

Peaceful Coexistence in Mahesh Dattani's *Final Solutions*

Nujood Salim Al-Waheebi¹ & Azeez Jasim Mohammed²

Abstract

This project based on dealing with the contemporary issue that Dattani presents throughout his play *Final Solutions*. The issue relates to religious racism of modern urban Indian culture. It discusses two opposite concepts; religious racism and religious compromise. This paper looks at how sectarianism makes people behave as evil like toward other people those belong to different religion. However, the events in this play represents different times; past, present and future. The grandmother, Daksha, is an example of the past while Ramanik and Aruna represent the present time. Bobby, Javed and Smita reflect the future as being young generation. On one hand, it describes the delegations of the fundamental and radical thinking upon the society and family's relationship, especially between mother and daughter. On the other hand, religious compromise is the main concept in this project to end this conflict and keep nations progressed.

Keywords: Coexistence, Final solutions, Religious compromise, Mahesh Dattani, Feminism.

1. Introduction

Mahesh Dattani was born in Bangalore in 1958. He is an Indian English playwright, filmmaker, director, writer and actor. As a writer, he wrote several plays like *Final Solutions*, *Tara*, *Dance like a Man*, *Thirty Days in September*, *Bravely Fought the Queen*, *The Big Fat City* and others. He has known to be a modern playwright because he has contributed in making a substantial standing of the current time by attacking the burning problems that take over the view of publicity. In 1998, he has considered as the first English playwright to be the one who won the Sahitya Academy award. He gives a name for theatre, which is "A craft of communicating through the language of action". He writes the plays by keeping in mind the stage directions.

This paper attempts to highlight and analyze the internal conflicts in the play. The center of discussion is the religious tolerance as a platform leads to peaceful coexistence. Dattani's *Final Solutions* reflects communal issues in which hatred and fears are aroused among individuals and varied, by the help of the sectarians, from one individual to another. It attempts to raise some questions as the main problem of this research to prove the main idea behind the positive effect of the religious coexistence in a society. What makes Dattani write this play? And what are the solutions that he suggests to end this communal conflict? Is there any story behind Dattani's *Final Solutions*? What are the outcomes of the communal riots in India? While the main idea of this work focuses on the question; How can people achieve peaceful and progressive society?

This study aims to find out the spark of the religious racism in a community. It also seeks to find out the reasons and motifs behind *Final Solutions*. It seeks to study the final solutions that Dattani provides to put an end to the religious conflict, not only in India but also all over the world to bring about peaceful communities. As a way to compare it to Arabic literature, the study gives an example of peaceful coexistence in the Arab world. Thus, if the society achieves harmony and coexistence among religions the societies can be developed and progressed.

2. Literature Review

Mahesh Dattani remains one of the best and serious contemporary playwrights in Indian English Drama. He touches various aspects of Indian raises and society through his plays. *Final Solutions* is one of his plays that brought him "Academia Award" and it is a very meaningful play. It is first profound in Bangalore in 1993 and contains three acts. The play deals deeply with the issue of the historical past and lays its accolade in acknowledging the similarity of two religions and respecting their differences. In the present paper, a literature review made below to find out the critical articles and researches around Dattani's *Final Solutions*.

¹ Department of English Language and Literature, Al-Zahraa College for Women. Oman.

² Department of English Language and Literature, Al-Zahraa College for Women. Oman. Email: aziz@zcv.edu.om

Let us start in 2012 when Dashrath Gatt in his review titled "Will there ever be a final solution? Mahesh Dattani's *Final Solutions* revisited in the light of communal divide" points out:

The playwright directly did not answer the question raised by himself in *Final Solutions*; rather he drops certain hints with dialogues of his characters in wiping out his communal malaise, which has caused a lot of disquiet among the people living both side of the borders. (129)

If Dattani gives final solutions in his *Final Solutions* in public, as Gatt expects, there will not be covert meaning that calls for the readers analyses. Dattani did not say his final solutions directly, but he implies them in the dialogues and the questions raised by the characters. Amongst them, Bobby who speaks frankly: "The tragedy is that there is too much that is sacred. But if we understand and believe in one another, nothing can be destroyed....[to Hardika] And if you are willing to forget, I am willing to tolerate" (Dattani, 1998: 74). In these words, Dattani comes to give the suggestion of coexistence and tolerance.

But Vivek Bharti in "Mahesh Dattani's *Final Solutions*: A metaphor of Doubt about established social perceptions and individual beliefs" published in 2015 illustrates that the playwright, in his play *Final Solutions*, used the metaphor of doubt about accepted social situations and individual stance. That is why this play is considered meaningful of ironic instead of finding final solutions and Dattani suggests that the human can achieve the peaceful and progressive society by having rationality and human concerns.ⁱ

As a type of comparative study, Rashmi Jain, makes a comparison in "Mahesh Dattani's *Final Solutions* and G. B. Shaw's *Arms and the Man*: A Comparative Study" in 2016 between Mahesh Dattani's *Final Solutions* and George Bernard Shaw's *Arms and the man* in respect to what she calls the theme of war in both plays. To be clear, Dattani's *Final Solutions* is based on a conflict between two racial group Hindu and Muslim while Shaw's *Arms and the man* reflects the truth of war and love. Moreover, both plays are perception of three generations of women; *Final Solutions* expresses the idea through Hardika, Aruna and Smita on one hand, whereas *Arms and the Man* through Raina, Louka and Catherine on the other. Rashmi Jain adds that the two playwrights used dramatic devices and give them importance in their play like satire, juxtaposition, coincidence, double role, flashback technique and many.ⁱⁱ

From a feminist perspective, in 2017, M. Nathiya in "The Conflict between mother and daughter in Mahesh Dattani's *Final Solutions*" says:

Final Solutions is a play about communal riots in India and subordination of women who belong to three significant times in the history of India. Daksha/ Hardika belongs to three pre-independence period: Aruna, her daughter in law, belongs to independence period; and Smita Aruna's daughter, is a contemporary, post-independence Indian woman. (507)

Final Solutions discusses the conflict between two communal parties, how the Indian society treats woman as subordinate and keeps her in shadow without accepting any contribution from her. The play deals with three generations of woman; the first character (Daksha as Hardika) lived in pre- independence period while her daughter in law (Aruna) lived in independence period and (Smita) lived in post- independence period that represent the educated and contemporary girl.

In 2018, Dipak Giri in his research "Interrogating National Identity: A Postcolonial Study of Mahesh Dattani's *Final Solutions*" states:

National, communal identity slowly started to woken. Bit by bit India's populace fell apart into more and more divided factions in post-colonial era. Validation and promotion of one religion at the expense of others has given birth to the problem of communalism in postcolonial India. Putting on the mask of secularism, the nation-state India in postcolonial period has held the real face back from public. (208) It seems the scholar means in his quotation that during postcolonial the people in India started to create the communal conflict and divided into more than one part. As a result, each group in India supported her/his religion and did not accept anyone from other religion.

Thus, the previously mentioned projects keep concentrating on the idea of feminism and communal, religious conflicts. By all means the victim is the human beings those suffer and remain suffering from these conflicts and will not be able to live in peaceful coexistence.

3. Discussion

Dattani's plays emerged as a new arrival in the range of Indian English drama in the late of twentieth century.

In his plays, he raises various issues that people suffer in Indian society like identity crisis, homosexuality, communal tension, gender perception etc. Thus, his plays deal with contemporary problems. Because of that Dattani's plays could be performed anywhere in the world.

Final Solutions is one of his well-known and commonly performed play. It is the fifth play by Dattani written in 1991 a year before the communal riots that happened in Bombay and it sparked because of damage of the Babri Mosque in Ayodhya. The play performed first at Guru Nanak Bhawan, Bangalore in 1993. It is in three acts attacking the conflict of communal violence and religious racism of modern urban Indian culture. In additions, it reflects the loss human weaknesses and identity, greed, selfishness, memory and suffering problems. The play takes a place around a Hindu family that helps and gives a refuge to Muslims boys.

3.1. Religious discrimination

This concept means a different treatment of a person or group for their particular beliefs especially related to religion, which they hold it. Therefore, these people have treated unequally either in law or in environment settings as housing or employment and consider as inferior among the majority religion. In addition, the concept of religious discrimination is associated to religious persecution; it includes cases, which are the most extremist forms in which it executed people for their beliefs perceived to be heretic. Regarding Dattani's *Final Solutions*, there is a discrimination between Hindus and Muslims. Therefore, this discrimination leads to creating problems.

The history of India witnessed the horrible bloodshed because of partition on one hand and being independence on the other. Unexpectedly, the partition made in both communities hatred and people became wild. In addition, this bitter communal did not end and clashes started more by the development of time. The play *Final Solutions* has written very close to Babri Masjid destruction in 1992. Therefore, this play shows the response playwright to the demolition. Although, it is not just a play which reflecting the Indian present but also deals with problems of hatred, the violence exploitation of communal riots and the position of the fanatics of the India in 1940s as compare with the present.

3.2. The reciprocal relations

Through Dattani's *Final Solutions*, there are opposite characters in both religions Hindus (mother and daughter) and Muslims (Two friends). To begin with Hindus, Aruna has strong beliefs that Hindus are superior to all from others religions, especially Muslims. She is highly intolerant and reduces the value of their religion and culture. When her husband Ramanik allowed Javed and Bobby into the house, she bitterly refused to give them a shelter. Moreover, she suspects the two Muslim boys and asks Ramanik to check whether they carry any harm tools, because her mother in law, Hardika and her family already suffered from Muslims, as she pretends, during the partition time. Though they did not have any evidence or witness proving that Muslims murder her father in law, but because of her prejudice, exactly like her mother-in-law, Hardika.

In addition, Aruna is traditional woman who does not trust the role of education in a woman's life. According to her sending out her daughter to get her education is a huge mistake and this resulted in corrupting Smita. Aruna is shocked when her daughter reveals to the family the prior acquaintance with Bobby and Javed at college. As it can be noticed that Aruna reflects conservative face of Hinduism, while her daughter represents the tolerant and moderate girl. The education that Smita received makes her rational in her attitudes and rejects her mother's narrow religious mind. Even though, Smita tries to practice forcedly the daily religious rituals just to obey her mother. To move to Muslims, the character of Javed is totally different than his friend Bobby. Javed is proud and we can feel the hatred and animosity he implied toward Hindus. It is clear when he treats Ramanik and his family members rudely. He shows a strong sense of identity to the Hindus. In addition, we come to know that Javed is involved with terrorist organization against Hindus. While Bobby is a more aware and moderate character. His moderate character is reflected when he picks the idol of god up at Ramanik's house carefully with respect and turns it back in its place slowly. In such conduct, Dattani through Bobby tries to find final solutions to end this conflict. Thus we hear Bobby saying: "The tragedy is that there is too much that is sacred. But if we understand and believe in one another, nothing can be destroyed" (Dattani, 1998: 63). In such a way, Bobby hints the solution throughout his words. He says that if the two religions understand and believe in each other then they will get rid of this conflict and nothing will be destroyed. According to the conflict especially between the mother and daughter, Dattani tries to draw attention to such conflict referring to it as a quite natural one in which the parents cannot accept any sort of rebellion from their children. Nevertheless, Dattani urges to have an individual freedom and recommends parents to allow their children to have personal freedom and even themselves to have open-mind. Otherwise, this rigid conflict might create problems for their children and threaten the spirit of individualism.ⁱⁱⁱ

3.3. Role model of religious compromise

Oman is an example of peaceful country as Oman is known to be one of the best religiously tolerant country. Though Islam is the official religion, but Oman also adopts citizens from different religions like Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, Baha'ism and Sikhism. Historically, this behaviour of tolerance was among people in Oman before putting the rules for that. It is considered as a main rule nowadays that calls all people in Oman to follow it and live in peaceful coexistence. In addition, Oman's basic law protects religious freedom and the discrimination on religion is forbidden because it is against the law in Oman. For centuries, Hindu community has been living in Oman and settling down in Muscat. Several of the families have shown their great contributions to the improvement of Oman. For instance, a young Hindu girl called Brinda Toprani who has been living in Oman since long time ago and some members of her family have been granted the Omani citizenship says: "We have been very fortunate to have lived in Oman and always found it very accepting in terms of celebrating festivals and following our faith".^{iv} Even the Christians have long history of living in Oman too. Alyssa Alexis is an American Christian who has been settling in Sur mentioned her perspective of people in Oman when she states: "I think Omanis are fairly tolerant of Christians, in general. Some seem to think Muslims and Christians are brothers and others have tried (in not-too pushy ways) to convert me. But, on the whole, they seem to accept that some foreigners who live here are Christian".^v Thus, these two examples and we can find more those are considered as proofs which emphasize that the religious freedom is something very important and highly valued in Oman and it is the main reason behind keeping Oman in the top of the list of peaceful countries.

4. Conclusion

Religious compromise is an important part for individuals within a society, particularly when there are varieties of people and cultures with different religious beliefs who live in a community. If the religious compromise is spread among people of a particular community, unity and harmony occur in a society that lead to peaceful coexistence and consequently this leads to a developed community too. Dattani's *Final Solutions* is an example of a community who shattered by the sectarians and unified by the moderates of the same community. Thus, Dattani's thesis is quite clear that India is a country of several different religions and everyone needs to accept the others beliefs and religious rituals. But when the seniors forget this virtue of living and converted into sectarians, the conflict leads to unlimited troubles in which the new generation like Smita, Bobby and Javed endure it in their life. They are the victims of this communal conflict. Though they did not commit any sins but they had to suffer. The religious compromise, as Dattani calls for, is the only solution to end such conflict and bring about peaceful community.

Moreover, Dattani's *Final Solutions* makes the receivers turn back to themselves and think about searching solutions to end this communal issue. As can be noticed, Mahesh Dattani speaks on behalf of the majority who has suffered in the society. This fears of the consequences made them moving around in the same circle, so this conflict remains the same in every new generation. However, Dattani tried to raise this issue to encourage people from different religions to avoid ignoring the others beliefs and try to live in harmony.

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