



GIRISH KARNAD'S THEATRICAL TAKE ON

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Abstract

The playwrights like Girish Karnad, Vijay Tendulkar and Badal Sircar induced a new vigour and life into the Indian Drama with their novel themes and bold experiments on the stage from 1970 onwards. Among them Girish Karnad occupies an important place in the galaxy of Indian English dramaturgy, and classical and folk conventions in his plays. He expresses a different view, however, stating that what is surprising and upsetting about India is its total lack of plays, despite the original traditions. There is no theatre in India and no meaningful tradition.

Girish Karnad has been creating a rich and vibrant drama in tradition and yet suited to modern stage. He is highly influenced by the folk art forms of India. The growth of Indian theatre has a queer history. Modern Indian theatre emerged under British influence in three cities that were founded by the British and had no previous Indian history.

Keywords: Theatrical, Galaxy, Drama, Biography.



Girish Karnad - Indian Author, Actor and Film Director

Notable Works

- “Tughlaq”
- “Nagamandala”
- “Yayati”
- “Hayavadhana”
- “Vamsha Vriksha”
- “Iqbal”



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- Habib Tanvir

Introduction

Girish Karnad, (born May 19, 1938, Matheran, Bombay Presidency (now in Maharashtra), India), Indian playwright, author, actor, and film director whose films and plays, written largely in Kannada, explore the present by way of the past.

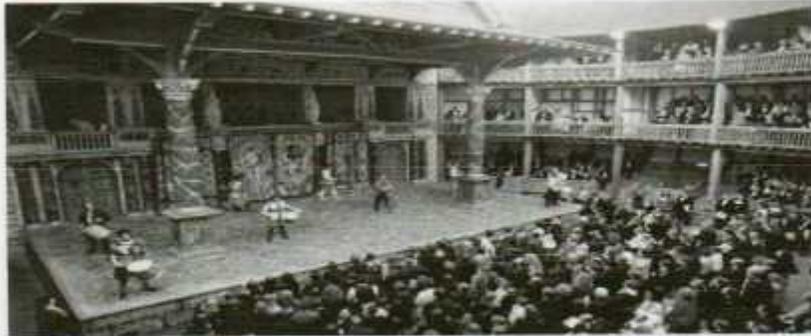
After graduation from Kannada University in 1958, Karnad studied philosophy, politics, and economics as a Rhodes scholar at the University of Oxford (1960-63). He wrote his first play, the critically acclaimed *Yayati* (1961), while still at Oxford. Centred on the story of a mythological king, the play established Karnad's use of the themes of history and mythology that would inform his work over the following decades. Karnad's next play, *Tughlaq* (1964), tells the story of the 14th century sulthan Muhammad – bin –Tughluq and remains among the best known on his works.

Major Works

Samskara (1970) marked Karnad's entry into film making. He wrote the screenplay and played the lead role in the film, an adaptation of an anticaste novel of the same by U.R.Ananthamurthy. Karnad followed with *Vamsha Vriksha* (1971), codirected by B.V.Karanth. During this period Karnad continued to produce work as a play wirght, including *Hayavadana* (1971), widely recognized as among the most important plays of post independence India. For his contributions to theatre. He was awarded the Padma Shri, one of India's top civilian honours, in 1974.

Karnad's other well known films in Kannada include *Tabbaliyu Neenade Magane* (1977) and *Ondanondu Kaaladalli* (1978). He also worked in Hindi, directing the critically acclaimed *Utsav* (1984), an adaptation of Shudraka's 4th - century Sanskrit play *Mrichchakatika*. With the play *Nagamandala* (1988), Karnad framed an unhappy contemporary marriage in imagery drawn from Kannada folk tales.

In 1992 the Indian government awarded Karnad another of its highest honours, the Padma Bhushan, in recognition of his contributions to ther arts. He was the recipient of the Jnanpith Award, India's highest literary prize, in 1999 for his contribution to literature and theatre. He continued to work in film, directing such movies as *Kanooru Heggadithi*(1999) and acting in *Iqbal* (2005) and *Life Goes On* (2009), among others.



in theatrical production

The planning, rehearsal, and presentation of a work. Such a work is presented to an audience at a particular time and place by live performers, who use either themselves or inanimate...

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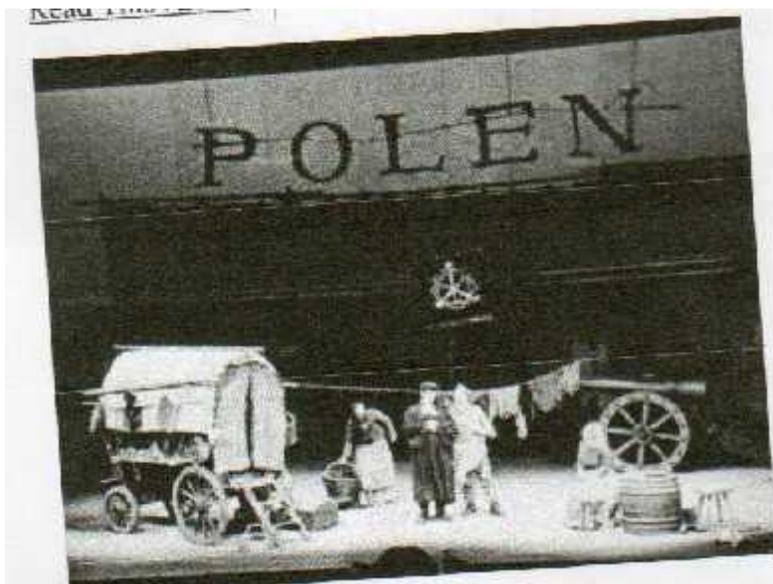
in India

India, country that occupies the greater part of South Asia and has roughly one-sixth of the world's population.

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The planning, rehearsal, and presentation of a work. Such a work is presented to an audience at a particular time and place by live performers, who use either themselves or inanimate. [Read This Article](#).





In India

India, country that occupies the greater part of South Asia and has roughly one-sixth of the world's population. Read this article.

In Literature

A body of written works. The name has traditionally been applied to those imaginative works of poetry and prose distinguished by the intentions of their authors and the perceived... Read This Article.

In Dramatic Literature

The texts of plays that can be read, as distinct from being seen and heard in performance. The term dramatic literature implies a contradiction in that literature originally meant... Read This Article.

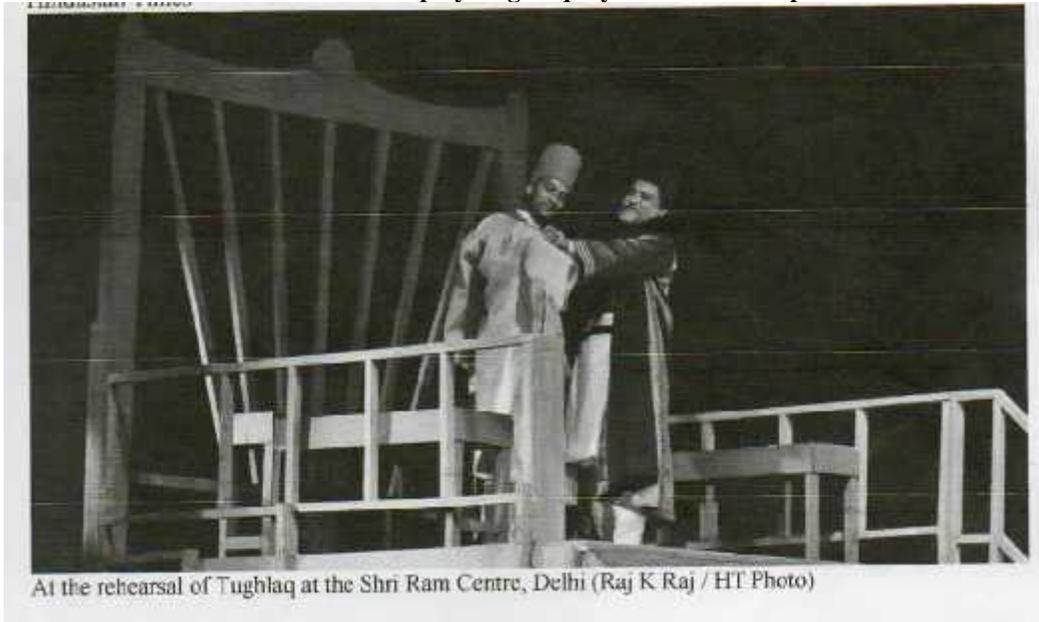
In Acting

The performing art in which movement, gesture, and intonation are used to realize a fictional character for the stage, for motion pictures, or for television, Acting is generally... Read This Article.

In Kannada Literature

The literature written in Kannada, which, like the other languages of South India, is of the Dravidian family. The earliest records in Kannada are inscriptions dating from the ... Read This Article

What Girish Karnad's play Tughlaq says about India's politicians



In the mid '60s, Girish Karnad was a 22 year-old playwright in search of a subject. He had just completed writing about the whim of a king (Yayati) when he came upon the statement of a fellow Kannada litterateur's dissing existing Kannada plays as costume drama. Karnad decided to rise to the challenge. His 'Tughlaq' is theatrical representation strong in rhetoric of the 14th - century king who destabilised his own kingdom, marched his people from the north (Delhi) to the west (Daulatabad) to set up a new capital and marched them back: went on a killing spree: struck coins in one metal and then another - all in the name of good governance. Watching a powerful man crack up, whenever it occurs, is a bad time in history. It's great for art though.

Tughlaq was first staged in Urdu in 1966 as part of a National School of Drama student production directed by actor Om Shivpuri, then a student. Its more famous outing was Ebrahim Alkazi's grand set-piece at the Purnaa Qila, Delhi, in 1972, veteran actor Manohar Singh played the lead. A revival of the play in Delhi this weekend comes at an interesting point when books are questioning older books about dead rulers with bad press - such as Aurangzeb - and the appropriate way to look at figures of history.



Home Truths

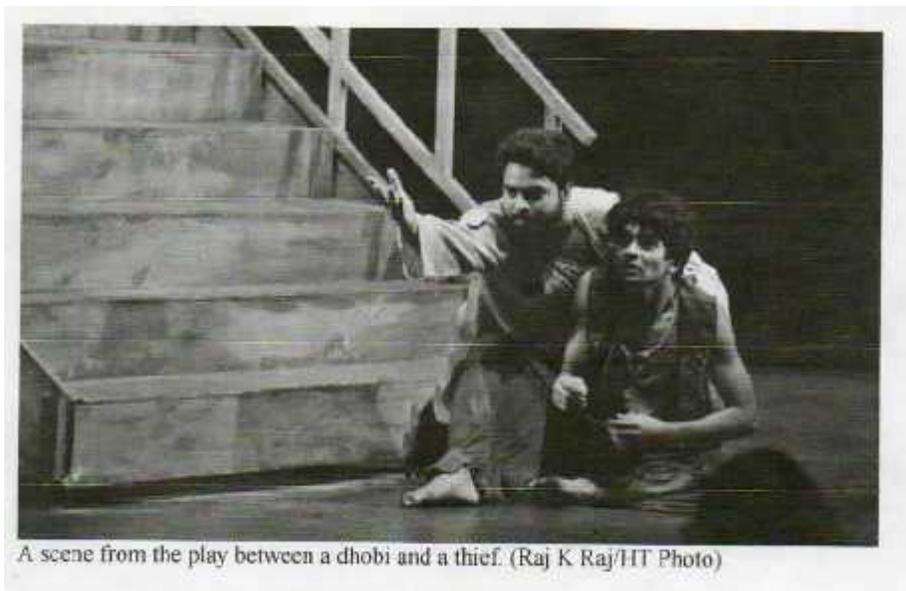
So, was Muhammad bin Tughlaq mad or brilliant? Should one laugh at him or listen to him? Was he a visionary or an insecure politician? Were his projects an expression of madness or driven by political calculation? The answers to these questions, says Karnad, may perhaps be set aside for the most important question – is the play still contemporary or not .

“Written in the ‘60s, everyone latched on to UR Ananthamurthy’s comment of it being a critique of Nehruvian socialism,” says the actor – playwright. “The point about a play is that it cannot simply be about its own time. Tughlaq is not just about Nehru. There are lines in the play when two guards talk to each other and one of them says ‘Oh, this is such a strong fort!’ The other guard doesn’t agree. He says ‘This fort will crumble due its inner weaknesses.’ An 80s’ audience watching it, interpreted it as the aftermath to Indira Gandhi’s assassination... Every audience interprets a play according to his own sense of reality. The question is whether it will connect it to Modi...”

When Curtains Go Up

K Madavane, the director of Tughlaq that will be staged this weekend, seems to have taken forward Karnad’s aesthetics in the way he has developed the play visually.”K Madavane is a meticulous planner. The throne is not a static piece of furniture, its movement to indicate a shift of capital,” says Veena Soorma of Shri Ram Centre of Performing Arts.

The Stage is bare except for a huge wooden throne atop a pyramid whose base is made up of stairs. Tughlaq climbs these stairs to issue his orders. his minions positioned at various levels on the staircase fight it out for his attention. The courier (Najeeb) who is all hot air, grand postures and bad advice, is the one who has the king’s ears. Those who are temperate don’t stand a chance. Tughlaq’s subjects also make hay feeding into his fickle impulses to be seen as inclusive.



A scene from the play between a dhobi and a thief. (Raj K Raj/HT Photo)

One of his Muslim subjects, for example, takes on the identify of a Brahmin to benefit from the King’s generosity to his Hindu subjects. The Daulatabad move, says Sandeep Singh, the Shri Ram Centre repertory chief, was, in fact guided by the motive that Daulatabad in Maharashtra) was a centre for his Hindu subjects. “ And the coming of his Muslim majority population from Delhi would make it a place of religious harmony... But it was also to secure his capital from Mongol invasion, he adds. “ Tughlaq got the people packing and everyone hated the idea”.

There were three things that were fighting for Tughlaq’s soul, says Singh. He quotes from the play to make his point. “ Khuda ki azmaat (Allah’s greatness), riyaya ki bhalayi ka khwaab (the dream for the good of the people) , aur zaati khwaishey (my personal desires) – jab teeno main kashmakash to rahi ho toh mujhey soney ka waqt kanhan hai...”

Veteran actor Ayaz Khan who is playing Tughlaq for the sixth time in his career, says the character is open to various readings. Tughlaq’s mistakes, he says, unlike today’s leaders.



Conclusion

He is truly an inspiration Like great playwrights, Karnad unravels the many layers of human understanding and emotion, Bharathanatyam dancer Alarmel Valli says, “ I remember what a powerful impact Girish Karnad’s plays had on me, even when I was in college. Here was one of the greatest of modern Indian playwrights, drawing on myth, history and folklore, to explore contemporary conflicts and themes of eternal human relevance. His plays speak across cultures and generations and for someone like me, who grew up in an era when the young tended to look to the West for its artistic cues, he is truly an inspiration.

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