Thag 16.8 — Thag 16:8 Aṅgulimāla

English translation by Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu.

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Source revision: sha256:06db98f11dbe5b66e3b290b0f8bcaa44ec5f2fe3d1e1b74062fcf0baea044036

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Changes: Presentation only: original HTML markup reflowed into plain text; wording, numbering and source repetitions retained. No repetitions expanded.

Completeness: ABBREVIATED. Every source-unit character is preserved, including introductions, notes and verse structure. Thanissaro's collection-level note explicitly states that repetitions were cut: https://www.dhammatalks.org/suttas/about.html. This is evidence about the translation method, not an assertion that every individual unit contains an omission; no repetitions reconstructed.

Text

Thag 16:8 Aṅgulimāla

Aṅgulumāla’s story is told in MN 86.

Aṅgulimāla:

“While walking, contemplative,

you say, ’I have stopped.’

But when I have stopped

you say that I haven’t.

I ask you the meaning of this:

How have you stopped?

How haven't I?"

The Buddha:

"I have stopped, Aṅgulimāla,

once & for all,

having cast off violence

toward all living beings.

You, though,

are unrestrained toward beings.

That's how I've stopped

and you haven't."

Aṅgulimāla:

"At long last a greatly revered great seer

for my sake

has come to the great forest.

Having heard your verse

in line with the Dhamma,

I will go about

having abandoned evil."

So saying, the bandit

hurled his sword & weapons

over a cliff

into a chasm,

a pit.

Then the bandit paid homage

to the feet of the One Well-Gone,

and right there requested the Going-forth.

The Awakened One,

the compassionate great seer,
the teacher of the world, along with its devas,
said to him then:
“Come, monk.”
That in itself
was monkhood for him.

* * *

Aṅgulimāla:
Who once was heedless,
but later is not,
brightens the world
like the moon set free from a cloud.1
His evil-done deed
is replaced with skillfulness:
He brightens the world
like the moon set free from a cloud.2

Whatever young monk
devotes himself
to the Buddha’s bidding:
He brightens the world
like the moon set free from a cloud.

May even my enemies
hear talk of the Dhamma.
May even my enemies
devote themselves
to the Buddha’s bidding.
May even my enemies
associate with those people
who—peaceful, good—

get others to accept the Dhamma.
May even my enemies
hear the Dhamma time & again
from those who advise endurance,
forbearance,
who praise non-opposition,
and may they follow it.

For surely he wouldn't harm me,
or anyone else;
he would attain the foremost peace,
would protect the feeble & firm.

Irrigators guide the water.
Fletchers shape the arrow shaft.
Carpenters shape the wood.
The wise control
themselves.3

Some tame with a blunt stick,
with hooks, & with whips
But without blunt or bladed weapons
I was tamed by the one who is Such.

"Doer of No Harm" is my name,
but I used to be a doer of harm.
Today I am true to my name,
for I harm no one at all.

A bandit
I used to be,
renowned as Aṅgulimāla.
Swept along by a great flood,

I went to the Buddha as refuge.

Bloody-handed
I used to be,
renowned as Aṅgulimāla.
See my going for refuge!
Uprooted is [craving],
the guide to becoming.

Having done the type of kamma
that would lead to many
bad destinations,
touched by the fruit of [that] kamma,
unindebted, I eat my food.4

They're addicted to heedlessness
—dullards, fools—
while one who is wise
cherishes heedfulness
as his highest wealth.5

Don't give way to heedlessness
or to intimacy
with sensual delight—
for a heedful person,
absorbed in jhāna,
attains an abundant bliss.6

This7 has come well & not gone away,
it was not badly thought through for me.
From among well-analyzed qualities,
I have obtained
the best.

This has come well & not gone away,
it was not badly thought through for me.
The three knowledges
have been attained;
the Awakened One’s bidding,
done.8

Where once I stayed here & there
with shuddering mind—
in the wilderness,
at the foot of a tree,
in mountains,
caves—
with ease I now lie down, I stand,
with ease I live my life.
O, the Teacher has shown me sympathy!

Before, I was of brahman stock,
on either side high-born.
Today I’m the son
of the One Well-Gone,
the Dhamma-king,
the Teacher.

Rid of craving, devoid of clinging,
sense-doors guarded, well-restrained,
having killed the root of evil,
I’ve reached the end of the effluents.

The Teacher has been served by me;
the Awakened One’s bidding,
done;

the guide to becoming, uprooted;

the heavy load, laid down.

Notes

1. This verse = Dhp 172.

2. This verse = Dhp 173.

3. This verse = Dhp 80.

4. This verse illustrates the kammic principle stated in AN 3:101. This is one of the ways in which the Buddhist doctrine of kamma differed from that of the Jains. For them, a person could not reach arahantship without having suffered retribution for every kammic misdeed, a process that could take many lifetimes—in the course of which, one might create more bad kamma, delaying arahantship still further. But for the Buddhists, training in virtue, discernment, and the ability not to be overcome by pleasure or pain could take the mind to a state where the results of past bad kamma would "be experienced in the here-and-now, and for the most part would appear only for a moment." In other words, in the Buddhist teaching, but not in the Jain, the state of the mind in the present plays a major role in how the effects of past kamma will be experienced.

5. This verse = Dhp 26.

6. This verse = Dhp 27. For a detailed discussion of "intimacy," see SN 22:3.

7. "This" apparently refers to the abundant bliss mentioned in the previous verse.

8. The verses in MN 86 end here.