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(Bhaya) Vera Sutta

The Discourse on (Fear and) Hate | A 5.174

Theme: Disadvantages of breaking the 5 precepts

Translated by Piya Tan ©2003

1 Introduction

1.1 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.”

1.2 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).

1.3 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.

1.4 Fear is the last of the 4 biases or prejudices (*agati*, literally “wrong course”)—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).

1.5 **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 mental pain or displeasure. The importance of this teaching is attested by the fact that the same discourse also

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

² 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 See **Sigal’ovāda s** (D 31,5/3:182), **Saṅgīti S** (D 22,1.11(19)/3:228, *agata,gamana*); **Agati S 1** (A 4.17/2:18, **Saṅga-ha Bala S** (A 9.5,6.4/4:364), SD 2.21; Vism 22.55/683, 22.69/685.

⁵ S 12.41/2:68-70 = SD 3.3.

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**.

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(Bhaya) Vera Sutta

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A 5.174

The 5 precepts

1 Then the houselord 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 Houselord, one who has not given up five kinds of fear and hate is called immoral, and arises in hell.

2.2 What are the five (that he has *not* given up)?

- (1) Harming of living beings.
- (2) Taking of the not-given.
- (3) Sexual misconduct.
- (4) False speech.
- (5) Strong drinks, distilled drinks, fermented drinks and that which causes heedlessness. **[205]**

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

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

3.2 What are the five (that he *has* given up)?

- (1) Harming of living beings.
- (2) Taking of the not-given.
- (3) Sexual misconduct.
- (4) False speech.
- (5) Strong drinks, distilled drinks, fermented drinks and that which causes heedlessness.

3.3 Houselord, 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) Houselord, **one who harms living beings**,
on account of one's *harming living beings*,
begets fear and hate here and now, and begets fear and hate in the hereafter
—one feels mental pain or displeasure.⁹

⁶ S 55.28/5:387-389.

⁷ A 10.92/5:182-184.

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

⁹ "Mental pain or displeasure," *cetasikam pi dukkham domanassam*. Here clearly mental states are meant. Cf defs of *dukkha* and *domanassa* at **Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna S** (D 22) & **Sacca Vibhaṅga S** (D 22) where they refer to "physical pain" and "mental pain" respectively (D 22,18(4cd)) = SD 13.2 & (M 141,16+17), SD 11.11.

- 4.2 But one who **abstains** from *harming living beings*,
on account of one's abstaining from *harming living beings*,
one neither begets fear and hate here and now, nor begets fear and hate in the hereafter
—one feels neither mental pain nor displeasure.
- 4.3 By abstaining from harming living beings, one thus ends the fear and hate.
- 5** (2) Houselord, **one who takes the not-given**,
on account of one's *taking the not-given*,
begets fear and hate here and now, and begets fear and hate in the hereafter
—one feels mental pain or displeasure.
- 5.2 But one who **abstains** from taking the not-given,
on account of one's abstaining from *taking the not-given*,
neither begets fear and hate here and now, nor begets fear and hate in the hereafter
—one feels neither mental pain nor displeasure.
- 5.3 By abstaining from taking the not-given, one thus ends the fear and hate.
- 6** (3) Houselord, **one who commits sexual misconduct**,
on account of one's *committing sexual misconduct*,
begets fear and hate here and now, and begets fear and hate in the hereafter
—one feels mental pain or displeasure.
- 6.2 But one who **abstains** from sexual misconduct,
on account of one's abstaining from *sexual misconduct*,
neither begets fear and hate here and now, nor begets fear and hate in the hereafter
—one feels neither mental pain nor displeasure.
- 6.3 By abstaining from sexual misconduct, one thus ends the fear and hate.
- 7** (4) Houselord, **one who speaks false speech**,
on account 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.
- 7.2 But one who **abstains** from false speech,
on account of one's abstaining from *false speech*,
neither begets fear and hate here and now, nor begets fear and hate in the hereafter
—one feels neither mental pain nor displeasure.
- 7.3 By abstaining from *false speech*, one thus ends the fear and hate.
- 8** (5) Houselord, **one who takes distilled drinks, fermented drinks and that which causes heedlessness**,
on account of one's taking *distilled drinks, fermented drinks and that which causes heedlessness*,
begets fear and hate here and now, and begets fear and hate in the hereafter
—one feels mental pain or displeasure.
- 8.2 But one who **abstains** from distilled drinks, fermented drinks and that which causes heedlessness,
on account of one's abstaining from *distilled drinks, fermented drinks and that which causes heedlessness*,
neither begets fear and hate here and now, nor begets fear and hate in the hereafter
—one feels neither mental pain nor displeasure.
- 8.3 By abstaining from *distilled drinks, fermented drinks and that which causes heedlessness*, one thus ends the fear and hate.

Closing verses

- 8.4 He who harms living beings, and speaks false speech,¹⁰
 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.
- 8.5 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.

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¹⁰ The first three lines here occur at Dh 246 f. Cf S 4:343.