


Lunar Year of the Rabbit

There is a saying: “From the red plum blossoms, we know the arrival of Spring and from the Jade Rabbit, we know the beginning of the Lunar Year”. When we talk about the rabbit, the Lunar Year of the Rabbit immediately comes to our mind.

In the Yin and Shang oracle bone inscriptions, there were already representations of the rabbit though the pictogram “”, with strokes showing its beautiful shape with long ears and short tail. The character “Mao” (卯) that corresponds to the rabbit on the Twelve Earthly Branches portrays the image of sprouting plants, thus making the rabbit a beautiful symbol of Spring and vitality.

If nursery rhyme is the milk that feeds children's childhood, the verse “white, white, white bunny, with two ears up...” should be quite familiar to us during our early stages of life. With the growth and enrichment of life experiences, we realize that appearance is not the only charm of the rabbit. Many of its characteristics correspond to our ideals and ambitions. Hence, the adorable rabbit has gradually become a spiritual symbol of traditional Chinese culture.

The first characteristic of the rabbit is its swiftness, which is also a focus of interest in traditional culture. Through the ages, the simile “Move like a rabbit” is often used to praise someone's speediness. In the fable “The Hare and the Tortoise”, while the hare's arrogance is criticized for being the cause of defeat, there also exists the hope of persuading the hare to recover its spirits and run quickly next time. And in “The Classic of Mountains and Seas”, it is stated that “A beast on Tianchi Mountain, which has the shape of a rabbit and the head of a mouse, flies on its back, and is known as the Flying Rabbit.” It shows the wonderful fantasies and fascination of our ancestors about high speed.

The second characteristic of the rabbit is its cleverness. It has been observed that when a rabbit is chased by a ferocious hound, it will stop half way and turn around to run for a certain distance before it jumps into and hide among the side bushes. In this way, the rabbit can deftly evade capture by the hound that heavily relies on its sense of smell for hunting. Despite being a weak animal, the rabbit can still make an unflinching plan under the threat from a powerful predator and quickly escape. Anyone will be amazed and surprised by it.

The third characteristic of the rabbit is its sense of alertness, which is reflected in its burrows that consist of several interconnected tunnels and chambers. It is a natural behavior of the rabbits to survive in a hostile environment. People get inspiration from the rabbits and find different ways to stay safe from dangerous situations. The saying “A crafty rabbit has three burrows” is not only a natural phenomenon, but also a kind of self-consciousness of people in the society. This shows the close relationship between humans and rabbits.

Only a few characteristics of the rabbit have been mentioned. The Chinese have always had a fondness for jade and they believe it contains “five virtues”: benevolence, righteousness, wisdom, courage and purity. The beautiful name “Jade Rabbit” appropriately combines the virtues of jade and the rabbit's characteristics. It is also a vivid portrait of the “projection of human characteristics onto nature”.

With the arrival of the Lunar Year of the Rabbit, the Macao Post and Telecommunications Bureau issues the Lunar Year of the Rabbit commemorative stamps to wish all Chinese around the world good health and wisdom.

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