Cp 11 — The Conduct of One Who Provided for His Mother

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Text

The Conduct Leading to Buddhahood

The Chapter on an Elephant

The Perfection of Ethics (1st)

The Conduct of One Who Provided for His Mother

“Once I lived in the forest
as an elephant who provided for his mother.
At that time no one on earth
could equal my virtues.
Seeing me in the forest, a forester
informed the king about me.
‘Great King, an elephant that befits you
is dwelling in the forest grove.
No need to dig a moat around him,
nor tether him to a post in a pit.
Taken by the trunk,
he will come here by himself.’
When he heard these words,
the king, elated,
sent an elephant-tamer,
a well-trained and expert tutor.
When the elephant-tamer reached there,
he saw me in a lotus pond,
pulling out lotus roots

to feed my mother.
Discerning my moral virtue,
he checked me for marks.
Saying, ‘Come, child’,
he took me by the trunk.
What was at that time
the natural strength of my body,
would equal a thousand
of the elephants of today.
If I had been upset
with those who came to capture me,
I would have had the power
to defeat even a kingdom of men.
Nevertheless, for the sake of guarding my ethics,
and fulfilling my perfection of ethics,
I did not let my mind change,
even as they caged me.
And even were they to beat me
with hatchets and lances,
I would never become upset,
for fear of violating my ethics.”