

## Brazilian Festivities and the Cycle of the Year

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“Time was my master  
Who taught me to heal”

(Euclides Talabyan)

Time is undoubtedly one of the great mysteries that permeates human life. So much so that in order to deal with this dimension in a healthy way, it requires us to develop a great art. The small child shows us how demanding it is to understand yesterday and tomorrow. Each stage of a day influences us in a different way: when the day begins to clear, the sun rises, the evening, the night, the dawn, each moment of the day and night has a quality that directly influences us, and thus intensifies over a week, a month, a year.

Our Earth has a considerable slope on its axis (23<sup>o</sup>) and when we divide it with the Equator line we have the two hemispheres, which receive the opposite solar incidence, that is, when it is summer in one hemisphere it is winter in the other, and according to the elliptical form that the Earth draws, this happens in the most distant points of the Sun, also known as Solstice, be it summer in one hemisphere, indicating the longest day of the year, or, complementarily, winter in the other hemisphere, indicating the longest night. The same is true when the Earth passes through the points closest to the Sun, where we have the Equinoxes of spring and autumn, a time when day and night have the same duration. From these landmarks we have the seasons, more or less marked, according to the place where we live. Important: every year everything is repeated. The cyclical year, the wheel of life that completes new springs each year.

Modern science tells us of the physical principle, in parallel, we have spiritual science, which looks in relation to the super-sensible, complements what happens in the sensory world that surrounds us.

Starting from the sensitive world, we have the most diverse chemical elements that are activated according to the climatic qualities of each region of the Earth. From the anthroposophical point of view, there are substances that prevail in the Earth's atmosphere in each season of the year. In the spring, we have the calcium present inside the soil that provides the strength for the plants to thrive; in summer, the expansion, the elements are diluted in the atmosphere and the sulfur gains strength, being controlled by the cosmic, sidereal iron, which reaches the earth like a meteor shower, organizing again the elements that, during the winter, intensify their work inside the earth, and finally the saline, lunar, generator element, complementing this cycle.

According to Rudolf Steiner, each of these elements and their chemical effects on the sensitive plane has its counterpart in the supersensible. Behind the seasons he speaks to us of forces that express an animistic quality which he approaches from images, since our understanding reaches them only in an imaginative character.

In his conference cycle named "The Experience of the Year in Four Cosmic Imaginations", the author describes the physical and soul quality that permeates each of the four seasons of the year and names the spiritual beings who act in the direction of those seasons, being the Archangel Raphael as ruler of spring, Archangel Uriel with summer, Archangel Michael with autumn and Archangel Gabriel with winter, and then, for each season, from the influence and archangelic qualities that govern it, Rudolf Steiner arrives in a imagination.

What does it mean to speak by images? As an example we will cite what happens in the fall. The sulfur element is in great expansion in the atmosphere when it is summer. In the fall, a meteor shower (composed of sidereal iron) falls on Earth and controls the expanding sulfur. This is the



event from the point of view of the physical, earthly, sensitive plane. As an Imagination, Rudolf Steiner says that a battle is fought between Michael (who carries an iron sword), against the luciferic beings (of a sulfurous nature) that dominates them, being therefore an image to speak of autumn: "Michael conquering the dragon".

Deepening the study of Rudolf Steiner on the topic, he points out that while it is autumn in one hemisphere, it is spring in the other and we need to remember that the Earth is a single being, that even though the climatic qualities of the hemispheres are opposite, they are complementary. Whatever happens in one hemisphere influences what happens in the other hemisphere. Experiencing autumn then means entering into a relationship with what the season provides us externally, in our environment, in our atmosphere, from the outside in.

However, the complementary season will act internally in the human being. We do not perceive it when we look out the window, but rather subtly within us.

To clarify the mutual action of the seasons, that is, the Archangels, let us take as an example the summer in the southern hemisphere: Uriel acts on the human being from the outside to the inside, while Gabriel acts from the inside to the outside; whereas, simultaneously, it is winter in the northern hemisphere, so there, Gabriel acts from the outside in, while Uriel acts from the inside out. So it is in the autumn with Michael and in the spring with Raphael - there is a complementarity in the performance of the forces.

When we look at the atmosphere that permeates us throughout the year and its qualities, we see a relationship in cultural expressions. Deepening this look can enable us to have many inspirations and a profound experience with the present moment and the place in which we live. We will deepen our look in Brazil.

The beginning of the year in this tropical country starts with the sun high at the zenith: it is summer, people look for beaches, make their vows for renewal by the sea: many jump waves, light candles, pray with their feet in the salt water. The Queen of Waters, also called Iemanjá or Janaína - many are her names and the origin is from the Yoruba tradition \*: Iemanjá, an Orixá or goddess from the salty water, Lady of the Heads. According to Yoruba mythology, she watches over the head of every human being. It is her waters that bless and strengthen intentions for the coming year. Iemanjá has her day, which is exactly 40 days after Christmas: February 2,

experienced with many celebrations. Her waters refresh from the beginning of the year until her day. Iemanjá shares that day with Our Lady of Candelária, who illuminates everyone with her lamps. A path of water and lights, which refreshes and illuminates. The celebration of "Águas de Oxalá" (Water of a deity called Oxala) in religions of African origin also takes place at this time and is marked by waters: the streets and churches are bathed with beautiful processions leading to purification and blessings wherever they pass in several Brazilian cities.

Like the waters that flow, carry, wash, in the beginning of January we also have the revelry of Reis (the celebration of the Three Kings) who roam the streets of many cities in Brazil, for days and days, flowing, taking, praising the coming of Christ to Earth. Celebrating Epiphany, Three Kings Day is experienced with simplicity and a great deal of inner nobility by the people who embody the figures of Mary, Joseph, shepherds and kings. Among adults, children, ladies and gentlemen, playing their instruments and with great singing, they praise the Lord and the kings with full of joy.

This atmosphere of lightness and warmth, both external and internal, permeates the people until Carnival. Some say that the year in Brazil only begins after Carnival. At the height of joy, people occupy the streets, dress up, shine, everyone plays together. A commitment to the uncompromising for some, a lot of effort, love and sacrifice for others. For so many beauties to happen, a lot of dedication is needed: there are samba schools, electric trios, carnival blocks, rural maracatu, maracatu nation, frevo, afoxé - each region of Brazil with its specificities to remember the brilliance that the human being carries.

Ash Wednesday is usually a rainy day. It seems that the sky intervenes to contain all that heat and euphoria. Carnival is a celebration difficult to stop.

We enter the Lenten period. Carnival drums cease. African-based religions, which have atabaque drums as the basis of their religious works, also suspend their drumming. It is time for reflection. We feel the Michaelic iron sword that autumn brings, which little by little puts sulfur and the elements in their places. Curiously, we have the day of Saint George on April 23, a saint known for his fight against the dragon, patron saint of the State of Rio de Janeiro and widely celebrated in several regions of Brazil.

Holy Week is lived in a very intense way in Catholic communities. In many cities, passing through the Tibouchina or Purple Glory trees that bloom at that time, there are processions, dramatizations of the Passion of Christ, events that go beyond churches, occupy the streets and involve not only devotees but many people interested in following the path until Easter Sunday.

The Hallelujah Saturday before Easter Sunday is remarkable, and religions of African origin return with their drums. In some regions it is the rebirth of the Ox in the tradition of Bumba meu Boi, a game that involves a lot of music and dance, and that happens in different regions of Brazil, each one with its own particularities. Usually a Bull made of wood, receives a leather cover, often embroidered or painted. The bull is a central figure with many representations and meanings, his symbology is extensive, but we emphasize that he will be baptized on Saint John's Day and will be killed until the Day of the Dead in November. Hallelujah Saturday is the day of his rebirth.

It is with the strength of the Resurrection, now with the autumn wind blowing stronger, that the days start to get shorter, the sun sets earlier each day. It is time for Ascension. Great Kiskadee birds sing at dawn, the tides turn. In the south of the country it begins to cool.

Pentecost (Whitsun) approaches and its traditions with it. The tongues of fire that touch the apostles and bring an understanding of another nature among human beings: we understand other languages, we speak with the heart, it is the principle of Community. The Divine Holy Spirit Festival is celebrated throughout the Brazilian territory. Communities come together to find the tree that will be the pole, that will make the communication between heaven and earth. The crown of the divine is prepared for him to be crowned among human beings. Who would be able



to represent the Holy Spirit on Earth? For some traditions it is the child who represents him. An empire is formed with children, they are Empresses, Emperors, butlers and flag holders, all in noble costumes to accompany each day of the festival. With plenty of food, the food is for everyone. People are usually simple in nature, but what they offer is worth more than gold: the food offered nourishes body, soul and spirit.

The pole of the Divine is overturned, the altar is closed. The cold announces itself, but inside, the heart warms itself. The time has come for the 3 Saints of June who ask for their bonfires: Saint Antony, Saint John and Saint Peter. The big party is for Saint John but the sympathies, promises, requests and celebrations for Saint Antony and Saint Peter are not left behind.

Street parties are called *quermesses* (festive bazaars) and festivals. The streets are decorated with colorful flags, ribbons and balloons, many food stalls, in fact, a lot of food! In some regions, such as the south of Bahia, it is time to harvest the corn that was planted on the day of Saint Joseph, on March 19. With it, many delicacies are prepared, one tastier than the other. A special place is reserved for the bonfire, other for dances. Among several, the *quadrille* is the most typical dance, dance performed in circles, in pairs, with a lot of joy and encounter. It's a meeting time. These are days and days of celebration.

In different places, "*julinas*" parties go on in the month of July. In August, the cold is still strong and the winds arrive. Wind that raises the kites in the sky, wind that swirls the skirts in the *Carimbó* as well as in the Creole drum, which culminates in the full moon of that month with a big party for Saint Benedict, a black saint so important for the Brazilian people.

Wind that swirls and brings a being of nature well known in Brazil: *Saci*. Many are his stories. Protector of nature, he plays, confuses and disturbs those who do not respect him. If a place is in a mess, then he messes it up even more! This is a propitious time for one of the pair's socks to disappear, because what they say is that *Saci* moves around with a cap on his head, a pipe in his mouth, bouncing on one leg only. *Curupira*, *Caipora*, *Boitatá*, *Pink Boto*, *Lara*, many folk figures appear with their stories at this time of year.

With the arrival of September, the wind changes in several regions of Brazil, we are following the flowering of the *ipês* or trumpet tree, the Brazilian national tree. From the purple *ipe* at the beginning of winter, passing through the yellow, arriving at the white ones, the streets are colored with their flowers that enchant us. The end of September is marked by the feast of another saint well known to Brazilians, in fact, two: *Cosmas* and *Damien*. *Crispim* and *Crispiniano* are also their names. Holy doctors, they lived healing people from their diseases and lost their heads for it. Synchronized with the *Ibejis*, the twin children who bring prosperity to religions of

African origin, the cult of Saints Cosmas and Damian, has become a day of many sweets, joy, meeting and hope. Sweets represent the sweetness of life and they are offered to all people, that is, each one goes to meet the other to offer him something that will give him joy.

October is the month of the patron saint of Brazil, Nossa Senhora da Aparecida (Our Lady of the Apparition), the Saint who was found in the waters by fishermen and works miracles. For 300 years the Marian faith has permeated many Brazilians, Cheia de Graça, (Full of Grace), which pleads for us now and at the time of death. There she is: in the portal of birth and in the portal of death.

November with all Saints and the Day of the Dead marks the end of a cycle that is renewed in December with the Immaculate Conception at the time of Advent. Female deities called Orixás are also celebrated in religions of African origin at that time in Brazil. Santa Lucia, who protects the eyes, is also celebrated. The strength of the feminine hangs over the Christmas season culminating in Mary, who will give birth to the baby Jesus. Once again it is summer. It is in the joy and expansion that the summer promotes that the nativity scenes are set up in the squares, outdoors, the pastoralists take to the streets, the families get together and once again the gesture of going to the seashore, of celebrating close to the waters involves the Brazilian people.

Thus, we draw a brief overview of celebrations that take place throughout Brazil, still with nuances of a more specific nature in the southeast of the country, still from the popular Christian point of view, briefly citing syncretism with Brazilian religions of African origin. The traditions of the original peoples, the specific cycle of religions of African origin and other] influences have broadened the vision of the festivities and their annual cycle in Brazil much more. Such are the inspirations that each popular manifestation offers us and for now we will stick to some brief relations with the Imaginations of each season and its Archangels.

Brazilian Christmas takes place in the summer, a season ruled by Uriel, a time when it highlights how far nature rises, the chemical elements mix in the atmosphere and go towards the Cosmos. Uriel's imagination is characterized from the depths of the Earth, from its crystals, from where the cosmic will rises like silver threads, to the heavens, where it is welcomed by the cosmic intelligence that weaves in the sky and turns them into golden threads that appear like the surrounding clouds of Uriel. The structuring force that comes from the Earth, from this Substance Mother, from this Mary, from the terrestrial effect of silver; in cosmic union with the luminous force that comes from above, the father's spirit, the heavenly effect of gold that hovers like a dove and, in the middle, the image of the son, forming the image of a Trinity. This is, in general, Uriel's Imagination.

A popular Brazilian song seems to address such a mystery

“Mom’s house is underwater  
Under the water over the sand  
There’s gold, there’s silver  
There is a diamond that illuminates us”

(public domain)

When we consider how the salt element is intensified by the sea with so much salt water and salt air, we can draw a parallel with the Imagination of Gabriel, Archangel of winter, who works in the Brazilian summer from the inside out, complementary to Uriel, with his salinizing forces, lunar forces which are strengthened when the woman gestates a new being. The mother who welcomes the solar effect, the new human being in gestation: the image of Madonna, the mother who welcomes her son in her arms. A poetic image for Brazilian Christmas would be a Maria that comes from the salty waters, emphasizing the feminine that expresses itself in the people throughout the month of December.

When the waters of March close the summer, as the Brazilian poet would say, it is very common



to be in a time of Lent. Gathering time under the autumn sky. In the heavens, it is Archangel Michael that hovers from outside, who with his sidereal iron sword makes the sulfur and the elements return to the earth. "The fight against the dragon", time to face the dragons themselves, to settle down and face their inner challenges. Autumnal Easter is for interiorization, it is not the time for the fertility of rabbits, but for the cocoons of butterflies, the seeds that will "die" in the earth to give life to the buds. Internally we have Rafael, the Archangel of healing, which provides us with a profound possibility of transformation, of balancing the adverse forces within us.

In the festival of Saint John, which takes place in the Brazilian winter, it is Archangel Gabriel that is hovering in the sky. The Gabriel imagination, the Madonna, we identify in the quality of the celebrations: it is the feminine force that nourishes, that welcomes and nourishes everyone as well as in Saint John who led the crowds in the desert, still in a consciousness of a lunar nature, awaiting the coming of the Solar being. A celebration that culminates in lighting the fire on nights with starry skies. As for the Uriel nature of Saint John, we can draw a parallel with the scene of baptism, in which the dove hovers over Jesus, the son, in front of John, the one who leads the crowds on earth.

When we arrive in spring, September 29 is the day devoted to Michael, which is experienced with the Rafael spring qualities acting from the outside, providing the cure and the balance in which the human being is the true center of the balance, balancing the adverse forces.

Michael, in turn, acts internally bringing courage. The Michaelic iron that normally dominates the sulfur dragon at the arrival of autumn, now acts otherwise in the spring, it is the iron of courage

to meet the other, to meet the world. Cosmas and Damien on the 27th of September bring precisely the atmosphere of healing and encounter: people go towards others to offer their sweetness.

Annual festivals provide great learning. Faced with the parallels and relationships outlined here, we realize that these are just a few paths, many others can reveal themselves. The important thing is to know that each year the cycle starts again, we can re-signify and learn from the experience of each party. The secret to this is simple, just open your heart and seek a true experience with the Archangels, the local nature and the tradition of that time: your secrets? They will be revealed over time.

\* the Yoruba people are one of the largest ethnic groups in West Africa, in the region of Nigeria. They came as slaves to Brazil around the 1800s.

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