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HOW THE WORLD GOT PEOPLE: AN ELEPHANT
STORY

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I was told once that every year the elephants meet in convocation, and each year one elephant is invited to relate a story. I was told that this is a great honor for the elephant chosen for only one could do this in every elephant convention. They give the elephant this honor and request him or her to do this in order to honor and respect her or his specialty in life. As I was told, this story was related by an elephant whose specialty was thinking things over and finding secret meaning in things.

As I heard it, when everyone at the convocation had settled down and become peaceful and clear, the speaker told the following story about how the world came to have people. In the beginning there was just the Jungle. The world was Jungle. The Jungle was eternal. And the Jungle was wide and deep, untrammled by any feet, elephant feet, or human feet, or pig feet or bird feet. As far as one could go, there was only Jungle. And as far as one could see there was only Jungle. Deep and tall and dark Jungle, reaching for the deep and wide, dark blue sky. And rooted into the great earth which supported all. Between earth and sky was only Jungle. And the Great Elephant, Master of All, saw this and saw that it was good.

But, but, the Jungle slowly untangled an idea, and when it was unravelled enough, the Jungle spoke to the Great Elephant, Master of All, and said, "O Great Elephant, O Master of All, I have a slight problem. For the most part, things are really well here with me, I have all the water I can use and all of the sunshine I can use, and all of the earth that I need. And there's just no pressure. But I still have a slight problem. I have all the room and I have all the time I want to think about Great and Serious Things and have great and serious thoughts and time to know everything, and to wonder all about Oneness and all of that stuff, but I have a problem." And the Great Elephant woke up with a start and wondered what could that problem be? What could have slipped my mind? Could I have made a mistake? Did I do something wrong? What's UP?

And the Great Elephant asked the magnificent, deep and dark and tall and tangled Jungle, "What's the problem, what's the fuss?" And the Jungle whined. "O Great Elephant, Master of All, I'm lonely. I don't have any friends. I'm forlorn. I don't have anybody to talk to. I don't have anybody to whisper at and to tease. Make me a friend of some kind, would you?" So the Great Elephant Gave In, with a capital G and a capital I, Gave In, and created the many, many monkey tribes, the grey monkeys, the blue monkeys, the striped monkeys, the monkeys with red bums, with short tails, with long tails, with big eyes, with short fur, and all the rest and That Was Very Nice. It gave both the Jungle and the Great Elephant some peace.

But not for long! After 1000 centuries the Jungle came back and said, "You know, O Great Elephant, Master of All, it's very nice to have all those friends with me now, but you know what, I have another problem. They aren't very serious and they just chatter away and I can't really talk with them about very

serious stuff and they don't listen very well." So the Great Elephant groaned but Gave In again and created the hippopotamus, who, as we all know, has Very Great Gravity.

But after 2000 centuries more, the Jungle became petulant - and a tiny bit pedantic - and complained again and said, "O Great Elephant, Master of All, hippopotami do indeed have Great Gravity but they are very slow and maybe even a little stupid! What do you think? So again the Great Elephant asked, "What do you want?" And Jungle said again, "Well, now I have fun, and I have serious, but I don't have practical." And, with a little covert sarcasm, the Great Elephant came back with humans!

Well, humans are very practical, we all know, and they'll destroy anything to make something they think is better, and you know what? After 3000 centuries, the Jungle came back and said, "Wow! Practical, yes! But they may soon destroy me if you make too many and anyway they don't understand me and they don't live with me and they don't really sit and talk with me and so they don't make very good friends either. So, what do you think?" The Great Elephant Gave In again and made gorillas, and that was pretty good, and pretty close to what the Jungle wanted for a friend. But after a while it just wasn't right either. It took 4000 centuries before Jungle complained again and said, "Gorilla is pretty good, he really is. But he still is more interested in feeding his face and copulating than he is in being a friend, and he's really afraid of me if I'm in a bad mood. He just won't do! So. What?" The Great Elephant made the lion but the lion was too cranky. And didn't like to get wet. And so on and so on.

Well, the speaker knew how to stretch this story on and on and on and he did. But finally the Great Elephant, Master of All, got mad and angry and He blew up and He roared and He groaned and He bitched and He finally shouted, "What do you want of me anyway?" "Well," said the Jungle, who'd had a lot of time now to think it over and refine his ideas, "I want someone like you. Only more down to earth - someone who likes to have fun like you and someone who can be mad like you and who can sit around and be serious and someone who won't ruin me and someone who can listen when I want to say something. Stuff like that is what I want." The Great Elephant complained and groaned and muttered and bitched, "Why couldn't it be like the old days and why the hell did I ever start this creation business? One thing after another, and they have to be better and better. I get tired of dreaming up this stuff.

I was doing fine just Contemplating Bliss." And He stormed and He blew and He tossed that Jungle around with winds and rain and blasted it with lightning and all the people cowered and they said we'll never do it again. But they didn't even know what they might have done wrong.

And the Jungle tossed and broke and burnt and bent and all that stuff. And at the end of it - you know how these stories turn out - at the end of it, the

Great Elephant Gave In again. It really grinded his rocks to do it. But He created the most magnificent tribe that a Jungle would ever want to live with: the Elephant Tribe. The Elephant Tribe! The perfect friend for the Jungle. And the Jungle was so gracious to the Great Elephant and promised to love and respect the Great Elephant forever. And so it came to pass. Now the Jungle has very many friends, but none so fine as the elephant family. None are so reflective and sensitive and friendly as the elephant family. None are so observant and thoughtful and intelligent as the elephant family. None are the pinnacle of creation like the elephant family. And that is the story of the creation of the people which was told. It took all day long to tell that story.

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