



## GOUTAM GHOSE ON BEING MESMERISED BY THE PLAY THAT BLENDS FRENCH AUTHOR MARGUERITE DURAS'S PASSIONATE WRITING, JORASANKO'S ATMOSPHERE & NANDITA'S ALL-ROUND TALENT

Pictures: Rashbehari Das

I really loved the play. First of all, while I was waiting for *Gates to India Song* to begin, the entire atmosphere of Jorasanko mesmerised me. I started thinking to myself, 'My God, this is the same place where the Tagore family was playing, singing and dancing some years ago...' The tune for the play was set. When you're there in the middle of that atmosphere waiting for a performance in that setting to begin, everything is in sync.

Marguerite Duras is one of my favourite writers. She was a very avant garde writer, very passionate and she also wrote for films. It was interesting to hear a short voice of hers in French, playing in the background, as the play began. I appreciate the director (Eric Vigner) for the way he handled the adaptation — characters reading from the book and introducing each other, then the play with a little Brechtian alienation in its form.

It was an interesting way in which the French vice-consul, his memories, his position, his childhood and the lady were all juxtaposed as well as the way in which different characters were moulded into one... all that made it



very engaging.

The performances were all very good. I had to congratulate Nandita (Das) personally at the end of the play. I went up to her and said, 'Nandita! You narrated, you acted, you sang!' So many things this girl

can do, it makes me very happy. Subodh (Maskara, Nandita's husband), switching between the dual roles of ambassador and club secretary, was also quite fine on stage. As were Suhaas Ahuja (theatre actor who played a vital

part in *Talaash*), who played the vice-consul of Lahore, and Jim Sarbh who plays the young attache.

The sets were simple, sober and minimalist and the lights helped create a very different ambience in Jorasanko. It was important that

they perform this play in Calcutta. Bombay at that time was growing but Calcutta was the centre of the empire, the capital of British India. The narrative, the music and the play of lights took me back in time.

**(As told to Mohua Das)**

**The final Calcutta show of *Gates to India Song* will be staged at the Jorasanko Thakurbari today from 6.30pm**