

A STUDY ON THE WORD AVATAR

Avatar = Avatāra

descent (of a deity from heaven), appearance of a deity, incarnation of Viṣṇu¹, any new and unexpected manifestation, opportunity of catching anyone, holy place, translation.

From avatī, avatarati: descend to, arrive, descend like a deity, become incarnate, inheritability, conduct oneself, reach, create oneself, be in the right space, dedicate oneself to, initiate, win, appear.

Cf.:

Av, avati = drive, push, promote, satisfy, offer.

Avata = avataḥ: hole in the ground, hole, any concave part of the body, cavity, void to be filled.

Avatara= descent, entry, opportunity

Analysis of Avatāra

1) A + VATA + RA

A²: Brahma, first letter (amatra) of the sacred syllable Om (Aum), first sound of the Sanskrit alphabet, non, without, vacuity.

VATA: pronounced, spoken, expressed verbally.

RA: represents the one thousand names of Rama, acquisition, possession, effect, fire, desire, love, amorous play, speed, gold, donating, going, moving, splendour, intelligence used to explain the etymology of a word.

2) AVA + TA + RA³

AVA: (as dual genitive): “of you two”, “of both”. Duality.
(as verbal prefix): outside, down, away, off.

TA: pronominal base corresponding to *tad* (this), tail, breast, uterus, hip, warrior, thief, sage, a Buddha, Mleccha (pre-Vedic people) jewel, nectar, virtue, passage.

RA: (see above)

1 Especially in its 10 main forms: fish, tortoise, man-lion, wild boar, dwarf, the 2 Rāmas, kṛishṇa, Buddha, Kalki.

2 When it has a privative value, in sandhi phonetics, it becomes *an* (अन्). It represents the entirety of existence in its state of earthly manifestation (Vaisvanara, Virat, Visva). Morphologically, as a prefix, it has a privative value (non). Whilst the long vowel ā has a positive and adjunctive value.

3 Also AVA + TARA (these two).

European evolution of the word Avatar

The term Avatar (from Sanskrit avatāra) was introduced into the Italian¹ vocabulary from French and English lexicon.

Phonetically, the Latin terms *avus* (grandfather, forefather, ancestor), *avitus* (ancestral, ancient, ancestral, hereditary) and *avivus* (great-great-great-grandfather and, in the plural form, *avivi* ancestors) derive from the same roots of the Sanskrit word Avatar – *ava* (indicating origin, provenance), *avati* (favour, love, protect), *avitar* (protector, defender) – hence the Italian *atavo* (synonym of *avito*) and the French *atavique* (the adjective *atavico*).

Avito: descended from his forefathers, lineage, of the ancestors, passed down or inherited by ancestors both in a spiritual and material sense.

Atavo: father of great-great-grandfather or mother of great-great-grandmother. In the plural form: distant ancestors.

Atavique – atavistic: that descends as an inheritance from very distant ancestors; (*extended meaning*) ancient, distant, first-born, primordial, ancestral⁴; (*genetics*) a trait that can be found in living organisms as well as in their very distant ancestors which appears to have regressed or disappeared altogether in the less distant ancestors.

Cf. **atavism:** hereditary trait that appears in an individual after having been absent for several generations as the effect of a recombination of genes that are codified according to recessive phenotypes. Particularly in botany, hybrid plants have a tendency to return to their original genetic trait after a certain number of generations.

After tracking the phonetic evolution of the Sanskrit term *Avatar* we come to a connection with the semantic area that expresses the concept of descending.

In fact, integrating the semantic areas of *Avatar* with the meanings that have come down to us from the Latin term *avus* and the French *atavique* (from which we get *avito*, *atavo*, *atavico*), the meaning of ancestor no longer indicates only descendent on a temporal level (the ancestor) but becomes “the descendent”: He who descends and becomes incarnate coming from (Is) the Ancestor, “ante-birth” (existing before birth).

Therefore descent, in this new sense, is no longer “temporal” (does not depend on ancestors) but “spatial” (depends on the “original” condition).

⁴ Ancestral: transmitted by ancestors, even meant as instinctive (ancestral need); (*biology*) trait found in fossils but absent or modified in living beings, or deducible in a theoretical model of a common ancestor.