

PARALLELISM BETWEEN TUGHLAQ'S REIGN AND INDIA OF THE SIXTIES

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INTRODUCTION-

This research paper throws light on “the Parallelism between Tughlaq’s Reign and India of the Sixties in Girish Karnad’s Tughlaq”. “Tughlaq” is a historical play dealing with the last five years of the troubled reign Muhammad-Bin-Tughlaq. Before he wrote Tughlaq, Girish Karnad started reading History widely. He says, “And when I came to Tughlaq I said Oh! Marvellous! That is what I wanted. In those days existentialism was very much in the air. To be considered mad was very much fashionable. Everything about Tughlaq seemed to fit into what I had read was the correct thing to do, which was to be mad and do impossible things and so on. So I started reading about Tughlaq. I suddenly realized what a fantastic character I had hit upon, I started with Ishwari Prasad and then went on to all the contemporary material and suddenly felt possessed. I felt this character was growing in front of me”. Although Karnad based Tughlaq character, administration, political, barbarity and savagery, he made deviation from history, which he things essential for dramatic purpose.

COMPARISON BETWEEN TUGHLAQ'S REIGN AND INDIA OF THE SIXTIES-

Tughlaq is the history play, but while writing is Karnad himself was struck by the parallelism between the reign of Tughlaq and Contemporary history. Tughlaq was a powerful personality but he disintegrated within a short span of twenty years, and the mood of disillusionment that set in correspond well with the mood of frustration at the end of the Nehru era. Karnad writes-

“I didn’t consciously write about the Nehru era. I am always flattered when people tell me that it was about the Nehru era and equally applies to development of politics since then. But I think, well, that is a compliment that playwright would be thrilled to get but it was not intended to be a contemporary play about contemporary situation. I think one gets involved with one’s character’s or one’s play then it should develop into same king of a true statement about oneself. I think a play can be only as contemporary as the playwright is. If the writer does not

have contemporary conviction or is not committed, the play will not be contemporary. You cannot be fashionably involved. If you are involved, the issues will come which if you are not involved don't emerge.”

At every step the play reflects the chaos, disillusionment and corruption that followed the Nehru era. Tughlaq ruled in the 14th century and Nehru in the 1950s and 1960s.

Striking parallels can easily be drawn between the two ages. Karnad writes:

“What struck me absolutely about Tughlaq's history was that it was contemporary. The fact that here was the most realistic, the most intelligent king to come on the throne of Delhi; and one of the greatest failure also. And within a span of twenty years this tremendously capable man had gone to pieces. This seemed both due to his idealism as well as the shortcoming within him, such as his impatiens, his cruelty, his feeling that he had the only current answer, and I felt in the early sixties India had also come very far in the same direction – the twenty years period seemed to me much a striking parallels” (8)

It tells the story of the reign of Tughlaq and the rapid disintegration of his personality and also tells of the shattering of ideals after the death of Nehru and the frustration and corruption that followed. Tughlaq wanted to establish a unity between Hindu and Muslim but they didn't trust one another. The Muslims called the Hindus bloody infidels who deserved to be kicked. And the Hindus respected the Muslims and could hardly believe that a Muslim was going to see them prosper and to exempt them from taxes without having his own benefit in view. A Hindu said “We didn't want an exemption. Look, when a sultan kicks me in the teeth and says, ‘pay up, you Hindu dog’ I am happy. I know you are a Hindu, but you are also a human being, well, that makes me nervous”. The young Muslim reacted sharply and violently to this statement of the Hindu and called him an “ungrateful wretch”. Despite the best effort of Muhammed to bring the Hindus and Muslims together, he failed. This fact of 14th century still holds good. Gandhi, the idealist, made attempts to unite the Hindus and the Muslims. Nehru followed in Gandhi's footsteps. As a Prime Minister, he wanted to unite the two but he failed. These were Hindu-Muslim riots and deep routed suspicion.

Tughlaq character is used only as background to portray what is happening today. Tughlaq thinks that whatever he does is right and for the good of the people. And to achieve this purpose he proposes to take a new step to transfer his capital from Delhi to Daulatabad. He explains to the people that his empire cannot flourish with Delhi as capital. Daulatabad as symbol of Hindu-Muslim unity will help to achieve his ideals. He

says, “I hope I shall have your support and cooperation.” But they don’t understand him. His idea is much ahead of the time and beyond the understanding of the common man.

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