

famous

The Brain 'Child'

Be it's Amole Gupte or Amole Frog, they both share the love for children. Disha Gadhiya meets the director as he shares his passion for children & cinema

"I enjoy spending time with Amole Sir. I look forward to meeting him every week!" says Amir. "Amole Sir is real fun to be with! We have a great time together!" says Salman. If these quotes were actually from the Bollywood super-stars, tabloids wouldn't take long to make their front page headlines. But incidentally, these are experiences shared by 8-year old students from Chimbai village municipal school run by Aseema, an NGO for educating street children in Bandra where director Amole Gupte spends time every month.

Amole Gupte has been a regular at this school for over a year now and children always seem to look forward to his visits. Most of them may not know his success story but they do know that the time they spend together is fabulous. As for Amole, this school gives him the perfect chance to meet children and get to know each one of them intimately. "I don't come here to take workshops. I share a relationship with these children" says Amole as he firmly denies the concept of conducting workshops with kids. "I honestly wonder why they call it workshops because quite frankly, you can't make children 'work' in a 'shop'! That's why I simply call it spending time and having fun!" he grins.

This love for children has also been reflected in Amole's films. "Given a chance, I would have children playing the leading role in all my films!" he candidly admits. According to him, children become what their parents make of them and the efforts they take to raise them. This was pretty much the issue Amole raised in his landmark film, Taare Zameen Par which unlike the popular perception, was focussed on 'parenting' and not a particular disorder. "Taare Zameen Par was never a story about a dyslexic



child! But it spoke about parenting. It was a story of a family and how they handled their child and his learning difference; Dyslexia being the mere bridge for the purpose," he said. The film was also made out of his desire for audiences to understand how some children cannot conform to classroom education. "Take 'art' for instance. Art is candid. You cannot train someone to be an artist. Look at our educational system. It trains a student in art and then stops it after 7th grade just because they feel it's not necessary thereafter. Where does the aspiration for that student go?" he questions.

Taare Zameen Par was a runaway success but it went through a mammoth research of six years conducted by his wife Deepa Bhatia, who also edited the film. Although this isn't the only movie Amole has conceived with a child protagonist. During the making of Taare Zameen Par, he also designed the blue-print of his forthcoming films, one of which titled India Item, will soon hit the production floor. "India Item is a film that has not one but five child protagonists in the lead!" he confirms. Moreover, this time Amole has made an attempt to bring out the societal issue of economic inequality. "India Item is a film about a child from a small Indian village and his journey in the big city and much more." "Children are more transparent and working with them involves no apprehensions. A child artist might deliver a scene after several instructions or repeated takes but that would be much more worthwhile than a trained NSD actor who would perhaps perform a scene at one go, efficiently, and without providing a surprise that a child non-actor can!" he confesses as he expresses that working with children is an absolute pleasure.

Although Amole says that a 'star' always helps reach a purposeful package in the garb of mainstream cinema to audiences far and wide, for him, casting the star does not take priority.

"The most important ingredient in a film is the 'content' which is the sole intention of the exercise. Once the content is clear, I think about the tools (production) with which I would perform that exercise. Tools are what create the feel and the look for the content, after which, follows the cast!" he says.

There are several aspects of cinema and film-making that he strongly disagrees with. Being someone who has spent 27 years of life understanding cinema and the various facets of it, he refuses to use any other word for 'cinema'. "The words 'movie' 'flick' are slang and I consider it disrespectful to cinema- the 20th century art-form!"

Also, he doesn't believe that a film belongs to a writer or a director. "I hate the concept of announcing to the world - 'A film by-so-and-so'! A film is not a product made by one single person but a combined effort of over 30-40 people. So how can you give credit to just one person?" he questions. Amole also maintains that he welcomes feedback from his actors. "Sure, if it adds to the vision of the film, why not?" he says.

The success of Taare Zameen Par may prove overwhelming for this director as he prepares for his upcoming film, but Amole doesn't let it get to him. "Of course there is immense pressure but I am not taking it!" he smiles. The film is still in the pre-production stage and the cast has not yet been finalised. Although he denied having signed Salman Khan for India Item, rumours have it that he is considering the actor for an important character in the film. There is also another effort with children and their sparkle named 'Stanley Ka Dabba'...wonder what's cooking there...?

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