

International Journal Research Publication Analysis

Page: 01-04

THEME OF COMMUNAL DISHARMONY IN MAHESH DATTANI'S 'FINAL SOLUTIONS'

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Article Received: 23 May 2026

Article Revised: 12 June 2026

Published on: 01 July 2026

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DOI: <https://doi-doi.org/101555/ijrpa.5887>

ABSTRACT

'Final Solutions' is a masterpiece of Indian English Drama. The play fetched worldwide acclaim for Mahesh Dattani. The play proved to be a turning point in Mahesh Dattani's career as an Indian English playwright. India before the invasion of Britishers was functioning in harmony and peace. British East India Company came to India for commercial purpose. They ruled for more than hundred fifty years. They created religious conflict by partition of the country. After the partition of India and Pakistan, there were groups of refugees who suffered a lot while leaving their native place. The hatred between different religious groups created lots of problem in the Indian society. Riots were rampant during portion of India and Pakistan. The theme of Final Solutions moves around three major aspects - communal disharmony, distrust and the effect of distrust on Indian family.

KEYWORDS: Communal, Disharmony, Riot, Tension, Partition, Distrust.

INTRODUCTION

'Final Solutions' is a stage play in three acts. It was first performed at Guru Nanak Bhavan, Bangalore on July 10, 1993. It was subsequently performed at Tara Theatre, Mumbai on 11th December 1993. It was directed by Alaquye Padamshee. It was translated into Hindi by SahidAnwar. The play focuses on the problem of communal disharmony between the Hindus and Muslims in India. Communal riots took seed in 1947 at the time of partition. The play was written before the destruction of BabriMasjid in 1992. However, it was performed the following year in 1993. " yes, things have not changed that much " says Hardika reading her

diary. She wrote her diary forty years back. She is thinking back on the riots that exploded in 1947, when her father was killed.

Dattani places history as an active character in this play. Opening with two main figures of Hardika as a young girl- then known as Daksha, the first scene shows us the writing of history. This diary establishes the history of division - the sense of "us" and "them". It establishes link between personal experience and political belief and social hatred. History is present throughout the action of the play. Sometimes it repeats itself. History is also evoked and used by almost every character on stage as a justification. History plays the role of an active character in the play which leads action of the play further.

There are six characters who actually speak in the play. Hardika is at the centre of the play. The plot of the play moves backward and forward. When it moves forward, Daksha is Hardika - Ramnik's mother. Action in Ramnik's house is sketched and when it moves backward, Daksha is a young bride enunciating her troublesome life. Through her character, Dattani presents the striving of Indian women to lead an individual life and their suffering. The play opens with her reading the Diary as Daksha; and ends with her feeling of remorse for the shameful deed - that her husband and her brother in law had burnt Zairi's father's shop in the name of communal hatred.

Aruna, Hardika's daughter in law and Ramnik's wife is a Gujarati housewife. She does Pooja path every day. Dattani presents her character as a prudish Hindu Woman who believes that prayers always protect the house. She is a great Krishna devotee. God fearing Aruna believes in Krishna very much. She is proud of being Hindu. Finally, Aruna realises the position of an outsider. She is changed but not crushed. She remains steadfast to her faith, but changes with time.

Ramnik is Hardika's son. He is liberal minded. He has lived his life bearing the shame of his father and grandfather's black deed of burning the shop of an innocent Muslim. He saves the two boys Bobby and Javed despite the shouts of the angry mob outside his house. He also offers Javed a job. He wants to compensate the wrongs his family has done with the Muslim family. He transfers his anger at his own father's black deed which he cannot forget. Hindu Pooja oath reminded him of the burnt shop of the Muslim. He thinks of himself as liberal minded. He came to know that Smita knows Javed and Bobby. He wants to know how she knows them. Ramnik despite his tolerant image is extremely uncomfortable with the idea of his daughter knowing the two socially personally. He is a progressive socialist. He not only saved Javed and Bobby from the mob, he also forces Aruna to serve them water. At the

end, he disclosed the secret of the burnt up shop to his mother Hardika. She will live the rest of her years in shame. Ramnik has lived all his life with this.

Bobby and Javed play an important role in the play. The theme of communal disharmony, identity crisis and transferred resentment are worked out through these characters. Javed is a young muslim fundamentalist. He is a member of a gang that has long nursed a resentment against the world because of the 'otherness' and the demonstration of his community and religious identity by the dominant community. Javed has a strong belief in himself and his own faith. It is this belief that has led him to the path of violence. There is an unexpected alliance between Javed and Aruna. They are both individuals who have a strong belief in their faith, in the things that shape their identities and their ideas of their selves. It is only Javed, the 'other' believer who is able to recognize and accept Aruna's position.

Bobby grew up with Javed but was not happy with his identity as a Muslim. He was ashamed of being a Muslim. He pretended that he was not a part of the community.. He chose to be called Bobby instead of Babban. He always tries to understand others and has faith in humanity. In the last scene, Bobby picks up the idol of Krishna from the Pooja room and holds it in his hand. He says, " See Javed ! He doesn't humiliate you. He does not cringe from my touch. He welcomes the warmth of my hand He feels me. And He welcomes it ! I told Him who is sacred to them but I do not commit sacrilege. (To Aruna) You can bathe Him day and night, you can splash holy waters on Him, but you can not remove my touch from His form. You can not remove my smell with sandal paste and attars and fragrant flowers because 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.. Thus Bobby playing the role of a pacifist between Ramnik and Javed, handling and caressing the Hindu God, gives the message of liberalism that is humanity.

A minor character, Kanta is a maid servant. She is mentioned in the diary by Daksha. Kanta gives Daksha details about Zairene's family. Kanta disapproves Daksha's friendly relations with Zarine. Daksha wanted to know about Zaine's well being. Daksha never trusted Kanta as she cooked up her own stories when she did not know the truth. Kanta is a liar too. She lied to Hari that Daksha has eaten the food from Zarine's family and for this Daksha had been beaten ruthlessly by Hari.

As Alyque Padamsee mentions in the note to the play, Final Solutions is a play about transferred resentment. It is a play about looking for a scapegoat to hit out when we feel let down and humiliated. Anger is considered as an enemy of human being. Anger can cause violence. It can ruin relationships. We take out our anger on somebody from the family to

outside or reverse. Thus is transferred resentment. The play opens with Daksha reading her diary. These are the incidents that occurred forty years back. At the same time the Chorus with Hindu mass burst with angry words about the Muslims. They are blaming them for breaking chariot.

At the backdrop of communal violence, Dattani deals with anti fanaticism concerns in his play *Final Solutions*. Dattani presents not only religious fanaticism but fanaticism in all walk of life. As a successful playwright, he 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 within society. It exists at the micro cosmic level of the family. The fanaticism of Hardika (older Daksha) is a springing response to her confinement. The fanaticism of Aruna who is the archetype pious Hindu Woman stifles her daughter. Fanaticism of Javed propels him into joining forces with the politicians who always talked about motherland and fighting to save our fate. Contrasted with such fanaticism is the doubtful pacifism of Bobby. The shaky liberalism of Ramnik and the escapism of Smita arising from sheer avoidance has been portrayed beautifully in the play. 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.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, the play was a turning point for Dattani in more sense than one. He turned here from the intensely personal focus that marked his earlier works. He looked at history and its ramifications within the localized context, within the localized context, with its simple and powerful visual texture that made it one of his most important plays. It fetched for him the prestigious Sahitya Academy Award and created a space in the Indian literary scenario for Indian drama in English.

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