The Story of Aṅgulimāla

Andrea Fella · Notable Dhamma Teachers — Andrea Fella · 59:27

So tonight I'd like to take my turn at telling a story, a story from the time of the Buddha.

Partly I'd like to offer this story and some teaching reflections about it because over the course of the last few months, given what's happening in our country, threads of this story kept arising in my mind. I realized there's quite a lot here that speaks to us in terms of what's happening in our country, in our cultures—not only here in the United States, but around the world. So I thought I'd offer it as a teaching parable that points to the ways our minds work, how we get caught and act out of greed, aversion, and delusion.

The story, which will probably be familiar to most of you, is the story of Aṅgulimāla, who was a mass murderer at the time of the Buddha and who met the Buddha and had his life—and the community around him—transformed by that meeting.

Some elements of this story seem to be possibly factual. There are indications that perhaps this was a person who actually lived at the time of the Buddha, who was committing murders during that period. There are stories in the Vinaya about Aṅgulimāla—the Vinaya being the teaching on the monastic ethical guidelines. Those stories often describe very human situations and how the Buddha worked with those situations in his community. This also indicates to me perhaps the non-mythical nature of this person. And yet there are elements of the story that do seem magical or mystical or mythological. Still, many parts of the story—which is a lot of what I'd like to look at—describe how our minds work, not only internally but in relationship.

This is where we're headed in our trajectory at this point in the transition of our retreat. We are moving more and more into relationship—just how much we influence each other in what we do, what we say, how we act, how we are.

The sources for this story: the main one is the Majjhima Nikāya. There's a whole sutta on Aṅgulimāla—it's Majjhima 86, for those of you interested in these references. Yet the story in the Majjhima starts basically from the point where the Buddha meets Aṅgulimāla. The commentaries actually give quite a backstory. Some of you may not be as familiar with the backstory around Aṅgulimāla—how he came to be, how he transitioned from being called Ahiṃsaka, meaning "harmless," to being called Aṅgulimāla, "finger garland," for the garland (māla) of finger bones he is said to have collected and worn around his neck from his victims.

So I'd like to start with the backstory.

Aṅgulimāla's father—let's call him Ahiṃsaka at this point—Ahiṃsaka's father was a chaplain in King Pasenadi's cabinet. One night his wife gave birth to a boy, and in his joy and delight, the father cast his horoscope. The horoscope had bad news in it. It is said that it showed the child was born under the robber constellation, meaning he was destined to become a thief, a robber.

The same night the child was born, the king—and actually all throughout the kingdom—the weapons began to glitter. The king woke up in the middle of the night and saw the glittering arms at the foot of his bed. He was terrified, thinking it was an evil omen, and wondered if he needed to somehow protect the kingdom.

The next day he told his minister, Ahiṃsaka's father, about these glittering weapons. Ahiṃsaka's father said, "I think it may be because of my son, who was born last night under this robber constellation." And so they debated in that moment about killing the child, saying that the omens were so poor, so bad around this young child that perhaps they should kill him to protect the kingdom.

But they decided instead to raise Ahiṃsaka with as much love and affection, with as much emphasis on ethical conduct and behavior, as they could. They gave him the name Ahiṃsaka, meaning "harmless," hoping that he would live up to his name. And so he became a model son, a dutiful son, loving and caring towards his parents. They felt they had done the right thing—that they had overcome the omens around his birth.

His father sent him off to the big college in India at the time, Taxila. There too, Ahiṃsaka was very dutiful, very studious, and did what his teacher asked. He became the teacher's favorite, in fact.

Because he became the favorite, the other students began to get jealous. They felt pushed aside by the teacher. They felt they weren't being respected in the way they had been in the past. They decided they needed to put a wedge between the teacher and Ahiṃsaka.

So what they decided to do was send a bad report of Ahiṃsaka to the teacher, in separate cohorts. Three separate groups of people, as if coming from different sources, went to the teacher saying, "We've heard that Ahiṃsaka is threatening to do bad things to you. He's threatening to take over. We believe Ahiṃsaka is plotting against you."

The teacher, having such great respect for Ahiṃsaka, said, "This is ridiculous."

A second time a group went, and a second time again, the response was the same: this is ridiculous. "I know my student, I know Ahimsaka, he's not plotting against me."

A third time the students added, "If our teacher does not trust us, he may examine the evidence for himself."

And so here we have human emotion—jealousy—inciting action, trying to divide people, trying to divide Ahimsaka from his teacher. In this case, they did it quite cleverly. This is how propaganda works. We hear

something repeatedly, and it begins to sow a seed of doubt. We begin to hear something, and we begin to question our own perspective.

With that extra suggestion—that the teacher can check this for himself—a little seed of doubt was sown, and the teacher began looking for evidence. Having had this perspective planted in his mind, it is said he found the evidence, even though it was not true.

This also points to a way our minds work. We talked about this a few weeks ago—how when we have a particular view or perspective, we take in information that corroborates that view. In this case there was a little bit of doubt, and so in a way the teacher was looking for evidence to support that doubt. And he found it. What he thought was evidence. He found what he thought was evidence.

So this pattern right here—first of the propaganda and the way our minds are so easily swayed, and then how our minds, once holding a particular perspective, struggle to see things that are not in line with that perspective—these two pieces are very potent forces in our minds.

Right now, there was a news story a couple of days ago. Yes, we're going to talk about news. I feel since the retreat is coming to an end, I can bring in something very current. There was a news story about fake news. There is a kind of industry in fake news. It makes money, partly because of the way things work these days around the internet. Somebody can put a story out there, and if people click on that website, they will get money from the advertisers on that website. So there's this whole industry around creating fake news. And sometimes even news outlets pick up this fake news, don't corroborate the information, and then it becomes much more widely disseminated.

So this is essentially what these students were doing. They were putting out this information multiple times. We need to take care, I think especially right now, even with what we're taking in through the media, that we are not just taking it in at face value. It's sad to say, but we have to do our own research and not fall into the trap of the teacher—to try to look for evidence that supports what we've heard, but instead look on both sides. It's a challenging world that we live in, with information coming from so many different angles.

This pattern around the way our minds see things from a perspective—I talked about that a couple weeks ago when we discussed dependent origination and how even an agenda to look at something in a particular way might have us miss information. Or see things, not see things. That's one of the key things: looking from a particular perspective, we see certain things and we don't see other things. This happens all the time. It doesn't just happen around news stories and major misinformation. It happens in small ways too.

When I was a child, when I was in first grade, I had an art teacher who taught us how to draw fruit—draw apples and carrots and fruits and vegetables. Apples and carrots, those are the main ones I remember. But another piece I remember about the apples in particular is that whenever any of us would draw an apple

that was lopsided, she would make us erase it and draw it perfectly round. And she said, "Apples don't grow lopsided." Even at five, we had seen apples that were really lopsided. And we were like, what is she talking about? But we would erase our circles and draw them the way she wanted.

One day, one of the other students brought in an apple that was really lopsided. She did not seem to even notice that it was lopsided. I was really puzzled by this for much of my life. I have no idea what was going on with her. But every now and then it would come up in my mind—what was that about? And one day—some of my insights happen around cutting apples; there's another one that happened around cutting an apple—one day I was in my kitchen and I cut an apple.

When I cut apples, I tend to cut them along their line of symmetry. Most apples have such a line, unless they are diseased or misshapen. You can find a place where the two halves will be mirror images. Even if an apple is quite lopsided, you can cut it along its line of symmetry.

As I cut that apple and watched it fall into two halves, appreciating the symmetry, this story came back to my mind. Again I wondered, what was going on there? And a plausible explanation occurred to me. Perhaps she had been told in some biology class that apples grow symmetrically, and she misunderstood what symmetrical meant. From then on, that perspective filtered out all evidence to the contrary.

It is rather stunning how something as obvious as a lopsided apple can be filtered out of our perception. We simply don't see it. This force—when we receive information, especially from a reputable source—makes us more likely to believe it, more likely to take it in a certain way, or perhaps misunderstand it in a particular manner.

This is a frightening aspect of our minds: so much of our experience can go unnoticed, and yet we believe we are seeing things reliably. This is one of the reasons why, personally, I do not feel that single eyewitness testimony should be used for sentencing someone for murder. I know from my own experience just how easily evidence coming through our senses can be skewed. It is a frightening aspect of how our minds work. And yet knowing that our minds work this way becomes a real support for us.

Coming back to the story of Ahimsaka and his teacher: this seed of doubt was sown, and the teacher found evidence—or what he believed was evidence—that made him think the students were telling the truth. The students, of course, knew they were lying. So this entire story actually springs from an unethical action by these students, the lie that planted the seed of doubt in the teacher's mind.

From what he believed was now corroborated evidence, the teacher decided he had to act. He felt threatened enough that he believed he needed either to kill Ahimsaka or be killed himself. For those of you interested in this backstory, it is written in a book called *Great Disciples of the Buddha*, which contains a whole chapter on Angulimala. From that chapter: "I must kill Angulimala or get him killed. It will not be easy to kill such a strong man," he reflected. "Besides, if he is slain while living here as my pupil, it will harm my reputation and students may no longer come to me. I must think of some other device to get rid

of him as well as punish him."

Again, the teacher is acting out of what he believes to be truth, yet his actions are motivated first by delusion—because he is driven by a story that was false—and also by aversion and fear. These are prompting him to consider unethical action.

It happens that Ahimsaka is nearly finished with his studies and preparing to leave the university. His teacher says to him, "In order for your studies to bear fruit, you must offer a gift back to the teacher." Ahimsaka asks, "What gift should I offer you?" The teacher replies, "You must offer me the finger bones of the right hand small finger of a thousand human beings."

Presumably the teacher believed Ahimsaka would be killed in the process of attempting this. Ahimsaka said, "I cannot do that. My family has always been harmless. We have never harmed anyone. How can I do this?" His teacher replied, "You must either do this, or the teachings you have received will not bear fruit." And so Ahimsaka decides to do it.

There is some question here. Why didn't Ahimsaka push back harder on his teacher? Why didn't he refuse or question this more thoroughly? Several reflections have been offered. One involves the aspect of guru devotion—the teacher-student relationship may have involved an unswerving commitment to the teacher. Again, a kind of blinding of Ahimsaka to the implications of his own actions. It is also suggested that this situation touched upon or opened a karmic thread within Ahimsaka, the tendency that had caused him to be born under the robber constellation. This inclination toward becoming someone who harms may have run deep within him.

This piece too, I feel, is important for us to examine: the power dynamic between Ahimsaka and his teacher. It is only a story, and we might think we would not be swayed by such a situation. Yet power dynamics are truly potent. The dynamic of teacher and student, combined perhaps with an unswerving commitment of student to teacher, can play a very strong role in making choices that go against our own ethical inner compass.

After World War II, there were some studies done on this very topic. One famous study, the Milgram experiment—some of you may have heard of it—basically pointed out how this power dynamic might be played out. They had people come in to participate in an experiment in which the participants were offering electric shocks to somebody to support them in learning something. It was a kind of negative reinforcement experiment. The person who was receiving the shocks actually wasn't receiving any shocks—they were an actor. The person who was offering the shocks was the real subject of the experiment. How far would they go, even when the person being shocked started saying, "Whoa, that's really painful! Stop! Don't do that anymore"?

Surprisingly—I won't go through the entire details of the study—but surprisingly, two-thirds of the people gave the severest level of shock. Something that would have been very damaging to somebody had they

really been receiving shocks. Possibly even fatal.

Milgram writes: "I set up a simple experiment at Yale University to test how much pain an ordinary citizen would inflict on another person simply because he or she was ordered to do so by an experimental scientist. Stark authority was pitted against the participant's strongest moral imperatives against hurting others. And with the participant's ears ringing with the screams of the victims, authority won out more often than not. The extreme willingness of adults to go to almost any lengths on the command of an authority constitutes the chief finding of the study and the fact most urgently demanding explanation."

There had been some thinking that somehow the conditions in World War II Germany were different. How did all these people end up doing these things under the Hitler regime? This experiment showed that all it took, really, was someone in a lab coat saying, "Please continue. The experiment requires that you continue."

They followed on to explore what variables around this experiment were the strongest ones. Those two were particularly powerful: the experimenter wearing a lab coat. If the lab coat was not on, if the experimenter was in normal clothes, compliance dropped way down. And if the participants were reminded at the beginning of the study that they were personally responsible for any harm that might happen during the study, compliance dropped to almost zero.

This, to me, is a strong pointing to the power of ethics and being reminded of our own ethical responsibility. The power dynamic is potent for us, but if we are reminding ourselves, "I'm responsible for the actions I commit. I'm responsible"—that reminder of our own ethical responsibility strengthens us in the face of that power dynamic.

And so ethics has really played a strong role in this story so far. We have the students motivated by jealousy lying about Ahimsaka's behavior, his conduct. We have the teacher motivated by fear wanting to kill Ahimsaka. We have Ahimsaka picking up the power dynamic and perhaps stepping back a little from responsibility: "This is required by my teacher." At any point in this, if people had looked at their own ethical responsibility, the story would have probably played out very differently.

This is a big piece of what I think is one of the messages of this story: how in our action in the world, committing to ethical conduct can be a great source of strength for us to overcome and combat delusion—in the world and in ourselves. This, to me, is a powerful message. I think that ethics can help to counter some of the deep forces of craving and ignorance in our minds. This is one of the reasons I think it's so firmly on the Eightfold Path.

And so the story doesn't go that way. It goes the way of murder and mayhem. Ahimsaka goes around finding ways to kill people so that he can get the little finger of their right hand, string it on a garland, and put it around his neck. This is now Ahimsaka becoming Angulimala.

The story says that he actually began to enjoy killing people. Perhaps at the beginning it was hard, but

repeatedly doing it somehow seemed to harden his heart. Again, this is another piece around ethics. When we routinely engage in unethical conduct, it can shift our hearts. It breaks us off from the capacity to feel that empathetic connection with others. To me, ethics and connection are so closely intertwined that as we behave ethically, it connects us with others. It creates community.

So Angulimala now, terrorizing the neighborhood, hiding in the forest, and basically at first waiting for individuals to go by and killing them. That was pretty easy. After a while, people began avoiding that part of the woods.

People began avoiding that part of the woods, and so Angulimala had to go into towns, into people's homes when they were sleeping, and murder them in their beds. He was creating havoc and mayhem in the neighborhood. The people of the villages went to the king and said, "This is not okay. We cannot live in our villages. We are terrified of this person." And so the king decided to send out a party to find and kill Angulimala.

At that point, Angulimala's mother—her son not having come home from college—began to worry about him. She wondered if this person who was killing people all over the neighborhood might be her son. Believing it was, she decided to go and see if she could reason with him, to try to stop him.

By this time, Angulimala had killed 999 people. He had one more finger to get.

Also at this time, it is said that the Buddha, in his meditation, scanning the world, saw this scenario playing out. He saw Angulimala in his mind and recognized that they shared a deep karmic connection from many lives in the past. He saw that Angulimala, in spite of his behavior in this life, had a great deal of wholesome karma buried in his heart beneath his actions. The Buddha actually saw that Angulimala had the capacity to become completely liberated in this very lifetime.

And yet, in this psychic surveying of the universe that he could reportedly do, he noticed that Angulimala's mother was on her way to try to stop her son—and that Angulimala would kill his mother.

In Buddhist cosmology, killing a parent is one of the actions that makes it impossible to become free in this life. In this cosmology, no one is irredeemable for eternity. There is always the possibility of turning the course of our minds through meeting the Dharma and practicing the Eightfold Path, from any circumstances whatsoever. And yet in a particular lifetime, it is said that certain actions can prevent you from reaching freedom in this very life. Killing a parent is one of those. Killing a Buddha is another.

So the Buddha saw that Angulimala's mother was on her way, and he decided to intervene. He walked the thirty miles to where Angulimala was and put himself between Angulimala and his mother.

Angulimala, seeing this, recognized: here is a monk, probably slow, probably not very strong. This person would be much easier to kill, and then I don't have to kill my mother. So I'll kill this person instead.

I'm going to read from the sutta at this point:

So Angulimala took up his sword and shield and followed close behind the Blessed One. Then the Blessed One performed such a feat of supernormal power that the bandit Angulimala, though walking as fast as he could, could not catch up with the Blessed One who was walking at his normal pace.

Then the bandit Angulimala thought, "It is wonderful, it is marvelous. Formerly I could catch up even with a swift elephant and seize it. I could catch up with a swift horse and seize it. I could catch up with a swift deer. But now, though I am walking as fast as I can, I cannot catch up with this recluse who is walking at a normal pace."

He stopped and called out to the Blessed One, "Stop, recluse, stop!"

The Blessed One responded, "I have stopped, Angulimala. It is time for you to stop."

Then the bandit Angulimala thought, "These recluses speak truth, assert truth. But though this recluse is still walking, he says, 'I have stopped, Angulimala. You stop too.' Suppose I question this recluse."

Then the bandit Angulimala addressed the Blessed One: "While you are walking, recluse, you tell me you have stopped. But now when I have stopped, you say that I have not stopped. I ask you now, oh recluse, about the meaning. How is it that you have stopped and I have not?"

"Angulimala, I have stopped forever. I abstain from violence towards living beings. But you have no restraint towards things that live. That is why I have stopped and you have not."

In this part of the story, the stopping that the Buddha refers to points, to some extent, to ethical conduct—the stopping of unethical conduct, the stopping of harming. And possibly it also points to the stopping of ignorance in our minds. How easily, when we are motivated by ignorance, our perceptions, our views, our opinions, our beliefs can sway us to create harm.

The path in its fullness is about stopping that ignorance, creating the conditions of non-harming.

Through this encounter with the Buddha, Angulimala had a powerful change of heart. It is said in the story that he realized the Buddha had actually come to the forest in order to help him, and he was deeply moved by this. He asked for ordination. The Buddha, understanding through his capacity of mind to see deeply into human beings, recognized that this was not a surface change of heart but a profound transformation, a genuine wish to turn away from harming. And so he said to Angulimala, "Come, monk," in that way ordaining him.

It is said that Angulimala decided to keep his name as a reminder for himself of how he had been spending his life killing people.

For a time, Angulimala became the Buddha's attendant, and together with a group of monks they wandered back through the forest. In the meantime, the king was trying to find Angulimala in order to kill him. On his way out to the forest, the king passed by the place where the Buddha was staying and decided

to stop and pay his respects.

The Buddha, seeing the king and all of his army gathered to go out and fight Angulimala, asked, "What's going on? Is there a war in the neighboring kingdom?"

The king replied, "No, there's a murdering bandit Angulimala in the neighborhood, and I'm going to put him down."

The Buddha, given that Angulimala was standing right next to him, fanning him as his attendant—the king not recognizing Angulimala, who had shaved his head and put on robes—said, "Great King, suppose you were to see that Angulimala had shaved off his hair and beard, put on the yellow robe, had gone forth from the home life into homelessness, that he was abstaining from killing living beings, from taking what is not given, and from false speech, that he was refraining from eating at night, ate only at one part of the day, was celibate, virtuous, of good character. If you were to see him thus, how would you treat him?"

"Venerable sir, we would pay homage to him. Offer him requisites. But he is such an immoral man, one of evil character. How could he ever have such virtue and restraint?"

The Buddha gestured. "This, great king, is Angulimala."

It is said that the hair on the back of the king's neck stood on end, so frightened and terrified was he to be in the presence of Angulimala.

The Buddha said, "Do not be afraid, great king. There is nothing for you to fear from him."

Here we have the Buddha essentially telling the king: trust me. There's a kind of counterpoint in this that I find interesting. The Buddha is asking the king to trust him, and the king, who reveres the Buddha, does trust him. In the earlier part of the story, the teacher said to Angulimala, trust me. What's the difference here? How does one know?

My sense, in reading this and reflecting on it, is that the Buddha, in asking the king to trust him—trust me, you have nothing to fear from him—is encouraging the king in the direction of non-harming. He's encouraging the king not to kill Angulimala. This is a trust that's in alignment with ethics.

I realize there may be times when the situation is not so clear. And yet I think this reflection on ethics is a very powerful resource for us in navigating our lives.

There are the kind of apocryphal stories people discuss. If you were in Nazi Germany and a Nazi came knocking on your door while you were hiding Jews, would you lie? A lie is a breach of ethics. And yet I hope I would have the courage to lie in that situation—knowing that if I couldn't come up with something else to say, some plausible response that wasn't a lie, in that act of lying I would be protecting the person I was hiding from being killed, and protecting the Nazi from doing the killing. So in another way, it aligns with ethics.

And yet this understanding around ethics and karma—in many ways I think the teaching on Angulimala is a teaching on karma, although that's not the thread I'm carrying through this particular version of the story tonight. The karma of telling a lie doesn't somehow vanish because it's in the service of non-harm. There's still going to be some kind of consequence. Perhaps even just in one's own mind—oh my gosh, I've told a lie to this person. Are they going to find out? Just in that agitation of mind, there is karmic repercussion.

And yet I hope I would have the courage to take those karmic consequences.

So, continuing this story, this first part has really been about relationship—about people in relationship with each other, how people influence each other, how people impact each other, especially along the lines of our behavior, ethically or non-ethically. So much of our interactions have this dimension to them.

The next part of the story really comes into Angulimala's inner life as a monk. He practiced meditation, he went on alms round, and he struggled as a monk. He had a hard time—probably had a harder time than most of you have had here, is my guess, having killed nine hundred and ninety-nine people. Just imagine. I mean, I can't even imagine what my mind would be like if I had killed someone and sat down and tried to meditate.

It is said that Angulimala had not been able to focus his mind on the basic meditation subject he had received, though he tried day and night. Before his mind's eye appeared the place in the jungle where he had slain so many people. He heard their plaintive voices imploring him, "Let me live. I'm a poor man and have many children." He saw the frantic movements of their arms and legs in fear of death. When faced with such memories, deep remorse gripped him and made him get up from his seat and leave.

So he struggled in meditation, having killed nine hundred and ninety-nine people. No big surprise. He struggled in community too. Going on alms round, people knew who he was. They knew he had killed their brothers and sons and wives and daughters. Husbands. So he would basically go on alms round and come back with an empty bowl. And worse at times—if I have a moment, I'll get to that in a bit.

In the community he didn't receive much support, his meditation was a challenge, and yet he kept going. He kept practicing.

And one day while he was on alms round, he hears a woman having a very difficult labor in childbirth. And his heart just opened with compassion. He said, "Oh, how beings are afflicted, how they suffer."

This really begins to point to the inner transformation Angulimala had undergone. He had killed so many people. The image he describes of people writhing and screaming, "Please don't kill me"—his heart had been closed to that empathetic connection with others. And now his heart is opening to that empathetic connection. That's a major shift. His heart is no longer so hardened.

And this, I think, points to one of the benefits of behaving ethically. I mentioned that connection earlier.

Ethical conduct also creates the terrain for us to have that empathetic connection with others—a kind of ground out of which wholesome relationships can grow, that empathetic connection.

And so he went back and told the Buddha this story about this woman having difficulty giving birth and how painful it was for him to see that and feel that. And the Buddha said to him, "Go into Savatthi and say to that woman: 'Sister, since I was born, I have never purposely deprived a living being of life. By that truth, may you and the infant be safe.'"

And Angulimala said, "I can't say that. That's not a truth. I've deprived many hundreds of beings of life."

And the Buddha said, "Then say to that person: 'Sister, since I was born with the noble birth, I have never purposely deprived a living being of life. By this truth, may you and the infant be safe.'"

Angulimala reflected and said, "Yes, I can do that. Since I became a monk, I have never purposely deprived a being of life. I can say that."

And he went back into the village and said that statement of truth to the woman. And it is said that she had a successful childbirth and that both the child and the mother lived.

So this is to me one of the magical elements of the story—that a statement of truth would have this power. And yet, we can think about it mythologically perhaps too.

I mean, truth does free us from suffering. We see this in our own practice, in our own meditation. We see how when we align ourselves with the truth, when we recognize, "Oh right, this is what's happening," our hearts can relax. We see the way that truth, when we align with truth, the heart can relax.

The story in the commentaries points to the reason why the Buddha gave this, potentially gave this paired statement—the first saying to declare that you haven't killed any beings, and then the refinement: say that since you have taken birth as a monk, you haven't killed any beings. This was to point out to Angulimala his transformation around sila in his life, to support him in his meditation. That is part of the reason it's said—not so much actually to support the woman in giving birth, but more to help Angulimala reflect on his transformation around ethics.

And it is said that following this time, Angulimala's mind could settle in meditation, and that he became fully awakened.

So for us, struggling in meditation—sometimes we mention this in meetings—reflect on your goodness, reflect on your ethics, reflect on wholesome qualities that you're cultivating. It supports the mind to relax. Recalling the wholesomeness in practice is a supportive condition for us meeting our own minds.

I will end leaving aside a piece of the story—you can read it yourself. I'll end by reading some of the verses that Angulimala wrote. These are in that collection of enlightenment poems written by the monks. Greg mentioned some of the ones written by the nuns. This is the poem Angulimala wrote following his

freedom:

Who once did live in recklessness and then is reckless nevermore,
That one shall illumine the world like the full moon unveiled by cloud.

Who checks with profitable deeds the evil kamma one has done,
That one shall illumine the world like the moon unveiled by a cloud.

Oh, let my enemies give ear from time to time—these enemies refer to people who threw things at him on alms rounds—*Let my enemies give ear from time to time and hear the doctrine as told by men who preach forbearance, by those who speak as well in praise of peacefulness and suit the while their actions to their words. For sure such foes would not then wish to harm me, nor would they think of harming other beings.*

So those who would protect all beings, frail or strong, let them attain the highest all-surpassing peace.

Conduit makers guide the water. Fletchers straighten out the arrow. Joiners straighten out the timber. Wise men seek to tame themselves. Wise ones seek to tame themselves.

"None-harmer" is the name I bear, who was a harmer in the past. The name I bear is true today. I hurt not anyone at all.

And though I once lived as a bandit with the name of Finger Garland, whom the great flood swept along, I went for refuge to the Buddha.

And though I was once bloody-handed with the name of Finger Garland, see the refuge I have found. What leads to rebirth is no more.

I stayed in forest, at the root of a tree, in mountain caves, but with an agitated heart. But now I rise and rest in happiness and happily spend my life. For now I am free of Mara's snares.

Oh, for the compassion shown me by the Master.

Let's sit for a moment.

Thank you for listening.

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