

Malay superstitions



SUPERSTITIONS Beliefs that are without any reasonable basis are called superstitions. These beliefs are merely based on ignorance, fear of the unknown, trust in magic and chance, or some other misconception.

Superstitious beliefs are universal. Every culture in the world has its own superstitions. Some cultures can be seen as being more superstitious than others. Even within a culture, one person may be more superstitious than another. Most of us like having our photos taken. Can you recall the last time you had a group photo taken? Can you recall the last time you had a threesome group photo taken? You would be surprised to know that many people avoid having a group photo taken with two other people. They believe that bad luck will befall the group. This bad luck ranges from their friendship breaking up, to death especially to the person in the middle! Having heard this, would you still fancy having your photo taken with two other people, with you in the middle? Besides numbers, certain actions are also to be avoided. Many of us would not walk under a ladder but around it. Some people stop dead on their tracks if a black cat crosses their path. They would rather take a different route, even if it is longer. My grandma never lets anyone leave the house if someone sneezes. She would make us come back in, wait for a few minutes and then leave. The kitchen too is not safe from superstitions. I am sure many of you have heard that it is not good for a young lady to sing while cooking. The consequence is that you would not get married. And speaking of marriage, one is not supposed to shift places at the dining table as this would indicate multiple marriages depending on how many times you change your seat. Do not point finger towards the rainbow, the consequences of your finger will be crippled. There are also fathers who say, “do not sit on the pillow, lest infected boils around the anus”. There are

also old people say, “ do not open an umbrella in the house, lest the snake will enter the house" In our research, back in the past, words or content of conversations which is considered as Malay taboos only involves sexual and religious matters. For example, one cannot discuss about sex in public places and also at home. Sex is not meant to be discussed among the people because it is considered as immoral. The problem is, every grownups know about sex and share their " knowledge" among themselves but at the same time they do not want to expose their " knowledge" to the youngsters because they believe that it is no use to do so. The other thing is about religion, in the past, only the Ulama' or Ustaz can talk about religion. In Malay culture, religion seems to be a very sensitive issues back in the old days until today. For instance, the Malays believe that questions such as " do god exist?"," who created the universe and why?"," is Islam the true religion of all?". Don't get us wrong, but these question can get you into deep trouble if you mention it at school or religious classes. We strongly believe that all of those mentioned above as taboos not because the subjects are immoral or corrupted, but the Malays are sometimes being restricted to certain knowledge by certain authorities for their own benefit, not because the words are impolite. Actually too much taboo and customs that do not make sense that can be found in the traditions of our society. But behind the trickery in the forbidden taboo, there are many lessons we can learn from it. But our ancestors education methods differ, they do not like to tell accurately about the consequences. They prefer intimidating so we do not make mistakes. Effects and consequences will be explored slowly, in line with increasing age. In conclusion, taboo and tradition in our society seems to resemble the teachings of error, but actually implied a very valuable

lesson. In history, the Malays are well known for their polite manners. Nowadays Malaysian Government starts introducing new terms to make a word more polite in order for the public to converse using polite language. For example, the introduction of OKU(orang kurang upaya), warga emas, pendatang tanpa izin (rather than pendatang haram), and meninggal dunia. There are many euphemism being used all over the Malay language, but the people have the freedom whether to use it or not. In conclusion, taboos exist within a community, our perception on certain subjects or words will determine whether some words or doings are considered as taboos. So, we must use euphemism in our everyday conversation so that we will not hurt other people's feelings. Remember, use polite words to address other people and choose the words carefully before we open our mouth. For example, instead of saying " orang cacat"(disabled) use " insan istimewa"(special). Please take note! do not use bad words and misuse taboos for bad things so that we can be nice to each other and be happy. During pre islamic era, it plays a major role especially as it's an important item to be given away to serving [jamu] the guardians [penunggu] of a certain spooky place [tempat keras] among them are pulut kuning [turmeric glutinous rice], ayam panggang [roasted chicken], daun sireh [betel leaves] and bertih goreng [rice 'pop corn'] The practice gradually dying out when Islam came to malay archipelago some 500 years ago, and now the food are just served as regular food especially during their feast to everybody. So. are you superstitious? Do you believe that breaking a mirror brings you seven years of bad luck? Do you avoid opening an umbrella indoors? As for me, I have done all this and so far, nothing bad has happened to me. Well, knock wood and keep your fingers crossed.