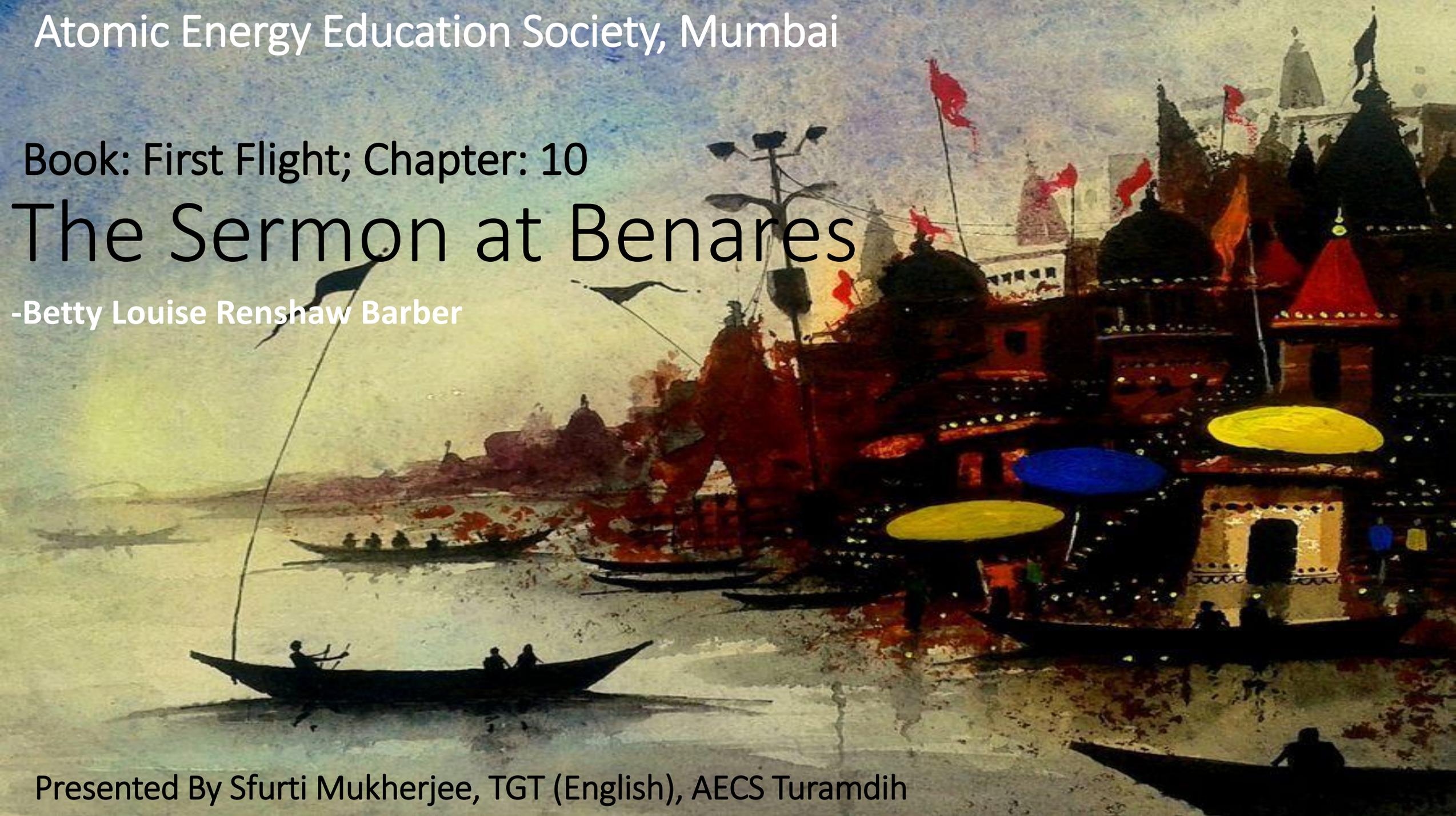


Atomic Energy Education Society, Mumbai

Book: First Flight; Chapter: 10

# The Sermon at Benares

-Betty Louise Renshaw Barber



Presented By Sfurti Mukherjee, TGT (English), AECS Turamdih

## About the author

Betty Louise Renshaw Barber was born in Shannon, Mississippi on September 3, 1927. Her parents were Mr. P. C. Renshaw and Mrs. Lillian Renshaw. She went on to obtain her Bachelor of Arts degree from Mississippi College, and later a Master of Arts from Mississippi University for Women. She was herself an active missionary worker and was always there to visit and support them in every possible way. Betty was dedicated to “serving God and loving others and often prayed that God would use her gifts for His glory”. She constantly reminded people around her about the Almighty’s infinite grace and kindness. Betty was just as active in showing God’s love as she was in talking about it. An embodiment of encouragement, support and kindness, her conversations and letters ended with the oft quoted line, “God loves you, and so do I.” Betty married Joseph Henry Barber, Jr. on December 23, 1950 and together they went on several missionary trips around the world. Married for 61 years, this pious and beautiful soul left for the Divine Abode on her eighty – sixth birthday, i.e. a year and after her husband’s demise.



# THEME

The first part witnesses the royal upbringing of Lord Buddha who is provided education as deemed important and useful, being a royal prince and his renouncing of all worldly pleasures including his family thereafter. His thirst of knowledge leads to his attainment of enlightenment at a very early age and he preaches his first sermon at the city of Benares on the River Ganges. This sermon reflects his understanding of the universal truth 'death', the pain associated with it and how to overcome it.



# ‘THE FIRST HALF’ – WHAT IS THERE TO READ?

- Born in a royal family in Northern India, Gautam Buddha was born in 563 BC and died in 483 BC. He was sent away for schooling at the age of twelve and mastered all the sacred Hindu Scriptures. This was followed by his marriage at the age of sixteen to a princess and the birth of his son. For ten years, he lived as befitted royalty. His life took a turn when he came across a sick man, an aged man, a funeral procession and a monk begging for alms once while out on hunting. He was so moved by these sights that he immediately left his family, all the royal luxuries and went out into the world in search of knowledge and truth. He wandered for seven years and finally sat down under a peepal tree where he vowed to stay until he was enlightened.
- Enlightened after seven days, he renamed the tree as the “Bodhi Tree” or the “Tree of Wisdom”. Soon, he got involved in preaching the people around him and sharing with them his new realisations of truth and knowledge. Thus, he came to be known as the “Buddha” or the “Awakened” or the “Enlightened”. His first sermon preached at Benares reflects his thoughts on ‘Death’ – “one inscrutable kind of suffering”. The universality of death was made clear by him.

# 'THE FIRST HALF' – WHAT IS THERE TO READ?

- A small incident is worth mentioning here. A woman called Kisa Gotami's only son had died and listening to someone's advice, she went to Lord Buddha requesting him to make her son alive. The Buddha thought for some time and then asked her to bring a handful of mustard seeds from any house which had never lost anyone of its beloved ones. Kisa Gotami became very happy as she thought it was such an easy task. Out she went happily to procure the seeds. However, none of the houses could help her out in this regard as all of them had lost some near and dear one at one or another point of time. She could find mustard seeds in every home but not a house where nobody had died. She realised that death was common to all. Just like the flickering lights of the city at night, mortal life also gets extinguished at one point of time. However, man can achieve immortality if he or she surrenders all "selfishness". Generosity, selflessness and truthfulness can purify man's soul.

# DIFFICULT WORDS & MEANINGS

*“GAUTAMA Buddha (563 B.C. – 483 B.C.) began life as a prince named Siddhartha Gautama, in northern India. At twelve, he was sent away for schooling in the Hindu sacred scriptures and four 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 out 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 went out into the world to seek enlightenment concerning the sorrows he had witnessed.”*

SL NO	WORD	MEANING
1	SACRED	HOLY
2	SCRIPTURES	SACRED WRITINGS OF A RELIGION
3	BEFITTED	SUITED
4	HERETOFORE	UNTIL THIS TIME
5	SHIELDED	PROTECTED
6	FUNERAL	CEREMONY HELD AFTER DEATH, INCLUDES BURIAL AND CREAMATION
7	PROCESSION	PARADE / MOVEMENT OF PEOPLE AS PART OF A CEREMONY
8	CHANCED UPON	MET BY CHNACE
9	MONK	MEMBER OF A RELIGIOUS ORDER LIVING AWAY FROM THE SOCIETY
10	ALMS	MONEY, FOOD OR ANY OTHER DONATION
11	ENLIGHTENMENT	STATE OF HIGH SPIRITUAL KNOWLEDGE
12	CONCERN /CONCERNING	RELATED TO
13	WITNESSED / WITNESS	WATCHED / WATCH SOMETHING HAPPEN

# DIFFICULT WORDS & MEANINGS

*“He wandered for seven years and finally sat down under a peepal 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. At that point he became known as the Buddha (the Awakened or the Enlightened). The Buddha preached his first sermon at the city of Benares, most holy of the dipping places on the River Ganges; that sermon has been preserved and is given here. It reflects the Buddha’s wisdom about one inscrutable kind of suffering.”*

SL NO	WORD	MEANING
1	PREACHED / PREACH	TAUGHT/ TO TEACH
2	SERMON	RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION
3	DIPPING PLACES	BATHING
4	PRESERVED	CONSERVED
5	INSCRUTABLE	MYSTERIOUS
6	VOWED	PLEDGED, PROMISED

# DIFFICULT WORDS & MEANINGS

*“Kisa Gotami had an only son, and he died. In her grief she carried the dead child to all her neighbours, asking them for medicine, and the people said, “She has lost her senses. The boy is dead.” At length, Kisa Gotami met a man who replied to her request, “I cannot give thee medicine for thy child, but I know a physician who can.” And the girl said, “Pray tell me, sir; who is it?” And the man replied, “Go to Sakyamuni, the Buddha.” Kisa Gotami repaired to the Buddha and cried, “Lord and Master, give me the medicine that will cure my boy.”*

SL NO	WORD	MEANING
1	GRIEF	SORROW
2	THEE	YOU
3	THY	YOUR
4	REPAIRED	WENT TO (STYLISTIC)

# DIFFICULT WORDS & MEANINGS

*“The Buddha answered, “I want a handful of mustard seed.” And when the girl in her joy promised to procure it, the Buddha added, “The mustard-seed must be taken from a house where no one has lost a child, husband, parent or friend.”*

*Poor Kisa Gotami now went from house to house, and the people pitied her and said, “Here is mustard seed; take it!” But when she asked, “Did a son or daughter, a father or mother, die in your family?” they answered her, “Alas! the living are few, but the dead are many. Do not remind us of our deepest grief.” And there was no house but some beloved one had died in it.*

SL NO	WORD	MEANING
1	PROCURE	ACQUIRE, OBTAIN
2	PITIED	FELT SORRY FOR SOMEONE’S MISFORTUNE
3	REMIND	HELP SOMEONE REMEMBER



THANK YOU