



## 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 concepts in the Gathas and try to use them in daily decision making.



### Essential Questions:

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

### Introduction/Anticipatory Set:

The Gathas are hymns composed by Zarathushtra. They are the core of Zoroastrian religion and serve as a guide for better living.

Vocabulary: The Gathas, Ahura Mazda, Zarathushtra

### **Lesson Procedure:**

#### Direct Instruction (10-15 minutes):

- Decide on what you want to share with the class. Not all the concepts should be shared. Below is a sample of what can be shared:

The Gathas are 17 hymns in an old language called Old Avestan or Gathic.

1. Zarathushtra, through his message, teaches us that there is one wise creator called Ahura Mazda. We are God's co-workers, and we should promote goodness in the world, live a truthful and productive life. A life that is beneficial for all. Working towards our happiness as well as others will lead to global happiness. We can do this by exercising good thoughts, words, and deeds. Any time we may want to do a wrongful act, we should think about our duty as Zoroastrians exercise a beneficial act. (See Activity 1)
2. Each one of us can make a difference and be a superhero.
3. Being nice and thoughtful toward others makes everyone happy and makes everyday living more enjoyable.

#### Guided Practice (10 minutes):

- Give each student a Gatha book and ask them to open it. Share what they find interesting or puzzling. Use this opportunity for educational enhancement. Feel free to guide them to the specific pages in the Gathas for focused learning.

For example:

- Are the Gatha songs in sequence?
- Look at the five different sections of the Gathas.  
EX: Not all the sections have the same number of songs.
- What are some of the phrases that are mentioned more than others?  
(EX. Righteousness, Mazda, good thinking...)
- Zarathushtra asks many questions in the Gathas, especially in Yasna 44. Why is that? Are we encouraged to ask questions or accept guidance on faith?



- If students find the verses hard to understand, ask them why? The Gathas is poetry and therefore the concepts are condensed.

#### Independent Practice 15-20 minutes):

- Have different scenarios ready for each student to read. They should think about how they can turn the scenario around to make them beneficial. Then, have each student share his/her scenario with the class and present his/her solution and discuss it with the class.
  - a. Ex 1. Sam is in a hurry to get to school. He needs to leave the house if he doesn't want to be late. His sister, however, is not ready and they usually walk together to their elementary school. What should he do?
  - b. EX 2. Your parents would like you to attend Zoroastrian classes at your local center, but you would rather stay home, play with your friends, or just relax. What would you do?
  - c. EX 3. Your friend has gotten a new hair cut which you think looks awful on her/him. He/she asks you what you think of his/her new look. What do you say?

#### Summary (5 minutes):

- Have class share what they learned from today's lesson. Can they name some of the concepts in the Gathas?
- Have they learned some practical lessons to use in their daily life? Explain.

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

**Prepared by:** Mitra Dinyari, Artemis Javanshir, Fariba Pirghaibi, Mandana Pishdadi

**Edited by:** Hilda Kasravi and Nina Kalianivala

**Revised lesson and activity for students edited by:** Roya Behmardian

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