



QUESTION BANK -SILK ROAD

Class: XI

Sub: ENGLISH

THEME

This chapter is part of a travelogue about the author's travel along the ancient trade route called 'Silk Road'. This account of the Silk Road, with its contrasts and exotic details, describes the challenges and hardships the author faced while undertaking his journey to Mount Kailash on a pilgrimage.

CHARACTERS

Nick Middleton (Narrator)- Nick Middleton, the narrator of the story is a young, curious, and adventurous traveler from England. He is a professor of Geography at Oxford University and an environmental consultant. He is on a journey to Mount Kailash. He is quite brave, courageous, and daring. He is open-minded, eager to explore new cultures, and has a strong sense of adventure. He is also shown to be observant and perceptive, paying attention to intricate details during his journey. He faces many obstacles during his journey. He shows great adaptability throughout his journey. He interacts with the locals and learns from them, which helps him overcome various obstacles and adjust to different environments.

Daniel -Daniel was the translator whom Nick Middleton had hired. He helped the narrator to communicate with the local Tibetans. He accompanied the narrator up to the town of Hor. There he parted from him as he was supposed to go to Lhasa. Fortunately, he got a ride in a truck to Lhasa.

Tsetan- Tsetan was a local Tibetan whose profession was to ferry visitors or tourists to places of interest in Tibet. He was the owner of the car hired by the author for the journey as well as a tourist guide. He was expert in driving through the rugged Tibetan terrain and high-altitude rough roads. He drove the car very carefully considering the safety of the passengers. During the journey, he spoke to the author and gave important details of the places they were passing by. When the narrator fell ill, Tsetan took him to Darchen medical college and cared for his health.

Lhamo - Lhamo was a girl of the family with whom the narrator, Nick Middleton had stayed for a few days on the way to Mount Kailash. When narrator was about to leave, Lhamo gifted him a drokba, a long-sleeved sheepskin coat that men in Tibet usually wear. Lhamo felt the author did not have enough warm clothes for the severe cold he was to face later on while completing the Kora.

Norbu- The author met Norbu at Darchen. He is a Tibetan working at a Chinese academy of Social Sciences in Beijing who wants to carry out the pilgrimage to Mount Kailash. He had also come to do the Kora. Both the narrator and Norbu decided to do the Kora together. The narrator actually wanted to reach Mount Kailash to do kora to get a feel of what a pilgrimage was like. But he didn't want to do it alone. He was looking for someone who could speak or understand English. When he was sitting in the only cafe at Darchen, Norbu, a plump Tibetan saw him reading an English book. So Norbu introduced himself to the author.

TEXTUAL QUESTIONS.

Give reasons for the following statements.

(i) The article has been titled 'Silk Road.'

Ans: The title of the article has been named on the historic silk road or routes. The network connected the Afro-Eurasian landmass. It established trade of Chinese silk, spices, teas and porcelain; Indian textiles, precious stones and pepper; and the Roman Empire's gold, silver, fine glassware, wine, carpets and jewels. The road was named Silk Road largely because of the silk trade with China. In the chapter the author travels to Mount Kailash, exploring the Himalayan belt in Tibet. Since the author explored this region, the chapter is titled as Silk Road.

(ii) Tibetan mastiffs were popular in China's imperial courts.

Ans: Tibetan mastiffs were popular in China's imperial courts as hunting dogs. They were brought along the Silk Road in ancient times as tribute from Tibet. They were huge black dogs used as watchdogs. They explode into action like bullets. They are furious and fearless.

(iii) The author's experience at Hor was in stark contrast to earlier accounts of the place.

Ans: Hor was a grim, miserable place. The dust and rocks were scattered everywhere in abundance; there was little vegetation. The place seemed unfortunate and dejected, though it sat on the shore of the Lake Manasarovar. The author was flabbergasted to realise the contrast in his experience to that of the earlier read accounts. A Japanese monk, Ekai Kawaguchi, who had arrived there in 1990, was so moved by the sanctity of the lake that he burst into tears. The hallowed waters had a similar effect on Sven Hedin, a Swede who was not prone to sentimental outbursts. However, for the author, when he reached Hor, first he had to get two punctures mended. The only relaxation was the tea served by a Chinese youth in the only café in the town, which was constructed from badly painted concrete and had three broken windows. The good view of the lake through one of them helped to compensate however.

(iv) The author was disappointed with Darchen.

Ans: The author was disappointed with Darchen. The high altitude was giving him health problems. He had a bad cold and was not able to sleep at night. Since he was one of the early arrivals there weren't any pilgrims coming to the place. The place was dusty, partially derelict and punctuated by heaps of rubble and refuse.

(v) The author thought that his positive thinking strategy worked well after all.

Ans: The author was disappointed with Darchen. He also complained of bad health. Tsetan had left for Lhasa. He was feeling rather lonely with no pilgrims around. It was then he met Norbu, a Tibetan who too wanted to visit Kailash. They would be a good team as both of them were academicians who had escaped from the library. The author started thinking positively and it gave him some delight and a new enthusiasm.

II. Briefly comment on

1.The purpose of the author's journey to Mount Kailash.

Ans: Nick Middleton is an Oxford Professor as well as an adventurer. He follows the most difficult terrain through the Silk Road and reaches mount Kailash. He visits the holy place to complete the kora- going around the place.

2.The author's physical condition in Darchen.

Ans: The author was not physically well when he reached Darchen. His sinuses were blocked due to the cold wind at Hor and he was not able to sleep well at night. The next day Tsetan took him to the Darchen Medical College and the doctor there gave him some medicine that gave him some relief.

3.The author's meeting with Norbu.

Ans: The author was feeling rather lonely without Tsetan who had left for Lhasa. There weren't any pilgrims at Darchen as he had reached the place much early in the season. It was then he met Norbu who was a Tibetan and also an academician. He too was there to visit Kailash and they decided to go there together.

4.Tsetan's support to the author during the journey.

Ans: Tsetan was a good and efficient driver. He drove the car very carefully. During the journey, he spoke to the author giving information about the places they were visiting. He was very caring. At Darchen when he found that the author was not well, he took him to the medical college and got medicine for him. He was a good Buddhist.

5.“As a Buddhist, he told me, he knew that it didn't really matter if I passed away, but he thought it would be bad for business.”

Ans: Tsetan was a good Buddhist and believed that death was not the end of life. Kailash being a holy place it would be better for him as it would take him to heaven. Then if the author would die there, it would be bad for his business as his credibility will be at stake in looking after the tourists and later, he may not get any customers.

III. Talking about Text

1.The sensitive behaviour of hill-folk.

Ans: The hill-folk are quite unsophisticated and innocent. People like Tsetan very religious and God-fearing. They are very much hospitable and take care of the visitors from outside.

2.The reasons why people willingly undergo the travails of difficult journeys.

Ans: The author was an academician; hence, he undertook the journey for the purpose of education. For him it was a learning experience. Secondly, people undertake such journeys because of the spirit of adventure. The areas covered by the author are some of the most difficult terrains in the world. The third can be a religious reason. People visit places like Mount Kailash as part of their pilgrimage.

3.The accounts of exotic places in legends and the reality.

Ans: There are many accounts of exotic places in legends and the reality. Places like Mount Kailash, Manasarovar occupy a prominent place in legends. There are many articles written about these places.

ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS IN BRIEF.

Q1. 'I hadn't made much progress with my self-help programme on positive thinking.' Why does the narrator feel so?

Ans: The narrator was very disappointed with Darchen. It was dusty, with heaps of rubble and refuse. But he was even more disappointed as there were no pilgrims. As his mind went over the drawbacks of the place he concluded that he hadn't made much progress with his self-help programme on positive thinking. In that case he would have been more accepting and optimistic.

Q2. Describe the landscape and wildlife the narrator and Tsetan encountered on their journey.

Ans: The landscape included vast plains with arid pastures, snowy mountains, and a wide river with ice. They saw gazelles, a herd of wild asses, and shepherds tending their flocks in the hills.

Q3. Explain why the narrator's head began to throb as they gained altitude, and how he dealt with it.

Ans: The narrator's head began to throb due to the high-altitude conditions and lower atmospheric pressure. To alleviate the discomfort, he took gulps from a water bottle.

Q4. What was the significance of the pass they reached, and why was it important not to smoke there?

Ans: The pass they reached was at a very high altitude, 5,515 meters above sea level, and smoking was discouraged due to the lower atmospheric pressure, which could lead to fuel expansion and potential dangers.

Q5. Why did the author complain of headache? How did he get relief?

Ans. The author was not used to high altitude climbing. He complained of headache when they had crept past 5,400 metres. He took gulps from his water bottle. This helped somewhat. His headache cleared as they moved down the other side of the pass.

Q6. How did the author pass the first night at Darchen?

Ans. It was a troubled night. The author suffered from a cold. He breathed through his mouth. His chest felt heavy. He tried his best to sleep but in vain. Almost the whole night, he kept awake.

ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS IN DETAIL.

Q1. Justify the title 'Silk Road'.

Ans: The 'Silk Road' is not a single highway, but a network of overland routes linking Europe with Asia, making trade possible between those with a passion for silk, horses and exotic fauna and flora. It's a thread that links East and West, a network of veins that pumped new lifeblood into mighty empires, a fabled route trodden by innumerable adventures through the ages.

Yet, underlying this trail is one of the most extraordinary tracts of land on this planet, a vast region separating China from the Mediterranean world that rates as one of the least hospitable areas on Earth. It was difficult crossing such unforgiving territory that kept East and West apart for so long, allowing them to develop in their own distinct ways.

The author records the challenges and hardships he faced in the Silk Road regions as they are now. The reader finds it refreshing to traverse such vast tracts of the natural world that remain largely unchanged from earlier days. Thus, the title is justified.

Q2. Why does the narrator think that the snow was dangerous yet beautiful?

Ans: Silk Road by Nick Middleton is a thorough account of the author's visit to Mount Kailash. Tsetan on his way reviewed snow on the path by stomping on it. The snow was not deep enough but they feared the car would turn over in case they slipped and so they flung a handful of dirt across the frozen surface to cover this risk. After that, they were able to drive without any trouble. A few minutes later, they stopped at one more obstruction. This time they determined to drive about the snow. However, the risks did not weaken the attractive beauty of the place. In the valley, they saw mountains that were covered with snow and the river was wide but mostly jammed with ice, and sparkling in the sunshine.

Q3. Describe the initial phase of their journey

Ans: As they set out, they took a shorter route to get off the Changtang. It was a road that would take them south-west, almost directly towards Mount Kailash. It required crossing several quite high mountains passes. Tsetan was confident that if there was no snow, they would have comfortable journey but that they would not know till they got there.

From the gently sloping hills of Ravu, the short cut took them across vast open plains with nothing in them except a few antelopes grazing in the arid pastures. As they moved ahead, the plains became more stony than grassy. There, the antelopes were replaced by herds of wild ass.

Q4. Why was the narrator fascinated by the awesome mastiffs?

Ans: Crossing the nomads dark tents pitched in remoteness, the narrator noticed a huge black dog, a Tibetan mastiff that guarded most of the tents. These monstrous creatures would tilt their great big heads when someone moved towards them. As they drew closer, these dogs would race straight towards them, like a bullet from a gun. The dogs were pitch black and usually wore bright red collars.

They barked furiously with their gigantic jaws and were so fearless that they ran straight into the path of their vehicle. They would chase them for about a hundred metres. The narrator could now understand why Tibetan mastiffs became popular in China's imperial courts as hunting dogs.

Q5. The narrator on his way to Mount Kailash came across a lot of topographic variation.

Comment

Ans: The narrator and his companions took a short cut to get off the Changtang. Tsetan knew a route that would take them southwest, almost directly towards Mount Kailash. It involved crossing several fairly high mountain passes. From the gently rising and falling hills of Ravu, the short cut took them across vast open plains with nothing in them except a few gazelles that were grazing in the arid pastures. Further ahead, the plains became more stony than grassy, and there a great herd of wild ass came into view. Still ahead, the hills became steeper where solitary drokbas were tending their flocks. This left them to the snow-capped mountains and then to the valley where the river was wide and by and large clogged with ice. At a height of 5,515metres, piles of stones marked the landscape. Next was the plateau which was covered with salty desert area and salty lakes that were remnants of the Tethys Ocean. Hor was next in line. It was a wretched place with no vegetation just dust and rocks, liberally scattered with years of accumulated refuse.

Q6. Analyze the character of Norbu and his role in the story. How does his physical condition contrast with his desire to perform the Kora, and how does this reflect the theme of personal determination in the face of challenges?

Ans: Norbu is characterized as a Tibetan working in Beijing, who has a desire to perform the Kora around Mount Kailash. However, his physical condition, particularly his large tummy, presents a significant contrast to his aspiration. This contrast highlights the theme of personal determination in the face of challenges. Norbu's willingness to attempt the Kora despite physical limitations demonstrates his determination and underscores the idea that personal motivation can surpass physical obstacles. His character reflects the human capacity to strive for spiritual or personal goals despite physical constraints.

EXTRACT BASED QUESTIONS

Q1. These beasts would cock their great big heads when they became aware of our approach and fix us in their sights. As we continued to draw closer, they would explode into action, speeding directly towards us, like a bullet from a gun and nearly as fast.

i. What beast is the narrator talking about?

- a. The Himalayan dogs
- b. the big foot
- c. the Tibetan mastiffs**
- d. the huge yaks

ii. 'They would explode into action' - what does this mean?

- a. The dogs would chase the car with great speed**
- b. There was a loud explosion
- c. The loud sound of the tire burst
- d. The sound of the landslide on the journey

iii. What kind of dogs were the Tibetan mastiffs?

- a. huge and black
- b. very quick
- c. guard dogs
- d. all of the above**

Q2. By now we could see snow-capped mountains gathering on the horizon. We entered a valley where the river was wide and mostly clogged with ice, brilliant white and glinting in the sunshine. The trail hugged its bank, twisting with the meanders as we gradually gained height and the valley sides closed in.

(i) What is the name of the river that the narrator is following?

Ans: The name of the river that the narrator is following is the Indus River.

(ii) What does the word "clogged" mean in the context of the extract?

Ans: The word "clogged" means blocked or obstructed in the context of the extract.

(iii) How does the extract show that the narrator is in a cold and high-altitude place?

Ans: The extract shows that the narrator is in a cold and high-altitude place by using details such as snow-capped mountains, ice, sunshine, and height.

(iv) How does the author create a sense of beauty and contrast in the extract?

Ans: The author creates a sense of beauty and contrast in the extract by using words such as "brilliant", "glinting", "twisting", and "closed in".

ASSERTION AND REASON BASED QUESTIONS

Q1: Assertion: The narrator and Tsetan passed the dark tents of the nomads in lonely places.

Reason: The nomads' tents were located in crowded areas.

- (a) True, and the reason is correct.
- (b) True, but the reason is incorrect.
- (c) False, and the reason is correct.
- (d) False, and the reason is incorrect.

Ans: (b) The assertion is true as they passed the dark tents of nomads in lonely places. However, the reason is incorrect because the nomads' tents are explicitly described as being in lonely places, not crowded areas.

Q2: Assertion: Tsetan advised against smoking after reaching the pass at high altitude.

Reason: Smoking could cause headaches at lower atmospheric pressure.

- (a) True, and the reason is correct.
- (b) True, but the reason is incorrect.
- (c) False, and the reason is correct.
- (d) False, and the reason is incorrect.

Ans: (a) The assertion is true, and the reason is correct. Tsetan advised against smoking due to the lower atmospheric pressure at high altitudes, which could lead to headaches and fuel-related issues.

Q3: Assertion: The narrator's nostril was blocked during his stay in Darchen.

Reason: Altitude-related issues can lead to blocked nostrils.

- (a) True, and the reason is correct.
- (b) True, but the reason is incorrect.
- (c) False, and the reason is correct.
- (d) False, and the reason is incorrect.

Ans: (a) The assertion is true, and the reason is correct. Altitude-related issues, such as low oxygen levels, can lead to blocked nostrils.

Q4: Assertion: Darchen had many cafes and stores selling a variety of items.

Reason: Darchen was a bustling town with a thriving economy.

- (a) True, and the reason is correct.
- (b) True, but the reason is incorrect.
- (c) False, and the reason is correct.
- (d) False, and the reason is incorrect.

Ans: (d) The assertion is false as the text indicates that Darchen had only one cafe and simple general stores. The reason is also incorrect because the description of Darchen is not consistent with a bustling town with a thriving economy.

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