

ODYSSEY AI – 46
with Shariar Karim's
“MILESTONES AND MEMORIES”

LAST FLIGHT : AI -45 on 31st December 2020 “Millennium Announcement”

THIS FLIGHT : AI -46 on 1st January 2021 “CRASH OF AN EMPEROR”

NEXT FLIGHT: AI - 47 on 4th January 2021 “Watan Ki Sair”

A DAY TO REMEMBER – A TIME FOR A PRAYER – FOR SOME DEAR, DEAR COLLEAGUES –WHO ARE NO MORE THERE



“ MILESTONES AND MEMORIES”

NAMASKAAR, WELCOME ABOARD FLIGHT AI-46,
ON FRIDAY THE 1ST OF JANUARY, 2020

Turning back the pages of history,
Today we have reached the 1ST of JANUARY, 1978.

This Day, That Year, We Mourned -

“ THE CRASH OF EMPEROR ASHOKA ”

New Year's Day is a day of rejoicing and celebrating the start of a new chapter in our lives, with new dreams, new hopes and new resolutions. But on 1st January, in 1978, it was a different story for Air-India, Air-Indians and all Indians.

All went well till the evening as people were getting ready for New Year's Dinner Celebrations. Some who had a beautiful view of the Bandra coast saw this majestic aircraft in the sky leaving the shoreline after taking off and then to their utter horror, . . . before their own eyes they see it side into the sea. In a matter of seconds, it was all gone. Air-India's 747-237B aircraft, VT-EBD, Emperor Ashoka with it's 213 passengers and crew had vanished beneath the waves of the Arabian Sea . . . not a Happy New Year any more.

We remember with sorrow and recall this incident every year on this day, because it happened this very day 42 years ago and will always be remembered by the families of all those who lost their loved ones. Amidst our New Year Celebrations today, let's also spare a thought and say a prayer for the victims of this New Year's Day Disaster. MAY GOD BLESS THEM ALL AND KEEP THEM IN HIS CARE.



On January 1, 1978, Air India's first-ever Boeing 747-237B aircraft, VT-EBD, Emperor Ashoka takes off on a scheduled flight AI – 855 from Bombay to Dubai.

After take off, it made a scheduled right turn upon crossing the Bombay coastline over the Arabian Sea, after which the aircraft briefly returned to a normal level position. But soon, it began rolling to the left, and never regained level flight.

101 seconds after leaving the runway, the jet plunges into the Arabian Sea at an estimated 35-degree nose-down angle killing all 213 passengers and crew on board.

This is one tragedy that comes back year after year to haunt me on this day and will always remain a poignant reminder in my 'Milestones and Memories'. Please pardon me for sharing it with you today.

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Tragedy off Bandra: survivors unlikely

A-I JUMBO WITH 213 CRASHES

By A Staff Reporter

All the 213 passengers on board an Air India jumbo are feared dead, when it flew up into a fireball in mid-air and crashed into the sea off Bandra, shortly after take-off from Bombay's Santa Cruz airport on Sunday night.

Air India's Ashoka had started from Cochin at 8.15 a.m. Enroute to Bombay, the aircraft plunged into the sea 6 km from the Bandra headland.

The wreckage of the jumbo has been hoisted two miles off Bandra, and it is said that the jumbo had plunged into the sea at an angle of about 35 degrees. It was a flash of light and heard an explosion, A.I. pilots reported a matter of three or four seconds, he said.

Other eye-witnesses at the scene said they saw the aircraft banking and nose-diving into the sea.

Mr. K. Mahabadi, Regional Director of Civil Aviation, said the aircraft had disappeared from the radar screen when it was about 45 km. out from the shore.

The airport had radio contact with the plane within minutes of take-off and no further message was received from the jumbo.

The large holiday crowd which gathered at Bandra Beach had just started as the news of the crash spread. The son of Flight Engineer A. P. Parth was seen crying at Bandra Bandstand looking at the jet.

Bandra Civil Control Tower said late at night (IAT) there was no indication of an explosion though eyewitnesses reported the contrary. The Control Tower also stated that there was no exchange of communication with the commander.

Another eyewitness said the New-Year illumination lights along Carter Road was suddenly put out after the jet burst in the sea. Bandstand at Bandra also had rattling of doors and windows by the impact of the boom.

The Express reporter who visited the Air-India office late at night saw anxious relatives hanging around waiting for further news. They were in

The crash site, that of the plane had tilted at an angle of about 35 degrees, he said.

The pilot, who was reported to be in the cockpit, was found dead in the sea.

These passengers had already proceeded to the site of the accident at the direction of the Western Naval Command. Other naval ships are being kept in readiness.

Three more aircraft were dispatched soon afterwards which helped to lift the jumbo from the sea.

Admiral R. K. Choudhry, Flag Officer Commanding in Chief, Western Naval Command, was blamed for the operation.

Some men also pointed to the vicinity of the crash reported that the naval and air force helicopters were searching the area for possible survivors of the 213 passengers, four were infants and two children.

Witnesses also told bodies being hoisted up from the sea by naval command. Attempts were being made to locate the jumbo. Twenty ambulances were also waiting on the shore.

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The bodies were being brought to the Cooper Hospital at the Park Road, Bandra, reports Air India officials, including Mr. J. K. D. Tiba, Chairman, Mr. S. G. Apparao, Managing Director, Captain B. D. C. Rao, Director of Operations, Mr. C. S. Rao, Director of Engineering, as well as Mr. R. S. Mahabadi, Controller of the airport.

Thirty-two passengers who were not originally booked on the Cochin flight were accommodated when 128 passengers on the original flight did not turn up.

The first call about the crash was received by the duty officer at 10.15 hours from Quarantine Bay of the Indian Navy, who kept AI 855. This message was checked up with the flight watch, which gave the information that the jumbo had "not returned".

Avalon Minister P. I. Karolik, who flew into Bombay late at night has entered a hospital into the crash.

AIR HOSTESSES ON THE ILL FATED FLIGHT AI-855 OF JAN 1, 1978



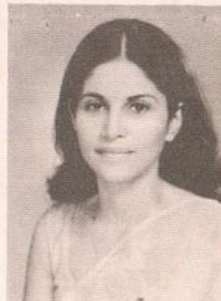
Ayesha MADAR, 25
A graduate from St. Xavier's College in Bombay, she joined Air-India on May 30, 1972 and was a fine hostess. She was fond of social work and visited Cheshire Homes in her spare time.



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.



Jeroo 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 28, 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 Kenne Girls' College. Her training report said, "she smiles all the time".



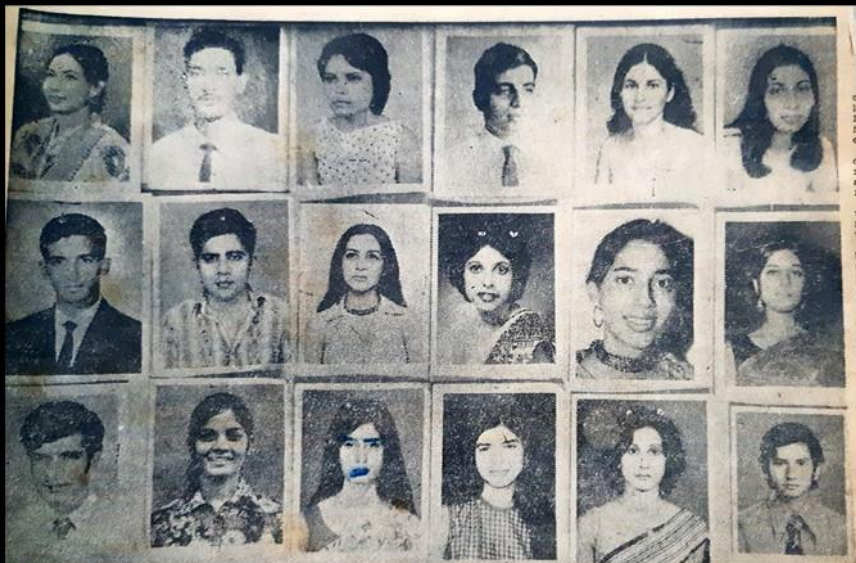
Ranjana LAL, 24
Daughter of Mr M.M. Lal, Advisor to the Libyan Government, she joined Air-India on August 1, 1977. She worked for Lufthansa for a short period in Tripoli and was fond of swimming.



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 Bhuvan's College for sometime before she joined Air-India on April 18, 1977. She was shy, and unassuming but particularly hard working.



ILL-STARRED CABIN CREW (All From left) : Top row — Beena Dabhi, V. S. N. N. Rao, A. D. Rapsang, Adil M. Dubash, Jeroo Kotwal, Ranjana Lal; Middle row — V. K. Ajinkya, Amin Sheik, Jeroo Dinshaw, Kamal Maneck, Adhar Majithia, Kettu Paymaster; Bottom row — K. R. Menon, M. Nanda, Ayesha Madar, Cheherazade Kathok, D. Mehta and N. Sabapathy. Photographs of M. Avalur, in-flight supervisor.



Lost all these dear Colleagues including my own batchmate
and dear friend Vivek Ajinkya *

