



ISSN Print: 2664-8717
ISSN Online: 2664-8725
Impact Factor (RJIF): 8.36
IJRE 2025; 7(2): 511-513
www.englishjournal.net
Received: 05-07-2025
Accepted: 10-08-2025

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The streak of mysticism in Netflix's 'Ray': contemporary adaptations of Satyajit Ray's supernatural vision

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DOI: <https://www.doi.org/10.33545/26648717.2025.v7.i2h.509>

Abstract

This paper examines the mysterious and spooky aspects of Netflix's episodic drama series 'Ray' (2021), that adapts four short tales by renowned director Satyajit Ray. This anthology series, which launched on June 25, 2021, to mark the centennial of Ray's birth, offers current interpretations of Ray's academic compositions via the prism of Indian film. Focusing on the four episodes of the series "Hungama Hai Kyon Barpa," "Forget Me Not," "Bahrupiya," and "Spotlight," the analysis looks at how each story uses mystique and supernatural elements to delve into existential concerns, ethical ambiguity, and psychological profundity. This research shows how modern Indian filmmakers have reinterpreted Ray's investigation of mystic themes for contemporary audiences by closely examining the series' depiction of memory, identity shift, deceit, and popularity. According to the research, the Netflix version adds additional mystic elements that mirror current concerns regarding technological advancement, personal identity, as well as reality in today's digital world, all the while remaining faithful to Ray's philosophical questions.

Keywords: Netflix Ray, Satyajit Ray adaptations, mysticism in Indian cinema, supernatural thriller, anthology series, contemporary Indian television

Introduction

On June 25, 2021, Netflix's anthology series "Ray" was released, marking a turning point in the modern interpretation of traditional Indian literature for online audiences. This series offers contemporary interpretations of the renowned director Satyajit Ray's investigation into human psychology and otherworldly events through the adaptation of four of his short tales for the big screen, ranging from satire to psychological horror. What may be called "digital mysticism" is created by the series' singular fusion of Ray's original mystical sensibility with modern cinematic narrative, reflecting both contemporary technology fears and ancient Indian spiritual themes.

There are only four episodes in the Netflix miniseries RAY. The series' dedication to preserving the mysterious undertones that defined Ray's original writings while adapting them for modern audiences is evident in its coverage of thriller, crime, drama, and some supernatural themes. A thorough analysis of the ways in which supernatural themes operate in contemporary Indian storytelling is produced by the anthology format, which enables each episode to examine various aspects of mystical experience, ranging from identity manipulation to psychological transition.

This research looks at how the series maintains Ray's core conceptual framework while adding new aspects of supernatural experience that are pertinent to modern Indian society, all the while navigating the difficult terrain between logical inquiry and mystical belief. Together, the four episodes "Hungama Hai Kyon Barpa," "Forget Me Not," "Bahrupiya," and "Spotlight" offer unique viewpoints on mystical subjects, forming a contemporary meditation on the significance of the paranormal in comprehending human experience and societal evolution.

Historical Context and Adaptation Framework

The Netflix version first appeared at a particular historical juncture that blends respect for Ray's centenary with the expanding role of streaming services in Indian entertainment.

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In honour of Satyajit Ray's 100th birthday, Netflix debuted an anthology series based on the renowned director's short stories, presenting the series as a modern reimagining and homage. Incorporating mystical concepts that respect Ray's artistic intent while appealing to contemporary audiences presents both special opportunities and difficulties because of this dual purpose.

Ray's literary mysticism must be translated into a visual language appropriate for modern digital consumption as part of the adaptation process. The Netflix series must condense such components into episodic structure that preserve the philosophical richness that distinguishes Ray's investigation of supernatural themes while preserving narrative cohesion in contrast to Ray's own films, which explored mystical themes through prolonged contemplation and intricate character creation.

The show appears in the larger framework of Indian streaming media, which is progressively setting itself apart from popular Bollywood productions by including mystical and supernatural aspects. This pattern indicates the increased desire of viewers for material that blends spiritual and psychological themes, opening up avenues for in-depth examination of mystical topics that may not be covered in conventional theatrical releases.

Episode Analysis: Mystical Dimensions in Contemporary Adaptation **"Forget Me Not": The Mysticism of Memory and Identity**

Through its examination of memory, personal identity, and psychological transition, the episode "Forget Me Not," which is based on Ray's short tale "Bipin Chowdhury's Smritibhrom," offers one of the series' strongest encounters with mystical themes. We get a compelling story that chronicles a prodigy's slow spiral into madness under Srijit Mukherji's astute direction, showing how the adaptation turns Ray's psychological observations into modern spiritual investigation.

This episode's depiction of memory as a possibly supernatural force that has the power to change reality and identity reveals its magical element. Analogous to classic psychedelic experiences of ego breakdown and reality questioning, the protagonist's battle with false memories produces a liminal area where the lines between illusion and reality become blurred. In order to support the narrative's examination of consciousness and identity, the episode's cinematography uses visual methods that imply the existence of forces that defy common psychological explanation.

The mystical undertones in Ray's original narrative are enhanced by the adaptation's use of modern concerns like urban isolation and professional pressure. As traditional identity identifiers increasingly clash with modern social and professional obligations, the enigmatic process of memory impairment and rehabilitation forms a metaphor for more general enquiries about true selfhood in contemporary Indian culture.

"Bahrupiya": Transformation and Mystical Deception

An adaptation of Ray's brief tale Bahurupi (transl. Chameleon), it tells the story of Indrashish (Kay Kay Menon), a desk jockey who acquires a priceless old book that his grandmother gave him. Using classic Indian notions about maya (illusion) along with the fluidity of identity, this

episode examines mystical subjects through the prism of both spiritual and physical development.

This mystical handbook of prosthetics is an example of the type of liminal artefact that is commonly found in mystical narratives, providing a concrete connection between everyday reality and otherworldly possibilities. Deeper issues pertaining to the illusive nature of permanent identity a notion essential to Hindu as well as Buddhist esoteric traditions that Ray frequently examined in his works—are suggested by the protagonist's capacity to entirely change his look.

The episode's analysis of deceit goes beyond straightforward deception to go into philosophical issues of what it means to be truly oneself. The protagonist's personality and goals are revealed during each transition, indicating that mystical change entails more than simply outward changes but also deep shifts in awareness and behaviour. This method demonstrates how sophisticated Indian film has become in addressing mystical subjects that connect conventional spiritual ideas with contemporary psychological knowledge.

"Hungama Hai Kyon Barpa": Musical Mysticism and Spiritual Connection

In the Abhishek Chaubey-directed segment "Hungama Hai Kyon Barpa," mystical concepts are presented via music and interpersonal relationships. It centres on two individuals who meet on a train ride: Aslam Baig (Gajraj Rao), a former wrestler who is now a sports writer, and Musafir Ali (Manoj Bajpayee), a well-known singer and musician. Through the historically esoteric channel of Indian classical music, this narrative structure enables the investigation of mystical ideas.

Like Mr. Baig's unique Arabian Chai Noomi Barsa, Hungama Hai Kyon Barpa is an accomplished taste for viewers' taste buds, indicating the episode's complex approach to mystical topics that need viewers' thoughtful participation. The transformational impact of musical performance along with the unexplainable bonds that form between strangers who have similar deep spiritual and creative experiences give rise to a mystical dimension.

An interstitial realm typical of mystical storytelling, the train travel setting allows for deeper interpersonal relationships and the disintegration of traditional social barriers. The episode looks at how music may create mystical experiences that go beyond the typical concept of creative expression and human relationships by acting as a bridge between several realms, including commercial and artistic, materialistic and spiritual, and individual and collective.

"Spotlight": Fame, Illusion, and Spiritual Corruption

Vasan Bala's last episode, "Spotlight," explores mystical topics under the prism of celebrity culture especially the distorting power of popularity. This modern adaption examines how pursuing fame and fortune may turn into a spiritual quest that eventually results in moral and psychological breakdown.

The protagonist's connection with stardom itself, which acts like an ethereal power that alters personality, interpersonal interactions, and moral thinking, is where the episode's mystical elements come to light. According to the episode, success in celebrity culture is based on intangible traits that are impossible to anticipate or manage using conventional

methods, and its functions on mystical rather than logical principles.

The tale examines the themes of spiritual decay that reverberate traditional mystical warnings about the perils of egotistical affiliation and earthly desire. The account of the protagonist shows how the need for external validation may turn into a spiritual practice that eventually undermines real selfhood, addressing mystical lessons about the ephemeral nature of worldly prosperity and fame.

Comparative Analysis: Original Ray and Contemporary Adaptation

Evolution of Mystical Themes

The Netflix version shows a notable shift in the way Indian storytelling traditions use mystical themes. The modern version adds technical and social components that provide new kinds of mystical experience pertinent to contemporary cultural situations, all the while preserving the fundamental philosophical questions that defined Ray's original writings. The procedure of adaptation shows how mystical topics may be modernised while retaining important philosophical and spiritual elements. According to the series, a true adaptation necessitates a creative reinterpretation that preserves spiritual purity while catering to the needs and interests of a modern audience rather than an exact translation.

Technological Mysticism versus Traditional Spirituality

The show reveals how spiritual themes change in response to shifting social and technical environments by examining the conflict between ancient Indian mystic practices and modern technology society. Different strategies for overcoming this tension from synthesis to conflict to integration are shown in each episode. This investigation is a reflection of larger cultural struggles taking place in modern Indian society as global technological culture collides with ancient spiritual practices. Instead of either accepting or rejecting technological modernity, the series posits that ingenious interaction with such cultural intricacy may lead to significant spiritual experience.

Conclusion

The enduring popularity of 'Ray' indicates a lot of potential for upcoming Indian streaming material that tackles mystical subjects with a same level of nuance and cultural foundation. The show illustrates that viewers are open to material that blends spiritual nuance with modern social awareness, opening doors for more ambitious endeavours that examine the relationship between ancient Indian mystic practices and modern life. The anthology's impact on modern Indian film goes beyond amusement to include creativity and cultural preservation. As it evolves to confront contemporary cultural issues and technological realities, the series makes sure that significant spiritual and philosophical ideas are still accessible to younger people by translating Ray's mystical vision for modern viewers.

In the end, the mystic streak in "Ray" on Netflix illustrates the continued significance of spiritual investigation in modern Indian society. The series shows how mystical themes may continue to shed light on important issues about truth, identity, and genuine life in modern cultural as well as technological landscapes through the use of advanced cinematic methods and careful adaptation procedures.

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