

All the hard work Jamsetji Tata put in throughout his life made him a living legend. Sadly it also took a toll on his health. At the age of 65, Jamsetji passed away on May 19, 1904, in the German town of Bad Nauheim. But 119 years post his death, his legacy lives on...



By Minoo Jokhi

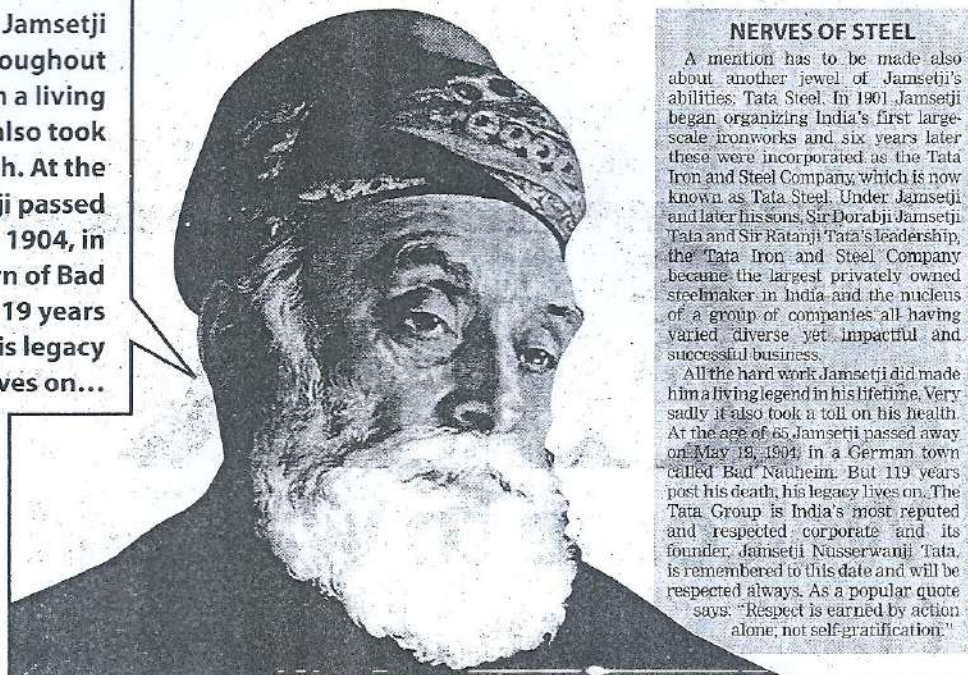
"Greatness lies not in ruling a people; it lies in being the cause of happiness in their lives." And one such legend, doyen and great individual of our Parsi community was late Jamsetji Tata.

A true jewel, Jamsetji Tata was born on Sunday, March 3, 1839, to Nusserwanji and Jeevanbai Tata in Navsari. He was born into a priestly family. He was born in poverty but never lost hope. As late renowned American poet Emily Dickinson said: "Hope is the thing with feathers that perches in the soul and sings the tune without the words and never stops at all."

Jamsetji fought all odds and never gave up. He had a formal western education and was particularly very gifted in mental arithmetic. He went to Bombay at the age of 14 and attended classes of various pundits, learning the 3 R's: Reduce, Reuse and Recycle. He joined Elphinstone College and completed his "Green Scholar" education, which is today's equivalent of graduation. Jamsetji developed a love for reading, which lasted all his life.

A little known fact is of Jamsetji escaping death during his Elphinstone College days. Staying with his father in a small house at Fort, during a terrible cyclone a hook in the house where he was moments ago tore away by the force of wind and came crashing down.

While studying, Jamsetji married Hirabai Daboo who was the daughter of Cursetji Daboo. This brought him new responsibilities and he was blessed with his first child, his elder son Dorabji, who was born when Jamsetji



### NERVES OF STEEL

A mention has to be made also about another jewel of Jamsetji's abilities: Tata Steel. In 1901 Jamsetji began organizing India's first large-scale ironworks and six years later these were incorporated as the Tata Iron and Steel Company, which is now known as Tata Steel. Under Jamsetji and later his sons, Sir Dorabji Jamsetji Tata and Sir Ratanji Tata's leadership, the Tata Iron and Steel Company became the largest privately owned steelmaker in India and the nucleus of a group of companies all having varied diverse yet impactful and successful business.

All the hard work Jamsetji did made him a living legend in his lifetime. Very sadly it also took a toll on his health. At the age of 65, Jamsetji passed away on May 19, 1904, in a German town called Bad Nauheim. But 119 years post his death, his legacy lives on. The Tata Group is India's most reputed and respected corporate and its founder, Jamsetji Nusserwanji Tata, is remembered to this date and will be respected always. As a popular quote says: "Respect is earned by action alone, not self-gratification."

## THE EXCITING JOURNEY OF JAMSETJI TATA'S ENTREPRENEURSHIP

was 20. And as finished studying from Elphinstone College in 1858 he joined his father Nusserwanji's export trading firm. With Nusserwanji's support he gained useful experience of various commodities and markets.

### FIRST STEPS

With his business acumen, sincerity, dedication and hard work Jamsetji impressed one and all. He had amazing self-belief. In 1869, when he was 29 and with 9 years of experience of working with his father, Jamsetji started a trading company with a capital of Rs. 21,000. This trading company later evolved into the Tata Group. His first expedition to England soon followed, where he learnt about the textile business. Jamsetji made inroads into textiles in 1869. He decided to acquire a derelict and bankrupt oil mill in Chinchpokli. With the help of a Borah Merchant, Sheikh Adam, he bought the old mill and renamed it Alexandra Mill in honour of the Prince of Wales and converted it into a cotton mill.

After making decent profit Jamsetji sold Alexandra Mill to Kesooji Naik who was a

renowned Bhatia mill owner and cotton merchant.

Jamsetji was going further in his career. He made a proper study of the Lancashire cotton trade. He focused on modern machinery. He travelled to various places like Egypt, Syria, Turkey, Russia and many others. He had a very good habit of keeping a diary and making notes. In 1872 he focused on cotton manufacturing and subsequently founded mills at Nagpur, Bombay and Coorla. His enterprises were noted for efficiency and also for good labor-protection policies and for the introduction of finer grades of fibre.

Jamsetji in 1874 floated a fresh enterprise, the Central India Spinning, Weaving and Manufacturing Company, with a seed capital of Rs. 1.5 lakh. Three years later his venture was ready to realize its destiny. On January 1, 1877, the day Queen Victoria was proclaimed Empress of India, the Empress Mills came into existence in Nagpur. By the age of 37, Jamsetji had embarked on the first of his many

fantastic odysseys.

As Jamsetji Tata became wealthier by the day, he never forgot humility and charity. He established the J.N. Tata Endowment in 1892. This helped Indian students of all caste and creed to pursue higher studies in England. By 1924 two of every five Indians coming into the Indian Civil Service were Tata Scholars. In 1896 he donated land for a research institute in Bangalore, and his sons ultimately established it in 1911—the Indian Institute of Science.

In 2021 the Hurun Report ranked Jamsetji Nusserwanji Tata as the biggest philanthropist in the last 100 years. Considering inflation, his donations were a staggering \$102.4 billion. God bless Jamsetji always, truly a remarkable individual.

### ULTIMATE LUXURY

The Tata group's jewel is the Taj Hotel. There was an interesting story of how Jamsetji built his dream hotel. He was denied entry into Watson Hotel, which then had only 'white' entry. Being a patriotic Indian, Jamsetji decided to build a

hotel where everyone, Indian or foreigners, could freely visit and thus Taj Hotel happened. In the beginning his sons, friends and business associates were skeptical. His sisters too chided him. The Taj Hotel started a new era in Asia. While building the Taj Mahal Hotel Jamsetji purchased two small islands near Uran, which were called Panjoo and Dongri. They were to be used as quarries for stone and rubble. The foundation of the Taj Hotel was laid in 1898 by Jamsetji Tata and the hotel opened its gates to guests on December 16, 1902, much before the foundation for the Gateway of India, which was laid on March 31, 1911.

The Taj Hotel was fully completed by 1903 and at that time cost a jaw dropping Rs. 4.2) crores. Taj Mahal Palace was the first building in Bombay to be lit by electricity. Taj was also India's first hotel to have American fans, German elevators, Turkish baths, English butlers and many amazing delights.

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