

Communal Conflicts in Mahesh Dattani's Final Solutions

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Abstract

Mahesh Dattani is one of the Indian's pioneering modern playwrights. His views on theatres are "a search for beauty as much as it is a search for truth". His plays are remarkable which deal with recent critical problems in the society. Dattani moulds his subject in such a way that it is both appealing as well as entertaining. His plays are accepted not only by the Indians but also by abroad. Dattani has treated each subjects with a deep-seated identification routed in everyday activity. Deep within platitude- ridden Indian society, his characters seek and reveal, probe and discern staging from families and neighbours, making each spectators with a storm within as the aftermath, an essential storm for the evaluation of Indian society and Indian society contains only socially sensitive Indians. The playwright understands the mind of the audience and deals each and every social problem with appropriate skills and techniques. The social awareness, the social discrimination in the name of religion, humiliation of humanity in the aroma of social pride, irrational acceptance of prejudices, etc. are brought to the stage through the play Final Solutions of Dattani.

Keywords: Communal riots, Monetary, Identity, Exploitation, Violence, Love

The issue of communalism has attracted the attention of an alert and responsible playwright like Dattani. The play Final Solutions, deals with the recurring rhetoric of hatred, aggression, the monetary and political exploitation of communal riots. Dattani also explores issues of identity, memory, suffering and loss within the larger political context. Mahesh Dattani's Final Solutions is a critique of violence. It is not overtly didactic but does make a forceful appeal for love and broader understanding.

Dattani's Final Solutions is a brave attempt at portraying communal conflicts in India. The play examines the liberal attitude of communalism. He is successful in handling such a burning social issue. In the world of Indian English drama, Dattani's plays emerge as a stunt that at once captures the attention of audience with the novelty of their sensational theme. The theme of the Final Solutions is stored in the first sentence of the 'Note on the Play' by Aleyque Padmsee. In this context Padmsee remarks that "The demons of the communal hatred are not out on the

street --- they are lurking inside us." (CP-I 161)

The drama projects two Muslim intruders in a traditional Hindu family during a communal Hindu-Muslim riot. Smita, the young daughter of Ramnik and Aruna Gandhi, reveals that she has been introduced with the two Muslim men. The old grandmother Hardika remembers the Hindu-Muslim riots at the time of partition and appears panicky. She is also shown in flashback as a fifteen year old girl-wife Daksha. Aruna is a typical housewife. She had a meaningless and a blind faith that Lord Krishna is the real protector. Ramnik has been secretly carrying the guilt-consciousness for the black deed of his ancestors. Therefore, he gives shelter to the two Muslim young men.

The theme of Hindu-Muslim hostility is introduced as the background of the play through the device of chorus. The men in the chorus put on Hindu masks and Muslim masks alternatively. They reveal the set view of Hindu and the Muslim towards one another. Padmsee remarks:

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. (CP-II61)

Daksha's diary portrays the theme of Hindu-Muslim riots as an integral part of the partition. Daksha recorded the incident as "a most terrible thing". Though everybody was awake waiting for midnight, it was not joy but probably the lighting and bloodshed that kept them alarmed.

After forty years of independence, Hardika again witnesses a Hindu Muslim communal riot. The incident of two Muslim young men entering her house for safety reveals that the episode is turned this time:

This time it was not the people with the stones. It was those two boys running away who frightened me, those two who were begging for their lives. Tomorrow they will hate us for protecting them. Asking for help makes them feel they are lower than us... I know their wretches pride! (CP-I 172)

In Final Solutions Dattani highlights how the wounded pride of the minority community in India breeds hatred

and stands as a hindrance in the way of peace. Hardika has a biased view that they don't want equality, but want to be superior. It is prompted by her lack of knowledge in regard to what actually happened to the family of her friend Zarine who owned the record of Noor Jahan that she had last during the riot. She did not know that her father-in-law managed to get the shop burnt to occupy it. It was his greed that created the dividing wall between the two communities.

The root cause behind Hindu-Muslim communal violence is best revealed through Javed and Bobby. They are trying to hide their identity while they are chased by some Hindu fanatics. It is made clear that failure of understanding between man and man creates communal hatred. The Hindu fanatics started searching for Muslim men by the notion that a chariot carrying the Hindu god was destroyed by some Muslim men. When the prayer cap of Javed and the knotted handkerchief of Bobby were found in their pockets, the mob became furious:

You pray to a god you do not know! You pray to nothing. You do not know his form. And you seek to destroy our gods! Drive them out! Kill the sons of swine! Kill the sons of swine! (CP-I 169)

On the other hand, the Muslims too react aggressively. A total lack of understanding between the two communities creates tension.

Muslim chorus 1&2:

They hunt us down!
 They're afraid of us!
 They beat us up! We are few!
 But we are strong!
 They're afraid of us!
 They hunt as down!
 They want to throw us out!
 (CP-I 179)

In this play, Dattani also shows that fear of seclusion and isolation creates frenzy which leads to violence. And all this happens because of the tendency to treat the person belonging to separate community as the 'other'. To quote noted Muslim intellectual Hassainur Rahman:

We hardly know another religion and society. We do not want to respect the other man's otherness. The ignorance is colossal and it has done enormous harm to us. Sociologically we must learn to see both society and human being as wholes. (Quoted in Haldar 73)

People turn fanatics when it comes to religion. They become so biased that they don't make any effort to verify

if the people belonging to other community have actually done any harm to them. They don't care for any logic; nor do they have rational mindset. Thus religious bias of Aruna is clearly brought out when she hesitates to offer water to Javed and Bobby. She is afraid of contamination. In this way, Dattani peeps inside a Hindu kitchen to expose the hatred nurtured in the minds of orthodox Hindus against the Muslim community.

Also, Javed makes it clear that the perpetual fear of minority stands in the way of their rational and sympathetic behaviour. He says to Ramnik that being the minority must feel good. Ramnik has to agree with Javed on this point. But just the fear of being minority cannot be only reason of making riots. Smita discloses that Javed was thrown out from his family for being used by the politicians in creating riots.

SMITA : (to Ramnik) they hire him! They hire such a people.

RAMNIK : They who?

SMITA : Those---parties! They hire him! That's he make a living. They bring him and many more to the city to create riots. To throw the first stone. (CP-I 195)

Smita opposes the way politicians hire people for creating riots. She is not aware about the whole truth and this lack of understanding causes further tensions.

When Ramnik offers him a job, Javed rudely says that he did not ask him for a job. Bobby explains that how Javed changed after he was humiliated by a Hindu in his locality. That man was afraid of being contaminated by Javed's touch and his behaviour caused hatred in Javed's mind against the Hindu community.

Dattani's Final Solutions presents different shades of the communal attitude prevalent among both - Hindus and Muslims. This play is different from other plays, because it is neither sentimental nor simplified in its approach. Here there is a clash between traditional and modern age. Dattani has also tried to show how communal violence breaks our social fabric. Kenneth Pickering rightly observes: The problem play is that 'which explores a particular social problem, raising many questions about it and provoking the audience into finding answer. Such plays, sometimes known as, 'thesis play' because they mount and work out an argument may be tragic or comic in essence but their ideas constitute some issues of deep concern to the dramatist with which he wishes to engage the minds and consciences of the audience (quoted in Das 78). Here, Dattani reveals the essential loneliness of a

man who is trapped by the feelings of communal hatred. He shows that biased approach shows lack of human understanding.

Works Cited

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 - 5 The works by Mahesh Dattani referred to in the study is Abbreviated in this paper as CP-I
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