

The Story of Ganesh and the Old Woman

Once there lived a blind old woman with her son and her son's wife. They were very poor.

The old woman used to pray to Ganesh every day. Every day Ganesh would appear before her and say, 'Old woman, I am moved by your devotion. I will grant you one desire. So ask me for something, tell me what you want.'

The old woman would reply, 'I don't know what to ask for. There is nothing that I want.'

Ganesh would say, 'Then ask your son and your daughter-in-law for advice – they may be able to tell you what to ask for.' But the old woman wouldn't.

This went on for a long time. One day the old woman gave in and agreed to do as Ganesh suggested and ask her son and her daughter-in-law for advice.

When she asked her son, the son replied, 'Ma, ask for wealth.'

When she asked her daughter-in-law, the daughter-in-law replied, 'Mother-in-law, ask for a grandson.'

The old woman considered their advice and said to herself, 'They have told me what they want, not what I want. So let me ask my neighbour. Let me see what she will say.'

So the old woman went to her neighbour and said, 'Ganeshji has told me to ask him for something. What do you think I should ask him for?'

The neighbour replied, 'Why should you ask for wealth or for a grandson? You still have a few more years to live. So ask for sight, so that you can see.'

The old woman returned home and thought to herself, 'To keep my son and daughter-in-law happy, I should ask Ganeshji for what they want. To make myself happy, I should ask him for what I want. So what should I ask for – wealth, a grandson, or my sight?'

The next day, Ganesh appeared again, and as usual, said, 'Ask me for something, old woman, tell me what you want.'

The old woman had made up her mind. She knew exactly what she wanted. She replied, 'I want to see my grandson drinking milk from a golden bowl. Give me that.'

Ganesh laughed and replied, 'Old woman, you have tricked me! You have asked me for everything! But a promise is a promise and you shall have what you want.'

Ganesh gave her what she wanted – and the desires of all three, the old woman, her son, and her daughter-in-law, were fulfilled.