Cp 16 — Ruru the Deer King’s Conduct

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Text

The Conduct Leading to Buddhahood

The Chapter on an Elephant

The Perfection of Ethics (6th)

Ruru the Deer King’s Conduct

“Then again when I was
the king of deer named Ruru,
in appearance I was like burnished gold,
focused on the highest ethics.
There was a pleasant, delightful region,
free of humans,
so I went there and stayed
on a lovely bank of the Ganges.
Then a man upstream,
harassed by creditors,
fell into the Ganges, thinking,
‘I live or I die!’
Day and night in the Ganges
he was swept along the stream,
crying out pitifully,
along the middle of the Ganges.
When I heard the sound
of his pitiful crying,
I stood on the Ganges bank

and asked, ‘What man are you?’
When asked he explained
to me his own deed:
‘I was so scared of my creditors,
I jumped in the great river!’
Taking pity on him,
surrendering my own life,
I entered and dragged him out
in the darkness of the night.
When I knew he had recovered,
I said to him,
‘I ask of you one favor:
tell no one about me.’
But once he had returned to the city,
for the sake of money he told when asked.
Taking the king,
he drew close to me.
All that I had done
was related to the king.
When the king heard this,
he fitted his arrow, thinking,
‘Right here I shall kill
this ignoble betrayer of a friend.’
I protected him,
substituting myself:
‘Let him be, Great King.
I shall carry out your pleasure.’
I guarded my ethics,
not my life.

For then I was ethical,

because it was solely for awakening.”