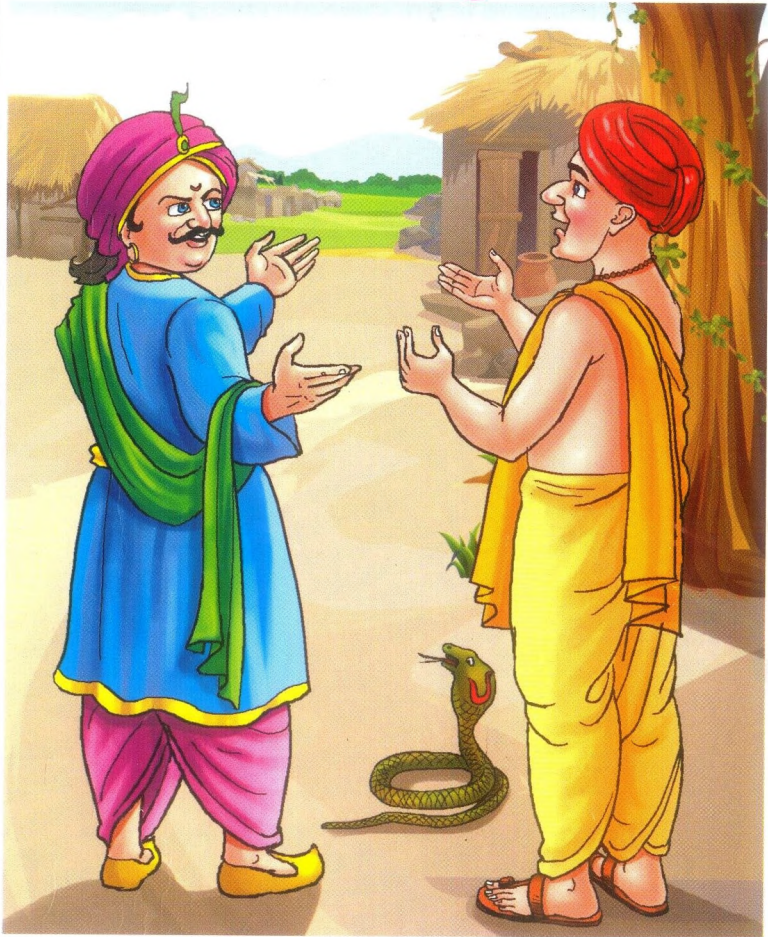


EVERGREEN

More Stories of

# Tenali Raman



15 Stories in Large Print



**EVERGREEN**

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**Tenali Raman**

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## **More Stories Of Tenali Raman**

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## Vikat Kavi Tenali Raman

**T**enali Raman was a wise and witty poet in King Krishna Dev Raya's court. He was one of the *Asht Diggaj* or the Eight Poets who were regarded as the eight pillars of the King's literary assembly.

Tenali Raman was the favourite of King Krishna Dev Raya. He used his wit and intelligence to get out of tricky situations and to help those in need. That is why tales of this 'Birbal of the South' have been popular for centuries.

Right from his childhood, Tenali Raman was the centre of attraction among the children of his age group. As a child, Tenali Raman was very mischievous. His naughtiness cheered some and troubled others. In the same way, his activities were a pleasure to some and an embarrassment to others. Tenali Raman was popularly known as 'Vikat Kavi' which means 'a jesting poet.'

Legend has it that one day, a sage passing by the village, watched little Tenali Raman closely and recognised the 'celestial spark' shining from within him. The sage, being on the devotional

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path, could also identify the inherent qualities of leadership and intelligence in Tenali Raman. He asked Tenali Raman to accompany him to a certain place. With the natural quality of fearlessness, Tenali Raman accepted the invitation without even asking, "Where to?"

The sage and Tenali Raman walked a little away from the crowd and reached Goddess Mahakali's temple in the woods.

The sage performed a special puja to please the Goddess Mahakali. He said to Tenali, "My dear child! I am growing old and gradually losing the physical strength to perform puja to seek the blessings of the Goddess Mother. You have all the qualities to please the Mother and receive Her blessings."

He then whispered a *mantra* into Tenali's ear and advised, "Chant this *mantra* continuously and pray to the Goddess every evening. Use all your concentration and strength to please the Mother. Goddess Mahakali will shower many boons on you." Saying this, the sage left the place and never returned. Soon, it became a routine for Tenali to go to the Mahakali Temple in the woods. There

he chanted the *mantra* and prayed to the Goddess every evening.

Time passed by and Tenali continued his prayers. He chanted the *mantra* with great devotion. To his surprise, one day, Goddess Kali with her hundred and eight heads and eight arms, stood in front of him, when he finished chanting.

When his eyes fell on the Goddess, Tenali started to laugh. This made the Goddess very angry and She demanded to know why he was laughing at Her.

Tenali Raman begged Her pardon and said, "When we get a cold and our nose runs, we find it difficult to manage one nose with two hands. I was wondering how you would manage hundred and eight noses with eight hands, if you ever caught a cold! I found this thought very funny."

The Goddess couldn't help smiling at this reply. She gave him a boon by which he could always make others happy with his wit. She also said that henceforth he would be called 'Vikat Kavi.' Tenali Raman was not satisfied with this boon. He argued with the Goddess that the boon would do

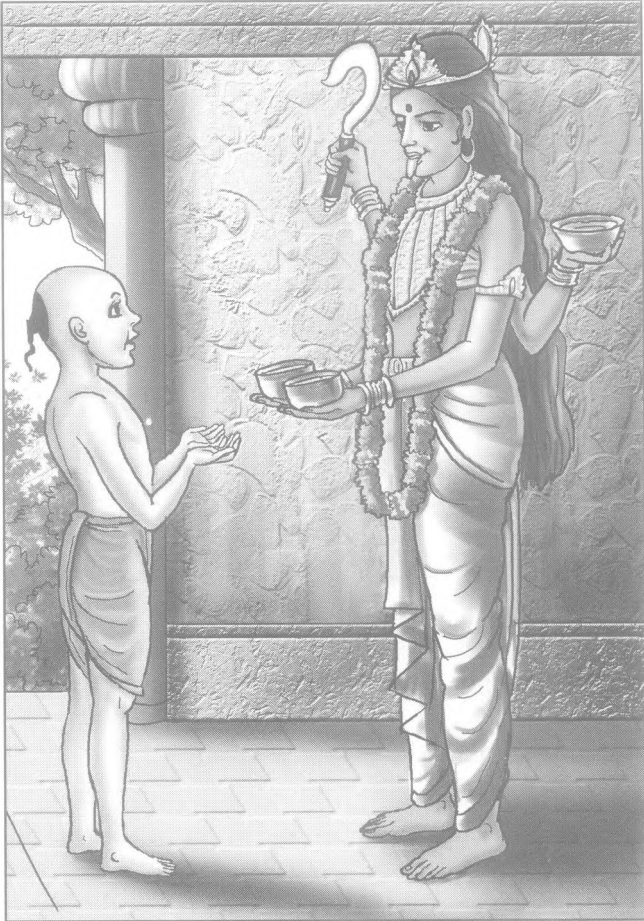
## More Stories of Tenali Raman

him no good. Then the Goddess brought forward two bowls in her hand. One golden bowl had the milk of wisdom, and the other silver bowl had the curd of wealth. Tenali Raman looked at Her with shining eyes. The Goddess continued, "If you consume the milk, you will be a great scholar. In the other case, if you wish to take the curd, you will be blessed with riches all your life. However, choose with caution. You are allowed to take only one bowl."

The Goddess offered the bowls to Tenali Raman and asked him to choose any one bowl. He had to drink from it to be blessed with that boon.

Not bothered by the Goddess' words, Tenali grabbed both the bowls from the Goddess' hands and with lightening speed, gulped down the contents. Goddess Mahakali was puzzled by this act and questioned him, "What did you do?"

Tenali Raman answered humbly, "O Mother! Jagadmata! What is the use of becoming a scholar without any wealth? Similarly, there will not be any purpose to the riches without intelligence.



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Hence, I thought I should have both of them and drank the contents of both the utensils. Kindly pardon me, Mother, if I had made any mistake.”

Mother Mahakali was pleased to see Tenali's frankness and wisdom at such a tender age. She blessed Tenali Raman with two boons before She disappeared. She said, “You will have both intellect and wealth. But there will be problems with the riches you gather by associating with the rulers. The poetry you author will be filled with uniqueness.”

Mother Mahakali also warned him that to be so blessed would make others envious, and therefore, he would make a lot of enemies. But he would also have the wisdom to get out of any unpleasant situation.

Tenali Raman was extremely happy over the happenings of the evening. He thought the boons were most suited to his nature and versatile personality. Since Raman hailed from the village Tenali, he was called Tenali Raman and since he was blessed by Goddess Kali, he was called *Vikat*

*Kavi* Tenali Raman.

One day, the Rajguru of Vijaynagar visited the temple of Kali at Tenali. He promised Tenali Raman that he would introduce him to the Emperor when he visited Vijaynagar next.

Finally, when Tenali Raman left Tenali and went to Vijaynagar, the Rajguru obviously did not recognise him. Tenali Raman reminded the Rajguru of his promise, but he was ignored.

Not to be deprived of his chance of meeting King Krishna Dev Raya, one morning, Tenali waited near the River Tungabhadra. The Rajguru came for his morning bath to the river.

Once the Rajguru finished his bath, Tenali Raman jumped onto his back and told him to carry him. The Rajguru had no option as he didn't want to create a scene. A few people, who saw this, went and reported this to the King.

The King flew into a royal rage, and climbed into his carriage and came to find the culprit and punish him. However, Tenali Raman saw the

## **More Stories of Tenali Raman**

royal carriage from afar. He nimbly jumped down from the Rajguru's shoulders. He then hoisted the Rajguru on his own shoulders. When the King saw this, he was impressed. Just then, the Emperor of China had sent some peaches to the King with a note stating that the fruit gave long life to anyone who ate them. As the fruits were being shown to the King, Tenali quickly picked up one of the juiciest peaches and bit into it.

The King was angry. "You've bitten into a fruit meant for me!" he roared. "For this you must die!" As Tenali was being taken away by the royal guards, he sighed dramatically and exclaimed, "What a deceitful man the Emperor of China is! He says the fruit gives long life. I took just one bite and I'm about to die. O, what fate awaits the one who eats the entire fruit!"

The King was greatly amused by Tenali's wit. He not only pardoned him but also gave him a dozen of the peaches he had risked his life for. Tenali was also made a Jester in the King's court.

Thus, Tenali Raman's name grew big and he made his presence felt in history.



## Who Is Cunning?

Tenali Raman, also known as Tenali Ramakrishna, was a wise and witty poet in King Krishna Dev Raya's court. He lived during the 16th century in the Vijaynagar Empire.

King Krishna Dev Raya had the habit of posing interesting questions to Tenali Raman during the evening walks that they took together in the royal gardens.

One evening, the King asked Tenali, "Who is more cunning when it comes to money, the priests or the businessmen?"

Tenali knew that the King was setting up a debate.

The King continued without waiting for Tenali's response, "I think the priests are more cunning. They make a good living, conducting rituals and reciting old texts. It is an easy life compared to all the hardships that businessmen have to bear. So, I think that the priests are cleverer in their way of life."

Tenali understood that the King was making fun of Tenali, whose forefathers were priests.

## **More Stories of Tenali Raman**

“I think priests are simpletons, Your Highness,” said Tenali. “They are so lost in their world of prayer and rituals that they are not as street-smart as the businessmen. Since the businessmen deal with a wide variety of problems in the world of commerce and trade on a day-to-day basis, it makes them cleverer when it comes to money.”

“You will have to prove that to me. Only then will I agree with your point of view,” said the King.

“I will demonstrate the difference to you tomorrow,” said Tenali confidently.

The next day, Tenali asked the King to hide and listen to his conversation with a priest whom he had summoned to the palace.

The priest, Ram Sharma, was in charge of the morning rituals at the local temple of the Goddess. Ram Sharma was very surprised to be called to the palace.

Tenali seated him in the palace guest room and began speaking very seriously, “Ram Sharma, I need to ask a very important favour from you.

The King has ordered me to present before him the knot of hair from the head of the best priest I know. That turns out to be you. So, I request you to give me the knot of hair on your head. I am willing to pay a price for it. A barber is ready and waiting in the next room to do the deed as soon as you agree.”

Hearing this, Ram Sharma was shocked. The knot of hair on the head was a symbol of his priesthood. Without it, he would not be able to show his face in public. He would lose his job. But this was the courtier Tenali himself asking for it and that too for the King! Ram Sharma began to sweat with worry.

In a trembling voice, he spoke, “How can I ever refuse you? But you see this knot of hair is very important to me. My livelihood depends on it. If I lose it, I have to stay away from the temple till it grows back. I cannot possibly appear in public till then.”

“I understand your difficulty,” said Tenali, “that is why I said you can put a price on it.”

## More Stories of Tenali Raman



Ram Sharma said, "I do not know how to ask a price for this knot of hair. But I think if you can give me enough money to make a trip to my native village faraway, it should work out. I can go there and hide at my sister's house till the hair grows back. So, please pay me one gold coin for the journey."

"Very well," smiled Tenali, "You can go now, Ram Sharma. Carry on with your work for the time being. Once I have the gold coin ready, I will send for you again. Do not talk about our conversation to anybody else."

A slightly relieved Ram Sharma bowed and left. The King entered the room. Tenali said, "As you heard, this priest was willing to give up his livelihood for just a single gold coin. He could not even think of putting a price on this ridiculous transaction and he was afraid to refuse. Now let us see how the businessman responds to this offer. I have asked the greatest businessman in the city, Dhandas, to come by. Please wait and watch from the other room."

## **More Stories of Tenali Raman**

After a few minutes, Dhandas came to the palace. Like Ram Sharma, Dhandas was also surprised to be called by Tenali Raman.

When Dhandas was seated, Tenali repeated, “I need to ask a very important favour from you. The King has ordered me to present before him the knot of hair from the head of the best businessman I know. That turns out to be you. So, I request you to give me the knot of hair on your head. I am willing to pay a price for it. A barber is ready and waiting in the next room to do the deed as soon as you agree.”

Dhandas was slightly taken aback by this. Since he was a businessman who had dealings all over the kingdom and abroad, he was used to hearing strange offers and bargains. He took a deep breath and thought for a few seconds.

Then he said to Tenali, “I have spent a whole lifetime taking care of this knot of hair. It is my proud possession. Every day, I wash it and apply expensive oils on it. I take great pride in my shiny knot of hair. It will be heartbreaking for me to part

with it. Moreover, it is a symbol of my family's honour during rituals and ceremonies."

"I understand this is difficult for you," said Tenali, "that is why I am willing to pay for it."

"Considering that I am now fifty years old and have had this knot of hair for around thirty-five years, I think roughly I have spent at least one hundred gold coins worth of oils on it," said Dhandas. "Very well then, I will pay you one hundred gold coins," stated Tenali.

Dhandas added, "But that is not all. This knot of hair represents my family's honour. If I lose it, I have to conduct several ceremonies to regain the lost honour. So that price is also associated with it." Tenali asked, "How much would that be?"

Dhandas answered, "At least one thousand gold coins." Tenali said, "So shall we fix this deal for one thousand one hundred gold coins? I have a barber waiting in the other room."

Dhandas said, "I think that is fair enough. As soon as you make the payment, I will declare that this

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hair belongs to the King.” Tenali ordered a guard to bring a bag of one thousand one hundred gold coins. He handed the bag over to Dhandas. Then Tenali called the barber.

As the barber got ready to cut off the knot of hair, Dhandas jumped up from the chair and said, “I cannot allow this knot of hair to be cut off. Now it belongs to the King and not me. You have already paid me one thousand one hundred gold coins for it and I have accepted the price. So I will protect this knot of hair until the King himself comes to me and says that he needs it.” Saying this, Dhandas walked out from the palace.

Tenali had a wide smile on his face when the King came out of hiding from the next room.

“I agree Tenali. The businessman who managed to pocket the gold coins and keep his knot of hair also intact is more cunning than the priest about money matters,” said King Krishna Dev Raya.



## A Beautiful Relation

**K**ing Krishna Dev Raya was very fond of horse riding and racing. Thus, the best horses from around the world were imported to Vijayanagar Empire. The King's stable boasted of several breeds from Afghanistan, Arabia, Sri Lanka and Bhutan.

The cavalry of the kingdom was several thousand strong. The King also had a full-fledged hospital for the horses. Vijayanagar had several ranches and pastures dedicated to horses. Just like the great Mauryan Emperor Ashok, King Raya was also a promoter of animal rights and welfare. Near the capital city, the King had set aside huge tracks of land to which old horses could retire to.

The King's personal possession was the majestic Arabian horse. The King enjoyed riding the horse long distances during the weekends with a bunch of courtiers. Tenali Raman used to dread these outings. If he was picked to accompany the King, he knew that the King would make fun of Tenali's old and feeble horse the entire day.

Tenali's horse, Vegamitra, actually belonged to his father. Tenali did not have the heart to get rid

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of old Vegamitra. Even in his old age, Vegamitra could still efficiently carry Tenali to nearby villages.

One day, a wealthy farmer passed by Tenali's village. Noticing old Vegamitra with Tenali on the street, the farmer planned to buy the horse. He wanted him to do some odd jobs in his fields. Hoping that Tenali would sell Vegamitra, the farmer said, "I think your horse looks quite good, so I will give you 10 gold coins for him."

"He doesn't look so good, and he is not for sale," Tenali replied.

The farmer insisted, "I think he looks just fine and I will up the price to 50 gold coins."

"He doesn't look so fine. In fact, he is quite old," Tenali said, "but if you want him that much, he's yours."

The next day, the farmer came back looking angry. He went to Tenali's house and screamed, "You sold me a half blind horse. You cheated me!"

Tenali calmly replied, "I told you he didn't look so good, didn't I?"

The farmer took his money back and left.

That Saturday, Tenali promptly arrived at the palace on Vegamitra. Like Tenali, Vegamitra also did not like the long journeys with the King.

The King was already on his horse, impatient to begin the journey. As soon as Tenali arrived, the party of riders set off down the road to the east. The King breathed in the fresh morning air and trotted down the unpaved road. Tenali followed a few feet behind him, ensuring that Vegamitra was not being stressed unduly.

Soon, they came across an uprooted tree that was blocking the road. The King hastened his horse, jumped over the tree trunk and turned around from the other side. "Let me see you do that with your horse, Tenali," said the King mockingly.

Tenali smiled sheepishly and went around the tree trunk. All the others jumped over like the King and laughed at Tenali.

By noon, they were several miles away from the city. Nearing a village, they found that the recent

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rains had created a narrow creek across the road. Though the creek was a few feet wide, it was a quick and easy jump for the King's Arabian horse.

The others also raced their horses and made them clear the creek. Vegamitra refused to do any such stunt. Moreover, the poor old horse refused even to walk across the creek.

Tenali had to get down from the horse and lead it across. He had to wade knee deep in the muddy creek along with Vegamitra. Tenali was pained to see that his old faithful horse was having a hard time. The King and the courtiers, however, had a great time, laughing at this scene.

During the rest of the afternoon also, on several occasions, the King would perform some stunt or the other with his horse. All the courtiers would imitate the stunt and then they would all turn to Tenali and say, "Tenali! Can your horse do it?"

By evening, they had neared the eastern edge of the Kingdom. The King planned to stay at the royal retreat nearby for the night and return to the capital next day. When Tenali came to know

A Beautiful Relation



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of their location, an idea struck him.

From behind the other courtiers, he shouted to the King who was way up front, “Your Majesty, I have a challenge. There is something I can make Vegamitra do, that none of your horses can do. I guarantee that none of you can make your horses do it either.”

“Don’t be ridiculous, Tenali,” laughed the King, “What can your weak horse possibly do that my mighty Arabian cannot?”

“Would you like to make a bet on that, O King?” asked Tenali.

“Absolutely,” said the King confidently, “Let us make it worthwhile. What do you want if you win this challenge?”

“Nothing special,” said Tenali, “I only wish the King and his men will promise me never to make fun of any animal or human because of their age.”

“Very well,” agreed Krishna Dev Raya, “Let us see what your beloved Vegamitra can do.”

“Follow me, please,” said Tenali taking a left turn from the road and galloping away. The King and the courtiers followed. They wondered what Tenali was up to. In a few minutes, they reached a low picket fence beyond which stretched lush green pastures as far as the eye could see. Tenali Raman dismounted swiftly and led Vegamitra to a small gate in the fence.

Carefully, Tenali removed Vegamitra's saddle, reins and bridle. He hugged his long time companion horse and then gently patted him till he entered through the gates. Once inside the pasture, Vegamitra neighed loudly. Suddenly, more and more horses began to appear from the edges of the pasture. Vegamitra started trotting towards them. Tenali stood by the fence watching.

The King and the courtiers realised that they were standing at one of the edges of the vast retirement pasture the King had set up for old horses. Tenali now turned to King and asked, “Your Majesty, you saw what I did with Vegamitra now. Let us see you do that with your horse.”

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Of course, the King and the courtiers had never thought of parting with their young, healthy horses. Tenali continued, "I had come to this pasture several times in the past months hoping to let go of Vegamitra. But each time, I was selfish and did not want to suffer the sense of loss. So, I would take him back with me, though it would have been better for him to be here with the other old horses. But your pointed words pained me today and made me realise that I was insulting the great service that Vegamitra had done to my family by making him continue to serve me even in his old age. Thank you for opening my eyes and helping me let go of him."

Then Tenali said, "But since clearly none of you are willing to let go of your horses, I think I have won the challenge. So, from now on, please do not make fun of anyone because of their old age."

The King and the courtiers were ashamed of having made fun of Tenali and Vegamitra. They promised never to insult old and feeble humans and animals in future.



## The Strange Philosophy

**I**n the capital city of Vijaynagar, there lived a washerwoman by the name Peepli with her husband, Damodar, and daughter, Chameli.

Peepli was known in the town for her excellent service. Her husband used a bullock cart to transport people's laundry. Peepli would make the clothes shine like new after each wash. She used the ancient Indian formula for soap and the technique of repeatedly beating the wet clothes on a smoothed flat stone.

However, there was a problem. Peepli believed that just like the clothes she dealt with every day, she could keep her husband also, as a man of clean character, by beating him! Her parents used to beat her as a child with the belief that it would make her well disciplined. Poor Peepli carried this wrong idea to her adulthood.

Damodar became a weak and depressed man because of Peepli's beatings. He bore it because he loved his family. Peepli, on the other hand, began believing in her own foolish idea. Because there was no resistance from Damodar, she continued

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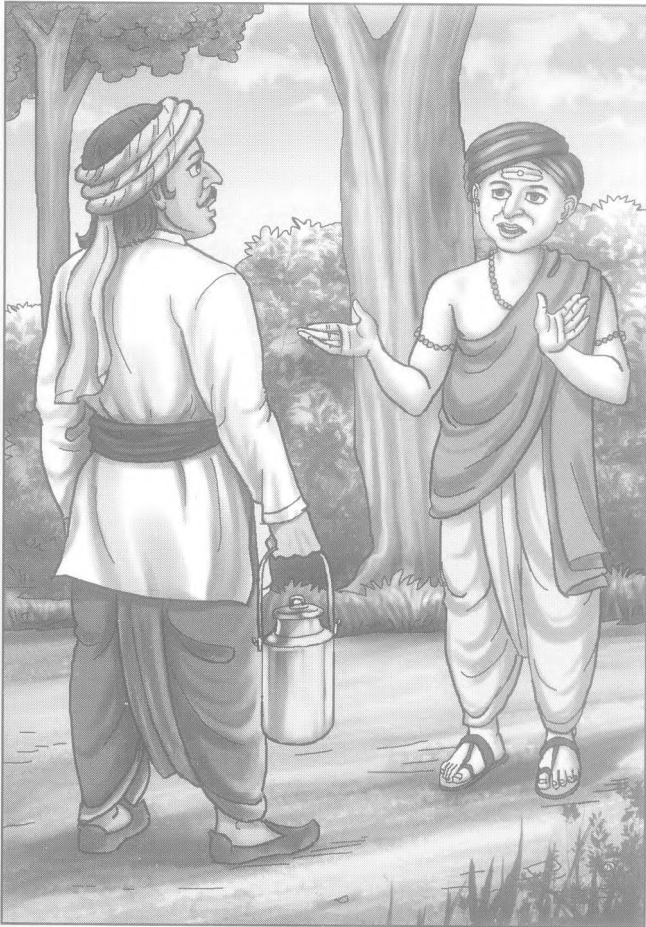
her ignorant behaviour towards him. Even though Chameli grew up to be a very beautiful young lady, nobody came forward to marry her. All the young men in the town were afraid that she would also follow her mother's philosophy of beating her husband. Damodar's worry grew day by day about not being able to find a suitable groom for his daughter.

One evening, a courtier was carrying a can of milk to his house. He met Tenali Raman and stopped him on the street. He said he had a problem and wanted Tenali Raman's advice.

"What's your problem?" asked Tenali. "My problem is that though I never drink wine, I feel intoxicated when I get up in the morning," explained the man. "What do you drink last thing at night?" asked Tenali, eyeing the milk can in his hand. "My wife gives me milk at night."

"Just as I thought," said Tenali Raman. "That is the cause of your problem."

"Milk causes intoxication?" asked the astonished courtier.



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“It is like this,” explained Tenali Raman. “You drink the milk and go to sleep. You toss around in your sleep. The milk gets churned. It turns into butter. Butter churned, turns into cheese. Cheese turns to fat. Fat turns into sugar. Sugar turns into alcohol. So you wake up with alcohol in your stomach. That is why you feel intoxicated in the morning.”

“So what do I do?” asked the confused courtier.

“Simple. Don’t drink the milk,” said clever Tenali. “Here, give it to me.”

And taking the milk can from the courtier, Tenali Raman walked away, leaving the courtier wondering. The courtier’s wife scolded him for being foolish. The courtier realised that he was fooled by Tenali Raman and made up his mind to take revenge.

When the courtier heard about Chameli, he decided to make this a challenge for Tenali Raman. He promptly went to Damodar and told him that Tenali Raman would be very interested in marrying his daughter Chameli. With great hope, Damodar hurried to Tenali Raman’s house.

Tenali patiently listened to Damodar's story. He realised that the courtier had set him up. But his heart filled with compassion for Damodar. He also decided to put an end to the abusive and ignorant behaviour of Peepli, and change their lives for the better.

"I cannot get married for the next couple of years," said Tenali Raman to Damodar after a moment's thought, "But I promise to find you a suitable son-in-law very soon. For that purpose, you have to stay at my place for the next two months. Please inform your wife and daughter about this, pack your bags and come over."

Damodar came to stay with Tenali Raman from the next day. Over the course of the months, since he was spared the abuse every night, Damodar grew healthier and cheerful. Tenali Raman in the mean time found a young man, Ishwar, who had come to the city in search of a job.

Ishwar was a skilled, strong blacksmith who had not heard of the husband-beating stories of Peepli. Tenali helped Ishwar set up his small business in

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the city. Subsequently, he introduced Damodar to Ishwar and brought up the idea of Ishwar marrying Chameli. Everyone was happy about the proposal.

On the day of the marriage, Peepli called Chameli and gave her an old, hard pair of leather shoes. "My dear daughter!" said Peepli. "Human minds are like the clothes we wear. They need regular cleaning so that they remain in good condition for long. Nobody wants to walk around in dirty clothes. A husband's mind is like his clothes. It is the responsibility of his wife to keep it clean. You have seen how I use shoes like these to keep your father disciplined. It is very important for you to discipline and have control over your husband. So, use these shoes for that purpose and you will have a happy life."

Poor Chameli did not know any better. She was as innocent as she was pretty. The obedient daughter decided to begin the course of daily beatings for her husband from the first night itself. Tenali also had conversations with Damodar and Ishwar on that day. Both men were pleased about the advice they got from Tenali. They thanked him for his wisdom

and happily went to the wedding ceremony. That night, when Ishwar came to the bedroom, Chameli promptly raised the shoes to beat him. But she was surprised to find that Ishwar had come to the bedroom with his hammer. It was a funny sight to see the new husband holding the hammer and the new wife holding the shoes in the bedroom!

Both of them could not help laughing at each other. Ishwar told Chameli what Tenali Raman had told him. Hearing that, Chameli understood the foolishness of her mother's advice.

She was happy that she did not resort to the foolish, violent behaviour towards her husband. In the mean time, Damodar was back in his house with Peepli after being away for two months. As it was time for bed, Peepli fetched the shoes to give Damodar the daily quota of beating. She had been missing the ritual for the past two months. But she was in for a surprise.

Damodar was stronger after his long stay with Tenali Raman. He blocked Peepli's beating and told her that there was a change of plan from that

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night. He went outside their home and fetched the whip that he used to guide the bullocks to pull his cart.

He said to a surprised Peepli, "My dear wife! Tenali Raman told me that just as you beat me like your clothes to keep my mind clean, I should also whip you like the bullocks to guide you in the right direction. I know you have taught the same lesson to your daughter. Do not worry, Ishwar will be using his blacksmith's hammer to shape Chameli's mind if she intends to beat his heart clean!"

Peepli realised the grave error that she had been committing. She was ashamed of herself. She cried and begged forgiveness from Damodar for all the years of abuse. She realised that violence was never a means to influence and improve a human mind. Damodar consoled her. He was happy that his wife promised to change her ways.

They decided to visit Tenali Raman the very next day and thank him for transforming their lives for the better.



## Tenali Raman – An Eye Opener

**T**enali Raman was one of the great courtiers of King Krishna Dev Raya's court. Though extremely wise, he believed in teaching everything through fun. So, he was called Vikat Kavi, the humorous poet.

One day, a wealthy merchant came to the court of King Krishna Dev Raya. He was from some other country. After saluting the King, he said, "Great King! People tell me that you have lot of wise courtiers. If you permit me, I want to test them."

The King became curious and agreed. The merchant then gave the King three identical looking dolls and said, "Sir, these dolls look the same but they are actually different. Please ask your wise courtiers to find out the difference. I will come back after 30 days. If none of them can find it, I will assume that you do not have any wise minister."

The King agreed and the merchant went away.

Then the King called all his ministers except Tenali and gave them each three days, time to find out the difference between the dolls. None of

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them were able to find it out. The worried King called Tenali and gave him the dolls.

“I did not trouble you earlier, because I thought it must be very simple. But so far none of the ministers have been able to spot the difference. I was also not able to do so. The honour of our country now depends on you,” said the King.

Tenali took the dolls and spent three days with them. Though it was very difficult, he finally found the difference. The next day, he went to the court. The merchant also came that day. Then Tenali announced, “These dolls are different. One is very good, another medium and another bad.”

The merchant asked, “Which is which?”

Tenali showed them a tiny hole in the ears of the dolls. He took the first doll and put a very thin wire through this hole. The wire came out of the doll’s mouth. For the next doll, the wire came out of its other ear. For the third doll, the wire went in and never came out.

Tenali said, “The first doll, where the wire came out of its mouth, is bad. It represents people,

to whom, if we tell a secret, they will tell it to others. The second doll, where the wire came out of the other ear, represents people who do not understand what you say. They are harmless and are medium. In case of the third, the secret goes inside and is preserved there.”

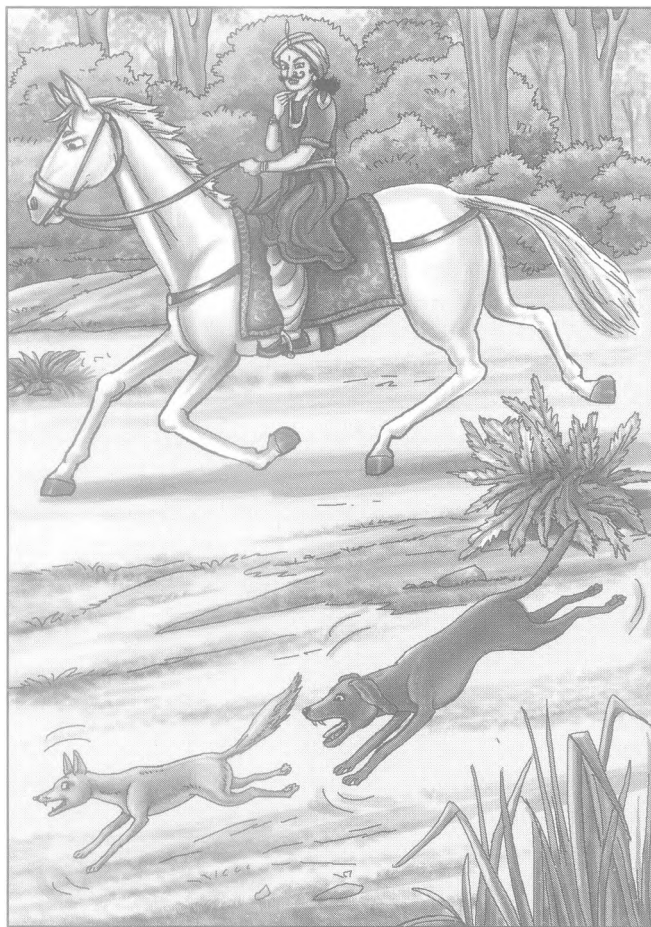
The merchant and the King were pleased by Tenali’s findings and gave him many presents.

However, Tenali continued, “My explanation is not over. There is another viewpoint. The first doll represents people who hear and teach it to others. So, they are good. The second doll represents people who hear and do not understand. So, they are medium. The third, are those who learn things and do not teach to anybody and keep everything secret. They are bad people.”

The King praised Tenali for his wise thinking.

Tenali continued, “My Lord, knowledge and virtue is like a candle, which does not lose its shine and lustre by lighting other candles. When one does good, he receives good. I will narrate a story to prove this.”

## More Stories of Tenali Raman



There was once a king who was so cruel that his subjects yearned for his dethronement. However, one day, he surprised them all by announcing that he had decided to turn over a new leaf.

One of his ministers asked him what had brought about his change of heart, and the king answered, "One day, I was riding through a forest when I saw a fox being chased by a hound. The fox escaped into his hole but the hound had already bitten its leg. Later, I went into a village and saw the same hound there. It was barking at a man. The man picked up a stone and threw it at the dog, breaking its leg. The man had not gone far when he was kicked by a horse. His knee was shattered and he was disabled for life. The horse ran, but it fell into a hole and broke its leg. So, I concluded that evil begets evil. If I continue doing evil, I will surely be overtaken by evil."

Tenali concluded, "So, if one does good, he will receive good in return."

The merchant was so pleased with Tenali Raman's wisdom and knowledge that he invited him to

## **More Stories of Tenali Raman**

visit his country and meet his king.

In the next few days, Tenali noticed that the King had started leading a sedentary lifestyle. Earlier, the King was fond of exercising in the mornings. This was followed by a long ride on his horse.

Tenali noticed that the King had stopped his exercises. He overate, and as a result, he grew fat and heavy. The King's temperament also underwent a sea change.

The royal physicians had cautioned the King against the ill-effects of overeating, and risks posed by obesity. They advised him to abstain from overeating and to take due care of his health.

The repeated advice of the physicians and doctors made the King angry and frustrated. So one day, he announced a reward for anyone who could find him an easy and proper cure. But there was one condition: 'Those who failed would have their heads off!'

None dared to advise the King in this regard. As usual, Tenali was approached by the courtiers for a remedy. Tenali heard the problem and assured

the courtiers of a great solution.

The next day, an astrologer predicted that the King had only a month left to live. When the King came to know of this, he was furious and upset. The King ordered to imprison the astrologer for a month so that his prediction could be put to test. Thus, the astrologer was promptly thrown into prison.

The King was so disturbed by the prediction that he hardly ate anything and lost a lot of weight over the month. When a month passed and nothing happened to the King's life, he summoned the astrologer and roared, "Tell me, why I shouldn't behead you?"

The astrologer replied patiently, "Bad habits are easy to acquire, difficult to give up. My Lord, look in the mirror and see yourself cured!"

The King was astonished to find himself slim and healthy. Then the 'astrologer' told the King that he was in fact a physician and had done this on the advice of Tenali.

By frightening the King to death, he had made the King eat less, and that had cured him. The

## **More Stories of Tenali Raman**

King felt delighted by Tenali's wit. He promised never to be a victim of bad habits henceforth.

That evening, Tenali was boating with a fellow courtier on the river. Tenali said something ungrammatical to the courtier. "Have you ever studied grammar?" asked the courtier surprisingly.

"No!" lied Tenali. "Then, half your life has been wasted," said the courtier mockingly.

Sometime later, Tenali noticed a hole in the bottom of the boat. "Have you ever learnt to swim?" he asked.

"No!" said the courtier.

"Then your whole life has been wasted! We are sinking!" exclaimed Tenali Raman.

He jumped into the river and started swimming, leaving the courtier shocked! Tenali rescued him a while later.

Thus, Tenali taught life's lessons through humour.



## The Art Of Disguise

**K**ing Krishna Dev Raya's Courtier named Chatur Pandit spent a year learning the art of disguise secretly from a great yogi who was visiting Vijaynagar.

At the end of the training, the yogi declared that Chatur had learnt enough. He also informed him that it would take several more years of stressful training and testing before he could become a master of disguise like the yogi himself.

But Chatur was impatient. He wanted to declare himself the master of disguise and that is precisely what he did, as soon as King Krishna Dev Raya entered the court one morning.

"Beloved King!" bowed Chatur. "This humble servant of your royal highness is now a master of disguise. I have completed hard training and testing. I can transform myself into almost anything I wish. The transformation will be flawless."

Chatur continued lying confidently about his abilities, as he was sure that nobody would go in search of the wandering yogi to find out the

## **More Stories of Tenali Raman**

truth. Tenali Raman was amused by his self-praising talks. He knew that Chatur had hardly finished the first year of training. "Let us see a demonstration," said the King.

"I don't think that would be correct, Your Majesty," said Tenali. "As much as we can use the skills of Chatur when required, I think it is not fair to the art of disguise to make a public demonstration out of it. After all, the very purpose of the art of disguise is to mislead the viewer."

"You are just jealous of my expertise," shouted Chatur thinking that Tenali was stealing the moment of glory away from him. "I would very much like to give a demonstration of my skills. In fact, I will display before the court one of the toughest transformations. I shall become a lion in this court tomorrow."

"Wonderful," said the King excitedly.

"However, I have a request," said Chatur eyeing Tenali. "I become so involved in the transformation that I must be excused for any odd behaviour during the demonstration." He had a cunning plan.

But Tenali was one step ahead of him and understood that Chatur was up to some dirty trick.

The court was packed the next day. The news had spread the previous night in the town that Chatur would appear as a lion in the court.

People were curious to see the disguise. Tenali arrived promptly and took his seat. After a few minutes, a loud roar resounded in the court hall.

Many of the spectators were caught off-guard and shuddered. Soon, there came another louder roar. And then a majestic lion strode on to the court through the back entrance.

Most people were scared. The disguise was perfect. The mane was shining in the morning light. The claws glistened. The sharp teeth were visible. The lion scanned the crowd.

It was difficult to believe that this was Chatur in disguise. Many people braced themselves just in case the lion jumped to attack. But the lion promptly moved towards the King and prostrated, offering his respects.

More Stories of Tenali Raman



Seeing this, the courtiers were relieved. It was indeed Chatur in disguise. Why would a real wild lion offer respects to the King?

Now the lion began to pace up and down the courtroom, sometimes slowly, sometimes swiftly. Once in a while, he paused, sniffed the air and then continued again.

Then suddenly, without any provocation, it sprinted towards Tenali and pounced on him with an open mouth and bare claws in full attack mode.

But Tenali was ready. He immediately moved out of the way. The lion missed him, but its left paw managed to make a deep cut on Tenali's shoulder. The lion then disappeared from the court. The court physicians rushed to Tenali. They gave him first aid. The injury was not serious. While they were bandaging Tenali, Chatur entered the court, having taken off the disguise. The courtiers and the King stood up to applaud his performance.

“Thank you, everybody!” said Chatur, “I am glad you enjoyed the performance of the master

## **More Stories of Tenali Raman**

of disguise. But I must apologise,” he continued with a wicked smile, “to my dear friend, Tenali who was harmed in the act. I am unaware of my actions when I am disguised. My body and soul are elsewhere. I was not here. It is like a trance. Only the lion was here. That is the dedication I apply to this art.”

With this blatant lie, he justified his attack on Tenali.

Tenali had known that Chatur would attack him. He did not mind being injured, but he knew that letting Chatur get away with this was dangerous. In future, he could inflict harm on anyone and claim innocence in the name of being in a trance. “I am happy that I could be part of the proceedings,” said Tenali. “But I think all of us present in this court would very much like another presentation. Since you are the master of disguise who is capable of transforming yourself into anything, tomorrow we would like to see you transform into that common household animal we all love, the cow!”

“Can you do that, Chatur?” asked the King. “The

cow is one of the easiest disguises, Your Majesty,” declared Chatur. “Tomorrow morning in the palace grounds, I shall demonstrate my cow disguise.”

The next day, an even bigger crowd assembled at the palace grounds to see Chatur disguised as a cow.

Very soon, a beautiful cow entered the arena. With decorated horns and a tinkling cow bell, it moved gracefully. The King was impressed by Chatur’s ability.

He was ready to applaud when Tenali stood up and spoke, “As Chatur told us yesterday, he is not here now. There is only the cow. Such is the greatness of his performance. Now all of us agree that this is indeed a magnificent cow. But we are just human beings. The real seal of approval for this disguise must come from the animal kingdom itself. So now I order the guards to release the royal bull into the arena. If the royal bull believes that this is a real cow, then Chatur is indeed the master of disguise.”

## More Stories of Tenali Raman

Chatur heard Tenali's words from inside the cow suit. There was no trance. He almost had a heart attack when he heard that the royal bull would be set on him! He knew that he would not be able to physically recover from a bull attack.

"Please do not release the bull. Please!" he shouted tearing open the cow mask. "The bull will kill me!"

"Don't worry, Chatur!" said Tenali smiling. "There is no bull. But I am surprised that you heard very clearly whatever I said, though you were in a disguise. How come you are very much here today but you were not responsible for your actions yesterday?" Chatur Pandit hung his head in shame.

The King understood that Chatur had cheated him and the court with all the talk about trance and mastery of disguise. The King realised that all Chatur wanted to do was to use his little expertise and knowledge to harm Tenali. Chatur was banished from the court for two months and ordered never to practise the art of disguise ever again.



## Tenali Raman – The Comedian

Tenali Raman was the favourite courtier of King Krishna Dev Raya. With his sense of humour and ready wit, Tenali could diffuse even a tense situation.

One day, for some reason, the King became annoyed with Tenali. He shouted, “Get out of my sight! I don’t want to see your face again!”

The sudden outburst of the King shocked the other courtiers. Some of them, who were jealous of Tenali and his closeness with the King were very pleased. Tenali Raman left the court quietly.

The next day, Tenali promptly entered the court covering his face with a pot. He went and took his usual seat very casually, as if nothing had happened. The King was enraged on seeing Tenali Raman back in his seat.

The King shouted, “Tenali Raman! How dare you come to the court? Didn’t I tell you yesterday not to show your face to me?”

“My Lord, I’m sorry!” said Tenali through the pot, which had two holes for eyes and a third one

## **More Stories of Tenali Raman**

for the mouth. He continued, "I'm only obeying your command, Sire! You said you didn't want to see my face. Haven't I covered my face with this pot?"

The King burst into laughter. He chuckled, "You may now remove it. It doesn't matter if your face is seen."

Tenali said, "My Lord! Our mind is like a monkey at times!"

"What do you mean, Tenali?" asked the King.

Tenali said, "Sire, once a snake charmer was crossing a river, balancing a snake basket on his head, a monkey on his shoulder and guided a goat with his hand. The monkey, by nature, was mischievous. It was restless and couldn't resist playing a game. It slowly opened the snake basket. The snake within the darkness of the basket sprung up with its head high and tongue hissing. This frightened the monkey and it fell into the water.

"The current began to drag the monkey away. In



## **More Stories of Tenali Raman**

the effort to save the monkey, the snake charmer dropped the snake basket into the stream. To catch hold of the basket, he lost his grip on the goat. Thus, the monkey, the snake and the goat were carried away by the current. In life, our mind is like the monkey. It is restless and difficult to predict. It leads us into serious trouble. Therefore, it is wise that we control our mind.”

The King agreed and promised to control his anger. Everyone praised Tenali for his comic sense.

Once, there was an argument in the court when the King asked, “What is the most wonderful moment in a man’s life?”

Everybody discussed among themselves and finally came to a decision, that it is, “When one is hungry and is having food.”

But Tenali Raman disagreed. He said, “My Lord, I think answering the nature’s call is a very good moment.”

Everyone in the court scolded Tenali Raman

when they heard this. But the King was curious, and ordered him to prove it. Tenali agreed to do so.

The next day, Tenali called all the courtiers and locked them in a large hall. There was no toilet. There were no windows. The room had only one gate. Tenali Raman ordered a servant to give the courtiers water and food they wished to eat. But he strictly instructed the guards not to let them leave the room.

On the second day, the courtiers wanted to go outside. Everyone had to answer the nature's call. But the guards did not allow them to go out. Instead, they gave more delicious food to the courtiers. But nobody took the food. Eventually, they were released in the afternoon. Finally, the courtiers agreed with Tenali that answering the nature's call was indeed a very good moment.

One day, Tenali Raman was visiting the neighbouring village. While travelling, he found himself in the company of a group of soldiers. They were all veterans of war and soon they got

## **More Stories of Tenali Raman**

talking about their experiences on the battlefield.

An old soldier related about the time he had single-handedly slain seven enemy soldiers. Another gave a detailed description of the manner in which he had held an entire enemy battalion at bay. When they had finished, they looked at Tenali Raman and waited for him to say something.

When Tenali remained quiet, one of them said, "I don't suppose you have any adventure worth telling."

"Oh, but I have," said Tenali.

"You have?" asked the surprised soldiers.

"Yes," said Tenali. "Once while travelling I chanced upon a large tent. I entered, and there, lying on a mat was the largest man I had ever seen. I recognised him at once as a dreaded thief who had been terrorising that part of the country for years!"

"What did you do?" asked the soldiers, their interest now fully aroused.

“I cut off his toe and ran for dear life,” said Tenali.

“His toe?” asked a soldier. “Why did you cut his toe? You should have cut off his head while you had the chance!”

“Somebody had already done that,” said Tenali smiling sheepishly.

The soldiers had a hearty laugh and praised Tenali for his wit.

When Tenali reached the neighbouring village, he heard someone scream. A villager had stepped out of his hut and saw huge, round footmarks in the mud outside his dwelling. “What is this?” he shouted.

Soon, there was a large crowd outside his hut. None of the villagers had ever seen such large footprints before and they were puzzled by them.

They followed the mysterious tracks and found that they ran all through the village to the other side. “I think,” said a villager, finally, “we were visited by a demon last night.”

## **More Stories of Tenali Raman**

“He must have been of a monstrous size,” said another man, shuddering.

“Let us not panic,” advised a third villager. “There might be a simple explanation for all this. Tenali Raman is here among us. Let us ask him. He has helped us so many times in the past.”

Tenali Raman, who had been listening to the villagers, walked over. He bent over the prints and studied them from every angle. “Some of us think they were made by a demon,” said the headman, hesitatingly.

“You people have such great imaginations,” said Tenali, giving him a stern look.

“No, these tracks were not made by a demon or monster. They were made by a deer.” “A deer!” exclaimed the headman. “But they are so big!”

Tenali explained, “That’s because the animal has tied large stones to its feet to fool us.”

The villagers stood staring in wonder at Tenali Raman. Some even regretted that they did not guess something so simple. “Only someone as

wise as you could have seen through the deer's clever trick. Thank you so much," said the headman.

Tenali graciously acknowledged the compliment and scolding the villagers for their foolishness, returned home. He narrated the incident to King Krishna Dev Raya who had a hearty laugh. He said, "Tenali, what if the villagers finally learn that you tricked them?"

"Your Majesty, they will learn a lesson for making an issue of something so small," said Tenali.

Some nights later, the animal that had made the tracks, a large elephant, came that way again. The foolish villagers saw the tracks the next morning, but this time they were not afraid. They knew the deer was trying to fool them again.

Thus, Tenali Raman was quite a comedian. He was known to bring humour even in most difficult scenarios.



## Wise Tenali Raman

**T**enali Raman was famous for his entertaining, educative and humorous stories.

One fine morning, King Krishna Dev Raya was in his court when a priest came with a tricky question. The priest wanted the King's ministers to answer his question, 'What is maya?'

The King asked the Rajguru to answer the priest's question. The Rajguru explained to the Priest, "Sir, when we are born, we do not bring anything with us. Similarly, when we die, we do not take anything along. We leave all our worldly possessions behind. Therefore, all that we acquire in this life is a lie. Hence, it is maya."

The priest pondered over the Rajguru's explanation but was not completely satisfied. Now, it was Tenali Raman's turn. Tenali asked the priest, "Sir, in which direction is the Himalayas?"

The priest replied, "North!"

Tenali asked again, "Sir, for a person living in China, in which direction is the Himalayas?"

The priest replied, "South!"

Tenali Raman said, “Sir, what is considered as the truth in one place could be treated as a lie in another place. Therefore, everything around us is truth and lie at the same time. Thus, everything is an illusion or maya.”

The priest was very happy with Tenali’s explanation and praised him for his knowledge. The King was also pleased with Tenali, since he had saved him and Vijaynagar from being ashamed.

Tenali said to the priest, “Sir, we all know that you are quite learned and wise. But I have a question for you, if you don’t mind answering.”

The priest was taken aback at this. Nevertheless, he agreed to answer Tenali’s question.

Tenali asked, “Sir, how can we calculate a man’s lifespan?”

Much to everyone’s astonishment, the priest did not know the answer. The King was very curious about Tenali’s question and said, “Tenali, please answer your question for us.”

## More Stories of Tenali Raman



Tenali said, "Sure, Your Majesty! I learnt the answer through a personal experience. Before I was appointed as a courtier in Your Majesty's court, I was going through hard times, financially. I found it difficult to survive and maintain my family in my own village. So, I decided to look for a prosperous place to resettle. During my search, I arrived at the outskirts of a very pious-looking village. When I entered it, I noticed a strange scene. Many memorial stones had been erected in memory of the dead. This was normal. The bizarreness was that the life span of each deceased person was beautifully written in gold foil: 'He lived for two years,' 'He died at the age of three,' 'She survived for two and a half years.'

"My God!' I wondered, 'People here don't live long. What use is it to settle in a place where one is destined to die quickly?' I was about to leave in haste, when the villagers saw me. They welcomed me to their homes, served me delicacies to eat and made me comfortable. Their genuine hospitality won my confidence. But the question of death at a young age was bothering me.

## **More Stories of Tenali Raman**

“When evening came, the whole village turned out for a spiritual discourse. They had come with books and diaries to make notes. They listened to every word spoken with much attention. I was convinced of their piety and was eager to settle there. It seemed like a holy paradise, except for those life spans on the memorial stones. They robbed me of all joy and depressed me. I stayed in the village for a few days, but never quite got over my gloom.

“One day, one of the villagers questioned my sadness. I said, ‘I am touched by your love and hospitality. You are good pious people. I also wish to settle here. But what good would it do to us if we are to die within a few years?’

“‘What makes you think so?’ asked the villager.

“‘Not just think, I have read those memorial stones on the village outskirts. Not one person seems to have lived more than five years!’ I answered.

“The villager laughed and said, ‘You are learned but not wise. Just look at my father. He is sixty years old. If everyone here died by the age of two

or three, then why would he still be healthy at sixty?' He pointed at his father and then at other old people in the village. 'Then, what must one understand by the life-spans on the memorial stones?' I questioned.

"It is a custom in this village,' the villager explained, 'that whenever we sit in a spiritual discourse, each one of us notes down his or her time spent in the discourse in a personal diary. Perhaps you have noticed this in the past few days you have been with us.'

"I nodded and the man continued, 'Well, we believe that our real life-span is only that which we spend in spiritual discourses. If a man spends one hour a day in the discourses, then it is thirty hours or one and a quarter day per month. By the end of one year he has said to have lived for fifteen days. And even if he survives for sixty years, his life comes round to about two and one half years. This is how the life span is calculated.'"

Tenali continued, "We must also think in this manner. Only that part of our life which we have

## **More Stories of Tenali Raman**

spent in worshipping God has been really lived. The years spent in worldly activities have gone to waste. All of us should pass more and more time in spiritual discourses and the Lord's work. His devotees should donate a part of their life-span for spiritual activities. In twelve months, a full month should be spent in the company of a true saint, listening to his wisdom and serving him through mind, word and deed. This is what will add up to make our real life-span."

The priest said, "Tenali, you have opened my eyes. I maybe learned but I have wasted my life proving to people how intelligent I am. Thank you for enlightening me."

The King also praised, "Tenali, I am indeed lucky to have such a wise man like you as one of my courtiers."

The next morning, the King was in a generous mood. 'Aha! What can I do to feel good today?' he thought. Soon it was time for him to hold the court. He called all his courtiers and gave them gold coins. He told them to spend the money in

any way they wanted in one week's time. But before they spend the money they had to look at the King's face. The courtiers were very pleased but every time they wanted to buy something they kept waiting for the King to show his face in the market.

After a week, they had to meet in the court, to show the things they had bought. All of them returned with the gold coins.

Only Tenali came wearing new clothes and holding an empty bag. The others said, "Tenali, you have cheated! We could not spend the money, as we never saw the King's face in the market."

"Why not?" said Tenali, "Our Majesty's face is on every gold coin. I saw His Majesty's face every time I bought my things."

The King looked proudly at Tenali and said, "Nobody can win over you, Tenali!"

Thus, Tenali Raman was indeed a wise and knowledgeable man of his times.



## Tenali Raman's Skill Of Judging

**C**lowner, jester, poet...Tenali Raman played numerous roles in the court of the ruler of Vijayanagar, Krishna Dev Raya. Stories about Tenali Raman and his practical jokes on everyone around him, including distinguished fellow poets and the King, are very famous.

A young man was at the end of his training, soon he would go on to be a minister. Like all other courtiers, he wanted to challenge Tenali Raman and prove that he was wiser than Tenali. So, he made a plan to prove this in front of the King and other courtiers.

The next day, the young man caught a small bird, placed it in one hand and went to the court. He requested the King, "My Lord, I would like to test Tenali Raman on his skill of judging."

The King granted permission, thinking that this test will develop his way of thinking. The young man asked Tenali, "Is this bird in my hand, alive or dead?"

His plan was this: if Tenali said 'dead', he would open his hand and the bird would fly away. If

the answer was 'alive', he would crush the bird between his fingers; that way Tenali would be wrong whichever answer he gave.

"Sir, is the bird alive or dead?" he asked again.

"My dear young man that depends on you," Tenali replied. The young man was embarrassed and sat down quietly. The King smiled and nodded at Tenali, appreciating his judgement.

Then, a painter came to the King's court. He had painted a beautiful deer in a jungle. The King wished to purchase it, but wanted Tenali's comments on it first.

When Tenali Raman was asked about the painting, he looked at the picture with great concentration. After a while he said to the King, "Your Majesty! The deer in the picture has only one ear."

The painter feared being insulted in the court. So, he said, "Your Majesty! The deer is looking towards it right, so the right ear is covered. It is a detail of art which only an artist can understand."

The next day, Tenali brought two paintings with

## **More Stories of Tenali Raman**

him to the court. One had a horse and the other had a rider on it. But, in both the paintings, the body part of the horse and the rider were drawn separately.

When asked by King Raya about the painting, Tenali replied, "Your Majesty! When we look at both the pictures together they represent one whole painting. Even the part drawn separately becomes one."

The painter understood that Tenali was indirectly pointing out his fault. He accepted his mistake and promised to correct the picture.

One day, Tenali's neighbour was expecting a visit from an acquaintance. He gave two ripe mangoes to his servant and asked him to slice them and serve the fruit when the man came.

The servant gave in to temptation and ate a slice. It was so sweet that he could not resist eating another one. When he devoured all the remaining slices, he panicked and sat down crying in the backyard.

Just then, Tenali who was passing that way, offered to help the poor servant. He whispered a plan to the servant and went home.

Suddenly, the servant saw the man his master was expecting coming towards the house. As per Tenali's plan, the servant grabbed a rusty knife and rushing to his master, told him he couldn't cut the mangoes as the knife was blunt.

"I'll sharpen it," said his master and going to a stone in the garden began to rub the cutting edge of the knife against it. Leaving him to the task, the servant ran out to meet the man who was coming.

"Beware! Beware!" he said when he reached him. "Don't come to our house. My master has gone mad. He's planning to cut both your ears."

"Cut my ears!" exclaimed the man, turning pale. "Why?!"

"There he is sharpening the knife," said the servant. The man saw that his host did indeed have a knife in his hands and was sharpening it.

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He did not wait to find out why his host wanted his ears. He turned around and started walking away as fast as he could.

The servant rushed back to his master and told him that the man he had invited was running away with the mangoes. "What!" said his master. "That greedy fellow! Has he taken both the mangoes?!"

"Yes," said the servant.

The man ran after the acquaintance, shouting, "Give me one! Give me one at least!"

The other man thought he was asking for one of his ears and ran for his life! Thus, Tenali helped the servant keep his job.

A rich landowner in Tenali's city was on his deathbed. Gasping for breath, he told his three sons to dig under his bed when he was gone.

Some days later, the sons dug at the spot and unearthed three pots, placed one above the other. The topmost pot contained mud; the middle pot contained dried cow dung and the lowest pot

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contained straw. Below this pot there was a silver coin. The brothers were puzzled.

“Obviously, Father meant to convey some message to us through the pots and their contents,” said the oldest brother. “But what?”

They wracked their brains but none of them could come up with an explanation. Finally, they decided to consult Tenali Raman, who was also a family friend.

Tenali laughed when the brothers put their problem before him. “Your father loved puzzles,” he said, “and I think he could not resist setting one last one. The interpretation is simple. The topmost pot contains mud, you say. That means he wants his eldest son to have his fields. The second pot contains cow dung. It means he wants his second son to have his herd of cattle. The last pot contains straw. Now straw is golden-coloured. That means he wants his youngest son to have all his gold.”

The brothers were happy with the way their father had divided his wealth and marvelled at Tenali’s

wisdom. "But one thing remains unexplained," said the youngest brother. "The silver coin at the bottom of the pots."

"Your father knew you would come to consult me," smiled Tenali. "The coin is my fee."

The three brothers praised Tenali's wit and skill of judging people.

The commander-in-chief of the Vijaynagar army was blessed with a beautiful son. He invited the King and all the other courtiers to his house to bless the child.

When the King saw the child lying in the cradle, he said, "May you live a healthy and long life and become a great warrior like your father."

Tenali walked up to the King and said, "Your Majesty! The child will be a greater warrior than his father."

The Rajguru heard him and said, "Your Majesty! How can Tenali judge that the child will be a greater warrior than his father? I have a plan to test his judgement skills."

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The Rajguru asked a servant to hang two identical gold pots from identical chains. One pot was made of solid gold and the other was hollow gold. Then, the Rajguru asked Tenali to identify the pot made of solid gold, without touching it.

Tenali saw for a moment and then said, “The pot on the left is made of solid gold. Because it’s heavy, it’s not swaying much.”

The Rajguru quietly slipped away and the King was once again impressed with Tenali Raman’s skill of judgement.



Krishna Dev Raya  
Thanks Tenali Raman

Tenali Raman's fame spread beyond Vijaynagar, to areas that come in Tamil Nadu and Karnataka today. Tenali Raman was a great poet and scholar. He wrote in many languages including Marathi, Tamil and Kannada.

Once, the King was holidaying with his family and some courtiers on a beautiful beach. One morning, the sun was shining and it was a beautiful day. So, the King decided to go for a walk by the seaside. As he was walking, he saw a man at a distance, going back and forth between the surf's edge and the beach.

As the King approached, he could see that there were hundreds of starfishes stranded on the sand as the result of the natural action of the tide.

The King was stuck by the apparent futility of the task. There were far too many starfishes. Many of them were sure to perish. As he approached, the man continued the task of picking up the starfish one by one, and throwing them into the sea.

As he came up to the man, the King said, "Oh

## **More Stories of Tenali Raman**

it's you, Tenali! You must be crazy. There are thousands of miles of beach covered with starfishes. You can't possibly make a difference."

Tenali looked at the King. He then stooped down and picked up one more starfish and threw it back into the ocean. He turned back to the King and said, "My Lord, it sure made a difference to that one!"

The King was shocked and understood what Tenali meant. He thanked Tenali for showing how important every living creature was.

The next day, a hunter gifted a beautiful parrot to the King of Vijaynagar. The Queen liked to have a pet and taught the pretty bird to chant some holy words like 'Hare Krishna.'

When the King heard the parrot say the holy words, he declared that it was indeed a holy bird and placed it in a golden cage and fed it only the best of grains. Tenali came to see the King one morning. The King said, "Tenali, our bird is more holy than you, as it only says the holy words."

Krishna Dev Raya Thanks Tenali Raman



## **More Stories of Tenali Raman**

When the Queen made the bird speak, it chirped, 'Hare Krishna.'

Tenali said, "My Lord, the bird will only speak what you teach it. How can it be a holy parrot?"

The King was offended and asked Tenali to prove himself. Tenali went and brought a cat near the cage. On seeing the cat, the parrot became very frightened and started flapping its wings in the golden cage. It even climbed the golden wires in agitation and made all sorts of sounds.

The Queen asked the parrot to say, 'Hare Krishna' but the bird recited everything but 'Hare Krishna!'

The King realised his mistake and set the frightened parrot free.

However, the King was still offended with Tenali and told him not to be oversmart.

Tenali felt insulted and said, "My Lord, my son has a bad temper. So, I gave him a bag of nails and told him that every time he lost his temper, he must hammer a nail into the fence. The first day, he had driven thirty seven nails into the

fence. Over the next few weeks as he learned to control his anger, the number of nails hammered daily, gradually came down. He discovered it was easier to hold his temper than to drive those nails into the fence.

“Finally the day came when he didn’t lose his temper at all. I suggested that he pull out one nail for each day that he was able to hold his temper. The days passed and he finally told me that all the nails were gone. I said ‘You have done well, my son, but look at the holes in the fence. The fence will never be the same. When you say things in anger, they leave a scar just like this one. You can put a knife in a man and draw it out. It won’t matter how many times you say ‘I’m sorry,’ the wound is still there. Make sure you control your temper the next time you are tempted to say something you will regret later.’”

The King, at once, apologised and thanked Tenali.

Sadly, a few days later, the priest of the royal temple died. The King requested Tenali to choose a new priest. Tenali went to the temple and told

## **More Stories of Tenali Raman**



all the candidates to climb the rocky hill to the temple within a fixed period of time. The path was full of thorns and stones.

Almost all the candidates reached the temple and the time for the competition was over. After a while, a shepherd walked into the temple with a wounded man.

Tenali asked him, “Young man, what has happened to the person with you?”

The shepherd replied, “Sir, while I was grazing my cattle on the hillside, I saw this man crying in pain. He had slipped and hurt himself. So, I helped him climb the mountain, so that he could participate in the competition.”

Tenali looked at the wounded man closely and realised that the shepherd had removed the thorns from the man's body.

Tenali said to the shepherd, “Congratulations, you are the new priest! Anyone can walk on a difficult path. But only a selfless man would take care of other people's interest.”

The King praised Tenali's wise decision.

Tenali added, "My Lord, when I was a young man, I wanted to change the world. I found it was difficult to change the world, so I tried to change my nation. When I found I couldn't change the nation, I began to focus on my town. I couldn't change the town and as an older man, I tried to change my family. Now, as an old man, I realise the only thing I can change is myself, and also, that if long ago I had changed myself, I could have made an impact on my family. My family and I could have made an impact on our town. Their impact could have changed the nation and I could indeed have changed the world."

The King agreed that Tenali had made a wise point yet again.

The next day, a strange blue-coloured man visited the King's court. He said to the King, "Your Majesty! I am Neelketu from Neeldesh. A lot of fairies reside in my world. I have come here to invite you all to enjoy the dance of the fairies."

The King was thrilled and accepted Neelketu's

## **More Stories of Tenali Raman**

proposal immediately. However, Neelketu had a condition. He said, “Your Majesty! You must come alone to the fort located on the outskirts of the city.”

That night, the King went alone to the fort where Neelketu welcomed him. However, before the King could enter the fort, Tenali jumped out of the bushes and the Vijaynagar army surrounded them.

Tenali told the King, “Your Majesty! Neelketu is the defence minister of our enemy country. His plan was to take you inside the fort where his soldiers would have killed you.”

Tenali continued, “Today when he came to the court, some of the blue colour he had put on himself had come off with sweat. I grew suspicious of him and asked my servants to follow him. They discovered his plan and I came here to save you.”

The King hugged Tenali and thanked him for saving his life.



## The Biggest Fool And The Cleverest Wit

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**H**oli, the festival of colours, was celebrated every year with great pomp and festivities in the Vijaynagar Empire. King Krishna Dev Raya and the royal family used to participate in all the celebrations, enthusiastically. At the end of the day's events, the King used to give away two awards: *The Biggest Fool* and *the Cleverest Wit*. This was an added excitement for the courtiers on that auspicious day.

Throughout the year, the courtiers would gather all the stories of foolishness and pick the best to be presented before the King on that day. But over the years, Tenali Raman would always win both the awards. Obviously, the courtiers were jealous about this. They feared that this year also, things were not going to be different. So, the most cunning amongst them decided to prevent Tenali Raman from appearing in the court on that day.

With this in mind, they reached Tenali Raman's house early in the morning. Tenali Raman was consulting his notes for the day in preparation for the contests. He was surprised to see the

## More Stories of Tenali Raman

courtiers come to his home. The courtiers had brought along a huge jug of *bhang* (opium-milk drink).

It was a tradition to consume *bhang* on Holi. They insisted that Tenali have a drink with them. He agreed. What he did not know was that the courtiers had made highly concentrated *bhang* which was sure to make anyone sleep the whole day.

They all pretended to drink along while Tenali genuinely drank a cup. They insisted that he have another cup. Tenali knew that this was unwise. He realised that the drink was highly intoxicating. But he drank another cup and fell asleep.

The courtiers made sure that Tenali was in deep sleep and happily went to the court to take part in the contests. The King enjoyed listening to all the tales of foolishness and cleverness from his courtiers throughout the day. He was a bit surprised by the absence of Tenali.

The great heat of the afternoon woke Tenali up from his sleep. He checked the time and was

The Biggest Fool And The Cleverest Wit



## **More Stories of Tenali Raman**

shocked. Quickly, he realised that the courtiers had played a dirty trick on him. He still had just about an hour to make it to the court before the celebrations were over and the awards distributed. He decided to repay the courtiers for their trickery.

Seeing a sleepy Tenali arrive at the court, the King was furious. He thought it was very arrogant of his courtier to have skipped court to sleep on such an important day. The King decided to announce the awards right away to somebody else.

But before he stood up, Tenali moved to the centre of the court and began to speak, “Your Majesty, I want you to help me solve a problem. This was such a severe problem that my head hurt thinking about it and I fell unconscious as you can see from my condition. Since today is the day that we give away the award for the greatest foolishness, it is appropriate that I get this matter resolved by your highness.”

To the curiosity of the courtiers and the King, Tenali continued, “This morning, an old man

## The Biggest Fool And The Cleverest Wit

came to see me. He wanted me to tell him who amongst his three sons was the greatest fool. He had decided to pass on his good business to them but did not want to give any role to the most foolish son as he would squander everything away.

His oldest son suffered from the company of wicked friends who were always stealing from him. But he completely trusted them and was unwilling to get rid of them. His second son was an alcoholic. He wasted all his money by trying out new intoxicants. He would stay drunk all day. His third son did not know the value of time. He was always wasting his own time. He did not value others' time. He would always be late. He did not care that others were waiting for him. Business under such a person was also bound to suffer. This old father wanted me to help him make the choice.”

The King and courtiers were now engrossed in the tale. Tenali posed the question, “Can anyone in this court help me with this problem? I wracked my brain on it all morning and fell asleep in

## **More Stories of Tenali Raman**

exhaustion. All the sons appear foolish to me. I don't think the business is going to be safe with any of them."

A courtier called Chatur Pandit said, "Clearly the drunkard son is the most dangerous and foolish. He has no control over his desire for drink. He is the most foolish one."

The King nodded his head in agreement. Chatur Pandit was happy to see that. He was happy the whole day for having tricked Tenali in the morning. But Chatur's happiness did not last long.

Another courtier spoke up, "I disagree with Chatur Pandit. The son with the wicked friends is the biggest fool. From all the epics and folklore we know that a man's greatest wealth is his friends. This fool is eating out of the hands of evil ones. They will ruin his life and his business. Anyone who cannot recognise the wicked ways of those pretending to be his friends is indeed the greatest fool."

The King began to think. He felt that the courtier made sense. But before the King could speak in

## The Biggest Fool And The Cleverest Wit

conclusion, another courtier spoke up, “If there is one thing that is common to every man alive, it is time. It is of immeasurable value, because we cannot get back lost time with even the greatest effort. A person who cannot recognise the value of time cannot recognise the value of anything else in the world. Thus money, relationships, honour will leave that person quickly. Therefore, the third son is the greatest fool.”

The King was confused with this. All the three opinions were valid. The courtiers had already split into teams supporting each notion and a noisy debate ensued in the court. The King understood that such a puzzle could have indeed brought about a headache for even clever Tenali. But now Tenali Raman was in the middle of the court with a smile, watching the courtiers.

Suddenly, he clapped his hands. The court fell silent. Tenali said, “Your Highness, I think all of us will agree that if one person had all these three characteristics, he will indeed be, without doubt, the greatest fool on this planet.”

## **More Stories of Tenali Raman**

The King and the courtiers laughed hearing this. "If such a person exists, then he is indeed the greatest fool ever!" declared the King.

"Thank you very much, My King," bowed Tenali Ram, "I gladly accept the award this year too for the biggest fool."

The King did not understand but the bunch of courtiers who had visited Tenali in the morning realised that they had been outwitted.

Tenali explained, "This morning a group of courtiers visited me with a plan of tricking me. I accepted their friendly gesture like a fool and became intoxicated. I drank more than I should have. Then like a fool, I fell asleep, totally unaware of the passing time on this important day. On all three counts, I have been the fool."

The King was pleased that Tenali was the cleverest of all. The King announced that Tenali Raman deserved the award for both the greatest fool and the cleverest wit that year, too.



## Tenali Raman Solves Problems In Minutes

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Once, King Krishna Dev Raya and his courtiers were hunting in a forest. In that thick forest, a large gang of robbers were hiding in the bushes. However, the King and his hunting party were not aware of it.

When the hunting party was still in the middle of the forest, the robbers suddenly came before them. With weapons in their hands, they ordered the King and his men to put down all they had with them.

Even though they were more in number, the King and his men were forced to submit to the robbers. The robbers took away everything the hunting party had, including their clothes.

The thought that they had overpowered the King and his men and looted all their belongings made the robbers very proud. They sat like kings before the hunting party they had just looted and ordered them to dance in front of them before they could let them go. The courtiers began to cry over their destiny. They had lost everything they

## **More Stories of Tenali Raman**

had and still the robbers were not satisfied with the loot and made them dance.

Standing amongst the King and the crying courtiers was Tenali busy thinking of ways to put the robbers down. Tenali thought over the misfortune that had happened to him and the courtiers. He was thinking about the dance they would have to do, and the manner in which the robbers were sitting on the ground.

While thinking so, he observed that the robbers had kept their weapons on the ground. The robbers, arrogant that they had thoroughly fooled the hunting party, had started dancing along with them.

Tenali signalled the King and the other courtiers that the robbers had kept their weapons on the ground. They all ran towards the robbers, picked up the weapons, and bounced on the robbers. The robbers did not expect this and were very frightened. They somehow released themselves from the clutches of the courtiers and ran away.

Thus, the King and his courtiers could save

themselves and their valuables with the help of Tenali. The King thanked Tenali Raman for his quick thinking and rewarded him handsomely when they returned to the palace.

Once, Tenali Raman's neighbour Tirumal came to meet him. Tirumal owned an inn by the name of 'Deccan Suryam' (The Sun of South) in the capital city of Hampi. He did his best to draw customers by making the inn comfortable, the services pleasant and the prices reasonable. Yet Tirumal was unable to make both ends meet. So in despair, he consulted his clever friend Tenali Raman.

After listening to him, Tenali said, "It is very simple. You must change the name of your inn."

"Impossible!" said Tirumal. "It has been the 'Deccan Suryam' for generations and is well-known all over the empire."

"No," said Tenali firmly. "You must now call it 'Panch Vāni' (The Five Bells) and have a row of six large bells hanging at the entrance of the inn."

## More Stories of Tenali Raman



“Six large bells? But this is strange. What good would it do?” said the astonished innkeeper.

“Give it a try and see,” Tenali suggested with a smile.

Tirumal gave it a try. Every traveller, who passed by the inn walked inside to point out the mistake that there were six bells on the door, where there should be just five. Each one believed that no one else had noticed the mistake yet.

Once inside, the travellers were impressed by the service and stayed on to refresh themselves! Thus, the inn became well-known and did good business.

One day, when the King was riding through the countryside, he met a farmer. Ever concerned about the welfare of his subjects, the King asked him how much he earned.

“Four coins each day, Your Majesty,” replied the farmer.

“And how do you spend the four coins?”

## **More Stories of Tenali Raman**

“One on myself, one I give in gratitude, one I give back and one I give on interest.”

The King was puzzled, asked him to explain. “A part of the money I spend on myself,” said the farmer, “a part on my wife in gratitude for all she does for the house, a part on my aged parents to pay them back for all that they did for me and a part on my children who I expect will pay me back with interest by looking after me and my wife in our old age.”

“You have provided me with a fine riddle,” said the King. “Please keep the answer a secret for some time, at least till you have seen my face a hundred times.”

“I will,” said the farmer.

The next morning, the King asked his courtiers the riddle. He told them what the farmer had said in reply to his question about how he spent his money and asked them to explain what the farmer had meant. None of the courtiers knew the answer, but Tenali Raman. He said he would have the answer in twenty-four hours. He searched

out the farmer whom the King had spoken to and asked him the answer to the riddle. The farmer, at first, refused to tell but eventually agreed.

When Tenali told the King the answer of the riddle, the King guessed that the farmer had broken his promise of silence. He sent for the farmer and asked him why he had betrayed his trust. "Didn't I tell you not to reveal the answer till you had seen my face a hundred times?" demanded the King.

"And I did see your face a hundred times before I told him the answer, Your Majesty," replied the farmer.

"Tenali Raman gave me a bag of hundred coins and each of them had your face on it."

The King was delighted with Tenali's wit and gave him a huge gift, saying, "Tenali, I have never known anyone to have brains like you. And solving problems in such short span of time, you deserve this gift, indeed!"

The next day, Tenali met a friend on the street.

## **More Stories of Tenali Raman**

The man looked worried, so Tenali asked him what was troubling him.

“I have this terrible dream every night,” said the man. “I dream there’s a monster hiding under the bed. When I get up and look, there’s no one there. I can’t sleep afterwards. I am on my way to the doctor’s house now. He says he can cure me for a hundred gold coins.”

“A hundred gold coins!” exclaimed Tenali. “I can rid you of your problem for five!”

The man immediately took out five gold coins and gave them to Tenali Raman. “Now tell me what to do,” said the man.

“The remedy is simple,” said Tenali smilingly. “Cut off the legs of the bed.”

That evening, Tenali walked up and down the veranda in great agitation. “What’s the matter?” asked his concerned wife.

“I borrowed some money from our neighbour last month. I promised to return the money on the last day of this month,” explained Tenali.

“Tomorrow is the last day and I don’t have the money. I don’t know what to do,” explained Tenali.

“Go and tell him you can’t pay!” said his wife. Tenali took his wife’s advice.

“How did our neighbour react?” asked his wife when Tenali Raman returned home, relaxed and happy.

“Ah, well,” said Tenali grinning. “Now he is walking up and down his veranda.”

Thus, Tenali Raman solved most problems in minutes, with humour and wit.



## Tenali Raman Fulfils His Responsibility

Once, King Krishna Dev Raya had become irresponsible towards his duties. He said, "One does not get born as a human very often. So, one should pursue material comforts and enjoy life to the fullest."

Tenali Raman was concerned about the King. Whenever he had an opportunity, he would try to counsel the King, but it was of no use.

One day, just by chance, the King was pleased by some action of Tenali Raman. As a reward, he gave him a very expensive shawl. Soon after leaving the court, Tenali used the shawl to clean his nose.

A courtier, who was jealous of Tenali, happened to see this. He went to the King and reported, "Your Highness, I saw Tenali Raman's extremely disrespectful gesture."

The King asked, "What?"

The courtier said, "You had rewarded Tenali with an expensive shawl. However, he depreciated your kind gesture by blowing his nose into it."

## Tenali Raman Fulfils His Responsibility

The King asked, “Tenali, how could you dare to insult me by blowing your nose into the expensive shawl I gave you?”

Tenali replied, “Your highness, I have only followed what you have taught me.”

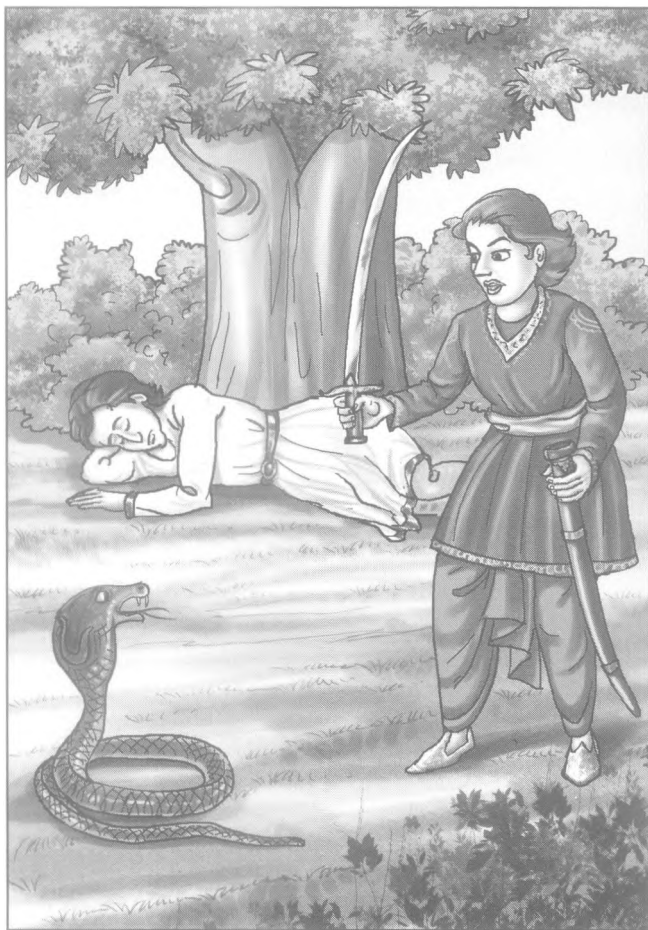
“I taught you to show disrespect!” the King retorted “How?”

Tenali said, “You have been blessed with human life that is considerably more valuable than this shawl. However, the way you are whiling away your time in pursuit of creature comforts without any regard to decency and morality, has taught me to misuse the shawl.”

Tenali had hit the target. The King realised his mistake and thanked Tenali. Tenali added, “My Lord, we share a unique bond of friendship that allows me to correct you if you are wrong. Let me narrate a story.”

A prince and the minister’s son were out hunting in a forest. They both were hungry and exhausted after a long day’s wandering. They found the cool

## More Stories of Tenali Raman



shade of a tree and sat down to rest. Soon, the prince fell asleep, while the minister's son stayed awake and kept guard.

A while later, a snake slithered towards the prince. Hissing furiously, it prepared to bite him. However, the minister's son was quick. He raised his sword. But before he could kill it, the snake spoke up, "This prince is my enemy. I cannot rest until I drink blood."

The minister's son wanted to save his friend's life and he was also intelligent. "What if I give you some of his blood to drink? Will that quench your hate?"

Saying this, he knew he was saving the life of the prince, because if the snake bit him, to draw blood, it would at the same time spit poison that was sure to kill his friend. The snake agreed. He was only after the prince's blood, not his life.

The minister's son made a cup out of dry leaves. He climbed upon the chest of the prince who was still fast asleep. He pulled out his dagger and made a small slit on the side of his neck. The

## **More Stories of Tenali Raman**

sharp cut suddenly shocked the prince awake. But on seeing that his friend, the minister's son, was holding the dagger, he closed his eyes again. The minister's son filled the cup with enough blood and offered it to the snake, who drank the blood and went its way.

Meanwhile, he collected some medicinal herbs and bandaged the wound. A few hours later, the prince awoke and made preparations to proceed further. He said nothing and walked happily as if nothing had happened. Two whole days passed in the forests, yet the prince never reminded him of the event.

It was the minister's son, who began to grow impatient, as to why he was not questioned.

He finally said, "Friend and Master, you know that I climbed upon you and slit your throat, drew blood and then bandaged you. You even saw me do it. Still why haven't you yet questioned me or asked me for an explanation?"

"You are a friend of mine," the prince answered. "I believe that whatever you may have done

must have been for my good. This is why I desire no explanation.”

He continued, “If someone else had attempted this, I would have been suspicious. Does he want to kill me or rob me? But with you, I know you’re a very close friend and I have boundless trust in you; that my friend shall never ever do any harm to me.”

The King had tears in his eyes. He said, “Tenali, I trust you completely, just like the prince trusted the minister’s son.”

The next morning, when the King’s court was assembled, two men entered carrying a golden statue of a swan. All the courtiers were awestruck by the beauty of the statue. The various diamonds and precious stones studded into the statue glittered in the day light. The richness of the statue was in contrast to the poor appearance of the two men.

“Who are you and what do you want?” asked the King.

## **More Stories of Tenali Raman**

“My name is Ramu and this is my best friend Shamu. We have been best friends and neighbours since childhood. He grows vegetables and I am a rice farmer. During last month’s unexpected rains, most of his harvest was destroyed and his fields became waterlogged.”

Shamu said, “Like a good friend should do, Ramu helped me in time of my need. He offered me a section of his land where I could plant some fast-growing vegetables. Yesterday, while I was tilling the land, I found this golden swan.”

“Shamu came to me with it. He insists that since it was found in my land, it belongs to me,” said Ramu.

“I think that is the right thing to do,” Shamu said.

“But he was the one who discovered the statue and I had already given the land to him. So I think it belongs to him. But he will not accept it,” complained Ramu.

“Very interesting! Who can settle this dispute among these friends? Who does the swan belong

to? It looks like neither will accept it," said the King to his courtiers.

It was indeed a strange situation. Each friend wanted to gift the swan to the other.

Then, courtier Chatur Pandit spoke, "This swan has been obtained from the earth of this kingdom. It is a sign from the Gods. Your Majesty, I request you to grant me permission to take this swan home and inspect it. Then, I can consult the religious texts and conduct the necessary rituals that such a find demands for the well being of the King and the kingdom."

As soon as Chatur Pandit said this, everyone realised that this was his cunning plan to steal some of the diamonds and gems from the statue.

The King's treasurer spoke next, "Your Majesty, I think the swan belongs to the royal treasury."

The King shook his head in disagreement to these suggestions. Then he turned to Tenali Raman.

Tenali said, "Your Highness, I think we should auction this swan. The proceeds should then

## **More Stories of Tenali Raman**

be used to build a beautiful garden in the main street of the kingdom. It should have a fresh water fountain and shady trees. Travellers from around the world should be able to rest there. We should have a pillar in the garden, on which the wonderful story of these selfless and generous friends should be engraved.”

Both the friends were very pleased to hear this suggestion. The King and the courtiers praised Tenali Raman's focus on the greater common good.



## Tenali Raman Justifies

Once, a pundit, who was very knowledgeable and proficient in many languages, decided to visit the King's court. There, he claimed that he could answer any question in any language. The courtiers tried checking his knowledge and asked many questions in diverse languages. The pundit proved to be too good, and answered each and every question accurately.

Everyone was impressed by his knowledge. The pundit also threw an open challenge to the King, "By tomorrow, your expert courtiers should be able to disclose my mother tongue, else I will assume that I am superior to all of your courtiers."

All the courtiers started to ask different questions to identify the pundit's mother tongue but none of them succeeded. When everyone failed, the King turned to Tenali and asked him to tackle this challenge. Tenali thought for awhile and then asked for some time until the next morning. The King accepted his request and adjourned the court.

That night, when the pundit was fast asleep,

## **More Stories of Tenali Raman**

Tenali Raman went silently to his house and entered his bedroom. Funnily, Tenali tickled The pundit's ear with a dry grass. The pundit's sleep was disturbed, but he turned to the other side and slept again. Tenali tickled his ear again. But this time the pundit woke up in anger as his sleep was disturbed. He screamed loudly, "Yevvurura Adi?" meaning, 'Who is that?'

Not finding anyone in the room, he went back to sleep again. Tenali, who was hiding, came out of the house, unnoticed.

The court assembled again next morning and the pundit also came soon afterwards. Again, the pundit kept talking in different languages, but no one could figure out his mother tongue. Finally, Tenali Raman broke his silence and announced, "Telugu is the mother tongue of the pundit."

The court sat still and the pundit was stunned. He could not figure out how Tenali was able to identify his mother tongue, and accepted his defeat. The King was curious and asked Tenali how he managed to find out. Tenali explained

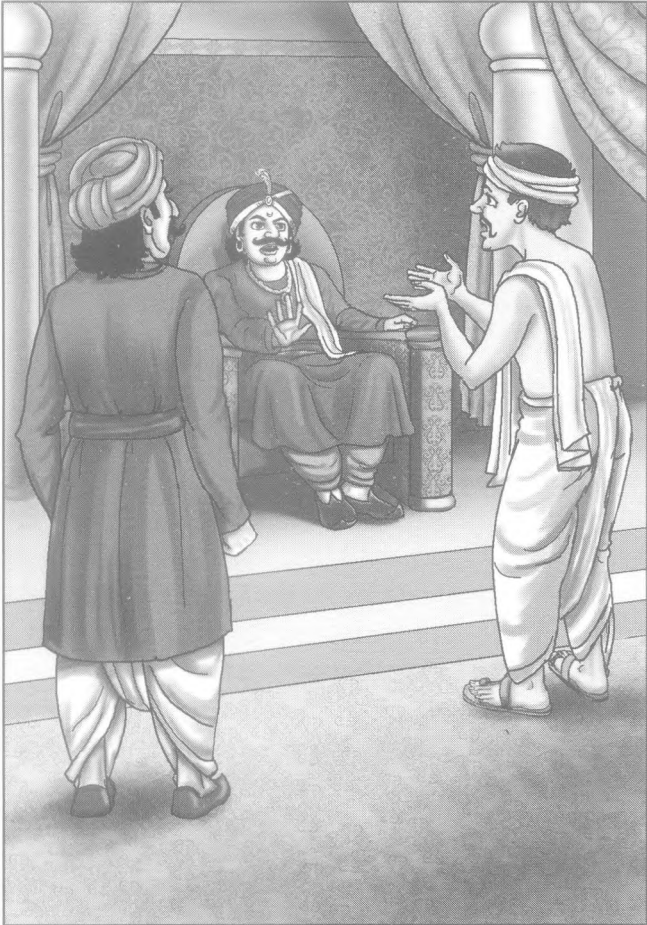
that usually a person always talks in his mother tongue while he is in distress. He narrated the previous night's story. The King felt very proud of Tenali Raman for his wisdom and quick thinking.

The next day, a man called Ramayya came running into the King's court, shouting, "Oh King! Please save me from my master." The King asked, "What happened?"

Ramayya said, "Yesterday, I went shopping with my master to the nearby village. While we were returning, it started raining. We looked around for shelter and found an old building. Due to the rain, we felt very cold. My master asked me to search for some sticks so that we could make a fire. When I was searching for sticks, I found a small pouch. I took that pouch to my master and opened it. There were some stones that looked like diamonds. I told my master that we should deposit the diamonds in the royal treasury.

"My master replied, 'You fool! These diamonds are very valuable. If we share these diamonds between us, our next five generations can live in luxury.'

## More Stories of Tenali Raman



“I said, ‘Ok, we will share the diamonds.’ Then my master said, ‘If we share it here, somebody will see us. So, we will do one thing, give me the pouch I will put it in my pocket safely. Once we go home, we can share these diamonds.’

“But my Lord, after reaching home, he has refused to give my share. Please give me justice.” Then, the King called one of his soldiers and asked him to bring the master into the court immediately. When the master came into the court, the King asked him to explain about the diamonds.

The master said, “By God’s grace, I have enough money and I am not interested in the money which comes suddenly. Yes, I do agree that we found a pouch with diamonds. But when we reached home, I gave the pouch to Ramayya and asked him to deposit it in your royal treasury. I don’t know what he did with those diamonds.”

Ramayya said, “Your Majesty, my master is lying. Please don’t believe him!” The master said, “Oh King, I have two other servants in my house

## **More Stories of Tenali Raman**

Lambu and Jambu. I gave those diamonds to Ramayya in their presence. You can question them.” Then, the King again sent his soldier to bring Lambu and Jambu to his court. As soon as they reached the court, the King asked them, “Did you see your master handing over the diamonds to Ramayya?”

Lambu said, “Yes, my Lord! My master gave a pouch which had diamonds.” Jambu said, “Yes, master had given a pouch and asked Ramayya to deposit it in your treasury.” Now the King was unable to decide who was speaking the truth. He asked his courtiers for a remedy to this problem.

Suddenly, Tenali Raman got an idea and said, “I have a solution for this. Let’s go to a private room and talk.” Then the King and Tenali Raman went into a private room. Tenali called the master first and asked him, “Can you say what colour the pouch was and what colour the diamonds were?”

The master said, “The pouch was green in colour and the diamonds were red in colour.”

Tenali asked the master to stand beside him silently.

Next Tenali called Lambu and asked, "Can you tell me the colour of the pouch and the diamonds?" Lambu said, "Yes Sir! The pouch was white in colour and the diamonds were green in colour." Tenali asked him also to stand silently beside him and then called Jambu.

Tenali asked Jambu the same question. He said, "Yes Sir! The pouch was black in colour and some of the diamonds were white, some were green and some were blue." By that time the King clearly understood that the three men were lying and he punished all three of them.

He appreciated Tenali Raman for his spontaneous idea and awarded him thousand gold coins. Ramayya thanked Tenali and started working at Tenali Raman's house.

That evening, a rich man showed Tenali Raman the coffin he had got made for himself. He wanted Tenali to admire the quality of the wood. "What do you think of the carvings on the sides?" he asked Tenali. "Don't you think they are superb?" Tenali nodded his head appreciatively. "I insisted

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that the inside be lined with the best felt material of course!" the man boasted. "Of course," agreed Tenali. "I wanted it to be perfect," the man went on. "Do you think anything is missing?" "Yes," replied Tenali, "the occupant!" The rich man was ashamed of boasting about his wealth and apologised to Tenali.

Soon, Tenali Raman's landlord came to collect the rent. Tenali told him about the alarming noises that the building made. The building was old and whenever there was a strong wind, its rafters would creak and squeak. "Don't let that worry you," said the landlord. "Those noises are nothing but the praises that the old building is singing to God."

"Oh, I'm not worried about the hymns," said Tenali. "But what if it decided to kneel down and worship God?" The landlord understood what Tenali was trying to say and got the building repaired.

Thus, Tenali Raman's way of giving justifications was quite unique.



## Tenali Raman And The Queen Of Vijaynagar

Once, the Queen of Vijaynagar was presented a rare piece of silk fabric from the Chinese Empress. She called Tenali Raman and expressed her desire to get a beautiful dress stitched with the fabric.

The Queen said, "Tenali, I have heard that tailors always steal some cloth from the fabric given to them for stitching. I am not worried that a part of my fabric will be stolen. However, I don't want anyone other than me to wear the dress made from this fabric. I want you to make some arrangements so that the tailor does not steal a piece of this fabric."

Hearing this, Tenali Raman said, "Your Majesty, my experience says that no matter what one does, tailors do manage to steal a part of the fabric."

The Queen replied, "No, no! I don't believe it. Call the royal tailor here and ask him to stitch my dress in the palace itself. Depute guards around his workplace and then see how he manages to steal a small piece. I bet he will not be able to do it!"

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Tenali smiled and said, “My Queen, the tailors are very smart. Whatever you do, they are bound to steal a piece.”

The Queen did not agree with him and took it as a challenge. The royal tailor was called and was ordered to work in the palace. He was told not to leave the palace until the work was finished.

The tailor came with all his work tools to stay in the palace premises. His workplace was closely observed by the royal guards. The tailor was not allowed to go out, not even to his house. He worked like this for ten days on the extraordinary dress of the Queen.

One day, the tailor’s daughter came to see him. She said, “Father, please come home today. We all are missing you.”

As the girl was not allowed inside, she remained standing out of the guarded room.

The tailor expressed his inability to visit home. But the daughter remained stubborn and kept insisting. Irritated with her repeated requests, the

angry tailor lifted his shoe and flung it towards her. He said, "Silly Girl! I have told you so many times that I cannot come. Why don't you listen?"

Seeing her father irritated, the little girl giggled in amusement. She picked up the shoe that was flung at her and ran away from there.

Finally, after fifteen days, the dress was ready. The Queen was very happy to see it. She gave a good reward to the tailor. Before leaving the palace, the tailor was thoroughly checked by the guards.

The Queen was excited that her dress would be rare in the whole kingdom.

One day, the Queen was passing through the market in her royal palanquin. Suddenly she noticed a woman wearing a blouse that was made of the cloth similar to her rare dress.

Surprised to see this, the Queen immediately asked her guards to call the woman to her palace. When the woman came, the Queen asked her who she was. After enquiry, it was found out that

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she was the wife of the royal tailor. The Queen was angry as well as shocked. She sent for the tailor. The frightened tailor went to Tenali and requested him to come along with him. Tenali felt pity for him and agreed.

The Queen was very angry, but Tenali cooled her down. He said, "Your Majesty, it's not the fault of the tailor. The tailors tend to do this. Please forgive him." The Queen thought for a while and then said to the tailor. "I'll forgive you if you reveal how you managed to take the piece of cloth out from the palace."

The tailor said, "Your Majesty, when my daughter came to call me, I pretended to be very angry and threw my shoe towards her. I had stuffed a small piece of cloth in the shoe. Before coming here, I had already told my daughter about it. So, when I flung the shoe towards her, she picked it up and ran away from there. In this way, the piece of cloth was taken out of the palace."

The tailor stood with his head down. As per her promise, the Queen forgave him and sent him

back. She then turned towards Tenali and said, "You were absolutely right. It is impossible to prevent this lot from stealing the cloth."

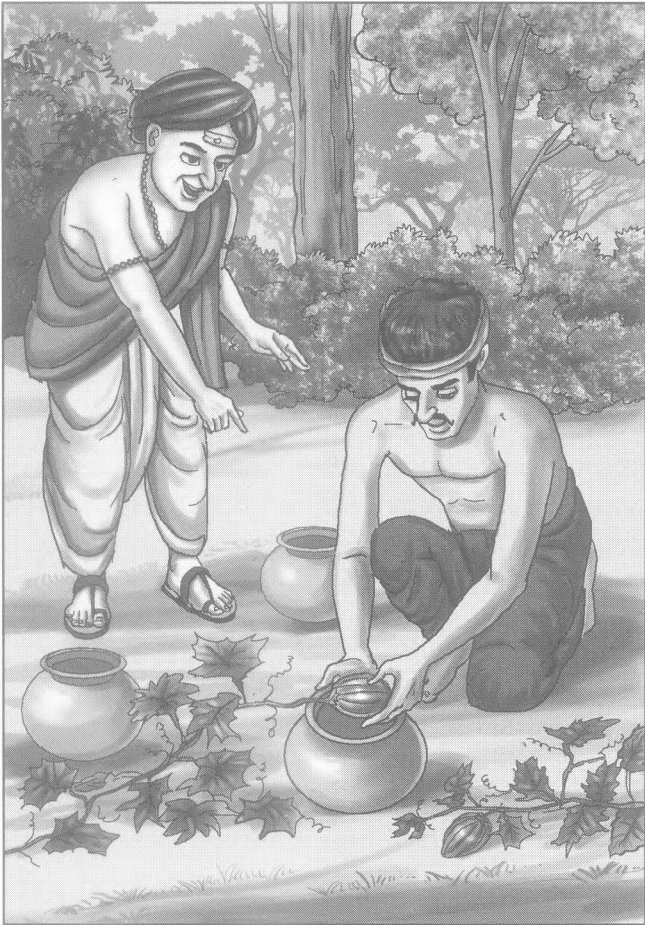
Tenali smiled and went away from there.

Unable to take her defeat in the bet against Tenali Raman, the Queen pressurised the King to appoint her brother, as the Jester. Under pressure, the King removed Tenali from the post of Jester and appointed the Queen's brother in his place.

The King of Delhi always envied King Krishna Dev Raya whose court was studded with wonderful gems. The King of Delhi knew that Tenali was unmatched in his brilliance. When the King of Delhi received the news of Tenali's removal from the post of Jester, he at once sent a messenger with a message. The messenger also carried a few pots with him.

The messenger came to the court of the King and conveyed the message, "I have heard a lot about your wise courtiers. I need a few pots of wisdom for my own use. Please send the pots filled with wisdom. In case you do not have any wisdom,

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then you please send the empty pots back to me.” The King assigned the responsibility of solving the puzzle to the new Jester, the Queen’s brother. He was totally confused with the message. He spent many sleepless nights, but could not understand what he should do.

Confused, he went to his sister, the Queen and said. “I’m tired of the Jester’s responsibility. I don’t want this anymore.”

He accepted in front of his sister that he was unable to solve the puzzle sent by the King of Delhi. The worried Queen thought, ‘What will happen if the solution is not sent?’

Finally, the Queen called Tenali and sought his help. After listening to the whole story, Tenali asked the royal gardener to sow a few seeds of pumpkin in the garden.

When the plants grew and small fruits came on the plants, Tenali gave the empty pots to the gardener and asked him to place a small fruit in each pot without plucking it from the plant. Tenali instructed the gardener to allow the

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pumpkin to grow inside the pots. After a few months, the pumpkin grew to its full size and filled the entire space of the empty pots. Tenali plucked the pumpkins from their plants. He called the royal messenger and asked him to take back the pots to the King of Delhi. He also sent a message with the pots, "As per your wish, we are sending a small amount of wisdom. It's filled in the pots. Please take it out without breaking the pots."

The messenger reached Delhi with the pots. He presented the pots to the King and read the message. The King murmured, "It looks like Tenali Raman is reappointed as the Jester. It can't be the Queen's brother's wisdom."

The messenger returned to the court of the King and narrated the entire episode. When the Queen came to know about it, she at once told the King to reappoint Tenali Raman as the Jester.





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