

Kathmandu – Important Questions

Q. What is the belief of the people at Pashupatinath temple?

Ans. It is the belief of the people at Pashupatinath temple that when a small shrine emerges fully on the river Bagwati, the goddess inside will escape and the evil period of the Kalyug will come to an end on the earth.

Q. Where and what did the Tibetan immigrants in Nepal sell?

Ans. Tibetan immigrants sell felt bags, Tibetan prints and silver jewellery around the Baudhnath Stupa, the Buddhist shrine of Kathmandu.

Q. What activities did the author see going on at the bank of the river Bagmati?

Ans. The author saw two monkeys fighting and chasing each other, a corpse was being cremated, washerwomen at work, children bathing on the bank and he even saw withered flowers being dropped from a balcony in the river Bagmati.

Q. Describe the author's experience at Baudhnath stupa?

Ans. The author experienced peace and stillness at Baudhnath stupa. There was no crowd at the stupa. It was a heaven of quietness amidst the busy streets around.

Q. How is the temple of Pashupatinath different from Baudhnath Stupa?

Ans. At Pashupatinath Temple there was an atmosphere of feverish activities, i.e., there was disorder and chaos all around whereas the atmosphere at Baudhnath Stupa was calm, peaceful and quiet with no crowd jostling around.

Q. What does the sign outside Pashupatinath temple proclaim? What expression does the author use to describe the atmosphere at Pashupatinath temple ?

Ans. The sign outside Pashupatinath temple proclaimed 'Entrance for the Hindus only'. The author uses the expression 'febrile confusion' to describe the atmosphere outside Pashupatinath temple.

Q. Give a brief description of Kathmandu Bazaar.

Ans. Kathmandu Bazaar has narrow and busy streets, shops selling cosmetics, film rolls, chocolate, utensils, postcards, etc. It was a vivid, religious and mercenary city, where hawkers, cows, flute sellers, fruit sellers, every colour was present.

Q. How does the writer pass his time in Kathmandu Bazaar?

Ans. The author buys a bar of Marzipan, eats a corn-on-the-cob roasted in charcoal, buys a couple of love story comics, a Readers' Digest, and then has Coca-Cola and orange drink and watches the flute seller playing his flute, for long.

Q. What observations does the author make about the Kathmandu Bazaar?

Ans. Kathmandu Bazaar had narrow and busy streets. The author saw chaos, confusion and disorder everywhere in the bazaar. There were fruit sellers, flute sellers, hawkers selling postcards, shops selling western cosmetics, film rolls and chocolates. Copper utensils and Nepalese antiques were also being sold. There was noise of film songs, car horns, cycle bells, stray cows and vendors shouting out their wares. The author made a very detailed and vivid observation of the Kathmandu Bazaar.

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

Ans. Music appeals to all mankind and gives pleasure to them. The flute seller had many kinds of flutes belonging to various cultures and different customs. In order to attract prospective buyers, the flute seller plays melodious tunes on his flutes. Music is universal and soothes everyone's heart, no matter which part of the world one belongs to. There is no culture that flute does not have. We have bansuri in Hindustani classical music. The flutes of South America are clear and breathy. The flutes are high pitched. The music of flute is universal. That is why the author says that hearing a flute is to be drawn into the commonality of all mankind.

Q. Justify why the author used the expression 'febrile confusion' for the atmosphere at Pashupatinath temple.

Ans. Priests, hawkers, devotees, tourists, cows, monkeys, pigeons and dogs roam through the grounds in Pashupatinath temple. People offer flowers. There are so many worshippers that some people trying to get the priest's attention are elbowed aside by others pushing their way to the front. A princess of the Nepalese royal house appears; everyone bows and makes way. By the main gate, a party of saffron-clad Westerners struggle for permission to enter. The policeman is not convinced that they are 'the Hindus' (only Hindus are allowed to enter the temple). A fight breaks out between two monkeys. One chases the other, who jumps onto a shivalinga, then runs screaming around the temples and down to the river, the holy Bagmati, where washerwomen are at their work and children bathe. From a balcony a basket of flowers and leaves, old offerings now wilted, are dropped into the river. Innumerable hurried routine activities creating chaos characterise the Pashupatinath temple. Therefore, the expression 'febrile confusion' is apt to define it.

Q. Have you also travelled like Vikram Seth? What are the similarities and differences between Vikram Seth and you ?

Ans. I do travel but there is a handful of similarities and differences between the way I and the author, Vikram Seth does. The main difference is we don't take long tours like the author did. We travel frequently but we stay in one place and return. We feel homesick after a few days. The most important similarity is noticing every feature of a place. His visit to the Pashupatinath temple in Nepal reminds me of our visit to Rameswaram temple in Rameswaram. The 'febrile confusion' is the commonality between the two temples. The author read the flute-seller's love for flute and also his rapport with the fruit seller. I also have this tendency to decipher people's behaviour and the equations among people which form them into a society. Like the author, we too indulge in the street food mindlessly once we are about to buckle under our knees. The author has itchy feet. So, do we. Our desire to explore new places is as strong as our desire to return home.

Q. The author has described Kathmandu vividly. What appeals you the most about Kathmandu ?

Ans. Many things about Kathmandu appeal me. But what appeals me the most is its similarities with India. I get a reflection of Kathmandu in the religious places of India like Rameswaram and Puri. I have experienced the 'febrile confusion' in religious places. When I try to imagine small shrines to flower-adorned deities along the narrowest and busiest streets with fruit sellers, flute sellers, hawkers of postcards, I have an urge to visit Kathmandu. Shops selling Western cosmetics, film rolls and chocolate; or copper utensils and Nepalese antiques also attract me. I would like to experience the contrast that one finds in the ambiance of Pashupatinath and Baudhnath Stupa. While one is a melting pot of all kinds of people and activities, another enriches a person with a sense of stillness. Even if Kathmandu shares similarities with India, every place has its unique culture. Vikram Seth's reflective description gives a hint of that culture alluring me to visit Nepal.