

The Blind Men and the Elephant

Natalie Merchant

Six men of Hindustan
To learning much inclined
went to see the Elephant
Though all of them were blind
That each by observation
Might satisfy his mind
Satisfy his mind, satisfy his mind
Six men of Hindustan
To learning much inclined

Well the First approached the Elephant
And happening to fall
Against his broad and sturdy side
At once began to bawl
"God bless me!
But this Elephant is very like a wall!"

And 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!"

All of them were blind
All of them were blind
Six men of Hindustan
To learning much inclined

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

Then the Fourth reached out an eager hand
and felt about the knee
"What most this wondrous beast is like
Is mighty plain," quoth he
"'Tis clear enough the Elephant is very like a tree!"

And the Fifth who chanced to touch the ear
Said: "Even the blindest man
Can tell what this resembles most
Deny the fact who can
This marvel of an Elephant is very like a fan!"

And the Sixth no sooner had begun
about the beast to grope
Seizing on the swinging tail
that fell within his scope
"I see," quoth he, "the Elephant is very like a rope!"

All of them were blind
All of them were blind
Six men of Hindustan
To learning much inclined

To learning much inclined

And so these men of Hindustan
Disputed loud and long
Each in his opinion
Exceeding stiff and strong
Each was partly in the right
but all were in the wrong

So often 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!