

## 2. Use of Mask in Girish Karnad's Play *Tughlaq*

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### Abstract:

*Girish Karnad is a multiple personality- a regional, national and international playwright, actor, film-maker and director. His plays have been performed all over the world and translated into many languages. For his works, Karnad has received a number of awards including "Gnanapeeth Award." In Indian folk theatres, half-curtain is used to introduce a character. It shows a well as hides the face of the character. Mask is also used either to conceal or reveal a character's reality. So the paper aims to study the use of a mask in Girish Karnad's play "Tughlaq." Tughlaq is the most complex and complicated of Girish Karnad's works. This play is about the rash actions of Tughlaq which finally lead to his downfall. His followers fail to grasp his idealism with the result that they become his enemies. There is a faint comparison between Tughlaq and Nehru, as the idealism of the two leaders created only confusion and topsy-turvydom.*

### Keywords:

*Mask; Symbolism; Irony; folk*

Vol. 5 No. 1 (2017)

Issue- March

ISSN 2347-6869 (E) & ISSN 2347-2146 (P)

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DOI: 10.5958/2347-6869.2017.00002.4



## Use of Mask in Girish Karnad's Play *Tughlaq*

Girish Karnad, the greatest of Indian dramatists, was born at Matheran near Bombay in 1938. He had a brilliant academic career. He was also a visiting professor and resident scholar at the Chicago University for some time. He has produced and acted in a number of movies. He has also produced many T.V. programs. Girish Karnad is a modern Indian playwright who draws the contours of contemporary reality upon the mythological canvas. Drawing the plots of his plays from Indian history, myths and legends, he presents them in such a way that they assume contemporary significance. As a modern playwright, the urgency of exploiting the incommensurable and inscrutable impels him to negotiate a dramatic form, novel in form, characterization, organisation of incidents and their dramatic representation. In Indian folk theatres, half-curtain is used to introduce a character. It shows as well as hides the face of the character. Mask is also used either to conceal or reveal a character's reality. So the paper's aims to study the use of mask in Girish Karnad's play "Tughlaq"

This play presents the story of a monarch who came to the throne by murdering his father and brother and ruled over India for about twenty years. In the play, he is depicted as a wise and foolish, kind and cruel, impulsive and farsighted emperor in one breath. His two major decisions- shifting of his capital from Delhi to Daultabad and change of currency- backfire and render him and his subjects homeless. In order to prove himself a just and kind emperor sometimes he behaves in an unjust way. He kills some of his associates including his stepmother thinking they are traitors to him. At the end, he is totally shattered as a ruler. The characters like Aziz, Aazim, the stepmother and the Prayer Scene are the dramatic inventions of the playwright designed to match his purpose.

Role-playing is a kind of mask in *Tughlaq*. As a king, the sultan has to play many roles in his life. One such a role that he plays interestingly is that of a visionary. In telling about the various functions of a mask, Roger W. Oliver says that a mask can be "a fiction that comes to be believed in the individual as his true reality."<sup>(12)</sup> This happens in Muhammad's life. Muhammad wants his country to be secular and likes the Hindus and the Muslims in his kingdom to live amicably. So after announcing that the capital is going to be shifted from Delhi to Daulatabad, Tughlaq tells his people, "I invite you all to accompany me to Daulatabad. This is only an intuition and not an order. Only those who have faith in me may come with me."<sup>(149)</sup> Hoping that his citizens will follow him wherever he goes, Tughlaq says, "with their help, I shall build an empire which will be the envy of the world."<sup>(149)</sup> Tughlaq is good at chess. He proudly tells his stepmother, "I have just solved the most famous problem in chess. Even al-Adli and as Sarakhi said it was insoluble."<sup>(155)</sup> In politics too the Sultan plays the role of a chess player in using Sheik Imam-Ud-Din as a pawn and solving two problems. SHEIK Iman-ud-din finds fault with Muhammad's attitude towards religion. It is Tughlaq who made Ain-ul-Mulk, the Governor of Avadh but now the latter is marching towards Delhi to defeat the sultan. So Tughlaq acts cleverly and requests Sheik Imam-Ud-Din to act as a messenger of peace between Tughlaq and Ain-Ul-Mulk: "I'm not asking you only for my sake

but for all the Muslims who will die at the hands of Muslims if there is a war.”(166) Without knowing Talaq’s plan, Sheik Imam-Ud-Din accepts to help Tughlaq. So Muhammed gives Sheik Iman-Ud-Din the roles of honour. When Sheikmam-Ud-Din wears the dress, he resembles the sultan. So In the battlefield, Ain-Ul-Mulk and his soldiers mistake him as Tughaq and Pierce Sheik Imam-Ud-Din with arrows. When Sheik Iman-Ud-Din is killed, Tughlaq arrests Ain-Ul-Mulk.

When the Sultan goes to kanauj, he appoints Shihab-Ud-din, the Prince of Sampansher to look after Delhi. After his return from the battlefield, Tughlaq says to Shihab-Ud-Din,” I am grateful to you for looking after my people in my absence.”(170) Shihab-Ud-Din does not know that Tughlag is playing the role of a traitor’s traitor. So he becomes happy at Tughlag’s thanks. But through Ratan Singh, the sultan confuses Shihab-Ud-Din’s mind: “I have never seen an honest scoundrel likes your Sultan. He murders a man calmly and then actually enjoys the feeling of guilt.”(172) Soon Shihab-Ud-Din’s mind gets changed and he tells Ratan Singh, “All right, let’s get down to the details. We have to work out carefully.”(179) When Shihab-Ud-Din and the Amirs are caught redhanded, Tughlaq tells them how he knew about their plan of murdering him through Ratan Singh. The sultan then stabs Shihab-Ud-Din to his heart’s content and orders to behead the Amirs, stuff their bodies and hang them up in public.(185)

Tughlaq plays the role of a tyrant at ease. When Barani spreads a silken cloth on Shihab-Ud-Din’s corpse, the Sultan says villainously, “Don’t cover him. I want my people to see his wounds.”(186) Muhammad has already killed his father and brother while they were praying. But when his step-mother accepts that she has killed Najib, Tughlaq finds fault with her action. At the same time, he justifies his murders: “I killed them-Yes-but I killed them for an ideal.”(204)

The other side of Tughlaq, the tyrant is Tughlaq, the forgiver. The Sultan plays the part of the forgiver twice. He forgives the arrested Ain-ul-Mulk when the latter finds out a mistake in the sultan’s solution for a problem in chess: “I had spent days on that wretched problem and he spots a Tughlaq forgives Aziz when the latter disguises himself as Ghiyas-Ud-Din. When Barani says, “This man should be buried alive.”(217), Tughlaq appoints Aziz as an officer in the army and says, “I don’t know why I am acting like a fool.”(218)

Tughlaq is good at playing the role of a self-realising person. When Barani says that Sheik Imam-Ud-Din considers the Sultan “a disgrace to Islam”, Muhammad asks, “That’s all? I could find worse faults in e. What else?”(157) Amir I says to Shihab-Ud-Din, “I told he’s (Tughlaq) mad!” (182) Later Tughlaq says to Barani, “You know what my beloved subjects call me? Mad Muhammad. Mad Muhammad.”(196) When Barani points out Tughlaq’s mistakes, “Your Majesty, there was a time when you believed in love, in peace, in God, what has happened to those ideals?”(196) Muhammad also accepts that he is responsible for Barani’s sorrow since her mother died in the riot between the public and the soldiers (213). Tughlaq plays the role of a devotee also. It is he who bans prayer when Sheik Imam-Ud-Din and Amirs try to murder him: “There will be no more praying in the kingdom, Najib. Anyone caught praying will be severely

punished.”(186) But the same lawmaker breaks his own law and begins to pray after ordering his step-mother to be stoned to death: “God, God in Heaven, please help me. Please don’t know how much of it is mine and how much of others. . . Raise me. Clean me. Cover me with your infinite mercy.”(205) Meanwhile, Barani comes there. On seeing him Tughlaq remembers his imposing a ban on prayer and thanks him for having saved Tughlaq “from treachery, you know, I was trying to pray.” (206) But he confesses that his praying words do not echo the anguish of his heart. In the last scene, the Sultan realises god’s power and says to Barani, “Thank Heaven! For once I am not alone. I have a companion to share my madness now-the Omnipotent God!”(220) Thus as P. Ramamoorthi says, “He (Tughlaq) plays a role now, then changes costumes and plays another ‘role’ (157).

In Shakespear’s Twelfth Night and As You Like It Viola and Rosalind disguise themselves out of necessity and for fun respectively. But in Tughlaq, Aziz, a comic character uses disguise as a mask for his survival. Aziz is a Muslim Dhobi. When he comes to know that Vishnu prasad’s land has been confiscated by the sultan’s officers, Aziz gets a plan. He buys the land from the Hindus as if Vishnu Prasad had sold it to him early, shaves his head and files a suit against the Sultan stating that he is Vishnu Prasad. Aziz succeeds in his plan. He gets 500 dinars and a job in the Civil Service for his disguise as Vishnu Prasad. Aziz later kills Ghiyaz-Ud-Din Abbasid, wears his dress and goes to Daulatabad to bless the sultan and his people, Tughlaq is aware of Aziz’s feet. Before making Aziz reveal who he is, Tughlaq says to Barani “If Najib had been alive, he would have enjoyed this farce.”(215) But when Aziz pretends that he is shocked by Azam’s death, the Sultan frightens Aziz asking, “Who are you? How long did you hope to go on looting us with your masquerade?”(215)

Mask is this used in Karnad’s play to depict how the fantasy (Naga-Mandala) and bizarre (Hayavadana) worlds can be created, to show how the actor can turn into the character (The Fire and the Rain) and describe how role-playing and disguise (Tughlaq) can become the various forms of masks.

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**Cite this article:**

Use of Mask in Girish Karnad's Play 'Tughlaq'

**Citation Format: APA**

Saravanakumar, D. (2017). Use of Mask in Girish Karnad's Play 'Tughlaq'. *SOCRATES*, 5(1), 14-18.  
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