In this article, Buddhist Sutra of Filial Piety is introduced. The sutra explains the manner in which we can repay our parents’ loving kindness, as well as the difficulty in doing this. Generally speaking, modern welfare systems are concerned primarily with provision of services to ensure physical well-being. Buddhist welfare, on the other hand, addresses welfare of the mind as well as satisfaction of physical desires.

Traditionally, concept of filial piety was Confucian value. But its pivotal point is bound to one’s own family. Historically Buddhists have accepted and re-interpreted the concept of filial piety with their own world-view in East Asia. The Buddhist approach is to recognize the nature of the human condition which is subject to karmic and social problems. Therefore, Buddhism emphasizes practice of filial piety towards all people beyond the limit of family. Hence the sutra may well be evaluated as a model which shows dialogue and
consensus of different faiths.

Key Words: Filial Piety, Ageing in Buddhism, Mother’s Loving Kindness, Buddhist Sutra of Filial Piety, Buddhist Welfare.

I. Introduction

In this article I will introduce the Buddhist Sutra of Filial Piety, which is about the importance of understanding a parent’s loving kindness, particularly a mother’s loving kindness, and the duty of offspring to repay this loving kindness. This sutra explains the manner in which we can repay our parents’ loving kindness, as well as the difficulty in doing so. Buddhism considers humans to be independent beings, possessing free will bestowed to them by nature. But the true nature of human beings is suffering because of egoistic desires which arise from spiritual ignorance.

Buddhism provides a remedy to this suffering in the doctrine of ‘co-dependent arising (pratityasamutpāda),’ and this doctrine also offers an alternative perspective on dealing with social problems and issues of ageing.

In general, modern welfare systems are concerned primarily with the provision of services to ensure physical well-being. Buddhist welfare, on the other hand, refers to not only the satisfaction of physical desires, but also the health and welfare of the mind. The Buddhist approach to problems associated with the welfare of the ageing population is to recognize the nature of the human condition, which is

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1 Full title of this sutra is pronounced as Bulseol-daebobumo-eunjung-gyeong 佛說大報父母恩重經 in Korean. It is usually abbreviated as Bumo-eunjung-gyeong 父母恩重經, and different from Fo-shuo-fu-mu-en-nan-bao-jing (佛說父母恩難報經; T.16, No.684) or Fo-shuo-fu-mu-en-zhong-jing (佛說父母恩重經; T.85, No.2887).