

# Prosecutor, Politician And Poet

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Talking about politicians, some of whom have been prosecuted by his office, including the former speaker of the New York state Assembly Sheldon Silver, Bharara said that based on wire-tapped conversations which were made possible with permission from judges, he noticed that a lot of people in power and with money are not able to resist the temptation to violate the law.

"One thing I can say about some politicians, who have been charged, is that at some point these people who take the oath

to serve the public, feel they are not making as much money ... Some people think like, 'a lot of the folks are getting rich, when do I get my chance to do that!'" Bharara observed.

Suketu Mehta asked Bharara if he planned to write a book given his access to so much interesting information. "The problem with writing a book is about saying things about people who are still alive!" Bharara said in a light vein.

During the first two days of the Lit Fest, numerous authors of Indian origin presented their works or discussed genres and

trends in the global world of Indian literary fiction and non-fiction, as well as in publishing and art in 19 sessions. The scope and breadth of the discussions is evident from the subjects tackled in the sessions - conversations with authors including Duke University Professor Sumathi Ramaswamy's book, "Husain's Raj: Visions of Empire and Nation; a discussion on Anglo-Indian literature led by theologian and clergyman Reginald Shires; Neelima Dalmia Adhar's book, "The Secret Diary of Kasturba Gandhi"; India's former Permanent Representative to the

United Nations Hardeep Singh Puri's book, "Calling the Shots"; a session on "Young Adult Voyages - Spiritual and Historical" with Ram Sivasankaran and Rohit Gaur; prominent Indian journalist Barkha Dutt's book, "The Unquiet Land: Stories from India's Faultlines" and several sessions on Indian politics and the post-9/11 world in the U.S.; "Understanding Mythology," a discussion with author and mythologist Devdutt Pattanaik; and a discussion on "Demystifying the digital universe: making literary work more accessible, led by Sree

Sreenivasan, founder of the South Asian Journalists Association and currently New York City's Chief Digital Officer.

On Oct. 9, a special session on poetry was held featuring Phinder Dulai, an Indo-Canadian poet from Surrey, British Columbia; African-American poet Neall Hall whose works have been translated into several Indian languages; architect, poet, and calligrapher H. Masud Taj; as well as New York's own Meena Alexander, the Distinguished Professor of English at the Graduate Center, Hunter College, City University of New York.



Above, Shashi Tharoor autographs his book at the book-signing. Photo right, author Suketu Mehta, left, with Aroon Shivdasani, president and executive director of IAAC, Tharoor and Somini Sengupta, at the conclusion of the festival.



PETER FERREIRA

## Depicting Kasturba Gandhi's Imagined Secret Life

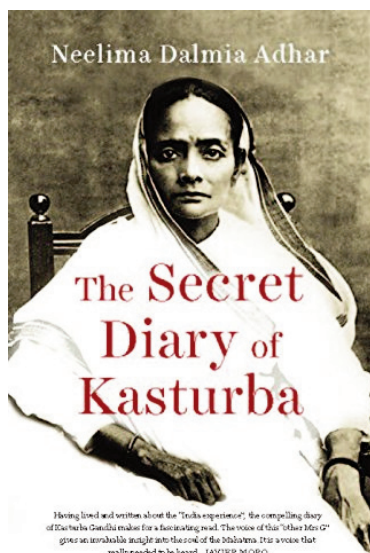
BY ELA DUTT

Her publishers say author Neelima Dalmia Adhar's new book, *The Secret Diary of Kasturba*, lays bare what it was like to be Mahatma Gandhi's wife, "in a gripping tale of unconditional love, passion, sex, ecstasy and the ultimate liberation that every woman seeks."

The child bride who married the boy next door, found in Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, "a sexually-driven, self-righteous, and overbearing husband."

Released Oct. 1, on the eve of Gandhi's birthday, the book is a psychologists attempt to look into the mind and heart of a woman and give voice to someone the world thought was voiceless despite her strong will, and her commitment to her husband, her children and her country-in-the-making.

"People watching" is her passion, Dalmia Adhar told *Desi Talk* during her visit to New York to



promote her book. As a lifelong student and professor of psychology, she said, she is "able to get into the soul, and get into that space, live inside it, and breath and speak like that person," she explained.

Best known for her 2003 expose, *Father Dearest: The Life*



and Times of R.K. Dalmia, that earned her the title of a daredevil family chronicler who exposed some fiercely-guarded secrets, Dalmia Adhar has now ventured into a fictionalized account of the mind of Kasturba, a space she said she is utterly familiar with.

In a "freaky" way, she says, in living with her own mother, she had an intimate view of Kasturba's life. "My father was close to Gandhi, our cultures are similar, and we belong to the same sub-religious sect of

Vaishnavism," she said. "When I started reading about Gandhi, I saw chilling similarities between him and my father and my mother's life paralleled Kasturba's."

She could well have titled her latest book, "Mother Dearest" she says, as each phase of Kasturba's life was relatable – the devoted wife, the aspiring passionate freedom fighter, a very suppressed wife, a very controlling husband, a very tormented mother. "Because my father did exactly what Gandhi did to his wife and children," Dalmia-Adhar said.

Unlike the docile figure of Kasturba cut in the epic film "Gandhi" directed by Richard Attenborough, "Kasturba was fiery and passionate, a fierce woman. She lashed out against her husband. It was never a silent acceptance," of Gandhi's directives, the author said.

"My Kasturba is the quintessential Indian woman – the Aadi Shakti," the author says, adding, "She is the omniscient mother. A woman is built with so much

power inside, one who was never created and will never be destroyed."

In *Kasturba*, the author says, she has portrayed a woman "dealing with the ordinary-ness of an extraordinary, larger than life, man." A woman to whom, she says, a free India owes a debt of gratitude.

"In a small way, I have redeemed my debt of gratitude," Dalmia Adhar says. "Gandhi's struggle was not half as trying and challenging as Kasturba's life as his wife," she contends. "I feel proud that I have resurrected Kasturba," who spent sixty-two years of her life, juggling the roles of a devoted wife, a satyagrahi and sacrificing mother, eclipsed by the shadow cast by near-Godly figure of her husband.

Educated in a convent school and a reputed college in Delhi, Dalmia Adhar has a Master's in Psychology with a specialisation in "Personality." She lives in Delhi with her husband, children and two grandchildren.