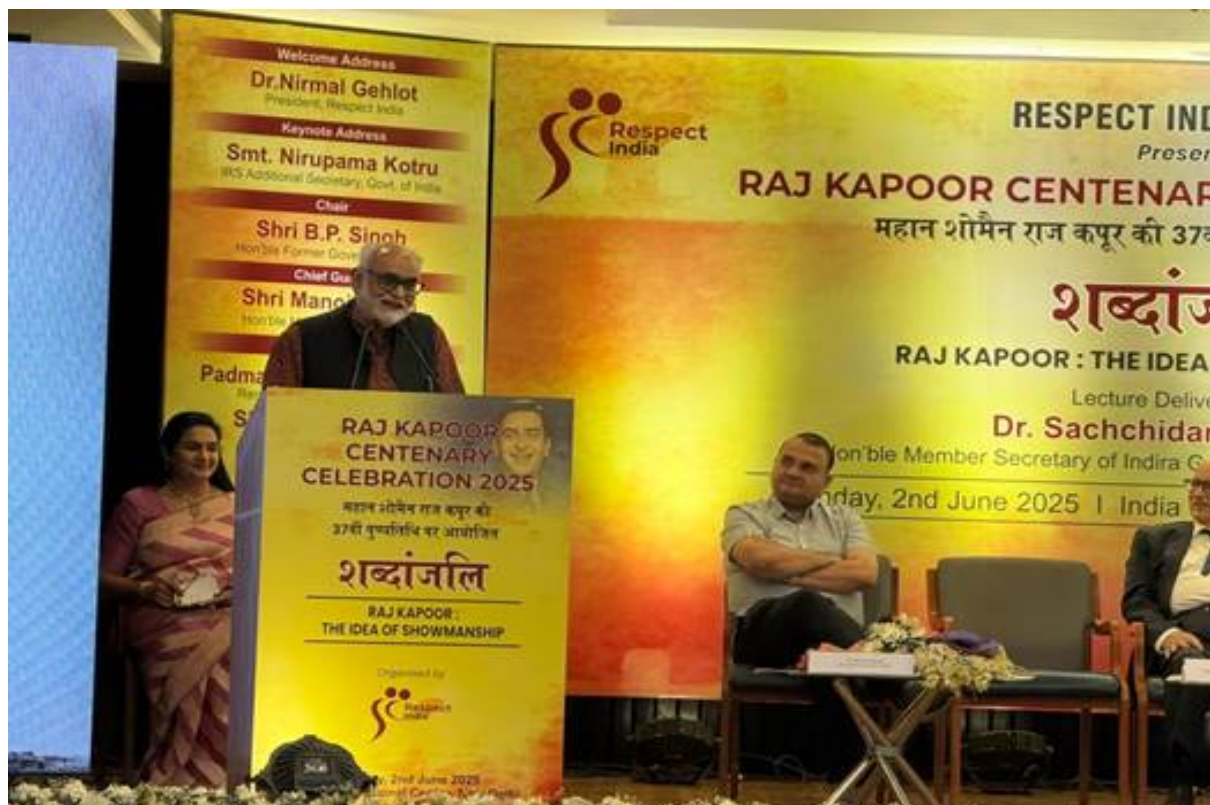


Raj Kapoor at 100: More Than a Showman, the Mirror of a Civilization

‘Shabdanjali: Raj Kapoor – The Idea of Showmanship under the Centenary Celebration 2025

Posted On: 02 JUN 2025 9:25PM by PIB Delhi

“Raj Kapoor ignited a passion in the young generation, turning films like Bobby and Mera Naam Joker into cherished obsessions. If you haven’t sneaked into a theatre or ‘borrowed’ a few paisas for a ticket, you haven’t truly lived the magic of cinema. Raj Kapoor didn’t just make movies; he inspired sweet rebellions, and we wear those memories with pride,” remarked Dr. Sachchidanand Joshi, Member Secretary, IGNCA, setting the tone for an emotionally resonant and intellectually rich evening at the Raj Kapoor Centenary Celebration 2025. Organised by Respect India, Delhi, the event-titled ‘Shabdanjali: Raj Kapoor – The Idea of Showmanship’; marked the formal launch of a yearlong national tribute to one of India’s most iconic cinematic storytellers.



Held at the India International Centre, New Delhi, the evening was chaired by Shri B.P. Singh, Former Governor of Sikkim, and graced by Shri Manoj Tiwari, Member of Parliament, as Chief Guest. Guests of Honour included Padma Shri Dr. Yash Gulati, renowned orthopaedic surgeon, and veteran actor Shri Mukesh Tyagi. The keynote address was delivered by Smt. Nirupama Kotru, IRS and Additional Secretary, Ministry of Culture, Government of India, while the evening commenced with a warm welcome by Dr. Nirmal Gehlot, President of Respect India.



More than a master entertainer, Raj Kapoor was, as Dr. Joshi observed, “a moral mirror to a young and evolving India.” His films were not just visual spectacles but profound cultural texts that engaged with the emotional and ethical concerns of a newly independent nation. As India emerged from the shadows of colonial rule, Kapoor offered a cinematic vocabulary for a people in search of themselves. Dr. Joshi emphasised, “When India got independence, Kapoor didn’t wait for the film industry to catch up. In just three years, he gave us ‘Aag’, ‘Barsaat’ and ‘Awaara’- works of staggering emotional depth, when the cinematic language was still being formed.” His cinema blurred the lines between entertainment and enlightenment, shaping a nation’s collective psyche.

In her keynote, Smt. Nirupama Kotru reflected on the deep social resonance of Kapoor’s films. “It was his genius that he made such deeply reflective films even in his early days as an assistant. Films like ‘Boot Polish’, ‘Jagte Raho’ and ‘Baawre’ showcased his compassion for the forgotten and the marginalised,” she noted. Kapoor’s storytelling power extended far beyond cinema halls. “Such was the impact of his narratives,” she recounted, “that dacoits in India began surrendering in the 1970s, moved by the redemptive journeys portrayed in his films.” Recalling a personal anecdote, she said, “An Indian doctor once operated on a patient in Africa. Upon learning that the doctor was from India, the patient lit up and exclaimed, ‘Raj Kapoor’s India!’ That’s how deeply embedded he was in the world’s imagination.”

Presiding over the evening, Shri B.P. Singh praised Kapoor’s rare ability to channel moral depth through popular cinema, describing him as someone who gave ethical direction through art. Shri Manoj Tiwari described him as “the cinematic conscience of a generation,” noting that Kapoor’s legacy lies in his persistent exploration of love, dignity, and social justice. Dr. Yash Gulati and Shri Mukesh Tyagi paid warm personal tributes, underlining the enduring humanism of Kapoor’s cinema. In his welcome address, Dr. Nirmal Gehlot stated, “This centenary is a national moment of gratitude for an artist who gave India a soul on screen.”

The Raj Kapoor Centenary Celebration will continue throughout 2025, with lectures, retrospectives, cultural programmes, and exhibitions planned across India and internationally. Respect India aims to reintroduce Raj Kapoor to newer generations-not just as a legendary filmmaker, but as a humane visionary who spoke to the moral conscience of a civilisation. As Dr. Joshi poignantly concluded, “Raj Kapoor was not just a filmmaker. He was India’s emotional autobiography-written on celluloid.”

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(Release ID: 2133436)