

Falldown

This essay was originally an answer of Suhotra Swami to a question about the "fairness" of our falldown to the material world.

First of all we strongly suggest those who have a specific interest in the falldown of the spirit soul from the spiritual world to acquire the book entitled Our Original Position, which is available from the Bhaktivedanta Book Trust. It is a very elaborate treatment with much quotations from sastra.

I find a refrain in the "condemned," "pretty unfair," "felix culpa," "how could I know" and "bad mistake" arguments that is typical of persons for whom the "original falldown" is a major philosophical stumbling block. And that is, "It's not my fault. It must be Krishna's fault."

You have to face this point unflinchingly: it *is* your fault.

And you have to face this next point unflinchingly: as long as you entertain the notion that it could be Krishna's fault (that He's "pretty unfair"), you will remain in this material world, birth after birth.

Accepting that it is your fault that you are fallen into the cycle of birth and death is what surrender is all about. It is only by accepting this that we can sincerely accept the Lord's help in getting ourselves delivered from this fallen state. Logically, if it is not your fault, then you are not really fallen. Just like, if you end up in prison for a crime you did not deliberately commit (maybe you were just a victim of association, but you personally did not intend harm), then you are not really a criminal, are you?

But the fact is, we *are* criminals. And we can't be reformed until we admit it wholeheartedly.

Now, zeroing in on the crux of your doubt -- that we fell out of krishna-lila because of some unexpected flare-up of envy, and so how can we be eternally condemned for something over which we had no control -- you've missed the real controller, Krishna. It is a fact that I, as a tiny spirit soul, have no power to control the ebb and flow of emotional states. But Krishna, the parama-isvara (supreme controller), does.

So there are two implications I wish to draw your attention to.

If your idea is that we fell because of an emotional flare-up, then behind that idea is a lack of faith in Krishna's control over those emotions. To be surrendered

to Krishna means to place oneself completely under Krishna's control. So why would Krishna permit the emotions of His surrendered devotee to flare up in some spiritually detrimental manner? Therefore, 1) either Krishna doesn't really have control over the ebb and flow of emotions that affect living beings, or 2) He does but He takes pleasure in allowing these emotions to cast someone down into darkness. I.e. Krishna doesn't always have our best interests in mind. Or worse, He has a malicious streak.

The adoption of either of these two positions is uncalled for. If you find one, the other or both reasonable, then why trouble yourself with following the Vedic scriptures? The Vedic scriptures state: *isvara parama krsna*: "Krishna is the supreme controller."

So then how did we fall victim to uncontrolled emotions?

The answer is that **first** we assumed a position of independence from Krishna's control. Our assuming that position was not prompted by some flood of emotions. It was a conscious choice. As Srila Prabhupada writes:

"Anandamayo 'bhyasat (Vedanta-sutra 1.1.12). Both the Lord and the living entity, being qualitatively spirit soul, have the tendency for peaceful enjoyment, but when the part of the Supreme Personality of Godhead unfortunately wants to enjoy independently, without Krishna, he is put into the material world, where he begins his life as Brahma and is gradually degraded to the status of an ant or a worm in stool." (Srimad-Bhagavatam 9.24.58, purport)

So the uncontrolled emotions that wind us up in lower forms like ants and worms come later. First comes the exalted post of Brahma, who manifests the full potency of a jiva (a liberated spirit soul). Brahma is situated in *brahma-varcasa*, the Brahman effulgence. Therefore Bhagavatam 2.3.2 states that those who wish to attain the divine light of Brahman should worship Brahma. But Brahma thinks himself **independent** of Krishna.

"That Brahma becomes liberated is known to everyone, but he cannot liberate his devotees. Demigods like Brahma and Lord Shiva cannot give liberation to any living entity. As it is confirmed in Bhagavad-gita, only one who surrenders unto Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, can be liberated from the clutches of *maya*. Brahma is called here *adyah sthira-caranam*. He is the original, first-created living entity, and after his own birth he creates the entire cosmic manifestation. He was fully instructed in the matter of creation by the Supreme Lord. Here he is called *veda-garbha*, which means that he knows the complete purpose of the Vedas. He is always accompanied by such great personalities as Marici, Kasyapa and the seven sages, as well as by great mystic yogis, the Kumaras and many other spiritually advanced living entities, but he has his own

interest, separate from the Lord's. Bheda-drstya means that Brahma sometimes thinks that he is independent of the Supreme Lord, or he thinks of himself as one of the three equally independent incarnations. ["Three equally independent incarnations" means Vishnu, Shiva and Brahma... but actually Brahma is not independent, because he is a jiva (fragmental soul, a constitutional servant of God), whereas Vishnu and Shiva are both classified as isvara (Lords).]" (Srimad-Bhagavatam 3.32.12-15, purport)

And, so, as Srila Prabhupada continues in this same purport:

"Here the word bheda-drstya occurs because Brahma has a slight inclination to think that he is as independent as Rudra. Sometimes Brahma thinks that he is independent of the Supreme Lord, and the worshiper also thinks that Brahma is independent. For this reason, after the destruction of this material world, when there is again creation by the interaction of the material modes of nature, Brahma comes back. Although Brahma reaches the Supreme Personality of Godhead as the first purusa incarnation, Maha-Vishnu, who is full with transcendental qualities, he cannot stay in the spiritual world."

Please digest the full implications of the above quotation. Brahma, the post occupied by the jiva upon his assumption of independence from the Lord, is a liberated personality. He is not dashed here and there by hot fluxes of emotions, whether envy or anything else. Brahma *knows* fully well the Supreme Lord as Maha-Vishnu. He returns to Him after his period of duty as the creator of the universe. But Brahma also has a tendency, due to his conception of independence, to become attached to his post as the creator... so that when again Vishnu breathes out the universes, Brahma leaves Him to take up the post of a lord of creation again. This second returning to the material world is considered to be his falldown -- the falldown of the jiva. Here you see an emotional element creeping in... attachment, prestige, etc, which brings him back to the material world even after his assignment is completed. This is the sign of growing ignorance. That is confirmed thusly later in the same purport:

"The specific significance of his coming back may be noted. Brahma and the great rsis and the great master of yoga (Shiva) are not ordinary living entities; they are very powerful and have all the perfections of mystic yoga. But still they have an inclination to try to become one with the Supreme, and therefore they have to come back. In the Srimad-Bhagavatam it is accepted that as long as one thinks that he is equal with the Supreme Personality of Godhead, he is not completely purified or knowledgeable. In spite of going up to the first purusa-avatar, Maha-Vishnu, after the dissolution of this material creation, such personalities again fall down or come back to the material creation."

The falling down of the jiva into material creation therefore has little in common with the scenario of his being carried away willy-nilly by some unfortunate gush of feelings.

It is the result of a deliberate, conscious and informed choice.

Perhaps you still have a doubt about how a soul comes to think himself independent. It can be postulated that before he assumed the post of Brahma, that soul must have been with Krishna in His pastimes within the eternal realm of Goloka. How is it that this particular soul goes from there to the post of Brahma?

The answer is that Krishna's pastimes are expansive. As Krishna expands His pastimes, so also the souls expand within Him into further realms of His divine lila or play. The creation of the material world is one more expanded lila. Thus the Lord Himself personally enters the material world, and so also do His devotees. Even the eternal residents of Goloka Vrindavan enter the material world at the time Krishna personally descends Himself, as He did 5000 years ago in Bhauma Vrindavan (the Vrindavan on earth, in India, 90 miles south of New Delhi). Some of these residents assume forms different than their Goloka identities. Narada Muni, for instance, the sage who preaches bhakti throughout the 3 worlds, is originally Madhumangala, a friend of Krishna's in Goloka. And Narada is the son of Brahma. Brahma is a role a jiva can get in the Lord's pastime of creation if that jiva is interested in participating in the creation-lila from a position apparently as independent as that of God Himself. This particular position (Brahma) is the one from which a soul **may** fall (it is not guaranteed he will) from the Lord's association into enmeshment in creation. In other words, rather than simply participating in creation from a transcendental position (as do the residents of Vrindavan and Narada Muni), such a soul, by attachment to his lordly position, becomes **part** of the creation... life after life.