

Tansen

YOU may have heard the name of Tansen — the greatest musician our country has produced.

A singer called Mukandan Misra and his wife lived in Behat near Gwalior. Tansen was their only child. It is said that he was a naughty child. **Often**, he ran away to play in the forest, and soon learnt to **imitate** perfectly the **calls** of birds and animals.

A famous singer named Swami Haridas was once traveling through the forest with his **disciples**. Tired, the group settled down to rest in a **shady grove**. Tansen saw them.

‘Strangers in the forest!’ he said to himself. ‘It will be fun to **frighten** them’. He hid behind a tree and **roared** like a tiger. The little group of travelers **scattered** in fear but Swami Haridas called them together. “Don’t be afraid,” he said. “Tigers are not always dangerous. Let us look for this one.”

Suddenly, one of his men saw a small boy hiding behind a tree. “There are no tigers here, master,” he said. “Only this naughty boy.”

Swami Haridas did not punish him. He went to Tansen’s father and said, “Your son is very naughty. He is also very talented. I think I can make him a good singer.”



Tansen was ten years old when he went away with Swami Haridas. He lived with him for eleven years, learning music, and became a great singer. At about this time, his parents died. Mukandan Misra’s dying wish was that Tansen should visit Mohammad Ghaus of Gwalior. Mohammad Ghaus was a **holy** man. Mukandan Misra had long been **devoted** to him, and often visited him. While living in Gwalior with Mohammed Ghaus, Tansen was often taken to the **court** of Rani Mrignaini, who was a great musician herself. There he met and married one of the ladies of the court. Her name was Hussaini.

Hussaini also became Swami Haridas’s disciple. Tansen and Hussaini had five children who were all very musical.

Tansen had, by this time, become very famous. Sometimes he sang before **Emperor** Akbar, who was so impressed by him that he **insisted** Tansen should join his court.

Tansen went to Akbar’s court in 1556, and soon became a great favourite of the Emperor. Akbar would **call upon** Tansen to sing at any time during the day or night. Quite often he would just walk into Tansen’s house to hear him practise. He also gave him many **presents**. Some of

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the **courtiers** became **jealous** of Tansen. “We shall never be able to rest till Tansen is **ruined**,” they declared. One of the courtiers, Shaukat Mian, had a bright idea.

“Let us make him sing **Raga Deepak**”, he said.

“How will that help us?” asked another man.

“If Raga Deepak is properly sung, it makes the air so hot that the singer is **burnt to ashes**. Tansen is a very good singer. If he sings Raga Deepak, he will die, and we will be **rid** of him.”

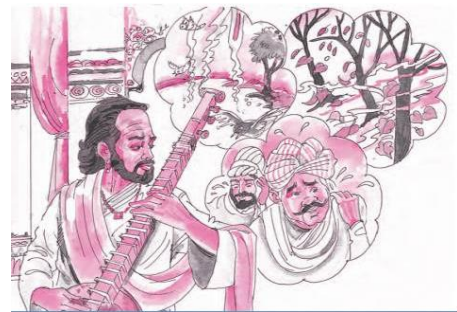
Shaukat Mian went to Akbar and said, “We don’t think Tansen is a great singer. Let us test him. Tell him to sing Raga Deepak. Only the greatest singers can sing it properly.”

“Of course he can sing it. Tansen can sing anything. ” Akbar said. Tansen was afraid, but could not **disobey** the king. “Very well, my lord,” he said, “but give me time to prepare myself.” Tansen went home. He had never been more **downcast** and unhappy. “I can sing the Raga,” he told his wife, “but the heat it **gives off** will not only **set** the lamps **alight**, it will also burn me to ashes.”

Then he had an idea. “If someone sings Raga Megh at the same time, and sings it properly, it will bring rain. **Perhaps** our daughter, Saraswati, and her friend, Rupvati, could do it,” he said

He taught the two girls to sing Raga Megh. They practiced night and day for two weeks. Tansen told them, “You must wait till the lamps start burning, and then you start singing.”

The legend goes that on the appointed day the whole town **assembled** to hear Tansen sing Raga Deepak. When he began to sing, the air became warm. Soon people in the audience were bathed in **perspiration**. The leaves on the trees have dried up and fell to the ground. As the music continued, birds fell dead because of the heat and the water in the rivers began to boil. People **cried out in terror** as flames **shot up out of nowhere** and lighted the lamps.



At once Saraswati and Rupvati began to sing Raga Megh. The sky clouded over and the rain came down. Tansen was saved. The story goes that he was very ill after this, and Akbar was sorry that he had caused him so much **suffering**. He punished Tansen’s **enemies**. When Tansen got well, the entire city **rejoiced**. Tansen remained Akbar’s court singer till 1585 when he died. He composed several new ragas.

Tansen’s **tomb** is in Gwalior. It is a place of **pilgrimage** for musicians.

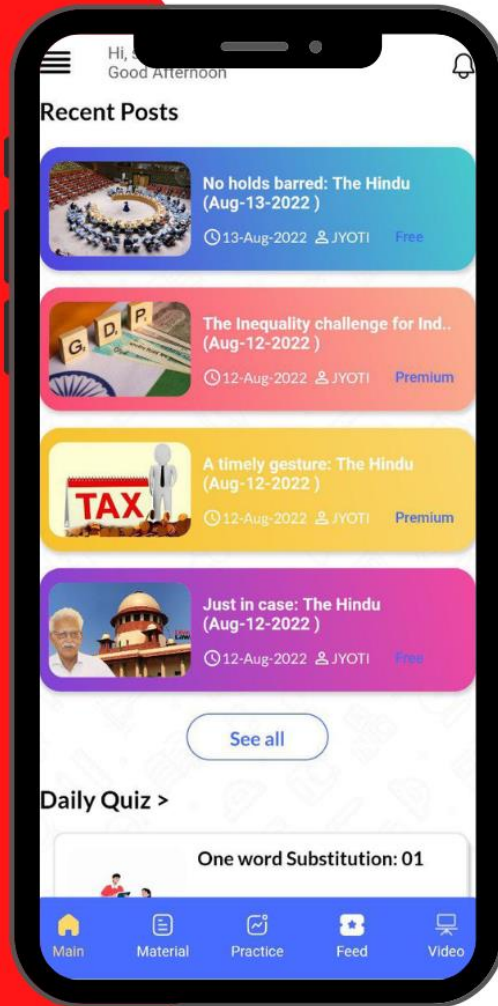
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Vocabulary

1. **Often** (adverb) – frequently, much, many times, repeatedly, usually अक्सर
2. **Imitate** (verb) – copy, emulate, simulate, reproduce नकल करना
3. **Call** (noun) – Sound आवाज़
4. **Shady** (adjective) – Sheltered from the glare of light or sultry heat. छायादार
5. **Grove** (noun) – A small growth of trees without underbrush वन
6. **Frighten** (verb) – scare, alarm, terrify, startle, intimidate डराना
7. **Roar** (verb) – (of a lion or other large wild animal) utter a full, deep, prolonged cry. गरजना
8. **Scatter** (verb) – To cause to separate and go in different directions फैलना
9. **Holy** (adjective) – divine, sacred, blessed, religious, saintly पवित्र
10. **Devoted** (adjective) – extremely loving and loyal समर्पित
11. **Court** (noun) – the official home of a queen or king
12. **Emperor** (noun) – king, ruler, sovereign, monarch, potentate सम्राट
13. **Insist** (verb) – assert, maintain, contend, claim, demand आग्रह करना
14. **Call on/upon** (phrasal verb) – Implore, Plead, Ask, Entreat, Request, Urge, Invoke बुलाना
15. **Present** (noun) – offer, gift उपहार
16. **Jealous** (adjective) – envious, covetous, green-eyed, resentful, grudging ईर्ष्यालु
17. **Ruin** (verb) – Destroy completely; damage irreparably बर्बाद करना
18. **Raga Deepak** (noun) – one of the six primal ragas of Indian Classical Music. It is believed to be created by Lord Shiva and there is a myth that singing it creates fire.
19. **Burn to ashes** (phrase) – to completely destroy (something) by burning जल कर राख कर देना
20. **Rid** (verb) – Relieve from छुटकारा पाना
21. **Disobey** (verb) – defy, flout, contravene, ignore, infringe अवज्ञा करना
22. **Downcast** (adjective) – depressed, despondent, dejected, downhearted, unhappy उदास

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23. **Give off** (phrasal verb) – emit, give out, radiate, discharge, send out निकालना (धुँआ आदि)
24. **Set alight** (phrase) – ignite, set on fire, light, kindle, burn जलाना
25. **Perhaps** (adverb) – possibly, maybe, probably, perchance, शायद
26. **Assemble** (verb) – gather, collect, put together, muster, इकट्ठा होना
27. **Perspiration** (noun) – sweat, sweating, diaphoresis पसीना
28. **Cry out** (phrasal verb) – call out, shout, yell चिल्लाना
29. **In terror** (phrase) – Nervously, Timidly, Uneasily, Apprehensively दहशत में
30. **Shoot up** (phrasal verb) – Rise dramatically बढ़ना
31. **Out of nowhere** (phrase) – appearing or happening suddenly and unexpectedly. नजाने कहां से
32. **Suffering** (noun) – pain, misery, agony, distress, anguish पीड़ा
33. **Enemy** (noun) – opponent, adversary, antagonist, rival, opposition शत्रु
34. **Rejoice** (verb) – Feel happiness or joy आनन्दित होना
35. **Tomb** (noun) – A place for the burial of a corpse समाधि
36. **Pilgrimage** (noun) – A journey to a sacred place तीर्थयात्रा



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