

## **Mum 'n son, Gold Medallists Both: DU Convocation 1982 !** **Dr Sulochana and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *True Harmony* !!**

### **MUSIC and ME**

I have had a very passionate relationship with music ever since I was a child. It has been a long and eventful journey with the craft, one that resulted in me acquiring a PhD in Music in my 60s.

My love for music started to develop at the age of two. My great-grandfather in Meerut, where I was born, used to compose verses and songs and would have an almost emotional reaction to the notes ! We had a gramophone at home and we listened to a lot of Carnatic music at home. By the time I was three, I began to identify some ragas and began to sing along. On my fourth birthday, an aunt gifted me a harmonium and my sister and I would play nursery rhymes on it. I attended my first music concert when I was four or five years old. Even our games were musical; we used to hum while playing!



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My sister and I were formally trained in music by a tutor. Ten years later, I went to college but my training continued. The fact is, as Tamil Brahmins, *women were not allowed to work* and music was kept within the house. But I was part of a group in college that played the veena, sarod and violin and performed at college functions.

I married into an orthodox family and music was snuffed out of my life. I sold my *tannpura* and we were not even allowed to listen to music.

**My husband was a bureaucrat** and, in 1955 we moved to Netaji Nagar, where the South Indian ladies had formed a Friday music group. They had the same story – their talent had been suppressed. We began to meet, sing and hold programmes. We sang exclusively for friends and family.

In 1975, we were transferred back to Madras / Chennai and I learnt the veena at a music academy there.

*My turning point* came after we returned to Delhi where, at a wedding, a lady told me about the **Sangeet Shiromani class** at **Delhi University**.

*This was my first really immersive experience with music and I felt elated.*

I completed the two-year course in Carnatic music and thought I was done – that the Diploma was enough. But with support from my daughter and daughter-in-law, I pursued a **Master's Degree at DU**.

*In 1982, my youngest son **Sanjay and I** were both conferred **Gold Medals** at the same Convocation; he for Economics and I for Music !*

Then I did my **MPhil** and also enrolled for **PhD studies**. It was a very challenging time. For one, my husband was unwell and, two, my guide retired and moved to Chennai. We also moved to *Cambridge* in the UK for a year as my husband had been offered a position there as Professor.

There were many times when I felt like giving up but I had **the wholehearted support of my family**; my daughter-in-law even helped me with notes and encouraged me to complete my thesis. My husband had bypass surgery and was in hospital when I got the call for my viva. The odds had definitely been stacked against me!

However, I took the viva and, *at the age of 63*, I received my PhD degree.

**I am 85** years old now 2018 and I spend a lot of time reading and listening to music. For many decades, something had been propelling me forward and I was consumed by music. Having fulfilled every goal I had been given, **I now feel a sense of closure and enjoy music** in a very different, more mellow way.

And thus my journey with music continues...

- **Dr Sulochana Subrahmanyam, New Delhi**

**Harmony** January 2018 *adapted*

*A heartwarmingly inspirational story that typifies the unique universal quality of Education service the University of Delhi provides, and has provided nonstop since 1922.*