



'SYMBOLISM' IN GIRISH KARNAD'S PLAYS:TUGHLAQ AND HAYAVADANA

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ABSTRACT

Symbols have got a different place in the Indian Context of Literature. Symbolism as a trend, or a movement, in literature began in 19th century in France, especially in Poetry. A symbol means 'anything, an image, an object, or even a word that stands for something else'. E.g. 'Cross' symbolizes 'Christianity' whereas 'Om' stands for 'Hinduism'. All cultures, religions and even our day-to-day life have a host of symbols. A symbol creates such a kind of impression on readers. It makes a literary text effective. One of the most Indian eminent playwright Girish Karnad makes use of symbolic elements in his plays like 'Tughlaq' and 'Hayavadana' in order to emphasize the beauty of our traditional forms. In his plays he used the symbols Ancient Indian Myths, Folktales and History. In this context he is to be called as an Indian Shakespeare, because Shakespeare borrowed the themes and symbols from Greek tradition, but Karnad used the themes and symbols from Ancient Indian Tradition. In the plays 'Tughlaq' and 'Hayavadana', we come across symbols such as 'The Game of Chess', 'The King', 'The State' and 'The Body', 'The Mind' respectively.

KEYWORDS:Symbolism, Chess, King, Myths, Tradition etc.

INTRODUCTION:

GirishRaghunathKarnad (born 19 May 1938) is an Indian actor, film director, writer, playwright. He started writing plays in 1960s. He is a recipient of 'Jnyanpeeth Award' in 1998. He has been writing plays from last four decades using mythological elements. So far he has contributed a lot in Indian English Literature by composing 9 plays such as Yayati(1961), 'Hayavadana(1971), 'Tughlaq(1972)', 'Naga Mandala (1988)' etc. In these plays Karnad utilized many of the mythological stories for his plays' plots. He also

used many symbols in his various plays. He makes bold experiments with the folk and classical devices but the modern devices like use of symbolism, irony and humour remain an integral part of his dramatic technique. In this article we are focusing on 'Tughlaq' and 'Hayavadana'. The play Tughlaq is a historical play which deals with the life of ambitions of a Muslim King, Mohammad-Bin-Tughlaq of 15th century India and Hayavadana is a play which dramatizes a conflict between the Physical strength and Intellectual Power by using the symbols Body and the Mind.

Symbolism in Tughlaq:The play Tughlaq opens with royal declaration that the Jizia tax on the Hindu subjects has been abolished and that the



state will copper coins and the capital will be shifted from Delhi to Daulatabad. Tughlaq gets his father and brother assassinated in an accident and becomes a King. But he keeps changing his roles. It is in this complex aspect of his changing roles that we begin to notice the evolving patterns of symbolism. In this play, there are three major symbols that Karnad uses. They are as follows:

- + Chess
- + The King
- + The State

Chess: Game of Chess which Girish Karnad first used in his play *Yayati* and later on in *Tughlaq*. 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. One of the critics observes that "Chess symbolizes Tughlaq's game approach to life wherein he regards the other people as pawns to be manipulated for his own advantage".

In Scene II Muhammad tells Barani that he has invited Shihabuddin, the Prince of Shampanshahar. When Barani questions it, "Forgive me. I let you down Barani, but I must play this game my own way". Caught in his deft move, Imam-u-din too pleads, "Don't play any more games with me." Despite Muhammad's verbal confession that "there is no time for games", he never stops playing it to the end. In his opinion all the important persons around him are the players of chess. Barani, who is a historian, is interested only in playing chess "with the shadows of the dead" Najib is a politician who wants "pawns of blood and flesh." Similarly, when Aziz shouts at his counterpart not to call him by his name, the helpless Aazam retorts "I am fed up by these games".

The King: The play dramatizes the ambitiousness, idealism and the frustration of a king, who believes that he alone can lead the country into an Ideal State. He makes free Hindu Subjects from Jizia tax imposed on them. But Tughlaq has two faces: One that is conspicuously public and the other is deeply private. He assumes the role both saviour and visionary. He sincerely wishes to transform his state with an ideal policy. Being the head of the state it is his duty to create an environment of unity in his kingdom. The symbolic role of visionary that Tughlaq has assumed for himself is constantly threatened by the bitter and material realities of governance. The tyrant in *Tughlaq* is like a sleeping dragon. When it wakes up, it swallows everything in sight.

The State: Tughlaq's idea of a State has symbolic connotations. The state that he imagines has all the components of Plato's Republic. In order to translate his vision of an ideal state into material reality, Tughlaq takes following decisions:

- a) Abolition of Jizia TAX
- b) Redressal of Public Grievances
- c) Shifting of Capital from Delhi to Daulatabad.

He is aware of the fact that the state Daulatabad is dominated by Hindu majority. The shifting of capital to Daulatabad could bring Hindus and Muslims closer. This will ultimately help Tughlaq in achieving his goal of communal harmony. The state gradually degenerates into the bitter reality of blood, violence, cruelty and finally an illusion but it is a symbol that has the power and strength to catch the attention of the spectators.

Symbolism in Hayavadana: Karnad's another play *Hayavadana* was published in 1971. Like other plays, Karnad makes use of Myths, Symbols for the plot of the play. The play depicts the conflict between body which symbolizes the physical strength and the head or mind which stands for intellectual power. The question of physical vitality versus intellectual power is dramatized in the characters of Devdatta and Kapila. Devdatta belongs to Brahmin family, Kapila belongs to lower caste. Being Brahmin Devdatta gains knowledge but remains physically unfit and on the other hand Kapila is physically strong but he lacks in intellectual power. Devdatta falls in love with a young girl Padmini and gets marry with her. The married couple decide to go picnic along with Kapila. On the way they find Kali temple, before Goddess Kali, as per their promise Devdatta and Kapila sacrifice their lives. When Padmini comes to that place, Goddess Kali appears and promises Padmini to grant whatever she wishes. Padmini requests Kali to restore the lives of two deadmen. Goddess Kali instructs Padmini to attach their heads to their respective bodies, but the desire and the lust of Padmini to have a strong companion having physical strength and intellectual power compels her attach to exchange the mind and the body. She attaches the

head of the Kapila to the the body of Devdatta and the head of Devdatta to the body of Kapila. As a result, Devdatta and Kapila start quarreling over the right to own Padmini.

In this situation Padmini falls in dilemma with whom to live. She finally goes to forest to live with Kapila, but there the two friends meet together and resolve that the three of them cannot live together and they decide to end their lives. The duel takes place between them and they kill each other. At the end the haunted Padmini also ends her life. It shows the conflict between knowledge and power which has a long tradition over the years. It is very difficult to go these two things hand in hand.

CONCLUSION:

We can conclude that the symbols play crucial role in every genre of literature. As the silence is better than words, the symbols are more powerful in conveying a particular thing. And this Symbolism has been used by GirishKarnad in many of his plays. He started using the term symbolism in Yayati, and continuing the same as much as possible.

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