

Tansen

Tansen was the greatest musician of our country. He was the only child of a singer named Mukandan Misra. They lived in Behat near Gwalior. very naughty during his childhood. Once he ran away to play in the forests. There he learnt to imitate the calls of birds and animals perfectly.

Swami Haridas and his disciples were travelling through the forest. Tansen hid himself behind a tree. He roared like a tiger. The travellers scattered in fear. One of Swamiji's men found Tansen roaring. This made Swami Haridas say that Tansen was talented. Swami Haridas went to Tansen's father and told him about Tansen's talent. Tansen's father entrusted him to Swami Haridas's care. After learning music for eleven years, Tansen became a great singer.

It was about this time that his parents died. His father's dying wish was that he should go to Mohammad Ghaus of Gwalior.

Tansen stayed with Mohammad Ghaus in Gwalior. He was sometimes taken to the court of Rani Mrignaini. There he married Hussaini Hussaini also became a disciple of Swami Haridas. Tansen had five children. They were all very musical.

By then Tansen had become a famous musician. Sometimes, he also sang before Emperor Akbar. Akbar was much impressed. He asked Tansen to join his court. He joined Akbar's court. Soon he became Akbar's great favourite. He would call upon Tansen to sing anytime during the day or night. Very often he would walk into Tansen's house to hear him practise. He also gave him many presents. Some of the courtiers became jealous of Tansen. They wished to see him ruined. A courtier, named Shaukat Mian plotted to get him killed.

Shaukat Mian knew about Raga Deepak. He knew that if a good singer like Tansen sang it, the lamps would burn. However, the heat produced around the singer could burn him to ashes. So Tansen's enemies wanted him to sing Rag Deepak.

Shaukat Mian approached Akbar. He requested Akbar to make Tansen sing Raga Deepak. Akbar ordered Tansen to sing Raga Deepak. Tansen agreed but asked Akbar to give him sometime to prepare himself. He dared not say 'no' to the Emperor.

Tansen knew that the Raga Megh could bring rain. He taught his daughter, Saraswati and her friend Rupvati to sing the Raga Megh. Tansen started singing the Raga Deepak on the appointed day. Flames shot up from nowhere and lighted the lamps. Just then the two girls began to sing Raga Megh. The rain came down. It saved Tansen's life but he became very ill.

The entire city rejoiced when Tansen recovered. He composed several new ragas. His tomb in Gwalior is a place of pilgrimage for musicians.