



SANDS OF TIME

Volume II Issue 1

January 2003

Tata Central Archives Newsletter

Dear Colleague,

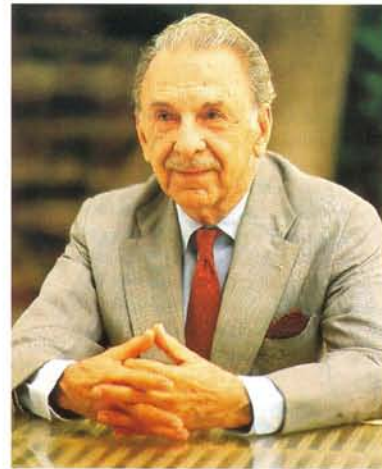
The Tata Central Archives (TCA) organised its third exhibition on "J. R. D. Tata", the multi-faceted personality of the 20th century. Many schools, colleges and a cross-section of society visited the exhibition.

A Workshop on the "Conservation of Cultural Heritage" was organised by TCA. Dr. Malik, Assistant Director(P), National Archives of India, along with two of his assistants conducted the Workshop. This Workshop was beneficial to the staff of TCA to learn the techniques involved in the repair and preservation of documents. This helps us in setting up our own "Conservation Cell."

TCA is in the process of collecting records from various Tata Companies which will be arranged and catalogued in a systematic manner. TCA is also assisting them in setting up "Heritage Corners" for Tata Chemicals at Mithapur and for Tata Power at Lonavla.

Senior Officials of the Jindal Iron and Steel Company Limited who are in the process of setting up their own Archives visited TCA to study the infrastructural facilities prevalent in TCA.

EXHIBITION ON "J. R. D. TATA"



J. R. D. Tata.

To commemorate the 98th birth anniversary of Mr. J. R. D. Tata on July 29, 2002, an exhibition on "J. R. D. Tata" was inaugurated by Dr. J. J. Bhabha, Vice-Chairman and Managing Trustee, Sir Dorabji Tata Trust, at the Tata Central Archives, Pune. This exhibition is the third in the series of Tata exhibitions planned to present the business and social aspect of the Tata Group to the new generation.

Mr. T. R. Doongaji, Managing Director, Tata Services Limited, Mr. R. M. Lala, Hon. Director, Tata Central Archives, and senior officials of the Tata Group were present on the occasion.

In this issue

- ❖ Exhibition on "J. R. D. Tata "
- ❖ Glimpses of the Exhibition
- ❖ J. R. D. Tata Records in the Archives
- ❖ Our Heritage – Letter from R. D. Tata to J. R. D. Tata
- ❖ Reminiscences
- ❖ Workshop on "Conservation of Cultural Heritage"
- ❖ Employees of Tata Services Limited visit Tata Central Archives
- ❖ Staff of Sir Dorabji Tata Trust visit Tata Central Archives
- ❖ A Walk Through The Woods
- ❖ Quiz



Dr. J. J. Bhabha viewing one of the panels on display.

The life of J. R. D. Tata spanned almost the whole of the twentieth century. He brought to India the gift of civil aviation. For fifty-two years he was Chairman of one of the largest industrial groups in India.

His achievements extended beyond the ambit of business to institutions he helped create. His was the first national voice to call for family planning. For thirty years he raised his voice against the misguided policies of a controlled economy. He set standards of integrity in business which may be equalled but were never surpassed.

This exhibition endeavours to portray "The Man who Touched Power But Remained Untouched By It".

A part of the workshop that he had set up at his residence has also been shown at the exhibition.

The attire worn by J. R. D. Tata when he received the Bharat Ratna, his convocation gown and his air commodore uniform are also on display.

One of the more interesting exhibits of the Tata Central Archives is the Mumbai Office room of J. R. D. Tata, which has been replicated to the last detail.

GLIMPSES OF THE EXHIBITION



J. R. D. TATA RECORDS IN THE ARCHIVES

by Arvind Mambro*

Among Indian industrialists, J. R. D. Tata was probably the most prolific letter-writer. He had "intense dislike" for making speeches or giving interviews. But loved writing letters. And he did it religiously despite his busy schedule throughout his life.

The **J. R. D. Tata Records** in the Tata Central Archives is a prized possession. There are over 40,000 letters in this collection written by J. R. D. to his parents, his colleagues in Tatas, business associates, ministers and bureaucrats, friends and others in India and abroad. Some prominent names which figure in his list of correspondents are Mahatma Gandhi, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Jayaprakash Narayan, Henry Kissinger, J. K. Galbraith and Robert McNamara. Besides these, there are several people who are not so famous and a few who are virtually obscure.

J. R. D. grew up in Paris where he had his education in French. The first available letter in the Archives was written by him to his mother when he was nine. It reads (the translation):

"My dearest little mama.... I think of you often. We are very happy that you are returning soon... I embrace you with all my heart... good little Jehangir".

Over the next decade he wrote to his parents almost every week. His father insisted on his writing detailed letters in English. He guided him on how to write them. Gradually J. R. D. loved the language and slowly and steadily he mastered it. His letters reveal his style and elegance.

These letters are lucid and well-composed. In his correspondence J. R. D. could be, serious or not-so-serious depending on the topic he dealt with and the person he wrote to. In serious correspondence he did not accept or reject the view of his correspondent. He gave thought to it and arrived at his own conclusion which he communicated to the person at the other end often with a step-by-step analysis. When he accepted or rejected a proposal he always gave reasons why he did it.

There are several letters in the Archives which reveal various facets of J. R. D.'s personality. They tell you the stories of his relationship with his parents, his apprenticeship as a Director and later as Chairman of the House of Tata, his growing friendships in India and abroad, his concerns as a citizen of Bombay and his personal likes and dislikes which, incidentally, were very strong.

As his relationship with his correspondents developed he liked to address them by their first names or by their pet names. "Dinos", "Munne", "Goku", "Nanja", "Bachu", "Punchie", etc. were some of them. The letters reflected the growth of his friendships. "Dear Mr. McNamara" became "Dear Robert" in a matter of months and ended up as "Dear Bob".

His moods were often revealing. While communicating with his communist friends, he would often adopt a lighter tone. When one professor with left leanings wanted to meet J. R. D., he replied: "... I always enjoy the rare occasions on which we do meet and on which the marxist lion... accepts a cup of tea from this capitalist lamb".

J. R. D. also liked most of his steady correspondents to address him as "Jeh". "I am Jeh for you, not Mr. Tata" he would tell them. If some of them addressed him as "Jay" he would correct them. Pointing to Romesh Thapar, one of his friends, who began, "Dear Jay", he wrote:

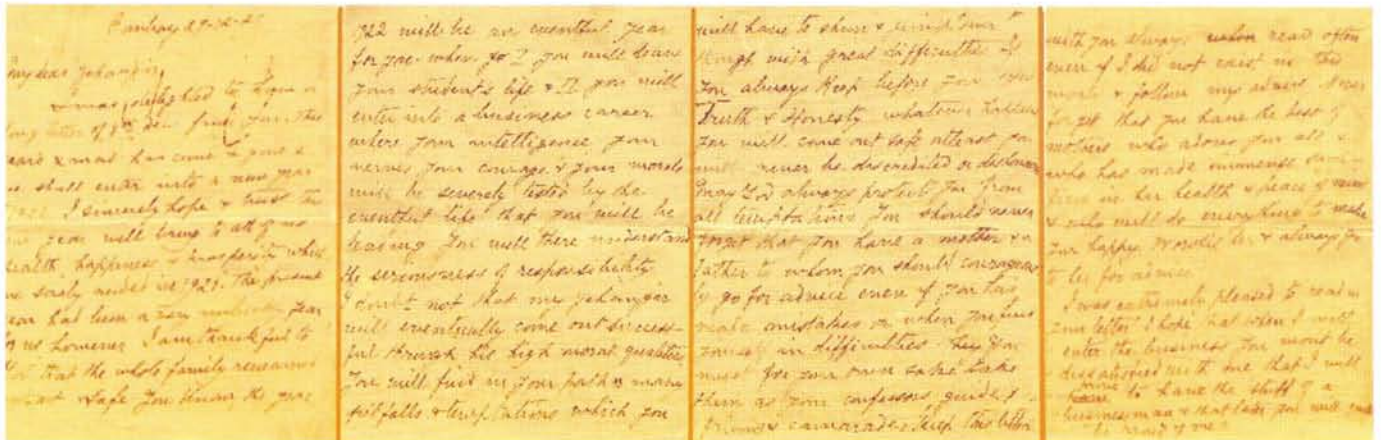
"I have looked up the dictionary and find that a Jay 'is a noisy, chattering European bird of brilliant plumage' and figuratively 'an impertinent chatterer or simpleton'.

"For future reference please note therefore that my name is spelt 'Jeh' in abbreviation of 'Jehangir' and any resemblance between me and the bird is purely coincidental."

* Former Chief Archivist, Tata Central Archives, is presently compiling J. R. D. Tata's letters for publication.

OUR HERITAGE

Letter written by R. D. Tata to his son Jehangir (J. R. D. Tata). This letter has been exhibited in the gallery and is one of the important historical collections in the Tata Central Archives.



Transcript of the letter written by R. D. Tata to J. R. D. Tata

Bombay
29-12-21

My dear Jehangir,

I was delighted to have a long letter of 8th Dec. from you. This year's Xmas has come & gone & we shall enter into a new year of 1922. I sincerely hope & trust this new year will bring to all of us health, happiness & prosperity which we sorely needed in 1921. The present year had been a very unlucky year for us, however I am thankful to God that the whole family remained intact & safe.

You know, the year 1922 will be an eventful year for you. When I - you will leave your student's life & II - you will enter into a business career where your intelligence, your nerves your courage & your morals will be severely tested by the eventful life that you will be leading. You will there understand the seriousness of responsibility. I doubt not that my Jehangir will eventually come out successful through his high moral qualities. You will find in your path many pitfalls & temptations which you will have to shun & jump over though with great difficulties. If you always keep before your eyes Truth & Honesty whatever happens you will come out safe at least you will never be discredited or dishonoured. May God always protect you from all temptations. You should never forget that you have a mother & a father to whom you should courageously go for advice even if you had made mistakes or when you find yourself in difficulties. You must for your own sake take them as your confessors, guides, friends & comrades. Keep this letter with you always read often even if I did not exist in this world & follow my advice. Never forget that you have the best of mothers who adores you all & who has made immense sacrifices in her health & peace of mind & who will do everything to make you happy. Worship her & always go to her for advice.

I was extremely pleased to read in your letter "I hope" that when I will "enter the business you won't be dissatisfied with me, that I will prove to have the stuff of a businessman & that later you will quite be proud of me".

REMINISCENCES

Oral history is an effective means of filling in gaps in the documentation of the history of an organisation. It is identified as an activity, a detached and academic process of inquiry into the memories of people who have experienced the recent past. This inquiry, and the responses it generates are recorded to supplement written records that have been found wanting in some measure for historical analysis.

Mr. Khushru B. Pestonjee has visited the Archives about six times in the past two years. During one of his last visits he happened to mention that he was working for Tatas. The TCA team interviewed Mr. Pestonjee as a part of its oral history. Following are excerpts from the recordings, which we feel, will be of interest to our readers:

I came from Kashmir in 1947 when it was being raided. I wanted to get admission into a college in Bombay. At that time, there was an order from the government, that anyone from Kashmir or Hyderabad could not join any college or school. So, I went to the Investment Corporation of India when Mr. Jamshed Patuck was employed. I walked in and took my old surname, Unwalla. There was a job going as an apprentice and so I joined the Investment Corporation of India. The office was located at Ewart House, 3rd floor, Bruce Street, Mumbai.

Mr. A. D. Shroff was the Chairman at that time. I was transferred to Palanpur Vegetable Products in 1947. I worked with the Company till 1950. Being in the Investment Corporation I was sent to other companies such as Telco, Tisco when the share registers were to be closed. I was a clerk and I also worked in sales and administration. I was transferred to New India Assurance Company in 1951. I retired in 1989 as Deputy Manager.

I was also connected with Tata Sports Club. Through the Tata Sports Club I passed some exams as a referee in football and hockey. In 1948-1949 the Tata Sports Club team won the Beighton Cup and Aga Khan Cup. There was a dance at Green Hotels where I was the master of ceremonies.

I remember going to the Brabourne Stadium on Founder's Day (March 3) where an athletic meet was held. Followed by a dance and dinner at the Ballroom of the Taj Mahal Hotel.

I had the privilege of working under J. R. D. Tata who was the Vice-Chairman of New India Assurance Company. He used to come to Kashmir and we would look after him. My father knew him, since Pestonjee and Company were agents for Tomco and Tisco. J.R.D. Tata met several politicians in our house. He knew my father very well. He had told my father that I could come to him anytime I needed help but I never took advantage of it.

I first met JRD under peculiar circumstances. In those days it was very proper to wear a long-sleeved shirt and a tie. I had become careless that day, had not shaved and had my collar open. Mr. M. Vazifdar handed me a letter to be delivered to Tomco. As I entered Bombay House J. R. D. Tata was standing in front of me. "Come here young man. Are you a Tata boy. Don't look like one." I took the hint, put the letter in my pocket and ran to the West End Watch Company. In those days there was a shop selling ties below it at Re. 1 and there was a barber's shop close to Fountain Restaurant. I had a shave, and put on a tie. That was my first meeting with J. R. D. Tata.

Mr. Tata attended very few meetings of the New India Assurance Company. After Mr. A. D. Shroff died, Mr. J. D. Choksi was appointed Chairman. Mr. Tata brought him to the Boardroom for the first time. He put his finger on the table - dust. He turned to our Managing Director, Mr. B. K. Shah, and the Secretary, Mr. V. C. Vaidya: "Are we directors to sit on a dusty table". They walked out of the Board Room.

These are a few instances that I recall.

If there was one man that I admired most in Tatas, it was Mr. J. R. D. Tata. The reason being he came down to the lowest man and he knew the difficulties of the employees.

When I first visited the Archives, I felt that I should sit here and work with Tatas once again.

WORKSHOP ON "CONSERVATION OF CULTURAL HERITAGE"



Mr. R. M. Lala, Hon. Director, Tata Central Archives addressing the participants. Seated (r to l) Dr. R. P. Malik, Asst. Director (Preservation), National Archives, New Delhi and Mr. H. Raghunath, Archivist, Tata Central Archives.

Mr. R. M. Lala, Hon. Director, Tata Central Archives (TCA), inaugurated the Workshop on "Conservation of Cultural Heritage" which was held at the Tata Central Archives from November 11-15, 2002. The Tata Central Archives, Pune and the National Archives of India, New Delhi, jointly conducted this Workshop. Invitations to attend the Workshop were also sent to various archives and libraries located in Pune.

In his inaugural speech Mr. Lala referred to the importance of preservation of records. He thanked Dr. R. P. Malik, Assistant Director (Preservation), who had come with his two assistants, Mr. Manu Kulbe and Mr. Mahesh Anand for taking the trouble to come all the way from Delhi.



During one of the practical sessions Mrs. S. Joshi, Jaykar Library, Pune learning the techniques of book binding.

Preservation encompasses activities designed to minimize the physical and chemical deterioration of records and prevent loss of informational content. Conservation is one component of a preservation programme. Conservation comprises the examination, documentation, and treatment of records. Conservators perform treatments which preserve records in their original format.

The topics covered in the Workshop were:

- Introduction to chemical composition of paper records and specifications of long lasting paper;
- Identification of damage/decay of records on account of environmental factors and restoration;
- Washing of documents;
- Preparation of deacidification solution;
- Repairing of documents by tissue paper, solvent lamination and encapsulation;
- Preparation of different kinds of bindings;
- Care and Preservation of Leather bound volumes and;
- Fixation of water soluble inks.



A group photograph of the participants who attended the Workshop.

This is the first time that the Tata Central Archives has conducted such a Workshop.

Dr. R. P. Malik distributed certificates to the participants on the concluding day.

EMPLOYEES OF TATA SERVICES LIMITED VISIT TATA CENTRAL ARCHIVES

The Staff of Tata Services who work in various departments in Mumbai paid a visit to the Tata Central Archives in November 2002.

It was an exhilarating experience for many of the employees who had not visited Pune or had seen the Archives before.



They meticulously went round viewing & reading each panel in the exhibition hall.

For many of them it was a nostalgic journey into the past, while for others it was a learning experience.



STAFF OF THE SIR DORABJI TATA TRUST VISIT TATA CENTRAL ARCHIVES

Inspiring and Motivating Generations is the Mission of the Tata Central Archives. Moving a step in this direction, the Sir Dorabji Tata Trust organised a visit for their staff and their families to the Archives to view the exhibition on J. R. D. Tata.

The children in particular, showed keen interest in the exhibits. They inquired if it could be set up in Mumbai so as to give their friends an opportunity of learning a little of this great personality.



A WALK THROUGH THE WOODS



"Castle Hill," Matheran.

Outside the city of Bombay, Mr. J. N. Tata's favourite haunt was a bungalow at Matheran, some fifty miles from Bombay (now Mumbai). In the early nineteenth century the Collector of the District, wishing for a retreat during the hot season, and fascinated by the magnificent view, had pitched his camp on Matheran Hill where he built a bungalow and called it "Castle Hill". Later it was bought by Nusserwanji Tata and passed on to Jamsetji who in turn, left it to his elder son, Sir Dorabji Tata. He rebuilt the place, and enlarged it to a more convenient size.

Mr. Zubin Mistry, an employee of Tata Services Limited closely associated with the Tata Central Archives was vacationing with his wife in Matheran in August 2002. He had heard of "Castle Hill" and went in search of it.

Instead of locating the property he stumbled on a magnificent bungalow known as "Homestead".

This name did not strike a bell, but a board at the gate read "Sir Ratan Tata Convalescent Home". Curious, he walked down a magnificent pathway which could have had horse-drawn carriages down its path leading to a beautiful and impressive bungalow.



Views of "Homestead".

After returning to Mumbai, Zubin forwarded a few photographs of the bungalow to the Archives. Tracing the history of this bungalow the Archives was able to locate the following information on "Homestead": 'Amongst the houses belonging to the Tata family mention may be made to the bungalow "Homestead" which Lady Ratan Tata had given away as a gift. Her bungalow at Matheran along with a benefaction of Rs. 3 lakhs was given for use as a convalescent home for poor and invalid ladies'.

"Castle Hill" has still not been located. If you stroll through the woods in Matheran and happen to locate it do let us know.

QUIZ*

What did the abbreviation "Telco" stand for when the company was formally incorporated on September 1, 1945?

*The quiz is open to all, except employees of Tata Central Archives (TCA). Five correct answers by draw of lots will receive "T-shirts" from TCA. The answer should be forwarded by March 31, 2003 to the following address: The Archivist, Tata Central Archives, TMTC Campus, 1, Mangaldas Road, Pune 411 001

AN APPEAL

The Archives is always on the look out for information pertaining to the House of Tata.

Do you have a story to tell? Have you located any property belonging to the Tata Family. The Archives would be happy to hear from you.

For further information please contact – Mr. H. Raghunath, Archivist.