

<b>OBSERVATION</b>
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**WHERE HAVE ALL THE INDIANS GONE ?**

There was a time, not too long ago, when the tightly knit, ethnic Indian population of the Hongkong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) of the People's Republic of China (PRC) had a place in society.

But not today. That is only too apparent.

In the days when the HKSAR was known, simply, as Hongkong, there were publicly listed Mohan's Property and Investments Ltd, Tajmahal's Ltd, Murjani Holdings Ltd and Bladon Company Ltd.

And, well-known Indian surnames, such as Harilela, Murjani, Bharwani, Narain and Mohan were, from time to time, emblazoned on the pages of daily newspapers.

In some cases, these names came to signify great wealth; in some cases, of course, they represented ethnic Indians, who were about to spend time *'at her Majesty's pleasure'*.

The ethnic Indians, themselves, those who made the business pages of the dailies, demanded the respect of their peers and of other businessmen of other ethnicities.

Pride of accomplishment, regardless of the ways and means that had been employed by an ethnic Indian, be they legal or illegal, had to be recognised; and, the recognition had to be demonstrated, relative to the number of zeros that defined the extent of the accomplishment.

While the Harilela Family is, still, known to be fairly well heeled, most of the other ethnic Indian names appear to have vanished from the social and business register, by and large, and one rarely hears about any ethnic Indian, resident in the HKSAR, doing anything, except when an Indian is accused of a crime or is sued in the High Court.

Relative to the generosity of ethnic Chinese residents, the ethnic Indians of these 416 square miles, over the decades, have never done much for Hongkong, although there are a number of roads, which have been named after ethnic Indian traders.

That is a well-known fact, but, nevertheless, they were, at one time, part of the business scenery in spite of their lack of community spirit, and their well-publicised meanness.

When an ethnic Indian is sued in the High Court, as happened recently in the case of Mr Hari Harilela, one remembers the days of yore and of the respect that the ethnic Indian of the HKSAR once enjoyed.

Mr Hari Harilela was sued recently in the High Court for allegedly being very naughty with regard to not acting in the best interests of an estate of a deceased relative.

But the name, Mohan, is a real no-no, today, in any circle, whether or not he is the subject of a High Court Writ since the last time that one heard of Mr Obi Mohan – his daughter is married to one of the Harilela Family members -- was when there was a Bankruptcy Notice, filed in the High Court.

Mr Obi Mohan is an interesting and well-documented case of an Indian businessman gone terribly bad. He epitomises what can happen when a man allows avarice to rule his life.

Mr Obi Mohan took over his father's very successful retail business of many decades and ruined it, leaving the publicly listed company, Mohan's Property and Investments Ltd, in such a state that he resorted to theft to try to cover over his incompetence.

He went to jail and then, after a period of relative calm when the name of Obi Mohan seemed to have disappeared from public view, it re-appeared in the High Court. The rest needs no further elaboration.

If one wants to view an Indian at work in the HKSAR, today, one needs only go to where the resident Filipinos congregate on Sundays and public holidays: There one finds the ethnic Indian by the score, trying to sell his wares to the Filipino maids, roaming the streets.

He is peddling his wares, illegally, and the Hongkong Police Force has been trying, in vain, to stop him.

That the Chinese, by and large, do not like the ethnic Indian is, also, well known, but the reasons for the dislike have never been considered, to any great degree.

The ethnic Indians of the old Hongkong were used by the British as policemen and prison guards – and they were a horrible bunch of bastards, of that there is no question.

That is the reason that many Hongkong people still think of the ethnic Indians as being pariahs, to be shunned.

The older Chinese generation of Hongkong would scold a child for being naughty and threaten to call a '*molocho*' (ethnic Indian) if the child did not behave.

The children of yesteryear grew up to dislike the ethnic Indian: They still do not like him.

So the ethnic Indian of the HKSAR obtained a bad name because of the way that he treated the Chinese in bygone years.

Rightly or wrongly, that reputation continues to this day.

Not all ethnic Indians are bad, of course, and in a country where there are some 600 million of them, it is unlikely that there are no good ones.

One recalls an outstanding Indian who, to this day, is revered the world over. That man, of course, is Mahatma Gandhi, the man who introduced passive resistance to the world.

The Gandhis of the world are few and far between, sadly.

That the ethnic Indian never tried to integrate himself into the society of Hongkong is, also, well documented, and his dislike and disrespect of the Chinese manifested itself in the closing days of the rule of the British when, fearing that he might become stateless when the Government of the PRC assumed sovereignty over Hongkong, he fought to obtain the right, by law, to a United Kingdom passport.

The Government of the People's Republic of China did not say a dicky bird about the Indians, leaving their territory of Hongkong: One wonders as to the reason for this.

Many ethnic Indians left the HKSAR after July 1, 1997, but there are still some Indian businessmen left – other than guards, standing outside jewellery shops, etc.

When the victorious People's Liberation Army, under the command of the late Comrade Chairman Mao Ze Dong, kicked out Generalissimo Chiang Kai Shek from China and took absolute control of the country, one of the first things that the New Communist Order did was rid the country of as many as possible of the ethnic Indians – especially those in the Shanghai Region of China – many of whom were money lenders, pimps and felons of the worst kind.

Statistics, compiled by the (old) Royal Hongkong Police Force, indicated that, as a percentage of the total population of Hongkong, the ethnic Indian was among the worst offenders and ranked high in the ethnic groups, from the point of view of the criminal element.

Even though the ethnic Indian may have been among the worst criminal offenders in these 416 square miles, the question remains: Where did they all go in just a few short years?

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