



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 for 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 Avangah 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.

Suggested Material:

1. Prayer book
2. Items used in Navjote Ceremony
3. Items used in Achhoo Michhoo 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. 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 Kushti



Activity for Students:

1. Ask children to talk about their Navjote ceremony
 - a. What is the most significant thing they remember from their Navjote?
 - b. How would they do things differently now and why?
2. Discuss/debate
 - a. Does wearing Sudreh Kushti in school interfere with your other activities?
 - b. Religious Symbols
 - i. Give students 5-10 minutes (either individually or within a group) to search different symbols or clothing worn by individuals following different religions (example: cross necklace worn by Christians)
 - ii. Have them share their findings with the class
 - iii. What are some possible reasons for wearing these symbols daily? How does it help them follow the teachings of their faith?
 - c. Daily renewal of koshti
 - i. Today there are Zoroastrians who renew their koshti 1-5 times a day. There are those who do not wear a sudreh and koshti.
 - ii. Do you think wearing or not wearing the sudreh and koshti affects the person's deeds? What do the Gathas tell us about wearing a sudreh and koshti? What does Zoroastrian tradition teach us about wearing a sudreh and koshti?
 - iii. Is it okay with some traditions to change with time? Why or why not?
3. Discussion based on video on how a Kushti is woven
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sXr8m4voDfk>;
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p1enzWvB8m8>
4. Plan a Navjote Ceremony for your younger sibling.

Source:

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

Prepared by: Tashan Mistree Byramji, Vehishta Kaikobad, Arnavaz Sethna and Persis Driver

Edited by: Vehishta Kaikobad

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