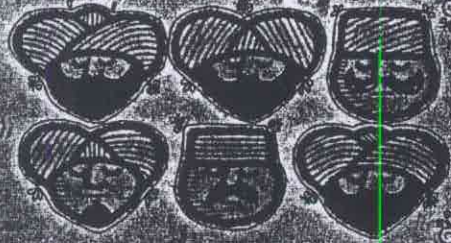
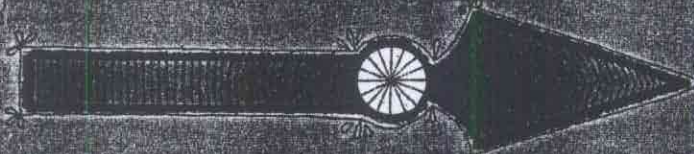


THE PARABLE OF
THE BLIND MEN
and
THE ELEPHANT
BY JOHN GODFREY SAYS

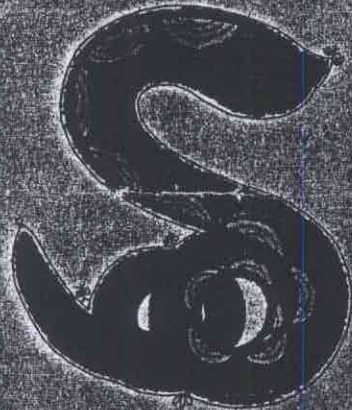
It was six men of Indostan
To learning much inclined,
Who went to see the Elephant
(Though all of them were blind)
That each by observation
Might tally his mind.



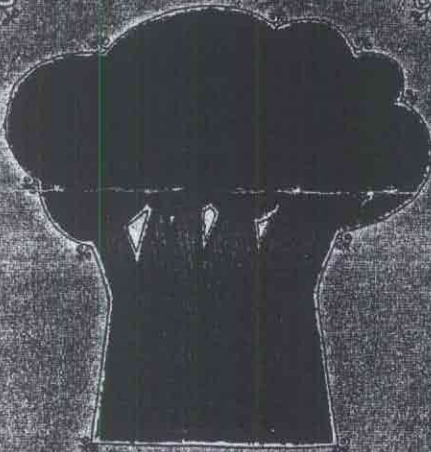
The First approached the Elephant, / And happening to fall
Against his broad and sturdy side, / At once began to bawl:
"God bless me! but the Elephant / Is very like a wall!"



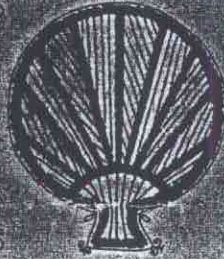
The Second, feeling of the tusk, / Cried: "How what have we here
So very round and smooth and sharp, / To me 'tis very clear
This wonder of an Elephant / Is very like a spear!"



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

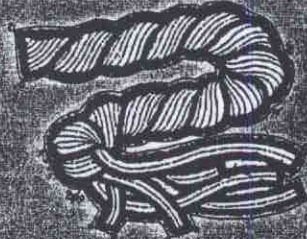


The Fourth reached out an eager hand
And felt about the knee:
"What most this wondrous beast is like
Is very plain," quoth he,
"Tis clear enough the Elephant
Is very like a tree!"



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, / They all were in the wrong.

This is the composite elephant the blind men saw. It reminds us that the world we live in is built up of the quite different experiences that people have had, and which they have managed to communicate with each other. But let us also consider that if the blind men had exchanged places, and individually experienced that portion of the elephant that they had not felt previously, they ultimately would have been able to agree upon a much better looking elephant than this one. As we read, and listen, and experience, we establish the basis for a closer understanding of what others experience, and thus we can—in the end—find that we have much more to agree on than to disagree about. It is when we stop learning that we begin to build the barrier that keeps us from understanding other people—and perhaps finding common agreement with them.

