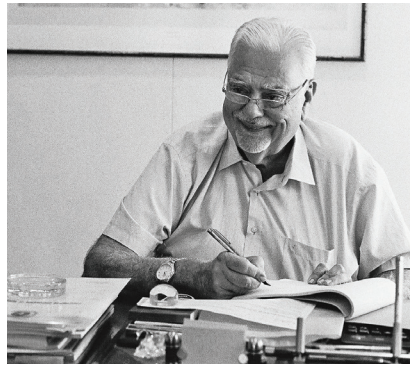


I vividly remember my first meeting with the late Mr Dilip Dharamsey Khatau in April 2009 at his office in Mumbai. His love and concern for wildlife was quite evident through his anecdotes on his journey in wildlife conservation. Particularly, he spoke passionately about The Corbett Foundation, a non-profit charitable organization that he and his wife Mrs Rina D. Khatau founded on April 22, 1994, and supported thereafter.

Mr Dilip D. Khatau was born on March 18, 1942, in the famous Khatau family that hailed from Kachchh, Gujarat, and was among the pioneers of the textile industry in India. As an industrialist, Mr Khatau was instrumental in diversifying the family business into shipping, footwear, cement, cables, chemicals, and tourism. To fulfil this endeavour, he spent almost two decades in Kenya and Southeast Asia, where his interest in wildlife and conservation blossomed. He was impressed by the popularity of wildlife tourism in East Africa and envisioned similar ventures in India. Subsequently, he became one of the pioneers of the concept of luxurious wildlife resorts in India, with the first resort named Infinity Resorts Corbett established in 1991 on the fringes of the Corbett Tiger Reserve. Subsequently, more resorts were added to the chain of Infinity Resorts in Kachchh, and on the outskirts of Bandhavgarh, Kanha, and Kaziranga tiger reserves.

In 1994, Mr and Mrs Khatau realized the need for an organization that could act as a bridge between the Forest Department and the villagers, who lived along the periphery of various tiger reserves and shared the natural habitats with wildlife. They envisioned that both these entities could work closely to help the villagers, and in turn, solicit their support in conservation efforts. This led to the foundation of The Corbett Foundation, which eventually expanded its operations to important conservation landscapes in six states of India – Uttarakhand, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, and Maharashtra.

Mr Khatau strongly believed in involving the local communities in grassroots conservation work. Through The Corbett Foundation, he initiated the Rural Medical Outreach Programme, veterinary care programme, and sustainable livelihoods programme that reached out to the forest-dependent communities to improve their health, well-being, and economic status. In 1995, The Corbett Foundation pioneered the interim cattle compensation programme in the Corbett landscape that was fully funded and implemented by a non-governmental entity.



## Dilip Dharamsey Khatau

March 18, 1942– March 09, 2023

This intervention immensely helped mitigate the retaliatory killings of tigers and leopards that were common in the early 1990s. This programme is still operational in the Corbett landscape with the partnership of WWF-India.

The grassroots work undertaken by The Corbett Foundation since the past three decades has positioned the organization as one that not only acts as an intermediary for human-wildlife coexistence but also advocates the protection and

conservation of India's threatened species and habitats at the national and international levels.

In July 2009, I became a part of The Corbett Foundation family, and the past 14 years of my association with Mr Khatau and the Foundation has been an exceptional learning experience as he guided me (and all our team members) to address conservation challenges, while keeping in mind the welfare and much-needed support of the local communities. Mr Khatau was an ardent supporter of BNHS. He was a Life Member for almost four decades and his company Conservation Corporation of India Pvt. Ltd. has been a Corporate Member for over two decades. He worked very closely with Dr Asad R. Rahmani, former Director of BNHS and present Scientific Advisor to The Corbett Foundation, for conserving the grasslands and the great Indian bustard in Kachchh. Mr Khatau served on India's National Board for Wildlife, and on the Board of Uttar Pradesh Tourism Development Corporation. In 2017, Mr Khatau was presented with the 'Gallery of Legends' award at the East India Travel Awards for his immense contribution to wildlife conservation and responsible tourism.

On March 09, 2023, Mr Khatau left for his heavenly abode, and India lost a great philanthropist, industrialist, and wildlife lover. He loved the myriad species that inhabited the Indian landscape, and did everything in his capacity to conserve them till his very last breath. We, at The Corbett Foundation, mourn his passing away but celebrate his life, which was dedicated to the cause of nature conservation. Personally, I will dearly miss him and so will everyone who has had the pleasure and the privilege to know him and work with him.

I am sure his spirit remains in the beautiful forests of Corbett Tiger Reserve, along the banks of Kosi River scanning the Shivalik Hills and smiling at the sight of a tiger.

Rest in peace, Sir. ■

– Kedar Gore  
Director, The Corbett Foundation