

Laghu-Bhāgavatāmṛtā

-Srila Rupa Goswami

Part 1: The sweetness of Kṛṣṇa

Chapter 2 :  
Description of the  
Puruṣāvatāras and Guṇāvatāras

What are Avatāras?

Text 1

Among the avatāras described, Kṛṣṇa is svayaṁ-rūpa, the complete avatāri, the basis of all other forms.

Kṛṣṇa is svayaṁ-rūpa : Kṛṣṇa is the root of all the avatāras

But Kṛṣṇa is also glorified as  
one of the avatāras?!

Occasionally He is counted as an avatāra because of  
appearing in this world like the others.

He however is puṣkala, svayaṁ-rūpa.  
(puṣkala means complete or best)

Text 2

If the forms previously described (svayaṁ-rūpa, tad-ekātma-rūpa or āveśa) appear in this world as ever-unique, either directly or through an agent, for certain purposes in the material world they are known as avatāras.

The form that descends from the spiritual world to the material world is called an avatāra.

Example of forms which appear directly:

Matsya and Haṁsa, who appeared directly for Brahmā, manifested forms without a visible source.

Example of forms appearing through an agent:

Garbhodakaśāyī Viṣṇu appears from Kāraṇodakaśāyī Viṣṇu.

Kṛṣṇa appears from Vasudeva.

Rāma appears through Dasaratha.

ever-unique: as if not having appeared before

What is their purpose?

They appear to produce the universe or to perform activities within the universe.

- They appear to produce mahat-tattva by agitating prakṛiti (Mahā-viṣṇu)
- or to satisfy the devatās by killing the sinful
- to give bliss to the devotees longing to see the Lord by becoming visible to them
- and to preach pure bhakti



Text 3

The agent of the Lord's appearance may be a tad-ekātma-rūpa (the Lord) or a devotee.

Mahā-viṣṇu lying on Śeṣa is an example of the tad-ekātma-rūpa agent (cause of Garbhodakaśāyī Viṣṇu) and

Vasudeva (father of Kṛṣṇa) is an example of a devotee acting as agent.

Text 4

There are three types of avatāra: puruṣāvatāras, guṇāvatāras and līlāvatāras.

Text 5

The avatāras are generally the svāmśa and āveśa forms. The appearance of the svayaṁ-rūpa as avatāra will be explained later.

Svāmśa refers to Saṅkarṣaṇa lying on Śeṣa and others.

Āveśa refers to Nārada, the Kumāras, Prthu and others.

"Generally" means that sometimes the svayaṁ-rūpa appears. (explained in chapter 5 of LBA)