

Asha Vahishta Seminar #4: Synopsis

Our fourth session, “Inheriting and Bequeathing Faith”, was difficult as expected.

This is because we began to attempt to implement our previous understanding of Faith and Fellowship, within a discussion of issues pertaining to contemporary Zoroastrianism. Specifically within the fourth colloquium, discussions focused on the methodology surrounding an education and transmission of Zoroastrianism.

We contemplated how one’s role as an adherent translates into being a progenitor of Zoroastrianism. Complexities of intergenerational disagreement regarding the purpose and utility of faith were observed. Moreover, circumstances of faith transmitted within diaspora, illustrated that location and time are very much the context of how individuals relate to religion.

Whether and how religion should be taught or modeled sparked much disagreement, which also created the basis of multiple perspectives on the “mission statement” of Zoroastrianism. That is to say, we found that how faith is transmitted and towards what end, is dependent on the core goal of religion itself. Without being clear regarding the identity and purpose of Zoroastrianism as an entity, it is unlikely that transmission of the faith can be satisfactorily accomplished.

Initially we understand that when one inherits faith, one is receiving religion. When one bequeaths faith, one is passing religion forward. However, it is important to realize that receiving inheritance is also an act of preservation in which one is honouring the past; while, bequeathing is an act of relinquishing and designating succession. Aspects of communication and reception therefore, are involved in this process of continuance. Without the clarity and focus of messaging, investment in faith is hard to achieve let alone bequeath.

Intergenerational (time) and inter-locational (place) dialogue determine the context of ‘the what’ and ‘the how’ of inheriting and bequeathing faith. Moreover, just as in the example of a chain-message that is passed from one to another, the content and interpretation may change. Propagation, the education and communication aspect of faith, require a constant affirmation or re-imagining of the core message of religion. Otherwise, the intended message may not be inherited or bequeath, properly.

In our next session, we will expand upon the discussion regarding issues pertaining to contemporary Zoroastrianism. We will explore the notion of ritual, priest, and prayer, as performative aspects of faith. We will discuss their relevance and whether these are examples of inheritance and bequeathment that have become lost in translation.