

*The following quotes by Manmohan Desai come from my interviews with the producer-director in Bombay, 1984, and are to be found in the book *Enchantment of the Mind: Manmohan Desai's Films*, published by Roli Books in 2006.*

Concerning his beginnings in cinema with the 1960 film *Chhalia*, starring Raj Kapoor and Nutan:

So my brother (Subhash Desai) said, 'I'll give you a chance as a director. Who do you want in your film?' I said, 'I'm a great fan of Raj Kapoor and Nutan.' ...I was only 22. Raj Kapoor said, 'Okay, he's your brother. Fine, but can he direct? I'll see him for a couple of days, and if not, Mr. Desai, we'll change the director.'

On his wife Jeevan:

I couldn't have asked for a better wife. I am what I am because of her.

Complaining of his back trouble:

My only love is cricket. . . My whole frustration is that I can't play cricket in the evening!!

His ambition:

I would like to go as the champion box office maker of all times... . It's the people, *people* whose love is ultimately going to matter.

One of his masters:

I consider Billy Wilder my god for scripting. I would like to touch his feet.

Explaining the style of dialogue his films were noted for:

If I use roadside dialogue, it is because it is easy to follow.

His ideal film hero:

Before *Amar Akbar Anthony* my concept of a hero was almost entirely modelled on Raj Kapoor . . . Now I have got Amitabh in my system and cannot think of anyone other than him.

My heroes are like me. All the impossible feats I've dreamed of, they perform for me on the screen.

The inner child:

I didn't like to study. Even now, you know, some people say they regret they didn't study more. I don't regret a bit. I wish I hadn't ever gone to school . . . I used to go to school only for the sake of playing cricket . .

The day children stop coming to my films I will give up and go away.

Philosophy of filmmaking:

My films are an escape hatch. . . . My constant efforts are to take people into a world of fantasy where there is no worry, no serious thinking, just fun and entertainment all the way. . . The person who comes to the movies should be happy to see whatever he's seeing.

My plots are not realistic. My characters are realistic. You see, if I make the stories real, they're not interested in seeing them. But put those characters on a trip to fantasy!

In the West people may read meanings into my films which I hadn't consciously intended. . . . Finally what counts is pleasing not the critics but the public.

Concerning religion:

When I say Billy Wilder is my god for filming and scripting, so I say Karna is my hero who I acknowledge as a master, a man who is charitable.

I'm more for the goddesses than the gods. I feel a woman is a supreme creation. It is she who conceives, she who bears the child after nine months, she who takes care through hardship. She brings into the world a new life.

If I had stood on a platform preaching Hindu-Muslim *bhai-bhai*, Hindu-Christian *bhai-bhai* (brother-brother), they would have said, 'We don't want to hear that bullshit from you!' So I said, best give it in a very palatable homeopathic pill.

Shabana Azmi, speaking in 1984 of her work on Manmohan Desai's 1977 film Parvarish and the 1977 Amar Akbar Anthony, said:

He jumps up and down, yells, claps his hands. He infuses the actors with a sense of fun. I had a ball working with him.