

Disfiguration of Chronicles in Literature (With Special Reference to Girish Karnad's Tughlaq)

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Abstract

Muhammad bin Tughluq (also Prince Fakhr Malik, Jauna Khan, Ulugh Khan; died 20 March 1351) was the Sultan of Delhi from 1325 to 1351. He was the eldest son of Ghiyath al-Din Tughluq, the Turko-Indian founder of the Tughluq dynasty. He was born in Kotla Tolay Khan in Multan. His wife was the daughter of the Raja of Dipalpur.² Ghiyas-ud-din sent the young Muhammad to the Deccan to campaign against king Prataparudra of the Kakatiya dynasty whose capital was at Warangal in 1321 and 1323. Muhammad ascended to the Delhi throne upon his father's death in 1325. He was interested in medicine and was skilled in several languages — Persian, Arabic, Turkish and Sanskrit³. Ibn Battuta, the famous traveler and jurist from Morocco, was a guest at his court and wrote about his suzerainty in his book. From his accession to the throne in 1325 until his death in 1351, Muhammad contended with 22 rebellions, pursuing his policies, consistently and ruthlessly⁴. Muhammad Bin Tughlaq (Jauna Khan) came to throne after death of his father Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq. While he had good intentions of inviting learned men to his court and implementing new policies, he remained largely unsuccessful and failed in most of his enterprises. He had been a man of controversies and crisis. He faced attacks of Mongols, dissension within his own support group, and rebellions from a very large and diverse population. In an effort to adapt to his growing empire, he attempted to shift his capital from Delhi to Daulatabad, which was supposed to be a more central location, but it was a disastrous decision and was costly. The paper is replete with the glimpses of Tughlaq's real life and of his depiction in Girish Karnad's play Tughlaq.

Keywords: Historical Play, Chronicles, Characters, Dramatist, Indo-Anglian Literature, Whimsical, Failure To Take Decisions, Pose.

Introduction

Change in the chronicles or disfiguration is a common thing when some historical episode is presented through literature or aesthetics. In fact, literature is written with a different angle from what the history is. The history of world literature is an evidence to it. From time to time, the things became controversial and gave rise to chaotic situations whenever some historical character or episode was used for the sake of literature, but the issue has not stopped it yet. India too is not an exception to it. Here too, historical portrayals have been made in literature, and often they have been entangled in the web of controversy and disputes. Girish Karnad's famous play, designed on the life, deeds and failure of Sultan Muhammad bin Tughlaq, more or less, has the same fate. However, it should be pointed out at this level that it has a better fate than many other literary pieces based on history, as it was received warmly with least of criticism on the ground that Karnad derived only the fragments from history, and not a complete history of Tughlaq in the play.

Tughlaq in Real Life: A Historical Perspective

After the death of his father Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq, Muhammad bin Tughlaq ascended the throne of Tughluq dynasty of Delhi in February, 1325 A.D. Unlike the Khaljis who did not annex stable kingdoms, Tughluq would annex kingdoms around his sultanate. In his reign, he conquered Warangal (in present-day Telangana, India) Malabar and Madurai, (Tamil Nadu, India), and areas up to the modern day southern tip of the Indian state of Karnataka. In the conquered territories, Tughluq created a new set of revenue officials to assess the financial aspects of the area.

Their accounts helped the audit in the office of the *wazir*.

Tughluq was a strict Muslim, maintaining his five prayers during a day, used to fast in Ramadan. According to 19th Century CE British historian Stanley Lane-Poole, apparently courtesans had hailed Tughluq as a "man of knowledge" and had interest in subjects like philosophy, medicine, mathematics, religion, Persian and Urdu/Hindustani poetry. In his "Medieval India", "He was perfect in the humanities of his day, a keen student of Persian poetry.....a master of style, supremely eloquent in an age of rhetoric, a philosopher trained in Logic and Greek metaphysics, with whom scholars feared to argue, a mathematician and lover of science." Barani has written that Tughluq wanted the traditions of the *nubuwwah* to be followed in his kingdom. Even though he did not believe in mysticism, Chandra states that he respected the Sufi saints, which is evident from the fact of his building of the mausoleum of the saint Nizamuddin Auliya at Nizamuddin Dargah. Critics have called him hasty in nature, owing to most of his experiments failing due to lack of preparation. Ibn Battuta has also written that he depended on his own judgement and rarely took advice from others and has also criticized him for his giving of excessive gifts and "harsh punishments". He was famous because whenever a gift was bestowed upon him, he would give gifts worth three times the value to show his stature.

Historian Ishwari Prasad writes that different coins of different shapes and sizes were produced by his mints which lacked the artistic perfection of design and finish. In 1330, after his failed expedition to Deogiri, he issued token currency; that is coins of brass and copper were minted whose value was equal to that of gold and silver coins. Historian Ziauddin Barani felt that this step was taken by Tughluq as he wanted to annex all the inhabited areas of the world for which a treasury was required to pay the army. Barani had also written that the sultan's treasury had been exhausted by his action of giving rewards and gifts in gold. This experiment failed, because, as said by Barani, "the house of every Hindu became a mint". During his time, most of the Hindu citizens were goldsmiths and hence they knew how to make coins. In the rural areas, officials like the *muqaddams* paid the revenue in brass and copper coins and also used the same coins to purchase arms and horses. As a result, the value of coins decreased and, as said by Satish Chandra, the coins became "as worthless as stones". This also disrupted the trade and commerce. The token currency had inscriptions marking the use of new coins instead of the royal seal and so the citizens could not distinguish between the official and the forged coins. Records show that the use of token currency has stopped in 1333 as Ibn Battutawho came to Delhi in 1334 and wrote a journal made no mention of this currency.

Review of Literature

K. Dasaradhi & Dr. P. D. Nimsarkar (February, 2016) in Symbolization of 'Chess' In Girish Karnad's 'Tughlaq' write that It is the play about the life and political career of Sultan Muhammad-Bin-

Tughlaq of the 14 century India. Karnad deviates from history when it is to create an artistic and dramatic effect. Karnad's main aim is to highlight the contradictions in Sultan's complex personality who is both visionary and man of action, devout and irreligious, generous and unkind, human and barbarian. Game of Chess which Girish Karnad first used in his play *Yayati* is a recurrent symbol in the play. In both the plays the game of chess stands for existential feeling of alienation and complexity of human relationships. Symbolizing the inner alienation of Muhammad, the game of chess in Tughlaq also stands for the complexity of the character of the emperor. For him, life is like a chess board where man's only aim is to win.

S.Lalithass (October 2016) in Portrayal of Historical Characters in the Works of Girish Karnad argues that Focusing on our folk culture, he takes inspiration from mythology and folklore. With *Hayavadana*, Karnad has taken us back to the myths and legends of the Hindu religion Muhammad Bin Tughlaq, who ruled from Delhi in the fourteenth century, was a man of many dimensions. A well-read scholar of the arts, theology, and philosophy, a brilliant calligraphist, a mystic, as well as a poet, it is the 'madness' that earned him the epithet 'Mad Muhammad', that Karnad explores in the play. Using history and myth in equal measure, Karnad delves into the psyche of Muhammad to understand and interpret the rationale behind his whimsical actions. Operating at both symbolic and metaphoric levels, the action of the play is closely paralleled with 'contemporary' political and social events.

Dharwadker, Aparna (1995), Sengupta, Ashis (2003), Karnad, Girish; Anathamurthy, U.R. (2015), *The Times of India* (11 March 2014. Retrieved 2 June 2016), Manikutty, S; Singh, Sampat (5 November 2014), *The Economic Times* (Retrieved 2 June 2016), & Ghosh, Paramita (27 May 2017) agree that Tughlaq is a 1964 Indian Kannada language play written by Girish Karnad. The thirteen-scene play is set during the reign of Muhammad bin Tughlaq. In 1970, it was enacted in English in Mumbai.

Objective of The Study

1. Going through Girish Karnad's play Tughlaq.
2. Being familiar with the life, works, positive and negative sides of Muhammad-bin-Tughlaq.
3. Comparing the real life of Tughlaq as depicted in history with the life presented in the play.
4. Exploring the changes made in the play for the purpose of making the story of Tughlaq presentable to the readers.

Hypothesis

1. Literature presents the historical characters and chronicles with certain changes.
2. Tughlaq, the sultan of Delhi in the 13th century is noted for several positive and negative things.
3. Girish Karnad in his play Tughlaq depicts Tughlaq with certain chronological changes.

Research Methodology

Purely a theoretical study grounded in Tughlaq's life and deeds that made him popular and that caused his downfall towards the end of his reign,

the paper is a historical analysis and comparative study of Tughlaq's real life and his depiction in the play. Beginning with the selection of the problem, the scholar ended the study with meaningful and fruitful conclusions about what Tughlaq was in his real life as a sultan and ruler, and how he has been depicted in the play Tughlaq by the dramatist for the purpose of making the contents dramatic. In-between lie a thorough study of the life of Tughlaq in the books of history, study of the reviews made in India and abroad on both Tughlaq and Girish Karnad's play, forming hypothetical beliefs, collecting, classifying, interpreting and analyzing the data, and drawing conclusions on the basis of the reading and understanding.

Historical Analysis & Interpretation of Tughlaq's Real Life and His Depiction in the Karnad's Play

Girish Karnad, a contemporary writer, playwright, actor and movie director in Kannada language, is the latest of seven recipients of Jnanpith Award for Kannada, the highest literary honour conferred in India. Girish Karnad's 'Tughlaq' is a theatrical representation strong in rhetoric of the 14th-century king who destabilised his own kingdom; marched his people from the north (Delhi) to the west (Daulatabad) to set up a new capital and marched them back; went on a killing spree; struck coins in one metal and then another – all in the name of good governance. Girish Karnad is not the first dramatist to stage the life and adventures of Tughlaq. Karnad's Tughlaq is an outstanding, contemporary Indian play. Commenting on the greatness of the play, Raju, B. Yadava rates the play as follows: No play in Kannada is comparable to Tughlaq in its depth and range. It is a classic in Kannada literature. In this play Girish Karnad has artistically integrated the two aspects, the historical and the universal, the temporal and the timeless, in the fascinating character of Muhammad Tughlaq, one of the most idealistic and intelligent kings to ascend the throne of Delhi. In it, Karnad depicts the predicament of Muhammad-bin-Tughlaq, the fourteenth century monarch of Delhi.

Although the theme of the play is from the history, the treatment of the theme is not historical. The play depicts two contradictory cultures and religions, presenting two kinds of conflict affecting each other adversely. It is a tragedy that depicts the struggle and spectacular failure of a personality who dreams of becoming an ideal ruler and establishing a utopia. Karnad projects the sufferings and mishaps endured by the people under the rule of this daydreamer. In the opening scene he declares, —I shall build an empire which will be the envy of world. He is always preoccupied with thoughts of his state. Acutely aware of the short span of life and the stupendous task before him, like Asoka the great, he seems to dedicate his life for the well-being of his subjects. He feels restless and keeps awake during nights. His preoccupation with the idea of establishing a utopia for the welfare of his people does not allow him to sleep. Muhammad claims that a king is no king unless he is one with his people. He takes great pains to correct all the errors committed by the past Sultans of Delhi in order to spread the Kingdom of Heaven on earth. Within a short span of twenty years, this

tremendously capable personality is shattered to pieces and all his dreams lie deflated.

By shifting his capital to the city of the Hindus, he hopes to win the confidence of the Hindus and help foster the Hindu – Muslim unity. But in actuality it leads to disastrous problems. The ruler who hopes to establish an empire, which will be the envy of the world, due to his lack of foresight and inability to steer clear through the situations falters and resorts to solving all the problems with a dagger. No advice is sought, no consultation takes place. Being despotic and devoid of human concern, he arrogantly and inhumanly says, 'I want Delhi vacated immediately. Every living soul in Delhi will leave for Daulatabad within a fortnight.'

The schemes of relocating the nation's capital from Delhi to Daulatabad and introducing the copper currency causes a lot of havoc and hardship among the people, which he fails to realize. The Sultan fails to make allowances for the innovations he makes and so with the best of intentions, excellent ideas, but no balance and patience, his life ends in a transcendent failure. On account of the ambiguities of Tughlaq's character, his tortured inner self and corruption combat at their very source and the country is plunged into a political chaos. Tughlaq paradoxically resorted to violence and cruelty for the implementation of his idealistic plans meant for public welfare.

The characters like Aziz, Barani, Najib and Sheikh Imamud-din are just various facets of Tughlaq's persona. Tughlaq derives a sense of a multiple and constructed self from various discursive locations of religion, history, law politics and morality. In Tughlaq Sheikh Imam-ud-din, Najib and Barani are the personae of Tughlaq, with the Sheikh symbolizing religion, Najib politics and Barani both history and spirituality.

Nevertheless, each of the characters has an independent existence and is not merely an aspect of Tughlaq. Precisely, in Karnad's play, Tughlaq is presented as an alienated protagonist who experiences interpersonal and social alienation, existential alienation and self-estrangement. Many of the other characters in the play are also seen to experience alienation, which serves to highlight Tughlaq's predicament.

Findings & Conclusion

Karnad established himself as a noted and talented dramatist after the publication of Tughlaq (1964). Karnad's plays reflect remarkable influence of Ibsen, Shaw and Shakespeare on one hand, on the other, his plays are highly characterized by trends in Kannada literature and he used legend, history and myth for the plots of his plays. He himself translated Tughlaq. His plays are equally appreciated in India and abroad. Karnad's plays are characterized by myths, legends, and folktales and histories not only for literary purpose but also as a surrogate to portray the contemporary situations. Karnad's creative genius lies in taking up fragments of historical-legendary experience and fusing them into a forceful statement. Noticeably, Karnad does not take the myths and historical episodes in their entirety he takes only

fragments that are useful to him and the rest he supplements with his imagination to make his plots interesting.

Though a genuine historical play as it is taken by most of the scholars, the traces of deviation from history are apparent in the play. Karnad has left many facts related to Tughlaq, and has moulded the plot through disfiguration of chronicles in order to make it interesting to the audience. Hence, it will be better to call it a semi historical play rather than a genuine historical play. Whenever, the historical facts are presented through the literary devices, at least some of the facts are left or presented in a different context with the colour of disfiguration.

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Footnotes

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