

COMMUNAL DISHARMONY IN MAHESH DATTANI'S FINAL SOLUTION

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"Final Solution" is a sensational story depicting communalism. It won the author the much coveted Sahitya Academy Award. The play is set in late forties of the twentieth century when India was divided on the basis of religion. Here in the Play the family is the battlefield of action. Discussions giving rise to actions packed with communal feelings take place in every drawing room. Horror prevails everywhere and stray accidents take place in the streets. There is a resentment of one kind or the other in every soul. Alyque Padamsee asserts:

"This is a play about transferred resentments about looking for a scapegoat to hit out at when we feel let down, humiliated. Taking out your own anger on your wife, children or servants is an old Indian custom."¹

The play received a massive reception all over India. It was translated into different languages. "Final Solutions" is reckoned as a great artistic creation showcasing the mind and art of its author.

Daksha is seen reading out her diary while Hardika is seen statuesque at the very outset of play.. Even before attaining the age of fifteen she marries to She happens to be the daughter of a freedom fighter. Daksha is habituated to write diary. She gets down the important notes in her diary. By introducing her character, Dattani finds it easy to correlate the past and the present. The portrayal of a character as such is both meaningful and innovative. It is tactful move of Dattani. Daksha enjoys a typical knack of analysis. Her commentary relates to both past and present at one and the

same time. This is how she is given by the author a separate space to identify herself

Home is the arena in the plays of Dattani. Various kinds of important and not so important actions take place. The actual action occurs in the street outside but the consequent tension and horror make their way inside the house. The social tension assumes the form of family tension. Javed and Bobby are caused by some fanatic Hindu. They seek refuge at Ramanik Gandhi's house. Gandhi is a man of liberal ideology. The incident entails thrilling actions symbolising the communal disharmony. Entire action takes place at Gandhi's house which turns to be a hot bed of politics. Reasons don't work before the mob whose mind is set ablaze. Gandhi is the practitioner of the democratic and liberal views. A communal orgy breaks out in the town owing to an attack on Rath Yatra. Violence prevails through out. Mob mentality is different. It is difficult to be controlled. The people are out for destruction with Arsenal's in hand. Peace is destroyed and chaos prevails. It is a stage of total confusion. The people in general are scared. They have no idea of what exactly took place. They are all pakicky everywhere there is fury and tension beyond measure:

"The mob in the play is symbolic of our own hatred and paranoia. Each member of the mob is an individual yet they melt into one seething whole as soon as politicians play on their fears and anxieties",¹

There is typical juxtaposition of the thrill and horror caused by communal orgy. People are ready to damage their own fellow beings. Those who were friends an hour ago become foes to each other. They stab and kill indiscriminately. The whole town is ablaze. The cases of rape are the common scenes during this period. Many are slaughtered and many more get wounded. The people are divided on the basis of religion. The religion teaches to live together with family. But they are fantastic. They don't know that they are grievously mistaken in the matters as such. Many a Hindu came from Pakistan to India and many a Muslim migrated from India to Pakistan. That was not for them the political compulsion but the religious choice. We still notice religious prejudices even after many more decades of independence.

Divided into three acts the play admirably depicts the background of situation that took such an ugly shape. We come to know about prim reason that hurt the religious sentiment of one group. The second act is full of action generated out of reaction and resolution to take revenge. It leads to the climax of the situation when one is thirsty of the blood of author. They turn fanatic and completely blind of their deeds. The third and final act is so structured as to philosophise the whole action and leads us to final solution. The author chooses to go for the cross examination of the two sides.

The exposition leads to action. All the characters are introduced at the very outset of the play and we know who is who. The wife of Ramanik Gandhi, Aruna, is religious to the core and she timely observes her daily rituals Smita, a college going girl, holds a different view altogether. Her ideology is liberal and at the same time humanitarian. Hardika is the senior most in the family. She frequently shifts from the present to the past and correlate every action of the present with what happened in the past. This communal orgy remind her of the death of her father. He was beaten to death during the post freedom internal struggle between two communities.

"Dattani's final solutions first staged in Bangalore in 1993, Depicts the problem of communal disharmony between the Hindus and Muslims in India, especially during the period of the post partition riots. 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. The psychosis that prevails among the Hindus as well as the Muslims in India after the events of partition of the country causes a chain of neurotic reactions to even the most inconsequential."³

The minority class of people are taken to be untachables. They are not acceptable. The Playwright depicts the problem as to how they can be acceptable. The way Aruna behaves explicitly shows the racial discrimination she catches hold of two glasses used by the young boys with

her thumb and index finger making sure that that portion has not touched their lips and she places the glasses in a different row. At this Javed replies to Ramnik:

Javed: "We do love our own blood unlike you who treat your own like shit which can't be touched."⁴

Mahesh Dattani's art and craft is par excellence. His Plays are highly realistic in nature and his motive is to bring change in the urban society. Communal hatred, prejudice, racial motives are some of the complex issues that he under takes to deal with in his play named "Final Solutions". Multi level sets and flash back technique are the specialities of this play:

"I've used time and space in different ways in my plays, I think all the tools of theatre are available to a playwright and you just use them the way your sensibility allows you to use them."⁵

Dattani uses the language that is used in day today life. He uses the words like mohalla, Rath, Pooja room, poojari, chokra, mehdi, bap re! Gali, paan, hookah, haram, topi, supaari that are commonly used in day to day life.

This play has a message to convey the spectators. We are born to a country where there is diverse faith. We have the rituals of our own. If we respect the religions faiths, habits and habitats of each other the communal harmony can be maintained. What we require is to shake off the pride and ego. We can combat the fire of communal hatred provided we respect the thoughts and feelings of our fellow beings. We are not supposed to cherish the biased ideals for the other religions. Amity can be maintained through love and respect. III-feeling of one community toward the other is not good. The Playwright outrightly dismisses the idea to send muslims to Pakistan. The people should not suffer for the politic error. India is a secular country and so it is not the solution to the problem of communal orgy. The ideology of the Playwright as depicted in the Play is essentially liberal. He views that final solution to the problem can be achieved by dis allowing the fanaticism and blind faith We have to be rational in approach.

Musk and chorus have symbolic significance in the Play. We can have a symbolic interpretation of the changing mask. The Hindu Muslim mask to join the respective mob is to show that we are all human beings. We are all alike. Humanity is our inward character which mask is just outer fit of communal identity. It is our human identity that is permanent. The Mask robs us of our human identity and we go for a mad chase for killing one another. The mob mentality works like opium that makes us unidirectional. It's impact is so devastating that we lose our real identity that transcendental and are driven toward the peripheral acts of hatred, pride and prejudice:

"It is basically dramatic about two Muslim boys, running away from a mob that is out to kill them and they seek shelter in a Hindu household, seemingly liberal mind and their presence through the night triggers off memories for the matriarch, the older woman, the grandmother".⁶

In the play, Dattani pleads for the cause of entire humanity irrespective of their creed and religion. He places humanism above all. He establishes that human pride and greed leads to the communal disturbance in Indian society Beena Agrawal asserts:

"Dattani establishes that the love of humanity eliminates the dark shadows of prejudice. The solution is not in external world but within man's own consciousness."⁷

The stage is dominated by horse shoes or crescent shape ramp, with the ends sloping to stage level. Most of the actions of the mob take place on the ramp. Within the confines of the ramp is a structure suggesting the house of the Gandhi's with just wooden blocks for furniture and on upstage is a detailed kitchen and Pooja rooms.

The mob in the play is symbolic of our own hatred and paranoia Each member of the mob is an individual yet "they melt into one seething whole as soon as politicians play on their fears and anxieties".⁸

All through the play mob/chorus remains on stage in a crouched or stylised position. The five who comprise this mob or chorus wear a mask which is at top a stick held before them. There are five Hindu and five Muslim masks. The playwright feels, ideally they should be wearing black-they do not belong to any religion but become Hindu or Muslim depending upon the mask they don't. These symbolic vehicles (the masks, the sticks, the black clothes) are what Blumer refers to as the 'Paraphernalia of ritual' by which he means such vehicles as slogans, songs, expressive gestures and costumes which foster feelings of common identity and sympathy. Within a ritual activity, such paraphernalia acquires a sentimental significance symbolizing the common feeling about the movement, their use serves as a constant reliving and re-enforcement about these mutual feelings. Such paraphernalia generates a sense of self-importance and provides one of the means by which people who participate in such dramas see themselves as playing certain roles.

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 the second act. The third act is very important both structurally and philosophically. The dramatist presents cross examination of Javed and Bobby for arriving at final solution of the common hatred.

The first act serves as an exposition and sets forth action. All the personages are introduced in the first act. Ramnik Gandhi is the head of the family. His wife Aruna is a very religious natured lady. She is very punctual and takes meticulous care in daily rituals. Their daughter Smita is studying in college. She is holding different views regarding life, faith, religion etc. she symbolizes the liberal and humanitarian ideology. Hardika is the oldest character in the play. She feels that her son, Ramnik, is blinded by his ideals. The present communal trouble reminds Hardika of the past one in which her father died. Her father was beaten on the streets of Hussainabad and died there during the post freedom communal trouble.

Chorus in the Play used by Dattani is a highly innovative device. It is not only effective but also serves the purpose of an eye-opener. It also highlights how and why the questions crop up in the heated mind to make the people act at the spur of the movement for no good to the either side:

Dattani muses over the issue psychologically and philosophically. He attempts to find out the seed cause of the communal hatred that has devastated the land. Like a scientist he believes in theory of cause and effect. He makes analytical inquiry into the problem for searching out the truth. The problem is in human consciousness and then in human behaviour. So, we need to understand human mind and see from where the trouble is originated

Dattani upholds that prejudice and blind faith nurture the issues of communal hatred. It is the outcome of the human attitude. He provides theory of forget and tolerate for fighting back denon of communal turmoil and tension. As Bobby says:

“Bobby: The tragedy is that is too much that is sacred. But if we understand and believe in one another nothing can be destroyed (puts on his footwear and looks at Hardika) and if you are willing to forget, I am willing to tolerate,”¹⁰

Mahesh Dattani excels in stage craft and art. Idea theatre is true to life. In Final Solution, he deals with the most complex and intricate issue of communal hatred and racial pride and prejudice towards other community. In order to achieve the desirable effect, the dramatist chooses the commonman's language of the native dialect. Local colour is maintained throughout by exploiting the prevalent myths and rituals. The author views that the communal riot takes place when mutual trust is betrayed by frenzy ignited by the mask. It is the mob mentality that causes the serious damage one should not lose one's identity to be swept by the mob. Prejudice or bias against the other community is harmful. The dramatist also dismisses the idea of sending the Muslim community to Pakistan. It is not the solution nor is it possible. Dattani has woven some other themes along with the main theme of turmoil. They are liberal ideology, guilt-consciousness,

transferred resentment; articulation of one's own voice and anger etc. Final Solution can be called the protest against subjugation of fanaticism, blind faith, patriarchal code, women etc.

Dattani has made symbolic use of chorus with mask. Interestingly the masks keep changing but the players of chorus remain the same. All human beings are alike. The mask is appearance. Humanity is reality and supreme truth. The players put on alternatively Hindu-Muslim mask and become the Hindu-Muslim mob that communal identity is outer form of the individual and human identity is the permanent and transcendental to all. When men are under masks, they question the identity and give chase to the other. It can be said that mask is like opium under the impact of which man behaves irrationally and causes chaos and destruction in society. In other words, communal hatred is caused under the intoxication of prejudice and blind faith.

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Notes and References:

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