

Angulimala

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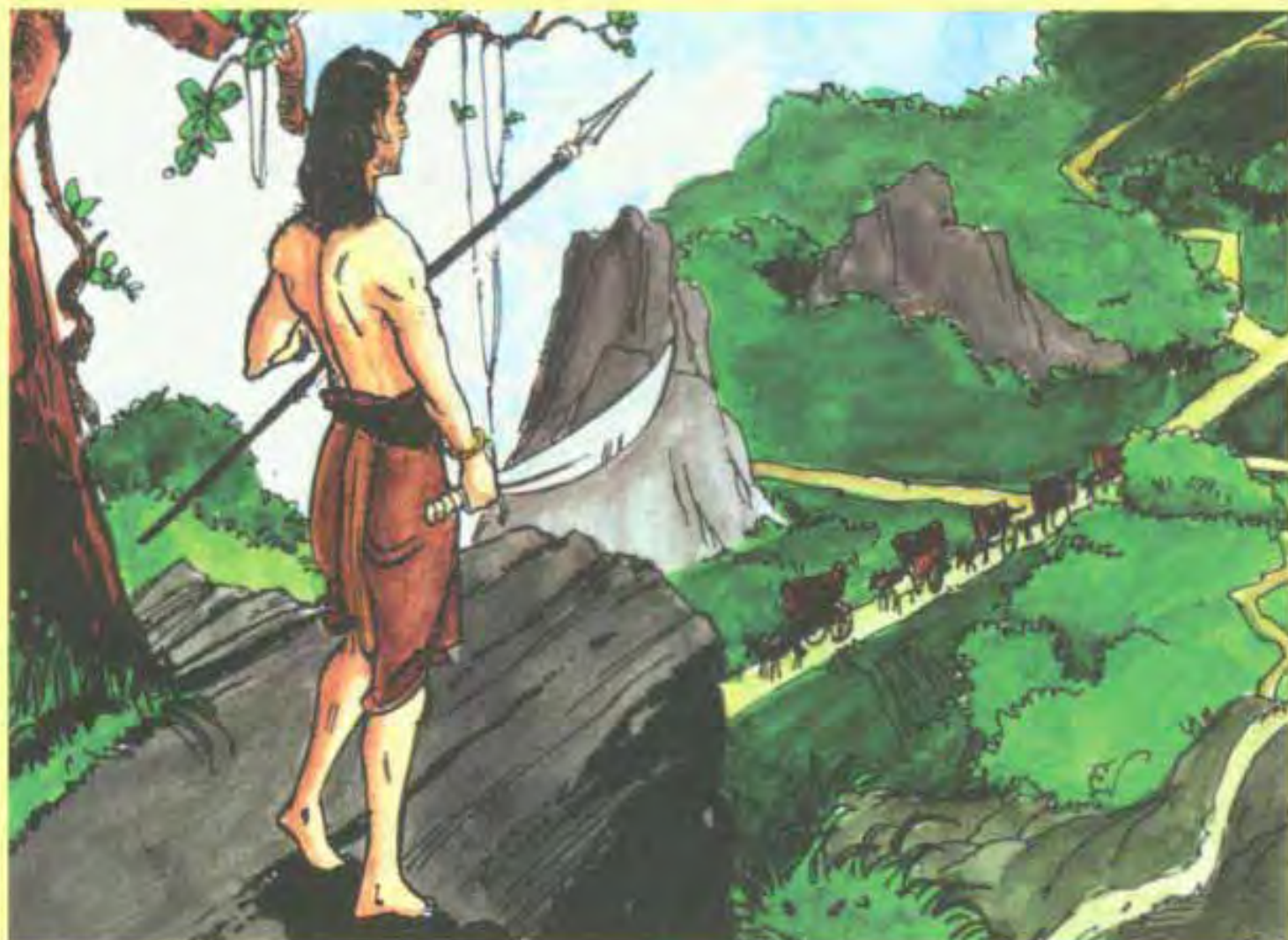
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ANGULIMĀLA REAL-LIFE STORY

THE DRAMATIC STORY of Angulimāla's dual transformation from a diligent, virtuous student to a notorious serial killer, and once again, into a compassionate, spiritually perfect Arahant has been retold millions of times for over two thousand six hundred years. It has never failed to evoke powerful emotions in the reader or listener, both young and old. This presentation of "Angulimāla" is designed to cater to a wide readership, ranging from young children, teenagers to adults.

Parents can introduce the moral lessons of the story of Angulimāla to their children as young as three years old, by reading, in sequence, the captions under each of the illustrations. The illustrations themselves unfold the life-episode of Angulimāla to the child. As the famous Chinese philosopher, Confucius once said, "a picture is worth a thousand words"; the child can thus better grasp the essence of the story through the graphic illustrations provided. Parents can use them to narrate in simple language the sequence of events and happenings of the legendary story and the moral lessons to be drawn.

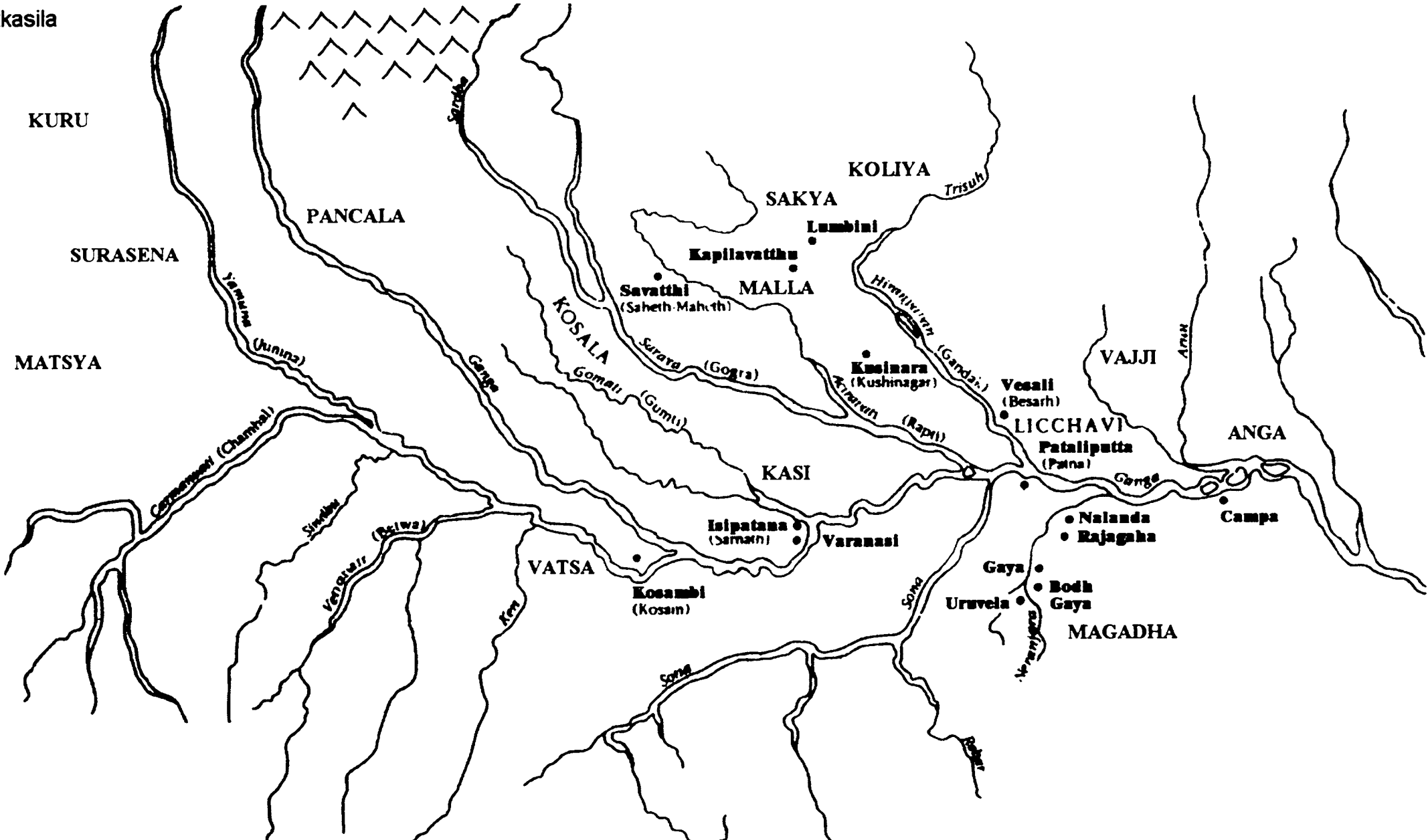
Teenagers and youths will find the story a classic that makes for enjoyable reading. They will at the same time benefit from understanding the underlying principles such as the *Eternal Doctrine of Kamma* (Sanskrit: *Karma*), contained in the episode. In addition, the story will inspire as well as serve as a guide to their personal development and progress in life.

Parents will find the story an important guide to parenting. They will be reminded to bring up their child with *Metta* (Loving Kindness) and *Karuna* (compassion). This will enable them to direct their child to tread the *Arya Magga* – the Noble Path of the Dhamma.

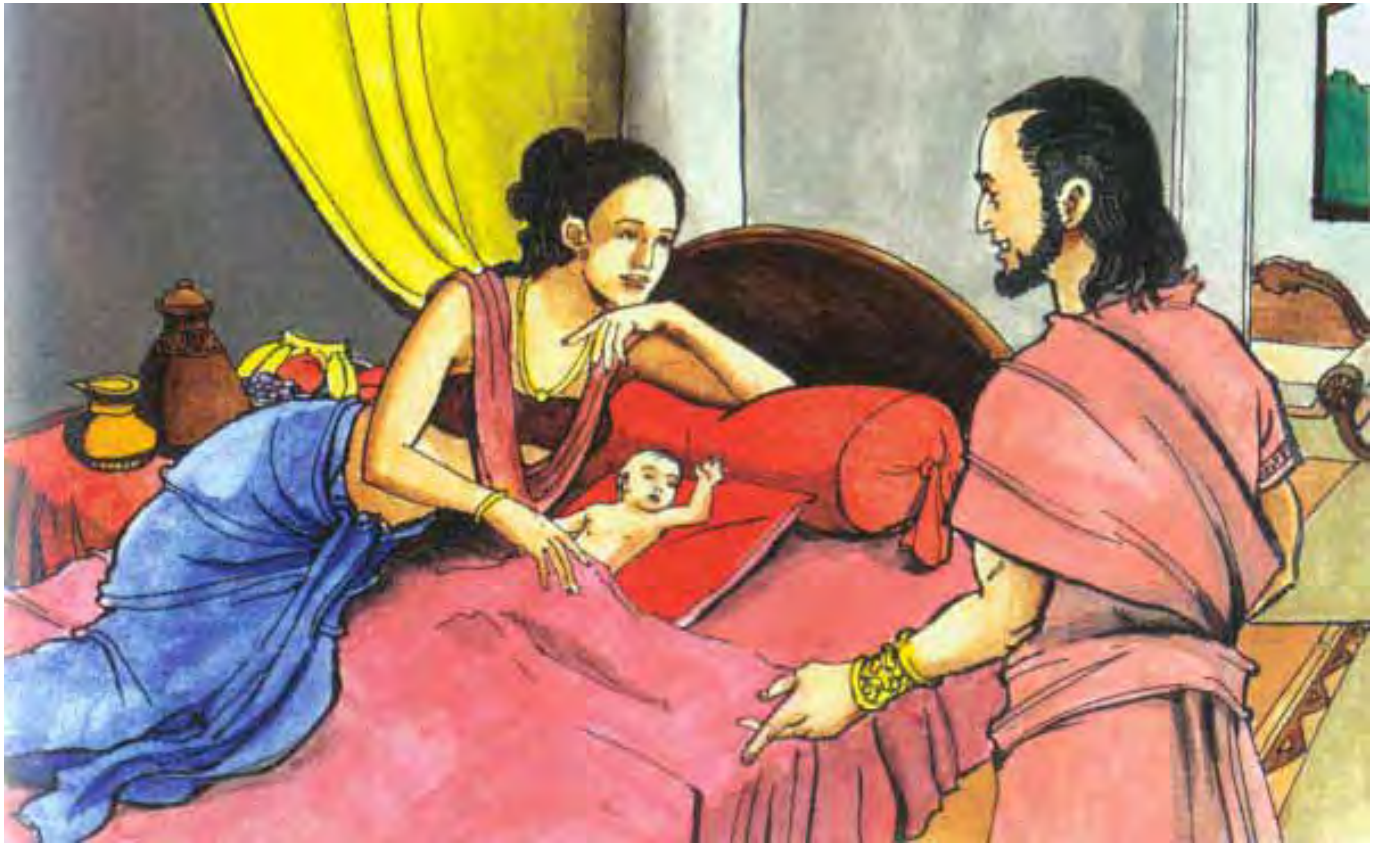
Expectant mothers and their immediate families will draw deep *Saddha* or confidence essential for motherhood, from their "Patron Saint", Arahant Angulimāla. They will also appreciate the inherent power of the protective blessings in the Angulimāla Paritta, and of the importance of observing "gabbha pariharā", for ensuring a safe and successful delivery.

In addition, the book can be used for staging a drama. Finally, to facilitate the use of the book as a text for comprehension, a list of questions is provided at the end of the story as well.

● Takkasila



Kosala and Neighbouring Kingdoms



Bhaggavā and Mantani overjoyed at the birth of a son

AFTER SEVERAL YEARS of being happily married, Mantani the wife of Bhaggavā Gagga, the Purohita Brāhmana* in the court of King Pasenadi, of the kingdom of Kosala, gave birth to a baby boy. He was a delightful, healthy, cute baby. Both Mantani and Bhaggavā were overjoyed at being blessed with a son, after waiting anxiously for so many years. However, at the time of his birth in the middle of the night, Bhaggavā had noted that a brilliant light glittered from the weapons of the night-guards protecting their home.

This unusual happening troubled him. He could not help feeling that the strange light was somehow connected with his son's birth. He wondered whether it was an auspicious sign. He could not tell for sure for he had not come across such a mysterious happening before. He was therefore anxious to find out whether the strange phenomenon was a good or bad omen. It was a common practice in India, particularly among the royal and aristocratic families, to consult astrologers to interpret any unusual event or incident. But since it was mid-night, he had to wait till the next morning to consult the Royal Astrologer.

Early next morning, Bhaggavā hurried to the Royal Astrologer to chart

* Grand Chaplain



Bhaggavā consults the Royal Astrologer on his son's horoscope

his son's horoscope and to seek his respected opinion about the strange incident that had taken place at the time of his birth. He broke to him the happy news of the birth of a son and requested him to cast his son's future. The Royal Astrologer carefully referred to his books and charts a few times over to make sure that he had read the astrological signs and planetary calculations rightly.

Bhaggavā noticed that after each reading, the Royal Astrologer shook his head as if in disbelief. He muttered to himself, after each round he flipped through his astrological tables and charts. *"This cannot be true. Possibly there might be something not quite correct in the configuration of the times and the reading on the constellation of the planets. I must check this out again"*, he mumbled to himself. Bhaggavā's anxiety heightened as the Royal Astrologer reviewed his calculations. Not able to hold his patience any longer, he pressed him for his verdict.

The Royal Astrologer finally looked up to Bhaggavā slowly and told him, *"I regret to be the bearer of sad news Brahmin. According to my calculations, your son was born at an inauspicious time. To be precise, he was born under what is defined as the 'bandit constellation'. This means your son possesses an innate disposition to a life of violence and crime. Furthermore, the strange*



Bhaggavā overhearing people talking about the omen

sparkling of light from the weapons you had witnessed at the time of his birth does not augur well for your son's future. As a matter of fact, the omen portends that he is destined to become a notorious bandit when he grows up."

Bhaggavā was devastated. He gaped with open mouth as the Royal Astrologer delivered his heart-shattering opinion. One could well imagine Bhaggavā's great shock when told the readings of his son's unexpected horoscope. Heart-stricken and burdened with great sadness he made his way home.

On the way home, he noticed city folk discussing about the strange flashes of light that had emanated from their weapons the night before. He stopped his horse carriage to find out what exactly they were saying. Most of them expressed fears that the strange event was a bad omen. He overheard a person remark *"Ah. This is not a good omen at all."* Another declared, *"Some evil is going to strike the people of Kosala."* *"The Gods must be angry with Kosala,"* they concluded.

Bhaggavā's heart became more burdened with sadness over his son's future. He told himself "If the people of Savāthī too had experienced the strange flashes of light, than the Royal Astrologer's prediction must be correct". As he journeyed home, brooding over what had transpired, his heart grew heavier and heavier about the prediction of his son's future. However,



King Pasenadi suddenly awakened by blinding flashes

he did not wish to inform his wife about their son's shocking horoscope. He simply did not have the heart to break the unhappy news to her. He knew that this would surely cause her much heartache and anguish. He resolved to bear the pain of the heart-breaking prediction of their son's future all by himself.

Later that morning, Bhaggavā, as usual, reported to King Pasenadi's court. He inquired from the monarch whether he had a sound sleep during the night. *"How could I have slept well Brahmin?"* replied the king. *"A strange thing happened last night. I was awakened suddenly in the middle of the night by blinding flashes of light which gleamed from the royal coat of arms hanging over my bed in my chamber. As I woke up, I saw the royal armoury, blazing like a fire. The whole night through my mind was preoccupied over the strange flashes of light in the palace. I was too perturbed to return to sleep. Initially, I thought that perhaps what had happened was a nightmare or just my imagination playing tricks on my mind. But upon investigating the strange incident, I realized that this was not to be so. I could not help but feel greatly distressed by the unusual happening. I could not help but wonder Brahmin; could this be an omen signalling a danger to the kingdom or to me personally?"*

The Brahmin Bhaggavā, being one of the most trusted and loyal officers



Bhaggavā confides to the King about the Royal Astrologer's prediction

of the royal court, addressed the king *“Your Majesty, have no fear. The same strange phenomenon had taken place throughout the city of Savāthhī. The mysterious happenings do not concern Your Majesty’s safety and well-being. Last night my wife was blessed with a son. At the time of his birth, all the weapons in the city had glowed as if they were on fire.”* With a heavy heart, he proceeded to disclose to the king, *“I requested the Royal Astrologer to cast my son’s horoscope and also consulted him about the mysterious happening. According to him, my son was born during a ‘bandit constellation’. This was what caused the weapons in the royal armoury to dazzle brightly. He had predicted that the strange phenomenon portended a danger to Kosala.”*

Out of his loyalty to his monarch, Bhaggavā stated that he, could not bring up a son who was destined to be a threat to the people of Kosala. He requested of the king whether his son’s life is to be ended in order to protect the kingdom. He cited as justification, the Vedic Scriptures which stated that one evil life may be sacrificed to save a hundred lives. Based on this Vedic ruling, Bhaggavā with a heavy heart submitted *“Your Majesty, permit me to put an end my new-born son before he grows up to be a notorious bandit and a threat to Kosala.”*

King Pasenadi was somewhat taken aback by Bhaggavā’s request. He



Bhaggavā expresses gratitude for the King's compassion

inquired “*Brahmin, did the Royal Astrologer predict your son would become a leader of gang of bandits or a lone criminal?*” Bhaggavā answered dutifully “*A lone bandit 1 his fate, Your Majesty.*” King Pasenadi was at ease with the Bhaggavā’s reply. He reasoned that Bhaggavā’s son could not pose an insurmountable threat to the kingdom as a lone bandit. The king recalled the Buddha’s Teachings about the innate goodness of every human being and also His emphasis that every child was born virtuous and pure in mind. King Pasenadi was hopeful that Bhaggavā would be able to forestall any evil traits from taking root in his son should he adhere to the Buddha’s advice. After careful consideration, he advised Bhaggavā “*Instead of ending your son’s life, noble Brahmin, it would be better to raise him with proper education and for you to personally guide and train him to live a virtuous life. Your son will then lose his evil predilection.*” Bhaggavā heaved a sigh of relief. His son would live after all! He thanked his king profusely for his compassion and wisdom and promised him that he would do as advised and endeavour to raise his son in the Brahminic virtues, customs and traditions.

Bearing in mind the king’s advice, one of the very first things Bhaggavā did was to give his son a carefully thought out noble name. After much deliberation with Mantani, the name “Ahimsaka” – meaning harmless –



Bhaggavā and Mantani spend joyful moments with baby Ahimsaka

was chosen. Bhaggavā hoped that this name would plant in his son's mind, the ideal to strive for a blameless way of life. He thought to himself *“Hopefully my son would strive to achieve the ideal of ahimsa and not become a bandit as predicted in his horoscope.”*

Bhaggavā and Mantani spent many delightful hours with their newborn son each day. He was a bundle of joy and gave them much happiness. They brought him up with great care and affection. Bhaggavā paid every attention to Ahimsaka's grooming. He spared no effort to bring him up as a person of sound character and mind. As instructed by his monarch, he provided close supervision and parental guidance in order to ensure that he grew up to be a virtuous person. He was provided the best education possible and was well tutored in the customs and religious practices of the Brahminic tradition.

Ahimsaka grew up to be a physically strong boy. He was true to his name as he was a gentle, loving child. He was deeply affectionate and highly respectful of his parents and totally committed to maintaining the honour and reputation of the family. Furthermore, he displayed deep compassion to others. He was equally kind and caring towards animals and insects. He proved to be an intelligent, diligent and well-mannered student. Bhaggavā's confidence



Ahimsaka proves to be a diligent, virtuous student

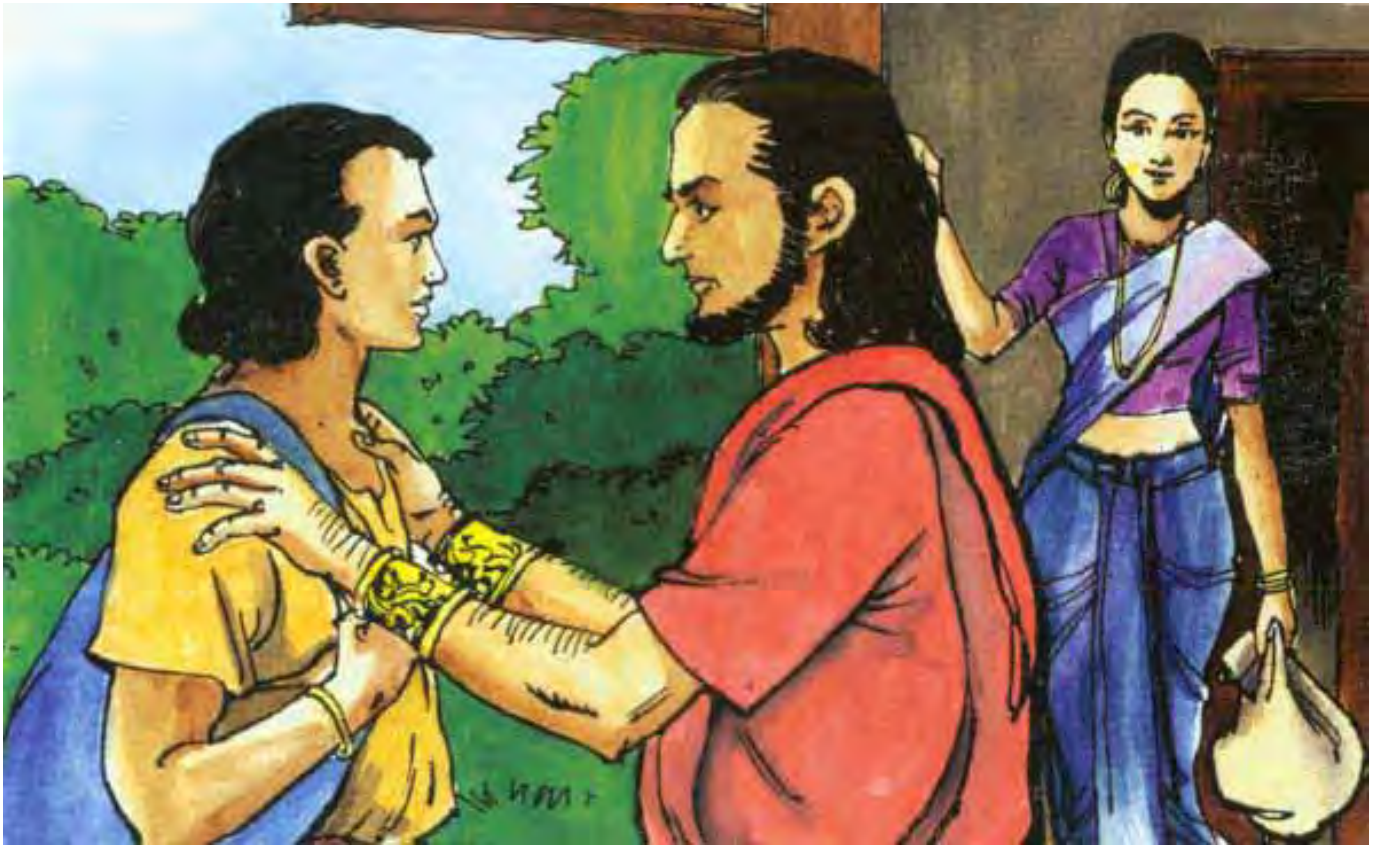
and pride in his son soared as he made remarkable progress in his education. He was equally pleased that his character and conduct were impeccable. He was confident that a youngster as dedicated as Ahimsaka, who took such a keen interest to study the sacred Brahminic traditions and customs as well as the Vedic Scriptures, could not even become a notorious criminal.

Even as a teenager, Ahimsaka was an outstanding student who distinguished himself in his scholastic achievements. He possessed a burning passion for learning. His *adhitthana*^{*} was to achieve the pinnacle of higher learning, by being selected to study at Takkasila^{**} – the renowned centre of learning in ancient India. When he came of age, in recognition of his excellent academic performance and his respectable Brahmin family background, he was selected into the famous University of Takkasila. Not only that, he was privileged enough to study under the tutelage of the foremost teacher, Acariya Disapamuk. Bhaggavā and Mantani beamed with pride. They were delighted that Ahimsaka would be instructed by the best *acar-
iya*.^{***} They were confident that he would soon follow in the footsteps of his

* Aspiration

** Also known as Taxila

*** Teacher



Bhaggavā and Mantani bid Ahimsaka farewell

distinguished father and hold a high position in the Royal Court. Higher learning was regarded as a most noble undertaking in ancient Indian society. A learned person was thus highly honoured and accorded great respect. But at the same time, Bhaggavā and Mantani's hearts were heavy too. Ahimsaka's departure for Takkasila was both a happy and sad event for them. Ahimsaka's selection into Takkasila meant that he would be away from home for several years until he completed his scholarship. It was the established tradition for a student to study under a single *acariya* who would teach his students for around eight to ten years, imparting all the knowledge he had accumulated through study and experience.

Bhaggavā, had another reason to be happy over Ahimsaka's scholastic excellence. He was relieved that Ahimsaka had proven to be an outstanding student. He was sure that his son had a great future ahead of him. This was all the more assured, given his own high position and influence in the king's court. Bhaggavā felt certain that since Ahimsaka possessed such an ardent thirst for learning, he would not become the predicted murderous bandit. *"There must have been some mistake in the prediction by the Royal Astrologer about Ahimsaka's evil ways when he became an adult. He must have made some error in the reading of his horoscope"*. Thinking thus, he ceased to



Ahimsaka arrives at Takkasila University

worry about his son's future.

When he arrived at Takkasila, Ahimsaka was simply overawed by the ambience of the ancient university city. Structures were massive, with towering arches every twenty or so steps. Wide corridors on both sides linked large lecture halls and students' dormitories. The library was a treasure vault of books and other educational materials one only dreamt about. He was eager to read the rare collection of treatises and other learned works housed in it. The campus itself stretched for miles in all directions with wide open parks and beautiful gardens, interspersed among the huge structures where groups of students were engaged in discussion, debate, quiet self-study or contemplation. *"This is such a refreshing environment for learning,"* thought Ahimsaka.

Takkasila also had the rare distinction of hosting students from all over the Indian sub-continent and beyond. There was hence the added attraction of interacting with students from different cultural backgrounds. It was a unique sight to see students garbed in various ethnic attire. He found the university such an invigorating place for scholarship. Ahimsaka took an immediate liking to the place and felt lucky to be there. From the very moment he stepped into the campus at Takkasila, he felt inspired to take every opportunity to excel in his higher learning. After being guided around



Ahimsaka pays respect to Acariya Disapamuk

the university, he was finally introduced to the famous Acariya Disapamuk. He bowed respectfully before his *acariya* and presented him with the gifts his parents had sent. Acariya Disapamuk warmly welcomed Ahimsaka and introduced him to the rest of his students.

At Takkasila too, Ahimsaka proved to be an excellent and conscientious student. He performed exceedingly well in his studies that he soon was head and shoulders above the rest of his class. He mastered in a short time, what his peers had struggled to cope with, for over three years. Acariya Disapamuk was highly impressed and proud of Ahimsaka's scholastic achievements and predicted proudly that he had a great future before him.

Ahimsaka also served his *acariya* humbly and faithfully. Within a few years; he became the most illustrious student of the renowned *acariya*. He was also known for his kindness and good virtues in the campus. It was no surprise that he soon became the favourite of his *acariya*. So impressed was Acariya Disapamuk with Ahimsaka that he extended the hospitality of his home as if Ahimsaka were his own son. Ahimsaka's gentle, humane nature also impressed Acariya Disapamuk's wife. As they had no children of their own, she took a natural liking for Ahimsaka and treated him as one of the family. It was indeed a rare honour for a student to be accorded such high



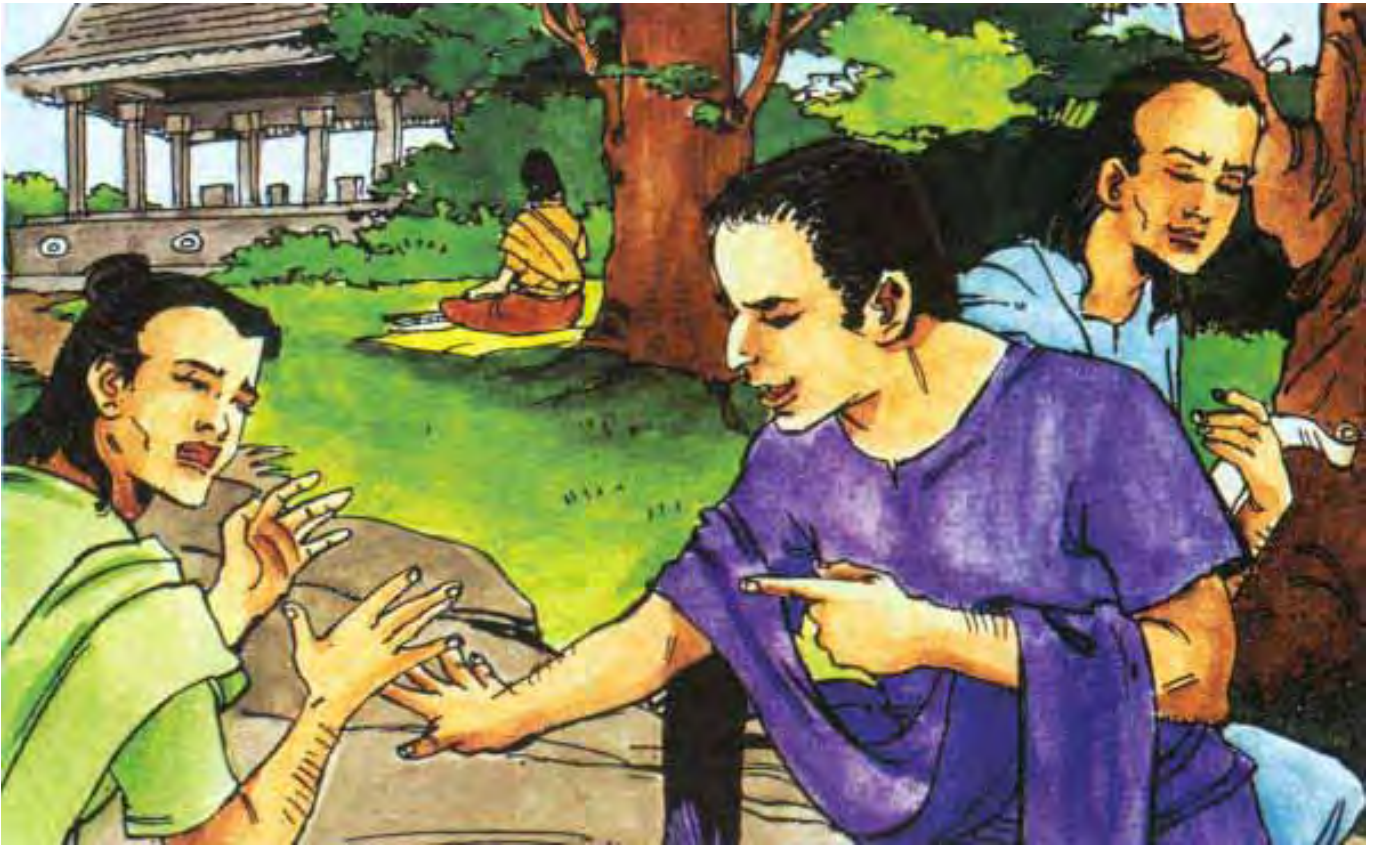
Acariya Disapamuk praises Ahimsaka's scholarship

privilege and trust by a teacher as renowned as Acariya Disapamuk.

When he first arrived at Takkasila, Ahimsaka had many close friends. But gradually, with his growing prominence, his peers began to distance themselves from him. They became envious of his remarkable success and the special treatment he was accorded by their *acariya*. As time passed, Ahimsaka's peers grew increasingly unhappy with the special attention extended to him.

They were resentful of the praises Acariya Disapamuk showered so liberally on him and began to frequently express their disenchantment against him amongst themselves. The usual grumbling was that since Ahimsaka's arrival, their teacher had almost forgotten them. "*We must soon end this ridiculous situation by causing a rift between Ahimsaka and our acariya*", they contemplated among themselves. Over time, their envy festered and degenerated into a deep-seated jealousy.

It came to a point that they could not bear Ahimsaka's popularity any longer. They decided that it was time to get rid of him. They plotted to discredit him in the eyes of their *acariya*. But try as they might, they could not find a single fault in their classmate. There was, nothing damaging about him that they could exploit to disgrace or discredit him. So they decided to



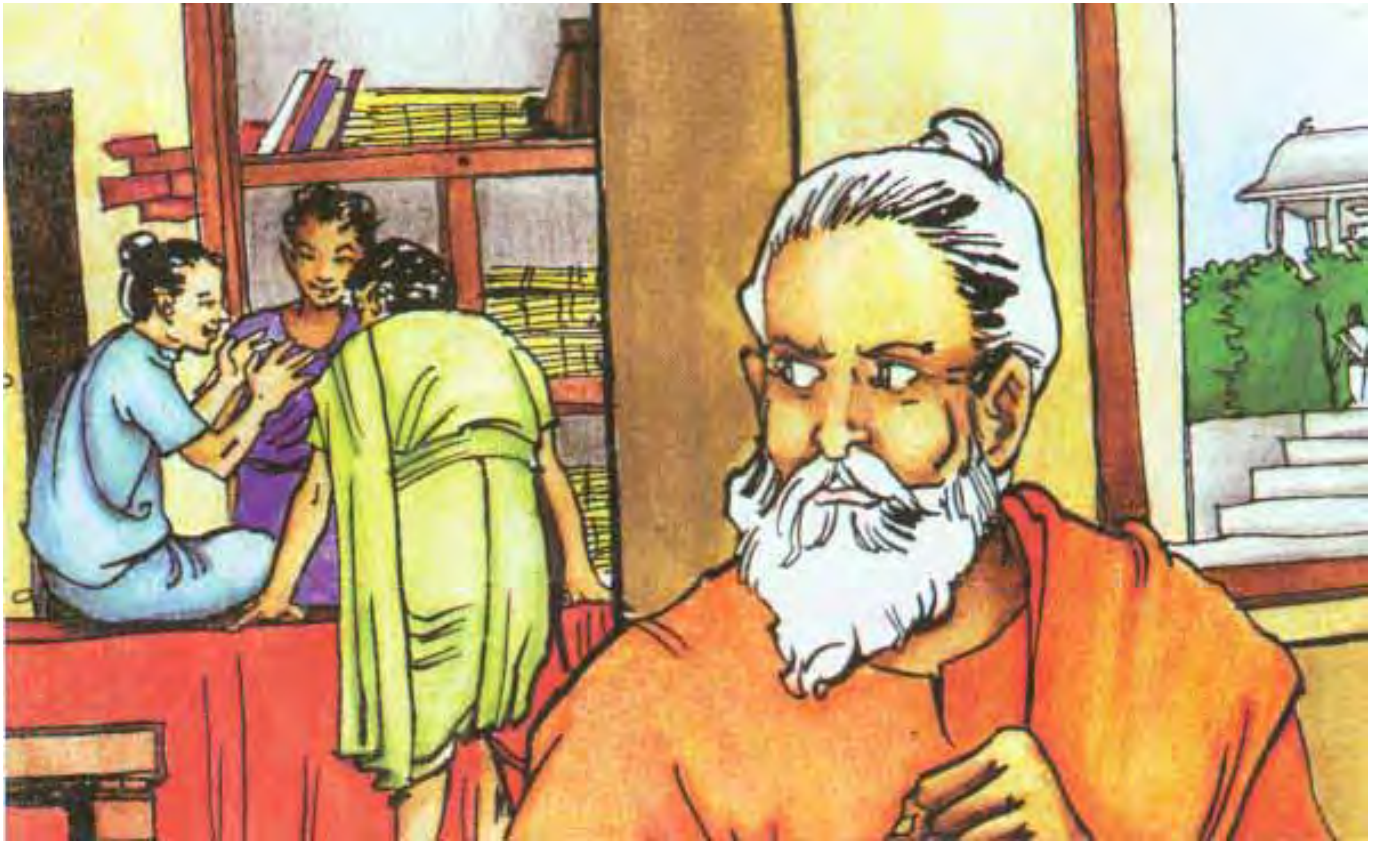
Ahimsaka's peers resentful of him

make false allegations against him in order to poison Acariya Disapamuk's mind about his favourite student.

They all acknowledged that they could not blemish his academic prowess. Instead they schemed to tarnish his character. They decided to report to their *acariya* that Ahimsaka had become swollen headed and had regarded himself as being intellectually superior to him, and that, he aimed to overshadow the master himself. To ensure that the scheme they hatched succeeded, they planned in addition to plant a seed of suspicion in their *acariya's* mind that Ahimsaka had taken advantage of his kindness and hospitality to start an illicit relationship with his wife.

In order to execute their sinister plot, the jealous peers divided themselves into three cliques. The first group informed their *acariya* of Ahimsaka's improper character and conduct. According to their scheme, the second and third clique would confirm to their *acariya*, at intervals, the veracity of the first clique's accusations. Acariya Disapamuk reprimanded his students and dismissed outright the allegations they had levelled against Ahimsaka. He considered their charges preposterous and scolded them for accusing Ahimsaka of such inconceivable wrong doings.

He rebuked all of them, saying "*Get away, you miserable lot! Don't you*



Ahimsaka's peers plot against him

have anything better to do than find fault with Ahimsaka? Do not waste your time to cause dissension between me and Ahimsaka! Leave him in peace to pursue his studies. It will do you all good instead to follow the example of his diligence." The three groups of peers, respectfully submitted to their *acariya* that as far as they were concerned, they had done their duty by informing him about Ahimsaka's rotten character and his wrong doings. It was now left entirely to the master to take heed of their warning and protect his interests and family. *"If our Respected Master does not trust us, it may do well Sir, for you to investigate about Ahimsaka yourself,"* they politely suggested to their *acariya*.

Although *Acariya Disapamuk* had at first rejected outright the allegations of his students, slowly but surely, doubt began to grow in his mind. As time passed, a poisonous seed of suspicion against Ahimsaka began to germinate in his mind. He became increasingly apprehensive about Ahimsaka's close relationship with his wife. *Acariya Disapamuk* was old. His wife was relatively young and attractive, and also, fond of Ahimsaka. Therefore he soon fell for the treacherous scheme hatched by Ahimsaka's jealous peers. His mind became preoccupied with the possibility of Ahimsaka having taken advantage of his hospitality and had begun an affair with his wife.



Ahimsaka and Acariya Disapamuk's wife in animated conversation

He noticed that Ahimsaka spent much time with her. He often found them seated together in animated conversation. He could not help feeling jealous of his wife's affection towards him. She treated him with such kindness all the time and looked after his needs with much caring.

Doubts about Ahimsaka's character and behaviour began to loom large in Acariya Disapamuk's mind. Day by day, and soon, hour by hour, he thought of nothing else but the close relationship between him and his youthful wife. More so since he knew full well that they enjoyed each others company.

Acariya Disapamuk, however, felt that it would be unwise to openly confront Ahimsaka or his wife about his deepening distrust. He often asked himself *"Could it be that my students were right about Ahimsaka's improper behaviour and dubious intentions? I have been so trusting of Ahimsaka to a point that I was blinded about his true character. I treated him like my very own flesh and blood. How could he do this to me? Is this the kind of gratitude that he repays me with? It is always said, that there is no smoke without fire. From now onwards, I must keep a close scrutiny on his every movement. It would be simply foolish to take my eyes off him even for a moment."*

It is said that once suspicion is aroused in one's mind, one can always



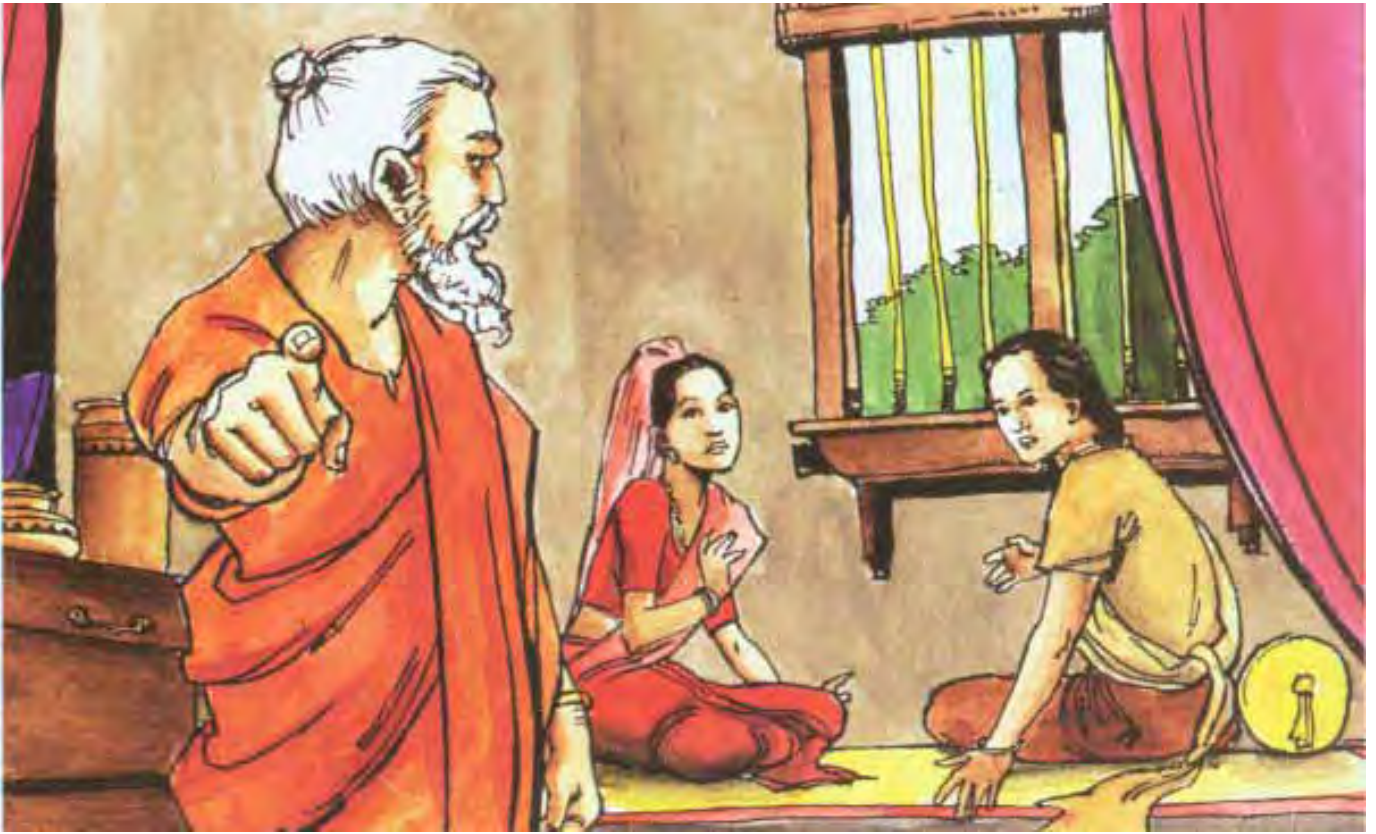
Acariya Disapamuk's suspicion about Ahimsaka takes root in his mind

find something to confirm it. As it turned out, this is exactly what happened in the case of Acariya Disapamuk. Despite the wise and learned person he was renowned for, he could not help being a victim of the age old practice of calumny.

Acariya Disapamuk waited for an opportune moment when both his wife and Ahimsaka were engrossed in conversation. He sneaked quietly behind the door and entered stealthy into his house. Both Ahimsaka and his wife were so absorbed chatting that they did not notice nor hear him enter. Unaware of his presence, they naturally failed to get up as was customary.

Acariya Disapamuk was furious that both Ahimsaka and his wife had failed to pay due respect to him when he made his entrance. He was livid that his student had behaved with such insolence. He shouted angrily at him for being ill-mannered and disrespectful towards him. Ahimsaka had never ever been reprimanded in his life, not to speak of suffering the ignominy of such a severe scolding from his respected *acariya*. Acariya Disapamuk's outburst of rage shook him to the core. Deeply shocked and shaken, he stood there silently in a daze with his head hanging down and his eyes gazing towards the floor.

After a barrage of reprimands, Acariya Disapamuk ordered Ahimsaka

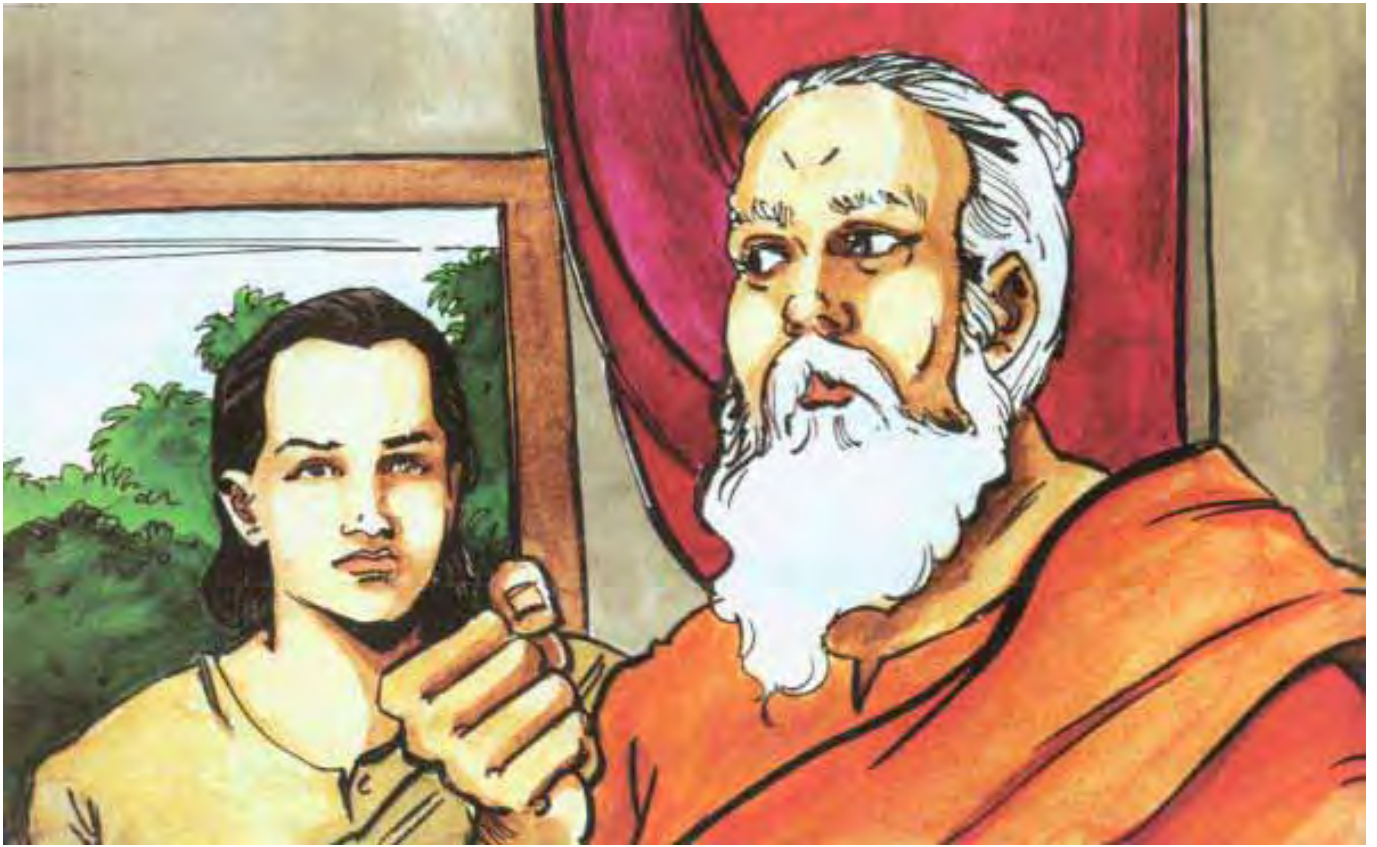


Acariya Disapamuk reprimands Ahimsaka for being disrespectful

to leave his house at once. Ahimsaka pleaded to his *acariya* “*Master, please forgive me, I do not mean to be disrespectful. I did not hear you coming. Please forgive me, for it was never my intention to disregard your eminence.*” He pleaded repeatedly for his *acariya*’s understanding for the inadvertent oversight. But Acariya Disapamuk was adamant and instead ruled that he should never again set foot in his house. Ahimsaka was completely shattered. He realized that he had no choice but to leave. He went to his room quietly and packed his belongings.

Before he took his leave, he paid reverence to his *acariya* and his wife. Once again, he begged his *acariya* for forgiveness. But Acariya Disapamuk remained unmoved. Instead, he looked the other way to demonstrate his impatience and still burning anger. Under a heavy cloud of despondency, Ahimsaka left to seek accommodation in the students’ dormitory in the campus.

By now Acariya Disapamuk concluded as true, what Ahimsaka’s peers had earlier reported about him. He was convinced that he had become egoistic, arrogant and disrespectful. Deep down, he also feared that his wife would elope with the youthful and handsome Ahimsaka. He could not bear the thought of being left all alone and to have been betrayed by this ungrateful student whom he had treated as his own son. He wickedly contemplated that



Acariya Disapamuk insists on his *Guru Dakshinā*

evicting Ahimsaka from his house was not sufficient security. Consumed by jealousy and deep anger, he decided that it was best to get rid of the young man completely. Thereupon he plotted a vile scheme to destroy him. With this sinister objective in mind, he decided to devise a way to get him killed. But he was concerned that if Ahimsaka was killed while he remained under his wardship, this would jeopardize his reputation and students would no longer seek him out for tutelage. He decided to demand his *Guru Dakshinā** – a hallowed custom that was strictly observed in ancient India. According to entrenched ancient Indian tradition, it was the *acariya's* sole prerogative to request any form of *Guru Dakshinā* he chose. Sacrificial offerings, including human sacrifice as fulfilment of a vow, penance or offering to the Gods was not unheard of under the Brahminic tradition. He knew that Ahimsaka would have no choice but to give the *Guru Dakshinā*, he demanded.

The first thing Acariya Disapamuk did the next morning was to summon Ahimsaka. He pronounced that he would not be able to teach him any further and demanded as his *Guru Dakshinā* of an offering of a thousand human angulis.** He ruled that the little fingers that Ahimsaka had

* Traditional offering to one's teacher

** Human fingers

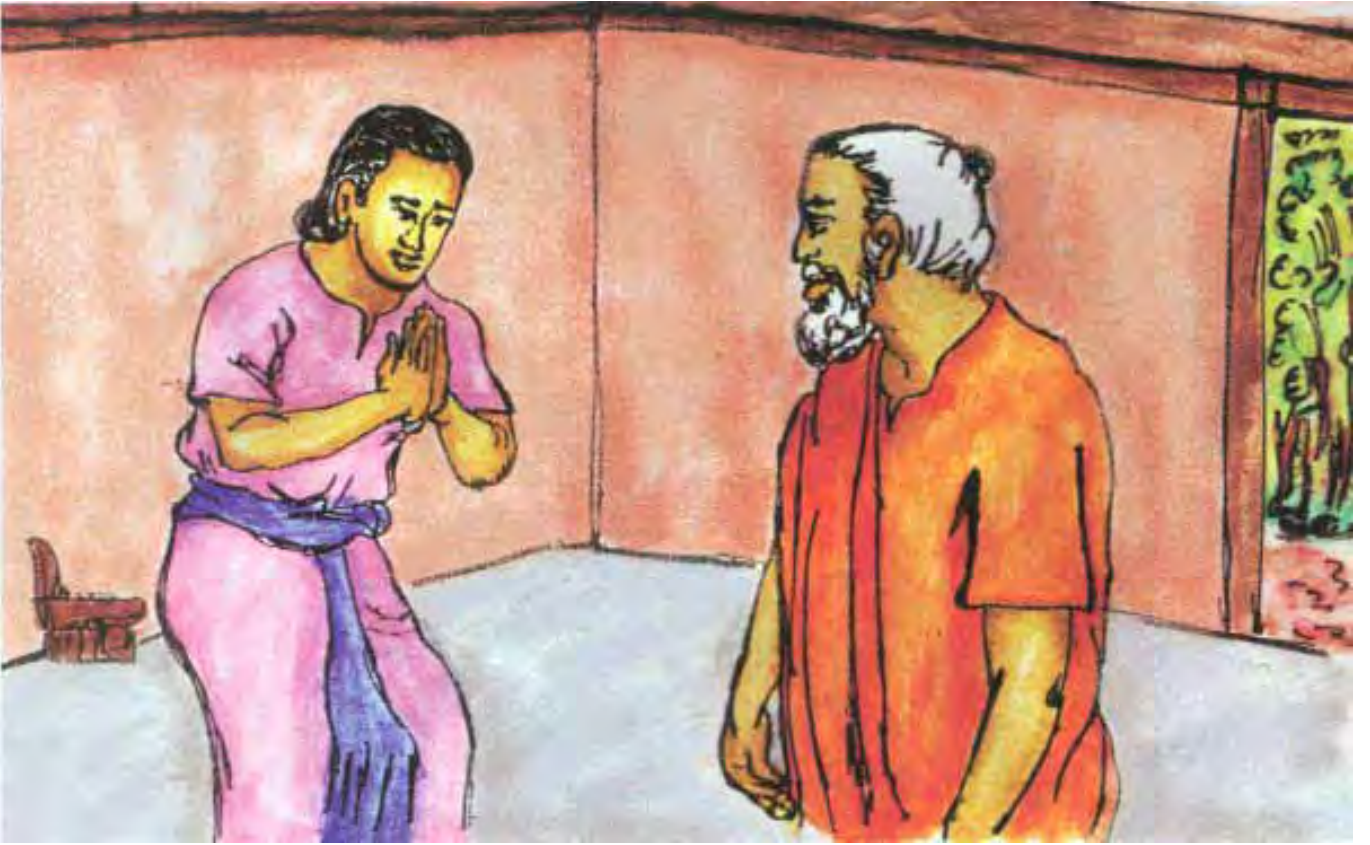


Ahimsaka thrown into deep consternation

to collect be only from the right hand of his victims. He was certain that Ahimsaka would be killed well before collecting them. At the same time, no blame could be attributed to him for the murders.

Ahimsaka was thrown into deep consternation over Acariya Disapamuk's shocking Guru Dakshinā. He was torn on the one hand between his duty as a student and gratitude to his teacher for all he had imparted to him and his personal desire to learn everything possible from this renowned master, and on the other hand, his aversion to hurt a living creature let alone kill a human being! He wanted very much to serve his *acariya* in any way he could. But he abhorred having to carry out such a murderous task, even though it came from no lesser person than his highly respected *acariya*. Early in life, he was taught by his parents, the virtues of kindness and gentleness, and above all, the sacredness of human life. Indeed, his very name "Ahimsaka" personified his life-ideal of not hurting or injuring or taking the life of another living being.

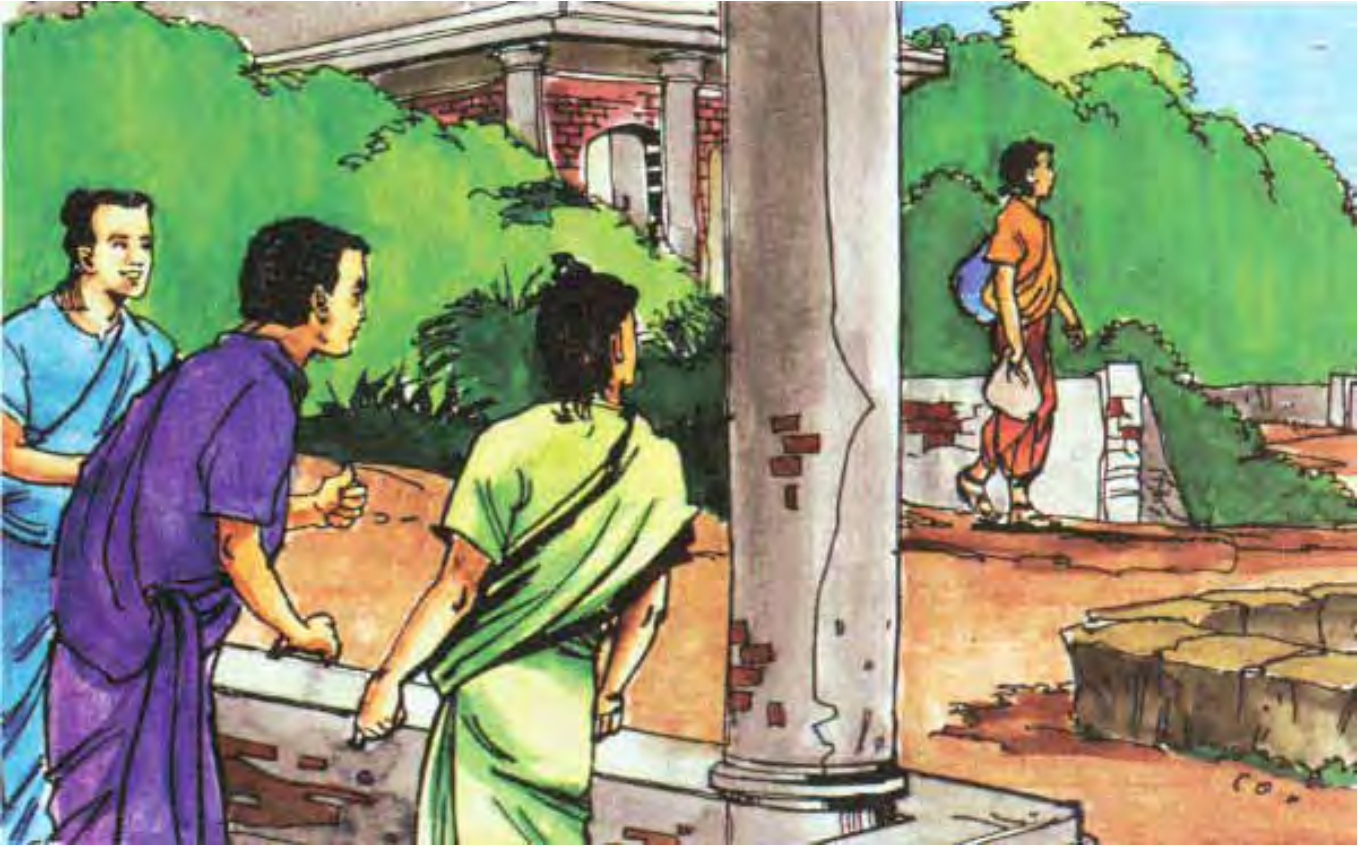
Shocked by such an outrageous demand, he exclaimed "O' Master! How can I ever do such a cruel thing as killing innocent people? My family has never engaged in violence much less kill people. We are peace-loving, respectable, harmless people. I beg you, Respected Master, please change the Guru



Ahimsaka pleads to Acariya Disapamuk to alter his *Guru Dakshinā*

Dakshinā?” I will do anything you command me, but please spare asking me to hurt or kill any being.” But his fervent pleas were to no avail. Since Acariya Disapamuk’s intention was to get rid of him completely, he of course insisted vehemently that he would not alter the *Guru Dakshinā*. Instead, Acariya Disapamuk warned Ahimsaka tersely, that should he refuse or fail to fulfil his *Guru Dakshinā*, he would as a consequence not only cause to bring upon himself considerable ill-repute, but also that a terrible curse will befall him.

Ahimsaka faced a great dilemma. He had to choose between avoiding evil and obeying his *acariya* to acquire special knowledge and supernatural powers. Acariya Disapamuk whom he revered, respected and honoured as he would his own father, had promised him that once his *Guru Dakshinā* was fulfilled, he would be instructed in special knowledge and sciences that would bestow him great supernatural powers. He would then be able to absolve himself from all sins and enjoy a blissful life here and now in this life and in future lives as well. In any case, in keeping with entrenched tradition, he had no choice but to fulfil his *Guru Dakshinā*. His passion for learning and the desire to acquire special knowledge and supernatural powers influenced Ahimsaka’s final decision to fulfil his *acariya*’s life-

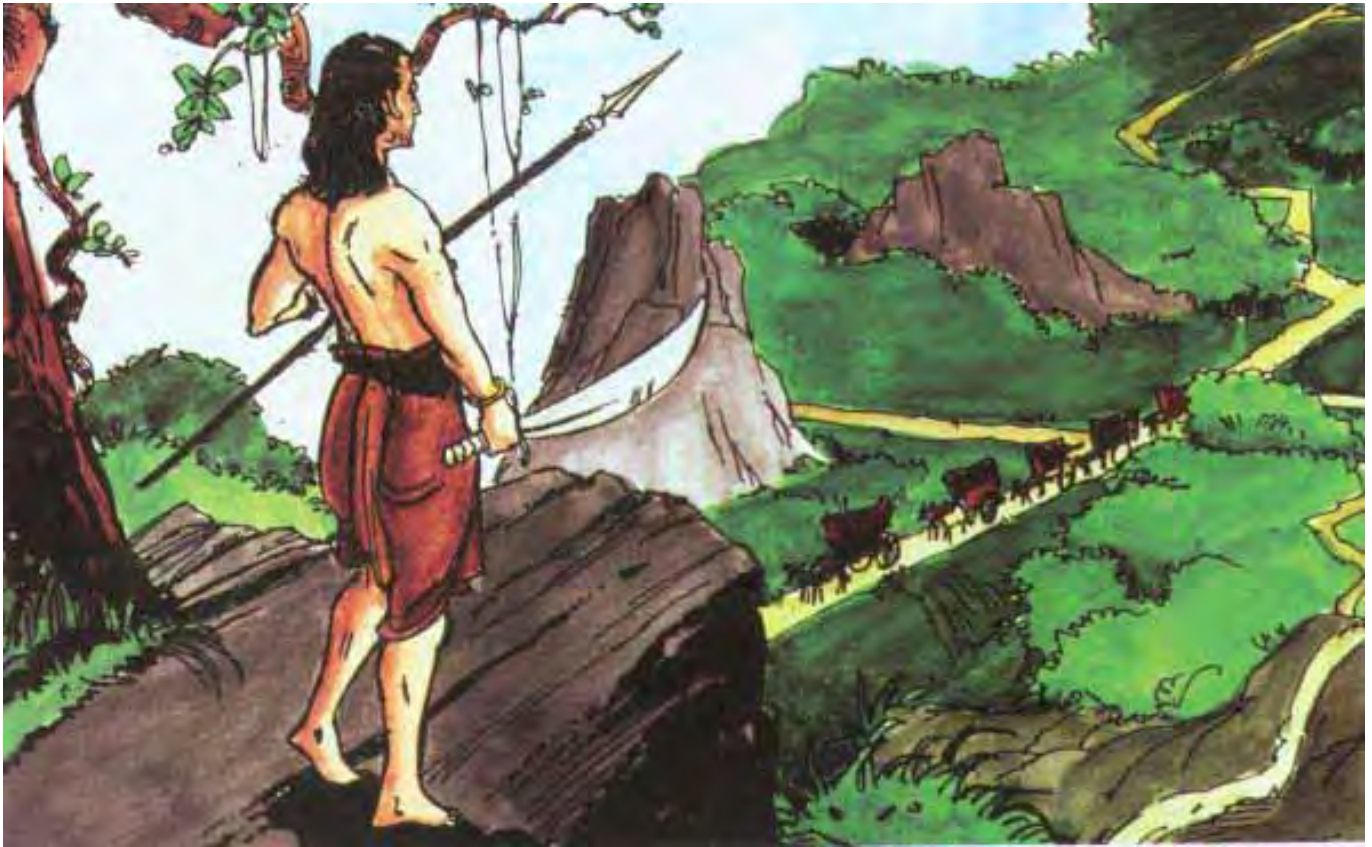


Ahimsaka's peers jubilant over getting rid of him

threatening Guru Dakshinā. He was therefore compelled to leave Takkasila to meet his Guru Dakshinā. After paying respects to his *acariya*, he left the campus. His jealous peers were jubilant that their evil scheme had finally borne fruit. They were truly happy that he would be gone forever. So certain were they all that he would be killed in the course of collecting a thousand angulis that they cheered and celebrated the success of their evil plot.

Ahimsaka's evil kamma in a previous life was beginning to ripen. Blinded by a misdirected sense of gratitude and a burning desire to excel in his scholastic pursuit and wield special powers, even if it meant he had to embark on a murderous career, he made up his mind to give his *acariya* what he demanded. He was now determined to fulfil at any cost his gory Guru Dakshinā.

Arming himself with swords, daggers and spears, Ahimsaka made his way into the Jālinī Forest, located along the western borders of Kosala. He chose a strategic location atop a cliff that overlooked the centre where the major cart tracks traversing the kingdom converged. One of them was a famous caravan route which merchants used to carry their goods, particularly rice, wheat and other agricultural products of Kosala to the trading city of Kosambi. Another route linked Savāthhī and the famous cotton and silk



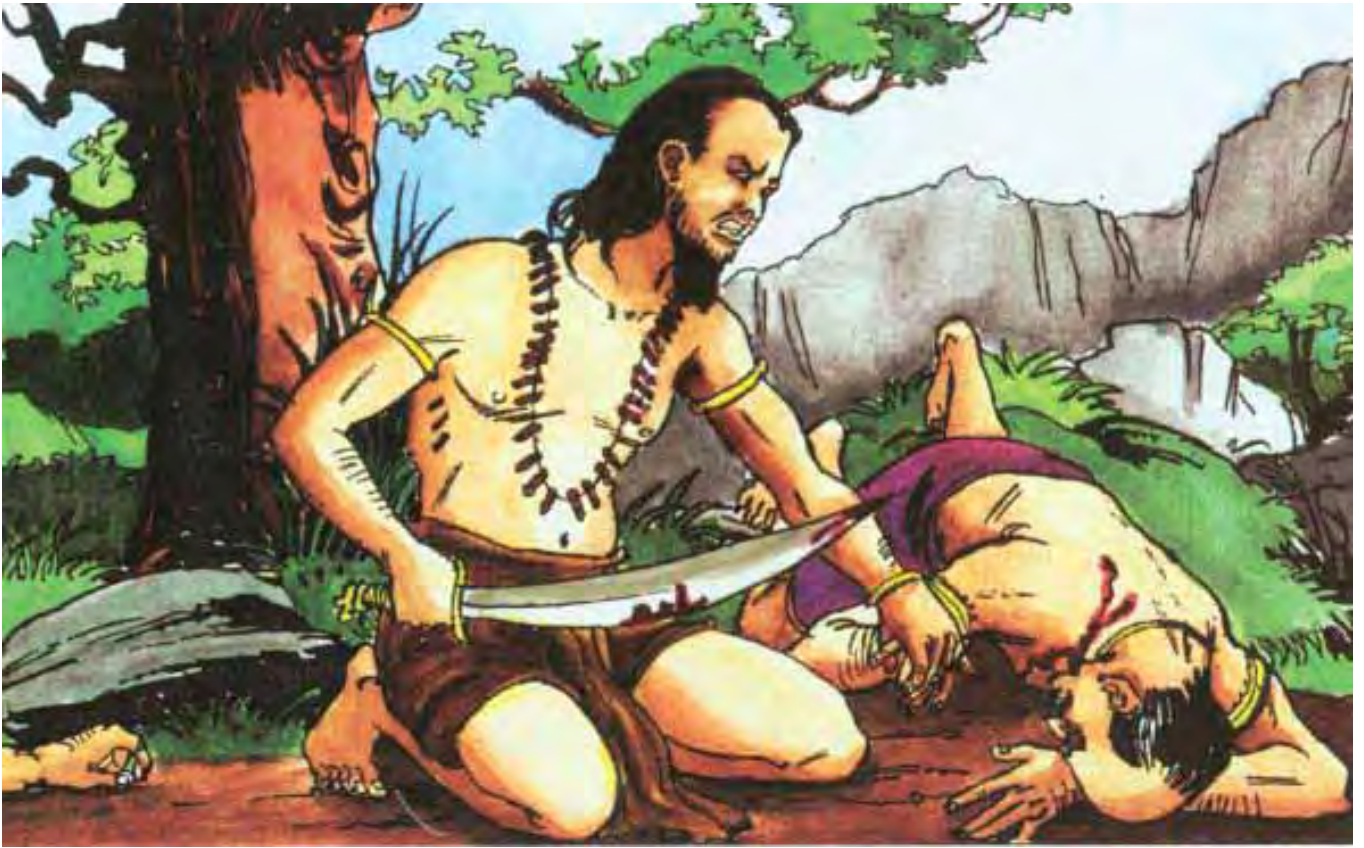
Ahimsaka surveys for victims from his forest hideout

handlooms of Kansi which produced the finest textiles for export to even as far as Rome and Greece. Then there were the cart tracks used to transport goods to and from the neighbouring kingdom of Magadha.

Ahimsaka calculated that he stood a good chance of collecting his thousand little fingers sooner by attacking unsuspecting merchants and others who frequently travelled along the major cart tracks. At the same time, his hideout on the fringe of the Jālinī Forest was isolated and reasonably secure for him to prey on his victims without him being caught.

From his secure hiding place in the forest, Ahimsaka began to pounce on innocent people who passed through the area. In particular, he terrorised traders and travellers who passed along the cart tracks through the Jālinī Forest. He spared no one and mercilessly murdered them for the little-fingers. Despite their fervent pleas to spare their lives, he ruthlessly butchered them all. As he began to kill more and more people, he had less and less qualms about attacking innocent men and women. Even children were not spared!

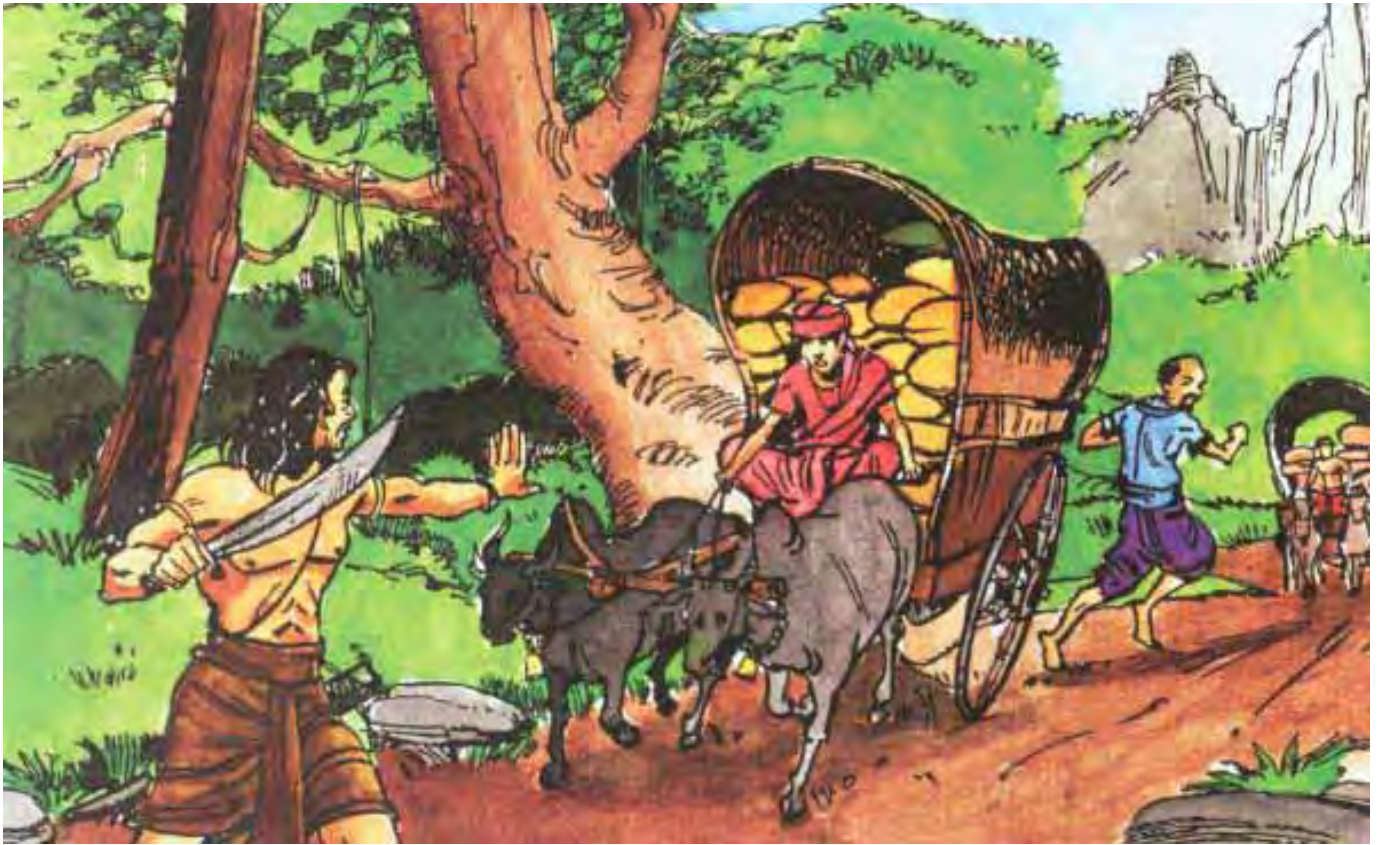
One by one his unsuspecting victims came to the Jālinī Forest from different directions. As if from nowhere, the young ex-student would leap out from the thick undergrowth and with one blow, render them all lifeless.



Ahimsaka severs the little finger from his victim

From each of his victims he cut off the little finger from their right hand. He did not hate them. Neither did he wish to take their gold or other possessions. All that he wanted was their little *anguli*.

At first Ahimsaka tied the *angulis* he severed from his victims and hung them on a tree. But they were all eaten by crows and vultures whenever he left to look for more victims. He realized that if this continued, he would never ever be able to complete his Guru Dakshinā. He then decided to string the *angulis* with twine and wear them as a garland around his neck. This enabled him not only to guard them but also to keep count of the total number of *angulis* he had collected. It was because of the garland of *angulis* he wore around his neck that Ahimsaka became infamous as the dreaded name “*Angulimāla*” – one wearing “a garland of *angulis*”. Not only that, he found that by the time he found new victims, the old fingers had rotted and fallen off. He reckoned that he would have to kill more than a thousand people to fulfil his offering to his *acariya*. But by this time he was well past the point of caring. He was blinded by the need to fulfil his vow. The innocent, noble kind-hearted Ahimsaka was long gone. He was now the dreaded “*Angulimāla*” who terrorised people, so much so that the very mention of “*Angulimāla*” sent shudders down a person’s spine. Thus Ahimsaka was no



Angulimāla attacks caravans passing the Jālinī Forest

more, as he came to be only known by his nickname “Angulimāla” which stuck with him ever since.

With single minded devotion, Angulimāla went about his gory task of adding to his garland of *angulis*. His murderous exploits soon spread throughout the countryside. He displayed great daring and ferocity. It was as though the devil himself had possessed him as he went about his obsession to complete his Guru Dakshinā. Traders, merchants and ordinary travellers who used the cart tracks and passed through his forest haunt feared for their lives. As he gathered hundreds of human little fingers, fear spread around the countryside about his daring attacks. Once he even managed to kill a group numbering forty merchants!

People began to avoid travelling anywhere near the Jālinī Forest for fear that Angulimāla would slay them. Traders and merchants discarded the popular caravan trade route to transport their rice and other agricultural harvest. Instead they used the longer route through neighbouring Magadha to reach Kosambi. Children were warned never to go near Angulimāla’s forest haunt. Even hunters and foresters who were familiar with the forest terrain relocated their livelihood far away from the area.

As news of the killings spread, hardly anyone used the roads passing



Angulimāla attacks villagers on the fringe of the Jālinī Forest

through the Jālinī Forest. The main cart-tracks between Kosala and Magadha became deserted. This meant there were fewer victims for Angulimāla to attack. The situation drove him to think of alternative ways to secure his *angulis*. Out of desperation he decided to attack people living along the fringes of the Jālinī Forest. He entered villages bordering the forest under cover of the darkness of night, killing people unlucky enough to be outside at that time. Village folks were soon alerted to Angulimāla's attacks. They avoided leaving their homes after dusk and remained indoors with their doors and windows heavily bolted. Finding new victims became tougher for Angulimāla. He became more desperate for *angulis*. He then began to forcibly enter homes and kill entire families for their little fingers. At this point, Angulimāla had become crazed. He killed without thinking. He was obsessed with only one aim, that is, to collect one thousand *angulis* as fast as he could.

Villagers living on the edge of the Jālinī Forest fearing for their lives abandoned their homes. No one was brave enough to stand up against the might and savagery that was Angulimāla. The displaced villagers trekked to the capital city of Savāthhī to plead with King Pasenadi to deliver them from the murderous Angulimāla. They camped on the outskirts of the city

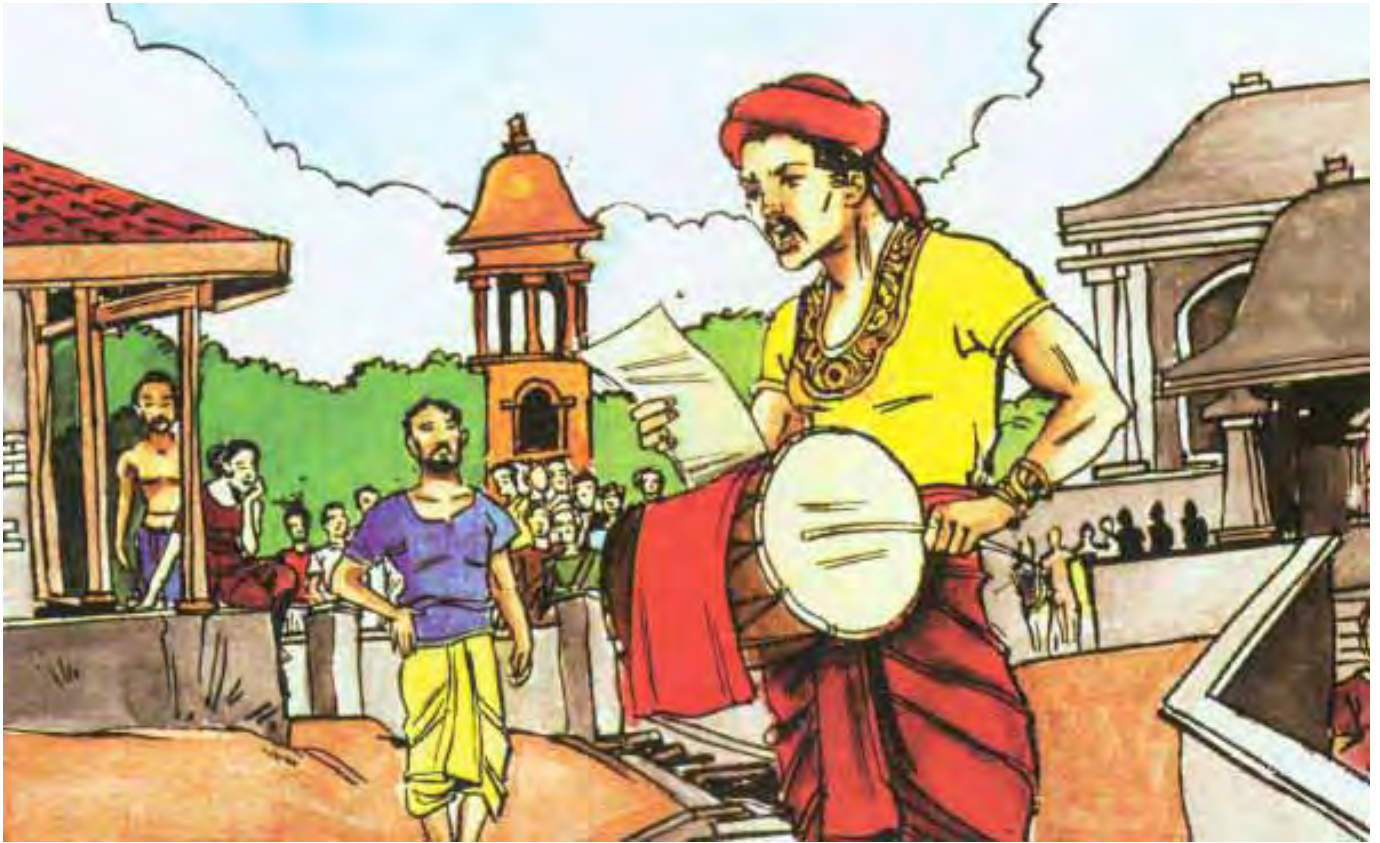


Village elders plead with King Pasenadi to capture Angulimāla

and waited for an audience with the king to implore him to protect their lives and homes from the murderous bandit. The elders presented themselves at the Royal Court when the King granted them an audience. Weeping and lamenting about their plight, they informed the king about their fears and sufferings. They entreated their sovereign to despatch his army to capture Angulimāla and put an end to his murderous exploits. King Pasenadi realized at once the gravity of the situation faced by the displaced village folks and the loss of revenue due to the cessation of trade with neighbouring kingdoms. He decided that firm action had to be taken against Angulimāla before the situation worsened and posed a serious threat to the kingdom. He resolved to free the villagers and the kingdom from the terror and agony of Angulimāla by capturing him immediately.

Having decided on the course of action to apprehend Angulimāla, the king commanded the announcement of his orders. That afternoon, the Royal Drummer read out at the top of his voice, the king's proclamation around the city centres:

Hear Ye! Hear Ye! People of Kosala. Without any further procrastination, I hereby declare that the murderous highway serial killer, Angulimāla is



Royal Drummer announces the king's proclamation to capture Angulimāla

to be captured. An army detachment of the best soldiers in the kingdom is to be assembled at once to execute this royal command!

These brave soldiers will capture Angulimāla without fail! Angulimāla will be hunted down by the royal soldiers and put to death by the royal sword!

The Royal Proclamation spread throughout Savātthī and the city folks discussed among themselves about the imminent capture of Angulimāla by the kingdom's finest soldiers. Bhaggavā was among the very first persons to know about the Royal Proclamation to capture Angulimāla. He contemplated deeply about the news of the killings that had taken place around the Jālinī Forest. With unease, he could not help but feel that the dreaded highway serial killer was his son who had not returned since he left for Takasila University. He recalled the prediction the Royal Astrologer had made regarding his son becoming a dangerous highway bandit. The more he contemplated about the gruesome killings, the more convinced he was that Angulimāla was none other than his son Ahimsaka.

Bhaggavā now felt compelled to disclose to his wife the Royal Astrologer's prediction regarding Ahimsaka at the time of his birth. After confiding in Mantani his worst fears that the notorious serial killer was their son, he



Mantani and Bhaggavā enveloped in deep anguish

informed her with a heavy heart, *“The king has ordered a detachment of the kingdom’s finest soldiers to capture and execute him, my dear.”* When she heard of the terrible news, Mantani’s heart felt a penetrating pain. She felt as if it was pierced by a sharp dagger and she could hardly breathe! Her son, her only beloved child could be a murderer! *“Oh Brahma! What have I done to deserve this curse”* she wept uncontrollably. *“Could this really be my beloved Ahimsaka?”* she asked herself. *“I must save him from being killed by the King’s soldiers”*, she thought in deep anguish.

Bhaggavā begged for Mantani’s understanding that much as he wanted to try and forewarn their son about the imminent danger to his life, he could not betray his monarch. As the king’s Royal Chaplain, he must at all times be loyal. He had no choice but to grieve in silence over the tragic fate of their son. He asked Mantani’s forgiveness for his unfortunate circumstance for not being in a position to do something to save their son’s life.

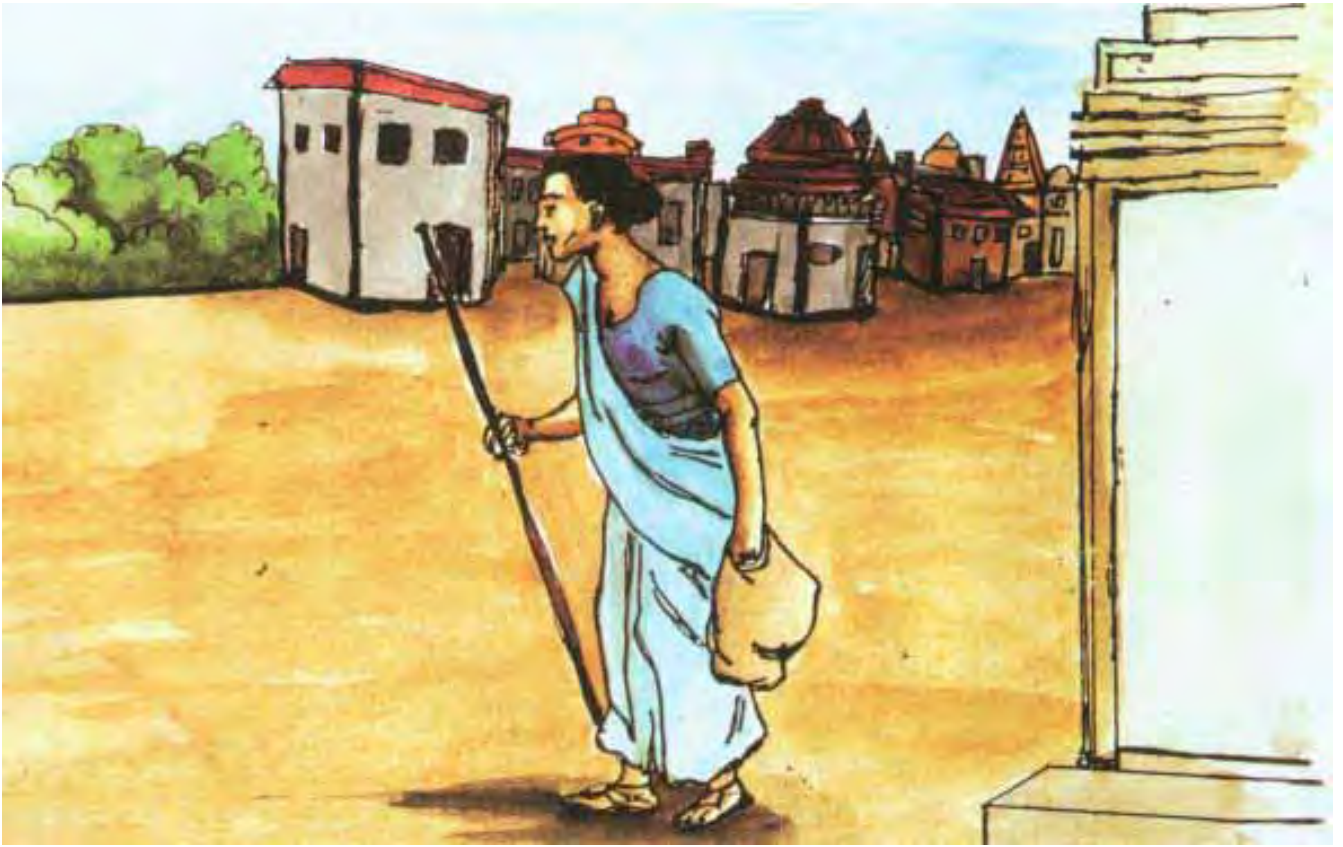
Mantani was devastated at the thought that the son she bore and brought up so lovingly could be the cause of so much pain in the land. But the thought of him being captured and killed was simply unbearable for her. Instantly, she thought of venturing to the Jālinī Forest to warn her dear son about the impending danger to his life. She was convinced that she



Mantani reminisces about her son

would be able to urge him to give up killing innocent people. *“After all,”* she thought, *“I am his mother. Who else is better qualified to make him see the error of his ways and return to the righteous path?”* As it was night and impossible for her to travel to the forest where wild animals roamed, she decided to wait till early the next morning. She planned to leave home even before Bhaggavā woke up, thinking that he might dissuade her.

Much as she tried, Mantani could not sleep a wink that night. Her mind was filled with anxiety for her son’s safety and the desire to do anything to save him from certain death. She tossed and turned restlessly in bed. All her thoughts were on her dear Ahimsaka. The son she had carried in her womb for ten lunar months and nursed and looked after so caringly all the years. Now the soldiers were going to hunt him down like a wild animal. The last she saw him was when he bid farewell for Takkasila. She wondered how her poor Ahimsaka was surviving in the forest *all alone* *“What a miserable life he must be suffering with no proper shelter and food to eat. Food, food, food,”* she repeated to herself. Her motherly instinct to feed her son automatically arose in her. *“I must take some home-cooked food for my starving Ahimsaka. I must cook his favourite dishes. My dear Ahimsaka must be missing home cooked food”* she told herself.



Mantani leaving Sāvathī before dawn

At that very instance, she got out of bed and went straight to the kitchen to cook the dishes Ahimsaka fancied. She then wrapped the food neatly in a cloth bundle and returned to her room. The time passed so slowly for Mantani. It seemed like the longest night she had experienced in her entire life. At long last, dawn was about to break. She hurriedly got ready to set out to the Jālinī Forest. Equipped with a staff, the parcel of favourite foods, and most importantly, the determination to save her son from imminent death, she quietly stepped into the street.

It was the middle of spring. There was a light mist and the air had a slight chill. It was still dark. Everything was shrouded in the morning mist and the city was so quiet that she could hear her own footsteps. Not a movement or a sound was in the streets. They were all empty as the city folks were still fast asleep. Even the birds had not awakened to chirp and crow. Just as she had expected, Mantani did not come across anyone as she walked through the city. This way she did not have to explain to anybody about her journey. Before the sun could peak over the horizon, she had already reached the outskirts of Savāthī. By early morning, she had travelled several miles away from the city. An hour later, Savāthī was completely out of sight and she was well on her way to Angulimāla's forest haunt.



The Buddha's Mahā Karunā Samāpatti

It was the twentieth year of the Buddha's Ministry. At this time, He was residing at the Jetavana Monastery. On that very morning, as the Buddha routinely surveyed the world with His *Mahā Karunā Samāpatti*.^{*} Through His psychic powers, He saw the unfortunate plight of Angulimāla who was innately virtuous. He saw the *akusala kamma*,^{**} that Angulimāla was about to commit.

The Buddha envisioned Mantani walking towards Angulimāla's forest abode eager to save her son, but unaware of her fate. Through His divine eye he could see Angulimāla's obsession to fulfil his Guru Dakshinā. He saw that he had already secured nine hundred and ninety-nine *angulis* and was all set to secure the thousandth little finger to complete his Guru Dakshinā. So compelling was his desire to complete his garland of *angulis* that it would lead him surely even to kill his own mother.

In order to prevent Angulimāla from committing matricide, the Buddha decided to intervene and save him from falling into a deep spiritual abyss. This was all the more pressing, since according to His Teachings, matricide is one of the five most heinous offences that produces irreversibly, an

* Supreme Compassion

** Unwholesome volitional action



The Buddha envisions the danger facing Mantani

immediate rebirth in *apaya*.^{*} The Enlightened One knew that Angulimāla was born a virtuous, noble child and had the potential, due to his past wholesome *kamma* to attain *Nibbana* in this life. He saw that Angulimāla had sufficient innate virtue as well as the potential to enter the *Bhikkhu Sangha*^{**} and attain Arahant hood or Sainthood. The Buddha was certain that this was attainable provided he was given the right instruction and training in living skillfully and by purifying his mind to realize his emancipation.

Through His divine eye, the Buddha knew that Angulimāla was a virtuous person who had been misguided by his *acariya* to become a ruthless murderer. Due to his blind faith in his *acariya* and his selfish desire to attain the pinnacle of learning, he had gone about fulfilling his Guru Dakshinā with an unwavering commitment. He was confident that Angulimāla could be brought to a noble, righteous person again through *metta* and *karuna*.^{***}

The Buddha thus decided to seek out Angulimāla before his mother could reach him. The Enlightened One was certain that He could prevent Angulimāla from committing a most heinous *akusala kamma* and lead him

* Woeful states

** Order of monks

*** Loving-Kindness and Compassion



Villagers warn the Buddha about the murderous Angulimāla

towards the Path of the *Dhamma*.^{*} Bearing these compassionate sentiments towards the unfortunate Angulimāla, He set out to the Jālinī Forest which was located thirty miles away. Cowherds, shepherds, ploughmen and villagers who saw Him passing by along the road, advised Him not to proceed as it led to the hideout of the murderous Angulimāla. “*Venerable Monk*” they warned, “*Angulimāla is no respecter of holy ones. He will surely kill you. Do not proceed any further along this track.*” The concerned village folks of course could not recognise the Buddha because he had decided to appear before Angulimāla as an ordinary forest monk. Out of deep concern for His personal safety, they pleaded with Him repeatedly:

Do not take this dangerous road, Venerable Sir. On this road is the bandit Angulimāla, who is murderous, bloody-handed, given to blows and violence and merciless to living beings. Whole villages, towns and districts have been laid to waste by him. He is constantly murdering people and he wears their fingers as a garland around his neck. Men have come along this road in groups of ten, twenty, thirty and forty, but still, they have all fallen victims to this ferocious Angulimāla!

* The Buddha’s Teachings

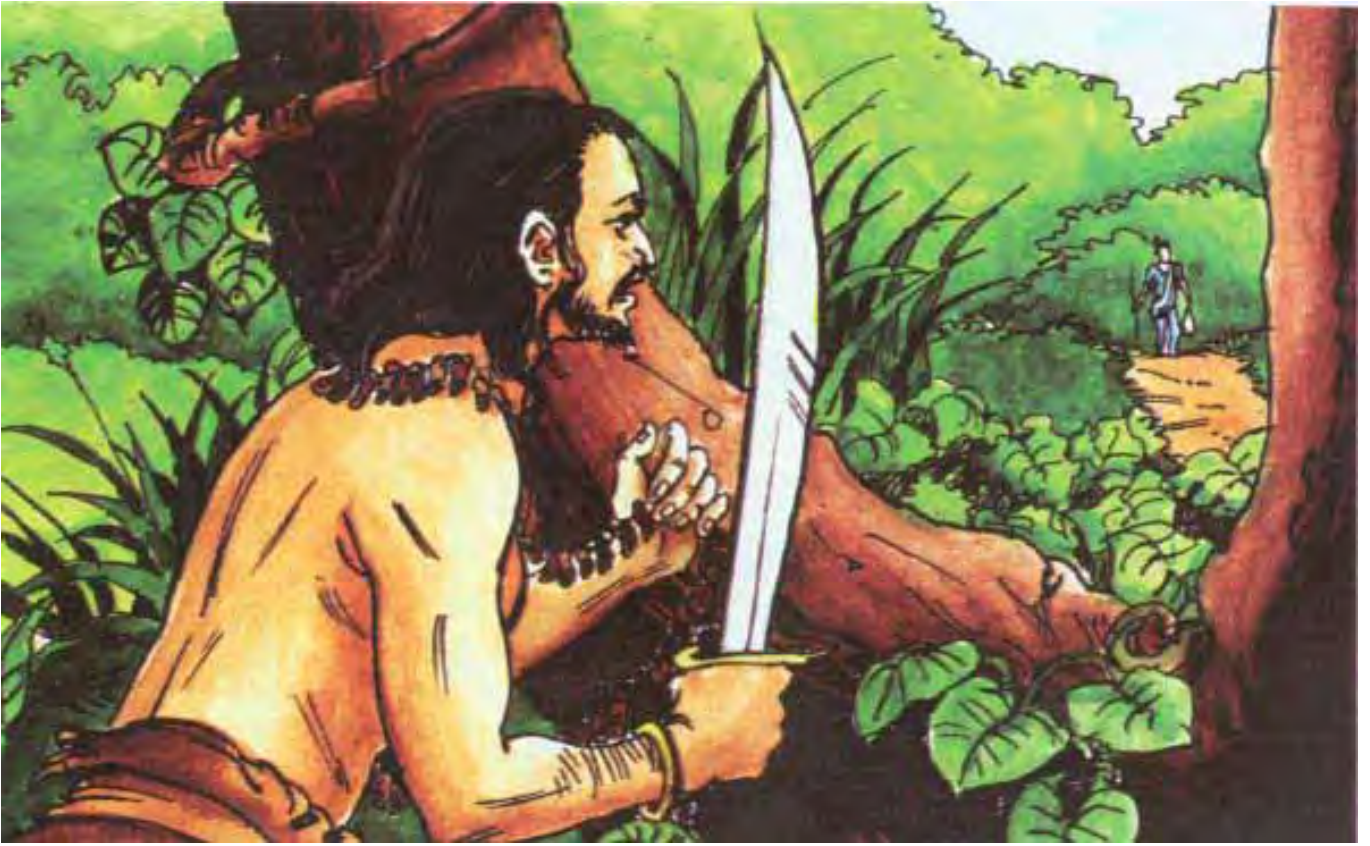


Village folks deeply concerned for the Buddha's safety

The Buddha thanked the village folks for their compassion and deep concern for His safety. He remained calm despite their anxiety and continued His journey along the road unperturbed. He exuded a bearing of great confidence and courage. For a second and third time He met villagers who ran up to Him to warn Him not to proceed along the road as it led to the dreaded Angulimāla's haunt. On each of these occasions, the Buddha remained calm and confident and continued silently towards the Jālinī Forest.

That morning, Angulimāla woke up very early. His heart was filled with anxiety for at last he just needed one more *anguli* to complete his Guru Dakshinā and return to his scholastic pursuit under the tutelage of his famous *acariya*. He vowed solemnly that he would kill whosoever he came across that day. Around mid-day, from his look-out post, he spied a lone figure in the distance, walking in the direction of the Jālinī Forest.

He felt his moment of good fortune had finally come to free himself from his Guru Dakshinā. His heart leapt with excitement to see a ready victim for him to kill for his last *anguli*. *With* great anticipation, he gathered his weapons and began to walk downhill through the thick forest undergrowth and position himself close to the cart track. Crouched among the

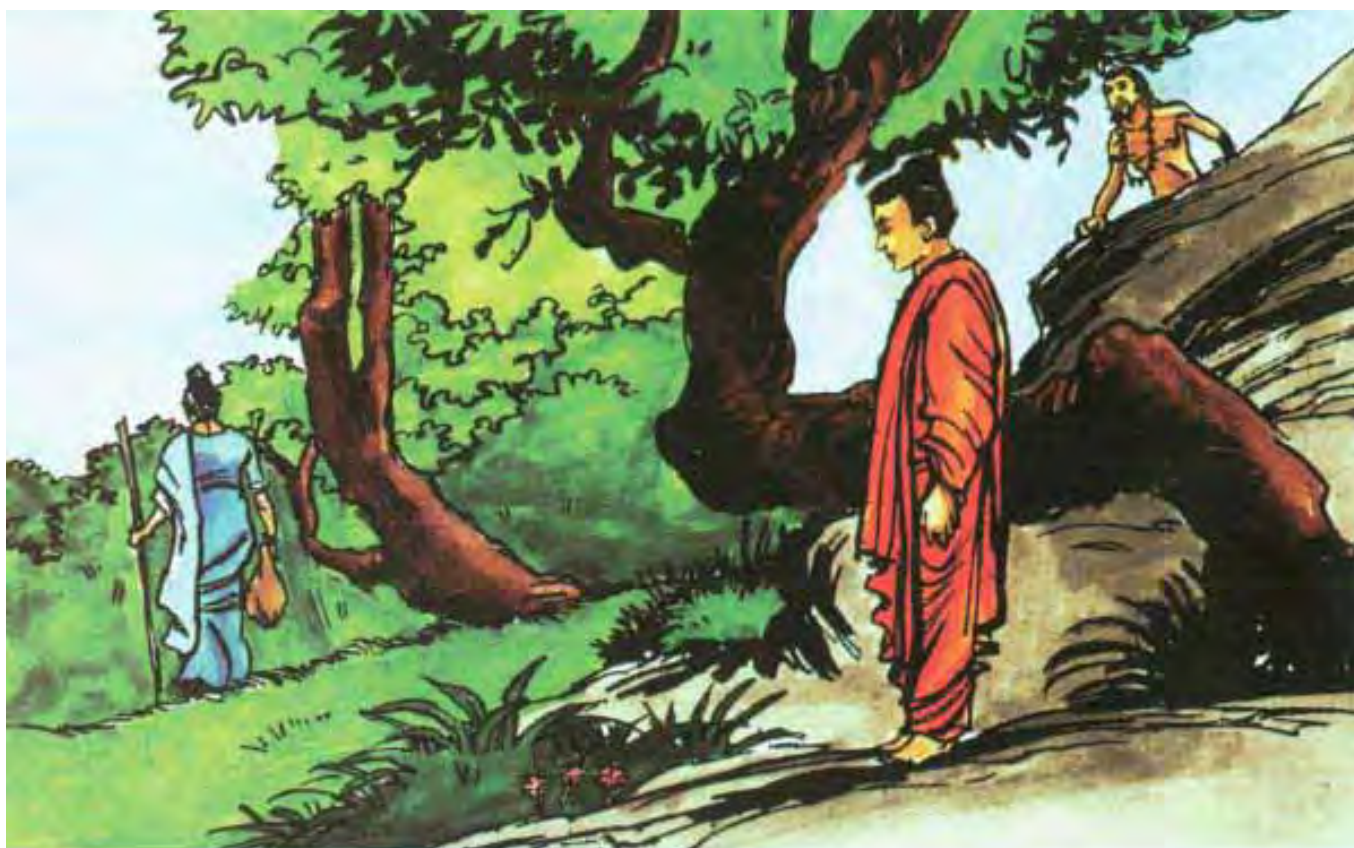


Angulimāla readies to pounce on his unsuspecting mother

bushes, he waited anxiously for the lone person to arrive. As the figure appeared closer, he saw that it was a woman walking slowly with the help of a staff in one hand and a bundle in the other. When the figure appeared nearer, he thought she looked vaguely familiar.

As she came nearer he realized, indeed she was his mother! At that moment his body quivered. His eyes began to fill with tears. His heart softened as he noticed that she had grown much older, tired and distinctly hunched. “*Oh, mother dear,*” the ferocious murderer wept silently without realizing it. He missed his mother dearly. He had not seen her for some years now, since he left home for Takkasila. His love and affection for her surfaced in his heart. His first reaction would have been to lay down his weapons and run up to his mother and hug her. But he could not let her see him in such a horrible state.

At that point, his mind turned towards his dark side. He reminded himself that he had a bigger mission to fulfill. He had vowed to complete his Guru Dakshinā at any cost. He was torn between his love for his mother and his desire to collect his last *anguli*. So intense was his obsession to complete his garland of *angulis* that he intended to kill his mother for the last little finger he required. With tears flowing from his eyes and trembling hands



The Buddha appears before Angulimāla as an ordinary ascetic

he raised his sword and rose from the bushes to pounce upon his unsuspecting mother.

Just at that critical moment, the Buddha with His psychic powers appeared before Angulimāla on the dusty cart track. On seeing the Buddha, Angulimāla's mind instantly switched from attacking his mother to killing the Buddha. He thought to himself *“How marvellous and fortunate it is to see a lone ascetic appear just right before me at this very moment. Why should I kill my mother when there is this lone recluse I can kill without much effort? Let my beloved mother live. I will instead kill the recluse easily and cut off his little finger”*.

Raising his sword and spear, Angulimāla stalked the Buddha. When he was close enough, the Enlightened One performed a feat of supernatural power. He used His psychic powers to create an illusion of Himself walking just a few steps in front of Angulimāla. Though Angulimāla walked briskly, he could not catch up with the Buddha. He could not come close enough to strike the Buddha with his sword even though the Enlightened One merely walked with great poise and grace at His normal pace. As much as he tried to bridge the gap between himself and the Buddha, he failed to do so.

Angulimāla then decided to give chase after the Buddha. But still, he



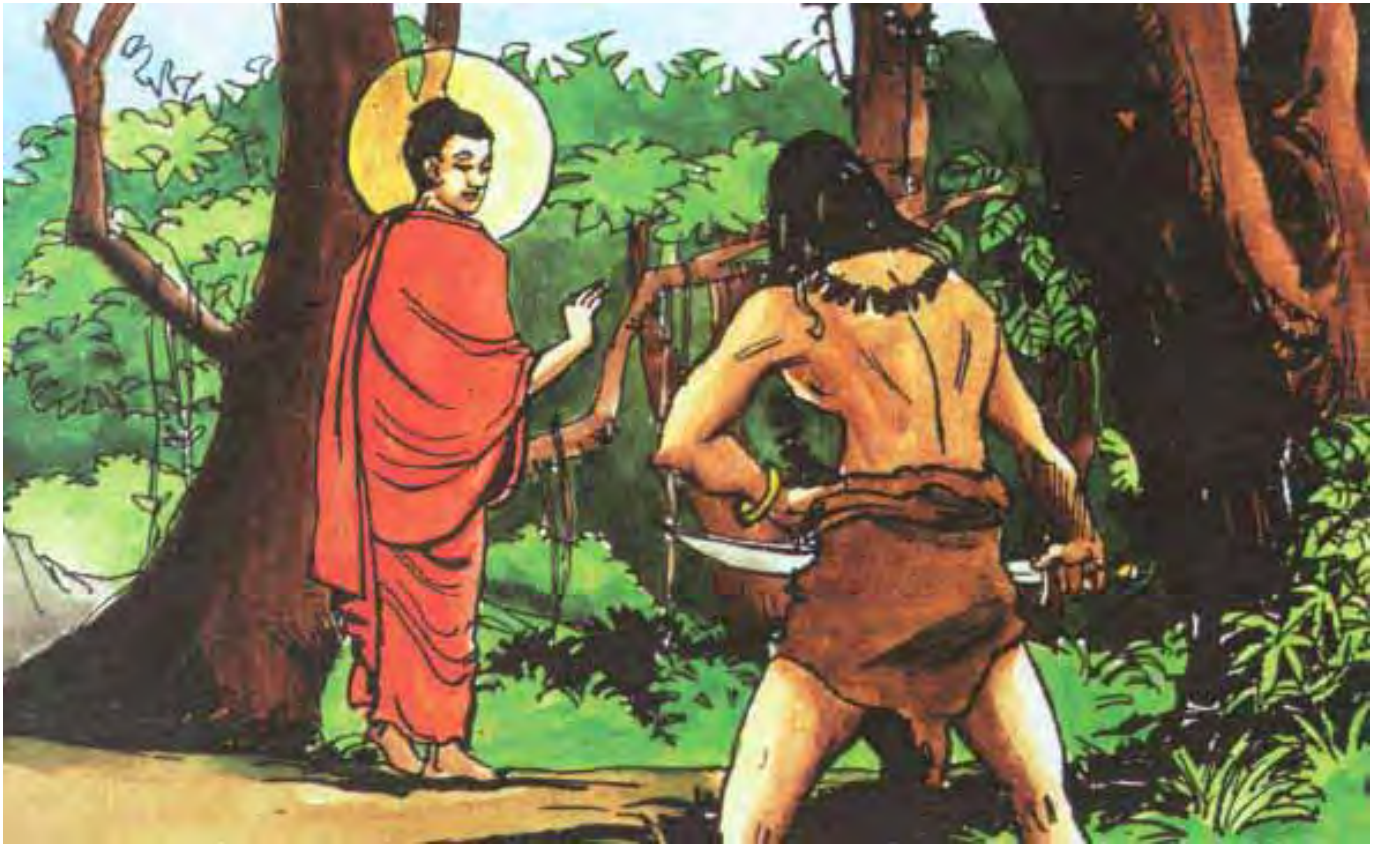
Angulimāla sprints after the Buddha

could not catch up with Him. Next, he sprinted as fast as he could after the Buddha. Even so, he was still unable to narrow the gap between him and the Enlightened One, who just continued to walk in his normal dignified gait.

Angulimāla increased his speed until he ran completely out of breath. He panted heavily. He was totally exhausted, and was compelled to stop his chase. His legs were tired and his feet were sore. His whole body was burning hot and poured profusely with perspiration all over. To his astonishment, the Buddha had walked at a leisurely pace, only a few steps ahead of him, and yet, he could not get any closer to Him. As he stood motionless to catch his breath, he thought to himself:

It is simply amazing. In the past, I could out run an elephant and seize it. I could chase a swift horse and capture it. I could overtake a chariot and arrest it. I could catch up with a swift deer and kill it. But now, though I ran with all my might, I could not catch up with this ascetic who remains unperturbed and walks only at his normal pace with such grace and dignity.

Angulimāla yelled out to the Buddha loudly, “Stop, ascetic! Stop, ascetic!” The Buddha calmly responded to Angulimāla, saying “I have stopped, Angulimāla,



The Buddha requests Angulimāla “You too stop”

you too stop.” When he heard these words, a dramatic transformation came over him. The suppressed current of his good *kamma* ripened, allowing his nobler and virtuous inner goodness to break through the wall of hardened cruelty into which he had been entrapped.

On reflecting upon the Buddha’s statement, he thought to himself “*The ascetic calls me by my bloodstained name. He asserts the truth. But though he is still walking, he says, I have stopped, Angulimāla, you too stop.*” Angulimāla was puzzled. “*Suppose I question the ascetic further?*” he told himself. Contemplating thus, he questioned the Buddha:

What do you mean ascetic by asking me to stop? While you were walking ascetic, you told me you have stopped. Again, when, I have stopped, you say I have not stopped. I ask you now, O’ ascetic, what is the meaning of your assertion? How is it ascetic, that you have stopped and I have not, when in fact, I have already stopped running?

The Buddha transformed himself into his Enlightened Being and turned slowly around to Angulimāla to meet him face to face, and uttered His immortal words:

Angulimāla, I have stopped forever. I abide steadfast evermore, for I am



Angulimāla awed by the Buddha's serenity and noble bearing

merciful to all living beings as I abstain from causing harm to them. But you, on the other hand, are merciless to living beings. You have no restraint towards things that live. That is why I say, I have stopped and you have not.

Even as the Buddha transformed into His Enlightened Being to address him, Angulimāla recognised that the ascetic who stood before him was no ordinary ascetic. It dawned in him that the majestic looking person was none other than the Buddha Himself. As he gazed with amazement at the serenity and aura of the Buddha with wide-eyed awe, his face lit up and his weapons simply dropped from his hands. For the first time since he became a highway bandit a radiant smile broke upon his weary face. He knew intuitively that the Enlightened One had come to the Jālinī Forest entirely out of compassion to save him. The radiance of the Buddha enabled him to see in a flash, the misery and suffering in which his life had been enmeshed with, as a result of his blind obedience to fulfil his Guru Dakshinā. On reflecting deeply upon the Buddha's words, he found in them a great depth of meaning. Moved to the very core by the Buddha's radiant being and noble bearing, Angulimāla desired to follow in His footsteps. No longer



Angulimāla requests permission to enter into the *Bhikkhu Order*

did he have an urge to return to Takkasila for he had indeed come across a far more Enlightened and Noble Teacher. He now entrusted himself to attaining final deliverance by conquering his own self-delusion. This realization impelled him to take the noble step to enter the *Bhikkhu Sangha* and become the spiritual son of the Buddha. So deciding, he removed his *mala** of angulis and flung it away.

Joining his palms together in reverence, he knelt at the Enlightened One's feet and paid homage to Him for saving him from the deep abyss of *apaya* which he was about to fall into. He vowed to renounce evil deeds forever and resolved that henceforth he would adopt the noble life by becoming a disciple of the Buddha. He requested permission from the Buddha 'to go forth'** declaring:

Oh, at long last Most Venerated Sage, You have come to this forest for my sake. Having heard your stanza teaching me the Dhamma, I will indeed renounce evil forever.

The Enlightened One, then addressed Angulimāla with deep compassion,

* Garland

** Becoming a monk



Mantani blesses Angulimāla while he pays his respects

“*Ehi bhikkhu.*”^{*} Angulimāla was inspired that the Buddha, had accepted him under His Refuge. Thus Angulimāla entered the *Bhikkhu Sangha.*^{**} From then onwards, he revered the Buddha as his Redeemer and Refuge. With this new spiritual aspirations, a second and even greater transformation came about in Angulimāla. His misguided, murderous obsession vanished totally and in its place the innate goodness and true potential of his *Metta* and *Karuna* broke loose. He now aspired to be the symbolic lotus that sprouts through the murky waters of a muddy lake and blossoms for all to enjoy its beauty, brilliant radiance and fragrance.

Mantani who stood a short distance away, witnessed the dramatic transformation of her son. She was overwhelmed and relieved when she heard him vow that henceforth he would shun unwholesome deeds, and instead, tread the Path of the Dhamma. With great joy in her heart, she walked up to Angulimāla. On seeing his mother, Angulimāla spontaneously knelt down on his knees and worshipped his mother at her feet. Mantani blessed him “*Sukhi Hotu*”^{***} my dear son,” by placing her hand on his head and stroking

* Come, *bhikkhu*

** Order of Monks

*** May you be well and happy



Mantani and Angulimāla embrace each other tightly

it gently with motherly love. As he rose to his feet, she hugged him tightly. Angulimāla too embraced his mother with intense love. He shed tears of joy, hugging his mother whom he had missed so dearly. Mantani was overjoyed and wept profusely. Both mother and son held each other in tight and loving embrace. For a moment they were both absorbed with each other and in a world of their own. Mantani then began to run her fingers over the features of Angulimāla's weary face. Her heart crumbled to see that his once gentle and pleasant looks had given way to something unkempt, haggard and weary. He looked so run down as though he had not eaten for some time. She then remembered the parcel of favourite dishes she had cooked for him. She released her embrace to collect the food.

Mantani handed the food to Angulimāla saying *“Dear son you must be hungry, I have brought you your favourite dishes knowing that you must miss them very much.”* Angulimāla felt deeply moved by his mother's boundless love for him. He could not help shedding tears of gratitude for her thoughtfulness and selfless caring. Tears began to roll down his cheeks as he sobbed like a little child. Mantani comforted Angulimāla and requested him to eat his favourite food.

Gradually, upon regaining his composure, Angulimāla realized the



Angulimāla offers his favourite food to the Buddha

presence of the Buddha in their midst. He turned to the Enlightened One and offered the parcel of his favourite food to Him. As a dutiful disciple to his new-found Master, it came to him naturally to serve the Buddha. The Enlightened One accepted the alms offered to Him and divided it into two portions. Taking one portion for Himself, He handed back to Angulimāla the other, saying *“This food was prepared by your dear mother out of great love for you. It is only proper that you at least consume a portion of it, my son.”*

Angulimāla accepted the other portion of food and placed it on his mother’s hands requesting her to eat as she must be hungry after her long, tiring journey from Savatthī. Mantani realized that Angulimāla would not eat until she agreed to partake as well. So she held Angulimāla by the hand and led him to a shaded spot nearby under a giant Banyan Tree. They sat down together and waited until the Buddha had completed His mid-day meal. Only then did they begin to have theirs. It was a delightful sight to see both mother and son seated together sharing the food. Mantani happily fed Angulimāla morsels of rice and his favourite dishes. He had no doubt grown up, but deep in her heart, he was still very much a child to her.

When the Buddha noticed that Mantani and Angulimāla had completed their meal, He signalled that it was time to leave for Jetavana Mon-



Angulimāla worships his mother before departing to Jetvana Monastery

astery. Angulimāla turned to his mother and once again worshipped her before he accompanied the Buddha to Jetavana Monastery. Mantani blessed Angulimāla “*Sukhi Hotu*” before he got up. She once again pulled Angulimāla into a dear embrace with motherly love and affection.

Mantani’s heart was now filled with mixed feelings. On the one hand, she was happy for her son that he had abandoned his evil deeds. ‘Going forth’ was no doubt a highly noble undertaking. Although they were Brahmins, they had the highest respect for the Buddha. Many sons of noble Brahmins such as Sariputta and Moggalanā had already entered the *Bhikkhu Order*. In the midst of her great joy in witnessing the transformation of her son, she sensed that she was going to lose him once again. She was saddened by the thought that he would not be returning home as he had now renounced the householder life.

Tears began to swell up in her eyes. Pearls of tears streamed down her cheeks. Angulimāla pleaded with his mother not to cry. He took the end of her sari which was draped over her shoulder and gently wiped off her tears. He comforted her, saying: “*Dearest Mother, I will visit you whenever I get the opportunity. Please be strong and have faith in me and the noble life of a bhikkhu I am about to enter. I must succeed in my mission ‘to go forth’. Pray,*



Angulimāla wipes the tears off his mother's face

dry your tears, dear mother, and give me your blessings. I will never be away from you, but forever remain close to you."

Mantani hugged Angulimāla tightly as though it was for the last time she was going to see him. After a while, she slowly let go of her motherly embrace and said to him *"My dear son, May the Blessings of the Buddha be always upon you. Here, take this piece of cloth to wrap around your body. This is all I have to give you my son."* Angulimāla gladly accepted the piece of cloth. He then turned towards the Buddha and both began their journey to Jetavana Monastery. Mantani stood there gazing at her son until he was completely out of sight. Then with a heavy heart, she took up her staff and began her homeward journey.

Bhaggavā was so relieved to see Mantani return home just before dusk. As soon as she faced her husband, Mantani placed her palms together and asked him forgiveness for leaving home without his knowledge. Bhaggavā rushed towards Mantani and hugged her tenderly and said *"My dear, it is I who should be asking for forgiveness for not venturing to save our son. There is nothing wrong you have done, my dear. I knew you had left home out of a mother's love."*

Mantani related to Bhaggavā what had transpired at the Jālinī Forest.



Anxious Bhaggavā rushes to meet Mantani on her return home

Bhaggavā gave a big sigh of relief. He hugged Mantani and once again asked for her understanding for not setting out himself to warn their son. Mantani smiled and told him that she fully understood his predicament as a loyal high official of the king. Both reconciled themselves to the reality that their son had renounced the householders life and had 'gone forth'. They whispered a silent prayer that their son would attain final emancipation through the spiritual path he had entered.

The transformed Angulimāla was ordained as a *bhikkhu** by the Buddha himself to pursue a monastic discipline and training. Angulimāla Thera from thence onwards practised the *Dhamma* diligently at the Jetavana Monastery. Thus through His supreme *Metta and Karuna* and His spiritual powers, the Buddha was able to dramatically transform Angulimāla into a righteous disciple.

In the meantime, King Pasenadi who had been implored by his subjects to capture Angulimāla had set out with a detachment of his finest soldiers. Being a staunch patron of the Buddha and the *Sangha Order*** it was customary for him to visit the Enlightened One. On his arrival at the Jetavana

* Monk

** Order of Monks and Nuns



King Pasenadi pays homage to the Buddha

Monastery, the king alighted from his royal elephant to pay homage to the Buddha. After paying his salutation to the Buddha, he sat down respectfully in front of the Enlightened One. The Buddha noticed that on this occasion, the king and his detachment of soldiers were in full battle gear. Although He was well aware of his intentions, the Enlightened One inquired from him the reason for his military preparedness. *Smilingly, He asked “What is it that troubles you O’ Great King that you are in full readiness for war? Has Kosala been attacked by a neighbouring kingdom? Is it that King Seniya Bimbisāra of Magadha has provoked you? Or is it because the Lacchavi Princes of Vesali are troubling you? Or is it that some adversary has posed a threat to you?”*

King Pasenadi assured the Buddha that he had not geared himself to wage war on any of the neighbouring kingdoms. He disclosed that instead he had mobilized a military expedition to capture just a single highway bandit. The Buddha then enquired as to the identity of this bandit. The king replied *“Enlightened One, he is the fearsome serial killer, Angulimāla who has caused my subjects around the Jālinī Forest to abandon their homes and flee for their lives.”*

The Buddha was mindful of the possibility of Angulimāla Thera’s entry into the *Bhikkhu Order* being misconstrued by the king and his ministers.



The Buddha enquires about the King's military expedition

Sensing the gravity of the implications to the law of the land, He decided that it was prudent to secure from the king a royal pardon for Angulimāla Thera for his past crimes. A royal reprieve was all the more so necessary, since he now resided in the Jetavana Monastery. The Buddha hence ventured to get the king to view positively Angulimāla Thera's entry into the Bhikkhu Order. With this objective in mind, He posed the following question to the king:

But O' Great King, suppose you were to see that same notorious Angulimāla had shaved his hair and beard, put on a saffron robe and 'gone forth' along the Aryan Path, from home life into homelessness. Further, that he was abstaining from killing living beings; taking that which is not given; and from false speech. That he was refraining from eating at night, ate only one part of the day, and was celibate, virtuous and of good character. If you were to see him thus, how would you treat him O' Great King?*

King Pasenadi being the devout benefactor of the Buddha and the Sangha Order, spontaneously responded:

* Noble Path of the Dhamma



The Buddha points out Angulimāla Thera to King Pasenadi

Most Venerable Sir, we will treat him with respect rightly due to a bhikkhu. We would pay homage to him, We would rise up for him, and invite him to be seated. We would invite him to accept our offering of the four requisites of a monk, and we would arrange for his lawful guarding, defence and protection. However, Blessed One, from all reports from the villagers around Jālinī Forest, Angulimāla is a most immoral man. He is one who is full of evil. It is simply unimaginable for such a ruthless, murderous bandit to possess high virtue and restrain and enter the Bhikkhu Order!

The Buddha signalled to the king to follow Him to the window to take a look at what was going on in the precinct of the *vihara*.^{*} While He and the king looked out through the window, the Buddha extended His right arm and pointed in the direction of Angulimāla Thera who was helping out in clearing up the grounds of the monastery. He looked at the king's face and said to him gently: *“There, O’ Great King, is Angulimāla Thera, the hitherto ruthless serial killer who was much feared by the people of Kosala.”* King Pasenadi was taken aback by the Buddha's disclosure of the presence of Angulimāla in Jetavana Monastery. So terrifying was Angulimāla's

* Temple

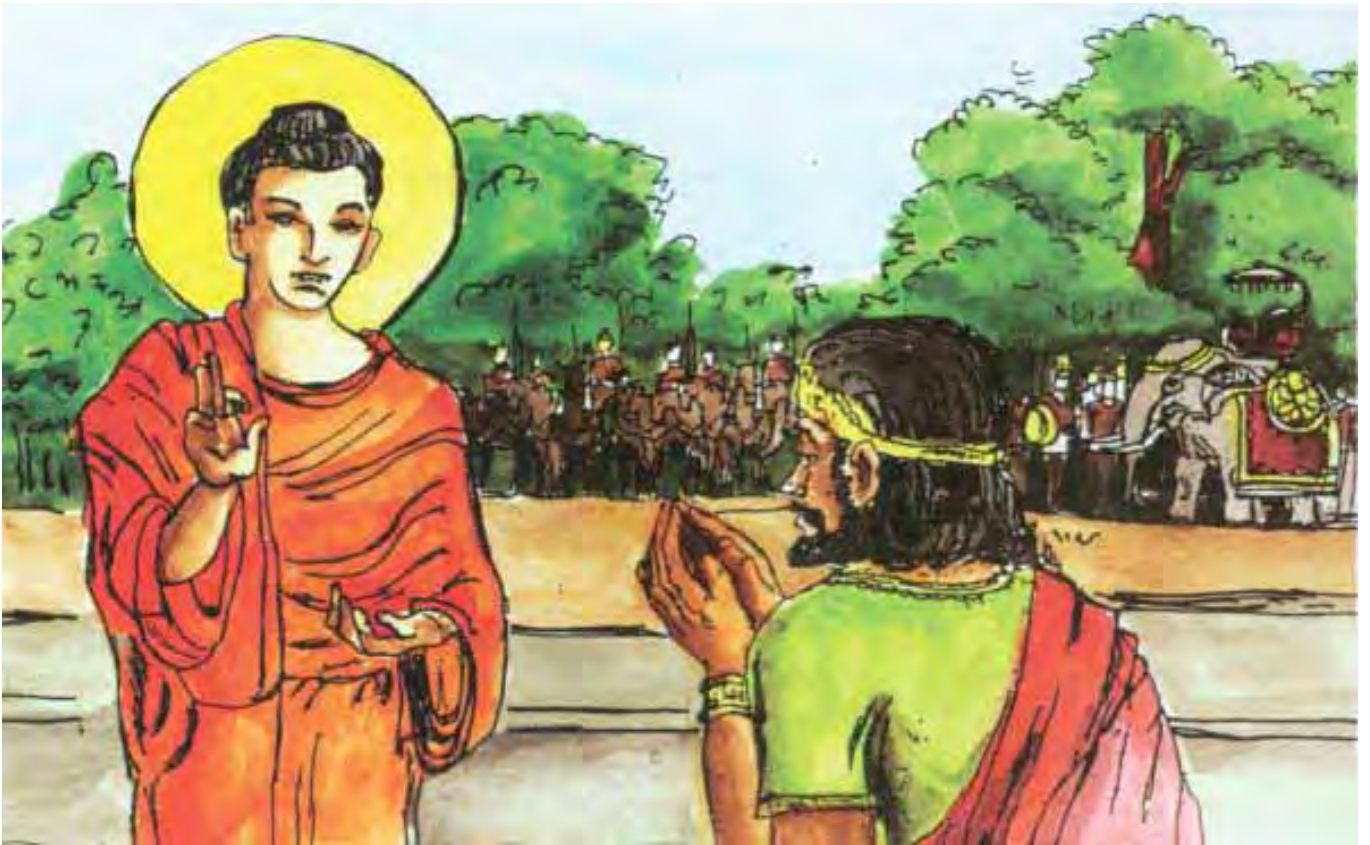


King Pasenadi pays respect to Angulimāla Thera

reputation that even the king lost his regal composure for a brief moment. His body trembled with alarm. His hair stood on end for fear that he could attack him at any moment. The Buddha calmed the king and assured him that henceforth there was nothing for him and the people of Kosala to fear from Angulimāla. Upon being reassured by the Buddha regarding the dramatic transformation of Angulimāla, he regained his regal composure. He was greatly relieved by the thought that with Angulimāla now a *bhikkhu*, his subjects would be able to return to their villages and live without fear any more from the terror he had caused around the forest fringe.

The Buddha then introduced Angulimāla Thera to King Pasenadi. After paying respects to Angulimāla Thera, the king inquired from him about the clan names of his parents, thinking himself that it was inappropriate to address a *bhikkhu* by a name that was derived from his past evil deeds. Angulimāla Thera revealed that his parents were Bhaggavā Gagga and Mantani. The king was initially surprised to learn that Angulimāla Thera was the son of his Royal Chaplain. Upon reflecting, he recalled the strange circumstances of Angulimāla Thera's birth. He remembered the prediction his father, Bhaggavā had confided to him then.

As accustomed, the king spontaneously offered to provide Angulimāla



King Pasenadi full of adoration over the Buddha's feat

Thera with the traditional monk's requisites, comprising of robes, food, shelter and medicine. Angulimāla Thera, however, politely declined the king's generosity, explaining that he had taken upon himself four of the strict monastic observances of *dhutanga*.^{*} That is, to be a forest meditation monk, and to live on *Pindapatha*.^{**} He then excused himself from the presence of the Buddha and King Pasenadi as he had to get ready to go on *Pindapatha* in the nearby village, for his mid-day meal.

The king and the Buddha discussed for a while about the needs of the *Sangha Order* at Jetavana Monastery and on a few other temporal matters of interest. Before taking leave of the Buddha, the king paid his respects to the Enlightened One. It moved the king deeply that the Buddha was able to transform a ferocious serial killer into a noble, gentle bhikkhu. Once again, he exclaimed to the Enlightened One with great joy:

It is simply wonderful, Blessed One! It is just so marvellous how the Blessed One subdues the unsubdued, pacifies the ferocious and calms the restless. It is truly amazing that this Angulimāla, whom we could not subdue without invoking fear of punishment and armed weapons, the

* Strict ascetic practice

** Going on alms round for daily meals



Village folks reluctant to offer *dana* to Angulimāla Thera

Blessed One has subdued with just Metta and Karuna.

Angulimāla Thera encountered great difficulties in practising *Pindapatha*. Only a few people, trusting the Buddha's judgement changed their attitude towards him and offered alms when he stood before their doorsteps. But most people still feared him. They shut their doors and windows when he presented himself at their homes for *dana*.^{*} Many others were outright hostile. They could not forgive him for having caused the death of their loved ones. Many people still feared the reputation of his murderous past. As a result, when he went on *Pindapatha*, people fearfully ran away from him and kept their distance. In accord with the Buddha's Teachings, Angulimāla Thera bore these harsh treatments and negative public responses with calm equanimity. He understood why people behaved that way towards him. He bore them no anger, ill will, or hatred. He just felt sorry for them.

There were days when Angulimāla Thera could not even get a mouthful of food when he went on his alms round. He then decided to go on *Pindapatha* in the city, hoping that he would not be feared by the city folks as he was not so conspicuous to them. But he experienced the same negative

* Alms



Angulimāla Thera regrets inability to help the expectant mother

response for the city folks too had come to know of his past murderous exploits. Although he realized it was arduous for him to go on *Pindapatha*, he continued to diligently carry out the monastic discipline. He was satisfied and thankful for whatever little he could get. He was bent perfecting his spiritual path, matters of body meant little to him in comparison to his aspiration to attain his spiritual goal of final emancipation.

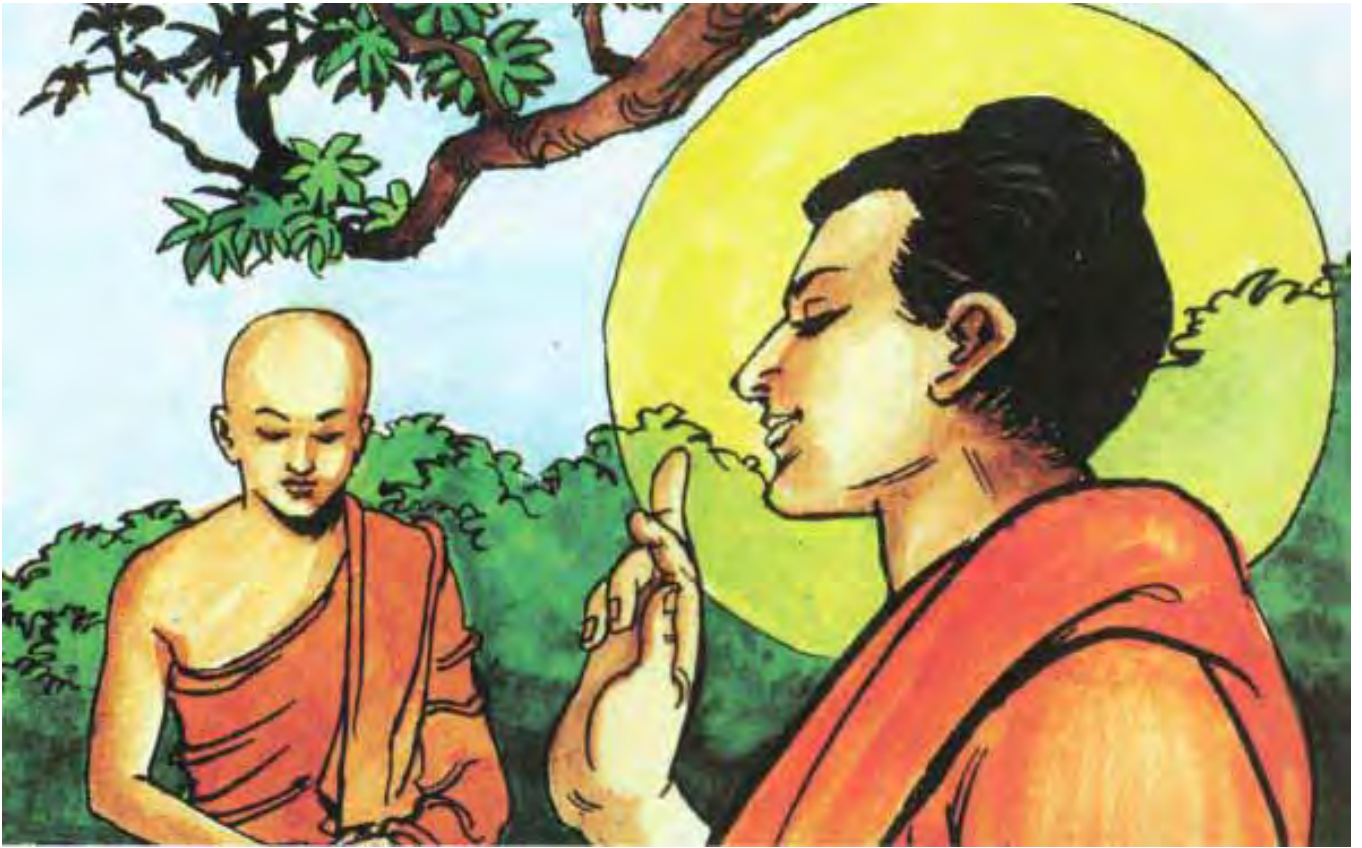
One day, on his daily rounds for morning alms in the village, Angulimāla Thera came upon a house where an expectant mother was screaming in excruciating pain. She was suffering from prolonged throes of labour. Everyone in the family was afraid that she would not be able to bear it any longer and that she and her unborn baby were in grave danger. On seeing Angulimāla Thera, on that fateful day, the family elders rushed to him and implored him to relieve the pregnant mother from her woeful state. They desperately pleaded him to use his spiritual powers to save the pregnant mother and her unborn baby from imminent death. Angulimāla Thera confessed his inadequacy in handling temporal matters such as childbirth. He regretted that he could do nothing to help the sorrowful plight of the expectant mother as he had no training and skill in delivering a baby. The deep anguish among the family members caused him great disappointment and a feeling of utter helplessness.



Angulimāla Thera depressed over inability to help the expectant mother

Deep compassion arose in him over the sorrowful state of the expectant mother. He felt miserable over his inability to relieve her suffering. As he walked back towards Jetavana Monastery, his mind was engulfed with misery over his inability to do anything to overcome the pregnant mother's grave condition. His heart was weighed down over the sad reality of human suffering. He questioned repeatedly *"How do human beings suffer? How much do they have to suffer? How can I help this suffering mother? How can I help the unborn baby who is about to die? It could not have done any harm or wrong to anyone. Why should an innocent, yet-to-be-born baby suffer such a cruel fate? In the past, I had killed so many innocent people. May I have the strength now to save lives and be a worthy disciple of the Buddha."*

He returned to Jetavana Monastery and reported to the Buddha about the morning's sad incident in the village. The Buddha noticed Angulimāla Thera's troubled state of mind as he approached Him. He also recognised the deep compassion, Angulimāla Thera had for the expectant mother's unbearable suffering. He felt compassionate for Angulimāla Thera's sadness to do anything to alleviate the expectant mother's prolonged labour pains and to save her and the unborn baby. From His insightful wisdom, He saw that the situation of the pregnant mother was also an opportunity for Angulimāla



The Buddha instructs Angulimāla Thera to recite a *Saccakiriya Sutta*

Thera to redeem his reputation among the village folks. He knew that once they changed their negative attitude towards him, they would become more willing to accept him and offer him *dana* when he went on *Pindapatha* in the future.

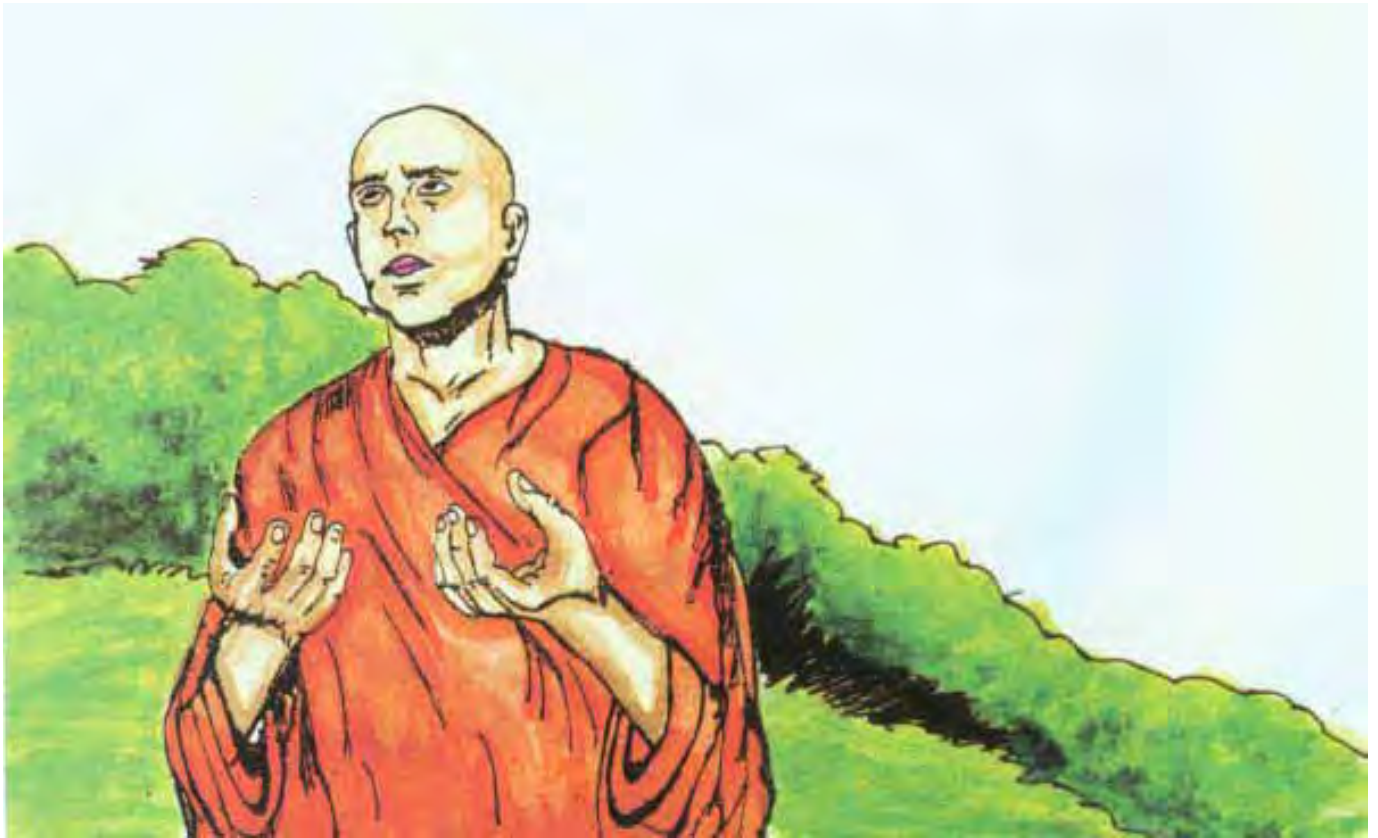
After discussing the plight of the pregnant mother, the Enlightened One taught Angulimāla Thera a short *Paritta Sutta*^{*} and requested him to return to the village and recite it aloud to her and the unborn baby. The Buddha instructed Angulimāla Thera to wish the expectant mother well and pray for the safety of her unborn baby through *Saccakiriya*,^{**} that is, through the power of the asseveration of his personal purity. He was to assert the Truth of his personal purity by reciting with intense concentration of mind and utmost *Saddha*,^{***} the *Paritta Sutta* the Enlightened One had just taught him.

Angulimāla Thera initially doubted whether he could undertake the assertion the Buddha had taught. He confessed to the Enlightened One his sense of guilt over the countless murders of people he had commit-

* Buddha's discourses recited as protection

** Assertion of the Truth of personal purity

*** Confidence or faith based on knowledge



“These two hands have killed over a thousand innocent people”

ted before his ordination into the *Bhikkhu Order*. He told the Buddha that by asserting he had never deprived a living being of life, he would be committing falsehood. He submitted, *“Enlightened Master, everyone knows that I have, in the past, intentionally deprived many innocent people of life. These hands have been bloodied by the murder of over a thousand innocent people. How can I truthfully make such a noble Saccakiriya, Most Enlightened Master?”*

The Enlightened One then advised Angulimāla Thera to make the assertion of his personal purity and piety, to commence from the time of his admission into *ariyāya jātiya jāto* – from the time of his ‘noble birth’ upon entering the *Bhikkhu Order*. *The Paritta Sutta* hence asserted that from the time he entered the *Bhikkhu Order*, he had not intentionally killed any living being.

Angulimāla Thera now felt confident with the assertion of his ‘noble birth’, for it was absolutely true that he had never ever knowingly injured or caused the death of any living being since becoming a *bhikkhu*. He was to now assert with *Saddha* that by the power of the Truth vested in the *Paritta Sutta*, may the expectant mother be blessed with a safe and untroubled childbirth. The Buddha further instructed him that upon completing the



Charged with confidence, Angulimāla Thera leaves for the village

recital, he was to sprinkle some of the *Pirith Pen** on the expectant mother as blessings and protection. He was to also offer some of the *Pirith Pen* for her to drink as part of her spiritual ablution.

Charged with renewed confidence, Angulimāla Thera paid his respects to the Buddha and returned immediately to the village. His compassion for the suffering mother was so deep that he left the *vihara* without taking his morning meal. Unlike his earlier visit, on this occasion, he was equipped with the *Saddha* of his personal purity, as a devout disciple of the Buddha. He presented himself at the expectant mother's home to carry out his assertion. Since males were customarily not permitted within the labour room, the expectant mother was accommodated behind a curtain that was hastily erected in the courtyard. The men folk hurriedly prepared a seat made out from a flat boulder for him to be seated on the other side to recite the *sutta*.

Seated cross-legged on the slab of stone, Angulimāla Thera focused deeply on the Truth underlying his *Saccakiriya* of a 'noble spiritual rebirth'. After invoking the Blessings of the Noble Triple Gem, that is, the Buddha, *Dhamma* and *Sangha*, and with one pointedness of mind, he recited his *Saccakiriya* with deep *Saddha*. With intense concentration, he asserted that by

* Blessed water used as spiritual protection



Angulimāla Thera recites *Saccakiriya* of his 'noble spiritual rebirth'

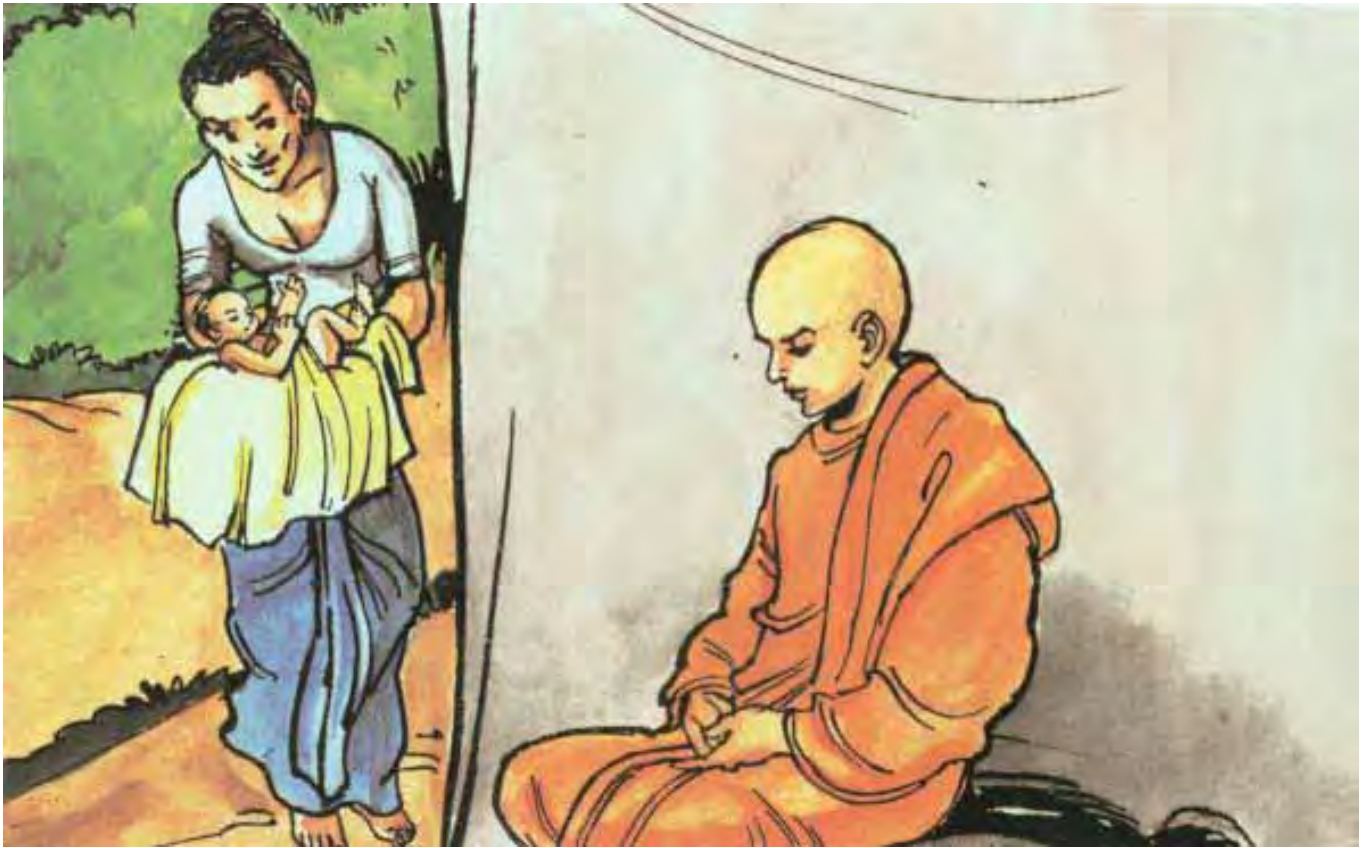
the power of the Truth vested in his *Saccakiriya*, may the expectant mother be blessed with a safe, untroubled, successful childbirth, thus:

*Yato' ham bhagini ariyāya jātiya jāto
nābhijānāmi sañcicca panām jīvitā voropetā
Tena saccena sotth te hotu
sotthi gabbhass ti.*

The English translation of the *paritta sutta* is rendered as:

O', Sister, from the moment I entered this noble life of a recluse,
I reckon not having deprived any living being of its life.
By the Truth of this, may there be happiness and well-being
to you and your unborn baby.

Even before he could complete reciting his *Saccakiriya*, the mother's labour pains dramatically subsided. On completing his *Paritta Sutta*, he requested the husband to sprinkle some of the *Pirith Pen* on her and to give the remaining portion to drink. The expectant mother's labour pains eased to a point where it became bearable. Few minutes later, she gave birth without



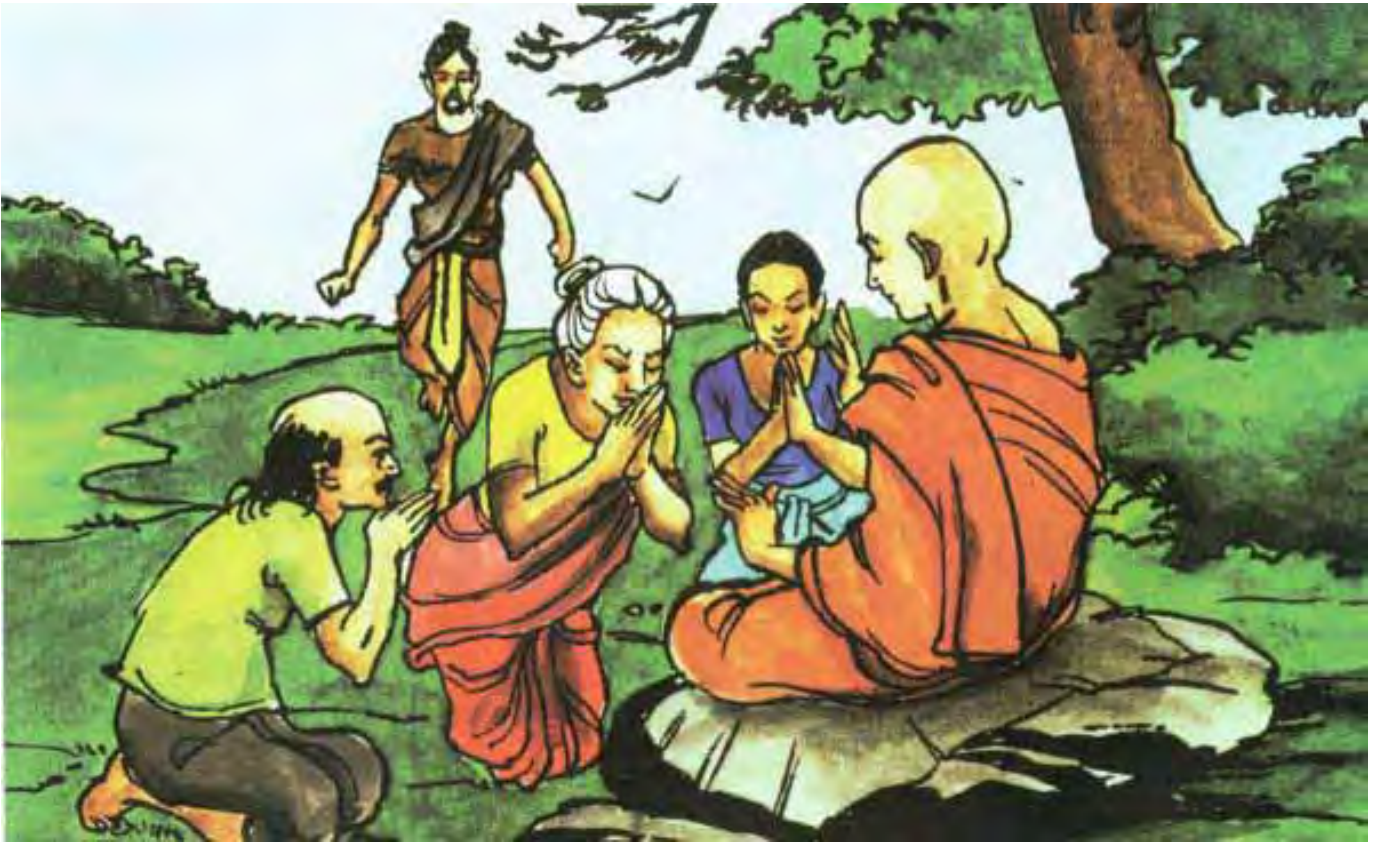
Happy grandmother presents the new-born baby girl to Angulimāla Thera

any complication or discomfort to a beautiful, healthy baby girl.

The grandmother proudly presented the new-born baby girl to Angulimāla Thera to bless. He was so relieved that both the mother and child were safe. He was delighted to see the innocent little girl. He happily anointed her with *Pirith Pen* and invoked the Blessings of the Noble Triple Gem for her good health and protection. He then blessed the new born baby “*Sukhi Hotu*”.

The whole family was elated. They all knew that without a doubt, it was the spiritual powers impacted through Angulimāla Thera’s assertion of *Saccakiriya* of his ‘noble spiritual birth’ that brought back the mother, who was virtually on the brink of death. The family members and neighbours who had gathered at the house paid their reverence to him in the traditional Buddhist way for what they considered was a miracle he had just performed. They showered him with flowers as well as praised and thanked him profusely. Ever so grateful were they for his compassion to the mother and her unborn baby. One by one, they knelt at his feet and paid reverence to his spiritual purity and noble bearing.

But Angulimāla Thera was not affected by all this attention, praises and profound adulation. He understood that he had merely carried out the



The family expresses its gratitude to Angulimāla Thera

Buddha's instruction. It was his deep faith in the Enlightened One that had brought about the happy turn of events. Nonetheless, his *Saddha* in the *Buddha Dhamma* soared to a new high with the experience that he had helped to save the life of the expectant mother and her baby. In the midst of the family rejoicing, he made a silent resolution to himself, "Henceforth, I will devote my entire life to bringing happiness to all beings, not to hurt, harm or destroy them."

In no time, word spread about the power that was invoked through the recitation of Angulimāla Thera's *Saccakiriya*. Soon news of the power of the *Paritta Sutta* reached the capital city Savāthī. From there, the power of his *Saccakiriya* spread far and wide to neighbouring kingdoms. Thence onwards, Angulimāla Thera's assertion of the truth of his 'noble spiritual rebirth' came to be referred to as the "*Angulimāla Paritta*".

In recognition of the great efficacy of the *Angulimāla Paritta*, expectant mothers travelled from distant towns and villages in Kosala and the surrounding kingdoms to the seat where Angulimāla Thera had invoked the assertion of his 'noble spiritual birth'. They were eager to experience themselves the power of the *Angulimāla Paritta*, to ensure a safe and comfortable delivery. Soon the seat from which he recited his assertion acquired



Angulimāla Thera's "Saccakirya Seat" being consecrated

great fame for its spiritual power of protection for pregnant mothers. It became consecrated as sacred by the people in the village. It was accordingly accorded great reverence and maintained with deep veneration by the village folks. For expectant mothers who were too weak to undertake the journey, the water with which the seat was washed was applied on their head to give the confidence and spiritual fortification for their delivery.

After sometime, not only expectant mothers but also livestock, especially cows, goats and mares encountering difficulty in pregnancy were brought to the seat to be blessed for an untroubled birth of their offspring. Thus reciting the *Angulimāla Paritta*, became a widespread Buddhist practice for mother-care. The regular chanting of the Paritta Suttas was regarded as a necessary benediction and invocation of confidence as well as protection to all expectant mothers. This religious practice became an integral part of the Buddhist culture of providing spiritual fortification for motherhood. To this day, in a number of Buddhist countries, it is strongly believed that when the *Angulimāla Paritta* is recited to bless and provide protection for an expectant mother, she and her unborn baby will remain in good health. In addition, they firmly believe that the mother will have a smooth, untroubled delivery of her baby.



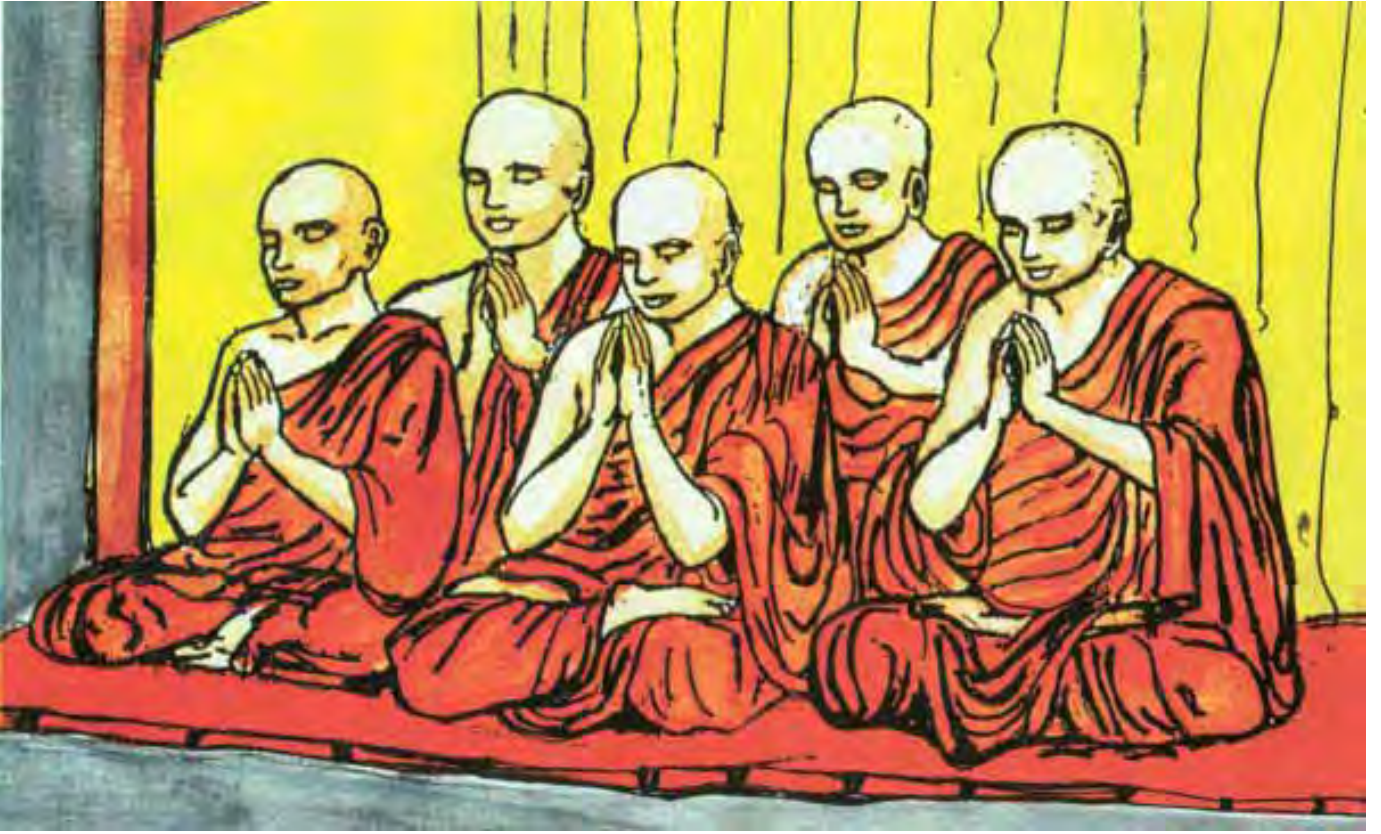
Reciting the *Angulimāla Sutta* for expectant mothers becomes a tradition

The tremendous *Saddha* generated by the recital of the *Angulimāla Paritta* further reinforced the Buddha's Teaching to attach great importance to prenatal care for both the mother and the foetus. This religious observance, in turn, reinforced the Buddhist culture of "gabbha pariharā".* In the years that followed, monks and nuns chanted in congregation the record of Angulimāla Thera's assertion of his purity, piety and spiritual prowess. A suitable preface was added to the *Paritta Sutta* to recall his feat, to invoke blessings on a pregnant mother and her unborn baby. For this purpose, the following two additional *sutta* stanzas were added as preamble to Angulimāla Thera's assertion of his 'noble spiritual rebirth':

*parittam yam bhanantassa
nisinnatthāna- dhovanam
udakampi vinaseti
sabbameva parissayam*

Whosoever shall recite this paritta,
the seat on which he sits,
labour pains.

* Protection of the unborn foetus



Reciting the *Angulimāla Sutta* becomes an entrenched religious practice

(that is, from where Angulimāla recited his assertion)
The water with which it is washed shall eliminate all

*sotthinā gabbha vutthānam
yañca sādheti tam khane
therassangulimālassa
lokanāthena bhāsitam
kappattāhīyi-mahāitejam
parittam tam bhanāmahe*

At the very moment this Paritta Sutta is chanted;
May a safe delivery of the infant be effected.
Now, we shall recited this very efficacious
Paritta Sutta for protection, which the Lord of the
World had given unto Angulimāla Thera.
This Paritta Sutta which we shall now chant, holds
good for all times and ages.



Angulimāla Thera experiences difficulties in meditation practice

With the inclusion of the two additional *sutta* stanzas, it became possible for other monks, and lay Buddhists to recite the Angulimāla Paritta to mothers whenever the need arose.

The success of Angulimāla Thera's assertion of the Truth underlining his virtuous conduct also had a positive effect on his training towards perfecting meditation. Until then, Angulimāla Thera had not been able to focus his mind in meditation practice. This was not due to lack of trying or effort on his part. Though he practised day and night with great commitment, there would always appear before his mind's eye, his past evil misdeeds. His mind would invariably revert to his forest haunt where he had brutally killed so many innocent men, women and children. He could still hear their desperate pleas imploring him to spare their lives. Their plaintive voices, "*Please let me live merciful lord. I have a wife and children to take care of; spare my life for my aged parents will be destitute....*", rang in his ears. The fear-stricken, desperate cries of his victims constantly distracted his concentration.

If it was not the cries of his victims, it was the vivid memories of their faces which haunted him. Their frantic last moments before he killed them often flashed across his mind's eye. He would visualize the gruesome scenes of the movements of their limbs and their pale bloodless faces, when he was



Angulimāla Thera haunted by visions of his past killings

about to strike them with his sword. The dreadful visions of the bodies of his murdered victims scattered along the cart tracks and forest fringe would return to torment him. The sight of vultures, crows and hyena's scavenging on the rotting bodies would nauseate him and cause him to lose his appetite for days.

Whenever gruesome visions of his past misdeeds entered Angulimāla Thera's mind, his heart would be consumed with deep remorse. It was difficult for him to concentrate his mind in meditation because of these mental and emotional disturbances. Much as he tried to forget his cruel past, he could not escape from this mental agony. But now, he felt he was 'spiritually reborn' and had entered the *Ariya Magga*.^{*} Obviously, he had truly undergone a noble transformation. By entering the *Bhikkhu Order*, he underwent a glorious "spiritual rebirth". The transformation of his mind and heart towards *Metta and Karuna* provided him an inner power to alleviate the pitiful suffering faced by ordinary folk. His inner power to heal and remove the suffering of people far exceeded the ruthless power, he had wielded in the past, to drive fear and to kill and destroy innocent human lives. The very thought of his 'noble spiritual rebirth' inspired him greatly and reinforced

* The Noble Path of the *Dhamma*



Angulimāla Thera inspired to perfect his practice of the Noble Dhamma

his *Saddha* in the *Buddha Dhamma*. Strengthened by the belief of his ‘noble spiritual rebirth’, he endeavoured to perfect his meditation.

The episode of Angulimāla Thera’s assertion of his *Saccakiriya* proved to be a tremendous morale booster with respect to his innate potential to achieve higher spiritual vistas. He resolved to show his gratitude to the Buddha the only way he could think of, namely by following His injunction to practise the His Teachings.

Arming himself with this resolve, he strove to perfect his practice of the Dhamma with great *Viriya*.^{*} He furthered his monastic discipline as an *Araññā Bhikkhu*^{**} and retired into the forest to perfect his meditation practice. Before long, dwelling alone in the solitude of the forest and committed himself totally to the ardent practise of the Buddha’s Teachings, Angulimāla Thera finally attained his spiritual goal of Arahant hood.

It would be recalled that earlier on, when he first entered the *Ariya Magga*, Angulimāla Thera had found difficulty in obtaining alms food from the village folk whenever he went on *Pindapatha*. Although he had become a bhikkhu, people were still very much afraid of him. Many still ran for

* Positive energy or resolute effort

** Forest meditation monk

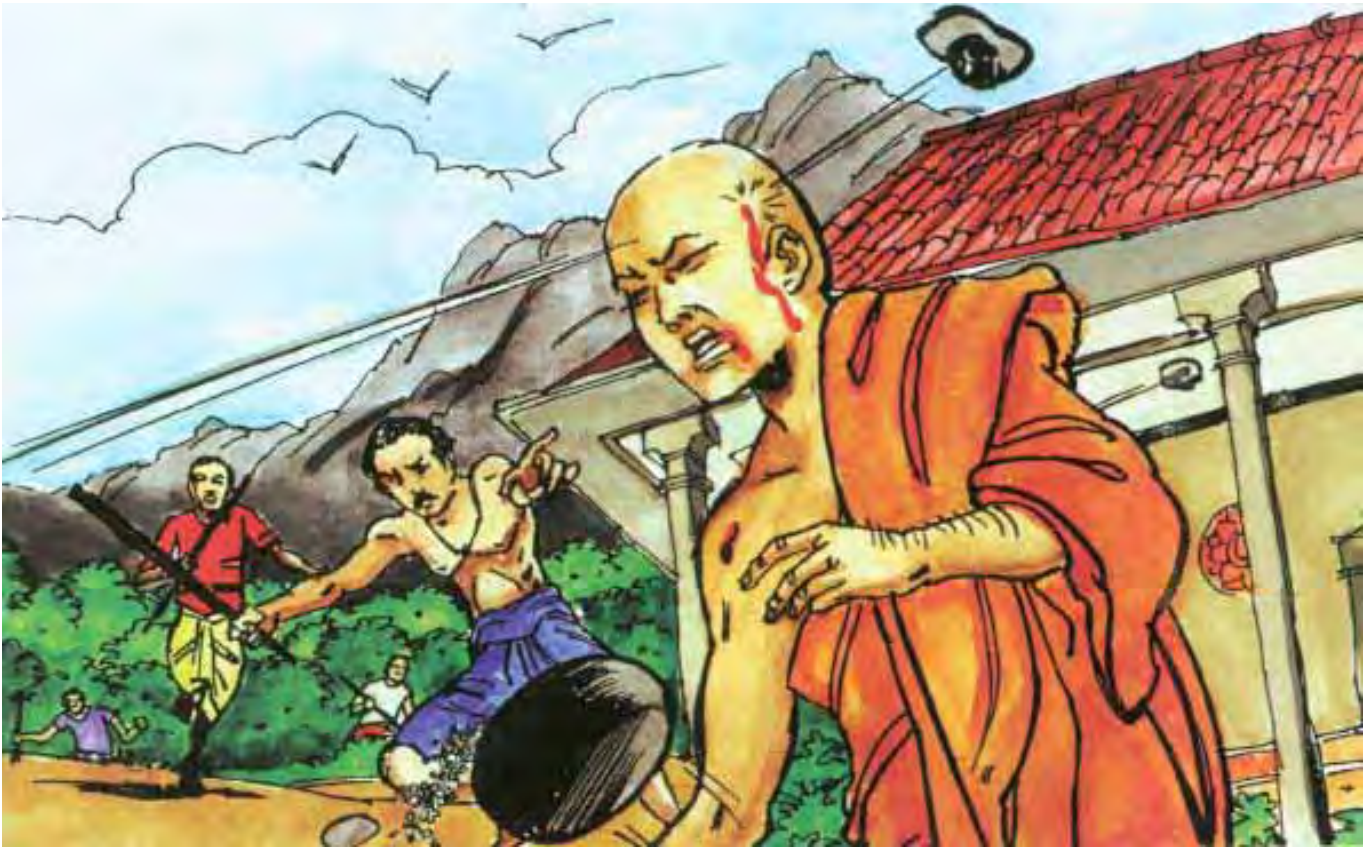


More village folk offer *dana* to Angulimāla Thera

their lives when they saw him from a distance. They would still shut their doors and windows when he arrived at their door steps to receive alms offering on his daily rounds of *Pindapatha* in the morning and at mid-day.

However, as a result of ensuring the safe delivery through the assertion of the Truth of his 'noble spiritual rebirth', people began to have greater confidence in his inner transformation. Many of the village folks' perception of him changed appreciably. They discarded their fears and skepticism and acknowledge his transformation into a noble being. As a result, an increasing number of village folks were now kindly disposed to him. People were more willing to offer him alms food when he visited their homes on his daily *Pindapatha* rounds.

Not all village folks respected Angulimāla Thera though as a noble, righteous *bhikkhu*. There were a resentful few who could not erase their anger and hatred towards him from their hearts. Their animosity was [not] erasable for he had murdered their loved ones. They continued to abhor him, despite his entry into the *Bhikkhu Sangha*. They could not forgive him for having caused them such irreparable loss and suffering. There were also many who still did not trust his motives although he had now donned the yellow robe. They regarded him a monstrous person in disguise and still a



A group of vengeful villagers brutally attack Angulimāla Thera

danger to society. Unable to seek retribution against him through the normal legal process, as the king had already pardoned him, they decided to take matters into their own hands.

One day, when Arahant Angulimāla went on *Pindapatha* in the village, an angry mob of villagers attacked him with rocks. A large piece of rock landed like a missile right on his forehead and caused a deep cut. Blood gushed from the gaping wound. More rocks were hurled at him as he felt dizzy and fell to the ground. The angry villagers ran up to him and let loose their pent up hatred. They beat up Arahant Angulimāla mercilessly. They assaulted him with iron rods and wooden poles with brutal vengeance. Arahant Angulimāla's robes were severely tattered and his begging bowl broken into two. Blood streamed from the injuries inflicted all over his body. His inner robes were soaked with blood.

When his body showed no sign of movement, they fear he was dead. They left him and disappeared into the village. In spite of the severe injuries and great pain he suffered, Arahant Angulimāla did not raise so much as a finger to ward the vengeful mob off. Instead, he drew strength and resolve from his *Upekkha** and received all their brutal blows without a single protest.

* Equanimity

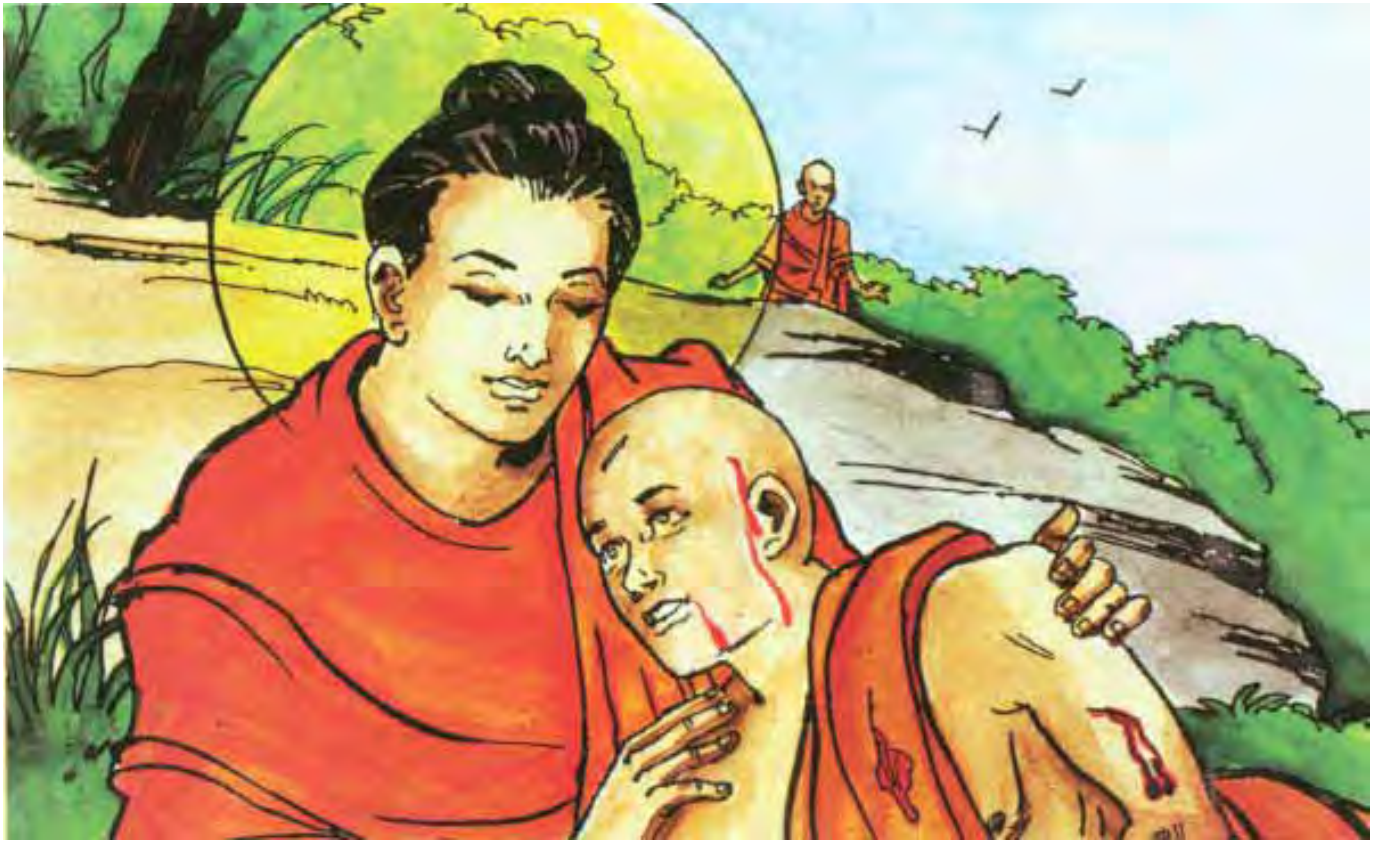


Fatally injured, Angulimāla Thera crawls to the Jetvana Monastery

Severely injured, Arahant Angulimāla gathered whatever strength his broken body could muster and crawled back to Jetavana Monastery. With great determination, he managed to reach its gates. The Buddha sighted him and hastened to his aid. The Enlightened One lifted him tenderly with both hands and rested him against His compassionate body. Wiping gently the blood that oozed from the wounds, He comforted Arahant Angulimāla, *“What cruel deed has been inflicted on you, my son? This is the reality of kamma. You must bear all the pain without any malice or hatred against those misguided ones who had assaulted you, my son.”*

The Buddha knew that Angulimāla Thera’s last moments had come. He wanted his last thoughts to be tranquil and pure. With tenderness of voice He consoled him *“My son, you are experiencing now the results of unwholesome deeds you had committed in the past on account of which you might have been tortured in apaya for many life cycles., Do not despair. You must remain resolute in Saddha, my son”*. As he had already attained Arahant-hood, Angulimāla remained steadfast in *Saddha*. Similarly, his *Metta* and *Karuna* remained intact despite the bodily pain he had encountered. His mind and heart were immune to *dosa*,* despite the physical pain from the

* Hatred



The Buddha comforts Angulimāla Thera in his last moments

severe injuries sustained at the hands of the angry village mob. He had only deep compassion for them.

Resting against the Buddha's body, Arahant Angulimāla gasped feebly, "*Enlightened Master, my Saddha will never diminish. Despite the pains and injuries suffered by my physical body, my mind remains equanimous.*" His last words left his lips, just as his breath left him, "*Buddham Saranam Gacchāmi; Dhammam Saranam Gacchāmi.*" (I take refuge in the Buddha, I take refuge in the Dhamma). With these dying words, Arahant Angulimāla passed into *Nibbana*.

On one occasion, in the course of His sermon, a group of *bhikkhus* inquired of the Buddha the place of rebirth of Arahant Angulimāla. The Enlightened One informed them that he had passed into *Nibbana*. The *bhikkhus* expressed surprise that one who had been so evil as Angulimāla who had killed so many innocent people should pass into *Nibbana*. He then explained to the *bhikkhus* that because Angulimāla lacked a good counsellor he was misdirected. As a result of his blind obedience to his *acariya*, he heedlessly committed evil deeds. But ever since 'going forth', he transformed himself completely and perfected through meditation practice, a life of resolute mindfulness.



The Buddha explains about Arahant Angulimāla's attainment of Nibbana

Thus, through his dramatic transformation, Angulimāla Thera was able to counter the weight of his past *akusala kamma* by accumulating greater *kusala kamma*.

In elucidating on the eternal *Law of Kamma*, the Buddha pronounced the following insightful stanza to the congregation of monks:

*He whose past misdeeds are covered by good deeds;
illuminates this world as does the moon freed from a cloud.*

There is no detailed record in the Buddhist scriptures and literature about the last years of Arahant Angulimāla. However, his own description of his diligent practise in forest meditation as recorded in verses in the *Theragathā*,* provide inspiring insights into the nature of his saintly life. These verses record that as a forest meditation monk, he lived in solitary places such as forests, caves and mountains. His inspiring verses reveal that he spent his last years in happiness while he diligently practised the *Dhamma*, thus:

* Paeans of joy upon attaining Arahant hood

Who once did live in negligence
And then is negligent no more,
He illuminates the world
Like the moon freed from a cloud.

Who checks the evil deeds he did
By doing wholesome deeds instead,
He illuminates the world
Like the moon freed from a cloud.

The youthful bhikkhu who devotes
His efforts to the Buddha's Teaching,
He illuminates the world
Like the moon freed from a cloud.

Let my enemies but 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 Doctrine as told by men who preach forbearance,
Of those who speak as well in praise of kindness,
And let them follow up the Dhamma 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 beings, frail or strong,
Let them attain the all-surpassing peace.

Conduit-makers guide the water,
Fletchers straighten out the arrow,
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
Who 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
With the name of “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 Dhammas known to men,
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.

I stayed in forests, at the root of a tree,
I dwelt in the mountain caves –
But no matter where I went
I always had an agitated heart.

But now I rest and rise in happiness
And happily I spend my life.
For now / am free of Māra's snares –
Oh! For the pity shown me by the Master!

A Brahmin was I by decent,
On both sides high and purely born.
Today I am the Master's son,
My teacher in the Dhamma-king.

Free of craving, without grasping,
With guarded senses, well restrained,
Spewn forth have I the root of misery,
The end of all taints have I attained.

The Master has been served by me full well,
And all the Buddha's bidding has been done.
The heavy load was finally laid down;
What leads to new becoming is cut off.

SIGNIFICANCE OF ANGULIMĀLA'S LIFE-STORY

ANGULIMĀLA IS AMONG THE BEST KNOWN ARAHANTS in the Buddhist scriptures and literature. Since the time of the Buddha, the real-life story of the dramatic transformation of Angulimāla from a notorious serial killer to a noble, peaceful compassionate *bhikkhu*, and subsequently an Arahant, through diligent practice of the *Dhamma* has been told to millions. Throughout the twenty-six centuries, the Angulimāla story has been used to teach important principles of the *Dhamma* and a popular moral lesson. Each time, the story has been retold or read, it has never failed to move the hearts of the reader or listener and inspire him or her to practise the Buddha's Noble Teachings. So much so, Angulimāla has become an integral part of Buddhist Education.

The legendary episode of Angulimāla carries important lessons in Buddhism. Among other things, it provides invaluable insights into human development. It illustrates how a decent person with strong *Saddha* in living a virtuous, noble life can be dramatically transformed when misguided. The story of Angulimāla demonstrates that *Saddha* and *Viriya* are important personal traits for one's development and success, provided they are well directed. For when misdirected along an evil path, *Saddha* and *Viriya* can make a person as passionate in achieving his or her evil mission. Since childhood, Ahimsaka was a highly virtuous, diligent person, who possessed great *Saddha* and *Viriya* for learning. Hence, when he embarked upon fulfilling his Guru Dakshinā of a garland of thousand human little fingers, he did so with blind obedience and commitment. With unrelenting zeal, he proceeded to meet his obligation as a dutiful student. He went about his gory mission with such great ferocity that once when he came across a group of traders numbering forty, he was able to slay them all.

The mindset of Angulimāla illustrates the nature of a person who is highly virtuous, trained in diligence and who possesses strong *Saddha*. When such a person's mind is directed towards a noble goal he or she will endeavour to achieve it with utmost enthusiasm. But should the mind get deviated towards an evil objective, the person will embark upon accomplishing the goal with as much tenacity of purpose and missionary zeal. Just like Ahimsaka, he or she would go to extremes to achieve the objective, despite knowing that it is morally wrong and evil. We know of terrifying killers, but

even the most notorious would not be prepared to go as far as Angulimāla. Obsessed with fulfilling his Guru Dakshinā, he was even ready to kill his mother who had set out to save him from King Pasenadi's soldiers.

At the same time, the historic episode illustrates how one could transform an evil person, even as notorious as the dreaded Angulimāla, to lead a virtuous life by reaching out through *Metta* and *Karuna*. Parents should, as the Buddha did with respect to Angulimāla, likewise bring up their child with *Metta* and *Karuna*. Another important Buddhist concept highlighted here is that a child is born pure of mind. At birth, a child's mind can be likened to clean sheet. Social scientists, such as Rousseau, refer to this state of an infant's mind as *tabula rasa*, that is, a blank tablet on which anything can be scribed. As the child grows, the mind can be subjected to incessant negative influences. This can lead to unwholesome ways of thinking and behaviour taking hold in a child.

Two fundamental principles in Buddhism which underline the Angulimāla episode merit highlighting, namely the reality of the *Law of Kamma*, and the pivotal role of the mind in human thinking and behaviour. We are reminded that our lives are influenced by *kamma* accrued through deeds committed earlier in life or arising from those done in previous lives. That is why sometimes for seemingly no explicable reason, misfortune strikes suddenly. We are faced with problems and difficulties in life because of the ripening of some past unskillful act. However, we are always interfering with our *kamma*. We are changing our *kamma* at every moment of our lives. So our *kamma* is in a constant state of flux. It is forever changing and being charged by one's actions. It is never static. That is to say, we can change the course of our life by cultivating wholesome *kamma* by living skillfully. No one is predestined or pre-programmed towards evil or failure or doom. Rather, we are in control of our destiny. Our future success, well-being and happiness are very much in our hands. It is we who determine the future of our lives.

We can change the direction of our life as Angulimāla did. One could always turn the direction in which one is living one's life. It is entirely in one's power to decide the path one wishes to tread. The Noble Path of the *Dhamma* is open to all who wish to benefit from practicing the Teachings of the Buddha. We can all benefit from the cultivation of the mind and training in skilful living, just as Angulimāla did, and finally, attained the spiritual goal of Arahant hood.

The cultivation of the mind is central in Buddhism. This principle is premised on the reality, that one's mind is the "maker" and "master" of one's thinking and behaviour. Deviant behaviour is triggered by one's mind. Similarly, skilful living is born out of a wholesome mind. It was Ahimsaka's mind that dictated his aspiration and led him in the wrong direction and made him the dreaded Angulimāla. But upon diligently practicing the *Dhamma* and purifying his mind from the time he became a *bhikkhu*, Angulimāla Thera was able to attain the spiritual goal of Arahant hood.

The life-story of Angulimāla also underlines the Buddha's advice to us not to judge people on the basis of their outward appearance and behaviour. But instead, try and understand with *Metta* and *Karuna*, the underlying factors that have led to their deviant behaviour, and in this way, redirect them onto the right path. It is far more important for us to first of all understand the mind or inner thinking of a wrong doer instead of passing judgement or straight-away condemn them. The mind is an extricable part of every human being. Our mind follows us wherever we go. We may be able to run away from many things, but we can never rid ourselves of our mind. It is always with us. It sees what we do; hears what we say and even knows what we think. Nobody may be around us to notice what we do or fail to do. But our ever present mind is always watching us and automatically records every little detail as future *kamma*.

What this means is that all our thoughts, speech and actions are dictated by our mind. We are in control of our future happiness or the lack of it. We are in full charge of our success. None of us are predestined or pre-programmed by some external being or power. We are ourselves responsible for our future. It is our mind that determines whether we succeed or fail; whether we are contented and happy or miserable; whether we are healthy or in poor health etc. We need therefore to purify our mind by cleansing our minds of unwholesome, evil thoughts and actions. This we can and must do by observing the Teachings of the Buddha and purifying our minds by practising meditation. In this way we will ensure that only wholesome thoughts, speech and actions are rooted in our mind.

The Angulimāla episode carries a special significance for expectant mothers. It highlights the important Buddhist concept of *gabbha pariharā*. The entrenched Buddhist culture in cultivating a wholesome 'foetal environment' for the healthy birth and development of a child is illustrated in the recitation of the Angulimāla *Paritta Sutta*. This historic *Paritta Sutta* is con-

nected with an important spiritual event that took place after Angulimāla's transformation and becoming a noble bhikkhu. To this day, the Angulimāla Sutta enjoys a special spiritual place, with regard to mother care and child-birth in traditional Buddhist communities. Modern scientific research has validated the importance of foetal protection and development as practised in Buddhism. The Angulimāla Paritta thus represents a hallmark of the importance given to mother care in Buddhism, dating as far back as the time of the Enlightened One.

Expectant mothers look up to Arahant Angulimāla as their 'Patron Saint' – a concept similar to the Christian tradition that emerged later. Since it was first recited twenty-six centuries ago, the Angulimāla Paritta has evoked powerful *Saddha* in the hearts of billions of expectant mothers. Apart from the religious practice of chanting *Paritta Suttas* for the protection and well-being of an expectant mother and her unborn child, it is a common practice in many traditional Buddhist communities, for the family to arrange for the recitation of the Angulimāla Paritta specifically. This religious practice of invoking the Angulimāla Paritta is specially observed because of the strong belief in the power inherent in it for invoking blessings on expectant mothers.

Angulimāla's "Protective Verses of Blessing," evoke strong *Saddha* among expectant mothers to experience a trouble-free, successful delivery of their unborn babies. It is particularly important to appreciate the invaluable therapeutic benefits that an expectant mother and her unborn baby receive through the transmission of this spiritual fortification. The chanting of the Angulimāla Paritta helps in addition to reinforce a calm and relaxed mental state in expectant mothers. The positive state of mind that is generated through the recital or listening of the Angulimāla Paritta, in turn, would impact positively on the growth and development of her unborn baby. It is for these reasons that it is regarded as worthwhile for us to know the historical antecedent of the Angulimāla Sutta.



COMPREHENSION EXERCISE

1. What aspect of the life story of Angulimāla impresses you most?
2. Why did Bhaggavā name his son Ahimsaka? How did he live up to it?
3. How did the Royal Astrologer's prediction turn out?
4. Evaluate the character of Ahimsaka before he became the dreaded Angulimāla.
5. Do you believe in predestination? Give your reasons?
6. Describe the nature of Ahimsaka's relationship with his peers?
7. How did Acariya Disapamuk's attitude towards Ahimsaka change?
8. How did Ahimsaka become a terrible serial killer?
9. Why and how did the Buddha intervene to save Angulimāla?
10. How did the Angulimāla Paritta come about? Explain its significance.
11. Explain how Angulimāla attained Arahant hood despite his past evil deeds?
12. What are the moral lessons to be learnt from the story?
13. What does the story tell about the nature of the human mind?
14. Discuss maternal love? How should we show our appreciation?
15. Describe the personality of the Buddha from the Angulimāla episode.
16. Discuss Buddhist meditation practice and its benefits?
17. Why is Arahant Angulimāla regarded as a "Patron Saint" of expectant mothers?
18. What do you understand about the Law of Kamma from the story?

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

AMBASSADOR DATO' DR. G.K. ANANDA KUMARASIRI has seen several important assignments in the course of his distinguished career in public service. Before embarking on a diplomatic career, he had a short but useful experience as a secondary school teacher. His diplomatic career commenced in 1966 as Assistant Secretary, ASA Secretariat, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Malaysia. He recalls with nostalgia his initial overseas diplomatic assignments as Assistant High Commissioner in Madras (1969–1972), First Secretary in New Delhi (1972-1975); and Counsellor in Tokyo (1975–1978).

In 1979, he was 'seconded' to INTAN to set up and head the Centre for International Relations and Strategic Studies (1979–1981). The challenging assignment was taken up with much trepidation. On hindsight, he regards it a rewarding and fulfilling experience for otherwise he would not have been so deeply immersed in the subjects of education and training.

Reassignment to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs saw him posted as Minister in Washington DC (1981–1983). In 1984, he was appointed High Commissioner to Nigeria with concurrent accreditation to Ghana. After a brief academic stint to pursue his doctoral discipline, he was appointed as Head of Inspectorate Division (1989–1992); Under-Secretary Americas Division (1992–1993); and Director General ASEAN (1993–1995). He is married and has three children.

Ambassador Dato' Dr. G.K. Ananda Kumarasiri does not believe that one should cease being active with retirement. Apart from being appointed Adjunct Professor at University Utara Malaysia, he has authored a number of landmark books. They include:

- Professional Diplomacy and Foreign Affairs Management: The Malaysian Experience;
- My First Word Book: Buddhist Pedagogical Approach;
- A Compendium of Buddhist Personal Names: Heritage and Significance of Adoption;
- Living Buddhism: The Way Forward;
- Living Buddhism: Advancing from Knowing to Being;
- My Alphabet Book: Buddhist Pedagogical Approach;
- Professional Diplomacy and Foreign Affairs Management: An Ambassador's Insight;
- The Terrifying Drug Menace: Relevance and Role of Buddhism;
- Welcoming the Birth of a Child; and Mothercare and Parenting: Cornerstone of Social Structuring.

List of Captions in order of page number beginning with Picture & caption on page 1
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Bhaggavā and Mantani overjoyed at the birth of a son; Bhaggavā consults the Royal Astrologer on his son's horoscope; Bhaggavā overhearing people talking about the omen; King Pasenadi suddenly awakened by blinding flashes; Bhaggavā confides to the King about the Royal Astrologer's prediction; Bhaggavā expresses gratitude for the King's compassion; Bhaggavā and Mantani spend joyful moments with baby Ahimsaka; Ahimsaka proves to be a diligent, virtuous student; Bhaggavā and Mantani bid Ahimsaka farewell; Ahimsaka arrives at Takkasila University; Ahimsaka pays respect to Acariya Disapamuk; Acariya Disapamuk praises Ahimsaka's scholarship; Ahimsaka's peers resentful of him; Ahimsaka's peers plot against him; Ahimsaka and Acariya Disapamuk's wife in animated conversation; Acariya Disapamuk's suspicion about Ahimsaka takes root in his mind; Acariya Disapamuk reprimands Ahimsaka for being disrespectful; Acariya Disapamuk insists on his *Guru Dakshinā*; Ahimsaka thrown into deep consternation; Ahimsaka pleads to Acariya Disapamuk to alter his *Guru Dakshinā*; Ahimsaka's peers jubilant over getting rid of him; Ahimsaka surveys for victims from his forest hideout; Ahimsaka severs the little finger from his victim; Angulimāla attacks caravans passing the Jālinī Forest; Angulimāla attacks villagers on the fringe of the Jālinī Forest; Village elders plead with King Pasenadi to capture Angulimāla; Royal Drummer announces the king's proclamation to capture Angulimāla; Mantani and Bhaggavā enveloped in deep anguish; Mantani reminisces about her son; Mantani leaving Sāvattihī before dawn; The Buddha's Mahā Karunā Samāpatti; The Buddha envisions the danger facing Mantani; Villagers warn the Buddha about the murderous Angulimāla; Village folks deeply concerned for the Buddha's safety; Angulimāla reads to pounce on his unsuspecting mother; The Buddha appears before Angulimāla as an ordinary ascetic; Angulimāla sprints after the Buddha; The Buddha requests Angulimāla "You too stop"; Angulimāla awed by the Buddha's serenity and noble bearing; Angulimāla requests permission to enter into the *Bhikkhu Order*; Mantani blesses Angulimāla while he pays his respects; Mantani and Angulimāla embrace each other tightly; Angulimāla offers his favourite food to the Buddha; Angulimāla worships his mother before departing to Jetvana Monastery; Angulimāla wipes the tears off his mother's face; Anxious Bhaggavā rushes to meet Mantani on her return home; King Pasenadi pays homage to the Buddha; The Buddha enquires about the King's military expedition; The Buddha points out Angulimāla Thera to King Pasenadi; King Pasenadi pays respect to Angulimāla Thera; King Pasenadi full of adoration over the Buddha's feat; Village folks reluctant to offer *dana* to Angulimāla Thera; Angulimāla Thera regrets inability to help the expectant mother; Angulimāla Thera depressed over inability to help the expectant mother; The Buddha instructs Angulimāla Thera to recite a *Saccakiriya Sutta*; "These two hands have killed over a thousand innocent people"; Charged with confidence, Angulimāla Thera leaves for the village; Angulimāla Thera recites *Saccakiriya* of his 'noble spiritual rebirth'; Happy grandmother presents the new-born baby girl to Angulimāla Thera; The family expresses its gratitude to Angulimāla Thera; Angulimāla Thera's "Saccakiriya Seat" being consecrated; Reciting the *Angulimāla Sutta* for expectant mothers becomes a tradition; Reciting the *Angulimāla Sutta* becomes an entrenched religious practice; Angulimāla Thera experiences difficulties in meditation practice; Angulimāla Thera haunted by visions of his past killings; Angulimāla Thera inspired to perfect his practice of the Noble Dhamma; More village folk offer *dana* to Angulimāla Thera; A group of vengeful villagers brutally attack Angulimāla Thera; Fatally injured, Angulimāla Thera crawls to the Jetvana Monastery; The Buddha comforts Angulimāla Thera in his last moments; The Buddha explains about Arahant Angulimāla's attainment of Nibbana