

Where There is a Will-Mahesh Dattani

Where There is a Will was first performed by Dattani's theatre group, Playpen, at Chowdiah Memorial Hall, Bangalore, on September 23, 1988, as a part of the Deccan Herald Theatre Festival.

Characters

Hasmukh Mehta

Hasmukh Mehta is the owner of the Mehta Group of Companies, a large garment business. He is stubborn and expects complete obedience from everyone around him. He even insists that his son polishes his shoes every morning and follows his commands. Hasmukh suffers from health issues, like high blood pressure, hypertension, and high cholesterol. He has an affair with Kiran, the marketing executive of his company. Although Hasmukh regularly takes medicine for his health problems, they stop working when Preeti secretly replaces his tablets. As a result, Hasmukh dies of a heart attack. After his death, his spirit remains as a ghost, hanging upside down from a tamarind tree. Before his death, Hasmukh made a special will. Seven days later, the family finds out that he has established the 'Hasmukh Mehta Charitable Trust'. Kiran Jhaveri has been appointed as the trustee, and all of Hasmukh's wealth is transferred to the trust. The trust will only dissolve when Ajit turns 45, which shocks the entire family.

Sonal Mehta

Sonal is Hasmukh Mehta's wife. She is submissive and dependent and struggles to manage the kitchen without their servant. Her habit of cooking too much food irritates Hasmukh, leading to frequent quarrels. However, Sonal continues to care for him, advising him to stop smoking. After Hasmukh's sudden death, Sonal is shocked to learn about his affair with Kiran, but she eventually adjusts and even befriends her.

Ajit Mehta

Ajit is the only son of Hasmukh and Sonal. He is the heir to Hasmukh's property. Ajit wants to be independent and does not like following his father's orders. He believes he can manage the family business, but Hasmukh often insults him.

Preeti Mehta

Preeti is Ajit's wife. She is greedy and wants Hasmukh's money. Hasmukh is not happy with her behaviour and does not see her as a responsible daughter-in-law. Preeti switches Hasmukh's BP tablets with her vitamins, hoping to inherit his wealth quickly. As she planned, Hasmukh dies soon.

Kiran Jhaveri

Kiran Jhaveri is a young woman who works as a marketing executive in Hasmukh's company. She is hardworking and earns Hasmukh's trust. Hasmukh also helps arrange her marriage. Kiran's husband is a drunkard and loses his job as an excise inspector. He lets his wife become Hasmukh's mistress in exchange for alcohol. Hasmukh names Kiran as the trustee of his "Hasmukh Mehta Charitable Trust" in his will.

Dr. Jhunjhunwala-Doctor
Maharaj-Cook
Damodar-Gardener
Minal-Sonal's Sister

Story

The story begins with Hasmukh Mehta introducing his son, Ajit Mehta. He is discussing his business plans with Deepak over the phone and requests five lakhs from him. Hasmukh explains that he needs seventeen lakhs to manufacture electronic typewriters. The call is interrupted by Hasmukh, which leaves Ajit feeling humiliated. Hasmukh tells Ajit that successful businessmen are brief and precise in their dealings. Determined to create his own identity in the business world, Ajit refuses to follow Hasmukh's approach. Ajit accuses Hasmukh of being biased and not giving him an opportunity to prove his worth. He believes that Hasmukh is stuck in the past when it comes to running the business, despite Ajit's desire to modernize it. Hasmukh dismisses Ajit's ideas, claiming that he lacks the experience to run the business successfully.

Ajit says that Hasmukh's need for control is suffocating him and preventing him from making any decisions on his own. Hasmukh acknowledges that he wants Ajit to follow in his footsteps, as he believes his way is the only path to success. This infuriates Ajit, and in a fit of rage, he calls his father a pompous fool. In response, Hasmukh slaps Ajit.

Preeti, Ajit's wife, arrives and tries to calm the situation. Although Hasmukh and Ajit attempt to resolve the conflict, it remains unresolved. The tension persists as the family prepares for dinner. During the meal, Ajit asks for halwa, a sweet dish, but Hasmukh immediately disapproves, reigniting the argument. Ajit sees Hasmukh's disapproval as yet another attempt to control even the smallest aspects of his life.

Meanwhile, Sonal, who is in the kitchen, continues making parathas, despite Preeti's insistence that there is already enough food. This disagreement becomes another point of tension between Hasmukh and Sonal. Then, their argument revolves around their cook, Maharaj, who has left, and their gardener, Damodar, who has gone to bring him back. In the middle of the argument, Sonal faints due to her high blood pressure, and the family rushes to help her. At the dinner table, Hasmukh and Sonal argue again about the food having too little salt. Ajit tries to intervene but is caught between his parents.

Later, when Hasmukh is left alone, he reflects on his life. He remembers how hard his father worked to build the family's wealth, which inspired him to succeed. Hasmukh had always hoped to pass on his legacy to a son who would continue the work with the same dedication. He reveals that he is dissatisfied with his marriage and acknowledges that he has a mistress, Kiran Jhaveri. He justifies his actions by blaming his unhappy

marriage with Sonal, saying that he married solely to have a son to carry on his legacy. Now, Hasmukh is deeply disappointed in Ajit for not meeting his expectations.

Hasmukh suddenly dies of a heart attack, but his spirit remains in the house, watching everything that happens after his death. Unaware of his passing, Sonal returns to the bedroom and speaks to his lifeless body.

A week after Hasmukh Mehta's death, the family is informed about his Will. Hasmukh's spirit, curious to see their reactions, watches closely. When the lawyer reads the Will, Ajit, Sonal, and Preeti are shocked and angered. According to Hasmukh's will, he has created a charitable trust that will take control of all his property and finances. The trust will dissolve only when Ajit turns 45, and until then, the family will receive a fixed allowance. The trust's terms include strict conditions: Ajit must attend the office every day and cannot start any new business ventures without approval. Sonal will receive a household allowance, and Preeti will get an allowance once she becomes a mother.

The family is even more shocked to learn that Kiran Jhaveri, Hasmukh's mistress, will be the trustee of the trust. Kiran will manage the Mehta Group of Industries and distribute the payments to the family. Just then, the doorbell rings. When Ajit opens the door, he finds Kiran Jhaveri standing there with a suitcase. She calmly informs the family that she will be staying with them for a while, as per Hasmukh's will. Everyone is shocked and angered by this news. Preeti, in particular, finds it difficult to accept Kiran's presence and refuses to let her stay. However, according to the Will, if the family does not follow Hasmukh's instructions, all his property and wealth will be donated to the charity. Reluctantly, Preeti accepts the idea of Kiran staying. Sonal agrees to share her room with Kiran.

Ajit's anger intensifies as he realizes the extent to which his father continues to control his life, even after death. The entire family struggles to adjust to this new reality. Kiran enters the house confidently, prepared to fulfil Hasmukh's wishes despite the family's resentment. Meanwhile, Hasmukh's spirit watches the drama unfold. His plan to control his family is working, but he is also worried about how his memory will be remembered.

Hasmukh Mehta makes an appearance on stage and speaks to the audience. He contemplates his decision to make Kiran Jhaveri, his mistress, the guardian of his wealth. He is convinced that Kiran's presence will help control his family, particularly his daughter-in-law, Preeti, whom he views as smart but troublesome.

Days pass. One day, Ajit Mehta returns home from work, tired and frustrated by Kiran's strict management. Despite Sonal's efforts to comfort him, Ajit feels trapped by both his father's and Kiran's control. Preeti enters, feeling upset, and begins cooking dinner. Sonal and Preeti discuss their

dissatisfaction with Kiran's presence and the limitations of Hasmukh's will. Preeti expresses her anger towards Ajit, blaming him for their current situation because of his past protests against his father.

Ajit and Preeti's conversation turns into a heated argument. Preeti accuses Ajit of being the reason Hasmukh handed over the wealth to Kiran, calling him a mistake in her life. The argument escalates when Ajit finds a mysterious bottle hidden among Preeti's belongings. Preeti claims it contains vitamin tablets, but Ajit becomes suspicious. Hasmukh, observing from a distance, wonders about the secrets in the bottle.

Sonal Mehta confronts Kiran Jhaveri about her relationship with Hasmukh, trying to understand why Kiran was involved with him. Kiran admits that her primary motivation was financial gain, but she also mentions that Hasmukh respected and trusted her. Sonal expresses concern about her daughter-in-law, Preeti, who she believes has developed an obsession with money. Kiran compares Preeti's desires to her own, implying that they are not so different. Kiran reflects on her childhood, recalling her father's abuse and her mother's suffering.

Kiran reveals that Hasmukh was intoxicated by power and wanted to control his family even from beyond the grave. Sonal comforts Kiran, and the two women bond over their shared experiences.

Later, Kiran confronts Preeti about switching her vitamin tablets with Hasmukh's BP medication, which led to his death. Kiran threatens to expose Preeti to Ajit but ultimately decides not to, choosing instead to protect Hasmukh's reputation and Ajit's well-being. Kiran hides the tension by telling Ajit that Preeti had planned a surprise birthday party for him. Preeti, with no other choice, accepts Kiran's presence. Hasmukh, observing from afar, feels distanced from his family. The play concludes with Kiran receiving a phone call from Minal, Sonal's sister.

Story in Brief

The story begins with Hasmukh Mehta introducing his son, Ajit Mehta. Ajit requests five lakhs from Deepak, but their conversation is interrupted by Hasmukh, leaving Ajit humiliated. Hasmukh believes that successful businessmen should be brief and precise in their dealings, while Ajit wants to modernize the business and create his own identity. Ajit accuses his father of being stuck in the past and not giving him the chance to prove himself. The conflict between father and son intensifies, leading to an argument in which Ajit calls his father a pompous fool, and Hasmukh slaps him in retaliation.

Tension continues to build within the family as Hasmukh exerts control over even small decisions, such as Ajit's request for halwa during

dinner. The strained relationship between Hasmukh and his wife, Sonal, is also evident. Sonal faints due to high blood pressure, adding to the stress in the household. Despite attempts to resolve these issues, the conflicts remain unresolved. Hasmukh reflects on his life and reveals his dissatisfaction with his marriage to Sonal and his affair with Kiran Jhaveri, whom he views as a more trustworthy companion.

After Hasmukh's sudden death from a heart attack, his spirit lingers in the house, observing the reactions of his family. A week later, the family learns about Hasmukh's will, which shocks them. He has created a charitable trust that controls all his property and finances until Ajit turns 45. To make matters worse, Kiran Jhaveri is appointed as the trustee, managing the Mehta Group and controlling the family's allowances. Despite their resentment, the family is forced to accept Kiran's presence in their home as per Hasmukh's will, or else all the wealth will be donated to charity.

Ajit, Preeti, and Sonal struggle with Kiran's control over their lives. Ajit feels trapped by both his father's and Kiran's influence, while Preeti blames Ajit for their current situation. As tensions escalate, Ajit grows suspicious when he finds a mysterious bottle in Preeti's belongings, though she claims it contains vitamin tablets. Meanwhile, Sonal confronts Kiran about her relationship with Hasmukh, and the two women bond over their shared hardships.

Kiran eventually confronts Preeti about switching Hasmukh's BP tablets, which contributed to his death. However, Kiran decides to keep this information to herself in order to protect Hasmukh's reputation and Ajit's well-being. The play ends with Preeti reluctantly accepting Kiran's presence in their home, while Hasmukh's spirit watches the family from a distance.

Critical Appreciation

Mahesh Dattani is a renowned playwright known for his keen observations of middle-class life in India. **Where There is a Will** was first performed by his theatre group, Playpen, at Chowdiah Memorial Hall in Bangalore on September 23, 1988, during the Deccan Herald Theatre Festival.

The play focuses on the complicated relationships within a family, especially how these relationships are often controlled by money and power. The story centers on a family dealing with the consequences of the father's strict dominance. His authoritarian behavior creates emotional distance, leading to conflict and tension among the family members. Each character has their own emotions and aspirations but struggles to express them.

The character of Hasmukh Mehta, a prosperous and influential businessman, symbolizes the patriarchal structure of Indian society. Dattani depicts Hasmukh as a man whose interactions with his family are characterized by a lack of emotional warmth and affection.

Sonal, Hasmukh's wife, has her own frustrations and often disobeys his commands. Ajit, their 23-year-old son and an aspiring entrepreneur, battles with his father's dismissive attitude toward his ambitions. Hasmukh perceives his son as helpless, reinforcing his control by treating Ajit like a child rather than as an adult capable of making decisions.

The surprising twist of Hasmukh's will adds fuel to the existing tension. According to the terms of the will, Ajit will only inherit his father's wealth when he turns 45. Until then, Kiran is appointed as the trustee, further complicating the already strained family dynamics. Her presence in the family intensifies the tension as they come to terms with Hasmukh's infidelity and its consequences.

Throughout the play, Dattani explores themes such as control, betrayal, jealousy, and greed. These emotions reveal the darker side of human nature. *Where There is a Will* highlights the nature of family relationships in modern Indian society. Dattani criticizes the traditional male-dominated system. He skillfully reflects contemporary society through simple and engaging dialogues that resonate with the audience.

Where There is a Will examines the complexities of family relationships and the impact of wealth on human emotions. Mahesh Dattani's masterful characterization, themes, and effective use of language combine to create a powerful narrative that resonates with audiences.

Nobel Prize Acceptance Speech- Wangari Maathai

Wangari Maathai's Nobel Lecture in Oslo on December 10, 2004, shows her dedication to environmental conservation, democracy, and peace. She demonstrates a deep sense of humility and pride as the first African woman to receive the Nobel Peace Prize. Maathai states that she accepts the award on behalf of the people of Kenya, Africa, and the world, particularly emphasizing the importance of women and the girl child. She hopes this recognition will inspire young women and youth to bring about positive changes in their communities.

Maathai acknowledges the efforts of numerous individuals and organizations worldwide in protecting the environment and promoting human rights. She refers to them as the "seeds of peace" and thanks her family, colleagues, and the Kenyan people for supporting her despite the many challenges she faced. According to Maathai, the recognition from the Norwegian Nobel Committee highlights the connection between sustainable development, democracy, and peace—concepts that have guided her work for more than 30 years.

Growing up in rural Kenya, Maathai witnessed the environmental destruction caused by deforestation and commercial farming, which had a devastating impact on local biodiversity. This experience inspired her to start the Green Belt Movement in 1977. It focused on planting trees to aid rural women in obtaining basic necessities like firewood and clean water. The movement grew over time, and over 30 million trees were planted, helping women improve their livelihoods while also addressing environmental issues.

Through the Green Belt Movement, Maathai also introduced a citizen education program. This initiative encouraged communities to understand the relationship between their daily actions and broader environmental, social, and governance issues. It empowered her people to fight for democracy, justice, and sustainable resource management, helping them overcome fear and take action for the betterment of society.

The movement further evolved to support the struggle for democracy and peace in Kenya. Tree planting became a symbol of resistance and hope during political struggles, with trees being planted to demand the release of political prisoners and as symbols of peace during ethnic conflicts. This connection between environmental conservation and peace helped develop harmony in communities torn apart by violence.

Maathai emphasizes that responsible environmental management requires good governance and democracy. Poor governance can result in conflict and environmental degradation without democratic space and accountability. The efforts of civil society, including the Green Belt Movement, played a key role in Kenya's peaceful transition to democracy in 2002.

Maathai concludes her speech by discussing the urgent environmental and social challenges that the world is facing, such as climate change, deforestation, and poverty. She urges young people to engage in sustainable development activities to secure their future.

In her closing remarks, Maathai recounts her childhood memories of a clear, vibrant stream near her home, which has since become dry due to

environmental destruction. This memory fuels her call for a collective effort to restore damaged environments so that future generations can enjoy the beauty and abundance of nature. Maathai's lecture is a powerful way to convey the message that peace, democracy, and environmental conservation are deeply interconnected and must be pursued together to achieve a better future.

Short Essay

Nobel Prize Acceptance Speech- Wangari Maathai

Wangari Maathai's Nobel Lecture in Oslo on December 10, 2004, highlights her commitment to environmental conservation, democracy, and peace. She is the first African woman to receive the Nobel Peace Prize. Maathai accepts the award on behalf of the people of Kenya. She emphasizes the importance of women and girls in driving change. Maathai hopes this recognition inspires young people to engage actively in their communities.

In her speech, Maathai acknowledges the global efforts of individuals and organizations. They work to protect the environment and promote human rights. She refers to these efforts as the "seeds of peace." Maathai expresses gratitude to her family, colleagues, and the Kenyan people for their support.

Maathai founded the Green Belt Movement in 1977. This movement aims to combat deforestation and promote biodiversity. It also empowers rural women by helping them access essential resources like firewood and clean water through tree planting. Additionally, it introduces citizen education programs. These programs encourage communities to understand the impact of their actions on the environment and society.

In her closing remarks, Maathai discusses urgent environmental and social challenges. She urges young people to participate in sustainable development to secure their future. She shares memories of a once-vibrant stream near her childhood home. This stream has dried up due to environmental destruction. Maathai calls for collective action to restore damaged ecosystems. Her lecture powerfully conveys that peace, democracy, and environmental conservation must be pursued together for a better future.

Listening - Robin Sharma

The ability to listen is an important skill that can significantly impact our relationships and our lives. Robin Sharma talks about the power of listening in his short essay titled "Listening." He is best known for his popular books, including *The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari* and *The 5AM Club*. Sharma believes that listening is not just about hearing words; it is also about understanding and connecting with others.

According to Sharma, listening is a key part of building strong cultures in great organizations. When leaders and team members listen to each other, they create an environment where everyone feels valued and respected. This feeling of being valued is very important. People often quit their jobs not because they dislike their work, but because they do not feel special or appreciated. Therefore, good listening can help retain talented people in an organization.

Sharma emphasizes that listening is a sign of respect. If someone listens to you, it means they care about what you are saying. This builds trust and makes it easier for people to work together. Good listening also helps leaders gather important information that can lead to better decisions and improved teamwork. Sharma says, "Brilliant performers are brilliant listeners." Successful individuals have the ability to listen well.

Sharma recommends that everyone practice masterful listening. He suggests that we should not interrupt or think about what we will say next while someone is speaking. We need to pay attention to what the person is saying instead. By doing this, we show that we respect the other person and truly care about their words. When we listen carefully, we can understand others better and connect with them on a deeper level.

Another important idea that Sharma shares is that everyone wants to be heard. Everyone has something valuable to share, and we desire for others to hear it. Amazing things can happen when we take the time to listen to others. We can learn new ideas, solve problems, and strengthen our friendships. A friendly atmosphere can be created by listening, leading to the growth of creativity and cooperation.

Robin Sharma says that listening is a powerful skill that can be beneficial in many ways. Through good listening, we can develop stronger relationships, demonstrate respect, and create a positive environment around us.

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