

Greek history affecting our lives in ways we don't realise

In today's era of technology and convenience, we may find it hard to believe that a civilisation of people who lived 3000 years ago, made any lasting contributions; however, the ancient Greeks, made an impact on history, which is still visible today. The civilisation of ancient Greece was immensely influential in many spheres: language, politics, educational systems, philosophy, science, and the arts. The spread of Greek ideas, was facilitated by Alexander, the young king of Macedon, commonly referred to as "Alexander the Great". Wherever he went, Alexander took Greek ideas. When he died in 323BC, the Romans took over. They admired the Greeks' way of life and carried Greek ideas to even more countries.

One of the most visible influences of the Greeks, can be seen in the English language. The Ancient Greeks were said to be one of the first people to use a "true" alphabet, featuring vowels and consonants. In fact, the word "alphabet", originates from the first two Greek alphabets: alpha and beta. According to an estimate, over 1,50,000 words in English have been derived from Greek words, including: antique, idol, dialogue, geography, grammar, architect, economy, etc. The ancient Greeks also created the world's first democracy, starting with Athens. The democratic government consisted of 6,000 assembly members, all of whom were adult male citizens. The assembly voted on issues throughout Athens. In order for a law to pass, the number of votes needed to be a majority. But in order to banish or exile someone, all 6,000 votes were needed. Today, many countries of the world follow democracy, or at least some form of democracy. But instead of a direct democracy, in India, we have a representative democracy in which the citizens democratically vote on who should make the decisions in the country. One of the many fields in which ancient Greece has had a deep influence is art. The first to develop the concept of aesthetic beauty, ancient Greeks created spectacular sculptures that have inspired artists from the Renaissance until today. Furthermore, Greek mythology was a major source of inspiration for many European painters, who depicted the many tales and myths in their works. Even the concept of "theatres" was introduced by the Greeks. The unique columns and pavilions developed by the ancient Greeks are one of their most recognisable contributions. The most famous example of Greek architecture is the Parthenon, a grand building with pillars located in Athens. Today, pillars are used in many public buildings such as churches and libraries. There are also pillars in many buildings in Washington D.C., including the White House.

The Greeks also made important contributions to philosophy, mathematics, astronomy, and medicine. The Ancient Greeks developed a sophisticated philosophical and scientific culture. One of the key points of Ancient Greek philosophy was the role of reason and inquiry. The Greeks made major contributions to math and science. We owe our basic ideas about geometry and the concept of mathematical proofs to ancient Greek mathematicians such as Pythagoras, Euclid, and Archimedes. Some of the first astronomical models were developed by Ancient Greeks trying to describe planetary movement, the Earth's axis, and the heliocentric system—a model that places the Sun at the centre of the solar system. Hippocrates (often called the "father of medicine"), another ancient Greek, is the most famous physician in antiquity. He established a medical school, wrote many medical treatises, and is credited with being the founder of modern medicine. The Hippocratic oath, a medical standard for doctors, is named after him. While medicine had been practiced in Babylon, China, India and Egypt, the Greeks were the first to create a standardised system of medicine including medical diagnosis, prognosis, and medical ethics. The manner in which the medical practice is carried out today, in terms of diagnosis and sometimes of treatment, is very similar to that of the ancient Greeks. The first library in the world, the library of Alexandria, was actually built in Egypt. During this time Egypt was under Greek control after submitting to Alexander's rule. Alexander's General, Ptolemy, ordered the construction of a library which would contain over 700,000 scrolls of work. Because of this accumulation of knowledge, many great discoveries took place in the library.

The Olympic Games started in ancient Greece, specifically in the city of Olympia. The participants were the city-states of Ancient Greece and its colonies. The Olympic Games were held every four years in honour of Zeus, the king of gods. Today we still celebrate the Olympic Games and continue some of the old traditions, such as the olive leaf crowns, the lighting of the flame, and the opening and closing celebrations. The concept of guiding ships safely to the port by using light as a signal was introduced by the Greeks, who built the first lighthouse in Alexandria, Egypt, in 3rd century B.C. At night, a huge fire was built atop the lighthouse — allowing ship crew a clear idea of the approaching coastline. The key to reaching workplace on time for most of us, the alarm clock, too, had its origin in ancient Greece. The ancient Greeks used water clocks, which would sound off delicate water organs or made pebbles drop against drums. Modern maps

were also introduced by ancient Greeks, before which traveling guides were vague and a lot more descriptive. In conclusion, unbeknownst to us, the Greeks have had substantial influences on our lives and lifestyles.

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