

# New Historicism in Dharamvir Bharati's *Andhayug*: A Critical Study

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**Preface-** The main objective of this research is to find out the textuality of the great war of Mahabharata and the historicity of Dharamvir Bharati's *Andhayug* applying New Historicism as a critical theory. In this text, the researcher has compared the literal meaning of *Andhayug* to the referential meaning of the Partition of India in 1947, drawing similarity between the characters of *Andhayug* and important characters who were involved during the partition. There are many dimensions from which studies have already been done, the aspects of anti-war sentiments, post-modernism, and post colonialism. This study aims to find out the relevance of the ideology of Krishna in this new millennium. The study was done from the theory given by Stephen Greenblatt's New Historicism.

**Abstract-** Dharamvir Bharati's *Andhayug* (1954) originally written in Hindi and later translated into many languages. It positions itself on the last day of the great war of Mahabharata. The play heralds the elements of bloodshed, devastation, war, injustice, revenge, self-realization, and the blindness that envelopes them all. The research concentrates on studying *Andhayug* from Stephen Greenblatt's approach of New Historicism. It also concentrates on checking the historicity of the text and relevance of the text in the present scenario. It focuses on Pastness of the Present and Presentness of the Past. This paper also portrays the conflict in ideology and failure in filial relationships which led to the great war of Mahabharata and resulted in a new beginning. As *Andhayug* is a political allegory, hence, this research also concentrates to compare the literal meaning and the referential meaning. The referential meaning has been deconstructed by trying to refer to the characters of the play to the key players of Indian politics of that time in the treaty of partition of India.

**Index Terms-** *Andhayug*; Conflict; Destruction; Historicity; Ideology; Partition

## I. INTRODUCTION

### Dharamvir Bharati

He was a renowned person who contributed to literature and was known as a masterpiece of Hindi literature, who wrote several poetries, stories and plays. He was a social thinker who wrote several works against the social norms established in the society. He was a chief editor of magazine Dharma Yug. His family had gone through

financial hardship after the death of his father. He did his M.A. in Hindi from Allahabad University. He has also worked as sub editor during PhD and after which he was appointed as a lecturer in Hindi. The period of 1950s was a golden period of Dharamvir Bharati in which he wrote most of his works and were equally appreciated and some critical study.

Some of his prominent works were *Gunaho Ka Devta*, *Suraj Ka Satwan Ghoda* and *Andhayug*. He got several awards for his works *Padma Shri* by Government of India in 1972 and Sangeet Natak Akademi in 1989.

### New Historicism

New historicism is a form of literary theory whose goal is to understand intellectual history through literature and literature through cultural context. This was the concept which actually came in 1980 by Professor Stephen Greenblatt. This is the study who tries to make a bridge between understanding history from the values which we believe in. In the theory of new historicism there are several theories and they have their own view point in understanding the new historicism. According to Stephen Greenblatt, the message on any history or an event which has taken place is given by the ideology of a person not by using the power of violence.

There are various historicists that study new historicism. According to Michael Foucault, New Historicism is a form of postmodernism applied to interpretive history. That elaborates on when it is seen as a text and is related it with the other event that happens in history and tries to make a connection between these two historical events called New Historicism.

This achieved its greater value when many of the intelligent literary writers and critics drew the comparison between the new criticism and new historicism. As it dealt with both studying of the text in isolation like new criticism and followed deconstruction, it became necessary to study the text from its culture practices which encouraged the readers in analysing the events on the basis of culture, history and understanding the worldwide characteristics of a period. This study was firstly practiced on the works of William Shakespeare.

According to Louise Montrose who defines the concept of New Historicism as an opposite of the text which concerns the historicity of the text. History as we study does not have any standardized, set, fixed objective or fact like literature only it must be interpreted.

### Historicity of the Text

The term historicity can be defined as the historical authenticity of any text. Here, in this dissertation the text is *Andhayug*, the famous play by Dharamvir Bharati. Historicity is an important study which involves finding out original and authentic information regarding the event that took place. Here, this study has been made on the based-on war Mahabharata and the aftermath of this war which we have studied from Dharamvir Bharati's play *Andhayug*. In this play the chorus and the first four acts that we have studied has an historical authenticity. The play opens with the chorus which delivers the dark reality of the time in which we are living, and the different Sanskrit Shloka says that Greedy man will rule, Lies would be appreciated, Money will be treated as the God and several things which we find in today's world. The first act of the play begins with the seventeenth day of Mahabharata and everyone was waiting for Sanjay to give the news of Mahabharata war and the last war between Bheema and Duryodhana. The second act of the play represents in front of us the Ashwathama turns into a beast and plans to kill Arjun's grandson which was in Uttara (daughter-in-law of Arjun) womb. The third act represents the effect of Yudhishthara's half truth when Pandavas plot to kill Dronacharya, father of Ashwathama. The fourth act represents that Gandhari curses Krishna. Here, the act five is a fictional because according to the text by Dharamvir Bharati this act represents the series of suicides, which deals with the suicide of Yuyutsu and Bheema turns mad on the basis of his power. This act of the play does not have any historicity because according to various sources Yuyutsu has never attempt suicide and moreover he was given the small kingdom as his share in establishing the dharma. The epilogue of the play has an historicity which tells us the dark reality and the welcoming of the dark time or the dark era that is Kalyug in which we are living. So, this is the text which can be studied from various angles but act five is fictional which was represented in front of us to show the tragic fall of the protagonist Krishna and Yudhishthara. This act five has been taken to give a message to humanity and to show the after effect of the war but does not have any historical authenticity.

### Review of Literature

Kabeer (2013), "Postmodernism and Mahabharata- A Study in Socio- Political Ethics", is a research paper which aims to look at the perspective of Mahabharata,

that it is readable in today's world if it is then if it is acceptable in today's world of the different and the dirty and the dark type of politics and the ethics which are actually happening and hampering the thoughts of the youth, How the ideology of good will effect in the growth and the development of individual perspective. This paper used the several elements that plays an important role in reviewing the facts and the important elements that is been used in the post-modernist elements in Mahabharata. This helps us in achieving the theory of postmodern philosophy of relativism and postmodernism and totality Anti- foundationalism and poetics of sublime and hyperreality. Another element that has been communicated to us after using the reference from the holy book of Hinduism Bhagavat Gita. The concept of transcendental self in Gita and postmodernism and in this the relativism and philosophy of Dharma that has been represented to us by the different ideology of Krishna in Gita. The principle for which the research took place is to analyse the importance of those principles and whether those views of Krishna can be taken into consideration or they are valid in today's world especially when it comes to current scenarios in politics and the thoughts of politicians.

Vishnu Ram (2016), "Anti – war Sentiments in *Andhayug*", is a research which is actually an eye opener for the all human kind. In this research, the question that continuously arises is that war is the solution to every problem. From this it has been represented that war can be a solution for all the kinds of problems like land, kingdom, property, money etc. War merely increases the feeling of disillusionment and betrayal and the devastative hatred among the people that results in the blood stain to entire humanity. Through *Andhayug* Dharamvir Bharati attempts to present war as a war not as a religious practice which only lead us towards the path of disgrace and displeasure among the other people that much that they destroy their own humanity and brotherly values among the other people were responsible for their humanity's downfall.

Rohit Majumdar, "*Andhayug*: A Colonial Depiction of Mahabharata", This has been represented in front of us as a modern tragedy. This study has used the theory of post colonialism and the writer Dharamvir Bharati has used the theory of post colonialism that represents the situation in the country. On Dharamvir Bharati's points of view it has been elaborated on partition and the formation of two nations India and Pakistan. It has also been elaborated on modern India set the last day of the great war Mahabharata. The clarity in the points on which the writer is trying to say the how colonialism affected partition of India and Pakistan. Through the

characters of Mahabharata Bharati tried to describe the destruction caused in the post colonialism period when India gained independence but resulted in partition.

### **Objectives of the Research**

The major objectives because of which I have taken this topic as the review itself suggests and has given me the various grounds such as postmodernism theory, post colonialism theory and anti-war sentiments. These above were the vital part on which the research of *Andhayug* had taken place. The main aim of my research is to find the gap and study the text by Dharmavir Bharati's *Andhayug* from New Historicism theory and to make a link between the two eras that was important on the ground of Mahabharata war and partition of India.

Another important objective towards working on the topic is to check the historicity of a text. Dharmavir Bharati's *Andhayug* represents the after effects of the great war Mahabharata. The actual authentic and actual information of the aftermath of Mahabharata which the text *Andhayug* gives us.

Thirdly, and most importantly, how the text is relevant in today's millennium. As we all know the war that was Mahabharata took place three thousand years ago but why still we study the ideology and even this text and how it is relevant in today's world and why it is necessary to study.

The next objective which has an importance to compare the literal meaning and the referential meaning of the text. This can be vitally studied by giving the characters different roles of the persons involved in the treaty of partition of India. The various quotes have been delivered to us in the forms of different perspectives of an individual and how it can draw a comparison in the terms of literal meaning of the text that is *Andhayug* in context of Mahabharata and in the context of referential meaning in the context of partition.

## **II. PASTNESS OF THE PRESENT AND PRESENTNESS OF THE PAST**

"Kaurava queens wandered gracefully" ( from *Andhayug* page no. 8)

These were the words by guards, who guarded the palace during the great war 'Mahabharata', through these words, the grief has been shown to us, that the wonderful queens who were very graceful and happy before the war, today they are widows of the Kaurava who lost their life in the great war. The guards through their words are pointing towards their helplessness and grief. They have lost their brothers in the war and just guarded the palace of a blind King which just gave them dissatisfaction and disgrace. The significance of these words is connection to the homeland. In the war all the people have lost their

loved ones, for the kings and the soldiers who lost their life for their Kings have left only displeasure and grief to their families.

In the context of Partition, guards are taking the role of common public and Kaurava queens are the families of the people who lost their lives in the riots. This was a great tragedy from which we study partition the people who once enjoyed their social and personal lives and were surrounded by their relatives but today because of partition all the people have turned into Ashwatthama (barbaric beast) for taking revenge all the good people have turned themselves into beast and killed their own brothers. So, here the whole grief, barbaric nature and helplessness of the country has been shown. And the actual loss was caused to the common public who lost their home and were asked to choose between India and Pakistan. The main loss of the people was losing their homeland where they were born and lived before Partition.

### **Blind Power and Ignorance of Unity**

In the context of Mahabharata, the blind king Dhritharastra was blind from his mind and never paid attention to his advisors from the beginning. Before the war of Mahabharata, when Krishna came for peace, he ignored his advice and neglected the effects of war. Because of Dhritharastra blindness and desperation of power the great war had taken place, and which has given us devastation and grief. He ignored the idea of unity between Pandavas and Kauravas.

In the context of partition, the power lay in the hands of powerful persons like Britisher, Jawaharlal Nehru and Mohammad Ali Jinnah. For showing superiority there were clashes in the ideology of Nehru and Jinnah. Because of which they drew the lines of partition, both were blind for their power on who will form the first government of India and both ignored the idea and were unable to understand the power of unity.

### **Aftermath lasts forever**

In the context of Mahabharata, the war has created the devastation one brother killed another. All the great warriors have sacrificed their life for their Kings. Ashwatthama has forgotten his 'Dharma' and tried to kill the infant in his mother's womb, when he fired Brahmastra on Uttara (Abhimanyu's wife), during this great war many women have turned widow. The whole Kuru clan was destroyed, and children of the same family killed each other and made a scene of wailing of widows who lost their sons and husbands.

In the context of partition, the riots during partition had killed humanity. Many people have turned into beasts and killed their own countrymen on the basis of religion.

Partition was responsible for the hatred between India and Pakistan. Till today these two nations have polarity in their ideology and are at each other's throat to destroy one another because of the light which partition gave and all the citizens have turned that light into destructive burning fire. The two nations hate and disgrace each other because of devastation and barbaric action that took place in 1947 at the time of partition. So, hatred was the aftermath of partition that lasted till now.

### III. CONFLICT OF IDEOLOGY

#### Sanjay vs Dhritharastra

In the context of Mahabharata, Sanjay was a charioteer of king Dhritharastra. Sanjay was a person who played an important role and was the person who always showed the ground reality to Dhritharastra. As in Mahabharata Sanjay had a divine power from which he can see the war and before the war he told Dhritharastra the after effects of war and his opinion on making the peace with Pandavas. Dhritharastra ideology always dealt with power and to make his son Duryodhana the King of Hastinapur.

In the context of partition, Sanjay plays the role of Gandhi and Dhritharastra as British Government. So, in partition Gandhi was never in favour of partition because he knew the after effect of partition which resulted in hatred between the two nations. On the other hand, the British government followed their policy of partition in the form of the 'Mountbatten Plan', to establish their power by dividing the people of India based on caste and religion.

#### Duryodhana's Pride

In the context of Mahabharata, Duryodhana was a prideful and arrogant person who never wanted to share his kingdom with anyone. He was a person who believed in the true monarchy of one person and not a kind of person who appreciates compromise. He disapproved of the peace policy of Krishna to give five independent villages to Pandavas. Because he feared that Pandavas will attack Hastinapur if Duryodhana gives them a little piece of share in his kingdom.

In the context of partition, Duryodhana ideology is like the ideology of Mohammad Ali Jinnah. As Muslim League was formed in 1903 in Calcutta. Jinnah never accepted the proposal that he should form the first government of India. He wanted his own separate nation Pakistan because he felt that he would lose the next election because India has more Hindu majority.

#### Barbaric Things and First Voice of Darkness

In the context of partition and Mahabharata the ideological conflicts appeared on the common public in

Mahabharata, Ashwatthama had turned into a beast and being educated Brahmin had killed Pandavas son and unburned infant. On the other hand, during partition the riots caused based on caste Hindus killed Muslims and Muslim killed Hindus. Because of this conflict the whole idea of brotherhood, unity was destroyed, and the public turned barbaric and killed their brothers. This riots and conflict in ideology based on caste was the first voice of darkness. Darkness symbolised and that can be seen as a form of hatred and in humanity that still exists between India and Pakistan.

### IV. FAILURE OF FILIAL RELATIONSHIP: A NEW BEGINNING?

"But today the experience of our final defeat has changed the very nature of truth" (from *Andhayug* Page no.23) These were the words by Sanjay. In the context of Mahabharata and text *Andhayug*, the whole war of Mahabharata was for establishing Dharma and truth. The war was against the evil mentality and to set up humanity, but the whole devastation that was caused in the war was an actual defeat of humanity.

In the context of partition all the great freedom fighters fought against the British government for the independence of India not for the partition. Here, Sanjay plays the role of Gandhi who did not believe and agreed with the ideology of partition, because it will result in the defeat of India. And partition resulted in the defeat of humanity and truth. It gave several Ashwathamas (barbaric public).

"Even today there is no dearth of words" (from *Andhayug* Page no.22)

These were the words by Sanjay which showed his helplessness that being the good friend and loyal servant of Dhritharastra he was unable to stop war and the clashes in filial relationship and here he had got no words which actual representation of his penetration into the grief and displeasure is.

In the context of partition, Gandhi just remained silent when the partition round table conference took place and just one letter came which said "Aaj Baapu Ke Chup Rehne Ka Din Hai" which justified that Gandhi was never in favour of partition. Gandhi's silence justified the aftermath of partition in that no one listened to Gandhi. He got betrayal from his own freedom fighter friends.

"Duryodhana shall never be defeated" from ( *Andhayug* Page no.32)

These were the words by Mendicant in *Andhayug* and his prophecy which he told to Dhritharastra and Gandhari that Duryodhana will not be defeated. In the context of partition, Jinnah is Duryodhana and the prophecy works with the catastrophe that Pakistan had been established

as a nation, but Jinnah wanted a separate nation which he got but it was established was formed on dead body and graves of many innocent people from both the nation India and Pakistan.

If we study the facts from the point of view of Jinnah, he always wanted a separate state for his Muslim community as he fought for their rights. The view Jinnah had for making the separate state was for tranquillity of Muslim people but riots have destroyed the healthy relation between these two nations and resulted in hatred. So, prophecy worked but Pakistan was formed but the community of both the nations got defeated. Jinnah was not defeated but the ideology of peace was defeated.

#### V. CONCLUSION

Krishna is the central character of the *Andhayug*. Many people blame Krishna for the devastation, the war, the grief even during the play Gandhari curses Krishna that his kingdom will destroy. In the context of partition Krishna plays several roles but most importantly Krishna can be considered as the definition of 'freedom' and 'peace'. During British rule all the freedom fighters had a common motive to free India from British rule. If we look at the Mahabharata from the whole scenario the perspective of Krishna was only to make peace for which he had tried several ways to stop the war but Duryodhana pride always came in the middle. Same in the case of partition there were several conflicts in ideology, pride and arrogance because which partition happened. Partition only resulted in giving us several Ashwatthama (barbaric beasts) in the form of public and achieved in turning all the good people into beasts. Krishna is considered as the positive side of the people, there lies both good deeds and bad deeds in oneself. Krishna lies in every person, the messenger of God who always teaches us not to tolerate bad things and to always raise voice against the evil mind. Here, partition gave several bad effect and devastation to all the people and there were many people like Mahatma Gandhi who was never in the favour of partition can be considered as true worshipper of Krishna. The whole aim towards this research was to check the historicity in the text *Andhayug* and the after effects of partition and is concluded that in every era there are two kinds of ideology of good and bad deed. Here, Krishna is a sign of good deeds which lies in every person. On the other hand, the ideology of Ashwatthama which also lies in every person. The situation has turned many good persons into a beast as many people followed the pathway of Ashwatthama during partition. The message is that in every worst to worst situation one should not forget humanity, if we follow this simple pathway it will be considered as

following the footstep of Almighty God. If we don't value Humanity then lines of Nations and hatred can be drawn and always redrawn but it will destroy humanity.

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