

Shakespeare and Karnad as Great Masters in the Art of Employing Images and Symbols in their Plays with Particular Reference to Macbeth and Tughlaq: An Appraisal

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Abstract- This paper projects Shakespeare and Karnad as masters in the art of employing images and symbols in their plays with special reference to Macbeth and Tughlaq respectively. Considering the instances where images were used in both the plays, this paper exposes how both the playwrights maintained subtlety in using images and symbols in their plays. Thus the extra special images used by both the playwrights to discuss various themes and ideas in their plays are well presented in this paper.

Index Terms- imagery, symbolism, supernatural elements, Imagination, hallucination, personification

Shakespeare is recognized world-wide as a great dramatist, still finding no rivals to expel him from the throne and he still wears the crown of supreme master as a dramatist. No doubt, he is a poet of eternal verities and the human soul in intense emotion has expressed itself in his dramatic creations and men and women irrespective of age have found in them an echo of their own emotions. Generally speaking, Shakespeare's plays are not ephemeral or idle songs of an empty day, for they have such revealing properties as are hardly to be found anywhere else. There are nothing but realistic picture of life and also mediation upon spiritual illumination of life. Being a moralist, he has implicit faith in a moral order. Villains however prosperous at the beginning, have to play the penalty in the long run. Thus, Macbeth and Lady Macbeth have to yield to the inexorable moral law. Good men like Macbeth have, no doubt, to suffer but that suffering is the outcome of the Aristotolian 'hamartia' or 'tragic flow'. If at all not equaled to Shakespeare, Girish

Karnad has some stamp of Shakespearean dramatic genius. As a notable Indian English dramatist, he has to his credit some of the best plays like Yayati, Tughlag and Hayavadana which proved him to be a versatile genius. Being a film producer, an actor and a Tv artiste and a playwright of plays, he has excelled in the art of translating plays like Tughlaq and Hayavadana into English and especially his Tughlaq has raised him at once to the front rank of Indian dramatists in English. Because of this, today Karnad is found towering head and shoulders above all other writers in modern Indian English drama.

Shakespeare's Macbeth has certain peculiarities which set it apart from the other great tragedies. It is based not on literary sources but on Holinshed's Chronicles and is, thus, from one point of view, more a kin to the histories than to the tragedies. Being one of the shortest of Shakespeare's plays, it has no subplot and no episodes that might throw light on the various aspects of a historical period. In various ways, Macbeth is Shakespeare's unique tragedy. Based on the hints from Holinshed Shakespeare gives dominance to Lady Macbeth, which he would not have assigned her if he conceived the play as a history. Macbeth is a man of action who seizes the throne and misgoverns his kingdom, but Shakespeare is more interested in the spiritual side of his character than in the political consequences of his tyranny. It is a study of the tragedy of ambition. Tughlaq is a personal tragedy, the tragedy of the protagonist has involved no distortion of the original history model. Though it is a historical play, it is more than a study of historical events. The play provides an

interpretation of human character in its width and depth. There is an apparent whimsicality of the ambitious emperor whose ideal and understanding of life make even his failures seem glorious. Karnad's play *Tughlaq* explores the reign of the king of spectacular regimes of history. Karnad's approach is modern and he uses the conventions and motifs of folk art. Like Bertolt Brecht, Karnad strives to break the illusion of the theatre by which the spectators become so engrossed in a play. Like Brecht, Karnad leaves the stage apparatus visible, presents symbolic announcements, has narrators directly talking to the audience. All this compels the audience to respond intellectually to the action of the play and to question it, instead of responding emotionally and merely accepting it. The characters are shown in the play conversing with one another and giving information about the parricide and fratricide by the Sultan and the death of Sheikh-Imam-Ud-din. Only the gruesome murder of the trusted lieutenant of Shihab Ud-din is enacted on the stage by the Sultan. Karnad's art of characterization is based on the principles of life which is an amalgam of contrasting elements. One can see how the contrast between Islam and Hinduism, between idealism and practice, between the real and the unreal, between loyalty and treachery, between religion and politics along with parallelism is highlighted by Karnad to make the play interesting and to show that in politics idealism does not work and that trust does not necessarily beget trust.

Both *Macbeth* and *Tughlaq* are opulent with symbols, images and supernatural elements. These elements are used with deft handling by the dramatists and are inextricable from the protagonists since each one is obsessed with certain symbols and images. Symbols and certain images refer to the madness of the heroes. They are drawn from the dramatists' mind and prove its importance for the study of the heroes. Though these two plays belong to different ages of drama, the eschewment of these elements makes the plays look like plants without roots. Shakespeare was essentially a poet and was more a poet than a dramatist. His power of imagination by which he pictures before his minds' eye as well as paints in words certain objects of nature in the light of imagination. He visualises the abstract through the concrete. In *Macbeth*, we see the witches, their weird appearances, the vision of the daggers with which *Macbeth* murders Duncan, the

ghost of Banquo and many other images and supernatural elements. *Macbeth's* world of doubts and darkness gives birth to strange and hideous creatures. Vivid animal disorder – symbolism is recurrent and the animals mentioned are for the most part of fierce, ugly significance. We have the bat and its 'cloistered flight', the 'shard-borne beetle', the crow making wing to the 'rooky wood', 'nights' black agents, *Macbeth* has scotched the snake, not killed it, his mind is full of 'scorpions' – all these suggest life as ill-omened hideous thing', all of it culminates in the holocaust of filth prepared by weird sisters.

Macbeth's universe, itself of nightmare quality, is bridged by phantasies and ghosts; the dagger of *Macbeth's* mind, the ghost of Banquo, the apparitions, the vision of Scottish kings; that is why life is here 'a tale told by an idiot', a fitful fever, after which the dead 'sleep well'. There are constant references to the image of blood. *Macbeth* and Banquo 'bathe in reeking wound's (Knight 147) in the fight reported by the bloody Sergeant; *Macbeth's* sword 'smoked with bloody execution' (P147); there is blood on *Macbeth's* hands, and on Lady *Macbeth's* after she has 'smeared' to sleeping grooms with it. There is the description of Duncan's body 'his silver skin laced with his golden blood' (147) and there is blood on the face of the murderer who comes to tell of Banquo's murder; the bloody child's apparition; the bloody nightmare of Lady *Macbeth's* sleep walking. Here is found rich blood-imagery. There is the imagery of the thunder and lightning which accompanies the weird sisters; the fire of the cauldron, the green glint of the spectral dagger; the glaring eyes which hold 'no speculation' of Banquo's ghost. In the same way, the moral darkness is shot with imagery of bright purity and virtue. The king of England is full of supernatural grace which is set beside the supernatural evil. Duncan's murder and its results are felt as events of confusion and disorder, as interruptions of the even tenor of human nature and are therefore related to the disorder symbols and instances of unnatural behaviour in man or animal through the play.

The witches are objectively conceived; they are not, as are the dagger and ghost, the subjective effect of evil in the protagonist's mind. They are with *Macbeth* universe, and the fact that they instigate *Macbeth* directly and Lady *Macbeth* indirectly tends to assert

the objectivity of evil. Macbeth is powerless to resist their temptation on him and this is his perversion. The witches are merely symbolic representations of the unconscious or half-conscious guilt in Macbeth himself. They are old women, poor and ragged, skinny and hideous, full of vulgar spite, occupied in killing their neighbour's swine or revenging themselves on sailor's wives who have refused them chestnuts, and are supernatural beings. They can raise tempests and hurtful weather; as lightning, thunder. They can pass from the place to another in their 'aire invisible'. They can manifest unto other things hidden and lost and foreshow things to come and see them as though they were present. While their prophecies on Macbeth are very great, they are presented simply as dangerous circumstances with which Macbeth has to deal. Macbeth himself refers to their influence on his destiny in a casual phrase of 'supernatural soliciting'. But they represent the forces of evil in Nature and man and they are symbolically the powers of darkness. In a few scenes, the witches appear in the company of their patron devil Hecate. She is undoubtedly a supernatural being and her visible association with them heightens the supernatural atmosphere of the witches.

Other than the witches, we have the images of babe torn smiling from the breast and dashed to death. On his second visit with the witches for further information, he is shown a bloody child and a crowned child as well as an armed head; finally it is learnt that Macduff "was from his mother's womb untimely ripped" (Macbeth 176). Macbeth has no children because to have children is an outward sign of natural humanity and begetting of children is seen as the ultimate sign of manhood. Macbeth's childlessness makes him suspect and reverberates in connection with his willingness to slaughter other people's children – the little Macduff and Fleance. Children are essential to community and continuity. The childlessness that Macbeth's achievement has no future. The hallucinatory dagger Macbeth sees just before the murder of Duncan; he can see it but able not to touch it:

"Is this a dagger which I see before me,
The handle toward my hand?
Are thou not, fatal vision, sensible
To feeling as to sight? or act thou but
A dagger of the mind, a false creation

Proceeding from the heat-oppressed brain?"
(Macbeth 46).

Macbeth conspicuously conflates the witches' external influence with his own receptive nature:

"This supernatural soliciting
Cannot be ill, cannot be good. If ill,
Why hath it given me earnest of success,
Commencing in a truth? I am Thane of Cawdor.
If good, why do I yield to that suggestion
Whose horrid image doth unfix my hair
And make my seated heart knock at my ribs,
Against the use of nature? Present fears
Are less than horrible imaginings;
My thought, whose murder yet is but fantastical,
Shakes so my single state of man that function
Is smothered in surmise and nothing is
But what is not."

He starts with "the premise that the prophecy's moral nature determines his physiological response to it; the inner workings of his body and mind operate as evidence of external evil" (Rowe 218) Shakespeare uses images in Macbeth to portray characters and develop the theme of the play. The protagonist is an evil power, who chooses the wrong path to achieve his goal, knowing that what he does is evil, "The wages of sin is death". The blood which symbolizes the sacrifices of Christ becomes an image for crime and sin. The images of clothes point out the unsuitability of the royal power for Macbeth. The images from the world of animals and birds represent the particular situations and persons. A.C. Bradley in his discussion on Shakespearean tragedy finds in Macbeth darkness as brooding over the play, "It is remarkable that almost all the scenes which at once recur to memory take place either at night or in some dark spot" (Kanitha 169). The scene of the vision of the dagger, the murders of Duncan and Banquo, Macbeth's meeting of the witches in the cavern and the sleep walking scene of Lady Macbeth happen in darkness. When Macbeth plans to murder Duncan, he prays for darkness. He bids the stars hide their fires that his black desires can be concealed. Lady Macbeth wished for the thick night to come, "palled in the densest smoke of hell." In her sleep-walking, she carried a light and the gentle woman talks about her command to keep a light near her continually. Her fear of darkness symbolizes her guilt and the torment that she has experienced. Darkness becomes

the characteristic aspect of evil. Witches are depicted as the midnight hags standing for evil. In common terms, 'blood' signifies love, life and sacrifice. In Macbeth, 'blood' stands for treason, murder, death and guilt. Macbeth uses blood to stand for his path of sin.

Imagery of dresses and tailoring are used to mean the unfitting position usurped by Macbeth. Macbeth himself feels uncomfortable in the underserved royal power. In the beginning, he talks of "borrowed robes". The animal imagery is used to represent the present situation or future action. The valour of Macbeth is described by captain in terms of animal imagery. While talking about his ambition, he imagines it as a horse without a spur to prick the sides of his intention. When Macbeth has gone to murder Duncan, his wife hears the shrieking of the owl, as the symbol of death. Lady Macbeth counsels her husband to pretend to be an innocent man but be a serpent under it. When Banquo is murdered and Fleance escapes, Macbeth refers to them as the serpent and the worm.

"the grown serpent lies; the worm, that's fled,
Hath nature that in time will venom breed,
No teeth for the present".

Fleance is like the worm without the teeth at present but in future, it will gain poison. The opposing forces in whom Macbeth has fears and doubts are imagined by him as the snake,

"We have scotch'd the snake not killed it"

The supernatural prophecy and soliciting reveal the nature of the hero's capricious environment. Banquo is the personification of fair play and success through hard work. It is through this that Banquo warns Macbeth against the viciousness of the witches. Macbeth refuses to listen to his words of caution, so engrossed is he in his own ambition. Opportunities begin to offer themselves to him. He kills Banquo and later Macduff's wife and son. It is here that nemesis catches up with him. Like Iago and Edmund, he has been lucky in the situations created for him and like them in the end, he finds himself pushed to the wall. In desperation, he once again invokes the supernatural. The witches advise him to

"Be bloody, bold, and resolute: laugh to scorn
The power of man, for none of woman born
Shall harm Macbeth"

Save of course their final warning

"Macbeth shall never vanquished be until

Great Birnam wood to high Dunsinane hill
Shall come against him".

The depiction in these devilishly supernatural counsels is symbolic of Macbeth's betrayal of self. The witches strike the keynote of the play in the very beginning itself, when they say,
"fair is foul and foul is fair".

Apart from the supernatural element provided by the witches, Banquo's ghost also adds to it. The ghost is symbolic of Macbeth's guilt as well and it is instrumental in bringing this guilt to the surface. In the words of C.Marydass, "The ingenuity of William Shakespeare arrests the attention of readers" (P 92). For example, the doctor of physic experiences the unique imagery of a pregnant woman who under goes the pangs of delivery,

"There is a great perpetuation in nature"

(Macbeth Act V Sc iii 9).

Shakespeare is so sagacious in his art that he flashes on us imagery in one vivid verb,

"Glamis hath murder'd sleep;
And therefore Cawdor.

Shall sleep no more – Macbeth shall sleep no more"

(Macbeth Act II Sc ii 44).

Sometimes his imagery takes the form of personification. Macbeth speaks of Banquo, personifying his wisdom. So does he personify his own genius;

"he had a wisdom that doth guilds his valour

To act in safety. Theme is none but he

Whose being I do fear; and under him

My Genius is rebuked, as it is said

Mark Antony's was by Caesar"

(Macbeth Act III Sec I, Lines 52)

In brief, it may be said that Shakespeare has employed imagery in the great tragedies as a medium for the revelation of character. Thus, one can see the various images, symbols and supernatural elements in Macbeth that reveal the genius of Shakespeare. He could transform even the common place into something of commanding respect and attention. These elements in Macbeth are probably of the greatest significance because they have the greatest dramatic effect. The entire play of Tuglaq is a symbol of the political situation of India of the sixties. It depicts the political mood of disillusionment and disenchantment symbolized in the opening sentence "God what's this country coming to" (P 20). Karnad has made a successful attempt at introducing politics

and religion in Tughlaq. Tughlaq, who is the chief protagonist of this New Drama, is an idealist aiming at Hindu-Muslim unity, at secularism and also at building a new future for India. He is a learned man and is known for his knowledge of philosophy and poetry all over the world. Like Marlowe's Dr. Faustus, he is ambitious; and like Macbeth, he is ambitious as well as a murderer; he is divided within himself. The young and the old have opinions which are at loggerheads about his personality; he like his enemies appears to be an idealist perpetrating its very opposite. Divine aspirations he has but he is lost as a deft intriguer. U.S. Ananda Murthy in his introduction to the play, points out to the use, "Karnad makes use of the leitmotiv of the play, prayer ..." (P 9).

Symbolism is part and parcel of its texture. Karnad has made effective use of four major symbols which are prayers, rose, game of chess and sleep. Prayer has been used as the leitmotiv in Tughlaq. The source of prayer is diseased by politics from the beginning of the political ascendancy of Muhammad. Muhammad, in the words of Sheikh Imam-ud-din, was guilty of killing his father and brother at the prayer time. No religious man will commit this sin. Even Hamlet, the Prince of Denmark would not kill his uncle – father at the prayer time for the incest he had committed. He will think and being imbued with protestantism, will shirk from taking action against one who has usurped his throne and murdered his father. He will not pollute prayer. But Mohammed and his enemies are not ashamed of corrupting prayer thereby giving a death blow to religion and the religionists. Tughlaq killed his father and brother at prayer time. At first he orders prayers five times a day according to the scripture later bans it when Muslim Amirs and Shihab-Ud-din conspire to murder him during his prayer. He stabs Sihab and orders Najib to behead those who are involved in this conspiracy. It is Ratansingh who suggests the murder of Tughlaq in his prayer but Amirs do not approve his idea of murder especially a Muslim at prayer time. At this Ratansingh ironically says, "where's your holy Koran? The tyrant does not deserve to be considered among the faithful and then, he killed his own father at prayer time" (Tughlaq 36).

Tughlaq is fanatic about prayer. The plan of murder fails due to his farsightedness and his secret knowledge of the conspiracy. He is disillusioned and

he realises the futility of prayer and prohibits prayer in his kingdom:

"I had wanted every act in my kingdom to become a prayer, every prayer to become a further step in knowledge, every step to lead us nearer to God. But our prayers too are ridden with disease and must be exiled. There will be no more praying in the kingdom, Najib anyone caught praying will be severely punished. Henceforth let the moment of prayer walk my streets in silence and leave without a trace" (P 43).

Prayer is reintroduced after an interval of five years when Ghiyas-Ud-din Abbasid is about to come Daulatabad to bless the Sultan. But Aziz kills Ghiyas and appears in his guise before Muhammad. The irony is that he falls on the feet of Aziz. But the citizens of Daulatabad are starving for food and what they want is food, not prayer. Sultan is stunned at this and in despair he prays. Though his prayer sounds genuinely desperate, he says that it was merely from the lips and memory and not from the heart. Tughlaq who falls into sound sleep at the end of the play gets up when the kuezzin's call to prayer fades away; so he fails to offer prayer. The prayer symbol is the very basis of the play. The chess symbol has a unique significance as it runs through the play. It symbolizes his approach to life wherein he regards other people as pawns to be manipulated for his own advantage. In his political game, he is checkmated by Aziz. Tughlaq knows that Sheikh Imam-Ud-din has been inciting rebellion against him in Kanpur. Ain-UI-Mulk is marching towards Delhi and Tughlaq wants to get rid of both his enemies, so he uses Imam who resembles him asking him to visit Delhi to give enlightenment to his citizens. Tughlaq humbly requests Imam to go to Ain-UI-Mulk as a loyal envoy and to dissuade him from his folly. He diplomatically says,

"Please Sheikh, I am not asking you only for my sake but for all the Muslims who will die at the hands of Muslims if there is war" (P 43).

But Ain-UI-Mulk mistakes him for Sultan and kills him thus Tughlaq get rid of both his enemies at one stroke. He forgives Ain-UI-Mulk since he has solved the famous chess problem set by Al-Adli. This clearly shows how Tughlaq uses them as pawns. 'Rose garden' is symbolic of Tughlaq's ideal world.

He wants to plant a rose garden because “I wanted to make for myself an image of Sadi’s poems” (P 42).

He says,

“I want to climb up, up to the top of the tallest tree in the world and call out to 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” (P 10).

He introduces copper coins instead of silver diner which set forth-new problems to the Sultan when all the people build domestic mints. His ideal garden is dumped with counter copper coins. It symbolises the disillusionment of Tughlaq’s idealism as the copper coins. The rose garden which becomes a rubbish dump is a perfect objective correlative of Tughlaq’s idealistic aspiration. It becomes an image of the absurd, the unbridgeable gulf between man’s expectations of orderliness and the chaos and irrationality which confront him. Similarly, sleep becomes a Symbol of a much – needed peace which punctually eludes Tughlaq and comes to him at last when he realises in a flash that he is not alone in his madness. Aziz and Aazam are cheats who symbolize opportunistic and unprincipled people who exploit liberal ideals and welfare schemes of the democratic government to fulfill their own pockets. Daulatabad is a Hindu city. It is a symbol of Hindu-Muslim unity. So Muhammad transfers his capital from Delhi to Daulatabad, but the entire experiment meets failure. Instead of leading to prosperity and peace, it leads to bloodshed and utter chaos. Girish Karnad has made deft use of symbols in the play and much enhanced the expressive power and beauty of language.

To conclude, it may be said that the play Macbeth begins with the courage that is not courage and ends with the courage that is not real courage. It exhibits the military courage of Macbeth and the drunken courage of Lady Macbeth. The play is also a study about man and woman and the impression that the play leaves on the mind of unbiased readers is that of manly courage of a noble and valiant human being struggling till the end against adverse fate and circumstances brought about by his own positive action. Karnad’s Tughlaq is a dreamer, an idealist but they are all bloated images of his own superabundant egotism. The play is full of royal intrigues, murders, plots, counterplots, double-dealing and rhetoric

Tughlaq seems concerned less with specific figures that what two general political issues that have become dominant in the public sphere. The first is the untenability of the idealistic and visionary politics that Nehru and Mahatma Gandhi practiced as national leaders and valorized in their respective meditations on political action. The Discovery of India and The story My Experiment with Truth. The second is the politics of power relations between groups that are separated by religion. Politics, for Tughlaq, is like a chess game that brings the intellectual pleasure of eliminating his adversaries. In brief, both plays Ma Macbeth and Tughlaq are engrossed with tyranny – a path chosen by the protagonists which has forced them to leap in the dark; and in the end, they wholeheartedly acknowledge its consequences. The deaths they have caused on their captives have taught them the lesson – that love can do giddy deeds whereas tyranny and cruelty cannot reach the sky and win the hearts and they reflect the hollowness of human soul. The moral one learns from Macbeth and Tughlaq is that human life is just like bubbles, timeless and no power can sustain man from death and in this period, he cannot hold the throne for a long time and cruelty and tyranny can never enable a person to attain his peak.

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