

ECHOES OF BLIND AGE: A STUDY OF ALOK BHALLA'S TRANSLATION OF DHAMAVIR BHARTI'S "ANDHA YUG"

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Abstract:

Dharmavir Bharti's Andha Yug, translated by Alok Bhalla as The Age of Blindness, is a thought-provoking play that delves into the moral and spiritual blindness of its characters. The play depicts the chaos and destruction of war. Bharati's masterful use of language and symbolism has highlighted the complexities of human nature, revealing the consequences of unchecked ambition, pride, and revenge. Set against the backdrop of the Mahabharata war, Andha Yug is a powerful allegory that critiques the destruction of human lives and ethical values in the face of war and violence. This paper tries to examine the themes of moral persistence, blindness, and the human condition in Dharmavir Bharti's verse play, Andha Yug, translated by Ashok Bhalla. As the play is written in the aftermath of India's partition, the critical analysis of the play's characters, themes, and literary style, highlights the relevance of Andha Yug in contemporary times.

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Andha Yug a distinguished post-Independence play, published in 1953 is considered as a landmark in the history of Indian drama. Dharmavir Bharti's *Andha Yug* is the dramatization of the 18th Day of the Mahabharata War on Kurukshetra. The play is translated into English by Alok Bhalla. It deals with the climax of the conflict between the Kauravas and the Pandavas on the eighteenth day of Kurukshetra war. The focus of the play is not on the heroic battles but on the moral, spiritual, and psychological devastation that has taken place due to violence. The ancient epic is used as a backdrop to portray human greed, ethical blindness, power politics and the destructive consequences of war. As the play was composed a few years after the two traumatic events; World War II and the bloody Partition of India that resulted into profound human loss, the play is a powerful modern allegory that criticizes not only the destruction of human lives but the ethical values in the face of war and violence and highlights its relevance in the current era.

Andha Yug (Age of Blindness) the title itself refers to an age in which moral vision is lost, and is under the burden of ignorance, vengeance, and spiritual decay. It picturizes the emotional wreckage and psychological torment left in the wake of the war. The whole of the play is set within the span of a single day from late afternoon to dusk, symbolizing the slow but inevitable descent into darkness, both literally and metaphorically. This compressed timeframe portrays the spiritual decline and moral decay of the characters, and the consequences of war, guilt, and vengeance. The play symbolically refers to an age of moral blindness, where vision is lost physically, spiritually and intellectually and the characters are plagued by guilt, anger, revenge, and despair.

The five-act play unfolds the emotional and philosophical dimensions of the play. Each act introduces a new character or group of characters and their response to the aftermath of war. The play begins with the grief and despair of Gandhari and

Dhritarashtra, while the central movement picturizes Ashwatthama's uncontrollable anger and his decision to release the Brahmastra. In the later sections introspective voices of Vidura and Sanjay reflect on the futility of violence and the blindness of human ambition. The play ends in symbolic twilight, marking the end of a moral era. This passage of time from light to darkness mirrors the spiritual decline and the fall of ethical values in society. In this context, Dusk is not just the end of the day, but a metaphor that symbolizes the blindness of a society which can never distinguish right from wrong.

The grim, barren landscape the ruins of Hastinapur, the capital city of the Kauravas, due to the disastrous Mahabharata war forms the setting of the play. The war has ended, but the devastation lingers in the physical space and, more importantly, in the minds and souls of its survivors. This post-apocalyptic setting, rich in allegorical meaning depicts the themes of guilt, blindness, vengeance, and moral decay. The barren and broken landscape also enhances the play's mood of despair, introspection, and futility and forces the characters to encounter the moral wasteland which is the result of their past actions. The ruins of Hastinapur serve as a universal symbol of how blinded by power and hatred, brings about its own downfall. Thus, the setting of *Andha Yug* is not merely a backdrop, but a living, breathing element of the play, reflecting and enhancing central theme that mirrors the inner turmoil of human conscience and a stark warning against the dangers of moral blindness. The silence, ruins, and reflection make the play significantly psychological representing the emotional and ethical wreckage. The mythological backdrop of the play echoes modern historical traumas such as the horrors of World War II, the nuclear bombings, and the Partition of India.

The play opens in the ruined city of Hastinapur, where the blind king Dhritarashtra, devastated by the death of

his hundred sons, sits in silence. He symbolizes not only physical blindness but also the blindness of moral judgment and leadership. His wife Gandhari, who has also blinded herself out of devotion and protest, curses Krishna for not preventing the destruction, blaming divine will for human suffering. Her grief is not just personal, but symbolic of the collective anguish of a civilization undone by pride, greed, and enmity. Vidura, the wise minister, and Sanjay, the narrator and moral witness, offer philosophical reflections on the futility of war and the erosion of dharma (righteousness). One of the central characters in the play is Ashwatthama, the son of Dronacharya, who is furious and wants to revenge his father's death. To fulfill his desire for revenge, he attacks the Pandava's camp at night when all are asleep and technically the war has stopped. Driven by madness and rage he releases a divine weapon the Brahmastra against the unborn child in Uttara's womb, the last heir of the Pandava lineage. His act represents the fall of morality. His revenge no longer distinguishes between guilty and innocent, enemy and unborn life. Here Ashwatthama's actions highlight how war transforms even the noble into monsters, and how cycles of revenge perpetuate endless suffering.

As the day fades into dusk, the atmosphere grows heavier with sorrow, guilt, and despair. No character finds peace or redemption: Dhritarashtra is paralyzed by loss and inaction, Gandhari remains unforgiving, and Ashwatthama is cursed to wander the earth in misery. Even Krishna, typically viewed as the divine upholder of dharma, is portrayed as a distant, silent force more philosophical than redemptive. His presence serves as a complex commentary on divine detachment and human responsibility. Ultimately, the play offers no easy resolution, instead the echoes of spiritual and ethical blind age are heard in the endless darkness of the age.

Andha Yug is translated into many languages and also in English by various authors. Among all these translations, Alok Bhalla's translation of the play seems the best one. He has skilfully captured the various dimensions of the arguments depicted in the play. The play criticizes the destructive tendencies of mankind, pride, hatred, vengeance, and unchecked ambition. The voices of Vidura, Sanjay, and the common people serve as a moral counterpoint, urging reflection and repentance. But their wisdom is drowned in the overwhelming weight of destruction. It makes a great question mark on the very foundation of war, even though when it is fought in the name of righteousness and to gain justice. Alok Bhalla's translation captures the essential tension between the nightmare of self-entertainment represented by story of the Kauravas. It also states that a possibility to find a way out of the cycle of revenge into a redemptive ethicality is always there. Alok Bhalla writes "A moral life demands perpetual attention. And those, like Dhritarashtra, who fail to understand this, cannot hope to escape the consequences. In the balance of things, then, it is right that, at the end of all the carnage which he had failed to prevent, Dhritarashtra is consumed by a relentless forest fire, a manifestation of the desolation and the affliction of his soul". Dharmavir Bharati has used poetic language, symbolic characters, and minimal action that forces the audience to contemplate the deeper moral questions at the heart of civilization. *Andha Yug* is not a story of heroes and villains, but of flawed individuals trapped in the consequences of their choices—making it one of the most powerful and enduring plays in Indian theatre and literature. The play reflects on the devastating period of the holocaust that destroyed millions of lives. It highlights the message that true independence, peace, and prosperity cannot be achieved through war or division, nor can these methods

solve the fundamental problems of human existence. The play provides insights into human beings' competence for ethical action, kindness during atrocious situations, settlement, and revelation of ways in which people fall prey to disparagement and malice of a dispirited and blind age. In addition, the play also provides an account of the cost incurred owing to society's failure to put a stop to the vicious cycle of revenge and, in place, choose the path of redemption, which is constantly available despite the worst scenarios. Thus, *Andha Yug* explores our capacity for moral action, reconciliation, and goodness in times of atrocity and reveals what happens when individuals succumb to the cruelty and cynicism of a blind, dispirited age.

Conclusion:

Andha Yug is a profoundly tragic and philosophical drama that explores the psychological ruins left behind by war. It goes beyond the Mahabharata to reflect on the modern human condition, especially in the context of events like World War II, Nagasaki, Hiroshima, and the Partition of India. It reveals its relevance to the modern age anxieties of international terrorism and fundamentalism. The story of Kauravas and Pandavas has achieved universal acknowledgement as it highlights the metaphysical conflict between Good and Evil and also offers the moral lesson that Truth will be ultimately victorious.

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