

The marriage of Ganesh

Elephant-headed Ganesh was sitting in his library. In two of his hands he was holding a book and carefully turning the pages. In his other two hands he was carefully cutting and eating a mango. After a while his brother Kartikeya burst into the room, excited by his new idea. "I'm old enough to be married and I was thinking that I should marry those two girls from the temple, Siddhi and Buddhi." Ganesh stroked his long trunk. "I'm older than you - I should marry them," he said. "But it's my idea," protested Kartikeya. "And now it's my idea too," said Ganesh. "Maybe we should fight for it," said Kartikeya. "You must think I'm stupid," said Ganesh, "You're the God of war. That's like me, the God of knowledge saying, let's decide it on a quiz." They decided to have a race around the world by whatever means they chose and that the first brother back would marry the two girls from the temple.

One, two, three, go! And off they went. Kartikeya scrambled up the Himalayan mountains. He stopped and looked around. There was snow at his feet, eagles circling below him and then he saw the tracks of snow leopard on the edge of the forest. He slid down the mountains and was soon in the forests of China, running past panthers, tigers, even the odd panda or two. He ran and he ran until he reached the rice fields and on through field after field until he reached the sea. Then he swam from island to island, passed dolphin, whale and shark. He reached the Americas and ran deep through the Amazon forest and up to the buffalo plains, running north with the buffalo, occasionally stopping to hear their stories, until again he was swimming in the sea. Onwards, through blocks of ice, he swam to the frozen plains, passed polar bear and seal, over the edge of the world and down the Russian Steppes beyond, until finally he was back where he started. He looked for Ganesh and found him in the library reading a book and eating a mango.

"Welcome back," said Ganesh. "I travelled around the world and got back a long time ago. I was just waiting for you so you could be here when I marry those two girls." Kartikeya was astounded. "But how do I know you really did travel around the world?" he asked. "I could ask you the same thing," said Ganesh. "So what was it like then, when you climbed the Himalayas?" asked Kartikeya. Ganesh described it, almost exactly as it had happened for his brother, the whole journey around the world.

And so Ganesh married the girls, Siddhi and Buddhi. After the wedding, Kartikeya came to visit his brother. "Did you really travel the world?" he asked. "Good question," said Ganesh. "Yes and no. You see, I read book after book, about country after country - about everything you could possibly see. And when I read about them, I saw them in my imagination and in that way, I travelled around the world."

Did Ganesh cheat? What do you think?