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## Word code for classical music

SUDESHNA BANERJEE



*Sangeetpedia* creators Anjan Chattopadhyay and Enayet Hossain in performance

You might coax your friend to get you a card for the Dover Lane Music Conference every year but do you know what *bemancha* means? Or *ghasit*? Or *baat taan*?

That is where *Sangeetpedia*, an encyclopaedia of North Indian classical music, promises to come handy.

The work of tabla player Enayet Hossain and sitarist Anjan Chattopadhyay, it is an audio-visual compendium of 1,200 terms that are integral to classical music. The DVD has been developed and is on sale in the US, where Hossain is based and will be available in India as soon as a clearance for commercial transaction is available from the US government.

"It was only when we sat down to frame the definitions that we realised the problem. Some books had no definition while others had conflicting versions. Also, we found that since music is a performing art, a string of words was inadequate to bring out what we were talking about," says Chattopadhyay, sitting at Nandan on Thursday, soon after a demonstration of the work to a select gathering that included sports minister Subhas Chakraborty. The problem becomes apparent when the definition of *tarana* appears on the screen. It is only on clicking on the accompanying audio clip that one gets to hear one *tarana* after another and realises what the definition means.

The audio clips supporting the terms are also a treat — by contemporary luminaries like Ustad Rashid Khan and Pandit Ajoy Chakraborty and maestros from the past like DV Paluskar, Amir Khan and Begum Akhtar.

There are also biographies of the artistes, demonstrations of about 30 *taals* ("We plan to add another 70") and 100 *ragas*. There are about 600 pictures too, some of them quite rare.

Hossain, son of well-known vocalist-teacher Hamid Hossain, had started the experiment with his own instrument — the tabla.

"While cataloguing the *bols* and *thekas*, I realised the same could be done with Indian music as a whole." Hence, the Baltimore-based computer expert tried to marry his two loves over the next six years, coming to India and Bangladesh to record sessions with local artists.

The video editor for the project was Kishen Patel. The 15-year-old was a rap addict till a few years back but now swears by Santaprasad and Ustad Vilayat Khan. "I hoped to hear my idols all around, on TV and radio, in India. But it hurts to see the kind of music that's played here," says the young tabla player.

Will *Sangeetpedia* manage to convert some ears back to our traditional music? The project, which "does not aim to replace the guru", hopes to achieve just that.