

Politics, Pathwork Style

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Politics in a democracy has to do with making a specific choice — which candidate to vote for. This truth mirrors the dynamics of personal decisions. At some point, decisions must be made — and failure to make a decision — just like sitting out the responsibility to vote in an election — is also making a decision.

Both political parties are portraying the US Presidential election as a momentous event with huge consequences for the country. But in a seeming paradox, no matter how the election goes, our personal, individual struggles will still continue, and that reality will be of more concern to us.

In Lecture 65, given on May 13, 1960, the Guide answers a question about the effect of prayer, but then gets into politics:

“From the point of view of spiritual truth and spiritual reality,” he says, “there are no big and little issues. The tiniest issue in a domestic quarrel, for example, is of exactly the same impact and importance as big international issues. This may sound fantastic to you. Nevertheless it is so, my friends. You think that because many lives are involved, the larger issues are more important. Little do you realize that, in truth and reality, your inner deviations and errors affect and involve just as many lives in the long run. You think that because the question of life or death exists in international quarrels, it is more important than the little, inner, subtle rights or wrongs in your private lives. But you ignore that with these subtle private undercurrents you contribute to the so-called big and important issues. In fact, the former are the cause of the latter.”

The Guide here is saying that there is no way of separating personal struggle from larger political events. Each of us, together, creates the big picture. The Guide’s statement that “the tiniest issue in a domestic quarrel is of exactly the same impact and importance as big International issues” is something to meditate on. It has to do with how we perceive the nature of reality. By contrast, the general focus of political parties is exclusively on the outer reality. The value and importance of personal struggle is denied, except when it comes to Election Day. To get the results we want for society, we must elect leaders who can make change, they say. Yet for the Pathwork, this shirks individual responsibility for undertaking our spiritual search every day.

The Guide adds: “Each emotion, each attitude, each current of the soul leaves an imprint on the cosmic forces and consequently returns to you, often in a roundabout way, until these negative forces are exhausted. If you try to comprehend the thought I present here, you will gain a great deal of insight and understanding. In your prayer for peace, try to find where, in your own surroundings, you act in ways that are similar to the actions and reactions of nations. By such

discoveries, you will contribute more to peace than through other approaches. Find the similarity, then you will gain the insight and understanding that it is all one and the same. The so-called big issues could not exist if the many little issues in thousands of individual cases were not a precedent to the creation of the same situation on a larger scale.'

This leads to the understanding "without the slightest trace of guilt, how you personally contribute to and are in a small measure responsible for the world's unrest. Not in the sense, as many people would believe, of not participating in political activities, but in the sense that your personal conflicts add to the general world conflict. Try to see this, and if you really try, you will find it."

In a Question and Answer session given on November 30, 1963, the Guide is asked about the assassination of President Kennedy. Here again, he draws the connection between major world events and personal responsibility for spiritual growth. He is asked about the extent to which his listeners "carry a burden of guilt or share in the guilt" of the assassination.

He replies: "Now, to the question of individual responsibility—how each and every human being is involved—I think the answer is very obvious: As long as you, any of you, any human being, harbors little resentments and hostilities for personal and subjective happenings, it is the same germ, it is of the same material."

"But nevertheless, my friend," he continues, "I would like to emphasize very strongly—and this goes to you as each individual works on this path—do make a distinction between living out these destructive forces or seeing them, for this is not quite the same. Your own sense of guilt is more conducive to destruction than the destructive, negative forces themselves. There is a difference between the little hates and the committing of overt destruction and malice.

"Please, my friends, realize this difference, because if you only see the negative in yourself and equate your own little guilts completely with such forces as happen occasionally and again and again, you will only thwart the natural good and constructive forces in yourself. You have to balance the extremes—the extreme of irresponsibility, denial of your negative tendencies, and shifting the responsibility on others. But it is of equal importance not to be burdened by false equations, and to distinguish between the act and the feeling so that you can grow, that you can lift your head and do not say this is the same, for this will only hinder you."

The Guide thus calls on us not to be paralyzed by evil in the world by feeling guilty for its presence. Instead, we take responsibility for our negative tendencies by examining them, holding them up to the light, and transforming their energy into positive manifestations.

The political horse race is not the main event. It is no substitute for inner work.