

Bhaya Vera Sutta

The Discourse on Fear and Hate

[Disadvantages of breaking the Five Precepts]

(Aṅguttara Nikāya 5.174/3:204-206)

Translated by Piya Tan ©2003

Introduction

The word *vera* is usually translated as “anger, hatred”¹ and its antonym *avera* is “non-hating, loving, friendly.”² The term *pañca bhayāni verāni* or more briefly, *pañca, verā* (Vbh 378) refers the five kinds of fear (*bhaya*) arising from breaking of the five precepts. In the latter usage (in this sutta), it is synonymous with *pāpa* and as such should be translated as “evil.”

The translated English expression “fear and hate” (as uncountable singular) refer to fivefold fear and hate (*pañca bhayāni verāni*) that arises as a result of the breaching of the five precepts.³ In keeping with this trend, I have also rendered the close synonym *bhera bhaya* as “terror and fear”, keeping it as collective uncountable singular. The Commentary glosses *bhera bhaya* as “volitions of fear and hate” (*bhaya, vera, cetanāyo*, SA 2:72). I have chosen this translation rather than “terrible danger,” etc, in keeping with my rendition of *bhaya vera* as “fear and hate” (always singular despite the Pali).

I have taken both “fear” (*bhaya*) and “anger” (*vera*) as feelings (mental states) and as emotions (physical expression of such states). “Terror” (*bhera*) is an emotion (expression). However, as Nyanaponika states, a distinction should be made here:

It should be first made clear that, in Buddhist psychology, “feeling” (Pali: *vedanā*) is the bare sensation noted as pleasant, unpleasant and neutral. Hence it should not be confused with emotion which, though arising from the basic feeling, adds to it likes or dislikes of varying intensity, as well as other thought processes. (Nyanaponika., 1983:7)

However, I think that both these psychological aspects—feeling and emotion—are expressed in the “fear and hate” [n1] suttas dealing with the Five Precepts.

Fear is one of the 4 biases or prejudices (*agati*)—the others being desire (*chanda*), hatred (*dosa*) and delusion (*moha*)—that motivates one in immoral behaviour.⁴ Fear however can also be the result of another mental state—a physical expression of the feeling, that is, an emotion: “Fear arises from love” (*piyato jayato bhaya*, Dh 212); “fear arises from affection” (*pemato jayati bhayaṃ*, Dh 213).

The Pañca Bhera, bhaya Sutta (S 12.41)⁵ deals with the attainment of stream-winning (*sotāpatti*) in connection with the keeping of the five precepts. One who keeps the Precepts do not give rise to “terror and fear” (*bhaya vera*) in the world both here and hereafter. In so doing, one does not suffer physical pain and mental displeasure. The importance of this teaching is attested by the fact that the same discourse also appears as **the Pañca Vera Sutta** (S 55.28)⁶ and **the Bhaya Vera Sutta** (A 10.92),⁷ and that the discourse also has other names such as **Pañca Bhaya, vera Sutta**.

¹ A 4:247; Dh 5; J 4:71; DhA 1:50; PvA 13.

² D D 1:167, 247 (*sa, vera, avera*), 251; S 4:296; A 4:246; Sn 150.

³ See for example S 2:68; A 5.174/3:204-206, 9.27/4:405-407, 10.92/5:182-184; It 57 = Sn 167 (*vera, bhay’-atīta*).

⁴ D 3:182, 228; A 2:18.

⁵ S 12.41/2:68-70 = SD 3.3.

⁶ S 55.28/5:387-389.

⁷ A 10.92/5:182-184.

The Discourse on Fear and Hate

(A 5.174/3:204-206)

The five precepts

1 Then the householder Anātha,piṇḍika went up to the Blessed One, saluted him and sat down at one side. As he was sitting thus at one side, the Blessed One said this to him:

2 Householder, one who has not given up five kinds of fear and hate is called immoral, and arises in hell. What are the five?

The harming of living beings;
the taking of the not-given;
sexual misconduct;
false speech;
strong drinks, distilled drinks, fermented drinks and that which causes heedlessness. [205]

Householder, one who has not given up these five kinds of fear and hate is called immoral, and arises in hell.

3 Householder, one who has given up five kinds of fear and hate is called morally virtuous, and arises in heaven. What are the five?

The harming of living beings;
the taking of the not-given;
sexual misconduct;
false speech;
strong drinks, distilled drinks, fermented drinks and that which causes heedlessness.

Householder, one who has given up these five kinds of fear and hate is called morally virtuous, and arises in heaven.

The training rules⁸

4 (1) Householder, one who harms living beings, by reason of one's harming living beings, begets fear and hate here and now, and begets fear and hate in the hereafter—one feels (physical) pain and (mental) displeasure.

But one who *refrains* from harming living beings, by reason of one's not harming living beings, one does not beget fear and hate here and now, nor beget fear and hate in the hereafter—one feels neither pain nor displeasure.

By refraining from harming living beings, one thus ends the fear and hate.

5 (2) Householder, one who takes the not-given, by reason of one's taking the not-given, begets fear and hate here and now, and begets fear and hate in the hereafter—one feels (physical) pain and (mental) displeasure.

But one who *refrains* from taking the not-given, by reason of one's not taking the not-given, one does not beget fear and hate here and now, nor beget fear and hate in the hereafter—one feels neither pain nor displeasure.

By refraining from taking the not-given, one thus ends the fear and hate.

6 (3) Householder, one who commits sexual misconduct, by reason of one's committing sexual misconduct, begets fear and hate here and now, and begets fear and hate in the hereafter—one feels (physical) pain and (mental) displeasure.

But one who *refrains* from sexual misconduct, by reason of one's not committing sexual misconduct, one does not beget fear and hate here and now, nor beget fear and hate in the hereafter—one feels neither pain nor displeasure.

By refraining from sexual misconduct, one thus ends the fear and hate.

⁸ This section occurs in (Thera) Bhaya Vera S (A 9.27/4:406).

7 (4) Householder, one who speaks false speech, by reason of one's speaking false speech, begets fear and hate here and now, and begets fear and hate in the hereafter—one feels pain and displeasure.

But one who *refrains* from false speech, by reason of one's refraining from false speech, one does not beget fear and hate here and now, nor beget fear and hate in the hereafter—one feels neither pain nor displeasure.

By refraining from false speech, one thus ends the fear and hate.

8 (5) Householder, one who takes distilled drinks, fermented drinks and that which causes heedlessness, by reason of one's taking *them*, begets fear and hate here and now, and begets fear and hate in the hereafter—one feels pain and displeasure.

But one who *refrains* from distilled drinks, fermented drinks and that which causes heedlessness, by reason of one's not taking them, one does not beget fear and hate here and now, nor beget fear and hate in the hereafter—one feels neither pain nor displeasure.

By refraining from distilled drinks, fermented drinks and that which causes heedlessness, one thus ends the fear and hate.

He who harms living beings, and speaks false speech,⁹
Who in the world takes the not-given, and goes with the women of others,
The man who is given to drinking distilled and fermented drinks—
Not giving up these five evils (*pañca, verāni*) is called immoral (*dussīlo*):
When the body has broken up after death, the fool arises in hell.

He who harms not living beings, and speaks not false speech,
Who in the world does not take the not-given, and goes not with others' women,
The man who is not given to distilled and fermented drinks— [206]
Having given up these five evils (*pañca, verāni*) is called virtuous (*sīlavā*).
When the body has broken up after death, the wise arises in heaven.

—evam—

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⁹ The first three lines here occur at Dh 246 f. Cf S 4:343.