

## **Mahabharat Versus Andha Yug: A Modern Interpretation**

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### **Abstract**

In contemporary literature, many modern Indian authors have revisited ancient stories and scriptures to scrutinize and critique the social-political issues of the past. Dharamvir Bharti's *Andha Yug* stands out as an exemplary study of modern-day dilemmas set against the backdrop of Mahabharat. This paper argues that *Andha Yug* employs nuances from Mahabharat to unfurl social, political, and psychological problems of contemporary India, notably the Second World War and post-Partition struggles of India in the form of trauma, agony, disillusionment and absurdity. By drawing these parallels, Bharti illuminates the perennial nature of human struggles and the vicious cycle of history that repeats itself time and again, focusing on the timeless relevance of these narratives in the historical context. The paper asserts that whether it is *maryada*, war, violence, irrationality in individual context or nuclear tension, the context of *Andha Yug* has become more significant today because gradually the entire world is going towards darkness, which may give birth to irrationality, war, mockery of dignity and fulfilment of goals by pondering what is irrational, and what is not.

*Keywords: Mahabharata, Andha Yug, Dharamvir Bharti, Comparative Study, Retelling.*

## **Mahabharat Versus Andha Yug: A Modern Interpretation**

In contemporary literature, many modern Indian authors have revisited ancient stories and scriptures to scrutinize and critique the social-political issues of the past. Prominent authors using this tradition are Maithili Sharan Gupt (1886-1964), Suryakant Tripathi Nirala (1899-1961), Ramdhari Singh Dinkar (1908-1974), Amrit Lal Nagar (1916-1990), Dharamvir Bharti (1926-1997), Narendra Kohli (1940-2021), Pratibha Ray (1943) and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni (1956).

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For instance, Maithili Sharan Gupt gave voice to contemporary women using his portrayal of eminent characters Urmila and Yashodhara in his works *Saket* (1931) and *Yashodhara* (1933). In *Ram Ki Shakti Puja* (1936) [Ram's worship of Goddess Shakti], Suryakant Tripathi Nirala has highlighted the power and strength of contemporary women through the worship of Goddess Durga by Ram. Ramdhari Singh Dinkar has speculated on the chaotic order of the modern world through the composition of his poem *Kurukshetra* (1946), women's desire through *Urvashi* (1961), and the hope for Indian glory and prosperity through his exceptional work *Parshuram ki Pratiksha* [Waiting of Parshuram] (1962-63). Dharamvir Bharti has highlighted the emotions and feelings of contemporary women through the portrayal of Krishna and Radha in *Kanu Priya* (1959) and put forward contemporary issues while drawing comparisons from Mahabharat in *Andha Yug* (1954). Dharamvir Bharti's *Andha Yug* stands out as an exemplary study of modern-day dilemmas set against the backdrop of *Mahabharat*. This paper argues that *Andha Yug* employs nuances from *Mahabharat* to unfurl social, political, and psychological problems of contemporary India, notably the Second World War and post-Partition struggles of India in the form of trauma, agony, disillusionment and absurdity. By drawing these parallels, Bharti illuminates the perennial nature of human struggles and the vicious cycle of history that repeats itself time and again, focusing on the timeless relevance of these narratives in the historical context.

Chandrakant Bandivadekar in his essay, “*Andha Yug* Kaalaviddh Aur Kaalaateet Rachna”, *Timeless and Timeless Creation* [Essay taken from *Dharamvir Bharti ki Sahitya Sadhana, Literary Exercise of Dharamvir Bharti*, edited by Pushpa Bharti-2001] presents his views about *Andha Yug* in this way – “1954 is the year when *Andha Yug* was written. It focuses and draws the reader's attention towards the pressing issues, which were the cause of anxiety among intellectuals in post-independent India.” [Pushpa Bharti: 439]

Another reason that compelled the author to write this distinguished play was his first-hand experience with the trauma and agony of war and the Partition. The Second World War started on 1st November 1939 and ended in 1945. Two years later, the Partition of British India took place in 1947, and it did not happen without violence and massacre. Both these historical events shook young Bharti to the core and largely influenced him. In the prefatory note to the play, he describes his experience in this way “*Andha Yug* would never have been written if it had been in my power

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not to write it! I was in a dilemma when the idea of writing the play rose within me. It made me a little afraid. I knew that if I set out to write it, I would never be able to turn back! But, then, there is something called addiction—in accepting the challenge of a roaring sea, fighting the high waves with one's bare hands, plunging to immeasurable depths. And then, after facing all the dangers, resurfacing with a few granules of faith, illumination, truth, and dignity— this addiction is mingled with such deep agony and so much joy that one can never give it up. *Andha Yug* was written to satisfy that addiction. After reaching a certain stage, one is no longer afraid. Frustration, dejection, bloodshed, vengeance, disease, deformity, blindness— one faces them all without hesitation because hidden beneath are the rare grains of truth! One would not perish if one confronted them! “Let the world perish, not I!” But no, why should the world perish either? Since I have shared its sufferings, how can the truth I have discovered be mine alone? A time comes when the superficial distinction between the “self” and “others” is erased. They are no longer separate. This is the “whole” truth. I have “personally” discovered it, but its dignity lies in its being widely shared once again.”

The play *Andha Yug* begins on the evening of the last day of the eighteen-day Mahabharata battle till the demise of Krishna in Prabhas Kshetra. It is needless to argue why Bharti has chosen the plot from *Mahabharata* to compose his verse play *Andha Yug*. In *Mahabharata*, all the characters are realistic or close to reality because they possess good qualities as well as likeable virtues. After the Mahabharata, war conditions became precarious on the sides of Kauravas and Pandavas. Kauravas lost more as compared to Pandavas.

Many characters like Dhritrashtra, Gandhari, and Ashwatthama were in search of their individual identities in this Indian epic. Cut to the modern day, after the Second World War and the Partition of India, the situation became more pathetic in the human world. The exploration of individual identities became common ground for almost everyone and anxiousness pertinent to this identity crisis added fuel to the fire of irrationality. For instance, Yudhishtir, during the dice game, ignored his elders' advice to not play the game, eventually keeping Draupadi at the stake and losing her as his 'property'. This episode indicates that for Yudhishtir, women are mere objects of property. As for Draupadi, she is also not entirely a statue of virtue as her character reveals caste prejudice. During the Svyamvar, she did not allow Karna to prove his skill in archery because he belonged to a lower caste. Through all these examples, it is clear that Dharamvir Bharti chooses his plot from

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*Mahabharata* for *Andha Yug* so that he can describe the reality of contemporary society through the play. It is also believed that whatever contents associated with human life are available in *Mahabharata*, they are available everywhere and that do not exist in *Mahabharata*, do not exist anywhere and in any book. In the prologue of this play, Dhramavir Bharti highlights this issue in this way:

“In those dark ages  
which came into being  
at the end of the great war  
all thoughts and deeds of men  
were corrupt and perverse...” (6)

At the beginning of the first act of this play, two guards on the stage are shielding the Hastinapur palace. During their duty, both discuss the impact of battle as described in the *Mahabharata*. Through this discussion, it is clear that both are tired of this world and every action or element of life seems absurd to them. For instance, Guard 1 says,

“And now  
We are tired  
Very tired  
All our actions  
are meaningless,  
Our faith  
our decisions  
our courage  
our lives

utterly meaningless....” (29)

This quote reminds us of Albert Camus’s (1913-1960) work *Myth of Sisyphus* (1942) whose eponymous hero becomes the victim of the curse. According to the curse given by God Zeus, he carries the rock up only to have it roll down when he reaches the top – an activity that becomes meaningless for him. The story highlights the never-ending, meaningless struggles of humankind against the absurdity of life. In *Andha Yug*, Guard 1 says that they are carrying on their shoulders those weapons which were insignificant.

“We are tired

very tired

We are not warriors.

We have shown no courage.

We have not fought

In this grim war

That lasted

Seventeen days.

These our spears

These our shields

He used

a burden

on our shoulders.

We are just guards

but there is nothing

here to defend.” (28)

These two guards are the voice of the common people and lower-class employees, who can only speculate on the issues but cannot do anything to make amends – due to their lack of power in the system. Sarita Shukla in her essay ‘Giti Natya *Andha Yug* Aur Kanupriya Paatr Parikalpana’ [verse play *Andha Yug* and Kanupriya creation of characters] from the book *Dharamvir Bharti: Yugchetna aur Abhivyakti* advocates for the guards' representation that is worth mentioning. She writes: “The guards of *Andha Yug* represent common people, who are completely associated with slavery. After the abolition of monarchy and feudalism, the democratic administration was established while keeping the welfare of the common people in mind. However, it remained restricted only on paper. Administrative power stayed only with selective people and common people remained slaves as usual.” (Shukla:202). This scenario is visible in present-day situations as well, when people face a bystander effect in their lives such as the 9/11 attack, the Russia-Ukraine war, and the Israel-Palestine war, to name a few.

In Act One, the Guard criticises blind emotions when Vidura asks whether Dhritarastra has a terrifying vision. This criticism is evident in the dialogue of the Guard 1 as he says,

“How could he?

He is blind.

Has he ever

been able

to see

anything

thus far?” (31)

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Dhritarashtra's fear is palpable in this act. He is anxious about the ramifications of the Mahabharata war and questions Vidura why he did not warn him. In an attempt to defend himself and prove his innocence, he uses his blindness as an excuse, saying to Vidura:

“Vidura

try to understand.

I was born blind.

How could I have discerned the real world

Or recognised its social codes?” (33)

Furthermore, Dhritarashtra describes his attachment to his sons, regarding them as the flesh of his flesh. All these descriptions indicate that he is not just physically blind but also emotionally blind – which causes him to lose his rationality. In other words, it is notable that his blind affection for his sons prevents him from understanding the difference between right and wrong.

Although he realized the real truth at the end of the Mahabharata war, but it was far too late. In this play, “Andha Yug” word has been used six times and the word andha (irrational), andhe, andho (irrationals) and andhepan (irrationality) have been used fifty-six times. The significance of blindness is most rooted in the title of the play, implying an age of irrationality through the metaphor of blindness. A deep study of *Andha Yug* suggests that apart from Krishna, all the characters like the Guards, Yuyutsu, Ashwatthama, Kripacharya, Kritavarma, Sanjay and Gandhari have lost their rationality in pursuit of their individual desires, pushing them to act irrationally. For instance, Ashwatthama is blinded by anger and revenge, Yuyutsu and Gandhari by emotion, and Duryodhana by power.

Through these characters, *Andha Yug* also reflects upon the psychological conditions of human reality. For instance, Yuyutsu represents the modern office-goer psychology, who is fed up with the work-life due to unfavourable circumstances and ultimately commits suicide due to depression. Another remarkable example is presented in the character of Ashwatthama – that of a destructive human, who is fraught with violence and slaughter. Sanjay's psychological condition is also complex and he emerges as a passive character despite the fact that he knows everything, every condition, and is also capable of knowing what to do. All these characters inter-reflect Dharamvir Bharti's mental condition as he writes in the same essay that it is Yuyutsu who introduced him to Ashwatthama by saying that he is meaningless and is a depressed person but Ashwatthama is active and not going away from his life despite his precarious psychological condition.

In the *Andha Yug*, the author draws parallels between the Mahabharata War, the Second World War and the Partition of India in 1947. Many kings participated in the battle of Kurukshetra, much like the multiple countries involved in the Second World War. Following the war, anarchy was rife

in many places. Life was meaningless, the whole world was dominated by frustration everywhere. Shukla's remark on the Second World War is noteworthy:

“Like the war of Mahabharata, after the Second World War also, the towers of righteousness, God, morality, truth, dignity, etiquettes, human values and philosophy of life began to collapse rapidly. Human sensitivity, extreme irrelevance of human life, consequences of ethical decline, the moral downfall of youth wondering for the fulfilment of their aim, social decline and devaluation of leaders' characters all; by situating all the evil elements with Mahabharata war in the circumference of myth, Bharti has attempted to resolve psychological issues in *Andha Yug*”. [Shukla:185]

The partition of India incited riots between Muslims and Hindus, leading to irrational violence over territory, culture and religion. Alok Bhalla in his essay ‘Defending the Sacred in an Age of Atrocities: On Translating *Andha Yug*’ states:



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“It was obvious that the play—written soon after the carnage of the Partition of the Indian subcontinent, which nearly erased a form of life and civilization, and being read once again in our rakshas (demonic) times of hysterical unreason—still had the power to make us realize how close we live to the borders of nightmares”. (14) [2010]

The duration of the *Andha Yug* play is associated with the aftermath of the Mahabharata war, where each character feels isolated and is driven to irrational acts of destruction. An episode from Act 2 justifies this irrationality and blind emotional attachment to their religion, culture, ideology etc. In Act 2, Ashwatthama, grieving his father’s death, has a sudden encounter with Sanjaya. Mistaking him for one of the soldiers of Pandavas, Ashwatthama makes an attempt to kill him, but Kripacharya and Kritavarma protect him. When they clarify that Sanjaya is not a Pandava soldier, Ashwatthama is neutral in the war. Ashwatthama says,

“Neutral?

The word neutral

is meaningless.

I am no soldier

I am a beast

A wild and ferocious beast

Whoever is not with me

Is against me!” (55)

Observing Ashwatthama’s character, it is obvious that circumstances compel human beings towards bad deeds. Human beings are neither innately good nor evil by birth. Ashwatthama’s statement about neutrality is highly relevant in the present context, where the life of a neutral person remains threatened from both sides during situations of war and tension. It goes without saying that in a

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situation of war, soldiers fight from both sides, but common people who are busy in their daily lives face severe consequences of losing their lives and loved ones. In the forest, Ashwatthama is alone and consumed by grief, and recalls how his father was killed by Yudhishtira's half-truth. He thinks,

“Yudhishtira’s half-truth

killed him.

That day

Yudhishtira’s half-truth

Ruthlessly slaughtered

All that was good

Or gentle

In me.

Honoured as Dharmaraj

He added:

‘The man or the beast.’

Since he could not

Distinguish between

Man and beast

I decided to turn myself

Into a blind, ruthless beast.

But even today

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I am lost

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In a dark cave-

The blind cave

Of defeat.” (52 – 53)

In this action of Ashwatthama, it is candid to see butchery and massacre that also remind critics about the consequences of the Second World War. When Duryodhana proclaims him as chief of the army, he enters the Pandava camp and kills Dhristdyumn and the five sons of the Pandavas with the help of Kripacharya and Kritavarma. All of them set fire to the camp and destroyed the Pandava army. The description of slaughter in Act 4, when Vidura says to Ghandhari, is as follows:

“.... Kripacharya and Kritavarma

waited outside the tents.

When children, old men, and servants

Ran out in terror

Kritavarma’s arrows

Cut them down.

Frightened elephants

Trumpeted wildly

Smashed the tents

And trampled the women

Sleeping inside

To death.” (99)

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During the conflict with Arjuna, Ashwatthama uses the Brahmastra, which starts to affect the power of nature. The Brahmastra reminds readers of nuclear power used in the Second World War. In August 1945, America dropped a nuclear bomb on Nagasaki and Hiroshima, the effects of which lingered on for a long time in Japan. Likewise, in *Andha Yug*, Dharmvir Bharti discusses the impact of nuclear power through the wisdom of Vyasa. Vyasa scolds Ashwatthama, explaining the consequences of using the Brahmastra. In other words, it seems that through the voice of Vyasa, Bharti is explaining his own views related to the consequences of nuclear war. Vyasa says to Ashwatthama,

“O you vile man

do you even know

the consequences

of using the Brahmastra?

For centuries to come

Nothing will grow on earth.

Newborn children

Shall be deformed

Men shall become grotesque.

All the wisdom men gathered

In the satya, treata, and dvapara yugs

Shall be lost forever.

Serpents shall hiss

From every ear of corn

With molten fire.” (114)

Bharti's use of the voice of Vyasa in *Andha Yug* plays a significant role in prophecy because his statements are extremely relevant in the present day. Nations are conducting nuclear tests, competing with each other to show their atomic power, thereby making nuclear war more plausible as they threaten each other with destructive bombs. This tension is visible in the context of North Korea vs South Korea, Pakistan vs India, Russia vs Ukraine, Iran vs America and Israel vs Palestine. By comparing *Kurukshetra* and *Andha Yug*, Mudrarakshasa in his essay 'Andha Yug: Ek Mulyakan' states “*Kurukshetra* highlights the issue of post second world war and its consequences while *Andha Yug* emphasizes the inevitability of third world war and its consequences”. (Pushpa Bharti: 468). In the proclamation of the play *Andha Yug*, Bharti presents remarks from Vishnu Purana, which indicate the forthcoming condition of the world from the perspective of socio-political and economic issues.

*Tataschanudinamalpala haras vavachchhedada-dharama-arth-ayorjagatas-samakshayo bhavishyati.* (...And then in the future, day by day, there will be a decline in prosperity and dharma, and the whole earth shall slowly perish.)

*Tatascharth evabhijan hetu.* (The one who has wealth shall rule.)

*Kapatavesha dharanameva mahatva hetu.* (The one who wears a false mask shall be honoured.)

*Evam chati lubdhak raja sahaas-shailanam-antaradroneeh praja samsriyashyanti.* (The one who is greedy shall be king. And weary of misrule the people shall hide in dark caves, and wait for their days of misery to end. They will hide in real caves or in the caverns of their souls.) (Pg.5)

In this play, the prophecy of Vyasa reflects an incident, associated with the life of Bharti. In 1950, he met Tarashankar Bandopadhyay— when he was sitting with volumes fourteen and fifteen of *Mahabharata*. Tarashankar said to Bharti, “You poets are liars, you always write false things. Only

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Vyasa is right because the reflection of truth is only visible in his composition.” Bharti mentioned this anecdote in his essay ‘*Andha Yug* kab aur kaise likha gya,’ compelling critics to ponder the probability of Vyasa’s influence on Dharmvir Bharti.

A superficial reading of the play *Andha Yug* shows Krishna as a human being, reflecting his character as a mix of good and evil deeds. However, an in-depth study portrays that Krishna is the preserver of future prosperity and in a political context, all kinds of strategies are acceptable to defeat a person who is unlawful but in power. In Act 3 of this play, the spectators come across Krishna for the first time when he is scolded by his brother Balarama. Balaram says to Krishna,

“Say what you like,

Krishna but what Bhima did today

violated dharma.

His attack was an act of betrayal.

.....

The Pandavas are related to us

but are the Kauravas our enemies?

I would have confronted Bhima today

But you stopped me.

I have known you since childhood.

You have always been

An unprincipled rogue!” (79)

In this play, Gandhari is able to challenge Krishna to some extent. During her frustration and grief, she forgets her fear of Krishna and verbally challenges his power. When she sees the bonds of her son, she curses Krishna thus:

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“...What have you done, Krishna?

What have you done?

Hear me now!

You will have to hear me today!

Hear me, Gandhari

Who has sacrificed everything

Who has lived a virtuous life

Who has lived a life of penance

And has earned the right

To tell you this:

If you wanted

You could have stopped the war.

I did not give birth

To this pile of bones

You incited Bhima's adharma

But you inflicted

A vile curse on Ashwathama

Who had committed no crime!

You used your divine power

for unjust ends.

If my sacrifice has any meaning

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If my penance has any sanction in dharma

Then listen, Krishna, to what I have to say:

You may be a God

You may be omnipotent

Whatever you are

Whoever you are

I curse you

And I curse

All your friends and kinsmen

They shall attack and kill each other.

They shall eat each other

Like rabid dogs.

And many years later

After you have witnessed

Their destruction

You will return to this forest

Only to be killed

Like a wild animal

By an ordinary hunter!” (121, 122, 123)



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In *Andha Yug*, Krishna's character is portrayed as a champion of non-violence. He accepts Gandhari's curses politely to prevent more violence and revenge, stating that he is in both pain and pleasure and will embrace the sorrow and joy of Ashwatthama. Prabhakar Shrotriya in his essay “*Andha Yug* aur Bhitari ka Mahabharata”, (1992) [The Age of Darkness and Internal Mahabharata] tries to draw similarities between Gandhi and Krishna. These similarities are significant and contextual for the analysis of *Andha Yug*. Both Krishna and Gandhi sacrificed their lives for the abolition of restlessness and chaos only to restore peace and harmony. It is also worth noting that through the death of Krishna, Bharti has allegorized Gandhi's assassination. Retrospectively, Krishna warns Dhritarashtra about the consequences of war. Vidura mentions it when Dhritarashtra expressed his fears:

Dhritarashtra: Vidura

For the first time

in my life

I am afraid.

Vidura: Afraid?

The fear you experience today

had gripped others years ago.

Dhritarashtra: Why didn't you warn me then?

Vidura: Bhishma did.

So did Dronacharya.

Indeed, in this very court

Krishna advised you:

“Do not violate the code of honour.

If you violate the code of honor

it will coil around the Kaurava clan

like a wounded python

and crush it like a dry twig.”

.....

Yet from the very first day

it was obvious that the Kaurava might

—the final arbiter of truth—

was weak and vulnerable.

Over the past seventeen days

you have received news

of the death

—one by one—

of the entire Kaurava clan. (15)

The echoes of *Shrimad Bhagavad Gita* in *Andha Yug* are remarkable. Whatever role Krishna plays, he plays without any desire for reward – similar to what Gandhi followed in his life. Apart from Krishna, other characters are also influenced by *Gita* in several ways. Bhalla suggests that “throughout the play, as indeed in the *Mahabharata*, whenever it seems life is so accursed that we shall never see the ordinary world again, the Kauravas are given another chance to acknowledge their complicity in evil and turn towards the ethical. Indeed, just as in the *Mahabharata*, the Bhagavad Gita lies at the heart of the story (I am not concerned about whether it is an interpolation) in *Andha Yug*.” (21). Ramesh Gautam in his essay, ‘Bharatiya Aastha ki Trasadi Bharti aur *Andha Yug*’ [Tragedy of India Bharti and *Andha Yug*] from the book *Rang Anubhav ke Bahu Rang* [Multiple Colors of Hindi Drama], defends Krishna by suggesting that Bharti has portrayed him as a

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local leader who provokes one rogue to kill other notorious rogues. In this process, he plays a prominent role in dividing criminals who fight with each other through his wisdom. He destroys all the criminals and later he says to the defeated ones – “dear you are not wounded, indeed I am wounded”. According to Gautam, this way Bharti is somewhat questioning the concept of *Gita*. In the real *Mahabharata*, compared to Kauravas, Pandavas have broken fewer rules by indicating small errors related to battle. It is unreasonable to blame Pandavas regarding dignity and code of conduct. Bharti could have created some major defects in the character of Pandavas through the power of imagination.

Gautam’s statement is appropriate to some extent, but it is misleading to suggest that Bharti’s approach is against Krishna throughout the play. In the first half of this play, he supports Ashwatthama, but later through the acceptance of Gandhari’s curse by Krishna, Bharti indicates the divinity of Krishna fortuitously. In his essay, ‘*Andha Yug* kab aur kaise likha gya’ [how and when *Andha Yug* was written] he describes his personal experiences in detail. This essay highlights that he is the champion of Ashwatthama and his main focus is to highlight the situation of Gandhari, Ashwatthama, and Yuyutsu. During this process, he discusses the writing with his grandfather Makhanlal Verma and Father Extros, the clergyman of a church in Allahabad. Both of them disagree with his view. His grandfather did say that though he is an atheist, by heart he is Vaishnavite. Father Extros is concerned that his friend Bharti is going away from belief and loyalty. He assures him that he will pray for him before the altar. After a few days, Father tells him that he is free from his side whatever he wants to do, he can do it. Overall, Father Extros is pro-Krishna, while Bharti is pro-Ashwatthama. Father says that hatred is the apprentice of love. When Bharti reaches the juncture where Gandhari curses Krishna, he is not able to write, and after that, spontaneously in his writing, Krishna accepts Gandhari’s curse, which he does unconsciously. Later, he realises and accepts the greatness of Krishna by claiming that “From where he came and after his arrival, he accepted the curse also. What should I do? Neither did I allow him nor his voice on the stage. Indeed, he was not in the scheme. I thought I would keep him separate from the agony that I was facing. From where did you get the hint? I did not call you even in the moments of extreme pain. I was going into the battlefield along with Ashwatthama and Yuyutsu... and he came in such a way that whatever was mine, all went to him. Also, death and life.” [Pushpa Bharti: 709-710]

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Apart from his personal experiences about the writing of the play, textual evidence also highlights his belief in Krishna. Like *Ramcharitmanas* (1574) of Goswami Tulsidas (1532-1623), he also wrote invocation of *Andha Yug* in Sanskrit, where he takes blessings from Vishnu, Saraswati and Vyasa:

Narayanam namaskritya naram chaiv narrottamam

daveem sarasawteem vaysaam tato jayamudeeyaret (5)

In this invocation, the word Narayanam is associated with Krishna, which dismisses the statement given by Gautam that Bharti has portrayed Krishna as a villain in the play. According to other references, before writing about the death of Krishna in the epilogue of the play, he takes blessing from him in this way.

You are the word, O Lord!

You are the meaning of meaning.

You are our refuge, O Lord!

You are our consolation.

Those who cry out to you, O Lord

never cry in vain!

We sing in your praise, O Lord!

We sing in praise of your devotees, O Lord

devotees who have sung in your praise

from generation to generation

about the mysteries of your acts

the mysteries of your creation.

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Grant this lonely pilgrim

in search of faith, O Lord

a few words, a few thoughts, a few images

to sing in sorrow at your sacrificial death! (Pg no. 99)

The character of Yuyutsu is very complex in *Andha Yug*. It signifies that those people who follow the path of truth in this world find life to be very miserable, as circumstances compel them to face the crisis associated with existentialism. C.M. Kulshreshtha in his book *T.S. Eliot and Modern Hindi Poetry* (1982) highlights that “He [Bharti] portrays Yuyutsu as symbolizing the modern sensibility.” (178). For the justification of this statement, he provides an example from the play, as follows:

“I am Yuyutsu

Like that wheel

Which was engaged throughout the war in the chariot,

But now which finds itself fixed to the wrong axle;

And have lost my bearings.” (56)

The play explores the theme of policy administration as well. In Act 5, two guards compare the Yudhisthir’s reign with that of Dhritarashtra and conclude that there is no change or no difference between the reigns of these two kings. Bharti has exhibited dialogue between two guards like this:

“Guard 1 Some went mad.

Guard 2 Some were cursed.

Guard 1 Yet we remained...

Guard 2 as we always were.

Guard 1 The ruler changed...

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Guard 2 ...but the conditions remained the same.

Guard 1 The previous ruler was a better king.

Guard 2 He was blind...

Guard 1 ...but at least he knew how to rule. This one is a saint and a philosopher.

Guard 2 How can he rule?

Guard 1 He does not know what his people are like.

Guard 2 Knowledge and morality...

Guard 1 what can we do with them?

Guard 2 Grind them?

Guard 1 Or eat them?

Guard 2 Wear them?

Guard 1 Or lie on them?

Guard 2 If only we had enough grain...

Guard 1 ...clear instructions...

Guard 2 ...a strong leader...

Guard 1 ...and orders we could blindly follow...

Guard 2 ...to wage war or live in peace.

Guard 1 He does not know what his people are like” (87).

In this Act, the weakness in the characters of Pandavas is also noticeable. Bharti describes their weakness in this way:

“Bhima was proud by nature

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and intellectually dull.

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Arjuna had grown old and weary

before his time.

Nakula was ignorant

and Sahadeva was retarded from birth.

Yudhishtira

his brow marked deep with sorrow

was the only one

who saw the future

as a nightmare.” (83).

Bhima’s intellectual dullness is so horrible that under the impact of this weakness, he humiliates Yuyutsu again and again; and Yuyutsu commits suicide. By highlighting Yututsu’s suicidal act, Bharti emphasizes the existential crisis in the modern world.

This play is also a predicament of the common people’s plight, illustrating that even if the government changes, their lives remain the same. Another key message coming out of this play is that it is extremely difficult to remain loyal, honest and down-to-earth towards common people. By highlighting this, Bharti has drawn spectators’ attention towards the disillusionment of Indians about freedom in the post-Independence era. He says,

“Days and weeks

months and years passed by.

Scorched earth

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slowly turned green and fertile again.

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Yudhishthira had finally won

his throne and his kingdom

but the old city of the Kauravas

never did regain its days of glory.

The Pandavas were victorious

but their confidence was shattered.

Krishna was their guardian, their counsellor

—the shaping spirit of their days—

but he himself was under a curse.

And so the Pandavas

who had founded their kingdom

on the ruins of war began their confused and inauspicious reign

without the customary rites of virtue.” (83)

This quotation highlights the difficulty faced by Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru when he became the first Prime Minister of Independent India. Poverty, hunger, communal rights due to the Partition of India and the resettlement of people coming from the other sides of the border were prominent challenges before him. The state of India was muddled and chaotic. Nirmala Jain and Jaydev Taneja highlight the death of Gandhi in this regard, which enhanced disenchantment among Indians. Jain in her essay, ‘Daitv Gahan, Bhasha Apooran, Shrota Andhe, ki Srijanatmak Pira ki Pariniti *Andha Yug*’ [*Andha Yug* Consequences of Big Responsibility in Complete Language, Blind Audience’s Creative Agony] from the book *Kavita ka Pratisansaar* [Imaginary World of Poetry], highlights Gandhi’s



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assassination by referencing the speech of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru ‘Light is Gone’ – in which Nehru describes the condition of the vacuum that was left after Gandhi’s assassination. Finally, it is significant to point out that Dharamvir Bharti’s *Andha Yug* is not only the story of the present time through the medium of the past but it also interconnects the past with the present and the future. Jyotsna G. Singh in the fifth chapter titled ‘The Blind Age: discovering a Postcolonial Nation’ from the book *Discoveries of India in the Language of Colonialism* (1996) highlights the political situation of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru after the independence of India and situates *Andha Yug* in the context of past, present and future in this way: “There is another dimension to *Andha Yug*’s cultural significance. This is evident in the way the play forces the postcolonial nation to confront its divisive present by taking its historical bearings between the idealist myths of its ancient past and the ambiguities and chaos of modernity.” (154) Jyotsna Singh’s statement is quite appropriate, as in the epilogue of the play, Krishna tells Jara at his end moment that he is giving the responsibility of the future to the entire human world by taking on the pain of Ashwatthama and Yuyutsu. This statement is significant in contemporary times, too, as Gandhi sacrificed his life for the establishment of communal harmony and for the further continuation of this harmony, every human being has to take responsibility.

During the minute critical analysis of *Andha Yug*, many critics, mentioned in this paper, have tried to situate *Andha Yug* in the context of World War II and its rendering consequences. According to Ramswaroop Chaturvedi, “any war or violence slaughters human dignity.” This statement is explicitly applicable in the context of India’s Partition. Unfortunately, critics have discussed the Partition of India – only in brief during the critical assessment of *Andha Yug*. During this process, Gautam does not hesitate by saying that *Andha Yug* is not so important text for the analysis of World War and its consequences because according to him there was minimal impact of World War II on India. This impact was restricted only to Europe. Furthermore, Gautam says that Bharti has written this play by distorting the myth of ancient India under the impact of Western critics. It is needless to say Gautam’s statement is undoubtedly appropriate. Bharti was influenced by Jean-Paul Sartre, Nietzsche, and Albert Camus. Jaydev Taneja, Bachchan Singh and C.M. Kulshreshtha have indicated T.S. Eliot’s (1888-1965) influence on Bharti through a comparative analysis of *Andha*

*Yug with Wasteland* (1922) and *Murder in the Cathedral* (1935). But Gautam should have realized the significance of India's Partition as this play was composed after the Partition. Violence is violence whether it is World War, India's Partition or anything else. Only Jyotsna Singh and Simona Sawhney have tried to analyze *Andha Yug* in the context of the Partition along with World War II to some extent in their respective essays 'The Blind Age: discovering a postcolonial nation' and 'The Lure of Violence: Dharamvir Bharti's *Andha Yug* [The Blind Age]' in the book *The Modernity of Sanskrit* (2009).

Another critical issue in contemporary times is Maryada [Dignity], and *Andha Yug* largely highlights its mockery. The significance of Maryada is significant as Sawhney presents an example from Namwar Singh's (1927-2019) work *Kavita Ke Naye Pratiman* (1968) [The New Patterns of Poetry] in the context of the two guards. "By assigning *Maryada* to a particular class, the two servants appear to be commenting bitterly on the deep division between royalty and servants. It is not surprising that the Marxist critic Namwar Singh singles them out as being the most striking characters of the play. Citing a part of this very dialogue in his book, he claims that its effectiveness derives largely from the fact of it being a *dialogue* and not a monologue. As a monologue, it would have become so weighed down by gravity as to lose meaning. However, as a dialogue, it is able to convey a self-mockery that in fact deepens the shadow of tragedy." (Sawhney 134)

To sum up, it can be asserted that whether it is maryada, war, violence, irrationality in individual context or nuclear tension, the context of *Andha Yug* has become more significant because gradually the entire world is going towards darkness, which may give birth to irrationality, war, mockery of dignity and fulfilment of goals by pondering what is irrational, and what is not. By highlighting the importance of *Andha Yug*, Sawhney quotes Muktibodh's statement in the epigraph of chapter 4 in this way: "Andha Yug represents an extremely valuable and important endeavour by the new literary generation—an endeavour that calls for extensive argument".

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