Silk Road Extra Questions and Answers Short Answer Type

Question 1.

when they set out on their journey.

Answer:

The narrator was moving towards Mount Kailash to complete the kora. He recalls the day, when they set out from Ravu, with nostalgia. It was a ‘perfect’ early morning to start a journey. The clouds looked like long French loaves glimmering pink as the rising sun shone on them. The far-away mountain peaks glowed with a rose-tinted colour. Lhamo presented him with one of the long-sleeved sheepskin coats that all the men there wore, for protection against cold.

Question 2.

Describe the initial phase of their journey.

Answer:

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 mountain passes. Tsetan was confident that if there was no snow they would have a 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.

Question 3.

What did the narrator notice about the ‘drokbas’?

Answer:

As the narrator went further up the hills from the rocky wasteland, he noticed the solitary drokbas tending their flocks. Sometimes these well-wrapped figures would halt briefly and stare at their car. They seldom waved as they crossed. When the road took them close to the sheep, the animals would swerve away from the speeding car.

Question 4.

The narrator was fascinated by the awesome mastiffs. Why?

Answer:

Crossing the nomads’ dark tents pitched in remoteness, the narrator noticed that a huge black dog, a Tibetan mastiffs, 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. These 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 understand why Tibetan mastiffs became popular in China’s imperial courts as hunting dogs.

Question 5.

How did Tsetan manoeuvre across the first patch of snow that they came across?

Answer:

Tsetan stopped at a tight bend and got out because the snow had covered the path in front of them. This unexpected-depository was too steep for their vehicle to mount. Tsetan stepped on to the covered snow, and stamped his foot to determine how sturdy it was. The snow was not deep but the car could turn over. Tsetan took handfuls of dirt and threw them across the frozen surface. Daniel and the narrator, too, joined in. When the snow was spread with soil, Tsetan backed up the vehicle and drove towards the dirty snow. The car moved across the icy surface without noticeable difficulty.

Question 6.

When did the narrator feel unwell or the first time? What did he do?

Answer:

When they went further up the trail and were 5,400 metres above the sea level, the narrator got an awful headache. He took gulps from his water bottle, which is supposed to help during a speedy uphill journey. His headache soon cleared as they went down the other side of the pass.

Question 7.

What was the sight on the plateau ruins of the Tethys Ocean?

Answer:

The narrator and his friends stopped for lunch in a long canvas tent, part of a work camp erected beside a dry salt lake. The plateau was covered with salty desert area and salty lakes that were remnants of the Tethys Ocean. This place was bustling with activity. Men with pickaxes and shovels were moving back and forth in their long sheepskin coats and salt-covered boots. All wore sunglasses as protection against the dazzling light of blue trucks that energed from the lake with piles of salt.

Question 8.

Why was the narrator sorry to see the miserable plight of Hor?

Answer:

Hor was a dismal place with no vegetation. It only had dust and rocks coupled with years of accumulated refuse. He found this unfortunate because this town was on the banks of Lake Manasarovar, Tibet’s most venerated stretch of water.

Question 9.

What is the belief about Lake Manasarovar? What is the fact?

Answer:

According to ancient Hindu and Buddhist cosmology Manasarovar is the source of four great Indian rivers: the Indus, the Ganges, the Sutlej and the Brahmaputra. In actuality only the Sutlej flows from the lake, but the headwaters of the all others rise nearby on the flanks of Mount Kailash.

Question 10.

The narrator ‘slept very soundly. Like a log, not a dead man’. Explain.

Answer:

After going to the Tibetan doctor the narrator soon recovered. Unpalatable as it seemed, the medicine led him to a quick recovery. Hence the narrator had a healthy and sound sleep unlike when he was ailing and restless. He slept undisturbed. He was not tossing and turning because he was sound a sleep, not because he felt lifeless.

Question 11.

‘Darchen didn’t look so horrible after a good night’s sleep.’ Justify

Answer:

The narrator had a very uncomfortable night at Darchen. After he rested, although Darchen was dusty, with heaps of rubble and refuse, the bright sun in a clear blue sky gave the narrator a view of the Himalayas. He also noticed the huge, snow-capped mountain, Gurla Mandhata, with just a tuft of cloud suspended over its peak.

Question 12.

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

Answer:

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.

Question 13.

Who was Norbu? How could he be a help to the narrator?

Answer:

The narrator met Norbu in a cafe. He was Tibetan, and worked in Beijing at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, in the Institute of Ethnic Literature. He had come to do the kora. Norbu had been writing academic papers about the Kailash kora and its importance in various works of Buddhist literature for many years but .he had never actually done it himself. The narrator was relieved to team up with him. He would not be alone then.

Question 14.

‘He suggested we hire some yaks to carry our luggage, which I interpreted as a good sign’. Why does the narrator feel so?

Answer:

The narrator was relieved at meeting Norbu. He kept telling the narrator how fat he was and how hard it was going to be for him to climb. He wasn’t really a practising Buddhist, but he was enthusiastic and was a Tibetan. Making the trek in the company of devout believers would not be easy as they would go prostrating all round the mountain. But Norbu suggested that they hire some yaks to carry our luggage. This to the narrator came as a relief.

Silk Road Extra Questions and Answers Long Answer Type

Question 1.

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

Answer:

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 failing 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 hills became steeper wh^re solitary drokbas were tending their flocks. This led 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 5,515 metres, 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.

Question 2.

The narrator realized that the snow was both dangerous as well as beautiful. Justify.

Answer:

Tsetan on his way surveyed the snow on the path by stamping on it. It was not deep. But in case they slipped the car could turn over. Hence to cover the risk, they flung handfuls of dirt across the frozen surface. When the snow was spread with soil, they drove without difficulty. Ten minutes later, they stopped at another blockage. This time they decided to drive round the snow.

However, the risks did not undermine the scenic beauty of the place. In the valley, they saw snow-capped mountains and the river was wide but mostly blocked with ice that was sparkling in the sunshine. As they moved ahead, on their upward track, the turns became sharper and the ride bumpier. The rocks around were covered with patches of bright orange lichen. Under the rocks, seemed unending shade.

Question 3.

Enumerate the difficulties that the group faced in Hor.

Answer:

The group reached the small town of Hor by late afternoon. Daniel, who was returning to Lhasa, found a ride in a truck and left. They had suffered two punctures in quick succession on the drive down from the salt lake and they got them replaced. Hor was a gloomy place devoid of vegetation. It only had dust and rocks, liberally scattered with years of accumulated refuse.

Hor’s only cafe which, like all the other buildings in town, was constructed from badly painted concrete and had three broken windows. The good view of the lake through one of them helped to compensate for the draught. The narrator was served by a Chinese youth in military uniform who spread the grease around on his table with a filthy rag before bringing him a glass and a thermos of tea.

Question 4.

Describe in detail the narrator’s miserable night in Darchen.

Answer:

The narrator reached the Darchen guesthouse after 10.30 p.m. This was just the beginning of a troubled night. The open-air rubbish dump in Hor had set off his cold once more. One of his nostrils was blocked again and he was tired and hungry. He started breathing through his mouth. After a while, he woke up abruptly. His chest felt strangely heavy but when he sat up, his nasal passages cleared almost instantly and relieved the feeling in his chest. He lay down again. Just as he was about to doze something told him not to.

He was not gasping for breath, but could not go to sleep. He sat up but as soon as he lay down, his sinuses filled and his chest felt strange. He tried supporting himself against the wall, but could not manage to relax enough to sleep. He did not know what was wrong but had a feeling that if he slept he would not wake up again. So he stayed awake all night.

Question 5.

Narrate the narrator’s meeting with the Tibetan doctor.

Answer:

After an awfully uncomfortable and breathless night, Tsetan took the narrator to the Darchen Medical College. The college was new and looked like a monastery from the outside with a very solid door that led into a large courtyard. The consulting room was dark and cold and occupied by a Tibetan doctor who did not have any kit that the narrator had been expecting.

He wore a thick pullover and a woolly hat. The narrator explained the symptoms and the doctor shot him a few questions while feeling the veins in his wrist. Finally he said, it was the cold and the effects of altitude. He said that the narrator would be well enough to do the kora. He gave him a brown envelope stuffed with fifteen screws of paper. Each package had a brown powder that had to taken with hot water. It tasted just like cinnamon. The contents of the lunchtime and bedtime packages were less obviously identifiable. Both contained small, spherical brown pellets. Though the medicine looked like sheep dung, it helped him recover quickly.

Question 6.

Meeting Norbu came as an immense relief to the narrator. Why?

Answer:

The narrator was not only disappointed with the filth in Darchen but also because of the lack of pilgrims. Moreover, since Tsetan had left, he had not come across anyone in Darchen with enough English to answer even this most basic question. It was then that he met Norbu in a cafe. He was Tibetan, he told him, but worked in Beijing at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, in the Institute of Ethnic Literature.

He had also come to do the kora. Norbu had been writing academic papers about the Kailash kora and its importance in various works of Buddhist literature for many years, but he had never actually done it himself. He was relieved to form a team with another academician. This apart, Norbu, wasn’t really a practising Buddhist, though he was a Tibetan. He suggested that they hire some yaks to carry their luggage, as he had no intention of prostrating himself all round the mountain.