

A STUDY OF MASTER FA FANG (法舫) AS A ROLE- MODEL FOR CHINESE *SAMGHA* STUDENTS STUDYING OVERSEAS

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Master Fa Fang was a *Mahāyāna* monk from China. He was born in 1904 and passed away in 1951. He not only had a rich experience of the Chinese Buddhist traditions but also of the outside world. Before he went to Southeast Asia, he had studied *Mahāyāna* and Tibetan Buddhism. According to the available literature of that time in *Pāli*, Sanskrit and English languages, he subsequently went to countries like Burma, India, and Ceylon and spent time in these countries studying *Theravāda* Buddhism from 1940 to 1946. Such rich experience had equipped him with the necessary background for his invaluable contributions towards the development of Buddhist education in China. It is noteworthy that he was the first person to translate the *Pāli* canon into Chinese. Furthermore, he was the motivating force behind the promotion of the internationalization of Chinese Buddhism. That is why it can be said that he could be considered as a role- model for Chinese *saṃgha* students who are engaged in study abroad. The methodology of this research is primarily historical. It focuses on the available historical evidence relating to Master Fa Fang's activities. It also will take a critical approach to the study in the evaluation of the contributions of Master Fa Fang. First, it researches on Master Fa Fang and the historical background of his time. Second, it examines his specialties and the contributions he made to Buddhism in modern China. Finally, it critically analyzes his contributions that impacted on the development of contemporary Buddhism in China. The research problems are "In what kind of historical background did Master Fa Fang live? Why is it possible for him to be considered as a model for Chinese *saṃgha* students who are engaged in study abroad? Did his contributions have an impact on the development of contemporary Buddhism in China?" This paper focuses on his achievements and contributions to demonstrate the advantages and value of learning from his example for the effective dissemination of Buddhism in modern China. In this study the researcher will closely examine Master Fa Fang's approach in the transmission of Buddhism to China. Through an examination of Master Fa Fang's outstanding achievements and contributions to Chinese Buddhism, it is intended to show that he could be recognized as a role- model for overseas *saṃgha* students who intend to be engaged in the study and propagation of Buddhism in modern China.

Keywords: Master Fa Fang, Modern China, Buddhism