

Everybody Needs Some “Osekkai” In Their Life

“Selamat Pagi, Miss Riko!”, my driver Andi would always greet me enthusiastically every morning as I climbed into the car, returning his greeting in broken Indonesian. This was our morning routine when he would pick me up for school in Jakarta. During my time in Indonesia, my enlightening interactions with him opened up a new perspective of kindness and social disparities.

A side that I admired was his genuine “nosiness”. This may sound like a negative attribute because in our language, there is a word called “osekkai”, commonly used as an insult for nosy people. During my stay in Indonesia, I experienced an unusual level of “osekkai” in various instances. For example, when I fainted at school, Andi showed an astonishing display of generosity. Despite being on holiday, Andi immediately rushed to the school and drove me home, while sending constant updates to my mother. This refreshing kindness was not simply limited to Andi but also the staff at the hotel I resided at. Even when they were off-duty, they would hand me some Kopiko, an Indonesian confectionary, or attempt to converse with me through English and Japanese. At first, I was under the mistaken impression that it was a part of their duty but I came to realize that they were genuinely curious and wanted to have a conversation. After living in Japan for most of my life, I had become detached from this type of generosity, simply because

of the negative innuendo surrounding it. In Japanese culture, there is an invisible limit to kindness because one may consider it as crossing boundaries. Being exposed to this new dimension of generosity, I pushed myself to reevaluate the way I treat peers.

My experience in Indonesia was memorable but also disheartening and eye-opening. My life became starkly different from my normalities in Japan. I was exposed to a bizarre dimension of wealth that came with a personal driver, affluent friends and a jacuzzi. My family swiftly adapted, yet I struggled adjusting to this lifestyle. Whenever I looked out of the window in my airconditioned car, I would see children running around with bare feet or small run-down houses that were poles apart from the luxury hotel I resided at. This sight tugged at my sense of guilt and would sink down in my car seat. During the course of my stay, I learnt at school that the majority of Indonesians do not have health insurance because they cannot afford the price. As a person who grew up with health insurance as a standard aspect of life, I was appalled upon learning this. Behind the smiles of many people that I saw everyday lay a dark reality of no access to actual medical treatments. I had grown up in a bubble, unknowing of the cruelness world. While it may lead to bliss, ignorance about the world is perhaps the most deadly weapon of all. The experience of living in Jakarta, a wild city where extreme wealth and poverty coexist side by side, pushed my mind to reexamine my privilege.

As people born in a first world country, we are in a way blessed but also cursed with low exposure to foreign cultures. Learning from the kindness of Indonesian people, such as Andi, and the harsh social inequalities I witnessed, I will continue to remember this precious experience. It taught me that it's okay to occasionally be "osekkai" and that it's not okay to turn a blind eye to social issues. My thoughts can be perceived as idealistic but there can be no realism without a hint of idealism. After returning to Japan, I swiftly started to take action. Firstly, I signed up for a volunteering organization that aids homeless people. Additionally, I started my internship at a non-profit-organization specializing in human rights. I currently handle social media, seminars, and fundraisers. While one may argue that these actions are not meaningful, I see them as building blocks for the future. My goal is to become a diplomat and work for the ODA in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. For the future, I will continue these small deeds, with hopes that they will one day reach someone. Until then, Selamat tinggal! [698 words]