Chapter - III

Communal Disharmony

The present chapter deals with the theme of communal differences in the plays of Mahesh Dattani. While presenting the contemporary Indian society in his plays, Mahesh Dattani cannot close his eyes to the burning issue of communalism which has destroyed the peace of the whole world. His *Final Solutions, The Swami and Winston, Clearing the Rubble* and *Do the Needful* deal with the theme of communal differences.

Mahesh Dattani’s *Final Solutions* has a powerful contemporary resonance as it presents an issue of communalism which is of utmost concern to our society. Touching the bitter realities of our lives, the play dramatizes different facets of the communal attitude prevalent among the Hindus and Muslims. The play moves from the partition to the present day communal riots and probes into the religious bigotry by examining the attitudes of three generations of a middle class Gujarati business family—the Gandhi family—consisting of Ramnik Gandhi, his mother Hardika, wife Aruna and daughter Smita.

The play opens with Daksha reading out what she has written in her diary. Hardika is seen seated motionless on the same level. Hardika, the grandmother, and Daksha, the young bride of fifteen, are on this level at the same time, although they are same person. The entire action of the play is seen through the eyes of Hardika.

In her diary Daksha has written not only about her personal life but also about the country. She wrote: “…last year, in August, a most terrible thing happened to our country, we …gained independence” (CP 166).
Daksha’s description of Indian Independence as “a most terrible thing” undoubtedly throws light on the setting of the play. No doubt, it was a time of merry making for most of the Indians as “everyone was awake waiting for midnight like children on the last day of school, waiting for the last bell of the last class before vacation” (CP 166). But for some Indians it was ‘a most terrible thing’ as they had lost their near and dear ones in the communal riots that broke out immediately after the Independence. Daksha’s father, a freedom fighter, was happy when it came as they were rid of the British. But his comment—the British before leaving India ‘had let loose the dogs’—confused and embarrassed Daksha as it was made about her Muslim friends’ fathers. As a young girl, she was not prejudiced against Muslims. But that night when the communal riots broke out after independence, she was with her mother in their ancestral house in Hussainabad. As she heard the Muslim rioters outside, she realised that “they were thinking the same of us” (CP 167). She too began to think “the same, like my father” (CP 167). Her father did not return. She blamed the Muslim rioters for the absence of her father. Her house was attacked and her most loving collection of records of love songs of Shamshad Begum, Noor Jehan, and Suraiya were broken. Neither her mother’s prayer to Lord Krishna nor her love for the Muslim singers saved her father. Her father was the victim of the communal hatred that was simmering in the minds of both the Hindus and Muslims at the time of partition of India. Alyque Padamsee is right when he says “The demons of communal hatred are not on the street…they are lurking inside ourselves” (A note on the Play CP 161).

The play begins in the wake of another communal riot which breaks out due to religious procession taken out by the Hindus through the Muslim dominated area. Recollecting the communal riots that took place after the Independence, Daksha
remarks that things have not changed that much even after forty years as she witnesses another communal riot in the small town of Amargaon where Ramnik Gandhi lives with his old mother, wife and daughter namely Hardika, Aruna and Smita respectively.

The mob in the play is symbolic of our own hatred and paranoia (Alyque Padamsee: A note on a Play). It consists of five men and ten masks on sticks. There are five Hindu masks and five Muslim masks. They represent the Hindu Mob/Chorus when they wear the Hindu masks and the Muslim Mob/Chorus when they wear the Muslim masks. The Mob/Chorus becomes frenetic when they are behind the masks. The entrance of the Hindu mob on the stage and their conversation clearly indicates that the communal hatred that caused ‘a most terrible thing’ in the country forty years ago is still working and may cause another riot at any time. They shout out loudly near the Gandhi house blaming the Muslims who are responsible for breaking the chariot and slitting the stomach of the Pujari. The Chorus 1, 2, and 3 are very critical of the Muslim community and want to drive them out of India. Their conversation throws light on the majority communalism i.e. Hindu communalism:

CHORUS 1. How dare they?

CHORUS 2,3. They broke our rath. They broke our Chariot and felled our Gods!

CHORUS 1,2,3. This is our land! How dare they?

CHORUS 1. It is in their blood!

CHORUS 2,3. It is in their blood to destroy!

CHORUS 4. Why should they?

CHORUS 5. It could have been an accident.
CHORUS 2. The stone that hit our God was no accident!

CHORUS 3. The knife that slit the Poojari’s stomach was no accident!

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CHORUS 1. (Pounding with his stick) Send… them…. Back

CHORUS 4. (Questioning) Send them back?

CHORUS 2. Drive… them… out.

CHORUS 5. Drive them out?

CHORUS 3. Kill the sons of swine. (CP 168-169)

The conversation of the Hindu Chorus brings out the reactions of the Hindu people after the Muslim fanatics have attacked their chariot procession. The conversation also reveals the different opinions among the Hindu community over driving the Muslims out of the country. No doubt, some Hindus wanted all the Muslims to leave India and to go Pakistan after the partition for the peaceful and happy life. The Chorus 1, 2, 3 and Hardika, the mother of Ramnik Gandhi, support this view in the play. But the liberal secularist like Ramnik Gandhi and his daughter Smita want Muslims to live in India respecting the religion of the majority and following their own. The Chorus represents the psychology of the majority community that the country belongs to them and the minority community especially Muslim community should not try to dominate them. They blame the whole community for felling their God and killing the Poojari. The conversation of the Chorus recalls the words of Golwalkar who focused on the Hindu religion as the guiding force of Indian nationhood. Predictably non-Hindus had no place in the nation he envisaged:

Non-Hindu peoples in Hindustan must either adopt the Hindu culture and language, must learn to respect and hold in reverence Hindu
religion, must entertain no idea but those of glorification of the Hindu race and culture...they must cease to be foreigners or may stay in the country wholly subordinated to the Hindu nation, claiming nothing deserving no privileges, far less any preferential treatment, not even citizen rights. (Quoted in Panikar 93)

Smita, the daughter of Ramnik and Aruna Gandhi, is a college girl. She has a Muslim friend Tasneem living in the Muslim Girls’ Hostel along with other Muslim girls. Being worried about the safety of her friend Tasneem, Smita phones her parents in Jeevnagar telling them about the outbreak of communal riots. Her father, Ramnik Gandhi, takes the receiver from her and introduces himself to Noor Ahmed, but as soon as Noor Ahmed listens in the name of Gandhi, he disconnects the phone and shows his contempt for the Gandhis. Perhaps Ramnik Gandhi reminds him of the past incident either burning off his shop or the death of some relative in the communal riots that took place after the independence. Like Hardika, Mr. Noor Ahmed has not forgotten the past and the feeling of acrimony for the Hindus in general and for the Gandhis in particular surfaces his mind.

Mahesh Dattani manages set design of the play in such a way that the family unit represents the society. The Mob/Chorus, consisting of five men with ten masks on sticks (five Hindu and five Muslim), is representative of people belonging to both the Hindu and Muslim communities. Now the Muslim Mob/Chorus appears on the stage as if they are replying to the queries of the Hindu mob. They make fun of the Hindu God by commenting that the Hindu god has no warranty. The conversation of the Muslim Chorus conveys the kind of feeling that they have for the Hindus and their Gods.

CHORUS 1. Their chariot fell in our street!
CHORUS 2. Their God now prostrates before us!
CHORUS 3. So they blame it on us?

CHORUS All. Why did they? Why did they? Why?
CHORUS 5. (emotionally) Why? (pause)
CHORUS 3. They say we raised their temples yesterday.
CHORUS 2. That we broke their chariot today.
CHORUS 1. That we’ll bomb their streets tomorrow.
CHORUS All. Why would we? Why? Why? Why would we?
CHORUS 5. (emotionally) Why would we?

Chorus 1,2,3,and 4 split
CHORUS All Except 5. Let them send us back. (They turn to Exit)
CHORUS 5. (meekly) Where?

The conversation obviously shows that the Muslims are antagonistic towards the Hindus only because they have been blamed for the deeds of their forefathers. No doubt, the Hindu temples have been razed by the Muslim invaders in the past. But there is no use blaming all the Muslims for that. It seems that the history is the root cause of the Hindu-Muslim problem. The rulers during the middle ages fought to gain power and wealth and not on the basis of their religions.

Being tired of humiliated life in India, some of the Muslims suggest that they should quit India and go to Pakistan where they will not be humiliated. Though Muslims in India feel affinity towards Pakistan, those who migrated to Pakistan after partition are not treated equally by the Muslims there. But it is not a solution to the Hindu-Muslim problem in India. Prof. V. K. R. V. Rao rightly observes:
Neither political nor religious leaders are able to tackle the problem of inter-communal distrust … Nor is there a ‘homeland’ that can provide a solution to the many millions of Muslims who are scattered over different parts of the country. There is no solution other than that of mutual trust and recognition of inter-dependence and collective self-interest that can bring about enduring communal harmony. But one does not see signs of such a trend emerging on the contemporary horizon. (24)

The past and present are brought together on the stage through the figures of Daksha and Hardika. Having had the experience of the partition riots, Hardika does not want to give shelter to two Muslim boys—Javed and Bobby—who beg for their lives. She knows their psychology, the psychology of the minority people. According to her, they cannot be her friends even if they are protected. She blames their wretched pride. She says:

Those two who were begging for their lives. Tomorrow they will hate us for it. They will hate us for protecting them. Asking for help makes them feel they are lower than us … I know their wretched pride! It had destroyed me before and I was afraid it would destroy my family again! (Pause) They don’t want equality. They want to be superior. (CP 172)

Hardika forms her opinion about the Muslims based on what she has been told by her husband Hari and servant Kanta. She blames Muslims only because they were responsible for her father’s death. She sees in every Muslim a murderer of her father and hates every Muslim. But she forgets that her friend Zarine’s family was also victim of the communal riots like hers. She does not know the truth, which she comes
to know at the end of the play that her husband and her father-in-law played a vital role in setting fire to the shop of Zarine’s father during the communal riots in order to occupy it at its half price. As she doesn’t know the reality, she misinterprets the refusal of the job offered by her father-in-law to Zarine’s father as an act of false pride. Suspecting Javed and Bobby as riot rousers, she asks Ramnik to drive them out of her house. She says: “Ramnik, let them sleep here, give them some pillows and bed sheets, give them whatever they want and tomorrow morning get them out of my house! (Pause, then adds) That is the way I feel!” (CP 190) These words of Hardika clearly indicate that she has not yet forgotten the death of her father and forgiven the Muslims for that.

Hardika does not like Ramnik offering a job to Javed in their shop. Her words—“Couldn’t he see there was more violence in that boy’s eyes than those stone throwers’ threats?” (CP 191)—undoubtedly express her distrust and suspicion for the Muslims. The partition of India and the carnage that followed not only divided the country into two but also divided the minds of Hindu and Muslim people, which cannot be bridged. Hardika is a best example of it. She does not blame the Hindus outside her house who hurl stones and call them traitors. She forgets the harm done by the Hindus to the Muslims and forgives her own people though they did not help her when she needed. This approach of Hardika towards Muslims is biased and such a prejudiced perspective is responsible for widening the gulf between the two communities.

Past and present are brought together in the play by introducing a new device i.e. the use of diary. Daksha who belongs to both the past and present takes us forward and backward in time like a zigzag machine. Her reading diary is a kind of narration of her past life. Through her reading we come to know the past events that took place
not only in her life but also in the life of the country. Daksha liked the company of Zarine, a Muslim girl, very much. That’s why she used to visit the house of Zarine under the pretext of embroidering her saree. She could not breathe freely in her own house as she does in the house of Zarine. She was fond of music especially of the songs of Noor Jehan and Zarine had a good collection of those songs. But Daksha’s in-laws did not like her going to the house of Zarine. It shows their conservative attitude and their hatred for Muslims in general. That’s why her father-in-law and her husband burnt down the Mithai shop of Zarine’s father in the name of communal riots. In fact they were swayed away by their selfishness. No human being who cares for others can perform such a demeaning act of setting fire to the shop. This shows that the fundamentalists in both the religions have sown the seeds of communal hatred in the minds of common people who, as a result, are unwilling to tolerate one another. The parents of Zarine and in-laws of Daksha were the stumbling blocks in their friendship.

Daksha’s diary unfolds the past events as the action of the play moves forward. Her diary supports the view of Ramnik Gandhi that the shop belonged to Zarine’s father. Daksha reads her diary:

Gaju, Wagh and Hari seem to be keeping some secret from me. Last night, after dinner, while I was cutting supari for him, Hari was looking at me very strangely…. because I had just asked him why we couldn’t give Zarine’s father a loan or something to start his business again, since he didn’t want the job we had offered him. …He said something strange too. They hadn’t offered Zarine’s father any job. In fact he hadn’t even asked for one. Then why did he come to our mill, I questioned Hari. That is when for the first time Hari became angry...
with me. I had never expected him to. He shouted so loudly, he sounded just like Wagh. And he called me names. Names that are too shameful to mention to you. My cheeks went red. We were silent for a very long time and I forgot about Zarine’s problems. (CP 215-16)

This narration by Daksha makes it clear to us that Hari did not like Daksha interfere in his business at the same time he did not like Daksha to be friendly with Zarine’s family only because she would come to know the truth regarding the shop. That’s why he scolds Daksha in such a way that she forgets Zarine and her problems.

Daksha was beaten by her husband Hari for eating the food in the house of Zarine. She promised him that she would never go to Zarine’s house. She had to suffer a lot because of her friendship with Zarine. Even after forty years, Hardika reminds the incident and blames Zarine for the discord between herself and Hari, her husband. Hardika says that she would have been so happy if she had not met Zarine. She lost respect forever in the eyes of husband because of the pride of their people.

She says, “I hate the way you look! I hate the way you dress! I hate the way you eat” (CP 223)! These words of Hardika show how much her mind is filled with hatred for Muslims. She can not forget how she was treated by her husband only because of “them”.

After the departure of the two Muslim boys Hardika comes to know the reality about their shop. Immediately she changes her attitude towards Muslims and asks Ramnik “Do you think…do you think those boys will ever come back?” This question shows that the revelation of the truth changes Hardika totally.

At the beginning of the Act II, the characters are all in the same position as at the end of the Act I. The Hindu Mob/Chorus gets angry as the Hindu people are not
allowed to enter the Muslim area to remove the broken chariot. The Chorus 1 blames the politicians and doubts their intentions, as decisions are not taken in their favour. He thinks that Muslims have insulted them by felling their chariot and killing the Poojari. He intends to take the retaliation. The words of Chorus 1 remind us the words of RSS men who always talk of taking the retaliation either by demolishing Mosques or by driving the Muslims out of India.

In *Final Solutions*, Mahesh Dattani criticises politicians who entice middle class people to take out processions of the religious idols to unite the religious community for their selfish intentions. When the religious fanatics get the support of the politicians, they become bloodthirsty. The Hindu Chorus, outside the house of Ramnik Gandhi, becomes bloodthirsty and asks Ramnik to open the doors to get hold of Bobby and Javed, the two Muslim boys, in order to kill them. But Ramnik Gandhi, a liberal secularist, protects the two Muslim boys and incurs the wrath of the Hindu people who call him a traitor.

Ramnik Gandhi is a representative of those Hindu people who tolerate the other faith. He is a liberal secularist and proves it by protecting the two Muslim boys from the Hindu fanatics. He treats them as fellow human beings and proves to be a humanist. He believes that majority community is responsible for communal riots. He says: “I have always maintained that if we want peace—that is, if you treat peace as a commodity and you go looking for it—you will find it hidden in the armpits of the majority” (CP 191).

Dattani’s *Final Solutions* brings out the plight of the minority community i.e. Muslim community in India. Prof V. K. R. V. Rao is right when he says: “Hindu-Muslim riots continue to be a feature of the country even after independence, giving the Muslim community a sense of insecurity and feeling of living on sufferance rather
than as trusted and respected citizens of the country to which they belong” (23). Javed, a Muslim youth, regrets to be minority as he cannot enjoy his life as a member of the majority community does. He is curious to know how one feels being the majority. That’s why he says Ramnik that he must be feeling good for being majority. When Ramnik tells him that he has never thought about it, Javed remarks: “But, sir, it is in your every move. You must know. You can offer milk to us. You can have an angry mob outside your house. You can play the civilized host. Because you know you have peace hidden inside your armpit” (CP 192).

He agrees with Ramnik that if peace is a commodity, it is hidden in the armpits of the majority. Being a minority, he feels that the majority always maltreats and humiliates him. That is also one of the reasons of Javed hatred towards Hindus.

Mahesh Dattani indirectly suggests that segregation of people in cities on the basis of community is one of the reasons of communal differences. While talking about the broken chariot and how the riot started, Ramnik tells Javed and Bobby that when there was only one Muslim family in their mohalla, they never bothered any one. But now being majority, they are bothering others though they haven’t bothered him personally. Ramnik remarks: “What they did isn’t right” (CP 192). It is the psychology of the majority. A majority group always ill-treats the minority. Minority Muslims in India and minority Hindus in Pakistan have the same lot. They suffer at the hands of majority only because they are minority and look upon other country as their saviours. And here the trouble starts. Alyque Padamsee rightly remarks: “Can we shake off our prejudices or are they in our psyche like our genes? Will we ever be free or ever locked in combat …Arabs against Jews, whites against blacks, Hindus against Muslims? Are they any final solutions?”(A Note on the Play, CP 161)
As soon as Bobby tells Ramnik that Javed is looking for a job and that’s why they came to Amargaon, Ramnik immediately expresses his desire to help Javed by offering him a job in his saree shop in Kapada Bazaar. He says: “It will be … it will be my pleasure to give you that job. That shop, it used to be … (pause). Take the job, please” (CP 194).

But Smita, the daughter of Ramnik, exposes Javed by revealing the truth that his parents threw him out of the house because political parties hire him “to throw the first stones” (CP 195) in the communal riots. She says, “Those . . . parties! They hire him! That’s how he makes a living. They bring him and many more to the city to create riots. To . . . throw the first stone!” (CP 195).

Mahesh Dattani exposes the politicians who add fuel to the fire of communal hatred and create communal riots in the name of their faith by hiring the most vulnerable and inflammable people like Javed for their own political benefits. A. A. Engineer is right when he says:

Muslim leadership—however regrettable it may be but it is a fact—has proved totally bankrupt, opportunist and dishonest in its intention… the Muslim leaders with hardly a few exceptions, have always tried to exploit the religious emotions of the masses of Muslims. It would be difficult to find any instance of any Muslim political leader dedicating himself or herself to the cause of uplift of common Muslims. (78)

Hindu leadership is not an exception to it. The demolition of Babri Masjid and the role played by the politicians is obviously known to everyone. S. K. Ghosh in his book *Communal Riots in India* states:
The study of Hindu-Muslim riots would show that behind every unsavoury communal incident lies the polluted atmosphere of friction between the two communities and the implicit involvement of vested interests. One is pained by the role of the politicians in the volatile situation. Hardly have they suffered from the ravages of riots. Only poor Hindus and Muslims who wanted to live peacefully suffered in most of the communal riots. (24)

In the beginning of the Act III, we meet the Muslim Chorus that talks about the identity of the Muslims in India. The Chorus 1 is of the opinion that a drop of oil cannot merge with an ocean of milk. The Muslims in India are like a drop of oil and the Hindus an ocean of milk. According to him, one reality cannot accept another reality. He raises many questions regarding their identity. He says: “Should we be swallowed up? Till they cannot recognize us? Should we meld into anonymity so they cannot hound us? Lose ourselves in a shapeless mass? Should we? Can we?” (CP 196)

The questions raised by the Muslim Chorus 1 throw light on the identity of Muslims in India. They feel suffocated as they are not recognized by Hindus. But they are unwilling to meld into anonymity or to lose themselves in a shapeless mass.

Ramnik begins to hate Javed as a riot rouser but tries to control his feelings and asks Javed what he gets out of it. Javed is bold to accept his involvement in the riots but he tells Ramnik that he gets connected with the communal riots for the sake of his people. Unbelieving in his words Ramnik asks him “How much did they pay you” (CP 197)? This question of Ramnik makes him angry and sarcastically he
comments: “Thousands! I got thousands, lakhs for doing it! Are you satisfied? That is what you want to hear!” (CP 197)

 Rejecting the job offered by Ramnik Gandhi, Javed proves that he does not participate in the religious riots for the sake of money. When accused him by Ramnik of being indifferent to them, Javed expresses his inner trauma: “I believe in myself. Yes! What else have I got to believe in? It’s people like you who drive me to a corner and I have to turn to myself and my faith. I have a lot to thank you for! At least now I am not ignorant of my history and faith.” (CP 198)

 Being a liberal minded secular, Ramnik Gandhi forgives Javed and offers him a job in his shop only on the condition that he must change his ways. But there is a question of trust. The dialogue between Ramnik and Javed throws light on Hindu-Muslim relationship based on distrust:

 JAVED. If I say I have changed, will you believe me?

 RAMNIK. Why do you distrust us?

 JAVED. Do you trust us?

 RAMNIK. I don’t go about 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. (angrily) 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…
JAVED. Now say you don’t provoke me!

RAMNIK. I’m sorry, I didn’t mean…

JAVED. Oh, don’t be! That is the way you feel!

This conversation between Javed and Ramnik brings out that both religions namely Muslim and Hindu respectively do not trust each other and people belonging to them provoke one another. The feeling of hatred for one another is like a disease of cancer, which spreads continuously without cure.

Dattani also shows how so called secular people behave violently when provoked. When Javed provokes Ramnik by accusing him of being responsible for his throwing stones, Ramnik slaps Javed suddenly and calls him a scum, a criminal, a hired hoodlum, and a riot rouser. According to Javed Ramnik gets angry and hates him because “I showed you that you are not as liberal as you think you are” (CP 199). Javed’s remark makes Ramnik more intolerable and he tells Bobby that he cannot keep him in his house knowing that he is a criminal.

Dattani’s *Final Solutions* also presents the behaviour of the high caste Hindus towards Muslims and how that behaviour turns Muslims into riot-rousers. He seems to establish a causal link between violence and deprivation. Any kind of deprivation leads to frustration which in turn produces anger responsible for aggression or an act of violence. When a gap between expectation and achievement develops due to change in economic, social and political situations or psychological reasons, deprivation sets in at individual and/or group levels. This sense of deprivation is responsible for the transformation of Javed from a neighbourhood hero to a riot-rouser. Bobby tells Ramnik Gandhi how the behaviour and the attitude of the high caste Hindus towards Muslims turn them into terrorists. Bobby narrates the story of
Javed’s childhood dream of becoming a neighbourhood hero and how that dream was shattered by the behaviour of a Hindu neighbour towards Javed. According to Bobby, if Ramnik finds Javed’s actions repulsive, he is also partly responsible for the actions of Javed. Bobby narrates: “At one time, in school, he was the hero. Smart and cocksure. . . . He loved playing the hero with the neighbourhood boys. And he was.” (CP 200)

A minor incident changed Javed. While playing cricket on their street with the younger boys, the postman asked Javed to hand the letter over to the owner. As soon as Javed opened the gate of the man, a voice bloomed, “What do you want? …Leave it on the wall” (CP 200). Javed was frightened. He came out of the gate and observed the man. The man wiped the letter, the spot on the wall where the letter was lying and the gate as if they were contaminated by the mere touch of Javed. The owner of the letter then prayed God for a long time and rang the prayer bell continuously which was heard by Bobby and other boys playing there on the street. But the next day the neighbour came out shouting and yelling on the streets. He was very angry, as someone had dropped pieces of meat and bones into his backyard. Bobby guessed who did that and did not speak to Javed for many days. Whenever they played cricket and heard the bell, Bobby remembered the incident but he avoided looking at Javed. In this way Javed was “in his own eyes—no longer the neighbourhood hero” (CP 201).

Javed was treated as an untouchable like Bhaka, a hero in Mulk Raj Anand’s novel Untouchable. Had Javed been treated like a human being by the Hindus, he might not have thrown the pieces of meat in the backyard of his neighbour. A sense of deprivation forces him to do so and join the fundamentalist groups.
Bobby is different from Javed. He is a liberal secularist like Smita and Ramnik. He too used to get angry whenever he heard the bell but did not throw meat into his neighbour’s backyard as Javed did. The reason is that he is ashamed of being a Muslim and pretends that he is not the part of his community. Even he changed his name from Babban to Bobby so that he should not be identified as a Muslim by his name. No one called him Baboon in his college. In a Hindu dominated area a Muslim has to hide his identity and vice versa. It is because in our country people are very frenzy about religion, caste and creed; and they put on such clothes that they are easily identified as belonging to a particular religion or a caste. Bobby lives like a lizard in the society so that the majority should not corner him. That’s why he blames Ramnik partly for his behaviour. Both Bobby and Ramnik are not very different in the sense that both of them feel ashamed of being themselves.

*Final Solutions* also exposes the government agencies like Police that are being used by the politicians for creating communal riots. When Ramnik Gandhi threatens Javed to hand him over to the police, both Bobby and Javed burst out in laughter in such a way that suggests that they have friendly relations with the police. Javed’s remarks clearly indicate the involvement of the police in the communal riots. He says: “Arrest me? When they have been looking the other way all along. How do you think we got into the street? In their vans. They will arrest me. Don’t worry. To please people like you. And a few more innocent Muslims to please every one.” (CP 204)

Sometimes Ramnik Gandhi behaves in such a way that we doubt his secular outlook. He does not hesitate to tell Javed that he would throw them to the mob from which he protects them. It seems that the real reason behind his anger and behaviour is Javed’s tearing off his mask of liberalism. But we must keep in mind that he gets
angry with him when Javed rejects his offer of a job. Ramnik Gandhi tries his best to atone for the deeds of his father and grand father by offering Javed a job in his shop which really belongs to ‘them’ i.e. Muslims.

Mahesh Dattani forewarns Indians of the corrupt alliance of the Hindu and Muslim terrorists. When Ramnik Gandhi threatens Javed and Bobby to throw them to the unruly mob, Javed criticizes the Hindu mob for being unsystematic in their attack. He would like to get acquainted with the Hindu mob so that “we don’t end up killing each other” (CP 204). Javed’s desire of having a round of introduction with the Hindu miscreants suggests the possibility of the immoral and disastrous alliance of miscreants belonging to both the religions. If it happens, as Javed suggests, there would be anarchy in the country.

In *Final Solutions* liberal secularists overcome the religious fundamentalists by changing their attitudes towards the people of other faith. Javed, an angry young man, also changes his attitude towards Hindus. He tells Bobby and Ramnik Gandhi how he was swayed away to throw the first stone to begin the communal riot. Comparing his involvement in the communal riots with a child on the giant wheel in a carnival, Javed admits the difficulty in getting out of the terrorist groups once involved in it. His feelings are also like that of a child who gets nauseous of the speed of the wheel and cries out “Why am I here? What am I doing here?” (CP 205) Javed too asks the same questions to himself when his reason overcomes his feelings. He hates himself for being swayed by ‘cheap sentiment’. The religious fanatics and fundamentalists always speak of “motherland and fighting to save our faith and how we should get four of theirs for every one of ours” (CP205). They would say “This is jihad—the holy war! It is written!” (CP 205) They could convince the hired hoodlums and blind people like Javed in their meetings that their faith is in danger and they must
sacrifice themselves for the sake of religion. In fact religious fanatics belonging to both the Hindu and Muslim religions added fuel to fire by instigating a feeling of hatred in the minds of people like Javed. The religious fundamentalists and terrorists of Pakistan and their supporters in India are poisoning the minds of the Muslim people in the name of jihad who want to live peacefully in India with their Hindu brethrens.

Javed, being remorseful of what he has done in the mob, narrates how he was insane in the mob and how other people provided him stones to throw at the crowd and knife to kill the poojari. But Javed soon gets nauseous. He narrates:

And ...and I was in a carnival again on that giant wheel screaming with pleasure. As I came crashing down, down. I wanted to get off, but I couldn’t! The poojari backed away. ...I got nauseous and I cried. ‘Why am I here? What am I doing here? Get me off! I want to get off!’ ...I let go of the knife...I watched someone pick up the knife and pierce the poojari. I watched while people removed a part of a chariot as planned. The poojari fell to the ground. The carnival continued. (CP 208)

The description of the riot by Javed is very realistic and throws light on the psychology of the mob. Here we come to know how communal riots are manipulated by the political and religious fanatics by making use of people like Javed who are totally blind in their faith and are ready to do anything for the sake of their religion. But Javed somehow gets off the giant wheel of communal riots and escapes in panic and confusion. Ramnik admires his bravery because it is not possible for everyone to get off and escape once involved in such activities. Ramnik Gandhi changes his attitude towards Javed and regards him high in his esteem.
Bobby plays a very vital role in bringing Javed home the reality behind the religious riots. He tries his best to stop Javed from killing the poojari by convincing him the futility of communal riots. He does succeed in his attempts and that’s why he tells Ramnik Gandhi again and again that he has changed Javed. If people like Bobby become active in the society and try their best to expose the religious fanatics and the political parties that instigate the feeling of distrust and hatred in the minds of the common illiterate and unemployed Muslims, then and then only people like Javed can get off the giant wheel of the religious riots and people will live peacefully.

Aruna’s every action and word reveals her attitude towards Muslims. When the mob disperses, she wants to fill water from the outside tap. Javed who is now changed and mitigated offers his service to her and is ready to fill the drinking water for her. But she does not like the idea as she is traditional and conservative. She says: “Please try to understand. We have nothing against you. It is only that we have our ways and customs and …and…we are all equal. There is no doubt. We respect your religion and we wish you well …All religions is one. Only the ways to God are many.” (CP 209)

These words of Aruna remind us the words of Swami Vivekananda. But there is difference between her theory and practice. If she had practiced her theory in her own life, then she would have allowed Javed to fill up water. But by giving explanation she makes the matter worse. She says: “we don’t allow anyone to fill our drinking water. Not outsiders… We bathe our god with it, Smita. It has to be pure. It must not be contaminated.” (CP 209)

In fact, Aruna’s explanation why she does not allow Javed to fill up drinking water is ludicrous. She has been taught since her childhood by her mother and orthodox religious people that the mere touch of Muslims and untouchables makes the
drinking water contaminated. She takes pride in her religion as Javed takes pride in his religion. Both Javed and Aruna are easily swayed by the religious people and believe in whatever is told to them by the orthodox and extremist religious priests; and here they commit the mistake. People like Aruna and Javed never think of the hidden agenda of the religious fundamentalists and allow themselves to be guided, controlled and used by them.

Bobby and Smita are different from Aruna and Javed. Both of them are liberal and do not hate the people having the different faith. Smita has many friends, as her mother tells, belonging to Muslim community. She feels stifled in her own house. She feels like a rat in a hole. She scolds her mother for having conservative approach and asks her to change her attitude towards other religions. When Aruna asks her to be proud of her religion and its traditions and customs, Smita remarks: “How can you expect me to be proud of something which stifles everything else around it? It stifles me. Yes! May be I am prejudiced because I do not belong. But not belonging makes things so clear. I can see so clearly how wrong you are”. (CP 211)

Aruna is an archetypal of a traditional Hindu woman who believes in Hindu traditions and customs and expects her daughter Smita to do the same. But Smita, a true secularist, does not like her mother’s approach to Bobby and Javed who stand for other faith. As she is well educated, and cultured, Smita hates her mother’s narrow mindedness and asks her to be broad-minded. Her mother does not budge an inch from her faith and gives a lecture to Smita. She scolds Smita for being atheist. She says:

What makes you think you have all the answers? Don’t you have any respect for who you are? I shudder to think what will become of your children. What kind of sanskar will you give them when you don’t
have any yourself? … For so many generations we have preserved our sanskar because we believe it is the truth! It is the way shown to us by our saints. (CP 211)

Her speech clearly indicates that she is a staunch believer of Hinduism and she is proud of it. When Smita tells her that she is wrong, she is unwilling to accept it “…because I will not accept that from someone who is not proud of her inheritance” (CP 211). She also tells Smita that she has no right to criticize her faith because she will be prejudiced in her criticism as Smita is running away from her faith.

Smita exposes Aruna and her religion. She cannot be proud of her religion which stifles everything else around it. She says: “… It (religion) stifles me! …What if I did what you do? Praying and fastening and …purifying myself all day” (CP 211). These words indicate that Smita does believe in religious rituals. She is totally different from her mother. The presence of two Muslim boys in the house makes Aruna insecure and her faith weak. But in the company of the same Muslim boys Smita feels friendly and secure. The arrival of the two Muslim boys makes them stand out from each other. Otherwise they would have gone on living their lives with the petty similarities.

Like Aruna, The Hindu Chorus is also critical of the secular people like Smita and Ramnik. The Chorus feels that the future of Hindus in India is threatened due to pseudo-secularists. The Chorus believes that the pseudo secularists favour the Muslims for the sake of Muslim votes. The Chorus says, “Our future is threatened…. our voices grow hoarse. Our bellowing pales in comparison to the whisper of a pseudo-secularist who is in league with the people who brought shame to our land! Half-hearted, half-baked, with no knowledge of his land’s greatness. He is still a threat.” (CP 121)
When Aruna tries to change Smita, she tells Aruna boldly not to keep trying. She says to her mother:

Don’t! Please, mummy, don’t try so hard! You are breaking me. Ever since I was small, you have been at me to go to temple, make garlands, listen to you reading from Gita. I love you, mummy, that’s why I did that. I listened to you and I obeyed you. I tolerated your prejudices only because you are my mother. Maybe I should have told you earlier, but I’m telling you now, I can’t bear it! Please, don’t burden me any more! I can’t take it! (CP 213)

Smita’s expression of her feelings clearly brings out her suffocation in the house. Her religion has oppressed her. When Ramnik Gandhi asks her why she did not tell him how she felt, Smita’s reply to her father moves and changes her mother who is now less fanatic than before. She replies: “Because…because it would have been a triumph for you—over mummy. And I couldn’t do that to her…How easy it would have been for us to join forces and make her feel she was wrong” (CP 213-14).

Smita’s speech, addressed to Aruna and Ramnik, opens the eyes of Aruna. She now doubts her goodness and asks Ramnik “Am I a bad person?” (CP 214). She realizes that Smita is rebellious like her father. She becomes lenient and allows the two Muslim boys to fill up water though she asks Smita to fill up God’s vessel herself.

Now both Aruna and Javed tolerate each other. Both of them are alike as far as their religious views are concerned. They form a pair in the play who are religious extremists and who are changed in the course of the time. Javed compares himself with Aruna and finds that they are not very different. According to him, Aruna said
the same thing to Smita what he said to Babban. He addresses Aruna and says: “What I told Babban, you told her (Smita)...you said you wouldn’t listen to her criticism because she was not proud of her—what did you call it?—inheritance. I said religion. Same thing, I suppose...We are not very different. You and me. We both feel pride.”

(CP 214)

Ramnik Gandhi hates his wife Aruna only because her behaviour and her attitude towards Muslims remind him of the guilt committed by his father and grandfather. He alone knows that the shop he owns once belonged to Zarine’s father and it was burnt in the name of communal riots by his father and grandfather and afterwards bought it at its half price. He would like to atone for it by giving a job to Javed. That’s why he again and again requests Javed to accept the job. The past guilt committed by his forefathers haunt him in the present and strains his relationship with wife and mother who are antagonistic towards Muslims.

While filling up the drinking water, Bobby tells Smita that they landed up at her house deliberately to know whether she was making sacrifices for Tasneem and whether she still loves Bobby. In fact Bobby would like to know from Smita whether she still loves him and if not, why the love relationship between them did not work. Booby thinks that the love relation between them did not work only because they belong to two different religions. But according to Smita, it is not the reason. She says, “I am sure that if we wanted to, we could have made it happen, despite all odds. It is wonderful to know that the choice is yours to make” (CP 218).

Smita is an atheist and does not believe in any god or religion. She believes in humanity. That’s why she tells Bobby that if they wanted to marry, they could have made it happen. She does not consider religion a stumbling block in the human relations. She proves that the touch of Muslim does contaminate neither the water nor
the God. That’s why she wants Javed to fill up God’s water. When Javed hesitates to do so, she says, “No, I suppose you are right. That’s why I wanted you to fill it. To prove that it is not going to fly off into the heavens with your touch, putting an eternal curse on our family” (CP 218).

Any God, either Hindu, Muslim, Christian or of any other faith, if it exists, does not discriminate people on the basis of caste, creed, religion or race. No religion teaches to discriminate people. The purpose of all religion is to make people lead a peaceful and happy life. All religions are good but its leading followers are self-centred, selfish, and narrow minded. They teach people to hate people belonging to other faith. They are the puppets in the hands of the ambitious and selfish politicians who play with the emotions of the innocent people for their selfish purposes.

In the final scene of the play, Aruna, after taking bath, enters the pooja room and begins her pooja by ringing the bell to wake up the God. Aruna’s act of ringing the prayer bell shatters the silence not only in the house but also in the mind of Javed. He stiffens as soon as he hears the bell. The bell is one of the rituals used in the play to create the religious atmosphere. It reminds Javed the bell rung by his neighbour in his childhood when he had touched the gate and the letter of his neighbour. But Bobby advances towards the pooja room to prove that Muslims also believe in Hindu Gods. Picking up the image of Lord Krishna he says: “See! See! I am touching God”! (CP 224). Looking towards the Hindu Chorus, Bobby says, “He does not burn me to ashes! He does not cry out from the Heavens saying He has been contaminated!”(CP 224)

Bobby’s act of touching the Hindu God exposes the so called religious fanatics who have created myths regarding the God. The myth is that if a Muslim person
touches a Hindu God like Krishna, the God burns that person to ashes. Another is about the contamination of the God. It has been preached by the conservative religious agents of God that if a Muslim or an untouchable touches the image of God, He is contaminated. Bobby proves that these myths are man-made and created by pseudo religious men to widen the gap between the two communities.

Showing the image of Lord Krishna to the Mob, Bobby tells them that the God laughs at “our trivial pride and our trivial shame” (CP 224). He tells Javed that the Hindu God doesn’t humiliate him. He says to Javed: “See Javed! He doesn’t humble you. He doesn’t cringe from my touch. He welcomes the warmth of my hand. He feels me. And he welcomes it! I hold Him who is sacred to them, but I do not commit sacrilege.” (CP 224)

Bobby, a true liberal, not only tolerates but also accepts and respects the other faith. He tells people like Javed not to harm any God as God welcomes all irrespective of caste, creed, and religion. It is the political parties that play a vital role in making the rift among the religious groups for the sake of vote banks. They make use of religious fanatics to widen the gap between the Hindus and the Muslims by instigating them to commit the sacrilege which becomes responsible for the communal riots. Javed admits it that he has been used by ‘those parties’ to throw the first stone to create communal riots. Bobby does not like Javed’s participation in the communal riots and tries his best to change him.

Bobby does not spare the Hindus like Aruna who do not allow the Muslims to enter the Hindu temples or in their houses. Showing the image of Lord Krishna to Aruna Bobby says:
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 cannot 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! (CP 224-25)

This speech of Bobby reminds us Lady Macbeth in Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*. Lady Macbeth also says that she cannot remove the smell of blood from her hands even if she uses the attars of whole Asia. Bobby and Lady Macbeth can not be compared as their acts are different. Lady Macbeth commits murder of King Duncan and talks of her blood stained hands and the smell of the blood. But Bobby’s act is pious. He holds the image of Lord Krishna in his hand not to commit sacrilege but to open the eyes of people like Aruna who believes only in their faith and are critical of the other faith. Bobby tells Aruna that there is no use of purifying herself or God by bathing all day and night. He tells her that his is the smell of a human being and therefore asks her to be human being like him who believes, tolerates, and respects what others believe. And it, according to him, is the strongest fragrance in the world. Everyone should use the fragrance so that the fragrance of humanity may spread everywhere and there will be the fragrance of communal harmony in India. This is the solution suggested by Dattani through the character of Bobby.

Looking at Hardika who has not yet forgotten the past events especially the death of her father and her insult in the house of Zarine, Bobby tells her “And if you willing to forget, I am willing to tolerate” (CP 225). The last sentence uttered by Bobby suggests that there is no use of only forgetting or tolerating each other but both the communities should take the initiative to bridge the gap between them by bilateral
communication. Forgetting the past, both the communities should tolerate and respect the other faith. I think that’s what Dattani suggests.

After the departure of the two Muslim boys, Hardika comments that there is one more memory to be cherished. She asks her son Ramnik why he has not gone to the shop and reminds him that his workers will be waiting for him. Ramnik firmly tells her that he cannot enter that shop any more and cannot bear thinking about it. For him there is no getting off, no escape, as he has no courage to tell anyone the secret about that shop. When asked what he is talking about, he replies:

It’s their shop. It’s the same burnt up shop we bought from them at half its value. (Pause) 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… When those boys came here I thought I would… I hoped I would be able to…set things right. (CP 226)

This revelation comes as a shock to Hardika who has wrongly interpreted their anger as false pride. When Hardika knows the reality she changes her attitude towards Muslims and asks Ramnik “Do you think…do you think those boys will ever come back?” It was she who wanted to drive them out of her house when they took shelter in her house. But now she is eager for their return. Ramnik tells her that they will come back if she calls them. “But if it is too late—they may not” (CP 226).

Thus, in *Final Solutions* Dattani take up the most current and serious issue of communal differences for discussion and makes his characters and audience to think
over the possible reasons and solutions to the communal problem. He seems to stand by the stance taken by Bobby, Smita and Ramnik who change the attitudes of religious extremists like Javed, Aruna and Hardika respectively. The play ends happily suggesting the need of bilateral communication to overcome communal differences. Lack of bilateral communication creates many problems not only in the family but also in the society. The Ram Janam Bhoomi–Babri Masjid issue which caused communal discord and riots between the two communities would not have been worsened if there had been bilateral communication between the religious leaders of Hindu and Muslim religions.

*The Swami and Winston*, first broadcast on June 3, 2000 on BBC Radio 4, is another important play that deals with the theme of communal differences. While *Final Solutions* deals with the Hindu-Muslim antagonism, *The Swami and Winston* deals with the Hindu-Christian antagonism. The play presents the religious fanaticism of Sitaram Trivedi, a right wing Hindu fundamentalist who murders the English woman Lady Caroline Montefiore in order to seize her property in London for raising a Hindu ashram there. It is Uma Rao, daughter-in-law of Bangalore’s Deputy Commissioner of Police and wife of Suresh Rao, the Superintendent of Police who brings the murderer to light by her intelligence.

The emergence of Hindutva politics in the last two decades has been a cause of communal riots. From the 1990s the BJP and its sister organizations have been active in instigating communal riots. Communal violence has entered a new phase with the Christians and members of other minority religions being made the victims of planned attacks. Tribal population in the rural areas is being forced to get involved in the attacks on Christians and Muslims by bringing them within the Hindutva framework. Apart from economic reasons, the call for Hindu unity which is primarily
a means to achieve political advantage is the main source for communal violence in this decade. Religious festivals and processions are generally used to mobilize Hindus for political purposes.

The play is set in Bangalore, a South Indian city in Karnataka where right wing Hinduism is spreading rapidly. The play opens with the conversation between Lady Montefiore and the driver who takes her to see the statue of the great big bull, the vehicle of Lord Shiva. It is at the Bull Temple where the English Lady Caroline Montefiore loses her dog, Winston. But immediately her dog is found. On her way back to the hotel, the car coughs a little and comes to a halt due to the overheating of the engine. The driver notices that the fan belt is broken. By locking the car from outside, he goes to get a mechanic near the Bull Temple. When the driver returns, he is shocked and horrified to see the Lady dead. He is arrested suspecting his hand in the murder. Uma Rao, the wife of Suresh Rao, the Superintendent of Police, investigates the murder of the English lady out of her interest and for her thesis on “Violence in India”. Uma tells Sitaram Trivedi why she is interested in the murder case: “I am merely interested in finding the motive for her murder. It is for my thesis on violence in India” (CP-II 301). She brings the murderer to light only with meagre clues. She exposes Sitaram Trivedi, a right wing Hindu fanatic, who murders Lady Caroline Montefiore, the sister of Charles Montefiore, in order to seize the property of Charles Montefiore. Uma Rao investigates the murder and gives justice to both the Muslim driver and Charles Montefiore.

Mahesh Dattani’s *The Swami and Winston* shows how innocent Muslims are victimized by the Police due to the communal bias. The driver Maqsood, being innocent, appeals Uma Rao to help him out to come out of the prison. Having no hand in the murder and being a victim of communal bias, he cries out: “What is my crime?
Being a Muslim? I tell you they will not have arrested me if I was not a Muslim! Who will believe me? You are also a Hindu …My life is not important?” (CP-II 300)

The driver Maqsood’s words speak a lot. It has been a fashion of the police to arrest Muslims whenever a riot or a murder takes place. Suresh Rao’s prompt action in arresting some Muslims including Maqsood after the murder of the English lady shows the biased attitude of the police towards Muslims. Munswamy, a police constable, also suspects the driver’s involvement in the murder. Sitaram Trivedi, a north Indian Vaishnav Brahmin, tries to elude Uma by suggesting the driver’s participation in the case. The following conversation between Uma and Trivedi throws light on the communal antagonism between Hindus and Muslims prevalent in the Indian society.

SITARAM TRIVEDI. How do you know she (Lady Montefiore) had lunch with me?

UMA. Her driver told me.

SITARAM TRIVEDI. Ah yes! The …Muslim gentleman.

UMA. Yes.

SITARAM TRIVEDI. She was very naïve. Trusting anyone.

UMA. You mean she shouldn’t have employed a Muslim driver?

SITARAM TRIVEDI. I didn’t say that… (CP-II 301)

In *The Swami and Winston* Dattani criticizes the right wing Hinduism which is responsible for the communal violence in India from 1990s. In the play, Sitaram Trivedi is “a real right wing Hindu fanatic” who feels “threatened by the presence of
Islam and Christianity” (CP-II 304, 305). He belongs to the new brand of Hinduism which does not believe in the principle of ‘Live and let live’. Conversely, Trivedi’s Hinduism is based on the hatred of ‘the other’. People like Sitaram Trivedi are mere puppets in the hands of RSS and its sister organizations. Having the political agenda, they always take out religious processions to mobilize Hindus. Sitaram Trivedi’s procession reminds us of the religious procession undertaken by Lal Krishna Advani over the issue of Ram Janam Bhoomi in Ayodhya. Trivedi himself supervises the procession with his personal bodyguards expecting trouble in the Muslim area. As soon as Uma Rao reminds him that anyone can throw the first stone to start a riot, Trivedi remarks, “Yes. That is why I am here to protect our religion! …Perhaps. It is my dharma to protect what we hold sacred. We must re-establish Hinduism. . . .” (CP-II 309)

Religious fanatics like Sitaram Trivedi can go to any extremes to fulfil their religious and political agendas. When asked about his daughter by Uma, Trivedi lies: “She is no longer with me. Killed by a …fanatic. A …non-Hindu.” (CP-II 309) It has been a common practice among the right wing Hindus to spread the rumours regarding the abduction of Hindu girls. If a Hindu girl runs away with a Muslim man, the rumour is spread that she is abducted and raped by the Muslim. If a Hindu person is accidentally injured or died in a fight with a non-Hindu, immediately a religious colour is given to that issue. Here Sitaram Trivedi tells Uma that his daughter is killed by a non-Hindu religious fanatic which is a trumped-up story. Actually, Trivedi himself has forced his daughter Radha to marry Charles Montefiore in order to inherit his property after his death which will be a part of his conspiracy. He batters his daughter when she refuses to poison Charles, her husband. Instead of killing her husband, Radha tries to commit suicide by eating the poisonous leaves of the
‘dhatoora’ plant. When Radha is being taken to the hospital, Trivedi fires a bullet at Charles which kills his daughter Radha. Thus, Trivedi, a Hindu fanatic, in his attempt to kill Charles Montefiore, kills his own daughter and loses everything.

The play *The Swami and Winston* deals with the investigation of the murder of Lady Caroline Montefiore who had come to India to meet her brother Charles Montefiore who lives in the ashram of Swami Jeevananda. She was extremely rich even by the European standards. Uma Rao is an intelligent research scholar having interest in the investigation of the murder cases. Though her husband Suresh Rao does not like her interference in his work, she secretly collects information about the death of Lady Montefiore and soon realizes that she was not strangled to death for the money in her bag. Thinking that her murder is connected with whatever business she had come with to India, to settle with her brother, she goes to the ashram to meet Charles Montefiore. On her way to the ashram, she comes across the scarecrow in the neighbouring farm wearing a Burberry raincoat that was torn at the right sleeve. Uma Rao comes to the conclusion: “Poor Winston tried his best to save his mistress that’s why the murderer wanted to get rid of it (raincoat)” (CP-II 308).

While going to the ashram, she also comes across the religious procession led by Sitaram Trivedi. By seeing the raincoat in the hand of Uma, Trivedi is puzzled and asks Uma whether Swamiji has loaned his raincoat to her, suggesting indirectly that the raincoat belongs to Swamiji. He also asks Uma whether the driver has confessed his crime. He deliberately tries to create suspicion in her mind about the Swamiji and the driver. But Uma is clever enough to recognize the cunningness of Sitaram Trivedi. She says, “It (raincoat) can’t belong to the Swami” (CP-II 310). Uma Rao also realizes that the Lady knew the murderer as she unlocked the door for him.
In *The Swami and Winston* Dattani comments on “the cause of violence today” (CP-II 311) through the character of Swami Jeevananda who is a real Hindu. As soon as Uma and Munswamy reach the ashram, they hear Swami addressing his devotees about “the cause of violence today”. He addresses:

Today we are so preoccupied with our own sense gratification that we are unaware of the existence of our fellow human beings. We see our brothers and sisters, fathers and mothers, children mere as means to fulfil our own needs. They do not exist for us unless they fulfil some need or want. That is the cause of violence today. Because we fell that anyone who does not fulfil our needs or wants is not required on the planet. And sometimes the death of fellow human beings may also fulfil some base need in us. . . . (CP-II 311)

This address of Swami Jeevananda also casts light on the main reason behind the death of Lady Montefiore.

While speaking a few words about his dead sister, Charles Montefiore reveals her intention behind coming to India:

My sister … my sole relative… ‘Sole’ as in only … come to India to visit me. She wanted me to go back to England with her. She loved me and she thought she knew what was good for me. She felt this somehow wasn’t natural for me … this life style. This madness, as she called it. (CP-II 312)
Lady Montefiore did not like Charles’ decision to come and live in the ashram of Swami Jeevananda in Bangalore forever leaving his property of five hundred acres of prime Hertfordshire land.

As Uma’s intention visiting the ashram is to collect information about Charles, she accompanies Charles to the market. On being asked how he came to know of the ashram, Charles tells about an Indian man who had met him in London and who had talked a great deal about *Advaita* philosophy. Accepting the invitation of that Indian man, Charles comes to India but that man turns out to be “the most bigoted, racist, casteist, classist man” (CP-II 316). A tourist from Afghanistan brings him to the ashram of the Swamiji.

When asked about the raincoat, Charles tells Uma that he had presented the raincoat to Swami Jeevananda. He also tells her that the Swamiji had been to the Bull’s Temple on the day Lady Montefiore was murdered but Charles assures Uma that the Swamiji can not murder her sister. He tells her about the documents addressed to Barnsworth and Milling. Before the death of Lady Montefiore, both Charles and Caroline had agreed to set up two trusts to look after their five hundred acres of Hertfordshire land. Charles had made Swami Jeevananda the senior trustee of the trust dealing with his share of the wealth. He also reveals his intention to divide the land between two trusts “exactly the way my sister and I had worked it out before her death” (CP-II 319). Charles also makes it clear to Uma that his wife Radha gets nothing and actually she wants nothing. Thus, giving information about the trusts to be formed and Lady Caroline’s intention behind visiting India, Charles Montefiore makes Uma believe that he can not be the killer of his sister.
Mahesh Dattani compares and contrasts the characters of Swami Jeevananda and Sitaram Trivedi. Of course, it is done through the investigation of Uma Rao, a research student and a sort of detective. She gathers information about Swami Jeevananda from Charles, according to whom Swamiji stands for “Peace and love …and beauty” (CP-II 313). Not satisfied by Charles’ opinion about the Swamiji, Uma meets the Swamiji personally in his private chamber. When the Swamiji was told about Uma’s visits to the ashram with her mother twenty years ago, the Swamiji reacts: “Those were the days when there was none of this nonsense of Hindu supremacy and ‘India for Hindus’ movement” (CP-II 320). The Swamiji is a true secular who does not believe in the superiority of one religion to another. He is critical of those Hindus who pulled down the mosque in Ayodhya in order to build a temple of Lord Rama in its place. He says, “…The irony of Fate! I was at the temple speaking at an inter faith seminar condemning the pulling down of the mosque. And at the same time, our Christian sister was brutally murdered” (CP-II 320-21). According to him the Hindu religion does not teach us to be violent. He admits that those who are killing people in the name of religion are doing so for the ‘power game’.

When asked about the raincoat, the Swamiji tells Uma: “Just I thought. Someone in the ashram is involved. I leave the raincoat in the main hall. Any one can use it. Any of my aides or devotees…Look at these people. They never leave me alone. They know everything that is going on here. We do not believe in secrets.” (CP-II 321)

The Swamiji’s life is an open secret. As he is always surrounded by his devotees, he has no private life or secret life. Everyone in the ashram knows where he goes and what he does.
While Uma, the Swamiji and Charles are busy in their discussion, Radha, the wife of Charles, enters into the private chamber of the Swamiji but soon she falls to the ground without uttering a single word. Uma notices dhatoora leaves in her hands and tells them that she has consumed the poisonous leaves of dhatoora plant. Immediately they take her to St. Mary’s hospital. On the way to the hospital, Uma tells Charles: “It’s not your sister’s death which is important to him. But yours.” (CP-II 322) She also tells Charles that his sister Caroline was killed with a purpose “to stop her from executing your letter of intention to Barnsworth and Milling” (CP-II 322). In order to put the suspicion on Swami Jeevananda, the killer of Caroline uses the raincoat of him and throws it in the field to be found. Knowing that the killer is very influential person, she suggests Charles “to move into a hotel in town and make sure that the police provide you with enough security until you have set up your trusts” (CP-II 322). As the killer knows everything that goes on in the ashram, Uma realizes that one of Swami Jeevananda’s aides must be his goon.

Uma Rao is clever enough to know the hidden agendas of the right wing Hindu organizations associated with the RSS. She brings to the notice of Charles that the killer is after his property “to set up a township or a mega ashram, to get expatriate Indians, millionaires interested in donating to the ashram which would be façade of course, to raise funds for their grand election campaigns, to gather support . . . for their pogrom . . . To eliminate Muslims, Christians …may be not genocide but to disempower them, to build temples to win the 700 million strong Hindu vote bank.” (CP-II 322-23)

In *The Swami and Winston* Mahesh Dattani condemns the right wing Hindu philosophy that believes in the supremacy of Hindu religion. Dattani also exposes Hindu fanatics like Sitaram Trivedi who are puppets in the hands of the right wing
organizations. People like Sitaram Trivedi are used by RSS and its sister organizations to mobilize Hindu voters by instigating them against Muslims and Christians.

Charles, thinking that Radha is also involved in the plot, asks Uma “But then why would she want to kill herself? Uma clarifies his doubt by telling him that Radha doesn’t want any of his property. She has been beaten and forced by her father to act according to his wishes. But, being a Hindu woman, she can not poison her husband. She tries to kill herself.

Revealing the identity of that man, Uma Rao tells Charles that Radha is the daughter of Sitaram Trivedi, who invited him to India and turned out to be “the most bigoted, racist, casteist, classist man I have met” (CP-II 316).

As Uma suspects, Sitaram Trivedi chases the car of Uma with an intention to kill Charles. When Uma’s car comes to a halt on the way to the hospital, Sitaram Trivedi fires a bullet that hits the body of the car in which they were carrying Radha to the hospital. Trivedi threatens Uma not to move and Charles to come out of the car. Uma reminds him that if Radha dies, Trivedi will get nothing. But soon Uma and Charles come to know that Radha is dead. When Trivedi calls Charles the murderer of his daughter, Uma reacts: “No! Liar! Your daughter was not dead. She is now. And she was killed by a fanatic. You! You killed your daughter!” (CP-II 324) Really, it is Sitaram Trivedi who is responsible for the death of his daughter Radha. In a fight that follows between Trivedi and Charles, the gun of Trivedi goes off hitting Trivedi himself. Before his death he confesses, “I—I didn’t want any of it for myself . . . I—I only wanted to help the Hindu cause” (CP-II 325).
In fact, as Uma says, Trivedi could have helped the Hindu cause by being a good Hindu himself. A true Hindu person believes in the principle of tolerance and not in the extermination of the non-Hindus. Hinduism as a religion is very tolerant. In the play it is practiced by Swami Jeevananda. He is the true follower of Hinduism. In his ashram, he gives shelter to any person who wants to learn Advaita philosophy irrespective of his caste, race, and religion. Charles Montefiore is greatly influenced by his philosophy. That’s why he makes Jeevananda a senior trustee of his trust dealing with his share of property which consists of nearly 250 acres of Hertfordshire land.

Conversely, Sitaram Trivedi, a hypocrite Hindu who pretends to be a great scholar of Advaita Philosophy, visits foreign countries to invite foreigners not to teach them the real Hinduism but to receive donations from them for the political party associated with right wing Hinduism. He invites Charles to India and plots his daughter Radha’s marriage with him, murders Lady Caroline Montefiore, the sister of Charles Montefiore when she becomes an obstacle in his attempt to grab Charles’s property, and finally intends to kill Charles Montefiore to inherit his property.

When Charles’s sister Lady Caroline becomes an obstacle in executing his plan, Sitaram Trivedi kills her. In order to put suspicion on Swami Jeevananda, Trivedi uses his raincoat while strangling the lady and throws it deliberately in the farm to be found out. He does not feel anything while slandering the character of Swami Jeevananda. A true Hindu will not defame and disgrace the Swami who stands for love, peace and beauty. Again he does not hesitate to fire a gun at Charles in the presence of others. He mars the life of his daughter by marrying her Charles, a foreigner who marries her to get the Indian citizenship only. But it is clear that Trivedi hands over his daughter to Charles in marriage only to be a widow as he himself
wants to kill Charles to grab his property. This demeaning act done by Sitaram Trivedi can not be done by any father either Hindu or non-Hindu. In his attempt to serve the Hindu cause, he loses everything—the life of his daughter as well as his own life. Thus, Sitaram Trivedi is a foil to the character of Swami Jeevananda. As Uma says, he is a real Hindu fanatic who can go to any extremes to execute his plans. Uma Rao tells her husband Suresh Rao the intention with which Sitaram Trivedi kills Lady Caroline and attacks Charles Montefiore:

\[\text{. . . by framing the Swami, he would get rid of an opposer, The Swami is truly spiritual and wants none of this new brand of Hinduism. Radha was totally under her father’s control, it would be very easy for Sitaram Trivedi to manage the property once she inherits it from Charles whom I am sure he would have killed in a way to make it look like an accident. He had grand plans. England would have been the perfect place to set up his own pseudo ashram.} \ (CP-II 325)\]

Uma Rao is shocked by the stance her husband Suresh Rao takes. Suresh Rao wants Uma to give a witness in the court that it was an accident. He says, “It was an accident, do you understand? He thought you were being attacked and so he stopped to help you. His gun went off accidently” (CP-II 325). Suresh Rao forces Uma to say exactly what he tells her to say in the court. But Uma Rao does not obey her husband. She supports Charles Montefiore and not her husband who supports the pseudo-religious people like Sitaram Trivedi and their movement ‘India for Hindus’. The police officers like Suresh Rao also support the Hindu organization like RSS and its sister organizations either in pulling down the mosques or in eliminating the non-Hindus. The riots in Gujarat in 2001 have proved it.
Mahesh Dattani criticizes the state agencies like the police that do not behave impartially in the communal riots arresting the innocent people like the driver Maqsood. In stead of arresting the true culprits like Sitaram Trivedi, the police arrest the innocents and keep them in the prisons to hide their inactiveness.

Mahesh Dattani’s play *Clearing the Rubble* is yet another play that deals with the theme of communal differences. It is a radio play written to be broadcast on the first anniversary of the earthquake in Bhuj in January 2001. It is “a direct response to the 2001 earthquake in Gujarat” (Jeremy Mortimer viii).

*Clearing the Rubble* presents the unjust world in Gujarat where Muslims and dalits are pushed to the periphery excluding them from the relief and rehabilitation works after the devastating earthquake in 2001. The play is set in the direct aftermath of the earthquake that ravaged Gujarat in January 2001. It throws light on the social milieu in Gujarat at the beginning of the 21st century. Immediately after the earthquake in Kutch region in Gujarat, the state witnessed the religious riots all over Gujarat stating what kind of communal atmosphere was prevalent in the very first year of new millennium. In his interview with Prashanth G. N. about his play *Clearing the Rubble* Mahesh Dattani says, “It is a critique about how the less-than-equals are treated in the time of disaster” (Betwixt Identities 2002)

The play *Clearing the Rubble* depicts the communal and caste biased nature of relief operations in Gujarat after the demoralizing earthquake in 2001. Whenever and wherever natural calamities like earthquake, flood, famine etc occurred, people helped the victims of the calamity forgetting their differences. During such calamities people help the victims irrespective of their caste, religion and race. The history has witnessed the victory of humanity during such times. Despite our unhealthy relations
with Pakistan, India has often helped Pakistan whenever it faced the natural calamities. But the earthquake in Gujarat in 2001 was an exception to it. It seems that the state government and its institutions took the precaution not to reach the relief material to the Muslims and dalits. At the very beginning of the play, Fatima, Salim’s mother who is still under the debris gives vent to her thoughts:

Allah be merciful! It is time for my prayer. Forgive me …Please show compassion. Both my daughters are with you now. I am coming too. Take me away from this unjust world now. I will hold the bodies of my daughters till I follow them to your world. I have no more strength to call out to those people who help others but not us. I cry out for you now. Only in your world is there justice. I want to be in your world. (CP-II 65)

Dattani begins the play with the thoughts of Salim, Jeffrey and Fatima—whose lives have been affected by the earthquake. Through the device of ‘thought’ Dattani allows his audience to see what is going on in the mind of his characters. Fatima, the mother of Salim, is buried under the debris of the village hospital. From beneath the debris she calls out for help but no one comes to help her only because she is both Muslim and dalit. Her son Salim, too, pleads the relief workers to unearth his mother and sisters who were buried alive under the debris, but no one pays heed to his requests. He requests Jeffrey to help him in unearthing his mother and sisters by telling him that “They tried! Not enough…We are Muslims …We are Muslims” (CP II 69). By his words it seems that Salim was trying to tell Jeffrey that those people who were clearing the rubble at the hospital did not try enough only because he was Muslim.
In *Clearing the Rubble* Dattani brings out the discriminatory nature of the relief work. Jeffrey, an English journalist, also comes to know about it. When he goes to Bhuj along with some people of Malliya to get a crane to unearth the people buried under the debris at the hospital, some people perhaps right-wing activists prevent him from taking a truck containing a crane and other relief work materials to Malliya by stating that they don’t need the foreign workers. But when Jeffrey shoots them with his camera and threatens them to bring to light the communal and caste biased nature of relief operations, they talk about the tolerant nature of Hinduism but suddenly attack Jeffrey and try to snatch his camera away. Overcoming them, Jeffrey and people of Malliya drive their truck to Malliya and save the people who were buried under the debris. Jeffrey succeeds in his attempt to save Fatima, the mother of Salim. If the government had sent the help in time, the more people including Salim’s two sisters would have been saved. Salim’s two sisters die under the rubble as they could not get help in time due to their religion.

Again, it seems to Jeffrey that the people of Malliya were less bothered about the lives of the Muslims and dalits in general and Salim’s family in particular. When Jeffrey tells them his intention to save Salim’s family with a crane, the people of Malliya look at each other in surprise and the man says to Jeffrey, “Yes, you can help. We can use you. We have a plan . . .” (CP-II 71). The man’s words clearly show his unwillingness to help Salim’s family. If he was interested in saving the lives of Salim’s family, he would have said “Yes, we can help” instead of “you can help”.

Thus, taking into account the views of Fatima, Salim and Jeffrey, it could be concluded that the condition of humanity in Gujarat during the relief operation was worst. The relief operation was religious, caste based and biased. As it was in the
hands of RSS and its sister organizations, the Muslims and dalits were deliberately neglected in relief and rehabilitation works.

The communal and caste discrimination has been the part and parcel of social life in Gujarat. The play also casts a light on the communal and caste discrimination at school. Salim, being a Muslim cobbler, gets unequal and torturous treatment in the school by both the teachers and his schoolmates. When a rat is found dead in the classroom, no one enters into the classroom. The other boys suggest the teacher that Salim be sent into the classroom to take the dead rat out. Salim’s schoolmates think that, being a low caste, it is his duty to remove the dead animal from the public places. He is humiliated in such a way only because he is a low caste Muslim. Such kind of treatment given to untouchable students affects their psyche and they develop a grudge against the society which rejects to accept them as a human being.

Expecting to be treated equally, Salim lies to his new schoolmate that his father was a farmer. If Salim had been treated equally at the school, he might not have lied to his friend. When other boys come to know about his lie, all of them tease him by calling him a son of farmer. It has been impinged on the mind of Salim from his early childhood that he, being a Muslim and a cobbler, is low caste and as a low caste he can not enjoy equal rights and opportunities as high caste students enjoy.

Thus, Dattani highlights the discrimination based on religion and caste. He brings out the discriminatory nature of relief operation in Gujarat during the 2001 earthquake.

Dattani’s *Do the Needful* also highlights the problem of communalism. The play presents the trauma of a Hindu girl, Lata, who loves a Muslim boy, Salim. The love between Lata and Salim can not culminate into marriage because of the religious
antagonism between the Hindus and the Muslims. Lata’s parents do not allow her to
marry Salim only due to his religion. As Lata’s affair with Salim becomes public, no
one in her community is willing to marry her. Devraj Gowda and Prema Gowda, the
parents of Lata, who live in Bangalore, invite Patels of Mumbai to Bangalore for the
marriage negotiations between Lata and Alpesh Patel, the son of Patels. When Lata
asks her mother not to insist her to agree with the marriage proposal, Prema Gowda
sharply reacts: “You should have thought of our lives before sleeping with that
terrorist!” (CP122). To Prema Gowda, every Muslim boy appears to be a terrorist. It
is the mentality of the majority of Hindus to distrust the patriotic feelings of Muslims.
In stead of allowing their daughter to marry Salim, they force her to marry Alpesh, a
divorced homosexual. Lata marries Alpesh only when she comes to know the sexual
orientation of Alpesh. She marries Alpesh, hoping to meet Salim in Mumbai. Thus,
the play throws light on the communal consciousness of the Hindu people who do not
allow their daughters to marry a Muslim boy.

Thus, Mahesh Dattani’s plays—Final Solutions, The Swami and Winston,
Clearing the Rubble and Do the Needful—highlight the issue of communalism in
Indian society. Dattani is a humanist who believes in the co-existence of all religious
people. He exposes the religious extremists and fundamentalists like Aruna and Javed
in Final Solutions and Sitaram Trivedi in The Swami and Winston. He supports the
stance taken by Bobby, Smita and Ramnik in Final Solutions, the Swami Jeevananda
in The Swami and Winston and Jeffery in Clearing the Rubble and expects the same
from us.