

Negotiating the Self: Conflict, Resolutions and Spirituality in Girish Karnad's Tughlaq

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Muhammad Bin Tughlaq, the only ruler called 'Mad' in history, is the central character of the play Tughlaq written by Girish Karnad. Girish Karnad is one of the most powerful dramatists of the new century. He wrote only three plays namely Yayati, Tughlaq and Hayavadana, but only those three dramas are enough to earn him a prestigious position among the Indo-Anglian dramatists.

Muhammad possessing the name of the founder of Islam tried to show his equal-watch on Muslims as well as Hindus. Navi Muhammad was the last ambassador of Allah. It was written in the Koran Sura Al Ambiya, one hundred and seventh ayat of 21st Adhyaya- Allah sent Hazrat Muhammad to the humankind as the mercy of Him. So our Sultan cancelled the collection of Jiziya tax from the Hindus. Moreover, he released an order of five times prayer daily for all the Muslims. Muhammad made the Muslims bound to do so, otherwise, the defaulters might be punished by his officers.

In ancient India, the ruler of the kingdom had an additional duty of keeping an eye on the religious life of his subjects, for e.g., we see in the Purana that mandhata's men are announcing that the subjects should remember the auspicious day of Ekadashi and do fasting on that very day- "Ekadasyang Na Bhoktabyam". "Dharmena Hinah Pasubhih Samanah"- Man without spirituality is no man at all. Again it was a belief in society that famine, drought etc. natural calamities take place in the kingdom when the ruler commits sin. So, in ancient India ruler participated in the religious activities of his subjects.

In India, Hindus and Muslims, apparently, have enmity since long ago. Hindu people could not think that a Muslim Sultan can have an impartial eye upon the Hindu and Muslim subjects. Muslims were provoked by Ulemas who lost popularity in Muslim society as the Sultan did not blindly obey them. In spite of being neutral in the Sultanship, Tughlaq was a pious Muslim who prayed five times a day according to the Koran, but opportunists have no religion, no ideal, no truth. They have only narrow-mindedness and vindictive mentality to harm others. These people instigated Tughlaq's subjects to disobey and distrust him. Moreover, the Civil officers Aziz, Aazam and Karim played the role of conspiracy-makers. They had spoiled the kingdom looting and killing the innocent people. Tughlaq trusted them and distrusted the trustworthy people like his Stepmother, Barani etc. So, Barani says, "Your Majesty, there was a time when you believed in love, in peace, in God. What has happened to those ideals?"

"Theta Sur Jhuta Pir

Bala Hate Nedar Fakir

Era Asal Saytan, Kafer Beiman

Taki Tomra Jano?" - These lines are perfect about the Civil officers of Tughlaq. Tughlaq's faith on these rogues, the suspicion of his Hindu subjects regarding him and unpopularity among the Muslim subjects also shattered the whole kingdom, and the dream of a young and idealist Sultan.

Tughlaq accepted the Kazi's declaration that he illegally appropriated the land of Visnu Prasad and a grant of five hundred silver dinars and a post in the Civil Service were granted to Visnu Prasad. Tughlaq did it to show Hindu-Muslim unity, though he was cheated because this Visnu Prasad was basically Aziz, a Muslim man.

Tughlaq being the Sultan of a great kingdom was full of confidence. He addressed his subjects as "My Beloved People". He longed for his subjects' Hindu-Muslim-Jains' strong unity. He was worried about his subjects' misery, poverty and disease, and was confident enough to eradicate these from their lives. But his desire remained unfruitful. His subjects faced drought, famine, ate burnt strips of skin of all types of animals. They drank the blood pouring from the bodies of the slaughtered animals. His decision of turning silver dinars to copper currency failed. Frustrated Tughlaq cried for God's help. He admitted that many were killed because of him- "My skin dips with blood and I don't know how much of it is mine and how much of others."

Everything occurred in the Tughlaq due to Tughlaq's conflicted nature, an idealist and cunning, a prayer-dependent man opposed prayer, a furious-killer Sultan overlooks allegations against rogue officials. As was uttered by Sri Ramathakura, the great sage "Maner Das Na Haiya Satyer Adhine Thakite Chesta Karun", the idea was not carried out by Tughlaq.

Tughlaq had promised to establish justice in his kingdom, but "Apani Achari Dharma Parere Sikhay". The Sultan himself acted as a dictator. He killed Imam-ud-din by misguiding him, he did not forgive his father and brother in apprehension of losing his sultanate.

Tughlaq killed his father and brother at the prayer time. It is a big sin for any Muslim. Tughlaq tried to justify the killing by saying that his father and brother tried to indulge in politics and he could not tolerate it. Therefore, he killed them. Even he secretly killed Sheikh Imam-ud-din who charged the Sultan of not understanding the Koran or taking the advice of Sayyids and Ulemas. It is the crafty nature of the Sultan, where religious-sacredness, saint-like calmness and simplicity are completely missing in Tughlaq. The Sultan behaved madly when he came to know that Shihab-ud-din had planned to kill him during his prayer time. He stabbed his "killer" furiously with the dagger numerous times. Seeing the Sultan's fury, his soldiers got scared. Tughlaq had turned his kingdom into a "Kitchen of Death". And the Stepmother was stoned to death by Tughlaq's army. There was no forgiveness to the Sultan's critic. He forgot that he had told that he would establish justice in his kingdom "without any consideration of might or weakness". Tughlaq broke his own promise and proved himself to be mischievous, a false man. A true and honest man cannot do any harm to anybody, so it is said by Tulsidasa-

"Jahan Ram Tahan Kam Nahi
Jahan Kam Nahi Ram
Tulasi Kabahun Hot Nahi
Ravi Rajani Ek Dham"

Tughlaq uttered many words to have an image larger than life. He promised a rule of greater justice, equality and peace. He passionately told that to bring the kingdom to the top of the hill, the Sultan will have to gallop, rather than crawl. This same person formulated an idea to show Shihab-ud-din's death a reaction of the revolt against the Sultan, who was to be killed at the prayer time. The Sultan arranged Shihab's death to be a martyr's death and his funeral was a grand affair. He asked for Shihab's father as Shihab's father was a powerful man who could take revenge against his son's killer and could bring a tremble in his throne. Thus, we came to know the Sultan's crafty and cunning nature, who could do anything to exercise power and to throw dust in the eyes of his subjects. The Sultan acted as Thagini Maya-

"Maya Maha Thagini Hum Jani
Keshav Ke Kamla Hain Baithi Shivke Bhavan Bhavani"

Tughlaq was a proud emperor full of arrogance of strength. He wished to have recurring births like the Hindus to serve his subjects, but he was least concerned about his subjects' plight when they were ordered to shift to Daulatabad leaving Delhi within a fortnight. Therefore, Tughlaq was rejected by his subjects, friends and relatives. Impatient and impulsive emperor, Tughlaq, was the one to stop his subjects from praying. After the order of his stepmother's stoning, the Almighty emperor bowed down to the Almighty God. He wanted the God to take him in his lap like a mother.

Muhammad cried in anguish "I started in Your Path, Lord, why am I wandering naked in the desert now? I started in search of You. Why am I become a pig rolling in this gory mud? Raise me. Clean me. Cover me with Your infinite Mercy. I can only clutch to the hem of Your cloak with my bloody fingers and plead. I can only beg, have pity on me. I have no one but You now. Only You. Only You....You...You."

Muhammad's Stepmother's cry turned out to be true-"My death won't make you happy. You have enough ghosts to haunt you, don't add mine to it." Only the Sultan was responsible for this situation. "..."

Sultan's companions showed him the apparently brighter path which eventually did not hold any truth. The Sultan could not bravely materialise his resolutions about his kingdom saying,

"Satya Ye Kathin

Ami Tare Bhalobasilam

Se Kabhu Kare Na Banchana"

"Fa Subhanallahi Hina Tum Suna Ahina

Tusbihun Alahul Hamdu Fis Samawati Al Ardi

A Asiban U Hina Tujahirun" – Five times a day Namaj announces Allah's praiseworthiness, sacredness. It was said by Swami Jagadatmananda that a man can control his mind with the help of prayer, company of the pious men and the reading of holy books-"Ekjon Lok Tar Manke Sangyata Karte Pare Keval Prarthana, Sadhusanga O Ucchabhavoddipak Pabitra Granthapather Dwara Evam Sadabhyas Gathaner Madhyame". Muhammad restricted his subjects from practising Namaj in his kingdom. The Sultan eager to spend sleepless nights without marrying and breeding children in order to pay complete attention to his subjects' welfare, found himself abandoned by all. Now, many times refused sleep came to heal him. At this time the

sound of people's Namaj roused him from the sleep of ignorance-turned-frustration. His head bent down to his chest which announced the death of his arrogance. Again, God touched him in the form of Namaj- "Ksama Vasikrtirloke Ksamaya King Na Saddhyate" (The Mahabharata). We are all sons of the God, how can he desert us?

At good times people forget God who always is ready to nurture them, love them, heal them from all agonies of life-"Aham Tvam Sarvapapebhyo Moksaisyami Ma Sucah"-as is promised by Lord Sri Krishna in the Gita. So is told by the great devotee Babaji Maharaj,"Bhagawan sarvada chayar nyay tomar sange sange achen evam tomake raksa karitechen".

Truly spiritual men surrender completely to God all time in sorrow or happiness-"Sukhesvanudvignamana dukkhesu bigatasprihah". But the humble householders remember God while facing danger in life. If God fulfils their desires, protect them they praise God. If their demands are not fulfilled by God they possess no faith in Him. These peoples' minds are always restless with the tides of desires. As a dirty mirror can reflect nothing, the calm pond when thrown a stone in it breaks the reflection fell in it God's touch cannot enter in the stormy desireful hearts of these people. What was told by Paramhansa Sri Ramakrisna " Bhakter hriday Bhagawaner Baithakkhana", it is not applicable to these people as to Tughlaq. At the end of the drama Tughlaq, we see that the sound of his subjects' prayer roused him from his deep frustration, thus, God's touch make us breathe, live; ,He is our lifeline, forgotten whom we near death.

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