



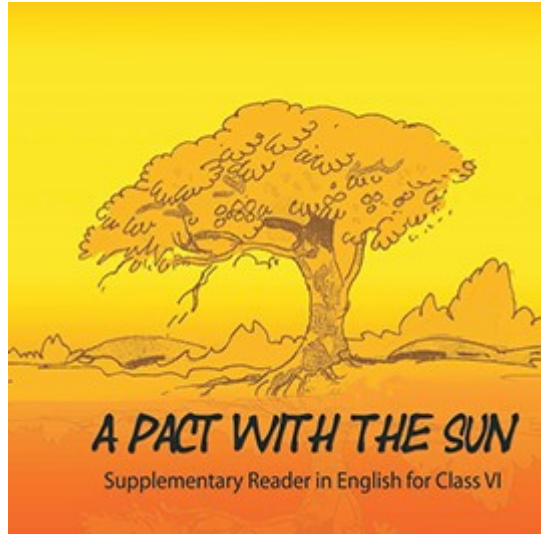
Learn English Through Stories

A1 Stories

Elementary Level

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# A PACT WITH THE SUN

Supplementary Reader in English for Class VI

# 1. 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.

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A famous singer named Swami Haridas was once travelling 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 travellers 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 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 practised 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 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.

## 2. THE MONKEY AND THE CROCODILE

ONCE, on the bank of a river, a monkey made a home for himself in a tree laden with fruit. He lived in it happily eating to his heart's content the fruit of his choice.

The monkey was happy but lonely and wanted a companion to talk to and share the fruits with. But there was no one around, not even another monkey, till one day a crocodile appeared on the riverside.

"Hello, there," said the monkey. "Do you live in this river? Would you like to eat some fruit?"

"Good morning," replied the crocodile politely. "I did come here in search of food for myself and my wife. Nice of you to offer me fruit."

The monkey plucked some from the nearest branch and threw them down. The crocodile found them delicious. "Thanks," he said. "May I have some on my next visit?"

"Certainly, as many as you like and some for your wife too," said the monkey. "Do come again. I'm rather lonely here".

The crocodile visited the monkey regularly and ate the fruits which his host threw down. He took some home for his wife. The monkey and the crocodile were now the best of friends. They talked and were never tired of talking. They talked about birds and animals, about the villages nearby and the difficulties villagers faced in raising good crops for lack of rain.

One day, the crocodile stayed with the monkey longer than usual. His wife was annoyed waiting and waiting managing the little crocodiles that had just been hatched. She said, "Who is this friend of yours you are so fond of?"

"Oh, he is a very nice monkey," he replied. "He lives on a fruit-tree. He sends fruits for you every day. You don't expect me to climb trees, do you?"

"A nice monkey, I'm sure," replied the wife with obvious sarcasm. "If you ask me, this monkey should be my food. I want to eat his heart so much."

"What a foolish thing to say!" shouted the crocodile. "I can't kill a friend, though I won't mind a monkey occasionally for a change of taste."

"You bring him here," ordered the wife. "I want to see him."

“So you can eat him. Never!” declared her husband.

His wife was furious and she dived in to hide herself at the bottom of the river leaving the little ones to pester their father.

The crocodile was in a serious dilemma. He loved his wife and was very fond of his friend too. Finally, he decided to be on the side of his wife. She was his life-partner after all. ‘I know it’s a sin to betray a friend, but I have no choice,’ he said to himself. ‘I’ll invite the monkey home and hope for the best.’

“My wife wants you over for a meal, dear friend,” said the crocodile when he visited the monkey next. “You must come home with me today.”

“With pleasure,” said the monkey. “I’m no swimmer, but can ride on your back.” And they set out.

In the middle of the river, where the current was the strongest, the crocodile could no longer hide his intention. “Sorry, my friend,” he said hesitatingly, “but I have to go under water now. I’ve brought you here to kill you. My wife cannot survive without eating your heart. Good bye.

The monkey was scared and distressed. But he was sensible and clever like all monkeys. He kept a cool head. Calmly he said, “I’d do anything for you and your family. You are my only friend. After all, what is a monkey’s heart compared with the life of a crocodile’s wife? But how foolish could you be? Why didn’t you tell me before? I’d have brought my heart along.”

“But where is your heart?” asked the crocodile innocently. “I thought you carried it all the time.”

“Of course not. It’s there on the tree. Let’s swim back at once and get it. Your wife must be waiting,” replied the monkey gaining confidence.

“Oh dear! What a mistake!” hissed the crocodile. They laughed loudly as the crocodile took a full turn to reach the tree.

On the river-bank, the monkey jumped on to the tree and heaved a deep sigh of relief. He plucked a fruit or two from the nearest branch and throwing them down said, “Let your wife have some fruit rather than my heart. Fresh fruits are good for mind and body. Good bye, friend, and if you don’t mind, we won’t meet again.” The crocodile, sadder and wiser, shed a few tears which were genuine and turned back to go home. He was in a hurry to tell his wife a thing or two.