The Śrīmālā-Devi Simhanāda-Sūtra (《胜鬘师子吼一乘大方广经》) was an important scripture of the Mahāyāna Buddhism (大乘佛教). It is said that it was composed as a Mahāyāna (大乘) text in the third century A.D. in the Andhra region of South India. The scripture rose into great importance in India and other parts of Asian countries for its Buddha-nature theory (佛性论) which advocates that all sentient beings have the potentiality of attaining Buddhahood, as they all possess the “Tathāgatagarbha” (如来藏) or the “Buddha-nature” (佛性), the main cause for nirvana.

The main objective of this academic exercise attempts to examine in reasonable detail the Buddha-nature theory of Śrīmālā-Devi Simhanāda-Sūtra, translated by Gunabhadra (求那跋陀罗: d.A.D. 396-468), a native of Central India who lived in China during the Liu Sung (刘宋: 420-502) Dynasty. The academic exercise provides an explanation of the title of the scripture, the background knowledge of the composition of the text, and various translations and commentaries of the scripture. Addition to these, the academic exercise also discusses the definition of the “Tathāgatagarbha”, the significance and issues in relation to the “Tathāgatagarbha”, and the influence of the Śrīmālā-Devi Simhanāda-Sūtra on other Mahāyāna Buddhist scriptures.

Sources used include the Chinese translations of Mahāyāna Buddhist scriptures, Chinese and Western commentaries as well as scholastic publications i.e. books and journals. The research result reveals that the Śrīmālā-Devi Simhanāda-Sūtra, like all other Mahāyāna Buddhist scriptures, believes that all men have the potentiality of attaining nirvana as every one is born with the “Tathāgatagarbha” or the “Buddha-nature”. The Buddha-
nature theory of the text also suggests that the "Tathāgatagarbha" would not be contaminated by our "ignorance" (烦恼) because of its "internal purity" (自性清净). All these factors enable the Śrīmālā-Devi Simhanāda-Sūtra to maintain its popularity as an influential Mahāyāna scripture in Asia.

《胜鬘经》的信性说