



Communal Harmony: A Cardinal Component of Higher Education with special reference to Mahesh Dattani's 'Final Solutions'

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“If we claim to be civilized, we must develop thought for the poor and the suffering, chivalrous regard and respect for women, faith in human brotherhood regardless of race or color, nation or religion, love of peace and freedom, abhorrence of cruelty and ceaseless devotion to the claims of justice.....Universities must stand for these ideal causes which can never be lost so as men seek wisdom and follow righteousness.”

After the formation of University Education Commission (1948-49) under the chairmanship of the great philosopher-educationist Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, the objectives of higher education have been defined and broadened time to time according to the need of the country and the people. But the basic objective of higher education remained the same i.e. to acquire knowledge and wisdom. These two key- words 'knowledge' and 'wisdom' comprise all the objectives mentioned by Education commission (1964-66) headed by Dr. D. S. Kothari and National Policy on Education 1986. Knowledge assimilates intellectual attainment, research-based scientific achievements, discoveries, inventions, innovations in any field of education while Wisdom comprises sensitivity for human-beings regardless sex, caste, religion, color and nation at the same time for environment as well, social - justice, gender-equality, promotion of democratic and patriotic fervor, preservation and inculcation of values and samaskara.

India is known for cultural diversity; it is said, ' Here, dialect and taste of the water change at every four mile.' It is a matter of pride that people of innumerable castes, creed, community and religion have been living in the country at the same time it is also a big challenge for the country as well as for the education- system. We cannot deny the fact that caste, religion and religious philosophies are the sensitive issues for common men. These issues are used and misused by religious priests and political parties in their self-vested interests.

In bringing Communal harmony, Literature plays an important role because language and literature are the part and parcel of any culture, it brings forth multi-culturism in the multicultural class room. Colonial and Post-colonial, Indo- Anglian writers have tried to bring a forbearance and tolerance among the people of diverse cultures. In English language teaching class, it is a big challenge for a teacher to deal with the multifarious and multi-faceted issues of



different cultures simultaneously. During his interaction with text and his teaching, he comes across with many ideologies where his personal ideology is assaulted, his thoughts are torn and a new thinking shoots out leaving his roots behind.

In the same way a poet or a writer brings a national and social harmony and integration among cultures. Through his plays Mahesh Dattani raised many issues like Gender-politics, Gender-discrimination, communal harmony and ethnicity. In this context I tried to evaluate 'Final Solutions' for which he won the Sahitya Academy Award in 1998. He penned this play in December 1992 at the Deccan Herald Theatre Festival. He showed a rare courage to touch the sensitive issue of communalism and gave a solution for the threats obstructing national integration and social compassion.

Final Solutions

India is like a necklace studded with many precious gems and stones that is Hindu, Muslim, Sikh and Christian. Social and religious harmony is the soul of this great nation which makes us more humane and strong but we are pseudo-secularist in a secular nation. **Final Solutions**, is a story of a family comprising of a grandmother Hardika, Ramnik the father, Aruna the mother and Smita the daughter; the family gives refuge to two muslim boys Javed and Bobby. Javed is involved in the riot-rousing which broke out after the stabbing of a Poojari and breaking of Idols in Rath Yatra procession.

The play reveals two poles - religious demagogue and liberalism and conservative ideology of old grandmother Hardika and mother Aruna and shimmering humanism in young Smita to whom intellectual and rational thinking and secular fervor are much more important than old demagogues. Very skillfully and deftly, Mahesh Dattani raises the issues of prejudices and resultant communalism in India and tries to give the solution of the deep rooted problem which was fed and watered during the time of partition and scars of that time are not yet vanished. The play opens with young Daksha, a girl of fifteen who is the grandmother Hardika in present, she is reading a diary which informs how the riots broke out in Hussainabad, the stones were pelted on her ancestral house, her endeared gramophone and entire collection of records of Shamshad Begum, Noor Jehan and Suraiya cracked and her father was beaten to death. The old grandmother Hardika remembers her friend Zarine and hatred between her father-in-law and Zarine's father.

In Act III of the play Dattani tries to explore the causes of communalism in India. He raises heated questions in the play that from where the tolerance comes. Does it come in inheritance? Do prejudices develop because of circumstances? Do they develop through internal factors? About this communal hatred Alyque Padamsee, the great director of his plays commented - 'The demons of communal hatred are not out on the street.... they are lurking inside our selves' To understand these internal and external causes and their solutions, I tried to examine the characters of the play, according to their views and actions. Javed is brother of Tasneem who is Smita's friend, he was a 'Hero, Smart and Cocksure' not born a riot-rouser. Babban i.e., Bobby recalls Javed's boy hood incident which converted him into a scornful young man. One day they



were playing a cricket match, the post man came to deliver mails and he handed over the neighbour's letter to Javed to give the owner. But the neighbor asked loudly to leave the letter on the wall, he came, he wiped the wall, the gate and the letter. Next day the neighbor came out yelling on the boys because somebody had dropped pieces of meat and bones in to his back yard. Bobby felt guilty; he did not speak to Javed for many days.

"For months whenever we played cricket and heard the bell, we remembered that incident and we avoided looking at Javed. And for Javed he was – in his own eyes- no longer the neighbour hood hero." page 200

As a young man, Javed is used like other young boys who are swayed and persuaded for political, social and personal gains. Dattani poignantly points out the mental status of Javed that his communal hatred is circumstantial; he entered into the procession of Rath Yatra where the Poojari was stabbed and idols were fallen down. First he screamed with pleasure but suddenly that scream was filled with pain and horror. They have 'Delusions of valour and heroism: they were just hired hoodlums. Very conspicuously Dattani reveals the mental condition of the strayed youth-

"And then...the vans came. Soon after the sun-set. The dullness of the day vanished. I became a hero once again. We hugged each other for being two sons of our mothers" page 206

Babban and Smita are liberal and rational human beings. Smita and Babban were attracted to each other but he loves Javed's sister Tasneem. She accepts-

"There's nothing between us.....anymore. it was just a.....there wasn't much between us." page 217

Aruna is a common woman, her religion is her pride, she is bound in her pseudo-religious constraints. For her Smita's familiarity with Javed and Bobby, comes as a shock. She retorts her

Aruna You.....you know them?

Smita I know who they are.

Ramnik Why didn't you tell us?

Smita I was too confused.

Hardika Where did you meet them? In college?

Smita Well --- yes.

Ramnik What does that mean?

Aruna Stop her studies! From now on she can stay at home.

page 188

Smita does not believe in fasting and praying, going to temple, making garland and reciting religious hymns. Smita and Bobby do not believe in false beliefs and prejudices. They are better human beings because religion was not a constraint for them; it was a mast which helps to move the bark in a good speed. True religion provides freedom, freedom to love, freedom to help, freedom to breathe in fresh air. True religion does not mean insecurity that it will be polluted and



contaminated by touching other’s hand. She bursts out vehemently-

“Come on mummy. This is a time for strength! I am so glad these two dropped in. we would never have spoken about what makes us different from each other”

page 213

In the morning when Arun goes to worship, Bobby clutches the image of Krishna and scream with joy.

Bobby Your God! My flesh is holding Him! Look, Javed! And He does not mind!See, Javed! He does not humiliate you...He welcomes the warmth of my hand. He feels me. You cannot remove my touch from His form.

page 224

Hardika has her own reasons of hatred. Her father was beaten to death in Hussainabad at the time of partition. Zarine was her best friend, her father’s dry fruits and milk shop caught fire and he went to Hardika’s father-in-law to ask for a job but they denied and after wards her father-in-law purchased the burnt shop in low price. So Zarine started hating Hardika .She recalls that she was beaten very badly by her husband Hari because she went her home and sat with them on dining table. She also wanted to revolt but she did not, she locked herself in her fake pride.

Ramnik is a link between old India and India of our dreams. He knows the causes of present chaos; he is terribly guilty of doings of his father who burnt the shop of Zarine’s father. He feels much ashamed and guilty-

“It’s their shop. 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 it burnt in the name of communal hatred. Because we wanted a shop. Also they learnt that... those people were planning to start a mill like our own. I can’t take it any longer. I don’t think I will be able to step into that shop again...” page 226

So, he offered the job to Javed but he denied to accept. He is optimistic about their return but it should notbe too late. Hence Dattani provides many solutions of this national problem which pops up any time, at any place and strikes and our national soul. The political leaders have their self-vested interests, they befool us, they do not let them feel their India, their country, their home and the religious mongers spin the people as a top. It is a time of awakening, time to stand up and time to move on. The youth, the teachers and the classrooms have final solutions only they can remove the communal hatred by proper education, by proper teaching, by proper awareness.

Thus Dattani is a play-wright who writes about human-relationship and human sensibility. **Final Solutions** has a powerful contemporary resonance and communal harmony, love, peace, values, sensitivity are the ultimate components of higher education in present India.





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