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The Chinese Four

Within the Chinese, and Buddhist religions, and many other Asian countries they share a specific word that carries a deep meaning and holds significant importance when it is being used especially during a certain time of the year such as on the Chinese New Year and most try to avoid the word because of how superstition they it is about. The number "4" emerges as a symbol filled with cultural meanings and echoes from history. As we start exploring the discussion about how important the number "4" is in Chinese culture, we discover different levels of meaning and look at the subtle ways in this simple-looking number, and how influences people's thinking and beliefs they hold.

To grasp the importance of "4," we need to explore its background, which is deeply embedded in Chinese historical records and ways of thinking. The concept of the world in the Chinese view includes four main directions: north, south, east, and west. The basic structure gives the number "4" a special meaning, showing that it stands for wholeness and the older generation's superstition.

Imagine a busy street in Beijing, hanging with bright red lanterns that move softly with the wind. While you walk among the crowds, you might catch parts of talks that mention "四" (sì), which is how you say "4" in Mandarin. For people who are not familiar, it might look like a simple number, but for those deeply involved in Chinese traditions, the number "4" has deep meaning and influences many parts of life including how we speak and our beliefs about luck.

The first time that I encountered this word not being tolerated was when I was on vacation with my family in China, and we had booked a hotel somewhere in the area near an airport since we just had landed. Once we were on the bus heading towards the hotel it seemed to be deep into the woods since all we saw were trees lined up right next to each other for a couple of miles after we made it to the hotel the outline of it to be like the Three Great Towers of Jiangnan but a much wider and taller one since it’s a hotel.

After going through the main entrance we headed towards the front desk to check in, the interior of the hotel had yellowish lighting, gold-looking decoration, and a lot of red like the flooring and some accessories. When we headed up to our room, I noticed on the elevator button there seemed to be a missing floor 4 button I asked why there was not a button to the fourth floor, and they said it was due to the word “4” being very closely sound to the word death in Chinese.

Later I learned many other words that the Chinese people don’t use often because it sounds like other words but the word “4” seemed to be the most disliked. I also do not think that the word has changed over time because the older generations believe in these superstitions and then tell the younger generations making them believe it is kind of real, I do not believe in most superstitions, and I believe that I can tell others about it because then they can become knowledgeable about this part of the world that has this and they might learn to not offend the older generations and showing them respect on the word that have been in the Chinese history since the early dynasties of early China.

In the Chinese language world, the importance of "4" shows up in many sayings, ways of speaking, and special language details. Think about the term "四季" (sìjì), it means "four seasons," it stands for time that goes around again and again and life's pattern. Likewise, the phrase "四方" (sìfāng), which means "four directions," suggests ideas of wide reach and welcoming everyone, showing how all people are linked together.

It is important to me and my Chinese community because it talks about how important the number "4" is in Chinese culture, using this number shows if someone knows a lot about that culture and respects it. People who know Chinese traditions are aware that "4" has special meanings and they use it very carefully so as not to offend anyone or break any cultural rules. On the other hand, people from outside may use it and it would not offend us as much because we know they probably do not know why we try not to use the word “4”.

If I could publish this article somewhere I would be looking at the travel sites because then I can show it to others who are traveling to Asia and show them that many could be offended by the number "4" and how it may think of you differently. This helps everyone understand and value different ways of life. There should also be a station where they hand out little packets that show what might be offensive in certain areas of the world. Also, I could publish it with National Geographic, and their exploration opens a door to learning about and valuing different cultures. It encourages readers to start discovering for themselves. While we explore how old traditions meet the new world, we should welcome the variety of our cultural backgrounds and build empathy and respect between people from all places.

To sum up, the meaning of "4" in Chinese culture gives us a look into the complex mixture of ideas, customs, and fears that form how people see themselves and their place in the world when the number "4" is brought on. It is important because it represents long-lasting history and the belief that many older generations of China have been built around the word, but also shows different opinions from inside of the group when outsiders are using it. Moreover, if we publish with National Geographic, it will make our message louder and ask readers to start a trip to learn about different cultures. Understanding the cultural importance of the number "4" helps people who travel to show respect when they encounter different traditions.