

# Wonhyo's Buddhism from the Perspective of Tathāgatagarbha-vāda

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*All religions originating from India share a common goal of liberation. To attain liberation one must adopt certain practice forms, collectively known in Indian thought as yoga and tapas. Especially, yoga is fundamental to Indian thought and is the backbone of Indian culture; certainly, it should be cherished as one of the world's greatest cultural heritages. Buddhism, originating from the Indian sub-continent, also adopted yoga principles and methods for seeking enlightenment and the yoga spirit is still very much alive in Buddhism today, in the three core practices of morality (戒 *sīla*), meditative concentration (定 *dhyāna*), and wisdom (慧 *prajñā*). Yet while Buddhism has integrated elements of early Indian religious and cultural practices, it offers a new 'liberation' paradigm. Essentially, Buddhism teaches that one cannot attain 'nirvana' without extinction of the Three Poisons: craving (貪 *rāg*); anger (瞋 *dveṣa*); and ignorance (癡 *moha*). And unless one attains 'nirvana' it is not possible to escape suffering and be free of affliction.*

*'Tathāgatagarbha' is said to have its roots in Fundamental Buddhism, from the central Mahayana period of development, and is thought to be based on the 'sunyata (emptiness)' of the early Mahayana School. In fact, both*

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*'Tathāgatagarbha' and 'Consciousness-only' ideas have their origin in 'Sunyata' philosophy, the difference being that Tathāgatagarbha holds that 'Mind itself is Buddha', while Consciousness-only, of the Yogachara school, which is characterized by an extensive and sophisticated enquiry into the characteristics of dharmas, starts from the premise that everything is consciousness-only, originating from Mind.*

*It is a prevailing view that Tathāgatagarbha thought is actually based on the Awakening of Mahayana Faith (大乘起信論), and is central to Wonhyo's whole Buddhist philosophy. His work, the Exposition of the Adamantine Absorption Sutra (金剛三昧經論), is a fine example of dedication to Tathāgatagarbha.*

Key Words: Tathāgatagarbha, Five Aggregates, Svacitta Suddhi,  
True Thusness Aspect of the Mind,  
Arising and Ceasing Aspect of the Mind.

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## I. Introduction

Buddhism's core teaching is that nothing exists in isolation; indeed, everything is interdependent and reliant on every other thing. This idea is based on the Law of Causality, the doctrine of conditionality of all physical and psychical phenomena. Whereas theistic religions such as Christianity and Islam profess the discrete and eternal nature of God and individual souls, from a Buddhist perspective human beings are viewed as a temporary combination of the five aggregates (panca-skandha) and are thus subject to transience in a continual process of change brought about by the flow of interdependence of these five categories of clinging. It is impossible to find anything of substance or permanence in human beings, nor in any manifest thing.

Enlightenment is the primary goal of Buddhism and accordingly, enlightenment is the most important issue in Buddhist practice. There

are two critical steps in the pursuit of enlightenment, firstly one must recognize that everyone has potential for enlightenment, and secondly, one needs to find a method or means of practice to apprehend enlightenment. In recognizing the universality of ‘tathāgata-garbha’ or Buddha nature, we can have confidence in our inherent human potential for enlightenment; while a variety of yogas and suitable ‘practice’ methods are readily available to guide seekers to an experience of fundamental unity.

Some scholars insist that ‘tathāgatagarbha’ does not belong to Buddhism, believing it to be similar to ‘substantialism’, but how can ‘tathāgatagarbha’ be considered ‘substance’ when human existence is subject to Causality Laws?

Tathāgatagarbha is the central idea in both the *Awakening of Mahayana Faith* and the *Adamantine Absorption Sutra* (金剛三昧經; *Vajrasamādhi-sūtra*), and any discussion of Wonhyo’s philosophy would need by necessity to make reference to these two works. In his two works the *Commentaries on Awakening of Mahayana Faith* (大乘起信論疏) and the *Exposition of the Adamantine Absorption Sutra* (金剛三昧經論), it is obvious that ‘tathāgatagarbha’ is an essential thesis and strongly characteristic of his philosophy.

A legitimate religion needs both a philosophical, theoretical foundation and a religious or faith ground. These two together provide balance and counter-balance, like the wings of a bird, and ensure strength, stability and vitality. Maintaining balance is critical, as an over-emphasis on theoretical aspects risks ‘bogging down’ in constructs that lack the wisdom of experience, while too much emphasis on religious aspects can give rise to a blind and unenlightened faith. Buddhism is quite clear in its insistence on the importance of both philosophical and religious aspects, which is why it holds a strong position as a world religion.

The two works which are characteristic of Wonhyo's philosophy, the *Commentaries on Awakening of Mahayana Faith* and *Exposition of the Adamantine Absorption Sutra*, are representative of a sound balance of theory and practice.

## II. Foundations of Tathāgatagarbha

In enlightenment terms, tathāgatagarbha thought encompasses both cause and effect. The origin of tathāgatagarbha can be traced back to the Mahasanghika School's (大衆部; School of the majority or community) idea of 'svacitta suddhi (心性本淨)' - nature of mind is originally pure but becomes tainted when defiled with 'agantuka-mala (客塵; guest-dust).' In this context 'svacitta suddhi' is interpreted as 'essential nature or original nature of mind', rather than a temporary, provisional mind. According to this theory, mind being originally pure is temporarily contaminated. However, when defilements are eliminated, the virtuous 'bodhi' character will spontaneously reveal itself.

From an historical Buddhist perspective the idea of 'svacitta suddhi' is similar to Mahayana philosophy but this idea continued to develop. There is an explanation in the *Maha-vaipulya-maha-samnipata-sūtra* (大方等大集經; Great Collection Scripture) and in the *Saddharmapundarīka sūtra* (妙法蓮華經), 'svacitta suddhi' refers to the 'true reality of all Dharma (諸法實相).' The *Buddhāvataṃsaka-mahāvaiṣṭya-sūtra* (大方廣佛華嚴經) also expounds that 'true reality (實相)' is the 'One mind dharmadhatu (一心法界).' And furthermore, buddha-nature, and the accomplishing of buddhahood of 'icchāntika', are also spoken of in the *Mahāparinirvāna-sūtra* (大般涅槃經). Thus, 'Pure Mind theory', which derives from the idea that 'secular truth is illusory, while Buddhist teachings are real truth (俗妄真實),' is also cognizant with the theory of the 'storehouse consciousness (ālaya-vijñāna).' The Pure Mind theory finally developed into the idea of 'storehouse consciousness (ālaya-vijñāna)' and tathāgatagarbha. Both streams of thought derive

from mind and consciousness theories such as root consciousness theory (māla-vijñāna) of the Mahasamghika School, individual existence (pudgala) of Vatsiputriyah, and the Mahisasaka doctrine of aggregates.

As all of these theories are similar in character to the ‘combined consciousness of true and false mind (眞妄和合識),’ they can all be linked to tathāgatagarbha theory. Thus we can assume that the *Awakening of Mahayana Faith* follows this same course. The six-consciousness theory cannot in itself fully explain subject, basis, and homogeneous continuity of Dependent Origination of Suffering (continuous transmigration; 流轉緣起), concerning the arising and ending of suffering, and thereby the ending of the round of rebirth by escaping the backwards regression into transmigration. Thus, ‘svacitta suddhi’ and the theory of storehouse consciousness (ālaya-vijñāna) are essential in explaining subject, basis, and homogeneous continuity.

‘Dependent Origination of Cessation (還滅緣起)’ can be explained from the view of ‘svacitta suddhi’, while ‘Dependent Origination of Suffering (流轉緣起)’ is grounded in the theory of ‘storehouse consciousness (ālaya-vijñāna)’ as ‘ālaya-vijñāna’ is characterized by the ‘combined consciousness of true and false mind (眞妄和合識).’ This corresponds exactly with the ‘Tathāgatagarbha’ theory of ‘dependent co-arising’ in the *Awakening of Mahayana Faith*, and gives a basis for understanding ‘storehouse consciousness’ as essentially the same as the ‘combined consciousness of true and false mind.’ Until recently there have been basically two popular viewpoints about causality theory as described in the *Awakening of Mahayana Faith*. The first being the tathāgatagarbha theory of causality (如來藏緣起說), and the second, the theory of production from ‘tathata’ through action of causation (眞如緣起說). Tathāgatagarbha theory of causality first came to light in the *Commentary on Awakening of Mahayana Faith*, with Fazang’s (法藏) four kinds of classification. But Fazang’s theory of causality is considered to

be closer to the theory of production from 'tathata' through action of causation, while Wonhyo consistently held to his view of the tathāgata-garbha theory of causality. This view is clear in his interpretation of the *Awakening of Mahayana Faith* 'storehouse consciousness (ālaya-vijñāna)':

Storehouse consciousness (ālaya-vijñāna) accommodates all things from secular phenomena to trans-secular truth and also produces all such things.<sup>1</sup>

In the *Commentary on Awakening of Faith*, Wonhyo explains how 'storehouse consciousness' subsumes and produces all things.

Both aspects of One Mind are subsumptive. There is no productive character in the True Thusness Gate (眞如門). Storehouse consciousness produces arising and ceasing. There is productive character in Arising and Ceasing Gate (生滅門).<sup>2</sup>

The mind aspect of 'true thusness' is enlightenment. It is also the manifestation of the 'dharmakaya,' embodiment of Truth and Law, and that is why there is no production as it is completely liberated from 'samsara' cycles of life and death. However in the mind's 'arising and ceasing,' there is this productive character that cyclically arises and ceases. This repetition of production and extinction is what we call 'dependent co-arising.' Since 'tathāgata-garbha' plays a main role in that process, we call it 'Dependent Co-arising from Tathāgatagarbha (如來藏緣起). Wonhyo speaks of this in his comment on the *Lankavatara-sūtra* (入楞伽經):

Nirvana (calmness and extinction) is One Mind (一心) and

1 此識有二種義。能攝一切法生一切法。云何為二。一者覺義。二者不覺義。(T.32.576b10-11)

2 又上二門但說攝義。以眞如門無能生義故。今於此識亦說生義。生滅門中有能生義故。(T.44.208c22-24)

One Mind is tathāgatagarbha.<sup>3</sup>

Wonhyo explains that this teaching combines the two aspects of mind, which are True Thusness Aspect of the Mind (心真如門) and Arising and Ceasing Aspect of the Mind (心生滅門):

Here the True Thusness Mind Aspect (心真如門) is interpreted the perfect stillness of the mind (寂滅), as One Mind (一心), while the Arising and Ceasing Aspect of the Mind (心生滅門) is interpreted as ‘tathāgatagarbha, One Mind.’<sup>4</sup>

Owing to this explanation scholars and others believe that Wonhyo’s view of ‘dependent co-arising’ is from the tathāgata-garbha perspective, rather than as ‘production from suchness through action of causation.’

Historically, ‘tathāgatagarbha’ and ‘storehouse consciousness (ālaya-vijñāna)’ theories developed independently of each other and from quite different sources. But ultimately the two strands of thought come together in the *Awakening of Mahayana Faith*. In short, ‘tathāgatagarbha’ is the original face or true nature of ‘svacitta suddhi,’ as ‘continuity of the original character,’ while ‘storehouse consciousness (ālaya-vijñāna)’ is a phenomenal function of mind, as wholesome, unwholesome and neutral in character.

### III. Starting with the Awakening of Mahāyana Faith

As we’ve already established, the common belief is that Wonhyo’s main philosophy is founded on tathāgata-garbha thought. But although he developed his own independent ideas he was also influenced by

3 寂滅者名爲一心 一心者名爲如來藏。(T.16.519a01-02)

4 又此一心體有本覺。而隨無明動作生滅。故於此門如來之性隱而不顯。名如來藏。如經言如來藏者是善不善因。能遍興造一切趣生。譬如伎兒變現諸趣。如是等義在生滅門。(T.44.206c18-c22)

others, in particular, Paramārtha (真諦, 499-569), and to a lesser extent by Huiyuan (慧遠, 523-592), Tiantai (天台, 538-597), Jizang (吉藏, 549-623) and Xuanzang (玄奘, 600-664). When he quotes from the *Compendium of the Great Vehicle* (攝大乘論) or the *Abhidharma Storehouse Treatise* (阿毘達磨俱舍論), he draws on translations from Paramārtha's version which is strongly influenced by 'tathāgata-garbha dependent co-arising.' If we take a closer look at Paramārtha's writings, we can see how he intentionally emphasized tathāgatagarbha. He often refers to 'amala consciousness (阿末羅識)' which is not used in the pure, traditional consciousness-only theory. 'Amala consciousness' is another name for 'tathāgata-garbha' and so this strongly suggests that Paramārtha's studies were largely based on tathāgatagarbha thought. As Wonhyo was deeply influenced by Paramārtha, there are many references to tathāgatagarbha in his writings.

Tathāgata-garbha thought was established during the middle period of Mahayana Buddhism on the basis of Madhyamaka theory, and 'Tathāgata-garbha' and 'Yogācāra' philosophies were developed from Madhyamaka. The rise of the Yogācāra School was inevitable because the Madhyamaka School misinterpreted the idea of emptiness (空 *sūnya*), but the Yogācāra School was also criticized for its attachment to existence (有 *bhāva*). Wonhyo's philosophy is an attempt to synthesize both Consciousness-only theory and Madhyamaka theory by emphasizing the tathāgatagarbha of the *Awakening of Mahāyāna Faith* (大乘起信論).

In his emphasis on 'tathāgatagarbha', rather than 'consciousness-only' and Madhyamaka theory, Wonhyo tried to unite all elements of Buddhist thought under the one pillar, One Mind (一心), which is also the main idea in the *Awakening of Mahāyāna Faith*. His intention is well reflected in his writings, the *Expository Notes on Awakening of Faith* (大乘起信論別記, *Daeseung gisillon byeolgi*) which is the second of his two influential commentaries on the *Awakening of Mahāyāna Faith*.



Wonhyo's great interest in 'tathāgatagarbha' is also evident in other of his works, the *Daehyedogyong-jong-yo* (大慧度經宗要), *Beopwhagyong-jong-yo* (法華經宗要), *Muryangsugyong-jong-yo* (無量壽經宗要), and *Yusim-allakdo* (遊心安樂道). And in the *Essentials of the Nirvāna Sūtra* (涅槃宗要), his definition of 'buddhahood' again reflects tathāgatagarbha.

Instead of following the path of Madhyamaka or Yogācāra, Wonhyo tried to unify all Buddhist thought from the perspective of tathāgata-garbha thought in the *Awakening of Mahāyāna Faith*. His intention in this regard is clearly demonstrated in his *Expository Notes on Awakening Faith* (*Daeseung gisillon byeolgi*, 大乘起信論別記 HBJ 1.677-697; T.44.226a-240c). This is the second of Wonhyo's two influential commentaries on the *Awakening of Mahāyāna Faith* and is often referred to simply as *Byeolgi* (別記) as follows:

What is the *Awakening of Mahāyāna Faith*? It accepts both denial and affirmation. *Mūlamadhyamaka-kārikā* (中觀論; Ch. *Zhong-guan-lun*) and *Dvādaśanikāya-śāstra* (十二門論; Ch. *Shi-er-men-lun*) denies all attachments and denies even the denial itself. So it cannot be a universal theory because it emphasizes only denial. On the other hand. The *Mahāyāna saṃparigraha-śāstra* (攝大乘論; Ch. *She-da-sheng-lun*) and The *Yogācāra-bhūmi-śāstra* (瑜伽師地論; Ch. *Yu-qie-shi-di-lun*) emphasizes only affirmation. So it cannot be a universal theory because it one-sidedly emphasizes affirmation. However, the *Awakening of Mahāyāna Faith* is vast, benevolent and mysterious. It uses both affirmation and negation, whereby he repeatedly negates until finally reaching affirmation. In this process of repeated negation and affirmation wrong theories are apprehended before attaining the ideal final conclusion. Thus, this is considered to be a harmonizing commentator of all thoughts.<sup>5</sup>

5 其為論也。無所不立。無所不破。如中觀論十二門論等。遍破諸執。亦破於破。而不還許能破所破。是

In his *Commentary on the Awakening of Mahāyāna Faith*, he uses both affirmation and negation, whereby he repeatedly negates until finally reaching affirmation. In this process of repeated negation and affirmation wrong theories are apprehended before attaining the ideal final conclusion. Thus, Wonhyo is considered to be a harmonizing commentator of all thought.

Wonhyo regards both Madhyamaka and Yogācāra theories as extreme views, as Madhyamaka theory negates everything, without distinction, whereas Yogācāra theory affirms everything, without distinction. Awakening of Mahāyāna Faith's tathagata-garbha thought, on the other hand, harmonizes the extremes of both theories. Historically, Madhyamaka thought appeared as a means to refute existence (有 bhāva) theory popular with the Abhidharma sects. Nāgārjuna (150-250) established his school on the foundations of Buddha and Dependent Origination as follows:

I salute him, the fully enlightened One, best of speakers; who preached non-ceasing and non-arising, non-annihilation and non-permanence, non-identity and non-difference, non-appearance and non-disappearance, dependent arising, appeasement of obsessions and that which is auspicious.<sup>6</sup>

And further:

Everything arising from causes and conditions (hetu-pratyāya) is *sūnyatā* (emptiness 空性). Causality is a provisional name (prajñapti 假名), figurative designation (upacāra 假說) and middle way (madhyama-pratipad 中道).<sup>7</sup>

謂往而不遍論也。其瑜伽論攝大乘等。通立深淺。判於法門。而不融違自所立法。是謂與而不奪論也。今此論者。既智既仁。亦玄亦傳。無不立而自遣。無不破而還許。而還許者。顯彼往者往極而遍立。而自遣者。明此與者窮與而奪。是謂諸論之祖宗。群諍之評主也。(T.44.226b04-b12)

6 不生亦不滅 不常亦不斷 不一亦不異 不來亦不出 能說是因緣 善滅諸戲論 我稽首禮佛 諸說中第一。(T.30.1b14-17)

Nāgārjuna and his disciple Āryadeva, established the Middle Way to avoid the two extremes but their later successors fell into erroneous observation of Emptiness.

The Yogācāra School's rise in popularity was largely due to this erroneous view of Emptiness, but the Yogācāra School conversely, fell into wrong view of existence (bhāva 有). Hence, Wonhyo tried to harmonize the difference of these two views by emphasizing the *Awakening of Mahāyāna Faith* view of tathāgata-garbha.

Many of Wonhyo's writings emphasize tathāgata-garbha thought. For example, in the *Daehyedogyeong-jong-yo* (大慧度經宗要; Doctrinal Essentials of the Heart Sutra), he interprets 'wisdom (prajñā)' of the three prajñās (三般若) in *Prajñāpāramitā-sūtra* (般若經) as: (a) 實相般若 wisdom in its essence or reality; (b) 觀照般若 wisdom that contemplates things as they are; (c) 方便般若 or 文字般若 wisdom that knows things in their temporary and changing condition; and he concludes that Tathāgata-garbha is true 'wisdom in its essence or reality.'

The *Beophwagyeong-jong-yo* (法華經宗要; Doctrinal Essentials of the Lotus Sutra) also deals with Tathāgata-garbha thought. The *Sūtra of the Lotus of Wonderful Dharma* (妙法蓮華經; *Saddharmapūṇārīka-sūtra*) teaches that all sentient beings return to the Single Buddha-vehicle (一佛乘 Buddha-yāna)<sup>8</sup> by 'uniting the three vehicles in one (會三歸一).' Tathāgata-garbha thought originates here in the Single Buddha-vehicle philosophy.

7 衆因緣生法 我說即是無 亦爲是假名 亦是中道義。(T.30.33b11-12)

8 The one Buddha-yāna. The One Vehicle, i.e. Mahāyāna, which contains the final or complete law of the Buddha and not merely a part, or preliminary stage, as in Hinayana. Mahayanists claim it as the perfect and only way to the shore of parinirvāṇa. It is especially the doctrine of the 法華經 Lotus Sutra.

Wonhyo's Tathāgata-garbha thought can be sourced in the *Myoheop-yeunwhagyeong-jong-yo* (妙法蓮華經宗要; *Doctrinal Essentials of the Lotus of Wonderful Dharma Sūtra*) where he explains that all practitioners of the Three Vehicles - the four kinds of voice hearers, sentient beings from four kinds of birth - will be sons and daughters of Buddha in the Single Buddha-vehicle. This is how Wonhyo arrived at the belief that all sentient beings can be enlightened.

All practitioners of the Three Vehicles - the four kinds of voice hearers and sentient beings from the four kinds of birth - will be in the Single Buddha-vehicle. They are all sons and daughters of the Buddha and bodhisattvas because they all have buddhahood and can succeed to Buddha. Even sentient beings who lack the nature of buddhahood can become Buddhas.<sup>9</sup>

Wonhyo's Tathāgata-garbha thought is also well reflected in the *Muryangsugyeong-jong-yo* (無量壽經宗要; *Doctrinal Essentials of the Sūtra of Immeasurable Life*) and in the *Yusim-allakdo* (遊心安樂道). He claims in the *Muryangsugyeong-jong-yo* that "four doubts arise from misunderstanding four cognitions (四智; four wisdoms) which, in Yogācāra, are the four kinds of pure cognition attained on full Buddha enlightenment." The four are: 'great mirror cognition (大圓鏡智),' 'cognition of equality in nature (平等性智),' 'wondrous observation cognition (妙觀察智),' and 'cognition with unrestricted activity (成所作智).'

An excellent comparative analysis of the distinctive character of these four cognitions is articulated by Wonhyo in his commentary on the *Sūtra of Immeasurable Life* (T.37.130a25-131b29). Let quote some of The following is an excerpt from the *Muryangsugyeong-jong-yo* in relation to Tathāgata-garbha thought:

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9 相略說有二。謂能乘人及所乘法。此經所說一乘人者。三乘行人。四種聲聞。三界所有四生衆生。並是能乘一佛乘人。皆爲佛子。悉是菩薩。以皆有佛性當紹佛位故。乃至無性有情亦皆當作佛故。(T.34.871a10-a14)

The fourth doubt comes from confusion about whether it is really possible for mirror cognition to perfectly illuminate all referents. This doubt arises when one thinks that, since the universe is limitless its worlds are also limitless, and since its worlds are limitless sentient beings are also limitless. Since sentient beings are limitless, their mental functions, faculties, desires, temperaments, and so forth, are also without limits. This being the case, how is it possible to have exhaustive knowledge of everything? And does one come to know all things through gradual cultivation, or suddenly and without cultivation? If it is that we come to know them suddenly, without cultivation, then all unenlightened worldlings should also experience this kind of cognition, given that no special causes seem to be required. But if it is that one finally attains full cognition after a period of gradual cultivation, then how is it possible that all objects are limitless, since to be limitless and yet exhaustible is contradictory. In such a case practitioners would advance and then regress without arriving at a state of completion. So how could they attain the universal cognition known as all-inclusive cognition (一切種智)? The unequalled, most excellent cognition (無等無倫最上勝智) that is named in the *Sūtra of Immeasurable Life* is what overcomes these two obstacles.

This unequalled, most excellent cognition (無等無倫最上勝智) has a special dimension not seen in the above three; and 'One should merely have faith in it as it cannot be apprehended through reason. It exists beyond the two truths, residing in non-duality.' Then, how does one generate faith in this cognition, given that the worlds, limitless though they may be, do not exist outside the universe. In the same way, a myriad objects, without limit, are also contained within the One Mind (一心). Buddha-cognition, free from any mark, returns to the mind-source. Cognition and one mind, combining together,

are not two. Just as Buddha wisdom without form returns to original mind, so too, wisdom and mind are one.<sup>10</sup>

Wonhyo explains how Tathāgata-garbha thought settles the fourth doubt of 'great mirror cognition (大圓鏡智).' This highest wisdom doubt of the 'great mirror cognition,' concerns the question of how to perceive the distinctions between all individual phenomena. Wonhyo theory of equalness has some basis in this 'great mirror cognition (大圓鏡智),' the unequalled and most excellent cognition (無等無倫最上勝智) which is all-inclusive cognition (一切種智). Even though doubts are boundless nevertheless, they are all subsumed into One mind. So, based on the idea of Tathāgata-garbha in *Awakening of Mahāyāna Faith*, Wonhyo concludes that 'initial enlightenment (始覺; the first phenomenal actualization of enlightenment in this lifetime)' is not different from 'original enlightenment (本覺; basic Buddha-nature of sentient beings), and Wonhyo frankly reveals that *Awakening of Mahāyāna Faith* is his source for this thought.

#### IV. Concluding with the *Exposition of the Adamantine Absorption Sutra*

There has been much speculation about when and where the *Adamantine Absorption Sutra* (金剛三昧經; *Vajrasamādhi-sūtra*) and the *Awakening of Mahāyāna Faith* originated. There is no question as to their Buddhist origin as both texts are reflective of the central theme of Buddhist thought, however, it is not clear as to whether both texts came from India or not. The *Adamantine Absorption Sutra* has been criticized as a spurious scripture. Many have debated over who wrote it,

10 第四疑者。謂疑大圓鏡智。遍照一切境義。云何生疑。謂作是言。虛空無邊故。世界亦無邊。世界無邊故。衆生亦無邊。衆生無邊故。心行差別。根欲性等。皆是無邊際。云何於此。能得盡知。爲當漸漸修習而知。爲當不修。忽然頓照。若不修習而頓照者。一切凡夫皆應等照。等不修故。無異因故。若便漸修。終漸得盡知者。即一切境非無邊際。無邊有盡。不應理故。如是進退。皆不成立。云何得普照。名一切種智。爲治如是兩關疑難故。安立無等無倫最上勝智。欲明如是大圓鏡智。超過三智。而無等類。二諦之外。獨在無二。兩關二表。迢然無關。只應仰信。不可比量。故名無等無倫最上勝智。云何於此起仰信者。譬如世界無邊。不出虛空之外。如是萬境無限。咸入一心之內。佛智離相。歸於心原。智與一心。渾同無二。以始覺者。即同本覺。故無一境。出此智外。(T.37.131a26-b14)

and when and where it was written; one speculation is that Wonhyo was the author and that his *Commentary on Awakening of Mahāyāna Faith* (大乘起信論疏) strongly influenced the writings of both the *Adamantine Absorption Sutra* and the *Exposition of the Adamantine Absorption Sutra* (金剛三昧經論). It is patently obvious that Tathāgatagarbha of the *Awakening of Mahāyāna Faith* is soundly reflected in both the *Adamantine Absorption Sutra* and in the *Exposition of the Adamantine Absorption Sutra*.

A close study of the *Awakening of Mahāyāna Faith* reveals that One Mind (一心) has many names, according to different perspectives and various viewpoints. ‘One Mind as truth’ is ‘true thusness’ or ‘suchness (眞如 tathata),’ while, as a personal character, it is called ‘innately pure mind (自性清淨心),’ mind that is inherently undefiled, as understood by Mahāyāna schools. It is also expressed as the innately pure mind (性淨心 or 本性清淨心) and in its relationship with defilement (煩惱 klesa), it is the ‘womb of the tathāgata (如來藏 tathāgatagarbha).’ Where it is interpreted as subjective and without defilement, it is ‘original’ or ‘innate enlightenment (本覺).’

Wonhyo’s ‘Tathāgatagarbha’ thought, largely influenced by the *Awakening of Mahāyāna Faith*, is introduced into the *Adamantine Absorption Sutra* and the *Exposition of the Adamantine Absorption Sutra* and then expounded in his own outlook on Buddhist practice.

As is known, enlightenment and non-enlightenment are both aspects in ‘storehouse consciousness,’ while enlightenment, is both initial enlightenment (始覺) and original enlightenment (本覺). In the chapter ‘Entering Absolute Truth (入實際品)’ true ‘thusness’ is substituted with the ‘arising and ceasing’ aspect of mind, while the chapter ‘True Nature Emptiness (眞性空品)’ expounds on the true nature of ‘suchness.’ ‘Suchness’ is itself emptiness in terms of true nature. It corresponds both to ‘suchness beyond language’ and ‘suchness shown through language.’ In the chapter ‘Tathāgatagarbha (如來藏品),’ Wonhyo considers ‘tathāgatagarbha’ to be the completion of the practice of

Original Enlightenment; this is different from the 'tathāgatagarbha' of the *śrīmāladevī-siṃhanānda-sūtra* (勝鬘師子吼一乘大方便方廣經) and the *Awakening of Faith*.

True Dharma which comprises both absolute truth and mundane truth is called Tathāgatagarbha because that is the ultimate place where all Buddhas return. (T.34.996a)

Here 'tathāgatagarbha' is the stage of attainment or realization, rather than a causal condition as the course followed until realization, and here it means the same as One Mind (一心 *eka-citta*). Even though the unenlightened seek and indulge the five-sensory fields and the single thought field, we are bound to return to One Mind by way of 'anuttara-samyaksambodhi-citta', in other words by breaking free of all attachment and harmonizing both cognizing subject and cognized object. This is the completion of practice in attainment of wondrous enlightenment. And this, Wonhyo intends as a finishing touch to 'Tathāgatagarbha'.

## V. Conclusion

Buddhism regards mind as Master and Buddhist philosophy and practice have continued to develop steadily in this spirit from ancient times. Without mind, we can recognize nothing. Both phenomenal and substantial aspects of all things can be recognized by mind. But because the mind structure is very complicated and mysterious, it is exceedingly difficult to discern True Mind as it is, which is why we need Buddhist practice. In attaining True Mind we can penetrate everything in the universe and see all things just as they are.

From ancient times Indian spiritual seekers have developed yoga methods to aid in the apprehension of one's true self. These methods have been developed in the forest, not in a laboratory. As enlightenment is the primary goal of Buddhism, recognizing our



‘Tathāgatagarbha or Buddha nature, can give us confidence in our inherent potential for enlightenment, while yoga methods can guide us in seeking the ultimate goal of liberation from suffering and freedom from the samsara, the cycle of life and death.

In Buddhism, the spiritual power to achieve liberation is referred to as ‘the womb of the tathagata (tathāgata-garbha).’ The five aggregates (panca-skandha), a collection of the five compositional elements of existence, are based on the fundamental Buddhist principles of non-self (anātman) and emptiness (sūnyatā). Thus we should not overlook the possibility that ‘tathāgatagarbha’ is also based on the same philosophy.

Let’s consider a metaphor as an aid to understanding ‘tathāgatagarbha’. Even though a persimmon is a persimmon having only persimmon characteristics, yet what is referred to as the summer persimmon is an ‘unripe persimmon’ with a sour taste, while the autumn persimmon is known as a ‘mellow persimmon’ and tastes sweet. Why do they taste different when they are the same fruit? An astringent persimmon will become sweet provided it has the necessary conditions during summer, such as fertilizer and protection from blight and harmful insects. So it is in our practice.

‘Tathāgatagarbha’ is original and inherent nature; this nature is the same in an unenlightened person and an enlightened Buddha. Hence it follows that anyone may become a Buddha with right and skilful practice. In an unenlightened person ‘tathāgatagarbha’ is the seed, while it is ripened fruit to a Buddha. So how we live and practice has great significance. In this regards Wonhyo concludes that ‘tathāgatagarbha’ can point us directly to our true self, which is the ultimate goal of our practice.

## **Glossary of Chinese Terms**

(K=Korean, C=Chinese, J=Japanese, S=Sanskrit)

Agantuka-mala (S) 客塵

- Anātman (S) 無我  
Ālaya-vijñāna (S) 阿賴耶識  
Beopwhagyong-jongyo (K) 法華經宗要  
Bhāva (S) 有  
Buddhāvataṃsaka-mahāvaiṣṭya-sūtra (S) 大方廣佛華嚴經  
Buddha-yāna (S) 一佛乘  
Daehyedogyong-jongyo (K) 大慧度經宗要  
Daeseung gisillon byeolgi (K) 大乘起信論別記  
Dharmadhatu (S) 法界  
Eka-citta (S) 一心  
Fazang (C) 法藏  
Huiyuan (C) 慧遠  
Jizang (C) 吉藏  
Klesa (S) 煩惱  
Lankavatara-sūtra (S) 入楞伽經  
Madhyamaka (S) 中觀  
Madhyamaka-śāstra (S) 中論  
Madhyama-pratipad 中道  
Maha-vaiṣṭya-maha-saṃnipata-sūtra (S) 大方等大集經  
Mahāparinirvāna-sūtra (S) 大般涅槃經  
Mahāsaṃghika, Mahāsaṃghika (S) 大眾部  
Muryangsugyong-jongyo (K) 無量壽經宗要  
Myobeop-yeunwhagyeong-jongyo (K) 妙法蓮華經宗要  
Panca-skandha (S) 五蘊  
Paramārtha (S) 真諦  
Prajñapti (S) 假名  
Pudgala (S) 補特伽羅  
Ratnagotravibhāga-mahāyānottaratantra-śāstra (S) 究竟一乘寶性論  
Saddharmapundarika sūtra (S) 妙法蓮華經  
Sūnyatā (S) 空  
Svacitta suddhi (S) 心性本淨  
Śrīmalādevī-siṃhanānda-sūtra (S) 勝鬘師子吼一乘大方便方廣經

Tathāgatagarbha (S) 如來藏  
 Tathatā (S) 眞如  
 Tiantai (C) 天台  
 Upacāra (S) 假說  
 Vajrasamādhi-sūtra (S) 金剛三昧經  
 Vatsiputriyah (S) 犢子部  
 Wonhyo (K) 元曉  
 Xuanzang (C) 玄奘  
 Yusimanrakdo (K) 遊心安樂道

## Abbreviations

- HBJ *Hanguk bulgyo jeonso* (韓國佛教全書: The Collected Texts of Korean Buddhism). Seoul: Dongguk University Press, 1984.
- T *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* (大正新修大藏經: Japanese Edition of the Buddhist Canon). Ed. by Takakasu-Junjirō (高楠順次郎) et al. Tokyo: Taishō-Issaikyō-Kankōkai, 1924-1935.

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