

## The First Paramita — Charity (Dana)

### 【The Story of Deer Park】

Once upon a time, there lived this Deer King, tall and handsome, with furs glowed five colors. He and his herd of thousands roamed free in the forest. One day, a royal king and his entourage discovered this forest and went hunting; they hurt and slaughtered many of the deer.

The Deer King was greatly grieved at the sight of so many fallen and his loving heart was filled with sorrow. He went to see the human king and pleaded, in human language, “I believe in your heart you know every living being treasures its own life. So please spare us the fear of losing ours everyday. Allow us offering one of us to you each day and stop the massacre.” The human king was surprised but consented to this arrangement.

The day came when it was the turn of a pregnant mother-doe. She begged to the Deer King to delay her death until her child is born. The Deer King took pity on the despairing mother-doe, but could not send anyone else to die for her. He decided to offer himself as the sacrifice of the day. When the human king saw the Deer King, he was surprised and asked, “Are there no more deer left?”

Realizing the Deer King’s decision, he was deeply touched and reflected: “The Deer King is but an animal yet he has such compassion for his fellow beings. I am the king of human beings, but I kill to satisfy my own appetite. I am less a being, let alone a king, than the Deer King.” With this understanding, the king swore off all animal flesh from his diet. He made it the law of land that no deer shall be harmed or killed ever again. The forest was reserved for the deer and became known as Deer Park in India.

The Deer King was one of the former incarnations of Shakyamuni Buddha.

