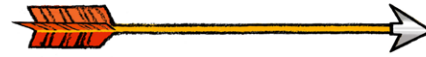


THE ARCHER AND THE OIL MERCHANT



by Prem Rawat

ONCE THERE WAS A MAN who was a very good archer. He could shoot one arrow, hit the target, and then with another arrow, split the first arrow. He would go from village to village demonstrating his skills. And everybody would gather and applaud, because they had never seen anything like it.

One day, he came to a little village, shot an arrow from his bow, and everybody applauded, "Bravo, bravo." Then, after everybody had finished applauding, a voice in the back of the crowd called out, "Agh. It's only a matter of practice."

The archer heard that, and it disturbed him, but he continued on. He took another arrow, shot it, split the first arrow, and again everybody yelled, “Bravo, bravo, bravo.” And the same voice said, “Agh. It’s only a matter of practice.”

After his show was over, the archer was upset. Here he was, demonstrating his greatest skill, and this man kept saying, “Only a matter of practice.” So he went to the back of the crowd and found the man. He was carrying a bamboo pole, with one pot of oil hanging from the front and another from the back, trying to sell oil.

The master archer said to him, “How dare you say it’s only a matter of practice? What do *you* do? You sell oil. Look at me. People come to see me from far away because my aim is so good.”

The man with the oil looked at the archer and said, “Agh, it’s only a matter of practice. Now, let me show you.”

So the oil merchant pulled out a bottle, put a coin that had a hole in it on top, and poured the oil from his pot through the small hole without spilling a drop. He turned to the archer and said, “Now, it’s *your* turn.” And the archer didn’t even try. He understood that it *is* a matter of practice.

PEACE IS SIMPLE

Now, I want to ask you this question: What do *you* practice? Think about it. What do you practice? Because whatever you practice, you will become good at it.



Sometimes we forget how simple the subject of peace is. Do you want to know the truth? The real truth? Then here it is: What you are looking for is inside of you.

Maybe you want me to explain what I mean when I say that what you are looking for is inside of you. I can't, because I didn't put the very thing that you are looking for inside of you. It has always been there. And we — all

of us — have always felt the attraction to know it. But we are too busy trying to measure the immeasurable, to define the indefinable, to come up with solutions that are absolutely nothing short of bewildering.

Some people say, “If you want true peace, then you must give up everything.” But how do I give up everything? It’s easy to say, “Give up everything!” Give up what?



what do you practice every day?
**do you practice kindness? if you do,
you will become good at it.**

There’s a story about Buddha, who gave up “everything.” Sujata came to him and said, “What are you doing?” Buddha said, “I am trying to be free of owning anything. I don’t want anything.” Sujata pointed to him and said, “You are going to give up this, too? You still have this body. You haven’t given up everything.” As the story goes, Buddha understood something.

There is a saying: “Nobody desires peace more than a soldier.” He is the last one to want to go to war. He does it only because of duty, but he and his wife would be the happiest if, when he was saying goodbye, orders suddenly came: No more fighting, peacetime. Go home.

We try to come up with solutions for having peace — even though we don’t know what starts war. Oh, there’s always a reason. At least, some historian’s pen is going to sketch why each war was started, and in none of that would be that something inside the human being is not content. Do you know what contentment is? To feel the gratitude every day for being alive. For being alive!

THE RIVER IS A LOVE AFFAIR

When life doesn't mean much to us, war and killing become a convenient solution. One human being has no problem killing another human being. "I am more interested in your money than in your life." Boom! Why? Because he feels worthless. And as he sees another person, he thinks, "You are worthless, too." Wait, wait, wait. You have been given the most incredible gift — the gift of life. Now you may ask, "Who gave this gift?" What do you care? If you have not accepted it, what difference does it make who gave you the gift? First, accept it.

When you wake up in the morning, do you say, "Thank you for this breath, thank you for this day"? Or do you say, "Oh, I have to do this, I have to do that"?

What do you practice every day? Do you practice kindness? If you do, you will become good at it. Or do you practice frustration? How quickly do you get frustrated? Practice the peace that lies in your heart, and you will become good at it. And when you do, you will understand what I am trying to say to you.

People want solutions: "Tell us a practical way to get to this peace." I would love to. Here is my dilemma: that which you are looking for is within you.

It's like you are wearing your glasses and you are saying, "Have you seen my glasses?" And I say, "Yes, you're wearing them." "No, no," you say, "I'm looking for my glasses. I looked everywhere, I can't see them." "Yes, but you have them on."

To us, everything is a puzzle. Look with sincerity, and you will see a simplicity. Have you ever stood and looked at a flowing river? Just looked and looked? Do you know *why* the water is running? It's a love affair. The water is going back to the ocean it came from. And it's going to run and run and run, day and night, until it meets the ocean, and then it will have to run no more.

I was watching a documentary about this frog in Africa that, in times of drought, buries itself deep down in the soil where it survives for months. The scientists commented, "How fascinating! How does it do that?" And I thought: What's really fascinating is *not* all the things it does to survive buried underground. Those are stopgap measures to stay alive until the next rain comes. What's really fascinating is that this frog has bet its life that it *is* going to rain again. How does it know it's going to rain again? Is it a meteorologist? No. But over millions of years of evolution, it has understood that it *will* happen.

YOUR HOME

So much that you trust and believe in one day will no longer be. Scientists even predict that one day this earth will be no more. "Aye-yi-yi. This earth won't be any more?"

do you know why
the water is
running?

it's a love affair.
the water is going back
to the ocean it
came from.

You mean all this will be gone? What about my statue? What about my name? What about my record?" Yes, it will be gone.

You are a guest in the hotel. Don't make it your home. Do you know what a home is? When people get off work, most of them say, "I am going home." When they are on their way home, they pass by thousands of homes. But they don't stop. Not *any* home will do. They will keep going until they get to *their* home.

Have you found your home? Not the one out there, but the one within you? When you do, you will begin to understand what peace is all about.

People make a lot of speeches about peace, but peace seems to elude them. There are even songs about "peace, peace, peace." Yet, what happens is another war, another war, and another war. When does it end? We've been fighting for a very long time. And what do we want? We want prosperity. What has the formula always been? *Peace and prosperity*. No formula says, "Prosperity, then peace." First peace, then prosperity.

Listen to the simplicity of your existence. Peace is related to the indefinable, to the simplicity and power of the coming and going of the breath.

What do you understand about your breath? You have to practice simplicity in your life to understand the simplest of all that resides within you.

Find that beauty inside of you, because that's where peace is. Dig for the treasure until you find it, because it's there within you. Seek until you have found it. Do not take no for an answer. Dig, dig, dig until you find what you have always been looking for.

have you found your home?

not the one out there,
but the one within you?

This is one in a series of edited addresses by Prem Rawat, known also as Maharaji. Prem Rawat has dedicated his life to bringing the simple and profound message that peace resides in each and every person.

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the
archer
and the
oil merchant

What do you practice every day?

Do you practice kindness?
Or do you practice frustration?

Practice the peace that
lies in your heart,
and you will become good at it.

