

# The Avatāra

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by Walther Eidlitz

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## The Avatāra

By “avatāra” the Indian Revelation, the Śāstram-s, understand “descent”, descent from the boundless realm of freedom (cit) to the world of time and space of the great māyā (mahā-māyā), without any substantial change in God’s nature (avatarati: he descends). It is *not* a matter of *incarnation*, to become flesh. God is by no means subject to the laws of the world of māyā, even when He descends to it, nor is He in need of any fleshly covering in order to make His original transcendental Form visible on earth, nor are His eternal Divine part manifestations, all of which consist of true *Being*, pure *Cognition* and transcendental *Joy* (sat-cit-ānanda). This is what the Śāstram-s declare about the avatāra-s. Even the term “the descending” is adopted to suit the comprehension of the novice.

To Him, there is no interior and no exterior,  
no anterior and no posterior.  
Still, He is,  
what is before, and what is after the universe,  
its exterior and interior.  
He ‘is’ the universe itself.

Bhāgavatam X. 3. 13

The purport is: without His Existence, the universe would not exist. God does not have to descend in order to make Himself visible. In His eternal transcendental Figure He *is* always present, everywhere.

The “coming” of an avatāra means: For a short period of time the veil of māyā becomes transparent, and the Omnipresence of this Supreme Reality shines through. The living God becomes manifest. Those who have been granted God’s Grace now perceive: In the deep of night, a Divine Child is “born”, i.e. becomes visible on earth. He grows up, performs many marvellous deeds – sometimes even acts as a guru, teaching the paths to Himself – and finally He “dies”, i.e. He becomes invisible on earth and returns to His Own Kingdom. Once again, the veil of māyā has become impenetrable and dark. Nevertheless, Bhagavān’s Divine Play with His Own eternal Co-Actors goes on, without interruption, in all eternity, and manifests in innumerable other inhabited worlds, as well.

According to the Indian Revelation of the Word, one purpose of the creation of the world is to create new scenes for the ever increasing drama of the Divine Play.

In the Bhāgavatam (I. 3. 26) it says:

The avatāra-s of God,  
Who Himself is the Foundation of eternal Existence,  
are innumerable;  
like from an inexhaustible lake,  
thousands of rivers flow.

Other attempts at translating the word “avatāra”, e.g. Redeemer, Saviour, Liberator, are also insufficient; to them is attached the limitation of the human mind, the selfish question: What does God do for us? The more God reveals His inner Life to the eyes of a bhakta, who is empowered by bhakti (God’s Own Power to know and experience Himself), the more a bhakta understands: God Himself never does anything for a special purpose. It is the outer part manifestations that perform creation, maintenance and dissolution of countless universes. All God does, even when He dwells on earth as an avatāra, is without purpose, without cause, without motive, “without why”, i.e. spontaneous Play. His nature is playfulness. *He Himself is the unlimited Play.*