
CBSE Class 10 English Language and Literature

NCERT Solutions

First Flight 10

The Sermon at Benares

Page No: 135 Thinking about the Text

1. When her son dies, Kisa Gotami goes from house to house. What does she ask for?

Does she get it? Why not?

Ans: When Kisa Gotami's son dies, she goes from house to house, asking if she could get some medicine that would cure her child. No, she does not get it because her child was dead and no medicine could bring back his life.

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?

Ans: When she meets the Buddha, he asks her to get a handful of mustard seeds from a house where no one has lost a child, husband, parent or friend. She goes from one house to another, but could not get the mustard seeds as there was not a single house where no one has died in the family.

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?

Ans: Kisa Gotami understands the truth of life that death is common to all and that she was being selfish in her grief. There was no house where some beloved had not died.

By sending her to different houses, Buddha wanted her to realize the fragile nature of human life. He also wanted her to rise above worldly matters so that the departed soul could rest in peace.

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

Ans: Kisa Gotami understood that death is common to all and that she was being selfish in her grief. She understood this only the second time because it was then that she found that

there was not a single house where some beloved had not died.

First time round, she was only thinking about her grief and was therefore asking for a medicine that would cure her son. When she met the Buddha, he asked her to get a handful of mustard seeds from a house where no one had died. He did this purposely to make her realize that there was not a single house where no beloved had died, and that death is natural. When she went to all the houses the second time, she felt dejected that she could not get the mustard seeds. Then, when she sat and thought about it, she realized that the circle of life is such that who is born, must die. Death is common to all. This was what the Buddha had intended her to understand.

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

Ans: Selfishness is preoccupation with I, me, and myself. Kisa Gotami was not in a position to think about other people’s grief. It is natural to feel sad over death of near and dear ones. But most people carry on their next responsibility of performing proper last rites of the dead. People seldom carry a dead body in the hope of some miracle happening to that. The family and the society always come together in hour of grief and sorrow. But Kisa Gotami was being ‘selfish in her grief’ and engrossed in her sorrow that she forgot to think about live members of her family and society.

Page No: 136 Thinking about the Language

I. This text is written in an old-fashioned style, for it reports an incident more than two millennia old. Look for the following words and phrases in the text, and try to rephrase them in more current language, based on how you understand them.

give thee medicine for thy child

Pray tell me

Kisa repaired to the Buddha

there was no house but someone had died in it

kinsmen

Mark!

Ans: 1. Give you medicine for your child

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2. Please tell me
 3. Kisa went to the Buddha
 4. There was no house where no one had died
 5. Relatives
 6. Listen
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II. You know that we can combine sentences using words like and, or, but, yet and then. But sometimes no such word seems appropriate. In such a case we can use a semicolon (;) or a dash (-) to combine two clauses.

She has no interest in music; I doubt she will become a singer like her mother.

The second clause here gives the speaker's opinion on the first clause.

Here is a sentence from the text that uses semicolons to combine clauses. Break up the sentence into three simple sentences. Can you then say which has a better rhythm when you read it, the single sentence using semicolons, or the three simple sentences?

For there is not any means by which those who have been born can avoid dying; after reaching old age there is death; of such a nature are living beings.

Ans: The single sentence using semicolons has a better rhythm. This is because the three parts of the sentence are connected to each other in their meanings. The second clause gives further information on the first clause. The third clause is directly related to both the first and the second. Their meanings are better conveyed when they are joined by semicolons.
