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Spirituality and Politics

Spirituality and politics: the two usually do not mix well. It is rare that a person who has position uses that authority to serve the needs of others; usually such needs are exploited, because personal ambition is prioritised over responsibility, goodwill and benevolence.

When we look at history we can see this, whether it be emperor, empress, president or pope. Of course there have been benevolent authorities, and their characteristic was that they always avoided the use of violence.

Any kingdom that justifies the use of offensive violence cannot be spiritual, if we accept that “spiritual” means peaceful, respectful and harmonious. Although one often hears “justified violence,” what are the standards on which this is based?

For example, is it justified to stone someone to death for a sexual offence? Concerning the current events in the Middle East: what is justified, what is not? Can the use of violence really bring justice?

Although certainly there are basic standards, very often the word “justice” camouflages revenge, the arrogance of being right, the feelings of hate and anger. A deep level of unbiased understanding and clear, unemotional discernment and wisdom are necessary whilst deciding which actions have to be taken in situations of conflict and disagreement.

For Yours is the Kingdom and the Power

In the past and in the present empires, institutions and leaders too quickly jump to conclusions, label others as enemies under the banner of freedom or truth and, most unfortunately, the supposed will of God.

A few thousand years ago King ASHOKA vigorously used armed violence to extend his Indian kingdom; the use of such violence was very common and regarded as a normal method for conquest by any king or emperor or power.

It is written that after the last great battle he fought, he saw thousands of bodies of dead soldiers; at that point in his life he was filled with great remorse and regret, realising he had been responsible for so much suffering and death. He decided never to wage war again. He became a Buddhist and spread the ideas of *ahimsa*, non-violence, as far as he could.

Of course such realizations and subsequent changes were exceptionally rare among rulers. On one hand one half expects selfish desires and malevolent policies in political systems, but it is a great shock when godly people or institutions indulge in the violent pursuit of power, glory, material possessiveness and even revenge.



There are many, many examples of such leaders and of such people both in the past and in the present but, of course there are examples of people who kept and still keep the integrity of their spiritual beliefs and position.

Good examples for this are the emperor John the Good and his wife Irene of the Byzantine era, Pope John XXIII, Mahatma GANDHI, Saint Francis of Assisi, or Martin LUTHER, just to name a few.

You cannot use destructive force and call it justice; you cannot kill and call it God's will; you cannot subject others and call it the divine right of kings; and you cannot gain freedom, equality, sisterhood and brotherhood through violent revolutions.

At least it cannot be for someone who calls herself or himself a spiritual person, for when their conscience compels them to act, to speak against something wrong, they are aware that a way can be found which does not involve the use of any violence.

Although they do resist, finally they have the courage either personally or collectively to act in a way that does not compromise or damage their firmly held and profound spiritual values and principles.

Honoured be Your Name

When systems have been corrupted by political and personal ambitions, there are always individuals who rise above such limitations, keeping the high respect and honour of their personal life.

In fact, they are the true emperors. In the Greek language the word 'emperor,' *afokratoras*, means the person who is the ruler of her or his own self and it all begins there, with the person, the individual.

Although we may look at social, economic, cultural, historical and regional factors, which in their own way are relevant, what makes the real difference for betterment is first of all the individual.

It is the individual, who because of her or his experience and code of beliefs, has been able to rise above the commonly heard thinking and customs and preserved the integrity of the true and authentic.

They have been able to "see" and to resist wrong values and negative forces. One can see this many times in history, for example how the young students Sophia SCHOLL and her brother Hans SCHOLL actively opposed the Nazi regime, constantly appealing to inherent human spiritual values.

They had the courage to stand and to speak, and although they paid for it with their lives, their example, although at first reviled by the German people, is now honoured and highly appreciated. In fact, in a country where there are many war criminals, they are among the few war heroes.

As we Forgive those who Trespass against us

We resist by the way we live, that is, by the spiritual standard which we believe in and which we follow on a daily basis. This standard does not change at all because of fear or expediency.

Resistance is not essentially accusations, threats and taking up of arms. True resistance is to live the message of peace, of respectfulness and of forgiveness. Let us ask: How did Jesus Christ resist? Or how did Buddha resist?

A true value is a true value always, whether it is peace or forgiveness or respect or tolerance or mercy. Although these values have a social expression, essentially they are the inner values of the human spirit, therefore they are eternal.

They can not be diluted by clever arguments or any type of expediency, because they are not values of convenience or of a particular epoch or social structure. They are existentially always relevant, and their relevance is expressed by any individual who chooses to tap into them at any time and at any place on the planet.

The worth of human life depends on the practice and the expression of these inherent values. The experience and expression of these values is centred on realizing the personal, inner system of these eternal principles.

But we must also connect them with each other, and we must connect them with God, the Original Pure Source. This becomes the way to truly overcome and resist whatever hypocrisy, evil and injustice that exist.

We can always find reasons to complain about and blame any and every external system, whether religious, political or social; and thereby conveniently excuse our inertia, frustration and negativity.

All external systems and institutions are human-made, so it is largely inevitable, even with the best and most honest intentions, that they will be faulty and mistaken to a lesser or to a much greater degree.

Problems abound everywhere and have done so for all time, whatever period of history we look at. Often the problem itself, however, is not the problem, but the way we think about it and the way we approach it is the real problem.

An innovator never focuses on the problem, but rather makes room consciously for alternatives and solutions. It is one and for that a quite important thing to acknowledge a difficulty, a fault and a wrong behaviour.

But it is quite another thing to focus on it so much that it expands in our mind and entangles us in negativity. The entanglement stifles clear understanding and being so overfocused on what is wrong, we become completely blind to the obvious.

But what is indeed the obvious? The obvious is the reality of our personal, inner system. Until we recognize, until we use the resources of our inner system, life will not offer positive responses or alternatives to the harsh negativities which abound in every system of present life.

On Earth as it is in Heaven

The individuals who realize the existence of their inner systems, who daily tap into that energy of permanent principles, rise above the pettiness and trivia of complaint and comparison; they can rise above the harshness of injustice and cruelty and can finally decide to Act.

They will act by such an action that is not permeated with revenge, with self-righteousness or with resignation, but by an action that answers and responds to the challenges for benevolent alternatives.

Such individuals attract similar individuals, who also have decided to think and act from their inner system. They come together, like the fingers of a hand, to accomplish a genuine and profound task.

Together they constitute a powerful and effective hand, which is not clenched to punch, to push, or to beat, but as a hand, which is entitled and willing to hold, to touch, to heal, to encourage and to care.

Those who use the inner eternal principles as reference points do not descend into the bitterness and violence of the accusers, the judges, the punishers, but they finally decide to help and serve.

Such individuals are able, no matter what threatens them or happens in the world, to maintain the connection with those principles, methods and values that make life holy, sacred, blessed and meaningful.

They work with a great enthusiasm and in a deep silence, because they believe in others as well as believing in life, and so have committed themselves to live non-violently in a violent world.

They can radiate optimism, calmness and peace into the darkest corners of the deepest negativity, working with time and patience, or even quickness and speed, where it appears necessary.

They can continue the fulfilment of their aims and tasks; they can keep going in the pilgrimage of life, because their inner strength gives them a confident and united thought: "There is always a way."

