

## Q & A with Prem Rawat in Sicily

On a recent visit to Mazaro del Vallo, Sicily, Prem Rawat was awarded honorary citizenship. Following that ceremony, several high school students came to the microphone one-by-one to ask him questions. These are excerpts from that exchange.



**Q:** "Life is a journey, and the journey of life is so beautiful that it does not require a destination." I read this quote of yours, and I wanted to ask: without a precise destination, don't we run the risk of drifting away?

**A:** Every journey has to have a purpose. Now, in some journeys, the purpose is to reach a particular place or destination. But in the journey of life, the purpose is to enjoy. And that in itself is the destination of the journey—to enjoy being alive. Yes, I agree with you that we cannot drift away from the enjoyment of this life. That is the purpose of this journey.

**Q:** How and when did you begin to have the desire to become an Ambassador of Peace?

**A:** The title was given to me in Brazil, for which I am very grateful. But ever since I was very young, I wanted to bring happiness in people's lives. Not a joy of two minutes, but a true happiness. That people can find a beautiful fulfillment in their lives—this is all I want. This is what I was trying to do before I was given the title and what I have been doing since. I want to take this message of hope and possibility of peace to as many people as I can. And I hope that I can continue to do so till the very last breath. I have dedicated my life to this. Whether I have these titles or not, what really matters is opening one heart and another and another to the possibility of peace in their lives.

**Q:** Intolerance has manifested itself in societies throughout the ages, and this often degenerates into fanaticism. Can fanaticism, which feeds on irrational passion, be fought by reason?

**A:** Let me tell you a little story. A long time ago in India, there was a great emperor called Akbar. He had a friend, a courtier named Birbal. One day, Akbar challenged his friend. He drew a line and said, "Make this line smaller without touching it." Birbal grabbed the pen and drew a bigger line, and the emperor's line automatically became smaller. Yes, there is fanaticism; yes there is cruelty. If we want to make them insignificant, the only way is to make the voice for peace much, much greater. Today, people are not reasonable; they see violence as a viable alternative. The problem is that it's on both sides. And when it is violence answering violence, it will only become more violent. Our only hope, I feel, is to have the voice of peace greater than the voice of violence.

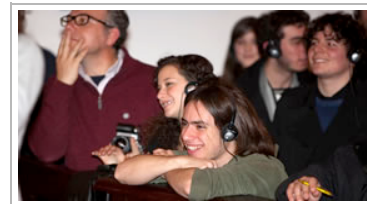


**Q:** Seneca, in his treatise On Tranquility of Mind, speaks of peace as a state that can be attained by detachment from worldly worries. Is this achievable in our day and age?

**A:** There are so many formulas. Some people say that if we get rid of all our worries, we will have peace. I can only speak from my own experience. If I feel hunger, and somebody says to me, "Stop thinking about food," will my hunger go away? I don't think so. If you have peace in your life, you will have happiness. If you merely have happiness, you may or may not have peace. Happiness is a result of having peace, contentment inside of you. As long as you are alive, you will be worried about something. The peace I talk about can be experienced in the middle of a war, in the middle of a prison. If I can find the peace inside of me, worries will come and go, but I will have peace in my life.

**Q:** "When you begin to look for peace, peace will begin to look for you." This is one of your quotes. Do men truly desire peace?

**A:** We look at ourselves by our nametags, by the hats and uniforms that we wear, but we are all human beings, and human beings desire peace. Is peace a luxury or a necessity? This is a fundamentally important question. We know that breathing is not a luxury; water is not a luxury. They are necessities. I say that peace is a necessity, not a luxury. That's what people want. But when the elements of greed, fear, anger and confusion come in between people and their own desires, everything becomes very convoluted. We look toward institutions to solve the problem. We need to solve the problem. Right now, there are not too many places in the world where people have the spirit to unify, to come together. When there are, there will not only be peace on earth, but in the heart and the mind of every human being.



**Q:** Is there a question you have never been asked and you would have liked to answer?

**A:** People have been asking me questions since I was seven years old, but nobody has ever asked me, "How does it feel to bring peace to a person?" And the answer is: When a person experiences peace in their life and I had some role to play in it, in that moment, the purpose of my life is fulfilled—that is how good it feels. This is what I want to do. So many people have expressed their gratitude to me for bringing peace in their lives. Their gratitude not only humbles me, it brings me an immense amount of joy.