



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.

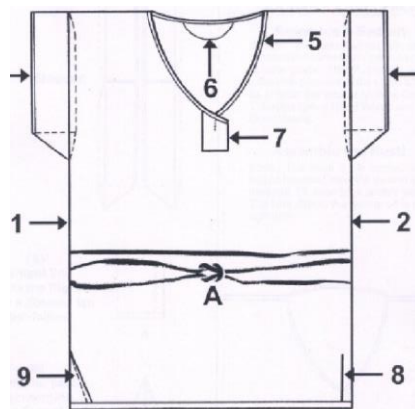
The 9 parts of the sudreh are:

- 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. Review the parts of a sudreh and kushti with a focus on the significance of each part, methodology of doing the kushti prayers and important phrases with meanings described in the lesson and activities for previous grades.
2. Symbolism in the kushti: Move students from the physical aspects of the sudreh and kushti (naming parts) to the more metaphorical aspects. Begin by reminding students of some basic facts related to the kushti (mentioned above) such as what it is made of, how many strands are woven together, and the number of knots we tie. Next ask them to brainstorm some hidden symbols in the kushti. Guide them to understand how the sudreh and kushti connect us, the wearer, to physical and spiritual worlds.
 - White = purity
 - Lamb's wool = animal kingdom
 - 72 strands = 72 Yasna prayers
 - 6 groups = 6 Amesha Spentas (sky, water, earth, plant, animal, fire)
 - 12 strands = 12 words of Ashem Vohu
 - 6 tassels = 6 Gahambaras
 - 3 times around the waist = good thoughts, words, deeds
 - Inner circle = spiritual world
 - Outer circle = physical world
 - 4 knots = protecting 4 elements or the 4 promises a child makes during the navjote ceremony



With this understanding explain how the concept of a kushti is similar to magical gadgets like the Lightsaber or the Marauder’s map or the Elder wand that may seem innocent on the outside but have deeper powers and meaning on the inside. And only those who belong to a particular group know their true meaning.

3. Ask students to research the following pieces of religious clothing or jewelry worn daily by individuals from diverse faiths. Why do they think almost every religion encourages its community members to wear such personal symbols (demonstrate membership, show pride, solidarity, belonging, identity...)?
 - Sikhs wearing turban and kara (metal bracelet)
 - Christians wearing a cross pendant.
 - Hindu Brahmins wearing a thread.
 - Devout Jews wearing a kippah or skullcap.
4. Indigenous and traditional art and craft forms are in great demand but are always at the risk of being lost to posterity. Ask students to research the kushti making art form and process how critically important it is to preserve this art form for the future of our religion.

Activity for students

1. Research kushti making process.
2. Stitch your own Sudreh/ mini Sudreh - with mulmul or paper
3. Pictorial representation of tools used to weave a kushti or show actual tools if possible
4. The one-month kushti challenge – Give students a monthly log to fill out for each day they do their kushti. Tell them that the log is only for them to see so they can be completely honest. At the end of the month ask them how they feel and if it has brought a change in their mindset.

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>
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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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