

Yearning for a Better World

Noirin Sheahan · Tips of the Day · 2 min read

This tip is inspired by a few lines from Bhante's Diary: "If enough people yearn for a better world ...something will manifest. After all society is conjunction of hearts and minds. Let us work in our own little ways for unification". We can join this effort, this collective yearning for a better world, through the practice of metta (goodwill) e.g. "May the global crisis bring a change for the better in society". Don't underestimate the potential for good even in a single good-wish. The flap of a butterfly wing can cause a storm. The ripple effects of metta through the world are similarly unpredictable. But there may be challenges e.g. the words 'global crisis' might bring up anxiety, while thinking about society changing for the better could bring up scepticism. We might give up after a few token wishes. But if we want to do our bit, we need to persevere. One option is to focus on equanimity, the balance of mind that adds strength to metta, giving us the necessary calm and steadiness to bring forth good-will in the face of challenges like anxiety and scepticism. Paradoxically, this strength stems from recognizing our limitations. It's the delusion that we should somehow be able to save the world that brings on anxiety, prevents us seeing the potential for good in others. We can cultivate equanimity using a phrase such as "Though I wish the world changes for the better, I have no power to make this happen". Sometimes recognising our limitations brings relief, and we are better able to wish well for our fragile world. But sometimes not - admitting to powerlessness in the face of the deep threat to civilisation might bring up fear, hatred or other hindrances. Here we resort to our old friend - vipassana. Seeing how much work is needed to change ourselves for the better, we start to feel relieved that we're not expected to do this for anyone else never mind the whole world! We start to trust that at some deep level, the world is OK, that each person has the potential for good, and that change for the better really is possible. To encourage ourselves we need to look out for signs of hope such as the number of community groups that have been set up to help vulnerable people through the crisis. We should pause for a moment on hearing any such news, let it recharge our metta-batteries, hope that the cumulative effect of all such efforts will bring beneficial change to our social structures, our shared values. As Bhante says: "If enough people yearn for a better world ...something will manifest."

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