



THE *ILIAD*

In conclusion of this series of articles concerning the ancient Greek Civilization we give a brief description of the two Epic Poems that *de facto* became its sacred texts. Greek literature begins in the 8th century B. C. with these Epics, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, attributed to the blind poet Homer, about whom we have little information. Probably he was born in Chios¹, where a guild of bards (*kavi*), called Homerids, had been active for many centuries.



1. Homer

In the prologue of the *Iliad* (Ἰλιάς, read *Iliàs*), the poet affirms that the very Zeus wanted to provoke the war. The explanation of this important statement lies in a fragment of the Cypria². There it is said that the Goddess of the Earth, afflicted by the weight of a degenerate humanity on her, asked Zeus to relieve her from it. The King of the Gods listened to her prayer and sparked out a long and fierce conflict to diminish the number of those wicked ones.

The *Iliad* tells of a war fought at the end of the Bronze Age (i. e. *Dvāpara yuga*) between those Greeks called Achaeans³ (or, sometimes, Mycenaean) and the Trojans, the inhabitants of Troy⁴, also known as Ilium (Ἴλιον, read *Ílion*). Troy was located on the western coast of present Turkey. The conflict broke out because Paris, one of the sons of the King of Troy, abducted

¹ Aegean Sea Island.

² A lost Epic Poem, which was part of the Trojan cycle Literature.

³ The Achaeans were one of the Sea Peoples, so they were of Atlantean origin.

⁴ Romans called this city in such way. Troy in Latin means the female of boar, *Vārāhī*. This proves Troy as a city of Arctic-Hyperborean tradition.





the beautiful Helen⁵, wife of Menelaus, King of Sparta and daughter of Zeus and one of his human lovers.



2. The abduction of Helen

King Menelaus, to avenge such offense and rescue Helen, sought help from all the other Greek Kings. They then gathered a huge army and a powerful fleet of more than one thousand warships to cross the Aegean Sea and reach Troy. Agamemnon, King of Mycenae and Menelaus' brother of Menelaus, was elected leader (King of Kings) of the expedition.

The siege of Ilion lasted ten years. However, Homer narrates only the last fifty-one days of war. On the battlefield the most illustrious heroes were Achilles on the Greek side, and Hector on that of the Trojans. Achilles, King of the Myrmidons (the Ants), was the finest among all the warriors for courage and thirst for glory; he was also invulnerable at any part of the body with the exception of his left heel⁶. Having received the opportunity to choose between a short but glorious life and a long but inglorious one, Achilles chose the first.

The city of Ilion was protected by high walls and had numerous allies. The commander in chief of the Trojan army was Hector, the beloved son of King Priam, valiant and firm in his duty to fight to the end. Hector too aspired to glory, but primarily he aspired to save the city. While knowing he could not win Achilles, he bravely faced him in a duel. He was killed and his corpse barbarously outraged. Finally, however, Achilles returned the body of Hector to his old father, the King Priam. The poem closes with the funeral pier of Hector. The Trojans wept

⁵ Helen (Ἑλένη read *Helène*). Her name has been linked to the moon (σελήνη read *Selène*), and to its splendour (σέλας, read *sélas*). Elena is described with a pale complexion: her skin, in fact, recalls the candid lunar splendour. In *Rāmāyaṇa*, Sītā as śakti of Rāmacandra also has lunar features.

⁶ The myth narrates that the goddess Thetis, wanting to make her son immortal, immersed him in the water of the Styx, the infernal river. Thus, she made him invulnerable throughout his body except the heel from which she was holding him. In fact, Achilles was wounded to death on his heel by Paris.

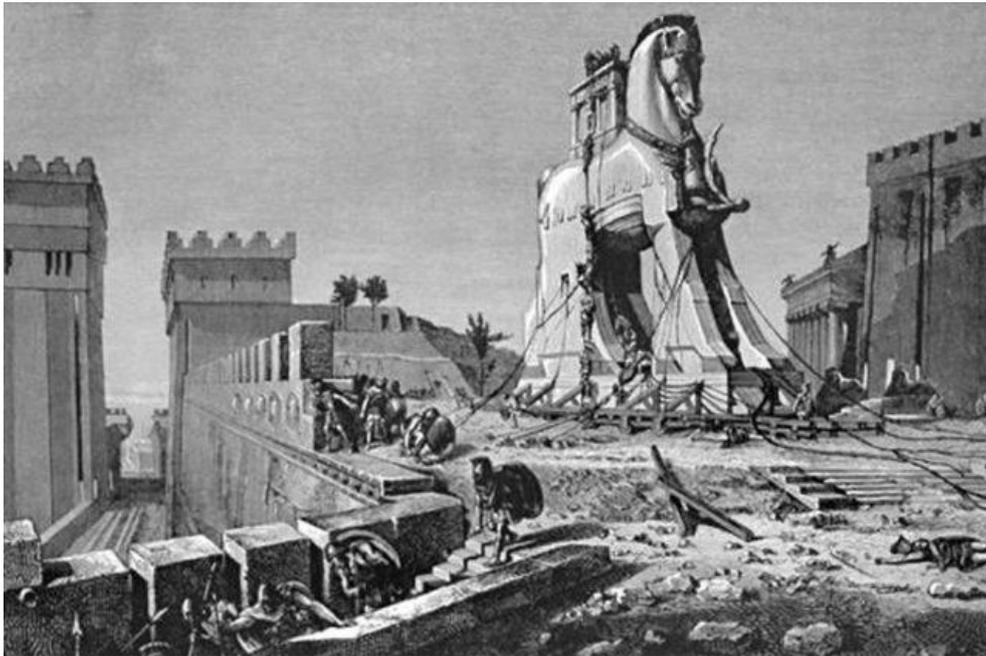


the death of their hero knowing that their hope of surviving went down with him. Therefore, Homer does not narrate the conquest and destruction of Troy.

Also the Olympian Gods took part in the war: each of them took the side of one of the contenders, helping their own devotees, until Zeus forced them to stop because Fate (*Niyati*), to which none of the Gods can oppose, had to be fulfilled. Troy was to be destroyed.

The heroes of both sides fought for the glory. They knew their duty was to fight; they did not fear the enemy and faced death valiantly to fulfil their *svadharma* and to be remembered by posterity. The only inglorious episode is a nocturnal expedition that Odysseus, the cunning King of Ithaca, led to the enemy camp, making slaughter of the sleeping Trojans.

From fragments of ancient works and from the *Odyssey*, we know that Ilion was conquered with deceit. Odysseus, famous for his deceptions, built a huge wooden horse in whose belly a group of warriors was hidden. The Greeks dismantled their camp, and their fleet set sail from the beach, pretending to return to Greece. The great mysterious wooden horse was left in front of Troy as a gift to the Goddess Athena, protectress of Troy. Jubilant for the departure of the Greeks, the Trojans imprudently introduced the horse with its burden of death into the city. During the night the Greeks came out of the horse and, with their comrades promptly returned from the sea under the cover of darkness, they massacred the sleeping inhabitants and destroyed the ancient Ilion with fire and sword.



3. The Greeks get out of the wooden horse

Only Aeneas, son of Anchises, the blind brother of King Priam and of the Goddess Aphrodite, managed to escape with a small group of Trojans. After many adventures, he reached Italy where he founded Alba Longa, the first nucleus of Rome. Thus, the Trojan offspring continued its glorious history, giving rise to Rome, the city that later took revenge by conquering Greece and all the lands around the Mediterranean basin.



It is easy to recognize similarities between the tale of the *Iliad* and the Indian *Itihāsas*. First of all, the premise: the Earth lamenting to the King of the Gods the weight of the human kind that she had to sustain. Zeus then initiates the war that will lead to the extermination of the Bronze Age heroes. This remembers the following passage of the *smṛti*:

In the early age⁷, when still there was no fear and danger, the primal God, Yama, dedicated himself to the sacrifices so no one died and the creatures continued to multiply. All creatures multiplied: birds, cattle, horses, fairs, and men, they grew in a disproportionate number.⁸

The text goes on describing how that uncontrolled multitude pressed the Earth under its weight, obliging Yama to assume his role as God of death. Earth then requested the help of Lord Viṣṇu. He, transformed into a wild boar, hooked the Earth-Vārāhī with his tusk and pulled her up until she emerged again.



4. Aeneas escapes from Troy carrying his old father

The war was motivated by the abduction of Helen by the Trojan Prince Paris. Menelaus gathered all Greek tribes and organized the expedition against Troy. This remembers the abduction of Sītā by Rāvaṇa, and the expedition organized by Rāma against Laṅkā.

Also the Gods participated in the Trojan War; and similarly the army of Śrī Rāma was formed by Gods disguised as monkeys and bears, whereas the troops of Rāvaṇa were made of *rākṣasas* and *asuras*.

However, in the Homeric tale the two sides appear inverted. In the *Iliad* the field of *dharma* does not correspond, as it should be, to the city of Troy, the *Vārāhī* of the Hyperborean-Arctic

⁷ It does not matter that the two episodes refer to different *yugas*. As we know, human events are cyclically similar to each other.

⁸ *Mahābhārata, Drona Parvan, LIII. 4.*

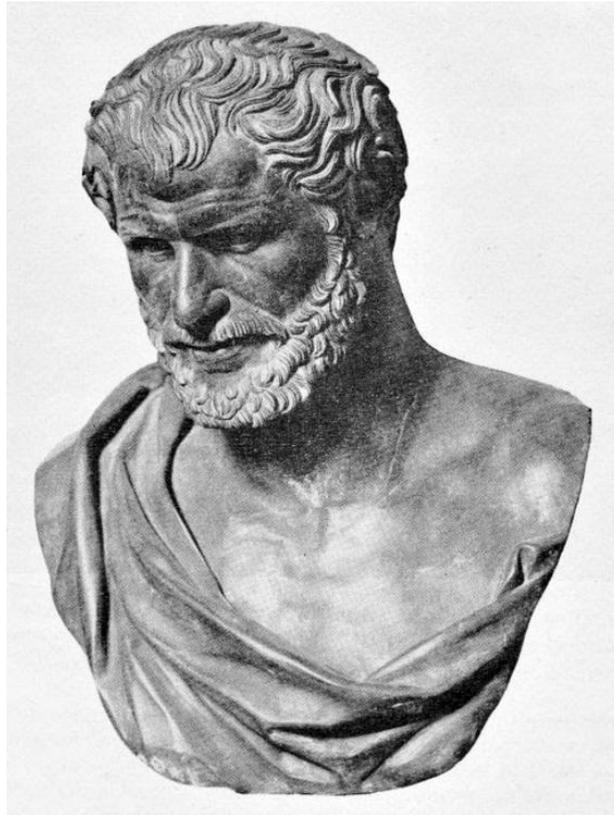




Tradition but to the Achaeans-Atlanteans, who should represent *adharmā*. On the contrary, in the *Rāmāyaṇa* the demonic Atlantean inhabitants of the oceanic island are defeated. Likewise, in the *Mahābhārata*, the Greeks should correspond to the Kauravas and the Trojans to the Pāṇḍavas.

The battles and duels described in the *Iliad* look like those described in the *Mahābhārata*. Even in the *saṃskṛta* poem, the Gods participate in the fighting, especially through their human offspring. The episode of the night raid is practically the same both in the *Iliad* and in *Mahābhārata*. The difference is that in the *Iliad* the treacherous night attack and the consequent massacre of Trojans are considered as a ruse of war. On the contrary in *Mahābhārata* the night attack lead by Aśvatthāmā in the Pāṇḍava's camp is described as a vile abomination.

What differentiates the *Iliad* from *saṃskṛta Itihāsas* is that in the Greek Epic Poem there are no sapiential sections: no chapter comparable to *Yoga Vasiṣṭha*, *Bhagavad Gītā* or *Anu Gītā*, demonstrating in this way a trend merely *kṣatriya*. Only vague descriptions of sacrifices and cremation rituals or some symbolism and allegory can be found; for instance, the illustration of the shield of Achilles, on which was chiselled a cosmography; or the description of the warrior code, the respect for the priests, the inevitability of Fate, but nothing else.



5. Heraclitus

Heraclitus (535.475 B. C.) stated that the so-called great masters as Homer and Hesiodus put together all the greatest and most important events in a complete confusion. Homer, generally considered as the wisest among the Greeks, could not understand a simple riddle proposed to



him by a group of children! Heraclitus has been one of the greatest Greek wise men, comparable to Pythagoras and Empedocles. He had been initiated in Eleusis and with his exceptional intellectual qualifications he reached the intuition of the eternal Truth beyond the illusory world.

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