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# Busan Film Festival: Aparna Sen's The Rapist, Starring Konkona Sensharma, is One of Her Finest Works

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The Rapist stars Arjun Rampal and Konkona Sensharma in lead roles.

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## The Rapist

Director: Aparna Sen

**Cast: Konkona Sensharma, Arjun Rampal, Tanmay Dhanania, Anindita Bose**

The legendary Aparna Sen – Satyajit Ray's find in the 1961 Teen Kanya, when she was barely 15 – has given us one of her finest works in The Rapist, which had its world premiere at the ongoing Busan International Film Festival the other evening. She debuted as a director with 36 Chowringhee Lane (1981), a supremely moving look at ageing and loneliness seen through an actor as compelling as Jennifer Kendal, who plays schoolteacher Violet Stoneham in Calcutta. One of the last scenes in which she finds herself alone and unwanted had the power to bring tears in our eyes. Shown against the backdrop of Christmas and 'Silent Night', it is an image that has stayed with me all these years.

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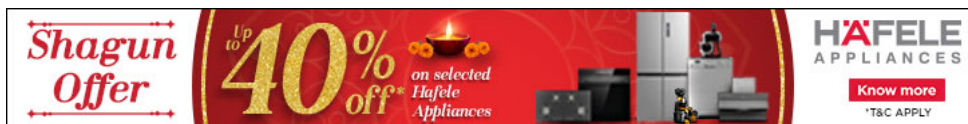
Suman Mukhopadhyay on His Film 'Nazarband' Premiering At Busan Film Festival



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Sen has since then made a whole lot of socially relevant movies. Apart from 36 Chowringhee Lane, which also had Dhritiman Chatterjee and Debashree Roy, I was particularly impressed with Mr and Mrs Iyer, a powerful

take on religious divisiveness and animosity. With Konkana Sensharma and Rahul Bose in the lead, the film was really subtle and spoke a lot about how in the midst of all this rage and vendetta, there was one woman who took it upon herself to save a man from certain death.



Sen's latest, The Rapist, is yet another work that is deeply profound, and raises questions about capital punishment. A mindboggling amount of research has been conducted to prove that death sentence does not deter heinous crimes like homicide. A Supreme Court judge in America once said that capital punishment was for those without capital. Indeed. It is the poor and sometimes the racially underprivileged sections of society who often face the noose.

Also, The Rapist examines the issue of what is more relevant: heredity or environment. It has been conclusively proved that it is environment that shapes a child's character. A rapist's or murder's child need not follow in its parent's footsteps if educated in the right values by the right people. A child may inherit certain diseases like diabetes, but seldom behavioural tendencies if it is allowed to grow up in an atmosphere of love and kindness.

Sen, who also wrote The Rapist, examines these questions as she narrates a terrible incident in which a college professor, Naina (Konkana Sensharma, also Aparna's daughter), married to Aftab (Arjun Rampal), is involved. While returning from a New Delhi suburb with her friend and college colleague, Malini (Anindita Bose), late one night after having sorted out a dispute about the murder of a baby girl, Naina is raped, and the horrific incident has been portrayed with utmost sensitivity by Sen. Yes, the molest does lead to a husband-wife rift, and Naina suffers painful trauma.

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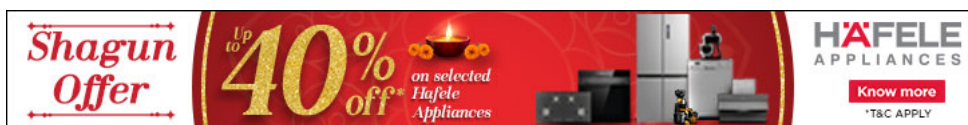


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I would not want to reveal more of the plot, for that would mean spoiling the viewing experience. With The Rapist mostly probably hitting the streaming circuit, it also raises questions about gender and class. The arrogance of a young man who thinks he is supreme because he belongs to the male of the species has been underlined with a red pencil. What is of equal significance is the dilemma about the relevance of capital punishment (in a world that is fast moving away from it) experienced by both Naina and Aftab. Woven into all this is the insensitivity of cops while they deal with rape victims.

And with Sensharma's standout performance and Rampal's controlled and nuanced deciphering of his character, The Rapist is bound to be a huge hit. In Hindi and English, the film will undoubtedly make a mark at the festival venues as it will on the OTT platform.



(Gautaman Bhaskaran is a movie critic, commentator and author)

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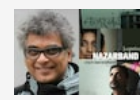
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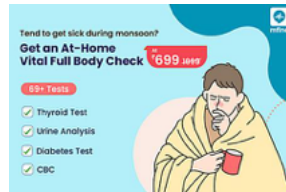
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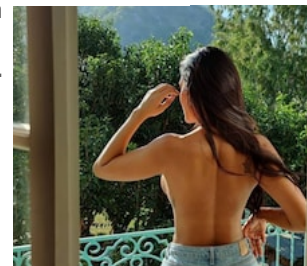
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