

Plight of Daksha: Identity Crisis and Communal Violence in Final Solutions

Himani Sharma

Assistant Professor

Deptt. of English

PMN College

Rajpura, Punjab, India

himanisharma45@gmail.com

Abstract

Mahesh Dattani is one among India's avant garde dramatists. He worked as an actor, director, playwright, dancer and screenplay writer. He is one of the most serious contemporary playwrights writing in English. He is a master of language. He can express what he wants to say in any language. Throughout his dramas, he acts like a spokesman for all the marginalized people. His popular play 'Final Solutions' deals with the theme of communal hatred and violence. Exploring the issues of religion, hindu-muslim conflict, gender bias, generation thinking gap, Dattani seems to show the inner conflict inside each character in Play. Among all these characters, we sympathizes with Hardika the most. Her dear 'Diary' makes the things clear and we learn that she has witnessed this communal hatred for long time.

Keywords: Hatred, Religion, Alienation, Identity, Memory, Mob.

Mahesh Dattani is an accomplished dancer also. His Play 'Dance like a Man' won the best feature film award in English at the National Film Festival. His other notable works are

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.24113/ijellh.v8i1.10407>

‘Where there is a Will’, ‘Tara’, ‘Ek Alag Mausam’, ‘On a Muggy Night in Mumbai’, ‘Brave Fought the Queen’, ‘Thirty days in September’. He is the first Playwright in English awarded the Sahitya Academy award. In his teens, he read Edward Elbee’s ‘Who is afraid of Virginia Woolf’ which inspired him to write dramas. He has never been the student of literature, nor did he show any signs of literary creativity. But his dedication and passion for the theatre is praiseworthy.

It has been the matter of those days when Muslims and Hindus were slaughtering each other in the name of religion after the partition. The characters depicted in the play fall into two categories- one group is of Hindus such as Ramnik Gandhi, his mother-Hardika, his wife- Aruna and his daughter- Smita. Ramnik Gandhi is a liberal, rational and open minded business-man. Smita is a sensible, modern girl. His mother Aruna and Grandmother seem proud of their caste Hinduism who are prejudiced against Muslims and their culture. The second group comprises of Bobby and Javed, two muslim boys who took refuge in Gandhi’s house for one night since rigid hindu mob was chasing them. Dattani has employed the stylistic device- chorus so perfectly. This chorus represents mob in majority. It has been carrying hindu and muslim masks both. Since they are in majority, they have power in their hand. Dr. Beena Agarwal rightly observes,

“Dattani represents two communities through the change of masks. This device of changing the masks 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 Solutions. The mob frenzy of Muslims is vitalized in the second appearance of mob/ Chorus sacrificing their humanity and religious faith, they make mockery of Gods and goddesses”. (Agarwal, 47)

Ramnik Gandhi has given refuge to Bobby and Javed against the wishes of his wife and mother. His mother Hardika protests against Bobby and Javed’s presence in her home. She has strong reasons behind this hatred. Her earlier name was Daksha. Infact Daksha is

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.24113/ijellh.v8i1.10407>

Hardika's memory. Daksha through her diary communicates her life story, her life experiences with husband Hari and her in-laws family. Through her diary, we learn that she has been the victim of loneliness from the beginning. After marriage, her role was submissive and she became a typical housewife who was compelled to be silent by male dominant society. She feels alienated in her own home. Daksha was fond of singing filmy songs but Hari's family doesn't like it, she writes in her diary "All my dreams have been shattered... I can never be a singer like Noor Jehan. Hari's family is against my singing filmy songs" (Dattani, 4). She developed the friendship with Zarine, a girl from muslim community since she was also fond of Noor Jehan. They shared the same taste if not the same faith. She completely loses her identity in her new home, her in-laws home. When she hears the song of Noor Jehan from window of Zarine's house, her amusement enhances. Naladri. R. Chatterjee in his essay 'Daksha, Music and Transgressive Identity Formation in Final solutions' comments,

"The songs of Noor Jehan become the only way for Daksha to transfer her own religious identity. She is not allowed to have her identity, ever her name changes Daksha to Hardika to suit her husband's name Hari. As far as her religious identity is concerned, she is taught to look down upon the other people, those wretched people, horrible people"

Hardika really demands our mercy since her own family kept secrets from her. She hates Bobby and Javed because of their religion. To her, Bobby and Javed represent all bad in their community that was responsible for her alienation and misfortune. She has been told that Zarine's father's shop burnt up. Since they denied getting helped financially and job offer by her family, she considered them wretched people, horrible people She hated their false pride. Hence her friendship with Zarine resulted in a disastrous way. She has been living with this bitter fact since last forty years. Her entire world is shattered when Ramnik told her the truth. She learnt that Zarine's father's shop was burnt up by her husband Hari in the name

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.24113/ijellh.v8i1.10407>

of communal hatred. They burnt the shop as they wanted to grab their shop. Suman Sigroha's saying is being quoted here-

“It is not the forgetting that is important here, it is rather the selection of prevailing memories and her identification with them. If she forgets she will no longer be able to know herself. She remembers because she wants to retain an identity, any identity that is available to her” (Sigroha, 232-233).

It's not merely about her young age but Daksha remains alienated in her old age too. Her own son Ramnik advises his daughter Smita to not to listen to Baa. He said, “I don't like her listening to Baa...Baa doesn't tell her everything that happened. Baa doesn't know or she pretends she does not know everything. I don't want her telling my daughter that those people are all demons!”(11-12)

Daksha shares through her diary, her worst experience in Hussainabad at the time of getting Independence. Her father fought for Independence. He was beaten up by Muslims. She says “ he was beaten up on the streets while we were waiting for him at home to take us away from the hell, he was dying on the streets!”(70). How could she forget that mental and physical torture which she and her family faced? Her dilemma is visible through her communication with Bobby and Javed, “I hate the way you look! I hate the way you dress! I hate the way you eat! I cannot forget... I just cannot forget”(72).

To conclude, not only Hardika but each character is isolated in the play. There are no final solutions found which can end this prolonged communal hatred. Forgetting and tolerance can be the possible final solutions. All the six characters's reactions are different but they suffer from the same crisis. Demons of this communal hatred are not in the streets rather they are lurking inside ourselves. Dr. Dipti Agrawal is of the view here,

“The very insightful and sharp analysis of the nationalistic conceptualization of india's Islamic legacy is taken up by Dattani in his well performed play Final Solutions. In

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.24113/ijellh.v8i1.10407>

this play, Dattani bemoaned the takeover of the symbols of his religion by proponents of Hinduvata”(Agraval, 237).

As demons of this communal hatred are prevalent inside us, we must understand each other. We should love and accept each other. India is a secular country and we should respect its secularism.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.24113/ijellh.v8i1.10407>

Works Cited

- Agarwal, Beena. "Mahesh Dattani's Plays." , " *A New Horizon in Indian Theatre* ", Book Enclave, Jaipur, India, pp. 47.
- Dattani, Mahesh. "Final solutions", Surjeet Publications, Delhi, India, 2010. pp. 4.
- Chatterjee, Niladri R. "Daksha, Music and Transgressive Identity Formation in Final Solutions", "*Final Solutions: text and Criticism.*" Ed. Angelie multani, New Delhi, Pencraft international, 2009.
- Sigroha, Suman. "Role of Memory in Shaping Characters' Identity in Mahesh Dattani's Final Solutions", celt, volume: 13. Number 2, 2013. pp. 232-233.
- Dattani, Mahesh, Final solutions, Surjeet Publications, Delhi, India, 2010. pp. 11-12.
- Ibid, pp.70.
- Ibid, pp. 72.
- Agarwal, Dipti. "The Plays of Mahesh Dattani, A Study in Thematic Diversity and Dramatic Technique", Discovery Publishing House Pvt. Ltd, New Delhi- 110 002. pp.237.