

Thursday 25th September 2003

'How has the concept/strength of religion changed over time (if indeed it has), and what does this mean in terms of spreading 'The Word' in society today?'

During the recent tour to England, Satguru Baba Hardev Singh Ji stated that if we truly have the *desire* to spread the word of God/Universal Brotherhood, then we will be successful in doing so (Congregation held in celebration of the life of Reverend Giani Joginder Singh Ji). Inline with this, the following themes were discussed:

1. How strongly are religious practices of different religions rehearsed today?

The general consensus was that for a variety of reasons (ranging from advancements in technology to 'new age thinking') there is less emphasis on religion and religious practices in society today. However this does not necessarily mean that there is no dedication and enthusiasm for religion, only that religious ties are not as strong as they once were. It was discussed that perhaps the relationship between religion and society was greater in previous times as the lives of individuals revolved strongly around religion and practising it in the community as a whole. Worshipping together and focusing on religion as a family/community was most common, however as time progressed and society changed, the tight grip which religion once held weakened on individuals and hence society.

This does not discard the fact that religion still plays an important role in society and belief in religion and faith varies on an individual level, depending on the needs one may have. Inline with this, many of the youngsters expressed how individuals are more open to exploring new ways to fulfil their personal needs and do not feel the need to turn to religion as their median. One young saint spoke of how friends view religion as perhaps an activity, which only the older generation partakes in.

It was further discussed that traditional beliefs and thinking about God have changed; this manifests in the increase in new age religious practices and sects, demonstrating that many do believe in God but do not necessarily feel the need to follow or practice a particular religion. It was commented that the age-old practices of worship do not appeal to many as they once did. However, once again, it was expressed that there are still many in society who even today, practice religion strongly as their ancestors once did.

2. What do you experience when approaching the topic of god with those around you?

Many in the group found that on occasions, they have been hesitant in expressing their feelings about God, as they are unsure of the response they will receive and are uneasy at what others may think of them. However, one of the younger sisters stated that although she finds it difficult to communicate to friends and family when it comes to religion, she is commended for her beliefs and individuality, which relieve her initial fears of what others may think.

Some in the group argued that if one's own faith is strong, there should be no hesitancy in approaching the topic of God and speaking for what you believe in, whereas others expressed that approaching the topic is dependent on the time and situation in which one finds themselves.

3. What suggestions do you have to help increase confidence in approaching the topic of God and this Mission?

It was stated that there is a need to be comfortable and dedicated in our own faith and beliefs. In addition, we must be confident in ourselves and must increase our knowledge and understanding of not only other religions and religious practices but also of the Mission itself.

Furthermore, the teachings of Satguru Baba Hardev Singh Ji must manifest in our lives: the Master's teachings should speak through our actions as it is only then, that we will be able to spread the Word of this Almighty God and Universal Brotherhood.