

The Life of Pythagoras

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It is said that Pythagoras was born at Sidon between 600 and 590 BC. According to legend, his birth was foretold by the famous oracle at Delphi, which indicated he was destined to surpass all men in beauty and wisdom, and would contribute much to the benefit of mankind.

Pythagoras is one of many sages and saviours of antiquity, the events of whose lives had many parallels to the story of Christ. As in the Christ legend, Pythous the mother of Pythagoras, is said to have conceived him by a spectre (the Holy Ghost) - she was said to be a virgin of great moral purity. The spectre afterwards appears to the father of Pythagoras (Mnesarchus) and told him that he must have no connexion with his wife during the pregnancy. This story also accords with the Christ legend. Pythagoras' fame spread rapidly and he was known by several appellations such as the 'Son of God', 'Paraclete' and the 'child of Divinity'.

The teachings of Pythagoras indicate that he was conversant with both Eastern and Western esotericism. He first learnt all that it was possible for him to learn from the contemporary Greek philosophers and became an initiate of the Eleusinian mysteries. Then travelling to Egypt he was initiated into the mysteries of Isis by the priests of Thebes. Then he journeyed to Phoenicia and to Syria where the mysteries of Adonis were revealed to him, and later became versed in the secret law of the Chaldeans. To further his quest for knowledge he then also ventured into Persia, and is said to have lived there for several years, where he may have been a pupil of learned Brahmins. (According to some authors his name is still preserved in the records of the Brahmins as Yavacharya, the Ionian teacher).

After he finished his wanderings, Pythagoras founded a university at Crotona, Southern Italy, and gathered around him a small number of disciples to whom he entrusted the fruits of his wisdom. He instructed them in the fundamentals of occult mathematics, music and astronomy which he considered to be the foundation of all the arts of sciences. One of the favourite methods of instruction used at the university was that of the aphorism which is a statement that contains symbolism and a concealed meaning. Iamblichus collected thirty-nine of these statements together, and they form a representation of Pythagorean Philosophy. One of the aphorisms urges "offer not your right hand easily to anyone". This warns the disciple not to offer his wisdom (his right hand) to those who are incapable of appreciating it. The hand represents truth which raises those who have often fallen because of ignorance.

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Pythagoras

Pythagoras is said to have considered wealth to be a great enemy, and that poverty a virtue. Like Christ he recommended the abandonment of parents, relations, friends, houses, and lands for the sake of religion. His disciples had a common treasury, and a general community of goods, to which all had free access, so that there was no poverty or suffering amongst them while the supply lasted.

Because of his outspokenness Pythagoras gained a number of enemies during his life. One man who was refused entry into Pythagoras' university resolved to destroy him, and his philosophy and, as a result of the man's false propaganda, the feelings of a large mass of people were turned against Pythagoras. One day these feelings came to a head and a band of murderers fell upon the university _ destroying the buildings and killing Pythagoras.

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