



## PROBLEM OF COMMUNAL DIVIDE AND COMMUNAL TENSION IN MAHESH DATTANI'S *FINAL SOLUTIONS*

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### ABSTRACT

*Mahesh Dattani is a well-known celebrated modern Indian – English playwright. His plays always deal with the intricate dynamics of the modern urban family. In his many plays, he aptly deals with various issues like homo sexuality, gender discrimination, and socialism and child sexual exploitation. Dattani is a playwright who challenged the edifice of India and Indian as they have been presented in the modern English theatre. This paper is a humble attempt to study problem of communal divide and communal tension in Mahesh Dattani's Final Solutions. The play Final Solutions deals with the problem of communal divide and communal tension.*

**Key words-** Mahesh Dattani, playwright, urban family, homo sexuality, communal divide, communal divide.

### INTRODUCTION

Mahesh Dattani, the most unorthodox and contemporary playwright of Indian English drama has used the medium of stage to present the invisible issues to the audience as theatre is the mirror of real life. Erin Mee calls Dattani “a young playwright who can create a new generation in the Indian English Drama which deals with the invisible social issues”.<sup>1</sup>Dattani has won Sahitya Akadami award for English literature for his play *Final Solutions*. Dattani puts Drama on a very high platform and argues, “Well, I think this is a wrong perception prevailing among the academics, especially the view that writing for the stage is inferior to writing a novel or writing poetry. I think it is important to keep in mind that the playwright is actually an artisan.”<sup>2</sup>



*Final Solutions*, a stage play in three acts, is a thrilling story of gripping communalism. Like in all other plays, Dattani has used segmented stage in this play and family as a battlefield of action. In Dattani's plays, incident takes place in the streets and it brings horror home. Alyque Padamsee considers *Final Solutions* as the play about transferred resentments. He puts:

*"As I see it, this is a play about transferred resentments. About looking for a scapegoat to hit out at when we feel let down, humiliated. Talking out your own anger on your wife, children or servants is an old Indian custom."*<sup>3</sup>

The time of the action is late 1940's the period when the India got freedom and partition of the country on the basis of religion into India and Pakistan. During this period, Hardika was a young girl known as Daksha. Daksha marries to Hari even before her 15th birthday. She reads her diary.

Daksha. (Reads from her diary) "Dear Diary today is the first time I have dared to put my thoughts on your pages. (Thinks for a while) Today? How will people know when "today" was a hundred years from now? (Picks up pen and scribbles.) 31 March, 1948"<sup>4</sup>

Through her reading, we come to know that she wanted to be a singer like voice queen Noor Jehan. She reads further,

*"All my dreams have been shattered...I can never be a singer, like Noor Jehan. Hari's family is against my singing film songs."*<sup>5</sup>

Her father had fought for freedom. She calls her mother-in-law as Gaju and father-in-law as Wagh for their certain personal traits. The introduction of Daksha's character is very meaningful innovative attempt. Dattani creates her character for revitalizing the past especially through her diary. Dattani very tactfully provides her separate space and identity with a view to connecting the past with present. She analyses the past with present and provides her commentary. With the rise of action, the drama reaches to the Gandhi's house. The actual action takes place outside the house, but it brings tension and terror inside the house. One can say that social tension or trouble assumes the form of domestic tension. Chased by the fanatic Hindu mob, Javed and Bobby sought refuge at Ramnik Gandhi's house who is a man of liberal ideology. This incident sets forth thrilling actions of the play. Dattani presents the whole drama of the communal disharmony inside the Ramnik Gandhi's house at Amargaon. He is the practicer of the democratic and liberal views. There was the communal trouble in the town. The communal riots break out due to the attack on rath yatra. The mobs are on the streets with weapons and burning fire. The communal flame engulfs the

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entire peace of the town. There is a chaos and confusion. Nobody knows what has exactly happened. Everybody is scared and panicky. The rumors of killing Pujari, bombing the Muslim girls' s hostel etc are at full speed. The dark night has enveloped the town with its fury and tension. It is observed: "The mob in the play is symbolic of our own hatred and paranoia. Each member of the mob is an individual yet they meld into one seething whole as soon as politicians play on their fears and anxieties." <sup>7</sup>

*Final Solutions* is written just after the Babri Masjid destruction unfolds the state of communal riot in the post-Partition India. By using the domestic space of Ramnik family as the setting, the play moves forward with the intrusion of two young Muslim namely, Javed and Bobby in Ramnik household. The conversation reveals that the sense of communalism is very much part of Indian socio-political territory and it is being repeated again and again. Along with the lack of trust and tolerance the play abounds with the themes like generation gap, politics, communities and identities in the lives of Ramnik, Aruna, Smita, Daksha, Javed and Bobby.

It advances the objective candor of a social scientist while presenting a mosaic of diverse attitudes towards religious identity that often plunges the country into inhuman strife. Yet the issue is not moralized, as the demons of communal hatred are located not out in the street but deep within us.

The play moves from the partition to the present day communal riots. It probes into the religious bigotry by examining the attitudes of three generations of a middle-class Gujrati business family, Hardika, the grandmother, is obsessed with her father's murder during the partition turmoil and the betrayal by a Muslim friend, Zarine. Her son, Ramnik Gandhi, is haunted by the knowledge his fortunes were founded on a shop of Zarine's father, which was burnt down by his kinsmen.

Hardika's daughter-in-law, Aruna, lives by the strict code of the Hindu sanskar and the granddaughter, Smita, cannot allow herself a relationship with a Muslim boy. The pulls and counter-pulls of the family are exposed when two Muslim boys, Babban and Javed, seek shelter in their house on being chased by a baying Hindu mob.

Babban is a moderate while Javed is an aggressive youth. After a nightlong exchange of judgments and retorts between the characters, tolerance and forgetfulness emerge as the only possible solution of the crisis. Thus, the play becomes a timely reminder of the conflicts raging not only in India but in other parts of the world.



*Final Solutions* touches us and the bitter realities of our lives so closely that it becomes a difficult play to handle for the Indian Director. The past begins to determine the outlook of the present and thus the earlier contradictions re-emerge.

No concrete solutions are provided in the play to the problem of communalism but it raises questions on secularism and pseudo secularism. It forces us to look at ourselves in relation to the attitudes that persist in the society. The chorus represents the conflicts of the characters. Thus the chorus in a sense is the psycho-physical representation of the characters and also provides the audience with the visual images of the characters' conflicts. There is no stereotyped use of the characterization of the chorus because communalism has no face, it is an attitude and thus it becomes an image of the characters.

*Chorus 1: "The procession has passed through these lanes Every year, For forty years! Chorus 2, 3: How dare they?"*

*Chorus 1, 2, 3: For forty years our chariot has moved through their mohallas.*

*Chorus 4, 5: Why did they? Why did they today.*

*Chorus 1: How dare they?*

*Chorus 2, 3: They broke our rath. They broke our chariot and felled our Gods!*

*Chorus 1, 2, 3: This is our land! How dare they?"<sup>8</sup>*

The play also presents the problem how minority can be acceptable. Racial discrimination is quite visible in the manner Aruna and Hardika treat these two young boys. Aruna places two glasses of water before them. After they have drunk water, she holds the glasses with her thumbs and index fingers, on the sides which have not been touched by their lips. She takes them away and keeps them separate from the other glasses.

The play *Final Solutions* also shows that the Police and the Politicians never treat the society on equal terms. The politicians whose primary purpose is to gain the vote by hook and crook, is often seen indulging in so many malpractices.

The conflict between tradition and modernity is well exemplified through the conflict between mother and daughter—Aruna and Smita. Aruna wants Smita to follow her ideology. Aruna shudders at the idea that her daughter doesn't have respect for her religion, sanskar, etc.

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Aruna: "You said it stifles you?"

Smita: What?

Aruna: Does being a Hindu stifle you?

Smita: No, living with one does.

Aruna: I never felt like that. I have always taken pride in my religion."<sup>9</sup>

The play depicts juxtaposition joy of freedom and horrors of communal riots. Under the intoxication of religion, people became thirsty for the blood of their own country people. Killing, stabbing, setting fire, looting, rapping etc. were the common scenes during these period. Many were slaughtered and many more wounded. Thousands of people migrated from India to Pakistan and vice-versa. Even after the decades of the freedom, condition has not changed in terms of the religious prejudice and communal tension. "The demons of communal hatred are not out on the street.....they are lurking inside ourselves."<sup>5</sup>

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