

Oscar-winner Olivia Coleman is mesmerizing in 'The Lost Daughter'



CHENNAI: A great actor will light up even a dull story, though Maggie Gyllenhaal's directorial debut, "The Lost Daughter," is not dull by any means. However, Oscar-winner Olivia Coleman (who won for her role in 2018's "The Favorite") brings her usual powerful presence to the film in which she plays a mother who pines for her grown-up daughters.



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The film screened as part of the recent Red Sea International Film Festival in Jeddah and although it does not flow smoothly from start to finish, it is a brutally uncompromising look at motherhood that is unflinching and attention-grabbing.

The director turns Elena Ferrante's 2008 novel into a warm, almost sensual, narrative with enrapturing details, but despite an array of fantastic actors like Dakota Johnson, Ed Harris, Paul Mescal and Peter Sarsgaard (in a brief but memorable appearance), it

is Coleman who keeps us mesmerized, pushing the plot from one frame to another.



The film stars oscar-winner Olivia Coleman. (YouTube)

We see middle-aged Leda (Coleman) holidaying on a glorious sun-kissed Greek island. She is alone and polite, but so introverted that she hates when someone appears on the beach. One day she gets sucked into drama on the shoreline — a little girl is lost and Leda finds her. She at once becomes a hero, especially to the girl's mother, Nina (Dakota Johnson).

In a flashback, which is equally fascinating as the present-day, a young Leda (essayed by Jessie Buckley) is a bright scholar, whose work is beginning to be noticed in academic circles. But she has two small daughters who force her to make difficult choices when it comes to her career.

“The Lost Daughter” plays out like a chapter in remorse and regret of a woman who had lost out on her motherhood. The film is all the more arresting because Gyllenhaal relies on closeups that keep us glued to the screen. Such frames add to the tension and the anguishing sense of isolation that Leda has pushed herself into. Gyllenhaal works

on Coleman to bring out her character's inwardness, and the actress does not fail, imbuing Leda with compelling mannerisms that hint at a turbulent past and traces of hostility. Nuanced direction by Gyllenhaal has ensured that despite her status as a celebrity actress in her own right, this is Coleman's drama through and through. It is a magnificent performance, with Johnson and Sarsgaard paling in comparison.
