

On Superstitions

A. G. Gardiner

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A. G. Gardiner (1865-1946) authored a number of celebrated journalistic essays and had been associated with several newspapers and journalistic ^{organisations} ~~institutions~~ in various capacities. His writings were not intended to have philosophical high-seriousness, but these expressed his natural sense of joy and harmony for life. With an effort-less ease, Gardiner, through his essays expresses his experiences which have universal appeal. His writings generally create impression that life is beautiful and charming and we must develop the art of enjoying life. While reading Gardiner, a reader quickly attunes himself to the moods and feelings of the writer. Gardiner, we may say, is a model ~~who is~~ of modern writer, who is able to elevate journalistic writings to the level of literature.

The prescribed piece 'On Superstitions' is a typical example of Gardiner's writings. This essay reflects author's views ~~on~~ on a matter like Superstition which generally escapes serious viewing by the people of all categories, even though everybody has some concern with it. In a charming and conversational style the author reflects ^{different aspects of} ~~all~~ our fears and beliefs regarding various kinds of superstitions prevalent in our society. He also tries to ~~dispel~~ show the irrelevance of ~~of~~ superstitions by giving various examples.

Superstitions are such beliefs which have been accepted by people at certain times when they could not find a satisfactory explanation for the occurrence of an event. In

the essay Gardiner gives examples of various kinds of superstitions prevalent in our society, affecting ^{life both at} individual and community levels. The belief that number 13 is associated with bad luck is shared by a lot of people. In a city like London, one hardly notices a house or a street or a hospital bed numbered 13. The extent to which an individual life can be affected by a superstition is best illustrated by the case of a soldier who after his recovery from serious injury died out of shock to discover that his bed No. was 13.

The author feels that he is not very sure to assert that he is himself quite immune to superstitions of various types which make conscious or subconscious impact on the actions of the people. Consciously or unconsciously. But he is sure that he does not believe in such idle superstitions and more so he does not allow any of his actions to ^{be} influenced in that way. But At the same time he admits that "No doubt many of our superstitions have commonplace and sensible origins." For example the superstition to walk round a ladder than ~~to~~ under it, has a safety reason. The author has several times experienced such impulses ^{to walk round a ladder} but it has never been influenced by the superstition and attached with it. The Jewish objection to pork eating is another example which has climatic reason rather than any superstition ^{attached with it.} usually superstitions get the support of the people because a large number of people believe in them.

seldom people try to find out ~~for~~ the origin of such superstitions.

History reveals that superstitions had their ^{powerful influence} ~~significance~~ in ancient times as well. Battles and elections ^{had} been postponed at crucial times because of bad omens. Alexander, the great conqueror believed in the prophecies of fortune-tellers. Caesar believed in Oracles and Cicero lost his life by trusting to the wisdom of crows. Gardiner says that superstitions had such powerful impact on the mind of people, because in those days people were ignorant. They were afraid of Natural forces and the designs of destiny. "Superstition was disinherited when science revealed the laws of the universe and put man in his place." The explanations of science have made people free from ignorance and the result is that now-a-days no body believes in the superstitions of ancient days, which once ruled the lives of the people.

The author is of the opinion that the effort must be made to remove ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~significance~~ of superstition from our ^{society} ~~life~~. It is not fair to accept a belief because it has come to us from earlier generation. Generally people accept superstition along with the other customs and traditions ~~and~~ ^{that} exist in the society. A minority who do not believe in them never shows boldness to challenge the credibility of superstitions. But this situation needs to be changed. By individual efforts the influence of superstitions on society can

be checked.

The whole of the essay is marked by conversational style. ~~and so~~ The sarcastic tone of the essay helps in establishing author's disfavour of superstitions and we also readily agree with the author.
