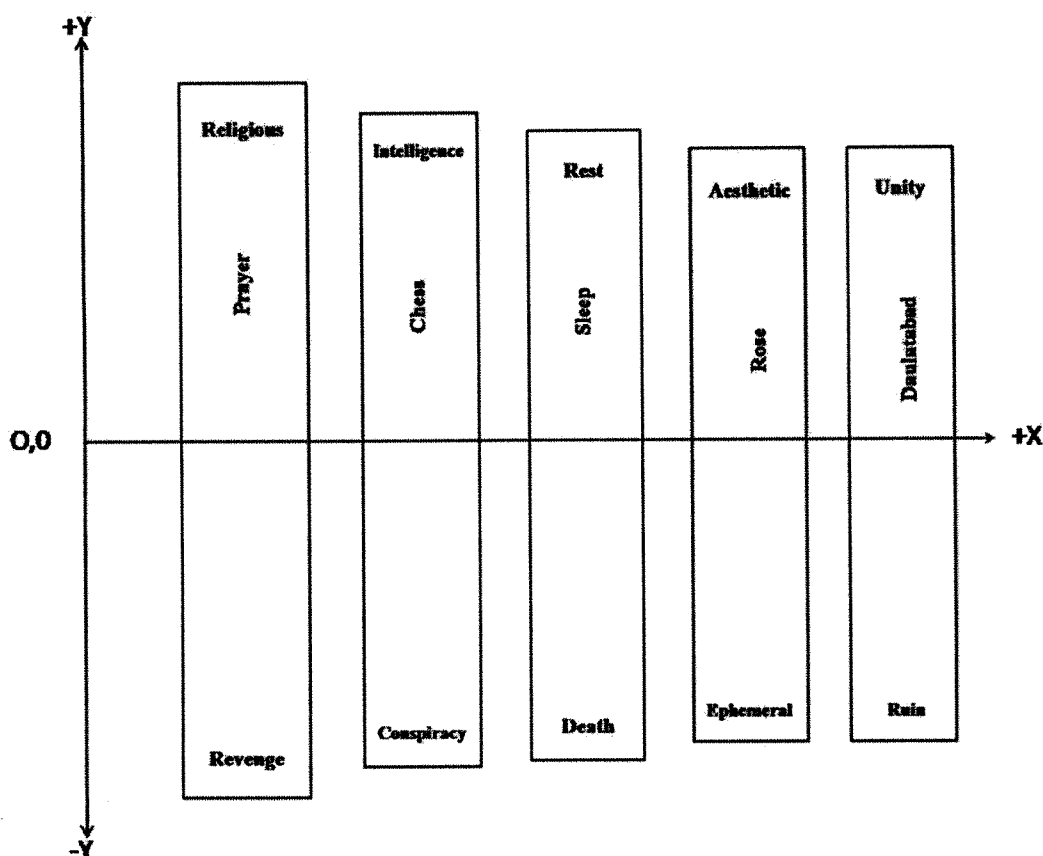


Fig. 8

Other symbols and figures of speech also contribute a lot to the theme of conversion of an ideal world in a real world of problems and deformity. A famous critic Christine Gomez commenting on rose garden remarked:

The rose garden which becomes a rubbish dump is a perfect objective correlative of Tughlaq's idealistic aspirations meeting with defeat, frustration and disillusionment. It becomes an image of the absurd, the unbridgeable gulf between man's expectations or orderliness and the chaos and irrationality which confront him in the universe. (125)

It is a technique of Karnad to make frequent use of idioms and phrases taken from common experiences in order to lend his style the charm of familiarity. But at the

same time he does not sacrifice grace. His style is however, straight forward and idiomatic. Girish Karnad is the master of rich vocabulary, therefore he is capable of using appropriate words for different situations, his language suits not only the situation, but also the character. He has chosen idiomatic English to reflect the psyche of his characters. His sentences often perform two or three functions at the same time. It sheds light on the character speaking, on the character spoken about and to further the plot. It almost functions ironically in conveying to the audience a meaning different from that conveyed to the character. Karnad's language is refined, lucid and precise and maintains the decorum in his dialogues.

Thus, through analyzing the distinguishing features of *Tughlaq* and by knowing about their overall contribution in creation of such well-knit plot with entirely different theme, it becomes evident that Karnad's thematic concerns have a universal significance. *Tughlaq* is not meant for any particular community or strata of society and therefore, appeals everyone, due to this, besides reaching the immense height of success in the realm of Indian Writing in English; it received a great appreciation on stage and in the world of theatre as well. In *Tughlaq*, Karnad grappled with fundamental human motives with a distinctive masterly control. The playwright, through the play *Tughlaq* critically explored the psychic structure of the characters. The moral and manners of political world have been sensitively and intelligently dealt with. The struggles of the Sultan Muhammad –Bin –Tughlaq were vigorously brought out. Commenting on the thematic concerns of the play, A. K. Sinha rightly observed, "Tughlaq presents a rich orchestration of themes subtly interlocked with one another, with a rapid progression of events"(62).

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