Saturday 28th May 2022 – 17:00 BST
via Zoom

''Re-Imagining Mathematics'', Dr Ashna Sen

Synopsis

''Re-Imagining Mathematics'' is an attempt to re-think and re-discover the very ground and building blocks of the subject – to be found in nature, in patterns around us, in art, music, poetry and even community. Examples of such influences include the geometrical complexity of Islamic Art and even Galileo's mathematical explorations of a work of Literature – namely, Dante's inferno. Numbers are liberally found in the realm of worship; often specifically mentioned in sacred texts. It seems with the passage of time and with the onset of the technological age we have forgotten some of the spiritual roots of the subject. Therefore, here is an attempt to re-emphasise the spiritual dimensions of the subject: extant in ancient textbooks and literature, in religious doctrine and sacred geometry. For example, The number seven is mentioned in the Quran 28 times which itself is a multiple of seven. The '*basmala*' or the phrase "*bi-smi llāhi r-raḥmāni r-raḥīm*" is also linked to the number 786 which is itself a nearly perfect square of 28. The 'basmala' is the Islamic phrase that means "In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful," and is recited before each chapter or surah of the Quran except for the ninth. Numerologically, the phrase adds up to 786 in the Abjadi system and has acquired special significance in folk Islam and near eastern folk magic (citation).

It is indeed an honour to have the author of ''Re-imagining Mathematics'' to present her thoughts to our Forum. With regard to our discussion in this group perhaps we can explore together where and how certain numbers are emphasised in the Quran. It is a vast subject and many scholars have spoken about the recurrence and spiritual significance of certain numbers that have later emerged as mathematically significant even in technological applications. Perhaps we could explore some of these open ended directions in our attempt to re-address the spiritual or even Holy angle in the Quran.

Speaker Bio-note

Ashna Sen was born and raised in Calcutta, India. She went to the USA for higher studies and there she double majored in physics and mathematics from Mount Holyoke College. Following this, she obtained an MSc in geophysics from Stanford University. Ashna has a PhD in mathematics from the University of Manchester, UK, and has taught mathematics to undergraduates at St. Xavier's College, Calcutta, and at a mathematics village in Şirince, Turkey.

Dr. Sen became interested in innovative mathematics education during her years at Brockwood Park School, Hampshire, UK. A historical memoir written by her on the lives and times of civil servants in Bengal during the pre-partition era of the British Raj, called The Rusted Trunk, was published by Writer's Workshop, Calcutta, in 2011, and later translated into Bengali. For the past decade, Ashna has been living in the steep climes of the eastern Himalayas with her husband and two children. ''Re-imagining mathematics: learning from the magic of nature, the arts and friendship'', (Penman Books, 2021), is her second book.

The forum meeting is free and aimed at the Alumni, members and friends of AMR. This is the Eventbrite **link to register. A ZOOM link will be provided to all who register an interest in attending.**

The meeting will be private and so we will be grateful if you do not share the link when you receive it. Simply let us know if you have a friend who would be interested in registering.

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