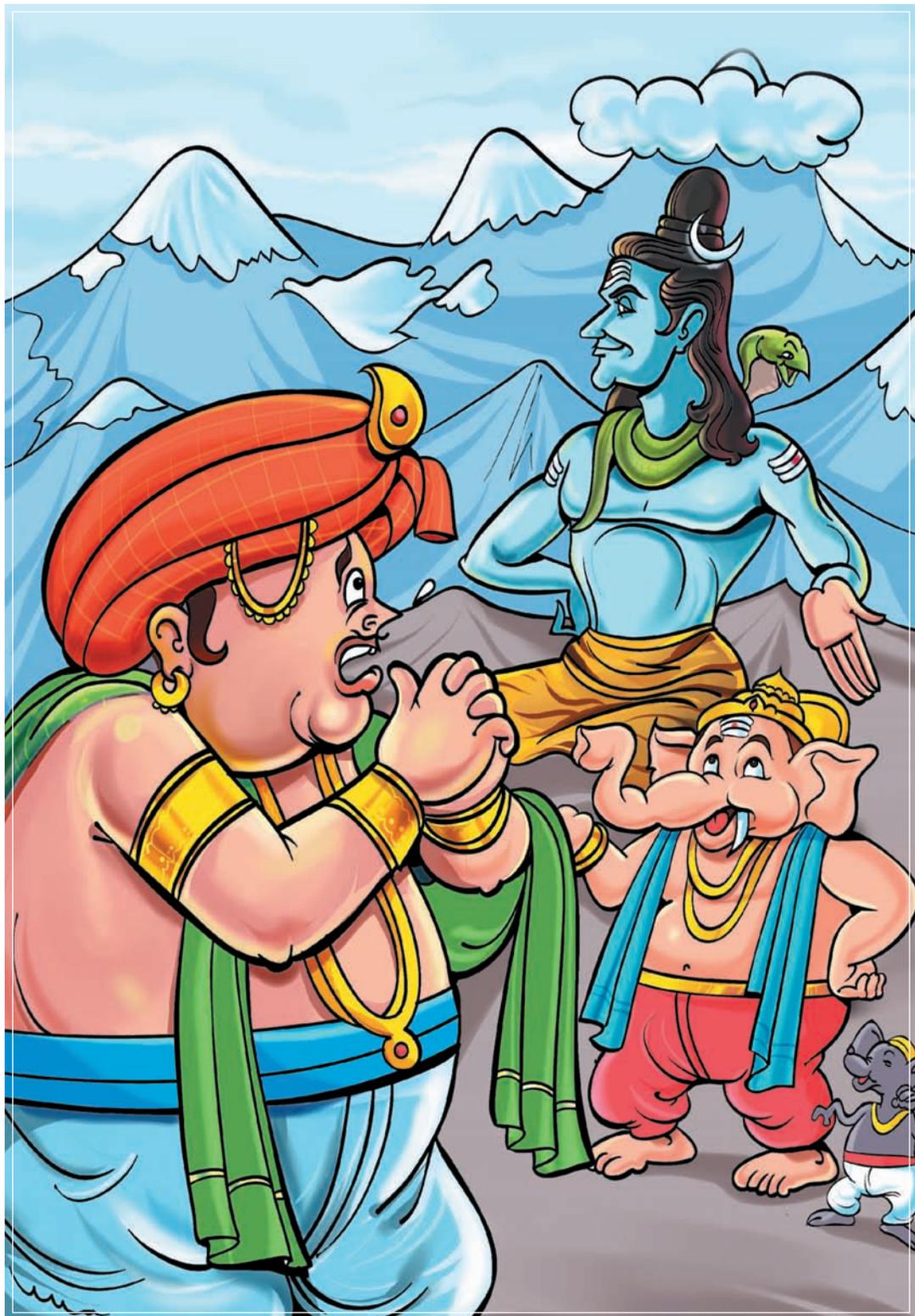


The
Elephant God's
Appetite
and other stories

*Retold by Chitra Shastri
Illustrated by Krishna Shastri*

EMESCO



WHEN THE ELEPHANT GOD IS YOUR GUEST

No one was richer than Kubera, God of Wealth, in all the three worlds. Though he was a big spender, his money never ran out. Lord Shiva had granted Kubera this boon for his constant devotion to him.

Kubera had a very hospitable nature. He was also a bit of a show-off. He loved to have great big feasts in lavishly decorated halls built for the very purpose. His guests would rest on silken cushions. They would be served with the most delicious of dishes. A million musicians would fill the place with soft melodies.

Life was one constant party for Kubera.

Almost everyone rich and famous had been Kubera's guest. But Kubera had never had the opportunity of entertaining Lord Shiva himself. As the days passed, this became his chief obsession.

So Kubera began to organize the grandest party he had ever held. He ordered every delicacy that heaven and earth could offer. A new palace was built of marble and gold. It was decorated with flowers and rangolis. The best orchestra in the universe was hired. Soon, everything was ready. The other guests had been invited. All that remained was for Kubera to invite his chief guest. He hurried to Mt Kailash. Lord Shiva greeted him kindly.

Kubera threw himself at Shiva's feet. "Lord," he cried, "please grace my humble home for a meal. Please don't refuse me! It is my heart's only wish to see you in my house."

Shiva felt sorry for Kubera. But he had no intention of stepping out of Kailash. "My dear fellow, it is kind of you to invite me," he said. "But I can't leave Goddess Parvati alone here. Maybe next time?"

"Please don't refuse me, Lord!" begged Kubera, very disappointed. "Everything has already been organized, the food is going to be delicious, and everyone else has promised to come. I can't cancel the party now!"