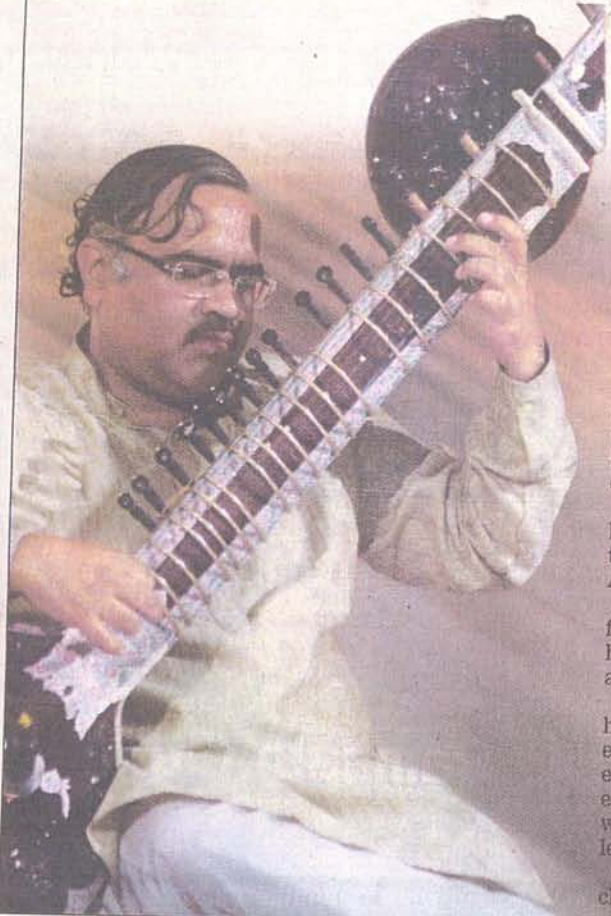


Parimal Sadaphal plays the sitar with panache and also talks about renewable energy with ease

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Strumming TWO WORLDS



Harshad Pandharipande | TNN

In a crowd of 'jack of all trades', Parimal Sadaphal stands out as someone who excels in two vocations. A gifted sitar player, he has been a disciple of the legend Pt Ravi Shankar since 1985 and also has performed with him many times across the world. And he runs an NGO Sustech International that promotes renewable energy and sustainable development.

May be having a full, meaningful life runs in his blood. That's because Sadaphal also happens to be the nephew of renowned social worker Baba Amte, who is also his inspiration.

In the city on Saturday to give a sitar performance at the 36th annual festival of Gandharva Sangeet Mahavidyalaya, Sadaphal spoke about both his pursuits with equal zeal.

Talking about renewable energy brings out his concern for fast-depleting fossil fuels and the environment. "Technology is making our lives easy, but it is also increasing our dependence on energy. The more fossil fuels we burn, the more we pollute. Our energy future seems bleak unless we decide to make a change," Sadaphal says.

In his own way, Sadaphal has made that change. One of the initiatives implemented un-

der his guidance involved providing clean solar energy-based lighting options for street hawkers and vendors at affordable prices in Bhopal. It received the prestigious Ashden Award for Sustainable Energy, also known as the Green Oscar. He was also involved in a project to bring electrification to a village in Chhattisgarh using bio-fuels.

Sadaphal proposes a three-pronged solution. Two of them are steadily switching over to renewable energy and controlling population growth. The third is to cut our demand for energy. "We can bring about small changes in our lifestyle. Take the staircase instead of the elevator. Fill water manually instead of using a motor pump. Go for jogs instead of running on a treadmill. These small changes will make a big difference," he says. "It will help our future generations."

While the power crisis worries him, Sadaphal has discovered an inexhaustible source of a different kind of energy: music. When he was just three, Sadaphal surprised everyone by being able to identify several ragas.

"My father was posted in Hyderabad then and he took me to watch a concert of Panditji (Ravi Shankar). After the show, we met Panditji, who was also impressed by my ability," he recalls.

He trained under Pt Ravi Shankar's disciples Balwant Rai Verma and Uma Shankar Mishra. Then, in 1985, the sitar maestro took Sadaphal under his wings. And the association has endured ever since. Sadaphal has supported Pt Ravi Shankar on the sitar in solo concerts at several places including Mumbai, Delhi, London and a number of places in the US, apart from several solo performances of his own.

"Sometimes, I still find it unbelievable that he is my guru. He is such a great man. I have learnt the purest form of music from him," Sadaphal gushes. "When he plays the sitar, it's like Goddess Saraswati is playing the instrument herself," he adds.

Sadaphal has also helped groom tomorrow's musicians. In 2006-07, he assisted Panditji in a project known as Global Children's Choir, which involved training a group of school children from India and Austria to perform compositions of Mozart and Ravi Shankar. "Panditji's contribution to music is immense," he says. "It will always live on."