



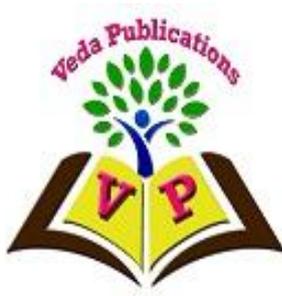
EDUCATION AS A KEY ROLE TO ELEVATE THE STATUS OF WOMEN: A STUDY ON MAHESH DATTANI'S PLAY *FINAL SOLUTIONS*

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ABSTRACT



Mahesh Dattani in his play, *Final Solutions* deals particularly with the issue of communal harmony. The playwright skilfully provides a solution to the problem by bringing the followers of the two religions on an even keel. Dattani had showed the outburst of woman characters from religious intolerance and social conflicts. This work shows the liberal ideology of women from three generations and retains the power to change the conventional thinking and to make better realization of hidden potentials. Education is a key factor for women empowerment, prosperity, development and welfare.

Keywords: *Harmony, Religious Intolerance, Education, Liberal Ideology.*

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**INTRODUCTION**

"You educate a man; you educate a man. You educate a woman; you educate a generation."

- Brigham Young

The status of women in a complex society like India is not uniform. Socio-economic growth of any nation lies in women empowerment along with manpower. Education brings a reduction in inequalities and functions as a means of improving their status within the family. Women education in India plays a very important role in the overall development of the country. It not only helps in the development of half of the human resources, but in improving the quality of life at home and outside. Educated women not only tend to promote education of their girl child, but also can provide better guidance to all their children. Moreover educated women can also help in the reduction of infant mortality rate and growth of the population.

In *Final Solutions*, Dattani represents the female characters like Hardika, Smita and Aruna. They make realization that women are not a shadow of male. Today woman is making her spaces. She has a better understanding of realization on identity both inside and outside the family. A woman of liberal ideology views the situation as an individual and constructs the image of life beyond the specified ideology of religious and community-based prejudices. She wants to take decision for herself and is confident on it; she is ready to protest against those agencies that are responsible for her sublimation.

Through characters of Smita, Hardika and Aruna, Dattani admits that women have greater consciousness and deeper realization of communal and religious identities.

1. Women are not a shadow of male. They have their own individual identity.
2. Women can think beyond their physical conscience on the matter like communal. Even she has the better realization than male in every aspect of life.
3. They retain their awareness in society. Now they are very much aware about their position, their desires and their dreams.

4. Women have the quest for the improvement of social status.
5. Woman is ready to accept the challenges of Inter-community. Smita who is a young girl represents the dynamism of new generation.
6. Anger of the women in the play is the representation of independent thinking.

Smita, whose love-affair with Bobby did not materialize, comes up with numerous queries which clamour for befitting rejoinders. Smita charges Aruna, her mother straightaway.

Smita: *"I can see so clearly how wrong you are. You accuse me of running away from my religion. Maybe I shouldn't be. What if I did what you do? Praying and fasting and purifying myself all day....."*¹. (F.S. Act III p.57)

Aruna feels shocked and asks her daughter whether *'being a Hindu stifles her!'* Smita blatantly, rather unabashedly, replies, *'No, living with one does.'* Thus, Smita opens up her heart and putting forth opinions regarding her mother's prejudices and wrong-beliefs in the name of *'sanskar'*. It is her education which made Smita liberal in her thoughts regarding religious prejudices unlike her mother Aruna. She even questions her mother on this point.

The modern education she has received has taught her to be individualistic, rebellious and quite objective and rational in her attitude. Ever since she was a child, Smita has been leading a life of suffocation on the conditions of her mother. Her freedom has been stifled by the religiosity of her mother. She sounds so desperately yearning for freedom when she says, *"Maybe we should all run away from home."* (F.S Act III p.67) But, she has willingly sacrificed her individuality for her mother's happiness and satisfaction. By the strength of love and regard for her mother Smita has been able to endure all that she could not get along with. Smita tells her mother. Smita: *"I love you mummy, that's why I did it. I listened to you and I obeyed you. I tolerated your prejudices only because you are my mother"*². (F.S Act III p.60)

On the other hand Aruna is a typical traditional woman who distrusts the role of education in a woman's life. She thinks that there are more drawbacks than advantages if a girl is sent out



of the house for education. For her, education has had a corrupting influence over her daughter. When she learns of Smita's prior acquaintance with the Muslim boys at the college, Aruna is shell-shocked. Hence, she is least concerned about educating her daughter further. She tells her husband: Aruna: "Stop her studies! From now on, she can stay at home!" (F.S Act II p.31) While Aruna is the conservative face of Hinduism, Smita, her daughter, like her father represents the liberal voice. Education is milestone of women empowerment because it enables them to respond to the challenges, to confront their traditional role and change their life. So that one cannot neglect the importance of education, which is the major step for women empowerment.

Women perform the role of many characters throughout her life such as a daughter, sister, wife, and mother. They have rights to get proper education to perform better in all areas of life. Women education helps them to be more independent and empowered in their life. It also helps them to grow their mind and status and not be a burden to their parents like past times. Education helps them to be well aware of their duties and rights as well as realize their responsibilities to contribute towards development of the country same as men do.

Smita, who reposes her faith in personal choice and freedom in life, dismisses her mother's version of 'the truth' as not only the one and that she feels stifled in the house, "Like a rat in a hole"³. (F.S Act III p.56). It is all right to have a firm faith in one's own religion. But this faith should not be rigid to the extent that you become intolerant and start disrespecting other religions. Hence it has to be accepted that education makes women to change her ideology on age old believes. Acharya Mahapragya remarks:

"There's no harm in believing ourselves, but we shouldn't remain adamant in controlling our thoughts. We should try and explore all facets of truth, which is possible only when we can visualize truth from others' points of view."

This is exactly what Smita tries to inculcate when Aruna enters into an argument with her about

the time-honoured religious values and points out the eternal truth behind them:

Aruna: I shall uphold what I believe is the truth.

Smita: It is the truth only because you believe in it.

Aruna: No! I will not accept that. Not from you.

Smita: Why not?

Aruna: I will not!

Smita: You have to face it. You have to admit you are wrong!

Aruna: You cannot tell me that I am wrong!

Smita: Why not?

Aruna: Because . . . because I will not accept that from someone who is not proud of her inheritance. (Smita sits down, placing the brass pot lightly on her lap.) You cannot criticize what you are running away from. You will be prejudiced.⁴ (F.S Act III p.57)

Since ancient time to the time after independence, there has been lots of progress in the field of women education. The reason behind the backwardness in the Indian society is because of the lack of proper women education. Lack of proper women education is because of the various social restrictions against women in India which need to be over on urgent basis. In order to remove such social evils from the society and improve status of women education, women should be encouraged for their rights of proper education so that they may make their positive efforts towards society and country. In Smita the playwright has presented a rational and liberal voice who doesn't want to belong to or bind her to any hollowed religious beliefs; this classification of communities on religious basis and then adherence to any of their narrow sectarian principles stifle the free thinking.

Smita: How can you expect me to be proud of something which stifles everything else around it? It stifles me! Yes! Maybe I am prejudiced because I do not belong. But not belonging makes things so clear. I



can see so clearly how wrong you are. You accuse me of running away from my religion. Maybe I am... embarrassed, Mummy. Yes. Maybe I shouldn't be. What if I did what you do? Praying and fasting and...purifying myself all day. Would you have listened to me if I told you you were wrong? You will say yes, because you are certain I wouldn't say that then. All right, so we both are prejudiced, so what do you want to do? Shall we all go back to sleep?

Aruna: *You said it stifles you?*

Smita: *What?*

Aruna: *"Does being a Hindu stifle you?"*

Smita: *"No, living with one does"⁵*
(F.S Act III p.58)

Smita is unlike her mother and grandmother; she doesn't agree with the arguments given by her mother, rather she differs with her and to the utter dismay of Aruna voices, her disapproval of her opinion in a rebellious manner:

"This is a time for strength! I am so glad these two dropped in. We would never have spoken about what makes us so different from each other. We would have gone on living our lives with our petty similarities."⁶ (F.S Act III p.58)

People in twenty first century became increasingly individualistic. Both men and women bothered about their own issues and commitments. More importance is being given to self identity. Youth do not tolerate any opposition or interference of elders in their lives. Any restriction on pleasures of life is just not tolerated. They want life free from tensions and stress. Such a character was portrayed by Dattani, where Smita stands up as an image of a modern girl.

Women constitute almost half the human race. Education has been recognised as an essential agent of social change and development in any society and any country. Education is considered as a potent instrument through which processes modernisation and social change come into existence. Education exposes people to new thoughts and ideas

and provides necessary skills. Hence development without educating women is impossible. Moreover it is rightly said that to educate the women is to educate the whole family. This is how Dattani had portrayed the importance of education for woman from his play 'Final Solutions.'

Due to poverty, illiteracy, especially female illiteracy, and many such factors, a vast majority of people in India are conservative and superstitious. We must strive for fighting these evils in the society to bring a situation where desired religious reform is a reality. In this new method of literary investigation, the feminist ideologies have also undergone a drastic change. It is not confined only to defend the cause of female emancipation and the spaces for the economic and social security of woman. The post-feminist interrogations of the female identity and female roles aim at the deconstruction of the constructed patriarchal structure. It has provided a wider canvas to construct the voice of women in family, society, professional life and personal relationship.

SOME FACTORS AFFECTING THE WOMEN EDUCATION IN INDIA

1. Undernourishment and malnutrition of the girl child
2. Sexual harassment and abuse at early age
3. Lower socio-economic status of parents
4. Infections and low immunity power at childhood
5. So many social restrictions and taboo in their life
6. Forced to follow orders of elders in family whether at home of parents or parents-in-law
7. Allowed to get only limited education

Daksha stands as a perfect example for the above mentioned points like she had undergone social restrictions and taboos and was forced by the elders of her family in getting married by changing her name from Daksha to Hardika in order to match her husband's name and her husband who reprimands her from singing. Education makes women aware of all such factors which Smita had achieved.

Education for women also makes a sense of learning what is right and wrong. Smita in the play



Final Solutions is aware of knowing the difference between what is right and what is wrong. She knows how to please others, when to apologise and how to respect elders. One can gain such manners through proper education. Smita is secular in her view on religion and its purpose, whereas, Aruna is a zealous follower of Hinduism. In spite of their ideological differences, both Aruna and Smita wrap up their prejudices and end the conflict on a reconciliatory note: Smita:(apologizes to her mother) "*I am sorry. I mean it.*" Aruna: "*All right. Do what you think is best.*"⁷. (F.S Act III p.59)

PURPOSE OF EDUCATION

Education empowers women: Educated girls and young women are more likely to know their rights and to have the confidence to claim them.

Education promotes tolerance: Education helps people to understand democracy, promotes the tolerance and trust that underpin it, and motivates people to participate in the political life of their societies.

Education equality improves job opportunities and increases economic growth: If all children had equal access to education, productivity gains would boost economic growth. Over 40 years, per capita income would be 23 per cent higher in a country with equality in education. .

Educating women avoids early marriages: If education is provided to more number of women it will be helpful in avoiding child marriage.

Education saves mother's lives: In some countries, many women still die because of complications during pregnancy and childbirth. Education can prevent these deaths.

Education saves children's lives: Education helps women recognize early signs of illness, seek advice and act on it. If all women in poor countries completed primary education, child mortality would drop by a sixth.

Education fights hunger: The devastating impact of malnutrition on children's lives is preventable with the help of education.

Education plays an important role in removing economic poverty by opening various job avenues for women, so that she can work hand in hand with men and give support to the family. Education promotes team work rather than making women individualistic.

Education makes her an opportunity to choose a career which is best suited for her.

1. Every woman has got her own aspiration which may be high or low, but education helps to maintain a balanced aspiration knowing her interest, ability and potential which further helps her to choose a correct field of her work.
2. Education helps in balanced personality development by giving due weight to various aspects of personality.
3. Education of women also plays an important role in teaching her expression of feeling or through effective communication which can solve disputes and adjustment problems of any level.
4. An educated women is a guiding light for the children, family members, society and nation, she knows how to have a happy family and balanced and healthy relations with others.
5. Education gives power to women to become strong physically by giving her knowledge about sports, exercise, and health- related aspects and good physical health; this will definitely benefit her mental health.
6. Education helps to improve the sex ratio and in controlling population.
7. Education encourages women especially the rural women to take advantage of the various schemes

CONCLUSION

There is a positive relationship between education and woman empowerment. Another important aspect in this regard is that the issue of women empowerment has been facing certain serious challenges, which are outcome of some certain evil norms and attitude such as child labour, child marriage, illiteracy, superstition, partial attitude of the parents, female feticides, etc. and in such a situation women empowerment is an urgent necessity. 'Final Solutions' is not just the play of communal riots but in this paper I would like to present the importance of education for women. In order to promote women's empowerment, it is necessary to create an environment that will allow



women to participate in educational programs and share the benefits.

The educational and other policies for women empowerment should be implemented in reality for empowering women in the world. The evils of poverty, unemployment and inequality cannot be eradicated by man alone. Equal and active participation of women is obligatory. Unless women are educated they will not be able to understand about their rights and their importance. Empowerment of women aims at striving towards acquiring higher literacy level and education, better health care for women and their children, equal ownership of productive resources, increased participation in economic and commercial sectors, awareness of their rights, improved standard of living and to achieve self-reliance, self-confidence and self-respect among women. While being attracted by modernisation and globalisation we must be confident to say no to marginalization.

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