

The Continuity of the Avatāra-līlā

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I. Each līlā of each individual avatāra appears successively and continuously on each individual earth in each individual universe (system of worlds [brahmāṇḍa]). The sequence of the appearance of the avatāra-s on one particular earth is related to the geological age of this earth and its historical evolution.

The countless universes, each and every one with its own earth, are in different phases of their geological age. A certain avatāra's līlā, which has been enacted on one earth, immediately takes place on another earth, in another universe, which is exactly at the same evolutionary stage as the universe in which this avatāra's līlā was enacted the moment before. Each individual avatāra's līlā consequently becomes visible or shines forth in unbroken continuity, as long as there are universes.

The following example is given in the Śāstram-s: Just like the rays of the sun touch the different places of the earth, successively in an unbroken course, one after the other, each individual avatāra "touches" the different earths of the innumerable universes, one after the other (i.e. he becomes visible there).

Another image that the Śāstram-s use for this, is the "alāta-cakram". By "alāta-cakram" they refer to the fact that a burning torch set in a quick circling motion forms a continuous circle of light. If, theoretically, one saw *one* individual avatāra's līlā from the centre of *all* universes, how it manifests in the different

universes, one could, in correspondence to this “alāta-cakram”, see the “līlā-cakram” of this *one* avatāra.

The līlā of each avatāra forms such a “līlā-cakram”, which, depending on the nature of the individual avatāra, is more or less intensive. In connection to this one should consider the following: The līlā of each avatāra is not to be understood as a circus, which after the end of the “show” leaves one universe in order to start the “show” in the next one. The avatāra and his līlā are cit and only seem to be confined to time and space. Each specific moment of the avatāra-līlā which has just passed on this earth—already successively appears on the earth of the next universe. This means, for example: When Kṛṣṇa, shortly after His birth on one earth, has just given His first cry “AUM”, He gives this cry in the same situation on the earth of another universe. In other words: Each avatāra has innumerable prakāśa-s, i.e. multiple forms of being, which are identical with Himself and which are present on the earths of the different universes in successive līlā situations.

The līlā of each individual avatāra, which manifests in the different universes in the way of a līlā-cakram, is nitya, i.e. in all respects eternal.

II. Each individual avatāra’s līlā, however, is not only eternal (nitya) in the sense of this līlā-cakram. From the point of view of man, who is confined to think in terms of time and space, the līlā of each avatāra *seems to be* a historical event with a beginning and an end. In reality, however, the līlā of each avatāra is not historical, i.e. historical in the sense of having a beginning and an end¹. Quite apart from the movement of this līlā-cakram, in other words the continuity of this

¹ It has neither a beginning nor an end. It is eternal. Its historicity is just apparent, as it merely becomes visible and again invisible in time and space.

līlā in other universes, the līlā is eternal also in relation to one and the same universe. Also when human beings in general no longer perceive the līlā, it continuously goes on, and more precisely on the cit level of the eternal cit-realm, which is hidden from outsiders by the geographical landscape. For example: “Vraja”, the eternal cit-realm of Kṛṣṇa’s līlā, becomes visible in the geographical district of Vraja and pretends to be merely a geographical landscape. The līlā becomes manifest and visible there, and when the līlā is brought to an end, this eternal cit-realm [once again] becomes invisible [to human beings in general], but could – to the same extent as the līlā that is present in this realm, and even after a thousand years – be experienced by a bhakta who is [physically] present in the geographical Vraja, if the ātmā of this bhakta has been granted the necessary power of knowledge [premabhakti]. Even today, such a bhakta can experience Kṛṣṇa’s līlā as directly present, which in fact it always is. Consequently, he does not have to concentrate on the eternally and continuously appearing līlā in other universes.

III. The eternity of the līlā, however, is not exhausted in the līlā-cakram and the generally non-visible līlā-realm on earth. In the realm of God, called Vaikuṅṭha, which never becomes visible in any universe, each līlā of each individual avatāra is uninterruptedly enacted. When, at the end of its history, a universe dissolves completely, the existing cit-realm of the līlā on earth and its corresponding līlā disappear, and they become united with Vaikuṅṭha and its corresponding līlā.

This threefold eternity of the līlā does by no means imply that all the details of the līlā’s threefold modes of being are simply identical. It is not a question of a threefold recurrence of the same thing; it is only a question of a structural identity. Each and every one of these three forms of the līlā has singularities of its own and is always new and different.