



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:

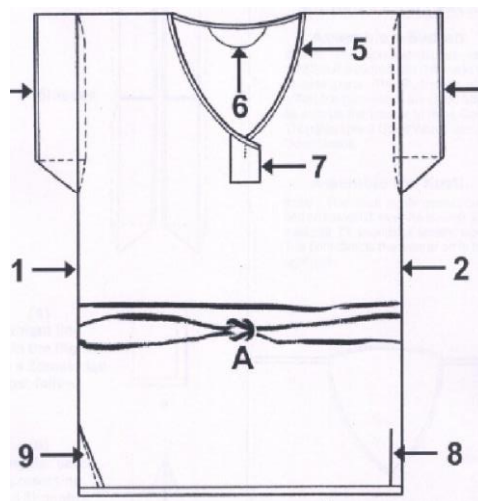
- 1, 2 - side seams
- 3,4 - sleeve seams
- 5 - neck seam
- 6 - girdo - pocket at the back for future good deeds/ potential good deeds
- 7 - gireban - pocket in the front for good deeds you are doing
- 8 - straight tiri - reminder of imperfections/ evil to be aware of
- 9 - triangular tiri - represents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

- | | | | |
|------------------|--------------------|--------------|-----------|
| 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 strands 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:

Sudren; girdo; gireban; tiri; mulmul; Kushti; Navjote; Yasna; Yatha Ahu Vairyo; Shyothananam; Topi; Padyab Kushti; Kushti Bastan; lar; lari;

Lesson for students

1. Review the basic concepts related to the sudreh & kushti (described in the information to teachers' section above) with a focus on:
 - The parts of a sudreh and their significance
 - The order of prayers when doing the kushti and the significance of the order
 - The meanings in each of the kushti prayers
 - The symbolism in the different parts of the kushti
2. Engage students in a discussion on the purpose behind wearing a sudreh and kushti.
 - Why do different religions encourage individuals to wear unique pieces of clothing or jewelry that symbolize their faith?
 - a. Research the purposes, symbols, and meanings behind each of the personal religious artifacts in different religions (Christianity & the cross, Orthodox Judaism & the kippah, Brahmins & the thread worn over the shoulder, Sikhs & the turban and kara).
 - b. How are these religious pieces similar and different from the sudreh and kushti?
 - i. Examples of similarities and dissimilarities might include how most are external markers of religious faith while the sudreh and kushti are internal artifacts. What can we infer about the purpose of these? Could it be that external artifacts are indicators of beliefs to the outside world while internal artifacts are meant to promote a sense of inner peace, belonging and identity?



- ii. Another dissimilarity might be that most personal items are worn only by males and some by females (though many of those are often restrictive) in other religions while the same sudreh and kushti is worn by Zoroastrians of all sexes. What can you infer about the role of women and gender?
3. How does wearing the sudreh and kushti contribute to a stronger sense of identity and belonging among Zoroastrians despite their global dispersion?
4. Encourage critical thinking about the diverse practices related to wearing the sudreh and kushti on a daily basis. What do adolescents think about wearing sudreh and kushti?
 - Consider that after the Arab conquest of Iran, it would have been dangerous for Iranian Zoroastrians to openly wear the sudreh and kushti as that would have invited harassment. Hence wearing the sudreh and kushti might have to be done with caution and was mostly done in the confines of one's home or on special occasions or to pray. In India however, Parsis who got refuge under a more tolerant regime, roam freely in their sudrehs and kushtis and insist that younger generations wear the sudreh and kushti every day. In North America, the practice of wearing sudreh and kushti is encouraged but not enforced and rationales such as it is inconvenient or incongruent with daily lifestyles is common. Have an engaged discussion about how the sociopolitical forces influence religious practices such as wearing the sudreh and kushti.
 - Ask students how they would encourage their future children to wear the sudreh and kushti regularly.
5. Help adolescents reframe their ideas about doing kushti prayers. Is doing the kushti simply a repetitive ritual that should be done a particular way simply because "that's what religion states?" Create a sense of disequilibrium by discussing how the repetitive practice of doing kushti everyday can be likened to any physical or mental activity that we undertake for our health and well-being. This could include meditation, yoga, going to the gym, buying a favorite coffee, or listening to soothing music. The act of "doing our kushti" can provide a small pocket of time out of our busy lives to clear our minds, meditate in rhythm and rhyme, and connect with something bigger than ourselves. It can be the most relaxing few minutes of our day.

Activity for students

1. Stitch your own sudreh/ mini sudreh - with mulmul or paper
2. **Debate:** The importance of performing the kushti ritual and wearing a sudreh and kushti in a Zoroastrian's life. Teenagers v. adults debate where teenagers have to argue for wearing the sudreh and kushti while the adults have to argue against the idea.



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>
3. http://www.avesta.org/ritual/nk_qadimi.htm?fbclid=IwAR265TMlbSNpqYTiRkgtTO5rejX4FIzuGhfzNrXaAl-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

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

Edited by: Vehishta Kaikobad

Date: February 28, 2023

Revised: Mar 8, 2023