



ŚRĪ ŚRĪ SVĀMĪ HARIHARĀNANDA SARASVATĪ “KARAPĀTRĪJĪ”

🇬🇧 WHY DO THE AVATĀRAS MANIFEST THEMSELVES EXCLUSIVELY IN INDIA?¹

*O Bhārata! Any time the order (dharma) decreases and disorder (adharma) increases, I manifest myself. From age to age (yuge yuge) I descend to protect the sage, to annihilate the wicked and restore the dharma.*²

Herein the following reflexion arises: doeth the Lord descends into the world to protect the *dharma* only in India or likewise in other parts of the world? And if He descends only in India, how can He be the Lord of everything? He is the controller and the fulcrum of the whole universe. His function is to eliminate from the entire universe the filth of perversion and re-establish virtue. That is, stopping the decadence of *dharma* and the rise of *adharma*, the principles of the universal law are restored, the sages are protected and the evil destroyed.

However, why only in India doeth the Lord take a shape to carry out those tasks? The Lord, righteous and all-pervading, should accomplish these goals as *avatāra* in every part of the world. And if there are *avatāras* in every country, who are they? Therewith it must be clarified if religions (*dharmas*) have been established and maintained by the Lord Imself. If so, why do exist religions so different and hostile to each other, depending on temporal circumstances, and not only in different countries but also in the same country? Why such antagonism and so many differences if *dharma* is based on one and only almighty and omniscient Lord?

The followers of the religions came in conflict among each other to the point of pursuing the destruction of the others' *dharma* in order to make their doctrine prevail. How can we say that these doctrines are *dharma* and the Lord is truly their founder and keeper? Considering these question, it is first of all necessary to make clear which *dharma* is meant in the aforementioned excerpt from *Gītā*. Once this is understood, it will be then clear who are the sages and who are the wicked, because in the *dharma* established by Kṛṣṇa the qualities of both the righteous and the iniquitous are defined. It is today undeniable the great importance given to the universality and the extension of the *Gītā* teachings on *dharma* and *karma*, also in popular form. Although *Gītā* defines with extreme simplicity the boundaries of *dharma*, firstly making clear that *karma* is fully understandable only through the *śāstras* (*śāstraikasamadhigamya*), nevertheless also in the writings of modern critics the same idea of universality shines through. According to some, if only the *Vedas* can be considered authoritative texts and the *dharma* is the action deriving from indications of the vedic (*śruti*) and purāṇic (*smṛti*) orthodoxy, attaining to principles of the caste and of the stages of life (*varṇāśrama*), intelligible only through the scriptures, then, in this case, *Gītā* would represent only a reduced form, thence limited. This statement, however, does not fit to a text of universal value as the *Gītā* is. On the other end, compared to the rest of the world India is a small country in which respect and propagation of *Veda* and *dharma* are cultivated only in some environments. Until *Gītā* is considered subject to the same textual instructions (*śāstra*) and to the same *dharma*, then it will be nothing more than the scripture of a definite country, it will not be considered neither universal, neither unanimously shared.

Following this assumption, in every country, depending on the historical time, authoritative texts are considered those in which the most brilliant thinkers codify the actions as in accordance or non accordance to the norm.

Following the same scriptures, *karma* and *dharma* are those actions motivated by political, economical, individual or collective needs.

¹ Svāmī Śrī Hariharānanda Sarasvatī, “Bhārata hī Meñ Avatāra Kyon” in, *Bhakti Sudhā*, Vṛndāvana-Dillī-Kolkattā, Rādhākṛṣṇa Dhānuka Prakāśan Sansthān, 2000. Edited by Corrado Puchetti. Engl. transl. by RC.

² *Bhagavad Gītā*, IV. 7-8.





Moreover, will be assumed as authoritative those writings of wise and respectable persons deserving unanimous consideration, who define prosperity and well-being in this life and in the other world for the creatures belonging to a certain country in a defined historical time.

This mentality considers *dharma* every action (*karma*) produced by body, senses, mind or reason, intended to bring prosperity. Though asserting what aforesaid, they insist on the universality of the *Gītā*'s message. Considering the typical perspective of these modern thinkers, based on empirical proceedings, [one will realize that nevertheless] in their own way, they wish to recognize the greatness of the *Gītā*, making its message (or rather, what they understand of it) universal. However, they pretend to do it denying its principles and meanings and therefore they are foreclosed on any attribution of universality. As a matter of fact, one can recognize the greatness of something only respecting its proper nature. One cannot claim to recognize its greatness when its very nature is betrayed, intellectuals know the difference between the material advantages and disadvantages that man of limited knowledge, strength and capacity of action can obtain. But many are those completely blind on how to know and achieve the otherworldly and metaphysical bliss. Depending on the different ages and places, enormous changes take place in activities and customs related to wealth and pleasures. Therefore it is impossible for the man to define a single way of behaviour on such matters. But the teachings of Prajāpati, Bṛhaspati, Śukra, Manu and other almost omniscient (*sarvajña*) Seers and Lawmakers, are the base on which some change or conservation can be easily and unerringly made. For the ignorant (*alpajña*) it is extremely difficult to understand which are the actions that, in the afterworld, will generate joy or sorrow. In spite of great differences of space, time and circumstances, variations in *dharma* and *adharma* are not limitless. In fact, if even in politics (*nīti*) it is impossible a disorderly change, in the *dharma* it is even more so. In any situation one must determine the entity to be defined (*lakṣya*) depending on the definition itself (*lakṣaṇa*). When defining an object directly verifiable through our senses (*pratyakṣa*), then the definition must be without defects, like lack of pervasiveness (*avyāpti*) or excessive pervasiveness (*ativyāpti*) or impossibility (*asambhava*). But when something is not immediately perceivable (*apratyakṣa*), its determination will be done only through the definitions. In this case, when the definition is not well-fitting, the comprehension of what is defined (*lakṣya*) remains defective. But nowadays, in the society, what is correct or incorrect is decided on the behaviour of the majority. Considering the actual *status* of things, modern mentality is adapted to an unceasing change. One thing is to define the *dharma* following its original teachings, while another thing is to set the limits of *dharma* on an individual situation and behaviour. Following the *Gītā* perspective any kind of action or effort is not necessarily *dharma* because, without order, the action is conditioned by the three tendencies [*guṇas*] inherent to the manifestation. So, in sentences as “*kuru karmaiva*”¹ and others, the *karma* to which we naturally tend is the one to be accomplished as indicated by the scriptures. Therefore it is said that a *śāstra* is the measure and warranty of what to do and not to do: “Once known the principles dictated by the *śāstra*, let's the *karma* be done”².

The *śāstra* is not a collection of disorderly rules established by the different societies in different ages, because according to the times, a more spiritual or secular tendency might prevail.

The society is composed by many individuals and there is no certainty about their capacity of discrimination. Also the best person can be wrong in the simplest things; in this time it is firmly truly believed what it is understood, even though, in hindsight, one realizes his own limits and mistakes. The influence of agitation produced by *rajas* and dullness due to *tamas* can blur the natural, crystal clear dominance of *sattva* in the intellect (*buddhi*).

This last quality is clouded if it does not show a tension toward the Supreme and lacks in discipline (*yoga*). For this reason today ignorance and error pervade any rank of the society, also in a collective form. To define *dharma* and *adharma* no individual evaluation is needed, neither by the collectivity nor

¹ “Perform exactly the rite”, *BhG* IV. 15.

² *BhG* XVI. 24.





by the majority. The rules established by an individual or a society, also concerning ethics, politics or economy, will not produce a stable successful outcome. A true success comes only from the knowledge of the principles of politics, ethics and economy as described by Manu and the other all-knowing sages.

For example, in medicine it has no value that the opinion of a doctor is validated by thousands of scientist, if they are expert in different topics. At the same time, in regard to *dharma*, any particular point of view ignoring the vedic teachings will have no permanent value. According to *Gītā*, the *Vedas* are the scriptures which establish which actions are to be done.

When dealing with *śāstra*, the *Gītā* cites the *Vedas*: “I am the One which is known by all the *Vedas*”¹, “*Ṛg*, *Sāma* and also *Yajur*”², “Among the *Vedas*, I am the *Sāma*”³. The disciple (Arjuna), the *Guru* (here represented by Kṛṣṇa), the Author and all the great men described in different contexts of the *Gītā* and of *Mahābhārata*, are characters of the vedic society and culture, in which they strongly believe. In the *Gītā* vedic teachings, the *Vedas* themselves and all the textual tradition in accordance with the vedic principles, converge. All the actions narrated are in accordance with the textual prescriptions both for the mundane aspects and for the strict rules related to casts and stages of life. The *Gītā* is coherent with the *śāstra*, representing a course of action which, in the different aspects of existence, is exactly the one to be followed. (*vidheya*).

Although *śāstra* and *dharma* are the root of prosperity, in this and the next world, and from them everyone can benefit, as a consequence of the general decline caused by the upheaval of the times, someone could define them as closed and restricted, but this is the evidence of an individual and limited interpretation. The conditions of reality do not worry about being liked or no by single creatures. Things that change depending on the worldly transformations are not real. The members of a society have the duty to follow the rules of the institution and those undisciplined who do not accept this, must be expelled. The fundamental principles of the society must not change for the sake of some insubordinate individuals. Legislators and rulers loyal to *dharma* and to the vedic culture duly expelled those infringing the rules which, being of divine origin and based on a stable foundation, are devoid of error.

Those who think in a disharmonious and confused way ignore the correct path indicated by the *śāstra* because *Ṛg*, *Sāman*, *Yajus*, *Mantras*, *Brāhmaṇas*, *Sūtras*, *Kalpas*, *Itihāsas*, *Purāṇas*, all together are the true breath of *Īśvara*, eternal (*nitya*), with no beginning (*anādi*). Any spatial, temporal and circumstantial change is fixed from the beginning. *Dharma* cannot be intended as closed or restricted, even if today the number of those who pursue it, is greatly diminished.

Very few are those who have directly realized the Supreme Identity or better yet, those who are interested to obtain it⁴. Nonetheless, fact remains that *dharma* is inherent to the essence of things and has an universal breath. But in spite of the completeness and universality of *śāstra* and *dharma*, with the progression of the cosmic cycle and the increase of the disorder, the majority of the countries and the persons have deviated from the path of righteousness. Also in India those faithful to *dharma* are a minority. We know from the *śāstra* that as in the *svarga* and in other planes of existence, also many parts of Earth (*bhūmaṇḍala*) were places of mere fruition (*bhogabhūmi*) and not of action (*karmabhūmi*). Therefore a law was established specifically for humans (*mānava dharma*) which contemplated respect, truth and other virtues⁵. Always India has been considered the land of sacrifice, *karmabhūmi*. There, the perennial Tradition fully flourished in its various facets, the *varnāśrama*, the sacrifice (*yajña*), the *yoga* and all the other phenomena described in the *Veda*. In India it was easy to attain perfection (*siddhi*) in the rituals, in spiritual practices and in knowledge. Thanks exactly to the

¹ BhG XV. 15.

² BhG IX. 17.

³ BhG X. 22.

⁴ BhG VII. 3.

⁵ See BhG XVI. 1-2, *et passim*.





rites here performed, Indra obtained his state of Lord. For this reason even the gods want to be born in India. As a lantern located in a place in the house can illuminate it all, only in the sole space of the heart, *antarātman*, the inner soul, reveals itself, lighting up and activating the whole body. Similarly, the land of Bhārata [India] is the center of the entire terrestrial sphere. According to *Purāṇas*, the *Jambu dvīpa* -the Indian subcontinent- is located at the center of the other islands. Mount Meru is placed on it and its most important extension is the land of Bhārata. For this reason India is the heart of the entire world.

As the *ātman*, albeit all-pervading, finds its most appropriate place of manifestation in everyone’s heart, in the same way the rules given by the scriptures and by the Lord who has enacted them, although universal and all-encompassing, are specially manifested in India. The whole world is illuminated and, on made consistent to the norm thanks to the light of knowledge and the influence of *dharma* infused by India. The Manu code states:

Etaddeśaprasūtasya sakāśādagrajanmanaḥ/ svaṃ svaṃ caritraṃ śikṣeran pṛthivyāṃ sarvamānavāḥ
*Every man in this world should learn the proper behaviour from the brāhmana born in this place.*¹

Life can remain in the body even if hands or feet or other parts are missing, but it is impossible for the life to go on without the heart. So the world continues to exist, even if the other countries deviated from the path of *dharma* and from the Lord; but if the *dharma* would be lost in India, in the heart of the world, its destruction would be certain. This is exactly why, if India would move completely away from the *dharma* and the *śāstra*, the annihilation of the world would be unavoidable. As it is more important to protect the heart than the other parts of the body, similarly the Lord manifests Himself for the protection of *dharma* and *śāstra* [which are the heart of humanity]. Although so many countries have strayed away from the Primordial Tradition to the point of losing any knowledge of the holy rites like *agnihotra* etc, and of the *karma* related to the three principal divisions of the society (*traivārṇika karma*), yet a sort of reduced *dharma*, (*śūdradharmā*), simply human, has remained. Through the listening of the *Purāṇas* and the *Itihāsas* those fallen societies can improve and start again to proceed in the direction of *dharma*.

But the true teaching brings success only to those who agree with it, not to those who disagree. Those who reject the *Veda*, the *śāstra*, the gods and the vedic law, even if being *brāhmana*, they could not be taught by anyone. All creatures are part of the Lord and therefore, being dear to Him, they could never be ignored or excluded by Him and by His devotees. Also in those countries or societies that stubbornly resist to vedic *dharma*, with the purpose to keep the right path as much as possible, some high-profile individuals manage to establish and spread a loose form of order.

Also in that case there is a regulatory act and a control of the lowest instincts.

But it is necessary that somewhere the true *dharma* and the scriptures that teach it be preserved. Thus, in the land of Bhārata, the spiritual heart of the world, the Lord manifests Himself to protect the *śāstra* and the Primordial Tradition. In other countries it is said that somewhere God manifested a messenger or His own son, but only in India the Lord Himself descended, because the defense of the vedic *dharma* and its intellectual light makes possible the protection of the entire world. The light of *dharma* is not directly perceivable in any part of the body, but this does not mean that *ātman* is restricted or limited. Even if the Lord manifests Himself only in India to restore the *dharma* it is still not possible to advocate any particularism of its scriptures.

Vedic *dharma* can be achieved where authoritative personalities whose judgments are consistently valid and not distorted, take action to attain the highest degree of prosperity for all the living creatures. Considering what was said, it will be understood why the *avatāras* manifest themselves only in India.

Om śānti śānti śānti

¹ *Manusmṛti*, II. 20.

