

# Patriarchy and Communalism in Mahesh Dattani's *Final Solutions*

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## Abstract

*Mahesh Dattani's themes highlight the problems that so many urban people face on a daily basis. These individuals may be living in historical transitions, torn between the alluring modernism and globalisation and the firm grasp of tradition and societal values. Skilled playwright and theatre professional Dattani discovers the problem, develops characters, and employs time, place, and the stage all in service of the subject he addresses. Indian urbanites of today make up the characters on stage. They work with socio-cultural tensions as their issues, and expressionism is his method. This article explains the patriarchy of these individuals in Final Solutions of Mahesh Dattani.*

**Keywords:** Society, Diversities, Indian Context, Communal Conflict, Communalism, Violence and Contemporary Culture

Final Solutions, a drama about the conflict between Muslims and Hindus, was planned for the Deccan Herald Theatre festival in Bangalore in December 1992. The Babri Masjid was destroyed one week prior to its planned staging. The show was turned down by the festival organisers out of concern of disastrous consequences. The next year, it was eventually conducted in Bangalore and Bombay. The drama examines secularism and communal understanding, demonstrating how the outlines of communal conflict are frequently shaped by personal and family history.

The drama explores two themes: women's subordination that limits their agency and sectarian rioting in India. It features three women from three pivotal periods in Indian history: Daksha/Hardika is from the pre-independence era; Aruna, her daughter-in-law, is from the freedom era; and Smita, Aruna's curious daughter, is from the post-independence era.

The play begins with Daksha, a young bride attempting to pour her inner feelings through her writings in a diary. The audience and readers are exposed to her early recollections, which are marred by the communal conflicts stemming from her father's passing and the loss of her most treasured recordings on vinyl. Because of the severe expectations placed on her by her family and society regarding proper behaviour for women, Daksha still has hardships in her marriage to Hari. She befriends Zarine because she loves Hindi movie music. Daksha kindly asks her men to assist Zarine's family when she learns that they are having financial difficulties due to the burning of their fabric mill. This reveals her mental state. Daksha is horrified and furious when Zarine's father turns down Hari's offer of assistance. In Dattani's play, history has a prominent role. The play's opening scene depicts the writing of history. On stage, Daksha and Hardika serve as the figures that unite the past and present. Daksha is keeping a journal. A diary is very important in every way. The father-in-law of Daksha declined to grant writing permission.

History is evident in many aspects of the play's action, including remarks made by Daksha/Hardika and instances of violence that are all well-known and have happened before. Almost every figure on stage also makes reference to history in order to explain violence.

The play begins with Daksha, who plays Hari's fifteen-year-old bride and is currently enrolled in college, reading from her diary, which she began on March 31, 1948. She is a vibrant, young woman whose favourite things to do are sing and listen to Noor Jehan's music. She recoils at the thought of August 1947, when our nation suffered a very horrible event. We became self-sufficient. She lost her father in the communal riots at Hussain bad, where she lived with her family prior to marriage; therefore independence was "terrible" for her. She still recalls her father's happiness and excitement at the country's independence from British rule, but he also bemoaned the fact that "that had let loose the dogs." Her mother prays to Lord Krishna every day, but Lord Krishna could not save her father's life. Her faith on God is shattered into pieces. Her idea about God has changed.

I looked at the idol and suddenly I had the most horrible thought. I feel afraid to repeat it here, but I must. I felt that the idol I had grown up seeing my mother worship was just a pointed doll. A doll no different from the ones I used to play with and think that it was a real person.

Her second startling encounter occurred when she tried to make friends with Zarine, a Muslim teenager. Since Zarine and Daksha shared the same likes and dislikes, they are quite close. However, the issue in their friendship arises when self-interest takes hold. The father of Zarine wants to start a textile mill. Hari is misinformed about Zarine's paternity in a few areas. Hari is able to set fire to his store because to the community root. Daksha was unaware of the reasons, but Zarine's father is aware of them. Since nothing is left with Zarine's father, she kindly asks Hari to provide him a job. When she goes to see Zarine's family, Hari acts out of character and gets upset as Daksha. Daksha's husband would occasionally hit her and keep her inside the house. This hardened Daksha's attitude to the Muslim community.

After forty years, Daksha has changed into Hardika, who reopens her journal and begins writing. She laments that, compared to forty years ago, nothing has changed. The people's attitudes and mentalities have not changed. Our lives continue to be characterised by communal violence.

The Chorus/Mob dons Hindu masks and turns into a fanatical Hindu group. They are upset because the Muslims have attacked the god's chariot, which has been passing through the same area for forty years. The god's idol has been crushed and the chariot destroyed. Killings have also taken place to the poojari who rode with the idol on the chariot. This behaviour demonstrates the bizarre mindset of Muslims. The radical Hindus yell that Muslims should be slaughtered and expelled from the nation. The story quickly spread, informing individuals and cautioning them against leaving their houses. Muslim crowd enjoying their victory over stopping the chariot's passage through their neighbourhood.

Chorus 1 : Their chariot fell in our street.

Chorus 2 : Their God now prostrates before us ...

Chorus 3 : Doesn't their God have a warranty?

([Dattani: Final Solutions 171](#))

As "neither idol makers nor breakers," they put it. Their foul behaviour and dirty mind are held responsible for them. The Hindu mafia simultaneously accuses the Muslims of demolishing their temples and smashing their chariot. They intend to assault a Muslim-populated area. They responded by questioning why the latter group (Muslims) had decided to remain in India despite being awarded their own country, Pakistan.

Chorus 2 : This is not their land. They have got what they wanted. So why stay?

Chorus 3 : They stay to spy on us

Chorus 4 : Their hearts belong there. But they live on our land. ([Dattani: Final Solutions 176](#))

Two Muslim youths named Bobby (Babban) and Javed seek safety in the Gandhis' home one evening during a night of neighbourhood rioting. Rammik Gandhi bravely grants them sanctuary in the house in defiance of the audience's threats and warnings, as well as the adamant resistance of his mother Hardika and wife Aruna, even though the throng is clamouring for their blood. The atmosphere outside was quite dangerous. Javed arrived in Amargaon in a van, and

the crowd need to know why. They discover a prayer cap on Javed and a knotted handkerchief on Bobby, which he wears to recite his prayers. During tense moments, commonplace items acquire significance, turning into emblems of a faith's identity and indicators of "otherness." Ramnik Gandhi's family members are not ready to give shelter to both. All of the wrongs done to his mother are brought up again as Ramnik allows the "outsiders" in her to be thrust back into the past:

Why did he do it? Oh God, why do I have to suffer? Didn't he have any feelings for me? I just wanted them to be my friends! How could he let these people into my house? Oh I hate this world! They killed his grandfather! (Act one)

These young people are problematic for Aruna. Unable to adequately oppose her husband, Aruna declares her unwavering belief in good and wrong, reasoning that the men must have done something wrong if they were being pursued to be killed. Ramnik is asked by Bobby and Javed to keep them inside because the crowd would kill them. Ramnik refuses to give in to his wife, even if Aruna begs him to hand these traitors over to the mob. Bobby and Javed are afraid because the crowd thrashed them and seriously injured them. Aruna constantly warns her husband and gets into arguments. She doesn't think highly of them. When Ramnik blurts out to Aruna, it's evident that he is acting out of a personal motivation. His conscious and structured liberalism is motivated by his sense of guilt. "I have to protect them! I need to protect them!" (Act one). He makes an effort to console them as much as he can. Javed and Bobby are both outsiders. Father, the tolerant insider who was the only one able to save the two guys from the intolerant outsider, sends his daughter Smita straight upstairs to her room. The entire family was stunned and taken aback when Smita emerged from her room and saw Bobby and Javed.

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: (unsure) Well-yes

Ramnik: What does that mean?

Aruna: Stop her studies: From now on she can

stay at home! ([Dattani: Final Solutions 188](#)) Ramnik calms down when Smita tells him that she knows the too because Javed is her friend.

Tasneem's brother, and that Bobby is Tasneem's fiancé. Smita again tries to explain.'

Look, all I know is what I have seen. Bobby comes to college quite often--- to meet Tasneem. She--- they used to go out quite often--- There's no harm in that, they're getting married any way-- and Javed -- I have seen him once. When I dropped Tasneem at her hostel--- She told me later who he was --- that is all. ([Dattani: Final Solutions 189](#))

Not even Ramnik is in favour of love marriages or even getting together with members of other communities. Because she claims to have met them in college, Aruna Smita's sensitive mother urges her husband to put an end to her studies and prevent her from going to college.

Even though he makes his wife be "civilised" and bring them a drink of water, Ramnik manages to save Javed and Bobby. They both rapidly down the water that Aruna brings them and express their gratitude to her. In reality, they wouldn't drink it. Following that, the "contaminated" glasses are carefully removed and stored apart from the other glasses in the kitchen. Because a lizard fell on the lid of the container holding the milk, even Aruna is ready to discard it, yet she has no problem giving Bobby and Javed the same "contaminated" milk later.

When Bobby tells Ramnik that Javed is looking for a job, he has a need of job so they have come to Amargaon. Ramnik lovingly offers Javed a job in his saree shop in the market telling him.

You'll like the job. You can handle those Bohra and Memen women who usually pass by our show room. You can stand outside and call them in. What do you say?-- Please I would be --- happy if you say yes. I will be --- it will be my pleasure to give you that job. That shop, it used to be --- (pause). Take the Job please.

Ramnik's acts are a direct result of his feelings of shame regarding the things his father and grandpa did. He freely acknowledges that Zarineer's father originally owned the store. At half its worth, it is the same burned-out store that we purchased from them. Because they had truly wanted the shop, he and his

father Hari had burned it in the name of communal hatred. The inhabitants of Zarine learned about it. They also intended to establish their own fabric mill. Ramnik has concealed his guilt, which is this.

When it is learned that Javed is among those who were sent to Amargaon in order to incite riots and engage in violence. He was ready, as were the others on the bus, to support their religion and they took pride in it. Ramnik steps beyond the boundary between comprehension and attribution of blame:

Ramnik : Why do you distrust us?

Javed : Do you trust us?

Ramnik : I don't go around throwing stones!

Javed : But you do something more violent. You provoke! You make me throw stones. Every time I look at you, my bile rises!

Ramnik : (angry): Now you are provoking me! How dare you blame your violence on other people? It is in you! You have violence in your mind. Your life is based on violence. Your faith is based--- (He stops, but it is too late) ([Dattani: Final Solutions 198](#))

It is evident from the conversation above that Ramnik and Javed are blaming one another. Violence is an issue that human compassion and understanding can help to solve. The “riot-rouser,” Javed, is a helpless, deluded, and foolish young guy who discovers that he has been manipulating disturbances in the community for the benefit of special interests all along. His violent and defiant attitude stems from his childhood encounter with an extreme Hindu neighbour. However, he is now frustrated and disillusioned, partially as a result of Bobby's influence and partly because of his own realisation. Young people like Smita and Bobby in the play offer hope despite the fact that there are no “final solutions” to the societal maze in this nation. Despite the obstacles in their way, these young people's efforts have made it possible for the two communities to coexist peacefully in the future.

Through Bobby, Dattani makes the suggestion that we need to adopt a new outlook on life and a more kind and considerate way of looking at everything. God does not distinguish between Muslims and Hindus; thus, it is crucial that we feel joy and happiness. Bobby transcends borders that are established physically, but mental barriers still need to be broken. Dattani goes on to say that in order for

there to be communal peace in the nation despite all of our differences, tolerance is essential. As Bobby correctly informs Aruna and Hardika before he and Javed depart:

The tragedy is that there is too much that is sacred. But if we understand and believe in one another, nothing can be destroyed --- And if you are willing to forget, I am willing to tolerate. ([Dattani: Final Solutions 225](#))

This can be the only possible “final solution” to the communal disharmony that raises its ugly head with alarming regularity in this country.

They have already closed all religious places, still some Muslim Community people they are praying together, this act directly or indirectly disturbs society and creates problem. Immediately people begin to think wrongly about this community. Actually some arrogant people does this and all good people suffers. There are so many good Muslim scholars and leaders guiding properly to the society and thinking positively about the Nation. All Hindu should accept the fact that Muslims are part of this country, they are one organ of the body we can't separate them; and all Muslims should behave like how the organs of the body adjust with each other and tolerance then in the future we will hope the communal riots will be stopped.

### Conclusion

Three things are clear from a thorough study and examination of the dramatic text *Final Solutions*. First and foremost, theatre has consistently conveyed the unadulterated reality of life through words that will always endure, captivate, and control people's thoughts and emotions. Creative playwrights have always attempted to depict current societal problems and reality via their plays, whether they are political or social issues. In addition, even if theatre depicts reality, it has given people bravery, hope, understanding, and a vision of a better future for themselves as well as the will to overcome all societal evils and overwhelming odds. And finally, through conceptualising identities, theatre serves as a vital teaching tool that both informs and illustrates the way that class, religion, caste, and ethnicity are perceived in society. Its primary goal is to entertain while imparting knowledge that will benefit society

by educating readers and viewers, particularly young people, who will play a significant role in the advancement and improvement of society.

Dattani addresses his humanistic concerns in *Final Solutions*. He addresses the communalism theme. Dattani uses discrimination against many religions and religious consciousness in this drama. He exposes the communalist views and stereotypes that are pervasive in society and that incite animosity between different communities. Through the play's reflection of current patriarchy and communalism socio-political concerns, Dattani aims to make clear that, if conceptual hurdles are ignored in the effort to understand the complexity of communalism, answers might not be all that far off.

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