**Earth Science Literacy Fusion: “Can 'Invisibility Cloaks' Protect Buildings From Earthquakes?”**

Scientists have been intrigued with the concept of making objects and even events disappear ever since J.K. Rowling planted the seed with Harry Potter's invisibility cloak. They have had limited success in both so far, by manipulating light waves - bending them to make objects invisible, and making events disappear by changing their speed. Now, some mathematicians are proposing the same principle to protect buildings from earthquake damage.

The bold idea is the brainchild of a team of researchers led by Dr. William Parnell from the University of Manchester. Their proposal, which so far is largely theoretical, is based on changing the course elastic or seismic waves, similar to what scientists have done with light waves.

The researchers believe that if large buildings in earthquake-prone regions are padded with pressurized rubber at their bases, it could keep specific types of elastic waves from traveling through the ground, which in theory would result in the waves traveling around the building, rather than through it.

While it may sound like science fiction, the idea behind it is not too far-fetched, because of the way seismic waves travel through the ground. While there is no stopping them when they are rippling through dense rock and soil, the waves get deflected when they encounter any pressurized object and end up going around them instead of through them, similar to how light waves behave through a prism or water.

So, if we placed a giant rubber padding filled with air or some pressurized fluid around the foundation of any structure, it should in theory, be able to deflect the seismic waves, making the building invisible and therefore, invincible, when faced with even the largest shakers!

While it would be impractical to cloak every building with rubber, it would certainly help to protect important ones like nuclear power plants, thus averting the recent Japan-like crises. Though scientists have a long way to go before this becomes a reality, the fact that it is even a possibility, is quite exciting.

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