

## Films make you a star, theatre a king: Lillete Dubey

Although she is very much into Bollywood, with plans of directing a movie next year, actress Lillete Dubey's first love remains theatre. According to her, cinema can make you a star but in theatre you are the king.

With a good 35 years of experience in the world of theatre and having done some memorable roles in Hindi cinema, like 'Monsoon Wedding', 'Zubeida', 'Gadar-Ek Prem Katha' and 'Kal Ho Naa Ho', Dubey should know what she is saying.

'Theatre is my first love. No matter how tight my schedule may be, for theatre I always find time. Cinema on the other hand is a medium that I have discovered recently, about 10 years back,' Dubey, who has mostly done English and Hindi plays, told IANS.

'I have dabbled in both the mediums and from my experience I can say that cinema doesn't give you the range that theatre can,' Dubey said.

Although she is quick to add that Bollywood is changing, she holds on to her statement that theatre gives an actor more interesting challenges.

'In a play, you can act like a man or a woman, a nine-year-old or a 90-year-old. You can do anything, and people will believe you. You can create a look, an ambience and your audience will believe you. That's why you feel like a king on stage.

'In cinema the challenges are there...talking to the elbow of the spot boy so that the actor emotes looking at the right direction is no mean feat! But, then, you are bound by your looks, by your director's imagination. Cinema is controlled by commerce. That's why you can be a star, but not a king,' Dubey said, gesticulating wildly with her hands.

Dubey's first film was Shyam Benegal's 'Zubeida', for which she has won much appreciation. She now has four to five films in hand of which one is being directed by Ravi Chopra. But in her own words she never wanted 'to be a superstar'.

'It was a new field and I wanted to experiment in it. That's all. Bollywood is a male dominated industry. And unlike theatre, it's impersonal,' she said.

An ex-student of Lady Shri Ram College of the capital, Dubey's journey on the road of theatre started with the play 'Dilli ki Sair'.

'Tumhari Amrita' is one play for which I will always be remembered. Vijay Tendulkar's 'Kanyadaan' is another one of those memorable roles.

'I first read the script of 'Kanyadaan' 26 years back. It was an English translation of the original Marathi script. I fell in love with the script and decided to edit it a little and direct it. At the Old World Theatre Festival in the India Habitat Centre this December, it will be the 25th show anniversary of the play,' she smiled.

In fact, she was here in connection with the theatre festival.

The mother of a 26-year-old, Dubey wears a number of hats besides acting in plays and movies.

'Direction is another passion, although in the heart of hearts I will always be an actor. I am directing my first Bollywood film next year. Also, the direction of an English play is on the cards,' she said.

Coming back to theatre scene in India, Dubey said unlike in the West, here theatre is simply not in people's blood.

'In Maharashtra, though, you can't say that. There even if a person has Rs. 50 in his pocket, he will go to see a play rather than watch a film. That's why the legacy of Marathi theatre is so rich.

'But, otherwise, we are simply having an overdose of Bollywood. The other day my daughter Neha who is in London said that she went to see the matinee show of 'Macbeth' the play and it was houseful! Can you imagine that here? They have theatre in their blood, something which we don't,' Dubey said.

Stating an example, she said that as opposed to a movie actor, when she introduces herself as a theatre artist in England, people look at her with a great deal of respect.

'Theatre has to be patronised. The more you patronise it, the more audience you get, the more endorsements flow in and there...it's a flourishing world. It's absolutely wrong to say that there is a dearth of talent here.

'I am happy to see that more and more young people are once again taking up theatre,' she said.

*Azera Rahman* ( © IANS / India eNews)