

The Wisdom and Virtues of Insecurity

Bhante Bodhidhamma · Tips of the Day · 2 min read

Everything changes and everything is dependent on something else. We, human beings, are always changing and dependent on virtually everything! We are all made up of bits and pieces and each bit is dependent on many of the pieces. And all these bits and pieces are changing all the time. The recognition and acceptance of impermanence is one of the rocks upon which the Buddha established his teaching. It is part of his last valedictory encouragement. 'Everything that is a compound is subject to change. Strive diligently for your liberation.' None of this comes as a surprise. But that does not mean to say we are ready for changes that really do upset our regular, presumed changes of everyday life. The sudden appearance of Coronavirus, a fatal illness! We have been lucky in the West not to have to deal with MERS, SARS, Zika, Ebola. And scientists say there are more on the way! Hold onto your hats! What are the contemplations and virtues that will steel our hearts to acceptance and action? The contemplations of sickness, ageing and death prepares the ground for profound acceptance. These were the awakening calls – the 'Messengers of the Gods' – that woke the Bodhisatta to his vow to become fully self-enlightened. Repeating the phrases once a day and really driving home their truth value that sickness and death could strike today, sensing any resistance, would be enough to keep us prepared for the worst. Equanimity, calmness in danger, comes in handy! This has to be based on acceptance. This is the way it is. This is what it is. This allows clarity to arise, untainted by emotional bias, and protects us from denial and fake hope of wacko theories – how could anyone in their right mind think that swallowing a cleaning liquid that says it kills 99% of known germs could be taken as a medicine and swallowed? Hopefully, they have recovered. Yes even the good old British stiff upper lip, courage and stoicism to face dire situations. Patient forbearance the Buddha says is the highest form of ascetic practice. In other words, letting go is most difficult when we are in a stressful situation. Lockdown, social distancing, restrictions on where we can go, who we can visit, where we can eat, all call for renouncing of enjoyable habits. So all in all, we may become grateful for this disruption in our lives. If we have responded with wisdom, it will make us more flexible, more inventive, more optimistic, more ready to face sudden changes in our lives in the future whatever the cause. The Chinese word for crisis says it – dangerous times may lead to opportunities.

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