

THE BLIND MEN AND THE ELEPHANT
BY JOHN GODFREY SAXE

American poet John Godfrey Saxe (1816-1887) based the following poem on a fable which was told in India many years ago.

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 Elephant is 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.
"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!

QUOTES AND POEMS FOR REFLECTION

“What Do I Care”

What do I care if an animal is rare and its time on earth is fleeting?
What do I care if its young in despair echoes the end in its bleating?
Who cares if a gator or whooper or two, can only be found in a rare species zoo?
The world might be better for me or for you, but then. . .
If I’m still around, who cares about you?
- Terry Brandt

*“In the end, we will conserve only what we love. We will love only what we understand.
We will understand only what we are taught.”*
- Baba Dioum, a conservationist from Senegal

*“Something will have gone out of us as a people if we ever let the remaining wilderness be
destroyed; if we ever permit the last virgin forests to be turned into comic books and plastic
cigarette cases; if we drive the few remaining wild species into zoos or extinction; if we
pollute the last clear air and dirty the last clean streams and push out paved roads through
the last of the silences.”*
- Wallace Stegner

*“What is the meaning of human life, or of organic life altogether? To answer this question at
all implies a religion. Is there any sense then, you ask, in putting it? I answer, the man who
regards his own life and that of his fellow-creatures as meaningless is not merely
unfortunate but almost disqualified for life.*
- Albert Einstein, from *The World As I See It*