

The Blindman and the Elephant

By Gordon Teekell

I didn't know why, but I had to learn about the elephant. I was curious. It stood there before me. I knew it was big. I had walked around it. I had touched it. I couldn't reach the top. I could feel the heat from it's body.

I remember being able to see, but that wasn't true anymore. I would have to find other ways to discover what the elephant was like.

How was I going to learn more? I could explore more on my own but that could take a while. I thought it would be best to learn from other people. Maybe they knew what the elephant was like. They had seen it. Maybe they had fed it or taken a ride on one. It became evident that to learn more about the elephant, I needed partners.

I began by seeking help from those closest to me. When someone came by, I would ask them to describe what the elephant was like. I was told about how powerful it was. I was told it was graceful and moved through it's world with skill and confidence. Others, told me about it's huge ears that listened to what was going on around it and this is how it learned. Some commented on how large it's legs were so that it could draw strength and energy from the earth. The closer I stayed to the elephant, the more I learned about it.

It seemed strange, standing beside an elephant and stopping people as they passed by and asking them to describe what it was I was standing next to. After a while, I began to receive many of the answers I had already heard. This was reassuring. If I heard it from more than one source, these things, although incredible, must be true. I began to see the elephant as more than an animal or a physical object. I heard wonderful stories of intelligence and kindness.

I decided to seek more knowledge about this amazing entity. Others, that did not pass by this elephant, would have their own experiences and could share. They had seen more elephants and could guide me to them or show me the paths they traveled. So, I began to travel and met others that knew about elephants or were also seeking to learn more about them. They, in turn, told me of others who were looking for the same thing.

We shared. We shared our time. We shared our admiration for the animal. We shared what we had learned on our own and from others. I came to know that no two journeys were alike. Each individual knew something new, had something to share, had something to learn and that I could learn from each of them.

I heard the elephant described in many ways. Some talked about it's power. Some talked about it's gentleness. Some talked about it's shape. I decided they were all correct. That the elephant can be, and is, many things and needs to be different at different times while being the same at all times.

While remembering being blind and coming to love the elephant, my alarm clock began to chime. I woke up, dressed, ate and began to drive to San Jose for the semi-annual training of the California Aikido Association.