Sriram Interview Transcript

Mitchell: So, Sriram, can you tell me about yourself?

Sriram: My name is Sriram. I’m a 20 of Indian descent. Both my parents are Indian so pretty much 100%.

Mitchell. So, I’m doing a project on Asian superstitions and I was wondering if you could tell me some superstitions that you have grown up with or heard about.

Sriram: I remember one, you’re not supposed to cut your nails at night, and you also shouldn’t touch people right after you get a haircut before you shower. One in my house, I don’t know if it’s everywhere, but you’re not supposed to step on any books or paper, and if you do you kind of touch it then waft your eyes. It’s like a statement of apology. There’s one, if cross over someone’s legs, you have to cross your own or else you’re going to have bad luck. If you’re a really cute child, people will complement you, but that’s kind of bad luck. There’s rituals that we’ll perform to get rid of that, it’s like jinxing you.

Mitchell: Great, thank you. What was the context behind these superstitions? Where did you learn them and what parts of Indian culture do you think contribute to them?

Sriram: Most of them I learned in my house. I went to India a lot, almost every summer, and I would always get a taste of the traditions in India. It’s kind of general cultural knowledge passed down through generations.

Mitchell: To what extent do you believe in these superstitions?

Sriram: I don’t really believe in them too that great an extent. I kind of get where they come from, though. A lot of them are rooted in hygiene. Hair could be perceived as grimy or unclean so you have to shower and it might be impolite to touch people. Maybe you don’t want to cut your nails at night because you don’t want to cut yourself in the dark, if there are candles. I don’t know, I’m just speculating, but there’s some interpretations of some of the superstitions that are pretty wild, I guess. The whole books thing comes from God being in paper. We worship education, so stepping on paper is disrespectful, so you have to apologize. That’s the essence. I don’t’ buy into most of them, but they exist.

Mitchell: Can I ask you what religion you are?

Sriram: I’m a Hindu.

Mithcell: Do you think that contributes to the superstitions?

Sriram: I would think so, yea. The god in knowledge – I think it’s really in that one. The rest seems situational in general.

Mitchell: Where are you from?

Sriram: I’m from New Jersey, West Windsor.

Mitchell: What is your major?

Sriram: Math.

Mitchell: What is your favorite hobby?

Sriram: Playing trumpet, undoubtedly.

Mitchell: Thank you.