



PRESS RELEASE

"A personal journey to remind India of the ill-fated S.S. Tilawa tragedy"

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As we come to the end of 2022, I look back with fondness at how far my father and I have come over 15 years with our journey to bring greater awareness of the ill-fated S.S. Tilawa forgotten tragedy. In order to bring back the memories of this incident to present times it was our aim to start with reminding the Indian people of a piece of their heritage and history from the Second World War. With the support of the Maritime Mumbai Museum Society (MMMS), we were able to organize the first ever commemoration to officially acknowledge the tragedy, and memorialize the loss of 280 lives. The event was held at the Grand Hotel, Ballard Estate, South Mumbai on the 80th anniversary November 23rd. The Ballard Estate was the perfect location for this historic occasion since S.S. Tilawa last left the nearby Ballard Pier on November 20th 1942, and the 678 survivors were brought back here on November 27th. The iconic Grand Hotel was a fitting place to the commemoration since it was in use during the Second World War, and it is possible that some of the crew or wealthy passengers stayed at this hotel before boarding for Tilawa's final voyage.

The week of November 21st 2022 was action packed. Following a boat cruise tour of the Ballard Pier with Captain Kapildev Bahl, President of MMMS, we visited the Seaman's Club War Memorial. In the commonwealth war grave memorial book, we were able to locate several staff who worked on board S.S. Tilawa and sadly lost their lives during the Japanese twice torpedo attack. Next we had 2 radio interviews including Radio One with Hrishikesh Kannan, as well holding a press conference at the Mumbai Press Club. It was also quite exciting to meet Mr. Amitabh Bachchan at KBC Studio where he was shooting one of his episodes of Kaun Banega Crorepati. The Bollywood legend was born 80 years ago, a month before the Tilawa incident. My father and I were able to present to Mr. Bachchan a small memento plaque of the 80th commemoration.



The highlight of my 5 days in India of course was the commemoration itself on Wednesday November 23rd. The event was attended by over 100 people including high-ranking retired Indian Naval officers, Commodore Koshy, Bollywood legend Mr. Johnny Lever, and chief guest the British Deputy High Commissioner Mr. Alan Gemmell, OBE, and his team. It was a privilege to have one of three known survivors Mr. Arvindbhai Jani, now age 83. He was 3 years old and rescued by his mother, the late Mrs. Vasantben L. Jani.

My father (aka Kash Kumar, U.K. radio broadcaster) was MC for the evening. Vice President Mrs. Anita Yewale of MMMS gave an introductory speech on the role of the museum, its work, and how their leadership team became involved with assisting us organize this commemoration. I had the privilege to deliver the 40 minute keynote address which included moving interviews from families connected to Tilawa who could not attend including Mrs. Tejparkash Kaur Manget now age 90 living in Cincinnati Ohio. Her daughter Rooney Manget contacted me a couple of days before the commemoration. They had seen our story on ITV news London, and contacted us right away. Mr. Mervyn Maciel age 93 living in South London U.K. sent a video message. He lost his parents and 3 young siblings to the Tilawa incident. The next speech was given by the British Deputy High Commissioner, Mr. Alan Gemmell, OBE. He commended our family for our efforts, mentioned the support of His Majesty's Government, acknowledged the loss of life, and the rescue efforts of HMS Birmingham and SS Carthage. His comments included a pledge to place a Tilawa wreath at the Mumbai High Commission in November each year. His speech concluded with reading a moving poem written by Mr. Maciel at age 14 about Tilawa's tragedy. After a moment's silence, my father interviewed Mr. Jani, his wife, and daughter. Mr. Gemmell presented a commemoration plaque to Mr. Jani, and Mr. Lever did the same for the owners of the Grand Hotel.

After arriving back home in Toronto, I received an encouraging letter from the U.K. Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's office. The tragedy was acknowledged, our efforts commended, mentioning of the commemoration and Mr. Gemmell's support, and commitment to the Tilawa wreath. In response to that letter, I asked Mr. Sunak for his support with access to archives, featuring Tilawa in U.K. maritime museums, etc. I also wrote to the Prime Ministers of India and Japan to provide us similar support, and acknowledge the tragedy. We shall see what happens in 2023.

On December 20th, we received an email from Mr. Pravin Patel of Canada notifying us that his father Mr. Chotoo Khoosal, now age 98,



was a survivor of Tilawa. He was 18 at the time, and newly married. Mr. Khoosal has moved back to Bardoli, Gujarat, to spend his remaining life in his motherland. We recently held a zoom interview, and heard some fascinating details of his recollections of the tragedy. We were sad to know Mr. Khoosal and his son were in India during the commemoration, and it would have been incredible to have them join us. Holding such interviews allow to relive the incident, and get a better sense for what took place. Gaining historical accuracy is very important to our various initiatives.

In all, 2022 has been a productive year. In 2023 we have several initiatives planned. We hope to hold the 81st commemoration in London U.K. I am working on a movie script with an award winning writer. I have been in contact with the Greenwich maritime museum in London U.K., and also working with a team in South Africa to produce a documentary.

I have already set up a Tilawa family whatsapp group for many around the world to connect with fellow descendants of victims. It has been wonderful to read the many heartfelt expressions of appreciation, and see the group build a warm rapport.

Tilawa 1942 The Forgotten Tragedy and our website tilawa1942.com is beyond a one time project. It has become a comprehensive resource and mission to increase awareness, memorialize the loss of life, help bring closure to hundreds of families, and continue to seek answers as to why this tragedy took place.

Photographs available on our website tilawa1942.com

Please visit www.tilawa1942.com for a comprehensive review on S.S. Tilawa. Any remaining survivors, descendants of victim's, or others with information are encouraged to share what they know and email info@tilawa1942.com

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