



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 the 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, who celebrate the birthdays and anniversaries of these deities in their homes and temples. These celebrations are part of the several Hindu festivals. Some of the famous Hindu festivals are:

Diwali	the festival of lights
Holi	the festival of colors
Janamashtami	Lord Krishna’s Birthday
Raksha-Bandhan	a festival to celebrate the love of brothers & sisters
Ganesha Chaturthi	Ganesha (the elephant-headed god who removes obstacles) festival
Dussehra	a festival celebrating the victory of Durga (female goddess of infinite energy) over the demons
Onam	the Boat festival
Til Sankranta	a kite-flying harvest festival

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%20belie>



ve%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 Material for teacher. Use PowerPoint to teach the lesson and to stop at appropriate sections to start a discussion.
2. Make a printout of the Material for teacher for each student or use a projector to display it on classroom wall (in a virtual class share screen the information). Have each student read a section before discussing it as a class.
3. Enhance the lesson by following up with a YouTube video.
EX: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xIBEEuYIWwY>
4. An interesting fact to share with students:

Through the efforts of Sanskrit scholars, Prophet Zarathushtra's Gathas were translated from Avesta into many current spoken languages. Avesta 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 newfound 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.

Activity for Students:

1. Fill out the comparative religion chart for Hinduism and discuss the results with the class. Using the chart compare each section with Zoroastrianism.
2. Plan a field day to a Hindu temple close to your center.
3. Invite a representative of Hinduism faith to your virtual or in person class to share information about the religion. Have each student have a question ready to ask the representative.



4. Have each student write one thing they found interesting about Hinduism on a small sheet of paper along with their name, fold it, and place it in a jar. Then have each student take out one of the folded sheets of paper, read the content, and ask the person whose name is on the sheet of paper why they found what they have written interesting and discuss with class.
5. 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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