

Kataññu Sutta

Gratitude

**THE SUTRA ABOUT THE DEEP KINDNESS OF PARENTS
AND
THE DIFFICULTY OF REPAYING IT.**



Translated from the Pali by Thanissaro Bhikkhu.
Translated into English by: Upasika Terri Nicholson
For free distribution only

Compiled for the Serene Joy and Emotion of the Pious

A Gift of Piety

PREFACE

I have heard Monks given sermon relating to the great filial gratitude that we all owe to our parents; and the repetitious kind of sermon like: *“The sutta about the deep kindness of parents and the difficulty of repaying it”*; but nothing like this short discourse that describes the way to repay the indebtedness, in grateful gratitude, to our parents:

The way to repay back the grateful gratitude is:

- **To arouse the unbelieving mother and father, settles and establishes them in conviction;**
- **To arouse the un-virtuous mother and father, settles and establishes them in virtue;**
- **To arouse the stingy mother and father, settles and establishes them in generosity;**
- **To arouse the foolish mother and father, settles and establishes them in discernment**

I am greatly indebted to my mother from the ancient past, who to this day watching over me for my safety and well being and to see that I am well guided on the right path. To her and all my past and present mothers and fathers, I dedicate this book.

Disciples of the Buddha, if you wish to repay your parents' kindness, write out this Sutra on their behalf.

1. *Recite this Sutra on their behalf.*
2. *Repent of transgressions and offenses on their behalf.*
3. *For the sake of your parents, make offerings to the Triple Gem.*
4. *For the sake of your parents, hold the precept of pure eating.*
5. *For the sake of your parents, practice giving and cultivate blessings.*
6. *If you are able to do these things, you are being a filial child. If you do not do these things, you are a person destined for the hells."*

I compiled this for the serene Joy and the Emotion of the Filial pious

May we all my Dhamma friends be freed from indebtedness

*Maung Paw, California
2004*

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Kataññu Sutta

Gratitude

Anguttara Nikaya II.31-32

Translated from the Pali by Thanissaro Bhikkhu.
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"Monks, I will teach you:

- The level of a person of no integrity, and
- The level of a person of integrity.

Listen and pay close attention. I will speak."

"As you say, lord," the monks responded.

The Blessed One said:

1. Person of No-integrity

"Now what is the level of a person of no integrity?"

A person of no integrity is ungrateful, doesn't acknowledge the help given to him. This ingratitude, this lack of acknowledgment is second nature among rude people. It is entirely on the level of a person of no integrity.

2. A person of Integrity

"A person of integrity is grateful and acknowledges the help given to him. This gratitude, this acknowledgment is second nature among fine people. It is entirely on the level of a person of integrity.

3. Mother and Father

"I tell you, monks, there are two people who are not easy to repay.

Which two?

Your mother and father.

Even if you were to carry your mother on one shoulder and your father on the other shoulder for 100 years, and were:

- To look after them by anointing,
- massaging,
- bathing, and
- rubbing their limbs, and
- they were to defecate and urinate right there [on your shoulders],

You would not in that way pay or repay your parents.

4. Why couldn't we pay back?

If you were to establish your mother and father in absolute sovereignty over this great earth, abounding in the seven treasures, you would not in that way pay or repay your parents.

Why is that?

- Mother and father do much for their children.
- They care for them,
- they nourish them,
- they introduce them to this world.

5. How to repay back

But anyone who:"

- rouses his unbelieving mother and father, settles and establishes them in conviction;
- rouses his un-virtuous mother and father, settles and establishes them in virtue;
- rouses his stingy mother and father, settles and establishes them in generosity;
- rouses his foolish mother and father, settles and establishes them in discernment:

To this extent one pays and repays one's mother and father."

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Filial Piety Sutra

Translated into Chinese by: Master Kumarajiva
Translated into English by: Upasika Terri Nicholson



Thus I have heard;

At one time, the Buddha dwelt at *Shravasti*, in the Jeta Grove, in the Garden of the

Benefactor of Orphans and the Solitary, together with a gathering of great Bhikshus (Bhikkhu's), twelve hundred fifty in all and with all of the Bodhisattvas, thirty-eight thousand in all.

At that time, the World Honored One led the great assembly on a walk toward the south. Suddenly they came upon a pile of bones beside the road. The World Honored One turned to face them, placed his five limbs on the ground, and bowed respectfully.

Ánanda put his palms together and asked the World Honored One,

"The Tathágata is the Great Teacher of the Triple Realm and the compassionate father of beings of the four kinds of births. He has the respect and reverence of the entire assembly. What is the reason that he now bows to a pile of dried bones?"

The Buddha told Ánanda, "Although all of you are my foremost disciples and have been members of the Sangha for a long time, you still have not achieved far-reaching understanding.

This pile of bones could have belonged to my ancestors from former lives. They could have been my parents in many past lives. That is the reason I now bow to them."

The Buddha continued speaking to Ánanda,

"These bones we are looking at can be divided into two groups.

- *One group is composed of the bones of men, which are heavy and white in color.*
- *The other group is composed of the bones of women, which are light and black in color."*

Ánanda said to the Buddha,

1. How to differentiate the bone?

"World Honored One, when men are alive in the world, they adorn their bodies with robes, belts, shoes, hats and other fine attire, so that they clearly assume a male appearance.

When women are alive, they put on cosmetics, perfumes, powders, and elegant fragrances to adorn their bodies, so that they clearly assume a female appearance.

Yet, once man and women die, all that is left are their bones. How does one tell them apart? Please teach us how you are able to distinguish them."

The Buddha answered Ánanda,

1.1.Bones of Men

"If when men are in the world, they enter temples, listen to explanations of Sutras and Vinaya texts, make obeisance to the Triple Gem, and recite the Buddha's names, then when they die, their bones will be heavy and white in color.

1.2 Bones of women

Most women in the world have little wisdom and are saturated with emotion. They give birth to and raise children, feeling that this is their duty.

- *Each child relies on its mother's milk for life and nourishment, and that milk is a transformation of the mother's blood.*
- *Each child can drink up to one thousand two hundred gallons of its mother's milk.*

Because of this drain on the mother's body whereby the child takes milk for its nourishment, the mother becomes worn and haggard and so her bones turn black in color and are light in weight."

When Ānanda heard these words, he felt a pain in his heart as if he had been stabbed and wept silently. He said to the World Honored One,

2. How can we repay one's mother kindness and Virtue?

"How can one repay one's mother's kindness and virtue?"

The Buddha told Ānanda, "Listen well, and I will explain it for you in detail.

2.1. The fetus grows in its mother's womb for ten lunar months.

- What bitterness she goes through while it dwells there!
- In the **first month** of pregnancy, the life of the fetus is as precarious as a dewdrop on grass: how likely that it will not last from morning to evening but will evaporate by midday!"
- "During the **second lunar month**, the embryo congeals like curds.
- In the **third month** it is like coagulated blood.
- During the **fourth month** of pregnancy, the fetus begins to assume a slightly human form.
- During the **fifth month** in the womb, the child's five limbs- two legs, two arms, and a head- start to take shape.
- In the **sixth lunar month** of pregnancy, the child begins to develop the essences of the **six sense faculties**:

- 1.the eyes,
- 2.ears,
- 3.nose,

4. tongue,
5. body and
6. mind.

- During the **seventh month**, the three hundred sixty bones and joints are formed, and the eighty-four thousand hair pores are also complete.
- In the **eight lunar month** of the pregnancy, the intellect and the nine apertures are formed.
- By the **ninth month** the fetus has learned to assimilate the different nutrients of the foods it eats. For example, it can assimilate the essence of peaches, pears, certain plant roots and the five kinds of grains."
- "Inside the mother's body, the solid internal organs used for storing hang downward, while the hollow internal organs used for processing, spiral upward. These can be likened to three mountains, which arise from the face of the earth. We can call these mountains Mount Sumeru, Karma Mountain, and Blood Mountain.
- These analogous mountains come together and form a single range in a pattern of upward peaks and downward valleys. So too, the coagulation of the mother's blood from her internal organs forms a single substance, which becomes the child's food."
- "During the **tenth month of pregnancy**, the body of the fetus is completed and ready to be born.

2.2..Filial Child

If the child is extremely filial, it will emerge with palms joined together in respect and the birth will be peaceful and auspicious. The mother will remain uninjured by the birth and will not suffer pain.

2.3. Rebellious child

However, if the child is extremely rebellious in nature, to the extent that it is capable of committing the five rebellious acts*, then it will injure its mother's womb, rip apart its mother's heart and liver, or get entangled in its mother's bones. The birth will feel like the slices of a thousand knives or like ten thousand sharp swords stabbing her heart. Those are the agonies involved in the birth of a defiant and rebellious child."

3. Mother bestowed Ten types of kindness

To explain more clearly, there are ten types of kindnesses bestowed by the mother on the child:

- a. **The first** is the kindness of providing protection and care while the child is in the womb.
- b. **The second** is the kindness of bearing suffering during the birth.
- c. **The third** is the kindness of forgetting all the pain once the child has been born.
- d. **The fourth** is the kindness of eating the bitter herself and saving the sweet for the child.

- e. **The fifth** is the kindness of moving the child to a dry place and lying in the wet herself.
- f. **The sixth** is the kindness of suckling the child at her breast, nourishing and bringing up the child.
- g. **The seventh** is the kindness of washing away the unclean.
- h. **The eighth** is the kindness of always thinking of the child when it has traveled far.
- i. **The ninth** is the kindness of deep care and devotion.
- j. **The tenth** is the kindness of ultimate pity and sympathy.

3.1.. The Kindness of providing protection and care while the child is in the womb.

The causes and conditions from accumulated kalpas grows heavy,

Until in this life the child ends up in its Mother's womb.

As the months pass, the five vital organs develop;

Within seven weeks the six sense organs start to grow.

The mother's body becomes as heavy as a mountain;

The stillness and movements of the fetus are like a kalpic wind disaster.

The mother's fine clothes no longer hang properly,

And so her mirror gathers dust.

3.2. The kindness of bearing suffering during birth.

The pregnancy lasts for ten lunar months

And culminates in difficult labor at the approach of the birth.

Meanwhile, each morning the mother is seriously ill

And during each day drowsy and sluggish.

Her fear and agitation are difficult to describe;

Grieving and tears fill her breast.

She painfully tells her family

That she is only afraid that death will overtake her.

3.3. The kindness of forgetting all the pains once the child has been born.

On the day the compassionate mothers bears the child,

Her five organs all open wide,

Leaving her totally exhausted in body and mind.

The blood flows as from a slaughtered lamb;

Yet, upon hearing that the child is healthy,

She is overcome with redoubling joy,

But after the joy, the grief returns,

And the agony wrenches her very insides.

3.4. The kindness of eating the bitter herself and saving the sweet for her child.

The kindness of both parents is profound and deep,

Their care and devotion never cease.

Never resting, the mother saves the sweet for the child,

And without complain she swallows the bitter herself.

Her love is weighty and her emotion difficult to bear;

Her kindness is deep and so is her compassion.

Only wanting the child to get its fill,

The compassionate mother doesn't speak of her own hunger.

3.5. The kindness of moving the child to a dry place and lying in the wet herself.

The mother is willing to be wet

So that the child can be dry.

With her two breasts she satisfies its hunger and thirst;

Covering it with her sleeve, she protects it from the wind and cold.

In kindness, her head rarely rests on the pillow,

And yet she does this happily,

So long as the child is comfortable,

The kind mother seeks no solace for herself.

3.6. The kindness of suckling the child at her breast nourishing and bringing up the child.

The kind mother is like the great earth.

The stern father is like the encompassing heaven:

One covers from above; the other supports from below.

The kindness of parents is such that

They know no hatred or anger toward their offspring,

And are not displeased, even if the child is born crippled.

After the mother carries the child in her womb and gives birth to it,

The parents care for and protect it together until the end of their days.

3.7. The kindness of washing away the unclean.

Originally, she had a pretty face and a beautiful body,

Her spirit was strong and vibrant.

Her eyebrows were like fresh green willows,

And her complexion would have put a red rose to shame.

But her kindness is so deep she will forgo a beautiful face.

Although washing away the filth injures her constitution,

The kind mother acts solely for the sake of her child,

And willingly allows her beauty to fade.

3.8. The kindness of always thinking of the child when it has traveled far.

The death of loved ones is difficult to endure.

But separation is also painful.

When the child travels afar,

The mother worries in her village.

From morning until night, her heart is with her child,

And a thousand tears fall from her eyes.

Like the monkey weeping silently in love for her child,

Bit by bit her heart is broken.

3.9. The kindness of deep care and devotion.

How heavy is parental kindness and emotional concern!

Their kindness is deep and difficult to repay.

Willingly they undergo suffering on their child's behalf.

If the child toils, the parents are uncomfortable.

If they hear that he has traveled far,

They worry that at night he will have to lie in the cold.

Even a moment's pain suffered by their child.

cause the parent's sustained distress.

3.10. The kindness of ultimate compassion and sympathy.

The kindness of parents is profound and important.

Their tender concerns never cease.

From the moment they awake each day, their thoughts are with their children.

Whether the children are near or far away, the parents think of them often.

Even if a mother lives for a hundred years,
She will constantly worry about her eighty-year-old child.
Do you wish to know when such kindness and love ends?
It doesn't even begin to dissipate until her life is over!

The Buddha told Ānanda,

4. The pain and suffering of a mother

"When I contemplate living beings, I see that although they are born as human beings, nonetheless,

- *They are ignorant and dull in their thoughts and actions.*
- *They don't consider their parents' 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."*

4.1 The child in her womb

"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."

4.2. The child after delivery

"Once the child is born,

- she saves what is sweet for the child and swallows what is bitter for herself.
- She carries the child and nourishes it, washing away its 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 has 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, which is transformed from the blood of 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 a son or daughter becomes ill, parents are worried and afraid to the point that they may even grow ill themselves. They remain by the child's side providing constant care, and only when the child gets well are the parents happy once again. In this way, they care for and raise their children with the sustained hope that their offspring will soon grow to be mature adults."

5. "How sad that all too often the children are un-filial 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, 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 un-filial, they will not heed the instructions or obey the rules. Rarely will 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 to be 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 defiant and hateful, rejecting both family and friends. They befriend evil people and under influence, soon adopt the same kinds of bad habits. They come to take what is false to be true."

"Such children may be enticed by others to leave their families and run away to live in other towns, thus denouncing their parents and rejecting their native town. They may become businessmen or civil servants who languish in comfort and luxury. They may marry in haste, and that new bond provides yet another obstruction which prevents them from returning home for long periods of time."

"Or, in going to live in other towns, these children may be incautious and find themselves plotted against or accused of doing evil. They may be unfairly locked up in prison or they may meet with illness and become enmeshed in disasters and hardships, subject to the terrible pain of poverty, starvation, and emaciation. Yet no one there will care for them. Being scorned and disliked by others, they will be abandoned on the street. In such circumstances, their lives may come to an end. No one bothers to try to save them. Their

bodies swell up, rot, decay, and are exposed to the sun and blown away by the wind. The bones entirely disintegrate and scatter as these children come to their final rest in the dirt of some other town. These children will never again have a happy reunion with their relatives and kin. Nor will they ever know how their ageing parents mourn for and worry about them. The parents may grow blind from weeping or become sick from extreme grief and despair.

Constantly dwelling on the memory of their children, they may pass away, but even when they become ghosts, their souls still cling to this attachment and are unable to get it go."

6. Un-filial children

"Others of these un-filial children may not aspire to learning, but instead become interested in strange and bizarre doctrines. Such children may be villainous, coarse and stubborn, delighting in practices that are utterly devoid of benefit. They may become involved in fights and thefts, setting themselves at odds with the town by drinking and gambling. As if debauchery were not enough, they drag their brothers into it as well, to the further distress of their parents."

"If such children do live at home, they leave early in the morning and do not return until late at night. Never do they ask about the welfare of their parents or make sure that they don't suffer from heat or cold. They do not inquire after their parents' well being neither in the morning or the evening, nor even on the first and fifteenth of the lunar month. In fact, it never occurs to these un-filial children to ever ask whether their parents have slept comfortably or rested peacefully. Such children are simply not concerned in the least about their parents' well being. When the parents of such children grow old and their appearance becomes more and more withered and emaciated, they are made to feel ashamed to be seen in public and are subjected to abuse and oppression."

"Such un-filial children may end up with a father who is a widower or a mother who is a widow. The solitary parents are left alone in empty houses, feeling like guests in their own homes. They may endure cold and hunger, but no one takes heed of their plight. They may weep incessantly from morning to night, sighing and lamenting.

It is only right that children should provide for ageing parents with food and drink of delicious flavors, but irresponsible children are sure to overlook their duties.

If they ever do attempt to help their parents in any way, they feel embarrassed and are afraid people will laugh at them. Yet, such offspring may lavish wealth and food on their own wives and children, disregarding the toil and weariness involved in doing so. Other un-filial offspring may be so intimidated by their wives that they go along with all of their wishes. But when appealed to by their parents and elders, they ignore them and are totally unfazed by their pleas."

7. Are daughters quite filial?

"It may be the case that daughters were quite filial to their parents before their own marriages, but they may become progressively rebellious after they marry. This situation may be so extreme that if their parents show even the slightest signs of displeasure, the daughters become hateful and vengeful toward them. Yet they bear their husband's scolding and beatings with sweet tempers, even though their spouses are outsiders with other surnames and family ties. The emotional bonds between such couples are deeply entangled, and yet these daughters hold their parents at a distance. They may follow their husbands and move to other towns, leaving their parents behind entirely. They do not long for them and simply cut off all communication with them. When the parents continue to hear no word from their daughters, they feel incessant anxiety. They become so fraught with sorrow that it is as if they were suspended upside down. Their every thought is of seeing their children, just as one who is thirsty longs for something to drink. Their kind thoughts for their offspring never cease."

"The virtue of one's parents' kindness is boundless and limitless. If one has made the mistake of being un-filial, how difficult it is to repay that kindness!"

8. Reaction to the Buddha's teaching on parent's kindness?

At that time, upon hearing the Buddha speak about the depth of one's parent's kindness, everyone in the Great Assembly threw themselves on the ground and began beating their breasts and striking themselves until their hair pores flowed with blood.

Some fell unconscious to the ground, while others stamped their feet in grief.

It was a long time before they could control themselves.

With loud voices they lamented, "Such suffering! What suffering!

How painful! How painful!

We are all offenders.

We are criminals who have never awakened, like those who travel in a dark night.

We have just now understood our offenses and our very insides are torn to bits.

We only hope that the World Honored One will pity and save us.

9. Please tell us how we can repay the deep kindness of our parents!

At the time the Tathágata used eight kinds of profoundly deep and pure sounds to speak to the assembly. "All of you should know this. I will now explain for you the various

aspects of this matter."

"If there were a person who carries his father on his left shoulder and his mother on his right shoulder until his bones were ground to powder by their weight as they bore through to the marrow, and if that person were to circumambulate Mount Sumeru for a hundred thousand kalpas until the blood that flowed out covered his ankles, that person would still not have repaid the deep kindness of his parents."

"If there were a person who, during the period of a kalpa fraught with famine and starvation, sliced the flesh off his own body to feed his parents and did this as many times as there are dust motes as he passed through hundreds of thousands of kalpas, that person still would not have repaid the deep kindness of his parents."

"If there were a person who, for the sake of his parents, took a sharp knife and cut his eyes and made an offering of them to the Tathāgatas, and continued to do that for hundreds of thousands of kalpas, that person still would not have repaid the deep kindness of his parents."

"If there a person who, for the sake of his father and mother, used a sharp knife to cut out his heart and liver so that the blood flowed and covered the ground and if he continued in this way to do this for hundreds of thousands of kalpas, never once complaining about the pain, that person still would not have repaid the deep kindness of his parents."

"If there were a person who, for the sake of his parents, took a hundred thousand swords and stabbed his body with them all at once such that they entered one side and came out the other, and if he continued in this way to do this for hundreds of thousands of kalpas, that person still would not have repaid the deep kindness of his parents."

"If there were a person who, for the sake of his parents, beat his bones down to the marrow and continued in this way to do this way to do this for hundreds of thousands of kalpas, that person still would not have repaid the deep kindness of his parents."

"If there were a person who, for the sake of these parents, swallowed molten iron pellets and continued in this way to do this for hundreds of thousands of kalpas, that person still would not have repaid the deep kindness of his parents."

At that time, upon hearing the Buddha speak about the kindness and virtue of parents, everyone in the Great Assembly wept silent tears and felt searing pain in their hearts. They reflected deeply, simultaneously brought forth shame and said to the Buddha,

"World Honored One, how can we repay the deep kindness of our parents?"

10. How can we repay the deep kindness of our parents

The Buddha replied,

"Disciples of the Buddha, if you wish to repay your parents' kindness, write out this Sutra on their behalf.

7. *Recite this Sutra on their behalf.*
8. *Repent of transgressions and offenses on their behalf.*
9. *For the sake of your parents, make offerings to the Triple Gem.*
10. *For the sake of your parents, hold the precept of pure eating.*
11. *For the sake of your parents, practice giving and cultivate blessings.*
12. *If you are able to do these things, you are being a filial child. If you do not do these things, you are a person destined for the hells."*

The Buddha told Ānanda,

"If a person is not filial, when his life ends and his body decays, he will fall into, the great Avici Hell.

This great hell is eighty thousand yojanas in circumference and is surrounded on all four sides by iron walls. Above, it is covered over by nets, and the ground is also made of iron. A mass of fire burns fiercely, while thunder roars and bright bolts of lightning set things afire. Molten brass and iron fluids are poured over the offenders' bodies. Brass dogs and iron snakes constantly spew out fire and smoke which burns the offenders and broils their flesh and fat to a pulp."

"Oh, such suffering! Difficult to take, difficult to bear! There are poles, hooks, spears, and lances, iron halberds and iron chains, iron hammers and iron awls. Wheels of iron knives rain down from the air. The offender is chopped, hacked, or stabbed, and undergoes these cruel punishments for kalpas without respite. Then they enter the remaining hells, where their heads are capped with fiery basins, while iron wheels roll over their bodies, passing both horizontally and vertically until their guts are ripped open and their bones and flesh are squashed to a pulp. Within a single day, they experience myriad births and myriad deaths. Such sufferings are a result of committing the five rebellious acts and of being un-filial when one was alive."

At that time, upon hearing the Buddha speak about the virtue of parents' kindness, everyone in the Great Assembly wept sorrowfully and addressed the Tathāgata, "On this day, how can we repay the deep kindness of our parents?"

11. The act of repaying the gratefulness to parents

The Buddha said,

"Disciples of the Buddha, if you wish to repay their kindness, then for the sake of your parents, print this Sutra.

This is truly repaying their kindness. If one can print one copy, then one will get to see one Buddha.

- If one can print ten copies, then one will get to see ten Buddhas.
- If one can print one hundred copies, then one will get to see one hundred Buddhas.
- If one can print one thousand copies, then one will get to see one thousand Buddhas.
- If one can print ten thousand copies, then one will get to see ten thousand Buddhas.
- This is the power derived when good people print Sutras. All Buddhas will forever protect such people with their kindness and their parents can be reborn in the heavens to enjoy all kinds of happiness, leaving behind the sufferings of the hells."

At that time, Ānanda and the rest of the Great Assembly of:

asuras,

garudas,

kinaras,

mahoragas,

Humans,

non-humans, and

others, as well as the gods,

dragons,

yakshas,

gandharvas,

wheel-turning sage kings, and

all the lesser kings,

felt all the hairs on their bodies stand on their ends when they heard what the Buddha had said.

They wept grievously and were unable to stop themselves. Each one of them made a vow

saying,

"All of us, from now until the exhaustion of the bounds of the future, would rather that our bodies be pulverized into small particles of dust for a hundred thousand kalpas, than to ever go against the Tathágata's sagely teachings.

We would rather that our tongues be plucked out, so that they would extend for a full yojana, and that for a hundred thousand kalpas an iron plough run over them; we would rather have a hundred thousand bladed wheel roll freely over bodies, than to ever go against the Tathágata's sagely teachings.

We would rather that our bodies be ensnared in an iron net for a hundred thousand kalpas, than to ever go against the Tathágata's sagely teachings.

We would rather that for a hundred thousand kalpas our bodies be chopped, hacked, mutilated, and chiseled into ten million pieces, so that our skin, flesh, joints, and bones would be completely disintegrated, than to ever go against the Tathágata's sagely teachings."

At that time Ánanda, with a dignity and a sense of peace, rose from his seat and asked the Buddha, "World Honored One, what name shall this Sutra have when we accord with it and uphold it?"

The Buddha told Ánanda, "This Sutra is called

THE SUTRA (Sutta) ABOUT THE DEEP KINDNESS OF PARENTS AND THE DIFFICULTY OF REPAYING IT.

Use this name when you accord with it and uphold it."

At that time, the Great Assembly, the gods, humans, asuras, and the others, hearing what the Buddha has said, were completely delighted. They believed the Buddha's teaching, received it, and offered up their conduct in accord with it. Then they bowed respectfully to the Buddha, before withdrawing.

Repaying One's Parents

Taken from *Numerical Discourses of the Buddha, An Anthology of Suttas from the Anguttara Nikâya*

Translated and edited by Nyanaponika Thera and Bhikkhu Bodhi

I declare, O monks,

that there are two persons one can never repay.

What two?

One's mother and father.

Even if one should carry about one's mother on one shoulder and one's father on the other, and while doing so should live a hundred years, reach the age of hundred years; and if one should attend to them by anointing them with soothing ointment, by massaging, bathing and rubbing their limbs, and they should even void their excrements there - even by that would one not do enough for one's parents, one would not repay them. Even if one were to establish one's parents as the supreme lords and rulers over this earth so rich in the sever treasures, one would not do enough for them, one would not repay them. What is the reason for this? Parents do much for their children: they bring them up, feed them and guide them through this world.

But, O monks,

- 1. One who encourages his unbelieving parents,
settles and establishes them in faith;**
- 2. who encourages his immoral parents,
settles and establishes them in virtue,**
- 3. who encourages his stingy parents
settles and establishes them in generosity;**
- 4. who encourages his ignorant parents,
settles and establishes them in wisdom - such a one,**

O monks,

Does enough for his parents:

He repays them and more than repays them for what they have done.

(Anguttara Nikâya², chapter 2, vagga 4, sutta 2)



Appendix – A

Sigalovada Sutta

The Discourse to Sigala The Layperson's Code of Discipline

Digha Nikaya 31

Translated from the Pali by Narada Thera
For free distribution only.

From *Everyman's Ethics: Four Discourses by the Buddha (WH 14)*, translated by Narada Thera (Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1985). Copyright ©1985 Buddhist Publication Society. Used with permission.

Thus have I heard:

On one occasion the Exalted One was dwelling in the Bamboo Grove, the Squirrels' Sanctuary, near Rajagaha.

Now at that time, young Sigala, a householder's son, rising early in the morning, departing from Rajagaha, with wet clothes and wet hair, worshipped with joined hands the various quarters -- the East, the South, the West, the North, the Nadir, and the Zenith.

Then the Exalted One, having robed himself in the forenoon took bowl and robe, and entered Rajagaha for alms. Now he saw young Sigala worshipping thus and spoke to him

as follows:

"Wherefore do you, young householder, rising early in the morning, departing from Rajagaha, with wet clothes and wet hair, worship, with joined hands these various quarters -- the East, the South, the West, the North, the Nadir, and the Zenith?"

"My father, Lord, while dying, said to me: The six quarters, dear son, you shall worship. And I, Lord, respecting, revering, reverencing and honoring my father's word, rise early in the morning, and leaving Rajagaha, with wet clothes and wet hair, worship with joined hands, these six quarters."

"It is not thus, young householder, the six quarters should be worshipped in the discipline of the noble."

"How then, Lord, should the six quarters be worshipped in the discipline of the noble? It is well, Lord, if the Exalted One would teach the doctrine to me showing how the six quarters should be worshipped in the discipline of the noble."

"Well, young householder, listen and bear it well in mind; I shall speak." -- "Very good, Lord," responded young Sigala.

And the Exalted One spoke as follows:

"Inasmuch, young householder, as the noble disciple **(1)** has eradicated the four vices in conduct,[1] **(2)** inasmuch as he commits no evil action in four ways, **(3)** inasmuch as he pursues not the six channels for dissipating wealth, he thus, avoiding these fourteen evil things, covers the six quarters, and enters the path leading to victory in both worlds: he is favored in this world and in the world beyond. Upon the dissolution of the body, after death, he is born in a happy heavenly realm.

(1) "What are the four vices in conduct that he has eradicated? The destruction of life, householder, is a vice and so are stealing, sexual misconduct, and lying. These are the four vices that he has eradicated."

Thus spoke the Exalted One. And when the Master had thus spoken, he spoke yet again:

Killing, stealing, lying and adultery,
These four evils the wise never praise.

(2) "In which four ways does one commit no evil action? Led by desire does one commit evil. Led by anger does one commit evil. Led by ignorance does one commit evil. Led by fear does one commit evil.[2]

"But inasmuch as the noble disciple is not led by desire, anger, ignorance, and fear, he commits no evil."

Thus spoke the Exalted One. And when the Master had thus spoken, he spoke yet again:

Whoever through desire, hate or fear,
Or ignorance should transgress the Dhamma,
All his glory fades away
Like the moon during the waning half.
Whoever through desire, hate or fear,
Or ignorance never transgresses the Dhamma,
All his glory ever increases
Like the moon during the waxing half.

(3) "What are the six channels for dissipating wealth which he does not pursue?

- (a) "indulgence in intoxicants which cause infatuation and heedlessness;
- (b) sauntering in streets at unseemly hours;
- (c) frequenting theatrical shows;
- (d) indulgence in gambling which causes heedlessness;
- (e) association with evil companions;
- (f) the habit of idleness.

(a) "There are, young householder, these six evil consequences in indulging in intoxicants which cause infatuation and heedlessness:

- (i) loss of wealth,
- (ii) increase of quarrels,
- (iii) susceptibility to disease,
- (iv) earning an evil reputation,
- (v) shameless exposure of body,
- (vi) weakening of intellect.

(b) "There are, young householder, these six evil consequences in sauntering in streets at unseemly hours:

- (i) he himself is unprotected and unguarded,
- (ii) his wife and children are unprotected and unguarded,
- (iii) his property is unprotected and unguarded,
- (iv) he is suspected of evil deeds,[3]
- (v) he is subject to false rumours,
- (vi) he meets with many troubles.

(c) "There are, young householder, these six evil consequences in frequenting theatrical shows:

"He is ever thinking:

- (i) where is there dancing?
- (ii) where is there singing?
- (iii) where is there music?
- (iv) where is there recitation?
- (v) where is there playing with cymbals?

(vi) where is there pot-blowing?[4]

(d) "There are, young householder, these six evil consequences in indulging in gambling:

(i) the winner begets hate,

(ii) the loser grieves for lost wealth,

(iii) loss of wealth,

(iv) his word is not relied upon in a court of law,

(v) he is despised by his friends and associates,

(vi) he is not sought after for matrimony; for people would say he is a gambler and is not fit to look after a wife.

(e) "There are, young householder, these six evil consequences in associating with evil companions, namely: any gambler, any libertine, any drunkard, any swindler, any cheat, any rowdy is his friend and companion.

(f) "There are, young householder, these six evil consequences in being addicted to idleness:

"He does no work, saying:

(i) that it is extremely cold,

(ii) that it is extremely hot,

(iii) that it is too late in the evening,

(iv) that it is too early in the morning,

(v) that he is extremely hungry,

(vi) that he is too full.

"Living in this way, he leaves many duties undone, new wealth he does not get, and wealth he has acquired dwindles away."

Thus spoke the Exalted One. And when the Master had thus spoken, he spoke yet again:

"One is a bottle friend; one says, 'friend, friend' only to one's face; one is a friend and an associate only when it is advantageous.

"Sleeping till sunrise, adultery, irascibility, malevolence, evil companions, avarice -- these six causes ruin a man.

"The man who has evil comrades and friends is given to evil ways, to ruin does he fall in both worlds -- here and the next.

"Dice, women, liquor, dancing, singing, sleeping by day, sauntering at unseemly hours, evil companions, avarice -- these nine[5] causes ruin a man.

"Who plays with dice and drinks intoxicants, goes to women who are dear unto others as their own lives, associates with the mean and not with elders -- he declines just as the moon during the waning half.

"Who is drunk, poor, destitute, and still thirsty whilst drinking, frequents the bars, sinks in debt as a stone in water, and swiftly brings disrepute to his family.

"Who by habit sleeps by day, and keeps late hours, is ever intoxicated, and is licentious, is not fit to lead a household life.

"Who says it is too hot, too cold, too late, and leaves things undone, the opportunities for good go past such men.

"But he who does not regard cold or heat any more than a blade of grass and who does his duties manfully, does not fall away from happiness."

* * *

"These four, young householder, should be understood as foes in the guise of friends:

- (1) he who appropriates a friend's possessions,
- (2) he who renders lip-service,
- (3) he who flatters,
- (4) he who brings ruin.

(1) "In four ways, young householder, should one who appropriates be understood as a foe in the guise of a friend:

- (i) he appropriates his friend's wealth,
- (ii) he gives little and asks much,
- (iii) he does his duty out of fear,
- (iv) he associates for his own advantage.

(2) "In four ways, young householder, should one who renders lip-service be understood as a foe in the guise of a friend:

- (i) he makes friendly profession as regards the past,
- (ii) he makes friendly profession as regards the future,
- (iii) he tries to gain one's favor by empty words,
- (iv) when opportunity for service has arisen, and he expresses his inability.

(3) "In four ways, young householder, should one who flatters be understood as a foe in the guise of a friend:

- (i) he approves of his friend's evil deeds,
- (ii) he disapproves his friend's good deeds,
- (iii) he praises him in his presence,
- (iv) he speaks ill of him in his absence.

(4) "In four ways, young householder, should one who brings ruin be understood as a foe in the guise of a friend:

- (i) he is a companion in indulging in intoxicants that cause infatuation and heedlessness,
- (ii) he is a companion in sauntering in streets at unseemly hours,
- (iii) he is a companion in frequenting theatrical shows,
- (iv) he is a companion in indulging in gambling which causes heedlessness."

Thus spoke the Exalted One. And when the Master had thus spoken, he spoke yet again:

The friend who appropriates,
the friend who renders lip-service,
the friend that flatters,
the friend who brings ruin,
these four as enemies the wise behold,
avoid them from afar as paths of peril.

"These four, young householder, should be understood as warm-hearted friends:

- (1) he who is a helpmate,
- (2) he who is the same in happiness and sorrow,
- (3) he who gives good counsel,
- (4) he who sympathizes.

(1) "In four ways, young householder, should a helpmate be understood as a warm-hearted friend:

- (i) he guards the heedless,
- (ii) he protects the wealth of the heedless,
- (iii) he becomes a refuge when you are in danger,
- (iv) when there are commitments he provides you with double the supply needed.

(2) "In four ways, young householder, should one who is the same in happiness and sorrow be understood as a warm-hearted friend:

- (i) he reveals his secrets,
- (ii) he conceals one's own secrets,
- (iii) in misfortune he does not forsake one,
- (iv) his life even he sacrifices for one's sake.

(3) "In four ways, young householder, should one who gives good counsel be understood as a warm-hearted friend:

- (i) he restrains one from doing evil,
- (ii) he encourages one to do good,
- (iii) he informs one of what is unknown to oneself,
- (iv) he points out the path to heaven.

(4) "In four ways, young householder, should one who sympathizes be understood as a warm-hearted friend:

- (i) he does not rejoice in one's misfortune,
- (ii) he rejoices in one's prosperity,
- (iii) he restrains others speaking ill of oneself,
- (iv) he praises those who speak well of oneself."

Thus spoke the Exalted One. And when the Master had thus spoken, he spoke yet again:

The friend who is a helpmate,
the friend in happiness and woe,
the friend who gives good counsel,
the friend who sympathizes too --
these four as friends the wise behold
and cherish them devotedly

as does a mother her own child.

The wise and virtuous shine like a blazing fire.
He who acquires his wealth in harmless ways
like to a bee that honey gathers,[6]
riches mount up for him
like ant hill's rapid growth.

With wealth acquired this way,
a layman fit for household life,
in portions four divides his wealth:
thus will he friendship win.

One portion for his wants he uses,[7]
two portions on his business spends,
the fourth for times of need he keeps.

* * *

"And how, young householder, does a noble disciple cover the six quarters?

"The following should be looked upon as the six quarters. The parents should be looked upon as the East, teachers as the South, wife and children as the West, friends and associates as the North, servants and employees as the Nadir, ascetics and brahmins as the Zenith.[8]

"In five ways, young householder, a child should minister to his parents as the **East**:

- (i) Having supported me I shall support them,
- (ii) I shall do their duties,
- (iii) I shall keep the family tradition,
- (iv) I shall make myself worthy of my inheritance,
- (v) furthermore I shall offer alms in honor of my departed relatives.[9]

"In five ways, young householder, the parents thus ministered to as the **East** by their children, show their compassion:

- (i) they restrain them from evil,
- (ii) they encourage them to do good,
- (iii) they train them for a profession,
- (iv) they arrange a suitable marriage,
- (v) at the proper time they hand over their inheritance to them.

"In these five ways do children minister to their parents as the **East** and the parents show their compassion to their children. Thus is the **East** covered by them and made safe and secure.

"In five ways, young householder, a pupil should minister to a teacher as the **South**:

- (i) by rising from the seat in salutation,
- (ii) by attending on him,
- (iii) by eagerness to learn,
- (iv) by personal service,
- (v) by respectful attention while receiving instructions.

"In five ways, young householder, do teachers thus ministered to as the **South** by their pupils, show their compassion:

- (i) they train them in the best discipline,
- (ii) they see that they grasp their lessons well,
- (iii) they instruct them in the arts and sciences,
- (iv) they introduce them to their friends and associates,
- (v) they provide for their safety in every quarter.

"The teachers thus ministered to as the **South** by their pupils, show their compassion towards them in these five ways. Thus is the **South** covered by them and made safe and secure.

"In five ways, young householder, should a wife as the **West** be ministered to by a husband:

- (i) by being courteous to her,
- (ii) by not despising her,
- (iii) by being faithful to her,
- (iv) by handing over authority to her,
- (v) by providing her with adornments.

"The wife thus ministered to as the **West** by her husband shows her compassion to her husband in five ways:

- (i) she performs her duties well,
- (ii) she is hospitable to relations and attendants[10]
- (iii) she is faithful,
- (iv) she protects what he brings,
- (v) she is skilled and industrious in discharging her duties.

"In these five ways does the wife show her compassion to her husband who ministers to her as the **West**. Thus is the **West** covered by him and made safe and secure.

"In five ways, young householder, should a clansman minister to his friends and associates as the **North**:

- (i) by liberality,
- (ii) by courteous speech,
- (iii) by being helpful,
- (iv) by being impartial,
- (v) by sincerity.

"The friends and associates thus ministered to as the **North** by clansman show compassion to him in five ways:

- (i) they protect him when he is heedless,
- (ii) they protect his property when he is heedless,

- (iii) they become a refuge when he is in danger,
- (iv) they do not forsake him in his troubles,
- (v) they show consideration for his family.

"The friends and associates thus ministered to as the **North** by a clansman show their compassion towards him in these five ways. Thus is the **North** covered by him and made safe and secure.

"In five ways should a master minister to his servants and employees as the **Nadir**:

- (i) by assigning them work according to their ability,
- (ii) by supplying them with food and with wages,
- (iii) by tending them in sickness,
- (iv) by sharing with them any delicacies,
- (v) by granting them leave at times.

"The servants and employees thus ministered to as the **Nadir** by their master show their compassion to him in five ways:

- (i) they rise before him,
- (ii) they go to sleep after him,
- (iii) they take only what is given,
- (iv) they perform their duties well,
- (v) they uphold his good name and fame.

"The servants and employees thus ministered to as the **Nadir** show their compassion towards him in these five ways. Thus is the **Nadir** covered by him and made safe and secure.

"In five ways, young householder, should a householder minister to ascetics and brahmins as the **Zenith**:

- (i) by lovable deeds,
- (ii) by lovable words,
- (iii) by lovable thoughts,
- (iv) by keeping open house to them,
- (v) by supplying their material needs.

"The ascetics and brahmins thus ministered to as the **Zenith** by a householder show their compassion towards him in six ways:

- (i) they restrain him from evil,
- (ii) they persuade him to do good,
- (iii) they love him with a kind heart,
- (iv) they make him hear what he has not heard,
- (v) they clarify what he has already heard,
- (vi) they point out the path to a heavenly state.

"In these six ways do ascetics and brahmins show their compassion towards a householder who ministers to them as the **Zenith**. Thus is the **Zenith** covered by him and made safe and secure." Thus spoke the Exalted One. And when the Master had thus spoken, he spoke yet again:

The mother and father are the East,

The Teachers are the South,
Wife and Children are the West,
The friends and associates are the North.

Servants and employees are the Nadir,
The ascetics and brahmins are the Zenith;
Who is fit to lead the household life,
These six quarters he should salute.

Who is wise and virtuous,
Gentle and keen-witted,
Humble and amenable,
Such a one to honor may attain.

Who is energetic and not indolent,
In misfortune unshaken,
Flawless in manner and intelligent,
Such a one to honor may attain.

Who is hospitable, and friendly,
Liberal and unselfish,
A guide, an instructor, a leader,
Such a one to honor may attain.

Generosity, sweet speech,
Helpfulness to others,
Impartiality to all,
As the case demands.

These four winning ways make the world go round,
As the linchpin in a moving car.
If these in the world exist not,
Neither mother nor father will receive,
Respect and honor from their children.

Since these four winning ways
The wise appraise in every way,
To eminence they attain,
And praise they rightly gain.

When the Exalted One had spoken thus, Sigala, the young householder, said as follows:

"Excellent, Lord, excellent! It is as if, Lord, a man were to set upright that which was overturned, or were to reveal that which was hidden, or were to point out the way to one who had gone astray, or were to hold a lamp amidst the darkness, so that those who have eyes may see. Even so, has the doctrine been explained in various ways by the Exalted

One.

"I take refuge, Lord, in the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha. May the Exalted One receive me as a lay follower; as one who has taken refuge from this very day to life's end."

Notes

1. *kamma-kilesa*, lit., 'actions of defilement.
2. These are the four *agati*, 'evil courses of action': *chanda*, *dosa*, *moha*, *bhaya*.
3. Crimes committed by others.
4. A kind of amusement.
5. The Pali original has here "six causes" as two compound words and one double-term phrase are counted as units.
6. Dhammapada v. 49: "As a bee, without harming the flower, its color or scent, flies away, collecting only the honey..."
7. This portion includes what is spent on good works: gifts to monks, charity, etc.
8. "The symbolism is deliberately chosen: as the day in the East, so life begins with parents' care; teacher's fees and the South are the same word: *dakkhina*; domestic cares follow when the youth becomes man, as the West holds the later daylight; North is 'beyond' (*uttara*), so by help of friends, etc., he gets beyond troubles." -- (Rhys Davids)
9. This is a sacred custom of the Aryans who never forgot the dead. This tradition is still faithfully observed by the Buddhists of Sri Lanka who make ceremonial offerings of alms to the monks on the eighth day, in the third month, and on each anniversary of the demise of the parents. Merit of these good actions is offered to the departed after such ceremony. Moreover after every *punna-kamma* (good action), a Buddhist never fails to think of his parents and offer merit. Such is the loyalty and the gratitude shown to parents as advised by the Buddha.
10. lit., 'the folk around' (*parijana*).

Revised: Fri 27-Aug-2004

<http://www.accesstoinsight.org/canon/sutta/digha/dn31.html>

Appendix - B

Maha-sala Sutta

Very Rich

Samyutta Nikaya VII.14

Translated from the Pali by Thanissaro Bhikkhu.
For free distribution only.

At Savatthi. Then a certain very rich brahman -- shabby, shabbily dressed -- went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, exchanged courteous greetings with him. After this exchange of friendly greetings and courtesies, he sat to one side. As he was sitting there the Blessed One said to him, "Why, brahman, are you shabby and shabbily dressed?"

"Just now, Master Gotama, my four sons --
at their wives instigation --
threw me out of the house."

"In that case, brahman, memorize these verses and then recite them when a large assembly of people have gathered in the town hall and your sons are sitting there, too.

"Those whose birth
I delighted in
-- whose growth I desired --
at their wives instigation
have chased me away,
as dogs would swine.

Wicked and vile,
though they call me 'Dad':
demons in the disguise of sons
who abandon me in old age.

As an old horse
of no more use
is deprived of fodder,
so the elderly father
of those foolish boys
begs at other people's homes.

My staff serves me better
than those disobedient sons.
It fends off

ferocious bulls
and ferocious curs.
In the dark it goes before me;
down steep slopes, it gives support.
Through the power of my staff,
when I stumble
I still stand firm."

Then the very rich brahman, having memorized these verses in the presence of the Blessed One, recited them when a large assembly of people had gathered in the town hall and his sons were sitting there, too:

"Those whose birth
I delighted in
-- whose growth I desired --
at their wives instigation
have chased me away,
as dogs would swine.

Wicked and vile,
though they call me 'Dad':
demons in the disguise of sons
who abandon me in old age.

As an old horse
of no more use
is deprived of fodder,
so the elderly father
of those foolish boys
begs at other people's homes.

My staff serves me better
than those disobedient sons.
It fends off
ferocious bulls
and ferocious curs.
In the dark it goes before me;
down steep slopes, it gives support.
Through the power of my staff,
when I stumble
I still stand firm."

Then the brahman's sons, having led him home, bathed him, and each provided him in a pair of cloths. So the brahman, taking one pair of cloths, went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, exchanged courteous greetings with him. After this exchange of friendly greetings and courtesies, he sat to one side. As he was sitting there he said to the Blessed

One, "We brahmans, Master Gotama, look for a teacher's fee for our teacher. May Master Gotama accept this teacher's portion from me."

The Blessed One accepted it out of sympathy.

Then the very rich brahman said to the Blessed One: "Magnificent, Master Gotama! Magnificent! Just as if he were to place upright what was overturned, to reveal what was hidden, to point out the way to one who was lost, or to carry a lamp into the dark so that those with eyes could see forms, in the same way has Master Gotama -- through many lines of reasoning -- made the Dhamma clear. I go to Master Gotama for refuge, to the Dhamma, and to the community of monks. May Master Gotama remember me as a lay follower who has gone for refuge from this day forward, for life."

See also: AN II.31

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<http://www.accesstoinight.org/canon/sutta/samyutta/sn07-014.html>

Sadhu! Sadhu! Sadhu!