



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 the main concepts in the Gathas.
- The concepts in the Gathas are guides for better living.
- These concepts should be used daily.



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. The Gathas contain guiding concepts that can be used and benefited from every day.

Vocabulary: The Gathas, Ahura Mazda, Zarathushtra, 7 Amesha Spentas,

Lesson Procedure:

The lesson procedure offers the lesson in one session giving students a general overview of the main concepts in the Gathas.

The teacher can then present each of the concepts in a different session giving students a wider opportunity for discussion of the Gathic concepts and their practicality in solving current worldwide issues in addition to everyday life. After a discussion about the chosen concept, the teacher can share a news clip of a current event relating to the discussion of the day for students to discuss firsthand the practical usage of Zarathushtra's message.

Direct Instruction (15-20 minutes):

- Start by asking students what they know about the Gathas and its content.
- Have a few Gatha books to share with students. Ask them to look inside and share what catches their eye.
- Choose a verse from the Gathas and read it to the class. Ask students what they think the verse means and how it relates to our lives.
Note: Choose a verse that presents one of the concepts that needs to be covered for the day's lesson.
- Present the information in "Background Knowledge for Teacher."
- The information can be presented by making a PowerPoint.

Guided Practice (10 minutes):

- Give students a copy of the "Background Knowledge for the Teacher".
- Draw a circle on the whiteboard with the word Gathas in the middle.
- Ask each student to read one of the concepts and come up with 1-3 words to represent the concept.
- Write it on the board.
- Ask the student to share his/her opinion why the concept is important.



Independent Practice (15-20 minutes):

- Ask students to look through the Gathas and pick a sentence or a verse that emphasizes one of the learned concepts.
- Share with class and discuss.
Note: Emphasize how the picked sentence or verse can improve our individual, communal, or global life.

Summary (10 minutes):

- Break the class into two teams and ask each team to share one of the Gathic concepts. The team that ends up not having something new to share will lose. Have the expectation that both teams will have something to share.

Learning Extension:

- Encourage Students to read the Gathas. Khosro Khazai's translation of the Gathas is an easy-to-understand translation. It is available on Amazon.
The Gathas: The sublime book of Zarathushtra by Khosro Khazai

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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