

J.R.D. TATA MEMORIAL TRUST
SPEECH ON THE OCCASION OF THE 113TH BIRTH ANNIVERSARY
OF MR. J.R.D. TATA

BY CHAIRMAN: M. P. MASCARENHAS

GOOD MORNING, LADIES, GENTLEMEN, MY FELLOW AIR INDIANS ...

2. ON BEHALF OF THE MANAGING COMMITTEE OF THE J.R.D. TATA MEMORIAL TRUST AND MYSELF, I WELCOME YOU ALL TO THIS FUNCTION TO CELEBRATE THE 113TH BIRTH ANNIVERSARY OF OUR FOUNDER, THE REDOUBTABLE J.R.D. TATA.

3. A SPECIAL WELCOME TO OUR CHIEF GUEST, AIR CHIEF MARSHALL, F. H. MAJOR, A FORMER CHIEF OF THE INDIAN AIR FORCE AND THE ONLY HELICOPTER PILOT TO BE APPOINTED TO THAT COVETED POSITION IN ITS 70 PLUS YEARS OF ILLUSTRIOUS HISTORY.

4. AN EQUALLY SPECIAL WELCOME TO OUR GUEST OF HONOUR, MR. ISHAAT HUSSAIN, A TRUE BLOODED TATA MAN IF THERE EVER WAS ONE, WITH OVER 3 DECADES OF WORK EXPERIENCE IN THAT OUTSTANDING AND DIVERSE SALT TO SOFTWARE CONGLOMERATE. I BELIEVE WE CAN RELY UPON YOU, MR. HUSSAIN, TO TELL US ABOUT YOUR INTERACTIONS WITH THIS GREAT MAN OVER YOUR MANY YEARS IN THE TATAS.

5. LADIES AND GENTLEMEN IT IS MY SUBMISSION TO YOU, THAT WE IN AIR INDIA HAVE HISTORICALLY TAKEN A VERY PAROCHIAL VIEW OF OUR FORMER CHAIRMAN. WE HAVE VIEWED HIM ALWAYS THROUGH THE PRISM EXCLUSIVELY OF AIR INDIA AND CIVIL AVIATION – AFTER ALL HE WAS OUR CHAIRMAN FOR OVER 24 YEARS – SO THERE IS NOTHING WRONG IN VIEWING HIM IN THAT FASHION. BUT THERE IS SO MUCH MORE TO THIS GREAT MAN THAT FEW PEOPLE KNOW ABOUT AND OUGHT TO KNOW.

6. LET US BEGIN FROM THE BEGINNING – FROM HIS VERY NAME – TATA. THE SMALL, INFINITESIMALLY SMALL PARSI COMMUNITY – WHICH CONSTITUTES LESS THAN 0.001% OF INDIA'S POPULATION BUT HAS CONTRIBUTED DISPROPORTIONATELY TO INDIA'S PROGRESS IN EVERY FIELD OF ENDEAVOUR – HAS A SIGNIFICANT PROPORTION OF ITS NUMBERS NAMED AFTER THE VILLAGE OR TOWN FROM WHICH THEY ORIGINATE. THE BHARUCHAS ARE FROM BHARUCH, THE UDWADIAS FROM UDWADA, THE ANKLESARIAS FROM ANKLESHWAR AND EVEN ~~THE~~ THE SMALL SUBURB OF AHMEDABAD – SIGANPORE - HAS GIVEN US THE SIGANPORIAS! I INFACT WORKED WITH TWO SIGANPORIAS MYSELF IN AIR INDIA.

7. NUSSERWANJI TATA, THE FOUNDER OF THE DYNASTY, CAME FROM NAVSARI – WHERE THE TATAS STILL OWN PROPERTY AND WHERE THEIR FAMILY HOME STILL STANDS. BUT HE WASN'T A NAVSARIA BUT A TATA. SO WHERE DID THE TATA SURNAME COME FROM?

8 FOR THE ANSWER YOU HAVE TO READ THE OFFICIAL HISTORY OF THE TATA GROUP AND REFER TO “HORIZONS – THE TATA INDIA CENTURY – 1904 TO 2004” – A TREASURE TROVE OF INFORMATION ON THE TATAS – YOU WILL KNOW THAT AN ANCESTOR OF NUSSERWANJI TATA, WAS A SHORT-TEMPERED, IRRITABLE, PEPPERY GENTLEMAN WHO WAS REFERRED TO IN THE PARSI-GUJERATI COLLOQUIALISM OF THE TIME, AS TATA – AND THE NAME STUCK! MY PARSI FRIENDS ARE EXTREMELY SCEPTICAL AND SAY THAT IF THIS ANCESTOR WAS DIFFICULT AND SHORT-TEMPERED, HE SHOULD HAVE BEEN CALLED ONE OR MORE OF THE FOLLOWING THREE DESCRIPTIONS:

“GUSSOWALLA” OR

“MIJASWALLO” OR

“BANANO FATELO”

IT YOU DON'T BELIEVE ME PLEASE REFER TO “THE TATA INDIA CENTURY”. TO DO SO YOU REQUIRE THE ATTRIBUTES OF PATIENCE AND STRONG BICEPS. PATIENCE BECAUSE THIS TOME RUNS INTO HUNDREDS OF PAGES. STRONG BICEPS BECAUSE IT IS 13” LONG, 11” BROAD AND 4” WIDE AND WEIGHS 9 LBS. - I ACTUALLY/WEIGHED ON MY WIFE'S KITCHEN SCALES!

9 I AM INFORMED BY AN OLD TATA HAND – NOT BY MR. HUSSAIN HERE – THAT WHEN MR. TATA – OUR JRD TATA – HEARD ABOUT THIS STORY, HE INSISTED IT BE INCLUDED IN THIS OFFICIAL HISTORY OF THE FAMILY. OUR FOUNDER NOT ONLY HAD A SENSE OF HUMOUR BUT DID NOT MIND LAUGHING AT HIMSELF! THE RARE ABILITY TO LAUGH AT ONESELF IS, TO ME, THE HIGHEST FORM OF INTELLECTUAL HONESTY IN AN INDIVIDUAL.

10 NUSSERWANJI TATA'S SON, JAMSHEDJI TATA, REALLY GOT THE FAMILY BUSINESS GOING. HE ESTABLISHED A SERIES OF TRADING COMPANIES DEALING WITH EUROPE AND CHINA, AND, LATER, ESTABLISHED THE TATA IRON AND STEEL COMPANY, AND THE ICONIC TAJMAHAL HOTEL IN SOUTH BOMBAY, WHERE WE ARE MEETING TODAY IN A SISTER PROPERTY. HE THEN DECIDED IT WAS TIME TO HAVE A FAMILY COAT OF ARMS. THE PRINCES OF INDIA LIKE BARODA, GWALIOR ETC. HAD THEIR OWN COATS OF ARMS SUBMITTED OFFICIALLY TO BE ACCEPTED BY THE LONDON COLLEGE OF HERALDRY – SO THERE WAS NOTHING UNUSUAL FOR THE PRINCES OF INDUSTRY LIKE NUSSERWANJI TATA TO DO LIKEWISE.

11 THE COAT OF ARMS HE CHOSE – YOU SEE IT THERE ON THE SCREEN – WAS A HIGHLY UNUSUAL ONE. THE CENTRE PIECE WAS AN ORTHODOX AND CONVENTIONAL ONE INCORPORATING THE THREE BASIC TENETS OF ~~THE~~ ZOROASTRIAN FAITH NAMELY:

HUMATA – GOOD THOUGHTS;

HUKTA – GOOD WORDS;

HUVARSHI – GOOD DEEDS!

12 BUT THE REST OF THE COAT OF ARMS WAS HIGHLY UNORTHODOX AND UNCONVENTIONAL FOR TWO REASONS. FIRST THE OVERRIDING COLOUR CHOSEN WAS BLUE WHICH THE BRITISH FROWNED UPON ITS USAGE SINCE THEY FOUND IT WAS THE COLOUR ONLY USED BY THEIR ROYALTY. ~~FIRSTLY~~ THE PREVAILING COLOUR CHOSEN BY OTHER PRINCES WAS, INCIDENTALLY, RED, DIFFERENT SHADES OF PINK AND BY THE MUSLIM RULERS OF HYDERABAD AND JUNAGADH – GREEN. SECONDLY THIS COAT OF ARMS HAD

WINGS ON EITHER SIDE! WINGS? WHAT ROLE DID WINGS HAVE IN INDIA OF THE 1860S?

13 WINGS ARE NORMALLY ASSOCIATED WITH ANGELS AND THE MOST COMMON ASSOCIATION WAS AND STILL IS, WITH ST. MICHAEL THE ARC ANGEL! BUT WAS IT A PROPHETIC CHOICE? WAS IT A HARBINGER OF WHAT WOULD BECOME A REALITY – THAT ONE DAY SOME ONE FROM WITHIN TATAS WOULD EMERGE, TAKE TO WING AND FLY INTO THE BLUE SKIES OF INDIA AND EVEN BEYOND!

14 I LEAVE YOU WITH THAT INTERESTING THOUGHT. PLEASE NOTE THAT THERE ARE NO PRIZES FOR GUESSING RIGHT.

15 I HAD MENTIONED EARLIER OF MR. TATA'S SENSE OF HUMOUR. BUT SENSE OF HUMOUR APART, OUR FORMER CHAIRMAN ALSO HAD A COME-WHAT-MAY ATTITUDE TO LIFE IN HIS EARLY YEARS. THIS IS IN REMARKABLE CONTRAST TO HIS PUBLIC IMAGE OF BEING SERIOUS, COMMITTED AND PURPOSEFUL INDIVIDUAL – WHICH HE UNDOUBTEDLY WAS. I WOULD LIKE TO GIVE YOU FIVE SEPARATE INSTANCES WHEN HE NEARLY LOST HIS LIFE – FOUR OF WHICH TOOK PLACE BEFORE REPEAT BEFORE – HE FOUNDED OUR AIRLINE IN 1932. I SHUDDER TO THINK IF THERE WOULD HAVE BEEN AN AIR INDIA IF HE HAD GONE SO PREMATURELY.

16 I HAVE GIVEN MYSELF A RESTRICTED TIMESLOT AND WILL ONLY SUMMARIZE THESE FIVE INSTANCES:

16A 1918: WORLD WAR I WAS NOT YET OVER. MR. TATA AND HIS FAMILY (HE WAS NOT MARRIED YET TO THELMA VICAJEE) WAS RETURNING FROM COLOMBO BY SHIP AND DISEMBARKED AT MADRAS. THE SHIP, THE JAPANESE "HIRANO MARU", DESTINED FOR LONDON, WAS TORPEDOED ENROUTE AND SANK WITH A LARGE LOSS OF LIVES.

16B 1925: MR. TATA, WHO WAS BORN IN FRANCE, WAS INITIALLY A FRENCH CITIZEN (UNTIL 1930) AND HAD JOINED THE FRENCH ARMY IN AN INFANTRY REGIMENT. FORTUNATELY, HE WAS CALLED TO INDIA TO HELP IN THE FAMILY BUSINESS, AND WAS THEREBY SAVED FROM ACCOMPANYING HIS

REGIMENT TO THE COLONY OF ALGERIA WHERE IT WAS WIPED OUT IN AN AMBUSH TO THE LAST MAN A FEW MONTHS LATER.

16C 1929: A PUSS MOTHI, IN WHICH HE WAS DOING AEROBATICS, WENT INTO A SPIN. HE LOST 5000FT AND APPEARED DOOMED TO MR. TATA'S INSTRUCTOR, WHEN MIRACULOUSLY, HE MANAGED TO PULL UP 200FT FROM THE GROUND.

16D 1930: PARTICIPATING IN THE AGA KHAN CUP ON THE SECTOR CAIRO TO DAMASCUS, HIS COMPASS WAS A FULL 25 DEGREES OFF COURSE. DUE TO HIS EXCELLENT MAP READING SKILLS, HE REALISED HE WAS FLYING OVER THE ELONGATED DEAD SEA INSTEAD OF THE CIRCULAR SEA OF GALILEE. HE MADE THE NECESSARY COURSE CORRECTION AND AVOIDED BECOMING, IN HIS OWN WORDS, "A PERMANENT PART OF THE GEOGRAPHY OF TRANS JORDAN" AS IT WAS KNOWN THEN.

16E 1982: A REENACTMENT OF HIS EARLIER HISTORIC 1932 FLIGHT ON ITS 50TH ANNIVERSARY. HE WAS STILL A YOUNG ENERGETIC 75 YEAR OLD IN 1982. AHMEDABAD WAS AN OFFLINE POINT FOR AIR INDIA AND AS MANAGER – WESTERN INDIA I WAS DEPUTED TO MEET HIM IN TRANSIT, WHICH I DULY DID ACCOMPANIED BY SALES MANAGER – GUJARAT – VASU BADAMI. ALSO ON THE TARMAC, LEADING THE WELCOME PARTY, WAS MRS. SHARDA MUKHERJEE, GOVERNOR OF GUJARAT, THE WIFE OF INDIA'S FIRST CHIEF OF AIR STAFF, AIR MARSHAL SUBROTO MUKHERJEE.

MR. TATA LANDED ON TIME AND TOOK OFF ON TIME AND LANDED IN BOMBAY ON TIME. NO FUSS NO BOTHER – HE JUST HAD TO DO WHAT HE HAD TO DO. BUT HE DIDN'T LET ANYONE KNOW AT THAT TIME THAT HE HAD SUFFERED A MINOR HEART ATTACK JUST A DAY PRIOR TO THE FLIGHT. A TEAM OF DOCTORS DECIDED IT WOULD BE BETTER IF HE WENT AHEAD IN DOING WHAT HE DREAMT OF DOING. NO FLIGHT WOULD BE BAD FOR HIS MIND BUT GOOD FOR HIS BODY – SO THAT IN THIS CASE THE BODY HAD TO WIN OVER THE MIND.

17 SO THIS WAS THE D.N.A. OF THE MAN WHO WHILE STILL IN HIS 30S WAS ASKED BY A UNANIMOUS VOTE OF THE TATA BOARD IN 1938 TO ASSUME THE REINS OF LEADERSHIP OF THE TATA EMPIRE. IT WASN'T VERY LARGE THEN - THE HIGH PROFILE FIRMS BEING EMPRESS MILLS, LATER THE SWADESHI

MILLS WHICH FINALLY BECAME TATA TEXTILES, THE TAJ MAHAL HOTEL, AND OFCOURSE THE ICONIC TATA IRON AND STEEL WORKS AT JAMSHEDPUR.

18. IN HIS 50 YEARS OF LEADERSHIP HE TRANSFORMED TATAS INTO A BEHEMOTH WHICH STRADDLED THE INDUSTRIAL SCENE LIKE A COLOSSUS TOUCHING VIRTUALLY EVERY ASPECT OF OUR LIVES AND THE ECONOMY OF THE COUNTRY. THE INDIVIDUAL COMPANIES HE ESTABLISHED ARE TOO NUMEROUS TO MENTION AND ONE CAN BARELY COVER THE ~~INDIVIDUAL~~ SECTORS TATA'S ENTERED AND, IN MOST CASES, DOMINATED – BE IT CONSUMER PRODUCTS / TRANSPORT / COMMUNICATIONS / CONSULTANCY SERVICES / DIGITALIZATION / TELECOMMUNICATIONS – AND I AM NO WHERE NEAR COVERING WHERE THE GROUP NOW REIGNS.

19 THE STAGE WAS SET FOR HIS WORTHY SUCCESSOR, RATAN TATA, TO FURTHER GROW AND DIVERSIFY THE EMPIRE AND TO GLOBALISE BY ENTERING, PURPOSEFULLY, INTO FOREIGN MARKETS. HE HAD THE COURAGE TO DO - WHAT MOST ONLY DREAM OF BUT DID NOT DARE TO DO. TO BUY OUT ESTABLISHED INTERNATIONAL BRANDS SUCH AS TETLEY TEA, CORUS STEELAND JAGUAR LAND ROVER – POSITIONING THE TATAS MORE FIRMLY AS A GLOBAL INDIAN BRAND.

20 I WOULD LIKE TO CONCLUDE AS I DO NOT WISH TO EXCEED MY TIME SLOT. I WOULD LIKE TO REMIND YOU ALL, LADIES AND GNETLEMEN, THAT WE ARE IN THE MIDDLE OF ONE AND ON THE THRESHOLD OF ANOTHER REVOLUTION. THE FIRST IS THE EXPONENTIAL GROWTH OF THE DOMESTIC INDIAN AIR MARKET. THE AMERICANS CALL IT HOCKEY STICK GROWTH – BECAUSE IT STARTS OFF BEING FAIRLY FLAT AND THEN TAKES OFF UPWARDS. 10 MILLION IN THE 1990S AND 100 MILIONPLUS AT PRESENT MAKING IT THE THIRD LARGEST IN THE WORLD AFTER THE USA AND CHINA. THIS, WITHOUT TAKING INTO ACCOUNT THE INTERNATIONAL AIR MARKET TO / FROM INDIA WHICH MERITS SEPARATE ATTENTION AND PRAISE.

21 THE DOMESTIC MARKET GROWTH RATE AT 20% P.A. IS FASTER BY FAR THAN THAT OF USA AND CHINA – AND WILL PROPEL INDIA INTO BEING THE

LARGEST AIR MARKET IN THE WORLD BY 2025 / 2030. ACCORDING TO SOME FORECASTS, THAT, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN IS ONLY A FEW YEARS DOWN THE ROAD FROM NOW. MR. TATA LYING IN SERENE AND ETERNAL PEACE AMONG STATELY CYPRESS TREES AT THE PERE LACHAISE CEMETRY IN PARIS WOULD UNDOUBTEDLY BE VERY PLEASED TO KNOW WHAT HE HAD STARTED OVER 80 YEARS AGO. - THE SINGLE ACORN WHICH HE FIRST PLANTED IN 1932, HAS NOW GROWN NOT ONLY INTO A MIGHTY OAK TREE, BUT INTO HUNDREDS OF OAK TREES. IT IS NOW A VERITABLE CALIFORNIAN SEQUOIA FOREST. THIS GENERATES INCOME AND EMPLOYMENT FAR EXCEEDING, MANY TIMES OVER, THAT OF THE ENTIRE TATA EMPIRE WHICH OUR FOUNDER ALSO GREW AND NATURED SO WELL.

22 LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, DID I SAY EARLIER IN MY ADDRESS THAT WE SHOULD NOT VIEW JRD TATA THROUGH THE NARROW PRISM ONLY OF CIVIL AVIATION AND AIR INDIA? I MAY HAVE TO TAKE BACK MY WORDS. I MAY HAVE TO USE ONE OF HIS FAVOURITE EXPRESSIONS "TO EAT CROW" WHICH WAS ALSO USED OFTEN BY THE AIRLINE'S LEGENDARY COMMERCIAL DIRECTOR, ^{DO} G. K. (BOBBY) K~~KA~~KA.

23 IN THE MACROECONOMIC TRAVEL REVOLUTION IS ALREADY UPON US, WE ARE ALSO IN THE CUSP OF A MICROECONOMIC REVOLUTION - THE IMPENDING DENATIONALIZATION OF AIR INDIA. AIR INDIA WAS NATIONALIZED IN 1953 FOR REASONS WHICH ARE LARGELY DEBATABLE. THE AIRLINE WAS FINANCIALLY STRONG ^{AND} GENERATING GOOD PROFITS ^{AND} WAS CARRYING THE FLAG OF THE NEWLY INDEPENDENT INDIA TO A GROWING LIST OF DESTINATIONS ABROAD. IT WAS NOT ONLY CAIRO, GENEVA AND LONDON THERE WAS ALSO ROME, BANGKOK, HONG KONG, SINGAPORE AND NAIROBI WITH MORE POINTS OF CALL TO COME IN 1953 AND IN THE IMMEDIATE YEARS TO COME. ON THE OTHER HAND, THE DOMESTIC AIRLINE INDUSTRY WAS IN THE DOLDRUMS - WITH FLY-BY-NIGHT OPERATORS USING WORLD WAR II SURPLUS AIRCRAFT OPERATING IRREGULAR SERVICES, LEADING ^{TO FREQUENT} FINANCIAL COLLAPSES. IN SOME CASES EVEN PRIVATE INVESTMENTS AND DEPOSITS WERE NOT RETURNED WHEN

CALLED FOR. IT WAS A FITTING CASE FOR NATIONALISATION WHICH CAME IN AN INEVITABLE FASHION.

24 IF ONE READS THE MINUTES OF DEBATES IN THE LOK SABHA OF THAT PERIOD, WHICH I HAVE DONE, IT IS CLEAR THAT THE GOVERNMENT OF THE DAY WAS ON THE HORNS OF A CLASSICAL DILEMMA – HOW TO PROCEED WITH THE NATIONALIZATION OF DOMESTIC TRANSPORT AND LEAVE A PROFITABLE AND EXPANDING AIR INDIA TO CONTINUE ON ITS OWN. THIS WAS NOT POLITICALLY POSSIBLE GIVEN THE SOCIALIST MINDSET OF THE DAY – SO AIR INDIA WAS NATIONALISED AND, AS THEY SAY, THE REST IS HISTORY – SOME OF WHICH IN THE LAST 15 YEARS IS FINANCIALLY MOST REGRETTABLE HISTORY. ^{PARA 25} AIR INDIA IS NOW IN A FINANCIAL ICU AND WILL SOON BE PUT ON A RESPIRATOR. THIS IS AS YOU KNOW, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, GETTING ON TO A RESPIRATOR, GENERALLY MEANS A ONE WAY AND NOT A ROUND TRIP TICKET. AIR INDIA'S FINANCIAL POSITION IS FOR GOVERNMENT AND INSUPPORTABLE ONE. IF IT WAS NATIONALIZED 64 YEARS AGO FOR THE WRONG REASONS, IT IS NOW BEING DENATIONALIZED FOR THE RIGHT REASONS.

25 I WOULD LIKE TO CONCLUDE, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, THAT WE DON'T KNOW WHAT THE MORROW WILL HOLD. BUT IT WOULD LIKE TO ASSURE YOU THAT IRRESPECTIVE OF THE NEW OWNERSHIP OF AIR INDIA, IF THAT HAPPENS, THERE WILL STILL BE A JRD TATA MEMORIAL TRUST – AND WE WILL MEET, YEAR UPON YEAR, TO HONOUR OUR FOUNDER. SO LET ME INVITE YOU RIGHT HERE AND NOW TO THE FUNCTION FOR 2018 WHICH WILL TAKE SOMETIME IN THE MONTHS OF EITHER NOVEMBER / DECEMBER 2018. SO NONE OF YOU CAN COMPLAIN THAT THE NOTICE IS SHORT!

JAI - JAMSHEDJI RATANJI DADABHOY TATA,

JAI - AIR INDIA

JAI HIND.

MUMBAI, SATURDAY, 25TH NOVEMBER 2017