



## **GIRISH KARNAD'S TECHNIQUE OF DIALOGUE AND LANGUAGE IN *TUGHLAQ* AND *HAYAVADANA***

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Girish Karnad is one of the most important contributors to Indian Drama literature. A multilingual actor, producer, writer and translator, who puts his soul into his plays. Drawing from Indian mythology, Karnad's plays are not the type that happen at one place and are written about in another. He writes his characters with such care and passion that the audience feels like they've known them for years. His dialogues are not just attentively chosen words but descriptive non-verbal gestures too. Karnad makes immense use of literary devices in the most beautiful ways and this makes his plays even more interesting.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Poetry, fiction and drama are the three strong pillars of literature. Out of these, drama is undisputedly the most expressive form of literature which provides a space for the articulation of human emotions, predicament, values, struggles, ideas and ideologies.

Drama is the oldest form of literature and was once the most popular genre of writing. It still commands great importance in literature, especially, in Indian literature, where dramas are heavily influenced by religion and thus, are rich, complex and not imitated. Books like

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*Natyashastra* and *Bharat* highlight the importance of Indian Drama, calling it the fifth *Ved*. Indian Drama is one of the most vibrant art forms on this globe.

Girish Karnad, an actor, a film producer, a famous playwright, recipient of Janpith Award, is one of the most respected names in the world of Indian drama and theatre. He was a pioneer of Indian drama, a Rhodes Scholar at Oxford and World Theatre Ambassador of the International Theatre Institute Paris. Girish Karnad is multi-lingual and a terrific translator too. He writes his plays in Kannada, his articles, essays and film scripts in English.

He directed and acted in many films in Kannad, Marathi and Hindi. Karnad used historical and mythological sources to elaborate contemporary themes like Human predicament in his dramas. Dialogue is one of the most important accessories of drama writing and Karnad accessorize his plays very well.

Karnad's dialogue handling is quite unique and effective. He adorns every dialogue with not just one but multiple meanings and functions. There's always a beautiful aperture between the meanings conveyed to the character and to the audience. The following lines help understand this point:

**Muhammad:** *No one can go far on his knees. I have a long way to go. I can't afford to crawl – I have to gallop.*

**Imam-ud-din:** *And you will do it without the Quran to guide you? Beware, Sultan, you are trying to become another God. Its sin is worse than parricide.*

These dialogues shed light on political theme of the play and the skills of the writer to portray it. Muhammad wants to be a universal conqueror and chooses to ignore the spiritual guidance of the prophet. These dialogues emit the importance of spiritual over material for the audience while they convey irrational ambition for the character.

Karnad is peculiar regarding the situations, characters and dialogues of his dramas. He thrives to make every dialogue realistic, immediate, precise and highly potent. In addition to words, he uses non-verbal gestures like silences and pauses to infuse conscious and unconscious motivation.

In *Tughlaq*, there's an encounter between Muhammad Tughlaq and Imam-ud-din which consists a long pause in the middle of the dialogue. Tughlaq tells Imam that people will greet him highly in the market, calls him a great saint and praises him for speaking against the Sultan despite all the risks. The long pause here signifies that Tughlaq is a crook and is inclined to kill Imam. In another conversation between Tughlaq and his step-mother, Tughlaq



pauses while describing the death of Imam. This pause highlights the absence of truth behind his words. Karnad uses pauses and silences like this to coerce the meaning of the play.

Karnad defines the characters by their language and dialogues. For example, in the play *Tughlaq*, Karnad has written Tughlaq's dialogue in agreement with his idealist, dreamer and voluble character. His dialogues are mostly filled with meaningless clichés and errors. He never means what he says. His conversations with his step-mother, aziz and amirs are full of empty signifiers. He refers to Ghiya-sud-din as "your holiness" and offers courtesy while knowing that Ghiya-sud-din is actually a common criminal. Tughlaq tells his mother that he loves her more than he has loved anyone in his life while ordering her arrest. In most of Tughlaq's dialogues, the signifier and signified are poles apart. The words are merely words, signifying nothing and this speech becomes a good example of logorrhea.

Moreover, the choice of vocabulary for each character is done with utmost care. Karnad chose a vocabulary dominated by abstract nouns, like *hope*, *belief*, *dream*, *ideal*, etc., for Tughlaq to portray his idyllic aura. This can be understood by looking at his following speech:

*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.  
Let's pray till our bodies meet and flow and our blood turns into air....  
Let's be the light and cover the earth with greenery.  
Let's be darkness and cover up the boundaries of nations....  
But then how can I spread my branches in the stars while the roots are yet to  
find their hold in the earth?*

This is how Tughlaq's speeches are filled with vague metaphors and imageries. Even his orders are formed of negations and abstractions –

*"Not a light should be seen in the windows of Delhi, not a wisp of smoke should rise from its Chimneys...., nothing but an empty graveyard of Delhi will satisfy me now". And later: "Hence-forth let the moment of prayer walk my street in silence and leave without a trace".*

Such exaggerated and vague language gives an air of insubstantial, incomplete signification to the character.

Some of Tughlaq's dialogues are even ironic and antiphrasis. He calls parricide "*a little thing*", prayer as "*pollution*" and expresses love for his mother or praises his followers ironically because he orders their execution immediately after his lavish praise. And hence, the deed cancels out the positivity and affirmation of words.



Since the character of Tughlaq was logorrheic, Karnad has filled his speech with repeated words and given him an abrupt style of speaking. All of his traits become overly apparent towards the conclusion of the play. Tughlaq's tortured rants are a good example,

*“Why have I become a pig rolling in this going mud? Raise me, clean me.  
Cover me with your infinite mercy....i can only beg – have pity on me.  
Cover me. I have no one but you now only you.”*

The tensed up, bunched and broken speeches signify that Tughlaq's mind is increasingly troubled and confused. In scene eight, he rebukes a man who does not understand him:

*“You don't understand! You don't understand!”*

He tells his stepmother:

*“They gave me what I wanted – power, strength to recognize myself.”*

This enhanced Epizeuxis points towards his disintegrated personality and progressive logorrhea. Logorrhea is a disorder associated with pressure of speech, grandiose delusions, and auditory hallucinations. Tughlaq wraps his incomprehensible dreams in artifice and emits an air of illusion throughout the play. His character is very theatric and masked.

Karnad climaxes the play in a very Bakhtinian way, all hierarchies are subverted, king, protector becomes the villain, the prophet becomes the king, washerman turns out to be a saint, and loyal subjects become treacherous. Tughlaq is praised lavishly numerous times, all in empty and encomium, ironical sense.

Karnad is a genius who likes to experiment with literary devices. In *Hayavadana*, he uses many epithets to convey the elusiveness of meaning and menace of language. The child Hayavadana, who wanted to be turned into complete (human being), was turned into a complete horse. The fluidity of meaning is further highlighted in the instance of the indignant Kali. Devadutta promises Rudra his head and rights hand to Kali but ends up giving his head to Kali. The incomplete language of the body (actions) reflects the language of the mind (thoughts) and exposes the vanity of vows, promises and prayers.

The words reinforce the idea of the search for completeness and absolute meaning in life but this search leaves the man even more clueless. The “why” questions remain answered;

*Kapila: (suddenly) why have you come away from him?*

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*Padmini: What do you want me to say?*

*Kapila: (to Padmini) why have you come here?*

*Padmini: I had to see you.*

*Kapila: Why? (No reply)*

The 'why' questions lead to more questions than answers.....

*Padmini: Why should one buy anything?*

*Kapila: Why shouldn't one? Why should one tolerate this mad dance of incompleteness?*

*Padmini: Whose incompleteness? Yours?*

All the 'why' questions fade into the verse of Bhagwata:

*You cannot engrave on water*

*Nor wound it with a knife*

*Which is why*

*The river*

*Has no fear*

*Of memories.*

In Hayavadana, the dialogues are in prose and are often interspersed with songs that comment on the characters and their actions. As in Sanskrit poetry, Karnad's plays are filled with descriptions in the form of romantic hyperboles as in Bhagwatha's account of Devadutta's statement: *having blinded the greatest poets of the world with his poetry and wit, devadutta is as it...* The image is specifically Indian when Devdutta characterizes Padmini as *Shyam Nagika – born of Kalidas as magical description – as vatsayayana had dreamt her*" and also when padmini – describes the casting of the dawn in the forest: *"the shadows of the twigs draw alpanas on the floor. The stars raise Arati and go."*

Translated poetry loses some of its original shine in the translation process. But Karnad manages to keep his poetry intact when translating it from one language to the other because the writer and the translator is the same person. He can experiment with the choice of idioms and diction and is closer to the efficacies of the written words and the cultural context of it all. Hence, the sensitivity of words and felt events remain intact even after translation.



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