

4.5 Tansen

■ ■ ■ Warming up! ■ ■ ■

- (a) Indian Classical music consists of many Ragas. Find out from an expert or the internet, the names of at least 10 Ragas and the time when they are sung to produce greater effect.

No.	Name of Raga	Effective when	No.	Name of Raga	Effective when
1.			6.		
2.			7.		
3.			8.		
4.			9.		
5.			10.		

- (b) Archaic words are those that are no longer used in a language, but sometimes their usage adds a historical or old-times flavour to a piece of writing.

Examples : • behold – look • afeared – frightened
 • forsooth – indeed • hither – this place

Now find out some archaic words from your mother tongue or another language that you are proficient in and write down at least ten of them, and against each, their modern equivalent and meaning in English.

Archaic Language

	Archaic Word	Modern Equivalent	Meaning in English
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			
6.			
7.			
8.			
9.			
10.			

- (c) There are many legends about the ‘nine gems’ in Akbar’s Court. These are popular tales and they may not have a historical basis. Can you name some of the nine gems and the stories associated with them?

Tansen

- ◆ How did Akbar reward Tansen for the ecstatic effect of his singing?
- ◆ What happened to Tansen when he sang the Deepak Raga with great vigour?
- ◆ How did he come back to normal, again?
- ◆ What did Tansen tell about his Teacher to Akbar?
- ◆ Why did Akbar change his kingly attire?



Tansen, the singer, in great Akbar's Court
Won great renown; through the Badshahi Fort

His voice rang like the sound of silver bells
And Akbar ravished heard. The story tells

How the King praised him, gave him many a gem,
Called him chief jewel in his diadem.

One day the singer sang the Song of Fire,
The Deepak Râg , and burning like a pyre

His body burst into consuming flame.
To cure his burning heart a maiden came

And sang Malhar, the song of water cold,
Till health returned, and comfort as of old.

— Mighty thy Teacher must be and divine, —
Great Akbar said; — magic indeed is thine,

Learnt at his feet. — Then happy Tansen bowed
And said, — Beyond the world's ignoble crowd,

- ignoble : not worthy
- celestial : heavenly

Scorning its wealth, remote and far-away
He dwells within a cave of Himalay. —

— Could I but see him once, — desired the King,
— Sit at his feet awhile, and listening

Hear his celestial song, I would deny
My state and walk in robes of poverty. —

Then said Tansen. — As you desire, Huzoor,
Indeed 'twere better as a slave and poor

To come; for he, lifted above the things
Of earth, disdains to sing to earthly kings. —

Long was the road, and Akbar as a slave
Followed Tansen who rode towards the cave

High in the mountains. At the singer's feet
They knelt and prayed with supplication sweet:

— Towards thy shrine, lo, we have journeyed long,
O Holy Master, bless us with thy song! —

Then Ostad, won by their humility,
Sang songs of peace and high felicity;

The Malkous Raga all ecstatic rang
Till birds and beasts, enchanted as he sang,

Gathered to hear, o'er Akbar's dreaming soul
He felt the waves of heavenly rapture roll,

But, as he turned to speak his words of praise,
Ostad had vanished from his wondering gaze.

— Tell me, Tansen, what theme this is that holds
The soul enchanted, and the heart enfolds

In high delight — ; and, when he knew the name,
— Tell me, — again he said, — could you the same

Theme sing to lure my heart to paths untrod? —
— Ah no, to thee I sing; he sings to God. —

- *Hazrat Inayat Khan*

- ◆ What was the magical effect of Ostad's rendering the Malkous Raga?
- ◆ What happened before Akbar could come out of his trance?
- ◆ Why did Tansen's singing not produce the same effect as that by Ostad?

- supplication : humble request
- felicity : great happiness; also, pleasing style
- theme : here it means a musical composition.

1. Pick out Archaic words from the poem and give their modern equivalents

	Archaic Words	Modern Equivalents
(a)		
(b)		
(c)		
(d)		
(e)		

2. Who said the following, to whom, and when?

- (a) "Mighty thy Teacher must be and divine."
- (b) "He dwells within a cave of Himalay."
- (c) "As you desire, Huzoor."
- (d) "O Holy Master, bless us with thy song!"
- (e) Ah no, to thee I sing: he sings to God."

3. Rearrange the following in their proper order as in the poem. Write the serial number against each line:-

- (a) The Ostad sang the Malkous Raga enchantingly.
- (b) Akbar followed Tansen, dressed miserably.
- (c) I request you to sing such a song that will I experience unmatched joy.
- (d) Ostad was nowhere to be seen.
- (e) O Divine Teacher, please gift us the joy of your song.
- (f) One day, the singer sang Deepak Raga in the court.
- (g) Akbar expressed his wish to meet the Teacher.
- (h) He experienced heavenly delight.
- (i) Tansen sings to please the earthly king but Ostad devotes his songs to God.
- (j) She sang Raga Malhar, which had a cooling effect.

4. Write the reason in your own words.

- (a) Akbar strongly desired to hear Ostad sing.
- (b) Akbar had to dress like a slave.
- (c) After the song Ostad had vanished.
- (d) Ostad's song was more elating than Tansen's songs.



5. What message does the poet wish to convey through this narrative poem, 'Tansen'?

6. Summarise this poem in your own words in 8 to 10 lines, highlighting only the main points.