



Dattani's Final Solutions : Question Of Communalism And A Search For It's Solution

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The most alluring quality of Dattani's plays is the wide range of themes that he deals with in his writing. He depicts mainly the middle class Indian life and focuses on modern subjects like homosexuality, gender identity, human relationship and communalism. His best known play is *Final Solutions*. One of the most significant serious themes of the play is Hindu-Muslim divide examined by Dattani in *Final Solutions*.

The play, *Final Solutions* foregrounds the Hindu Muslim divide, the prejudice and the deep rooted mistrust that lies in our liberal and secular attitudes. It is a disturbing play because it erases the comforting distance between the actors and the audiences. Mahesh Dattani's fifth play, *Final Solutions*, was written in 1991, a year before the communal riots in Bombay, evoked by the destruction of Babri Mosque in Ayodha. The first production of the play under Dattani's direction at a theatre festival in Bangalore, was cancelled. The play revolves around a Hindu family that gives shelter to two Muslim boys during a communal riot. Dattani uses the family as a microcosm of India.

In *Final Solutions* Dattani ascribes the communal problem to sociological as well as psychological factors, while at the sociological level, it consists in socio-economic disparity and opportunist politics which is ready to capitalize on the former, it works deeper at the psychological level. In fact if sociological causes be the superstructure psychological prejudice of the two communities serve as the base. Dattani probes into the mindset of the conservative of the respective communities both at the group level and the individual level. At the group level it is represented by the chorus and at the individual level by the frankly orthodox character Javed, and the hypocritically liberal character like Ramnik and his wife Aruna, though the latter seems to be less pretentious than the former. But we also find that the seeds of communal hatred and distrust are deep rooted in Ramnik's mind, as in the others. It is because of his communal distrust that he did not mind much when at first he heard from Smita that 'Muslim girls' hostel was bombed.' He says, "I don't believe it! That wasn't a bomb. It was probably some chokra teasing the girls." And he simply says "I think your friend is over re-acting. How did she know it

was soda bottle? If it had exploded, there wouldn't have been any piece around. So . . . it must have smashed against the wall or broken a window, making a loud noise." And we also get some evidence of communal hatred from Ramnik's part when he is talking to Javed "Now you are provoking me! How dare you blame your violence on other people? It is in you! You have violence in your mind. Your life is based on violence. Your faith is based . . ." Ramnik is extremely uncomfortable with the idea of his daughter knowing the two Muslim boys personally. Ramnik only calms down when Smita tells him that she knows the two because Javed is her friend, Tasneem's brother, and Bobby is Tasneem's fiancé. Smita also says that Bobby comes to college quiet often and there's no harm in that as they are getting married. Ramnik says that there is also no harm in that. But the question is where is there no harm? Is Bobby going out with Tasneem because they are engaged? Or because he is involved with somebody from his own community, and therefore 'safe'? The questions remain unanswered. The man came out with a cloth in his hand. "He wiped the letter before picking it up, he

then wiped the spot on the wall the letter was lying on and he wiped the gate! ” The boys stared at him and he went outside. The postman told the boys that the man was “ slightly cracked. ” Then the boys heard the inconsistent ringing of the prayer bell inside the house. They had heard it before but it hadn't meant to them. But that day it had a special significance for them. The next day the neighbor came out screaming on the streets. Someone had thrown pieces of meat and some bones in his courtyard. It was Javed who had avenged the insult heaped on him by the man, Bobby was scared. Everyone avoided looking at Javed. He was “ no longer the neighborhood hero ” in their eyes. From then onwards, Javed became a religious fanatic. A political party picked him up to further their communal agenda and used him as “ a hired hoodlum ” to engineer and instigate communal riots. And Javed was proud of it as he was serving the “ cause ” of his people, a minority in India. He was however, thrown out by his family and has been on his own ever since. Hardika, the old grandmother, narrates her story in patches, how her father was beaten to death in the communal riots on the streets of Hussainabad where she lived with her family before marriage. Daksha used to visit her Muslim friend Zarine's house with her maid Kanta to listen to Noor Jehan's songs on the gramophone and sing them along. Though Daksha loved Zarine and her sisters, she didn't like the locality where they lived because “ unmentionable things ” were sold there and the food that the family partook made Daksha vomit. Hardika is so prejudiced against the Muslims that she says: “ I didn't like the one called Javed. The minute I saw him, I knew he was not good. And the other one, I was frightened of him. He was far too quiet and much too polite. What was he thinking? That we are all the same? Javed didn't think I hated him. ” As Ramnik tries to make them comfortable in the house, Aruna is obviously uneasy and insecure while Hardika is full of venom. She recalls how she has suffered in the past for befriending Zarine and her family and the consequences thereof.

She keeps asking herself: “ Why did he let them in? Why? ” Even she also insists Javed and Bobby to leave for Pakistan so that they “ can live the way you want without blaming other people of your failures. ” What then is the ‘ final solution? ’ Is Aruna's and Javed's faith the answer? Or does the solution lie in the rejection of Bobby and Smita? In the last scene, Bobby picks up the idol of Krishna from the puja room in the Gandhi family and holds it in his hand. He defies Aruna's cries and the anger of the Mob and asserts his faith in ‘ humanity. ’ Bobby says “ Your God! My flesh is holding Him! Look, Javed! And He does not burn me! He does not burn me to ashes! He does not cry out from the heavens saying He has been contaminated! . . . See, Javed! He doesn't humiliate you. He doesn't cringe from my touch. He welcomes the warmth of my hand. He feels me. And he welcomes it! . . . it belongs to a human being who believes, and tolerates and respects what other human beings believe. That is the strongest fragrance in the world! ” [Act Three] Does this end which seeks to uphold that we should try and understand and believe and forget and tolerate constitute Dattani's final solution? But this final solution may remain just another possibility- the very last scene, after Bobby and Javed leave the Gandhi home, changed forever, is still a bleak one. Ramnik finally tells his mother of the crime committed by his father- how they burnt the shop in the name of communal hatred, because they wanted a shop and when Hardika asks the boys to come back, Ramnik's answers is what remains with us “ If you call then they will come, but then again- if it's too late- they may not ” [Act Three] Dattani here, like a typical humanist searches for an end, a solution to this continuing problem of accommodating other by focusing on the dialectics of a few people on the micro economic level of the family which stands for the community, nation as well as humanity in the macrocosmic sense. Choosing to demonstrate the futility of communal violence final solutions involve anti fanaticism concerns not only at the religious level but fanaticism in all walks of life. And appropriately enough, Dattani

demonstrates this by showing the various ways in which most people, overtly or covertly are party to acts of fanaticism and are responsible for a good deal of the conflicts that exist in our society- be it at the macrocosmic level of the nation-state or even the microcosmic one of the family. Thus we have the fanaticism of the Hindus and the Muslims in Amargaon clashing during the "Rath Yatra" the fanaticism of the Daksha's in laws that prevents her friendship with Zarine from progressing the fanaticism of the older Daksha i. e. Hardika which is a ricocheting response to her "confinement" the fanaticism of Hardika's daughter-in-law Aruna, who is the archetypal pious Hindu woman and of course the fanaticism of Javed that pushes him into joining force with those who always liked the motherland and fighting to save their faith. Constructed with such fanaticism is the doubtful pacifism of Bobby; the shaky liberalism of Ramnik and the escapism of Smita arising from sheer avoidance. Such fanaticism is not only self-limiting for each of these individuals but is also the primary cause for the barriers that are constructed between them and the larger world. In this context if Daksha/Hardika's writings in her diary can be seen as an attempt to confront and negotiate with the reality faced by her, the play *Final Solutions* can be read to imply that no text not even this dramatic script by Dattani- can provide any final solution(s) to the audience. Perhaps the solutions lie with each of us- we all need to come to terms with our and other people's prejudices and find our own solutions as Bobby did. Dattani thinks that only the commonsense spirit of correlation and understanding and the gesture of accommodating the "other" can prove the way towards 'final solutions' in India in particular and the world in general. The play can only serve as an awakening.

The solution to the endemic hatred lies not in the complete annihilation of the other communal group, and this is where the title of Dattani's play ironically resonates to the pitch of Hitler's "Final Solution" which planned to exterminate all the Jews in Europe and the world.

Although Dattani himself declares that he believes in bringing out 'the complexities of any conflict and discussing the issues surrounding it' and that 'there are no easy answers,' Dattani does attempt to provide not one simple and singular solution but an amalgam of solutions that must work in concord.

The first and foremost solution is the recognition of similarity. Ramnik is the one to first put the question as well as to answer it: "We are not very different, are we? . . . we both feel the shame." The quality or the detail may vary, but the essence remains the same. Javed is the next to point out that he is no different from his Hindu persecutors: 'You have been protecting me from people like me.' Later he declares to Aruna that they are 'not very different' since they both feel 'pride.' Another solution is to forget the past, forgive past injustices and move on. Javed emphasizes this when he reproaches Hardika for blaming the present Muslims 'for what happened fifty years ago.' Yet another solution is to be sensitive to others' religion and honor it as Bobby himself does with lyric ecstasy while holding the image of Krishna: "Your God! My flesh is holding Him! . . . And He does not mind." The final solution is to share the simple joys of life such as music indoors and the splashing of water outdoors. When these final solutions are practiced unremittingly, then the miasma of communal hatred will cease to exist and conflict will yield place to coexistence.

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