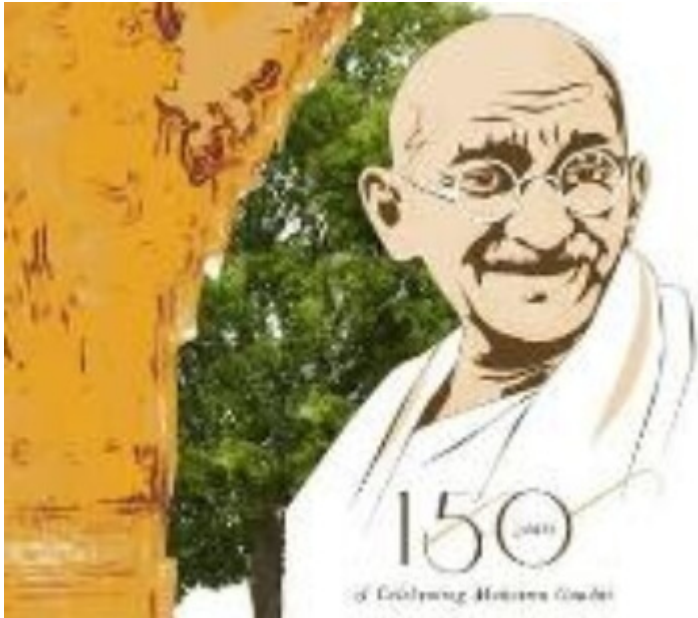


# Celebrating 150 years of the Mahatma | Manohar Khushalani



A review of the festival at IIC \_ Gandhi Ki Dilli

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Sanatan Sangeet Sanskriti's, Words in the Garden, curated by Ashok Vajpeyi, is an annual celebration of Literature, Arts and Ideas, of Delhi, this time as a tribute to Gandhi, it was also capsuled as Bapu ki Dilli.

The event thus opened with a film directed by Shyam Benegal, The Making of

the Mahatma, featuring Rajit Kapoor as Gandhi and Pallavi Joshi as Kasturba.at IIC

The film is based upon the book, The Apprenticeship of a Mahatma, by Fatima

Meer it relates to his 21 years in South Africa where he evolved and fine tuned

his Satyagraha Philosophy. For those who have not seen the 1996 film, it

reveals a different Gandhi and his attempt to come to terms with his

headstrong idealism, which sometimes set him on a path of confrontation even with his wife. Pallavi, affectionately called, Kastur, by Gandhi etches out a strong personality for Kasturba unlike the common perception of her being a pliable person

On the same day we saw an unusual theatre exercise. Stay Yet a While, was a play reading directed by M.K. Raina, inspired from an unusual and rare collection of letters exchanged by Mahatma Gandhi and Rabindranath Tagore, along with some essays by them, curated by Sabyasachi Bhattacharya. The production retained the flavour of the text by keeping it simple, the content was powerful enough to sustain the performance handled deftly by seasoned actors; Avijit Dutt as Tagore and Oroon Das as Gandhi. Preeti Agarwal, the debutant, was the narrator. Raina's style of Direction is very original, he chooses performers for their ability to think and analyse and not for their histrionics. Also without imitating the body language of the protagonists, they were able to bring out their larger than life personalities. The result was a didactic presentation exploring the ideas of two philosophical giants.

Ras Chakra's Har Qatra Toofan, directed by Vinod Kumar, was yet another play reading in the series about Gandhi which. The idea was to demystify the

legend, through the eyes of women of his time. Thus the reading was made by women actors from letters and essays by Sarojini Naidu, Mahadevi Verma, Ismat Chughtai, Taj Sahiba Lahauri, Anne Mary Peterson, Ellen Horup and Ima Tarlo. The inspiration for the collection came from the historian Ram Chandra Guha's path breaking writings, considered by critics to be the last word on the subject; Gandhi before India and Gandhi: Years that Changed the World, 1914-48

Besides, the festival was also replete with discussions on topics and ideas ranging from Sustainable Living, Sparrows to Gandhi's favourite Bhajans and even his nutritional philosophy expressed through a lunch curated by Pushpesh Pant, with unfamiliar cuisine, like Bajre ki Khichri, Methi ke Theple and many such minimalistic gourmet items

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