

Blind men and the elephant poem by john godfrey saxe essay sample

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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 his broad and sturdy side,
At once began to bawl:
“ God bless me! but the ElephantIs very like a wall!”

The Second, feeling of the tusk,
Cried, “ Ho! 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
The squirming trunk within his hands,
Thus boldly up and spake:
“ I see,” quoth he, “ the Elephant
Is very like a snake!

The Fourth reached out an eager hand,
And felt about the knee.

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“ What most this wondrous beast is like
Is mighty plain,” quoth he;
” ‘ Tis clear enough the Elephant Is very like a tree!”

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

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

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

Moral

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

The “Blind Men and the Elephant” tale originated in India. It is widely thought the original story originated in Hindu lore. It was translated to the English language in the 19th century as a poem by the English writer John Godfrey Saxe.

A version of the story has been used in the Buddhist culture as well as the Jain and Sufi Muslim culture.

In modern times, the story has become widely used in philosophy and religion classes. It is used to illustrate the need for religious tolerance. The story illustrates how people form their reality and belief system on their limited experiences. In other words, perhaps each religious faith only holds truths that make up one part of God.

The story is also used to teach tolerance for other cultures. We only “see” the culture in which we are immersed.

The poem illustrates how perception is based on what a person is able to see or touch. In the story, six blind men touch an elephant. Although each man touches the same animal, his determination of the elephant is based only

what he is able to perceive. The poem warns the reader that preconceived notions and perceptions can lead to misinterpretation.