

The boy sat frowning in the midst of the gentle sea breeze and “unpleasant music”. He was accompanied by his parents and grandparents, who were too immersed to listen to any frequency that was produced by his esophagus. Any impartial tribunal of moral law and children’s rights would have issued a writ of *habeas corpus*, had there been a *petition that would be heard*.

The day was turning out to be very pestiferous for the boy. He had had to wear a shirt to *be respectful to the artistes*. In addition, going to the concert itself, where two extremely undesirable things (the enormous crowd and the *obnoxious noise* emanating from the lead vocalist) made themselves unignorable, bothered him.

After hours of tolerating the torment (or the equivalent of five adult-human minutes), he heard it. It was like the nitrogen getting preferentially adsorbed by the molecular zeolite and the oxygen passing through without any hindrance. All other sounds – those of the waves, the breeze against the banners, the indistinct, soft and occasional murmur of the audience and, of course, the lead vocalist – were oblivious to him. It struck a chord, reverberating in his thought.

The melody of the flute oozed into his soul. He had never heard anything like that. He was going crazy: crazy of it. The day was metamorphosed. He was enjoying himself.

“I want to learn the flute”, he told his parents.

With the boy’s newly discovered passion, the parents had a question, “Hindustani or Carnatic?”

“What are Hindustani and Carnatic?” he inquired.

“Hindustani is the North Indian style of music, while Carnatic is the South Indian style” they explained.

The father added, “That concert was a Hindustani concert”.

“Okay, then I’ll learn Hindustani.”

The parents started searching for Hindustani Flautists in Chennai. In spite of hunting for months, they could not find a single teacher in Chennai. However, there were many teachers in Bangalore, 360 Km from Chennai. “Are you willing to give up one day of your weekend to go to Bangalore?” the parents asked.

“Okay. If I want to learn, I need to go” the boy said with a smile of conviction.

It is like the propagation of light: the electric and magnetic fields, mutually perpendicular to each other, propel the wave in the third dimension; playing the flute is the synchronization of blowing and fingering, yielding music. While he got the sound out of blowing the very first

day (his *Guru* said it could even take months for some), he repeatedly faltered with his breath or fumbled with his fingers. However, between these faults, notes of music emanated - *rays of hope*. He envisioned himself mastering the instrument in a matter of weeks.

However, the list of challenges was growing - the depths of a *Raag*\*, *Alaap* (a creative exploration of a *Raag*), *Staccato*, and the millions of permutations a *Raag* encompassed, all overwhelmed him. The initial enthusiasm and expectation gave way to despair.

Bedtime conversations with *Granny* and *Tansen*'s assessment of his musical knowledge as being just a drop from the Ganges led to the boy's *Buddha* moment. What followed were sessions with *Granny*, where he mimicked her singing on the flute.

Bedtime conversations have now evolved to the nuances of *Raags*. These have led to his own flute design, a composition in a *Raag*, and his own *Raag*! He now seeks that *tone*, that *clarity*, that *rhythm*, that *speed*, while working on breath.

This new found passion is now his stable ship, wading through turbulent seas and storms. He is in the comfort of his cabin with his flutes, oblivious to the outside world. The journey has just begun!

\*A *Raag* is set of notes within a framework that is artistically interpreted to produce music.