

## ***Thousand Gold Coins and a Handful Grain***



Simhapuri was a prominent town in the Vijaya Nagar empire. There lived a stunning beauty named Vidyullatha. She was a rich lady and well versed with prose, poetry and composition besides dance and music. Vidyullatha was famous as a proud woman in the region.

A hoarding appeared on the compound wall of the woman's house quoting as, "A reward of one thousand gold coins would be presented to those who can win over the Lady in the house. The competitors are required to prove their upper hand in humour, wit and scholarship." This became a prestigious issue for the scholars in the region.

Many responded to the open invitation and barged into her house, individually, to test their fate through the fete. Surprisingly, everyone whoever walked into Vidyullatha's house lost in the battle and came out with chins down. The list of losers was steadily growing and after sometime there were no takers to the invitation.

Days were passing like this. One morning, a vendor with a load of firewood on his head started shouting in front of her house, "Firewood...strong firewood...excess heat generating firewood..." he continued the sequence for sometime. Vidyullatha thinking that his noise was growing unbearable walked on to the threshold and enquired, "How much do you sell the load for?"

An instant reply came from the vendor, "I will not sell this for money. If you can give me a handful grain I will give you all the load." Assuring him to give

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more grains, Vidyullatha ordered him to dump the load in the backyard and return to collect the grains.

The vendor unloaded the weight off his head then and there started to argue, "There is no bargain in this deal Madam! I will sell this to you only if you can give me a handful grain, did you get it" he stressed, "a handful grain." The rich woman got disgusted with the vendor's behaviour, "Hey you bloody vendor. Stop crying, I will give you what you wanted." She said, "throw them in the backyard and come here."

The Vendor was adamant and made his firewood load's price much more clearer, "There is no change in the deal Madam. I said a handful grain...that means nothing more or less...it should be a handful grain. If you cannot pay the price, you should pay me one thousand gold coins and wipe the invitation hoarding on the compound wall."

Vidyullatha yelled at him, "What nonsense are you trying to talk?" The vendor replied on par with her, "There is not any nonsense. I told you the price, you agreed for it and now if you cannot pay the price, stand by my wish. You should give the one thousand gold coins. That is it."

The fire broke out between Vidyullatha and the firewood vendor. Both started arguing and shouting at each other. The local people started gathering in front of the house to witness and know what is happening and why is the Lady was having a tiff with an ordinary vendor. Tired of shouting, both resorted to approach the provincial Court of Law for justice.

Vidyullatha presented her argument, "My Lord! This firewood vendor must have gone crazy. He is not ready to accede to my offer, though I wished to pay him more. He is sticking to his senseless argument to have a handful grain. He demands later for payment of a thousand gold coins and wiping away the invitation hoarding. I plead for justice."

The Judge looked at the vendor and asked him what was his problem. Folding hands the vendor started in a humble manner, "Yes Your Majesty. She

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was right to some extent. However, I am not crazy. I informed her beforehand that the load of firewood would cost her a handful grain.”

He continued innocently, “When I was clear about a handful grain, she must have understood that I needed handful of grains. That was her mistake to mistake my quote for a handful grain. It means, one grain that fills the hand.”

What more? Vidyullatha was speechless. Obviously, the verdict was in favour of the vendor. Vidyullatha was unable to comprehend that a handful grain meant so much. Shocked with the development and the judgement, she was compelled to pay him one thousand gold coins and wipe off the invitation from the compound wall.

The people of the region knew about this and told themselves that the years old proud ness of Vidyullatha was shattered to pieces in a single stroke. By the way, the vendor was Tenali Ramalinga.

On hearing about the problem Vidyullatha created with her hoarding, Ramalinga took due permission from the King Rayalu to take her to task. In the guise of firewood vendor, Ramalinga fulfilled his responsibility in all success.