

Kathmandu - Vikram Seth

Answers to NCERT Questions

THINKING ABOUT THE TEXT

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

1. Name the two temples the author has visited in Kathmandu.

Ans: The two temples the author visited in Kathmandu are the Pashupatinath Temple and the Baudhnath Stupa.

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

Ans: While drinking Coco Cola, the author consumes a bar of marzipan, a roasted corn-on-cob (rubbed with salt chilli powder and lime) and also reads two love story comics and a Reader's Digest.

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

Ans: The author is comparing the pole made of bamboo, with an attachment on the top from which fifty to sixty bansuris protrude in all directions, to the quills of the porcupine.

4. Name five kinds of flutes.

Ans: The five kinds of flutes are the reed neh, the recorder, the Japanese shakuhachi, the deep bansuri of Hindustani classical music, the clear 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?

Ans: The flute seller selects a flute from his collection and plays it for a few minutes. The sound rises clearly above the noise of the traffic and the hawkers' cries. He plays slowly, meditatively, without too much of aggressive display. He does not shout his wares as the other hawkers do. His music attracts his customers and he sells his wares in a very casual manner.

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

Ans: At Pashupatinath, a small shrine half protrudes from the stone platform on the river bank. It is believed that when the shrine emerges fully, the Goddess inside will escape, and the evil period of the Kaliyug will end on 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

Ans: (i) Outside the Pashupatinath temple, hangs a sign that says 'entrance for Hindus only' and there is an atmosphere of febrile confusion. The priests, hawkers, devotees, tourists, cows, monkeys, pigeons and dogs roam around the temple grounds. Worshippers elbow each other trying to get the priest's attention. Suddenly, if the princess of the royal family arrives, everybody bows down and makes way for her. There is a struggle at the main gate between the police and some saffron clad westerners. In between all this, two monkeys begin a wild chase and run down to the holy Bagmati river, screaming all the way.

(ii) On the banks of Bagmati, he sees a body being cremated, someone was throwing a basket of wilted flowers into the river, washerwomen were at work while the children were bathing. He also sees the submerged shrine. He sees the Pashupatinath Temple and the Baudhnath Stupa. The stupa and its ambience is in stark contrast to the temple. At Kathmandu, he sees several flower bedecked shrines, narrow busy streets, with fruit sellers, flute sellers, hawkers of various products, and the stray cows who loiter questioning at the two-wheelers.

(iii) The sounds he hears are that of the loud music on the streets that blare out from radios, the sounds of car and bike horns, the bicycle bells, and the loud sounds of the hawkers selling their wares. The only sound that appealed to the author was that of the flute player who produced wonderful music. The melody of the music made it difficult for the author to leave the square.

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.

Ans: The author has made a very distinct comparison of the ambience in both the holy places. At the Pashupatinath temple, the atmosphere is fairly chaotic and loud. Everybody is in a wild hurry to establish contact with the priest. The entire premises is packed with men and animals, who vied (to compete) with each other to test who could be louder. Visiting rights to the temple is restricted to Hindus. The river beside the temple was also brimming with activity.

In contrast to this, the Baudhnath shrine presented a strange stillness and calm. Its immense white dome is ringed by a road. Small shops owned by Tibetan immigrants, are found at the outer edge. The place is devoid (lacks) of huge crowds. The author says that it is a haven of quietness despite the streets around being busy.

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

Ans: Kathmandu is a vivid, mercenary, yet religious place that has a number of small shrines along the narrow roads. The busiest street is full of fruit sellers, flute sellers, hawkers of postcards, shops selling western cosmetics, film rolls and chocolates, or copper utensils and Nepalese antiques. He is introduced to the blaring of film songs that are emerging from the radios. Besides, there is the traffic that contributes in adding to the confusion on the streets. Finally, the vendors who shout out their wares. In contrast to all this chaos is the flute seller whose soulful music spreads through the air, above all the other sounds as he plays on it in-between selling them and talking to the other vendors.

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

Ans: Vikram Seth considers the music that flows out of the flute to be 'most universal and most particular of sounds'. He says that each flute has a different style of placing the fingers to produce different notes and their own range and scale, and each one weaves together their own associations or combinations. To hear the flute is to be drawn into the commonality of all mankind, as its tune is the closest to the human voice. The force that keeps both the flute and man alive is the need to breathe, and pause in between every breath. He was surprised that the flute was able to affect him so significantly.

THINKING ABOUT LANGUAGE

I. Read the following sentences carefully to understand the meaning of the italicised phrases. Then match the phrasal verbs in Column A with their meanings in Column B.

1. A communal war broke out when the princess was abducted by the neighbouring prince.
2. The cockpit broke off from the plane during the plane crash.
3. The car broke down on the way and we were left stranded in the jungle.
4. The dacoit broke away from the police as they took him to court.
5. The brothers broke up after the death of the father.
6. The thief broke into our house when we were away.

Ans:

A	B
(i) break out	(a) to come apart due to force

(ii) break off	(b) end a relationship
(iii) break down	(c) break and enter illegally; unlawful trespassing
(iv) break away (from someone)	(d) of start suddenly, (usually a fight, a war or a disease)
(v) break up	(e) to escape from someone's grip
(vi) break into	(f) stop working

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II. Answer the following questions

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

Example: proclaim –proclamation

cremate	_____	act	_____	exhaust	_____
invent	_____	tempt	_____	immigrate	_____
direct	_____	meditate	_____	imagine	_____
dislocate	_____	associate	_____	dedicate	_____

Ans:

cremat(e) ion	act- ion	exhaust - ion
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invent- ion	tempt-a tion	immigrat (e) ion
direct - ion	meditat(e) ion	imagin (e) a- tion
dislocat (e) ion	associat (e) ion	dedicat (e) ion

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) Hardwork and _____ are the main keys to success.
- (v) The children were almost fainting with _____ after being made to stand in the sun.

Ans:

- (i) Mass literacy was possible only after the invention of the printing machine.
- (ii) Ramesh is unable to tackle the situation as he lacks dedication.
- (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

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

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 upto an elephant and asked the same question 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

Ans: 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 upto an elephant and asked the same question. The elephant picked him up in his trunk and swung him in the air and threw him down. "Look said the lion, "there is not need to get mad just because

you don't know the answer.

IV. Simple Present Tense

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.

Ans:

(i) 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.

Ans:

(ii) The African lungfish can live without water for up to four years. During a drought it digs a pit and encloses itself in a capsule of slime and earth, leaving a tiny opening for air. The capsule dries and hardens, but when rain comes, the mud dissolves and the lungfish swims away.

(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!

Ans:

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

VIPUL: Rohit plays the flute.

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MAHESH: That's wonderful.

WRITING

Diary entry for a travelogue

I. The text you read is a travelogue where the author, Vikram Seth, talks about his visit to two sacred places in Kathmandu.

Imagine that you were with Vikram Seth on his visit to Pashupatinath temple, and you were noting down all that you saw and did there, so that you could write a travelogue later.

Record in point form

- what you see when you reach the Pashupatinath temple
- what you see happening inside the temple
- what you do when inside the temple
- what you see outside the temple
- what your impressions are about the place

Ans: The first thing I saw was a huge idol of Nandi, the cow.

I noticed people clamouring (shouting loudly) for the attention of the priest.

I generally fold my hands and say prayers in praise the deity.

I notice people selling items that are required for pooja.

My impression about the place is very non-judgemental. People come to express their sorrow or joy, and struggle to get a glimpse of the deity, in between the teeming (full of people, large groups of people) crowds.

II. Here is your diary entry when you visited Agra. Read the points and try to write a travelogue describing your visit to Agra and the Taj Mahal. You may add more details.

January 2003 — rise before dawn — take the Shatabdi Express at 6.15 a.m. from Delhi — meet a newly-married couple on train — talk about Himachal Pradesh — get off the train — enter the once-grand city, Agra — twisted alleys — traffic dense — rickshaws, cars, people — vendors selling religious artifacts, plastic toys, spices and sweets — go to the Taj Mahal — constructed entirely of white marble — magical quality — colour changes with varying of light and shadow — marble with gemstones inside — reflection

of the Taj Mahal in the pond — school-children, tourists — tourist guides following people.

Ans:

3 January 2003

Friday 8 p.m.

Dear Diary,

I woke up early this morning, before the break of dawn, as I had to take the Shatabdi Express at 6.15 a.m. from Delhi. As I settled down, I noticed a newly married couple sitting on the seat opposite to mine. We got into a conversation, and began discussing about Himachal Pradesh. I got off the train, and put my foot for the first time in my life on the grand old city, Agra. I was amazed to see the twisted alleys. As is common in Delhi, the traffic was dense and the roads crowded here too, comprising of rickshaws, cars, and pedestrians. Alongside, there were vendors selling religious artifacts, plastic toys, spices and sweets. After strolling along the narrow streets, I went to visit the Taj Mahal. I had only read about the monument, and seen it in pictures. I gaped in wonder, on seeing the magical structure made in pure white marble. It was a treat to see the colour of the marble changing, with the varying of light and shadow. It was magical! The marble had beautiful gemstones embedded inside that added to its beauty. The reflection of the Taj Mahal in the adjacent pond was a treat to the eye. As it was the winter break for the children, there were many children, tourists and guides, all around the place.

I enjoyed the experience. I am planning to visit the place tomorrow once again.

Good night

Additional Questions

Extract Based Questions

Read the following extracts carefully and answer the questions that follow: (4 Marks each)

1. “I get a cheap room in the centre of town and sleep for hours. “ I visited two temples Kathmandu.

(a) Who is ‘I’?

(b) Which town is being spoken about here?

(c) What was the reason for ‘I’ being in the town?

(d) Name the two temples referred here.

Ans:

- (a) 'I' refers to the author, Vikram Seth.
- (b) He is talking about the town of Kathmandu.
- (c) The author who loves to travel was here in the town during one such occasion.
- (d) Pashupatinath temple and Baudhnath Shrine are the two temples referred here.

2. "One chases the other, who jumps onto a shivalinga, then runs screaming around

- (a) Who are 'one' and 'other'?
- (b) What made them chase each other?
- (c) Where were the two?
- (d) What did they do?

Ans:

- (a) 'One' and 'other' are monkeys.
- (b) A fight breaks out between them and they begin chasing each other.
- (c) The two monkeys were in the premises of the Pashupatinath temple.
- (d) One of them fell on to the Shivalinga. They were screaming and running around the temples and went down to the banks of the river Bagmati.

3. "Film songs blare out from the radios, car horns sound, bicycle bells ring, stray cows low

- (a) Who has written these lines?
- (b) Which lesson has the extract been taken from?
- (c) Where is the above mentioned activities taking place?
- (d) Whom does the cow 'low' at?

Ans:

- (a) The author Vikram Seth has written these lines.
- (b) The extract has been taken from the lesson, "Kathmandu.
- (c) The activities are taking place on the busiest streets of Kathmandu.
- (d) The cow lows questioningly at the motorcycles.

4. "I have returned home after a long absence abroad. I have hardly noticed such details

- (a) Who is 'I'?
- (b) Where has 'I' returned from?
- (c) What had he not noticed?
- (d) Why does he make the observation?

Ans:

- (a) 'I' is the author, Vikram Seth.
- (b) 'I' has returned from a long journey from China to India, via Tibet and Nepal.
- (c) He had not noticed that he could be affected by the music that flows out of a bansuri.
- (d) He makes the observation because earlier he had not invested the time and significance to the music, as he had done during the recent visit.

Short Answer Questions (30-40 words: 2 Marks each)

1. What is the impression that comes to your mind when you read about the description by the author about the Pashupatinath temple?

Ans: It gives me a lot of delight to read about the lively ambience, the author has said, that prevails around the temple. It is wonderful to know that the temple premises are free for all God's creations—man, animal and birds alike. The sound and rush may be annoying to some, but the fun is to reach the inner abode of the deity, and being able to pray to the God/Goddess, peacefully after overcoming the hurdles. The only thing that disturbed me was the instruction at the gate about the restricted entry into the temple.

2. What would the lifestyle of the people here be like?

Ans: Being a distinctly holy place, the people around here would be strictly following the rules and regulations prescribed. Their occupations may primarily be vendors, hawkers, flower and pooja material sellers, tourist guides, and ofcourse priests. Life may perhaps be revolving around the temple and its deity.

3. Which is 'the haven of quietness', according to the author? Explain.

Ans: According to the author, the second shrine he visited, the Baudhnath Shrine, was a haven of quietness. There was a sense of stillness within the white dome, that was surrounded by a road, at the outer edge of which Tibetan immigrants sold their products. He says that there were no crowds or sound anywhere.

4. What were the ideas for the return journey that flashed through the author's mind?

Ans: The author was now considering as to how he should go back home. In his keenness to travel, he would go by bus and train to Patna, then sail up the Ganges past

Benaras to Allahabad, then up the Yamuna, past Agra to Delhi. He was however, very exhausted and homesick, therefore, he pushes himself to fly directly home and books his tickets for the following day.

Long Answer Questions (100-150 words: 8 Marks each)

1. Write a paragraph on your experience while visiting a holy shirne.

Ans: It was in the month of May, when the heat of the sun was at its peak, that the family decided to go on a pilgrimage to Rameswaram. My father decided that there was no need to go for any tour packages. His friends had advised that the best option was to hire a vehicle, as locally the travel charges were too high. Besides, it would give us the flexibility to time the journey according to our requirements. We planned to break journey at Madurai as we were travelling from Bangalore. After that, we drove down to Rameswaram. We visited the Madurai Meenakshi Temple at Madurai and the Ramanathaswamy Temple at Rameswaram. It was a very pleasant journey. There were huge crowds of people, all waiting eagerly, yet patiently for their turn to catch a glimpse of their deity.

2. As the author, make a diary entry of your visit to the Pashupatinath Temple.

Ans:

Thursday, 29 August 2001

9 p.m.

Dear Diary,

Today, I had been to visit the famous Pashupatinath Temple at Kathmandu. It was a very different and challenging experience for me. I was first of all taken aback by the notice that prevented non-hindus from entering the temple. I put that at the back of my mind and proceeded into the temple. I was greeted by different kinds of animals and birds, who roamed around quite comfortably, and not harming the devotees in any manner. As I moved further to get into the inner walls of the temple, I noticed people clamouring for the attention of the priest. People were chanting prayers, elbowing each other, in their earnest to pray to God. I came out after offering my prayers and lingered around the premises observing all that happened there. Along the narrow streets, and dense traffic, business continued as usual. All the people, despite the sound and rush, seemed to be at peace with themselves.

It has been a very long and tiring day. A wonderful experience!

Good night

Self- Assessment Test

Extract Based Questions

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

1. **“But I am too exhausted and homesick; today is the last day of August.**

- (a) Who was exhausted?
- (b) What does ‘homesick’ mean?
- (c) Why is the speaker homesick?
- (d) In which context has this been said’?

2. **“He plays meditatively without excessive display. He does not shout out his wares.**

- (a) Who is playing? What is he playing?
- (b) What does ‘meditatively without excessive display’ mean?
- (c) What is the comparison being made by the author?
- (d) How does ‘he’ make his sale?

Short Answer Questions

- 1. Describe the activities done by the two monkeys in the story, ‘Kathmandu’.
- 2. Why did the author decide to go home?
- 3. Where would you like to spend more time, at the Pashupatinath Temple or the Baudhnath Shrine? Why?
- 4. Write a short paragraph on the flute seller.
- 5. Why could the author not move from the square?

Long Answer Questions

- 1. Write a letter to your friend, telling her about your plans to go to Kathmandu. Also ask her, if she would like to go along. You are Anand/Anjali.
- 2. Why does the author call ‘febrile confusion’ to the atmosphere at Pashupatinath Temple?
- 3. What do you have to say about the naughty monkey? Have you encountered or observed any bird or animal and their behaviour? Write a short paragraph on it.