

Where There's a Will by Mahesh Dattani: The Politics of Non - Conformist Sexuality

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Abstract: This research looks at how Dattani displays and defies gender stereotypes. The purpose of the paper is to investigate how Dattani has represented gender and undermined gender norms. In order to demonstrate Dattani's perceptions and responses in relation to gender and gender constructions vs those of society, the study uses relevant examples from the literature. In addition, the study makes the most of the text's examples to demonstrate how Dattani simultaneously embodies and dismantles gender norms. Additionally, it depicts the hierarchy of genders and their respective positions within the patriarchal, heterogeneous, dominant society. Additionally, to determine the author's inspiration for composing these plays as well as the ideology they represent. Dattani is well-known for both his broad range of themes and subjects and his technical mastery. Essentially, the study is text-focused. In an effort to effect social change and a sociocultural revolution to raise public awareness of the necessity for reforming the current social structure, these chosen plays have undertaken audacious inventions and experiments and dealt with issues relevant to the current social context. The plays portray the intense conflicts of modern city life and address the ambitions of the underprivileged and marginalized segments of society.

Keywords: hegemony, sexuality, society, patriarchy, gender, and gender constructs. Introducing:

Patriarchy is a long-standing political-social structure that maintains that the oldest and most powerful men are naturally dominant, superior to all others who are considered weak, and granted the authority to rule. Psychological terrorism and violence in different forms are how they keep their power. In India, it is a typical occurrence for the father to have authority over the family's property, women, and children. The subjection of women and other weak members is necessary for the males to have rules and privileges. The foundation of social, legal, political, and economic structures has long been the idea of patriarchy.

Everything in the world is arranged in a hierarchy; an office or government operates according to a set of rules that are followed from bottom to top. The families in India even observe this. The authority that parents have over a kid and other family members is known as patriarchy. In an organization, these kinds of directives may be helpful, but they are never beneficial in a family. A son is not a doll or an object that a father may manipulate; he is simply a relation. An individual's existence in every Indian household is still impacted by this notion, which was developed by the patriarchal society and culture. Dattani gave voice to this kind of family member oppression by a typical Indian father through these plays.

Power is the subject of Dattani's plays. The devastating, stultifying connections and patterns of behaviour that are ingrained in family life, along with the accompanying sorrow and pain, are the result of power dynamics. The complex result of the different roles we are required to play is our personality. As they carry out their socially prescribed roles as mother, mother-in-law, father, husband, boss, or brother, their dominance over others causes humiliation, retaliation, and ultimately victimization. The family becomes the victims of their own schemes when one uses their influence over them.

Power comes from a variety of sources, including sex, love, and profession. These factors can produce



victimization since they shape people's minds to force their will on others. People will stop at nothing to obtain it. Those who pursue such targets will ultimately lose all influence. Occasionally, after experiencing helplessness, we could feel better about ourselves if we have authority over other people.

A person's ability to exert influence and force upon another is demonstrated by their own personal efforts for dominance and control over others, themselves, and their environment.

We are forced to consider our own individual and social consciousness by Mahesh Dattani.

As a result, Mahesh Dattani serves as a mirror for society, reflecting reality but also going over the reasons and causes behind a progressive improvement.

In the archetype of the man-headed family, Dattani examines the differences between the roles played by men and women as well as the situations in which women assume leadership responsibilities. Three male line generations are mentioned by Dattani, who also highlights the pressure that Hasmukh was under to Change ultimately occurs because Ajit wants to break out from the cycle and forge his own path rather than carrying out his domineering father's instructions. Where there is a will, he acts in a way that perpetuates patriarchy and its stereotypes to the people of tomorrow.

Although postcolonial society is changing slowly, progress is being made. People began to question long-held beliefs and values instead of mindlessly adhering to traditions. the westernization may have contributed to this shift away from ancestral businesses and towards individual aspirations.

Throughout the nation, parents feel as though they own their children and should act in accordance with their opinions and desires. However, time is passing, and new ideas and concepts are emerging daily, making the world appear fresh and new. Patriarchy is outdated and freedom is modern. In Dattani's plays, the kids are first portrayed as imprisoned birds, then at the conclusion of the act, they get to be freed.

Multicultural Gender' Politics:

Reading and criticism of *Where There's a Will* have been place on various fronts. There are a number of fascinating elements in the play, as Sita Raina notes. The playwright Dattani referred to it as the patriarchal code's exorcism. Whether they are a wife, mistress, or daughter-in-law, women are dependent on men, and this drama explores what happens when those relationships are strained. Another way to read the play *Where There's a Will* is in relation to the wealthy and well-off people's tendency toward passivity. A number of critics continue to see the play as a portrayal of marital excess, while others believe the play is about the chaos that arises in a family when members are not compatible on an emotional or psychological level.

Some people consider that living in forced harmony is the only option accessible to the individuals. According to Gauri Shankar Jha, problems about identity and dilemmas around feminine sensibility are specific to women. Women in post-colonial society are embodied by Kiran, the mistress of Hasmukh. Since there are several levels of significance in the play, it seems rich and sophisticated. On the surface, it seems to be the play of a successful businessman named Hasmukh Mehta. A deeper look reveals the play's many interpretations, which seem to be numerous and rich.

A comedy with faintly humorous overtones is *Where There's a Will*. Dattani's portrayal of the misconceptions and bigotry of Indian society as they are mirrored in the family unit's microcosm has its roots in the Gujarati family background. It highlights the way patriarchal men constantly act egoistically and is the most significant and dynamic reality in middle class Indian homes. Hasmukh Mehta is a powerful and successful businessman, and his family is the centrepiece of the play's plot, which also looks at his life after death.

A disgruntled father, he faces the usual challenges of an offspring's expectations from his cold-hearted wife Sonal,



his dull married life, his impulsive son Ajit, his cunning and deceitful daughter-in-law Preeti, and last but not least, his mistress Kiran Jhaveri. Each of the four is confident in their names. Sonal barely makes an impression and Hasmukh has a grim expression. Preeti has no affection for anyone in the family, and Ajit is not the winner, at least not in his father's opinion. With no romantic ties between them, they are coexisting as a group under the patriarchal regime. Neither Hasmukh nor his son bring him happiness. "Tragedy after tragedy" is how he views his marriage and the birth of his son.

Sonal's obsession with cooking and feeding him drives him mad, and he considers his kid to be a reckless wastrel. Since he exercised implicit obedience toward his father, it is what he expects from others. When circumstances begin to spiral out of his control, he considers a checkmate. He establishes a trust and designates Kiran Jhaveri, his mistress, as its trustee.

Hasmukh dies one evening following a heated argument with the family. However, his ghost persists in ruling his family from another planet! According to his wishes, his family will live a modest life until Ajit becomes 45 years old. A woman named Kiran enters as the Mehta family accepts their fate is required to remain and oversee the family's business.

Much to Hasmukh's satisfaction, Kiran's presence upsets the family. He had intended to teach his family a lesson and hoped they would realize how unfit they were for roles as wife, son, and daughter-in-law. Sonal, however, and Kiran become close and express their disagreements over his cunning and manipulative character. He becomes aware of his own shortcomings in living under his father's shadow during his epiphany. The baby that Preeti is carrying kicks in her womb, symbolizing Hasmukh's potential second chance at life with his family as his unborn grandchild, just as he makes the decision to leave them and find his place in paradise.

This drama clearly demonstrates the obsession with gender and gender roles. It's ingrained in the workings of the Gujarati middle-class household. One of the main issues raised by Dattani, time and time again, is the play's undermining of patriarchy. In his narrative, Dattani delves into the intrigue and deception of family members who have been left in a precarious situation by a deceased man's will. This allows him to examine the conflict between traditional male-female roles and the consequences that arise when a woman assumes leadership. The patriarch believes he has finally prevailed in the wars he fought while still alive because of the workings of the will.

It's unexpected, though, how uncomfortable his family is, as his ghost returns to observe with great enjoyment. Three generations of the male line are mentioned by Dattani, who also identifies the forces that drive Hasmukh's actions. He puts his son's needs behind those of his coworkers at work, his mother and wife at home, and his online pals. Paradoxically, a woman will be the tough boss of the office. Here, Dattani unequivocally makes the point that women handle situations extremely differently. Even though Sonal was largely silent before Hasmukh, she raised her son in a unique way. Ajit declines to act as his father's further amplification. He retaliated violently.

According to Dattani, the true threat posed by the patriarchal code is that it prevents people from having the chance to develop independently. The son is supposed to comply with all requests without question because they are rooted in tradition, politeness, and even duties. An individual will lose their motivation and proactivity as a result. "Weak men with false strength" is how Dattani describes the men who expect this kind of obedience. He also decries people who consent to this kind of enslavement. Kiran remembers the beatings and violence she suffered at the hands of her own intoxicated father. She says that her brothers' personalities have resembled those of their father.

Along with beating and abusing their wives, they also return home carrying bottles of rum. Kiran has retreated from her life due to her unfortunate circumstances. She also wed an inebriated man and put up with his profanity. Similar to her mother, she has also been quietly suffering while seeming as though everything in her life was OK and she was content in that house.



Conclusion:

Dattani is interested in power in his plays. The devastating, stultifying connections and patterns of behaviour that are ingrained in family life, along with the accompanying sorrow and pain, are the result of power dynamics. Our multifaceted personalities are the result of the different roles that we are required to play. The power of dominance over others brings shame, retaliation, and eventual victimhood when they perform their culturally prescribed roles as boss, father, husband, brother, mother, and mother-in-law. A family becomes the victims of its own deceit when one uses their influence to control them.

Power comes from a variety of sources, including sex, love, and profession. These factors can produce victimization since they shape people's minds to force their will on others. People will take any action necessary to obtain it.

Such persecutors will ultimately lose all power. We may feel better about ourselves when we assume control over others after being in a helpless situation. The capacity of one mind to exert influence and imposition over another in personal struggles for dominance over oneself, other people, and the world at large. Mahesh Dattani challenges us to investigate our own personal and societal consciousness.

Mahesh Dattani, then, serves as a mirror for society, reflecting reality as it existed while also highlighting the factors that led to and justify a slow but steady improvement. In the framework of the traditional male-headed household, Dattani examines the distinctions between the roles played by men and women as well as the experiences of women in leadership roles.

In *Where There Is Will*, Dattani references three successive generations of the male line and highlights the pressure that Hasmukh feels to conform to patriarchy and its stereotypes for the benefit of future generations. Ultimately, however, Ajit's desire to break free from his controlling father's shadow and forge his own path leads to change.

Westernization may have contributed to the shift away from family businesses and toward pursuing individual dreams. Although change in postcolonial society has been slow, it is happening. People have begun to question long-standing beliefs and values instead of blindly adhering to traditions.

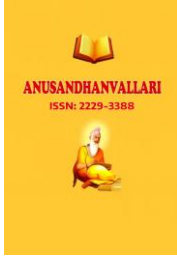
In the nation, parents feel as though they own their children and should act in accordance with their opinions and desires. However, time is passing and the world is changing, making everything appear different every day and bringing with it fresh concepts and ideas. Patriarchy is outdated and freedom is modern. In Dattani's plays, the kids are portrayed as caged birds at first, and by the play's conclusion, the birds are released. A moral conclusion to the drama *Where There Is Will* conveys to the patriarchal society what it's like to be the observer of one's own deeds after one has passed away.

It's also a better method to prove things to an antiquated, conservative society than giving up management of the family to a woman. Throughout the play, these kinds of pictures have the power to alter society and raise awareness of issues. While this model may not have a significant impact on the masses, it will ultimately become apparent in society since people are already aware of the influence of western nations on behaviour changes.

Although people cannot suddenly change, society assumes that every individual does, hence a change in one person may result in a change in society. Ajit is a revolutionary figure who teaches people the importance of being independent, having a clear vision for the future, and breaking free from domestic domination.

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