



FEZANA Age-Appropriate Lesson Plan

Subject Category (circle one): Iranian 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):

Subject of the Lesson: Sadeh

Background Knowledge for the Teacher:

Description:

The name is associated with the word sad in Persian language meaning 100. Jashn-e Sadeh (Sadeh Celebration) is an ancient Indo-Iranian celebration usually held on the 30th of January (10th of month of Bahman in Persian Calendar). It is 100 days after the Ayathrim Gah Gahanbar held to be the beginning of Winter. Sadeh is also 40 days after Yalda and 50 days before Nowruz (Spring Equinox).

Why do we celebrate Sadeh?

This celebration is always accompanied with lighting a large bonfire and there are different proposals as why we celebrate Sadeh:

1. Shahnameh

Sadeh is associated with the discovery of fire by Hushang (ancient Kianian King in the Shahnameh)

The story says when Hushang and his attendants are passing by when they see a snake. Hushang wants to kill the snake by throwing a stone, however, the snake escapes and the stone struck another stone resulting in fire. The story goes on to say that from that time, people would celebrate the discovery of fire on that day.

Discovery of fire changed people's lives. From then on, they could cook their food, separate elements such as iron from rock, protect themselves against wild animals, use it as a source of warmth and light during dark and cold winter nights, etc.

2. Warming of the Earth and 100 days after big Winter

Ancient Iranians divided the year in two parts, big Summer which consisted of 7 months (beginning with the month of Farvardin to end of Mehr-210 days) and big Winter (beginning with the month of Aban to end of Esfand-150 days). It is said that Iranians celebrated Sadeh 100 days after the start of big Winter because they believed that at Sadeh the worse of Winter and cold has passed and after Sadeh earth will warm up.



3. Mithra- (Mehr in Persian) god of light

Yalda is 40 days after the big Winter and is also called Chelle Bozorg (meaning the big forty) and associated with birth of Mithra. Forty days after Yada is Sadeh also called Chelle Koochak (meaning the small forty). The discovery of fire on this day and warming of the Earth helped with Mithra's victory against darkness.

Fun addition:

Although not presented by scholars but it is interesting to note that in many traditions the newborn child and mother were kept indoors for forty days without visitors. Forty days after birth, family and friends could visit the newborn. This tradition was to give the mother and child time to rest and get stronger.

Mithra was born on the Winter Solstice, and Sadeh is 40 days after the solstice. If Mithra is considered a newborn at Yalda then Sadeh would be when he becomes visible and hence his power to overcome darkness is increased.

How is Sadeh Celebrated around Iran?

People usually prepare for the celebration a few days before by gathering firewood in a previously chosen place, usually on top of a nearby hill or in open space areas outside cities. As all people usually cooperated in gathering woods, the ceremony turned into an opportunity to celebrate the collective collaboration. It is not clear if Sadeh is a Zoroastrian festival or not, but the ceremony is being held mainly in Zoroastrian area in current Iran, mainly in Kerman and Yazd.

On the 10th day of Bahman (the 11th month of Persian calendar), people assemble around the firewood and kindle the fire. A ritual which is done by young people who follow a Zoroastrian priest called Mobed. They all wear white clothes as the symbol of purity, walk around the pile several times with torches in their hand and then light the fire while a Mobed is reciting verses from Avesta, the holy book in Zoroastrianism.

Farmers usually participate in gathering the woods even with carrying a single branch to have a share of ashes when the fire turns off. They would spread the ashes on their lands to make the lands fertile.

In Kerman, people close their stores sooner in this day. Women would cook soup and family members gather, eat the soup, fruits, and nuts, talk and have fun till evening when all people celebrate Sadeh around a bonfire in an open space. The fire burns all night to defeat darkness.

For more specific information as how Zoroastrians celebrate Sadeh refer to:

https://www.iranchamber.com/culture/articles/festival_of_sadeh.php



Community and Collaboration:

One of the features of this celebration is collaboration and cooperation of community members similar to that of the Gahanbars. In ancient times gathering the wood for the celebration was considered a religious duty and one that will bring benefit. Each member would help in gathering the wood. It was an act of importance as it symbolically aided the victory of good over evil.

Lesson for Students:

1. Sadeh is celebrated for many reasons.
 - a. Discovery of fire by King Hushang (tell the Shahnameh story).
 - i. Give examples that illustrate the many benefits that fire has had in our ancestors' and our lives.
 - ii. Importance of fire in Zoroastrian religion. Why do you think our ancestors prayed in front of fire? (A symbol of light, warmth, and enlightenment)
 - b. The weather gets warmer, and Spring is close. For our ancestors this meant a time to plant and take their animals to grazing.
 - c. Discuss how we celebrate Sadeh and emphasize communal gathering and fellowship.
2. Make a PowerPoint of Material for Teacher section to present to students.

Activity for Students:

1. Make homemade candles with students.
Use the links below for ideas:
 - a. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GWbrMWon4CY>
 - b. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SSUkMAD7TNS>
2. Use Activity 2 for hands on ideas.
3. Plan a Sadeh Celebration for your class or for all the classes.
4. YouTube video:
 - a. Sadeh song by Khodi Kaviani and Nooshafarin
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dolkn4o3gHM>
 - b. Show sections of the YouTube videos about Sadeh:
Farhang Foundation Sadeh Youtube video:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hE765tvION8>
 - c. Sadeh at California Zoroastrian Center
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1J43Ko_QSDI



Sources:

1. <https://iranparadisetours.com/sadeh-festival-of-fire/>
2. https://www.iranchamber.com/culture/articles/festival_of_sadeh.php
3. <http://www.avesta.org/sadeh.htm>
4. <http://exhibits.usu.edu/exhibits/show/tehrangeles/heritage/sadeh>
5. <https://parsikhabar.net/ceremonies/zoroastrians-observe-sadeh-festival-in-iran/1403/>
6. <https://www.packtoiran.com/blogs/detail/212/All-you-need-to-know-about-the-ancient-Sadeh-Festival>
7. https://www.cais-soas.com/CAIS/Celebrations/fire_sadeh.htm
8. <https://www.womensweb.in/2016/09/40-day-rule-after-baby/>
9. <https://blog.iranroute.com/sadeh-festival-iran/>
10. Ancient Iranian Festivals by H Razi

Prepared by: Farzaneh Kavooosi

Initial edits by: Artemis Javanshir

Final edits by: Persis Driver

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