



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: Sedreh Pooshi

Background Knowledge for the Teacher:

Meaning of the word Sedreh Pooshi:

The navjote or sedreh-pooshi ceremony inducts a person into the Zoroastrian faith. For many Zoroastrians it is one of the most important rites of passage in their lives and in the lives of their families.

Navjote is the Indian-Zoroastrian word for the ceremony. Navjote means new (nav) life (jote). Some say that 'jote' comes from the Avestan word zaotar, meaning one who offers prayers. Sedreh-Pooshi is the Iranian-Zoroastrian word for the ceremony. It means putting on the sedreh or white vest which Zoroastrians wear.

Zarathushtra chooses to live according to the Gathas:

Zoroastrian religion is a religion of choice. In the Gathas Zarathushtra too chooses for himself to follow the doctrine presented in the Gathas.

Therefore, Wise God, I, Zarathushtra choose for myself
the very mentality of Yours, which is the most progressive.

May righteousness breath a strong life in body.

May serenity prevail in the sun-bathed dominion.

May the reward for actions be given through good mind.

(Gathas: Song 8.16 or Yasna 43.16)

Meaning behind the sedreh and koshti:

Zoroastrians are recognized in two ways:

1. An inward sign: Living a life of good thoughts, words, and deeds
2. An outward sign: wearing the sedreh and koshti



Sedreh in Avesta is named “Vohumah Vastreh” meaning “garment of good thinking”. Koshti in Avestan is named “Aeioya Vanghan” meaning “belt” is the outward sign of a Zoroastrian similar to a Zoroastrian birth certificate.

Sedreh is the first piece of cloth touching the skin and should be white in color, made of cotton, linen, or jaconet. The color white is a symbol of cleanliness, purity, simplicity, and humility. Sedreh is made of 9 parts which reminds of 9 main concepts and beliefs of Zoroastrian religion. It acts as a reminder to use these 9 concepts in one’s daily life.

They are as follows:

Belief in:

1. one God, Ahura Mazda
2. Zarathushtra as the messenger of the religion
3. the law of Asha (Righteousness and Truth)
4. twin essence, Spenta Mainyu (progressive mentality) and Angra Mainyu (regressive mentality)
5. the Amesha Spentas
6. the eternity of soul
7. donation, and charity
8. honoring the 4 elements, water, fire, air, and earth
9. Freshekerti or renewal and improving the living world

Sedreh is a loose shirt, without neckline and short sleeves. It contains two small pockets, one in front and the other in the back. The pocket in the back is a reminder of the responsibilities of every Zoroastrian that needs to be considered daily. The pocket in front is called “keeseh kefreh” or “Keeseh Kar e neek” meaning good deeds pocket is a reminder of a Zoroastrian’s choice of deeds that leads to one’s happiness.

Koshti is a white band made from sheep wool. It is made of 72 wool strings intertwined together representing the 72 chapters of Yasna. These 72 strings are divided into 6 sections when knitting, with each section having 12 strings. Zoroastrians wear the koshti by wrapping it three times around the waste on the sedreh as a reminder to follow good thoughts, good words, and good deeds. The four knots (two in front and two in the back) reminds a Zoroastrian of the 4 elements, fire, water, air and earth clean and care for the environment. The two knots in front are tied with two Yatha Ahu prayers and the knots in the back are tied with one Ashem Vohu prayer.

Sedreh Pooshi Ceremony:

Choosing one’s religion, in Zoroastrianism is based on a personal choice that is accompanied with free will, wisdom, and knowledge. Sedreh Pooshi is based on an ancient tradition. When a boy or girl reach



an age of mental maturity, a time when they can decipher right from wrong and have learned “Avesta bayaste” then the parents can conduct the Sedreh Pooshi ceremony for them. This ceremony changes their status from a born Zoroastrian to officially joining the Zoroastrian community. Sedreh Pooshi will represent a new birth into the religion. At this time the initiate will make a vow with Ahura Mazda and each time when renewing his/her koshti will renew his/her vows.

In the past this ceremony would be conducted in the morning but now a days it is conducted in the afternoon in one’s home, Darbe Mehr, or another location. This ceremony is sometimes performed as a group Sedreh Pooshi. That is a group of initiates will undergo Sedreh Pooshi together.

The initiate should bathe, wear his/her sedreh and white clothes and present oneself with the Mobed by the Sedreh Pooshi spread. The Mobed will start this ceremony with Atash Niayesh (Fire Prayer) or Urmazdyasht prayer. At the end of the Beresad prayer, while the initiate is holding the Mobed’s sleeves will recite the Koshti Avesta with the Mobed. Together with Mobed’s guide he/she will tie the koshti on top of sedreh around his/her waist. After this he/she will say the Mazdayasnu Ahmi prayer with the Mobed and declares him/herself a Zoroastrian.

Then the initiate will say the Payman e Din prayer and by saying this prayer he/she will commit to following the teachings of Zarathushtra which is based on Truth, wisdom, and Righteousness.

At the end, the Mobed will recite the Tandorosti prayer, wishing a benevolent, prosperous, healthy, and joyous life for the initiate.

Daily renewal of the koshti is a way for the initiate to remember his/her commitment to the Zoroastrian religion, and his/her declaration to serve the living world based on Zarathushtra’s teachings.

Sedreh Pooshi is a beautiful ceremony that teaches the initiate to pay attention to the teachings of Zarathushtra, one is not alone in implementing a righteous way of living and other righteous Zoroastrians are aiding in Hamazoori for the improvement and betterment of the living world.

Sedreh Pooshi Spread:

The Sedreh Pooshi spread is usually placed on the ground or floor. A small amount of Avishan (thyme) is placed on each of the four corners. Two lit candles can also be placed on either side of the spread.

Following items are placed on the spread:

1. Photo of Ashu Zarathushtra- Reminder that we are Zoroastrian
2. Avesta Book or the Gatha book- We follow the teachings of Zarathushtra and the religion.
3. Candle or a lit light- representing divine light



4. Kaleh Ghand wrapped in Green (sugar cone wrapped in green)- representing a good and benevolent life. We also offer it as a gift to one another.
5. Place for fire and nice smelling incense.
6. A small dish containing a bit of rice mixed with Avishan (thyme) and a brand new unwrapped koshti- Rice is a symbol of a prosperous life, thyme is a symbol of vibration and nice smell. The Mobed will use the rice and thyme during Tandorosti prayer to place on the initiate's shoulders.
7. Sweet to offer guests- presenting a sweet life, celebration, and joy.
8. Mirror and rose water- mirror represents a radiant heart, and face (radiant inside and out). Rose water is a sign of vibration and nice smell.
9. A dish of season's fruits
10. A dish containing lork (toasted and salted dried fruit and nuts-ajeel) with some white noghl (candied almond)-A small bag of lork will be given to each guest to enjoy.

Reference for teacher:

1. Soroush Vaj and Avesta Koshti
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7mz1aanBiCE&list=PLnOSH5j1sQh_sKPkoUzPj_ER_wzQkG0qI
2. Sedreh Pooshi by Zarathushtrian Assembly (In Persian)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rg1o2hig9Dc>
3. Kurdish Sedreh Pooshi
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1-QMDWsnd_Y&t=62s
4. The translation of the Koshti prayer is provided in the Iranian Prayer section of lesson plans.

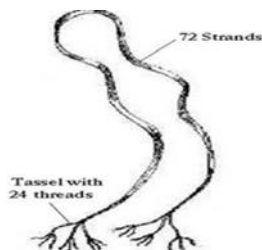
Lesson for students:

1. Sedreh Pooshi is a ceremony that one chooses to be a Zoroastrian and follow the teachings of Zarathushtra.
 - a. Ask students what are the teachings of Zarathushtra?
 - b. Discuss some of the basic teachings, such as doing the right thing, being truthful, protecting the animals and the environment, and helping the oppressed, etc.
2. Show them the sedreh and Koshti. We wear the Sedreh as a sign of outward purity and we tie the koshti three times around our waist as a sign of good thoughts, words, and deeds with two knots in the back and two in the front to remind us to protect the four elements.
 - a. Why is it important to have a reminder to be truthful and righteous?
 - b. Why is it important to have a reminder to protect the environment, specially the four elements?
 - c. What positive outcomes can be gained from such reminders?

3. Share what we place on a Sedreh Pooshi spread and why.
4. Talk about the 9 main concepts and beliefs of Zoroastrian religion.
5. Use the PowerPoint provided or make one of your own to present the lesson.

Activity for Students:

1. Solve the puzzle (Activity Grades 4-5)
2. Ask students what are some of the ways that we can protect the environment and the four elements? Do a planting project.
3. Make a game of who can name the most items on the Sedreh Pooshi spread.
4. Math game:
 - a. What is the most common Zoroastrian prayer? (Ashem Vohu)
How many words are there in the prayer? 12
 - b. How many strands does the koshti have? 72
What does it stand for? 72 chapters of Yasna
 - c. If you divide 72 by 12, what do you get? 6
 - The koshti has 6 tassels.
 - What do you think the 6 stands for? 6 Gahanbars
 - How many tassels does each side have?
 - What do you think number 3 stands for? (Good thoughts, words, and deeds)
 - d. The koshti is tied with 4 knots. What do you think the 4 can be related to?
4 elements-Fire, air, earth, water



5. What kind of knot do we use to tie the koshti? (Reef knot) Why? (Easy to tie and untie)
If you know someone familiar with different kinds of knots, invite them to class to show the students different knots and then explain the advantage of a reef knot.



Sources:

1. <https://www.heritageinstitute.com/zoroastrianism/navjote/index.htm>
2. YouTube link in Persian: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7TFvG-WwAp4>
3. Amoozesh e Din e Zartoshti (Sal e Aval e Dabirestan): Education in Zrooastrian religion (6th grade) Prepared by Tehran Zoroastrian Anjoman
4. Gathas Our Guide by AA Jafarey
5. Fravarane by AA Jafarey

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