

‘KRISHNA’ AS A COUNTERPART TO THE HUMAN AND DIVINE IN DHARAMVIR BHARATI’S ‘ANDHA YUG’: ORIGINAL AND IN TRANSLATION

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Abstract: Dharamvir Bharati’s play “*Andha Yug*” was written in the year 1954 and later translated into many languages. It positions itself on the last day of the great war of Mahabharata. The play heralds the element of war, injustice, bloodshed, revenge, self realization and the blindness that envelops them all. The Kauravas are in constant conflict with the ideals of *Krishna*. The play highlights within itself the need to speak out for the betterment of the society and in the process calling out for the need to better oneself. The research paper will attempt at seeking the role of *Krishna* as a counterpart of both human and divine power. The researcher will attempt to coerce the theories of *Existentialism* and *Identity* to highlight the role of *Krishna* in the larger scheme of things. *Krishna*’s role as a human and as a divine power is portrayed through the other characters in the play. The Mahabharata unproblematically ‘*posits the battle as one of good over evil*’, but Bharati’s play debunks this premise. The play is portrayed from the point of view of the defeated Kauravas who see *Krishna* not as a God but as an opportunist and a politician who helped the Pandavas to win the battle against them.

Keywords: Humanity, Divinity, Consciousness, Conflict, Existentialism, Self-realization, Identity.

In the play “*Andha Yug*” *Krishna* is portrayed as a disembodied voice. Throughout the play all the characters are talking about *Krishna* and the battle, they are referring to *Krishna* in varied situations, they address to his beliefs differently and also deal with his ideals and philosophies in their own way. He is regarded as a divine presence by some of the characters who have utter faith in him. Some other characters refer to him as a politician, opportunist and a diplomat who has been flawed since the very beginning (Singh 154). When the play opens, we never see *Krishna* anywhere. We know that the Pandavas have won the battle and that *Krishna* has helped them win it.

The play is an abundantly interesting example of theatricality and character developments. It focuses on performance and performativity, and also is a discussion of political scenarios and happenings of violence during the time. Though the play is set in the times of the Mahabharata, it does not debunk the premise that the issues and concerns that are highlighted by Bharati in the play are very much the problems of the modern society as well. The play is a perfect concoction and amalgamation of theatre, story, poetry and rhythm.

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The opening scene of the play sets the mood of the audience and they realize that the play is set in the last day of the war and that it highlights the position and mental state of the Kaurava clan throughout. The initial reaction of the audience towards *Krishna* is that of betrayal and treachery. As *Krishna* is never witnessed by the audience, his character has no say to the reactions of the audience. It assumes its shape through the Kaurava perspective. As the plot unfolds, the audience realizes that due to defeat the Kauravas have an invariably bitter perspective towards everything. By the end of the second act, the two confronting roles of *Krishna* begin to emerge. The audience now begins to understand that what they see might be only one side of the story.

The other half of the story is left to the imagination of the audience till the last act. *Krishna*'s character is never justified. It is only represented and given to the audience to decide. The play is all about power structures and power plays. Even though the audience realises that *Krishna* has been a very powerful entity in the lives of the Pandavas, they fail to realise that power comes not only physically, but also by how you play your opponent. And though psychological power play might seem to be very devious and vicious, the play would eventually show unfurl the thought in your minds that it was not very uncommon then and neither is it now. The play is in no way a moral play and does not portray the victory of light over darkness. It instead overtly highlights the aspect of darkness throughout and portrays that the presence of light does not mean the absence of darkness. Darkness prevails at all times, even in goodness and light.

The first mention of *Krishna* is in act one. It is when Vidura tells Dhritarashtra that not only did Bhishma and Dronacharya warn him about the consequences of the battle, *Krishna* also did the same. He said, "*Do not violate the code of honour. If you violate the code of honour it will coil around the Kaurava clan like a wounded python and crush it like a dry twig.*" (Bhalla 12). This is the first glimpse of *Krishna*'s character that the audience gets. It gives an impression of a godly voice that guides Dhritarashtra in times of distress and indecision. This impression is not strange to the audience at all because they know that *Krishna* is a God and that he guides his pupils towards the right path. There is nothing out of place here. Through the entire act, *Krishna* is invariably portrayed as a divine power who directs his pupils towards light. Only Gandhari seems to be bitter and broken.

In the second act the old mendicant recalls what *Krishna* tells Arjuna at the battle field. He tells him to fight without fear and that the existence of a man is in the actions that he performs and not in the refusal of it. This advice seems to be a very practical advice to be given during the time of war. Many people might even think that it is inhuman to wage a war against your own kith and kin. Even then, this is not something that stands out for the audience so that they can take up a stand for themselves.

The advent of Yuyutsu in the third act gives the play a noticeable twist. The rest of the characters go through a slight shift and the portrayal of *Krishna* to the audience also takes a turn. Yuyutsu is Dhritarashtra's son who has fought for the Pandavas and has now come back home after the war. Yuyutsu's coming home also brings home a new perspective to the role of *Krishna*. He was a devout follower of *Krishna* and decided to fight on the side of the truth. Vyasa had told him, "Where there is *Krishna*, there is victory" (Bhalla 46). But now after the war is over and he has won, he begins to regret his decision. He says he is damned and cursed by his mother. He feels betrayed by betraying his own clan. There is a small dialogue between Balarama and Kripacharya where they say that *Krishna* is trying to explain that the path of truth is never wrong. This act of explanation and the act of consoling Gandhari at the end of the same act, is a human indicator of *Krishna*'s role through other characters.

In the interlude Vidura who was a devout follower of *Krishna* and had immense faith in him, starts to question his power. He says that in such deep darkness he has started to doubt his faith on *Krishna*, which he does not want to do as it is a sin. By this time in the play the two contrasting roles of *Krishna* are very evident. *Krishna* is now not only shown as a God who leads us to the path of *Dharma*, but also as a human being who is also capable of committing mistakes and taking faulty decisions. Here *Krishna*'s power seems restricted. The limits of his power also strengthen our belief that he is more a human than a divine power.

The fourth act of the play leads us to Gandhari's curse to *Krishna*. In a fit of madness, rage and bewilderment she curses *Krishna* of a death in the hands of an ordinary hunter. Such a simple death of a divine power like him is also somehow becomes a platform of our beliefs. After being cursed by Gandhari, *Krishna* readily accepts the curse. He accepts it willingly and there seems to be no pain or agony in his voice or actions, which make Gandhari regret the curse later. He says, "Mother. I may be God. I may be omnipotent. But I am also your son and you are my mother... In this terrible war of eighteen days, I am the only one who has died a million times. Every time a soldier was struck down, every time a soldier fell to the ground, it was I who was struck down, it was I who was wounded, and it was I who fell to the ground." (Bhalla, 81)

Here *Krishna* seems to be very divine in accepting the curse and thus claims to end all human suffering through his acceptance. On the other hand his human follies and other decisions flout our understanding completely. This ambivalence in the role of *Krishna* as a human and a divine presence marks not only the end of the play but also the end of the era. The Dwapara Yuga comes to an end and hence the Kali Yuga raises its head; which is invariably the age of darkness. The play becomes a kind of a Brechtian form of detachment for the audience that forces them to think about the course and consequences of their actions, and not only to be lulled to

innocence by faith or divinity. The audience gathers a lot of perspective through the plot of the play, and begin to question their unknowing beliefs and blind faiths on the divinity of *Krishna*.

In the climax *Krishna*'s death signifies the death of humanity and the advent of darkness. *Krishna*'s split personality as portrayed in the play highlights the nature of human faith. It is a dilemma that humans face every day. The characters are caught in a spiral of violence and revenge because they lead a blind existence, submitting their powers of resistance to him. The darkness shakes the faith of his most devout follower Vidura too. Even he begins to question his power and might. *Krishna* is thus portrayed in varied lights in the play wherein he not only gives advices and directions but also takes decisions which might not necessarily be right; for which he says, "*Dharma is above all that is right and wrong*".

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