



## Theosophical Society Point Loma - Blavatskyhouse

Literature, supporting the study (on Sunday, May 5, 2024)  
of the lecture of Herman C. Vermeulen (on Sunday, April 28, 2024)

Series: **COMPASSION – the Law of laws**  
Lecture: **Teachings on Avatāras**

### Helena P. Blavatsky on 2 types of Avatāras

#### *Theosophical Glossary,*

**Avatāra** (Sk.) Divine incarnation. The descent of a god or some exalted Being, who has progressed beyond the necessity of Rebirths, into the body of a simple mortal. Krishna was an avatar of Vishnu. The Dalai Lama is regarded as an avatar of Avalokiteswara, and the Teschu Lama as one of Tson-kha-pa, or Amitābha. There are two kinds of avatars: those born from woman, and the parentless, the *anupapādaka*.

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#### *H.P. Blavatsky, Collected Writings, Vol. 14, pp. 374-375*

Gautama BUDDHA was born an Avatāra in one sense. But this, in view of unavoidable objections on dogmatic grounds, necessitates explanation. There is a great difference between an **Avatāra** and a **Jīvanmukta**: one, as already stated, is an illusive appearance, Karmaless, and having never before incarnated; and the other, the Jīvanmukta, is one who obtains Nirvāna by his individual merits. To this expression again an uncompromising, philosophical Vedāntin would object. He might say that as the condition of the Avatāra and the Jīvanmukta are one and the same state, no amount of personal merit, in howsoever many incarnations, can lead its possessor to Nirvāna. Nirvāna, he would say, is actionless; how can, then, any action lead to it? It is neither a result nor a cause, but an ever-present, eternal Is, as Nāgasena defined it. Hence it can have no relation to, or concern with, action, merit, or demerit, since these are subject to Karma. All this is very true, but still to our mind there is an important difference between the two. An Avatāra is; a Jīvanmukta becomes one. If the state of the two is identical, not so are the causes which lead to it. An Avatāra is a descent of a God into an illusive form; a Jīvanmukta, who may have passed through numberless incarnations and may have accumulated merit in

them, certainly does not become a Nirvânî because of that merit, but only because of the Karma generated by it, which leads and guides him in the direction of the Guru who will initiate him into the mystery of Nirvâna and who alone can help him to reach this abode.

The Sasstras say that from our works alone we obtain Moksha, and if we take no pains there will be no gain and we shall be neither assisted nor benefited by Deity [the Mahâ-Guru].

Therefore it is maintained that Gautama, though an Avâtara in one sense, is a true human Jîvanmukta, owing his position to his personal merit, and thus more than an Avatâra. It was his personal merit that enabled him to achieve Nirvâna.

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## Gottfried de Purucker on 2 types of Avatâras

*Esoteric Teachings, Vol. 10 - The Hierarchy of Compassion, pp. 59-64*

### Upapādaka- and Anupapādaka-Avataras

In the foregoing lines, as well as on many other occasions, I have given, and explained in giving, the technical meaning of the term *Avatâra*, and more or less just what the Avatâras are; but as far as I can recollect at this moment of writing, I have not drawn attention to the fact that there are really two kinds of Avatâras: (a) the *Upapādaka*; and (b) the *Anupapādaka*.

Now the distinction or difference, or both, between these two types of avatâric 'descents' can be gathered from understanding the technical meanings of these two Sanskrit words, which I give hereunder, and of which the student will see the different application from what I shall hereinafter say. *Upapādaka* is a Sanskrit compound which means 'caused to follow along, or after, or according to,' 'caused to occur'; *anupapādaka* means the opposite of this, i. e., those who are 'not caused to follow along, or after, or according to,' 'not caused to occur.' Consequently, this compound word may be translated as meaning one who does not go or come according to a line of succession; in other words 'parentless' — not for instance descending from father to son, to son, to son, to son, in regular serial order; or again, for instance, not signifying a Messenger in a line of Messengers, the one who leaves passing the Torch of Light to the hand of his successor.

(...)

Now the various explanations regarding Avatâras which I have on various occasions given, both exoterically and esoterically, refer almost wholly to the Upapādaka class; and this arose from the fact that it was the class almost unknown popularly, and scarcely even suspected in the best philosophical Schools of India or elsewhere, whereas the Anupapādaka class is, to a certain and rather large extent, fairly well known or set forth in the ordinarily accepted ideas of what an Avatâra is, i. e., a 'descent' of a divine being, or of a portion of a divine being, into human life through a human individual, for the purpose of carrying out some great and specifically lofty purpose in the world.

The Upapādaka class of avatâric beings, quite rare in human history, are called *Upapādaka* because they 'follow along, or according to' or 'are caused to occur by' the swābhāvic characteristics of the psychological apparatus through which the Avatâric Ray works or functions. Thus a ray of brilliant sunlight streaming through a stained-glass window 'follows along, or after, or according to' the color of the stained glass, so that the color of the traversing ray is 'caused to be' the color of the stained glass. In other words, the Divine Ray expresses

itself or manifests itself according to or after the characteristics and individuality of the psychological apparatus of the Buddha who has loaned this apparatus in order to bring about the being or happening of such an Upapādaka-Avatāra. The Divine Ray, although having its own swabhāva, i. e., its own characteristics and individuality, etc., etc., nevertheless, because it manifests in human life through a highly evolved Buddha-apparatus, is *de facto* more or less modified in its manifestation by the strong individuality of the Buddha's psychological apparatus through which it works; and hence is said to be Upapādaka, 'following along, or after, or according to,' or 'caused to happen by,' the psychological instrument through which it expresses itself.

Now the Anupapādaka – which means 'not Upapādaka' – Avatāras are much more numerous, as already stated, since we include in the reckoning here all the various kinds or modes by which a Divine Ray expresses itself or manifests itself in human life. The term *anupapādaka* may otherwise be somewhat paraphrased, to adopt H. P. B.'s expression, as "self-born of divine essence," and this exactly describes not the etymological meaning of the Sanskrit word *anupapādaka* but the nature and type of this class of avatāric manifestation in the world of men – or in any other world where a similar avatāric manifestation takes place.

(...)

As other instances of somewhat different types or grades of Anupapādakas, we may point to those fairly rare but still not very infrequent instances of surpassing human spiritual and intellectual genius, all which last cases are instances where the Dhyāni-Buddha of the man himself inspires or infills by its direct radiance the man's *own* psychological apparatus; and perhaps the most noteworthy of this last kind or type of Anupapādaka avatāric descents are the Buddhas themselves, and I mean here of course the Mānushya-Buddhas, like Gautama the Buddha. Thus we see that the Buddhas, while not Upapādaka-Avatāras, are nevertheless Avatāras 'of a kind' – i. e., belonging to the second general class mentioned above, the Anupapādakas. All the foregoing instances of Anupapādaka-Avatāras are so called because they do *not* 'follow after, or according to,' nor are they 'caused to happen by' any other intermediate 'soul' or psychological apparatus than their own.

Of course I realize that all this teaching regarding the Avatāras is typically esoteric or occult, and therefore has only been pointed to by H. P. B., and then usually in very ambiguous terms and even sometimes in language which, while correct, is a 'blind.' Thus, in her *Theosophical Glossary* (p. 44) – which we must always remember is a posthumous work, and therefore never underwent her correcting hand – she states that "there are two kinds of avatars; those born from woman, and the parentless, the 'Anupapādaka.'" Now it is obvious that the Anupapādakas are 'parentless,' for they are Divine Rays arising in the bosom of the Divine Monad and streaming downwards in their various 'descents' in order to do their work in the world, and doing it through their own 'reflexions' or 'representatives' on Earth – i. e., their own human vehicles; whereas it is the much rarer cases of the Upapādakas who are 'born from woman'; and just here comes the 'blind,' for it is obvious that, as far as physical bodies go, any human being who is an Anupapādaka-Avatāra must likewise work through a body born from a woman.

The point to notice here is a subtil and highly occult one; and it is that the Avatāras, as I have so often described them, i. e., the Upapādakas, are really 'creations' of a sublime and lofty White Magic; whereas the wide range of the Anupapādakas includes all the different Individuals forming this class who send a radiance from themselves through their own lower constitution. These latter range all the way from the Dhyāni-Buddhas and Logoi at the summit of this class, down to those great men and women who are *inspired* each one by his or her inner god.

(...)

In a way, when you come to think of it, every human being's own inner god, who is a spark of the Cosmic Spirit, can say the same thing as lies in the words ascribed to Kṛishṇa. Take the average man today, imperfect, buffeted by the winds of destiny because he lacks spiritual will-power, and because he lacks spiritual holding power. It would be a manifestation not identic with, but resembling, an Avatāra-manifestation, for the inner god of a man today, I mean the man's own inner god – the heart of his reincarnating ego – to express itself through the man's physical brain, and to infill that physical brain with glory. When such an event happens, you have a Buddha. This is our own technical term, and it is correct. In other words, when the inner god of any human being manifests more or less continuously through the human consciousness, and therefore more or less continuously through the brain-mind of such a human being, you have a Buddha — one no longer an ordinary human being, but one glorified.

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