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Four Blind Men and the Elephant

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four
To anyone concerned with about his Karma, the story of the ~~known~~ blind men and the elephant is a familiar tale. However, to those whose present plans do not include rebirth, the four blind men respectively took hold of the elephants head, its ear, its tusk and its tail. When asked what they were holding, each asserted it was a large pot, a winnowing fan, a ploughshare, or a besom. "Thus," said the Buddha, "are those wanderers who, blind, unseeing, not knowing the truth, yet each maintain that it is thus and thus."

In Laos - Laos being something akin to a bedbug to most Americans or perhaps an obscure part of Brooklyn - the tale has an odd twist. In fact, it's backwards as most things are in the land of Medico.

On the Laotian flag is a curious beast which not even the late Dr. Dooley claimed to have seen. It is a mythical magical three-headed elephant and each head symbolizes something that every Laotian knew as achld but later forgot rather like some of our historical antecedents like ... like a well, that talk that Lincoln gave in Pennsylvania.

As the natives tell it, one day this elephant was placidly munching opium leaves deep in the jungle, wondering what a three headed elephant was doing in a world of one headed elephants, cars and ~~zuzum~~ trains, when a blind man looking for someone to help, stumbled into him. The blind man grabbing on to one head, proclaimed, " Ah, ah, an elephant! "

Then, his arm brushing up against another head, announced, "Hee, hee, two elephants! "

He might have gone on thinking there were only two elephants had he not found a third head. " Oh, oh, three elephants. "

Although it is true that this blind man, unlike many blind persons, did not have a highly developed sense of touch and hearing and no sixth sense at all - it was rumored that he did everything with a heavy hand and usually turned a deaf ear - people claimed that he was enthusiastic if without much talent. But before you judge his lack of perception too harshly, what would you think if you were a clumsy, hard of hearing blind man and you ran up against three elephant heads in the jungle? Furthermore, not having Dr. Doelittle's expertise in Elephantese, communication was strained.

Overjoyed at the prospect of having found someone to help, the blind man groped for the leftmost elephant head to make sure that he had counted correctly. The left head promptly bit his finger and the blind man, sucking his sore thumb, muttered something about, "My father told me that all elephants were sons of bitches."

The middle head, seeing the blind man's anger and being a desperately friendly elephant head himself, stroked the blind man's head soothingly with his trunk. Under probing fingers the cautious blind man felt the broad warm smile of the middle elephant head who reeked faintly of digested Beaujolais. 'Here, certainly, is an elephant with whom my help would be welcome,' thought the blind man.

Feeling for the right head, the blind man came in contact with what he considered to be a haughty, proud, intransigent head - though he didn't notice that the trunk of this head had created an area of extreme suction near the mouth of one of his pockets.

Students of mythology will remember that at this time, elephants were "in" and a glut of peanuts had caused a major crisis. So it was hardly surprising that the blind man stumbled away only to return with a potage of peanuts and a coterie of peanut vendors in grey flannel suits who didn't mind working for peanuts as long as they got some too.

Always one for causes and the like, the blind man ordered his little vendors to dispense with 3,000,000 peanuts ~~extensively~~ a month ostensibly to counter a flood of Yunnanese leechie nuts that had been streaming across the border, peddled by an unscrupulous dragon in sheep's clothing. Some of the best informed quarters, however, it is thought to this day that there were just too many peanuts that year.

In any case, an impressive agreement was reached which included such wonderful phrases such as, "Land, Peanuts and Peace," "Equality through Peanuts" "Alliance for Peanuts" "A Government for the Elephants, by the Elephants and of the Elephants" as well as a strong phrase about one liking either peanuts or leechie nuts, it being impossible to be neutral. It was inference to this last phrase that the blind man informed the center head that (who had naturally been chosen to be Dispenser of Peanuts) that unless that left elephant shaped up, his share would be cut off.

The middle elephant head, beaming, and exhaling the gentle aroma of Martell V.S.O.P., announced all would be taken care of while the right hand head muttered something about the right head never knowing what the left head was doing. The left hand head trumpeted that he had always eaten leechie nuts and always would, but the blind man was too overjoyed with his heady success to hear.

Now as all students of exotic animal husbandry and Siamese triplets will recall,

most polyheaded beasts share the same digestive system. This particular elephant was no exception and what went in one head benefitted the other two equally... you know, in one head, out the other, it made no difference. Consequently, all three grew corpulent and contented, investing in opulent Klephant carriages manufactured by some obscure German firm with a star three pointed star as a symbol. However, the left hand elephant, supplementing his diet with leechie nuts grew even more contented than the other two.

Feeling his way into the situation on his return, the blind man concluded that someone was sneaking peanuts on the sly and made the following concise mental note, "it would appear, on sources close to the authorities, that the middle elephant has a tendency to perhaps not decisively taken a diplomatic stand on the question of leechie nut encroachment at various times. It perhaps is not too much to say at this time that the above's militant anti-leechie nut stand has, at best, been tenuous. It is further our belief that he may be soft on leechie nuts but we cannot be positive."

The peanut concession was summarily given to the right hand head.

People who should know report that fresh Yunnanese nuts are often more nutritious and palatable than dried nuts lugged across an ocean. ^{So,} It was hardly a surprise when

the middle elephant head joined with the left head in a joint import venture from the right head wrestled with north while the/increasingly ~~awkward~~ difficult red knots that secured each bag of peanuts.

The right hand head called for help but meanwhile, back at the jungle camp, a new elephant-tamer-at-large was on the scene. Newly arrived on the Frontier, this blind man was an acknowledged wizard with bears and bulls in the market, and how donkeys could kick the hell out of even steel, but the last elephant he had tangled with was a little Dumbo named Rocky and the memory of that meeting made right ~~him~~ elephants pretty well "out" as far as he was concerned.

Declaring that what was needed was an equitable leechie nut/peanut coalition, ^{he} he ignored the right pleas of the elephant head on the right (declaring that it reminded him of a Great Overfed Peanut) and reminded the three heads that they should ask not what a peanut could do for them, but what they could do etc..... and what they could do was to act just as if they were not three elephants, but joined together as one elephant but with ~~xx~~ three heads. At this there were cheers of "Bravo" "Clever Man" and "Go go go" from the assembled peanut vendors. The middle head, now giggling from champagne, said that they would get their heads together and do as the blind man

bade them. It is recorded that all three heads ~~immed~~ from that moment on, regarded the game old elephant-tamer-at-large as slightly punchy from his last elephant beating and that his unfriendly attitude toward them was but a subconscious dislike for all elephants as well as a result of being blind.

And so the great leechie nut/peanut question was solved - the elephant would have both but as was noted before, what goes in one mouth effects the whole and its habit forming qualities of leechies is well known. Peace reigns again in the jungle, and the blind man sits by contentedly thinking that all is forgotten and all is forgiven. But an elephant never forgets, and getting the respect of an elephant is similar to the way he got his trunk - a very long, ~~stomach~~ drawn out, painful affair. It is also better to swallow the leechie nut than starve for lack of peanuts.

MORAL

Don't fool around with elephants that are white, have three heads, or have pink spots

OR

All government employees should become Buddhists.