



The Blind Men & the Elephant

John Godfrey Saxe (1816-1887) • Revised & Expanded by Maja Apolonia Rodé



It was six men of Indostan
to learning much inclined
who went to “see” the Elephant
(though all of them were blind)
that each by observation
might satisfy his mind.

The First approached the Elephant
and happening to fall
against its broad and sturdy side
at once began to bawl:
*For goodness sake, the Elephant
is very like a wall!*

The Second, feeling at the tusk,
cried, *Oh what have we here
so very round and smooth and sharp?
to me, 'tis mighty clear:
This wonder of an Elephant
is very like a spear.*

The Third approached the animal
and happening to take
its squirming trunk within his hands,
thus boldly up and spake:

*I see, said he, the Elephant
is very like a snake.*

The Fourth reached out
his eager hands
and felt about the knee.
*What most this wondrous beast is like
is mighty plain, said he.
'Tis clear enough the Elephant
is very like a tree.*

The Fifth no sooner had begun
about the beast to grope,
then, seizing on its swinging tail
that fell within his scope,
*I see, said he, the Elephant
is very like a rope!*

The sixth, who chanced
to touch its ear said:
*Even the blindest man
can tell what this resembles most.
deny it, no one can.
This marvel of an Elephant
is very like a fan!*

And so these men of Indostan
disputed loud and long,
each with his opinion
exceeding stiff and strong.
While each was partly in the right,
all were mostly in the wrong!

THE MORAL:

So oft in theologic wars,
disputants can be seen
to rail on in ignorance
of what each other mean,
with claims about an Elephant
not one of them has seen!



And furthermore, this story tells us:
Question your perceptions.
For one, or even many views,
can only be deceptions
of that which can be seen anew
from infinite directions.

