

# To Me China Is Changing

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## People's Characteristics:

My hometown is a small, peaceful and distant village where people live peacefully without much disturbance from the outside world, but under the surface of the seemingly relaxing and tranquil rural life, turbulence is rooted in every inch of soil in my hometown. Having been living there for two decades, I consider myself a qualified spokesman, one who is capable of saying something about the characteristics of the folks in my hometown and maybe even of drawing a conclusion at the end of the story in terms of what kind of people these folks might be.

Amongst all the people I have met in my life in different cities or towns, I have a feeling that the folks from my hometown are the most kind, most unsophisticated, and most tranquil, which seems a bit biased, for I definitely have a certain sort of special emotion for this village and the folks there, but I want to show my stance: this emotion does not make me feel satisfied with my hometown, and it's actually what drives me to look for what is hidden under the inborn affection.

As I mentioned previously, my hometown is distant and peaceful, far away from any disturbances, and as a result, the simple and regular lifestyle here allows the people to have a sense of simplicity towards everything in their daily lives. They wake up at 7am and hit the hay at 9pm, during which period they have three meals at regular intervals and usually do some work in the crop fields where the green plants will thrive in autumn. Maybe that's the source of their simplicity and tranquility, just like a crop rooted in the soil. Soil is the most important element to village folks because we were born on and fed by this land. Even the education of this generation and the previous ones is closely tied to the land. It all flashes back in my mind, a primary school built on a small plot surrounded by a crop field. At that time, the sweetness of the crops often wafted over to the classroom where me and my classmates had lessons with a surge of voices ringing out, reading from one article in the textbook, tantalizing everyone with vague drowsiness. Under those circumstances I have no doubt that we are a people of tranquility and peace.

But this standpoint is sometimes overthrown by one event I experienced (or really maybe a few) which made me entirely skeptical about this tranquility and simplicity, the main characteristics of my hometown folks as defined by myself. It must have been the most furious quarrel I have ever seen in my life, and it was over a dispute between villagers. They used swear words, cursed, and even fought physically; no good manners or merits were shown, only coarseness and violence. As a person who was educated in college and had gotten used to campus life, at first, I felt a little ashamed of this coarse demonstration of their true natures, and then I imagined that if I encountered the same situation what would my reaction be. I thought, maybe I would speak ill of that person with whom I had a conflict, or maybe I would adapt a more extreme way of ignoring him for good. It was more polite in my opinion. But for the folks there, especially the elders, they would disapprove of this idea, and would prefer to act in the more uncivilized manner, after which, the two sides would most likely drop any bad blood. Maybe they all have bad memories so that they quickly forget these squabbles, which are like the wild seeds upon dirt roads in their eyes; after a surge of stomps, they're easily squashed down. However, they will be re-energized after a short time, full of vigor and vitality, in which case, another surge of stomps will be necessary.

## Village Life:

Another characteristic worth noting is the love we feel for our own hometown. In a sense, it's embodied by every villager who hasn't left the small world they live in for decades. Sometimes, I thought I did not belong to the village where I had lived for my first twenty years. "Walk out of here and get somewhere", this has echoed around my ears since I was a little kid, from all of my family and other folks who knew me; all of their faces glum, without any smiles. At the beginning, I thought they

hated this village, and then I unlocked the puzzle. They did not hate this village, instead they loved it with the utmost affection. "Walk out and get somewhere" is just the start, the conclusion is to come back after success. Their love for this land is like the one between a child and his home, innocent and pure. The last generation, like that of my grandparents, is like a toddler, and the generation of my parents is like an adolescent, but my generation, more mature, more willing to venture, like a young man. My grandparents left the village maybe two or three times, after that, they refused to leave for any reason. My parents work outside, but one day they will come back to the village, but for me, it is not possible to stay.

I feel the connection between us (the new generation) and the village is being cutting off exactly the way we are losing the fields that are contracted by the men who come in from the town. Everyday someone drives his lorry in to carry the workers there to work in the fields that used to belong to us. They have crowded into the village with different and distinct accents, muddling the peaceful, rural life with a disturbance of machinery treading on the soil we have loved. The generation of my grandparents is fading off, and the generation of my parents is changing, and us, we have been changed. The characteristics of this village are like a monument that is decaying. More and more people walk out of there and get somewhere like my parents and me, only some of whom might come back if the monument is still there.

So what kind of characteristics do village folks, including me, possess? What is China to me? It is hard to say or to define. I can confidently say, we are kind, peaceful and hometown-loving, but then what else? I guess nothing yet, for the village is falling down, and we will have to be something we were not. Get somewhere and become the new "us".

There was never a solid conclusion that could be drawn from this particular start.