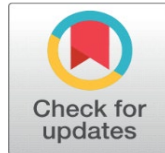
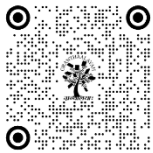


MAHESH DATTANI'S WHERE THERE'S A WILL: A STUDY OF REALISTIC DRAMA

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ABSTRACT

Drama must be comprehended in light of all the small elements a dramatist displays on stage because it is a visual medium. The dialogue, including monologues and asides, contributes to the overall meaning. Symbols and signs give meaning depth. On a stage, the dramatist brings all of these to life. It is the stage itself that alters the entire comprehension of the drama. In their own right, the stage and stagecraft are forms of art. There are various types of stages that are used in the theatre industry. The most crucial ones are the promenade stage, hippodromes, round stage, open air stage, and proscenium stage. Every stage has its own meaning and staging grammar. The dramatist arranges his actions according to the stage that is in front of him. The type of stage a dramatist chooses to utilise greatly influences the actions in the play. As a result, the stage is essential to theatre and its significance.

Keywords: Drama, Dramatist, Meaning

1. INTRODUCTION

Greek architecture introduced the Western world to the concept of a stage. The stage was referred to as the orchestra orcheater, which means dancer. Early in its inception, drama is intended to be a dance festival dedicated to the Greek god Dionysus. Later, dialogue was added by Thespis, a priest in the Dionysus temple, and over time, appropriate drama gradually developed. The Greek stage served as a model for the English stage as they developed their own. With a few modifications, they produced and performed plays on stage according to Greek dramaturgy. Everywhere they established colonies around the world, this format was adopted. In order to construct their own stage, the colonies bravely innovated by fusing the western stage with their own local stage. To keep up with the times, the English stage itself underwent numerous modifications. These stage innovations opened the door for creative staging and provided a wide diversity of dramatic stages.

One of the most well-known modern Indian dramatists is Maresh Dattani. In 1998, he became the first Indian English dramatist to win the Sahitya Academy Award. His dramas are renowned for their daring use of stagecraft and theme. His plays' radical topic is complemented by the intricate construction of his stages.

Dattani's *Where There's a Will* is a comedic work centred on a Gujarati family. It is his first drama, staged on 1988. Dattani uses only five characters and two invisible characters to bring out filial human relationships. Hasmukh Mehta is the head of the family. His wife is Soal. He has a son Ajith and Preeti is his daughter in law. Kiran Jhaveri is his secretary cum mistress. Two characters never appear in the play but have a say on the action. They are Minal, Sonal's sister and Maharaj, the cook. The play has gotten positive reviews from critics. "Where There's a Will does both delight and teach" and "is a comedy with slight farcical touches," according to Manzoor. "The play centres on broken interpersonal relationships within the range of familial relationships," Tharini notes. In their comment to the staging, the New York-based performing company Naatak notes that the play is "a play in which traditional family values meet the seven deadly sins." The "play is a comic caricature of patriarchal authority and the politics played by the protagonist," according to Bhumika Agrawal. According to Sanjeeb Kalita, who examines the play from a postmodern perspective, it "explores socio-cultural dynamics of postmodern society".

The play's stage is noteworthy. The stage is set up according to the standard format for performing spaces. Three categories of theatre are listed in the *Natyaśāstra*. They come in three sizes: small (*avara*), medium (*madhya*), and giant (*jgestha*). According to Bharatha Muni's book, the theater's structure is separated into three sections: the acting area, the rest room, and the seating area. The drama's action takes place entirely in the acting space. In his book, Bharatha Muni also discusses various facets of play, including speech, costume, music, song, action, emotions, and so on. They all work together to make the play a success.

There are three divisions or spaces in Dattani's *Where There Is a Will*. The following is the stage direction:

There are three areas: Hasmukh and Sonal Mehta's bedroom, their son Ajit's and his wife Preeti's obscenely fashionable bedroom, and the elegant dining-cum-living room

The majority of the time, the "fancy dining –cum-living room" serves as the acting space.

Play. Following their action, the characters retire to their bed (tiring) room. In *Antony and Cleopatra*, the bed (tiring) room functions more like the secret area in the Elizabethan theatre that served as Cleopatra's tomb. Through speech or monologues, Dattani employs that area to show his characters' introspective thoughts.

The three geographical spaces in the stage represent the three spatial spaces: the actual acting location represents the world as a whole, where all types of action occur; the other two bedrooms simulate the inner spaces of every human being, where everyone reflects on what transpired in the main stage/world; one is the authoritative/conventional space, and the other is the liberal/modern space of thought. The characters finish their actions and enter the room, and the movement indicates the character's shift in attitude.

The convention is represented by Hasmukh. He retires to his chamber and expresses his largely traditional views on life. The acting area is where Hasmukh "comes down." The only purpose of the bed (green) room is to recount Hasmukh's past and his beliefs on his brother and son. Hasmukh goes into further detail regarding his upbringing and his level of obedience in this speech.

The second bed (green) room, which is Ajit and Preeti's, represents the human capacity for radical and modern thought. Only Preeti and Ajit are involved in the activities in this room. Preeti is increasingly outspoken about her desire to become self-sufficient. She challenges him, saying, "I refuse to follow your orders." I am not your mistress; I am your wife! It is not good.

I've had enough of your father's mistress controlling my life. I won't allow you to do it as well!

In every way, the activity in this area is also contemporary. In the cupboard, Ajit inadvertently finds Preeti's vitamin pills behind the sarees. "Why haven't you taken them?" he asks. Ajit's invasion of Preeti's personal space offends her, and she chastises him, saying, "How dare you go through my things?"

This is also where the plan to kill Hasmukh passively takes shape. Preeti substitutes her vitamin tablets for Hasmukh's blood pressure medication. Because he used vitamin pills rather than blood pressure medication, Hasmukh died of a heart attack. At the conclusion of the play, which takes place in Preeti's bedroom Kiran learns of her plan.

Additionally, Kiran and her motivation for being Hasmukh's mistress are depicted in this place. Due to her poor personal life, Kiran was content to be Hasmukh's mistress in exchange for money. That is demonstrated by her chats with Sonal and Preeti at various locations.

(To Sonal)

Kiran: Mrs. Mehta, no woman has an affair with an older man for a small amount of trust and respect, especially if he is married. The money was the key reason.

Kiran: In agreement. Preeti and I are not that different.

Kiran: Don't consider me superior or her inferior. It simply depends on the situation. One way, I got my money. She is attempting to pass someone else (CP 506).

She and Preeti are identical, as evidenced by their conversation in the bed (green) room. Preeti was willing to kill Hasmukh by swapping out the medications in order to get the money. In contrast, Kiran is prepared to comply with Hasmukh's request and act in a way that will allow him to keep his money. Preeti didn't wait while Kiran did.

(To Preeti)

Kiran: Well. Were you really so impatient? Would you not be able to wait a few more years? A...

Kiran: It was correct of your mother-in-law. I made a comparison with you. We both want money. Don't diminish yourself by comparing yourself to her, she said. You're low. I'm not sure how to handle you

As a result, the two areas have come to refer to the two ways of thinking—the traditional and the modern. As Kiran remarks, "Well, this is a nice house," there are further rooms in addition to the dramatist's performances, suggesting additional lines of thought. Far superior to the corporate flat. Many rooms. The globe is represented by the home, and everyone's mental areas are represented by the phrase "plenty of rooms."

The primary acting location in the drama is the living room. Here, every character's traits combine to make them appear normal. They don't love or hate other people.

Until his death, Hasmukh maintains his position as the major character, and even after his passing, he is still a topic of discussion. The way his father acts bothers Ajit. Despite his "protests," he gives in. Sonal presents herself as a loyal wife who makes salads and parth as whether or not anyone enjoys them. Preeti's daughter-in-law is obedient. Initially seen as an outsider, Kiran eventually integrates into the family. By using Hasmukh as the conventional drama's Sutradhara, Dattani gradually integrates this space in the audience's consciousness. In a drama, the Sutradhar interprets and connects different actions. His function is more akin to that of the Western drama's chorus.

After that, he frequently addresses the audience in his dialogues. He speaks to the crowd seven times. His speeches expose ingrained conventional beliefs. With his impactful comments about every character and action, they also help to influence the audience's thoughts. In big, capital characters, Ajit is "Twenty-three years old, he is on the road to failure!" According to .Preeti is "preety, charming, graceful, and sly as a snake." Sonal means "my spouse." The mother of my son. Are you aware of Sonal's meaning? No? "Gold." I used to make jokes about her being as good as gold when we were first married. However, we had just gotten married at the time. She was a good-for-nothing, as I quickly discovered "A shrewd, hard-headed marketing executive," Kiran describes herself. She was the only person in my office with a mind as sharp as mine. The fact that he is "45 years old and I am a success in capital letters" is one of his observations about every character. , enables the viewer to view each character from his point of view. When Hasmukh was alive, he controlled the family's events and forced the audience to accept them as the standard.

After Hasmukh dies, his spirit assumes his role. The audience is the target of every conversation. With its clever comments, the ghost manipulates the audience's thoughts. The job of the ghost is to give the actual stage's events more colour. When Kiran joins Mehta's family, the ghost is delighted. When the mission is effectively completed, one feels elated. The ghost exclaims,

"Well done! I was hoping to hear that! (Dances). She has come to her senses! She has come to her senses! (To the audience) I can now go to heaven and you can go home

It is only after that the true drama begins. Sonal and Kiran can communicate with each other. Kiran completely destroys the character of Hasmukh,

He was completely dependent on me. He believed that he made the decisions. However, I was. He wants his life to be managed by me, just as his dad had. (Hold off). Hasmukh had no true desire for a mistress. He desired a father. He recognised a potential father in a woman.

"Everything you said is true," Sonal continues. If you had told Hasmukh, he would have to concur as well. As Hasmukh understands,

Is it true? What Ajit has been to me, have I only been to my father? Have all of my accomplishments been a result of my father's wishes for me? Have I been the ghost of my father? Where was I, if that's the case? What happened to the real me? (Coming to) My God! I have Aju's voice! Oh no!

Hasmukh's ghost departs the stage in sorrow.

No. I doubt I'll be able to get into this house. It's no longer mine. The tamarind tree will be my permanent resting place. (At the table, laughter). They are no longer my family. I regret ever interfering in their lives. Together, they appear to be very content, with Kiran occupying my seat. If only I had been more. (Exits) I wish I had survived

The interpreter's departure is indicated by the ghost's exits. Now that Hasmukh and his ghost are gone, the audience can come to their own conclusions.

Dattani has done a good job of using the three spaces in the play to carry out the action in three different audience mental zones. Because of Hasmukh's constant disruptions, the audience is unable to identify with any of the characters. Additionally, they are not permitted to develop their own theories regarding the plot of the drama. The drama's action is dictated by Hasmukh's observations of the play's characters and activity. In contrast, the Ghost's observations aid in the comprehension of Hasmukh's goals.

2. CONCLUSION

Dattani effectively highlights the play's protest element by fusing the traditional spatial arrangements with the contemporary context. The stage is divided into three areas in this play, which is the standard spatial design. Three spaces are discussed in the *Natyasastra*. The first is the stage for acting. The exhausting chamber is the other. The audience area comes in third. The living room serves as a metaphor for the primary acting stages in this play.

The two bedrooms serve as a resting place. The disassociation effect created by the main character controls the third area, which is the audience's mental space. The dramatist's use of complex stage directions also adheres to the contemporary environment. The drama gains significance from the meta-dramatic mood. The protest, a post-colonial element, is successfully brought against the customary ideas by means of this convulsion.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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