

## THE TRANSFORMATION OF ANGULIMALA

Angulimala, the ferocious murderer, who used to wear a garland of fingers of the numerous victims he had killed, shouted at Buddha asking him to stop when he was passing through the forest. Buddha stood before him and said, “*Angulimala, I stopped a long time ago. It is you who have not stopped*”. Angulimala was startled by the reply. Then he looked into Buddha’s eyes. He did not see any trace of fear and was amazed. For fear and dread was what he had seen all his life in the eyes of his victims. Instead he saw a pair of eyes shining with an ethereal light and a presence exuding serenity and peace. How someone can remain so calm and peaceful when facing the most blood thirsty murderer of the kingdom, he wondered. No longer being able to bear the Buddha’s kind and gentle gaze, he gathered himself and asked, “*Monk, you said you stopped a long time ago and I was the one who has not stopped. What did you mean by that?*”

The Buddha replied, “*Angulimala, I stopped committing acts that cause suffering to other living beings a long time ago. I have learned to protect the lives of all beings. All beings want to live. All fear death. We must nurture a heart of compassion and protect the lives of all beings*”.

“*Human beings do not love each other. Why should I love other people? Humans are cruel and deceptive. I will not rest until I kill them all*”.

The Buddha spoke gently, “*Angulimala, I know you have suffered deeply in the hands of others. Sometimes humans are cruel but such cruelty is the result of ignorance, hatred, desire and jealousy. But humans can also be loving and compassionate. Angulimala, there may be cruel people in this world, but there are also many kind people. Do not be blind to this reality. My path can transform cruelty into kindness. You are now walking the path of violence and hatred. You should stop. Choose the path of forgiveness, understanding and love instead*”.

These words had a profound cleansing effect and Angulimala transformed by the grace and compassion of the Buddha, fell at his feet, accepted his disciple hood and was initiated into the path of Dharma. Thereafter he became a monk who begged for a living for the rest of his life. With the passage of time he became so meditative and peaceful, that the other monks named him *Ahimsaka*, the non-violent one.

A Master shares and gives of his own being and showers grace on his disciples. Because the teaching is not in the words, but in the being, in the personality and in the living presence of the Master. That is why in the East, we have the concept of *Satsang* – company of the holy. *Satsang* means being in the holy presence of a Master – to absorb the vibes emanating from the holy man, to soak in the divine personality of the Master. That itself brings a change in the mind of the disciple. It's like a flame that jumps from one burning object to another. The holy man, the prophet, is that flame.

Today is Buddha Purnima

An extract from my book EATING HIS MONEY