

An Elephant in the Dark

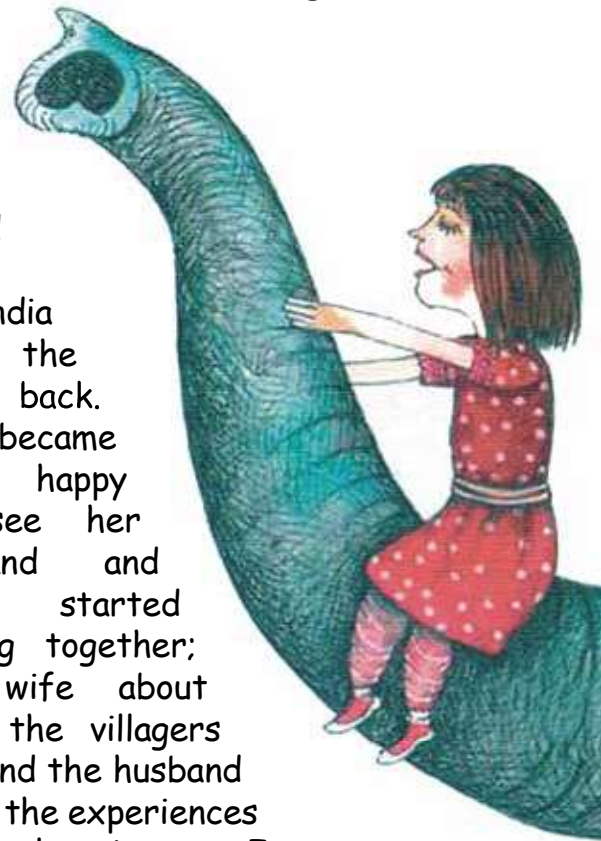
There was once a farmer living in a small village. His life was simple and good. One day a merchant from India came to their village, sold his goods to the people there and upon returning to India, asked the farmer to accompany him, since he had many camels and needed help. The farmer accepted the offer, left the work on the farm to his kind wife and started his journey to India together with the merchant.

Several days, months and years passed, but the farmer still hadn't

returned to his village. People thought that he would never return, but his wife was hopeful and would tell them that she was sure her husband would come back. At last, on a dark night the farmer returned to his village. He had bought an

elephant and had put all the things he had brought from India upon the elephant's back.

His wife became very happy to see her husband and they started talking together; the wife about what the villagers said and the husband about the experiences of that long journey. In fact, he wanted to share with the others what he had learned in this journey. The next day, the people of the village received the news of his return from India and gathered



around him, asking him questions about India. One of them asked if he had brought anything special from India and in reply, the farmer who was looking for an opportunity to teach them something, said: "I have brought a very big thing from India. It is now in the stable. Do you know what it is? If you want, you can go to the stable and find

for yourself."

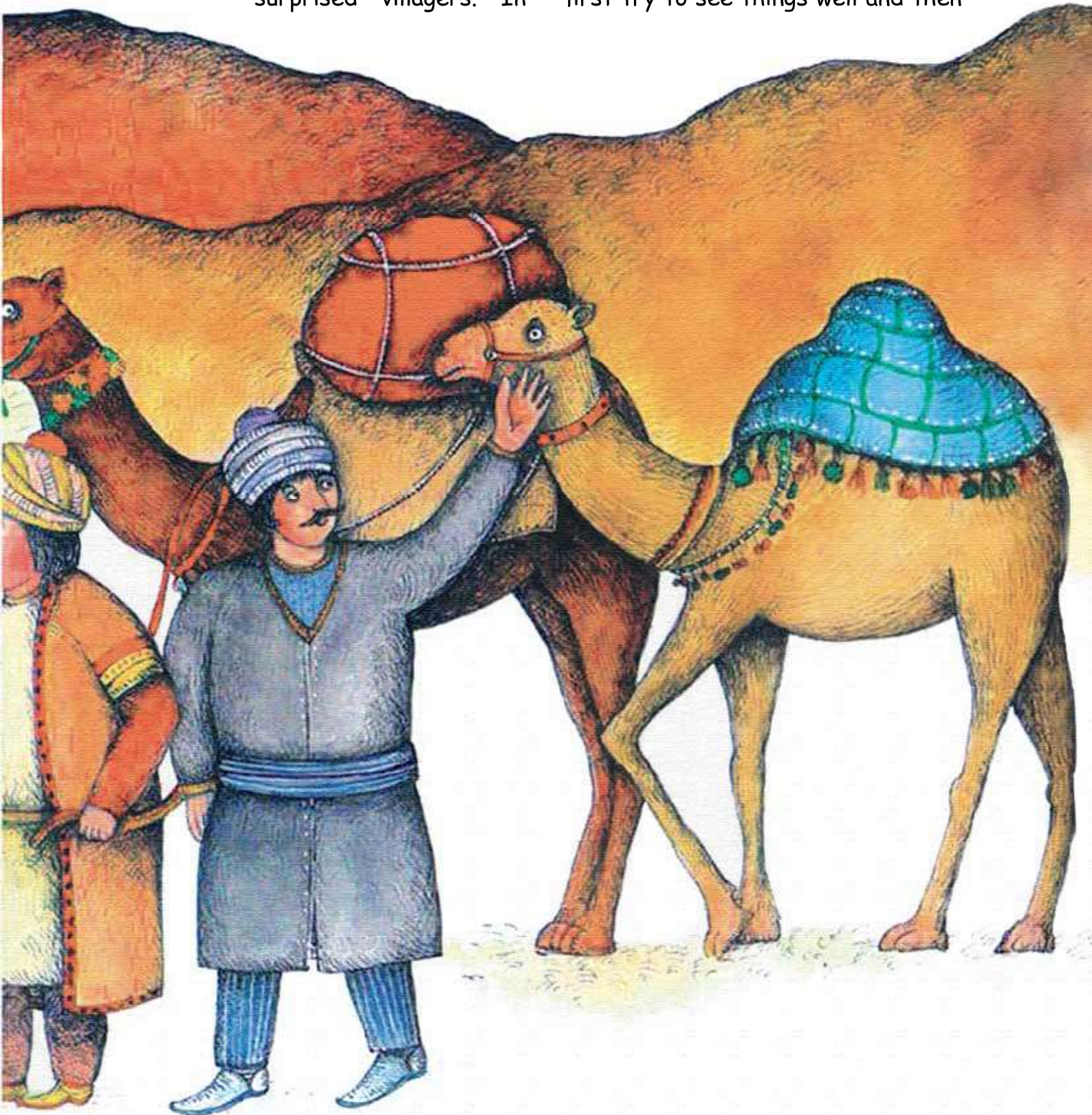
The villagers started entering the dark stable one by one. One of them happened to touch the trunk of the elephant and said that it was a spout. Another touched the elephant's ears and said it was a big fan. The third's hand hit the elephant's back and so he thought it to be a big bed. As for the fourth, he said



that the thing in the dark stable was a big pillar because he had happened to touch the elephant's legs.

In short, none could find that it was a big animal. Now the farmer went into the dark stable, took the elephant out and showed it to the surprised villagers. In

fact, they had not seen any elephant before. Then the farmer said to them: "Dear friends! You could not see the elephant in the dark and each of you touched one part of its body and made a guess which was wrong. The fact is that one should first try to see things well and then



“speak about them and that for seeing well, one needs light. One cannot see things in the dark and so one should use a light in order to be able to find the truth about everything.”
Certainly, by 'light', Mowlana has meant the light of knowledge and

understanding.

A story from Mathnavi written by Mowlana Jalaluddin Mohammad Rumi, the well-known Iranian poet.
Simplified by: Hussein Fattahi
Illustrated by: Bahar Akhavan

