

Tied in tradition

In *Yugpurush*, Mahatma Gandhi comes face to face with his philosopher, guide and mentor Shrimad Rajchandra



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Mahatma Gandhi's principles of ahimsa were a paradigm change in the battle for independence. While his values and philosophies made him a mentor to many, Gandhi himself had a mentor in Shrimad Rajchandra, who he met for the first time in Mumbai, upon his return from England as a barrister in 1891. He even wrote a chapter on Rajchandra titled Raychandbhai in his autobiography *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*. It is this relationship that *Yugpurush*, a 120-minute-long English drama that will be staged in the city, sheds light upon. "The play kindles the profound movement towards universal brotherhood and societal upliftment," says Atmarpiti Maulikiji, trustee, Shrimad Rajchandra Mission, Dharampur and core team member of the *Yugpurush* team.

C Krishniah Chetty Foundation, which is bringing this play to Bengaluru – to commemorate 60 years of service of their trustee and

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chairman CV Hayagriv, also marks the 150th birth celebrations of Shrimad Rajchandra.

The bond between Rajchandra and Gandhi initiated a new chapter, not only in their own lives or in the history of India but in the cultural, political and spiritual history of the entire world. *Yugpurush*, directed by Rajesh Joshi will take you back in time and history to experience a new facet of Gandhi's celebrated life. "It's the untold story of how Gandhi attained greatness. The play comes with powerful messages and inspiration," says Maulikiji.

The research process has been exhaustive, Maulikiji says, especially the interactions between Gandhi and Shrimad Rajchandra. "Gandhi spoke about Rajchandra on various

platforms," he says pointing out to Gandhi's speech at Ahmedabad in 1921 where he had said: "I have often declared that I have learnt, and learnt much, from the lives of many persons. But it is from Kavishri (Shrimadji's) life that I have learnt the most. It was from His life that I understood the way of compassion." Or even in *Mahatma Gandhi – Some Recollections of Raychandbhai* – an article written by Gandhi in Yerwada Central Jail, Pune: "We are all worldly people whereas Shrimad was not of this world. We will have to take many births whereas for Shrimad perhaps one birth is sufficient. We will perhaps be running away from liberation whereas Shrimad was advancing towards

liberation at a fast pace."

Rajchandra's inner equipoise, knowledge of the scriptures and enlightening wisdom left a deep impression on Gandhi, who soon proclaimed Shrimadji as his spiritual mentor. Their relationship grew over the two years that Gandhi spent in Mumbai. Upon moving to South Africa, Gandhi corresponded with Rajchandra through letters. Rajchandra's adherence to the principles of satya, ahimsa and dharma crystallised as fundamental tenets of Gandhi, forming the cornerstone of India's freedom movement and resulting in India's Independence.

The Gujarati and Hindi version premiered in Mumbai in 2016, the Kannada in 2017 at the Vidhana

Soudha, and the Marathi version in Mumbai was attended by chief minister Devendra Fadnavis. This is their first-ever English performance. *Yugpurush* has had a diverse audience – the Indian Armed Forces, industry professionals, film and theatre artists, social organisations, government officials, corporates, students and NGOs. "We hope the play inspires audiences worldwide to walk the path of love and ahimsa. And age is no bar to this. We've had teary eye audience members watching the journey and transformation of Gandhi from young Mohandas to Mahatma," he says.

Maulikiji hopes the audience takes away certain values from *Yugpurush* – expanding one's capacity to love and give selflessly, respecting diversity, supporting truth, fostering trust and building lasting communities. "It brings to the forefront a powerful experience of looking within, upholding truth and fearlessness, as well as transforming character and consciousness. It revives an inspiring spiritual legacy and the cultural ethos of our nation that lies mostly forgotten, today. The legacies of Shrimadji and Gandhiji continue to offer new paradigms to global peace and human progress," Maulikiji says.

The play will be staged in Kannada at 2pm and in English at 6pm on September 1 at Chowdiah Memorial Hall. Tickets on bookmyshow.com

