



## 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:** Navjote Ceremony

### Background Knowledge for the Teacher:

The navjote (Parsi-Zoroastrian word) or sedreh-pooshi (Iranian-Zoroastrian word) for the ceremony to initiate a child into the Zoroastrian faith, where 'Nav' means new and 'jote' means initiate.

The Navjote or the initiation ceremony consists of wearing the sacred vest (sudreh) and the tying of the sacred cord (Kushti) for the first time. Parsi children, both girls and boys, are initiated between the ages of 7 to 11 years and sometimes for boys up to 14 years of age. Prior to Navjote, parents are responsible for the actions of the child, however, upon being initiated into the faith, the child accepts the responsibility of being directly answerable to Ahura Mazda for all his/her thoughts, words and actions. He/she declares to worship Ahura Mazda and follow the tenets of the Zoroastrian religion.

In preparation of the Navjote Ceremony, the child undergoes the Nahn ceremony. Nahn is the physical and spiritual purification ceremony. The child is made to pray with the priest the regular kushti prayers – Kem na Mazda, Hormazd Khodae and Jasa me Avangahe Mazda. Then the priest recites the Baj prayer where the child is made to chew pomegranate leaves and sip sacred Nirang (a consecrated libation). In the absence of Nirang, pomegranate juice or lemon juice is used.

After these prayers, the child takes a shower/bath, including washing the hair. The child is made to wear ijaar (pajamas), sapat (slippers) and topi (cap) with a shawl draped over the body. The child is then taken to the hall where the ceremony is to be performed.

To welcome the child before the navjote prayers are performed, the Achhoo Michhoo ceremony is conducted to confer blessings upon the child. The items in the Achhoo Michhoo tray and their meanings are:

- Egg - life
- Coconut - physical and spiritual world
- Water - purity
- Betel Leaf - suppleness
- Haldi stick (turmeric) - good health, Kharak (dried date) - resilience, Betel nut - strength, Sakar (Sugar crystals) - sweetness, Dried Almond nut – virtue;
- Rice – abundance



A second tray (ses) includes the first sudreh (which is generally hand stitched), to be worn by the child, and Kushti. Along with a ses, a set of new clothes to be worn, topi, shoes and a garland is also included.

The child is made to stand facing the priest. The sudreh is placed upon the child's outstretched hands, the priest recites Yatha Ahu Vairyo and then leads the child through Din no Kalmo. The priest then recites another Yatha Ahu Vairyo and on the word Shyothananam (good deeds) he puts the sudreh over the child's head and onto his/her body. He then recites the first part of Hormazd Yasht. The priest then guides the child with the tying of the kushti with the recitation of Hormazd Khodae prayer. This is followed by the Jasa me Avangahe Mazda prayer in which the child affirms his/her faith in the Mazdayasni religion. The ceremony concludes with the Doa Tandarosti prayer conferring blessings on the child.

At the conclusion of the ceremony, the child wears new clothes and sagan is done to the child. The event is followed by a celebration with gifts, music and food.

**Material for the teacher:**

1. Prayer book
2. Items used in Navjote Ceremony
3. Items used in Achoo Michoo ceremony
4. Items used in Nahn Ceremony

**Vocabulary:**

Navjote; Nahn Ceremony; Achoo Michoo; Sudreh; Kushti; Topi; Ijaar (lengha); Sapat (Slippers); Ses; Tili; Sagan; Haar/Toran (garland); Toro (bouquet); Patlo; Chawk; Prayers; Mobed (Priest); Nirang.

**Lesson for students:**

1. Basic Introduction to what a navjote ceremony is:
  - a. What is a Navjote? When does it happen? Who is it performed by? Why does it happen?
  - b. Essential steps of Navjote Ceremony: Nahn Ceremony; Achoo Michoo Ceremony; Navjote (initiation) Prayers
2. Significance of Navjote Ceremony in the life of a Zarathushti child
3. Simple meanings for Navjote prayers (Ashem Vohu, Yatha Ahu Vairyo, Kem Na Mazda, Hormazd/Ahura Mazda Khodae, Jasa Me Avanghe Mazda, Din no Kalmo, Doa Tandarosti (optional))
4. Basic explanation and importance of a Sudreh & Kushti
5. Parts of a Sudreh and Kusti



### Activity for Students:

1. Make your own prayer book of basic kushti prayers, Sarosh Baj, Din no Kalmo, Doa Tandarosti
2. Discussion:
  - a. Why do most religions have an initiation ceremony?
  - b. When we graduate from elementary or middle school, etc., there is a graduation ceremony. Is this similar to an initiation ceremony? What are the similarities and the differences between the two?

Sample answers: Graduation ceremony is when one celebrates finishing a task. Navjote ceremony is performed when a child has completed a task (learned his/her prayers, knows the beliefs of the religion, and has accepted them to be his/her way of life) and now is ready to celebrate with family and friends. The task of a Zoroastrian continues after Navjote or some would say starts after Navjote. In both Graduation and Navjote learning continues.
  - c. Ask children to talk about their Navjote ceremony
    - i. What was the most significant part of the ceremony for them and why?
    - ii. Have they continued wearing their sudreh and kushti? Why or why not?
3. Make your own sudreh from cloth (Mulmul (India) or any cotton material)
4. Video on how a Kushti is woven  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sXr8m4voDfk>;  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p1enzWvB8m8>
5. Touch & Feel - Sudreh and Kushti
6. Enacting the Navjote Ceremony
7. Do chawk with children
8. Make your own Toran

### References:

My First Zoroastrian Prayer Book - by Jamshed Rivetna  
The Story of Our Religion - Zoroastrianism by Ava Mehta  
Joyous Flame - Parzor  
The Good Life - ZAGNY (<https://zagny.org/shop/books/the-good-life-book-4th-ed/>)  
Zoroastrianism by Jenny Rose

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