SECTION II

FEMINISM IN KARNAD’S HISTORICAL PLAYS
CHAPTER IV FEMINISM IN GIRISH KARNAD’S \textit{TUGHLAQ}

\textbf{Introduction:} \textit{Tughaq} is Karnad’s second play which he wrote in Kannada in 1964 and translated into English in 1972. This play is result of and response to Kirtinath Kurtikoti’s statement that “modern Kannada drama had no first-hand historical plays”\textsuperscript{1}. Karnad was at Oxford then and begun to prepare himself to take up the challenge of producing a historical drama in the quality Kurthkoti had wanted. He studied the history of India and found that the history of Mohmad bin Tughlaq was suitable for his venture to write a historical play. He succeeded in his endeavour by giving a historical play \textit{Tughaq} to Indian theatre. It has become not only a successful play but also elevated Karnad as a playwright to an enviable and covetous height both at home and abroad. The play has been studied with reference to the political and ideological contexts. Jaydipsingh Dodiya remarks about \textit{Tughaq} as : “Girish Karnad is perhaps the most renowned media personality in the contemporary India. He is India’s leading playwright and an adept practioner of performing arts. His first play \textit{Yayati} (1961). A retelling of a myth from the \textit{Mahabharata} won critical acclaim. But it was his second play \textit{Tughaq} that established him as one of the foremost playwrights in India. It is a historical play in the manner of the nineteenth-century parsee theatre. It deals with the tumultuous reign of medieval Sultan, Muhammad-bin-Tughlaq, a visionary, a poet, and yet most eccentric individual to ascend the throne of Delhi.”\textsuperscript{2} The play has been not yet explored from the perspective of feminism because there is only one woman character and the play does not deal with the feminist issues explicitly. Thus the play studied from the point of view of feminism in this chapter. However, the plot of the play and a brief note on the history of Muhammad bin Tughlaq are provided prior to the study from the angle of feminism.

\textbf{Plot:} The plot of \textit{Tughaq} deals with the miserable down-fall and utter failure of the ideals of Mohammad bin Tughlaq, the Sultan of Delhi. He attempts to create secularism and Hindu-Muslim unity in his kingdom by implementing various ideal
policies. He waves the tax imposed on the Hindus. But this provision is misused by the Muslims in the disguise of the Hindus. He changes the state currency from gold into copper. It is also manipulated that fake currencies are minted in a large scale creating crisis. He transfers the capital from Delhi to Dauladabad thinking that it will be appreciated by the Hindus because Dauladabad is largely inhabited by the Hindus. Yet it also becomes failure because of the adverse effect of the transport of the people from Delhi to Dauladabad. Mohammad bin Tughlaq who is highly educated and very wise becomes disillusioned in his attempt translate his ideals into reality. The note on the plot of \textit{Tughlaq} is summed up with M.K.Naik’s observation about the play as follows:

\textit{Tughlaq} is a historical play on the life of Sultan Mohammad bin Tughlaq of the fourteenth century India. Karnad projects the curious contradictions in the complex personality of the Sultan, who was at once a doer and a man of action, benevolent and cruel, edevote and godless. His two close associates – Barani, the scholarly historian and Najib, the politician seem to represent the two opposite selves of Tughlaq, while Aziz, the wily time-server, appears to represent all those who took advantage of the Sultan’s visionary schemes and fooled him. ... However, \textit{Tughlaq} fails to emerge as a tragedy, chiedfly because the dramatist seems to himself the artist’s privilege to present an integrated vision of a character full of conflicting tendencies.\textsuperscript{3}

\textbf{A Brief Note on the history of Tughlaq:} Mohammad bin Tughlaq is the eldest son of Ghiyas- ud- din- Tughlaq of what is called Tughlaq Dynasty. He was born in Kotla Tolay Khan in Multan. He is known by such other names as Prince Fakhr Malik, Jauna Khan and Ulugh Khan. He received training and experience in war and royal rule from his father. His father had sent in to Warangal, the capital of Kakatya Dynasty for the propaganda against King Prataparudra in 1321 and 1325. He became the Sultan in 1325 on his father demise. There are two versions about the death of his father. Firstly, some have stated that he killed his father to become the Sultan. However, this version is denied by some historians. Secondly, it is said that he died accidently while he was
observing the march of the royal elephants on his son’s return from Warangal. He married the daughter of Raja of Dipalpur. Mohammad bin Tughlaq was very ambitious as he tried to annex all the inhabited lands to empire. His regime was very restless as it was full of rebellions, controversies and crisis. He tried to capture the Himalayan region and to invade China but withdrew from that attempt due to the local resistance in the Himalayan region. He shifted the capital from Delhi to Daulatabad because of his intention to make use of the fertile lands in the Deccan plateau. In order to facilitate the migrants from Delhi to Daulatabad, he constructed the roads and planted and grew the shadowy trees along the passage. He had also developed the postal services between these two places. His mother is one those who moved from Delhi to Daulatabad in 1329. The other reason for him to shift the capital was to safeguard his kingdom from the attacks of the Mongals who always used to target Delhi. But he shifted the capital from Daulatabad to Delhi again in 1335 because of the rebellions from Mabar and the West Bengal. He changed the currency from gold to copper and brass in order to pay the increasing soldiers. He passed away during his visit Thalta where the Guljar tribes indulged in group wars.

Mohammad bin Tughlaq was expert in logic, philosophy, mathematics, astronomy, physical sciences and calligraphy. He had a keen interest in medicine as well. He was a polyglot of being well versed in Persian, Arabic, Turkish and Sanskrit. He was a very strict follower of Islam praying five times and fasting regularly. He possessed religious tolerance by respecting the Sufi and Jain saints. He used to participate in the Hindu- Holi festivals. His personality was characterized by haste and mixture emotions and harshness.

**Feminism in Tughlaq:** It is very well known that Karnad adopts the historical, mythical and epic texts for his making his plays. The aspects of feminism in Karnada’s plays are first observed in the very act of creating women characters outside the source texts. Thus the very creation of Step-mother character in Tughlaq is an example of feminism
because it is act of providing space for woman which was denied in the real history in the past. Karnad has used her role in all major actions of Tughlaq in the play. The study of such role is undertaken now in order to show the importance given to the lone woman character in the play.

It is very important to note that there is not any mention of a step-mother in the history of Mohammad-bin-Tughlaq. His father Ghiyas-ud-din-Tughlaq might have had several wives as it was the practice of the kings and emperors of the bygone ages. But there is no specific information available about a step-mother of Mohammad-bin-Tughlag and about her constant counsel to the king. Thus it is inferred that the character of Step-mother is imaginative and the author has purposely created and incorporated this character to provide gender justice and equality in literature.

Karnad has selected the history of Sultan Mohammad-bin-Tughlaq from 1327 though he ascended the throne in 1325. The play opens with the minor characters of common people in the Shakespearian manner to offer the glimpse of the background. Three characters representing the public namely Old man; Young man; and Third man are seen interacting and through this interaction the present image of Sultan as prevalent in the empire is revealed. While Young man opines that the country safe in the hands of the present Sultan, Old man differs with him stating that the present regime has created disappointment. The Sultan’s policy of public redress of grievances; compulsory prayers for five times; and the exemption of jiziya tax to the Hindus has created suspicion and fear in the public. This public opinion establishes the image of the Sultan as being complex and self-contradictory.

The first issue of Mohammad-bin-Tughlaq the play deals with is the failure of Sultan’s ideal of justice to all. A public announcement made by the Sultan that anybody who is affected by the policy of his rule can seek the redress. A Muslim dhobi called Aziz manipulates this announcement very effectively. Aazam detects that the man who wins the case in the disguise of a Brahmin called Vishnu Prasad is none other his friend
who is a Muslim dhobi. Aazam is a pickpocket himself. He extracts the fact from Aziz which is depicted in the play thus:

Aziz: You know, the one on the second anniversary of his coronation. (Mimicking a public announcer) ‘Henceforth people may file a suit against the Sultan himself for the misbehaviour of his officers ... No one need have any fear ... Justice will be done ...’ Et cetera. Well, I was at the end of my tether then. There’s no future in being a dhobi these days. So I did a bit of thinking. There’s a Brahmin called Vishnu Prasad whose land had been confiscated recently. I shaved my head and went to him. I said I would buy the land. ...

Exactly, that’s what he said too. But I said, ‘Never mind about that’. So he sold me the land—backdating the contract. And I filed a suit. Well, here I am. Five hundred silver dinars for nothing, and a job in His Merciful Majesty’s own Civil Service.

Aazam: ... Anyway, why did you have to dress up in these ungodly clothes? Couldn’t you have come like a proper Muslim?

Aziz: (Scandalized) But then what would happen to the King’s impartial justice? A Muslim plaintiff against a Muslim king? I mean, where’s the question of justice there? Where’s the equality between Hindus and Muslims? If, on the other hand, the plaintiff’s a Hindu ... well you saw the crowds.

Mohammad-bin-Tughlaq wants to create the impression that he is secular and loves to bring about unity among the Hindus and Muslims. He is very particular in projecting himself as being unbiased religiously. It is in this regard, he waves the jiziya tax off to the Hindus and sanctions compensation to the so called Vishnu Prasad. But both of them result in the adverse effect. When the Hindus are exempted from jiziya tax, it is suspicion rather faith which arises among the Hindus. His policy for redressing the grievances of the Hindu farmer is grabbed by Vishnu Prasad by Aziz in the disguise of Vishnu Prasad. This failure of Sultan’s ideals is foregrounded in these instances at the very outset.
The second issue of the Sultan is about the death of the king’s father. As stated earlier, there was a rumour that Mohammad-bin-Tughlaq had murdered his father for the sake of the crown. In the play, the death of his brother is also added. It is the talk of the town as well as that of very prominent characters. Third man hints that Mohammad-bin-Tughlaq has murdered his father and got his father’s throne. When Young man disputes with him by asking whether he has himself witnessed the murder, he states that his friends have seen it and he has learnt from them. He gives to the reference to Sheik Imam-ud-din’s statements in this regard in Kanpur like this:

THIRD MAN: Why, of course. Only a week ago. In Kanpur. What a man! What a voice! The audience was spell-bound. And he said the Sultan’s guilty of killing his father and brother. He said so many other things too _ about Islam and what’s happening to it. It was the most inspiring speech I’ve heard. The audience went wild and burnt down half of Kanpur. You think he would talk like that if he wasn’t.

The conversation between Mohammad-bin-Tughlaq and Step-mother conveys that the latter too suspects that he has murdered his father. Mohammad-bin-Tughlaq states that he is more worried his people than fighting battles against his enemies. Step-mother reminds him that it is not new as the previous Sultans had also had the similar worries. He responds to her rejecting her view by stating that the previous Sultans were unable to bear the responsibility of their throne nor die they forego it. In the process they either died at the young age or got murdered. When Step-mother expresses that she can not bear his joking about murder, the dialogue between them indicates the rumour thus:

MUHAMMAD: So you too belive that piece of gossip!

STEP-MOTHER: What gossip?


STEP-MOTHER: Don’t be silly. I didn’t mean anything of that kind.
MUHAMMAD: But you do believe it? And why shouldn’t you? After all my own mother believes it. The whole court believes it. My Amirs believe it. Why shouldn’t my step-mother believe it?

STEP-MOTHER (flaring up): Shut up, fool! I’ve told I won’t have you calling me that.6

At this juncture, the door-keeper informs them that Najib and Barani have arrived to see the Sultan. Najib is a politician and Barani is a historian. Both of them have brought him the message of what criticism Sheikh Imam-ud-din has been spreading about the Sultan. Barani and Najib inform the Sultan how Sheikh Imam-ud-din has criticised the Sultan:

BARANI: It’s as Your Majesty said ... He says the Sultan is a disgrace to Islam.

MUHAMMAD: That’s all? I could find worse faults in me. What else?

(Silence)

NAJIB: He says Your Majesty has forfeited the right to rule, by murdering your father and brother at prayer.

(The Step-Mother and Barani react sharply, but Muhammad is still. A short pause.)

MUHAMMAD (quietly): Did he say that?

BARANI (almost in whisper): Yes, Your Majesty.

MUHAMMAD: So now they talk about it openly, do they?

BARANI: He said it in the heat of the moment, Your Majesty. I’m sure he didn’t mean it. Your Majesty must ignore these little things.

MUHAMMAD: Do you really think parricide is a little thing? And fratricide? And the pollution of prayer? It’s not what people say, Barani, it’s their crooked minds that horrify me. Look at my own mother – she won’t talk to me now –not because father died because my brother died in the accident. He was more amenable to her whims and he would have made a king for her. So
she believes I killed them. Do you know, I’ve just found out that even this step-mother of mine thinks I am a murderer.  

Karnad has adopted the original history of Mohammad-bin-Tughlaq with reference to the death of his father. There was a rumour that his father was murdered by Mohammad-bin-Tughlad in order to become the king. This view was dismissed by a number of historians and they had argued that he died in the accident while he was watching the march of the royal elephants.  

The role of Step-Mother in this respect is very significant. She observes that the Sultan fails to take proper rest in the night. He keeps awake. She is more worried about his health. It is in the interest of his health, she reminds him that the previous Sultans had also worried the people and not to joke about the murder of the previous Sultans. But the Sultan misreads that his step-mother also suspects him as a murderer. Karnad has broken the myth of step-mothers as being cunning, cruel and biased by portraying the Sultan’s step-mother as being kind, caring and concerned about her step-son in Tughlaq. This becomes very clear in Step-Mother’s confiding in Barani as shown below:  

STEP-MOTHER: I don’t know what to say, Barani. I mustn’t complain against my son --  

BARANI: Your Highness may place full trust in me.  

STEP-MOTHER: I know. That’s why I asked you to stay. I am worried about him. You know what he is like. He is such an intelligent boy and he works so hard for the people. He doesn’t even go to bed these days. (Pause) But he is so impulsive – and when he gets into one of his moods I don’t know what he’ll do next. (Pause) You are a sober man, Barani, level headed and honest, and he needs friends like you. I just wanted to ask you .. Oh, God! It all sounds so stupid.  

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Muhammad-bin-Tughlaq becomes frustrated by the criticism of Sheik Imam-ud-din. He is a saint and his opinion carries a lot of impact among the people. So he decides to eliminate him through conspiracy. He invites him to his place and informs him that he has made arrangement for his speech to the people. But it turns out to be a failure because no common man has gathered at the fixed venue for listening to the saint. He appeals to Sheik Imam-ud-din to approach Ain-ul-mulk as his convoy to stop the war for which Ain-ul-Mulk he has already set out to Delhi. Sheik Imam-ud-din resembles the Sultan in the physical appearance. The Sultan convinces the Sheik that Ain-ul-Mulk will listen to his advice as he is saint. When the Sheik-Imam-ud-din marches with the army towards Ain-ul-Mulk, the Sultan also moves with another set of army and hides behind the hill.

When the Sheik Iman-ud-din and Ain-ul-Mulk are near, a trumpet blows and the armies of both sides begin to attack each other. The Sheik Imam-ud-din is killed in cold blood. The exhausted army of Ain-ul-Mulk is attacked by the Sultan and is defeated. The Sultan has given the kingdom of Avadh to Ain-ul-Mulk for his expertise in the chess. When the Sultan narrates the death of the Sheik Imam-ud-din and defeat of Ain-ul-Mulk, his step-mother is present. The step-mother is able to understand that the Sultan is acting in a secret way. The step-mother remains silent about the mysterious death of Sheik Iman-ud-din and the Sultan’s special treatment to Ain-ul-Mulk but the silence also indicates that she could read between the lines about those incidents.

The Sultan has invited Shihab-ud-din to Delhi and left the responsibility of looking after Delhi during his arrangements to shift the capital to Dauladabad. The Sheik, Amirs in Delhi do not approve this plan. They feel that they will be deprived of their rights in Dauladabad as it is the region of Hindu majority. They seek the help of Shihab-ud-din in resolving this problem. Ratansingh who is the adopted brother of Shihab-ud-din suggests a conspiracy of killing the Sultan at the time prayer. When Shihab-ud-din is about to stab him while he is in the prayer, he is overpowered by the
Hindu soldiers who were kept ready for such an action. The Sultan has detected the conspiracy and taken precaution to stop. The Sultan kills Shihab-ud-din and has sent the message to his father that he died as a martyr in his heroic action to protect the Sultan from the assault of the nobles of the court.

Najib expresses an apprehension that it is very difficult to hide the murder of Shihab-ud-din because those Hindu soldiers who have witnessed it are bound to let the cat out of the bag. He raises a doubt whether all of them should be hanged for the maintenance of the secret. The Sultan dismisses such plans and makes it clear that the people of Delhi should move to Dauladabad in a fortnight so that there is no fear of the disclosure of the secret of the murder. He passes an order that prayers should be stopped in Delhi. He passes such an order because he feels that the prayers are ridden with disease. He announces that the prayers shall be resumed after the visit of a holy man called Ghiyas-ud-din Abbasid. In a short while, the announcement of shifting the capital to Dauladbad is made as shown under:

ANNOUNCER: Attention! Attention! The Merciful Sultan Muhammad has ordered – that within the next month every citizen of Delhi must leave for Daulatabad. No one should remain behind in Delhi. Anyone who attempts to stay behind or to go elsewhere will be severly punished. All arrangements have been made to ensure the comfort of citizens on the way to Daulatabad. All the needs of the citizens, regarding food, clothing or medicine, will use these amenities to the full and be in Daulatabad as soon as possible. Attention! Attention! ⁹

When this policy is implemented, his ideal is defeated. Aziz who manipulated the policy of public grievances takes an undue advantage of this policy as well. He is the supervisor of monitoring the people moving from Delhi to Daulatabad. It has caused hardship tens and thousands of people moving from Delhi. The act of collecting bribe from the people for the delay is observed. In the meantime, the Sultan has reached Daulatabad and visits the fort which he constructed at the age of twenty one. He faces a
lot of problems. The rebellion has started from the Deccan, Bengal and Maber and the Sultan is found disabled to contain the rebellions. In addition, his ideal of changing the currency from silver to copper meets with failure. He has dismissed the arguments that the value of the currency would decline if the copper is used as equivalent to silver. He justifies that it is trust which matters. He quotes that the paper currency is working in China. But this ideal also is defeated as every home of the Hindus has become an industry of minting the copper currency.

Aziz is the one who takes the undue advantage of the Sultan’s erroneous and impracticable ideals. The Sultan has invited Ghiyas-ud-din Abbasid who is the descendant of the Khalif and he is expected to be Daulatabad. Neither the Sultan nor anybody in his court has seen him before. Aziz happens to meet him when the migration of the people of Dedli to Daulatabad is taking place. Ghiyas-ud-din Abbasid possesses nothing but the letter of the Sultan and a ring of Sultan as a mark of recognition. Aziz plans to manipulate this factor in his favour. He decides to kill the saint and visit the Sultan in the disguise of him so that he would get all the favours from the Sultan. Aazam prevails upon him not kill him but in vain.

Step-Mother is found in Daulatabad now. She meets the Sultan and reminds him of the chaos in the kingdom. She reminds him that his policy of using the copper as currency instead of silver is misused by the goldsmiths. The treasury is filled with fake copper currencies. The Sultan is not ready to correct his mistake. He states that he is going to store the copper coins in the rose garden. The following dialogue between The Sultan and Step-Mother is very evident in knowing the concern of the step-mother for The Sultan:

MUHAMMAD: What else can I do? I said the new copper coins would have the same value as the silver dinars. Now I can’t go against my own orders.
STEP-MOTHER: But this sheer folly! The Vizier says there are five hundred carts out there and they are full of counterfeit coins. Are you going to exchange them all for silver?

MUHAMMAD: There’s nothing else for it. I should have expected this but didn’t –that was my fault. If I don’t withdraw the coins now, the whole economy will be in shambles. It’s in a bad enough state already.

STEP-MOTHER: Five hundred carts on the first day! And what about tomorrow and the day after? You are just legalizing robbery –

MUHAMMAD: It’s all their wealth. I can’t let my whim ruin them.

STEP-MOTHER: And how is a treasury full of counterfeit coins going to help them? Will that revive your economy?

MUHAMMAD: Don’t worry, Mother. The coins aren’t going into the treasury. They’ll all be heaped in the new rose garden.¹⁰

The step-mother reminds her that the Sultan has planned the garden for many years and asks him what will happen to such a garden if the copper coins are heaped there. He replies that he does not need the garden any longer. He states that he has constructed the garden to create an image of Sadi’s poems for himself. He has desired to look at each rose as a poem and look at every thorn to arouse his senses. He laments that his desires have been destroyed by the recent happenings in his state.

Step-Mother reminds him that the people are killed and funeral of those who are killed is going on everyday. She asks him to do something to stop such things. When he replies that he keeps on killing those people whom he suspects in the murder of Najib, she puts forth her argument which shows her concern for him and his regime thus:

STEP-MOTHER: Then why don’t you stop the funeral? Why this unending line of corpses? Muhammad, I have been hearing rumoure lately. The Amirs and Khans are apparently getting upset because you are hounding them about Najib.
MUHAMMAD: I am not hounding them. I merely want to find out who murdered Najib.

STEP-MOTHER: Is it true five of them have fled?


STEP-MOTHER: Oh God!

MUHAMMAD: He told his wife he knew who had killed Najib. One of his servants overheard the conversation.

STEP-MOTHER (alarmed): Pleasae, don’t go on like this. Please. Najib’s dead. Finished. You can’t drive the nobles to rebellion for his sake?

MUHAMMAD: Don’t you think it strange that an Amir like Jalal-ud-din should kill himself in order to save the murderer? It must be someone very special.11

The argument between them continues till she confesses that she is the murderer. She tries her best to make him forget the murder of Najib before her confession. She states that she is very happy that Najib is dead because she feels that he has misguided Muhammad. She comments that the Sultan believes none so much as Najib and it is his trust in him which has caused the unrest in the state now. She draws his attention to the fact that the Ulema, noblemen, people are against and hate him because of Najib’s influence on him. She expresses that Najib should have died a long ago and she is glad that he is gone now. Muhammad disagrees with her and stress that although he was not loyal to him, he was certainly faithful to the throne. His opposition to him at any time is an indication of the Sultan being wrong. Step-Mother becomes annoyed about the Sultan’s eulogy of Najib and asks him to forget Najib and focus on the state of affairs. But Muhammad is not ready to yield to her advice. When he is insistent upon detecting the murderer, she reveals her role in it which shows her concern for his well-being:

MUHAMMAD: I must know who killed him and why.
STEP-MOTHER: Muhammad, how long are you going to torment yourself like this?

MUHAMMAD: Not for long. The Amirs will return. If they don’t, I’ll be sorry for their families.

STEP-MOTHER: You frighten me, Muhammad, you really do. Please stop this. Muhammad---please—for my sake.

(No reply)

Won’t you? I appeal to you.

(No reply)

All right. I killed him. I had him murdered.

MUHAMMAD (exploding): For God’s sake, don’t joke about it! And don’t try to be noble and save me from the moronic Amirs and Khans. This isn’t a small thing.

STEP-MOTHER: I am perfectly serious. I had him poisoned.12

Muhammad becomes shocked. He does not seem to believe the words of his step-mother. He considers that it is a torment to hear his step-mother stating that she has poisoned Najib to death. But the step-mother emphasises that she has killed him and to kill him was easier than the Sultan’s murder of his father, brother and the saint Sheik Imam-ud-din. A.K.Sinha endorses this by stating that “His step-mother shocks Muhammad when she tells him that it was she who had got Najib murdered. She makes him conscious of his degeneration.”13 Muhammad justifies his act by stating that he killed them for the sake of his ideal. Yet his act has brought ruin to him now.

Step-Mother makes a comparison between the condition of his state at beginning of his regime and at present. She recollects that he was very glorious, idealistic and full of hopes. But his kingdom has become a land of death for which Najib is responsible. The Sultan refutes the allegation and states that Najib had advised him against the violence and control his sword for the sake of the stability in the state. Step-Mother
questions him as why has failed to follow his advice. He answers that he could not control himself. He admits that it is Shihab-ud-di of Sampanshar whom he killed first with his own hands. He was unable to realize the consequence of that murder. He has now decided to use sword for implementing his mission. He argues that it has got nothing to do with the murder of Najib. In the dialogue which follows, Step-Mother love and concern for Muhammad is exhibited:

STEP-MOTHER: You had your share of the futile deaths. I have mine now.

MUHAMMAD (shouting): No, they were not futile. They gave what I wanted --- power, strength to shape my thoughts, strength to act. Strength to recognize myself. What did your little murder give you?

(Suddenly freezes. Stares at her. Then quietly)

Woman, woman, so you are also one of them! So that’s what you too wanted! Mother is annoyed she can’t control me. And now you too are trying the same game, aren’t you? Get rid of Najib, so you could control me?

STEP-MOTHER: I want nothing for myself. You are my life, Muhammad. You know that. If I had wanted power, I wouldn’t have confessed.

MUHAMMAD: You needn’t have confessed. I would have found out on my own. Or else, the Amirs would have rebelled. And then, what power? Clever you. You thought I wouldn’t punish you, didn’t you? Because I love you more than I have loved anyone in my life. That was the price of your love, wasn’t it? (Suddenly in agony.) Mother! Why did you have to do it?  

Muhammad has become very angry on his step-mother at present. When the step-mother advises him to listen to her, his fury becomes uncontrollable. She tries to put her on his shoulder but he warns her not touch her. He pronounces death as the punishment to her for her murder of Najib. She tries to dissuade him from his decision but he is very firm. He regards his act as worse that that
adultery. The dialogue between them shows the authority in him and humbleness in her:

MUHAMMAD: Don’t touch me! There’s only one punishment for treachery – death!

(Claps twice)

STEP-MOTHER: Don’t be a fool, Muhammad. I am telling you for your own sake. My death won’t make you happy. You have enough ghosts to haunt you. Don’t add mine to it.

MUHAMMAD: The others died unjustly. You deserve to die –

(Two soldiers enter)

You are worse than an adulteress. But I can’t think of a worse punishment for you. Take her to prison.

(The Step-Mother stands petrified. The soldiers are also baffled)

(Screaming) Take her away!

(The soldiers hold her. She tries to break away)

Tell the Nayab Vizier I want her stoned to death publicly tomorrow morning.

STEP-MOTHER (finding her voice): Not that, Mohammad, don’t do that to me ---please.

MUHAMMAD: That’s how an adulteress dies. Take her away.

STEP-MOTHER: Muhammad, please---

15 Muhammad calls her worse than an adulteress. Then he states that the punishment he has given her right alleging that she is an adulteress. There is no clue for her adultery in the entire play. Her relationship with the Sultan is that of a mother. But Geeta Kumar interprets her excessive concern for her as being the evidence of her incest with Muhammad. She comments like this: “The stepmother in her own selfish pursuit of power, wants to control Muhammad. Not just satisfied with the incestuous relationship with him, she has the Vizier Najib poisoned. But Muhammad’s mad lust for
power, which he wouldn’t allow anyone to share, makes him sentence her to stoning to death in public. His consciousness, however, does not let him rest and nagging questions sting him like mad.”

It is obvious that Mohammad regards his step-mother as one of the three most important people to him. He has stated it once. His step-mother keeps a close vigil on his conduct personal and political. Najib is another most important person for him. It is he who is his political guru. When Najib is found to have been killed, he loses his sense and begins to cause savage to the suspects. He has least thought that his own step-mother would kill Najib. When she confesses it, he feels that she has betrayed him.

K.Ratna Shiela Mani expresses a similar opinion as: With regard to his relationship with his mother. Tughlaq is already estranged from her as she believes him guilty of patricide and fratricide. More significantly in scene ten comes the betrayal of his stepmother to whom he has been very close. He condemns her to death by stoning in public when she confesses to having his close adviser Najib murdered. Her reason for doing so is her resentment as the way Najib was leading Tughlaq astray and in advising him against the interests of the State and Muhammad.

The role of step-mother is very clear in the depiction of her in the play. She appears to be worried about his health right from the beginning. She does not hold any good opinion about Najib from the beginning. She confides her thoughts in Barani whom she trusts more that Najib. M Sarat Babu looks at the stepmother as a rescuer: “The roles of other characters in the play can also be seen in the same way. Muhammad’s own mother seems to have understood his morbid mentality and keeps herself away from the psychological game of the Drama Triangle. But his stepmother takes pity on him and offers to his Rescuer. She also takes active interest in politics, she thinks that Najib is misleading her step-son and she feels that she ought to rescue Muhammad from the bad influence of Najib, so she gets poisoned.”
Muhammad begins to experience an utter disillusionment after this incident. Aziz murders the saint from Arabia called Ghiyas-ud-din Muhammad who is son of Abdul Kahir for another manipulation. Ghiyas-ud-din Muhammad has been invited as the Sultan’s guest. The Sultan has planned to revive prayers with him to cleanse his regime from the sin of numerous murders. Aziz has been exploited the policies of the Sultan and has gained wealth, job and land. He has sent Karim to bring a Turk merchant but he has brought Ghiyas-ud-din Muhammad by mistake. After the confirmation that Ghiyas-ud-din Muhammad has not visited the Sultan before, he kills Ghiyas-ud-din Muhammad amidst the protests from his friend Aazam. He wears the dress of Ghiyas-ud-din Muhammad and moves to Daulatabad to meet the Sultan for some more fortunes.

The Sultan remains in a great despair. He invites Barani for gaining some solace from him. Barani is also in despair because his mother has passed away. He feels that he has failed his filial duty of having stayed with his mother. He seeks the Sultan’s permission to leave for his town to attend his mother’s funeral. When they are in their conversation, he comes to know that Ghiyas-ud-din Muhammad has been killed. He also learns that Ghiyas-ud-din Muhammad is on his way to meet him. It becomes clear that the present Ghiyas-ud-din Muhammad is not original. He has murdered Ghiyas-ud-din Muhammad and come in his disguise to exploit the Sultan.

When Barani suggests that he should be killed and the Sultan is ready to pronounce such a punishment, Aziz who has appeared in the disguise of Ghiyas-ud-din Muhammad uses his argument skill and proves that he is none other the Sultan’s disciple. He explains what he has done so far nothing but the imitation of the Sultan’s acts only. The Sultan gets taken aback by his logical argument and appoints him as an officer in Deccan under Khusrau Malik. M.Sarat Babu comments on Muhammad’s act to rewarding Aziz as : Muhammad does not mind becoming the victim of his own ideals or the people. Perhaps for this reason, he forgives Aziz at the end when he comes to know all his crimes of misusing the reforms for his gross selfish needs. He prefers the
misuse of the reforms to the objection of them. He shifts the role of Persecutor when anybody tries to oppose or abort his reforms.”

Barani becomes confused about the behaviour of the Sultan. Aziz has committed many offences including the murder of the saint from Arabia. But the Sultan has ignored his offences and rewarded him with a position of an officer in Deccan. The Sultan asks Barani to pass his judgement on him. He expresses his inability to make any such judgement on the Sultan and takes leave of him to proceed to his other’s funeral. The Sultan feels tired and falls asleep in his throne itself. He plans to shift the capital to Delhi again. The announcement of the prayer he wakes him up. When wakes up, he is in a state of confusion without knowing where he is now. The play ends at this phase of Mohammad-bin-Tughlaq which is around 1335. Mohammad-bin-Tughlaq remained the Sultan of Delhi up to 1351. But Karnad has chosen the period from 1327 to 1335 to expose the ideological failure and disillusion in his rule. The author’s note on his Tughlaq sums up the plan of play as: “My subject was the life if Muhammad Tughlaq, a fourteenth century sultan of Delhi, certainly the most brilliant individual ever to ascend the throne of Delhi and also one of the biggest failures. After a reign distinguished for policies that today seem far-sighted to the point of genius, but which in their day earned him the title ‘Muhammad the Mad’, the Sultan’s career ended in bloodshed and political chaos. In a sense, the play reflected the slow disillusionment my generation felt with the new politics of independent India: the gradual erosion of the ethical norms that had guided the movement for independence and the coming to terms with cynicism and realpolitik.”

Conclusion:
Karnad has succeeded in providing to Indian drama what Kurthkoti found wanting in Tughlaq. Besides, many have observed that Tughlaq is identical Shakespearean play in several respects. The observation of R.K.Dhawan is worth while to note here: “Karnad’s Tughlaq bears several resemblances with Shakespear’s Richard II. Like King Richard
Muhammad-bin-Tughlaq is temperamental and whimsical. Events in both plays centre around the eccentricities of their protagonists. Again, like Shakespeare, Karnad presents the historical events and complexities of time with perfect objectivity of a true historian, throwing upon them beautiful colouring of art.” 21
6 Karnad,16-17
7 Karnad,18-19
8 Karnad, 22
9 Karnad, 55
10 Karnad,76
11 Karnad,76
12 Karnad,76-77
14 Karnad,78-79
15 Karnad,79