

A Conversation with *Maharaji Prem Rawat*

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The Pursuit of Happiness, Health and Harmony

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A professional portrait of Prem Rawat, a middle-aged man with dark hair, wearing a dark suit jacket, a white dress shirt, and a striped tie. He is looking slightly to the right of the frame with a calm expression. The background is dark and out of focus.

An Encounter with Prem Rawat

By Toan Nguyen, EiC

The pursuit of happiness is as fundamental as the oxygen in the air that we breathe. The manner in which we think, feel and conduct ourselves in a given situation or communicate with the world around us is motivated by what happiness can be attained. We are willing to take great risks in exchange for it and the errors we make in our decisions tell us that happiness is as much elusive as it is rudimentary. Why do we have this paradox? In order to achieve happiness, as in any goal, we must first know what it is. So, what exactly is happiness?

Would you believe me if I said that happiness lies within each one of us and in order for it to prevail in your life, you must have self-knowledge? Recently I had the pleasure of knowing a gentleman, a wise man if you will, who told me exactly that. His name is Prem Rawat. In his native country, India, he has been bestowed the honorary title *Maharaji*. Following his father's legacy, Prem began his career at the age of nine and over the last thirty years has helped millions of people across the world realize inner peace and true happiness. He addresses audiences of men and women from all walks of life, from prominent business entrepreneurs to young students. His message to a wide range of audiences is simply: "when fulfillment or peace is not present in your life, look within yourself as the solution lies in you, not in the external things.

As straightforward as the message may sound, it has deep implications. In western civilization, happiness or fulfillment is most often linked to financial success, family, relationships and social position, etc. We all try to excel in each of these departments and although many of us have, few can claim to have achieved fulfillment. Something is missing. Prem maintains that most of us are so pre-occupied with making plans for our businesses that we neglect to make plans for ourselves. Consequently, while success in business, family, relationships and so on may facilitate our life's plan, looking to it for our own happiness is illusory. "It is a great assumption that does not prove to be true," he said, "Instead, it is the true happiness within us that helps us achieve better success with our work and our relationships."

Let me take a few moments to tell you about my encounter with Prem Rawat. Most of us, at one point or another, have seen and heard an inspirational speaker of some sort, be it religious, political or business in nature. The most characteristic approach of such a person is usually the exaggerated enthusiasm, the over-emphasized or over-utilized keywords, the pretentious gestures and the deliberate eye contact. With Prem, it was quite different. There was something in the quality of his voice—a certain clarity and candor—that told me I was in the company of quite a distinctive genre. Upon hearing his warm greetings, I was completely put at ease. More than a charismatic figure, Prem radiates benevolence and truthfulness; so that rather than feeling overwhelmed by his presence, one becomes more conscious of oneself. In fact, it is this self-consciousness that Prem wishes to bring to the surface of one's being. With

remarkable eloquence and charm, Prem has the unique ability to open one's mind so that his words make perfect sense in their profound message.

What I desired to know first and foremost is Prem's ultimate definition of happiness, as this would pave the foundation for our further conversation. "It is a feeling—a feeling of contentment and simplicity that exists in all of us. It is the foundation of our being and if we allow ourselves to feel it, we will be fulfilled." So, we established that happiness is not quite an analytical choice; that is to say, we cannot artificially assert that if we can accomplish a certain goal then we will be happy. It is necessary to be in touch with our true needs, to know what fundamentally fosters our joy, regardless of the external factors such as wealth or prestige. As my life and the world around me become increasingly more complex, I see myself from time to time longing for the simplicity that Prem was speaking of. I can feel it in the core of my existence, but it is not always easy to get to it. "And what I do is show

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people the path to that core to savor the sense of fulfillment that was missing,” said Prem. I ventured to ask him, how can I—the chief editor of a publication whose aim is to promote the celebration of life in terms of material achievement and enjoyment—tell our readers that these things do not bring them happiness. “People who feel true happiness can be perfectly happy in the absence of worldly luxuries,” Prem continued, “I am not saying that economic achievements and ambitions are insignificant. In many ways, they are vital to our lives in this modern world. The problem I see over and over is that most people have priorities in the wrong order and end up having to sacrifice themselves for their goals and ambitions. These people often feel incomplete because they have left themselves behind, even when they have achieved success. In the sphere of happiness and inner peace, nothing needs to be sacrificed; you will have to merely find that balance which already exists within you.” Prem compared human conditions to a flower in a vase. If the vase is filled with water—the true substance in sustaining the flower’s life—the flower will live and thrive. If there is no water in the vase, painting water on the vase’s surface will not benefit the flower in the least. By the same analogy, people tend to create formulae to satisfy their thirst for happiness. Yet, they have to realize that in order to quench their thirst, they must start from its source.

So, I gathered that if I looked into myself and knew fundamentally what I need to be happy and to feel at peace, I could work towards that goal and eventually get there. But on the way, I may be distracted and lose sight of my vision, or even after I have felt inner peace and contentment, over the course of time, I may—however unconsciously—let that feeling be tarnished by life’s circumstances and events. “That is very possible. It is not likely that we feel happy every moment of our day. There are things that frustrate us; there are disappointments and misfortunes beyond our control. It is at such moments that we should reflect and reassess ourselves. And having self-knowledge will steer us in the right direction,” Prem said. Similar to making adjustments in our business according to its influencing variables, we can make adjustments within ourselves to realign us to the appropriate balance.

In the area of self-knowledge or self-consciousness, again, Prem insists that feeling rather than logic rules. We may conceivably know that a burning stove is hot, but until we touch our hand to it, we would not know what heat is and its intensity. “Our lives are definitely affected by what is happening around us. However, the only thing we can rely on to lead us is our independent experience case by case.” Therefore, it is meaningless to set standards and formulae to gauge happiness; we must depend on our inner voice as our guide. At this point, one thought was chasing after another in my head, as I tried to prolong the conversation, since our meeting would conclude in a matter of minutes. In my wildest imagination, Prem’s concept of validating the existence of joy through self-knowledge—substantiated by individual consciousness and sensations—reminded me somewhat of the Romantic aesthetic



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theory of the late 19th century. The two schools of thought of course differ completely both in their implications as well as applications. But it would make for another stimulating discussion some other time.

As there is only one Prem Rawat for the entire world, I can only imagine how precious his time is. Prem is constantly on travel, delivering speeches to men and women on every continent. Before leaving each other, I inquired about The Prem Rawat Foundation. It is an extension of Prem’s message and is dedicated to promoting and disseminating his lectures and speeches via various media including print, audio, video and internet-based communication. The Foundation also assists organizations that support charitable, social and philanthropic programs and services consistent with Prem Rawat’s message. In recent months, the Foundation donated several tons of rice to refugees in war-torn Ivory Coast and is preparing to launch an initiative to offer free cataract surgery to the needy in India. ❧



Three decades of practicing Prem Rawat's knowledge and of being inspired by his guidance have made it clear for me that inner peace, the inner fulfillment that I had always been looking for are within me and that I am very fortunate to have been shown a way to access them.

My life looks exactly the same on the outside as it always has. I am a busy physician, and the pleasure from helping and achieving is just as strong as ever. However, I am moving forward in my life with clarity. I make the right decisions and win at whatever matters most: leading a fulfilled life.

Donald W. Novey, M.D.
Medical Director

The Center for Complementary Medicine, Advocate Medical Group

...while I wanted material success, something in me needed to see beauty and harmony in life. I had always sensed that, for me, only being content would be real success in the truest sense. Prem Rawat has taught me that my deepest aspirations for my own happiness could be fulfilled, if I look inside. he has helped me to do this, and in this process I have found the inner contentment. I now have everything I always wanted and more, because I feel fulfilled.

Klaus Hastermann
Circulation Director

International Herald Tribune for Germany

Knowledge is a place of sanctuary within me where I feel a deep sense of contentment, peace and joy. I will always be grateful to Prem Rawat for introducing me to this inner experience. Whether his talks are broadcasted from Burbank, Brisbane or Barcelona, Prem Rawat's message is always relevant to what is going on in my life. There is always something in his message that can help me in my life at that immediate time.

Darlene Shelton, PhD.

Associate Research Scientist, School of Medicine, Yale University

My peers and subordinates say I have a "balanced view" of things and they trust my advice. I know that a large part of that is due to that equilibrium I have found in the practice of self-knowledge. I listen to Prem Rawat and am always amazed at his unusual combination of depth and humor. He has helped me a great deal.

Alfredo L. Fort, PhD

Director of Research and Evaluation
U.S. Agency for International Development

From the day I was shown Prem Rawat's techniques of knowledge and started to explore my inner self, things began to change. The anxiety of not knowing who I was or what to do with my life outside of business, was replaced with a feeling of freedom and happiness within, and, like a puzzle coming together, life finally began to make sense.

Jean Kikson

President and Founder
Eldfast Blissmoor AB