



### Mahesh Dattani

- ✚ Indian playwright, director and actor.
- ✚ Born on 7 August 1958 in Bangalore where his parents moved to from Gujarath.
- ✚ He went to Baldwin High School where medium of language was strictly English and colloquial language was frowned at.
- ✚ But as part of connecting with their roots he with his family watched Gujarathi and Marati play performances in Banglur and was awe struck with the aura of the stage and the illusory effect of theatre.
- ✚ Dattani explains that he had to unlearn a lot learnt at school to have the practical knowledge of theatre that has made him so successful
- ✚ During his college days in the early 1980s he got involved with Banglore Little Theatre and participated in workshops, acting and directing plays.
- ✚ Started his own theatre group, 'Playpen' in Bangalore in 1984.
- ✚ He looked for Indian plays in English rather than commonly performed western Canonical plays.
- ✚ He also directed plays of other dramatists for Playpen, ranging from classical Greek to contemporary works.
- ✚ His first full length play *Where there's a Will* in 1988 was performed in The Deccan Herald Theatre Festival.
- ✚ He took to screenwriting for cinema, radio and television from 1993 onwards
- ✚ As a writer he continued to grow and renew his art both in terms of form and theme.
- ✚ He dealt with a wide range of themes in his plays from sexuality to religious conflicts and child abuse.
  - *Dance Like a Man* and *Tara*- deals with sexuality and gender issues
  - *Bravely Fought the Queen*- Shame of the upper middle class joint family
  - *Final Solutions*- Gripping and sensitive play about the Hindu-Muslim conflict
  - *Thirty Days in September*- incest and child abuse
- ✚ A writer who chose English as medium Dattani always faced questions of acceptance in the Indian Theatre scenario.
- ✚ But his plays fuse the Indian and the western in a special way as to create a “political and social statement of astonishing force”
- ✚ He called himself as “the change” rather than the break in the development of Indian Dramaturgy for he too evolved out of the same roots but dared to stop an unnecessary harkening to the past.
- ✚ He is the first playwright in English to be awarded the Sahitya Akademi Award.