

ENGLISH (HONS) - Part-2; Paper-4; Unit, 1 - Essay.

Topic - 'On Superstitions'; Lec - Rev - 39

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'On Superstitions' is a thought provoking essay written by A. G. Gardiner who is also known by his pseudonym 'Alpha of the Plough'. In this essay, the writer has expressed his thought about superstitions in the modern scientific days. Though, the laws of universe have solved the mysteries of natural phenomena even that superstition plays a vital role in human society.

What do we mean by Superstitions?

'Superstitions' means a set of belief, uncritical prejudices and preconceived notions which inhibits freedom of thought. Though superstitions do not have any correlation with reality but they do influence human conduct.

In this essay, the essayist has given many examples of superstitions or belief which are only superstitions or uncertified and unconfirmed beliefs and nothing else. In this essay, the essayist has taken an example of number 13 wherein a street of London, a man was murdered. But this number of 13 did not <sup>play</sup> any role behind the demise of that unfortunate man, rather it was mere a coincidence. Many persons even dislike the number of 13 and they

get irrational terror, this number. Even in hospitals this number carries the bad luck. It is quite sure that the superstition about number 13 of being unlucky is a childish and superstitious, but people believe in this preconceived notions.

The essayist is of the opinion that the physical recovery is based on mental as well as physical utility. In support of his argument he records how a soldier who had been seriously injured in battle and was brought to the military hospital in a critical condition, was slowly patched up and seemed to have been saved when a pimple grew out on his nose. The growing out of the pimples on his nose cast such a gloomy effect on the injured soldier's mind that he died from a nervous breakdown. It was nothing, in itself, but it was enough to produce a mental state that checked the flickering return of life. This example demonstrates that common human beings are under the influence of superstitious understanding. Even the ladder kept against the house-side is not considered as a favourable event. Generally, people feel uneasiness in the whirl of superstitions. According to Gardiner superstitions only create mental fantasy.

Science has tried its best to wipe out the feelings of superstition. It is a fact that happiness and misery is not directly influenced by superstitions. Science has minimized the importance of superstitions by revealing the laws of universe and putting the man in his place. When scientific knowledge was undeveloped, man was highly superstitious. The great historical personalities like Pompey, the Roman Emperor; Alexander the great, even so modern and intelligent a person like the Roman orator and rhetorician Cicero and others had the least faith in superstitions.

It is true that in ancient times, the common men like farmer, peasants, and persons belonging to the lower strata of society used to consult and keep faith in omens and oracles.

Even the flight of crows and activities of animals create suspicion and superstition on the delicate and plain mind and feeling of the human beings.

Cardiner says that he is proud of being born in present rational age. He has the perception that there is something mysterious and very powerful that control our lives. He points out that we are still superstitious. The difference is that the forms of blind beliefs might have changed but we

but we can still prove to be  
influenced by blind faith.

The essay is loaded with thoughts  
and ideas. The view expressed in  
essay is impressive and indelible  
as the essayist has expressed  
his outlook on superstitions  
in vivid, explicit, exhausted  
and consummate manner.

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