

Article

Uddālaka's Yoga in the *Mokṣopāya*

Tamara Cohen

Department for the Study of Religion, University of Toronto, Toronto, ON M5R 2M8, Canada;
tamara.cohen@mail.utoronto.ca

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Abstract: This paper suggests that the Uddālaka story, told in the *Mokṣopāya* (MU) (950 CE), in which the young sage Uddālaka undergoes a process of body and mind purification after an experience of the appearance of *kuṇḍalinī* in the body, prompted by the recitation of the syllable Oṃ, could be seen as a precursor to systems of praxis outlined in later Haṭha Yoga (HY) texts. The narrative of Uddālaka paints a picture of a complex and blended world of sectarian influence, spiritual knowledge and embodied praxis within which the MU was no doubt composed, and within which early HY also likely emerged as praxis for the sake of *mokṣa*. The depiction of Uddālaka's yogic transformation is summarized here and analyzed to reveal a multilayered picture of influence that may shed light on the formative environment of early Hatha Yoga.

Keywords: Yoga; Haṭha Yoga; Mokṣopāya; Yogavāsiṣṭha; Kuṇḍalinī; Praṇava; Prāṇa; Jīvanmukti; Videhamukti

1. Introduction

This paper suggests that the Uddālaka story, told in the *Mokṣopāya* (MU) (950 CE), in which the young sage Uddālaka undergoes a process of body and mind purification after an experience of spontaneous *kuṇḍalinī* awakening prompted by the recitation of the syllable Oṃ, can be seen as a precursor to systems of praxis outlined in later Haṭha Yoga (HY) texts. The MU is the earliest known manuscript tradition of the text that later became known as *Yogavāsiṣṭha* (YV), which has been traced to mid-10th Century Kashmir. The YV, dated to between 11th–14th centuries CE, is a popular and heavily redacted recension of the MU and has most commonly been affiliated with Advaita Vedānta. However, without the redactions of the MU that are found in the YV, the MU is very clearly not a Vedānta text. In fact, the idealistic nondual philosophy of the MU does not match any known schools of Indian thought. The MU refers to itself as the *sarvasiddhāntasiddhānta*—the definitive philosophical position of all definitive positions, the ultimate perspective that encompasses all known perspectives, the one consciousness that encompasses each manifestation of the one consciousness. Nonetheless, passages of the MU that depict embodied effort on the path to liberation offer clues to classifying the philosophical affiliation of the text. Book V of the MU presents a narrative account of the transmutation of the body of the sage Uddālaka. Prompted by the movement of the winds of *prāṇa* stirred by a recitation of the syllable Oṃ, *kuṇḍalinī* enlivens the Uddālaka's in the form of Lord Nārāyaṇa. I suggest that this passage, and others like it, place the MU within the text tradition of early HY.

2. Uddālaka's Awakening

The story of Uddālaka is introduced in the MU with a discussion of the need for *vicāra* on the path to liberation. Vasiṣṭha tells Rāma to cut the poison tree of thought (*cittaviṣadrumaṃ*) that has branches of desires, whose leaves are imaginations, which grows in the horrible pit of the body, whose buds are anxieties, whose fruit is old age and death and illness, that has pleasurable flowers, with the saw of

vicāra (5.50.62–63).¹ Instead of remaining in the *vṛttis* of the mind, Rāma should water the creeper of comprehension with *vicāra*, just like Uddālaka, the teen sage who completely cut himself off from the five elements (*ālūnaviśīrṇaṃ bhūtapañcakam kṛtvā*) (51.1–5). In other words, Uddālaka transcended his connection to his physical body, which is composed of the five elements, and underwent a process of transformation by means of a method that begins with *vicāra*.

Uddālaka had already attained the highest state of yoga by practicing austerity (*tapasya*) and engaging in the *yamas* and *niyamas*. Thus, in spite of having achieved the highest state of yoga according to the system of the *Pātañjalayogaśāstra*, by ostensibly practicing more than just the first two of its eight limbs mentioned in the passage,² Uddālaka was not fully liberated. In the *Yogasūtra* we hear that uninterrupted *viveka* is the method for cessation of the *vṛttis* of the mind.³ And yet, Uddālaka had achieved *viveka* after having observed the *yamas* and *niyamas* in accordance with the *śāstras* (51.15) and still his mind remained agitated by the fear of *saṃsāra* (*saṃsārabhayabhītadhīḥ*). Uddālaka was depressed (*klāntamānasah*) (51.16). He wanted to know what fundamental thing he must obtain to go beyond grief and rebirth (51.17–25). When will he have an intellect free from conceptualizations (*śāntakalpanayā dhīyā*)? He knew there was more to attain. He had not gone yet beyond craving, he had not yet experienced everything as only consciousness, he didn't have the supreme vision (*paramālokaṃ*) (51.26–29). Uddālaka sought the state of self-effulgence (*svapṛakāśa*), the inner satisfaction (*antas toṣam*) that destroys delusion (51.31–32). In spite of being a great-minded silent sage (*munir maunī mānī mahāmātiḥ*) (51.13), Uddālaka had not reached the highest state of *mokṣa* (51.38).

In order to achieve a more advanced level of attainment, Uddālaka retired to a hidden cave in a mountain that was quiet and difficult to reach (51.48–52.2). Uddālaka made a seat with flowers, covered it with beautiful deerskin and sat in the lotus posture like a Buddha,⁴ facing north, holding his testicles with his heels, making Brahmā's *Añjali* [*mudrā*] (52.3–7). Uddālaka withdrew his mind from its *vāsanās*, including the *vāsanā* of ego, and began a conversation with his mind. This process of *vicāra* is narrated for one hundred and forty verses, up to the end of the following *sarga* (52.8–53.81). Key themes in Uddālaka's inquiry into his own self and the nature of supreme consciousness are the senses as independent actors devoid of ego, recognition of I-ness as a limited ego state, the creative power of the mind by means of *vāsanā*, the nature of reality as consciousness, the unreality of the body and death and the boundless nature of the state beyond all objects and perceptions. At the end of this contemplation session, Uddālaka knew that he was not the body nor the mind, but rather the consciousness that transcends the two. Uddālaka knew that the body and the mind together bring suffering and only bad things come from their mutual connection. Therefore, he decided to eliminate his body, since his mind and its *vāsanā* were also being destroyed (53.2–67). Uddālaka thought to himself, I who am eternal, having surpassed the body, having brilliance that does not set, having obtained a connection with the luminous, know the sun in the sky, happiness means nothing for me, I am not grieved by the bad; whether my body exists or does not exist, my fever is gone (53.71–72). Where is Self, there is no mind, no senses, no *vāsanās*; villains do not remain around a king (53.73). I follow that state; I am whole/alone, I am victorious, I am desireless, I have not parts, I am motionless (53.74). There is now no connection for me with the mind, body, senses, etc., like oil that has been separated by a broken sesame seed (53.75). Because the state of delusion is gone, because the mind is gone, because thinking is free

¹ This essay draws exclusively on the critical edition of the *Mokṣopāya*, edited under the direction of Walter Slaje; See Krause-Stinner and Stephan (2014, 2018); the full published text of the critical edition can also be found online at <http://gretel.sub.uni-goettingen.de/gretel.html#Sanskrit>.

² YS 2.29; these are *yamas*, *niyamas*, *āsana*, *prāṇāyāma*, *pratyāhāra*, *dhāraṇā*, *dhyaṇa* and *samādhi*.

³ *vivekakhyātir aviṣṭavā hānopāyah* || YS2.26 ||.

⁴ This reference to the Buddha or the Buddha state reinforces the connection to the YS, which has acknowledged Buddhist content; for more on Buddhist content in the YS, see Wujastyk (2013) and Cousins (1992) and Larson (1989).

from conceptualizations, I rest clearly in the cool self, like the particle of a cloud on the surface of the sky in the fall (53.81).⁵

Uddālaka remained bound in the lotus posture for a long time, with eyes half closed (54.1). Then he made the OM sound loud, like the sound of a hollow bell hit properly (54.2).⁶ We are told that, while reciting OM, Uddālaka's state of consciousness was focused entirely on the sound and the sound consisted of three and a half parts. The first part (*amśa*) of the praṇava, had a clear sound, was located upwards, extensive and pure, and sounded though a slightly activated prāṇa. At the moment in the sounding, the outbreath (*recaka*) emptied the sage's entire body, like Agastya emptied the ocean, drinking the water (54.3–5).⁷ This first of three and a half parts of the *praṇava* that occurred as the sound first rang out. Each part correlates with one of three bodily winds (*prāṇa*).⁸ The subsequent two and a half parts must have occurred as the sound continued to ring throughout the space of consciousness. As a result of the recitation of the sound OM, the *prāṇa* left Uddālaka's body entirely and stayed in space, which was itself full of the nectar (*rasa*) of consciousness (54.6). While his body was devoid of *prāṇa*, the fire of Uddālaka's heart (*hr̥dayāgnir*) completely burnt his impure body (*malinaṃ vapuḥ*) like a forest fire fanned by a rising wind burns a dry tree. Uddālaka's body was incinerated from the inside out in a kind of internal combustion, instigated by this fire of the heart (54.7).

The author of the *Mokṣopāya* ends the description of the first part of praṇava with a verse that asserts that this method is decidedly not Haṭha Yoga—it is not a forceful method—but rather a process that happens spontaneously.⁹ Vasiṣṭha says:

*yāvadiccham avasthaiṣā praṇavaprathame krame |
babhūva na haṭhād eva haṭhayogo hi duḥkhadaḥ || 5.54.8 ||*

A literal translation of this verse reads:

In this first (or primary) method (*prathame krame*) of praṇava [which is also the first stage of prāṇa], this state (*avasthaiṣā*) occurs by will (*yāvadiccham*) and not merely from force (*na haṭhād eva*), because forceful yoga brings suffering (*haṭhayogo hi duḥkhadaḥ*) (54.8).

This verse provides some interesting information. First, the MU does not identify itself as a HY text, but rather as a text that positions itself either against HY, or perhaps alongside HY, as a parallel but different system that must be similar in some way, or else there would be no need to assert a distinction. Uddālaka's yoga is the natural outcome of making the sound OM, it occurs as a spontaneous natural unfolding of a process initiated by intention, and not a physical manipulation of the body intended

⁵ *tasmād dehād atīto 'haṃ nityo 'nastamitadyutiḥ |yas saṅgaṃ bhāsvatā prāpya vedmi vyomani bhāskaram || 5.53.71 || jño 'haṃ me na sukhenārtho nānarthena ca duḥkhitā | śarīram astu vā māstu sthito 'smi viḡatajvaraḥ || 5.53.72 || yatrātmā tatra na mano nendriyāṇi na vāsanāḥ | pāmarāḥ paritiṣṭhanti nikaṭe na mahībhrtaḥ || 5.53.73 || padaṃ tad anuyāto 'smi kevalo 'smi jayāmy aham | nissprho 'smi niraṃśo 'smi nirīho 'smi nirīpsitaḥ || 5.53.74 || nedānīn mama sambandho manodehendriyādibhiḥ | prthakkr̥tasya tailasya tilair vidalitair yathā || 5.53.75 || viḡatamohatayā vīmanastayā gatavikalpanacittatayā sphuṭam | uparamāmy aham ātmani śītale ghanalavaś śaradīva nabhastale || 5.53.81 ||.*

⁶ The construction of this verse is problematic; see comments and translation by Steiner (2014).

⁷ In some way the *recaka* carries the *prāṇa* out of the body, although the exact correlation between the *prāṇa* and the breath is not clarified in this passage. In the Bhusuṇḍa story (6.13–28), we hear that the processes of *prāṇa-apāna* and *recaka-kumbhaka-pūra* are distinct yet related. The passage in Uddālaka is as follows: *omuccārayatas tasya saṃvittattve tadummukhe | yāvadoṅkāram ūrdhvasthe vitate vimalātmani || 5.54.3 || sār̥dhatriyaṃśātmamātrasya prathame 'mśe sphuṭārove | praṇavasya manāḅkṣubdhapraṇāraṇitadehake || 5.54.4 || recakākhyo 'khilaṃ kāyaṃ prāṇaniṣkr̥maṇakramaḥ | riktīcakāra pītāmbur agastya iva sāgaram || 5.54.5 || atīṣṭhat prāṇapavanaś cidrasāpūrite 'mbare | tyaktadehaḥ parityaktaniḡaḥ khaga ivāmbare || 5.54.6 || hr̥dayāgnir̥ jvalaṅ jvālī dadāha malinaṃ vapuḥ | utpātapanocchūno dāvaś śuśkam iva drumam || 5.54.7 ||.*

⁸ These are *prāṇa*, *apāna* and *samāna*; the correlation of the additional half part of *praṇava* with a part of the *prāṇa* is not given in the story.

⁹ Yoga as disciplined praxis has been traced to an early *tapas* (austerity) tradition that was external to the Vedic tradition and involved renunciation from worldly life, and control of the body, senses, mind and breath (see Brockington 2003; Fitzgerald 2012, pp. 45–46; and Mallinson 2016). The earliest texts of Haṭha Yoga, which post-date the MU, describe *mūdras* (seals), *bandhas* (binds), and other techniques for forcefully controlling *prāṇa* and moving *bindu* (semen or drops) and (later on) *kuṅḍalinī* to the place of *amṛta* (nectar) in the head, thereby flooding the body with *amṛta* and leading to a physiologically based immortality (Mallinson 2011, p. 770).

to move the *prāṇa* by force. Noteworthy here is that there was a HY in existence at the time of the composition of the MU that was somehow related to the process of *prāṇava/prāṇa* in which Uddālaka engaged, that the author of the MU positions against; but that other forceful yoga was also different from Uddālaka's yoga in that Uddālaka's method was prompted by intention and sound vibration while the other engaged physical effort.

The next stage of *prāṇava* is an even state (*samasthiti*) called unmoving *kumbhaka* (*nisspandakumbhako*) in which the *prāṇas* do not move (54.9–10). In this stage, the fire of Uddālaka's body was extinguished and the pale ash of his bones were seen as if they were asleep on a bed of camphor, white as snow. The bones were then picked up by a fierce wind and blown about, instantly covering space (54.13–14).

The description of the second stage of *prāṇa* is followed by the same statement as the description of the first stage:

yāvadiccham avasthaisā prāṇavasyāpare krame |
babhūva na haṭhād eva haṭhayogo hi duḥkhadaḥ || 5.54.15 ||

A literal translation of this verse reads:

In this subsequent method (*apare krame*) of *prāṇava*, this state (*avasthesā*) [called unmoving retention (*nisspandakumbhako*), in which Uddālaka's body is ash mixed into the ether,] occurs by will (*yāvadiccham*) and not merely (*eva*) from force (*na haṭhād*), because forceful yoga brings suffering (*haṭhayogo hi duḥkhadaḥ*).

Now begins the third stage of the *prāṇava*. This is the *pūraka* or filling up stage that brings rest (*upaśāntide*) (54.16).¹⁰ In this stage, Uddālaka's *prāṇas* had cooled and resided within the elixir (*amṛta*) of consciousness in space (54.17). Here, the *prāṇas* congealed into a round orb like the moon, like mist became a cool cloud (54.18) and then a great stream of nectar, like pearls or rays of the moon on water (54.20). That stream fell from space onto the remainder of the dust of the Uddālaka's body, like Gaṅgā onto the head of Śiva (54.21). His body then rose as Nārāyaṇa himself (54.22–23), thereby completing the process of the divinization of the body of Uddālaka. The divinization of the body is a HY process.¹¹ The *prāṇas*, that were like the sap of a tree in spring, then filled his body like waves of a stream fill a lake, like sweet sap fills a tree (54.24). These diligent *prāṇas* filled the *kuṇḍalinī* inside like crooked streams fill a break in the ocean (54.25), and Uddālaka's body was revived as before (54.26). Uddālaka's body returned to its natural form yet enlivened by consciousness and purified for even further transformation.

3. Historical Analysis

We don't hear when the third phase of *prāṇava* is completed, nor do we hear about the next half phase either. The enumeration of the stages of *prāṇava* is dropped for the remainder of the story. However, the revival of Uddālaka as Nārāyaṇa by means of *prāṇas* enlivening *kuṇḍalinī* is interesting from an historical perspective. It is evident from the way that Uddālaka is introduced at the beginning of the narrative, and from his story of enlightenment, that this story is about a kind of yoga that is deemed to extend beyond the Classical yoga of Patāñjali. Uddālaka was clearly a yogin who had practiced the *yamas* and *niyamas* according to the *śāstras*, but in spite of having attained the highest level taught in the *Yogasūtra* (YS), i.e., *viveka*, he was not enlightened. The YS is also referenced when Uddālaka intones the syllable OM. In YS 1.28–29 the *prāṇava* is given as the verbal expression (*vācaka*)

¹⁰ Rest from the heat; Steiner (2014, p. 340) translates this verse differently, as follows: "Dann, zum Zeitpunkt (*avasara*) [des Erklingenlassens] des dritten [Teils] der Silbe *Om* (*prāṇava*), [der] das Zurruhekommen bewirkt, trat aufgrund des Anfüllens (*pūraka*) [mit dem einströmenden Atem] die Stufe der Atem [winde] (*prāṇa*) namens 'Einatmen' (*pūraka*) ein."

¹¹ For a discussion of the divinisation of the body in Haṭha Yoga see Dasgupta (1969) with further discussion in Ondračka (2015).

of *Īśvara*¹² that leads directly to the experience of *Īśvara* by means of its repetition and through the contemplation of its meaning. However, neither *Īśvara* nor the semantic or philosophical meaning of OM are mentioned in the narrative. The ineffectuality of the *yamas*, *niyamas*, *tapas*, *viveka* and other actions according to the *śāstras* to bring about realization suggests that Uddālaka's yoga is not the same yoga as that of the YS, but rather another kind that begins when the limit of the teaching of the YS has been reached.

Uddālaka's re-appearance as Nārāyaṇa suggests a possible Vaiṣṇava connection for this yoga that is explicitly not Haṭha Yoga but, because of the twice repeated declaration of non-allegiance, must somehow have been within the range of what others might have considered to be Haṭha Yoga. To be clear, diverse passages throughout the MU have been traced to many diverse traditions, and the MU claims no specific sectarian affiliation at all throughout. Nonetheless, I suggest that we may read the appearance as Nārāyaṇa at this point in the narrative of Uddālaka along with mention of *kuṇḍalinī* to indicate a connection between Uddālaka's yoga, specifically the transmutation of the physical body by means of seated posture and mantra, as the depiction of a body-centred yoga that has roots in both the Vaiṣṇava muni tradition of ascetic practice that produced the *Dattātreya yogaśāstra* (DYS) (13–14th C) tradition and also the early Nāth Siddha/śākta *layayoga* tradition described by Mallinson (2016, pp. 109–40). According to Mallinson, the DHS is a 13th C Vaiṣṇava text is linked to a *ṛṣi* tradition of *tapasya* that was external to the Vedic tradition but not Śaivite, that contains a detailed description of ten Haṭha Yoga *mūdras* ascribed to the *ṛṣi* Kapila, is focused on keeping *bindu* from leaving from the body at the head, and also depicts an eight-fold yoga like that of Patañjali but ascribed to the *ṛṣi* Yājñavalkya and others (ibid., pp. 115–17).¹³ This muni/ṛṣi supra-vedic *tapasya* tradition, Mallinson suggests, was different from the a śākta Kaula/Kubjikā focus of the Nāth Siddha tradition that called itself *layayoga* and sought to raise *kuṇḍalinī* to the storehouse of *amṛta* in the head by means of breath control, thereby flooding the body with the nectarean substance (ibid., p. 111).¹⁴ By Mallinson's evidence, both these traditions draw upon or extend from the tradition from which the *Yogasūtra* emerged: The *ṛṣi* tradition teaches “a yoga of the eight limbs also taught in, for example, Patañjali's *Yogasūtra* but here ascribed to Yājñavalkya and others” and the Nāth śākta tradition stems from “more rarefied formulations of mental yoga in early sources, taught in, say, the *Yogasūtra* and its commentaries or Buddhist works” (ibid., pp. 110 and 121).¹⁵ According to Mallinson, the *Haṭhapradīpikā* (HP) (15th C) blended the Vaiṣṇava body oriented Haṭha Yoga taught in the DHS¹⁶ with the śākta *kuṇḍalinī* tradition taught in, for example, the *Khēcarīvidyā* (Mallinson 2011, pp. 770–81 and 2016, pp. 109–40). In other words, teachings on *kuṇḍalinī* can be traced to a Śaiva/Śākta historical stream rather than the Vaiṣṇava Haṭha Yoga stream, and both streams fed into the HY synthesis of the HP. Mallinson concludes, based on this evidence and conjecture, that the Nāth/Siddha/Śākta (*tantra*) traditions (independently and as a blended unit) co-opted the “ancient non-Vedic ascetic tradition”—the supra-vedic *muni/ṛṣi* *tapasya* tradition—and “it was onto the *bindudhāraṇa*-oriented Haṭha Yoga of this ascetic tradition that the *kuṇḍalinī*-oriented *layayoga* of the *siddha* tradition was grafted” to create the Haṭha Yoga synthesis seen in texts that post-date the HP (Mallinson 2016, p. 121). I suggest that we could read the mention of *Kuṇḍalinī* along with Nārāyaṇa in Uddālaka's story of enlightenment as evidence of early merging, or at the very least a co-existence, of the two historical streams outlined by Mallinson that pre-dates the earliest HY texts as well as the first well-known synthesis of these systems in the HP.

The Uddālaka passage is not the only mention of *kuṇḍalinī* in the MU. Queen Cūḍālā, after having already attained the highest state of enlightenment by means of her own contemplation, gains the

¹² *niyama īśvarapraṇidhānād* || YS 1.23 || *īśvarapraṇidhānād vā* || YS_1.23 || *kleśakarmavipākāśayair aparāmrṣṭaḥ puruṣaviśeṣa īśvaraḥ* || YS_1.24 || *tatra nīratīśayam sarvajñabijam* || YS_1.25 || *pūrveṣāṃ api guruḥ kālenānavacchedāt* || YS_1.26 || *tasya vācakah praṇavaḥ* || YS_1.27 || *tajjapas tadarthabhāvanam* || YS_1.28 ||.

¹³ (ibid., pp. 115–17)

¹⁴ (ibid., p. 111)

¹⁵ (ibid., pp. 110 and 121)

¹⁶ This tradition can be traced to the *Nārāṇīya* section of the *Mahābhārata*, see Laine (1989).

power to fly—just for the fun of it (*līlayā*)—by sealing the openings of her body, locking the wind into her *nāḍīs* and harnessing *kuṇḍalinī*. In the Cūḍālā passage, *kuṇḍalinī* is described as the highest power of living beings (*prāṇīnaḥ paramā śaktis*) which gives speed to all powers (*sarvaśaktijavapradā*) (6.84.45). It is also significant to note here that, in the case of Cūḍālā, in addition to the presence of *kuṇḍalinī* as the spiritual power of the body, we also have a theme of acquiring powers (*siddhi*) for the sake of worldly pleasure or enjoyment (*bhukti*) and not just for liberation (*mukti*), which is a further reinforcement of the śākta-tantra influence on the MU.¹⁷

The earliest known use of the term Haṭha Yoga, according to Birch (2011), is in the *Guhyasamājantra* (8th C) in which it is a forceful (*haṭha*) method advocated when other proscribed methods fail to be successful (Birch 2011, pp. 527–53). The first full definition of the term is found in a later text. Puṇḍarīka defines Haṭha Yoga in his commentary to the *Kālacakratāntra* (10th C) known as the *Vimalaprabhā* (11th C). The *Kālacakra* and *Guhyasamāja* are both Buddhist *anuttara* yoga tantras, the highest yoga tantras of the Buddhist tantric system, which means that they focus on the highest inner action and are classified as nondual (Sopa 1985, p. 139). The *Guhyasamāja* is a father tantra that focuses on method (*upāya*) in regard to purifying the body to arrive at a union of illusory body with clear light (ibid., pp. 142–44).¹⁸ Part of this process of purification and consequent union involves withdrawing the winds of the body to the central channel and loosening the inner knots that keep the wind from circulating throughout the body. The details of this process are complex, yet it is important to note that the term and concept of Haṭha Yoga, in its earliest textual attestation, has associations with a process of transforming the physical body into a body of light by harnessing the power of wind. The *Kālacakratāntra* also describes such a transformation, however with a slightly different focus. The *Kālacakra* is a *yoginī* or mother tantra that focuses on wisdom (*prajñā*) as a means of purifying the physical body to arrive at the union of clear form with the clear light (ibid., p. 139).¹⁹ The *Kālacakra* method is different from that given in the *Guhyasamāja*, however the goal is the same: a transformation of the physical body to a light body. Puṇḍarīka defines Haṭha Yoga as constraining *bindu* and forcing *prāṇa* into the central channel by means of *nāda*. Birch identifies three important elements in common between the *Vimalaprabhā* definition and later HY: (1) movement of *prāṇa* by force, (2) cessation of *bindu*, and (3) the use of sound (*nāda*) as a process (Birch 2011, pp. 536–37). Here is evidence of a consistent theme of combining the movement of bodily winds with sound and the restraint of some kind of special bodily substance. In the Uddālaka story, *amṛta* is not consciously restrained, however we do learn that the pacifying nectar—not described—is necessary for cessation (*nirvṛtim*) (52.10), and that Uddālaka's *prāṇas* went inside the nectar of consciousness (*cetanāmṛtamadhyagāḥ*) in the third stage of *praṇava* (54.16–17). These descriptions and systems do not match exactly, however I contend that the process depicted in Uddālaka's story suggests a connection of shared influence between the MU, the Vaiṣṇava muni/ṛṣi Haṭha Yoga tradition, the Kaula-Śākta-Nāth-Siddha tradition and the *Kālacakra-Vimalaprabhā* tradition.

4. Jīvanmukti and Videhamukti

Uddālaka's journey continued after the third *praṇava*. After his body was reconstituted, he engaged in an even further process of bodily purification by consciously restraining the movement of *prāṇa* in his body and closing off various openings. He first made his five senses firm in his body, i.e., he returned to his solid physical form. He then decided to make his body pure for the sake of attaining *nirvikalpasamādhi* (54.27–28). Using the power of thought, he directed the *prāṇa* that had gone out into the direction of the heavens to his heart (54.29). He forcefully restrained his mad, dirty, agitated mind

¹⁷ For a discussion of the divinization of the Tantric body see Flood (2000, 2006). Flood (2000) presents stages of bodily purification from the *Jayākhya Saṃhitā* (ca. 7–10th C CE), an important revelation text in the Pāñcarātra tradition of Tantric Vaiṣṇavism. The processes described by Flood loosely parallel the stages of transformation experienced by Uddālaka, however it is not possible to attribute textual influence of the *Jayākhya* to the MU since Flood draws on a southern recension that is unlikely to have been known to the Kashmirian author of the MU.

¹⁸ (ibid., pp. 142–44)

¹⁹ (ibid., p. 139)

(54.30). The pupils of his eyes were unmoving like bees in a lotus (54.31). He made the *prāṇa* and *apāna* placid in the mouth, like a peace agreement (54.32).²⁰ He diligently separated the senses from their objects like oil from sesame seeds and like a turtle retracts its limbs (54.33). Then he completely renounced the enemies, the outer sensations, and made the inner sensations dissolve like sap in a tree in the winter (54.34–35). He restrained (*rurodha*) the winds of the nine gates (*navadvārānilān*) by contracting the anus (*gudasankocāt*) and restrained the sheath at the opening of the forehead (*kumbha*) by covering his mouth (54.36). With a neck straight like Meru, he placed his subdued mind (*manas samyamam*)²¹ within the space of the heart (*hṛdayākāśe*) (54.38).

At this point Uddālaka seems to go through phases of challenge to his mental serenity which he easily conquers. He continued to easily cut down appearances approaching in the mind (54.41). He saw a darkness in the region of the heart (54.42), which he drove away with the light of his own heart that arose through proper knowledge (54.43). When that darkness was gone, he saw a mass of light (54.45) and then his mind became sleepy (54.46). He quickly destroyed that too (54.47). When the sleep was pacified, he imagined a dark space (54.48), but his own clarity cleansed the darkness like a light (54.49). When the space was broken, his mind became confused (54.40), but then he cleared the delusion like the sun clears the coldness of the night (54.41). Finally, he rested (54.52), he perceived his body and then went to a state of consciousness that is an equal or common consciousness (*citsāmānyam*) free from thoughts (*cit śhuddhā*) (54.53–6). Uddālaka then briefly visited the world of the Siddhas who sought his attention and tempted him to go with them (54.62–84), but he sent them away and then lived as he pleased in a state of enlightenment (54.85). This episode with the siddhas seems to indicate that Uddālaka's state of attainment is beyond that which has been sought or attained by the Siddhas. He goes beyond the goal of Classical Yoga and now even further than the level of the Siddhas to arrive at a state of equal consciousness (*sattāsāmānyam* or *citsāmānyam*). This equal consciousness is a state above *turya* that always arises for liberated ones with or without a body (55.6). Equal consciousness exists when thought is destroyed and there is just total clarity, which is thought without objects or parts, thought dissolved into itself that is just consciousness as its own form (55.2–4). All the wise *jīvanmukti* siddhas reside in that perspective, including everyone beginning with Nārādā, as well as Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva (55.8–9).

After a long time, Uddālaka decided to become free from his body (*videhamuktaḥ*) (55.11) and underwent a process of conscious death. Having made this decision, he engaged his body in a method for the sake of merging with universal consciousness by once again controlling the *prāṇa* and closing off the various openings of the body. First, he sat in the lotus posture (*baddhapadmāsana*) in a cave on a mountain, on a seat of blossoms, with his eyes shut (55.12). Then he restrained the nine gates by closing the anus (*samyamya gudasamrodhād dvārāṇi nava*) (55.13). He blocked the winds of *prāṇa* (*saṅgruddhaprāṇapavanā*), sat tall with his face upraised and the roof of the tongue adhering to the roof of his palate (55.14), with an unfocused mind, teeth not touching (55.15), having equanimity in the blockade of the flow of *prāṇa*, a pale mouth, body hairs erect from the consciousness in the body (55.16). He again experienced the equal consciousness of the endless self and obtained supreme flowing bliss within (55.18). Existing in that state that is an expansion of complete equanimity (*tatsthas samasamābhogaḥ*), he was in supreme peace (*parāṃ viśrāntim āgataḥ*), his face shining from union with the bliss of non-bliss (*anānandasamānanda*) (55.19). Then he was completely gone (*alam gataḥ*) (55.20). He became a great being (*mahāsattvaḥ*) (55.21). For some days he rested in the taintless state (55.22). He became endless, beyond describable qualities, purity, bliss, unprecedented joy that is not joy, he spread through the directions, pervading indefinite space, filled, having a form that is nourishing the world, enjoying great fortune (55.24). His body sat for six months and became like a mountain lute, singled by the sun, with many thin strings, making sound in the wind (55.25). Then the mothers came,

²⁰ I follow the translation of Steiner (2014) here.

²¹ Samyama is a technical term in the YS, and consists of *dhāraṇa*, *dhyāna* and *samādhi* (YS 3.1-4).

joined by Pārvatī, the daughter of the mountain (55.26). This is another reference to Śākta traditions. Uddālaka's skeleton was made into an ornament for the goddess of the gods, Khīṅkhinī (55.27) and to this day the body of Uddālaka remains an adornment for Khīṅkhinī, wound with a Maṇḍāra garland (55.28).

5. Conclusions

The purpose of this paper has been to highlight the need to consider the MU in light of the history of early HY. Much of the material in the Uddālaka story warrants significant further analysis, as do other passages of the MU that contain material that resembles early HY. The MU has been predominantly overlooked as a source of historical knowledge about early Haṭha Yoga for a several reasons.²² First, The *Yogavāsiṣṭha* is affiliated with Advaita Vedānta and scholars of the text have accepted this indigenous affiliation and focused their scholarship accordingly (for example, see Dasgupta [1932] 1991; Atreya 1936; Mainkar 1977; Arjunwadkar 2001; Sahadev 2004 and Veda Bharati 2013). It is only since the publication of the critical edition of the MU, a pre-redaction non-Vedānta recension of the YV, that the text has begun to be explored beyond the boundaries of Advaita Vedānta.²³ Second, the *Yogavāsiṣṭha* has primarily been deemed to be a text about *jñāna* rather than yoga. When introducing the Bhusuṇḍa story in the *Nirvāṇaprakaraṇa*, Vasiṣṭha tells Rāma that there are two equally effective methods for quieting the mind (*manonāśa*), and these are self-knowledge (*ātmañāna*) and the cessation of *prāṇa* (*prāṇasaṃrodha*). While both of these are forms of yoga and equally effective—they both engage human effort and lead to a transcendent state—the method of *prāṇa* has become the conventional meaning (*rūḍhim āyātaḥ*) of yoga, and the knowledge method is the one preferred by Vasiṣṭha (6.13.5–10).²⁴ Hence, based on Vasiṣṭha's own acknowledged preference and many significant passages in the MU that emphasize knowledge, the text has been categorized as a philosophical text that teaches the perception of consciousness and not a text about Haṭha Yoga. Finally, passages that describe embodied praxis are found in the stories, while abridgements tend to cut detail from stories. Since one of the many abridged versions of the text—the *Laghuyogavāsiṣṭha*—has circulated most widely and is the most translated edition of the MU, it is possible that significant passages on yoga just didn't make the cut and therefore have not been widely read and remain unknown.²⁵ Indeed, the *sāstra* passages that occur in-between the stories have been highlighted most frequently in studies that attempt to reconstruct the philosophical worldview of the MU, and one method of abridgement has been to eliminate the stories

²² One exception to this oversight is Timalsina (2012). Timalsina notes that the Bhusuṇḍa narrative contains significant HY material and depicts an embodied liberation by means a method of *prāṇāyāma* that differs to methods given in the *Yoga Sūtra* and other later Nāth literature, concluding that the passage demonstrates that the YV does indeed contain Haṭha Yoga material. Timalsina's paper is significant yet limited in two ways. First, he relies on the highly corrupt published edition of the YV that too many altered, misaligned and interpolated verses for a coherent reading, which leads him to an interpretation that relies on late HY material, whereas the MU is an early HY text. Second, Timalsina suggests that the Bhusuṇḍa story presents a unique episode and a "dynamic shift" within an otherwise entirely advaita philosophical text, however the MU has yoga material throughout. Andrew Fort (1998) has also categorized the YV as a Yogic text in the Advaita tradition that combines Sāṅkhya, Yoga and the Śāṅkara's Advaita Vedānta.

²³ Some scholars have sought to link the YV to traditions outside of Advaita Vedānta, for instance Bhattacharyya (1951); Divanji (1951); Chapple (1981, 2012) and Granoff (1989). These studies follow in the tradition of scholarly attempts to date the YV, beginning with Bhattacharyya (1925), followed by Dasgupta [1932] 1991; Divanji (1933, 1938); Raghavan (1939); Lo Turco (2002) and more recently by scholars of the *Mokṣopāya* Project, including Slaje (1994, 2001, 2005) and Hanneder (2005a, 2005b). Chapple and Chakrabarti (2015) have edited a collection of essays that interpret the YV beyond Advaita Vedānta, often in the language of theoretical paradigms external to the YV itself; several essays in the volume touch on the theme of embodiment.

²⁴ The Bhusuṇḍa story is discussed in detail by Timalsina, in "Bhusuṇḍa's Yoga" (see the preceding note). Bhusuṇḍa lives in the hollow of a Kalpa tree on the tip of Mount Meru in heaven. Bhusuṇḍa is a long-lived (*cīrajīvita*) liberated-in-life (*jīvanmukta*) crow who engages a unique method of *prāṇāyāma* along with a series of *dhāraṇas* on the five elements to be able to live in his body across the dissolution of the eons. Vasiṣṭha hears about Bhusuṇḍa from a sage in heaven and goes to Mount Meru to hear the story from the crow himself. Vasiṣṭha asks Bhusuṇḍa the following questions: What family were you born in? How do you know what is to be known? How long is your life? What do you remember of the kalpas that have passed? Which far-sighted person gave you your dwelling place? Bhusuṇḍa's answers to these questions fill the rest of the narrative.

²⁵ This comparison of verses remains to be done.

altogether (For example, [Atreya \[1936\] 2002](#)). Yet, the yoga is in the stories. Moreover, the text itself declares that method of the MU is in the stories (2.18.33; *dr̥ṣṭāntaiḥ pratipādakam*). Stories teach in a way that didactic literature cannot, and it is by means of the illustrations that the goal of the text can be achieved (2.18.50; *bodhopakāraphaladam taṃ dr̥ṣṭāntaṃ*). For the purpose of historical analysis, stories are useful because they create and represent worlds and environments as reconstructed historical contexts. By looking at the elements of Uddālaka's world we find new information. The narrative of Uddālaka paints a picture for us of a complex and blended world of sectarian influence, spiritual knowledge and embodied praxis within which the MU was no doubt composed, and within which early HY also likely emerged as praxis for the sake of mokṣa. We have mention of Vaiṣṇava influence when Uddālaka transforms into Nārāyaṇa as well as significant Śākta content, especially highlighted in the presence of *kuṇḍalinī* and when the mothers show up with Pārvatī to collect Uddālaka's remains. We are also told of a complex process of binds and locks that harness bodily winds when Uddālaka prepares to merge permanently with universal consciousness. The depiction of Uddālaka's yogic transformation that has been summarized here presents a multilayered picture of influence that, I suggest, may shed light on the formative environment of early Hatha Yoga.

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