Gaurav Interview Transcript

Mitchell: Hi, could you tell me a little about yourself?

Gaurav: I’m Gaurav Varma.

Mitchell: How old are you?

Gaurav: I’m 19 and I’m Indian.

Mitchell: I’m doing a project for a Russian folklore class, could you tell me a little bit about some superstitions that you’ve grown up with or heard about?

Gaurav: Sure. You don’t put your feet on books and don’t leave books on the floor. If you have a thimble on your body, then you’re going to become very wealthy. I’ve heard that adding a rupee to a gift is good and that going to a new place and offering sweets is good. Touching your elder’s feet is also good luck.

Mitchell: So, could you give me some context on these superstitions? Where did you learn them from and what parts of Indian culture do you think influence these superstitions?

Gaurav: I would say I learned all of these superstitions from my mom first and foremost. I think I learned the superstition about touching elder’s feet from my grandmother. I learned that adding a rupee to a gift is good from my aunt. Everything here I’ve learned from a member of my family.

Mitchell: To what degree do you believe in these superstitions? If you follow them, do you follow them out of tradition or respect?

Gaurav: So I actually strictly follow not putting my feet on books or knowledge. I’ve been told that from a young age and I think it’s just ingrained in me, and now I just follow it out of habit. I don’t have any rupees on me so I don’t follow that one. I think going to a new place and offering sweets is good; I’ve never done that, but I would do it and I think it would be good luck.

Mitchell: Are you religious?

Gaurav: No, not particularly. I was born in San Jose.

Mitchell: Is your family religious?

Gaurav: Not particularly. I feel like they’ll go to temple, but not really be into it. They’ll go temple to get it out of the way. We don’t have a temple in the house, which is what most religious Hindu families have. I don’t seem them praying, which is a religious thing to do. Only when we go to temple do we pray, which is once every five months.

Mitchell: Do you think Hinduism roots these superstitions even though you guys are practicing Hindus?

Gaurav: Yea, of course. I think Hinduism is all about respect and hierarchy. I think all the superstitions go back to being respectful of your elders and knowledge. Everything there is about being respectful. I do think it goes back to Hinduism.