

The History of the Life of Ajāmila



Maharaj Parikshit asks Sukadeva Goswami -
O greatly fortunate and opulent Śukadeva Gosvāmī, now kindly tell me how human beings may be saved from having to enter hellish conditions in which they suffer terrible pains.

Śukadeva Gosvāmī replied: My dear King, if before one's next death whatever impious

acts one has performed in this life with his mind, words and body are not counteracted through proper atonement according to the description of the Manu-saṁhitā and other dharma-śāstras, one will certainly enter the hellish planets after death and undergo terrible suffering. Therefore, before one's next death comes, as long as one's body is strong enough, one should quickly adopt the process of atonement according to śāstra; otherwise one's time will be lost, and the reactions of his sins will increase.

Mahārāja Parīkṣit said: One may know that sinful activity is injurious for him and he also knows that one is thrown into hellish

conditions in the next life for committing sinful acts. Nevertheless, in spite of such knowledge, one is forced to commit sins again and again, even after performing acts of atonement. Therefore, what is the value of such atonement?

Śukadeva Gosvāmī, answered: My dear King, since acts meant to neutralize impious actions are also fruitive, they will not release one from the tendency to act fruitively. Persons who subject themselves to the rules and regulations of atonement are not at all intelligent and are in the mode of darkness. They may superficially seem pious, but will be prone to act impiously. Therefore real

atonement is enlightenment in perfect knowledge, Vedānta, by which one understands the Supreme Absolute Truth.

Only a rare person who has adopted complete, unalloyed devotional service to Kṛṣṇa can uproot the weeds of sinful actions with no possibility that they will revive, simply by discharging devotional service.

My dear King, if a sinful person engages in the service of a bona fide devotee of the Lord and thus learns how to dedicate his life unto the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa, he can be completely purified and not merely by undergoing austerity, penance, brahmacarya and the other

methods of atonement.

In this regard, learned scholars and saintly persons describe a discussion between the order carriers of Lord Viṣṇu and those of Yamarāja.

In the city known as Kānyakubja there was a brāhmaṇa named Ajāmila who married a prostitute maidservant and lost all his brahminical qualities because of the association of that low-class woman.

This fallen brāhmaṇa, Ajāmila spent his time in abominable, sinful activities to maintain his family of many sons and thus eighty-eight years of his life passed by. That old man

Ajāmila had ten sons, of whom the youngest was a baby named Nārāyaṇa. Because of the child's broken language and awkward movements, old Ajāmila was very much attached to him. Always engaged in taking care of the child and calling his name, Nārāyaṇa, Ajāmila could not understand that his own time was now exhausted and that death was upon him.