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Sohaila Kapur's forthcoming docu-play captures the history of the city's middle class and its distinguished facets between 1930 and 1951. The director spoke to *Karan Bhardwaj*

Ever since it was declared as the National Capital, Delhi has witnessed many political and social changes. The era just before the Independence was quite fascinating. The British rule was outgoing, freedom fighters were gearing up for new political roles and there was a rise of middle class. Amid all these exciting affairs, the city was also hosting some lavish parties and evenings full of glamour. These events which took place during 1930-1951 will be captured in a play *Glittering Delhi*, directed by Sohaila

Kapur. Starring Sunit Tandon, Alexander James Holmes, Vani Vyas and Anuja Thirani, it will be staged on September 7 and 8 at the India Habitat Centre, September 12 at the Delhi Gymkhana Club and September 14 at the Epicentre, Gurgaon.

The idea is to celebrate Delhi Gymkhana Club's centenary year and city's social life. The docu-play is adapted from Nayantara Pothan's book *Glittering Decades: New Delhi in Love & War*. "While on one hand there was a refugee influx, severe shortages and a thriving black market, on the other there was endless socialising with cocktail parties and balls at the Imperial Delhi Gymkhana Club, with its strictly enforced etiquette and foxtrot diplomacy. Added to that were the social hierarchies and carefully construed politics, which gave the Capital the identity we are familiar with today," says Kapur.

The play will be in a form of a monologue by four people who will be narrating letters. "These characters, two Indian and two British, had written these letters to a lady in England. Through these letters, they will be sharing their experiences of the city life and what all was happening at that time. They are private opinions," the director informs.

The play will begin on a celebratory note since in those days, the British thought they would stay here forever and were actually partying hard. "In 30s, Rashtrapati Bhavan, Dominion columns were being unveiled. Delhi was celebrating. However, game changed in next few years. World War II shook the British Empire completely. Had the war not happened, British would have stayed here for more years," says Kapur.

There was a moment when Governor General was reprimanded for partying too much. “British had adapted *Nawabi* life. The message sent to the England was that the troops were battling too hard against fighters and all odds, so they need to relax and chill. But the administration in England got very angry with this culture,” tells the director, who started her career as a journalist. Kapur insists that her play is not a regular entertainment show and deals with a serious subject which people should know. “It’s a serious piece of history. People must listen. It has little nuggets that Delhi doesn’t know about,” she says.

Kapur, an eminent figure in theatre, says arranging finance for serious plays has become quite a challenge in the city. “I think people are stressed out and they want to watch light stuff. When you go to corporate sector for finances, they would want some famous face,” she says. But she is glad that young people who are entering theatre are experimenting a lot. “In the last two years, I have come across many original works,” she says.