

Foundations of Muslim's Shuracracy

(Part III)



**Athenian Democracy viewed through the
interpretive lens of Islamic Ethical praxeology**

2) The Athenian System of Government

Athens, with which we will be concerned here, to portray its kind of democracy, was one of the hallmarks of GREEK CIVILIZATION.

And unlike most westerners, who for ideological petty reasons of their own, handle its entry into World historical stage, as coming from nowhere, with no links whatsoever, with its natural regional setting, without which, this hypothetical Greece of theirs, would have remained as barbarous as one can surmise, I will treat it naturally, within that natural setting.

The crucial moment that brought Athens to the forefront of history, happened some 2500 years or so after the World has witnessed the mushrooming big **city-states** in the **Fertile Crescent**, encompassing; Mesopotamia, Syria, Lebanon and Egypt, nicknamed for good reasons; "**The Cradle of Civilization**". These early Levantine city-states becoming, after being dominated altogether, by some mighty foreign rulers, part of a big imperial powers.

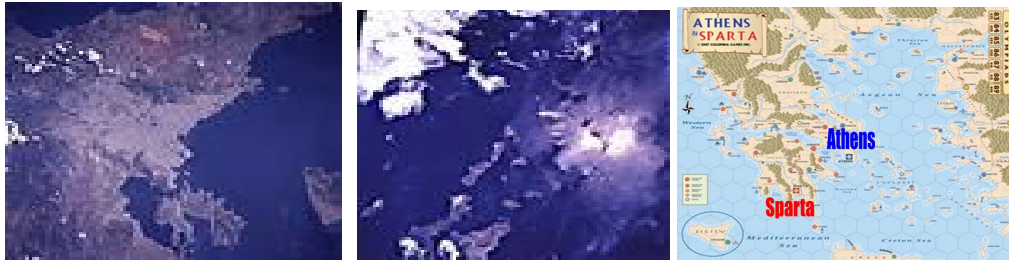
And beside educated Greeks who have always acknowledged their debt to the Levantine civilisations, in terms of knowledge and achievements, wealthy Athenian's families traded freely with Assyria and Egypt and whole communities settled in these foreign lands, while Low status citizens served in the armies of these empires as mercenaries, readying themselves to enter Greece into the Stage of cosmopolitan Civilisation two centuries later, following the lead of **Alexander the Great**.

Athens proper was a city with a population estimated at 250000 people in the fifth century BC and the **demos** consisted entirely of **free adult males** of strictly **Athenian descent**, numbering between 30.000 to 45.000 citizens in all.

Only on very rare occasions, was Citizenship granted to others, but only with the approval of the Assembly, the main "**sovereign**" body.

Athens {shown below a satellite fine view of Athens and the port city of Piraeus¹} controlled the area of the **Attic Peninsula** {satellite view below to the right}, to the east and northeast of **Sparta** (see map below). It was not unlike Sparta in terms of **colonialist drive**, and **expansionism**, save for two facets:

¹ On the green hill of the Acropolis, the light rectangular areas of the Parthenon and the Agora are easily visible.




1) Athens was larger both geographically and in population and

2) The people it conquered **were not reduced to servitude**, which was the rule at Sparta.

Given these two aspects, Athens never faced the prospect of controlling large populations of angry and on occasion violent subjects.


2.1) Political Crisis, Tyrants and Social Reforms

In the course of the late seventh and the beginning of the sixth century, Greece was experiencing rapid social changes and facing political unrest which led many Greek towns to be ruled by *tyrants* as sole rulers.

The word 'tyrant', negative as it may sound to our ears today, **and it should**, was not always the case either in ancient Mesopotamia, which produced a mighty lawgiver of the stature of **Hammurabi** and his **Code of Laws**  or in Greece two millennia later which will produce its nine sages.

In Greece proper, tyrants nearly emulated their Mesopotamian counterparts. The case of **Cypselus** of **Corinth** was archetypical. He was the **archon**² in charge of the military, and he used his influence as a **polemarch** (war chief) with the soldiery to expel the king and his other enemies, while allowing the later to set up colonies in northwestern Greece.

His reign witnessed a great economic boom and lasted for 30 years (657 – 627 BCE) and unlike many later tyrants, he never used bodyguards and died on his bed a natural death. His was so appreciated as a ruler as to be reckoned among the nine sages of Greece.

By contrast, his son **Periander** (625 – 585 BCE) , the second tyrant of Corinth (627 – 587 BC), was one of the most violent of the early Greek tyrants. He not

² It is the name given in most Greek states to the holders of the highest office. H had wide judicial as well as executive duties. Also one of the nine principal magistrates of ancient Athens

only killed his wife, but he avenged the death of his son in Corcyra by sending some 300 Corcyran³ innocent boys to be castrated⁴.


Athens experienced at this juncture the same problems as **Corinth**, where a class of aristocrats ruled the city while excluding the wealthy nouveaux riches. As a result, the growth in “wealth” of some of Athens citizens was not matched by improvements in the conditions of the poorer classes, particularly those who owned small farms or were landless and Athens faced its first political crisis around the year 600 B.C.

The city suffered from a classical economical crisis, where;

An ever expanding population increased pressure on the privileged, leading to a period of sustained social turmoil.

The farmers who used to supply the city with food found themselves short of keeping up with demand to satisfy the ever growing population needs, which had soared too quickly and beyond control. Farmers were thus forced to trade their land in order to obtain food and promptly went bankrupt.

In this multifarious situation, concessions had to be made to preserve a balance of power or face upheaval.

To solve the crisis, Athenians called on **Solon** (640- 561 B.C.) , a former high official in 594 B.C. to find a solution out of the crisis.

As **archon**, Solon cancelled all agricultural debts and freed all slaves. He decreed **that no Athenian would be sold into slavery** and that magistracies were open to all rich people (diminishing the power of the aristocrats).

Happily the concessions that were made strengthened the economic autonomy of small and medium-sized farmers as well as of some categories of peasants, creating a community of smallholders (see *Hornblower*⁵)

Although **Solon** did not end the agricultural crisis and factional strife remained, he was nonetheless reckoned among the nine sages of Greece and was reminded mainly for passing constitutional reforms that instituted “**Timocracy**” (*timokratia*), which is defined as⁷

³ Corcÿra (Kerkyra, modern Corfu), is an island in the Ionian Sea in north-west Greece, off the coast of Epirus, identified by the ancients with Scheria, the land of the Phaeacians in Homer's *Odyssey* (book 5). It was colonized in 733 BC by Corinthians.

⁴ They managed to escape.

⁵ *Simon Hornblower, 1992; "Creation and development of democratic institutions in Ancient Greece» in J .Dunn (ed.), Democracy the unfinished journey. 508 BC to AD 1993, Oxford, Oxford University Press, pp. 3-4.*

a state where only; property owners and those endowed with some degree of honour relative to others in their society, peers and the ruling class. may participate in government.

He divided Athenian subjects into four **classes** based on their annual agricultural production rather than birth, and allotted them political rights and economic responsibilities depending on membership in one of these four tiers of the population, whose memberships depend on how many bushels of produce each man could produce in a year, namely:

- ***Pentacosiomedimni*** (owners of large, productive tracts of land; "Men of the 500 bushel", i.e. those who produced 500 bushels of produce per year, they could serve as **generals in the army**)
- ***Hippeis*** (named for their social class as horsemen or charioteers; **knights**, those who could equip themselves and one cavalry horse for war, valued at 300 bushels per year)

Zeygatae (The social class of ox drivers, tillers, owners of at least one pair of beasts of burden, valued at 200 bushels per year, could serve as **Hoplites**; (Greek ὁπλίτης, hoplitēs) **a** heavy infantryman)

- ***Thetes*** (the lowest of the four classes of Athenian citizens, they were hired farm workers, labourers and served as lightly-armed soldiers and common seaman manual)

Within these castes, only members of the three highest orders could hold public office.

Salon's system excluded from citizenship all people who either did not own any productive land, or were; women, children, slaves, resident aliens, artisans and merchants.

The only merit of these constitutional reforms, **where the few privileged, either by property or honour would govern, a political situation condemned unequivocally by the Koran as we have seen before⁶**, was that they allowed for the first time, men from *less-established families* to work their way up economically and achieve positions of political leadership.

A relative achievement, given the time and the circumstances!

2.2) The Role of big Families

The political continuity of **Athens** was broken by the rise of the 'tyrants' (autocrats) (650-510 BC), who represented the interests of those who had recently become wealthy.


⁶ Verse 7 of Surat 59; "Al-Hashr" (Exile, Banishment) (الحشر) { **In order that it may not (merely) make a circuit between the wealthy among you.**

The **Alcmaeonids**⁷ were a very **rich family** who lived in Athens in the **Archaic** as well as in the **Classical periods**. One of their feats, for which they will be remembered by Athenians, is that they fought against a man called **Cylon** who wanted to become tyrant of Athens, in 631 BC.

After a big fight between Cylon and the other rich men of Athens, he finally gave up and surrendered. But when Cylon came out under truce, giving up, the Alcmaeonids stabbed him to death anyway!

Because of this treachery, The Athenians, superstitious as they were, thought that all the Alcmaeonids were under a curse and banished them all from Athens. The curse however didn't keep the Alcmaeonids from continuing to be a powerful and very wealthy family.


On the regional front, Greeks started to make inroads in the international scene at this juncture of time.

And one has only to remember that without the Greeks, serving as mercenaries, **Psammetique 1st** (664-610 BC)  the founder of the XXVI dynasty of Egypt could never have hoped retaking the Delta from the Assyrians towards 655 BC and Upper Egypt from the "Ethiopian" and to succeed in reunifying the country once again, as often happened in Egyptian history.

Necho II (Ouhemibrê-Nékaou II) (610 -595 BC), his successor, developed the Egyptian fleet using the Greeks and tried to take again the town of Harran to Medes and Babylonians, but failed.

2.3) The Rules of Tyranny

In 561, the former military leader **Pisistratus** (c.600-527 B.C.) appeared at Athens seized the **Acropolis** (photo) and began to rule as a **tyrant** in place of **Solon**. Pisistratus was accepted as tyrant because he promised law and order.

Pisistratus treated **Solon**, who left Athens for some time and has visited Egypt and king Croesus (595 BC – 546 BC)  of Lydia⁸, well and didn't hesitate to often ask advice from him in public matters. **Solon**, showing good statesmanship was generous and patriotic enough never to refuse it, if he thought; it would be of benefit to the state. A rare quality of statesmanship now and then!

⁷ *Alcmaeonids; the descendants of Alcmaeon.*

⁸ Croesus: detail of a painting by Claude Vignon, 1629.




By now, Athens had grown in size as well as in wealth and the common people enjoyed high standard of living, having more leisure time at their disposal and were far-better informed than their ancestors had ever been.

2.4) The use of Religion in Politics

In 548 BC, when an earthquake knocked down the **Temple of Apollo at Delphi** (photo), the *Alcmaeonids* paid to have it rebuilt again, but bigger and better than ever.

The oracle at Delphi was on their side this time, since it seems that the Greek Pantheon of local gods was very sensitive to lush money!!

Down to 527, the year of his death, **Pisistratus** rewarded dispossessed peasants with land confiscated from *wealthier families*. His tyranny, which lasted from 546 until his death, was the first period of Athenian glory. He broke the power of the aristocracy, strengthened the city institutions, improved the economy, built temples, and stimulated cultural life.

New religious festivals were also introduced by **Pisistratus**, such as the one devoted to the *god Dionysus* , the god of fertility, imported from the Levant.

In essence this tyrant was not unlike some of his equivalents in Great Assyria.

It was during the reign of **Pisistratus**, aspiring to have a popular power base and support, that the average citizen obtained his political experience.

But, since men continued to qualify for office only on the basis of wealth, and since incomes were rising, a greater number of citizens were included de facto in the operation of the government.

When **Pisistratus** died in 527, he was succeeded by his son **Hippias**, whose reign was resented by many people. His brother **Hipparchus** was murdered in 514 B.C., and **Hippias** became all the more nervous and suspicious, though to no avail, since one of the noble clans exiled by the sons of **Pisistratus**, the Alcmaeonids, led by **Cleisthenes**

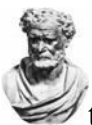


, **bribed the oracle at Delphi to tell the Spartans to assist them** against the Athenian tyranny.

The Spartans, led by **Cleomenes I** (*Κλεομένης*) (reigned c. 520–490 BC), responded promptly and marched into Athenian territory in 510 B.C. **Hippias** fled to Persia, the **Super Power** of the time, with dire consequences in the future of the Greek poleis.

2.5) The Dual Kings of Sparta at Each-Others Throats

In 501 BC, **Aegina**, was one of the states which gave the symbols of submission (*earth and water*) to **Persia**. Athens at once appealed to Sparta to punish this act of treason, and Cleomenes I crossed over to the island to arrest those responsible.

. When **Cleomenes I** attempted to make **Isagoras** tyrant in Athens, **Demaratus**
 the other co-ruling Spartan king with **Cleomenes I**, who reigned (515 - 491) opposed the later in his drive and tried unsuccessfully to frustrate his plans.

After the withdrawal of the Spartan troops, **Cleomenes'** friend **Isagoras** held the leading position in Athens. His chief rival was **Cleisthenes** of the restored **Alcmaeonids'** clan. Isagoras tried to restore a version of the **pre-Solonian aristocratic state** by purifying the citizen lists.

Back home in Sparta, Cleomenes, in retaliation against **Demaratus**, urged **Leotychides**, a relative and personal enemy of **Demaratus**, to claim the throne on the ground that the latter was not really the son of **Ariston**, but of **Agetus**, his mother's first husband.

Cleomenes bribed the Delphic oracle, to pronounce in favor of **Leotychidas**, who became king in 491 BC.


After the deposition of Demaratus, Cleomenes I visited the island of Aegina for a second time, accompanied by his new colleague **Leotychides**, seized ten of the leading citizens and deposited them at Athens as hostages.

On his abdication, **Demaratus** was forced to flee. He went to the court of the



Persian king **Darius I** (549 -486 BC) who gave him the cities of **Pergamum, Teuthrania and Halisarna**, where his descendants still ruled at the beginning of the 4th

century. A historical mighty fact running against the wishes of those who want to cut all links between Greece and its surrounding!

Demaratus accompanied **Xerxes I** (522 – 465 BC)  on his invasion of Greece in 480 BC and is alleged to have warned Xerxes not to underestimate the Spartans before the **Battle of Thermopylae**⁹.

2.6) Athenian Democracy in the making

It was at this historical juncture that **Cleisthenes** had the wit to turn to the people for political support, by proposing **a reforming program of great popular appeal**.

Cleisthenes instituted in 508 B.C., a new political organization whereby the citizens would take a direct role in running the Polis.

He called this new political organization **demokratia** (democracy). i.e., rule by the entire body of citizens.

In the history of ideas in the Occident, the word, **Democracy** (Δημοκρατία); from the Greek **demos** (δῆμος), "people", and **kratos**, (κράτος) "rule" means literally; **"the rule by the people"**, and is a relic of Cleisthenes organisation.

Thus, Democracy means, the shape of government where those **who posses land and/or property govern themselves and others; including; females, slaves and other non-citizens**.

He instituted a Council of Five Hundred which planned the business of the public assemblies. **Only male citizens over the age of thirty** were eligible to serve for a one year term on the Council and no one could serve more than two terms in a lifetime.

Cleisthenes thought that such an organization was a necessity, so that every citizen would not only learn from direct political experience, but would not conspire and attempt to abolish the system.

Cleisthenes also divided all Athenians into **ten tribes**¹⁰ (replacing the original four of Solon). **The composition of each tribe guaranteed that no region would dominate any of them**¹¹.

⁹ See <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Demaratus> for more details.

¹⁰ One shouldn't forget that we are dealing here with a tribal institution in the first place.

¹¹ Which the usual fail safe measure found in all tribal organisations, as found in Morocco and elsewhere up to recent times,

But since the tribes had common religious activities and fought as regimental units, the new organization would also increase devotion to the polis and diminish regional division.

Each tribe would send fifty men to serve on the Council of Five Hundred (thus replacing Solon's Council of 400). Each set of fifty men would serve as a presiding committee for a period of thirty-five days.

The Council has the prerogatives to convene the Assembly, consisting of approximately 21,000 citizens, as of the year 450 B.C. Of this number, some 12000-15000 were absent, serving either in the army, navy or managing their businesses.

The Council verified the qualifications of officials and follows the allocation of funds. They supervised the construction of docks and surveyed public buildings. They were also responsible for collecting rent on public land and administered the redistribution of confiscated property. He was also responsible for examining the horses of the cavalry, administering state pensions and receiving foreign delegations. In short, the Council was responsible of all the daily operations of the Athenian city-state.

Membership on the Council was limited to one year, with an option to serve for a second term. Every year, a minimum of 250 new members had to be chosen.

Serving on the Council of Five Hundred was a full time job and those who did serve were entitled to be paid a fee.

This **direct democracy** managed to choose every year 500 Council members and 550 Guards by lot from the villages of the Athenian polis. These representatives were inspected by the Council before being chosen.

This rapid turnover in the Council ensured two things;

a) ***Making sure that a large number of Athenians held some political position in their lifetime and;***

b) ***Enticing and retaining membership.***

The Assembly contained all those citizens who were not serving on the Council of 500 or were not serving as public officials. The Assembly had ***forty regular meetings*** per year, four meetings in each 35 day period into which the Council's year was divided.

The first meeting discussed the corn supply, the qualifications of officials, questions of defence and **ostracisms**.

Ostracism (Greek ὄστρακισμός *ostrakismos*) was a procedure under the Athenian democracy in which a prominent citizen could be expelled from the city-state of Athens for ten years.

One should note that while certain case in point clearly expressed popular anger at the victim, ostracism was often used pre-emptively. It was used now and again as a way of defusing major confrontations between rival politicians (*by removing one of them from the scene*), or in order to neutralize someone thought to be a threat to the state, or in exiling a potential tyrant.

Noticeably, ostracism bore no direct relation to the processes of justice, since there was no charge or defence, and the exile was not in fact a penalty; it was simply a command from the Athenian people that one of their numbers should be cut from society for ten years¹².

The **second meeting** was open to any issue.

The **third and fourth meetings** debated on **religion** and on foreign and secular affairs. Special meetings or emergency sessions could be called at any time.

This **Athenian democracy** was a form of **direct democracy** {¹³}, with two distinctive features:

1) The allotment (*selection by lot*) of ordinary citizens to government offices and courts,^[7] and

2) The assembly of all the citizens.

One particularity of this *Athenian democracy*, which all **western democracies** inherited from them, is the fact, that while in theory, all the Athenian citizens were eligible to speak and vote in the Assembly, political rights, and citizenship, were not granted to **women** (half the population), **slaves, or metics**.

And of the 250,000 inhabitants of Athena,

- a) **only some 30,000 on average were citizens i.e. less than one in eight ($\frac{1}{8}$) and**
- b) **Of those 30,000, some 5,000 only attended one or more meetings of the popular Assembly. i.e. ($\frac{1}{6}$).**

So that, less than ($\frac{1}{48}$) or 2 % of the population was eligible for this democratic game {¹⁴}

¹² <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ostracism>

¹³ One of the earliest democratic civilizations was found in the [republics of ancient India](#), which were established sometime before the [6th century BC](#), and prior to the birth of [Gautama Buddha](#). However, we are not going to be concerned with it right now, save to remind the reader that the Islamic PSI is at the same dialectical distance with this India's democracy as it is with the Athenian democracy.

¹⁴ See this link for more { <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Democracy> }

This historical fact represents in itself a blatant rebuke for those who persist in defining Athenian's democracy as **the rule by the people, without qualifying the people concerned!**

But seen from a societal point of view;


The Greek Democracy can be compared to a closed club, not open to foreigners, even if they were residents for generations already. And even though one of these foreigners will be granted with good grace the statute of a host or a protected host, the statute of full citizen will remain out of his reach. The only foreigners, who could attend this club of rich, were servants and slaves.

This aristocracy, made up of great landowners controlled the cities through their respective assemblies, not so differently, from what we still experience today.

In other words, as some contemporaries put it;

Save in few instances of high motivations and awakenings, money and money alone, was and still is what made the difference either in Athena, Paris, London, Washington or even lately in Tokyo....



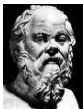
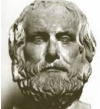
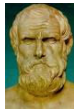
Athens became around 460 B.C., under the leadership of **Pericles** (490-429


B.C.) , who dominated the political scene of the city for more than forty years, a symbol of Classic Greek culture.


It boasted marvels of architecture, such as; the Parthenon, the acropolis, the temple of Hephaestus,..., beside being a place where; art, rhetoric, oration teemed with philosophy, poetry and military might giving rise to the extraordinary intellectual productivity that marked this period.

This generation of Athenians lived through the Peloponnesian War (431-404 B.C.).

It was a remarkable age that produced many intellectuals of fame such as the two

historians; **Thucydides**  and **Herodotus** , and the philosophers; **Socrates**,
Sophocles , **Euripides** , **Aristophanes** , and the **sophists**.

These in turn, will be the mentors of other celebrities such as; *Plato*  and

 *Xenophon*, among others.

But lurking behind this glowing shadowy image of Athens was a **substantial slave population**, lacking any political rights and utterly devoid of citizenship. A sad fact of life which led some political thinkers to observe;

That without slavery, Periclean democracy could simply not have been.

2.7) Synopsis of Athenian democracy

Now, since Athenian democracy, as it came down to us, seems inseparable from Pericles himself, it will be most rewarding for us, to study in detail *a famous speech*¹⁵ he delivered to the Athenians in a **Funeral Oration** after the first battles of the Peloponnesian war¹⁶.

I will add only subtitles to the original text, in order to stress or emphasize the main ideas, worth noting..

Acknowledging the feats of Ancestors

I shall begin with our ancestors: it is both just and proper that they should have the honour of the first mention on an occasion like the present. They dwelt in the country without break in the succession from generation to generation, and handed it down free to the present time by their valour.

An Imperialistic Democracy

And if our more remote ancestors deserve praise, much more do our own fathers, **who added to their inheritance the empire which we now possess, and spared no pains to be able to leave their acquisitions to us of the present generation.**

The Uniqueness of the Athenian Constitution

"Our constitution does not copy the laws of neighbouring states; **we are rather a pattern to others than imitators ourselves.**

Favouring the many instead of the few

Its administration **favours the many instead of the few**; this is why it is called a democracy.

Affording equal justice to all in their private differences

¹⁵ Thucydides (c.460/455-c.399 BCE): *Pericles' Funeral Oration from the Peloponnesian War (Book 2.34-46)*

¹⁶ Funerals after such battles were public rituals and Pericles used the occasion to make a classic statement of the value of democracy.

If we look to the laws, they afford equal justice to all in their private differences;

Merit alone is the yardstick for holding Public Office

if no social standing, advancement in public life falls to reputation for capacity, class considerations not being allowed to interfere with merit; nor again does poverty bar the way, if a man is able to serve the state, he is not hindered by the obscurity of his condition.

No Orwellian Big brothers

The freedom which we enjoy in our government extends also to our ordinary life. There, far from exercising a jealous surveillance over each other, we do not feel called upon to be angry with our neighbour for doing what he likes, or even to indulge in those injurious looks which cannot fail to be offensive, although they inflict no positive penalty.

Lawful citizens

But all this ease in our private relations does not make us lawless as citizens. Against this fear is our chief safeguard, teaching us to obey the magistrates and the laws, particularly such as regard the protection of the injured, whether they are actually on the statute book, or belong to that code which, although unwritten, yet cannot be broken without acknowledged disgrace.

Leisure is part of life

Further, we provide plenty of means for the mind to refresh itself from business. We celebrate games and sacrifices all the year round, and the elegance of our private establishments forms a daily source of pleasure and helps to banish the spleen; while the magnitude of our city draws the produce of the world into our harbour, so that to the Athenian the fruits of other countries are as familiar a luxury as those of his own.

Military Policy

If we turn to our military policy, there also we differ from our antagonists. We throw open our city to the world, and never by alien acts exclude foreigners from any opportunity of learning or observing, although the eyes of an enemy may occasionally profit by our liberality; trusting less in system and policy than to the native spirit of our citizens;

Education Policy

While in education, where our rivals {Spartans} from their very cradles by a painful discipline seek after manliness, at Athens we live exactly as we please, and yet are just as ready to encounter every legitimate danger. In proof of this it may be noticed that the Lacedaemonians do not invade our country alone, but bring with them all their confederates; while we Athenians advance unsupported into the territory of a neighbour, and fighting upon a foreign soil usually vanquish with ease men who are defending their homes. Our united force was never yet encountered by any enemy, because we have at once to attend to our marine and to dispatch our citizens by land upon a hundred different services; so that, wherever they engage with some such fraction of our strength, a success against a detachment is magnified into a victory over the nation, and a defeat into a reverse suffered at the hands of our entire people. And yet if with habits not of labour but of ease, and courage not of art but of nature, we are still willing to encounter danger, we have the double advantage of escaping the experience of hardships in anticipation and of facing them in the hour of need as fearlessly as those who are never free from them.

On Using Wealth

"Nor are these the only points in which our city is worthy of admiration. We cultivate refinement without extravagance and knowledge without effeminacy; wealth we employ more for use than for show, and place the real disgrace of poverty not in owning to the fact but in declining the struggle against it.

Participation of Citizens in running the State

Our public men have, besides politics, their private affairs to attend to, and our ordinary citizens, though occupied with the pursuits of industry, are still fair judges of public matters; for, unlike any other nation, regarding him who takes no part in these duties not as unambitious but as useless, we Athenians are able to judge at all events if we cannot originate, and, instead of looking on discussion as a stumbling-block in the way of action, we think it an indispensable preliminary to any wise action at all. Again, in our enterprises we present the singular spectacle of daring and deliberation, each carried to its highest point, and both united in the same persons; although usually decision is the fruit of ignorance, hesitation of reflection.

How Athenians perceived courage

But the palm of courage will surely be adjudged most justly to those, who best know the difference between hardship and pleasure and yet are never tempted to shrink from danger.

Friendship and Generosity

In generosity we are equally singular, acquiring our friends by conferring, not by receiving, favours. Yet, of course, the doer of the favour is the firmer friend of the two, in order by continued kindness to keep the recipient in his debt; while the debtor feels less keenly from the very consciousness that the return he makes will be a payment, not a free gift. And it is only the Athenians, who, fearless of consequences, confer their benefits not from calculations of expediency, but in the confidence of liberality.

Building the Power of the State through good habits

In short, I say that as a city we are the school of Hellas, while I doubt if the world can produce a man who, where he has only himself to depend upon, is equal to so many emergencies, and graced by so happy a versatility, as the Athenian. And that this is no mere boast thrown out for the occasion, but plain matter of fact, the power of the state acquired by these habits proves.

Such is the Athens for which these men, in the assertion of their resolve not to lose her, nobly fought and died; and well may every one of their survivors be ready to suffer in her cause.

Craving for Vengeance

But none of these allowed either wealth with its prospect of future enjoyment to unnerve his spirit, or poverty with its hope of a day of freedom and riches to tempt him to shrink from danger. No, holding that vengeance upon their enemies was more to be desired than any personal blessings, and reckoning this to be the most glorious of hazards, they joyfully determined to accept the risk, to make sure of their vengeance, and to let their wishes wait; and while committing to hope the uncertainty of final success, in the business before them they thought fit to act boldly and trust in themselves.

Dying resisting, rather than living submitting

Thus choosing to die resisting, rather than to live submitting, they fled only from dishonour, but met danger face to face, and after one brief moment, while at the summit of their fortune, escaped, not from their fear, but from their glory.....

Miserable have nothing to hope for

These take as your model and, judging happiness to be the fruit of freedom and freedom of valour, never decline the dangers of war. For it is not the miserable that would most justly be unsparing of their lives; these have nothing to hope for: it is rather they to whom continued life may bring reverses as yet unknown, and to whom a fall, if it came, would be most tremendous in its consequences. And surely, to a man of spirit, the degradation of cowardice must be immeasurably more grievous than the unfelt death which strikes him in the midst of his strength and patriotism!

Steadfastness in times of grievance and sorrow

"Comfort, therefore, not condolence, is what I have to offer to the parents of the dead who may be here.....

For it is only the love of honour that never grows old; and honour it is, not gain, as some would have it, that rejoices the heart of age and helplessness.

The Greek model of a woman

On the other hand, if I must say anything on the subject of female excellence to those of you who will now be in widowhood, it will be all comprised in this brief exhortation. Great will be your glory in not falling short of your natural character; and greatest will be hers who is least talked of among the men, whether for good or for bad.

The State in charge of the offspring's of the deceased braves

If deeds be in question, those who are here interred have received part of their honours already, and for the rest, their children will be brought up till manhood at the public expense: the state thus offers a valuable prize, as the garland of victory in this race of valour, for the reward both of those who have fallen and their survivors. And where the rewards for merit are greatest, there are found the best citizens.

End

To be continued in part IV

The critics of Athenian Democracy