



The Betty Letters

My Dear Grandchild,

It is not often that my mind works this way, but I have made a number of interesting observations of late. For years, I have made very few, what I would call, valid observations, but, over the Chinese New Year period, I have made what I think are very important observations. Many former Chinese grouches have become friendly! I took the train to Shatin, last Saturday, in order to have a New Year Eve meal with my family members and I noted that a little girl, aged about 5 years, was dressed in lovely yellow satin jacket while her parents, all quite well dressed, not in their best go-to-dinner attire, but in better-than-average clothes, showered their daughter with affection. It was such a lovely sight! The train, as you can imagine, was filled with people, going to Lo Wu, on the border with Hongkong. Most of these people, all of whom were Chinese, were on their way to eat dinner with their families on this, the most-important day of the lunar calendar. All of them, without any exception, were especially polite, considerate, and very sensitive of their fellow travellers, even though they did not know them. This is very unusual and I determined that it had to have been the fact that The Year of The Pig would dawn in a matter of less than 6 hours and nobody wanted to start off the new lunar year with a bad omen. Hence, one must avoid upsetting anybody, or being upset, oneself. On the way home from Shatin, I took the Number 40 bus from Pacific Place at about 10 pm. The bus was packed with people, obviously going home after eating a large dinner with their family and friends. Again, I noted that the Chinese passengers were especially polite. Not so for the Filipina passengers, however. They, to a lady, were extremely selfish and, aside from yelling into their mobile telephones for the entire 15-minute journey, they tried (and, unfortunately, succeeded) in monopolizing about 20 percent of all of the seats – while elderly Chinese ladies and men, some of whom had disabilities, stood, holding onto the seats in order not to be jostled too much. Do you note the difference between the events on the train to Shatin and the bus to Mid-Levels? The major difference was that the travellers on the train to Shatin were, by and large, considerate and sensitive to their fellow travellers' needs and went out of their way to make things as pleasant as possible even though the train was full to capacity. Not so on the bus to Mid-Levels. But it was the Filipinas, by and large, that made the short journey stressful, especially for some of the elderly members of the Hongkong society. I am not suggesting that Chinese people are more polite than Filipinas and Filipinos, but my observations appear to suggest that the Filipinas and Filipinos, living in Hongkong, are less polite than, perhaps, their counterparts in The Philippines.

The Central Government of China is trying to educate the general population of the country to the laws of Hongkong so that, when they travel, they can be a little knowledgeable to the rules and regulations of this territory of China and, by so doing, be more acceptable to the residents of Hongkong ... as well as not falling foul of the law. As it is, sadly, Chinese tourists are considered among the rudest tourists by the residents of many other parts of the world. This is due, in the main, to the fact that they have only recently, in modern Chinese history, been exposed to tourism. Since 1949, with the advent of Chinese Communist Party as the ruling political regime of the country, most of the Chinese population had not the wherewithal to travel abroad. Now, they are sufficiently heeled to be able – and are very keen, too – to see how other peoples live. The Filipinas and Filipinos have a great deal more experience in travel than the average Chinese tourist because they are, by choice, servants to many countries of the world. The Filipinas and Filipinos have acquired a very poor reputation, generally, due to their selfishness and insensitivity to the requirements of others, others, that is, to people of other nationalities in the countries in which they are 'guests'. (I, sometimes, wonder whether or not these people realise that they are only temporary guests in the countries where they reside, during the tenure of their employment contracts.) What the above boils

down to is that the Chinese tend to be very amenable to new information and absorb the knowledge, willingly and gladly, with regard to being a better-and-more-considerate tourist. The average Filipina and Filipino, however, is apathetic to the requirements of others when travelling or living in a foreign country in which he or she is engaged in domestic work, such as cleaning and looking after young children. This is not to suggest, My Dear Grandchild, that all Filipinas and Filipinos are bad, far from it, but there are a large percentage of them that need training or retraining. If you doubt me, go down to Central on a Sunday and try to walk on the pavement, opposite the Legislative Council Chamber building: It is impossible. The Filipinas and Filipinos will not let one pass. They sit everywhere, blocking one's path, and, if one touches a Filipina or Filipino in an effort to pass, one is given a very crouchy look. It appears to me that Central Hongkong is not the exclusive territory of the Filipina and Filipino on Sundays and public holidays, but try telling them that fact of life. The same is true, with regard to the public area below the Headquarters of The Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation Ltd. That area is completely impassable on a Sunday afternoon as Filipinas, exclusively, use it as their private dining area in order to eat their chicken legs and fried rice and what-have-you.

The above observations have nothing to do with cultural differences between the Chinese and the Filipinas and Filipinos. Simply put, it is a matter of training at a very early age. It is called, nurture, My Dear Grandchild. Infants are potty trained at a very early stage. The Filipinas and Filipinos, it appears, clearly, have never been potty trained, at least not about travelling and living in a foreign land. The fact that many of them possess a very low intelligence quotient has nothing to do with good manners. Many of the 1.30 billion people of China, also, have very low intelligence quotients, but the Government of the country is giving them 'potty training', today, in order to present to the world, a more-favourable opinion of the general population of the most-populous country of the world. During the Chinese New Year holiday period, happily, I experienced some of the positive effects of this potty training. Perhaps, the ringing in of the Year of the Pig had something to do with the fact that the Chinese people with whom I had the privilege of sharing a place on trains were more polite than usual, but if that be the case, then, how can we have such a situation, all year long? How may we potty train the 200,000 Filipina and Filipino temporary residents of Hongkong to be better guests of our home? It is a thought, is it not?

Talk to you next week.

Chief Lady

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