

Idealism and Realism in Girish Karnad's Play 'Tughlaq' At Variance

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Abstract

An idealist always keeps himself far off from the world and its people. This is the same situation that Tughlaq confronts. Girish Karnad distrusts Idealism or Romanticism in the play "Tughlaq", and he agrees with James Joyce's statement that Romanticism is a "fundamentally a false attitude" in the words of Arthur Power: Joyce has blamed the fall of human mankind on Romanticism seeing in it the source of all civilization's discontents: "In Realism you are down to facts on the earth. What makes most people's lives unhappy is some disappointed romanticism, some unrealizable and misconceived Ideal. Foucault agrees with the fact that there exist two concepts in all social, religious and political institutions namely domination and submission. This sort of singularity meets a complete failure on either side – the law makers and the law abiders. Thus this paper discusses the modern phenomenon in politics as evolved through Girish Karnad's play 'Tughlaq' and idealism and realism thereof at variance.

KEYWORDS: Idealism, Realism, Religion, Power, Justice

INTRODUCTION:

Girish Karnad distrusts Idealism or Romanticism in the play "Tughlaq" and he agrees with James Joyce's statement that Romanticism is a "fundamentally a false attitude" in the words of Arthur Power: Joyce has blamed the fall of human mankind on Romanticism seeing in it the source of all civilization's discontents: "In Realism you are down to facts on the earth. What makes most people's lives unhappy is some disappointed romanticism, some unrealizable and misconceived Ideal. In fact you may say that the idealism is the ruin of man and if we lived down to fact, as primitive man had to do, we would be better off"...

An idealist always keeps himself far off from the world and its people. This is the same situation that Tughlaq confronts. He realizes the fact that he aspires to what is not. "He looks before and after and pines for what is not" as Shelley says. He seems to suspect when he admits: "But then how can I spread my branches in the stars while the roots have yet to find their hold in the earth?" It implies that he soars higher and higher above the sky till he disappears just like the skylark of Shelley. He never sticks to the earth. He ought to have to be down to the earth to set up rapports with the subjects but he keeps himself isolated from his subjects. He regards like Wordsworth that there is multitude in solitude and agrees with him that 'solitude is bliss'.

He escapes from the matter of fact world and scales the enormous height of his ideal. When he is distanced from his subjects and kingdom, he feels more approximated with them. That is why he expresses his sentimentality towards his people: "...I want to go back to the poetry of Pleiades and Ib-ul-Mottazz and sink myself in their words. Then again I want to climb up, up to the top of the tallest tree in the world and call out

to my people: “Come my people:” “Come my people, I am waiting for you. Confide in me your worries. Let me share your joys. Let’s laugh and cry together and then let’s pray till our bodies melt and flow and our blood turns into air. Let’s be the light and cover up the boundaries of nations. Come I am waiting to embrace you all!” (Scene II Page - 10).

Here it seems that he bathed in Platonic Ideal that exists in thought not in actions. All these passionate words of Sultan are nothing but his waking dream at night. In the words of Aristotle it is merely an imaginative re-construction of life. It is a fictitious and fake rather than reality. Ironically speaking; his thought, speech and actions are at variance. They are not reconciled and harmonized.

In the introductory and opening scene we learn the fact that people are not happy with his dictatorial domination over them. His compulsory mandate to have prayers five times a day and reading the Koran in the street causes a stir and commotion among them. Some Muslims are not happy when the Sultan abolishes the jizia tax levied on Hindus. They say it is against the tenet of Islam or the Koran. A Hindu listens and is not offended. On the contrary he comments that first we Hindus and Muslims are human mankind. But an old Muslim warns: “Beware of the Hindu who embraces you”. When the young Muslim comments that Hindu is an ungrateful wretch. On the other hand when an impartial judgement of the Kazi in the presence of the Sultan is announced in favour of a Hindu Brahmin named Vishnu Prasad whose land was forfeited by an officer, was returned to a muslim dhobi, Azam who was awarded a grant of five hundred dinars and moreover offered a job in Civil service the old man from the crowd gathered in the front yard of the Court exclaimed “What folly is this”?

On the one hand the Sultan says: My people ... I waiting to embrace you all” and on the other hand he addresses them: “My empire is large and now embraces the South and I need a Capital at Daultabad, the central city of India”. It implies that his main interest is “to develop and strengthen his kingdom”. He treats his subjects as his national property and as such he uses them as fools to fulfil his greedy ambition for the expansion of his territory. But he hides his crooked design in his polished words: My beloved people, you have heard the judgement of the Kazi and seen for yourselves how justice works in my kingdom without might or weakness, religion and creed. May this burn bright and light up our path towards greater justice, equality, progress and peace - not just peace but a more purposeful life.

“And to achieve this end I am taking a new step in which I hope I shall have your support and cooperation. Later this year the capital of my empire will be moved from Delhi to Daultabad”. (Scene one page-3).

Foucault agrees with the fact that there exist two concepts in all social, religious and political institutions namely domination and submission. As a matter of fact all members or citizens of the state should co-operate as one family so that politics can achieve a desired effect. On the contrary it so happens that the rulers and the ruled keep themselves aloof from each other. Only the few elite have their voice that renders the subjects voiceless and silent. This sort of singularity meets a complete failure on either side – the law makers and the law abiders. This is the modern phenomenon in politics as evolved through Girish Karnad’s play ‘Tughlaq’. This type of atmosphere is gradually built up in the opening scene of the play.

Muhammad pretends to be a well-wisher of his subjects and the same time he assumes to be a strict moralist and a religious man so he introduces prayer five times a day and to read Koran in the street. Now he wants to announce to impart justice to a Hindu named Vishnu Prasad by restoring his land back to him as once seized by the government and then he has to make another announcement to the subjects of Delhi assemble in the open premises of the court. Here the conversation held among the Muslims and Hindus seems to be quite contrary to the ideology of the emperor.

A youth resumes his talk: "Now you pray five times a day because that is the law and if you break it, you'll have the officers on your neck. Old man regards prayer as pretence and says: "Do men act according to Koran? It implies that prayer should come from within. Anything imposed from without is meaningless". Third man comments: Hindus not paying the Jiziya tax. That is against Koran. Hindu defends himself by saying: "we don't want any exemption from this tax". The Old man suspects the Hindu and remarks: "Wretch is our friend. Beware of the Hindu, he'll turn Islam into another caste by embracing Muslim and may call our prophet an incarnation of Hindu God".

The singularity of the emperor's ideology does not originate from their grass-root level hence meets a complete failure as the ideology set up and propagated by the Sultan is a lopsided view. In the name of equality, justice and peace survives the colonial power of repressing his subjects. His empty words are rendered meaningless and purposeless. To conclude Bhaktin is right when he says that "discourse must be alive to touch the living impulse of the people. The distance between the Centre (the Ruling Mechanism) and periphery should be reduced to the minimum".

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