

The Comet - I

Comprehension Check (Page 77)

Question 1:

Why does Indrani Debi dislike Duttada's "hobnobbing" with Dibya?

Answer:

Duttada was very fond of star gazing and would enjoy spending a lot of time with his telescope "Dibya" trying to discover a comet in the night sky. Indrani Debi disliked Duttada's "hobnobbing" with Dibya because she thought that the telescope was like a woman who had ensnared her husband and had grabbed all his attention.

Question 2:

She is complaining and smiling. Why is she smiling?

Answer:

Indrani Debi had complaints about the wretched Dibya, Duttada's telescope ever since. However, she would often smile it off as she knew how utterly oblivious her husband was of the practical problems of living. Although his doctor had advised him to take special precautions against the cold, he wouldn't remember to put on a sweater even if it was lying on his bedside chair.

Question 3:

- (i) What was Duttada's secret ambition?
- (ii) What did he do to achieve it?

Answer:

(i) Duttada was an amateur astronomer whose secret ambition was to find a comet one fine day. To him, the telescope marked the fulfillment of the ambition of a lifetime. He was optimistic that the professionals with their pre-assigned programmes might miss such an insignificant thing as a comet as they would be exploring faint stars and nebulous galaxies.

(ii) Being an amateur astronomer, Duttada had always longed to have enough money to buy a good telescope and enough spare time to gaze the night sky with it. He fulfilled his desire after his retirement and bought an eight-inch long telescope which he called Dibya Chakshu or Divine Eye. Every night, Duttada would sit with Dibya and gaze at the star-studded sky with the hope of discovering a comet. This is because he was confident that the professionals might miss such an insignificant activity due to their pre-assigned space exploration programmes.

Question 4:

What is the difference between a planet and a comet, as given in the story?

Answer:

According to the story, comets are new objects that come from the remote corners of the Solar System. Like planets, comets also orbit round the Sun but their orbits are highly eccentric. Hence, once in a while a comet comes closer to the Sun. A comet has a longish tail that is lit brilliantly by the sunlight and then suddenly it recedes into darkness not to be seen again for years or for centuries.

Question 5:

Why was Duttada hopeful that he would discover a new comet soon?

Answer:

Duttada was hopeful that he would discover a new comet soon because he was aware that the professionals were extremely busy with their pre-assigned programmes while exploring faint stars and nebulous galaxies. In this process, they are mostly likely to miss such an insignificant thing as a comet since they might not expect to see it anyway. As a matter of fact, amateurs had often discovered new comets which the professionals had mostly missed.

Question 6:

Why does Duttada say – “I almost wish I had not discovered this comet.”?

Answer:

While returning from one such ceremony Duttada muttered to himself in disgust, “I almost wish I had not discovered this comet.” This is because the discovery of a new comet by Duttada brought in unwelcome publicity to him. There were numerous receptions and functions to attend. He was an introvert person and all these publicity stunts were not of his liking.

Question 7:

Why is his wife unhappy about the discovery?

Answer:

Duttada’s wife, Indrani Debi was unhappy about the discovery because she thought that comets bring ill-luck or cause unnatural calamities to Earth. Moreover, she was concerned that a good man like Duttada should not have been associated with the discovery of a comet.

Comprehension Check (Page 80)

Question 1:

How did Sir John get hold of James’ original manuscript?

Answer:

James’ original manuscript was published in the paper *Nature*. Sir John got hold of it from Mr. Taylor who was the editor of *Nature* and was also his friend.

Question 2:

What is the important point the paper makes?

Answer:

The important point that the paper makes is that Comet Dutta is likely to collide with planet Earth soon.

Question 3:

Why does Sir John say that James' paper should not be published?

Answer:

Sir John told that James' paper should not be published because he was fearful that the dreadful news of the inevitable collision of the comet with Earth might cause a lot of panic around the world.

Question 4:

What do the two men finally decide to do?

Answer:

The two men finally decide to organize an important secret conference of international experts to chalk out a plan to avert this impending calamity.