Thag 16.8 — Aṅgulimāla

English translation by Bhikkhu Sujato.
Source: https://suttacentral.net/thag16.8/en/sujato
Source revision: 3bc8665e0e28e70518eba94304a2fafcab80f933
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Text

Verses of the Senior Monks 16.8

The Book of the Twenties

Chapter One

Aṅgulimāla

“While walking, ascetic, you say ‘I’ve stopped.’

And I have stopped, but you tell me I’ve not.

I’m asking you this, ascetic:

how is it you’ve stopped and I have not?”

“Aṅgulimāla, I have forever stopped—

I’ve laid aside violence toward all creatures.

But you can’t stop yourself from harming living creatures;

that’s why I’ve stopped, but you have not.”

“Oh, at long last a renowned great seer,

an ascetic has followed me into this deep wood.

Now that I’ve heard your verse on Dhamma,

I shall discard a thousand evils.”

With these words, the bandit hurled his sword and weapons

down a cliff into an abyss.

He venerated the Holy One’s feet,

and requested the going forth from the Buddha right away.

Then the Buddha, the compassionate great seer,

the Teacher of the world with its gods,

said to him, “Come, monk!”

And with that he became a monk.

“He who once was heedless,

but turned to heedfulness,

shines upon this world,

like the moon freed from clouds.

Someone whose bad deed

is supplanted by the good,

shines upon this world,

like the moon freed from clouds.

A young mendicant

devoted to the Buddha’s teaching,

shines upon this world,

like the moon freed from clouds.

May even my enemies hear a Dhamma talk!

May even my enemies devote themselves to the Buddha’s teaching!

May even my enemies associate with those good men

who establish others in the Dhamma!

May even my enemies hear Dhamma at the right time,

from those who teach acceptance,

praising acquiescence;

and may they follow that path!

For then they’d never wish harm

upon myself or others.

Having arrived at ultimate peace,

they’d look after creatures firm and frail.

For while irrigators guide water,

fletchers bend arrows straight,

and carpenters bend timber straight,

the astute tame themselves.

Some tame by using the rod,
some with goads, and some with whips.
But the unaffected one tamed me
without rod or sword.
My name is ‘Harmless’,
though I used to be harmful.
The name I bear today is true,
for I do no harm to anyone.
I used to be a bandit,
the notorious Aṅgulimāla.
Swept away in a great flood,
I went to the Buddha for refuge.
I used to have blood on my hands,
the notorious Aṅgulimāla.
See the refuge I’ve found—
the leash to existence is eradicated.
I’ve done many of the sort of deeds
that lead to a bad destination.
The result of my deeds has already struck me,
so I enjoy my food free of debt.
Fools and simpletons
devote themselves to negligence.
But the wise protect diligence
as their best treasure.
Don’t devote yourself to negligence,
or delight in erotic intimacy.
For if you’re diligent and practice absorption,
you’ll attain ultimate happiness.
It was welcome, not unwelcome,

the advice I got was good.
Of the well-explained teachings,
I arrived at the best.
It was welcome, not unwelcome,
the advice I got was good.
I've attained the three knowledges,
and fulfilled the Buddha's instructions."
"In the wilderness, at a tree's root,
on mountains, or in caves—
it used to be that wherever I stood,
my mind was anxious.
But now I lie down happily and stand up happily,
I live my life happily,
out of Māra's reach;
the Teacher had sympathy for me.
I used to be of brahmin birth,
highborn on both sides,
now I'm a son of the Holy One,
the Teacher, King of Dhamma.
I am rid of craving, free of grasping,
my sense doors are guarded and well-restrained.
I've destroyed the root of gloom,
and attained the ending of defilements.
I've served the Teacher
and fulfilled the Buddha's instructions.
The heavy burden is laid down,
the leash to existence is eradicated."