

## Silk Road – Important Questions

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**Q. Why did the author take the short cut inspite of high mountain passes?**

**Ans.** The short cut would take them south west, almost directly towards Mount Kailash. Crossing high mountains passes posed breathing problems. Absence of snow meant a fairly good ride.

**Q. What did the author notice in the vast open plains after leaving Ravu?**

**Ans.** These vast open plains had only dry pastures. A few gazelles could be seen nibbling the grass. When the plains grew more stony than grass, he saw a great head of wild asses.

**Q. What were drokbas doing in the “rocky wilderness”?**

**Ans.** Drokbas are the people, men or women who were tending their flocks in the rocky wilderness. They wear long-sleeved sheepskin coat to protect themselves from the cold of the high mountains.

**Q. 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.

**Q. How did the author pass the first night at Darchen?**

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

**Q. Describe Nick Middleton’s journey from Ravu to the height of 5,210 metres.**

**Ans.** The author Nick Middleton started from Ravu early one morning. He was starting on his pilgrimage to Mount Kailash. On this occasion a woman named Lhamo gave him a farewell present. It was a long sleeved sheepskin coat. Such coats are worn by all the men in that area to protect themselves from cold.

Nick Middleton started on his journey in a car which was being driven by Tsetan. There was one more person named Daniel with him. Tsetan took a short cut to take the author almost directly towards Kailash. This short cut took them across vast open plains with nothing except a few gazelles in them. Stony plains followed these arid pastures. There, the author saw herds of wild asses which Tsetan called Kyang.

After these rocky plains, the hills were visible. Here, the author saw solitary Drokbas tending their flocks. Then, there were nomads' dark tents. Almost, all of these tents were guarded by Tibetan mastiffs. The snow-capped mountains now came into view. The ride became very bumpy. At one point, the car had to stop. There was ice on the track for about 15 metres. They threw some dust on the ice and then the car moved on. This happened at the height of 5,210 metres.

**Q. Describe the author's journey from the top of the pass to his stay at Hor.**

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**Ans.** The top of the pass was at 5,515 metres. It was marked by a cairn of rocks. The author along with the two other persons took a turn round the cairn in a clockwise direction as is the tradition. The author was suffering from severe headache at this altitude. Now, the car careered down to the other side of the pass. He was glad that his headache had now disappeared. At about 2 p.m. they stopped for lunch. Then they started again and by late afternoon reached the small town of Hor. Here, Daniel parted company. He went back to Lhasa in a truck that was going there.

Tsetan decided to repair his punctured tyres here. So, he sent the author to a cafe to pass about half an hour. Hor did attract the author. Though, he sat on the shore of the sacred lake Manasarovar, it was dirty and full of refuse. When Tsetan came back, the author started on his journey again.

**Q. Give a brief account of the author's visit to the medical college at Darchen and the effect of the Tibetan medicines on him.**

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**Ans.** At first the author was impressed neither by the building of the medical college nor the Tibetan doctor. The building looked like a monastery. The consulting room was dark and cold. The paraphernalia of a doctor. The dotan himself appeared like any other tibetan in a thick-pullover and wooly hat. He had no white coat on him. The author explained his sleepless symptoms and sudden aversion to lying down.

While feeling his pulse, the Tibetan doctor asked the author some questions. He diagnosed his illness as a cold and effects of the altitude. By now the author had developed some confidence in the doctor. He asked if he would recover enough to be able to do the Kora. The doctor assured him that he would be fine.

The doctor gave him a five day course of Tibetan medicine in fifteen screws of paper. The after breakfast package contained a brown powder. The author took it with hot water. The lunch time and bed time packages contained small spherical brown small pills. They looked like sheep dung, but the author took them. He found the medicines quite effective. After his first full day's course, he slept soundly at night.

**Q. What impression do you form of the author, Nick Middleton, on the basis of reading 'Silk Road'?**

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**Ans.** The author is bald headed gentleman who knows English. He was keen on performing Kailash Kora. He undertook the hazardous journey to Mount Kailash for this purpose, he hired Tsetan's car and took Daniel as companion for escorting him upto Darchen. He seems to be a lover of adventure one who is not at all afraid of taking risks. This is evident from his assent to take a short-cut through high mountain passes involving the risk of slipping on snowy roads.

He is a keen observer of men and manners. He has a sharp eye for details. He describes the hilly people quite sensitively. He gives a graphic account of difficulties faced during ascent. His headache and loss of sleep was caused by cold and high altitude. His observations about lake Manasarovar and Hor reveal the difference between legend and reality. He dislikes dirt and shabbiness.

He faces communication problem after Tsetan leaves and before he meets Norbu. However, he waits and takes correct decisions. He approves of Norbu's practical suggestion to hire yaks to carry luggage. In short, he is a sensitive and likeable fellow.