

Pliant like a bamboo i.v. mallari essay sample

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There is a story in Philippine folklore about a mango tree and a bamboo tree. Not being able to agree as to which was the stronger of the two, they called upon the wind to make the decision. The wind blew its hardest. The mango tree stood fast. It would not yield. It knew it was strong and sturdy. It would not sway. It was too proud. It was too true to itself. But finally its roots gave way, and it tumbled down. The bamboo tree was wiser. It knew it was not as robust as the mango tree. And so every time the wind blew, it bent its head gracefully. It made loud protests, but it let the wind have its way. When finally the wind got tired of blowing, the bamboo tree still stood in all its beauty and grace. The Filipino is like the bamboo tree. He knows that he is not strong enough to withstand the onslaughts of superior forces. And so he yields. He bends his head gracefully with many loud protests. And he has survived. The Spaniards came and dominated him for more than three hundred years. And when the Spaniards left, the Filipinos still stood - only much richer in experience and culture.

The Americans took the place of the Spaniards. They used more subtle means of winning over the Filipinos to their mode of living and thinking. The Filipino embraced the American way of life more readily than the Spaniard's vague promise of the hereafter. Then the Japanese came like a storm, like a plague of locusts, like a pestilence - rude, relentless, cruel. The Filipino learned to bow his head low, to "cooperate" with the Japanese in their "holy mission of establishing the Co-Prosperity Sphere." The Filipino had only hate and contempt for the Japanese, but he learned to smile sweetly at them and to thank them graciously for their "benevolence and magnanimity." And now that the Americans have come back and driven away the Japanese, those

Filipinos who profited most from cooperating with the Japanese have been loudest in their protestations of innocence. Everything is as if Japanese had never been in the Philippines. For the Filipino will welcome any kind of life that the gods offer him. That is why he is contented, happy and at peace.

The sad plight of other peoples of the world is not his. To him, as to the ancient Oriental poet, the past is already a dream and tomorrow is only a vision but today, well-lived, makes every yesterday a dream of happiness and every tomorrow a vision of hope. This may give you the idea that the Filipino is a philosopher. Well, he is. He has not evolved a body of philosophical doctrines. Much less has he put them down into a book, like Kant, for example, or Santayana or Confucius. But he does have a philosophical outlook on life. He has a saying that life is like a wheel. Sometimes it is up, sometimes it is down. The monsoon season comes, and he has to go undercover. But then the sun comes out again. The flowers bloom, and the birds sing in the trees. You cut off the branches of a tree, and, while the marks of the bolo are still upon it, it begins to shoot forth new branches - branches that are the promise of new color, new fragrance, new life. Everywhere about him is a lesson in patience and forbearance that he does not have to learn with difficulty.

For the Filipino live in a country on which the gods have lavished their gifts in plenty. He does not have to worry about tomorrow. Tomorrow will be only another day - no winter of discontent. If he loses his possessions, there is the land and there is the sea, with all the riches that one can desire. There is plenty to spare - for friends, for neighbors, and for everyone else. No wonder

that the Filipino can afford to laugh. For the Filipino is endowed with the saving grace of humor. This humor is earthy as befits one who has not indulged in deep contemplation. But it has enabled the Filipino to shrug his shoulders in times of adversity and say to himself, "Bahala na." The Filipino has often been accused of being indolent and of lacking in initiative. And he has answered back that no one can help being indolent and of lacking in initiative. And he has answered back that no one can help being indolent and lacking in initiative who lives under the torrid sun which saps one's vitality. This seeming lack of vitality is, however, only one of his means of survival.

He does not allow the world to be too much with him. Like the bamboo tree, he lets the winds of chance and circumstances blow all about him; and he is unperturbed and serene. The Filipino, in fact has a way of escaping from the rigorous problems of life. Most of his art is escapist in nature. His forefathers swallowed in the moro-moro, the awit and the corrido. They loved to identify themselves with the gallant knights battling for the favors of fair ladies or for the possession of a hallowed place. And now he himself loves to be lost in the throes of modern romance and adventure. His gallantry toward women - especially comely women - is a manifestation of his romantic turn of mind. Consequently, in no other place in the Orient are women so respected, so adulated, and so pampered. For his women have enabled the Filipino to look upon the vicissitudes of fortune as the bamboo tree regards the angry blasts of the blustering wind. The Filipino is eminently suited to his romantic role.

He is slender and wiry. He is nimble and graceful in his movements. His voice is soft, and he has the gift of language. In what other place in the world can you find people who can carry on a fluent conversation in at least three languages? This gift is another means by which the Filipino has managed to survive. There is no insurmountable barrier between him and any of the people who have come to live with him - Spanish, American, Japanese. The foreigners do not have to learn his language. He easily manages to master theirs. Vently, the Filipino is like the bamboo tree. In its grace, in its ability to adjust itself to the peculiar and inexplicable whims of fate, the bamboo tree is his expressive and symbolic national tree. It will have to be, not the molave nor the narra but the bamboo.