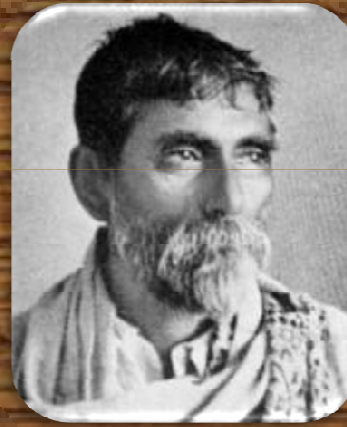


# Indian Ethics: A few case studies



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- **Ethics**: the four goals of human existence (*chaturvarga* or *purushartha*):

*Dharma*

*Artha* (wealth, prosperity)

*Kāma* (enjoyment)

*Moksha* (liberation, esp. from ignorance)

- **Values**:
  - satyam* (truth / truthfulness)
  - shivam* (goodness / auspiciousness)
  - sundaram* (beauty / pleasantness)

- *Trupti*, contentment: not asceticism but moderation.
- Respect of woman, parents, elders, guru.
- Respect of the other. Collaboration over competition.
- Modesty and self-effacement.

# Akbar's *Din-i-Ilahi* ("Divine Faith")

- Akbar wanted to "bind the multitudes of the inhabited world on the thread of unity" ... "that every class of mankind may become religious and worship God in accordance with the measure of their faith."
- "Every sect can assert its doctrine without apprehension, and everyone can worship God after his own fashion." (Abu-I-Fazl)





## Shivaji's letter to Aurangzeb of 1679 (in Persian)

... “It has recently come to my ears that, on the ground of the war with me having exhausted your wealth and emptied your treasury, your Majesty has ordered that money under the name of *jaziya* should be collected from the Hindus and the imperial needs supplied with it. May it please your Majesty! That architect of the fabric of empire, [Jalaluddin] Akbar Padishah, reigned with full power for 52 [lunar] years. He adopted the admirable policy of universal harmony in relation to all the various sects, such as Christians, Jews, Muslims, Dadu's followers, sky-worshippers, materialists, atheists, Brahmans and Jain priests.



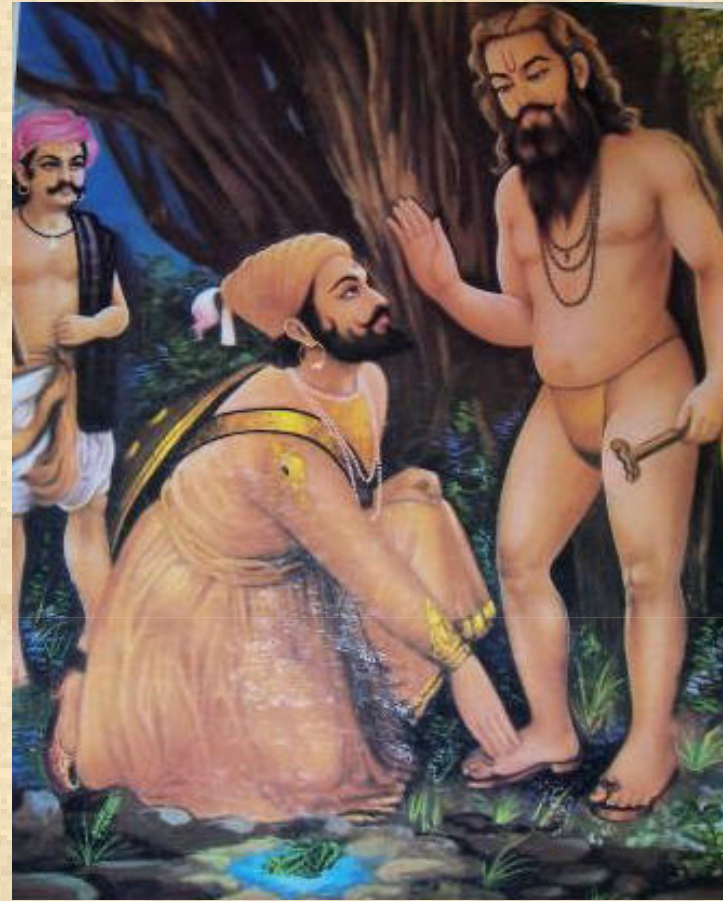
The aim of his liberal heart was to cherish and protect all the people. So, he became famous under the title of Jagat-Guru....

“They, too, had the power of levying the *jaziya*; but they did not give place to bigotry in their hearts, as they considered all men, high and low, created by God to be examples of the nature of diverse creeds and temperaments. ...

“But in your Majesty's reign, many of the forts and provinces have gone out of your possession, and the rest will soon do so too, because there will be no slackness on my part in ruining and devastating them. Your peasants are down-trodden; the yield of every village has declined—in the place of one lakh [of rupees] only one thousand, and in the place of a thousand only ten are collected, and that too with difficulty. ... How can the royal spirit permit you to add the hardship of the *jaziya* to this grievous state of things?

**“The infamy will quickly spread from west to east and become recorded in books of history that the Emperor of Hindusthan, coveting the beggars’ bowls, takes *jaziya* from Brahmans and Jain monks, yogis, *sannyasis*, *bairagis*, paupers, mendicants, ruined wretches, and the famine-stricken—that his valour is shown by attacks on the wallets of beggars—that he dashes down to the ground the name and honour of the Timurids!**

**“May it please your Majesty! If you believe in the true Divine Book and Word of God [i.e., the Koran], you will find there [that God is called] *Rabb-ul-alamin*, the Lord of all men, and not *Rabb-ul-musalmin*, the Lord of the Muhammadans only. Verily, Islam and Hinduism are terms of contrast. They are [diverse pigments] used by the true Divine Painter for blending the colours and filling in the outlines [of His picture of the entire human species].**



**Shivaji's value system was largely inculcated by his mother Jijabai and his contact with the Marathi saint and poet Ramdas (who composed a poem "Shivastuti" or "Praise of King Shivaji").**



# Bal Gangadhar Tilak (1856–1920)



- **Mathematics teacher, journalist, social reformer, lawyer, freedom fighter, among the first to advocate complete independence from the British: “Swaraj is my birthright and I shall have it.”**
- **He transformed the private worship of Ganesha into a mass public event.**
- **Founded the ‘Sri Shivaji Fund Committee’ for Shivaji’s death anniversary and got his tomb restored at Fort Raigad.**



- Wrote his monumental *Gītā Rahasya* in 1914 during his imprisonment at Mandalay (Burma).
- Before his 1897 trial, he “endorsed Sri Krishna’s teaching that killing was legitimate if done without selfish motive and for the good of society.”
- “Let us then try our utmost and leave the generations to come to enjoy that fruit. Remember, it is not you who had planted the mango-trees the fruit whereof you have tasted. Let the advantage now go to our children and their descendants. It is only given to us to toil and work. And so, there ought to be no relaxation in our efforts, lest we incur the curse of those that come after us.”

## **Indian ethos in business**

- **Much of Indian business is family-based and community-driven, with a culture promoting self-employment and entrepreneurship.**
- **India's traditional society prioritizes savings over consumption. Indian households (mostly women) possess \$200 billions of gold, about half of India's bank deposits.**
- **Trust is the foundation of traditional Indian business relationships: the case of the diamond carriers between Mumbai and Surat. The case of the Patels.**
- **The case of Mumbai's dabbawallas: 200,000 lunch boxes carried every day by some 5,000 dabbawalas for a nominal fee, with hardly any mix-up ever.**





## **Jamshedji N. Tata (1839-1904)**



- **Founded mills in Nagpur, turned a sick mill at Kurla into “Swadeshi Mill”.**
- **Founded the Taj Mahal hotel of Mumbai.**
- **Worked for scientific education and the industrial development of backward regions of the country. Was a pioneer of India’s new steel industry.**
- **Envisioned the Indian Institute of Science in Bangalore (inspired by Swami Vivekananda) and a steel plant in Jamshedpur.**

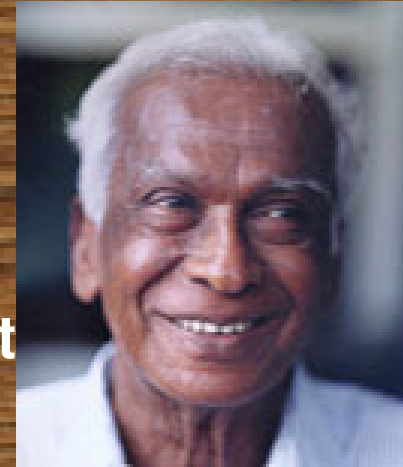


## **J.R.D. Tata (1904–1993)**

- **Founded the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research in 1945.**
- **Initiated a program of closer “employee association with management” to give workers a stronger voice in the affairs of the company.**
- **Instituted an eight-hour working day, free medical aid, workers’ provident scheme, and workmen’s accident compensation schemes. A worker was deemed to be “at work” the moment he left home for work till he returned home.**
- **Jamshedpur was selected as a UN Global Compact City because of the quality of life, sanitation, roads and welfare offered by Tata Steel.**



## **Dr. G. Venkataswamy (1918–2006) & Arvind Eye Hospitals**



- **Follower of Sri Aurobindo. Founded the first Aravind Eye Hospital at Madurai in 1977 “to eradicate needless blindness”.**
- **“Intelligence and capability are not enough. There must also be the joy of doing something beautiful. Being of service to God and humanity means going well beyond the sophistication of the best technology, to the humble demonstration of courtesy and compassion to each patient.”**
- **Developed mass marketing and surgical processes resembling an assembly line: 285,745 surgeries in 2007-08.**
- **The hospital provides free eye care to two-thirds of its patients from the revenue generated from its one-third paying patients.**

# Jagadis Chandra Bose (1858–1937)

- **Physicist, biologist, botanist and father of Bengali science fiction.**
- **Invented wireless transmission and discovered millimetre-length electro-magnetic waves (microwaves).**
- **Pioneered plant science, showed that plants have sensitivity and respond to stimuli, thus establishing parallels between animal and plant tissues.**



**J.C. Bose's letter to Rabindranath Tagore (17 May 1901)  
about his inventions related to wireless transmission:**

**“A short time before my lecture, a multi-millionaire proprietor of a very famous telegraph company telegraphed me with an urgent request to meet me. I replied that I had no time. In response he said that he is coming to meet me in person and within a short time he himself arrived with patent forms in hand. He made an earnest request to me not to divulge all valuable research results in today's lecture: “There is money in it — let me take out a patent for you. You do not know what money you are throwing away” etc. Of course, “I will only take half share in the profit — I will finance it” etc.**



**“This multi-millionaire has come to me like a beggar for making some more profits. Friend, you would have seen the greed and hankering after money in this country, — money, money — what a terrible all-pervasive greed ! If I once get sucked into this terrible trap, there won’t be any escape! See, the research that I have been dedicated to doing, is above commercial profits. I am getting older — I am not getting enough time to do what I had set out to do — I refused him.”**

- **One of his American friends persuaded him to file a U.S. patent application, which was granted in 1904. However, Bose refused to accept his rights and let the patent lapse.**
- **Indian value: Knowledge is no one’s personal property and must be shared at large.**

## **Praffula Chandra Ray (1861–1944)**

- **A pioneer of modern chemistry in India and the first historian of Indian chemistry. Taught chemistry at the Presidency College, where he created India's first laboratory of chemistry. In 1916, he joined the new University College of Science of the Calcutta University, and lived there in a room that had just the barest essentials, giving away most of his earnings to needy students and various charities.**
- **Founded many industries, beginning with Bengal Chemical & Pharmaceutical Works.**
- **He took part in the nationalist movement, declaring once: "There are occasions that demanded that I should leave the test-tube to attend to the call of the country. Science can wait, Swaraj cannot."**



- In 1923, Northern Bengal suffered a flood which made millions of people homeless and hungry. Prafulla Chandra organized Bengal Relief Committee, which collected nearly 2.5 million rupees in cash and kind and distributed it in the affected area in an organized manner.
- He donated money towards a Brahmo Girls' School and Indian Chemical Society, the establishment of the Nagarjuna Prize for chemistry and other awards.

### **Rabindranath Tagore on P.C. Ray:**

**“It is stated in the Upanishads that The One said, ‘I shall be Many’. The beginning of Creation is a move towards self-immolation. Prafulla Chandra has become many in his pupils and made his heart alive in the hearts of many. And that would not have been at all possible had he not unreservedly made a gift of himself.”**

## **Stories of ordinary Indians**

- **T. Jaishankar, the vegetable vendor in Dharavi, Mumbai's largest slum, worked hard for 40 years: starting with a monthly salary of Rs. 12/-, he ended up being a millionaire: "I look back at my journey with great satisfaction. I still live in Dharavi and will always live here."**
- **Khimjibhai Prajapati, a beggar in Mehsana who collected his entire savings of Rs. 3,000/- to donate clothes to 11 poor hearing and speech-impaired girls at a school for the deaf: "I just need two meals a day and some money to send back to my ailing wife in Rajkot. Apart from this, whatever I earn I use to buy food for poor, hungry people."**
- **Savitri rescued her husband Ajit Singh who had been kidnapped by Chambal valley dacoits.**



- **Young women of Sambalpur decided to start a movement to protect trees of a nearby from a local timber mafia. They tied rakhis to the trees on a Raksha Bandhan and took the pledge to protect their ‘tree-brothers’ as they would protect their blood brothers.**
- **Anil Joshi, an Ayurveda doctor in Fatehgarh (Madhya Pradesh) collected one rupee each from one lakh people and constructed a check dam across a local seasonal river, later at eleven more locations (and aiming at 100 such check dams in nearby villages).**
- **Rajendra Singh’s work restoring *johads* in Rajasthan.**

## **The heroic staff at the Taj Mahal Hotel**

- **The heroic response by employees of the Taj Hotel during the 26/11 terror attacks is now a case study at Harvard Business School that focuses on how they went beyond their call of duty to save lives.**
- **A dozen Taj employees died trying to save the lives of the hotel guests during the attacks. “Not even the senior managers could explain the behaviour of these employees, who knew all the back exits ... In the process, some of them, unfortunately, gave their lives to save guests.”**
- **The HBS study notes the Indian culture’s “guest is God” philosophy. “There is a much more paternalistic equation between employer and employee that creates a kinship. ... The Taj employees felt a sense of loyalty to the hotel as well as a sense of responsibility to the guests.”**

**Grenadier Yogendra Singh Yadav, the 'Hero of Tiger Hill', survived 15 bullets while capturing Tiger Hill in the Kargil War and was awarded the Param Vir Chakra for his role in securing this strategic hill. He was in hospital for 18 months before rejoining the army.**



**“I prayed to Ishwar to keep me alive long enough to save my comrades. ... I tried to see how to descend, when *Devi-shakti* appeared before me ... a being in white who said, ‘Son, roll down this *nalla* (gully).’ ...**

**“When, with full faith, a man surrenders everything he has to accomplish a certain task, and this, without reserve, (ulterior) motive or calculation, certainly then, an inner strength, a *shakti*, arises in him. ...**

**“It is a fact that in Kargil we had surrendered ourselves fully to our task, we were fully aware that we could lose our lives, but we still surrendered ourselves to the task ahead with complete faith in the Lord. ...**



# Environmental ethics

- **Divinity (sacredness) of the earth**
- **Greed to be controlled**
- **Interconnectedness of all creatures**
- **Non-hurting**
- **Quest for beauty**

## The Bishnois' sacrifice:

In 1730 at Khejadli (Rajasthan): 363 women, children and men laid down their lives to protest against the cutting of Khejadli trees. Led by Amrita Devi and her three young daughters, they died chanting one of their Guru's teachings: *Sar Santey Rookh Rahe To Bhi Sasto Jaan* — "If a tree is saved even at the cost of one's head, it is worth it."

The Maharaja of Jodhpur apologized and prohibited the cutting of trees and hunting of animals in all Bishnoi villages.

