

TUGHLAQ : GIRISH KARNAD

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 in to 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.

Girish Karnad has been in the forefront of modern Indian theatre since the spectacular success of his much celebrated play *Tughlaq*, written in the Kannada language and translated into English by the author himself in 1972. One of the twenty-three official languages of India, Kannada belongs to the family of Dravidian languages. It is estimated as being spoken by sixty million speakers in India alone, and by a further nine million as a second language. It is the state language of Karnataka and is one of the modern languages of India. Girish Karnad was born in 1938 at Matheran in Maharashtra state, India. He completed his schooling in Sirsi (Karnataka) and took a BA (Mathematics and Statistics) at Karnataka College, Dharwad, India. Later he went as a Rhodes Scholar (1960-63) to Oxford University to pursue his post-graduation (Philosophy, Political Science and Economics). In addition to being a bilingual writer, Karnad is also a renowned filmmaker, director and actor, whose autobiography has recently been released (2011). If his directing and acting have earned him some twelve awards, his career as a playwright has bestowed upon him Jnyanapeeth, India's highest literary award, and he has received further recognition from various institutions.

The plot of *Tughlaq*

The play centres on the historical figure of Mohammed-bin-Tughlaq, a Muslim king of the Tughlaq dynasty who ruled from Delhi over large parts of Northern and Central India during the period 1325 to 1351. The play aptly fuses history and fiction. History, in the form of the political career of Tughlaq, forms the main plot; fiction forms the subplot of the play in the creation of the pair Aziz and Azam, a dhobi (washerman), and a pickpocket, respectively. If the main plot enacts the fall of an ambitious autocrat in Tughlaq, the subplot presents an ordinary dhobi manipulating for his own benefit the schemes introduced by the king. The play fashions the character of Tughlaq as an ambitious king who wants to build a grand empire and manoeuvre his citizens to think as he does. To that end he devises the grand schemes of transferring his capital from Delhi to Daulatabad, and introduces a new currency system. A lover of the game of chess, Tughlaq symbolically moves his political pawns without ethics or morality. Manipulation and cruelty combine together in him to serve his delusions. Tughlaq attempts to make a show of the prevalence of justice in his kingdom by restoring to Vishnudatta, a Hindu Brahmin,

his confiscated property and by giving him an appointment in his state service. This political pretension of showing how justice prevails in Tughlaq's kingdom is manipulated by the dhobi Aziz, who presents himself in the guise of Vishnudatta.

Tughlaq is portrayed as a master of intrigue and treachery. His politics do not spare even religion; he invites Sheik Imam-ud-din, a great religious leader, who criticizes him openly, to address his people, but sees to it that no one attends his address. He later persuades Sheik, in the name of Islam, to act as envoy to his political rebel Ain-ul-Mulk, only to make Sheik the scapegoat. However, Tughlaq's tyranny makes the overlords of Delhi rebel against him; they hatch a plot to kill him during prayer, but he sabotages the conspiracy and murders Sihab-ud-din, one of the conspirators. Tughlaq gives it a political colouring by projecting that Sihab-ud-din died while saving the king. As Tughlaq's ambition fades, his cruelty and disillusionment dominate the state; not even his stepmother is spared from death. When Ghiyas-ud-din Abbasid, a descendant of the famous Abbasid dynasty of the Caliphs of Baghdad, is on his way to visit the new capital Daulatabad, Tughlaq revives the prayer which he had ordered to stop after the conspirators' plan to finish him off. Aziz kills Abbasid on the way and supplants him in the palace by disguising himself as a descendent of Khalif. By that time there is chaos in the kingdom as a result of famine and counterfeit currency. In the end, Tughlaq finds himself alone; even Barani, his confidant and constant companion, leaves him to his fate.

This text is not only successful as written literature but also as a dramatic piece- its staging has established a tradition of excellent theatrical performances. As might be expected, it has invited a variety of critical readings in both Kannada and English. Among the Kannada writings on Tughlaq, G.H. Nayak (1984), in one of the best essays on Tughlaq, undertakes a thematic analysis of the play, while C.N. Ramachandran (2008) offers perceptive insights into Karnad's engagement with history. Ramachandran scrutinizes three of Karnad's historical plays - Tughlaq, Taledanda and The Dreams of Tipu Sultan - on the premise that what is important for a work of art which is based on history is not only historical objectivity but also the rationality of defining history. In Ramachandran's opinion, Karnad's Tughlaq defines history as a narrative of the past which reflects the contemporaneity of the present. By contrast, The Dreams of Tipu Sultan, while questioning the very discipline of history, asserts that India should reject colonial thinking and develop its own theory of history. This analysis is a good entry point for Karnad's historical plays.

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. If Muhammad has disguised his true self and poses to be a very religious and benevolent king, Aziz 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 Aziz 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". 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.

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). When he is to present himself before the king, he aptly defines himself, — I am your majesty's true disciple. 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.

Tughlaq as a Political Allegory

Through the technique of establishing analogy between the past and the present, Girish Karnad heightens the relevance of the play for the present time. The play does not merely present a picture of the past, but highlights its implications for the present. An analogy is developed between Tughlaq's reign in the play and the political situation of the Nehruvian era. This analogy and its appropriateness make the play unique in terms of contemporary relevance. Even after years of its first publication, the play continues to be perceived as being contemporary.

One of the critical issues that Karnad addresses in Tughlaq is the striking gap between political aspirations and its reality. In one of his interviews Karnad comments: —When I read about Mohammed bin Tughlaq, I was fascinated. How marvellous this was, I thought. Tughlaq was a brilliant individual, yet is regarded as one of the biggest failures. He tried to introduce policies that seem today to be farsighted to the point of genius, but which earned him the nick name "Mohammed the mad" then. He ended his career in bloodshed and chaos.

There is a consistent conflict between reality and what is assumed to be the ideal state of affairs. Tughlaq's uncompromising idealism is strongly critiqued. As the drama opens, Tughlaq implores his subjects to observe a system of imparting justice "without any consideration of might or weakness, religion or creed." Karnad's depiction of Tughlaq as one who sought to put aside religious differences in the hopes of embracing secularism is a powerful issue in the drama. Tughlaq states early on that he wishes to see unity between Hindus and Muslims as a significant part of his vision: "Daulatabad is a city of Hindus and as the capital, it will symbolize the bond between Muslims and Hindus which I wish to develop and strengthen in my kingdom." The impracticality of his aspiration collides with reality as Tughlaq fails in his vision. It is because of such a condition that Karnad exposes his propensity to failure. This sense of analogy that attaches itself to the play is significant when set against the condition in which it was written. In 1964, India had been less than two decades removed from Partition and Independence. The result was a nation where direction and transformative vision was hard to establish. A nation born from Gandhian principles was still hopelessly locked in sectarian violence and communal hatred, the very elements that Karnad's Tughlaq desires to overcome in the drama. The theme of political aspiration being limited by temporal reality is a significant one in both the drama and the historical condition in which it is written. Tughlaq's initial judgment rendered upon a Brahmin that he "should receive a grant of five hundred silver dinars from the state treasury... and in addition to that...a post in the civil service to ensure him a regular and adequate income" is a reflection of how a transformative political vision might not necessarily be received well by the public. This theme of political transformation stumped in the face of temporal reality is a significant part of the drama. It is reflective of the India that Karnad sees in front of him, a stunning realization between the gulf between what is and what can be. The chaos and fragmentation that results out of a vision steeped in genius becomes a part of both the ruler's narrative and the nation's history. Tughlaq's notion of religious tolerance prompts him to emancipate Hindus from the payment of jiziya or tax. This vision of his is not properly understood and appreciated by his citizens, who strongly oppose such a move. His policies and methods of political action were well ahead of his time, and therefore received severe critique from his contemporaries. They were formulated with the far-sighted vision of establishing a secular kingdom, but were instant failures as they failed to relate to the immediate reality of the subjects.

Major Themes and Issues in the Play:

Idealistic Leadership

What makes the Sultan's character more fascinating is his paradoxical and complex nature. He is portrayed as —a dreamer and a man of action, benevolent and cruel, devout and callous. U.R. Anantha Murty remarks: —Both Tughlaq and his enemies initially appear to be idealists; yet in the pursuit of the ideal, they perpetrate its opposite. The whole play is structured on these opposites: the ideal and the real: the divine aspiration and the deft intrigue. These opposites constitute the main charm of the structure of Tughlaq. Tughlaq promises his Subjects to maintain —justice, equality, progress and peace -- not just peace but a more purposeful life—without any consideration of might and weakness, religion or creed. But to a great surprise he could not win the hearts of his public.

He wants to give his —beloved people peace, freedom, justice and progress. He says that his people would witness how justice works in my kingdom - without any consideration of might or weakness, religion or creed. But his ascendancy over the throne of Delhi makes him —at once a dreamer and a man of action, benevolent and cruel, devout and godless. His two close associates- Barani, the scholarly historian and Najib, the politician seem to represent the two opposite selves of Tughlaq, while Aziz, the wily time server appears to represent all those who took advantage of Sultan's visionary schemes and fooled him. Indeed Tughlaq was at first an idealist but as time passed on his idealism failed and he turned to be a shrewd politician, a callous and heartless murderer and intriguer who employed religion for his political motives and even hurled the country into turmoil and troubles. Thus the play —explores the paradox of pseudo – idealistic Sultan Muhammad Tughlaq, whose reign is regarded as a spectacular failure in India's history. As an idealist and visionary, a rationalist and forward looking emperor Tughlaq tried to introduce his kingdom into an egalitarian society. But he found the circumstances not favorable to rule because the country was divided between Islam and Hinduism. There was much animosity between the Hindus and Muslims. Tughlaq began to make efforts to bring about harmony between the two communities, justice and equality for all for the welfare of his people. He said: —May this moment burn bright and light up our path towards greater justice, equality, Progress and peace – not just peace but a more purposeful life.

Tughlaq wanted to be an enlightened and liberal despot and tried hard to find the cooperation of his subjects, which was denied to him due to the bigotry and orthodoxy of his people. The people fail to understand his idealism and reformatory zeal, and condemn him as an enemy of Islam. In fact, he is a devout Muslim with full faith in the Holy Koran but his rationalistic and ideal views are beyond the comprehension of his subjects. However, the young people admire and support the liberal and secular policies of the Sultan whose rationalistic and modernized attitude appeals the youth. To him, —The country's in perfectly safe

hands – safer than any you’ve seen before. No other Sultan before Tughlaq allowed —a subject within a mile’s distance. It is he who made prayer five times a day compulsory for all Muslims as dictated in the Koran. The Young man further advocates him and says:

—Now you pray five times a day because that’s the law and if you break it, you’ll have the officers on your neck. Can you mention one earlier Sultan in whose time people read the Koran in the streets like now?

Religious Tolerance as a Political Strategy

The Sultan practiced the idea of brother hood, which is an important aspect of human values in Islam, and this in turn annoyed the ecclesiastics because it undermined their political interests. The efforts of the Sultan to bridge the difference between Hindus and Muslims invited anger and displeasure of the Mullahs and Maulavis. To unite them, he abolished the jiziya tax and openly declared that both Hindus and Muslims would be treated impartially and would be equal in the eyes of the law. But this made him a suspect both in the eyes of the Hindus and the Muslims. The Old Man in the first scene mocked at the Sultan’s liberal attitude towards Hindus:

—Beware of the Hindu who embraces you. Before you know what, he’ll turn Islam into another caste and call the prophet an incarnation of his god....

Even Hindus, who were prospering and exempted from jiziya taxes, never trusted on their part. They bore with such insults silently. A Hindu expresses his anguish in the following words:

—We didn’t want an exemption! Look, when a Sultan kicks me in the teeth and says, Pay up, you Hindu dog’; I’m happy. I know I’m safe. But the moment a man comes along and says, 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 —Ungrateful wretch. Tughlaq remained an idealist and visionary throughout his life. As he said to his Step Mother: —I pray to the Almighty to save me from sleep. All day long I have to worry about tomorrow but it’s only when the night falls that I can step beyond all that. Even at the height of frustration he did not give up his visions and idealism. He tells the Young Man:

—Nineteen. Nice age! An age when you think you can clasp the whole world in your palm like a rare diamond. I was twenty-one when I came to Daulatabad first, and built this fort. I supervised the placing of every brick in it and I said to myself, one day I shall build my own history like this, brick by brick.

By temperament Tughlaq was a rationalist and philosopher and he wanted to build up a powerful and united nation. The far-sighted Tughlaq announced his policy to shift the capital by saying that —this is no mad whim of a tyrant. My

ministers and I took this decision after careful thought and discussion. The decision to shift the capital from Delhi to Daulatabad was taken because —My empire is large now and embraces the South and I need a capital which is at its heart. Delhi is too near the border and as you well know its peace is never free from the fear of invaders. But for me the most important factor is that Daulatabad is a city of Hindus and as the capital it will symbolize the bond between Muslims and Hindus which I wish to develop and strengthen in my Kingdom. I invite you all to accompany me to Daulatabad. This is only an invitation and not an order. Only those who have faith in me may come with me. With their help I shall build an empire which will be the envy of the world.

Tughlaq's rash decision to change the capital from Delhi to Daulatabad is a turning point in Tughlaq, which results in untold and inexpressible suffering to the common people. Prayer and religion are vitiated for power and money. Prayer is used to achieve an end and not an end in itself. The word 'prayer' is repeated several times and it reverberates throughout the play. Karnad dexterously shows how prayer affects the ruler and the masses. The powerful, the prosperous and the rulers can pray in peace. The poor who are exploited and empty stomachs cannot even think of prayer. Their prayer is only to earn bread by the sweat of brow. To Tughlaq it was a masquerade to hide his guilty conscience and to the hungry people it was luxury. 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.

Disguise

Disguise is an important theatrical strategy in the play. It on the one hand undermines the seriousness with which the Sultan's plans are made and on the other, mocks at his idealism. The dramatist ironically presents Aziz, the dhobi, who disguises himself as Brahmin, and later appears in the guise of the great grandson of —His Imperial Holiness Abbasid, the Khalif of Baghdad. He is invited by the Sultan to Daulatabad to bless the country and to start the banned prayer. An announcement is made so that all the citizens may welcome His Holiness for, —This is a holy day for - us - a day of joy! And its glory will be crowned by the fact that the Public Prayer, which has been mute in our land these five years, will be started again from next Friday. Henceforth every Muslim will pray five times a day as enjoined by the Holy Koran and declare himself a faithful slave of the Lord.

Muhammad welcomes His Holiness with these words:

—We have waited for years for this joyful moment. Our streets have waited in silence for the moment when the call to the holy prayer will ring in them again. And each year has been a century. 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. Only you can save me now, Your Holiness, only the dust of your feet on my head can save me now.¶

It is a great ironic act that Tughlaq, the mighty and the most powerful, falls at the feet of Ghiyas-ud-din Abbasid, disguised Aziz. The great and shrewd politician of his time wants to seek shelter at the feet of a religious man not knowing the dust of the feet he is taking on his head, is that of a common man. Here the great emperor becomes an object of pity as his dreams of the monarch are shattered. Politics fails and the realm of religion begins to prevail over politics. Karnad succeeds in presenting the common man in disguised is more powerful than the Sultan for the royalty has to bow down to him. The last scene becomes more ironical because the Sultan, who initiates the prayer after five years, falls asleep.

Symbolism

The play Tughlaq is noted for its symbols. Four symbols like prayer, sleep, the game of chess and the rose are used to heighten the effect of the play. As P. Bayapa Reddy remarks: —At the micro level, prayer symbolizes the religious idealism of Tughlaq. At the macro level, it connects man's unconscious need for divine protection and guidance in an hour of anguish. In the beginning prayer is made compulsory but later it is banned for a few years and again it is revived. It is reduced to a mockery when the Sultan's life is threatened at the time of prayer.

Sleep on one level represents the need for rest in man's life. At the macro level it becomes symbolic of peace, which eludes man often. The rose is a symbol of the aesthetic and poetic susceptibilities of Tughlaq. It later on becomes a symbol of the withering away of all the dreams and ideals of Tughlaq. At the macro level, the game of chess is an ordinary game which is popular in India. It also symbolizes a political game in which an ordinary washer man checkmates the most intelligent and clever politician. Through this symbolist technique, the playwright has succeeded in creating the right political atmosphere

Rulers and politicians use religion as a medium to befool the common man. They pollute religion by misusing it for fulfilling their dirty political motives. But religion cannot be used to serve the end of those who are in power because it preaches morals and expects morality from the people. It stands for virtue, goodness, righteousness and moral conduct while politics thrives on intrigue, craftiness, dishonesty and deceit. The case of Tughlaq is no exception. What Karnad shows in Tughlaq is that the idealist and his idealism do not go hand

in hand with a politician and his politics. The idealist is only a misnomer and he has to face challenges, which he tries to curb down in his own crafty manner. But the idealist Tughlaq fails in producing any lasting result. What he gains, as he tells, is: —Not words but the sword – that’s all I have to keep my faith in my mission and —power, strength to shape my thoughts, strength to act, strength to recognize my self. All his idealism is shattered in the game of politics and thrown to the winds. Even Barani, the best of his advisors, asks Muhammad, who is a man of great learning,

—You are a learned man, Your Majesty, you are known the world over for your knowledge of philosophy and poetry. History is not made only in statecraft; its lasting results are produced in the ranks of learned men. That’s where you belong, Your Majesty, in the company of learned men. And further, Your Majesty, there was a time when you believe in love, in peace, in God. What has happened to those ideals? You won’t let your subject pray. You torture them for the smallest offence. Hang them on suspicion. Why this bloodshed?

The murder of the Sheikh leads to the intrigues of the courtiers and other idealists of the kingdom. This happening unites the Hindus and the Muslims altogether to rise against the craftiness and tyranny of the Sultan. Shihab-ud-din, the most trusted of the friends of Sultan is persuaded to attend the meeting of the intriguers and at last to stand against the Sultan.

Questions:

1. Girish Karnad’s Tughlaq juxtaposes the historical and the contemporary. Discuss.
2. Tughlaq’s failure is rooted in his uncompromising idealism. Analyse.
3. Comment on Karnad’s use of theatrical devices in his Tughlaq.
4. Write an essay on Girish Karnad’s use of symbols in Tughlaq.
5. Parallelism between Aziz and the Sultan is one of the central theatrical strategies in Girish Karnad’s Tughlaq. Justify.
6. Girish Karnad’s Tughlaq is a comment on the political anxieties of the Nehruvian Era. Elucidate.