

# **Electronic Buddhist Texts and the Direction of Future Buddhism**

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Buddhism is one of motive power that has been leading human spiritual life and culture for about 2500 years. Especially, the role of buddhism in East Asia is breathing with brilliance in history. For the past 19th and 20th century, Buddhism was transferred to the West, and it has become worldwide. Now we have to think about what Buddhism can suggest for the present and future of human beings. In groping for this direction, I believe that electronic Buddhist texts will be an index of future Buddhism. The reason is that electronic Buddhist texts contain the Buddha's teaching which is available to the whole world whenever and wherever people want, and it will lead them to live following the Buddha's teaching.

Mankind live an abundant life in the earth that has become one, thanks to the epoch-making development of science, traffic and communication as well as materialistic richness based on the mass production of the industrial revolution. However, the mass production was led to the destruction of environment, and it is threatening human rights of living. In addition, the development of science is followed by that of weapon, and it is giving a crisis to human beings. That is, human beings are losing their dignity as human, and they are living everyday life like standing on the edge of a cliff.

On the other hand, human beings often become alienated themselves in the civilization they made. Losing their selves and subjectivity, they resort to instant enjoyment without seriously searching for why they live and how they should live. Many are addicted to drugs and other things, losing their dignity as human. Accordingly, Buddhism, which aims to complete one's whole character, should ask its role at this time and suggest solutions.

Another side of these phenomena lie three poisons as Buddha said. Those three poisons- human greed, anger and foolishness- are the starting point of all problems. The greed made people "want more," and the lack of practice prevented them from bearing instant anger, and make them only to desire egotistic accomplishment, indifferent to sacrifice of other beings.

Since all this materialistic richness of human beings was caused by these desires, some people say the pursuit of desires are the motive of human development. Regarding the sufferings and problems caused by desires, some also insist on their own justification just like the ones, who are shot by a poisonous arrow, but refuse to get treatment until they find who shot them and what kind of poison they used.

It is the time a new countermeasure should be suggested. The countermeasure means the one that can shift a vicious circle that connects action with counteraction. I dare to say Buddhism

has a solution and the answer lies in our lives of following Buddhist spirit. Buddha's teaching is an antidote of the three poisons, and it leads to practice of life that will benefit us all.

In this sense, I'd like to define the spirit of Buddhism as awakening the mind and repaying gratitude. Awakening the mind is the mind of pursuing enlightenment. It makes us attain enlightenment from suffering and go toward the world of wisdom. Buddha's teaching and his enlightenment suggest specific answers to the problems that mankind are now facing. Awakening the mind toward Buddha's teaching will provide the specific instructions to the way human beings should pursue.

Yet if this awakening the mind is limited to oneself, it will not benefit the whole mankind. Benefiting only self will keep in dead storage. Hence, to practice repaying gratitude, that is, to benefit both me and others should be practiced at the same time. Awakening the mind is human will to live that way. Accordingly, Buddha's teaching will light the world when practice of spiritual awakening is realized through action.

Today's EBTI international conference with the subject of "International collaboration for the Digitization of Buddhist texts" may not look familiar enough for the scholars of humane studies like me. It may be caused by humane studies not keeping pace with the development of science.

So far, humane studies and science have been processed in their own domains. As a result, humane studies becomes ignorant of science, and science ignorant of humane studies. However, Buddhist causation(緣起) identifies that science and humane studies are mutually supplementary, not confronted with each other. In other words, "this makes that exist and nonexistence of this makes nonexistence of that." As such, Buddhist thinking shows that Buddhism and science mutually support each other, and it requests seeking the way to be interdependent and collaborate. In this sense, today's theme is very important.

Let us ask where science and humane studies start from. It can be said that they come from human thoughts. On the common basis of thinking, they have had different languages and systems, but both of science and humane studies pursue common goals. Therefore, science and humane studies should find a mutual point of contact.

Recently, human beings have stepped into the era of new civilization. It is related to the development of the computer. It is what the computer does 'to provide more information to more people.' At first, people were only interested in the storage capacity and processing speed of the computer. That is, they concentrated on developing the hardware of the computer. It was followed by the development of the software, which helps use the hardware better. The combination of the software and hardware made the computer work. The combination of the two seems like that of humane studies and science. The two are indispensable to each other.

The combination of the computer and communication made the unprecedented era of

communication called the internet. The internet makes the people of the whole world communicate with each other on a real time basis through the computer. It is literally 'the world within a small dust' as stated in "Avatamsaka Sutra". However, there are some side effects. In 'Dharmapada', it says as follows.

The same water changes into poison if a snake drinks it,  
and milk if a cow drinks it.

As written above, the computer and internet either benefit or harm us depending on how we use them. It is our job to make it into a convenience.

For this, we should produce 'contents' in the internet. A machine does not work without 'contents'. The computer itself has no power, and it is human beings who give spirit in it and make it benefit themselves. It is our duty to make the computer and internet work as an antidote not as poison, and fill contents in them. The present is a temporary bridge of the future. Just as Buddha's words and his spiritual world assisted in the popularization of Buddhism through the Tripitaka, now it is the time for electronic Buddhist texts to play the same role.

Looking back on the digitization of Buddhist texts, Korea has a long tradition. For example, we have the world's first wooden block edition, "Mukujungkwang Dharani Sutra" in Bulguksa, and the 13th century's "Koryo Tripitaka", which is selected as the world cultural asset. It is truly the treasure of human culture to make a wooden block edition of the Tripitaka to provide mass supply of Buddha's teaching. Also, there is "Jikjishimgyeong", world's first metal edition. Recently, Korean Tripitaka was completed by the Dongguk Translation Center (Yokkyoungwon) this year following Ven. Baik Yong-sung(白龍城)'s efforts to translate the Sutras years ago. Dongguk university has been publishing 'Hankuk Bulkyo Chonso' by summarizing Korea's Buddhist texts. After completing this work, we are working to input 'Hankuk Bulkyo Chonso' and 'Korean Tripitaka' on the internet.

The digitization of Buddhist texts are being actively processed all over the world. It is an important work that can determine the present and future of human beings. It will remove the dark side of human civilization and keep people working to pursue the way to attaining Buddhahood.

Therefore I firmly believe that the results of discussion and collaboration among the world's renowned monks, scholars and professors here today will be an valuable light for our present and future.

Thank you.