

play. But a mad man cannot be made the hero of the play. Hence the title chosen by the dramatist is quite apt and suggestive.

✓ 2. *The Hero of the Play: Claims of Tughlaq*

Or

The Disintegration of a Powerful Personality within a Short Span of time.

M.A. IV 1-5-20

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A Strong Man

Tughlaq has a powerful personality and was feared and respected by all. He is the only unifying factor in the thirteen chapters of the play. Without him the play would fall to pieces. All the characters are related to him in one way or the other. Thus the step-mother, Najib and Barani are his loyal and faithful friends. While Ain-ul-Mulk has raised the standard of revolt against him and is marching on Delhi with his thirty thousand soldiers. Sheikh Imam-Ud-din is against him and as a result of his speeches the whole of Kanpur is burning. Then he comes to Delhi to incite the people

against him and the Amirs, the Sheikhs and the Sayyids are already not satisfied with him and ready to revolt against him.

A Crafty Politician

The Sultan is also a man of action as a Sultan should be. He is a crafty player on the chess board of politics and can hold his own against his enemies. His shrewd plans and moves are beyond the comprehension of those who are close to him. Thus even Barani does not know how he plans to deal with Ain-ul-Mulk and Sheikh Iman-ud-din. But Tughlaq is able to kill two birds with one stone. The close likeness which Sheikh Iman-ud-din has with him is fully exploited and while the Sheikh is killed, Ain-ul-Mulk is pardoned and he sends him back to Avadh. This is a clear move to turn a powerful enemy into a staunch friend.

Beginning of Disintegration

He has an efficient system of espionage and with great political acumen and foresight he overcomes the rebellion of Sheikhs, Amirs, Sayyids, etc. However, the fierceness and ferocity with which he kills Shihab-ud-din, surprises even Barani and others, and even the soldiers are terrified. The disintegration of a powerful personality has set in. In great anguish and spiritual torture he tells Najib, "Najib I want Delhi vacated immediately. Every living soul in Delhi will leave for Daulatabad within a fortnight. I was too soft, I can see that now. They'll only understand the whip. Everyone must leave. 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."

He further adds, "What hopes I had built up when I came to the throne. 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." He seems to have already lost his mental balance.

His Impartiality: Suspected By All

The Sultan is also an idealist, a visionary and dreamer. He is inspired with noble ideas and ideals but when he puts them into action he is suspected both by the Hindus and the Muslims as is clear from the following dialogue:

Old Man: And get kicked by an infidel too. It's an insult to Islam.

Young Man: That's good that! Insult to Islam! So you want to teach him Islam, do you? Tell me, how often did you pray before he came to the throne?

Third Man: That isn't the point.

Young Man: That's precisely the point. Not even once a week, I bet.

Now you pray five times a day because that's the law and if you break it, you'll have the officers on your neck. Can you mention one earlier Sultan in whose time people read the Koran in the streets like now? Just one?

Old Man: What's the use? One must act according to it

Third Man: All this about the Hindus not paying the *jiziya* tax. That's against the Koran, you know. A moulvi told me that the Hindus too suspect him.

"Now, now, don't look at me when you say that. We didn't want an exemption. Look when a Sultan kicks me in the teeth and says, 'Pay up, you Hindu dog'. I'm happy I know I am safe. But the moment a man comes along, and says, I know you are a Hindu but you are also a human being—well, that makes me nervous.

Young Man: Ungrateful wretch!

Old Man: But this wretch is your best friend, Jamal. Beware of the Hindu who embraces you. Before you know what, he'll turn Islam into another caste and call the Prophet an incarnation of his god

They are unable to understand him when he proposes to shift his capital from Delhi to Daulatabad.

"My beloved people, you have heard the judgement of the Kazi and seen for yourselves how justice works in my kingdom—without any consideration of might or weakness, religion or creed. May this moment burn bright and light up our path towards greater justice, equality, progress and peace—not just peace but a more purposeful life.

"And to achieve this end I am taking a new step in which I hope I shall have your support and cooperation. Later this year the capital of my empire will be moved from Delhi to Daulatabad.

The crowd reacts in bewilderment. Muhammad smiles.

"Your surprise is natural, but I beg you to realise that this is no mad whim of a tyrant. My ministers and I took this decision after careful thought and discussion. My empire is large now and embraces the South and I need a capital which is at its heart. Delhi is too near the border and as you well know its peace is never free from the fear of invaders. But for me the most important factor is that Daulatabad is a city of the Hindus and as the capital it will symbolise the bond between Muslims and Hindus which I wish to develop and strengthen in my kingdom. I invite you all to accompany me to Daulatabad. This is only an invitation and not an order. Only those who have faith in me may come with me. With their help I shall build an empire which will be the envy of the world".

This is a balanced statement of a move undertaken after due consideration, but it is mistaken as the mad whim of a tyrant. The people fail to understand his ideals, his impartiality and his eagerness to work for Hindu-Muslim unity which was essential to build up a large stable empire.

His Spiritual Anguish

The gradual frustration of his ideals makes him restless and he is unable to sleep at night. He is restless and suffers from spiritual anguish and mental torture. He grows more fierce and blood-thirsty. There was nothing wrong in moving the capital from Delhi to Daulatabad but he modified his original order and made it compulsory for all to leave Delhi and go to Daulatabad. No proper arrangements were made, and the suffering of the people was unheard of. Thousands starved and died on the way. They were also faced by greedy officers like Aziz. He introduced copper currency without making any proper arrangement for its manufacture. The result was that cart-loads of counterfeit coins had to be accepted and unloaded in the rose garden which he so much loved. Aazam sees him one night there and tells Aziz:

"On the night we came here, I was so nervous I couldn't sleep. So I was standing by the window, looking at those heaps. They looked like giant ant-hills in the moonlight. Suddenly I saw a shadow moving among them. I stared. It was a man wandering alone in the garden. He went to a heap and stood there for half an hour still as a rock. Then he dug into the heaps with his fists, raised his fists and let the coins trickle out. It was frightening. And you know who it was? Your Sultan. He does that every night—every night. It's like witchcraft."

Increased Fierceness

This is certainly terrifying and an indication of oncoming madness. The Sultan becomes more fierce and blood-thirsty as the people starve and the riots begin. Many die of hunger and famine and many more are killed by the soldiers of the Sultan. The economy is completely shattered and there is no option for the Sultan, now nearly mad, but to abdicate. When Barani advises him to do so his reply is:

"It isn't as easy—as leaving the patient in the wilderness because there's no cure for his disease. Don't you see—this patient, racked by fever and crazed by the fear of the enveloping vultures, can't be separated from me? Don't you see that the only way I can abdicate is by killing myself? I could have done something, if the vultures weren't so close. I could have crawled forward on my knees and elbows. But what can you do when every moment you expect a beak to dig into you and tear a muscle out? What can you do Barani? What vengeance is driving these shapes after me?"

No words can better reveal his inner frustration than these words. After he has ordered the step-mother to be stoned to death as an adulteress, he falls on his knees and prays:

"God, God in heaven please help me. Please don't let go of my hand. My skin drips with blood and I don't know how much of it is mine and how much of others. I started in Your path, Lord. Why am I wandering naked in

this desert now? I started in search of You. Why am I become a pig rolling in this gory mud? Raise me. Clean me. Cover me with Your Infinite Mercy. I can only clutch at the hem of Your cloak—with my bloody fingers and plead. I can only beg—have pity on me. I have no one but You now. Only You. Only You ... You You.... ”

These words are the outcome of deep anguish and frustration. his last mad acts are (a) his order to the people to return to Delhi, and (b) sending of Aziz as an high placed officer in the Deccan with the advice that he should disappear thereafter.

Conclusion

Thus the drama depicts the disintegration of a powerful personality within a span of five years. The spiritual anguish of the Sultan is fully brought out. It has been shown that he is tethering on the brink of madness. In this psychological study lies the secret of the popularity of the play.

3. *Tughlaq as a Tragedy of Intrigue*

Or