

**GIRISH KARNAD'S TIPU SULTAN:  
PATRIOTIC PROTAGONIST OF OPEN ECONOMY POLICY**

**SHIVAJI K. DESHMUKH**  
BULDHANA, INDIA

---

**Abstract**

*Girish Raghunath Karnad, born and brought up during the impact of British civilization has written the play The Dreams of Tipu Sultan with respect to the Indo-British relationship on the occasion of fiftieth Anniversary of Indian Independence. Although the play is historical Karnad manages to fulfill the literary tastes of the readers' without much deviating from the facts of history.*

*Girish Karnad has written the play in 1996 when India accepted Open Economy Policy in 1991 and signed the GAAT in 1995. Indians were not ready to say good-by to their old, value-based, traditional and confined Economy and at the same time Government had no option without accepting the Open Economy Policy in the stream of Globalization. Controversial opinions of people are observed about the decision. The same was observed when Tipu started Trade with foreign countries. In spite of all these controversy Karnd'sTipu Sultan applied the Open Economy Policy in his diplomacy to make his state financially and strategically strong without any hesitation. Hence we can honour **GirishKarnd'sTipu Sultan as a Patriotic Protagonist of Open Economy Policy.***

*Key words: patriotic protagonist, economy, dreams, trade, policy...*

---

## GIRISH KARNAD'S *TIPU SULTAN*: PATRIOTIC PROTAGONIST OF OPEN ECONOMY POLICY

- SHIVAJI K.DEAHMUKH

Girish Karnad, a versatile personality, genuine playwright deals with various themes in his plays. No doubt Indian Drama has the ancient tradition of great history and Girish Karnad is one of the eminent playwrights who use it to produce the world applicable plays. He has written '*The Dreams of Tipu Sultan*' in 1996 based on Indo-British relations on the occasion of Fiftieth Anniversary of Indian Independence. The play deals with history and reveals the known and unknown characteristics of Tipu Sultan – The Tiger of Mysore.

Indeed it is very tough task for any playwright to produce historical play by fulfilling the readers' taste and by sticking up with the facts of history. It is also challenging to convey the World applicable message with native evidences. Karnad attempts the task of objectivity, charming writing and interesting presentation honestly without lacking native identity in his historical play '*The Dreams of Tipu Sultan*'. In this regard Manoj K. Pandey asserts, '*Girish Karnad endeavors as playwright, writing in English for a global audience is secondary, the primary thing is that he remains true to his soil.*' (05)

Girish Raghunath Karnad born on May 19, 1938 is brought up during British Rule in India. He has witnessed the development of Independent India. At that time Indian Economy was proceeding on the tenants of Socialism. Indian Constitution developed the Socialism by avoiding the drawbacks of **Marxism** and **Capitalism**. Suddenly with respect to the changes across the world, India has adopted the **Open Economy Policy** in 1991 and signed the **GAAT** in 1995. There were views for and against of the new Economy system in the country. People, Small Scale Industry Traders were in a fix to say good-bye to virtue based system and adopt the capital based Economy system. Consequently the waves of Globalization started rippling across the Indian and also Asian Continent. On this background Girish Karnad wrote his historical

play “The Dreams of Tipu Sultan” in which he has represented **Tipu Sultan as the Patriotic Protagonist of Open-Economy Policy**. In his preface to the play Girish Karnad explains the intention and purpose behind writing the play,

‘In 1996, the BBC commissioned me to write a radio play to celebrate the Fiftieth Anniversary of Indian Independence. The plot obviously had to deal with some aspect of Indo-British relations and I immediately thought of Tipu Sultan, one of the most politically perceptive and tragic figures in modern Indian history.’ (i)

Obviously playwright had to deal with the aspect of Indo-British relations while writing the play. In spite of the colonization and its harassment, Asian countries have been standing forcefully in the modern globalized era. The credit goes to the patriotic figures like Tipu Sultan who fought with foresight of the upcoming challenges. No doubt Karnad’s Tipu Sultan was patriotic. He was the only ruler in India who understood the true intention of British. He was not mute spectator but tried to resist the expansion of British. He concentrated military as well as Economy development of his state at that time. Girish Karnad presents Tipu Sultan with his dreams. In spite of symbolic dream; the protagonist behind it is true.

**Tipu:** Oh, will none of you ever learn? If profits are only seven pagodas and expenses on clerks and accountants come to ten, how can one survive in business? How long these will these traders be able to carry their bullion to other places? Don’t you worry! They’ll come back to us – crawling. (21)

Bedre R. T. describes these qualities of Tipu Sultan in the following words, ‘Karnad presents Tipu as a multi-faceted ruler who has not only command over the horseback but all the qualities of a European imperialist.’(77)

In 1991 on the background of accepting new Open Economy Policy there was a controversy among the masses in India. People were talking about the

virtues preserved by Indian Traditional Economy and raising the objections on money oriented economy. The same questions are raised in Karnad's The Dreams of Tipu Sultan.

**Tipu** : Actually I asked the toy-makers of Chennapatana before ordering it from the French. And do you know what they said? 'Oh sir, our ancient tradition is dedicated to things beautiful. Let the foreigners handle these cruel toys!' (34)

In spite of all these controversy Karnd'sTipu Sultan applied the Open Economy Policy in his diplomacy without any hesitation. It was mainly possible due to his patriotic sense. His each and every act was for the welfare of his state without any personal interest. Hence we can honour **Girish Karnd's Tipu Sultan as a Patriotic Protagonist of Open Economy Policy.**

Open Economy Policy provides the freedom for Trade beyond the man made geographical boundaries across the countries. The quality, utility and affordable selling costs and competent service are essential in this regard. Karnad'sTipu Sultan attempts to expand his trade with France, China and other countries. Tipu worked to turn his government into a 'Trading Company' like 'East India Company'. Only the difference was that his intention was not exploitation but he wanted to make his government financially and strategically strong. Girish Karnad has presented the three dreams of Tipu Sultan in the play. In his first dream Tipu looks forward for Foreign Trade.

**Tipu:** Then they'd better like it. And both of you too! We need glass. We need guns. We need cannons. Shall we keep buying them from abroad? Even for that we need money. And shall we be content with the pittance we get by taxing our businessmen when we have ivory and sandalwood freely available? Can an individual trader deal in sandalwood? For centuries we begged and borrowed silk from the Chinese. And everyone predicted disaster when I got a few eggs from China. And now we have a flourishing industry of our own. (22)

Tipu sent a delegation to France to talk with **King Louis XXI** about trade and politics. He wanted the advantage of France against British.

**Tipu** : When you return, bring with you, not just ten thousand soldiers, but French craftsmen who could make guns, cannons, pistols.

**Osman Khan:** Yes, Your Majesty.

**Tipu** : You know that the delegation we sent to Istanbul last year to His Holiness the Caliph of All Islamic Nations prove a sensational success. Turkey, Arabia, Iran– are clamoring for our products. (24)

Karnad's Tipu Sultan maintained the diplomatic relations with several countries while other contemporary Indian Rulers kept the narrow traditional view. Surjit Mansingh focuses, '*Tipu had commercial and diplomatic relations with Afghanistan, the Ottoman Empire, Hormuz, Mauritius and Muscat, China and France.*'(416)

### **Conclusion:**

Girish Karnad presents his historical play 'The Dreams of Tipu Sultan' peeping into medieval age and giving message to the ultra-modern world, most applicable and useful in this age of Globalization. Today India has been following the Open Economy Policy since 1991. It is the decision taken with respect to changing situation of the world. Moreover it is the part of 'Universal Family' which is also our ancient teaching 'Vasudev Kutumbakam'.

Hence today we should be able to face the challenges of Open Economy Policy by improving our ability. Karnad's Tipu also imparts the same message. In the end of medieval period of History, one Indian King attempts to touch the sky, tries to improve the quality is truly noteworthy.

**Tipu:** You must, you must indeed. That's what makes Europe so wonderful – it's full of a new ideas – inventions – all kinds of machines – bursting with energy. Why don't we in our country

think like them? I've just read about something called a thermometer. You must bring me one. (25)

Karnad's Tipu Sultan couldn't defeat the British but he checked them by his policies. Today in this age of Globalization **Girish Karnad's Tipu Sultan: Patriotic Protagonist of Open-Economy Policy** is the source of inspiration while working in the field of Arts, Literature, Socio-Culture as well as Science and Technology for the people of Asian Countries.

### WORKS CITED

- Karnad, Girish. Preface. *Two Plays by Girish Karnad – The Dreams of Tipu Sultan & Bali The Sacrifice*. Oxford University Press. Delhi-110001: Third Edition, 2005. Print.
- Bedre, R.T. "Girish Karnad: A Profile (An Introduction)", *Critical Essays On The Plays Of Girish Karnad*, Ed. R. T. Bendre, Creative Publications, Nanded: 2009. P. 77. Print.
- Pandey, Manoj K. *The Plays of Girish Karnad and Tradition*, Adhyayan Publishers & Distributers, New Delhi: 2007. P. 5, Print.
- Surjit, Mansingh. *Historical Dictionary of India*, Vision Books, Delhi, Third Edition, 2000. P. 416. Print.

Higher Education &  
Research Society