

talk
to
me!

LET'S TALK EMPOWERMENT. LET'S TALK ENGLISH

Beehive

10. Kathmandu

by

Vikram Seth

1. Summary

This story is written by a very famous, award – winning Indian novelist and poet, Vikram Seth. This is an extract from his book “Heaven Lake”. In this particular extract he describes his experiences when he is visiting Kathmandu, and the two famous temples there. He describes both the religious shrines he visits and in describing, draws a sharp contrast between the two. After his visit, he speaks of the thoughts that go through his head while planning his journey back home. This is when he comes across a flute seller who captures his attention. He describes beautifully the actions of the flute seller and the effect that the music has on him, something that he says he has not experienced for many years.

2. Some Interesting Facts

Nepal is situated on the southern slopes of the Himalayan mountain range. It is a landlocked country located between India to the east, south, and west and China to the north. The capital of Nepal is Kathmandu. The majority of the population is Hindu.

Pashupatinath Temple is one of the most sacred Shiva temples in the world. It is located on the banks of the Bagmati River in Kathmandu. The temple is a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Baudhnath Stupa is the largest stupa in Nepal and the holiest Tibetan Buddhist temple outside Tibet. It is the most visited site in Nepal.

In April 2015 Nepal was hit by an earthquake which killed nearly 9000 people. While a lot heritage sites in Kathmandu and the surrounding valley were destroyed, Pashupatinath temple was not damaged at all and the Baudhnath Stupa escaped with some damages to its spire.

To see the Pashupatinath Temple click on the link below.

<https://youtu.be/d9q60LajRW4?t=8>

To see the Baudhnath Stupa click on the link below.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UhKoDjz1xhE>

3. Vocabulary

1. **Surroundings** – the place where someone or something is and the things that are around it
We must always keep our **surroundings** clean to stop the spread of any disease.
2. **Description** – something that tells you what something or someone is like
She gave a detailed **description** of the chain-snatcher to the police.
3. **Sacred** – pertaining to or connected with religion
The Golden Temple is a **sacred** place of worship for the Sikhs.
4. **Proclaim** – make known publicly or officially
It is important to **proclaim** your discovery to everybody, when you find a cure for cancer.
5. **Atmosphere** – air; mood
The **atmosphere** in the restaurant was so lively.
6. **Febrile confusion** – hurried activity; complete chaos
There was **febrile confusion** in the market after the bombs went off.
7. **Hawkers** – persons who sells goods by shouting in the street; peddler
The **hawkers** standing outside the school sold snacks for the hungry children.
8. **Devotee** – a person who admires, loves and is extremely loyal to someone or some God
The **devotees** bowed to God and begged for forgiveness.
9. **Worshippers** – someone who prays and performs religious ceremonies to a particular god or object
There was huge crowd of **worshippers** at the church on Christmas day.
10. **Elbowed** – to make one's way by shoving
The people **elbowed** their way to the door of the train to try to get in first.
11. **Struggle** – to experience difficulty and make a great effort in order to do something
Rita continued to **struggle** with the math problem all afternoon.

12. **Permission** – consent to do something
You must take **permission** from your parents before going on the school trip.
13. **Convinced** – to make someone agree or understand; persuade
I was **convinced** he was a good man.
14. **Corpse** – dead body
She screamed when she saw the **corpse** lying on the floor of the shop.
15. **Cremated** – burned something, especially a corpse, and reduced to ash
They **cremated** her father last week.
16. **Offerings** – something given in worship to a deity; sacrifice to a deity
She makes **offerings** of flowers and fruits to God every morning.
17. **Wilted** – to become limp, droop; lose strength
The **wilted** flowers need to be thrown away before they start smelling bad.
18. **Shrine** – a place of worship
They went to see the famous **shrine** before they left the city.
19. **Protrudes** – to stick out
A nail is **protruding** from the chair; please fix it before it hurts somebody.
20. **Emerges** – to come out or rise
When politicians lie, the truth always **emerges** in the news.
21. **Kaliyug** – according to the Hindu religion, the fourth and present age of the world - full of conflict and sin
It is said that God Himself will come down to save the earth during **Kaliyug**.
22. **Contrast** – showing noticeable differences when compared with another
She is very intelligent, especially in **contrast** with the rest of the class.
23. **Stillness** – total lack of movement or changing of position
The **stillness** of the water in the lake calmed me down.
24. **Immense** – large, huge, vast
The ocean is an **immense** body of water.
25. **Ringed** – marked or decorated with, or as if surrounded in a circle
They **ringed** the area with police to protect the children when the riots began.

26. **Immigrants** – people who have moved permanently to another country
Immigrants bring a rich new culture to the countries they migrate to.
27. **Felt** – any matted fabric or material
My aunt bought me a beautiful **felt** hat during her travels.
28. **Haven** – a safe place
The ashram is a **haven** for the homeless.
29. **Quietness** – making very little noise
I can study peacefully in the **quietness** of the early morning.
30. **Vivid** – bright, intensely deep
My sleep was disturbed because of my **vivid** dreams.
31. **Mercenary** – person influenced by greed or desire; working only for money or reward
The **mercenary** fought a war for a cause that he did not believe in.
32. **Adorned** – decorated
The idols of Sri Krishna and Radhaji are **adorned** with new clothes and jewelry every year.
33. **Deities** – gods or goddesses or their statues
The **deities** are offered food first before everyone starts their meal.
34. **Cosmetics** – beauty preparations
The women rushed to the store to buy the **cosmetics** that were on sale.
35. **Utensils** – vessels
Every dhanteras, we buy new **utensils** for our kitchen.
36. **Antiques** – objects belonging to the past
His passion for collecting **antiques** left him bankrupt.
37. **Blare** – to make a very loud sound
The teenagers **blare** loud music from their cars at night.
38. **Low** – deep, long sound of a cow
The cows were **lowing** in the field next to the house.
39. **Vendors** – people who are selling something
There are many **vendors** selling vegetables on carts in our colony.

40. **Wares** – small things for selling, especially in a market or on the street
The poor woman displayed a few **wares** on a mat on the street.
41. **Indulge** – to allow oneself the pleasure of something
You must not **indulge** yourself by eating too much junk food.
42. **Mindlessly** – in a way that is stupid and has no purpose
Some children started **mindlessly** throwing stones at the dog.
43. **Marzipan** – a sweet made of almond paste
I love **marzipan** biscuits.
44. **Corn-on-the-cob** – a cob of maize (butta) boiled or roasted and eaten on the stick
I love to eat **corn-on-the-cob** with lots of butter on it.
45. **Roasted** – to cook by dry heat (e.g. like in an oven)
The chicken **roasted** in the oven while I got the rest of the meal ready.
46. **Charcoal** – black form of carbon made by burning wood without much air
Earlier they used **charcoal** as fuel for cooking food.
47. **Brazier** – a metal container used for holding burning coal
We used the **brazier** to heat the room.
48. **Pavement** – a path for pedestrians
To avoid an accident, please walk on the **pavement** and not on the road.
49. **Comics** – books or magazines that tell funny stories through pictures
When I was young, I loved reading **comics** of all kinds.
50. **Reader's Digest** – the name of a magazine
I love reading old issues of the **Reader's Digest** magazine.
51. **Nauseating** – to feel sick
The smell from the drain is **nauseating**.
52. **Consider** – to think carefully about something
It is important to **consider** everything carefully before making a decision.
53. **Propelled** – pushed forward
The ship was **propelled** forward once they started all the engines.
54. **Enthusiasm** – keen interest in something
It is good to show **enthusiasm** in class.

55. **Per se** – by, of, for, or in itself
Per se she is a very good person.
56. **Exhausted** – very tired
You must be **exhausted** after the long journey.
57. **Homesick** – the longing to go back home
She got very lonely and **homesick** when she went to boarding school.
58. **Attachment** – an extra piece that can be added to a machine or object
The mixer has a special **attachment** for making fruit juices.
59. **Quills** – hollow needles on the back of a porcupine
Even the tiger is afraid of the **quills** of the porcupine.
60. **Porcupine** – a large rodent with a coat of sharp spines, or quills, that protect it against predators
The **porcupine** is one of the animals that has quills which scare away larger animal predators.
61. **Cross-flutes** – a type of flute that is held horizontally and it is blown from the side
She played a lovely tune on the **cross-flute**.
62. **Recorders** – wind instrument of the flute family
The children played their **recorders** with great enthusiasm.
63. **Meditatively** – thoughtfully
She sat in a corner **meditatively** looking at the painting.
64. **Excessive** – over the normal limit
There is no need to make an **excessive** show of wealth at a wedding.
65. **Display** – to show or exhibit
You should **display** your wares to attract customers.
66. **Occasionally** – from time to time; sometimes
Occasionally, I go to the movies with my friends.
67. **Curiously** – eager to learn or know; inquisitive
The dog sniffed at my bag **curiously**.
68. **Offhanded** – casual; not showing much interest in something
She spoke in a very **offhanded** manner.

69. **Incidental** – occurring by chance; less important than other things
He was shot dead during the riots; **incidentally** his wallet was stolen too.
70. **Enterprise** – a project undertaken
It was wonderful to hear that he has undertaken a new **enterprise**.
71. **Breaks off** : smashes, splits, or divides into parts
The mother **breaks off** the bread in equal pieces for her children.
72. **Pattern** – a particular way that something is often done or repeated
His **pattern** of bad behavior was making the teacher very angry.
73. **Tear myself away** – come away
It was tough for me to **tear myself away** from the party.
74. **Universal** – relating to the whole of mankind or nature
It is a **universal** rule that we must respect our elders.
75. **Particular** – relating to or specific for a single thing
In this **particular** situation, we must all be very careful.
76. **Culture** – activities and ideas of a group of people with shared traditions
In many **cultures** around the world, families eat their meals together.
77. **Classical** – representing a long-established form or style
I went to a beautiful concert of Hindustani **classical** music and met many famous people there.
78. **High-pitched** – shrill; high in volume or tone
Her voice is so **high-pitched** that it disturbs all of us.
79. **Specific** - special or particular kind
I want a **specific** shade of pink paint for the walls of my room.
80. **Fingering** – way of placing the fingers to play different notes
It was beautiful to watch how she made music by **fingering** the flute.
81. **Compass** – in this context it means, range. Most common meaning is an instrument that shows directions: North, South, East, West
We should live within the **compass** of our means.
The **compass** will guide us if we get lost.
82. **Weaves** – forms or constructs something, usually cloth
The **weaves** of the saris on sale at the shop were beautiful.

83. **Associations** – connection
In **association** with the school administration, the parents are planning a fair.
84. **Commonality** – sharing of features
There are few **commonalities** between the Indian and Western cultures.
85. **Mankind** – the whole of the human race, including both men and women
Nature is slowly being destroyed by **mankind**.
86. **Motive** – a reason for doing something
She gives large donations with only one **motive** – to get praise.
87. **Pause** – stop temporarily
She **paused** in the middle of the race because she wanted to drink some water.
88. **Affected** – influenced
She was greatly **affected** by the death of her father.
89. **Familiar** – well known
He was a **familiar** face in that part of town.
90. **Previous** – coming before something
She says she remembers everything from her **previous** life.
91. **Absence** – state of being away
The **absence** of her husband made it very difficult for her to cope.
92. **Abroad** – foreign country
She is planning to go **abroad** for further studies.
93. **Certainly** – surely
She will most **certainly** get into a very good college with such high marks.
94. **Invested** – used, gave or devoted time, talent or money to achieve something
Her mother is too **invested** in her health issues.
My father **invested** all his money in the bank.
95. **Significance** – importance
We don't fully understand the **significance** of rules, till something goes wrong.

4. Questions

I. Before You Read

1. Do you like travelling? The writer, Vikram Seth, enjoys it very much. In his book, *Heaven Lake*, he describes a long journey from China to India, via Tibet and Nepal.
2. Have you heard of places like Ajmer Sharif, Madurai, Sanchi, Varanasi, Sarnath, or Halebid? Can you name some other places like these?
3. What do the surroundings of a holy place in your city look like? Think about it as you read Vikram Seth's description of Kathmandu.

II. Answer these questions in one or two words or in short phrases.

1. Name the two temples the author visited in Kathmandu.
2. The writer says, "All this I wash down with Coca Cola." What does 'all this' refer to?
3. What does Vikram Seth compare to the quills of a porcupine?
4. Name five kinds of flutes.

III. Answer each question in a short paragraph.

1. What difference does the author note between the flute seller and the other hawkers?
2. What is the belief at Pashupatinath about the end of Kaliyug?
3. The author has drawn powerful images and pictures. Pick out three examples each of:
 - (i) the atmosphere of 'febrile confusion' outside the temple of Pashupatinath (for example: some people trying to get the priest's attention are elbowed aside...)
 - (ii) the things he sees
 - (iii) the sounds he hears

IV. Answer the following questions in not more than 100–150 words each.

1. Compare and contrast the atmosphere in and around the Baudhnath shrine with the Pashupatinath temple
2. How does the author describe Kathmandu's busiest streets?
3. "To hear any flute is to be drawn into the commonality of all mankind." Why does the author say this?

5. Grammar

I. Read the following sentences carefully to understand the meaning of the italicised phrases. Then match the phrasal verbs in Column A with their meanings in Column B.

1. A communal war *broke out* when the princess was abducted by the neighbouring prince.
2. The cockpit *broke off* from the plane during the plane crash.
3. The car *broke down* on the way and we were left stranded in the jungle.
4. The dacoit *broke away* from the police as they took him to court.
5. The brothers *broke up* after the death of the father.
6. The thief *broke into* our house when we were away.

A	B
(i) break out	(a) to come apart due to force
(ii) break off	(b) end a relationship
(iii) break down	(c) break and enter illegally; unlawful trespassing
(iv) break away (from someone)	(d) of start suddenly, (usually a fight, a war or a disease)
(v) break up	(e) to escape from someone's grip
(vi) break into	(f) stop working

II.

1. Use the suffixes -ion or -tion to form nouns from the following verbs. Make the necessary changes in the spellings of the words.

Example: proclaim – proclamation

cremate	_____	invent	_____	direct	_____
dislocate	_____	act	_____	tempt	_____
meditate	_____	associate	_____	exhaust	_____
immigrate	_____	imagine	_____	dedicate	_____

2. Now fill in the blanks with suitable words from the ones that you have formed.

- (i) Mass literacy was possible only after the _____ of the printing machine.
- (ii) Ramesh is unable to tackle the situation as he lacks _____.
- (iii) I could not resist the _____ to open the letter.
- (iv) Hard work and _____ are the main keys to success.
- (v) The children were almost fainting with _____ after being made to stand in the sun.

III. Punctuation

Use capital letters, full stops, question marks, commas and inverted commas wherever necessary in the following paragraph.

an arrogant lion was wandering through the jungle one day he asked the tiger who is stronger than you you O lion replied the tiger who is more fierce than a leopard asked the lion you sir replied the leopard he marched upto an elephant and asked the same question the elephant picked him up in his trunk swung him in the air and threw him down look said the lion there is no need to get mad just because you don't know the answer

IV. Simple Present Tense

Study these sentences from the lesson.

- A fight *breaks* out between two monkeys.
- Film songs *blare* out from the radios.
- I *wash* it down with Coca-Cola.

The italicised verbs are in the simple present tense. The writer is here describing what he saw and heard but he uses the present tense instead of the past tense. A narration or a story can be made more dramatic or immediate by using the present tense in this way.

Now look at the following sentences.

- A small shrine half *protrudes* from the stone platform on the riverbank.
- Small shops *stand* on the outer edge of the Stupa.

We use the simple present tense to speak about what is usually or generally true. The sentences above describe facts. We also use the simple present tense in sentences depicting 'universal truths'. For example:

- The sun *rises* in the east.
- The earth *revolves* around the sun.

We can also refer to habitual actions using the simple present tense.

- He usually *takes* a train instead of a bus to work.
- We often *get* fine drizzles in winter.

In these sentences, words like *every day*, *often*, *seldom*, *never*, *every month*, *generally*, *usually*, etc. may be used.

To understand tenses watch this video by clicking on the link below.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=faUvT7zfsyk>

To understand present tense watch this video by clicking on the link below.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gRlrZrDL5QI>

To understand the simple aspect of tenses watch this video by clicking on the link below.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_JXcMI8Hqjo

1. Fill in the blanks with the correct form of the verb in brackets.

- (i) The heart is a pump that _____ (send) the blood circulating through our body. The pumping action _____ (take place) when the left ventricle of the heart _____ (contract). This _____ (force) the blood out into the arteries, which _____ (expand) to receive the oncoming blood.
- (ii) The African lungfish can live without water for up to four years. During a drought it _____ (dig) a pit and _____ (enclose) itself in a capsule of slime and earth, leaving a tiny

opening for air. The capsule _____ (dry) and _____ (harden), but when rain _____ (come), the mud _____ (dissolve) and the lungfish _____ (swim) away.

- (iii) **MAHESH:** We have to organise a class party for our teacher. _____ (Do) anyone play an instrument?
VIPUL: Rohit _____ (play) the flute.
MAHESH: _____ (Do) he also act?
VIPUL: No, he _____ (compose) music.
MAHESH: That's wonderful!

6. Speaking

1. Discuss in class the shrines you have visited or know about. Speak about one of them.
2. Imagine you are giving an eyewitness account or a running commentary of one of the following:
 - (i) a game of football, cricket or hockey, or some sports event
 - (ii) a parade (e.g. Republic Day) or some other national event

Speak a few sentences narrating what you see and hear. Use the simple present and the present continuous tenses. For example:

- He passes the ball but Ben gets in the way...
- These brave soldiers guard our frontiers. They display their skills here

7. Writing

Diary entry for a travelogue

- I. The text you read is a travelogue where the author, Vikram Seth, talks about his visit to two sacred places in Kathmandu. Imagine that you were with Vikram Seth on his visit to Pashupatinath temple, and you were noting down all that you saw and did there, so that you could write a travelogue later. Record in point form.
 - what you see when you reach the Pashupatinath temple
 - what you see happening inside the temple
 - what you do when inside the temple
 - what you see outside the temple
 - what your impressions are about the place.

- II. Here is your diary entry when you visited Agra. Read the points and try to write a travelogue describing your visit to Agra and the Taj Mahal. You may add more details.

January 2003 — rise before dawn — take the Shatabdi Express at 6.15 a.m. from Delhi — meet a newly-married couple on train — talk about Himachal Pradesh — get off the train — enter the once-grand city, Agra — twisted alleys — traffic dense — rickshaws, cars, people — vendors selling religious artifacts, plastic toys, spices and sweets — go to the Taj Mahal — constructed entirely of white marble — magical quality — colour changes with varying of light and shadow — marble with gemstones inside — reflection of the Taj Mahal in the pond — school-children, tourists — tourist guides following people

- III. Practice

Write a short diary entry describing the **Annual Award Function** held in your school recently.