

Mumbai: They are the men with the keys to the kingdom. In a city where 60% live in hovels and another 30% work their backs off to afford that extremely modest roof over their heads, these men control vast tracts of land that their forefathers bought or were gifted decades ago. The identity of most isn't common knowledge, but TOI spent a fortnight tapping the real estate industry and the charity commissioner's office to unearth it. While many of those who were gifted land by the British or acquired it at dirt-cheap rates haven't reaped the harvest on account of factors like encroachment and lack of foresight, a few have held on to the land and made much money out of it.

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Asalape and Paripur for a yearly rent of Rs 3,587. The trust that bears the name has lost huge chunks of land in the western suburbs to the encroachers and ceded parcels to the government.

Among the estates that have been fractured is the property of Paraji merchant Francis Gonsalves (the Bombay who, in 1838, founded the *Bombay Times* and the *Journal of Commerce* in India). He returned after the Times of India. He had a vast estate at Powai. In 1835, the villages of Kanjiv and Vikroli were leased by the East India Company to him on an annual payment of 93 pounds (then worth Rs 930).

In the 18th and 19th centuries, when the British issued out huge tracts of land as a reward for British merchants and loyalists, the phanikharites were among the biggest beneficiaries. The lease terms were changed to cutting down the 200-year-old dodo myrsine. The colonial rulers issued out large tracts to private mainly the Parsis, who are mainly traders and businessmen. They owned the largest owners of landed estate in Mumbai and the period. Land was always considered a source of investment by the Parsis. In the late 19th century, the British and Asaphi and in 1857. The trust that bears his name has lost huge tracts of land in the western suburbs of the city and ceded parcels to the encroachers.

Among the estates that have been fractured is the property of Parsi trader Framjee Cowasji Dadasaheb, who, in 1838, founded the Journal of Commerce (after Times of India) and later owned The Times of India. He had a vast estate at Powai in Mumbai and Vikhroli where the village was founded by the East India Company to turn on an oil plant. The Parsi paid Rs 300 pounds (then worth Rs 1,500) for the land.

good investor. Karachi-based 19th century contractor Edulji Dinshaw invested nearly all his money in real estate in the hope that the value would soar, even in the short term. Dinshaw's land holdings were later expanded by his son, and

Paral traders became the largest owners of real estate in the city

The East India Company gave the United Alos Indians a village called Brynmar. The village was located along the edge of the town of Georgetown and Bonick's land. The village was named after a large tract of land that the British East India Company also owned in 1814, where the Isipah and the land of the end, where the Isipah is located, once belonged to him. Over the past 40 years, chunks of land in Oshawa, Kandivali and other areas have been either sold to him or have been given to the government builders or ceded to the government for various public projects.

The holdings of the Ahi Wadia Trust were put together in the form of part of a village called together in the form of part of the 19th century. According to Karmaj Wadia was given the lease for Karmaj Wadia was then compensated the six villages of Mohai, Kolipahai, Marol, Sahar,

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Mumbai's largest landowner, the Godres, got their Vikhro land over 60 years ago from the Bombay High Court receiver. Originally, this land was given by the East India Company to Framjee Banaji in the 1830s till it came up for sale sometime in 1941-42. After buying it

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aries
know,
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1941-42. After my
land, the Godrejs slowly
acquired the adjoining
by negotiating with 200
nearby plot-owners. Godrej insiders
say there is not a single
encroachment on this land and "be-
one square foot of land has been
sold" Also fragmented are the Pa-
rice fields that, in 1793, were awarded
to the sons and grandsons of
shipbuilder Lowjee Wadia for service
rendered to the Royal Navy during
the France. The Godrejs

live Sir
in 1830.
The
Jamjee
the Taj
longed to
his, chunks
landfill and
sok
government
H Wadia Trust
early part of
her marriage
for Kuria-
and the six villages
Karoli, Sahar,

war with France.
Landlords of yore included
Pestonjee Bomanjee Wadia,
a owner who in 1874 was consid-
dered the largest land-owner of Bombay.
In 1954, entrepreneur and philanthro-
pist Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy's Pro-
him a monthly income of Rs 100,000
phenomenal income for those
Educational trust and philanthro-
Methanand Yussat Limai, whose
1985, was not only one of the
landlords of Mumbai but also
controlled the island of Nhava
he shifted the father's manor
and a seamen's orphanage
largely in 1912.

The city holds many secrets close to its heart. One of them is the identity of the people who control Mumbai's private land. TOI spent two weeks tapping the big guns of the real estate industry and scrounging for information in the Orwellian charity commissioner's office to get to the heart of the mystery

The S & F Engineer Group (named after the one of the Raheja brothers, a civil engineer, who constructed some of South Mumbai's landmark buildings) owns over 300 acres in Kandivli and Malad. Much of the land has been sold to builders like the Evershine Group, Thakur Group, Seth Developers, Kanakia Constructions and Gundecha Builders and it is not clear how much the Engineer Group now holds — one source puts it at 240 acres, another says it could be half of that — one source says it is either encroached or reserved by the state for a large public amenities.

The Ajmera family, which started off as a construction contractor in Mumbai in the early 1960s, is one of the city's top landholders today. It also owns 100 acres in Andheri, where it has developed 30 and 80 more acres in Kanjurumarg. The government's Ajmeras are hopeful that it will be opened up in the future. Another developer sitting on a goldmine (175 acres of salt-pan and 100 acres of land) in Mahul is Ladi Gandhi of the Lok Group. A small part of the salt-pans within the no-development zone, but the group is fighting a legal battle with the central government on that. The group is fighting to acquire this property from the state. Gandhi says he acquired this property from a Gujarati family, the Thakwads, in 1994. He also owns 130 acres of land in Andheri.

[illegible]

Kanjur has been taken over by slumlords. We barely have anything now." But the trust still owns nine buildings at Flora Fountain, the Cutlery Market at Crawford Market and property in Mazgaon, Lamington Road and Worli.

Nineteenth-century Parsi philanthropist Byramjee Jeejeebhoy, it is said, once owned large parts of the western suburbs between Bandra-Kandivli and Lokhandwala Complex in Oshiwara. Thakur Complex in land belonging to the Jeejeebhoy Trust. But virtually nothing remains, a spokesperson claims. It sold 550 acres in the Malad creek area a few years back to the Usha Madhu Cooperative Development Society for the latter to build an 18-hole golf course. Environmentalists have opposed the project and the society has since been dissolved. The sources cited above are not reliable.

The Jeejeebhoy trust had to surrender about 3,000 acres to the government for Aarey Milk Colony, 1,200 acres to the forest department for the Sanjay Gandhi National Park and 2,000 acres for the Aarey Forest Scheme between 1975 and 1985.

The A H Wadia trust once virtually owned Kurla and its surrounding villages. But in 1979, it sold 250 acres of its surrounding villages. But in 1979, it sold 250 acres of its surrounding villages. But in 1979, it sold 250 acres of its surrounding villages.

of Mumbai Samachar, is one of the prominent trustees. Nineteenth-century landlord Anwar Haji Mohammad Haji Kasam's huge tracts in Dahisar. It is now controlled by Veekayal Property Limited. A few years ago, when the state government drew up a list of Mumbai's top land-owners, the Haji Kasam Khod Jevs came down to be about 350 acres.

the over-350-year-old Bombay Parsi Panchayat may not be one of the largest real estate owners, but with about 5,500 tenants it is surely the biggest private landlord in the city. It controls all the famous Parsi residential enclaves like Cushtrow Bang at Colaba, Rustom Baag at Malabar Hill, and the Haji Kasam Khot land was

g. Rustom Baug at Byculla, Khareghat Colony on Hughes Road, Laitan Baug at Haji Ali, Gamadia Colony at Tardeo, Panthaky and rucha Baugs at Andheri, the Nirlon Estate in Goregaon and ant 55-acre Tower of Silence land at Kemps Corner. The Mahindra and Mahindra developers, Mahindra Gresco owns about 50 acres in south Mumbai, Ghatkopar. The Ghatkopar area is a

landanandis have already developed 180 acres of the 200-acre Powai that once belonged to the Sharma family. Niranjan Hiranandani confirmed to TOI that his group controlled about 100 acres between Mumbai and Thane.

Housing expert Chandrashekkhar Prabhu has the final say: "There are about nine builders who control a majority of the city's private land," he declares, "It is they who decide the rates that will dominate. They do it by releasing land into the market in dribs and drabs, according to the demand."

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Ajmera Group	450
Lok Group	289
SF Engineer Group	240

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South Mumbai	15,800	Rs/SqM
Worli	8,200	Rs/SqM
Sion/Chembur	3,600	Rs/SqM
Bandra (W)	7,000	Rs/SqM
Andheri (W)	3,500	Rs/SqM
Goregaon - Borivali	2,250	Rs/SqM

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