The Position of prasāmkhyāṇa as an Aspect in the Theory of Practice by Suresvara

Masahiko TANIGUCHI

The study on hand aims at clarifying the content and position of prasāmkhyāṇa in the theory of practice by Suresvara (c. 720-770 AD).

First, in the Sambandhokuṭi, that is, the introductory prose section of the Naiskarmyāsiddhi (hereafter, abbreviated as Nais) 3.90 that outlines Suresvara’s criticism of the exponents of prasāmkhyāṇa, a certain exponent explains prasāmkhyāṇa as follows:

"It is said that prasāmkhyāṇa is the repeated application of the mind to reasoning by means of the logical method (yukti) called anvayavyatireka, which is its turn is applied to the meaning of revelatory sentences like ‘That thou art’ in the Śruti. And when practiced, it gives rise to perfect knowledge by increasing the correct knowledge and not by increasing the concentration on one single object" (for reasons of space only the translation is presented here).

According to this assertion, the correct knowledge to be increased does already exist in man before prasāmkhyāṇa is practiced. Further, as regards anvayavyatireka, it represents a method of interpretation of the Śruti, and Suresvara goes so far as to assert that this is indispensable for obtaining an understanding of vākyārtha (meaning of revelatory sentences) 2). Suresvara refutes the above-mentioned argument in Nais 3.90 as follows:

(90) What arises from accumulating abhyāsa is only the concentration of mind. Actually the various means of knowledge do not bring about the knowledge of its objects as a result of repetition.

Here abhyāsa is used in place of prasāmkhyāṇa. Furthermore, another exponent of prasāmkhyāṇa appears in Nais 3.123 who asserts that the revelatory sentences present the knowledge of ātman only indirectly, and in Nais 3.124 Suresvara’s response goes as follows:

However, we do not support the view that correct understanding is produced by prasāmkhyāṇa,
The Position of *pramāṇa* as an Aspect in the Theory of Practice by Śrīvaśti
(M. Taniguchi)

which represents nothing but the repetition of reasoning (by logical method) and of the revelatory sentences of the *Śruti*. "Wherefore?"

(124) If reasoning and revelation sentences did not bring about correct knowledge for him earlier, what sort of completely new thing (*apurva*) could result from their repetition?

Afterwards however, he makes a turn and approves *prāmnāṇa* conditionally:

Then, if someone says that he is not able to maintain his life without *prāmnāṇa*, we will acknowledge it only in *śravaṇa* (hearing) etc. "On what conditions?"

(125) We will accept the method of repetition in *prāmnāṇa* in hearing contents related to *ātman*. Man will come to an understanding after correctly hearing what he heard only a little bit or fragmentarily.

The fact that the term *prāmnāṇa* is simply replaced by *abhyāsa*, and the wording "the method of repetition in *prāmnāṇa*" in Nais 3.125, suggest that he did not acknowledge the method of practice as advocated the exponents of *prāmnāṇa* but rather approved the method of "repetition" contained therein.

However, according to preceding studies the below-mentioned points have already been clarified. Śrivaśti regards *prāmnāṇa* as an extremely preliminary and auxiliary element in the practice and acknowledges its usefulness for physical and mental actions like religious rites or meditation and logical reasoning. In practice *prāmnāṇa* is carried out on the same stage together with *śravaṇa* and *manana* (reasoning); as a result *prāmnāṇa* enables those, who cannot understand *vākyārtha* in a single *śravaṇa* and *manana*, to obtain an understanding of this religious teaching. According to preceding study by Shoun Hino the point is clarified that for Śrivaśti, as a consequence of practicing the repetition of *śravaṇa* and *manana*, the state in which an understanding of *vākyārtha* has been obtained is *ni-didhyāśana*, and what makes up the term *manana* is nothing but *anvayavyatireka*.

From it the following conclusion can be derived.

Śrivaśti takes out only the element of "repetition" from the *prāmnāṇa* and calls the "repetition" of *śravaṇa* and *manana*, which are mental acts for illuminating *vākyārtha*, "pramāṇāṇa". Therefore, in the explanatory description of up to 14 stages in the *sambandhokti* in Nais 1.52 the 10th stage of the "practice of yoga", *yogābhīṣa* ⁶, which contains *śravaṇa* and *manana*, again includes also *pramāṇāṇa*. However, *śravaṇa* and *manana* are required for attaining *ātman*, and especially
anvavavyatireka that constitutes the term of manana is indispensable for clarifying vākyārtha. On one side the degree of necessity of prasamkhyāna, which is their "repetition", is determined by the capability of the practitioner. For those who understand vākyārtha in only one single śravana and manana the repetition is therefore not necessary. As a result prasamkhyāna, while being in the very same way a mental action, ranks lower than anvavavyatireka. In addition, a point of analogy can also be discovered between religious rites and prasamkhyāna. Because religious rites that contribute to the purification of mind, too, are in their turn determined by the purity of the practitioner as regards their degree of necessity.


3) "prasamkhyāne śrutāv asya nyāyo ‘stv āmredanātmakah"


〈Key Words〉 Suresvara, prasamkhyāna, Naiskarmyasiddhi

(Graduate Student, Tokyo University)