



Notes of Chapter 10 – Kathmandu

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

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

Ans: Pashupatinath temple and Boudhanath stupa.

2. The writer says, “All this I wash down with Coca Cola.” What does ‘all this’ refer to?

Ans: Here, ‘all this’ refers to a bar of marzipan, a corn-on-the-cob rubbed with salt, chili, and lemon roasted in a charcoal stove and reading a few love story comics and a reader’s digest.

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

Ans: Vikram Seth compares a flute seller to the quills of a porcupine. The flute seller was holding a long pole that had around fifty to sixty flutes at its top.

4. Name five kinds of flutes.

Ans: The following are the 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
- 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 author sees that while other vendors were shouting to attract the customers, the flute seller frequently selected one of his flutes and played it slowly, meditatively. He also made occasional sales. This is the difference the author notes between the flute seller and the other hawkers.

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



Ans: At Pashupatinath, there is a small shrine that half protrudes from the stone platform at the bank of the Bagmati river. It is believed that when it fully emerges, the goddess inside will come out and then the evil kalyug period will end.

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

1. The atmosphere of 'febrile confusion outside the temple of Pashupatinath (for example some people trying to get the priest's attention are elbowed aside...)

Ans: The pictures of 'febrile confusion outside the temple of Pashupatinath drawn by the author are: two monkeys fighting with each other, a royal Nepalese princess for whom everybody makes way, and a group of saffron-clad westerners struggling to enter the temple as the temple allowed only Hindus to enter.

2. The things he sees

Ans: The author has drawn very powerful and beautiful images of what he sees. Some are as follows: the things he sees at the Pashupatinath temple and Boudhanath stupa, like, the hawkers selling flutes, fruits, postcards, and various shops selling western cosmetics, chocolate, Nepalese antiques and copper utensils, etc.

3. The sounds he hears

Ans: The sounds he hears are, the sound of various hawkers and vendors shouting out their wares, the sound of movie songs coming out of the radio, the sounds of car horns and bicycle bell rings, etc.

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 Pashupathinath temple.

Ans: The main difference between the atmosphere at the Baudhnath shrine and the Pashupatinath temple is that the Pashupatinath temple was a noisy and highly chaotic place while the atmosphere at the Baudhnath shrine was quite calm.



At Pashupatinath temple, there were so many things happening simultaneously and adding to the chaos. For example, the monkeys were fighting, people were struggling to enter the temple. The people were pushing each other to get to the front and struggling to get the attention of the priest. At the bank of the river Bagmati, washerwomen were washing their clothes while a corpse was being cremated.

On the contrary, the Baudhnath shrine was very quiet. There was no crowd. The author felt that it was a heaven of quietness in the busy streets around.

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

Ans: The author describes the busiest streets of Kathmandu on the basis of the things he sees and the sounds he hears. The author describes that along the busiest streets of Kathmandu, there were several small shrines and flower-adorned deities. Also, there were many hawkers selling fruits, flutes, postcards, copper utensils, film rolls, chocolates, and some Nepalese antiques shouting out their wares.

He also hears some sounds on these streets, such as the sound of movie songs blaring out of a radio, sounds of the honking of the cars, and the sound of bicycle bells.

The author also draws a beautiful picture of the flute seller not shouting but producing calm music with his flutes which could be heard over the honking of the vehicles and the shouting of other vendors.

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

Ans: The author believes that the music of a flute is "the most universal and most particular" of all the music. The flute is present in all cultures. There are different types of flutes used around the world, be it 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. Even though these different flutes have different fingering and compass, but, the author believes that in spite of their differences, all the flutes produce music with the help of the human breath. Hence, for an author, "to hear any flute is to be drawn into the commonality of all mankind" because just like flutes, humans also have the same living breath running through all of



them despite the differences in their caste, culture, religion, region, etc. The author believes that all human beings are the same.

