

# Tenali Raman Stories

The wit and humor  
stories of Tenali Raman

# Tenali Raman Stories

## - Jay

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## Introduction

Once upon a time a king named Krishna Devaraya was ruling the Vijaya Nagar kingdom. He is a popular king who ruled the people with favor. Tenali Raman was the royal poet of Vijaya Nagar who went on to become world famous. We cannot say all the Tenali Raman Stories are imaginary. Some imaginations might have been mixed with the real incidents. Tenali Raman could have lived between 1509 AD – 1529 AD. People say Tenali Raman

was born laughing unlike other children who are born crying. Tenali Raman was born in a poor family in a small village of the state of Andhra Pradesh. Three days after his birth, he lost his father. His mother carried him to her brother's place and lived there. His mother admitted him in a school. He was not interested in school education, so he made a gang of friends and made lots of jokes and laughed with them. Soon after, he discontinued his education. As he grown up, his naughtiness, jokes and funny acts also have grown up along with him. Tenali Raman was not interested in finding a job and led a normal life. His lifetime aim was to use his sense of humor and become famous. What kind of income can one get with the sense of humor? Read further to know more about him.

## **1. A Palm Fruit Monk**

There was no rain in Tenali Raman's area. All the lakes, rivers and water resources have dried up. There was no crop production, since there was no water for irrigation. Famine started to hit the kingdom. People wandered here and there for drinking water. During that time a monk came to that village accidentally.

The day after the monk arrived, with his brave walk and his water vessel, the

rain started pouring like never before. Rivers started flowing fluently and the dams and lakes were filled with water. There is no measure for the amount of happiness the people received.

People started believing that the place started receiving rainfall due to the arrival of the new monk. The fame and respect for the monk developed among the people. People came to the monk in huge numbers and received his blessings by giving their huge offerings.

One day Tenali Raman was also present among the mob that came to visit the monk. Tenali Raman was watching the people offering the monk huge sums of money and bowing down at his feet. But he never bowed down at the feet of the monk. One of those who were going out from the monk's place told Tenali Raman, "You too bow down at the feet of the monk, you will be blessed and you will not lack money anymore."

At this Tenali Raman started laughing like hell. People in that place started scolding Tenali Raman, thinking he was behaving in a disrespectful manner towards the monk. Some of them have even gone to beaten him up.

But the monk was not angry by Tenali Raman's laughter. He ordered the men not to ridicule him nor harm him. His face was shining with the grace of God. He called Tenali Raman in a gracious voice and asked him why he laughed so hard.

Tenali Raman said, "Sorry, I did not mean to disrespect you, I was just thinking about the Palm fruit crow story."

"Which Palm fruit crow story?" asked the monk in a concerning voice.

"Everyone knows this story. I am not telling this to defame you; I am just giving you a fact. Once upon a time, there lived a crow. One day it sat on a ripen palm fruit; it was the time for the fruit to fall of the tree since it was ripen. But the crow thought, due to his strength the fruit have fallen down from the tree. Same was true in your case" said Tenali Raman and laughed again.

"I do not understand, kindly explain me" said the monk with his own gracious voice.

"Dear monk, good and bad, rain and sun shine are given by God in his own time at his own will. It was a coincidence that you arrived at our village when

God sent us the rain, but everyone here thinks that you are the reason for the rain”, said Tenali Raman. The crowd again got agitated and was about to hit Tenali Raman. But the monk stopped them and asked them to leave Tenali Raman.

Then the monk asked Tenali Raman to stay back and had a conversation with him. He told Tenali Raman, “You are having a very smart mind, which is a gift from God” and appreciated him.

## 2. Royal Priest and the Magician

Tenali Raman’s wife gave birth to a male child. It was very difficult for Tenali Raman to run his family. During that time Krishna Devaraya was ruling Vijayanagar with will and wisdom. Krishna Devaraya was a master of many arts. He cared about the development of arts and artists. Tenali Raman believed he could get a better status of life if he could get the mercy of Krishna Devaraya. It would be difficult to meet the King without recommendation.

During that time Thathacharya, the royal priest of Vijayanagar was very much respected and honored by Krishna Devaraya. Tenali Raman believed that if Thathacharya could recommend him, he could get a chance to meet the King and become the royal poet.

One day Thathacharya paid a visit to a city nearby Tenali Raman’s place. People went in groups and got the blessings of the royal priest. Tenali Raman took some of his writings with him and met the royal priest and read those poems to him. The royal priest really enjoyed those literatures with a mix of humor. He commended Tenali Raman and spoke well about Tenali Raman. Tenali Raman used that opportunity and asked him to recommend him for the post of royal poet in the kingdom.

The royal priest thought to himself that if Tenali Raman gets a chance to come into the royal court, Thathacharya himself might lose the favor of the king and Tenali Raman might take away his place.

But still, Thathacharya said he will introduce Tenali Raman to the king and invite him to come to the royal court for a performance. So, Tenali Raman waited for many days to get a reply from the King. Tenali Raman was

disappointed that he could not get a reply from the royal court.

Tenali Raman believed that somehow if he could get into the royal court, the royal priest would recommend him for the post of royal poet. One day Tenali Raman sold his belongings and took his family along with him and went to Vijayanagar. There he made his wife and son to stay in an inn and went to meet the royal priest.

Tenali Raman was unsure if the royal priest would remember him or not. So, he decided to use a short cut method to enter into the royal court. He wore the best clothes and hired a vehicle and went to the royal priest's house.

The watchman of the house thought Tenali Raman is some VIP and allowed him to get into the house with much respect. "I am the childhood friend of the royal priest, don't allow anyone inside until I finish my conversation with the royal priest", said Tenali Raman and went inside.

The royal priest was shocked as he recognized Tenali Raman. He never expected him to come to his house. "Who are you? Why did you come here? You look like a robber! Who's there, send him out!", shouted the royal priest.

"Master, don't you recognize me, I am Tenali Raman. Have I not read you all my songs in your presence when you came to my place? Have you not appreciated me? Have you not promised to make me the royal poet in Krishna Devaraya's court?" pleaded Tenali Raman. But the royal priest's heart was unmoved and threatened to send him to jail, if he persisted. So, Tenali Raman came out with a broken heart.

The next day Tenali Raman dressed up well and went towards the palace of King Krishna Devaraya. He went along with the royal members of the court in a cunning way. It was the time for the royal court to begin the proceedings of the day. Tenali Raman went silently and sat on a seat that he could find. Royal priest was seated on his unique seat.

There was a magician who was the friend of the royal priest. The royal priest and the magician made a deal to ask for a great reward from the King and share it among them. The magician was the best in the country. The magician started performing wonderfully and entertained the king and the members of the royal court.

After performing his magic, the magician proudly said, "not only in this city, throughout the country there is no better magician than him, I am challenging

everyone in the court, if there is anyone who could win me in performing magic, let him come up”.

The King did not like the way he spoke, he was thinking about giving a great reward for anyone who could come up and win this magician. But the king was embarrassed to see that no one came forward. Suddenly Tenali Raman came out of his seat and appeared before the king.

“Lord, if no one could win over this magician, it would become a big embarrassment for you and the country. So, I want to stop such situation”, he said. The king had not seen Tenali Raman before; nevertheless he was happy to see someone coming forward to accept the challenge of the magician. So, the king ordered the treasurer to bring 1000 gold coins.

“Young man, if you could win this magician, these 1000 gold coins would be yours. If you lose, the magician would get this prize. Whoever fails would end up in prison!” said the king.

Both the magician and Tenali Raman agreed to that. The magician looked at Tenali Raman and thought that he should be a fool. Tenali Raman did not have any characteristics of a magician. He asked Tenali Raman, “Little boy, what kind of magic trick are you going to perform?”

Tenali Raman replied, “I am going to perform a trick with closed eyes, all you have to do is to perform the same trick with your eyes wide open, I will be a loser. If you cannot perform that, then I will be the winner”

The magician said, “Do, let me see!”

Tenali Raman ordered for a kilogram of chili powder to be brought in. He closed his eyes tightly and poured the chili powder above his eyes. He then cleaned them up and washed his eyes with water.

“Now” said Tenali Raman, “pour this chili powder above your eyes, with your eyes wide open”

“Who could do that? It is impossible, you are cheating” said the magician.

“No! No! No!”, said the King, “Dear magician, you should have inquired on what is the job that need to be performed with eyes wide open before he brought the chili powder, but now since you have accepted it is impossible for you to do that with your eyes open, you have lost the game” he added.

The king felt happy for Tenali Raman and gave him the 1000 gold coins. Along with that he also gave permission for Tenali Raman to come to the royal court any day and take part in the activities.

### 3. Royal Priest Avenged

Tenali Raman was waiting patiently for a chance to avenge the royal priest for ill-treating him when he visited his house for recommendation. One day the royal priest Thathacharya went to the Thungabatra river, early in the morning to take bath. He removed all his clothes and kept them at the bank of the river and went into the river without any clothes. Tenali Raman saw this and he secretly went there and took the clothes and was hiding behind a tree. The royal priest finished taking bath as the sun was slowly rising. He came back to the bank and was shocked to see his clothes were not there.

Tenali Raman shouted, “Master, do not worry your clothes are with me!”

“Tenali Raman! Do not play like this, please give back my clothes, its already sunset and women are coming to take bath”, pleaded the royal priest.

“Well, well, you remember my name, but when I came to your house you called me a robber and you said you do not know me!”, said Tenali Raman.

“I am extremely sorry for that Tenali Raman, but do not put me to shame, please give back my clothes”, the royal priest begged again.



“Well, I will give you your clothes, but on one condition, that you will do whatever I ask you to do!” said Tenali Raman in a rough voice.

“I will do anything you ask, but please give me back my clothes”, the royal priest pleaded.

Tenali Raman gave his clothes back and the royal priest asked Tenali Raman what he needs to do. Tenali Raman told the royal priest that he needs to carry Tenali Raman all the way back to the King’s palace. The royal priest never expected such a request from Tenali Raman. “Tenali Raman, please ask me anything else, how would I carry you to the king’s palace”, said the royal priest. “Either you carry me there, or I will remove your clothes and make you walk naked all the way back to the town!” said Tenali Raman. Knowing that Tenali Raman would do anything, the royal priest carried him all the way up to the king’s palace.

The King Krishna Devaraya was strolling on the royal palace. He was shocked to see the royal priest carrying a man on his shoulders. He could not recognize whom he was carrying, but then the king could not tolerate someone disrespecting the royal priest. So, the king ordered his soldiers to bring pull the man who is sitting on the shoulders, give him 100 lashes on his back and bring him back to the king. Tenali Raman saw the king took a notice of what is happening and guessed the outcome.

Tenali Raman asked the royal priest to stop. He got down from his shoulders. “I am sorry master, I have made you carry me so far for the mistake you have done, but now I am feeling very guilty, so let me carry you from this point onwards” said Tenali Raman and took the royal Priest on his shoulders.

When the soldiers saw Tenali Raman carrying the royal priest on his shoulders, they pulled him down, gave him 100 lashes and took him to the King. The king was shocked to see the royal priest being beaten up by the soldiers. “You fools, why did you beat the royal priest?” asked the king. Then he understood how smartly Tenali Raman has put the royal priest under trouble for the ill-treatment he had received earlier.

## 4. Resurrection of Tenali Raman

Though the king understood why Tenali Raman had disrespected the royal priest, he ordered the soldiers to behead him due to the disrespect he had done to the royal priest. The King ordered the soldiers to cut off Tenali Raman's head in one whisker. So, they took Tenali Raman with them. Along the way Tenali Raman told the soldiers that he had one last wish. The soldiers took pity on him and listened to his last wish. Tenali Raman told them that he want to go to a river and worship the God, while his head is being cut off. The soldiers agreed and took him to a nearby river. All three went to the middle of the river. Tenali Raman said, he would bow down into the river as a way of worship and count each time he came out of the river, when he finish his worship for the third time, he would say three and come out of the river, immediately upon saying 'three' the soldiers should cut off his head. The soldiers agreed and Tenali Raman went into the river for the first time and came up and said, 'One'. Tenali Raman did the same second time and came up and said, 'Two'. Now the soldiers got ready to cut off his head, as they were listening to his count. Tenali Raman went into the river came out and said, 'three'. And the Soldiers threw their swords in a whisker, but Tenali Raman went inside the water once again. Now Tenali Raman said, "Stop!" and asked, "What did the king tell you?". The Soldiers were shocked and said, "We are supposed to chop off your head in one whisker!"

"Alright then, you made a whisker, but you could not chop off my head, you are not supposed to try and chop off my head in second attempt, now leave me free or you would be working against the King's commands", said Tenali Raman. The Soldiers were confused on how they would face the king now. So, Tenali Raman gave them an idea to stain their swords with the blood of goat and show it to the king as Tenali Raman's blood. The Soldiers did the same.

The king was restless as he thought he made a grave mistake in asking Tenali Raman to be beheaded who made a small mistake for which killing him is a great price. But before the king could order the soldiers, not to behead Tenali Raman, the soldiers came back with their sword that had blood on it, confirming the death of Tenali Raman.

The royal advisors told the king that the ghost of Tenali Raman could haunt

the King and the palace proper ceremony is not conducted to make the spirit of Tenali Raman to rest in peace. So, the king asked the royal priest and few other priests to go to the graveyard and conduct the ceremony to send back Tenali Raman's spirit to the world of spirits.

The royal priest was very much scared, but nevertheless he could not refuse the king's order, so he went into the graveyard with his fellow priests and started performing the ceremony under a banyan tree. Now it was customary for the royal priest to call out the name of the dead person, usually the dead person would not respond. But since Tenali Raman was hiding at the top of the tree, he jumped down saying "Here I am!"

All the priests and the royal priest scared to death and flew back to the king. "The spirit of Tenali Raman has scared us and we all ran back to you my Lord!" reported the royal priest.

So, the king proclaimed that 1000 gold coins would be rewarded to any person who could send back Tenali Raman to the underworld. No one came forward for three days, since everyone was afraid of getting killed by the ghost of Tenali Raman.

After three days a monk came from the jungle and met the king. He said he could send the ghost back to the underworld, but only on one condition. "What is that condition?" asked the king. "It would require Tenali Raman to be resurrected" said the monk.

"Oh, it would be my pleasure if Tenali Raman could be resurrected" said the king

"What must I do to resurrect Tenali Raman?" inquired the King again.

"It's very simple, all you have to do is, yourself and your court men to close your eyes for few minutes"

"Is it that simple? Then ok" said the King

The king and the people in the court closed their eyes, while Tenali Raman who was disguised as the monk removed changes his clothes and appeared before the king.

Everyone was shocked and surprised to see Tenali Raman back. The King was very much curious about knowing how Tenali Raman came back to life. Nevertheless Tenali Raman said, those details will not be useful to anybody. So, the king agreed and everyone was happy about the return of Tenali Raman.

## 5. The Proud Philosopher

One day a world famous philosopher paid a visit to the king's palace. As per the king's request he made long lectures about philosophy for many hours. King or the members of the kingdom were unable to understand most of his philosophies. But the philosopher was very boastful about his knowledge in philosophy. The king was waiting for someone to say something to stop the boastful speech of the philosopher.

During his long lecture, the philosopher said that anything that a person could smell with his nose, taste with his tongue and see with his eyes were nothing but illusions. In other words, none of the things we do were true in reality.

Suddenly Tenali Raman stood up and asked, "Sir, can I ask you a doubt?"

Philosopher responded, "Please ask!"

"Dear Philosopher, we eat when we are hungry, was that also an illusion? Is there no difference between eating and thinking that we are eating?" asked Tenali Raman

"There is no difference!" said the philosopher

Tenali Raman stopped asking further questions.

The King ordered a big banquet to honor the philosopher. The ministers along with the philosopher sat down to have the dinner. Tenali Raman was also among them. When everyone was about to start their dinner, Tenali Raman started a problem.

"Dear Philosopher, I request you to kindly exercise your philosophy in this food matter", said Tenali Raman

"Please explain what you would like to tell me" asked the philosopher

"Dear Philosopher, according to your illusion philosophy, everything is an illusion including hunger, so, please think that you have had your fill and your hunger will be gone!", said Tenali Raman

Everyone including the king laughed at the smartness of Tenali Raman. The philosopher was embarrassed. Tasty food was presented before him, but he could not eat it. How would it be act as though he is not hungry, when he is actually starving?

The philosopher bowed down his head in shame due to the fact he was insulted by Tenali Raman.

"Dear Philosopher, I said this only to let you understand that we should not confuse ourselves with useless philosophies which do not have practical

value. You may forget your philosophies and eat your dinner”, said Tenali Raman. Thus he ended the embarrassment of the philosopher.

## 6. Rats, Cats and Cows

Rats and mice increased in number and started giving a lot of trouble to the people of Vijayanagar. People tried whatever they could do to stop this but in vain. So, they came to the King and summoned about this issue. King gave them the assurance the rats and mice in the city will be controlled through proper measures.

The king gathered the council of ministers to discuss about the ways to stop the problems caused by rats and mice. The ministers and government officials gave each of their opinions and ideas about getting rid of the rats and mice. Then Tenali Raman gave an idea.

“Dear Majesty! There is huge number of cats available in Persia, since their government feels it is wrong to kill animals, they are exporting the cats to other countries for low cost. Let us import large number of cats into our city. Let us give one cat to each citizen” said Tenali Raman. Everyone including the king unanimously accepted that this is the best idea.

But the Royal Priest wanted to show himself as a wise man, suggested that a cow also must be given to each citizen, so that they could grow the cat with the milk provided by the cow. There was a friend of royal priest who is a cow seller. Due to this deal made by the royal priest, they both would be benefitted.

They imported a large number of cats from Persia. And cows were brought from the royal priest’s friend. Each of those cats and cows were given to the citizens to take care of.

Tenali Raman also got one cat and a cow. Immediately after coming home Tenali Raman took the milk from the cow and heated the milk in a vessel.

He poured the very hot milk in the dish and called the cat to drink. Without knowing that the milk is very hot, the poor cat kept its mouth on the dish and got his mouth burnt. The poor cat ran away being hurt. From that day

onwards the poor cat started running off immediately after seeing the dish of milk. Even if the milk was very cold, the cat would not dare keep its mouth on it. But the cat caught the rat and mice in Tenali Raman's household for its food. Tenali Raman drank the milk from the cow and became stronger and healthier.

Meanwhile the king wanted to know how the citizens are taking care of the cats. He made an order for everyone who got the cat from the government to bring them before the king. The citizens also brought all their cats with them. Along with them was standing Tenali Raman with his cat.

All the cats that the citizens bought were fat and fluffy. But Tenali Raman's cat was very average. So, the king asked Tenali Raman, why his cat is not as healthy as the other citizen's cats.

"Dear Lord, my cat does not drink milk", said Tenali Raman

"What? Don't tell lies Tenali Raman" replied the King in a rather angry voice

"No! My Lord, I am saying the truth" Said Tenali Raman

The king ordered milk to be brought immediately. On seeing the dish filled with milk, the cat got scared and ran for its life. The king understood that Tenali Raman had done something.

"Dear Tenali Raman, anything you want to say about this?" inquired the King softly

"Lord, we have bought the cats from Persia to save people from mice and rats, please ask them if they have their problems solved" said Tenali Raman

When the king enquired, except Tenali Raman's household everyone else had the problems. So, the king understood the mistake of giving a cow to each household to feed the cat, when the real need was to allow the cats to hunt down the rats and mice. Thereby the king honored Tenali Raman in front of everyone and the royal priest and ordered all the cows be given back.

## 7. The Arabian Horse and the stray kitty

Krishna Devaraya's capital city Vijayanagar was a great city. There were huge number of shops, clubs and amusements. People from far away would visit this place to see the greatness of this city. Magicians, poets and wise men visited this city to provide their performance and get rewards from the king. The city was always filled with events and celebrations.

Raman roamed around the city to watch the latest performances, shops and amusements. Though Tenali Raman was wise and humorous, he enjoyed his everyday life rather than saving money for the future. He ate well and bought gifts for his friends and family. His heart was always bigger than his pockets. He was delighted in helping the poor more than earning money for himself.

Raman's friends took advantage of this and get money from him, which they will never return. Anyways Raman would never keep an account of them. So, many a times Raman would find himself in trouble without money. In spite of being the King's pet and receiving huge amount of gold coins, he went to the moneylenders for help. Since, Raman would always pay back they would charge huge interest on his loans.

Deema, a moneylender, hated Tenali Raman, since the king liked Raman more. He was a proud man. Deema was always planning to loot all the money that Raman got as gifts from the king.

The king gifted an Arabian horse to Tenali Raman. The horse was white in color. Owning a horse was considered equivalent to that of owning a luxury car in today's circumstance. Deema was jealous and wanted Raman to lose his horse.

As he expected, Raman spent all his money and wanted to get some loan. Deema came to know about this, and went straight to Tenali Raman's house, even before Raman made an effort. He acted like a passerby and said, "Hi Raman, My dear friend! How are you? I was just passing by and thought I would say hi to you". Raman understood that Deema was not telling the truth but acted as though he believed him.

Raman said, “God must have sent you to me, I am in great need of money, can you give me some money?”

Deema smiled cunningly and said, “Of course, I would definitely help you, friends are made for that”

Raman requested him to give 50 gold coins. Deema agreed but he added, “Raman, I will provide you the money, but on one condition. If you do not repay me the money in exactly 2 weeks, you will have to sell this beautiful white horse of yours and give me all the money that you get from it”

Raman knew the plan of the moneylender. He got only 50 gold coins from the moneylender, but the horse would cost 100 gold coins. To Deema’s surprise, Tenali Raman agreed to this deal. Deema thought, “Tenali Raman must be a fool, I am sure he would not be able to repay this money”

As Deema expected, Raman was unable to repay the money that he got from Deema. So, as per the agreement along with Deema, Raman took the beautiful white Arabian horse to the market for selling it. Before they left the place, Raman took a cat and put it on the horse’s back. Deema felt strange, but he never minded it.

Immediately after entering the market, Raman began shouting, “Good Morning ladies and gentlemen, I am selling a small kitten. Is there anyone who is interested in buying it?”

A great mob gathered around Raman. Deema could not stop himself from laughing. Raman shouted again saying, “I am selling this cat on a special offer for 100 gold coins. Anyone who buys this cat can get this beautiful Arabian horse for just one gold coin!”

The people and Deema could not believe it. “Raman must be really mad”, they thought. A rich businessman took hold of this opportunity and said, “I will buy this cat for 100 gold coins. I will pay you right now!”. Raman accepted the 101 gold coins from the rich businessman and gave away the cat and the Arabian horse to him. The rich businessman went away happily. The businessman knew very well that the horse was worth the 101 gold coins and he loved the cat anyways.

Deema was entirely shocked and said, “Why the hell? The horse was worth much more than 1 gold coin!”



Raman replied with a smile and said, “Deema! I know that. But our agreement was to give you whatever I get by selling this horse, right?” Deema fainted. He understood that Raman had over smarted him. Since Deema could not do anything else, he accepted that one gold coin and left that place. He decided never to make trouble with Tenali Raman again.

The moneylender learnt a very good lesson from Tenali Raman. He never tried to trick people off their money again.

## 8. Treasure inside the well

Using his sense of humor and his wisdom Tenali Raman received a lot of rewards from the King. He kept some of the gifts in his house while he bought gifts for his friends and family with some of the gifts. He also bought costly plants and planted them in his garden behind his house.

The costly plants and trees need to be watered regularly. Raman was a lazy person. Though he liked the plants very much, he was not much interested in watering them himself. He would always trick someone into watering his plants. He dug several paths for water to reach his plants from the well behind his house.

During that time, there were two famous thieves. They became a big threat to the citizens of that city. Every night they looted the house of rich people. But no one knew, when and how they entered into their houses. Since Tenali Raman received a lot of rewards from Krishna Devaraya, he was also afraid. Raman knew that the thieves would definitely pay a visit to his house one day or the other.

One day evening as Tenali Raman was walking in his garden, he was pondering about the thieves. Suddenly he noticed to strangers standing behind the well in his garden. His inner thoughts told him that these were the two thieves, who are threatening the city dwellers.

Tenali Raman immediately got an idea. Though he was scared within, he did not show it out. He went near the apple tree and called out to

his wife, “Lalitha, Come out, I want to talk to you for a minute!” he said. His Lalitha came out immediately, thinking that something went wrong. Raman told her, “Do not worry darling, there is nothing wrong. I just thought about something”. He spoke so loudly in a way the thieves could hear. “There are a lot of thefts going on in the city. And I am worried that they would come to our home one day. Everyone knows that I am receiving lots of rewards from the King. To protect our valuables, let us put them all in a bag and throw it into the well. The thieves will never search our well.”

His wife was about to say something against it, but Tenali Raman signaled to her by keeping a finger on his mouth. He later took her inside the house and explained her about his idea. His wife laughed but acted along with him. They both packed the old pottery and waste items in their house into a bag. They took it to the well and threw it into the well while the thieves were watching from behind.

The thieves thought this is going to be too easy for them. They waited till the sky darkened and stars appeared. They slowly moved towards the well. One of the thieves looked at the other and said, “The well looks too deep, and I do not know swimming, get into the well and throw the bag out!” For which the other one replied “Hey no!”, “I also do now know how to swim”. Then one of them came up with an idea. “Let us draw the water from the well and pour it out, once the water level is low, we could easily take the bag from the well and run away”, they planned. They both agreed to this idea and began drawing water from the well. As they poured out the water, it went into the path that Raman has created for watering the plants.

Raman laughed inside while he watched the thieves watering his plants in search of treasure inside the well. When the thieves had drawn enough water for his plants, he called his guards from outside his house and took them to the garden. The guards took hold of the criminals. As the thieves were tired of drawing water, they were unable to run away when they guards caught them.

As they were taken to custody, Raman called them out and said, “Thanks a lot for watering the plants in my garden” They thieves felt ashamed.

When the King came to know about this incident, he called Tenali Raman and gave him a big reward in front of the citizens for catching those notorious criminals. “Yet again, you have used your wisdom, Raman. I am really

feeling proud to have you in my court. May God bless you” Said King Krishna Devaraya.

## 9. Hidden Thieves

The thieves who got caught by Tenali Raman’s wisdom got released and wanted to take revenge. Once again they came to Tenali Raman’s house and hid themselves behind a bush in his garden. They were really furious because Tenali Raman also made them to water his plants in the garden.

As usual Tenali Raman was walking in his garden. It was a custom to keep a pot of water behind the house to wash the hands and drink water before having the dinner. Raman’s wife called him to have the dinner. So, Raman bent down to take some water to wash his hands. He was shocked to notice the thieves hiding behind the bush. Raman got an idea and took some water in his mouth and spit them towards the bush, behind which the thieves were hiding. Since Raman was at a distance, if the thieves showed up, he would shout and call the neighborhood. Knowing this, the thieves kept silent and waited for their chance. One by one Raman took all the water in the pot and spit it on the thieves.

Raman’s wife saw him wasting all the water in the pot got angry and shouted at him for spitting everything out. Raman asked her to bring another pot of water. Raman’s wife was confused, but she obeyed him and brought another pot of water. When she brought him the water, Raman again took some into his mouth. This time Raman spit the water at his wife.

Raman’s wife concluded that Raman is out of his mind and went outside his house and shouted. On hearing his wife’s screaming, everyone from the neighborhood came to inquire on what happened. “My husband drank all the water from the pot and spit it out, when I asked him why he did such thing, he spit the water on me as well” She said.

“My wife is not very patient, look at those two men, I am spitting on them since evening, and they did not even dare to speak a word against me, but my

wife is screaming so loud !” said Tenali Raman

Now the mob who gathered around his house noticed the thieves and caught them red-handed. The people had beaten them up in such a manner, the thieves decided never to steal from anyone ever after.

## 10. Tenali Raman not be seen

King Krishna Devaraya was known for his wisdom and kindness. He liked Tenali Raman very much. But often at times Tenali Raman would do something that would bring him some punishments as well. Tenali Raman would do them as a practical joke, but the rest of the court and the King would not feel good about it.

A messenger came to King Krishna Devaraya’s court one day. The messenger was sent by Krishna Devaraya’s friends from another kingdom. The messenger came to warn the king about a plot to kill him. The King was deeply distressed and called his ministers to gather at the court.

As Krishna Devaraya was seriously discussing the issue with the ministers, Tenali Raman entered the court laughing and making jokes. The king became angry; he raised his voice and said, “How dare you laugh at this moment Tenali Raman! My life is in danger, and you are laughing so happily! Get out of the court! I do not want to see you again!”

Tenali Raman who was unaware of the plot to kill the king was shocked to hear such an order from the king. Since it was improper to argue with the king, Tenali Raman bowed down and went out.

Krishna Devaraya went on with his discussion and commanded the security to his palace to be doubled. Sometime later the king realized that he was too harsh on Tenali Raman. He thought about asking Tenali Raman to come down to his court next day to forgive him.

After taking his meals in the afternoon he went to the royal court to watch a snake charmer’s performance. Everyone in the palace was busy watching the snake charmer, when suddenly there was a fuzz. Tenali Raman appeared from the middle of the crowd and stood in front of Krishna Devaraya. The King saw Tenali Raman with his head covered by a mud pot. There were two holes in the mud pot for Tenali Raman to see.

The king was irritated. He had forgiven Tenali Raman already, but he could not understand why he had covered his head with a mud pot and entered into the royal court. Krishna Devaraya shouted at Tenali Raman and asked, “Why are you doing this? I suppose I have ordered you not to enter into the royal court?”

Tenali Raman spoke with the vessel in his head, “No! my Lord! You told me that you do not want to see my face anymore, so I covered my face with a mud pot!”

Unable to control his laughter, the king fell down to the ground and laughed. He told Tenali Raman, “Tenali Raman, how can I spend a day without seeing you? Remove that stupid vessel from your head and take your seat in the royal court” and he hugged Tenali Raman.

Raman immediately broke the mud vessel by hitting his head against the wall. Everyone in the royal court laughed at this sight.

## 11. Unknown Book

One day Vidyasagar, a famous poet from Orissa, came to the royal court of Krishna Devaraya. He was a world famous Sanskrit poet. He made world tours and have learnt many languages. He made debates with several other famous poets of his time and has won the debates and became the dominant poet of his time. Krishna Devaraya welcomed him into the court and honored him.

Vidyasagar bowed down to the king and said, “Dear Majesty, your fame is spread all over the world, I came here to prove my poetic dominance in your court and get rewards from you. Is there anyone in your royal court who could compete with me in a debate and win over me?”

“Dear poet, there is never a time in the history of Vijayanagar which lacked the presence of great poets, sure there are many poets in our court to accept your challenge” said Krishna Devaraya.

“I understand that you have many great poets in this great kingdom, but in my experience around the world, there is no greater poet who could challenge

me in my poetry skills. When I challenge any poet in the world, they would not dare to accept my challenge and bow down in defeat. So, it is better for you to accept the defeat right away and give me the rewards, which I will accept silently and move away, than to accept the challenge and bow down in front of me after getting defeated” said the proud poet Vidyasagar.

King was very angry at these words from the poet, but he smiled and replied, “Tomorrow one of our poets will debate with you on poetry related topics”. After the king went home, he called three of his best poets Bethanna, Thimmanna and Veeranna. These three poets were very famous during the reign of Krishna Devaraya and their fame was spread throughout the country.

Krishna Devaraya asked which among the three is ready to accept the challenge of Vidyasagar. But all three of them looked into each other’s face instead of answering the king. The king became furious and asked them to answer right away. Bethanna the eldest of the three poets came forward to answer the king, “Dear Majesty! Have we not debated with so many other poets who came to the court and won over them? Vidyasagar is a renowned poet in Sanskrit. He had travelled across the globe and has achieved endless knowledge. So, we are hesitating to debate with him”

“So, do you want me to bow down to him along with three of you”, the king replied angrily.

Suddenly Tenali Raman stood up and said, “Dear Lord! Why should you bow down before an alien?”

“For keeping unqualified people as poets, I should certainly bow down to him”, the king answered in anguish.

“Dear Lord! If you could allow me to accept the challenge of Vidyasagar, I would certainly win over the poet and bring pride to our Kingdom” Said Tenali Raman.

The king’s face brightened as he heard these words, “Tenali Raman! Are you sure you could win over this great poet?”

“If I could not, I would not have said this, My Lord!” reassured Tenali Raman.

“Very well then, I would certainly allow you Tenali Raman” said the Krishna Devaraya and they dispersed.

Next day the court gathered,

Vidyasagar walked proudly to his throne and sat on it.

“Dear Majesty! Who is going to compete against me?” asked Vidyasagar

Krishna Devaraya looked at Tenali Raman

Tenali Raman walked proudly and said, “I am the poet of King Krishna Devaraya, who is going to defeat you the great Vidyasagar”

Vidyasagar stared at him and said, “Shall we start our competition?”

“Before we could compete, I would like to test your knowledge in poetry” said Tenali Raman and kept a sack covered with silk cloth in front of Vidyasagar.

“What is this?” asked Vidyasagar

“This is a world famous poetry book, ‘Thilaga kashta magila mandhanam’, have you heard about it?” said Tenali Raman

“Yes, sure, I have that book with me”, lied the poet

“Then we shall start our debate from this poetry itself”, said Tenali Raman

“I am having stomach pain, shall we have this debate tomorrow?” told Vidyasagar in a low voice.

“Sure, we will debate tomorrow”, said Tenali Raman

So, the court dispersed that day. The next day however Vidyasagar did not turn up. The king sent his servant to check Vidyasagar’s room. But the servant came back and reported that Vidyasagar has left the city over night.

The king was overjoyed and asked Tenali Raman about the book. Tenali Raman replied, “Thilaga kashta magila mandhanam’ means, “Sesame burning wood, rope to tie cow” in ancient language, that was what inside the sack covered by silk cloth”

When the king heard it, he could not control his laughter. The whole court also laughed when they came to know how Tenali Raman had tricked the proud poet.

## 12. Death Choice

Though the king received warnings about the plot to kill him, soon everyone forgot the threat. Everyone was confident that no one would be able to assassinate the king, with such a strong security. Even Tenali Raman had forgotten the threat. But Tenali Raman would be happy to give his own life in order to save the king. He prayed every day for the well-being of the king.

One day a young man visited Tenali Raman's house. He said he is a distant relative of Tenali Raman. Though Tenali Raman could not recognize him, he did not want to send back his relative. So, he allowed the young man to stay with him in his house.

The youngster was friendly with Tenali Raman and he was very much interested in Tenali Raman's work at the royal court. The young man told Tenali Raman that he want to meet the great king Krishna Devaraya. Tenali Raman ensured him that he will make an arrangement for that.

Raman does not know that the youngster was actually a paid killer. Another king, Krishna Devaraya's enemy, had sent this young man to kill Krishna Devaraya. The enemy king has found that Krishna Devaraya was very relaxed with Tenali Raman around him. So, if the youngster could become Raman's friend then it would be easy for him to assassinate Krishna Devaraya.

One day the king sent Tenali Raman to a distant town to worship in a temple for the welfare of Krishna Devaraya and the citizens of Vijayanagar. The youngster understood that this was his best opportunity to murder the king Krishna Devaraya. He tied Tenali Raman's wife in one of the rooms of Tenali Raman's house with a cloth in her mouth and sent a messenger to inform that Tenali Raman's wife was ill. The king felt that, it is because of his order to send Tenali Raman to a distant town, his wife fell ill. So, he immediately went to Tenali Raman's house.

Krishna Devaraya saw the house opened. He did not want to disturb Tenali Raman's ill wife, so he asked the soldiers to wait outside. As the king went inside the house, he was shocked to see Tenali Raman's wife tied to a chair with a piece of cloth kept inside her mouth to prevent her from shouting. As Krishna Devaraya recognized that there is a plot, the door shut behind him. Krishna Devaraya was well versed in all forms of fights known in India; he



somehow managed to escape the sword of the enemy behind him and fought with him to save his own life and that of Tenali Raman's wife. Hearing the noise inside, the soldiers who were outside the house rushed inside. Understanding the situation that he cannot escape, the assassin surrendered himself.

Krishna Devaraya understood that the killer had kept Tenali Raman's wife as captive and Tenali Raman was totally unaware of it. Even though he wanted to teach Tenali Raman a lesson.

When Tenali Raman returned, the king summoned him and asked him, "Dear Tenali Raman, due to your carelessness, you put your wife's life and my life at stake, so I have decided to kill you, but I am going to leave the choice to you to choose the method in which you want to die, what is your choice?" The king very well knows that Tenali Raman would somehow escape with his wit and intelligence, but wanted to see what he does.

Raman bowed down and inquired, "Lord! You know very well that I will not do anything to harm you, but I accept my failure and carelessness to believe a wicked stranger and allow him to stay in my house. May I ask one question from you?". "Yes, of course" said the king. "Will you allow me to die exactly in the same manner I want to die" asked Tenali Raman.

Happily Tenali Raman replied, "Dear Lord! As you have given the orders that I can choose the way I want to die, let me choose to die naturally in your kingdom at my old age". The king laughed out loud and was happy to hear that, he replied "Tenali Raman, your wish is granted and you shall happily live and die in your old age in this beautiful kingdom", said Krishna Devaraya. At this everyone in the royal court laughed and understood the cleverness of Tenali Raman.