

Today, there was a lot of activity at Maalu's house. *Chittappan* and his family were coming home after five years. Five years ago *Chittappan* had got a job in the capital city of United Arab Emirates (UAE) called Abu Dhabi. Since then he had lived there. Maalu and her *Appa* went to the airport to receive them.

After the plane landed, the passengers had to wait for some time to collect their luggage. At last *Chittappan*, *Kunjamma* and their two children could be seen coming out. "How big Shanta and Sashi have grown," *Appa* said.

Soon the many suitcases and bags were fitted into the taxi and everyone was on the way to Maalu's house.

"Shanta, you must be very tired after your long journey, *Appa* told me that Abu Dhabi is far from India," said Maalu.

For the teacher: *Chittappan* – Father's younger brother in *Malayalam*. *Kunjamma* – Father's younger brother's wife in *Malayalam*.

"We are not tired. Even though it is far, our flight took only two hours," said Shanta. "The plane flies very fast."

Maalu was surprised. She remembered that when she had gone on a school trip to Chennai, they had spent almost 12 hours in the train. And on the map, Kochi and Chennai seemed quite near. Maalu, Shanta and Sashi chatted all the way home from the airport. Maalu remembered how much fun she had on her school trips. She wanted Shanta to tell them all about her trip from Abu Dhabi.



Dust All Around!

"Did you see many interesting things from the plane?" asked Maalu.

"Most of the time we saw only clouds because the plane was flying so high, even higher than the clouds," said Shanta. "But before it went so high, we could see that we were flying over sandy areas. It was sand but the colour of the sand kept changing – white, brown, yellow, red, black. We saw mountains made only of sand." "They are called sand dunes," added Sashi.



"I have seen sand only at the seashore," said Maalu.

"Then you should come to visit us," said *Chittappan*.



"The countries around Abu Dhabi are located in a desert area. Even if one drives a little away from the city, one can see miles and miles of sand – no trees, no greenery – just sand."

"I used to dream of the thick greenery and cool water around our home in Kerala," said *Kunjamma*. "I am so happy to see all this after such a long time."

"The children have almost forgotten how it feels when it rains. You know it almost never rains in desert areas," said *Chittappan*. "Water is really very precious over there. No rain, no rivers, no lakes, no ponds. Even below the ground there is no water." "But," added Sashi, "there is a lot of oil under the sandy soil. So petrol is easily available in these countries." "In fact petrol is cheaper than water," said *Chittappan*.

By this time the taxi had reached Maalu's house. Shanta and Sashi were surprised to see so many fruit trees – coconuts, bananas, jackfruit, papaya, betelnut ... so many kind of trees! Sashi said, "We used to see only one kind of tree there – the date palms – because it is the only one that can grow in the desert. The date is the most common fruit."





Nice Gifts and Photographs!

After they had met everyone, *Kunjamma* unpacked their bags. They had brought gifts for everyone. They gave dates for everyone to eat. The dates were very sweet and tasty. Sashi showed Maalu some notes and coins. Shanta explained that the money they used in Abu Dhabi was different and was called *Dirham*. It had some writings in their local language – Arabic. They also showed many photographs of the place where they lived.



Chitappan gave Maalu a globe. He said, "Maalu, why don't you locate Abu Dhabi on this? Locate Kerala also." The children enjoyed playing with the globe and looking for different places on the globe. Maalu found Chennai and Kochi also.

In the evening everyone sat in the verandah, enjoying the breeze and looking at the photographs. They saw that in Abu Dhabi the buildings were tall with many storeys and big glass windows. Maalu said, "You must be getting nice cool breeze through the big windows." *Chittappan* said, "We cannot open the windows because of the heat. It is air-conditioned inside





where everyone stays. As the weather is very hot, people wear loose cotton clothes and keep themselves fully covered – even the head is covered. This protects them from the strong sun."

Maalu enjoyed looking at the pictures and finding out about the other country from her cousins. She constantly kept comparing her city with the things that they described about Abu Dhabi. She decided that she would make a project report about Abu Dhabi for her class.

Discuss and write

- You can also make a small report comparing Abu Dhabi with the place where you live. You can use some of these points mentioned below while writing the report. You can also draw pictures or put photographs.
  - The climate and weather
  - What people wear
  - The trees and plants
  - The kind of buildings
  - The traffic on the roads (kinds of vehicles)
  - The common food items
  - The language
- Why do you think many trees cannot grow in desert areas?

- Do you have any relatives who live in another country?

- How long have they lived there? Did they go there for studies or for work? Was there any other reason?

- Look at these currency notes

Write the value of each note in the box near its picture.











- To which country does this currency belong? How did you know ?

- Whose picture can you see on the notes?

- Can you find any number on the notes (other than the value)?

- Do you think that two notes can have the same number?

- Take a ten rupee note and observe it carefully. How many languages can you see on the note?

- Write the name of the bank given on the note.

Match the coins



- How many of these coins do you recognise?

- What is written on each coin other than the value.

- Look at these notes. Do they all belong to India? Put a circle around notes that are not Indian. Find out which country do they belong to.

















