

# Scary picture of India in Netflix's 'Ghoul' fails to frighten



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- The pace is lazy and the suspense is unconvincing and both Apte and Kaul wear a deadpan expression most of the time

CHENNAI: Netflix's second India-based original after "Sacred Games" paints a fearful picture of the country where democracy, justice and personal liberty are under severe threat.

Written and directed by Patrick Graham, the television series, whose three episodes began streaming a few days ago, is set in the near future, and talks about some of the scary events in the country. The army has taken over to control sectarian violence and secret prisons have been established where terrible torture is the rule. And all this to put down dissidence. The targets are political leaders, student activists and some Muslims. Saeed (Mahesh Balraj), a terrorist, is being hunted down.

Heading an army detention center is Sunil Da Cunha (Manav Kaul) and assisting him is Radhika Apte's Nida Rahim, who, to prove her loyalty to the state, turns over her own father to the army. His crime is that he has been teaching his college students things not in the syllabus, and also encouraging them to question authority.

The events take place over a day and a night, and Nida enters the center not quite knowing what to expect. She is shocked when she sees bloodshed and brutality there, and when Saeed is finally caught, he has a message for her.

Really not a patch on "Sacred Games," Ghoul is purportedly a horror, but although frights are thrust upon us, the horror is quite minimal.

The pace is lazy and the suspense is unconvincing and both Apte and Kaul wear a deadpan expression most of the time. The one character who briefly registers her humanity is Laxmi (Ratnabali Bhattacharjee). Sunil's deputy, has a fiery temperament. "I like nightmares, they relax me," she quips.

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