



FEZANA Age-Appropriate Lesson Plan

Subject Category (circle one): Religion/Ceremony 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:

The Content of the Gathas

Background Knowledge for the Teacher:

The Gathas serve as a guide, giving us the tools to lead a good life toward Asha (in cosmic sense it is translated as order and in moral sense as righteousness and truth).

The content of the Gathas:

- Some of the verses are addressed to the Divinity, Ahura Mazda, and other verses to the public that have come to hear the Prophet.
- Zarathushtra explains his teachings and encourages his audience to live a life as Ahura Mazda has directed.
- There are devotional verses addressed to Ahura Mazda, Asha, Vohu Mana and Armaity.
- There are verses which refer to episodes and crises in the mission of Zarathushtra.
- The main points and the theology of the message is present throughout the Gathas.

Main points in the Gathas:

1. There is one God, God of subtle Wisdom, Ahura Mazda, continuous creator, sustainer, and promoter of the cosmos (Songs 8 and 9).
2. Superstition and irrational ideas should be abandoned (Song 5)
3. Daena Vanghui (the Gathic name for Zarathustrian religion), the religion of Good Conscience, is universal and for all (Song 9.10, 17.1)
4. The divine enlightenment, Sraosha, reveals many divine faculties:
 - i. Spenta Mainyu- progressive mentality, the divine faculty that creates, maintains, and promotes. Theologically, it is the attitude of Piety toward the Source of Being and the Ultimate Truth; Ethically, it is the attitude of Benevolence, a concern for the Good. It may be characterized as Right-Mindedness.
 - ii. Asha Vahishta (Asha)- Best Order, Universal law, the highest form of Truth, and Righteousness. How the world ought to be in its ideal form.



- iii. Vohu Manah-Good Mind, the wisdom behind every righteous move. The mental capacity to comprehend Asha.
 - iv. Khshathra Vairya- Desired Rule or Desired Dominion, the benevolent power that keeps good order in universe. It is the ideal social (and political) structure of the human world.
 - v. Armaiti- Serenity and tranquility required under good rule and to promote the cosmos.
 - vi. Haurvatat- Wholeness and perfection. The state of complete well-being, physical and spiritual integrity-the state of perfection on earth.
 - vii. Ameretat- Immortality and eternity attained through wholeness- The state of Immortal Bliss.
5. The universe has been created good and is progressing toward completion (where Druj is no more, and Asha exists in totality) as intended by Ahura Mazda (Song 8 and 9).
 6. Humankind has been given the freedom of thought, words and deeds and has a bright mind to discern between what is good and bad for human society (Songs 3.2, 4.9, 11, and 12)
 7. Human beings have two mentalities, “spenta mainyu” progressive or bountiful mentality and “angra mainyu” regressive mentality. The wise would choose the better or progressive mentality. (Songs 3,4, 10). The objective of the righteous should be to win over the wrongful to the rightful way of being. Sooner or later humanity will correct itself and attain perfection and eternal life (Song 10.7).
 8. Mankind is its own savior (Song 3 and 10).
 9. Men and women are equal and enjoy the same rights. One person being more benevolent than another lies in righteous deeds alone (Songs 3.2, 17, 1.6, 5.3).
 10. Every person should acquire and promote wisdom. Free human society should select only fully qualified persons of righteous records and merits for both state and spiritual leadership (Song 2 and 16).
 11. The prime object of every person should be to make a better world in spirit and body. Human society must progress. Every member must persevere to promote it (Songs 3.9, 7.5, 11.9, 13.11). The Good Religion is a “self-renovating” religion (Songs 3.9,7.15, 11.19, 15.11).
 12. Enlightenment and happiness come to the person who gives happiness to others without any discrimination whatsoever (Song 8.1).
 13. Prayers help a person communicate with God and experience divine love. One may pray whenever, wherever and in whatever state one feels the urge to communicate with God. (This is repeated throughout the Gathas).

Note:

Understanding the Gathas Hymns of Zarathushtra by Dinshaw J. Irani can be obtained from ZAGNY as a good source in one easy to read booklet.



Learning Objective:

- To understand some of the basic concepts in the Gathas.
- Gathas help us to live a good life.
- Think wisely and make good decisions.

Essential Questions:

- What are the Gathas?
- Who composed the Gathas?
- How can we benefit from the Gathas?

Introduction/Anticipatory Set:

The Gathas are hymns composed by Zarathushtra. They are the core of Zoroastrian religion.

Vocabulary: The Gathas, Zarathushtra

Lesson Procedure:

Direct Instruction (10 minutes):

- Present a general idea of the concepts in the Gathas. This can be presented as such:
 - Many years ago, Zarathushtra brought people a message to help them live in peace and have a good life.
 - This message is very important, and we still use it today.
 - The message is written down in a book that we call the Gathas.
 - The Gathas teach us to be wise, think before we act and make good decisions.
 - This will help us lead a good life and make the world a better place for everyone, even animals and plants.

Guided Practice (10 minutes):

- Tell students that it is important to think before we say or do something.
- It is important for our actions not to be hurtful.
- Our actions should bring happiness and goodness to us and those around us.
- Read them a story to illustrate the importance of thinking wisely and to think before acting. It is important to consider how our actions affect us and others.
 - The story below was generated by AI with a little bit of modification. Please feel free to use another relevant story.

Once upon a time, there was a young girl named Arnavaz. She was very wise for her age and always tried to think before acting.



One day, she was walking with her friend, Beth in her neighborhood when she noticed a small, injured animal on the side of the road. She stopped and looked closely, realizing it was a baby bird. She immediately wanted to help but Beth didn't want to spend her time helping an animal.

Stop the story at this point and continue to Independent Practice.

Independent Practice (15 minutes):

- Ask students to think about the story and what they think Arnavaz's decision should be.
- Have them share their thoughts with the class.
- Finish reading the story and discuss Arnavaz's decision with the class.

But Arnavaz remembered her motto: think wisely and before acting. She had learned from the Gathas to think for herself and make the best choice possible. She said goodbye to Beth. She knew the right thing is to help the bird. She ran home and got a box, a towel, some food, and a bottle of water. She then carefully placed the squirrel in the box and brought it home.

Beth then called her mom and asked if they could take the squirrel to the vet. Her mom agreed and they drove to the vet's office.

The vet carefully examined the squirrel and gave it some medicine. Beth was so relieved and happy that the squirrel was now safe.

From that day on, Beth knew that it was always important to think before acting. She also became an animal lover and was a huge help in her community when it came to injured animals.

The moral of the story is: always think before acting and make good decisions.

Summary (5 minutes):

- Ask the class what they learned from the Gathas.
- Review the day's lesson.

Learning Extension:

- Encourage students to use what they learned in their daily life and talk about it with their parents.

Assessment:



- Assess the students' understanding of the lesson and their interest and involvement in the activity.

Sources:

1. www.Zoroastrian.org
2. www.avesta.org
3. Understanding the Gathas, The Hymns of Zarathushtra-By Dinshaw J. Irani
4. <https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/haug-martin>

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