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Introduction to Modern Indian Drama

Dr. Kiran Keshavamurthy
Department of Humanities and Social Sciences
IIT Guwahati

Good morning. Let us now begin our discussion of Mahesh Dattani's plays. Mahesh Dattani is one of our major playwrights who wrote entirely his plays entirely in English. A lot of his plays he's known for many of his important place especially Final Solutions, Dance Like A Man, Bravely Fought the Queen, On a muggy night in Mumbai, Tara, 30 days in September and so on

where many of which have to do with urban life and they revolve around certain questions of gender and sexuality and certain institutional sites of power that regulate gender sexuality especially the family, religion, and society at large. And he was born in Bangalore to Gujarati parents and he went to St. Joseph's School in Bangalore. He was also a graduate in history economics and political science and he went on to pursue a career initially in marketing and advertising management. He also worked as a journalist until he settled down to become a full-time theater professional.

So he is now known to be one of our major actors, directors, playwrights, and writers. Let us first begin with his very important play that he wrote called *A Final Solution*. Dattani earlier has also acknowledged the impact that a very important theater figure called Alyque Padamsee had on his plays. He was one of those major practitioners of theater who appreciated his plays and also put up his plays under his own directorship. The other important figure was of course Mahesh Elkunchwar whom Dattani considered to be the father of modern Indian theater and Dattani in the preface to his collection of plays also acknowledges the fact that he is privileged of writing in English the fact that he belongs to a middle-class family and he wrote in English and he realizes the privileges, the international attention that he has derived as a result of his socio-economic position and he is also met with a lot of hostility with a lot of challenges from society at large on the fact that perhaps some people charged him with the fact that his plays don't reflect working-class lives that they are largely about mostly about middle-class lives and cities but then he also defends his position by saying that creativity cannot be limited by one's or cannot be identified or reduced to one's class position that one can – one should have the right to be able to reflect the realities of his own socio-economic background and his own time in place and so in the final solutions which is a reflection of communal violence and hostility in the country you have very interesting chorus, an anonymous chorus that acts in the play that performs in the play. They wear two kinds of masks. They wear are the Hindu masks or Muslim masks or both at once to in some sense give the audience a sense of the communal violence, the climate of communal violence in the country. So it's it's an interesting backdrop to a play which is really about the riots and the curfew that follows on a night in the play which is triggered by one of the characters in the play.

So you have two intersecting narratives in the play which in some sense suggests the fact that communal prejudice the kinds of prejudices that let's say Hindus have against Muslims has not changed over decades and then one of the ways in which the plays does it is to the character of Hardika who is interchangeable with the character named Daksha and what is also very interesting about Dattani's plays is that his stage craft is rather elaborate. So if you look at for example the stage craft of *Final Solutions* they resemble the stage craft of many of his other plays where the play the stage is divided into multiple tiers or levels each level corresponding or mapping on two layer in the psyche, in the mind. So it's – the stage the layered kind of construction of the stage reflects the layers of the human psyche. So it maps on to the complexity complex porous boundaries between the conscious and the unconscious.

The play was first performed in 1993 in Bangalore and then subsequently performed at Tara Theater in Bombay in 1993 again and then it was also translated into Hindi and directed by Arvind Gaur in 1998. So if you look at the stage directions of the play there are the elaborate. So it says in the beginning of act 1 these are three act play the stage is dominated by a horseshoe or crescent-shaped ramp with the end sloping to stage level. Most of the action of the mob or the chorus takes place on the ramp. Ideally the mob or chorus should remain on stage in a crouched

or stylized position throughout the play. The mob chorus comprises five men and ten masks on sticks. The masks are strewn all over the ramp. The player wears a mask by holding the stick in front of at more dynamic movements. He can use it as a weapon in a stylized fashion. There are five Hindu masks and five Muslim masks. The mob or chorus become the chorus when they wear either the Hindu or the Muslim masks. So they have – they placed these masks on sticks in front of their faces. They don't actually wear them but they seem to be wearing them and this suggests also the fact that how does one actually dawn religious identity. It's the fact that one doesn't essentially a Muslim or a Hindu but then one takes on becomes a Hindu or Muslim through certain ideological violence that produces it.

So but when referred to individually they remain chorus1, chorus2, etc. The players of the mob or chorus do not belong to any religion and ideally should wear black. So they are anonymous otherwise. They wear black but then they take on these religious identities when and were required.

Within the confines of the ramp is a structure suggesting the house of the Gandhi's with just wooden blocks for furniture. However, upstage perhaps on an elevation is a detailed kitchen and a puja room. On another level is a room with a roll-top desk and an oil lamp converted to an electric one suggesting the period is the late 1940s.

So the upper layer is suggestive of an earlier world from the 1940s just before and after independence. This belongs to young Daksha who was in fact the grandmother also sometimes seen as a girl of 15. So the play constantly oscillates between the time when the grandmother was young a young girl 15 and to the time later on when she's an old woman. There are several instances when Hardika the grandmother and Daksha the young bride are on this level at the same time although they are the same person. Hardika should be positioned and lit in such a way that the entire action the play is seen through her eyes. When the play opens Daksha reading out what she just written in a diary Hardika is seated motionless, on the same level.

So the entire play is through the perception of Hardika the grandmother who is looking back on her life as a young girl who had a Muslim school friend, somebody who was a neighbor somebody she grew up with. And so she has a Muslim childhood friend and she's looking back on her life from her present position.

So it may seem initially that not much has changed over the generations between the grandmothers time when she's grown old and the time when she was young a young girl of 15 and 40 years later when she has turned old. So she is telling her secrets of her life of past to the audience through her by reading out her notes in the diary that she had maintained as a young girl.

And even as she is reading out her diary or even as there's a flashback of the young girl Daksha who's writing her notes in diary there are whispers and shouts of freedom from the mob and the chorus in the background and this continues through Daksha's speech when she talks about how her father, Daksha's father was a freedom fighter and who was very happy when the British left the country but also had a deep hatred and resentment towards Muslims but is also glad that something called Pakistan was created to where the Muslims could be sent away. And then she also loses her father during the freedom struggle and she is convinced or she's been told and the

Muslims are responsible for her father's death. So she has a deep sense of prejudice, a deep rooted sense of prejudice that she acquires as a young girl because she thinks her father has been killed by them and she also has a deeply pious mother who worships Lord Krishna and during the time when there were riots during independence that she sees the idol of Lord Krishna in a house being destroyed by stones that are being thrown on the house. And so her house is being vandalized and she sees her the idol of Lord Krishna also being broken and she wonders whether there's any power in the idol of Lord Krishna or is it just a question of faith. Is it a question of blind faith. She just placed a blind faith on an idol or does the idol actually have or possess power. So she remembers losing an entire collection of records of sound record musical records of Shamshad Begum Noor Jahan Suraiya and so forth. So she regrets, she's remorseful at her loss and she's lost an entire collection of records during the attack in the during independence.

Then you have the mob or the chorus took a compliment of drum beats that are growing slowly. They wear Hindu masks so they are behind the masks. They become more frenetic. The lines could be distributed and spoken individually or in groups. There is a definite counterpoint. So they wear Hindu masks and they take on the bloodthirsty frenzied appearance of Hindu mobs who accuse Muslims of having destroyed the chariot, the rath of their Lord and of having stabbed a priest during a procession. Then chorus4 and 5 continue to question why should they, why would they. It could have been an accident while chorus1 mutters, no accident and chorus 2 and 3 continue the stone that hit our God was no accident. The knife that slit the Poojari's stomach was no accident. Soon they overlap and say it together. So there's this constant reverberation of voices that on the one hand charged Muslims with having destroyed their chariot and for having destroyed their faith or challenged their faith for having stabbed their priests but then there's another chorus which wonders if it must have just been an innocent accident. Then there are other choruses that are violent and aggressively asking demanding that Muslims be driven out of the country.

So it becomes, the chorus gradually becomes an unruly mob that's crying out for blood. Then there is shift to the living room of the Gandhi's Ramanik Gandhi and his family. And Ramanik Gandhi and his daughter pride themselves in their secular and liberal credentials. We get to know that Smita's friend Taslim a Muslim girl called Taslim her, the Muslim girl's hostel where she lived was bombed during the riots and Smita is concerned about her friend's welfare and then she discovers she learns that she and the other girls have been trapped inside the hostel and the matron has called for the police but no one has come to rescue them. They believed that it was a homemade soda bottle bomb that caused the destruction in the hostel and then she tries to call the Taslim parents and Shiva Nagar to tell them to come and fetch her but they are unable to get – she's unable to get through on the phone and then Ramanik is not sure whether he's skeptical – whether it was really a soda bottle bomb that destroyed the hostel because they are unable to find any remains of the bomb and so he wonders, he suspects whether any person any particular person may have been paid or volunteered to actually create riots between Hindus and Muslims. He wonders if it's the contribution, the role of some mischief monger who has tried to create or take on communal riots between the two communities.

Then we try to inform Taslim's father of the bomb blast and that's what Ramanik does. He has a conversation with Mr. Noor Ahamad who is Taslim's father and tries to tell him that her daughter is trapped in the hostel after the bomb blast but then the phone gets disconnected. I think the father disconnects the phone. Then there's again a relay of courses that again demanding revenge for the chariot the God's chariot that has been destroyed or for the priest who has been stabbed.

And then they want revenge and then again it cuts back to the Hardika the grandmother who can remember has a memory of her childhood when there were two boys who were running away for their lives. She remembers two boys begging for their lives as they are being pursued with sticks and stones and this memory of Hardika's resonates with another memory with what actually happens in the play when they meet two other important characters Javed and Bobby. Javed is Smita's friend Tashlim's brother and Bobby is engaged to be married to Tashlim. Then the other important character the play is Ramanik's wife Aruna who is an orthodox Hindu woman who observes ritual rites of purity and pollution. She does seem to be a fairly casteous woman. She like her mother-in-law, like her mother knows parents and in-laws. She also follows the same ritual rites of purity and pollution. She constantly bathes herself. She performs puja and she is unwilling to entertain people who do not belong to her religion or caste in her house.

So these are two ends of the spectrum. So you have in the middle you Ramanik and his daughter Smita who claim to be liberal Hindus, broad-minded liberal Hindus. On one end of the spectrum you have a person like Aruna who was an orthodox Hindu who is casteous, who is – who observes purity and pollution and on the other hand you have a character like Javed and Bobby, especially Javed who later on identifies with Aruna in the fact that Javed is somebody who is a young aggressive hot minded hot-blooded Muslim who wants to seek revenge against the Hindus would have been persecuted his community. So he's willing to take anything that it has even he is willing to inflict pain and suffering on the Hindu community he is willing to commit acts of violence to actually avenge the humiliation and the justices that his community has suffered over the decades.

So you can make out initially that Ramanik and Smita are tolerating Arun's orthodox practices. So they are rest willing to humor her religious piety that she always wants to bathe for, she wants to wash the idol she wants her daughter to -- she wants to inculcate all these values in her daughter and then you have another stage direction in the middle of it as Smita is undressing the idol of Lord Krishna and putting him to bed the chorus whispers we are neither idol makers nor idol breakers. Aruna folds the clothes neatly and puts him away along with the jewels. She picks up the Bhagavad-Gita and reads out in an urgent whisper. Smita joins in. Aruna looks at Smita out of affection. Aruna is happy that Smita is following all her instructions that she wants Smith her to actually carry on inherit her religious piety.

then 174-175 again there is Daksha's memory of her in-laws who are extremely orthodox Hindus who always bathed in the Ganga and constantly bathe themselves to purify themselves especially when they saw lower caste persons or they were touched by someone else they had to go again go to the same bathing ritual. So she makes fun of her in-laws but then she also ends up inculcating the same religious values. She also has a friend called Zarin muslim friend whom she grows up with and she is a very fond of Zarin because she is her only access to a world outside the world of Hindu orthodoxy. So she secretly visits Zarin before and after her marriage only to listen to the records that she has of Noor Jahan and Suraiya and some of her favourite early female playback singers and she knows that she always wanted to be a singer but she's forbidden from becoming a singer because she belongs to an orthodox Hindu family and but she secretly visits her friends Zarin to listen to these records.

Then you have the entry of the two men Bobby and Javed who are apparently running away from a bloodthirsty mob that is chasing them with sticks and stones and the mob believes or suspects that Javed and Bobby are responsible for creating the riots for triggering the riots and because they're loitering around during the curfew and so they wonder if they are responsible for the riots

and so Bobby and Javed are trying to escape from the mob when they arrive at Ramanik's house and Ramanik offers them refuge in his house. So again pay attention to the what the mob is doing during the action. So the mob or chorus circles around Javed and Bobby. There's a slow drumbeat. Two of the mob or chorus suddenly grabbed them from behind and snatched the watch of one of the young men, young men are petrified but so they steal the watch of one of the men. The mob or chorus searches their pockets some money is found which chorus one pockets he's about to throw away their wallets when he sees something. He removes a bus ticket from Javed's wallet and as Javed and Bobby tells lies to the mob saying that they have just come from Jeev nagar. And the date is 22nd and they came on the 22nd and then the chorus expects something fishy then they also remove a handkerchief from Bobby and which then the handkerchief is actually knotted with something and Bobby tells the the mob that he wears the handkerchief only because it's too hot. So he needs something to protect his head from the summer heat. Then chorus1 takes the cap and that he has fished out he fishes out chorus1 fishes out a prayer cap from Javed and he covers Javed's face with it. Javed deliberately wears it on his head with dignity whereas Bobby has removed his handkerchief. The mob or the chorus picks up the Hindu masks on a slow drumbeat. So Javed is identified as a Muslim and he embraces that identification. His identity as a Muslim by wearing the skull cap on his head with dignity while Bobby has removed the handkerchief that was on his head and then a mob turns to becoming a Hindu mob as they wear the Hindu masks and now the bloodthirsty Hindu chorus is out to kill the two men. The young men come to the door of Ramanik and they shout for help asking Ramanik to save them initially Ramanik and Aruna hesitate. They are not sure they should open it and even Hardika or Daksha thinks that there are some Muslim men who have come to attack them. So they don't open it and Hardika keeps telling Hardika or Daksha they accuse Muslims of having killed her father. So she doesn't want these men to be let into the house.

Now two of the chorus have Muslim masks on. The Gandhis can simultaneously be seen in an animated discussion with the two men. So chorus 1 andn 2 says they hunt us down. They're afraid of the – they are the Muslim choruses. They hunt us down. They are afraid of us. They beat us up. We are few but we are strong. They beat us up. They're afraid of us. They hunt us down. They want to throw us out. Then there's a crosscut. So the scene to the Gandhis and the chorus quickly exchanged the masks and Bobby and Javed again beg the Ramanik's to open the door because they're scared they'll be killed by the mob. Aruna asks that the demands that they call for the police but then Ramanik wants to find out who they are and then Ramanik discovers that the people who are outside are these two young Muslim men who are trying to escape from a bloodthirsty Hindu mob and his liberalism will not allow him to do not give them refuge. So he does open the door and they enter.

So even the chorus accuses Ramanik of being a traitor for giving refuge to two Muslim men but then Ramanik says that they've done no harm to anyone. There's no reason why I should not protect them. So he opens the door and they enter and Hardika is reminded of one of the Muslim men she knew as child when she sees Javed and so she accused she thinks that Javed is the same person from her past who has come to attack her. So she does not – she suspects -- she's suspicious of Javed. She doesn't know if he is sincere or genuine man.

After they enter Aruna tries to be civilized to them although she is they uncomfortable with the idea of having strangers that too Muslims in her house and then she offers him a glass of water and places it before the two men despite the fact that she is very uncomfortable with the idea of sharing the same glasses with men who are Muslims. So Aruna goes to matka and quickly pours

out water into two glasses and places him very delicately in front of the two men. They both quickly in gulped down the water obviously they were thirsty. Aruna is aghast. She was sure they wouldn't drink. Then later on Aruna holds the glasses with her thumbs and index fingers on the sides which have not been touched by the lips. She takes them away and keeps him separate from the other glasses. So initially they are told, the Ramaniks are told that Javed and Bobby had been running away from the mob during the curfew because they are in search of Tashlim but later on Smita realizes that Javed is lying because she seems know her truth that the rest of the family does not. So initially she tells Ramanik and Smita Javed that they informed his father of the bomb blast at Tashlim's hostel but then Javed tells him that he is estranged from his parents. He no longer stalks them. So he does not know of the conversation and that's when Ramanik become suspicious. He wonders why Javed would come to see a sister when he is not living with his parents and Smita tells them that Javed is actually secretly responsible for the triggering the riots. So Javed initially defends his position by saying that he's proud of being a Muslim because he does not differentiate or discriminate against other Muslims unlike Hindus who practice untouchability and caste. So they do not treat their lower cost Hindus fellow Hindus as equals and so this is this very brief argument between Javed and Aruna. Aruna who was trying to protect her own Hindu values and purity and Javed who accuses people like Aruna upper caste Hindus like Aruna of not treating the fellow Hindus with love and refusing to give them equal status. Where Ramanik offers refuge and he offers he tells Javed and Bobby to stay back at his house to spend the night with them and here again there is an argument. There's a kind of a brief comment on the benevolence and patronage that only Hindus can afford to give offer to Muslims because they belong to the majority community. They're the only ones who can afford peace. They are the only ones who can afford to offer protection to their persecuted Muslim citizens.

So again this entire scene between encounter between Javed and Bobby and Ramanik and Smita is constantly intersected and undercut by Hardika's memories of communal violence and her prejudice against her bigotry and prejudice against Muslims from her childhood during partition. Hardika says that night I could not sleep. I listened I was angry that Ramanik was blinded by his ideals. Why did he offer that boy a job in our shop. What was he doing? How did he know they were innocent? Couldn't he see there was more violence in boy's eyes than those stone throwers threats? He wasn't just saving two boys from getting killed. This was something else Ramanik was trying to do. So Ramanik offers a refuge to Javed and Bobby and he also offers them a job in his shop, but cloth close shop and Hardika does not approve it. And then Ramanik asks – Javed asks Ramanik what does it mean - what does it feel to be a part of the majority and Ramanik says he had ever thought about it. Javed about feeling good because you are the majority do you feel good because you are the majority. Ramanik says no, not about being the majority. 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 under inside your armpit. So it's again a challenge to the limits of Ramanik's liberalism but only someone who is belongs to majoritarian community who has power can afford to be kind, can afford to be compassionate and afford to offer peace as though it were a commodity which can be bought and sold. And later on Ramanik offers job to Javed in a saree shop in Kapada Bazaar but then Smita says that Javed is lying. That he should not be offered a job in the shop because he's lying and he tells – she tells her father that he was thrown out of his house by his father. Tashlim had told Smita that Javed was thrown out of his house by his father because Javed apparently has been hired by Hindu parties to create riots. So Smita says those parties they hire

him that's how he makes a living. They bring him and many more city to create riots, to throw the first stone.

So it's suggested here that no one would suspect a Muslim for triggering riots because they belong to a minority community. Why would they create riots? What do they have they have everything to lose. Why would they create riots? And so initially Smita suspects that Javed has been paid by the Hindu parties to throw the first stone to create riots in the community. That was the end of Act 2.

In act 3 again you have a flashback to Daksha's life where she has been married at the age of 15. She has orthodox in-laws and she has an orthodox husband named Hari and they own or they run their own mill and their own clothes store and she wants to ask her in-laws to give Zarin's father who's poor, who's jobless, who doesn't have a job asks her father-in-law to give Zarin's father a job right but they refuse. They refuse to give him a job and she does not know why. So we don't know initially what has happened but later on we get to know that Zarin's father owned a shop that was burnt by Hardika's in-laws in revenge during the partition and then they offer to buy back the same burnt shop for a much lower rate. So they destroys Zarin's father and they destroy Zarin's father's shop and they destroy -- they deprive him of his livelihood. His only source of income. And Hardika or Daksha is not aware of this at that point.

Later there is a crossfade again to the scene of the Gandhis living room and Javed tells Ramanik that he's paid thousands and lakhs for doing it, for triggering the riots and so Ramanik obviously disapproves of Javed's violence. His greed, his corruption, and his violence but Javed is unrelenting. He is defensive and he says that it's people like you he tells Ramanik who drives me to a corner and I have to turn to my self and my faith. I have a lot to thank you for at least now I'm not ignorant of my history and faith. So he defends his faith and he defends his entire community against the persecution of Hindus but the Ramanik does not approve of violence. He says it is in you. How dare you blame your violence on other people. You have violence in your mind. Your life is based on violence. Your faith is based and so on but then he has to check himself because he cannot accuse Islam of promoting violence. So the play really is about this struggle to distinguish personal relationships with people from ideological relationships with Muslims or Hindus that are based on hatred and violence and so very often these two distinction between personal relationships and ideological relationships cannot be sustained. It's a struggle to try and separate these two to be able to – it becomes a test one's own liberalism to be able to make it and sustain a distinction between personal relationships with people and an ideological relationship with people based on their religious identities. So Javed says you would have let the mob kill me. So Ramanik says you cannot justify yourself for being a riot rouser and Javed says you would have let the mob kill me and you wouldn't have minded if pointing 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. So the point is I have shown you the limits of your own liberalism not – you don't hate me because of the fact that I am Muslim or because I am a rabble-rouser I mean I mean somebody – I am a riot rouser, somebody who roused, who triggered the riots and in contrast to Javed as Bobby. Bobby is someone who does not identify with his community. So he tells Ramanik later on Bobby is talking about Javed says he has changed believe me he has changed. I don't want to defend him if I defend him you will say haha we know why he is saying all that. pathetic at one time in school he was the hero, smart and cocksure. You take his anger and attitude very seriously don't you. Ramanik, should I not. Bobby it's funny how you can be emotional and irrational and yet appear smart intelligent and be taken

seriously because you're convinced that you have all the answers and you urge people to accept your convictions and they do. I always appeared stupid in front of Javed. He loved playing the hero with a neighborhood boys and he was. A minor incident changed all that. they may have been others which Javed didn't talk about. I can't remember how it started. Oh yes there was a cricket match not much of her match we were playing cricket on our street with the younger boys. The postman delivered our neighbours mail. He dropped one of the letters. He was in a hurry and asked Javed to hand the letter over to the owner. Javed took the letter and opened the gate. Immediately a voice boomed what do you want. I can still remember Javed holding out the letter and mumbling something. His usual formless vanishing in a second. Leave it on the wall the voice ordered. Javed backed away really frightened. We all watched as a 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 as the letter was lying on and he wiped the gate. So then the person is obviously very orthodox Hindu. He stared at him as he went back inside. The postman came out of the next house and grinned when he saw this. Take no notice he said. This man is slightly cracked. We all heard a prayer bell ringing continuously not loud but distinct. The neighbour had been praying for quite a while but none of us had noticed the bell before. We had heard the bell so often every day of our lives that didn't mean anything. It was a part of the sounds the wind and the birds and the [00:38:36]. It didn't mean anything. The next day the neighbour came out screaming on the streets yelling at our windows. We peeped out. He was furious tears running down his face. We couldn't understand a word he was saying. I found out later someone had dropped pieces of meat and bones into his backyard. I didn't speak to Javed for many days after this. I was frightened of him for months whenever we played cricket and heard the bell remember that incident we avoided looking at Javed. So this suggests that Javed may have planted the meat and the bones in the house on the back yard of very orthodox and casteous Hindu and triggered some of the violence between the Hindus and Muslims. Later on Bobby says I was ashamed of being myself. After this incident he says I'm ashamed of being myself. I was apologetic for being who I was and pretending that I was not a part of my community. For thinking that I could become superior by not belonging. Nobody called me Babu in college. I chose to be called Bobby. So he even he said nobody can actually quite escape the structural inequalities and violence that characterizes the relationships between Hindus and Muslims. But despite the fact that is he is Hindu despite the fact that Bobby is a Muslim he does not want to be identified with him with as one he thinks that he can be above his community by not identifying himself as a Muslim. This is something that is not possible. So he's ashamed of associating himself with someone like Javed.

Later on we discover that Javed has not been paid by the Hindu parties to create riots but that he himself volunteered. He volunteered himself to create riots and he tells Ramanik who threatens to throw him to the mob he tells Ramanik that I am no different from the mob. I'm no different. I'm a part of the mob. I am no different from them. We both do the same thing. I am someone who wants to seek revenge who avenge the humiliations of the Muslim community by attacking Hindus and the Hindus want to persecute Muslims because they think that this is a country only for Hindus. So I do exactly what they do but only on a different street. I was there on that street when the rath yatra came I did precisely that. I shouted I had permission to do exactly what I had been asked not to do all my life. Raising my voice and protest to shout and scream like a child on the giant wheel in a carnival and then he tells Javed goes on to tell Ramanik that he is disillusioned. He is deeply disillusioned. He has feelings of anger and frustration but then now he feels alone. He hates himself for what he has done. Bobby would never come to the meetings that Javed was a part of the Muslim gatherings that he was a part of. Bobby does not want to

identify with a violent community. Javed seems isolated because he hates himself for what he has done and then he later on tells Ramanik that anyone sitting at home sipping tea and reading the newspapers will see 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 swing by their own religious fervor, united by their fantasies of persecution constantly reassuring themselves and this is their land by taking out processions.

So all the Muslims in some sense feel the need they provoked to feel the need to create a holy war a Jihad which they believe is justified by the fact that they are persecuted by Hindus who in turn ironically think they are being persecuted by Muslims despite the fact that they are the majoritarian community that they occupy a huge place, a position of power in the country and they want to rule their land on the country on religious lines. Later on we discover that we discover that – we discover Javed's participation in the riots during the chariot ratha-yatra, the chariot procession and we learned that he nearly killed the Poojari but he does not. Somebody else ends up stabbing the Poojari. So he stops short of committing that act of murder which he does not and there's a chorus again a Muslim chorus in the background lamenting the fact that they belong to a minority community that they belong to minority community and that they don't know how to be embraced by the majoritarian community without losing their own identity. So they're struggling to be accepted as part of the larger community and later on you have the other side of the spectrum which is the encounter, the exchange with Aruna and Smita and against Smita being the liberal person that she is tells Aruna that she always wanted to accept Aruna for all orthodoxy. She did everything that Aruna asked her to do like reading the Bhagavad-Gita, like cleaning the idol of Lord Krishna and and praying and fasting only to satisfy her mother. Not because she had any kind of Hindu piety.

So it did not come out of her own piety but only because she want to tolerate and accept her mother for whom she was. She tells her that it would have been very easy for how to join forces with her father and corner her mother for being the only orthodox Hindu in the household and she obviously she claims to have felt stifled by her mother's piety that intolerant piety but then she also tells Aruna that she needs to learn to be more accepting of differences, of religious differences, of even differences in between religious piety in orthodoxy and secularism. So liberalism is somewhere in the middle and you have these two extremes spectrums of religious violence both Hindu and Muslim fundamentalism and violence on the one hand and on the other you have Hindu orthodoxy and casteism and there is this constant negotiation between these two extremes in the play.

So yeah and it's really interesting later on that Javed himself identifies himself with Aruna. He even tells Aruna that we are the same that we are both in some sense not very different. You and me we both feel pride. So Aruna feels pride a deep sense of pride at her own religious practices, her own religious values Javed is proud of the fact that he is Muslim rebel who wants to avenge the humiliations of his community by attacking the Hindus and then later on we also again there is a flashback to Daksha and Daksha's in-laws who again aren't willing to give Zarin's father a loan or a job and later on she discovers that it was Hari and her father-in-law who are willing to buy up the burnt up shop, the shop that they burnt for an amount much lesser than what Zarin's father had demanded and the she says later on punished for her friendship, for her illicit friendship with Zarin.

Smita towards the end of the play tells her mother that one can always create freedom no matter where one is. it's the freedom of thought. It's a freedom of acceptance. It's a freedom of tolerance

but also embracing difference and that is the freedom that she believes that one can have no matter who one is or where one is and as a test of the faith of Aruna as a way of the meeting of these two extremes of religious orthodoxy on one hand the orthodoxy of the majoritarian community and the end of communal violence within Hindu and Muslims on the other the persecution of a minority by the Hindus you have a scene in the play towards the end of the third act where Bobby holds the idol of Krishna in his hand much to the the shock and horror of Aruna who's terrified and cannot bear the fact that her god has been polluted by Bobby's touch but then nothing really happens, nothing happens and it becomes a test of Aruna's faith that faith does not lie in intolerance, in persecution but in being absolutely secure and comfortable with one's own religious credentials, with one's own faith without being – without excluding others. without being intolerant and casteist and so it comes with a certain degree of tolerance which then preferably should then move on to a larger mode of acceptance and embracing.

So and Hardika also is in some sense she has to question her own prejudice when she discovers through Ramanik later on that the family shop that her family her in-laws had actually burned the shop and bought it from – bought the shop from Zarin's father at half the price. So I think I by the end to play the characters that are driven by religious zealotry, by religious prejudice and bigotry are in some sense forced to unlearn many of the values that we have inherited, many of the stories that they have overheard and transmitted on to the next generation. So they in some sense it's a process of unlearning and relearning what it means to be tolerant, what it means to be accepting. The play itself tests the very limits of liberalism, the benevolence, the the patronizing attitudes of the Hindus towards Muslims and that becomes a way of challenging the limits of liberalism by negotiating these different ideological positions and by also trying to distinguish ideological positions, ideological relationships from personal relationships with people and not being prejudiced to someone simply because they are Muslim or Hindu or because they have committed or not committed certain acts of violence.

So that is Mahesh Dattani's play Final Solutions.

Thank you.