

Communal Harmony in Mahesh Dattani's *Final Solutions*

Mr. Rajendra Raghunath Rajput: Assistant Professor, Dhanaji Nana Mahavidyalaya, Faizpur, Tal. Yawal Dist. Jalgaon

Contemporary Indian Drama Shows a special penchant for the study of man where playwright like Mahesh Dattani set his microscopes to study man's social and family relationships. Man's social, emotional, economic and physical needs have driven him to form association with his fellow beings resulting in the emergence of the institutions like family and society. In personal and social relationships man has moved no doubt but perhaps in a zigzag motion that the threads of love and affection or even betrayal have got tangled and solving the puzzle of these threads has become a hard nut to crack.

Mahesh Dattani is the first Indian playwright to be awarded the prestigious Sahitya Akademi Award for his unique contribution to theatre. His endeavor is different from earlier attempts at staging Indian Drama in English as he chooses to entertain his spectators, at the same time making them feel at home with the incidents on the stage from their life itself and making them reflect a bit on their own lives. Thematically, Dattani's plays belong to the existing times dealing with sexuality, gender issues, religious tension, class conflicts, homosexuality etc. Dattani makes an abundant use of the Indian mythology, rituals, Traditions, contemporary problems and elevates these themes to higher level touching the human chords that emanate love, happiness, sexual fulfillment and the problem of identity. The plays of Mahesh Dattani emerged as 'fresh arrival' in the domain of Indian English Drama in the last decade of the twentieth century. John Mc Rae in his Introduction to Dattani's plays writes, "They are plays of today, Sometimes as actual as to cause controversy, but at the same time they are plays which embody many of the classic concerns of world drama" (Qtd in Dhawan 20)

Dattani's dramatic art is inspired by the mission to communicate profound meaning through his plays and therefore he exhibits keen awareness for the direction and stage performance of his own plays. Most of the issues taken up by Dattani in his plays are radical, unconventional, contemporary and free from the taboos. In the present paper, I am going to discuss communal harmony in *Final Solutions*, the major issue handled by Mahesh Dattani.

Dattani's '*Final Solutions*' is a prize-winning play as a brave attempt at portraying to feel in the primitive way and is sadly lacking in human understandings. To quote Alyque Padamsee's note on the play in this context, "Is life a forward journey or do we travel round in circle returning to our starting point? Can we shake off our prejudices or are they in our psyche like our genes? Will we ever be free or ever locked in combat... Arabs against Jews, white against blacks, Hindus against Muslims? Are they any final Solutions?" (161)

The present drama projects two Muslim intruders in a traditional Hindu family during a communal Hindu-Muslim riot. Much to the surprise of the other characters, Smita, the young

Variorum Multi-Disciplinary e-Research Journal
Vol.,-04, Issue-II, November 2013

daughter of Ramnik and Aruna Gandhi, reveals that she has been acquainted with the two Muslim youngmen. The old grandmother Hardika recalls the Hindu-Muslim riot after Independence and appears panicky because of the intrusion of the two Muslim young men inside the house. Hardika's husband and father-in-law exploited a Muslim shopkeeper (burning his shop in the name of communal hatred) to enhance their own business, a fact that was known to Hardika's son Ramrik. His anger at his father's shameful act led him to analyze the causes behind the Hindu-Muslim riot from an unbiased viewpoint. A mob of individuals outside the Gandhi house, who alternatively put on Hindu and Muslim masks to give out violent hatred for the other community. Daksha's diary introduces the theme of Hindu-Muslim riot as an integral part of Indian Independence. Daksha recorded the incident as a most terrible thing she wrote,

My father has fought for that hour. And he was happy when it came. He said he was happy we were rid of the Britishers. He also said that something I did not understand then. He said that before leaving, they had let loose the dogs. I hated to think that he was talking about my friends' fathers---- But that night in Hussainabad in our ancestral house-when I heard them outside- I knew that they were thinking the same of us. And I knew that I was thinking the same, like my father. (167)

After forty years of independence, Hardika again witnesses a Hindu-Muslim riot, but the two Muslim young men who have entered her house for safety, reveal that the table is turned this time. Through Hardika's analysis Dattani highlights how the wounded pride of the minority community in India breeds hatred and stands in the way of peace. Hardika's biased view that they don't want equality but want to be superior, 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 Jehan, the most favourite collection of Daksha that she had lost during the riot. Daksha only knew that the shop owned by Zarine's father was burnt during riot and that shop was purchased by Daksha's father-in-law. She also knew that Zarine's father did not accept the job in the same shop offered by her father-in-law, the new owner of the shop, and hence she explained the matter of pride of the minority community. Zarine's family had enough reason to suspect Daksha's father-in-law though there was hardly any legal proof, therefore, just the result of their wounded pride.

Dattani has made a realistic analysis of the cause of friction between the two communities in Post-Independence India. To quote a critic, Rina Mitra,

“Dattani's *Final Solutions*, first stage in Bangalore in 1993 focuses on the problem of communal disharmony between the Hindus and Muslims in India, especially during the period of the post-Partition riot. The analysis of the cause of friction between the two communities offered by Dattani carries conviction as it is endorsed by a study of human psychology offering valid explanations of the proclivities and susceptibilities of individuals under circumstantial pressure.”¹²⁹

Dattani searches for the root causes behind Hindu-Muslim riot is best revealed through Javed and Bobby who are introduced as two Muslim young men trying in vain to suppress their identity

Variorum Multi-Disciplinary e-Research Journal
Vol.,-04, Issue-II, November 2013

while they are chased by some Hindu fanatics. It is made clear that failure of understanding between man and man creates communal tension. Infuriated by the notion that a chariot carrying the Hindu God was destroyed by some Muslim men. The Hindu fanatics started searching for Muslim men because they equated the breakers of chariot with the Muslim community. When the prayer cap of Javed and the knotted handkerchief of Bobby were found in their pockets the mob became furious.

CHORAS ALL: You pray to a god you do not know! You pray to a nothing. You do not know this form. And you seek to destroy our gods! Drive them out! Kill the sons swine! Kill the sons of swine! (178)

Dattani shows how fear & seclusion creates frenzy leading to riots. And all this is caused by the tendency to create the persons belonging to a separate community as the other. He elaborates the theme of Hindu–Muslim riot through projecting the incapacity of the recognition of “other man’s otherness.” When Ramnik chooses to give shelter to the two Muslim young men, the Hindu chorus outside becomes frenzied.

RAMNIK: What harm have they done to you?

CHORAS 1. Set an example.

CHORAS ALL : Stop them.

CHORAS 1. Before they do harm.....

CHORAS ALL: Tame them.

CHORAS 1. Before their passions inflame.

CHORAS ALL. Thwart them, So we may live in peace.

RAMNIK. We?

CHORAS ALL. We, who are right.

RAMNIK. And they?

CHORAS ALL . They who are wrong. Since we are right. And they oppose us.

RAMNIK. If we are right.

CHORAS ALL. Do you doubt us? Your own people? (181)

The fanatics are so biased that they don’t bother 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. The Hindus are often at loggerheads with the lower class people within their own community is also focused. Thus, *Final Solution* serves the dramatist’s purpose well through a life-like portrayal & Indian society. He wants to use the theatre as a powerful tool for bringing about the necessary social change. Mahaesh Dattani in an interview says, “Theatre to me is a reflection of what you observe..... I write plays for the sheer pleasure of communicating through this dynamic medium.” (Qtd in Pant 33)

At the end of the play, Hardika asks to Ramnik why he has not yet gone to his shop and he answers much to her surprise, that he cannot enter the shop any more. The secret is now revealed by Ramnik. The shop was the same burnt–up shop. They purchased from Zarine’s father at half its price and it had been burnt up by Hari and his father in the name of communal hatred. They needed a shop

Variorum Multi-Disciplinary e-Research Journal
Vol.,-04, Issue-II, November 2013

and used communal violence to satisfy their selfishness. It was not their arrogance then, but their anger. Hardika is crushed and wants to know why Ramnik has not disclose the fact to her earlier. Ramnik replies that he did not just want her to put in shame. Hardika wants to know if the two boys will ever come back. He says that they may come if she calls them. But soon he says that they may not come back as it is too late. The play ends with the light fading out slowly on the mob. We may come to the conclusion that the play mocks at the politicians who use people as their puppets. These puppeteers are the real culprits. The playwright, attacks on this game of hatred and communal tension. Ramnik accepts that his father has done the black deed..To conclude, the Play ends with Ramnik's statement, "We should forgive the offenders and forget the past. This can be the final solution"

Work cited

Dhawan, R. K. & Pant, Tanu. *The plays of Mahesh Dattani: A critical Response*, New Delhi, Prestige Books, 2005.

Dattani, Mahesh. *Collected plays*, New Delhi, Penguin India, 2000.

Mitra, Reena. "Mahesh Dattani's final solutions and other plays: A Living Dramatic Experience, "*The plays of Mahesh Dattani : A Critical Response* ed. R.K.Dhawan and Tanu Dant, New Delhi, Prestige Books, 2005.

Pant, Tanu. "Mahesh Dattani : The face of Indian Drama", *The plays of Mahesh Dattani : A Critical Response*,ed. R.K.Dhawan and Tanu Pant, New Delhi, Prestige Books, 2005.