

Somu Uncle plays nice games with children during family functions.

Last Deepavali, after a heavy lunch with puliyodarai and paayasam, the children were playing in one corner of the house, when Somu uncle called out to them.

"Come! Let's decorate the house with these colourful string lights!"

The children could see sets of green, blue and red lights in his hands – and when they looked closer, many more, too! He showed them how to untangle the wires and make malas that could be hung around doors and windows. Excitedly, the children pulled out the many plastic chairs that were lying around and started climbing on them, to decorate the doors and windows with these string lights.

That is when Somu uncle said: "Stop, I will give all of you one challenge, let's see who wins this!"

The children knew that Somu uncle always gave interesting challenges. So they immediately scrambled down from the chairs and stood expectantly beside him.

Drawing a red plastic chair to his side, Somu Uncle placed it in the middle and asked them: "Can you make this red chair black without painting it with black paint?"

That was an easy question! Shreyas said: "We will paste black sheets of paper all over the chair!"

Uncle Somu laughed and nodded: "That is a good idea - but what if you are not allowed to paste paper or cloth on to the chair?"

Amrita from next door said: "I will keep the red chair in a black shadow."

Somu uncle smiled and asked everyone: "What do you all think? Will this work?"

Some children said 'yes' while others were not convinced.

By now, the evening sunrays were slanting in through the tall windows and doors that they were supposed to decorate. One boy dragged the red chair towards the window and kept it in the path of the sun light. Then he stood between the chair and window, causing his black shadow to fall on the red chair.

All the children looked carefully at the chair to see whether it had turned black.

To their disappointment, it was still looking red.

Many more ideas flowed out of the children and some of them appeared to be good answers at first, but were not found to be satisfactory on close examination.

By then it was already dark and Somu uncle suggested that the decoration had to be completed quickly and the string colour lights have to be switched on

The children completed the decoration silently and quickly, but they were thinking about Somu uncle's question all the time.

Finally, when they switched ON the colourful lights, it was so beautiful that they almost forgot Somu uncle's question and started jumping around.

Suddenly, something occurred to Amrita who talked about shadows earlier.

She had a crazy idea. She asked Somu uncle to switch off all lights. While the children watched in surprise, Somu uncle slowly switched off all lights and it became pitch dark.

Amrita said, "See? Now the chair is black!"

The children fell into silence at first. Then they began mumbling: "But this is cheating..."

Somu uncle was still silent. Finally, he said: "I agree - but where is the chair? We don't see anything. Everything is black when there is no light but I wanted only the chair to be black."

But he appreciated Amrita's cleverness. "You are now very close to the final answer!" He declared.

What could the answer be? Can you think?



Write/draw your thoughts and ideas and send them in to thinkingteacher22@gmail.com