

# Shatranj in legal move



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Kolkata, June 20

TWENTY-EIGHT YEARS after Satyajit Ray's *Shatranj Ke Khiladi* first enthralled audiences, the master's film has got caught in a legal imbroglio. Calcutta High Court on Monday refused to restrain the film's producers from demanding the music rights from Saregama India Limited and selling it to any other.

In 1973, Devki Chitra and Vijay Rahi Productions of Suresh Jindal had signed an agreement with Saregama India Limited, assigning it the music rights of any film it produces in the next 25 years. The company produced three films — *Rajnigandha*, *Shatranj Ke Khiladi* and *Katha*. After the films were made, the producers handed over the music's master discs to Saregama, who started manufacturing and selling the music through gramophone records, audiocassettes and CDs against payment of royalty to Jindal.

The dispute cropped up in February

2004, when Jindal wrote to Saregama, saying that it owned the films' musical rights for a limited period, and that it had expired. Jindal also asked Saregama to stop manufacturing and selling the music, and to return the master discs.

But Saregama wouldn't let go. The company filed a suit in the high court for a declaration that it had the lifelong rights over the literary, dramatic, musical and artistic works of the films. Saregama also sought an order restraining Jindal from selling the music rights of the films to any others.

"Saregama had the musical rights of the films for 25 years, which has expired. It has also not paid the royalty for years. When Jindal demanded the master disc, Saregama filed the suit because it misinterpreted the agreement," said Jindal's advocates Ranjan Bachawat and Phiroze Edulji, opposing Saregama's plea.

"Jindal is also planning to file a suit against Saregama for restraining it from manufacturing and selling the music and songs of the films," said Edulji.

## Films affected

- *Rajnigandha*
- *Shatranj Ke Khiladi*
- *Katha*

## Producers

- Devki Chitra and Vijay Rahi Productions of Suresh Jindal

## Music rights

- Saregama India Ltd

## Agreement period

- 1973-1998