

Chapter 9: The Comet - I

Comprehension Check

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Question 1: Why does Indrani Debi dislike Duttada's "hobnobbing" with Dibya ?

Answer: Duttada was an amateur astronomer. Every night he would spend a lot of time with his telescope "Dibya". Indrani Debi had a great concern for her retired husband's health. The doctor had advised him to take special precautions against the cold. But Duttada was so fascinated with 'Dibya' that he would forget to wear his sweater. That is why she disliked Duttada's 'hobnobbing' with Dibya.

Question 2: She is complaining and smiling. Why is she smiling ?

Answer: When Indrani Debi woke up in the night, she found that Duttada had again gone upstairs to be with that wretched Dibya." She was smiling because of the absentmindedness of Duttada, who had forgotten to close the door and wear his sweater. That is why she is complaining and smiling.

Question 3:

(i) What was Duttada's secret ambition ?

(ii) What did he do to achieve it?

Answer:

(i) Duttada's secret ambition in life was to discover a new comet, which should be named as Comet Dutta.

(ii) After his retirement, Duttada bought a telescope and spent night after night in looking at the sky through it. Finally, he was able to discover a new comet.

Question 4: What is the difference between a planet and a comet, as given in the story?

Answer: Planets orbit round the sun. They are the bodies in space that move round a star, such as a sun, and receive light from it. The orbits of the planets are highly eccentric. A Comet is an object that moves round the sun. It looks like a bright star. Its long tail is brilliantly lit by the sunlight. Comets come from the remote corners of the solar system.

Question 5: Why was Duttada hopeful that he would discover a new comet soon ?

Answer: Duttada was an amateur astronomer. He had an eight-inch telescope. He knew that professionals keep themselves busy in looking at faint stars and nebulous galaxies. So, they miss comets. Duttada was an amateur like those who discovered new comets. He had detected a faint stranger. He was busy in his observation. On this basis, he was hopeful that he would discover a new comet soon.

Question 6: Why does Duttada say-"I almost wish I had not discovered this comet" ?

Answer: Duttada was an introvert. He did not like undue praise and publicity. After he discovered the comet, many public functions were held. That is why he got disgusted. So he wished that he had not discovered the comet. All this shows that he was a shy and a modest person. He did not like pomp and show.

Question 7: Why is his wife unhappy about the discovery?

Answer: His wife Indrani Debi was of superstitious nature. She believed that comets bring bad luck and misfortunes on earth. She was unhappy to know that her husband's name has been associated with a comet. That is why she was not happy about the discovery.

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Question 1: How did Sir John get hold of Jame's original manuscript?

Answer: Sir John was the Defence Science Advisor in the Government of England. Doctor James, an eminent astronomer had written an article for a science magazine 'Nature'. It described how Comet Dutta would collide with the earth within ten months. The editor of 'Nature', who was a friend of Sir John, had sent the article to him for seeking his opinion.

Question 2: What is the important point the paper makes ?

Answer: Dr. James Forsyth's paper on Comet Dutta had predicted that the comet would collide with the earth within ten months. The collision, according to him was inevitable barring rare circumstances. It could cause complete destruction on earth.

Question 3: Why does Sir John say that James' paper should not be published ?

Answer: Dr. James' article predicted that Comet Dutta would collide with the earth within ten months. The report of complete destruction would cause panic amongst the people of the world. That is why Sir John firmly believed that James' paper must not be published. He suggested to Dr. James that the article should be toned down by using many "ifs" and "buts."

Question 4: What do the two men finally decide to do ?

Answer: They thought that the problem of collision of comet Dutta with the earth was too serious. Sir John showed real concern at the prediction. This problem definitely needed more than two brains. So, the two men finally decided to call an urgent meeting of experts and top scientists of the world. They would plan how the cometary collision could be averted.