

# Magic Carpet IN MEMORIAM

JANUARY 1978

## THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

I AM DEEPLY GRIEVED TO KNOW ABOUT THE UNFORTUNATE AIR CRASH AT BOMBAY STOP PLEASE CONVEY MY DEEPEST SYMPATHIES TO THE MEMBERS OF THE BEREAVED FAMILIES STOP

MR NEELAM S. REDDY

## THE PRIME MINISTER'S MESSAGE

I am deeply distressed to learn of the Air-India crash off Bombay in which more than 200 lives including competent technical crew have been lost. Air-India's record of accident free operations is well-known. It is therefore even more tragic that this accident should have occurred. Please convey to the bereaved families of the crew and also to the families of passengers who have lost their lives my deepest sympathies and condolences.

MR MORARJI DESAI

## THE CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

THE tragic news of the loss of the 213 precious lives in the disaster that befell our "Emperor Ashoka" on January 1, 1978 has filled us all with the deepest grief, and with anguish at the suffering and sorrow of those so cruelly bereaved.

We mourn in particular the loss of the fine and dedicated members of the crew, who lost their lives in the course of duty, and we grieve deeply for their stricken families.

Although at such calamitous moments words of sympathy can afford little solace or comfort, I would like all those so grievously bereft to know that they are in our thoughts and prayers. We share in full measure their sorrow and despair and extend to them our profound sympathy.

Whatever may be the ultimate findings in regard to the cause or causes of the tragedy which claimed so many lives, in no better way can we, in Air-India, pay homage to their memory than to rededicate ourselves to the cause of safety and of the security of those who entrust themselves to our care.

MR J.R.D. TATA

# WHY?

WHY the moon? Why the sun and the stars? Why does the world go round, and why does it for some people suddenly come to a stop? Why did Mrs X at the last moment decide not to take the fateful Bombay-Dubai AI Flight 855 on January 1, and why did Mr Y decide to board? Why did Boeing 747 Emperor Ashoka plunge into the sea a few minutes after take-off summarily consigning all on board to a watery grave? Why my beloved husband, moans a young widow? Why my darling daughter, wails a mother in her distress? Why? Why? Why?

There is no one to provide the answer to these questions to the hundreds of bereaved husbands, wives, fathers, mothers, sons, daughters and other close relatives as they throng the city morgue. 190 passengers perished in the tragedy as the sturdy warhorse Ashoka with 21,000 flying hours to its credit slid into the muddy waters off Bandra, setting off the biggest search-and-rescue operations by the Navy, Air Force, and other organisations including our redoubtable fishing fleet. Many of these passengers were returning to lucrative jobs while others were hopefully seeking fresh pastures in the Gulf.

And what of the Emperor's crew — 23 of the finest crew that any airline in the world could hope to have? The commander, first officer and flight engineer were responsible and experienced men, clocking up a total of 33,500 flying hours among them. The 20 cabin crew were a young, efficient and enthusiastic bunch with no hostess more than 26 years old, and the three trainees yet to savour the delights of foreign travel.

The flight data recorder recovered from ten feet of mud by naval

divers, the voice recorder (yet to be recovered) and the investigation by an independent team of experts will no doubt in due course unfold the gory story of how and why VT-EBD went down. And in the meantime self-professed experts will continue to expound from the comfort of their offices theories, opinions and conjectures as to what caused the tragedy. But all this will provide small satisfaction and no consolation to the ones left behind in their suffering, misery and despair. For they will continue to ask the one question: Why — and the answer will not be easily forthcoming.

All of us in Air-India from the Chairman to the juniormost staff mourn with the bereaved families of our crew, we grieve for them and we grieve with you. Mere words cannot provide consolation, we know, but it is not for us to question why. It is all in God's hands, it is all part of his grand plan. For has it not oftentimes been said that those whom the Gods love die young? And we shall remember them forever.

So, to the wives, parents, children, relations and fiancées of our fine and gallant crew who gave their lives in the sacred cause of duty, we beseech you in your great sorrow: Do not grieve too much, for Life is but a transitory thing. We are all here today, but gone tomorrow. Emperor Ashoka and the 213 persons on board have gone — and gone forever. And it is better to have loved and lost those dear ones of ours aboard Ashoka's last flight than never to have had them with us at all.

May their souls, dear God, rest in peace.

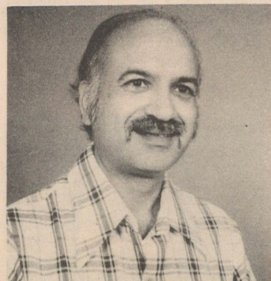
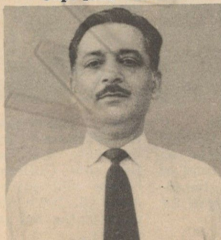
Editor

## THE OPERATING CREW

### CAPT INDU VIRMANI

A Wing Commander in the Air Force, Capt Virmani, 43, First Officer on Emperor Ashoka, had logged more than 4,500 hours on various types of aircraft. He had flown such Air Force types as Dakotas, Liberators, IL-14s, Packets and Super Constellations, before joining Air-India in early 1976. In the Air Force he held a Master Green Instrument rating which meant that he was cleared for all weather flying. One of his colleagues who knew him from his Air Force days described him as 'jolly and carefree when off-duty'. He was married with two children.

Capt Indu Virmani



Capt Madan Lal Kukar

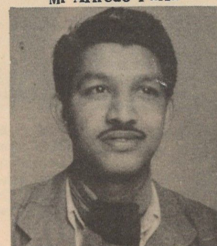
### CAPT MADAN LAL KUKAR

Genial, good natured and gregarious was how one Air-India pilot described Capt Kukar, 51, Commander of the Boeing 747 Emperor Ashoka. A Navigator friend described him as generous and helpful. Capt Kukar joined Air-India in 1956 from Indian Airlines and had logged nearly 18,000 hours. He was one of our most experienced 747 Commanders. Married with three children Capt Kukar was always cheerful — even on his last flight on January 1, 1978.

### MR ALFREDO FARIA

Flight Engineer, Mr A. Faria, 53, had been with Air-India since 1955. Trained as a Ground Engineer at the Air Services Training Centre, Hamble, England, Mr Faria had logged 11,000 hours. A Navigator colleague who knew him from his Hamble days said he was quietly humorous and retiring by nature. Mr Faria was one of Air-India's seniormost Flight Engineers. Before joining Air-India he served with B.K.S. Southampton and Starways Ltd; both companies in England.

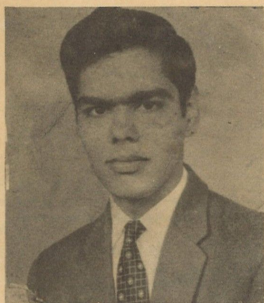
Mr Alfredo Faria





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## THE CABIN CREW



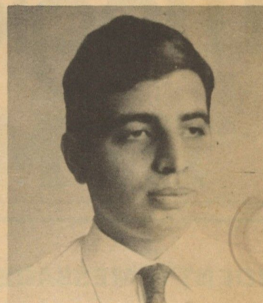
**Mayur AVALUR, 39**  
Joined Air-India on April 1, 1960 and was promoted to Flight Purser in 1964 and as Inflight Supervisor in 1973. A dedicated worker, he took considerable interest in crew scheduling activities.



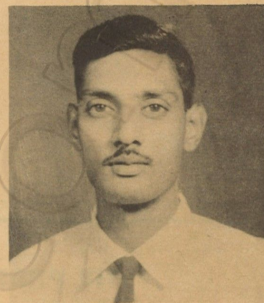
**Vivek AJINKYA, 30**  
Very enthusiastic and full of zest, he joined Air-India on March 1, 1968 as Asst Flight Purser and was promoted as Flight Purser in 1971. He always showed plenty of initiative.



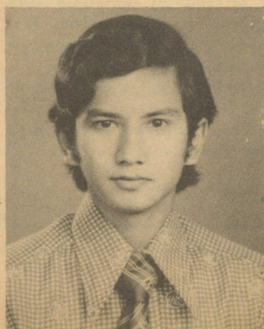
**Kali KOTWAL, 37**  
Lively and always cheerful, he joined Air-India on November 15, 1965 and was promoted as Flight Purser in 1970. He attended a training programme in Transactional Analysis conducted by the Central Labour Institute at Deolali as an added interest and was a music buff.



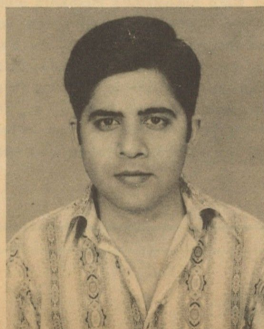
**Adil DUBASH, 31**  
One of the few Asst Flight Pursers to have got 100% marks in the final test, he joined Air-India on January 21, 1970. He was promoted as Flight Purser in 1973.



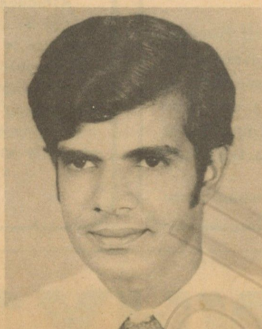
**Vallam Mohan RAO, 32**  
Joined Air-India on February 22, 1972 and as his colleagues comment, "he was always ready to assist". An aero-modelling enthusiast, he was also a voracious reader.



**Narayanswamy SABAPATHY, 27**  
Always active and full of life, he joined Air-India on February 10, 1977 after giving up a family business. Born and brought up in Pondicherry, he was a Karate expert.



**Amin SHEIK, 32**  
A quiet, unassuming young man, he joined the Inflight Service Department on March 28, 1972. A fine worker, he was always attentive to the needs of passengers, particularly the old and the infirm.



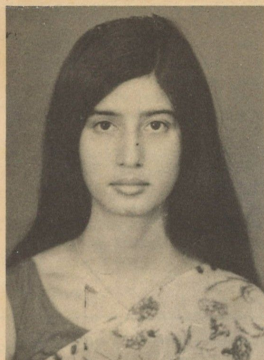
**Kinathinkara MENON, 33**  
Served as a Plant Technician in our Ground Support Division in New Delhi for sometime before he joined as an Asst Flight Purser on November 17, 1975. A student of the St. Germain School in Bangalore, he was trained at the Industrial Institute as well.



**Jerro DINSHAW, 24**  
An exponent of Indian dancing and a spare-time model, she joined Air-India on August 19, 1975. She had tendered her resignation effective December 31, 1977 but later withdrew it. She was to be engaged.



**Chemerazade KOTHAK, 23**  
A graduate from the Ruparel College in Bombay, she joined Air-India on March 17, 1975 and was a keen sportswoman. She took special interest in dramatics.



**Ayesha MADAR, 25**  
A graduate from St. Xavier's College in Bombay, she joined Air-India on May 30, 1972 and was a fine hostess. She was fond of social work and visited Cheshire Homes in her spare time.



**Adhar MAJITHIA, 26**  
Daughter of an Army Officer, she joined Air-India on October 21, 1971 and was complimented by Mr David Bane, former US Consul General for her "courtesy, hospitality and excellent service". She could communicate in German and was fond of horse riding.



**Kamal MANECK, 22**  
Also the daughter of an Army Officer, she joined Air-India on May 4, 1977. Fond of dramatics, she took special interest in learning French.



**Jerro Nadirshah KOTWAL, 25**  
Worked for a short time with Alitalia before she joined Air-India on November 12, 1973. An extrovert, she was fond of swimming and out-door sports.



**Madhu NANDA, 25**  
A matriculate from St Mary's High School in Bombay, she joined Air-India on October 3, 1972 and took special interest in dramatics and throwball. Her sister, Sashi too was a Hostess with Air-India till she left us recently to get married.



**Kettu PAYMASTER, 25**  
Her colleagues said she would make an "ideal wife", for she was fond of cooking and stitching her own clothes. She joined Air-India on June 26, 1972 and was fond of social activities.



**Amora RAPSANG, 26**  
Was brought up in Shillong and joined Air-India on April 1, 1976. She graduated from Lady Keane Girls' College. Her training report said, "she smiles all the time".



**Ranjana LAL, 24**  
Daughter of Mr M.M. Lal, Advisor to the Libyan Government, she joined Air-India on August 1, 1977. She worked for Lufthansa for a short period in Tripoli and was fond of swimming.



**Dilshad MEHTA, 22**  
A graduate from Jabalpur University, she joined Air-India on August 1, 1977 and was fond of singing, athletics and handicraft. She had a special yen for Yoga.



**Beena DABHI, 20**  
A matriculate from St Joseph's Convent, she studied at the Bhavan's College for sometime before she joined Air-India on April 18, 1977. She was shy, and unassuming but particularly hard working.