



FEZANA Age-Appropriate Lesson Plan

Subject Category (circle one): Iranian 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:

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. Give examples of Zoroastrian individual who worked, built, and improved the Zoroastrian community. For example, the role that Jahanian family played in establishing the first Iranian bank and constitutional movement in Iran.

Parviz Shah Jahan and his four brothers, Khosro, Goudarz, Fereydoun, and Bahram in 1896 established a firm in Iran. This firm was active in commerce of cotton and later in currency affairs. Jahanian Firm due to this family's hard work, fairness, effort, and perseverance became one of the largest trading firms with locations in the cities of Tehran, Yazd, and Shiraz.

Jahanian Firm became a form of banking facility. This family, along with other Iranian and Parsi patriots were interested in forming a fully Iranian bank to terminate the foreigners' hand in controlling Iranian commerce. However, countries such as England and Russian who realized that their profit making in Iran was at danger tried to bankrupt Jahanian Firm and gain exclusive control of banks in Iran. At the time, the Qajar ruler did not have a say in the country's affairs. Hence, the people of Iran started a movement called "constitutional movement". The goal of this movement was to create a legislative assembly for making the laws of the land and look over the king's actions by people's representatives.

Jahanian firm financially and otherwise supported this movement and played an important role in its success. However, the Qajar family who were angry at the Jahanian's role, hired individuals and murdered Parviz and Fereydoun Shah Jahanian.

Despite the unfortunate and sorrowful turn of events upon this Zoroastrian family, the constitutional movement was victorious and the legislative assembly with a member on behalf of Zoroastrian community started its service. In addition, a few years after, the first Iranian and national bank of Iran was established. The long time wish of Khosro Shah Jahan and his brothers came to reality.

Documentary about Jahanian brothers and their efforts:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gollwh25mcU>

Use material in #1 to open a discussion.

2. Use the material in teacher's section to talk about the importance of work, effort, and perseverance as part of Zoroastrian culture.



Activity for Students:

1. After watching the documentary or reading about the Jahanian brothers, ask students to discuss the following questions:
 - a. Why do you think the Jahanian brothers put their lives and business in jeopardy?
 - b. Would you do that if you were in their place? Why or why not?
 - c. What would have been the results if the Jahanian brothers had taken the easy and safe rout?
 - d. What Zoroastrian values have obliged the Jahanian brothers to make the choice of working for the improvement of the country and Iranian people?
2. Have students research and give a short report to class about a Zoroastrian of their choice who built and improved their community or country. Then ask the class to discuss what Zoroastrian values encouraged the individual to uptake their goal.
3. Ask students, what they think needs to be changed or mended in the US today and what Zoroastrian values can be used to make a difference (ex: racial injustice, climate change, economic inequality, health care)? How would you go about doing that? With teacher's guidance work on a class project to bring awareness about the issue that needs to be mended or changed.

Sources:

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

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