ARBiT
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Celebrating Hug Day: The Power of a Simple Embrace

Hug Day, celebrated on February 12 every year, is a heartfelt reminder of the warmth and comfort a simple embrace can bring. Beyond just a gesture of affection, hugs are known to reduce stress, release feel-good hormones, and strengthen emotional bonds between friends, family, and partners. Whether it's a quick squeeze to say hello or a long embrace to offer support, Hug Day encourages people to express love and care without words. In a world that often feels rushed, taking a moment to hug someone can create connection, happiness, and a sense of belonging.

राष्ट्रदूत
THURSDAY
12 February 2026
A-B

#ROOTS

Dad, Berserk, Pajama...

Old Words We Still Use Today, and Where They Came From

Many of the words we use in everyday conversation have ancient roots, some dating back hundreds or even thousands of years. Words like pajama, berserk, salary, alcohol, and even dad may seem simple or modern, but each carries a long and surprising history across different cultures and languages.

Let's take a closer look at these five everyday words and explore their origins, evolution, and meanings.

Pajama (Also spelled Pyjama)

The term was adopted into English during the British colonial period in India in the 17th and 18th centuries. Initially, pajamas were loose-fitting trousers tied at the waist, worn by men in South and West Asia for sleeping or lounging.

The British found them comfortable and began wearing them as sleepwear, eventually bringing the word and concept back to the West.

Berserk

A berserkr (or berserker) was a fierce Norse warrior who fought in a trance-like fury. The term likely referred to warriors who wore bear-skin cloaks and entered battle with uncontrollable rage.

From Norse Myth to Modern Language:

These warriors became legendary in Viking mythology and sagas. Over time, the word evolved in English to mean someone who is wild, uncontrollably angry, or out of control.

Salary

In ancient Rome, salt was a valuable commodity used for preserving food and was sometimes part of a Roman soldier's payment. The term salarium originally referred to money given to soldiers to buy salt. Over centuries, salarium broadened to mean any form of payment for work, and that's how we get the modern word salary.

Alcohol

In medieval chemistry and alchemy, al-kuhul came to mean any purified or distilled substance. Over time, European alchemists adopted the word to refer to distilled spirits, and it eventually narrowed to mean ethanol, the intoxicating ingredient in drinks.

Dad

In English, dad began appearing in written texts around the 16th century, though the spoken use likely goes much further back.

Final Thoughts

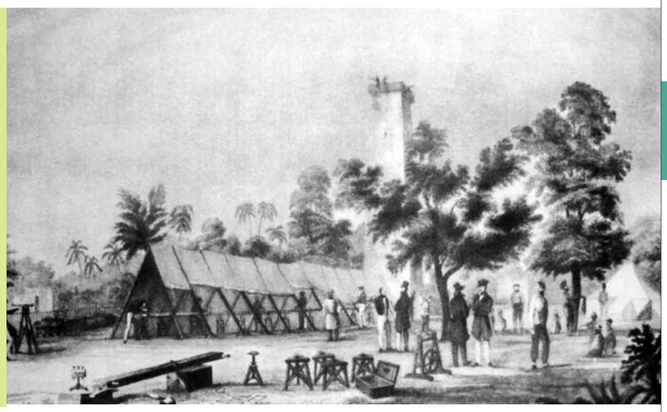
Words are living artifacts of history. As we've seen, terms we use casually, like pajama, berserk, salary, alcohol, and dad, have ancient, global origins. They've crossed borders, shifted meanings, and adapted to new cultures and times.

Next time you slip into your pajamas or call your dad, you're unknowingly connecting to centuries of linguistic evolution.

So This Is What A European Face Is Doing On A Temple Tower

Bust of William Lambton at St. Thomas Mount, Chennai.

The first baseline of the survey was between Marina Beach and the Madras race course (roughly 12 kms away) and the observation post was St. Thomas Mount in Chennai. The actual work was deceptively simple. The distance was measured with a blistered steel chain (which was less prone to thermal expansion) exactly 100 feet long at 62 degrees F. They carried a thermometer with them, so that they reworked the length if the temperature was different (the correction was +/- 0.00725 inches for every degree Fahrenheit variation). The angles were calculated using a device called theodolite, it weighed over half a tonne and was carried by 12 men.



A sketch of the Calcutta baseline by James Prinsep.

Kshema Jatuhkarna

A certain panel depicting a very European-looking face at the Brihadeeswara Temple in Thanjavur has puzzled devotees for years. Now, many historians believe the sculpture is of the extraordinary cartographer and soldier Lt. Col. William Lambton.

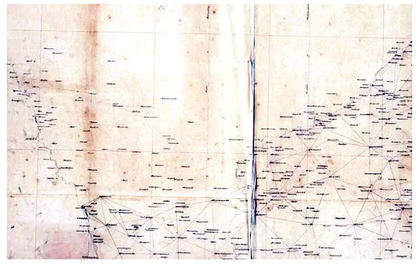
The Great Trigonometrical Survey of India was the largest measurement of the Earth's surface ever attempted. Apart from mapping the country, the project measured the height of Mount Everest, the tallest peak in the world, and even corroborated Newton's theory about the shape of the Earth. This is the story of the man who led this massive project, Col. William Lambton.

No one knows when exactly Lambton was born; our best guess is 1753. Young Lambton had a passion for science, especially mathematics and astronomy. Once, he damaged one of his eyes trying to observe a solar eclipse with inadequate protection!

When he grew up, Lambton started working as a surveyor for the British army in America. He was taken prisoner in the Battle of Yorktown (1781) but was released after the American War of Independence. In 1796, he was posted to India, where he took part in many campaigns. It was during the Fourth Anglo-Mysore War that his navigational skills came to the fore. The most celebrated case was when General Baird led the troops on a night manoeuvre: without realising it, he began leading them towards enemy lines. Lambton, navigating by the stars, corrected the general, and prevented slaughter by enemy cannon.

After the fall of Mysore, British India had become a large colony. Lambton proposed a survey to map this territory accurately. There was administrative, security and commercial justification for Lambton's idea, because maps of those days were very approximate. There were some reservations in the beginning, some of the higher authorities were not convinced about the project's significance. Ultimately, Maj. Gen Arthur Wellesley (later the Duke of Wellington) and some other influential leaders backed Lambton, and that was how Lambton began the Great Trigonometrical Survey of India in 1802.

By this time, trigonometry (Greek for 'triangle measurement') was a mature science. Lambton used a trigonometric method called triangulation. Its principle was: if you know the distance between two points in a line (the baseline), you can calculate the distance to a third point without actually measuring it; all you need to know is the angles between the two baseline points and the third point. These three points would form a triangle and a trigonometric formula would do the trick! After that, you kept adding adjacent triangles till you measured the whole land.



A trigonometric map.

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And he used another instrument called the zenith sector which pinpointed the location with reference to the stars. Because the Earth is not a flat plane, they had to make many daily adjustments in the readings to compensate for this; these were factors like the curvature of the earth, its non-spherical nature, altitude and its effect on gravity (they used pendulums and plumblines), refraction errors, temperature variations and so on. It was a laboriously slow process for the survey party of about 150 men. Accuracy, not speed, was the focus.

The survey team crossed rivers, mountains, and jungles, braving rain, wild animals, thieves and disease, across the peninsula. Four years later, they arrived at Mangalore, on the west coast. Lambton's map proved that Mangalore was closer to Madras by a whopping 10% as compared to the previous official figure! The East India Company was greatly impressed. They now wanted India to be mapped from Kanyakumari to Banog in the Himalayan foothills! It was much longer than the five-year project that they had originally planned for. Lambton immediately began the southern phase from Kanyakumari to Nagpur. It was then that the survey team reached Thanjavur. The team needed a high point for the survey and got permission to perch on top of the Brihadeeswara temple gopuram (tower). At 65 metres, it was one of the tallest structures in India then.

They hauled the massive theodolite up the tower. Unfortunately, a mishap occurred, they accidentally dropped the theodolite from the gopuram while setting it up. That was a big setback, but Lambton salvaged it carefully. However, the theodolite had also chipped off a part of the bas-relief on the tower. Now, this was a holy temple and Lambton was obliged to repair it immediately. Apparently, they affixed a new image, a modern Lambton look-alike. There is no clear evidence on how it was executed. Perhaps, they got away with it because the then Thanjavur king, Serfoji II, was a British ally and a progressive sponsor of scientific knowledge.

Not all kings were friendly though. Lambton had to cross several other Indian princely states in his route during the survey. Some of them panicked when they saw the military-looking team entering their borders. (At its peak, the survey team had nearly 700 members!) Only after they patiently explained the project did the kings support the scientific exercise.

Once, the French navy intercepted a ship carrying Lambton's theodolite and seized it, probably assuming it was a weapon. When they understood its purpose, they gracefully repacked it and returned it to him. Sometime in 1817, a membership in the French Academy of Sciences was conferred upon Lambton!

The project moved on. If Lambton was constantly on the move, what kind of family life did he have? We can only guess. Apparently, for many years, he sent a substantial portion of his salary back home, to support his parents; therefore, raising his own family might have been financially challenging. And he was married to this project. But somewhere along the way, he found himself an Indian companion named Kumerboo and had at least three children with her. One of them, William Lambton Jr., joined his father's survey team in 1815.

For Lambton, 1818 was an eventful year. He was invited to become a Fellow of the Royal Society. Governor-General Warren Hastings realised the national importance of the survey and made it a central subject under the control of the Supreme Council at Calcutta (now Kolkata). Lambton had triggered a culture of scientific cartography in India! His survey was formally christened the Great Trigonometrical Survey (GTS) and he became its first Superintendent. He was also allotted an energetic deputy, Captain George Everest. Years after Lambton died and Everest had retired, the GTS ascertained that peak XV in Nepal was the tallest peak ever. It was named after Everest, the worthy successor of Lambton.

Sir Isaac Newton had theorised that the Earth was not a sphere but an oblate spheroid. An oblate spheroid is something like grapefruit, nearly spherical but flattened at the top and bottom. Newton had concluded that this shape is caused by the spinning of the Earth. Lambton's expedition had covered such a large portion of the Earth, that it created adequate field data to support Newton's theory. Lambton's work was thus very important in the scientific world. By late 1822, Lambton was approaching Nagpur, the end of the southern phase. He had covered around 4,25,000 sq.km in about 20 years, mostly by foot. A sturdy man, he was suddenly struck with pulmonary illness. He was around 70, but still vigorous. He recovered and got ready for the final trek to Nagpur, 75 kms away. But he never saw Nagpur. He passed away peacefully in his sleep at one of the camps.

But his team never faltered; they crossed Nagpur and eventually reached the Himalayas many years later. Perhaps, the greatest manual survey in the history of science, the Great Trigonometrical Survey functioned for about 70 years, led by successors who practised Lambton's high standards. In 1875, it merged with the Survey of India and became a permanent department of the government of India.

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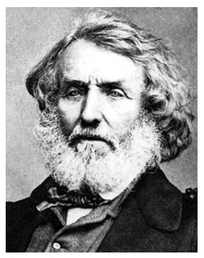
#BRIHADEESHWARA



George Everest.

The Brihadeeswara Temple in Thanjavur.

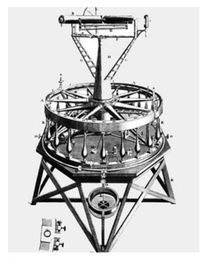


Diagram of a theodolite.

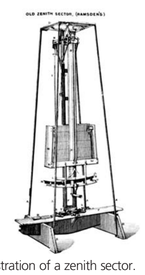


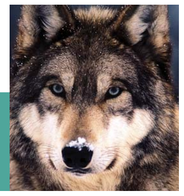
Illustration of a zenith sector.

Colonel William Lambton on the walls of Brihadeeshwara Temple.

#TEACHER

Lessons from Wolves

What the Wild Can Teach the Human Soul



In a world that often demands compromise, constant noise, and the loss of inner instinct, the wolf stands as a quiet, powerful reminder of another way to live. Wolves are more than fierce predators or mythic creatures of the forest, they are deeply intelligent, emotionally complex, and bound by a code of behavior that speaks to something ancient in us.

If we listen closely, the wolf teaches. Not through words, but through action. Through instinct. Through loyalty, strength, and silence. Here are the timeless lessons we can learn from wolves, truths that can guide the soul, especially in a world that has forgotten the wilderness within.

1. Never Eat What Is Rotten

A wolf will sniff, examine, and reject food that is spoiled. It refuses to poison its body, a lesson for humans not just in diet, but in life.

Do not consume what corrupts your spirit. This includes toxic relationships, degrading environments, or beliefs that no longer serve you. Learn to walk away from anything that contaminates your peace. Feed yourself with what nourishes, physically, emotionally, spiritually.

2. Choose What Nourishes Your Soul

Wolves hunt with focus and patience. They do not chase everything, they pursue only what sustains the pack. In this, they teach us to be intentional.

Choose pursuits, people, and places that feed your spirit. In a world of distractions, clarity is a rare strength. Don't waste your energy chasing what leaves you empty. Trust your gut. Know your hunger.

3. Never a Wolf in a Circus

You'll never see a wolf performing tricks under bright lights for applause. Wolves do not submit to cages or crowds. Their dignity is not for sale. Be wild enough to resist becoming entertainment. You were not born to be someone else's spectacle. Don't contort yourself for approval. Freedom may be lonely at times, but it is sacred.

4. Wolves Are Loyal in Love

Wolves mate for life. When one partner dies, the other may never take another. Some mourn in silence for years. Their bond is not convenience, it is commitment.

Loyalty still matters. In a world where love is often disposable, the wolf reminds us of devotion that runs deep. To love like a wolf is to choose again and again, even when it's hard. To mourn deeply is to have loved deeply.

5. Wolves Respect Bloodlines

Within the pack, there is a deep sense of heritage and order. Elders are honoured, the alpha leads not through domination but through earned respect, and every member has a role. Know where you come from. Respect your ancestry, your family, your roots. Don't forget the struggles and wisdom of those who came before. Let it guide your path without chaining you.

6. Wolves Care for Their Elders

Old wolves are not cast out, they are protected. They pass on knowledge, guard the young, and are fed even when they can no longer hunt.

Honour the wisdom of age. A society that discards its elders loses its memory. Value those who have walked before you. Listen. Learn. One day, you will be the elder.

7. Stay United in the Pack

A lone wolf may be fierce, but it is the pack that survives. Wolves succeed through cooperation, communication, and shared survival. They protect each other. They raise the pups together.

Find your pack. Whether it's family, friends, or community, stay connected. Fight for each other, not against each other. There is strength in unity that the individual can never match.

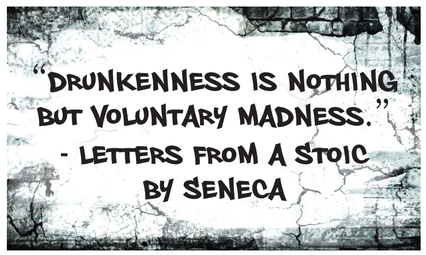
8. Live with the Discipline of the Wolf

Wolves are not reckless. They live by rhythm, hunting with strategy, traveling with purpose, resting in cycles. Their life is not chaotic, but precise. Discipline is not control, it is power. Learn the patterns that bring you strength. Rise early, speak with intention, move with clarity. Live by a code, even if no one is watching.

Return to the Wild Within

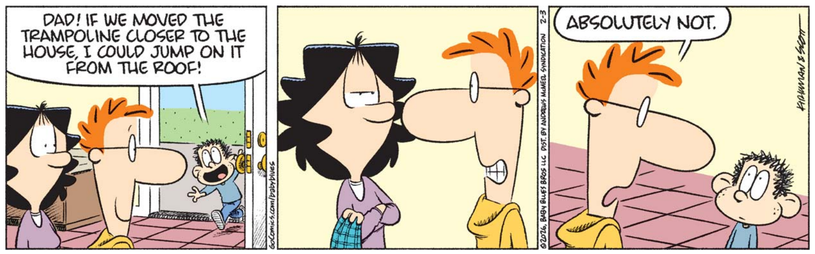
The wolf does not pretend to be anything it's not. It doesn't apologize for its hunger, its solitude, its love, or its strength. It simply is. In a world where many wear masks, be a wolf, raw, real, and rooted. Protect your soul the way a wolf protects its pack. Hunt only what feeds you. Speak only when needed. And walk through this life with the quiet, fierce wisdom of the wild.

THE WALL



BABY BLUES

By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott



ZITS

By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman