

Aryabhata the Elder Encyclopedia Article

Aryabhata the Elder

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476-550

Indian astronomer and mathematician whose *Aryabhatiya* helped usher in a period of increased scientific curiosity in his country. Aryabhata suggested that the reason the stars and planets seem to move around Earth is that Earth is in fact rotating on its axis—an idea literally a thousand years ahead of its time. He also maintained that the Moon and planets reflect light rather than generating it, and that the planets' orbits describe ellipses rather than circles. In addition, Aryabhata provided an accurate explanation of the causes for solar and lunar eclipses, supplanting a prevailing superstition that these were caused by a demon named Rahu.