

WHERE THERE IS A WILL

Mahesh Dattani

Introduction

Where There is a Will is a one-act play by Mahesh Dattani, first staged in 1988. It is a **comedy-drama** that talks about **family, wealth, inheritance, human behavior, and morality**. The play shows how money can influence people's decisions and how greed and selfishness affect relationships. It also teaches that **honesty, responsibility, patience, and good character** are more important than wealth.

The story revolves around the **Mehta family**, a wealthy Gujarati family. The patriarch, **Hasmukh Mehta**, controls his family's life through his **will**, even after his death. The play combines **humor, family conflicts, and moral lessons** in a way that is easy to understand and entertaining.

Characters

- **Hasmukh Mehta** – The wealthy father of the family. He is clever, authoritative, and wants to make sure his son Ajit becomes responsible and honest. Even after death, his **will controls the family**.
- **Sonal Mehta** – Has Mukh's wife. She is more concerned with **money, comfort, and status** than emotions. She enjoys the wealth her husband accumulated and is focused on the material benefits of the will.
- **Ajit Mehta** – The only son of Has Mukh and Sonal. Ajit has lived under his father's strict rules and now faces the challenge of following the **will's conditions** while trying to live his own life. He represents responsibility and honesty, but also struggles with independence.
- **Preeti Mehta** – Ajit's wife. She is worried about Kiran staying in their home as per the will. Preeti is concerned about family peace and her comfort, reflecting the tension that the will creates in their married life.
- **Kiran Jhaveri** – Has Mukh's secretary and mistress. She is required to live in the house according to the will and guide Ajit. Kiran plays a **key role in enforcing Has Mukh's rules**. Her presence creates conflict, tension, and humor in the household.

Setting

The play is set in the **Mehta family home**, mainly in the **living room and study**. The setting is simple, making it easy for the audience to follow the events and understand the family dynamics.

Plot Summary

The Death of Has Mukh Mehta

The play begins with the death of Has Mukh Mehta. Even though he has passed away, his **rules and influence** remain strong through his will. The family members are initially

shocked and unsure about how to deal with his strict conditions. This shows that Hasmukh had complete control over his family, and his authority continues even after death.

The Will and Its Conditions

Hasmukh's will states that **Ajit will inherit the family wealth only if he follows certain rules**. One of the main conditions is that **Kiran Jhaveri must live in the house for 22 years** and guide Ajit until he reaches the age of 45. This ensures that Ajit remains under control and learns responsibility, even after his father's death.

The will also indirectly tests the **attitudes and personalities** of other family members: Sonal is interested in material gain, Preeti worries about household peace, and Ajit has to balance his independence with his father's instructions.

Family Conflicts and Tensions

The rules create tension in the house:

- **Ajit** feels trapped between his father's expectations and his own desire for freedom.
- **Preeti** is concerned about Kiran staying in the house and how it might affect her married life.
- **Sonal** is focused on wealth and comfort, showing her materialistic nature.

Kiran's presence in the house adds humor and creates awkward situations. She is strict in following the will, and her guidance sometimes irritates Ajit and Preeti. The conflicts and misunderstandings among the family members show how **authority, greed, and personal desires** can affect relationships.

Hasmukh's Influence

Even though Hasmukh is dead, his influence is felt throughout the play. His presence represents **patriarchal authority** and shows how parents can control their children's lives through rules and conditions. Hasmukh's will ensures that the family's behavior reflects his wishes, teaching a lesson about responsibility, obedience, and moral values.

Resolution

By the end of the play:

- Ajit accepts the **conditions of the will** and learns to manage his father's legacy wisely.
- Preeti understands the importance of patience and family harmony.
- Sonal realizes that wealth alone does not guarantee happiness.
- Kiran continues to play her role as the guardian of Hasmukh's rules.

The play ends with the moral that **honesty, responsibility, and good character** are more valuable than money, power, or material comfort.

Themes

1. **Greed vs. Honesty** – Greed creates conflict, while honesty and integrity bring reward.
2. **Family Relationships** – The play explores tension, rivalry, and responsibilities in a family.
3. **Control and Independence** – Shows how parental control can influence children even after death, and the struggle of children for independence.
4. **Inheritance and Power** – Wealth is shown as a tool of influence and control within the family.
5. **Humor and Morality** – Comedy makes the story enjoyable and teaches important life lessons.

Conclusion

Where There is a Will is a **funny, meaningful, and easy-to-understand play**. It explores **family conflicts, greed, inheritance, and patriarchal control** in a relatable way. Through Ajit, Preeti, Sonal, and Kiran, the play shows the impact of wealth and authority on family life.

The play teaches students that while money can create tension, **honesty, responsibility, patience, and good character** are the most important qualities in life. It is suitable for students because it is **entertaining, relatable, and full of moral lessons**.