

The Sermon at Benares

The key to enlightenment is the way of the Buddha

The Sermon at Benares Introduction

The Sermon at Benares throws light upon the early life of Lord Buddha who was originally born as a prince in the royal family. On being exposed to the sufferings of the world which he was earlier shielded from, he left his priesthood and went in search of salvation thus leaving all the worldly pleasures behind. Upon attaining spiritual awakening, he gave his first sermon in the city of Benares hereby making a lady named Kisa Gotami realize that men are mortal and a wise person should not grieve at what is bound to happen for it only enhances pain and suffering.

Theme of the Lesson

The story is based on the concept of life and death. It explains the biggest truth that humans are mortal and death is the only truth. The concept of detachment from loved ones and the importance of silence for attaining inner peace have been discussed. The story of a misfortuned woman has been given so that the readers can understand the concept.

The Sermon at Benares Summary

Gautama Buddha was born to a North Indian royal family as a prince and was named Siddhartha Gautama. When he was twelve years old, he was sent to a far away place to study Hindu sacred scriptures and upon returning four years later, he got married to a princess. Soon, they both had a son and they continued to live the royal life for about ten years. The royals were shielded from all the unpleasant experiences of the world until one day, on his way to hunt, the Prince met a sick man, an aged man, a funeral procession and a monk begging for alms. These experiences acted as eye-openers for him and thus, he left all the royalty behind to seek a higher sense of spiritual knowledge. Upon attaining salvation, he began preaching. He gave his first sermon in the city of Benares. There was a lady named Kisa Gotami whose son had died. Suffering with unending pain, she went from house to house looking for medicine to bring her son back to life. People started thinking that the lady had lost her senses. One day, she met a man who directed her towards Lord Buddha who could possibly have a solution for her problem. Buddha asked her to look for mustard seeds and the seeds must be procured from a house that had seen no death. Reinstated with hope, Kisa Gotami once again went on a search from house to house but to her dismay, she could not find mustard seeds from a house that would fulfill Buddha's condition. Disheartened, she sat at the edge of the road thus realizing how selfish she had been. She became conscious to the fact that men were mortal and no one could escape the cycle of life. This was exactly what Buddha wanted her to understand. According to Lord Buddha, feelings of grief and sorrow only increase man's pain and suffering thus, deteriorating his health. Therefore, a wise person fully aware about nature's functioning must not grieve at something bound to happen and only then he can be happy and blessed.