



FEZANA Age-Appropriate Lesson Plan

Subject Category (circle one): Iranian Religion/Ceremony 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):

Subject of the Lesson: Life and Time of Zarathushtra

Background Knowledge for the Teacher:

Zoroastrianism's messenger or prophet is Zarathushtra in Avestan, Zartosht or Zardosht in modern Persian, and Zoroaster in English. Most commonly we call Zarathushtra, Ashu Zartosht or Ashu Zarathushtra. Ashu Zarathushtra lived about 3800 years ago in the eastern part of the greater Iran. Ashu Zarathushtra's family were called "Spitaman" or "Espantaman". According to the religious narratives passed down to us, his mother was called "Doghdova (Dogdo)", his father, "Pourushaspa", and his wife, "Hovo-ouy". Ashu Zarathushtra had three daughters named, Fereny, Trity, and Pouruchisti (Pouruchista). He had three sons named Isado-astar, Orvatadnar, and Khursheed-chehr.

Due to the long-time frame since when Ashu Zarathushtra lived and different incidences, our information about the specifics of Ashu Zarathushtra's society and way of life is limited. Using discoveries through the science of archaeology, linguistics and specially what we have from the religious text specifically the Gathas we can imagine what kind of society he lived in.

Most of the Iranian people of his time were agriculturalists and pastoralist. They lived in villages and small cities. People's food, clothing, and tools were obtained from agriculture, raising a few domestic animals, pottery, and black smithery. Ashu Zarathusht, in the Gathas defends agriculture, pastoral living, and production. He considers these to be a peaceful and correct way of living. In opposition to the people who lived as such, there were tribes or people who would raid and steal hard-earned goods, grains, and livestock from the peaceful people. (Yasna 32.10).

One goal of Ashu Zarathushtra was to stop the violence against peaceful people and invite all to work, build, and be productive.

**Let the evildoers stand foiled in their wish,
Let them be abandoned to confusion and ruin!
Let those of virtuous principles frustrate them, prevent their harm, And make way for the
advent of happiness and peace on our humble dwellings!
Let the Great Upholder of virtue bring the evil to naught. And let it be quick!**
Gathas: Yasna 53-8 Translated by D Irani



Ashu Zarathushtra strived to correct people's beliefs and way of thinking. In his time, people believed in many gods, in the Gathas these gods are named "Div". People believed that these gods controlled every aspect of their lives and they needed to do whatever necessary to keep them happy. There were those who benefited from misguiding and deceiving the people. Some of these people were local rulers (kavi) and others were religious rulers (Karpan). Ashu Zarathushtra refers to anyone following the Divas as followers of Druj (lie, deceit). He believed that the followers of Druj who themselves have gone astray will cause confusion and misdirection of others. He considered the false believes a cause of backwardness and restriction against people's better way of thinking and progression.

**For, ye liars confound the human mind, and make men act their worst,
Make men speak as lovers of Evil,
Separated from the Good Mind,
Far removed from the will of Ahura Mazda,
Departing from the path of Truth and Right.**

Gathas: Yasna 32-4 Translated by D Irani

Zarathushtra wanted truth, righteousness, order, and law (Asha) which would become a reality under the umbrella of one God, Ahura Mazda. That is why we name him Ashu Zarathushtra because Zarathushtra wanted and worked to spread Asha. In Zoroastrian culture, Ahura Mazda is the creator of wisdom, Asha, best thinking, best rule, and all that is beneficial and good.

**O ye, coming to seek wisdom, now shall I proclaim to you the message of the Wise Creator,
The hymns unto Ahura, and the offerings of the Good Mind,
The enduring sacred Truth,
And the glorious vision of the Heavenly Lights attainable through Truth sublime.**

Gathas: Yasna 30-1 Translated by D Irani

**He who in the First Beginning thus thought:
Let the glorious heavens be clothed in light;
He by His supreme understanding created the principles of Truth and Light.
Enabling mortals thereby to maintain the Good Mind.
O Wise Lord, O ever-the-same Ahura, by Thy Holy Spirit make these realms flourish.**

Gathas: Yasna 31-7 Translated by D Irani

Ashu Zarathushtra asked many questions and through his good mind, Vohu Mana, sought answers.

**This I ask Thee, tell me truly, O Ahura;
Who so balanced the earth and heavens to keep them apart?
Who created the waters and the plants?
Who yoked swiftness to the winds and motion to the clouds?
Who is the creator of Good-Mind, O Mazda?**

Gathas: Yasna 44-4 Translated by D Irani



He believed in progressive and better living. A communal life of righteousness and wisdom.

**And may we among those who make this life fresh!
You, lords of wisdom, who bring happiness through righteousness,
Come, let us be single minded in the realm of inner intellect.**

Song 3-9 (Yasna 30-9) Translation AA Jafarey

Ashu Zarathushtra in Yasna 45-8 summarizes his teachings in three main principles of good thoughts, good words, and good deeds. In this section of the Gatha, he says:

**“With my songs of praise and veneration I seek the acceptance of my Lord!
For now indeed I see Him in my eyes, as the Lord of the Good Spirit, the Lord of Good Word
and Deed.**

**I have realized Him through Truth,
He who is Mazda Ahura!**

Verity I shall render Him homage in the House of Songs.”

Translated by D Irani

In summary, good thoughts, words and deeds include all the thoughts, behavior and conduct by people that can lead to progress, health, joy, and a better life for everyone.

When he realized the way to better living and starts to spread his teachings, he finds himself alone, cast aside by his community, Kavis and Karapans. They put Zarathushtra under pressure to stop spreading his message. He has only a few followers and feels powerless. He asks Ahura Mazda for guidance. A kind of guidance that a friend may bestow another friend.

**To what land should I turn?
Where should I turn to go?
They hold me back from my folks and friends.
Neither the community I follow pleases me, nor do the wrongful rulers of the land.
How can I please You, Wise God?**

Gathas Song 11-1 (Yasna 46-1) Translated by AA Jafarey

**I know Wise One that I am powerless.
I have a few cattle and also a few men.
I appeal to You.**

Please, Lord, see to it.

Lend me the help a friend gives a friend.

Grant, through righteousness, the riches of Good Mind.

Gathas Song 11-2 (Yasna 46-1) Translated by AA Jafarey



Later, he travels to a nearby land, ruled by a Kavi name Vishtaspa or Goshtasb in modern Persian and introduces Vishtaspa to his teachings. After accepting Zarathushtra's teachings, Vishtaspa sends messengers across the land to spread the teachings of Zarathushtra.

**Who is my, Zarathushtra's righteous companion?
Who wishes fame for the Great Fellowship?
He, on this great event of initiation, is Kavi Vishtaspa.
I shall invoke, with words of good mind, those whom You, Wise God,
Have established in Your abode.**

Gathas: Song 11-14 (Yasna 46-14) Translated by AA Jafarey

In Yasna 53 or Song 17 of the Gathas, Zarathushtra speaks of his success. Those who previously wanted to hurt him, now have seen the truth and he is successful in spreading the message of the religion of the Good Conscious.

**The best wish of mine, Zarathushtra Spitama,
has been fulfilled,
because the Wise God has, on account of my righteousness,
granted me blessings, both mental and material, and a good life for ever.
Those who hurt me,
have also learned the words and deeds of the Good Conscience.**

Gathas: Song 17-1 (Yasna 53-1) Translated by AA Jafarey

Zarathushtra teaches his pupil Jamaspa Hvogva his message in songs so that it will be remembered through generations.

**Here, Sage Jamaspa Hvogva, I teach you my message
In a poetic and not in a non-poetic language,
So that it shall always stay with you
As prayers of glorification with the divine inspiration.
Whoever distinguishes between the just and the unjust,
Wise Lord, is, through righteousness, a wonderful counselor.**

Gathas: Song 11-17 (Yasna 46-17) Translated by AA Jafarey

Due to lack of proper historical evidence, Zarathushtra's date of birth and death is not known. Per religious texts, written many years after death of Zarathushtra, and communal tradition, Zoroastrians get together for his birthday on the 6th of Farvardin [(day of Khordad and month of Farvardin) and his death on the 5th day of Day (day of Khur and month of Day) on Persian calendar [birth=March 26th and death=December 26th on Gregorian Calendar]

Zarathushtra's work, effort and strive for improving people's lives and correcting their beliefs and overlook brought into existence the religion of Zoroastrianism.



Zarathushtra called this doctrine *Daena Vanguhi* meaning good conscious. Later, this doctrine was called *Mazdayasni* (celebrating wisdom), *Din e behi* (good religion) and *Zartoshti* in modern Persian, and Zoroastrianism in English.

Lesson for students:

1. Make an age-appropriate PowerPoint from the provided information. In addition, inform students that there are stories about Zarathushtra's life that have been written many years after his death which are legends about his life and not factual. Some of these stories over time have become part of Zoroastrian culture.
2. Combine the lesson with activity. Pick verses from the Gathas that refer to Zarathushtra's life and time. Break the class into groups and have each group discuss one verse and share it with class.

Activity for Students:

1. Break the class into groups and have each group make a poster about important aspects of Zarathushtra's life.
2. Pick a current event and have students discuss how Zarathushtra would solve the conflict.
3. Choose a current event that relates to defending what is right and just. Have the students read about the event either through a newspaper clip provided by teacher, a news video, or some other means. Then break the class in two groups and have them debate the two different sides of the issue. For example, the 2020 police cruelty news. Have one team defend the police force and the other the Hispanic and Black communities.

Sources:

1. "Din Amooz" 6th grade
2. The Gatha Hymns of Zarathushtra- Dinshaw Irani
3. Gathas Our Guide by AA Jafarey
(The Gatha translations indicated by Song number are by AA Jafarey)
4. www.czc.org

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