

## The Coming Race

### by Annie Besant

A lecture delivered at the Theosophical Conference held at Chittoor on 17th March, 1916,  
and originally published in *The Adyar Bulletin*, April and May, 1916

Published in 1917

Theosophical Publishing House, Adyar, Chennai [Madras] India  
The Theosophist Office, Adyar, Madras. India

**[Page 1]** I AM to speak to you this morning on what may seem to some of you rather a curious subject — the Coming Race. In reading history, certain points stand out clearly and distinctly, and then we see the connection between them. The history runs over a considerable period of time, the unimportant things disappear, and the important things stand out by the disappearance of the trivial. But when we are living in the world, we are constantly surrounded by the unimportant things; and the consequence of this is that we are not able as a rule to distinguish clearly between the things that matter and the things that do not matter in the larger sense of the term. Unless we have trained ourselves in historical knowledge and are in the habit of taking what is sometimes called a bird's-eye view, we are apt to confuse together the important and the unimportant. And so we are unable to see the things which in history stand out. It is very much the same in fact as the way in which you may look on a town from the top of a very high building, and from the very street in **[Page 2]** which you may be standing. In the street you would see the houses, the people, the vehicles, immediately around you. You have no idea of the town as a whole. If you go up to a high place, you look down over the town, and you see the relative importance of the various streets and buildings therein. Sometimes one can help the people of one's own day to distinguish the important from the unimportant by pointing out to them similar cases in history, where they at once recognise, in that bird's-eye view given by history, the things that have had much to do with human evolution, and the things that can have had only a comparatively inferior bearing thereon.

Now in the past, many races and sub-races have risen. Among us who are Theosophists we make careful distinctions and divisions in order that we may be able to understand the whole better. Just so the boy who is studying physiology has to learn a great many divisions in the human body that we do not usually trouble much about. He learns to know one form of tissue from another, he learns to know one kind of bone from another; a bone which a layman picks up and says, "a bone", he will call "a femur", "an ulna"; all these distinctions are necessary where knowledge is to be accurate. And so in studying these questions of human evolution we distinguish between big divisions and small; and we call the large division a Root Race, meaning by that a race which, like the root of a tree has many divisions that grow up from it. And then, as other divisions grow up one after another, we call them **[Page 3]** sub-races, smaller races, minor divisions of the main Root Race, and so go on into the families, nations, and so on.

Now with regard to greater divisions, the Root Races, we are now in the fifth; you may find all these, I may say, in the Purānas, if you take the trouble to read them. But the modern educated man, as we call him, that is the English-educated man, usually looks down on the Purānas; he sees them only as full of legends, follies, and superstitions not worth his while to bother about, and the non-English-educated man, who has only studied the Shāstras generally and the Purānas among them, does not realise strongly the meaning of many allegorical expressions. You want to bring English education and unite this with the Samskrit education under one head, and then you may have light thrown upon the meaning of

the allegories and the stories, and begin to realise that in the Purānas you have history and not fable. This is an interesting point. I only notice, in passing, for the benefit of the English-educated friend, that so far as antiquarian research has gone, historical research into the dynasties of the great Indian Kings, into the history of the great Indian States, you will find that Vincent Smith, an English historian of very considerable eminence in the study of Indian history, points out that so far as researches have gone into coins and inscriptions, they confirm the accuracy of the dynastic lists which are given in the Purānas. It is worth while to remember this, so that you may become a little more respectful, perhaps, to the [Page 4] Purānas, when they have that kind of stamp from an Englishman on them. There is a good deal of that nowadays. I am afraid that Indians did not find out the immense value of Rabindranath Tagore, until he had been to Europe, had been very much admired by the Europeans, and been presented with the Nobel Prize. People nowadays like these foreign stamps, before they appreciate their own great men. Dr. J. C. Bose was not much regarded here for a long time, and was kept teaching boys — there are a dozen other people who could have taught as well, and only one Jagadish Chandra — and until he was received in all the learned academies in Europe, he had many difficulties here. And now he is regarded as one of the greatest of Indian Scientists.

It is the same with the Purānas. They have been left out as mere superstition, but now that they are confirmed as historical in their list of Kings, as far as European antiquarian research has gone, you may look at them with more respect. Anyhow they are very useful to me this morning; for in the Purānas you have an outline of the great Race and the subdivisions of this Race, and you find that there are seven Root Races, that is seven Root Races altogether. There are also, I may add, seven sub-races to the Root Race. Now in these seven Root Races we have reached the fifth, and in the great Āryan Root we have up to now five sub-races. The Āryan Root stock itself came down from the North, and then from Central Asia, across the Himālayas, across Afghanistan and Baluchistan, across Kashmir, and even more to the east near [Page 5] Assam. They came down into the great plains of India, conquering the mighty civilisation that existed there, belonging to the Fourth Race, and took possession of the land. But before they left Central Asia, various branches had gone out. Counting the Root stock as one, then the second sub-race is that which went to Egypt, and built the civilisation along the shores of the Mediterranean. The third went up to Persia and built up the great Persian civilisation, the Persian Empire, so famous in later days. The fourth, the Keltic, went out and populated Greece, Italy, Spain, and France, and spread over Europe, giving birth to what we now call the Latin races, including the French, the Spanish and the Italian. The fifth also went towards Europe, but in a more northerly direction. It gave birth to the Teutons and Slavs, to those who now are Russians, Prussians, and so on. Hungarians are largely mixed with the Huns from China. The fifth spread along northern Europe. You have also among these the Saxon people; they went across to England partly, but only partly; the fourth, the Keltic, had gone to Ireland where they quarrelled with the remains of the fourth Root Race. Thus we have five sub-races, all of which are recognised by students. It is not Theosophy, merely, that says that. It is only ordinary knowledge of ethnology, and of the types of these sub-races. They are traced similarly by European ethnologists, and these researches conform with the occult history, which some of us prefer to follow. [Page 6]

Now in the Purānas you do not stop with the fifth: they go on to the sixth and the seventh. Just as in the great continents of the world, they do not stop with the present continent, the fifth, but they give names to the sixth continent and the seventh. You have there the occult side, but it suggests that which history has worked out. Every history is only the throwing down on the physical plane of all those great realities found upon the highest planes, which are the real causes of facts that you see as historical events down here; and that is one of the reasons why Hindûs, as a rule, have been said by European critics to be without what they call the historical sense. The historical sense concerns itself with dates, with physical

events, with the order of their happenings, and the relations between them. The Indian way of looking at history is rather that you see in it an unfolding of certain types, which are non-physical, and are thrown down materialised on the lower world; and the Indian is interested not in the date or the event, but in the unfolding of great type ideas, which he is endeavouring to trace through the historical veil. Consequently he cares little about the dates, little about the kings, little about battles; those to him are the mere froth, an unimportant part of the history, which tells the characteristic of the plan of evolution of thought; in the appearance of great philosophers, great dramatists and great teachers, as far as he can he does not trouble himself about each particular writer, but concerns himself with the school of their thought, and he puts together under the name of **[Page 7]** Shri Shañkara those writings which are of the school of Shri Shañkara, the thoughts which that name symbolises and covers; he cares little if a particular book was written by this disciple or another, in that century or another. They are of a particular type of thought, and that is what matters, revealing stages of the physical plane evolution. It is for this he studies history, and this does not suit the more concrete western ideas: That, however, is a digression, and is only to remind you that Indians are not quite as inferior as some of the western people think, because they have their own way of looking at things, a way exceedingly instructive, and really far more important in the evolution of mankind than the western system of following out names and dates.

Now with regard to these races and continents in the Purānas, we are able to look forward as well as to look back, just as in occult history; it is written more on the Indian plan than on the plan of the English, the German or the Frenchman. A continent is the home of a Root Race. When a new Root Race is to be born, a new continent rises up; parts of the old continent vanish by earthquakes, by floods, by whatever natural means happen to be the most convenient for the moment. The great fact is the destruction in one way or another. Whatever is most convenient, that is used. The fact of the great Root Race and the fact of the great continent on which it lives, these are the recurring facts in history. Then you have the subdivision going on in various countries, and spreading far and wide. **[Page 8]**

Now the third great continent, that of the third Root Race, that was destroyed, was Lemuria. It was land where now the Pacific Ocean is rolling; the bed of the Pacific is the old continent of Lemuria, and that fact has been recognised by European scientists. They admit that there was a land where the Pacific now is, and they call it by the same name; and Haeckel, the great German biologist, regards Lemuria as the cradle of the human race. He is quite right, for it was the first which was fully human. That was destroyed by earthquakes and fire; water rushed in to fill up the destruction, to fill the great holes made by the earthquakes; parts of it, however, are recognised as remaining; Australia is such a part, and New Zealand; such a part is Mauritius; such a part is the Easter Islands, also belonging to it. I need not go over the whole remains that are left, but the greater part is below the ocean. Now that is the site of the coming sixth great continent. Lemuria will rise, and where there is now the Pacific, there will be widespread land. And it is beginning. I am not talking fairy tales. At one of the important meetings of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, where all the wisest men gather together, chemists, arithmeticians, geographers, explorers, the cream as it were of precise knowledge gathered together to study and to discuss — you could not have a more respectable authority, and I fall back upon them for my new continent — they told us in the Geographical Section that the continent was rising, and they pointed to the fact that parts of the new **[Page 9]** continent are already above the level of the sea, They speak of an "earthquake ring" in the Pacific, and they point out that during the last few years thousands of volcanic outbursts have occurred, and some have thrown up islands above the surface of the ocean, and people travelling in ships, captains, were sometimes astonished to find solid land where a few years before there was only water. Now some of our friends, studying geography, say there is a danger that the human race may be destroyed by floods, caused by these upheavals. It seemed to make the people

nervous, to hear of a continent rising from under the water, and causing enormous tidal waves, submerging neighbouring continents. Theosophists, however, do not feel nervous. They know a continent takes a long time forming; it comes up bit by bit; doubtless it will cause some big tidal waves that will drown many people, but the human race is in no kind of danger. These things have happened before. It is only going to happen again. History in this sense repeats itself. And so the Theosophical Society students cannot be frightened while their geographical friends are showing these pictures of future terrors. They say: "It is only another continent; Lemuria will have to come up again, and something else will have to go down". That is true. In some thousands, or hundreds of thousands of years, America will disappear, and only a little piece of western America will remain as the eastern boundary of the new continent. But that is nothing to be alarmed about; it will be done gradually. Certainly [Page 10] there will be some destruction of human life, as there has been in the past. But after all you cannot kill the man, you can only kill his body, and if you kill his body he will get another and a better one. There is no reason to be troubled by the fact that many will have their bodies destroyed: anyhow, it is a long way off, and that is a consolation to many people.

Now the sixth continent is to be the future home, hundreds of thousands of years hence, for the great sixth Root Race. We shall all be there, and you will learn all about it by your own experience. For the present, however, "the coming race" is only a sub-race. As we use the word in the general sense of a "new type", let us look at what we really mean by the word Race. We mean a new human type, distinguishable from all other preceding types, partly by the shape of the head, partly by the setting of the eyes in the face, by the other features, especially the nose and the chin; then by the general type of the body, slender or square, as the case may be; but most of all by the nervous system, and the development of that system. That, although invisible to the eye, being within the body, is the most essential difference between successive Races. In addition to that we find the different type of man going with the different types of body; body is only an expression of the mind, and as the mind develops new faculties, the body must develop new organs for their expression. Why the nervous system shows so much difference is because it is most connected [Page 11] with the mind. By the nervous system, by the brain specially, the type of mind is marked out.

Now in order to make the theoretical description more clear, to visualise it for you, take one of yourselves and compare yourselves with the Japanese or the Chinese. You will see some very marked differences. You will notice that you are taller and slenderer than the Japanese; as a rule the Japanese is more square-faced and shorter; you will notice the difference in the shape of your heads; you will notice the great difference in the setting of the eyes. The eyes generally slope a little upwards, more markedly in the Chinaman than in the Japanese. The eyes are narrower, less widely opened, than in yourselves. You will mark the difference of the type of nose and chin. All these are racial differences. The Chinaman and the Japanese are fourth Race men, and belong to the race that preceded your own as the leading race in evolution. One race follows another. And the fourth Race that spread over the whole of Asia did not all perish in the destruction of Atlantis, and even to the present day the fourth Race is more numerous than the fifth, and the fifth dominates not by numbers but by ability. Just so the man controls the elephant, although the elephant is very much stronger and larger than the man, and a very clever animal to boot; but the man is cleverer.

If a Chinaman or a Japanese is wounded in battle, he has much more chance of recovery than one of the Aryan Race. The Red Indian, again, of America, who is also a fourth Race man, will bear a wound [Page 12] that would kill any one of you by shock, not by bleeding but by nervous shock, and he will recover

from a wound which would kill a fifth Race man. He can bear torture that none of you could bear without dying under it. He has not the same nervous system. It does not respond equally to the external stimulus, and whilst he feels pain, he does not feel it so acutely as to paralyse the brain; it does not kill as quickly; and that is one reason why, in the Russo-Japanese War, the death-rate from wounds was so extraordinarily low among the Japanese. I am not forgetting the skill of their surgeons; I am not forgetting their beautiful cleanliness, and the extreme care of their nursing. I know they brought to bear upon the wounded every resource of European science. But the other was the chief factor. Some people think that that makes the fourth Race better than the fifth Race, and prefer its constitution. Taking, then, these typical differences, you realise that the Root Race difference is extremely great, that of the sub-race less; the general type of yourselves is easily recognisable, and the Caucasians, for instance, are as pure an Aryan type as are the Kashmiris, who, by the way, are far more white than the southern European nations. If you put the Kashmiri beside an Italian or a Spaniard, you would say that the Italian or the Spaniard is the coloured man. It is only a question of climate. People want to make difference by colour; the real difference is in the Race and not in the colour. Colour is darker as you go southwards, and the woman as a rule is fairer than the man, [Page 13] merely because she does not go out so much into the sun. You will find Bengali women and Panjabi women as white as the English women, owing to the purda system that tends to keep the skin extremely fair. But it is a warmer white, not so pallid as the English.

What are the differences of the sub-race ? There are minor differences, not major. The nervous system is very much the same. The minor difference is more in the type of the face. You would know the Greek face from your own face. The Greek type is a well-marked type. Instead of the nose being aquiline, for instance, as in the Indian Aryan, there is the tendency for it to run straight downwards from the forehead. If you look at the profile of a Greek bust, you will find that the forehead and the nose are in a straight line. In the Teutonic type, the nose is larger and clumsier, not so finely cut as in the Greek or in the Indian of pure blood. Then there are other facial differences you notice; the cheek-bones differ little in the sub-races; that is more marked in the Root Races. But you have a difference in general type; the Italian and the Frenchman are both smaller, more agile, slenderer in stature than the Teuton. He is a bigger man, stronger, and, if I may say so, more coarsely moulded. These are all differences of sub-races.

The sixth sub-race is " the coming race," and is now developing. Many children are being born of that type, of the new type, and they are being born especially, as H. P. B., told us [Page 14] long ago, in America and, as has been lately found out by ourselves, in Australia and in New Zealand. The new human type in America is easily recognisable. So far as I know, science has not yet recognised it in Australia or New Zealand. I noticed this in going to America in 1891. Because I had been told of it by H. P. B., I kept my eyes open and found a small number of men differing from others. The forehead was large, the eyes large and well set, face exceedingly well cut, and rather reminding one of the Greek type; the chin more square and strong, the mouth finely cut, rather a thin upper lip. When I went again some years later, I saw a great many more of these. Not very long ago, I do not remember the year, the chief ethnologist of America reported to the Ethnological Bureau at Washington that a new type of race was emerging in America. So strong it was, he said, that Jews who had intermarried with Americans showed a tendency to lose the Jewish type, which is one of the most persistent types in the world. In America the Jewish type is beginning to take on the marks of a new race.

Lately they have found a curious way of bringing out the characteristics of the type, by using what is called the composite photograph. I have not seen many of them here, but there is a very fine device in Europe: when anyone wants to find out the common features of a number of people who physically or

mentally are somewhat alike, this is used. It is very much used for examining criminal types. The way in which it is, [Page 15] done is this. You take a hundred photographs, or more if you like, of noted criminals who show the criminal type in their faces. Then having secured all the photographs, you have in some way an arrangement made by which these photographs are passed very, very rapidly before a camera, so that each only leaves a momentary impression on the sensitive film. The result is that all those photographs are superposed, and only the common features stand out. The dissimilar features disappear in the process, and so you get the composite photograph that shows the common features of the criminal faces, and they call this composite a criminal type. It is a fine, scientific plan much used in America, and by students. They pick out the people who are alike in general features; they photograph them, and then photograph their photographs in the way described. By this method they obtain a photograph of the type; the common features all stand out and the others disappear.

There is no doubt as to the emergence of this new sub-race. This has been a Theosophic commonplace for a long time. What has that new race to show ? Mind is the characteristic of the fifth race as a whole, and of its fifth sub-race. But the next stage above that is the wisdom consciousness; the Theosophist speaks of it as Buddhi, in contradistinction to Manas. The characteristic of that new race is to be the development of that higher consciousness, characterised not by reasoning but by intuition. That is the theory, so to speak, the result of the Occultist looking [Page 16] forward into the future. One European philosopher has arrived at that same result. The philosopher Bergson has declared that the next human quality to develop is intuition. He distinguishes that from intellect. The intellect, he says, looks at the outward world. The intuition is a faculty belonging to the inner life, related more to instinct, that emphasises in the organism life-preserving energies.

Now that is to be the distinctive element of "the coming race". Knowledge certainly, intellect certainly, but it is to be subordinated to the higher spiritual quality, which realises the unity in diversity and therefore comes to realise the divine Self in man. That is the next step forward, looking at consciousness. Intellect divides, isolates. How do you know a thing intellectually ? By differences; think for a moment; you will realise that you distinguish one thing from the other by the differences between those objects. The wisdom faculty sees the unity amid diversity. So the human race, developing the wisdom quality, will realise its unity as it has never done before, save among spiritual men who have already realised it as a truth of experience. That will be a common faculty of the sixth Root Race, and a distinguishing faculty in its forerunner, the sixth sub-race, that is already being born into the world. You may say that I am starting from a Theosophic standpoint. It is true. But the theory is complete. I am showing you how western science has recognised all these distinguishing marks, but it does not synthesise them, it does not build up a complete theory, because it has learned [Page 17] them one by one, and it cannot join them all together until the whole of the facts are discovered. Realise, then, that we are in one of the great transition periods of history; the new sub-race is being born, and the new type is being evolved. Now in this, the Manu is at work, the Lord Vaivasvata Manu, who is the Progenitor of the fifth Root Race. Do you not sometimes call yourselves "children of Manu" ? — quite rightly; for the fifth Race descends from Him, is His family, literally and physically His descendants. The Lord Vaivasvata Manu is the Progenitor of the fifth Race. He is now bringing out another type, the sixth sub-race of the fifth, the type I have been describing. He is at work, although you may forget Him; He is ever watching over the evolution of His Race, although the modern mind may ignore Him. The great work of the Manu is the building up of a Race, and its sub-races, and families, and nations, and He is at work now as surely as He has been at work in the past, and this War is His helper.

Watch the lists as they come out in the picture-papers, especially of Europe; you will find every week faces of almost boys, young fellows, 18, 19 and 20 — so many below 30 years of age. England has given up her children till now by voluntary offering, and not by force of conscription. They are seeing that the flower of the Nation is being destroyed, the best of the Nation are being killed, those who are noblest, most self-sacrificing, they are being swept away in this frightful War. What is England to do, the people cry, for the births of the coming generation, [Page 18] when the best and the noblest are taken away? We look at it from a different standpoint. We say that these answer the call of the Lord Vaivasvata Manu, who needs the noblest for the building of "the coming race". They do not die, when their bodies are struck away by shrapnel, by rifle, by high explosive. What matters the killing of the body? The man is set free, and by virtue of his sacrifice, by the fact that he has given up all the joys of his young manhood, all ambitions, everything that makes life joyous, all the young strength of manhood — by that tremendous sacrifice he has sprung forward in evolution, he has answered the call of the Manu, whether he knows it or not.

India has shared that in a different way. For although her men largely entered the army with no thought of this kind, although volunteering has been forbidden, yet young India is eager to go, and there is one thing in the Indian fighting, that is not present in the fighting of any one of the other Allied Nations. The King marked out the difference the other day, in that gracious way of his, when he was addressing the wounded Indian soldiers who had gone to see him on their recovery; the King-Emperor used a remarkable phrase. In speaking to them he said that they were fighting not for themselves, not for their own liberties, but for the liberties of other nations, and he hoped that larger liberties would come to them in their own land under his reign. It is a very remarkable statement, for he has seen with that sympathetic insight of his into the very heart of the Indian merit, that they are not fighting for [Page 19] themselves on the battle-fields of Europe, of Mesopotamia, of Africa; they are fighting for others. And there comes in the element of unselfishness which marks them out as a race in this War and that will bring the blessings of the Manu on this Nation; for those who die for others have a right to raise their Nation with themselves. And so one of the outcomes of the War will be wider liberty, and the coming back of those heroic souls to be the builders here of a greater and nobler civilisation.

But in this change there are two things to remember. The fifth sub-race is not going to perish. It will go on building its own civilisation in the fifth Root Race, by building an Empire mightier than the world has ever seen; and England and India must keep together, India must be united and linked with England. But she must win her freedom; she must be free within her own borders, a Self-Governing Nation within the one mighty Federation, for she has her work to do in the fifth Race, which has still to build and still to help. And while the new little sixth sub-race, "the coming race", is growing up in small groups — little cared for by the eyes of the world, for it is only looked upon as a curious change of types, and the world knows nothing of its future — while it is growing quietly and out of sight, the great fifth Race Empire will be completed, the guarantee of the peace of the whole world; and in the shelter of that peace, in the maintenance of which India will take part, there will be room for the growing of "the coming race", until it is numerous [Page 20] enough to impress itself on the civilisation of the world.

Moreover it will influence others. Co-operation will spread instead of competition, the feeling of brotherhood will spread instead of antagonism, internationalism will spread instead of opposition between Nations, the tendency towards international law will appear, as it had already begun to appear before the War. It will reappear more strongly afterwards. These are the things of the future, and the present state of things is thrown as it were backward on the civilisation that has not yet reached its zenith. Out of the

coming civilisation, which will be wholly of a brotherly and a co-operative type, "the coming race", which is slowly growing, will establish its features and thoughts in the mind of the world, before they take much form in outer semblances. All that tends to brotherhood and that tends to friendship between nations, all that helps forward the realisation of a common manhood, that will be the characteristic of "the coming race", and it is because of that, that in the Theosophical Society Universal Brotherhood is the only recognition that we ask for from our members. For we have been from the beginning a group of human beings scattered over all the civilised nations of the world, who held Brotherhood as our great bond of union, and as the type of the civilisation of tomorrow. That is the type of "the coming race". And so, partly unconsciously and partly consciously, this great spiritual movement that we call the Theosophical Society [Page 21] is spreading the ideals of "the coming race" all abroad, right through the civilised world. We are doing it, some of us, consciously, because we know of the future that lies before us. Others cooperate for the sake of the beauty of the ideal, of the greater happiness that it will bring to our land; and this great War is only a part of the preparation, the destruction of the contrary ideal, which is that of oppression instead of freedom, of militarism instead of peace; and this War will go on until that ideal is destroyed, until man begins to realise that not the German superman of power without compassion is the evolution of "the coming race", but the ideal of that Superman who is typified in the Masters, in the Christs, in the Buddhas of humanity, that Superman in whom love and compassion, tenderness for the weak, protection of the helpless, have been more prominent than the mighty knowledge which is also theirs. For knowledge without love tends to create that type of superman that crushes, that tyrannises, that exploits the weak, and makes him the slave of the strong. But the coming Superman is of the type of the Masters: They are Masters of Compassion; not only Masters of Knowledge, but of love and knowledge together, which make Wisdom, and it is Wisdom which shall be the characteristic of "the Coming Race".