

The Blind Men and the Elephant, A Hindu Fable
retold by 19th century American poet John Godfrey Saxe

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,
Against his broad and sturdy side,
"God bless me!—but the Elephant
And happening to fall
At once began to bawl:
Is very like a wall!"

The *Second*, feeling of the tusk,
So very round and smooth and sharp?
This wonder of an Elephant
Cried: "Ho!—what have we here
To me 'tis mighty clear
Is very like a spear!"

The *Third* approached the animal,
The squirming trunk within his hands,
"I see," quoth he, "the Elephant
And happening to take
Thus boldly up and spake:
Is very like a snake!"

The *Fourth* reached out his eager hand,
"What most this wondrous beast is like
"T is clear enough the Elephant
And felt about the knee.
Is mighty plain," quoth he;
Is very like a tree!"

The *Fifth*, who chanced to touch the ear,
Can tell what this resembles most;
This marvel of an Elephant
Said: "E'en the blindest man
Deny the fact who can,
Is very like a fan!"

The *Sixth* no sooner had begun
Than, seizing on the swinging tail
"I see," quoth he, "the Elephant
About the beast to grope,
That fell within his scope,
Is very like a rope!"

And so these men of Indostan
Each in his own opinion
Though each was partly in the right,
Disputed loud and long,
Exceeding stiff and strong,
And all were in the wrong!

MORAL.

So, oft in theologic wars
Rail on in utter ignorance
And prate about an Elephant
The disputants, I ween,
Of what each other mean,
Not one of them has seen!