



# Sands of Time

Newsletter of Tata Central Archives

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October 2004

## IMAGES OF GREATNESS



The year 2004 is a significant year for the Tata Group, as it marks the death centenary of Jamsetji Tata, Founder of the House of Tatas and the birth centenaries of J.R.D. Tata and Naval Tata.

The Tata Central Archives (TCA) pays tribute to the three personalities who were pioneers and part of the tapestry that is Tatas by organizing an exhibition entitled "Images of Greatness". The

Exhibition, displays original documents, photographs, awards, etc., culled out from its archival collections.

On December 7, 2004, in the presence of a distinguished audience, Mrs. Simone Tata, Chairman, Trent Limited inaugurated the exhibition "Images of Greatness" at the Tata Central Archives in Pune.

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Mrs. Simone Tata speaking at the inaugural function. Also seen in the picture on the right is a view of the audience.

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"To renew ties with the past need not always be day dreaming; it may be tapping old sources of strength for new tasks."

Simeon Strunsky



## IMAGES OF GREATNESS...



Mrs. Simone Tata cutting the ribbon to formally inaugurate the Exhibition.



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Mr. H. Raghunath, Archivist, TCA welcomed those present and paid tribute to the three personalities highlighting their major achievements. He also appealed to the principal's and teachers present on the occasion to send their students to visit this exhibition and learn from the contributions made by these luminaries.

Mr. T. R. Doongaji, Managing Director, Tata Services Limited, addressed the gathering. In his address he mentioned

pleasure to have a Tata inaugurate a Tata exhibition.

It is very rare on occasions like this that one would have a person of the Tata family which has been so great, and a person like



Mr. T. R. Doongaji, Managing Director, Tata Services Limited, Mrs. Simone Tata and Mr. Raghunath, Archivist, Tata Central Archives.

Mrs. Tata who in her own right can stake claim to greatness".

Mrs. Tata who addressed the gathering said, "I am delighted to be here. The Century of Trust has been a momentous year for all of us. But this would not have taken place without the help and assistance of the Tata Central Archives and the fantastic work done by them."

Reminiscing, Mrs. Tata said that it was not so long ago that Mr. Russi Lala, invited them to a meeting in the Bombay House Auditorium to inaugurate the Archives. When I attended this meeting she said: "I was a bit puzzled. How are

"If the past cannot teach the present and the father cannot teach the son, then history need not have bothered to go on, and the world has wasted a great deal of time."

Simeon Strunsky



Mr. Z. D. Mistry, Manager Accounts, Tata Services Limited, Ms. Margaret D'Souza, Voltas Ltd., and Mr. Anthony Lobo, TCS admiring one of the documents on display.

Mrs. S. N. Tata going round the Exhibition.



that the exhibition, "Images of Greatness" is on the three gentlemen who have been great in their own right. These three personalities are the brightest jewels which the Tata cradle has been fitted for posterity. All of us in the Tata Group have derived inspiration and continue to colour the Tata ethos and the Tata Group.

He also said, "It is a moment of great

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## THE UNKNOWN TATA

*Excerpts from an oral history recording of J. R. D. Tata with M. V. Kamath in December 1986 which has been continued from the previous issue of "Sands of Time".*

**MVK:** Sir, I understand that you lived first in Paris, then in Bombay, then again sometime in Japan, can you give us a chronological sequence of your stay in various places to the best of your memory?

**JRD:** Yes, somewhat, with some vagueness. Whenever I was in Bombay, I was at the Cathedral High School. When I was in France, I was admitted to one of the top public schools in Paris called Janson De Sailly. Every time I went back to France, I'd rejoin a different class. This made it a bit more difficult than it need have for me.

I'd first been educated in English - I wasn't very good in English, at least in pronunciation. I'd suddenly find myself educated in French. I wanted to go to university and it had been arranged that I should be admitted to one of the colleges in Cambridge.

But, so far as India is concerned it was British education in India as you know, in high school. In Cathedral they used to teach you English, and English history. You didn't learn Indian history you learnt British history, and British literature and British this and British that. I could hardly consider myself as educated enough to enter university.

So in order to get admitted I was sent to a Crammer on the east coast of England. A Crammer is an establishment you probably know, usually a private establishment where boys whose education up to then, either they been lazy or they've been like me, cramming enough to be able to pass the entrance examination. I went there in England in order to learn English properly and also to prepare for the entrance examination to Cambridge.

That was in 1925. I spent a year at the end of my military service because as I had a dual nationality I was born a French man in France and was treated as a

French man. In India, as an Indian. A British subject presumably. My father was very grateful to France for having given him my mother.

My father wanted me to - as every young man in France at the age of 20 had to - spend a year and a half, at times it use to be two years, in the military service in France. That was in 1924, when I was 20. So half of 1924 and half of 1925 I was in the French Army. I was in the cavalry.

I made use of my grandmother but not very successfully. I wanted to learn how to ride well, thinking that may be one day in India, if I'd have enough money, I would be able to play polo. My grandmother apparently knew a French General. Out of kindness to her he ensured that I'd be enlisted in a Cavalry Regiment.

Unfortunately, he got me into an Arab regiment that was mainly in Tunisia, Algeria but also having some of their Regiments in France. The bulk of the soldiers were either Algerians or Tunisians, North Africans. We used to ride Arab horses. Arab riding is completely different from European riding. Whatever I learnt in riding in the army was of no use to me for playing polo or even riding for pleasure. Because I was the eldest son of a family of five children I was allowed six months less. So, instead of a year and a half, I had a year.

Luckily for me because those regiments were mainly consisting of illiterate Arabs - somewhat like the jawans in India - the Regiment was called Le Spahis, which is the Sepoys. So, I was a sepoy, except that I had an attractive uniform.

**MVK:** What were you, what was your rank?

**JRD:** Oh no, second lowest, Second Class Sepoy. In fact, I had a meteoric career from Second Class Sepoy to Air Commodore in the Indian Air Force. The point I was making, which was of some



Mr. J. R. D. Tata being interviewed by Mr. M. V. Kamath.



J. R. D. Tata's school time-table while he was studying at the Cathedral School.

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## THE UNKNOWN TATA...

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J. R. D. Tata when he was a conscript in the French Army.

relief, life in the barracks was pretty primitive. There were no bathing facilities in the barracks. We had to go to town and pay for a bath. Very few bothered to bathe in the French army in those days, including the few French men who were there.

**MVK:** There were no bathing facilities in the entire barracks?

**JRD:** Yes there were cold taps, and in winter they sometime froze. So I used to go into town twice a week and pay for a bath. The important point I was trying to make is that living in the barracks, living in the dormitory, with all these fellows, the noise and the smells and particularly in winter with the windows closed, In the cavalry you have Squadrons. In my Squadron there was a Captain in charge of the Squadron who discovered that I could not only write well, but also type.

**MVK:** Where did you learn that?

**JRD:** On a Japanese boat coming back from Japan in 1918.

**MVK:** Typing on a Japanese boat?

**JRD:** I spent 15 days on that boat and learnt to type on their typewriter. When he found that I could type, he got me out of the Barracks, out of the dormitories. He didn't want the Colonel of the Regiment to know that there was a soldier who could type. He got me to sleep in an office - they put a bed in an office behind his office - where I could be concealed, but it failed. And after a month the Colonel found out. I was removed from there, and accommodated in the Colonel's ...

**MVK:** That's a real promotion.

**JRD:** That was promotion, and I use to type there on a very antiquated machine, it amuse me sometimes, officers use to come and ask me to type a letter of application for leave or for something and then they give me a tip of 1 franc, which I always accepted with a very polite thank you very much. So that was that.

**MVK:** Sir to come back to your schooling I think there was a prize for a composition which you got and some other young man

who was sitting .....

**JRD:** Where did you get that from? Oh! You got it from Rusi Lala. That's not very interesting except it shows that I seem to have had some facility for writing whether in French or English. And to my surprise there was a year in which the final exam included a French, writing composition on a particular subject, and some subject of some historical event so I wrote that and apparently it turned out to be the best because funnily enough the man in front of me was the grandson of Marshall of Napoleon and he was the big fellow in front of me and so when the teacher said you'd be surprised and he pointed towards me but I was behind this big fellow, so this big fellow got up and started bowing and the teacher "Not you the L'Egyptien behind you" He could not make out an Indian, to him an Indian and L'Egyptien were all the same. There I had love of language, love of poetry, whether in English or in French. so I put it into.....

**MVK:** Have you written any poetry—in English or in French?

**JRD:** Written, No, I tried to, but you got to keep that it up and I didn't have the talent.

**MVK:** Sir, who were your best friends at school? Do you remember any of them? Are they alive, would they be alive?

**JRD:** Yes, I had some friends one was the son of Louis Bleriot the man who crossed the, first, flew over the channel to England and crashed in England when he arrived, because he crashed almost in every flight and who died trying to duplicate or trying to beat Lindberg across the Atlantic, they were preparing a bigger plane 4 engine plane to fly the Atlantic and he died of a very strange, illness nobody dies of just appendicitis. So I lost him, and then in the school Janson De Saily whom I became very friendly. But during the war he went underground and was ultimately captured by the Gestapo and shot. Then there were few other friends. Some nephew of my grandmother who was an electrical engineer, but nobody close, no closely bound friendship.



J. R. D. Tata's Certificate when he was in the 9th Regiment of Le Spahis.

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## THE UNKNOWN TATA...

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**MVK:** Sir, when were you in Japan and what were you doing there?

**JRD:** Well, in 1916 when my young brother was born, as you know prematurely in that accident on the stairs of the Taj, the doctors advised, she nearly died in that crash the haemorrhage etc, the doctors says she must head to a better climate. Normally we would have gone back to France but ships were being torpedoed and father felt that to send mother not very well herself with 5 children there, so where to go? Really in India there wasn't quite the climate that was wanted or they didn't want to send her too high, to Kashmir, so he said Japan as he had done business in Japan and he had Japanese friends, so off we went all of us to Japan, and settled down in Yokohama in 1917. We were there for 2 years in Yokohama which was then an independent city now its part of Tokyo. In order to maintain English I went to an American school - a Jesuit school.

**MVK:** You had your education completely interrupted every now and than?

**JRD:** Everywhere.

**MVK :** Where did you pick up your English? At that point you couldn't have been proficient in English. Were you at that age?

**JRD:** No, not too well in pronunciation. I could read and write but I talked like a Frenchman much to the amusement of the British and Indian friends.

**MVK:** Sir, when the First World War started you were hardly 10 years old. Do you have any memories of that particular period - those four years?

**JRD:** Yes, the First World War started in 1914, when I was ten. We lived in an apartment almost in the shadows of the Eiffel Tower. I remember there were some air raids of a kind. The Germans had these zep planes. They came over with their zep planes hoping to bomb. But the bombs were small. I once saw a zep plane being shot down and in flames. We were there in France but we came away in 1916 when my mother was pregnant.

**MVK:** Was it safe to travel at that time in 1916?

**JRD:** Well by that time they didn't have the torpedoing that there was in Second World War. Oh no, there was but anyway we managed. We were in India from 1915-16 until 1918 after the War was over.

**MVK:** I was told that you applied for an extension in the French army?

**JRD:** I am a little ashamed of that. Well I was a French soldier and I'd been brought up as a French boy so I had a dual patriotism. I didn't realise that Abdel Karim was a Moroccan Chief who rebelled against the French and so the French army fought him. I thought that taking part in a war in Africa with all the romance. Do you remember those films of Beau Gest? I had six months and I decided that it would be rather fun taking part in a War.

**MVK:** And getting killed!

**JRD:** Well I didn't think that I would have. In fact, I would have been, if I had gone. I asked my father, can I apply for a six months extension. I'd learn a little more riding. He said certainly not don't be a damn fool, come back. So I didn't. Now the interesting thing is that my Regiment was sent off to Morocco to fight Abdel Karim and it was ambushed. My squadron was ambushed and totally destroyed. There were no prisoners, they were mutilated. So if I'd been there..

**MVK:** There would have been no JRD Tata.

**JRD:** There would have been JRD Tata up to then, but that's about all. Then I realised later, after all these people were fighting against colonialism, I should have been wanting to fight for Abdel Karim and not against him.

**MVK:** But did you have that concept of colonialism at that time?

**JRD:** Evidently not, yes in India I didn't like the fact that the British were ruling us here but Morocco didn't seem to be an independent country, I don't know, any way it was quite wrong as I say I feel ashamed of that particular part of my life but I am glad I didn't do it.



J. R. D. Tata (centre) with his father R.D. and his sister Sylla.



J. R. D. Tata in traditional Japanese costume.

Continued in the next issue



## APPRENTICES AT THE EMPRESS MILLS

One of the rare photographs probably taken in 1901 of the apprentices who worked in the Empress Mills at Nagpur which is on display at the Exhibition.

Seen in the picture is Hormusji J. Tata – father of Naval Tata (seated second from the right).

Hormusji Tata joined the Mills on January 19, 1889. He was the thirty-seventh apprentice to sign the agreement.



## IMAGES OF GREATNESS...



Mr. H. Raghunath in conversation with Mrs. Tata.

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we going to build up the Archives? Who has kept the documents? Where are the photographs? When I see what is being done today, it is simply remarkable. Mr. Lala had a clear vision of where he wanted to go. I wish he was here with us today. Without the Archives, the task of the Century of Trust would have been that much more difficult."

Concluding, Mrs. Tata remarked that by the time we reach another century we will have a building the size of the Victoria and Albert Museum.

Mr. R. P. Narla, Asst Archivist proposed the vote of thanks. He thanked Mrs. Tata and said, "We are truly inspired by your words. We would like to thank you



Mrs. Tata surrounded by the press who were present at the inauguration.

for sparing your valuable time to be with us on this memorable occasion."

He also thanked Mr. Doongaji, promising to live up to his expectations, assuring him that TCA will strive to achieve greater heights under his leadership.

Mrs. Simone Tata writing her comments in the visitors book which has been reproduced on the right of the picture.



*This is personally a very moving exhibition which covers so much of the 50 years I have spent in the Tata fold. One is immensely grateful to all those who have put it together, creating not only a monument for our then Great Men but inspiring the younger generation to strive for the best for the nation.*

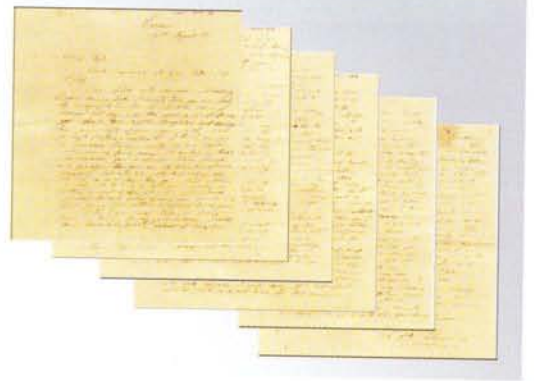


## THE NIGHT BEFORE LAST

Excerpts from a letter written by J. R. D. Tata to his father R. D. Tata in 1925.

In this letter JRD recounts his days in the Regiment.

I am sure readers would find this letter interesting.



Vienne, 13th August 1925

Dearest Papa,

..... The night before last was the worst I spent at the Regiment. I had to go and sleep at the Chambre and fought all night with bugs. Again ! I only slept an hour in the whole night and next morning I had at least 200 bits on me ! If it had not been cold and raining, I would have gone and slept outside but could not do so for that reason. I caught a cold on the stomach not having my shawl and being half of the time out of my bed shaking my sheets and near an open window. I took calomel this morning, wore my shawl around me whole day and night and am quite well now.

We have first come back from bathing in the Rhone. Owing to the recent rains the water was filthy. I will have to take a bath to wash myself now ! I notice with pleasure that though the water is icy cold I bear it easily and enjoy it, whilst I remember that formerly in Harelott for instance I used to become green and faint with cold. July waters will seem hot to me next winter !

The General, Inspector-General of Cavalry is coming to inspect our Depot next Wednesday. Our commandant is to meet him at the station with his car. And as he has no chauffeur I believe he is going to ask me to drive ! Great guns ! It is a Renault and I will have to drive slowly, but still I will enjoy it as there is a long time I haven't done so. I will go round bends on two wheels and skid into the entrance. I think not !

I think I am going to buy some extract of meat syrup, haemoglobin or something like horse blood to replace the meat which I need and don't have here. The meat they give you is so bad that I have practically given it up. Knowing what effects vegetarian diet had on me I am not going in for that again ! It is a pity because if I was at home, I feel I could eat a lot with pleasure. Thank God, less than three months left now ! Once I go on leave and have the bus, time will pass off quickly.

I have never been so much interrupted in a letter as I have been over this one. Owing to the coming of the general and also owing to the escape of a prisoner from here there was a lot of work to do today. Being the only man who types in this beastly place every letter or document to be typewritten is given to me. It is the only useful thing I will have learnt in the army, typewriting fairly well. However, I must say that isn't my vocation for I am getting fed up with it. I would much prefer being whole day doing some work outside rather than spending my time sitting in an office.

We have had perfectly magnificent weather today, sunny and warm. A weather that makes you feel that everything is not wrong in this world, that on the contrary it is full of good things. My liberation seems to me nearer on such days.

...The next weekly will probably say something about it. I was rather amused at seeing the portrait of the Nawab of Rawalpur. He travelled with me on the boat and at Marseilles had promised to send me from London an Arab costume ! He was a nice man and I was told he was fairly clever and doing good work for his province. Anyway he owes me a costume !

.....Meanwhile I hope you are keeping very well. Don't be anxious about me. I am getting on very well. The children are well too. Au revoir Papa chéri, fit 'embrace de tout coeur et bien affectueusement.

Ton fils  
Jehangir



## WE ALSO MADE THESE

"We set high standards for ourselves and for the operations and decided that profitability and growth must result from efficient exploration of challenging opportunities. We also postulated that the organization could consolidate, modernize, diversify and expand all at the same time, provided it worked imaginatively and effectively and provided it never over-extended its managerial capabilities. It is the quest for excitement and growth and the emphasis on excellence in daily affairs which are responsible for the success which this organization has achieved.

**Sumant Moolgaokar**



Early in 1945, the (British) Government of India and Tatas reached an agreement according to which the "Singhbhum Shop" a repair shop belonging to the former East India Railway was to be sold to Tatas.

Tatas were to promote a company to produce steam locomotives and spare boilers in the Shop after suitably converting it.

Telco was accordingly incorporated on the 1st September 1945,.

Three months earlier, i.e. on the 1st June 1945, the Singhbhum Shop was taken over on behalf of Tatas.

When the Shop was taken over it was in the process of completing an army order for hulls for armoured vehicles.

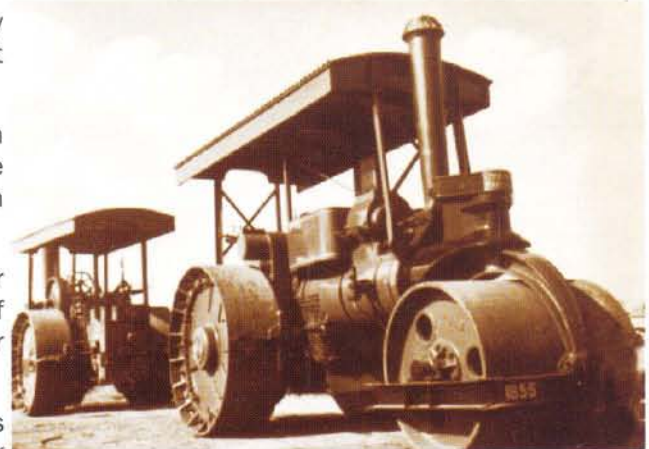
They served the 8th army in its North African campaign saving many lives as these hulls were impenetrable by ordinary bullets. They were termed as Tatanagar plates with admiration by the soldiers.

The hull was sequentially the first product of the Shop after it was taken over by Tatas.

Before the company started the manufacture of trucks and cars it had to pass through several phases thereby

creating several milestones. From the beginning it was decided to manufacture engineering equipment, diesel engines, etc., besides boilers and locomotives to keep itself busy.

As there was huge demand for road-rollers during the post-war the company decided to enter the field. M/s Marshalls of UK were the major suppliers of road-rollers to the government. As deliveries from England were slow they decided to manufacture them in India and approached TELCO and other concerns. The brand name of the product was TATA-MARSHALL and its sales agents were to be Marshalls (India).



On April 22, 1948 amidst shouts of "Jai Hind" and "Bande Mataram" Dr. Shama Prasad Mukherjee the then Minister of Industries & Civil Supplies launched the first road-roller named "CITY of DELHI". A number of other road-rollers each named after a big city in India - Calcutta, Bombay, Madras, Jubbulpore, Patna - rolled past the assembly line in quick succession.

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