

## The Blind Men and the Elephant

—A Hindoo Fable

*John Godfrey Saxe*

### I.

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.

### II.

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 Elephant  
Is very like a wall!"

### III.

The *Second*, feeling of the tusk,  
Cried:"Ho!—what have we here  
So very round and smooth and sharp?  
To me 't is mighty clear  
This wonder of an Elephant  
Is very like a spear!"

### IV.

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!"

### V.

The *Fourth* reached out his eager hand,  
And felt about the knee.  
"What most this wondrous beast is like  
Is mighty plain," quoth he;  
"'T is clear enough the Elephant  
Is very like a tree!"

VI.

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!"

VII.

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!"

VIII.

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!*