Practice of Wakefulness

—*Ālokaśamjñā in the Śrāvakabhūmi*—

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The first *Yogasthāna* of the *Śrāvakabhūmi* (=Śbh) shows basic attitudes and acts of forest-dwelling renunciants rather than *yogācāra*'s methods of meditation. In this chapter, the practice of wakefulness (*jāgarikāyoga*) is interpreted in detail. Whereas the term *jāgarikāyoga* is commonly expressed in the Nikāyas and the Āgamas as “applying to being awake (*jāgariya-anuyutta*, 初夜後夜精進覺寤)”, the Tibetan translation of the Śbh renders “a practice of not sleeping (*mi nyal ba sbyor ba*)”, and also the *Mahāyānābhidharma-samuccaya* puts “不睡眠” in this term. There are some sūtras indicating a practice of forgoing sleep for a particular period of time as an ascetic deed. Thus we tend to give a definition of *jāgarikāyoga* as a practice of forgoing sleep. The Śbh, however, stresses taking enough sleep to maintain their health and to practice during sleep. In the whole process of practice in sleep, the most essential element is the *ālokaśamjñā*. Though the Nikāyas and the Āgamas refer it as a concentration on an image of light to avoid the defilement of drowsiness (*middha*), the Śbh gives a different view on its function and character. In this paper, as a part of my current research on the practitioners' behaviour stated in the Śbh, I first would like to demonstrate that the *jāgarikāyoga* is a practice that takes place during sleep and consider the function of the *ālokaśamjñā*, and second discuss the manner in which one performs the *ālokaśamjñā*.

1. Way of *jāgarikāyoga* The way of *jāgarikāyoga* in the Śbh, originally from a passage of the *Rathakāra-vagga* [AN], the *Mahāssapura-sutta* [MN], or the *Loka-kāmaguṇa-vagga* [SN], is as listed in order below:

1. Day time / The first watch of the night --- Walking and sitting practice.
2. The middle watch of the night --- (1) Washing feet outside and entering into the residence, (2) Lying in the lion's posture (*siṃhaśayyā*), (3) Perceiving a light (*ālokaśamjñā*), (4) Having mindfulness (*smṛti*), (5) Having full awareness (*samprajñāna*), (6) Thinking of

rising up (*utthānasamjñā*). (Śbh.4pp.10-11)

Although the term (3) *ālokasamjñā* does not occur in the passage of the above Nīkāyas and is just mentioned in the Āgamas, the Śbh explains it as follows:

[The practitioner] grasps an image of a light well, thinks it well, enjoys it well, and recognizes it well. (*ālokanimittam anena sūḍgrhitaṃ bhavati sumanasikṛtaṃ sujuṣṭaṃ supratividham*). The one who is examining the light lies down with the mind brightened. Thus the mind is never covered with darkness even during sleep. (Śbh.p.106)

This passage is explicit about one's sleep with an awakened mind. By the following passage on (4) *smṛti*, we could suggest that the *ālokasamjñā* makes a mind brightened in order to investigate objects in a dream. The text says:

Having heard, thought, and cultivated the meaningful teachings, [the practitioner's] memory of the exact [teachings] arises during sleep. Depending on the [memory], even while in sleep, the teachings are recorded (*abhiḥlapanti*) as if he were awake (*svapnāpi*), and his mind observes the teachings repeatedly. In accordance with the recollection, one lies down with a good mind or a neutral mind. (Śbh.pp.106-107)

It should be noted here that the term *abhi√lap* does not only express that past objects are fixed, but also implies that they appear with their distinctive marks, signs, forms, or languages in a mind. Seeing "svapna" as a dream, "abhi√lap" can be described as a function of a process of recollection which reflects past objects clearly in a dream. This view would be accepted by Hsüan-tsang and the *Mahāvibhāṣā-śāstra*. Hsüan-tsang translates this "svapna" into "a dream in sleep 睡夢", and "abhi√lap" into "to memorize 記憶" and "to appear clearly 分明現前" as well. The *Mahāvibhāṣā* offers a detailed description of the mind in sleep and the three types of actions performed in sleep: good, bad, and neutral. If one actually performs good acts, good-karma occurs while sleeping. The good-karma leads him to do good acts such as making an offering in his dream, which then causes good virtue.

Although the later Yogācāra-Vijñānavādin's texts, as we know, strongly deny existences appeared in a dream, the Śbh takes the traditional ascetic deed of wakefulness as a way of observing the teachings in a dream. In the process of the *jāgarikāyoga*, we could confidently say that the *ālokasamjñā* is a function to keep consciousness clarified in order to project the teachings in a dream.

2. *Manner of ālokasamjñā* To consider what I pointed out in the previous paper

that the divine eye (*devacakṣus*) can be obtained by means of *ālokaśamjñā*, we might expect that the *ālokaśamjñā* means more than the concentration on an image of light for the avoidance of sleepiness. Now a question arises: how does one perceive a light?

We can see that the *ālokaśamjñā* is rather a series of visualizations, because few texts regarding the *ālokaśamjñā* as a visualization give similar comments to the Śbh's passage quoted above. For example, the chapter of the *Samādhi-bhāvanā* (修定品) in the *Dharmaskanda-pāda-śāstra* says that having taken an image of light such as a light of medicine, mani-jewelry, heavenly palace, constellation, or a round frame of the sun or the moon, the practitioner imagines the light shining at a certain place and widens the image to spread over the mind. The sūtra also expresses its method as “thinking, comprehending, observing, concentrating, settling, and discriminating (思惟解了觀察勝解堅住而分別)”. Likewise, the *Śāriputrābhidharma-śāstra* explains that one grasps an image of light, thinks it, recognizes it, and enjoys it (取諸光明相已...思惟光明知光明受光明), and then fill the mind with the light.

3. Conclusion As we have seen, the *jāgarikāyoga* in the Śbh is not a practice of forgoing sleep, but a meditation during sleep. In this process, the *ālokaśamjñā*, which is stated in the Nikāyas to be a meditation to avoid drowsiness, is a function to awaken one's consciousness, so that the mind reflects objects previously memorized in a dream. While the *ālokaśamjñā* is simply considered to be a concentration on an image of light, in the Śbh it is a series of visualizations that begins with a physical image of light and ends with a mind suffused with brightness.

References: *Śrāvakabhūmi* of *Ācārya Asaṅga*, Shukla, K. ed (1973). *Śrāvakabhūmi*, Revised Sanskrit Text and Japanese Translation, Śbh Studying Group, Taisho University (1998). Notes are omitted for want of space. See my previous paper: “光の瞑想”, In *The Journal of Esoteric Buddhist Studies*, No.36 (2004).

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