

SOCIAL INFLUENCES IN CHILD BEHAVIOUR

How does our system respond ?



Who decides?

The Boards of Education decide the syllabi, textbooks and teaching in the classroom.

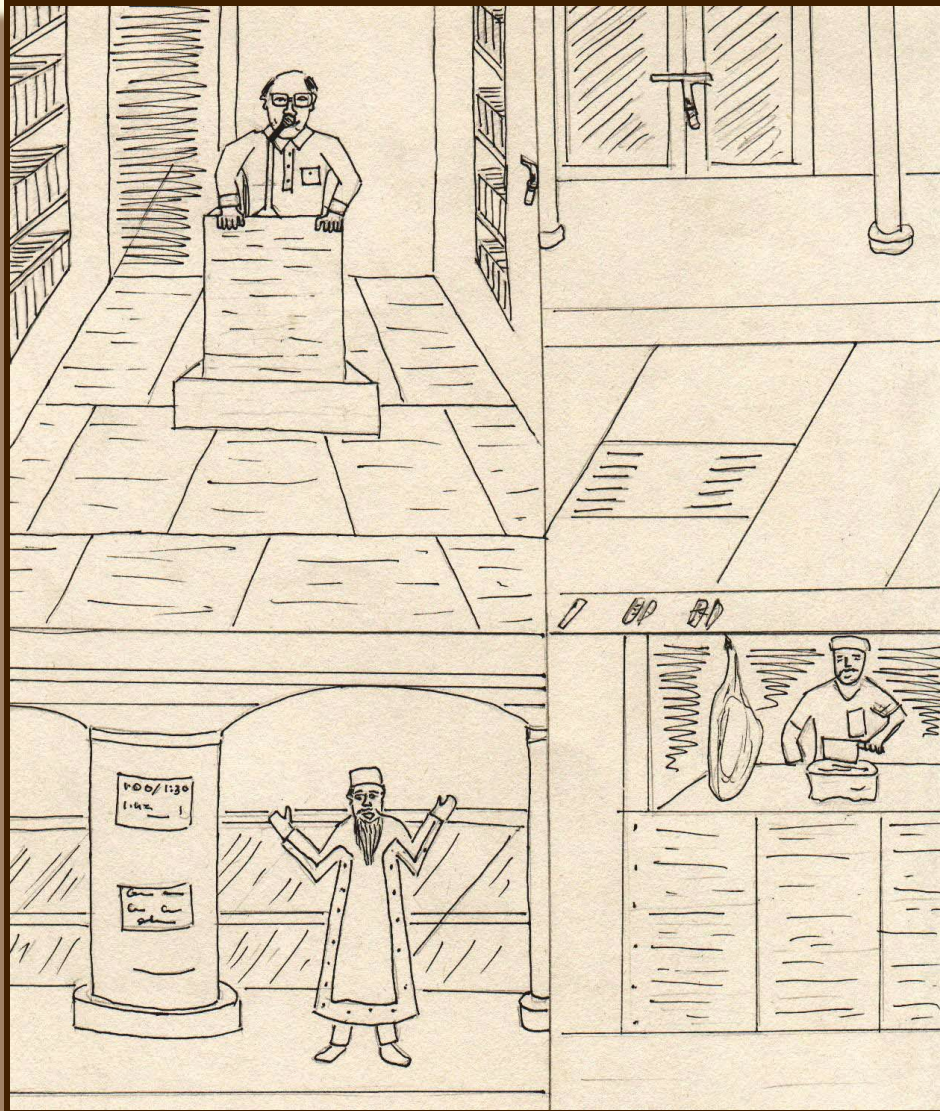


The main Education Policy, however, is decided, deliberated upon and finalised by our politicians who are insufficiently guided by educationists.

Our Main Focus

**Social Studies and History
&
Organisation and Structure of our
schools and colleges**

Indian Situation



- ✓ Intense, dynamic, plural society
- ✓ Intense social disparity of wealth and opportunity
- ✓ Does our education system match our situation?

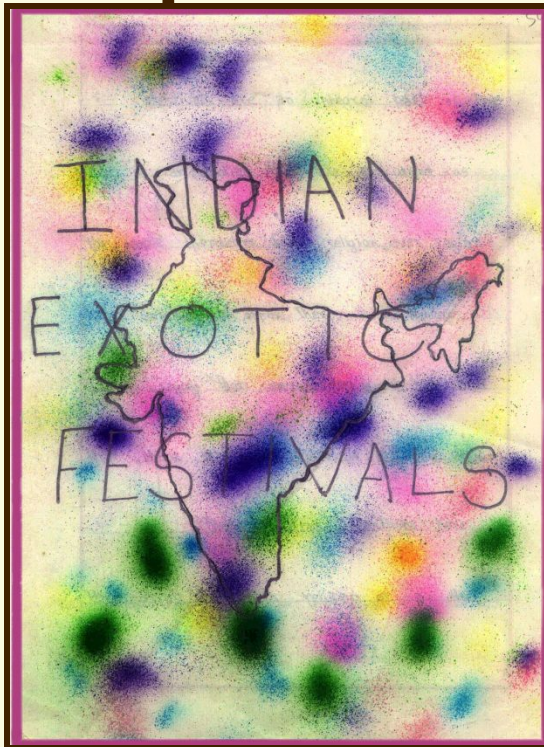
Diversity Understood?

- ✓ Do we celebrate this variety and diversity?
- ✓ Or is learning by rote and a standardised exam system used as a means to ensure success



Social Situation

✓ Deep schisms in Indian civil society



- ◆ Caste divisions
- ◆ Class differences
- ◆ Political projects
- ◆ Communal prejudices

✓ What is our response as educationists?

KHOJ

- ◆ An alternate approach
- ◆ Radical change in content

Khoj

Methodology

Interactive, Discursive, Practical
Media Studies & Media critiques encouraged
Creative Exercises for Greater Engagement
Emotional World Explored
Multi-dimensional methodologies
Emphasis on Conflictual Issues- Personal,
Political & Social

AIM

**Analysis, Strength & Strategies to enrich
Theoretical Knowledge
&
Practical Application.**

An Alternative

✓ **Alternate Vision to Social Studies Teaching**

✓ **A 45 session Modular Intervention for middle school level.**

Module 1 &2 Std V

Self Portrait & Problem Solving

Aim: To enter the emotional world of the child

Locate: Questions & Conflicts in their minds

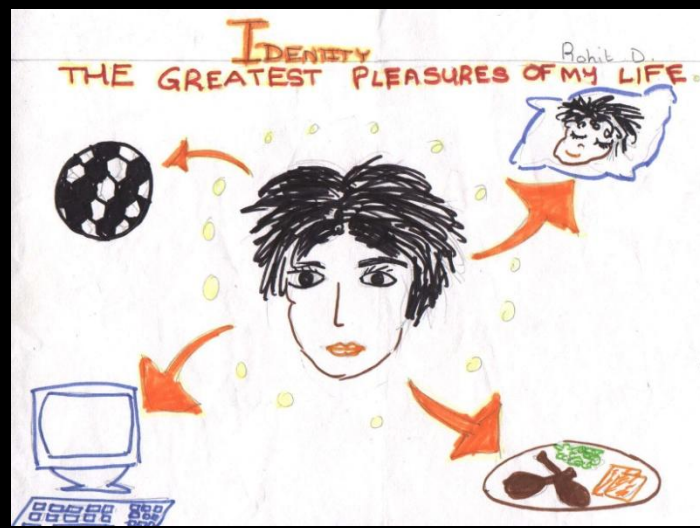
Is beating the only way to get children to listen?

Can India & Pakistan ever be friends?

Why are girls and boys treated differently?



The Self Portrait Module



We ask the children to draw/caricature images of themselves, a self-portrait. They are asked to portray, through blurbs/sketches/listings, an image of themselves,

The persons in their lives most important to them,
and a list of "LIKES" and "DISLIKES."

The KHOJ animator explains that this list is not simply a list of material things but also of emotions and feelings.

For example, what are happenings or emotions that make you feel like smiling, happy, feel like laughing and comfortable.

Then again, in the list of "DISLIKES" what are the situations or emotions that make you feel sad, hurt and angry.

To quote one student's response before he had started, (std.V), "I hate to dislike."



Amura's response



**My mother said,
“Beating is an insult to
anybody. If parents or
teachers beat a child,
he or she feels insulted
and repeats the
mistake again and
again. After sometime
the beatings have no
effect at all.**

Module 2

From Self-Portrait to Problem Solving in the Classroom

After individual responses to the self-portrait session have been collected --this session can go on for two one-hour sessions--the KHOJ animator reads every response in detail.

Issues that arise out of each class/batch are then culled out into 'three-four issues to be discussed in class groups.'

No two batches of children are the same. Therefore responses differ. Homework by the animator is essential.

Responses can be as varied as Beating is Humiliating for Children A girl child's anguished question--Why were my parents happier when my brother was born?

My enemy is Pakistan!

How would you turn your **enemies** into friends?

By speaking softly and nicely to them, by giving them something, by behaving in a friendly manner, by playing with them and, by saying sorry.
(**Milan, V-B, Radhakrishnan Vidyalaya**)

By the following methods:-

- 1) I would try to sit together and solve the problem which made us enemies;
- 2) I would obey (respect) his religion and him or her;
- 3) I would talk with her or him in a friendly manner;
- 4) I would not tease them and make our enemy-ness (enmity) more bigger;
- 5) I would help him when needed.

(**Sweety Shah, V-B, Radhakrishnan Vidyalaya**)



When you are angry with a country like Pakistan (which you feel is India's enemy) what would you do?

- 1.** I would try and make them understand our point of view by the technique of satyagraha (fighting injustices in a peaceful manner with sit-downs, boycotts and demonstrations). If they do not understand still, then I will declare a war against that country.
(Aayushi bagadia, V-D, Radhakrishnan Vidyalaya)
- 2.** Especially when Pakistan beats us in cricket, I feel that I should make (organise) a series and tell the Indian team that they should win. If they don't win, I will cheat. If they declare war, I will try the technique of satyagraha.
(no name), V-D, Radhakrishnan V.)

3. When we are angry with Pakistan, we should first show them the technique of satyagraha, that is, solving problems through peaceful means. If they do not obey it, we should not declare war against them. Then the Pakistanis will also feel ashamed and come to us and say sorry. So Pakistan's anger will also go.

(Abha, V-D, Radhakrishnan V.)

4. If we fight with Pakistan, we will get nothing but thousands of people losing their life. Towns and cities will be destroyed. We should make them understand not to fight with each other.

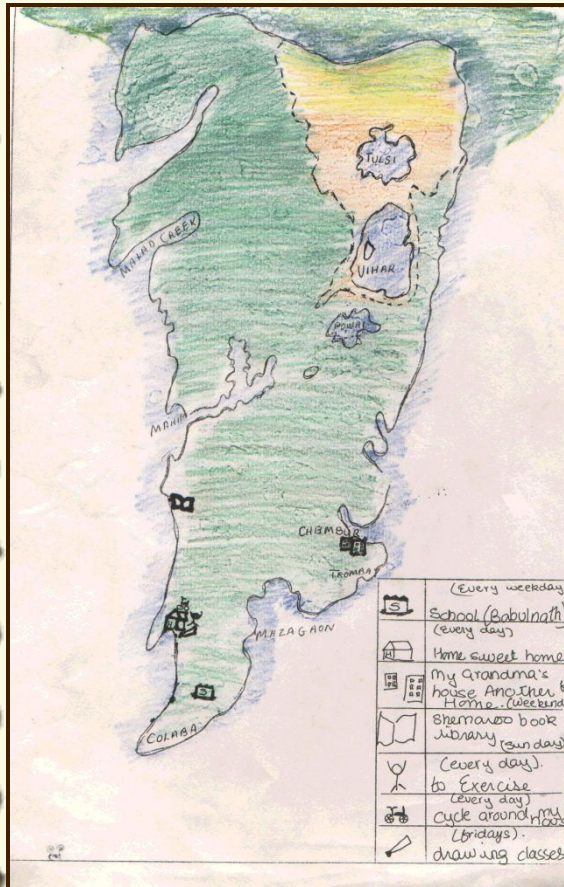
All are equal, no one is inferior or superior.

(Rahul Shah, V-D, Radhakrishnan V.)



Module 3 & 4

History of Mumbai, Mine & Others



When Amma was a little girl
When Dadi bought her first book
What did Abba wear when he went to school?
Stories of our childhood are so much part of the intimate learning process at home
Can they become a part of our classroom?

Aamchi Mumbai

**An experiment in tracing migratory history
Paternal and Maternal**

Vitalises history teaching

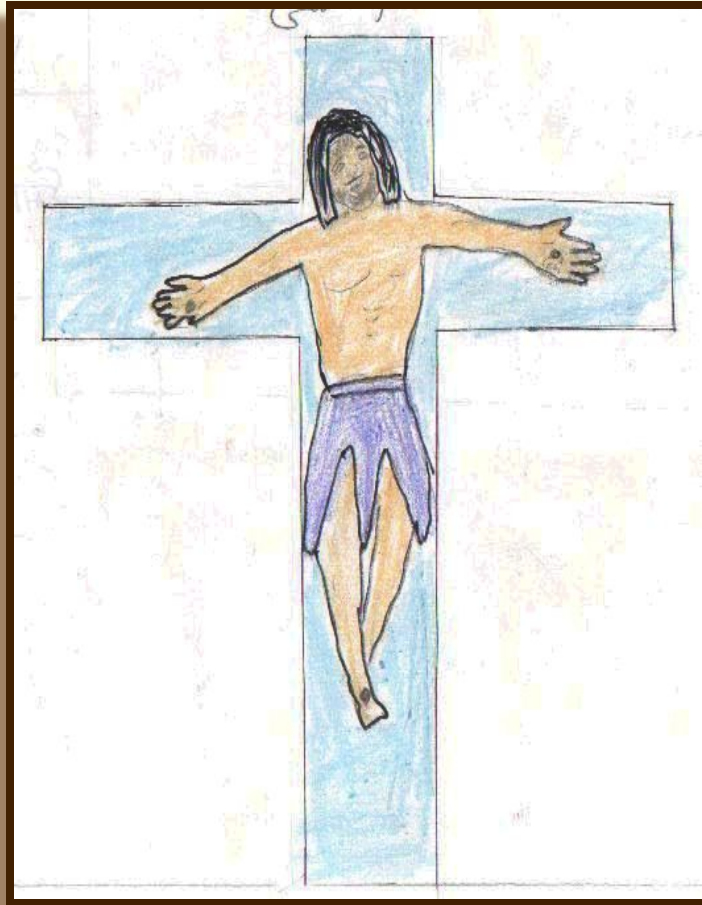
Dynamically alters the character of the classroom

Enthuses teachers

Draws in parents

Module 5 & 6

My God, Religion



**Children express
through letters,
poems and drawings
their relationship
with their God.**

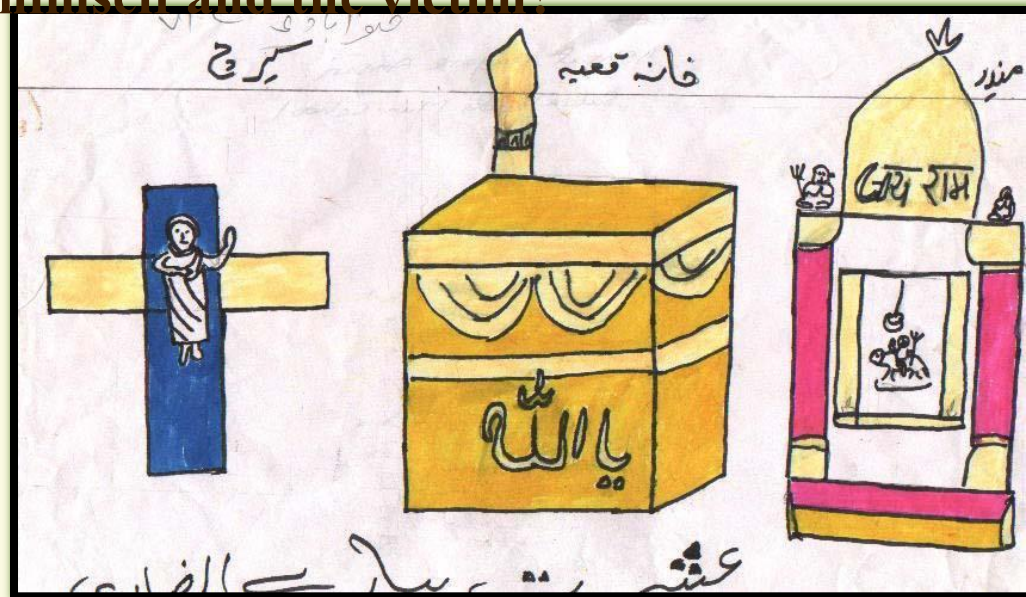
**Introduction to a brief
'History of Religion'**

**Special module on
'How Faiths have
Travelled'**

Living Diversity, Celebrating Difference

We extol virtues of non-violence and satyagraha in textbooks that do not excite us or the young.

Do we really believe that we share the virtues of non-violence with the young without exploring the human being's innate tendency to anger and violence and the consequences of that for herself or himself and the victim?



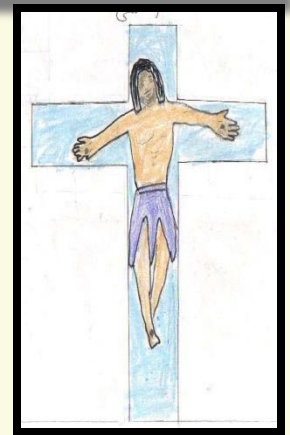
Religion, God, Us and Them

KHOJ uses seven linked modules to deal with a child's notion and relationship with her or his "God", their candid observations on ten different Indian Communities (Hindu, Muslim, Christian, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, Dalit, Brahmin, Jew, Parsee) and what the word Religion means to them.



Children's' abstract response to 'My God', 'Dear God' is qualitatively at odds with their observations on different communities—a module that comes later, however. When they express their emotions to their notion of God, they express the need for a unity that children find in their experience of real life, does not exist.

Switch to the follow-up module and the responses of children illustrate the contradictions that I referred to at the start.



Children's Communications to God are idealistic, searching and emotional. Searing questions to Him (unfortunately a majority, though not all, children relate to a God of the male gender) centre around disturbing questions of why is there poverty, violence, disunity, and hatred ? Surely a God must have answers, and any child in the modern world needs to ask these questions.



During the next connected module, the children are played a two-minute cassette which is a collection of religious music --- the Parsee *kushti* prayers, the *azaan* (muezzin's call), the *Vaishnavjan* bhajan, the choir from a Church, the recitation of verses from the Guru Granth Sahib. Ten names of different communities are listed on the blackboard and the children given 2 minutes each to express honest opinions on each.



From 2,500 responses of children from a wide spectrum of Mumbai schools on this module is an eye-opener.

Pre-conceptions and stereotypes abound.

The young confuse 'religion' with 'language' and 'dress' (hence religion and culture are being collapsed) and for many some religions are already 'foreign'

"Christians speak English and it is not an Indian religion," echoed often though comparatively, Christians enjoy a more benign image.

The term 'Hindu' draws an empathetic and expansive response.

It is "the majority in India," those "speaking Hindi", an "open and tolerant religion", an "an ancient community", and "the most important religion."

On the whole, children have a pathetic knowledge of other smaller minorities like the Parsees, the Jews, and the Buddhists.

Towards Sikhs and Jains, the children display a fair knowledge of their beliefs and ways of life. The Granth sahib, mode of worship and the tenets of the Jain faith in the urban upper caste child are familiar.

A sketchy knowledge of discrimination on the basis of caste and untouchability is prevalent in the minds of the lower middle and upper caste, urban Indian child.

The term Dalit is associated universally and simplistically with 'abject poverty.' But the word Muslim draws the most negative responses.

For many of the children this word and the religion associated with it is "connected to Urdu."

"Anger, violence, burqa-clad women and noisy prayers" are phrases that many children use when responding to the word "Muslim".

For example, "Muslims is a good religion but its people are angry.."; or "My friend is a Muslim but everybody says if a Muslim is your friend, you are not an Indian, you are a Pakistani;" another, "Muslim is the name of a religion.

"Muslims are majority of people in India. First when the British rule India they play along to create a fight between Hindus and Muslims. All Muslims keep weapons with them."



"Muslim eat goats and hens and if we say something to the Muslims, they show a knife to us and we die."

"Muslims are not Muslims but they are Hindus. They have been made Muslims by the Britishers. They have a fixed time of doing their prayers in their own language." "They wear black colour clothes," "Muslims pray very loudly," "they are from Pakistan," and "they go to their temple at night."

KHOJ believe sthat it is very important to be able to draw out such responses before we go into discussions on the religions of the world.

Unless we first understand the play of hegemonistic imagery and politics and how successfully it has entered the mass psyche, where even the young have not been spared, we will not be able to generate effective interventions to creatively counter them.

There are connections between how the young mind is forming impressions and then adult Hindu society reacts.

The crowds at the *Jumma ki namaaz* (Friday congregational prayers) bother us and stimulate anger, feed some sense of insecurity about "our" faith versus "theirs" and in the worst case scenario, generate violence even.

To match "them" we concoct congregations of our own that boisterous and noisy though they may be, do not in our perceptions and the perceptions of our children, appear to be so.

"Their" early morning *azaan* (muezzin's call) that wakes us up every morning is a disturbing intrusion and we view it quite differently from the inconveniences, noise pollution, filth etc. etc caused by "our" *Navratris*, or Ganesh, Jagannath or Shivajai Jayanti processions.

Both may be as disruptive but simply because the latter enjoy greater social sanction they are condoned whereas the first, the *azaan* of "theirs" is a disruption, a matter of 'their' shamelessly treading on our public space, notions that have intruded even the world of children.

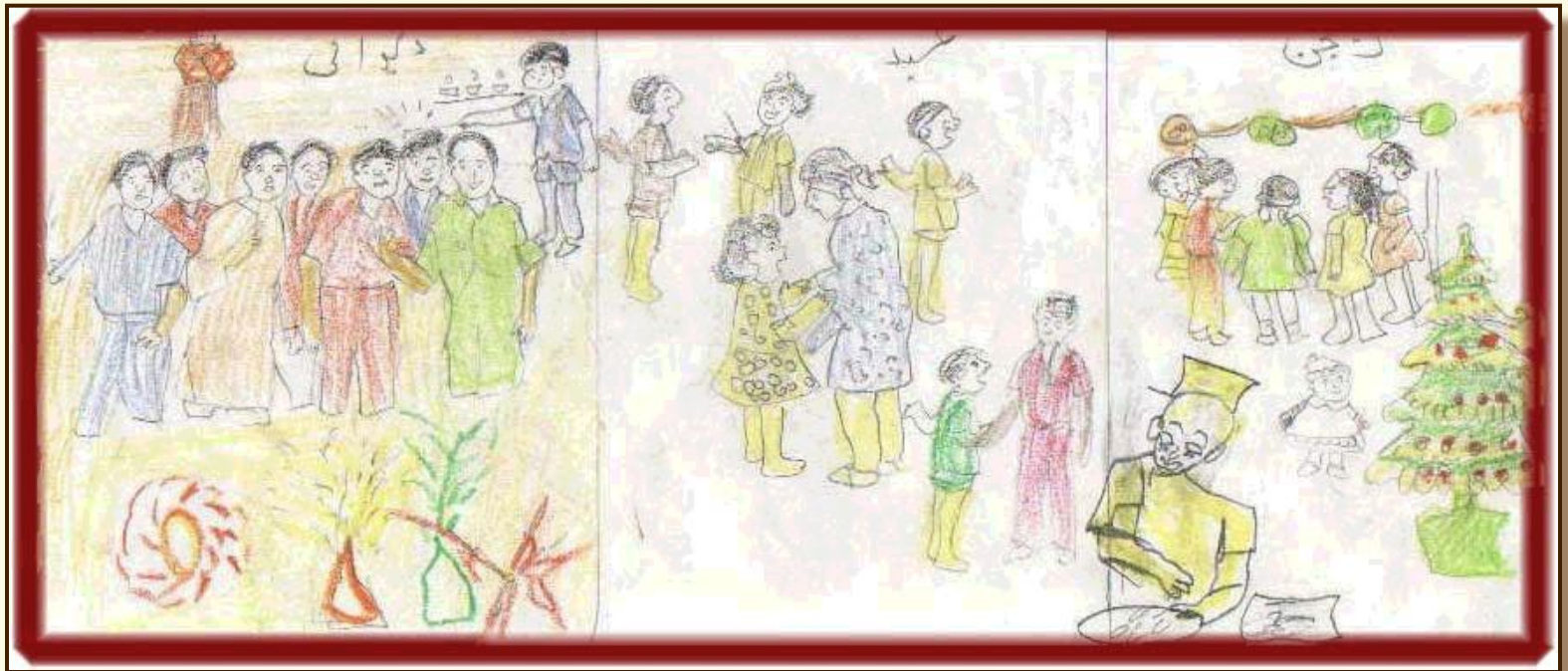
After candid responses have been obtained, do we proceed on the final two modules on the History of World Religions how and in what social contexts they were born, how and where they spread, what are the essential tenets, forms of belief and rituals.

Only after the children's genuine opinion on these questions has been sought and received do we enter into the final module. The final module in this group is an exercise in creative articulation when the 10 year-old is asked to formulate, an Ideal Religion for the modern world.

Module 7

Festivals of India

Project work on Festivals of India and how they reflect India's diversity



Leads to energetic debate

Story lines to discuss complex Social Situations

Injustice to the girl child

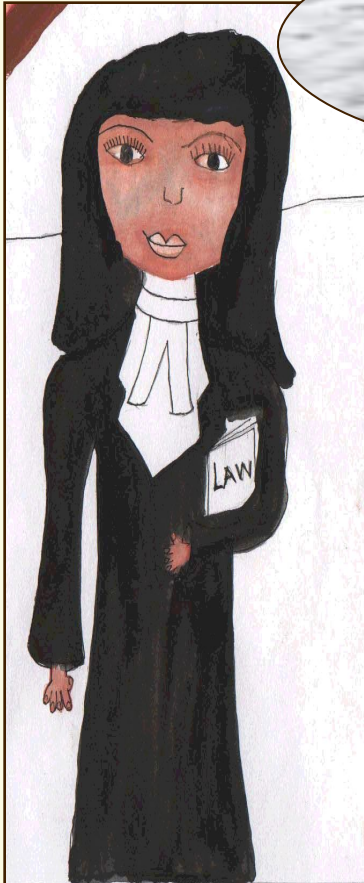
**Life decisions:
Marriage or Career**

Equality and Justice



Module 9

Child Rights



**Let me play
don't play with
my rights.**

**Children's Charter of
Rights**

Human Rights

Module 10

Child Labour



Child Labour within South Asia and the World and its implications

Module 11

The concept of South Asia

**Our neighbours, our climates, our
common problems, some differences.**

Live experiment in South Asian studies.

Module 12

Dates in History

- How to understand dates in history.

Module 13

Resources & Environmental Damage

**How I take care of my locality, my city,
my country.**

Civic Sense & Responsibility

Module 14

Cities - Then & Now

**Cities as systems of
social organisation**

**Ancient and modern
cities**

**Brief History of the
evolution of urban
centres.**

Last Session

Class newspaper

**Reviewing KHOJ sessions throughout
the year.**

Aman-- An olive branch of the Khoj project.

Aman was conceived one, with KHOJ's realisation that, despite all our emphasis on a comprehensive education, the best of schools impart very little knowledge about India's neighbours, the countries in south Asia.

Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Burma, Afghanistan, what do our children know of these countries?

Seventy years after Independence and Partition, is it not important for children from this subcontinent, particularly, India and Pakistan to establish links with each other?

Aman the programme linking students of the sub-continent with each other was born in 1997. Within a month schools each from Lahore and Karachi in Pakistan have enthusiastically responded and soon, independent contact will be established through a letter writing programme (Peace Pals) for the children.

Even through Aman, we do not believe in avoiding difficult questions but encouraging young mind to ask them so we help them together to find answers.

Questions that arise are

Who was responsible for Partition?

Why is their terrorism in Kashmir?

KHOJ-AMAN believes that a satisfactory modern-day intervention for young minds must find the courage and wherewithal to confront them