

Children's Conception of God: An Exploratory Study in Indian Schools

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Abstract: The present paper is based on the research study that envisaged exploring and understanding the children's conception of God in Indian context. The study of the related literature in this area presented various schools of thought supporting as well as challenging children's ability to think abstractly. It also clearly revealed that most studies were conducted on the Judeo-Christian children and established that there was an ongoing debate around the influence of culture on the children's conception of *God*. There were found two different opinions about children's conception of God. On one side, preadolescent children were said to possess an anthropomorphic and material understanding of God, whereas another school of scholars opined that children could represent non human and abstract concept of God and they should not be constrained to be anthropomorphic only. The present study conducted in Indian context showed that children were able to think about God as an abstract concept through their everyday experiences. These everyday experiences of the children could be planned to engage them in philosophical abstract thinking from the very beginning by leaving space for them for questioning and thinking for themselves. It showed that children's conception of God gets influenced by the processes of primary and secondary socialization. At the same time the study showed that children's reasoning, imagination, curiosity and inquisitiveness is unquestionable and children should be provided proper opportunities to enhance and develop them.

Keywords: God, Children, Anthropomorphism, Conception, Abstract, Experience.

INTRODUCTION

Dr. Sesus has once remarked- "*A person is a person, no matter how small.*" This remark stuck the mind of the investigator when she saw young children in school during morning assembly clasping their tiny hands together, and then solemnly bowing their heads in prayer. It was a fascinating experience for the investigator to see the children of different communities, folding hands and praying to 'God' together. This led to curiosity in the researcher to know what the children thought about 'God'. A survey was undertaken by the researcher with a group of children that included 5-13 year old children coming from different religious backgrounds belonging to different schools of Delhi and NCR region. The survey using different methods and tools explored children's conception about God and related practices. Children's responses to the survey showed that the children had their own ideas about God that needed to be probed further. Also the review of existing research studies and literature related to children's conception of God showed that there were two different opinions pertaining to children's conception of God. One group of researches (e.g. Hyde[1] 1990, Nelsen, Potvin and Shields[2] 1977) showed that children do not have sufficient cognitive abilities for mature religious

thinking. Studies (Long, Elkind and Spilka[3] 1967, Piaget[4] 1926/2007, Spilka [5] 1985) showed that children did not have adult like capacities for religious beliefs. Pre adolescent children are supposed to possess an anthropomorphic, that is 'human like' understanding of God. It is assumed that children are not equipped to deal with abstract concepts until they move from the concrete operational stage to the formal operational stage. On the other hand the other group of scholars (e.g. Barrett[6] 2001, Barrett and Richert[7] 2003) are of the opinion that these examples of children's thinking of God in a human like way, are the result of biased methods. Barrett and Richert[7] (2003) say – "*This anthropomorphism stems from initially modelling of the concept of God upon ideas of one's parents.*" In fact, developmental psychologists have found evidence that younger children and even babies can represent abstract, non human agents. Research studies (e.g. Atran [8]2002, Keleman[9] 2004) show that children's concepts of the supernatural are not necessarily based on a human concept but are rather developed from a more general and abstract conception. Moreover experimental evidences are there (e.g. Tamminen[10] 1991) which show that children's conception of God are not necessarily anthropomorphic at any stage. Kirkpatrick [11] (1999) argues that God concepts are

likely to be formed early in life and probably exert great influence on their religious inclinations later in life. Geula[12] (2004) says-“*We are biologically primed to know our creator*” and claims “*human brain is biologically primed in its basic structure and system to connect to the spiritual reality.*” Fowler J.W.[13, 39] (1981, 1991) has given stages of faith development (or spiritual development) across the life span. He proposed six stages of faith development viz. Intuitive Projective Stage (3-7 years), Symbolic Literal Stage (elementary school years), Synthetic – Conventional Stage (early adolescence), Individualizing Stage (late adolescence and young adulthood), Paradoxical (Conjunctive) Stage (at midlife or beyond) and Universalising Stage . Korniejcuk A. V. [14] (1993) gives the example of Oser (1991) and says –“ *Oser attempted to develop a universal cognitive pattern to describe, explain and predict religious development . Using the semi –clinical interview and the religious dilemma as his methodology , Oser [15, 40](1991) found five developmental stages and alluded to a sixth universal stage.*” Adler A. [16] (1933) establishes through his studies that our beliefs in God are characteristics of our tendency to strive for perfection and superiority.He gives example saying that in many religions God is considered to be perfect and we identify ourselves with God to compensate for our imperfections and feelings of inferiority. As he says-“*One way that religion enters into this picture is through our beliefs in God, which are characteristic of our tendency to strive for perfection and superiority.*” Hence, as Adler says “*our view of God is important because it embodies our goals and directs our social interactions as God (or the idea of God) motivates people to act.*” Ericson [17] (1958) considers religion to have important influences in successful personality development because religion is one of the primary ways through which that cultures promote the virtues associated with each stage of life. Pargament K. [18] (1997) , during research study on religious coping, led the design of a questionnaire called the ‘RCOPE’ to measure religious coping strategies. He distinguished three types of styles for coping with stress: collaborative, deferring and self directed. Collaborative is the way in which people cooperate with God to deal with stressful events. Second is Deferring in which people leave everything to God. Third is Self directed in which people do not rely on God and encourage themselves to try exclusively to solve problems by their own efforts. There are some other aspects in our daily lives related to God . There are rituals which, according to Sheff, [19] (1979) ‘*provides catharsis , emotional purging , through distancing ,which enabled an individual to experience feelings with an amount of separation and thus less intensity.*’

Though there are studies (e.g. Dickie [20]1997, Barrett [6].2001,Barrett and Richert [21] 2002, Wolley D.J. [22]1997, Keleman[9] 2004, Roos[23] 2004) that have explored children’s conception of God but I wasfound that most of these studies are with Judeo-Christian children and are from Western context .The pattern of ideas about ‘God’ found with the sample of children from one culture might not hold across all cultures For ex. as Burdett and Barrett [24](2010) have shown through their study the pattern found by Makris and Pnevmatikos[25] (2007) with their sample of Greek orthodox children might not hold across all cultures and their paradigm has recently been used with Jewish and British Israeli children whichyielded different results .(Burdett and Barrett [24]2010). Hence,the need was felt that the researches conducted mostly on Judeo-Christian children should be extended to Indian children so that the generalizability of findings might be addressed in Indian context .Therefore, the present study envisaged to explore the conception of Indian children about God. The following are the delimitations of the study:

1. The study has been confined to the children of I- VIII grades i.e. 5-13 years old children only.
2. The study has been confined to school going children of Delhi and NCR region only.
3. The study has been confined only to the variables – grade/ age, gender and school.

MATERIAL AND METHODS OF THE STUDY

The present study is qualitative and exploratory in nature.The study involved exploring the children’s conception of ‘God’ by qualitatively analyzing the responses of children. For eliciting responses from children, different kinds of age-specific semi projective tools and techniques were devised and used respectively for children from different age groups.The population for the present study was defined as all the school going children of classes I- VIII of Delhi and NCR region as per the delimitations of the study.The sample consisted of children from different classes (I-VIII) from two schools of Delhi and NCR region. As the study also envisaged for looking into the influence of factors like kind of school, age, and gender, hence both government as well as private schools were taken. Within each school, children were selected from the three cluster of classes namely; I- III, IV- V, VI – VIII using purposive sampling such that each group consisted of equal no. of girls as well as boys .Thus, convenience as well as purposive or deliberate sampling was done for the present study so that comparative analysis could be done for studying the influence of the factors undertaken in the present research. The sample of 420 children in total were taken from Delhi and NCR region whose distribution is given below:

Table 1: Sample Distribution of the Present Study

SCHOOL	GOVERNMENT		PRIVATE		TOTAL SAMPLE	SIZE
GENDER	GIRLS	BOYS	GIRLS	BOYS		
GRADE						
1-3	35	35	35	35	140	
4-5	35	35	35	35	140	
6-8	35	35	35	35	140	
TOTAL	105	105	105	105	420	

RATIONALE FOR THE SAMPLE

The sample consisted of children from three cluster of classes namely; I-III, IV- V, VI- VIII as the studies related to cognitive development in children have theorized that the cognitive development in children was a stage-wise process. Piaget [26] (1929) has argued that young children do not think in the same way as older children and that children go through a stage wise process of cognitive development. The three age groups taken for the present study correspond to the stages of cognitive development. (Piaget[26] 1929). Other studies (K. Sandeep[27] 2011, Arnell [28] 2009, Long, Elkind and Spilka [3]1967) have also proved that with age our thinking becomes more rationale. The sample also included equal number of boys and girls as various studies (Fagot, Leinbach and Boyle [29]1992, Lauer &Lauer[30] 1994, Santrock [31]1994, Kaplan [32]1999, Thorne [33]1993, Eccles, Jacobs & Harold [34]1990, Basow[35]1992) have suggested that children's experiences during primary socialization are different for boys and girls. GLAAD[36] (2010) observes that the children learn to categorise themselves by gender usually by the age of three. A study done by Fagot , Leinbach and Boyle[29] (1992) tested gender stereotypes and levelling within young children. The study showed that gender stereotyping and labelling is acquired at a very young age and that social interactions and associations play a large role in how genders are identified. Thorne[33] (1993) has shown through his study that parents treated sons and daughters differently , dressing infants in gender specific colours , giving gender specific toys and expecting different behaviours from boys and girls. Similar findings were found by Kaushik[37] (1993) in her studies done in Indian context that showed that identification with her role images and gender stereotyping in household activities had made many girls performing quite a lot of domestic work. The government and private schools provide different types of learning experiences to the children that may also influence their ideas. Hence, the sample included children from both the government and private schools.

DATA COLLECTION TOOLS

In the present study three different types of tools and techniques were devised and constructed for the children of three clusters of classes namely; I-III, IV-V, VI-VIII as per their cognitive development. The semi-

projective tools and techniques were used to uncover feelings , beliefs, thoughts and experiences of the children associated with the concept of God as semi projective techniques are designed to let a person respond to ambiguous stimuli, presumably revealing hidden emotions and internal thoughts. The children of classes IV-V and VI-VIII were given situation based stories with which they could relate themselves and responded considering themselves in place of the characters of the story. It was also taken into consideration while making the tool for the younger children that the protagonist in the story is a child like the responding child. The stories were followed by questions related to the story and by responding to these questions, children expressed their ideas related to 'God'. The children of classes IV-V were given two different interesting stories, followed by a set of questions. The questionnaire following the stories consisted of 16 items which had open ended questions. The questions were based on situations related to the story. Similar process was adopted for the children of VI-VIII grades , though the stimulus was same in the form of story but different story was taken for VI-VIII grades children as per their cognitive level. The language and diction was also taken into consideration while structuring the stories for the IV-V and VI-VIII grades children as per their cognitive levels. The questionnaire for children belonging to classes VI- VIII consisted of 19 items , with open ended questions based on the story as well as related to children's own experiences, thoughts and feelings. For the children of I-III grades, stimulus in the form of pictures was used because children belonging to these grades might not be able to express themselves through written responses. Hence, for the children of classes I- III various visual clips related to different aspects of God were shown which was followed by an interaction with them. Considering all these points, and thinking about the various other ideas related to the conception of 'God' e.g. spirituality, religion, family rituals , prayer, faith, beliefs, religious practices , religious books and teachers , visual stimulus was provided to the children in the form of visual clips showing-

- Different worship places of different religions
- Different symbols related to God
- Different images related to God
- Different festivals celebrations
- Different pictures of children worshipping

A pilot study was conducted before the actual investigation to test the method and plan of the research study and also to evaluate feasibility, reliability and validity of the tools. The results of the pilot study helped in modifying the tools as per the understanding and responses of the children. This was followed by getting the tools validated by two experts.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

In the present study, qualitative method of analysis was used. The data was analyzed using grounded theory method , a systematic method of research ‘consisting of systematic inductive guidelines for collecting and analyzing data to build theoretical frameworks to explain the collected data’ (Strauss and Corbin [38] 1998). The data consisted of responses of children that were analysed by reading the responses sentence by sentence. The key points were marked and were extracted from the responses of the children. In order to make the responses more workable, the key points were grouped into similar concepts. From the concepts, various themes were identified on the basis of theoretical studies related to the concept of God. Within each theme, various categories as well as subcategories were formed on the basis of responses given by the children . Written data from transcripts were also grouped into similar concepts and it was done sentence by sentence to define actions or events within data. These categories were sorted, compared and contrasted until all the data was accounted for in the core categories as well in subcategories and no new categories as well as subcategories could be produced. The twelve themes that emerged from the analysis of data are .:

- Existence of God
- Form of God
- Place of God
- Singleness/ multiplicity of God
- Gender of God
- Role of God
- Omnipresence of God
- Factors influencing children’s conception of God
- Children experiences of God related practices in family
- Children experiences of God related practices in school
- Doubts about God
- Reason of nature worship
- Children’s experiences regarding nature worship

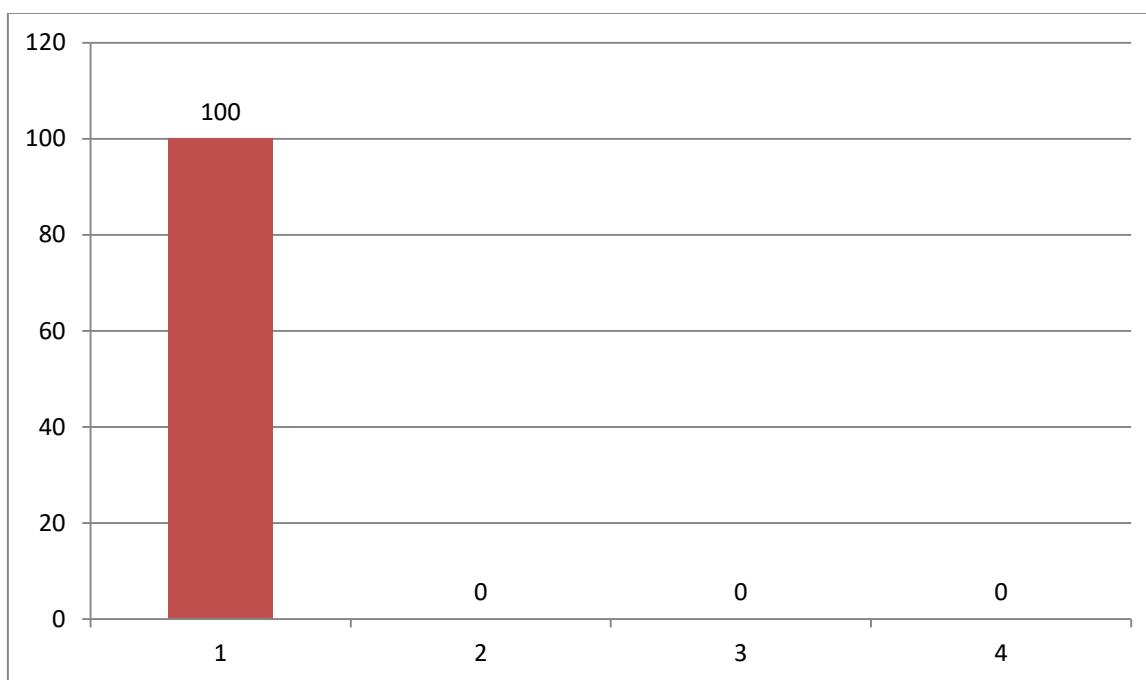
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION:

Analysis and interpretation of children’s conception of God as expressed through their responses themewise:

THEME 1. - EXISTENCE OF GOD

Table -1: Children’s responses related to the theme ‘Existence of God’

Sr. No.	RESPONSES	PERCENTAGE
1.	YES	100%
2.	NO	0%
3.	DON’T KNOW	0%
4.	LEFT OUT	0%



Graph: 1:Graphical Presentation of Children’s Responses Related to the Theme ‘Existence of God’

Table 1 and bar graph show that all the children say that God exists. All children responded that God exists although they expressed it in their own ways such as - “Bhagavan hote hain aur hamare dil mein rahte hain.”- Nishi (10 yrs.) “Bhagavan hame dikhai nahi dete par vo har samay aur har jagah hote hain.”-Priya (11 yrs.) “Bhagavan hote hain aur unka niwas mandir , dharti, akash, jag, janni sabhi mein hai.”-Himanshu (10 yrs.) “Allah har jagah maujood hai.”-Rashid (7 yrs.) “Bhagavan dikhai nahi dete par hote hain .”-Gurmeet(7 yrs.) “..... jis tarh hiran kastoori ke liye idhar –udhar bhagta hai aur kastoori nahi milti kyonki kastpori uske pet ke andar hoti hai , usi tarah Bhagavan manushay ke andar hi hote hain par vo unhe

idhar-udhar doondhta hai.”- Abhay (11 yrs.) “Bhagavan sab jagah rahte hain.”-Aditya (7 yrs.) “ Bhagavan bhale hi dikhai na de par vo hai jaroor.”- Vasu (6 yrs.) “ Allah jaroor hote hain kyonki ye duniya unhi ne beneyi hai.” – Saba (6 yrs.)

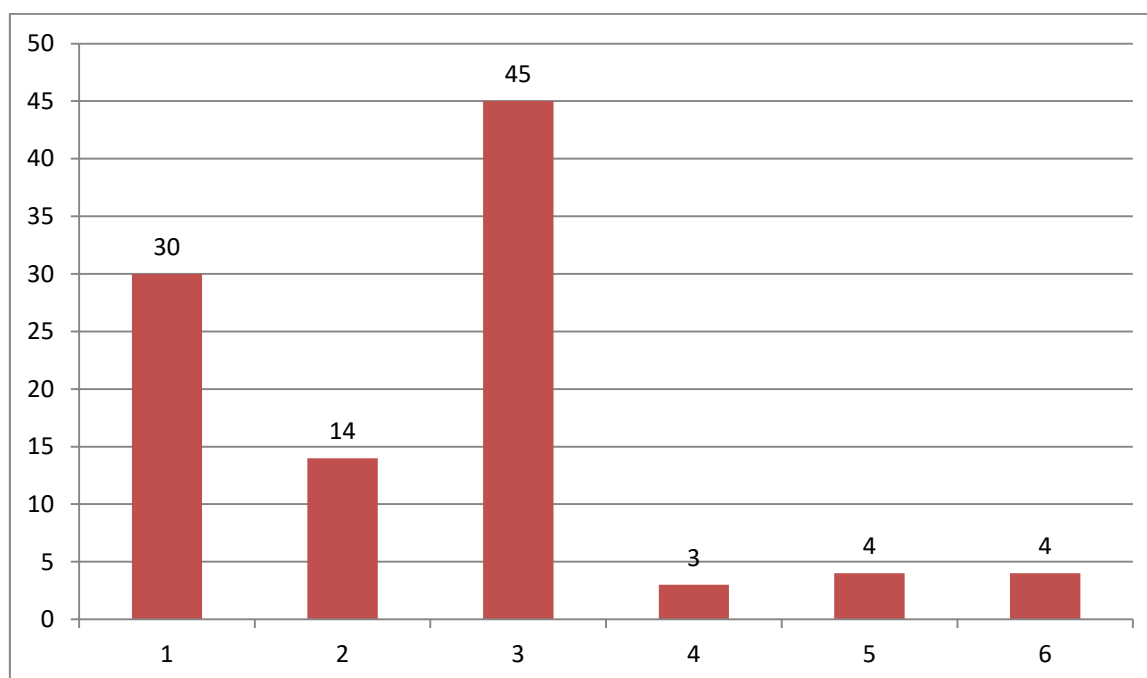
INTERPRETATION OF DATA:

The analysis of above data shows that all the children irrespective of gender, group or class , believe in the existence of God but their expression about God and His existence is very diverse.

Theme 2 - FORM OF GOD

Table- 2 Children’s responses related to the theme ‘Form of God’

S.No.	RESPONSES	%
1.	Helping common man/Human form / parents	30
2.	Superman	14
3.	Formless/ goodness/ light/ nor	45
4.	Statues of worship places	3
5.	Don’t know	4
6.	Left out	4



Graph- 2: Graphical Presentation of Children’s Responses Related to the Theme ‘Form of God’

Table 2 and bar graph show that 30% children say that God is common human being in the form of parents or other helping ones e.g.: “Mere anusaar ishwar mata-pita jaise hote hain.” –Anita (7 yrs.) “Dharti par hamare mata-pita hi ishwar ka roop hain.”-Priya (10 yrs.) “Ishwar hamari sahayata karne ko kisi bhi insaan ke roop mein aa jaate hain.” –Pawan (9 yrs.) 14% children say that God is superman having powers not

possessed by common human beings e.g.: “Ishwar superman ki tarah hote hain . jo kaam insaan ke bas mein nahi , use Bhagavan poora kar dete hain.”- Siddharth (10 yrs.) 45% children say that God is formless. He is in good qualities –charity, love for all, goodness and kindness. He is a noor , a light not having any specific human form e.g.: “Ishwar ek andekhi shakti hai jo hamare man ke andar hai.”-Pooja (12

yrs.)“*Khuda ek noor hai, ek roshni hai, uska koi aakaar nahi hai aur vo har jagah hai*” - Sheeba (8 yrs.)“*Ishwar roop vihin hain. Vo nirankar hote hain aur phir vo har roop mein jis mein aap chaho uplabdh bhi hain.*” Jagdish (13 yrs.)“ *Ishwar ka koi roop, rang, aakar nahi hota. Ishwar vo shakti hai jise mahsoos karne par ek alag hi khushi milti hai.*” -Mukul Dev (13 yrs.)“ *Ishwar ka roop hamari kalpana mei hai. hum jaisi bhi kalpana karte hain, ishwar usi roop mein hame dikhai dete hain.*” -Prachi (12 yrs.)“*Bhagavan kale, gore, mote ya patle nahi hote, vo nirankaar hain aur har kisi mein vidyamaan hain.*” -Deepak (12 yrs.) 4% children say that they do not know how is God while 4% children do not respond. Only 3% children say that God is in the statues of worship places:

“*Ishwar mandir mein hote hain varne mandir kyon banaya gaya?*” -Kajal (11 yrs.)

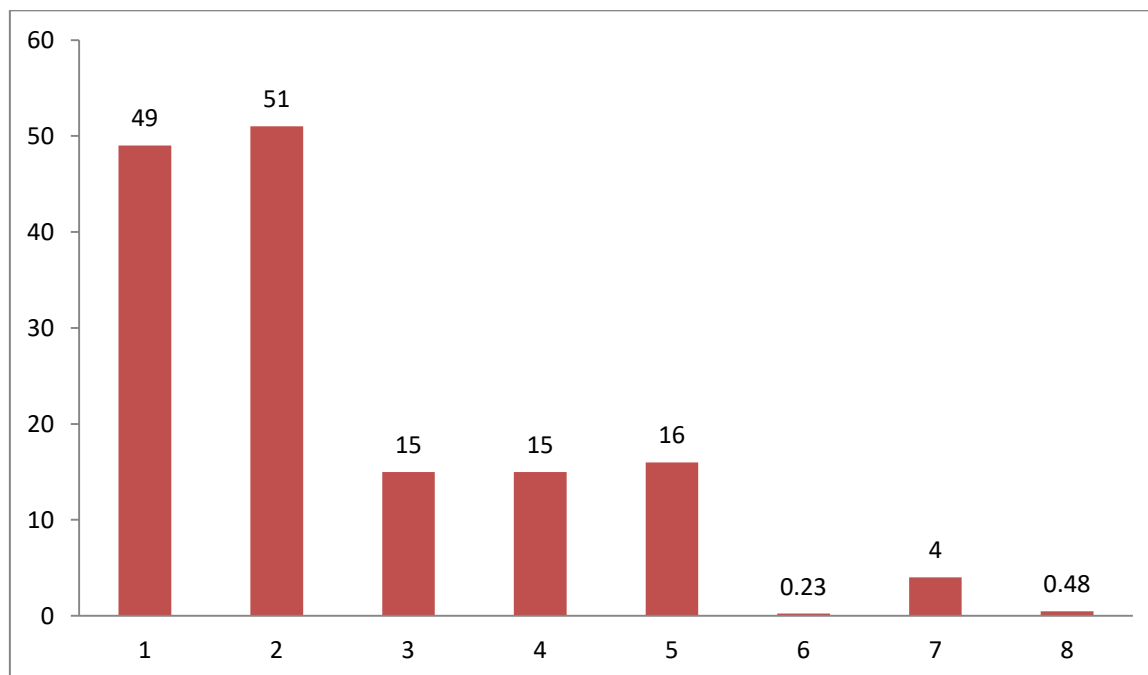
INTERPRETATION OF DATA:

The analysis of the above data shows almost half of the children express through their responses that God does not have any specific form but can be experienced through good qualities or can be felt. Some are able to describe its form without referring to any human form whereas others relate its form to their parents or any other human being whom they find to be helpful. Few children associate its form to a human with extraordinary powers by describing God as superman.

THEME 3. – PLACE OF GOD

Table - 3 Children’s responses related to the theme ‘Place of God’

Sr. No.	RESPONSES	%
1.	Everywhere	49
2.	Specific places	51
2.1	Hearts	15
2.2	Sky and river	15
2.3	Worship places	16
2.4	Patallok and surlok	0.23
2.5.	Surely don’t know	4
3.	Left out	0.46



Graph- 3: Graphical Presentation of Children’s Responses Related to the Theme ‘Place of God’

Table 3 and bar graph show that 49% children say that God is everywhere. There is no particular place to find Him. He lives in each and every particle of this universe as:“*Allah har jagah rahte hain, bas unhe sachche dil se yaad karne ki jaroorat hai.*” - Chanda (10 yrs.)“*Ishwar sab jagah hain. Dharti ke kan kan mein vo samaye hue*

hain.” -Rinki (9 yrs.)“*Is chal – achal dhara ke kan kan me uska pratibimb upasthit hai. Jaha manav ka niyantran nahi, har us isthi mein ishwar ki agyat shakti ki anubhuti hoti hai.*” -Jagdish (13 yrs.)“*Ishwar ka koi ghar ya makaan nahi hota. Ishwar har pal, har jagah hain.*” -Neha (13 yrs.) 51% children say that God lives

at the specific places out of which 15% children say that God is in the hearts of living beings , checking us from doing wrong and guiding us to the right path in the form of inner voice as :“ *Ishwar hamare dil mein rahte hain. Jab hum bura kaam karte hain to hamare man me khud –b – khud sawaal uthte hain.isse pata chalta hai ki ishwar haemin galat kaam karne se rokhte hain.* ” – Priyanshi (13 yrs.)“ *Har manav ke man me Bhagavan base hote hain , jo unhe sahi- galat ki pehchan batate hain . jab hum galat karte hain , to hamari atma haemin rokti hai, vohi Bhagavan hai.*”-Aakash (11 yrs.)“*Bhagavan murtiyon me nahi hain. Vo hridya mein hai . Bhagavan har us bhavna mein hain jisse kisi ka bhala hota hai... . Bhagavan har us karya me hain jisse aap aage barte hain... . Bhagavan har us hath me hai jo apko sambhalta ho.* ” – Jagdish (13 yrs.) Only 15% children say that God lives in the sky and rivers e.g.:“ *Bhagavan aasmaan me rahte hain aur sabko dekhte hain.* ”-Sakshi (8 yrs.)“*Allah aasmaan me rahte hain*

jahan koi nahi ja sakta hai.”- Shaddab (7 yrs.) 16% children say that God is at the worship places . 0.23% children say that that God is in patallok and surlok while 4% children say that they do not know where God lives. 0.46% children have not responded to the question.

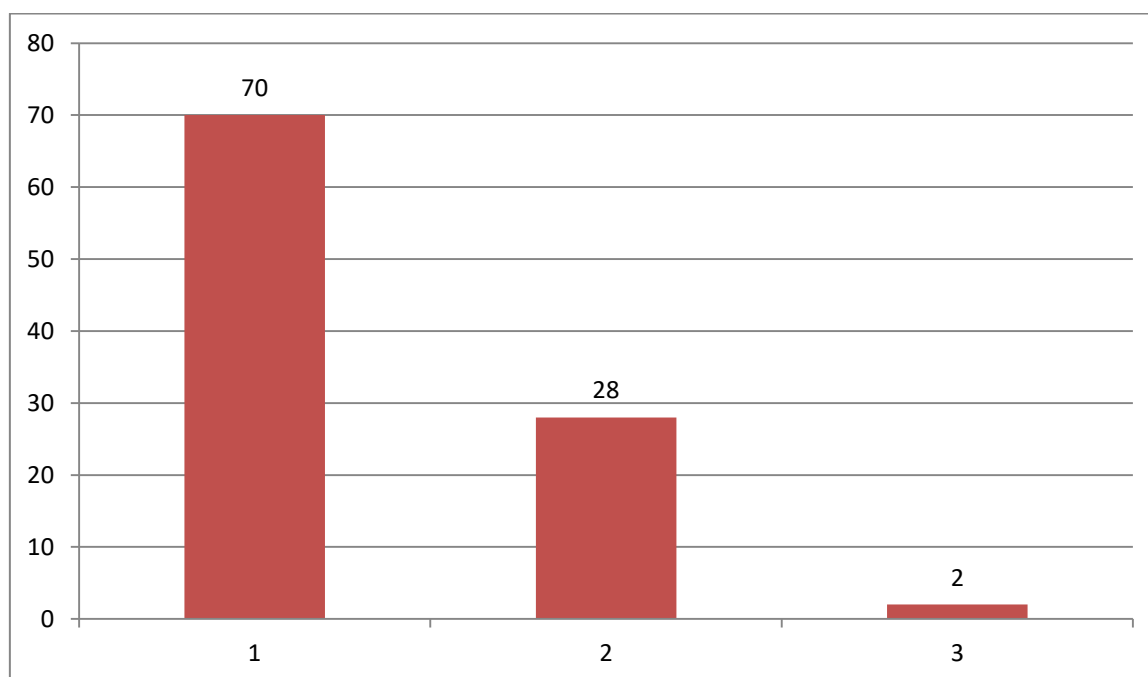
INTERPRETATION OF DATA:

The analysis of the above data shows that almost half of the children express through their responses that God is everywhere while half of the children assign specific places e.g. hearts, sky and rivers, worship places to God. Very few children say that they don't know the place of God and a very nominal number of children have not responded.

THEME 4– ONENESS/ MULTIPLICITY OF GOD :

Table - 4 Children’s responses related to the theme ‘Oneness/multiplicity of God’

Sr. No.	RESPONSES	%
1	One in different forms	70
2	Many	28
3	Left out	2



Graph- 4: Graphical Presentation of Children’s Responses Related to the Theme ‘ Omnipresence / multiplicity of God’

Table 4 and bar graph show that 70% children say that God is one having different forms e.g.:“ *Bhagavan ek hi hote hain , bas unke roop alag- alag hote hain.*”- Ritik (9 yrs.) “ *Bhagavan ek hote hain . Alag –alag dharmo me unhe alag-alag namo se jana jata hai, lekin vo kewal ek hain.*”-Sakshi (9 yrs.)“*Ishwar ek hain kyunki jaise sikh dharm me bataya gaya hai- ‘Ek Omkar’ usi*

prakar sabhi dharmo me apni- apni bhasha me kaha gaya hai ki ishwar ek hai lekin unke naam anek hain. ” – Aakash (13 yrs.)“*Hamare anusar ishwar kewal ek hote hain , lekin manushay ne unhe apni jaati ke anusar alag alag bahut sare ishwar banaya hua hai.* ” –Ruby (12 yrs.) 28% children say that gods are many as:“*Bhagavan asankhya hote hain, bhala unhe kaun gin*

sakta hai? ”- Vishesh(10 yrs.)“*Bhagavan bahut sare hote hain, Jaise- krishan ji, hanuman ji, mata ji aadi.*”- Kartik (7 yrs.)“ *Bhagavan 33 crore hote hain, mujhe kuch ka hi pata hai jaise- Sai baba, krishan ji, shiv ji, devi maa...* ”- Sanjay (6 yrs.)

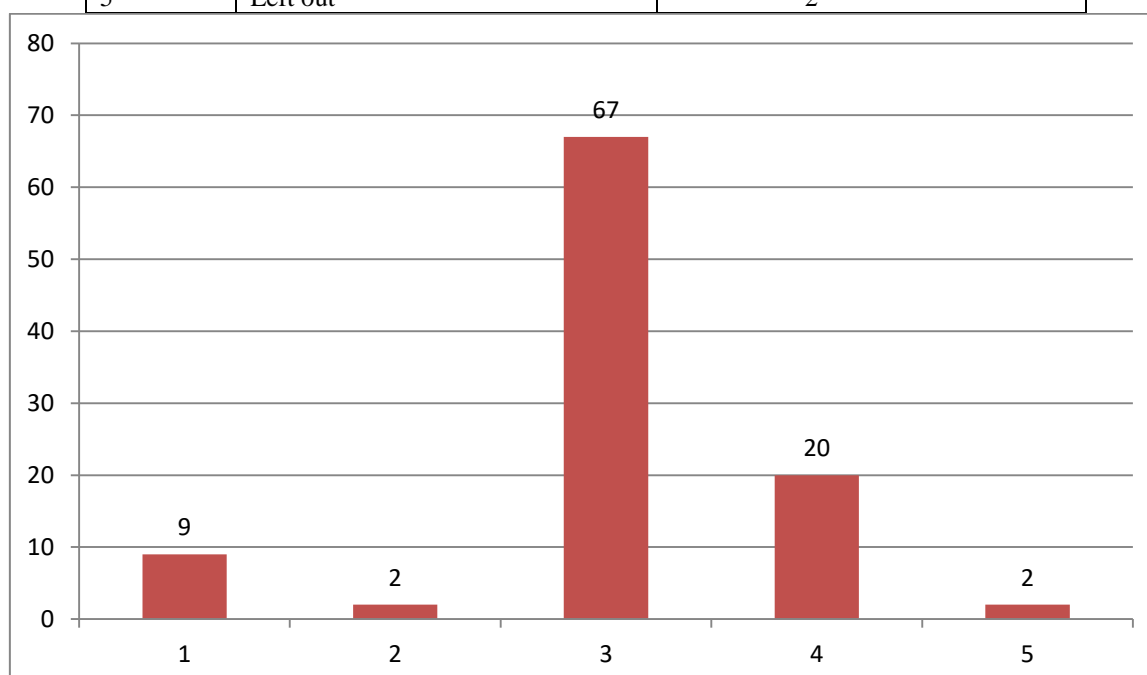
INTERPRETATION OF DATA:

The analysis of above data shows that most of the children say that God is one in different forms while a few children say that gods are many and a very nominal number of children have not responded to the question.

THEME 5 - GENDER OF GOD

Table - 5 :Children’s responses related to the theme ‘Gender of God’

Sr. No.	RESPONSES	%
1	Male	9
2	Female	2
3	Both	67
4	None/ formless	20
5	Left out	2



Graph- 5: Graphical Presentation of Children’s Responses Related to the Theme ‘Gender of God’

Table 5 and bar graph show that 67% children say that God may be both male and female e.g.:"*Ishwar istri aur purush dono hote hain.*"- Jony (13yrs.)"*jaise mata pita do hote hain , vaise hi ishwar bhi do hote hain , istri bhi aur purush bhi.*" –Rohit (12 yrs.)"*Bhagavan hamare mata pita hi hote hain .*"- Abhilasha(6 yrs.)" *Bhagavan mata bhi hote hain aur pita bhi .*"- Dinesh (7 yrs.)"*ishwar mata pita dono roop me hote hain jaise mat aparvati, laxmi aur saraswati aur pita ke roop me mahadev, brahma ji , hanuman ji .*"-Mukul (12 yrs.) 20% children say that God is neither male nor female . He is formless as- "*Khuda to ek noor hai , von a to aadmi hai aur na aurat.*"- Sheeba (8 yrs.)" *ishwar ek prakash punj hai , uska koi ling nahi hota kintu jagat ke har roop, har aakar, har swaroop me uska astitva hota hai.*"- Jagdish (13 yrs.)"*hamare*

anushar ishwar na istri hain aur na purush . ye hum par nirbhar karta hai ki hum unhe kis nazariye se dekhte hain."- Prachi (12 yrs.) 9% children say that God is male and 2% children express through their responses that God is female while 2% children have not responded to the question.

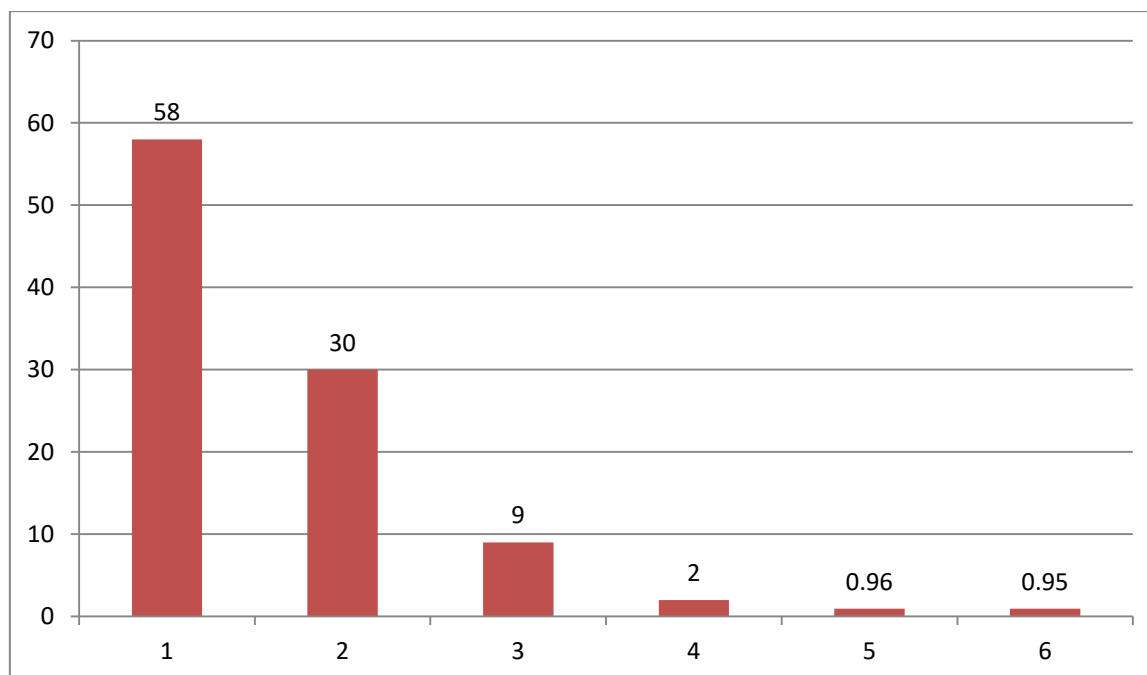
INTERPRETATION OF DATA

The analysis of the above data shows that most of the children say that God may be both male and female while some say that God is neither male nor female. As per their responses God is formless , hence is beyond any gender. A few children say that God is male and a very nominal number of children consider God as female.

THEME 6 - ROLE OF GOD

Table - 6 Children's responses related to the theme 'Role of God'

Sr. No.	RESPONSES	%
1	Helps, checks, guides, judges us	58
2	Generator/ operator of the world	30
3	Superman like	9
4	To make himself worshipped	2
5	IIIrd position of God in life after parents	0.96
6	Left out	0.95



Graph- 6: Graphical Presentation of Children's Responses Related to the Theme 'Role of God'

Table 6 and bar graph show that 58% children say about the role of God that God helps us in the hour of need, checks us from doing wrong, guides us to the right path of life and judges us for our deeds or misdeeds e.g.: "Achche kaam ka achcha aur bure kam ka bura fal dena bhagavan ka kaam hai."-Anju(10 yrs.) "bhagavan hame sahi kaam karne ki shakti deta hain."- Suraj (9 yrs.) "Jesus apne bachcho ko bure kamo se hatakar sachchai ke raste par le jate hain aur sabko sadbhuddhi dete hain"-Muskan (8 yrs.) "mere anusar is sansar me Bhagavan ka kam bhoolne walon ko sahi rasta dikhana hai."-Priya (10 yrs.) "Bhagavan ka kam hai hare k ke sath nyay karna."-Sonu (10) "Bhagavan ka kaam sahi disha dikhana hai."-Divyam (10 yrs.) "main ishwar se laptop mangna chahta hoon jaise vo sabki halp karte hain."-Rohan (9 yrs.) 30% children say that God is the generator and operator of this universe and everything depends on Him as- "yadi Bhagavan nahi hote to surya na nikalta, chand nahi ugta, duniya nahi hoti, aap bhi na hote aur hum bhi na hote."-Rajni (12 yrs.) "ishwar ke anusaar hi ye shrusti chalti hai."- Priya (10 yrs.) "ishwar is

samuche sansar ka sanchalan karte hain jaise kaha bhi gaya hai- 'labh- hani, yash - apyash, jeevan- maran vidhi hatha'."-Rupal (13 yrs.) "ye sansar ishwar ki marji se chalta hai, yadi ishwar nahi to kuch bhi nahi."-Muskan (12 yrs.) "ishwar hame janm dete hain, mrityu dete hain, sabhi ko unke karmo ke anusar fal dete hain aur shruti ka sanchalan karte hain."-Kartik (12 yrs.) "Is sansar ke sabhi karyo par ishwar ka adhikar hai, bina ishwar ke kuch bhi nahi ho sakta."-Ruchi (11 yrs.) "mere anusar ishwar jagat ke srijankarta, palankarta aur vinashkarta hain."- Anjali (12 yrs.) "jeevan-maran ka santulan banaye rakhna ishwar ka kaam hai."-Bhavana (12 yrs.) "naye bchche paida karna aur boron ko maarna ishwar ka kaam hai." -Daksh (7 yrs.) "Bhagavan ka kaam logo ko paida karna hai." - Anubhuti (7 yrs.) "Jaise tailor kapre banata hai aur sarkar sarak banati hai vaise hi bhagavan sansar ko banate hain."-Mohit (7 yrs.) 9% children say God works like a superman, 0.96 % children say that God possess third important role in their lives: first is of mother, second of father and third goes to God while 2% children say that the work of God

is to make Himself worshipped by people as: “*Bhagavan ka kaam insane se apni pooja karvana hai.*” - Chavi (9 yrs.)

INTERPRETATION OF DATA

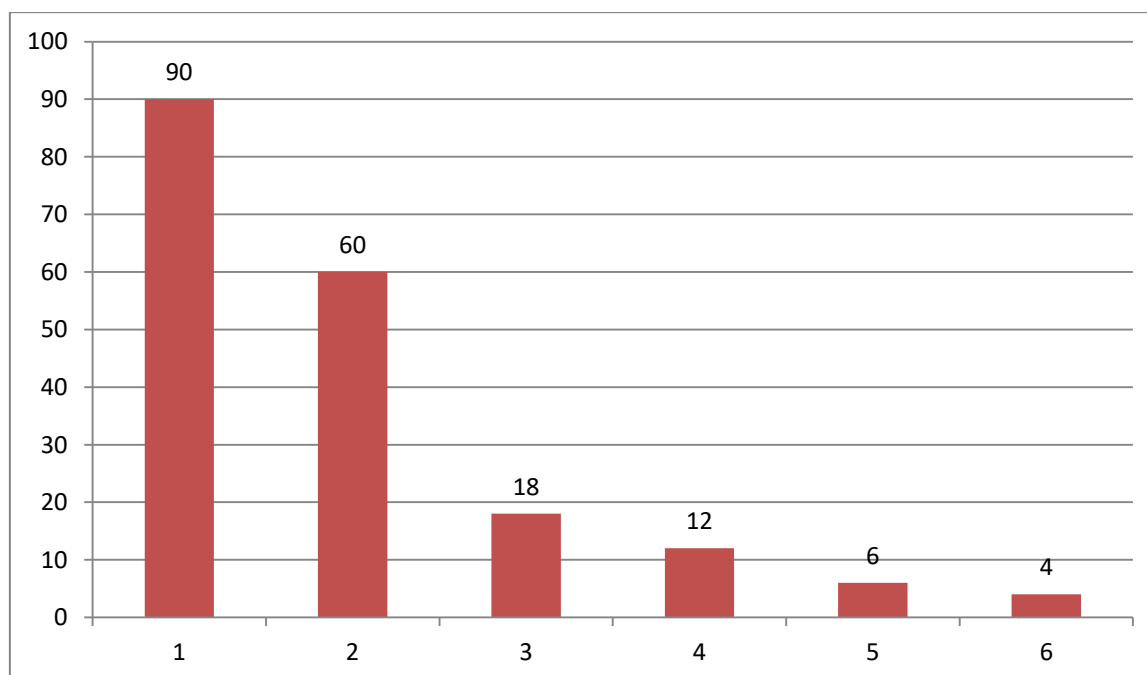
The analysis of the above data shows most of the children consider the role of God as a guide, leader or helper in their lives, perceiving Him similar to their

parents. Others consider Him as creator and operator of this world and few children think Him as superman thus perceiving Him larger than humans and a very nominal number of children did not attempt the question. Their perception of God as relating to their parents is seen in the previous theme too.

THEME 7- OMNIPRESENCE OF GOD :

Table - 7 Children’s responses related to the theme ‘Omnipresence of God’

Sr. No.	RESPONSES	%
1	Yes	90
(I)	God helps us in the form of inner voice	60
(II)	Don’t feel fear when remembers God	18
(III)	Natural procedure / cycle shows	12
2	Don’t think so	6
3	Left out	4



Graph- 7: Graphical Presentation of Children’s Responses Related to the Theme ‘Omnipresence of God’

Table 7 and bar graph show 90% children show their belief in the existence of God out of which 60% children recognise the omnipresence of God in the form of inner voice which helps them, checks them from doing wrong and guides them to the right path e.g.: “*Haan ! Bhagavan hain aur sab jagah hamari raksha karte hain .jaise – hamare ghar aag lag gaye thi aur hum sab bach gaye to hame bhagavan ne hi to bachaya.*” -Gaurav (11 yrs.) “*Bhagavan ko yaad karne se paper accha karne mein vo hamari madad karte hain.*” - Vansh (6 yrs.) “*ishwar sachmunch sab jagah hain . jab main koi galat kaam karta hoon to man se ek awaj use galat batati hai. Ishwar mere man ki awaj*

banker mujhe sahi – galat ka bhed batate hain.” - Divyanshu (12 yrs.) “*ishwar hame galat kaamo ke liye saja aur acche kaamo ke liye puruskar dete hain , isse pata chalta hai ki vo har jagah se hame dekhte hain.*” - Rohan (13 yrs.) “*jab hum musibat me hote hain to Allah hamari madad karte hain , isse pata chalta hai ki vo har jagah se hame dekhte hain.*” -Faizan (13 yrs.) “*galat kaam karte hi man ko pata chal jata hai ki vo kaam galat hai , jisse pata chalta hai ki Bhagavan har waqt aur har jagah khamare sath hain aur ye mere sath bahut baar ho chukka hai.*” -Yashvant (12 yrs.) 18% children say that they do not feel fear due to the omnipresence of God: “*Allah ko yaad karne se dil ka*

dar khatm hota hai. Isse pata chalta hai ki vo har samay aur har jagah hamara khyal rakhte hain .”- Ahmad (11 yrs.)“ jab main chota tha to mujhe bhooton se bahut dar lagta tha , phir mummy ne kaha ki hanuman ji ko yad kiya kar lena . ab mujhe bhooto se dar bilkul nahi lagta kyonki hanuman ji mere sath hote hain.”- Pankaj (6 yrs.) While 12% children say that through the natural procedures / cycle (e.g. rising of sun and moon at the proper time ,formation of day and night and this beautiful world), they feel the omnipresence of God :“ Allah sab jagah hai , ye hame aise pata chalta hai ki raat hoti hai, din nikalta hai aur hawa chalti hai. ” -Shadab(9 yrs.)“Jis prakar suraj aur chand samay par roj aate hain, phool khilte hain , hawa chlti hai, barish hoti hai inse pat chalta hai ki ishwar in sabme maujood hai aur har jagah hai.” -Anuj (12 yrs.)“Bhagavan ne sansar banaya hai , isliyeBhagavan hai. ”-Divya (6) 6% children say that they don't believe in the

omnipresence of God as they have not experienced it as :“jab maine ishwar ko dekha hi nahi to mujhe kya pata?” -Daksh (7) yrs. ,while 4% children did not respond to the question.

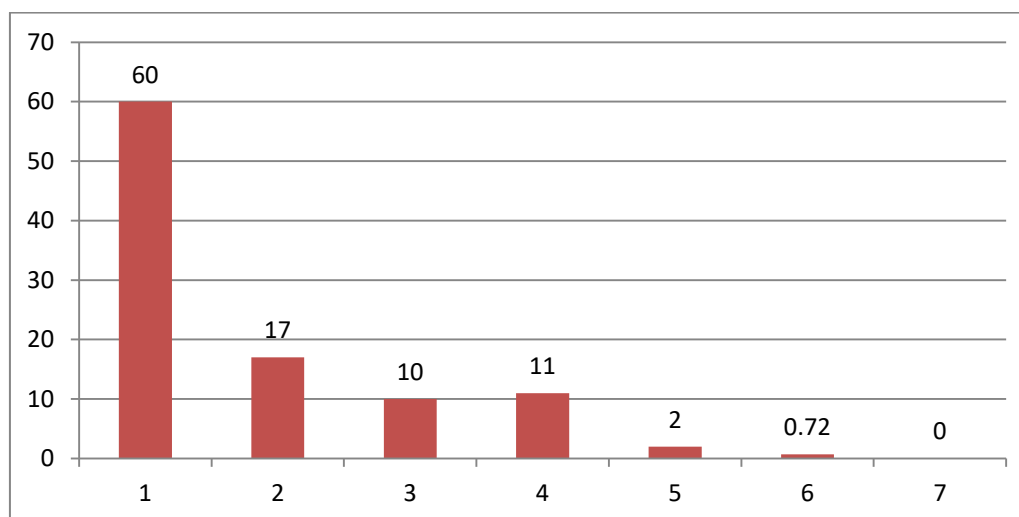
INTERPRETATION OF DATA

The analysis of the above data shows that most of the children demonstrate their belief in the omnipresence of God through their responses out of which most of them demonstrate it in the form of inner voice. Other relate God to the nature and draw evidence of His presence through the processes and cycles occurring in nature. A very nominal number of children left the question or showed their ignorance about it.

THEME 8: FACTORS INFLUENCING CHILDREN'S CONCEPTION OF GOD

Table - 8 Children's responses related to the theme 'Factors Influencing Children's Conception of God'

Sr. No.	RESPONSES	%
1	Family members and neighbours	60
2	School teachers, religious teachers & religious practices	17
3	Religious books , myths and T.V.	10
4	Self experiences	11
5	Worship places are proof	2
6	Natural cycle shows	0.72
7	Left out	--



Graph- 8: Graphical Presentation of Children's Responses Related to the Theme 'Factors Influencing Children's Conception of God'

As table 8 and bar graph show that 60% children say that they have come to know about God through their family members and neighbours e.g. “ Mummy ne bataya tha aur log baat karte hain , usse pata chala. ”- Simran (9 yrs.)“ Aise hi kuch ghar me suna , kuch auron se sun aur jo mujhe samajh me aaya.”Daksh (7 yrs.)“Jab bachcha janm leat hai to vo naam, dharm , karm se door hota hai, mujhe bhi kuch nah pata tha. Dheere – dheere samaj me rahkar bhagavan ke bare me

jaanta gaya .kya sahi , kya galat ,lekin mujhe to itna sab kuch samaj se hi pata chala. ”-Deepak (12 yrs.)“mujhe mummy ne bataya , pehle mujhe lagta tha ki ishwar nahi hota phir maine mummy se sawal kiye aur unke uttar itne sahi the ki mujhe manna hi para ki ishwar hain. ”- Abhilasha (12 yrs.)“jaise surekha ki mummy ne bataya , vaise hi mujhe meri mummy ne bataya.” Kunal (9 yrs.)“Dadi roj kahani sunakar batati hain.”- Vishesh (6 yrs.)“jab hum bare hote hain to

dekhte hain ki sabhi log bhagavan ki pooj karte hain , isse pata chala.”-Shivani (12 yrs.) 17% children say that their school teachers , religious teachers (as Maulana sahib, sister/ father at church, pandit ji, guruji) told them about God and through God related practices in family as well as in school , they came to know about God :“ madam ne school me bataya tha .”-Umang (6 yrs.)“ kitabon se ,T.V. se pata chala. ”-Devanshu (12 yrs.)“hamare ghar me pooja path, yagya, hawan aur kirtan hote hain jinse hame ishwar ke bare mein pata chala.”- Chand prakash (11 yrs.) 10% children say that through religious books, myths seen in the T.V. serial, movie etc. They came to know about God:“Dharmik pustakon – Quran , Bible, Ramayan , Guru Granth Sahib ko par kar hamare poorvjo ko oata chala aur hame bhi. ”-Nishu (11 yrs.)“T.V. me Krishna , Ramayan dekhkar pata chala.”- Vimlesh (10 yrs.)“computer par movie dekhne ke baad meri didi ne bataya.”-Harshika(6 yrs.) 11% children say that through their own experiences they came to know about God as:“ mujhe kisi ne nahi bataya . maine to apne man se poocha aur man kabhi jhooth nahi bolta kyonki man me ishwar hote hain.”Divyanshu (12 yrs.)“kisi ke

batane se kuch nahi pata chalta . dheere- dheere khud hi mahsoos hone lagta hai ki koi adrashya shakti hai jo hamari raksha karti hai.”-Kunal (11 yrs.)“jo kan kan me vidyamaan hai , use batane ki jaroorat nahi.”Aman (9 yrs.) 2% children say that through worship places (temple, mosque, church etc.) they came to know about God and 0.72% children say that through natural cycle they came to know about God.

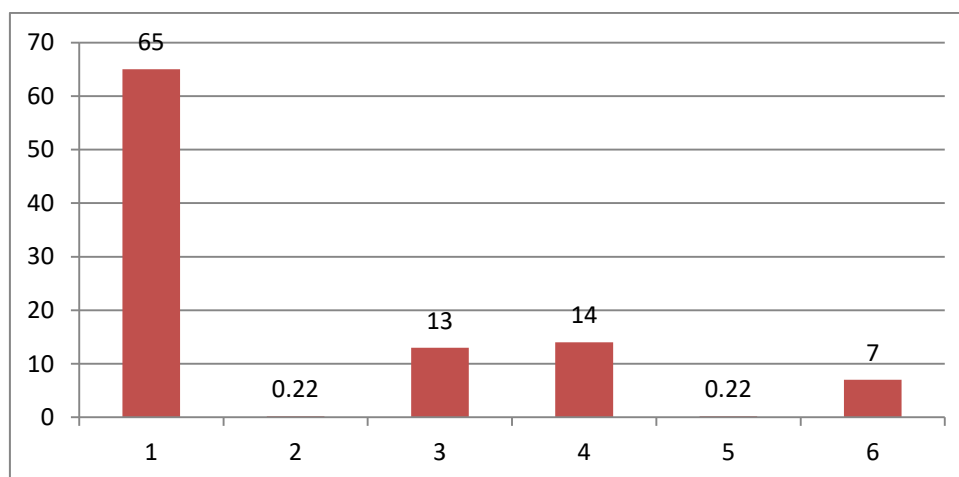
INTERPRETATION OF DATA:

The analysis of above data shows that most of the children’s conception of God get influenced by their family and neighbours. Some children also acknowledge the role of school teachers, religious teachers and religious practices. Few children have mentioned religious books and mythological stories through media as source of their knowledge about God .Very few children have expressed that they have known God out of their own experiences.

THEME 9 : CHILDREN’S EXPERIENCES OF GOD RELATED PRACTICES IN FAMILY

Table-9: “Children’s Responses Related to their ‘Experiences of God Related Practices in Family’”

Sr. No.	RESPONSES	%
1	Worship on different festivals	65
2	Singing bhajans	0.22
3	Pray for wisdom	13
4	Daily worship and religious practices	14
5	Greatest festivals- Jal Divas,Earth day, Plantation day	0.22
6	Left out	7



Graph- 9: Graphical Presentation of Children’s Responses Related to their ‘Experiences of God Related Practices in Family’

As table 9 and bar graph show 65% children say that they participate in worship of God at home on different festivals (as Laxmi pooja on Diwali, Shri Ram pooja on Dusshera, Krishna poojan on Janamastmi, Nammaz at the occasion of Eid, Kanya poojan at Navratra, Ganpati pooja on Ganesh Chaturthi etc.) e.g.:“ Hamare ghar me

Diwali pooja, holka dahan, Dusshera pooja , govardhan pooja aadi tyoharon par sari pooja hoti hain. In sab tyoharon par pooja se hamare dharm ki bahut sari jankari hame milti hai.”-Shalu(13 yrs.) “ Hamare ghar panch time ki Nammaz pari jati hai. Har saal ramjaan ke mah me roze rakhte hain aur roze ke

akhiri din eid manate hain.”-Sara (11 yrs.)“Janamastmi par Krishna ji, Diwali par Laxmiji, aur bhi bahut si pooja hoti hain.Navratro me kanya poojan karte hain.”-Ruchika (10 yrs.)“Main mahashivratri , Krishna janamastmi, aur navratro me vrat rakhti hoon.”-Sarika (12 yrs.)“main namaz , Quaran sharif parti hoon aur kheer batne jaati hoon. Abbu aur bhai masjid me namaz parte hain. ”-Sana(11 yrs.)“ Diwali par laxmi mata Lanka se aati hin , isliye unki pooja karte hain.”-Anubhav(7 yrs.)“ Salmaan aur Shadab ke Ghar pee id manayi jati hai.”- Suraj (6 yrs.) 14% children say that they experience God worship and other religious practices at home daily (as namaz , kirtan, satsang, bhog, prarthna aarti gana, Prasad baatna)e.g.：“ Roj subah nahakar hum pooja karte hain aur tulsii mata ko jal charate hain.”-Ruchika (10 yrs.)“ Mummy aur dadi roj pooja karti hain.”- Sanjay (6 yrs.)“hamare parivaar me ishwar se sambandhit karya nimlikhit hain- pratidin subah uthkar pooja, phir naashte ka bhog , phir dopahar me bhojan ka bhog thekur ji ko lagana, phir sone se pehle mandir ke pat band karna.”-Roopal (13 yrs.) 13% children say that they only pray to God for wisdom and do not participate in worship related

practices while 0.22% children that they participate in singing bhajans at different religious occasions at home. 0.22 % children say that for them God is in earth, water, trees and other beneficial elements of nature and they worship in the form of celebrating Plantation day, earth day, water day etc. as:“ Aaj ke समय me sabse bari pooja bhumi divas, jal divas vrikshropan divas honi chahiye . main inko sabse bara tyohar mankar manti hoo.”- Chavi (13 yrs.)

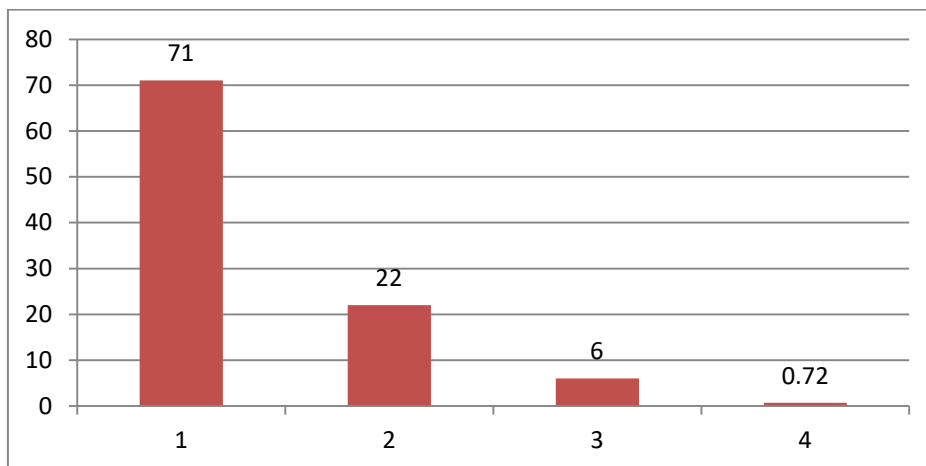
INTERPRETATION OF DATA:

The analysis of above data shows most of the children share their experiences of worship of God and other religious practices by associating it to different festivals and describing different religious rituals and practices as part of them. Few have mentioned activities related to worshipping God as a practice that they followed on a daily basis/ everyday at their homes and a very nominal number of children have not responded.

THEME 10: CHILDREN’S EXPERIENCES OF GOD RELATED PRACTICES AT SCHOOL

Table - 10 :Children’s responses related to their ‘Experiences of God Related Practices in School ’

Sr. No.	RESPONSES	%
1	Festival celebrations and morning prayer	71
2	Daily morning prayer	22
3	Left out	6
4	Moral education with reference to God/ Geeta Gosthi	0.72



Graph- 10:Graphical Presentation of Children’s Responses Related to their ‘Experiences of God Related Practices in School’

As table 10 and bar graph show 71% children say that at school they participate in daily morning prayer and other festival celebrations (as Christmas Day, Janamashtami Mahotsava, Diwali poojan and decoration , Ravan dahan, Guru parv celebration):“ alag- alag tyoharo par alag alag karyakram hote hain jaise-Christmas Day, Janamashtami Mahotsava, Diwali poojan and decoration , Ravan dahan , inme hum ya to

aage barker bhag lete hai ya darshak banker.”-Prachi (12 yrs.)“Dusshre par Ram bhagavan ki pooja hoti hai aur unke jeewan se sambandhit jhanki bhi lagate hain. Vasant panchmi par ma sarawati ki pooja ki jati hai.main in sab me bhag leti hoo jaise dusshere par jhanki me kisi patra ka role karti hoo aur pooja ki tayarrion me apne sathio ka hath batati hoon”-Riya (12 yrs.)“ Tyoharo par aarti , bhajan aur pratiyogita hoti

hai aur jate samay Prasad milta hai.”-Ayushi (12 yrs.)“ Gayatri mantra ka jaap aur prayer hoti hai , hum usme khushi se bhag lete hain.”-Satyam (9 yrs.)“hamare school me ‘hum ko man ki shakti dena.....’ prayer madam karati hain.”-Richa (6 yrs.)“Bhagavan gande bachcho se door rahte hain aur unki halp bhi nahi karte .prayer karne se achchi batein aati hain , isliye madam prayer karati hain.”-Sarthak (7 yrs.) 22% children say that they participate in daily morning prayer while 0.72% children say that they experience / enjoy moral education with reference to God at the school:“ Geeta Gosthi hoti hai , jisme bataya jata hai ki karm karo , phal ki ichcha mat karo. Satya ki ur chalo , jhooth ka rasta mat apnao, bhagavan

humse kewal satya ki chah rakhte hai aur yahi sabhi dhamo ka saar hai.”-Deepak (12 yrs.)

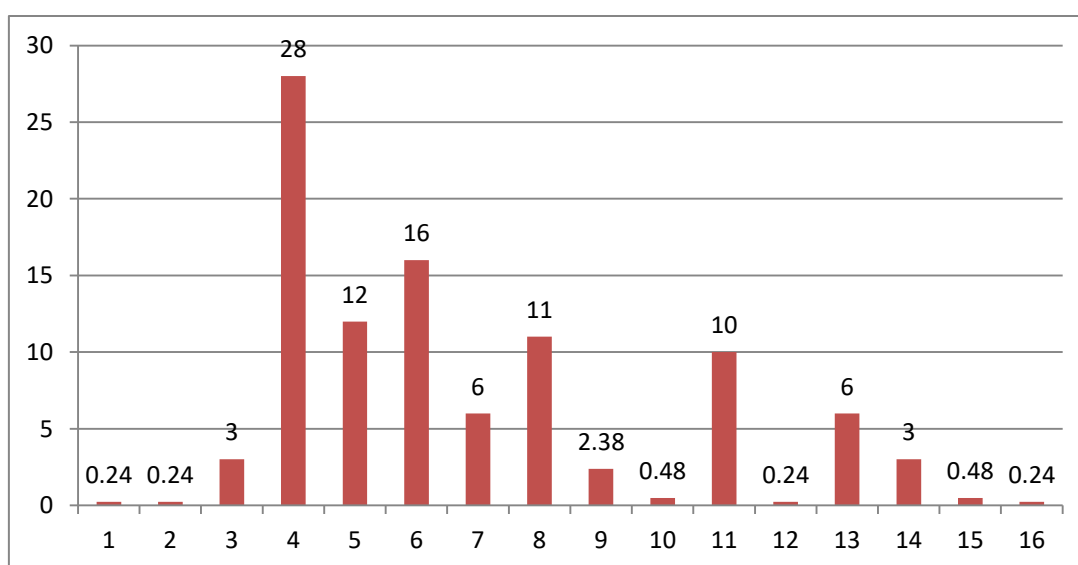
INTERPRETATION OF DATA:

The analysis of above data shows that most of the children share their experiences of God related practices at school in the form of celebration of different festivals and daily morning prayer while some share experiences of daily morning prayer only. A few children have not responded while a very nominal number of children saw moral education as a God related practice at school.

THEME 11 : DOUBTS ABOUT GOD:

Table - 11 Children’s responses related to the theme ‘Doubts about God’

Sr. No.	RESPONSES	%
1	Why God has made my mind so slow working	0.24
2	Who created gods so differently	0.24
3	Does He really demand money from us	3
4	Why not visible	28
5	Why is their disparity among people	12
6	No doubt	16
7	Left out	6
8	How is He in reality	11
9	Why does He give us so suffering	2.38
10	Have we been told reality about God or all fake is told to us About God to make us obeying	0.48
11	Why does Evil win and Good suffer	10
12	How can He be in sinful and non vegetarian people	0.24
13	How does He face winter/ summer/ rain in the sky? Why did He go back from the earth to the sky	6
14	Will He really punish us for our misdeeds	3
15	Why did Lord Ram ask mata Sita for agni pariksha	0.48
16	Why is there difference between mythological stories and bookish knowledge e.g. sun is considered a god in mythological stories while a circle of fire in science book.	0.24



Graph- 11: Graphical Presentation of Children’s Responses Related to the Theme ‘Doubts of God’

As table 11 and bar graph show 28% children raised question why is God not visible e.g.: “*Bhagavan hame kyun nahidikhthe?*”- Soniya Jain (11 yrs.) “*Ishwar ko hum log kyon nahi dekh paate?*”-Yashika (12 yrs.) “*mere mn mein ek hi prashan hai ki Ishwar hote hain , par dikhte kyon nahi?*”-Bhavya (12 yrs.) “*Bhagavan hote hain to dikhte kyon nahi?*”-Ayushi(10 yrs.) “*Ishwar hamare samne kyon nahi aate?*”-Anjali (10 yrs.) “*Bhagavan ko hamare samne aane mein dar lagta hai ya sankoch?*”-Kanika (9 yrs.) “*Main Bhagavan ko ek bar dekhna chahti hoon.*”-Shivani (8 yrs.) “*Bhagavan hamare bulane par bhi aate kyon nahi?*”-Neelvansh (10 yrs.) 12% children ask why is there disparity amongst people while God is there in the world e.g.: “*Bhagavan ne kuch logon ko amir aur kuch ko garib kyon banaya?*”-Prabhat (11 yrs.) “*Allah ne is duniya me amiri- garibi kyon banayi hai?*”-Danish(10 yrs.) 16% children say that they don’t have any doubt about God while 11% children want to know how is God in reality: “*Ishwar vastav me kaise hote hain, main ye janna chahta hoon.*”-Mohit (11 yrs.) 10% children ask why Devil wins and Good suffers e.g.: “*Bhagavan aparadhion ka jaldi se vinash kyon nahi kar dete jab vo sarv shaktimaan, sarvygata hain?*”-Nishi (10 yrs.) “*Bhagavan bure logon ki sahayata kyon karte hain?*”- Soniya (10 yrs.) “*Bhagavan ke hote hue bhi ek insaan doosre insaan ko marne ki himmat kaise kar leta hai?*”-Kunal (10 yrs.) “*Mujhe ek baat sabse jyada chubhti hai ki jab Bhagavan hain to sansaar mein apradh kyon hote hain?*”-Yashwant (12 yrs.) 6% children raise question like: “*Ishwar aakash me sardi, garmi, barsaat kaise sahte honge ? Ishwar dharti se vaapis akash me kyon chale gaye?*”-Shivani (12 yrs.) 2.38% children want to know why does God give suffering to the people e.g.: “*jab Ishwar hi sabko sukhdukh dene wale hai to vo sabko such- such hi kyon nahi dete?*”-Muskan (12 yrs.) “*Bhagavan apne Bhakton ko itne dukh kyon dete hain?*”- Anju (10 yrs.) 6% children did not respond while 3% children want to know will God really punish us for our misdeeds: “*Jaisa ki kaha jata hai kya Allah sachmuch kayamat ke din hame hamare kamo ka phal dega?*”-Ahmad (11 yrs.) 3% children ask if God really demands money from us in the form of ‘chadava’: “*log itna sab kuch mandir me daan dete hain , yadi itna sab kuch vo garibon ko de de to unka kitna bhala hoga? Kya Bhagavan humse sachmuch chadava chahte hain?*”- Riya (12 yrs.) “*Kya Bhagavan apni pooja karana chahate hain?*”-Daksh(10

yrs.) “*Kya aapko lagta hai ki Ishwar humse sona – chandi ya paise mangte hain?*”-Divyanshu (12 yrs.) “*Main ye kahna chahta hoon ki log jab mandiron mei doodh , tel , mombatti aadi chadate hain aur sab naliyon me ya idhar- udhar bahkar chala jata hai, yadi hum in samanon ko kisi garib ko de de to kitna achcha hoga?*”- Mukul (10 yrs.) 0.24% children want to know who created God / gods so differently- “*Ye question mere dimag mein bar bar aata hai ki Bhagavan ko kisne banaya?*”-Vaishnavi (10 yrs.) “*main ye janna chahti hoon ki chalo thik hai ki Ishwar ne to hame banaya to Ishwar ko kisne banaya? Chalo banaya bhi to itni saari shalti unke paas kahan se aayi aur kya ishwar hamare jaise hi kisi ko banaya gaya hai ya phir kisi vishesh vyakti ko?*”-Abhilasha (12 yrs.) 0.24% raises such a question/ doubt: “*Kya Bhagavan non vegetarian aur paapi logon ke andar bhi hote hain yadi kaha jata hai vo sab jagah hain?*”-Sarala (11 yrs.) “*Bhagavan ne mera dimaag itna kum chalta hua kyon banaya?*”-Riya (11 yrs.) “*maine kahaniyon mein suna hai ki Surya ek Bhagavan hai aur science ki book mein likha hai suraj ek aag ka gola hai , jisme anu kea lag hone se aag utpann hoti hai. Sach Kya hai?*”-Avdhesh (12 yrs.) 0.48% children ask the question like: “*Bhagavan ke bare me kya hame sach bataya gaya hai ya hame anushasit banane ke liye jooth bola gaya hai?*”-Anjali (10) “*Bhagavan Ram ne Sita mata ki agni pariksha kyon li?*”-Kanika (11 yrs.) “*jab Bhagavan ne dharti par janm liya tha to kya unki vansh bel aaj bhi hamare beech hai?*”-Shubhi (10 yrs.)

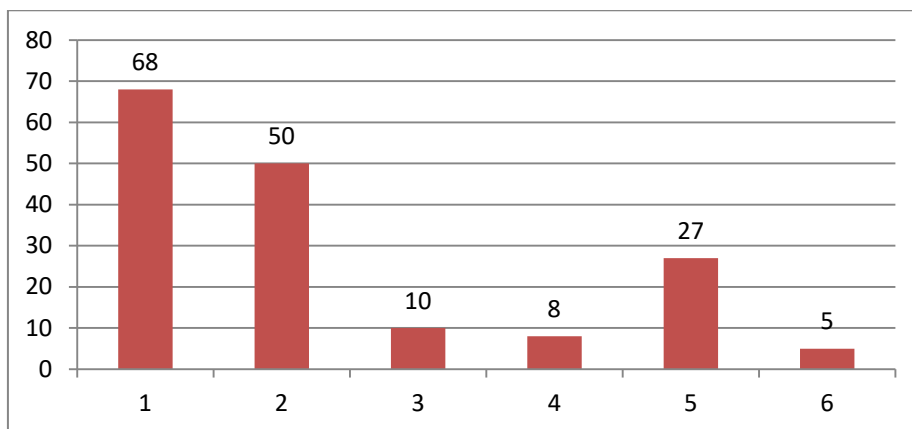
INTERPRETATION OF DATA:

The analysis of the above data shows that the doubts/ questions raised by children about God were very diverse. The questions such as *why is God not visible* and *how is He in reality* were raised by more number of the children. Doubts raised by some children were in the form of questions related to disparity existing amongst people despite the presence of God. This correlates to the role that children assign to God and their expectations from him as analysed in the above theme. Few children did not respond and a few say that they do not have any doubt about God .Personal doubts about God have also been expressed by the children.

THEME 12 (a): CHILDREN’S EXPERIENCES OF NATURE WORSHIP

Table – 12(a) Children’s responses related to their ‘Experiences of Nature Worship’

Sr. No.	RESPONSES	%
1	Yes	68
1.1	Surya Namaskar , Tulsi pooja for having wisdom and scientific reasons	50
1.2	Mother makes us to do	10
1.3	To please them	8
2	No	27
3	Left out	5



Graph- 12 (a): Graphical Presentation of Children's Responses Related to their 'Experiences of Nature Worship'

As table 12(a) and bar graph show 60% children say that they participate in nature worship out of which 50% children say that they do Surya namaskar , Tulsi-jal-vandan for having wisdom and for other scientific reasons:“*jisse Surya dev hame sad buddhi dein.*”_ Alok (10 yrs.)“*main Surya auy tulsi ki pooja karta hoon kyonki tulsi ek aushdhi paudha hai. Sury duniya ko andhkar se mukt karta hai aur surya ko jal dene se sadbuddhi aati hai.*” –Akash (13 yrs.)“*taki surya hame buddhi dein aurbare hokar hum bhi unki tarah prakash failayein.*”-Rishabh (10 yrs.)“ *jisse mujhe sadbuddhi aa sake.*”- Sumit (8 yrs.) 10% children say that they worship nature as mother asks them to do so while 8% children say that to please these natural elements they worship them-“*Surya aur chandma ki pooja karne se vo khush hote hain.*”-Jyoti (10

yrs.)“*unko prassan karne ke liye pooja ki jati hai.*”- Tannu(10 yrs.) 27% children say that they do not worship natural elements e.g.: “*Mai aise koi pooja nahi karta.*”- Vivek (9yrs.) “ *Hamare ghar me aise pooja nahi hoti hai.*”-Keshav (12yrs.) 5% children did not respond to the question.

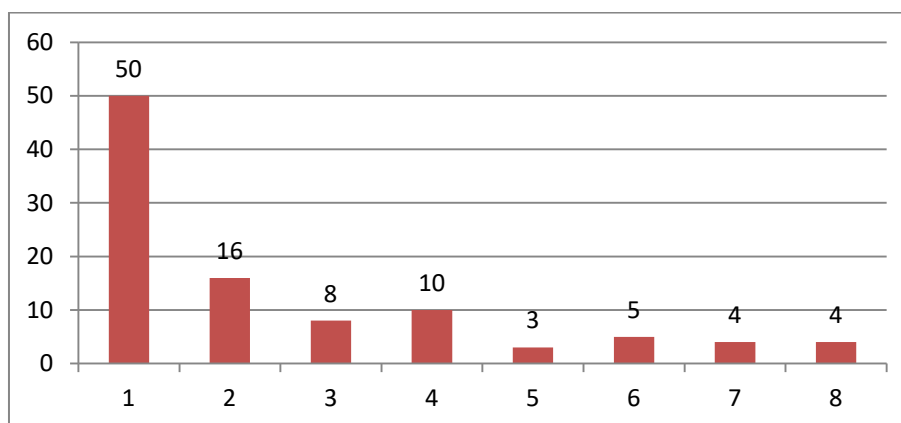
INTERPRETATION OF DATA:

The analysis of the above data shows most of the children share their experiences of religious practices in the form of Surya namaskar and Tulsi pooja while few children deny from having such experiences. A very nominal number of children did not respond to the question.

THEME 12(b): REASON OF NATURE WORSHIP

Table –12(b) Children's responses related to the Theme 'Reason of Nature Worship'

Sr. No.	RESPONSES	%
1	Scientific reasons as they give us precious things	50
2	As they are gods/ gods lie in them	16
3	For the peace of mind	8
4	Due to superstitions	10
5	For enjoyment (Ganga snan)	3
6	Do not know	5
7	Left out	4
8	Due to customs	4



Graph- 12(b): Graphical Presentation of Children's responses related to the Theme 'Reason of Nature Worship'

As table 12(b) and bar graph show 50% children say that natural elements are worshipped for scientific reasons as they give us precious things e.g.:“*Kyonki ped hame phal , sabji dete hain aur suraj hame ujala deta hai.*”-Hyder khan(10 yrs.)“*Surya se vitamin D milta hai , isliye uski pooja karte hain.*”-Simran (9yrs.)“*Kyonki ye sab jeewan dayak hain.*”-Varsha (10 yrs.)“*kyonki vo hame phal, ann, sabjiyn , lakri , ooshma dete hain aur humse kuch nahi lete.*”- Jyoti (10 yrs.)“*Unki pooja karke unhe ‘Thank You’ bolte hain ki vo hame itni sari cheeje dete hain.*” -Samma (10 yrs.)“*prakriti ke in tatvon ke bina hamara jeewan asambhav hoga , isliye unki pooja ki jati hai.*”-Akash (13 yrs.)“*kyonki sharir jin paanch tatvon se milkar bana hai vo name prakriti se hi prapt hote hain.*”-Lavkush (13 yrs.)“*taki hame hawa , jal aur roshni ki prashani na ho.*”-Rohan (9 yrs.)“*kyonki Tarini mata / river poore jeewan hamari pyas bujhati hain.*”-Nishu (11 yrs.) 16% children say that natural elements are worshipped because god/ gods lie in them:“*manav ka un par nayantran na hone ke karan un me daviy shakti kianubhuti hoti hai.*”- Jagdish (13 yrs.)“*Nadi me Vishnu ji rht hai , isliye nadi ki pooja karte hain.*”-Chaya (6 yrs.)“*kyonki log inhe Bhagavan mante hain.*”-Prayas Jain (12 yrs.)“*kyonki grantho me inhe Bhagavan mana gaya hai.*”-Amit (10 yrs.) 8% children say that for the peace of mind , natural elements are worshipped :“*man ki shanty aur ghar ki shanty ke liye inki pooja hoti hai.*”- Gaurav (9 yrs.)“*taki man shant rahe .*”-Akash (10 yrs.)“*bua roj suraj bhagavan ko jal deti hain jisse gussa na aaye.*”- Suraj (6 yrs.) 10 % children say that due to superstitions , people worship natural elementse.g.:“*kyonki log andh vishvasi hote hain.*”-Muskan (10 yrs.)“*kyonki andhvishav ke karan log unse darte hain.*”-Ahmad (11 yrs.) 5% children say that they do not know the reason of nature worship and 4% children did not respond to the question while 4% children say that due to customs natural elements are worshipped e.g.:“*kyonki ye Hindu logon ki pratha hai.*”-Kanchan Jain (11 yrs.) 3% children say that for the sake of enjoyment natural elements are worshipped :“*Ganga snan ke liye log apne sukh ke liye , picnic manane jate hain.*”-Khushi(8 yrs.)

INTERPRETATION OF DATA:

The analysis of the above data shows that almost half of the children say that natural elements are worshipped due to scientific reasons while some say that it is due to superstitions . Some children say natural elements are worshipped as god/ gods lie in them while a vary nominal number of children give reasons such ase, for enjoyment, for peace of mind , or due to customs , natural elements were worshipped.

CONCLUSION

The findings of the study are as follows:

1. All the children of all the grades (I-III, IV-V, VI-VIII), of both the genders, of both the

government and private schools believe in the existence of God.

2. Almost half the number of the children said that God is everywhere while others assign specific places to God like one’s heart, sky, rivers and worship places etc.
3. Most of the children said that God is one in different forms.
4. Most of the children were of the opinion that God could be both male or female.
5. Most of the children said that God helps in the hour of need , checks people from doing wrong, guides people to the right path of life, judges people for their deeds and misdeeds and fulfills the wishes of the people.
6. Most of the children demonstrated their experience about the omnipresence of God in the form of inner voice guiding them to the right way of life.
7. Most of the children said that they were told about the God by their parents, family members, neighbours and teachers.
8. Most of the children shared their experiences of worshipping of different gods on different festivals in the family.
9. Most of the children shared their experiences of festival celebrations and daily morning prayer in their schools.
10. There is a great variety in doubts/ questions raised by the children about God .
11. Almost half of the children said that nature is worshipped for the scientific reasons.
12. Most of the children shared their experiences of nature worship in their family as the part of their daily routine practices or occasional rituals.

On the basis of the findings of the study , it may be concluded that the concept of God being an abstract concept is not very easy to be studied. However, the findings of the study show that children can think over such abstract conceptions through their everyday experiences . These everyday experiences of the children can be planned to engage them in philosophical abstract thinking from the very beginning by leaving space for them to keep questioning and thinking for themselves . Very young children can also be engaged with thinking about abstract experiences through their everyday experiences. Experiences need to be planned as per the age group of the children. Children’s questions may be a way for them to express their burgeoning philosophical thinking and it can sprout by engaging them in conversation rather than struggle to provide answer . No doubt, children’s conception of God are influenced by the processes of primary and secondary socialization . Children’s experiences during primary and secondary socialization have a major influence on the formation of concept. Hence, teachers

should help the children to explore and examine issues related to ethics and values, reflect upon them, compare diverse views and then make their own minds on what they decide to believe. Teachers should provide children with opportunities that help in developing their reasoning skills, engage in the construction, development and consolidation of their own questions. They should be encouraged to develop their own ideas through open ended dialogue. Parents and teachers need to understand that their views, thoughts, concepts play a vital role in formation of conception in children. Therefore, it is necessary to provide them a healthy atmosphere for the same. School is expected to provide best opportunities for all round development of the children. Media and mythological stories are found influencing the children's conceptions of God, so more sensitiveness is required on their part to make children aware of the reality and to enable them to differentiate between reality and fantasy. At the same time children's reasoning, imagination, curiosity and inquisitiveness is unquestionable and children should be provided proper opportunities to enhance and develop them.

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