

Peering at permanent impermanence

In a relationship's trajectory fraught with trials and tumult, director Divya Jagdale's characters in the play *Toxic* sketch an emotional reality that many experience but few talk about. Rajat and Smita, the protagonists, model the mood of what we're increasingly seeing around us—impermanence, dying love, the desperate need for new beginnings—and that's challenging the age-old conventions of how we looked at intimate connections.



The story of the couple whose relationship and friendship is slowly turning toxic, is told through Rajat, a writer, whose plummeting relationship with his wife, Smita, is the subject of his new book. The same is felt through Smita's yearning for physical intimacy given the lack of it, among other things.

"The most glaring pattern I notice is that people continue in a relationship even though they have outgrown it, or else enjoy the fact that they can play victim," says Jagdale. The criss-crossing of relationships absorbed the director into the story's depth more than anything else.



The play is being staged as part of the Old World Theatre Festival that, besides *Toxic*, has staged 15 productions starting October 6. "There were some bold experiments like Faezeh Jalali's *Shikhandi* that brought a sharp insight into one of the earliest trans characters from mythology, *Shikhandi*. There is Atul Kumar's *Khwaab Sa*, which in gibberish and through choreography, puts across the perennial concerns in Shakespearean plays," says Vidyun Singh, Director Programmes, Habitat World.

Divya Jagdale

Each play that was staged during the festival was seeped in a well-researched context of personal experiences. Jagdale's preparation was a bit different. She didn't go through an obvious process of research. "I've been watching couples at different stages of their relationship curve and that's where my insight came from. I've realised that guilt, a main emotion, arises from false expectations," she says. "I'm optimistic about where we're headed as individuals and as society, because all said and done, we work our problems out." That's the thing about complexities. The answers, sometimes, lies within their trenches.

Toxic: October 15, at 7 pm, Amphitheatre, India Habitat Centre.