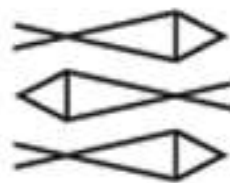


THE YOGA
SŪTRAS OF PATAÑJALI

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ignorance, superimpositions on the only real existent, *Brahman*. Outlining the position of the Yoga school, Vijñānabhikṣu stresses that the world in its essence—*prakṛti*—is real and eternal, and therefore the evolutes from this matrix, the world, are also in this sense real, albeit temporary and constantly changing, mutating, and eventually dissolving back into their source. He quotes the well-known verse from the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* in reference to objects made out of clay, which we call pots or plates, etc., out of convenience, but which remain, essentially, clay: “By means of just one lump of clay, one can perceive everything made out of clay—the transformation is just a verbal handle, a name—while the reality is just this: ‘It is clay’” (VI.1.4). The manifestations of *Brahman* are not false, Vijñānabhikṣu argues, contra Śāṅkara, any more than the modifications of clay are false. But they are temporary.

Vācaspati Miśra further states that manifest reality has to follow the sequence of evolution noted by Patañjali in this *sūtra*. It is not that the seed of a *nyagrodha* tree will spontaneously and immediately produce a fully grown, stocky tree with its leaves and branches, he says. The tree comes about gradually, the seed becoming a shoot and slowly evolving in contact with light and water. At the same time, says Vijñānabhikṣu, seed, sprout, and tree are nondifferent from each other, and so, in the same way, are *buddhi* and its effects nondifferent. *Puruṣa*, on the other hand, is a totally different entity. When *puruṣa* and *prakṛti* combine, living beings come into existence, just as when air and water combine, bubbles are formed.

दृष्टा दृशिमात्रः शुद्धोऽपि प्रत्ययानुपश्यः ॥ २० ॥

II.20 draṣṭā dṛśi-mātraḥ śuddho ‘pi pratyayānupaśyaḥ

draṣṭā, the seer; *dṛśi*, the power of seeing; *mātraḥ*, only; *śuddhaḥ*, pure; *api*, although; *pratyaya*, ideas or images of the mind; *anupaśyaḥ*, witnesses

The seer is merely the power of seeing; [however,] although pure, he witnesses the images of the mind.

The seen—the *guṇas* of *prakṛti* and their effects—has been discussed in the above *sūtras*, and now Patañjali turns his attention to the seer, *draṣṭṛ*. The seer is the *puruṣa*, the soul or innermost conscious self. He is the pure undiluted power of consciousness—pure because untouched by any attribute, qualification, object, or predicate. He is neither the same as, nor, at least when embodied, totally different from *buddhi*, intelligence, insofar as his knowledge of *prakṛti* arises from his awareness of *buddhi*.

He is not the same as *buddhi*, because *buddhi* has external things (cows, pots, etc.) as its object of attention and is therefore always changing, while *puruṣa* is unchanging and has only *buddhi* as the object of its attention. Moreover, *buddhi* exists solely for the sake of *puruṣa*, while *puruṣa* exists for its own sake only. Finally, *buddhi* is inert, unconscious, and composed of the three *guṇas*, whereas *puruṣa* is the active spectator, the source of consciousness, and beyond the three *guṇas*. On the other hand, *puruṣa* is not totally distinct from *buddhi* in practice because, even though *puruṣa* is pure and self-contained in essence, by witnessing the transformations of *buddhi* in the form of thoughts and cognitions, *pratyayas*, etc., it appears as if those thoughts pertain to *puruṣa* itself, that they are *puruṣa* rather than the flickerings of an external and inert but subtle substance. *Puruṣa* sees its reflection in the mirror of *buddhi*, say the commentators, and the mind mistakes this reflection in the mirror, which is distorted due to the transformations of the *guṇas*, to be the real self. *Puruṣa* does not change or transform; *buddhi* does.

Therefore, it is said, says Vyāsa, that although *puruṣa* is the experiencer and does not change or pursue the objects of the senses, it appears to do so by its identification with the transformations of *buddhi*, which does change and does pursue the objects of the senses. Indeed, it is only when *buddhi* takes the form of the objects of the senses, the *pratyayas*, noted here (see I.10), that these objects become known to *puruṣa* via the medium of *buddhi*. And it is only *puruṣa* who can inherently know, says Vijñānabhikṣu; *buddhi* does not know, that is to say, is not conscious of the objects of the senses that it is processing and that it exhibits to *puruṣa*. One might analogize that the software of a

computer is not conscious of the material that it is processing and that it exhibits on its screen. As the computer needs a witness to know the data, so does *buddhi*.

Thus, as a result of being identified with *buddhi*, *puruṣa* appears to assume the qualities of *buddhi*. The consciousness of *puruṣa*, although not in reality changing, witnesses or follows as a spectator the transformations of *buddhi* and therefore rests on (is aware of) each object that comes into the sphere of the ever-changing *buddhi*. Whatever *buddhi* is transformed into is colored by consciousness, says Vācaspati Miśra, as a result of their contact. Although the moon is not transformed into water, he continues, it appears to be so due to its reflection in water. This Vedāntic analogy works well: Water in a lake or an ocean is transformed or agitated by waves, ripples, foam, etc. When the moon shines upon this disturbed surface, its reflection also becomes rippled and agitated due to the disturbed surface of the water. Ignorance is mistaking the disrupted reflection to be the true moon. Due to ignorance, *puruṣa* is misidentified with the disturbed reflection of *buddhi*, which is taken to be the real self. Like an echo, says Vijñānabhikṣu, a sound that emanates from a source and then bounces off an object to return back to that source in somewhat distorted fashion, the consciousness of *puruṣa* bounces back from *buddhi* in the form of a distorted reflection, and thus *puruṣa* becomes aware of the disturbed *buddhi* along with its *bhāva*, or quality, of ignorance. The *Sāṅkhya Kārikās* speaks of *buddhi* as having eight *bhāvas* (virtue, knowledge, nonattachment, potency, and their opposites, including ignorance) (XXIII). *Buddhi* thus becomes aware of ignorance even though the ignorance is not in *puruṣa*—which, by definition, is pure awareness—but rather in *buddhi*.

Not only does *puruṣa* appear changed due to this symbiosis, but inert *buddhi* appears to be conscious due to being energized by consciousness, continues Vijñānabhikṣu, just as sunlight falling on the sea makes the sea appear to be luminous like the sun. (Verse XX of the *Sāṅkhya Kārikās* states that that which is unconscious appears as if conscious.) Therefore, *puruṣa* is witnessing not only its own reflection but one that appears to be energized, or

animate, and this further enhances the tendency of misidentification.

This misidentification of *puruṣa* with *buddhi* transformed or agitated by the three *guṇas*, the objects of this world, is the cause of bondage. Its freedom, says Vijñānabhikṣu, cannot come about through the conventional means of knowledge—the senses, mind, intelligence, etc.—since its nature is essentially different from these. It can come about only through its own nature. Its own nature is pure knowledge, that is, exclusive awareness of its own self, rather than of the objects of *prakṛti*.

Hariharānanda adds to this that the existence of *puruṣa* is evidenced by the fact that the sense of I is constant at all times. One may say, “I know something,” where the thing one knows pertains to whatever is being presented at any point in time by *buddhi* and is always changing, but the I who knows remains constant. Likewise even with the notion “I know myself”: The myself that is known also pertains to ever-changing *buddhi*—one may think of oneself in many different ways throughout the various stages of one’s life—but the I is always constant. As soon as this I begins to know something—anything—then the misidentification of *buddhi* with *puruṣa*, the erroneous notion that *puruṣa* is *buddhi*, has occurred, since all knowable things are the products of *prakṛti*. All knowledge thus requires the presence of the overseer, *puruṣa*, and of something seen, an object in *prakṛti*.

This misidentification of the seer and the seen, continues Hariharānanda, is the product of *ahaṅkāra*, the ego. As a result of this misidentification, the distinction between *puruṣa* and *buddhi* is not perceived in ordinary consciousness. *Buddhi* resembles *puruṣa* to some extent, and vice versa. Inanimate *buddhi* appears to be animate because it is energized by the consciousness of the animate *puruṣa*, and the unchanging *puruṣa* appears to be ever-changing and mutable because its consciousness pervades the ever-changing and mutable *buddhi*; hence Vyāsa’s statement that they are neither the same nor different.

तदर्थ एव दृश्यस्यात्मा ॥ २१ ॥

II.21 *tad-artha eva dṛśyasyātmā*