

A BRIEF HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION OF THE ESOTERIC BUDDHISM IN KOREA

-Sang-Kyun Sun

It is my pleasure to be in this prestigious assembly. I would like to introduce myself as Sang-Kyun Sun a Buddhist priest and a lecturer in Jingak College, which belongs to Jingak Sect of Korean Buddhism. It is also my pleasure to let you know that I am a Ph.D. student of Delhi University in Department of Buddhist Studies under Prof. Sangha Sen Singh. I am thankful to respected Prof. S.S. Singh who introduces me to this seminar.

I also would like to pay my heartfelt thanks to the organiser for giving a chance to read my paper though my paper is not concerned to the topics of this seminar.

My paper is entitled as "A Brief Historical Introduction of the Esoteric Buddhism in Korea". In fact, it is not seminar paper but an information of Esoteric Buddhism in Korea.

Generally, it is believed that the Esoteric Buddhism was appeared during seventh century A.D. in India as the further development of Buddhism. In this context, the term of Esoteric Buddhism used by me here is as synonymous of terms such a Tantric Buddhism, Mantrayana and Vajrayana etc. The esoteric Buddhism had been succeeded to occupy an exalted position in northern countries such as Nepal, China, Tibet, Bhutan, Mongolia etc.

In Korea, Buddhism was first introduced in fourth century A.D. Later on, during seventh century A.D., Esoteric Buddhism was introduced by Korean monk Myungrang from China, and named Sinin Sect or Mudra Sect in Korea. It is believed as the Earlier Esoteric Buddhism which is based on the Kriya Tantras.

In course of time, Chongji Sect of Dharani Sect founded by monk Hyetong in Korea. It is regarded as the Middle Esoteric Buddhism which deals with *Carya* and *Yoga* Tantras. These two Korean monks namely Myungrang and Hyetong are paid respect by country people as the founder of Esoteric Buddhism in Korea. Here, I would like to say that as Padmasambhava (Guru Rinpoche), the founder of Esoteric Buddhism in Tibet, Sikkim and Other places has occupied a prominent position in Tibetan history. Likewise, the two Korean monks have also occupied an exalted position in Korean Esoteric Buddhist history.

In course of time, a number of Buddhist sects had been appeared. In this way, total 11 sects were in practice till 1406 A.D. as the further propagation of Buddhism in Korea. These sects merged into seven, and again into two sects in 1424 A.D. and finally into one without any particular name. Thus, decrease of the number of the sects shows the declination of Buddhism under the policy of Chosun Dynasty in Korea. And Confucianism was enjoying under the patronage of Chosun Dynasty. Though the Esoteric Buddhism was almost disappeared from country due to policy of Chosun Dynasty, yet it was under practice in Buddhist society. The practice remained as seed of Esoteric Buddhism in Korea.

Finally, the restoration of the Esoteric Buddhism in Korea was attempted 50 years ago by a Buddhist scholar named Hoedang. He who formerly a layman, was initiated in Six-Syllabled Mantra OM MANI PADME HUM. He, who founded Jingak Sect as the Esoteric Buddhist sect in Korea, is regarded as the Chief Buddhist Priest of that sect.

Nowadays, there are 30 Buddhist sects in Korea. Among them, three Esoteric Buddhist sects namely Jingak, Jineon and Chongji are in practice. Jineon Sect and Chongji Sect

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are those which appeared as sub-sects of Jingak Sect. Those three sects which differ from traditional Esoteric Buddhist system, try to implement the Esoteric Buddhism in modern society of Korea.

Buddhism is the proper way of life rather than the worship of God and the preservation of tradition. Its aim is to make all beings happy and to purify the society. The society is changing rapidly and becoming of habit of new system. In this context, though the Esoteric Buddhism is the further development of Buddhism according to the time changing, but it seems to me that certain changes should be brought again. Nevertheless, I don't mean that the fundamental principles of Buddhism must be modified.

The following few points are given here in the respect of modernization of Esoteric Buddhism not as any final conclusion but as means for discussion.

1. Importance of Esoteric Buddhism in modern society should be clear.
2. Secret way of initiation of Esoteric Buddhism should be modified.
3. Esoteric Buddhism should be institutionalized with the modern concept of education.
4. Further study and publication of texts in regular journals of Esoteric Buddhism seems to be very limited. I think that further research works, publication of texts and journals should be brought in to light.