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# Some Contemporary Dilemmas of Korean Buddhism: A Critical Review of the Jogye Order's 2018 Periodic Report

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**Abstract:** According to the Jogye Order's 2018 periodic report, the average age of monks is increasing and the number of monks is decreasing. In order to offer solutions to these problems, the report presents and analyzes by dividing those themes into six sub-topics, namely: decrease of births; decrease of postulants; aging of postulants; rapidly changing educational environment; teaching aptitude of educators; education budget. The report lists a variety of information derived from the raw data and offers suggestions regarding these six topics. However, the report has several failings, as the research misunderstands the data at times, and their report does not present proper interpretations and concrete solutions. The final suggestions that the report proposes to increase the number of monks seem to be misguided and ineffective. This article critically scrutinizes the Jogye Order's latest report to identify and correct some data misinterpretations and offer new insights that the authors believe would help our leaders come up with better solutions.

**Keywords:** the Jogye Order; decreased number of monks; aging monks; education for monks; educational innovation

## 1. Introduction

Buddhist monks are suffering negative public perceptions in modern Korean society. As the media continues to report the moral corruption and sectarianism of the Jogye Order (조계종), the main Buddhist sect in Korea,<sup>1</sup> the public simply does not regard Buddhist ordination as a decision to be respected.

For example, a few years ago, a video clip of monks in the Jogye Order gambling while drinking and smoking at a hotel was released on the news.<sup>2</sup> More recently, the violence and sex scandals of the Jogye Order monks were reported by a famous television program.<sup>3</sup> Regardless of the veracity of these reports and accusations, the religious authority and public respect of the Jogye Order have been seriously damaged. Another example would be Hyun Gak (현각), a Harvard-educated American who became a famous monk of the Jogye Order and was highly respected by the public in the late 1990s. Through the media in 2016, he announced that he would no longer follow the Jogye Order, even though he would maintain his life as a Buddhist monk. When leaving Korea, he strongly criticized the

<sup>1</sup> In general, the Jogye Order represents Korean Buddhism. With the liberation of Korea in 1945, a movement to restore genuine Korean Buddhism took place, and consequently the Jogye Order was established in 1962. The title was named after the Jogye mountain in China which was a hot spot of the Chinese Chan tradition. Although there are 146 Buddhist sects in modern Korean society, the Jogye Order is the biggest (Ko 2018, pp. 98–107).

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=THrfsZaXXnQ>.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4wb6j-qvP1c>.

anachronism of Korean Buddhism. His criticism of Korean Buddhism was in fact directed toward the Jogye Order (Kim 2016; Lee 2016, available online).

Indeed, the news above caused quite a stir and the public strongly condemned the outdated perspectives and corruption of the monks of the Jogye Order. Since the Jogye Order has been neither determined nor effective in coping with these scandals, the criticism toward the monks of the Jogye Order still remains strong. Subsequently, the public begins to view the Buddhist ordination more negatively.

To address this negative perception of the Jogye Order by society at large and facilitate comprehensive discussions to improve the Order's educational system in line with the decreasing number of monks, the periodic seminar titled 'A Study for the Improvement of Sangha Education of the Jogye Order' (조계종 승가교육 개선방안: hereafter 'the seminar' or 'the report') was held on 12 July 2018, at the International Conference Hall of the Korean Buddhist History and Culture Museum (한국불교역사문화기념관 국제회의장). This seminar was hosted by the Education Committee (대한불교 조계종 교육원), the division responsible for the education of the Jogye Order monks.

The Jogye Order publishes an annual report <Statistics of the Jogye Order>. However, the statistics have not been released to the public since 2008. The report discussed in this article reveals specific changes in the number of monks. Of course, there have been reports on the decreasing number of monks before. However, the report examined in this article is meaningful and valuable in that it is an official report published directly by the Education Committee of the Jogye Order in charge of teaching monks.

The main theme of the seminar report was about how to encourage more people to be ordained. This theme is discussed by the following six divided sub-topics: (1) decrease of births, (2) decrease of postulants, (3) aging of postulants, (4) rapidly changing educational environment, (5) teaching aptitude of educators, and (6) education budget. The first three topics discuss the membership crisis of the Jogye Order. There has been a considerable reduction in the number of the ordained, and the average age of postulants is increasing. It has subsequently led to a depletion of monks entering the priesthood and providing dharma preaching in the field. The remaining topics focus on discussing the educational crisis of the Jogye Order. This problem originates from the outdated educational system of the Jogye Order. Given that the contemporary educational system of Korean society is changing rapidly, the Jogye Order has failed to catch up with this trend. Finally, the report concludes with several suggestions for the improvement of Buddhist education for monks.

While some of the contents of the report are noteworthy, many other discussions are less persuasive. The report offers various data and figures, but it is unclear how they are closely related to the main topics. In addition, it is difficult to grasp the intended objectives of the report because its description and organization are vague and incoherent.

In this article, we will critically examine the validity of the analysis and the resolution of the latest Jogye Order report. For the facts and points that we identify as problematic as we analyze the report, we will try to offer more accurate interpretations and share solutions that we think would be more viable. Given that the periodic seminars of the Jogye Order have never been open to the public, the reports of the seminars have not been examined critically so far. Therefore, various discussions in this article will offer a unique opportunity to highlight and critically analyze the challenging situation of the Jogye Order particularly in the field of education.

This paper is bound to be very limited because it is not intended to provide solutions. Nevertheless, our critical analysis of the report will reveal the fact that the Jogye Order does not have a clear understanding of the fundamental problems of its educational crisis. We also hope that our critical review will help the community of the Jogye Order revisit the crisis in recruiting postulants so that it can come up with better solutions.

## 2. Summary of the Report

For our discussion, we will begin by summarizing the Jogye Order's latest report. The report announces that the decreased number of monks is an inevitable consequence of the decrease in the national birth rate. It states that the decreased number of births from the mid to late 1980s, along with the modern trend of ignoring religion, is decreasing the number of monks. In the past decade, the number of Buddhist ordinations has decreased significantly. In 1999, there were a total of 532, with 306 males and 226 females. However, in 2015, that figure was more than halved to 130 males and 74 females. There were 104 males and 53 females in 2016, and 94 males and 57 females in 2017. At this rate, the annual postulant rate will reach zero by 2025. This decreased number of the ordained has led to a decline in enrollment at the Monastic Seminary (강원, *Kangwŏn*), which means that no one will be admitted to the Monastic Seminary in the next few years.

In fact, the problem of the decreased number of monks is not something new (Jackson 2018; Lew 2004; Lew 2016, pp. 361–86; Park 2016, pp. 323–59). This is due to a combination of multiple factors such as the low birth rate, aging, and indifference toward religion. The Jogye Order has prepared several self-rescue measures to recruit more postulants. For example, the Jogye Order founded the "Special Committee for Improving the Ordination System (출가활성화추진 특별위원회)" in 2016 to encourage ordination. The Jogye Order planned to provide educational and health benefits to those who received ordination, and it even planned to provide full tuition fees for bachelor's degrees. Although these measures have only had very limited success, they show how seriously the Jogye Order is considering the problem of the decreased number of monks.

After serious consideration, the report concludes that the basic educational institutions should be reorganized, which is summarized as below:

- Reduce Monastic Seminary (강원, *Kangwŏn*) from fourteen institutions to six: four for male, two for female.
- Let Joong-Ang Sangha University (중앙승가대학교) be the only basic education institution (reduced from four institutions to one).
- Integrate Joong-Ang Sangha University into Dongguk University (동국대학교).
- Convert the Elementary Seon Meditative Institute (선원, *Seonwŏn*) into a two-year educational institution to foster future monk leaders.

However, the panelists who attended the seminar remained negative on the proposed reform of the Jogye Order. To sum up, the objections were as follows: Firstly, the Order's suggestions cannot lead to a fundamental solution. Rather, the goal is to revive the traditional Buddhist education of the Monastic Seminary, which mainly focuses on Buddhist texts such as the *Chimungyeonghun* (치문경훈) and develop the seminaries into basic educational institutions. Dongguk University and Joong-Ang Sangha University should remain as separate institutions offering Buddhist studies. Secondly, a unified educational system is not always the best solution. There is a risk that the traditional Buddhist education will be impoverished by the institutional integration. Thirdly, it is very unreasonable to reduce the amount of education that monks receive. This possibly poses a risk of undermining the very foundation of the Monastic Seminary.

Indeed, at the seminar, most of the participants admitted that the educational system for monks should be modernized in line with contemporary educational trends. However, the majority of participants opposed the reorganization of basic education institutions in the same way that the report suggested. This means that there are conflicting views within the Jogye Order. In other words, there is a consensus of the membership crisis within the Jogye Order. However, there is no unified view of how to solve it.

In the following sections, we will critically review the findings of the report and discuss some problems.

### 3. Analysis and Critique

#### 3.1. Membership Crisis

According to the report (p. 12), compared to the 1990s, the number of postulants has decreased by a third. In the 1990s, the annual number of newly ordained averaged around 500, but that decreased to 151 in 2017 (See Table 1).

**Table 1.** Decreasing Number of Postulants.

Year	1993	1999	2003	2008	2013	2017
Postulants	510	532	373	286	236	151

The Jogye Order’s report categorizes the reasons why this happened as follows: (1) decrease of births, (2) decrease of postulants and (3) aging of postulants. However, as we shall see, the report’s analysis is too superficial.

Firstly, the report (pp. 10–14) claims that this decline is in line with Korean population trends, such as the decreased birth rate and aging population that began in the mid to late 1980s. The report argues that the decreased number of children born has led to the decline and aging of the entire monkhood. In order to support this assumption, the report compares the number of births and postulants for the last 20 years (pp. 10–11).

First of all, the age distribution of postulants mentioned in the report is flawed (See Table 2):

**Table 2.** Age Distribution of Postulants in the Report.

Year	1996	1998	2000	2002	2003	2010	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017		
Semester	2nd	1st	1st	1st	1st	1st	1st	1st	1st	1st	2nd	1st	2nd
10s	8	3	3	2	2	5	5	5	5	4	5	6	4
20s	50	49	36	26	21	23	20	17	19	21	18	25	17
30s	36	38	46	46	39	31	33	35	25	24	29	24	10
40s	6	10	14	26	38	41	42	43	51	51	48	30	35

The report lists the age distribution of postulants from 1996 to 2017. However, there is no data for 1997, 1999, 2001, 2004–2009 and 2011–2012. In addition, the ordination ceremony, which is held twice a year, is not clearly described in the data. This missing information in the report above fails to reveal exactly what it is trying to propose.

It is true that the problem of a low birth rate and an aging population are problems of the Korean society as a whole. However, this cannot be the decisive reason for the decrease in numbers and the aging of monks. If that were the case, the number of priests in all religions in Korea should have decreased. However, statistics show otherwise.

For example, according to <Statistics of the Catholic Church in Korea 2017 (한국 천주교회 통계 2017)>, the number of priests in parishes over the past decade has alternated between growth and decline (Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Korea 2018, pp. 13–15). In 2017, however, it jumped 33.9 percent and this growing trend has continued into 2018 and 2019, producing the largest number of new priests since 2009. This is in stark contrast to the Jogye Order, which has seen a sharp decline in recent years. Therefore, this implies that the first data and its subsequent analysis presented in the report are misguided or, at least, require a more detailed interpretation.

Secondly, the report (p. 12) provides annual figures for the number of postulants from 1993 to 2017 in order to analyze the decreased number of monks. According to these figures, the number of postulants has significantly declined since 1999 (See Table 3).

**Table 3.** Number of Postulants from 1993 to 2017.

Year	1993	1995	1999	2002	2003	2006	2008	2013	2015	2016	2017
Number	510	448	532	406	373	334	286	236	204	157	151

Although the data set itself is informative, the report fails to address some significant problems, particularly the gender gap. Despite the greater decline of female postulants being found in the data set, the report does not recognize these gender differences. According to statistics, there were approximately half as many female postulants in 2017 (94 male vs. 57 female). However, in 1993, the difference between genders was insignificant (282 male vs. 228 female). As time goes by, the number of female postulants has decreased more rapidly when measured with that of male postulants. However, the Jogye Order has yet to recognize this sharp decline in female postulants (See Table 4).

**Table 4.** Gender Ratio of Postulants.

Year	1993	1999	2003	2008	2013	2017
Male	282	306	216	168	163	94
Female	228	226	157	118	73	57

Korean Buddhism has the longest history of the nun (*Bhikhuni*) tradition among East Asian Buddhist countries. Since the 6th century CE, the tradition of nuns has continued to modern society.<sup>4</sup>

Nevertheless, there has been an institutional contradiction in the status of nuns and their role restrictions in the Jogye Order. Given that the authority of the Jogye Order is concentrated on just a few male monks, nuns are currently demanding more of a voice within the organization. In actual fact, nuns handle a lot of important day-to-day work; however, they do not receive the recognition they deserve.<sup>5</sup> If the number of postulants and monks continues to decrease and the power of the Jogye Order remains concentrated on only a few male monks, then these criticisms will continue to grow in the future. Consequently, it is more likely that the number of the nuns will continue to decline within the Jogye Order. This is a significant factor directly related to the decrease in the number of monks in Korea.

In order to prevent the decrease of female ordinations, gender discriminative elements should be removed in the Jogye Order's systems and laws. It is also necessary to develop a short- and long-term plan to prevent the decline of nuns and expand their roles. For example, it will be helpful to scrutinize the cases that show the active role of the nuns in the field. A good example would be the activities of the world-renowned Taiwanese *Fo Guang Shan Monastery* (佛光山寺, <https://www.fgs.org.tw/en>), or closer to home, Korean *Hanmaum Seonwon* (한마음선원, <http://www.hanmaum.org/eng>) which is leading overseas missionary work.<sup>6</sup> *Fo Guang Shan Monastery* led by nuns has propagated Buddhist teachings in the U.S. and even in Africa. In addition, their social activities play an important role in Taiwanese society, helping to support the poor. *Hanmaum Seonwon* runs temples without gender discrimination, and actively supports social and cultural education projects and overseas activities. These organizations provide useful templates that the Jogye Order could model itself after to help increase its number of monks and improve gender equality.<sup>7</sup>

Furthermore, the report does not exactly address why postulants for monkhood give up during the process of receiving the ordination. The report simply concludes that the main reason for the recruitment crisis is that the Buddhist monkhood is not as attractive a vocation as in the past. It then suggests the

<sup>4</sup> The oldest record for the existence of the nuns traces back to the Silla Dynasty (Ha 2018, pp. 118–24; Kim 2010, pp. 175–86).

<sup>5</sup> For more details on this discussion, see (Cho 2011; Park 2010, pp. 109–30; Park 2011).

<sup>6</sup> For general information for Hanmaum Seonwon, see (Park 2017).

<sup>7</sup> For a comprehensive discussion on 'Women in Monasticism,' see (Crosby 2014, pp. 218–37).

improvement of the temple educational centers. However, this is a serious misunderstanding of the underlying problems. As is well known, the temple educational centers are institutions for those who have already been ordained, not for monkhood candidates. This misunderstanding conveys that the Jogye Order does not clearly distinguish between monkhood postulants and monks who have already been ordained. It seems that the Jogye Order is not deeply concerned about recruiting postulants.

The declined retention rate implies that there is a fundamental problem with the initial education of monks. We believe that a better understanding of the gender, age, and educational level of the dropouts and some correlations of these factors would help us figure out the cause of the problem. In other words, a careful study of the common reasons for the withdrawal is demanded. If the Jogye Order has a clear understanding of and effectively addresses the main cause of the drop-out, we can hope that the retention rate will get back to the level of the 1990s.<sup>8</sup>

Thirdly, the average age of monks is increasing. According to the report (pp. 21–23), monks are getting older, and the average age of postulants is also increasing as well. In order to solve this problem, the report suggests shortening the basic educational period for monks.

This idea comes from the notion that four years of basic education for monks is too long, especially for middle-aged postulants since they are already highly educated. For this assumption, the report (p. 21) suggests the data showing that educated postulants have increased in recent years. There is, however, no sufficient evidence to prove the assumption that all middle-aged postulants are and will be highly educated. If this were the case, the relevant data should have been presented in the report.

Furthermore, assuming a postulant's education level based on their academic credentials in other fields is misguided, for they are nevertheless laymen in the monkhood. Even if the aged postulants were highly educated in other fields, this does not guarantee that they are ready to become sincere monks. In sum, it is a fact that secular education does not guarantee that a postulant is of good character for monkhood.

### 3.2. Educational Innovation: The Solution for the Membership Crisis

After discussing the membership crisis, the report points to the Jogye Order's educational system as the reason for the decreasing number of monks. The report (pp. 24–33) discusses this with three sub-topics as follows: (1) rapidly changing educational environment, (2) teaching aptitude of educators and (3) education budget.

Firstly, given that the educational environment is changing rapidly, the report proposes that the current Buddhist educational curriculum should be changed to reflect contemporary educational trends. The report (p. 24) summarizes the trends in four keywords, namely, Massive (no restriction on the number of students), Open (open to all), Online (based on the Internet), and Course (based on a curriculum).

These concerns and discussions in the report about educational environments are very relevant. Educational innovation corresponding to a fast-changing contemporary society is an important issue and not just limited to Buddhism. The problem is, however, the report's (or the Jogye Order's) ambiguous attitude toward contemporary trends. Given that the report discusses this topic with four pages (pp. 24–27), it takes three and half pages to discuss the characteristics of general public education that are unrelated to Buddhist education for monks. Consequently, it is then ambiguous what the report is trying to discuss. (Actually, this is also true for the discussions of the following topics.)

There are four basic education institutions in the Jogye Order, namely, Joong-Ang Sangha University (중앙승가대학교), Monastic Seminary (강원, *Kangwŏn*), Elementary Seon Meditative Institute (선원, *Seonwŏn*) and Dongguk University (동국대학교). These educational institutions aim to teach

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<sup>8</sup> For improvement suggestions on this topic, see (Han 2012).

the character and skills of monkhood.<sup>9</sup> These institutions are, however, mixed with temple-oriented education such as the Monastic Seminary and the Elementary Seon Meditative Institute, and public academic education such as provided by Joon-Ang Sangha University and Dongguk University. Many monks and Buddhist scholars have made various suggestions such as merging, separating, reorganizing and unifying the monastic and academic institutions.<sup>10</sup> The Jogye Order, however, has not taken these suggestions seriously, rather it has just repeatedly mentioned that the number of monks is decreasing and that the educational system needs to be changed. The 2018 report is representative of their approach.

Secondly, the report emphasizes that educators should improve their teaching methods in line with contemporary educational trends. Subsequently, the report highlights the duties of the educators, such as “education,” “research,” “service,” “administration,” and a method of teaching to satisfy the needs of students.

These duties for educators listed in the report, however, correspond to general university students who are not involved in the education of monks. The report mentions three references here, namely, ‘An Effective Teaching in University,’ an article written by Seungil Na who is a professor of Seoul National University, the Basic Education Act of the Constitution and ‘The Prospects and Tasks of Educational Reforms’ published by the Korean Educational Development Institute. Having taken us through these quoted references, the report then draws the following extraordinary conclusion: “The professors at Monastic Seminary have improved their professionalism a lot, but their expertise is still insufficient. They should make efforts to improve their ability (p. 31).”

The discussions found in the report are not easily understandable. The discussions about educators for the monkhood would be vague without an agreement on what and how to teach. If the Jogye Order wants to improve the current educational system for monks, first of all, the direction and goals of their improvement should be clearly set. It should be based on researching previous educational studies.<sup>11</sup> Once the direction of these improvements has been established, the ability and responsibilities of educators should be specifically required to align with this direction. Nevertheless, the report overlooks the peculiarity of monastic education, and unhelpfully lists the duties of an educator without a definite plan.<sup>12</sup>

Thirdly, the report (pp. 32–33) mentions financial support for educational improvement. Although the report does not disclose it, it is necessary to first look at the entire budget of the Jogye Order and the budget allocated to the Education Committee.

According to the Buddhist Broadcasting System (BBS),<sup>13</sup> the Central Committee of the Jogye Order, which was held on the 13 November, 2018, announced its budget for 2019. The budgets over the past four years were as follows: 47.9 billion won in 2015, 53.3 billion won in 2016, 70 billion won in 2017, and 82.7 billion won in 2018, and the budget for 2019 is about 100.45 billion won, which has increased by 17.7 billion won compared to that of 2018. From that total, 18.5 billion won will be spent for regional missionary work and to buy religious land. The project to rebuild the Jogye Temple, the main temple of the Jogye Order, will be set aside 11.6 billion won. The Education Committee has been allocated 3.9 billion won (excluded Sangha Education Fund).

The report (p. 33) informs that it is impossible to continue providing more budget support to basic educational institutions since the Jogye Order spends money on a variety of fields. Nevertheless, as seen above, the educational budget is only less than 4% of the total budget in 2019. Inevitably,

<sup>9</sup> For more details on Buddhist basic education and monastic education, see (Pöpsöng 1995; Söngbon 2008; Söran 1995; Educational Institute of Jogye Order 2009a, 2009b, 2009c; Hyönung 1994, pp. 110–29).

<sup>10</sup> (Chihwan 1992, pp. 277–307; Chongböm 1997; Changik 2010, pp. 109–28; Kwön 2005; Ko 2011, pp. 201–35; Youm (Ven. Ja-Hyun) 2018, pp. 111–45).

<sup>11</sup> (Cho 2002, pp. 264–85; Chöng 1999; Hyönung 1995; Kaksa 2003; Kaplan 2015; Kim 2013, pp. 313–40; Kim 2010, pp. 189–214; Kim 2016, pp. 168–78; Lee 2012, pp. 65–84; Mugwan 1995; Mun 2012).

<sup>12</sup> Kim (2017, pp. 77–98) is useful to understand the training system for the Buddhist educator.

<sup>13</sup> <http://news.bbsi.co.kr/news/articleView.html?idxno=908497>.

this will make all educational sectors demand more financial support. It implies that there might be a problem with financial support for the monk's educational innovation.

The report (p. 32) introduces the data regarding the budget of the Jogye Order as below (See Tables 5 and 6):

**Table 5.** Total Budget of Education Committee 2011~2017 (included Sangha Education Fund).

Year	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Thousand Won (USD) <sup>14</sup>	5,079,731 (4,511,306)	6,295,424 (5,590,962)	6,404,017 (5,687,404)	6,778,756 (6,020,209)	6,663,818 (5,918,133)	6,607,344 (5,867,978)	6,427,409 (5,708,178)

**Table 6.** Education Committee's Financial Support for Basic Education.

Year	1995	1997	2001	2003	2004	2006	2010	2015	2010	2017
Thousand Won (USD)	1,245,205 (1,105,865)	1,634,481 (1,451,581)	2,298,709 (2,041,482)	2,369,000 (2,103,907)	2,825,800 (2,509,591)	3,015,626 (2,678,175)	3,603,325 (3,200,111)	3,433,981 (3,049,716)	3,436,780 (3,052,202)	3,491,620 (3,100,905)

Given that there are fourteen Monastic Seminaries, the financial support that the Educational Committee provides to the Monastic Seminaries are as follows (See Table 7):

**Table 7.** Financial Support for the Monastic Seminary.

Year	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Thousand Won (USD)	434,586 (385,955)	525,100 (466,341)	616,287 (547,324)	620,300 (550,888)	556,800 (494,493)	607,020 (539,094)

As seen above, despite the considerable discussions of educational innovation by the Jogye Order, the actual budget allocation for the Monastic Seminary is less than 1 percent of the total budget of the Jogye Order in 2017. Furthermore, the Education Committee wants to integrate them into a more general academic institution. What the Education Committee wants is for the Monastic Seminary to provide a graduate level education. By contrast, the Monastic Seminaries want to maintain their traditional educational system. They disagree with either unifying the fourteen seminaries or reforming them into modern academic institutions. In order to reform the monk's education, the different views of the Education Committee and the Monastic Seminary must be reconciled first. The report, however, avoids direct comment on these issues.

Of course, the increased financial support will be of great help to reform the monk's educational system. However, if the report had really considered such financial support, there should have been specific plans, such as using at least part of the Jogye Order's budget for a monk's education. Furthermore, there should also be discussions about how the budget allocation of the Education Committee, namely, 3.9 billion will be used and specifically in what areas additional funding is needed in 2019. Long-term financial investments should be continued only after a proper educational environment has been established.

#### 4. Conclusions

This article has critically examined the Jogye Order's latest report regarding the decreased number of monks, and their idea that educational innovation is the solution. The report itself contains much good raw data. As seen above, however, there are various problems in the explication of that data, which can be summarized as below.

<sup>14</sup> Exchange rate in 8 February 2019.



Firstly, the report says that the number of postulants has decreased due to the decrease in the general population. However, given that the number of Catholic priests is on the rise, this claim needs to be reviewed. Without more persuasive analysis of the data, an effective solution will prove to be elusive. Secondly, the report is indifferent to gender discrimination in the course of analyzing the number of monks. In the Jogye Order, nuns are not given satisfactory positions compared to their abilities. To increase the number of postulants, the welfare of nuns should be improved. Thirdly, the report does not make a clear distinction between applicants and those who are already ordained. The solutions to the decrease in the number of monks have been more focused on the monks rather than on the postulants. An effective system for postulants should be established. These new members of the monkhood will lead the Jogye Order in the near future. During their apprenticeship, a postulant should be given religious motivation through professional counseling and education. Fourthly, the report argues that the period of basic education should be shortened as a solution to the decreasing number of monks. However, the aging of monks and monk's education are irrelevant; furthermore, there is a fundamental difference between general education and Buddhist education. The report argues for an educational revolution but, in actual fact, it is just focused on increasing numbers. Fifthly, the report argues for educational innovation in response to contemporary social trends. However, the report does not accurately recognize the mix of Buddhist monastic and general academic education. As a result, the solution presented to make educational improvement is not effective either. Sixthly, the report emphasizes the ability and duty of educators to teach monks. But it only lists the duties of the general educator, without establishing a clear plan for educational innovation. Lastly, the report emphasizes financial support for educational innovation. However, there is no explanation as to exactly what the financial support is needed for. Their request for financial support without a particular purpose for it is nothing more than a vague fiscal theory.

To make things worse, these reflections and analyses are without critical review. Despite many previous in-depth discussions, the Jogye Order has failed to examine and react upon them. In a way, the problems above may have been caused by a lack of continuous debate. Since the previously proposed opinions have not been reviewed, it is difficult to come up with new perspectives or ideas. Rather, only the same inappropriate interpretations and ineffective solutions are repeated.

In fact, the decreasing number of monks is a phenomenon occurring in all contemporary Buddhist countries. However, the Jogye Order in Korea has quite a different reason for it. Different from other Buddhist countries, as briefly mentioned in the introduction, it is the moral laxity of the Jogye Order, which has been exposed through the media by a series of scandalous behaviors of the monks. Therefore, one of the essential causes for the decreasing number of postulants and monks is possibly due to the bad image of Korean monks.

Nevertheless, the report never comments on the scandals within the Jogye Order while discussing their membership crisis. It seems that the report is trying to find the reason for the decreased number of monks elsewhere, while intentionally ignoring the most fundamental issues. Consequently, the analysis and solutions of the report are only a limited and theoretical discussion.

Although the Jogye Order has been and is the epitome of Korean Buddhism, it has caused numerous problems. Nevertheless, as seen above, the Jogye Order is not fully aware of its problems and is consistent with a formal and complacent attitude. It is a serious problem that even the chief leader and main officials in charge of the Jogye Order hold this view. The monks, who are currently in office, should reflect on themselves and try to build an ethical and sacred Buddhist community. More important than improving various systems is the religious maturity of the monks who make up the Jogye Order. In order for the Jogye Order to become a true representative of Korean Buddhism, it needs to continue to reflect on itself and embrace external criticism. If this does not occur, the status of the Jogye Order will become very uncertain in Korean society.

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