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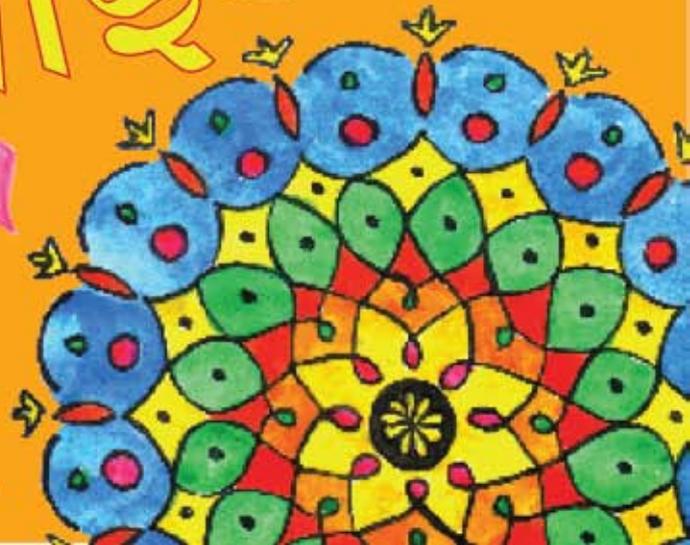
किंवदन्ति

Primary RE

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Opening up Hinduism

Opening up Hinduism aims to support children and teachers in learning about and from the collection of ancient religious traditions which make up contemporary Hinduism. While often taught as one religion, Hinduism originated over a long period in India, influenced and inspired by many individuals. It is often called Dharma or Sanatan Dharma (eternal way) by those who practise it. For many Hindus, it is a way of life.

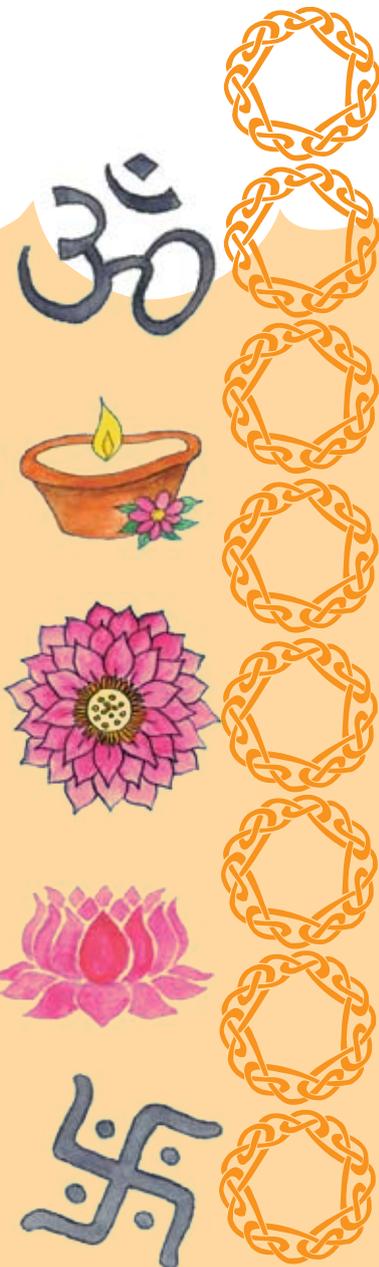
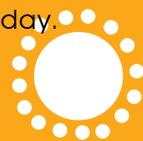
Within this book we share a variety of engaging pedagogies and practical learning activities that will help the class teacher and subject leader and support deep learning for children. There are opportunities for children to learn through a variety of pedagogies, for example, learning from experience or learning from concepts. The example of learning from experience used in this book is that of guided visualisations to understand the relevance of sacred text to Hindus today. Learning from concepts is used to explore dharma and karma. Learning for younger children raises the 'big questions' which lie at the heart of good RE, and yet complement the flexible, play-based learning environment found in many schools and settings for 4–7 year olds by the use of Persona Dolls, engagement with authentic materials and using the senses.

On these pages we have taken themes which will link to other areas of learning whilst remaining true to the RE objectives. By looking at authentic believer accounts, story, festival, sacred text and some key Hindu concepts we hope to have got to the heart of this diverse religion.

For the subject leader we have provided a set of pages that can be shared with staff who lack confidence in teaching about and from Hinduism. These pages support teachers in teaching the religion accurately and appropriately. The support and guidance of Neera Vyas, our faith community consultant, has been invaluable, ensuring we have represented Hinduism in Britain today.

Fiona Moss

Editor



Web links: RE Today website

The RE Today website offers subscribers some free additional resources and classroom ready materials related to this publication. Look out for the 'RE Today on the web' logo at the end of selected articles.



To access resources:

- go to the RE Today website www.retoday.org.uk
- click on the **download login** button and use the password from this term's issue of *REtoday* magazine
- click on **Primary curriculum publication – web supplement**
- click on the title of the publication scroll down the page to find what you are looking for.

Age focus	Contents	Page
4-7	Opening up Hinduism with younger children Joyce Mackley	2-7
6-9	What does Divali mean to Hindus? Stephen Pett	8-11
5-11	Doing Divali better in Religious Education Lat Blaylock	12-13
7-9	Hindu ideas about the goddess Lat Blaylock	14-19
7-11	Exploring Hindu ideas about actions and consequences Fiona Moss	20-25
7-11	Opening up Hindu sacred texts with pupils Rosemary Rivett	26-29
Subject leader	Representing Hinduism: ten tips for teachers Fiona Moss and Neera Vyas	30-32
	Further classroom activities exploring Hinduism from RE Today publications	33

OPENING UP HINDUISM WITH YOUNGER CHILDREN

4-7

For the teacher

'It would be very easy to say, "Oh we do lots of RE incidentally through our topics" and count dressing up in saris for Divali as being enough. [But] our children can't be left to absorb ideas by osmosis from dressing up . . . without adult support. They need to have big questions asked about the what, where, why, how and when, and how it relates or otherwise to the way they live and move and have their being.' ¹



These words of Marilyn Bowles, a very experienced Early Years practitioner writing in *REsource*, Spring 2008, capture the focus of this section. Here we aim to outline some very practical and 'fun' ways of 'opening up' Hinduism with young children in ways which help raise the 'big questions' which lie at the heart of good RE, and yet complement the flexible, play-based learning environment found in many schools and settings for 4-7 year olds.

Pages 3 and 4: Strategies to encourage children's 'chatter' – Persona Dolls and using ICT.

Pages 5, 6 and 7: Looking, Listening and Doing activities for opening up Hinduism.

While the activities suggested here are set in the context of 'opening up Hinduism', they are however easily adaptable to other religions and beliefs found in Britain today.

Cross-curricular links

Literacy: speaking; listening and responding; group discussion and interaction; drama (role play).

PSHCE: working with others, discussing beliefs, values and practices, collaborating with others and developing respect and sensitivity.



The activities in this section enable children in the 4-7 age group to:

- **begin to know** about their own culture and belief and those of other people (in this case members of the Hindu community) (*Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)*, DfES 2007)
- **comment and ask questions** (*EYFS*, DfES 2007)
- **use imagination and respond** to what s/he sees, hears, smells, touches and feels (*EYFS*, DfES 2007)
- **recognise the importance** for some people of belonging to a religion or holding special beliefs, in diverse ways, and the difference this makes to their lives (*Non-Statutory National Framework for RE*, QCA, 2004).

See also:

- 1 Bowles, Marilyn 'How do we teach young people about religion in a play based environment?' *REsource* 30:2 (Spring 2008).
- 2 Vickery, Shahne, *Persona Dolls in Religious Education*, Jumping Fish Publications, Diocese of Gloucester, ISBN 978-0-95566-112-9.
- 3 Bowles, Marilyn, *The Little Book of Persona Dolls*, Featherstone Education 2003, ISBN 978-1-904187-86-8.

Some useful websites

- BBC Learning Zone Broadband Class Clips (select: Primary, Religious Education, Hinduism) www.bbc.co.uk/learningzone/clips
- Images of deities: www.hindugallery.com
- Teachers TV
The story of Ganesh and the cat
www.teacherstv/video/22343



Opening up Hinduism through . . . Persona Dolls

For the teacher

The 'Persona Doll' strategy is a lively way of addressing attitudes and behaviour towards those who are similar to and different from ourselves.



Persona Dolls have been successfully employed to provide opportunities for the personal, social and emotional development of 3–7 year olds. They are also an extremely valuable tool for supporting learning about and learning from religion.

Here we 'meet' Alka, a 'Hindu' Persona Doll as devised by Shahne Vickery in her *Persona Dolls in Religious Education* pack. The teachers or practitioners in the setting need to know all about Alka (through the life story or 'persona' which she brings with her, or which they have devised and agreed together). They introduce Alka to the children – who talk and play with her, asking her questions and expressing their own ideas to her via the adult. Alka also has a backpack of faith-related objects, ideal for stimulating children's interest and conversation.

Use of a 'Hindu' or other faith Persona Doll will allow children to

- **meet and 'talk'** to a child from a particular faith background
- **ask questions** – often about the whys and wherefores of different attitudes and beliefs
- **interact playfully** with 'someone' from a different cultural and religious background.



Alka takes off her shoes

Slide from the PowerPoint which comes with the Persona Dolls pack by Shahne Vickery

Alka's Little Book

Name:	Alka
Age:	5
Gender:	female
Hair:	long, straight & black
Eyes:	brown
Nationality:	British
Favourite food:	laddoos (sweets made from coconut, cardamom and sugar)
Favourite activities:	Indian dancing & helping Mum with the cooking
Family structure:	lives with Mum, Dad, her brother Deepak (9 years), grandparents and uncle (her father's brother)
Father's occupation:	runs an Indian restaurant
Mother's occupation:	helps in the restaurant
Languages spoken:	English and Gujarati
Family history:	grandparents came to England from Gujarat in India
Religion:	Hindu
Special times:	Diwali, Raksha Bandhan & Holi

Special Times

Inside Alka's backpack

Diya lamp
Picture or boxed image of Lakshmi

Special words

Hindu, Diwali, diya lamp, goddess, Lakshmi, rangoli patterns

Make the room as dark as possible. Sit Alka in the circle with the children in your group. Place the backpack in the centre of the circle and explain that Alka has brought something that reminds her of a special time for Hindus, called Diwali.

☞ Take out a diya lamp and light it.

7 Can you think of special times when candles are lit? Why do candles and lamps give a place a magical feeling?

Alka works hard with her Mum to prepare for Diwali by making the house clean and tidy from top to bottom. They then decorate the rooms with tinsel, paper chains and streamers ready for the celebrations. Diya lamps, like this one, are lit and put on the windowsills, because Alka's family want the goddess, Lakshmi, to visit their house.

7 When do you decorate your house? What do you use to make it beautiful?

Take the picture or boxed image of Lakshmi from the backpack. (There is a picture of Lakshmi on the accompanying CD "Special Places".)

7 Alka wants to know what you notice about this colourful goddess? Why do you think Lakshmi is holding lotus flowers and sitting in a lotus flower? (Lotus flowers are a special symbol because even though they grow with their roots in muddy water, they blossom into beautiful white or pale pink flowers on the surface of the water.)

Extracts from *Persona Dolls in Religious Education* by Shahne Vickery, Jumping Fish Publications - used with permission.

Using this strategy

- Commercially produced Persona Dolls are available from a number of sources or a creative parent might make one for you!
- Create a persona for the doll, ensuring the faith tradition is accurately and fairly represented. Ensure that this persona is consistently used by teachers/practitioners. If you are lucky enough to have parents from faith traditions ask their help in developing the 'persona' for your dolls. (For further resource information, see page 2.)
- Devise learning activities (like the Special Times example shown here) to meet the outcomes expected by your local agreed syllabus or faith community guidelines for RE, using the Persona Doll as an interactive and engaging device to stimulate children's questions and responses.



Suggestions for using Persona Dolls in RE are available for download by subscribers from the RE Today website:

See: www.retoday.org.uk.

Opening up Hinduism through . . . looking

Look at pictures, posters and photographs of a Hindu home shrine; Hindu gods and goddesses (see activity below); Hindu temple/mandir; Hindu puja (prayer); Hindu people greeting one another using the namaste gesture; Hindu festivals; traditional rangoli design; Hindu family in Britain today.

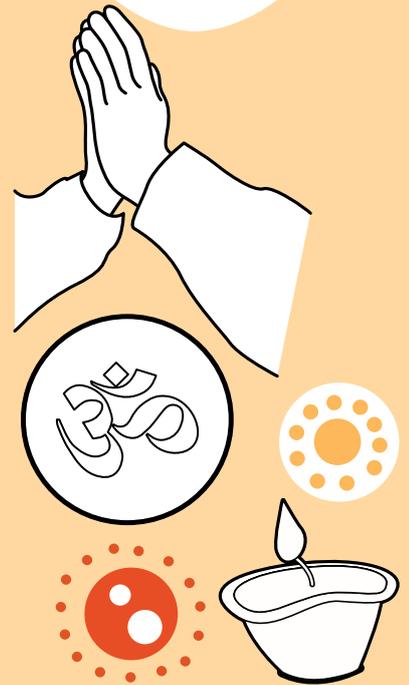
Ask children:

- What do you see?
- How does it make you feel?
- What do you want to ask?
- How is the person feeling? How do you know?
- What colours and shapes can you see? What do they tell you?

Explore artefacts, for example **symbols** (e.g. Om or Aum symbol; diva lamp; puja tray objects); **greeting cards** (e.g. Divali cards); **other**: (e.g. cultural items such as traditional dress (red sari for a wedding) – but recognise that this will vary according to the particular community individuals come from.

Look at video/website images, for example, the BBC's Learning Zone Broadband Class Clips: www.bbc.co.uk/learningzone/clips (select: Primary, Religious Education, Hinduism).

The most useful clips show real lives and some include animated faith stories. Carefully select clips linked to a feeling or experience relevant to your RE focus. Freeze-frame a moment and ask questions such as: What is he/she thinking/feeling? What do you think happens next?



An example: Exploring a Hindu goddess

- Display a range of everyday objects which 'say' something about you, e.g. a musical instrument, photograph, a painting, a map, a favourite book, sports equipment/clothing, play your favourite song/tune. Encourage the children to discuss the clues that are about one person. Ask what is this person like? What is the person interested in? Who do they think it is and why?
- In table groups, older/more able children could talk about what 'symbols' they might pick for each person in their group and why. What animal, what food, what weather is each person like?
- Can the children remember the name of an important religious festival celebrated by Hindus? (Divali)
- Display an image of goddess Lakshmi on interactive whiteboard. (Alternatively provide smaller table copies, or use an artefact of the goddess.) Ask children in their table groups to look very carefully at the 'person'. Ask them to think about what the image tells them about the person they are looking at. What does she look like? What feelings do you get by looking at this image?
- Children share their ideas through discussion. Encourage them to think about questions they would like to ask Lakshmi or a Hindu person who likes to have this special image in their home.
- Finally, explain that the image of Lakshmi is symbolic for Hindus. Lakshmi is worshipped at Divali time by many Hindus as the goddess of good fortune, wealth and new beginnings. Hindus often pray to Lakshmi at Divali to ask for blessings and good fortune. An excellent video clip can be downloaded and used from the BBC's Learning Zone Broadband Class Clips website: www.bbc.co.uk/learningzone/clips/a-visit-from-lakshmi/4791.html. Talk about the blessings or good fortune children would ask for their own family, friends and school.



W An image of Lakshmi to display on the whiteboard is available for download by subscribers from the RE Today website: www.retoday.org.uk

See also:

Developing Primary RE: *Special Times*, ed. J Mackley, RE Today 2004, pp 13-16, ISBN 978-1-904024-68-2.

Opening up Hinduism through . . . listening, touching

What can we listen to?

Story activities

- **Work out sounds children can make** whenever certain names or words are used during the telling of a faith story. For example, pantomime-type booing whenever the demon Ravan appears in the Prince Ram and Princess Sita story, with cheering for the hero Prince Ram. This is fun and a great way of engaging children's full attention.

Sounds

- **Listen to sounds** associated with worship, such as the bell being rung during Hindu worship. Talk about why this sound is used and how it makes children feel.
- **Explore the Aum sound.** See the activity below.
- **Light a candle and play some calming music.** Talk about feelings of stillness/calmness and how this can be found in Hindu worship. Talk about children's own 'calm places' or 'calm music' or 'calm times'.

Music

- **Use Hindu music to aid reflection,** e.g. as they write or draw their response to a faith story.

What can we touch?

In many Hindu homes there will be a **shrine** where offerings are made and prayers are said (**puja**). The shrine may be a room or even a shelf but all family shrines are carefully looked after and often decorated with fresh flowers. There will also be their favourite god or goddess [this could be in picture form]. The very centre of Hindu religion is in the home.

Gather the following items and ask children to arrange them on a shelf or windowsill to make a replica of a 'Hindu family shrine':

- **small bell** (used to let the deity know that puja (prayer) is taking place)
- **water in a pot** (represents life)
- **spoon** (for giving water to worshippers after it has been blessed)
- **fresh flowers** (beauty and fragrance of the created world)
- **picture of one of the gods or goddesses**
- **diva lamp** (wick made of twisted cotton wool dipped in vegetable oil)
- **food offerings** – e.g. sugar crystals or fruit.

Exploring the Aum sound

- Download and watch a short clip from the BBC's Broadband Learning Zone Class Clips, clip No 4799 on puja. A one-minute extract can be viewed, showing a family seated before their home shrine, making the sound of AUM together as they pray.
See: www.bbc.co.uk/learningzone/clips/puja/4799.html
- Place an Aum symbol in a soft bag. Ask children to take turns to feel and describe what they feel. Ask them to guess what is in the bag before watching it being slowly revealed.
- Talk about its shape and how it is made. What sound is this a sign for?
- Teach the children that in Hindu stories, 'Aum' is the first sound in the universe.
- The sound is also repeated to make a calm start to worship in the home or the mandir. It is a sound of peace, power and strength. Do the children know other sounds that mean these things?
- Make some sounds together, including the 'aum' sound. Notice how the Aum sound 'vibrates' through the body.

