

Ancient Indian astronomy

The Historical Note on Asutosh Mukhopadhyay¹ makes totally unnecessary and unscholarly remarks on ancient Indian astronomy. Aryabhata should have been Aryabhata and Varahamihir should have been Varahamihira. The author makes an extraordinary claim that Aryabhata 'had hinted towards the heliocentric model of the Solar System much before the Copernican revolution'. *Current Science* should have asked the author to quote the verse in *Aryabhatiya* which suggests heliocentrism. Similarly, the author should have been asked to substantiate his claim that 'Bhaskaracharya was head of an astronomical observatory in Ujjain in the 12th century'.

Current Science has tried to embellish the note by printing colour images of ancient astronomers. Placing these images side by side with photographs of historical personages creates an impression that these images are also authentic. They are not and should have no place in a respectable journal.

1. Ghosh, C. K., *Curr. Sci.*, **107**(8), 1339–1340.

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Response:

'Aryabhata' and 'Aryabhata' are used interchangeably. So are 'Varahamihir' and 'Varahamihira' like 'Swami Vivekanand' and 'Swami Vivekananda'. These are proper nouns and each spelling used by me uniquely fixes the person. Kochhar should have realized that the slight distortion has happened by way of an attempt to strike a balance between the manner in which the names are spelt in English and in an Indian language. It may not be out of the way to mention that recently, a college has been opened in New Delhi by the name 'Aryabhata', which is how it has been spelt in the official document. I would rather say that Kochhar has brought disrespect to Aryabhata by way of his spelling the name in the latter part of his letter.

As regards Aryabhata's hint to heliocentrism and Bhaskaracharya heading an astronomical observatory in Ujjain, I mention the relevant references as under: (a) en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aryabhata; (b) www.aazad.com/bhaskaracharya.html#-VMXR39KUdHM (both last accessed on 26 January 2015).

I fail to understand the context behind the comment on the photographs (basically Kochhar has been critical about *Current Science*) and the use of the expression 'historical personages'. Era in history is broadly divided into three periods – ancient, medieval and modern. The mathematicians belonging to the ancient and medieval periods are also historical personages and their photographs have been obtained from authentic sources. The idea was to include the name of Asutosh Mukhopadhyay in the august list to generate awareness about Indian contribution to mathematics.

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FORM IV

Particulars of *Current Science*—as per Form IV under the Rule 8 of the Registration of Newspapers (Central) 1956.

- | | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. Place of Publication: Bangalore | 4. Publisher's Name, Nationality and Address:
G. Madhavan
Indian
Current Science Association, Bangalore 560 080 |
| 2. Periodicity of Publication: Fortnightly | 5. Editor's Name, Nationality and Address:
R. Srinivasan
Indian
Current Science Association, Bangalore 560 080 |
| 3. Printer's Name and Address:
G. Madhavan
Current Science Association, Bangalore 560 080 | 6. Name and Address of the owner:
Current Science Association
Bangalore 560 080 |

I, G. Madhavan, hereby declare that the particulars given above are true to the best of my knowledge.

Bangalore
1 March 2015

(Sd/-)
G. Madhavan
Publisher, *Current Science*