

## **Triptych scenes**

On an early morning, I was engrossed in reading in a corner seat of the Calcutta (as it was called in 1977) airport lounge. I heard a booming baritone, “Hello, Amol”. That was Satyajit Ray - as I saw him tall from my low angle metaphorically! He talked to me about my acting in films and the work in theatre, the details of which were blurred even at that time. All I remember vividly is the warmth expressed all through! Honestly, I was awestruck by the fact that such a prodigious man had noticed the work of a new upcoming actor.

In 1981, during the Indian Panorama screening of ‘Akriet’ at Kolkata, Manekda was present. While patting my back, he invited me for tea at his residence. The next day, he praised the villainous protagonist that I had played despite my popular image as ‘a boy next door’; he also applauded my command over the technique and the craft even though ‘Akriet’ was my directorial debut. I was longing to ask many questions clustered in my mind at that time. But again, I felt intimidated, moreover, overwhelmed with the realization that he had seen most of my work and had the magnanimity to talk about it.

Much later, he offered me two different roles in two separate episodes to be produced by him for a TV serial titled ‘Satyajit Ray Presents’. He shared with me that since the doctors had forbidden him from being on the sets after his heart operation, his son Sandeep would direct the serial. However, I was pleasantly surprised to find him not only present on the location but also directing every small detail of the serial. When I expressed my concern, he winked and said, “You are the only actor whom I have chosen for two roles. How can I not be around?” I was drenched in his affection.

My personal encounters with Manek da spread through these triptych scenes are shot with this Gestalt lens! I was indeed fortunate!