

Essay on What Relics of The Immediate Past, Such as Trains, Steam Locomotives, Corner Shops, And Slums Interest You Enough for You to Regret Their Passing?

At the rate our country is developing, one can never say for certain what our lives will be like in a few years' time. Changes occur rapidly. New things take the place of the old. Some of these old traditions and relics simply vanish under the onslaught of modern advancement. This gradual disappearance of old things are not always necessary nor welcome, but nevertheless, they have to make way for the relentless drive of progress. Often it is with a tinge of sadness to watch these fond old relics disappear forever.

Take for example the traditional Malay houses that are part and parcel of a kampong. These unique houses, each with its own charm and personality, are slowly being replaced by rows upon rows of faceless terrace houses. To stroll among these beautiful kampong houses is to take a walk with nature. I always feels refreshed and uplifted every time I have the opportunity to do so. One can take in the sights and sounds of nature; the songs of birds, the calls of animals and most of all the feeling of being a part of the world.

On the other hand, taking a stroll in a housing estate is to see endless rows of similar houses. It numbs the mind to face this planned monotony. The uniqueness of a traditional house with its vast living space is exchanged for the sameness of a modern house with a few square meters of walled-in compactness. I cannot see the logic of making such a change.

Another item that is soon to be extinct is the small sundry shop. In almost every neighborhood outside of town, there is always at least one sundry shop that caters for the needs of the people living near

it. Such a sundry shop stocks every imaginable commodity that one may need, from sugar to cigarettes and mosquito coils. What is it that a sundry shop possesses that a modern supermarket does not? The answer is personal attention. In a sundry shop, we can select and bargain with all our might. We can even take things on credit, depending on how well we know the shopkeeper. Any bad item can be returned albeit sometimes grudgingly. Try to do any of these in a supermarket and see what happens. We will have the security guards breathing down our necks in next to no time. The most infuriating thing is that the salesgirl does not care two hoots about what you buy or whether you are satisfied or not. No item is returnable unless you are prepared to face the wrath of the almighty management. It is strictly business and very impersonal. I prefer the quiet little sundry shop anytime. At least I know that it is run by Hun beings, not machines.

Just a decade or so back, things that we buy from the market are wrapped with newspaper or leaves. For larger items, we may get a useful paper bag or gunny sack. Nowadays it is always the ubiquitous plastic bag. Plastic bag for fish, meat, vegetables, rice, food, medicine and everything you may care to buy. Plastic bags are definitely more convenient and efficient but nobody knows how safe it is. Nobody seems to care. Its vast application is unquestioned. Only time will tell whether it has any ill effects on us. The thing is, the tried and trusted newspaper and paper bags are virtually gone. We are saddled with an old newspaper that nobody wants. In addition, we are also saddled with these indestructible plastic bags. Two problems are added to our lives by the mere invention of the plastic bag.

Once in a while, we may still chance upon a quiet little farm in the country. Within a few acres of land these farmers, usually consisting of a family or two, can manage to raise poultry as well as grow vegetables. The work is hard and a lot of the younger people have already left for more lucrative jobs in the towns and cities. Soon we

may not see any these peaceful little farms anymore. No longer can we buy fruits and vegetables for a few cents. We may have no content with giant agricultural corporations. Again the personal touch will be gone when machine-like employees take over.

Many other things that have disappeared or, that will soon disappear arouse sad feelings in me. Austere planes, a policeman in khaki shorts, cars with single-letter number plates, metal and wooden toys, rickshaw pullers and motorcycles with sidecars are all gone or nearly gone now. They live only in my memory. Gone too are the bicycle-peddlers who used to come around the neighborhood sharpening scissors, selling brooms, brushes, toys, candies and other things. They were all part of my childhood and I will never forget them. Their passing was unavoidable. They paved the way for many new and equally wonderful things that will become fond memories for later generations.