

SAMPLE STORIES

THE BLIND MEN AND THE ELEPHANT

*Based on a story from the Buddhist Sutra
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The people who lived in a small village were always arguing and fighting among each other about God and different religions. They could never agree to a common answer. So they came to the Buddha to find out what exactly God looks like.

The Buddha asked his disciples to get a large magnificent elephant and six blind men. He then brought the blind to the elephant and asked them to describe what an elephant looks like.

The first blind man touched the elephant leg and reported that it "looked" like a tree trunk.



The second blind man touched the elephant's stomach and said that the elephant was a wall.

The third blind man touched the elephant ear and said that it was a fan.



The fourth blind man touched the elephant's tail and described the elephant as a piece of rope.

The fifth blind man felt the elephant's tusks and described it as a spear.



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And the sixth blind man rubbed the elephant's snout and got very scared because he thought it was a snake.



All of them got into a big argument about the "appearance" of an elephant.

The Buddha asked the citizens: "Each blind man had touched the elephant but each of them gives a different description of the animal. Which answer is right?"

"All of them are right," was the reply.

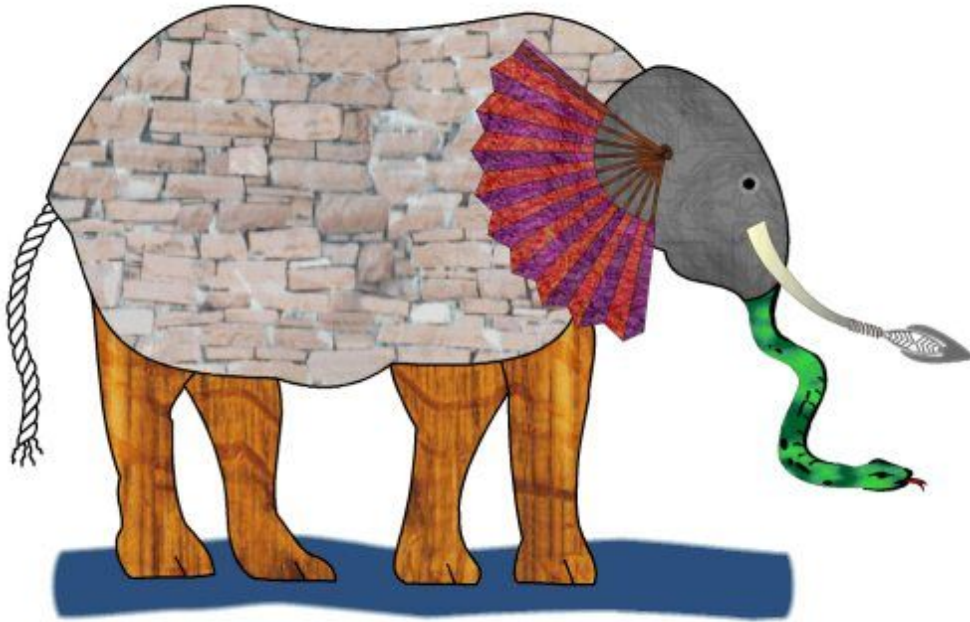


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"Why? Because everyone can only see one part of the elephant. They are not able to see the whole animal. The same applies to God and to religions. No one will see Him completely."

By this parable, Buddha taught that we should respect all other religions and their beliefs.

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Discussion Questions for Story:

- › What is the moral of the story (the meaning behind the story)?
- › How does the story apply to religions?
- › Have you ever had disagreements like the blind men had with your friends? How did you resolve them?
- › How can we use this story to understand why we should have respect for all religions?