



FEZANA Age-Appropriate Lesson Plan

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

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

Subject of the Lesson: Sudreh & Kushti

Background Knowledge for Teacher:

Sudreh

The word **SUD** means good and **REH** means path. So, the **SUDREH** means the **Good Path** and with your Sudreh on you, you are always on the good path of Ahura Mazda. The Sudreh is also called the garment of the good mind (Vohu Manik Vastra) and it is the armor that protects you from the forces of evil. A child born of Zoroastrian parents is not considered a Zoroastrian till he is initiated into the fold by the Navjote ceremony.

The Sudreh is symbolic in its structure. It is made of white muslin (mul mul). White color is symbolic of innocence and purity, and, as such, is the symbol of the Mazdayasnian or Zoroastrian religion. The Sudreh is made of one-fold, i.e. no shoulder seams but only side seams - one seam may be on the right hand side, and the other on the left hand side, thus dividing the shirt into two parts, the front part and the back part. These two parts -- the front and the back -- are said to be symbolic of the past and the future, both related to each other through the present.

The front part must remind a Zoroastrian of his duty to persons and institutions of the past ages. We owe a duty towards those who have gone before us -- to our ancestors, our forefathers, our departed dear ones, all who have preceded us. We also owe a duty to our superiors, who have been in the front before us.

The second or the back part of the shirt must remind us of our duty to the future -- to our children, to future generations. It must also remind us of our duty to our juniors who are still to rise to our position. In short, these two parts of the shirt -- the front and the back -- are said to indicate and to say to us, as it were: "Look straight in the front, bearing in mind that it is the past that has come up to the present and will lead to the future."

The first time you are religiously made to wear the sudreh is during the Navjote ceremony. The priest doing your navjote, places the sudreh over you when reciting the word Shyothananam during the Yatha Ahu Vairyo prayer.

The Sudreh is made of 9 parts. The 9 parts represent the 9000 allegorical years that Ahura Mazda said he would fight Ahriman for in the Creation Story. This is the period that every Zoroastrian experiences from birth to growth and finally to death.

The 9 parts of the sudreh are:

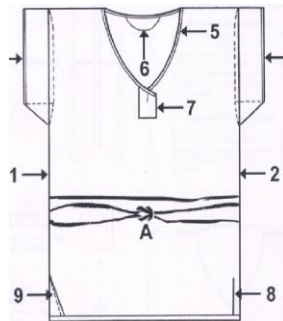
- 1, 2 - side seams
- 3,4 - sleeve seams
- 5 - neck seam
- 6 - girdo - pocket at the back for future good deeds/ potential good deeds
- 7 - gireban - pocket in the front for good deeds you are doing
- 8 - straight tiri - reminder of imperfections/ evil to be aware of
- 9 - triangular tiri - represents good thoughts, words and deeds

It is believed that the Sudreh we wear today is a modified version of a garment worn by Zarathushtra.

Every time you wear the Sudreh you are reminding yourself to use the Good Mind or Vohu Manah and follow the laws of purity.

NOTE:

A sudreh which is torn or stained and cannot be cleaned, needs to be discarded. Before discarding the sudreh you should cut the neck seam with the Girdo and the Gireban attached to it while reciting 5 Yatha Ahu Vairyo and 3 Ashem Vohus and then roll the neck seam and place it in a metal box in your cupboard or bury it in your yard.



(Sudreh and kushti diagram "Zoroastrianism: An Ethnic Perspective" by Khojeste Mistree).

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|------------------|--------------------|--------------|-----------|
| 1. SEAM | 2. SEAM | SLEEVES | SLEEVES |
| 6. GIRDO | 7. GIREBAN | 5. NECK SEAM | A. KUSHTI |
| 8. STRAIGHT TIRI | 9. TRIANGULAR TIRI | | |



Kushti:

The kushti is the sacred cord tied over the Sudreh. Your kushti is your **direction finder** – it directs you on to the good path or path of Asha (righteousness). It is made of 72 strands of white lamb's wool. The color white in Zoroastrianism stands for purity of thought, word, and deed.

The 72 stands represent the 72 chapters of the Yasna. (The Yasna is a very important Zoroastrian prayer recited during the Yasna ceremony when hom nu pani is made or when an Atash Behram is being consecrated.)

The Kushti is divided into 6 sections of 12 strands each. The 6 sections represent the 6 Amesha Spentas - Sky, water, earth, plant, animal, and fire. The wearer of the kushti represents the 7th creation of human beings - Spenta Mainyu.

The 12 strands represent the 12 words of the Ashem Vohu prayer. The 6 sections (3 at each end) also represent the 6 Gahambars and are linked to the 6 creations.

The kushti is cylindrical. The inner hollow part represents the inner spiritual world, and the outer part represents the physical world, the world we live in.

Once the weaving of the kushti is completed, it is removed from the loom and taken to a priest for cutting. The ends are braided into a lar, followed by the further partitioning of the strands into 3 sections, lari. It is said that when Zarathushtra left his home in search of truth, he was given a sacred cord, a precursor to the modern day kushti.



Padyab Kushti (Kushti Bastan) is the act of cleaning oneself and untying and re-tying your kushti with kushti prayers.

The basic kushti prayers consist of Kem na Mazda; Ahurah Mazda Khodae; Jasa me Avenghe Mazda. The kushti should be done at least twice a day; a traditional Zoroastrian performs the Kushti ritual



many more times a day! The kushti ritual is performed facing the sun or any source of light (like a divo).

Remember!

When you have a problem you talk to your parents or your friends, but now learn to talk to Ahura Mazda on this special chat line which is your Kushti!

Suggested Material:

1. Sudreh and Kushti
2. Diagram of Sudreh
3. Implements to make a kushti - if available
4. Power Point Presentation giving a gist of the Kushti Prayers

Vocabulary:

Sudreh; girdo; gireban; tiri; mulmul; Kushti; Navjote; Yasna; Yatha Ahu Vairyo; Shyothananam; Topi; Padyab Kushti; Kushti Bastan.

Lesson for students:

1. Ask students to research the various kinds of fascinating armors and gear worn by traditional (eg Persian, Turkish) and contemporary (eg. United States, Indian) militaries and armies. Connect these protective devices to the sudreh and kushti that is meant to protect the mind and soul from the temptations that might lead us astray from the path of Asha. Emphasize that being trusted with wearing a sudreh and kushti is an honor and with great power comes great responsibility.
2. Review the parts of the sudreh & kushti, paying attention to the significance of each part.
3. Teach the methodology and prayers related to untying and re-tying the kushti explained above with a rationale for that particular sequence of prayers. Provide a short description of the meanings of the kushti prayers like Kemna Mazda, Ahura Mazda Khodae etc. and ask students to summarize some important phrases:
 - “Khshnaothra ahurahe mazdao” - obedience towards Ahura Mazda
 - “Taroidite angrahe mainyu” - reject all things evil.
 - “Shyaothananam” - doing good towards others.
 - “Ushta asti ushta ahmai” - happiness is to him who brings happiness to others.
4. “Manashni, Gavashni, Kunashni” - Good thoughts, words, deeds



Activity for Students:

1. Draw a Sudreh and name the 9 parts.
2. **Kushti math** – The magical multiples of 3!
 - a. What is the most common prayer we recite (Ashem Vohu)? Count how many words are in it (#12)
 - a. Give groups of students 72 pieces of string or toothpicks - Look at the pieces of string in front of you. How many groups of 12 can you make? (#6) Now recount the names of the Amesha Spentas – How many are there not including us humans? (#6)
 - b. How many times do you tie the kushti around your waist & how many tassels are on each end of the kushti (#3)
3. Activity sheet – “parts of the Sudreh”
4. Activity Quiz
5. Research the Kushti making process.

Pictorial representation of tools used to weave a kushti or show actual tools if possible.

Kushti Making Video (Part 1 and 2):

1. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sXr8m4voDfk>
2. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p1enzWvB8m8>

Sources:

1. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sXr8m4voDfk>
2. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p1enzWvB8m8>
3. http://www.avesta.org/ritual/nk_qadimi.htm?fbclid=IwAR265TMibSNpqYTiRkgtTO5rejX4FlZuGhfzNrXaAl-oyyFBZxPrtoZEvX0
4. <http://www.heritageinstitute.com/zoroastrianism/>
5. <https://www.iranicaonline.org/>
6. <https://www.britannica.com/>
7. The Good Life Book, ZAGNY: <https://zagny.org/shop/books/the-good-life-book-4th-ed/>
8. Zoroastrianism The Story of Our Religion by Ava Mehta
9. The Joyous Flame - PARZOR

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