

The Sermon at Benares – Important Questions

Q. Who was Gautama Buddha? When and where was he born?

Ans. Gautama 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’.

Q. Mention the incident which prompted Prince Siddhartha to become a beggar?

Ans. 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.

Q. Why was Kisa Gotami sad? What did she do in her hour of grief?

Ans. 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.

Q. What did the Buddha want Kisa Gotami to understand?

Ans. 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 the wise do not grieve after accepting this truth of death.

Q. Why did Prince Siddhartha (Gautama) leave the palace and become a monk?

Ans. While going out for hunting Prince Siddhartha saw a sick man, an aged man and then a funeral procession. Then he saw a beggar begging for alms. These sights mourned him very much. He realised that the world is full of sorrows. He thus turned into a monk.

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

Ans. 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 inevitable and that no one can deny the nature’s cycle.

Q. What did the Buddha say to Kisa Gotami?

Ans. The Buddha told Kisa Gotami that the life of mortals in this world was troubled and brief. It was combined with pain. Those who were born could not avoid dying. Such was the nature of living beings. All earthen pots made by the potter ended in being broken. Similarly, all were subject to death.

Q. What did Kisa Gotami do when her only son died? What did her neighbours think about her?

Ans. Kisa Gautami's only son had died. She was overwhelmed with grief. She carried the dead child to all her neighbours. She asked them for medicine to cure her son. The neighbours thought she had lost her senses. A dead child could never be cured.

Q. What did Kisa Gotami learn in the end?

Ans. 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.

Q. How did Buddha teach Kisa Gotami the truth of life?

Ans. 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.

Q. What did the Buddha do after he had attained enlightenment? Why?

Ans. 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.

Q. What does the Buddha say about the world?

Ans. 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.

Q. What lesson on death and suffering did Buddha teach Gotami in the chapter, 'The Sermon at Benares'?

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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. 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, therefore the wise do not grieve, knowing the terms of the world. Not from weeping nor from grieving will anyone obtain peace of mind.