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Interview with
PREM RAWAT
"What you are looking
for is within you"





“What you are looking for is within you”

Prem Rawat pictured speaking at Harvard University's Sanders Theatre

The RDS in Dublin was packed recently to hear the thoughts and teachings of Prem Rawat, who travels the world offering knowledge on how to attain fulfilment and peace. Phillip Graham spoke to him about wealth, beauty and the pursuit of happiness.

It seems that more and more are coming to hear you speak, both in India and in the West. Why is this? Does it say something about the times we are living in?

Well, definitely the times are very uncertain, but I think people are looking for peace in their lives. And this is starting to become a little bit of a priority, because every time the uncertainty starts to dance around us, we try to look for something more stable. It's a bit like when the storm comes, the person on the boat is looking for calmer seas. I think that is very much the situation now, even though people have always come to hear me, and people have always appreciated the message even when it is not so stormy outside.

What would you say is the essence of the message you are bringing to people?

The essence of the message is that what you are looking for is within you. The peace you want, the fulfilment you want, the different definitions of success you have and all those things put together, are names for the same thing. Whether you're looking for truth, or whether you're looking for this or you're looking for that, what you're really looking

for—that inner satisfaction—is within you. It always has been and always will be.

And when you speak about inner peace or inner happiness, are you coming from any particular religious or spiritual tradition?

No. This is the beauty of it, that for every person, regardless of who they are, what they do and what they follow—as long as they are alive—in each breath is the possibility that they can be fulfilled. “As long as you are alive” is the only prerequisite. You have that peace, you have that joy, within you—regardless of what religion or tradition you may follow.

Some people may be wary of such a simple message of fulfilment while one is alive. Can you clarify for us that this not a personality-driven movement—that it's not all about one man—or that you are not trying to sell something?

No, there is nothing to sell because what you're looking for is already inside of you. That's the preface and the bold headlines of the message anyway. So, if you already have it—and this is what the message is pointing out, that you do already have it—it would be hard to say: “Let me sell you what you

already have”. For a lot of people, and in some religions and some cultures we live in, it may be that people frown upon happiness now because, I think, their definition of happiness is very different. What I am saying is that we work so hard following different religions to be able to secure heaven after we die, but we can also have heaven here now. The heaven I am referring to is when we are content. Heaven is about peace. Heaven is about feeling good. Not necessarily in the worldly sense, but feeling at home with yourself. There is a place where you can feel at home, and as long as you are alive, you should feel at home with yourself, you should feel that peace.

I also mention to people that there is no conflict with having heaven here versus having heaven after you die. You can have both if you want to pursue that.

Some people may say that it's actually better not to try to explain something which is essentially so simple—that we have already been blessed with a gift, and we do not need to make specific efforts or to die before such a gift is bestowed. What would you tell them?

Well, speculation is one thing, but feeling something like that, knowing that you have

a gift is one thing, and being able to feel that gift is another thing. To make joy a reality in one's life—that's what's important. To make peace a reality. Not just have a passive attitude: "Yes, I have peace inside of me, and that's all I need to know". It's like, if you are thirsty and you are in the middle of a desert, just because you have a home somewhere with a lot of water in the refrigerator, that's not going to help you. If you are in the middle of the desert, and you are thirsty, you need to have access to water there.

There are many different definitions of success in life. What is yours?

An opportunity recognized and an opportunity taken, to me, is success. To recognize the opportunity we have simply by the fact that we are alive, that life means something, that a breath comes into us is a beautiful gift given every moment, that there is peace within, that there is a very big treasure trove of joy inside us—and not only to know that, but actually to *feel* that every day—these are the basic fundamentals of success.

Success may have many labels, but success has to begin with the individual in a very basic and fundamental way, because it's a bit like a car that is not fully assembled that is travelling down the road. The situation is going to get progressively worse. There has to be an integrity to every person—that they

are feeling whole, that they do feel in their lives that stability, that peace inside of them. And then, to me, success begins from there. All the worldly success that a person wants, they can have. But the fundamental success of a person within themselves—knowing that feeling, understanding that feeling—is where success truly begins. Where it ends, I don't know. I don't think anyone knows. But where it begins, I do know.

Because it can be said of many of our readers that they appreciate many of life's "finer things", would you see anything inherently contradictory with this and the pursuit of inner peace and fulfilment?

I think there is a very big misconception out there that if you want inner contentment, if you want peace, you have to sacrifice everything else. I really think this is a very big misconception. You can have all those things because the inner peace I'm talking about is going to manifest itself within you, not on the outside. It has very little to do with what happens on the outside. You can pursue whatever you want to pursue on the outside and also feel that fulfilment on the inside. And this is the beautiful thing about it, that whoever a person is—whatever they are pursuing in their lives, whatever challenges they want to take on—knowing that they have something they carry within them, and that they can feel that feeling, gives them the real freedom to pursue



Prem Rawat pictured at the United Nations Conference Centre in Bangkok

whatever they want to pursue and succeed in whatever they want to do and have the finer things in life they want to have. The two really have nothing to do with each other. You can be poor or you can be rich; happiness is not based on those parameters.

Some might say that the wealthy have a greater social obligation to help those who aren't so fortunate. Would you agree?

I think the fact that we are all on this planet earth, we have an obligation to help each other. It may be that a poor person can help a rich person in a very different way than a rich person could help a poor person. We all need to help each other. I know from my own experience travelling in India, even though I have a certain amount of resources, one day I found myself without water and very, very thirsty. It was indeed a very poor man who pulled water out of the well for me. I still remember his face to this day, even though it's been probably more than twenty years since this happened. He helped me. And certainly, we can all help each other. There shouldn't be barriers between rich and poor. We all have something to give, and we should give. We should receive too, because without receiving, you cannot understand the value of giving. And without giving, you cannot understand the value of receiving.

You talk of the importance of discovering something beautiful on the inside. How would this be different from the appreciation of things of beauty on the outside?

Well, there is the beauty we see on the outside, and we may be attracted to the fineness of it, but then there is the beauty that is faceless, that is colourless, that is odourless, that is just inside of us. This is a beauty that we are attracted to because beauty is the glue that allows us to feel that attraction. And inside of us, there is a beauty, too. Whether you call it truth, whether you call it contentment—whatever you call it—it is the name for

Allan Gildea, 35, is an award-winning filmmaker who lives in Northern Ireland. He currently teaches practical filmmaking at Queen's University, Belfast. In addition to working behind the camera, Allan has also been a professional actor for over ten years, with a lead role in Paul Greengrass's acclaimed "Bloody Sunday", amongst many other television dramas, comedies and commercials. Allan is currently developing a number of animated short films and sci-fi features.

"I first became interested in Prem Rawat and his teachings about seven years ago. A friend whose opinions and judgement I trusted invited me to hear him speak. I was impressed by the simplicity and inclusiveness of his message. At the same time, I had considerable reservations. Over the course of the next year, those questions were resolved to my satisfaction, and I realised this was something that I could pursue out of a sincere in-

ner conviction, and that Prem Rawat's message was independent of religion, spirituality or lifestyle preferences.

"Whilst I would doubt—and perhaps hope—that no major change in my outer behaviour is apparent to others, I know I experience more peace and happiness within myself. And that does, inevitably, have a knock-on effect on how I live my life 'out there'—with family, friends and colleagues. In particular, I have found myself able to detach from difficult situations considerably better than I might have done in the past. This has been helpful both in teaching, filmmaking and in my personal life. I would stress, however, that whilst Prem Rawat's teaching has been enormously helpful, there is no quick all-in-one fix for the problems in our lives. In fact, I'm really grateful that Prem Rawat stresses the need for daily commitment to peace, happiness, fulfilment and fun. Like anything else in life, I get out what I put in."



Prem Rawat pictured speaking at the recent RDS event in Dublin

the same thing. And that exists inside of us. And outside beauty? You know, that's personal taste. We have certain differences. Somebody might prefer the colour blue over red, and someone else green over yellow, and so on and so forth. But there is an inherent beauty that everyone has inside of them. And to appreciate that beauty, to enjoy that beauty—that's the beauty I am talking about. That beauty is faceless, tasteless, colourless; it is.

Do you believe one's inner beauty is genetic—something you either have or don't have at birth—or is it something that one can develop in one's life?

Well, I think the very fact that you are alive means that beauty is there—just by the fact that you are alive. And when you can feel that life, when you can feel that existence, then you can also feel that beauty. It isn't a question of an object on the outside. We think that because we relate to so many things on the outside. But there are so many things that are on the inside that we have not kept an eye on. We have not really been able to feel them. But when we can turn within and feel that beauty, feel that peace inside, then we realize that beauty has another dimension to it. The dimension of inner beauty is very different from beauty on the outside.

Yes, and that quest for beauty is universal. But there's also a matter of personal taste, which is quite individual, isn't it?

Yes, because this is such a fundamental beauty. I mean, everybody on the face of this earth has to take a breath. There is no choice in the matter. There are no variances

for that. "I like to take shorter breaths, I like to take longer breaths, I like to take pink breaths or whatever." Breath is very fundamental, and the beauty I am talking about, the beauty that peace is, the beauty that joy is, is also very, very fundamental. And not subject to variation. It doesn't matter if you are rich. It doesn't matter which country you live in. It doesn't matter who you are. It doesn't matter what you do. It is so fundamental because it's connected with existence, it's connected with life, and it is not connected with anything else.

The British poet, John Keats, wrote, "Beauty is truth, truth beauty—that is all ye know on earth, and all ye need to know." Would you say that you are saying the same thing?

In a way, I'm saying the same thing, but I don't want to second-guess what he really meant.



Prem Rawat at the University of Salamanca

I know that there is beauty in truth, and I know that truth is very beautiful. We can feel that—and that's what it has to be—*feeling*. Truth has to be felt, and the beauty of the truth has to be felt, and if they are both the same, then both of them have to be felt in this life. It cannot just be a static statement on a wall. It cannot just be words; it has to be a feeling. And I'm sure that a lot of people might just read the words, but the poet must have felt it, and we have to get there—where the poet actually felt it—not just be stuck on the words.

Would you say that the appreciation of beauty is akin to the appreciation of excellence?

Excellence will come when all those fundamental things are in place. When something is not right, it doesn't matter how much you try to polish it on the outside, it's not going to really work. Excellence is that something is beautiful on the outside, and it's beautiful on the inside, too. Excellence is when a job is done, that it is complete. It's whole. It has been done properly. When you achieve something, if it is done in an excellent way, then it was done in a holistic way, in a complete way. And this is what I am saying, too: If you really want excellence in your life, do not leave yourself out. Maybe the world's definition of excellence does not include how whole and complete you are, but you know that excellence is really there when you can also feel that joy, feel that peace and contentment within inside of you. To excel on the outside and not excel on the inside is going to create, sooner or later, a very grave deficit and leave a void in people's lives.

It's often considered egotistical or even narcissistic to admire one's own personal beauty. What would you say to that?

Some people definitely would say that, but the beauty I am talking about is a very different kind of beauty. It has no face, it has no colour, it has no scent, and it does not have the traits of what we consider beauty on the outside. This is an enjoyment of something so fundamental. Because we are alive—this beauty is there. This is a gift, as is the gift of existence. And when we accept the gift of existence, why not also accept the gift of peace? Because peace is possible. I mean, why leave something so important out of the equation? Both are possible. We don't have to say, "That's very selfish". It isn't selfish because it's already there and it is something to be explored. A person who looks at a rose and admires it cannot be called selfish because they admire roses. I'm talking about admiration and the feeling of inner beauty that we have innately.

It is common knowledge that those who may be financially successful are not necessarily the happiest. What does it take, do you think, to be truly happy in one's life?

I think first of all, we have to take the whole equation of rich and poor out of this formula and really look at each person as a person who is capable of being happy. It doesn't matter who you are. You are capable of being happy because this ability has been given to you. So, if we want to be truly happy in our lives, we have to start looking at the resources we have been given, because in those resources—within this life, within this existence we have been given—is buried the essence of joy. To accept that, to understand it, and most importantly, to feel it, to me, is what's going to make a person truly happy. It is not only an accomplishment on the outside, but a beautiful accomplishment on the inside as well.

What difference would you say it makes in a world torn apart by conflict and poverty and disease if a person should take the time to pursue the riches that you say lie within them? What would it really change?

You know, if you want to light up a football field or a soccer field, you have to begin with light bulbs. You have to turn on those big lights. But those big lights are sometimes made up of a lot of little lights all brought together. We are like little lights. If we burn out,

it doesn't matter how big or how incredible the casing is, there is not going to be any light. I think that if we want change in this world, it has to begin with individuals. Too many times, we rely on governments. Too many times, we rely on leaders. What can a leader do? Maybe that leader has the capacity to turn on a switch, but if all the bulbs are burnt out, what would be the point? If the bulbs are not interested, if we are not interested, what can they do? The excuse is, "One person can't possibly make a difference". I disagree with that. I have travelled around this world many, many times, and I have never seen anything called "the world". I have never come across anything I could put my finger on and say, "That's the world", but I have come across a lot of people. A lot of people. And each one of those people has the wonderful potential to be content. When we see a riot, we don't see a world, we see people rioting. When we see disease, we don't see the world suffering, we see people suffering.

It is people. That's the fundamental thing we have forgotten—that this whole planet we are living on is really made up of individuals. When individuals can feel that joy, when individuals can feel that peace, that is when there

is, maybe for the first time, a greater hope for resolving a lot of the issues we may not like.

Would you say, then, that self-discovery may be a luxury that a person can afford only after they have secured all of life's basic necessities?

Well, that certainly would not be my observation. I have seen people from one end of the spectrum to the other end of the spectrum, and it doesn't really matter what you are doing on the outside, you can always have peace within, regardless of where you are on the ladder of success. I have seen people who are very poor, and I have seen people who are very rich. I have seen people who have retired, people who are successful and people who are



Prem Rawat at the Italian Parliament

Willie Maxwell, 58, graduated from Queen's University, Belfast, and has recently become Assistant Director of North Down & Ards Institute, one of the largest further and higher education colleges in Northern Ireland. Having spent twenty-five years as a college lecturer, he became involved in the development and management of a School of Creative Studies that has achieved the Centre of Excellence status in the sector for its work in Music Technology, Digital Media and Multimedia. Two years ago, he was appointed Head of the Faculty of Business and Creative Technologies and has been personally involved in the Northern Ireland review of education at many levels during this time. In his most recent post, he will be continuing to manage the faculty and work in partnership with businesses and other educational organizations.

"I first heard about Prem Rawat over thirty years ago when a friend came back from London with news of a young boy who was speaking to people about a practical way to experience peace in their lives. I had been restlessly looking for something that was missing in my otherwise happy existence, and this sounded interesting.

"Over time, Prem Rawat helped me learn to value the simple experience of being alive, and this, in turn, brought about a feeling of fulfilment that had been missing up till then. By this time I had a family of six lively kids and was teaching in a secondary school in Belfast at the height of the Troubles. In these dark days, it was so reassuring and comforting to be in touch with something so gentle and yet so positive.

"What Prem Rawat taught me has continued to be an enduring source of contentment in my life for the past thirty years, and today, as the head of a business and creative faculty in one of Northern Ireland's further education institutes, it is as important to me as ever.

"As a manager of some 130 staff in an educational organization, it is easy at times to lose perspective, to overreact, to allow stress to creep in and affect the quality of your life, both at work and at home. Prem Rawat has helped me keep in touch with the human side of myself, and this has made being a manager of people a lot simpler. Also, it has ensured that I am more sensitive to the danger signals when the life/work balance is becoming affected."

just starting out. Each one of them has the potential to be fulfilled. It really doesn't matter. You don't have to wait until you have taken care of all the necessities in life, because, in a way, you will never end up taking care of those necessities. There will always be a new necessity and another new necessity and a different kind of necessity. So to feel the inner contentment whenever you can is the best avenue to take.

Most people lead very busy lives. Does finding this inner peace and beauty take a lot of time and a special environment?

No, it takes neither a special environment nor a lot of time. What it takes is a lot of understanding and learning. And that's very enjoyable. Anybody, regardless of how busy they are, can do that. Understanding does not require you to pause everything. And understanding doesn't require a special room. Understanding—that light bulb going on—can happen anywhere and regardless of what you are doing. This is really understanding about yourself and what you have been given. It is about feeling the beauty, feeling the joy and feeling the peace inside of you.



What, then, would you say is the first step for a person who says, “OK, I acknowledge there is something beautiful within, where do I start on the journey of self-discovery?”

The first thing is that we have turned up the stereo on the outside so loud that we can’t even hear what is being said on the inside. One of the things that has to happen is to turn down that stereo a little on the outside so we can start listening to what the quest of the heart is. The quest of the heart isn’t about many things. The quest of the heart is very singular. The quest of the heart is to be fulfilled, to be in that joy, to be in that peace. Because the heart really doesn’t care about all the other trappings. It cares about a reality.

It cares about a sincerity. And it cares about an understanding—that you have gratitude. The heart wants to feel thankfulness, and the heart wants to feel the joy of that thankfulness. It really begins with turning down the outside volume so you can start to hear what the other spectrum is. And once you can do that, you can begin to appreciate the simpler things in life, the more fundamental things in life. That is one of the basic and most beautiful steps that anyone can take.

If a person succeeds in the process you are talking about, what would he or she have to show for it in the end?

Well, they may not have anything to show on

the outside, but they certainly are going to know it for themselves. It is like a person who is in the desert, and there is a group of people. Maybe one person brought their suitcase, and one person brought their saddle, and one person brought their stereo, and one person brought something else. And maybe there is one person who brought water. Now they all start feeling very, very thirsty. And they realise that their stereo is no good, their suitcase is no good, and their saddle is no good. What they need—and the need has become very, very apparent now—is water.

Having the ability to quench the thirst may not be something you can advertise: “Now I have achieved this”. But knowing that you are satisfied is something you will know for yourself. Maybe the attention really needs to turn within. Rather than seeking the approval of the world, maybe we need to seek the approval of ourselves as well. And this is where peace becomes very, very important. Because to seek the approval of ourselves, that, yes, we are in harmony and not in duality, the request that comes from the heart has to be fulfilled, and that request is to be content, to be in peace, to be in joy. If that can happen, maybe you don’t get a certificate, but you get something much more valuable, and that is the inner smile. That is the inner joy. That is the inner twinkle a person can have in their life.

Geraldine Aitken is a retired Business Director. She spent twenty-five years in the publishing and media sector. During this time she worked for several national and international publishing groups in Northern Ireland, Ireland and the United Kingdom. In her roles as both Commercial Director and Managing Director, she has spent her energy seeking excellence in business management.

“I first heard Prem Rawat in the late ‘70s and was interested when he spoke of an experience of happiness and joy within. As I began to learn more from him, I became more aware of myself and the humanity within me. Knowing that allowed me to see it in others too—my family, my friends and the people I worked with.

“As my career developed, success came my way, and with it the pressure of commitments and deadlines. Time for myself became constrained, as each new role demanded more. I achieved most, if not

all, of what had been on my map of life: success, prestige, respect and many material luxuries. Then circumstances occurred to help me realise that I also needed the peace within that Prem Rawat always talked about, and I began to put my effort in that direction.

“Now I awake in the morning and feel strong and confident because I am again experiencing something of myself. I am enjoying, once again, things in life that I had crowded out, and I feel alive and happy.

“For a while I was a workaholic and judged myself by the approval of colleagues or superiors. Now I have come to realise that life isn’t about success or failure in business, but about success within myself. Prem Rawat has helped me to discern what’s really important for me and how to work towards it, and for that I will be forever grateful.”

To find out more about Prem Rawat, visit www.contactinfo.net for details of local events and other ways to learn about Prem Rawat’s message, or the website at www.tprf.org.

Broadcasts on Sky TV are every Tuesday at 8:00 pm on the Open Access Channel 687. The Information line phone number to call is: 028 9022 6993.