



## FEZANA Age-Appropriate Lesson Plan

**Subject Category (circle one):** Religion/Ceremony    Celebration    History    Prayer  
Gathas    **Comparative Religion**    Shahnameh

**Age Group (circle one):** PreK-K    Grades 1-3    Grades 4-5    **Grades 6-8**    Grades 9-12

**Lesson # (if applicable):** 3

**Subject of the Lesson:** Hinduism

**Background Knowledge for the Teacher:**

### HINDUISM

Hinduism is one of the oldest living religions in the world\*. There are about 1.2 billion Hindus and the majority of the people living in India and Nepal follow this religion. Unlike many other religions, Hinduism **does not have a founder** (a single prophet), nor is it based on any single scripture. Indians call it the **Sanatana Dharma** (the faith with no beginning and no end).

The most ancient **sacred texts of the Hindu religion** are written in Sanskrit and are called the **Vedas (which means, “knowledge”)**. Hinduism does not just have one **sacred book** but several **scriptures**. The **Vedas scriptures** guide **Hindus** in their daily life. They contain hymns of creation, prayers, and philosophical discussions.

To simplify high philosophy and offer it to the common people, legends were created in the form of epic stories such as the **Puranas, the Ramayana, and the Mahabharata, all of which were composed in Sanskrit. These stories inspire people and teach them the universal values of righteous living.**

A part of the Mahabharata is the Bhagavad Gita, a philosophical song of God that brings out the essence of Hinduism in simple form. Here, **Lord Krishna, one of the avatars (God incarnated) of the Hindu religion**, speaks to the people about three paths: the path of mental discipline for the intellectual, the pursuit of love and devotion for the emotional, and the path of selfless service for those who believe that ‘work is worship’. And the common advice that Lord Krishna gives to all types of people is to follow **nonviolence, truth, and detachment.**

Hindus view life as divided into four stages: **childhood**, a time of joy and innocence; **student life**, a time of discipline in mind and body; **married life**, a time for family and the household; and **old age**, a time to renounce material things in preparation for the final years. Since these stages are common to everyone, the Hindu priests can also marry and raise families. The Hindu priest is called a **Brahmin**. A Hindu temple is called a **Mandir (pronounced as mun-deer).**



Hindus believe in one Ultimate Supreme Being (God) known as **Brahman**. **However, they also believe that there are innumerable forms of that God (Ekam Sat, Vipra Bahudha Vadhanti; One Truth, Many Names)**. Thus, Hindu gods and goddesses reflect the Hindu value system. Anything beautiful, valuable, or awe-inspiring is associated with divinity. That is why plant and animal life, natural forces of energy, the sun, the planets, the elements, art, knowledge, wealth, and happiness all have their corresponding gods and goddesses.

The **three gods** believed to be the most powerful are called the **Hindu Trinity**.

**They are:**

- 1) Brahma - the Creator**
- 2) Vishnu - the Preserver**
- 3) Shiva – the Destroyer**

The gods and goddesses are very real to the Hindus. They celebrate the birthdays and anniversaries of these deities in their homes and temples. These celebrations are part of several Hindu festivals. Some of the famous Hindu festivals are the following:

<b>Diwali</b>	<b>the festival of lights</b>
<b>Holi</b>	<b>the festival of colors</b>
<b>Janamashtami</b>	<b>Lord Krishna’s birthday</b>
<b>Raksha-Bandhan</b>	<b>a festival to celebrate the love of brothers &amp; sisters</b>
<b>Ganesha Chaturthi</b>	<b>Ganesha (the elephant-headed god who removes obstacles) festival</b>
<b>Dussehra</b>	<b>a festival celebrating the victory of Durga (female goddess of infinite energy) over the demons</b>
<b>Onam</b>	<b>the boat festival</b>
<b>Til Sankrata</b>	<b>a kite-flying harvest festival</b>

The cow is sacred to the Hindus, who worship the cow as the Divine mother. The cow is the source of life-sustaining milk, and also a symbol of fertility. Almost every animal is associated with some god or goddess. This association is one of the reasons why many Hindus are vegetarians.

Modern Hindu leaders, such as Swami Vivekananda, Mohandas Gandhi, and Aurobindo Ghosh, have given voice to a movement that moves away from the traditional ideal of renunciation of materialism in the world, and have voiced the necessity of uniting spiritual life with social concerns.

Finally, the purpose of life, from the Hindu perspective is: "Build Good Karma to Liberate the Soul from Cycles of Birth/Reincarnation and Become One with God (Moksha)."

\*There is an ongoing debate about the date and if it was brought into India or originated in India (IndusValley?). <https://www.history.com/topics/religion/hinduism#:~:text=Most%20scholars%20believe%20Hinduism%20started,%2C%20near%20modern%2Dday%20Pakistan.&text=Around%201500%20B.C.%2C%20the%20Indo,people%20living%20in%20the%20region.>



## Lesson for students:

1. Make a PowerPoint of the lesson highlighting the major aspects of Hinduism such as:
  - a. Hinduism does not have a prophet.
  - b. The name of their scripture and the language it is written in.

### **An interesting fact to share with students:**

Through the efforts of Sanskrit scholars, Prophet Zarathushtra's Gathas were translated from Avestan into many current spoken languages. Avestan and Sanskrit are considered sister languages as Old Avestan and Sanskrit existed, and were spoken, simultaneously thousands of years ago by the pastoral people who called themselves Indo-Aryans in the southern Russian steppes, until the Great Migration began circa 1500 BCE. This migration happened over several centuries, and the group that went eastward to establish the Indus Valley civilization, later called themselves 'Indus' or 'Hindus', while the group that went southward to settle in the region of North-eastern part of present-day Iran, called themselves Iranians (developed from Airyana – from the Aryan tribe). This group called their new found land in Northeastern part of modern day, Airyana Vaeja – which means the land of the Aryans). This is just to give you an idea of why these two languages are so similar – Old Avestan & Sanskrit – if you knew how to speak one language, you would be able to understand the other! Both these groups lived as one large community in the ancient southern Russian Steppes for thousands of years before they split.

We are indebted to the Sanskrit scholars who translated our Prophet's Gathas, as without these translations, even today, we would have been quite ignorant about understanding our Prophet's messages to mankind.

- c. Four stages of life in Hinduism
- d. Having multiple gods and why
- e. Purpose of life in Hinduism
- f. Hindu celebrations-include photos or videos for visual experience.

- i. Diwali-celebration of light (victory of light over dark)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VtMwjW6Gzqs>

Discuss with students the Iranian cultural celebration that Iranian Zoroastrians also celebrate which this reminds them of - Answer=Yalda (Longest night of the year after which days become longer and nights shorter. Celebrated as the re-birth of light)

- ii. Holi-Festival of colors- celebrating the Spring.
  1. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AbFIkJ8KFZ8>
  2. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8AVi8WxZzJQ>
  3. What Zoroastrian cultural celebration is in spring? Nowruz



What is symbolically similar between Holi and Nowruz-Celebrating end of Winter and beginning of Spring.

- time for planting=having food to survive.
  - Being able to take animals out for grazing.
  - Nature is renewing itself.
- g. The lesson can be enhanced with videos such as:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IGV6M4wQ8Os>

### Activity for Students:

1. Pair up the students (it can also be an individual activity) to solve the Lesson 3 Puzzle. The team that solves it first is the winner.
2. Make a booklet or a poster of this series of comparative religion lessons.
  - a. Booklet:
    - i. Give each student a sheet of paper and ask them to write, draw or design some of the major aspects of Hinduism.
    - ii. After finishing all the lessons about the different religions, they can design a cover page and bind all the pages to form a booklet which illustrates their work for all the covered religions.
  - b. Poster:
    - i. Give each student a half sheet of paper and ask them to design depicting some of the major aspects of Hinduism.
    - ii. After finishing all the lessons about the different religions, they can glue their half sheets on a poster board and design it.
3. Virtual activity:
  - a. After each lesson, ask students to say something they learned from the day's lesson and record them. Make sure they do not repeat the facts. Use the recording from all the lessons in this series to make a comprehensive video to share.
  - b. Make a Kahoot game.
4. Visit a Hindu temple close to your center with the class.
5. Break the class into groups of 2-4 students. Have them imagine that they will be talking about Hinduism at an interfaith gathering. Give each group a specific category (for example goal of a Hindu, the Hindu prophet, and his/their beliefs, etc.) Give each team about 10-15 minutes to prepare a 5-minute talk about their specific category. Then each group present their talk to the other groups.
6. Sites for students to explore to expand their learning:
  - <http://www.historyshories.com/india-aryan-civilization.html>
  - <https://courses.lumenlearning.com/suny-hccc-worldcivilization/chapter/the-indo-aryan-migration-and-the-vedic-period/>



**Sources:**

1. Cultures of the World – INDIA by Radhika Srinivasan/Leslie Jermyn
2. <https://www.history.com/topics/religion/hinduism#>
3. Note: This lesson was read and approved by Sri Mirle, a practicing Hindu in Cincinnati, OH, who also actively represents Hinduism in many interfaith events.
4. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Purim>

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**Date:** 9/2022