

Bhayabherava Sutta (MN 4)

Fear and Terror

Translated by Bhante Suddhāso

Thus have I heard. On one occasion the Blessed One was living at Sāvatti, at Jeta's Grove, in Anāthapiṇḍika's Park. Then the Brahmin Jāṇussoni approached the Blessed One and greeted him. When the appropriate polite conversation was finished, he sat to one side. When he was seated to one side, the Brahmin Jāṇussoni said to the Blessed One, "Sir Gotama, of the gentlemen renunciates who go forth from home to homelessness because¹ of Sir Gotama, Sir Gotama is their leader, Sir Gotama is their helper², Sir Gotama is their advisor; and the populace follows the example of Sir Gotama."

"So it is, Brahmin; so it is, Brahmin. Brahmin, of the gentlemen renunciates who go forth from home to homelessness because of me, I am their leader, I am their helper, I am their advisor; and the populace follows my example."

"Sir Gotama, it is hard to settle in dwellings in remote wilderness or forest areas, seclusion is hard to practice, solitude is hard to enjoy; the forest seemingly³ harasses the mind of a monk who does not gain concentration."

"So it is, Brahmin; so it is, Brahmin. Brahmin, it is hard to settle in dwellings in remote wilderness or forest areas, seclusion is hard to practice, solitude is hard to enjoy; the forest seemingly harasses the mind of a monk who does not gain concentration."

"Brahmin, before my awakening, when I was still just an unawakened Bodhisatta⁴, I was aware of this: 'It is hard to settle in dwellings in remote wilderness or forest areas, seclusion is hard to practice, solitude is hard to enjoy; the forest seemingly harasses the mind of a monk who does not gain concentration.'

"Brahmin, it occurred to me, 'When contemplatives or brahmins who are not pure in their physical conduct go to dwell in remote wilderness or forest areas, because of that flaw - their impure physical conduct - those honorable contemplatives and brahmins bring upon themselves unwholesome fear and terror. But when I go to dwell in remote wilderness or forest areas, I am not impure in my physical conduct; I am pure in my physical conduct. Of the noble ones who are pure in their physical conduct when they go to dwell in remote wilderness or forest areas, I am one of them.' Brahmin, seeing pure physical conduct in myself, I became more confident about living in the wilderness."

"Brahmin, it occurred to me, 'When contemplatives or brahmins who are not pure in their verbal conduct... mental conduct... livelihood go to dwell in remote wilderness or forest areas...' Brahmin, seeing pure livelihood in myself, I became more confident about living in the wilderness."

1 *Uddissa*. Lit. "indicating" or "referring to."

2 *Tesaṃ bahukāra*. Lit. "one who does much for them."

3 *Maññe*. Lit. "I think." This word is used to indicate hyperbole.

4 Lit. "One who is intent on attaining awakening."

“Brahmin, it occurred to me, ‘When contemplatives or brahmins who are filled with covetousness and intense lust⁵ for sensuality go to dwell in remote wilderness or forest areas, because of that flaw - covetousness and intense lust for sensuality - those honorable contemplatives and brahmins bring upon themselves unwholesome fear and terror. But when I go to dwell in remote wilderness or forest areas, I have no covetousness or intense lust for sensuality; I am free of covetousness. Of the noble ones who are free of covetousness when they go to dwell in remote wilderness or forest areas, I am one of them.’ Brahmin, seeing the absence of covetousness in myself, I became more confident about living in the wilderness.

“Brahmin, it occurred to me, ‘When contemplatives or brahmins who have aversive mentalities and malignant thoughts go to dwell in remote wilderness or forest areas, because of that flaw - an aversive mentality and malignant thoughts - those honorable contemplatives and brahmins bring upon themselves unwholesome fear and terror. But when I go to dwell in remote wilderness or forest areas, I do not have an aversive mentality or malignant thoughts; I have a mentality of loving-kindness. Of the noble ones who have mentalities of loving-kindness when they go to dwell in remote wilderness or forest areas, I am one of them.’ Brahmin, seeing a mentality of loving-kindness in myself, I became more confident about living in the wilderness.

“Brahmin, it occurred to me, ‘When contemplatives or brahmins who are overwhelmed by dullness and drowsiness⁶ go to dwell in remote wilderness or forest areas, because of that flaw - being overwhelmed by dullness and drowsiness - those honorable contemplatives and brahmins bring upon themselves unwholesome fear and terror. But when I go to dwell in remote wilderness or forest areas, I am not overwhelmed by dullness and drowsiness; I am free of dullness and drowsiness. Of the noble ones who are free of dullness and drowsiness when they go to dwell in remote wilderness or forest areas, I am one of them.’ Brahmin, seeing the absence of dullness and drowsiness in myself, I became more confident about living in the wilderness.

“Brahmin, it occurred to me, ‘When contemplatives or brahmins who have agitation and unpeaceful mentalities go to dwell in remote wilderness or forest areas, because of that flaw - agitation and an unpeaceful mentality - those honorable contemplatives and brahmins bring upon themselves unwholesome fear and terror. But when I go to dwell in remote wilderness or forest areas, I do not have agitation or an unpeaceful mentality; I have a peaceful mentality. Of the noble ones who have peaceful mentalities when they go to dwell in remote wilderness or forest areas, I am one of them.’ Brahmin, seeing a peaceful mentality in myself, I became more confident about living in the wilderness.

“Brahmin, it occurred to me, ‘When contemplatives or brahmins who have doubt and skepticism go to dwell in remote wilderness or forest areas, because of that flaw - doubt and skepticism - those honorable contemplatives and brahmins bring upon themselves unwholesome fear and terror. But when I go to dwell in remote wilderness or forest areas, I do not have doubt or skepticism; I have gone beyond skepticism. Of the noble ones who have gone beyond skepticism when they go to dwell in remote wilderness or forest areas,

5 *Rāga*. This can also mean “passion.”

6 *Thīna-middha*. That is, mental dullness and physical drowsiness.

I am one of them.’ Brahmin, seeing that I had gone beyond skepticism, I became more confident about living in the wilderness.

“Brahmin, it occurred to me, ‘When contemplatives or brahmins who praise themselves and disparage others go to dwell in remote wilderness or forest areas, because of that flaw – self-praising and disparaging others – those honorable contemplatives and brahmins bring upon themselves unwholesome fear and terror. But when I go to dwell in remote wilderness or forest areas, I do not praise myself or disparage others; I am one who does not praise oneself or disparage others. Of the nobles ones who do not praise themselves or disparage others when they go to dwell in remote wilderness or forest areas, I am one of them.’ Brahmin, seeing that I do not praise myself or disparage others, I became more confident about living in the wilderness.

“Brahmin, it occurred to me, ‘When contemplatives or brahmins who are timid and cowardly go to dwell in remote wilderness or forest areas, because of that flaw – timidity and cowardice – those honorable contemplatives and brahmins bring upon themselves unwholesome fear and terror. But when I go to dwell in remote wilderness or forest areas, I am not timid or cowardly; I am free of apprehension. Of the nobles ones who are free of apprehension when they go to dwell in remote wilderness or forest areas, I am one of them.’ Brahmin, seeing the absence of apprehension in me, I became more confident about living in the wilderness.

“Brahmin, it occurred to me, ‘When contemplatives or brahmins who long for acquisition, respect, and fame go to dwell in remote wilderness or forest areas, because of that flaw – longing for acquisition, respect, and fame – those honorable contemplatives and brahmins bring upon themselves unwholesome fear and terror. But when I go to dwell in remote wilderness or forest areas, I do not long for acquisition, respect, and fame; I have few wishes. Of the nobles ones who have few wishes when they go to dwell in remote wilderness or forest areas, I am one of them.’ Brahmin, seeing that I have few wishes, I became more confident about living in the wilderness.

“Brahmin, it occurred to me, ‘When contemplatives or brahmins who are lazy and lethargic go to dwell in remote wilderness or forest areas, because of that flaw – laziness and lethargy – those honorable contemplatives and brahmins bring upon themselves unwholesome fear and terror. But when I go to dwell in remote wilderness or forest areas, I am not lazy and lethargic; I am energetic. Of the nobles ones who are energetic when they go to dwell in remote wilderness or forest areas, I am one of them.’ Brahmin, seeing energy in myself, I became more confident about living in the wilderness.

“Brahmin, it occurred to me, ‘When contemplatives or brahmins who have hazy mindfulness and a lack of clear awareness go to dwell in remote wilderness or forest areas, because of that flaw – hazy mindfulness and a lack of clear awareness – those honorable contemplatives and brahmins bring upon themselves unwholesome fear and terror. But when I go to dwell in remote wilderness or forest areas, I do not have hazy mindfulness and a lack of clear awareness; I have mindfulness established. Of the nobles ones who have mindfulness established when they go to dwell in remote wilderness or forest areas, I am one of them.’ Brahmin, seeing that I have mindfulness established, I became more confident about living in the wilderness.

“Brahmin, it occurred to me, ‘When contemplatives or brahmins who have an unconcentrated and scattered mind go to dwell in remote wilderness or forest areas, because of that flaw - an unconcentrated and scattered mind - those honorable contemplatives and brahmins bring upon themselves unwholesome fear and terror. But when I go to dwell in remote wilderness or forest areas, I do not have an unconcentrated and scattered mind; I have concentration. Of the nobles ones who have concentration when they go to dwell in remote wilderness or forest areas, I am one of them.’ Brahmin, seeing that I have concentration, I became more confident about living in the wilderness.

“Brahmin, it occurred to me, ‘When contemplatives or brahmins who are foolish and stupid go to dwell in remote wilderness or forest areas, because of that flaw - foolishness and stupidity - those honorable contemplatives and brahmins bring upon themselves unwholesome fear and terror. But when I go to dwell in remote wilderness or forest areas, I do not have foolishness and stupidity; I have wisdom. Of the nobles ones who have wisdom when they go to dwell in remote wilderness or forest areas, I am one of them.’ Brahmin, seeing that I have wisdom, I became more confident about living in the wilderness.

“Brahmin, it occurred to me, ‘Perhaps on the standard auspicious days - the fourteenth, fifteenth, and eighth days of the fortnight⁷ - I will go to live in dwellings that are terrifying and apprehension-inducing, such as forest cairns⁸, jungle cairns, and tree cairns; maybe I will experience fear and terror.’ Brahmin, on a later occasion, during the standard auspicious days - the fourteenth, fifteenth, and eighth days of the fortnight - I went to live in dwellings that are terrifying and apprehension-inducing, such as forest cairns, jungle cairns, and tree cairns. Brahmin, while I was living there, a deer would come, or a peacock would knock down a stick, or the wind would make the leaves rustle; Brahmin, it would occur to me, ‘Perhaps this is the fear and terror coming.’

“Brahmin, it occurred to me, ‘Setting that aside - why do I dwell in expectation of fear? Perhaps in whatever way fear and terror come to me, in that way I will remove the fear and terror.’ Brahmin, if fear and terror came while I was walking, I would not stand or sit or recline until I removed that fear and terror while walking. Brahmin, if fear and terror came while I was standing, I would not walk or sit or recline until I removed that fear and terror while standing. Brahmin, if fear and terror came while I was sitting, I would not recline or stand or walk until I removed that fear and terror while sitting. Brahmin, if fear and terror came while I was reclining, I would not sit or stand or walk until I removed that fear and terror while reclining.

“Brahmin, there are some contemplatives and brahmins who perceive the night as exactly the same as the day, and the day as exactly the same as the night. Here I say that those contemplatives and brahmins are dwelling in confusion. However, Brahmin, I perceive the night as exactly the same as the night, and the day as exactly the same as the day. Brahmin, if one might rightly speak of a person as ‘A being who is characteristically unconfused has arisen in the world for the welfare and happiness of many people, out of compassion for the world, for the benefit and welfare of celestial and human beings,’ they

7 That is, the lunar quarters.

8 *Cetiya*. This can also have the meaning “monument” or “shrine.”

would be rightly speaking of me as ‘A being who is characteristically unconfused has arisen in the world for the welfare and happiness of many people, out of compassion for the world, for the benefit and welfare of celestial and human beings.’

“Brahmin, in me unrelenting energy was initiated, clear mindfulness was established, my body was tranquil and unagitated, my mind was concentrated and focused⁹. Brahmin, isolated from sensuality and from unwholesome phenomena, I attained and remained in the first Jhāna, which has thought, examination, and the rapture and happiness produced by isolation. With the pacification¹⁰ of thought and examination, and with internal composure and mental unification, I attained and remained in the second Jhāna, which has no thought, no examination, and has the rapture and happiness produced by concentration. With the dissipation of rapture I dwelt equanimous, mindful, and clearly aware – what the noble ones describe as ‘Equanimous, mindful, and happy’; I attained and remained in the third Jhāna. With the abandoning of pleasure and pain, and with the previous disappearance of elation and depression, I attained and remained in the fourth Jhāna, which has neither pain nor pleasure, and has purity of mindfulness and equanimity.

“When my mind was concentrated in this way – completely pure, completely clean, flawless, free of defilements, flexible, workable, stable, and imperturbable – I directed my mind to the recollection of past lives. I remember numerous past lives – one life, two lives, three lives... a hundred lives... a hundred thousand lives... many eons of universal expansion... many eons of universal contraction... many eons of universal expansion and contraction – ‘At that place I had this name, this family, this appearance, this food, this experience of pleasure and pain, this death. Falling from there, I appeared over there, where I had that name, that family, that appearance, that food, that experience of pleasure and pain, that death. Falling from there, I appeared here.’ In this way, I remember numerous past lives and their characteristics in detail. Brahmin, this was the knowledge that was attained by me in the first part of the night. Ignorance was destroyed and knowledge arose, darkness was destroyed and light arose – as it is for one who is vigilant, persistent, and determined.

“When my mind was concentrated in this way – completely pure, completely clean, flawless, free of defilements, flexible, workable, stable, and imperturbable – I directed my mind to the knowledge of birth and death. With divine vision, which is pure and surpasses human vision, I see beings falling and appearing – inferior and superior, beautiful and ugly, in good places and bad places; I understand how beings fare according to their actions¹¹: ‘These honorable beings engaged in physical, verbal, and mental misconduct; they disparaged noble beings, they held wrong view, and they based their actions on wrong view. When they were separated from their bodies after death, they appeared in deprivation, a bad destination, downfall – hell. However, these honorable beings engaged in good physical, verbal, and mental conduct; they did not disparage noble beings, they held right view, and they based their actions on right view. When they were separated from their bodies after death, they appeared in a good destination – a heavenly world.’ In this way, with divine vision, which is pure and surpasses human vision, I see beings falling and appearing – inferior and superior, beautiful and ugly, in good places and bad places; I

9 *Ekagga*. Lit. “one point.”

10 *Vūpasama*. Lit. “close to peace.”

11 *Yathākammūpaga*.

understand how beings fare according to their actions. Brahmin, this was the knowledge that was attained by me in the middle part of the night. Ignorance was destroyed and knowledge arose, darkness was destroyed and light arose - as it is for one who is vigilant, persistent, and determined.

“When my mind was concentrated in this way - completely pure, completely clean, flawless, free of defilements, flexible, workable, stable, and imperturbable - I directed my mind to the knowledge of the elimination of the corruptions. I directly knew as it really is, ‘This is suffering,’ ‘This is the origin of suffering,’ ‘This is the cessation of suffering,’ ‘This is the path of practice which leads to the cessation of suffering,’ ‘These are the corruptions,’ ‘This is the origin of the corruptions,’ ‘This is the cessation of the corruptions,’ ‘This is the path of practice which leads to the cessation of the corruptions.’ Knowing and seeing in this way, my mind was freed from the corruption of sensuality, the corruption of existence, and the corruption of ignorance. With liberation there was the knowledge ‘Liberated.’ I directly knew, ‘Birth is eliminated, the spiritual life has been completed, what was to be done has been done, there will not be another life here.’ Brahmin, this was the knowledge that was attained by me in the third part of the night. Ignorance was destroyed and knowledge arose, darkness was destroyed and light arose - as it is for one who is vigilant, persistent, and determined.

“Brahmin, you may think, ‘Apparently even today the contemplative Gotama is still not free of lust, hatred, and delusion, which is why he goes to dwell in remote wilderness or forest areas.’ Brahmin, this is not the way to see it. Brahman, seeing two benefits, I go to dwell in remote wilderness or forest areas: I see it as a pleasant way of life for myself here and now, and I have compassion for the next generation.”

“Indeed, Sir Gotama has compassion for the next generation, as it is for an Arahant, a Rightly Self-Awakened One. Wonderful, Sir Gotama! Wonderful, Sir Gotama! Sir Gotama, just as one might set upright what has been overturned, or reveal what has been concealed, or explain the path to one who is confused, or bring an oil-lamp into the darkness so those with eyes can see - in the same way, Sir Gotama has revealed the Dhamma in many ways. I go for refuge to Sir Gotama, and to the Dhamma, and to the monastic community. May Sir Gotama remember me as a disciple who has taken refuge for the rest of his life.”