

The Blind Men and the Elephant

A story of the Indian Subcontinent

Hindu/ Buddhist/ Muslim

Characters:

King

6 Blind men

Elephant

Props:

1m circle of felt/paper

Hindu Symbol

Buddhist Symbol

Muslim Symbol

Today we are going to think about why this story is known to Hindus

Place Hindu symbol

And known to Buddhists

Place Buddhist symbol

And known to Muslims

Place Muslim Symbol

This story comes from India.

Once there was a wise King,

Place King in on left of circle.

The King was tired of people arguing, sometimes it seemed that people would never agree.

One day the King brought a great grey elephant into his palace.

Place elephant in circle.

The people stopped arguing and stared at the elephant, it wasn't something you saw every day in the palace.

Then the King invited some special guests into the palace.

Place men in a line.

The men were led in, each holding on to the man before him, for the men were blind and could not see the way.

"Well," said the King said to his guests, "What do you all think of my elephant?"

The blind men could not see the elephant with their eyes. Each man had to use his hands to "see" the elephant using his sense of touch.

Move 1st man so out-stretched hands touch the side of the elephant.

The first blind man stretched out his fingers. He felt the animal's wide and rough side.

He said to the King, "The elephant is just like the wall of my house."

Hold up flat palm like a wall.

Move 2nd man so out-stretched hands touch the tusk of the elephant.

The second blind man stretched out his fingers, he felt the animal's long, sharp tusk. He said, "The elephant is just like a hunter's spear."

Jab air with pointed finger for spear.

Move 3rd man so out-stretched hands touch the trunk of the elephant.

The third blind man stretched out his fingers, he felt the animal's wriggling, inquisitive trunk. He said, "The elephant is just like a sinuous snake."

Wriggle hand and arm for snake.

Move 4th man so out-stretched hands touch the leg of the elephant.

The fourth blind man stretched out his fingers, he felt the animal's strong, rounded leg. He said, "The elephant is just like a huge pillar."

Make hand into a fist and stand arm upright for pillar.

Move 5th man so out-stretched hands touch the ear of the elephant.

The fifth blind man stretched out his fingers, he felt the animal's thin and flapping ear. He said, "The elephant is just like a cooling fan."

Flap hand for fan.

Move 6th man so out-stretched hands touch the trunk of the elephant.

Finally, the sixth blind man stretched out his fingers, he felt the animal's long, dry tail. He said, "The elephant is just like a strong rope."

Make both hands into fists and pull apart as if pulling a rope between them.

Then the King spoke,

Rais both open palms outwards in question.

"But, my wise friends, which is it? A wall, a spear, a snake, a pillar, a fan or a rope?"

And each blind man called out his own answer until the men all fell to arguing.

And, perhaps, they are still arguing today.

Wondering Questions:

I wonder, which man was right? What was the elephant really like?

I wonder, why did the King do this?

I wonder, what might people learn from the story?

I wonder, how might this story reflect some peoples' ideas of religion or God?

I wonder, have you ever had a different point of view to someone else? How did you resolve the argument?

I wonder, what is faith?