The Blind Men and the Elephant

John Godfrey Saxe

It was six men from India
To learning much inclined,
Who went to see an Elephant
(Though all of them were blind),
That each man by observation
Might satisfy his mind.

The First man approached the Elephant,
And he happened 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 man, feeling the tusk,
Cried, "Oh, what have we here,
So very round and smooth and sharp?
To me it's mighty clear
This wonder of an Elephant
Is very like a SPEAR!"

The Third man approached the animal,
And happened to take
The squirming trunk in his hands,
He boldly up and spake:
"I see," quoted he, "the Elephant
Is very like a SNAKE!"

The Fourth man reached out an eager hand,
And felt about the knee
"What most this wondrous beast is like
Is mighty clear," quoted he:
"It's clear enough the Elephant
Is very like a TREE!"

The Fifth man, who happened to touch the ear,
Said: "Even 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 man no sooner had begun
About the beast to grope,
Than seizing on the swinging tail
That fell within his scope,
"I see," quoted he, "the Elephant
Is very like a ROPE!"

And so these men of India
Argued 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!
1. Why did the 6 men have different ideas about what the elephant was?

2. Which of the men were right?

3. How could they all be right and wrong at the same time?

4. How does this apply to point of view or perspective?

5. When you view another culture, what is your first reaction if they do something different than what you do?