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International

An Interview
with Prem Rawat

Bharat Ratna
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Bharat Ratna interviews Prem Rawat, also known as Maharaji

PEACE NEEDS TO BE FELT

Bharat Ratna caught up with Prem Rawat as he was embarking on one of his yearly world tours.

Aseem Chhabra spoke to him about his childhood, his views on peace, success and happiness, and the reasons for the growing popularity of his message.

Recently you went to India, and in a short time, spoke to over a million people. How long were you there?

About two months. The events were scheduled over the course of three or four weeks. The total attendance was more than one million.

You left India at an early age to teach in the West. Are you surprised by your increasing popularity in India?

People want to hear a very simple message that comes from the heart, uncomplicated, fresh and very simple. This is what I offer. I do not offer a different way of life or different ideas. The peace we are looking for is within, and I offer a means to be able to feel that peace.

You started speaking publicly at an early age and left India as a young teenager.

I was speaking when I was six or seven years old. My father would hold big meetings, and I would speak before he did. The message was very simple. I came alone to the West when I was thirteen, responding to an invitation.

Did you inherit this quality from your father?

I have been given this gift and this opportunity. My father made all that



Prem Rawat addresses an audience of 130,000 at Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium, in New Delhi



Prem Rawat addressing an audience at age six.

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to be able to go inside and feel fulfilment within. This makes a big difference, because it's not just empty words.

Is your message aligned with the teachings of the

saints in India, with the rich spiritual heritage of India?

Kabir was saying, "You have to feel peace in your life. You have to make that a reality. You cannot just have rituals." The message came from these people's hearts. They were

possible for me. He not only gave me an opportunity to speak in public, but he also gave me the means to be able to feel the peace inside of me.

What was the basic message you brought to the West?

The basic message has always been consistent: What you're looking for is within you. There is a way to reach that place inside which can bring you peace. Whether you call it peace, love or enlightenment, it lies within inside of you. I am offering not only the statement, but a practical means



Prem Rawat is welcomed by President Emilio Colombo, former Italian Prime Minister and former President of the European Parliament.

**RICHARD PATTEN, MEMBER,
PARLIAMENT OF ONTARIO, CANADA**

The charter of the UNESCO says, 'Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defense of peace must be constructed.' Little progress has been achieved towards making this vision a reality. Prem Rawat speaks of a peace that is more than the absence of war. A peace that institutions cannot bring. A peace that needs to be established by each individual. He brings a remarkable message of hope.

**DR. PAGES, RECTOR OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CATALUNA AND
CEO OF THE UNIVERSAL FORUM OF CULTURES, SPAIN**

Many people in this world speak of peace from different angles. Prem Rawat speaks of peace from a perspective that is original and intriguing. Rather than look only to institutions or to policies for creating peace, he speaks of a peace that, he says, each person is personally responsible for finding. His message is directed at each individual who comes to hear him, and the people who enjoy his message come from all walks of life.

**MAHENDRA SWARUP, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER,
THE TIMES FOUNDATION**

Peace within is vital for leading a life fulfilled. Prem Rawat brings a message of hope and peace. This message is very much needed in this world today. Each of us as individuals can benefit from it. His message can help us lead more fulfilled lives, whatever our circumstances might be.

EMILIO COLOMBO, FORMER PRESIDENT OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

As public servants, we all seek, each in our own way, to make the world a better place to live. Prem Rawat's message is that he speaks of the possibility for every person to find within themselves a peace and happiness that is not dependent on circumstances. What I also find interesting is that he sees peace not just as the absence of war, but rather as a feeling within to get connected with, to cultivate for oneself. I see his message as pointing out to us that everyone must find peace for themselves first before helping to bring peace in the world—as sorely needed as it is.

I offer what I call Knowledge: four techniques, a very practical way of taking the focus from the outside to the inside, the know-how to be able to go within.

feeling something. Whenever a message comes from a real feeling, it's fresh and beautiful, and it touches the heart. Insofar as the freshness is concerned, my message is very much aligned with all that is beautiful and comes from the heart. The difference is that nobody can give my message their own meaning, because I am alive. You can't go to Kabir and say, "Is this what you really meant when you said this?"

Have you focused more attention on the West than on India? If yes, why?

Approximately four months are



Prem Rawat at Harvard University's Sanders Theatre.

dedicated to India. I need to be able to look into people's eyes, and they need to be able to look at my eyes. I want people to feel that this is really coming from a heart. It is about the feeling. India will always hold a very special place in my heart, but my resolution has always been to take this message to the whole world. Every person alive has the potential to feel peace in their life. I want to be able to make this potential a reality.

Do people try to associate you with some religion?

People like to put people in boxes. "Who's he? He talks about peace so he must be a religious leader." But when they come and they listen to me, they realise that is not the case. It doesn't matter what religion you follow. You can still have peace in your life. People of completely different religions come and receive the gift of Knowledge from me, and they are enjoying their lives very much.

I read on your website that you show something called Knowledge. Tell us more about it.

I offer what I call *Knowledge*: four techniques, a very practical way of taking the focus from the outside to the inside, the know-how to be able to go within. Then it's up to people to make a little time every day to practise it. It's not like physical yoga. It's very simple. The techniques are there so you can feel that feeling. A lot of people say, "This sounds great. Can I have it?" I say, "Preparation is involved. You need to get in touch



Prem Rawat delivers the keynote address at Salamanca University's First Conference on Peace, in Spain.

with your thirst, listen to what I am saying and make the decision that this is something you want to do.”

In this modern age, is India losing cultural roots and spiritual roots? Does this concern you?

In the metropolitan cities there is a new buzz: “Let’s be modern.” Nobody’s going to stop that. You can live in a high-tech society and still have the heart of a child, have beauty in your life, let that beauty radiate and emanate. The heart stays untouched by technology. The heart wants beauty, peace. The two can co-exist. India has the maturity, the foundation, to make that happen.



Eye clinic sponsored by Raj Vidya Kender and The Prem Rawat Foundation.

It has a culture that appreciates beauty and peace.

What is for you the essence of the idea of peace?

Peace is something that you, as an individual, need to feel. Peace is within, and we need to feel that; we need to understand in our own heart what peace is. Peace is not a question of definitions. Peace needs to be felt.

How do you fund your work and your projects in and outside India?

It’s 100% people-based. Whatever needs to happen, people with an

appreciation for this message come together and make it happen. Individuals who want to participate in the different projects that are going on come together and make, not only the physical effort, but also the economic effort that is needed. Whatever people want to make happen, people can make happen.

Recently a charitable foundation has been founded and named after you. What’s the purpose of the Foundation, and how does it differ from your other work?

Yes, The Prem Rawat Foundation. I see that certain people have needs that are not being taken care of. We try to bring help to these people.

Certainly, the purpose of the Foundation, and of Raj Vidya Kender, the organisation in India, isn’t to try to fulfil the needs that governments should be fulfilling. It is to fulfil needs that are just possibly being overlooked, that no one is seeing.

Your trips have been attracting larger and larger audiences. There’s usually not much promotion. How does the word get to people?

It’s all by word of mouth. People hear it from friends and families, and invite their friends. I just want to give the message to people. People are responding; when they hear the message, a new priority comes in their lives that existed a long time ago when they were young, but was lost along the way. We came empty-handed, but we don’t have to go empty-handed. One of the things we can take is that beautiful experience of being alive.

I really appreciate speaking with you. Thank you.

Aseem Chhabra is a freelance writer living and working in New York.

NAVEEL JINDAL, EXECUTIVE CHAIRMAN, JINDAL POWER & STEEL, AND PRESIDENT, FEDERATION OF INDIAN CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY

I am impressed by his message. In a recent address at the United Nations Conference Centre in Bangkok, he said that it is people that need to be at peace, and that when people are at peace, there will be peace in the world. Many people speak of peace, and yet there is more to his message than just words. I find him to be a warm and delightful person and find his insights to be most helpful.

DR. JAGANNATHRAO HEGDE, SHERIFF OF MUMBAI

I find his message to be simple and from the heart. We seek to find the best thing in life, to find peace, joy, fulfilment, regardless of circumstances. Maharaji tells us that what we have been looking for all our lives is already within us, and that it can be found. His message is a noble one.

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