

The history of numbers in India

India is a country where we provide great importance to culture and spirituality. As a result of which much of the ancient work that was done during the Vedic period was ignored. India had its own system of counting that is similar to the current decimal system, the proofs of which can be found in the Sanskrit texts that date to almost 2500 year old. In this system they used the following nomenclature eka (1), dvi (2), tri (3), catur (4), pañca (5), s.at. (6), sapta (7), as. t.a (8) and nava (9).

We were also stargazer as a result of which we were well advanced in the field of arithmetic and geometry which were then called as ganita and rekha-ganita. The Sulbasutra's (one of the Vedic Literature) shows insights on the geometric and algebraic aspects of the properties of triangles, squares, rectangles, parallelograms, trapezia and circles, and properties of similar figures. We also had various theorems such as Pythagorean theorems way before it was defined for Pythagoras. Thus, Baudhāyana states that the square on the diagonal of a rectangle is equal (in area) to the sum of the squares on the two sides which was familiar to the Pythagoras theorem.

There are also many records that show the the theory of probability had originated in India. The Indian understanding of music and meter was mainly based on Permutations and combinations. This goes as back as the The Vedic and The Post-Vedic period where composers where they used this in order to measure the points/meter where they calculated 2^n where 2 is the number of syllabi and n represents the notes.

Although we have written documents of all of these in our Vedic literature it was neglected and the main reason for this was as stated by Kim Plofker's was Eurocentrism — British colonial historians paid it little attention, assuming that Indians had been too preoccupied with spiritual matters to make significant contributions to the exact sciences. Another main reason why it was neglected was that it was written in Sanskrit and very few of the scholarly class knew how to read and write this scripts. As a result of caste system they did not share this knowledge amongst the lower classes and tried to keep it within the upper caste members.