

5

Moral Shame and Moral Fear

Hiri,ottappa: The 2 bright states that are world-protectors
(Duka) Kaṇha Sutta, The (Twos) Discourse on the Dark, A 2.7, SD 2.5a
(Duka) Sukka Sutta, The (Twos) Discourse on the Bright, A 2.8, SD 2.5b
(Duka) Cariya Sutta, The (Twos) Discourse on Conduct, A 2.9, SD 2.5c
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1 Noble treasures

1.1 THE THREE DISCOURSES in this chapter—the **Kaṇha Sutta** (A 2.7), the **Sukka Sutta** (A 2.8) and the **Hiri Ottappa** or **Cariya Sutta** (A 2.9)—form a sequential set: they all are statements on moral shame (*hiri*) and moral fear (*ottappa*). They are all found in the **Kamma,kāraṇa Vagga**, “the torture chapter,”¹ the first chapter of the Book of Twos (*duka,nipāta*) of the Aṅguttara Nikāya.

1.2 MORAL SHAME

1.2.1 Moral shame (*P hiri*; Skt *hrī*) is a sense of disgust with the bad and unwholesome. The Abhidhamma defines moral shame as “to be ashamed of what one ought to be ashamed of, to be ashamed of performing bad and unwholesome deeds” (Pug 24).² It is one of the **7 noble treasures** (*ariya,dhana*): *faith, moral conduct, moral shame, moral fear, learning, generosity and wisdom*.³ Moral shame is often paired with **moral fear** (*ottappa*; Skt *apatrāpya*),⁴ and, as the foundation for morality, they are called “the world-protectors” (*loka,pāla*, A 1:51), since they are the preconditions for a functional and wholesome society.

In comparative terms, moral shame is disgust at bodily and verbal misconduct; moral fear is the fear of such misconduct. Moral shame is directed inwardly (to oneself). It arises from self-respect and moves us to reject wrongdoing on account of *our own inherent dignity*. Moral fear is directed outwardly. It arises from a fear of blame and moves us to reject wrongdoing based on *a fear of the social consequences*.⁵

1.2.2 Hiri

1.2.2.1 The Ariya Dhana Sutta 1 (A 7.5) is an abridgement of the **Ariya Dhana Sutta 2** (A 7.6). Both Suttas mention moral shame and moral fear as being two (the 3rd and the 4th) of the 7 noble treasures: those of *faith, moral virtue, moral shame, moral fear, learning, charity and wisdom*.⁶ These treasures or precious qualities truly bless the lives of the lay follower with true and lasting wealth that brings happiness and spiritual liberation.

1.2.2.2 The Ariya Dhana Sutta 2 (A 7.6) lists **moral shame** as the 3rd treasure, thus:

4 And what, bhikshus, is **the treasure of moral shame**?⁷

¹ For details of **Kamma,kāraṇa Vagga** (A 2.1-2.10), see SD 51.0.

² Cf Dhs:R 18 f.

³ D 3:163, 251; A 4:5; VvA 113; cf A 3:53; DA 2:34; ThaA 240; VvA 113. Cf Sn 77, 462 (= D 1:168), 719.

⁴ Eg M 1:271; S 2:220; A 2:78; It 34; Tikap 61; J 1:127; Vism 221; DhA 3:73.

⁵ For details, see Vism 14.142/464,31-465,4; DhsA 124f; Bodhi (ed), *A Comprehensive Manual of Abhidhamma*, 1993:86.

⁶ A 7.5/4:4 f (SD 37.6(2a)) + A 7.6/4:5 f (SD 37.6(2b)).

⁷ This passage is stock: **Sekha S** (M 53,12/1:356); **Vitthata Pañca Sekha,bala S** (A 5.2,3/3:2); **Vitthata Satta Bala S** (A 7.4/4:3, called a “power,” *bala*); **Nagarôpama S** (A 7.63,14/4:109). Cf Dhs 3, 14, 23, 66, 78, 216, 227, 228. Opp: *ahirika* Vbh 359, 370; Pug 20, 24. The term *ottappa* is derived from *apa* + √TRAP (to be abashed) [Skt **āpatrāpya* > *apatrapā* (Trenckner)]. Andersen suggests that this etym must be preferred to that of Childers: **autap-*

Here, bhikshus, a noble disciple is one who has moral shame. He feels moral shame towards wrong bodily actions, wrong verbal action, wrong mental action. He is endowed with moral shame towards bad unwholesome states.⁸

This, bhikshus, is called the treasure of moral shame. (A 7.6), SD 37.6(2b)

1.3 MORAL FEAR

1.3.1 *Ottappa*.

1.3.1.1 The term *ottappa* is derived from *apa* + √*TRAP* (to be abashed) [Skt **āpatrapya* > *apatrapā* (Trenckner)]. Andersen suggests that this etymology must be preferred to that of Childers: **autappya* > *uttāpa*, *ut* + √*TAP* (heat) (*Pali Grammar*, 62). Edgerton (BHSD) has *apatrāpya* and the compound *hrīr-apatrāpya* (P *hiri,ottappa*). Moral shame is often paired with **moral fear** (*ottappa*),⁹ and, as the foundation for morality, called “the world-protectors” (*loka,pāla*, A 1:51), since they are the preconditions for a functional society.

1.3.1.2 The Ariya Dhana Sutta 2 (A 7.6) includes moral fear as the 4th of the 7 treasures [1.2.2.1]. It defines **moral fear** as follows:

5 And what, bhikshus, is **the treasure of moral fear**?¹⁰

Here, bhikshus, a noble disciple is one who has moral fear. He feels moral fear towards misconduct with the body, misconduct with speech, misconduct with the mind. He is endowed with moral fear towards bad unwholesome states.¹¹

This, bhikshus, is called the treasure of moral fear. (A 7.6), SD 37.6(2b)

1.4 RESPECT

1.4.1 According to **the Visuddhi,magga**, the proximate cause for moral shame is self-respect, while for moral fear it is respect for others. (Vism 14.142/464 f).

1.4.2 Moral shame is self-respect or self-regarding moral conduct, in the sense of disgust at bodily and verbal misconduct. It is motivated by the *shame* or censure that a wrong deed entails. Moral shame is directed inwardly (to oneself). On account of self-respect—because of our *inherent dignity*—we are moved to reject wrongdoing. Out of self-respect (*attāna garu katvā*), says Buddhaghosa, one, like the daughter of a good family, rejects bad-doing through moral shame.¹²

1.4.3 Moral fear is other-respect or other-regarding moral conduct as the fear over any misconduct. Moral fear is directed outwardly, as other-regarding moral conduct that is motivated by a healthy *fear* of karmic repercussion or personal accountability.¹³ It arises from a fear of blame and moves us to reject wrongdoing based on *a fear of the social consequences*.¹⁴ Buddhaghosa curiously says that out of respect for others (*param garu katvā*), one, like a courtesan, rejects bad-doing through moral fear.

pya > *uttāpa*, *ut* + √*TAP* (heat) (PG 62). Edgerton (BHSD) has *apatrāpya* and the cpd *hrīr-apatrāpya* (P *hiri,ottappa*). See **Abhabba S** (A 10.76/5:144-149), SD 2.4 & **Hiri Ottappa S** (A 2.9/1:50), SD 2.5.

⁸ *Hiriyati pāpakānaṃ akusalānaṃ dhamānaṃ samāpattiyā*.

⁹ M 1:271; S 2:220; A 2:78; It 34; Tikap 61; J 1:127; Vism 221; DhA 3:73.

¹⁰ Its occurrences (refs) are the same as those for “moral shame” [§4] n.

¹¹ Moral fear, see prec n.

¹² For details on moral shame, see SD 1.5 (4.2).

¹³ See **Ādhipateyya S** (A 3.40), SD 27.3.

¹⁴ For details, see Vism 14.142/464,31-465,4; DhA 124f; Bodhi (ed), *A Comprehensive Manual of Abhidhamma*, 1993:86.

1.4.4 The 2 bright states as world-protectors

1.4.4.1 As a dynamic pair, moral shame (*hiri*) and moral fear (*ottappa*)¹⁵ form the vital foundation of morality. They are called “**the world-protectors**” (*loka, pāla*, A 1:51), since they are the preconditions for a functional and wholesome society. Here, “world” (*loka*) refers to “beings” (*satta*), especially human beings, that is, to say, society.¹⁶ They protect the world in the sense of making possible the existence and progress of a wholesome society.

1.4.4.2 Moral shame and moral fear are called “**bright states**” (*sukkā dhamma*)¹⁷ because they are wholesome conditions that conduce to spiritual progress and happiness [2.5b]. These “bright” wholesome states are self-respect and other-respect. **Self-respect** is self-regard, self-worth or self-esteem. **Other-respect** is accepting others as they are, as having the potential for good, and that we should not hinder them from doing good or from spiritual progress.

More fully, they are said to be the 2 bright states that protect the world (*sukkā dhamma lokam pāleṇti*) [2.5c]. If not for them, “one would neither respect one’s mother, nor one’s mother’s sister, nor one’s brother’s wife, nor one’s teacher’s wife” so that we do not behave like animals (A 1:50).¹⁸

2 The 3 related suttas

What are briefly stated in the first two discourses—the **Kaṇha Sutta** (A 2.7) and the **Sukka Sutta** (A 2.8)—are fully laid out in **the Hiri Ottappa** or **Cariya Sutta** (A 2.9), which also appears verbatim as **the Sukka Dhamma Sutta** (It 2.5/36 f), the 42nd discourse of the Iti, vuttaka.¹⁹ The Sukka Dhamma Sutta, however, besides its characteristic opening (“This was indeed spoken by the Blessed One, spoken by the Arhat [worthy one], thus have I heard”),²⁰ also closes with these two verses:

*Yesañ ce hiri, ottappaṃ
sabbadā ca na vijjati
vokkantā sukka, mūlā te
jāti, maraṇa, gāmino*

For those whom moral shame and moral fear
are at all times unknown—
they, turning away from the roots of light,
are those who go to birth and death.

*Yesañ ca hiri, ottappaṃ
sadā sammā upaṭṭhitā
virūḷha, brahmacariyā te
santo khīṇa, punabbhavā ti*

But those for whom moral shame and moral fear
are ever always fully founded—
they, prospering in the holy life,
are at peace with rebirth destroyed. (It 2.5/36 f)

And it characteristically closes with “This matter [meaning], too, was spoken by the Blessed One. Thus I have heard.”²¹

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¹⁵ Eg M 1:271; S 2:220; A 2:78; It 34; Tikap 61; J 1:127; Vism 221; DhA 3:73.

¹⁶ On the 3 kinds of world, see SD 15.7 (3.5 (2)).

¹⁷ On “dark” and “bright” being applied to karma, see (**Vitthāra**) **Kamma S** (A 4.232), SD 4.13.

¹⁸ See **Veju, dvāreyya S** (S 55.7/5:352-356) + SD 1.5 (4); (**Abhabba**) **Tayo, dhamma S** (A 10.76/5:144-149), SD 2.4; **Hiri Ottappa S** or **Cariya S** (A 2.9/1:51), SD 2.5c. In his tr, Ñāṇamoli renders *hiri* as “conscience,” but apparently mistranslates *ottappati* as “is ashamed” and *ottappa* as “shame,” Vism:Ñ 524 f.

¹⁹ It 2.5/36 f (SD 72.6).

²⁰ *Vuttam h’etaṃ bhagavatā vuttam arahatā ti me suttaṃ.*

²¹ *Ayam pi attho vutto bhagavatā, iti me suttaṃ ti.*

2.5a The (Twos) Discourse on the Dark

SD 2.5a

(Duka) Kaṇha Sutta

The (Twos) Discourse on the Dark | A 2.7/1:51

A 2.1.1.7 = Aṅguttara 2, Duka Nipāta 1, Paṭhama Paṇṇāsaka 1, Kamma,karaṇa Vagga 7

Theme: What are not world-protectors

2.5.1 SUTTA THEME

Both the **(Duka) Kaṇha Sutta** (A 2.7) [2.5a] and the **(Duka) Sukka Sutta** (A 2.8) [2.5b]—they are amongst the shortest suttas in the Tipiṭaka—are complementary suttas: they complete each other. The Commentary glosses *kaṇhā* as “essentially referring to all the unwholesome states” (*sarasenāpi vā sabbā-kusala,dhammā kaṇhā eva*, AA 2:96). These are those conditions that prevent our spiritual growth and promote decline and suffering.

While *kaṇha* means “dark,” *sukka* means “bright”—they are often used to highlight the bad and the good sides of things [2.5.2.1 & 2.5.2.2]. While **A 2.7** speaks of the lack of moral shame and moral fear (*ahirikañ ca anottappañ ca*) as the “two dark states,” **A 2.8** speaks of moral shame and moral fear (*hiri ca ottappañ ca*) as the “two bright states.”

2.5.2 KANHA AND SUKKA

2.5.2.1 The words *kaṇha*, “dark,” and *sukka*, “bright,” are often used to highlight the bad and the good aspects of things. *Kaṇha* (Skt *kṛṣṇa*), both as a noun and an adjective—meaning “black, dark, bad, wicked”—is itself often a name for Māra.²²

Kaṇha,pakkha (BHS *kṛṣṇa,pakṣa*) (and the adjective, *kaṇha,pakkhika*),²³ means “the faction or party of Kaṇha = Māra”;²⁴ hence, the negative or bad aspects of things.²⁵ This phrase is also used for the “dark half” or fortnight of the moon.²⁶ *Kāḷa,pakkha*, “the dark phase,” is a synonym and opposite of *sukka,pakkha*.²⁷ [2.5.5.2]

2.5.2.2 *Sukka* (Ved *śukla*) means “white, bright; pure, good”—this usage is common.²⁸ *Sukka,pakkha* refers to the “bright half” of the moon.²⁹ Often we see both *kaṇha* and *sukka*—as the dvandva *kaṇha,-sukka*—meaning (1) “black and white”; hence, metaphorically, “good and bad”;³⁰ (2) (metaphorically) “both dark and bright,” that is, “both good and bad, or mixed.”³¹

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²² D 2:261,19; Sn 967; Tha 189. Ironically, this name is later used by Hindus for their god, Krishna.

²³ *Kaṇha,pakkhika*: Nm 1:189,8+11, 306,10+20 f; SnA 545,32.

²⁴ Māra: Nm 489,7 ad Sn 967; SA 1:268,22 ad S 1:185,21*.

²⁵ Neg side of things: V 5:203,23*; S 4:245,22; Nm 1:489,11; MA 1:103,4, 2:84,22; SA 2:144,17. Further, see CPD: *kaṇha,pakkha* & *kaṇha,pakkhika*.

²⁶ Lunar cycle: MA 2:119,10; PvA 135,23.

²⁷ Both words at J 4:26.

²⁸ S 2:240, 5:66, 104; Dh 87; It 36; J 1:129; Dhs 1303; Miln 200..

²⁹ A 2:19; Miln 388; J 4:26; Thī 358; ThaA 2.

³⁰ D 2:328,4 ≈ M 1:509,15 ≈ 2:201,14; Sn 526; SnA 430,7; Ap 263,2.

³¹ A 2:231,30-232,7 (def); D 3:83,7, 230,3 = M 57,7/1:389,24 = A 2:230,23; Dh 87; Miln 200; DA 1023,11 = MA 3:103,16 = AA 3:211,20; DhsA 89,4, 129, 389. For more details, see CPD: *kaṇha-sukka*.

The (Twos) Discourse on the Dark

S 2.7

Bhikshus, there are these two dark states. What are the two?
The lack of moral shame and the lack of moral fear.
These, bhikshus, are the two dark states.

— evaṃ —

2.5b The (Twos) Discourse on the Bright

SD 2.5b

(Duka) Sukka Sutta

The (Twos) Discourse on the Bright | A 2.8/1:518
A 2.1.1.8 = Aṅguttara 2, Duka Nipāta 1, Paṭhama Paṇṇāsaka 1, Kammakaraṇa Vagga 8
Theme: The twin world-protectors

Bhikshus, there are these two bright states. What are the two?
Moral shame and moral fear.
These, bhikshus, are the two bright states.

— evaṃ —

2.5c The (Twos) Discourse on Moral Shame and Moral Fear

SD 2.5c

Hiri Ottappa Sutta

The Discourse on moral shame and moral fear | A 2.9/1:51: see SD 51.9
or **Cariya Sutta** The Discourse on Conduct
A 2.1.1.9 = Aṅguttara 2, Duka Nipāta 1, Paṭhama Paṇṇāsaka 1, Kammakaraṇa Vagga 9
Theme: The true world-protectors

- 1 Bhikshus, there are two bright states³² that protect the world. What are the two?
- 2 Moral shame and moral fear.
- 3 Bhikshus, if these two bright states were not to protect the world, then there would be no mothers, nor mothers' sisters, nor uncles' wives, nor teachers' wives, nor the wives of the respected.³³
Instead, the world would come to confusion such as there is amongst goats and sheep and fowl and pigs and dogs and jackals.
But, bhikshus, since these two bright states do protect the world, therefore there are seen mothers, mothers' sisters, uncles' wives, teachers' wives and wives of the respected.

— evaṃ —

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³² “Bright states,” *sukkā dhammā*, ie, wholesome conditions. See (Vitthāra) **Kamma S** (A 4.232), SD 4.13 (2.1).

³³ *Ime kho bhikkhave dve sukkā dhammā lokaṃ na pāleyyūṃ, na-y-idha paññāyetha mātā'ti vā mātucchā'ti vā mātulānī'ti vā ācariya, bhariyā'ti vā garūnaṃ dārā'ti vā. Matucchā* is one's maternal aunt, while *mātulānī*, maternal brother's wife (also an aunt). Comy: Of those worthy of respect, such as one's paternal elder brother (one's elder uncle), one's paternal younger brother (one's younger uncle), and so on (ItA 159). AA is silent.