

Daily Meditation 09/28/2022

The Italian Election and the Impermanence of Democracy

Good morning.

Today we're meditating together on the Italian election of this weekend and the impermanence of democracy. That word "impermanence" is a rich one, especially in the Buddhist tradition, where we are reminded that all things are impermanent. Nothing here is eternal.

If you look at the big picture, in 5 billion years or so our sun will burn up. And will take several planets with it, including our own. And, of course, the vastness of the universe and the vast times involved, that have brought us here, remind us, too, that evolution is a reality. And you might even say another word for evolution is impermanence. Because evolution tells us everything is undergoing change, constantly.

And so a big question comes up: how permanent is democracy? And we are Americans, how permanent is democracy here? Obviously, democracy is under many challenges at this time in history, at home and abroad, and we have other versions of government, such as China, or Russia. And we have many, many versions of democracy. And democracy itself has to evolve in order to stay around.

Now, we may even say that another way to look at impermanence is by way of the *via negativa*, that the *via negativa* teaches us that we learn as individuals, but also as societies and communities, to let go, learning to let go and to let be. That's the root of the *via negativa*.

Whether we're talking about the stillness of meditation, meditation as calming the mind, mind-emptiness that leads to mindfulness, or whether we're talking about suffering, and grieving, and loss, all these are experiences of letting go and letting be.

But of course, when it comes to a society, we imagine that we're going to leave something worthwhile for others, for our children and grandchildren, as we move on, as we let go of these bones and bodies.

And so that's the shock involved, obviously, in facing the impermanence of democracy: what would come next, if those who want to live by authoritarianism instead of by democracy, succeed in their intentions?

What comes next, if an authoritarian figure takes over contrary to the rules of democracy, and imagines that he or she is empowered to make all the decisions without any feedback from the citizens and from the voters?

So obviously, we are facing a significant moment in democracy's history, whether we're talking about Italy, or whether we're talking about any country, and certainly with the United States at this time.

So let us put on our wisdom caps, and our spiritual warriorhood, and move forward if we believe enough in democracy to bring it up to date, and to address issues of economic justice and political justice and cultural integrity to work hard, to see that it sticks around, even as it evolves for future generations

Thank you. We'll see you tomorrow