

THE DIFFICULTY OF REPAYING
THE PROFOUND KINDNESS
OF PARENTS SUTRA

佛說父母恩重難報經

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Published by Fo Guang Shan International Translation Center
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Printed in Taiwan.

The Difficulty of Repaying the Profound
Kindness of Parents Sutra

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FOREWORD

When we are born, we may know only that the warmth of our mother and father is there to comfort us. When we grow as children, we may know only that our parents are there to guide and encourage us. When we become teenagers, we may think that our parents are there only to discipline us. When we become adults, we may think that our parents are irrelevant—what could they possibly know about our careers, our love lives, and our daily existence in this world?

Often, it is not until something stops and reminds us that we realize our parents endured great pain and sacrifice to keep us healthy, feed and clothe us, educate us, and raise us into adulthood. That “something” may be the death of a parent, or it may be when we have our own children.

The Difficulty of Repaying the Profound Kindness of Parents Sutra serves as another kind of reminder that we all owe a great deal to our parents. Best of all, it demonstrates a way to show our appreciation for them and to repay their kindness.

The sutra presents the teachings of the Buddha to his great disciple, Ananda, and “a gathering of monks numbering two thousand five hundred, and bodhisattvas and great bodhisattvas numbering thirty-eight thousand in all” in Jeta Grove in the city of Sravasti.

Although these teachings are ancient, they are just as relevant today.

The Buddha begins by describing the stages of pregnancy and the suffering a woman must endure while bearing a child and giving birth. He details the sacrifices a mother makes when the infant has arrived, such as nursing, keeping the child dry, changing diapers and so on.

But the Buddha makes clear that a mother's loving concern does not abate, no matter how old her son or daughter becomes:

*Even when the mother's years reach one hundred,
She still constantly worries about her eighty-year-
old child.*

The same holds true for the father. A verse spoken by the Buddha states:

*The kind mother is like the great earth;
The stern father is like the heavens;
One covers and the other supports, the kindness
being equal;
The kindness of parents is also like this.*

Yet as the child gets older, he or she usually does not consider this and forgets the kindness that his or her parents bestowed. Today we may call this the rebellious teenage years or starting one's life as an adult, but the basic sentiment remains the same: The child ignores the advice and warnings of the parents, wants to do things his or her own way, and may even fall in with the wrong crowd. Before long, the parents are all but forgotten.

Naturally, this causes great distress to the parents. As you read through the first part of this sutra, you are likely to feel some form of distress too, just as the great assembly did when hearing the Buddha's words.

Rather than feel shame, guilt or despair, there is something you can do about it. The Buddha offers a way to repay this kindness.

Read this sutra all the way to the end, and you will discover how to do so.

Incense Praise

Incense burning in the censer,

All space permeated with fragrance.

The Buddhas perceive it from every direction,

Auspicious clouds gather everywhere.

With our sincerity,

The Buddhas manifest themselves in their entirety.

We take refuge in the bodhisattvas-mahasattvas.

(repeat three times)

Homage to Our Teacher Sakyamuni Buddha
(repeat three times)

Sutra Opening Verse

The unexcelled, most profound, and exquisitely
wondrous Dharma
Is difficult to encounter throughout hundreds of
thousands of millions of kalpas.
Since we are now able to see, hear, receive and
retain it,
May we comprehend the true meaning of the
Tathagata.

The Difficulty of Repaying
the Profound Kindness of Parents Sutra

Thus have I heard: At one time, the Buddha was in the city of Sravasti, in Jeta Grove, with a gathering of monks numbering two thousand five hundred, and bodhisattvas and great bodhisattvas numbering thirty-eight thousand in all.

At that time, the World-Honored One, leading the great assembly, walked directly toward the south and suddenly saw a pile of bones gathered on the side of the road.

At that time, the Tathagata placed his head and four limbs onto the ground and paid respectful homage to the dry bones.

Ananda joined his palms and addressed the Buddha: “World-Honored One, you are the great teacher of the three realms, the compassionate father of [all beings through] the four kinds of birth,¹ and the one whom the masses of people revere and in whom they take refuge. For what causes and conditions do you pay reverential obeisance to these dry bones?”

The Buddha told Ananda: “Although you and the others are my chief disciples, having renounced

1. Beings are born in one of four ways: born of transformation, born of wombs, born of eggs, or born of moisture.

household life a long time ago, you have not reached the comprehensive understanding of things. This pile of dry bones could belong to the ancestors, even my parents, of my past lives. It is for these causes and conditions that I now pay respectful homage.”

The Buddha told Ananda: “You will now divide this pile of withered dry bones into two parts. If they are the bones of men, then they will be white in color and heavy. If they are the bones of women, they will be black in color and light.”

Ananda addressed the Buddha: “World-Honored One! While men are alive, they adorn themselves in elegance with shirts, belts, shoes, and hats so that from one faraway glance anyone will know that they are men. [...]

[...]While women are alive, they often apply cosmetics and powders, and daub on perfume and musk for adornment so that anyone will immediately know that they are women. Yet after death, their white bones are all of a similar sort. How can your disciples discern between them?”

The Buddha told Ananda: “If these men, during their lives, enter into a monastery and listen to lectures on the sutras and vinayas, pay respectful homage to the Triple Gem and recite the names of the Buddhas, then their bones will be white in color and heavy. [...]

[...]In this world, many women lack the strength of wisdom and are easily drowned with passion. They regard giving birth to and rearing their sons and daughters as their heavenly duty. The life of every single child born relies on the nourishment of a mother's milk. The milk is transformed from the mother's blood, and every child drinks eighty-four pecks of the mother's white milk or more. Therefore, the mother becomes worn and haggard, and her bones appear black in color and light in weight."

Once Ananda heard these words, pain pierced his heart. As he sorrowfully wept, he addressed the Buddha: "World-Honored One, how can one repay the kind virtue of mothers?"

The Buddha told Ananda: "Now listen attentively, and I will explain it for you in detail. [...]"

[...]The mother's womb normally carries the child for ten lunar months. This is extremely burdensome and strenuous for her.

“During the first month in the mother's womb, the embryo is like dew atop grass; it may not last from morning until night, as it collects in the early morning, yet disappears by noon.

“During the second month of pregnancy, the embryo is just like congealed curd.

“During the third month of pregnancy, it is like coagulated blood.

“During the fourth month of pregnancy, it partially assumes human form.

“During the fifth month of pregnancy, the fetus inside the mother's belly develops five appendages. [...]

[...]What are these five? The head, along with the two elbows and two knees. Altogether they make up the five appendages.

“During the sixth month of pregnancy, the fetus in the mother’s belly develops the six sense organs at the same time. What are these six? First are eyes; second are ears; third is nose; fourth is mouth; fifth is tongue; and sixth is mind.

“During the seventh month of pregnancy, the fetus inside the mother’s belly develops three hundred and sixty bones and joints and develops eighty-four thousand pores.

“During the eighth month of pregnancy, the fetus develops the intellect and the nine orifices.

“During the ninth month of pregnancy, the fetus inside the mother’s belly absorbs the sustenance provided by food, such as the essential nutrients from peaches, pears, garlic, fruits, or the five grains. Inside the mother’s body, the organs for the undigested [food] go downward, and the organs for the digested [food] go upward, much like a mountain forming on the surface of the earth; there are three names for this mountain: Sumeru, Karma Mountain, [...]

[...]and Blood Mountain. This metaphorical mountain collapses all at once and transforms into a single stream, where the mother's blood coagulates and becomes food for the fetus.

“During the tenth month of pregnancy, when every single part of the child's body is completely formed, it will descend to be born. If this child will be filial and obedient, then it will be born peacefully with hands raised and palms joined, without harming the mother or causing her any suffering. If this child will be capable of the five great violations, he will injure the mother's uterus, tearing at her heart and liver, and trampling on her pelvic bones. [...]

[...] Such profound suffering in giving birth to this child is like the flurry of a thousand knives or even like ten thousand blades piercing her heart.

“To explain this even more clearly, there are the ten kindnesses bestowed by the mother upon the child:

The first is the kindness of carrying and protecting the fetus.

The second is the kindness of enduring the suffering of approaching childbirth.

The third is the kindness of forgetting the sorrow of childbirth.

The fourth is the kindness of swallowing the bitter while sharing the sweet with the child.

The fifth is the kindness of keeping the child dry while lying in dampness herself.

The sixth is the kindness of breastfeeding and rearing.

The seventh is the kindness of washing away the filth.

The eighth is the kindness of thinking of the child who is travelling far away.

The ninth is the kindness of deep care for the child.

The tenth is the kindness of utmost compassion for the child.”

1. A verse on the kindness of carrying and protecting the fetus:

There are abundant causes and conditions over many kalpas;

Now, the fetus comes into the mother’s womb.

As months pass, its five vital organs develop;

Then after seven periods of seven days, its six sense organs form.

The mother’s body becomes heavy like a mountain;

Whether active or at rest, she feels like the windy devastation of a kalpa.

She never wears any of her fine clothing,

Her dressing mirror gathering dust.

2. A verse on the kindness of enduring the suffering of approaching childbirth:

Pregnancy lasts for ten lunar months;

As the difficult labor draws near,

Every morning the mother feels as if severely
ill;

Every day she is faint and lethargic.

Facing the coming difficulty, she speaks in fear,

Anguish and tears filling her heart.

Choking back sorrow, she tells her family:

She is only afraid that death will overcome her.

3. A verse on the kindness of forgetting the sorrow of childbirth:

On the day the kind mother delivers the child,
Her five organs are all extended open;
Her body and mind are completely exhausted,
Her blood flowing out like that from a slaughtered lamb.

After the delivery, upon hearing that the child
is healthy,

She feels joy—many times more than normal;
Yet after her joy has settled, her grief returns,
Pain and sorrow pervading her heart and gut.

4. A verse on the kindness of swallowing the bitter while sharing the sweet with the child:

The kindness of parents is deeply profound,
Their care and sympathy unending.
They share the sweet without rest
And swallow the bitter without knitted brow.
Their love profound and affections difficult to
bear,
Their kindness is deep, and their compassion is
manifold.
Only wanting the child to be sated,
The kind mother does not mind her own
hunger.

5. A verse on the kindness of keeping the child dry while lying in dampness herself:

The mother willingly casts her body into
dampness,

So the child can be moved to where it is dry.

With her two breasts, she satiates the child's
hunger and thirst,

And with her sleeve she covers him from the
wind and cold.

She is kind and sympathetic; her head rarely
touches the pillow;

Doting on the child makes her happy.

Only wanting her child to be comfortable,

The kind mother does not seek comfort.

6. A verse on the kindness of breastfeeding and rearing:

The kind mother is like the great earth;

The stern father is like the heavens;

One covers and the other supports, the kindness being equal;

The kindness of parents is also like this.

Not hateful or glaring in anger,

They are not displeased if the child has crippled hands or feet.

From the time the child is in the belly to when the mother delivers the child,

Throughout the day, the parents care for and comfort their child.

7. A verse on the kindness of washing away the filth:

The mother was originally as beautiful as a hibiscus flower,

Spirit strong and abounding,
Eyebrows like the fresh green willow, and
Complexion surpassing that of a lotus's red
color.

Her kindness is so deep that she mars her beautiful face,

And in washing away the child's filth, she harms
her constitution.

Solely acting to comfort her son or daughter,
The kind mother changes in her appearance.

8. A verse on the kindness of thinking of the child who
is travelling far away:

Separation in death is indeed difficult to endure,
Yet separation in life is truly painful, too.

When the child travels beyond the passes and
mountains,

The mother laments in her village.

Day and night her thoughts are with her child,

Tears flowing in a thousand trails.

Like a monkey crying affectionately for its child,

Bit by bit, this tears into her gut.

9. A verse on the kindness of deep care for the child:

The kindness of parents is so deep and profound

That it is truly difficult to repay.

If the child suffers, they are willing to endure it
instead.

If the child toils, the mother is uneasy.

Hearing that her child is on the road, traveling
far away,

She worries for her child who might lie out in
the cold at night.

If the son or daughter has a moment's hardship,
It causes sustained duress in the mother's heart.

10. A verse on the kindness of utmost compassion for
the child:

The kindness of parents is deep and profound.

Their concern and compassion do not have a
moment's rest.

Whether active or at rest, their hearts follow
their child;

Whether near or far, their thoughts are with
him or her.

Even when the mother's years reach one hundred,

She still constantly worries about her eighty-year-old child.

Do you wish to know when such kindness and love ends?

It only begins to dissipate after the end of her life.”

The Buddha told Ananda: “When I observe sentient beings, although they are reborn as human beings, their thoughts and actions are still foolish and ignorant. They are inconsiderate of their parents' great kindness and virtue. They do not show reverence, they forget kindness, and they turn their back on righteousness. They lack humane compassion and are neither filial nor obedient.

“During the ten months the mother is with child, when she arises or sits, she is discomforted as if lifting a

heavy burden. She cannot keep down her food or drink, as if she were chronically ill. When the baby is full-term and it is the time for birth, the mother endures all kinds of pain and suffering, and in the moment of childbirth, she is fearful of her mortality. Like a slaughtered pig or sheep, the blood flows all over the ground. She endures suffering such as this.

“Once the child is born, the mother swallows the bitter and shares the sweet, embraces the child, nurtures and rears the child, and washes away the child’s filth. She does not dread the labor and toil. She endures the cold and heat and does not mind undergoing hardships herself. The child lies on dry spots while she sleeps in dampness.

“For three years the child drinks the mother’s ‘white milk-blood,’ and from infancy to childhood, and through to adulthood, [...]

[...]the child is taught manners and righteousness. Marriages are arranged, wealth is prepared, and a profession is sought. Parents take up this hardship, endeavoring and toiling a hundred times over, never speaking of their kindness and graciousness.

“If the son or daughter is ill, the parents become frightened and worried, distressed to the extent that they may become ill themselves, but they consider this to be an ordinary matter. Only when the child’s illness has been cured will the mother’s sickness be alleviated. Like this, children are nurtured and reared, with the hope that they will soon become adults.

“Reaching their maturity, however, they become unfilial; their parents may offer warnings, but the children do not know obedience or compliance. While interacting, they lack manners and glare with an evil eye. They deceive and insult their uncles and hit and

curse at their brothers. Ruining and abusing any familial sentiment, they are without manners or righteousness.

“Although they are educated, they do not observe rules or training. They often will not comply with their parents’ instructions or commands. Talking with their brothers, they are defiant and rebellious with every encounter. In coming and going, they do not inform their father or mother. Their speech and acts are haughty and arrogant, and they manage their affairs with an impulsive mentality. As to their parents’ admonition and punishments and their uncles’ warnings, these children are immature and are to be pitied; thus, elders protect and defend them. As they gradually become older, they become fiercely rebellious and obstinate. They do not hide their defiance and instead become resentful. Rejecting their family and friends, these children befriend evil people. Before long, bad

habits become natural, and they consider what is wrong as right.

“Some may be tempted by others to run away to another village, thus betraying their parents by leaving home and separating from their family.

“Some may become brokers or civil servants, and in the course of time become tied down and may marry; due to this, they are detained for a long time, never to return home.

“Some in other villages may not be able to be cautious, so they are plotted against and injured by others and lured into evil schemes. They may be wrongly punished and convicted, being placed in jails, cangues,² or shackles.

“Some may encounter disease and misfortune, be entwined in adversity and hardship, or be captive to the

2. Formerly used in China, a cangue is a large wooden collar worn by petty criminals as punishment.

sufferings of starvation and emaciation, without others caring for or treating them. Being detested and scorned by others, they may be abandoned in the streets, and due to this their lives will end, since no one will rescue or treat them. Their bodies will swell and decay, and then become desiccated by the sun and blown away by the wind; their white bones will disintegrate and scatter throughout the dirt of another village. To have a joyous reunion with the family is now forever impossible.

“By betraying compassionate kindness, the children will never know that their aged parents will eternally worry and lament over them. The parents’ eyes will become blind from weeping, their throats will become hoarse from mourning, and they will eventually weaken and die from constantly lamenting on the memory of their children. Even when they become ghosts, they will hold on to this attachment without letting go.

“Furthermore, some such children may not honor an education or profession, and may participate in outlandish activities. Villainous, vulgar, and mischievous, they enjoy a lifestyle that is unbeneficial, and by fighting and stealing they cause transgressions against the village. They drink alcohol and gamble; they break the law and commit crimes. Through implicating their brothers, they further distress their parents. Leaving at dawn and returning at dusk, they never inquire about their respected parents’ well-being, or whether their parents suffer from cold or heat. Throughout the month, from morning to night, they never attend to their parents, ask how their parents are doing in daily activities, or if they may arrange their parents’ beds and pillows. By being estranged like this, they do not participate in, or inquire about, their parents’ daily life. As the years pass by for the parents, their appearance becomes withered and emaciated, [...]

[...]and they are ashamed to see others, being left to endure deception and oppression.

“Some have a father who might be a widower, or a mother who is widowed, living alone in an empty house, as if only a traveler staying in someone else’s home. They may endure cold, hunger, and thirst without anyone being aware of their suffering. From morning to night, they constantly cry, groaning and sighing to themselves. Children should offer delicacies in support of their respected parents. If these reckless children accomplish nothing, then their parents will feel shame when they think of what their children are doing and be fearful of people’s blame and ridicule.

“Some, having wealth and food, will support their wives and children instead, forgetting their own weariness and toil, and will not try to avoid the shame in these acts. [...]

[...]Due to their wives' restrictions and control, they comply with every demand, yet when respected elders glare at and scold them, they are completely unfazed.

“Some, furthermore, may be daughters who are matched with a man. When they are not yet married, they are totally filial and submissive, yet after marriage they become increasingly unfilial. With the parents' slightest glare of displeasure, the daughter will foster resentment and enmity, yet she will endure her husband's attacks and accusations with the sweetest temperament. Though her husband has a different surname and ancestry, her sentiment runs deep and her concern for him is profound. As for her own flesh-and-blood family, she retreats in neglect.

“Some move with their husbands to other villages in foreign regions, separating from their parents. Neither thoughtful nor loving, they cut off all communication,

either spoken or written. This causes the parents' stomachs to knot in anxiety. The parents do not have even a moment of peace, just as if they were hanging upside-down. Their every thought is of seeing their daughter's face, just as one who is thirsty and longs for a drink.

“Their loving thoughts for their offspring are without rest. The kind virtue of parents is immeasurable and illimitable. The transgression of being unfilial makes it ultimately difficult to describe in detail.”

At that time, the great assembly, who heard the Buddha explain the profound kindness of parents, all threw their bodies to the ground and began beating their chests and striking themselves until their pores all gushed with blood. Having fainted and fallen to the ground, [...]

[...]it was a long while before they regained consciousness. In a loud voice they called out: “Such suffering! Such suffering! What agony! What agony! At present, we are all deep offenders. Unaware, we were oblivious as if traveling in the night. Now that we have realized our faults, our hearts are entirely torn apart. We only hope the World-Honored One will have compassion and rescue us. How may we repay the deep kindness of our parents?”

At that time, the Tathagata told all in the great assembly by means of his eightfold, deeply resonant Brahma-like voice: “All of you should know this. I will explain it for you in detail.

“If there were a person whose left shoulder carried his father and right shoulder carried his mother until his skin was rubbed away to the bone, and his bone was bored through to the marrow, and who circumambulated Mount Sumeru for hundreds of thousands of kalpas until the blood poured down to his ankles, then that person would still not be able to repay the deep kindness of his parents.

“If there were a person who, during a kalpa of starvation and famine, for the sake of his parents, used his own body to slice off flesh, mincing it as fine as dust, and did so for hundreds of thousands of kalpas, then that person would still not be able to repay the deep kindness of his parents.

“If there were a person who, for the sake of his parents, held a sharp knife in hand and scooped out his eyes, offering them to the Tathagata, and did so

for hundreds of thousands of kalpas, then that person would still not be able to repay the deep kindness of his parents.

“If there were a person who, for the sake of his parents, also used a sharp knife to slice his heart and liver so that the blood would flow all over the ground, never shirking pain or suffering, and did so for hundreds of thousands of kalpas, then that person would still not be able to repay the deep kindness of his parents.

“If there were a person who, for the sake of his parents, used hundreds of thousands of swords and spears to stab his body at the same time, so from left to right and right to left they entered and exited his body, and did so for hundreds of thousands of kalpas, then that person would still not be able to repay the deep kindness of his parents.

“If there were a person who, for the sake of his parents, smashed his bones until they spewed out marrow, and did so for hundreds of thousands of kalpas, then that person would still not be able to repay the deep kindness of his parents.

“If there were a person who, for the sake of his parents, swallowed hot iron pellets, and did so for hundreds of thousands of kalpas until his entire body was scorched and charred, then that person would still not be able to repay the deep kindness of his parents.”

At that time, the great assembly, who heard the Buddha explain the kind virtue of parents, shed tears and sorrowfully wept as pain pierced their hearts. After carefully considering it, they found they had no way to help. They spontaneously cried out in unison, and deeply feeling their shame and remorse, they addressed the Buddha together: [...]

[...]“World-Honored One, we are now all grave offenders. How may we repay the deep kindness of our parents?”

The Buddha told his disciples: “If you wish to repay their kindness, then write out this sutra on behalf of your parents, or recite this sutra on their behalf, or repent your offenses and mistakes, or make offerings to the Triple Gem, or observe fasts and uphold precepts, or practice giving to cultivate merit, all on their behalf. If able to do so, you will be called a filial and obedient child. [...]

[...]If you do not do these activities, then you will be a hell dweller.”

The Buddha told Ananda: “If a person is unfilial, when his body decays and his life ends, he will fall into Avici, the unremitting hell. This great hell is eighty thousand yojanas wide, with iron walls on four sides, and covered by nets. The ground is also made of iron and filled with flames that burn fiercely while thunder claps and lightning flashes. Molten copper and iron are poured over the offenders; copper dogs and iron snakes constantly spew out smoke and fire, [...]

[...]which sear and roast their fleshy fat to a char. Such suffering and pain! It is so hard to endure and so difficult to bear all of the hooks, poles, spears, lances, iron bayonets, iron chains, iron mallets, iron halberds, and sword-leafed trees as well as bladed wheels—which all fall like rain from clouds in the air, cutting or stabbing the offender in horrid punishment. Throughout kalpas, he endures torture without even a temporary respite.

“Furthermore, the offenders will then enter into the other hells where their heads are topped with fiery basins, while iron carriages crush their bodies, passing quickly over them both vertically and horizontally until their guts are ripped open and their bones and flesh are pulverized. Within a single day, [...]

[...]they die and are reborn tens of thousands of times. To endure suffering like this is all a consequence of committing the five great violations or of being unfilial in a previous life. Therefore, one will receive such punishment.”

At that time, the great assembly, who heard the Buddha explain the kind virtue of parents, shed tears and sorrowfully wept as they addressed the Tathagata: “How may we repay the deep kindness of our parents?”

The Buddha told his disciples: “If you wish to repay their kindness, then reproduce this sutra on behalf of your parents. This will truly repay your parents’ kindness. If you are able to reproduce one copy, then you will see one Buddha. [...]

[...]If you are able to reproduce ten copies, then you will see ten Buddhas. If you are able to reproduce one hundred copies, then you will see one hundred Buddhas. If you are able to reproduce one thousand copies, then you will see one thousand Buddhas. If you are able to reproduce ten thousand copies, then you will see ten thousand Buddhas. For virtuous people like these, due to the power of reproducing copies of sutras, the Buddhas will constantly come to kindly protect them and cause such people and their parents to be reborn in the heavens, enjoy all kinds of happiness, and be free from the suffering of the hells.”

At that time, Ananda and the great assembly of asuras, garudas, kimnaras, [...]

[...]mahoragas, humans, nonhumans, devas, nagas, yaksas, gandharvas, as well as the lesser kings and noble wheel-turning monarchs all had their body hair stand on end when they heard the Buddha speak. They wept with grief and choked with sobs, unable to stop themselves.

Each then set forth a vow: “From now until the end of time, we would rather grind our bodies into particles of dust over hundreds of thousands of kalpas than disobey the noble teaching of the Tathagata.

“We would rather pull out our tongues with iron hooks, extending them for a yojana, [...]

[...]so iron plows could cut through them, causing blood to flow like a river over hundreds of thousands of kalpas, than disobey the noble teaching of the Tathagata.

“We would rather have hundreds of thousands of bladed wheels freely enter and exit through our bodies than disobey the noble teaching of the Tathagata.

“We would rather have our bodies wrapped and entwined in iron nets for hundreds of thousands of kalpas than disobey the noble teaching of the Tathagata.

“We would rather have our bodies cut, pounded, chopped, and ground into a billion pieces so that our skin, flesh, muscle, and bone would completely disintegrate over hundreds of thousands of kalpas, than disobey the noble teaching of the Tathagata.”

At that time, Ananda arose from his seat in complete serenity and addressed the Buddha: “World-Honored One, what should this sutra be called? How should it be preserved?”

The Buddha told Ananda: “This sutra is called *The Difficulty of Repaying the Profound Kindness of Parents Sutra*. By this name, you should uphold it.”

At that time, the great assembly, devas, asuras and so forth, upon hearing what the Buddha said, all greatly rejoiced, faithfully receiving, honoring, and practicing it. Having made obeisance, they then withdrew.

[Seven Buddhas' Negative Karma Purification Mantra, preserved in Sanskrit through Chinese transliteration. Traditionally, mantras are not translated. The mantra is recited at the end of a sutra chanting section.]

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A Prayer for Our Parents, Relatives, and Friends

Oh great, compassionate Buddha!

It is said:

“Trees wish for stillness,
Yet fierce winds do not cease.
Children wish to render support to parents,
Yet their parents are no longer around.”

Some of our family and good friends

Have departed from this world;

Some remain in good health.

However, we feel ashamed and repentant

That we have not rendered enough devotion and
support to them.

Oh great, compassionate Buddha!
Since we emerged from the womb
Our parents and loved ones have raised,
educated, and supported us.

We have received so much over our lives,
Yet we have given back little.
When we cried,

they gave us joy.
When we despaired,
they encouraged us.

In each of life's necessities,
they took care of us.

Through hardships,
they comforted us.

Even ravens and lambs know how to repay their
parents;
Are we not as capable as these creatures
Of showing devotion and loving-kindness?

Oh Buddha!

You carried your father's coffin;

You journeyed far to teach the Dharma to your
mother.

But as your disciples,

we have not always followed your teachings.

Please grant us the faith and strength to do so
going forward.

We wish to bring honor to our deceased ancestors;

We wish to guide our living relatives.

Please bless and protect our parents and relatives!

May they enjoy happiness, longevity, good health,
and peaceful lives;

May they be safe and at ease.

If we have honor, we wish to share it with them;

If we have wealth, we wish them also to be free
from need.

We pray:

Please allow us to spend our remaining years in
dedication to our family.

Allow the sincere gratitude in our hearts
To gain approval from our elders.

Oh great, compassionate Buddha,
Please grant your disciples' humble and sincere
wishes!

Please grant your disciples' humble and sincere wishes!

Fo Guang Shan
International Translation Center

A Prayer for the Birthdays of Our Parents

Oh great, compassionate Buddha!

Today we happily celebrate

The joyous occasion of our father's/mother's
birthday.

Please accept your disciples' prayers for our parents.

Oh great, compassionate Buddha!

Our parents have grown old;

Over the decades, they
Have given freely to their family
With no concern for themselves.

Today, we would like to offer our devotion to our
parents.

Oh great, compassionate Buddha!
In your presence, we wish to proclaim
What is in our hearts.

Oh most esteemed and beloved parents!
You gave us life,

And through your loving-kindness we have
thived.

Your hard labor has given us everything.
Your encouragement forever supports us.

Oh great, compassionate Buddha!
How immense is our parents' benevolence to us!
We would like to pray to you, Buddha,
To protect our parents with your blessings:

May they be free from the fears of aging and
sickness;

May they be free from the suffering of disasters;

May they be free from the worries of human
affairs;

May they be free from the snares of enemies.

Oh great, compassionate Buddha!

With your kind protection and support,

Please help us develop the strength for doing
good in this world.

Please help us generate the sincerity to serve all
people.

Through this humble enthusiasm
May we transfer merit to our parents,
Enabling them to uphold the Triple Gem
And to study Buddhism thoroughly.
May they remain close to good Dharma friends
And be loved and supported by all people.

May they be able to eliminate karmic hindrances
And be peaceful and joyous in mind and body.
May they be able to increase merit and wisdom
And be blessed with auspiciousness and good
health.

Oh Buddha!

Please hear one last wish for our parents'
happiness.

With the protection and support of your Buddha
light,

May they have boundless lives.

May they have boundless blessings.

Oh great, compassionate Buddha,

Please accept our sincere prayer!

Oh great, compassionate Buddha,

Please accept our sincere prayer!

Triple Refuge

I take refuge in the Buddha, wishing that all sentient beings understand the Dharma and make the supreme vow.

I take refuge in the Dharma, wishing that all sentient beings study the sutras diligently and obtain an ocean of wisdom.

I take refuge in the Sangha, wishing that all sentient beings lead the masses in harmony without obstruction.

Dedication of Merit

May kindness, compassion, joy, and equanimity
pervade the dharma realms;

May all people and heavenly beings benefit from
our blessings and friendship;

May our ethical practice of Chan, Pure Land, and
Precepts help us to realize equality and patience;

May we undertake the great vows with humility
and gratitude.

FO GUANG SHAN
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