

The Treatment of History in Girish Karnad's the Dreams of Tipu Sultan

Prof. Vijayalaxmi Patil

Assistant Professor of English, Shri. Mahadevappa Basalingappa Halli Govt First Grade College
Annigeri 582201, Dist. Dharwad(Karnataka)

ABSTRACT

The Dreams of Tipu Sultan use the idea of dreams to indicate the downfall of Tipu Sultan through his dreams. The Dreams of Tipu Sultan interprets as representation or a symbol which focuses on his downfall in the future. The Play analyzes the treatment of history of the Mysore. Paper focuses on British rule in older times. The events of Tipu Sultan's life add an important paper to Indian history and brought to Tipu life by Karnad's play. The play is an inspiring presentation of the aspirations of this king. The story follows the last days as well as the historic moments in the life of the Ruler of Mysore. The Dreams of Tipu Sultan, which explores the inner life of this warrior, political visionary and dreamer, was commissioned by the BBC and broadcast in Britain on the fiftieth anniversary of Indian Independence

Keywords: Dream, Historical, British, Human, Experience, indications, symbol and mythological

INTRODUCTION

Karnad's greatest ambition in life was to become a good English dramatist. Karnad's writing a play on mythological material was accidental. When he was only twenty and leaving for England, he wrote his historical play The Dreams of Tipu Sultan. Karnad's writing on historical materials is in no way dissimilar from that of mythology. For him, myth and history are the past elements whose relevance is felt even today. These past elements govern the present, and the present identifies itself with the past. By this Karnad brings the whole of human experience under common ground, together prepared by myth, history and the contemporary world.

Karnad's plays, regardless of genre or subject matter, have been praised for their contemporaneity and their capacity for capturing the aesthetic senses of the audience and penetrating their consciousness. By combining historical facts with imagination he creates an atmosphere of fantastic recreation and here lies his unassailable greatness. Karnad's play explores the sense of loss and despair that the Indian disunited rulers underwent right up through the times of Tipu Sultan.

The play "The Dreams of Tipu Sultan" portrays Kirmani and Mackenzie's descriptions of Tipu Sultan's valour and his downfall due to the treachery of his own people and his dreams regard him as a modern ruler capable of innovation and experimentation. With the conversation of the two historians the play opens and the year is 1803. Mackenzie has employed Kirmani to write the history as he believes that, one can't buy genuine court historians in the bazaar, Mir Hussain Ali Khan Kirmani feels immensely grieved in writing. The fall of Tipu Sultan's capital Srirangapatna had passed before his presence and the death and incidents that followed had produced a psychological depth of pain in him. His strongly affected state of mind finds him in a confounded and confused manner. Mackenzie's records have been widely approved and he is supposed to have travelled extensively over Karnataka and amassed a lot of information from local history and folk tales.

The scene proceeds with Kirmani recalling the incident of the British attack. The severity of the situation and the clouds reluctant to shower increased the tension of the day. As a brave man and an unflinching spirit Tipu Sultan washed his hands, got up, buckled the sword belt and was ready to face the English that very moment bravely. He hands over a sealed envelope from his pocket to Kirmani asking him to preserve it until his return and it contained his last dream. Next follows the fourth of May, 1799. The face of the disaster increased in its intensity as it leads us to the scene where the British soldiers are found searching Tipu Sultan's body amidst the other dead bodies, Qilledar Nadeem Khan another tyrant in the utter darkness and with the help of some torches finds out Raja Khan, the Sultan's personal assistant, Mackenzie assumes the body to be close by and Nadeem Khan points out to him lying with the gold buckle summoned by fate, uncompromising in dire consequences his strong will power and love for righteousness. Tipu Sultan met a martyr's death. He visualized the

approaching danger of the Britisher's presence in India and likewise the horrors did not subtract. Tipu Sultans indomitable valour is ineffable and rests in the inexhaustible memories and folk songs which the Britishers indignation cannot erase.

Once again we are led to the mentioning of the last dream which deviates to the habit of the Sultan of recording dreams in his diary. Dreams act like revelation to some great souls through which indications of coming events are prior noticed. They identify themselves as guiding stars. His handing off of the sealed envelope displays his farsightedness and preparedness amidst a threatening situation. If he returns he would take it and if otherwise the matter was in the hands of a reliable historian. His marvelous dream faculty and achievements are unfolded as his major engagements. The first dream which is recorded in the play is the one which occurred to him on the 3rd day of the month of Thamari and the last night of the month of Ramzan. The next day was Id. He was returning from Farrukhi near Salamabad with his army.

He dreams that he had been on an elephant shikar and on his way back was walking with Poomaiya, the Finance Minister, when we saw a big temple. It was in a dilapidated state and asks Poomaiya to look at that structure which looked quite mysterious. When they go within they see the statues and some of them come alive. The Sultan asks the ladies to keep themselves occupied with thoughts of God and assures of no disturbance and promises rebuilding of the temple. His dreams indicated his passion for reforming and transforming the mental and physical condition of his subjects by high standards of moral attitudes, which he wanted to communicate. His war was for the sole intention of freedom of the Indian inhabitants.

The dreams form the major source of inspiration and his actions to some extent are dictated by them. He dreams further that two old men present him a white elephant and horses as a token of friendship and affection from the Emperor of China.

Tipu Sultan interprets it as God Almighty's will of making him another Alexander. He had many dimensions to his personality. He had an artistic bent of mind, a foresighted person with an immense interest in science. He looks to it that his sons too are adequately involved in the discussions held. He pioneers in flourishing the silk industry of his own. He is adept in encouraging traders, ambassadors and craftsmen from other countries and the list runs to doctor, surgeon, smelter, carpenter, weaver, blacksmith, locksmith, cutter, gardener. His fervor reveals his inclination towards the invention of thermometer. The play criticizes the English philosophy that considers Indians depraved beings who must constantly wait for the British orders for almost everything.

The two historians who discuss about the facts in the play form the Frame' of the play which shifts and alternates with the main story of Tipu Sultan. Then the scene shifts to the day of the death of Tipu Sultan and this is followed by his dream which is interpreted by him that he was to be a powerful ruler like Alexander. The scene shifts to a discussion over meals of the trade, industry and business.

Tipu Sultan is keen on his sons' participation. The introduction of tigers is another technique to expose the brave spirit of Tipu Sultan. In the last dream there is the mentioning of the tiger being silent. He says, "Why are the tigers restless? Have they been fed?... He is growing up. He needs more food than the others. Tell that to the zoo-keeper." In Act Two.

Poomaiya : Remembering that you gave them shelter when the Marathas sacked the monastery, the Swami has assured you of Goddess Sharada's blessings.

Tipu : We are protected by such blessings.

(Long silence No one knows what to say to a servant)

Incidentally, why is Bahadur Khan Quiet today?

Is he all right?

Servant: Yes, Sarkar, and resting.

Tipu (Fidgety): Not even a growl? (Gets up)

Well then Let's get ready. The meeting is adjourned." ((The Dreams of Tipu Sultan, Act Two, 61).

The long silence, Tipu's concern of the tiger's growl and the shooting of the tigers at the end is a technique to depict the shooting of Tipu Sultan and this marked the beginning of a new era. Tipu Sultan had laid the foundation of the freedom struggle in India. Through the flashback technique and the dreams Tipu Sultan's military achievements and his overall personality is portrayed. C. N. Ramachandran mentions.

"In all, there are ten scenes shifting in time and place and twenty-five characters in the first act, and ten more characters join in the second act. It is clear that Karnad adopts the 'Montage technique' for the first time, in this play." (Ramachandran, 32).

In order to mark his play with emotional depth he uses such a technique. The flashback technique of the battlefield where the soldiers are mutilated, the act of indecency on the part of British soldiers and the fourth dream which remains a dream in reality draw a great amount of pathos from the heart's core of the audience.

The tragedy of Tipu Sultan equates with the tragedy of the nation. The technique of the frame play is used to interrogate the historical facts and prove its authenticity in the light of post colonialism. Karnad has modified the play with scenes which are not connected with one another and they also lack cause and effect relationship. C. N. Ramachandran observes:

Regarding the nature of 'history' as a field of knowledge, the play takes a position that may broadly be called postmodern, foucaudian in particular. That is, the play, with its disconnected scenes and absence of 'cause and effect relationship among the incidents, posits a view that history is not a continuous whole, running on logical lines, with a beginning and an end. On the other hand the play tells us, history is a pastiche of disjointed incidents, having neither linearity nor rational connection." (Ramachandran, 33).

The stage setting of the play which was performed at Srirangapattana was a tremendous success. The stage was elevated at about twenty feet for a better view and a summer palace for Tipu Sultan was constructed. The characters Mackenzie (Jagadish Manevarthe), Mir Sadik (Krishnakumar Naamakaje), Kirmani (Manjunatha Belekere) add life to the lively characters. The costumes were grand and represented historical figures.

The costume designing was remarkably appreciable. The mood of the play was represented by proper lighting and music facility. C. Basavalingaiah's direction of the performance is noteworthy and not to forget the stage designer which provided wings to the audiences mind to fly back two hundred years. Different parameters are used to portray the historical figure.

Sincerity and honesty marks the delineation of Tipu Sultan. Memory as a technique adds dimensions to the characters. Through all these techniques Karnad portrays that adornment should surround personalities like Tipu Sultan and they cannot be "Vandalized and hunted down in unequal battles." (Grace, 316). Grace Sudhir further concludes:

"In showing that the fearless warrior was in fact a dreamer of peace and progress who yoked ethics with economics, Karnad adds human dimensions to the figure painted into the fading murals of history. One might say that just as the V.B. Group chairman Vijay Mallya has reclaimed the sword and other possessions of Tipu Sultan from the British to kindle the memory of the forgotten patriot, Girish Karnad has re-claimed the dreams of Tipu Sultan to present the man in the new light of Indian history." (Grace,317)

Karnad experiments with his play and the structure unfolds itself as a form of aesthetic modification through the light of historical event, gauged and presented with the intention of increasing the heart beats of the audience followed by applause Kavalam Narayana Pannikkar on Karnad as a successful writer :

"The unique success that Girish Karnad enjoys today owes a lot to the fact that he started his experiment in Indian theatre after acquiring a thorough knowledge of what was happening in the west. This way, he was able to reach a successful proportion of the techniques of both western and Indian traditions." (Pannikkar 223).

The dialogues are well composed and bring out the dividing nature of the English, the foolishness of the native rulers, mean mindedness of the conspirators and the outstanding personality of Tipu Sultan which raises him to the zenith. Regional words of exclamation are introduced to highlight the effect of the martyrdom. It is fascinating to note that the techniques used in recreation of historical delineation of Tipu Sultan portrays a sincere human of principles caught and judged through the internet and trials of an enemy channel. It has tremendous glimpses of the contemporary happenings taking place in various parts of the globe. Basavaraj Donur in his reflections reflects:

"...it may be said that the gap between the audience and the play should be bridged, and the tussle between the playwright and the director should be resolved. The real problems of the stage should be addressed and solutions found after they are brought to light, to enable the audience to watch a great spectacle on the stage and to experience the joy that only theatres can provide." (Basavaraj, 49).

CONCLUSION

Karnad 's play 'The Dreams of Tipu Sultan ' exemplifies his idea of subversions in the themes and technique and show how with the slightest change in the tackling of characterization, the texture, structure and so on, it can be modified and given a different twist significantly. The play is revived and adds new life by Karnad to emphasize the injustice and idea of



divide and rule policy employed by the English. The play exposes the fact that no profit is attained by the traitors in the long run and the country had to face a long battle before independence. The torture of slavery many generators had to face due to internal senselessness and rivalry. The dreams and their interpretations move towards subversive and contrasted reality; and when he wakes up that very afternoon he dies fighting in the battle. Tipu Sultan's portrayal of unyielding assertive spirit once again announces the master craftsmanship in Karnad .

REFERENCES

- [1]. Donur. Basavaraj(2002) Drama and Language, ed. B. Donur. Reflections. Dharwad: Adavi Publications.
- [2]. Grace Sudhir (2006) On the Wings of His Dreams: Re-viewing the Legend and History of Tipu-Sultan. Ed. Tutun Mukhejee. Girish Karnad 's Plays Performance and Critical Perspectives. Delhi: Pencraft International,
- [3]. Karnad Girish (2004) The Dreams of Tipu Sultan, Bali The Sacrifice. New Delhi: Oxford University Press,
- [4]. Pannikar Kavalam Narayana (2006) From 'Word' to 'Act' : An Approach to Girish Karnad. ed. Tutun Mukhejee. Karnad Girish 's Plays Performance and Critical Perspectives. Delhi: Pencraft International,
- [5]. Ramachandran. C N. Girish Karnad's The Dream of Tipu Sultan Pulls of Nationalist Historiography. Ed. Donur. Basavaraj. Aniketana Journal Bengaluru: Karnataka Sahitya Academy, May-July 2008.