



FEZANA Age-Appropriate Lesson Plan

Subject Category (circle one): Iranian Religion/Ceremony Celebration 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: Tirgan

Background Knowledge for the Teacher:

Description:

Tirgan also known as Jashn-e Tirgan (The festival of Tirgan) is an ancient Iranian summer festival which is still celebrated among Iranian Zoroastrians, Parsis of India, and some Iranians of various religions in different parts of Iran.

The celebration is widely attested by historians such as Abu Sa'īd Gardēzī, Biruni and Al-Masudi, as well as European travelers to Iran during the Safavid era.

According to the Zoroastrian calendar, each thirty days of the month carries a name. When the name of the month and the name of the day coincide, Zoroastrians celebrate. Tirgan is celebrated on the month of Tir and on the day of Tir which falls on the thirteenth day of the month of Tir on the Persian calendar (2nd or 3rd of July).

Legend of Tirgan



The Tirgan festivity refers to the archangel, 'Tir' (meaning arrow in Persian) or 'Tishtar' (Indo-Iranian god of rainfall), referring to thunderstorms that bring much needed rain that boost harvest and avert drought.

Ancient legend of the Tir (arrow) refers to “Arash of the swift arrow” or 'Arash the archer' (Arash-e Kamangir).



Legend has it that Arash was the best archer in the Persian army. He was selected to settle a land dispute between Persia and Turan (present day Central Asia).

When the kings of the two lands - Manouchehr and Afrasiyab - decided to settle their dispute and to set a permanent boundary between Persia and Turan, they arrived at a mutual understanding that Arash should climb to the tall Mount Damavand's peak, and from there shoot an arrow toward the east. Wherever his arrow landed, they agreed, would determine the boundary between the two kingdoms.

Arash shot his arrow (Tir) on the 13th day of the Persian month of Tir, which fell on the banks of the Jeyhun (the Oxus) River. Thus, the borders of the two countries were marked.

Legend has it that as soon as the border dispute was settled, rain began pouring down on both lands, which had been suffering from an eight-year drought.

Thus, this day, the 13th of Tir (July 4th) is celebrated as the Festival of Rain.

Tishtar Yasht (8.6) in reference to the legend of Arash the archer:

"We honor the bright, khwarrah-endowed star, Tishtrya, who flies as swiftly to the Vouru-kasha sea as the supernatural arrow which the archer, Erexsha, the best archer of the Persians, shot from Mount Airyo-xshutha to Mount Xwanwant. (7) For Ahura Mazda gave him assistance; so, did the waters ...," Tishtar Yasht (8.6).

How to Celebrate:

The Festival of Rain is celebrated by people dancing, singing, reciting poetry, and serving delicacies such as spinach soup and 'sholeh zard' (saffron flavored rice pudding).

Pottery Vase

Zoroastrians of a specific district choose a young unmarried girl one day before the festival. She is given a pottery vase which is filled with water from a spring and covered by a silk fabric. People who have a wish in their hearts put small objects such as rings, coins, and pins into the vase. The girl takes the vase under an evergreen tree and leaves it for one day. At the day of the festival, she brings the vase to the elderly who recites poetry in a loud voice. At the end of each poem, the girl takes out an object from the vase by chance and the owner associates her/his wishes to the content of the poem.



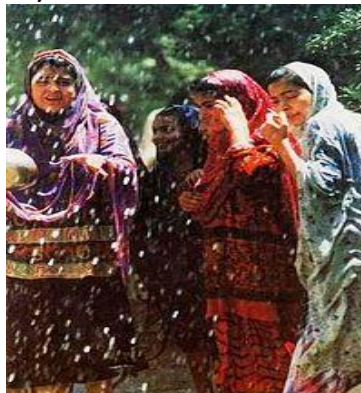
Colorful Ribbons

Locally called Tir-o-Bâd bracelet, the colorful bracelets are woven by seven ropes with assorted colors. Some people wrap these rainbow-colored ribbons around their wrists for ten days, exactly nine days before the day of the festival. Then, on this very day, the people go to high places and leave the bracelets to the wind stream while asking their wishes by singing poems. The wind will carry their wishes to the right place and right people!



Splashing Water

Water has been considered as a blessing in Iranian culture. It has been regarded a sacred element and a symbol of light and joy, which should not be polluted. Splashing water is a part of the Tirgan festival and people either go next to streams or carry a container full of water to splash water at each other.



Lesson for students:

Make a PowerPoint of the Material for teacher to present to class and emphasize the importance of correct water usage (conservation, keeping clean) in Zoroastrianism.

Activity for Students:

1. Research about saving water, keeping water clean, and make a poster.
2. Celebrate Tirgan: Tell the story of Arash kamangir, do “Pottery Vase” activity, enjoy eating âsh (the spinach soup) and sholeh zard!
3. Pottery Vase Activity

Cut out the “motivational notes” activity sheet for grades 6-12, fold them and put in a basket. Also, ask the students to make a wish and put a small object in a pottery vase, cover it with a green scarf. One of the girls will be in charge of taking out the objects one by one. Each time she takes out an object, the owner of that object will get a happy note and associates with his/her wish.



Sources:

<http://www.iranreview.org/>

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