

Headed to Dhaka

Real-life couple Subodh Maskara and Nandita Das' first play together, which was staged in the city this weekend, will also be taken to Bangladesh soon

Garima Sharma

It's the story of a lawyer couple fighting a case against each other, and real-life couple Subodh Maskara and Nandita Das, co-collaborators on the play, say that it borrows from their life. Called *Between The Lines*, the English play, the first creative project from their production house, marks the debut of Nandita as a writer-director and Subodh as a producer and actor. In a chat with BT, they talk about working together and how work on the play had started as a romantic idea of doing something creative together.

So, when did you first think of working together?

Nandita: Subodh always had a desire to explore something creative and he wanted to start with theatre. We also wanted to do a film and I am sure he'll be a great film producer as well. So, we thought of setting up a small company, which will do quality work without compromises and yet make it viable. Our son was small and I was the chairperson of the Children's

Film Society, India, but I wasn't doing anything creatively stimulating. So, I said, 'Why don't we do a play?' and I chanced upon this script that was offered to me long back as an actor. I started working on it, but realised I didn't have enough

Subodh and Nandita during a rehearsal



discipline to work on it alone and that I needed a collaborator.

Subodh: The acting part came in a bit later. Initially, it was just a thought. In January, I did some workshops in acting and a director's workshop and then Nandita said, 'Why don't you act? and let's see where it goes'. It was a very organic process. It started with a very romantic idea that both of us will do this play together and we'll bring our son, and with our small crew, we will travel together. It would be simple. It is anything but simple.

Is it beneficial to work with someone you know so well work?

S: I keep telling her that this is a casting couch in reality. The director is sleeping with the producer, the actor is sleeping with the actor and the co-actors are sleeping together!

How important is the commercial viability of the play for you?

S: Having Nandita in the play helps. I am getting into theatre to make it much more viable and not a struggling art as it is today. And that includes taking it to as many places as possible.

N: We want to break even, but that is not our motivation. We're doing this to make it viable, and eventually sustainable, otherwise there is no point. That's why we are travelling with it. There's a lot riding on us. In November, I am speaking in Dhaka at the Hay Festival and they heard we are doing a play and they asked us to bring it there.