

## Bakhshali, Jambudvipa and India's role in science

Zeroing in: A page from the Bakhshali manuscript seen at the Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford. | Photo Credit: [HANDOUT](#)

London's Science Museum on Tuesday unveiled a new exhibition that traces India's contribution to science and technology over the past 5,000 years. Bringing together pieces from scientific institutes and museums across India as well as those held by British institutions, the Indian High Commission and the museum hope to be able to bring the exhibition to India too.

The highlight is a folio from the Bakhshali manuscript, loaned to the exhibition by the Bodleian Library in Oxford, which contains the oldest recorded origins of the symbol "zero".

Dated to 3rd century

In September, the Bodleian revealed that new carbon dating research into the manuscript revealed it to be hundreds of years older than originally thought and that it could be dated back to the third or fourth century.

Another remarkable piece is an 1817 version of Jambudvipa, or Jain map of the world, and a spectrometer from 1928 designed by Nobel Prize winner C.V. Raman. The exhibition also covers significant recent contributions — from the Jaipur foot that has been used across 27 countries to the Intel Pentium processor and the Embrace Nest Neonatal pouch. The exhibition also highlights writings by some of the most influential figures, including letters from S.N. Bose to Albert Einstein, held by the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and selected papers of Srinivasa Ramanujan, held by Trinity College Cambridge.

It also includes an index chart of the great trigonometrical survey of India from 1860, which it says "no map in the world at that time could rival" for scale, detail and accuracy.

"It encapsulates what India has gone through in terms of science and technology in the past five thousand years," said India's Deputy High Commissioner to the U.K. Dinesh Patnaik, who hopes to work with the museum to take the exhibition to India.

"We wanted to tell that story of India's role in science and technology which is an incredibly difficult and complex thing to do— - we wanted to capture just how far reaching it has been in shaping science and technology," said the exhibition's head of content Matt Kimberly, pointing in particular to the spectrometer and the influence it had in shaping industries from forensics to art conservation.

Growth of photography

A separate exhibition charts the growth of photography in India. One section of it focusses on 1857 and includes the bizarre growth of what it refers to as "mutiny tourism", which led to sites of conflict and suffering getting turned into "postcards, stereocards and prints for a burgeoning British tourist industry".

It also includes works by artists like Ahmad Ali Khan, the court photographer to the last king of Avadh, and Felice Beato. The exhibition also focuses on 1947, and includes works by photojournalists Henri Cartier Bresson and Margaret Bourke-White.

A study of nearly 300 people living in different parts of India found that nine single-base variants

(single-nucleotide polymorphisms or SNPs) account

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