

Third Root Race

Definitional Essay

Theosophy Trust

Third Root Race names a major phase of humanity's development in Theosophical esoteric anthropology, commonly associated in that literature with Lemuria. The term belongs to an account of the Earth's Fourth Round and the gradual awakening of human faculties. It is not a classification of present-day ethnic groups, and its chronology is not established scientific history. Its central philosophical theme is the awakening of self-conscious mind: humanity acquires the capacity to reflect, choose and become responsible for the direction in which its powers are used.

The framework distinguishes planetary rounds, globes and root races. A round is a circuit of life through the seven globes of a chain; a root race is a broad developmental phase of humanity during its period on a globe. The Third Root Race therefore names a phase within a larger cycle. These terms indicate different levels of the cosmological account. Understanding their relationship helps prevent a numerical resemblance from becoming a false equivalence, and keeps the present inquiry focused upon the particular development attributed to this phase.

Professor Iyer's "Evolution and Consciousness" approaches human development through the interaction of spiritual, intellectual and physical evolution. The streams are related without being identical. A form can become more differentiated while consciousness still lacks the self-reflective power associated with fully awakened *Manas*. The teaching therefore does not treat the appearance of a bodily instrument as a sufficient explanation of human mind. Its account concerns the relation between that instrument and a spiritual-intellectual inheritance that must become consciously active through experience.

The awakening of *Manas* is described through the *Manasaputras*, the Sons of Mind. Their participation lights the capacity for self-conscious thought in humanity. Fire is a suggestive image: a latent possibility becomes an active power, capable of illumination and capable of being misdirected. The texts describe differences in the manner and degree of awakening, rather than one mechanically uniform event experienced identically by all. The philosophical emphasis falls upon the emergence of a being who can question an impulse, envisage a purpose and choose among possible actions.

This awakening changes the meaning of responsibility. A reaction can now become an object of reflection. We may recognize anger, ask what has provoked it and consider what response would be just. The capacity does not guarantee that we shall use it. Thought can also invent excuses, conceal motives or make desire more effective. The gift of *Manas* therefore opens a field

of moral freedom. Its direction depends increasingly upon the relationship we cultivate between intelligence, the desire-nature and the deeper discernment associated with *Buddhi*.

The original cosmological narrative includes changes in the human form, increasing material density and symbolic accounts of embodiment. H.P. Blavatsky discusses the garments or coats of skin within this esoteric reading of humanity's past. These passages belong to her interpretation of sacred symbolism and prehistory. Their significance cannot be preserved by silently converting them into findings of modern anthropology. The student can examine the account on its own terms, asking how the development of form is related to the growing capacity for conscious participation in earthly life.

Professor Iyer's "The Dawning of Wisdom" gives special attention to the early awakening of humanity's spiritual imagination. The image of a Golden Age joins wonder, devotion and an immediate sense of relationship to a greater life. This quality can be contemplated without assuming that mature wisdom consists in recovering an unexamined simplicity. Once self-conscious thought has awakened, it has a work of its own to perform. Trust must become capable of understanding, and devotion must learn to cooperate with discrimination rather than suspend it.

The distinction is readily visible in education. A learner may begin by trusting a teacher whose knowledge cannot yet be assessed independently. Good teaching gradually strengthens the learner's ability to ask questions, examine reasons and practise the skill for themselves. Dependence can then mature into intelligent cooperation. The analogy illuminates one ethical meaning of the awakening of mind. A helpful guide does not need to preserve another person's incomprehension in order to remain useful. The growth of understanding is part of the relationship's fulfilment.

The Third Root Race is also associated with the third eye in Theosophical accounts of early perception. Professor Iyer's "Spiritual Perception" places its meaning within the changing relation between spiritual awareness and material involvement. The central lesson for the student concerns the purification and direction of consciousness. It does not require treating a symbolic faculty as a bodily technique to be forced into activity. The cultivation of truthfulness, concentration and compassion gives a responsible practical approach to the question of how perception might become less distorted by personal desire.

Human Solidarity is indispensable when reading this literature. The historical term root race must not become a measure of the moral worth of living peoples. Nineteenth-century racial rankings do not provide a sound basis for assigning spiritual value to individuals or communities. The teaching's affirmation of a common spiritual origin and destiny calls for a more universal regard. Every person we meet deserves to be encountered as a human being,

with particular capacities, circumstances and possibilities that cannot be read from a supposed position in a cosmic classification.

Drawing a Larger Circle of Conception can therefore change the way the account is studied. Instead of asking where to place other people, we can ask what the doctrine reveals about the responsibilities of awakened intelligence. How does reflection become more honest? What allows devotion to mature without losing warmth? How can knowledge strengthen care for beings whose power is less than our own? These questions bring the cosmological image into relation with present conduct while preserving the distinction between a traditional narrative and a practical ethical inference.

The relation of *Manas* to *Kama* and *Buddhi* supplies an inward focus. The mind can become absorbed in desire, using its inventiveness to defend what the personality wants. It can also become receptive to a more impersonal discernment, capable of seeing a relationship beyond immediate advantage. This is rarely an all-or-nothing transformation. We discover mixed motives and learn to give the better ones greater strength. A sincere apology, for instance, requires understanding an injury without making the explanation of our intention erase its effect upon another person.

The teaching's vision of future spiritual development gives this work a hopeful horizon. Faculties associated with earlier phases are to be transformed and integrated through more conscious understanding. The goal is not a return to humanity before reflection, but a wiser union of intelligence and spiritual perception. We can approach that possibility in ordinary ways: preserve wonder while asking careful questions, keep affection alive while acknowledging a fault, and allow a larger purpose to guide a power that once served chiefly personal satisfaction.

Third Root Race thus centres upon a decisive theme in the Theosophical account of humanity: the lighting of mind and the responsibilities that accompany it. The vast narrative becomes inwardly significant when we examine the use of our own intelligence. We inherit a capacity to conceive alternatives, learn from consequences and revise the purposes we serve. Each honest exercise of that capacity can deepen our participation in a common human future. The light of thought becomes more worthy of its spiritual origin as it helps us understand one another and act with greater courage, accuracy and compassion.

Glossary

Anthropogenesis — An account of the origin and development of humanity; philosophical anthropogenesis here concerns the relation of consciousness and form within esoteric cosmology.

Anthropology — The study of humanity; occult or esoteric anthropology here means the Theosophical account of human origins and development.

Bodhisattva — An awakened being devoted to the welfare and enlightenment of all; in the cited Theosophical interpretation, a member of the compassionate spiritual Brotherhood.

Brotherhood of Bodhisattvas — The spiritual fellowship described by Professor Iyer as working for humanity's regeneration.

Buddhi — The spiritual soul or faculty of intuitive discernment; Buddhist means pertaining to it.

Cosmogenesis — An account of the origin and emergence of a cosmos; paired with anthropogenesis, the account of human origins.

Drawing a Larger Circle of Conception — Widening understanding to include more relationships, consequences and the needs of others.

Esoteric — Pertaining to an inward or occult interpretation of a teaching, distinguished from its outward formulation.

Fifth Root Race — The present major humanity-cycle in Theosophical cosmology, associated with the education of self-conscious mind within the Fourth Round.

Globe — A sphere or field of evolution within a planetary chain; Globe D is the fourth member, identified with Earth in the account.

Golden Age — An image of an early state of harmony and spiritual awareness; in the cited interpretation, associated with humanity's awakening devotion and self-consciousness.

Golden, Silver, Bronze and Iron Ages — Traditional names for successive qualities of a human cycle; the quotation relates their succession to cyclic law.

Gupta Vidya — Sacred or esoteric wisdom; also the title of Professor Iyer's collected Theosophical writings.

Human Solidarity — The shared dignity and interdependence of human beings, expressed through responsibility for one another's welfare.

Imperishable Sacred Land — The primordial spiritual region associated with the First Root Race in the Theosophical account; the quotation emphasizes its noumenal character.

Kama — Desire or appetite; its association with mind is called *Kama-Manas*.

Kronos — The Greek divine figure associated with an earlier age of harmony in Plato's *Statesman*, as interpreted in the quoted discussion of the Golden Age.

Lemuria — The name applied to the Third Continent and Third Root Race in Theosophical esoteric prehistory; the account is distinct from established scientific anthropology and geology.

Lemurian — Pertaining to the Third Root Race and its associated continent in Theosophical esoteric history.

Manas — The self-conscious thinking principle; in its higher sense, the reincarnating individuality. Manasic means pertaining to this principle.

Manasaputras — Sons of Mind; spiritual intelligences associated with the awakening of self-conscious *Manas* in humanity.

Manvantara — A period of manifestation and activity, contrasted with *pralaya*; manvantaric means pertaining to such a period.

Noumenal — Pertaining to an inward intelligible or spiritual ground, considered in relation to phenomenal expression; noumenon is the singular noun.

Personality — The temporary identity, habits and instruments associated with a particular life, distinguished from enduring spiritual individuality.

Planes — Levels or orders of consciousness and substance within the Theosophical account of manifestation.

Psychic — Pertaining to subtle or psychological modes of experience; its level and relation to spiritual intelligence depend upon context.

Root Race — A major phase of humanity's development during its period on a globe in the Theosophical scheme; the term does not establish the spiritual worth of present-day ethnic groups.

Round — A circuit of the evolutionary life-wave through the seven globes of a planetary chain in Theosophical cosmology.

Self-consciousness — The capacity to reflect upon one's own experience, intention and action; the sources distinguish personal and more universal degrees.

Sub-Race — A subdivision within a root-race cycle in the historical Theosophical terminology; not a basis for judging living peoples.

Third Eye — A faculty of spiritual perception in the Theosophical account of early humanity, its subsequent atrophy and possible recovery through spiritual development.

Third Root Race — The major phase of humanity associated in Theosophical cosmology with the awakening of self-conscious mind and the Lemurian narrative during Earth's Fourth Round.

Universal Brotherhood — The spiritual kinship of beings, expressed ethically through care extending beyond personal or sectarian boundaries.

Vesture — A sheath, vehicle or instrument through which consciousness is expressed; vestures is the plural.

Quotes for Meditation and Self Study

1. R.N. Iyer — “Evolution and Consciousness”, *The Gupta Vidya*, Vol. I, p. 125.

“The proper study of mankind is Man, declared the poet Pope. This is a mighty venture into the range and reach of human consciousness. The intuitive individual who turns inward, giving reality to the secret wisdom within the sanctuary of immortal consciousness, will necessarily turn back far beyond the confines of recorded and unrecorded history, beyond manifested events and finite memory. One must thus return to the primal fount of one's deepest kinship with enlightened beings on the Imperishable Sacred Land who were the divine guardians that nursed and protected the First Root Race. No poetical description, philosophical account or scientific scheme could do justice to that primordial state of collective consciousness. It is not to be located in the mists of antiquity, but lies in a realm transcending ordinary conceptions of past, present and future, perpetually present during the vast epoch of a *manvantara*. This is the noumenal basis for all theological or poetical conceptions of paradisaic consciousness.”

Meditation thought: The passage places human consciousness within a horizon larger than remembered history. Let this widen your sense of kinship without substituting an imagined past for the work of understanding yourself now.

2. R.N. Iyer — “Evolution and Consciousness”, *The Gupta Vidya*, Vol. I, pp. 125–126.

“Then we have the Third Continent in which the Third Root Race came to experience the first stirrings of self-conscious awakening. It is designated as 'Lemuria', a name invented by P.L. Sclater, who held on zoological grounds that there was once a continent which extended from Madagascar to Ceylon and Sumatra, including some portions of what is now Africa. This gigantic continent stretching from the Indian Ocean to Australia and beyond has almost entirely disappeared, leaving only some of its highest points as scattered islands.”

Meditation thought: Read Lemuria within the esoteric account presented here. What does the narrative ask you to consider about awakening consciousness, while its historical claims remain distinct from established evidence?

3. R.N. Iyer — “Evolution and Consciousness”, *The Gupta Vidya*, Vol. I, p. 126.

“Any accurate appreciation of philosophical anthropogenesis and its spiritual implications must be consonant with cosmogenesis. One must work back from the fourth globe, our own earth, to its earliest inheritances which connect with the entire solar system. This is not only true on the physical plane, but also simultaneously on the invisible planes. This is difficult to understand but it is crucial if one is to make sense of the cosmic scale on which interact internal and external evolution.”

Meditation thought: Inner and outer development belong to a larger relationship. When examining a human difficulty, what inward capacity and what outward condition both deserve attention before a judgment is formed?

4. R.N. Iyer — “The Dawning of Wisdom”, *The Gupta Vidya*, Vol. II, p. 59.

“The Spirit gave birth to self-consciousness in the Third Root Race in a paradisaic state characterized by Plato in *The Statesman* as the Age of Kronos. Since that was an epoch of human solidarity and universal brotherhood, it is hardly surprising that it was marked by effortless devotion.”

Meditation thought: Devotion and solidarity appear together in the Golden Age image. Consider a form of trust that could become more intelligent and generous as understanding develops, rather than depending upon unquestioned obedience.

5. R.N. Iyer — “The Dawning of Wisdom”, *The Gupta Vidya*, Vol. II, p. 59.

“To contemplate the abstract and also cherish the deepest feelings is indeed to approximate the paradigm of the Golden Age of the Third Root Race when the fire of self-consciousness was lit. These excellences are essential to the humanity of the future, the civilization of tomorrow. The Theosophical Movement, under the guidance of the Brotherhood of Bodhisattvas, offers every human being the golden opportunity to develop the devotional heart and to engage in the meditation of the abstract mind that is capable of lighting the fire of self-consciousness.”

Meditation thought: A clear mind and a warm heart can deepen one another. Give a difficult idea patient thought, while keeping alive the human concern that makes its understanding worth seeking.

6. R.N. Iyer — “The Dawning of Wisdom”, *The Gupta Vidya*, Vol. II, p. 60.

“If the potency of the Third Root Race vibration were used in concert with *Manas*, the active power of the Fifth Root Race, and the latter became the servant of spiritual intuition, a very fruitful combination would result, whereby the Sixth corresponding to the Third through the Fifth is able to alchemize the Fourth. What is fundamental is what is beyond every series, the Self-existent, the Seventh, which gives life-energy to the First, the temple of the Divine, wherein lies the holy of holies.”

Meditation thought: The passage asks for earlier capacities to be transformed through awakened mind. What quality of wonder or devotion could be preserved and made wiser through honest reflection and discrimination?

7. R.N. Iyer — “Continuity of Consciousness”, *The Gupta Vidya*, Vol. II, p. 263.

“Humanity, circling round the seven globes, finds itself in the Fourth Round on Globe D, the most material of the terrestrial spheres. This globe is preceded by three ethereal globes and succeeded by three globes which are also ethereal but represent a more evolved state of consciousness. In the present fourth life-wave, occupying millions upon millions of years in its circuit through the seven globes, humanity finds itself evolving through a sevenfold series of vestures that are adapted to matter as it exists in this system. Having attained self-consciousness over eighteen million years ago, in the middle of the Third Root Race, and now belonging to the Fifth Sub-Race of the Fifth Root Race, it still must experience many periods of relative activity and rest before arriving at the close of the present Round.”

Meditation thought: The cosmological account places a present phase within many cycles. Let its scale encourage patience with unfinished development, while maintaining care with the specific choices and evidence available today.

8. R.N. Iyer — “Spiritual Perception”, *The Gupta Vidya*, Vol. III, p. 140.

“The ancient atrophy of the Third Eye, together with the possibility of its reawakening, is integral to the teachings of *Gupta Vidya*. The elusive nature of that eye lies veiled in many myths and legends about the idyllic childhood of humanity and its paradisaic innocence.”

Meditation thought: The third eye belongs here to a teaching about spiritual perception. Direct the inquiry toward truthfulness and purified motive, asking what currently distorts your ordinary capacity to see fairly.

9. R.N. Iyer — “Spiritual Perception”, *The Gupta Vidya*, Vol. III, p. 140.

“Mature wisdom calls for a strong sense of moral responsibility for the collective consequences of past conduct as well as active cooperation with the inexorable cycles of Nature. These include the familiar cycle of birth and death, the slow succession of the Golden, Silver, Bronze and Iron Ages, the emergence and disappearance of continents and also the myriad vicissitudes in the alteration and refinement of human vestures. The original awakening, subsequent atrophy and future recovery of the Third Eye is a moral saga illustrating the interweaving of cyclic necessity and moral responsibility.”

Meditation thought: Mature wisdom includes responsibility for collective consequences. What inherited pattern could you understand more clearly and help improve through a deliberate act of cooperation or repair?

10. H.P. Blavatsky — *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. II, p. 272.

“No sooner had the mental eye of man been opened to understanding, than the Third Race felt itself one with the ever-present as the ever to be unknown and invisible all, the One Universal Deity. Endowed with divine powers, and feeling in himself his inner God, each felt he was a Man-God in his nature, though an animal in his physical Self.”

Meditation thought: The awakening of mind brings an awareness of inward dignity. Let that recognition include every person you meet, while remembering that a spiritual possibility must be expressed through responsible conduct.

11. H.P. Blavatsky — *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. II, p. 272.

“The struggle between the two began from the very day they tasted of the fruit of the Tree of Wisdom; a struggle for life between the spiritual and the psychic, the psychic and the physical. Those who conquered the lower principles by obtaining mastery over the body, joined the ‘Sons of Light.’ Those who fell victims to their lower natures, became the slaves of Matter.”

Meditation thought: Reflection allows an impulse to become a choice. At the next point of tension, pause long enough to ask which response would strengthen understanding and reduce the power of an unexamined habit.

12. H.P. Blavatsky — *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. II, p. 272.

“At the dawn of his consciousness, the man of the Third Root Race had thus no beliefs that could be called religion. That is to say, he was equally as ignorant of ‘gay religions, full of pomp and gold’ as of any system of faith or outward worship. But if the term is to be defined as the binding together of the masses in one form of reverence paid to those we feel higher than ourselves, of piety — as a feeling expressed by a child toward a loved parent — then even the earliest Lemurians had a religion — and a most beautiful one — from the very beginning of their intellectual life.”

Meditation thought: The passage locates early reverence in an immediate relation of affection. How might such warmth mature into a devotion that welcomes questions and helps another person grow in freedom and understanding?