

## 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, who has surrendered all his selfishness, to immortality.

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, death is inevitable and is bound to happen sooner or later.

**Thinking about Language (Page 136)****Question 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!*

**Answer:**

- Give you medicine for your child
- Please tell me
- Kisa went to the Buddha
- There was not a single house where no one had died
- Relatives
- Listen

**Question 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.

**Answer:**

The single sentence using semicolons has a better cadence and rhythm. This implies that the three parts of the sentence are connected to each other in their meanings. The second clause gives a detailed information of the first clause. The third clause is therefore, directly related to both the first and the second clause. Their meanings are conveyed in a better way when they are joined by semicolons.

## Writing (Page 138)

**Question 1:**

Write a page (about three paragraphs) on one of the following topics. You can think about the ideas in the text that are relevant to these topics, and add your own ideas and experiences to them.

1. Teaching someone to understand a new or difficult idea
2. Helping each other to get over difficult times
3. Thinking about oneself as unique, or as one among billions of others

**Answer:**

Activity to be done by yourself.

## For Anne Gregory

### Thinking about the Poem (Page 141)

**Question 1:**

What does the young man mean by “great honey-coloured /Ramparts at your ear?” Why does he say that young men are “thrown into despair” by them?

**Answer:**

The young man in the poem praises the “great honey-coloured hair /Ramparts at Anne’s ear” to refer to her beautiful yellow coloured hair that gracefully falls behind her ear and covers it like a wall. Her hair is so attractive that young men hopelessly fall in love with her. They are “thrown into despair” because they are enchanted by Anne’s beauty as her hair beautifully falls behind her ear. She is so pretty that everyone wants her which is not possible hence, they are all thrown into despair.

**Question 2:**

What colour is the young woman’s hair? What does she say she can change it to? Why would she want to do so?

**Answer:**

Anne’s hair is yellow in colour just like honey. She says that she can dye it black, brown or carrot colour, which means that she can change it to any colour of her choice. She says so to express that outer beauty can be changed anytime, but that’s not real or permanent. She wants young men to look deep into her soul and wants them to love and appreciate her for her inner beauty rather than her external superficial appearance.

**Question 3:**

Objects have qualities which make them desirable to others. Can you think of some objects (a car, a phone, a dress...) and say what qualities make one object more desirable than another? Imagine you were trying to sell an object: what qualities would you emphasise?

**Answer:**

There are various objects having qualities in our lives that make it desirable to others. Here we bring to you a list of objects that make it desirable to others:

Object	Qualities
Car	Colour, speed, fuel consumption, brand
Dress	Pattern, colour, material, fit
Phone	Brand, technology, user-friendliness, memory, price
Bag	Design, colour, brand, price, style

While selling an object, a person should emphasise on the different features of the product and also help the buyer identify how it is better than other products in the market. Students can also add some points on their own to understand how best an object can be sold to a customer.

**Question 4:**

What about people? Do we love others because we like their qualities, whether physical or mental? Or is it possible to love someone “for themselves alone”? Are some people ‘more lovable’ than others? Discuss this question in pairs or in groups, considering points like the following.

- (i) a parent or caregiver’s love for a newborn baby, for a mentally or physically challenged child, for a clever child or a prodigy
- (ii) the public’s love for a film star, a sportsperson, a politician, or a social worker
- (iii) your love for a friend, or brother or sister
- (iv) your love for a pet, and the pet’s love for you.

**Answer:**

Every person has his/her own choices, likes and dislikes. Students are advised to answer the question based on their interpretation and personal experience. As humans, we all have our personal favourites based on our perception and situation in life. It is therefore, not wrong to like some person more than others.

- (i) A parent or caregiver’s love for a newborn baby, for a mentally or physically challenged child, for a clever child or a prodigy reflects their attentiveness and concern for them.
- (ii) The public’s love for a film star, a sportsperson, a politician or a social worker reflects our admiration and being awestruck about their personality.
- (iii) Your love for a friend or brother or sister reflects your love, compassion, empathy and a feeling of togetherness for them.
- (iv) Your love for a pet, and the pet’s love for you reflects the unconditional and selfless love towards each other.

**Question 5:**

You have perhaps concluded that people are not objects to be valued for their qualities or riches rather than for themselves. But elsewhere Yeats asks the question: How can we separate the dancer from the dance? Is it possible to separate ‘the person himself or herself’ from how the person looks, sounds, walks, and so on? Think of how you or a friend or member of your family has changed over the years. Has your relationship also changed? In what way?

**Answer:**

Students can write this answer as per their personal experiences. It is recommended that they think about their family and friends and attempt this question based on their interpretation and personal experiences.

Here are some hints that may help you:

1. Approach a friend or a family member and give it a thought whether you think of them as an individual or their physical appearance takes precedence.

2. Every person's way of thinking changes with age. A person needs to check it himself if his thought process has remained the same or improved / degraded with time.
3. Every person is unique and we should accept them as they are rather than criticizing them for anything.
4. It is well understood that our love and feelings for our loved ones undergo change in due course of time.
5. We should not judge people superficially for their looks or appearance, rather appreciate the person for his/her positive qualities.

