Chapter 10 – Ancient and Medieval India

The Sutra and the Series

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June 2025

I. Cultural Invocation

- **Civilization:** Ancient and Medieval India
- **Time Period:** c. 800 BCE – 1600 CE
- **Figures:** Baudhāyana (Sulbasutra geometry), Aryabhata (sine tables and rotation), Brahmagupta (algebra and quadrilaterals), Bhaskara II (infinitesimals and proofs), Madhava (infinite series and trigonometry)

In India, mathematics was not merely calculation — it was revelation. Numbers appeared in hymns, proofs were sung, and the infinite was summoned through rhythm.

Geometry emerged not in the abstract — but in ritual fire altars, bound by rope and rule. Zero was not a placeholder — it was a metaphysical insight. And infinity was not feared — it was named, shaped, and passed forward through verse.

Where the West saw mathematics as deduction, India saw it as ***resonance*** *— a harmony of cosmos, computation, and consciousness.*

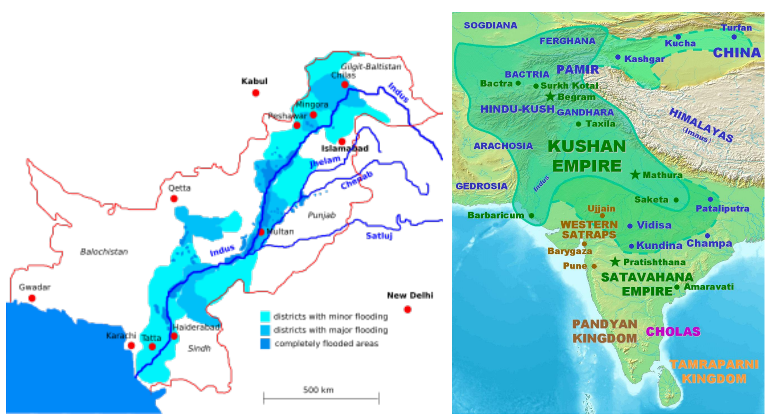

Figure 1: Indus River abd Kushan Empire (c. 30 AD - c. 375 AD)

II. Problems and Solutions

Problem 1 — Can You Build with Ropes and Reason?

Concept Preview

When you build an altar for the gods, the angles must be right — or the fire will falter.

Before proofs, before theorems, India's Sulbasutras encoded geometry in ropes, knots, and ritual.

Topic: Geometric Construction in the Sulbasutras

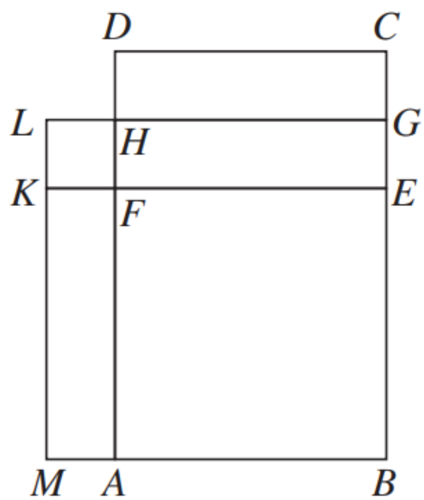

FIG. 10.1

Figure 2: Geometric construction of a square from a rectangle in Apastamba's Sulbasutra

- Rope-stretchers used ratios like 3-4-5 to construct right angles.
- Apastamba's method mirrors elements of Euclid II:
  - Extend shorter sides to match square dimensions.
  - Use midpoints and segment bisectors to construct the square.

Meta-Realization
This was not deduction — it was construction.
The altar was not symbolic of geometry.
It was geometry.

Problem 2 — Can a Lattice Compute Faster Than You Can Carry?

Concept Preview

Before calculators, before carrying digits — could a window of triangles make multiplication mechanical?

Topic: Gelosia Multiplication (Lattice Method)

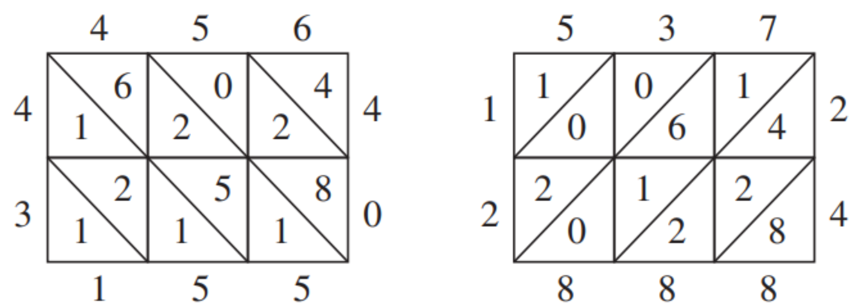

FIG. 10.2 FIG. 10.3

Figure 3: Gelosia (lattice) multiplication grids from Indian arithmetic

- Diagonal grids segment partial products.
- Each cell handles multiplication of a digit pair.
- Carrying is replaced by visual summation across diagonals.

Meta-Realization

The lattice is not just a method — it is a map of multiplication.

Digit meets digit not in chaos, but in a window of clarity.

The grid remembers what your hands cannot.

Problem 3 — Can You Divide With a Boat?

Concept Preview

Long division feels tedious. But once, it was theatrical — shaped like a galley ship, carved into the page.

Topic: The Galley Method of Division

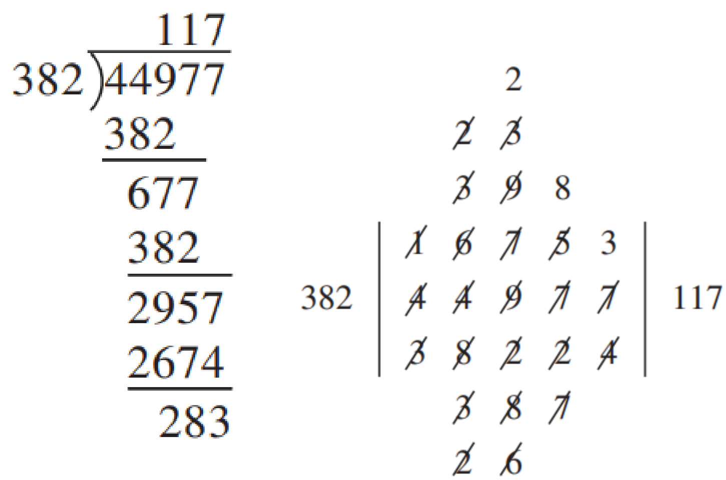

FIG. 10.4 FIG. 10.5

Figure 4: Figures 10.4 and 10.5: Modern vs. Galley division methods

- Subtractions appear above and below the central dividend.
- Galley shape mirrors the logic of recursive subtraction.
- Visual placement matters: differences above, subtrahends below.

Meta-Realization

Even division was once an art form — symmetrical, recursive, and spatial.

The quotient sails from one reduction to the next — carried not by rules, but by rhythm.

Problem 4 — Can You Square What Cannot Be Seen?

Concept Preview

Western mathematicians feared the irrational. Indian thinkers named it, shaped it, and used it — without apology.

Topic: Brahmagupta's Algebra and Area Formulas

- Cyclic quadrilateral area:
$$K = \sqrt{(s-a)(s-b)(s-c)(s-d)}$$
- General quadrilateral:
$$K = \sqrt{(s-a)(s-b)(s-c)(s-d) - abcd\cos^2\alpha}$$
- Embraced irrational roots, negative solutions, and even division involving zero (though inconsistently).

Meta-Realization

Where others hesitated, Brahmagupta advanced.

He did not debate whether irrationals existed — he built with them.

Not certainty — but courage — is the foundation of algebra.

Problem 5 — Can the Infinite Be Solved With a Name?

Concept Preview

Europe speaks of Newton. Of Leibniz. Of calculus.

But centuries before, Indian mathematicians were already taming the infinite — not with limits, but with *verse.*

They called it by name. And they made it speak.

Topic: Madhava and the Kerala School of Mathematics

No temples. No diagrams. Just palm-leaf manuscripts and recursion.

- **Timeframe:** 14th–16th centuries CE, Kerala (southwestern India)
- Madhava developed:
$$\frac{\pi}{4} = 1 - \frac{1}{3} + \frac{1}{5} - \frac{1}{7} + \cdots$$
- Also expanded:
$$\sin x = x - \frac{x^3}{3!} + \frac{x^5}{5!} - \cdots, \quad \cos x = 1 - \frac{x^2}{2!} + \frac{x^4}{4!} - \cdots$$
- **Sanskrit Verse Encoding:**
  - Formulas embedded in poetic meter
  - Mathematical recursion preserved via rhythmic phrasing
- Approximated π to 11+ decimal places:
$$\pi \approx 3.14159265359$$
- Used arc tangent convergence corrections and recursive finite differences to refine sine table entries.

Mathematical Note: How India Defined sin

Indian mathematicians defined $\sin(\theta)$ as the length of the *half-chord* of a circle.

$$\text{jya}(\theta) = R \cdot \sin(\theta)$$

- This was rooted in circular, not triangular thinking. - Sine tables were computed using difference methods, not geometric construction. - Aryabhata compiled values for θ from 0° to 90° in 24 equal steps. - This approach laid the groundwork for Madhava's infinite series centuries later.
They did not define sine by sides — they summoned it from the circle itself.

Sidebar: Madhava vs. Archimedes on π

- **Archimedes** (c. 250 BCE):
  Approximated π between $\frac{223}{71}$ and $\frac{22}{7}$.
  Used a geometric method with 96-gon perimeter estimates.
  Accuracy: *2 decimal places.*
- **Madhava** (c. 1400 CE):
  Used infinite arctangent series with corrections.
  Approximated π to 11+ digits: $\pi \approx 3.14159265359$.
  Embedded in Sanskrit verse, not symbolic algebra.
- **Key Insight:**
  Archimedes *encircled* π. Madhava *summoned* it — digit by digit, from the infinite.

Meta-Realization

They did not define limits.

They did not name convergence.

They sang the infinite — and listened as it answered back in decimals.

This was not approximation. This was invocation.

Infinity arrived — not by proof, but by verse.

III. Closing Dialectic

Summary

In India, mathematics was not abstracted — it was *evoked*. It emerged from fire altars, from lunar cycles, from poetry and planetary motion.

- The Sulbasutra rope-stretchers did not draw lines — they consecrated space.
- The lattice method of multiplication was not a trick — it was a ritual window.
- Brahmagupta did not fear irrationality — he gave it form, gave it rules, and let it live.
- The Kerala School did not define convergence — they sang it, digit by digit.

Indian mathematics threaded together:

- **Ritual and recursion**
- **Verse and verification**
- **The physical and the philosophical**

While the West sought certainty in proof, India sought continuity in pattern.

Not to dominate number — but to harmonize with it.

This was not just a body of results.

It was a lineage. A resonance. A memory handed down in palm leaves and planetary arcs.

Comparative Mathematical Cosmologies

Greek: Number as perfection. Geometry as proof. The irrational as disruption.
Chinese: Number as ritual. Computation as continuity. Memory encoded in form.
Indian: Number as vibration. Mathematics as reverberation, as resonance. The infinite invoked, not feared.
Each civilization did not merely compute — it expressed its metaphysics in method.

Exit Prompt

You are Bhaskara. Or Madhava. Or the anonymous voice behind a Sulbasutra.

No symbols. No algebra. Just recursion, ritual, and the desire to name the infinite.
What will you encode — and how will it endure?