

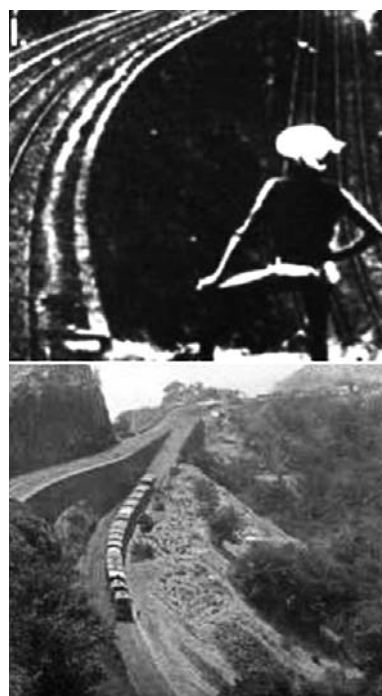


Hashtag: The Symbol That Changed Social Media

bserved on August 23, International Hashtag Day marks the anniversary of the first use of the hashtag symbol (#) on Twitter in 2007. What began as a simple way to group conversations has now become a global digital tool that drives trends, movements, and real-time engagement across platforms. From #ThrowbackThursday to #BlackLivesMatter, hashtags have transformed how we communicate, advocate, and connect online. International Hashtag Day celebrates this symbol's cultural impact, highlighting its role in shaping modern discourse, amplifying voices, and bringing communities together in the ever-evolving world of social media.



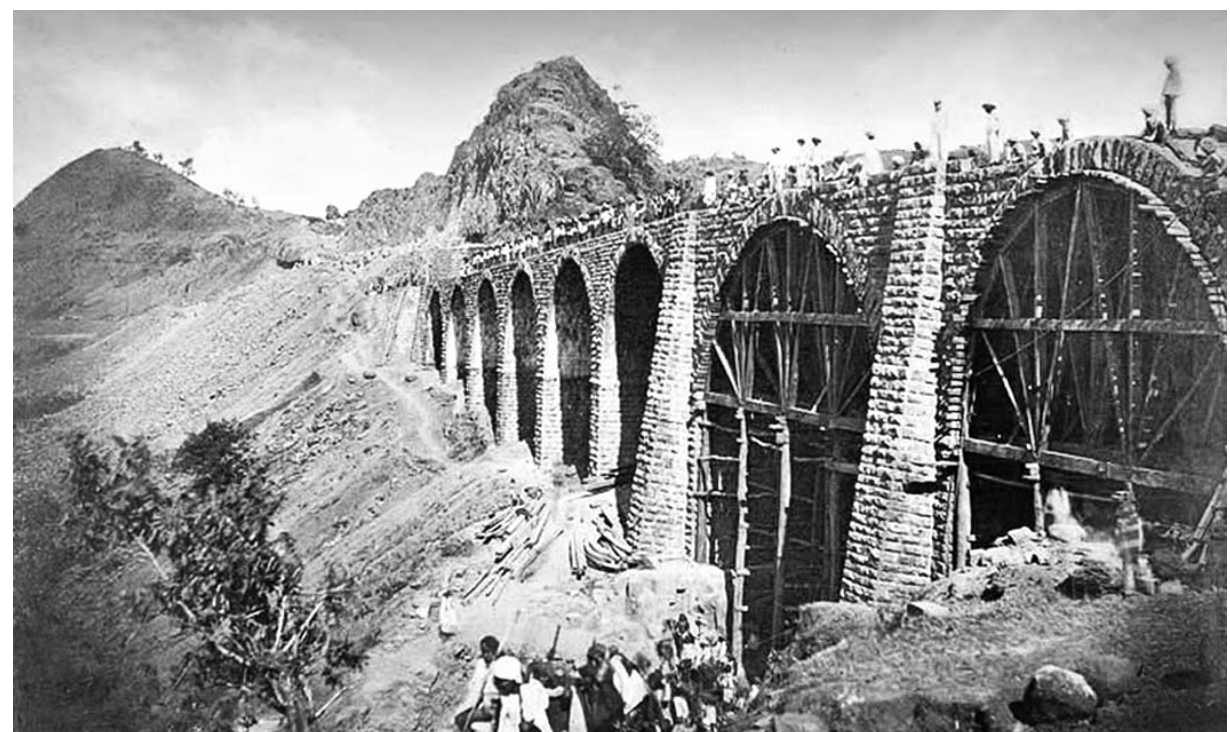
Deccan Queen train turns 96 years old.



Deadliest Railway Line during British India that cost 24,000 lives.



Sir Bartle Frere, 1st Baronet British colonial official.



Railway Bridge, Bhor Ghat.



View of the contractors workshops with Mr. Clowser, joint manager of contract, in the village of Ozone.

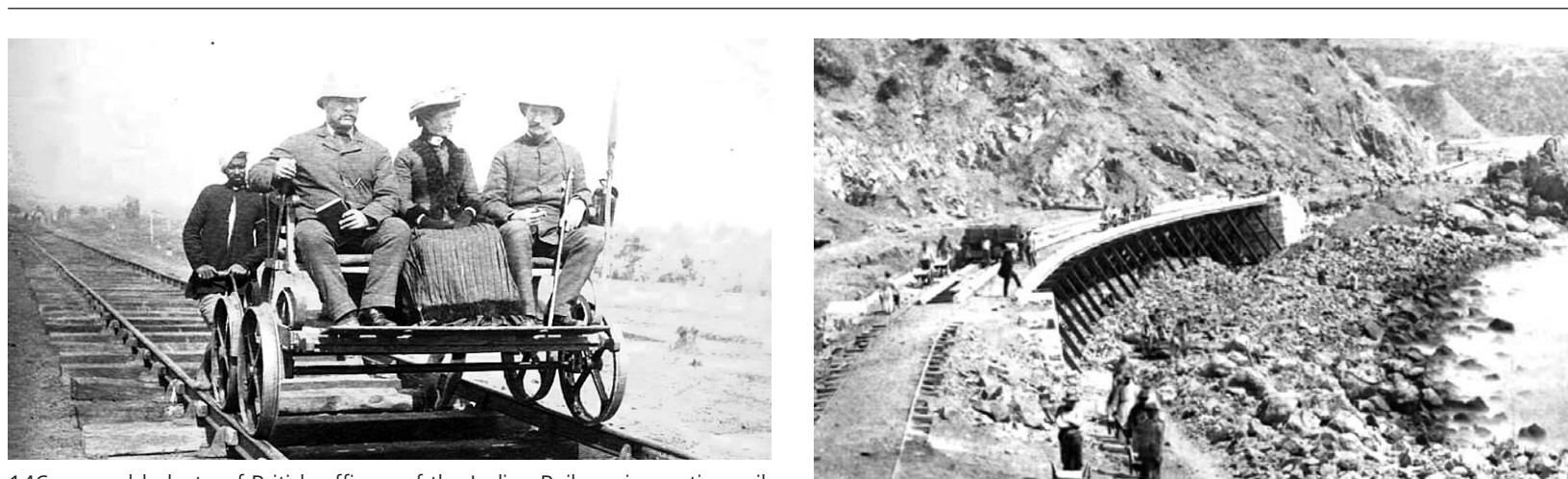


Construction of The Bhor Ghat Line near Bombay (1860s). The scenic Bhor Ghat stretch on the Mumbai-Pune route is the main reason of taking a train from one city to the next.

For the British, this was an economic and strategic decision. For the labourers, it was a daily brutal battle with death. The job was far more dangerous than ordinary construction work; it was like working in a battlefield. Thousands of men, women, and even children hung from ropes on the hillsides, cutting through rock without any safety harnesses or protective gear. Chisels and hammers in their bare hands, they hacked at the mountain so that the railway could pass through.

Deccan Queen The British Luxury Train

#THE BHOR GHAT PROJECT



146 years old photo of British officers of the Indian Railway inspecting rail track in a human-powered trolley was taken in 1880 AD.



Bhor Ghat Incline.

railway from Bombay to Thane, which had opened in 1853, put together a team for the Bhor Ghat project.

After four years of arduous surveys of various routes, 3,000 maps, drawings and cross-sections, Berkley chose the Bhor Ghat to lay the line. But the ascent here was so abrupt that it was impossible to construct a direct line. The railway incline would have to ascend 2,017 feet in less than 25 km, which would mean exceeding the prescribed gradient. Clearly, this was going to be a bigger challenge than they had imagined. So, instead of constructing a continuous steep line, they came up with a brilliant solution, to carve out a 'reversing section' at a bend near the summit, where an additional line was to be provided so that the train left in the direction opposite to which it had entered. In other words, the train would have to travel several yards backward and then take a run-up along a different, higher track to gain elevation.

The line would be laid such that



the train would climb gradually at the steepest part of the ghats, and would leave the reversing station through a U-curve, followed by a long tunnel, all this while chugging along the edge of the very narrow and precipitous Khandala gorge.

The project also involved the building of 25 tunnels, 8 arched masonry viaducts, and the cutting of 54 million cubic feet of hard rock. Nowhere in the world had engineers ever attempted a project as tough and dangerous as this, and they had no precedent to guide them.

Besides, British engineers had to adapt to a vastly different physical and cultural setting than they were used to. As one consulting engineer to the Government of the Bombay Presidency wrote in 1855, "There is nothing as far as I am aware of in any English Railway which can be looked upon as a parallel undertaking."

Economics over safety

For the British, this was an economic and strategic decision. For the labourers, it was a daily brutal battle with death. The job was far

more dangerous than ordinary construction work; it was like working in a battlefield. Thousands of men, women, and even children hung from ropes on the hillsides, cutting through rock without any safety harnesses or protective gear. Chisels and hammers in their bare hands, they hacked at the mountain so that the railway could pass through.

Every day meant blasting rock, carrying soil, and balancing on treacherous slopes. The slightest slip could cost a life. The danger was not only from falling rocks and sudden landslides, but also from the harsh conditions: a severe shortage of water, unbearable heat, and the constant fear of being crushed under a collapsing boulder. Yet, the British kept pushing the Indian workers to labour day and night. At its peak, nearly 25,000 workers were always on the job, turning the steep incline into a living nightmare. The work was supervised by British contractor William Faviell, whose methods have been described as severe.

Labourers reportedly worked long hours with little rest, and injuries, poor treatment, and delayed wages added to their suffering.

By 1859, working conditions had become unbearable, and many labourers protested. The colonial authorities suppressed the unrest. During the monsoon of 1859-60, stagnant water around the construction camps became breeding grounds for diseases such as malaria and cholera. Landslides, collapsing rock faces, broken ropes, and falling debris turned the construction site into a place of constant danger.

A commonly cited claim is that around 24,000 Indian workers lost their lives during the construction of the Bhor Ghat railway. While this figure appears frequently in books, articles, and public discussions, historians note that surviving colonial records do not conclusively verify the exact death toll. What is beyond dispute is that thousands of labourers endured extreme hardship and many died from disease, accidents, and exhaustion while building the railway.

Then, in January 1859, the project's investors demanded more. Angry at the slow speed of work



Traveling on the Deccan Queen.

and worried about not having enough money to complete the section, they insisted on paying only half the specified rate. This was when wages were already months in arrears.

The workforce was infuriated and a riot broke out, with the mob gathering around the British tents, on site, with sticks and stones to attack the sub-contractors. They relented only when they were promised more money.

Decades later, on 1 June 1930, the Deccan Queen began operating on this very route. The train became a symbol of luxury and efficiency, carrying British officials and wealthy passengers through the scenic hills of the Western Ghats. The train was designed for ease and elegance, soft seats, dining cars, and refined service while the labourers who had cleared the path for it remained invisible in both memory and history. The British never seemed to notice the suffering behind the scenery they admired from the train's windows.

Today, as the Deccan Queen passes through verdant valleys, towering bridges, and dark tunnels, most travellers see only the natural beauty and engineering brilliance. Hidden beneath that beauty, however, lies a story of immense human toil and sacrifice. The railway stands not only as an engineering achievement but also as a reminder of the thousands of unnamed Indian labourers whose sweat, suffering, and, for many, lives made it possible.

whose labour and lives made the project possible.

Decades later, on 1 June 1930, the Deccan Queen began operating on this very route. The train became a symbol of luxury and efficiency, carrying British officials and wealthy passengers through the scenic hills of the Western Ghats.

The train was designed for ease and elegance, soft seats, dining cars, and refined service while the labourers who had cleared the path for it remained invisible in both memory and history. The British never seemed to notice the suffering behind the scenery they admired from the train's windows.

Today, as the Deccan Queen passes through verdant valleys, towering bridges, and dark tunnels, most travellers see only the natural beauty and engineering brilliance. Hidden beneath that beauty, however, lies a story of immense human toil and sacrifice. The railway stands not only as an engineering achievement but also as a reminder of the thousands of unnamed Indian labourers whose sweat, suffering, and, for many, lives made it possible.

rajeshsharma1049@gmail.com



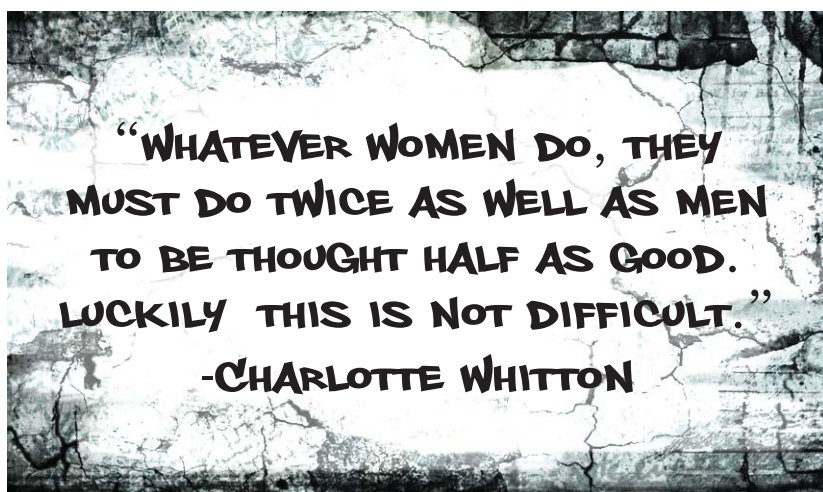
Men and donkeys at the construction site.



Bombay-Poona railway construction in the 1860s.



THE WALL



BABY BLUES



By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott

ZITS



By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman