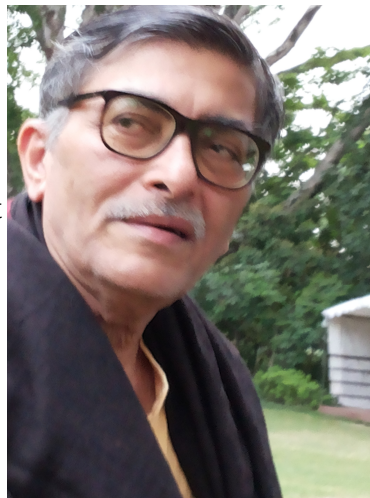


Śulba-sūtra geometry: can we teach it in school today?

Indians often boast that the śulba sūtra-s (manuals for masons to construct fire altars) “stated the Pythagorean theorem before Pythagoras”. To the contrary, our NCERT school texts summarily reject all non-Western geometry as inferior. Who is right? Neither! The key instrument of śulba-sūtra geometry is the śulba (or rajju) or string, which differs manifestly from the geometry box (compass box) used in schools today. The corresponding *concepts* of point, line, angle, proof (and math) etc. are all *fundamentally* different, as will be explained in the talk, using a recent text-book for class 9, *Rajju Ganita*. This results in far greater practical value, and school children can determine the height of a mountain, latitude, longitude, and earth’s radius, as was done in ancient India. However, to teach it in school today challenges Western/church education, and its related myths and superstitions, globalised by colonialism. Do we dare to do so?

About the speaker

Professor C. K. Raju has advanced revolutionary new ideas in mathematics and physics, helped build India’s first supercomputer, and first explained how calculus developed in India and was transmitted to Europe. He is Tagore Fellow at the Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla.



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