

The golden days of Satyajit Ray and Mangesh Desai's amazing chemistry

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The association of Satyajit Ray and Mangesh Desai goes down in the annals of Indian cinema. Just as no other filmmaker achieved the peak scaled by Satyajit Ray, Mangesh Desai remains the undisputed wizard of sound and track recording and rerecording. Satyajit Ray noticed the brilliance of Mangesh Desai in films like 'Guide'. From 'Pratidwandi' in 1970, Mangesh Desai recorded all Ray masterpieces till 'Ghare Baire'.



Satyajit Ray started recording his films at Rajkamal Kalamandir. Initially, optical soundtracks were used by Desai. From *Pikur Diary*, Sandip Ray's directional debut, magnetic soundtracks replaced optical ones. In almost every film of Satyajit Ray, there were eight to nine soundtracks working. Remembers Sandip Ray, "In *Seemabaddha*, Mangesh Desai folded a Kolhapuri chappal and let it return to its original shape. The sound was ideally suited to the creaking of a rocking chair."

Mangesh Desai had a room in his studio which had audio cassettes, utensils and other objects. If ever any sound was to be created and recorded a special sound effect, there was no dearth of items. The filmmaker and the recorder understood each other's creativities and their souls combined to create cinematic magic.



Kiran Shantaram had once said, "I remember Mr Ray initially did not have that much confidence in Mangesh Desai. Working together in two to three films, he understood the genius of Mangesh Desai. From dialogue to music, every track was recorded by Mangesh Desai. My father V Shantaram specially instructed that when Mr Ray and Mangesh Desai worked, there should not be any disturbances."

Perhaps the best usage of natural sounds by Desai was in *Jana Aranya* and *Shantranj Ke Khiladi*. Satyajit Ray was gifted the guest house at

Rajkamal studio to rest and read books in his later days. He was not keeping well then. Viewing the performance of an unknown actor, Bimal Chatterjee in Jana Aranya, Desai complimented him by telling Ray that the actor was never camera conscious.



Sandip recollects, “Desai genuinely felt there was no need for any music during the climax of Sadgati. Baba wanted an effect to be created by Indian drums. A timpani (kettledrums) was available in Desai’s room with musical items. I had played the timpani and the necessary effect was created. Desai recorded it superbly.”

Reference

<https://m.timesofindia.com/entertainment/bengali/movies/news/the-golden-days-of-satyajit-ray-and-mangesh-desais-amazing-chemistry/articleshow/82323668.cms>