

A REAPPRAISAL OF MAHESH DATTANI'S WHERE THERE IS A WILL PROTAGONISTS

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Mahesh Dattani is one of the distinguished playwrights in Indian writing in English. Dattani has portrayed the Indian middle class family as such. He brings out the real events of Indian life style system how much they are fond with each other and how far they depend on one another in the family and explores in a vivid way. Typically one could say that human relationship is only based on money as we witness in Dattani's *Where There Is a Will*. It is a social realistic play of Mahesh Dattani, which credits *Dattani as a fine observer of Indian social life style*. Dattani utilizes theatre as a tool to depict social atrocity, gender bias and child abuse which are the themes of his plays. He has not only directed the plays rather he dwells with each character. In *Where There Is a Will* Dattani conveys that everyone in the family to lead a fine life and no one should compel anyone to lead the life as such because one may have his or her own ideology to succeed in their life. So through this play, Dattani proves that he is one among the renowned playwrights and good observer of our Indian society. He portrays our society by using dramatical techniques to the audience in the theater.

There are several interesting aspects in *Where There is a Will*. Dattani describes it as exorcism of the patriarchal code. Women being a wife, daughter or mistress are dependent on men and this play shows what happens when they are pushed to the edge. After reviewing this play one can lead his or her life smoothly and without any expectations from one another. In *Where There is a Will*, Hasmukh Mehta has a complete control over his family through money and forgoes an opportunity to improve his interpersonal relationship as men do nowadays. Moving forward in the play, he dies and his soul watches the actions of the family members sitting in the middle of the house. When he became the watcher of his own actions, he perceives that his desire for control has let him to be the victim of his own machinations unlike Kiran, who uses her power to essentially improve her relationships.

Hasmukh Mehta is a rich and successful businessman in Gujarat. He is very strict with his family members as he treats his laborers in office. And he is also a diabetic and cardiac patient with a history of high blood pressure. Mehta's wife, Sonal, who leads her life under the complete influence of her sister over phone. Sonal pretends to do according to her husband's wishes but she always defies Hasmukh Mehta's words, and as a mother to Ajit, she cooks very sumptuous food to pamper her son. Ajit is a twenty three year old married guy somehow interested on to start a business of his own for which he requires five lakhs from his father. But according to Ajit's father, Ajit is fit for nothing and denies him the amount what he needs. Hasmukh Mehta is always having an eye on his son's every deeds whether he does the thing correctly or not and Mehta keeps on insisting "Do This" "Don't do That" as if he treats his son as a child. Pretti is the daughter-in-law of Hashmukh Mehta, and Dattani's description in the context Pretti is described as pretty, charming, graceful and sly as a

snake and her aim in the family is to get all the wealth and fame after the death of her father-in-law, who is fond of money and will always. Mehta has no any love affection towards his family members, since no one heeds his words and at the end of the first act Mehta dies in the bed, where his wife discovers his dead body a few minutes later after his death. Before his death there is a self mourning, which conveys Mehta's grief on his entire life. The following passage brings out the grief of Mr. Mehta.

"Sonal. My wife. My son's mother. Do you know what Sonal means? No? 'Gold'. when we were newly married, I used to joke with her and say she was as good as gold. But that was when we were newly married. I soon found out what a good-for-nothing she was. As good as mud. Ditto our sex life. Mud. Twenty-five years of marriage and I don't think she has ever enjoyed sex. Twenty-five years of marriage and I haven't enjoyed sex with her. So what does a man do? You tell me. I started eating out. And what about my sex life? Well, I could afford that too. Those expensive ladies of the night in five star hotels! (smiles at some pleasant memories.) I mean, a man in my position has to be careful. I need a safer relationship. Something between a wife and pick-up. Yes. A mistress! It didn't take me very long to find her. She was right there in my office. An unmarried lady. Not an ordinary typist or even a secretary. A shrewd hard-headed marketing executive. If there was anyone in my office who had brains to match mine, it was her. She is now one of the directors of the company. Not entirely due to her shrewd head. She lives now in a company flat in a posh locality. I won't tell you where. Well, it is walking distance from here. Convenient for me. All right, what's wrong with having a bit on the side? Especially since the main course is always without salt. Okay, okay, less salt"(P 472-473).

It is a statement reflected the hatred towards Hasmukh Mehta's wife for not treating him as her husband in bedroom and this issue poisoned him and made him to be unfaithful to his family members and explores unhappy marital life. Many couples depart due to the lack of interpersonal communication and love and sex which are the skeleton of marital life system all over the world. So in Mehta's life one of the skeletons lacks in his life so he is supposed to have a mistress, named Kiran. Kiran works as one of the directors of Mehta's company. she is not married woman in the eyes of Mehta but she has a husband, he is a drunkard as if her father so she leaves her home and works in Mehta's company.

When Mehta is famished, and asks Sonal for supper, She replies that,

"weeds take a few days to grow. But your stomachs get hungry every few hours. We need Maharaja more badly than we need Damo"(P 466)

Maharaja is a cook in Mehta's home. Damo is a Gardner. These two characters play a minor role in *Where There is a Will*. As a house wife, Sonal is not interested to cook for her husband she feels her life as a failure one. She lives with her husband for the sake of our Indian culture and tradition. She is murmuring about the arrival of Maharaja so that she can let free from cooking for all of his family member. Sonal's activities in the kitchen as if she is entering the kitchen first time in her life which irritates Mehta when he is in hunger.

There is a conflict between Mehta and his son Ajit. Since Ajit never obeys his father because Mehta wants to be sustained with the rich class prestige so Mehta likes to treat his Ajit as Mehta had been treated by his father and Mehta feels that the status Mehta gets through his hard work along with his father. Like that Mehta expects his son Ajit to assist him for the sake of his successful

business. No one in the family is affectionate with each other rather they do anything as they like as if a free bird flies without determination. When Mehta dies his soul lingers at home and responds all the reactions and conversation of his family members and the soul of Mehta can hear and see his family members where as Mehta is invisible to them. Through this invisible character Mahesh Dattani uses his theatrical techniques in order to entertain the audience in an amazing way.

After the death of Mr. Hasmukh Mehta, his wife, son and daughter-in-law blames one another. Because there are no documents regarding the WILL at home for that they all revile Hasmukh Mehta for his callous behavior. This following conversation pictures rather Mehta's family concerns of his death neither seeking for money.

PREETI: Yes. If you had been nicer, all this wouldn't have happened.

HASMUKH: Clever girl.

AJIT: I was not nice to him because he was not nice to me.

PREETI: So what? He was not nice to me either.

SONAL: And he is not exactly in love with me either. If I'd known he had a mistress, I would have left him.

HASMUKH: I should have told her years ago then.

PREETI: Well, I have to suffer on account of you two. (P. 481)

Then Preeti quarrels by saying that "I married you because you were well-placed" these words reflect the common idea or thought of Indian modern spinsters. So money decides life rather than human beings. This is one of the postmodern traits which Dattani concentrates the prosaic characteristics of Indian people. Then Mehta's family plans to get the certificate, which has to be certified that Mehta was a senile when he wrote the WILL, but their plan ends in vain because of the family doctor, as he was a genuine to Mehta. When the phone rings Ajit and his mother receive the call at a stretch from different places and it is Sonal's sister. Sonal's sister comes to know that Mehta has formed a charitable trust and all his property, finances, shares and Mehta has donated to the trust and including the house where they are living in.

In the Will there are some terms and conditions, in that Ajit has to attend the office every day at nine a.m. and he can only leave at six p.m. and he even has to have lunch there. In the WILL all the conditions Mehta specified against his son. It also mentioned that no new business project of Ajit should be sanctioned. Further Ajit informs his aunt that the trustee of the WILL is Kiran Javeri, who is a marketing executive, turned company director and late Mukhta's mistress. The above conversation is held between Sonal's family and her sister over phone.

If Mukhta's family don't go by these terms and conditions then the trust will donate its funds to the various charities in and around the city, the name of the charities are mentioned in the WILL. After Sonal comes to know that the trustee as a woman she is stunned and starts reviling her husband Mehta.

When Mrs. Kiran enters Mr. Mehta's home every get shocked of seeing Mrs. Kiran. Kiran introduces herself to the family members of Mehta. And then the further details are revealed by Kiran that she is married to a drunkard and tortured man she leaves her husband, Jonnie Walker, and stays in the company apartment, provided by Mr. Mehta. Kiran is known to Mehta before her marriage.

This following conversation brings out the conflict between Mr.Mehta family and Mrs.Jhaveri. Because he didn't believe his wife rather believes his mistress.

PREETI: Then why did he make you the trustee? Why didn't he choose his own wife? Tell me.

SONAL: (wearily). Oh, what difference does it make now?

PREETI: But she has to admit her selfish motives to us! That will make a difference. the Will has left us naked. The whole world is saying, 'Hasmukh Mehta didn't have faith in his own family. He didn't get along with his wife. His son is a spend-thrift. His daughter-in-law is a scheming little witch. That's why he left all his wealth in the hands of an outsider. We have got to show them that he was . . . influenced. By this woman.

SONAL: And publicly declare that she had a mistress?

PREETI: Oh, people know about that, I'm sure.

KIRAN: No. we were very discreet. They may suspect. But they don't have real proof.

In this conversation Kiran accepts her secret relationship with Mehta to Mehta's family members. Kiran then explains about her duty in Mehta's house. Kiran will get salary for her work and she declares that Ajit has to attend the office regularly. Mrs. Mehta gets a regular allowance to run the house and a little more for her personal expenses. And Preeti too gets an allowance when she becomes mother. When the child is twenty-one, the trust automatically dissolves. Then the trust will hand over its hold to Ajit and his heirs to enjoy. Kiran's duty is to run the group of Mehta's industries on behalf of Ajith Mehta until he becomes an experienced administrator. Kiran has the authority to make all the decisions in the interest of the companies and she has to train Ajit Mehta as a fine administrator. All these instructions are mentioned in the Will. The instructions Kiran receives through Has Mukh Mehta's solicitor.

In between Ajit and his wife blame each other in their home. Preeti aggressively scolds him that "it is bad enough having your father's mistress running my life"(Pg 500) then Ajit reciprocation is that "can't you see? He is still alive. Through his Will! Through his mistress! " and Ajit says that "everything she tells me to do is exactly what he would have wanted me to do. We are all living out a dead man's dream". (Pg 500). So Mehta's home has become as a hell because of the conflict for the Will.

When Ajit is in need of migraine tablets and searches in the cub board he finds out a bottle behind Preeti's saris with full of tablets. He asks his wife Preeti then she replies that it is a vitamin tablets and she hides it from him so the doubt raises again but she manages her husband by saying that doctor has asked me to stop taking the tablets over phone, so here he is supposed to believe his wife. After Ajit leaves the room she throws out all the tablets through window, it is being noticed by Kiran. While the conversation is going on between Sonal and Kiran, Kiran notices that.

"Kiran enters the bedroom. She sits by the dressing table, lets her hair down. She opens her handbag and takes out her hand brush. She notices in her handbag the bottle Preeti had thrown out of the window. She takes it out and places it on the table. She begins brushing her hair. She stops when she notices Has Mukh's bottle of blood pressure tablets which Ajit had taken out. She opens it

and removes some tablets, which are orange in colour. She opens Preeti's bottle and removes some tablets." (P - 512)

Ajit takes the same colored tablets, this incident makes doubt on preeti. Immediately Kiran enters the room of Preeti, where she is resting. Kiran wakes up preeti and enquires about the changing of the tablets. Then Preeti replies that she understands the patient's psychology of her father-in-law, patient will no longer see the tablets and intake it, it happens in the beginning only, that made to use this opportunity. Preeti accepts her plan of silent killing her father-in-law. The truth revealed by Preeti by threatening her if this matter is known to Preeti's husband then she would leave the home without any single property from her husband. For that Preeti requests Kiran not to inform to Ajit. Both of them make an agreement that Preeti would provide half of her share to Kiran if the truth is unrevealed. They both become intimate.

All the deeds of Kiran and Mehta's family has been watched by Has Mukh Mehta as an invisible to others but he responses whatever they converse with each other. Later Mehta comes to know that, his Daughter-in-law and his mistress have become friends to usurp his property and wealth. After hearing their conversation Mehta feels bad about his mistress

HASMUKH: No. I don't think I can enter this house. it is not mine. . . any more. I will rest permanently on the tamarind tree. (laughter at the table.) they are not my family any more. i wishe I had never interfered with their lives. They look quite happy together. With Kiran sitting in my place. Oh, I wish I had been more . . . I wished I had lived. (P- 515)

Mahesh Dattani in the crystal clear expresses that the world is running after money and there is very difficult to find out a good person in the world. This play concentrates on day today activities through which Dattani brings out social realism. It is fact that nobody will escape from death. So death is inevitable, one should not covet other's belongings. Finally Dattani in the context makes Mukhta realize his flaw of the play. *Where There Is a Will* does not conclude its ideas completely rather it makes the readers to concern about their family members as well as the society.

Works Cited

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