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**MAHESH DATTANI'S *FINAL SOLUTIONS*: A COUNTER DISCOURSE
 TO THE ISSUE OF COMMUNALISM**

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Abstract:

Throughout the play Dattani objectively shows that fundamentalism has no special colour or religion and it is same everywhere. Whether be it Hindu mob or Muslim they act in same gesture in their frenzy. Through the use of horse-shoe shaped ramp, common mob of Hindu or Muslim, their masks, black dresses cross-fading of light and so many other theatrical devices Dattani has hinted at the universality of fundamentalism throughout the play. And the playwright thinks that only the common sense, spirit of toleration, understanding and the spirit of accommodating the “other” can pave the way towards “final solutions” of such recurrent problem of communalism in India in particular and the world in general.

Keywords: *Postcolonial, communalism, secularism, gender discrimination, fundamentalism.*

In his magnum opus *Final Solutions* (1994), which won the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1998, Mahesh Dattani probes deep into the complicated issue of communalism and fundamentalism in a multicultural, multilingual, multi-religious, multiracial country like India in particular and the world in general. In the backdrop of the Indian scenario Dattani here wants to highlight the fundamental problem of Fundamentalism, which does not change in the course of time or place and remains same in its ugly appearance whether be it the anti-Semitism and holocaust in Germany or the Hindu-Muslim clash in India. Mahesh Dattani wrote :

...my plays are a true reflection of my time, place and socio-economic background...in a country that has a myriad challenges to face politically, socially, artistically and culturally.
 (Dattani, 2000: xiv)

Asha Kuthari Chaudhuri thinks that at the backdrop of *Final Solutions* the national agitation in the post-Babri Masjid demolition period is captured. Asha Kuthari Chaudhuri has written about *Final Solutions* :

In confronting and negotiating responses to the post- Babri Masjid demolition and the post-Godhra Hindu-Muslim communal violence in Gujrat, through varied discursive frames of history and theatre, Dattani subsequently explores issues of identity, memory, suffering and loss, and the resulting “other”- bashing, either/or terms of reference within the larger political context through the various productions of this play. (78)

And Mahesh Dattani ultimately succeeds to show that this national problem of communalism is part of the International problem of Fundamentalism and Racism. Alyque Padamsee compares this Hindu-Muslim clash in *Final Solutions* : to the anti-Jewish attitude in Germany after World War I. Alyque Padamsee comments about *Final Solutions*:

As I see it, this is a play about transferred resentments. About looking for a scapegoat to hit out at when we feel let down, humiliated... Who was responsible for the humiliating state in Germany after World War I? Blame it on the Jews. They had siphoned off all the money! Who is responsible for us becoming a third-rate nation ? Get rid of the minorities and Ram Rajya will return! ...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, whites against blacks, Hindus against Muslims? Are they any final solutions? (Dattani, 2000:161)

And Dattani here like a typical humanist searches for an end, a solution to this continuing problem of accommodating the “other” by focusing on the dialectics of a few people on the microcosmic level of the family, which stands for the macrocosmic form of the community, nation as well as humanity at large.

By focusing on the incidents and conversation within the house of Ramnik Gandhi with the sudden arrival of the two Muslim “outsiders” Javed and Bobby, Dattani brings the problem of Communalism and Fundamentalism in the individual as well as the national level to the limelight. Here Dattani almost historicizes the issue of Communalism by the flashback of Hardika or the memory of young Daksha about the pre-independence history of India. So many times in this play Daksha refers to partition and the hardships, that the Hindu refugees had to face. She recalls the bitter experience of her leaving of Hussainabad with her family due to partition. Then they were beaten up on the streets and her father was killed. And now Hardika accuses Bobby and Javed as the representative of the Muslim community for the death of her father fifty years ago. Hardika's personal loss during the communal riot of Partition led her to bear hatred and prejudice against the Muslim community. Dattani here does not confine himself to the politics of the subcontinent. Dattani takes up the topic from international stance. Partition generates the problem of accommodation and later on it takes the problematic form of accommodating “other” in the psyche of a community. The problem of communalism, rising out of the religious difference in India, takes another form of the problem of Racism in U.K. and U.S.A. . Dattani highlights that this problem of Fundamentalism is universal. Hence Ramnik Gandhi, as the symbolic voice of the secular as well as sensible common man, objects to the wrong charge of Hardika against the Muslims. He suspects the personal version of History of Hardika as she intentionally highlights certain parts of it and suppresses some portion of it. Ramnik rejects her personal version of the History of Partition as biased. But Aruna tells him that yet this partial version of History by Hardika is true and it cannot be rejected as it is a segment of the holistic History of a Nation.

Dattani emphasizes on the role of rumor in spreading riot and communal hatred in this play. When Tasneem, being panic stricken, says that during the Communal riot, the Muslim girls' hostel was bombed, Ramnik tells her to keep patience and apply common sense against such rumor. Ramnik says if Tasneem's hostel was bombed everyone would be hurt. It was probably some hooligan, teasing the girls by making any sounds like bomb and the girls got scared. Now Ramnik shows that from such rumours riots start and communal violence is spread. Such rumour can damage the unity of the semi-educated, semi-social and semi-feudal India.

Again in this play Dattani shows that religion plays an important role in spreading Communalism in India. Through the character of Javed, Dattani shows how religious fanaticism can make a man blind, who unconsciously goes on to create riot out of his religious zeal. Dattani shows here how one's extreme religious enthusiasm can lead one to attack the believers in other religion. Again through the character of Aruna it is revealed that sometimes even pious and religious- minded people, who are not fanatics, can ultimately hurt the feelings of the people of other religion. Aruna too very often says that she does not hate others' religion, but she wants to keep her God pure. Though Aruna is innocent in her way, her many gestures, actions and words too often unintentionally hurt Bobby and Javed, making them always feel as “other” as well as minorities. When in the first act Javed and Bobby asks for water, the behavior of Aruna is symbolic:

Ramnik: I think we should at least try and be civilized.

Aruna: Yes, of course.

Ramnik: So bring them a glass of water.

Aruna stares at him as if he has asked her to go and kill someone.

Bobby: It's okay, we are not thirsty. . .

Javed (sarcastically); I am not thirsty.

Aruna goes to the matka and quickly pours out water into two glasses and places them very

delicately in front of the two men. They both quickly gulp down the water. Obviously they were thirsty. Aruna is aghast. She was sure they wouldn't drink. ...Aruna holds the glasses with her thumbs and index fingers, on the sides which have not been touched by their lips. She takes them away and keeps them separate from the other glasses. (184-85)

This gesture of Aruna makes Javed and Bobby feel ashamed as the “other”.

Dattani shows that religion which is misinterpreted and used as a basis of Fundamentalism, can be used as a weapon against Fundamentalism through their proper interpretation. Every religion speaks for unity and harmony. If religious fanatics like Javed can be taught the words of unity through the proper interpretation of scriptures, then only they can hit at the false base of fundamentalism. At one point Javed says that Bobby tried to dissuade him from being swayed over by the hypnotic voice of the Fundamentalists but Javed could not believe Bobby as Bobby had no faith in religion. Javed could be taught only through the proper interpretation of religion by a religious-minded person.

Again through the example of Javed, Dattani shows that religious violence and communal hatred are calculatedly organized by the political parties. In order to fulfill their personal interest political parties try to keep alive the spirit of dissent among the members of different religious sects by hiring men to make riots. Javed acted as such hired-riot-maker, who spreads communal discord intentionally. Javed was an innocent, sensitive man in his heart of hearts. But being swayed over by the hypnotic words of fundamentalists and being hired as a riot-maker by the political parties, Javed unconsciously went on to throw the first stone on the chariot during the “rathayatra” to create the riot and stab the Hindu priest. But before stabbing the priest the consciousness of his innocent, sensitive mind comes back. So he drops the knife and controls himself from committing such inhuman crime. It clearly shows that such young people like Javed are not really corrupt at heart, but they are initiated to such communal violence by different master-minds.

In this play Dattani also wants to show that our communal hatred is often an outcome of what Alyque Padamsee calls “transferred resentments”. Dattani here latently shows that we very often like to transfer our resentment on “others”. Whenever we are unhappy, we like to blame some “scapegoat” figure and transfer our resentment on him. When young Daksha was beaten up by her husband and his family, she transferred her anger on Zarine and her Muslim community as she could not stand up against her own in-laws. Again Javed's anger against the fanatic Hindu who thought that his letter was contaminated by the touch of a Muslim boy like Javed was transferred on the symbolic sound of the Hindu prayer bell in particular, and the Hindu community in general.

Dattani also shows that sometimes people try to fish in the troubled water of communal riot. During the commotion of communal riots some persons try to fulfill their personal interest. As the father of Ramnik Gandhi needed a shop, he burnt out the shop of Zarine's father in the name of communal hatred and then they easily bought the burnt shop at the half of its original value. The burden of this dark truth creates a permanent scar in the mind of Ramnik Gandhi and Hardika.

Finally, by making Bobby to play the “final deed” of liberation through his tender handling and caressing the Hindu God, Dattani almost shatters and subverts all the stifling structures of his given social identity. Placing the idol of the Hindu God in his palm Bobby says about the “final solution” to this problem of communal discord:

See! See! I am touching God... Your God! My flesh is holding him! Look, Javed! And He does not mind! ...He does not burn me to ashes! He does not cry out from the heavens saying He has been contaminated! ...Look how he rests on my hands! He knows I cannot harm Him...I don't believe in Him but He believes in me...because it belongs to human being who believes, and tolerates, and respects what other human beings believe. That is the strongest fragrance in the world. . . And if you are willing to forget, I am willing to tolerate.(224-25)

Thus, Bobby, as the mouthpiece of the playwright, hints that only the spirit of tolerance, co-operation and accommodating the “other” is the “final solution” to this problem of communal discord. Throughout the play Dattani objectively shows that fundamentalism has no special colour or religion and it is same everywhere. Whether be it Hindu mob or Muslim they act in same gesture in their frenzy. Through the use of horse-shoe shaped ramp, common mob of Hindu or Muslim, their masks, black dresses cross-fading of light and so many other theatrical devices Dattani has hinted at the universality of fundamentalism throughout the play. And the playwright thinks that only the common sense, spirit of toleration, understanding and the spirit of accommodating the “other” can pave the way towards “final solutions” of such recurrent problem of communalism in India in particular and the world in general. For such objective assessment of such sensitive issue in this play, Dattani's work was acclaimed in Sahitya Akademy Award citation (1998) for probing deep into “tangled attitudes in contemporary India towards communal differences, consumerism and gender...”

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