

Chapter – 8 Silk Road

Understanding The Text

QI. Give reasons for the following statements.

1. The article has been titled 'Silk Road.'

Answer. 1. The article has been titled 'Silk Road'. All along the route from Ravu to Man Sarovar, the places that the author saw were festooned with white silk scarves and prayer flags. Also, Hor, was situated on the main East-West highway. It was the old trade route from Lhasa to Kashmir. Silk was one of the main export items. Hence, it came to be known as 'Silk Road'.

2. Tibetan mastiffs were popular in China's imperial courts.

Answer. 2. Tibetan Mastiffs were popular in China's imperial courts. Tibetan Mastiffs were huge black dogs that guarded the tents of the nomads. They were shaggy monsters who would speed directly to the target like a bullet from a gun. Their bark was ferocious and they were completely fearless. They used to chase away invaders. Their ferociousness made them popular in China's imperial courts as hunting dogs. They were brought along 'Silk Road' in ancient times as a tribute from Tibet.

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

Answer. 3. The author's experience at Hor was in stark contrast to earlier accounts of the place. Previous travellers Ekai Kawaguchi, a Japanese monk, Sven Hadin, a Swede, were so moved by the sanctity of the lake that they had a sentimental outburst. But the author found Hor, which was situated on the shore of lake Man Sarovar a grim and miserable place. There was no vegetation whatsoever, just dust and rocks liberally scattered with years of accumulated refuse.

4. The author was disappointed with Darchen.

Answer. 4. The author was disappointed with Darchen. Darchen was partially derelict and punctuated by heaps of rubble and refuse. The author was disappointed because it was not the tourist season and there were no pilgrims.

5. The author thought that his positive thinking strategy worked well after all.

Answer. 5. The author thought that his positive thinking strategy worked well after all. The author was not willing to do the Kora all by himself. When he met Norbu and the latter told him his purpose to come to Man Sarovar, the author was delighted. Norbu told him that both of them could be a team to do the Kora. This made the author think that his positive thinking strategy had worked.

QII. Briefly comment on

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

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

of the author's journey to Mount Kailash was to complete the Kora, which was a sacred religious ritual according to Hindu and Buddhist tradition.

2. The author's physical condition in Darchen.

Answer. 2. 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. 2. The author's physical condition in Darchen.. The author suffered a cold, which made him very uncomfortable., He had problems in breathing, especially when lying down. He felt that if he went to sleep, he would never wake up.

3. The author's meeting with Norbu.

Answer. 3. The author's meeting with Norbu. The author was sitting in a cafe in Darchen when he met Norbu. He was delighted to meet him since Norbu was also planning to do Kora. Norbu, who worked in Beijing at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, had written papers on Kailash Kora. 4. 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.

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

Answer. 4. Tsetan's support to the author during the journey. Tsetan was driving the vehicle for the author. He was a very efficient driver and managed to drive the tough terrains without any mishaps. Further in Darchen, when the author felt terribly sick, he tended well and took him to the doctor whose medicines cured the author.

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."

Answer. 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." These were Tsetan's words spoken to the author. After the author's sickness was cured, Tsetan wanted to go to Lhasa. By saying these words, he showed his caring attitude towards the author and at the same time, he firmly reinstated that he was a Buddhist, who believed that physical death was not death in the real sense. However, he thought that the death of a tourist could affect his business as a taxi driver, badly.

Talking About The Text

Q1. Discuss in groups of four

1. The sensitive behaviour of hill-folk

Answer. 1. 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

Answer. 2. 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.

Answer. 3. There are many accounts of exotic places in legends and the reality. Places like Mount Kailash. Mana Sarovar occupy a prominent place in legends. There are many articles written about these places.

Thinking About Language

Q1. Notice the kind of English Tsetan uses while talking to the author. How do you think he picked it up?

Answer. Tsetan is able to communicate his feelings, though his English is grammatically incorrect. Being a taxi driver, he has picked up just a working knowledge of English. He doesn't speak English much but whenever he speaks, he does so only in phrases or half sentences. I think Tsetan should have picked up his English from the English-speaking foreign tourists whom he ferried in his car.

Q2. What do the following utterances indicate? (i) "I told her, through Daniel ..."
(ii) "It's a cold," he said finally through Tsetan.

Answer. (i) She was not able to follow English but Daniel translated what he told in English in the Tibetan language to her. (ii) The doctor spoke in Tibetan language, which Tsetan translated into English for the author.

Q3. Guess the meaning of the following words. kora drokba kyang In which language are these words found?

Answer. Kora: Walk all the way round circumambulate Droka: shepherd Kyang: It is a wild Tibetan ass. These words are found in Tibetan Language.

Working With Words

Q1. The narrative has many phrases to describe the scenic beauty of the mountain side like: A flawless half-moon floated in a perfect blue sky. Scan the text to locate other such picturesque phrases.

Answer. Here are a few extracts from the text that describe the scenic beauty of the Tibet region:

"Extended banks of cloud like long French loaves glowed pink as the sun emerged to splash the distant mountain tops with a rose-tinted blush."

"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."

Q2. Explain the use of the adjectives in the following phrases. (i) shaggy monsters (ii) brackish lakes (iii) rickety table (iv) hairpin bend (v) rudimentary general stores

Answer. (i) shaggy monsters: hairy, unkempt (ii) Brackish lakes: salty (iii) Rickety table: wobbly, shaky (iv) Hairpin bend: very sharp bend (v) rudimentary general stores: elementary.

Think It Out

Q1. Does the poem talk of an exclusively personal experience or is it fairly universal?

Answer. The poem does talk of an exclusively personal experience. However, we can also call it fairly universal because a conflict like this is quite common in many households. It is also known as generation gap.

Q2. How is the father's helplessness brought out in the poem?

Answer. The helplessness of the father is highlighted through the depiction of the emotional struggle that he undergoes. He is aware of the problem and is willing to resolve it, but is unable to do so. He regrets the lack of a strong emotional bond and proper communication with his son who is also physically distanced from him.

Q3. Identify the phrases and lines that indicate distance between father and son.

Answer. Phrases/lines that indicate distance between the father and the son are: 1. 'I do not understand this child' 2. 'I know / Nothing of him' 3. 'We speak like strangers' 4. 'there's no sign/ Of understanding in the air'

Q4. Does the poem have a consistent rhyme scheme?

Answer. No, the poem does not follow a consistent rhyme scheme.