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## **“Year of the Horse, when Mainlanders got Smarter in HK”**

There are several activities tourists will be able to do in Hong Kong at any time. They might take the funicular railway to reach the top of Victoria Peak and enjoy the panoramic view over hundreds of skyscrapers. They might go to Lantau to see the Big Buddha or more quietly sitting at a table to have a nice tea at the Peninsula Hotel. But nothing compare to the glamour of the Chinese New Year Parade and fireworks at the Victoria Harbour waterfront.

To celebrate the kick-off of the Year of the Horse they shelled more than 6000 Kg. of fireworks. The atmosphere of Hong Kong is fantastic and Hong Kongers should receive credit for it, as well. It is great to be here.

Obviously, from the middle of November up to the end of February the number of Mainlanders coming here from every part of China extends to a biblical phenomenon: shoppers arrive in hordes, in addition to swarming tourists – a flood of people moving around at the same time, almost everywhere.

I think this is understandable, acceptable and not particularly annoying. However, many Hong Kongers do not share my view. They consider their city too crowded already and they feel that those additional flocks are a not necessary aggravation of it.

Last year there were misunderstandings and complains with good reasons from both sides. Many Hong Kongers accused those masses of shoppers of being rude occasionally, overeager to take the subway, impatient for queue up at the counter, while speaking too loudly over the phone and plundering all types of foremost necessity goods.

On the other side, many Mainlanders accused the residents here of intolerance, harassment and discrimination towards their own race.

For weeks, I have been watching those quarrels on TV and live on the street.

Now, we might say that Hong Kongers are a bit superficial and perhaps sometimes they have the tendency to follow stereotypes. But nobody can accuse them of being racists. Hong Kongers are not racists. This I can tell for sure. So, I decided to investigate further, in order to find out the nature of those encounters.

In the Western society (mostly in the U.S.A. but not only there) the media sponsored by the upper classes have worked hard to re-define the meaning of “poverty” and the approach of the rest of the community towards “poor people”. For those rich commentators, poverty is not a temporary condition, frequently determined by misfortune or by origins – such as for a child to be born in a very poor family and thus remaining poor for the rest of his life.

For the richest ... poverty is more like “a choice” made by lazy individuals.

After years of brainwashing, now large portions of society start thinking that poverty is not related to disadvantaged or underprivileged people and many of those rich guys think also that poverty stinks and whoever has no money at all is infected or must have a bacterial disease, like the plague.

By association, “poor people” should be avoided with a sense of repulsion, with disgust – implying that somehow those subjects “are guilty of being poor”, which is truly ridiculous and sad at the same time. Indeed, the “association of poverty with guilt” is cruel, merciless, inhumane and it should have no place inside a modern and organized society.

So, I wanted to take a closer look at those shoppers in Hong Kong and I wanted to see if this was the case.

I must say that many of them were not the most sophisticated people I have ever seen, but for sure they were not “poor”. In fact, they were buying all sort of goods – not just powdered milk !!! But, fashion products (bags, shoes, accessories), expensive watches and jewelries and gold, you name it.

Nobody was blaming them or accusing them to be poor.

So what was so annoying about them ??? Why the Hong Kongers were complaining ??? And what was the discrimination related to it ???

After one year, I have got the answer. In preparation for the Year of the Horse more shoppers than ever came to Hong Kong from Mainland China but this time they have learned the lesson. This time Hong Kongers had no reasons for complaining. And I am pretty confident that those Mainlanders were feeling less discriminated than ever before, for a truly simple reason: they have got smarter.

First of all, the large majority of them considered themselves as tourists, not just shoppers. How do I know that ??? They were spending most of the time making photos and videos of all kind of happenings.

Most importantly: No more unstable cartoon boxes on top of obsolete trolleys. It was in fact because of those cartoon boxes that some of them had to stay out of the most elegant shops in the City, last year. Of course, nobody said to them: “You stay out”. But a boy at the entrance of the shop just said something like: “Please, do come in but keep your baggage out of this place”.

What a transformation ladies and gentlemen !!! From frog to princess, from larva to butterfly, from ugly duckling to marvelous swan !!!

This year many of those shoppers had brand new suitcases, elegant clothing and accessories, they were not impatient inside railways stations or in line at the counters and they were moving around more quietly and more slowly.

Best among them ??? Mothers and daughters together acting as a team ... both the mother and the daughter extremely elegant and polite, they were still buying incredible amount of expensive goods but also evaluating carefully where to put them. Later on, going back to Mainland China, on an East Rail Line train, they had the time to take away some of those goods from the suitcase, distributing them inside new fashionable bags and they themselves looked fashionable, extremely well dressed and charming.

In only twelve months I saw an extraordinary transformation in look and behavior of the Mainlanders and I can tell: ten years from now those shoppers from Mainland China will be not just welcome in Hong Kong, they will be treated like stars here and it will be a “Status” they will have reached completely on their own.