



## 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. They are our guide for improving our lives and making the world a better place for all living beings.

Vocabulary: The Gathas, Ahura Mazda, Zarathushtra

### **Lesson Procedure:**

#### Direct Instruction (15 minutes):

Look through the information in “Background Knowledge for Teacher” and choose to present the concepts appropriate for your class.

Below are a few examples of what can be shared with this age group:

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. Men and women are equal in the Gathas. Zarathushtra addresses them together and asks every human being regardless of sex, gender, ethnicity, etc. to use their good thoughts to do good words and good deeds.
3. By using good thoughts, we strengthen our good way of thinking and therefore strengthen our ability to make good choices.
4. Each person has the freedom to choose their actions.
5. 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.

#### Guided Practice (10-15 minutes):

- Choose a verse beforehand that relates to one of the concepts you have chosen to cover in class.
- Read the chosen verse or sentence and ask students which of the learned concepts do they think the verse or sentence relates to.



- Discuss how the concept can help students in making good decisions or improving the lives of others, etc.

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

- Give students a copy of the Gathas. Khosro Khazai's "The Gathas: The sublime book of Zarathushtra" available on Amazon is an easy-to-read translation.
- Give students a verse from the Gathas such as Yasna 43.1 or Yasna 28.1
- Have them think about its meaning and share their uptake with the class.
- Relate the sentence to the learned concepts.
- How does the chosen verse help them in their daily life.

#### 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.
- Encourage them to read the Gathas.

#### 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>

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