

THE CLASSICAL IDEAL IN GREEK ARCHITECTURE  
5<sup>th</sup> c. BCE

Greek civilization, as represented by the Classical ideal of 5<sup>th</sup> c. BCE, is the foundation of what evolved as Western civilization. The literature, science, philosophy, art and architecture of that period in Greece had a lasting impact on all later periods.

The greatness of that period was achieved after Athens emerged as a powerful force in the Greek military and political landscape. The ancient history of Greece is marked by isolated city-states scattered across mountains, islands and coastal plains. The city-state, or the *polis*, is one of the remarkable ideas of governance and rule, but the city-states were also at constant war with each other, and also with non-Greek peoples. Athens rose above other cities following the struggle of the Greeks against the Persians. Pericles of the 5<sup>th</sup> c BCE is one of the most noted rulers of Athens, from a period that represented the great works of Socrates, Aeschylus, Sophocles and Aristophanes, and the creation of the Parthenon and other works of art.

The *polis*: Colonization of the Mediterranean coast led to trading, amassing wealth, and rise of a middle-class who was influential in turning the Greek polity in the *polis* from a tyrannical to a democratic system. It is in that context that art, literature and architecture flourished. Although the city-states fought with each other, the Greeks were united by some common strands: language, ancestry, the Olympian gods and goddesses, and the Pan-Hellenic Games.

The temple as the finest product of Greek civilization, with the Parthenon in Athens as the epitome.

Vocabulary:

*Agora*, town square, market, center of social and commercial life

*Stoa*, long, colonnaded building

*Acropolis*, upper part of the city, usually a sacred enclosure where the principal temples lay

*Propylaea*, gateway