

1. Thus have I heard. On one occasion the Blessed One was living at Sāvattthī in Jeta's Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika's Park.

2. Now on that occasion there was a bandit in the realm of King Pasenadi of Kosala named Angulimāla, who was murderous, bloody-handed, given to blows and violence, merciless to living beings. Villages, towns, and districts were laid waste by him. He was constantly murdering people and he wore their fingers as a garland.

3. Then, when it was morning, the Blessed One dressed, and taking his bowl and outer robe, went into Sāvattthī for alms. When he had wandered for alms in Sāvattthī and had returned from his almsround, after his meal he set his resting place in order, and taking his bowl and outer robe, set out on the road leading towards Angulimāla. Cowherds, shepherds, ploughmen, and travelers saw the Blessed One walking along the road leading towards Angulimāla and told him: "Do not take this road, recluse. On this road is the bandit Angulimāla, who is murderous, bloody-handed, given to blows and violence, merciless to living beings. Villages, towns, and districts have been laid waste by him. He is constantly murdering people and he wears their fingers as a garland. Men have come along this road in groups of ten, twenty, thirty, and even forty, but still they have fallen into Angulimāla's hands." When this was said the Blessed One went on in silence.

For the second time...For the third time the cowherds, shepherds, ploughmen, and travelers told this to the Blessed One, but still the Blessed One went on in silence.

4. The bandit Angulimāla saw the Blessed One coming in the distance. When he saw him, he thought: "It is wonderful, it is marvellous! Men have come along this road in groups of ten, twenty, thirty, and even forty, but still they have fallen into my hands. But now this recluse comes alone, unaccompanied, as if driven by fate. Why shouldn't I take this recluse's life?" Angulimāla then took up his sword and shield, buckled on his bow and quiver, and followed close behind the Blessed One.

5. Then the Blessed One performed such a feat of supernormal power that the bandit Angulimāla, 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 Angulimāla thought: "It is wonderful, it is marvellous! Formerly I could catch up even with a swift elephant and seize it; I could catch up

even with a swift horse and seize it; I could catch up even with a swift chariot and seize it; but now, though I am walking as fast as I can, I cannot catch up with this recluse who is walking at his normal pace!" He stopped and called out to the Blessed One: "Stop, recluse! Stop, recluse!"

"I have stopped, Angulimāla, you stop too."

Then the bandit Angulimāla thought: "These recluses, sons of the Sakyans, speak truth, assert truth; but though this recluse is still walking, he says: 'I have stopped, Angulimāla, you stop too.' Suppose I question this recluse."

6. Then the bandit Angulimāla addressed the Blessed One in stanzas thus:

"While you are walking, recluse, you tell me you have stopped;

But now, when I have stopped, you say I have not stopped.

I ask you now, O recluse, about the meaning:

How is it that you have stopped and I have not?"

"Angulimāla, 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.”

“Oh, at long last this recluse, a venerated sage,

Has come to this great forest for my sake.

Having heard your stanza teaching me the Dhamma,

I will indeed renounce evil forever.”

So saying, the bandit took his sword and weapons

And flung them in a gaping chasm’s pit;

The bandit worshipped the Sublime One’s feet,

And then and there asked for the going forth.

The Enlightened One, the Sage of Great Compassion,

The Teacher of the world with [all] its gods,

Addressed him with these words, “Come, bhikkhu.”

And that was how he came to be a bhikkhu.

7. Then the Blessed One set out to wander back to Sāvattihī with Angulimāla as his attendant. Wandering by stages, he eventually arrived at Sāvattihī, and there he lived at Sāvattihī in Jeta’s Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika’s Park.

8. Now on that occasion great crowds of people were gathering at the gates of King Pasenadi’s inner palace, very loud and noisy, crying: “Sire, the bandit Angulimāla is in your realm; he is murderous, bloody-handed, given to blows and violence, merciless to living beings! Villages, towns, and districts have been laid waste by him! He is constantly murdering people and he wears their fingers as a garland! The king must put him down!”

9. Then in the middle of the day King Pasenadi of Kosala drove out of Sāvattihī with a cavalry of five hundred men and set out for the park. He drove thus as far as the road was passable for carriages, and then he dismounted from his carriage and went forward on foot to the Blessed One. After paying homage to the Blessed One, he sat down at one side, and the Blessed One said to him: “What is it, great king? Is King Seniya Bimbisāra of Magadha attacking you, or the Licchavis of Vesālī, or other hostile kings?”

10. “Venerable sir, King Seniya Bimbisāra of Magadha is not attacking me, nor are the Licchavis of Vesālī, nor are other hostile kings. But there is a bandit in my realm named Angulimāla, who is murderous, bloody-handed, given to blows and violence, merciless to living beings. Villages, towns, and districts have been laid waste by him. He is constantly murdering people and he wears their fingers as a garland. I shall never be able to put him down, venerable sir.”

11. “Great king, suppose you were to see that Angulimāla had shaved off his hair and beard, put on the yellow robe, and 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 eating only one meal a day, and 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, or rise up for him, or invite him to be seated; or we would invite him to accept robes, almsfood, a resting place, or medicinal requisites; or we would arrange for him lawful guarding, defense, and protection. But, venerable sir, how could such an immoral man, one of evil character, ever have such virtue and restraint?”

12. Now on that occasion the venerable Angulimāla was sitting not far from the Blessed One. Then the Blessed One extended his right arm and said to King Pasenadi of Kosala: “Great king, this is Angulimāla.”

Then King Pasenadi was frightened, alarmed, and terrified. Knowing this, the Blessed One told him: “Do not be afraid, great king, do not be afraid. There is nothing for you to fear from him.”

Then the king’s fear, alarm, and terror subsided. He went over to the venerable Angulimāla and said: “Venerable sir, is the noble lord really Angulimāla?”

“Yes, great king.”

“Venerable sir, of what family is the noble lord’s father? Of what family is his mother?”

“My father is a Gagga, great king; my mother is a Mantā i.”

“Let the noble lord Gagga Mantā i putta rest content. I shall provide robes, almsfood, resting place, and medicinal requisites for the noble lord Gagga Mantā i putta.”

13. Now at that time the venerable Angulimāla was a forest dweller, an almsfood eater, a refuse-rag wearer, and restricted himself to three robes. He replied: “Enough, great king, my triple robe is complete.”

King Pasenadi then returned to the Blessed One, and after paying homage to him, he sat down at one side and said: “It is wonderful, venerable sir, it is marvellous how the Blessed One tames the untamed, brings peace to the unpeaceful, and leads to Nibbāna those who have not attained Nibbāna. Venerable sir, we ourselves could not tame him with force and weapons, yet the Blessed One has tamed him without force or weapons. And now, venerable sir, we depart. We are busy and have much to do.”

“You may go, great king, at your own convenience.”

Then King Pasenadi of Kosala rose from his seat, and after paying homage to the Blessed One, keeping him on his right, he departed.

14. Then, when it was morning, the venerable Angulimāla dressed, and taking his bowl and outer robe, went into Sāvattthī for alms. As he was wandering for alms from house to house in Sāvattthī, he saw a certain woman in difficult labor, in painful labor. When he saw this, he thought: “How beings are afflicted! Indeed, how beings are afflicted!”

When he had wandered for alms in Sāvattthī and had returned from his almsround, after his meal he went to the Blessed One, and after paying homage to him, he sat down at one side and said: “Venerable sir, in the morning I dressed, and taking my bowl and outer robe, went into Sāvattthī for alms. As I was wandering for alms from house to house in Sāvattthī, I saw a certain woman in difficult labor, in painful labor. When I saw that, I thought: ‘How beings are afflicted! Indeed, how beings are afflicted!’”

15. “In that case, Angulimāla, go into Sāvattthī and say to that woman: ‘Sister, since I was born, I do not recall that I have ever intentionally deprived a living being of life. By this truth, may you be well and may your infant be well!’”

“Venerable sir, wouldn’t I be telling a deliberate lie, for I have intentionally deprived many living beings of life?”

“Then, Angulimāla, go into Sāvattthī and say to that woman: ‘Sister, since I was born with the

noble birth, I do not recall that I have ever intentionally deprived a living being of life. By this truth, may you be well and may your infant be well!”

“Yes, venerable sir,” the venerable Angulimāla replied, and having gone into Sāvattī, he told that woman: “Sister, since I was born with the noble birth, I do not recall that I have ever intentionally deprived a living being of life. By this truth, may you be well and may your infant be well!” Then the woman and the infant became well.

16. Before long, dwelling alone, withdrawn, diligent, ardent, and resolute, the venerable Angulimāla, by realizing for himself with direct knowledge, here and now entered upon and abided in that supreme goal of the holy life for the sake of which clansmen rightly go forth from the home life into homelessness. He directly knew: “Birth is destroyed, the holy life has been lived, what had to be done has been done, there is no more coming to any state of being.” And the venerable Angulimāla became one of the arahants.

17. Then, when it was morning, the venerable Angulimāla dressed, and taking his bowl and outer robe, went into Sāvattī for alms. Now on that occasion someone threw a clod and hit the venerable Angulimāla’s body, someone else threw a stick and hit his body, and someone else threw a potsherd and hit his body. Then, with blood running from his cut head, with his bowl broken, and with his outer robe torn, the venerable Angulimāla went to the Blessed One. The Blessed One saw him coming in the distance and told him: “Bear it, brahmin! Bear it, brahmin! You are experiencing here and now the result of deeds because of which you might have been tortured in hell for many years, for many hundreds of years, for many thousands of years.”

18. Then, while the venerable Angulimāla was alone in retreat experiencing the bliss of deliverance, he uttered this exclamation:

“Who once did live in negligence

And then is negligent no more,

He illuminates this world

Like the moon freed from a cloud.

Who checks the evil deeds he did

By doing wholesome deeds instead,

He illuminates this world

Like the moon freed from a cloud.

The youthful bhikkhu who devotes

His efforts to the Buddha's teaching,

He illuminates this world

Like the moon freed from a cloud.

Let my enemies hear discourse on the Dhamma,

Let them be devoted to the Buddha's teaching,



Let my enemies wait on those good people

Who lead others to accept the Dhamma.

Let my enemies give ear from time to time

And hear the Dhamma of those who preach forbearance,

Of those who speak as well in praise of kindness,

And let them follow up with kind deeds.

For surely then they would not wish to harm me,

Nor would they think of harming other beings,

So those who would protect all, frail or strong,

Let them attain the all-surpassing peace.

Conduit-makers guide the water,

Fletchers straighten out the arrow-shaft,

Carpenters straighten out the timber,

But wise men seek to tame themselves.

There are some that tame with beatings,

Some with goads and some with whips;

But I was tamed by such alone

Who has no rod nor any weapon.

‘Harmless’ is the name I bear,

Though I was dangerous in the past.

The name I bear today is true:

I hurt no living being at all.

And though I once lived as a bandit

Known to all as 'Finger-garland,'

One whom the great flood swept along,

I went for refuge to the Buddha.

And though I once was bloody-handed

With the name of 'Finger-garland,'

See the refuge I have found:

The bond of being has been cut.

While I did many deeds that lead

To rebirth in the evil realms,

Yet their result has reached me now,

And so I eat free from debt.

They are fools and have no sense

Who give themselves to negligence,

But those of wisdom guard diligence

And treat it as their greatest good.

Do not give way to negligence

Nor seek delight in sensual pleasures,

But meditate with diligence

So as to reach the perfect bliss.

So welcome to that choice of mine

And let it stand, it was not ill made;

Of all the teachings resorted to,

I have come to the very best.

So welcome to that choice of mine

And let it stand, it was not ill made;

I have attained the triple knowledge

And done all that the Buddha teaches.”

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Majjhima Nikāya 86

Part Two – The Middle Fifty Discourses (Majjhimapaṇāsaṇḍa)

The Division on Kings (Rājavagga)

Translated by Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi

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