Lalit Helps Stay Away from Light Pollution



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Lalit is a lion. He's a roary-woary lion. He has a big wavy mane of hair around his face. Lalit is an Asiatic lion and he lives in a special park called a wildlife sanctuary. The park is enormous so there's lot of space for Lalit to roam around and play in.

Lalit is a very brave lion. That means that even when he's scared, he doesn't let it stop him from doing anything. Lalit is also a very observant lion. He notices everything, even the smallest of details.

Lalit lives in a pride with his mother and father and his brothers and sisters. Sometimes his father has to go away to hunt for food. Lalit is the oldest of his brothers and sisters. So when his father goes away, Lalit helps his mother look after the younger cubs.

One evening at sunset, Lalit is playing with the new lion cubs in the pride when he notices that his mother looks upset.

"Mum, are you OK?" he asks her.

"Actually, I'm a bit scared, Lalit," she replies.

Lalit's mother has taught him to be a courageous lion, so he wonders why she is scared.

"What are you frightened of Mum?" he asks, concerned.

"I'm worried about your brothers and sisters," his mother explains. "More and more villages for humans are appearing in the park. With them come dangers that we didn't have before."

"What kind of dangers?" Lalit enquires.

"Well, there are the electric fences around the villages, and the wells humans build. Your brothers and sisters are too young to understand that they're dangerous. I worry they'll come to some kind of harm. There are so few of us Asiatic lions left already."

"Don't worry, Mum," says Lalit, trying to comfort her. "The cubs won't go near the villages."

“I wish it were that simple,” Lalit’s mum responds, looking sad. “At night, the lights from the villages and from cattle owners trying to protect their bomas are really bright against the dark sky. They cause light pollution and draw animals to them. Animals don’t realise the lights are man-made, not natural, and that they need to keep away from them.”

Lalit knows how much his mum loves his little brothers and sisters and he doesn’t want her to be worried about what might happen to them.

“It’ll be OK, mum,” he says. “I’m going to help make sure all of the cubs are safe.”

Lalit lies down on his back to play with his brothers and sisters again. As he does, he looks up and sees all of the stars starting to appear in the night sky. Suddenly, this gives him an idea.

“Hey, follow me!” he calls out to the little cubs as they roll around on the dry, dusty ground.

The little cubs all get up and pad along behind Lalit as he walks to the top of the hillside. When they reach it, Lalit stops them.

“Look up there,” he says, pointing with his large paw.

“Do you see those little dots twinkling in the sky? Those are called stars.”

The little cubs all look up to where Lalit is pointing. TWINKLE! TWINKLE! TWINKLE! They can see so many stars!

“They light our way,” Lalit continues. “Whenever you can see them, it means you’re safe.”

“Now look down there,” he says, indicating with his paw. The little cubs all look down to the valley at the very bottom of the hillside.

“Those lights there aren’t made by nature. So they create something called light pollution. If you go near them it isn’t safe. Brave little lions stay up here close to the stars. Can you do that?”

The little cubs all look back up at the stars and start jumping up and down, falling over each other, as they try to reach them.

Lalit laughs as he watches them. He can see they’ve understood.

“The stars are a bit too far away for us to touch them, but as long as we can see them, we’re alright. Let’s make sure we look for them every night. Come on, time to go home. It’s getting late.”

Lalit starts to walk back down the hillside towards home and the cubs follow him. They roll around on the floor and hang off of Lalit’s wavy mane and his tail. The little cubs love their big brother.

“Where have you been?” Lalit’s mum asks when they finally arrive back at their den. “Come on, it’s time for bed!”

She helps each of the cubs curl themselves up into a little ball of fur, ready for sleep.

“You don’t need to worry any more, Mum. My brothers and sisters all know how to stay safe now.”

“Oh Lalit, thank you!” says Lalit’s mum, smiling. “I knew I could rely on you.”

“Any time,” Lalit yawns. Although as he’s a lion, his yawn looks and sounds a lot more like a roar!

Lalit curls himself up into a ball, ready to go to sleep. He feels really content. He’s teaching his family how to be brave and observant, just like him. And he’s helping to protect them from the effects of light pollution too.

Questions for discussion

Is the light that causes light pollution natural or man-made?

Can you find out one bad effect of light pollution?

What harmful things can you help to keep members of your family away from so that they can stay safe?