

3.6 The Concert

Warming Up!

1. Pair up with your partner and ask and answer the following questions.

- (a) Do you like music?
- (b) What does a concert mean?
- (c) Have you ever attended any live concert?
- (d) Have you seen a concert on Television?
- (e) Whose concert would you love to attend?

2. Look at the web diagram given below and study the traits of a good concert organizer.



The Concert

Shanta Rao (1930-2007) was a notable dancer from India. She was exponent of Bharatnatyam and also studied Kathakali and Kuchipudi. She was recipient of Padmashri and Sangeet Natak Academy Award and Kalidas Sanman for Music, dance and drama.

This is a true story, but all the names except Pandit Ravishankar's and Ustad Allah Rakha's have been changed.

◆ *Why was Smita excited?*

Note : Bombay was the official name of Mumbai until 1995.

● **maestro :** a prominent conductor or performer of classical music.

● **murmur :** quietly spoken words

◆ *What was the chance of a lifetime for Anant?*

◆ *Why did Smita become nervous?*

One morning in a small apartment in Bombay a girl of about sixteen looked up from the newspaper and said excitedly, 'Pandit Ravi Shankar is playing tomorrow at the Shanmukhananda auditorium.'

'Sh-sh,' said her mother pointing to the figure sleeping on the bed. 'You'll wake him up. You know he needs all the sleep and rest he can get.'

But the boy on the bed was not asleep. 'Pandit Ravi Shankar!' he said. 'Pandit Ravi Shankar, the sitar **maestro**? He raised himself up on his elbows for one second, then fell back. But his eyes were shining. 'We mustn't miss the chance,' he said. 'I've - 'I've - always wanted to hear him and see him...'

'Lie down son, lie down.' His mother sprang to his side. 'He actually raised himself up without help,' she **murmured** with a catch in her throat and her eyes turned to the idols on a corner shelf. The prayer, which she uttered endlessly, came unbidden to her lips.

'I must hear him and see him,' the boy repeated. 'It's the chance of a lifetime.' Then he began to cough and gasp for breath and had to be given oxygen from the cylinder that stood under the bed. But his large eyes were fixed on his sister.

Smita bit her lip in self-reproach. She had been so excited at seeing the announcement, that she had not remembered that her brother was very ill. She had seen how the doctors had shaken their heads gravely and spoken words that neither she nor even her parents could understand. But somewhere deep inside Smita had known the frightening truth - that Anant was going to die. The word cancer had hung in the air - her brother

was dying of cancer even though she pretended that all would be well and they would return together, a small family of four, to their home in Gaganpur. And he was only fifteen and the best table-tennis player in the school and the fastest runner. He was learning to play the sitar ; they were both taking sitar lessons, but Anant was better than her as in many other things. He was already able to compose his own tunes to the astonishment of their *guru*. Then cancer had struck and they had come to Bombay so that he could be treated at the cancer hospital in the city.

Whenever they came to Bombay they stayed with Aunt Sushila. Her apartment was not big but there was always room for them.

They had come with high hopes in the miracles of modern science. They told themselves that Anant would be cured at the hospital and he would again walk and run and even take part in the forthcoming table-tennis tournament. And, he would play the sitar—perhaps be a great sitarist one day. But his condition grew worse with each passing day and the doctors at the cancer hospital said, ‘Take him home. Give him the thing he likes, **indulge** him,’ and they knew then that the boy had not many days to live. But they did not voice their fears. They laughed and smiled and talked and surrounded Anant with whatever made him happy. They fulfilled his every need and gave him whatever he asked for. And now he was asking to go to the concert. ‘The chance of a lifetime,’ he was saying.

‘When you are better,’ his mother said. ‘This is not the last time they are going to play.’

Smita stood at the window looking at the traffic, her eyes wet with tears. Her mother whispered, ‘But you Smita, you must go. Your father will take you.’

When she was alone with Aunt Sushila, Smita cried out in a choked voice, ‘No, how can I? We’ve always done things together, Anant and I.’

‘A walk in the park might make you feel better,’ said Aunt Sushila and Smita was grateful for her suggestion.

In the park, people were walking, running, playing ball, doing yogic exercises, feeding the ducks and eating

◆ *Why was everyone from the family trying to keep Anant happy?*



◆ *Why was Smita not ready to go for the concert?*



● **indulge** : to allow to enjoy the pleasure of something



roasted gram and peanuts, Smita felt alone in their midst. She was lost in her thoughts.

Suddenly a daring thought came to her and as she hurried home she said to herself. 'Why not? There's no harm in trying it.'

'It would be nice to go to the concert. I don't know when we'll get another opportunity to hear Pandit Ravi Shankar,' she said to her mother later. And her father agreed to get the tickets.

The next day as Smita and her father were leaving for the concert, her brother smiled and said, 'Enjoy yourself,' though the words came out in painful gasps. 'Lucky you!'

Sitting besides her father in the gallery, Smita heard as in a dream the thundering welcome the audience gave the great master. Then the first notes came over the air and Smita felt as if the gates of a land of enchantment and wonder were opening. Spellbound, she listened to the unfolding ragas, the slow **plaintive** notes, the fast twinkling ones, but all the while the plan she had decided on the evening before remained firmly in her mind. 'The chance of a lifetime.' She heard Anant's voice in every beat of the tabla.

The concert came to an end, the audience gave the artistes a standing ovation.

A large moustachioed man having a long moustache, made a long boring speech. Then came the presentation of bouquets. Then more applause and the curtain came down. The people began to move towards the exits.

Now was the time. Smita wriggled her way through the crowds towards the stage. Then she went up the steps that led to the wings, her heart beating loudly. In the wings a small crowd had gathered to talk about the evening concert, to help carry bouquets and teacups and instruments.

He was there, standing with the man who played the tabla for him, the great wizard of music, Ustad Allah Rakha. Her knees felt weak, her tongue dry. But she went up and standing before them, her hands folded, 'Oh sir,' she burst out.

'Yes?' he asked questioningly but kindly. And her story came pouring out, the story of her brother who

• **plaintive** : sad

◆ *How did Smita enjoy the concert?*

Discuss and Share:

◆ *Have you ever attended any concert? How was your experience there?*

lay sick at home and of how he longed to hear him and the Ustad play.

‘Will you come to Aunt Sushila’s house and play for him?’ she asked at the end breathlessly. ‘Please,’ she begged, ‘Please come.’

‘Little girl,’ said the moustachioed man who had made the long speech. ‘Panditji is a busy man. You must not bother him with such requests.’

But Pandit Ravi Shankar smiled and motioned him to be quiet. He turned to Ustad Sahib and said, ‘What shall we do, Ustad Sahib?’

The Ustad moved the wad of *paan* from one cheek to another. ‘Tomorrow morning we perform for the boy – Yes?’ he said.

‘Yes,’ Panditji replied. ‘It’s settled then.’

It was a very excited Smita who came home late that night. Anant was awake, breathing the oxygen from the cylinder.

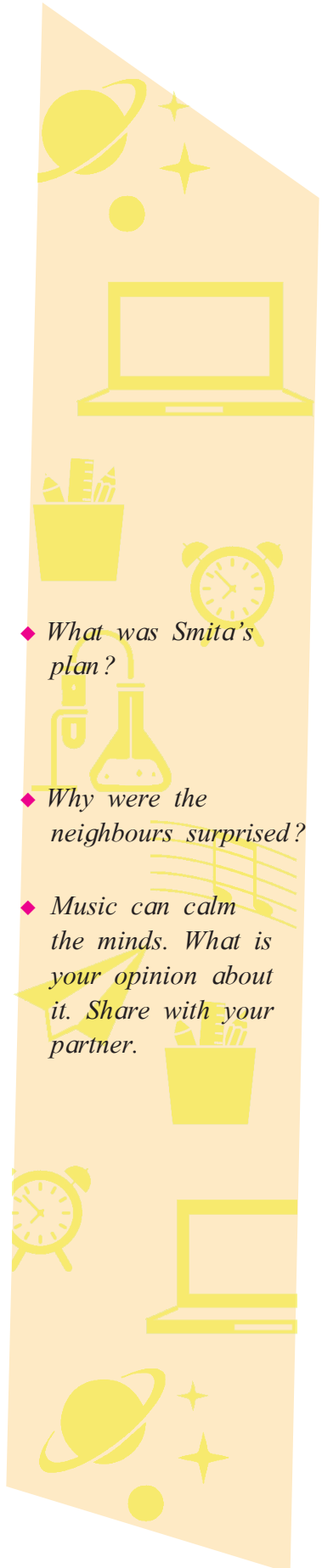
‘Did you – did you hear him?’ he whispered.

‘I did,’ she replied, ‘and I spoke to him and he’ll come tomorrow morning with the tabla Ustad and they’ll play for you.’

And the following morning Aunt Sushila’s neighbours saw two men get out of a taxi which pulled up outside their block... they could not believe their eyes. ‘Is it... It’s not possible?’ they said.

Pandit Ravi Shankar and Ustad Allah Rakha went up the wooden staircase and knocked softly on the door of Aunt Sushila’s apartment. They went in, sat down on the divan by the window and played for the boy, surrounding him with a great and beautiful happiness as life went out of him gently, very gently.

-Shanta Rao



◆ What was Smita’s plan?

◆ Why were the neighbours surprised?

◆ Music can calm the minds. What is your opinion about it. Share with your partner.

1. Who said to whom ?

- (a) "We mustn't miss the chance."
- (b) "This is not the last time they are going to play."
- (c) "A walk in the park might make you feel better."
- (d) "Tomorrow morning we perform for the boy – Yes?"

2. Read the following sentences and write which emotions are revealed from these sentences.

- (a) Pandit Ravi Shankar is playing tomorrow at Shanmukhananda auditorium.
- (b) It's the chance of a lifetime.
- (c) Will you come to Aunt Sushila's house and play for him?
- (d) Did you...did you hear him?
- (e) Is it...It's not possible?

3. Read the text carefully, you will find some words describing a particular speciality of the individuals/personalities in the text. Explain the meaning of the following words given in the table with reference to the particular personality mentioned in the text.

Speciality	Personality	Explanation
Maestro		
Pandit	Ravi Shankar	
Ustad		
Moustachioed		a person having a large or bushy moustache.

4. Describe the condition of Smita when she was going towards the stage. Read the text again and complete the boxes given below. One is done for you.

Smita's condition	Her heart was beating loudly.

5. The whole story revolves around Anant. Write a short paragraph on Anant. Take help of the following points to develop the paragraph.

- 1. Health
- 2. Disease
- 3. Early interests
- 4. Intense desire/wish
- 5. Fulfillment of desire/wish.

6. The story has three important characters – Anant, Smita and Aunt Sushila. Go through the story again and complete the following table that highlights their special traits of character. You can put X mark if that trait is not mentioned in the text.

Special traits	Smita	Anant	Aunt Sushila
Strength			
Weaknesses			
Dreams			
Motivation			

7. The two contradictory pictures are depicted in the story. Discuss in pairs and describe them in your words in front of the class.
8. The text has a big collection of Indian words in it. Using words from another language in a write up is called Code-mixing. Make a list of all the Indian words in table A and their meanings in table B. One is done for you.

‘A’ Indian word	‘B’ Meaning
1. Raga	(a) piece of Indian classical music based on one of the six basic musical modes
2.	(b)
3.	(c)
4.	(d)
5.	(e)
6.	(f)
7.	(g)
8.	(h)
9.	(i)

9. (A) Choose the appropriate Adverb or Adjective form to fill in the gaps.

- (1) She spoke in an tone. (excited / excitedly)
- (2) Smita accepted the suggestion (grateful / gratefully)
- (3) They gave him whatever made him (happy/ happily)
- (4) He ran very (slow / slowly)
- (5) He would become a sitarist some day. (great / greatly)
- (6) Life went out of him (gentle / gently)

(B) Rewrite in Indirect speech

1. "Please", she begged him, "Please come".
.....
2. He said, "What shall we do, Ustad Sahib ?"
.....
3. Her brother said, "Enjoy yourself". He added, "Lucky you!"
.....
4. 'Yes' Panditji replied. "It's settled then. Tomorrow morning we shall perform, for the boy."
.....

10. The text mentions names of stalwarts like Pandit Ravi Shankar and Ustad Allah Rakha. Both have earned world wide name and fame for their outstanding contribution to the field of music. Form groups of 5 students each and write a brief note on other stalwarts in this (music) field. You can take help of your school library or search the relevant information on the internet.

Take help of the following points.

1. Name :
2. Field : Music
3. Specialisation : Tabla/Sitar/Violin etc.
4. Guru :
5. Early life :
6. Education :
7. Early success :
8. Contribution to the field and world :
9. Awards:
10. Any special incident that has occurred in his/her life :

11. Imagine you are the monitor of your class. You are assigned the task to invite a classical singer as a chief guest for the Annual Day Programme. Write a letter of invitation to a famous classical singer. Take help of the following points.

Write in short -

1. About your school.
2. About the Annual Day Programme
3. Interest and love of students for music.
4. Motivation.

