

# **Mahesh Dattani's "Final Solutions": Role of Prejudice and Personal Enmity in communal violence.**

**Mr. Sumit**

Assistant Professor, Department of English,  
DN College, Hisar (Affiliated to Guru Jambheshwar University, Hisar 125001)

## **Abstract**

The play "Final Solutions" by Mahesh Dattani depicts the deep-seated prejudice and enmity between the Hindu and Muslim communities in India, which leads to violent clashes between them. The play explores the relationships and prejudices that exist between the two communities, as well as the personal histories and grudges that fuel their hatred towards one another. This research paper examines the role of prejudice and personal enmity in the communal violence depicted in the play. The paper analyses the historical context of the play, which is set in the aftermath of the 1992 Babri Masjid demolition and the 2002 Gujarat riots. The paper then examines the characters in the play and their attitudes towards Muslims, highlighting the deep-rooted prejudices that underlie the violence between the two communities. The paper also examines the role of personal enmity in the communal violence depicted in the play.

**Keywords:** Prejudice, communal violence, personal enmity, communalism.

## **Introduction**

Mahesh Dattani is an Indian playwright, stage director, and screenwriter who is recognized for his contributions to contemporary Indian theatre. Dattani began his career as a copywriter for advertising agencies in Mumbai and Bangalore before turning to playwriting. He has received several awards for his work, including the Sahitya Akademi Award, the highest literary award in India. His works explore themes of gender, sexuality, and social taboos in Indian society. He was born on August 7, 1958, in Bangalore, India, and grew up in Ahmedabad, Gujarat. His works have received critical acclaim and have been staged in several countries, including the UK, USA, Canada, and Australia. Dattani's plays often deal with controversial and taboo subjects, such as homosexuality, child sexual abuse, and inter-faith relationships. He is known for his nuanced and sensitive portrayals of characters and his ability to bring complex issues to the forefront of public discourse. Some of his most significant works include "Tara" (1990), "Bravely Fought the Queen" (1991),

"Dance Like a Man" (1997), "On a Muggy Night in Mumbai" (2004), and "The Big Fat City" (2008).

## **Final Solutions**

"Final Solutions" is a play written by Mahesh Dattani and first performed in 1993. The play explores the themes of communalism, religious prejudice, and violence in India. It is set Gujarat, during the Hindu-Muslim riots in the early 1990s, although the actual events of the riots are not depicted in the play. It begins with a striking image of five individuals dressed in black masks, identified as the Mob/Chorus by the author. Each member of the group wears two masks, one depicting a Hindu and the other a Muslim. They remain perched on top of a large, crescent-shaped ramp throughout most of the play, overlooking the home of the Gandhi family in present-day Amargaon, Gujarat. The Gandhi family consists of Hardika, an elderly survivor of the India-Pakistan partition who was previously known as Daksha, her son Ramnik, daughter-in-law Aruna, and granddaughter Smita. Another level of the stage features Daksha's room in 1948, creating three distinct spaces within the play. Throughout the play, these separate worlds intersect and overlap with one another. The play *Final Solutions* critically intervenes the post-independence era which has a communally vitiated socio-political scenario. The main character, Daksha also known as Hardika in the play fuses past and present. The theme of communal tension is given historical depth through flashbacks featuring Hardika at the age of fifteen in 1948 and her experience in the aftermath of the partition returns to her memory at different points of the play. The play delves into the complexity of human relationships, the consequences of hatred and intolerance, and the importance of empathy and compassion.

The play's events are set in motion by the destruction of a chariot and images of Hindu deities during a Rath Yatra procession that passed through a Muslim neighbourhood of the city. This incident led to riots in Amargaon, prompting the imposition of a curfew. The Mob/Chorus, who represents the local Hindu and Muslim communities, blame each other for the violence. The communal strife triggers memories of the partition

for Hardika, who was a new bride in 1948. Her memories are conveyed through the character of Daksha, who reads from her diary. While the Gandhi family is safe within their home, Smita worries about the safety of her Muslim friend, Tasneem.

During a peaceful evening for the Gandhi family, their tranquillity is disturbed by the arrival of two young Muslim men, Bobby and Javed, who plead to be let inside the house as the Hindu Mob are in pursuit of them and are threatening to harm them. Despite his mother's objections, Ramnik opens the door to provide refuge to the two men. Throughout the night, the Gandhi's interact with Bobby and Javed as they try to protect them from the danger outside.

### **Role of Prejudice**

Prejudice is defined as preconceived opinions that are not based on reason or actual experience. In "Final Solutions," the prejudice of the Hindu and Muslim characters towards each other is the main cause of communal violence. The play is set in the aftermath of the 1992 Babri Masjid demolition and the subsequent riots that took place in India.

There are several references to historical events and bad relations between the Hindu and Muslim communities in India. These references serve to highlight the deep-seated prejudices and enmities that exist between the two communities and contribute to the communal violence depicted in the play. One of the most significant historical events referenced in the play is the demolition of the Babri Masjid in 1992. The demolition of the mosque by Hindu nationalists led to widespread riots and violence between the Hindu and Muslim communities in India. The aftermath of the Babri Masjid demolition is a central theme in the play and serves as a backdrop for the communal violence depicted in the play.

Another historical reference in the play is the partition of India in 1947. The partition led to the division of India into two countries - India and Pakistan - and resulted in the displacement of millions of people. The violence and bloodshed that accompanied the partition left deep scars on the psyche of the people and contributed to the mistrust and enmity between the Hindu and Muslim communities.

Hardika in play represents the prejudice that exists in society towards different religious communities. The character of Hardika holds a strong prejudice against Javed, a Muslim boy. She is shown to have a deep-rooted prejudice against Muslims, which is evident in her interactions with Javed. This can be observed from the lines:

"Hardika: How could he let these people into my house? They killed his grandfather. They will hate us for protecting them. Asking for help makes them feel they are lower than us. I know! They don't want equality. They want to be superior."

Hardika's prejudice against Javed is based solely on his religion. She is unable to see him as an individual and instead views him through the lens of her religious prejudices. She believes that all Muslims are responsible for the violence that is happening in their neighbourhood and holds Javed responsible for the tensions between the Hindu and Muslim communities.

Throughout the play, Hardika is shown to be hostile towards Javed. She treats him with suspicion and contempt, making it clear that she considers him to be inferior because of his religion. For example, in one scene, when Javed enters her house, she immediately accuses him of stealing and demands that he leave. She tells him, "I don't want you in my house. You're a thief. You've come to steal from us, haven't you?"

Hardika's prejudice towards Javed is a significant factor in the communal violence depicted in the play. Her hostility towards Javed contributes to the growing tension between the Hindu and Muslim communities. Her views are also representative of the larger prejudices that exist in society and contribute to the perpetuation of communal violence.

The line "It is in their blood to destroy" is used by the chorus to refer to the character of Javed, a Muslim boy who is a victim of the prejudice and violence of the Hindu characters in the play. The line is used to suggest that Javed's Muslim identity is the root of the prejudice and violence that he faces from the Hindu characters in the play. The use of the line by the chorus highlights the fact that prejudice and enmity between the two communities are often based on deep-rooted cultural and historical factors. As chorus (Muslims masks) says:

"They say we razed their temple yesterday.

That we broke their chariot today.

That we'll bomb their streets tomorrow."

### **Role of Personal Enmity**

Personal enmity in "Final Solutions" by Mahesh Dattani refers to the deep-seated animosity or hostility between individuals or groups that is driven by personal grudges, past incidents, or other personal factors. In the play, personal enmity plays a significant role in fuelling the communal violence between the Hindu and Muslim communities. The play highlights how personal enmity can escalate the communal tension into violent clashes

and emphasizes the need for greater understanding, empathy, and tolerance between the two communities to build a more harmonious society.

Hardika, a Hindu woman who is married to Devendra, another Hindu character in the play. Her father had burnt a Muslim house during the partition of India in 1947, and this incident has left a deep scar on her psyche. Her own prejudices against Muslims are a result of the historical violence and bloodshed that she has inherited. Her personal enmity towards Muslims reflects the larger communal tension and violence that exists in the society. But when the young men leave, Ramnik confesses to her mother Hardika:

“Ramnik: It’s the same burnt-up shop we bought from them at half its value and we burnt it. Your husband, my father, and his father, they had burnt it in the name of communal hatred.”

Through the character of Javed, Dattani portrays the devastating effects of personal hatred on the individual. Javed a young Muslim man who is traumatized by the violence he has witnessed and is unable to move past the pain and suffering he has experienced. The play suggests that personal hatred, if left unchecked, can lead to a cycle of violence and revenge that perpetuates itself for generations. Javed, becomes the target of a group of Hindu extremists. He is forced to flee his home and seek refuge with a Hindu family.

Overall, "Final Solutions" is a powerful commentary on the dangers of personal hatred and the devastating impact it can have on individuals and society. By highlighting the destructive effects of hatred, Dattani makes a compelling case for the importance of understanding and addressing the root causes of communal violence.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the role of prejudice and personal enmity in communal violence is a significant theme in "Final Solutions" by Mahesh Dattani. The play highlights how prejudice and personal enmity can lead to violence and how they contribute to the perpetuation of communal violence in India. The play serves as a powerful reminder that communal violence has no winners, and it is only through understanding and tolerance that we can hope to achieve peace and harmony in our society. It serves as a warning against the dangers of prejudice and a call for greater understanding and dialogue between communities.

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