



FEZANA Age-Appropriate Lesson Plan

Subject Category (circle one): Iranian Religion 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:

Work, effort, and perseverance

Material for the teacher:

Reading the biography of great scientists, benevolent individuals in fields of human affairs, politics, entrepreneurship, etc. we notice a similar trait possessed by all of them. All these individuals who we now remember in kindness were able to overcome their hardships with perseverance, hard work, effort, and endeavor. This trait is not only true of individuals but also true of communities, peoples of different nations and countries. Those who have made an effort and worked hard were able to build a better and stronger country for their children and the future generation. For example, countries like Japan and Germany after WWII destruction were able to rebuild a strong, and successful country through organization, hard work, effort, and endeavor. Now, the question is what place does hard work, effort, and perseverance have in Zoroastrian culture.

In Yasna 33 verse 3, Zarathushtra says,

“He who is most good to the righteous, Be he a noble, or a peasant, or a dependent, He who zealously makes the good living creation flourish, He shall come to dwell with Truth in the realm of Good Mind.”

Also, in part of Yasna 44.2, we read,

“... What is the source of Best Existence? How shall one who seeks it, receive the blessed recompense? Surely such a holy one through Righteousness, Is a healer of existence, beneficent unto all, a genuine friend, O Mazda?”

In Zarathushtra’s view there is no boundary regarding improving the world. In Yasna 46.12 we read about a person named Fryana Tourani:

“When among the kinsmen and descendants of the renowned Turanian, Fryana, Right rises, when through the spiritual zeal of Armaity, they further the welfare of the country, then shall Ahura Mazda bring them the illumination of Good Mind and show them the path of Righteousness.”



Building and improving:

Looking at Iranian historical sites, we realize that Zoroastrians from long ago have strived to improve the country and their lives with respect to the role of humans and consideration of other people. At a time when the rulers of neighboring countries used slaves, the impressive palace of Persepolis was built by men and women all across the Persian Empire who received fair wages for their work.

If we look at the more recent history and after the collapse of the Sassanid Empire, we realize that although our ancestors endured many hardships, they did not surrender and continued to build. Many Zoroastrians especially after Safavid period who lived in desert regions of Yazd and Kerman strived in these droughted lands to build, plant and start agriculture. In the droughted land with low amount of rain fall, they used opportunities to invent, utilize, and save water to prosper and have better living conditions. Engineering extensive qanat (underground water canals) and underground water reservoirs are such examples.

Parsis who migrated to India using the same Zoroastrian values worked hard, persevered, and prospered in their new home.

Why today more than ever, do we need to put in more effort and do constructive work?

Today there are many goals for Zoroastrians inside and outside Iran that need to be accomplished. Therefore, using teachings of Zarathushtra and our ancestors as examples, we need to work hard, be optimistic, and move ahead with consistent, firm, and stable steps.

Learn, understand, protect, and spread Zarathushtra's message is the most important goal for each one of us. As already mentioned, Zarathushtra's teachings is a universal and valuable heritage. We need to understand this culture, preserve it, avoid the loss of its components, and share it with those who appreciate it. We need to build a community in which the ethical and moral values of Zoroastrianism is preserved and practiced. This task is not an easy one and requires work, effort, and perseverance.

Aside from the values of perseverance, hard work, effort, and endeavor being strong Zoroastrian values, these values were praised further by Persian poets throughout history. Read through the following stanzas and stories from three different Persian poets and analyze how Zoroaster's values are being highlighted.

The poet Eghbal Lahouri says:

God gave grandeur to the people,
Who wrote their own fate.



The poet Eghbal Lahouri emphasizes that success and progress is reached when we practice our freedom of choice. We choose our goals followed by action to shape our future. The influence of Zoroastrian values is shown in this poem as the Gathas teaches freedom of choice. There is no set destiny. We are encouraged to use this freedom to shape a future that is beneficial to all including ourselves.

The poet Sa'di says:

*Treasure will not be found without hard work
The person who worked received wages.*

The poet Sa'di emphasizes the importance of hard work and perseverance to gain benefit. This hard work can include physical labor, education, or working at a relationship all of which can result in "wages" that are beneficial.

Sa'di also writes:

*Sa'di, a righteous person who does good deeds will not die
Dead is one whose name is not associated with good deeds.*

Zoroastrian values, manifests good thoughts and words by practicing good deeds. It is through good deeds that goodness most visibly reaches the community at large. Some scholars regard Amertat (one of the Amesha Spentan meaning deathlessness) as exactly what Sa'di is describing in the poem above. One who does good deeds is remembered and hence never dies in our hearts and minds. A good example is Ashu Zarathushtra who lived about 3700 years ago but still remembered today.

The poet Malek al shoara Bahar has a poem called "Hard Work and Treasure",

A farmer on his deathbed advises his sons to work hard plowing the planting field because there is a hidden treasure in the land. The father told his sons that he doesn't know where the treasure is, but it is up to the sons to find it. When the father died, the sons worked very hard plowing the field, and turning the soil in hope of finding the treasure.

Due to their hard work each seed grew as if 70 seeds were planted. The sons did not find the treasure, but their hard work gave them an excellent crop that year which was as if they had found treasure.

The poet Malek al Shoara Bahar describes hard work in a clever way. The sons looking for gold or silver gained riches of a prosperous harvest leading to financial gain including a bountiful harvest that benefited the whole community (grain for the winter ahead). As Zoroastrians we believe in gaining riches through hard work, and perseverance.



Lesson for students:

1. Use the material in teacher's section to make a PowerPoint and talk about the importance of work, effort, and perseverance as part of Zoroastrian culture. Give an example of Zoroastrians who have changed their community or country for the better (ex: Keykhosrow Shahrokh, and Pashutanji Markar). The example should make it easier for students to participate in activity #2 of "Activity for Students" section.
2. The material in teacher's section can be printed and students can take turns reading the material. Then, the teacher can have examples of individual Zoroastrians building and improving the community and country to share with students.

Activity for Students:

1. Break the class into teams and give them a copy of one or more of the poems in "Material for teacher" section.
Ask them to discuss amongst themselves the meaning of the poem and how it relates to Zarathushtra's teachings.
2. Have students discussing the following questions:
 - a. What kind of future goal would they set for their Zoroastrian community?
 - b. What role can they play to reach their goal?
 - c. What role can the students in your class play to reach the desired future?
1. Break the class into groups, bring poster boards and ask each group to draw their community or something representing their Zoroastrian community in the middle of the poster board (ex. gahanbars, Norouz Celebration, religion classes). Then have each group use old magazines to cut out and glue the magazine photos that represent their set goal around their drawing (ex. for gahanbars, photos can include hands (everyone giving a helping hand), or books (so everyone shares stories about themselves or their childhood with one another).
2. Plan a project to improve something in your center (ex: for gahanbars, the project could include a student-led/organized gahanbar with the groups' goals to improve event).

Sources:

1. "Amoozesh din o Farhang e Zartoshti" Grade 7
2. *The Gathas The Hymns of Zarathushtra* by Dinshaw Irani

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