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# Ray Movie Review: Screen Adaptations of the Master's Stories are Largely Disappointing



The new Netflix Anthology Ray, directed by Srijit Mukherjee, Vasana Bala and Abhishek Chaubey, pay tribute to Master filmmaker Satyajit Ray's short stories.

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**R**ay  
Directors: Srijit Mukherjee (Forget Me Not, Bahrupiya), Abhishek Chaubey (Hungama Kyon Hain Barapa), Vasana Bala (Spotlight)

Cast: Ali Fazal, Shruthi Menon, Shweta Basu Prasad (Forget Me Not); Kay Kay Menon (Bahrupiya); Manoj Bajpayee, Gajraj Rao (Hungama Kyon Hain Barapa); Harshvardhan Kapoor, Chandan Roy Sanyal, Radhika Madan (Spotlight).

It is never easy to bring a novel or short story to life through images. There have been exceptions though, like Satyajit Ray and Adoor Gopalakrishnan among a few others. Both Ray and Adoor did justice and more to adaptations.

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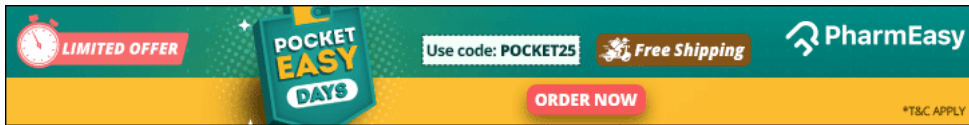


When Shweta Nanda Bachchan Went Home Hungry Because of Karan Johar

Ray himself was a brilliant writer, and four of his short stories have been filmed as a four-episode anthology titled, Ray, and is now streaming on Netflix. Handled by three directors, the work is largely passe, because it

fails in its structuring, scripting and editing. Performances, barring a few, are not great either.

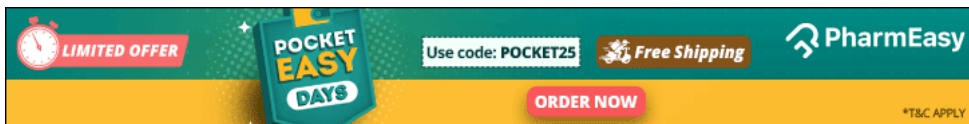
Ali Fazal is interesting as Ipsit in Srijit Mukherji's *Forget Me Not*. As a dashing, debonair and extremely intelligent corporate partner who arrogantly prides himself as one whose memory never fails, he runs into a personal and professional disaster that is orchestrated by one he trusts. One evening, he meets a woman at a bar who tells him that they have had a sexual fling in a hotel close to the Ajanta Caves. Ipsit cannot seem to remember that at all, despite the woman minutely detailing the encounter. This segment loses its clarity towards the end, and Shweta Basu Prasad as Ipsit's secretary, Maggie, is trifle too wooden.



The other episode by Mukherji, *Bahrupiya*, has Kay Kay Menon playing a movie makeup artist, who uses his skills to destroy his adversaries, but soon reaches a point of utter helplessness. Menon is not bad as *Indrashish*, trying to change his appearance by using different kinds of prosthetics. But is not prepared for the tragic consequences.

Abhishek Chaubey's *Hungama* Kyon Hai Barpa tackles a very distressing condition, kleptomania. Shot almost entirely inside a first-class airconditioned coupe (I could not believe that A/C coaches are so swanky), this part is the most engaging. Manoj Bajpayee's *Musafir* Ali is shocked to see Baig (Gajaraj Rao), also travelling with him.

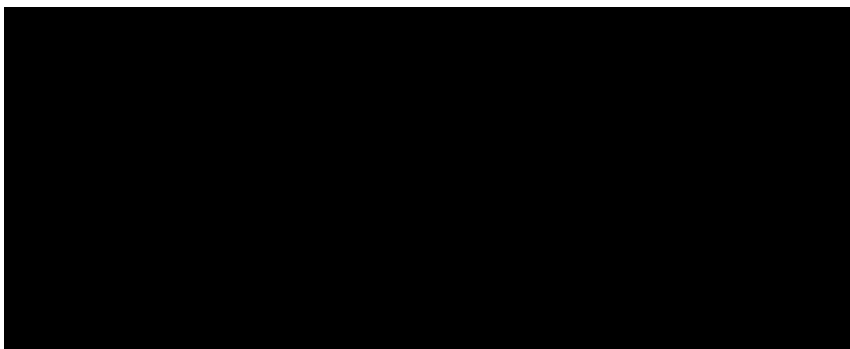
A kleptomaniac, Ali remembers that he had stolen a classy dress watch from Baig ten years ago. Baig does not seem to remember the incident, and the twist at the end is just superb. Chaubey's episode has been handled with a lot of care, and Bajpayee is an excellent performer with a range that is amazing. I remember him as a cowering homosexual in *Aligarh*, as a wily young man who tries to break the system in *Satyagraha*, as psychological wreck trapped inside a room in *Gali Guleidan* and as a ruthless *Chambal* dacoit in *Sonchiriya*. Rao is also great as one who pretends with marvellous alacrity.



Vasan Bala talks about religion vs cinema in *Spotlight*, and comes nowhere near Ray's *Ghanshatru*, a magnificent take on religion vs not entertainment but science. Adapted from Henrik Ibsen's Play, *An Enemy of the People*, Ray's work had the late Soumitra Chatterjee essaying a medical doctor who tries hard to convince villagers that the temple prasad is responsible for the outbreak of an epidemic. *Spotlight* focusses on the life of a film star, Vikram (Harshvardhan Kapoor), who gets angry when he realises that the *sadhvi*, Divya Didi (Radhika Madan), draws a much bigger crowd in the hotel where he is staying than he could ever hope for.

The climax is engaging and lays bare what Didi really is. Chandan Roy Sanyal as Vikram's agent, Robby, actually overshadows the rest of the cast. The actor may well be the one reason to watch *Spotlight*.

**Rating: 2/5**



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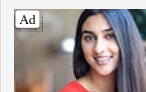
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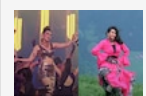
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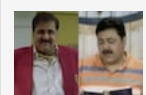
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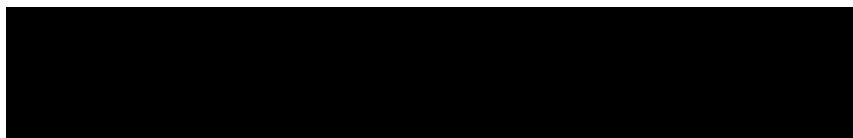
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(Gautaman Bhaskaran is a movie critic and Adoor Gopalakrishnan's biographer)

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