

**The Primary Programme**  
**Primary Programme A (4-7)**

**Yr.1 (Age 4-5)**

**General Topic: Myself and Relationships**

**Module 1 (1<sup>st</sup> Term): Myself – What makes me, me?**

**Introduction**

This first module is about **identity** – about being aware of myself and who I am. It is intended to begin a process of thinking self-reflection, which leads to the appreciation of one's **uniqueness** and **individuality** and, eventually, to the appreciation of the uniqueness and individuality of others which the children will learn to value. Understanding one's uniqueness is also the beginning of understanding oneself as **different** from others and others as different from oneself. In short, it is the beginning of appreciating the complexity of being; theirs and that of others. In this first module the teacher also takes the first step towards creating a **community of inquiry** which will later become a **moral community**, by inviting the children to **speak** honestly, to **listen** to each other, and to **comment** on each other's words or stories.

**Objectives:**

- to begin to create the desired classroom environment for the discussion of ethics;
- to begin the process of thinking self-awareness in the children;
- to sensitize the children to the importance of being individual and of being different;
- to explore the notions of name, identity (being an individual, a person), distinctness and difference, being a stranger, being a person;
- to explore the values of uniqueness, identity, difference, being a person, complexity;
- to introduce children to the idea of sharing a story, idea, discussion;
- to introduce children to the values of speaking honestly, listening to others, and considering what they hear;
- to introduce children to the skills of telling, narrating, exploring ideas, understanding, sharing information, listening, thought experiment (putting oneself in another's shoes);

**Teaching Strategy:**

Tools: narrative, exposition, discussion, story-telling.

Resources required: Stories, media production, materials for drawing, pasting, collaging, possibly a cartoon story, video material, others.

## Method

- (a) Children are asked whether they have a **name** and what it is, who gave it to them and why they think they have a name. The importance of having a name is explored beginning with things, why they think things have names we call them by, then why animals (their pets) have names. The point to be made is that names are useful labels to **identify** people, things etc., with. This should lead to the further point that to identify means to **distinguish**, and that we only give names to what we want to distinguish.
- (b) The general object of the discussion in (a) is to lead the children to the notion of **identity** which, in the sense explored so far, is that which **distinguishes** them from others. In other words it is based on difference – what makes us different from others makes us distinct, individuals. The other way in which identity is formed is **with** others, but that will come later.
- (c) The children are asked if they know of someone who has no name, and this is discussed. Then they are asked to imagine what their life would be like if **they** had no name – what would happen in a world without names, if nobody in the classroom had a name. A story is told to them of a child with no name.
- (d) Next the teacher points out to the children that they see and meet with many children and people in the streets and elsewhere whose names they do not know; these may be people they see or meet with quite frequently, and who thereby become **acquaintances**, or only very occasionally, or **strangers** they see once. The point to be made is that these children have lives of their own also, names and identities like us, in other words they are **persons** also.
- (e) The children are asked whether there are other things besides their names that identify who they are. They are asked to say what these other things are; their date of birth, physical appearance, their likes and dislikes, their preferences and general behaviour, their talents and dispositions, their dreams and aspirations, and so on. These are listed by the teacher as the elements of **distinctness** but also of **difference** from one another, of what makes them individual. The exercise should also introduce them to the idea that individuals are **complex beings**.
- (f) They are then invited to describe themselves in terms of the different items identified together in (c) in a very informal discussion. They are invited to draw pictures of themselves and to bring photos of themselves in different circumstances of their lives or engaged in different activities and to create a *collage* of themselves with them – This is Me.
- (g) They are then each invited to speak about themselves describing themselves to the others and to answer questions the other children may pose to them. The object of this activity is two-fold; to sensitize the children further to their and each other's individuality, and to begin the process of community building for the classroom,

which must begin with the recognition of each other as **distinct** and **different** individuals.

- (h) Children are asked to discuss whether absolute sameness is possible. Examples are given of colonies of ants, bees, and other insects as species where each looks exactly like the other and which are thoroughly regimented – video material of these is provided and the behaviour is described. Children are then asked to debate what the world would be like if people were like ants and bees, if everyone was the same, looked the same, had the same likes and dislikes, the same talents, etc. and whether it would be a world they would want to live in.
- (i) The debate is finally followed with a discussion of what makes human beings different from ant colonies. And this discussion is completed through visual material of different kinds showing different children in different societies, cultures, geographical settings, playing different games, and so on

## **Module 2 (2<sup>nd</sup> Term): Myself at home**

### **Introduction**

However, the module begins with a consideration of the value of being alone and it introduces the notion of privacy before moving on to its general object which is the value of being with others. Its object is to get the children to appreciate that though they are individuals, unique beings and different they do not live or exist alone but in **relationships** with others with whom they live their lives. These relationships are as sons or daughters, brothers or sisters, nieces or nephews, cousins, grandchildren, and friends including their class-mates. The object is to make the children aware that who they are depends on these relationships with these others and more; that these relationships **make** their identity as well as their lives. Hence the process moved into is of a thinking awareness of others. From here children are led to appreciate the value these others for their, beginning, for the time being, with the intimate circle of their family and home,

### **Objectives:**

- To appreciate the value of being alone and to introduce the children to the notion of privacy;
- to get children to appreciate the importance of not being alone and to introduce the notion of having relationships with others;
- to illustrate the idea that relationships are different and important for us;
- to make them aware that they are what they are through these relationships;
- to introduce the notions of having a home, privacy, sharing with others, caring for others, having relatives, having a family, enjoyment, being sentient, responsibility, rights, duties, authority, obedience, justice, community, empathy, solidarity, helping others;

- to reinforce the skills of speaking; of discussing, narrating, exploring, explaining, reasoning, comparing, and of listening;
- to introduce the values of play, privacy, interaction/communication with others, caring, sharing, difference, empathy, solidarity.

### **Teaching Strategy**

Tools: Narrative, discussion, exploration, story-telling, illustration, media production

Resources required: Stories, materials for drawing, pasting, collaging, photos, cartoons, videos, stories, others.

### Method:

- (a) Children are led to explore the idea of being alone, to discuss the value it has for them if any, when they feel they want to be alone, what they enjoy about being alone, what they do when they are alone. The discussion should lead into the notion and of **privacy** and of its value. There may, of course, be children who say that they do not like being alone, and this preference needs to be explored too – indeed it should be part of the general discussion of the value of privacy.
- (b) The children are asked about playing – whether they enjoy playing alone and what they play when they play alone. Whether the same **enjoyment** of playing alone cannot be had through playing with others – they are asked to explore what the value of playing alone is to them, if any. Those who have no siblings are asked what they feel they miss by not having anyone to play with. Those who have siblings are asked if they ever find the need to play alone and what they enjoy about playing with others, which they prefer and why.
- (c) The question is asked whether playing with toys is really playing alone – the teacher introduces the idea that playing with toys is a form of **interaction** with **objects** which usually means communicating with them, speaking with them, and treating them as people. The question is raised: what is the difference between interacting with objects and with persons. The difference to be made is that objects don't respond and persons do, they **communicate** back, therefore there is **sharing**. The notion of sharing is explored just a bit – just to see what the children think it means.
- (d) The difference between inanimate objects and **sentient** persons who **feel**, who experience things, is explored more fully. The children are asked what it is to be sentient, to feel – what it is that they feel, and a chart of a sentient being should be made. Video material should be used to illustrate the sentience of people; of people in situations where they experience different feelings, emotions, reactions, to different kinds of stimuli – of **fear, happiness, joy, anxiety**, and so on. The children should be asked to identify the experiences themselves – and the video material should be multi-cultural.

- (e) The children are asked to describe who they share their home with, who does what, and how these persons are related to them. The general question discussed is what it means to **share** a home with one's relatives, whether all relations in the home are the same, and what the differences are between them. The discussion should introduce (and no more) the notions of **responsibility**, **rights**, **duties**, **authority**, and **obedience**, and should be the beginning of education into the notion of **justice** (without the word being used at this stage).
- (f) Each child is asked to compose a picture of their home and of herself or himself, and of the others who live in it through a mixture of collage, drawings, photos, and so on which they make themselves after collecting the relevant material.
- (g) They should then be encouraged to speak about their pictures and their relations with the persons in the pictures, their relatives in their home, how these relations are different, why they are important to them, how they affect and influence their lives, and how their lives would be different without them – the idea is to get the children to see the value of these relations they have with others who they live with in their homes.
- (h) Children are then asked whether they have other **relatives** beside those they share their home with – to say who they are and to describe them, distinguishing uncles, aunts, cousins, grandparents etc. They are asked to describe their relationships with these other members of their **family**, a notion which is introduced and explored, and which leads to the notion of **community**, people who have things in common that they share. The question is explored what a community shares in common and what its members owe and should expect from each other; solidarity, friendship, help, comfort, understanding, protection, and respect. This is done through stories, narratives about families using also visual material of different kinds.
- (i) Discussion of what makes a family a community follows. Children are referred to situations and occasions when the family comes together to share something, some special, others ordinary; sometimes to celebrate on festive occasions like birthdays, baptisms, weddings, and so on, other times to get together on picnics, outings, holidays, others still to grieve or mourn, when some member has passed away, or to show solidarity if someone is sick or in distress. All these are occasions when the values identified in (b) and others become needful and apparent.
- (j) The general question the children are asked next is if they know of any children, acquaintances or otherwise, even strangers, or of they have heard stories of children who have no homes and/or families. A discussion of homeless children should follow here – what can render children homeless in our society and in other societies in the world. Short documentaries on the subject are shown to trigger off discussion always keeping in mind the children's age, i.e. ensuring they are not too dramatic or potentially distressing for the children. They should be chosen to ensure a multi-racial, multi-cultural, multi-ethnic representation and should draw on different

situations of poverty, abandonment, war, famine, population displacement, natural disaster, and so on.

- (k) The discussion that follows is why we should be helping these children, what is and can be done for them – the idea being to promote the value of **empathy** and **solidarity** with, namely of **helping others**. Children should also be told something, also through documentaries, of the various international institutions in the world dedicated to relief work – but the organisations should not be described or entered into in detail.

### **Module 3 (3<sup>rd</sup> Term): My Pets**

#### **Introduction**

This module coordinates with the previous about myself in the home to broaden the membership of the home to include one's pets besides one's family – to consider pets as a part of the family. The long term, more general aim, however, is to sensitize the children to the being of animals and to prepare children for future discussions on our ethical relations with animals. The more immediate object of the module is, however, to explore the ethical significance of owning pets and having them in the home and to convey the message that pets and other animals should not be treated the way we treat inanimate objects, and this because animals are sentient beings, like human beings; they are beings that experience pain, fear, hunger, a sense of abandonment, discomfort, can show affection, etc. – many of the things we experience as human beings.

#### **Objectives:**

- to explore the significance of having pets in the home, of what it means to **own** a pet – what kind of owning is right;
- to distinguish domestic from non-domestic animals, and to explore the distinction;
- to begin to explore ethical relations with the animal world of which our relationship with pets is the beginning;
- to introduce the general moral implications of the distinction between objects and sentient beings, beings that feel or experience;
- to explore the notions pet, caring for, needs, cruelty, ownership, wrongness (as not something we should do), same and different treatment (of animals);
- to develop the skills of discussing, narrating, exploring, explaining, imagining, reasoning, media gathering, empathising, comparing;
- to explore the values of caring, rightness, kindness, taking responsibility for.

## Teaching Strategy

Tools: Narrative, exposition, discussion, exploration, story-telling, comparison.

Resources: Video-footage, materials for poster-making, narrative materials written and visual, cartoons, live pets.

### Method:

- (a) The children are asked whether they have **pets** at homes and to talk about their pets; what kinds of animals they are, to describe them, tell stories about them, and so on. They are asked to bring pictures of their pets to school so that classroom posters are made with the different pets with the names of their owners. The children are asked why they have given their pets names, just as they have names.
- (b) This should lead to a discussion on how one **cares** for one's pet, with the teacher using video-footage of pets of the usual domestic, and the more unusual, kind, possibly even of the children's own pets. Introducing the idea that, like humans, animals, beginning from pets but not only, are different in many ways; they feed on different foods, live in different homes, share with other animals, and have different needs – again video-footage should accompany these discussions. Stories are told through narratives, written, video, cartoon, of attachments of animals and animals, animals and humans showing **affection, loyalty, sacrifice**, and so on.
- (c) The children are asked to discuss the difference between domestic animals that are pets, domestic animals that are not pets, that are kept for food, and other non-domestic animals that run wild. They can be asked to make their own separate lists of the ones and the others – the question about animals used for food should not be entered into at this stage. This should lead to the discussion whether all animals make suitable pets, whether there are not animals that should not be made pets and should be allowed to run or fly free.
- (d) The discussion leads to the next topic which is about **animal cruelty**. Stories of animal cruelty and destruction are told and discussed with the children without overdramatizing with the help of cartoon or documentaries, using material which does not distress them (hence cartoon stories would probably be better). The general question to be explored is why it is **wrong** to be cruel to animals.
- (e) Children are asked whether they have been to a zoo or circus, or places where animals are held for public viewing, and to say what they saw when they visited these places; what kinds of animals, what the animals were doing and, in the cases of the circus what was being done to them. Video footage of animals in zoos, circuses, aquaria, etc., needs to be used here. The discussion should be about how these animals were **treated** – though children are asked whether they regard any of this treatment is cruel, the question is not discussed nor should it, at this stage, lead to discussing the morality of zoos, circuses, etc.

- (f) The idea should be introduced to the children that there are special doctors for sick or injured pets called vets. Videos of animals being treated in vet clinics should be used here and children can discuss their own experience with ill pets – an actual visit to a vet clinic would not be amiss. The general point is that pets need to be cared for and taken to vets when they are ill or injured. Children may even be encouraged to bring their pets to school to show them to their friends – but teachers should tread carefully here and would need the collaboration of the school and parents if they consider it.
- (g) The general issue of **ownership** is taken up through the question what it means to **own** a pet. The question is asked in what sense **my** pets are mine, whether they are mine in the same way as my toys are mine. Whether they should have the same **value** for me as my toys or other objects, and therefore whether I should treat them the same. Children are referred back to the discussion of the previous module on the difference between sentient beings and material objects to make the difference – that discussion should be revived and taken deeper. The point is two-fold: (1) to locate pets and animals among sentient beings, (2) to make the point that therefore they should be treated **differently**, (3) to sensitize the children to the idea that ownership implies **responsibility**, (4) to make the point that responsibility for sentient beings is different from my toys or other objects in the house.
- (h) The final group of questions in this module take the question how we are responsible for our pets in another direction. The next obvious question is whether I should treat my pet at home like I treat the members of my family – whether I should regard my pet as a part of my family. Then what this should mean – what should happen to them when the family goes on holiday or away. This should lead into the discussion what should be done about homeless domestic animals or strays, whether they should be left to run wild in the streets or countryside. There should be no attempt to take these discussions to any depth, sensitization to the issues is enough, and this should be done, again, through narrative – literary or/and video, while children should be invited to tell their own stories.