

The Continuity of the Avatāra-līlā

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Into English, text within square brackets, footnotes and

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1. Each līlā of each individual avatāra appears successively and continuously on each individual earth in each individual universe [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. Consequently, each individual avatāra's līlā becomes visible or shines forth continually, as long as there are universes [i.e. eternally].

The following example is given in the Śāstram-s: Like the sunbeams touch the different places of the earth, successively and continuously, one place 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 which the Śāstram-s use for this course of events, is the ‘alāta-cakram’. ‘Alāta-cakram’ means a burning torch, which is set in fast circling motion, thereby forming a continuous circle of light. Theoretically, if we saw *one* individual avatāra's līlā from the centre of *all* universes, how the līlā shines forth in the different universes, we could, corresponding to this ‘alāta-cakram’, see the ‘līlā-cakram’ of this *one* avatāra.

The līlā of each avatāra forms such a ‘līlā-cakram’, which is more or less intensive, corresponding to the nature of the individual avatāra. In connection to this, we should consider the following: Each avatāra-līlā is not to be understood as a circus which, after the end of the “show”, leaves one universe in order to begin 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 the next universe. In other words: each avatāra has innumerable prakāśa-s, i.e. multiple forms of being, which are identical with Himself and

present on the different earths of the different universes in successive situations of the līlā.

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

2. Each individual avatāra's līlā is eternal (nitya) not only in the sense of this līlā-cakram, however. From the viewpoint 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 end. Irrespective of the movement of this līlā-cakram, in other words, the continuity of this līlā in other universes, the līlā is eternal also in relation to one and the same universe. When human beings in general, no longer perceive the līlā, it goes on continuously, and more precisely on the cit plane of the eternal cit-realm, which is hidden from outsiders by the geographical landscape. 'Vraja', for example, 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 becomes invisible again. But the invisible līlā can also be experienced – to the same extent as the līlā that is visibly enacted there – by a bhakta who is in the geographical Vraja, if the ātmā of this bhakta has been given the necessary power of realisation. 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.

3. However, the eternity of the līlā is not exhausted with the līlā-cakram and the generally non-visible līlā-realm on earth. In the realm of God, called Vaikuṅṭha¹, which never becomes visible in any universe, each līlā of each individual avatāra takes place uninterruptedly. 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 unite with Vaikuṅṭha and its corresponding līlā, forming a unity.

This threefold eternality of the līlā does not imply that every particular detail of the līlā's threefold modes of being are quite identical. It is not about a threefold

¹ Vaikuṅṭha, 'without break'; here used in the wide sense of the word, as God's infinite realms as a whole, not in its restricted sense, as the majestic realm of Nārāyaṇa and Lakṣmī.

recurrence of the same thing; it is about structural identity. Each of these three modes of the līlā has singularities of its own and is always new and different.