

## Onstage chemistry

# 'Play'fully together

DEEPAI DHINGRA

THE maid brings in yet another bouquet of flowers at their Worli residence and Nandita Das tells **CS** that flowers have been pouring in ever since her play — which she co-wrote (along with Divya Jagdale), directed and acted in — premiered in the city. But the biggest high for her is that her husband Subodh Maskara made his acting debut in this play too and the chemistry was for all to see! Nandita laughs, "All our friends were like, 'you were fine but he was fantastic!'" The husband-wife duo spoke about their stage experience:

### Act one

**Nandita:** I did street theatre long time back but the motivation wasn't to become an actor. I did four years of that and then did my masters in social work. I did do two professional plays but I've not really come from a theatre background and this is not my return to theatre. I have done different things at different times.

**Subodh:** I must have been seven or eight. I would come home from school and see my uncle rehearsing for plays. I would watch him and was completely fascinated. I would remember all his dialogues, and invariably he would make me the prompter in his plays. I would sit backstage and prompt him. I always had stage fright so I never ventured beyond that. Although in one of his plays, I did play a young Gandhi, where I stood and delivered one line!

### Acting two-gether

**Subodh:** I come with no experience and no training. It was a clean slate and Nandita had to write from A to R.

**Nandita:** What's that?

**Subodh:** A-C-T-O-R! (laughs) Initially, I was very uncomfortable with my body, and speech. I don't know what she did but she made me more comfortable as we went along. I would sometimes go over the top, but she taught me that acting is about not acting. There were genuine moments when I felt I can't do it but I enjoyed the journey.

**Nandita:** If the seeds of acting had not been there in him, there would have been no point. Because it was the kind of play it was, at some level, the kind of chemistry we have, the conversations, the laughter, the seriousness, the irony, the wit — got incorporated in the play.

### Future perfect

**Subodh:** I'm definitely going to do a lot more theatre. I'm going to pitch every project to her first, she has the first right of refusal! (laughs) I also want to produce plays that have interesting stories to tell. And if she wants to direct me in a film, she can pitch the story to me.

**Nandita:** Starry tantrums! (laughs)

**Subodh:** Seriously speaking, to work with her anytime will be a pleasure. One of the biggest pressures while doing this play was that I had a responsibility as she brings in 20 years of credibility with her. I didn't want to let her down.



**WHO:** Nandita Das and Subodh Maskara

**WHAT:** On acting together in a play

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