

The Sermon at Benares

Oral Comprehension Check (Page 135)

Question 1:

When her son dies, Kisa Gotami goes from house to house. What does she ask for? Does she get it? Why not?

Answer:

Kisa Gotami was overcome with grief and agony when her only son died. She carried her son's dead body

in her arms and went from one house to another asking for medicine that could cure her child, but nobody could help. Since her son was dead, it wasn't possible for anyone to give her any medicine and bring the dead person back to life.

Question 2:

Kisa Gotami again goes from house to house after she speaks with the Buddha. What does she ask for, the second time around? Does she get it? Why not?

Answer:

Gautama Buddha asked Kisa Gotami to bring a handful of mustard seeds from a house where no one had lost a child, husband, parent or friend. She went from door to door, but couldn't find a single house where death had not knocked their door and taken away their beloved one. Hence, she did not get any such house as death is inevitable and all mortals who come to this world are bound to die someday.

Question 3:

What does Kisa Gotami understand the second time that she failed to understand the first time? Was this what the Buddha wanted her to understand?

Answer:

When Kisa Gotami failed to procure a handful of mustard seeds from a house where death never took away any beloved one, she became weary and helpless and sat down by the roadside. While sitting there, she observed the flickering and extinguishing of lights and finally the darkness of the night reigned everywhere. This incident made her realise that death is inevitable and she was being selfish in her grief and agony. She understood that in this valley of desolation, there is always a path that leads man to immortality who has surrendered all his selfishness. Yes, this is what Buddha wanted her to understand that every mortal being who is born in this world is bound to die one day.

Question 4:

Why do you think Kisa Gotami understood this only the second time? In what way did the Buddha change her understanding?

Answer: In the first instance, Kisa Gotami could only see her grief of losing her young son. But, when she went from one house to another the second time to procure a handful of mustard seeds to save her dead son, she understood that everyone was dealing with the loss of a dear one. Not a single house was left untouched by death, where people had not lost their son, husband, parent or friend. At some point of time, everyone had experienced the pain of death and losing their loved ones. Feeling dejected, she sat down and realised that death is inevitable and the fate of mortal beings is to live and die someday. Through this instance, Gautama Buddha helped her to understand that death is common to all mortal beings and everyone is bound to die one day or the other.

Question 5:

How do you usually understand the idea of 'selfishness'? Do you agree with Kisa Gotami that she was being 'selfish in her grief'?

Answer:

A selfish person is one who is extremely preoccupied about himself or herself. In the story, Kisa Gotami was also being selfish in her grief because she was just thinking about her own pain. So when she lost her child, she wanted to bring him back to life by any means and finally went to Buddha to ask for help. He gave her the ultimate lesson of life that humans are mortal beings and it is natural for everyone to die. Although we may find it difficult to accept the death of our loved ones, but death is inevitable and is bound to happen sooner or later.

Extract Based Questions (4 marks each)

Read the passage given below and answer the questions that follow :

Question 1.

At twelve, he was sent away for schooling in the Hindu sacred scriptures and years later he returned home to marry a princess. They had a son and lived for ten years as befitted royalty. At about the age of twenty-five, the prince heretofore shielded from the sufferings of the world, while going out on hunting, chanced upon a sick man, then an aged man, then a funeral procession, and finally a monk begging for alms. These sights so moved him that he at once became a beggar and went out into the world to seek enlightenment concerning the sorrows he had witnessed. **(1 x 4 = 4)**

- (a) Who does 'he' refer to here ?
- (b) What did the prince chance to see while out on hunting ?
- (c) Find a word from the passage that means the same as 'holy'.
- (d) When was Buddha sent for Schooling ?

Answer:

- (a) 'He' is referred to Buddha.
- (b) When the prince went out on hunting he saw a sick man, an aged man, a funeral procession and a monk begging for alms.
- (c) Sacred.
- (d) At the age of 12

Question 2.

At about the age of twenty-five, the Prince, heretofore shielded from sufferings of the world, while out hunting chanced upon a sick man, then an aged man, then a funeral procession and finally a monk begging for alms. (1 x 4 = 4)

- (a) Name the Prince.
- (b) What are the sights of sufferings that the Prince saw ? (Any 2)
- (c) Give the meaning of the word, 'shielded'.
- (d) What was the Prince's age in the passage ?

Answer:

- (a) Name of the prince was Siddhartha.
- (b) On his way to hunting, the prince saw a sick man, and a funeral procession.
- (c) 'Shielded' means 'Protected'.
- (d) The Prince's age was Twenty five.

Question 3.

At about the age of twenty-five, the Prince, heretofore shielded from the sufferings of the world, while coming out of hunting chanced upon a sick man, then an aged man, then a funeral procession, and finally a monk begging for alms. These sights so moved him that he at once became a beggar and went out into the world to seek enlightenment concerning the sorrows he had witnessed. He wandered for seven years and finally sat down under a fig tree, where he vowed to stay until enlightenment came. Enlightened after seven days, he renamed the tree the Bodhi Tree (Tree of Wisdom) and began to teach and to share his new understandings. (1 x 4 = 4)

- (a) Who is the Prince ? Mention any two sights which moved the Prince.
- (b) What did he do after he became enlightened ?
- (c) Which word in the passage means the same as 'a state of high spiritual knowledge' ?
- (d) Where did Buddha sit ?

Answer:

- (a) Gautam Buddha is the Prince. The sight of an aged man and a funeral procession were the two sights that moved the Prince.
- (b) Buddha renamed the tree the 'Bodhi Tree' (Tree of Wisdom) and began to teach and to share his new understandings.
- (c) Enlightenment.
- (d) Buddha sat under a 'Fig tree'.

Question 4.

The Buddha answered : "I want a handful of mustard seeds." And when the girl in her joy promised to procure it, then Buddha added: The mustard-seed must be taken from a house where no one has lost a child, husband, parent or friend." (1x4 = 4)

- (a) Identify T in the passage.
- (b) What did the Buddha ask the girl for ?
- (c) Find the word from the passage which means the same as 'obtain'.
- (d) What did Buddha add?

Answer:

- (a) T in the passage is Buddha.

- (b) The Buddha asked the girl for a handful of mustard seeds.
- (c) 'procure'.
- (d) Buddha added that the seeds should be from a house where there was no loss.

Question 5.

The Buddha said: "The life of mortals in this world is troubled and brief and combined with pain. For there is not any means by which those that have been born can avoid dying; after reaching at certain age, there is death; of such a nature are living beings. As ripe fruits are early in danger of falling, so mortals when born are always in danger of death. (1 x 4 = 4)

- (a) What did the Buddha say about the life of the people ?
- (b) What does the ripe fruit fear ?
- (c) Find the word from the passage that means 'living beings who have to die'.
- (d) What is natural ?

Answer:

- (a) The Buddha said that the life of the mortals in this world is troubled, brief and combined with pain.
- (b) The ripe fruit fears falling down.
- (c) Mortals.
- (d) Death is natural.

Question 6.

Mark while relatives are looking on and lamenting deeply, one by one mortals are carried off, like an ox that is led to the slaughter. So the world is afflicted with death and decay, therefore the wise do not grieve, knowing the terms of the world.

(1 x 4 = 4)

- (a) What is the fate of mortals ?
- (b) Why do the wise not grieve ?
- (c) Write the meaning of the word, 'lamenting'.
- (d) What is the world afflicted with ?

Answer:

- (a) The fate of mortals is inevitable death of all. No one could avoid dying.
- (b) Wise (people) have accepted the truth that death is common to all. So they do not grieve.
- (c) 'expressing sorrow'.
- (d) The world is afflicted with death and decay.

Short Answer Type Questions (30-40 words & 3 marks each)

Question 1.

Who was Gautam Buddha ? When and where was he born ? [Board Term-II, 2012 Set EL (62024)]

Answer:

Gautam Buddha was a Prince who was named Siddhartha Gautam by his parents. He was born in 563 B.C. in North India. He had been shielded from the sufferings of the world. He attained enlightenment under a Peepal tree and named the tree as 'Tree of Wisdom'.

Question 2.

Mention the incident which prompted Prince Siddhartha to become a beggar ? **[Board Term-II, 2012 Set EL (62022)]**

Answer:

Once Prince Siddhartha had gone for hunting where he came across a sick man, an aged man, a monk asking for alms and also witnessed a funeral procession. Unable to understand those sufferings, he became a beggar and went in search of spiritual knowledge.

Question 3.

Why was Kisa Gotami sad ? What did she do in her hour of grief ? **[Board Term-II, 2015 Set 2/1/5]**

Answer:

Kisa Gotami was sad because her only son had died. In her hour of grief, she went from house to house in search of a medicine to cure him. She had become selfish in wanting her son back.

Question 4.

What did the Buddha want Kisa Gotami to understand ? **[Board Term-II, 2015 Set 2/1/3]**

Answer:

Buddha wanted Kisa Gotami to understand that death is common to all and no one could avoid dying. No one can save their relatives. So wise do not grieve after accepting this truth of dead.

Question 5.

Kisa Gotami again goes from house-to-house after she speaks with the Buddha. What does she ask for the second time round ? Does she get ? Why not ? **[Board Term-II, 2012 Set EL (62018)] [NCERT]**

Answer:

Kisa Gotami goes from house to house to bring some mustard seeds where no death had taken place as asked by Buddha to cure her son. But she was unable to find such a house where no death had taken place. It made her realise that death is evitable and that no one can deny the nature's cycle.

Question 6.

What did Kisa Gotami learn in the end ? **[Board Term-II, 2012 Set EL (62021)]**

Answer:

In the end, Kisa Gotami realised and learnt that death is common to all and that no one could avoid dying. People weep over their dead ones but it is only the wise who do not grieve as they have accepted the truth. A person should only try to seek inner peace.

Question 7.

How did Buddha teach Kisa Gotami the truth of life ? **[Board Term-II Outside Delhi II, 2014, Code-2/2]**

Answer:

Kisa Gotami was devastated by the death of her only son and wandered door to door, seeking help. Someone directed her to Sakyamuni, the Buddha, who asked her to bring a handful of mustard seeds. This raised a hope in Gotami's heart that her son could be revived. But the condition imposed by Sakyamuni was that the seeds should be from a house where people had not lost a loved one to death. Kisa Gotami's futile search made her realize the bitter truth that sorrows are a part and parcel of life and one can attain peace only by acceptance.

Question 8.

What did the Buddha do after he had attained enlightenment ? Why ? **[Board Term-II Foreign Set 1,2014, Code-2/2/1]**

Answer:

Prince Siddhartha Gautama was deeply pained by the sufferings he saw around him and left house to seek the truth of life. After wandering for seven years, he finally sat under Peepal tree to meditate till he received the enlightenment. Wisdom of the law that governs the cycle of birth and death dawned on him and 'The Buddha' set out to share it with the world to relieve the mortals of their sufferings.

Question 9.

What does the Buddha say about the world ? **[Board Term-II, 2012 Set (62017)]**

Answer:

The Buddha says that everything in this world is subject to death. He further says that the world is deeply affected by suffering, disease or pain. Inevitably there is death and decay.

Long Answer Type Question (100-120 words & 8 marks each)**Question 1.**

How did Buddha make Kisa Gotami realise about the reality of death ?

Answer:**Value Points:**

Kisa's son had died went to Buddha for making him alive—was sent to bring some mustard seeds from a house where no death had occurred—couldn't get. Buddha made her realise that death is common to all.

Detailed Answer:

When Kisa's only son had died, she went to Buddha. Being plunged into deep grief, first she went to every neighbour, asking for medicine for her dead son. She had lost all her senses and forgot that no medicine could bring back the dead. Then she went to Buddha for making his son alive. Buddha asked her to bring some mustard seeds from a house where no death had occurred. But she couldn't get find such a house. Buddha made her realise that death is common to all. So in the midst of adverse circumstances, we should not lament.

Value Based Questions

Question 1.

How do you usually understand the idea of selfishness ? Do you agree with Kisa Gotami that she was 'selfish' on her grief ? Is it natural for people to be selfish at times ? **[Value Based Question]**

Answer:

'Selfishness' means when a person does something only for his own benefit or thinks only about himself/ herself. Kisa Gotami was selfish in wanting her dead son to be alive. It was a mother's love which had blinded her. She was wrong in wanting that. She could not see the reality of life. It is perfectly natural for anyone to be selfish at times. When this desire becomes harmful to others or the demands become unrealistic, it is wrong. A little bit of selfishness is there in generally everyone and it is natural to be so.

Question 2.

How does Gautam Buddha make the human beings realize that death is common to all ?

Answer:

Value Points:

- life full of troubles and grief
- combined with pain after death
- death cannot be avoided
- no use crying/mourning
- accept death as truth brings less pain
- all are subject to death

Detailed Answer:

In his first sermon, Buddha makes the human being realise that death is common to all. It is true that human life is full of troubles and grief. After the death of the loved one, one's feelings are combined with pain. But life can't stop here. Death is inevitable. It cannot be avoided. So in such adverse situations, there is no use of crying and mourning. If we accept this universal truth of inevitable death, it will not only lessen the pain but also help us to tackle the situation.

Question 3.

The Buddha said, 'The world is afflicted with death and decay, therefore the wise do not grieve, knowing the terms of the world.' Do you think the statement is appropriate even for today's life ? Write your views in the context of the above statement. **[Value Based Question]**

Answer:

'Sakyamuni's' first Sermon at Benares was to accept death as a fact, as a truth that cannot change. Grieving and lamenting cannot lessen the pain or revive a dead one, but only make life more difficult.

'Man is mortal', is a harsh reality which is as steadfast as the various other natural phenomena. The cycle of birth and death is eternal and continues ceaselessly. Acceptance of this truth is important and in the light of the transient nature of life, one must strive to do at least one good deed every day and live life to the fullest.

Question 4.

Life is full of trials and tribulations. Kisa Gotami also passes through a period of grief in her life. How does she behave in those circumstances ? What lesson does a reader learn from the story of her life ? Give any two points how you would like to act in the midst of adverse circumstances. **[Value Based Question]**

Answer:

Life is full of trials and tribulations. Kisa Gotami also passes through a grief in her life when her only son died. She went from house to house in search of a medicine to cure him. She had become selfish in wanting her son back, but later she realised that man is immortal. The lesson we learn from her story is that peace of mind cannot be obtained by grieving. I would try to overcome my sorrow and accept the fact that human life is mortal, when faced with such a situation.

Question 5.

Answer the following question in 80-100 words : .

“The life of mortals in this world is troubled and brief and combined with pain ” With this statement of the Buddha, find out the moral value that Kisa Gotami learnt after the death of her child. **[Value Based Question]**

Answer:

Value Points:

Hints:

- Death is common to all, accept the truth, things not everlasting, detachment from mundane life, farsightedness.
- Weeping and grieving can not bring peace of mind.
- He who overcomes sorrow will be blessed.

Detailed Answer:

When Kisa's only son had died, she went to Buddha. Being plunged into deep grief, first she went to every neighbour, asking for medicine for her dead son. She had lost all her senses and forgot that no medicine could bring back the dead. Then she went to Buddha for making his son alive. Buddha asked her to bring some mustard seeds from a house where no death had occurred. But she couldn't find such a house. Buddha made her realise that death is common to all. So in the midst of adverse circumstances, we should not lament.
