

Ideology in motion

Vivek Agnihotri On Storytelling, Freedom And Film **INTERVIEW**

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Meet Vivek Agnihotri — two-time national-award winning director, screenwriter, and producer. He's best known for hard-hitting and awakening films, such as 'The Kashmir Files' and 'The Tashkent Files'. His refusals to shy away from difficult themes and daring responsibilities makes him one of the most talked-about filmmakers in modern Bollywood. Here's an exclusive interview...

The heart of stories

I refuse to be confined by the word filmmaker. Every breath of my life is storytelling. Gravity existed long before Newton, the apple simply gave it a story. That's how I see my journey — not as a career in cinema, but as a lifelong conversation with meaning. I call myself a storyteller because even when my medium changes, my intent does not. Leaving the comfort of commercial success wasn't a rebellion but a moment of clarity. Why tell predictable stories? I wanted to tell stories with my own signature, in my own voice.

Soul that seeks freedom

Creative freedom is never about permission. It is about conviction. Either you feel free or you don't. Society imposes many

restrictions, yet as storytellers, we must find a way to express our truth within those boundaries. I see cinema as a dialogue, not a lecture. If you are not convinced of your story, how can you convince others? The criticism I receive allows me to reflect on how I can make a bigger impact on society. Sometimes audiences are not ready for a film that is ahead of its time, but even that resistance adds value. Every story worth telling disturbs before it heals. I have fought for this creative freedom by refusing to follow conventional norms of filmmaking.

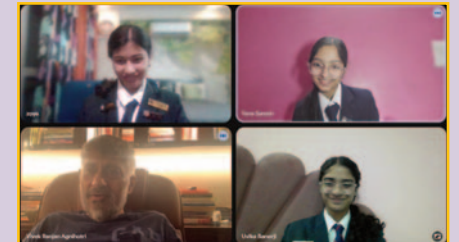
'Mind'ful of truth

All art is political. It is an ideology, a moral lens through which society is shaped. With 'The Kashmir Files' and 'The Bengal Files', I did not seek controversy, but closure. People say

my films provoke. But I think provocation can lead to healing. The real failure of cinema lies in its fear of discomfort. If art cannot make people question, think, or reflect, then what purpose does it serve? I raise questions through cinema, but the answers lie with society. Awareness is the most powerful form of change.

Spine of the script

Every film tests my endurance, but some have tested my humanity. Buddha in a Traffic Jam explored brainwashing, 'The Tashkent Files' questioned the mysterious death of a Prime Minister, but, 'The Kashmir Files' and 'The Ben-



Vivek Agnihotri with GT reporters



Vivek Agnihotri, national award-winning filmmaker

gal Files' were the battles of my soul. My take on India's identity cuts deep. Seventy-eight years after the partition, the scars remain. Our communities, food, clothing - everything divides us. I recall a line from 'The Bengal Files': "Anyone can tell which thread belongs to a Hindu or a Muslim, but no one can tell which belongs to an Indian." That is the story I want to tell.

The wide-angle vision

When asked what I would have been if not a filmmaker, I often laugh. Honestly, I have no idea. But I do know that today, my vision is mentorship. I plan to start a 'School of Creativity' — a space where young people can be guided. My dream is for India to become the capital of ideas, a hub for imagination and innovation. Everyone is born creative. And, you must discover your creativity to see the world differently. The Buddha is inside all of us. In the end, it is all about persistence. Value the gifts life has given you. Understand that you can exist and that you can imagine.

Book Review

Ink, intrigue, and dilemma

Synopsis: 'Mightier Than The Sword' is the fifth novel in Jeffrey Archer's Clifton Chronicles - a seven-part saga spanning the 20th century that explores love, loss, betrayal and ambition through the lives of two intertwined families, the Cliftons and the Barringtons. The novel unfolds spectacularly in the 1960s when an IRA bomb explodes on the MV Buckingham's maiden voyage. Emma Clifton, the chairperson of Barrington Shipping - the owner of the attacked ship - must now manage the repercussions while simultaneously dealing with an old foe who is scheming to discredit her. In the meantime, her husband Harry Clifton, the recently elected leader of

Book: Mightier Than The Sword
Author: Jeffrey Archer
Published on: February 24, 2015
Genre: Historical fiction, Family saga, Political drama

English PEN, goes to considerable lengths to free a Russian author imprisoned for disclosing Stalin's atrocities. Other characters' plotlines, too, take dramatic turns: Giles Barrington's political career faces dangerous upheavals; Sebastian Clifton battles love and business issues. Threats and alliances shift as the families work through issues that

could destroy them on both private and public levels.

Why is it worth reading: Archer moves so smoothly between real-life political tension and family drama that the story feels big in scale yet very personal. It's not just the historical setting that draws you in, but the strong characters and their honest emotions. The book keeps you hooked right up to the final cliffhanger, leaving you eager to know what happens next.

Iconic quote: "If you take care of the pennies, the pounds will take care of themselves."

Rating: 4/5

Review by: Chehak Sharma
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