

The First Paramita — Charity (Dana)

【Tale of A Sage's Sacrifice to Save Tigers】

Long time ago, a Brahman was living in the mountain, striving to cultivate Buddhism by not committing any sins and treating all sentient beings with great compassion. One day, the Brahman was searching for food and discovered a female tiger, who had just given birth to several baby cubs. The tiger was exhausted with no strength to hunt, and thus could not produce milk to feed the young cubs. Without much choice the tiger ate one of her baby cubs in order to gain nutrients to produce milk to feed cubs.

The Brahman felt heartbroken when he saw what happened: “There is no end in the sufferings of sentient beings. There are no words that could describe how painful the mother tiger felt to have to eat her own cubs.” Tearfully he searched for food to feed the hungry tiger to save the young cubs. The Brahman thought “The purpose for cultivating Buddhism is to eliminate the suffering of sentient beings, and to turn their suffering to happiness. I will get old and die eventually. I should sacrifice my body so the mother and her cubs could all survive.” Having so decided, he moved his head toward the mother tiger’s mouth and fed himself to the tiger.

This was one example of how Śākyamuni Buddha sacrificed himself to save others. Because of his fearless and selfless charity, he shortened the span it takes to attain Buddha hood by nine kalpas, perfected the practice of dana paramita, and became the great spiritual teacher, and assisting all sentient beings in the process of liberation.

