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Moon

There was an unexpected power cut yesterday evening. The whole city was enveloped in a blanket of darkness. Grandma started searching for a candle. Mihir slowly moved towards Grandpa. Grandpa put his arm around Mihir's shoulder and said, "Come, let's go to the terrace. We can take a walk there."



Mihir felt a little scared. He let go of Grandpa's hand and went near Grandma. Grandma gave him a push and said, "Go to the terrace. Why are you scared? Have you seen the sky? The moon is looking like a pizza base in the sky!"

Mihir was surprised when he reached the terrace! The terrace was quite bright. There was no sign of darkness. Now he didn't want to hold on to Grandpa, he wanted to try and guess the moon's size.

As they were walking on the terrace, Mihir would sometimes look at the moon and sometimes at the buildings around. After some time he felt a little fearful. He pestered Grandpa to go home. Just then power was restored.

"Grandma, I will never go to the terrace at night. I had a strange experience. I felt as if the moon was keeping a watch on me—it would follow me when I walked! When I stopped walking, it would also stop instantly. If I turned my neck, it would not move. But the minute I moved forwards or backwards, it would immediately follow me. Tell me, why does the moon follow small kids like me? I saw from the terrace...the trees and the tall buildings around were not interested in me. It was this moon that was following me everywhere..."

This made Grandma smile.



But Grandpa burst out laughing. He teased Mihir, “What do you think...you are someone very important that the moon should follow you? And is the moon jobless to follow you everywhere?”

Mihir looked ready to burst into tears.

Grandma chided Grandpa, “Is this the way to explain things to children? If you don’t know the answers, don’t tease him. Come here, Mihir.”

“You had asked me the same question when we were travelling by train the other day. Remember...I had shown you something,” continued Grandma.

“I remember! I was sitting at the window. I had asked you, ‘Why are the trees running backwards? Is it because we are going forward?’ Then you had showed me the hills which were far away. But they were coming with us slowly. I was so confused!! The objects which are close to us run backwards while objects which are far seem to come with us slowly...Isn’t this strange?”

Then you asked me to keep my gaze steady. I couldn’t do it immediately. But I managed to do it after some time. Then I saw something totally different! A very different but a beautiful scene!!

“What’s this? What do you mean by startling but still beautiful? What did you see? And what do you mean by keeping your gaze steady?”



“First stop your flood of questions. I will explain everything. Mihir was correct. When we look out of a window of a moving train, the objects which are close to us seem to go backwards very fast. But the objects which are far away seem to move slowly in the same direction. In such a situation, if we keep our gaze steady, then all the objects outside the train seem to move in circles!! If we move our gaze slowly from a nearby object to some faraway point, then we can even locate the centre of the objects moving in a circle. This is because of the illusion of speed perceived by our eyes.

Our brain imagines that the speed at which the angle created by an object with the eyes changes is the speed of the object. But the brain is aware that in reality it is we who have motion and the objects outside are still!

“Grandma, I have understood this. But what about the moon? It walks when I walk. It stops when I stop. And it constantly looks at me” said Mihir.

“In the case of the moon, it is not the illusion of speed, but optical illusion which causes this perception. Get it?” When Grandma said this, Grandpa exclaimed “Now, I have understood one more thing!”

Grandma and Mihir looked at Grandpa, who continued “I have understood who is the moon of our house...who is always with me,



and is always looking at me, and taking good care of me..."

Grandma blushed and ran in before Grandpa could finish.

Mihir said, "Oh, looks like the moon has gone behind the clouds!"

RAJIV TAMBE
rajiv.childrenswriter@gmail.com