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Human Beings feel afraid of death just as children feel afraid of darkness; and just as children's fear of darkness is increased by the stories which they have heard about ghosts and thieves, human beings' fear of death is increased by the stories which they have heard about the agony of the dying man. If a human being regards death as a kind of punishment for the sins he has committed and if he looks upon death as a means of making an entry into another world, he is certainly taking a religious and sacred view of death. But if a human being looks upon death as a law of nature and then feels afraid of it, his attitude is one of cowardice. However, even in religious meditation about death there is something a mixture of folly and superstition. Monks have written books in which they have described the painful experience which they underwent by inflicting physical tortures upon themselves as a form of self-purification. Such books may lead one to think that, if the pain of even a finger being squeezed or pressed is unbearable, the pains of death must be indescribably agonizing. Such books thus increase a Man's fear of death.

Seneca, a Roman Philosopher, expressed the view that the circumstances and ceremonies of death frighten people more than death itself would do. A dying man is heard uttering groans; his body is seen undergoing convulsions; his face appears to be absolutely bloodless and pale; at his death his friends begin to weep and his relations put on mourning clothes; various rituals are performed. All these facts make death appear more horrible than it would be otherwise.

Questions

(i) What is the difference between human beings' fear of death and children's fear of darkness?

Children's fear of darkness is straightforward as it is only triggered by stories of ghosts and thieves. On the other hand, human being's fear is not only based on stories of torturous and painful death but also on religious beliefs, cultural practices and personal experiences.

(ii) What is a religious and sacred view of death?

If a human being considers death as a punishment of the sins or he think that after death he will enter into

another world then this is a religious view of death. On the other hand, if he considers death as a fundamental law it is termed as sacred view.

(iii) What are the painful experiences described by the Monks in their books?

Monks have undergone severe physical torture to purify themselves. Therefore, they have written in their books death must be more painful than this torture. Their painful and torturous experiences for purification do not justify the fear of death.

(iv) What are the views of Seneca about death?

Seneca expressed his views that death itself is not as frightening as people have made it. When someone dies, the mourning sounds, clothes and ceremonies make death frightening. But it is not as much horrible.

(v) What are the facts that make death appear more horrible than it would be otherwise?

There are several facts that make death appear more frightening such as moan of dying man, seizures in his body, his pale face and people weeping, wearing mourning clothes and baseless death ceremonies. All these facts make death more horrible than it would be otherwise.