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At the NFDC Film Bazaar, Rhoya and Bena Are All About Dreams



A still from the film 'Rhoya' directed by Ketan Pedgaonkar.

Part of the Industry Screenings at the ongoing Film Bazaar, organised virtually for the second consecutive year, Rhoya is helmed by Ketan Pedgaonkar.

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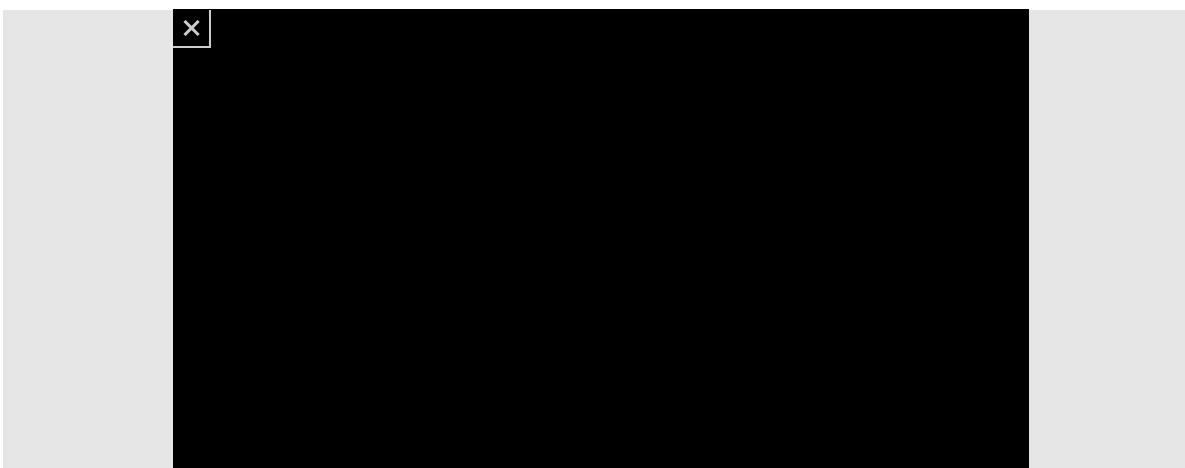
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V“don’t be such a dreamer”. I can sum up a 27-year-old woman’s predicament in Rhoya in this one-line retort. Part of the Industry Screenings at the ongoing Film Bazaar, organised virtually for the second consecutive year, Rhoya is helmed by Ketan Pedgaonkar.

Protagonist Rhoya (Helly Thakkar) sells dreams that come in little boxes, and are meant for wide-eyed children. When a little girl says who her role model is, Rhoya quickly takes the picture of him, pastes it inside the box, and tells the child to open it. The girl is thrilled to bits. But parents do not want to buy these boxes. And Rhoya’s dejection multiplies, although she tries hard to convince them that when their children are struggling, the photograph of a role model inside the dream box will literally fire up their imagination. Nothing can be a greater encouragement than this!



Beaten and bruised with no takers for her magical contraption, she is even more devastated when her own “hero”, her elderly father, who always advocated perseverance, kills himself. Rhoya and her neighbour, Sahil (Suraj Singh Gaur), drive down to her family house, where a motley group of relatives is assembled. Her mother is stoic, her brother, sister and her husband are not. They just cannot understand why an old man (played by Randhir Khare) would want to end his life at this juncture.

The movie has a twist ending but is dotted with wit and a lot of sarcasm. When Rhoya’s brother-in-law wants to know what Sahil is doing for a living, he replies that he plays music. The older man is biting when he retorts, “in marriages?” The witty scene comes in the beginning when Rhoya is pushed to take Sahil’s help after she had lambasted him for turning on the full blast volume of his music system.

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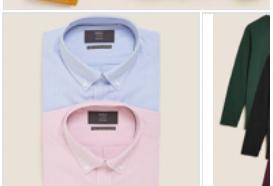
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Scripted by Thakkar, the film does veer off course sometimes and does appear somewhat unfocussed – especially the third act which sees Rhoya and her family gathered after the patriarch’s death. The editing leaves a lot to be desired with the result that there are so many parts that could have been excised. But many Indian directors – I would presume – hate to have an independent editor.

The Short film, Bena, by Vrushali Telang, manages to stay focused. In 10 minutes, it gives an amazing idea of what religious prejudices can be in India. Bena (Juhaina Ahsan) is a housemaid, and her dream is to educate her daughter and help her rise in life. But when Bena cannot pay the fee in time, the school says it will not allow the girl to take the examination. Bena in desperation seeks a loan from the lady of the house where she works, but theft and misunderstanding create such a hullabaloo that she is sacked. But was that the actual reason for her to have lost the job. The climax is superb and hard-hitting. It knocks you on your face.



(Author, commentator and movie critic Gautaman Bhaskaran has been covering the Film Bazaar for several years.)

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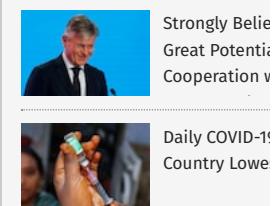
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