

## The Wong Way .....

**Mr Wong is a practising solicitor in the Hongkong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) of the People's Republic of China (PRC). Because he is a solicitor, he is very proud of his position in society. He wears only the latest fashionable clothes, which he purchases at a very fashionable departmental store, the same fashionable departmental store from where he purchased all of the furniture for his home. Solicitor Wong lives on The Peak, a very fashionable part of Hongkong. He lives in a house. He is married to a former teacher of the English language. He has a teenaged son who attends an international school. He is the proud owner of a white Rolls-Royce, which he purchased, second-hand, about 8 years ago.**

**The following are just some of the things that Solicitor Wong does; and, the reasoning (or lack of it) for his actions.**

While it was fact that Solicitor Wong was idiosyncratic about many things, but when it came to his son, Nickolas, he realised that the future of his immediate family and for the generations of Solicitor Wongs to come, it rested, squarely, on the little shoulders of this teenager. *'I know that Nickolas is getting a good education at school,'* Solicitor Wong announced to Judy, his wife, one morning after the boy had been taken to his (very expensive) international school on the south side of Hongkong Island by the family chauffeur, *'but is Nickolas fully aware that there are other people in the world, other than just Chinese and Filipinos, I mean? Are we giving him an introduction to the "real" world?'* Judy looked at her balding husband, quizzically: *'What do you mean by the word, "real"?''*

Solicitor Wong replied: *'Well, Gloria is a Filipina and she is the maid of the house, at this time. Jesus is the family chauffeur and he is a Filipino. And we are Chinese and we are, what we could rightly state, the proclaimed aristocracy of Hongkong. But there are other people in the world, also, you know. What I am trying to say is that, other than Filipina and Filipino servants, other races do exist.'* If there was one thing that Judy disliked, it was being branded a snob – although, in truth, she was just that: A snob. Realising that, if she made a mistake in her response to her husband's statements, her snobbishness could come to the fore, she meekly asked: *'What did you have in mind, my dear?'* It was an opening for Solicitor Wong. It was, in fact, an opening, far better than he had hoped or imagined: *'Well, Judy, in about 6 months, Gloria's contract as a servant in this house will terminate, having been in my employ for the past 2 years. What do you think of employing an ethnic Indian to replace Gloria? She would add a little colour to the household, don't you think?'* *'You mean because she is black!'* Judy fired back. And, then, she continued to saying: *'Anyway, I don't like curry. If you bring in an Indian maid to replace Gloria, she will stink up the entire house. You know that Indians, because they eat copious quantities of curry, their entire bodies tend to reek of curry after a while.'* *'Well, I like curry if it is not hot, in the same way that I enjoy Japanese food just*

*as long as it is not raw fish,' Solicitor Wong said after giving the matter some careful consideration for about one tenth of a millisecond. 'I am thinking of my son. It is my sole responsibility to make certain that he is tolerant of all races – black, brown, yellow, white, and all of the half tones in-between. The reason that I suggest, engaging an Indian servant at my house, is that I have been told that they are easily manageable, fairly loyal, much cheaper than Filipinas and Filipinos, and, Indians are quite used to sleeping on the floor and use their fingers to eat instead of chopsticks or knives and forks. Further, it would give Nickolas a chance to learn about this ethnic group and to study them up close.'*

Solicitor Wong, unbeknown to Judy, had seen a decided drop in his legal firm's monthly incomes and he was becoming a little concerned as the revenues fell, month after month after month. As with many of his peers, the legal profession of Hongkong was suffering, financially, along with the general economy. The idea of hiring ethnic Indians occurred to him on reading a report about the country. India, Solicitor Wong discovered, was the tenth-largest economy of the world and the disparity between the rich and the poor was a chasm, which was unlikely to be breached for decades.

Corruption in the country was widespread and many of the population had trouble reading and writing, the literacy rate, being about 74 percent of the entire 1.17 billion human population. That means that about 328 million Indians cannot read or write. All of which, as far as Solicitor Wong was concerned, was a perfect situation. Malnutrition is endemic in most parts of the country as is high unemployment. Another plus for this erudite and far-sighted solicitor of Hongkong. The more that he read about India, the more certain he was that he could kill 2 birds with one stone: He could introduce Nickolas to another ethnic group and, at the same time, he could save money by hiring an illiterate ethnic Indian who would be happy to sleep on the floor and who is not in the habit of eating very much. It was, as far as Solicitor Wong was concerned, the best of all worlds.

*'I have been considering our conversation about Gloria and Nickolas,' Solicitor Wong mentioned casually, at breakfast, 'and I think that we should employ the services of an Indian servant to help you to keep the house clean, wash the Rolls-Royce, polish the silver and look after Nickolas when you are busy. Since you do not like curry, you can tell her that she is not permitted to prepare certain dishes and, in that way, she will not offend your sensibilities. The servant that I am thinking of employing lives in the south of the country and is unable to read or write, but she does speak a little English. She comes from a very poor family in a farming community and likes to sleep on the floor. The monthly wages for this 25, year-old servant is about half of that of Gloria. Best of all, she is used to being subservient.'* Judy looked at her husband incredulously: *'Do I have any say in this matter?'* *'Of course you do!'* answered Solicitor Wong. *'How do we communicate with this Indian servant if she can neither read nor write in any language? Sign language?'* asked Judy. Solicitor Wong suddenly realised that there may be a slight problem in communication, but Judy had the answer: Sign language. Out of the mouths of babes!

And so, about 6 months later, in the townhouse of Solicitor Wong on The Peak, there was a very fat, brown-skinned lady, scrubbing the floors, washing the family's clothes, polishing the silver and cleaning the family's second-hand, Rolls-Royce, using abrasive cleaners, normally reserved for cleaning pots and pans. And, 6 months after she started work for Solicitor Wong, this same, very fat, brown-skinned was on an Air India flight, headed back to her home in the south of India.

*'It is really a pity that she did not work out,' Solicitor Wong said to his wife at breakfast, the Sunday morning, following the departure of the Indian servant, 'but she cost me more than \$HK100,000 to repaint the Rolls-Royce, following her scrubbing off the motor car's white paint, and most of the silver is beyond repair because she used knives to scrape off the tarnish. Who would have believed that a servant would wash a mink coat in a toilet bowl! It is beyond imagination!'* Judy listened and smiled: *'Yes, well, but let bygones be bygones. I think that we shall go to Landmark, this afternoon. I have to do a great deal of shopping and I would like you to be with me in order to pay the bills and to carry the bags. I have made a complete list on these 2 sheets of paper of all the things that that Indian servant damaged or destroyed in the short time that she was living here.'*

And the moral to this story in the words of Solicitor Wong as he explained to his wife:

***'I know that you believe that you understand that for which you think I said, but I am uncertain as to whether you realise that that which you heard is not, exactly, that which I meant.'***

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