

OPINION・ 의견・意見

二つの故郷・フィリピンと日本

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始めてトランジットで成田に立ち寄った2007年。そして4年後、主人の両親に会うためにまた日本に降り立ち、そして2014年、何と妻として、また英語の講師、日本語の生徒としてここ日本での新生活が始まったのです。今1年余りが過ぎましたが、まだ日本の暮らしや文化に慣れたとは言えません。この国は日々新しいことを教えてくれます。

初めてお手洗いに入った時の驚きは鮮烈でした。多様なボタン、どれを押せば水が流れるのかと。私は5歳の子どものように、何が起きるか興味深々で全部のボタンを押してみました。また自動販売機で温かい飲み物が出てくることも衝撃的でした。秋冷の10月にホットコーヒーが出てくるなんて天国みたい! タクシーもしかり、ドライバーもそしてメーターもなんて正直なんでしょう。ドアが自動的に開くなんて手品を見ているようでした。

信じられない電車の正確さ、様々な品物の知的なまでの包み方、お弁当箱の美しさ、小さなカフェから素敵なレストランまでの心こもったサービス、ごみの分別、これらのことは日本では全て何事もなく行われています。でも私にとってはまだ慣れることができない素晴らしいです。

日本人の規律的なことや礼儀正しさにも驚きます。真夜中まで働いても次の日の早朝に出勤します。「ありがとう」は、その時に1回、次にメールで、顔を合わせてもう1回と少なくとも3回感謝します。謝罪も同様です。「すみません」はいつも聞く言葉です。

フィリピンを思い出すと、交通渋滞、タクシーでの値段の駆け引き、停留所でなくても手を挙げて乗ってしまうバスやジプニー、電車に乗ると職場の文句やだれかの今日の夕食の献立がみんな耳に入ってくる、みんな懐かしく感じます。格安な楽しみのいろいろ、マッサージ(1,000円/h)、ペディキュア(200円)ヘアカット(180円)。そして母に日本ではゴミをどうやって分けるかを教え乍ら、なんでも一緒に捨てるフィリピンの事を思います。クリスマスには家族が集まってプレゼントを交換し、日本ではバカ高いマンゴーやスイカをお腹いっぱい食べます。愛情にあふれたカップルは、老いも若きもためらうことなく“I love you”と言い、家を出る時は両親にキスをします。この日が最後だと思うわけではないけど。

二つの国は多くの点で違うけれど、でも同じ価値観で、お年寄りを敬い、その知恵を認めます。表現の仕方は違って家族や友達に愛情を示します。

人生は思いもよらず私を日本に連れてきたので、今フィリピンを懐かしく思っていますが、日本を去るときが来た時、私はきっと困惑するでしょう。心を魅了する二つの国。私は大声で言いたいのです「私は故郷が二つあります。」と。



MY TWO HOMES: JAPAN AND THE PHILIPPINES

Rianna Gernale Utagawa (Philippines)

It was back in 2007 when I travelled overseas for the first time. Japan was not my destination but I had to transit then at the Narita airport. And so, technically speaking, Japan was the first country I have encountered outside my home country, The Philippines.

I had no clue that 4 years later, I would come back to Japan to meet my future parents-in-law. And that in another 3 years, I would start my new life here as a wife, an English teacher and a student.

I have been living here for a little over a year, and I still cannot say that I have already adapted to the Japanese lifestyle and culture. Every single day, Japan teaches me something new.

I can still clearly remember how surprised I was when I first entered a Japanese restroom. The toilet had so many buttons, I had a hard time locating the flush. I probably looked so silly at that time, pushing all the buttons with a 5-year-old kid's excitement, wondering what would happen next.

My first encounter with a vending machine offering hot beverage left me dumbfounded. Instant hot chocolate on a chilly October night? Bliss! Japanese taxis also left an impression on me. They are very reliable -both the driver and the taxi meter. And how can I forget the automatic car doors? I thought my eyes were playing tricks on me.

The incredible train system, the intelligent packaging of products, the beautifully presented lunchboxes, the exceptional service from small cafes to fine dining establishments, the convenience stores, the garbage disposal system -these are everyday things in Japan. Little things that people have become used to and have taken for granted. Yet, I still appreciate them. Every time.

The Japanese people's discipline and courtesy blow me away. They work almost until midnight and start early the next day. They are very appreciative of even the smallest favors you would do for them. They will thank you at least 3 times, in 3 different ways and at 3 different times. They also apologize on the littlest things. A slight bump in the train, and you would instantly hear "Sumimasen".

Still, I miss the Philippines a lot. Save for the heavy traffic, price negotiations with taxi drivers and pollution. I miss defying rules from time to time. I miss the crazy system of the buses and jeepneys' random pick up and drop off points. You can get on and off the bus in the middle of a highway, anytime. I miss the loud and lively train rides. I miss overhearing other passengers rant and complain about work and I miss eavesdropping on someone else's dinner plans. I miss the affordable pampering - one-hour massages (1,000yen), pedicures (200yen), haircuts (180yen, yes, you read it right). I miss teaching my Mom how people sort the garbage in Japan. And I miss how we still end up throwing everything in one garbage bag. I miss the Christmas traditions of gift-giving and family reunions. I miss gorging on lots of fruits, especially mangoes and watermelons, which are ridiculously expensive here in Japan. I miss seeing couples, young and old, being affectionate with each other. I miss hearing them say "I love you" without being embarrassed and kissing their partners goodbye before going to work. We never know if this day is going to be the last.

Surely, both countries are very different in many respects. Yet, both share the same values. Both respect and recognize the wisdom of the elderly. Both care a lot for their family and friends and show affection in their own different ways. Both are resilient to whatever obstacle that may come their way -be it typhoons in the Philippines, or earthquakes in Japan.

Life's unpredictability somehow brought me here. I live in Japan, and I miss the Philippines. Yet, I know that when time comes and I have to leave Japan, I'd be devastated. I guess, both countries have captivated my heart. And that is why I always claim having 2 homes -Japan and The Philippines.

