



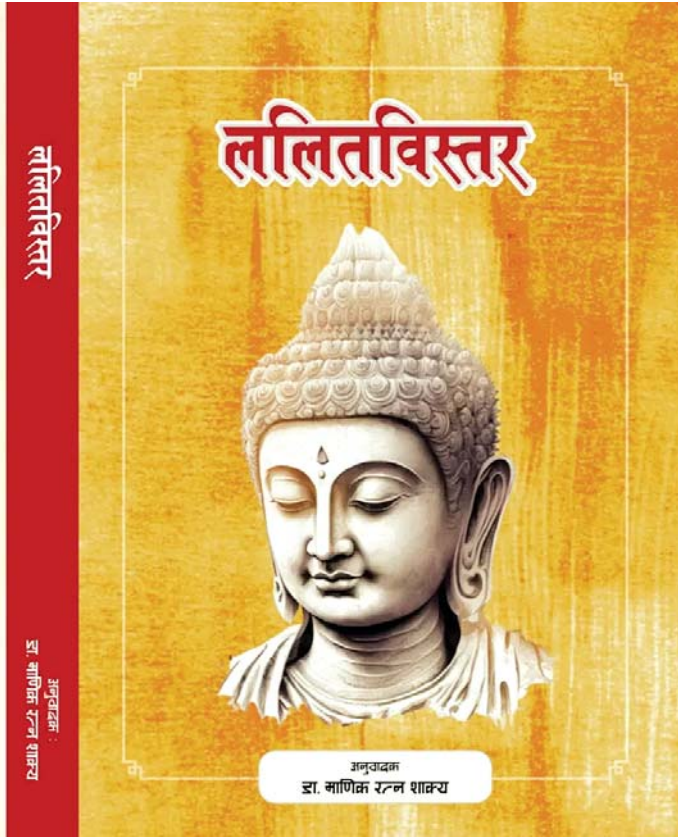
Superhuman Day 2025

celebrated on September 7, Superhuman Day honours individuals who push beyond ordinary limits, inspiring others with resilience, determination, and extraordinary spirit. From athletes overcoming physical challenges to everyday heroes breaking barriers in science, arts, and society, the day is a reminder that "superhuman" strength often comes from within. It encourages people to recognize their own potential, celebrate perseverance, and admire those who redefine boundaries of human ability. Observed worldwide, the day promotes positivity, empowerment, and a deeper appreciation for human courage and innovation that make ordinary lives truly extraordinary.

#INFINITY IN THOUGHT

Enormous Numbers in Ancient Indian Tradition

Buddha is said to describe a sequence of numbers increasing in powers, eventually reaching figures as large as 10^{53} , which is called *Tallakshana*



Ancient Indian texts often reveal a remarkable fascination with vast numbers, figures so large that they stretch the imagination even today. One such account appears in the Lalitavistara Sutra, which narrates episodes from the life of Gautama Buddha, blending philosophy, symbolism, and intellectual challenge.



According to tradition, during the time of his marriage to Princess Gopa, Buddha was asked to demonstrate his intellectual and scholarly abilities. Among the tests presented to him was one rooted in mathematics, a challenge meant to assess not just counting ability, but conceptual understanding.

In this account, Buddha is said to describe a sequence of numbers increasing in powers, eventually reaching figures as large as 10 to the power 53 . This system of naming and conceptualizing extremely large numbers is sometimes associated with terms like *Tallakshana*, reflecting a structured approach to numerical expansion in ancient Indian thought.

But the narrative goes further. When asked why such enormous numbers would even be necessary, the explanation becomes philosophical as much as mathematical. Buddha is said to respond with examples drawn from nature: if one were to count all the grains of sand in the Ganges River, one would reach numbers far beyond ordinary comprehension. Extending this idea even further, the text speaks of numbers reaching magnitudes like 10 to the power 700 , figures that attempt to quantify not just earthly quantities, but something as vast as the particles in the universe itself.

This was not mathematics



Heavy rains during the battle ruined Siraj's gunpowder, while the British guns remained dry. Mir Jafar betrayed Siraj. July 3, 1757. The mutilated body of the last independent Nawab of Bengal was paraded around Murshidabad town on the back of his favourite elephant. Siraj-ud-Daulah had been executed the day before, having lost the Battle of Plassey to the British. The British victory transformed them from traders into rulers, and Bengal's vast wealth began flowing to Britain. The Jagat Seths, however, soon realized their mistake. Once the British no longer needed them, they took control of Bengal's treasury and mint, rendering the Seths' financial empire irrelevant. In 1763, Mir Qasim ordered the execution of Jagat Seth Mahtab Chand and Swarup Chand, having their bodies thrown from Munger Fort.



Imagine a single family so wealthy that their fortune surpassed those on today's global rich lists. That was the Jagat Seth family of Bengal in the 18th century. Originally Jain Marwari bankers from Rajasthan, they became

the financial backbone of the Mughal Empire's richest province, Bengal. They controlled coin minting, managed state revenues, financed trade, and influenced politics at the highest level.

The most prominent members of this family were Seth Madhab Rai, and his cousin Maharaj Swarup Chand, the last two scions of this empire. The family was established by a man called Hiranand Sahu, a jeweller who started lending money at an exorbitant rate and would only take land as collateral.

The Seth family was not royalty but per se, but they were connected to the Royals of Bengal. Historically, the family was basically into trading fabrics, spices and artifacts. They eventually started lending money to people, from which they made a huge fortune. Saying they were filthy rich would be like saying that Jeff Bezos owns peanuts. In today's money, they had holdings that would be worth about 1000 Billion Pounds or more. Heck, British documents have shown that they had more money than all the banks in England combined. Some reports also estimate that the

- **Philosophical:** To illustrate the vastness of the cosmos and the insignificance of individual existence.
- **Spiritual:** To evoke a sense of awe and contemplation about infinity and time.
- **Intellectual:** To demonstrate mastery over abstract thinking and numerical systems.

In this way, the story is less about a literal "math test" and more about showcasing the intellectual culture of the time, one that did not shy away from grappling with infinity. The idea of counting every grain of sand in the Ganges or every particle in the universe may seem impossible, but that is precisely the point. These immense numbers symbolize the boundless nature of reality and the human attempt to comprehend it.

Through such narratives, ancient Indian traditions remind us that mathematics is not only about calculation, it is also about imagination, philosophy, and the courage to think beyond limits.

British economy back in the 1720s was smaller than the wealth the Jagat Seths had.

To put things into perspective, consider this, they owned about half of the total land in undivided Bengal. Combine Assam, Bangladesh and West Bengal, they owned half of that. Their story is a timeless lesson in how immense financial power can be lost through political ambition. The Jagat Seths were once so rich that their wealth, estimated at around 8.3 lakh crore (about \$1 trillion today), made them among the richest families in history. They lent money to both the Mughals and later to the British East India Company.

Origins and Rise

The family's legacy began in the 16th century with a wealthy banker named Manik Chand, who earned the title "Jagat Seth," meaning "Banker of the World," from Mughal Emperor Farrukhsiyar. Manik Chand had moved from Patna to Dhaka in the early 1700s to establish a trading business. When Bengal's capital shifted to Murshidabad, he followed and soon became the banker and financial adviser to the Nawab. In 1712, Emperor Farrukhsiyar further honoured him with the title "Nagar Seth" (banker of the city).

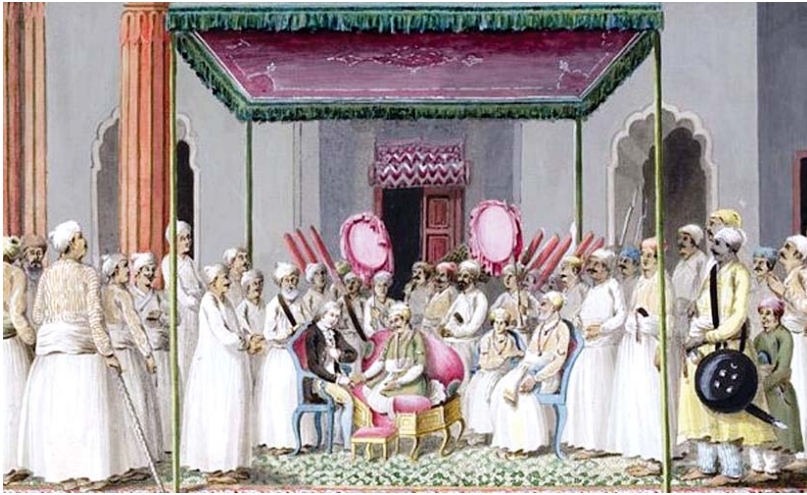
After Manik Chand's death in 1714, his nephew and adopted son Fateh Chand took charge and expanded the family business. Under his leadership, the Jagat Seth family's influence grew enormously. British historian Robert Orme described the Jagat Seths as the wealthiest family in the Mughal Empire, possessing vast influence over Bengal's administration. Their banking empire was often compared to the Bank of England in importance. They managed government funds, collected

The Slap That Changed Indian History



House Of Jagat Seth Complex, Mahimapur, Murshidabad.

#TURN OF FORTUNE



India's Richest Banker, Jagat Seth.



Siraj-ud-Daula.



Corridor of Jagat Seth's office.



Garden Bench, House Of Jagat Seth.

revenue, and even minted coins. Some historical accounts claim that their wealth exceeded that of the entire British economy of the 1720s. After Fateh Chand, his grandson Mahtab Chand and cousin Maharaja Swarup Chand took over the business in 1744. Both were highly influential during the reign of Alivardi Khan, the Nawab of Bengal. However, their fortunes began to turn when Siraj-ud-Daulah became Nawab. Facing growing hostility, the family allied with the British East India Company, a move that would change India's history forever.

The Fall of the Jagat Seths

At the height of their influence, the Jagat Seths were not only bankers but also political kingmakers, capable of making or unmaking rulers. Yet, their greatest mistake was allowing business and politics to

intertwine with emotions. It is true that soon after ascending the throne of Bengal, Nawab Siraj-ud-Daulah demanded a massive tribute of Rs. 3 crores from Jagat Seth Mahtab Chand, the head of the phenomenally wealthy Jagat Seth banking family. When the banker refused, Siraj-ud-Daulah slapped him in open court in front of his packed assembly. On another occasion, he forced an English officer to go down on his knees and beg mercy in pidgin Bengali. ("Tomar ghulam, tomar ghulam," stammered the Englishman between violent sobs.) This public humiliation proved to be a fatal political miscalculation. Striking a man whose personal wealth was said to exceed that of many kings alienated the most powerful financier in the region. As a direct result, the Jagat Seths threw their immense financial weight and influence behind Robert

Clive, funding the British conspiracy and paving the way for the Nawab's defeat at the Battle of Plassey in 1757. You would think that these acts were typical of an ultra-aggressive, super-confident man, one whose fists work faster than his tongue and to whom satisfying his inflated ego is more important than looking after the finer points of diplomacy. The truth, however, is different. Siraj's outbursts were more in the nature of a Nawab's desperate attempts to establish his credentials as a man among stalwarts who had always looked on him as a child. He had grown up under the protective shadow of his grandfather; he always had the reassuring hand of Alivardi Khan on his shoulder, and when that hand was cruelly removed by death, Siraj found his situation not unlike that of a fawn trapped amid wolves. Hostile pow-



ers pressed in on his kingdom from all sides; his capital was a hotbed of conspiracies and intrigues; and he felt compelled to show more confidence than he felt, exercise more power than he possessed, and act more precipitously than he would under other circumstances.

But even the best mask falls off after a while. The aggressive facade couldn't hide forever the terror that lurked at the root of Siraj's soul, and when he tried to mend fences with Jagat Seth and the English after having first overshot his mark, it had the bearings of a greenhorn who doesn't feel equal to combating a crisis. His enemies were kicking up a deadly storm; the vessel of his kingdom was rapidly sinking, and it required an experienced pair of hands to steer that vessel to safety. But the experienced hands weren't coming, and when it was left to Siraj's novice hands that had done precious little apart from holding wine cups, there was only one outcome that was possible: Siraj losing his Bengal, and Bengal losing her halcyon days.

Battle of Plassey and Its Aftermath

The Battle of Plassey, fought on June 23, 1757, marked the beginning of British rule in India. The British army, led by Robert Clive, had only 3,000 men against Siraj's 50,000 soldiers, but the Seths' financial and political support turned the tide. They helped Clive bribe Mir Jafar, one of Siraj's commanders, promising to make him the next Nawab.

Heavy rains during the battle ruined Siraj's gunpowder, while the British guns remained dry. Mir Jafar betrayed Siraj. July 2, 1757. The mutilated body of the last independent Nawab of Bengal was paraded around Murshidabad town on the back of his favourite elephant. Siraj-

ud-Daulah had been executed the day before, having lost the Battle of Plassey to the British. The British victory transformed them from traders into rulers, and Bengal's vast wealth began flowing to Britain.

The Jagat Seths, however, soon realized their mistake. Once the British no longer needed them, they took control of Bengal's treasury and mint, rendering the Seths' financial empire irrelevant. In 1763, Mir Qasim ordered the execution of Jagat Seth Mahtab Chand and Swarup Chand, having their bodies thrown from Munger Fort. Mahtab's son, Kushal Chand, only 18 at the time, inherited the title but lacked leadership and business skills.

By the 1860s, the family's fortune had vanished. The British never repaid their debts, and the Seths lost their lands and influence. By the 1900s, they had disappeared from public life entirely. The Jagat Seth mansion in Murshidabad, once filled with treasures, secret tunnels, and political meetings, has now become a museum. It holds ancient coins, fine textiles, and artifacts from their golden era. Also embroidered Banarasi sarees with gold and silver threads, fine muslin textiles, and priceless personal belongings of the family. A hidden underground chamber and secret passageways, where strategies were once planned, add a mysterious aura to the site.

The Jagat Seths funded temples, educational institutions, and charitable initiatives across Bengal. It reflects the family's commitment to societal welfare alongside commercial interests. Their opulent mansion in Murshidabad, once a symbol of luxury and authority, became a hub of both business and social gatherings, attracting nobles, merchants, and dignitaries from near and far.

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House of Jagat Seth, Nashipur, Murshidabad, West Bengal.

#A REMARKABLE RETURN

Giant Tortoises Roam Floreana Once Again

Challenging the idea that extinction is always final and shows how science and dedication can help rebuild what was lost



In a powerful story of conservation and resilience, giant tortoises have returned to the Galapagos island of Floreana for the first time in more than 180 years. Highlighted by BBC World Service, this moment has been described by conservationists as a "hugely significant milestone" in ecological restoration.

A Species Lost to History

The original native tortoise species of Floreana, Chelonoidis niger niger, was driven to extinction in the 1840s. Sailors traveling through the Galapagos Islands took thousands of tortoises as a source of food during long sea voyages. Over time, this relentless exploitation wiped out the species entirely from the island.

For nearly two centuries, Floreana remained without one of its most important ecological inhabitants.

The restoration effort

The return of these tortoises is part of the ambitious Floreana Ecological Restoration Project. In a recent milestone, 158 captive-bred juvenile tortoises were released onto the island, marking a new chapter in its ecological recovery.

This effort began in 2017, when scientists made a surprising discovery on Isabela Island.



They found tortoises carrying genetic material linked to the extinct Floreana species. Using this genetic connection, a selective breeding program was launched to revive traits of the original tortoise population.

Nature's Engineers Return

Giant tortoises are not just iconic animals; they are vital to the ecosystems they inhabit. As explained by evolutionary biologist Evelyn Jensen, these creatures act as "ecosystem engineers."

- They shape their environment by:
- Grazing on vegetation
- Dispersing seeds across the landscape
- Trampling terrain to create habitats for other species

Their presence helps maintain balance and supports biodiversity across the island.

A New Beginning, Not Just a Return

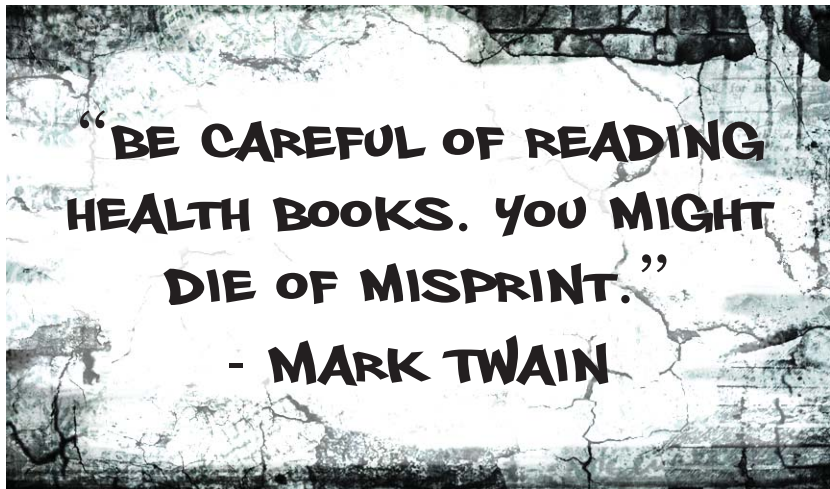
Although the original Floreana tortoise remains officially extinct, this initiative represents something extraordinary. The newly introduced tortoises carry the genetic legacy of the lost species, effectively giving rise to a restored population that echoes its ancestor.

Scientists suggest that this could be seen as the beginning of a "new species," symbolizing hope in conservation biology. It challenges the idea that extinction is always final and shows how science and dedication can help rebuild what was lost.

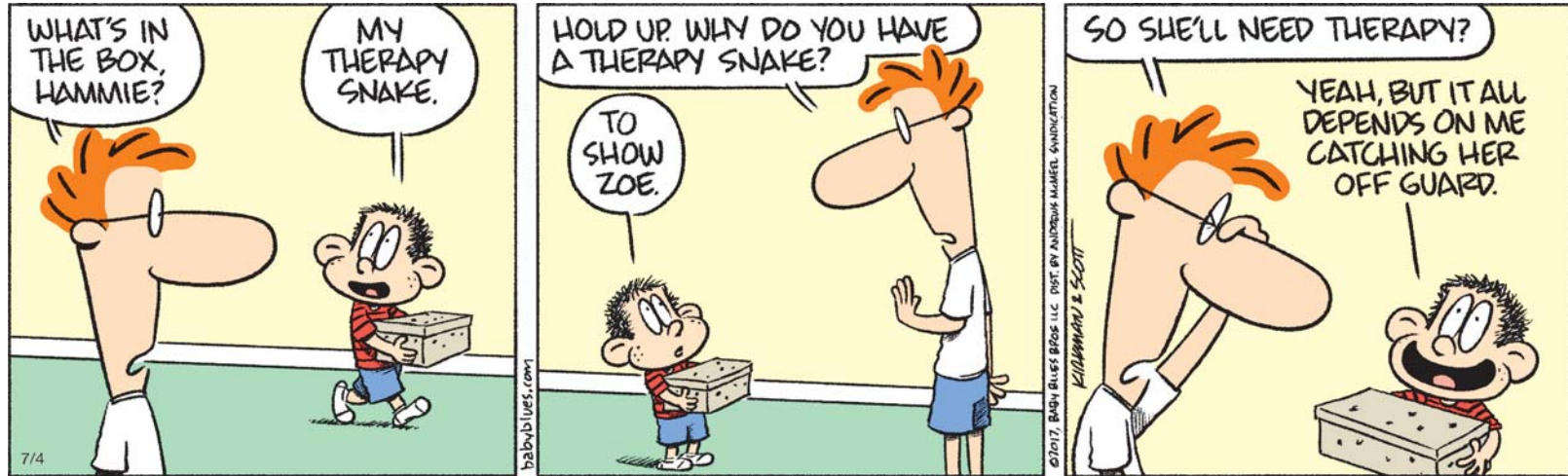
Conclusion

The return of giant tortoises to Floreana Island is more than just a wildlife story; it is a testament to human responsibility and the possibilities of ecological restoration. From extinction in the 19th century to revival in the 21st, this journey reflects both the damage caused by human activity and the potential for meaningful repair. As these young tortoises begin to roam freely once again, they carry with them not just the legacy of their species, but also a renewed hope for the future of conservation worldwide.

THE WALL

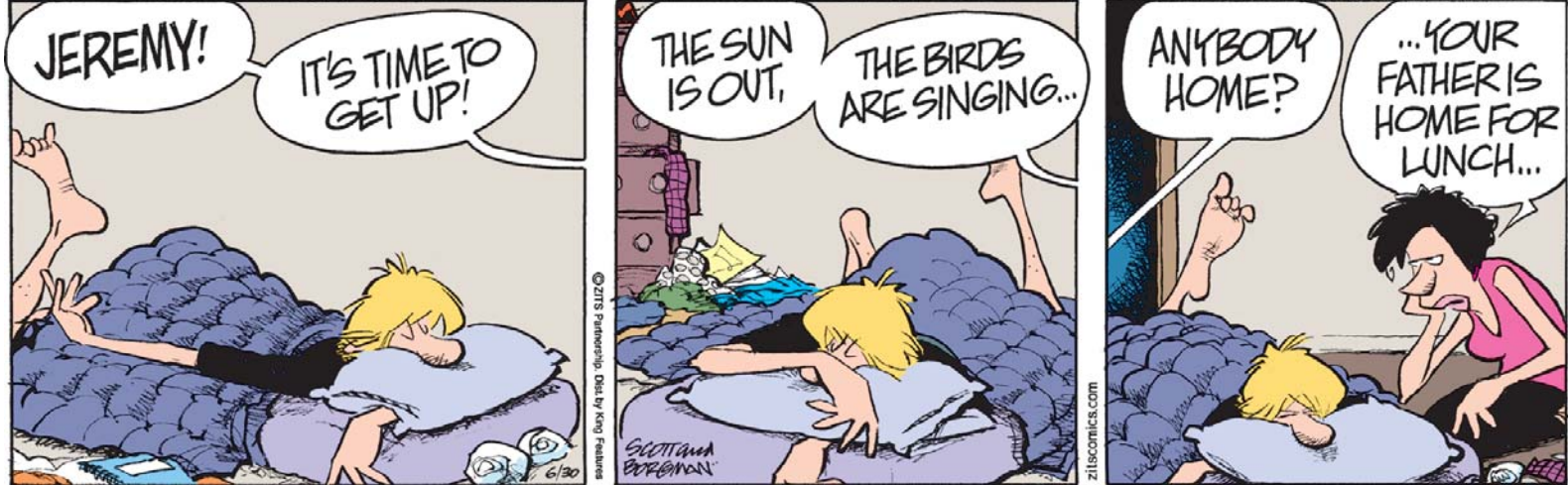


BABY BLUES



By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott

ZITS



By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman