

The Educational Spirit of *Buddhabhadra*: According to His Biographical and Translational Contributions at Mount Lu, China, in the Fifth Century

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Abstract

Before *Nālandā* became a key center for Buddhist study, so many early pilgrims and translators introduced Buddhist teachings to China. These helped establish monastic institutions and educational programs, forming the basis for Buddhist scholarship in China.

One important figure in this process was *Buddhabhadra* (佛馱跋陀羅, Chinese name Juexian 覺賢, 359–429 CE), an Indian monk who significantly contributed to the Buddhist community at Mount Lu (廬山). His work in translation, teaching, and meditation training was vital for early monastic education in Chinese Buddhism.

Buddhabhadra initially worked with *Kumārajīva* (鳩摩羅什, 344–413 CE) in Chang'an (長安) before moving to Mount Lu. Over there to the south, he collaborated with Huiyuan (慧遠, 334–416 CE) and Faxian (法顯, 337–422 CE). He translated fifteen major texts, including the *Mahāvaiṣṭava Sūtra* (大方廣佛華嚴經) and the *Mahāsāṃghika Vinaya* (摩訶僧祇律), both of which have deeply influenced Chinese Buddhist philosophy and monastic practices. It also impacts the teachings of Chan (禪, Zen) Buddhism and Huayan (華嚴) thought, which emphasize comprehensive harmony with a mindful life and continue to evolve in contemporary development.

In addition to his written work, *Buddhabhadra* lived by the principles of the Threefold Training (*Triśikṣā*, 三增上學)—Moral Discipline (*Śīla*, 戒), Meditation (*Samādhi*, 定), and Wisdom (*Prajñā*, 慧). Those teachings and actions reflected these principles. His influence continued through scholars like Huiguan (慧觀), Zhiyan (智嚴) and Baoyun (寶雲), who helped shape monastic education in medieval China. This study highlights *Buddhabhadra*'s role in Buddhist translation, education, and monastic development, showing how he had a lasting impact on the cross-cultural transmission of Buddhist thought and practices between India and China.

Keywords: *Buddhabhadra*, Mount Lu, Huiyuan, Faxian, Buddhist education

1. Starting Point of Research Problem

Buddhism has a long history and has developed in many ways over time. But there is still a persistent key question for both practice and education: whether the efforts of practitioners match the Buddha's path to liberation and the spirit of his teachings. Can practitioners truly understand and experience the path to liberation through meditation or contemplative practice? As they use these methods, does their personal growth align with the Buddha's teachings on ending suffering? To what extent does the individual's personal development correspond with the Buddhist doctrine of the elimination of suffering in their utilization of these practices?

This harmony is essential to maintain the Buddhist path and to protect the distinct philosophical and spiritual heritage of the teachings of *Siddhartha Gautama*.

Throughout Buddhist history, people practicing Buddhism have always asked important questions. These questions have been written down and shared as Buddhism has grown and spread to different cultures. It'll often be seen in key Buddhist writings like the Vinaya, Sutras, and Treatises (Śāstras), which are really important for keeping Buddhist teachings the same and making sure their practice stays relevant.

This study focuses on the historical figure *Buddhabhadra*, who was revered as a meditation master, *Tripiṭaka* translator, and influential teacher in the monastic community. His impact extended beyond Buddhism, making him a significant figure in Chinese culture and intellect, respected by both religious and intellectual circles.

The following discussion will examine *Buddhabhadra's* life and translation work,¹ focusing on his significant contributions and unique Qualities. The objective is to explore the Buddhist educational spirit he embodied throughout his life and translate his Chinese work on *Mahāyāna* Buddhism, which is the central focus of this study.

2. Biographical Discussion

Firstly, we may discuss a painting that primarily depicts the monastic community at Mount Lu. The author uses it to preface a biography compiled during the 11th-century Song Dynasty in China.

¹ For relevant academic achievements, interested readers may refer to representative sources, such as the work of Kōgen Mizuno, which provides a thorough brief introduction to this subject. See **Kōgen Mizuno, *Buddhist Sutras: Origin, Development, Transmission* (Tokyo: Kōsei Publishing Company, 1982), 71–74.**



Dōnglín Shíbā Gāoxián Zhuàn (東林十八高賢傳), Preface Illustration No. 3²

The painting arranges figures to show their significance. A Buddha sits meditating at the top. Below, monks and laypeople meditate in a cave. Further down, monks and ascetics meditate and live simply by the stream and in caves.

The artwork respectfully portrays the 5th-century Mount Lu monastic community using traditional Chinese painting techniques. It highlights the close relationship between monks and laypeople, the integration of meditation and study, and the high spiritual and communal standards of the Buddhist *Saṅgha* at Mount Lu.

Historical accounts of *Buddhabhadra* (佛馱跋陀羅, 359–429 CE) date back to the Southern Qi period (479–502 CE) during the Southern Dynasties. One of the earliest detailed records is in Sengyou's (僧佑, 445–518 CE) book called *Chū Sānzàng Jì Jì* (出三藏記集³, Collection of Records on the Tripiṭaka). After this, more biographies appeared during the Liang dynasty (502–557 CE). These include Baochang's (寶

² See CBETA (Comprehensive Buddhist Electronic Text Archive Foundation) 2024.R3, X78, no. 1543, p. 113a3.

³ CBETA 2024.R3, T55, no. 2145, pp. 103b27–104a28.

唱) *Míng Sēng Zhuàn Chāo* (名僧傳抄⁴, Abridged Biographies of Eminent Monks) and Huijiao's (慧皎, 497–554 CE) *Gāo Sēng Zhuàn* (高僧傳⁵, Biographies of Eminent Monks).

During the Tang and Song dynasties, new historical narratives about *Buddhabhadra* emerged. These included the *Huáyán Jīng Zhuàn Jì* (華嚴經傳記⁶, Records of the Avataṃsaka Sūtra), the *Huáyán Gǎnyìng Yuánqǐ Zhuàn* (華嚴感應緣起傳⁷, Accounts of the Responses and Conditions of the Avataṃsaka Sūtra), and the *Huáyán Jīng Chí Yàn Jì* (華嚴經持驗記⁸, Records of Efficacious Responses to the Avataṃsaka Sūtra). Additionally, the illustrated collection titled *Dōnglín Shíbā Gāoxián Zhuàn* (東林十八高賢傳, Biographies of the Eighteen Eminent Monks of Donglin) provides both visual and textual representations of *Buddhabhadra's* legacy.

Scholars from Ming and Qing dynasties to modern times have primarily researched *Buddhabhadra's* Buddhist training, translations, and life events. They emphasize his significant influence on Huayan Buddhism, Pure Land teachings, and cultural exchange between China and India, highlighting his crucial role in spreading Buddhist education across cultures.

Different historical records tell varying stories about *Buddhabhadra*, but they share a common narrative of his extensive travels. His journey began in *Kapilavastu* (迦維羅衛) and took him through *Gandhāra* (犍陀羅) and Kashmir (喀什米爾). He then embarked on sea voyages that brought him to Vietnam, followed by his arrival in China's Shandong province. From there, he traveled west to Chang'an in Shaanxi province. Later, he moved southward, crossing the Yangtze River to join the Buddhist community at Mount Lu (廬山僧團). With support from the ruling powers of the southern territories, he dedicated himself to spreading Buddhist teachings in the thriving cities of Nanjing and Yangzhou.

Buddhabhadra's life was full of challenges, but he faced them with determination and dignity. He remained dedicated to learning and sharing Buddhist teachings, even when it was difficult. He worked hard to grow spiritually and help others become enlightened, which made him a respected figure in Buddhism. His life shows how someone can stay committed to their spiritual beliefs even when faced with hardship.

The author wants to focus on *Buddhabhadra's* educational philosophy, so they will use the "Biographies of the Eighteen Eminent Monks of Donglin" (東林十八高賢傳) as their source. This illustrated collection is a concise and balanced summary of *Buddhabhadra's* life and achievements, and the translation offers readers essential context while maintaining focus on his educational contributions.

Venerable Master *Buddhabhadra* (佛馱跋陀羅, Fo Tuo Ba Tuo Luo), known during the Jin dynasty as Juexian (覺賢), was a descendant of the Śākya (釋迦) clan from *Kapilavastu* (迦維羅衛) and a distant relative of King Śuddhodana (甘露飯王). Orphaned at a young age, he entered monastic life as a novice (Śrāmaṇera) and, by the age of sixteen, had mastered various Buddhist scriptures, excelling in meditation and studies of the Vinaya.

⁴ CBETA 2024.R3, X77, no. 1523, p. 355a16–24.

⁵ CBETA 2024.R3, T50, no. 2059, pp. 334b26–335c14.

⁶ CBETA 2024.R3, T51, no. 2073, pp. 153c24–154c9.

⁷ CBETA 2024.R3, X77, no. 1533, p. 638a8 – b20.

⁸ CBETA 2024.R3, X77, no. 1534, p. 649a23–b21.

As a young man, *Buddhabhadra* went to Kashmir with *Saṅghadatta* (僧伽達多). During meditation, *Saṅghadatta* had a mystical vision where *Buddhabhadra* appeared and said he was going to Tuṣita Heaven to honor Maitreya, then disappeared. *Saṅghadatta* saw this happen multiple times and it increased his respect for *Buddhabhadra*. He later discovered that *Buddhabhadra* had reached the spiritual state of *Anāgāmin* (不還果), or non-returner.

A significant turning point occurred when *Zhiyan* (智嚴), a monk from Later Qin (姚秦), visited *Kashmir*. He was profoundly impressed by the local Buddhist practitioners' spiritual discipline but felt concerned about the lack of advanced spiritual guidance in China. Facing eastward, he expressed his worry that Chinese practitioners couldn't progress toward enlightenment without proper mentorship.

To address the lack of advanced spiritual guidance in China, *Zhiyan* sought help from the Kashmir monastic assembly. They unanimously recommended *Buddhabhadra* as the ideal teacher to spread Buddhist teachings in China.

Following this endorsement, *Buddhabhadra* agreed to travel with *Zhiyan*. Their extensive journey took them through various territories before reaching *Giao Chi* (交趾, present-day Vietnam). From there, they continued their voyage by sea, eventually landing in *Qingzhou* (青州) in the *Donglai* (東萊) region of modern Shandong. Upon learning that the renowned Buddhist translator *Kumārajīva* (鳩摩羅什) was residing in *Chang'an* (長安), *Buddhabhadra* immediately set out to meet him.

When *Buddhabhadra* faced official exile following what his followers considered an unfair judgment, he made his way south to *Mount Lu* (廬山), accompanied by his devoted disciples *Huiyan* (慧嚴), *Huiguan* (慧觀), and over forty other followers. During this challenging time, *Huiyuan* (慧遠), the respected founder of the *White Lotus Society* (蓮社), examined *Buddhabhadra's* conduct and found no violations of Buddhist monastic rules. Acting on this conviction, *Huiyuan* authorized his disciple *Tanyong* (曇邕) to deliver a formal appeal to the Later Qin ruler, seeking to clear *Buddhabhadra's* name.

The appeal succeeded, and *Buddhabhadra* received an invitation to reside at *Donglin Monastery* (東林寺). This marked a pivotal moment in Chinese Buddhist history, as his subsequent work translating meditation texts established the groundwork for *Chan (Zen) Buddhism's* development in the *Jiangdong* (江東) region of southern China.

Despite having a settled position, *Buddhabhadra's* calling as an itinerant teacher led him to continue his travels. He journeyed west to *Jiangling* (江陵), where he lived as a traditional mendicant monk, maintaining strict Buddhist disciplines and collecting alms. During his stay there, he observed the arrival of five vessels from India, a sight that symbolized Buddhism's continued spread across maritime routes. Eventually, he made his way back to the capital, where he founded *Daochang Monastery* (道場寺).

Prior to *Buddhabhadra's* time, the *Khotanese* monk *Zhi Faling* (支法領) had brought back a Sanskrit version of the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* (華嚴經), a substantial text containing 36,000 verses, but it remained untranslated into Chinese. The opportunity to translate this important work came in 418 CE when two prominent officials—*Meng Yi* (孟顗), who governed *Wu Commandery* (吳郡內史), and *Chu Shudu* (褚叔度), who held the position of *General of the Right Guard* (右衛將軍)—requested *Buddhabhadra* to oversee its translation.

Buddhabhadra led a team of monks that included Faye (法業), Huiyi (慧義), Huiyan (惠嚴), and Huiguan (慧觀) to translate the *Mahāvaiṣṭhīya Buddhāvataṣṭaka Sūtra* (大方廣佛華嚴經) into 60 fascicles. During the project, two young boys wearing blue attire (青衣) mysteriously appeared from a pond and helped with tasks like sweeping, cleaning, and ink preparation. This was seen as a supernatural sign of the text's importance.

Besides the *Avataṣṭaka Sūtra*, *Buddhabhadra* also translated *Mahāsāṃghika Vinaya* (摩訶僧祇律), also known as The Great Assembly *Vinaya*, which was brought back by Faxian (法顯). In total, *Buddhabhadra* completed fifteen major translations during his lifetime.

At the last stage, *Buddhabhadra* returned to Mount Lu and passed away peacefully in 429 CE while chanting the Buddha's name. A memorial stupa was built on Mount Lu's northern ridge to honor his significant contributions to Chinese Buddhism.⁹

3. Translational Contributions

The most notable contributions of *Buddhabhadra's* career were his translations of two major Buddhist texts: the *Avataṣṭaka Sūtra* and the *Mahāsāṃghika Vinaya*. To get a complete picture of his translation work and its significance, researchers can examine various Chinese Buddhist bibliographies that have been assembled throughout history. Among these historical records, the *Dà Táng Nèidiǎn Lù* (《大唐內典錄》), created during the Tang Dynasty's peak period of literary achievement, stands out as one of the most detailed and comprehensive sources.

The *Dà Táng Nèidiǎn Lù* was the work of Daoxuan (道宣, 596–667 CE), a highly respected Buddhist scholar who specialized in *Vinaya* studies and historical documentation. His scholarly expertise and thorough research methods have provided us with detailed chronological information about *Buddhabhadra's* translation activities after reaching China. Daoxuan's careful record-keeping allows us to trace the sequence of texts that *Buddhabhadra* translated throughout his career.

1. Huáyán Jīng (華嚴經, 50 or 60 fascicles). (The English title is also known as *The Flower Adornment Sutra*) (*Avataṣṭaka Sūtra*).
2. Guān Fó Sānmèi Jīng (觀佛三昧經, 8 or 10 fascicles). (*The Sutra on Contemplation of the Buddha within the Ocean of Samādhi*) (*Buddha-Dhyāna-Samādhi-Sāgara-Sūtra*).
3. Guòqù Yīnguǒ Jīng (過去因果經, 4 fascicles). (*Sūtra on Past Causes and Effects*).
4. New Wúliàngshòu Jīng (新無量壽經, 2 fascicles) (*Sūtra of New Infinite Life*).
5. Dámódūoluó Chán Jīng (達摩多羅禪經, 2 fascicles) (Also known as *The Sūtra on the Impurity Contemplation* or *The Sūtra on the Path of Practice and Attainment*) (*Dharmatrāta Dhyāna Sūtra*).
6. Dàfāngděng Rúláizàng Jīng (大方等如來藏經, 2 fascicles) (*Mahāvaiṣṭhīya Tathāgatagarbha Sūtra*).
7. Wénshūshīlì Fāyuàn Jie Jīng (文殊師利發願偈經) (*The Sūtra of Vows Inspired by Mañjuśrī*).
8. Chūshēng Wúliàngmén Chí Jīng (出生無量門持經) (Also called *Sūtra of the Infinite Gate of Arising Mantra*, or *The Sūtra on Attaining Omniscience through Subjugating Māra upon Enlightenment*).

⁹ CBETA 2024.R3, X78, no. 1543, p. 117b13-c16.

9. Běnyè Jīng (本業經, *The Fundamental Karma Sūtra*) / Xīn Wēimìchí Jīng (新微密持經, *The New Esoteric Dhāraṇī Sūtra*).
10. Jīng Liù Bōluómì Jīng (淨六波羅蜜經, *The Pure Six Pāramitās Sūtra*).
11. Púsà Shízhu Jīng (菩薩十住經, *The Ten Stages of the Bodhisattva Sūtra*).
12. Sēngqí Lǜ (僧祇律, *Mahāsāṃghika Vinaya*, 40 fascicles).
13. Sēngqí Dà Píbùjiè Běn (僧祇大比丘戒本, *The Mahāsāṃghika Bhikṣu Prātimokṣa*, 2 fascicles).
14. Fāngbiàn Xīn Jīng (方便心經, 1 fascicle) (*The Sūtra of Expedient Mind*).¹⁰

Additionally, the same catalog continues with translations associated with Faxian:

15. Dàbān Níhuán Jīng (大般泥洹經, *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra*, 6 fascicles)¹¹

The Dà Táng Nèidiǎn Lù records that *Buddhabhadra* conducted his translation work mainly in two significant locations: Yangzhou and Mount Lu (Lushan). His success in translation was made possible by several key factors: the consistent support of skilled monastic students, substantial backing from Lushan's Eastern Forest Monastery, and generous patronage from both government officials and aristocratic supporters. The high caliber of his translations was further enhanced by the collaboration of distinguished contemporary scholars who assisted with proofreading, polishing, and editing the texts. This collective effort resulted in translations of exceptional quality and unique style that have become precious contributions to Buddhist literary heritage.

To begin our analysis of *Buddhabhadra's* surviving translations in the Chinese Buddhist Canon, we'll focus on a specific text: The *Sūtra* of Vows Inspired by *Mañjuśrī* (文殊師利發願經). For this study, we'll use the block-printed version found in the Yongle Northern Canon (永樂北藏) as our main reference text.¹²

Our goal in creating an English translation is to establish a foundation for scholars to examine *Buddhabhadra's* distinctive translation methods, his choice of terminology, and his interpretation of Buddhist concepts. When researchers compare this English rendering with corresponding Tibetan texts and subsequent Chinese translations, they can better understand how Buddhist texts evolved and were interpreted differently during their transmission across languages and cultures.

This research lays groundwork for future scholars to undertake several important tasks: validating and harmonizing various versions of the text¹³, uncovering original meanings, and enriching our understanding of how Buddhist teachings spread historically. Our methodology seeks to broaden textual research possibilities while staying true to *Buddhabhadra's* original translations and their doctrinal significance.

Furthermore, this study attempts to establish a foundation for future textual restoration efforts. It's allowing scholars to authenticate and reconcile different recensions, recover original meanings, and contribute to the broader historical and philosophical discourse on Buddhist transmission. Through this approach, we

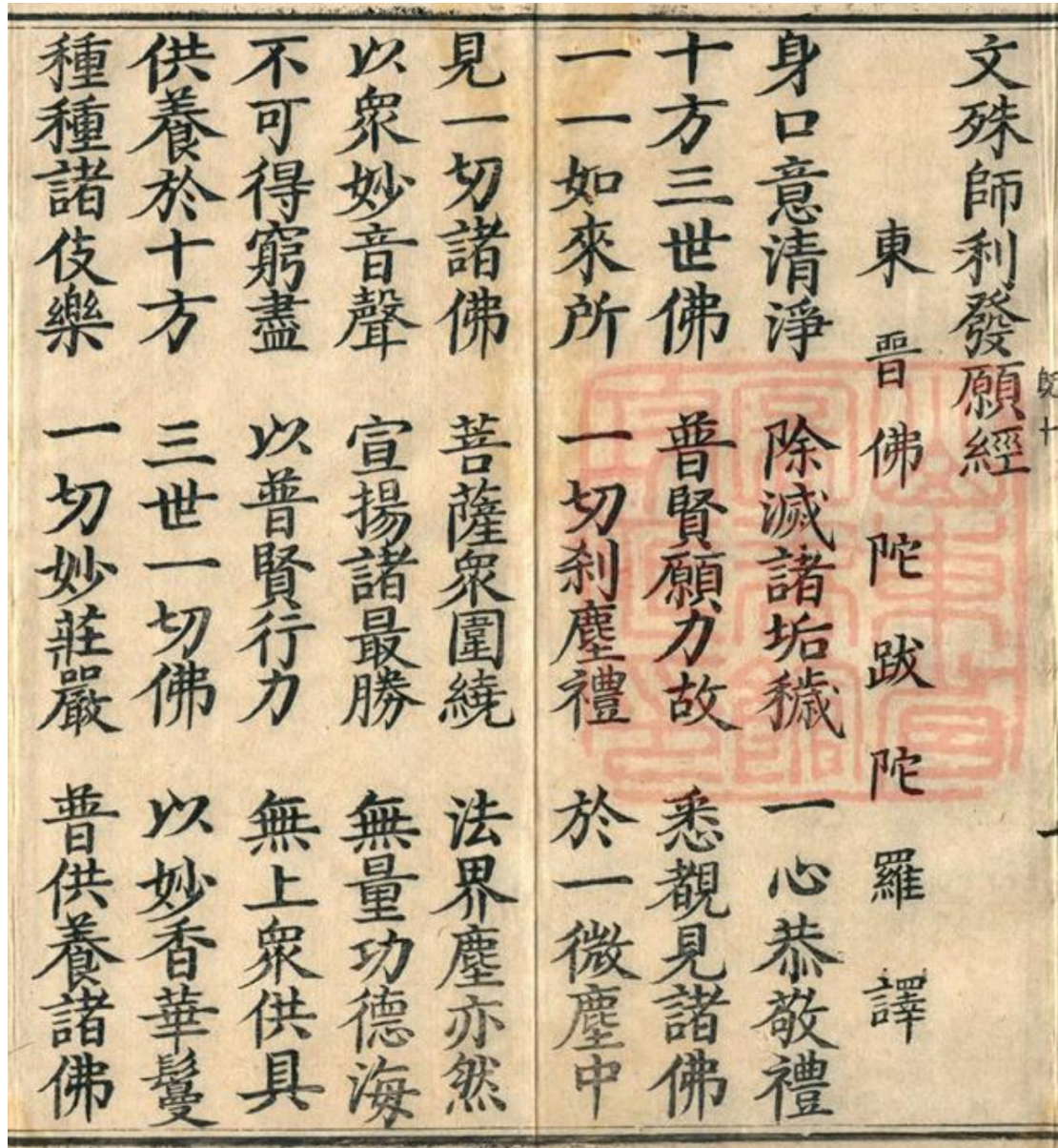
¹⁰ See Daoxuan (道宣), *Dà Táng Nèidiǎn Lù* (大唐內典錄), CBETA 2024.R3, T55, no. 2149, pp. 246c27–247a20.

¹¹ CBETA 2024.R3, T55, no. 2149, p. 247a21–22.

¹² See Yongle Northern Canon (永樂北藏), No. 1394, *Wénshūshìlì Fāyuàn Jīng* (文殊師利發願經), translated by *Buddhabhadra* during the Eastern Jin Dynasty, in *Xītǔ Shèngxián Zhuànjí* (西土聖賢撰集), vol. 129, p. 297.

¹³ Anonymous, *Gzuñs-ḥdus* (Wam), folios 262b–266a, and *Sna-tshogs* (Ño), folios 300b–303b.

aim to expand the scope of textual studies while maintaining fidelity to Buddhahadra's historical and doctrinal contributions.



The *Sūtra* of Vows Inspired by *Mañjuśrī*

Translated by *Buddhabhadra*,

during the Eastern Jin Dynasty

With purified body, speech, and mind,
All defilements are cleansed and cast aside.
With single-hearted reverence, I bow
To Buddhas of the ten directions and three periods of time.

By the boundless vows of *Samantabhadra*,

All Buddhas shine before my eyes.
Before each *Tathāgata* in every realm,
I bow as countless as dust in boundless lands.

Within a single dust mote so small,
Countless Buddhas come into view.
Surrounded by assemblies of Bodhisattvas,
Each speck reflects the vast Dharma Realm.

With wondrous and sublime voices,
I proclaim the supreme Dharma.
An ocean of immeasurable merit,
Endless and boundless in all directions.

Empowered by the practice of *Samantabhadra*,
I present supreme and wondrous offerings.
Extending across the ten directions,
To all Buddhas of the past, present and future time.

With fragrant incense, flowers, and garlands,
Through various musical performances and arts,
Every sublime adornment beyond compare,
I make offerings to the universal Buddhas.¹⁴



From greed, hatred, and delusion's grip,

¹⁴ For comparison, see CBETA 2024.R3, T10, no. 296, pp. 878c22–879a7.

All my past misdeeds arise.
Now repenting these wrongs of body, speech, and mind,
May every defilement be completely purified.

At the merits of all beings—
From *Śrāvakas*, *Pratyekabuddhas*,
To great Bodhisattvas and all Buddhas,
I rejoice in their boundless virtues.

To Buddhas of the ten directions,
Who have newly attained supreme *Bodhi*,
I sincerely make this request:
Please turn the unsurpassed wheel of Dharma.

To those entering *Nirvāṇa*'s stillness,
I fold my hands and humbly pray:
Remain throughout countless eons,
Bringing peace and bliss to every sentient being.

All merits and virtues I have accumulated,
I transfer to all sentient beings.
May they fully accomplish the Bodhisattva practices,
And attain perfect enlightenment.

I universally make offerings to the Buddhas of past,
Present throughout the ten directions,
And pray that future World-Honored Ones,
May swiftly accomplish the Bodhi path.

Universally adorning all ten directions,
Every Buddha-land manifests in perfection.
Tathāgatas preside, seated upon the *bodhimāṇḍa*,
While assemblies of Bodhisattvas fill the cosmos.

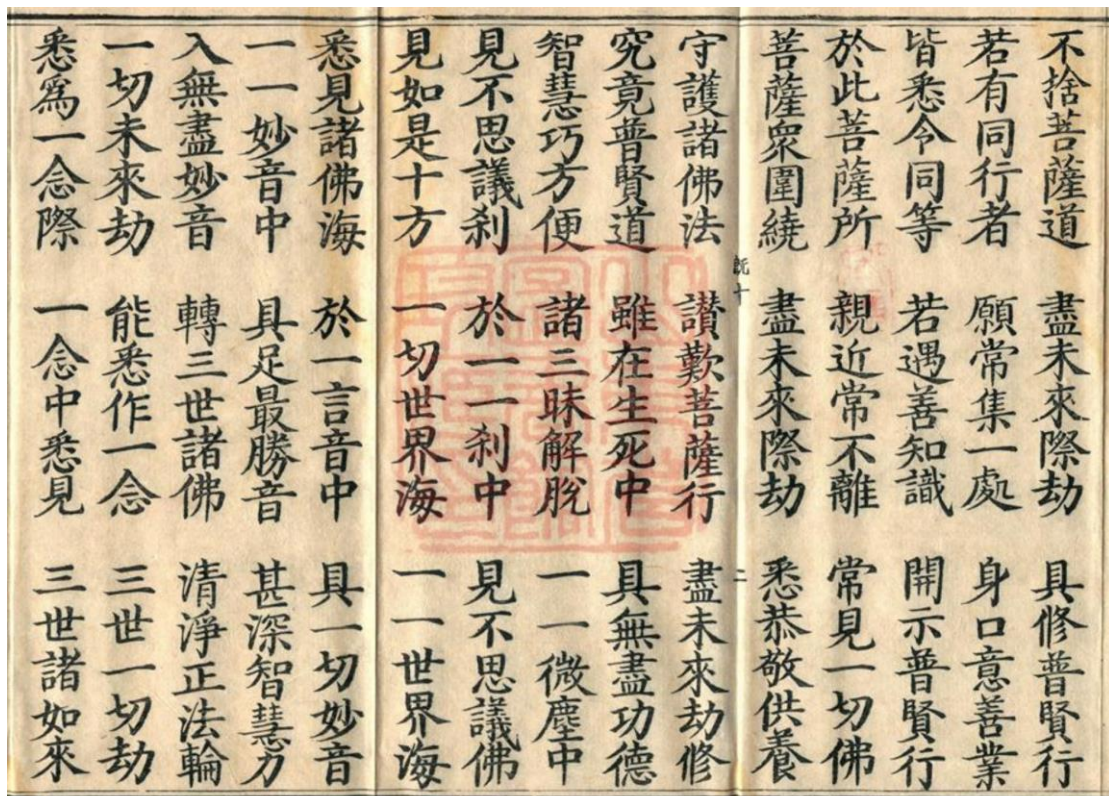
May all beings throughout the ten directions,
Eradicate every affliction and distress,
With deep insight into the ultimate truth,
And forever abide in peaceful bliss.

Through practicing the Bodhisattva path,
I attain the wisdom of prior lifetimes.
All karmic hindrances are forever dissolved,
Leaving no trace to obscure the way.

Completely transcending birth and death,
Beyond *Māra*'s grasp and karmic afflictions.
Like the sun suspended in empty space,
As the lotus flower is not sullied by the water.

Roaming freely through all ten directions,
Teaching and guiding all sentient beings.
Eradicating the sufferings of the woeful paths,
Fully perfecting the practice of the Bodhisattva way.

Though conforming in harmony with the world,¹⁵



Never abandoning the path of Bodhisattva,
Through all future *kalpas* without end,
I shall uphold and fulfill *Samantabhadra*'s way.

¹⁵ CBETA 2024.R3, T10, no. 296, p. 879a8–b1.

If there are companions on the path,
May we always gather together.
In wholesome actions of body, speech, and mind,
May our virtues be equal in harmony.

When encountering a virtuous guide,
Who reveals the path of *Samantabhadra*,
At the abode of such Bodhisattvas,
Never drifting, never away.

May I always meet all Buddhas,
Surrounded by vast assemblies of Bodhisattvas.
Through endless eons yet to come,
Forever offer reverence and devotion.

I vow to guard all Buddha-dharmas,
Praising the practices of Bodhisattvas,
Through endless eons shall stay,
The ultimate path of *Samantabhadra*.

Though dwelling in the cycle of birth and death,
My virtues shall shine with boundless grace.
With profound wisdom and skillful means,
I will attain samadhi and liberation.

Within each minute particle of dust,
Unfathomed realms I glimpse in all.
In every single one of those realms,
I witness inconceivable Buddhas.

Thus perceiving all ten directions,
Each cosmic ocean of world-systems vast—
Within every such oceanic realm,
I behold oceans of all Buddhas.

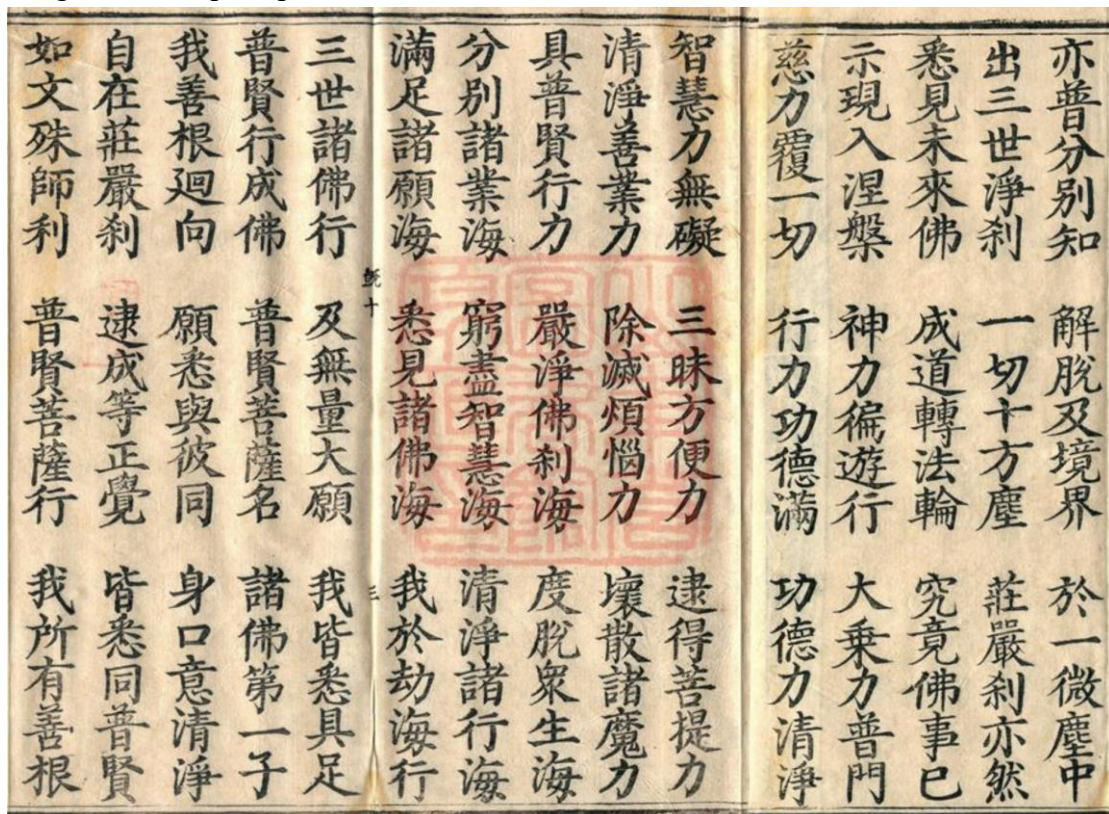
Within a single uttered sound,
Full of all forms of auspicious tones.
Each sublime resonance contains a wondrous voice,

Resounds the supreme Dharma sound.

By the profound power of transcendent wisdom,
I immerse myself in the boundless ocean of sublime tones.
Turning the pure Dharma wheel of past, present, and future Buddhas,
Pure and true, cleansing beings through all ages.

May all future eons condense,
Into a single moment of mindfulness.
And all eons of the three periods of time,
May I perceive within a moment attained.

Within a singular mindfulness, may I see
All the Tathagatas of the past, present and future.¹⁶



Universally discerning with penetrative wisdom,
Their liberated states and Dharma realms' dimensions.

Within a single particle of cosmic dust,
Pure lands arise from the three periods of time.

¹⁶ CBETA 2024.R3, T10, no. 296, p. 879b1-23.

All motes throughout the ten directions,
Buddha realms shine in splendid adornment.

I behold all future Buddhas,
Attaining enlightenment and turning the Dharma wheel.
Completing the Buddha-dharma activities,
Manifesting *parinirvāṇa*'s transcendent call.

Through divine power that pervades all realms,
Opening the universal gate of the Great Vehicle.
With compassion covering all sentient beings,
While the power of practice fulfills all merits.

Through the purified potency of merit power,
Unobstructed wisdom power manifests,
With the power of *samādhi* and skillful means,
The power universally accumulates *Bodhi*.

By the power of purified wholesome *karma*,
All afflictions are completely extinguished.
By the power that shatters all demons,
The power to perfect conduct of *Samantabhadra*.

The oceans of Buddha-lands I everywhere adorn and purify,
And liberate the ocean of all living beings.
With skill I discern the vast oceans of karmic differentiation,
Exhaustively fathoming the oceans of wisdom.

I am able to purify everywhere the ocean of all practices,
Fulfilling the vast ocean of all vows.
Completely perceiving the infinite ocean of all Buddhas,
As I journey through the vast ocean of eons.

The practices of all Buddhas throughout the three periods of time,
And their immeasurable great vows—
I fully cultivate them all,
Perfecting the path of *Samantabhadra* to attain Buddhahood.

The name of *Samantabhadra* Bodhisattva,
Whose foremost child of all Buddhas,
I dedicate all my virtuous roots,
Aspiring to match his noble path.

With purified body, speech, and mind,
Freely adorning Buddha realms,
Attaining supreme enlightenment,
In complete harmony with *Samantabhadra*.

As *Mañjuśrī* and *Samantabhadra*
Cultivate the Bodhisattva path,
So too do I dedicate all my merits,¹⁷



With the same aspiration and resolve.

¹⁷ CBETA 2024.R3, T10, no. 296, p. 879b24-c17.

All *Tathāgatas* of past, present, and future,
Praise the supreme path of dedication.
I dedicate all my roots of virtue,
To fulfill the practice of *Samantabhadra*.

At my final hour of passing,
May all hindrances fade away.
May *Amitābha*'s face appear,
And be reborn in the Land of Peace and Bliss.

Once reborn in that Buddha land,
May I fulfill all great aspirations.
May *Amitābha*, the Thus-Gone One,
Bestow upon me his prophecy of awakening.

May I perfect the pure conduct of *Samantabhadra*,
And fulfill the vast vows of *Mañjuśrī*.
Through infinite eons yet to come,
May I ultimately complete the Bodhisattva path.

The *Sūtra* of Vows Inspired by *Mañjuśrī*¹⁸

4. *Buddhabhadra* and the Spirit of Buddhist Education

In accordance with the religious and practical traditions of *Mahāyāna* Buddhist education must strictly follow the Buddha's original teachings to achieve inner awakening. It should go beyond personal enlightenment and actively spread methods for awakening, purification, and peace to all who suffer.

Buddhabhadra's noble birth and life experiences influenced his character. As a member of the *Śākya* clan, he was raised with their values and dignity. He was intelligent from a young age but also experienced the loss of both parents as a child. This experience with impermanence led him to contemplate aging, death, and rebirth, similar to how the Buddha's experience shaped his journey.

Following his ordination, *Buddhabhadra* embraced the traditional path of *Śākya* monastics with complete dedication. He excelled in both meditation practice and scholarly studies, developing a deep understanding of Buddhist teachings and their systematic nature.¹⁹ His expertise covered both practical meditation and theoretical knowledge. Driven by noble purpose, he traveled extensively to teach Buddhism and show gratitude to his teachers. He never wavered from his master's instruction to "strengthen the monastic

¹⁸ CBETA 2024.R3, T10, no. 296, p. 879c17-26.

¹⁹ See Huijiao's (慧皎), *Gāo Sēng Zhuàn* (高僧傳), Scroll 2, CBETA 2024.R3, T50, no. 2059, p. 334c6.

community and teach meditation."²⁰

Buddhabhadra's deep awareness of his historical mission gave him exceptional strength, moral courage, and persistence against all odds. He transcended the role of mere scholar or teacher, emerging as a true pathfinder who faced dangers fearlessly. Even in life-threatening situations, he continued his work, believing that any contribution to establishing meditation practice, guiding suffering beings, or preserving Buddhist teachings made his efforts worthwhile. Personal hardships, persecution, and physical suffering seemed minor compared to his greater mission.

His unwavering dedication shone brightest during his period of exile and disgrace, when he lost everything and had to leave his life's work behind. Yet he remained steadfast even in his darkest moments. Though isolated and displaced, he guided his followers through dangerous mountain passes and war-torn regions, ultimately finding sanctuary at Mount Lu's monastery in southern China. There, he resumed his twin missions of translating sacred texts and teaching meditation.

He owned many disciples. Those like Huiguan (慧觀) said that the most intellectual and greatest masters all respected their teacher's virtue and wisdom, which are sacred, vast, and profound—beyond the understanding of people in their era!²¹

This reflects *Buddhabhadra's* lifelong commitment to sharing Mahāyāna Buddhism, particularly through his translation works. It stressed faith, inner purification, and universal benefit. His vision also encompassed all beings across time and space, encouraging everyone to develop wisdom and work toward enlightenment. He sought to uplift humanity through all possible means, embracing every person and situation as an opportunity for spreading Dharma.

5. Conclusion

We need Buddhist educational models that can effectively help today's global society, especially in building sustainable futures and new ideas. While Buddhism has made many important contributions in the past, just admiring its history is not enough to address the urgent problems we face today. Our main goal is to take valuable lessons from Buddhist traditions and use them in modern life. However, figuring out how to turn these teachings into practical solutions for today's world is an important challenge in Buddhist education and practice. In the discussion above, I have tried to look at the insights from ancient scholars and practitioners, and I hope this will lead to more discoveries in the future.

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1. To present the citation format in **English numerical notation** according to the Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō (大正新修大藏经, Taishō Tripiṭaka) and the Manji Shinsan Dainihon Zokuzōkyō (卅新纂大日本续藏经, Manji Supplementary Buddhist Canon), which were sourced from the **Chinese Buddhist Electronic Text Association (CBETA) online edition (2024 Q3)**, please follow this

²⁰ CBETA 2024.R3, T50, no. 2059, p. 334c20.

²¹ CBETA 2024.R3, T50, no. 2059, p. 335b25-27.

structure:

2. (Txx, no. xxxx, p. xxx, [column]x[line]-[line])
3. (Xxx, no. xxxx, p. xxx, [column]x[line]-[line])
4. **Example:**
5. *Samyuktāgama Sūtra* (雜阿含經)
6. (T02, no. 99, p. 220, b16-c3)
7. A **proper citation** in an academic text:
8. The passage is cited from the *Samyuktāgama Sūtra* (T02, no. 99, p. 220, b16-c3), as found in the **CBETA edition of the Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō (2024.Q3)**.

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