

- Sucked into the seedy trade of human trafficking, Sonia is not only raped and punished for not falling in line

CHENNAI: Trafficked women are humans — and that's exactly what director Tabrez Noorani wants us to remember with "Love Sonia."

Written by Ted Caplan and Alkesh Vaja, the film infuses a sense of endearing humanism into the narrative as it trains the spotlight on tortured women who find themselves involved in the sex trade.

Inspired by true events and shot in a documentary style, "Love Sonia" captures the horrifying reality of Mumbai's underbelly — where men, trying to make a fast buck, turn into monsters by trafficking innocent teenagers.

One of the most fascinating aspects of the film is its characterization. Whether it is debt-ridden farmer Shivaji (Adil Hussain), ruthless brothel owner Rashmi (Freida Pinto) — hardened over the years — or Madhuri (Richa Chadha) whose transformation into a good Samaritan is one of the film's highlights, all characters have been created to perfection.

Prime among them is Faizal (Manoj Bajpayee) who acts as both a mentor and romantic interest to the girls.

One of these girls is Sonia, 17, who is pushed into the dark confines of a brothel after she goes searching for her sister, sold to moneylender Baldev Singh (Anupam Kher), by their father, Shivaji.

What a superlative performance Mrunal Thakur delivers as the title character. Sucked into the seedy trade of human trafficking, Sonia is not only raped and punished for not falling in line, but shipped away in containers to Hong Kong and later Los Angeles, too — her agonizing cries for help panning across continents.

Manish (Rajkummar Rao) enters the film as a savior, but Sonia is too broken by now to believe that not all men are beasts and pushes him away. For most of the film, the director remains steadfast in his commitment to present a heart-rending picture of prostitutes, with Lucas Bielan's lens acting as a constant reminder of the fact that women of supposed ill repute could be trapped in a cage.

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