

## **Asha Vahishta Seminar #1: Synopsis**

In the first seminar of the series, the general topic which was interrogated was “What is Faith and Fellowship?”

Sitting at round tables of 6-8 people each, the seminar participants had several opportunities in break-out type sessions where respective table-groups would discuss a question posed by Dr. Panthaki.

Table groups then began to contribute their ideas, so that all participated in the building of answers.

Discussion proceeded according to the answers provided, so that each response was then re-examined for clarity and purpose.

In this way, the seminar participants came to acknowledge several important things. These were not predetermined or foregone conclusions, but the production of the invested discussions which took place during the course of the 2 hour seminar:

- Religion is a fluid construct that develops in the context of time and location (era and geography)
- Religion is a social creature; it is lived every day and thereby re-imagined on a daily basis
- Religion is the product of a faith based community, not vice versa
- Faith is the core of religious expression
- Faith may be expressed in fellowship or individually When faith is expressed as fellowship, religion is the produced
- Religion can be subverted by control. Control attempts to regulate and confine faith and fellowship
- Faith is personal truth. Faith may follow logic, but it is not a necessity. Truth is not always logical in expression

In preparation for, and foreshadowing of, the second seminar (I'm Zarthoshti, Who Am I?); Dr. Panthaki began to urge the seminar participants to explore the relationship between being a Zoroastrian and Zoroastrianism. That is, the relationship between personal faith/identity (Zoroastrian) and religion/group-identity (Zoroastrianism).