# From Violence to Transformation in Buddhism and Islam

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Angulimāla "While walking, contemplating, you say, 'I have stopped.' But when I have stopped you say I haven't. I ask you the meaning of this: Now have you stopped? Now haven't?" The Buddha: "I have stopped, Angulimāla, once and for all, my violence against living beings. But you haven't, you are not a conventional monad beings. That's how I've stopped you haven't."

At that moment, Angulimāla understood his condition. He felt deep regret and decided to change his life. He gave up violence and became a monk. This transformation reflects a central Buddhist teaching found in the *Dhammapada* (verse 183):

**Sabbapāpassa akaraṇaṁ ko sukhaṁ upasampadā sacittapariyodapanaṁ etaṁ buddhāna sāsanaṁ.**

**Not to do evil, to cultivate merit, to purify one's mind – this is the Teaching of the Buddhas.**

However, Angulimāla's transformation did not remove the consequences of his past. People still feared him and even attacked him. He accepted this suffering patiently, understanding that it was the result of his past actions (karma). This reflects another teaching, *Dhammapada* (verse 127):

**Na antaliksha na samudduraplle na pabbatanam vivaram pavisa ya sa ajjatapapaso yathathite maccu papatamo.**

**Nor in the sky, nor in the middle of the ocean, nor in the cave of a mountain, nor anywhere else, is there a place where one may escape from the consequences of an evil deed.**

Through discipline, meditation, and wisdom, he eventually reached enlightenment (nibbāna). His story also reflects the power of mental transformation, as stated in *Dhammapada* (verse 5):

**Na hi verena verani sammantīdha kudacanam averena ca sammanti esa dhamma sanantana**

**Hatred is, indeed, never appeased by hatred in this world. It is appeased only by loving-kindness. This is an ancient law.**

This story shows that in Buddhism, transformation comes through self-awareness, wisdom, and inner change.

### The Story of the Repentant Killer

In Islam, there is a well known story about a man who killed ninety-nine people. He wanted to know if he could be forgiven. He first went to a religious man, who told him that there was no forgiveness for him. In anger, the man killed him as well, making the number one hundred.

Still searching for hope, he went to a knowledgeable scholar. This time, he received a very different answer. The scholar told him that nothing can stop a person from repentance (tawba). This reflects the Qur'anic teaching (Qur'an 39:53):

قُلْ يَا عِبَادِيَ الَّذِينَ أَسْرَفُوا عَلَىٰ أَنفُسِهِمْ لَا تَقْنَطُوا مِن رَّحْمَةِ اللَّهِ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَغْفِرُ الذُّنُوبَ جَمِيعًا ۚ إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْغَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ

**Say: O Prophet, that Allah says, "O My servants who have exceeded the limits against their souls! Do not lose hope in Allah's mercy; for Allah certainly forgives all sins. He is indeed the All-Forgiving, Most Merciful."**

The scholar advised him to leave his bad environment and go to a place where people worship God. The man sincerely decided to change and began his journey. However, he died on the way. According to the narration in *Sahih Muslim*, angels argued about whether he should be punished or forgiven. In the end, it was decided that because he was moving toward goodness, God forgave him.

This story highlights the importance of intention. It is mentioned in the Hadith book of *Sahih al-Bukhari* and *Muslim*, where the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said:

إِنَّمَا الْأَعْمَالُ بِالنِّيَّاتِ، وَإِنَّمَا لِكُلِّ امْرِئٍ مَا نَوَى

**Actions are judged by niyyāh (intentions), so each man will have what he intended.**

It also reflects the vast mercy of God, as mentioned in another Hadith Qudsi in the book of *Sahih al- Muslim* and *Sahih al-Bukhari*, where Allah says:

إِنَّ رَحْمَتِي تَغْلِبُ غَضَبِي

**My mercy prevails over My wrath.**

This story teaches that no matter how great the sin, sincere repentance (tawbah) can lead to God's mercy.

## What Do These Stories Teach?

### The Possibility of Change

Both stories strongly reject the idea that a person is permanently defined by their past. In Buddhism, Angulimāla becomes a peaceful monk after being a killer. In Islam, the man who killed one hundred people is forgiven because of his sincere repentance. This reflects a shared moral vision. In Buddhism, transformation is possible and that expressed as *Dhammapada* (verse 162), which says:

**Attana hi kataṁ pāpaṁ attanā saṁkilissati attanā akataṁ attanā va sudhī suddhī pacataṁ nanno pisuvan visodhye**

**By oneself indeed is evil done and by oneself is one defiled; by oneself is evil left undone, and by oneself is one purified. Purity and impurity depend entirely on oneself; no one can purify another.**

In Islam, the Prophet (PBUH) said (*Sunan Ibn Majah* 4250):

طُوبَى لِمَنْ هُدِيَ إِلَى الْإِسْلَامِ، وَكَانَ عَيْشُهُ كَفَافًا، وَرَضِيَ بِهِ

**The one who repents from sin is like one who has no sin.**

This teaches that change is always possible.

### Responsibility and Consequences

Even though both stories talk about forgiveness and change, they do not ignore responsibility. In Buddhism, Angulimāla still suffers because of his past actions. This reflects the law of karma. In Islam, although the man is forgiven, the Qur'an reminds (Qur'an 99:7-8):

فَمَن يَعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ خَيْرًا يَرَهُ

وَمَن يَعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ شَرًّا يَرَهُ

**So, whoever does an atom's weight of good will see it, and whoever does an atom's weight of evil will see it.**

This shows that actions matter and are taken seriously in both traditions.

### The Role of Guidance

In both stories, change happens because of guidance. Angulimāla meets the Buddha, who helps him understand the truth. The killer in Islam meets a wise scholar, who gives him hope and direction. This reflects the importance of wisdom. It is mentioned in *Dhammapada* (verse 78) where the Buddha said:

**Na bhaja yaparo mitra na bhaja purisadhma bhajetha mitra kalaana bhajetha purisuttama**

**One should not associate with bad friends, nor with the vile. One should associate with good friends, and with those who are noble.**

Similarly, in Islam, the Prophet (PBUH) said (*Abu Dawud*):

الْمَرْءُ عَلَى دِينِ خَلِيلِهِ فَلْيَنْظُرْ أَحَدُكُمْ مَنْ يُخَالِلُ

**Man follows his friend's religion; you should be careful who you take for friends.**

This shows that guidance and good company are essential for transformation.

### Inner Change and Outer Action

Both stories show that true transformation is not just about stopping bad actions. It requires deep inner change. In Buddhism, the focus is on purifying the mind. The first verse of *Dhammapada* says:

**Manopubbangama dhamma mannomha manomaya manasa ce padutthena bhasati va karati va tato nam dukkhamanvetti cakkamva vahato padam**

**All mental phenomena have mind as their forerunner; they have mind as their chief; they are mind-made.**

In Islam, both inner and outer change are required. The Qur'an says (53:13):

وَلَقَدْ رَآهُ نَزْلَةً أُخْرَىٰ

**Indeed, Allah will not change the condition of a people until they change what is in themselves.**

Thus, transformation involves both inner intention and outward action.

## Lessons for Contemporary Society

### Rethinking Crime and Punishment

In today's world, criminals are often seen as people who cannot change. Many systems focus only on punishment. However, these stories suggest a different approach. They remind us that even serious offenders can transform and change. This supports rehabilitation and second or another chances.

The Qur'an encourages justice with mercy (5:38):

فَمَنْ تَابَ مِن بَعْدِ ظُلْمِهِ وَأَصْلَحَ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ يَتُوبُ عَلَيْهِ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ

**But whoever repents after their wrongdoing and mends their ways, Allah will surely turn to them in forgiveness. Indeed, Allah is All-Forgiving, Most Merciful.**

### Moving Beyond Judgment

Modern society often judges people quickly and permanently. These stories challenge this attitude. They teach compassion. The Buddha emphasized as it is mentioned in *Dhammapada* (verse 50):

**Na paresam vilomani na paresam katakatam attanna avekkhasu katani atanni va**

**One should not consider the faults of others, nor their doing or not doing good or bad deeds. One should consider only whether one has done or not done good or bad deeds.**

Similarly, in Islam, the Prophet (PBUH) said, as is mentioned in Sunan Ibn Majah (3548):

إِنَّ مِنْ عِبَادِ اللَّهِ تَعَالَى مَنْ إِذَا رَأَى عَوْرَةً أَقَامَهَا، وَإِذَا سَمِعَ بِعَيْبٍ سَتَرَهُ، وَإِذَا بَلَغَهُ عَنْ أَخِيهِ مَا يَكْرَهُ سَدَّهُ، وَإِذَا بَلَغَهُ عَنْ أَخِيهِ مَا يُحِبُّ أَشَاعَهُ، أُولَئِكَ الْأَبْدَالُ، أُولَئِكَ الْأَوْتَادُ، أُولَئِكَ الْأَقْطَابُ، أُولَئِكَ الْأَوْلِيَاءُ، أُولَئِكَ الْأَحْيَاءُ، أُولَئِكَ الْأَتْقِيَاءُ، أُولَئِكَ الْأَصْفِيَاءُ، أُولَئِكَ الْأَبْرَارُ، أُولَئِكَ الْأَخْيَارُ، أُولَئِكَ الْأَطْهَار