



## 10. THE GREEK CIVILIZATION: THE BRIGHT SIDE (II)

The "bright side" of Greek civilization is the result of positive adjusts due to the Hyperborean influence on Greek society of Atlantean origin. Ancient Greek historians, in fact, tell the several mysterious visits to Greece by Hyperborean emissaries coming from the North. However, this correction has to be considered from two angles. The first point of view concerns Greek society and its exterior religion, that is to say, exoterism. The second one is the initiatic side represented by the Mysteries: esoterism. We remind the reader that this dichotomy we are speaking of is characteristic not only of archaic Greece, but also of all the other civilizations, religions and nations that appeared in Europe during the Iron Age.

**Exoterism:** Aristotle (384-322 BC), the famous Hellenic philosopher, tells us that the Greeks<sup>1</sup> conceived three kinds of political regime: Monarchy, Aristocracy and Democracy. Monarchy was the oldest political regime, while at his time Greek cities were administered exclusively by aristocratic or democratic governments. Greek thought that political regimes could, over time, degenerate. Thus Monarchy, the rule of a single King (Βασιλεύς, read *basilèus*), could turn in to Tyranny, a regime controlled by a despot outside any control of laws. As a reaction against that degeneration, it could be formed an aristocratic regime, composed by noblemen, the aristocrats, that Greek language means the "best men" (ἄριστοι, read *àristoi*). But even Aristocracy could later degenerate into Oligarchy, the government of a few individuals, which is a Tyranny of a small number of people. Even in this case a rebellion could lead the people (δῆμος, read *démos*) to the Government of the city, thus forming a Democratic regime<sup>2</sup>. In its turn Democracy too could degenerate into Demagogy (lit. people manipulation) when a duly elected leader, by succeeding to be worshiped by the people, becomes a dictator.

There are no certain data about the Monarchies of ancient Greece, because when written documents began to be produced, Monarchies were almost disappeared. The only news are from mythology and epic poems. The King had all the power and was surrounded by wise men (σοφοί, read *sophòì*) and seers (μάντεις, read *mànteis*), counsellors playing priestly and sacrificial functions.

These figures disappeared in the historical period. In Greece, in fact, under aristocratic and democratic regimes, there was no longer a priestly order. The priesthood was open to any person, man or woman belonging to every social class. Usually men served in the temples of Gods while women in the temples of Goddesses. The sacrifices consisted in oblations of milk, honey, water, olive oil, or in offerings of the first fruits of agriculture. Also the bull, ram, or goat animal sacrifice was kept, and the victims were killed at the opening of all religious or statal festivals. Then, meat was solemnly eaten by the donor and community leaders, while the inedible parts, bones, fat, tendons, horns, hooves, and so on were offered to the Gods in the altar fire<sup>3</sup>. However, we know that these cruel sacrifices were of Atlantean origin, since they had been instituted by Prometheus, Atlas' brother.

<sup>1</sup> "Greeks" was the name given by the Romans. They called themselves Hellenes because all their tribes, though rivals among them, recognized to be descendants from a primordial common hero called Hellen.

<sup>2</sup> Democracy of ancient Greeks cannot be compared to the chaotic, corrupt, and inefficient "democratic" regime that nowadays oppresses most of human beings. According to the Greeks people (*démos*) were composed only by free citizens of the city, representing about 10 percent of the total inhabitants. In fact, in Athens during the fifth century B.C., free citizens were about thirty-five thousand when the whole population of the city was of more than three hundred thousand inhabitants. Those who were exercising power and carrying out public functions were only the householders among the free citizens. All the others, women, boys and slaves hadn't any civil rights.

<sup>3</sup> In the case of human sacrifice, performed only in rare occasions, the whole body was consumed on pyre as food for Gods.





If the priestly caste had disappeared in the mist of time, the other social classes were preserved. The aristocratic warrior caste, called the horsemen (ἵππεις, read *hippéis*<sup>4</sup>) or knight' class, was the highest, even if with slight differences among the city-states. Then there were the merchants (οἱ ἐκ τῆς ἀγορᾶς, read *hòì ek tes agoràs*, those "of the Market Square"), divided into subcategories depending on their wealth. Nobles and merchants were citizens of the city and had all civil and religious rights. Foreigners and slaves, on the other hand, had no right in both aristocratic and democratic regimes.

The Temples were dedicated to the heavenly Gods, to the chthonic (underground's) Gods, or to the Ancestors. In the classical period (6<sup>th</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> centuries B.C.) also appeared temples dedicated to the Bronze Age heroes, especially to the Demigod Heracles. Demigods were the offspring of a God or Goddess and a human being. Every city was consecrated to a God whose temple stood in the central square. Other temples in the city were considered less important, even if dedicated to divinities more powerful than the Protector God (πολιάς, read *polias*, i.e. *nagaradaivata*). Moreover, in the cities there could have been temples dedicated to the same Deity, represented in different shapes and with different attributes, as it still happens in India today<sup>5</sup>. All young men who felt attracted to serve in a temple, regardless their family background, attended it, assisting the priests, learning local rituals, and finally they were consecrated priests.

The most prestigious temples, however, were those hosting an Oracle. The main priest or priestess on certain occasions, were possessed (*āviṣṭa*) by the God and then they were able to answer the questions of the people. Only in those few, but influential, oracular temples Greek priestly caste was maintained. In fact, the priests' guild of each Oracle descended from a single primordial ancestor.

The oldest among those Temples was the oracle of Zeus in Dodona, Epirus (today in Albania), of Pelagic origin (i.e. Atlantean). All the others, more recent, were mainly Oracles of the Hyperborean God Apollo, in Thebes, in Lycia, and finally in Delphi, the most famous among them, already previously mentioned. For any major problem the God was consulted: in this way peace or war, the foundation of a new city or the change of laws, were decided. In his book *The fall of Oracles (De defectu oraculorum)*, the Greek priest Plutarch (46-125 A.D.) narrates that in the first century A.D., the crew of a ship sailing from Egypt to Rome, heard a powerful voice coming from the sea announcing: "The Great God Pan<sup>6</sup> is dead!" This news quickly spread throughout the Roman Empire. From that moment all Oracles of the Greek gods disappeared, as if that voice had announced the cyclical conclusion of the Hellenic Tradition.

The rites were meant to obtain immediate results in this world, or to reach a pleasant condition after death. The attachment to life of ancient Greeks was such that they regarded posthumous destiny as something sad. According to them the souls of the dead were always in pain, regretting the sweet memory of life on earth. Only those who had an initiation (*dīkṣā*), could long to reach some more blessed condition. In the next paragraph devoted to esotericism.

Of great importance were the myths sung by the poets-singers (ᾠοιδός, read *aoidòs*, i.e. *mahākavi*) during the festivities or represented as dramas in theaters. Myth played an important role in ethical and

<sup>4</sup> Called Σπαρτιάται (read *Spartiátai*) in the city of Sparta.

<sup>5</sup> For example, the main Temple of the city of Olympia was dedicated to Zeus Olympius, Lord of the Olympus Sacred Mountain (the Kailāsa of the Greeks), while in Athens the Temple of the same god was dedicated to Zeus Ipatos, the Highest one, another hypostasis of the God.

<sup>6</sup> Pan, a shepherd Divinity, is considered identical to Phanes, the oldest of the Hellenic Gods, as we will illustrate in the chapter on Greek cosmology. Similar to the Vedic God Pūṣan, Pan is the one who guarantees the development of manifestation. Therefore, his announced death was interpreted as the interruption of Greek Tradition. Pan, moreover, in Greek means "All" and is linked to the cult of Hyperborean Apollo. We recall that for Pythagoras the name of Apollo means "Non-Multiple". Pan's image in the Oracle Sanctuary of Apollo in Delphi was so terrible that when the Celts irrupted in the Temple to plunder it, they ran away. From Pan originates the expression "Panic fear".





civic teaching. However, its symbolic meaning remained out of reach of the masses. Only in the initiatic environment it was possible to find the keys to understand those myths accordingly to the degrees of realization of the *sāadhanā*. We will also discuss this in the next chapters.

*D. K. Aśvamiṭra*

