The Tata Group comprises of 30 companies across 10 verticals, the revenue together of which is over US$100 billion. This book traces the fascinating story of the Tatas from 1868 to 2018 and introduces us to the legends who have kept the Tata flag flying high for 150 years and running!
In a free enterprise, the community is not just another stakeholder in business, but is in fact the very purpose of its existence.

- Jamsetji Tata

Picture (left to right): The four partners - Jamsetji Tata, Founder of the Tata Group; R. D. Tata, father of J. R. D. Tata; Sir Ratan Tata, younger son of the Founder; and Sir Dorabji Tata, elder son of the Founder.
Come on, Mitali. You have been with Tata for a decade now.

In retrospect, I would have loved to though.

Yes, but I didn’t start my career with them.

TATA! TATA! TATA! What’s so great about the Tatas anyway?

Well, that’s a long story, Kayaan. 150 years long to be exact.

150 years?

That’s how old the Tata Group is. Would you like to hear their story?

Story time? Yes! Yes! Yes!
There's tremendous scope for Indian companies in the textile industry. We can give the British a run for their money.

With my newfound knowledge, it's time to scale up the business. First, I need to find the perfect place to headquarter my operations.

In 1869, he bought an old run-down oil mill in Bombay's Chinchpokli and converted into a cotton mill called Alexandra Mill.

Two years later, he sold the mill for a nice profit and took a trip to London where he studied the cotton trade exhaustively.

With my newfound knowledge, it's time to scale up the business. First, I need to find the perfect place to headquarter my operations.

Jamsetji locked in on Nagpur as his new headquarters. This was because of three reasons.

*Now known as Mumbai
In 1877, at the age of 37, Jamsetji started Empress Mill, marking the first of many iconic establishments.

Wow! Jamsetji sound’s like a super smart guy!

Jamsetji was a true visionary. He understood the value of a good education and how it would help make India self-reliant.

“In 1892, he set up an endowment scheme to help young Indian scholars study abroad. He set aside almost 30 lakhs from his personal fortune for this.

Tata Scholars over the years have included...

...Physicist Raja Ramanna...

...Astrophysicist Jayant Narlikar...

...Physicist Raja Ramanna...

...And Playwright Girish Karnad...

One could say this fund was a precursor to the numerous trusts that the Tatas began since. Today, all of them are known collectively under one name—the prestigious Tata Trusts.
Today, the Tata Trusts own 66% of the equity share capital of Tata Sons, the apex company of the group. This helps the trusts channel back the company’s profits for the benefit of the community.

What else did Jamsetji do?

You remember how we went to the Taj Hotel for Dadaji’s birthday last month? Guess who’s idea that was?

It was Jamsetji’s idea to take Dadaji to the Taj Hotel?

Ha ha ha! Your mother is talking about the hotel itself. There are many legends behind Jamsetji’s motivation to build the Taj Hotel.

Some say it was because he was refused entry to the prestigious Watson’s hotel because of his skin colour.

You remember how we went to the Taj Hotel for Dadaji’s birthday last month? Guess who’s idea that was?

What else did Jamsetji do?

But to lift up the best and most gifted, so as to make them of the greatest service to the country.

Some say it was because he was refused entry to the prestigious Watson’s hotel because of his skin colour.

“It still operates on Jamsetji’s vision of proactive philanthropy and his approach to “giving”.”
*Now known as Mumbai*

*Bombay* needs a hotel worthy of her, Jamsetji. Only you can make that a reality.

Others say it was at the insistence of a Times of India editor. Whatever the reason, when it was finished in 1903, India had never seen a hotel as magnificent. It cost over four crores, an unimaginable sum in those days.

Wow! How many zeroes are there in a crore, Ma? Let’s just say a lot, Kayaan!

Jamsetji had three big dreams in his life...

...First, to set up an iron and steel company...

...Second, to generate clean hydro-electricity for his beloved city, Bombay...

...And third, to create a world class educational institution for Indians dedicated to science.

While he worked tirelessly towards realising all three, unfortunately they did not come to fruition in his lifetime. He passed away in 1904.

“...While he worked tirelessly towards realising all three, unfortunately they did not come to fruition in his lifetime. He passed away in 1904.”
So, what happened then?

"The Tata empire was taken over by his elder son Dorabji, with the help of Jamsetji’s cousin RD Tata and younger son Ratan Tata."

How, Dadaji?

"Well, in 1907, they set up Tata’s first company overseas called Tata Limited in London."

They made his vision a reality, besides adding their own flourish to the Tata legacy.

"That same year, 1907, Dorabji also started the Tata Iron and Steel Company (now Tata Steel) and set up India’s first integrated iron and steel plant in Sakchi, which would later become Jamshedpur."
In one letter, he wrote...

Be sure to lay wide streets planted with shady trees, every other of a quick-growing variety.

Be sure that there is plenty of space for lawns and gardens; reserve large areas for football, hockey, and parks.

Earmark areas for Hindu temples, Muhammad mosques, and Christian churches.

Wait, Jamshedpur? After Jamsetji?

Exactly! It was in 1919 that the city was renamed in honour of the Tata founder. He had a fantastic vision for the city, evident from his many letters to Dorabji about it.
Okay, so iron and steel were taken care of. What about his other dreams?

I think it was in 1910 that the first of the three Tata electric companies was set up. It was called the Tata Hydro-Electric Power Supply Company. A few years later, the Andhra Valley Power Supply Company was set up, followed by Tata Power in 1920.

1919 actually. These merged with Tata Power in the year 2000, making it India's largest power generation company.

India's largest?

Yes, India's largest!

Meanwhile, in 1911, the Indian Institute of Science was finally established, just like Jamsetji had dreamed.
OF COURSE, THE ROAD TILL THERE WAS NOT AN EASY ONE. JAMSETJI HIMSELF HAD STARTED PLANNING FOR IT IN THE LATE 1800S, AFTER HEARING A SPEECH BY LORD REAY, THE THEN GOVERNOR OF BOMBAY.

FOR INDIA TO TRULY PROGRESS, WE WILL NEED "REAL UNIVERSITIES"...

IN 1893, HE HAD AN ACCIDENTAL MEETING WITH SWAMI VIVEKANANDA WHERE HE FIRST DISCUSSED HIS IDEA OF SETTING UP A RESEARCH INSTITUTE.

IN 1896, HE WROTE TO LORD REAY, PROMISING HALF HIS PERSONAL FORTUNE, 14 BUILDINGS AND FOUR LANDED PROPERTIES TO SET UP HIS DREAM. TWO YEARS LATER, HE SET UP A PROVINCIAL COMMITTEE TO IMPLEMENT HIS VISION.

LEGEND HAS IT THAT THE THEN VICEROY GENERAL OF INDIA, LORD CURZON OPPOSED THE IDEA AND JAMSETJI MET HIS SUPERIORS IN ENGLAND TO GET THE BALL ROLLING.

“WITH THE HELP OF THE DIWAN OF MYSORE AT THE TIME, JAMSETJI CONVINCED THE MYSORE GOVERNMENT TO DONATE LAND FOR THE INSTITUTION IN BANGALORE.

*Now known as Mumbai
After Jamsetji’s death, the project was again stalled. It was in 1909 that the colonial government finally gave a Vesting Order, allowing for its establishment.

So, iron and steel, hydro power and a science school. All three of his dreams were realised. What then?

Well, under Dorab’s guidance, the Tata group entered the consumer goods industry with the Tata Oil Mills Company to make soaps, detergents, and cooking oils.

“They also ventured into insurance with the New India Assurance Company in 1919.

In 1932, Nowroji Saklatwala took the reigns of the Tata group which by now also included two cement companies and an aviation unit.”
Didn’t Dorabji or Ratanji have children of their own, Papa ji?

No, they didn’t. When Dorabji passed away, he left behind his entire fortune, including a 40% stake in Tata Sons, to the Sir Dorabji Tata Trust which was to be formed after his death.

“He also donated all his personal belongings, including his wife’s Jubilee diamond, said to be two times larger than the Kohinoor.

The Sir Dorabji Tata Trust became a driving force behind setting up many of India’s premier institutions today, such as...

...the Tata Institute of Social Sciences...

...the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research...

...the Tata Memorial Centre that specialises in cancer research...

...the National Centre for Performing Arts...
Ratanji’s adopted son, Naval Tata, and RD’s son, Jehangir, fondly called JRD, were working their way up the ladder within Tata when Nowroji took over.

“Did you know that the aviation unit was actually JRD’s idea?”

After Nowroji passed away unexpectedly in 1938, JRD took over as chairman of the group, a post he held until the early 90s.

If the first half of the Tata story was shaped by Jamsetji, the latter half was shaped by JRD Tata!

“You said it, Mitali! JRD was a force of nature!”

“Did you know that the aviation unit was actually JRD’s idea?”
"Yes, they did. JRD was a qualified pilot himself and an avid fan of flying. Tata Airlines started as a mail service, ferrying air mail between Karachi and Madras*, via Bombay** and Ahmedabad.

JRD himself piloted the first flight from Karachi to Bombay’s* Juhu aerodrome, from where it continued to Madras* piloted by his friend Nevill Vintcent.

Really? I thought it was started by Dorabji?

Under his supervision, yes. It was JRD’s old boss and mentor from Tata Steel, John Petersen, who convinced Dorabji to let JRD go ahead.

Wait! Aviation unit? Tata had planes back then?

“Under his supervision, yes. It was JRD’s old boss and mentor from Tata Steel, John Petersen, who convinced Dorabji to let JRD go ahead. JRD himself piloted the first flight from Karachi to Bombay’s* Juhu aerodrome, from where it continued to Madras* piloted by his friend Nevill Vintcent."
Soon after, domestic services were started to Trivandrum* and Delhi, followed by flights to Ceylon.**

Because you took a flight with them last year. The name is Air India!

Post the Second World War, the company was taken public under a new name. Do you know what that name is, Kayaan?

I don’t know, Dadaji. How would I know?

Because you took a flight with them last year. The name is Air India!

Wait! JRD Tata started Air India? But I thought it was a government airline.

*This map is a generalized illustration only, and is not intended to be used for reference purposes. The representation of political boundaries and the names of geographical features do not necessarily reflect the position of the Government of India on international issues of recognition, sovereignty, jurisdiction or nomenclature. **Now known as Thiruvananthapuram *Now known as Sri Lanka
In 1939, the Tata Group started Tata Chemicals, which is now the world’s third largest producer of soda ash.

In 1945, Tata Industries was set up for the promotion and creation of high-tech industries.
That same year, JRD also made his uncle proud.

“In 1945, JRD took his uncle’s vision of academic excellence in India one step further by setting up the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research.”

The institution was to become the cradle of India’s atomic programmes.

“Thats a product of JRD’s entrepreneurial vision as well. In 1945 itself, JRD set up the Tata Engineering and Locomotive Company."

Dadaji, what about Tata’s cars and jeeps? Who set that up?”
Initially, it was focused on building locomotive engines for the Indian Railways, churning out 100 locomotives a year with 98% indigenous parts.

However, JRD soon realised the limitation of this arrangement and allied with Daimler Benz to start making trucks.

While the first ones were made from Daimler spare parts, the Tatas set up forges and foundries to manufacture all the parts by themselves.

In 1986, the Tata 407, India’s first light commercial vehicle, was launched.

Today, more than half of the medium and heavy commercial vehicles on Indian roads are made by Tata, with almost 100% of parts involved produced in-house.

“Well, it was in 1998 that the Tata Indica was launched. It was India’s first fully indigenously developed car, and marked Tata’s entry into the passenger car segment. But so much else had happened in the years between.”

And the cars?
See that?
The AC? Yeah, I see it.
What brand is it?
It's a Voltas, Dadaji. So, what?
Wait, Voltas is a Tata brand?
Who do you think owns Voltas?

"It was in 1954 that the Tata group collaborated with Volkart Brothers to set up Voltas. Today, it is the largest air-conditioning brand in India!"

Wow! I never realised there was a Tata touch to everything around me!

"That's the beauty of the Tata Group. It is everywhere, trying to make life better for all Indians in all aspects."
Chai? What does Tata have to do with chai?

"Haven't you heard of Tata Tea, Kayaan? That was started in 1962 under the original name of Tata Finlay. Nowadays, the company is called Tata Global Beverages and is one of the largest tea producers in the world."

I never knew that!

Sorry, Dadaji, that's my alarm. During weekdays, this is when I'm supposed to start my homework.
That's a nice watch. What make is it?

It's a Zoop, Dadaji. Cool, no?

Titan Zoop, Kayaan.

You've been carrying a little bit of Tata's legacy on your wrist all this time.

"Ha ha ha! The Titan Company was set up in 1984 by Tata and the Tamil Nadu Industrial Development Corporation.

Titan is owned by Tata as well? It's like Tata makes everything in the world!

Today, they make designer watches, eyewear, bags, even jewellery.

Jewellery?
Wow! Is there anything Tata doesn’t do?

The list grows smaller every day, young man. The Tata Group has always prided itself in seeing potential in game-changing tech and services and making the first play.

Do you remember how we went to get my passport renewed a few months back? There also, there was a little bit of Tata magic.

“YES, BRANDS LIKE TANISHQ AND MIA ARE ALSO OWNED BY TITAN!”

Tata was the first to enter the software services industry with Tata Consultancy Services in 1968.

“Today, TCS has over 400,000 associates and is the second-most valuable IT company in the world after IBM.”

“All Passport Seva Kendras in the country are supported by TCS to make the process faster and more efficient.”
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They are efficient.
I remember your renewed passport reached us so fast!

THE TATAS WERE AMONG THE FIRST TO SEE SOLAR POWER AS COMMERCIALLY VIABLE, SETTING UP TATA BP SOLAR IN CONJUNCTION WITH BP SOLAR IN 1989.

Today, the company is a 100% subsidiary of Tata Power called Tata Power Solar.

In 1996, Tata again was among the first to foray into the telecom sector with Tata Teleservices.

By 2002, Tata even acquired a 25% stake in VSNL from the government of India. This is what is now known as Tata Communications.

So, all of this happened under JRD?

“Mostly, yes. JRD served as chairman till 1991 when he was 87 years old. He changed the way industries worked.”
JRD Tata cared greatly for his workers. Way back in 1956, he initiated a programme to give workers a stronger voice in the affairs of the company.

There was this incident during Sir Dorabji’s tenure as chairman when Gandhiji himself made a visit to Jamshedpur in 1925. The Tata group has always firmly believed in employee welfare and promoted the principles of an eight-hour working day, free medical aid and workers’ provident fund scheme.

In a speech he gave to the workers, Gandhiji vouched for the Tatas’ commitment to worker welfare.

* Excerpted from **DAY-TO-DAY WITH GANDHI** Vol-7 (23rd May 1925 To 28th December 1925) by Mahadev H. Desai
“JRD was the one who initiated workmen’s accident compensation schemes. All these measures were the norm at Tata, well before they became laws.”

“...But JRD sought to give these positions based on merit. He gave up chairmanship of various Tata subsidiaries, appointing people in his place who had given their blood, sweat and tears to make those companies the successes they were.

That’s how the Tata group became a truly world-class business empire, with a galaxy of highly qualified chief executives.”

TATA STEEL
TATA MOTORS
TATA TEA
TITAN
TATA CONSULTANCY SERVICES

Through all his efforts, JRD made himself truly different from his contemporaries.
“That’s why, even today, JRD is the only Indian industrialist in the history of the country to have received the Bharat Ratna, the highest civilian honour in India!”

“So, what happened after JRD?

He was also someone who had come up the long way within the Tata Group, starting on the shop floor of Tata Steel, involving himself even in shovelling limestone and handling the blast furnace.

“AFTER HE TOOK OVER, OVERLAPPING OPERATIONS IN GROUP COMPANIES WERE STREAMLINED INTO A CONSOLIDATED WHOLE.

“The chairmanship of the group was given to Ratan Tata, great-grandson of Jamsetji. His father was Naval Tata, the adopted son of Jamsetji’s younger son, Ratan.”
HIS STRATEGY WORKED WONDERS! DURING THE 21 YEARS HE WAS IN CHARGE, THE TATA GROUP’S REVENUES WENT UP MANIFOLD.

RATAN TATA’S TENURE WAS MARKED BY THE SHEER NUMBER OF INTERNATIONAL BRANDS HE ACQUIRED AND PARTNERED WITH, MAKING VALUABLE ADDITIONS TO THE TATA PORTFOLIO. THIS IS WHAT REALLY MADE THE INDIA-CENTRIC TATA GROUP A GLOBAL PLAYER.

IN 2000, TATA TEA ACQUIRED THE FAMED TETLEY TEA BRAND BASED IN THE UK.

AROUND THE SAME TIME, THEY RE-ENTERED THE INSURANCE GAME FORMING AN ALLIANCE WITH AIG INSURANCE.”

2004 SAW TATA ACQUIRE THE HEAVY VEHICLES UNIT OF DAEWOO MOTORS IN SOUTH KOREA.

Tata Chemicals acquired a controlling stake in Brunner Mond Group in 2006 which became their Europe face, and in 2008, they acquired General Chemical Industrial Products Inc, now known as Tata Chemicals North America.

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“In 2010, they also acquired a 100% stake in leading vacuum salt producer, British Salt.

Subsequently, Tata Chemicals also launched Tata Swach, a nanotech based water purifier that runs on no fuel or electricity.

“Subsequently, Tata Chemicals also launched Tata Swach, a nanotech based water purifier that runs on no fuel or electricity.”

They also launched I-Shakti Dals, India’s first national brand of pulses, which has now been rechristened as Tata Sampann.

“Subsequently, Tata Chemicals also launched Tata Swach, a nanotech based water purifier that runs on no fuel or electricity.”

“Tata Steel acquired the Singapore-based steel company NatSteel in 2005 and the UK-based Corus Group in 2007.”
Ratan Tata’s most high-profile acquisition has to be Jaguar-Land Rover from the Ford Motor Company in 2008.”

What else did Ratan Tata do, Dadaji?

Yup, they are part of Tata Motors now! Just like the Tata Nano!

Jaguar and Land Rover belong to Tata?

What else did Ratan Tata do, Dadaji?

Well, he set up Tata Sky in 2006! Without that, how will Kayaan watch his favourite cartoons?

MOM!
In 2011, the Tata Medical Center was established in Kolkata as a comprehensive cancer care and treatment facility.

Ratan Tata also set up Tata Capital in 2007, as a new Tata company in the financial sector.

In 2012, Tata Global Beverages partnered with Starbucks to bring the international coffee chain to India.

In 2014, the Tata Group partnered with AirAsia, launching the low-cost carrier AirAsia India, and then with Singapore Airlines, launching the full-service airline, Vistara.
The Tata group has kept soaring since, with a global presence in over 100 countries. They recently launched a brand-new line of SUVs and compact SUVs like the Hexa and the Nexon, both doing remarkably well.

Tata Steel has set up modern India's largest single location greenfield steel project in Kalinganagar in Odisha.

Tata also supplies vehicles for the Indian armed forces and has tie-ups with global aerospace companies such as Boeing and Sikorsky.

Among other things, the Tata Trusts are playing a crucial role in setting up the National Cancer Grid, allowing cancer care centres across the India to interact real time.

Meanwhile, the work done by the Tata Trusts has been quite remarkable as well.
"Along with Google, they have developed an Internet Saathi program for increasing digital literacy among rural women.

Even today, the Trusts embody the giving spirit of Jamsetji, putting the country and community first."

Phew! The story of the Tatas is so fascinating. They sure did a lot in 150 years!

True! But given my experience working with them, I feel this is just the beginning.

Exactly! So, Kayaan, now do you get what’s so exciting about the Tata group?

Completely!
Tata Building India school essay competition is one of the key initiatives undertaken by the Tata Group to motivate the youth of India and instill the value of nation building. It has become India’s largest school essay competition, currently reaching nearly 5 million students in classes 6-12, across 13 languages and around 10000 schools, who express their thoughts on a given topic of national significance. The essays are evaluated first at the school level and then winning essays are evaluated for city and national levels, with the national winners getting an opportunity to meet a national dignitary and visit Rashtrapati Bhavan in New Delhi.

The national winners of the first edition of Tata Building India school essay competition with the then President of India Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam at Rashtrapati Bhavan in New Delhi

"The ignited mind of the youth is the most powerful resource on the earth, above the earth & under the earth."

– Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam in the interaction with the competition winners

www.tatabuildingindia.com
The journey of India’s most illustrious business empire began in 1868 when a young Jamsetji Tata set up a small trading company in erstwhile Bombay. Today, the Tata Group comprises of 30 companies across 10 verticals, the revenue together of which is over US$100 billion.

This book traces the fascinating story of the Tatas from 1868 to 2018 and introduces us to the legends who have kept the Tata flag flying high for 150 years and running!