

# The Visions of a Visionary—Girish Karnad’s Play *The Dreams of Tipu Sultan*

Wahaj Unnisa Warda<sup>1</sup>, & Mohammad Rezaul Karim<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of English Language and Literature, College of Science and Humanities. Prince Sattam Bin Abdulaziz University, AL-Kharj, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Correspondence: Wahaj Unnisa Warda, Department of English Language and Literature, College of Science and Humanities. Prince Sattam Bin Abdulaziz University. AL-Kharj, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

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## Abstract

Indian playwright Girish Karnad seeks to challenge the conventional historical portrayal of Tipu Sultan in his play *Dreams of Tipu Sultan* by emphasizing Tipu’s personal and psychological experiences. As a pioneering playwright known for blending diverse theatrical styles, Karnad integrates real historical events with creative storytelling to present Tipu Sultan as a complex figure deserving of both respect and empathy. The play begins not with the central character of Tipu Sultan, but with two historians, Mysorian Kirmani and the British Colin Mackenzie. These historians serve as a lens through which the audience can explore and question the traditional narratives surrounding Tipu Sultan’s life and reign. They raise important inquiries about the authenticity of historical accounts and traditional narratives and encourage a more nuanced understanding of Tipu Sultan’s motivations, relationships, and inner world. By delving into the personal and psychological experiences of Tipu Sultan, Karnad invites us to question and reevaluate our understanding of history, new historicism, and the human portrayal of the historical figure Tipu Sultan.

**Keywords:** historical narration, Girish Karnad, Tipu Sultan, British, new historicism

## 1. Introduction

As the son of Sultan Hyder Ali, Fatehali Tipu Sultan (1751–1799) was groomed from a young age to take over the throne. His early experiences in warfare and diplomacy shaped him into a formidable leader. With a keen interest in modernizing his kingdom, Tipu Sultan initiated several reforms to improve infrastructure, agriculture, and trade. His bravery and military prowess were displayed in numerous battles against the British, leading to his reputation as a fierce warrior monarch, for which he is still known as the “Tiger of Mysore.” Despite facing constant threats from foreign powers—the Dutch, Portuguese, and British—Tipu Sultan remained unwavering in his dedication to protecting and expanding his kingdom. The events that transpired during his ascent to power not only shaped his legacy but also left a lasting impact on the history of South India. Tipu Sultan’s dreams were a reflection of his deep-rooted desires and aspirations for the progress and freedom of his kingdom. Through his dreams, Tipu Sultan sought guidance and inspiration from the spirits of his ancestors, who had fought valiantly to defend their land. They also served as a source of motivation, fueling his determination to challenge the oppressive foreign rule and establish a sovereign and prosperous state. Tipu Sultan envisioned a united South India, free from foreign domination and filled with prosperity and progress. These dreams provided Tipu Sultan with the vision and courage to continue his relentless pursuit of freedom and independence for his kingdom. In his dreams, Tipu Sultan saw himself as a visionary leader, tirelessly working toward the advancement and upliftment of his people. They were not simply flights of fancy, but rather a window into his subconscious desires and ambitions. They acted as a compass guiding him through the challenges and obstacles he faced in his quest for independence. They offered him solace in times of uncertainty and fueled his unwavering determination to resist foreign rule.

This article explores Tipu Sultan’s *Khwaḍ-n-āma* (known as the *Dream Book* in English) from the point of view of dream interpretation and its impact on the Sultan’s actions and decision-making. These dreams provide valuable insights into his subconscious desires and motivations, shedding light on his determination to challenge foreign rule and establish a supreme and successful state. Furthermore, the analysis of Tipu Sultan’s dreams offers a unique perspective into the psychological and emotional state of a leader who faced immense challenges and adversity. They were a reflection of his innermost desires and served as a constant reminder of the goals he sought to achieve. Overall, Tipu Sultan’s dreams served as a powerful driving force for his resistance against foreign rule and his pursuit of a flourishing South India.

Aparna Dharwadkar (2006) notes in this analysis that the tragedy of Tipu’s fall is not only that it made the way for a full-scale colonial takeover, but also that it destroyed a visionary who shared the modernizing impulses of the European enlightenment and could meet the English on their own terms much to their chagrin. To quote Karnad, “when India became independent in 1947 the families of Maharajas who had bowed and scrapped before and many actively helped the British masters were granted sumptuous privy purse by the government of India while the descendants of Tipu Sultan were left to rot in the slums of Calcutta” (Karnad, 2004, p. 65).

In an article by Fennell and Wiggins (2020), Shashi Tharoor, an Indian parliamentarian and former undersecretary at the UNO said, “I happen to have a slightly unfashionable view in India today that he was a hero. And that’s largely because he was a resolute anti-colonialist.” He continued, “The people of his kingdom of Mysore enjoyed the highest standards of living in the known world . . . the per capita income was higher than the highest European power at the time, the Dutch . . . He was both an extremely effective general who won more wars than he lost” (Fennell & Wiggins, 2020).

Tipu the Sultan of Mysore was made into a mighty, mean, cruel, wicked antagonist. Aparna Dharwadkar (2006) noted that the tragedy of Tipu’s fall is not only that it made way for a full-scale colonial takeover, but also that it destroyed a visionary who shared the modernizing impulses of the European enlightenment and could meet the English on their own terms. The English faced a formidable enemy a dark force that the self proclaimed protagonist -the English the bearers of the White man’s burden here was to rid the region of a dark force. The British enemy was made into a powerful tyrant, which reinforced the idea that the British were even more mighty, intelligent, and righteous to overcome him and defeat him and thereby restore “peace” in the region—a peace that had been missing because of Tipu being a Muslim ruler. The new historicism approach challenges this play and refutes the very foundations of existing history as revealing power structures (both then and today), which gives new meaning to the play. This was just a foreshadowing to what has followed in recent history and contemporary times, where Muslim organizations are viewed as threats, terrorists, or radical groups that need to be eradicated—something that cannot happen locally without powerful Western intervention.

Four dreams are depicted by Girish Karnad, dreams nine, 10, 14, and the final dream, where a letter is given to Kirmani containing the premonition of victory over the British. Tipu Sultan’s inner world and instinct are questioned by his subconscious mind, creating a thought-provoking exploration of whether his ambitions and aspirations could manifest into reality or remain as illusions. The imagery and symbolism in his dreams are a testament to the profound impact of his Western knowledge and the submerged fossilization of his experiences. Karnad wants to prove that history has treated Tipu unfairly because the British wrote most of precolonial Indian history. Hindu chauvinism both inside the government and outside of it have belittled Tipu’s contribution to India’s history that has been written by British and pro-Hindu historians.

## 2. New Historicism

New historicism presents history as both textual and contextual and considers the author’s environment, beliefs, critics’ ideas, and societal norms. It analyses literary texts from these perspectives and conveys more historical insight than standalone history texts because literature is influenced by social, political, and historical factors. This is crucial because historical texts are often biased due to the ideologies of their composition period and interpretation periods along with deconstructive language practices. Although not exclusively a new historicist, Michel Foucault’s ideas have significantly influenced the development of the theory. Foucault’s concepts of power, discourse, and the relationship between knowledge and power have been central to the new historicist approach in analyzing the historical and cultural contexts of literary works. Stephen Greenblatt is a prominent figure in the field of new historicism and has contributed to the theory’s emphasis on the interconnectedness of literature and history. His exploration of the role of power and ideology in shaping literary and historical narratives has been foundational to the new historicist approach.

## 3. Background of the Play

In commemoration of the 50th year of India’s independence, Dr. Girish Karnad wrote plays that were broadcast on radio. The play titled *Tipuina Kanasugalu*, which translates to *Dreams of Tipu Sultan*, is about Tipu Sultan of Mysore (famously known as the “Tiger of Mysore”). History writers have maligned him as a tyrannical figure who oppressed non-Muslims and resorted to forced conversion. This was done deliberately to destroy reality and justify British oppression, which led to overthrowing him and “liberating” the common Indian subjects.

One that would resonate most with the mindset and world view of the current leaders of Karnataka. This would be to reassess the historical role of Haidar Ali and his son, Tipu Sultan, to present them as fanatic Muslims whose primary agenda was the creation of an Islamic state that necessitated the conversion of their Hindu subjects. Its historical validity could always be established by privileging select sources and interpreting them in accordance with Hindutva’s world view. This exercise in smoke and mirrors could also reduce Haidar and Tipu’s resolute opposition to the British as a mere sideshow to their central purpose, which, according to this view, was to create Islamic dominance in the region. (Menon, 2019)

The dreams in the play serve as a reminder to the public about one of India’s greatest heroes, who was not only an admirable king and individual but also a visionary. This portrayal offers a different perspective on Tipu’s history compared to Western accounts. Therefore, this play can be analyzed through the lens of new historicism to interpret it as a literary text that reacts to power structures and reflects society.

Tipu has been written about in Bhagwan S. Gidwani’s *The Sword Of Tipu Sultan* (Gidwani, 1989). The author presented Tipu as a romantic through a portrayal of his family life. The book also tried to present Tipu as he really was and not the cruel person history presented him to be. He was an enlightened person who believed that God was not confined to one religious belief or to one God alone. Tipu believed that, following the examples of the American Revolutionary War and the French Revolution, India could be freed of colonial rulers, but he was also fully aware of the disunity within the country as well. He did not flee to save himself, setting an example for future freedom fighters of the country that dying on the battlefield was better. Many of the writers of this history were British or were heavily under the colonizers’ influence. But some original books served to preserve reality. Based on these authentic versions, the

dramatist Karnad tries to set the record straight, portraying Tipu as a just, fair, and brave ruler and patriot who was in reality a martyr. The word *shahid* (plural *shahada*) has the meaning of “martyr” and is closely related in its development to the Greek *martyrios*, in that it means both a witness and a martyr (i.e., a person who suffers or dies deliberately for the sake of affirming the truth of a belief system; Cook, 2012). The play is based on Tipu’s dreams, which were actually visions of a heroic valiant king who accepted death over subservience.

#### 4. Literature Review

Girish Karnad was an acclaimed Indian playwright, actor, and film director known for his impactful and thought-provoking plays. Several literary works have analyzed and critiqued his plays, shedding light on their themes, characters, and social commentary. Shastri (2014) examined two of Karnad’s most famous plays, focusing on the use of micro-texts, intertextuality, and narratology in their analysis. Shastri argued that Karnad’s plays are not just simple narratives, but rather intricate texts that subvert traditional structures and challenge societal norms. Another insightful source is an essay titled “The Psychological Deterioration of Characters and Elements of Myth in Girish Karnad’s Play *Yayati*” (Aslam & Bindhu, 2021), in which the authors explored the mythical elements present in Karnad’s plays and how they serve as vehicles for social critique. The authors emphasized that Karnad uses old Indian mythology to highlight contemporary social and cultural issues within traditional Indian society (Aslam & Bindhu, 2021). Additionally, in this article Karnad traverses through unfathomable depths of old Indian mythology to make the social and cultural problems that plague society come alive on stage (Aslam & Bindhu, 2021). Aslam & Bindhu further discussed how Karnad’s plays are deeply rooted in Indian mythology because he aims to shed light on the social and cultural problems prevalent in society through the amalgamation of symbols and realistic portrayals of characters. Another noteworthy source is the paper “Postcolonialism, Folk Culture, and Girish Karnad’s *Nagamandala*” (Behera, 2011) published in the *South Asian Review*. In this paper, Behera (2011) explored how Karnad incorporates elements of postcolonialism and folk culture to address issues of identity, gender, and power dynamics in the play. Another valuable source is an interview conducted by Aparna Dharwadkar (1995) with Girish Karnad. In the interview, Karnad discusses his work and its context within the Indian theatre scene. The interview provides insights into Karnad’s approach to storytelling, his exploration of Indian mythological themes, and the challenges faced by contemporary Indian theatre.

Karnad, writing in Kannada in the 1960s, typified the dilemma of a postcolonial writer who had to negotiate the “tension between the cultural past of the country and the colonial past” (Thakur, 2023). It was indeed challenging to create a theatre that is modern yet not Western, a theatre that took the best from both traditions, Indian and Western. “His biggest contribution to Indian theatre was blending its cultural and colonial past seamlessly. His range was eclectic, drawing from history to folklore and mythology to contemporary society. While he looked towards the Indian cultural past for inspiration, his plays had a contemporary sensibility” (Thakur, 2023). Datta (2012) commented about how “Girish Karnad’s play brings out how much of our history has been written through the eyes of the British and how it has affected ours and the world’s perception of Tipu Sultan. In the play, we see Tipu not only as the warrior we all know him as, but also as the statesman, the innovator, husband and father. Tipu’s dream was to oust the British from India. He saw that the only way to do this was to form a united front of the Marathas, the Nizams of Hyderabad and all the other princely states. He was unsuccessful in this as everyone preferred to follow their own path for personal gain”.

In light of recent research, it has become increasingly evident that Tipu Sultan’s reign was marked by a complex interplay of power dynamics, resistance, and adaptation. By examining the multifaceted dimensions of his rule, scholars have aimed to offer a more comprehensive understanding of Tipu Sultan’s significance in South Asian history. One recent study focused on Tipu Sultan’s military campaigns and their impact on the region (Isa & Sidek, 2014). New historicism continues to be relevant in reevaluating historical figures and events and offering fresh perspectives and critical insights that enrich our understanding of the past. Such an evaluation of recent research on new historicism and Tipu Sultan highlights the importance of historical context in understanding the ruler’s actions and policies (Umachandran, 2015). It also emphasizes the need to move beyond imperial frames of reference and consider broader comparative contexts, such as the processes occurring in other parts of Asia and Europe during the same time period (Wilson, 2007). Overall, the recent research on new historicism and Tipu Sultan has provided valuable contributions to our understanding of this historical figure and the broader sociopolitical landscape of his time (Umachandran, 2015). In evaluating the sources provided, it is evident that they offer valuable insights into the application of new historicism to the study of Tipu Sultan. These sources highlight the significance of understanding historical context and the impacts of colonialism on Tipu Sultan’s legacy. Furthermore, the sources emphasize the need to move beyond Western-influenced narratives and consider a more comparative approach to studying colonialism and state formation in South Asia (Wilson, 2007). Based on the sources provided, it is clear that recent research conducted on new historicism and Tipu Sultan has contributed to a more nuanced understanding of his reign, shedding light on the intricate interplay between culture, power, and historical forces. By employing a new historicist lens, scholars have been able to unravel the complexities of Tipu Sultan’s interactions with colonial powers, uncovering layers of meaning that challenge previous interpretations of his actions and policies. Western narratives that portray Tipu Sultan solely as a villain need to be challenged, and his Tamil Muslim heritage needs to be acknowledged. Another source offers a holistic analysis of Tipu Sultan’s expression and dialectic of power, focusing on his representations of himself and his authority (Sreenivasan, 2014) highlighted the contested nature and limits of kingship in South Asia during that time period by examining the claims to royal status by Man Singh Kachhwaha. Recent research on Tipu Sultan has provided a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of his reign and significance in South Asian history. These perspectives have contributed to a richer understanding of Tipu Sultan’s rule, moving beyond simplistic portrayals of him as either a villain or a hero (Fisher, 1998).

## 5. Methodology

The primary data for this study is derived from the analysis of Girish Karnad's (2004) play in the work *Dreams of Tipu Sultan*. This involved studying primary sources such as Tipu Sultan's letters, diaries, and historical accounts of his life and reign. Additionally, secondary sources such as biographies, historical analyses, and scholarly articles were consulted to gain a broader understanding of the social, political, and cultural climate during Tipu Sultan's time. The analysis will focus on identifying recurring themes, symbols, and motifs within the dreams portrayed in the play. These elements will be analyzed in light of historical and cultural contexts to uncover possible meanings and interpretations.

## 6. Dreams

Dreams have long fascinated scholars and researchers due to their enigmatic nature and potential insights into the human psyche. In the context of literature and historical analysis, dreams can provide valuable insights into desires, fears, aspirations, and motivations and can provide a glimpse into the realm of the subconscious. Dreams have long been a subject of study in various fields, including psychology, anthropology, and literature. However, dreams in the context of historical figures and events offer a unique perspective.

According to Muller (1904), the Hindu *Vedanta-Sutras* define the dream state as when the mind and all the instruments of self are not altogether at rest. The mind being occupied with the objects of the state while the senses are at rest. The visions of the waking state are acts of immediate consciousness, whereas the visions of a dream are acts of remembrance.

Barrett (2001) the official publication of the International Association for the Study of Dreaming explored the various ways in which dreams have influenced society and culture, provides authoritative insights into well-known and lesser-known discoveries, artistic achievements, and problem-solving processes that occur during sleep and dreaming.

Dreams have held a significant role in the Atlantic World but waned in the 19th century. Scholars across various disciplines have endeavored to revive understandings and practices of dreaming during this period. Although there is some lack of cohesion in the historiography, several key themes have emerged, such as the connection between dreams in early modern times and medieval church traditions; the impact of the Protestant Reformation on theories and practices related to dreaming; using dreams for political opposition or advocating for marginalized groups; and their religious or supernatural significance, evident in witchcraft trials and spiritual autobiographies that highlight fluid self-identities. Because of dream research's interdisciplinary nature, it draws from history, anthropology, religious studies, and literature. Works should use actual reported dream materials rather than analyzing literary dreams, which are fiction-based—although these fictional narratives have garnered much attention within literary circles. The medieval “dream allegory” persisted into early modern times, as seen in works like John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, which was framed entirely as if it were a dream. Ozgen Felek wrote the following about this topic:

Dreams and visions have been part of Islamic lore since the revelation of the Qur'an. Referred to variously as *ru'ya*, *manam*, *bushra*, *hulm*, *ahlam*, and *adhas*, dreams are particularly associated with the prophets Abraham (37:102–105), Joseph (12), and Muhammad (PBUH) (17:60 and 48:27) in the Qur'an. The story of Joseph in Sura 12 is one of the most well-known stories regarding dreams and dream interpretation, parallel to the Bible. The Hadith literature, the collection of the sayings, deeds, and teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), (d. 632), plays a significant role in the understanding of dreams and their functions in the Muslim mind. Based on the Prophet's (PBUH) words, Islamic dream lore classifies dreams by a set of prophetic traditions as either “true” and “veridical,” or “false” and “misleading.” While some dreams are seen as glad tidings (*mubashshirat*) from God that require interpretation, some dreams are frightening or baseless dreams influenced by the devil. The third type is confused dreams reflecting images and situations from the dreamer's daily activities and encounters that may lead a pious Muslim astray. (Felek, 2023)

Research on dreaming in the 1960s and 1970s was primarily led by psychological anthropologists from the United States. The existing research up to that time was summarized in Bourguignon (1972), which contributed to a well-known edited collection of psychological anthropology. In the late 1980s, there was a significant shift in the anthropological study of dreaming as seen through Tedlock's (1987) compilation of articles. During this time, anthropologists aimed to broaden their range of psychological and philosophical influences beyond Freudian psychoanalysis, which had previously been the dominant theoretical paradigm for psychological anthropologists.

*The Dreams of Tipu Sultan*, the play by Girish Karnad, delves into the dreams of a historical figure who played a significant role in the resistance against colonialism in India. This article aims to analyze the dreams depicted in Karnad's play using a new historicist approach, which combines elements of historical contextualization. One prominent theme that emerges from the dreams is colonialism—in particular, the deep-seated resentment toward the British colonizers and his desire for liberation. The dreams also reflect the patriotic fervor of Tipu Sultan, for he envisions himself as a son, husband, father, and martyr in the fight against colonial oppression.

### 6.1 The Dreams of Tipu Sultan

*The Dreams of Tipu Sultan* can be viewed through Greenblatt's (2005) assumption that literature has a deep connection to history and is influenced by various social and cultural factors. To truly grasp literature, one must consider the culture and society from which it originated. Literary theory and the analysis of literary texts are significantly impacted by this perspective, for both literature and human beings are shaped by social and political forces. It is important to recognize that there is no intrinsic human nature that exists independently of historical context, for history consists of distinct periods each with their own unique characteristics. Therefore, a modern

interpretation of a Renaissance text will differ from how it would have been understood during the Renaissance period. Additionally, historians are inevitably bound by their own societal influences, making it challenging for them to fully comprehend historical events objectively on their own terms

With the dream theme, Karnad attempts a reinterpretation of history by detaching his play from the weight of the past. He defamiliarizes the play from its historical context in the portrayal of the character of Tipu. The playwright makes his protagonist Tipu a secular and politically mature ruler in India who fought single-handedly for his sovereignty. Karnad (2004) makes his Tipu declare, “the many faiths in my kingdom will depend upon me for protection and succour” (p. 3). Karnad presents Tipu as one who is all set to checkmate the British using their point of power, trade and commerce. Karnad’s Tipu becomes not only a political hindrance to the expansion of British rule in South India but also a strong possible rival in trade and commerce. Tipu aspires to strengthen his state with French aide. According to historical facts, a folio of Tipu Sultan’s personal writing was found that stated the following:

This register of the Suldaun’s dreams was discovered by Colonel William Kirkpatrick, amongst other papers of a secret nature in an escritoire found in the Palace of Seringapatam. Hubbeeb Oollah, one of the most confidential of the Suldaun’s servants, was present at the time it was discovered. He knew that there was such a book of the Suldaun’s composition; but had never seen it, as the Suldaun always manifested peculiar anxiety to conceal it from the view of any who happened to approach while he was either reading or writing in it. (Beatson, 1800, p. 196)

The book is titled *Khwāb-n-āma*, and it was one of the books that were looted from Lal Mahal Palace. This book is different in that it was found in the royal bedchamber of Tipu Sultan. It was his personal, secret, and handwritten document, which was verified by Tipu’s Munshi Habeebullah as his personal folio. It is composed of 37 dreams written from 1785 to 1798 (he died on May 4, 1799); Girish Karnad used four of them. The play starts 4 years after the martyrdom of Tipu in 1803. The setting is Mir Hussain Ali Khan Kirmani’s house, who was loyal to Tipu Sultan, and a historian there, Colonel Colin Mackenzie, compels him to hasten the work with “objective dispassionate distance” (Karnad, 2004, p. 7). Kirmani asks Mackenzie why he cares about their (Tipu’s/Kirmani’s) view of history when he already had his own version (the English version). Kirmani says that he was offended in “the way he was destroyed . . . for you he’s made up of bits of evidence, bits of the argument that prove that your side was right. And that’s what I don’t understand. You have your version of history, all worked out. Why do you want my side? Why do you care?” (p. 8). To which Mackenzie replies, “I am interested in the other side. You could say that’s how we Europeans are brought up . . . to be interested in the other side as well. That I suppose is our strength” (p. 4).

The dreams cover a wide variety of topics, but the majority reflect Tipu’s preoccupations with his enemies. Some are seen as indicating success and victory. Others relay encounters with the Prophet (PBUH), his son-in-law Ali, and important religious and literary figures such as Sa’di and Jami, whose presence may be seen as a legitimizing force.

Only a few of the dreams are described as having been written down on waking. Most were recorded afterwards and they are not all in chronological order. This arrangement suggests that the notebook was intended as an ongoing project containing a selection of Tipu’s most significant dreams, starting, perhaps, around 1795. The dreams are dated according to Tipu’s own lunisolar calendrical system which used new month and year names based first on **abjad** and then on **abtath** values. The era, termed **mawludi**, was calculated from a date which was presumed to be the date of the Prophet’s (PBUH) spiritual birth, 13 years earlier than the **hijra**. (Brittlebank, 2006, p 167)

Considering the importance of divination and predicting the future in premodern Islam, the existence of this journal is entirely consistent with Tipu’s particular interest in the interpretation of dreams and bibliomancy. It has sometimes been regarded as something of an esoteric oddity but should be viewed, rather, as a serious attempt to make sense of events in a historical context. The play and his own dreams narrate his internal and external motives, where his passion, goal, and motive was purely to drive the forces of oppression and domination out. The same applied for both his waking and sleeping hours.

The first dream in the play is one where Tipu Sultan enters a dilapidated temple with his minister, Poornaiya, and it is full of strange deities unfamiliar to either Tipu or the minister. Two of the idols have very strange eyes that start moving, which terrifies Poornaiya, but they turn out to be women who were meditating. Tipu apologizes for having disturbed them and wants them to resume their prayers to their Lord, telling them that the dilapidated temple shall be repaired. As they are leaving the temple, two old men with long white beards and long silk garments greet the sultan, saying they are emissaries of the Chinese emperor who had offered the gift of a white elephant and horses to the sultan to reaffirm their friendship. Tipu is reminded of Hadrat Nizami’s book *Sikander Namah*, in which he mentions that, in the past, similar tokens of a white elephant, a horse, and a female slave had been gifted by the Chinese emperor to Emperor Alexander. Tipu takes this to be a prophecy of his future greatness equaling that of Alexander the Great. This dream corresponds with his business expansion plans at a time when a delegation was being prepared to travel to France. He wanted to expand business in Mysore and make it profitable, rather than just relying upon the British like the Nizam did. But he is saddened further upon contemplating the following:

This land is ours and it’s rich, overflowing with goods the world hungers for, and we let foreigners come in and rob us of our wealth! Today the Indian princes are all comatose wrapped in their opium dreams. But some day they’ll wake up and throw out the Europeans. So the only way the Europeans can ensure their profits for all time to come is by becoming rulers themselves. You see? It’s them or us. (Karnad, 2004, p. 36)

He imported silk-making techniques from China and wanted to expand learning to make silk from Muscat because the climatic conditions were similar in the regions of Muscat and Mysore. The business opportunities were to be expanded, so traders were sent to Turkey, Arabia, Iran, and Muscat. He considered the English to be his teachers, saying, “But let me tell you, I’ve had two teachers in my life. My father, who taught me war, and the English who taught me trade. They taught me that the era of the camel is over, that it is now the age of the sailing ship. And they dislike me for being so adept a pupil” (Karnad, 2004, p. 35). Tipu fully understood the game the English played by controlling the Indian coastline, stating the following:

What you’ve got is only a restitution of your earlier possessions. And in return you have given the English new territories: Salem, Dindigul, the Malabar coast with its coconuts and pepper and its magnificent ports. You are back where you were while the English now have the entire coastline of India. And remember, they are sea-faring power. Mine is a landlocked kingdom, so I thirst for the sea, for today the sea is the key to power, to prosperity. You have the whole of the western coast. And instead of keeping the English out, you’ve permitted the shark into your waters and are trying to swim along with it. (Karnad, 2004, p. 54)

Tipu believed that trade was important for “trade, industry and money. Besides needing professionals” (Karnad, 25). He also wanted books of medicine to be translated into Persian.

The former chief commissioner of Mysore, Bowering (1899) was set on proving that the sultan was a cruel and quarrelsome ruler who invented his own doom. Bowering (1899) recorded how it had become essential for the East India Company to get rid of Tipu for peace in India: “The British historians and some Indian historians took pains to gather every bit of evidence to prove that Tipu Sultan was responsible for his own doom. They were aimed at proving that his understanding was at times clouded over in a way that betrayed symptoms of mental aberration” (p. 226). The British contrived such distortions because he was posed as a lone threat, which ties into Foucault’s (1997) explanation of resistance or opposition:

You see, if there was no resistance, there would be no power relations. Because it would simply be a matter of obedience. You have to use power relations to refer to the situation where you’re not doing what you want. So resistance comes first, and resistance remains superior to the forces of the process; power relations are obliged to change with the resistance. So I think that resistance is the main word, the key word, in this dynamic. (p. 167)

According to historians and the British, Tipu forced conversion, but this was not so—it was just that his religion was the only negative the British had to use against him, which they did to the fullest extent possible, making sure it was recorded. But other historians had the true records:

Tipu made lavish gifts of land and other things to Hindu temples and temples dedicated to Shri Venkataramanna, Shrinivas and Shri Ranganath and located in the vicinity of Tipu’s palaces still bear testimony to his broad-minded toleration, and indicate that great martyr at any rate for a real martyr he was in the cause of liberty was not disturbed in his prayers by the Hindu bells calling people to worship the same Allah whose devotee he was. (Gandhi, 1930, p. 31)

He wanted his sons to have a good education from learned teachers and would not allow them to be illiterate like his father Haider Ali because he thought he was “foul mouthed.” He wanted his sons to learn through observation, especially when he was dispatching foreign delegations. He instructed his sons and all his courtiers, telling them that “that’s what makes Europe so wonderful—its full of new ideas—inventions—all kinds of machines bursting with energy. Why don’t we in our country think like them?” (Karnad, 2004, p. 25). “Whenever you feel lazy or despondent think of the John company—how they came to this country poor, cringing, and what have they become in a mere fifty years. They threaten us today. It is all because of their passion for trade” (Karnad, 2004, p. 26). According to Loomba (1988), “the Europeans travelled to the New World as Greenblatt termed ‘the European Dream’ was grossly unequal I give you a glass bead and you give me a pearl and half your tribe . . . the power attaching to the East and especially to the Islamic East were thus reworked to create an alternative version of savagery understood not as lack of civilisation but as an excess of it, decadence rather than primitivism” (pp. 108–109).

Tipu was keen to sign the Treaty of Perpetual Alliance with Louis XVI, urging him to kick his listless Frenchmen awake in India before the English “gobbled” up all of India. He wanted not only 10,000 soldiers but also craftsmen from France who could make pistols, cannons, and guns. He understood why General Cornwallis was sent to India; it was to “refurbish his honor” and overcome the “ignominy of defeat” in the Americas at the hands of George Washington, and “to get the stain off his reputation he needs to vanquish one man in India—only one—Tipu Sultan” (Karnad, 2006, p. 28).

The second dream was one that Tipu had when he was preparing a night attack on the Maratha armies of Hari Pant Phadke at Shahnur near Devgiri. In the dream he saw a light-eyed, fair-skinned youth, who turned out to be a Maratha woman who came to him dressed as a man. In 1790, the British along with the Marathas and the Nizam attacked Seringapatam. At the end of 2 years, Tipu was forced to sue for peace. The terms of the peace were the relinquishing of neighboring lands of the Maratha and Nizam territories, freeing of the English prisoners of war, an indemnity of 6 crores, and, to add insult to injury, the surrender of two of his sons as hostages, so he sent his sons who were around 8 years of age. He only felt fear about one factor of his impressionable sons getting anglicized, that he had to face these collective tragedies beside the gravest of them all, the death of his beloved wife, Ruqaiyah Begum, on the day the sue for peace was finalized.

The danger is: they’ll teach my children their language English. The language in which it is possible to think of children as

hostages. All I can try to do is agree to their terms and conclude the treaty in a hurry—before my children have learnt that language . . . she died without knowing that I had bartered her sons for my kingdom. (Karnad, 2004, p. 43)

Foucault (1972) contended that individuals are not entirely trapped by power dynamics because they always retain an ability to resist. He rejects a simplistic view of power as containment and subversion, instead presenting a more intricate argument that encompasses both the forces maintaining the status quo and individual acts of resistance or subversion (Foucault, 1997). Colonialism, as a central theme in *The Dreams of Tipu Sultan*, is represented through the dreams as a site of resistance and subversion. The dreams depict Tipu Sultan's subconscious desire to reclaim his country from the British colonizers and restore it to its former glory. The symbols and motifs present in the dreams further reinforce the theme of colonialism and its impact on Tipu Sultan's psyche. In one of his other 37 dreams, Tipu Sultan envisions himself leading a valiant army against the British forces, symbolizing his resistance against colonial oppression. This dream highlights Tipu Sultan's unwavering determination and his refusal to submit to the colonizers. The dreams also reveal Tipu Sultan's fear and anxiety about the consequences of colonialism, for he is haunted by visions of his kingdom being dismantled and his people suffering under British rule. Furthermore, the dreams reflect Tipu Sultan's internal conflict between his duty as a ruler and his personal desires. He is torn between the responsibility to protect his kingdom and the longing for personal freedom.

In *The Sword of Tipu Sultan*, Gidwani (1989) used a range of methods, including irony, to portray his characters. One example is the utilization of memory digression, wherein a character reminisces about their own past. This technique allows for interruptions in storytelling and adds variety to the narrative, thereby preventing monotony. Moreover, it facilitates impartial narration and offers glimpses into a character's private experiences from their past. These benefits are distinct from those found in conventional historical writing approaches.

Tipu's next dream was after his sons were sent to the British. He sees his father Haider Ali under a tree, where he has been maimed, without hands or legs, because he felt his son had traded him to the British and was thinking more like a trader than a king. Tipu responds:

No, I'm not. If I were scared, I would have ordered a slaughter. But, Father, often, suddenly I see myself in them—I see these white skins swarming all over the land I wonder what makes them so relentless? Desperate? Most of them are no older than Fath Haider. What drives these young lads to such distant lands through fever, dysentery, alcohol—so often to death—wave after wave? They don't give up. Nor would I. sometimes I feel more confident of them than my own people. What makes them so unsparing towards themselves? Is it only money? . . . No, if it was only for money, they would betray each other. But there's never any treachery against their own kind no back-stabbing. They believe in the destiny of their race. Why can't we? . . . What is it? It's not a religion that sustains them, nor a land that feeds them. They couldn't be here if it did. It's just a dream, for which they are willing to kill and die. Children of England! They have conquered our land, plundered its riches. And now they've started taking away our children. Mine—. (Karnad, 2004, pp. 51–52)

Richard Wellesley, Earl of Mornington, Governor General of India in 1798, was highly offended when he gave the following reply:

Tipu is building a trading empire on the European model and succeeding eminently. We have driven the French and the Dutch out of India, contained the Portuguese. Is there any reason why we should tolerate an upstart native? The longer the peace, the stronger will Tipu become. (Karnad, 2004 p. 56)

In 1798, Tipu spoke to his advisors at the arrival of the new governor general, saying the following:

I knew the English wouldn't like my extending my hand to the French. So what? Shall I spend the rest of my life looking with anxiety at the English for smiles of approval or frowns of displeasure? Today I am the only one in India who won't bow and scrape before them. So they want to humiliate me. I'm told England is buzzing with stories of what a monster I am and how I need to be subdued. (Karnad, 2004, p. 57)

On the final day of confrontation, May 4, 1799, after a 32 days' siege of his fortress, Tipu Sultan was "martyred" by the British not because of valor but because of the betrayal of his own chief minister, Mir Sadiq. Tipu Sultan was approached for a "disgraceful" compromise or surrender by the British (the Hindu, May 14, 2012, which he declined with the following words: "Single day life of a tiger is far better than that of 100 years of a jackal"—hence the name "Tiger of Mysore."

This point can be compared to Greenblatt viewing Iago's scheming against Othello in Shakespeare's play as a larger Elizabethan subversive plot to deny the otherness of subjugated people. Foucault (1972) revolutionized the concept of representation by considering it as not just a way to create meaning within a culture, but also as the generator of knowledge itself. He focused on understanding how human beings perceived themselves in their cultural context and how social knowledge was formed and shared across different eras. Foucault's exploration led him to identify specific methods through which meaning was generated and encapsulated in particular statements and regulated discourse. He viewed discourse as playing a critical role in representing knowledge and shaping popular topics during historical periods. Because all social practices were involved in producing meanings that influenced human behavior, discourse became essentially discursive in nature—dealing with the production, validation, and perpetuation of knowledge through language.

The last dream was recorded on a letter given to Kirmani, and it had the bright vision that the British "white plague" had been successfully driven out. It included the names of all the people who were celebrating the victory, but in reality it was a list of people who had betrayed him.

As soon as Tipu's corpse was located, one of the soldiers borrowed his pen knife and quickly cut one of his moustache hairs, saying that it

was a trophy for Dr. Crusoe of the Establishment. Kirmani is irate that the soldiers could not wait even a moment before going on a rampage and insulting the slain king. He was bitter at having to serve the British because he had no other choice. He found the discovery of the book as an act of betrayal by Munshi Habeebullah because they were meant to be their master's secret ("a sacred relic") and should have been destroyed, rather than have foreign hands, especially those of his enemies, delve into his deepest thoughts that were more than anything else a catalogue guiding him to chart his planned victories. For the British it was just an "inconsequential book" that would be gifted to the Chairman of the Court of Directors of the East India Company.

Tipu Sultan can be compared to Shakespeare's Hamlet because of his father's apparition/dream where he was reprimanded for his wrong decisions, lack of sense of direction, and inaction. In the end, both were wronged by those they trusted, and Tipu's last thoughts on May 4, 1799, might not have been much different from Hamlet's dying words to Horatio:

O, good Horatio, what a wounded name, things standing  
Unknown, shall live behind me,  
If thou didst ever hold me in thy heart,  
Absent thee from felicity awhile,  
And, in this harsh world, draw thy breath in pain,  
To tell my story . . . (Shakespeare, 1623/1996, V:2:291)

## 7. Conclusion

"Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." —Santayana G.

In conclusion, the imagination and vision of consciousness are indications to every human through the indications of their sense organs. In the context of Tipu Sultan's dreams, it becomes evident that his dreams were not merely flights of fancy, but rather manifestations of his deep-rooted desires for the progress and freedom of his kingdom. Each dream served as a source of guidance and inspiration, fueling his determination to resist foreign domination and pave the way for a united and prosperous South India.

Besides, Tipu was the only Indian king to die on the battlefield fighting the British. After him, they put the Wadiyars on the throne, who were under British control. Tipu's greatest tragedy was that he was deliberately erased from heroic history and instead was classified among tyrants and despots because he refused to cooperate or work with the British. He was born at the wrong time in the wrong century; he was a visionary who tried to establish international trade relations, to use India's natural resources for herself rather than be robbed of them. He did not have neighbors who shared his beliefs because they had been placated by British imports, and to keep the colonizer happy, they stood for the old rotting order, not yet ready for the new order in which Tipu believed. The time and place were not ready to have a visionary of his caliber. To add to that, he was born into the wrong religion, due to which it was easy for him to be labeled as an oppressor who ruled nonbelievers with an iron fist. If Tipu was born a few decades later, he might have been appreciated for his visionary spirit, an iconic leader who could have spearheaded the Indian freedom struggle.

## About the authors

**Mohammad Rezaul Karim** is currently working as an Assistant Professor of English in the College of Science and Humanities, Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University, KSA. He holds a Ph.D. in English from Gauhati University, India. He has been teaching English language to the undergraduate students for the last 5 years. He has presented papers at both national and international conferences, published research articles and papers in various journals, and also authored two books. His main area of interest is English language and comparative literature.

**Wahaj Unnisa Warda** has been working in the Department of English Language and Literature, College of Science and Humanities, Prince Sattam Bin Abdulaziz University, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for the past eleven years. Prior to that she worked as a senior lecturer in India for Thirteen years. She has published and presented papers in international conferences, besides being on the editorial board and a reviewer for many leading international journals. Her areas of interest are psychoanalysis, classical mythology and fiction of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century.

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## Authors contributions

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