

## Theatre a Mirror of Today Interview with the Author Mahesh Dattani

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Theatre and drama has always been a part of the human life. Since age long it has been a part and parcel of the human life. Writers have been Projecting life vividly. One such writer is Mahesh Dattani, Sahitta Academy award winner for his famous play **The final Solution**. Dattani picks life from the Very point where theatre and life becomes inseparable. He has become the voice of every individual who is hushed down due to the existing norm of our so called society. Dattani gives a firm and a reasonable voice to every feeble existence in the surroundings. He has given reason to people, to think upon their prevalent conditions. His writing compels the audience to ponder and Question oneself.

**AR:** How come that a student from the discipline of social science took a divergent step and choose playwriting as profession?

**MD:** I guess artists and writers come from different fields. Very few people study to become playwrights. In fact, I think a certain amount of exposure to other subjects and professions makes a writer much rich in experience. This richness is bound to show in the writer's work.

**AR:** What is your perception regarding the difference between the craft of drama (as literature) and the theater (as live stage performance)?

**MD:** They say poetry is enemy of drama. I think they are two completely different mediums.

One is a literary one where the facility (felicity) with the language is of utmost importance in storytelling. Drama is a special – temporal medium, which will only find life in time and space. The writer needs to take that account into account.

**AD :** Why did you prefer to write in the genre drama? Why not in the narrative fiction? The themes of your play could have easily suited the form of novel

**MD:** I guess I am more interested in drama than literature. I started off with acting and directing. Only later did I discover my play writing skills. In some ways the medium choose the artist rather than artist choosing the medium.

**AR:** How does Mahesh Dattani visualizes himself different from other writers?

**MD:** I don't see myself as different at all from other people. The different are provided by Nature and so paradoxically we are no different from one another. Writing is like a

signature. It is unique to who we are. That is the nature of writing. In that sense I am just as unique and special a writing like everybody else.

**AR:** What did you have in mind when you wrote Ek Alag Mausam? Could the finished product tally with the authorial intention.

**MD:** Ek Alag Mausam was a commissioned work by an NGO called Actionaid. In that sense the message was clear. Hate the disease called AIDS, not the people with the disease. The filmmaker and I tried our best to make it work as an entertaining film in spite of its heavy message. Whether we succeeded or not we don't know.

**AR:** What do you think about Aparna from Ek Alag Mausam, was justification done to her character?

**MD:** I think Nandita Das did a fine job. But my favorite was Renuka Shahane's cameo as the sex- worker Rita.

**AR:** In your play Bravely fought the queen which character is your favorite and way?

**MD:** I really don't have any favorite character in that play. I hate them all! No they are all deeply unhappy people who find some comfort in their fantasies.

**AR:** Why is that in most of your plays women suffer more than men except in Dance like a Man?

To what extent male chauvinism is responsible for the women suffering in Indian context.

**MD:** I think men have a lot do with the sufferings of women in my plays. It is a male dominated society we live in. So in the Indian context you cannot delve into the lives of women without the context of male dominance.

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**AR:** What do you think about Amrital Parekh in *Dance like a man*? Was he really doing injustice to the feeling of his son? What according to you was it a patriarchal ego or patriarchal affection that wanted to be satisfied somehow?

**MD:** I think it was out of particular affection that Amrital operated from. Like most forms affection, his tended to be oppressive as well.

**AR:** What difference do you perceive (Patriarchal) in the attitude of the Indian audience towards taboo themes like homosexuality, atriarchal dominance, gay marriage, eunuch etc? Do you notice any difference in the hypocritical attitude of people before and now?

**MD:** There is some sensitivity towards alternative sexuality and gender in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Maybe more people are talking about it and pretending these things do not exist. But we are far from an egalitarians society where differences are celebrated.

**AR:** How do you feel to be called a postcolonial writer?

**MD:** I do not like the term post colonial at all. It is only used for writers from former colonies, never on writers from former colonizers. If the term has to be used at all, it should also be used on English, Spanish and French writers too.

**AR:** Which of your play is more close to your heart and why?

**MD:** They are all close to my heart.

**AR:** In the play *Final Solution* at one point again and again the chorus play, "Don't break our pride". What pride is it?

**MD :** The pride of every human being or society to live in dignity and honors. Also the pride of one's religious and cultural identity.

**AR:** In the play *Final solution*, it seems that Gandhi surname is symbolical to Mahatma Gandhi.

What does the writer think about it?

**MD:** In an oblique way am saying that Ramnik is a pacifist like Mahatma Gandhi, but he too fails to understand the bitterness and hatred.

**AR:** I felt that Chander in the play, Tara is trying to run away from incidences and people in his life from the very beginning. Why is it so?

**MD:** Because he knows that in some way is he responsible for the loss of his sister.

**AR:** It is said a play on the radio, a final and a screenplay are quite different from each other.

What are your views as you have worked efficiently in each one of them?

**MD:** Yes, they are different languages, with the same root, that is drama. Radio works with soundscapes, stage uses time and space imaginatively whereas cinema is essentially a visual medium.

**AR:** Which among them do you feel truly presents Mahesh Dattani?

**MD:** I think the stage, since it is what primarily drew me to the art of drama.

**AR:** What exactly was the difference in directing the play on a *Muggy Night* in Mumbai as a stage play and as a film? Which one do you feel could present clearly what Mahesh

Dattani wanted to convey to his audience?

**MD:** I think the stage play worked successfully in creating the claustrophobic atmosphere the characters find themselves in the film opened it up so that feeling was lost in some ways.

**AR:** How was *Seven Steps around the Fire*, a radio play different from a screen play *EK Alag*

*Mausam*?

**MD:** They are different mediums. As explained earlier, seven steps around the fire used the sound of mantras, fire, dialogues etc. to bring out the world of the hijras. *EK Alag Mausam* tried to show the world of HIV positive people in their hospital *jeevan jyoti*.

**AR:** Do you find Vijay Tendulkar,s play *Sakharam Binder* was written before *Bravely Fought the Queen*.

**MD:** Not that I can think of apart from the gender conflict. In any case, *Shakharam Binder* was written before *Bravely Fought the Queen*.