Article

Uddālaka’s Yoga in the Mokṣopāya

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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 kundalini in the body, prompted by the recitation of the syllable OM, 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; Yogavāsīṣṭha; Kuṇḍalīni; 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 kundalini awakening prompted by the recitation of the syllable OM, 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 Yogavāsīṣṭha (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 manifetstation 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 O, kundalini 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 (cittaviṣadrumam) 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). 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 (ālānaviśiṣṭam bhūtapaśīkaṇam 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 Pātañjaliyogaśāstra, by ostensibly practicing more than just the first two of its eight limbs mentioned in the passage, Uddālaka was not fully liberated. In the Yogasūtra we hear that uninterrupted viveka is the method for cessation of the vṛttis of the mind. 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 samsāra (saṃsārabhāvabhūtadhīhiḥ). 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 (sāntakalpanayā dhiyā)? 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 (paramālokam) (51.26–29). Uddālaka sought the state of self-effulgence (svaprakāśa), the inner satisfaction (antas toṣam) that destroys delusion (51.31–32). In spite of being a great-minded silent sage (munir mauni māni mahāmatiḥ) (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, 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

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1 This essay draws exclusively on the critical edition of the Mokṣapāya, edited under the direction of Walter Slage; See Krause-Stinner and Stephan (2014, 2018); the full published text of the critical edition can also be found online at http://gretil.sub.uni-goettingen.de/gretil.html#Sanskrit.
2 YS 2.29; these are yamas, niyamas, āsana, prāṇāyāma, pratyāhāra, dīhāraṇā, dīhyāṇa and samādhi.
3 vivekakhyātir avīplavā hānopaṇāḥ || 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).
gone, because thinking is free 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 (anśa) of the praṇava, had a clear sound, was located upwards, extensive and pure, and sounded though a slightly activated praṇa. At the moment in the sounding, the outbreath (recāka) 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 praṇa left Uddālaka’s body entirely and stayed in place, which was itself full of the nectar (rasa) of consciousness (54.6). While his body was devoid of praṇa, the fire of Uddālaka’s heart (hṛdayāgni) completely burnt his impure body (malinam vapuh) 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:

\[
yāvadiccham avasthaī praṇavaparthame krame
\]
\[
abhiśeṣa na haṭhād evo haṭhayogo hi duḥkhaḥ
\]

A literal translation of this verse reads:

In this first (or primary) method (prathame krame) of praṇava [which is also the first stage of praṇa], this state (avasthaī) occurs by will (yāvadiccham) and not merely from force (na haṭhād evo), because forceful yoga brings suffering (haṭhayo hi duḥkhaḥ) (54.8).

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5 tasmād dehād atīto ’haṁ niśyo ’nastamitadyātī | yas saṁgaṁ bhāsvatī praṇya vedi vyomani bhāskaram || 5.53.71
11 jīo ’haṁ me na sukhēnirtho nānarthena ca duḥkhēthi | śaṁram astu vā nāstvo sthīto ’svirī viṣaṭvāraḥ || 5.53.72
11 yātrāṁ tatra na mano nendriyāṁ niśam aṣaṁ vāsanaḥ | pānārāḥ pariṣiṣṭhāni niśate na māhabhāṭrāḥ || 5.53.73
11 padaṁ tād anuṣṣṭo ’svirī kevalo ’svirī jñāṁ aham || nisphro ’svirī nārīlam’ ’svirī nirvīram’stitaṁ || 5.53.74
11 nādāṁ mama sambandho manrohendhiyādibhiḥ || prathākṣetraṁ taitāsya tālārāḥ vidālitār yathā || 5.53.75
11 viṣvamahatāy āvānaśtāya gataviṇkāparaccittāyāś śpuṣṭām || uparamāṁy āham ātman ēte ēte ghanāvāya śāradāva nabhastāle || 5.53.81
11.

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

7 In some way the recāka carries the praṇa out of the body, although the exact correlation between the praṇa and the breath is not clearly clarified in this passage. In the Bhusunḍa story (6.13-28), we hear that the processes of praṇa-apāna and recāka-kumbhaka-pūraka are distinct yet related. The passage in Uddālaka is as follows: omuccāraṇātas taṁśa saṁvittātva tuṇānukhe | yaṁvadonkarām ārdhivaśe vītate vimalātmanā || 5.54.3
11 sārdhāttvāṇāṁtāmnātnārasya prathame ’īśe śpuṣṭāraṇaḥ | praṇavasya manikṣyadhagāpraṇāraṇadheke || 5.54.4
11 recākāḥko ’khdam kāyam praṇāṇipramānaṃkramaḥ | rikkicākāra pitāmbur āgaṭya ēva sāgaram || 5.54.5
11 āṭiṣṭhat praṇapacanas ciḍrasiṣṭārte ’mbare | tyaktaḥhṛdayāgni parītyaktaṇiḥ ṛgacanaśāvibhuv || 5.54.6
11 hṛdayāgni jvalaṁ jvalaṁ jvalaṁ daddhaṁ malinam vapuḥ || utpāpapaṇvavochtō dūvaś śaṅkam ēva drūmam || 5.54.7
11.

8 These are praṇa, apāna and samāna; the correlation of the additional half part of praṇava with a part of the praṇa 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 praṇa and moving bindu (semen or drops) and (later on) kuṇḍalini 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).
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 to move the āṭhaṇa 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/āṭhaṇa 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 (samsāsthitī) called unmoving kumbhaka (nisspadakumbhaka) 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 āṭhaṇa is followed by the same statement as the description of the first stage:

yāvādīccham avasthaśā prāṇavyasyāpare krame
babhūva na hāṭhād eva hāṭhayogā hi duḥkhadāh

A literal translation of this verse reads:

In this subsequent method (apare krame) of prāṇava, this state (avastheśā) [called unmoving retention (nisspadakumbhaka), in which Uddālaka’s body is ash mixed into the ether,] occurs by will (yāvādīccham) and not merely (eva) from force (na hāṭhād), because forceful yoga brings suffering (hāṭhayogā hi duḥkhadāh).

Now begins the third stage of the prāṇava. This is the pūraka or filling up stage that brings rest (upāśāntīte) (54.16). 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 Nārāyāṇa 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, 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 kundalini 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 Nārāyāṇa by means of prāṇas enlivening kundalini 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

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10 Rest from the heat; Steiner (2014, p. 340) translates this verse differently, as follows: “Dann, zum Zeitpunkt (avasara) [des Erklingenslusses] des dritten [Teils] der Silbe Om (prāṇava), [der] das Zurruhekommen bewirkt, trat aufgrund des Anfu’Ilen (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 Shashibhusan Dasgupta (1969) with further discussion in Ondračka (2015).
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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 kundalini 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 Vaiśāvya muni tradition of ascetic practice that produced the Dattātreyaayogasāstra (DYS) (13–14th C) tradition and also the early Nāṭ Siddha/sākta layayoga tradition described by James Mallinson (2016, pp. 109–40). According to Mallinson, the DYS is a 13th C Vaiśāvya text is linked to a rṣi tradition of tapasya that was external to the Vedic tradition but not Śaivite, that contains a detailed description of ten Hātha Yoga niyamas ascribed to the rṣi 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 rṣi Yājñavalkya and others (ibid., pp. 115–17). This muni/rṣi supra-vedic tapasya tradition, Mallinson suggests, was different from the a sākta Kaula/Kubjikā focus of the Nāṭ Siddha tradition that called itself layayoga and sought to raise kundalini to the storehouse of amṛta in the head by means of breath control, thereby flooding the body with the nectarean substance (ibid., p. 111). By Mallinson’s evidence, both these traditions draw upon or extend from the tradition from which the Yogasūtra emerged: The rṣi 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 Nāṭ sākta 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).
According to Mallinson, the Hathapradipikā (HP) (15th C) blended the Vaiśāvya body oriented Hātha Yoga taught in the DYS16 with the sākta kundalini tradition taught in, for example, the Khecarividya (Mallinson 2011, pp. 770–81 and 2016, pp. 109–40). In other words, teachings on kundalini can be traced to a Śaivā/sākta historical stream rather than the Vaiśāvya Hātha Yoga stream, and both streams fed into the HY synthesis of the HP. Mallinson concludes, based on this evidence and conjecture, that the Nāṭ/Siddha/Sākta (tantrā) traditions (independently and as a blended unit) co-opted the “ancient non-Vedic ascetic tradition” — the supra-vedic muni/rṣi tapasya tradition — and it was onto the bindudhāraṇa-oriented Hātha Yoga of this ascetic tradition that the kundalini-oriented layayoga of the siddha tradition was “grafted” to create the Hātha Yoga synthesis seen in texts that post-date the HP (Mallinson 2016, p. 121). I suggest that we could read the mention of Kundalini along with Nārāyaṇa in Uddālaka’s story of enlightenment as evidence of early merging, or at the very least

12 niyama śivarupanidhānād || YS 1.23 || śivarupanidhānād vā || YS 1.23 || kleśakarmavicpūtaigh aparanṛṣṭah
purusavisaśe śivaroh || YS 1.24 || tatra niratihāsyam sarvaṣaḥbījām || YS 1.25 || pūrveśām api guruḥ
kālendūtavacchedat || YS 1.26 || tasya vācakah praṇavaḥ || YS 1.27 || tajjapas tadārthabāvavam || 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 Nārāniya section of the Mahābhārata, see Laine (1989).
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 

\textit{kundalini} in the MU. Queen Ćūḍālā, after having already attained the highest state of enlightenment by means of her own contemplation, gains the power to fly—just for the fun of it (lilāyā)—by sealing the openings of her body, locking the wind into her nāḍīs and harnessing \textit{kundalini}. In the Ćūḍālā passage, \textit{kundalini} is described as the highest power of living beings (prāṇināh paramā sāktis) which gives speed to all powers (sarvasāktijavapradā) (6.84.45). It is also significant to note here that, in the case of Ćūḍālā, in addition to the presence of \textit{kundalini} 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 sākta-tantra influence on the MU.\footnote{For a discussion of the divinization of the Tantric body see Flood (2000, 2006). Flood (2000) presents stages of bodily purification from the \textit{Jayākhyā Samhitā} (ca. 7–10th C CE), an important revelation text in the Pāṇćarātra 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 \textit{Jayākhyā} to the MU since Flood draws on a southern recension that is unlikely to have been known to the Kashmirian author of the MU.}

The earliest known use of the term Haṭha Yoga, according to Jason Birch (2011), is in the \textit{Guhyasamājatantra} (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 \textit{Kālacratatantra} (10th C) known as the \textit{Vimalaprābhā} (11th C). The Kālacakra and \textit{Guhyasamājā} are both Buddhist \textit{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 \textit{Guhyasamājā} 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). 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 as constraining \textit{bindu} and forcing \textit{prāṇa} into the central channel by means of \textit{nāḍa}. Birch identifies three important elements in common between the \textit{Vimalaprābhā} definition and later HY: (1) movement of \textit{prāṇa} by force, (2) cessation of \textit{bindu}, and (3) the use of sound (nāḍa) 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, \textit{amṛta} is not consciously restrained, however we do learn that the pacifying nectar—not described—is necessary for cessation (niśvīrtim) (52.10), and that Uddālaka’s \textit{prānas} went inside the nectar of consciousness (\textit{cetanāmṛtamadhyagābḥ}) in the third stage of \textit{pranava} (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-\textit{Vimalaprābhā} tradition.

\textbf{4. Jivanmukti and Videhamukti}

\footnote{\textit{ibid.}, pp. 142–44}

\footnote{\textit{ibid.}, p. 139}
Uddālaka’s journey continued after the third prāṇava. 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 (54.30). The pupils of his eyes were unmoving like bees in a lotus (54.31). He made the prāṇa and apiṇa placid in the mouth, like a peace agreement (54.32). 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 (navadvīrānilīnī) by contracting the anus (guḍasankocāti) 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) 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 śuddhā) (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 tūrya 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 jīvaumuktis siddhas reside in that perspective, including everyone beginning with Nārada, as well as Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva (55.8–9).

After a long time, Uddālaka decided to become free from his body (videhamuktah) (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 (buddhatadnāsanas) 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 (samāyam gudasamrodhād dvāraṁ nava) (55.13). He blocked the winds of prāṇa (samruddha-prāṇapavanas), 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 (tatsthās samasamābhogah), he was in supreme peace (parāṁ 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

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20 I follow the translation of Steiner (2014) here.
21 Ājñā is a technical term in the YS, and consists of dhāraṇā, dhyāna and saṁādhi (YS 3.1-4).
world, enjoying great fortune (55.24). His body sat for six months and became like a mountain lute, sung by the sun, with many thin strings, making sound in the wind (55.25). Then the mothers came, joined by Pārvatī, the daughter of the mountain (55.26). This is another reference to Śaṅkta traditions. Uddālaka’s skeleton was made into an ornament for the goddess of the gods, Khīṃkhīni (55.27) and to this day the body of Uddālaka remains an adornment for Khīṃkhīni, 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. First, The Yogavāṣiṣṭha 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. Second, the Yogavāṣiṣṭha has primarily been deemed to be a text about jīvāna rather than yoga. When introducing the Bhusunā story in the Nirvāṇaprakaraṇa, Vasiṣṭha tells Rāma that there are two equally effective methods for quieting the mind (manonāśa), and these are self-knowledge (ātmajñāna) and the cessation of prāṇa (prāṇasampradha). 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). 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

22 One exception to this oversight is Timalsina (2012). Timalsina notes that the Bhusunā narrative contains significant HY material and depicts an embodied liberation by means a method of prāṇāyāna 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 Bhusunā 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 Saṅkhya, Yoga and the Saṅkara’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 Makṣapāṇa 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 Bhusunā story is discussed in detail by Timalsina, in “Bhusunā’s Yoga” (see the preceding note). Bhusunā lives in the hollow of a Kalpa tree on the tip of Mount Meru in heaven. Bhusunā is a long-lived (ciraśāyita) liberated-in-life (jīvamukta) crow who engages a unique method of prāṇāyāna along with a series of dhārānas on the five elements to be able to live in his body across the dissolution of the eons. Vasiṣṭha hears about Bhusunā from a sage in heaven and goes to Mount Meru to hear the story from the crow himself. Vasiṣṭha asks Bhusunā 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 farsighted person gave you your dwelling place? Bhusunā’s answers to these questions fill the rest of the narrative.
abridgements tend to cut detail from stories. Since one of the many abridged versions of the text—the Laghu yogavāsiṣṭha—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. Indeed, the śāstra 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 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; drṣṭāntaiḥ 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; bodhopakāraphaladaṁ tam drṣṭāntam). 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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25 This comparison of verses remains to be done.
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