



Contemporary Relevance of W&nhyo Thought

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Contemporary Relevance of W&nhyo Thought

W&nhyo(617-686) was one of the greatest scholars in the East Asia and his works were immensely influential not only in Korea but also in China and Japan. As his name suggests, he was like a sun at dawn that shed Buddhist light on the East Asian continent. His range of scholarly endeavor covered the whole gamut of East Asian Buddhist materials and the 100 works attributed to this prolific writer, over twenty of which are still extant, find no rivals among his fellow Korean exegetists.

According to the *Samguk-yusa* and the *Song-gaoseng-zhuan*, W&nhyo lived a quite diverse and varied life. In his early days, he belonged to an elite youth corps of Silla and later he went the way of a pilgrim, philosopher, mystic, religious crusader, and proselytist.

As we open this meaningful conference, we are going to seek the true essence of W&nhyo's universal philosophy and also explore the message of promise that W&nhyo gives to help with the world problems now we are facing.

Firstly, W&nhyo teaches us to live in Buddha's mind by returning to the origin of One Mind. "Returning to the origin of One Mind" philosophy is quite a relevant teaching to the contemporary world where people live in chaos and delusion as a result of ignorance of their true nature and their attachments to name and form. In his *Commentaries on the Awakening of Faith* in Mah2y2na, W&nhyo teaches:

One mind is identical with Suchness. It is neither increasing nor decreasing, and is none other than the Tath2gata-garbha endowed with numberless excellent qualities, giving rise to good 'cause and effect' in both this world and in other worlds

W&nhyo's main teaching is this One Mind which is the world of Buddha, that is Buddha's Mind. In his *Commentaries on the Awakening of Faith* in Mah2y2na, the structure of the human mind consists of One Mind and Two Aspects. He states that all sentient beings originally have One Mind but we forget our true selves and wander through transmigration because of ignorance and afflictions.

We, as human beings, can only realize the perfection of true self when we return to the origin of One Mind. As a flower bud has a sprout generating fruits, all human beings already have buddha-hood. W&nhyo awakens us to knowing that our true lives are not those of sentient beings but those of tath2gata-garbha with immense merits of Buddha.

These explanations are consistent with the teachings that Gautama Siddhartha first gave to the world when he attained enlightenment on that "All sentient beings have wisdom and virtue, but they don't realize their ability owing to their attachment to ignorance". Buddha Nature as One Mind, just like the sun always gives us vitality.

It is the world of Great Affirmation, and the world of Perfection. We can find the eternal truth and the principle of everlasting life outside the constraints of time and space when we experience internal awakening of Buddha Nature as One Mind.

Secondly, W&nhyo teaches us a way to solve the oppositions and conflicts that are caused by assertions that one possesses truth. His approach is by the way of harmonization and reconciliation "Hwajaeng."

In the preface of the *Yolban-chongyo*, W&nhyo tells us the meaning and purpose of 'Hwajaeng' as follows:

Hwajaeng synthesizes all teachings and gives rise to one taste from all streams of thought. It reconciles the different assertions of the various schools and points us towards the correct meaning of Buddha's teachings.

So *Hwajaeng* returns the four kind of noisy and turbulent

sentient beings to their true Nature of non-duality and it leads them from a long and dark sleep to the ultimate fruit of Great Enlightenment

The purpose of W&nhyo's study on Buddhism is to make clear the intrinsic meaning of Buddha's teachings through the harmonization of different theories or opinions. In his *Commentary on the Vajrasam2dhi-S^tra*, he states

If we take the expression literally, we cannot accept it's whole meaning. But if we take real meaning of the expression, there is nothing that we cannot accept.

W&nhyo also says in his the P*pwha-chongyo that "Deep and great truth is not dual and different, beautiful and rich expressions teach us the essence by showing the methods".

Some academics assert that the core of W&nhyo's thought is focused on Hua-yen(Flower Garland) or Wei-shih(Consciousness Only) or Tath2gata-garbha. But W&nhyo isn't interested in identifying with a certain school or sect. He only wants to seek a way to return to the One Mind World of Buddha. W&nhyo speaks for a Buddhism of Total Interpenetration(Tong-Pulgyo) which synthesizes different theories of all schools by showing us the intrinsic meaning of Buddha. He comments on Buddha's teachings, using the concepts of 'Chongyo'(thematic essentials) and 'Kaehap'(Analysis and synthesis). W&nhyo's main philosophical direction is a 'Hwajaeng' which is a method leading to harmonization and reconciliation; thus "analyzing or synthesizing are done freely, asserting and contradicting are unobstructive to each other".

W&nhyo thinks that we assert different opinions or theories mainly because we misunderstand Buddha's teaching, attaching to words only. Modern hermeneutic scholars such as H. Gadamer believe that the personal prejudice of a commentator is the main cause for misinterpretation of the texts. Only through the free Hwahoe(reconciliation and harmonization) viewpoint, we can understand the text beyond literal translation.

Thirdly, W&nhyo teaches the Bodhisattva Way of practice which is composed of T'ung-ti-ta-pei(Compassion on the ultimate identity between oneself and other beings) and Jao-i-chung-sheng(Benefitting sentient beings). In other words, that way means identification with all other sentient beings.

W&nhyo's non-dualism is based on his religious experience of interpenetration without obstruction. His teaching points to a returning to One Mind and then the way to benefit society and sentient beings through one's shining inner light.

In his the P*phwa-Chongyo, W&nhyo says that "All sentient being as well as human beings are sons and daughters of Buddha, whether one knows Buddhism or not, whether one does spiritual practice or not". Also he says that "This world where all sentient beings live in is Nirvana itself because every sentient being is already Buddha".

In one chapter of the Avata8saka S^tra on the ten great vows of Samantabhadra Bodhisattva, it is written, "We should consider all beings as buddhas and always pay our respect to those buddhas".

As the true nature of all sentient beings is just One Mind of Buddha, all our neighbors are buddha and all the nature surrounding us is the same buddha. Therefore, seeing all beings as buddhas and respecting them is same as respecting oneself. Accordingly, respecting and offering to others is the way through which one becomes buddha.

In the same chapter Buddha says that "You should pay others courtesy as they want, respect them as your parents and offer to them as to your teacher, Arahat and Buddha. Become a physician to the infirm, a guide to those who are lost, a beacon in the dark night, and assist the poor to obtain treasures". We can see this teaching in practice in W&nhyo's altruistic life.

It is really important and necessary for us to spread universally W&nhyo's teaching at this time of crisis and uncertainty. W&nhyo's philosophy is both universal and eternal, beyond time and space.

We are sure that his thought can give a direction for the future, overcoming the negative impacts of 21st century civilization. So how can we find a concrete and practical vision and ideological orientation towards the future from W&nhyo's teaching?

Firstly, W&nhyo teaches us the fundamental way to go back to the origin of One Mind. One Mind in W&nhyo is Buddha's Mind which has limitless, creative energy. The life of Buddha Mind will enrich the life of this technology and information society. One Mind as Buddha Mind is non-dual creative power which transcends spirit and substance, and any kind of logic.

Secondly, W&nhyo's teaching of reconciliation and harmonization can provide a way to solve conflicts between religions and ideologies which we are now facing and can enrich the value of religious pluralism. Everybody knows that holding on to assertion of one absolute truth cannot survive in this contemporary pluralistic society. In the future, religion will have a more relative and pluralistic outlook on truth. So a greater reconciliation and harmonization between religions will gradually expand. W&nhyo's Hwajaeng emphasizes an open viewpoint towards respecting diversity and individuality. Hwejaeng suggests a way to let go of holding to a notion of absoluteness of truth and to reconcile to each ideology and religion.

Thirdly, W&nhyo teaches liberal thought without obstruction. He teaches the liberty of non-discrimination wisdom based on a non-dualistic view of the world which sees the holy and the secular as the same, and the mundane and Nirvana as the same. W&nhyo says that "Dharmadh2tu(the sphere of the ultimate reality) without obstruction, is neither large nor small, neither instantaneous nor eternal, neither mobile nor immobile, neither one nor several." And he also says "Life and death are not different to Nirvana, Nirvana is the same as life and death, One dharma is just the whole dharma, the whole dharma is one dharma."

This non-dualistic Muae-thought(liberalism without attachment to greed) could become a key to help open up the current logos-centered civilization which is liable to judge everything from a dualistic discriminative viewpoint.

Fourthly, W&nhyo's teaching based on the organic viewing life, says that human beings and nature are not separate entities. They are interdependent and the same because the Universe is one Buddha, the

Dharma Body. W&nhyo's 'unobstructed dependent origination' provides macro-vision into how everything in this Universe is in symbiotic relationship.

Fifthly, W&nhyo's philosophy suggests common world ethics in this global era. Hua-yen Buddhism stresses "One is many, and many is one" In W&nhyo's teachings, this idea is further developed into 'benefitting sentient beings' which sees the holy and mundane as the same, not different. Thus, the bodhisattvas of 'Great Compassion' can offer specific solutions to the problems of our society such as war and nuclear proliferation, racial discrimination, capitalism and labor issues, economics, inequality of the sexes, abuse of children and the elderly, etc.

W&nhyo's philosophy is both universal and global, far beyond time and space. His teachings can provide a practical alternative to help put an end to the endless conflict in the global community. The history of ideas proves that the Western way of thinking, with its emphasis on rationalism, is now being replaced by the wisdom of traditional Oriental thought, especially Buddhism. I'm convinced that W&nhyo's concept of 'returning to the origin of One Mind' is a light of hope which shows us the way leading to the eternal liberation of all sentient beings and thus a possibility for peace and harmony in the world.

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