

LESSON 7

THE RISE AND FALL OF CIVILIZATION

By this time the student will have become aware that the story of man's evolution, as compiled and interpreted by students of Theosophy, includes the concept of cosmic purpose as a determining principle. This, of course, implies the working out of a Plan on a time scale that has already involved billions of years and will involve billions more before the plan is fulfilled.

The rise and fall of civilizations, so well documented in anthropological studies and in geological formation on the earth, are said in Theosophy to be a part of this great Plan. Nations and peoples come and go, each supplying a particular field of development for the egos incarnating in them, and each contributing its own special gift to the total evolvement of mankind.

According to the theosophical philosophy, the great Plan is septenary in nature; during the evolution of humanity on this earth, there are seven great overlapping phases in which seven races appear and furnish vehicles for the process. The term "races" in this context should not be confused with the modern ethnological and anthropological divisions which have to do with skin color and various other physical characteristics. The theosophical concept holds that **consciousness** itself, and not the form or the color of the skin, is the determining factor, and that great numbers of people of different ethnic groups comprise the major, or root race presently flowering upon this planet. All these groups have their own special contributions to make to the fulfillment of man as man.

In the septenary plan of evolution, each of these root races is said to have seven modifications, or divisions, known as sub races. Each subrace has the fundamental characteristics of the root race to which it belongs, but it also has some tendency or quality peculiar to itself. The subraces again divide into branch races. To use an analogy with which we are all familiar, we might think of evolution as process of education in the true meaning of the term--which is a drawing-out, not an adding-onto. In this analogy, each root race would represent a school in which a major group of lessons must be mastered, the subraces would represent grades within the school, and the branch races would be classes within the grades. Man's attendance at these schools, through all the classes and grades, is obligatory. In each school, concentration on development of a particular aspect of consciousness is the assignment, and this must be learned at seven different levels and from various approaches. And just as there is a certain amount of recapitulation as we pass from one grade to another and from an earlier school to a later one in the process of education so familiar to us in this life, so it is with the cosmic process. Each school, or root race, must recapitulate all the previous training and begin to concentrate on a new aspect,

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stage begin to appear. We cannot therefore say that one school is superior and another inferior, all are essential if man, the ego, is to complete his revolutionary education and pass his final examinations. The child entering the first grade is the potential of all that the graduate will be. The latter is simply the fulfillment of that potential. A school (root race) exists so long as there are egos needing to master the lessons which it provides. When this is accomplished, the race dies out and humanity passes on to the next phase. And so, behind the rise and fall of civilizations, behind the emergence of great personages, behind the rising and destruction of continents, the great Plan can be discerned, ever gradually releasing its beauty and fulfilling its purpose through a vast process of cosmic education.

It should be remembered that the aspects of consciousness developed through experience in all the races exist from the very "beginning" in "seed" form, so to speak. If a further analogy may be used for the moment, just as an oak tree first is an acorn and then fulfills its majestic height by developing ring upon ring of "oakness"--while using all the environmental influences as nourishment--so the being that man is to become exists from the beginning in the monadic spark which emerges from the Divine Flame and, through the eonic process of evolution, gradually unfolds the full potentials of that humanness.

The theosophical hypothesis suggests that five root races have thus far appeared. The first two left no historical or geological records because they did not possess dense physical bodies such as we have today. Their existence cannot, therefore, be documented scientifically, but the early teachers of mankind are said to have known of them; esoteric writings and mythologies refer to them, and a little reflection may convince the student of their logic and necessity. What follows then, is presented for consideration in this sense and not as verifiable historical fact.

The first root race is said to have flourished during the Eocene epoch of geology, some 60 to 40 millions of years ago. The aspect of consciousness upon which this ethereal race concentrated was sensation, or perception at the most at a primary and basic level. We are told that during the Eocene epoch great terrestrial disturbances took place, and that these gradually awakened sense responses in infant man. This was a period of great climatic changes, volcanic eruptions, floods, tides, heat, cold, etc. which provided the myriad impacts necessary to bring about sensation. The first root race, having no dense bodies, was sexless and reproduced by a process spoken of as "budding." in The Secret Doctrine (Vol. 3, p.125) we find the statement, "They evolved the Second Race unconsciously, as do some plants. Or perhaps, as the amoeba only on a more ethereal, impressive, and larger scale." From further comments in the

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cellular mitosis. There was no death; the first race simply “vanished and was absorbed by, disappeared in, the new form, the second race, more human and more physical.

The second root race, according to occult teachings, existed during the Oligocene epoch, some 40 to 25 millions of years ago. This was a period of luxuriant vegetation which followed the violent terrestrial changes of the Eocene epoch. In terms of consciousness, this race concentrated on activity, beginning to organize its bodies into vehicles of active expression through which it could make its influence felt on its environment. It is probable that the rudiments of the physical human body, with its vital organs, but without bony framework began to form at this time, and a language of sounds was developed. Professor Emile Marcault, in The Evolution of Man, explains: “Having gathered a number of sense images of the outer world during the first race period of perception, the second race man now seizes upon those images and, impressing upon them the dynamic power of his own life, uses them as a means of expressing his intentions.” According to The Secret Doctrine this race was androgynous and reproduced by a process called “sweating.” After long eons, it produced a third root race, the “egg-born”, and disappeared.

Early in the third root race, which has been termed the Lemurian, physical bodies appeared, but it was not until much later, about 18 million years ago, when separation between the sexes had been achieved, that bodies such as we use today became developed. These, of course, were very primitive in their early development, although not the anthropoids that Darwinian evolution would lead us to believe were the ancestors of man. According to The Secret Doctrine, the so-called “missing link” between animal and man does not exist, however animal-like the earliest human forms may have been. The evolutionary assignment of this race was the development of emotion. It lived a life of impulse, with mind at first incipient but not developed, although during the later subraces this faculty became more active, foreshadowing its full awakening in the next root race.

The actual development of the analytical mind and the refinement of language came in the fourth root race, called in theosophical literature and elsewhere the Atlantean. This race became predominant during the Pliocene and early Pleistocene epochs from 4 million to 1 million years ago, and dwelt on a great continent, Atlantis, now submerged beneath the sea. The Atlanteans developed an extremely high materialistic civilization, said by some to have been far beyond anything since achieved. One of the remarkable aspects of their culture was an intense interest in magic and in creating artifacts of great sophistication and beauty. It is said that they knew and used the science of aerodynamics and

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recorded, evil in high places developed to such an extent that there was critical danger of halting the progress of the cosmic plan altogether. Then came a series of great cataclysms. The continent of Atlantis itself suffered a series of mighty convulsions and eventually sank, creating huge tidal waves that swept the lowlands of the earth and left in men's minds the tradition of a vast and devastating flood. Many millions escaped to find homes on other shores. Many more millions perished. The egos involved have since merged with the fifth root race which, according to occult tradition, had its beginnings in Central Asia about 75,000 B.C., and whose civilization now dominates the globe.

The fifth root race is still imbued with much of the Atlantean consciousness. The materialistic attitude which has held sway for so long is not far removed from that which brought down the cosmic curtain on earlier civilization. Pride of intellect, indifference to moral and human values--these are the traits which have all too obviously been carried over into the present world consciousness. Consider the use man is making of atomic energy, the most recent and the most precarious discovery to be made in the field of cosmic force. If we believe in karma, the law of cause and effect, we must see the necessity for a wise use of this tremendous power now available to man. The struggle between good and evil goes on and will continue until each human being is perfected. Yet out of each period there comes a group of souls who have made great advancement and have become the forerunners of the new race to come.

If one wishes to read some of the stories of Lemuria and Atlantis that have grown like a sort of science fiction around the deep-lying remembrance lingering in legends and tales all over the earth, they are available in some theosophical libraries. It is important, however, to distinguish between a good story--an imaginary projection into those earlier races -- and the less elaborated concepts generally included in serious theosophical literature. The validity of stories based on clairvoyant research is to be judged by each reader for himself. This is where the human temperament is important, for the stories are helpful to some, annoying to others. The parables of Jesus pleased his audiences of fishermen and shepherds, but he kept reminding his disciples to listen with the inner ear for deeper meanings. This attitude is important also in studying Theosophy. Each can follow his own temperament in choosing his reading on this fascinating subject of man's and development. The important thing is to look for the deepest meanings, to find that which is most useful at one's own stage of growth.

As we look at our heritage with the eyes of the occultist, we see ourselves standing at a tremendously important place in the human evolutionary path. The last lesson in this series will be devoted to a theosophical look at our potentials, for it is from these potentials that we must move into the age which lies ahead

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is our destiny as egos.

REFERENCES

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The Peopling of the Earth, Geoffrey Barborka
Basic Theosophy, Geoffrey Hodson. Chapter 14
Theosophical Gleanings, by “Two Students”
The Solar System, A.E. Powell
Occult Preparations for a New Age, Dane Rudyard
Introduction to Esoteric Principles, Doss McDavid
The Story of Atlantis and the Lost Lemuria W. Scott-Elliot
An Abridgement of The Secret Doctrine, ed. by Elizabeth Preston and Christmas Humphreys. Part 2, Anthropogenesis

QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

1. Why are there no geological remains of the first and second root races?
2. Describe the qualities and general physical characteristics of the third root race, the Lemurian.
3. Describe the qualities and particularly the evolutionary path of the Atlanteans.
4. Why is it important to remember that the journey through the races has been made by all present-day human individuals?
5. Why is it theosophically important not to make sweeping generalizations about human characteristics on the basis of the present skin color of an individual?
6. Discuss human evolution based on the concepts given in this lesson.