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Bringing Gandhi's inspiration to the stage

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BENGALURU: Conceptualised by Shrimad Rajchandra Mission Dharampur and penned by a Gujarati playwright Uttam Gada, a play titled Yugpurush: Mahatma Na Mahatma premieres today in the city. The play is a celebration of Shrimad Rajchandra's 150th birth anniversary. While the world knows

who Mahatma Gandhi is, little do they know about the inspiration behind the Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi evolution as the 'Mahatma'.

The man behind Gandhi's spiritual drive was Shrimad Rajchandra, a Jain poet and a philosopher from Gujarat.

"Mahatma Gandhi met Shrimadji for the first time in Mumbai when he had just returned from England as a barrister in 1891. When Gandhi moved to South Africa, it is said that Gandhi considered converting to Christianity or Islam. He was advised by Shrimadji to first know his own religion in depth and then take the decision. They had exchanged more than 200 letters," said Hemanshu Desai, member of the Shrimad Rajchandra Mission Bengaluru centre.

"The more I consider his life and his writings, the more I consider him to be the best Indian of his times," Gandhi wrote to HSL Polak, the author of Mahatma Gandhi, in April 26, 1909 talking about Shrimad Rajchandra.

The 120-minutes play starts with a flashback as Gandhi is on his bed reminiscing his life. "The play covers the lesser known connections of Gandhiji and Shrimadji. The teachings that Gandhiji imbibed from Shrimadji on satya and ahimsa were applied in the freedom struggle," said Atmarpit Maulik, secretary of Shrimad Rajchandra Mission Dharampur.

The play, written in August last year, was first staged on November 14, 2016 to mark Shrimad Rajchandra's 150th birth anniversary in Mumbai. In a matter of six weeks, 57 shows were performed. The team then began their South India tour with 30 days to cover 21 cities and 35 shows.

Fifteen actors play 57 characters and the same cast performs in Hindi and Gujarati. But to reach more masses, arrangements for the play to be staged in vernacular, all over India, is under process. "The cast for Kannada has already been selected," said Atmarpit Maulik, who is also heading the play.

“The play is free of cost and only based on invitation. It is going regional to reach every town and village in Karnataka,” said Hemanshu, who is the assistant of the Mission in the city.

Attempt is being made for an English cast as well since the UK tour is in April and USA tour in July, says Atmarpit Maulik.

Speaking on behalf of the playwright and the director, Rajesh Joshi, Atmarpit Maulik says that the play was a new subject even for the pros. “Most of the plays these days are comedy or fillers, but this one is different”.

The play will be staged at Ambedkar Bhavan, Vasanth Nagar from today till January 16 at 7.30 pm. Timings and venues may differ each day. For further information, visit www.yugpurush.org.