



SUPERSTITION--DISPELLING FEAR OF THE UNKNOWN

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Man fears the mystery of the unknown. That's why superstition always finds a strong following. Superstitious beliefs are commonly the easiest way to justify what can not be readily explained. We use superstition to explain away ignorance, to dispel feelings of uncertainty and unreason. We adhere to superstitious beliefs because they're more convenient than finding clearer explanations for what we witness, deal with and hear about.

We struggle with uncertainties everyday. We wake up to each and every day unsure of what lies directly ahead of us. Reading the day's horoscope serves to give us a perspective despite the fact that horoscope readings are hazy, too broad, and often only give us something we'd like to hear: good forecasts and words of caution. Once, one of my students told me that before coming to my country to study, she had consulted a monk at a certain temple in her country. The monk had correctly predicted she would go on a journey within the year. Well, my student being in my country proved that the monk was right. The monk had also said that she was a 'boy', maybe in another life. Well, that student happened to have a strong demeanor, so I told her it was probably why the monk had told her she was the opposite of her gender. She tended to be impulsive but always made firm decisions. She also had the inclination to be brusque and had a fairly rough humor.

My mother used to consult fortune tellers in the village where she used to be a school teacher. Going on frequent trips to the village fortune teller, my mom and her also retired co-teachers always came back from such trips with glowing accounts of what the palm reader had told them. Things like: your children will be very successful, one of your kids will be able to go abroad, you will enjoy success and have much money; these were always things that the palm reader saw for those who consulted her. I told my mom that I noticed the fortune teller didn't dish out negative predictions as readily as good ones. I observed that she did not tell them things they didn't want to hear. Perhaps that was the reason why they patronized the fortune teller, I said. My mother has since stopped going to the palm reader.

It's funny how we tend to readily believe that knowing ahead gives us power. Knowing ahead does indeed do that, but it does so with careful planning and clear anticipation. If we don't proceed with a plan on what to do and how to proceed in case of contingencies, then indeed we are doomed. In any endeavor, especially less favorable ones, we should always hope for the best and expect the worst. We should not blame our sorry fates on not believing in superstition. Good things happen to those who carefully lay out plans for their future. Having a foretold good fortune come true is coincidental; it's not the direct result of consulting your lucky stars. What our mind can conceive, we are able to achieve.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. Are you particularly superstitious? Why or why not?
2. Have you ever been to a fortune telling session? What did the fortune teller tell you? Have any of those predictions come true?
3. Why do we fear the unknown? Why is it easy to believe in superstition?
4. Be able to talk about the superstitious beliefs your own family adheres to.
5. Why should we take superstition with a grain of salt? Use examples to support your answer, if needed.