



## **THE HYDRA-HEADED MONSTER OF COMMUNALISM IN MAHESH DATTANI'S PLAY *FINAL SOLUTIONS***

**UMAR ALTAF SOF**

Research Scholar  
Bhagwant University, Ajmer,  
(RJ) INDIA

### **ABSTRACT**

*Religion in India is characterised by a diversity of religious beliefs and practices. India is a secular state with no state religion. The Indian subcontinent is the birthplace of four of the world's major religions; namely Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism. Throughout India's history, religion has been an important part of the country's culture. Religious diversity and religious tolerance are both established in the country by the law and custom; the Constitution of India has declared the right to freedom of religion to be a fundamental right. In India people especially the Muslims and the Hindus are locked in mortal combat with each which leads to communal tension and riot. India is known as a secular nation and such type of communal tension and communal riots that often take place, disturbs and disrupts the peace of the minds and lives of people. Final Solutions is one such play, where the playwright Mahesh Dattani, has highlighted the picture of India during the communal riots. The play talks about the enormous sufferings of both the Hindus and the Muslims. The play also deals with male dominance in the life of a woman in the Indian family.*

**KEY WORDS:** *Communal Tension, Communal Riot, God, Hindus, Muslims, Male Dominance, Gender Bias, Sufferings of Women.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Communal violence, communal riot and communal concord are the terms that everyone knows about very well in India. Communal violence is a form of violence that is perpetrated across ethnichos communal lines, the violent parties feels solidarity for their respective groups, and victims are chosen based upon group membership. The term includes conflicts, riots and other forms of violence between communities of different religious faith or ethnic

**UMAR ALTAF SOF**

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origins. Mahesh Dattani has mentioned about communal tension and harmony brilliantly in his play *Final Solutions*. The plays of Dattani emerged as the breath of fresh air in the field of Indian Drama in English at the end of the twentieth century and they have proved popular not only in India but throughout the world. The plays of Dattani deal with the contemporary issues of the Indian Society and they are written in such a manner that they can be staged anywhere in the world as they have a universal appeal.

Mahesh Dattani was awarded the Sahitya Akademi award for his play *Final Solutions* in the year 1998. This particular play is considered as the tour de force of Dattani out of all the other plays. Dattani underlies the clash between the fanaticisms of Hindus pitted against that of Muslims. Lack of accommodation between the two communities and unacceptability culminate in acrimony leading to terrorism and chaos. The play itself is a big question mark on this inveterate hostility between the two communities struggling for if there would ever be a final/permanent solution to this hydra-headed monster of communalism. In common parlance, the accusation could be attributed to other factors for fomenting the unrest, conflict and disharmony and the chief one can be politics. However, as Veer opines: Nor is it simply a political trick conjured up by leaders for their own benefit. Such arguments simply overlook the importance of religious meanings and practice in the construction of identity (7).

The plot of the play shuttles from the past to the present and vice versa. The story deals with the lives of people in a Gujarati family, where the characters speak about three generations. Hardika the grandmother who is known as Daksha as well (in the past), Ramnik, son of Hardika and Smita, grand-daughter of Hardika. Memory plays a crucial role in the play as Hardika is often seen recalling her past memories. In the play the mob or the chorus represents the communal divide and tension of the minority and the majority.

Religion has been the cultural essence among Indians, and the determining factors of the society- economic, political and social- are aware about it. It is through the credence of this awareness that they wield expediency to somehow facilitate their own cause, even at the cost of creating a parochial and sectarian environment. In *Final Solutions*, Smita says that they (political parties) hire him (Javed) and many more in the city to "create riots" (195). The people in power are able to hoodwink masses by concocting a discourse of an untoward happening by demonizing the "other" and injecting prejudiced doctrines. In this way, the young minds are swayed in the emotional turmoil of religion, creed, region and language.

Communal riot is such a war which is actually not fought between two different nations, rather it takes place between two different religious groups. Dattani deals mainly with the communal discord between the Hindus and the Muslims. The play talks about the condition of India during the post partition riots.



The play is about a Gujrati family where the head of the family is Hardika, who cordially dislikes the Muslims because her father was killed by the minority people. She takes a strong exception when her son provided refuge to two Muslim boys Javed and Bobby in her house.

*Hardika: How could he let these people into my house?*

*Hardika: They killed his grandfather! (Collected Plays, 179)*

The above quote goes to show the dislike of Hardika which she had nourished in her heart for the Muslims. She says those things to her son Ramnik when he allows the Muslim boys Javed and Bobby to stay in their house.

The story of the play shifts between the past and the present and vice versa. Hardika represents the present whereas Daksha, (another name of Hardika) represents the past. Ramnik, son of Hardika, is liberal in his outlook and he doesn't support the ill-will of his mother against the Muslims because he knows the truth which his mother is unaware of. Hardika hates the Muslims because they killed her father but she does not know that her husband and father in law destroyed the life of Zarine who was her friend when she was young. Hardika's father in law and husband had torched the shop of Zarine's father and Ramnik was in the know of this truth but he did not disclose this to his mother because he did not want his mother to suffer more. He just tried to make amends for the sins committed by his father and grandfather and hence proves himself to be a true secularist. Ramnik even offers a job to Javed so that he can earn his living and in this way he would be able to overcome the guilt.

*And we burnt it. Your husband. My father. And his father. They had burnt it in the name of communal hatred. Because we wanted a shop. Also they learnt that . . . those people were planning to start a mill like our own. I can't take it any longer. I don't think I will be able to step into that shop again . . . When those boys came here, I thought I would . . . I hoped I would be able to . . . set things right. I-I wanted to tell them that they are not the only ones who have destroyed. I just couldn't. I don't think I have the face to tell anyone. (Collected Plays, 226)*

*Final Solutions* can be regarded as a problem play as it talks about the communal tension and communal riot. Dr. Deepti Agrawal, talks about the Hindu Muslim communal riot in her book and she also discusses about Final Solutions in one of the chapters. She says: The very insightful and sharp analysis of the nationalist conceptualization of India's Islamic legacy is taken up by Dattani in his well performed play Final Solutions. In this play, Dattani



bemoaned the takeover of the symbols of his religion, by proponents of Hindutva. (Dattani 237)

Dr. Deepti also asserts that the play has highlighted various facets of the communalist attitude which were/are rampant among the Hindus and the Muslims in the attempt to underscore the stereotypes and the cliches that influence the collective consciousness/ sensibility of one community against another. The writer speaks about the plot of the play as well where she says it(the play) is about a simple Hindu family who are suddenly beset with a plethora of questions when two Muslim miscreants seek shelter in their house during the communal riots. Dr. Beena Agarwal dicusses about the play in her book.

She says that, Dattani represents two communities through the change of masks. This device of changing the mask is quite significant. Behind the mask each member of the chorus is a human being and here lies the roots of dramatic tension in the play Final Solution. The mob frenzy of Muslims, is vitalized in the second appearance of mob/chorus. Sacrificing their humanity and religious faiths, they make a mockery of Gods and Goddesses (Dattani 47).

Dr.Beena expresses her thoughts about the plays in her book and she says that in the play, anger is not an articulation of aggression but a mechanism of self defense. She says with reference to Final Solutions that Javed, the Muslim boy offers his services to Aruna and tries to help her by filling the bucket of water but it was of no use.

Aruna, wife of Ramnik, is a typical Indian house wife and a religious woman as well. She tries to maintain balance with her modesty when the two Muslim boys take refuge in the house. She did have sympathy for the boys but at one point of time, it becomes difficult for her to compromise with them. Javed tries to help her out in her work but she says: We don't allow anyone to fill our drinking water. No outsiders (209).

Dr.Bipinkumar Parmar talks about the play in one of the chapters in his book and he says:

*The play is bifurcated into three acts for the presentation of the events in a systematic way. Structurally, they can be considered as the exposition, climax, and denouement or solution. The first act introduces the situation and people involved in it showing communal riots as the background of the play. There is a gradual development of action leading to the climax in second act. The third act is very important from structurally and philosophically. The dramatist presents cross examination Javed and Bobby for arriving at final solution of the communal hatred (Dattani 87-88).*



Dr Pramod Kumar Singh discusses the play Final Solutions in the second chapter of his book. He says that the particular play is the true representative play of the observations of Dattani and the observations deal with the burning issue of communal riot. Dr Singh says that Dattani shows in the play how the seed of riot is sowed and some vested groups reap its fruit.

Dr Singh also says that Mahesh Dattani is the true observer of society and he writes only what he sees and not what should be. All his plays are filled with matter and manner which he observes. Each and every play of Dattani raises some prominent issues concerning the various maladies contaminating the healthy tissues of the society and in doing so he is never seen didactic in his attitude.

Dr. Singh discusses further and says that Dattani is a different kind of writer who portrays the reality of the society directly through his play. He says that the older generation in the play had faced the burnt of communal violence and they are not ready to accept any solution but the younger generation in the play they have a different point of view. They approach the same issue in from a different angle and they want a solution for all this.

Dr. Singh also says that it is not only the religion that is the causative factor in the communal violence but the socio-economic too has a role to play in it. He says there are some opportunistic groups who always look out for opportunities and utilise it fo their own interest as Ramnik's father does in the play. Dr Singh says that the class struggle is also one of the reasons of such type of riot and tenison which is misconstrued most of the time by the groups.

Painting a conceivable terrorist with sentiments and humanity, Dattani requests his readers who are religiously biased and tend to presume to be aware of the dangers of such presumptions. These only lead to mindless killings and make societies susceptible to external aggressions.

## CONCLUSION

It may be summed up in conclusion that Mahesh Dattani's FINAL SOLUTIONS not only tries to emphasize the efforts of the maintenance of peace and harmony as being undertaken by some conscious individuals. Mahesh Dattani's *Final Solutions* is a problem play that deals with the socio-political aspects of a society in India. Two different types of community live in India, one is the majority and the other one is the minority. Each of the communities hate each other and the reason of the hatred is actually absurd and baseless. God is one and the same but people do fight on God and each and everyone claims that God is mine, God is ours, whereas God loves everyone like parents love all the children, if there is more than one child in a family. Dattani, the playwright, has shown the true colours of the politicians and the



police department very well through his play. The politicians force the innocent people to work for them in the name of religion. Javed in the play, has been shown as such a character who works for the politicians who did brainwash

Dr. Dipti Agrawal says that Dattani has made use of the mob or the chorus as a stylistic device to enhance the presentation of Hindu and Muslim people in the play. She also says that Daksha's diary confirms the history of division, the sense of us and them, the one and other by linking personal experience with the political and social hatred. We all must understand each other and must stop hating each other as well. It is the responsibility of people of India, to make it a secular country in the true and real sense. The conflict of the minds must be stopped first, then only the conflict or the fight that takes place outside can be stopped.

Dattani also focusses on patriarchal hegemony and gender bias, which is the other side of the play. He has tried to show with the help of the character Daksha, that, gender bias and sufferings of women have not totally swept away from India. Though India has got its independence or freedom, the Indian women in most of the families, still live like caged birds with shackles in the legs. India shall receive its true independence or freedom only on the day when women will be receiving their due respect and freedom. Also, the people must start loving and accepting each other, rather than hating and misunderstanding.

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