



www.dhammastream.org

Namo Tassa Bhagavato Arahato Sammasambuddhasa

Published by

Buddhist Discussion Centre Australia.

33 Brooking Street, Upwey, Victoria 3158, Australia

May You Be Well And Happy

Associated Institute of The World Buddhist University.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE NIRVANA ORDER OF KOREAN BUDDHISM

By Hemendra Lal Barua

1. KOGURYO

Buddhism was introduced to Korea in 372 A.D. in the second year of King Sosurim's reign of Koguryo by an emissary and the Monk Sundo of King of Earlier Chin who brought with them Buddha statues and scriptures.

Buddhism flourished for 1,000 years in the place of its origin in India and 300 years in China before it was brought into Korea. The Koguryo court and its people treated the emissary and the monk as state guests, and thanked the Chin king with presents. In 374 the Chin King sent Monk Ado, originally a Korean, to Koguryo. Receiving the two monks, the Koguryo court had two temples, Songmunsa and Ibullansa, built for them in the following year. These were the first Buddhist temples in Korea. The court and the people of Koguryo so devoted themselves to the worship of Buddha that 20 years after its introduction, in the second year of King Kwanggaeto's reign, there were already nine temples in the capital city of P'yongyang.

2. PAEKCHE

Paekche received Buddhism 13 years later than Koguryo. Indian Monk Marananta introduced Buddhism to Paekche in 384, in the first year of King Ch'imnyu's reign, directly from India through Western Chin China.

He received a hearty welcome from the king and his subjects. The king had a temple built in the present-day Kwangju, east of Seoul, and selected 10 outstanding youth for ordination and propagation of Buddhism. However, nothing is known about the state of affairs of Buddhism for 142 years, that is, until 526, the fourth year of King Song's reign. Monk Kyomik, who had gone to India to study Sanskrit and Vinaya at Sangana Vinaya Temple, returned home with scriptures accompanied by an Indian Monk Paedalda. At the behest of the king, Monk Kyomik along with 28 others translated 70 volumes of commentary on Vinaya, thus becoming the founder of the Vinaya Order of Paekche.

In addition, two scholar monks, Tanuk and Hyein, wrote and published 36 volumes of commentary on Vinaya. We can assume from this that Paekche's Buddhism was centred around Vinaya and its development.

King Song, in the 19th year of his reign, sent an emissary to Yang China to obtain other scriptures such as the Nirvana Order, had a six-foot tall Buddha stature carved and composed a prayer in the 23rd year of his reign, and in the 30th year of his reign propagated Buddhism abroad.

3. SHILLA

It is said that during the reign of King Nulchi of Shilla, Monk Mukhoja smuggled himself into Ilson county of Shilla from Koguryo and, hiding himself at the home of Morye, preached the Three Precious Ones...Buddha, Dharma and Sangha... and disappeared after curing a Princess of disease.

Monk Ado, however, staying a few years again at the home of Morye during the reign of King Konch'o, and when the monk passed away three of his disciples preached sutras and vinayas at the home of Morye. From that time on, it is said believers in Buddhism multiplied.

King Pophung tried to propagate Buddhism but thwarted by the opposition of his subjects; consequently, Ich'adon died a martyr. The king had a temple built on the spot of the martyrdom in order to offer prayers for the martyr. In his late years, the king became a monk adopting the name of Popun and lived his remaining years in meditation and asceticism in Hungnyunsa temple. The queen also become a nun assuming the name of Popnyu and lived her remaining life in Yonghungsa temple. These three... monk Ado, King Pophung and Ich'adon, were the three saints most responsible for helping Buddhism blossom in Shilla.

The martyr Ich'adon occasioned the revival of Buddhism in Shilla. Thus, Sundo became the founder of Buddhism in Koguryo, Monk Marananta in Paekche and Monk Ado in Shilla.

The Nirvana Order or school was founded later by Master Podok in 623, in the seventh reign year of King Yongnyu of Koguryo. Podok was born in Yonggang Prefecture of Koguryo, became a monk and after obtaining enlightenment, he lived in the walled city of P'yong-yang. One day an old monk came to his mountain temple, asking him to elucidate the Sutra. He originally declined, but in vain. He finally lectured to the man the 40 odd volumes of Nirvana Order, and retired to a cave in Taebosan Mountain west of the capital city for meditation. A demigod appeared out of the blue, asked him to settle down there, and pointed with his cane to a spot where he stated, there was an octagonal stone pagoda buried. He dug out the place to find the octagonal stone pagoda. He built a temple there and named it as Yongt'apsa, meaning "the temple of divine spirit pagoda". Later he preached on the Nirvana Order, educated his disciples, built many temples in order to expand the influence of his school. Thus he became the founder of the Nirvana School of Koguryo.

Master Podok, the founder of the Nirvana Order, propagated his religion at Panyongsa and other temples until 650 when he moved his base to Kyongboksa in Wansan County in Paekche along with his seven hundred disciples and preached on the Nirvana Order. Many student monks including Wonhyo and Uisang studied under him at that time. Later Wonhyo wrote a summary of the Nirvana Order.

Besides, the disciples of Master Podok included Monk Musang (of Kumdongsa), Monk Uiyung (of Chingusa), Monk Chisu (of Taesungsa), Monk Ilsung (of Taewonsa), Monk Sujaeng (of Yumasa), Monk Sadae (of Chungdaesa), Monk Kaewon (of Kaewonsa), Monk Myongdok (of Yon'gusa). These monks using their respective temple as a base propagated the Nirvana Order, thus paving the way for the golden period of the Unified Shilla Buddhism.

The five eminent monks of Shilla founded five orders: the Nirvana Order, the Vinaya Order (Namsan Order and Kyeyul Order), the Dharmalaksana Order (Yuga Order, Chungdo Order), the Dharmata Order (Yushik Order and P'asang Order), and the Hwaom Order (Wonyung Order, Punhwang Order, Haedong Order, Wonhyo Order, Uisag Order, Pusok Order). About a century later Nine Zen Mountains were founded: Silsang Mountain, Kaji Mountain, Kaegul Mountain, Tongni Mountain, Songju Mountain, Saja Mountain, Uiyang Mountain, Pongnim Mountain, and Sumi Mountain.

4. KORYO

Koryo maintained, in the earlier years, the five schools and Nine Zen Mountains, until Royal Preceptor Taegak founded the Tien-t'ai (Heavenly Terrace) School, thus promoting the doctrinal and Zen Buddhism. The Ch'ont'ae (Tien-t'ai) adopted as its major scriptures the Mahaparinirvana Sutra, Saddharmapundarika Sutra, Prajna Sutra the Garland Sutra and the Diamond Sutra. The royal preceptor supervised the editing and publication of a 20-volumes commentary on the Nirvana Sutra.

Royal Preceptor Pojo (Chinul) explored new territory by upholding the banner of uniting meditation and wisdom (Chonghye ssangsu). He unified the existing Nine Zen Mountains into the Chogye Order, thus there were two Zen Schools along with the Ch'ont'ae (Tien-t'ai) and the five doctrinal schools of the Nirvana, the Vinaya, the Dharmalaksana (Pobsong Order), the Dharmata (Pobsang Order) and the Hwha'-om (Huayuen) (garland). However, in the late Koryo period the Zen School again divided into the Nine Zen Mountains until the Royal Preceptor T'aego reunited them into a single school.

From the late Koryo to the early Choson period, there were 12 doctrinal and Zen orders, each competing with the other to revive Buddhism.

5. CHOSON

The founder-king T'aejo of the Choson dynasty tried to promote, instead of suppressing Buddhism, by appointing Monk Muhak as his royal preceptor, publishing Buddhist scriptures, offering prayer to Buddha for the welfare of the new dynasty and its people, and appointing high and eminent monks of Ch'ont'ae-Jong (Tien-t'ai-Jong) School to positions of dignity. However, King T'aejong suddenly espoused the cause for suppressing Buddhism and promoting Confucianism. He reduced the number of temples of the Chogye and Ch'ongji

orders to around 70, the Ch'ont'ae (Tien-t'ai) related orders to 43, the Hwha'-om (Huayuen) and Tomun orders to 43, the Chaun orders to 36, the Chungdo and Shinin orders to 30, the Namsan orders to 10, and the Nirvana Order to 10.

The new kingdom not only reduced the number of temples but also that of monks. They reduced the 12 orders of the late Koryo period to seven including three Zen orders (the Ch'ont'ae (Tien-t'ai), the Chogye, and the Ch'onngnam) and four Doctrinal orders (the Nirvana, the Garland, the Chaun and the Chungshin). Later, further reductions were made: a total of 18 temples were allocated to the Doctrinal order (the Nirvana being given Kyongboksa, built during the Paekche period) and the Zen order were also given 18 temples.

During the reign of King Myongjong, the government designated Pongunsa in Kwangju as the headquarters of the Zen order with the eminent Monk Pou as the chief abbot as well as its minister, while Pongsonsa became the headquarters of the doctrinal Order with the eminent Monk Sujin as its minister.

The dual system of Zen and Doctrinaire of Pyogam and Paekkok were unified into one by the eminent Monk Sosan and P'oyang, who preached the unity of Zen and Doctrinaire orders.

All the orders were united into T'ong Pulgyo (all-embracing Buddhism) in Korea. Nevertheless, even though they attached paramount importance to the Zen doctrine of "not setting up scriptures", they specialized in the Mind Sutras, by the time of Paek Mo (1631-1700), when the various orders of Zen concealed their true nature to such an extent that they no longer needed to put out the slogan of Zen order. Zen monks preached on the Garland Sutra, the Lotus Sutra and Nirvana Sutra. Thus was born the Lecture Hall System in which eminent monks preached on the sutras, until 1912 when the Japanese Government General in Korea reorganized the Zen and Doctrinaire Schools into 30 Dioceses, with Pongsonsa in Yangju, Kyonggi-do and Yongmunsa in P'yongyang as the headquarters of the Doctrinaire School; and Pongunsa and Pomosa as those of the Zen School. And in 1924 Hwaomsa was designated as the Religious Academy for Zen and Doctrinaire Schools, thus making the number of dioceses 31. Later, the Japanese established the Central Secretariat for the Zen and Doctrinaire Schools.

With the nation's liberation from Japan in 1945, the Central Secretariat of Choson Buddhism was established in Seoul with one diocese in each province, each temple running a Zen Meditation Hall and Lecture Hall.

When the government returned to Seoul from exile in Pusan in the wake of the Korean War, the government's effort to purify the temples led to the chronic feud between the celibate and married monks. After the military revolution in 1961, the Reconstruction Committee for Buddhism set up the Chogye Order of Korean Buddhism by merging the celibate and the married monks.

1970 saw the appearance of 18 orders such as T'aego-jong, Chingak-Jong, Wonhyo-jong, Ch'ont'ae-jong (Tien-t'ai-Jong), Yonghwa-jong, Miruk-jong, Pobsang-jong, Taehan Pobhwa-jong, Pomun-jong, Pulip-jong, Ilsung-jong, Chaengt' o-jong, Chinon-jong, ch'onghwa-jong, Hwha'-om-Jong (Huayuen), and Han'guk Pobhwa-jong.

In the meantime, in the early 1960's, the eminent monks Pak Han- yong, Chin Chinung, Pak Taeryun, Po Songu, and eminent scholars Kwon Sangno and Kim Pogwang decided at Pobhunsu to re-establish the Nirvana Order, and asked Kim Pogwang to write the chronological history of the Nirvana Order. Thus Dr. Kim was able to prove that the Nirvana Order has been alive for 18 generations from founder-monk Podok.

They advertised this fact in the newspapers and were about to begin propagation but their effort was ended in failure due to the feud between the celibate and married monks. It was Monk Haeam who finally revived the Nirvana Order. He was born in Kanui-dong, Najin, Hamgyong-pukto in the Japanese occupation period and he became a monk and obtained enlightenment after 1945 at Wibongsa temple, the headquarters temple for both the Zen and doctrinaire orders, in Soyang-myon, Wanju-gun, Cholla namdo. He established a temple in Yokkok-dong, Puch'on City, Kyonggido in order to propagate the Nirvana Order through lectures on the Nirvana Order. So many faithful gathered around him that he had the headquarters temple, Wabul Chongsa, built in Haegongni, Yongingun, Kyonggido, and registered the Nirvana Order in 1987 with the Ministry of Culture and Information as a religious juridical person.

The Sakyamuni Buddha is the founder of the Order.

The Main Buddha for worship is also the Sakyamuni Buddha (the Nirvana Buddha).

The founder of the Order is Master Podok of Koguryo.

The Reviver of the Order is Monk Haeam.

Its doctrine is "All the sentient beings have the Buddha nature".

The Nirvana Order is the major scripture of the Order.

The Nirvana Order also registered the name of the Order, the Yolbanjong (Nirvana Order) of Korea Buddhism with the Office of Patent and inaugurated the first primate of the Order.

Thus the Nirvana Order has been maintaining its life for more than 1,300 years as one of the keynotes of Korean Buddhism.

Hemendra Lal Barua

- (Retired) Senior Inspector of T. T. Es. Bangladesh Railway
- Ex. President, Bangladesh Buddhist Association (B.B.A) & Bangladesh Regional Centre World Fellowship of Buddhists (W.F.B).
Chittagong Buddhist Monastery. Buddhist Temple Road. Chittagong.
- Founder & Executive President Kausalyamayee (Govt Managed)
Primary School. Fatehnagar. Upazila-Raozan, Chittagong.

- A Member of a goodwill Buddhist Mission of Bangladesh Government to Nepal, Sri Lanka & Thailand in the Year 1980
- A participant as a leading Delegate of B.B.A to the 15th, 16th & 17th General Conference of W.F.B held in Nepal, America & South Korea in the year 1986, 1988 & 1990 respectively.
- A participant of many Symposiums & religious Congregations held in the Countries of the Eastern Globe.
- The writer of a book 'Bangladeshi Bouddhader Itibritta' (Bangladeshi Buddhists Annals).