



Following is a note written by Lakshmi Mittal after his visit to TISCO recently.

Lakshmi Mittal:

- Undisputed King of World Steel
 - 5th Richest Man, per the Forbes List of Billionaires (2006)
 - Richest Indian in the World, with an estimated fortune of \$27.7 billion
 - Richest in UK according to the Sunday Times Rich List 2006, with a net worth of £14.8 billion.
 - 2006 Person of the Year, per The Financial Times
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".....I visited Jamshedpur over the weekend to see for myself an India that is fast disappearing despite all the wolf-cries of people like Narayanamurthy and his ilk. It is one thing to talk and quite another to do and I am delighted to tell you that Ratan Tata has kept alive the legacy of perhaps India's finest industrialist J.N. Tata. Something that some people doubted when Ratan took over the House of the Tata's but in hindsight, the best thing to have happened to the Tata's is unquestionably Ratan. I was amazed to see the extent of corporate philanthropy and this is no exaggeration.

For the breed that talks about corporate social responsibility and talks about the role of corporate India, a visit to Jamshedpur is a must. Go there and see the amount of money they pump into keeping the town going; see the smiling faces of workers in a region known for industrial unrest; see the standard of living in a city that is almost isolated from the mess in the rest of the country.

This is not meant to be a puff piece. I have nothing to do with Tata Steel, but I strongly believe the message of hope and the message of goodness that they are spreading is worth sharing. The fact that you do have companies in India which look at workers as human beings and who do not blow their software trumpet of having changed lives. In fact, I asked Mr. Muthuraman, the managing director, as to why he was so quiet about all they had done and all he could offer in return was a smile wrapped in humility, which said it all. They have done so much more since I last visited Jamshedpur, which was in 1992. The town has obviously got busier but the values thankfully haven't changed.

The food is still as amazing as it always was and I gorged, as I would normally do. I visited the plant and the last time I did that was with Russi Mody. But the plant this time was gleaming and far from what it used to be.

Greener and cleaner and a tribute to environment management. You could have been in the mountains. Such was the quality of air I inhaled! There was no belching smoke; no tired faces and so many more women workers, even on the shop floor. This is true gender equality and not the kind that is often espoused at seminars organised by angry activists. I met so many old friends. Most of them have aged but not grown old. There was a spring in the air which came from a certain calmness which has always been the hallmark of Jamshedpur and something I savoured for a full two days in between receiving messages of how boring and decrepit the lack lustre Fashion Week was.

Jamshedji Nusserwanji Tata had created an edifice that is today a robust company and it is not about profits and about valuation. It is not about who becomes a millionaire and who doesn't. It is about getting the job done with dignity and respect keeping the age-old values intact and this is what I learnt.

I jokingly asked someone as to whether they ever thought of joining an Infosys or a Wipro and pat came the reply: "We are not interested in becoming crorepatris [millionaires] but in making others crorepatris [millionaires]."

Which is exactly what the Tata's have done for years in and around Jamshedpur. Very few people know that Jamshedpur has been selected as a UN Global Compact City, edging out the other nominee from India, Bangalore. Selected because of the quality of life, because of the conditions of sanitation and roads and welfare. If this is not a tribute to industrial India, then what is? Today, India needs several Jamshedpurs but it also needs this Jamshedpur to be given its fair due, its recognition. I am tired of campus visits being publicised to the Infosys and the Wipro's of the world.

Modern India is being built in Jamshedpur as we speak. An India built on the strength of core convictions and nothing was more apparent about that than the experiment with truth and reality that Tata Steel is conducting at Pipla.

Forty-eight tribal girls (yes, tribal girls who these corrupt and evil politicians only talk about but do nothing for) are being educated through a residential program over nine months. I went to visit them and I spoke to them in a language that they have just learnt: Bengali. Eight weeks ago, they could only speak in Sainthali, their local dialect. But today, they are brimming with a confidence that will bring tears to your eyes. It did to mine.

One of them has just been selected to represent Jharkand in the state archery competition. They have their own women's football team and what's more they are now fond of education. It is a passion and not a burden.

This was possible because I guess people like Ratan Tata and Muthurman haven't sold their souls to some business management drivel, which tells us that we must only do business and nothing else. The fact that not one Tata executive has been touched by the Naxalites in that area talks about the social respect that the Tata's have earned.

The Tata's do not need this piece to be praised and lauded. My intent is to share the larger picture that we so often miss in the haze of the slime and sleaze that politics imparts. My submissions to those who use phrases such as "feel-good" and "India Shining" is first visit Jamshedpur to understand what it all means. See Tata Steel in action to know what companies can do if they wish to. And what corporate India needs to do.

Murli Manohar Joshi would be better off seeing what Tata Steel has done by creating the Xavier Institute of Tribal Education rather than by proffering excuses for the imbroglio in the IIMs. This is where the Advanis and Vajpayees need to pay homage. Not to all the Sai Babas and the Hugging saints that they are so busy with. India is changing inspite of them and they need to realise that.

I couldn't have spent a more humane and wonderful weekend. Jamshedpur is an eye-opener and a role model, which should be made mandatory for replication. I saw corporate India actually participate in basic nation-building, for when these tribal girls go back to their villages, they will return with knowledge that will truly be life-altering. Corporate India can do it but most of the time is willing to shy away.

For those corporate leaders who are happier winning awards and being interviewed on their choice of clothes, my advise is visit Tata Steel, spend some days at Jamshedpur and see a nation's transformation. That is true service and true nationalism.

Tata Steel will celebrate 100 years of existence in 2007. It won't be just a milestone in this company's history. It will be a milestone, to my mind of corporate transparency and generosity in this country. It is indeed fitting that Ratan Tata today heads a group which has people who are committed to nation-building than just building influence and power.

JRD must be smiling wherever he is. And so must Jamshedji Nusserwanji. These people today have literally climbed every last blue mountain. And continue to do so with vigour and passion. Thank god for the Tata's !"