

London museum showcases India's contribution to science

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London's Science Museum on Tuesday unveiled a new exhibition that traces India's contribution to science and technology globally 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 bring the exhibition to India too, providing what they believe is a rare opportunity to tie together the developments that have taken place across the centuries and the country into a single narrative. The exhibition's highlight is a folio from the Bakhshali manuscript, loaned by the Bodleian Library in Oxford, where it has gone on show only on occasion, and contains the oldest recorded origins of the symbol 'zero'. In September, the Bodleian revealed that new carbon-dating research into the manuscript revealed it to be hundreds of years older than originally thought, dating to the third or fourth century AD.

Another remarkable piece is an 1817 Jambudvipa, or Jain map of the world, and a spectrometer

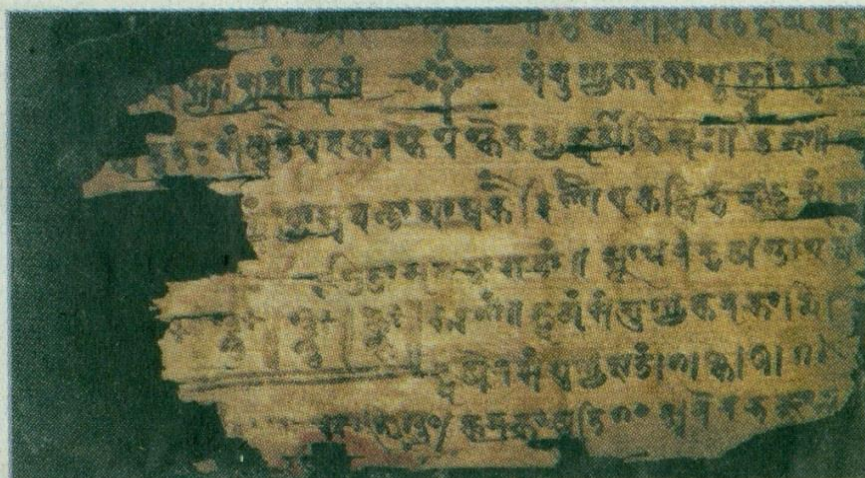
from 1928 designed by Nobel laureate CV Raman.

The exhibition also covers significant recent contributions—from the Jaipur foot, developed by craftsman Ram Chander Sharma and orthopedic surgeon Pramod Karan Sethi, that has been used across 27 countries; and the Intel Pentium processor, whose development was led by electrical engineer Vinod Dham, to Embrace Nest neonatal pouch.

In black and white

The exhibition also highlights correspondence and writings by some of the most influential figures, including letters from SN Bose to Albert Einstein, held by The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and selected papers of Ramanujan held by Trinity College, Cambridge. It also includes an index chart of the great trigonometrical survey of India from 1860, which "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 5,000 years," said India's Deputy High Commissioner to the UK Dinesh Patnaik, who hopes to work with



Close-up of folio 16v from the Bakhshali manuscript, 224-383 CE. The manuscript contains the oldest recorded origins of the symbol 'zero'

the museum to take the exhibition to India. "We wanted to tell the 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 Kimberley, pointing, in particular, to the spectrometer and the influence it had in shaping industries from forensics to art conservation.

Captured history

A separate exhibition charts the growth of photography in India, focussed around 1857 (including the bizarre growth of what is re-

ferred to as "mutiny tourism," whereby the sites of conflict and suffering were turned into "postcards, stereocards and prints for a burgeoning British tourist industry"). It includes works by Ahmad Ali Khan, the court photographer to the last king of Lucknow, to the works of Felice Beato. The exhibition also focusses on 1947, and includes works by photo-journalists Henri Cartier-Bresson and Margaret Bourke-White, as well as more recent works.

'The Illuminating India: 5,000 years of Science', and 'Innovation and Photography: 1857 to 2017' are both free to enter and run till March 2018.