

RELIGION: AN IDEOLOGICAL CONFLICT IN MAHESH DATTANI'S FINAL SOLUTIONS

K.SHALINI

Assistant Professor of English,
Paavai Engineering College, Namakkal,
Tamil Nadu.

Email ID: shalinisenthil82@gmail.com

Abstract

Mahesh Dattani, an elite, modern and a creative thinker has discovered the world of real human experience and given drama a synonym of life itself. The play *Final Solutions* is a dossier of Hindu-Muslim hatred winning Sahitya Academy award and stands as a fine testimony to Dattani. He, as a social scientist, discerns a mixture of diverse attitudes towards a religious identity that often puts the country into human strife. For years together communal hatred has been an unresolved issue. Despite India's marvelous achievements in science and technology, rapid changes in the spheres of education and the blooming of parliamentary democracy, the monster communal hatred hampers social development, eats up the vitals of the country and crushes down the peace of the nation. The communal hatred sprouts in human consciousness and that which is exposed by human behavior is not only lurking our motherland but also it has acquired universality. The play is the finest piece of art with universal appeal voicing about the extra dimension of India, a contemporary India tormented with ideological conflict leading to confusion, violence, convulsive social and political changes. People forgetting the fact that all are Indians, they under the intoxication of religion become bloodthirsty of their country people and do all misbehaviors like killing, stabbing, setting the fire, looting, raping, etc... Thus, the paper attempts to speak about Dattani's persistent effort in comprehending and bringing in the solution for the causes of ideological conflict and religious fanaticism. Dattani is certain that having and showing humanism for fellow being is the permanent solution for communal hatred.

Keywords: Hindu-Muslim, social development, violence, .etc

Final Solutions, a resoundingly successful play is first staged in 1993 focussing on the problem of communal disharmony between the Hindus and Muslims in India, especially during the period of post-partition riots; he examines the so-called liberal attitude to communalism. Commendably it is a bold venture of Dattani in which he exposes the ugly face of communalism in the immediate aftermath of the demolition of the Babri Masjid and the nightmarish bomb blasts in Mumbai. The mutual distrust between two dominant communities-Hindus and the Muslims, which led to the partition of British India into two independent nations accompanied by enactments of violence, unbearable brutality, horror and severe atrocities in 1947 continues to be a thorn in the flesh of the nation even after Independence. Hatred breeds hatred and the ultimate result is a communal riot, communal disharmony in India. The play moves from partition related conditions to the present-day communal tension with the purpose to depict the communal violence in India and to present the consciousness and the psychological fear that haunts the affected Indians.

Final Solutions holds on the theme of Hindus and Muslims and their conflict describing it with twin issues: the issues of communal violence – which explodes the society, disintegrates national harmony and swallows the grace of human relationships; the issues of transferred resentments – which brings in a familial stranglehold and societal oppression. Dattani handles the contemporary social reality problem in a bold new light with an intense and a daring departure, the play unfolds at a swift pace, weaving the post-independence partition riots with the travails of a middle-class family in the face of Hindu-Muslim conflicts. Dattani highlights and focuses his attention on the problems and conditions of the typical world of experiences of the middle-class. Thus, the play externally focuses on Hindu-Muslim incompatibility and internally with full of mutual disagreements amongst the family members. As Asha KuthariChoudhuri puts it, "The play to a large extent is rooted in the familial as well as the individual realities that combine to form the complex whole." (39). Dattani has highlighted a spectrum of conflicts and paradoxical confrontation of tendencies, attitudes, ambitions, and ways of seasonal politics versus those of a middle-class person, also presenting a concealed commentary on the values and the lack of values in both the spheres.

It indicates the obsession that prevails among the Hindus as well as the Muslims in India before and after the event of the partition of the country causes chain of neurotic reactions to even the most inconsequential of happenings. Lack of accommodation between the two communities and unacceptability paves the way to acrimony resulting in terrorism and anarchism. The clash between fanaticisms of Hindus versus fanaticisms of Muslims bothers the troubled individuals engendering a disturbed society. The negative emotion anger leads to chain reactions, causing violence and ruining relationships. The fanatic people become members of raging communities without thinking about the consequences that negative emotions like anger will lead to violence and destruction.

Two young Muslim boys, Javed and Bobby, seek and take refuge in Ramnik's house against the wish of his wife Aruna and his mother Hardika. The intervention of Javed and Bobby in the house of Ramnik Gandhi during the raging of communal riots in the locality shakes the complacency and brings in chaos and confusion among the family members. The relationship among the members of Ramnik's family is affected by the communal feelings prevalent in the society and so the atmosphere is electrified amongst the family members as they have personal grudges against each other. Aruna condemns her husband and daughter against giving shelter for the Muslim boys in their house. In spite of the crowd's threat and the stiff opposition from the family members, Ramnik offers them shelter.

Dattani has not only presented the anger that prevails in the society and the heinous act between the two communities but also has shown the inner conflict that runs in our home daily — the source of love and hate, of smoldering discontents and resentments, of bitter strife between the generations. Thus, it excavates into religious bigotry by delving deep into the attitudes of three generations of a middle-class Gujarati family.

The sentiments of the Hindus and Muslims bring religious intolerance which leads to communal hatred. Through this play, Dattani shows the reality of society and makes us realize that false conventions and notions are deep inside the human psyche. Depicting his characters as the victims of the political, social, economic and cultural malaise, he attempts to create awareness about the false notions to eradicate the demon of communal hatred.

Dattani's character struggle for freedom and happiness under the weight of tradition, cultural constructions of gender and suppressed desire. The fundamental problem arises when a mother, a patriarchal construct tries to impose her principles and values on her daughter. Either the daughter has to yield or revolt against it. If she yields she loses her identity and if she revolts she will be hated and condemned by her mother resulting in distancing of the emotional bonding between her and her mother.

Aruna, a typical Gujarati housewife does 'pooja-path' every day and lives by the strict code of the Hindu Zanskar. She says:

... I have always taken pride in my religion. I never felt my mother was stifling me. I was so happy knowing that I was protected. I grew up listening to stories of our gods and how they slew the demons to protect the good people of their land. And I was thankful to my mother for showing me the path of truth. I was happy. (CP 211)

In the case of Smita, Dattani, along with communal Hatred, mirrors the sharp and bitter truths that prevail in the society- the ridiculousness of the blind traditions that are ought to be followed in a traditional Hindu family. Mother always expects the daughter to inherit all the

traits from her. Aruna a typical Indian mother expects Smita to inherit her traits of Sanskars. Instead, Smita emerges as a revolt, to change the blind tradition that is followed without questions for centuries together. She says to her mother:

I tolerated your prejudices only because you are my mother. Maybe I should have told you earlier, but I am telling you now, I can't bear it! Please don't burthen me anymore, I can't take it (CP 213).

The society shows oppression and suppression for other community in the name of religious fanaticism. Javed turns to a riot rouser when an incident affects him internally. The incident took place when Javed was a young boy who did not know about untouchability or religious discriminations. A postman asked Javed to handover the letter to the owner, for help as he was in a hurry. Javed when opened the gate of the letter's owner, he was ordered to stop and to leave the letter on the wall. The man came with a cloth and wiped the letter, wall and the gate. Javed developed hatred towards the other community grows, certain complex and wanted to show his identity and faith, turns to be a riot rouser.

Hatred and aversion are evident in both Hindus and Muslims. The minority are too conscious of the antipodal position they assume in a majority community. This mutual aversion of the two communities for each other in India has created much crisis in the lives of the common people like Javed. Thus, provoked by the prejudices of the majority community, Javed has become a riot-rouser.

Dattani has taken a bold venture in finding a new solution to the problem. For Javed becoming a riot-rouser and Aruna thinking that the convention and traditional modes are violated leading to disorder and chaos at her home, Bobby takes the situation in hand, He goes to the pooja room and picks up the idol of Lord Krishna very delicately and respectfully and says, "He does not burn me to ashes! He does not cry out from the heavens saying He has been contaminated!" (CP 224). The comprehensiveness of his vision encompasses fear, anxiety, insecurity, and uncertainty of human sentiments. By doing so, he proves that the Hindu Gods consider them also as human and not idol breakers and are not angry, rebellious and prejudiced against them.

Humanitarian can be realized better through deeds than words, Bobby through his profound and innocent gesture has made everyone realize that love is the only way to reach God. He leaves his everlasting touch on lord Krishna and asserts that the Hindu God does not mind a Muslim's touch. Dattani has depicted the real picture of communal hatred and also attempted to find a new final solution for the predicament. A deeper convergence of identities has been brought out by Bobby picking up the idol of Krishna. Thus, the harmony and a final solution are wrought out by him, between the two communities can be understood.

Bobby having the idol of Krishna on his palm asserts faith in humanity and not in the community. He wants to prove that God is one and He does not make a differentiation between man and man and sees all people as His child. Bobby makes one realize that the change should come from within oneself and says forgiveness is a source of salvation. The formula - forget, forgive and tolerate will emancipate society from the eclipse of communal hatred.

Therefore, the attitude towards the religion of being conservative or liberal rules the situation. Religion is a matter of personal faith and the ideological conflict and communal tension emerge out of prejudices. The solution lies in the recognition of similarities and not in the identification of differences and discrimination.

References:

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