

## World Heritage Day: Preserving the Legacy of Humanity

celebrated on April 18, World Heritage Day, also known as the International Day for Monuments and Sites, underscores the importance of safeguarding cultural and natural heritage across the globe. The day promotes awareness about the diversity of heritage sites and the need to protect them from threats such as urbanisation, climate change, and neglect. From ancient monuments to ecological landscapes, these sites reflect shared human history and identity. Governments, conservationists, and local communities come together to encourage sustainable preservation practices, ensuring that future generations can experience and learn from these invaluable treasures.

### #RARE

## The World's Top 5 Most Expensive Flowers

Rare, difficult to cultivate and impossible to commercialise, valued at thousands or even millions of dollars



Flowers have long symbolized beauty, love, and luxury. While many flowers are easily available and affordable, some are extraordinarily rare, difficult to cultivate, or impossible to commercialize. These factors make certain flowers incredibly expensive, sometimes valued at thousands or even millions of dollars. Below are five of the most expensive flowers in the world, each prized for its rarity, uniqueness, or cultural significance.



#### Juliet Rose

The Juliet Rose is often regarded as the most expensive rose ever developed. Created by renowned rose breeder David Austin, this peach-coloured rose took over 15 years of research and cultivation to perfect. The cost of developing the Juliet Rose is estimated at around 15 million USD. Its soft apricot petals and perfect rosette shape make it a favourite in luxury weddings and high-end floral arrangements.

#### Saffron Crocus

The Saffron Crocus is famous not for its appearance alone but for what it produces, saffron, the world's most expensive spice. Each flower yields only three red stigmas, which must be harvested by hand. It takes approximately 75,000 flowers to produce one pound of saffron, making the process extremely labour-intensive. As a result, saffron can cost thousands of dollars per kilogram, making the crocus itself one of the most valuable flowers globally.

#### Kadupul Flower

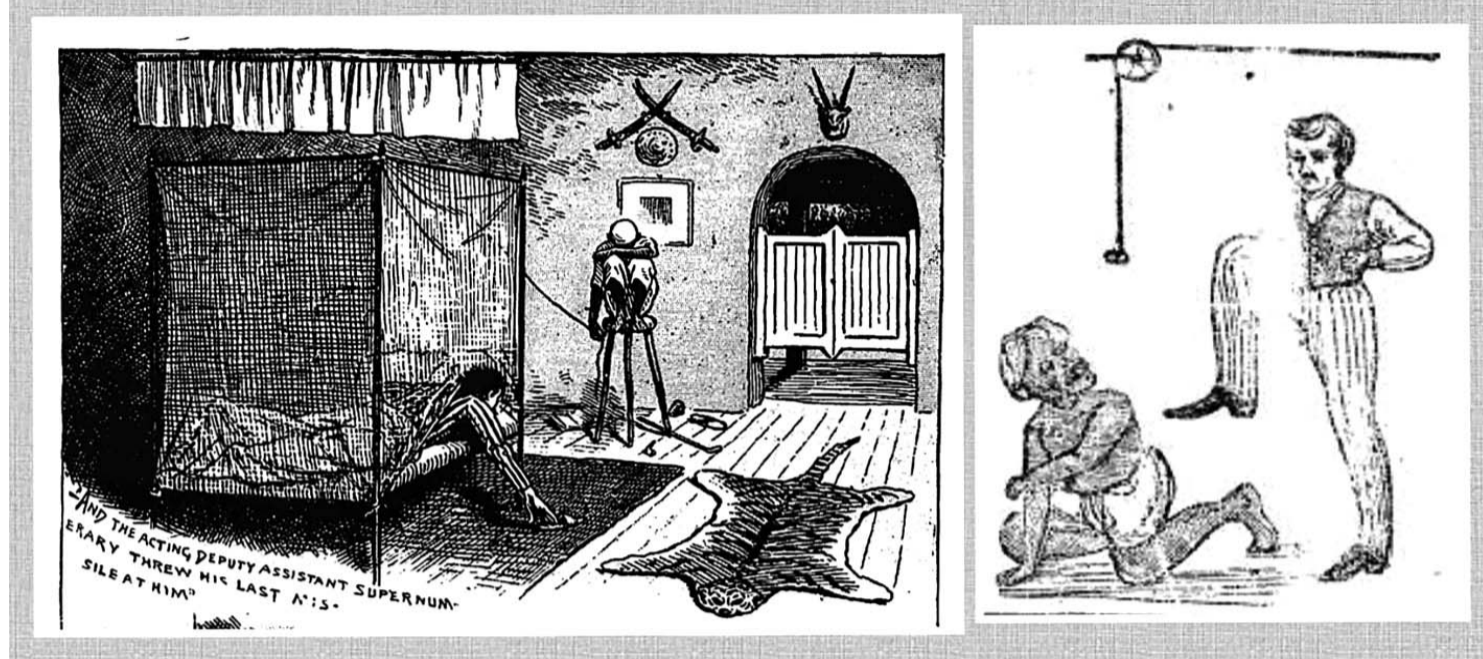
The Kadupul Flower, native to Sri Lanka, is unique because it is priceless rather than expensive. The flower blooms only at night and writes before dawn, making it impossible to harvest or sell. Known as the 'Queen of the Night,' it has a delicate white appearance and a powerful fragrance. Its rarity, short lifespan, and cultural reverence give it immense value beyond money.

#### Conclusion

The continuous use of the punkah and punkah coolies became particularly significant in army barracks of European soldiers since the 1840s, when their health became a pressing problem for the colonial government. In private households, the day and night use of the punkah involved a further recasting of working conditions from early decades of the nineteenth century.

# Beating the Tropics With Boots

## PART:2



Hurling 'missiles' (boots) and delivering kicks to keep the punkah wallah awake.



Meanwhile, characteristically uneven legal-contractual forms favouring masters and imposing fixed wages and penal sanctions on servants (like Regulation VII of 1819) were introduced in the whole of Bengal presidency to specifically target domestics. Taken together, the introduction of such fixtures by the Company state in early-colonial cities describes the second key development that contributed to the making of the punkah as a possible necessity of European life in India.

### #THE PUNKAH

Following the intensification of such state measures, servants' complaints about punkah-pulling seem to disappear from European accounts from around the third decade of the nineteenth century. The punkah also starts being used by gradually expanding durations of the day and night. The state-enabled subjection of service labour also allowed the punkah to surpass other kinds of artificial remedy like ventilators, thermantidotes, and ice-making machines in becoming the most preferred and affordable modality of dealing with 'tropical' heat. Further, manual punkah-pulling proved a more economic option compared to automated forms of the device that had already come into existence, for instance, in sovereign Awadh, where palace punkahs were driven entirely by steam since 1819.

With the punkah becoming an absolute necessity of European life by the middle decades of the nineteenth century, the creation of a separate profession of punkah wallahs or punkah coolies entirely dedicated to the task of punkah-pulling became imminent. This profession emerged in both private (household) and public (offices, barracks) sites.

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With the nocturnal extension of punkah-pulling, the puller was suddenly in certain places at certain times beyond stipulated entry. This did not necessarily sit well with European sensibilities that sought out privacy from these "half naked wretches" who did not attain the lived status of higher servants. The puller of the punkah was thus architecturally resituated to a position outside the immediate view of the master, possibly in a verandah space or even outside the immediate confines of the building where the rope end of the punkah reached him through a hole in the wall. Being thus extramurally confined to relative invisibility as well as somewhat sequestered from the domain of servant's sociability, the puller of the punkah became a liminal relation to the world of household work.

The demand for punkah labour grew remarkably over the second half of the nineteenth century. In Calcutta, this was met by steady streams of relatively lower caste migrant populations, like Kahars, Rajwars, Dusadhs from Bihar and eastern United Provinces, certain Muslim communities from Bengal districts and Gwalas from Orissa, assembling in the city every 'hot weather' season (usually between March and October).

In some ways, the liminal status of the punkah wallah afforded an opportunity to him (and in rare cases, her) to seek out employment independently of the control of a singular household and beyond the usual mediation of higher servants like sirdar-bearers who oversaw the running of any such household chore. This opportunity was availed throughout this period by the migrant punkah workers who maintained separate schedules of work across various employment sites over different periods of the day. An 1886 description of the enterprise of punkah-pulling in Calcutta thus stated it to be common practice that 'large bodies of men' worked at the offices during the day and then proceeded to the humble homes, to add to their earnings by hauling for the further period of eight hours at the end of a rope.

European householders did not take very favourably to this relative loss of control that they suffered by virtue of punkah wallahs using their time flexibly. Their angst focused on these servants tiring at their jobs, and allegedly dozing off from time to time. The wealthier amongst them tried to incentivize their punkah wallahs to take rest over the day so that they could stay

### #THE PUNKAH

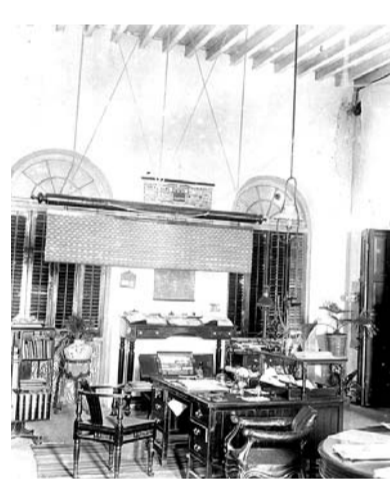
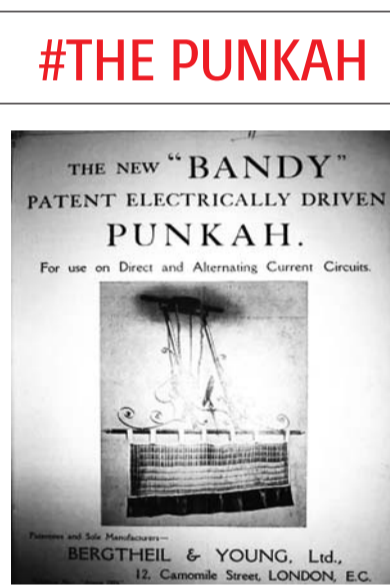


awake during their night duties. More often than not, this did not work as the very meagre incentives against rather stagnant wage levels were never really enough. The less well-off Europeans tried to compel their other servants to fill in for the missing or slacking punkah labour. But these servants had also developed their own caste and status-based restrictions against working alongside what they perceived were the 'lower'-in-status punkah wallahs who came in from outside the household.

In the colonial army, a similar refusal by existing regimental followers developed around the same period which saw the work of punkah-pulling slide down a caste-oriented order of mentalisation. The situation in the barracks was even more complicated by the fact that the employment of punkah coolies came to be deeply mired in a corrupt system created by the collaboration of native contractors and lower order military officers. This typically involved employing lesser numbers of or less able coolies at cheaper rates for accomplishing the rather laborious task of pulling scores of punkahs. The resulting surplus generated against the yearly endowment for punkah-pulling was siphoned off by the interested parties. Moreover, awkward modes of labour-saving innovations in the barracks ended up assigning sets of two or more punkahs to each coolie that were often too heavy to be operated consistently by any single puller. It was little wonder then that barrack punkahs too slowed down frequently to interrupt the sleep of the European soldier.

The enterprise of punkah-pulling thus hardly ever functioned satisfactorily. And the brunt of this dissatisfaction, unsurprisingly, was borne by the lowly-paid, casualised and overburdened punkah wallahs. Consequently, the liminality of punkah wallahs also became a source of repeated ordeals, ordeals that invariably amounted to regular acts of violence.

The architectural banishment to a location outside the master's immediate view had already relegated the punkah wallah to a nameless, faceless object that could be interacted with entirely impersonally without much of the affective entanglement that could possibly arise in the course of domestic work with other servants. George Atkinson thus wrote quite nonchalantly about the resources that had to be kept at hand to be used as 'missiles' targeted at the punkah wallah to keep him enjoined to his duties, a few boots, slippers, a racquet, even a chair: The punkah wallah could also be

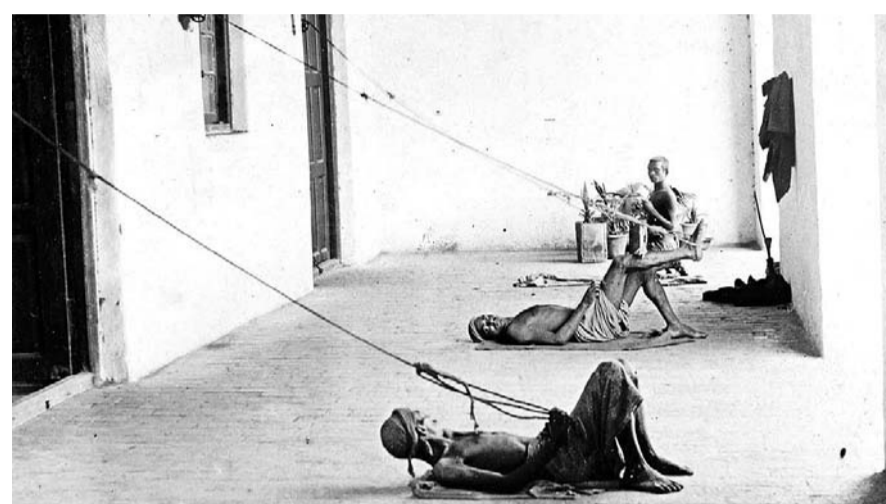


brought closer and placed on a high stool supposing that he might tumble off it in his sleep. And if all of this did not serve to keep him awake, there was obviously the option of a direct personal assault, kicks and punches, often hurled repeatedly.

As the legal threat of penal sanction for 'insolent' domestic servants came to be overruled by the 1860s, the direct dealing (in racial violence) between the European master and his night punkah wallahs became more common. But this, of course, hardly contributed to making the European's sleep any more peaceful. One master thus wrote of 'rising six times in the night to kick his punkah-bearer awake' and in the process submitting to 'a life of compulsory hypochondria and inevitable valetudinarianism.'

In the last three decades of the nineteenth century, more instances started being reported in the native press of fatal injuries sustained by these servants leading to deaths in several cases. An obvious example could be that of Mr. Fox, the Assistant Station-master of Tundla, accused of delivering a fatal blow leading to the death of his punkah coolie 'Tulsia' in August, 1879. This kind of fatal violence came to increasingly raise issues of legitimacy for the highest orders of the colonial state. But the colonial judicial establishment effectively decriminalized much of this racist violence as a contingent outcome of the lazy labour of the deceased victim. The Allahabad High Court thus overruled any possibility of murder or 'culpable homicide' in the Tundla case, deciding that there was nei-

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ther premeditation nor 'reckless vindictiveness' that motivated Fox, for whom it was only quite natural to react in the way he did when the punkah slacked.

In the three odd decades following this incident, twenty-one cases were reported from army barracks where punkah coolies captured on quaint acts of European soldiers. Similar judicial arguments were adopted in almost all of these cases that actually went to trial. Some such cases did not even go to trial since military authorities covered up by declaring the fatalities as 'accidents' or by citing an inability to detect the perpetrator. Colonisers' sleep was more important than colonized lives.

#### The punkah wallah as a fantasy object

Colonial officials not infrequently admitted that the slacking of punkah coolies could be an expected outcome of the rather trying conditions within which they carried out their laborious duties in the barracks. By the end of the nineteenth century, the colonial administration under Curzon tried to seek out mechanized alternatives.

The mechanization projects were also urged by masters who felt harassed by repeated oppositional action like court cases. A momentous strike in 1898 by punkah wallahs, looking for better working conditions and higher wages, aggravated this demand. This was also a timely opportunity for the promoters of the new energy form that was electricity, to propose their own automated alternatives, some of which eventually went on to successfully replace the punkah in a slow transition over the years to come.

But why didn't earlier mechanized alternatives affect this substitution, given the constantly discussed obsolescence of the punkah wallah and the barely mechanical device he pulled? A provisional exploration of this question could lead us to the multiple parables of fantasy that were spun about the punkah wallah, parables that remained united in spirit with the early nineteenth century views of the likes of James Johnson. The later manifestations of a Johnson-like imagination had at their core the possible myth of the sleeping punkah-puller that referred to the distinctive ability of a small spectated men of Asian humanity to pull the punkah while fast asleep.

Even as European masters vented their frustration against the interruptions caused to their sleep by the slacking motion of the

punkah, the punkah wallah continued to shoulder the immense burden of supposedly being innately capable of dragging at the end of a rope throughout his sleep. This mythology was scripted through popular travel writing, scientific accounts as well as photographic penmanship, captured on quaint postcards that sold this wishful thinking to an imperial public. Similar to the myth of the sleeping punkah puller was another figment of imagination that could be referred to as the 'jerk' theory, this theory assigned to the puller of the punkah another unique ability, to render a 'jerk' to his pull of the punkah rope that was difficult for any machine to replicate. While rejected by learned engineering authorities, this theory too sustained for an inordinately long time, serving to discourage an automated transition to a 'self-acting punkah.'

Taken together, such ideological work of rendering punkah wallahs into peculiar anthropological fantasies possibly had an apposite dialectical pairing with the narrative of their obvious obsolescence throughout the nineteenth century. But it did not really make their working lives any more valuable or secure. Punkah wallahs continued to tire at their very demanding regimes of work, and for their masters, beating them up continued to figure as the sole way of beating the 'tropical' Indian heat.

#### The Transition to Electric Punkahs

By the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the development of electricity brought about a new era for the punkah. The five interlocked rings, coloured blue, yellow, black, green, and red, are set against a white background. Coubertin chose these specific colours because, at the time, every national flag in the world contained at least one of them. The rings themselves stand for the five inhabited continents of the world: Africa, the Americas, Asia, Europe, and Oceania. Their interlocking nature signifies the coming together of athletes from all corners of the globe in a spirit of friendly competition and mutual respect.

Contrary to popular belief, there is no official assignment of a specific colour to a specific continent. The rings were never meant to be interpreted that way. Instead, they are a visual expression of the Olympic ideal, that despite differences in race, nationality, or back-

ground, humanity can unite through sport. The rings made their first official appearance at the 1896 Olympic Games in Antwerp and have since become a permanent and powerful emblem of the Games.

Equally symbolic and steeped in history is the Olympic Flame, which has its roots in ancient Greece. In the original Olympic Games held in Olympia, a sacred flame was kept burning throughout the event in honour of Zeus, the king of the Greek gods. This fire, drawn from the altar of Hestia, represented purity, sacrifice, and the continuity of life. The modern incarnation of the Olympic Flame was first introduced at the 1928 Amsterdam Olympics. However, it wasn't until the 1936 Berlin Games that the tradition of the Olympic Torch Relay began. This modern ritual starts in Olympia, Greece, where the flame is ignited using the rays of the sun, harnessed through a parabolic mirror. From there, the flame

### #SYMBOLS

# The Truth Of The Rings And The Flame

The Olympic Rings and Flame: Symbols of Unity, Tradition, and Global Spirit



The Olympic Games are not just a celebration of sport, they are a powerful expression of global unity, resilience, and shared human values. Central to this grand spectacle are two iconic symbols that have become inseparable from the identity of the Games: the Olympic Rings and the Olympic Flame. Though instantly recognizable, their origins and meanings are often misunderstood or overlooked. In truth, these symbols carry deep historical roots and reflect ideals that go far beyond athletic competition.

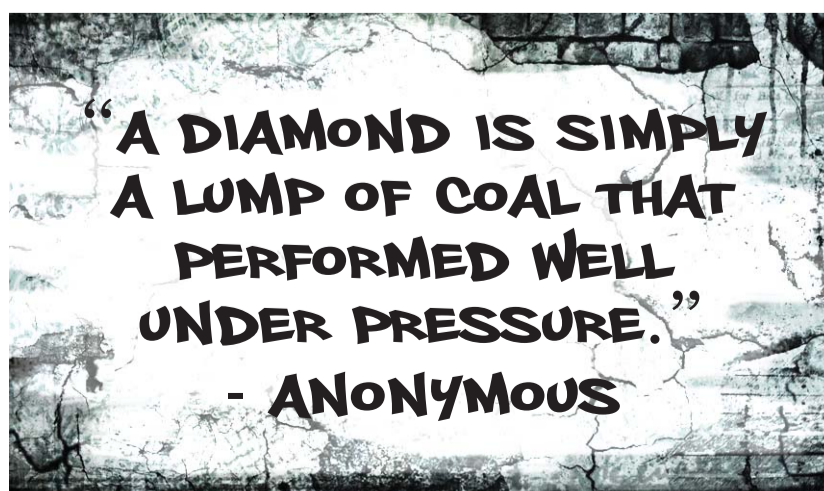


The Olympic Flame symbolizes much more than a ceremonial tradition. It represents purity of competition, the light of knowledge and life, and the enduring spirit of perseverance. It is a reminder that the Games are not just about medals and records, but about inspiring hope, unity, and peace among nations. The torch relay, in particular, connects the ancient with the modern, symbolically linking the birthplace of the Olympics with the host nation, and reminding the world of our shared history and common future.

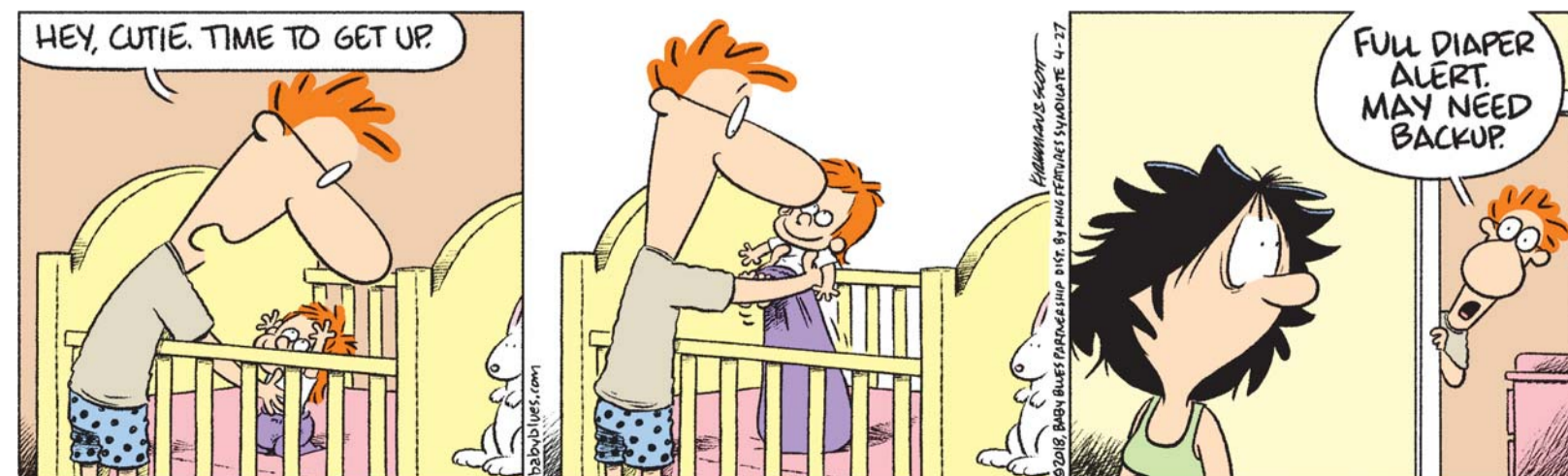
Together, the Olympic Rings and the Olympic Flame embody the heart and soul of the Games. They are more than symbols; they are living expressions of the Olympic values, excellence, friendship, and respect. They stand for a vision of a world where people of all nations can come together, compete with integrity, and celebrate the best of human potential.

As the Olympic movement continues to evolve, these symbols endure, lighting the way for new generations of athletes and spectators alike. They remind us that while countries may compete on the field, the greater goal is unity, an aspiration as timeless and enduring as the flame itself.

### THE WALL



### BABY BLUES



### ZITS

