

2. The Research of Mahayana Buddhism & Education

2) Hwaŏm Study and Disciple Training of Master Ŭisang

(1) Hwaŏm Study

Master Ŭisang went to China to study Buddhism in 661. Earlier, Master Ŭisang, along with Master Wonhyo, had visited many great masters in Shilla looking for someone from whom they could study. One of them was Podŏk, a master who had a thorough knowledge of *Mahāparinirvāna-sūtra*. He was a Koguryŏ monk but when the Koguryŏ king, Pojang (r. 642-668), believing in Taoism, rejected Buddhism and refused his advice, he moved to Kodae-san in the south of the peninsula. There he lived and taught the *Mahāparinirvāna-sūtra* and eleven disciples succeeded his teaching. At that time, it is said that Master Ŭisang and Master Wonhyo learned the teaching of the sutra from Master Podŏk.

Master Ŭisang, being already well versed in Mahayana Buddhist texts, went to T'ang and studied for eight years under Master Chih-yen who established the Chinese system of *Avatamsa* study. Master Chih-yen favored Master Ŭisang and personally gave his own books to him for his studies.

When Master Ŭisang asked about models of universally valid dharmas, Master Chih-yen explained ten general and ten particular models, saying, "Can you keep them? For, by lifting the collar of a coat ten thousand threads follow, and by holding the guide ropes at the edge of a fishing net all meshes of the net are arranged. For all worldly dharmas are included in all dharmas which show reality." And then Master Chih-yen taught Master Ŭisang the ten models of dharmas. The ten models contain the deepest layer of *Avatamsa* philosophy and are the essence of Master Chih-yen's teaching. Through studying this, Master Ŭisang is considered to have mastered all of the diverse teachings of the Chinese *Avatamsa*, for he was chosen as the successor of Master Chih-yen and brought the teachings back to Shilla.

There is one legendary story about Master Ŭisang which appears in the book *Ilſŭng-bŏpkyedo-wont'ong-gi* written by Master Kyunyŏ (923-973). When Master Ŭisang was studying under Master Chih-yen, Master Ŭisang dreamt of a strangely looking divine person. In the dream, the divine man told Master Ŭisang, "You should write about what has enlightened you and what you intend to teach to other people." He then gave the master some miraculous medicine. Three times the master received this medicine. Master Ŭisang told Master Chih-yen about the dream, and Master Chih-yen remarked, "I received some secrets from a divine person only once, but you have received them three times. It is the good karmic result of your hard practice and study." Then Master Chih-yen advised him to write about his state of mind, and he wrote the ten volumes of *Taesŭngjang*. Master Chih-yen then told Master Ŭisang to erase the unnecessarily long parts of the books. So Master Ŭisang followed the advice and arranged the material. And then the two of them, prayed, "If the meaning tallies with the Buddha's teaching, it will not burn," and they made a fire. From this fire, 210 Chinese characters were saved. They again threw these few characters on to the fire but they would not burn. So Master Chih-yen, admiring this miracle, had Master Ŭisang write a chant using the remaining characters. And so Master Ŭisang kept to his room for several days and wrote a chant with the 210 characters.

The chant is called *Hwaŏm-ilsŭng-bŏpkyedo* which means the "Picture of *Dharmadhātu*, the Underlying Spiritual Reality of the *Avatamsa* of the One Vehicle." The chant is also called *Pŏp-kye-dojang*, *Pŏpsŏng-do*, *Haein-do*, or *Pŏpsŏng-ge* which all mean the "Chant of Dharma-nature" and it is written in the form of a seal. *Do* is a picture and *Dojang* is the name given to the combination made, or seal. It was completed on 15th of the 7th month, 668, three months before Master Chih-yen's death. The chant is the only example of Master Ŭisang's writing on *Avatamsa* philosophy but it is the essence of it. It contains 73 characters taken directly from Master Chih-yen who used to express his ideas by using pictures or seals. Though criticized for being too simple, the ideas are also fresh and the meanings are new. Since Master Chih-yen was a creative thinker, it is known to have been difficult to understand his ideas. Master Ŭisang not only had a thorough knowledge of this great thinker's philosophy but also synthesized the ideas.

The *Pŏpsŏng-geis* of the status of *Haein* Samādhi, a particular state of meditative attainment which indicates the vastness of the meditation of the Buddha, and the vision of all things. In *Haein* Samādhi all things are seen as they really are and it is considered as the highest of the entire *Avatamsa* philosophy. There are a number of commentaries on Master Ŭisang's *Popkye-do*. Because, even though the highest status of the *Avatamsa* philosophy is beyond language or letters, some explanations are necessary for people who are not able to understand the teachings of *Pŏpkye-do*.

(2) Disciple Training

Master Ŭisang, after returning to Shilla from T'ang in 670, devoted himself to educating his disciples rather than writing books on *Avatamsa*. At that time monks were already studying the various main texts of the different sects. They studied *Vinayapitaka*, *Mahāparinirvāna-sūtra*, *Mahāyāna-saṃgraha*, *Three Śāstras* (*Madhyamaka-śāstra*, *Dradasanikaya-śāstra*, *Śāta-śāstra*), *Satyasiddhi-śāstra*, and so on. Some monks studied in T'ang and some made pilgrimages to the west of China or to India, and after they had returned to Shilla, they were active in establishing their own religious organizations. Besides, Taoism and other sects of Shamanism which already existed in Shilla, all these different teachings to which people adhered made it difficult for Master Ŭisang to spread *Avatamsa* thought. And so he was forced to wander around searching for places where he could teach *Avatamsa* and train his disciples. One opportunity which he did get was a ceremony for the death of the mother of one of his disciples, Master Chinjōng. On this occasion, Master Ŭisang held a dharma meeting in which the *Avatamsaka-sūtra* was taught for 90 days to 3,000 people. One of the disciples, Master Chit'ong, recorded the essence of the meeting and called the record *Ch'udong-gi*. It was Master Chit'ong who became Master Ŭisang's successor.

Once while Master Chit'ong was living, in T'aebaek-san meditating on *Avatamsa*, he saw a big wild boar passing by who bowed to a wooden statue. The statue then told the master, "The wild boar is your past body and I am the body of your future Buddha form. Suddenly he realized that the world and past, present, and future are one. When Master Chit'ong told this to Master Ŭisang, the teacher knew that his disciple had reached a certain stage of attainment and handed him the *Pōpkye-do* in recognition of his attainment.

When Master Ŭisang was studying under Master Chih-yen in China, he had a deep relationship with one Master Tao-hsüan who was the founder of the four-divisioned Chinese Vinaya School. Master Ŭisang spent seven years learning from this master. The influence of the ideas and teachings of Master Tao-hsüan on Master Ŭisang can be clearly seen in his practice, his study and his method of educating his disciples.

Master Ŭisang lived a simple, honest life, he only ever possessed the monk's robes and bowls. When Shilla king, Munmu (r. 661-681), offered him land and servants, he refused, saying, "My dharma teaches equality, there is no distinction between high and low class, and anybody can share it. The Mahāparinirvāna-sūtra says that we should not possess any property which has been unfairly gained. What is the use of land and for what do I need servants? The dharma world is my house, and I have bowls for food. I live relying on the wisdom of the Buddha."

Master Fa-tsang (643-712) was a Chinese dharma brother of Master Ŭisang. His celebrated book, *Hua-yen-wu-jiao-zang* explains the teachings of *Avatamsa*, especially that of Ekayāna, the vehicle of oneness. The book is considered essential for *Avatamsa* study. Master Fa-tsang and Master Ŭisang both studied under Master Chih-yen and they held each other in great respect. After Master Ŭisang returned to Shilla from T'ang, Master Fa-tsang sent copies of his books to Master Ŭisang through the Shilla monk, Sūngjōn, and politely asked Master Ŭisang to critique them. Among the books were *Hua-yen-wu-jiao-zang* and *Hua-yen-jing-tan-hsuan-chi*. On receiving these books, Master Ŭisang retired to his room for about a month and read them carefully. Then, he checked the books with his disciples, and changed the order of the former book to make the meaning clearer. Also he chose his four, best pupils and had them give lectures on the second book, classifying it into four sections. This example shows the extremely high level of research that Master Ŭisang's disciples engaged in as well as the fine teaching techniques of Master Ŭisang.

Master Ŭisang's ten main disciples' names are recorded in the *Samguk-yusa*. They are masters Ojin, Chit'ong, P'yohun, Chin-jōng, Tojang, Toyung, Yangwon, Sangwon, Nūng-in, and Ŭijōk. The main temples where Master Ŭisang taught were Pusōk-sa in T'aebaek-san, Haein-sa in Kaya-san, Okch'ōn-sa in Pisul-san, Pōmō-sa in Kūmjōng-san, and Hwaōm-sa in Chiri-san.

Master Ŭisang was the first monk to introduce *Avatamsa* study to the Korean Peninsula. Master Chih-yen's teaching of *Avatamsa* was continued by masters Fa-tsang and Ŭisang. As Master Chih-yen gave the pen name Munji (meaning "Sustenance of Literature") to the former and the pen name Ŭiji (meaning "Sustenance of Significance") to the latter, the former was successor to the theoretical part and the latter to the practical part of their master's teaching. This is why Master Ŭisang's *Hwaōm-jong* (*Avatamsa*) is sometimes known as Ŭiji-jong, the order of Ŭiji.

3) Development of Study on Buddha Land

(3) Scholars and their Achievements

(iv) Master Ŭisang

While Master Ŭisang was staying in China from 661 until 671, he studied *Avatamsa* under Master Chih-yen. At the same time, he was also influenced by Master Shan-dao who educated people emphasizing Amitabha belief. Master Ŭisang's book, *Paekhwa-doryang-balwonmun* (meaning *Prayers of the White Flower Land*, which refers to the land of the Bodhisattva of Compassion) shows the strong influence of the Pure Land, and many of his disciples were also involved in this kind of Buddhism, especially Master Ŭijŏk.

One of the ten temples of *Avatamsa* which Master Ŭisang built was Pusŏk-sa. The main hall of the temple is Muryangsujŏn, Hall of Amitābha. It is a good example of the outcome of the influence of Amitābha cult. For, though he was a great scholar of *Avatamsa*, he wanted to educate the people in the practice of Amitābha belief.

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