



Grade IX

Lesson: 10 - Kathmandu

Prose

Soul of the Chapter

The present chapter is an extract from Vikram Seth's 'Heaven Lake'. Vikram Seth is a famous modern Indian writer who has written many novels, essays and travelogues. He has given a vivid description of the temples, markets and people of Kathmandu in this chapter. He describes in detail the atmosphere in and around Pashupatinath temple and Baudhnath in this chapter. He describes in detail the atmosphere in and around Pashupatinath temple and Baudhnath stupa. He has drawn powerful images and pictures of sights and sounds.

The atmosphere in and around the Pashupatinath temple and Baudhnath (stupa) differs totally. There is a sharp contrast between the two. At Pashupatinath temple, there is an atmosphere of excitement, noise and confusion. At Baudhnath stupa, there is a sense of stillness. This is a heaven of quietness in the busy streets around.

He tells us about a flute-seller who is selling flutes by playing meditatively on one of them. He is different from other sellers. Vikram Seth is fascinated with the flutes. He says that every culture has its own kind of flute creating a common bond between various cultures. The writer admits that he has an immense love for the music of flutes.

NCERT Questions

Think About the Text

I. Answer these questions in one or two words or in short phrases.

1. Name the two temples the author visited in Kathmandu

The two temples the author visited in Kathmandu were the Pashupatinath temple and the Baudhnath stupa.





2. The writer says, "All this I wash down with Coca Cola. " What does 'all this' refer to?

'All this' refers to eating a bar of marzipan, a corn-on-the-cob roasted in a charcoal stove (rubbed with salt, chilli powder and lemon), and reading a couple of love story, comics and a Reader's Digest.

3. What does Vikram Seth compare to the quills of a porcupine?

Vikram Seth compares the fifty or sixty *bansuris* protruding in all directions from the pole of a flute seller to the quills of a porcupine.

4. Name five kinds of flutes.

The reed *neh*, the Japanese *shakuhachi*, the deep *bansuri* of Hindustani classical music, the clear or breathy flutes of South America, and the high-pitched Chinese flutes.

II. Answer each question in a short paragraph.

1. What difference does the author note between the flute seller and the other hawkers?

The flute seller is different from other hawkers. He moves to different places playing the flute slowly and meditatively. He does not shout like other hawkers to sell his flute. The author found the music captivating.

2. What is the belief at Pashupatinath about the end of Kaliyug?

A small shrine half protrudes from the stone platform on the river Bagmati. It is believed that when it emerges fully, the goddess inside will escape and the evil period of the Kaliyug will end on the earth.

3. The author has drawn powerful images and pictures. Pick out three examples each of

- (i) the atmosphere of 'febrile confusion' outside the temple of Pashupatinath
(for example some people trying to get the priest's attention are elbowed aside...)
- (ii) the things he sees
- (iii) the sounds he hears

(i) The author has drawn powerful images and pictures of the atmosphere of 'febrile confusion' outside the temple of Pashupatinath. These include the following:





a group of saffron-clad Westerners struggling to enter the main gate as only Hindus were allowed to enter the temple; a fight that breaks out between two monkeys; and a royal Nepalese princess for whom everyone makes way.

(ii) He saw that the Baudhnath stupa had an immense white dome, which was ringed by a road. Small shops were there on the outer edge where felt bags, Tibetan prints and silver jewellery could be bought. There were no crowds there. On the busiest streets of Kathmandu, he saw fruit sellers, flute sellers, hawkers of postcards, shops selling Western cosmetics, film rolls, chocolate, copper utensils and Nepalese antiques.

(iii) The sounds he heard were film songs that were blaring out from the radios, car horns, bicycle bells, vendors shouting out their wares. He also listened to flute music, calling it the most universal and most particular of sounds.

III. Answer the following questions in not more than 100-150 words each.

1. Compare and contrast the atmosphere in and around the Baudhnath shrine with the Pashupatinath temple.

The atmosphere around the two holy places is in contrast to each other. At Pashupatinath temple there is an atmosphere of 'febrile confusion' and chaos. The priests, hawkers, devotees, tourists, birds and animals roam freely throughout the grounds. There is a large gathering of worshippers who are jostling with one another to get the attention of the priest. Some tourists from West also try to get entry in vain. There is a fight between two monkeys. The atmosphere is extremely noisy. In Baudhnath shrine, there is, in contrast, a sense of stillness. Beggars and the self-proclaimed messengers of God irritate me most at any religious place. In the name of God they bother not only the locals but the foreigners too. Extortion of money in the name of donation is another thing that disturbs the tourists at such places.

2. How does the author describe Kathmandu's busiest streets?

Along Kathmandu's narrowest and busiest streets, there are small shrines and flower-around deities. Apart from these, there are fruit sellers, flute sellers, hawkers of postcards, shops selling Western cosmetics, film rolls, chocolate, those selling copper utensils and Nepalese antiques. The author hears film songs that were blaring out from the radios, sounds of car horns and *bicycle* bells, vendors shouting out their wares. He says that stray cows roam about on the roads. He also draws a vivid picture of a flute seller with many *bansuris* protruding from his pole. He





describes how the serene music produced by the flute seller is heard clearly above all the other noise.

3. "The hear any flute is to be drawn into the commonality of all man king." Why does the author say this?

The author considers flute music to be "the most universal and most particular" of all sounds. This is a musical instrument that is common to all cultures. We have the reed *neh*, the recorder, the Japanese *shakuhachi*, the deep *bansuri* of Hindustani classical music, the clear or breathy flutes of South America, the high-pitched Chinese flutes, etc. Even though each of these has its specific fingering and compass yet, for the author, to hear any flute is "to be drawn into the commonality of all mankind". This is because in spite of their differences in caste, culture, religion, faith, all human beings are the same, with the same living breath running through all of them.

Thing about Language

II. 1. Use the suffixes -ion or -tion to form nouns from the following verbs. Make the necessary changes in the spelling of the words.

Example: proclaim - proclamation

Cremate _____	act _____	exhaust _____
Invent _____	tempt _____	immigrate _____
Direct _____	meditate _____	imagine _____
Dislocate _____	associate _____	dedicate _____
Create cremation	act action	exhaust exhaustion
Invent invention	tempt temptation	immigrate immigration
Direct direction	meditate meditation	imagine imagination
Dislocate dislocation	associate association	dedicate dedication

2. Now fill in the blanks with suitable words from the ones that you have formed.

(i) Mass literacy was possible only after the _____ of the printing machine.





(ii) Ramesh is unable to tackle the situation as he lacks _____.

(iii) I could not resist the _____ to open the letter.

(iv) Hard work and _____ are the main keys to success.

(v) The children were almost fainting with _____ after being made to stand in the sun.

(i) Mass literacy was possible only after the **invention** of the printing machine.

(ii) Ramesh is unable to tackle the situation as he lacks **direction**.

(iii) I could not resist the **temptation** to open the letter.

(iv) Hardwork and **dedication** are the main keys to success.

(v) The children were almost fainting with **exhaustion** after being made to stand in the sun.

III. Punctuation

Use capital letters, full stops, question marks, commas and inverted commas where necessary in the following paragraph.

an Arrogant lion was wandering through the jungle one day he asked the tiger who is stronger than you O lion replied the tiger who is more fierce than a leopard asked the lion you sir replied the leopard he marched up to an elephant and asked the same questions the elephant picked him up in his trunk swung him in the air and threw him down look said the lion there is no need to get mad just because you don't know the answer.

An arrogant lion was wandering through the jungle. One day, he asked the tiger, "Who is stronger than you?" "You, O lion!" replied the tiger. "Who is more fierce than a leopard?" asked the lion. "You sir," replied the leopard. He marched up to an elephant and asked the same question. The elephant picked him up in his trunk, swung him, in her air, and threw him down. "Look," said the lion, "there is no need to get mad just because you don't know the answer."

IV. Simple Present Tense

Study these sentences from the lesson.

- A fight breaks out between two monkeys.
- Film songs blare out from the radios.





- I wash it down with Coca-Cola.

The italicised verbs are in the simple present tense. The writer is here describing what he saw and heard but he uses the present tense instead of the past tense. A narration or a story can be made more dramatic or immediate by using the present tense in this way.

Now look at the following sentences.

- A small shrine half protrudes from the stone platform on the riverbank.
- Small shops stand on the outer edge of the stupa.

We use the simple present tense to speak about what is usually or generally true. The sentences above describe facts. We also use the simple present tense in sentences depicting 'universal truths'.

For example:

- The sun rises in the east.
- The earth revolves round the sun.

We can also refer to habitual actions using the simple present tense.

- He usually takes a train instead of a bus to work.
- We often get fine drizzles in winter.

In these sentences, words like every day, often, seldom, never, every month, generally, usually, etc. may be used.

1. Fill in the blanks with the correct form of the verb in brackets.

(i) The heart is a pump that _____ (send) the blood circulating through our body. The pumping action _____ (take place) when the left ventricle of the heart _____ (contract). This _____ (force) the blood out into the arteries, which _____ (expand) to receive the oncoming blood.

The heart is a pump that sends the blood circulating through our body. The pumping action takes place when the left ventricle of the heart contracts. This forces the blood out into the arteries, which expands to receive the oncoming blood.

(ii) The African lungfish can live without water for up to four years. During a drought it _____ (dig) a pit and _____ (enclose) itself in a capsule of slime and earth, leaving a tiny opening for air. The capsule _____ (dry) and _____ (harden), but when rain _____ (come), the mud _____ (dissolve) and the lungfish _____ (swim) away.





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(iii) **MAHESH** : We have to organise a class party for our teacher. _____
(Do) anyone play an instrument?

VIPUL : Rohit _____ (play) the flute.

MAHESH : _____ (Do) he also act?

VIPUL : No, he _____ (compose) music.

MAHESH : That's wonderful!

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SOLVED QUESTION BANK

Reference-to-Context Questions

Q. Read the following extracts carefully and answer the questions that follow.

1. A corpse is being cremated on its banks; washerwomen are at their work and children bathe. From a balcony, a basket of flowers and leaves, old offerings now wilted, is dropped into the river.

(a) The river being talked about is the _____.

Bagmati river

(b) _____ were taking shower in the river.

Children





- (c) Basket of flowers and leaves, corpse, bathing of people pollute the water of the Bagmati river. (True/False)

True

- (d) The word 'corpse' means _____.

'A dead body'

2. A small shrine half protrudes from the stone platform on the river bank. When it emerges fully, the goddess inside will escape, and the evil period of the Kaliyug will end on earth.

- (a) A _____ is half sunk into the river.

Small shrine

- (b) The _____ period of the _____ will end the day the shrine would fully emerge into water.

Evil, Kaliyug

- (c) The shrine is not near the bank of the river. (True/False)

False

- (d) _____ in the above lines means same as 'sticks out'.

'Protrudes'

3. At the Baudhnath stupa, the Buddhist shrine of Kathmandu, there is, in contrast, a sense of stillness. Its immense white dome is ringed by a road. Small shops stand on its outer edge: many of these are owned by Tibetan immigrants; felt bags, Tibetan prints and silver jewellery can be bought here.

- a. _____ has an immense white dome.

The Baudhnath Stupa

- b. Most of the surrounding shops are owned by _____.

Tibetan immigrants

- c. It is the most important shrine of Kathmandu and its immense white dome is ringed by a road. (True/False)

True





d. The opposite of the word 'outer' is _____.

'Inner'

4. Kathmandu is vivid, mercenary, religious, with small shrines to flower-adorned deities along the narrowest and the busiest streets; with fruit-sellers, flute-sellers, hawkers of postcards; shops selling Western cosmetics, film rolls and chocolates; or copper utensils and Nepalese antiques.

a. _____ has many small shrines.

Kathmandu

b. _____ are used for decorating deities.

Flowers

c. At Kathmandu, one can easily come across shops selling Indian cosmetics.
(True/False)

False

d. The word in the passage which means the same as 'money-oriented' is _____.

'Mercenary'

5. In his hand is a pole with an attachment at the top from which fifty or sixty *bansuris* protrude in all directions, like the quills of a porcupine. They are of bamboo: there are cross-flutes and recorders. From time to time, he stands the pole on the ground, selects a flute and plays for a few minutes.

a. The author gets attracted by a _____ in the market.

Flute seller

b. The man _____ the flute to entertain people.

Plays

c. The literary device used in the second line is _____.

Simple

d. His flutes are made out of iron. (True/False)

False





6. I find it difficult to tear myself away from the square. Flute music always does this to me; it is at once the most universal and most particular of sounds.

a. 'I' here refers to _____.

Vikram Seth

b. _____ is the most universal and most particular of sounds.

Flute music

c. The author was found of listening to the music of flute. (True/False)

True

d. 'Tear myself away' means _____.

'To find it difficult to leave'

7. That I can be so affected by a few familiar phrases on the bansuri, surprises me at first from the previous occasions that I have returned home after a long absence abroad.

a. _____ is a musical instrument on which music is played.

Bansuri

b. The _____ surprised the author most.

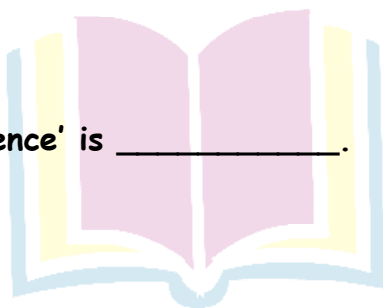
Tune of bansuri

c. Earlier, the author had never noticed something in depth as he noticed the flute seller.

True

d. The antonym of 'absence' is _____.

'presence'



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Short Answer Questions

1. How was the atmosphere at Pashupatinath?

The atmosphere at Pashupatinath was confusing and feverish. There was febrile confusion. The priests, hawkers, tourists and animals were roaming around aimlessly. Devotees were pushing one another to go to the front.

2. Why did the policeman stop the party of Westerners in the temple?

Only Hindu devotees are allowed entry in the Pashupatinath temple. There was a party of tourists from the West who wanted permission to enter the temple. The policeman was not convinced that they were Hindus. So he stopped them from entering the temple.

3. What were the activities which one can notice at the Bagmati river?

Bagmati is the holiest river in Kathmandu. Its bank is always busy in religious ceremonies. One can see people throwing offerings in it. Corpses are also cremated at the river bank. Washerwomen wash clothes and children take bath in the river.

4. How was the atmosphere at the Baudhnath shrine?

The atmosphere at the Baudhnath Shrine was very calm, quiet and peaceful. There was a sense of stillness in and around Baudhnath Shrine. There was no crowd and hustle and bustle around the bazaar too.

5. What did the author buy from Kathmandu?

The author enjoyed his stay in the Kathmandu bazaar. He was very happy. He bought for himself a bar of Marzipan, a roasted corn-on-the-cob which was rubbed with salt and chilli powder and lemon. He bought some books too.

Long Answer Questions

1. Describe the Kathmandu bazaar in your own words. Do you think these bazaars are helpful for the locals for developing a social bond?

The Kathmandu Bazaar is full of activities. Here we find fruit-sellers, flute-sellers and hawkers of postcards. The bazaar is full of noise and chaos all around. In the bazaar, there are many shops selling Western cosmetics, film rolls and





chocolates. There are some shops which sell copper utensils and Nepalese antiques. The atmosphere is full of music. There is sound of film songs coming out from the radio. He has various types of flutes which have unique appeal. Yes, these markets are very helpful to the locals. They get employment and an opportunity to display their talent and values inherent in their culture. Moreover, people from different cultures come there and get acquainted. This develops a special bond among them.

- 2. Describe the flute-sellers' pattern of life. Do you feel that such talents are generally ignored and never get opportunity to excel in their life? What should be done for such talents?**

The flute-seller selects a flute from his collection and plays for a few minutes from time to time. He does not shout to sell the flutes. Rather, he plays meditatively. The author feels fascinated towards the flute-seller. For the seller, playing the flute is more important than selling them. Yes, these local artists don't get a platform to show their talent. They are often ignored. Their talent dies in silence. There should be some activities in these fairs or markets where the talent of such artists is highlighted. The world should come to know about them. Once these artists are identified, the government should support them in their growth. The media should give them an opportunity to show their talent.

- 3. The author finds a lot of confusion outside the temple in Kathmandu. What were the confusions about? Is this type of confusion common in our temples?**

The author finds a lot of confusion outside the temple in Kathmandu. What were priests, hawkers, devotees, tourists mingled with the birds and animals. The worshippers pushed one another to be in the front line. Policemen were busy in dealing with the foreigners whom they suspected to be non-Hindus. Temples should be some activities in these fairs or markets where the talent of such artists is highlighted. The world should come to know about them. Once these artists are identified, the government should support them in their growth. The media should give them an opportunity to show their talent.

- 4. Bagmati is the holy river in Kathmandu where some religious and non-religious activities are undertaken. Rivers are considered pious in our country and are worshipped. According to you, what is the best way to show our reverence to the holy rivers?**

Bagmati is the holy river in Kathmandu. People cremate corpse on its bank. Washerwomen wash their clothes in the river. Children and animals take bath in it. Devotees throw flowers and used garlands in it. All these activities pollute the river.





Rivers are considered pious in our country. They are our lifeline. Ganga, Yamuna and Saraswathi are the rivers that we worship. But in the name of religion, we often pollute them. We throw the garbage and other harmful chemicals in them. At the time of Pooja we submerge the offerings in poly bags which not only pollute the river but kills the water animals. The best way to worship the rivers is to keep them clean. They are the lifelines of a country. By keeping them clean, we can truly show our reverence towards them.



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