

Humanism in Mahesh Dattani's Final Solutions



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ABSTRACT

Humanism is a rational philosophy based on belief in the dignity of human beings. It accepts only the scientific method to realize the truth and rejects irrationalities and supernaturalism. Humanism is a non religious philosophy. It promotes secular and humanist values, scientific temper and rational behaviour. Humanists rejoice in the diversity around them. In the words of Thomas Paine, "such is the irresistible nature of truth that all it asks, and all it wants, is the liberty of appearing." Humanists seek insight from all cultures and from many sources--scientific, secular, and religious--recognizing that there are many truths and many ways to learn about how to live. In this article, I have tried to show how humanism is portrayed in Mahesh Dattani's play Final Solutions. It appears to me that Humanism is quite discernible in Mahesh Dattani's play Final Solutions. The main theme of the play is communal conflict. Communal violence, communal riots, communal hatred, fanaticism are the possible ramifications of communalism which the playwright, Mahesh Dattani has delineated all this aspects insightfully. It appears that Dattani sees the solution of the problem in humanism.

Introduction

First performed in Bangalore in 1993 Mahesh Dattani's straight play Final Solutions foregrounds the Hindu-Muslim problems. He has truly and rationally identified the real cause of the malady of communal disharmony. The diagnosis offered is the spirit of humanism. Let us see straight how this spirit works in the play:

Years have passed and things have changed but the communal conflict remains the same. Again and again, it appears that riots and bloody expression of deep-seated hatred fanned to fire for one reason or the other. Hardika says:

After forty years....I opened my diary again. And I wrote. A dozen pages before. A dozen pages now. A young girl's childish scribble. An old woman's shaky scrawl. Yes, things have not changed that much.¹

Things have not changed naturally because people have not changed their irrational attitudes. Daksha was not allowed to sing and listen to Noor Jehan's songs. It always in the name of culture and tradition tend to deprive women of a human impulse, an imaginatively creative impulse. All orthodoxy, Hindu or Muslim, is thus retrogressive, irrational and inhuman. She holds an irrational belief that the water should be pure and it should not be contaminated by the touch of a Muslim. She throughout the play behaves according to received customs thoughtlessly. She fails to understand that her words or behaviour could be hurtful to others. We can see the clash between rationality and irrationality in the conversations between Aruna and Smita, the new spirit of humanism and the old, orthodox spirit of irrationality, the thoughtful and the thoughtless. Smita is

rational and humanist in her attitude. Disobeying her mother's command, she tells Javed to fill God's water. She wants to prove that it is not going to fly off into the heavens with his touch, putting an eternal curse on her family. To Smita, it is really irrational that the water brought by a Muslim would be contaminated and not acceptable for bathing gods. Smita cannot stomach it. What irks her is the offense such words might cause to human beings. That is why she takes up cudgels against her mother. She does so in the cause of humanism.

In the play, Smita pleads for freedom irrational restraints, and her mother stands for mechanical ways of orthodox living. Smita as well as Bobby is Dattani's mouthpiece in this play. Readers are urged to accept the differences readily and be prepared for the peaceful co-existence. This seems to be Smita and Dattani's simple message. Both Bobby and Smita are humanists in its true sense of the term. They have found that all bigotry is irrational and may become inhuman. Humanism in the play becomes quite discernible when Bobby and Smita share their common feelings about uninterestedness in religion. Like true humanists, they do not believe in their respective religions. Aruna frequently accused Smita of running away from her religion. Bobby tells Smita:

I never could express my feelings as well as you do, maybe my religion oppressed me far more.² She says to Javed and Bobby: May be we should all run away from home like Javed for five minutes everyday. So we can quickly gulp in some fresh air.³

Dattani has rightly chooses Bobby, a humanist, to hit upon the final solution of the communal tangle. The choice is quite appropriate as it is most

effective for a Muslim youth to speak the language of love, peace and harmony- all are humanist values - one who is charged with breaking idols most reverently lifts up in the warmth of his palm the little image of Lord Krishna. Here comes the pinnacle of humanism in the play. He exclaims most reverently that his flesh is holding Him (Image of Lord Krishna) but He (Krishna) does not mind. He does not burn him to ashes. He does not cry out from heaven that He has been contaminated. Krishna smiles at our trivial pride and trivial shows. To Javed he says: See Javed! He does not humiliate you. He doesn't cringe from my touch. He welcomes the warmth of my hand.⁴

Bobby's action is pregnant with humanism. He tries to awaken the spirit of humanism in other characters. Tragedy is that there is too much that is sacred in this world. If we understand and believe in

one another, nothing can be destroyed. Bobby preaches the philosophy of humanist that a great understanding and a great trust are required; trust in humanity of every man and woman.

Thus, the problem of communalism is viewed in a rational and humanistic perspective. The evils rooted in the communal psyche of Muslims and in the collective psyche of Hindus are brought out in all clarity. A bridge of healthy understanding is required to be built between the two collectivities. But politicians are interested in demolishing all bridges. Humanism is a final solution. Religious conflict is a matter of past, the baneful legacy of medieval times. The sooner it goes the better. And go it certainly will gradually as the spirit of humanism and rationalism progresses.

REFERENCE

1. Dattani, Mahesh. Collected Plays. New Delhi: Penguin Books India, 1998.
2. Ibid
3. Ibid
4. Ibid