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JE 2

Two sides of one coin

Introduction: different cultures may have different ways to express idioms but there are two that tell similar meanings to “one coin has two sides” and have similar expressions in Chinese and English, respectively.

I. Chinese Idiom-福兮祸所伏，祸兮福所倚 fú xī huò suǒ fú, huò xī fú suǒ yǐ.

II. English Idiom-Fortune lies in misfortune, misfortune lies in fortune.

Conclusion: despite different cultures there are similar expressions of life wisdom and we can benefit from them.

Two sides of one coin

There are plenty of idioms in both Chinese and English, which are used to express some certain points of view or life wisdom. As the old saying “Do in Rome as Romans do”, we adapt idioms into different expressions for the language habits of different cultures. Thus, two idioms may sound strange in the other’s language but in fact have the same meaning. Fortunately, here are two looking similar both in Chinese and English, which tell good things and bad things may come together, just like one coin has two sides.

“福兮祸所伏，祸兮福所倚” is a Chinese idiom to describe situations that an unfortunate thing comes right after a good thing has happened or conversely. This idiom is derived from *Laozi,* a book records philosopher Laozi’s words and deeds. It is often used by older people to exhort youngers not to be excessively excited when something good happens and to stay optimistic in hard days. In fact, the idiom teaches us a sober attitude of life. If we don't stay awake in the face of unfortunate things or good fortune, we won't be able to grasp the situation and make achievements.

There is an idiom “Fortune lies in misfortune, misfortune lies in fortune” having a similar expression in English. The idiom can be traced back to James Harvey’s hymn and has been expressed differently by many people in the past time. Since it shares a similar meaning with the idiom above, people usually use it to encourage friends not to be depressed when bad things happen or not to be arrogant when they succeed. Actually, when you are still regretful for past failures, you are halfway to losing the next chance of success. And if you have been immersing yourself in the last success, how do you pursue the next?

To conclude, what we’ve learned is “Though life ups and downs, we should go forward with faith and a calm mind”. Only in this way, can we not be happy with good things, not sad with unfortunate things, people with a big pattern can achieve greater success. Thus, from the two idioms mentioned, we can see that despite different cultures there are still similar expressions of life wisdom. We can enjoy great benefit by reading them and using them in our life or tell other people about the meaning and benefit more people. After all, a good word is better than a good medicine.