

## An End or a New Beginning: Deciphering the Allegory in Dharamvir Bharati's *Andha Yug*<sup>1</sup>

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### Abstract

This paper will analyse how Dharamvir Bharati portrays the horror of Partition through the lens of the Kurukshetra War in *Andha Yug*. The paper will try to decode the allegory that Bharati presents through not just looking at Mahabharata but also referring to various texts written on Partition. The paper will analyse the medium of Theatre used and the purpose that it serves. The paper will then deal with the allegory through the themes of Blindness, moral and physical decay, the role of the narrator, the idea of war and the Existential crisis during the two times. The blurring boundaries between the binaries of good and evil, dharma and adharma, faith and doubt, free will and predestination, light and darkness will be addressed. The paper will go on to discuss the question of Identity and 'Honour'. Thus this paper will look at various aspects of *Andha Yug*, thereby analysing if *Andha Yug* can be read as a dystopian allegory.

**Keywords:** Indian Theatre, Allegory, Partition Literature, Dystopian Literature

"Kalyug<sup>2</sup>, is not merely evil, in it, necessary conditions are progressively built for a new Satyug<sup>3</sup>, another harmony, a more advanced perfection."- Sri Aurobindo

How can a harmony be created from death and destruction? How can symphony be generated out of a barren world? How can *Kalyug* ever be an 'advanced perfection'? These are some of the questions that this paper will try to analyse through Dharamvir Bharati's

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<sup>1</sup> *Andha Yug* is translated as 'The Age of Blindness' but it can also mean 'The Age of the Blind'. 'Andha' means blind while 'Yug' means an Era. Where the people are blind to the happenings of the world and have lost their morality and ethics. It refers to the modern world after 1947, when India and Pakistan were separated.

<sup>2</sup> Kalyug means 'The Age of the Downfall' and is the fourth and final stage in the spiritual evolution of man according to Hindu mythology. It is also termed as 'Kali Yug' or the age of Goddess Kali, the Destroyer. Hence it is a corrupt and unfair world, full of sorrow and suffering. It will end, marking a new age of hope, salvation and peace, named 'Satyug'.

<sup>3</sup> Satyug is the first era in the cycle of Hindu mythology. It comes after Kalyug and is a fair and peaceful world. It comes from 'Satya Yug' or 'The Age of Truth'.

*Andha Yug* (1953). A five act play, *Andha Yug*, uses the war of the *Mahabharata*<sup>4</sup> to lay bare the horrors of partition. There is a blurring of the binaries and *Kalyug* is presented as a Pandemonium. It is a Godless world with numerous leviathans and no salvation. It clearly is an *andha yug*, staged for people to see.

The playwright, Dharamvir Bharati, is a renowned Hindi Playwright who has won the 'Padma Shri' Award for excellence by the Government of India in 1972 along with the 'Sangeet Natak Academy Award' in Playwriting (Hindi) by India's National Academy of Music, Dance and Drama in 1988. His works have a strong mythological reference, especially to the longest classic in the world, *Mahabharata*. It is an Indian epic, conjectured to be written by Ved Vyasa, a saint, who narrated it to Lord Ganesha<sup>5</sup>, on one go. Bharati's works appropriate references and characters from this epic to form a connection to one's culture.

Furthermore, it adds to the already mythology laden minds of the audience who can immediately draw contrasts and similarities amongst the texts. One can draw the assumption that Bharati's working as a chief-editor in Mumbai for the Hindi weekly magazine, 'Dharmayug', inspired the title of *Andha Yug*. Along with this, journalism brought him closer to the grim reality of Partition of India. In the year 1947, British Indian Empire gained its independence when the British lost control of the area and had to leave. This decolonisation and Independence came with a heavy price.

As the British Indian Empire catered to a plethora of cultures, religions and traditions, the reclaiming of control split the British India into two domains, India and Pakistan. The two main political parties of the time, Indian National Congress<sup>6</sup>, led by Jawaharlal Nehru, and All-Indian Muslim League<sup>7</sup>, led by Mohammed Ali Jinnah, in their avarice for power and control of the entire nation, let the land be divided into two separate nations. One was to be India, a land of diverse cultures, the other, Pakistan, the land of

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<sup>4</sup> *Mahabharata* is one of the two major Sanskrit epics of India. It is the grand narrative of the 'Bharata' dynasty which reigned Ancient India from roughly 1200 BCE to 800 BCE. It is the longest epic in the world with over two lakh verses. It depicts the story of the kingdom of Hastinapur which was reigned by the blind king Dhritarashtra, having a hundred sons called Kauravas; and his deceased brother and former King, Pandu's five sons, Pandavas. Their battle for power and glory is depicted with various adventures and plotlines.

<sup>5</sup> Lord Ganesha is a worshipped deity of Hindu mythology. He is the son of Lord Shiva, the Destroyer, and Goddess Parvati, the Goddess of fertility, love, beauty and devotion. Ganesha has the head of an elephant and is worshipped for his auspiciousness. He is seen to remove all obstacles, hence people in India worship Lord Ganesha before starting anything new.

<sup>6</sup> Indian National Congress was a secular political party established in India in 1885 but gained precedence under Mahatma Gandhi, during the Freedom struggle for India under the British.

<sup>7</sup> All-Indian Muslim League was formed during the early twentieth century in the British Indian Empire. It advertised the formation of a Muslim-majority nation named Pakistan which led to the Partition of India in 1947 under the guidance of Muhammad Ali Jinnah.

‘Allah’ or the God of Muslims. Dharamvir Bharati then employs this war full of bloodshed, inhumanity and cruelty into his play.

Hence Dharamvir Bharati offers a nuanced and yet allegorical portrayal of the gory Partition of India in 1947, bridging the two historical wars temporally in order to rekindle the ideas of righteousness, death, blindness and yet hope.

He does so using the realm of Indian Theatre which has been thriving on the use of mythology and folk traditions. What commenced as folklores being presented in the form of theatre for the public during festivals, went on to become an amalgamation of eclectic styles, stories and methodologies along with having its own set of rules and regulations or an Indian *Poetics*, named *Natya Shastra*<sup>8</sup> by Bharata. Bharati follows the Indian Theatre’s tradition of a narrator or *sutradhar*, use of omens, curses, a higher power or almighty along with songs and dance being an integral part of the Indian Theatre.

The use of Theatre by Dharamvir Bharati evokes the inherent dramatic quality of the War. “Andha Yug...resonates with powerful theatricality evoked by death, physical pain, and moral confusion.” (Datta 170) These ideas are a result of the horrific history that came with the baggage of not just the two world wars and the use of nuclear weaponry but also with India’s gruesome partition in 1947. Bharati seems to be affected by various writers from across the world. He follows the Aristotelian Drama by setting the play in five act structure along with an invocation and a functioning Chorus. He insures unity in time, place and action by setting the play on the last day of the Kurukshetra War<sup>9</sup>. There is a cathartic experience where fear and pity are invoked. He also carries forward the tradition of Hindi Theatre by resorting to the folk culture of songs and dance and not presenting death on stage.

It is often conjectured that Bharati wrote the play under the influence of the ‘Theatre of Cruelty’. First brought into existence in the early twentieth century by avant-garde French artist, Antonin Artaud, it expressed the “implacability of life.” (Bermel 15) Artaud also talks about the importance of Siva<sup>10</sup> in Oriental Theatre to induce ‘unification’ as he is

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<sup>8</sup> Natya Shastra is a Sanskrit text of rules and regulations on the performing arts. It was written by sage Bharata Muni. It is roughly dated between 500 BCE to 500 CE.

<sup>9</sup> The war in *Mahabharata* is also called the Kurukshetra war as it was fought on the land of Kurukshetra, a place which is now in the state of Haryana, India. It was named after King Kuru who was the ancestor of Kauravas and Pandavas, the two clans who fight for power in *Mahabharata*.

<sup>10</sup> Siva or Lord Shiva is a deity in Hindu mythology. He is one of the three principal deities in Hinduism. He is the destroyer and the transformer of the world within the Holy Trinity of Hinduism. He lives in the Himalayan range on India, wearing animal skin. His anger is depicted through his vigorous dance or ‘Tandava’ which opens his third eye and causes destruction.

the unifier of God and dancer. Lord Siva blesses Ashwatthama<sup>11</sup> in Act IV, ironically inverting the idea of unity by bringing chaos and the dissociating particles of 'Brahmastra'<sup>12</sup>, into action. The influence of Modern playwrights like Beckett is seen in the fragmented dialogue between the guards in Act V which echoes the dialogue between Vladimir and Estragon in *Waiting for Godot*:

Guard 2: Knowledge and morality...

Guard 1: what can we do with them?

Guard 2: Grind them?

Guard 1: Or eat them? (Bharati 132)

The modernist trope in Bharati's writing gives voice to the myriad emotions of loss, anxiety, anger and emptiness. This voice is legitimised by the *sutradhar*<sup>13</sup>, or the storyteller. According to Walter Benjamin, in his essay "The Storyteller", storytelling is a dying art that needs to be revived. The two World Wars and Partition of India silenced people, severing the bond of storytelling. These partition narratives, then, break this silence, helping people recover from their traumatic past. The supreme narrator in *Andha Yug* is Sanjaya who is blessed with *divyadrishti*<sup>14</sup>, or divine sight. He is immortal, like the storyteller who cannot die, but here, it is viewed as a curse. He is left to narrate the horrors of the war to the blind king, Dhritarashtra. Even after Partition, what has stood the test of time are these narratives.

The "unrighteous war" (Bharati 81) that took place both in the *Mahabharata* and during Partition smeared the pages of history with narratives of blood. The coming of *Kalyug* ensured the end of righteousness or morality. The Pandavas<sup>15</sup> in the *Mahabharata* are valorised and presented as great warriors. Even in Sunil Gangopadhyay's *Arjun* (1987), written about the partition years, 1940s to 1970s, Arjun is shown possessing the qualities of all the Pandavas. He has a flair for learning like Sahadeva and a decision making prowess

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<sup>11</sup> In *Mahabharata*, Ashwatthama was the son of Guru Dronacharya who had taught both the clans, Pandavas and Kauravas, but was fighting from the side of Kauravas in the Kurukshetra War.

<sup>12</sup> Brahmastra refers to the supernatural weapon used in Hindu mythological wars. It was formed by Lord Brahma, the creator from the Holy Trinity in Hindu mythology. It was extremely powerful and could destroy the whole world.

<sup>13</sup> Sutradhar refers to the storyteller. It literally means the thread holder as 'Sutra' in Sanskrit means thread while 'Dhara' means someone who holds. Thereby weaving a story or working as a narrator. It is also a caste in India under Hinduism which were employed in wood work and creating furniture.

<sup>14</sup> Divyadrishti means divine eye sight. It is divine perception along with intuition and enlightenment. It was endowed on people by gods and could help them perceive things, similar to blind seers or bards in Greek mythology.

<sup>15</sup> Pandavas are the victorious clan of five princes in *Mahabharata*. They are the sons of deceased King Pandu, the righteous King who died under a curse. The Pandavas are Yudhishtira, Bhima, Arjuna, Nakula and Sahadeva. The eldest, Yudhishtira is the most virtuous man. Bhima stands for 'terrible might'. Arjuna is a skilled warrior and the best archer. Nakula is attractive and humble while Sahadeva is the wisest of them all. They are presented with grandeur, valour and morality. They all were married to the same woman, Draupadi, daughter of King Drupada, King of Panchala.

like Yudhishtira. He has a good aim like Arjuna who sees “nothing but the bird’s eye” (Gangopadhyay 141). While in *Andha Yug*, Bharati presents a negative portrayal of the Pandavas. Bhima is proud and “intellectually dull” (Bharati 127), Nakula is ignorant and Sahadeva “retarded from birth” (Bharati 127). Yudhishtira though has vision enough to see the future, he sees nothing but a nightmare while Arjuna has grown old and weary.

Through such a portrayal, Bharati tries to bring to the fore who is the people who make decisions for the nation and how intellectually and physically incapable they are. The consequences of the decisions made by the leaders or the king are to be endured by the common public. There is a severing of familial bond as well as the bond between the King and his public in both the texts. Brothers in the Epic and the two communities, Hindus and Muslims, both fight for land, property and power. As a consequence of War, many people had to leave their homelands without a single penny and with no assurance of a secure future.

The pain of exile from one’s own land is beautifully captured in Intizar Hussain’s “A Chronicle of the Peacock” where the peacocks who once lived in Paradise were exiled from their own courtyards, now living on the terraces of people, homeless. In one of his interviews, Intizar Hussain talks about the pain of partition. “The first Partition was in the Mahabharata,” he says, “and then it was me when I was exiled. Only the Pandavas and I knew the pain of leaving one’s land.” (Hussain *The Hindu*) Thereby reinstating how the two wars of Partition and the Kurukshetra war share a sense of pain, loss and nothingness. The allegory reinstates the idea of change in the already existing order, loss of one’s homeland and identity, the greed for power, people turning against their own families and relatives, bloodshed, no sense of right and wrong, suffering of the common man and finally, the retention of the hierarchical order of the world no matter who reigns. This allegory we see is already exploited by Bharati in his multilayered efficacious narrative.

The age Bharati refers to is where “Blindness rules this age/ not reason” (Bharati 27) and hence there is a lack of morally upright beings. Blindness is used as a symbol for not just literal blindness but also metaphorical blindness that has curbed the sense of people, just like Dhritarashtra, to distinguish between right and wrong, good and evil. This is the age where even the storyteller, Sanjaya, “Trying to show the truth/ to the blind/ must...become blind” (Bharati 106). He has to be blind of the “grotesque spectacle” (Bharati 83) that envelops the entire nation. The “encroaching darkness” (Bharati 128) covering the age symbolises the lack of light. This light represents hope, vision and God himself; all apparently absent from *Andha Yug*.

The idea of a blind king evokes a resonance with the leaders of both the parties, Indian National Congress as well as Indian Muslim League, who acted blindly without

measuring the dire consequences of their actions. In the play, the guards are representative of the masses that have lost everything and meaninglessly perform their duty. One of the guards says, “We did not violate honour/ because we did not have any” (Bharati 43). The idea of honour then is attached to the class positioning in the society.

Those who are above in this hierarchical structure have the luxury of having ‘honour’. Where, before the war, Lord Krishna advised the Kauravas<sup>16</sup> to “not violate the code of honour” (Bharati 33) as it would lead to their annihilation, the end of Act IV affirms that “the word ‘honour’/.../lost all value for the living” (Bharati 125). Thus ‘honour’ in Andha Yug has no existence be it for the rich or the poor. No one in the class hierarchy is honourable as everyone is devoid of morality and righteousness.

The physical and moral decay that prevails in this age is devoid of any ‘Dharma’<sup>17</sup>. In Act III, Vidura, the half brother to King Dhritrashtra, voices his concerns of how he does not know “where righteousness ends and falsehood begins” (Bharati 77). All is grey in the *Mahabharata*, as in life.

The very act of killing Dhrishtadyumna<sup>18</sup>, Shikhandi<sup>19</sup> and many other armless people in the Pandavas’ tents during the night rightly suggests that “Ashwatthama becomes the dramatic correlative of the exhaustion of the ethical” (Bhalla 12). He is the beast that personifies the chaos and unethical nature of *andha yug*.

Though one must not forget that while Dhrishtadyumna beheaded Guru Dronacharya unethically, Shikhandi too tricked Bhishma and let one of the Pandavas, Arjuna, kill Bhishma while Shikhandi stood in front of Arjuna as a shield. As Shikhandi was born a woman, it was against the rules of war to attack him. Hence Bhishma could not kill Shikhandi. Both of them acted against the ‘dharma’ to kill their enemies. Thus one can record poetic justice in sense of both the clans fighting immorally.

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<sup>16</sup> Kauravas is the defeated clan in *Mahabharata*. They are the hundred children, ninety-nine sons and a daughter Dushala, of the blind King Dhritrashtra, who reigned Hastinapur after his able brother, Pandu, died under the influence of a curse. They fight against their cousins to win the Kingdom. They use unfair means, ill-treat their cousins and go to the extent of trying to publicly rape the wife of Pandavas, Draupadi. They are brutally murdered in the Kurukshetra War.

<sup>17</sup> Dharma in Hindu mythology means the ‘right way of living’ or moral law to be followed. It is what governs the ethics of both inanimate and animate objects in Hinduism. It is to be followed in order to attain salvation.

<sup>18</sup> Dhrishtadyumna was the son of King Drupada of Panchala and brother of Draupadi, the wife of the Pandavas. He was the commander of the Pandava army and was killed on the eighteenth night by Ashwatthama, the son of Guru Dronacharya, unethically and dishonourably, while Dhrishtadyumna was resting in his camp at night.

<sup>19</sup> Shikhandi or Shikhandini was the sister of Draupadi and Dhrishtadyumna and the daughter of King Drupada of Panchala kingdom. Shikhandi is a reincarnation of a woman named Amba, who was wronged by Bhishma, the son of King Kuru, the ancestor of Pandavas and Kauravas. In some versions, she is born a female and becomes a man, in some Shikhandi is portrayed as a eunuch. She too was killed on the eighteenth night of the battle by Ashwatthama as she is resting at the Pandava camp.

The war overtook days and nights, dream and reality. Ashwatthama is guided by the dream-like 'dance of war' where an owl attacks a crow in his sleep. The owl is often associated with darkness in Indian context and is viewed as an ill omen thereby foretelling death. Ashwatthama's real identity comes out in the dark night as there are no appearances to be kept. It is his 'Dharma' to kill and avenge his father's death. His use of the 'Brahmastra' can be seen as an allegory for the Nuclear weapons that were used during the second world war but also as the demand for a separate nation itself. This demand by Quaid-e-Azam or Jinnah<sup>20</sup> brought about death, destruction and complete chaos that led to fragmentation of not only the land but also of individual identity.

The question of identity is a prominent theme that reverberates throughout the text. Which side you belong to determines your identity. It is Yuyutsu<sup>21</sup>, a Kaurava, who dares to fight against his brothers. He is not accepted by the masses and neither by his own mother. Did he choose his foes or did God do that for him? Partition too brought about the question of whether history was determined "by the will of man" (Bharati 41) or by the will of God. In such times, it was faith that got them through. Though some believed, "whether you uphold truth/ or untruth/ you are damned" (Bharati 75), some held onto their faith in humanity and goodness. The idea of attaining salvation if one fights courageously was exploited by the religious fanatics. People fought in the name of 'Allah' (Muslim god) and 'Ram' (Hindu deity) during Partition and "both sides in the war violated the code of honour" (Bharati 27). What we are reminded of constantly is "[t]he fact [that] both sides killed. Both shot and stabbed and speared and clubbed. Both tortured. Both raped." (Khushwant Singh 1)

The multiple identities, be it religious, national, cultural or lingual, coalesce to form a pastiche which seems complete yet highlights the fragmented postmodern identities. This coalition emerges from the blurring of boundaries between good and evil, right and wrong and moral and immoral which ironically resulted from the formation of boundaries between India and Pakistan. Toba Tek Singh, in Saddat Hassan Manto's short story by the same name, is a lunatic who is unable to decipher where his hometown lies. So he stands "In the middle, on a nameless piece of earth" (Manto 10) between the two nations. This "wasteland of ash and stones" (Bharati 115) is a no man's land that belongs to no one and where humanity can still exist. In her poem, "Empty Space", Amrita Pritam writes, "Come, let's have a roof over our heads awhile./ Look, further on ahead, there/ between truth and falsehood, a little empty space"( Pritam 1). The empty space helps one get rid of the fixated identities that one is bound with.

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<sup>20</sup> Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the leader of All-India Muslim League, went on to become the first Prime Minister of Pakistan. He was also called as 'Quaid-e-Azam' or Great Leader.

<sup>21</sup> Yuyutsu was the son of King Dhritarashtra with his wife's maid, Sughada. He was the half-brother to Kauravas. He fought from the Pandavas' side and betrayed his own clan, choosing 'Dharma' over family. He was the only son of Dhritarashtra to have survived the Kurukshetra War.

There is almost negligible 'empty space' provided to the masses during Partition. There is no choice given to them and they are left to face many atrocities. The refugee camps had people stacked like swarms of bees trying to find flowers in a 'wasteland'. In times like these, who would believe in God? "In Bharati's play, the heroic battle of the revered epic, The Mahabharata, has been reduced to a nihilistic 'end game'" (Majumdar 3). The classic phrase by Nietzsche, "God is dead" (Nietzsche 109) is what rules this age. "The axle is broken/ and the wheel spins/ without a center" (Bharati 77).

In the play, all the actions following the war seem meaningless and hence generate an existential crisis. "Things fall apart/ the center cannot hold/ mere anarchy is fell upon the world" (Yeats 18). This anarchy does seem like the fall of mankind from the garden of Eden where they lived in the presence of God but in the *Kalyug*, there seems to be no God. God here can be referred to both Lord Krishna <sup>22</sup> as well as an ideal leader who could have solved the issue of Partition and tried to demolish the differences between the two religious communities instead of choosing war.

The War is shown to be futile with no winners. Parikshit<sup>23</sup> understands this and asks Ved Vyasaji, the writer of *Mahabharata*, "Why didn't they (elders) understand that in war everyone has to pay a heavy price? That war destroys everything?" (Hussain 206) All it leads to is massacres, rapes and suicides. A very prominent issue in the text then, is that of Yuyutsu's suicide. It is often seen in the Indian context as an anti-religious act that can deprive one of salvation. But in *andha yug*, where everyone is damned, what difference does it make is something that the text tries to decipher.

He commits suicide in order to save his 'honour' from further degradation. In Urvashi Butalia's *Other Side of Silence*, In the April 15, 1947, The Statesman, English daily newspaper came that talked about ninety women who drowned themselves in a well, following "Mr. Gandhi<sup>24</sup>'s advice...that in certain circumstances, even suicide was morally preferable to submission" (Butalia 196). Thus Yuyutsu becomes a means to talk about the

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<sup>22</sup> Lord Krishna is a deity in Hinduism. He is viewed to be the eighth incarnation of Lord Vishnu, 'the Preserver' of the world in Holy Trinity in Hinduism. He is the god of compassion, love, wit and playfulness. In *Mahabharata*, Lord Krishna is the King of Dwaraka and helps the Pandavas win the war over Kauravas. He indulges in unlawful behaviour to win but claims it to be lawful as the Kauravas tried to immorally defeat Pandavas.

<sup>23</sup> Parikshit is the Kuru King who reigned during the Middle Vedic Period between 1200 BCE to 900 BCE. He was the grandson of Pandava Arjuna. He succeeded Yudhishtira to the throne of Hastinapur.

<sup>24</sup> Mohan Das Karamchand Gandhi was the leader of the Indian Independence Movement against the British rule. His principles of 'Ahimsa' or non-violence and 'Satyagraha' or 'Devotion to the Truth' led the entire nation to unite and fight against the British. Gandhi opposed Partition and wanted Hindus and Muslims to unite.



thousands of people, mostly women, who committed suicide to save their 'honour'. But the question remains, what is this 'honour' and who determines it?

The threat of impurity and being raped by a man of the 'Other' community was engrained in their minds to such an extent that they internalised it to be their duty to the society and their family. Though *Andha Yug* stands for every class being devoid of their 'honour', we see women still cling to the societal beliefs that were, in Louis Althusser's terms, engraved through dominant ideologies. The idea of honour does affect the gender identity and not absent altogether. The nihilism that leads to committing suicide invites death but what is interesting to note is that Lord Krishna while accepting Gandhari<sup>25</sup>'s curse in Act IV say, "[if] I am life/ then, Mother/ I am also death" (Bharati 123).

Thus where *Andha Yug* talks about futility of war and the massacre that made it difficult for people to emerge from, both with respect to the *Mahabharata* and Partition, it also brings hope. "The lotus feet <sup>26</sup>of the Lord", writes Clifford Hospital, "are seen as a way of extinguishing the miseries" (Hospital 402). It is this lotus foot that bears the arrow of a hunter. The mortal Krishna is killed under Gandhari's curse. As Gandhari, the wife of King Dhritarashtra and mother of Kauravas, on hearing the news of her sons' demise, curses Lord Krishna. She believes he could have stopped the destruction but he was compliant to the state politics and killed her sons by deceit. Her pain is moulded into the form of a curse.

Just as Lord took Ashwatthama's pain upon himself, he will take the pain of mankind upon him, granting them a chance to make this *andha yug* an endurable place. The text ends with the reference to a small seed in the mind which gives "courage/ and a longing for freedom/ and the imagination to create something new" (Bharati 161). The absence of God is but his presence in a different form, that of a 'small seed'. It is hope for a new beginning, devoid of wars, bloodshed and rivalry. A world of brotherhood, shared pain and love. It is only when the people realise the futility of war that they will actually break free from this 'Sisyphean struggle', achieving an end to the *andha yug*, moving towards a more 'advanced perfection'.

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<sup>25</sup> Gandhari is the wife of Dhritarashtra, the blind King of Hastinapur. She is the mother of Kauravas who willingly blindfolds herself to become equal to her blind husband. She is a strong character who turns bitter and curses Lord Krishna after hearing of her sons' demise at the Kurukshetra war.

<sup>26</sup> The lotus feet is a metaphor for the divine feet of gods and other saints. Here it refers to Lord Krishna's feet. Lotus symbolises rebirth, development, creation and purity. It is through the lotus feet of the deity that a disciple or a devotee can establish any connect with them. One can attain enlightenment and be free of ego by touching or worshipping the lotus feet. It symbolises the ethereal, divine and enlightened nature of Lord himself.

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