

## GENDER CONTEXTS AND THE MARGINALIZATION OF MEN IN MAHESH DATTANI'S *WHERE THERE'S A WILL*: A STUDY THROUGH CONNELL'S THEORY OF MASCULINITY

**Ms. Simoni Sarma**

MA English, SSHSS, Sharda University

**Dr. Pallavi Thakur**

Associate Professor, SSHSS, Sharda University

### **Abstract**

Marginalization is the social process of relegating specific groups or political views to the sides of society whose most significant aspects either do not benefit from participation in a general credit system, having no access or willing participants. Men can also be marginalized, especially if they don't fit in with mainstream gender standards. "Masculinities are shaped by social institutions- social norms and practices" (Sitha & Khan, 2022). In India, masculinity is also associated with social, religious and cultural contexts. Indian masculinity is a construct that is affected by caste systems, family traditions, expectations, and economic conditions. Mahesh Dattani's plays explore gender, identity, and societal expectations in a nuanced way through the portrayal of disenfranchised males. *Where There's a Will*, explores the conflicts men face in pursuing their own identities in opposition to societal norms and patriarchal power structures. The play is analyzed through the lens of 'Masculinity Theory' propounded by Connell.

Key words: Masculinity, marginalization, identity, social constructions,

### **1. Cultural and Familial Constructions of Masculinity**

Mahesh Dattani's *Where There's a Will* explores the impact of cultural traditions and family structures on conventional male roles. The play critiques the rigid expectations imposed on men, particularly in a patriarchal, business-oriented Indian family, where masculinity is equated with control, financial dominance, and legacy.

The father-son bond is one of the most important ways that masculinity is shaped in the play. The conventional self-made man who wants loyalty and authority over his family is embodied by the patriarch, Hasmukh Mehta. "He is the autocratic head who demands unquestionable obedience from his family members" (Thakor, 2012). He feels that a son needs to live up to his father's standards and walk in his footsteps. Hasmukh constantly undermines Ajit, portraying him as weak and incapable of independence.

He tells him, "Now you can call Champak or whoever. I have received my call." "You fail. That's all. As usual" (Rita, 2000). These statements are not just casual insults but reveal deeper insecurities and the rigid expectations Hasmukh places on Ajit. As far as Hasmukh is concerned, he is the only one in the house with actual responsibilities. He implies that Ajit wastes time on pointless social connections while he, Hasmukh, takes care of crucial business affairs by disparaging Ajit's phone conversations by calling them "Champak or whoever" (Rita, 2000).

"I have received my call" (Rita, 2000), indicates that Hasmukh controls the phone's usage schedule. This upholds the conventional wisdom that the father is in charge of the household's finances and that his needs come first. This instance is a prime example of how Hasmukh

controls every element of his son's life, making sure that Ajit never becomes independent and always depends on him.

The second statement, **“You fail. That’s all. As usual”** (Rita, 2000), is particularly brutal. It illustrates Hasmukh’s deep disappointment in Ajit and his refusal to acknowledge any of his son’s potential. Ajit makes plans to modernize their company throughout the play, but Hasmukh won't listen. Assuming Ajit lacks the intelligence to make wise business decisions, Hasmukh flatly rejects new initiatives that Ajit suggests. The use of the word "as usual" implies that Hasmukh views Ajit's failure as a recurring trend rather than a singular error. Ajit's confidence is damaged by this unrelenting criticism, which strengthens the notion that he would never be able to meet his father's expectations. Hasmukh desires to maintain control over Ajit. Ajit will continue to rely on his father's leadership if he feels he is incapable of succeeding, meeting the patriarchal expectation that a son must blindly follow in his father's footsteps.

Hasmukh Mehta’s statement in *Where There’s a Will*—

**“I have every right. It’s my phone you are using in my house, and it’s my business secrets you are leaking to government officers”** (Rita, 2000).

It exposes the ingrained hegemonic and patriarchal masculinity that shapes his perspective. Three main aspects emerge from this statement: ownership and power, resource control, and skepticism in Ajit's abilities. According to Raewyn Connell's theory of masculinity, each of these elements represents the greater societal demands that are placed on males in patriarchal family structures. The patriarch has absolute authority and makes all significant decisions in traditional Indian families. This conventional role is personified by the main male character, Hasmukh Mehta. When Ajit shares his personal business concepts, Hasmukh expects total obedience from his son, Ajit, and feels that a father's authority should be absolute.

Power is presented by Hasmukh as an inalienable right. This remark supports the idea that dads make the final decisions in patriarchal households. In order to establish sole ownership, he uses the phrases "my house" and "my phone" rather than "our house" or "our phone." The male leader of the household is supposed to own and manage all household resources, which is a conventional definition of masculinity.

Hasmukh reinforces the notion that Ajit is not yet a "real man" in his father's view by implying that he is unable to handle business affairs discreetly. Because Hasmukh continuously questions Ajit's competency, he is a symbol of subordinate masculinity. Ajit finds it difficult to establish himself, in contrast to his father, who personifies hegemonic masculinity by seizing total control of the company. Hasmukh believes that Ajit's activities will cause the business to fail. In patriarchal households, where fathers feel they are the only ones who can lead, his mistrust implies that he does not consider Ajit to be a deserving heir.

Through Connell’s lens, Hasmukh’s behaviour is **not just about personal control but about maintaining the larger system of patriarchal masculinity**. "Hegemonic masculinity is always constructed in relation to various subordinated masculinities as well as in relation to women (Connell, 1995). His words are designed to **weaken Ajit’s confidence and prevent him from becoming a fully independent man**, ensuring that hegemonic masculinity continues to dominate the family structure.

## **2. The Dominant Patriarch: Hasmukh Mehta’s Model of Masculinity**

Through Hasmukh Mehta, the main character, the drama examines issues of authority, patriarchy, and the intricacies of familial ties. A strict and conventional representation of masculinity, Hasmukh embodies power, domination, and an authoritative presence in both life and death. His persona functions as a critique of the patriarchal ideals that uphold existing power structures. When examining Hasmukh Mehta's character in *Where There's a Will*, Raewyn Connell's idea of masculinity offers a helpful context. "Masculinity is not a fixed entity embedded in the body or personality traits of individuals. Masculinities are configurations of practice that are accomplished in social action and, therefore, can differ according to the gender relations in a particular social setting" (Connell, 1995). Hasmukh is the embodiment of hegemonic masculinity, which maintains patriarchal authority and domination over women and weaker males, according to Connell, who recognizes various types of masculinity. The inflexible gender standards that define masculinity through dominance, power, and wealth are reflected in his character.

"Hasmukh Mehta is a man who believes in patriarchal social conduct, and hence all his life, he has walked on the footprints his father and forefathers paved" (Wagh, 2021). He is the archetypal patriarch who feels he should have complete control over his family's lives. He expects total obedience from his wife Sonal, son Ajit, and daughter-in-law Preeti because he sees himself as the only provider and decision-maker. Traditional ideas of power, financial control, and emotional distance define his masculinity.

"Hasmukh intends to govern the fate of his family members even after his death through his will" (Kumar, 2017). Hasmukh refuses to let Ajit take control of his inheritance, **ensuring that his power continues beyond the grave.**

*"All his property, finances, shares—he has donated to the trust."*

*"Ajit has to attend office every day at nine a.m. and he can only leave at six p.m."* (Rita, 2000).

Hasmukh feels he has the authority to determine his family's lifestyle because he is the primary provider. He accuses Ajit of lacking ambition and claims that his son is incapable of succeeding without his leadership. Even in his will, Hasmukh makes an effort to rule his family from the hereafter and make sure they abide by his laws in order to inherit. As an extension of his patriarchal authority, Hasmukh's will requires Ajit to abide by his terms in order to receive the fortune. Connell's theory of institutionalized masculinity, in which men maintain patriarchal power through economic and legal means, is consistent with this.

Hasmukh rules by fear and discipline rather than showing love for his family. He wants Preeti to play the part of a submissive daughter-in-law, hardly listens to Sonal's viewpoints, and rejects Ajit's ambitions. His cold interactions serve to further the idea that being a man means suppressing one's emotions.

*SONAL:* "You are not the same man I married."

*HASMUKH:* "And you are still the same woman. That's the problem" (Rita, 2000).

**He refuses to engage emotionally, making it clear that he sees marriage as a transactional relationship rather than a partnership.** Hasmukh's worldview is deeply entrenched in patriarchal ideologies, where men are expected to be dominant, rational, and authoritative, while women and younger men must be submissive. "Why does a man marry? So that he can have a woman all to himself? No. There's more to it than that... Maybe he needs a faithful

companion? No. If that was it, all men would keep dogs” (Rita, 2000). This implies that marriage is about possession rather than collaboration, objectifying women. His extramarital encounter serves as more evidence of his conviction that women should be faithful while males have sexual freedom. Hasmukh's wife Sonal has lived her entire life under his dominance. He doesn't respect her beliefs or give her the freedom to be herself.

Hasmukh eventually fails to hold onto his power in spite of his best efforts to manage his family. Instead of bringing about compliance, his death highlights the shortcomings in his inflexible masculinity. Hasmukh continues to set rules even after he passes away, showing up as a ghost to see if his wishes are carried out. *SONAL*: “You think you are the king of this house, ruling over us even from the grave? Well, I’ve had enough” (Rita, 2000). The family, however, progressively rejects his influence, underscoring the boundaries of patriarchal authority. After his passing, Hasmukh's mistress Kiran and sonal discover their voices and begin to challenge the very systems he supported. The play makes the argument that oppressive and control-based rigid masculinity cannot last.

Hasmukh does not respect his daughter-in-law, assuming that she married Ajit **only for wealth**. “*That’s my daughter-in-law, Preeti. Pretty, charming, graceful and sly as a snake.*” “She has her eye on my money. Why else would she agree to marry a dead loss like my son?” (Rita, 2000) His immediate suspicion of Preeti’s intentions shows his belief that women must be controlled to prevent them from exploiting the family’s wealth. This aligns with hegemonic masculinity, which assumes that men must act as gatekeepers of financial resources. Hasmukh’s insulting attitude toward Ajit and Preeti shows his need to control wealth and power, even at the expense of his family.

Connell's theory of hegemonic masculinity "Hegemonic masculinity is not a fixed character type, always and everywhere the same. It is, rather, the masculinity that occupies the hegemonic position in a given pattern of gender relations, a position always contestable" (Connell, 1995), in which men assert control over their families, businesses, and income in order to preserve patriarchal authority, is exemplified by Hasmukh. His will continues to direct the family's actions even after his passing, demonstrating the enduring nature of patriarchal power institutions.

### **3. Marginalized Masculinity: Ajit’s Struggle with Identity**

The play exposes how conventional ideas of masculinity stifle alternate manifestations of manhood and uphold dominance, hence criticizing patriarchal systems. Because of his self-reflection, emotional sensitivity, and non-aggressive manner, Ajit represents marginalized masculinity. This stands in stark contrast to the play's major character, his authoritarian father-in-law Hasmukh Mehta. The way that various masculinities are devalued in a strict, patriarchal family environment is demonstrated by Ajit's battle for self-identity.

Ajit exhibits characteristics that are different from the traditional definition of masculinity that Hasmukh maintains. Whereas Ajit is thoughtful, quiet, and sensitive—qualities that are sometimes linked to weakness in a patriarchal framework—Hasmukh is domineering, forceful, and deeply invested in his own achievement and power. Ajit does not try to fit in with the restrictive expectations of the household or establish domination over his wife, Sonal, in contrast to Hasmukh, who associates masculinity with economic dominance and power. His

capacity to assess the toxic nature of Hasmukh's power shows how introspective he is. By refusing to engage in the same performative masculinity, Ajit challenges Hasmukh without resorting to overt aggression. *AJIT*: "You will never be happy. Not until all of us dance to your tune" (Rita, 2000). Ajit directly confronts Hasmukh's hypocrisy, showing that the father is just as inflexible as the son. A larger social problem—the marginalization, denigration, and perceived weakness of men who do not fit the mold of hegemonic masculinity is reflected in his internalized battle.

By exhibiting traits like emotional sensitivity, a desire for independence, and an unwillingness to engage in violent domination, Ajit questions the conventional notion of masculinity. He fights against his father's attempts to shape him into a copy of himself since he recognizes his uniqueness. In a critical exchange between Ajit and Hasmukh, the father-son dynamic highlights this tension.

**HASMUKH:** "Yes, I want you to be me! What's wrong with being me?"

**AJIT:** "And what becomes of me? The real me, I mean, if I am you, then where am I? (Rita, 2000)

This dialogue reflects Ajit's struggle to maintain his sense of self while being pressured into a traditional masculine role. He recognizes that his individuality is being erased by Hasmukh's insistence on molding him into a tough, dominant businessman.

Ajit, like the family's women, is positioned in a submissive role inside the home. Hasmukh continuously discredits him by claiming that he has the skills necessary to manage commercial and financial matters. The idea that masculinity in this home is associated with power and material success is furthered by the fact that Ajit, despite being a member of the family, is not granted any autonomy in the workplace. Ajit's manhood is nevertheless denigrated by Hasmukh's posthumous power over the family through his will. Hasmukh's view that Ajit lacks the necessary manly qualities to manage responsibility is reflected in the terms of the will. As a result, Ajit continues to be marginalized within the family and is subject to Hasmukh's control. At one point, Ajit sarcastically acknowledges his entrapment: "Everything is going according to your plans. You really have us cornered. You know I'm too fond of your money to give it all up and say to hell with you and your will" (Rita, 2000). This highlights the tragic irony of Ajit's situation—despite resisting his father's values, he is still bound by them, financially and emotionally. Even if Ajit challenges his father's authority, his defiance is met with further control and mockery. The stipulations of Hasmukh's will, which governs Ajit's personal and professional life until he turns forty-five, keep him bound by his father's influence even after his death. This is an example of how patriarchal masculinity continues to be oppressed over other masculine identities.

The hyper-masculine persona of Hasmukh is contrasted with Ajit's temperament. Hasmukh is the quintessential patriarchal man: brash, focused on his work, and emotionally aloof. He enforces strict systems of control over women, his wife and daughter-in-law and younger men, Ajit because he thinks that masculine authority is superior. The foundation of Hasmukh's toxic masculinity is the repression of emotions, and he anticipates that Ajit will follow suit. Ajit stands out in this strict framework because of his gentler, more reflective personality. He doesn't feel the need to demonstrate his masculinity via violence or financial gain, nor does he pursue dominance. Because of his nonconformity, he is a prime candidate for mockery, underscoring the ways patriarchal homes diminish other manifestations of masculinity.

In the play, Ajit's identity crisis emphasizes how males who don't fit the mold of hegemonic masculinity are marginalized. In sharp contrast to Hasmukh's dictatorial masculinity, his emotional sensitivity and introspection establish him as a subservient figure in the home. But his ultimate declaration of selfhood implies a criticism of patriarchal norms, promoting a more expansive and inclusive definition of masculinity—one that prioritizes emotional intelligence and individual autonomy over power and financial achievement. In the end, Dattani's depiction of Ajit emphasizes how important it is for diverse masculinities to be acknowledged rather than diminished. The play questions the strict gender standards that still influence how society views males through Ajit's character.

#### 4. Intergenerational Conflict and the Crisis of Masculine Identity

The generational conflict between Hasmukh Mehta and his son Ajit is examined in Mahesh Dattani's play *Where There's a Will* as a mirror of larger societal disputes over changing gender roles and masculinity. Ajit, his son, rebels against these strict expectations and represents the transition toward a more independent and emotionally aware masculinity, whereas Hasmukh, a patriarchal self-made businessman, embodies the old idea of masculinity—authoritarian, dominating, and emotionally distant.

Hasmukh is a **self-made industrialist** who believes in **absolute control over his family**, seeing himself as superior (Gunanidhi 2021). He represents a strict, authoritarian masculinity ideal that is based on patriarchal principles. According to him, a "real man" ought to be the family's sole provider and decision-maker. He also believes in authority and discipline. Traditional ideas of masculinity, which hold that wealth is a sign of respect and authority, have a significant impact on his outlook on life. His son Ajit is an example of a newer generation that defies these strict gender norms. Ajit defies his father's expectations of masculinity, especially the notion that he should mindlessly follow in his footsteps, in contrast to Hasmukh. He opposes the notion that a man's value is exclusively based on his level of professionalism and financial independence. His father's perspective is at odds with his desire for equality and independence in both his personal and professional lives.

Hasmukh is the epitome of an overbearing, overly masculine father figure and leader. According to him, a man needs to be strong, in charge, and in complete control of his home and business. AJIT: "I don't think he has ever listened to me in his entire life" (Rita, 2000). He frequently acts domineering, disparaging, and depriving his son of autonomy in his relationships with Ajit. Hasmukh views Ajit as incompetent, calling him a "nincompoop" and questioning his intelligence simply because Ajit does not follow his authoritarian leadership style. He constantly undermines Ajit, suggesting that he lacks business acumen and would lead the company into bankruptcy if given any control. Ajit wants to modernize the family business, but Hasmukh immediately rejects his ideas, seeing him as incompetent.

HASMUKH: "Do you blame me for not listening to him? If I paid any attention to even one of his crackpot schemes, I wouldn't be around to listen to anybody" (Rita, 2000).

Hasmukh doesn't accept Ajit's intelligence since he thinks his own strategies are the only ones that work. This is indicative of a traditional masculinity in which dominance, not teamwork, is the key to power. Their main disagreement stems from Hasmukh's perception that Ajit lacks the strength to be the "strong" man he expects him to be. As an unfit heir to his business empire,

Hasmukh frequently berates Ajit for lacking desire and independence. A more egalitarian and flexible view of gender roles has replaced strict, authoritarian masculinity in society, as this age divide demonstrates.

Hasmukh's battle to keep authority over his legacy and family after his passing is a reflection of his broader masculine identity dilemma. His compulsive drive to use his will to control the lives of everyone around him is a manifestation of his nervousness about losing power. His anxiety that the new generation is rejecting the conventional norms that formerly characterized masculinity is revealed by his paranoia about Ajit's alleged inadequacy as a man and a businessman. When Hasmukh's authority is questioned by both Ajit and the women in his life—his wife Sonal and his mistress Kiran—this problem becomes even more evident. In various ways, both women start to challenge and dismantle the patriarchal systems that Hasmukh maintains. Hasmukh's inflexible masculinity is further undermined by Kiran, who stands out as a strong, independent woman who negotiates the male-dominated environment on her own terms.

Though in different ways, the play shows how Hasmukh and Ajit both suffer from strict standards of masculinity. Hasmukh's personal experience of being subjugated by his father is the source of his preoccupation with control. He was never given the freedom to choose for himself; instead, he was always told what to do. Kiran, his mistress, exposes this by stating, "*Hasmukh didn't really want a mistress. He wanted a father. He saw in me a woman who would father him!*" (Rita, 2000) Despite his money and influence, he is only carrying on his father's legacy rather than living life on his own terms, which exposes his underlying insecurity. Hasmukh's incapacity to accept change or cede power is seen in his attempts to exert control over his family even after his death by using his will to dictate their behaviour.

Ajit, though initially passive, resists his father's ideology in small but meaningful ways. He *refuses to conform entirely to Hasmukh's rigid expectations, asserting- "I will never dance to your tune"* (Rita, 2000). This signifies his rejection of the traditional authoritarian model of masculinity. His frustration is evident when he says, "We are all living out a dead man's dream!" (Rita, 2000), showing his resistance to his father's attempt at posthumous control.

The evolving role of women in the play also highlights the crisis of traditional masculinity. Hasmukh's fear of losing control is exacerbated by the women in his life—Sonal, Preeti, and Kiran—who challenge patriarchal norms in different ways. Kiran, Hasmukh's mistress, emerges as a powerful figure that ultimately dismantles his authority. She states "Even his attempts at ruling over you after his death, through his will, are pathetic" (Rita, 2000). By exposing Hasmukh's dependence on patriarchal structures, she reveals the fragility of his masculine identity.

In the end, the play shows that Hasmukh's masculinity, which is based on control, domination, and emotional distance, is untenable. Although Hasmukh feels he has manipulated his family with his will, the last scene implies that his power is waning, making his "victory" meaningless. Even though he may not have fully overcome his father's influence, Ajit's little acts of defiance signal the start of a new paradigm around masculinity. The drama thus highlights the conflicts between tradition and progress, control and freedom, and acts as a microcosm of larger societal changes in gender roles and masculine identity.

## 5. Economic and Social Ramifications of Rigid Gender Norms

In *Where There's a Will*, Raewyn Connell's theory of masculinity—specifically, the idea of hegemonic masculinity—offers a helpful framework for examining the social and economic effects of strict gender norms. According to Connell's thesis, hegemonic masculinity—the dominant, idealized version of being a man—is frequently given preference over other masculinities while being marginalized or subordinated in patriarchal societies. Hasmukh Mehta represents hegemonic masculinity in Mahesh Dattani's play, which places a premium on power, financial dominance, and emotional distance. His son Ajit's career prospects and self-esteem are also impacted, in addition to his own social standing and general well-being.

Raewyn Connell contends that hegemonic masculinity maintains male supremacy in both private and public domains.

HASMUKH: “Forty-five years old and I am a success in capital letters. Twenty-three years old and he is on the road to failure, in bold capital letters!” (Rita, 2000) Hasmukh bases his identity on this ideal, holding that a “real man” needs to be prosperous, powerful, and in total control of his family and company. He views masculinity as synonymous with economic success—“Twenty three years old Ajit is a managing director of Hasmukh’s factory but he is not allowed to take a single decision” (Thakor, 2012). This demonstrates the connection between economic power and Hasmukh's hegemonic masculinity. His domination over others and financial control, rather than relationships or emotional health, determine his social standing. But this inflexible masculinity is also brittle; his identity is compromised when his wife opposes his control or when his son questions his authority. This supports Connell's contention that in order to preserve its supremacy, hegemonic masculinity needs to be continuously upheld and reinforced.

The relationships between Hasmukh and Ajit at work also exhibit hegemonic masculinity. Connell contends that men who adhere to prevailing ideas of masculinity—decisiveness, violence, and business savvy—are given preference in patriarchal organizations, while alternative methods are devalued. Because he believes Ajit is weak and unable to manage financial responsibility, Hasmukh doesn't trust his business ideas. Hasmukh dismisses Ajit’s ability to contribute to the family business. AJIT: “After all, I am the joint managing director” (Rita, 2000). HASMUKH: “Believe me, appointing him as the JMD was a big mistake” (Rita.R. 2000). Here, Hasmukh enforces a **hierarchical, authoritarian model of masculinity**, where power must remain concentrated in the hands of the dominant male figure. His refusal to consider new ideas from Ajit reflects a **fear of losing control**, a key concern in Connell’s discussion of hegemonic masculinity.

Ajit experiences the repressive expectations of his father as a subordinate masculinity. Connell contends that shame, self-doubt, and rebellion are common among men who do not conform to the ideals of hegemonic masculinity. Ajit struggles with self-worth because he is not given autonomy- AJIT: “If I am you, then where am I?” (Rita, 2000)

“Ajit’s statements are not only his rebel against dominating and controlling powers of patriarchal system but also an urge for existential identity of his own personality. He wants to see himself as a distinguished person that exists in this world. He wants his own individual existence of his personality” (Sharma, 2018). This statement reflects Ajit’s **identity crisis**. Because Hasmukh’s masculinity is defined by control, he does not allow Ajit to develop **his own form of masculinity**—instead, Ajit must either conform or resist, but he is never allowed to be himself.

Representing the concept that men must lead, protect, and rule women in their lives, Hasmukh Mehta is a classic example of patriarchal authority. Hasmukh's spirit remains big over the Mehta family even now, after his death. This ghostly appearance represents the tenacity of patriarchal power, even after the patriarch is no longer (Suganya, Arun, 2024).

The economic concerns brought forth by hegemonic masculinity are shown in Hasmukh's last attempt to maintain control even after his death. Instead of distributing riches freely, his will controls and limits his family's use of it. Hasmukh's will enforces strict rules on Ajit's work and finances- AJIT: "The trust will be dissolved when I turn forty-five! Then I can do what I want with the money, if I'm still capable of doing anything with it" (Rita, 2000). This is explained by Connell's theory as a component of the reproduction of hegemonic masculinity—Hasmukh's ambition to mould his son into a version of himself transcends his own existence. But by giving Kiran Jhaveri control over his trust, he unintentionally empowers a woman and challenges patriarchal inheritance, which runs counter to his own values.

The progressive decline of hegemonic masculinity and the emergence of independent female voices are dramatized in *Where There's a Will* through stage divides, character movement, and Hasmukh's ghost (Muthuraj & Kavidha 2020). As the patriarchy's designated heir, Ajit is reduced to a supporting role and is powerless to control his father's legacy or his wife's growing power.

Despite his wealth and social standing, Hasmukh's obsession with control causes him to become emotionally isolated and finally brings about his downfall. Ajit, on the other hand, is positioned as a subordinate masculinity and fights against his father's authority but is unable to establish his own identity. As the patriarchy's designated heir, Ajit is reduced to a supporting role and is powerless to control his father's legacy or his wife's growing power.

According to the play, strict adherence to stereotypically masculine norms not only hurts people but also causes instability in families and enterprises. In the end, Hasmukh's own contradictions weaken his authority; his need for control persists after death, but the woman he entrusts with his money, Kiran Jhaveri, challenges his patriarchal views. Through *Where There's a Will*, Dattani challenges the inflexibility of hegemonic masculinity and promotes a more adaptable, inclusive, and sensitive view of gender roles.

## REFERENCES

- Connell, R. W. (1995). *Masculinities*. University of California Press.
- Gunanidhi, P.N. (2021). Patriarchal influence and discrimination in Mahesh Dattani's *Where There's A Will*. *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies*, 17(2), 1205-1206.
- Kumar, T. (2017). A Critical Evaluation of the Politics of Patriarchy and Gender Role in Mahesh Dattani's Play, *Where There's a Will*. *An International Peer Reviewed-cum-Refereed Research Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*. 5, 53-57.
- Muthuraj, G.S. & N.Kavidha,N. (2020). Mahesh Dattani's *Where There's A Will*: A Study of Stage Craft. *Studies in Indian Place Names*, 40(3), 785-791.
- Rita, R. (2000). *Where There's a Will* in collected plays Mahesh Dattani. *Penguin Books*, 447-543.

Sharma, S. (2018). Patriarchy and traces of feminism in Mahesh Dattani's *Where There's a Will*: A holistic analysis. *An International, Peer Reviewed, Refereed, E- Journal in English*, (3), 1-6.

Suganya1, A. & Arun,C. (2024). The Silent Struggles: Patriarchy and Female Empowerment in Dattani's *Where There's a Will*. *Library Progress International*, 44 (3), 2198-2202.

Thakor, D. (2012). Social Issues in *Where There's a Will*. *Galaxy: International Multidisciplinary Research Journal*. 1(1), 1-8

Wagh, G. C. (2021). Reflections of Decolonization in Mahesh Dattani's '*Where there's Will*': A critical review. *Journal of Interdisciplinary Cycle Research*, 13(11), 815-824.