

Use of Prayers in Girish Karnad's *Tughlaq*

Thiyam Naoba Singh

Assistant Professor of English

Thambal Marik College, Oinam

Ph.d Regn. No. 80187513042369

Bishnupur-795126, Manipur, India

naobatmc@gmail.com

Abstract

Girish Karnad, 'Tughlaq', a brilliant but spectacularly unsuccessful fourteenth century Islamic sultan of Delhi knew popularly 'Mad Muhammad'. Muhammad Bin Tughlaq was second and most remarkable ruler of Tughlaq dynasty. He was the first Sultan to have the vision to see India as a whole country, and not just as a sort of cake for every ambitious aspiration to carve a kingdom out of it. After the tragic death of his father Ghias-ud-din, in 1325, soon declares himself as a sultan of Delhi under the title of Muhammad Bin Tughlaq. Muhammad was, without any doubt, the most educated of all Muslim rulers who ruled in Delhi. Muhammad was a deeply religious man and had learnt *Holy Quran* by heart. He used to quote verse of the *Quran* during his conversation. Karnad's uses many symbols in the play but prayer has been use for many dramatic purposed. His use prayer in murder of his father, brother, Sheikh Shams-ud-din, Imam-ud-din, his step mother, etc. also as politic.

Keywords: Prayer, Holy Quran, Patricide, Fratricide, Durban-I-Khas, Daulatabad.

Introduction

Tughlaq is a well know king in Indian history, who ruled India in the 14th century. He is known in the Indian history for his wickedness and insane policies than anything else.

Karnad's has immortalized this character in the play *Tughlaq*. Tughlaq has the extraordinary character to come on the throne of Delhi after his father and brother murdered during prayer time, and has blood on his hand at such a young age. In religion, in philosophy, even in calligraphy, in battle, in war field, in anything we talk about, he seems to have anyone who came before him or after him. Muhammad Bin Tughlaq after the tragic death of his father Ghias-ud-din, in 1325, soon declares himself as a sultan of Delhi under the title of Muhammad Bin Tughlaq. Muhammad Bin Tughlaq originally named Fakhr-ud-din Muhammad Junna Khan. He was second and most remarkable ruler of Tughlaq dynasty. He was the first Sultan to have the vision to see India as a whole country, and not just as a sort of cake for every ambitious aspiration to carve a kingdom out of it. He was also relatively liberal and he permitted Hindus and Jains to settle in Delhi. Tughlaq was born in 1300 in well-to-do family of Tughlaq nobles. He received the best education available.

Muhammad was a deeply religious man and had learnt *Holy Quran* by heart. He used to quote verse of the *Quran* during his conversation. He was a practicing Muslim who never missed his prayer and fasted regularly. During his regime, it was made compulsory to pray five times a day. His step mother believed that he was responsible for the death of his father and brother. She considered him as a murderer. He had polluted the prayer by murdering during prayer time. Muhammad Tughlaq used prayer as politics. He also knew Iman-ud-din a great saint, who revolted against Sultan Tughlaq at Kanpur. Sheikh Iman-ud-din was his greatest critic. He aroused the people of Kanpur with his fiery speeches. Sheikh Iman-ud-din was murdered. The greatest politician of today also falls at the feet of religious men not knowing the dust of the feet that he is taking on his head is a very common man's dust.

Prayers

Muhammad Bin Tughlaq was actually a brilliant man, with great vision and surprising insight. In fact many historical writers are of the view that he was far ahead of his time,

intelligent person whose way of thinking is not understood by the average man and he is taken to be a foolish and impulsive king by the people of his kingdom, though Barani seems to suggest that Muhammad was not so much ahead of time. Muhammad was a deeply religious man and had learnt *Holy Quran* by heart. He used to quote verse of the *Quran* during his conversation. He was a practicing Muslim who never missed his prayer and fasted regularly. During his regime, it was made compulsory to pray five times a day. Ratan Singh says:

The Sultan as you know is fantastic about prayer. He has made it compulsory for every Muslim to pray five times a day.

In the beginning, the Young Man says “now we pray five times a day because that’s the law and if we break it, we’ll have the officers on our neck”. But the people said he was guilty of killing his father and his brother during prayer. His father defeated brave Balban’s son with his similar ambition. For that grand victory Muhammad Bin Tughlaq, son of Ghias-ud-din’s, pretended to welcome his victorious father warmly with his evil intention. A grand pavilion was erected near Delhi at Afghan-pur for Ghias-ud-din’s welcome. As the lunch was over, the elephant were being taken by the front side of the pavilion soon the whole pavilion fell down and Ghias-ud-din and his second son died under it. The young man says:

It was. The elephant suddenly went wild. The crowds must have frightened it. It just ran and dashed against the wooden pandal. And the pandal collapsed.

Sultan didn’t care for what the people said. He tells to Barani that, “it’s their crooked minds that horrify me. Look at my own mother; she won’t talk to me now not because father died but because brother died in that accident. He was more amenable to her whims and he would have made a better king for her. So she believes I killed them”. His step mother believed that he was responsible for the death of his father and brother. She considered him as a murderer. But in fact he was not there. He had gone to the mosque to pray when the

accident occurred. That was the prayer time and the Sultan never missed a prayer. People believed that Sultan erected the whole pavilion and thought that the procession had been arranged for his father's honour. Later on he realized that he was responsible for their killing but he felt that they were killed for an ideal. He had never denied the word of God. He needed it most when the surrounding void pushed itself into his soul and started putting out every light burning there. But he was alone in his life. His kingdom had millions of Muslims, Hindus, and Jains. He knew, there was dirt and sickness in his kingdom. He called on God to clean the dirt deposited by men. But Sultan was trying to become another God. It was a sin worse than patricide. Only an atheist could try to be God. He was God's most humble slave.

Muhammad Tughlaq also used prayer as politics. Sultan told to his step mother that his dear friend Ain-ui-Mulk, the companion of his childhood, his fellow champion in chess, was at that very moment marching on Delhi with an army of thirty thousand. He didn't know. In the last letter he wrote to him, he asked him to be the governor of the Deccan. He needed strong men there and he thought he would like it. But instead, he revolted against him. He didn't ever have six- thousand soldiers to fight. He also knew Iman-ud-din a great saint, who revolted against Sultan Tughlaq at Kanpur. Sheikh Iman-ud-din was his greatest critic. He aroused the people of Kanpur with his fiery speeches. Sheikh told them that the Sultan was guilty of patricide and fratricide and that he was a transgressor of Islamic- tenet. The audience went wild and burnt down half of Kanpur. Iman-ud-din told to Sultan:

Please listen to me, Your Majesty. The Arabs spread Islam round the world and they struggled and fought for it for seven hundred years. They are tired now, limp and exhausted. But their work must continue and we need someone to take the lead. You could do it. You are one of the most powerful kings on earth today and you could spread the kingdom of heaven on earth. God has given you everything- power, learning, intelligence, talent...

The Sultan comes to know of the people's rising and invites Iman-ud-din to Delhi to address his people and to analyze the Sultan's administration and show where he had gone wrong. Iman-ud-din is caught in the trap. When he comes to Delhi he finds no audience to listen to him. This is clearly revealed from the conversation among the Amirs, Ratan Singh, Shihab and Sheikh.

Amir I. What did happen in Delhi?

Shihab-Ud-Din. You know that better than me! He came here to speak to the people and not a soul turned up to hear him. Not one of you had the courage to come to the meeting... and now you have the cheek to blame the Sultan for his death.

Sheikh. Yes, behind the scenes. It's true the Sultan invited the whole of Delhi to hear the Sheikh. Yet, on that very afternoon, soldiers went from door to door threatening dire consequences if anyone dared to attend the meeting.

Shihab-Ud-Din. Does the Sultan know this?

Sheikh. They were his orders! And do you know, while the Sultan stood in front of the great mosque with the Sheikh and got more and more agitated at the empty auditorium, his soldiers were hiding in the streets around stopping those who tried to come. You don't believe it? Look here...unbuttons his shirt and shows a wound on his shoulder

Sheikh is flattered by Sultan and his request to be the royal envoy to the Nawab of Avadh to plead peace of Islam. Sultan says that he, like every other Muslim of India, has great respect for saint (Iman-ud-din). He will believe in what saints tell him. Therefore, Sultan requests Iman-ud-din to help him in establishing peace. Sultan's says "Please Sheikhsahib, I'm not asking you only for my sake but for all the Muslim who will die at the hands of Muslim if there is a war. I'll never be able to thank you enough for this. Clap his hands. Bring the robes of honour for royal envoy. At once! "

Iman-ud-din feels delighted about being the Sultan's peace emissary. He looks gorgeous all dressed up in royal robes, a royal turban, even royal slipper, and sitting on royal elephant. Infact he looks exactly like the Sultan. All of a sudden the charge is sounded and the battle begins. His face becomes twisted with fear but he shouts at the top of his voice asking to stop. He didn't stand a chance. Arrows pour into him and within minutes he looks a gory human porcupine. He doesn't know that Sultan was hiding behind some hill with the rest of the army. The Iman-ud-din plunged down from the elephant and over his corpse fled in confusion. The enemy was convinced that the Sultan was dead and they pursued them. It was the bloodiest massacre. The battle was won. Sheikh Iman-ud-din was murdered.

Muhammad's prayer used again politically for the death of Sheikh Iman-ud-din. Shihab is entrapped when the Amir and Sheikh and his brother, Ratan Singh, tell him to save Islam by killing the Sultan at the prayer time when the emperor and his entire bodyguards are without arms. U.R. Anantha Murthy says that, the use of prayer for murder is reminiscent of what Tughlaq himself did to kill his father. That he as well as his enemies vitiates prayer, which is most dear to Tughlaq is symbolic of the fact that his life is corrupted at its very source. The Sayyids and Amirs don't approve Ratan Singh's idea to murder someone especially a Muslim at the prayer time. They decided to kill on next Tuesday at the meeting at Durban-I-Khas when there's prayer. Ratan Singh who wanted to see the downfall of Shihab writes a letter to Sultan and so Sultan is forewarned. The plan of murder fails due to his farsightedness and his secret knowledge of the conspiracy. He say to make announcement that he was died a martyr's death defending sultan.

It's only seven years ago that Sultan came to the throne. His stepmother says "how glorious you were then, how idealistic, how full of hopes. Now your kingdom becomes a kitchen of death all because of you". Sultan even orders to kill his stepmother for the murder of his friend Najib. After giving the order for the killing of his step mother, he prays to god.

Sultan is disillusioned and he realizes the futility of prayer and prohibits prayer in his kingdom. He says, he had wanted every act in the kingdom to become a prayer, every prayer to become a further step to knowledge, every step to lead as nearer to God. But our prayers too are ridden with disease, and must be exiled. There will be no more praying in his kingdom, Najib. Anyone caught praying will be severally punished. Karnad has repeatedly used the word “prayer” and it’s, polluted form at the very source, and so it no longer has the efficacy of prayer. Religions make it incumbent for the people to pray. Ambition for power and money vitiates prayer and religion. Prayer is used as a means of an end, and not as an end in itself. It is the power, the prosperous and the rulers who can pray in peace, empty stomach can’t afford to pray. In the atmosphere of atrociousness, cruelty, killing, sobs and sighs, wailing and tears which India had during the reign of Muhammad, it was very difficult for the people to pray. In scene XI of the play crowds of people gather in a plain outside the fort of Daulatabad. They say, “Who want prayer now?”

Karnad ironically presents the dhobi in the guise of the great grandson of Sultan Imperial Holiness Abbasid, the Khalif of Baghdad. After having committed the murder of Ghiyas-ud-din Abbasid who was invited by the Sultan to Daulatabad, now Aziz disguised again and appears in the guise of a Muslim saint and goes to the palace of Muhammad to bless and purify Daulatabad. It is announced; today is a holiday for us. Muhammad welcomes him with these words:

Welcome to our city, Your Holiness welcome to our poor land. My kingdom rejoices at the arrival of your gracious presence. We have waited for this joyful moment ... we have waited long, your Holiness, and our sins have become shadows that entwine round our feet. They have become our dumbness and deprived us of prayer. They have become the fiery sun and burnt up our crops. Now the moment has come for me and my people to rejoice.

It is the great irony that Karnad presents that great mighty Tughlaq, the most powerful, fall, at the feet of a dhobi masquerading as Ghiyas-ud-din Abbasid. The greatest politician of today also falls at the feet of religious men not knowing the dust of the feet that he is taking on his head is a very common man's dust.

Conclusion

Girish Karnad's '*Tughlaq*' was far ahead of his time, intelligent person whose way of thinking is not understood by the average man and he is taken to be a foolish and impulsive king by the people of his kingdom. He was a practicing Muslim who never missed his prayer and fasted regularly. During his regime, it was made compulsory to pray five times a day and in this 21st century of Hindu country still continue. But the people said he was guilty of killing his father and his brother during prayer. Not only this but also Sheekh Imam-ud-din. The murder of Sheikh during prayer he used politic. He say to make announcement that he was died a martyr's death defending sultan. Sultan is disillusioned and he realizes the futility of prayer and prohibits prayer in his kingdom. He wanted every act in the kingdom to become a prayer, every prayer to become a further step to knowledge, every step to lead as nearer to God. But our prayers too are ridden with disease, and must be exiled. There will be no more praying in his kingdom. Karnad has repeatedly used the word "prayer" and it's, polluted form at the very source, and so it no longer has the efficacy of prayer. Prayer is used as a means of an end, and not as an end in itself. It is the power, the prosperous and the rulers who can pray in peace, empty stomach can't afford to pray. In the atmosphere of atrociousness, cruelty, killing, sobs and sighs, wailing and tears which India had during the reign of Muhammad, it was very difficult for the people to pray. The greatest politician of today also falls at the feet of religious men not knowing the dust of the feet that he is taking on his head is a very common man's dust.

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