

Filmmaker Deepa Mehta replies to the Times of India: 'I am determined to make the film'

13 April 2000

Indian-born filmmaker Deepa Mehta has been the target of a campaign led by Hindu extremists and right-wing forces in India over her attempts to make her latest film, Water . Her film set was destroyed in January and Mehta has been vilified as an "anti-Hindu," a plagiarist and an opportunist. We reprint below a letter she wrote in reply to an article that appeared in the Times of India , April 6.

The article states that Mehta "seems to have given up all hope of shooting 'Water' anywhere in India this year." As we reported in an article on the World Socialist Web Site April 10 (Hindu extremist campaign forces director Deepa Mehta to suspend filming in India), Mehta has every intention of resuming her filming later in the year. The Times' article also observes, "Mehta is no stranger to controversy in India," as if she were responsible for the right-wing attacks mounted against her.

Dear Sirs,

Re: "Mehta loses hope of shooting 'Water' this year"
by Ajit Jain, April 6
[<http://www.timesofindia.com/060400/06boll1.htm>]

I object to the title and tone of this article. I have never lost hope of filming 'Water' this year. Irresponsible headlines and the misinterpretation of my words contribute to the Hindutva Brigade's commitment to discredit "Water" and me. I am determined to make the film—why would the press want to misrepresent this?

"Fire" was trashed by the Shiv Sainiks after playing in movie halls for three weeks without one incident and now "Fire" is called a "controversial" film. The irony is that the "controversy" surrounding "Water" was generated by the Hindutva Brigade. Of course, when the press picked up the story, the label: "controversial filmmaker" stuck. Let's keep in mind that "Water" has not even been made yet!

And why does nobody talk about "Earth", "Sam & Me" or "Camilla"?

As for the alleged plagiarism: I am not a plagiarizer, nor do I believe I have violated anyone's copyright. If people want to hitch their bandwagon to "Water" to generate senseless publicity, let them do so, but not at the cost of my credibility. I went to court because the court is the only competent authority to judge whether the allegation holds or not. Furthermore, if my script is based on Mr. Gangopadhyay's book, why isn't the Hindutva Brigade protesting outside his door?

Perhaps Ms. Tavleen Singh's article in India Today (17 April 00) best describes the harm that is caused by sensationalist reportage: <http://www.india-today.com/itoday/20000417/singh.html>

Yours sincerely,

Deepa Mehta

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