

NĀMARŪPA

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NĀMARŪPA, *Categories of Indian Thought*, is a journal that seeks to record, illustrate, honor, as well as comment on, the many systems of knowledge, practical and theoretical, that have originated in India. Passed down through the ages, these systems have left tracks, paths already traveled, which can guide us back to the Self, which is the source of all names [NĀMA] and forms [RŪPA].

NĀMARŪPA seeks to present articles that shed light on the incredible array of DARŚANAS, YOGAS and VIDYĀS that have evolved over thousands of years in India's creatively spiritual minds and hearts. The publishers have created this journal out of a love for the knowledge that it will reflect, and desire that its content be presented clearly and inspirationally, but without any particular agenda or sectarian bias. The aim is to permit contributors to present offerings that accurately represent their own traditions, without endorsement or condemnation. Each traditional perspective on reality is like a different branch on a vast tree of knowledge, offering diverse fruits to the discerning reader.

Though NĀMARŪPA begins life as a tender sprout, it will, as it grows, offer shade, shelter and sustenance to its readers and contributors alike, it is hoped. Now, though, it needs nurturing with articles, images, ideas and contributions.

We invite you to support us in any way that you can.

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अ	•	a
आ	•	ā
इ	•	i
ई	•	ī
उ	•	u
ऊ	•	ū
ऋ	•	r̥
ॠ	•	r̄
ऌ	•	l̥
ॡ	•	l̄
ए	•	e
ऐ	•	ai
ओ	•	o
औ	•	au
अं	•	am̐
अः	•	aḥ
क	•	ka
ख	•	kha
ग	•	ga
घ	•	gha
ङ	•	ṅa
च	•	ca
छ	•	cha
ज	•	ja
झ	•	jha
ञ	•	ña
ट	•	ṭa
ठ	•	ṭha
ड	•	ḍa
ढ	•	ḍha
ण	•	ṇa
त	•	ta
थ	•	tha
द	•	da
ध	•	dha
न	•	na
प	•	pa
फ	•	pha
ब	•	ba
भ	•	bha
म	•	ma
य	•	ya
र	•	ra
ल	•	la
व	•	va
श	•	śa
ष	•	ṣa
स	•	sa
ह	•	ha
क्ष	•	kṣa
त्र	•	tra
ज्ञ	•	jña

NĀMĀRŪPA

NAVARĀTRI ISSUE

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YOGA SŪTRAS OF PATAÑJALI & ITS COMMENTARIES

Edwin Bryant's translation of Patañjali's Yoga Sūtras with commentaries aims to contribute to the growing body of literature on classical yoga by providing insights from all traditional Sanskrit commentators on the text.

EDWIN F. BRYANT

तदा द्रष्टुः स्वरूपेऽवस्थानम् ॥३॥

1.3 Tada draṣṭuḥ svarūpe 'vasthānam.
Tadā, then, at that point; *draṣṭuḥ*, of the seer, of the soul; *svarūpe*, in its own real essential nature; *'vasthānam*, abiding, remaining, be absorbed in.

At that point, the seer abides in its own true nature.

What happens to the *puruṣa*, self, referred to in this verse as the “seer,” when the mind is void of content, asks Vyāsa? Vijñānabhikṣu rhetorically considers three possibilities: a) Once all the *vṛttis*, states of mind, have been removed, does the soul remain as pure consciousness which is only conscious of itself? b) Does it remain unconscious, like a log of wood (only becoming conscious when states of mind are activated)?¹ or, c) Does it cease to exist, like a lamp on the destruction of the wick?² The yoga school subscribes to the first view. Once freed from its association with the states of the mind, the soul is now perfectly free and can abide in its own nature, the highest state of trance, *asamprajñāta samādhi*. It is devoid even of knowledge, says Vijñānabhikṣu, since knowledge implies an object of knowledge, and thus requires a connection with the states of mind and the external world.

In fact, the commentators stress that the soul has always abided in its own nature, even though, when the mind is outgoing and caught up in the world of thoughts and sense objects, it appears not to be. To illustrate the nature of the soul as pure consciousness alone, devoid of content, the commentators give the example of a pure, transparent crystal. When a red flower is placed next to a crystal, the



Patañjali Mahāyāni

flower's color is reflected in the crystal. The crystal, however, is not affected or changed by the flower, even as it reflects it, nor does it disappear when the flower is removed. Similarly, consciousness reflects or illuminates external objects and internal thoughts, *vṛttis*, but is not itself affected by them. Nor does it disappear upon the disappearance of the objects of consciousness.

The commentaries frequently refer to another example: mother-of-pearl does not give up its own essential nature simply because someone mistakes it for an actual pearl itself. Likewise, consciousness does not change its nature simply because someone may confound it with the changing states of the mind and intelligence.

वृत्तिसारूप्यमितरत्र ॥४॥

1.4 Vṛttisārūpyamitaratra.

Vṛtti, fluctuation; *sārūpyam*, identification; *itaratra*, otherwise, at other times.

At other times, [the seer] identifies with the changing states [of the mind].

Patañjali states that at other times—viz., when not abiding in its own nature as pure consciousness devoid of content—the seer identifies with the mind's changing states. Vyāsa calls the soul the master, and the mind its property: he compares the mind to a magnet which attracts that within its proximity—the objects of the senses, etc. The mind serves its master by presenting objects of experience to the soul in the form of *vṛttis*. When these ever-changing states of the mind are presented to the soul, the soul appears affected by them. Vācaspatimiśra repeats the analogy of someone looking in a dirty mirror, identifying with the dirty reflection, and then becoming anxious at the thought that he or she is dirty. Likewise, when one is not aware of the distinction between consciousness and the mind, one wrongly attributes the states of the mind—tranquility, infatuation, delusion, etc.—to the self. Misidentification with something he or she is not is the cause of the person's anxiety and experiences. Although the mind is actually inert and unconscious, say the commentators, as a result of being permeated by the consciousness of the soul, its states and fluctuations appear to be states of the true self, and are as if experienced by the self. We can recall the analogy of a dark object appearing to be luminous due to its contiguity to an illuminating lamp.

And so, says Vācaspatimiśra, the soul, which has no misconceptions, appears to have misconceptions and, although completely pure and transcendent, appears to be affected by mundane pleasure, pain or delusion. This is like the phenomenon of a lake appearing to have trees on it due to the reflection of the trees on its bank, says Vijñānabhikṣu, although the lake itself

actually has no trees, or like the crystal appearing red due to the adjacent red flower, though is actually not red at all. The commentator Bhoja Rājā gives the well-known illustration of the moon appearing to be altered when reflected on rippling water—though it is the water that constantly fluctuates due to the wind, not the moon. Similarly, the mind is constantly experiencing and processing the forms of sense objects through the senses. It is thus constantly changing, like the flame of a candle, says Vijñānabhikṣu, and, depending on the experiences of the moment, producing temporary states such as happiness and distress, etc. The self, although pure, then misidentifies with these changing states of the mind, due to proximity, and appears also to be affected. It seems to experience the emotions of the mind triggered by the senses and their objects, and thus to be the enjoyer or sufferer of the things of this world. In reality, it is not affected, any more than a crystal is affected by a red flower. Vijñānabhikṣu quotes the Gītā: “One who sees that all activities are being performed by *prakṛti*, and that the self is not the doer, truly sees.” (13.29).

A more modern analogy might be that of a person absorbed in watching a film. The actual film itself just consists of a sequence of inert flickering images and sounds, which are nothing more than light particles and frequency waves—material energy. People watching the film, however, can become so absorbed in this spectacle of light and sound that they forget their own existence. If the film is a good one, two or three hours can pass by during which viewers forget their real self and all personal problems, their mental anxieties and fears, their bodily aches and pains, etc. in the real world. Moreover, they can become so wrapped up in the illusory world of the film that they experience, let us suppose, sadness when the hero or heroine is killed, or happiness when the hero and heroine live happily ever after. In other words, the spectators forget their own separate nature, and experience emotions produced by intense identification with the illusory and separate world of the

film (indeed, a good performance aims to stir such identification). When the film is over, everyone is thrust back into his or her own realities—they are suddenly returned to the world of their own problems, become aware perhaps of being hungry or thirsty, etc. In the same way, due to ignorance and illusion, the soul is absorbed in the lights and sounds and emotions of the external objective world, and forgets its own real nature as pure subjective consciousness. Yoga is about stilling the *vṛttis*, stopping the film mid-way, such that the soul can realize that the emotions, fears, happinesses, pains, experiences, births and deaths, etc. that it has been experiencing do not come from itself, but from the inert flickerings of the material spectacle. Thus yoga is ultimately about liberation from the external material world, or, in traditional Hindu terms, the cycle of birth and death.

Vācaspatimiśra raises the question of the cause of the soul's misidentification with the mind in the first place, in other words, the cause of nescience. It is eternal, he answers, like the relationship between seed and sprout. Almost all schools of Indic philosophy conceive of ignorance as eternal, and do not speculate over the very first impetus that caused the individual to be associated with ignorance and *samsāra*. As the Buddha put it, if a man is shot by an arrow, it is useless to inquire as to the nature of the arrow, its point of origin, etc. One must first remove the arrow. Likewise, for one drowning in the ocean of birth and death, *samsāra*, it is fruitless to speculate as to how one originally fell in; one would more productively first find a means to get out. Such a means is yoga. ❖

¹This may be a reference to the Vaiśeṣika school.

²This would be the position of the Cārvakā school.