

Chapter – 4

Communalism

It is not difficult to conceive how the rise of terrorism or fundamentalism can become a grim threat to various societies in the Islamic world. Undoubtedly, it is born out of a burning resentment to injustice or an overpowering vision of an independent and more prosperous future. The religious and social contexts largely differ, yet the premises are more or less similar. Though the nature of such uprisings may vary from country to country, yet they find common ground in religion and in the infallibility of theological interpretations imposed by the religious authority at the head of any extremist movement. Paradoxically, the notion of tolerance that all religion preaches have turned into intolerance within the confines of identity politics. The objective in these cases is ultimately that of gaining power and the establishment of a religious nation-state that would not hesitate to resort to even dogmatic violence to impose orthodoxy, to control the social and political lives of the people. Any opposition to this would be considered with utmost intolerance as an act of blasphemy and it is to be castigated and brutally punished.

There is no comprehensive or final answer to the question- what is an identity? The concept was first used as 'psychological identity' by Eric Erikson, a post-Freudian, who reunified this label under the 'self' psychoanalysts, had fragmented into ego, super-ego, id, object relations and so forth. He argued that a person's identity grows in the course of the life cycle, or it may degenerate, as in negative identity or identity diffusion. According to Erikson, identity is defined as a relationship between the self and others; it 'connotes both the persistent sameness within oneself (self-sameness) and the persistent sharing of some kind of essential character with others.' (Erikson, 6)

One of the key strategies in which power operates in societies is by setting up groups and versions of the 'other' who can be both excluded from the opportunities of support and well-being that society may offer, and made scapegoat of as the cause of social or political trouble. Theories of identity politics are crucial in preventing the position of the 'other' being reduced to that of a victim. In studying the complexities of identity, one must understand that there is a dogmatic or orthodox strain in almost all religions, yet the Hindu constructs the idea of the orthodox or the superstitious Islam, ignoring the independent actions, the humour and the humane strengths of marginalized groups, which can emerge in their own right.

The most important lesson to be learnt from analyzing issues of moral and philosophic relevance to the problem of fundamentalism is to try and avoid reproducing the effects of discriminatory power in one's thought. No one has the right to impose one's views on the other. Attention to the question of identity can alert us to a much broader range of viewing other religions, which are not flexible or as dogmatic as our own, and thus may not be held to be as formidable as they are made out to be. No one can, with any certainty, lay down one universal moral philosophy. The new communitarian thinking can be one way of accepting ethnic debates without sounding ethnocentric. In the words of Mushirul Hasan:

The constant refrain in scholarly and popular writings is how ethnic and national identities operate in the lives of individuals by connecting them with some people and dividing them from others. Such identities, often highlighted by the perception of a 'threat' from a group external to it, are often deeply integral to a person's sense of self, defining an 'I' by placing it against a background of 'we'. (Hasan, 7)

Understandably, the path of Islam, Hinduism or Christianity does not allow criminal anarchy and there are apparently political motivations behind such a strategy. A bifurcated world is there not because of race or nation: it is there because of what Mark Twain observed about the double face of terror in France: one that brought the 'horror of swift death' and the other that emerged from 'lifelong death from hunger, cold, insult, cruelty and heartbreak.' The former 'inflicted death upon a thousand persons, the other upon a hundred million.' We often forget the latter as being probably one principle cause of violence and agitation. The confusion of misunderstandings, crude stereotypes such as suicide bombers, terrorists and fundamentalists by which we define the 'other' and the absence of self-knowledge, along with American hegemony are all causes of present discontentment and violence. Islam has certainly been at the receiving end and the West has not tried to understand that most of the Muslim around the world are tolerant and peace loving. If we were to ignore the religious fanatics and the tyrants, we can easily decipher a 'core of shared values'. The attacks of 9/11 were certainly celebrated in the Islamic world, but the mourning and sympathy that they aroused in the same world was systematically blocked out by the media.

Today the Muslim constitutes the second largest religious community in India after Hindus as well as the second largest Muslim minority in the world. Approximately, 172 million Muslims are spread out over all parts of our country, and the Muslim population density is more in some states like Jammu and Kashmir, Assam and West Bengal. India's Muslims are as varied in language, culture and socio- economic conditions as the Hindus. There is little in common between the Muslims in Uttar Pradesh and the Muslims in Kerala or in Jammu and Kashmir. Their unifying factor is religion but the fact is that they do not even have a common

language. Why do these people feel threatened, and in the face of what kind of opposition to their identity do they take steps, which are defensive and compulsorily fundamental? It is not the question of putting down the threat issuing from the minority of Muslims but to understand the attitude of the majority of the Hindu population, which is indirectly responsible for the rise of terrorism in India.

The rising trend of communalism and the accompanying violence have created a feeling of insecurity among the religious minorities and ethnic groups such as Muslims and this fear and discrimination led one-sixth of the country's population to fall victim to panic, suspicion and insecurity. Religious fundamentalism is on the verge of becoming religious bigotry, intolerance and narrow mindedness. First of all it is necessary to define what 'communalism' is. If a Hindu declares with pride that he is a Hindu, is this communalism? If a Muslim says that he is proud of being a Muslim and would give his life to stay a good Muslim, would that be communalism? When a minority community feels (rightly or wrongly) that it has been suppressed by decades of injustice and is being exploited and deprived and reacts and protest sharply, sometimes even violently, can this be called communalism? Do those Hindus, who accuse Muslims of hurting their religious sentiments and sensibilities by a variety of acts of omission and commission, by permitted to feel that they are above public accountability by dint of sheer superiority in numbers when they themselves commit the same sin of hurting Muslim's sentiments and faith in a systematic fashion?

Communalism can be considered an ideology, which states that society is divided into religious communities whose interests differ and are, at times, even opposed to each other. The antagonism, which is practiced by members of one community against the people of other community and religion, can be termed 'communalism'. 'Communal persons' are those persons, who practice politics through

religion. This antagonism goes to the extent of falsely accusing, harming and deliberately insulting a particular community. It extends to looting, burning down the homes and shops and shops of the helpless and the weak, dishonoring women, and even killing persons. These power politicians are not good Hindus nor good Muslims nor Sikhs nor Christians nor Parsis nor Buddhists. They can be viewed as dangerous political 'scum'. For them God and religion are merely instruments to be used to live luxuriously as the 'king parasites' of society and attain their political goals.

Muslim attacks on India started from 10th Century A.D. but early Muslim conquerors like Mohamud Ghaznavi and Mohammad Gori were more interested in looting rather than establishing religious dominance. It was when Qutubuddin became the first sultan of Delhi that Islam found a footing in India. Later, it was the Moghuls who consolidated their empire and Islam in the process. Some of the policies and destruction of Hindu temples and construction of mosques over these temples by Moghul rulers aroused communal bickering between Hindu and Muslim communities According to Noor Mohammad:

Islam also penetrated into Indian sub-continent long back through the Arab travelers. These Arab travelers entered into India through the Arabian Sea and settled in the south-west coastal areas. They did not only preach the Islamic fundamentals but also practice these and demonstrated the others by practicing equality, social justice and tolerance, which attracted the downtrodden, exploited and neglected lots of the Indian population who embraced the Islam. At a later period, some Muslims invaded India from the northern side and were able to establish their rule, which started from Shahabuddin Ghouri to the last Mughal ruler Bahadur Shag Zafar. Some of the Indians might have also

embraced Islam to take political benefits from the rulers of the time.
(Mohammad, 17)

When the British established their dominance in India through the East India Company, they initially adopted the policy of patronizing Hindus, but after the first war of Independence in 1857 in which Hindus and Muslims fought shoulder to shoulder, the British adopted the policy of 'divide and rule' which resulted in fostering communal clashes deliberately for keeping intact their hegemony. The phrase comes from the Latin *divide et impera*, which translates to "divide and rule", keeping its people divided along lines of religion, language, caste etc. The British followed this policy in India by categorizing people according to religion in the census first by treating them as separate from each other. They had based their knowledge of the peoples of India on the basic religious texts and the intrinsic differences they found in them instead of on the way they coexisted in the present. The British were also still fearful of the potential threat from the Muslims, who were the former rulers of the subcontinent, ruling India for over 300 years under the Mughal Empire. In order to win them over to their side, the British helped in the establishment of the M.A.O. College at Aligarh and supported the all India Muslim conference, both of which were institutions from which leaders of the Muslim League and the ideology of Pakistan emerged. As soon as the League was formed, they were placed on separate electorate. Thus the idea of separateness of Muslims in India was built into the electoral process of India. The relations between Hindus and Muslims further strained when during the freedom struggle, power politics came into play. There was also an ideological divide between the Muslim and the Hindus of India. While there were strong feelings of nationalism in India, by the late 19th century there were also communal conflicts and movements in the country that were based on

religious communities rather than class or regional ones. Some people felt that the very nature of Islam called for Muslim communal society. Thus, though the antagonism between Hindus and Muslims is an old issue, Hindu-Muslim communalism in India can be described a legacy of British rule during the freedom struggle. Communalism operates today in a significantly changed social and political milieu. It is now perceived as a problem that impedes and wraps the process of development of our country. It is the single largest threat to the secular ideals that our Constitution emphasizes. The sectarian interests keep on fanning the flames of communal hatred.

One cannot wish away one's past, an attitude that is highly visible in the evasion to recognize the deep influences of India's Islamic inheritance. Undeniable the very notion of India's national identity is based on the contributions made by Islam. Nationalist leaders like Vivekananda, Gandhi, Nehru and Savarkar cannot be absolved for harboring a clear-cut bias towards Muslims, a disposition of discomfort in viewing the past with its overwhelming Islamic scaffolding. These leaders are to a great extent responsible for provoking an attitude that created the rupture between the two communities. Interestingly, no such intense animosity was directed either towards the Buddhists, who posed the utmost danger to Hinduism. It can be argued that this perplexing treatment of the Muslims within India arose out of 'Indian nationalist thought'. The sense of Muslim oppression was used strategically by the leaders to forge a stronger national solidarity. Many Indian nationalist leaders found it useful, specially, to accept the notion of an Indian Golden Age that ended with the presumed oppression of Muslim rule.

The partition of India left both India and Pakistan devastated. The process of partition had claimed many lives in the riots. Many others were raped and looted.

Women, especially, were used as instruments of power by the Hindus and the Muslims; “ghost trains” full of the severed breasts of women would arrive in each of the newly born countries from across the borders. Fifteen million refugees poured across the borders to regions foreign to them, for though they were Hindu or Muslim, their identity had been embedded in the regions alien to them, or in the regions where their ancestors were from. Not only the country was divided, but also so were the provinces of Punjab and Bengal, divisions that caused catastrophic riots and claimed the lives of Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs alike.

Many years after the partition, the two nations are still trying to heal the wounds left behind by this incision to once-whole body of India. Many are still in search of identity and a history left behind beyond an impenetrable boundary. The two countries started with ruined economics and lands and without an established, experienced system of government. They lost many of their most dynamic leaders, such as Gandhi, Jinnah and Allama Iqbal, soon after the partition. Pakistan has to face the separation of Bangladesh in 1971. India and Pakistan have been to war twice since the partition and they are still deadlocked over the issue of possession of Kashmir. The same issues of boundaries and divisions, Hindu and Muslim majorities and differences, still persist in Kashmir.

Partition brought with it a baffling lunacy manifested in the worst forms of mystification, chaos, arson, turmoil, calamities of rape, eviction, dislocation and refuge. The bitter memories of this madness, whether lived or learnt through narration, continue to haunt the survivors, perpetrators and their descendent generations. The violence of partition generated deep feelings of terror, fear hostility, hatred and other negative emotions among its victims and perpetrators. At the depths of despair and madness, on both sides of the divide, the ‘Other’ was seen and

projected as the greatest and possibly the most dangerous enemy, one that had to be pulled down as effectively and as soon as possible. Partition violence sounded the death-knell of those high moral values that were essential components of Hinduism, Islam and the Sikh faith.

On the other hand, in the post-independence era, it became a model of violent conflict resolution invoke and emulated by ethnic and religious extremists and the hawkish establishments of India and Pakistan. The chapter argues that the Partition of India epitomizes the politics of identity in its most negative form: when trust and understanding have been undermined and instead fear and insecurity reign supreme, generating angst at various levels of state and society. The trauma emerged in the process has been profound. Consequently, relations between the two states, between them and some of their people, and between some of their groups have not been normalized even after more than half a century; on the contrary, they have been consistently worsening with each passing year. Ethnic conflict currently pervades the domestic politics of the two states and the hawks in their defense establishments have been calling the shots for quite some time.

How have the government in different parts of the world countered such violence that has been the cause of devastation and death? The demolition of the Babri Masjid, the Kashmir problem, the massacres in Punjab, the killings by the Islamic Salvation Front, or the daily blood bath in the Middle-East and then the heartless attack on the Twin Towers give a loud indication of the serious dimensions of this ongoing threat which rides unabashedly on the ideology of the coexistence of orthodoxy and violence. In present times, the press and the media also sometimes contribute to communal tensions in their own way. Many a times, the news published in paper is the based on hearsay, rumors or wrong interpretations. Such news adds

fuel to the fire and fan communal feelings. This is what happened in Ahmedabad in the 1969 riots when ‘Sevak’ reported that several Hindu women were striped and raped by Muslims. Although this report was contradicted the next day, the damage had already been done. It aroused the feelings of Hindus and created a communal riot. Issues like the Ram Janam Bhoomi-Babri Masjid dispute in Ayodhya, the Krishna Janam-Bhoomi and nearby Masjid alteration in Mathura, the dispute between Kashi Viswanath temple and its adjoining mosque in Varansi, and the controversial Masjid in Sambhal claimed to be the temple of Lord Shiva from the days of Prithviraj Chauhan, and Shabhuddin’s (M.P.) giving a call for non-attendance of Muslims on Republic day the observing of January 26, 1987 as ‘black day’, have all aggravated the ill-feeling between the two communities. The reason behind such kind of divisions can be given in the words of A.G. Noorani:

A community that considered itself to be a distinct nation by itself,
rather than a part of the nation, demanded the Partition of the country
for the establishment, ironically, of another majoritarian state.

(Noorani, 121)

The realities of Muslims as citizens of the world expose us to external forces, which compound their internal struggles. Their Islamic identity is increasingly a burden that they have to endure as a result of a global assault that on the one hand defines them as the aggressor and the terrorist, while on the other, it paints them as a victim and backward. Consequently, being Muslim gives others a license to judge you based on assumptions they may have. For instance, many expect the same level of groove in their social life as they see in their advocacy, but because they are profoundly spiritual and very subdued in lifestyle and character; they are labeled ‘conservative’. As Pye puts it:

In the process of political development, an identity crisis occurs when a community finds that what it had once unquestionably accepted as physical and psychological definitions of its collective self are no longer acceptable under new historic conditions. In order for the political system to achieve a new level of performance ...it is necessary for the participants in the system to redefine who they are and how they are different from all other political and social systems. (Pye, 110-111)

The partition of India has given a limited distinctive identity to both communities within their territorial location and these forceful religious divisions have now become our complete national identity. The gruesome and ghastly rioting, which took place in 1947, has continued to throw up countless such incidents in independent and secular India. The confronting and negotiating responses to the post-BabriMasjid demolition and brutal bloodshed while the post-Godhra Hindu-Muslim communal violence in Gujarat 2002 is the most recent shameful example of this. Young people may endure great discontent and refrain from agitating. Since Independence, Muslim in India has endured corruption, inequality, exploitation, political manipulations, police brutality, bureaucratic callousness, religious fanaticism without serious social protest. Politicians charge the social atmosphere with communal passion by their inflammatory speeches, writings and propaganda. They plant the seeds of distrust in the minds of the Muslims while the Hindus are convinced that they are unjustly coerced into making extraordinary concessions to the Muslims in the economic, social and cultural fields. They also exploit the deep religious traditions of both the communities and highlight the differences in their respective practices and rituals. The leaders also try to use economic arguments to install fear

and suspicion in the minds of people and prepare their followers to start a riot at the least provocation.

In this context, the very insightful and sharp analysis of the nationalist conceptualization of India's Islamic legacy is taken up by Dattani in his well-performed play *Final Solutions*. In this play, Dattani bemoaned the takeover of the symbols of his religion, by the proponents of Hindutva; many like him have expressed the resolve to reclaim them. Dattani exposes the fundamentalists and orthodox persons who use religion as a cover (or mask) to realize their selfish interest. Religion is a mere ploy in their hands to further their interest in life and cherished their desired goal. Identity politics underlying the Hindu-Muslim tension in India has to be clearly grasped to explain the causes of communal riots as well as large scale killing that have taken place in recent years. These are the some issues which Mahesh Dattani foregrounds as a serious socio-political problem plaguing our nation today- the communal disharmony between Hindu-Muslim in *Final Solutions*; dealing with the recurring rhetoric of hatred, aggression, the monetary and political exploitation of communal riots, the chauvinism and parochial mindset of the fundamentalist, in the context of the India of the 1940s interspersed with the contemporary India.

The play presents different shades of the communalist attitude prevalent among Hindus and Muslims in its attempt to underline the stereotypes and clichés influencing the collective sensibility of one community against another. While tackling with the theme of transferred resentments in the context of family relations, he also presents the main cause of riots today and that is through the paid peoples by corrupted and selfish politicians. Alyque Padamsee observes:

The demons of communal hatred are not out on the street.....they are lurking inside ourselves. (CP-I, 161)

The chorus used by Dattani in the play is a good device to express the broad way in which the thinking of excitable elements within the two communities goes, besides the inner resentments, fears and anxieties of the massacre of partition, there are some other reasons which enlarge this hatred further. The feeling of second grade citizens in Muslims through the food habits of kitchen fads of the two communities as Hindus are vegetarian and think of utensils getting contaminated by even the touch of a member of other community are also brought into focus in the play. Muslims, too, are conscious of the antipodal position they assume in Hindu community and are equally averse to the Hindus. Politicians exploit most of these things; hired goons help them and therefore pent up feelings take a violent shape. And thus the false feeling of superiority among Hindus and the resultant base feeling of inferiority or 'otherness' among Muslims is perhaps the worst thing in such situations. And the ridiculous situation comes in when the sentiments and perspectives of violence arouasers and liberal minded people matches, may be in different ways but the underlying sense of 'otherness' is imprinted into the psyche of almost every character in the play, expressed through the violence of so called secularism.

The play *Final Solutions* opens with the partition of India in 1947 and then shifts between the past and the present while presenting the changing nuances of Hindu-Muslim relationships. The plot involves three generations of people who convey complex and abstract messages about guilt, tolerance, religious bias, hypocrisies and cultural prejudices. Through their challenges, the audiences are forced to take a closer look at themselves. It is about a simply Hindu family who are suddenly faced with lot of questions when two Muslim miscreants seek refuge in their house during the communal riots. Thus begins the quest for the truth of their beliefs by their father, mother, daughter and Baa (the grandmother). The story is juxtaposed

deftly between two time periods – the present and the past and finally throws light on the beliefs of even those who consider themselves very liberal. In an Interview to Utpal. K. Banerjee, Dattani asserts:

The story ... looks at two Muslim boys who are running away from a mob and take shelter in a Hindu house. But tension develops when the householder suspects that one Muslim boy is having an affair with his daughter and prejudices surface. Incidentally, this was a turning point in my life and suddenly I lost confidence. It became a time of soul searching for me. (Banerjee, 163)

The play opens with Daksha, a girl of fifteen on the stage, reading from her diary. An oil lamp converted to an electric one suggests that the period is the late 1940s. Her diary shows her pitiful plight as a married woman in a typical Indian family as she says:

All my dreams have been shatteredI can never be a singer, like Noor Jehan. Hari's family is against my singing film songs. His parents heard me humming a love song to Hari last night. And this morning they told him to tell me.... I am just a young girl who does not matter to anyone outside her home. (CP-I, 196)

But, soon she comes to the main point of the play and sarcastically addresses this as 'more important thing' and continues,

Like last year, in August, a most terrible thing happened to our country. We... gained independence ...Everyone was awake waiting for midnight – like children on the last day of school, waiting for the last bell of the class before vacation. And their rushing out and screaming and shouting and fighting. (CP-I, 166)

Mob or Chorus is used by Dattani as a stylistic device to enhance the real presentation of the Hindu and Muslim peoples. For these five men are employed with having ten masks in their hands, five for Hindu and five for Muslims by holding the stick in front of them. After her reading is finished, the Mob/Chorus accompanies her by whispering ‘Freedom! At last! Freedom!’ (CP-I, 166). Daksha continues describing the event when the massacre took place—communal riots, which took her father’s life. She and her mother were alone in the house and they took refuge from the flying stones in the pooja room. Some stones hurt them; some other had broken their precious things, especially Daksha’s entire collection of her gramophone records, which she ‘loved most’. Daksha’s diary ascertains the history of division – the sense of ‘us and them’, the ‘one and other’ by linking personal experience with the political/social hatred:

DAKSHA. That night in Hussainabad, in our ancestral house –
when, I heard them outside – I knew that they were thinking the
same of us. (CP-I, 167)

Daksha closes her diary and Hardika appears on the stage. Past and present is fused on stage through the figures of Daksha and Hardiak. Hardika is the grandmother or Baa of Gandhi’s family in the present time. Hardika is the name given to Daksha by her in-laws. She shutters between her two identities, namely that of a girl of fifteen and that of a mature woman, who has witnessed forty years of freedom. After the Babri-Masjid event and Gujarat carnage in India, one can ask whether anything has changed from the time of freedom at all. And Hardika in the play, while clashing during the ‘rath yatra’ in Amargaon, replies who feels that a period of forty years is not long enough to make enough changes in the country:

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 women's shaky scrawl. Yes, things have not changed that much. (CP-I, 167)

And, with this, the drumbeat grows louder on the stage and the chorus is seen wearing the Hindu masks and growing to be aggressive and blood thirsty with the comments they pass. The words spoken by Chorus show the beginning of disharmony and painful period ahead, as the inner hatred and 'outsider', feeling towards Muslims is clear in these words:

CHORUS 1. The procession has passed through these lanes

Every year

For forty year!

CHORUS 2, 3. How dare they ?

.....

CHORUS 4, 5. Why did they ?

Why did they today ?

.....

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 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!

.....

CHORUS 1 (pounding with his stick.) ... Send...them... back

.....

CHORUS 2 (pounding with his stick. Drive ...them ... out.

.....

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

A muddle up feeling is found in these voice as while Chorus 1,2,3 seem to be more cantankerous, Chorus 4 and 5 seem to be polite in the beginning, but later on turn to be antagonistic like those. These words show that the bitter feelings of partition in the heart of people are still raw. Nobody thinks it is the land of Indians, as it has become the Hindu land only. Thus at the very beginning, Dattani gives us an idea about the real cause of recurrent riots in Indian society.

The scene shifts from the street to the living room of the Gandhi's; the family comprises of Ramnik Gandhi, the father of the house, his wife Aruna, his daughter Smita, and his Baa Hardika. Ramnik Gandhi seems to be a very liberal-minded person towards the Hindu-Muslim relationships and does not like Hardika's telling his daughter that "those people are all demons" (CP-I, 173). Aruna is a typical Gujarati housewife doing 'pooja – path' everyday, praying constantly "Our Krishna will protect us" (CP-I, 174). She is a God-fearing woman and thinks that her Krishna will do everything smooth and peaceful one day. She is over burdened by the work daily. When she complains about her uneasiness, Ramnik asks:

RAMNIK. Nobody is asking you to pray all day.

ARUNA. Who do you think is protecting this house?

RAMNIK. Who do you think is creating all this trouble? (CP-I, 173)

The Muslim Chorus whispers on this superstitious behaviour, ‘We are neither idol-makers nor idol-breakers’ (CP-I, 173). This chorus seems to answer the questions of Hindu mob outside but gradually get emotional and worried about their displaced identity by the Hindus.

CHORUS 1 Their chariot fell in our street!

CHORUS 1 Was the chariot built by us?

CHORUS 2,3 Blame the builder of those fancy thrones.

CHORUS 4. A manufacturing defect!

.....

CHORUS 5. But they blamed it on us!

CHORUS All. Why did they? Why did they? Why?

CHORUS 5 (emotionally). Why?

Pause.

CHORUS 3. They say we rage their temples yesterday.

CHORUS 2. That we broke their chariot today.

CHORUS 1. That we’ll bomb their streets tomorrow.

CHORUS ALL. Why would be ? Why? Why? Why would we?

CHORUS 5 (emotionally). Why would we ?

Chorus 1, 2, 3 and 4 spit.

CHORUS ALL EXCEPT 5. Let them send us back.

They turn to exit.

CHORUS 5 (meekly). Where? (CP-I, 171)

Inside the house, there is Hardika, the old Baa of Ramnik, clutched in the old misdeeds happened to her and her family while partitioning. Even after forty years,

she could not forget those incidents. She does not believe Muslim at all. She is an epitome of those hateful thoughts towards them, as any fanatic Hindu would be. These lines spoken by Baa clearly show his fears of both past days and incoming days when the two Muslim boys come to take shelter to Ramnik while riots outside:

This time it wasn't the people with the sticks and stones. It was those two boys running away who frightened me. 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! All those memories came back when I saw the pride in their eyes! I know their wretched pride! It had destroyed me before and I was afraid it would destroy my family against (Pause.) They don't want equality. They want to be superior. (CP-I, 172)

Hardika is always worried for her family because what she has seen in her times, she does not want it to happen again. Hardika once had, for a brief period, Muslim friend named Zarine forty years ago. She admired her beauty and her interest in music, "I have never met anyone as pretty as her! What a complexion! It's true that Khoja women are the prettiest in the whole world" (CP-I,175). But she hates the place where she lives as it is "a place where they sell unmentionable things" (CP-I,175). One day, her father's dry fruits and mithai shop had caught fire and her family was in financial trouble. Daksha thought that her father-in-law would give her father a job in his own shop. But it didn't happen. To know the reason, Daksha went to Zarine's home. They were preparing for the lunch. They invited Daksha as well. But she could not tolerate the smell of non-vegetarian food and vomited; this infuriated Zarine and called her names. Daksha felt humiliated and after returning home, her father-in-law

was furious with her and denied her any freedom of going anywhere alone. The incident made Daksha hate Zarine and all Muslim's false pride.

The play shifts to the present; Javed, the rioter and Bobby his friend appear on the scene and the action begins. They are caught by the mob outside and they run to save themselves. When they knock at the door of Ramnik seeking refuge, he saves the two boys, while the chorus shouts: "Kill the sons of swine!" (CP-I, 179). The bitter hatred intensifies. The irrational behaviour of the two communities lingers for some time showing one's prowess over the other. Chorus 1, 2 shout: "We are few! But we are strong!" (CP-I, 179). The chorus calls Ramnik 'a traitor' for protecting the boys. Deep hatred makes the chorus devoid of any human feelings. Hardika betrays her feelings by saying that she hates Javed. Aruna too wants that the boys must go away from the house. She gives them water but put the empty glass separate from other glasses as they were contaminated by their touching. Act I ends with the violent words of the chorus. "Throw them out!" (CP-I, 187) The chorus goes to the extent of saying:

You mad man! They'll stab you in the back! They'll rape your daughter. (CP-I, 186)

At the beginning of Act II, the characters are all in the same position as at the end of Act I. However, the mob outside is restless as the chariot lies broken in the street as it is and no political decision has been taken. They began to doubt the intension of their leaders and say: "They want our blood to boil" (CP-I, 88). They lament that perhaps they have succeeded in their mission. Inside the house, Smita, the daughter of Ramnik, tells that she knows them. Ramnik, in spite of having a tolerant image, gets extremely uncomfortable on hearing this:

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!

RAMNIK. Where did you meet them?

SMITA. I – told you.

HARDIKA. But they are not from here. What were they doing in your college?

BOBBY. It's alright. Let me tell you –

SMITA. (angrily) No!

RAMNIK (sternly), For God's sake! Tell us how you know these...

boys (CP-I, 188)

Ramnik calms down only when Smita explains that Javed is Tasneem's brother and Bobby is her fiancé; Tasneem being her classmate. And when Ramnik comes to know through Bobby that Javed is here to find a suitable job for himself, he offers him a job in his own shop; an idea which Hardika strongly disapproves as she does not believe them at all. But at this offer of Ramnik, Smita reveals the truth about Javed being a violent, individual: a fact told to her by Tasneem:

SMITA (to Ramnik). They hire him! They hire such people!

RAMNIK. They who ?

SMITA. 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-I, 195)

Javed turns furious at these words and calls Smita a "Traitor!" And soon Smita realizes her fault when Bobby tells her that he had succeeded in convincing Javed to change his way of life. But everything is destroyed now as she again has broken Javed's trust. This natural disillusionment of such youth like Javed because of the identity problem can be demonstrated in the words of Andre Gorz:

When, as is currently the case (national, social, occupational, ethnic or religious) identity is invoked and extolled on all fronts, this proves that it is in doubt, that it is no longer self-evident, that it is already lost. (Quoted in Ronald Inden. 1)

Act III opens with a spotlight on the two men sitting on the floor, looking troubled. The accusations and counter-accusations between Ramnik and Javed go on; both accusing each other and the flames of the hatred begin to erupt in their minds. Ramnik accuses Javed as representative of those wronged by his ancestors, and proves he is as 'communal' in some ways as those are on the other side of the door. Ramnik proves that he is not so much liberal minded as he thinks himself to be. The distinction between him and his wife however, is that Aruna articulates this clearly from her security of being part of the dominant group, while Ramnik tries to suppress his prejudice. His views about Muslims are the same, as like any Hindu, The condition gets worse when Ramnik indicts Javed as a riot-rouser and criminal and emits a few curses by crossing the line between understanding and allotting 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 (angrily). Now you are provoking me! How dare you blame your violence on other people ? It is you! You have violence in your mind. Your life is based on violence. Your faith is based... (Stops, but it is too late) (CP-I, 198)

This move of Ramnik, from blaming the individual to blaming the community in this single sentence is the main and insoluble problem of the society. Ramnik thinks that Javed has done an unforgivable act but still he is ready to offer Javed a job only to give him a chance. But Javed doesn't want that job as he knows very well the hypocritical characters of Hindu like Ramnik, who will never trust him even if he changes and will doubt him forever for one or other thing. He had already refused it in the previous act by sarcastically addressing Ramnik as 'sir' that Ramnik is on the side of 'majority' of the country and so he can offer him job to show him superior:

JAVED. 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-I, 192)

The atmosphere of the room begins to get tense with the conversations between Javed and Ramnik; and it seems as if a quarrel is going to erupt. Javed reveals true face of Ramnik behind his 'liberal-minded' mask:

RAMNIK (shaken.) Why must I defend myself to you? You are the criminal...no matter how much you attack me; you cannot justify your being

a riot-rouser. (Suddenly slaps Javed.) You... you scum. If I had known what you were....

JAVED. You would have let the mob kill me. And you wouldn't have minded if (points to Bobby) he had died as well. You don't hate me for what I do or who I am. You hate me because I showed you that you are not as liberal as you think you are. (Goes to the main door and stands outside.) There's no danger outside now...(CP-I, 198)

Ramnik, therefore, proves himself to be more repulsive, provocative and a proud Hindu who always feel himself in 'majority' while neglecting Muslim as 'minority'. The subtext is clear – the home/family/society/nation are firmly Hindu, the two young men, literally and metaphorically the outsiders, the transgressors. Bobby, however controls the situation, makes them cool down and tells Ramnik the childhood story of Javed, which is the main reason of his revolting attitude and behaviour. That time Javed was the hero among his neighbourhood boys. But one day, a minor incident changed all that. Javed and his friends, including Bobby were playing cricket on their street when a postman dropped a letter in hurry and requested Javed to hand over the letter to the owner. And “Javed took the letter...and opened the gate. Immediately a voice boomed, ‘What do you want?’ ...‘Leave it on the wall,’ the voice ordered. Javed backed away, really frightened ... as the man came out with a cloth in his hand. He wiped the letter before picking it up, he then wiped the spot on the wall the letter was lying on and he wiped the gate!.” (CP-I, 200)

The neighbour began his prayers with the praying bell continuously. Bobby and Javed had never been noticed that bell so intensely and individually before, as that voice of bell was no other than other voices of birds and tongas, which we use to hear daily unconsciously. Bobby says:

It (ringing bell) didn't mean anything. You don't single out such things and hear them, isolated from the rest of the din. But at that moment ...we all heard only the bell. (CP-I, 201)

And the next day, Javed took revenge by throwing pieces of meat and bones into his neighbour's backyard, by which the man got very furious, wept and screamed on the street. Seeing this Bobby and other friends were frightened, at what Javed had done and did not speak to him for many days. The impact on Javed of this incident was, in Bobby's words:

And for Javed, he was – in his own eyes – no longer the neighbourhood hero. (CP-I, 201)

The play, thus, shows the journey of a Muslim youth into being a rioter and back. Some politicians start taking an interest in these agitations and in some cases they incite anti-social elements to keep these agitations alive, and when these anti-social elements indulge in loot and arson, it is the youth who are blamed for these destructive activities. The frustrated youth, thus, become more frustrated and the unrest among them further increases. But those angry youth, who feel victimized by outrageous injustice, or those who feel even mildly annoyed with existing structures and opportunities will collectively act to pressurize the power-holders to bring some change. The Muslim mob generally gets infuriated when any objectionable statements or provocative slogans are shouted against their community and they feel threatened by the other group. These members of the 'other' group take out religious procession such as drills, demonstrations, rath yatras, etc, showing strength and challenge. Or when they compare the standard of living of their community and low representation in government and other services, and therefore are forced either to revolt or to conceal their religious identity because of fear of exclusion.

Bobby confesses to Ramnik that not only Javed, but he too suffers in this way. Javed rebelled because he is proud of his religion, but Bobby used to feel ashamed of his religion and the fear of being the ‘minority’ forced him to hide his real identity and he changed his name from Babban to Bobby. Now Bobby and Javed want to leave the house as the road is clear. Ramnik could not let go Javed as he is a criminal and must be arrested. Hearing this Javed laughs and says sarcastically, which is a good example of corruption in politics today:

JAVED. 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 innocent Muslim to please everyone. (CP-I, 204)

Ramnik is shocked to hear revelations and so is the audience, especially with the mouth of the rioter himself. Javed says that he was there when the procession was going from the street and he began to throw the stones for which he was hired by the political leaders. Those leaders used to hire many such rebellious youth in the name of religion to fulfill their cheap wishes of getting higher positions in politics. The provocative speeches that Javed, like his fellow recruits, is privy to, serve precisely this purpose of legitimizing the conceptual principles of the organization through its emotional impact. Javed’s experience is not exceptional but a collective experience in fact, this bonding with the other youth who have undergone the same process of initiation as himself that keeps Javed attached to his group. Javed is realizing his fault now and is disillusioned. He does realize that his faith is taken advantage of by those, who will be profitted by the riots and he goes on describing how he and others get involve blindly in these things:

It was different when I used to attend the meetings. I was swayed by what now appears to me a cheap sentiment. They always talked about motherland and fighting to save our faith and how we should get four of theirs for every one of ours.

.....

Anyone sitting at home, sipping tea and reading the newspapers will say that it is obvious that a minority would never start a riot, we are too afraid, that it had to be politically motivated. Try telling it to a thousand devotees swayed by their own religion fervor, united by their fantasies of persecution, constantly reassuring themselves that this is their land by talking out processions. (Looks at Bobby.) Anyone could tell. Not when he has his delusions as well. Delusions of valour and heroism. Of finding a cause to give purpose to his existence. 'The time has come', somebody would say. 'This is jihad-the holy war! It is written! Yes!' I would say. 'I am ready. I am prepared!'

.....

And I became a hero once again. We hugged each other for being true sons of our mothers. (CP-I, 205-206)

However, now Javed realizes his fault and foolishness of such promises, he finds himself unable to get out of it. Like a child on a giant-wheel in a carnival, to which he goes for pleasure but after the first and second ride all, the joy is replaced by fear. He says:

To shout and scream like a child on a giant wheel in a carnival. The first screams are of pleasure. Of sensing an unusual freedom. And then... it becomes nightmarish as your world is way below you and you are moving away from it... And suddenly you come crashing down, down, and you want to get off.

But you can't. You don't want it any more. It is the same feeling repeated over and over again. You scream with pain and horror, but there is no one listening to you. Everyone is alone in their own cycles of joy and terror. The feelings come faster and faster till they confuse you with the blur created by their speed. You get nauseous and you cry to himself, 'Why am I here? What am I doing here? The joyride gets over and you get off. And you are never sure again. (Pause) It is terrible feeling. Being disillusioned. (Pause). Don't we all have anger and frustration? Am I so unique? Now that I am alone.... I hate myself. (CP-I, 204- 205)

After throwing the stone on the procession, he plans to kill the pujari with a knife whose ringing of the bell irritates him like the sound of bell of his neighbour in his childhood. But he could not succeed, as his conscience began to revolt against this misdeed. His knife fell down and he finds himself in the carnival again, unable to get rid of it even though he wanted to get off. His conscience begins to ask him questions, like the Hamlet in Shakespear's play *Hamlet*, and he backs off:

There were screams all around, and I was screaming too, but no longer with joy as fear came faster and faster confusing me! I got nauseous and I cried. 'Why am I here? What am I doing here? Get me off! I want to get off!' I was so close to him and I could .. I could have... I could have... I let go of the knife. The knife fell to the ground. The joyride was over.

.....

The carnival continued. (CP-I, 208)

Javed gives voice to the individual participating in such riots and reveals how mechanisms of 'othering' influence the self. How does phobia, the irrational fear of

the other, grip one's mind? Ramnik sympathize him after hearing all these Bobby and Javed's illustration of their lives, who observes:

You are brave. Not everyone can get off. For some of us it is not even possible to escape. (CP-I, 378)

For Ramnik, Javed appears to be lucky as he himself cannot escape from the sins of his forefathers whose crimes arising from communal hatred haunt and torture him. Smita and Aruna enter the scene. They are getting ready with the buckets to fill water from the tap outside the house. Smita insists Bobby to go with her for this purpose – an idea which shocks Aruna as she can never approve this. Being a typical Hindu- woman, doing pooja-path daily, Aruna believes in purity, a hypocritical sham; the meaning of which Smita could not understand. Aruna used to say always, “Always be pure. Pure in your mind, in your deeds.” (CP-I, 173)

These lines, from the Hindu text Gita, do not mean that the only purity is of body and home it goes beyond this. It needs the purity of mind and soul – pure enough to look at every individual with an equal eye. But Aruna cannot understand this, as what she believes is taught to her by her mother, and to her mother by her mother. This chain goes on and half knowledge in anything becomes dangerous in present time. Smita, an essentially secular character, tells her mother not to impose anymore-religious prejudices on her. She accuses her mother of stifling her with her orthodox religion practices. Aruna is shocked because she had always regarded Smita as an ally in her constant battle against her rational and skeptical husband. The smug and often parsimonious Aruna is shaken out of her complacency through Smita's outburst against her rigid and restrictive practices that have for long choked her. Aruna gets infuriated on Smita's not believing on her so-called religion and wants her to follow those rules, which are written:

ARUNA. 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? It's all very well to have progressive ideas. But are you progressing, or are you drifting? God knows, I don't want all this violence. How could I, when I won't even harm a goat or a chicken? But to throw everything just like that? Doesn't it mean anything to you? 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. We must know no other path. And I will not have all perished to accommodate someone's else's faith. I have enough faith and pride to see that it doesn't happen. I shall uphold what I believe is the truth.

SMITA. It is the truth only because you believe in it. (CP-I, 210)

Subtle details are introduced that added complex layers to the characters even as the scene plays out what is commonly and simplistically termed "the generation gap". Aruna is deeply religious and assumes that her daughter, on account of being born a Hindu, has automatically inherited her beliefs. She is quite unprepared for the violence of her daughter's accusation, and her question shows both her bewilderment and hurt. Living with one religion or believing in some illogical tenets blindly irritates and stifles Smita; however, she does not reveal her thoughts to her mother. Because if Aruna finds Smita's liberal ideas match with those of Ramnik, she may feel herself alone and isolated with her ideas as Muslim used to feel among Hindus. Smita says:

SMITA. Please, mummy, don't try so hard! You are breaking me. Even since I was small, you have been at me to go to the temple, make garlands, listen to your reading from the 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-I, 213)

An alliance in the play is that between Smita and Bobby who feel suffocated in following the principles of only one religion as they are liberal minded, tolerant and believe in one religion of 'humanity'. They are not conservative to divide the society into stereotyped sections and categories of only Hindu and Muslims. They are desperate to escape from its clutches, to leave behind the baggage of social, religious and communal identities that seem to trouble them in all their relationships and actions. This however, is one possible 'final solution' – to deny any context, to attempt to live on your own terms, to reject the past or any other social framework of identity and self-formation. As Professor K.N. Pannikkar pointed out in the Fourth V.P. Chintan Memorial Lectures in 1990:

The anti-communal struggle is a negative struggle. It is a struggle which tries to evolve ways and means to oppose communal propaganda. The agenda is set by them and the secular forces are made to respond to it. At every stage the secular forces are either trying to counter, say, a Mahant Avaidanath or an Advani. They are ahead of us. It is necessary to reverse this order. If so, we have to transform our struggle against communalism to a struggle for secularism. Such a struggle can be meaningful only if it is a part of a struggle for a humane society - a society in which human beings are recognized and respected as human beings and not as "Hindu", "Muslim" or any other religious denomination. Such a struggle is possible only if we integrate the struggle for a just society. (Noorani, 138)

Smita is undaunted to speak up for what she thinks is right, maintaining that she had kept her silence only to remain non-partisan to both her parents. When

Ramnik asks her why she didn't tell him how she felt, her reply is that she didn't want to tell him because that would have been a triumph for him over Aruna as a way of dominating her. She says:

SMITA. How easy it would have been for us to join forces and make her feel she was wrong. How easy to just push her over because you will have me telling her exactly what you wanted to tell her yourself. (To Aruna) What would you have done? Shut yourself from us? We wouldn't have let you off so easily. We wouldn't hounded you. We wouldn't have let you forget that the spirit of liberalism ran in our blood and you were the oddity-you were the outsider! What would happen to you then? How weak and frustrated would you to you then? How weak and frustrated would you feel? You go get what I mean, don't you, Mummy? (CP-I, 213)

So does the initially unassertive Bobby (Babban), who hides behind a name that conceals the identity into which he was born, and with which he has always been uncomfortable. Javed and Aruna is another such pair-they are both individuals who have a strong belief in their faith, in the things that shape their identities and their ideas of their selves. They have same proud, strength and same fear and weakness, which is clear through these words of Javed to Aruna:

JAVED (to Aruna). You said the same thing. To her. What I told Babban, you told her... 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. (Pause) We are not very different. You and me. We both feel pride. (CP-I, 214)

Therefore, Dattani's characters have their own rationale for their actions. As Javed, the young Muslim fundamentalist, has a resentment against the worldbecause

of the ‘otherness’ and deionization of his community and religion, Daksha hates Muslims because her father was killed in communal riot and because she herself suffered a lot in her in-laws house because of her Muslim friend Zarine. Such religious and historical fanaticism is not only self-limiting for each of these individuals but is also the primary cause for the barriers that are constructed between them and the larger world. Although not all the characters are the same like, the different peoples in the society. Contrasted with such fanaticism are the doubtful pacifism of Bobby; the shaky liberalism of Ramnik and the escapism of Smita arising from sheer avoidance. Aruna is the archetypal pious Hindu woman, but changed with times like Javed. When Smita asks Aruna to help her with the filling of the water by Bobby and Javed’s help, firstly, she denies but later on, replies that ‘they’ can help with the general water but “not God’s vessel” (CP-1, 214. With these characters, Dattani wants to show that breaking free from and prejudices whether religious or historical, depends entirely on the individual will. In the words of A.G. Noorani:

A minority sense of identity is shaped by its understanding of its own history. Its self-image is influenced, no less, by the image the majority groups have a minority – an image shaped, in turn, by their understanding of history. Not frequently, historical perceptions clash. History does not address itself in the same language to different peoples. (Noorani, 121)

The climax of the play is reached when playing the role of a pacifier between Ramnik and Javed, Dattani eventually has Bobby, performing the ultimate and daring act of liberation – handling and caressing the Hindu god, Krishna subverting all the stifling structures of his given social identity. He says that Krishna smiles at our trivial pride and trivial shows:

BOBBY. Your God! My flesh is holding Him! Look, Javed!

And He does not mind!

.....

He does not burn me to ashes! He does not cry out from the heavens saying. He has been contaminated!

.....

Look how He rests in my hands! He knows I cannot harm him. He knows His strength! I don't believe in Him but He believes in me. He smiles! He smiles at our trivial pride and our trivial shame.

.....

See, Javed! He doesn't humiliate 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. (To Aruna). You can bathe Him day and night, you can splash holy waters on Him but you cannot 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-I, 224-225)

Bobby sees himself as a human being who believes, and tolerates, and respects what other human being believe. Bobby liberalism troubles Aruna who believes in purity strongly and thus she wants to know if there is anything left sacred in the world. Bobby answers so truthfully:

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. (CP-I, 225)

This reminds us the great Shakespearean dictum, “forget and forgive”. If the Hindu and Muslim forget the past and forgive each other for the wrongs done in the past, then the road to understanding and cooperation will be free of thorns. The shocking revelation of the play is reached in revealing a big secret from Ramnik to his mother Hardika of his family. The mercenary gain that one party derives from the communal riots of the past is the baggage of guilt of his father’s ‘black’ deeds that Ramnik has carried for long. The shop of Zarine, Hardika’s friend, had been burnt down by Ramnik’s father and grandfather in the name of communal hatred. After which they bought it at a fraction of its cost. Ramnik clearly acts out of a personal motivation-his sense of guilt is the driving force behind his conscious and structured liberalism. That is why he was offering a job to Javed in that same shop just to amend his forefather’s misdeeds. Ramnik has never revealed the guilt of the past to his mother, saving her from the weight of the burden that he has had to carry all alone. It also explains the reasons for Ramnik’s extreme tolerance. And when this is revealed to a crushed Hardika, who seemed secure in her hatred of the other party, shatters her sense of being in the right. She asks Ramnik:

HARDIKA. Do you think... do you think those boys will never come back?

RAMNIK.If you call them they will come. But then again – if it’s too late – they may not. (CP-I, 226)

There is nothing left to say after these last lines of the play; audience is left to speculate over the situation and decide what is right or wrong. The play encourages communities to open a dialogue in order to rectify the current situation of communalism. It is not limited to questions that face India but a dilemma that the entire world is currently encountering. It is a confrontation between Arabs and Jews,

whites and blacks, Hindus and Muslim, traditional and modern, and above all, between the innocent general people and crafty politicians. Dattani brilliantly handles the difficult contour of the play with a subtle dramatic mechanism of using the family to mirror the community as also using the community to reveal the hidden ugliness within the family unit. Are there any final solutions to the problem of communal riots, disputes and acts of hatred? Can we come out of this vicious circle? Alyque Padamsee asks:

Is life a forward journey or do we travel around in a circle, returning to our starting point? 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... Are there any final solutions? (CP-I, 161)

But, Like all other plays, Dattani offers no resolution and the end is inconclusive; it leaves the viewers delving deep in search for an answer to the problem posed and find a 'final solution' itself. If the anger can be expunged from our range of emotions, only then we can live peacefully. But this is not possible at all. A Hindu has always inherited a preconceived notion of what a Muslim is like. The open-ended finale leaves us musing as to what solution there can be to the mutual hatred and intolerance that prevails between the Hindu and Muslim in India. As Vijay Tendulkar in his essay "Muslim and I" points out, "A Muslim was someone you stayed away from." (Choudhary, 63)

Blame game is in full swing. As it is to be expected, political parties blame each other, residents blame the government and the police. Violence comes as an outpouring of anger and frustration. First of all, who is a citizen, who is an "outsider"? Everyone that lives in this land, no matter how far the generations that have lived here go back, came from somewhere. The earlier generations shaped the character of this

city as it sees it. A city is a living, changing, amorphous creature that cannot be frozen in time and that image taken to be its true representation. “Whose city is it, anyway?” Well, it is the city of every single person living here, whether those who landed here yesterday at the airport, bus station or train station and are setting up homes as we speak, or those whose families have been living here for generations.

There is no reason to believe that the newcomers do not have an equal interest in having a rounded, complete, fulfilling life in the city they have chosen to make their home. Newcomers also definitely look for signs of welcome. If given half a chance, many of them would do just that, just right in, they too would like to live a life of grace and charm, I improved. They too want the crime rate down. They too want fewer accidents, better schools, better transportation, fewer power cuts and water shortages, parks for their children, safe roads, and justice and liberty for all.

Instead of looking outward for the sources of our problems, we would do well to look inward, at our own feeling toward this city we have called home for generations. What are our strengths and capabilities? What are our weaknesses? Let us assess those and act accordingly. Let us not blame our weaknesses on “outsiders.” Let us not act in haste and look for scapegoats. Let us be a city worthy of our heritage, if we so care about it. While we spend our energies fighting the demons of humanity – discrimination, injustice, intolerance, human rights abuses – we forget that the demons are not just out ‘there’ they may inhabit within. Likewise, our advocacy platform is shrouded in abstract terms so fickle that it can be a weapon of attack in one instance and equally come under attack in another.

Labeling any oppositional discourse as homogenous overlooks the fact that it may have within it diversity and the lack of any unitary religious framework. The leaders of many Islamic regimes get co-opted into the western view fundamentalist

category and therefore, posing a threat. Thus it becomes imperative to have knowledge of another culture so that the understanding of our own culture and political thoughts gains in a deeper awareness of human relationship. Though we are faced with a very uncertain future, we must try to re-examine the concept of secularism and try to view the politics of difference with the clarity and broad-mindedness that the issue of fundamentalism demands. There is a liberal communitarian model, which might be an answer to the debate. It is important to address the question of the way we should conceive of human reasoning once we accept that there is no universally comprehensive and privileged stance or point of view. We have to conceptualize on the Nietzschean idea of liberation of thinking for multiplicity through the demolition of platonic hierarchies by keeping in view the constant 'dream' of harmonization, which underpins all shifts and the adventures of the dialectic.

The present economic and political tensions call for a new agenda for social reconstruction within which socialism does not need to be replaced but must put forward a programme to salvage a world from inequality, exploitation, hunger and the abuse of power. Such a move might lead the world away from disorientation and a delusional course. A dialogue between left-wing politics and the anti-essentialist theoretical basis would help to throw light on the nature of the social and political struggle, characteristics of the major crisis in contemporary world politics and capitalism. Past politics need to be reviewed in order to revitalize the institutions of democracy around the world.

While the politics of exclusion is rife in our lives, and it may indeed compel one to claim an affiliation, Dattani chooses neither to remain on the fringes nor to be fully absorbed. Rather, he wants to chart out his own destiny, creates still undergoing

an experience that is deeply personal. To do this, he has to defy stereotypes. Defiance, though painful, remains for him an empowering option mainly because when defying, he not only goes against the dominant, but also challenges himself to reason, and to accept the consequences of thought and action. Nevertheless, one must defy on principle and not just for the sake of being exceptional. Social justice advocacy, therefore, should give expression and recognition to personal marks of resistance in challenging deep-seated prejudices that permeate human reason and action. Otherwise, it loses significance and passion. Certainly, the challenge in advocacy rests with the personal. Core values we espouse can no longer concern just ‘those people’ out there but must concern ‘us’ right there. Nor can they be externalized or dealt with in a technical, mechanical or surgical fashion. Dattani has to search his soul not only to make peace with his conscience but also to accept the consequences of his conviction. The dramatic canvas of Dattani is not a static and mechanical survey of human experience corresponding with the clash of the motives at the level of the familial relationship or at the level of individual’s own aspiration in context of social order. As a creative artist, he is broad enough to interact with innumerable visible and invisible socio-cultural forces. As he asserts himself in his talk on 11th Feb. 2001 at Ravindra Kalakshetra as a part of Krishi Festival Plays to celebrate the 50th anniversary of Bengali Theatre in Bangalore:

Man has created a very complex language called theatre. A language that has the ability to redefine the natural concepts of time, space and movement. A language that the physical. Through this language of theatre he has been able to see himself for who he is, what he has made of himself and what he aspire to be. (Dattani, 1)

It is not difficult to conclude that the Ghost of Partition stalks South Asia, haunting the minds and souls of many of its people. It bequeathed a negative, aggressive and violent mode of thinking, behaving and realizing a political objective. It is possible that in the long run both sides may be fatigued by the high cost of such an undertaking, or one of them gives up such a path realizing that it cannot win the competition. A clear and strong message from the Security Council of the United Nations and major states outside it to India and Pakistan to abandon the path of conflict may also help. Perhaps a process of forgiveness for the crimes committed during Partition initiated by intellectuals from both sides can miraculously lead to reconciliation and mutual acceptance. Whatever it is, Dattani's intention is clearly to bridge the gap between people, and set straight some of the events of history, which have been distorted by time so that they are no more partitions of hearts or of countries.

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