

## **THE TORTOISE AND THE GARUDA**

*(An Indonesian fable)*

**Together we conquer, alone we fail.**

**Cooperation works miracles**

A tortoise was living at the edge of a river. He was happy and carefree. Suddenly a Garuda the devourer', an Indonesian mythical bird, swooped down and picked him up thinking of a good meal.

Very frightened, but cunningly, the tortoise said to the Garuda:

“Look here, Honourable Garuda, I am not afraid of you, Now I am your captive, but only because you came from behind. You sneaked in at me, hardly a proper behavior for a powerful bird like you. I am not in the least sorry to lose my life. But I am very sorry that a Big one, such a big bird like you, acted in an underhand way to capture me. At any rate, I want to ask whether you would dare fight with me, face to face?”

“What fight are you talking about, silly tortoise?” demanded the Garuda;

“Anything, anywhere, I don't care, replied the tortoise.”

He went on to say: “I've heard you fly very fast, isn't that so? I walk very slowly, everyone knows. Yet, I dare you to run a race against me.

You fly in the air and I will walk along the edge of the river. Okay? If you beat me, then I will submit to you and be your delicious meal. But, if I beat you, just, leave me alone.”

The Garuda was furious. But he accepted the challenge! There was no question in his mind, of course, about who would win. The tortoise asked for seven days to prepare himself. The Garuda agreed and let the tortoise free.

During those seven days the tortoise asked hundreds of other tortoises in the river to help him. The strategy was to coordinate the work of the tortoises and space them out along the river, just far enough to hear the shout of the previous one. The distance covered by all these tortoises was several miles. They agreed that when they would hear the shouting of the Garuda, the tortoise just ahead, would shout back in response.

“Here I am! Catch up with me quickly!”

At the start of the race, the tortoise said to the Garuda: Since you will be flying in the air and I will be moving along the river side, you may not see me clearly. Therefore, in order to communicate with each other, why don't you shout at me?. When I hear you, I will shout back. Then we will know my whereabouts.

The Garuda agreed to that proposal and the race started. The Garuda began to fly slowly and with self-confidence. After a short while, he looked back to call at the tortoise: “Stupid tortoise, where are you?” “Here I am. Catch up with me quick”, was the reply coming from the tortoise just ahead of the Garuda.

Very surprised, the Garuda increased his speed.

After a while, he called to the tortoise again: “Tortoise, where are you?”

“Here! Catch up quickly. Why are you so slow?”

The Garuda spent all his energy to speed up. He called again and again to the tortoise, but always found that the tortoise was ahead of him. At the end the Garuda, exhausted, dropped dead.

