



FEZANA Age-Appropriate Lesson Plan

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

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

Subject of the Lesson: Muktdas

Background Knowledge for the Teacher:

The sixth Gahambar festival celebrates the creation of human beings and is dedicated to the fravashis (guardian spirit). It is known as the festival of Hamaspathmaedaya in Avestan, Fravardigan in Pahlavi and Muktdas in Gujarati. Muktdas comes from the word Mukti – meaning end.

The Muktdas are the days to remember the Fravashis (guardian spirit) of the departed loved ones. Muktdas days are interconnected with the Calendar and therefore an understanding of the calendar is beneficial.

There are ten (10) days of Muktdas prayers. The first 5 days of Muktdas start with the last 5 days of the last month of the Zoroastrian calendar which are Roj Astad, Asman, Zamyad, Mahrespand and Aneran of Mah Asfandarmad. The next 5 days are known as the Gatha days and include, Gathas Ahunavad, Ushtavad, Spentomad, Vohu Khshathra and Vahistoisht.

60-70 years ago Muktdas prayers were performed in each household with each family having their own table. Presently, it is mostly done within the Fire Temple with vases dedicated to individual departed family member. Families may choose to maintain traditions at home too.

A Muktdas table (generally marble or stone table) consists of:

- A silver or metal flower vase in memory of the deceased – this is the same vase that was prayed upon on the 3rd day after the funeral (*Uthamna*) and later used for the Muktdas prayers. This represents Khshathra Vairya, creation of the sky
- Flowers - Represents Ameretat, the creation of the plants
- Water - represents Haurvatat, the creation of the water
- Milk - represents Vohu Manah, the creation of the animals
- Divo - represents Asha Vahishta, the creation of the fire
- Afarganyu - represents Asha Vahishta, the creation of the fire
- Sukhar and Loban - fragrant offering to the fire
- Fruits - offering
- Food: Generally consists of the deceased's favorite food
- Siyav and Kusti - White piece of cloth with a kusti to symbolically offer the Fravashis garments/clothes
- Namgrahan - List of names of deceased family member



Before starting prayers, mop and clean the area where prayers are going to be held. Wash all the implements known as *Alat*.

Prayers recited by the priest during the Muktdad rituals include the Afrinagan, Farokhshi, Stum and Baj. Afrin in Avestan means *to invite*. Muktdad days start with *inviting* the fravashis of the departed loved ones. Visiting family members can pray “Stum no Kardo” for the departed ones of the family (prayer for the fravashis of the deceased).

If more than one priest is praying – one can pray Afrinagan and the other can pray Farokhshi. If only one priest prays, then he recites both.

The fravardin yasht (13.14) states, "in that house in which clean and pure water and vegetation is placed, the holy fravashis agree to move about." also, fakra 13 – (in part) states: we have deep reverence for the good, strong, beneficent fravashis of the faithful who come and go through the world.

In the Fravadin Yasht, the Fravashis ask:

“Who will praise us, who will worship us, who will sing hymns to us, who will propitiate us with the hand containing meat (gaomata) and garments (vastravata) with the highest praise? Of which of us will be praised by name, of which of you will the soul be worshiped, to whom will the gift be given who may have everlasting food forever” (Yst 13.50).

The *Muktdad no Namaskar* - Humbandagi (communal prayer) recited at the end of the formal Muktdad prayers as a community.

On the eve of Navroz, an hour before dawn in Ushahin gāh, the priest prays all the prayers one more time to bid farewell to all the fravashis.

At the break of dawn, the priest prays in havan gah and performs the first machi of the year in an agairy. The congregation wish each other Navroz Mubarak.

For further information refer to the provided file “How to Celebrate the Muktdad – Adults Zoroastrian Studies – August 2021”

Suggested Material:

1. Mini Book on Gathas – Attached
2. Muktdad Celebrations for Kids - Attached

Vocabulary: Muktdad, Fravardigan, Fravadin Yasht, Fravashis, Hemaspathmaedaya, Gathas Ahunavad, Ushtavad, Spentomad, Vohu Khshathra, Vahistoisht, Namgrehan, Afrinagan, Farokhshi, Stum no Kardo, Baj, *Muktdad no Namaskar*.



Lesson for students:

1. What is Muktdad? Show pictures of Muktdad celebrations and ask students if the visuals look sad, serious, happy, calm? So, what is the purpose of Muktdad? Is it to feel sad about those who have left us or to celebrate their lives and thank Ahura Mazda for knowing them and experiencing their love?
2. Simple explanation of Gathas as verses written in poetic form that embody the essence of our religion through the words of Zarathushtra. Focus on the fact that there are 5 gathas and that each one has a special meaning. Hence, we devote each of the last 5 days of the year to each one.

Activity for Students:

1. Create clay or playdoh dolls/ figures
2. Sowing 7 seeds
3. Cut and Paste – Muktdad Table Activity
Instructions for Activity – The Muktdad Table
 - *Make copies of the Muktdad Table sheet – One per each student*
 - *Keep one as the Key Sheet*
 - *Tell the children to cut out the figures as per the dotted line*
 - *The kids can then put the objects on the Table – they could use the kids' friendly glue.*
4. If you have a common meeting place or remotely - Create a Muktdad table together
5. Make your own Gatha booklet - refer to the file “My Mini Book on the Gathas”

Source:

1. The Story of Our Religion - Zoroastrianism by Ava Mehta
2. The Divine Songs of Zarathushtra by Erach Taraporewala
3. Gatha Ba-Maani by Prof. Ervad Manek F. Kanga: http://www.avesta.org/kanga/kanga_gathas.pdf
4. Teachings of Zarathushtra by T.R. Sethna
5. An Ethnic Perspective by Khojeste Mistree

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