

62

**Sir Vithaldas  
THACKERSEY**

---

---

---

BIRTH CENTENARY SOUVENIR

SIR VITHALDAS THACKERSEY  
BIRTH CENTENARY  
S O U V E N I R

Published on the occasion  
of the  
INAUGURAL FUNCTION

December 23, 1972

*“ To call woman the weaker sex is a libel; it is man’s injustice to woman. If by strength is meant brute strength, then indeed is woman less brute than man. If by strength is meant moral power, then woman is immeasurably man’s superior. Has she not got greater intuition, is she not self-sacrificing, has she not got greater power of endurance, has she not got greater courage? Without her, man could not be. If non-violence is the law of our being, the future is with woman.”*

**—Mahatma Gandhi**

## MESSAGES

---

I am glad to know that the birth centenary of Shri Vithaldas Thackersey will be celebrated at Bombay on the 23rd December, 1972. I send my best wishes for the success of the celebrations and hope that Shri Thackersey's life and work would be a source of inspiration to many young entrepreneurs in our country.

V. V. GIRI  
*President of India*

\* \* \*

The Vice-President sends his best wishes for the success of the Inaugural Function of the Birth Centenary Year of Sir Vithaldas Thackersey to be held on the 23rd December, 1972.

G. S. PATHAK  
*Vice-President of India*

\* \* \*

Shri Vithaldas Thackersey was a person of great practical vision. Apart from rising to the top in the world of business, he championed many worthy causes, specially education, professional training and social service. He was convinced of the contribution which women's education could make to national progress and gave large-hearted support to the efforts of Dr. D. K. Karve and other dedicated workers. The women of India should be particularly grateful to him.

I pay tribute to Shri Thackersey on the occasion of the centenary of his birth.

INDIRA GANDHI  
*Prime Minister of India*

On the occasion of the birth centenary celebrations of Sir Vithaldas Thackersey, I extend my greetings to the Shreemati Nathibai Damodar Thackersey Women's University and the Celebrations Committee and congratulate them both on their decision to commemorate the birth centenary of one of our most eminent citizens to whose life of dedication and service we owe so much. The Shreemati Nathibai Damodar Thackersey Women's University is one of the products of his efforts, and a living memorial, and it is fortunate in continuing to receive inspiration from their services through Shreemati Thackersey and the band of devoted workers around her.

ALI YAVAR JUNG  
*Governor of Maharashtra*

\* \* \*

I am glad to know that S. N. D. T. University, Bombay, is celebrating the Birth Centenary Year of Sir Vithaldas Thackersey, Chief promoter and principal donor of the University.

I convey my good wishes on the occasion of the Inaugural function of the celebrations to be held on the 23rd December 1972.

SHRIMAN NARAYAN  
*Governor of Gujarat*

\* \* \*

Rajaji thanks the Sir Vithaldas Thackersey Birth Centenary Celebrations Committee for their letter dated November 22 and sends his good wishes.

C. RAJAGOPALACHARI

\* \* \*

Dr. S. Radhakrishnan has sent his best wishes for the Birth Centenary Celebrations of Sir Vithaldas Thackersey.

DR. S. RADHAKRISHNAN

Shri Vithaldas Thackersey was one of the early believers in social revolution through the emancipation of women. He realised the necessity and importance of creating educational institutions meant exclusively for women. The Women's University to which he contributed so much is a befitting monument to his memory.

I wish the Shrimati Nathibai Damodar Thackersey Women's University all success in celebrating Shri Vithaldas Thackersey's Birth Centenary.

Y. B. CHAVAN

*Finance Minister of India*

\* \* \*

Shri Vithaldas Thackersey was a great personality of his time. He had a passion for public service and his concern for the poor was most marked. Besides his contribution to the field of industry and commerce, his service to education, and particularly women's education, will be remembered for long,

It is befitting that the S. N. D. T. Women's University has decided to celebrate the birth centenary year of Sir Vithaldas Thackersey. I am glad to learn that a souvenir will be brought out as a part of the centenary programme.

I send my good wishes.

V. P. NAIK

*Chief Minister of Maharashtra*

\* \* \*

A great social reformer and philanthropist, late Sir Vithaldas Thackersey will ever be remembered, particularly by the women in this country, for his magnificent services to the cause of education through huge endowments right from 1920, to the S.N.D.T. Indian Women's University.

He had a passion for public service and great concern for the weaker sections of the society, and the distressed. He has left his indelible impressions of service, also in other fields like commerce, industry, co-operation, etc. and the institutions like Bombay Municipal Corporation, Banaras Hindu University, University of Bombay, etc. which were fortunate to obtain his services.

After his untimely demise at 49, Lady Premlila Thackersey continued the social work following the footsteps of her illustrious husband with the result that today the S.N.D.T. Women's University occupies unique place among various universities in the country.

I am happy to go through the programme for the birth centenary celebrations of the late Sir Vithaldas Thackersey and send my best wishes for the success of all functions connected with the celebrations.

GHANSHYAMBHAI OZA  
*Chief Minister of Gujarat*

\* \* \*

With a sense of pride and extreme delight, I associate myself with the Birth Centenary Programme of Sir Vithaldas Thackersey, Chief promoter and principal donor of the S. N. D. T. Women's University.

This is an occasion to remember with reverence the far-sightedness and the burning zeal of the late Sir Vithaldas, who was a firm believer in the need for providing adequate facilities for education of women and children. He realised that the progress of a country was intimately bound up with the emancipation and uplift of its women and regarded the status and progress of women as an index to the general advancement of the country in the comity of nations.

On this happy occasion, I send my best wishes.

RAVJI K. GANATRA  
*Mayor of Bombay*

\* \* \*

I am glad to learn that the Shreemati Nathibai Damodar Thackersey Women's University has decided to celebrate the Birth Centenary Year of Sir Vithaldas Thackersey.

Sir Vithaldas Thackersey was a scholar of great calibre and guiding spirit behind women's education. He was an enlightened industrialist with vision and foresight.

I take this opportunity to pay my humble homage to his memory and wish the function all success.

ARVIND N. MAFATLAL

Sir Vithaldas Thackersey attained distinction in many fields. What however we are concerned with is his intense interest in women's education and the part he took in promoting it. We all know how he approached Professor Karve and induced him to launch on the foundation of the Women's University. It was his munificent donation of Rs. 15 lakhs to the Indian Women's University which helped to put the institution on a sound financial basis. The further progress of that University is known to all of us. This institution unique in the fact that it is the only institution of its kind in the country owes a deep debt of gratitude to Sir Vithaldas Thackersey and his devoted wife Lady Premlila for all that they have done for the institution. It is fitting that the institution should have decided to celebrate the birth centenary of Sir Vithaldas Thackersey.

M. C. SETALVAD

\* \* \*

I did not know Sir Vithaldas personally as I was a student in Bombay when he was working there. But I distinctly recollect my impression about his splendid work as a businessman, a social reformer and an educationist. His great love for the cause of women's education was obvious in his donation of Rs. 15 lacs which was princely in those days for Indian Women's University. This donation made the work of the University easier and enabled it to progress to its present development.

He had a very good reputation as a businessman and did service to the community through the then Bombay Municipality of which he was once a President, through the Legislative Assembly and through several non-official organisations.

I am, therefore, glad that you have decided to commemorate this occasion of his Birth Centenary and have formed a very influential committee for the purpose.

I wish you all success in your programme.

MORARJI DESAI



It is in the fitness of things that the Shreemati Nathibai Damodar Thackersey Women's University is celebrating the Birth Centenary of Shri Vithaldas Thackersey. The generous donation of this great philanthropist made it possible for the Women's University to carry out the mission of Maharshi Karve in promoting the education of Women in India. I hope the centenary celebrations will further the cause of Women's education which still needs all efforts to catch up with men's education.

JIVRAJ N. MEHTA

\* \* \*

I am happy to learn that the Birth Centenary year of Sir Vithaldas Thackersey is being celebrated and the inaugural function would be held on December 23, 1972. Sir Vithaldas Thackersey is one of the great names in modern times particularly in the history of educational development in the old Bombay State. Smt. Nathibai Damodar Thackersey Women's University is a glorious memorial to the work done by him in this field. His premature death was a great loss. But Lady Premlila Thackersey continued his traditions and developed the University with devoted mind. On this occasion of the Birth Centenary function we remember Sir Vithaldas Thackersey with feelings of love and gratitude and offer our humble tributes to him.

A. G. PAWAR

*Vice Chancellor, Shivaji University*

\* \* \*

Sir Vithaldas was a great philanthropist amongst the very few in India. He took active interest in education and played a very prominent part for providing adequate facilities for the education of women and children. He endowed big and sumptuous amounts for the uplift of Hindu widows and but for his help many educational institutions would not have come into existence.

Sir Vithaldas took keen interest in the civic life of Bombay City of his time and was nominated by the Government as a Member of the then Bombay Legislative Council. The Knighthood was conferred on him for his meritorious service to the public.

It was our misfortune that Sir Vithaldas died a premature death at the age of 49 in the year 1922. He left behind him great tradition of illustrious, devout, charitable and philanthropic family of the Thackerseys.

The S.N.D.T. Women's University is a standing monument to the memory of Sir Vithaldas.

On this occasion I have great pleasure in paying my tributes to Sir Vithaldas and wish the Celebrations all success.

G. S. MAHAJANI  
*Vice-Chancellor, Poona University*

\* \* \*

I am glad to learn that Smt. Nathibai Damodar Thackersey Women's University has decided to celebrate the 'Birth Centenary year of Sir Vithaldas Thackersey.'

Sir Vithaldas was a successful industrialist and started several Cotton Textile Mills. Besides being an Industrialist of the first rank he was a social worker and the champion of the cause of women's education. He has to his credit the establishment of several Educational Institutions, most noteworthy of which are Smt. Nathibai Damodar Thackersey Women's University and Sydenham College of Commerce and Economics at Bombay. He donated generously for the spread of education and for the upliftment of women, especially, widows and poor working class people.

It was the misfortune of this country that he passed away at the young age.

I send my good wishes for all the success of the centenary celebrations.

KASTURBHAI LALBHAI

\* \* \*

It is indeed gratifying to know that in memory of its chief promoter and principal donor, the S.N.D.T. Women's University is celebrating the Birth Centenary of the late Sir Vithaldas Thackersey.

The University owes a great deal to him for its present day stature and reputation and it is only right that it repays this with a fitting and richly deserved tribute on his Birth Centenary.

Sir Vithaldas Thackersey will be long remembered not only as a great philanthropist but as a champion for the education and upliftment of women.

I wish the celebration every success.

FATESINGHRAO P. GAEKWAD  
*Chancellor, Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda*

\* \* \*

On the occasion of the birth centenary of Sir Vithaldas Thackersey I take this opportunity to pay my warm tribute to this great philanthropist whose generous donation to the Women's University founded by Maharshi Karve set the University on its feet. It is only recently that women's education is getting some attention from authorities concerned. Fifty years ago while the Government authorities were not much worried about women's education and the public at large were not much interested in it, men like Sir Vithaldas came forward to its help with large donations. The S.N.D.T. Women's University owes a deep debt of gratitude to Sir Vithaldas and Lady Premlilaben for what it is today - a pioneer in women's higher education.

HANSA MEHTA

\* \* \*

Women of India owe a deep debt of gratitude to Sir Vithaldas Thackersey and Maharshi Karve who had the vision and foresight to realise that if India had to take its rightful place in the world community of nations, it was very important for women to be educated, who form more than half the population of the country.

Sir Vithaldas was one of the staunch supporters of the co-operative movement, as a result of which opportunity was given to one and all who had the desire and capacity to learn and earn a living.

His work and devotion should serve as a guideline and shining example to the younger generation.

TARABEN M. PREMCHAND

\* \* \*

I am happy to note that Shreemati Nathibai Damodar Thackersey Women's University has decided to celebrate the Birth Centenary Year of Sir Vithaldas Thackersey in a befitting manner.

Sir Vithaldas Thackersey was not only the Chief Promoter & Principal Donor of this university but was also an industrialist of repute of his time and a great social worker. He was a firm believer in the need for providing adequate facilities for the education of women and children. He realised that the progress of our country was intimately bound up with the emancipation and uplift of its women.

I would like to congratulate the Sir Vithaldas Thackersey Birth Centenary Celebrations Committee for the elaborate programme they have drawn up to be executed during the Centenary Year and wish them all success.

S. L. KIRLOSKAR

\* \* \*

Few men in India have combined in them the capacity to produce wealth through productive effort and generosity to part with it for a great cause. Sir Vithaldas Thackersey is one of the rare examples of a great industrialist who successfully attempted

to fulfil a dream of national service in the most practical manner. Death claimed him when he was still young but it could not deny the country the heritage he left in the form of a young, understanding and enlightened partner who kept the flame of his inspiration, bright and constant.

Many leaders and reformers in India have reminded us from time to time that no society can progress unless its women are awakened to a sense of social responsibility and political consciousness. This is possible only through a suitably planned, well-organised and well oriented and purposeful education which alone can usher in the social revolution silently and effectively, a revolution so badly needed in tradition-ridden and backward India. Sir Vithaldas not only believed in the need for such a revolution but gave practical shape to belief by generously donating 15 lakhs of rupees to Prof. Karve and urging him to go ahead with the project of creating a Women's University.

More than his munificence, unique and remarkable in itself, is the gift he left for the country in his wife Lady Thackersey who never spared time, money or her health to fulfil the noble wishes of her husband and realise the dream of awakening Indian women to a spirit of service through education. The Women's University, named after his mother, is the standing memorial to the benefactor. Under the able guidance of Lady Thackersey it has become a vast educational enterprise generously nourished by the idealism of its patron and the support of the Thackersey family and the public. On the auspicious occasion of the benefactor's birth centenary we should not content ourselves by recalling his interest and generosity which enabled him to sow the seeds of a great educational movement but express our sense of gratitude by helping the University to grow to greater heights of excellence so as to produce a leadership, noble and selfless, dedicated to the service of the motherland.

LAKSHMI N. MENON



## SIR VITHALDAS THACKERSEY

As the old Sanskrit adage goes: "Wealth follows enterprise". ( साहसे श्री प्रतिवसति ) It was this spirit of enterprise that impelled Sir Vithaldas's great—grandfather to embark on a countrycraft from a sleepy little hamlet of VARVALA, near DWARKA, to the port of MUSCAT in 1784, and his grandfather Thackersey, perhaps with only a shirt on his back but a head teeming with ideas, to Bombay in 1825. After years of inevitable groping and struggling, Thackersey prospered and established his own firm, M/s. Thackersey Moolji & Co. (still a reputed going concern in Bombay); and in course of time inducted into his business his young son Damodar, who not only consolidated but also added a number of new commercial enterprises to those started by his father.

Sir Vithaldas Damodar Thackersey who was born on November 30, 1873, had thus the business acumen and enterprise in his blood as a part of his heritage, but the silver spoon in his mouth at his birth did not seem to secure him any special privileges, exempting him from the rigorous training, unostentatious simple living and discipline, which his father Damodar and his mother Nathibai subjected him to. To guard against over-indulging in the child, a sum of three pies a day as pocket money, for instance, was allowed him, when he joined a school near the Old Hanuman Gali in Bombay, where the family was then residing.

After a short spell of education in Saurashtra, during which he rode on his pony to his distant school, so as to be there punctually on time, young Vithaldas returned to Bombay, matriculated from the Bharada New High School, and joined the Elphinstone College in 1892 - only to be withdrawn from it within six months, only to be fully involved into, trained and equipped for business - his future vocation.

This he did, as desired by his parents but before he was firmly established in his saddle, the premature death of his father at 46, left young Vithaldas, then barely 20, largely to his own resourcefulness, initiative and business acumen in handling a complex of industrial enterprises, which included four textile mills in Bombay. Not only did he efficiently and successfully manage these, but also added a fifth highly remunerative textile mill and a cluster of other commercial concerns to them, emerging before long as an outstanding industrialist, a shrewd and successful businessman. His eminence in business and industry was implicitly acknowledged when he was elected the President of the Indian Merchants' Chamber; President of the Millowners' Association and the President of the Second Industrial Conference at Calcutta in 1906.

But business was not his only business nor was amassing wealth the be-all and end-all of his life. Evidently, the world of commerce was too narrow for him; and in 1897, he entered public life when he was 24 - incidentally, the year when

he was nominated as a J. P. In 1898, he was elected as a member of the Bombay Municipal Corporation, and his first success in that body was the acceptance by the Corporation of the resolution moved by him, asking for powers from the Government to raise Municipal loans in the open market, instead of borrowing from Banks at high rates of interest.

In 1904, he was elected Chairman of the Standing Committee; and two years later, when he was 33, he was elected the Mayor of the Bombay Municipal Corporation – probably, the youngest Mayor so far.



*Sir Vithaldas and Lady Premlila Thackersey*

In 1908, when he was 35, the honour of Knighthood was conferred on him, specially in appreciation of his work as a member of the Indian Factory Labour Commission, and the then Governor of Bombay, Sir George Sydenham Clarke, wrote him a letter of congratulations, in his own handwriting.

In 1903, the Government had nominated him as a member of the Bombay Legislative Council, where he boldly asserted that a businessman was better qualified than most people to speak on



economic questions and to advise the Government in shaping its industrial and commercial policies. He also drew attention to the handicaps to which Bombay's cotton textile industry was then exposed to, because of the high rate of exchange, excise duty and the danger of Japan, ousting Indian piecegoods and yarn from markets abroad.

On other occasions, when his membership was twice extended, he emphasized the need of holding annual exhibitions of indigenous products, of industrial surveys, and of a more liberal expenditure on commercial education.

When elected to the newly reconstituted Imperial Legislative Council in 1909, Sir Vithaldas felt himself more free to express his views on public questions and took a leading part in the discussion of subjects of economic and financial interest. Here, too, he opposed the levy of excise duty on Indian piecegoods, objected to the freight charges levied by Managers of railways at their sole discretion, and moved a resolution recommending that a substantial portion of gold reserve should be held in India.

In 1921, when he entered the Indian Legislative Assembly – then newly reconstituted under the Montague – Chelmsford Reforms – Sir Vithaldas put in a forceful plea for the manufacture of locomotives, rolling stock and railway stores in India, so that a substantial portion of Rs. 150 crores then proposed as a capital expenditure on the construction of railways may be spent within the country.

Sir Vithaldas Thackersey was an independent thinker, a patriot without a political label and a man of vision, who could see far ahead of his time. He was a pioneer of co-operative Banks and Institutes; the Founder Chairman of the Bank of Baroda, a member of the Bombay Port Trust, a member of the Public Accounts Committee, of the Finance Department of the Government of India; and a member of the Bombay City Improvement Trust, which even in 1909, considered the city overcrowded and deliberated on the measures to be taken

to provide well-lighted and airy buildings and chawls in its most congested areas.

In 1919, Sir Vitthaladas with Lady Premlila, Sir M. Visvesvaraya and a few others went on a world tour, visiting Ceylon, Singapore, China and Japan. In Japan, he was honoured at a public meeting, presided over by the Prime Minister Prince Okuma of Japan. He studied the industrial development of Japan and was greatly impressed with the working of a Women's University there.

Sir Vitthaladas's love of learning remained an abiding passion all through his life. The formal education, which he had reluctantly to discontinue, was in fact, never discontinued, since it was resumed with even more vigour and freedom with the help of eminent tutors, like James Macdonald and Principal Padhye, at home. This love of learning and the great store he laid by education, always evoked from him a ready response to any call to start, support and contribute generously to Educational Institutes of all kinds - Sydenham College of Commerce and Economics; Banaras Hindu University; Vanita Vishram at Bombay, Surat and Rajkot; Seva Sadan at Poona; Workingmen's Institute at Parel in Bombay; Sanskrit Pathshala at Chandod; and the most outstanding of all - a donation of Rs. 15 lacs to the Women's University, founded by Dr. Karve, which was subsequently named after his mother, Shreemati Nathibai Damodar Thackersey Women's University.



*Parnakuti, Poona*

In private life, Sir Vitthaladas was a man of devout nature and artistic taste. He had Pandits

and Shastris to enlighten him on religion and philosophy. He had visited the four corners of India as a pilgrim. He loved horse riding, music and entertaining his innumerable guests and with his unmatched hospitality. He reared a beautiful mansion in Poona on a picturesque spot on Yervada Hill on the left bank of Mulla Mutha river and, in all humility, named it "Parnakuti", where Lady Premmila Thackersey, following the tradition of her distinguished husband, played hostess to Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru and almost all the eminent leaders of India's great national movement of independence.

Between 1897, when he entered the public life and 1922, the year of his premature passing away at the age of 49, Sir Vithaldas scaled all the peaks of achievement and excellence, without deviating from his principles. These heights were not reached by 'sudden flights', but by sheer dint of hard work and studiousness, a passion for disinterested public service, strength of character, unpretentious concern for the poor and the distressed and a deep faith in God and Man.

Sir Vithaldas Thackersey passed away at the early age of 49, on Saturday, August 12, 1922. Markets, mills, industrial establishments and commercial concerns were closed in his honour. Obituary notes and editorials, paying glowing tributes to him, appeared in almost all the newspapers in India and in some of the leading newspapers in England, including the Times of London.

In Bombay, Sir Stanley Reed, Editor of the Times of India, in his editorial dated August 14, 1922, wrote of Sir Vithaldas Thackersey as 'a man of marked ability in financial, industrial and commercial organisation, adding that, "he also possessed a high sense of public duty which perpetually inspired him freely to place his talent at the disposal of his city, his country, and those classes of his countrymen, who stood in need of assistance." Sir Stanley also referred to him as a "shrewd and fearless critic of the political administration of the country" and as "always fairminded and completely destitute of rancour," as "possessing a capacity for

a broad view of affairs and never failing to win the respect and attention of friends and opponents alike, whether official or non-official" and concluded by saying, "India can ill spare such a personality in the difficult times through which she is passing."

Besides evaluating, in brief, all the salient features of Sir Vithaldas's character and multilateral talents, achievements and services, Sir Stanley's detached but warm editorial tribute seemed to be echoing exactly the sentiments of the public at large. This was confirmed when a public meeting of the citizens of Bombay was held in the Sir Cowasji Jehangir Hall on August 15, 1922. "The Hall" to quote a report from The Times of India of August 16, 1922, "was filled to its utmost capacity." The Hon. Sir N. G. Chandavarkar presided. Sir Stanley Reed moved the condolence resolution and Mr. Otto Rothfield moved a resolution proposing to raise a suitable Memorial to commemorate the services of the Late Sir Vithaldas Thackersey. More than Rs. 30,000/- were subscribed on the spot after an appeal for Memorial Fund.

Resolutions expressing sense of loss and sorrow at the demise of Sir Vithaldas and offering sympathy to Lady Premlila Thackersey in her sad bereavement were passed by the Imperial Legislative Assembly immediately after its inauguration by the Viceroy at Simla; by the Government of Bombay, other public bodies, commercial and industrial establishments all over the country, testifying to the high regard in which they held Sir Vithaldas.

Sir Vithaldas Thackersey's life, though brief, was a life of marked achievements and self-fulfilment, of which any individual may justly be proud. Mere wealth commands awe but rarely admiration. Sir Vithaldas Thackersey's claim to greatness did not rest on his wealth, which, of course, he knew how to make but also, which is rather an exception than a rule, how to put it to better use, by giving of it freely to support worthy causes, doing maximum good to the maximum number of people, during his life-time, and hence, through Sir Vithaldas Thackersey Charitable Trust, now managed by Lady Premlila Thackersey and

other trustees, which has proved a boon to thousands of students, as also to less fortunate persons in need of financial assistance even for their daily bread, such as widows, the old, the disabled and the destitute, without any means of support.

Sir Vithaldas Thackersey, who, as Sir M. Visvesvaraya maintains, "must be reckoned as one of the biggest Indians of his time", may have been equalled or surpassed, in course of time by an individual in one single field or another of life, but, all in all, for his uniform attainments and achievements in all the varied fields of life – both private and public – where, in the philosophic spirit of the Gita, his beloved source book of life, he was neither puffed up by success nor depressed by unsuccess, he was a man, the like of whom, in Shakespeare's words, we are not likely to see yet for a long time to come.

Sir Vithaldas Thackersey would have entered the hundredth year of his life on November 30, 1972 and completed it on November 30, 1973, if he had not been snatched away prematurely from the services of his country. But his public good deeds and memory still survive, calling for a homage from his countrymen in this centenary year of his birth.





SHREEMATI NATHIBAI DAMODAR  
THACKERSEY WOMEN'S  
UNIVERSITY, BOMBAY.

“संस्कृता स्त्री पराशक्तिः”

*(An enlightened woman is a source of infinite power)*

The establishment of a women's university in an era, when women's higher education was considered a sacrilege, highlights the immense foresightedness of the founder of the University.

In 1916, when the world was in the throes of the first global war, an humble and utterly unassuming person, in the comparatively quiet town of Poona, gave shape to his revolutionary ideas on the establishment of a university exclusively for women. He was Dhondo Keshav Karve, a fearless social reformer and the greatest champion of women's education in India, who built up a network of educational institution that have evoked universal admiration. The President of India very rightly conferred on him the titles of Padma Vibhushan and subsequently Bharat Ratna in 1960. His countrymen knew him as the Maharshi.

The inauguration of the Indian Women's University in June 1916 virtually marked the beginning of a new era in the history of women's education in this country. The idea of inaugurating a university exclusively for women with its own special curricula invited a vaietry of criticism in those days. According to some, it was an utopia; some thought it would be a stumbling block in the way of women's education; even Dr. R. P. Paranjpye, a great well wisher of Dr. Karve, had his own apprehensions about his venture and advised him : Festina lente—hasten gently. There were some people, however, who considered the establishment of a Women's University a laudable idea, in the right direction.

There were a number of factors responsible for such hesitation on the part of these eminent persons. In spite of nearly 50 years of efforts of many social reformers, the traditional attitude towards women had hardly changed. Till early twenties of this country, women were confined to their four walls. The involvement of women in political activity, as envisaged by Mahatma Gandhi was yet to emerge. There were no legal measures protecting the women, excepting the Act of age of consent. An all-India organisation, ventilating women's demands had not yet found its footing. Though nineteenth century reformers had stressed the need of educating women, the status of women in this sector was depressing. As late as 1921, only 1.9% of the female population was literate. Child marriages continued to prevail and women

were expected to live in seclusion; in the family, sons were given preferential treatment.

Further, though the intelligentsia of the last century, as stated, felt that without educating women, there could be no solution of her problems, the gates of higher learning were not open for her, and women still continued to exist as the unlighted lamps of the Indian scene. In order to break through this wall of resistance to higher education of women, Dr. Karve, with a new vista of vision, explored a new path by starting a women's university with its own special curricula suited to the needs of women, the various subjects being taught in the language in which they were reared. The adequacy of the venture, which even Dr. Karve described as 'a leap in the dark', require no justification today. It may be mentioned that the idea of a women's university was born in the mind of Dr. Karve, when he read a report of such a University in Tokyo. The present University started with one College, 'The Mahila Pathashala', run by the Hindu Widows' Home Association and consisting of a small batch of five students, to begin with, at Hingne Budruk in Poona.

A practical educationist as he was, Dr. Karve had clearly foreseen the numerous difficulties in the way of promoting education among our women. Social customs, orthodoxy, ignorance, poverty and age-old inhibition prevented Indian girls from devoting sufficient time and energy to the study of courses primarily designed for boys and unrelated to the needs of women. Besides, the continued use of a foreign language even for elementary knowledge was a phenomenon peculiar only to India.

Dr. Karve strongly felt that the wide gulf between the social status of men and women in India must be bridged and women should be given an opportunity to contribute their best along with the men in the affairs of the home, society and the nation, at large.

Thus, the two vital principles unique in nature, which governed the University, marked it



out from all other similar seats of learning in the country. First, the medium of instruction was to be the mother-tongue of student. The best brains of our country have given diverse opinions on the problem for the last 18 years and at present the trend of the solution to the problem is practically in our favour. The second principle, which governed this University, was that the courses of studies were to be planned to suit its students for the future, which they had to face and fight. In short, women's social and cultural needs were specially kept in view when the courses of studies were planned.

But having a noble ideal alone is not enough. There must be the means to implement it. Luckily, good causes never suffer for lack of means. So, when a great educationist was striving to make big dream a reality in Poona, a great merchant prince in Bombay was inspired by an equally great vision of the uplift of our womankind through sound education.

Dr. Karve found an admirable and worthy colleague in the late Sir Vithaldas Thackersey, who gave the munificent sum of rupees fifteen lakhs to commemorate the memory of his late mother, Shreemati Nathibai Damodar Thackersey, whose name is enshrined in this Temple of Learning. Thus a great idealist and a noble philanthropist joined hands to give shape to a noble dream. As a result of it, Shreemati Nathibai Damodar Thackersey Indian Women's University was born, and over the decades, it has been developing and expanding to meet the needs of society.

The seeds of the University campus were sown at Yerandavana, Poona in 1920 and in 1936 the headquarters of the University were shifted from Poona to Bombay.

The year 1939 was a memorable one for the University, for in that year, Mahatma Gandhi visited it on the occasion of its annual convocation.

Among the many milestones which marked the development of the University, the year 1949 stands out in golden letters in its history as it was in this year that the Government of Bombay

passed a bill in the Legislative Assembly, giving the Shreemati Nathibai Damodar Thackersey Women's University, statutory recognition.

Most eloquent words were expressed by speakers while the bill was being discussed in the legislature, as the University had served as a lifeline to many girls and women who, but for the existence of the University, would have been denied the opportunity of receiving higher education. Moreover, this was a turning point in our growth, development and progress. In 1951, the University Act was put on the Statute Book when Dr. (Smt.) Premilila V. Thackersey was nominated by the Government as its first Vice-Chancellor.

After independence, the object of women going in for higher education has changed considerably. Prior to the Second World War, education was given to girls just to make them better mothers and better citizens. In view of this, the University never thought of any other faculty except that of Arts, because education in liberal arts was then supposed to be the only suitable outlet for our women, thus providing them with some sort of broadening of outlook. After the Second World War, and more particularly after the Independence, a new goal has been visualised in the matter of women's education. With the rapid rise in the cost of living and the emergence of new concepts in our standard of life, our girls do not just aspire to get only liberal education but they also as per their aptitude aspire for a career in life. Keeping this in view, the University also changed its concepts of education with the passing of time and has now the disciplines of Humanities, Social Sciences, Fine Arts, Home Science, Education, Library Science and Nursing.

The Home Science Faculty at present caters to the undergraduate as well as post graduate programme and has to a great extent met the requirements of specialised and professional courses for women in the context of our growing needs.

Though the Constitution of the country gives equal rights to men and women, many women still live in the dark and have not seen the light of knowledge. The enrolment figures confirm this

sorry state of affairs. There is a tremendous disparity existing between the percentage of school-going boys and school-going girls. Unfortunately, this gap widens with each level of education. In order to make women's emancipation complete, they must be made economically independent.

To achieve this aim, the University is trying to diversify and reorient its courses in different directions and contemplates providing vocational courses through a women's polytechnic, later leading to an Institute of Vocational and Professional Arts. It also hopes at a future date to add the Faculties of Social Work, Science and Medicine to the existing ones.

A new felt need of the University is to create an independent research unit on women's education. This unit can concentrate on maintaining records with regard to the different facets of Women's education. It can further collect data and offer assistance on various problems concerning women's education, right from the elementary to the highest level. It can thus lay down guidelines in the existing areas and other aspects of women's education, and can also help discover new fields of activity. In order to achieve this lofty aim, it will need the co-operation of various institutions more, particularly women's organisations, of this country as well as abroad. Such a venture may eventually be a great fountain source of information and guidance.

Since its inception, this institution has permitted and encouraged external students. The system of external examination gives the opportunity of giving knowledge to those girls who are unable to attend a college as regular students. However, it may be mentioned, that these students are deprived of the advantages of university life and instruction. They are denied college experience. Hence, the University in time to come, proposes to introduce correspondence courses, summer courses and guidance courses, partially to remedy this drawback.

The University has all along been aware of the fact that its responsibilities do not end with teaching and research. It has the tremendous task before it of moulding the future citizens of the

world's largest democracy. It hopes to achieve this by providing opportunities to women for their intellectual, emotional and social development. To meet this end, the University has added one more dimension of functional orientation to its role by taking up programme under its scheme of continuing education for life long learning, thus helping in the acceleration of social and economic changes in the community. In the future, it is proposed to bring this work under a Centre of Continuing Education so as to meet the needs of individuals and society, "ranging from the young adult entering into the challenging world of reality, the middleaged and their need for vocational refresher work, and the older age group who need not despairingly contemplate a diminution of vocational productiveness and an attenuation of those things which help us to live"

The fifth estate, namely, the students are never forgotten in any of the schemes of the University. The welfare of students at the University has been made the focal point of its activities and the objective includes student welfare activities like health programmes, advisements, guidance and counselling, orientation and cultural and co-curricular activities.

Modern India is facing several important problems as far as women's education is concerned. The chief among them are bridging the gap between the education of girls and boys, of man and women, a realistic and flexible approach to meet the problem of wastage, the stresses and strains as a result of the dual role played by women with reference to the status and identity in the rapidly changing society, the problem of educated women and employment and the utilisation of women power through full-time and part-time jobs.

The University with fiftyfive years of existence to its credit can look back upon its work and accomplishment, with satisfaction and pride for having contributed substantially in the field of women's education. However, it is today at crossroads, and has a heavier and a much greater task to perform in the years to come. Indian society at present is exposed to a variety of new challenges in the field of education. If this challenge is to be faced, commitment to a new system of values and

social structure is required. In the context of modernising Indian society, a new womanhood is emerging. Moreover, to meet the needs of the social change coming over the world of to-day and to-morrow, it will be necessary to channelise educational thought for the development of a total woman capable of work, service and enjoying leisure. The woman is a link between the family structure and the outside world and the responsibility of not allowing the family to disintegrate, lies heavy on her shoulders, as the family still needs to remain the major influence for coming generations. Women's education needs to be geared to meet these needs. The Shreemati Nathibai Damodar Thackersey Women's University has upto now accepted various challenges and hopes to meet the new challenges too.

### **Basic Facts and Figures.**

- (i) **General Information and Special Features.**
  - (a) A pioneering institution founded in 1916 by Mr D. K. Karve.
  - (b) Named after the mother of the donor Sir Vithaldas Thackersey.
  - (c) The only Women's University in the country promoting the kind of education which would help women to live a personally satisfying and socially useful life, by equipping them to contribute better to society professionally and otherwise.
  - (d) Instruction imparted through four languages, thus bringing about a practical and workable solution to the otherwise complex language problem in the country.
  - (e) Courses evolved to suit the special needs of women. Contents and emphasis altered from time to time to meet the needs of society.
  - (f) The University offers an opportunity to a large number of women to receive higher education by providing facilities for external studies.
  - (g) The University has all India jurisdiction thereby opening its doors to any women's college from any part of the country to seek affiliation to it.

(ii) Faculties and Courses.

Faculty	Degrees	Duration	Medium of Instruction
Faculty of Arts	B. A.	4 years	Gujarati, Hindi
	M. A.	2 years	Marathi
	Ph.D.	2 years (Minimum)	
	B. Lib. Sc.	1 year	English
Faculty of Home Sc.	B. Sc. (Home Sc.)	4 year	English Gujarati, Marathi
	M. Sc. (Home Sc.)	2 years	English
	Ph.D. (Home Sc.)	2 years (Minimum)	
Faculty of Education	B. Ed.	1 years	Gujarati, Marathi
	M. Ed.	2 years	Gujarati, Marathi
	Ph. D.	2 years (Minimum)	
Faculty of Nursing	B. Sc. (Nursing)	4 years	English

Certificate and Diploma courses in Foreign Language such as German and Russian of one year duration and certificate courses in Music and English conversation also of one year duration are conducted by the University.

(iii) Institutions : 1972-73

Faculty	Colleges Conducted by the University	Colleges Affiliated to the University	Total
1. Arts	2	17	19
2. Home Science	2	..	2
3. Education	2	..	2
4. Nursing	1	--	1
5. Library Science	1	..	1
	8	17	25

(iv) Number of Faculty Members : 1972-73

Faculty	Full-time	Part-time	Total
1. Arts	251	162	413
2. Home Science	73	19	92
3. Education	53	3	56
4. Nursing	26	34	60
5. Library Science	3	10	13
TOTAL:	406	228	634

(v) Facultywise Enrolment of Regular and Private Students 1972-73 :

	Regular Students at con- ducted colleges	Students at affi- liated colleges	Total	Private Students 1972-73	Total
1. Arts	3736	8327	12063	7010	19073
2. Home Science	977	..	977	..	977
3. Education	344	105	449	180	629
4. Nursing	131	..	131	..	131
5. Library	44	..	44	..	44
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>5232</b>	<b>8432</b>	<b>13664</b>	<b>7190</b>	<b>20854</b>

(vi) Total Degree and Diploma holders of the University (upto 1971-72)

1. Faculty of Arts	B.A.	18416	
	M.A.	2728	
	Ph.D.	15	
	B.Lib.Sc.	223	<u>21382</u>
2. Faculty of Home Science	B.Sc.H.Sc.	1047	
	M.Sc.H Sc.	35	<u>1082</u>
3. Faculty of Education	B. Ed.	4620	
	M. Ed.	370	
	Dip. Ed.	331	<u>5321</u>
4. Faculty of Nursing	B. Sc. Nursing	100	<u>100</u>
			Total: 27885



## SIR VITHALDAS THACKERSEY

### Chronological Events

- \* Born in a Bhatia family Nov. 30, 1873
- \* Married to Smt. Leelabai,  
daughter of Sheth Morarji  
Gokaldas and sister of  
Sheth Narotam Morarji 1887
- \* Passed Matriculation Examination  
of the Bombay University from  
Bharda High School 1891
- \* Joined the Elphinstone College  
but left College soon to join  
family business on account of  
father's illness. Initiation into  
business and end of College  
Education due to demise of  
father 1892
- \* Death of Seth Damodar  
Thackersey 1893
- \* Nominated as a Justice of the  
Peace for the City of Bombay 1897
- \* Elected as a member of the  
Bombay Municipal Corporation 1898



* Death of Leelabai, his first wife	1899
* Purchased the Crown Spg. & Mfg. Co. Ltd. and Sirdar Carbonic Gas Co. Ltd.	1899
* Married Premkunverbai	1899
* Elected as a member of the Standing Committee of the Corporation	1902
* Nominated by the Government to the Bombay Legislative Council	1903
* Elected as a Chairman of the Standing Committee of the Corporation	1904
* Nominated to the Bombay Legislative Council	1905
* Pioneer in the cause of Indian Banking—Floated Indian Specie Bank	1906
* Presided over deliberations of the Second All India Industrial Conference held in Calcutta	1906
* Elected President (present office of Mayor) of the Corporation	1906
* Elected Chairman of the Bombay Millowners' Association	1907
* As the President of the Corporation inaugurated and drove first electric tram-car which replaced the horse-tram	1907
* Renominated to the Bombay Legislative Council for the third time	1907
* Member, Factory Labour Commission	1907

- \* Knighthood conferred on the King's Birthday in June, 1908 1908
- \* Helped in starting the Bank of Mysore 1908
- \* Establishment of the Bank of Baroda. Was appointed Chairman of the first Board of Directors 1909
- \* Elected as member to the Imperial Legislative Council 1909
- \* Trustee, Bombay Improvement Trust, nominated by the Government 1909
- \* Trustee, Bombay Port Trust from the Mill Owner's Association 1913
- \* Chairman, First Board of Directors of Bombay Central Cooperative Bank 1911
- \* Member, Factory Ventilation Committee 1911
- \* Started Night Schools for adult education 1911
- \* Death of Lady Premconverbai Vithaldas, his second wife 1912
- \* Married Bachoobai Dharsi Purshottam and named her Premlila 1913
- \* Helped in establishing Sydenham College of Commerce & Economics 1913
- \* Started Jamnagar Dwarka Railway 1915
- \* Helped Pandit Malaviaji in the establishment of the Banaras Hindu University 1916

- \* Nominated by Government. on Coal Committee on behalf of the Mill Owners' Association 1917
- \* Visited Hindu Widows' Home at Hingne and became a Patron 1917
- \* Appointed Member of the Priority Committee by the Govt. 1918
- \* Member, Advisory Committee for Control of Cloth 1918
- \* Member of Licensing Committee 1918
- \* Financially helped the Seva Sadan, Poona and Vanita Vishram, Bombay 1918
- \* Left on World Tour. Greatly impressed by Japan's Women's University 1918
- \* Returned from the foreign tour 1918
- \* Launching of Dwarka Cement Co. 1919
- \* Donation of Rs. 15,00,000/- to the Indian Women's University 1920
- \* Laying of foundation stone of Parnakuti at Poona 1920
- \* Entry to the Legislative Assembly as a representative of the Mill Owners' Association 1921
- \* The opening ceremony of Parnakuti 1921
- \* Death of Sir Vithaldas Thackersey August 12, 1922



## PROGRAMME OF CENTENARY CELEBRATIONS

- \* Arranging Functions at college level on November 30, 1972
- \* Inauguration of Centenary Celebrations at the hands of Shri Ali Yavar Jung, Governor of Maharashtra on December 23, 1972
- \* Opening of the Study Centre sanctioned by the University Grants Commission, at Sir Vithaldas Nagar, Santacruz in January 1973.
- \* Request to the Bombay Municipal Corporation to name the Road New Marine Lines, which is on one side of the University Campus at Bombay, "Sir Vithaldas Thackersey Marg."
- \* Request to the Postal authorities to issue special stamp to commemorate the occasion.
- \* Publication of Souvenir during the Inaugural Function and publication of Commemoration Volume during the centenary year.
- \* Arranging a Seminar at the University on a subject relevant to its objectives like 'Education in the Seventies' or 'Social and Economic Status of Women's etc.
- \* Preparation of a film of the University and its activities, linked with the progress of women.
- \* Instituting fellowships / scholarships / prizes in the name of Sir Vithaldas Thackersey
- \* Undertaking a research on an interdisciplinary basis, preferably on some important aspect of women's education or women's problem.
- \* Performing a cultural programme as a concluding function.
- \* Raising funds for the developmental programmes of the University.



*Womanliness is not chiefly decorative. It is like that vital health, which not only imparts the bloom of beauty to the body, but joy to the mind and perfection to life.*

**—Tagore**