
Filial Piety Sutra

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The Buddha told Ananda, "When I contemplate living beings I see that the character which human beings have inherited makes them stupid and dull in their thoughts and actions. They don't consider their parent's great kindness and virtue. They are disrespectful and turn their backs on kindness and what is right. They lack humaneness and are neither filial nor compliant.

For ten months while the mother is with child, she feels discomfort each time she rises, as if she were lifting a heavy burden. Like a chronic invalid, she is unable to keep her food and drink down. When the ten months have passed and the time comes for the birth, she undergoes all kinds of pain and suffering so that the child can be born. She is afraid of her own mortality, like a pig or lamb waiting to be slaughtered. Then the blood flows all over the ground. These are the sufferings she undergoes.

Once the child is born, she saves what is sweet for him and swallows what is bitter herself. She carries the child and nourishes him, washing away his filth. There is no toil or difficulty that she does not willingly undertake for the sake of her child. She endures both cold and heat and never even mentions what she had gone through. She gives the dry place to her child and sleeps in the damp herself. For three years she nourishes the baby with milk from her own body.

Parents continually instruct and guide their children in the ways of propriety and morality as the youngsters mature into adults. They arrange marriages for them and provide them with property and wealth or devise ways to get it for them. They take this responsibility and trouble upon themselves with tremendous zeal and toil, never speaking about their care and kindness.

When their sons and daughters become ill, parents are worried afraid to the point that they may even grow ill themselves. They remain by their children's sides providing constant care and only when the children get well are the parents happy once again. They care for and raise their children with the sustained hope that their offspring will lead healthy and happy lives.

How sad that all too often the children are unfilial in return! In speaking with relatives whom they should honor, the children display no compliance. When they ought to be polite, they have no manners. They glare at those whom they should venerate with hateful expressions and insult their uncles and aunts. They scold their siblings and destroy any family feeling that might have existed among them. Children like that have no respect or sense of propriety.

Children may be well taught, but if they are unfilial they will not heed the instructions or obey the rules. Rarely do they rely upon the guidance of their parents. They are contrary and rebellious when interacting with their brothers. They come and go from home without ever reporting to their parents. Their speech and actions are very arrogant and they act on impulse without consulting others. Such

children ignore the admonishments and punishments set down by their parents and pay no regard to their uncles' warnings. Yet at the same time they are immature and always need looked after and protected by their elders.

As such children grow up they become more and more obstinate and uncontrollable. They are entirely ungrateful and totally contrary. They are rebellious and hateful, rejecting both family and friends. They befriend evil people and under their influence soon adopt the same kinds of bad habits. They come to take what is false to be true. *-continued next issue*