

Partial to Joy

Just recently, I told a little Chinese story that I heard. There was an archer who came to town, and he was an incredible marksman. He was showing off—shooting one arrow after another, right on target. A man standing in the back of the crowd, instead of cheering him, kept saying, “Ah, it’s just a matter of practice, just a matter of practice.”

The archer thought a lot of himself and did not like this comment. He was expecting praise. So he went over to the man and said, “What do you mean, ‘It’s just a matter of practice’? Can you do what I can do?”

The man said, “No, but let me show you something.” He used to sell oil, so he grabbed a bottle that had a very narrow tube at the opening and a large bowl at the bottom, took a big container of oil, and poured it through the little opening into the bottle, not spilling a drop. Then he looked at the archer and said, “Can *you* do that?”



The archer realized that, no, he hadn’t had any practice doing that. So the man said, “I can’t shoot arrows like you, but you can’t pour oil like me. It’s all a matter of practice.”

The point of the story is: What do you practice? Whatever you practice, you’ll get good at. If you practice complaining, you’ll get very good at it. You will be able to complain about everything. When your friends are looking at the big harvest moon, everyone in awe of the beautiful evening, you’ll be able to say, “Yes, but it’s so dark!”

So what do you practice in your life? If you practice peace, you’ll get very good at it. If you practice joy or happiness, you’ll get very good at it. If you practice knowing yourself, you’ll get very good at it. You will know who you are. When you begin to know yourself, you begin to

realize what a gift you are and the value of every breath that you are being given.

What I offer is a way to connect to the beauty that is inside of you, not merely words. To stand on your own feet and judge for yourself whether you feel that peace, that joy, in your life or not.

This is not: “My Palm Pilot says I have had lunch, and therefore, my hunger is false.” I don’t believe in that. I believe in a very simple reality that I wasn’t, I am, and I won’t be. It doesn’t make me sad that I won’t be. It makes me very, very active in wanting to find out what is going on in my life in this moment. I don’t have to take life in chunks of years, months, weeks, and decades. I can actually take it moment by moment. That is a gift.

I understand that fulfillment can be felt moment by moment. I don’t have any control over time. I can’t sit there and keep rolling the hand of my watch backwards. What I can do is accept my life as it is being offered to me, as it is unfolding for me.



It should be something that you have felt in your life that brings you joy, because this is how you have been made. You are partial to joy. It’s a beautiful life, and it needs to be enjoyed to the fullest.

Maharaji