

GIRISH KARNAD - *TUGHLAQ* :

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1.1. Contemporary Indian Theatre:

1.1.1. Introduction

The two decades after independence represent a time of the proliferation of theatrical forms in various regions of India. This period is also distinguished by the coming-of-age of Indian theatre. The generation of playwrights who emerged and came in to prominence in the two decades following the Indian independence revolutionized theatrical practices in India. The work of these playwrights is characterized by some commonly shared features. Most of them had a firm faith in the idea that earlier forms of theatre made possible by colonial modernity and conditioned by a pre-dominantly urban culture have become obsolete. Their departures from the earlier forms of theatre like the Parsi stage or the Indian Peoples' Theatre Association (IPTA), which flourished in the early decades of the century, became increasingly apparent. These departures manifested themselves as radical shifts in terms of themes, forms, structures, and presentation. Apart from these, new conceptions of theatre and theatrical techniques emerged as novel directions in Indian theatre. These playwrights forged radically new ways of creative self-expression distinguished by experimentation and revival of tradition. The self-consciousness of these playwrights as shapers of a "post-colonial" Indian theatre provided a different dimension to the cultural phenomenon. Almost all of the playwrights who started writing their plays in this period experienced a sense of disconnection with the previous forms of theatre. Girish Karnad, Dharamvir Bharati, Mohan Rakesh, Vijay Tendulkar, Badal Sircar, Utpal Dutt, Habib Tanvir, G.P. Deshpande, and others are the most representative of this generation of playwrights. They strongly believed in the pursuit of play-writing as a serious literary practice with an independent existence of its own. For them, theatrical performance was not a precondition to write a play. The play-text was

treated as an autonomous entity with a life of its own. They were beneficiaries of both the print form and the performance of their plays. Their plays-as-texts were widely read, analysed, and commented on both nationally and internationally. They belong to the first generation of playwrights to have established play writing as a literary endeavour. Interestingly, most of these playwrights opted to write their plays in their own languages rather than in English, even as they were actively involved in the translation of their own plays into English. This period is distinguished by the emergence of a number of bilingual playwrights who had literary competence in more than one language and both wrote and translated their works in either of them. Complementary to the role of the playwrights as translators was their role as critics, theorists and commentators. Their visibility in the literary world might be attributed to their active involvement in the formulation as well as articulation of experimental ideas and techniques in theatre. They had concrete and individually distinct notions of language, dramatic techniques, art of representation and performance, which transformed theatre into a systematized art and a national cultural institution.

1.1.2. Contemporary Indian Dramatists

The plays of this generation of playwrights are characterized by experimentation, innovation, and a sense of cultural regeneration. A host of playwrights like Mohan Rakesh, Girish Karnad, Badal Sircar, Vijay Tendulkar, and Mahesh Dattani, among others, are representative of the paradigm shift. Mohan Rakesh (1925-1972) wrote his first play *Ashadh Ka Ek Din* (*One Day in Ashadh*) in 1958 which is now translated into English. During this period no dramatist could attain the heights that Rakesh scaled so easily. In 1959 he bagged the first prize of the Sangeet Natak Academy with his very first play. In his lifetime Rakesh published three full length plays, *Ashadh Ka Ek Din* (1958), *Lehron Ke Rajhans* (1963) and *Aadhe-Adhure* (1969) which are translated into English. He also wrote some one-act plays,

Dhwaninatya (audio play), *Beejanatya* (seed play) and radio plays, *Ande ke Chhilke*, and *Raat Beetne Tak. Pair Tale Ki Zameen*, was left unfinished, and was later completed by his close associate Kamleshwar. Rakesh's first play *Ashadh Ka Ek Din (One Day in Ashadh)*, 1958, a historical play, based on the life of the renowned Sanskrit poet Kalidasa is about his first love, Mallika-a moving portrayal of the destiny of a simple rustic girl who loves the poet intensely and dreams of his greatness. Her dream is realized but she has to sacrifice all that is valuable in her life. For her, Kalidasa is her total existence, but for Kalidasa she is only his inspiration. This juxtaposition between self love and total surrender of being in man-woman relationships is explored in the play. The play is also concerned with conflicts between art and love, creativity and environment, feeling and action, and artist and the state. *Lehron Ke Rajhans (The Great Swans of the Waves)*, 1963, also reflects the anxieties of the modern world but on an altogether different level. The problem here is the relations between man and woman, the clash of their egos, divided personalities and the inability to communicate with each other. What stands out in this play is the loneliness of the individual, internal conflict, the pain of not being able to communicate. The inability to mould oneself according to the desires of the other even when one would like to do so, the insistence on treating one's own ego and desires as all important instead of surrendering and compromising are modern, twentieth century modes. *Aadhe-Adhure (Halfway House)*, published in 1969, also deals with the clash between the egos of man and woman, the tension, suffocation, and the disintegration of such a relationship, but on an entirely different scale. In this play, it is not only the bond between husband and wife, which seems to be breaking, but the whole family, is heading towards total disintegration. For the first time in this play Rakesh has placed man in a modern setting to deal with modern problems. The theme, here too, is of a breakdown in relation but in a different manner and on an entirely different level. Such a dispassionate, ruthless portrayal of our lives and our problems in a modern context is indeed rare. *Aadhe-*

Adhure is Rakesh's best literary work. It is also regarded as one of the best dramatic literary works in Hindi theatre and an important landmark in Indian theatre. *Pair Tale Ki Zameen* (*Soil beneath the Sole*), too, was written keeping in mind the disruption, listlessness and suffocation of modern life. This play basically leans towards existentialism. The setting is not domestic but a tourist club in Kashmir. The characters are not related. Fate has brought them together for one day. Suddenly, a fearful flood begins to chip away the bridge that links the club to the city and the characters are cut off from the rest of the world. The changed psychological condition of these characters, overshadowed as they are by the possibility of sudden death, has been finely drawn and analyzed by Rakesh. A few hours later arrives the news of the receding waters, the telephone begins to ring and their safety assured, everyone returns to normalcy. However, the contribution of Mohan Rakesh to the growth and development of Indian Drama is undeniable for it is the creative effort of all regional writers producing plays in their respective languages that has enriched Indian Drama. Vijay Tendulkar (1928-2008), a leading playwright, is fundamentally a social commentator. During his several observations of the post-independence Indian social setup as a journalist Tendulkar felt deeply concerned about the predicament of certain sections of society especially the marginal position granted to women. Though never claiming to be a champion of women's liberation, yet he found that male suppression and exploitation of women was a persistent problem in Indian society. In Indian society, Tendulkar observes, woman suffers largely as the victim of the institutional body of powers. Often there is a collision between the two i.e., women and society sparking off violence. In majority of his plays, Tendulkar appears preoccupied with the view that woman as a victim is subjected to violence and is traditionally deprived of her rights. Tendulkar's *Kamala* (1981), a play in two acts, projects the deplorable state of women who are treated as mere objects to be bartered, bought and sold. Jaisingh Jadhav, a well-known young journalist working as an associate editor in an

English language daily, deciding to expose this racket, buys a woman named Kamala for a paltry sum of Rs. 250 in the Luhardagga Bazaar in Bihar. He is troubled by this bargain for he believes that even a bullock costs more than that. Jaisingh wants to take Kamala to the press conference to prove his point. In *Kanyadan* (1983) Tendulkar presents the deep rooted malaise which he perceived in everyday life. The play won him the Saraswati Samman award. In this play, Jyoti, the 20 year old daughter of Devalikar, an MLC decides to marry Arun Athavali, a boy from the lower stratum of society. While the father has no objection, her mother and brother are against the alliance. Jyoti has her way marrying Arun in spite of all opposition. The truth of the situation emerges soon when Arun proves to be a violent husband. Jyoti's marital and social experiences teach her that it is almost impossible to change either people or society. The greater dismay for her is that she fails to bridge the gap between her section of society and that of Arun's. The attitude of Arun in the play exhibits the misuse of power and violence. He thought that as a husband he had complete control over his wife—body and mind. In no case was he prepared to compromise with the independence of Jyoti. In this way Tendulkar was able to maintain a semblance of reality right through his creative productions because, as he admitted, behind the creation of each character or incident was a real life character or situation. Vijay Tendulkar composed his first direct play in English entitled *His Fifth Woman* which has been regarded as a sequel to his earlier play *Sakharam Binder* and deals with the problems of women. The play was performed in the Tendulkar Festival held in New York in 2004. The play portrays two friends in conversation with each other sitting near the mistress of one of them lying on her death bed, a destitute picked up from the streets. One of the friends, in the pretext of providing food and shelter to such women, exploits them physically, being careful at the same time not to get emotionally involved. Dawood, the other friend has a sympathetic attitude towards these destitute women and perceives them as persons having desires and capabilities. When the mistress dies, he

requests the bereaved friend to arrange for a decent cremation, thereby succeeding in this enterprise. In an apparently simple play, the message conveyed focuses on the fact that those claiming to uphold the law strictly are in reality tyrannical hypocrites. Real justice results out of compassion and love and not from hypocrisy, autocracy and selfishness. Tendulkar's *His Fifth Woman*, though written many years after the play *Sakharam Binder*, may be considered as a prelude to the later. The man giving shelter to the destitute woman is called Sakharam Binder, a man in his forties and these helpless women are projected as the live-in mistresses of Sakharam who is a bachelor. The dramatist raises some relevant questions on the issue of morality and necessity of compassion through the play. Thus, many sensitive and thought-provoking issues are examined and analysed from a predominantly social point-of-view.

Mahesh Dattani is India's first playwright in English to be awarded the Sahitya Akademi Award for his contribution to world drama. Familial relationships attracted him the most. His *Where There is a Will* (1988) discusses the negative love of a father for his son. The enigma of generation gap constitutes the crux of *Dance like a Man* (1989) where Jairaj takes to dancing and marrying a dancer against his father's inclination. The familial conflict continues till the death of the father enabling Jairaj to relegate each item from the ancestral house that reminds him of his father. In addition, a hint is given about the prejudicial attitude of society against a male dancer, discussing, at the same time, the plight of temple dancers. Family relationships tend to be prominently displayed again in *Do the Needful* (1997) where a suitable bride is being sought for Alpesh, a thirty plus homosexual divorcee while twenty-four year old Lata deeply in love with a Muslim terrorist elopes with him. Mahesh Dattani's play *Tara* (1990) portrays characters that suffer from repressed desires, bondage to unreasonable traditions and very often are victims of cultural construct of gender. In *Tara* Mahesh Dattani delves deep into the mind of such characters laying stress on their fractured psyche especially when they are living in an equally fragmented social set up. The play

revolves around the physical and later the emotional separation of two conjoined twins, Tara and Chandan. The surgical operation is manipulated by Bharati, the mother and the maternal grandfather as to favour the son, Chandan. The twins had three legs between them with the major supply in the girl's side. However, as tradition required, it was essential for the boy to survive with two legs. Surgically the twins are separated in such a manner that Chandan has two legs while Tara remains with one leg though fate had its own plans and Chandan's leg was not accepted by his body resulting in amputation. Perhaps it would have suited Tara's body better. Consequently, both Tara and Chandan have one artificial leg each. Later several physical complications arise leading to the early demise of Tara. Tara is not merely an individual character but emerges as an archetype, an icon of the Indian girl child who is subdued in the mill of tradition. Dattani's plays have been acclaimed widely for their social realism more so because he brings out the plight of the subaltern woman who is no better than a second grade citizen in her own country. Another play focusing on woman's subordinate status in the society is *Bravely fought the Queen*, first produced in 1991 in Mumbai. This play focuses on an Indian family comprising of two brothers, Jiten and Nitin who are married to two sisters, Dolly and Alka. And Baa, the aging mother of the two brothers. Jiten and Nitin are joint owners of an advertising agency. The father of Jiten and Nitin was a cruel man often harassing their mother. Incidents of cruelty on her are referred to time and again in the play. Baa sees the same kind of cruelty in her older son Jiten hence she likes Nitin more. Dattani, through the various characters in the play brings to the forefront certain issues like domestic violence, deceit, desire, and fantasy. Through his plays, Mahesh Dattani succeeds in persuading the audience/readers to examine their individual and collective consciousness, thereby raising several questions about woman's condition in Indian society. Badal Sircar, a great Bengali playwright, is among the three great contemporary writers—Girish Karnad, Vijay Tendulkar and Mohan Rakesh. Badal Sircar

dives deep into the problems of middle-class society. He uses contemporary situations to project the existential attitude to modern life. Popularly known as a 'barefoot playwright', Badal Sircar stands in the forefront of new theatrical movement in India. He has created a genuine people's theatre known as Third Theatre, a theatre supported by people. His later plays, *Procession* (1972), *Bhoma* (1974) and *State News* (1979) are based on the concept of the Third Theatre. Badal Sircar's three plays present philosophy and vision of making people aware of their social responsibility. He makes the theatre a medium of conveying individual responsibility of the people towards the society. Sircar's *Procession* is about the search for a real home—a new society based on equality. It is about a new society where man does not have to live by exploiting man and in which each works according to his ability and gets according to his needs. These plays show Sircar's deeper understanding of the problems of the nuclear age and of poverty, corruption, greed and the industrial and agricultural exploitation of the poor inform his theatrical endeavours.

1.2.Girish Karnad

1.2.1. Early Life and Career

Girish Karnad, a well-known playwright, author, actor, and film director, was born on May 19, 1938 in Matheran, Bombay Presidency whose films and plays, written largely in Kannada, explore the present by way of the past. His initial schooling was in Marathi. In Sirsi, Karnataka, he was exposed to travelling theatre groups or *Natak Mandalis* as his parents were deeply interested in their plays. As a youngster, Karnad was an ardent admirer of Yakshagana and the theater in his village. He earned his Bachelors of Arts degree in Mathematics and Statistics, from Karnatak Arts College, Dharwad (Karnataka University), in 1958. Upon graduation Karnad promptly went to England and studied Philosophy, Politics

and Economics at Lincoln and Magdalen colleges in Oxford as a Rhodes Scholar (1960–63), earning his Master of Arts degree in philosophy, political science and economics.

After working with the Oxford University Press, Chennai for seven years (1963–70), he resigned to take to writing full-time. While in Chennai he got involved with local amateur theatre group, The Madras Players. During 1987–88, he was at the University of Chicago as Visiting Professor and Fulbright Playwright-in-Residence. During his tenure at Chicago *Nagamandala* had its world premiere at the Guthrie Theater in Minneapolis based on Karnad's English translation of the Kannada original. Most recently, he served as director of the Nehru Centre and as Minister of Culture, in the Indian High Commission, London (2000–2003). He served as director of the Film and Television Institute of India (1974–1975) and chairman of the Sangeet Natak Akademi, the National Academy of the Performing Arts (1988–93).

Most of his plays, written in Kannada, have been translated into English and some Indian languages. Karnad's plays are written neither in English, in which he vainly dreamt of earning international literary fame as a playwright, nor in his mother tongue Konkani. Instead they are composed in his adopted language Kannada. Initially, his command on Kannada was so poor that he often failed to distinguish between short and long vowels (laghu and deergha). When Karnad started writing plays, Kannada literature was highly influenced by the renaissance in Western literature. Writers would choose a subject which looked entirely alien to their milieu. There was a strong need to indigenize theatre and thus relate it to an Indian reality.

It was in such circumstances that Karnad took to writing plays. C. Rajagopalachari's version of the Mahabharat published in 1951 left a deep impact on him and soon, sometime in the mid-1950s, one day he experienced a rush of dialogues spoken by characters from the Mahabharata in his adopted language Kannada. "I could actually hear the dialogues being

spoken into my ears... I was just the scribe," said Karnad in a later interview. Eventually *Yayati* was published in 1961, when he was 23 years old. Centred on the story of a mythological king, the play established Karnad's use of the themes of history and mythology that would inform his work over the following decades. These sources were often used to portray contemporary themes, and existentialist crisis of modern man. Most of his characters are locked in psychological and philosophical conflicts. Karnad's next play, *Tughlaq* (1964), tells the story of the 14th-century sultan Muḥammad bin Tughluq and remains among the best known of his works.

Samskara (1970) marked Karnad's entry into filmmaking. He wrote the screenplay and played the lead role in the film, an adaptation of an anticaste novel of the same name by U.R. Ananthamurthy. Karnad followed with *Vamsha Vriksha* (1971), codirected by B.V. Karanth. During this period Karnad continued to produce work as a playwright, including *Hayavadana* (1971), widely recognized as among the most important plays of post-independence India. For his contributions to theatre, he was awarded the Padma Shri, one of India's top civilian honours, in 1974.

Karnad's other well-known films in Kannada include *Tabbaliyu Neenade Magane* (1977) and *Ondanondu Kaaladalli* (1978). He also worked in Hindi, directing the critically acclaimed *Utsav* (1984), an adaptation of Shūdraka's 4th-century Sanskrit play *Mrichchakatika*. With the play *Nagamandala* (1988), Karnad framed an unhappy contemporary marriage in imagery drawn from Kannada folk tales. In 1992 the Indian government awarded Karnad another of its highest honours, the Padma Bhushan, in recognition of his contributions to the arts. He was the recipient of the Jnanpith Award, India's highest literary prize, in 1999 for his contributions to literature and theatre. He continued to work in film, directing such movies as *Kanooru Heggadithi* (1999) and acting in *Iqbal* (2005) and *Life Goes On* (2009), among others.

1.2.2. Major Works

Girish Karnad's success in the field of contemporary theatre bears testimony to the fact that Indian theatre has revitalized itself through the use of experimental models. His plays are an assertion of the fact that Indian theatre can achieve significant success only by a "return to the roots". His plays are an interesting blend of the classical and the popular elements of Indian theatre. He borrows theatrical techniques both from the Sanskrit and the folk theatres of India. His plays are often considered to be an important part of Indian English literature, the consensus being that he himself has translated these plays in to English. Karnad, whose mother tongue was Konkani, wrote almost all his plays in Kannada, which was a second language to him. The English translations of his plays are considered by many to be far better in terms of literary merit than the Kannada originals. Another interesting aspect of Karnad's plays is that they do not directly base themselves on the original versions of a folk tale or a legend. They quite often develop out of a distinct and identifiable English translation of the original. In his preface to his *Naga-Mandala*, for instance, Karnad argues that the play "is based on two oral tales from Karnataka, which I first heard from Professor A.K.Ramanujan".

Yayati (1961) is a play about the Chandravamshi king in the Mahabharata who exchanged his decrepitude with the youth of his youngest son, to ward off the curse of premature old age. The play is a reflection of his eclecticism in borrowing elements from playwrights like Jean Anouilh, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Eugene O' Neill. This play established Karnad as a successful playwright, and makes use of the mythic narrative that is so crucial to his plays. The play attracted the attention of many readers when it first appeared in Kannada. *Hayavadana*

(1971) marked another significant achievement in his career as a playwright. The play is remarkable not just to Karnad's theatrical endeavours, but also to the new directions that post-independence Indian theatre was taking in around that time. It explores the question of the efficacy of revitalizing indigenous performance genres for a supposedly "modern" expression. It also marked the beginning of the genre of the "urban" folk play, that makes use of the dramatic and performative conventions of *Yakshagana* like stock characters, music, dance, masks, and talking dolls. The play centres around a story taken from the *Kathasaritasagara*, which is based on the transposition of heads. The play raises a set of important questions about identity and desire. Karnad's *Nagamandala*(1988) is often said to echo many of these themes. The play begins with a prologue where a failed playwright is cursed with death, because he has sent so many people to sleep in the theatre, the playwright himself is helped to stay awake by "Story" personified, who recounts to him the exciting narrative of a cobra and a married woman. The newly-wed Rani is neglected by her husband Appanna, who locks her up in the house. A king cobra falls in love with her and visits her in the disguise of her husband every night. On knowing this, her husband orders her to prove her innocence by putting her hand in to the ant-hill. She emerges unscathed in the process and is raised to the status of a village goddess. The play moves at a brisk pace and the dialogues are delivered in a smooth flow which preserves the spontaneity inherent in the narration of a folk-tale.

One of the dramatic techniques central to Karnad is the re-contextualization of history in the framework of the present. The past gets a contemporary relevance in most of his plays. This is clearly evident in plays like *Tale-Danda* and *Tughlaq*(1964). *Tale-Danda* deals with the final crisis in the life of one Basavanna, a social reformer in 12th century Karnataka. The play highlights the resentment of the upper-caste to the reformist ideas of Basavanna, which reaches a climactic moment when one his Brahmin disciples gives his daughter in marriage to

an untouchable. The “Mandal” and the “Mandir” movements and the unrest they generated in the country become the chief sources for the play and the reason for its contemporary relevance.

For his *The Fire and the Rain*, Karnad borrows a story from *The Mahabharata* and gives it a contemporary meaning. This story highlights the dangers of knowledge without wisdom, power without integrity. Karnad expanded the original story and invested it with rich meaning and universal significance. The play reverberates with symbolism and suggestions. The “fire” in the title of the play is thus the fire of lust, anger, vengeance, envy, treachery, violence, and death. The “rain” symbolizes self-sacrifice, compassion, divine grace, forgiveness, revival, and life.

1.3.Tughlaq

1.3.1. The Context

Girish Karnad’s *Tughlaq* is a representation of one of the most important but nevertheless neglected periods of Indian history. the reign of the fourteenth century Mughal emperor Muhammad-Bin-Tughlaq remains till date one of the most turbulent periods of history. This is the first and most significant play in the post-independence period to have engaged with the Sultanate period in Indian history. this period brought an end to the ‘golden age’ of classical Hinduism and introduced Islam as a dominant force. This is one of the most important phases of Islamic imperialism in India, but it remains neglected in the national imaginary because of the attention given to the later Mughal and British imperialism.

In the narrative of the life and achievements of the eccentric Sultan, Karnad saw the possibilities of creating a drama about contemporary political turmoil. While Karnad

eclectically borrows from a variety of sources like Zia-ud-din-Barani's contemporaneous account of Tughlaq in *Taqikh-I Feroz Shahi* (1357), he also freely blends fact and fiction to give the story a contemporary relevance. The play, then, represents the hopes and disappointments in the political life of the Nehruvian era in Indian politics. It voices the disillusionment of the people of Karnad's generation with Nehru's idealism. The play is a comment of the political scenario of the two decades after independence, under Nehru's leadership. Nehru's vulnerability to failure, in spite of over-arching ambition and an uncompromising intellect is paralleled with that of Tughlaq.

Karnad's *Tughlaq* is a significant intervention in history, as also a site for the development of a creative analogy between the past and the present. The contemporaneity ascribed to a historical situation makes the play unique.

1.3.2. Major Characters in the Play

Tughlaq- In the play, Tughlaq emerges as a headstrong and idealistic ruler. He is vulnerable, and constantly admits his mistakes and allows himself to be punished publicly. He moves his capital to Daulatabad because it is a city dominated by the Hindus. This move will further the cause of togetherness and communal unity. Through this character, the idealism of the Nehruvian era is commented upon. Guilty of parricide, Tughlaq is often on the defensive when he is questioned of his crime. His uncompromising generosity and sense of social justice embraces all religions and treats them in an impartial fashion. This character is a device that represents a scathing critique of the nationalist notion of communal harmony and religious co-existence, the very ideals that were valorized before independence but later turned in to an anti-climax with the partition of India.

The opening scenes reflect the idiosyncrasies and eccentricities of this character. He contemplates to equate the value of copper coins with silver dinars. In order to establish himself as a worthy ruler, he exposes himself to public scorn and invites public condemnation. He hastens the process of his own nemesis through a series of badly contrived measures at projecting himself as a tolerant and efficient ruler. His irrational and erratic methods are severely criticized by his courtiers and citizens. He emerges as a shrewd contriver and a mercilessly ambitious ruler. He is responsible for the assassination of Sheikh Muhammad, his severest critic, who accuses him of parricide and of being un-Islamic. He stabs Shihab-ud-din when he tries to conspire against him. He is doomed because of his own follies and failures, and becomes an insensitive murderer. The height of his insanity is reflected in the later episodes of the play. He later becomes a divided self, and suffers from inner turmoil and contradictions. His ultimate isolation in a world turned alien gives a tragic dimension to the play. Tughlaq might be perceived as an over-ambitious alien emperor, who aims to rebuild new cities and empires, subjecting the culture of a people to colonial strain. Each scene represents the progressive degradation and dehumanization of Tughlaq, leading to his tragic downfall.

Step-mother- The step-mother of Tughlaq constantly appears in the earlier scenes of the play. She is torn apart by conflicting emotions—her over-riding concern for her son is in contradiction with her awareness of the fact that he is guilty of parricide. She appears troubled, and confides in Najib, the courtier and politician. She is consistently projected as an embodiment of rationality and concern. She later murders in order to save her son from ultimate ruin. Tughlaq orders her to be stoned to death for the unwarranted act.

Aziz- Muhammad is very manipulative, witty, imaginative, secretive and ruthless, Aziz provides his ironic parallel .Like him, from the very beginning Aziz is clear about what he is to do in future (when he reaches his destination). In pursuit of realizing his dream to be rich by hook or crook, he manipulates the decision of the government giving compensation to those whose land has been confiscated by the state. He is a Muslim but in order to get the compensation he disguises himself as a Brahmin. Thus he punctures the balloon of the king's welfare policies .If Muhammad is confident that everything will be settled after he reaches Daultabad , Aziz is also confident of his plans. He tells Aazam, "There is money here .We will make a pile by the time we reach Daultabad."(p.155).If Muhammd has disguised his true self and poses to be a very religious and benevolent king, Azis is disguised as a Brahmin(though he is a Muslim washer man). Ironically, he appears as a Brahmin and ends up as a special messenger to the king. He becomes an instrument in exposing the cruelty and corruption prevalent in Muhammad's regime when he refuses to help a woman with a dying son in her lap and asking for help for his medical aid. Aziz expects money from her knowing full well that her husband is bed-ridden and she is helpless. Asked by Aaziz why he doesn't let her go to the doctor, very stoically he says,"It is a waste of money. I am doing her a favour." (188)

For Muhammad and Aziz politics holds a common interest. Aziz's comments about politics are ironically true:

... Politics ! It is a beautiful world- wealth, success, position, power-yet it is full of brainless people, people not with an idea in their head. When I think of all the tricks in our village to pinch a few torn clothes from people if one uses half that intelligence here, one can bet robes of power. It is a fantastic world. (190)

Like Muhammad he also makes use of religion and caste for his personal gains. He knows that even if the Hindu woman is not allowed to leave the camp, she can't complain against him as she takes him for a Brahmin. Complaining against a Brahmin to a Muslim, according to a Brahminical dogma, will send her to hell which she never desires. Furthermore, he is cruel like Muhammad in taking life of someone. He kills Ghiyas-ud-din and starts dancing after that which shows that he has no regrets of any sort after killing someone. His singing and dancing over a dead body reminds us of the neurotic self of the emperor. After killing Ghiyas-ud-din and putting on his robes he asks the horrified Aazam, "How do I look, eh? The great grandson of the Khalif . . . Laugh, the fool you laugh. Celebrate! What are you crying for? . . . Dance, dance. . . (sings)." (201). When he is to present himself before the king, he aptly defines himself, "I am your majesty's true disciple" (216). Indeed, Aziz appears as his 'shadow' or the 'other Muhammad'. It is perhaps because of this parallelism between them that Muhammad pardons him even for his grave misdeeds.

Aazam- He is a close friend of Aziz and his partner in the play. Both of them are vagabonds, and live mostly by robbery and deception. Aziz is undeniably the more cunning of the two. Aazam's actions are staged on a smaller scale, and Aziz's actions have larger ramifications. They constantly comment upon and analyse the policies of the Sultan and provide a variety of perspectives on the political climate of the play.

Najib- He is a politician and a shrewd contriver, a Hindu, who later embraced Islam. In most of the scenes, he is seen advising the Sultan on matters of political action and diplomacy. He is an advocate of ruthless political expansion and domination, and presents a perfect contrast to Barani, the historian. In the words of the Sultan "he wants pawns of flesh and blood. He doesn't have the patience to breathe life in to these bones..." He represents the more rational aspects of Tughlaq's self and is a constant companion in terms of royal political affairs.

Barani- He is a historian and a close associate of the Sultan. He witnesses and records history unfolding before his eyes. He radically differs in his opinions from the more rational Najib, and is more interested in looking at events in a relational and humanitarian point of view. He is sympathetic and tries his best to save the Sultan from his own whims and fantasies. The Step-mother confides in Barani and advises him to guard the Sultan from his temperament.

Sheikh-Imam-ud-Din- He is a maulvi and probably the harshest critic of Tughlaq. He openly proclaims Tughlaq to be un-Islamic and invites his hostility. He gives public lectures and condemns Tughlaq as guilty of parricide. He tries to influence the general public through his inflammatory speeches deriding the actions of the Sultan. He is later murdered in a cleverly crafted plot of the Sultan.

to be continued...