GANESHA STORIES

1. **Choosing the Leader**

The Gods in heaven once held a competition to find out the leader of the world. Everyone had to navigate around the Earth and reach Mount Kailash, Shiva's residence, first. The one to reach the peak first would be a winner. The gods geared up to win the competition and everyone mutually decided upon an auspicious time. Ganesha stayed quiet through this process, and sat on a side with a low head. He did not even express the desire to take part in the race. On his way back, Sage Narad asked him the reason for this to which Ganesha said, "I have a small Mount, Narad Ji, as compared to the mounts of other Gods. I know I won't win this race. I better not take part in it!" Disappointed to see Ganesha demotivated, Narad decided to help him.

2. **Ganesha – The Leader**

Sage Narad first consoled Ganesha and then encouraged him to take part in the race nevertheless. To convince Ganesha, Narad said, "Ganesha, you shouldn't lose hope before trying to find a solution to any problem. Don't worry. Do you know what is the power behind the chanting of 'Ram'? The world resides in this name, and if it is inscribed upon ground, you could accomplish your mission of navigating the world. You don't have to actually cover the world on your mount." Ganesha understood Narad Ji's message in an instant. And he inscribed the letters 'RAM' on the ground three times with utmost enthusiasm. Then he went to Shiva's abode and told him everything. Shiva was delighted to hear this, and said, "My son, Narad is correct. Ram's name has a whole world hidden beneath it. It is exceptionally powerful. I am happy that you finally understood the truth, and thereby, I regard you as the winner. You will be called 'Vinayak' and 'Ganpati' from now on!"

3. **Ganpati – The Son of Varenya**

A king named Varenya once wished to have Ganesha as his son. Incidentally, his wife was pregnant and they were about to have a baby. Seeing this, Ganesha said to his mother, "Mother, I need to be born as Varenya's son." After seeking blessings from Parvati, Ganesha left for Earth. When he reached Earth, he found out that the baby was delivered and kidnapped by a maid while the Queen was asleep. Ganesha disguised himself as a baby and took its place. But Ganesha's appearance bothered him. He had a trunk and four hands. When the queen woke up, she saw a very unusual baby lying beside her. She picked up the unusual baby and quickly left him in the forest. Fortunately, Sage Parashar and his wife Vatsal found the baby Ganesha and raised him up as a strong child. In the meantime, the Sindura demon began to torture everyone. Baby Ganesha fought against the demon and came to be called as 'Varenyaputra Ganpati.'

4. **The Troublesome Tripurasur**

There once lived Sage Grutsamad who was cursed to grow up a demon child – Tripura – who was blessed by Ganesha. Tripurasur was very powerful, so he began troubling the Gods, the sages, the humans, and Patalvasi. Rampaging the world, Tripurasur finally reached Lord Shiva's abode, Mount Kailash. With his supreme powers, he made quite an impression upon Shiva who asked Tripurasur to make a wish. He then told Shiva his wish to rule Mount Kailash. Shiva politely moved his abode to Mount Mandar and handed over Mount Kailash to Tripurasur. But Tripurasur wasn't satisfied. He kept disturbing the sages, who then sought help from Narad. "Invoke Lord Ganesha," said Narad. When Ganesha came to know this, he promised to destroy Tripurasur and save them all. He turned into a brahmin and went to Amravati to face Tripurasur.

5. Maha Ganpati Roop

Disguised as a Brahmin, Ganesha met Tripurasur who could not take his eyes off Ganesha's precious stones. Ganesha gave him some diamonds and pearls, which made Tripurasur very happy. "Ask for anything and it shall be fulfilled," said Tripurasur. Ganesha, as the brahmin, asked for the Chintamani, which was a wish-fulfilling jewel possessed by Shiva. Tripurasur reached Mount Kailash and requested Shiva for the Chintamani. Shiva refused. A battle ensued and Tripurasur won the war. When Shiva asked Sage Narad who Tripurasur defeated him, he said, "My Lord, you did not worship Ganesha before beginning the war." Next time, Shiva chanted the name of Ganesha and said, 'Om.' Suddenly, a ten-handed and five-faced form of Ganesha stood before him. It was Omkar Ganesha. He gave Shiva a mantra using which Shiva killed Tripurasur with one arrow. Shiva made Maha Ganpati's shrine where he slayed Tripurasur.

6. Gana Asks for Chintamani

There is another tale about the Chintamani. There once lived King Abhijit and Queen Gunvati who bore a son named Gana. He was an intelligent child and a devotee of Shiva. Pleased with Gana's worship, Shiva granted him some boons. The boons, however, made him egoistic and he came to be surrounded by many negative people. Sage Kapil had the wish-fulfilling Chintamani, which was a gem that provided food to thousands of people worldwide. Once, Gana visited Kapil at his hermitage. When he saw the shining gem, he desired to own it. Kapil knew that Gana had fallen into negative company, so he feared that Gana would use the gem to harm people. So, he refused to give the gem to Gana, who then took it by force. The sage was mortified. So, he began praying to Lord Ganesha who appeared before him and promised to help him.

7. Vinayak of Chintamani

Since Ganesha had promised Kapil to get the Chintamani back, he began to devise a plan to fulfill his promise. Ganesha made an appearance in Gana's dream one day. In the dream, he cut off Gana's head. When Gana woke up, he became furious towards Ganesha and Sage Kapil. He rushed towards Kapil's hermitage to finish him off. Even King Abhijit, his father, requested him

to return the Chintamani, but he became adamant. When his army reached Kapil's hermitage, he saw Lord Ganesha coming there with his own army to rescue Kapil. Ganesha was successful in killing Gana who had to return the Chintamani to Kapil. But Kapil was no more interested in the gem, so he requested Ganesha to keep it. He did not want the gem to cause more trouble. Kapil also offered Ganesha his favorite *modaks* in gratitude. He hung the jewel around Ganesha's neck and at that very place, a pious shrine called Chintamani Vinayak was built.

8. Ballal – A Devotee of Ganesha

There once lived a merchant named Kalyansheth with his wife Indumati in Pali village. They had a son named Ballal, a big devotee of Lord Ganesha. Once, Ballal went into the forest to play with his friends when he came across a huge stone. He immediately told his friends to worship the stone, imagining it to be Lord Ganesha. The children drew a trunk with red paint on the stone and placed some flowers in front of it as an offering. Some of his friends brought fruits to offer to the idol. Happily, the boys started chanting the mantra of Ganesha. They together recited the 'Vakratunda Mahakaya' couplet. When the boys didn't return for a long time, the parents became anxious and rushed towards the forest in search of them. They began accusing Ballal for spoiling their children. The children, on seeing their parents, rushed towards them happily. But Ballal stayed there and prayed.

9. Ballaleshwar – Another Form of Ganesha

Lost in prayers, Ballal didn't notice his father approaching. His father was furious at his son, so he tied him with the tree and began to hit him badly. He finally left his son in the wild and returned home. Even though hurt severely, Ballal never stopped chanting the name of Ganesha. All of a sudden, a brahmin appeared before him and Ballal's wounds began to heal. He was freed from the tree as well. The brahmin embraced Ballal, who suddenly realized that it was Omkar Ganesha. He fell to the brahmin's feet with devotion. Ganesha, pleased with Ballal's devotion, asked him to make a wish. "I want you to stay with me forever, and also protect the villagers." Ganesha fulfilled the wish of Ballal and disappeared into the stone. Ballal's father came there the next morning, and was surprised to see a Ganesha's statue in place of the stone. Ballal's father repented of beating up Ballal, and named the idol "Ballaleshwar."

10. River Kaveri and Ganesha

The gods sought help from Lord Ganesha, as they knew that Ganesha would devise a solution to their problem. They told how Agastya has kept Kaveri River in his Kamandalu. On hearing this, Ganesha left for Sahya Mountains to visit Agastya and Kaveri. At that time, Agastya was meditating in his hermitage. On seeing the meditating Agastya, an idea struck Ganesha. He disguised himself into a crow and dived towards Agastya's Kamandalu which made it tumble down. Suddenly, Agastya raised his hand to shoo the crow away. River Kaveri, seeing Agastya's

raised hand, thought of it as an indication to flow down. It started flowing down the Sahya Mountains, and the dry lands of the south finally got some water. This is the birth of River Kaveri, which is till date, one of the largest Indian rivers serving a great population of the region.

11. Ganesha Disguises Himself as a Crow

Another story speaks of a water crisis in the southern areas of India when Sage Agastya prayed to Lord Brahma to save the people of the south from the crisis. Brahma appeared before Agastya and told him to visit Mount Kailash and meet Shiva. “Shiva bears the holy River Ganga in his hair. He can help you solve the water crisis,” suggested Brahma. As told, Agastya visited Shiva and told him all about the drought of southern India. Shiva handed some holy water to Agastya who carried it in his Kamandalu. Ganesha overheard the conversation and followed Agastya. When Agastya reached the southern region, he sat to meditate instead of releasing the holy water. “I should do something to release the water to end the drought!” thought Ganesha. He turned into a crow and gave a push to Agastya’s Kamandalu which then tumbled down. Ganesha then turned into a small boy and rushed off.

12. Releasing River Kaveri

Disturbed by the noise, Sage Agastya opened his eyes and saw a boy running away. He also saw his Kamandalu in a tumbled position. As he raised his hand to chase the boy, the holy water in his Kamandalu took this as an indication to flow down. The water took the form of a river and flowed down. This river came to be known as River Kaveri. In the meantime, Agastya began chasing the boy who had covered a long distance by then. Somehow, the sage caught the boy who turned out to be Lord Ganesha. The sage was surprised and furious to see Lord Ganesha. Coming back to his senses, Agastya apologized to Ganesha, “O Lord, why did you waste the precious water?” Ganesha smiled. “Turn around, O Sage, and tell me if the water is really wasted?” he asked. As Agastya turned around, he saw a huge river flowing down Sahya Mountain. Ganesha then blessed the river to never dry up.

13. Satrajit’s Syamantak Gem

Ganesha’s curse has a lot of power. The moon of the fourth day in the Bhadrapad month has been cursed by Lord Ganesha. This is why it is not considered to be auspicious to look at the moon on the fourth night. Once, in the city of Dwarka, Lord Krishna’s abode, an incident took place. A yadava named Satrajit, being a devotee of Surya, started worshipping the god daily. Impressed by his devotion, Surya gifted him the Syamantak, a divine jewel. The Syamantak gem was a vibrant ruby that could sparkle like the sun. Surya also told Satrajit that the Syamantak gem had exemplary powers that could produce about 1.5 tonnes of gold on a daily basis. “Wear it around your neck,” Surya instructed him. The gem helped Satrajit a lot until the gem came into the

notice of the yadava chief Ugrasen who ordered Satrajit to hand over the gem to him. When Satrajit refused, Ugrasen said, “It is Krishna’s order.” Satrajit nevertheless refused.

14. The Journey of Syamantak Gem

Satrajit’s brother Prasenjit was fond of hunting. One day, Satrajit gave Prasenjit the gem and asked him to wear it around his neck. Prasenjit wore the gem and went into the forest to hunt. Suddenly, a lion attacked Prasenjit and killed him. The lion was attracted to the vibrance of the gem. He took the gem along with him to the cave. But on the way, a bear named Jambavan killed the lion. Jambavan then took the gem to his cave and gave it to his son to play. When Prasenjit didn’t return for long, Satrajit began to worry. “Maybe Krishna killed my brother for the gem!” he thought. To prove his innocence, Krishna left in search of Prasenjit and found his dead body in the forest. Near that body, Krishna saw a lion’s footprints that led him to the lion’s dead body. Next to that, Krishna found the bear’s footprints which made him more curious. He started following the bear’s footprints.

15. Krishna Finds the Gem

Finally, Krishna reached Jambavan’s cave with his army. He asked his army to wait outside as he stepped into the cave all alone. When asked for the gem, Jambavan got furious. He didn’t know the reality of Krishna. A battle ensued between Krishna and Jambavan. Soon, Krishna defeated Jambavan who finally saw the image of Lord Rama in Krishna. Jambavan then realized who Krishna was, and fell to his feet. “O Supreme Lord, I am so ignorant to not recognize you! It is such a big sin. How could I even dare fight against the supreme power that runs the entire world? O Lord, let me present to you a precious gem that I found in the forest.” Jambavan then gave the Syamantak gem to Krishna and requested him to marry his daughter Jambavati. Krishna agreed, and returned to Dwarka with the gem and his wife Jambavati. He then returned the gem to Satrajit.

16. Syamantak Gem’s Journey Continues

Satrajit repented for questioning Krishna, and to make up for his bad accusations, he offered his daughter Satyabhama’s hand in marriage to Krishna. Meanwhile, two brothers, Shatadhanva and Akrur, lived together in Dwarka. They were jealous of Satrajit’s gem and wanted to acquire it. Plotting against Satrajit, Shatadhanva killed him in his sleep and took the gem with him. This incident was witnessed by Satyabhama who narrated it to Krishna. Meanwhile, Shatadhanva gave the gem to Akrur and asked him to leave Dwarka. Krishna and Balram followed Shatadhanva to acquire the gem back. Krishna also killed Shatadhanva but did not find the gem. “Why did you kill an innocent man? That is sick. I am leaving Dwarka,” asked Balram. Saying so, Balram left Krishna alone and left Dwarka. When Krishna returned Dwarka without Balram, everyone thought that Krishna had exiled Balram for a gem. This made Krishna upset.

17. Krishna Prays to Ganesha

Krishna could not take it anymore. His people were continuously suspecting him. Once, Sage Narad visited Dwarka and found Krishna upset. When asked for a reason, Krishna explained, “O Narad, my people are doubting me. Do you think I can steal or lie? How can they suspect me? Please, Narad Ji, guide me as I feel that I am under a curse.” “Yes, you are right. You looked at the moon on the fourth day in the month of Bhadrapad. It is considered omenous. You are facing Lord Ganesha’s curse which states that anyone who looks at the moon on the fourth night will be implicated falsely,” explained Narad. “Is there a way to reverse the curse? Help me, O Narad, I don’t want people to think bad of me,” requested Krishna. Narad advised, “Start praying to Lord Ganesha with devotion. Only Ganesha can free you from this curse.” Krishna then followed Narad’s suggestion and prayed to Ganesha ardently, freeing himself from the curse.