Although superstitions are passed down from generation to generation, I started a new one. I told my family that bay leaves are lucky. As soon as I said that, my sons stopped complaining about finding one in their soup.

Knocking on wood is meant to be good luck because benevolent spirits were thought to live in trees and thus knocking on anything made of wood is meant to protect you from misfortune. Crossing your fingers is meant to be good luck because you make the sign of the cross and thus prevent evil spirits from harming you. However, I have no idea why a robin flying into your house is meant to be lucky - unless it's an excuse for poor housekeeping.

In ancient Egypt the goddess Bast was in the form of a female, black cat. When the Christian priests wanted to remove all traces of other religions, they asked their followers to destroy black cats. Unfortunately, those who had black cats were thought to be witches and were destroyed too. I think that proves black cats are unlucky.

Before gallows were invented, criminals were hung from the top rung of a ladder and their spirits were believed to linger underneath. That's why it's meant to be unlucky to walk under a ladder. I disagree. I think it's unlucky to climb a ladder and more than 222,000 people agree with me. That's how many people a year go to emergency rooms because of ladder accidents - and that's not counting the women who hit their heads on glass ceilings when trying to climb ladders.

A mandala is a design made with rice powder. In India the woman of the house is meant to put a mandala on the front doorstep every morning to ward off evil spirits. Today making mandalas is a dying art. It's not because the women don't have enough time for the ritual. It's because today's Indian women have moved into cities and don't have doorsteps.

No matter which part of the world you tour, you will find the natives nurturing certain beliefs and superstitions and India is no exception in this case. Though the Indian society is fast progressing, there are many people who are still superstitious and have a strong faith in the local beliefs. While some of them are quite hilarious, few others are really interesting, as many aspects of life are linked to them. Few beliefs even find their way into the Indian religious texts and scriptures.

The standard viewpoint is that most of the Indian beliefs and values have sprung with an objective to protect from evil spirits, but some were based on scientific reasoning. With the passage of time, the reasoning part behind the origin of these cultural beliefs and superstitions got eroded. That is exactly why most of these beliefs appear unsubstantiated and false. However, in reality, there are many such beliefs in the Indians culture which are absolutely absurd and have no logic behind them.

Superstitions are deemed as pertinent in India because these, generally, hint at future occurrences and can be either good or bad. Thus, anything from the call of a bird to the falling of utensils is considered an omen in India. Many of the traditional superstitions in India are connected with animals, birds and reptiles. For instance, seeing an elephant when one is leaving for a journey is considered lucky. This is because an elephant represents Lord Ganesha, the Indian God who is the harbinger of good luck and removes obstacles.

Similarly, other auspicious signs could be cawing of a black crow in one's house, as it forecasts the arrival of guests. Seeing a peacock on a journey is also considered lucky, but hearing its
shrill sound is bad. Indians feel happy if a sparrow builds a nest in a new house because it signals good fortune. A very old belief is that if you kill a cat, you have to offer one in gold to a priest. This belief or superstition was concocted by the priests to protect the cats, which are useful in killing the rats in people's houses.

Leaving one's home after wedding or for some other important task is a significant occasion. Thus, Indians often consult astrological charts to fix an auspicious time for this. Again, it is considered lucky to see cereals, paddy, cotton, hay or a newly wed before embarking on a journey. In India, you may also come across or hear about people who help in interpreting other's dreams. Even the daily life of Indians is governed by beliefs and superstitions. For example, Monday is not an auspicious day for shaving and Thursday is a bad day for washing one's hair.

Do not ever leave home without consulting an astrologer. Rahu and Ketu, two ominous planets, are waiting to ruin things for you. Wait for the shubh mahurat, based on the Hindu calendar. This also holds true for weddings, naming ceremonies, housewarming rites and everything in life!

Consult a horoscope before getting your children married. Go ahead only if the virtues and gunas match perfectly.

Seeing an elephant during a journey is auspicious as Ganesha, the God who removes obstacles will ensure success.

A dog howling at night chills the blood – a portent of approaching death.

When leaving home, it is auspicious to see a bride, a Brahmin or an religious idol. However, sighting a widow or a barren woman is not lucky!

A new bride is judged by the fortunes or misfortunes that occur in her new family for a year after marriage. She enters her new home putting her right foot first.

Menstruating women are regarded unclean and are isolated. They cannot enter the kitchen till they are ‘clean’ again.

Pregnant women are not allowed to travel alone at night or enter an uninhabited home because ghosts might possess them. They should read religious books and watch inspiring movies so that the child grows up to be a good person.

Hiccups indicate someone is thinking of you. But an itchy eye refers to someone maligning you, or your envy of someone.

A barber shop remains closed on Tuesday as hair is not cut on that day.

Nails should not be cut at night for fear of evil spirits.

Twitching of the eye is highly inauspicious.

An eclipse occurs when Rahu and Ketu swallow the sun, and people avoid eating anything, and go and take a dip in rivers after it is over.

When there is a birth or death in the family, the members are unclean, and do not go to the temple till the stipulated period is over.

WHEN YOU ARE GOING OUT - THESE ARE CONSIDERED BAD:
1. Some one asks you 'where are you going?'
2. Some body sneeze odd no; of times
3. a widow, a single Brahman or a man carrying oil or milk or a cat crossing your path.
4. Going below the ladder.
5. Hitting your head or feet on the thresh hold.

THESE ARE GOOD:
1. Eating curds with jaggery
2. Sighting a married lady with flowers on the head & kumkum on fore head.
3. Sighting an elephant or braying of a donkey. Sound made by lizards

THESE ARE NOT GOOD
1. Milk over-flowing except on sankranthi day
2. Spilling of oil, turmeric, kumkum
3. Hair-cutting on Tuesdays or in evenings
4. Lizard falling on head
5. Keeping money inside the bag meant for carrying your purchase.
6. Doing things during Rahu-kala or traveling during in-auspicious time
7. Getting married on New moon day, or during certain months
8. Not lending or borrowing after sun set ( lighting the lamp in the evening )
9. Exchanging things across the threshold.
10. Giving or taking with the left hand.
11. Not crossing the broken pumpkins or coconuts on the road.

OTHERS
1. Cawing of crow- itching of right palm-arrival of guests
   Itching of left palm--money gain
2. Right eye twitching --good for men
   Left eye twitching good for women.

GLOBAL SUPERSTITIONS - PERTAINING TO ANIMALS & BIRDS

Albatross
In the days of sail, an albatross flying round a ship in mid-ocean was an omen of wind and bad weather to come. It was very unlucky to kill it because it was thought to embody the restless soul of some dead mariner. Echoes of these time-honored traditions were heard in July 1959 when the cargo liner, Calpean Star, docked at Liverpool with engine trouble, after a voyage from the Antarctic that had been dogged by many misfortunes. The crew blamed these on the presence on board of an albatross destined for a zoo. Fifty of the crew staged a sit-down strike because they were unwilling to continue their unlucky voyage. The captain is reported in the Daily Telegraph of July 7, 1959 that it had required some courage on his part to bring the albatross on board in the first place. And most of his crew still believed that the bird would bring bad weather or misfortune, or that it was connected with the souls of the dead.

Ants
Stepping on ants brings rain.'
Ants signify bad weather when they are very agitated.
Ants building a nest near the door to your house is a clear sign of financial security in the future.

Bats
A bat means long life and happiness, a good omen, to the Chinese and Poles. If a bat lands on your head, you should hope the Cricket sees rain coming because the bat won't get off until it hears thunder. When you see a bat, you might actually be seeing the Devil, a witch, a ghost, or Dracula.

Bats have always had a connection with witches, and can have good or bad connotation, depending on the tradition. According to one, if a bat flies three times around a house, it is a death omen. Conversely, when bats come out early and fly about playfully, it is a sign of good weather to come.

**Bees**

If a bee enters your home, it's a sign that you will soon have a visitor. If you kill the bee, you will have bad luck, or the visitor will be unpleasant.

Bees have often been regarded as wise and even holy insects, having foreknowledge as well as knowledge of many secret matters. In antiquity they were sometimes divine messengers, and their constant humming was believed to be a hymn of praise. Because of their status it is still considered unlucky in some places to kill a bee. If a bee flies into the house it is a sign of great good luck, or of the arrival of a stranger; however, the luck will only hold if the bee is allowed to either stay or to fly out of the house of its own accord. A bee landing on someone's hand is believed to foretell money to come, while if the bee settles on someone's head it means that person will rise to greatness. They were once considered to deliberately sting those who swore in front of them, and also to attack an adulterer or unchaste person; it was once held to be a sure sign that a girl was a virgin if she could walk through a swarm of bees without being stung.

There is believed to be a very strong link between bees and their keepers; bees cannot prosper in an atmosphere of anger or hatred, and will either pine away and die, or fly away. There is still a common belief that bees should be told about deaths that occur in the beekeeper's family; in past times this was extended to include every birth, marriage or other notable event in the life of the family. It was especially important to inform the bees of the death of their owner; traditionally this was done by the eldest son or widow of the owner, who would strike each hive three times with the door key and say 'The master is dead!'. If the procedure was not followed, the bees would die or fly away. In many districts the hives were put into mourning by having black crepe draped around them, and at the funeral feast sugar or small amounts of the food eaten by the mourners were brought out for the bees.

An old country tradition states that bees should not be purchased for money, as bought bees will never prosper. It is acceptable to barter goods of the same value in exchange for bees, and in some districts gold was an acceptable form of payment. A borrowed swarm or one given freely is more likely to do well; a stock of bees was often started from a borrowed swarm on the understanding that it would be returned if the giver was ever in need of it.

Bee-stings were once thought to prevent rheumatism, and in some places a bee-sting was also thought to cure it.

**Birds**

A bird that flies into a house, foretells an important message. The white bird foretells death.

A bird call from the north means tragedy; from the south is good for crops; from the west is good luck; from the east, good love.
If you have bird droppings land on your head it is good luck."
A bird call from the north means tragedy; from the south is good for crops; from the west is good luck; from the east, good love.
If a bird poops on your car, it is good luck.
If you have bird droppings land on your head it is good luck.

**Blackbird**
If two males are seen sitting together this is a very good omen. Should a blackbird nest anywhere in your house then you can look forward to a year of good fortune.

**Butterfly**
If the first butterfly you see in the year is white, you will have good luck all year.

**Calf**
If the first calf born during the winter is white, the winter will be a bad one.

**Cat**
If a black cat crosses your path, Satan was taking notice of you.
Butter your cat's feet when you move to keep it from running away from the new house.
If a cat crosses or jumps over the coffin, the dead person's spirit will return as a ghost.
A black cat is lucky or unlucky, depending on where you live.
Cats were sacred to the goddess, Isis in Egyptian mythology.
Bast or Pasht, the daughter of Isis, was represented with the face of a cat. Anyone who killed a cat was put to death. Archaeologists in Egypt found cat cemeteries from which a shipment of embalmed cats was taken to England. In Egypt it was believed that a black cat crossing one's path brought good luck.
In East Anglia, England, they used to mummify cats and place them in the walls of their homes to ward off evil spirits.
If a black cat walks towards you, it brings good fortune, but if it walks away, it takes the good luck with it.
Keep cats away from babies because they "suck the breath" of the child.
A cat onboard a ship is considered to bring luck.

**Cattle**
Cattle were highly regarded by the Celts, being the most important animal for their sustenance and welfare and also a basis for wealth and prestige. They were also believed to have close ties with their human owners and to be aware of human activities and festivals. In some areas it is thought that cattle should be informed of any deaths in their owners' household, or the cows, sensing that something was wrong, would sicken and probably die. During mediaeval times the superstition arose that cattle would kneel at the stroke of midnight on Christmas Eve; in some parts of Europe they were also believed to gain the ability to speak on this night, although it was considered dangerous for any human to hear their speech as misfortune would befall anyone who overheard them.

There are many English, Irish and Welsh tales of fairy cows who gave never-ending milk until their generosity was abused by some greedy human, causing a loss of the cow or her powers. A Lancashire tale tells of a dun cow that appeared during a famine to save the people with her
unending milk supply, until one person tried to get more than her fair share by milking the cow through a sieve, leading to the cow's death from exhaustion and sorrow at the trick. Fairy cattle could be dun or red but were more usually white with red ears.

It was once considered unlucky if an offer were made to purchase cattle which were not for sale, leading to their illness and perhaps death. In some districts it was also considered unlucky to strike cattle with human hands; a stick should be used to drive them from place to place, and should be thrown away once the destination was reached. Cattle who stand close together in low ground, and feed hard together, are said to be foretelling rain, but if they stand on high ground the weather will be fair.

Cattle diseases were often attributed to the machinations of fairies, elves or witches, and many charms were used to fend off these magical attacks. Horseshoes or holed stones hung above the door of the byre, or crosses made of rowan wood fixed over cattle-stalls, were believed to ward off evil influences. In the sixteenth century wax from a Paschal Candle would be moulded into a special candle, and wax from it dripped between the ears and horns of the beasts; the remaining wax was then set over the main door, or on the threshold, so that all the cattle had to pass the spot. Written charms were also obtained from local wise-women or cunning-men to ward off evil, and concealed in the roof or under the floorboards.

It was traditional to drive cattle over the embers of the Beltane and Midsummer fires, as a magickal protection against cattle plague and other diseases. As recently as the nineteenth century, some farmers would sacrifice one healthy calf or cow (sometimes burying it under the threshold of the byre with feet pointing upwards) as a symbolic sacrifice that the herd might be spared from cattle plague.

Cows
If a plow kills a daddy long legs the cows will go dry
If you see nine cows in a shed with a gray bull next to the door, and all of them lie on the same side, you are in luck, because you will be granted one wish.

Cricket
A cricket is a lucky house spirit that takes it's luck away when it leaves.
A cricket can tell of oncoming rain, death, and x-lovers.
It's bad luck to kill a cricket.

Crow
One's bad,
Two's luck,
Three's health,
Four's wealth,
Five's sickness,
Six is death.

Daddy Long Legs
If a plow kills a daddy long legs the cows will go dry.
"When I was a kid on a farm in Ohio, somewhere we were told when we picked up a Daddy Long Legs to ask it "Where are the cows?" and it would point (with it's feelers) in the direction of the cows. I remember thinking this usually worked!"
If you kill a daddy long legs, there'll be rain soon.
Dogs
Greeks thought dogs could foresee evil. "Usually superstitions about dogs are somewhat ominous. But here's one my grandmother believed--if you have your new-born baby licked by a dog, your baby will be a quick healer. We all believe this because I was not licked, and I'm a slow healer and my brother, who was licked, is a quick healer--go figure."
Howling dogs mean the wind god has summoned death, and the spirits of the dead will be taken.
A dog eating grass - rain
A howling dog at night means bad luck or somebody close to you will be very sick or worse.
When a dog is staring intently, at nothing, for no apparent reason, look between the dog's ears and you'll see a ghost.
Dogs have always been credited with the power of sensing supernatural influences, and seeing ghosts, spirits, faeries or deities which are invisible to human eyes. In Wales only dogs could see the death-bringing hounds of Annwn; in ancient Greece the dogs were aware when Hecate was at a crossroads foretelling a death. Dogs are believed to be aware of the presence of ghosts, and their barking, whimpering or howling is often the first warning of supernatural occurrences.
There are many instances of black dog ghosts which are said to haunt lanes, bridges, crossroads, footpaths and gates, particularly in Suffolk, Norfolk and the Isle of Man. Some black dogs are said to be unquiet ghosts of wicked souls, but others are friendly guides and protectors to travelers; the Barguest of northern England could also appear as a pig or a goat, but was most commonly a huge black dog with large eyes and feet which left no prints. Packs of ghostly hounds have also been recorded all over Britain, often heard howling as they pass by on stormy nights rather than actually seen; these hounds generally foretell death, or at least disaster, if they are seen and the proper action is to drop face-down onto the ground to avoid spotting them.
When a dog howls in an otherwise silent night, it is said to be an omen of death, or at least of misfortune. A howling dog outside the house of a sick person was once thought to be an omen that they would die, especially if the dog was driven away and returned to howl again. A dog which gives a single howl, or three howls, and then falls silent is said to be marking a death that has just occurred nearby.
Dogs were feared as possible carriers of rabies; sometimes even a healthy dog was killed if it had bitten someone, because of the belief that if the dog later developed rabies, even many years afterwards, the bitten person would also be afflicted. Remedies for the bite of a mad dog often included the patient being forced to eat a part of the dog in question, such as its hairs or a piece of its cooked liver. Dogs were also used to cure other illnesses; one old charm which was often used for children’s illnesses was to take some of the patient's hairs and feed them to a dog in between slices of bread and butter; the ailment was believed to transfer to the animal, healing the patient.
In Scotland, a strange dog coming to the house means a new friendship; in England, to meet a spotted or black and white dog on your way to a business appointment is lucky. Three white dogs seen together are considered lucky in some areas; black dogs are generally considered
unlucky, especially if they cross a traveler’s path or follow someone and refuse to be driven away. Fishermen traditionally regard dogs as unlucky and will not take one out in a boat, or mention the word 'dog' whilst at sea.

**Donkeys**
Christian tradition stated that donkeys originally had unmarked hides, and that it was only after Christ's entry into Jerusalem on the back of a donkey that they received the dark cross on their backs. The hairs from the cross were widely believed to cure a number of ailments, and were often worn in a charm around the neck to guard against whooping-cough, toothache, fits, and to ease teething pains in babies. Sometimes the hairs were eaten in a sandwich instead. Riding a donkey was also believed efficacious, especially if the rider faced the donkey's tail end, and was sometimes used as a preventative for toothache, measles and other children's complaints. One cure for whooping-cough and ague stated that the patient should be passed under a donkey and over its back either three or nine times; the trick of feeding an animal some of the patient's hair to transfer the illness was also used with donkeys. The donkey was also used to help cure the complaints of other animals; letting a black donkey run with mares in a field was thought to stop the mares miscarrying.

An old saying claims that no-one ever sees a dead donkey; however, there is also a tradition that to see a dead donkey means great good fortune, and even as recently as this century it was considered a good-luck charm to leap over the carcass of a dead donkey three times.

**Elephants**
In Siam, white elephants were rare and not made to work for their upkeep, so a White Elephant is an item that is a non profit expense. Considering the value of space in our homes, items kept as memorabilia could be considered White Elephants.

**Fish**
Throw back the first fish you catch then you'll be lucky the whole day fishing.
It's bad luck to get married when the fish aren't biting, according to the custom of some fisher folk.
A fish should always be eaten from the head toward the tail.
Dream of fish: someone you know is pregnant.
If you count the number of fish you caught, you will catch no more that day.
It's bad luck to say the word "pig" while fishing at sea.

**Frogs**
Frogs, like toads, were once thought to have peculiar properties, and were frequently used in healing charms, and in others of a slightly less innocent nature.
A well known country cure for thrush was to hold a live frog with its head in the patient's mouth. As it breathed, so it drew the disease away and into itself. Warts could also be cured by rubbing a frog across them.
The dried body of a frog worn in a silk bag around the neck averted epilepsy and other fits.
Frogs were also used in love-magic. In one tale, a girl, whose lover was untrue stuck pins all over a living frog and then buried it. The young man suffered extreme pains and eventually returned to her. She dug up the frog and removed the pins, after which the pains ceased. The man, perhaps rather unwisely, married her.
A frog brings good luck to the house it enters.
**Hens**

A hen which crows is considered to be unlucky, as is a hen with tail-feathers like those of a rooster; previously these birds would be killed on most farms. Hens which roost in the morning are said to be foretelling a death, usually that of the farmer or someone in his household. A hen which enters the house is an omen that a visitor will arrive, and this is also the case if a rooster crows near the door or comes inside.

**Hornets**

If the hornets build their nests high in trees during the summer, it will be a bad winter. If they build their nests low in bushes, it will be an easy winter.

**Horses**

A white horse could warn of danger, and lived longer than a dark horse, so was considered a living amulet against early death.

Spotted horses are magical.

Grey horses and horses with four white socks are unlucky.

Horses have been sacred animals in Indo-European cultures from very early times, and it is easy to see why; their great importance in farming, travel and warfare would make them extraordinarily important. The Celtic goddess Epona presided over horses, and the Norse Odin was said to ride through the heavens on an eight-footed white horse. Horses were used as valuable sacrifices by many ancient peoples, including the Romans, and their bones were concealed in the walls of houses, or horse skulls placed on the gables of houses, as a protection.

Inhaling a horses breath - cure for whooping cough

In some places it is lucky to meet a white horse; in others, unlucky; either way, tradition states that upon meeting a white horse one should spit and make a wish, or cross one's fingers until a dog is seen. In many places it is lucky to lead a horse through the house; this belief may stem from the association of horses with fertility and crops, which has lasted in form of hobby-horses which were originally part of Beltane (May Day) revels.

It was once thought that whooping-cough could be cured by going to the stables and inhaling the breath of a horse; being breathed upon by a piebald horse, or riding upon its back, was another supposed cure. Horse-hairs, chopped very finely and fed to a child in bread and butter, were thought to be a certain cure for worms, and the horse-spurs (callouses which appear on the sides of a horse's leg) were believed in the eighteenth century to be a cure for cancer if dried, ground and drunk frequently with new milk.

**Horseshoes**

A circular ring made from an iron horseshoe nail gives the same protection against evil as the horseshoe itself. The horseshoe or crescent moon shape was seen as a sign of good fortune and fertility. One legend says that the Devil called on St. Dunstan, who was skilled in shoeing horses. St. Dunstan recognized him and fastened him to a wall. He then set to work with such roughness that the Devil roared for mercy. St Dunstan turned the Devil loose after making him promise never to enter a home on which a horseshoe was fixed. Witches fear horses, so they are also turned away by a door with a horseshoe mounted on it. The horseshoe must be hung with the points up to keep the luck from spilling out.

Horseshoes are considered lucky for their healing powers (cures hiccups) and for their
protective influence (specifically against witches). It resembles the crescent moon and is thought to protect against the evil eye. Similar-shaped charms were used among the Chaldeans and the Egyptians. Related to animal worship, it approaches the form of a serpent biting its own tail—a universal symbol of eternity. There is a time-honored belief in the magical power of iron. Blacksmiths were often identified as sorcerers and the efficacy of fire as a bane to demons supported this idea.

A horseshoe, hung above the doorway, will bring good luck to a home. In most of Europe protective horseshoes are placed in a downward facing position, but in some parts of Ireland and Britain people believe that the shoes must be turned upward or "the luck will run out."

A horseshoe hung in the bedroom will keep nightmares away.

**Jaybirds**
Jaybirds go down to the devil's house on Fridays to tell all the bad things that have happened during the week. Jaybirds who remain on Friday are checking up on what people are doing.

**Ladybug**
The bright scarlet ladybug is a luck-bringer, probably because it is traditionally associated by its color with fire. It is a sign of good fortune if one lands on a person's hand or dress. It must, however, be allowed to fly away of its own accord, and must not be brushed off. It is permissible to speed it onwards by a gentle puff, and by the recitation of the rhyme which runs,

Ladybird, ladybird, fly away home.
Your house is on fire and your children are gone.
The deeper the ladybird's color, the better luck it brings. The number of spots on its back are also important. The more spots...the better the luck!

If a young girl catches a ladybug and then releases it, the direction in which it flies away will be the direction from which her future husband will come.

**Moth**
A big black moth in the house means a deceased one is just visiting reincarnated through that moth.

**Mouse**
If somebody throws away a dead mouse, the wind will soon start to blow from that direction.

**Owls**
Owls have carried a mixed bag of superstitions since time immemorial. The ancient Greeks revered owls and believed them sacred to Athena. Affiliated with the goddess of wisdom and learning, the owl was considered wise and kind.
But somewhere in time, the owl's reputation plummeted and hearing the hoot of an owl is now associated with bad luck. To counter evil owl power put irons in your fire. Or throw salt, hot peppers or vinegar into the fire, the owl will get a sore tongue, hoot no more, and no one close to you will be in trouble. When you hear an owl, take off your clothes, turn them inside out and put them back on. You might not want to do this if you are in public.

**Peacocks**
A peacock feather has an evil eye at the end. Argus, the Greek legend, says a hundred eyed monster was turned into a peacock with all it's eyes in it's tail.

**Pigs**
One superstition to get rid of warts involves rubbing a peeled apple and giving it to a pig.

**Rabbits**
Before Christianity in the British Isles, the hare, like the cat, was thought to be a witch in disguise. This witch could only be killed with a silver bullet. Since rabbits and hares are born with eyes open, which is an erroneous notion, they supposedly had special powers over the evil eye.

It is believed to be unlucky to meet either a hare or a rabbit, one variant stating that a rabbit which crosses one's path in front is a good omen and one which crosses behind is a bad one. In some English counties it is considered unwise to shoot a black rabbit, as it may be an ancestral spirit returning in rabbit-form; in Suffolk it was believed that white rabbits were witches, which is was also unlucky to shoot. Rabbits and hares were never mentioned at sea, as they were considered ill-omened words, and to meet one on the way to see was a very bad omen.

An old custom is to say 'Rabbits' or 'White Rabbits' either once or three times on the first day of the month, as a good luck charm; it must be the first word said that morning, otherwise the charm is not potent.

**Rabbit's Foot**
Because of the rabbit's ability to reproduce, the rabbit's foot also became a symbol of fertility. Rabbit's feet are also symbols of new life because of their prolificacy; they also were linked with darkness, witches and the devil because they live underground. By owning a rabbit's foot as a talisman, you would have vital connections with many powerful forces.

A left rabbit hind foot, carried in the left pocket after having been removed from a rabbit that was killed during a full moon by a cross-eyed person is truly lucky. The foot is considered a powerful charm against evil because the rabbit's strong hind legs touch the ground before its front legs. Ancient people thought this so remarkable that they ascribed magical powers to it.

A rabbit's foot is a well-known lucky charm in most English-speaking countries, said to ensure success in many fields. Actors may keep a rabbit's foot in their make-up cases for good luck, and will meet with misfortune if the foot is lost. In Wales an old belief is that a new-born child rubbed all over with a rabbit's foot will be lucky for life.

**Ravens**
To kill a raven is to harm the spirit of King Arthur who visits the world in the form of a raven.

**Robins**
A wish made on the first robin of spring will be granted.
"My grandmother used to say that a robin entering the house was a sign of a death in the family. It happened to her (the bird appearing actually on the day of a relatives death) and to my mother (appearing the day before a relatives death). It happened to me the other day - but the day after a relative’s death."

**Roosters**
Roosters have long been connected with the sun, as they crow to herald its arrival at dawn, and are considered watchful protectors of humankind. When a cock crows at midnight a spirit is passing; in England it is a death omen if one crows three times between sunset and midnight. Crowing at other times is often a warning against misfortune. If a cock crows while perched on a gate, or at nightfall, the next day will be rainy. A white rooster is considered very lucky, and should not be killed as it protects the farm on which it lives; black cocks, however, were more
ill-omened, being often associated with sacrifice.

**Seagulls**
Three seagulls flying together, directly overhead, are a warning of death soon to come.

**Sheep**
To meet a flock of sheep on a journey is an omen of good luck. An old Manx belief states that sheep cannot be counted accurately unless the person counting them has washed his or her eyes under running water first. Peaceful sheep, lying in the field, are said to herald fine weather, but rain is foretold if they are restless and baa for no apparent reason.

The knuckle-bone from a piece of mutton was once thought to be a preventative charm against rheumatism if carried about in the pocket; similarly, a certain T-shaped bone from a sheep's head was believed to protect its carrier from bad luck and evil. A strip of sheepskin on a horse's collar was once used as a prevention against the evil eye, and a rather gruesome method of breaking a curse was to stick a sheep's heart full of pins and roast it at midnight in a room where all doors, windows and openings had been firmly closed.

Parts of sheep were often used in folk cures; a sheep's lung was once applied to the feet of a pneumonia sufferer, and was thought to draw the disease downward into itself. People could be wrapped in the skin of a freshly-killed sheep in an attempt to cure an adder bite; children with whooping-cough were thought to be cured by letting a sheep breathe on them. Sufferers from consumption were once advised to walk around a sheepfold many times a day, beginning early in the morning.

If sheep gnash their teeth during round-up in the autumn, the winter will be hard. If sheep gnash their teeth somewhere else, it presages very bad weather.

**Sparrows**
Sparrows carry the souls of the dead; it's unlucky to kill one.

**Spiders**
Superstitious people probably don't kill spiders because it has been unlucky since a spider spun a web over baby Jesus to hide him from Herod. When the spiders build their webs high, it's going to rain soon.

A spider with syrup cures fever.

Seeing a spider run down a web in the afternoon means you'll take a trip.

You'll meet a new friend if you run into a web.

A spider is a repellent against plague when worn around the neck in a walnut shell.

**Sow Bugs**
According to one Texas superstition, a bag filled with 13 sow bugs tied around a child's neck will cure the child from the thrash, or sores in the mouth.

**Storks**
Storks deliver babies.
Storks were sacred to Venus in Roman mythology.

If a stork builds a nest on your roof, you have received a blessing and a promise of never ending love from Venus. Aristotle made killing a stork a crime, and Romans passed a stork law, saying that children must care for their elderly parents.
Swans
A swan's feather, sewed into the husband's pillow, will ensure fidelity.

Toad
If you eat a live toad first thing in the morning nothing worse will happen to you all day.

Whippoorwill
An insect-eating nocturnal North American bird (Caprimulgus vociferus) of the goatsucker family, having spotted brown feathers that blend with its woodland habitat. A whippoorwill calling near the house is a sign that someone in the house will die soon.

Wolf
During the middle ages, wolves were ascribed magical powers and wolf parts became an important part of many early pharmacies. Powered wolf liver was used to ease birth pains. A wolf's right paw, tied around ones throat, was believed to ease the swelling caused by throat infections.

It was widely believed that a horse that stepped in a wolf print would be crippled

The gaze of a wolf was once thought to cause blindness

Others believed that the breath of the wolf could cook meat.

Naturalists of the day believed wolves sharpened their teeth before hunting

Dead wolves were buried at a village entrance to keep out other wolves (a bizarre belief echoed today by farmers who continue to shoot predators and hang them on fence posts to repel other predators.)

Travelers were warned about perils of walking through lonely stretches of woods, and stone shelters were built to protect them from attacks. Our modern word "loophole" is derived from the European term "loup hole," or wolf hole, a spy hole in shelters through which travelers could watch for wolves.

GLOBAL SUPERSTITIONS - PERTAINING TO HUMANS & BODY

The Hair
The 'crowning glory' is one of the most indestructible parts of the body. As such, a sudden loss of hair is unlucky, forecasting a decline in health, loss of property or failure in business, or the death of a closely related child. Red hair is associated with fiery-tempered people (e.g. Cleopatra and Queen Elizabeth I); black and dark brown hair indicates strength; fair hair implies timidity. On a man, if the hair grows low on the forehead and back above the temples he will have a long life; if a woman's hair grows in a low point on her forehead ('widow's peak') she will outlive her husband. If a woman suddenly develops curls on her forehead her man has not long to live.

Lank hair = a cunning nature; Curly hair = good natured, full of fun; Long hair = strength (e.g. Samson) and luck.

It is said to be unlucky to have your hair cut when the moon is in the wane as this will cause it to fall out and lose its lustre. Cutting your own hair will tempt fate. To determine your future: set fire to some strands of your hair - cut them off first!. If they burn brightly, you are in for a long life. If they sputter and smolder, it is said to be a death omen. Never pull out grey hairs, for one will be replaced by ten. It has often been believed that a sudden fright can turn hair
white.

The Eyes
Are the 'windows to the soul' and the colour leads to differing beliefs.
Dark blue eyes = delicate and refined souls; Light blue or grey eyes = strong and healthy ones;
Green eyes = hardy souls; Hazel eyes = vigorous, deep-thinking folk.
Itching eyes: if the right eye tickles, it's lucky, and vice versa. Theocritus has it, 'My right eye
itches now and I shall see my love.'
'Trust not the man whose eyebrows meet,
For in his heart you'll find deceit.'

The Ears
Feature prominently in superstition, i.e. 'My ears are burning, someone is talking about me.'
Small ears denote a delicate character and thick ears a person of a sensual/coarse nature.
Thin, angular ears = a bad temper; Long or prominent ears = a person with musical
inclinations. The larger the ear lobes, the greater the intellect.

The Nose
Indicates the character of the man.
Prominent noses = intelligence and determination; Thin noses = jealousy and uncertainty;
Receding noses = bad temper and obstinacy; Tip-tilted noses = bright and lively characters.
There is said to be a connection between the size of a person's nose and their sexual organs. A
tickling nose (Britain) = a fight or an important communication or (America) a kiss.

The Lips
Itch or tingle when someone is about to kiss you. If you bite your tongue while you are eating
then you have recently told a lie.
A large gap between the teeth = lucky in life; Large teeth = physical strength; Small, regular
teeth = careful and methodical in your habits.
It is not good for a child to be born with any teeth showing. Never eat anything when a funeral
bell is tolling or toothache will follow.

The Hand
It’s a symbol of power and an instrument of healing, justice and blessing. The right hand is
lucky and the left unlucky because the Devil is supposed to have sat on the left-hand side of
God before being cast out of heaven.
From the time of Edward the Confessor, kings of England are said to have had the power to
'heal by touch'. Conversely, the hand of an executed criminal, cut from his body while still on
the gallows, was said to have healing powers as well as providing its owners with the ability to
commit crime and robbery without fear of detection by stupefying all those who saw it.
Large, thick hands = strength of character; Small, slender hands = weak and timid character;
Long hands = ingenious nature; Short ones = careless and foolish nature; Hard hands =
rudeness; Soft hands = wit; Hairy hands = a person who likes luxury. A damp hand = an
amorous disposition; while 'a cold hand means a warm heart'.
If the palm of your right hand itches you will receive money; if the left palm, you will lose
some ('left, lose; right, receive'). Two people should never wash their hands together in the
same water - this will lead to a quarrel between them.

Crossed fingers (imitating the sign of the cross) wards off bad luck.

Long fingers = artistic; Short, thick fingers = intemperate and silly; a crooked little finger = omen of wealth; the first finger (the 'poison finger') should never be used to administer medicines; the third finger (the 'wedding' finger) is said to be linked directly to the heart.

It is unlucky to cut fingernails on a Friday or Sunday.

Specks on the nails: yellow = death; black = ill-luck; white = good fortune to come.

If a woman cuts the nails of her right hand with her left hand she will have the upper hand in marriage.

The Feet

Also have their own superstitions: an itching foot = a journey to somewhere new; Flat feet = bad temper; do not enter a building left foot first, to avoid bad luck.

Moles and Dimples

Left hand side of the body = unlucky; those on the right = lucky; on the face (especially chin or neck) = wealth; on the chest and stomach = strength; a mole on the nose = great lechery; a mole on a woman's thigh = unfaithful, and a great spendthrift; a girl with a mole on her breast will be irresistible. A hairy chest = masculinity.

'Dimple on the chin - Devil within'

A wart is said to be the mark of the Devil and is unlucky.

Sneezing

Or 'a little death' (in places where it is believed the soul momentarily leaves the body with the sneeze). We still use the expression 'Bless you' (short for 'God Bless You'). This stems from the times when a sneeze could mean the plague, viz. 'Coughs and sneezes spread diseases'.

Sneeze 'once for a wish, twice for a kiss, three for a letter, four for something better'. In Scotland, a newborn child is said to remain under 'the fairy spells' until it has sneezed for the first time. It was also believed that an idiot could not sneeze, so that a child's first sneeze was important. If you sneeze when talking you are telling the truth (America); three sneezes before breakfast means you will receive a present during the day (Germany); any sneeze is an indication that someone, somewhere, is saying nice things about you (Japan). It is very lucky to sneeze at exactly the same time as someone else you are with.

Coughing meant the unexpected entry of a devil into a person who had been telling lies or carrying out misdemeanours of some kind.

Hiccups are caused by someone who dislikes you complaining to someone else. The only way to stop them is to guess the name of the person maligning you.

Yawning can lead to evil spirits entering the body unless you cover your mouth with your hand; it is a sign that Death is calling to you, and you must snap your second finger and thumb (American Indian).

A Shiver means that someone is walking over your (eventual) grave.

Laugh before breakfast and it will end in tears before supper; to laugh excessively shows that the person is possessed and that his days are numbered.

GLOBAL SUPERSTITIONS - PERTAINING TO CLOTHES
**Body Jewellery**
Prevents evil spirits from entering the body by one of the five orifices. Wearing earrings and painting the lips were talismans to keep devils away.

**Emeralds** = unlucky because they were used in the East for the eyes of religious figures and consequently became the target of robbers.

**Opals** = unlucky; although 13th century alchemist Albertus Magnus maintained that an opal wrapped in bay leaves made its wearer invisible.

**Pearls** = once believed to be unlucky; in medieval times they were thought to be 'solidified tears'.

**Diamonds** = the best of all good luck bringers, possessing the power to drive off witches and prevent the wearer from ever going insane.

**Gloves**
It is unlucky to drop your glove and pick it up yourself; if someone else does it, good fortune will follow for both of you.

**Clothing Inside Out**
It is lucky to put on an item of clothing inside out, although you must not change it until the time you would normally take it off, for the luck to hold. William of Normandy inadvertently put on his shirt of mail back to front just before the Battle of Hastings; when his courtiers pointed out his mistake and said it was a bad omen, quick-thinking William assured them it was not and was in fact a sign that he was about to be changed from a duke into a king.

**Clothing Button Up**
It has always been unlucky to hook or button up any item of clothing wrongly (start all over again); just as you should never put your left arm, leg or foot into anything first.

**Under-Garments**
If a girl's bra or pants should suddenly slip down this is a sign that someone who loves her is thinking of her; and, if two or more holes should appear in any of these items then tradition says the owner can expect a gift very shortly. Any girl wearing suspenders who finds that her stocking slips from the clasp three times can take it she is in for an unlucky day, but if stockings on the washing line curl round each other it is an omen that the owner may expect great happiness before long. Garters have always been regarded as lucky, and many a girl has slept with one under her pillow on Midsummer Eve in the hope of dreaming of her future husband (a suspender belt can also do the trick, apparently). Any young girl anxious for a husband should get a garter worn recently by a married woman and put it on her own leg; a girl who puts valerian in her underwear will prove irresistible to men (Wales). It used to be very lucky for brides to be married wearing no underwear under her wedding gown. Well into the nineteenth century a new husband became liable for any debts previously incurred by his bride but, if the girl went to the altar weaning no more than her dress, any creditors would take pity on such an obviously poor young soul and not wish to compound the problems in her new life by pressing their bills. Such ceremonies were known as 'smock' weddings'.

Clothes are part of the 'body magic'; many fans try to touch their idols or grab a portion of their clothes; and items once worn by superstars fetch a high price at auction.

It is unlucky to wear the clothes of a dead person; for, as the body of the deceased decays, so will the clothes - 'The clothes of the dead always wear full of holes'.

**Handkerchief**
Tying a knot in a handkerchief to remember something signifies a very ancient belief that that the knot was a charm against evil. Any demon nearby will be so intrigued by the shape that all thoughts of interfering with you will go from his head.

**Hat**

Putting your hat on back to front will result in a bad day; a woman who puts on a man's hat is giving a sign that she wants to be kissed (America).

**Shoe**

Considered lucky, hence the custom of tying an old boot to the back of the car of a couple who have just got married; shoes on the table is symbolic of hanging; shoes left crossed on the floor or put on the wrong feet brings bad luck; and walking anywhere with one shoe on could lead to the death of one of your parents. A shoelace which comes undone as you set off on a venture is unlucky; if you tie someone else's shoe laces up you should make a wish as it is lucky.

**New Clothes**

Always slip a small coin into the right-hand pocket of a new suit or dress, to avoid being hard up when you wear that item of clothing. It is lucky to wear a new item of clothing on festivals, as everything old and dirty should be renewed at a festival.

**SUPERSTITIONS - PERTAINING TO HOME**

Houses have either a warm and friendly atmosphere or one that is cold and depressing. It has nothing to do with how long the house has stood (new or old); nor whether it's well-heated or not. The atmosphere stems from the 'spirit of the house' whose personality governs whether the house is lucky or unlucky.

**Door**

As main point of entry of the house, the door is particularly important and the positioning over the porch of statues and good luck symbols (e.g. horseshoe, with points upwards to stop the luck from running out) keep out bad elements, spiritual or human. It is unlucky to enter the house for the first time by the back door, as this entrance is not protected against evil spirits. Encourage visitors to leave by the same door they came in to avoid taking the owner's luck with them. The opening of a door of its own accord indicates that a visitor is on the way, whilst a slamming door may damage the 'spirit of the house' and should be avoided. Leave a door open when a child is being born or someone is dying, so that the entry or exit may take place without hindrance. The Romans would leave a servant on duty to stop someone entering left foot first (the forerunner of the modern footman).

**Cooking**

When any food is mixed it should be stirred clockwise, as all functions of importance should be performed in an east to west direction (old belief in sun-worship). Leave a tray or a cooking utensil in the oven when not in use (old Jewish), for the time may come when the owner has nothing to place in it. Never waste leftover morsels of pastry or dough from making bread or cakes, or the whole baking will be ruined. Loaves marked with a cross protects them from evil; when baking bread, remember - 'She that pricks bread with fork or knife; will never be a happy maid or wife.' A loaf that splits open while it is in the oven warns of a death to come in the family; a loaf with a hollow centre presages a death; it is unlucky to turn a loaf upside down after cutting the first slice for this will cause the head of the household to fall ill; if a loaf crumbles in your hand as you are cutting it there is going to be a quarrel before very long. Drop a slice of buttered bread
butter side up and a visitor will arrive.

**Eggs**
When you have finished your boiled egg, crush the shell or push the spoon through the bottom to avoid bad luck. This stems from the belief that witches collect up the empty shells and use them to go to sea and work spells against hapless mariners. Also, do not bring eggs into the house after dark as it is bad luck. The giving of Easter eggs and the use of eggs in all sorts of other festivities, both Christian and those held by other religions can be traced back to antiquity, when the Egyptians and Romans, among others, saw its shape as an emblem of the Universe. Painting eggs red at Easter is seen as good luck, as it is the colour of blood and life.

**Salt**
The Ancient Greeks believed that salt was sacred and a repository of life itself because of its preservative qualities, and consequently used it in their sacrificial cakes and preparations. They also believed it to be a symbol of friendship, and if any was spilled it was an omen of the end of a friendship. Among some peoples it was the custom to pay workers in amounts of salt, hence our modern word salary, from salarium. Later beliefs had it that evil spirits dwelt on the left-hand side of the body and so began the custom of throwing spilt salt over your left shoulder (and into their eyes). Salt is often given to newborn babies for luck. Country folk often carry a little bag of salt on their person to bring them luck in their dealings (Britain, Europe). If spilt salt is carefully picked and thrown into the fire, this will dry up the tears otherwise shed (America).

**Tea**
To stir the teapot anti-clockwise will stir up a quarrel. If two women pour from the same pot one of them will have a baby within a year. There is a lot of belief in ‘reading the tea-leaves’ to predict the future.

**Knife**
Crossing two knives is bad luck. If you are given a present of a knife, give a coin in return to avoid 'cutting' the friendship.
Let the superstitious wife
Near the child's heart lay a knife.
Point be up, and haft be down,
While she gossips in the town.
This amongst other mystic charms
Keeps the sleeping child from harms.'

**Spoon**
If two are found in a tea cup there will be a wedding in the family; if you drop one and it lands with the bowl upwards you are in for a pleasant surprise.

**Apron**
accidentally put one on inside out = lucky ; if it falls off suddenly for no apparent reason = unlucky (Europe). If a man's wipes his hands on a woman's apron he will soon fall in love with her. This stems from the fact that a woman's perspiration is to be found on her apron.

By contrast, members of the opposite sex should never dry themselves on the same towel as this will invariably lead to a quarrel between them.
**Washing Up**

If you break a plate or cup you can expect another breakage before the end of the day unless you deliberately smash some other small item to avoid the bad luck.

"Wash and wipe together
Live in peace together"

An English country superstition says that it is bad luck to throw any water out of the house after nightfall because it has long been regarded as a deterrent to the denizens of the night and by throwing it out you are weakening your protection during the hours of darkness.

"They that wash on Monday, have the whole week to dry.
They that wash on Tuesday, are not so much awry.
They that wash on Wednesday, will get their clothes so clean.
They that wash on Thursday, are not so much to mean.
But they that wash on Saturdays are dirty folks indeed."

**Dining Table**

When rising from the table take care not to upset your chair, for this is a sign that you have lied at some time during your conversation. Anyone who lies down on a table will die within a year; any engaged girl who sits on a table while talking to her fiancé risks losing him; it is unlucky to change your position at the table after a place has been allocated to you; to place your chair back against the wall or fold your napkin after a meal at a friend's home will prevent you ever visiting there again (America).

**Fireplace**

A fire that roars up the chimney = an omen of an argument or a storm; sparks clinging to the back of the chimney are a sign of important news in the offing; a sudden fall of soot presages bad weather or a disaster of some kind. Coal (a symbol of fire) is lucky and small pieces were often carried in the pocket. Its use in the tradition of 'first footing' on New Year's Eve is well known.

**Mirrors and Looking Glasses**

To break one will result in seven years bad luck. Early man, on seeing his image reflected in water, believed it represented his soul and should anything disturb this image then his own life was in danger. Mirrors have always been closely associated with magic. Mirrors are covered over with cloth in the room where someone has died for fear that anyone who sees himself in the glass will similarly die.

**Staircase**

It is unlucky to pass anyone on the stairs (cross your fingers if you do so). Stairways symbolized the means of ascending to the abode of the gods and it was dangerous to trespass; also, early stairways were very narrow and two people passing each other left themselves open to attack from behind. Stumbling on the staircase is said to be a good omen and may indicate a wedding in the household before long.

**Upstairs**

Do not sing in bath as this will lead to sorrow before evening; any young girl who persistently splashes herself or her clothes when washing will end up with a husband who is a drunk. Get out of bed the right side. The left-hand side is associated with the Devil; but, if you can't avoid it, put your right sock and shoe on first. You will always get the best night's sleep if your bed is
positioned in a north-south direction with your head to the south - this will ensure a long life. To be rich, point your head to the east; to travel widely, the west. It is unlucky to put a hat on the bed (America).

**Housework**
China ornaments of animals should never be placed so that they face a door for they will allow the luck to run out of the house. It is unlucky to sweep any dust or waste material directly out of the house, as this will carry the good luck with it. Sweep such waste into the centre of the room, collect it up in a pan and then carry the lot out of doors to avoid any repercussions. A new broom should always be used the first time to sweep something into the house, to symbolize luck. Never buy any new brush in May; as the Romans decreed May to be the month of death:

'If you buy a broom or brush in May
You'll sweep the head of the household away.'

And it was said that to gather broom, which they believed was a magical plant of phallic significance, might well endanger the life of the man who performed the act. The phallic significance is also evident in an English country belief that a young girl who walks over a broomstick will become pregnant before she marries.