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# The body in early haṭha yoga

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*For my parents*

# Abstract

This study of the body in Sanskrit sources on early *haṭha* yoga, eleventh to fifteenth centuries, asks how the texts describe the body such that physical practices are efficacious. The sources describe for the first time physical practices to achieve soteriological liberation and bodily sovereignty yet are accompanied by only a limited metaphysical framework.

Three models of the body are analysed: the ascetic paradigm of ‘baking’ the body in the fire of yoga (*pāka*), conception and embryology (*bindu* and *rajas*), and the affective arousing processes, and materiality, of *kuṇḍalinī*. These models, and the governing principles of the saṃsāric body that are reversed through yoga, provide a framework for intra-corpus comparison of the sources’ heterogenous accounts. The study also draws on a wide range of related literature in adjacent fields to offer a select genealogy of ideas and contextualise the at times sparse accounts of the *haṭha* sources.

The research question ‘what is the body’ is framed by and engages questions of materiality, affect and gender. The study focuses on the materiality of the body and its attenuation, and the inversion of physiological processes of sex, conception and sexuality. Key findings are that the sources articulate a prosaic approach to sex and sexuality that appears to be founded on an anti-procreative stance. This is not denial of pleasure and experience but acceptance and integration. The thread of sovereignty runs throughout: the yogi’s bodily, social and cosmic sovereignty is such that they attain absolute power over the physiological processes of their own body, appear to accrue power over others, and develop divine powers over the creation and dissolution of the cosmos. This contributes a nuanced analysis of the connectivities between physical or *haṭha* yoga and kingly or *rāja* yoga.

The significance of this thesis lies in its new, sustained and in-depth interrogation of the *haṭha* sources in relation to bodily materiality and affect, and supplements and contextualises this discussion with recourse to a wide range of antecedent and contemporaneous literature. While situated in the hitherto privileged epistemologies of Sanskrit and textual studies, the study nevertheless foregrounds historically abjectified aspects of the body, i.e. materiality and gender, and speaks with both Indology and Religious Studies.

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I am immensely grateful to the many scholars who have read the Sanskrit texts with me that form the primary corpus for this study. I read the *Amṛtasiddhi* in Procida in September

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<sup>1</sup> Available at: <http://hyp.soas.ac.uk/publications/> (Accessed 5 October 2022).

2018 with James Mallinson and Péter-Dániel Szántó and a cohort of learned colleagues: Jason Birch, Dominic Goodall, Shaman Hatley, Jacqueline Hargreaves, Harunaga Isaacson, Ulrich Timme Kragh, Nils Liersch, Corinna Lhoir, Florinda de Simini, Francesca Sferra, Peter Mukunda Pasedach, Serena Saccone and Alex Watson.

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# Note on translation

Sanskrit proper nouns are not capitalised to retain the ambiguity of abstract concepts such as *kuṇḍalinī*, *śakti*, *śiva* and *brahman*. Occasionally, I will deploy capitalising and non-italicising where the context indicates personified deities rather than concepts (i.e. Śiva etc.). This is important for my argument as I do not wish to suggest *kuṇḍalinī* or *śakti* are only to be understood as anthropomorphic feminine deities. Throughout I include Sanskrit terms for the body and epithets for *kuṇḍalinī* to indicate the range of terms used. Elsewhere I only include Sanskrit terms where it significantly clarifies the meaning.

Primary sources have been translated and paraphrased in English with the Sanskrit in appendices where not published (i.e. the *Dattātreya yogaśāstra*, *Goraḥṣaśataka*, *Vivekamārtaṇḍa* and *Yogabīja*). The Sanskrit for primary sources that are available in published editions has not been included. The editions that I refer to are indicated in the corpus summary in the introduction. Where I occasionally use different editions, this is referenced in the main body. The Sanskrit for wider literature has been included in footnotes when not readily available in published editions.

I do not offer new translations where suitable translations are available. Some sources are not available in translation, such as the *Yogabīja*, and in this case I offer translations. Unless indicated otherwise translations are my own.

# Abbreviations

The following abbreviations are used with verse numbers for the core corpus.

Am	<i>Amaraugha</i>
AS	<i>Amṛtasiddhi</i>
DYŚ	<i>Dattātreyayogaśāstra</i>
GŚ	<i>Gorakṣaśataka</i>
HP	<i>Haṭhapradīpikā</i>
KhV	<i>Khecarīvidyā</i>
ŚS	<i>Śivasamhitā</i>
Viv	<i>Vivekamārtaṇḍa</i>
VS	<i>Vasiṣṭhasamhitā</i>
YB	<i>Yogabīja</i>

# Introduction

## *Female:body*

The *vedas*, *śāstras* and *purāṇas* are like public women. Only *śāmbhavī mudrā* is kept private like the wife of a good family.<sup>2</sup>

*Hatḥapradīpikā* 4.5

This thesis analyses the body in early *haṭha* yoga. The *haṭha* sources describe for the first time physical techniques more complex than sitting still in meditation but less gruelling than austerities (*tapas*). These techniques are seen to be efficacious: the appropriate manipulation of the body engenders the objectives of *haṭha* yoga—objectives of power and liberation from the round of rebirth (*samsāra*). The sources are practice manuals that focus on the description of technique and, apart from the *Amṛtasiddhi*, they do not articulate at length a systematic or homogenous physical or metaphysical justification for why or how bodily practice works. The sources have been selected for this study precisely on the basis that they teach physical techniques. More developed systems of (embodied) metaphysics are articulated in antecedent and contemporaneous *śaiva* and *vajrayāna* literatures, and *vedānta* and *sāṃkhya*. These wider sources have been drawn on to help understand aspects of the *haṭha* sources that are unclear. The core question is how the *haṭha* sources understand the body such that physical techniques are efficacious. While the physical and metaphysical basis for practice being efficacious is not extensively explained in the sources, I do not interpret that brevity as the redactors asserting a disjunct between theory and practice, the irrelevance of theory to practice. Rather than dismiss the sparing rationales that are given as merely arbitrary, I argue they are foundational to how

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<sup>2</sup> HP 4.5 *vedaśāstrapurāṇāni sāmānyaganikā iva | ekaiva śāmbhavī mudrā guptā kulavadhūr iva* || Cf. *Amanaska* 2.9 and Birch (2013:286) for parallels.

yoga works. Because the body is the site and technology of yoga practice, I do not rush to separate the physiological body and yogic body; instead, I analyse them as imbricated with one another if not identical. I identify the principles underlying the body and analyse three key paradigms of the body. Chapter one explores the descriptions of the body and identifies these underlying principles: identity of body and cosmos and the depletion paradigm. Setting out these descriptions and principles paves the way for an analysis, through chapters two to six, of what I term bodily paradigms. I identify three paradigms of the body: an ascetic-derived heat paradigm where the body is baked in the fire of yoga (*pāka*), a *bindu-rajas* model prescribing the manipulation of semen and female sexual and menstrual fluids, and a *kuṇḍalinī* model which incorporates a female deity or deities within the body. Developing power over bodily processes informs each of these paradigms. The conclusion draws together the threads of sovereignty.

What is the meaning of *haṭha* yoga? ‘Yoga’ refers to both practices and the results of practice. ‘Yoga’ in the *Amṛtasiddhi* is union of *prāṇa* and *apāna* (AS 6.13) and union of semen (*bindu*) and menstrual blood (*rajas*) (AS 7.13). Again, in the *Yogabīja*, yoga is the union of *prāṇa* and *apāna*, *rajas* and semen (*retas*), and also sun and moon, the individual and higher self—yoga is the union of many opposites (YB 79-80ab). Yoga also refers to the attainment of freedom from suffering (*duḥkha*) and power and liberation, whether that liberation is in a living body (*jīvanmukti*) or without a body (*videhamukti*). Mallinson defines *haṭha* yoga as, ‘a type of yoga in which physical practices predominate’ (2021:1) yet points to its ‘artificiality’ as a construct. It is ‘useful as a category in scholarly analysis of yoga but is not important for its practitioners... Its artificiality is reflected in its fluidity as a concept’ (Mallinson 2018:25).<sup>3</sup> For the purposes of this thesis I take *haṭha* to mean physical practices and have selected the materials to examine on the basis of whether they prescribe physical

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<sup>3</sup> Mallinson published this draft article as ‘Hathayoga’s Early History’ (2020a) without this analysis.

practices, whether or not the redactors define the practices as *haṭha*. However, my concern is less with the practices themselves and more with the notions of the body underlying the techniques of yoga.

The early *haṭha* yoga period spans the eleventh-century *Amṛtasiddhi* to the *locus classicus* of *haṭha* yoga, the early fifteenth-century *Haṭhapradīpikā*.<sup>4</sup> Only the texts redacted in that period that teach physical practice have been included in the core corpus. The core corpus in approximate chronological order is the *Amṛtasiddhi*, *Amarauḡha*, *Vivekamārtanḡa*, *Yogabīja*, *Khecarīvidyā*, *Vasiṣṡhasaṡhitā*, *Goraḡsasaṡhitā*, *Dattātreyaḡogaśāstra*, *Śivasaṡhitā* and *Haṡhapradīpikā*. I start with the *Amṛtasiddhi* because it is the first text to teach the physical practices that become core to yoga from this point onwards. The last text I have chosen is the *Haṡhapradīpikā* as subsequent sources do not add to the basic structures of the body set out in the early corpus.

This is not primarily an account of the ‘yogic body’ (*sūkṡma śārīra*) but an account that takes the materiality and physiology of the body seriously. Therefore, chapter one focuses on how the sources understand the body. This account also takes seriously differences of sex and gender in the practices and outcomes of *haṡha* yoga. My findings have bodily and social implications for men and women, for example in relation to non-conception and in relation to social and soteriological power. Thus, the study attends to questions of materiality, affect and gender. I attempt not to separate yogic bodies as esoteric bodies from gross material bodies. But I do attend closely to what I have termed ‘models’ of the body that incorporate material and esoteric aspects: the purification or refinement of materiality<sup>5</sup> through baking the body in the fire of yoga (*pāka*), reproduction (especially *rajas*, menstrual and sexual fluid), and *kuṡḡḡalinī* (as constitutive of the body and the experience of sexual affect). These analytic

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<sup>4</sup> Or even 1400 (Mallinson, personal communication, 5 April 2024).

<sup>5</sup> My understanding of the body as material is set out in chapter one in terms of materiality (*jāḡya*) and physiology (understood as bodily constituents and emotions).

models are not incommensurate with one another though they have distinct genealogical trajectories and differ in techniques and outcomes. However, identifying these models generates a methodological tension as it reifies difference between the models (and might also be misunderstood as suggesting the sources adhere systematically to one or another model). While I orient the material around these models to structure the discussion, I do not suggest there is a single systematic account or an ur-body, nor that these models are historically, theoretically or experientially distinct. Rather the models are deployed differently in the different sources as well as being adapted and incorporated one with another. I do not impose homogeneity on sources that each offer idiosyncratic accounts of the body. I consider the risk of imputing ur-bodies shortly.

A similar danger attends focusing on the sexual and social outcomes of the practices—that I give the impression the sources overall promote sex. I privilege accounts of sex and pursue readings that are marginal and tentative at the risk of distorting the rather limited focus on sex in the sources overall. Key here is an assessment of who the sources are by and for. In general, the sources appear to be instructions for practitioners rather than the apologetics or polemics of particular schools, though the sources do defend their approaches—such as *Amṛtasiddhi* 1.7-9, 10.11, 36.5 and *Śivasamhitā* 1.1-18. The period of early *haṭha* yoga sees a marked rise in the compilation and dissemination of such sources, against a backdrop of the rise and decline of the ‘Śaiva Age’ (Sanderson 2009) with the coming of Islam. Monastic systems survive the decline of patronage and the sources were likely composed, or at least redacted, within monastic settings (though their audiences may not have been renunciants). Earlier ascetic forms are codified in the baking (*pāka*) model, and *rajas-bindu* and *kuṇḍalinī* internalise tantric ritual, mobilising it in the body of the *haṭha* yogi. Mallinson notes,

The yoga traditions associated with the early Haṭha texts were all celibate, even those that developed out of Kaula lineages which had practised ritual sex. The purpose of the composition of most of the texts of the Haṭha corpus seems to have been to bring the



yogic techniques of these ascetic traditions to a non-celibate householder audience.  
(Mallinson 2018:201)

Sex and sexual affect are key topics in this thesis, but it is not my intention to adjudicate on the celibate or otherwise social context of textual production.<sup>6</sup> I should note that the passages I examine on sex are marginal in the overall balance of the materials, but foregrounding these passages allows me to interrogate the understanding of the body.

Who compiled the sources? The compilers of the sources could be practitioners who had personal experience of the efficacy of the practices, or the sources could be products of scholastic, scribal efforts to collate a range of contemporaneous accounts with all their inconsistencies. Birch notes, ‘The early texts give the impression that they were instruction manuals on Yoga written by practitioners for practitioners, whereas the late corpus contains texts that were written by scholars who had expertise in several branches of knowledge’ (2018:11). While they were certainly composed for practitioners, they might not have been redacted by practitioners, or rather, by practitioners who practised all the teachings contained within any one text in a comprehensive manner. The sources are compilations that draw on one another with differing degrees of internal consistency. The *Amṛtasiddhi* appears very systematic, the *Dattātreyaśāstra* a compendium written in one authorial voice, while the *Śivasamhitā* is an inconsistent compendium. The inconsistencies may indicate that some practitioners were to do some but not all of the practices. Not all practitioners were always

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<sup>6</sup> In relation to the generally celibate contemporary Nāth *saṃpradāya* Bouillier remarks, ‘even though the Yogīs now acknowledge the injunction to remain celibate, I remember how casually someone explained to me in the Dang monastery: ‘Sure, the Yogīs have to remain celibate! Their lovers, they must keep them outside the *math!*’ (2016:302).

expected to do all practices:<sup>7</sup> certain grades of practitioners are allocated certain practices in some of the sources.<sup>8</sup>

A related point is the degree of veracity we should place on these at times fantastical accounts. The sources might be embellishing the potential of the practices to win adherents or conform to a more widespread literary practice of hyperbole. The Kaivalyadhama redactors of the *Haṭhāpradīpikā* note in relation to *vajrolī*, ‘Usually the Haṭhayogic practices are being praised with exaggeration. It is indicative of their importance only, they should not be applied in their literal sense’ (1998:107). Similarly, Birch sees descriptions of therapeutic benefits and the attainment of powers (*siddhi*) as rhetorical, attempts by the texts to secure new adherents.<sup>9</sup> Dagmar Wujastyk acknowledges the place of hyperbole in describing the outcomes of inner alchemy (*rasaśāstra*) (2017).

I take a hermeneutics of trust as to whether the sources describe actual experience and the veracity of their descriptions of the body. Taking the practices seriously is tantamount to stepping from the critical discourse of religious studies to an implicit theology. With Flood, I ‘intend to take very seriously the ascetic claims about the nature of the self and the world’ (Flood 2004:xi) made in these sources. Slouber points to the benefits of such an approach in relation to tantric medicine for snakebite:

Why should one study what many consider to be quack medicine? This book does not attempt to defend early Tantric medicine as an efficacious method of treating snakebite, but it does seek to reframe it in less combative terms than conventional thought on medicine has allowed. By opening a space for considering early Tantric medicine on its own terms, glimpsing a radically alternative view of health and power

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<sup>7</sup> The *Amṛtasiddhi* differentiates four types of practitioner (chapters 15-18), the four stages taught in *Amarāgha* 34 are specified as relevant to four types of practitioner in *Amarāghaprabodha* 24. The *Śivasamhitā* too associates the four stages with grades of practitioner (ŚŚ 5.12-28) and the *Dattātreyayogaśāstra* gives mantra as appropriate to the practitioner of little intelligence (DYS 14). However, the *Yogabīja* presents an interdependence between its stages (Birch 2023:31).

<sup>8</sup> The *Amṛtasiddhi* differentiates four types of practitioner (chapters 15-18), the four stages taught in *Amarāgha* 34 are specified as relevant to four types of practitioner in *Amarāghaprabodha* 24. The *Śivasamhitā* too associates the four stages with grades of practitioner (ŚŚ 5.12-28) and the *Dattātreyayogaśāstra* gives mantra as appropriate to the practitioner of little intelligence (DYS 14). However, the *Yogabīja* presents an interdependence between its stages (Birch 2023:31).

<sup>9</sup> Personal communication, 31 January 2024.

becomes possible. (Slouber 2016:2)

Having sketched the scope of this thesis, the introduction is organised as follows: a literature review on gender critique and ‘body:yogic body’ dualism, a theoretical stance influenced by approaches that foreground affect, and a methodology that historicises philology specifically to unpack treatments of the body and practice *vis-à-vis* philosophy or context. The *hatha* corpus is nowhere attested as a discrete corpus and I justify the selection of the corpus before introducing the core corpus. Finally, I give a brief survey of the chapters and their findings.

### ***Literature review***

Here I review scholarship on bodies both subtle and material. I do not chart the body-mind dualism often associated with Descartes<sup>10</sup> but the body:yogic body dualism (to adapt Holdrege’s stylisation). I review scholarship that disaggregates body and yogic body. In the substantial part of this thesis, I try not to make this move and instead foreground the materiality and affect of the body.

### ***Female:body***

This thesis studies representations of the body and the implications of bodily practice to draw out social as well as soteriological implications. This is true for the bodies of women as well as men. The bodies of women in the *hatha* corpus are referenced only in relation to misogynist jokes, sexual availability, traces of menstrual blood or as partners in sex. Holdrege sets out how feminist scholarship frames and challenges the privileging of male:reason over female:body.

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<sup>10</sup> The mind:body dualism associated with the work of Descartes casts a long shadow, such as set out in his Sixth Meditation (AT VII 78: CSM II 54, 56) (Skirry 2008:131-138). The influence of Cartesianism is seen in studies of Indian philosophy as critiqued by Ashton (2020) in relation to the Newton-Cartesian bias in modern *sāṃkhya* scholarship epitomised in Larson’s ‘Eccentric Ghost in the Machine’ (1983).

The distinction between mind and body, spirit and matter, in its various formulations in Western philosophy from Plato and Aristotle to Descartes, is a hierarchical and gendered dichotomy: the mind, characterized as the nonmaterial abode of reason and consciousness, is correlated with the male and is relegated to a position of superiority over the body, which is characterized as the material abode of nonrational and appetitive functions and is correlated with the female. Thus one aspect of the feminist project involves challenging the tyranny of male:reason by re-visioning the female:body and ultimately dismantling the dualisms that sustain asymmetrical relations of power. (Holdredge 1998:344)

Biernacki too notes that we have come to expect, in writing before the twentieth century, a scripting of male as spirit and female as body (2008:8) (and finds a subtle rescripting of this in seventeenth-century texts associated with Kāmākhyā). *Sāṃkhya* feminises the body as *prakṛti* and Buddhism and Brahmanism see the body as degenerate *vis-à-vis* the mind (as we see in the *Maitrī Upaniṣad* 3.4 verse which stands as epigraph to chapter one). I ask questions about the physiological and material implications of bodies in *haṭha* yoga in order to, in Holdrege's terms, 're-vision the female:body', from which I derive the title of this chapter. Pursuing the physiological implications of the practices foregrounds bodily and social outcomes for women and men without straining to hear voices that are not recorded in these sources. This is part of reframing academic discourse, walking away from traditional orientations of recovering agency.<sup>11</sup>

This thesis is not predominately about the female body because there is insufficient data for the female body to comprise the main dataset. A history of female practitioners has not been written for *haṭha* yoga and remains a *desideratum*. Ground-breaking work listening for and at times articulating the voices and bodies of women has been done in adjacent fields. A brief summary indicates this. Jamison (1996) has done philologically robust work on female agency in the Vedas. Attempts to excavate or insert female agency in Buddhist tantra are

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<sup>11</sup> Traditional in the sense exemplified by Shaw (1994) of early feminism's identification of agency. Repositioning this discussion from women as 'subject' of study to the academic as 'actor', Stefaniw articulates: 'Feminist work in the academy is not about a matter of trying and trying to get ourselves on screen. It is a matter of walking away. If actors move far enough out of the shot the camera has to move' (2000:264).

evident in work such as Shaw (1994) and Simmer-Brown (2002), whereas Biernacki (2008) focuses on subjectivity. Careful work has been done on *vinaya* by Hüskin (2001) on menstrual cloths and Langenberg (2020) on tampons and theorising the hermeneutics of reading for women. Olivelle's work on women in *dharmasāstra* warns that apparent female speech may be the 'ventriloquial speech of men' (1997:430) and suggests women may only attain liberation 'hanging on to their husband's ritual coat-tails' (1997:437). However, Selby (2005) has pioneered feminist critical reading approaches to discern the voices of women in childbirth narratives of *āyurveda*. Dhand's (2008) emic theorisations of *nivṛtti* and *pravṛtti dharma* in the *Mahābhārata* I have found inspirational for theorising sexuality by nuancing the situatedness of sexuality. Kragh (2017) has done initial work on female authorship of ninth to eleventh century Buddhist texts. Törzsök (2014) and Hatley (2019) have both located women in ritual and sexual practice in *śaiva* tantra and assessed their roles as independent ritual actors to be minimal. Hatley notes the 'enormous difficulty in recovering substantive glimpses of historical women' (2019:1) though Törzsök identifies women as 'the most ideal practitioners' in relation to the 'Heart of Yoginī' mantra (2014:361). Drawing closer to the timeframe of the sources studied here, Cohen (2018) takes the pursuit of the female voice in her work on the *Mokṣopāya* as far as suggesting female authorship. She bases this on the evidence of women delivering two of the major narrative teachings in the work and argues that the conditions at the time would have allowed such authorship.<sup>12</sup> Biernacki (2008) addresses 'talk' about women, and how this talk confines and defines notions of women's subjectivity, their ability to talk or not, and the implications for women's bodies in their speech (2008:6). The rigorous body of scholarship surveyed here does much to listen and identify women's voices in literatures adjacent to the *haṭha* corpus.

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<sup>12</sup> See Cohen (2018n27) for a bibliography of scholarship on women and Hinduism that I need not reiterate here.

Some work has been done on women in *haṭha* yoga. Mallinson and Singleton (2017:53-54) discuss what evidence they have accrued, noting, importantly, ‘Women are never explicitly prohibited from practising yoga’ (2017:53). Birch (2013:120-124) identifies statements attesting the universal applicability of yoga to all, including women in *Yogayājñavalkya* 6.12 and 16-6.19ab. The *Vasiṣṭhasaṃhitā*, which is the basis for the *Yogayājñavalkya*, does not refer to women. The *Dattātreya yogaśāstra* and *Haṭhapradīpikā* do describe *vajrolī* practices for women (see chapters two and three) but there is no endorsement for women to engage in the practices of yoga that constitute the body of the teachings. Birch notes the two commentators on the *Yogacintāmaṇi*, Godāvaramiśra (early sixteenth-century) and Śivānandasarasvatī (seventeenth-century), include women in those who can benefit from the practice of yoga, and Brahmānanda, the author of the *Jyotsnā* commentary on the *Haṭhapradīpikā*, quotes this verse twice. However, this is less about enjoining women to practice and more about the benefits of yoga generally. Ondračka in his thesis on the liberated body notes the necessity for women in men’s practice of *vajrolīmudrā* (2021:87), and though the ‘presence of women in yoga texts... continues to be irritating and unacceptable in some quarters’ (2021:86), his study is not directed at accounting for the anomalous occurrence of women in the sources.

There is a stark transition from the lacuna of women in the late medieval period to the predominance of female practitioners in the modern period. Modern Postural Yoga in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries has been characterised by a gender transition: now, most practitioners are women. Yet even so the scholarly work to account for this change is at an early stage. Singleton’s work (2010) on gendered exercise regimes remains definitional of the field particularly in relation to the UK, in the late nineteenth-century and Syman (2010) charts the way in which yoga is oriented to a female audience in Hollywood, USA in the early twentieth-century. Newcombe (2019) includes important case studies on the UK in the

twentieth-century. Hauser (2024, 2020) is producing work on post-war Germany and Mangiarotti (2023) studies the discourse of wellness, healing and self-realisation for women in current-day Genoa, Italy.

This thesis is not a history of women practitioners. There is not enough data in the early *haṭha* Sanskrit materials for such a study. Turning to vernacular and art historical sources is a productive avenue (such as Linrothe (2006); Bankar (2019); Hatley (2014); Diamond (2013)), but I do not have the requisite languages and gaining sufficient expertise in art history is outside the scope of this project. Looking for women as agents risks ventriloquizing, as Olivelle suggests above, into the silence of the subaltern (Spivak 1988:64). However, in the *haṭha* sources, taking seriously the body reveals significant soteriological and social implications for men and women without imputing second wave feminist agency onto women. I thus come full circle and draw findings that are significant for women and women's bodies without having to invent their voices, or their agency, in the sources.

### ***Bodies both subtle and yogic***

Having set aside as methodologically unsound a pursuit of women's words in these sources, I now review the literature on body and subtle body, particularly when presented as dichotomous. In contemporary understandings of yoga the subtle body is often associated with the theory of the five sheaths (*kośas*) of the body which 'ascend' in subtlety from the gross food sheath (*annamayakośa*) through breath sheath (*prāṇamayakośa*), mind sheath (*manomayakośa*), consciousness sheath (*vijñānamayakośa*) to the bliss sheath (*ānandamayakośa*). Mallinson and Singleton identify the *kośas* as historically anterior and posterior to *haṭha* but not coincidental: outlined in the *Taittirīyopaniṣad* (2.1-5) the scheme does not appear in yoga texts possibly until the 1623 *Yuktabhavadeva* (3.6) and post-*Haṭhapradīpikā Triśikhībhṛāhmaṇopaniṣad* (11-12) and *Tejobindūpaniṣad* (4.74-5 and 6.56)

(2017:184). The latter-day ubiquity of the concept of the *kośas* may contribute to the popularity of ideas of the subtle body (*sūkṣma śarīra*). However, the early *haṭha* sources infrequently use the term *sūkṣma śarīra*, and, as I show in chapter one, rarely present the body as a series of bodies from gross to subtle.

Holdrege makes the distinction between different types of bodies in her article ‘Body Connections’ (1998) and her subsequent book chapter (2008) summarising this work. Holdrege’s useful thematic approach to the body divides and distinguishes modes of understanding. This hermeneutics of disaggregation is a helpful analytic but in the *haṭha* sources the defining feature of the body is integration of material, conscious, and affective domains and modalities. There are inherent risks in disaggregating the body if this division is taken as absolute or even possible, rather than heuristic and provisional. This risk plays out in the valorisation of consciousness as transcendent over the material and insentient (*jaḍa*) body (see chapters one and six). The danger is particularly evident in approaches to the yogic body as distinct from the gross body because it extends a separation of philosophy from method, that I turn to later in this introduction.

While I resist the hermeneutics of disaggregation I find Holdrege’s work helpful in identifying the gender, feminist, ascetic and social bodies (Holdrege 1998:369). This distinction has helped me think through the implications of bodily practice simultaneously on these four registers. In addition, the medical body as identified by Wujastyk is important to my analysis.

Dominic Wujastyk (2009) continues Holdrege’s approach of dividing the body into hermeneutic domains and includes the medical body. Wujastyk apportions the body into ‘the body of sacrifice’, ‘the upaniṣadic body’, ‘the Jain body’, ‘the Buddhist body’, ‘the tantric body’, ‘the yogic body’, ‘the wrestler’s body’ and ‘the medical body’. However, as with



Holdrege's approach, I prefer to resist the logic of disaggregation. I find Wujastyk's analysis of the notions of exteriority and interiority helpful:

One of the exciting aspects of body studies in the Indian context is that we find within the Indian tradition itself, from the very earliest period, a self-conscious attitude to the body as the vehicle of consciousness and as an exteriority, we might say, carrying various inscriptions. The notions of exteriority and interiority were deeply embedded in Indian thought early on. (Wujastyk 2009:190)

Exteriority and interiority are evident in the *haṭha* sources, and Shalev's analysis of fluids circulating internally and externally around the body brings out the notion that both are material, in *Khecarīvidyā* 2.73-76 (Shalev 2021:150).

Flood's notion of the body carrying inscriptions may have informed Wujastyk, as this is the central thesis put forward in *The Tantric Body* (2006) and prefigured in *The Ascetic Self* (2004). For Flood the body as text is entextualised, divinised through processes of mantra, the *bhūtaśuddhi* ritual, *nyāsa* and so on (2006:171, 174) in a process that though shared across traditions is tradition- and text-specific (2006:100). Flood suggests that particulars of the yogic body, specifically *kuṇḍalinī*, 'are given meaning and form a part of the practice only in the context of ritual and meditative visualisation grounded in text' (Flood 2006:162). Flood makes the larger argument that the yogic body is entextualised, inscribed upon by traditions.

Mallinson and Singleton appear to develop this argument:

... yogic bodies arise according to the particular ritual, philosophical or doctrinal requirements of the tradition at hand, and because they are expressions of these requirements, rather than descriptions of self-evident, empirical bodies common to all humans. In other words, the goals of a particular system determine the way the body is imagined and used within its yoga practices. The yogic body was—and continues to be in traditional practitioner circles—one that is constructed or 'written' on and in the body of the practitioner by the tradition itself. (Mallinson and Singleton 2017:172)

I do not deny the logical coherency of this approach of doctrinally specific articulations of the yogic body. But I suggest that for the *haṭha* corpus, the understanding of the body is not arbitrary, as if it were divorced from the physiological processes of the body. *Haṭha*

understands the physiology of the body in a very specific way that is the foundation for the practices.

When I encountered Flood's work during my masters' studies, I found the argument for ritual entextualisation of the body provocative and productive. However, Goodall and Isaacson suggest that this 'ambitious' treatment of tantric practice, an attempt 'to move beyond Indology to a 'post-foundational understanding of text as infinitely interpretable', is premature because the foundations are still so weak (Goodall and Isaacson 2011:133).<sup>13</sup> I would not so easily dismiss postmodernism's critique of traditional textual hermeneutics, but I wonder whether Flood treats the tantric body too strongly as mesocosm rather than body *per se*. Here I resist the move to treat the yogic body as mesocosm.

Firmly in the field of Indology, Ondračka's unpublished thesis, '*Amaratva*' (2022) is an important contribution to the literature on bodies in *haṭha* yoga and builds on his 2015 article that sets out much of the literature review for his thesis. Both thesis and article through a strong literature review critique scholarship on the Nātha-Siddha tradition for incorrectly imputing a transcendent body where there is none. Ondračka analyses the work of Dasgupta (1969), Mallik (1950) and White (2003, 1996) and finds that they do not support their analyses of different bodies with primary sources. Instead, he finds that, 'In the Nātha-Siddha texts, it is not possible to find any elaborate description of the gradual transformation of the physical, material body into the spiritual, non-material one' (Ondračka 2015:220). He sources the errors of later scholars to the 1937 study by Sastri, 'The doctrinal culture and tradition of the Siddhas' (Ondračka 2015:221). Ondračka establishes the materiality of the body and liberation as within rather than transcendent of the body, though he does not evaluate the

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<sup>13</sup> Watson in less critical mode describes the field as a 'division of labour rather than a battle' between the philological provision of new data and the theoretical construction of new analyses (Watson 2015:31).

broader literature on body:mind dualism. His thesis is compelling, and I seek to build on his argument.

Ondračka describes the moment his dream to produce a thesis on alchemy was extinguished when he picked up a copy of White's *Alchemical Body*, because it 'said everything about Indian alchemy' (2021:2). Ironically, such was my concern when I first encountered Ondračka's work: his thesis insists on an argument that has become increasingly clear to me during my research. This is that scholarship on the *haṭha* corpus fails to address the centrality and importance of the body and the continuing importance of the body upon attaining the goal of yoga, whether empowerment or liberation. Prior to reading Ondračka's thesis my meta-argument was that in the *haṭha* corpus bodies matter, bodies are matter, and the matter of the body is what the techniques of *haṭha* yoga work on. Ondračka's work confirms much of this hypothesis. Where our work differs is that he focuses on the liberated body and I on the paradigms of the body such that physical practice is efficacious.

Cox's recent *The Subtle Body: A Genealogy* (2022) complements my own study in productive ways. His philological and textual investigation of the genealogy of the subtle body is not what I intend here as his is a genealogy of reception. For example, Cox treats 'those fathers of Indology, who, in their earliest translations of Sanskrit philosophy relied heavily on the Cambridge Platonist lexicon, and thereby brought Indian philosophy into what had hitherto been a distinctly Platonistic discourse' (2022:2) such as de Ramsay, Colebrooke and Müller. Embedding the term subtle body very clearly in its European birthplace, Cox notes, '[t]he earliest literary attestation of the English term "subtle body" comes rather unexpectedly from the correspondence between Thomas Hobbes and René Descartes, where there is some disagreement over who plagiarized the idea from whom' (2022:6). My sources are less reception and more historical. This work differs from Cox's in being a close textual study of the body in the Sanskrit sources. Our studies do however emerge from a similar

objective, as Cox sums up: ‘This genealogical project began as a search for the ground of a concept. What I quickly found, and found again and again, was that any apparent ground soon evaporates under the blazing perspicacity of historical vision. The illusion of conceptual uniformity vanished before my eyes. And instead of that one book, that one ur-body on which the rest were grounded, I found a hundred blooming flowers’ (2022:5). This study similarly resists attempts to establish ur-bodies, or urtexts, for that matter, instead analysing sectarian and text-specific articulations of the body.

In sum, scholars such as Holdrege, Wujastyk, Flood and Cox—but not Ondračka—utilise some form of subtle body analysis that disaggregates the body. *Sūkṣma śarīra* is the term often associated with the ‘subtle body’. The *haṭha* corpus does not use the term *sūkṣma* as a typology of the body (though *Yogabīja* 53 describes the body as more *sūkṣma* than *sūkṣma*). In light of this fact Mallinson and Singleton use the term ‘yogic body’ rather than ‘subtle body’ (2017:171ff). In what follows I attempt to go a step further and simply use the term ‘body’.

### ***Theory and concepts***

Here I summarise the theoretical approach of affect that has inspired me in my analysis of the materials. I also consider aesthetics (*rasa*) as a compelling approach to bodies and the phenomenology of liberatory praxis. *Rasa* avoids collapsing into ontology and corporeality, moves that tend to necessitate a theology of transcendence, such as *vedānta*, and thus treat the body as second order. However, *rasa* is not deployed as an emic discipline to analyse the body metaphysically or theologically. Devotionalism (*bhakti*) may be a more appropriate emic theory but, like *rasa*, it is not self-consciously drawn on by the authors of the texts and is a later historical development. I situate my theoretical approach to the body within affect and materiality as these are precisely the constitutive features of the body I wish to foreground.

My foundational theoretical influence is Butler and in particular her 1993 *Bodies that Matter*. I also acknowledge my debt to Douglas (1966) who, alongside Butler inspired me to follow the menstrual and sexual fluids to find the abjected bodies of women. Moreover, these approaches bring all bodies and bodily processes into the foreground. Historically and contextually situated, the body of early *haṭha* yoga is the abjected other to the transcendent and emotionally purified self. The lens of affect studies helps to forestall the transcending move and instead grounds this study in the body—which is also the prosaic approach of the sources.

### *Affect*

‘The affective turn’ (Pollock 2016:45) is an orientation that attends to emotion and the material.<sup>14</sup> I am inspired by affect as prompting an orientation to the materiality of the body and the process of emotions but this work does not constitute a contribution to affect theory. With the term ‘affect’ I am referring both to emotion as an embodied experience and theoretical approaches that centre the body and experience. I initially resisted affect as a theoretical frame in order not to subject the colonised periphery to the theoretical whim of the centre.<sup>15</sup> Affect is a theoretical approach from the humanities that privileges the non-linguistic, the non-human, and matter and emotion as the impetus to act or think, the pre-cognitive that shapes the forms and interactions of all relationships including relationships of power. According to Arthur:

The word “affect” holds a glut of meanings in generative drift: from emotion, feeling, mood, sensation, and vibe to action, atmosphere, capacity, force, intensity, potential,

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<sup>14</sup> Affect studies was pioneered by the psychologist Tomkins (1962) and turned to critical theory by scholars such as Sedgwick (2003), Berlant (2012) and Ahmed (2010, 2006). Sedgwick’s *Touching Feeling* (2003) is particularly relevant to affect but her work from *Tendencies* (1994) onwards has been pioneering in the field.

<sup>15</sup> Or, in the contestations of area studies and queer theory, as Arondekar and Patel put it more eloquently, ‘the citational underpinnings that provide the theoretical conduit for such explorations were and continue to be resolutely contemporary and drawn primarily from the United States; that is, geopolitics provides the exemplars, but rarely the epistemologies’ (2016:152).

or relation. Affect studies attend to those near-imperceptible, too-intense, interstitial, or in-the-making visceral forces and feelings that accompany and broker the entangled material—especially bodily—and conceptual potentials of an emergent or historical phenomenon. (Arthur 2021)

This approach is promising if we can construe affect in relation to texts, and historical ones at that. Schaefer considers whether this framework can elucidate ancient texts and bodies in his article ‘The Codex of Feeling’, where ‘Affect theory is a way of approaching the humanities that emphasises the facets of subjectivity that cannot be reduced to language’ (2019:1). How can this be applied to ancient fields where data is exclusively linguistic or textual? Schaefer responds squarely to this appeal:

[T]exts do not come from nowhere: they are themselves the working out of deeper affective currents crossing and colliding with one another. Texts tell affective histories. And equally importantly, to make meaning from these texts, we need to try to create a map of the affective coordinates by which they were created and interpreted. (2019:2)

This offers a possibility of moving beyond a ‘mere philologist’ approach, to use Grinshpon’s archetype (2001:26ff), an approach that is focused on reconstructing grammar and syntax, and instead encompass the material, emotional and somatic nature of bodies. Mapping the affective currents of the body corresponds to Schaeffer’s call to map the affective coordinates of texts. Schaeffer’s manifesto can be deployed to elucidate the material, emotional and somatic body formally bound by the constraints of *karma* and *saṃsāra* that yogis seek to become free from.

Affect can sit alongside *rasa* as an emic theoretical approach. *Rasa* is the Indian theory of aesthetics. This could be productive in the analysis of *kuṇḍalinī* in chapters five and six but is also problematic. *Rasa* might help understand the experience of the process of liberation via the production and consumption of elixirs in the body. However, just because the primary meaning of *rasa* is ‘taste’ it cannot be so easily deployed in this context. *Rasa* as aesthetic

theory was developed for dance, theatre and poetry, not theology or the mystic or ascetic experience, let alone mere gustatory appreciation.

The *Amṛtasiddhi*'s concepts of *prakṛti* and *guṇa* show why affect is an appropriate orientation for the *haṭha* corpus. In the *Amṛtasiddhi prakṛti* and *guṇa* are bodily and affective phenomena, the physical manifestation of the doctrine of *karma*.<sup>16</sup> *Prakṛti* is the destruction of the body (AS 9.1), the form that the good and bad deeds done in previous births take in the body (AS 9.2). *Prakṛtis* are of two kinds, physical and mental: the physical are *vāta*, *pitta* and *kapha*<sup>17</sup> and the mental has the mind as its field of operation (AS 9.3). The physical *prakṛtis* are not described as *doṣas* in chapter nine but they are elsewhere (AS 10.10, 14.13, 14.19). We can understand the *prakṛtis* to be the *doṣas* and the *guṇas* of chapter ten as the standard triumvirate of *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. However, chapter nine also gives *guṇas* of *prakṛti*, in the sense of qualities of *prakṛti*, as momentary experiences of pleasure and suffering that arise in the mind, and the mind and other elements (AS 9.4-13). The concept of *prakṛti* accounts for feelings and ailments of the body, thus subsuming affective and physiological realms. The *Amṛtasiddhi*'s account of *guṇa* in chapter ten (AS 10.1-9) likewise fits an affect understanding where *guṇas* are produced from *prakṛti* as *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas* (AS 10.1), they bind the body and mind (AS 10.2) and from the *guṇas* arise emotions, physiological needs and actions.

Elsewhere affect has been deployed in Indological scholarship by Biernacki. Biernacki integrates affect theorised as virtual reality by Massumi in conversation with Abhinavagupta's theology of the body in which affective states are deities. Notwithstanding Biernacki's articulation of Abhinavagupta's apparent dualism of mind and body, affect here highlights

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<sup>16</sup> The *Amṛtasiddhi*'s idiosyncratic use of these terms is not that of *sāṃkhya* or *tantra*.

<sup>17</sup> The term *kapha* does not appear in this verse in the critical edition but occurs in variant readings and can be considered to be included in the 'etc' (*-ādyāḥ*) of *vātapittādyā*. *Kapha* is named in AS 9.7 and 9.8.

‘the body itself as an ecology of beings, materially embedded’ (Biernacki 2019:121) that is also found in *haṭha* sources—I touch on this in the discussion of *kuṇḍalinī*.

The ‘affective turn’ has inspired the orientation of this thesis to centring the materiality of bodies rather than reaching for the transcendent and acknowledging the generative entanglement in emotion of the yogic process. The body is bound by *karma* and emotions, and the yogic process is an affective one, characterised by experiences of bliss and power, rather than an entirely renunciatory mode. In the discussions that follow I single out in particular desire (*kāma*) as a structuring emotion for yogic process.<sup>18</sup> Massumi calls the shift of perspective in affect theory ‘fluidifying’ (Massumi 2002:6) and I mobilise this concept to reorient an approach to the matter of the body and see it rather as fluid in substance and in process.

### ***Method: bodies of text and bodies of flesh***

The primary methodology deployed here is text historical in the sense of reading texts in Sanskrit and in English, comparing sources and identifying and analysing intertextuality in order to understand texts in context. It is not a philological project in the sense of collating manuscripts in order to produce a critical edition. To sum, I compare the *haṭha* sources with specific earlier, contemporaneous and later literature, not to offer a comprehensive genealogy of ideas, but to explicate the analysis of specific aspects of the *haṭha* account. Occasionally I refer to mythology or ethnography to illustrate the textual sources. Let me expand.

In order to address the question ‘what is the body’ I examine descriptions of the body in terms of materiality and physiological processes, all of which are at play in the models I have identified. Because the sources focus on practice rather than physiologically or

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<sup>18</sup> Cf. Litvik’s reading of Dicken’s through the prism of resentment (2012) and Recalcati’s interrogation of Freud and Lacan through hate (2012).



metaphysically comprehensive treatments of the body I have contextualised the *haṭha* material through comparison with antecedent and contemporaneous literatures in adjacent fields. This is not a comprehensive historical genealogy of the body across different religious genres but selects material to complement and explicate the *haṭha* sources. Neither is this a search for origins that privileges an imagined early systematic ideal, a trend in Indology that I seek to avoid. Instead, comparison is intended to contextualise and elucidate the *haṭha* sources and demonstrate how they adapt adjacent knowledge regimes to the domain of bodily manipulation.

In order to study the account of the body in early *haṭha* texts I have identified passages on the body and functional principles of the body (chapter one) before treating in turn the three models of the body: the baking (*pāka*) or ascetic (*tapas*) model for purifying emotion (chapter two), *rajas* (chapter three) and the technique for women to raise *rajas* (chapter four), *kuṇḍalinī* as conceptual frame for sexual affect and its sublimation (chapter five) and *kuṇḍalinī* as the stuff of dissolution (chapter six). Clearly, I am influenced by the directions taken in affect studies in my choices of how to frame and understand the sources.

My work is based on Sanskrit textual sources. I do not examine other languages or oral traditions except occasional sources in translation—such as the Old Marathi *Jñāneśvarī*. This methodology continues a trend within philology of privileging Sanskrit and the (male) written word at the expense of the vernacular and the oral. These sources are male authored and redacted, and directed at male practitioners. The focus on such sources marginalises embodied knowledge and other forms of knowledge transmitted among women and less elite social groups. Indeed, the voices at the margins cannot be heard in these texts. It is impossible even if it were desirable to do a positivist reconstruction of female voices—due to the lack of women and women’s voices as noted above.

Having acknowledged the limiting nature of Sanskrit and texts in general, a certain amelioration of this critique is found in the type of sources that I work with. These sources are not written in a high register. While they are in metre rather than prose they in no way constitute poetry (*kāvya*). They also have a close and iterative relationship with orality and with practice. Lidke sets out something similar in his study of the *śrīvidyā* traditions in Nepal:

When oral tradition—the locus of ethnography—becomes institution it replicates itself as authoritative text (*śāstra*)—and thereby enters the locus of textual analysis. In a Tantric context, a text is authoritative by merit of the fact that it emblemizes the living tradition [. . .] in this symbiotic relationship between text and tradition, the living tradition (*sampradāya*) embodies its text through yogic practices which transform the written word into lived experience and makes possible liberation from the binding properties of language. (Lidke 2017:13)

Lidke gives here an appealing account of the close relationship between textual production and practitioner experience. The symbiotic relationship between bodies of text and bodies of flesh is a real and underexplored area in yoga studies. How can we read bodies of text for bodies of flesh? In these didactic manuals it is problematic to analyse the sources for men’s experience. The sources describe therapeutic benefits and ecstatic experience but they are not historical surveys reporting first-hand accounts. More traditional Indological philologists have steered clear of probing texts for accounts of experience. Some scholars have argued that claims of therapeutic or ecstatic effects should be regarded as hyperbole or propaganda, attempting to appeal to new adherents (see Wujastyk and Birch above).

Probing texts for experience risks orientalising. Contemporary or new age views of tantra tend to associate tantra with sex and antinomian practices. Urban notes that tantra was viewed as the ‘most extreme and perverse aspect of the “Indian mind”—as the “extreme orient” and “India’s darkest heart”’ (Urban 2010:148, cf. 2003). This project is particularly susceptible to accusations of eroticising because of the subject matter that I foreground. Broadly, I started out looking for women in the sources yet they only appear through misogynistic dismissal, menstrual blood and sex. Of course this work is not intended as a response to

contemporaneous accounts of tantra and yoga as all about sex but there is a danger that the subject matter I focus on could be used to confirm such eroticizing views. I engage this selective reading of the sources because I want to write a textual and intellectual history of the body, as it relates to both men and women. I should emphasise that the material on sex and menstrual blood is a very small component of the sources that I examine and would not want my work interpreted as suggesting this is a more central concern of the sources than it is. The focus on these passages is because this is where the body and bodily experience are found.

There is a potential dissonance in decolonising the precolonial. It is important to acknowledge the colonial work done by vedāntic and Christian missionizing in denying the body and felt-experience in favour of cerebral meditation and soteriological transcendence. While these movements may be informing the reception of these sources, the sources themselves are not responding to colonial views though some integrate vedāntic non-duality such as the *Śivasamhitā*. My articulation of the prosaic sexuality of the sources demonstrates that the sources are not defending themselves against any perceived body-denying ethic, whether vedāntic or otherwise. My work is thus not necessarily responding to the request by tantric studies scholars, such as Lorea and Singh, for responsible scholarship that de-Orientalises representations of practitioners and their lives (Lorea and Singh 2024:11). I do centre affect, and sexual affect at that, as a way of foregrounding the body and felt-experience and evaluating the nature of that sexuality (whether pragmatic or erotic). Indeed, Hatley critiques Indologists for providing inadequate corrective, in the form of detailed studies on sexuality, to the transnational reinvention of tantra as ‘sacred sexuality’ in contemporary popular culture (Hatley 2016:2). Here the lack of such studies is a dereliction of scholarly duty rather than irresponsible orientalisation.

Having outlined my essential methodology I explore the two trends in the literature that I seek to avoid. One is a tendency to separate practice from context, and the other is a tendency

to privilege the earliest attestations of practices. I argue for an approach to methodology that sees texts as products of contexts, and somatic praxis as dependent on metaphysics, notwithstanding the epistemological tension between textual bodies and material bodies. I trace a doctrine in the history of philology: that practice floats free of philosophical or metaphysical context. On the contrary, I argue that the ways in which bodies are articulated, and the underlying bodily logics, matter. Bodily metaphysics and sectarian context are, therefore, the foundations upon which bodily yoga is thought to work.

This method is philological according to Pollock's minimal definition of philology as making sense of texts (2009:934). Philology, or 'historical-critical hermeneutics', 'seeks to understand the historical origins and trajectory of a text' yet 'this kind of text criticism declined in the late twentieth century, partly due to the rise of postmodern textual approaches that disclaimed objectivity, emphasizing multiple readings instead' (Flood 2016:154). Philology's focus on understanding the text in context is a foundation stone of this thesis. My questioning of philology, set out below, is less associated with post-structuralism's querying of the intent of the author or 'the death of the author' (Barthes 1977) and more to do with the multivocality of the sources, 'choral hermeneutics' (Frazier 2017:13) or 'variance' (Traschler below). I am less keen to trace how the meaning of a text changes through time, the *raison d'être* of historical-critical hermeneutics, if the purpose of such work is to recover an original, and implicitly superior, meaning. Traschler identifies 'the return to the "original" reading' as 'inseparably linked to the movement to go back to Greek and Hebrew sources from which the Latin text stems' (2006:17). Instead he defends 'variance':

Instead of trying to figure out which manuscript or which reading is closest to the original version, and trying to fit the documents into some hierarchy, variance declares all the witnesses equivalent, all on a par... That is where the main benefit of the approach lies: it opens the view onto every single manuscript, it reminds us that each one of them is a response to a specific historical situation and thus deserves to be

examined as a witness of that precise moment. (Traschler 2006:20)<sup>19</sup>

Below, I extend his argument on manuscripts to bodies.

### *Praxis floats free*

The rationale for this method is that the understanding of the body is embedded in context. That physical techniques are thought to work in *haṭha* yoga is based on how the body is understood, and the body is understood as material and affective. However, I have identified a trend in scholarship that separates practice from context or somatics from philosophy, a dichotomy analogous to the Cartesian and vedāntic separation of body and mind. This matters because the bifurcation of practice and philosophy, whether resulting from or leading to an abjection of the body, means that the context of bodily practice is lost. Then it is no longer possible to appreciate how yoga is thought to work. I now trace this trend back through the scholarship of Mallinson, Singleton, Bronkhorst and Frauwallner.

I note a tension in Mallinson's (2014) framing of the relationship between practice and philosophy. Mallinson observes, 'In general, the texts of *haṭhayoga* reveal, if not a disdain for, at least an insouciance towards metaphysics. Yoga is a soteriology that works regardless of the yogin's philosophy' (2014:225). He proceeds in a careful analysis of the metaphysical context of the *Haṭhapradīpikā*, but his initial observation deserves reflection. The early corpus certainly incorporates only a limited metaphysics. I argue that how the body is understood matters to the functional physiology and soteriology of *haṭha* yoga, but this sits awkwardly alongside Mallinson's assertion that practice floats free of philosophical moorings, or more precisely, 'The texts of the early haṭhayogic corpus quickly floated free of any sectarian moorings and became common property' (2014:10). I am not treating the later corpus here, in which the systematic rationale of for example the *Amṛtasiddhi* is lost though

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<sup>19</sup> See also Martin (2010) on multivalent realities of textual origins.

the practices remain foundational. If texts float free of philosophical moorings then practice floats free of its original context too. Mallinson and Singleton substantiate this point in relation to their selection of materials for their book *Roots of Yoga*:

The material presented here is largely practical in nature, not philosophical. In general, we do not include passages on metaphysics unless they are directly related to the practice (e.g. meditation on the elements (*tattvas*)). Although traditional yoga rarely, if ever, occurs outside of particular religious and doctrinal contexts, these contexts vary considerably, while yoga itself retains essential theoretical and practical commonalities. (Mallinson and Singleton 2017:xi)

Mallinson and Singleton (2017:xxxiiin10) attribute the scholarly heritage of their observation to Bronkhorst's statement that, 'The spiritual discipline yoga does not belong to any philosophical system, but may, or may not, get connected with a variety of philosophies, depending on the circumstances.' Bronkhorst in turn refers to the work of Frauwallner in this regard (1981:317). Frauwallner (1953) contrasts the 'actual' (*eigentlichen*) philosophical school of *sāṃkhya* with the 'second school' (*zweiten Schule*), the yoga system of Patañjali. Frauwallner warns against considering it a system because it is rather 'a way to find salvation' (*ein Weg, die Erlösung zu finden*) and as such could be combined with diverse philosophical teachings (*den verschiedensten philosophischen Lehren*) (1953:408-409).

The scholarly longevity of Frauwallner's distinction between philosophical system and practice appears to be preserved in Mallinson's maxim that yoga technologies float free of philosophical or sectarian mooring. Not preserving quite the same distinction between Frauwallner's *sāṃkhya* and *pātañjalayogaśāstra*, Singleton and Larios however make a similar point. They attest a separation of 'practical yoga' from yoga as a philosophical system allied to *sāṃkhya*, as well as an emphasis on textual sources, and see this argument stemming from Colebrooke's (1824) essay 'On the Philosophy of the Hindus'<sup>20</sup> as the first (partial)

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<sup>20</sup> Colebrooke's 1824 essay 'On the Philosophy of the Hindus' (volume 2) concerns *nyāya* and *vaiśeṣika*. Singleton and Larios may be referring to Colebrooke's 1823 essay of the same name that concerns *sāṃkhya* and yoga (volume 1). Here Colebrooke summarises those systems and notes, 'PATANJALI's *Yóga-sástra* is

English translation of ‘Patañjali’s yoga darśana’ and White’s argument that this ‘effectively cut the Yoga Sutra free from its Indian moorings’ by reading it through a distinctly philosophy-oriented, European classicist’s gaze’ (Singleton and Larios 2020:40, cf. White 2014:60).

Singleton (2010) sets out the separation of practice regimes from historical or cultural context in his analysis of exercise regimes for women. He argues that,

[A]ssumptions and associations that cleave to particular postures and exercises superimpose themselves on their “foreign” counterparts. So, for example, a contorted body knot designed to be a component part of the *kuṇḍalinī* raising project of *haṭha* yoga can, through this superimposition, be reborn as a suppling exercise for health and beauty. In this way corporal postures become “floating signifiers” whose meaning is determined according to context (see Urban [2003: 23–25] on the “floating signifier” of Tantra). When the same posture is re-presented in Western postural yoga, the traces of both contexts remain, although typically the *haṭha* context is but vaguely understood (if at all). (Singleton 2010:161)

Singleton thus shows how practice floats free of context. The goal of this study is to understand the context of early *haṭha* yoga, to not already separate practice and the understandings of the body articulated in these early sources on yoga. The early *haṭha* context gives the principles of the body such that physical practice is articulated as working. The connection between this understanding of the yogic body and physical praxis may become attenuated or reworked in later literatures but I see this period as foundational for understanding how and why the body is the site and technology of yoga praxis.

### ***Progress and decline***

I have suggested that Frauwallner and Colebrooke’s separation of philosophy as *sāṃkhya* and practice as *pātañjalayoga* lives on in a division between philosophy or metaphysics or context

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occupied with devotional exercise and mental abstraction, subduing body and mind. CAPILA is more engaged with investigation of principles and reasoning upon them. One is more mystic and fanatical. The other makes a nearer approach to philosophical disquisition, however mistaken in its conclusions’ (Colebrooke 1923:38).

and technique or practice in the scholarship on yoga. There is a second point, pertaining to philology and ideas of progress and decline, that I wish to use Frauwallner's work to illustrate. Frauwallner adheres to a stance of textual decline. I use this example to make two related points. First, there is a general trend within philology to seek to identify or recreate an urtext. Second, and connected, is a historiographical endeavour to create an ur-body.

Collins identifies Frauwallner's historical progressivism as characterised by degeneration:

Unfortunately, in my view, the main accomplishment of this work is to exemplify clearly an outmoded and discredited form of Orientalism (in the pejorative sense). The method is: Herr Professor sits at a desk in Vienna with various texts, in various editions, before him (note that tucked away in a footnote is the remark 'I have only had limited access to the Pāli literature' [1995, p. 215, n.7]). He then excogitates an historical progression from simple to more complex (to which the judgment 'degenerate' is frequently applied)... The assumption that simple must precede complex has only to be articulated to be shown to be as absurd as it is common in previous generations of Indological scholarship. Do not people sometimes summarize and simplify in exegesis of earlier material? (Collins 2009:504n22)

This passage, itself a footnote in Collins' article, is used here to historicize philology's tendency to reach for an urtext rather than malign Frauwallner's Nazi affiliation or denigrate Orientalism *per se*. The tendency to see a progressive historical degeneration matters for the body. Textual analysis of the body inherits diachronic analysis's preoccupation with an urtext, or indeed an ur-body as Cox initially hoped for in his research. The attempt is to identify a complete system as a comprehensive and systematic unit of meaning, with preference attributed to single-authored sources as more internally consistent than multivocal compilation. Once this urtext and ur-body is identified, establishing the genealogy of ideas tends towards seeing 'traces' leading up to apogee, and degeneration and corruption following thereafter.

But what is the alternative? I am not advocating a collapse into despairing relativism where comparison is pointless, nor even such positive relativism as Cox's 'a thousand flowers blooming'. I am not advocating the rejection of philology at all. Textual comparison and



multivocality accompany the historical development of oral and textual corpora. The theoretical critique of philology has developed in post-colonial and feminist literature (Mandair 2009) which demands a ‘self-reflexive examination of the cultural context and prejudices of the interpreter’ (King 1999:80). The epistemological context of philology must be born in mind when applying it in a pre-colonial context: does a philological interaction with textual sources enact a subjugation of these sources? Cohn’s argument that the ‘western’ academic discipline of philology is enacting epistemological subjugation (Cohn 1996:20-21) when applied to the already denigrated body has the potential for double subjugation.<sup>21</sup> These critical warnings inject caution into this study of bodies of flesh via bodies of text and point to the subjugations in the epigraph to the introduction, where texts and practices are compared to women defined by their sexual availability: the Vedas, Śāstras and Purāṇas are like prostitutes and only *śāmbhavī mudrā* is kept private like the wife of a good family (HP 4.5).

This methodology section has traced the historiography of philology to articulate the fault line in scholarship severing bodies from contexts, and problematised philology’s urge for urtext and extended this to an urge for an ur-body. The challenge in what follows is to resist the urge to ur-body, to resist positing a metanarrative that flattens the heterogeneity of the sources to reify instead a homogenized ur-body. Before setting out how the sources describe the body in chapter one I introduce the corpus.

### ***Defining a corpus***

The core texts have been selected based on teaching physical practices contained in the *Haṭhāradīpikā* as opposed to sources that privilege meditation or visualisation practices. The physical practices of the *Haṭhāradīpikā* are posture, breath-retention, and seals (*mudrā* or

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<sup>21</sup> Dattoo critiques Menon’s use of philology as conflating, ‘a discourse that co-constituted British control over South Asia with an ostensibly politically neutral method by which to explain it’ (Dattoo 2023:R14).

*bandha*). The sources do not necessarily refer to themselves as teaching *haṭha* yoga. The selection of a core corpus is problematic for three reasons. First, selecting physical techniques as the category for inclusion contributes to a logical fallacy whereby reification of embodied praxis over more meditative practice is predetermined by corpus selection. Second, privileging *haṭha* masks the importance of meditative dissolution (*laya*) which is especially relevant to *kuṇḍalinī*. Third, the core texts are not a self-defined canon and so not a corpus as such. Nevertheless, I refer to the sources that I have selected as the primary data set for this thesis by that term.<sup>22</sup>

With these caveats in mind there is a strong case for selecting this corpus as the dataset for this study. The early corpus is a discrete moment in the history of yoga. Birch notes the twelfth to fifteenth century, ‘was a remarkable time in the history of yoga’:

It saw the emergence and advance of physical yoga techniques and the supremacy of the practice of *samādhi* as the means to liberation in yoga traditions. Early Haṭha and Rājayoga traditions created simple soteriological systems, which were based solely on the practice of yoga (rather than ritual, gnosis or devotion). In doing so, they omitted the doctrinal and ritualistic complexity of earlier tantric and philosophical traditions. (Birch 2015:8)

Birch describes early *haṭha* yoga as ‘minimalist’ and after the sixteenth century *haṭha* and *rāja* were absorbed by more brahmanical traditions and integrated with ‘more sophisticated philosophical and metaphysical doctrines’ (Birch 2015:12; cf. 2020:456). The early corpus is probably written for practitioners (Birch 2020a:456) but not necessarily by practitioners. I make the case that the theory that is included is integral to how *haṭha* yoga is considered to function. Later sources elaborate on metaphysics (such as the *Haṭhatattvakaumudī* and *Yogacitāmaṇi*). It is precisely the depictions of the body in the early sources that intrigue me:

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<sup>22</sup> Important scholarly work by Bouy (1994) identifies the intertextual relationships of the corpus and this continues to be advanced by Mallinson and Birch in their extensive research.

the bodily accounts and metaphysics are not extensive but constitute a key moment in the history of yoga, the moment in which physical practice is born.

I turn now to each of the core sources in rough chronological order to set out the dates, orientation to *haṭha* yoga, sectarian affiliation, and relationship to the themes of this thesis.

### ***Amṛtasiddhi***

The eleventh-century *Amṛtasiddhi* is the first to teach the practices of *haṭha* yoga while not referring to them as such. The *Amṛtasiddhi* was clearly composed before 1160, the date of the colophon in the oldest available manuscript (this date could have been copied from an earlier manuscript). Initial work was carried out by Schaeffer (2002) and developed by Mallinson, who makes the case for the *vajrayāna* genesis of the text (2020b). Mallinson and Szántó have published an open access critical edition and annotated translation (2021).

The *Amṛtasiddhi*'s 'yoga method is for individual celibate male yogins' (Mallinson & Szántó 2021:4), derives from a tantric Buddhist (*vajrayāna*) context and is part of the lineage of yogis who become the Nāth *saṃpradāya*. It is an outlier among other *vajrayāna* sects in that it teaches celibacy (AS 32.4). However, its celibate emphasis does not also include a denial of pleasure: as a result of attaining the first stage of yoga the yogi's body is beautiful and he enjoys pleasures with his heart fulfilled (AS 19.19). It systematically articulates the elemental nature of the body and internal embryology. Sources that inherit these teachings are less systematic. The *Amṛtasiddhi* does not include *kuṇḍalinī* though the rubric upon which she is superimposed is clear, such as the breath piercing upwards (AS 13.8). It is significant for *haṭha* yoga in its systematic articulation of physical techniques that become the defining features of *haṭha* yoga despite not referring to these practices as *haṭha*.

Cited verse numbers relate to Mallinson and Szántó's 2021 edition.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Available open access <https://hal.science/hal-04031405v1> (Accessed 29 March 2024).

## *Amaraugha*

The twelfth-century *Amaraugha* is closely based on the *Amṛtasiddhi* and is the first surviving text to describe its teachings as *haṭha* yoga. For the *Amaraugha* Birch gives the *terminus a quo* as the *Amṛtasiddhi* and the *terminus ad quem* as the *Haṭhapradīpikā* (Birch 2023:15). Birch gives the eighteenth-century *Varāhopaniṣat* as the *terminus ad quem* of the *Amaraughaprabodha* (2023:16). Mallik published a transcription of one manuscript of the *Amaraughaprabodha* (1954). Birch identified a short recension that he designates the *Amaraugha* in contrast to the longer *Amaraughaprabodha* (2019). Birch has recently published (2023) a critical edition and annotated translation of the older 46-verse *Amaraugha* and the later 74-verse *Amaraughaprabodha*.

The *Amaraugha* develops the *vajrayāna* material of the *Amṛtasiddhi* in the *śaiva* context of South Deccan or Konkan *paścimāmnāya kaula*, similar to the *Khecarīvidyā* and *Goraṅṣaśataka* and is ‘likely the earliest surviving account of a fourfold system of yoga that established a basic relationship between Haṭha and Rājayoga’ (Birch 2023:5). It introduces *śaiva* concepts such as *kuṇḍalinī* and *liṅga* and masks *vajrayāna* concepts such as the four blisses, moments and voids which nevertheless, ‘remain buried as obscure terms’ (Birch 2023:17). Despite the jettisoning of much of the Buddhist theory behind the physical praxis, that praxis remains largely the same (Birch 2019:960–961). The *Amaraugha* does not teach the physical practice of *vajrolī* and the *Amaraughaprabodha* dismisses this practice in a verse similar to the *Amanaska* (*Amaraughaprabodha* 8; *Amanaska* 2.32). The *Amaraughaprabodha* includes an elemental analysis of the body (*Amaraughaprabodha* 56-61) missing in the *Amaraugha*, and both include important passages on *rāja* yoga and the nature of sovereignty. Both conclude with the importance of the body as an indicator of success in yoga (Am 46, *Amaraughaprabodha* 74).

Cited verse numbers relate to Birch’s 2023 edition.

### ***Vasiṣṭhasaṃhitā***

The thirteenth-century *Vasiṣṭhasaṃhitā* is a dialogue between the sage Vasiṣṭha and his son Śakti. The *Vasiṣṭhasaṃhitā* does not name its yoga *haṭha* but ‘attempts to accommodate Tantric Kuṇḍalinī yoga within an orthodox Vedic soteriology’ (Mallinson 2012:258) and the *Haṭhpradīpikā* borrows its verses on posture (*āsana*). Over 250 verses of the *Vasiṣṭhasaṃhitā* were borrowed by the *Yogayājñavalkya* and both are derived from earlier *vaiṣṇava* works such as the *Vimānārcanākālpa* (Mallinson 2014:227–8) and *pāñcarātrika* texts, such as the *Ahīrbudhnyasaṃhitā* (Birch 2020b:210). The *Vasiṣṭhasaṃhitā* does not teach *haṭha* yoga by name but does teach posture as part of the same eight-limbed yoga (VS 1.33) that is taught in the *pātañjalayogaśāstra*, and breath retention (VS 3.2). It does not teach *mudrā* or *bandha* as such, though the description of the unnamed posture (VS 3.42-43) is similar to the seals taught in the *Amṛtasiddhi*.

This is the only text in my core corpus that has not been edited by Mallinson or Birch. The Kaivalyadhama Yoga Institute in Lonavla published an edition in 1984 and a revision in 2005 of six chapters. The editorial board of the first edition was Digambarji, Jha and Sahay. The editorial board of the second edition was Maheshananda, Sharma and Bodhe alongside Sahay from the first edition. Verse references are to this edition.

The brahmanical *vaiṣṇava* tantric orientation of the text is seen in the orthodox approach to sex. It is not celibate: *brahmacarya* for householders is sex with one’s wife at the appropriate time for conception (VS 1.44) or *brahmacarya* is serving the master regularly (VS 1.45).

This study refers to the Sanskrit text and verse numbers of the Kaivalyadhama (2005) edition.

### ***Dattātreyaśāstra***

In similar vein to the *Vasiṣṭhasaṃhitā*, the thirteenth-century *Dattātreyaśāstra* is *vaiṣṇava*. The *terminus a quo* of the *Dattātreyaśāstra* is unknown, and its *terminus ad quem* is the fourteenth-century *Śārngadharaṃpaddhati*<sup>24</sup> (Birch 2013:68; Mallinson 2024:9). The *Dattātreyaśāstra* concludes by invoking Dattātreya as a form of Viṣṇu (DYŚ 193) but in the opening narrative Śiva is the teacher. The *Dattātreyaśāstra*, ‘while still far from the realm of orthodoxy, is a product of a more renunciatory and ascetic tradition’ (Mallinson 2007a:28) than, for example, the *Khecarīvidyā*. The *Dattātreyaśāstra* is a compilation of earlier ideas expressed in original verse with apparently no intertextual borrowings. It draws on the *Amarāgṛha* and *Vivekamārtanḍa* for the *haṭha* techniques to which it adds *vajrolī*. But, according to Mallinson, the text is entirely new (Mallinson 2024:4).

Mallinson released a draft translation of 169 verses in 2013 and has a critical edition and annotated translation coming out in 2024 that incorporates 30 *śloka*s from three new manuscripts, M<sub>1</sub>, A and M<sub>2</sub> (Mallinson 2024:29). These attest a graphic practice of *vajrolī* and detail how women should practice. They are similar to but more detailed than the *Haṭhapradīpikā* and *Haṭharatnāvalī* (seventeenth century).

In what follows I use the 193-verse version of Mallinson’s 2024 critical edition. I include the Sanskrit for the verses I reference from the draft critical in an appendix.

### ***Goraḁśāṭaka***

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<sup>24</sup> Extracts of the 1363 *Śārngadharaṃpaddhati* were edited and translated into German by Aufrecht and Böhrling in 1871 and 1873. Peterson’s 1887 edition was the first complete printed edition in Sanskrit. As yet there is no complete critical edition nor complete English translation. The text is derivative of the *Mārkaṇḁyapurāṇa*.

The central core of the *Gorakṣaśataka* was composed or became well known in perhaps 1400 (Mallinson 2012:263) and has around one hundred (*śataka*) verses appropriate to the name. The oldest catalogued manuscript of the *Gorakṣaśataka* was written in 1795 CE and at least the core (GŚ 7-64) presents a coherent unit (Mallinson 2012:262). Mallinson arrives at the tentative date of 1400 (2012:262-3). The *Gorakṣaśataka* does not define itself as teaching *haṭha* yoga but does teach posture (*āsana*), locks (*mūlabandha*, *uḍḍiyāṇa* and *jālandhara*) and *śakticālana*.

Mallinson published a translation of one manuscript in 2012. Mallinson has a critical edition and translation forthcoming. Here verse references are to Mallinson's unpublished critical edition. I include the Sanskrit for the verses I reference from the draft critical edition in an appendix.

### ***Vivekamārtaṇḍa***

The twelfth- to thirteenth-century *Vivekamārtaṇḍa* is attributed to Gorakṣanātha in its colophons. Mallinson identifies a long recension in his forthcoming critical edition that he dates to the seventeenth-century. The *Vivekamārtaṇḍa* does not use the term *haṭha* to characterise its yoga but does use the term to describe how *kuṇḍalinī* opens the door to liberation (Viv 35) and the drinking of nectar that has been forcefully (*haṭha*) obtained from *prāṇa* (Viv 118).

The earliest known manuscript of the *Vivekamārtaṇḍa* was copied in 1477 by a Jain ascetic in Rajasthan, south of Jodhpur, thus just a few years before the earliest known manuscript of the *Haṭhapradīpikā* (dated 1497). There are more than 200 manuscripts of the *Vivekamārtaṇḍa* under various names including *Gorakṣaśataka*. The *Vivekamārtaṇḍa* has between 171 and 201 verses although a late version attempts a 100-verse *précis*, perhaps to accommodate the name in that context, the *Gorakṣaśataka*. Mallinson differentiates the

*Vivekamārtaṇḍa* from the *Gorakṣaśataka*, by which name it is also known, and I follow that differentiation here. He argues that the *Vivekamārtaṇḍa* may have become known as the *Gorakṣaśataka* through confusion with that earlier text (2012:263).

Briggs included a 101-verse transcription in *Gorakhnāth and the Kānpaṭa Yogīs* (1938). Kuvalyananda and Shukla published an edition of a different abbreviated recension in 1958. In 1976 Nowotny published an edition of the *Gorakṣaśataka* based on four seventeenth-century manuscripts. Here verse references are to Mallinson's forthcoming critical edition. I include the Sanskrit for the verses I reference from Mallinson's edition in an appendix.

### ***Yogabīja***

The thirteenth- or fourteenth-century *Yogabīja* is a dialogue between the goddess (*devī*) and the lord (*īśvara*) and is the most meta-philosophical in nature of the sources considered here. *Haṭha* is taught as the second in the sequence of four yogas of *mantra*, *haṭha*, *laya* and *rāja* (YB 104) and is defined as the consumption of indolence or materiality (*jāḍya*) by force (YB 108cd), and as the union of sun and moon (YB 149).

Śrīvāstav published an edition in 1982 and Awasthi edited and translated an edition in 1985. Muñoz published a 190-verse translation in Spanish in 2014 and a transcription in 2016. Larson and Bhattacharya published a summary of the *Yogabīja* based on Naraharinatha 1959 in 2008. Birch identifies a 145-verse *alpha* recension and is preparing a critical edition and annotated translation including two unpublished manuscripts. Here I use the earlier short recension identified by Birch. The verse references are to Birch's forthcoming edition included in an appendix.

### ***Khecarīvidyā***



The fourteenth-century *Khecarīvidyā* is an outlier to my corpus on the basis of the physical techniques described in the *Haṭhapradīpikā*: they are not the central teaching but are referred to in passing. The *Khecarīvidyā*, rooted in *yoginī*-cults and Kaulism, teaches *khecarīmudrā*, turning the tongue back to ‘drink’ the nectar of the moon from the cranium skull-bowl. The yogi should always worship Śiva (KhV 1.13) and through the attainment of union (*melaka*) become Śiva (KhV 1.9). The *Khecarīvidyā* does not refer to its yoga as *haṭha*<sup>25</sup> and teaches neither posture nor breath-retention in developed forms.

Mallinson’s doctoral work was a critical edition and annotated translation of the *Khecarīvidyā* (2007a) and I refer to the verses as numbered in that work.

### ***Śivasamhitā***

The *śākta śrīvidyā Śivasamhitā* is fourteenth- to fifteenth-century, datable by its borrowings from the *Amṛtasiddhi* and *Dattātreyayogaśāstra* (Mallinson 2007b:x). Its teachings are internally consistent perhaps because its compiler is not constrained to disguise their sectarian affiliations as the compilers of other sources appear to be. The *Śivasamhitā* names *haṭha* as the second in a sequence with *mantra*, *laya* and *rāja* (ŚS 5.12) which are prescribed for practitioners of differing abilities. *Haṭha* is recommended for the third best of four categories of practitioner (ŚS 5.23).

Vasu published an English translation in 1914 and the Kaivalyadhama Yoga Research Institute published a critical edition in 1999 based on 13 manuscripts and three printed editions. Mallinson published a critical edition and translation in 2007. Unfortunately, the publisher did not include the variant readings in the edition and they are not available on the

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<sup>25</sup> Some redactions emend *naṭa* to *haṭa* or *haṭha*, incorrectly in Mallinson’s view (2007:224n346).

website.<sup>26</sup> Pasedach is creating a new critical edition and the first chapter is available online.<sup>27</sup>

I refer to the verses as numbered in Mallinson's (2007b) edition.

### ***Haṭhapradīpikā***

The early fifteenth century *Haṭhapradīpikā* is a watershed text in the history of yoga.

Svātmārāma, the first professedly human author of a *haṭha* text, delineates *haṭha* as the sole method for the attainment of *rāja* yoga, a delineation followed in all subsequent texts. The earliest dated manuscript is 1497 CE from Sampūrnanānda Library in Varanasi, not much later than the compilation of the text.

The *Haṭhapradīpikā* has been published in various forms. The Theosophical Society first published the text in 1893 with the *Jyotsnā* commentary, and a second edition appeared in 1933. The Adyar Library and Research Centre edited the *Haṭhapradīpikā* as published by the Theosophical Society in 1972 in Madras. The 1972 edition was corrected by Ramanathan and Sastri after consulting additional manuscripts in the Adyar Library and Research Centre, 'especially' the manuscripts of the *Jyotsnā* commentary (No. PM 1431) (Adyar 1972:v). The original English translation was revised by Burnier and Ramanathan. The Kaivalyadhama critical edition, edited by Digambaraji and Kokaje, was first published in 1970 in Lonavla with a second edition in 1998. The commentary appears to be that of the editors and translators rather than Brahmānanda. The *Haṭhapradīpikā* has been edited and translated as part of a three-year project 2021-2024 between SOAS(then Oxford)-Marburg, involving the consulting of over 170 manuscripts. A digital edition has recently been published<sup>28</sup> and verse numbers reflect this edition or have been marked as the Kaivalyadhama edition.

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<sup>26</sup> <https://www.yogavidya.com/index.html> accessed 16 December 2022.

<sup>27</sup> [https://muk.li/upama/sivasamhita:1:ss-1-p?upama\\_ver=gkctzyk7w9](https://muk.li/upama/sivasamhita:1:ss-1-p?upama_ver=gkctzyk7w9) accessed 16 December 2022.

<sup>28</sup> As of 23 February 2024 [www.hathapradipika.online](http://www.hathapradipika.online).

The greatest care has been taken to check verse numbers against the latest versions of ongoing critical editions. However, these are subject to ongoing revisions and may not reflect the eventual published editions.

The foregoing texts are my core corpus. However, the corpus is not closed and I have consulted further sources where appropriate. The main texts that I do not treat comprehensively but comment on where appropriate are the *Jyotsnā* commentary, the *Amanaska*, *Yogayājñavalkya* and *Yogatārāvalī*. I introduce these briefly now.

### ***The Jyotsnā commentary***

Brahmānanda's *Jyotsnā* commentary is outside the main historical time period treated in this thesis but I have drawn on it to help explicate passages in the *Haṭhapradīpikā*. I do not consider Brahmānanda's analysis to be the definitive exegesis of the *Haṭhapradīpikā* due to the historical distance between the sources: while the *Haṭhapradīpikā* was compiled around 1450 the *Jyotsnā* dates to the 1800s. The *Jyotsnā* draws on the *Yogacintāmaṇi* as a source text.

### ***Amanaska***

The *Amanaska* consists of two chapters. The first chapter is c. sixteenth century and the second chapter is c. twelfth century (Birch 2013). Birch's 2013 doctoral thesis was a critical edition, translation, and study of the 198 verses of the *Amanaska*. The *śaiva*-oriented *Amanaska* vies with the *Amarauḡha* to offer an early definition of *rāja* yoga which it proclaims is superior to all other yogas and soteriologies (Birch 2013:401). The central teaching of the *Amanaska* is absorption or *laya* in a no-mind state (*amanaska*). The first chapter is not treated here as it is later than my timeframe. The second chapter was a source for the *Yogatārāvalī* and *Haṭhapradīpikā*. In both chapters *kuṇḍalinī* occurs and both reject

*mudrās* and *bandhas*. The *Amanaska* states that *kuṇḍalinī* does not cause the transition to the no-mind (*unmani*) state; rather, immersion bestows powers (*siddhis*). The text teaches the internal gaze of *śāmbhavī mudrā*. *Kuṇḍalinī* is not emphasised in this text. The *Amanaska* does not deploy a *bindu* model but variant readings do mention *bindu*.

Notably, one of the concluding verses of chapter two dispenses with *haṭha* yoga techniques on the basis that they are based in the body.

The conquest of the breath can be achieved by means of [reciting] the three types of Om and by various [haṭhayogic] Mudrās, as well as meditation on a fiery light [or meditation] on a supporting object [like] the empty sky [which are done] in the lotus of the inner space [of the heart]. [However,] having abandoned all this [because it is] situated in the body [and therefore limited], and having thought it to be a delusion of the mind, the wise should practise the no-mind state, which is unique, beyond the body and indescribable. (Birch 2013:215)

*Kuṇḍalinī* occurs in these *rāja* yoga sources that do not emphasise forceful techniques. This is an alternative to the accounts where her forceful rising is definitional of *haṭha* yoga.

### ***Yogayājñavalkya***

The fourteenth-century *Yogayājñavalkya* teaches a *vaiṣṇava* form of *aṣṭāṅgayoga* without the *haṭha* yoga *mudrās*. Bouy discusses the *Yogayājñavalkya* but does not appear to date the text (1994). Divanji published an edition in 1954 which does not include a translation. The *Haṭhapradīpikā* borrows verses on *āsana* from the *Yogayājñavalkya*, and the *Yogayājñavalkya* takes its teachings on *kuṇḍalinī* (YY 4.21-4) from the *Pādmasaṃhitā* (2.13c–2.17b) (Mallinson and Singleton 2017:490n21).

I do not include the *Yogayājñavalkya* in my core selection of sources because although it is within my timeframe its teachings are similar to that of the earlier *Vasiṣṭhasaṃhitā* which I do include.

### ***Yogatārāvalī***

The fourteenth-century *Yogatārāvalī* teaches *haṭha* yoga as the chief means to *rāja* yoga (Birch 2020b:206). It is likely that the *Yogatārāvalī* was influenced by the *Amanaska* and, therefore, composed after the twelfth century (Birch 2015:5). The *Yogatārāvalī* was a source text for the *Haṭhapradīpikā*. Two of its 29 verses feature *kuṇḍalinī*. The *haṭha* yoga techniques are physical techniques including the three locks (*mūla*, *uḍḍiyāna* and *jālandhara*). As a result of applying the locks during breath retentions (*kumbhaka*) the practitioner immerses the mind in internal resonance (*nādānusandhāna*) (Birch 2015:4). *Rāja* yoga appears to be an experience that does not involve the body: ‘Having left behind everything beginning with the states of ‘I’ and ‘mine’, those whose minds are steady in the sacred [state of] Rājayoga are neither observers nor objects of observation. Only an isolated awareness prevails’ (Birch 2015:4).<sup>29</sup>

I have consulted many more sources than detailed here and will introduce them as appropriate.

### ***Thesis overview***

This research is presented in six chapters that address the research question, what is the body in early *haṭha* yoga such that physical practice is efficacious?

Chapter one, ‘The matter of the body’, sets out how the sources articulate the body. It identifies the principles underlying these descriptions of the body. The overarching principles are micro-macrocosmic homology and depletion and death (the reversal of these processes, such as interiorisation of embryology and reversal of cosmogony, are unpacked throughout the thesis). These principles are expressed within an approach that is prosaic toward pleasure, neither moralising nor erotising. These principles inform the body models of *pāka*, *rajas* and

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<sup>29</sup> *Yogatārāvalī* 16 *ahaṃmamatvādi vihāya sarvaṃ śrīrājayoge sthīramānasānām | na draṣṭṛtā nāsti ca drśyabhāvaḥ sā jṛmbhate kevalasaṃvid eva ||*

*kuṇḍalinī* that comprise the topics of subsequent chapters. Chapter two, ‘Begin by cooking yourself’, analyses the ascetic model of baking the body as adapted in the *haṭha* sources, with its attenuation of the material body. Chapter three, ‘Tracing blood’, defines *rajas*. The procreative potential of *rajas* underlies the practice’s social and soteriological significance as a reversal of embryology. Chapter four, ‘I will slay your red dragon’, analyses the techniques for ‘raising *rajas*’ and contextualises the injunction to draw *rajas* upwards by comparative analysis with Chinese *nūdan*. The doctrinal commonalities are not attested by intertextual borrowings but indicate tantalising similarity in praxis. Chapter five, ‘*Kuṇḍalinī*: the matter of emotion’, describes *kuṇḍalinī* according to the *haṭha* corpus and analyses the affective register of the description—*kuṇḍalinī* as interior beloved, supplemented by *vajrayāna* material. Chapter six, ‘*Kuṇḍalinī*: *pralayatrix*’, asks how we should understand the practical deployment of the metaphysical description of *kuṇḍalinī* such as the coiled eightfold *prakṛti* and *śakti*. *Kuṇḍalinī* and the body are both understood as elemental (composed of the *tattvas*), and the arousing and ascent of *kuṇḍalinī* involutes the *tattvas* to reverse bodily creation. This is paradigmatically distinct from spiritual embryology but fulfils a similar purpose: the undoing of the individual through bodily constituents, a function that I term the *pralayatrix*.

This introductory chapter has demonstrated the tendency in scholarship to dichotomise body and yogic body and detailed philology’s urge toward urtext and ur-body floating free from metaphysical context. Chapter one turns to passages from the early *haṭha* corpus to describe the many bodies and the principles that underly them.

# Chapter One

## *The matter of the body*

This body comes into being from sexual intercourse, and, devoid of understanding, comes out through the gate of urine into a Hell-realm. It is constructed of bones, smeared with flesh, bound up with hide, filled with faeces, urine, bile, phlegm, marrow, fat, marrow of the flesh, and many other impurities.

*Maitrī Upaniṣad* 3.4 (Roebuck 2000:418)

The elements which [exist] in the three worlds are all [found] in the Body [but] the elements which are in the Body do not [all] exist elsewhere.

*Amṛtasiddhi* 1.19 (Mallinson and Szántó 2021:110)

[The teacher] should examine [a student's capability] according to their body. What will [a student] who is brilliant [only] in speech achieve? Do some yogis really become [yogis] simply by discussing it?

*Amarauḡha* 45 (Birch 2023:124)

The Sāhebdhanīs from colonial Bengal viewed the subtle body as geopolitical cartography. Using the metaphor of the 'railway car' they imagined the subtle body, 'as a landscape connected by the tracks, bridges, and stations laid down by the British empire, through which the passenger must navigate, amidst threats of thieves, derailments, and even bombs' (Urban 2022:4, see also 2001:1085-1114). This description resonates with the preconceptions with which I came to this project, of the 'yogic body' as an imagined ritual construct of channels (*nāḡīs*), energies (such as *prāṇa* and *vāyu*) and wheels (*cakras* and *padmas*). This yogic body was sited between the gross and transcendent, between the material and immaterial, between

female:body and male:reason. The yogic body was a map of the gulf between body and mind and a bridge or device, a *yantra*<sup>30</sup> or *maṇḍala*, to cross that divide. This map was impervious to discovery through positivist experiments, hence Dayananda throwing his books in the river when esoteric anatomy proved imperceptible in cadavers (Wujastyk 2009:201-202). This dichotomised reading lends itself to a linear progression from gross to esoteric to divine to transcendent.<sup>31</sup> But what do the *haṭha* sources say? They barely mention the *cakras*. Studying the *haṭha* sources' treatment of the body has, as I noted, led me to drop the term 'yogic body' and instead refer simply to the 'body'.

In this chapter I examine how the *haṭha* corpus articulates the body which is taken to include aspects that are sometimes separated from the physical body and referred to as the 'yogic body', 'subtle body' or *sūkṣma śarīra*. I have chosen not to use the term 'yogic body' even when the body is articulated with esoteric attributes or attenuations of the material body. The sources do not always or consistently separate the 'yogic body' from the body. I avoid the term 'yogic body' because I seek to avoid fabricating a conceptual consistency across the sources. Furthermore, I avoid the term because it suggests an ethereality or incorporeality to the 'yogic body' at odds with the materiality of the body that I wish to problematise—though the sources do also include ethereal accounts of the body (AS 35.1-2). I use the term 'saṃsāric body' to refer to the body that has not gone through the process of yoga and the term 'yoga body' to refer to the body that has been through the yoga process but nonetheless remains a material body.

Wujastyk notes, 'The variety of ancient Indian body concepts is naturally reflected in the rich Sanskrit vocabulary of names for the body, a litany of which includes such terms as *śarīram*, *kāyaḥ*, *dehaḥ*, *vigrahaḥ*, *aṅgam*, *vapus*, *kalevaram*, *tanus*, *gātram*, *śavaḥ* and

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<sup>30</sup> For *yantra* as the wheel of *saṃsāra* see O'Brien-Kop 2021:42-43 (page numbers refer to proofs not published edition).

<sup>31</sup> The divinised body appears a prior stage to transcendent, as I argued in my unpublished 2010 MA thesis, '*Īśvara* in the *Yogasūtra*'.



*kuṇapah*, each carrying its own particular connotations according to usage and etymology’ (Wujastyk 2009:190). All these terms are found in the *haṭha* corpus except the *kuṇapa*, the ‘dead body’ or ‘alive body dismissed as if dead’, though *śava*, ‘dead body’, is used to describe a posture for a living body to assume (HP 1.32). There is no single Sanskrit term that I am translating with the term ‘body’ and so in what follows I indicate the Sanskrit term in parenthesis when I translate as ‘body’.

This chapter is not primarily about charting the cartography or genealogy of the ‘yogic body’ of channels (*nāḍīs*), energies (such as *prāṇa*, *vāyu*, *bindu*, *rajas* or *jīva*) and vortices such as wheels (*cakras*) or lotuses (*padmas*). Mallinson and Singleton summarise these aspects of the ‘yogic body’ in an eponymously named chapter: ‘Prior to the modern period, the body of the yogi was commonly conceived as a network of psychophysical centres (*cakras*, *granthis*, *ādhāras*, etc.) linked by channels (*nāḍīs*) for the movement of various endogenous airs and vital forces (*vāyus*, *bindu*, Kuṇḍalinī, etc)’ (2017:171). Rather than that yogic body this chapter is about the body more broadly and viscerally construed in the sources: both esoteric elements and articulations of the body as material, elemental, physiological and cosmic. This thematic approach to the presentation of the body in the sources proceeds by way of selecting descriptions of the body and reading them alongside one another. These descriptions of the body comprise the foundations upon which the analysis of the thesis proceeds in subsequent chapters.

### ***Bodies that matter***

The rationale for studying accounts of the body was set out in the introduction: the *haṭha* corpus records physical techniques which are considered efficacious in the attainment of power and liberation. Because it is physical techniques that are efficacious, I seek to understand the accounts of the body set out in the sources. Furthermore, I argue that bodies

matter in early *haṭha* yoga. I acknowledge an intellectual debt to Butler's 1993 *Bodies That Matter* in the title of this chapter.

In what ways do bodies matter? Bodies matter as the site and technology of *haṭha* yoga. I set out examples from the *Amṛtasiddhi* and the *Yogabīja* to demonstrate this point.

The *Amṛtasiddhi* argues that only physical techniques are conducive to liberation, as opposed to deity-yoga or self-empowerment (*svādhiṣṭhāna*) (Mallinson and Szántó 2021:19n44). The text lengthily dismisses all philosophies that attempt to master the mind by the mind (AS 8.8-15).<sup>32</sup> Amid five evocative metaphors, even a sharp sword cannot cut itself and a well-disciplined mental stream cannot master itself (AS 8.12) for the same element cannot control itself.<sup>33</sup> Instead, mind is borne by breath in the body and will reside in whatever place breath resides (AS 8.17).<sup>34</sup> The *Amṛtasiddhi*'s chapter on the mind concludes with the fusion of body and mind: there is knowledge, meditation, perfection, immortality and perfect fusion of the three diamonds (*vajras*) (AS 8.21).<sup>35</sup> I am foregrounding the importance of bodies because, though bodily techniques are integrated with mental techniques, mental techniques will not succeed without bodily techniques. Using a lexicon of power, sovereignty and affect, in the *Amṛtasiddhi* the mind (*citta*), located in people's hearts, is the ruler of the body and experiencer of pleasure and sorrow (AS 8.1).

In the introduction I analysed the tendency in some scholarship to separate practical yoga from philosophical yoga. We see in the *Yogabīja* a rejection of this bifurcation between knowledge and yoga (as practice) such that one does not succeed without the other. The

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<sup>32</sup> *Citta* and *buddhi* are synonymous terms for the mind (Mallinson and Szántó 2021:124n160).

<sup>33</sup> In addition to this metaphor, he who tries to control the mind by means of 'self-empowering yoga' deludedly chews a rock and drinks the sky (AS 8.9). Moreover, the mind is not conquered by mind in the same way that fire is not conquered by fire, nor air by air, nor water by water (AS 8.11). Since the mind is supportless, making a support of it is like hoping to sleep comfortably in the ocean or sky (AS 8.13). Finally, those who use their minds to perform mental restraint fall onto paths on which they cannot return, like fish (AS 8.15).

<sup>34</sup> The justification is a little forced: when part of the body is bitten by a snake and abandoned by breath one does not experience the flow of consciousness there because of the damage to the flesh (AS 8.18).

<sup>35</sup> The three *vajras* of body, speech and mind are familiar from Indian Mahāyāna in general and the *Guhyasamāja* literature in particular (Mallinson and Szántó 2021:125n165).

*Yogabīja* distinguishes between yoga and knowledge and argues that gnosis will not succeed without yoga. Having identified the cause and nature of the body *īśvara* sets out the method to remove the faults (*doṣas*), noting that knowledge or gnosis (*jñāna*) alone will not lead to success (YB 16). He states how can knowledge liberate without yoga and how can yoga liberate without knowledge? (YB 17). This key rhetorical statement establishes the relationship between gnosis and yoga such that neither can succeed without the other. *Īśvara* and *devī* discuss the nature of ignorance, knowledge and *saṃsāra* (YB 18-28) and *īśvara* persists in arguing that one devoted to knowledge, a knower of *dharma* and one who has mastered the senses, does not obtain liberation without yoga even if a god (YB 29). Therefore, yoga is the orthopraxy without which orthodoxy alone fails.

### ***Orienting to the saṃsāric body***

The emphasis in this chapter is on the descriptions of the body in *saṃsāra* rather than only in liberation. Thus, the emphasis is different from Ondračka's doctoral work, the aim of which is to prove that the body is not transcended in liberation. The emphasis too is different from that of Birch, in 'The quest for liberation-in-life', which surveys the early sources of *haṭha* and *rāja* yoga and shows that the objective is generally *jīvanmukti* (2020b:201). Finally, the emphasis here differs from that deployed by Shalev in 'The increasing importance of the physical body in early Medieval Haṭhayoga: A reflection on the yogic body in liberation', which makes the argument set out in its title. Shalev identifies three stages with which she associates three approaches to the body in liberation: a first phase of 'silent liberation', a second that offers a choice between 'silent' and 'embodied' immortality, and a third that focuses on 'embodied immortality' (2022:119-120). Shalev argues, 'The importance of the physical body in *haṭha* texts increased over time' (2022:137) though she allows that one of the main implications of her study is that the understanding of the body in *haṭha* yoga 'should

be regarded as fluid' (2022:139). I hesitate to endorse a rigid diachronic development through the sources but instead see variation within as well as between the sources. I do not see the importance of the body as increasing through the sources, as I have selected sources (the same as Shalev) on the basis that they teach physical techniques which they see as efficacious. Instead of the focus by Ondračka, Birch and Shalev on the status of the body upon liberation, my focus here is on the *saṃsāric* body. Nevertheless, this study also engages how yoga practice—and ultimately liberation—impact the body.

### ***The body***

This chapter explores the *saṃsāric* body through a thematic analysis out of which I identify principles of the body. The thematic analysis draws on the core corpus to consider the themes of bodily sheaths and subtle bodies, esoteric bodily locations, *karma* as causal, constitutive and allied with *kāma*, and the body as elemental and *jaḍa*. The principles that inform the function of the body in *saṃsāra* are microcosmology and depletion. By principles of the body I refer to rationales underpinning descriptions of the body or the logic by which the body appears to function.

The bodies described in the sources are not uniform across the *haṭha* corpus and the following discussion attempts to capture this diversity. The selection of themes does not imply that the themes are all at play in the different sources. The different conceptions of the body support different emphases on practice, grounded in sectarian genealogies. As argued for in the introduction, practice and metaphysical context do not sit apart, in ahistorical isolation. Understandings of the body are historically contingent.

### ***Non-material bodies***

I have argued that the *haṭha* sources do not posit subtle bodies mediating between gross body and transcendence. However, the term *sūkṣma śarīra* does occur in the early corpus. Here I consider non-material bodies in the *Vasiṣṭhasaṃhitā* and *Gorakṣaśataka* as counterpoints to this argument.

The *Vasiṣṭhasaṃhitā* discusses in brief the nature of the body. It deploys *sūkṣma śarīra* and *liṅga śarīra* as terms for the subtle body. It does not go into detail on the gross physical body or physiological functions. The first portion of chapter five pertains to the *ātman* and *jīva* (both of which I translate as ‘self’) and the body as regards transmigration and final liberation. The body is referred to as the field (*kṣetra*), and the *ātman*, known as the *jīva* when it is enveloped in doubts, is the knower of the field (VS 5.6). Objects which are enjoyed are internal like happiness and external like a pot, and the body is the place of enjoyment (*bhogāyatanadeha*) and the senses the means of enjoyment (VS 5.7). Five substances are named: enjoyer, object of enjoyment, enjoyment, place of enjoyment and the senses, and a sixth thing is not to be found (VS 5.8).

The text uses key terms for the ‘subtle body’ that are frequent in later sources and secondary literature but rare in the early corpus. After the destruction of the body (*kṣetra*) the *ātman* is particularised in the subtle (*sūkṣma*) and causal bodies (*liṅga śarīra*) and resides in air or fire (VS 5.12). The *jīva* revolves everywhere by means of the *liṅga śarīra* and bears another body (*deha*) as a result of good and bad deeds (VS 5.13). This continues until the complete cessation of action (VS 5.14) which is only achieved through meditative absorption (*dhyāna*) (VS 5.15). The body is somewhat valorised as the site within which actions can be taken (VS 6.16) and one is encouraged to act while one has a body (VS 5.16). The importance of the body as the site for yoga is emphasised by the argument that one cannot achieve anything after the body is destroyed, and embodiment (*kṣetrayoga*) is difficult to achieve (VS 5.17).

The *Gorakṣaśataka* comes closest of the core corpus to articulating a range of bodies from gross to ethereal, similar to the sheathes of the *Taittirīya*. A passage towards the end of the *Gorakṣaśataka* discusses the nature of the body and problems of perceiving it and conceiving of it. This occurs after *kuṇḍalinī* has disappeared (GŚ 86) and *rajas* and *śukla* (semen) have come together. Alchemical imagery likens the body to a crucible in which the winds flow like gold (GŚ 88). The verses appear to articulate a sophisticated analysis of the body, somewhat influenced by *vedānta*, that does not entirely work perhaps because of textual corruption. However, three terms distinguish types of bodies: material (*ādhibhautika*), divine (*ādhidāivika*) and ‘fleeter than the wind’ or yogic (*ātivāhika*).<sup>36</sup> *Ādhibhautika* is the physical or material body characterised as *jaḍa*, a multivalent term encompassing inertia, insentience and materiality, to which I will return as a key descriptor of the saṃsāric body. As the material body transitions to the divine body it becomes extremely pure (GŚ 89). The ‘fleeter than the wind’ (*ātivāhika*) body is the most important of all, consisting of bliss, free of the state of materiality (*jāḍya*), pure, with consciousness as its essence (GŚ 90). In no other sources in the early *haṭha* corpus is such a triumvirate of bodies articulated where the distinction between them turns on a refinement of materiality. However, the characterisation of the body as divine is a recurring feature in the sources. The refinement of *jāḍya* does recur in descriptions of the body transmuted by the process of yoga. Thus subtle bodies do feature in the early *haṭha* corpus, but my argument still stands that they are not definitive of the genre.

### ***Esoteric locales***

As well as arguing that subtle bodies are not central I have suggested that *cakras* and assorted accoutrements of the esoteric body appear but fleetingly. Although *cakras* and *padmas* are not definitive of the body, the bodily paradigms of *pāka*, *bindu-rajas* and *kuṇḍalinī* do define the

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<sup>36</sup> The *Mokṣopāya* has the *ādhibhautika* and *ātivāhika* bodies (3.54.1ff) but not the *ādhidāivika*.

body and explain the function of yoga in the early corpus. However, there is an important description of the esoteric body in the *Vivekamārtaṇḍa*.

The poetic description of the body in the *Vivekamārtaṇḍa* does not distinguish between gross body and esoteric or yogic body. The 62 verses in the text on *cakras*, channels, breaths, *kuṇḍalinī*, *mudrā*, *bandha* and *om* (Viv 9ff) are preceded in the later long recension with two rhetorical verses questioning whether those who do not recognise these elements in their body (*svadeha*) can become perfected yogis (Viv long recension 13-14). These aspects are not distinct from but simply exist in the body. In addition, the long recension asks how people can become perfected yogis when they do not recognise esoteric anatomy as their own bodies (*svadeha*): the six *cakras*, 16 supports, three worlds, five voids, one column, nine doors, three voids and five deities (Viv 13-14 long recension). This is not ritually inscribed cartography. The *Vivekamārtaṇḍa* advocates the importance of the esoteric body for practice without an *a priori* separation from the physical body. These verses emphasise the importance of the yogic body as body.

The text gives scattered references to the nature of the body rather than a systematic exegesis. Clearly, the text does not separate the body from the yogic body though the esoteric vital principles of *prāṇa* and *bindu* animate the body. The channels *idā*, *piṅgalā* and *suṣuṃṇā* convey *prāṇa* and have the deities of moon (*soma*), sun (*sūrya*) and fire (*agni*) (Viv 20). In the long recension *bindu* is the root of the body, and the channels flood the body from the soles of the feet to the head (Viv 68 long recension). However, there is a relationship between the one who possesses a body (*dehin*) and the body (*deha*) such that the former does not leave the latter so long as the body is filled with *soma* (Viv 131). The analogies given in this verse are that fire does not leave fuel nor (presumably the flame of) a lamp leave a wick in oil. Note that the embodied (*dehin*) is equated with ephemeral fire. The *Vivekamārtaṇḍa* does not teach *jīvanmukti* or *videhamukti* but does teach that *samādhi* is when the individual self and the

supreme self become one (Viv 163). In its description of the experience of *samādhi* the yogi is not troubled by death, nor bound by *karma*, nor troubled by disease (Viv 167). Thus, the activities associated with the body are surpassed. The yogi becomes absorbed just like milk put in milk, ghee in ghee or fire in fire (Viv 171). These examples illustrate that esoteric features of the body are not separate from the material body.

### ***Bound by karma, kāma and kāla***

The materiality of the saṃsāric body is caused and constituted by retributive action (*karma*), desire or affect (*kāla*) and time (*kāla*). Examples from the *Amṛtasiddhi*, *Śivasamhitā* and *Jyotsnā* demonstrate this.

The *Amṛtasiddhi* concludes its first chapter by noting that a human birth is the result of the intensification of the karmic effect of great merit and one is not reborn once established in the teaching of the guru (AS 1.20). Prostration at the feet of the true guru dissolves the sorrows of transmigration (AS 1.21). Thus, *karma* is the cause of repeated birth and death (*saṃsāra*) and the necessary condition for the arising of the body. The dissolution of *karma* leads to liberation from rebirth. There is a causal relationship between *karma* and the body. This generic point, appearing in most yoga texts, is nevertheless a definitional premise of the saṃsāric body: when *karma* and associated affects are eradicated the body is free from the constraints of *saṃsāra*. This does not necessitate the transcendence or abandonment of the body for those texts that teach *jīvanmukti*.

The *Śivasamhitā* clearly articulates the relationship between the body, *karma* and desire: the *jīva*, residing everywhere in the body, is adorned with beginningless desire and chained by *karma* (ŚS 2.39). Desire and all other faults that bring about happiness and suffering arise in the *jīva* according to *karma* (ŚS 2.52). *Karma* causes the body (ŚS 2.52) yet the body may also be perfected—the body shows physical signs of perfection as a result of purification of



the *nāḍīs*, including beauty and becomes a receptacle for the nectar of the gods (ŚS 3.30, 3.33).

In the *Jyotsnā* commentary on the *Haṭhapradīpikā* Brahmānanda sets out that yoga is not an optional method but the main method for reaching liberation. Intellectual knowledge does not lead to liberation because it does not change the human situation determined by *karma*. Only yoga does. He derives this position from ‘a slightly slanted interpretation’ (Hanneder)<sup>37</sup> of the inversion *viparītakaraṇī* in HP 3.82 that conquers death. Brahmānanda takes this as counteracting the effects of current *karma* (*prārabdhakarma*) and cites four sources in support of his analysis (*Viṣṇudharma* 100.141, *Jīvanmuktiviveka*, and the narratives of Uddālaka and Vītahavya who die when they decide to, rather than when preordained by their *karma*).<sup>38</sup>

The import of desire among other emotions is a recurring thread both in this chapter and taken up again in chapter five in an analysis of the affective mode of *kuṇḍalinī*.

### ***Elemental and earthy***

In what I believe is a key defining feature (along with *jāḍya*) the body is defined as elemental, as is the cosmos. We see this systematically developed in the *Amṛtasiddhi* and *Yogabīja*, and I also draw on material from the *Śivasamhitā* and *Dattātreyayogaśāstra*, as well as a rather anomalous example from the *Haṭhapradīpikā*.

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<sup>37</sup> Personal communication, 28 February 2024, with thanks for sharing the *Jyotsnā* reference.

<sup>38</sup> *Jyotsnā* on HP 3.82 *viparītakaraṇīguṇān āha valitam iti. valitam carmasaṅkocāḥ palitam keśeṣu śāuklyam ca. ṣaṅṅām māsānām samāhārah ṣaṅmāsam. tasmād ūrdhvam upari naiva dṛśyate naivāvalokyate. sādhakasya deha iti vākyādhyāhārah. yas tu sādhako yāmamātram praharamātram nityam abhyaset sa tu kālajit kalam mṛtyum jayatīti kālajin mṛtyujetā bhavet. etena yogasya prārabdhakarmapratibandhakatvam api sūcitam. tad uktam viṣṇudharme*

*svadehārambhakasyāpi karmaṇaḥ saṅkṣayāvahaḥ  
yo yogah pṛthivīpāla śṛṇu tasyāpi lakṣaṇam iti*

*vidyāranyair api jīvanmuktāv uktam yathā prārabdhakarma tattvajñānāt prabalaṃ tathā tasmād api karmaṇo  
yogābhyāsaḥ prabalaḥ. ata eva yoginām uddālakavītahavyādīnām svecchayā dehatyāga upapadyate iti.  
bhāgavate 'py uktam daivam jahyāt samādhinā iti.*

The *Amṛtasiddhi* sets out a comprehensive and coherent account of the body that is variously incorporated and reworked later in the corpus. I summarise that account here and draw attention to the elemental nature of body and cosmos. The first ten chapters give a systematic, sustained account of the body including the essential constituents of the body and the various aspects to be mastered (AS 1.10) which are the body itself, the goddess of the centre (*madhyamā*), the moon, sun and fire, *bindu*, mind, *prakṛti* and *guṇa* (AS 1.11). In the chapter one synopsis of the body (AS 1.14) the elements of the cosmos exist in the body, yet there are also elements of the body that do not exist elsewhere (1.19). Iterating these elements demonstrates the identity of body and cosmos: mount *meru* exists inside the body with seven islands, three worlds and fourteen levels (AS 1.15) in which are oceans, rivers, regions and guardians of the regions, gathering places, sacred sites, seats of deities and deities of the seats (AS 1.16); in the body are lunar mansions, all the planets, sages, holy men, the moon and sun in their orbits causing creation and destruction (AS 1.17); and in the body is sky, wind and fire, water and earth; Viṣṇu and Prajāpati (AS 1.18). The aspects of the cosmos that are in the body comprise geographic features, deities, astrological processes and the five elements—a macrocosmic ecology contained in the microcosm that, in its elements (*tattvas*), exceeds the macrocosm (AS 1.19).

In its second chapter the *Śivasamhitā* sets out a description of the body as a microcosm of the universe that is very similar to the *Amṛtasiddhi* (ŚS 2.1-11). The body is an ecology of divinities, sacred geography, astrological bodies and elements. Differing from the *Amṛtasiddhi*'s assertion that all elements and more are to be found in the body, in the *Śivasamhitā* all beings in the three worlds are found in the body (ŚS 2.4).

The *Dattātreyayogaśāstra*'s account of withdrawal (*pratyāhāra*) is based on recognising whatever is seen with the organs of sense to be the self (DYŚ 94-97), a practically efficacious technique if not actual identity of the objects of sense with the self. For one who practices

fixation (*dhāraṇā*) on the five elements the body is not at risk from those elements, as I come back to in the conclusion to the dissertation. Then the body becomes firm and does not die (DYS 121) even in the dissolution of *brahman* (DYS 122ab).

The *Yogabīja* has an unusually, for the early corpus, developed discussion of how embodiment comes about in the frame of a comparison of gnosis and practice that has already been mentioned. In the opening passages of the *Yogabīja* the goddess (*devī*) and the lord (*īśvara*) discuss the nature of the body in *samsāra* and how the self (*ātman*) becomes embodied. *īśvara* describes the brilliance of the self revealed by scripture (YB 8) as motionless, spotless, peaceful, beyond everything, and concealed by the *jīva* as a result of virtue and vice (YB 9). *Devī* wishes to know how the eternal highest stage that is beyond the elements becomes the *jīva* (YB 10). *īśvara* explains how the *jīva* is taught as within the highest self (*paramātmā*) (YB 13ab) by noting that the sense of self (*ahaṃkāra*) arises in that which is beyond all thoughts, a form of knowledge, spotless and shimmering like water (YB 11). He characterises the body (*piṇḍa*) as consisting of the five elements, bound by the constituents (*dhātus*) and consisting of the qualities (*guṇas*). It is always connected with pleasure and pain and confused by the behaviour and belief that it is the *jīva* (YB 12). *īśvara* lists the faults or characteristics of the body (*doṣas*) free from which the *jīva* is *śiva* (YB 15cd): desire, anger, fear, concern, greed, delusion, rapture, pain, old age and death, miserliness, despair, fatigue, laziness, hunger, thirst, aversion, shame, happiness, unhappiness, depression, sexual desire, waking, dreaming and sleep, doubt and pride (YB 13cd-15ab). Thus, the body comprises the affective and material elementary *dhātus*, *guṇas* and *doṣas*.

Key to understanding the representation of the body in these sources is the description of the physiological consequences for the body of *jīvanmukti*. A key passage of the *Haṭhapradīpikā* describes the body becoming like a piece of wood (HP Kaivalyadhama

4.106) as a result of the state of no mind (*unmani*).<sup>39</sup> The wood-like yogi is as if dead and liberated (HP Kaivalyadhama 4.107). The attribute of not being consumed by time is joined by not being bound by *karma* nor being subdued by anyone (HP Kaivalyadhama 4.108). While the indomitability of the yogi is expressed in terms that seem formulaic in *Haṭhapradīpikā* Kaivalyadhama 4.113—invulnerable to weapons, stronger than all living beings, and beyond the reach of mantras and *yantras*—I see this as not only a semantic residue of tantra, but a reiteration of the trope of the sovereign yogi. This example does not amount to a statement on the elemental nature of the body but the wood-like status is material and earthy, segueing into the next discussion: *jāḍya*.

### ***More jaḍa than jaḍa***

The multivalent and apparently innocuous term *jaḍa* occurs in some sources, like the *Gorakṣaśataka*, the *Yogabīja* and *Śivasamhitā*, to describe the saṃsāric body. I discuss the *Gorakṣaśataka* in the next subsection. An analysis of the *Yogabīja* forms the substantial part of the next chapter. Here I introduce those teachings and discuss the occurrence of the term in the *Śivasamhitā*.

The *Yogabīja* uses the term *jāḍya* in relation to the *saṃsāric* body and contrasts it with the mighty yogic body (*yogadeha mahābala*) cultivated through practice. I take the purport of *jaḍa*'s 'cold', 'motionless', 'unintelligent', 'inanimate lifeless matter' (Monier-Williams 1872:409) to point to the materiality of the saṃsāric body which is nevertheless not dead, as 'cold' and 'lifeless' suggest.<sup>40</sup> *Jāḍya* arises in the body and is destroyed through practice (YB 122cd). As well as describing the body as *jaḍa*, *haṭha* yoga is defined as the consumption of

<sup>39</sup> Eight verses earlier there is a foreshadowing of the use of wood as a metaphor: fire in wood that has been kindled is extinguished together with the wood; the mind established in *nāda* dissolves together with *nāda* (HP 4.11).

<sup>40</sup> The *Yogabīja* riddles with the paradoxical power over death of the yogi who has already died and is liberated in life (*jīvanmukti*)—a power over death that others who have been conquered by the body do not have (YB 51-4, 58) discussed further in chapter two.

*jāḍya* by force (*haṭhena*) (YB 108cd). After swallowing *jāḍya* the mind dissolves (YB 109ab). *Jāḍya* appears to function as weight or gravity, as through conquering *jāḍya* and, *inter alia*, materiality (literally earth etc.—*pṛthvyādika*), a man becomes one who can move in the air (*khecara*) (YB 124cd). In the *Yogabīja*'s description of baking the body in the fire of yoga, *īśvara* states that even the gods cannot perceive the resultant mighty yogic body (*yogadeha mahābala*) (YB 47) which is like the sky or ether (*ākāśa*) but more pure than *ākāśa*. It is more subtle than the subtle, more gross than the gross, and more *jaḍa* than *jaḍa* (YB 48). This body stands in stark contrast to the bodies of all others, even ascetics and gnostics, who are conquered by their bodies which are characterised as lumps of flesh (*māṃsapinḍa*) (YB 54).

The composite *Śivasamhitā* discusses the cause and constitution of the body in chapter one and a micro-macrocosmic description of the body in chapter two. The cause of the body is desire. At the outset, the *Śivasamhitā* lists wrong views that include the belief that there are two fundamental principles, matter and spirit (*prakṛti* and *puruṣa*) (ŚS 1.12). The nature of the body is elucidated in a passage towards the end of chapter one. The body has an elemental composition distinct from the self (*jīva*). Ignorance is the notion that the body (*śarīra*) and all other inanimate things (*jaḍa sarva*) are situated in the supreme self (*paramātman*) along with the lord and all the other gods (ŚS 1.87). It is unclear whether the text is arguing here that the body is not associated with divinities or just that the body and divinities are simply not in the *paramātman*.

For the *Śivasamhitā* *jāḍya* is a key term for distinguishing the materiality and insentience of the body in *samṣāra*. The cause, constitution, purpose and dissolution of the body is causally connected with *karma* and experience in seven verses towards the end of chapter one. The body is born of the body of the father because of past *karma*, is unpleasant, and is for reaping the fruit of one's past (ŚS 1.93). The body of the father is given literally as the food sheath. The text does not otherwise unpack the body into sheaths (*kośas*) and may be using

the term to refer simply to the material body rather than elaborate a theory of the body as composed of sheaths, gross to subtle. The body, literally the abode of pleasure (*bhogamandira*), experiences only pain and is described as an accumulation of channels (*nāḍīs*) made of flesh, bone, ligament, marrow, etc. (ŚS 1.94). It is unusual for the body to be described in such physiological terms. This body (*gātra*) is in service to another, is composed of the five elements (*pañcabhūta*), is known as the egg of *brahman* and was created for the experience of pain and pleasure (ŚS 1.95). An embryological explanation accounts for the arising of elements: from the union of *bindu* as *śiva*, and *rajas* as *śakti*, the dream elements arise spontaneously by the power that takes the form of inertia or materiality (*jaḍarūpa*) (ŚS 1.96). The goddess *mahāmāyā* is described as *jaḍarūpa* in *Śivasamhitā* 1.82. In the egg of *brahman*, countless material objects exist through desire, among which is the *jīva* that exists by means of its *karma*; from the five elements flow all creation for the purpose of the experience of the *jīva* (ŚS 1.97). A first-person creationist claim is made by Śiva that specifies the juxtaposition of *ajaḍa* with *jaḍa*: ‘I make pots’ (*ghaṭa*), i.e. people, in accordance with past actions; the immaterial (*ajaḍa*) experiences all elements in a state of materiality (*jaḍasthityā*) (ŚS 1.98). Bound out of ignorance or materiality (*jaḍa*) because of its own *karma*, the *jīva* exists in various forms; in that which is known as the egg of *brahman* it is generated again and again in order to experience; and when it has stopped experiencing its *karma* the *jīva* dissolves (ŚS 1.99). The *Śivasamhitā* does not use the term *jīvanmukti* or teach exiting the body through the head (*utkrānti*), but does suggest the practitioner can choose not to die and instead retain the body to enjoy pleasures (ŚS 5.223).

*Jāḍya* thus characterises the body as insentient, terrestrial and material and has some cross-overs with *prakṛti* and *śakti*, and thus perhaps *kuṇḍalinī*—in the *Śivasamhitā* we have seen that the goddess *mahāmāyā* has the form of *jaḍa*. I postpone a fuller discussion of the *Yogabīja* until the next chapter and now note that the cosmos too is described as *jaḍa*.

### *Cosmos as elemental and jaḍa*

If the body is elemental, affective and material or insentient (*jaḍa*) what is the cosmos? The cosmos encompasses the proximate locale of the practitioner, the manner of polity (ideally peaceful as conducive to yoga practice), and the earth more broadly as goddess, as heaven and hell realms, and as constituted by the phases of emergence, continuity and dissolution. It is these latter senses, of cosmos as elemental and temporally cyclical that are perhaps most relevant here, yet the earth as goddess can also correlate to *kuṇḍalinī* as goddess. The analysis of the yogi as sovereign is also informed by the relationship between earth as goddess and yogi as sovereign. The *haṭha* yogi appears to gain control of the cosmos as does the yogi of the *Mahābhārata*: ‘Yoga leads not only to control of oneself, but also to control of the world’ (Jacobsen 2005:6).

The texts articulate the elemental constitution of the cosmos. In the *Amṛtasiddhi* the cosmos is within the body in terms of geographic and divine cartography (AS 1.15-17) and the cosmic features of sky, wind, fire, water and earth are in the body (AS 1.18). In the *Khecarīvidyā* the yogi sees the entire universe as undifferentiated from himself (*Khecarīvidyā* 1.64). But here I focus on a passage in the *Gorakṣasataka*. Here a rather difficult passage appears to identify the cosmos and body as of the same nature. Two verses define freedom from the state of materiality (*jāḍyabhāvavinir muktiḥ*) and error regarding the appearance of time (GŚ 91) as doctrines that have the form of the rope and the snake—i.e., doubt about the nature of reality. Time is the cause of doubt about the nature of reality (GŚ 92).<sup>41</sup> The elemental universe is illusory from the perspective of the temporal body (GŚ 93) as it is produced from the elements: it is neither real in name nor form (GŚ 94). It is through

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<sup>41</sup> Mallinson’s draft translation takes *kālenātyuditasthitiḥ* as, ‘the condition arises of considering their cause to be time’ and notes this section could be cruxed.

comparison between the universe and the body that both are found to be unreal. Both are material and insentient although they appear otherwise within the incorrect frame of temporal perception. The text draws on tropes familiar from *vedānta* to make this case: in addition to the rope and snake we have water in a mirage, the hare’s horn, and knowledge from a dream (GŚ 92-97). If the argument is sophisticated the witnesses are poor. What is clear is that through introspection the body is revealed as insentient or material because it is formed of the elements (GŚ 98)—and the universe is also elemental (GŚ 93). *Gorakṣaśataka* 99, again difficult to construe, appears to assert the importance of the breath while *Gorakṣaśataka* 100 refers to seven levels and the attainment of perpetual happiness in a condition it calls ‘being without fire’ (GŚ 100). The text concludes with a poetic and sexual interiorisation of the practice that we shall consider in chapter four. The description of the body as material (*jaḍa*) and composed of the elements is key to understanding how the processes of yoga, such as baking (*pāka*) and meditation on the elements, operates. Here I emphasise the articulation of the body and cosmos as both *jaḍa*.

### ***Jīvanmukti***

I noted at the outset that this study is primarily concerned with the saṃsāric body and pointed to important contributions on the liberated body by Birch, Shalev and Ondračka.

Nevertheless, for the sake of comprehensiveness I summarise some key passages on

*jīvanmukti* that relate to the themes analysed here. The *Amṛtasiddhi* does not specify *nirvāṇa* as involving abandoning the body though the yogi controls the material of the body: the yogi can become invisible (*śarīragopana*) (AS 34.3), has the form of bliss, a body of knowledge (*jñānakāya*) (AS 35.1) and a pure body of knowledge (*viśuddhajñānadeha*) (35.2). The

*Amarauḡha* does not specify whether the outcome of the practice is *jīvanmukti* or *videhamukti* though the later *Amarauḡhaprabodha* does. In the *Amarauḡha*’s description of *rāja* yoga the



yogi has powers of creation and destruction (Am 42), may dissolve the universe at their pleasure and is not subject to obstacles of sense objects or worldly interactions. The veil obscuring ‘time without boundaries’ is destroyed (Am 44), suggesting the yogi knows the past, present and future (Birch 2023:123n203) or is free from the *saṃsāric* constraint of time.

The *Dattātreyaśāstra* gives the option of retaining the body upon liberation (*jīvanmukti*) (DYŚ 125cd) as well as teaching *videhamukti*. He may release the body by dissolving into *brahman* (DYŚ 127ab). However, if he does not want to let go of the body for it is dear to him (DYŚ 127cd) he may wander about in all the worlds, with all the perfections such as infinitesimality, and sometimes become a god and wander about in heaven (DYŚ 128). He might through desire instantaneously become a man, spirit or animal such as a lion, tiger, elephant or horse (DYŚ 129). Thus, the wise yogi is a great lord living as he wishes (DYŚ 130ab). *Jīvanmukti* is therefore defined by absolute power over the body.

In the *Yogabīja* liberation is bodily (*jīvanmukti*) (YB 53). Death of the body does not result in liberation, as attested by the death of the bodies of animals (YB 140), and liberation in a dead body does not count (YB 141). Instead, liberation is when the body has the nature of *brahman* (YB 142). Bodily liberation is sovereignty over the body, a sovereignty expressed in terms opposite to the inertia and heaviness of *jāḍya*. The yogi has powers (*siddhis*) to play in the three worlds including omniscience, assuming any shape, and moving as swiftly as the wind (YB 125), similar to the *ātivāhika* of the *Goraḥśāta*. Once the *ahaṃkāra* has disappeared the text queries the possibility of solidity (*kaṭhinatā*) in the body, akin to the lack of solidity in dissolved camphor (YB 126). The great yogi becomes a god, creator of all, autonomous, with all forms—a *jīvanmukta* (YB 127). This is not at all straightforward embodiment, but embodiment freed of all *saṃsāric* restrictions.

An outlier in concepts of the body in the *haṭha* corpus is that of the diamond body (*vajradeha*) more common in Buddhist sources. The *Khecarīvidyā* uses this term frequently

and describes both *jīvanmukti* and *videhamukti*. In the *Khecarīvidyā* the yogi obtains a diamond body (*vajrakāya*) (KhV 1.71ab, 2.25ab) and the source posits a diamond bulb (*vajrakanda*) (KhV 2.25cd, 2.29, 2.49, 2.86) at the top of the forehead, also unusual in yogic texts. The second chapter of the *Khecarīvidyā* describes how through drinking the tetrad of elixirs (*kalās*)<sup>42</sup> the practitioner becomes a lord of yoga, liberated while living (*jīvanmukta*) and *śiva* (KhV 2.7cd, 2.14). The practitioner becomes identical with *brahman* and attains an immortal body forever (*sadāmṛtatanu*) (KhV 3.11cd).<sup>43</sup> Mallinson demonstrates a doctrinal difference between earlier and later recensions of the text: earlier recensions describe *kuṇḍalinī* breaking out and the yogi dying, whereas later redactions privilege the concept of *śivātman* in an eternal body (*nityadehamaya*) (KhV 3.31d) (Mallinson 2007a:235n429). The yogi may maintain the body for the good of the universe, after which, at the dissolution of the universe, the practitioner abandons it and abides in his own self (*svātman*) (KhV 3.54).

The *Haṭhapradīpikā* does not offer a systematic description of the saṃsāric body. The opening of chapter four of the *Haṭhapradīpikā* describes *samādhi* and the body in *samādhi*. *Samādhi* is defined with a broad sweep of synonyms that draw in multiple sectarian variations (HP 4.29-30). *Samādhi* is defined as *ātman* and *manas* becoming one (HP Kaivalyadhama 4.5), and this definition is refined as the coming together of *jivātman* and *paramātman* (HP Kaivalyadhama 4.7).<sup>44</sup> The ultimate reality or last element (*tattvānta*) is formless or incorporeal (*nirākāra*) and that is the highest lord (*parameśvara*) (HP Kaivalyadhama 4.102). This however is not contextualised in relation to the body whether as the essence of embodiment or transcendence of the body. Conjunction or dissolution into subtle sound

<sup>42</sup> For the terms *vajrakanda* see Mallinson 2007:215n293 and *kāla* see Mallinson 2007:213n277.

<sup>43</sup> Mallinson notes an 'original' term here may have been *parāmṛtatanuḥ*, 'altered in most of the *KhV* witnesses to suggest the idea of liberation in an eternal body' (Mallinson 2007a:232n411).

<sup>44</sup> The recently published online beta version of the critical edition currently displays the earlier short recension (<http://www.hathapradipika.online/> accessed 27 February 2024). This is complete with translation, witnesses and philological commentary for the first two chapters but not the last two. For the last two chapters the older, shorter recension and witnesses are given but without translation and commentary. Therefore I refer to the Kaivalyadhama edition for some verses not yet available in the beta edition.

(*nādānusandhāna*) removes accumulated ‘badness’ (*pāpa*) (HP Kaivalyadhama 4.105ab), in a sequence familiar from the examples above where bodily liberation is presaged by the removal of *karma*. Suggesting a trajectory toward disembodiment, consciousness (*citta*) and breath (*prāṇa*) dissolve in the supreme being (*nirañjana*) (HP Kaivalyadhama 4.105cd). *Rāja* yoga results in the eluding of death (HP Kaivalyadhama 4.103).

The status of the body in *jīvanmukti* is paradoxical. The implication of *jīvanmukti* is freedom from the saṃsāric constraints of causality (*karma*) and time (*kāla*). Thus, the factors that caused and maintained the body fall away. What is the implication for the continuing persistence of the body in *saṃsāra*? Though the body persists its saṃsāric corporeality is diminished. The yogi wields such power over corporeality that he is no longer constrained by corporeality. For example, in the third stage of the *Amṛtasiddhi* the yogi has power over the arrangement of the body, the ability to enter another’s body, and clairvoyance and clairaudience (AS 29.1). The control over such laws of *saṃsāra* is an example of the sovereignty of the yogi over the body, to which I return in the conclusion to this thesis.

Thus far this chapter has analysed the saṃsāric body according to passages in the *haṭha* corpus. Though I emphasise the heterogeneity of the sources and the multiplicity of bodies, nevertheless the themes of *karma*, elements and materiality (*jaḍa*) comprise a compelling nexus of understandings of the body that are susceptible to manipulation by *haṭha* yoga. The chapter now turns to consider two principles that inform these accounts of the body: micro-macrocosmic correlations and a downward, depleting flow.

### ***Micro-macrocosmic correlation***

Eliade discusses ‘ritual interiorization’ tracing *tapas* in vedic cosmogony and the ‘inner sacrifice’ in which physiological functions replace libations and ritual objects (1954:111–14). Heesterman too analyses the internalisation of the Vedic sacrifice (1985:26–44). Flood

identifies ascetic traditions as cosmological traditions that emphasise interior cosmology, ‘an interiority that interfaces with the structure of the hierarchical cosmos’ (Flood 2002:9). White articulates the subtle or yogic body as a mesocosm: in relation to tantric initiation processes he identifies as ‘crucial’, ‘the notion that within the gross body of the human microcosm or protocosm there is a subtle, yogic body that is the mesocosmic replica of the divine, universal macrocosm or metacosm’ (White 2000:14). Chapple in *Living Landscapes* examines the ancient elemental nature of the cosmos to craft an environmental and ecological ethics. His work is part of a burgeoning literature recovering a narrative of ecological concern in Indian Religions.<sup>45</sup> Chapple argues that ‘we live in landscapes and landscapes live in us’ (Chapple 2020:xix). While I do not go so far as to see an ethic of nature veneration or ecological activism in the *haṭha* sources, I do want to test the basis of the relationship between body and cosmos in the *haṭha* corpus. The bifurcations identified by Eliade, Heesterman, Flood and White do not quite characterise the *haṭha* sources. The macrocosm seems *a priori* the microcosm, and the yogic or esoteric body is not somehow separate from the body.

As we have seen, in the *Amṛtasiddhi* the body is more than the cosmos (AS 1.19), and a partial echo of this verse appears in the *Śivasamhitā* (ŚS 2.1-4). It is not clear what additional element or elements (*tattvas*) are considered to be in the body in the *Amṛtasiddhi*. While the body is of the same nature as the cosmos this move asserts the human form as somehow greater than the cosmos. In the *Khecarīvidyā* the practitioner sees in his body the entire universe as not different from himself (KhV 1.64<sup>46</sup>). As already discussed the later recension of the *Vivekamārtaṇḍa* identifies esoteric aspects of the body and the three worlds within the practitioner’s body. It questions whether those who do not recognise the six *cakras*, sixteen

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<sup>45</sup> Cf. Miller (2023), Javanaud (2020), Kent (2013), Jain (2011), Narayan and Kumar (2003), Kaza and Kraft (2000) and Nelson (2000).

<sup>46</sup> Mallinson (2007 208n255) notes the similarities with *Amanaskayoga* 1.95ab and *Kaulajñānanirṇaya* 14.62–65.

supports, three worlds and five voids in their own bodies can become perfected yogis (Viv long recension 13-14). These sources site the cosmos within the body of the practitioner.

Examples of macrocosmic interiorisation include the *Khecarīvidyā*'s descent of the *gaṅgā* within the body: the very cold ethereal (*ākāśa*) *gaṅgā* flows from the place of *brahman* drinking which the practitioner gets a diamond body (*vajrakāya*) in one month (KhV 2.116) and, as well as divine speech, divine sight, divine intellect, and divine hearing, he gets a divine body (*divyadeha*) (KhV 2.117). Thus, we have a downward flow of divine liquid in the body that in this example has a macrocosmic correlate, the River *gaṅgā*, whose descent to earth via Śiva's head is told in the *Mahābhārata*, *Rāmāyaṇa* and various *Purāṇas*. This liquid is an ambrosia, an elixir and as such associated with semen. The *Śivasamhitā* too describes the descent of *gaṅgā* through the channel *īdā* to nourish the body (ŚS 2.7). Another way in which the body and cosmos are simultaneously and correlatively mapped is through pilgrimage sites (*tīrthas*) that correspond to specific locations in the cosmos and in the body. For example, in the *Amṛtasiddhi bindu* resides in *kāmarūpa* in the cave of *kūṭāgara*, from where it descends via the central path because of sexual pleasure (AS 7.10). Kragh has traced such macrocosmic homologues in sacred pilgrimage sites in *śaiva* and *vajrayāna* tantric traditions (2018). In addition, there appear to be similarities with Daoist subtle body maps (Bokenkamp 1997:283). Again, the *haṭha* corpus simply asserts such sites within the body rather than deconstructs whether and how the body acquires such designations. This is an *a priori* association or identity of these sites in the body. In an example of micro-macrocosmic analogy that does not go so far as asserting identity the *Vasiṣṭhasamhitā* describes the subsidiary *nāḍīs* as like the leaf of a fig tree (VS 2.41). This simple illustration of the relationship between body and cosmos is not suggestive of a material identity. Yet where metaphor is used the relationship between body and cosmos appears to be *a priori*, suggesting a similarity in materiality.

A different type of relationship is at play in the *Vivekamārtaṇḍa*. The principle of interiorisation is used as an analogy to explain the practice of withdrawal (*pratyāhāra*). *Pratyāhāra* is the act of withdrawing sight and other senses as they move among their fields of operation (Viv 103). Two analogies are given to explain *pratyāhāra*. In the first there is the appearance of withdrawing material, as the sun drawing in shadow (Viv 104), but not an actual withdrawing of substance. In the second there is the material withdrawal of the limbs of the tortoise into its shell (Viv 105). Yet whether these analogies involve material transfer, they are but analogies. The *Vivekamārtaṇḍa* then goes through all the faculties to instruct the practitioner that whatever sense object he hears with his ears, good or bad, the knower of yoga should recognise it as his self and withdraw (Viv 106). This instruction is repeated for the eyes, skin, tongue and nose (Viv 107-110). The identity of the self and the objects of the senses is clearly stated, and thus we have a specific example of micro-macrocosmic identity. This passage concludes with two verses describing the consumption of nectar. The first describes the sun consuming the stream of lunar nectar (Viv 111) and in the second the stream is anthropomorphised into a woman consumed by the two channels (Viv 112). These examples shift the register from ontology to affect.

This *Vivekamārtaṇḍa* passage is likely the basis of a similar passage in the *Dattātreyayogaśāstra*. Here the practitioner should recognise as the self (*ātman*) whatever he experiences with his organs of sense, such that anything he sees with his eyes he should understand to be the self, and on through smell, taste and touch (DYŚ 95-96). For the *Dattātreyayogaśāstra samādhi* is the state of identity of individual (*jīvātman*) and higher selves (*paramātman* (DYŚ 126), similar to but not quite the same as a realisation of the identity of macro- and microcosm.

The *haṭha* corpus offers various analyses of the relationship between body and cosmos, the root of which appears to be identity. The relationship between cosmos and body may be

like that identified by Robertson in his work on the identity of person and world in *Carakasamhitā* 4.5: ‘contrary to the usual interpretation, early Ayurveda does not consider the person to be a microcosmic replication of the macrocosmos. Instead, early Ayurveda asserts that personhood is worldhood, and thus the person is non-different from the phenomenal totality (spatial and temporal) of his existence’ (2017:838). The non-difference of body and cosmos, and the spatial and temporal synchronicity spelt out by Robertson in relation to *āyurveda* can, when read across to *haṭha* yoga, help explain how the manipulation of the body delivers sovereignty not only over the structures of the body but the cosmos as well.

While I have suggested the relationship between body and cosmos is *a priori* identity it is not possible to make a definitive statement based on the materials available. The sources are not metaphysical treatises oriented towards clarifying such claims. There are however important functional implications in relation to those correlations in terms of how yoga is thought to work. Similar to this apparent *a priori* identity of body and cosmos is the principle of depletion and death to which I now turn.

### ***Downward depletion***

Both body and cosmos have a ‘natural’ downward flow which is reversed in yoga practice. Flood identifies asceticism as ‘the reversal of the flow of the body, which is also an attempt to reverse the flow of time’ (Flood 2002:4). This is apparent in the *haṭha* corpus. Indeed, if there is one master narrative of the process of yoga it might be movement upward through the body—whether this media be *prāṇa*, *kuṇḍalinī*, or the sexual essences of semen (*bindu*) and menstrual or generative fluid (*rajas*).<sup>47</sup> The *Amṛtasiddhi* states that when all the elements

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<sup>47</sup> South Asianist and queer studies scholar Anjali Arondekar noted in relation to this project, specifically chapter five on *kuṇḍalinī*, that movement upwards and downwards is about caste, personal communication, 1 March 2024, Sexuality in the Archive workshop, University of California Riverside. Wakankar analyses caste as social verticality (2010:77) and Kabir’s spiritual internalisation that precedes transcendence as upward movement (2010:26). In *haṭha* yoga movement upwards is associated with spiritual progress. I discuss caste in relation to *kuṇḍalinī* in chapter five.

move upwards in the body then the sun and moon bestow liberation (AS 4.12). This upwards movement is predicated in some of these accounts on an *a priori* principle of depletion—though *kuṇḍalinī* does not descend before rising. How do the sources describe this depletion?

We have seen how the *Khercarīvidyā* and *Śivasamhitā* internalised the descent of the *gaṅgā* in the body. Further, the process of death is governed by the principle of depletion: death is from the fall of *bindu*, life from its preservation (*marañam bindupātena jīvanam bindudhāraṇāt*). This line reverberates throughout the early corpus in the *Amṛtasiddhi* 7.25-26, *Dattātreyayogaśāstra* 157, *Śivasamhitā* 4.88, *Haṭhapradīpikā* 3.87cd and beyond into the seventeenth-century *Haṭharatnāvalī* 2.98ab and *Yuktabhavadēva* 253ab and eighteenth-century *Vajroliyoga* 22. Seminal depletion is a paradigm of the body that offers an organising rationale for the raising and maintenance of semen within the body. Sometimes this depletion is of sexual fluid through ejaculation (whether procreative or not) and sometimes the depletion relates to the consumption of nectar by the fire in the abdomen. We can see both at play in the *Haṭhapradīpikā*'s rationale for the practice of *khecarī*: the fall of *bindu* results in death (HP 3.37) and the body ages because the sun at the navel swallows the divine nectar that flows from the moon (HP Kaivalyadhama 3.76). Destruction of *bindu* is death and life is from the preservation of *bindu* (HP 3.87)—therefore yogis should guard semen (*śukra*) with every effort (HP 3.89).

Similar to the concept of *jāḍya* incorporating a sense of gravity discussed in relation to the *Yogabīja* above, the principle of downward movement is associated with the downward flow of water. Thus the downward flow of the fluids of the body is predicated on the downward flow of fluids in the world. The *Amṛtasiddhi* describes the normal flow of the channels as downwards, a flow that drains the body of liquid elements. It notes that the channels, usually flowing downwards, are reversed by the great lock (*mahābandha*) (AS 12.8). The general rule is given that a downward flow makes liquid elements leave the body like rivers leaving their



basins (AS 12.9). *Mahābandha* therefore acts like a dam in the external world blocking a river (AS 12.10). It seems that the downward path of the central channel (*madhyamā*) brings about creation and death and the two paths that flow at its side are agents of sin and virtue (AS 12.13) and are two of the three paths to be blocked. The metaphor of rivers emptying is not unique to the *haṭha* corpus: in the *Kulārṇavatantra* all rivers empty themselves, directly or indirectly, into the ocean, just as all teachings meet in the *kula* system (*Kulārṇavatantra* 2.12).<sup>48</sup>

In this first chapter I hope to have demonstrated that there is a near identity between the body and the cosmos, often described as an interiorisation of aspects of the macrocosm in the microcosm, and an elemental and material—or *jaḍa*—correlation between the body and the cosmos. Rather than the body becoming the cosmos through ritual inscription or initiation it appears to be an *a priori* identity. Finally, I have demonstrated that there is a mundane or saṃsāric notion of downward flow and depletion in the body. Thus, most yoga techniques function to effect a movement upwards through the body.

### ***Summary of the body in the sources***

The body that emerges in the *haṭha* corpus has the following aspects, this summary of which is not intended to substitute for the nuances between the sources brought out in the foregoing discussion. The saṃsāric body is caused by *karma*. The process of liberation of the body is accompanied by the cessation of *karma*. This material body is understood as constituted by ‘faults’ (*doṣas*), ‘qualities’ (*guṇas*) and *prakṛtis* (the latter aspects idiosyncratically understood in *Amṛtasiddhi* chapters eight and nine). The body is comprised of constituents (*dhātus*). The body is characterised as *jaḍa*, material or insentient. This term is common in

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<sup>48</sup> Rather than doctrinal metaphor, in Tibetan medicine the description of fluids flowing downwards characterises the ‘*or nad*’ disorder (Simioli 2016:393n5).

characterisations of the saṃsāric body. The channels (*nāḍīs*) and vortices (*cakras*) are aspects of the body and not elements of a distinct ‘yogic body’. They are not presented as distinct from the saṃsāric body of ‘flesh’ (a term used in the *Yogabīja*) and ‘bones’ (a term used in the *Śivasamhitā*). *Prāṇa* animates and governs physical functions, and every technique of yoga utilises or impacts *prāṇa*. The *jīva* is generally considered the embodied self. The identity of the *jīva* with higher selves is part of the union that is definitional of yoga, but its identity with for example the *paramātmān* does not necessitate the end of the body where *jīvanmukti* is an option. A reason given for the retention of the body is that it is ‘dear’ to the yogi (DYŚ 127), a seeming contradiction for yogis who have developed non-attachment. However, as developed throughout this thesis, the body is the site of pleasure and may be retained for the experiencing of pleasure.

The foregoing discussion identifies the ways in which the body is described as material, and the fewer instances where a gradation of bodies is offered from the gross physical through to more refined articulations of the body. The descriptions of the body as elemental, earthy, material, affective and causally constituted and constrained have been identified because these are the physical or metaphysical foundations based upon which the three models of *haṭha* yoga discussed later operate. While there are similar features in these descriptions, such as the elements and materiality, the precise valences differ text to text. The articulations of more subtle, or less than material, aspects of the body challenge my hypothesis that the body is matter. The ways in which the body becomes refined through the process of yoga attenuates the materiality of the body.

### ***Conclusion: the matter of the body***

The purpose of this chapter has been to illustrate that the body is matter and that the body matters in the process of *haṭha* yoga. To do this I have detailed how the body is described in

the *haṭha* corpus. We see that there are no stable terms for the yogic body across the corpus such as the *sūkṣma śarīra*. Instead, there are multiple terms to describe the body and some metaphysical and physiological accounts of the body though not systematically sustained. The latter part of this chapter identified the principles by which the body functions: the micro-macrocosmic correlation or identity between body and cosmos and the principle of downward flow and death.

This chapter has detailed the physiological and affective characterisation of the body to show that the yoga body is not different from the material body, though it may be more attenuated. The yogic body is not an imagined cartography, a superimposed *yantra*. Dayananda was too strongly under the sway of the empiricists when he threw his subtle body books into the river, aghast at the lack of *nāḍīs* in a corpse.

I have argued that the saṃsāric and liberated body, at least in relation to *jīvanmukti*, are material rather than transcendent. This argument turns on the understanding of the materiality or *jāḍya* of the body. Essentially the sources posit the saṃsāric body as *jaḍa*, which includes materiality, inertness and insentience. The paradox that the alive saṃsāric body is somehow not fully alive is brought out in the enigmatic statements of the *Yogabīja* considered in the next chapter. There is a distinction between the saṃsāric body as lump of meat, somehow inert, and the fully alive *jīvanmukta*. Thus saṃsāric bodies do not exhibit essential liveliness or agency (drawing on Biernacki's presentation of Abhinavagupta's thought in relation to New Materialism (2023:3, 19)).<sup>49</sup> The view of the saṃsāric body thus aligns with the mechanistic Enlightenment that New Materialism seeks to overturn, and the *jīvanmukta* aligns with the fully alive, vibrant matter of the body as an ecology of divine beings. The counter to this is the description of liberation as a wood-like state in the *Haṭhapradīpikā*.

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<sup>49</sup> Page numbers reference the chapters individually downloaded.

Do the sectarian origins of the sources bear on the variation in importance of the body on liberation? I hesitate to deploy that method to organise the positions of my sources because it does not give helpful results in relation to descriptions of the body. It is possible to distinguish two progressions of the body but they are overlapping and do not map onto the sectarian genealogies of the sources. One is from gross to subtle, as most clearly set out in the *Vasiṣṭhasaṃhitā* and *Gorakṣaśataka*. The other is from ‘lump of meat’ to empowered, charismatic and divine sovereign body, as set out in the *Yogabīja* and also apparent in the divine empowerment and charisma of the *Amṛtasiddhi*, *Amarauḡha*, *Dattātreya yogaśāstra* and *Khecarīvidyā*. These positions Birch might characterise as ‘freedom to’ and Shalev as ‘embodied immortality’. We can see that these progressions are neither separate from one another nor map onto the sectarian affiliations of the sources because those that teach gross to subtle are from *vaiṣṇava* (*Vasiṣṭhasaṃhitā*) and *paścimāmnāya kaula* (*Gorakṣaśataka*) genealogies; the other *vaiṣṇava* source (the *Dattātreya yogaśāstra*) and other *paścimāmnāya kaula* sources (*Vivekamārtaṇḍa*, *Yogabīja* and *Khecarīvidyā*) do not teach gross to subtle. Sources from all sectarian orientations teach the empowered charisma of the sovereign yogi—for example the *vajrayāna* and *śaiva Amṛtasiddhi*, the *vaiṣṇava Dattātreya yogaśāstra*, the *śrīvidyā vedāntin Śivasāṃhitā* and the proto-*vīraśaiva Haṭhapradīpikā*.

Even if discernible in some sources there is no simple linear progression from gross to subtle. To complicate the perceived gross to subtle trajectory, there is no linear progression from physical to cognitive or spiritual. More apposite are Shalev’s point (2021:150) on circularity of fluids—faeces, urine, sweat, saliva (KhV 2.73-76)—and Wujastyk on exteriority and interiority (2009:190). There is a progression in the bodies of *haṭha* yoga but no straightforward teleology. There is a dialectic of both circularity and of outer to inner to outer. The lists of empowerments (*siddhis*) that define the results of the practice as ultimate liberation (*mokṣa*) are not linear but circle between *siddhis* such as freedom from disease,

youth and longevity, sexual charisma, omniscience and omnipotence. While some of the texts are more systematic the overall lack of systematism indicates that linear progression is not the dominant schema.

The progression from ‘lump of meat’ to divinely charismatic is set out in the *Yogabīja*, and in sources such as the *Amaraughā* the yogi becomes equal to god (Am 37), a creator and destroyer of the universe and equal to the god of yogis (Am 42). Is the perfection of the physical form merely propagandist, derivative of cultural norms of masculinity irrelevant to the yogic processes at play? I do not think so. The concept of sovereignty is key, and I develop this point throughout the thesis. The divinity of the body may help to articulate the amelioration of materiality: while the gross body is obviously material, the divine or perfected body is also material, yet so empowered as to subvert the constraints of corporeality.

The analysis of this chapter fits into the broader themes of the thesis, first that practice does not float free of context and second that the body matters. Practice as not floating free of context can be seen in the imbrication of the models of the body on physiological understandings of the body. It is through the manipulation of these physiological structures that yoga works: the preservation of *bindu* (*bindudhāraṇa*) is predicated on the embryological understanding of *bindu-rajās*; fixation on the elements and *kuṇḍalinī* is based on an affective and elemental nature of the body; and, finally, baking the body is predicated on the constituent, or *dhātu*-model of the body. A key term for the materiality of the body is *jāḍya*. The multivalency of this term does not point to an uncontested materiality and the term will be further problematised in the next chapter.

The body matters in that the body indicates the progression or efficacy of yoga, it is the site that may be tested or observed for evidence of the success of yoga. I opened this chapter with the *Maitrī Upaniṣad* verse on the aggregates of the body as an example of revilement. The *haṭha* sources tend more towards valorising the body, certainly in a functional sense. The

final verse of the *Amaraughā* emphasises the importance of the student's body in the teacher's examination of them and dismisses mere discussion of yoga as a method to evaluate success in yoga (Am 46). This verse centres the practical emphasis and importance of the body in *haṭha* yoga. I suggest that the body matters in *haṭha* yoga because the body is matter. Whose body matters is a question I have not addressed—the paradigmatic body is the male practitioner and the assumed referent for all the instructions. Though the female body does not matter in the eyes of the redactors, chapters three and four excavate and evaluate what material there is to find women's bodies and the bodily implications for women of these practices.

The next chapter opens with an overview of the three paradigms of the body—embryology, *kuṇḍalinī* and baking the body—to indicate that the principles of interiorisation and depletion structure the logic of these paradigms and draw out the interleaving themes of heat, gestation and desire, before detailing the baking model of the body.

## Chapter Two

### *Begin by cooking yourself*

Biologically, eating trumps sex for innovative power; and eating is what made sex possible in  
the first place.

Donna Haraway (2016:190n16)

As for the renunciants, they begin by cooking themselves.

Charles Malamoud (1996:48)<sup>50</sup>

He devours death and nothing devours him.

*Śivasamhitā* 5.106ab

The last chapter set out descriptions of the body based on materiality and causality, before identifying two principles of the body: micro-macrocosmic near-identity between body and cosmos and a depleting, downward flow. This chapter turns to the paradigm of baking the body in the fire of yoga and its challenge to the materiality of the body. The paradigms of the body—baking, embryology and *kuṇḍalinī*—are distinct heuristic frames that nevertheless share characteristics. For embryology, the reproductive paradigm is a principle, or perhaps even a biomedical master narrative, of the body as understood by *haṭha* yoga. *Kuṇḍalinī* is a more phenomenological approach and thus helps centre the affective currents at the heart of

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<sup>50</sup> First published in French in 1989 and in English translation by White in 1996.

the process of yoga. I identify the baking model as inheriting gestational and desire-oriented modes of internalised ritual. The genesis of the heat model lies in embodied internalisations, homologies of external sacrifices. This connects with the analysis of internalising and reversing embryology and *kuṇḍalinī* as the internalisation of sexual affect or the beloved. However, baking the body in the fire of yoga challenges the previous chapter's insistence on the body's corporeality.

*Pāka* derives from  $\sqrt{pac}$ , which has the sense of digesting as well as cooking, baking and ripening. As epigraphs I pair Haraway's evocative suggestion that eating is more fundamental than sex as a function of the human body with Malamoud's statement that renunciants first cook, or perhaps even 'eat', themselves. I pair these epigraphs because the models of embryology and *kuṇḍalinī* are readily understood within the domain of sex and sexual affect yet the model of baking appears to fall within the domain of eating. In the *Śivasamhitā* quote we see the yogi becoming sovereign over death through devouring it—and nothing devours him (ŚS 5.106a). I place these modes of understanding together because I see that consumption and sex characterise all three of the models of the body that I have identified and underline the fundamentally material functions of the body.

In terms of the development of this chapter, I had approached the body through the lens of gender, particularly in relation to *kuṇḍalinī* and *bindu-rajās*. Because of this focus the starting point for this chapter was to explore the alternate view or *pūrvapakṣa* to gender as the central paradigm: the ascetic view. Tubb and Boose define a *pūrvapakṣa* as 'the prior view' in a dialogue, which opposes the *siddhānta* or 'demonstrated conclusion', i.e. the privileged view. They note, 'The *pūrvapakṣa* may be the established doctrine of another school, or it may be any question or doubt anticipated by the commentator' (2007:239-240). As the research for this thesis developed, the focus shifted to the body itself, with gender continuing to provide a filter for the material. This chapter became less the *pūrvapakṣa* and more concerned with an



essential paradigm of the body in *haṭha* yoga, informed by both the renunciatory aesthetics of the ascetic paradigm and at the same time encompassing the gestative heat and transmutation or sublimation<sup>51</sup> of desire at the functional heart of that genealogy.

To discuss baking the body in the fire of yoga this chapter is organised into three sections: first a close look at passages in the *haṭha* corpus, second an analysis of similar passages in adjacent literatures and third a longer perspective taking in vedic and Buddhist precursors.

The first section on *haṭha* defines the term *pāka* as used in the *haṭha* corpus and details key passages in the *Yogabīja* which has the most significant and extended discussion of baking the body. In analysing this and other passages the primary meaning of *pāka* as baking or cooking sits alongside a secondary sense of digesting or ingesting—a theme in the literature that, like baking, interacts with the materiality of the body: the practitioner desiccates the fluids of the body and also consumes the fluids and elements of the body. Furthermore, the baking paradigm attenuates the materiality, or *jāḍya*, of the body set out in chapter one in various ways including challenging corporeality through becoming burnt camphor, and invisibility.

The second section situates the *haṭha* deployment of *pāka* with passages in proximate historical or at least striking conceptual contiguity, from the *Mahābhārata*, *Mānavadharmasāstra*, *Mokṣopāya* and *Aparokṣānubhūti*. In the *Mahābhārata* the body is baked to purify it from actions; in the *Mānavadharmasāstra* the faults of the body are burnt by controlling the breath; in the *Mokṣopāya* the body is burnt from the inside out and reconstituted through *kuṇḍalinī*; and in the *Aparokṣānubhūti* an unbaked body should be cooked by *haṭha* yoga before engaging *rāja* yoga.

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<sup>51</sup> The terms ‘transmutate’ and ‘sublimate’ have the alchemical senses of one element changing into another and of refining or purifying respectively. I acknowledge the influence of psychoanalysis and in particular Freud from the 1890s in the usage of these terms to describe the transformation of drive-based desire or eros into a higher level of art or cultural development (cf. Freud 1930).

In the third section I sketch some longer historical connections with *tapas* as the vedic interiorisation of the sacrifice—with gestative and generative functions, and contrast this with the terminative heat of Buddhism and the *Pātañjalayogaśāstra* or ‘classical’ yoga. This chapter is not however the place for a genealogy of *tapas* in antecedent literature nor a genealogy of the bodily cartography of sun, moon and fire. Sun, moon and fire as potentially stable textual signifiers could be the basis of broader and deeper research on the genealogy of the body. The tantric genealogy of purification of the elements (*bhūtaśuddhi*) is deferred to the discussion of this topic in chapter six.

Through these discussions, it is clear that although the baking paradigm of the body at first appears to be the straightforward inheritance of an ascetic and body-denying mode, its fiery features are shared with both the models of *rajas* and *kuṇḍalinī*. Further, though the model challenges corporeality it is nevertheless a fundamentally bodily practice based in physiological processes and corporeal causation and constitution.

### **Concept: *pāka***

The *Yogabīja* contains a key description of the body that has been cooked in the fire of yoga as the ‘mighty body of yoga’ (*yogadeha mahābala*) (YB 47). The paradigm of baking the body in the fire of yoga is the central concern of this chapter and here I set out the *Yogabīja*’s account after first examining usages of the term in the corpus. The term *pāka* and *pakva* derive from √*pac* with a semantic range of baking, cooking, burning, and ripening, maturing or coming to completion or fruition. *Pakva* enters English as *pukka* meaning ‘full, good, complete’<sup>52</sup> from Hindi *pakkā* ‘firm’.<sup>53</sup> It has the sense of something finished and solid, as a pot when baked. In addition the term can refer to digesting and eating, for example the term

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<sup>52</sup> *Oxford English Dictionary*. Available at: [https://www.oed.com/dictionary/pukka\\_adj](https://www.oed.com/dictionary/pukka_adj) (Accessed: 10 April 2024).

<sup>53</sup> *Collins Hindi-English Dictionary* (2020). Available at: <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/hindi-english/%E0%A4%AA%E0%A4%95%E0%A5%8D%E0%A4%95%E0%A4%BE> (Accessed: 10 April 2024).

‘dog-eater’ (*śvapaca*) used to refer to dalits (cf. *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* 3.33.7, 7.9.10).<sup>54</sup> In very broad terms, a recurrent refrain in the Vedas and Upaniṣads is the delineation of social classes into the eater (*atṛ*) and the eaten (*anna*), for example in the *Śatapata Brāhmaṇa*’s description of piling the bricks for the fire altar (*Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* 6.1.2.25, 8.7.2.2) and in the Upaniṣads at *Bṛhadāranyaka* 1.2.5 and *Kauṣītaki* 2.9. A refrain that recurs in the Upaniṣads is the delineation of people into the enjoyer and the enjoyed, or enjoyer and observer, such as the two birds sitting in the same tree with one eating while the other looks on (*Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* 2.3.1-2 in Olivelle 1996:274). Throughout the *Mahābhārata* we hear that time cooks all beings (such as *Mahāprasthānikaparvan* 17.001.003),<sup>55</sup> yet here in the *haṭha* corpus we see yogis cooking, and even consuming, themselves.

Specific to the *haṭha* corpus, the term *pāka* is used to describe both cooking and maturation of the results of practice. The term is used to describe conventional cooking and tasting as a metaphor to compare embodied experience and theoretical knowledge. Thus the *Amanaska*, not a core text for this study but nonetheless close to these sources, utilises the basic meaning of *pāka* as ‘food that is cooked’: the ladle which does not know the ‘taste of cooked food’ (*pākarasa*) is deployed as a metaphor for those said to be learned in the teachings but who do not know the reality of the self (*Amanaska* 101).<sup>56</sup> Here *pāka* is deployed in an embodied experiential sense in apposition to knowledge that is merely theoretical. Elsewhere the term refers to the effects of the practice. The *Yogatārāvalī* uses the term *vipāka* for the ‘result’ or ‘fruition’ that is born of the practice of the three *bandhas* (*Yogatārāvalī* 8).<sup>57</sup> The *Śivasamhitā* uses the term in the context of the requirement to follow

<sup>54</sup> Vedabase dictionary <https://sanskritdictionary.com/?iencoding=iast&q=pac&lang=sans&action=Search> accessed 26 October 2023.

<sup>55</sup> *Mahāprasthānikaparvan* 17.001.003 *kālah pacati bhūtāni sarvāny eva mahāmate | karmanyāsam ahaṃ manye tvam api draṣṭum arhasi ||*

<sup>56</sup> *Amanaskayoga* 101 *ye tu vidyārthavijñāne vidvāmsa iti kīrtitāḥ | ātmatattvaṃ na jānanti darvī pākarasaṃ yathā ||*

<sup>57</sup> *Yogatārāvalī* 8 *bandhatrayābhyāsavipākajātāṃ vivarjitāṃ recakapūrakābhyām | viśoṣayantīm viśayappravāhaṃ vidyām bhaje kevalakumbharūpām ||*

a restricted diet until the practice is ‘complete’ or ‘ripe’ (ŚS 5.224). In this text *pāka* is also the ‘digestion of food’, the action of the ‘fire of all men’ or the ‘digestive fire’ (*vaiśvānarāgni*) situated in the bodies of living beings (ŚS 2.34). In the *Gheraṇḍasaṃhitā*, a later text than the corpus considered here, the term is used in the context of advice on the type of food to be eaten: it should, *inter alia*, be easy to digest (*laghupāka*) and nourish the body’s constituents (*Gheraṇḍasaṃhitā* 5.29).<sup>58</sup> We will return to the discussion of the impact of the baking paradigm on the body’s constituents as there is a tension as to whether the practices dry out or nourish.

Beyond the *haṭha* corpus, the *Pātañjalayogaśāstra* gives an illuminative analysis of fire which includes the sense of rising up as well as consuming, purifying, burning and cooking in its account of mastery of the elements (*bhūtajaya*). *Bhūtajaya* results from meditation on matter, essential nature, subtle nature, sequence and purpose (*Pātañjalayogaśāstra* 3.44).<sup>59</sup> The *Vivarāṇa* sub-commentary notes that conquest of the elements results from meditation (*saṃyama*) on the physical form, essential nature, subtle form, inherence and purposefulness of the elements. The attributes of fire are given as ‘rising, consuming, purifying, burning, cooking, lightness, brilliance, etc.’ (Leggett 2017:489).<sup>60</sup> That fire has the attribute of rising as well as consuming, purifying, burning and cooking is important in relation to yoga practice as reversing what I have identified as a ‘principle’, that of downward flow, depletion and death. This puts the baking paradigm on a directional par with *kuṇḍalinī* and *rajas* in relation to paradigms that explain the process of yoga as moving upwards.

In broad terms I argue that the *yogadeha mahābala* is not a materially distinct body from the yogi’s saṃsāric body. Ondračka in his 2015 article and 2021 thesis engages the secondary literature that argues for a distinct yogic body and shows that the primary sources do not

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<sup>58</sup> *Gheraṇḍasaṃhitā* 5.29 *laghupākaṃ priyaṃ snigdhaṃ tathā dhātuprapoṣaṇam | manobhilaṣitaṃ योग्याṃ योगी भोजनम् ācaret ||*

<sup>59</sup> *Yogasūtra* 3.44 *sthūlasvarūpasūkṣmānvayārthavattvasaṃyamād bhūtajayaḥ ||*

<sup>60</sup> Page references are to the unnumbered pdf.

support such a notion. For example, he sets out how according to Mallik (1950) the synonym of the perfected body is the *yogadeha* but Ondračka explains this term is rare in the texts. It appears in the *Yogabīja* passage and in the c. nineteenth-century anthology *Gorakṣasiddhāntasaṃgraha* where the yogi should give up or destroy his ordinary body, create a yogic body and protect it (Ondračka 2021:69). Ondračka notes he has not found any synonyms of this term in the texts (Ondračka 2015:218-219). Though the *Gorakṣasiddhāntasaṃgraha* describes the *yogadeha* as a new, distinct body I do not find this to be the *Yogabīja*'s conception of the body.

However, and to ameliorate this broad argument that the yogi does not destroy his old body and create a new body, I show how the materiality of the saṃsāric body is attenuated by the process of baking the body. The *yogadeha mahābala* is paradoxical in relation to death and life, in relation to materiality and ethereality, and in relation to cooking and consuming. Although the *Yogabīja*'s account of this body is paradoxical it is far from nonsensical: the paradoxical nature of the *yogadeha mahābala* in relation to saṃsāric laws indicates its transcendence of those laws while remaining imbricated in materiality.

### ***The Yogabīja***

The *Yogabīja*'s analysis of the body as cooked by the fire of yoga is part of an elaborate argument against gnosis alone as liberative. As such it is an illuminative account of the body as well as the process of yoga as cooking. In chapter one I gave an overview of the *Yogabīja*'s account of the body that showed how the body came into being from a state of being beyond the elements (YB 10) to consisting of the elements, bound by the constituents, and associated with pleasure and pain (YB 12). A long list of emotions, beginning with desire, are enumerated without which the *jīva* would be a *śiva* (YB 13-15ab). The *Yogabīja* teaches the method for destroying these faults (*doṣas*) (YB 16). I argued that the body was caused and

constituted by emotion and specifically desire (*kāma*). Thus, baking burns out these faults to deliver sovereignty over the matter of the body—but the body may be retained upon liberation. The samsāric body of the *Yogabīja* is characterised as *jaḍa* (YB 32) and the text sets up a relentless contrast between this and the perfected body of yoga, employing a language of conflict and supremacy (YB 44). The resultant mighty yoga body has a paradoxical relationship with life and death. The yogi is free from rebirth and the body is no longer bound by desires, with a materiality attenuated to ethereality.

To discuss the body of the *Yogabīja* I analyse the descriptions of the raw body compared with the mighty body of yoga. I then detail the paradoxes that arise: the tension between dead and alive and the tension between material and ethereal. Finally, I draw attention to the affective language of eating and the controlling language of sovereignty.

### ***The raw body***

The passage that stands at the heart of this chapter and was introduced in chapter one states:

Beings with bodies are said to be of two types: uncooked and well-cooked. The uncooked are without yoga; embodied beings are cooked by yoga. The body cooked by the fire of yoga is not material and is free from pain. Know the uncooked to be material, earthy and a source of pain. (YB 31-32)<sup>61</sup>

The uncooked body, that without yoga, is material (*jaḍa*) and painful (*śoka*). While *śoka* is clearly pain or sorrow in this context, its primary meaning is pain as a result of burning.

Paradoxically one can therefore understand the body that is baked as free from the heat/pain of *śoka*. The multivalency of *jāḍya* includes torpidity, lethargy, insentience, solidity and

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<sup>61</sup> See appendix four, *Yogabīja*, for the Sanskrit here and throughout. The *Yogabīja* is currently an understudied source on *hatha* yoga. A full English translation of the *Yogabīja* has not yet been published (there are excerpts in Mallinson and Singleton 2017 and Muñoz has a Spanish translation (2014) and transcription based on three printed editions (2016)) and few scholars have analysed the text (notable exceptions being Birch 2020 and Ondračka 2015 and 2021). Birch's forthcoming critical edition and annotated translation will change this situation. Because of both the importance of these passages to this discussion and the lack of available translations I have departed from my usual approach of summarising or paraphrasing the sources, and instead offer translations of key passages.

inertia. Alongside *jaḍa* the uncooked body is characterised as earthy or material (*pārthiva*) and causing suffering.

The justification for why gnosis alone cannot liberate is given as an account of the saṃsāric body. The uncooked or raw body, consisting of the five elements, bound by the constituents and with the nature of the qualities (*guṇas*) (YB 12ab) will continue to be reborn. The raw person in meditation is controlled by the senses such that even should he restrain them firmly he is tormented by other things (YB 33). The mind is agitated when the body is afflicted by experiences such as cold, heat, pleasure, pain etc., diseases, men, various other living beings, weapons, fire, water and wind (YB 34). Furthermore, when vitality fails the breath becomes agitated and people's minds, pervaded by hundreds of torments, are agitated (YB 35). A brilliant metaphor sums up the pointlessness of meditation for a body uncooked by yoga: if meditation cannot be maintained when ants touch the body how much more so when scorpions bite (YB 18abc)? Thus, meditation will not succeed in a raw body.

The earthiness or earth-bound nature of the body appears to be the key distinction between the raw and cooked body. The raw body is characterised as *jaḍa* which on the face of it has a straightforward meaning as still or cold. However, the use of the term to refer to a raw or uncooked body that is nevertheless alive is fraught with paradox. For example, in the Monier-Williams dictionary *jaḍa* has the meaning of 'void of life' as well as 'cold', 'stiff', 'motionless' and 'unintelligent'. In contrast to consciousness (*cetana*) *jaḍa* is given as 'inanimate', 'lifeless' and 'matter' (1851:409). The sense of *jāḍya* as 'matter' is amplified by the *Yogabīja*'s use of the term *pārthiva*, literally 'earthy' (Monier-Williams 1851:621). Thus, the meanings point to the *prakṛti* of the *sāṃkhya* school as insentient materiality and corroborates the feminist analysis of the abjection of the body in relation to the mind reviewed in the introduction. In another use of the term *jāḍya* in the *Yogabīja*, first desires and then the *jāḍya* of the body are destroyed through practice (YB 122). Further, as well as the arising of

internal sound there is a reduction in bodily weakness or pliancy (*mārdava dehaka*), the elements beginning with earth and *jāḍya* are conquered, and a person becomes able to move in the air (*khecara*) (YB 124). From ‘earth etc’ (*pr̥thvyādika*) is understood the elements which are the foundations of the body and cosmos. The yogi overcomes his earth-bound nature, recalling the previous use of the term ‘earthen’ or ‘terrestrial’ (*pārthiva*) (YB 32) as well as the earth (*pr̥thvī*) used here. There is a contrast between *jāḍya* as stiffness and *mārdava* as pliancy which is removed if we take *mārdava* as weakness. A different term from *jāḍya* that also denotes stiffness or rigidity (*kāṭhinya/kāṭhinatā*) is deployed to describe the mundane body: when the mind is dissolved in camphor what ‘rigidity’ is found?— and likewise, when the *ahaṃkāra* is destroyed what ‘firmness’ in the body is there (YB 126)? What this means for the longevity of the body in liberation—or whether the yogi can be alive and dead—will be returned to shortly. Finally, the *Yogabīja* defines *haṭha* yoga as the consumption by force (*haṭha*) of *jāḍya* (YB 108cd)—underlining the importance of this term to the research question of this thesis.

### ***The mighty body of yoga (yogadeha mahābala)***

The essential passage on the mighty body of yoga (*yogadeha mahābala*) is *Yogabīja* 44-54 which I translate here based on Birch’s critical edition:

Everyone is conquered by their body but the body is conquered by yogis, thereby not producing pleasure and pain etc. for them (YB 44). When the yogi has conquered the senses, mind, intelligence, desire, anger etc. he has conquered everything—he is not afflicted by anything (YB 45). The gross and other elements are brought together and gradually the body consisting of the seven constituents is slowly burnt by the fire of yoga (YB 46). Even the gods cannot perceive<sup>62</sup> the mighty body of yoga. Becoming free by splitting the bonds the body possesses various great powers (YB 47). The body is like ether, but more pure than ether; the body is more subtle than the subtle, more gross than the gross, and more material than matter (YB 48). The lord of yogis has the

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<sup>62</sup> Birch has selected *lakṣyeta* rather than *labhyate* in the critical edition though both readings are widely attested. With the latter the gods could not obtain the mighty body of yoga. See Birch’s forthcoming critical edition for manuscript details and variant readings.



form he desires and is independent, without birth and death and plays in the three worlds everywhere he desires (YB 49). The yogi who possesses inconceivable power can deploy various forms and he, his senses conquered, then retracts them at will (YB 50).

The body of the *Yogabīja* is described as composed of the elements (*bhūtas*) and the constituents (*dhātus*). As we have already observed, the body consists of the five elements (YB 12ab) and as a result of practice the elements (taking *pṛthvyādika* as the elements starting with earth) and *jāḍya* are defeated (YB 124). The five elements are earth, water, wind, air and ether (*ākāśa*). *Ākāśa* is ether, sky or space. The ‘cooked’ body is described as like ether but more pure than ether (YB 48) and as having the form of highest ether (YB 67). The camphor metaphor could be seen as describing the appearance of space when marked out by smoke—the motes of matter that demarcate space.<sup>63</sup> The seven constituents or *dhātus* burnt in this passage are the elements or essences of the body set out in āyurvedic sources such as the *Carakasamhitā*’s *Śārīrasthāna* 2.4. The constituents are chyle (*rasa*), blood, flesh, fat, bone, marrow and semen.

The key verse on burning the body in the fire of yoga notes the constitution of the body as elemental, consisting of both gross elements (*mahābhūtas*) and elements (*tattvas*), and consisting of the seven constituents. It is not clear from the verse what the relationship is between the elements and the constituents. Above I understood this as, ‘The gross and other elements are brought together in sequence, then the body consisting of the seven constituents is slowly burnt by the fire of yoga’ (YB 46). This follows Mallinson and Singleton who take the first line as describing action occurring before the second line: ‘[After] the gross and [other] elements have arisen in series, the body composed of the seven constituents is slowly burnt by the fire of yoga’ (2017:226). In his translation, Ondračka switches the order of the

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<sup>63</sup> One should note another meaning of the term *pakva*, that of the ashes of a burnt corpse (Monier-Williams 1851:575), which brings a bodily nuance to the smoke of burnt camphor.

*pādas*, ‘The body consisting of seven constituents is slowly burnt by the fire of yoga and the gross elements gradually enter into [their corresponding] *tattvas*’ (Ondračka 220, 230n40).<sup>64</sup> I would not go so far as to say the gross elements enter their corresponding *tattvas*. I would suggest that though the gross elements and elements have a distinct action, that of coming together sequentially, they might also be burnt in the fire of yoga as the seven constituents are. This consideration of the elements relates to the elemental constitution of the body and cosmos which in chapter six is discussed in relation to *kuṇḍalinī*’s elemental nature. In this *Yogabīja* passage Ondračka identifies some elements of the *bhūtaśuddhi* ritual where a ‘ritual body’ is constructed through visualisation, and even more similarities with the *bhūtajaya* technique or ‘mastery of the elements’. However, he notes the *Yogabīja*’s body seems to be permanent rather than the *bhūtaśuddhi*’s temporary body (Ondračka 2015:231n42).

### ***Technique: cooking by the fire of yoga***

Broadly this thesis is concerned with the paradigms of the body offered by the sources such that the techniques of yoga are seen to work. What distinguishes the *haṭha* techniques is their physicality and hence there is something distinctly material about the presentations of the body such that those techniques are efficacious. I am not concerned with the techniques of yoga *per se*. Instead, I turn to technique to ask how, according to the *Yogabīja*, the body is to be baked, to consider whether this is yoga more generically or *haṭha* yoga in particular.

The *Yogabīja* defines yoga as the conjunction of *prāṇa* and *apāna*, likewise of menstrual blood (*rajas*) and semen (*retas*), and of moon and sun and individual and higher self (YB 79)—the union of many opposites (YB 80). Immediately upon this definition of yoga breath control is given (YB 81). Again, after one of the statements on baking the body (YB 66-68)

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<sup>64</sup> The reading *saṃhrtāni* (brought together) is selected by Birch in the critical edition, where he notes variants including one reading of *saṃbhūtāni* (produced). Birch identifies this manuscript as P3, see forthcoming critical edition for manuscript details. This reading is selected in the Śrīvāstava (1982) Gorakhnāth Mandir edition upon which Mallinson and Singleton and Ondračka base their translations.

the method for victory is given as *prāṇāyāma* and no other (YB 70). The *Yogabīja* does not identify *prāṇāyāma* as a distinct type of yoga but rather distinguishes the four types of yoga as *mantra*, *haṭha*, *laya* and *rāja* yoga (YB 104). As we have seen *haṭha* is defined as the consumption by force of *jāḍya* (YB 108cd). *Laya* yoga, defined as the breath becoming still, can only occur after the consumption of *jāḍya* and the dissolution of the mind (YB 109). In the description of the technique of *prāṇāyāma* many of the witnesses describe the inhale as drying (*śoṣayet*) rather than increasing (*poṣayet*) (YB 96ab)<sup>65</sup>. Drying, desiccating and baking function very differently from the drenching in elixirs that we also see in the sources. What is clear is that baking the body in the fire of yoga is not identified specifically with *haṭha* yoga but with yoga in general.

The foregoing passages detail the nature of the raw and cooked body in the *Yogabīja*. *Jāḍya* appears to be a fundamental descriptor of the raw body as material or earthy, is a quality of the raw body that baking ameliorates and that defines *haṭha*, and that the cooked body is free from. However, the material nature of the liberated body is somewhat paradoxical, troubled by an ambivalence towards whether the yogi is dead or alive and the extent to which ethereality attenuates the material. These questions are considered next as well as a consideration of the language of consumption in the *Yogabīja*.

### ***Paradox: dead and alive***

After the key statement on the mighty body of yoga comes a paradoxical statement on the status of the body in relation to life and death:

O goddess who's face is like the moon, you ask what is death to him: he does not die again because of the power of yoga (YB 51). He has already died, so of one who has died what death can there be? Where there is death for all, there the yogi lives happily (YB 52). Where the ignorant live, there he is always dead; there is nothing that he

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<sup>65</sup> YB 96ab *recake kṣīnatām yāte pūrakam poṣayet [\*śoṣayet] sadā* | *Poṣayet* is retained in Birch's critical edition. The manuscripts that attest *śoṣayet* are N<sub>2</sub>N<sub>3</sub>N<sub>4</sub>N<sub>5</sub>N<sub>n</sub>P<sub>2</sub>P<sub>3</sub> (see Birch forthcoming for manuscript details).

must do and he is not stained by what he does, he is always liberated while alive, established in himself, and free of all faults (YB 53). Other ascetics and gnostics are always conquered by their bodies. How are they equal to yogis? They are lumps of flesh with miserable bodies (YB 54).

Whether the *Yogabīja*'s conception of *jīvanmukti* implies embodied liberation, as I have understood the term elsewhere, will be considered below. Birch states, 'bodiless liberation (*videhamukti*) is rejected explicitly' in keeping with the view that the yogi does not die (Birch 2000b:219). I would temper this statement somewhat and point to the paradoxical status of the liberated body in the *Yogabīja*. *Videhamukti* is not mentioned in the text. The liberated body is not a dead body, but there is a transcendence of the laws of the body in *saṃsāra* such that the concepts of life and death appear paradoxical.

As we saw in chapter one, in the *Yogabīja* liberation is bodily (*jīvanmukti*) (YB 53, 127, 137 and 139). Bodily death is not liberation but liberation of the body is when it has the nature of *brahman* (YB 140-142). Bodily liberation is sovereignty over the body, expressed as the opposite of *jāḍya*: upon liberation the yogi can play in the three worlds, is omniscient, may assume any shape and move as swiftly as the wind, is a god, creator of all and autonomous (YB 125, 127).

Thus *jīvanmukti* is not *saṃsāric* embodiment but fractures the constraints of *saṃsāra*. We have seen the text use paradoxical statements in the characterisation of the cooked body (purer than *ākāśa*, the most pure of substances, more subtle than the subtle, more gross than the gross, more material than matter (YB 48)). The layered, apparently mutually exclusive paradoxes suggest that the liberated yogi is beyond mundane ontology and conventional comprehension. Brereton in a 1990 book chapter examines paradigms by which the Upaniṣads construct totality out of multiplicity, and I think we can see at play here the strategies he identifies as hierarchy and paradox (1990:124-133). In this text these paradigms suggest the yogi encompasses and exceeds known ontologies. Just as on the nature of the body, we have seen paradoxical statements on life and death despite the insistence that death is not

liberation: he has already died so what death can there be for him? The yogi lives where others die (YB 52) and where the ignorant live he is always dead (YB 53ab). The text is neither confused nor unsystematic, but points to a state beyond saṃsāric embodiment or bodiless liberation using on the one hand paradox and riddle and on the other a two-levels-of-truth approach contrasting a saṃsāric conception of life and death with an ultimate conception of the embodied liberated yogi beyond the constraints of *saṃsāra*.

*Yogabīja* 39 is likely the destruction of the body but could refer to the disappearance of the body. Here the destruction of the I-maker (*ahaṃkṛti*) facilitates the destruction/disappearance (*naṣṭa*) of the body (*deha*) and diseases (YB 39). It appears to be saying that the body is destroyed upon liberation. However, it can be taken as disappearance or invisibility of the body as *naś*, usually intransitive, is not in the causative, and thus refers to the destruction of the conception of the body rather than the body itself.<sup>66</sup> In another verse *naś* does mean the death of the body: when the body is destroyed (*naśyate*) due to lack of success in yoga and ignorance, one bound by former impressions obtains another body (YB 116). The *Yogabīja* however belongs to the group of texts that understand the liberated body as capable of invisibility, as discussed below in the intra-corpus analysis. The *prima facie* reading is that the body is destroyed and so diseases must be destroyed too.

On the basis of this discussion we can refine the definition of *jīvanmukti*. Though *jīvanmukti* is bodily, the body is free of the constraints of *saṃsāra* such that it is only enigmatically construed as body.

### ***Paradox: material and ethereal***

If the *Yogabīja* sets up the body as material and earthy, to what extent does the technique of baking the body undo or attenuate that materiality? We cannot understand the baking process

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<sup>66</sup> Birch personal communication, 25 May 2022.

as only purifying emotions or faults and thereby eradicating *karma*; it also impacts the structures of the body. As I demonstrated in chapter one the material and emotional are not discrete—the emotional creates and constitutes the body in *samsāra*. The baking process also impacts the elements and constituents that comprise the body.

My core argument is that the *samsāric* body of yoga is always already material and the physicality of the *haṭha* techniques are just so, physical, because they leverage the matter of the body. The resultant liberation can be an embodied rather than transcendent state. The validity of this argument does, to an extent, turn on the impact the baking paradigm has on the materiality of the body and any change in status. As we have seen the body of the *Yogabīja* is elemental and material yet also complex and enigmatic: more subtle than *ākāśa* (YB 48) yet mighty (YB 47). Turning to the recurring metaphor of burnt camphor does this image illustrate an ethereal, perhaps evanescent, but nonetheless material ontology of the body? Does camphor give form to space (*ākāśa*) enabling it to be seen and to demarcate a structure within the triple world, or does its fading into space indicate the ultimate status of the body as beyond materiality, as of the nature of *brahman* (YB 142).

A recurring metaphor expresses the result of burning the body's constituents. The *Yogabīja*'s conception of the body liberated through burning is that of burnt camphor (*kapūra*).<sup>67</sup> The passage *Yogabīja* 66-68 is an important statement of this:

Due to the union of *prāṇa* and *apāna* the moon and the sun unite, and the body consisting of the seven constituents is surely digested by the fire of yoga (YB 66). His diseases, cuts and wounds etc. are destroyed and the body becomes the form of highest ether (YB 67). What's the point of saying lots more? He does not die. He is perceived in the world as if embodied, like burnt camphor (YB 68).

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<sup>67</sup> The *Hevajatantra* identifies a hidden meaning (*sandhyābhāṣā*) of semen (*śukra*) and *rakta* (blood) as camphor (*karpūra*) and frankincense (*silhaka*) (Hevajra 2.3.59). This links the paradigms I have identified as baking and embryology. The *haṭha* corpus does not make this connection explicitly. *Hevajatantra* 2.3.59 *gūtham catuḥsamaṃ proktaṃ mūtram kasturikā smṛtā | svayambhu silhakaṃ jñeyam śukram karpūrakam matam ||*

In this passage the process of burning destroys diseases, as is also set out in *Yogabīja* 40. Here, the disappearance of disease is attributed to the disappearance of ego (*ahaṃkāra*). In addition, the yogi will not suffer pain from water, fire or the stroke of a sword. This suggests freedom from injury by the elements (here water and fire), and freedom from injury by other people. Freedom from injury by the elements is a key feature of the yogi's sovereignty over the cosmos, and freedom from injury by other people—wielding swords—suggests a social sovereignty. I seek to build on these themes of sovereignty throughout the thesis and return to this specific argument in the final conclusion.

The camphor metaphor appears again in *Yogabīja* 126 in a passage (YB 122-127) that describes the empowerment of the body:

As a result of the practice first desires and then *jāḍya* born of the body are destroyed (YB 122). Then the nectarine<sup>68</sup> moon continuously streams and the fire completely consumes the constituents with the breath (YB 123). Great internal sounds arise and bodily weakness goes; a person becomes able to move in the air having conquered the *jāḍya* that is earthy etc. (YB 124). He becomes omniscient, can assume any shape and is as quick as the wind, he plays in the three worlds and all powers arise (YB 125). When camphor is dissolving what hardness can be found in it? Likewise, when the ego is dissolved what hardness (*kaṭhinatā*) can be found in the body (YB 126)? Without doubt the great yogi is liberated while alive, becomes a god, the creator of all, autonomous and able to take all forms (YB 127).

The materiality of the body is challenged by becoming as ethereal as burnt camphor. The description of cooking the body centres both the importance of the body—as gnosis is not possible without a body, and also attenuates the materiality of the body such that it is barely material anymore. However, it is clear the liberation described in the *Yogabīja* involves some form of body in its articulation of liberation while alive (*jīvanmukti*) rather than a bodiless liberation (*videhamukti*).

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<sup>68</sup> *Samarasī* suggests nectar or liquid that has undergone an alchemical process to become assimilated or equalised.

The camphor image troubles the materiality of the body as both material and ethereal. This imbrication of materiality and ethereality is accompanied by an imbrication of materiality and affect.

### ***The language of consumption and victory***

I conclude this discussion of the *Yogabīja* by considering the language of consumption. As well as cooking, *pāka* has the sense of consuming and digesting. With the epigraphs to this chapter, I draw a connection between the baking paradigm and sex. Sex is not the concern of the text but appears in internalised form in the definition of yoga as the union of *rajas* and *retas* (YB 79). Here I want to draw attention to affect in the language of consumption. The topic of *kuṇḍalinī* eating the body is taken up in chapter five, particularly in relation to the *Jñāneśvarī* as I discuss in chapter five.

The key technique of the baking paradigm is consuming the constituents of the body. We see fire consuming the constituents with the breath (YB 123). The definition of *haṭha* yoga is given as the consumption by force of *jāḍya* (108cd) as a result of which the mind dissolves (YB 109ab). We also see *suṣumṇā* consuming the breath with the tube of her mouth just as an elephant drinks water with its trunk (YB 91). Related to *suṣumṇā*, I note the important point that as well as the body being burnt in the fire of yoga, *kuṇḍalinī* is also burnt by fire (YB 84).

Alongside the language of consumption is a trope of victory. Not only do yogis attain victory over the body while others are defeated by their bodies (YB 44), they conquer their senses, mind, intellect, desire etc. (YB 45), and *prāṇa* (YB 81ab). The method of mastering the mind is *prāṇāyāma* or mastering the breath (YB 70, 97ab). Finally, I noted people become able to move in the air when the earth element is conquered (YB 124) and within *suṣumṇā* time is conquered because of the conjunction of sun and moon (YB 93).



The *Yogabīja* treatment of baking the body is quite idiosyncratic in the early *haṭha* corpus. I turn from the *Yogabīja* to other sources in the early corpus to trace these ideas.

### ***Baking across the early corpus***

The *Yogabīja*'s account of baking the body is distinctive but not without connections across other sources in the early corpus. The *Yogabīja* is akin to sources that teach *jīvanmukti*, where the yogi exists within a body and can act as he wishes, such as the *Amṛtasiddhi* (AS 30.3-14) and the *Dattātreya yogaśāstra* but unlike the *Amaraugha* where the state of the body is ambiguous at the end. The *Amṛtasiddhi* and *Dattātreya yogaśāstra* also teach that the yogi can become invisible. I turn first to the *Amṛtasiddhi* as it is the most consistent with the teachings of the *Yogabīja*, before including some of the other sources in more cursory form.

The *Amṛtasiddhi* utilises a semantics of consumption on both micro- and macrocosmic scale. The text deploys an idiosyncratic conception of *prakṛti* as the form that good and bad deeds done in previous births take in the body (AS 9.2) and describes *prakṛti* as consuming and being consumed: the universe is consumed by *prakṛti* but *prakṛti* is not consumed by anything; however, the practitioner consumes *prakṛti* and by so doing consumes death (AS 9.14). This trope is found in the *Śivasamhitā* verse that stands as epigraph to this chapter.

The *Amṛtasiddhi* describes the sun and fire in the abdomen and the moon in the head in a system common to many *haṭha* sources. We see that the moon is located at the top and the sun at the base of the goddess of the centre (*madhyamā*) (AS 4.1) from where the sun travels upwards on the right (AS 4.2). A key articulation of the general physiology of all bodies is given: the sun consumes (*grasati*) the moon's nectar, moved by the wind, and burns (*dahati*) the seven bodily constituents (AS 4.3), just like the *Yogabīja*.

The *Amṛtasiddhi* articulates a more elaborate interiorised cosmology involving sun, moon and fire than we see in the *Yogabīja*. This enables a more systematic and cosmological

account of how and why the constituents of the body are baked. That the sun moves upwards (AS 4.2) is a broad principle of yoga. The movement of the sun is elucidated as an internal astrology with the sun governing units of time (AS 4.4-7). The internal and external are homologues of one another, but this is not a ritual interiorisation, rather an *a priori* one: the external union of the sun and moon is creation and the internal is yoga (AS 4.8). This is an eclipse, understood as meritorious when external and liberation when internal (AS 4.9). Internalising the myth of *rāhu*, the seizing of the moon by the sun is yoga (AS 4.10). The movement upwards of the sun and fire, equated with *rāhu*, combined with the downward movement of the nectar of the moon is death (AS 4.11): when all elements move upwards in the body then the sun and moon bestow liberation (AS 4.12). This last point is key, indicating a unifying principle in the process of yoga, that of all the elements moving upwards in the body. The sun in the body presents the cosmic correlates of the body as *a priori* rather than ritually constructed. The sun and fire are given as homologues in chapter four, then a short separate chapter is devoted to fire. Fire is situated in the middle of the orb of the sun in the abdomen (AS 5.1) and though similar, fire and sun are taught to be subtly different (AS 5.2). In a chapter on the general characteristics of the breath, breath is singled out with the role of increasing *rasa* by forcing fire to become enflamed and cook (*pacati*) grains and other foods (AS 6.15). As Mallinson and Szántó note, *rasa* is likely to refer to the first of the seven bodily constituents (2021:117n135) and thereby perhaps imply the others.

Baking is a key aspect of the *Amṛtasiddhi*'s explanation for how the three physical techniques taught in chapters 11-13 interact with the body. The difference between this account and the *Yogabīja* is the attention given to the importance of digesting food and increasing *rasa* through baking before the constituents are digested and other elements of the body burnt, including bad deeds. Chapter 14 describes how practising every three hours in the day and night increases all pleasures (AS 14.7) (rooting the practice firmly in affect rather

than renunciation of bodily sensation). The result of the practice is to train the breath by which fire increases (AS 14.8). The physiological consequences of this are the ease of digestion (*pāka*) of food, and because of this baking (*paripāka*) *rasa* increases (AS 14.9). The increase in *rasa* results in an increase in the bodily constituents, specifically the chief *rasa* (AS 14.10) which is semen (2021:135n192). From intensive practice of *mahābandha* there is digestion (*jāraṇa*) of *rasa* (AS 14.12) and the *doṣas*, faeces, urine and defilements dry up (AS 14.13). The two *rasas* (likely to be *bindu* and *rajas*) are joined and there is entrance into *madhyamā* (AS 14.14). Bad deeds are burnt up like straws in a fire (AS 14.17). Thus, burning is a key way in which the physical techniques work directly on the bodily structures set out in the *Amṛtasiddhi* but there is a tension between nourishment and desiccation. Indeed, the practice should be carried out in such a way that breath is not strained, for when breath is strained fire burns up the bodily constituents (AS 19.8). *Rasa* is semen and ‘the nourishing fluid produced from good digestion’ (Mallinson and Szántó 2021:135n190). It is not burnt, instead moving upwards in the body, but it is not an elixir that drenches and nourishes the body. Rather than referring to baking or cooking, the term *vipāka* is used to describe the signs of *jīvanmukti* and here suggests a culmination or fruition. It describes the moment when the wind has pierced the knot of *rudra*, is in all the bodily stations and the mind shines forth, ‘adorned by the moment of culmination (*vipākakṣaṇabhūṣita*) (AS 30.1). Thus, the *Amṛtasiddhi* gives a broader internalised cosmology than the *Yogabīja* within which burning the constituents is an aspect, but not as central a feature as in the *Yogabīja*.

Other sources in the early *haṭha* corpus incorporate some of the features associated with cooking the body in the *Yogabīja*. The *Amarauḡhaprabodha* (later than the *Amarauḡha*), dismisses *vajrolī* and other techniques as not succeeding without *rāja* yoga. One technique it dismisses is the consumption of the bodily constituents by those who are skilled in moving air through the tubes of their entire body (*Amarauḡhaprabodha* 8).

In the *Dattātreyayogaśāstra* the fire of the abdomen has a role in digestion. For example, increasing the brightness of the fire of the abdomen leads to emaciation of the body (DYŚ 68cd-69ab). The technique of inverting the body (*viparīta*) is said to increase the fire of the abdomen (DYŚ 146cd) and the practitioner is advised to obtain a lot of food for if there is too little the fire will burn the body instantly (DYŚ 147). Thus, burning the body is not prescribed in this text.

In the *Gorakṣaśataka* increasing the fire of the body is an important aspect of the practice. *Kuṇḍalinī* is awoken as a result of increasing the fire of the body (GŚ 47) and both consumes and dries up. When she has risen to the orb of the moon she dries up the fluid produced from the moon (GŚ 82) and consumes it (GŚ 83). As a result of tasting this the yogi's mind, rather than moving in external sense objects, eats or enjoys the best of what is inside him (GŚ 85). In the culmination of the practice the fire of the body increases whether it has consumed a little or a lot of food and makes all the winds flow in the body like gold in a crucible (GŚ 88).

The *Vivekamārtaṇḍa* describes the standard location of sun, which it glosses as fire, to be in the abdomen and that of the moon to be in the palate (Viv 113). The moon faces downwards and rains nectar while the sun faces upwards and takes it (Viv 114ab). The *Vivekamārtaṇḍa* also discusses drying up the *rasas* of the body. Of note for conceptions of moon, sun and fire in the body, the three channels *idā*, *piṅgalā* and *suṣumṇā* that convey *prāṇa* have moon, sun and fire as their deities (Viv 20). The *Vivekamārtaṇḍa* teaches *khecarīmudrā*, turning the tongue back into the hollow of the skull, and describes the results in relation to *bindu* and *rajas* (Viv 47-57). Immediately upon this explanation of these sexual or generative fluids *mahāmudrā* is taught as occurring when there is purification of the channels, union of sun and moon and drying up of the bodily fluids (*rasas*) (Viv 58). We could infer from the preceding discussion that these fluids refer to *bindu* and *rajas* or they could refer to the seven constituents.

The *Khēcarīvidyā* does not have a model of baking the body but *kuṇḍalinī* has the role of fire that consumes. The yogi should visualise *kuṇḍalinī* like the world-destroying fire devouring the *jīva*, the breath and the senses (KhV 3.35). The yogi drinks the cold, milky *amṛta* that is sweet like sugar-cane juice and then eats the meat that consists of *nāda* and *bindu* (KhV 2.66-68ab). I discuss these passages further in chapter five. Here I simply illustrate the limited conceptual similarity of the *Khēcarīvidyā* with the *Yogabīja*.

Reminiscent of the vedic dichotomy of eater and eaten, the *Śivasamhitā*, as set out in the epigraph to this chapter, notes that the yogi devours death and nothing devours him (*Śivasamhitā* 5.106ab). The *Śivasamhitā* gives the standard description of a blazing fire in the abdomen that digests food and is situated in the middle of the orb of the sun (ŚS 2.33). Here fire is seen to lengthen life, invigorate and nourish, as well as destroy disease (ŚS 2.35). However, there is a combination of the fire as nourishing with the sun consuming. Earlier in this chapter the sun, situated at the base of *meru* and journeying on the right-hand path (ŚS 2.10), consumes the nectar emitted by the moon and the constituents of the body (ŚS 2.11). The yogi's digestion is improved by the practice such that he is not troubled if he eats much or little (ŚS 3.51, cf. DYŚ 79).

The *Haṭhapradīpikā* does not include the baking paradigm and in fact presents the opposite view to desiccating—that of nourishing. The yogi should avoid a liking for harming the body (HP 1.61) and part of the reason that the yogi should eat food that is pure, unctuous and containing dairy is to nourish the bodily constituents (*dhātuprapoṣaṇa*) (HP 1.63). Like the *Dattātreya yogaśāstra* it teaches *viparīta* to increase the digestive fire (HP 3.78) and adds that the practitioner needs a lot of food otherwise the fire will quickly consume the body (HP 3.79). An enigmatic simile is used to describe the effect of breath retention on the body. If, after holding the breath and filling the body with the nectar of the moon, the yogi should open the network of channels at the aperture of the brow that are subject to the powerful fires of

time, his body will become new again like the withered trunk of a tree (HP 3.114). The idea may be that the tree can regenerate after the crown and branches are cut away, but the tree itself does not appear to be burnt in the fire of time. The technique of incinerating the body before recreating it is undertaken by Uddālaka in the *Mokṣopāya* discussed below.

To conclude this section on intra-corpus comparisons I return to the topic of invisibility. Challenging the physicality of the body is the concept of invisibility that occurs in a few of the sources. In the *Yogabīja* the I-maker (*ahaṃkṛti*), the cause of the *ātman* becoming embodied, ultimately disappears and the body disappears (YB 39) (or is destroyed as discussed above). In the *Amṛtasiddhi* the yogi may make his body invisible with his yogic power (AS 34.3). Invisibility (*añjanasiddhi*) is listed among the many other *siddhis* with which chapter one of the *Khecarīvidyā* concludes (KhV 1.76). *Añjana* is a magic ointment or paint and thus the invisibility is an attribute of the observer rather than the body that is observed. The practitioner who applies this ointment to the eyes sees everything in *Matsyendrasaṃhitā paṭala 35*.<sup>69</sup> Another *siddhi* listed at the end of chapter one of the *Khecarīvidyā* is *manaḥśilā*, realgar or red arsenic which in other sources is an ingredient in elixirs that confers invisibility to the wearer.<sup>70</sup> The yogi also becomes invisible (*adrśyatva*) in *Khecarīvidyā* chapter two (KhV 2.16ab). Does this mean that the body of the practitioner becomes so attenuated as to not appear, or is the seer unable to identify an existent body? While the latter could be at play in the *Khecarīvidyā*, the former appears to be the case in the *Amṛtasiddhi* and *Yogabīja*. Birch considers the notion of the body that includes the possibility of invisibility in the *Amṛtasiddhi* and *Yogabīja* to be ‘the logical outcome of achieving embodied immortality and complete transcendence over materiality’ (Birch 2020b:214) and references more recent myths of such *sādhus* living in the Himalayas who only reveal

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<sup>69</sup> *Matsyendrasaṃhitā paṭala 35* (MS A f. 78r–f. 8r) according to Mallinson (2007a:212n274).

<sup>70</sup> See Mallinson (2007a:212n273) for further references to invisibility in the *Amoghapāśakalparāja* and *Kāmasūtra 2.7.46*.

themselves to genuine seekers. This ‘complete transcendence over materiality’ of course includes the matter of the yogi’s own body.

Having charted tropes of baking in the early *haṭha* corpus I turn to striking passages in corpora that are akin.

### ***Mahābhārata: pāka and sovereignty***

The *Mahābhārata* (first to third centuries CE) is a repository of yogic lore. Here yoga, like asceticism (*tapas*), ‘is seen as a glorious power in itself, through which the yogi becomes mightier than the gods and can even burn up the entire universe’ (Mallinson and Singleton 2017:361). Kṛṣṇa, in the well-known *Bhagavadgītā* portion of the *Mahābhārata*, warns against harsh or tamasic asceticism, ‘mindlessly emaciating the aggregate of elements that make up the body and me within the body’ (*Bhagavadgītā* 17.5-6) (Johnson 1994:71). The *Mahābhārata* frequently uses the epithet ‘whose semen is turned upwards’ (*ūrdhvaretas*) to describe ascetics and specifically teaches a channel carrying semen and nourishing the body through other channels: mastery of semen leads to liberation and the yogi’s ‘faults are burned up’ (*Vārṣneyādhyātma* 12.207.24) (Mallinson and Szántó 2021:16n36; Takahashi 2019). *Tapas* is a recurrent feature in the *Mahābhārata* but a term that occurs rarely in the *haṭha* corpus. This exploration of the mediate corpus—beyond the confines of the early *haṭha* texts—limits the discussions of *tapas* to focus on passages on baking. After an examination of such a passage in the *Mahābhārata* we turn to the *Mānavadharmasāstra*, *Mokṣopāya* and *Aparokṣānubhūti*.

The *Mahābhārata* refers to baking the body with terminology (*śarīrapakti*) close to that of the *Yogabīja*’s. The *Yogabīja*’s passage may be foreshadowed in these passages:

Actions bake the body, but knowledge is the highest goal. When impurity has been baked with the help of vomiting, a knowledge of [its] taste does not remain. Therefore kindness, patience, peace, non-harm, truth, honesty, unmaliciousness, humility,

modesty, endurance and equanimity—these are the roads that lead to *brahman*. By means of these, one attains that which is highest. (*Mahābhārata* 12.262.36-38)<sup>71</sup>

The term *kaṣāya* is here taken as ‘impurity’ as it is used in another instance in the same section of the *Mahābhārata* (*Mahābhārata* 12.237.002-12.237.005).<sup>72</sup> *Kaṣāya* may also be an astringent medicine.<sup>73</sup> Sharma discusses the cooking of *kaṣāya* in relation to a similar but unreferenced ‘*smṛti*’ passage: ‘There is definite talk of cooking or boiling (*paktiḥ*, *pakve*). What is cooked is the stuff of impurity or *kaṣāya*; one that should be particularly included is what prevails in *Āyurveda* (medical treatise), namely a decoction brewed by boiling certain herbs with water. There are any number of *kaṣāyas*. The same process is used in ritual. What is implied is sacralizing actions’ (Sharma 2000:20). Yoga can certainly be understood as ‘sacralizing actions’.

As noted, the trope of *tapas* is extensive within the *Mahābhārata* and it cannot be detailed here. Suffice to mention the intimate connection between emotion and *tapas*, in order to link the discussion to affect—and this aspect of *pāka* in the *haṭha* corpus. *Tapas* is destroyed by emotion. There are innumerable angry ascetics in the *Mahābhārata* despite the adage ‘anger destroys penance’ (*Mahābhārata* 1.38.8) as analysed by Dhand at length (such as 2008:61 and throughout). A primary cause of the generation and accumulation of *tapas* is restraint of sexual desire (Dhand 2008:76). As Knipe notes, ‘*Tapas* and *kāma* [desire] cooperate in keeping the created world together; erotic desire poses the strongest threat to ascetic world-transcendence’ (2005:8998). Sex is correspondingly the simplest means to sabotage *tapas*. The physical loss of fluid represents the diminution of ascetic energy (*Śantiparvan* 12.207.22,

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<sup>71</sup> *Mahābhārata* 12262036 *kapila uvāca*  
12262036a *śarīrapaktiḥ karmāṇi jñānaṃ tu paramā gatiḥ |*  
12262036c *pakve kaṣāye vamanai rasajñāne na tiṣṭhati ||*  
12262037a *ānṛśaṃsyam kṣamā śāntir ahiṃsā satyam ārjavam |*  
12262037c *adroho nābhimānaś ca hrīś titikṣā śamas tathā ||*  
12262038a *panthāno brahmaṇas tv ete etaiḥ prāpnoti yat param |*

<sup>72</sup> Thanks to Wojtczak for discussing this passage and sharing this reference, 26 October 2023.

<sup>73</sup> *Kaṣāyas* in Jainism are ‘passions’, that when present cause *karma* (understood as subtle matter) to be bound to the soul (Wiley 2002:90).



12.277.28) (Dhand 2008:78). But often the *haṭha* sources are not bound by this dictum: rather, baking the body is purifying by destroying faults and undoing the restraining impact of *karma*, and then in some cases the yogi may ‘do as he please’, including experience *kāma*. If baking the body is predicated on an earlier tapasic ascetic model it also inherits ideas of desire—and gestation, discussed below.

Before leaving the *Mahābhārata* I draw a connection between immolation and asceticism. Some ascetics end their lives in forest fires, such as Dhṛtarāṣṭra, Gāndhārī and Kuntī. This manner of death burns off sin (Hill 2001:49) similar to the way in which *tapas* burns through the *karma* that keeps one captive in *saṃsāra* (Dhand 2008:76). The story of the pigeons and hunter brings together *tapas* and immolation. The pigeon immolates himself on the advice of his wife to provide a meal for the hunter as his guest (*Mahābhārata* 12.142.40). Upon this action he attains heaven. The fowler is filled with remorse and resolves to change his way of life in fear of the sin he has accrued as a hunter (*Mahābhārata* 12.143.5). The hunter performs many ascetic practices which are considered to generate *tapas*. He pledges to give up his life, forsake his children and wife, avoid all food and dry his body up as if it were a puddle in summer (*Mahābhārata* 12.145.1). He immolates himself in a forest fire and all his sins are destroyed, attaining the most supreme perfection (*Mahābhārata* 12.145.10). The hen pigeon also immolates herself, with resonances with *satī* as ‘an amalgam of two distinct concepts: religious self-immolation, and the burning of widows at their husbands’ pyres’ (Matilal 2002:154).

### ***Mānavadharmasāstra***

Linking to the injury—and self-injury discussed in the *Mahābhārata*—the *Mānavadharmasāstra* (second to third century CE) teaches breath control to cleanse the ascetic of unwittingly injuring creatures (*Mānavadharmasāstra* 6.69-72). Breath control is

prescribed for burning away the faults of the organs: ‘As the impurities of metallic ores are burnt away when they are blasted in a furnace, so the faults of the organs are burnt away by suppressing the breath’ (*Mānavadharmasāstra* 6.71) (Olivelle 2004/2009:103). O’Brien-Kop draws on this example from the *Mānavadharmasāstra* in her discussion of the destruction of the germinating power of the seed by burning it in her study of *Pātañjalayoga* and Buddhism (2021). She notes that fire is necessary to remove the germinating impulse of the seed and that the image of heat or fire in the body itself is linked to *tapas*, but also to the medical context of fever, as a potentially healing force (2021:206). She notes that while *kleśas* are the faults that are burnt in the *Pātañjalayogasāstra*, in Brahmanism the related term *doṣa* is that which can be remedied by a counterstate. She points to *Mānavadharmasāstra* 6.72 as yogic meditation as counterstates, where the yogi ‘should burn away his faults by suppressing his breath’ (Olivelle 2005:152) and notes:

Being linked to defects of the body and their remedies, this metaphor maps qualities from the medical domain. Interestingly, however, the counterstate for eliminating the *doṣas* in the *Mānavadharmasāstra* is not a remedy or antidote but rather the application of intense heat to destroy impurity. This image of intense heat to remove a problematic factor in the self is... the fire necessary to remove the germinating impulse of the seed. (O’Brien-Kop 2021:205n5)

The possible genealogy of baking the body as derived from agricultural metaphors of burning out the generative power of seeds (see O’Brien-Kop 2017, 2021) is intriguingly suggested by the title of the *Yogabīja* itself—‘the seed of yoga’.

### ***Mokṣopāya***

In a theatrical account in the *Mokṣopāya* 5.54.3-12 Uddālaka both self-incinerates and the pale ash of his bones are observed as if asleep on a bed of camphor (Cohen 2020). Cohen dates the text to 950 CE as the earliest known manuscript of the text that later became known as the *Yogavāsīṣṭha*. Cohen argues that though the heavily redacted eleventh- to fourteenth-

century *Yogavāsiṣṭha* has been commonly associated with *advaita vedānta*, the *Mokṣopāya* is ‘very clearly not’ a vedāntic text (2020:1).<sup>74</sup> As Cohen glosses, ‘While his body was devoid of *prāṇa*, the fire of Uddālaka’s heart (*hr̥dayāgniḥ*) 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)’ (Cohen, 2020:3). Thus, we have an impure body immolated as if in a forest fire. The reference to the tree is not the same as the elliptical reference in the *Haṭhapradīpikā*, as there the fire burnt the network of *nāḍīs* rather than the tree. As in the *Yogabīja*, the image of camphor is deployed: ‘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)’ (Cohen 2020:4). The story re-occurs in *Yogavāsiṣṭha* 8-16. This episode brings together the burning of the body with *kuṇḍalinī*: *kuṇḍalinī* re-animates Uddālaka’s body, as I discuss in chapter five.

The connections between this episode and the *Yogabīja*’s is the baking of the body (delivered with far more theatrical narrative in the *Mokṣopāya* but consistent across the sources in the basic tenets), and the description of the body as being like burnt camphor in space. In both texts *kuṇḍalinī* has an important role but not in the precise instance of the burning or baking of the body. More broadly the *Mokṣopāya*’s assertion that this is not forceful yoga, on the basis that that brings suffering (*Mokṣopāya* 5.54.8, *Yogavāsiṣṭha* 16) is of note to scholarly work on the genealogy and meaning of the term *haṭha* yoga.

Cohen suggests that we could read the mention of *kuṇḍalinī* along with Nārāyaṇa in Uddālaka’s story as evidence of early merging, or at the very least a co-existence, of the two historical streams outlined by Mallinson. These are the Nāth/Siddha/Śākta (tantra) traditions

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<sup>74</sup> Page numbers are those of the preprint pdf.

(independently and as a blended unit) and the ancient non-Vedic ascetic tradition or supra-vedic *muni/ṛṣi tapasyā* tradition. The tantric traditions graft their *kuṇḍalinī*-oriented *laya* yoga of the Siddha tradition onto the *bindudhāraṇa*-oriented *haṭha* yoga of the ascetic tradition to create the *haṭha* synthesis that can be seen in texts that post-date the *Haṭhapradīpikā* (Mallinson 2016:121; Cohen 2020:5). Cohen argues that the *Mokṣopāya*, nuancing Mallinson, is evidence of an early merging of ascetic and Siddha traditions.

### ***Aparokṣānubhūti***

The vedāntic *Aparokṣānubhūti* culminates in an important passage on cooking. Slatoff (2022) dates it to the late fifteenth to mid-sixteenth century. Birch concurs that the *Aparokṣānubhūti* is unlikely to predate the fourteenth century and that the final two verses which mention baking could have been appended to the text (Birch 2020b:454n10, 2011:540n98-100). However, they are included in all the commentaries (Slatoff 2022:245-252).<sup>75</sup>

The *Aparokṣānubhūti* describes a fifteen-part system it calls *rāja* yoga, but prescribes *haṭha* yoga for those whose impurities (*kaṣāyas*) are only partially cooked (*kiṃcitpakva*) (*Aparokṣānubhūti* 143).<sup>76</sup> In explaining this verse, the *Dīpikā* comments, ‘Of whom the afflictions, beginning with attraction, have been partly, or a little, cooked, i.e., consumed by fire, this yoga, which is taught in the Upaniṣads, is joined with *haṭhayoga*, i.e., with the well-known *aṣṭāṅgayoga*, which is taught by the followers of Patañjali’ (*Dīpikā* 143)<sup>77</sup> (Slatoff 2022:246). The *Dīpikā* introduces the final verse as summarising the entire work and indicating for whom *rāja* yoga is useful (*Dīpikā* 144).<sup>78</sup> The *Aparokṣānubhūti* states, ‘And for those whose mind is completely cooked, this [*rājayoga*], alone, bestows attainment. For all

<sup>75</sup> Thanks to Slatoff for sharing a section of the thesis, 18 April 2022.

<sup>76</sup> *Aparokṣānubhūti* 143 *ebhir aṅgaiḥ samāyukto rājayoga udāhṛtaḥ | kiṃcitpakvakaṣāyāṇām haṭhayogena samyutaḥ ||*

<sup>77</sup> *Dīpikā* 143 *haṭhayogena pātanjaloktena prasiddhenāṣṭāṅgayogena samyuto ‘yaṃ vedāntokto yoga ||*

<sup>78</sup> *Dīpikā* 144 *ayaṃ rājayoga eva keṣām yogya ity ākāṃkṣāyām sarvagramthārtham upasaṃharan ||*

those who are devoted to the teacher and the deity, it is easy to attain, at once’

(*Aparokṣānubhūti* 144)<sup>79</sup> (Slatoff 2022:163). The *Dīpikā* specifies that those who are completely cooked are free from the impurities of attraction and so forth (*Dīpikā* 144)<sup>80</sup> (Slatoff 2022:248).

The *Aparokṣānubhūti*, therefore, links both the *Mahābhārata* passage and the *Yogabīja*. Slatoff reflects on the incorporation and inversion by the *Aparokṣānubhūti* of the *Yogabīja*, where baking should be undertaken by all: ‘This is the inverse of what we have seen in the *Aparokṣānubhūti*, where it is only the inferior student who needs these extra methods. By including a reference to this, the *Aparokṣānubhūti* is responding to the methods in vogue at the time, finding a way to include all practitioners in its teachings’ (Slatoff 2022:251). Thus, it includes and subverts the *haṭha* yogic methods into its domain on the way to advaitic realization (Slatoff).<sup>81</sup> The overriding concern of the *Aparokṣānubhūti* is the misidentification of the self with the body, using classic *vedānta* tropes of the superimposition of a snake on a rope or silver on mother of pearl (*Aparokṣānubhūti* 70).<sup>82</sup> Finally, the text uses the image of a dried up tree, as we have seen in the *Haṭhapradīpikā* and *Mokṣopāya*, in part to critique *haṭha* yoga: ‘Equilibrium of the limbs of the body should be known, as being absorbed in the constant *brahman*. If there is not this, there is no equilibrium, it would be just straightening [of the body], like a dried-up tree’ (*Aparokṣānubhūti* 115)<sup>83</sup> (Slatoff 2018:5).

### ***Tapas in the longue durée: gestative or terminative?***

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<sup>79</sup> *Aparokṣānubhūti* 144 *paripakvaṃ mano yeṣāṃ kevalo ’yaṃ ca siddhidah | gurudaivatabhaktānāṃ sarveṣāṃ sulabho javāt ||*

<sup>80</sup> *Dīpikā* 144 *yeṣāṃ manaḥ paripakvaṃ rāgādimalarahitam iti |*

<sup>81</sup> Personal communication, 18 April 2022.

<sup>82</sup> *Aparokṣānubhūti* 70 *sarpātvena yathā rajjū rajatatvena śuktikā | vinirñītā vimūḍheṇa dehatvena tathātmatā ||*

<sup>83</sup> *Aparokṣānubhūti* 115 *aṅgānāṃ samatām vidyāt same brahmaṇi līnatām | no cennaiva samānatvam rjutvaṃ śuṣka-vṛkṣavat ||*

*Pāka* in the *haṭha* corpus and the mediate corpus refers to heating the body by using the breath to increase the abdominal fire which burns out or digests impurities. The digestion of impurities has an alchemical sense of assimilating impurities. *Tapas*, ‘ascetic power’ (Mallinson and Singleton 2017:177), is not a key term for describing the processes of the early *haṭha* corpus. *Tapas* occurs as a preparatory personal restraint in the early *haṭha* corpus and is part of the ascetic milieu in which the corpus is situated.<sup>84</sup> In the *Haṭhapradīpikā kuṇḍalinī* is described as an ascetic (*tapasvinī*) (HP 3.108), and more broadly across the corpus *kuṇḍalinī* is heated (*tapta*) as we examine in chapter five. *Haṭha* techniques do not harm the body like physical methods of *tapasyā* such as sitting amid five fires, keeping the arms above the head and standing on one leg for twelve years and Birch suggests, ‘The fact that *Haṭha*- and *Rājayoga* texts do not integrate or even mention the methods of *tapasyā* suggests that their authors were unwilling to conflate the two’ (Birch 2020b:234).

Though *tapas* was not a key analytic for the *haṭha* corpus the long history of *tapas* nonetheless bears on baking as a paradigm derived from asceticism. Knipe defines *tapas*:

The Sanskrit term *tapas*, from *tap* (“heat”), was in ancient India an expression of cosmic energy residing in heat, fervor, and ardor. Through anthropocosmic correspondences established in early Vedic sacrificial traditions *tapas* became one of the key concepts of South Asian religions and the accepted term in Sanskrit and other Indic languages for ascetic power, especially a severely disciplined self-mortification that produces both personal and cosmic results. (Knipe 2005:8997)

It is the association of ascetic heat with desire, and as Knipe terms the ‘anthropocosmic correspondences’ that this section focuses on. This section seeks not to trace an intertextual genealogy of *tapas* in the *haṭha* corpus—though important work is done in this regard by

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<sup>84</sup> *Tapas* is a personal restraint (*niyama*) in the *Vasiṣṭhasaṃhitā* (VS 1.53) of which eating quantities of food in accordance with the lunar cycle (*kṛcchracāndrāyaṇa*) is the best (1.54), as well as a *niyama* in some recensions of the *Haṭhapradīpikā* that adopt readings from the *Vasiṣṭhasaṃhitā* or the *Śāradatilakatantra* 25.7-8 and insert them after *Haṭhapradīpikā* 1.16 of the critical edition (<http://www.hathapradipika.online/> accessed 25 February 2024). The *Vivekamārtaṇḍa* describes the *ajapā* mantra as an austerity (*tapas*) (VM 30). There is a trope of residing in ascetic groves (*tapovana*) (VS 1.3, 2.57) and much use of the epithet ‘rich in austerities’ (*tapodhana*) in the *Vasiṣṭhasaṃhitā* (VS 1.33, 3.57, 4.54, 4.67). The *Śivasāṃhitā* lists *tapas* as one of many methods (ŚS 1.4, 3.41). See Birch (2013:110ff).

Birch (2011) and ethnographically by Bevilacqua (2017)—but rather to draw on the history of *tapas* to illuminate questions of procreation and gestative heat, and celibacy and the role of desire, that may inform the practice of baking the body.

### ***Gestative heat in the Vedas***

Cooking the body and concomitantly ‘cooking the world’ as Malamoud names his monograph (1996) has a long history predating the *haṭha* corpus by at least a thousand years and continues to the present day. *Tapas* has a rich heritage in the Vedas. In the *Yajurveda* recensions, the *Atharvaveda* and the *Brāhmaṇas*, ‘the human body becomes a metaphor of sacrificial fire and *tapas* is simultaneously the means to and the experience of transformation’ (Knipe 2005:8998). Thus, ‘the difference between the sacrifice and the *tapasvin* was, in the beginning, a difference of degree’ (Eliade 1954:108) as the sacrifice is assimilated within the individual through ‘ritual interiorization’ (Eliade 1954:111). In its earliest ascetic models *tapas* is associated with both the heat of desire and the heated process of gestation. Knipe notes that perhaps the most influential ṛgvedic speculations on *tapas* occur in such late cosmogonic hymns as 10.129 and 10.190, and here ‘*tapas*, existing prior to both divine and human beings, is linked in the procreative process with primordial desire (*kāma*), mind, order, and truth...’ (2005:8997-8998). Knipe goes on to describe how ascetic techniques replicate, even replace, sacrificial technique: ‘Both are performances on an exhaustive, even painful scale: procreative on a sexual model, yet requiring chastity... and burning away, by inner heat, those impurities that are hindrances to transcendent, immutable being’ (2005:8998). As well as the theme of burning impurities, Knipe further points out the association of *tapas* with world- and self-conquest (2005:8998), linking to the theme of sovereignty that permeates the *haṭha* conception of controlling the cosmos as well as the body. Yet Knipe also notes how,

throughout Indian literature from the Upaniṣads onwards, *tapas* and *kāma* cooperate in keeping the created worlds together.

Kaelber's study of asceticism and initiation in vedic India (1989) is replete with procreative and gestative tropes of desire and celibacy, of embryos and fluids and milk, of sex, orgasm, pregnant ascetics, prostitutes—rainfall and fertility, seed, semen and sweat. Kaelber writes of two symbols of transformation, the gynaecological and obstetrical: 'The most conspicuous symbols here are the womb, the embryo, and birth' (1989:4). His discussion of ontology and epistemology in relation to vedic *tapas* helps to think through the ontology, and affect, of the body. Kaelber argues:

*Tapas*, however, as meditative knowledge is not simply a means of apprehending reality; it is an inherent quality of ultimate reality itself. In *tapas* epistemology joins ontology. When *tapas* as ontological "ground" is apprehended through *tapas* as meditative power, it is *tapas* which knows itself through *tapas*. In this context we may speak of ascetic celebration and, relatedly, interpret *tapas* as an ecstatic heat, as a heat of rapture. (1989:146)

Kaelber simultaneously appreciates the ontological and epistemological domains of *tapas* and embodied affect—the heat of rapture. The ontological impact of *tapas* in the ground of the body is clearly at play in the *Yogabīja*. Just as important is the ecstasy of heat, clearly associated with the experience of yoga, and the reason that practitioners may opt to retain their bodies.

Thus, the ascetic model of the body presupposes a procreative paradigm. Yet there may be an early androgynous vein to this, as Doniger explores in terms of unilateral procreation (Doniger 1980:25). The vedic model of *tapas* is procreative but not confined to a biophysical or heterosexual paradigm. This is a key comparison to draw with the *haṭha* conceptions of conception that underpin the work of the next two chapters. Spiritual procreation deploys and resists the polarities of gender.



The broad coordinates of *tapas* thus map directly onto the concerns of this study. Now to turn more closely to examine vedic conceptions of cooking through the important work of Malamoud, for whom the Vedas cook the world as the macrocosmic correlate of cooking the body (1996:48). The key term is the same as we find in the *Yogabīja*: '*pakti*, a verbal noun derived from the root *PAC*. has 'cooking' for its primary meaning, but can also be employed figuratively to mean 'maturation', 'perfecting', and even 'dignity, good reputation' (1996:24). Malamoud takes *lokapakti* as 'cooking the world', a duty of the *brahmin*:

In *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* 11.5.7.1 we read: 'Here now is the praise of the personal recitation of the Veda. The personal recitation and learning are sources of pleasure for the brahmin. He acquires presence of mind, becomes independent, and acquires wealth day after day. He sleeps well. He is his own best physician. To him belong mastery of the senses, the power to find joy in a single object, the development of intelligence, glory and cooking the world. As this intelligence grows, four duties come to incumb upon the brahmin: a brahmanic origin, behaviour consonant with his status, glory, and cooking the world. And as it cooks, the world protects the brahmin through the fulfilment of its four duties towards him: respect, generosity, non-oppression, and immunity. (Malamoud 1996:23)

Malamoud sees this theme of cooking, both actual and metaphorical, displayed in the brahmanical doctrine of sacrifice (1996:27). We have deployed the concept of homology (*bandhu*) specifically in relation to the body and the cosmos. Malamoud specifies his understanding of the term:

From a theological standpoint, the essential part of the *brāhmaṇa* is in fact the *bandhu*, the 'bond'—not in the sense intended by Winternitz (1905:164), of a bond between the act and its accompanying prayer, but rather as Oldenberg (1919:4) correctly saw it, between act and prayer as an all-encompassing whole, and the forces that the rite sets in motion. (1996:30)

Malamoud defines *tapas* in relation to desire (*kāma*) drawing from Prajāpati's desire to become manifold: 'the word *tapas* designates, in its most primal sense, that heat born of *kāma* and in which *kāma* must of necessity culminate in order to trigger *karman*, that activity *par excellence* which is nothing other than the sacrifice' (1996:34). I see the continuing thread of

*kāma* as relevant to the treatment of *pāka* in the *haṭha* corpus—the primary function of *pāka* is to mobilise *kāma* rather than to renounce or eradicate it, though the context of the early *haṭha* corpus is also sensitive to renunciatory logics. Further, Malamoud points out the equation of cooking with gestation: ‘If it is true that gestation is identified with the cooking process, it is also true... that cooking is reciprocally described as an instance of gestation’—thus the clay that is cooked by placing it in the hole in the ground is the embryo and the oven the womb (*Śatapathabhrāmaṇa* 6.5.4.6) (Malamoud 1996:42). We see the sacrificer (and his wife)<sup>85</sup> as the embryo that is reborn through the consecration (*dīkṣā*) which in its most elaborate form simulates a period of gestation: ‘the man who undergoes it adopts the posture of a foetus; the hut in which he is enclosed, in darkness and silence, is like a womb to him’ (1996:44).<sup>86</sup> Malamoud follows Mayrhofer (1957) in tracing the etymology of *dīkṣā* from *√dah*, burn and sees the maturation of the sacrificial foetus as not merely the result of an incineration but a cooking process, citing *Śatapathabhrāmaṇa* 3.1.3.28, ‘The womb of the sacrifice is, in truth, the fire, and the *dīkṣita* [the man who undergoes *dīkṣā*] is the embryo’ (Malamoud 1996:45). And not only in gestation but also in immolation, the body of the sacrificer is ‘[c]ooked in the sense that it constitutes an offering on the funeral pyre’ (1996:44)—recalling *pāka* as the ashes of a burnt corpse and the *Mokṣopāya*’s bed of camphor. The funerary arrangement for the renunciant differs from the sacrificer as he has already cooked himself and is rather buried (1996:48).

Malamoud concludes his essay on ‘Cooking the world’ with the observation that is borrowed as epigraph for this chapter. The total renunciant (*saṃnyāsin*) cannot escape the sacrifice but reorients, reverses and perhaps subverts the relational orientation established by it. When the sacrificial fires are extinguished at the ritual marking the entry into renunciation:

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<sup>85</sup> See Jamison (1996) for the role of the sacrificed / sacrificer’s wife.

<sup>86</sup> See Heesterman (1957) and Proferes (2007:114) for the motif of sacrificial gestation informing the structure of the rite of royal consecration.

One's fires are not abolished for all this: they are rather internalized, inhaled; they are made to 'mount back' into oneself (*samāropaṇa*), such that the renouncer's own person thenceforth becomes at once the seat of, and the raw material for, a burning up, a permanent oblation, offered upon that internal flame that is the Veda. We can see that the renouncer settles down at the *dīkṣā* stage of sacrifice: his non-sacrifice is an endless *dīkṣā*. (Malamoud 1996:47)

Thus, the renunciants begin by cooking themselves (1996:48).

### ***Terminative heat in Pātañjalayoga and Buddhism***

The vedic material clearly demonstrates cooking to be bodily and gestative. In the final discussion of this chapter I turn to considering the extent to which cooking can be considered terminative heat. Is terminative heat an alternative to generative heat, or can these modalities both inform the baking paradigm? As far as I am aware there are no passages in the early *haṭha* corpus where seed (*bīja*) is specifically referred to as being burnt. The constituents (*dhātus*) are burnt, and seed as semen (*retas*) and *rajas* are the most refined of the *dhātus*. In this sense semen and *rajas* are burnt in the fire of yoga. There is no indication of the agrarian metaphor, in which seeds are burnt so that they do not sprout again. I wonder whether we see in the *haṭha* corpus the burning of seed so that procreation does not occur again. Thus, rather than a non-propagative, agrarian paradigm of 'no-seed', do we have here a non-procreative concept of embryology and non-conception?

I turn to the *Pātañjalayogaśāstra* and Buddhist sources to ground this discussion of terminative heat and first introduce the use of *tapas* in the *Pātañjalayogaśāstra*. The *bhāṣya* commentary tells us that yoga cannot be successful for those who do not practise *tapas* (Mallinson and Singleton 2017:xxxvn22) and the term *tapas* recurs within the root text. In *Pātañjalayogaśāstra* 2.1 *tapas* is a component of *kriyāyoga* along with study (*svādhyāya*) and homage (*īśvarapraṇidhāna*). In *Pātañjalayogaśāstra* 2.32 *tapas* is one of the five observances (*niyamas*) along with cleanliness (*śauca*), contentment (*santoṣa*) and again study and homage. The results of *tapas* are given as perfection of the body (*kāya*) and senses as a result of the

removal of impurities (*aśuddhikṣaya*) (*Pātañjalayogaśāstra* 2.43). The final reference to *tapas* notes that it is a cause of attainments (*siddhis*) alongside birth, medicine, mantra and *samādhi* (*Pātañjalayogaśāstra* 4.1). We saw in the *haṭha* corpus *tapas* infrequently referenced as a *niyama*, and in the mediate textual discussion that baking removes impurities (*kaṣāya*).

O'Brien-Kop has a detailed analysis of eliminating the afflictions (*kleśas*) in the *Pātañjalayogaśāstra* and *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* that turns largely on the metaphor of burning seeds so that they do not sprout again (O'Brien-Kop 2021:49-74). O'Brien-Kop demonstrates the importance of examining the *Pātañjalayogaśāstra* within a Buddhist context (O'Brien-Kop 2021, 2020, 2017). She notes that *karma* and affliction (*kleśa*) emerge from pain or heat, and doubly, are burnt out by pain and heat (O'Brien-Kop 2021:73). Thus, heat characterises the original painful condition and is an attribute of the cure. This is explained in the *Aṅguttara Nikāya*:

It is monks, as with seeds that are undamaged, not rotten, unspoiled by wind and sun, capable of sprouting and well embedded: if a man were to burn them in fire and reduce them to ashes, then winnow the ashes in a strong wind or let them be carried away by a swiftly flowing stream, then those seeds would have been radically destroyed, fully eliminated, made unable to sprout and would not be liable to arise in the future. Similarly, it is, monks with actions done in non-greed, non-hatred and non-delusion. Once greed, hatred and delusion have vanished, these actions are thus abandoned, cut off at the root, made barren like palm-tree stumps, obliterated so that they are no more subject to arise in the future. (*Aṅguttara Nikāya* 1.135; Nyanoponika and Bodhi, 1999: 50) (O'Brien-Kop 2021:39)

The *Yogasūtra* gives the five afflictions as ignorance/nescience, egoity, attachment, animosity and clinging to life (YS 2.3)<sup>87</sup> and a threefold formula of greed, anger and delusion (YS 2.34).<sup>88</sup> O'Brien-Kop describes how in the fivefold scheme the afflictions (*kleśas*) are explained with the idea of plant propagation:

[N]escience is a field (*kṣetra*), which is the propagative ground (*prasavabhūmi*) of the other four afflictions. In total, there are five states in which the afflictions may exist,

<sup>87</sup> *Yogasūtra* 2.3 *avidyāsmītārāgadveṣābhīniveśāḥ kleśāḥ*

<sup>88</sup> *Yogasūtra* 2.34 *lobhakrodhamoha*

and they are all explained via the idea of plant propagation: (1) dormant (*prasupta*), (2) attenuated (*tanu*), (3) cut (*vicchinna*), (4) sustained (*udāra*) and (5) burnt (*dagdha*), the last of which is the ideal state (*Pātañjalayogaśāstra* 2.4). (O'Brien-Kop 2021:58)

This is clearly more agrarian than biophysical, though success in yoga will result in freedom from rebirth. I note that the language of propagation used by Patañjali and the Buddhist Sautrāntikas in the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* of the seed's dormancy (*prasupta*) and awakened (*prabodha*) (O'Brien-Kop 2021:65) is similar to that used in relation to the sleeping and awakening of *kuṇḍalinī* such as *supta*, *prasupta* and *prabodha* (see chapter five). In some of the earliest *śaiva* tantras *kuṇḍalinī* is a sprout in the heart or an awn of rice which resonates with the language of sprouting seeds in the *Pātañjalayogaśāstra*. However, there is no reference to *kuṇḍalinī* in the *Pātañjalayogaśāstra* and the uses of the term *śakti* are 'power to' rather than an embodied divinity. I leave this topic here and return to *kuṇḍalinī* as the substantive topic of chapters five and six.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter has analysed the paradigm of baking the body. The *Yogabīja* gives us the most extensive account in the *haṭha* corpus and as such has been set out in greatest detail. This description was interrogated particularly with regard to the conception of the body, from raw to cooked, and the implications for the materiality of the body. The description of the body is replete with paradox—both dead and alive, more *jaḍa* than *jaḍa*—but rather than the sources' confusion this points to the body being beyond the bounds of *saṃsāra*, where conventional description gives way to gestures to ultimate reality (to lean on a two-levels-of-truth analysis). I also drew on examples of the language of consumption as this connects a visceral imagery of eating the body or aspects of the body with accounts of *kuṇḍalinī* and made a conceptual

link between digestion and sex. Here I follow the feminist scholar of science Donna Haraway in her suggestion that species development was marked more by indigestion than sex.<sup>89</sup>

The comparison of the *Yogabīja* within the early *haṭha* corpus demonstrates that the *Yogabīja* has by far the most extensive discussion of baking and bears close similarities with the *Amṛtasiddhi* and fleeting reference to consuming the elements of the body elsewhere. More standard than baking the body is the account of the abdominal fire becoming hot and awakening *kuṇḍalinī* or melting the fluids of the moon in the head. This is discussed in the *Vivekamārtaṇḍa*, above, and repeated in the *Amṛtasiddhi*, where fire is in the abdomen as the digester of food and the moon is in the head; the sun consumes the nectar of the moon melted by fire (AS 3.1, 4.3, 5.1-4).

Thus, the *Amṛtasiddhi*'s and *Yogabīja*'s accounts are somewhat outlier to the rest of the corpus. However, the model of baking the body to remove impurities can clearly be traced anterior and posterior to the *Yogabīja* in the *Mahābhārata*, *Mānavadharmasāstra* and *Aparokṣānubhūti*. The *Mokṣopāya* dramatizes an account of burning the body that brings in key aspects including the role of breath and a role for *kuṇḍalinī* in re-animating the body. Though the baking paradigm thus diminishes the materiality of the body this text demonstrates this is not the end of the body or bodiless liberation for *kuṇḍalinī* re-animates it, bringing Uddālaka back to life.

Finally, the foray into the *longue durée* demonstrated that *tapas* in vedic sources sets a precedent for baking the body as predicated upon desire and its transformation, and a heated, gestative model whereby the body is the embryo that is baked and reborn. However, the terminative heat of the *Pātañjalayogasāstra* and Buddhism as agrarian metaphor is not seen in the *haṭha* sources—any similarity to the baking paradigm is simply burning out impurities.

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<sup>89</sup> Comment made during a public lecture 25 April 2017 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GrYA7sMQaBQ> accessed 20 December 2021) to launch *Staying with the Trouble* (2016).

Though there is anecdotal concern in Modern Postural Yoga that heating the body through physical practice can contribute to miscarriage<sup>90</sup> there is no suggestion in the early *haṭha* sources that cooking destroys a samsāric or biomedical embryo. Even so the trope of non-conception in terms of samsāric procreation is a core model in the *haṭha* corpus. The way in which the *haṭha* corpus understands embryology and inverts this process is taken up in the next two chapters. In fact, when we read the *Yogabīja* as a continuous thread rather than disjointed through thematic analysis, hard upon the heels of one another, in fact intermingled, come the discussions of *pāka*, *rajas*, and *kuṇḍalinī*. *Rajas*, the topic of the next chapter, is associated with the sun from the *Amṛtasiddhi* (7.12) onwards, but not necessarily with heat while *bindu* is associated with the moon and the cool elixir of *soma*. If baking burns out impurity, note that menstruation in the *Mahābhārata* cleanses women of ‘sin’ (*Śāntiparvan* 12.36.27) (Hill 1988:74). As well as the association between *rajas* and heat, *kuṇḍalinī* too is both heated and characterised as hot. The association between *kuṇḍalinī* and heat is set out in chapter five.

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<sup>90</sup> See Smallcombe et al (2021) for research on thermoregulation during pregnancy but not in the context of yoga.

## Chapter Three

# *Tracing blood*

*Bindu* is of two kinds: white and red. White is *bindu* and red is the great *rajas*. Looking like flowing coral, *rajas* is in the *yoni* and *bindu* is in the moon. Making the two into one is very difficult. *Bindu* is *śiva*, *rajas* is *śakti*. *Bindu* is the moon, *rajas* is the sun. Only by joining them both is the highest state achieved.

*Vivekamārtaṇḍa* 54-56

Chapter one set out the materiality of the body and principles of depletion and micro-macrocosmic identity. Chapter two analysed baking and attenuation of materiality. Chapter five and six explore *kuṇḍalinī* as affect and a material reversal of cosmogony. The nature of *rajas* and its preservation are the subjects of this and the next chapter. To set up the discussion and fill a void in the literature, here the focus is *rajas*. *Rajas*, menstrual blood or female sexual fluid, is a key and understudied aspect of bodies in *haṭha* yoga. The concept of *rajas* is deployed broadly in medical, soteriological, ritual and symbolically transgressive contexts, and is key to the process of yoga and understanding of the body for some of the *haṭha* sources. So what is *rajas*?<sup>91</sup>

I use the example of the *Amṛtasiddhi* to indicate the role of *rajas* in *haṭha* yoga. The *Amṛtasiddhi* teaches a practice of raising *rajas* for a male practitioner in a celibate context (Mallinson and Szántó 2022:4,16,17; Mallinson 2018:201). This complicates an otherwise simple gendered binary of *rajas* as menses and sexual fluid in women and *bindu* as semen in men. *Rajas* occurs within the micro-macrocosmically homologised world and body that is based on a depletion, or gravitational, paradigm of death: downward energetic flow is the

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<sup>91</sup> I published early research findings on this topic (Westoby 2021) and have since substantially developed that material in this and the next chapter.



‘natural’ order that results in repeated birth and death (*saṃsāra*). The falling down of *bindu* from its location in the head leads to death, the raising upwards or preservation of *bindu* leads to life and immortality. On the basis of this principle the practices of yoga either stop the fluids from falling or raise the fluids that would otherwise fall, and at times this is expressed within an embryological discourse which the practitioner is to reverse. The internalisation of real-world physiological reproduction I have termed ‘spiritual embryology’. Drawn from an embryological discourse, an intriguing question is how *rajas* is understood in the *haṭha* corpus, particularly where, as in the *Amṛtasiddhi*, it is an attribute of male bodies? I will deepen the analysis of *rajas* in the *Amṛtasiddhi* later in this chapter.

To explore the nature of *rajas* I define the term, situate the *haṭha* understanding in relation to *āyurveda*, analyse the relationship between *rajas* as menses and *rajas* as quality (*guṇa*) and consider the relation between *rajas* and *rāja*. I analyse key passages in the *Amṛtasiddhi*, *Dattātreyaśāstra* and *Haṭhapradīpikā* and additional sources to supplement these passages. I conclude with reflections on the impact of this material for our understanding of *rajas* as bodily substance. Based on this material I argue that the approach to menstrual blood as taboo and abject, evident in tantric precursors and recent controversies,<sup>92</sup> if read across to the *haṭha* sources, obscures a prosaic approach to menses and sex in the *haṭha* corpus. Because *rajas* exists in men, the nature of *rajas* has implications for the sexed nature of bodies. If we can read behind the sources’ obvious misogyny and orientation to a male audience, the nature of *rajas* suggests a single-sex model of the body. A comparison of *rajas* with the *pāka* and *kuṇḍalinī* models indicates similarities but not identity. Finally, the *rajas* that is advocated for use in sexual practice such as in the *Dattātreyaśāstra* is the early portion of the menstrual flow, making conception unlikely. Note that I am not researching the extent to which women

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<sup>92</sup> See the legal controversies over women of menstruating age entering temples such as Sabarimala (Acevedo 2018) alongside temples and practices that revere the menstruation of the goddess (Rosati 2016; Hirmer 2022a; Hurwitt 2022).

operate as ritual agents but the implications for men and women's bodies should they engage in the practices described in the sources.

*Rajas* is the understudied correlate of *bindu*. *Bindu* is one of the most common terms for semen in the *haṭha* corpus but the sources also use the terms *retas*, *śukra* and *vīrya*. As well as the corporeal substance semen, *bindu* encompasses the power substance or vital essence of life that is not confined to the sexual organs but located in the head.<sup>93</sup> In texts deriving from a male celibate context, *rajas* occurs within male practitioners without being derived from a woman. In the *bindu-rajas* paradigm of the body *bindu* is drawn upwards and preserved alongside *rajas* using the technique of *vajrolīmudrā*, conferring success (*siddhi*) and immortality (*amṛta*). Much work has been done on *bindu* (Mallinson 2018; Darmon 2002; Gold 2002; Gold and Gold 1984; Digambarji and Sahai 1969). This and the next chapter attempt to do for *rajas* what Mallinson's 2018 article, 'Yoga and Sex', did for *bindu*.

Slaje (1995) has an important work on *rajas* and Das (2003) a sweeping one. Das does not, however, address *rajas* in relation to the *haṭha* corpus. Ondračka points to the lack of scholarship on *rajas* in yogic texts (2022:84n375). Scholarly treatments of the hitherto taboo subject of menstruation have broken new ground in adjacent fields such as Buddhist *vinaya* studies. Langenberg treats Buddhist blood taboo specifically (2015) and generally (2017, 2018, 2020). Hüsken explores the use of a cloth for menstruation (*āvasathacīvara*), as a pad or perhaps a tampon, to be shared between nuns in public lodgings for itinerant ascetics (2001). She compares this with the 'stained cloth' (*malavadvāsas*) of the *Taittirīyasaṃhitā* (52.5.1.5-7). This anticipates, in quite different context, the 'old cloth' (*jīrṇavastra*) of

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<sup>93</sup> *Bindu* sited in the head as the moon (*candra*) has a tantric heritage. *Bindu* as a location in the body and a corresponding stage in the manifestation of the phonetic universe occurs in *Svacchandatantra* 15.24 as *śukra*. Mallinson and Szántó note Kṣemarāja's secret name (*chommakā*) for *śukra* is *candra*, *ad Svacchandatantra* 15.24. *Vajrayāna* sources use *śukra* for semen and *bodhicitta* in the context of religious, especially sexual, ritual (Wangchuk 2007:218–225). *Śaiva* and *vajrayāna* sources also use *bindu* to refer to a drop of semen (eg *Kaulajñānanirṇaya* 5.23 and *Laghukālacakratantra* 2.125, 4.110, 4.113, 5.126) (Mallinson and Szántó 2022:17n37).

*Dattātreyaśāstra* 163ab utilised in an idiosyncratic practice of *vajrolī* and *amarolī* to wipe or absorb the various products of sexual practice including menstrual blood, semen and sweat according to some early manuscripts. Is the use of a cloth in the *Dattātreyaśāstra* similar to Hüsken's menstrual hygiene, or similar to Bāul practices of soaking up menstrual blood in a cloth to be ritually ingested, as researched by Hanssen (2006)? This chapter addresses the gap in the literature on *rajas* in *haṭha* yoga and the next focuses on techniques for women to carry out this practice, and possible physiological consequences.

### ***Red blood: the procreative potential of rajas***

*Rajas* has a broad semantic range and its precise physiological referent is difficult to determine. This section explores some of those meanings before the next sections look at fluids in *āyurveda*. *Rajas*'s multivalency ranges from atmosphere to impurity, dust<sup>94</sup> to pollen, the sovereignty of *rājan* to the quality (*guṇa*) of *rajas*. *Rajas* derives from √*rañj* to dye or redden, to be affected or moved, attracted or enamoured, and red menses.

A vedic sense of *rajas* as atmosphere, subdivided into upper (*rajas upara*) and lower (*rajas pāṛthiva*) (Monier-Williams 1899:863; cf. *Ṛgveda* 1.164.6, *Artharvaveda*, *Taittirīyaśāhitā*, *Vājasaneyisaṃhitā*) is evident in some approaches to *haṭha* such as the Kaivalyadhama translation of the *Haṭhapradīpikā*. Kaivalyadhama interprets *vajrolīmudrā* as manipulating secretions from the roof of the mouth and secretions from the pelvic region (1998:108-109). I see the Kaivalyadhama exegesis as predominately sanitising the taboo definition of *rajas* as menses and erasing the requirement for a sexual partner. However, by drawing on the meaning of *rajas* as lower atmosphere and the material or earthy (*pāṛthiva*) *rajas*, the Kaivalyadhama edition points out a way to understanding *rajas* as both microcosm

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<sup>94</sup> See Shulman lecture, 'The Inner Life of Dust' (2016) and Apfel-Marglin and Jean on ingesting dust (2020:271).

(bodily menses) and macrocosm (atmosphere). Other such homologies are evident in for example the *Amṛtasiddhi*'s and *Śivasamhitā*'s micro-macrocosmic understanding of the body, and the *Haṭhapradīpikā*'s correlation of *kuṇḍalinī* with the cosmic snake. Alongside the vedic referent of the term *rajas* as upper and lower regions, we have an upaniṣadic micro-macrocosmic homology between the human womb and the divine womb. Slaje argues that *Kauṣītaki Upaniṣad* 1.6's transmigratory moon cycle can be homologized on the biological level and relates this to the mytho-cosmogonic account given in the *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa* 1.17, translated by Bodewitz:

Two wombs, indeed, there are. The divine womb is the one, the human womb the other. There are, indeed, also two worlds. The divine world is the one, the human world the other. The human womb is (related to) the human world. It is the generative organ of the woman. Out of that progeny is born. (Slaje 1995:133n58)

These understandings of *rajas* appear to be drawn on in the Kaivalyadharm exegesis of the *Haṭhapradīpikā*'s practice of *vajrolīmudrā* discussed below.

In embryology *rajas* functions as a vital essence. *Rajas* is the counterpart of male semen in some texts of *āyurveda* where *rajas* and *bindu* combine to produce the embryo (*Carakasamhitā Śārīrasthāna* 2.34) (Das 2003:33). Terms related to *rajas* include *rakta* 'blood', *payas* 'milk', *ṛtu* 'cycle' or 'menstruation', *retas* 'semen', *bindu* 'drop' or 'semen' and *bīja* 'seed'. *Retas*, *bindu* and *bīja* are more commonly associated with men, but do occur in relation to women. *Ṛtu* is the period of female fertility lasting 12 to 16 days, starting with the visible occurrence or 'stained garments' (*malavadvāsas*) of a bloody fluid (*ārtava*) according to Slaje's comprehensive treatment of the topic (1995:148). Slaje, an Indologist specialising in medical literature, notes that *ārtava*, another term for menses, is the strengthened (*vṛddhi*) formation of *ṛtu*, i.e. 'belonging to *ṛtu*', or the menstrual period of women. Slaje, in summarising the results of his 1995 study, finds that 'a particular opinion testified to in medical Śāstras with regard to the power or fecundity of "menstrual blood"

must already have been present in the Vedic period' (1995:148). He notes that *rtu*, the period of female fecundity, lasts between twelve and sixteen days from the first sign of menstrual blood. *Ārtava*, 'a fluid appearing bloody', was attributed a power of fecundity and regarded as a kind of female seed. To utilise this power intercourse was prescribed during the flow, though the first three days were avoided for fear of producing female offspring or contact with 'a bloody and therefore magically dangerous fluid'. However, Slaje notes that, in the course of increasing disapproval of intercourse during the 'menstrual flow', testified in the *dharmasāstras*, the number of chaste nights was extended from three to four, and to six at least if male progeny were desired (1995:148).

There does not appear to be a difference between menstrual and sexual fluid despite the extensive effort of Das to disambiguate the terms in medical literature (2003). In the medical compendium *Carakasamhitā*, conception occurs as a result of the union of male seed (*bīja* or *śukra*), female seed (*strībīja*, *śonitā*) and the descending spirit (*jīva*) (*Carakasamhitā śarīrasthāna* 4.5). 'Female seed' is menstrual blood (*ārtava*, *rajas*) (Bose et al 1971:242). Menstrual blood is procreative. Menstrual blood is differentiated according to the stage of the menstrual cycle and associated fertility, and according to perceived purity or impurity. *Āyurveda* sources agree that the first three days of menstrual flow are unsuitable for conception (*Suśrutasamhitā* 3.2.31) (Leslie 1996:93). The following 12 or 16 days are suitable for conception and the woman is deemed to be in 'season' (*rtu*) (*Suśrutasamhitā* 3.3.9, *Aṣṭāṅgasaṃgraha* 2.1.198) (Leslie 1996:93). Tryambaka's eighteenth-century *Strīdharmapaddhati*, a compendium summarising a thousand years of *dharmasāstra* for women, specifies that the period of fertility is not associated with whether the woman is still bleeding or not. For Tryambaka women lose two types of blood: *rajas* is menstrual flow on the first three days of the menstrual cycle and *rakta* (blood) is bleeding at any other time

(*Strīdharmapaddhati* 35v.6-9) (Leslie 1996:283-4). *Rakta* does not occur in the early *haṭha* corpus as a term to describe menses.

Thus, according to the *Strīdharmapaddhati*, a key transition in the terminology for menstrual discharge occurs at the point when a woman is considered ritually pure. During the first three or four days of menstruation (depending on the source), the discharge is named *rajas* and considered impure. Once the menstruating woman has undergone ritual purification, even if she is still bleeding, the discharge is termed *rakta*, considered to be auspicious, and sex for the purpose of procreation is recommended between wife and husband. According to Leslie, the double dichotomies of auspicious–inauspicious and pure–impure combine here: *rajas* is impure and inauspicious because infertile, and *rakta* is pure and auspicious because the woman has been ritually purified and is understood to be fertile (1996:101).

This survey of the terminology used for menstrual blood and female sexual fluid demonstrates that *rajas* is a key term among others and integrates meanings of both menstrual blood and also female procreative seed.

### ***Rajas as rasa of the body in āyurveda***

I turn to *rajas* in *āyurveda*. Do āyurvedic sources prefigure the *Amṛtasiddhi* model of *rajas* occurring within the body of the male practitioner? I found no evidence of the latter. There does appear to be continuity between *āyurveda* and *haṭha* yoga though there are no textual parallels. Āyurvedic sources predate *haṭha* developing from a ‘classical’ period in the second century BCE to the seventh century CE (Cerulli 2010:267). I draw on classical *āyurveda*, the *Carakasamhitā* (c. first - second century CE) and *Suśrutasamhitā* (c. third century CE), to clarify the nature of *rajas*. I do not compare these historical discourses with contemporary biomedical understandings of menstruation and embryology.

*Āyurveda* sets out a physiology based on fundamental essences (*dhātus*) which pertain to the nature of *rajas*. *Āyurveda* privileges processes of substance and a substance-oriented understanding of the body. Zimmermann addresses the epistemological position of anatomical knowledge, and the images underlying the doctrine of the humours, especially concerning unctuousness or oiliness. Zimmermann claims, ‘there is no real anatomy; the humours are vital fluids, and the frame of the body is a network of channels through which vital fluids must be kept flowing in the right direction’ (Zimmermann 1979:11). Instead of organs, Zimmermann highlights the humours and in particular ‘the state of intimate fluidity and *sneha-tva*, “unctuousness”, of the living body, and the process of over-activating and over-refining vital substances through internal coctions’ (Zimmermann 1979:11). Coction, boiling or digestion, was the subject of the last chapter. Zimmermann notes the importance of the combination and cooking of medicinal plants for modern medical practitioners basing their craft on the *Aṣṭāṅgahṛdayasaṃhitā*. He sees images from the vegetable kingdom, such as the network of veins in a green leaf and the rising of sap, as providing models for the image of the body: ‘The idea prevails of a continuity from plants to men; saps (*rasa*), medicinal properties (*auśadhaguṇa*) and processes of cooking and coction—by the sun, on the kitchen fire and through the seven organic fires transforming chyle into blood, blood into flesh, etc.—remain the same all along the chain of living beings’ (Zimmermann 1979:14). *Haṭha* yoga departs from *āyurveda* in the practitioner rather than the physician effecting bodily transformation—for example through cooking himself as we saw in the last chapter.

In *āyurveda*, semen and female menstrual blood are the seventh of the seven *dhātus* (*Carakasamhitā Śārīrasthāna* 2.4) (Wujastyk 2003a:154–55). The *dhātus*, elements or essences of the body, are formed in a process of successive transformation due to the breaking down of food. Das’s extensive study, *The Origin of the Life of a Human Being: Conception and the female according to ancient Indian medical and sexological literature* (2003)

acknowledges that we do not have a clear idea of the character of these female fluids and his study leaves open many questions. He defines *rajas* as ‘procreatory-menstrual fluid’ which he identifies as different from blood (2003:489) and different from female semen (*śukra, retas*) the nature of which ‘seems to be one of the most problematic subjects of ancient Indian medical theory’ (2003:492). Where ‘procreatory-menstrual fluid’ is red, female semen is clear, like *rajas* and *bindu* respectively. This appears to be distinguished from the semen common to men and women which is the last *dhātu* in the chain of alimentary transformation beginning with *rasa*. Das, drawing on Aruṇadatta’s commentary on the *Aṣṭāṅgahṛdaya*, argues that the ‘classical’ texts derive ‘procreatory-menstrual fluid’ not from blood but from (*ārāra*)*rasa*, which is not part of the *dhātu* chain proper but a separate development from a member of this chain (Das 2003:259, 489). Das’s study does not elucidate whether *rajas* can arise in men.

*Rajas* is vital to the generation of an embryo and its procreative nature is ‘the same as or very closely linked to milk’ (Das 2003:489) where milk is also a vital fluid.<sup>95</sup> It is connected with the heart and nourishes the foetus. The foetus is created from the joining together of male semen (*śukra*), female seed (*śoṇita*), and the descending spirit (*jīva*) (*Carakasamhitā Śārīrasthāna* 4.5) (Leslie 1996:92). Here female seed is red (*śoṇita*) rather than the clear (*śukra*) female semen referred to above. Elsewhere the *Carakasamhitā* prefers the term *rajas* to *śoṇita* (*Carakasamhitā Śārīrasthāna* 2.34). *Ārtava* enters the uterus during pregnancy to nourish the foetus, and its downward flow is halted by the growing embryo, causing the collection of milk at the heart (*Suśrutasamhitā* 3.4.24) (Das 2003:491; Leslie 1996:94). Leslie emphasizes that, ‘What in religious and mythic contexts is seen as the most polluting of all substances (i.e. menstrual blood) is transformed into what in those same contexts is one of the

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<sup>95</sup> Doniger, in an insightful though at times perhaps too strongly psychoanalytical analysis of the vedic lexicon, discusses the correlation between blood and milk—*payas* has the primary meaning of ‘milk’, the secondary meaning of ‘expressed fluid’ and the tertiary meaning of ‘semen’—and the potential for association between penis and breast (1980:18–21).



purest (i.e. breast-milk)' (1996:94). The locale of the heart as the collection site for milk is inconclusive (Das 2003:487–88), but as a physiological and yogic body structure the heart is important in *haṭha* yoga and Daoism.

To what extent does an āyurvedic understanding of *rajas* inform *haṭha* yoga? Maas finds that the system of medical knowledge with which Patañjali was acquainted is *āyurveda* of an early classical style (2008:153). Birch finds that 'textual evidence from the classical period of India's history suggests that some kind of relationship dates back to the beginning of the first millennium' (Birch 2018:3). However, he argues that yogis had a more general knowledge of healing disease, found in earlier tantras and brahmanical texts, without adopting in any significant way teachings from classical *āyurveda* (Birch 2018:5).

There are parallels, though scant, between *āyurveda* and *haṭha*, with āyurvedic terminology becoming more frequent from the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries in *haṭha* yoga sources (Mallinson and Singleton 2017:488n2). *Āyurveda* has a system of channels including *nāḍī* and *sirā*, two of which are within the *yoni*, the left carrying 'semen' (*śukra*) and the right 'blood' (*rakta*).<sup>96</sup> Dagmar Wujastyk notes that there are importance differences in the conceptions of the yogic body between *āyurveda* and *haṭha*: āyurvedic literature does not mention the *cakras*, nor the channels *iḍā*, *piṅgalā* and *suṣumṇā* (2018).

Perhaps there is continuity from *āyurveda* to *haṭha* in the interconnected nature of *rajas* as menstrual blood and generative vital fluid. However, there is no evidence for the siting of *rajas* within male practitioners as deriving from *āyurveda*. *Haṭha* does continue the micro-macrocosmic correlations of the individual and the universal evident in *āyurveda* (Cerulli 2010:277). *Āyurveda* accounts for the body or self as having 'substance codes' (a term developed by Marriott) transferable on the mental, emotional and material level (Zubko

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<sup>96</sup> *Samvarodayatantra* 2.23 'dve nādyau yonimadhye tu vāmadakṣiṇayos tathā | vāme śukraṃ vijānīyād dakṣiṇe raktam eva ca || (Das 2003:452–53n1549)

2010:722; Marriott 1990), framing an identity of body and cosmos and the transferability or manipulation of sexual fluids within a body and worldview that incorporates affect.

### ***Rajas as guṇa***

In the *haṭha* corpus in general, more prevalent than the meaning of *rajas* as sexual or menstrual fluid is *rajas* as ‘vibrancy’ or ‘passion’ and one member of the triumvirate of qualities (*guṇas*) alongside *tamas* (darkness or inertia) and *sattva* (truth, reality or illumination). Typically, *rajas guṇa* is distinct from *rajas* as menstrual blood. However, here I identify some connections. Chakrabarti gives an unusual definition of *rajas guṇa* in relation to the *prakṛti* of early *sāṃkhya* ontology as menstrual discharge in *Sāṃkhyakārikā* 11 (Chakrabarti 1999:175), locating the whole macrocosmic cycle in the physiology of the female body.<sup>97</sup> It is tempting to dismiss this as idiosyncrasy but there may be something to the connection of these concepts. The *haṭha* sources do occasionally associate *rajas* as menses and *rajas guṇa*. In the *Amṛtasiddhi* *rajas* is the capacity or quality of emotion and passion: it cries with grief for relatives, is deluded by the pursuit of wealth, angry at the actions of enemies and with desire it makes love to a woman (AS 8.5). Again, desire for sex and sex itself are associated with a predominance of *rajas guṇa* (AS 10.7) but not explicitly with menses. In the *Amṛtasiddhi*’s discussion of *bindu* and *rajas*, *rajas* is associated with menstrual blood as that which ‘arises in women’ (*strīsamudbhava*) (AS 7.8) though it occurs in men. Thus, the *Amṛtasiddhi* uses both senses of the term *rajas*. *Rajas* is also a *guṇa* of sexual desire as Takahashi (2019) discusses in relation to the *Vārṣṇeyādhyātma* of *Mahābhārata* 12.207.16-29. Takahashi does not analyse *rajas* as menstrual blood or female sexual fluid but it has a role in causing ejaculation of *bindu*. The passage is close to the *bindu-rajas* paradigm of the *haṭha* sources and important in acknowledging the role of sexual desire.

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<sup>97</sup> Thanks to O’Brien-Kop for this reference, personal communication, 8 December 2021.

*Rajas guṇa* is associated with heat in the triumvirate with *tamas* and *sattva*. Ondračka makes the point that all Indian literature connects menstruation with fire though gives no specific references (2022:85). Dominic Wujastyk (2003) points to a primordial dyadic relationship between *agni* and *soma*, earlier than the triumvirate of *rajas*, *tamas* and *sattva* where *rajas* is fire (*agni*) and sun (*sūrya*) and *soma* is cool nectar. Here Wujastyk sees an equation with the Chinese dyad *yin* and *yang*. *Agni* and *soma* continue to map the praxis of tantra such as in the *Mālinīvijayottaratantra* (Vasudeva 2004). There is an association between menstruation as pain and heat (*tapas*) and, in relation to the sense of *tapas* as sin-expiating penance, menstruation is thought to remove sin. For example, menstruation absolves Indra of his guilt of brahminicide by transferring that portion of his guilt to women in the *Taittirīyasamhitā* (800-500 BCE) myth of the origin of menstruation, among other sources (cf. *Mahābhārata* 5.10.13 and 12.329.28-41, *Bhagavatapurāṇa* 6.9.6-10) (Leslie 1996:90-91). There are also injunctions that menstruation removes sin (*Mahābhārata* 36.27.8, *Strīdharmapaddhati* 21v.9-10) (Hill 2001:74, Leslie 1996:103). The association between *rajas* and *agni*, and the dyadic *agni* and *soma*, could point to an early concept of reproduction as the combination of heated menstrual blood and cool semen.

Some of the practices of yoga are said to halt the movement of *bindu* even in a passionate embrace. For example, in the *Amanaska* sexual desire ceases and will not arise again even when embraced by a passionate woman (*Amanaska* 44).<sup>98</sup> In the *Vivekamārtaṇḍa* *bindu* does not fall for the one who has sealed the opening above the uvula with *khecarī* even if he is embraced by a passionate woman (Viv 51). *Rajas* as the term for both the *guṇa* and menses has some semantic overlap in these terms and helps orientate a reading of menstruation as associated with sexual desire. *Rajas* as *guṇa* is in the affective realm of desire for sex while *rajas* as menses is the corporeal products of sex in a dyad with *bindu*. If *bindu* becomes

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<sup>98</sup> *Amanaska* 1.44 *palāṣṭakalāyēnāpi kāmas tasya nivartate | kadāpi naiva jāyeta kāmīnyāliṅgītasya ca ||*

unmoving, does *rajas*, as female sexual and menstrual fluid, become unmoving too? The sources give little detail on the effect of yoga techniques on *rajas* and analysing what data there is forms the subject of the next chapter.

### ***Rajas as rāja yoga, the yoga of kings?***

Are there connections between the practice of manipulating *rajas* and *rāja*, kingly yoga? The term *rajas*, menses, and *rājan*, a sovereign, derive from the connected roots √*raj* and √*rañj* (Whitney 1885:134). Though there is etymological connection, the principle of *nirukti* etymologies does not require linguistic historicity but derives from symphonic and pedagogical imperatives, both of which I would suggest are relevant here. The concept and genealogy of *rāja* as royal yoga is close to *haṭha* yoga, and later I will make the intervention that *rāja* yoga is an outcome of bodily sovereignty, in part established by controlling *rajas*, that also delivers sovereignty over others and the cosmos. While on the face of it *rajas* and *rāja* appear distinct here I press their similarities. This has been attempted by White and riposted by Birch and Mallinson. White suggests that *rāja* yoga is named as such because of the association between *rāja* yoga and *rajas*. Birch defines *rāja* yoga, kingly yoga, as the outcome of *samādhi*. Mallinson defines *rāja* yoga as techniques for heads of monasteries. I set out this discussion insofar as it elucidates the relationship between *rajas* and *rāja* yoga.

White claims that prior to the meaning of *rāja* yoga as ‘royal yoga’ the term derives from the consumption of *rajas*. This is based partly on his disputed analysis of the twelfth-century *śaiva Amanaska* as denoting the consumption of male and female sexual emissions (*Amanaska* 2.33). He writes:

The much-vaunted tradition of *rāja-yoga* itself, a term that is generally translated by commentators to signify the most elevated, “royal” practice of yoga, is read in at least one tradition to denote the consumption of male and female sexual emissions. So, the twelfth-century *Amanaskayoga* of Gorakṣanātha states that “some [practitioners], overstepping the limit [of conventional propriety], resorb semen from young girls’

yonis. Without *rājayoga*, free of mental construction, there can be no perfection of the body for them.” (White 2003a:81)

White cites the *c.* seventeenth- or eighteenth-century *Yogaśikhopaniṣat*’s definition of *rāja* yoga as ‘the union of menstrual blood (*rajas*) and semen (*retas*)’<sup>99</sup> (Birch 2014:427n45; Bühnemann 2007:14-16; White 2003a:81n86) and gives an etymological explanation for both the *Amanaska* and *Yogaśikhopaniṣat* connecting *rajas* and *rāja*: *rāja* as a *vṛddhi* form of *rajas*, that is, ‘deriving from female discharge,’ rather than ‘royal’. White suggests the *Yogaśikhopaniṣat* predates the *Haṭhapradīpikā*, on the basis of which he concludes, ‘their readings of the compound *rājayoga* are earlier than the more widely accepted reading of the term as the “royal” path of yogic practice’ (2003a:81–82). The scholarly consensus has it that the *Yogaśikhopaniṣat* is later than the *Haṭhapradīpikā* (Mallinson and Singleton 2017:xl; Birch 2013:411–12). While White’s chronological and linguistic analysis could be more precise, he nevertheless draws together important conceptual data.

Birch, who conducted his doctoral research on the *Amanaska*, understands *rāja* yoga as ‘the king of all yogas’ (2013). The *Amanaska* teaches the practice of meditative absorption (*amanaska*) which is presented as superior to and autonomous from physical or forceful (*haṭha*) practice. Though the *Amanaska* does not deploy a *bindu* model or name *vajrolī* it does describe the practice. Taking the *Amanaska* passage as a whole that was partially given by White, it is the practice of meditative absorption which gives mastery of the body rather than *rāja* yoga as the consumption of *rajas*. Birch translates *Amanaska* 2.33 as,

Some drink urine, their own impurities. Some discharge the saliva of (their) body.  
Some who have inserted (a catheter) into the abdomen, guide (their) semen upwards  
(after) it has fallen into a woman’s vagina. Or some who are skilled in circulating  
vitality through the nerves of the entire body, consume (their own bodily) elements.  
They do not have mastery of the body without Rājayoga, which disperses one’s mind.  
(Birch 2013:53)

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<sup>99</sup> *Yogaśikhopaniṣat* 1.137cd *rajaso retaso yogād rājayoga iti smrtāḥ* ||

Thus, *rāja* yoga in the *Amanaska* is a mental process and goal, and Birch argues that *rāja* yoga means *samādhi* in the earliest yoga texts in which it occurs, not excepting the *Amanaska* (2014:406–9). In the *Yogabīja* part of the definition of yoga is the union of *rajas* and semen (*retas*), alongside the union of *prāṇa* and *apāna*, sun and moon, and individual and supreme selves (YB 79). Birch argues that in early *haṭha* texts such as the *Yogabīja* and the *Amanaska* it is clearly not *haṭha* yoga that causes the retention of *bindu* but the dissolution of the mind.<sup>100</sup> In the *Yogabīja* semen retention (*bindudhāraṇa*) is not an outcome of *haṭha* yoga but an outcome of the dissolution of the mind. For Birch the non-falling-down of *bindu* is an incidental consequence.

In later sources, such as the seventeenth-century *Sarvāṅgayogapradīpikā* of Sundardās and the eighteenth-century *Jogpradīpakā* of Jayatarāma, *vajrolīmudrā* is equated with *rāja* yoga (Mallinson 2014:10n27). Rather than an etymological derivation, Birch argues that these later *haṭha* texts combine *haṭha* and asceticism, an outcome of which is the association of *rāja* with sexual fluids. Thus, the textual sources, such as the *Yogaśikhopaniṣat*, which associate *rāja* yoga with sexual fluids and the practice of *vajrolīmudrā*, are relatively recent (Birch 2014). Birch cites the eighteenth-century *Jogapradīpakā* of Jayatarāma and Sundardās’s *Sarvāṅgayogapradīpikā* for the idea that *rāja* yoga arises from the practice of *vajrolīmudrā*. Birch also suggests ‘the idea of *samādhi* as the union of menstrual blood and semen may have emanated from the belief that the mind is absent at the time of conception (that is, when semen and menstrual blood unite)’ (Birch 2013:427n45).

Mallinson makes the wider argument that *rāja* yoga developed as a less ascetic practice for monastic heads who were known as *rājas* (Mallinson 2024:24-26; Ondračka 2021:90n404; cf. Bouillier 2016) and the specific argument that *rāja* yoga in the *Amanaska* does not describe sexual fluids (Mallinson 2014:10n27). White cites Mallinson as the source

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<sup>100</sup> Birch, personal communication, 10 December 2019.

of his translation of the *Amanaska* (White 2003a:81n85) and Mallinson critiques White's translation (2014:10). Ondračka does much work on the meaning of *rāja* and *vajrolī* (2021:87-90) and argues, 'There can be no doubt, therefore, about the connection between Rājayoga and the ability to preserve semen by means of the *vajrolī*' (2021:89) but does not extend this argument to consider the relationship between *rajas* and *rāja* yoga.

The definitions of *rāja* yoga and the implications of *rajas* in yoga practice are complex and vary according to text and context. However, the association between *rāja* yoga and *rajas* that is evident in the later sources is at least worth considering in the earlier sources. There may be a connection between *rajas* and *rāja* as bodied practice delivers sexual sovereignty: sovereignty over pleasure and reproduction. Having considered the meaning of *rajas* in relation to *āyurveda*, *rajas guṇa* and *rāja* yoga I turn to key passages on *rajas* in the early corpus.

### ***Amṛtasiddhi: unite bindu and rajas inside***

I start with the *Amṛtasiddhi* as, although it does not describe a practice of *vajrolīmudrā*, it articulates in detail concepts that underlie *haṭha* yoga in subsequent texts. The *Amṛtasiddhi* is significant for *haṭha* yoga in setting out the *bindu-rajas* model of the body. The *Amṛtasiddhi* arises in a male celibate context and the redactors understand *rajas* and *bindu* occurring within the body of the male practitioner. The *Vivekamārtaṇḍa* too sites *rajas* within the male practitioner (Viv 54) (Mallinson 2018:199). The siting of *rajas* within the male practitioner, the absence of references to female practitioners and the supposed absence of women providing *rajas* as ritual media create a tension in the essential physiological understanding of *rajas* as menstrual and sexual fluid arising in women. The occurrence of *rajas* in men is not

explicitly attested in *āyurveda*.<sup>101</sup> How does the *Amṛtasiddhi* consider *rajas* to occur in men? *Amṛtasiddhi* 7.8 describes *rajas* as ‘produced in women’ (*strīsamudbhava*). Are the redactors disingenuous about the involvement of women, masking their involvement as the source of *rajas*? Or is the reference to ‘arising in women’ merely a conventional definition of *rajas* that does not exclude it arising in men?

The *Amṛtasiddhi* asserts a conventional mode of procreation which it inverts as a yogic mode of inverse procreation or what I have termed ‘spiritual embryology’: from the external union of *bindu* and *rajas* people are created and when they are united (*yoga*) internally one is a yogi (AS 7.9). What I refer to as the ‘depletion model’ is the gravitational and embryological paradigm laid out in the *Amṛtasiddhi*’s seventh chapter on semen (*bindu*). This chapter asserts that seed (*bīja*) is the single fundamental essence of the body, and creates a micro-macrocosmic homology with the world: everything seen in the world has its origin in this seed (AS 7.1). Verses one to seven describe *bindu*. The next five verses describe *rajas*.

The term *bīja* or ‘seed’ is often used as cognate with *bindu* and is defined in terms of bodily matter, sanctity and divinity: it is the essence of bodily constituents, always auspicious and contains the gods in subtle form (AS 7.2). *Bindu* is synonymous with moon, seed, rapture (*mada*), the fundamental element, the vital principle and the essence of everything (AS 7.3). *Bindu* is the source of sexual affect as all the bodily blisses arise from it (AS 7.4). In the next verse *bindu* always gives everything (AS 7.5). The technique for mastering *bindu* is breath as *bindu* enters the same state (*avasthā*—but not essence) that breath is in (AS 7.6). Utilising alchemical terminology in relation to the four stages of mercury, *bindu* can be thickened and remove disease, bound to make one a sky-rover (*khecara*), dissolved or absorbed (*līna* not *laya*) to bring about all powers, and stilled to attain liberation (AS 7.7). The divine nature of

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<sup>101</sup> Chinese traditional medical literature accords a ‘sea of blood’ in men and women (Valussi 2008:78). In female alchemy the ‘sea of blood’ is the infant’s palace in women and located three and a half inches below the navel; it is not to be confused with the lower elixir field, where male practice begins (Valussi 2022:452).



*bindu* is emphasised later in the chapter where it is said to be synonymous with Buddha, Śiva, Viṣṇu, Prajāpati and all the gods (AS 7.15), and the god who is the lord of all elements resides in all beings in the form of *bindu* (AS 7.18).

*Bindu* is thus multifaceted and extends across epistemic domains: ontological, physiological, divine, power-substance and essence, and is described in terms of mercurial alchemical procedures. The *Amṛtasiddhi* describes *rajas* much more succinctly. If *bindu* is multivalent *rajas* defies clear definition. *Bindu* is defined by the category of gender as twofold: *bīja* is the male *bindu* and *rajas* is produced in women (*strīsamudbhava*) (AS 7.8). Despite the text specifying that *bīja* is the male form of *bindu* it later uses the term *bindu* to refer to just the male aspect (AS 7.10).<sup>102</sup> For the celibate male context of the *Amṛtasiddhi* how is *rajas* to be understood as female-gendered but nonetheless arising in men? It could be understood as not gender-specific such as the use of the term *yonī* when used as a bodily orientation in descriptions of posture. As discussed later in this chapter in such instances *yonī* refers to the non-gendered perineal region of practitioners, as used by Birch (2018b:168), rather than the womb or uterus of women.

*Bindu* is in the head and moves downwards in the body due to felt pleasure. Despite the deployment of esoteric yogic body physiological locations, it is fairly clear that *kāmarūpa* and *pūrṇagiri*, the locations of *bindu*, are in the head<sup>103</sup> (AS 7.10ab). In the initial stages of the technique there is a key reference to sexual arousal for it is as a result of ‘pleasurable contact’ (*mudāśparśa*) with *pūrṇagiri* that *bindu* goes by way of the central channel (AS 7.10cd). Chapter three, the inquiry into the moon, identifies the moon in the head and two types of white nectar raining down from it. One of these nourishes the whole body and the other goes by way of the middle of the goddess of the centre (*madhyamā*) to bring about creation (AS

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<sup>102</sup> I tend to use the term *bindu* to refer to the male aspect but this sometimes includes the female.

<sup>103</sup> See Mallinson and Szántó (2021:119-120n144).

3.1–4). Here the falling down of *bindu* is associated with sexual pleasure: it resembles a cluster of white jasmine flowers and when congealed as a result of rapture goes by way of the middle of the central channel (*madhyamā madhya*), i.e. descends, to cause procreation (AS 3.4).<sup>104</sup>

*Rajas* is located in the lower body in the great sacred field in the middle of the *yoni* and is red as a *javā* flower (AS 7.11ab). *Rajas* is associated with divinity as is *bindu*, and specifically the goddess: *rajas* rests upon the goddess element (AS 7.11cd). *Kuṇḍalinī* does not appear in the *Amṛtasiddhi* yet the *devītattva* is somewhat parallel as a divine feminine element located at the base of the body. However, the *devītattva* does not unite with *śiva* at the top as *kuṇḍalinī* does in some sources. In the *Amṛtasiddhi* the *devītattva* integrates a divine, *śākta* element with *rajas* as a biological substance. I will discuss the consistency of the *Amṛtasiddhi*'s body with *kuṇḍalinī* in chapter five.

In accordance with the locations of *bindu* in the head and *rajas* at the base are the associations of *bindu* with the moon and *rajas* with the sun (AS 7.12ab). They are to be united in the very hard to reach *kūṭāgāra* (AS 7.12cd) in the head. The text, in closing this section defining *rajas*, accords the union of *bindu* and *rajas* great status as the fundamental element, the ultimate teaching, the best yoga, the path that bestows liberation and the ultimate secret (AS 7.13). Of course, the text also accords such status to the other elements that make up the body in chapters one to ten.

The text uses a metaphor of non-generation to describe abandoning *bindu* yoga: such a person is a fool who keeps vigil without fruit among barren trees (AS 7.14).<sup>105</sup> The generative metaphor, that *bindu* yoga is productive of results, contrasts with the intention of *bindu* yoga not to produce progeny.

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<sup>104</sup> There is a correspondence here with Chinese materials that describe a downward flow of *jing* energy in the body associated with sexual arousal, as noted in the next chapter.

<sup>105</sup> Mallinson and Szántó identify the tree in question, the *śākhotaḥka*, as barren and cite the *Rasārṇavasudhākara* 2.225 and *Subhāṣitaratnaśoḥa* 1087 as referring to it as 'useless' (2021:121n149).

*Bindu* is mastered in the same way that breath is mastered (AS 7.6). The state of mind is the same as the state of *bindu* (AS 7.16). A causal relation is asserted between breath, *bindu* and mind: when the breath moves *bindu* moves and one whose *bindu* moves has a moving mind (AS 7.17), a principle re-stated two verses later (AS 7.19). The repetition likely underscores the import of the principle rather than poor redaction. The movement of *bindu*, mind (*citta*) and breath (*vāyu*) is given as the reason for birth and death (AS 7.20), thus connecting this triumvirate with the depletion paradigm—downward flow and external union of *bindu* and *rajas* leading to procreation (AS 7.9). An alternative triumvirate is then offered to the one just established: internal resonance (*nāda*), *bindu* and mind (*citta*) (AS 7.21). Mallinson and Szántó note that breath would make better sense than *nāda* in relation to the preceding verses but all the witnesses report *nāda* (2021 121:153). In the *Amṛtasiddhimūla* the practitioner is instructed to raise *bindu* and *nāda*. References to *nāda* occur in the *Dattātreyaśāstra* and *Haṭhapradīpikā* in the context of a female practitioner of *vajrolī*: the *yoginī*'s *nāda* becomes *bindu* (DYŚ 174cd, HP 3.98). Therefore, the occurrence of the term *nāda* in the *Amṛtasiddhi* is not without subsequent attestation in similar contexts. The question remains as to the ontological relationship between the triumvirate of *bindu*, *nāda* and *citta*: though the three become one they are not simply synonyms for one another. The text specifies that although these three are present individually in the body the breath masters them all (AS 7.22).

The *Amṛtasiddhi* gives much explanation for why breath is the correct practice but little on technique. Simply, breath is stilled, literally killed (*mriyate*) through contact with the inside of the goddess of the centre (*madhyamā*). This stills *bindu* and mind (AS 7.23). The terminology of killing recurs in the next verse where the elements that reside in the body are dependent on breath and hence stilled or killed (*mriyante*) when breath is killed (*māraṇa*) (AS

7.24). As discussed in chapter five *kuṇḍalinī* is killed in the central channel in the *Amaraughā*.

Finally, the *Amṛtasiddhi* chapter concludes with a pair of verses that powerfully recapitulate the spiritual inversion paradigm: death results from the fall of *bindu*, life from holding onto *bindu* (AS 7.25ab). *Bindu* is described as a great jewel that when perfected leads to all powers (AS 7.25cd). The text restates this principle in similar terms with the body described as diamond: when the moonlike nectar of immortality (*amṛta*) goes down all embodied beings die yet he whose *bindu* is indivisible is a Siddha in a diamond body (*vajrapañjara*) (AS 7.26). This concludes the discussion devoted to *bindu* in chapter seven. The *Amṛtasiddhi* extols different aspects of the body and practice as the pinnacle, or multiple apexes. Though here *bindu* is the ultimate principle and practice, the other chapters easily substitute peak features. The concept of *rajas* as *rasa* (taste, element of the body) occurs in chapter 14 on practice (the import of that chapter I discussed in relation to the process of baking the body). For now, suffice that through practice the practitioner can use the ‘yoga of time’ (*kālayoga*) to still or kill (*māraṇa*) (presumably) the breath, ‘unite’ (*melaka*) the two *rasas* and make breath enter the goddess of the centre (AS 14.14). Mallinson and Szántó note that the two *rasas* are the male and female *bindus* (Mallinson and Szántó 2021:135n196). Finally, in chapter 24, ‘the inquiry into the perfection of the body’, bodily perfection occurs when the impurities are mastered and the two *bindus* united (AS 24.1).

Sexual affect is clearly associated with *bindu* in *Amṛtasiddhi* chapter 21 concerning the bliss that is death by time. After the breath has burst through the bolt of *madhyamā* a fire arises that destroys the fire of time (AS 21.2). The bliss of the falling of the drops of *bindu* is death by time (*kālānala*) in the body and the fall of *bindu* causes old age and death in embodied beings (AS 21.3). This seems to mean that the destruction of the bliss of the falling *bindu* is replaced with the bliss of the fire of time. Chapter 22 summarises the arising of

innate bliss (*sahajānanda*) when the expulsive breath which goes out of the body in conjunction with *bindu*, i.e. ejaculation, is controlled (AS 22.1-2). I return to a discussion of bliss and sexual affect in chapter five.

Having considered the material on *rajas* and *bindu* in the *Amṛtasiddhi* I now turn to the *Vivekamārtaṇḍa*.

### ***Vivekamārtaṇḍa: impel rajas by moving the goddess***

The *Vivekamārtaṇḍa* is less clear on the locations of *bindu* and *rajas* than the *Amṛtasiddhi*. Like the *Amṛtasiddhi* the text recommends sexual continence (Viv 38). Unlike the *Amṛtasiddhi* the *Vivekamārtaṇḍa* includes a teaching on *kuṇḍalinī*. *Kuṇḍalinī* is described as *śakti* (Viv 32) and *rajas* is moved upwards by a process of stimulating the goddess (*śakticāla*) (Viv 57) but these passages are not contiguous. That both *rajas* (Viv 56) and *kuṇḍalinī* are named *śakti* does not necessarily mean they are considered synonymous.

The description of *bindu* that precedes the description of *rajas* reflects the *Amṛtasiddhi*. In the long recension of the *Vivekamārtaṇḍa* the body is founded on *bindu* (Viv 68). *Bindu* that has been sealed by *khecarī* above the uvula does not fall even if the yogi is embraced by a passionate woman (Viv 51), an assertion that sites *bindu* in the head. Then the *bindu* that has moved and reached the fire moves upwards when checked by *yonimudrā* and struck by the goddess (Viv 53). This could be read as two different *bindus* sited in two different regions of the body. However, I think it more likely, in line with the account of *Amṛtasiddhi* 3.4 that *bindu* moves downwards due to sexual arousal and is then drawn back upwards. Therefore, *bindu* is not located in the lower body but only travels downwards and back up. The *Vivekamārtaṇḍa* does not specify that this is as a result of sexual arousal. Only after the description of *bindu* falling and being moved back upwards is it distinguished as two kinds. These are white *bindu* and red *rajas* (Viv 54). *Rajas* is described as liquid coral in the *yonī*

and *bindu* is in the moon (Viv 55), i.e. *rajas* is in the lower body and *bindu* in the head. Although *bindu* is identified with *śiva* and *rajas* with *śakti*, and *bindu* with the moon and *rajas* with the sun and their joining is very difficult (Viv 56ab), the text does not identify *rajas* with *kuṇḍalinī*. Neither in the *kuṇḍalinī* section (Viv 31-35, 39) nor elsewhere is *kuṇḍalinī* described as joining *śiva*. Joining *rajas* and *bindu* attains the highest condition (*parama pada*) (Viv 56cd). *Rajas* unites with *bindu* as a result of moving the goddess (*śakticāla*) by the breath (Viv 57). This is also a technique for awakening *kuṇḍalinī* taught for example in the *Gorakṣaśataka* where it involves tying a cloth around the tongue (GŚ 16-28) as identified by Mallinson (2012). Redolent of Aṅgiras drying up the oceans, *mahāmudrā* is purification of the channels, union of sun and moon and drying up of the bodily fluids (Viv 58). The *Vivekamārtaṇḍa* has the most explicit connection between *rajas* and *kuṇḍalinī* because *rajas* is raised by *śakticālana* but they are not necessarily identical.

### ***Dattātreya yogaśāstra: kṣīra, āṅgīrasa and nava rajas***

The *Dattātreya yogaśāstra*, perhaps two centuries later than the *Amṛtasiddhi*, contains a passage on *vajrolīmudrā* with a similar but more detailed passage on the fluids to be used in sexual practice with a stark difference: half the products necessary for *vajrolīmudrā* are to be obtained from a woman, and in some manuscripts (M<sub>1</sub>, A and M<sub>2</sub>)<sup>106</sup> the woman is addressed as a practitioner of *vajrolī* (DYŚ 150-183). Mallinson notes of the manuscripts, ‘In many places the meaning is not clear to me and the constitution of the text is tentative’ (Mallinson 2024:119n289). Thus the discussion of those portions in this chapter and the next is somewhat provisional.

In the *Dattātreya yogaśāstra* the descriptions of sex are graphic and not erotic, forceful and not violent, pragmatic and not moralistic. The *Dattātreya yogaśāstra* urges the practitioner

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<sup>106</sup> See Mallinson (2024) for manuscript details.

to acquire milk (*kṣīra*) and *āṅgirasa*, a cryptic substance likely to be female sexual fluid and menstrual blood. *Rajas* is also named and qualified as new (*nava*) and red, appearing in the *yonis* of women, hence the early portion of the menstrual flow. The *vajrolīmudrā* technique is the final technique to be taught in the *Dattātreyaśāstra*. Immediately following this section is a statement that *rāja* yoga arises from these techniques (DYS 184-86). The chronological connection does not equate to a quasi-etymological (*nirukti*) link between *rajas* and *rāja* yoga. However, *rāja* yoga arises from the yogi practising the techniques that have been taught (DYS 184). While this probably refers to all the techniques taught it absolutely refers to *vajrolī*.

In accordance with the order in which these ‘things’ (*vastu*) are enumerated in the text I will analyse the fluids here and discuss ‘the second thing’, i.e. women and the reproductive and social implications of the practice, in chapter four. There I will analyse the instructions and implications for women to practise *vajrolī*. Here the analysis of the fluids is contained in a passage instructing a man how to practise *vajrolī*.

### ***Kṣīra: milky semen***

The *Dattātreyaśāstra* states ‘there are two things (*vastudvaya*) I will teach you that are difficult for just anyone to obtain: if obtained, success in yoga is in hand’ (DYS 153). ‘Milk (*kṣīra*) is the first and the second is a woman who is *vaśavartinī*. If milk is not available, I will teach you the substitute’ (DYS 154). I will leave aside an analysis of whether the woman who is *vaśavartinī* is controlled by the male practitioner or by herself. The concern here is with the nature of the fluids and the bodily implications rather than the ritual agency of the female practitioner.

Milk (*kṣīra*) is used to practice *vajrolī* (Mallinson 2018:189, 201n70) and its mundane meaning could well be the referent of this instruction. This is the case in the

*Bṛhatkhecarīprakāśa*, an eighteenth-century commentary on the *Khecarīvidyā*, in which the yogi is both to practise drawing milk into his urethra and also to have a diet of nothing but cow's milk (*Bṛhatkhecarīprakāśa* fol. 103r) (Mallinson 2018:207-208). There are late references to the drinking of milk to maintain strength in the context of *vajrolī* practice in the *Haṭhābhyāsapaddhati* (fol. 27r10-11).

Milk is sometimes used as a fluid with which to practise *vajrolī* in the early stages, after which semen is used (*Bṛhatkhecarīprakāśa* fol. 103r; Mallinson 2018:189n23). However, there is an overlap in meaning between milk and semen. Milk is a ritual substitute for semen and substitution of ritual elements, particularly *soma*, has a long history (Olivelle 1998:19). *Kṣīra* as semen could have been substituted for *śukra* as semen, which occasionally occurs as a couple with *āṅgirasa*.<sup>107</sup> Milk and semen are both white in colour: *bindu* is the *soma*, the gleaming white drop of liquid in the Vedas (Wujastyk 2003b:348). There may be a further sense in which milk is used as a metaphorical homologue for *bindu* in relation to its coagulation capacity: *bindu* might be 'thickened' (*mūrcchita*) (AS 7.7) in the same way that milk can be thickened into butter or curds. Coagulation is also an important external alchemical process: its use in the *Amṛtasiddhi* suggests the internalization of the external alchemical paradigm (*rasāyana* or *dhātuvāda*). Milk can also refer to *rajas* because of *rajas*'s association with breast milk in *āyurveda* (see above).<sup>108</sup>

In *Dattātreyaयोगसूत्र* 154 it is difficult to assess whether the referent for *kṣīra* is cow's milk or semen. The source states that a substitute is offered if *kṣīra* is hard to obtain. Cow's milk is quite likely to be available to practitioners, though of course there is no certainty. There is no indication that semen is difficult to obtain: later in the passage the practitioner produces semen through non-penetrative sexual activity in which there is no suggestion this

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<sup>107</sup> Barois, personal communication, 6 April 2019.

<sup>108</sup> Menstrual fluid is also associated with breast milk in Daoism since at least the twelfth century (Valussi 2008:72).



might not be possible and hence require substitution. The semen produced through non-penetrative sex is then drawn upwards. Mallinson, referencing Darmon, notes that the long-term practice of *vajrolī* can inhibit the ejaculatory reflex, though this is not the main purpose (Mallinson 2018:194n36).<sup>109</sup> It is just about possible, therefore, that *kṣīra* could be an esoteric term for semen and the requirement for a substitute be due to the inability of the practitioner to ejaculate. Commenting on an earlier collation of the *Dattātreyaśāstra* Ondračka states that *kṣīra* must mean semen despite the lack of clarity in the text: ‘In the case of ‘milk’, in my judgment it is certainly semen, since various dairy products (most often yogurt), at least in Bengal, often refer to this liquid’ (2022:84). The reference to *kṣīra* could be to cow’s milk or to semen and there is evidence for both usages. Whether milk or semen, it may be substituted with *āṅgīrasa* if milk or semen is unavailable. As we shall see *āṅgīrasa* is likely female menstrual blood and female sexual fluid. Let us turn to a consideration of *āṅgīrasa*.

If the ‘first thing’ the practitioner needs is milk or semen, *āṅgīrasa* is the substitute (DYŚ 155ab). However, like *kṣīra*, the meaning of the term *āṅgīrasa* is not straightforward. Prompting the more detailed explanation only available in manuscripts (M<sub>1</sub>, A and M<sub>2</sub>), Sāṃkṛti asks Dattātreya, ‘tell me o lord what is the thing called *āṅgīrasa*’ (DYŚ 155cd). The interactive interlocutor format is dropped as Dattātreya launches into a 30-verse monologue on *āṅgīrasa*, *vajrolī*, *sahajolī* and *amarolī*. This is the most extensive and detailed discussion of sexual practices yet available in an early *haṭha* yoga text.

In response to the question on which *āṅgīrasa* to drink if milk is unavailable Dattātreya gives an explanation that could be understood as stimulating the female partner to produce sexual fluid: the fluid of the body (*āṅgīrasa*) of the woman arises in the *yoni* from drinking the libation (*iḍā*); the practitioner is the man who drinks that if milk is not available (DYŚ

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<sup>109</sup> On the anthropocentric model of menstruation as voluntary or libidinal, menstruation could thus be stopped by *vajrolī*.

156), even though the quality is only partially as good as milk (DYŚ 157ab). The libation (*iḍā*) could be the sexual fluid that arises from inferred sexual arousal occurring as a result of stimulating, i.e. drinking from the *yoni*. The following verse is difficult to construe: the woman is to be drunk (i.e. as breastfeeding, reading *dhātu* for †*dhatu*†) as a cup (*kośam*), repeatedly and with careful intensity (*bhr̥śa*) (DYŚ 157cd). There are many difficulties with this line. *Bhr̥śa* can be taken adjectivally as in a ‘strong’, ‘forceful’, ‘harsh’ manner, or be taken as an intensifier, or indicate repetitions. Here it may be the latter, but the term *niṣṭhura* that occurs later in the passage does have a sense of forcefulness (DYŚ 163cd), so *bhr̥śam* could be understood with *niṣṭhura* to indicate forceful sex. However, the passage also uses the term *ādaratas* (respectfully), mitigating against the inference of force. The teaching is summed up: in the absence of milk, that is surely the essence (*rasa*) that is the milk-substitute (DYŚ 158ab). The passage does not specify whether *āṅgīrasa* is to be drunk through the mouth, thereby implying cunnilingus, or, inferring the method of *vajrolī* subsequently taught, understood as ‘drinking’ through the penis. The passage then describes the technique for this sexual practice which I turn to in the next chapter.

*Āṅgīrasa* is literally ‘fluid’ (*rasa*) of ‘that which has limbs’ (*aṅgin*), i.e. the body (*aṅga*). *Āṅgīrasa* has a range of referents from the eponymous sage *Āṅgīras*, to semen (*āṅgīrasa* is often paired with *śukra*) and to *rajas*. *Āṅgīrasa* is glossed as *rajas* by Ballāla in the *Bṛhatkhecarīprakāśa* (Mallinson 2018:189). The *rasa* of *āṅgīrasa* may refer to the final āyurvedic bodily constituent (*dhātu*) of chyle, the most refined evolute of digestion, understood as both semen and menstrual blood—and perhaps breast milk.

The mythological etymology (*nirukti*) of the term *āṅgīrasa* with the sage *Āṅgīras* could recall associations with the death of the body through desiccation and loss of vital fluids. *Āṅgīrasa* is the possessive derivative of *Āṅgīras*, the ancient sage associated with the *Atharvaveda* (Gonda 1975:267–68) meaning ‘belonging to, or a descendant of, *Āṅgīras*’. In

the *Bṛhadāranyaka Upaniṣad* a cryptic etymology is offered, of a kind common in the Brāhmaṇas and Upaniṣads. The breath in the mouth is named *āyāśya*, the *āṅgīrasa*, for ‘it is the essence of the bodily parts’. Here *āṅgīrasa* is explained as referring to the essence (*rasa*) of the parts of the body (*aṅga*), and thus to ‘breath’, ‘life breath’ or ‘vital essence’ (*prāṇa*) (*Bṛhadāranyaka Upaniṣad* 1.3.8–19).<sup>110</sup> The commentary on the *Bṛhadāranyaka Upaniṣad* attributed to Śāṅkara (1.3.19) connects the mythological narrative of Aṅgīras drying up the ocean with the body drying up through the loss of *rasa* and *prāṇa*. These ideas of desiccation and death through the loss of vital essence could have been drawn on by the *haṭha* corpus.

How likely is it that this etymology would have been picked up by the *Dattātreyaśāstra*? The *Mokṣopāya*<sup>111</sup> knows the sage Agastya who, similarly to Aṅgīras, drinks the ocean to capture the Kāleyas (*Mahābhārata* 3.103.1). Agastya’s drinking of the ocean is used to characterise breathing practice in the *Mokṣopāya*. As Uddālaka performs the *prāṇāyāma* of *recaka*, ‘the outbreath (*recaka*) emptied the sage’s entire body, like Agastya emptied the ocean, drinking the water’ (MU 5.54.5) (Cohen 2020:3).<sup>112</sup> Agastya is also associated, in Ṛgveda 1.179, with the transfer of ascetic power through sexual fluid. Here Lopāmudrā seduces her husband Agastya, and ‘sucks dry the panting wise man’ (*Ṛgveda* 1.179) (Doniger 2005:251). His sexual fluids, associated with his ascetic power, are ‘sucked’ out of him through the act of, in this case, procreative sex. This passage is used as epigraph to the conclusion of this thesis.

Ondračka gives another etymology for the term:

Although it is derived from the name of the famous seer Aṅgīras, so we can translate it

<sup>110</sup> *Bṛhadāranyaka Upaniṣad* 1.3.8 and 1.3.19 so ‘yāśya āṅgīrasaḥ, aṅgānām hi rasaḥ | prāṇo vā aṅgānām rasaḥ || My thanks to Barois for notifying me of this etymology; personal communication, 6 April 2019. Mallinson also references this verse in his draft edition of the *Dattātreyaśāstra*: ‘On *āṅgīrasa*, see also *Bṛhadāranyakopaniṣad* 1.3.19, where Ayāśya, a descendant of Aṅgīrasa and hence an *Āṅgīrasa*, is identified with *aṅgānām rasaḥ*, the essence of the body’ (2013:59n95).

<sup>111</sup> Cf. Cohen 2020 on the extent to which the *Mokṣopāya* informs the *haṭha* corpus.

<sup>112</sup> *Mokṣopāya* 5.54.5 *recakākyo 'khilaṃ kāyaṃ prāṇaniṣkramaṇakramaḥ | riktīcakāra pūtāmbur agastya iva sāgaram ||*

as Aṅgiras' substance, however, this surname also belongs to the fire god Agni, so another possible interpretation is 'fire substance'. And this characterization fits menstrual blood exactly, as it is considered a fiery fluid in all genres of Indian texts (2022:84-5).

This latter etymology, the vedic dyad of *agni* and *soma*, could well be the genealogical source of *rajas* and *bindu* as *agni* and *soma* in the body.

### ***Nava rajas: fresh blood***

Is it possible to disambiguate whether *rajas* refers to sexual fluid or to menses, and the stage of the menstrual cycle at which the practice is to be done? In the final verse on the practice of *vajrolī* in the section instructing men in the practice, *rajas* is described: in the *yonis* of women there is new (*nava*) *rajas* that appears as vermilion (DYS 168ab). It seems to me that the appearance of this term here indicates that *āṅgīrasa* and menstrual blood are considered either synonymous or at least co-occurring. In other words, we cannot separate out sexual fluid from menstrual blood in these sources as also is the case in āyurvedic materials. In this verse *rajas* is qualified as new (*nava*) and so the practice would occur during the early part of the menstrual flow. I will return to the implications of the specification of the stage of the menstrual cycle below.

The late *Bṛhatkecarīprakāśa* corroborates this use of the early portion of menstrual discharge and gives greater detail on *āṅgīrasa*: 'Thus, for six months, at the first sight of *rajas*, having rejected the first menstrual fluid, in which there is an excess of *pitta*, on the second day he should perform the secret ritual with that menstruating woman and extract the *āṅgīrasa rajas* from her vagina' (fol. 103v) (Mallinson 2018:209).<sup>113</sup> The implication of this

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<sup>113</sup> *Bṛhatkecarīprakāśa* fol. 103v *prathamaraḥjodarsane prathamam dṛṣṭam pittolbaṇam rajo vihāya dvitīyadine rajasvalayā tayā saha gupteṣṭim kṛtvā tasyāḥ strīyoner āṅgīrasam raja ākr̥ṣya ṣaṇmāsam* (Mallinson 2018:207n44, 209).

verse is that *āṅgirasa rajas*, and perhaps *rajas* as a standalone term when deployed in the context of *vajrolī*, refers to blood from the second to the fourth day of the menstrual cycle.

### ***Blood, sweat and semen***

A unique instruction involving a cloth occurs in the passage where sex is described in the context of men's practice of *vajrolī* in the *Dattātreyaśāstra*: having embraced one another firmly, one should not place the penis on or in (locative case) the *yoni*, but kiss and make the sounds of sex (DYŚ 161). They should roll around pleurably until sweat appears and if semen should fall externally, rub it with the sweat (DYŚ 162). Having wiped it with an old cloth, the wise retain the cloth (DYŚ 163ab). Presumably three fluids are being wiped: blood (*āṅgirasa*), sweat and semen because the next line instructs the practitioner to continue non-penetrative sexual activity until ejaculation occurs. Further, if the *bindu* does not fall one should have rough (*niṣṭhura*) sex externally (DYŚ 163cd). Specifications are given: one should not enter the penis in the *yoni* until the *bindu* has been ejaculated externally and this should be done daily for three days (DYŚ 164). It is clear that semen must be produced—this is no technique for a man who has inhibited the ejaculatory reflex as an outcome of practicing *vajrolī*. With reference to the possibility of conception, penetrative sex is enjoined after ejaculation (DYŚ 164) but the *rajas* is new—hence perhaps the early and non-fertile stage of the menstrual cycle (DYŚ 168).

Are these substances being conserved as media to be used in further ritual praxis?

Hüsken's (2001) analysis of the pad or tampon (*āvasathacīvara*) used by nuns attests to the requirement for menstrual hygiene in the context of Buddhist law codes. Shifting from *vinaya* sources (fifth-century BCE to fifth-century CE) to the contemporary Bāul context, Bāul ethnography attests to the use of a cloth to soak up menses and preserve for future use.

According to Hanssen,

[S]he was 12 years old when her first flow appeared. Her father gave her a white strip of cloth, instructing her to wear it to soak up the menarche. She did as she was told, after which he delivered the cloth to the family guru. Then one month later, Tara, her parents, and three other sadhus were summoned to their guru's ashram. After pouring water on the cloth, for it had hardened during the intervening period, their guru placed the cloth in a coconut vessel to which various liquids had been added, including cow's milk, and palm juice, ingredients to cool the heating properties of Tara's first flow. Sugar and camphor were also added, and the resulting mixture acquired a pink, sweet, and thick consistency. Tara smiled and cupped her hands to illustrate the amount that each of them ingested, saying, "We drank a tiny little bit". (Hanssen 2006:107)

In the *haṭha* context the materials wiped with the cloth are not ingested, though urine or possibly sexual fluid (*amarī*) is drunk through the nose (DYŚ 180cd). Sex during menstruation can only be messy hence supporting the understanding of the use of the cloth here for hygiene purposes. And it being an 'old' piece of cloth suggests its utilitarian nature rather than ritual value. However, the cloth reappears in the *Dattātreyaśāstra*'s discussion of *sahajolī*, treated in the next chapter. There it is thrown into water which could suggest ritual rather than hygiene purposes. This may be related to the ritual 'old cloth' (*dhaṭikā*) given to women after the vedic impregnation rite (*garbhādhāna*).<sup>114</sup>

While the next chapter considers conception more fully, here I consider whether *rajas* is thought to be a procreative, fertile substance. It is likely that *rajas* is the fluid of the first three or four days of the menstrual cycle. We can infer from the verse qualifying the *rajas* as new (DYŚ 168ab) that the practice is happening in the early phase of menstruation, and if the practice were continued for three days as instructed (DYŚ 164) and then discontinued until at least the next menstrual blood, the woman would only be practising during a period of the menstrual cycle when fertility is low. Hence, it seems that *rajas* under these circumstances would not be fertile.

This analysis of *rajas* as not being fertile is inferred from the sources but not specified in them—and the readings that this analysis is based on are tentative at that. The sources set out

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<sup>114</sup> See Nemeč (2020 303n45) on the *Tantrāloka*'s advice on vedic societal acts such as the ceremony before conception.

what the results of preservation of *rajas* are for the female practitioner. Contraception is not one of them. However, a woman who practices *vajrolī* for ‘just’ (*eva*) the purpose of preserving her *rajas* and protects her *rajas* through the practice of *vajrolī* is a *yoginī* (DYS 169). Here the sense is that she should *only* practice for the sake of preserving *rajas* (*rajorakṣārtham eva*) and presumably not for other reasons such as sexual pleasure—or perhaps conception. However, the *Dattātreyaśāstra* in instructing the practice of *vajrolī* for men notes that women obtain pleasure while men attain *siddhis* (DYS 159). The term *yoginī* may be a title or honorific similar to the masculine equivalent *yogin* or may refer to the powers associated with tantric *yoginīs* such as are analysed by Hatley and White (Hatley 2013; White 2003a).

The *Dattātreyaśāstra* grants the female practitioner attributes and abilities, perhaps associated with tantric *yoginīs*: she knows the past and the future, will become a *khecarī*<sup>115</sup> and attains a perfect body (*dehasiddhi*) through the yoga of the practice of *vajrolī* (DYS 170). This is the first reference in the sources to women attaining a perfect body and one that is repeated in the *Haṭhapradīpikā*. The *haṭha* texts in general can be read as teaching a perfect bodily masculinity as the male practitioner achieves alleviation of disease, good health, charisma and superhuman attainments (*siddhis*). Here, women are explicitly referenced in this attainment of bodily perfection.

The *haṭha* sources occasionally associate male practitioners of *vajrolī* with the empowerment of *khecarī*. There is a widespread classification of *yoginīs* in which *khecarī* is one type. Törzsök defines a *khecarī* as ‘she who moves in the void’. She expands,

In the early Tantras, *Khecarīs* are a class of *Yoginīs* moving in the air, who can bestow supernatural powers (PBY *kapālalakṣaṇa* 35, 37; SYM 27.2, 28.33). They may also

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<sup>115</sup> The term *khecarī* literally refers to one who moves through the air. In Hatley’s polythetic analysis of *yoginīs* flight is key aspect seven (Hatley 2013:8) and in White’s list of attributes it is feature four (White 2003a:27). *Khecarīmudrā* is an important exercise in *haṭha* yoga for preventing loss of *amṛta*, the nectar of immortality, taught for example in the *Khecarīvidyā*. There the tongue is inserted above the palate to drink the *amṛta* dripping from the top of the skull (Mallinson 2007a:183-4n113, 191n153).

harm those who are afraid of them (SYM 27.31), but initiation can bestow some protection against death by Khecarīs (SYM 28.20), which shows that the word is often synonymous with Yoginī. Practitioners are often promised to become their masters (*khecarīṅāṃ patitva*, SYM 20.90; MVT 22.26). They are often mentioned together with Bhūcarīs, who can be understood simply to be Yoginīs walking on the ground in this context (SYM 27.26; KMT 24.98) (Törzsök in Brunner et al 2004:168).<sup>116</sup>

The description of *haṭha yoginīs* attaining *kecarī* thus associates them with their more-than-human tantric predecessors. The reduction in materiality of the *khecarīs* in relation to the *bhūcarīs* resonates with the discussion of *jāḍya* in chapter one where materiality becomes attenuated and the practitioner less earth-bound.

### ***Haṭhapradīpikā***

After the *Dattātreyaयोगśāstra* the *Haṭhapradīpikā* has the most detailed account of *vajrolī* and includes details for female practitioners. Much explanation is found in the later *Jyotsnā* commentary posing problems for reading back from that to the early *haṭha* period. The *Haṭhapradīpikā* account is also close to that of Śrīnivāsa's seventeenth-century *Haṭharatnāvalī* an edition of which is published (Lonavla 2002). I have consulted the *Jyotsnā*'s extensive section on *vajrolī* for clarification of the *Haṭhapradīpikā*.

The *Haṭhapradīpikā* is very clear that there are two things to be obtained: milk (*kṣīra*) and a woman (HP 3.83) from whose vagina *rajas* is to be drawn upwards. The Kaivalyadhama critical edition of the *Haṭhapradīpikā* also describes the practice of the preservation of *rajas* from the perspective of a female practitioner and this is discussed in the next chapter. The Kaivalyadhama editors go to some lengths to remove the injunction to have sex, likely an intervention that reflects the reception rather than intent of these practices. The Kaivalyadhama translation of *Haṭhapradīpikā* 3.95, which in the critical edition is numbered HP 3.97, offers a version which does not require the combination of fluids derived through

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<sup>116</sup> PBY = *Picumatabrahmayāmala*, SYM = *Siddhayogeśvarīmata*, KMT = *Kubjikāmatatantra*.



sexual activity: ‘If, by appropriate practice, a woman collects the upper secretions and (also) conserves the lower ones, (combines the two) by Vajrolī, she too is a Yoginī’ (Digambaraji and Kokaje 1998).<sup>117</sup> The Kaivalyadhama edition does not include the qualification of the *bindu* as the man’s and gives a creative translation to exclude the necessity for sexual engagement. This translation seems to draw on the sense of *rajas* as different atmospheric strata, homologized into the body, discussed above in relation to the *Kauṣītaki Upanisad* transmigratory moon cycle and the two moons of the *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa*. The Kaivalyadhama translation may simply be attempting to dissociate the practice from sex by drawing on the definition of *rajas* as atmosphere but there is some genealogical basis for this interpretation.

Some of the manuscripts of the SOAS-Marburg critical edition currently under preparation use the term *rajas*. Manuscript J7 has an extra verse advising yogis to draw *rajas* upwards by the penis. This verse is repeated by J10, N17, N4 and N12 in different places in the text. Manuscript N4 introduces the terms ‘the fluid from the moon’ (*cāndrī*) and ‘ash’ or perhaps *rajas* (*vibhūti*): through practice the flowing fluid of the moon should be mixed together with ash (*vibhūti*) and held in the upper body; divine sight arises (HP 3.122). *Vibhūti* is usually ‘ash’ but the Kaivalyadhama editors take it as *rajas*. The Kaivalyadhama editors note, ‘The word Cāndrī is here used for the juice oozed out of the Candra up in the throat and Vibhūti for that from the pelvic region’ (Digambaraji and Kokaje 1998:113 where this verse appears as HP 3.94).<sup>118</sup> Thus, we could take *vibhūti* as the generic power (*śakti*) of *rajas*.

The next portion of the *Haṭhapradīpikā* describes the practice for women but gives no further details on *rajas* as a bodily substance. It does elaborate on its transmutation: if a

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<sup>117</sup> HP 3.97 *pumso binduṃ samākṛṣya samyagabhyāsapātāvāt | yadi nārī rajo rakṣed vajrolyā sā hi yoginī ||* The Kaivalyadhama edition has *kuñcya* for *\*kṛṣya*.

<sup>118</sup> The fluid from the moon resonates with the following anecdotal account: James Mathie experienced a prolonged period in which he produced a pearly white fluid in the mouth (from the head rather than regurgitating from the abdomen), during a *kuṇḍalinī* episode doing a trance dance described as the *rasa lila* (Ann Mathie, personal communication, 19 February 2024).

woman from skilful practice correctly draws up the *bindu* of the man and preserves her own *rajas* she is a *yoginī* (HP 3.97). As well as receiving the title *yoginī* her *rajas* is not destroyed and her *bindu* becomes internally aroused sound (*nāda*) within her body (HP 3.98). Finally, *bindu* and *rajas* become one within her own body and through the yoga practice of *vajrolī* all attainments are bestowed (HP 3.99). There could be a correlation here between *rajas* and *kuṇḍalinī* discernible via *nāda*. *Kuṇḍalinī* is associated with creation and associated with the alphabet and *nāda* as explored in chapter six. It is notable that the description differs between male and female practitioners: in the description of practices for men *bindu* does not change to *nāda*. However, it is not clear to me whether this bears any significance for bodily or embryological practices *vis-à-vis* men and women. Shortly I will suggest the sources espouse a single-sex physiology of the body with which differences in the *vajrolī* practice for men and women sit oddly.

Having discussed the *Amṛtasiddhi* which establishes a *bindu-rajas* model of mundane embryology inverted by the celibate yogi, and the *Dattātreya yogaśāstra* which in some witnesses describes explicit sexual activity at the start of the menstrual cycle when the female partner is less likely to be fertile, the *Haṭhapradīpikā* offers a detailed and pragmatic account that is again neither erotic nor particularly moralistic. In the *Haṭhapradīpikā* *bindu* and *rajas* are mixed together and drawn upwards by both partners. It is clear that *rajas* is menstrual fluid. It is less clear that *rajas* is also fluid produced through sexual stimulation and there is no indication of the manner in which the practice should be done, such as pleurably or forcefully (terms which are not necessarily exclusive). However, *sahajolī* is said to deliver liberation even though pleasure has been enjoyed (HP 3.94). The rhetoric of the sublimation of *rajas* into *nāda* is deployed but not an inversion of embryology.

I turn to the *Goraḅᅣaᅣataka*, *Vasiᅣᅣhasaᅣhitā* and *Śivasaᅣhitā* as they add a little more detail before summarising *rajas* in the later corpus.

### ***Gorakṣaśataka***

The passages I have discussed from the *Amṛtasiddhi*, *Dattātreya yogaśāstra* and *Haṭhapradīpikā* are the most substantial and significant for their explanations on *rajas*. I now turn to the *Gorakṣaśataka*. The only mention of *rajas* as the correlate of semen (*śukla*) (GŚ 87) that occurs in the *Gorakṣaśataka* is after the description of *kuṇḍalinī* rising. It is as a result of *kuṇḍalinī* embracing *śiva* and disappearing (GŚ 86) that *rajas* and *śukla* come together in *śiva*—as do *prāṇa* and *apāna* (GŚ 87). In the *Yogabīja* the coming together of these pairs is the definition of yoga and here in the *Gorakṣaśataka* this passage precedes the final metaphysical denouement. Though *rajas* does not occur elsewhere in the text the place of *pitta* is identified as the abode of the sun (GŚ 82) which is the lower body and it is from this place, along with fire, that *kuṇḍalinī* is moved. *Rajas guṇa* is mentioned only in reference to producing the knot (*granthi*) of *brahman* (GŚ 78) and not in relation to *rajas* as menses or sexual fluid.

### ***Vasiṣṭhasaṃhitā***

In the *Vasiṣṭhasaṃhitā* prescriptions for appropriate sexual conduct turn, on the one hand, on the stage of life of the yogi, and on the other, the phase of the female partner's menstrual cycle as well as her relationship to the yogi. In the *Vasiṣṭhasaṃhitā* *brahmacarya* is defined as the renunciation of sex whether through action, thought or word and in anything or anyone, always, everywhere (VS 1.43). *Brahmacarya* is defined for householders (*grhastha*) as sex with one's wife according to her fertile periods (VS 1.44), taking *ṛtāv ṛtau* as repeatedly in each fertile period.<sup>119</sup> *Rajas* is not simply menses but also generative or procreative in *āyurveda* and *dharmasāstra* (Das 2003; Leslie 1996; Slaje 1995) which stands in tension with

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<sup>119</sup> Thanks to Wojteczak for clarification, personal communication, 3 June 2022.

modern medical accounts of embryology where ovulation occurs around days 12-14 of the menstrual cycle. Thus, although at variance with contemporaneous understandings of physiology, the double locative *ṛtāv ṛtau* could result in rhythm birth-control as sex during or immediately following menstruation is less likely to result in conception. This passage treats non-regulated sex as taboo but not menstruation.

In the *Vasiṣṭhasaṃhitā* *rajas* as a quality (*guṇa*) rather than blood occurs as a description for the sun in chapter two's discussion of the body. The moon and sun move in *iḍā* and *piṅgalā* respectively (VS 2.28) and, drawing together the *guṇa* interpretation of *rajas*, the sun is *rajas* and the moon *tamas* (VS 2.29). Chapter five identifies the breath (inferred from VS 5.22) as poisonous (*viṣa*) in the sun passage and nectar (*amṛta*) in the left (*soma*) (VS 5.23). What implications can be drawn from this? *Rajas* is identified with the sun and the right passage, and the sun and the right passage are said to carry poison. While not explicit there is an inference that *rajas* is associated with poison. *Kuṇḍalinī* too has associations with poison.<sup>120</sup>

### ***Śivasāṃhitā***

*Vajrolī* is taught in the *Śivasāṃhitā* as one of the ten *mudrās*, the first of which is *yoniṃudrā*. In chapter four the *Śivasāṃhitā* teaches *vajrolī* (ŚS 4.78-85) as drawing up the comingled *bindu* and *rajas*. The perspective is entirely androcentric, instructing only the male practitioner. Here I focus on the nature of *rajas*, which echoes the description of the *Amṛtasiddhi*. In chapter one the *Śivasāṃhitā* teaches that *śiva* is *bindu* and *śakti* is *rajas* and from the union of the two, illusory elements arise spontaneously through the power of *maya* (ŚS 1.96). This is in the context of explaining the cause of the body and, thus, refers to samsāric conception. Samsāric conception and its halting is also reflected in *Śivasāṃhitā*

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<sup>120</sup> See chapter five p. 236n185.

4.88-91 where one is born and dies in the world through semen and, therefore, the yogi should preserve it (ŚS 4.89), thus inverting the process of *saṃsāra*. The instructions for *vajrolī* clearly involve sex, reflecting the *śaiva* orientation of the source: the *rajas* that the yogi should draw upwards is ‘from the woman’s vagina’ (ŚS 4.81). *Bindu* is lunar and *rajas* solar and they are to be combined within one’s own body (ŚS 4.86). Semen is *śiva* (and the authorial voice in this text) and *rajas* is *śakti*; their combination makes the yogi’s body divine (ŚS 4.87).

### ***Rajas in later corpus***

*Vajrolī* is treated in the later corpus as mentioned in the *Jyotsnā* on the *Haṭhapradīpikā*. In the seventeenth-century *Haṭharatnāvalī* the yogi should draw up only *bindu* (*Haṭharatnāvalī* 2.97) whereas for the women, the *rajas* that is defined as of the menstruating women (*rtumatyā rajo*), should be preserved by her along with *bindu* and *rajas* after sex in which the semen is ejaculated into the vagina (*Haṭharatnāvalī* 2.100-101). The eighteenth-century *Haṭhasaṅketacandrikā*,<sup>121</sup> similar to the *Āmṛtasiddhi*, identifies *śiva* as *bindu* in living beings and as twofold, male and female: *rajas* is of a woman and *bīja* of a man. The early nineteenth-century *Vajroliyoga* notes that a woman may master *vajrolī* (*Vajroliyoga* 3) and specifies how she should extract semen and attain steadiness of body: having pulled ejaculated semen upwards neither semen nor *rajas* are lost and *rajas* together with *bindu* becomes *nāda* in the *mūlādhāra* of women (*Vajroliyoga* 24-26) (Mallinson 2018:215).<sup>122</sup> The *Haṭhābhyāsapaddhati* is an eighteenth-century manual written, according to the opening, for those obsessed by, *inter alia*, women (Birch and Singleton 2019:16). Its final section on *vajrolīmudrā* is ‘the most extraordinary of its kind in any premodern yoga text’ (Birch and

<sup>121</sup> *Haṭhasaṅketacandrikā yas sarvatattvādhipa eṣa devo bhavo vyayo bindumayo [’]sti janteṣu | sa pauruṣastraiṇa iti dvidhokto rajas [s]triyāḥ pauruṣam eva bījam |* Thanks to Birch for this reference, personal communication, 26 November 2016.

<sup>122</sup> See also *Mālinīvijayottaratantra* 17.15a and 17.32b (Vasudeva 2004:134, 139).

Singleton 2019:27). In the *Haṭhābhyāsapaddhati*, *vajrolīmudrā* is an ascetic practice to develop non-attachment (*vairāgya*) and the retention of semen, though not celibacy. Sexual intercourse is enjoined, and while the majority of the instruction is to draw up *bindu*, men are also instructed to draw up *rajas*. Thus, *vajrolī* continues to be instructed in the written record, and women continue to be a marginal but nevertheless continuous presence.

### ***Impurity and power***

*Haṭha* yoga emerges from a tantric context in which menses is a vital power substance imbibed in ritual encounters between practitioners (*sādhakas*) and female consorts and *yoginīs*. Notwithstanding this tantric context, *haṭha* yoga as we have seen does not continue practices of ingestion of menses, nor apparently treat the substance with horror but with pragmatism. The impurity and power of *rajas* as theorized by scholars such as Douglas (1966) is particularly apt to the tantric context. Critical theoretical approaches help to articulate the antinomian power of *rajas* and at the same time draw the female practitioner, marked largely by absence in most tantric and *haṭha* accounts, into the frame. The abjection of *rajas* has a long history. In the agrarian counterpart of menstruation, the dust (*rajas*) of fields torn for fertilization could be the starting point for the exegesis of the *Taittirīyasamhitā*'s myth of the *brahmahatyā* (2.5.1), an origin myth for menstruation and thus human procreation (Leslie 1996; Slaje 1995). Here women take a portion of Indra's blame which manifests as menstruation. We see abjection at play in this external evidence of menstruation onto women's clothes. Apt here is Kristeva's articulation of the 'abject' as that which has been expelled from the body, discharged as excrement, literally rendered 'Other' (1984). The evidence for the 'othering' of women is their menstrual flow which at the same time establishes them as empowered agents. Butler notes, 'The construction of the "not-me"

as the object establishes the boundaries of the body which are also the first contours of the subject' (1990:181). On this view the *yoginī* is established via the abjection of *rajas*.

Philosophic theorizations of the purity or otherwise of menstrual blood predate contemporary critical theorists. Sanderson describes Kashmirian tantric brahmin attitudes towards menstrual blood's 'awesome power of impurity'—

[T]hat which could not be suppressed [in the women of the cult], the monthly discharge of their inner depravity, contact with which was feared by the orthodox as the destroyer of wisdom, strength and sight, was revered by the devotee of Bhairava and Kālī as the most potent of power-substances, irresistible to the deities he invoked into himself or into his presence. (Sanderson 1985:202)

In the next chapter I explore the limits of suppressing 'that which could not be suppressed'.

Abhinavagupta, the tenth-century nondualist Kashmirian *śaiva* exegete, challenges the Brahmanical prescription that bodily substances are impure after leaving the body. In *Tantrāloka* 4.244c-246b impurity is not an attribute of an external entity but a property of the perceiver (Sanderson 2018:7).<sup>123</sup>

In the *Guhyasūtra*, rites harness such 'potent and impure materials' as skulls, flesh, menstrual fluid and 'razor's edge' (*asidhārāvratā*) practices for non-soteriological but power-seeking *sādhakas* that presage the visionary ritual world of the *Bhairavatantras* (Hatley 2016:9). White gives an at times exoticizing account of the consumption of menses in 'esoteric traditions':

[T]he expansion of consciousness to a divine level was instantaneously triggered through the consumption of forbidden substances: semen, menstrual blood, feces, urine, human flesh, and the like. Menstrual or uterine blood, which was considered to be the most powerful among these forbidden substances, could be accessed through sexual relations with female tantric consorts... Whether by consuming the sexual emissions of these forbidden women or through the bliss of sexual orgasm with them, tantric yogis could "blow their minds" and realize a breakthrough into transcendent

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<sup>123</sup> *Tantrāloka* 4.224c–246b *bahiḥ satsv api bhāveṣu śuddhyaśuddhī na nīlavat | pramātr̥dharma evāyaṃ cidaikyānaikyavedanāt | yadi vā vastudharmo 'pi mātrapekṣānibandhanaḥ | sautrāmaṇyāṃ surā hotuḥ śuddhānyasya viparyayaḥ |*

levels of consciousness.’ (White 2021:27)<sup>124</sup>

While this material frames the potency of *rajas* as derived through antinomianism and abjection, and which undoubtedly constitutes the framework for the utilisation of *rajas* in *haṭha* sources, there is no exoticisation or even horror of *rajas* as a substance in the *haṭha* sources. The closest the *haṭha* sources get to ingesting menses is in some witnesses of the *Dattātreyayogaśāstra* and these are very difficult to construe.

### **Conclusion: single sex**

This chapter has focused on the nature of *rajas* within *haṭha* yoga by defining *rajas* as used in the sources, in *āyurveda*, in relation to *rajas guṇa* and in relation to *rāja* yoga. Threaded through the discussion of *rajas* in passages from the *Amṛtasiddhi*, *Dattātreyayogaśāstra* and *Haṭhapradīpikā* and supported with additional material from the corpus, was the question of whether *rajas* is fertile. A comparison with the treatment of *rajas* in tantra indicated that *haṭha* yoga does not inherit, or at least express, an abhorrence or veneration of *rajas*. To conclude this chapter, how should we understand *rajas* as sited in men, and how is *rajas* situated in relation to the *kuṇḍalinī* and *pāka* models of the body? Finally, what is *rajas* in the body of *haṭha* yoga?

The *Amṛtasiddhi* describes *rajas* as ‘that which arises in women’ and at the same time situates *rajas* in men. This suggests a fluidity and sufficiency to the male practitioner insofar as the ability to provide himself with *rajas*. Unlike the vedic materials in which the wife is a vital component of the sacrificial couple (Jamison 1996; Olivelle 1997), the male practitioner in *haṭha* yoga is sufficient unto his own liberation. And women can also draw up *rajas* and *bindu*.<sup>125</sup> The essentialist gendered paradigm of *rajas* as arising in women and *bindu* as

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<sup>124</sup> Page numbers refer to the preprint not the published edition which I have been unable to consult.

<sup>125</sup> The sources do not specify that women can create or utilize self-generated *bindu*, but may be because such concerns do not enter the anthropocentric ambit of the sources.



arising in men, used to define these substances in the *Amṛtasiddhi*, is not an essential physiological truth for the texts of the *haṭha* corpus. The essentialism breaks down, or at least is shown to be provisional, and is creatively reworked in the *haṭha* corpus for soteriological and social purposes.

The terms ‘sex’ and ‘gender’ have been defined and critiqued by a broad array of disciplines such as feminism, critical theory, queer studies and de- and post-colonial approaches with social and political ramifications. Put simply, ‘gender’ is the social construction of identity, behaviours and attributes associated with labels of masculinity and femininity. Gender is often contrasted with ‘sex’, the biological sex of an individual, assigned at birth and generally male or female. Gender theorists such as de Beauvoir and Butler have, I think persuasively, argued for the social construction of gender, and have further collapsed the distinction between gender and sex, arguing that sex too is constructed through the performance of social roles (de Beauvoir 1988; Butler 1993, 1990). Laqueur’s pioneering work *Making Sex* (1990) takes this further by foregrounding the cultural construction of sex. His work has provided a fruitful point of departure for analysing the sexed and reproductive bodies of *haṭha* yoga.

Is the paradigm of bodies in the *haṭha* corpus based on the single sex model described by Laqueur? Laqueur contextualises the radical reformulation of sex in eighteenth-century Britain to ‘a new model of radical climorphism, of biological divergence’ (1992:6), a shift from what went before:

For thousands of years it had been a commonplace that women had the same genitals as men except that, as Nemesius, bishop of Emesa in the fourth century, put it: "theirs are inside the body and not outside it." Galen, who in the second century A.D. developed the most powerful and resilient model of the structural, though not spatial, identity of the male and female reproductive organs, demonstrated at length that women were essentially men in whom a lack of vital heat—of perfection—had resulted in the retention, inside, of structures that in the male are visible without. (Laqueur 1992:4)

Following Laqueur I suggest that the sources adhere to a one sex model of the body: men and women are considered the same with the only variation relating to difference in sexual organs. This fact is obscured by the misogyny of the sources. Laqueur's argument can be tested via recourse to sexed anatomy. Women are not addressed as practitioners in *haṭha* yoga except in practices that involve differences in sexual organs. Thus, in *vajrolī*, the principal practice in which sexual anatomy dictates a different technique, women are instructed in how to do these practices. A grammatical case can be made for the corpus' use of the generic masculine optative singular to include women as well as men (see next chapter). However, the patriarchal context of textual redaction, audience and copying culture obscures what could be a grammatical universalism.

The discussion of grammatical gender can be extended to the question of whether sexual organs should be associated only with one or other of the sexes. It is clear that the only practices addressed to women are where men and women differ in sexual organs and this impacts the technique taught, and nowhere in the corpus are women banned from practicing. The esoteric anatomy of the yogic body is gendered (*nāḍīs*, *kuṇḍalinī*, *śiva* and *śakti*), but what of the more mundane? Gender is ascribed to aspects of the body, such as *nāḍīs* with feminine gender, without that ascription bearing on the sex of the practitioner.<sup>126</sup> The *yoni* as a physical organ is the reproductive organ of women. As such we might expect *yoni* not to be used in relation to male practitioners. Yet it is. *Yoni* is used as a physical location of the grammatically male body when directional instructions are given. To take some examples from the *Vasiṣṭhasaṃhitā*, the practitioner should place the heel at the place of the *yoni* (*yonisthāna*) and the other foot on the penis (*meḍhre*) (Viv 7ab). The bulb (*kanda*) is described like a *yoni* situated above the penis (*meḍhra*) and below the navel (Viv 16). The

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<sup>126</sup> In some Tibetan traditions the channels are reversed in women's bodies, cf. Kragh in Mallinson and Szántó (2022:144n125).

great seal (*mahāmudrā*) involves pressing the *yoni* with the heel (Viv 59ab). In the *Śivasamhitā* the *yoni* is said to face backwards between the anus and the penis (ŚS 5.78). The *Haṭhapradīpikā* instructs the *yoginī*, in the latest version of the critical edition, to use her ‘penis’ (*mehana*) to draw *rajas* upwards (J7 reports *mehana*, N12 *mehana*, and J10, N17 and N4 report that she should use the *meḍhra*, a synonym for *mehana*, to do so).<sup>127</sup> We can conclude that the terms *yoni* and *meḍhra* do not refer to sexual organs associated with only women or men. Further, *rajas* is not only produced in women. Finally, and this is a broader point about the nature of the body in *haṭha* yoga, the *haṭha* sources can be read in the Galenic model of a single sex.<sup>128</sup>

### ***Rajas, kuṇḍalinī and pāka***

How do the models of *pāka*, *rajas* and *kuṇḍalinī* interrelate? Both *rajas* and *kuṇḍalinī* are clearly associated with heat but not specifically baking. The bodily experience of heat is not always identified as sexual arousal. *Rajas* is described as fire and sun. The contexts in which *rajas* is discussed is often one of sex in which arousal is likely to play a part. The bodily locations of *rajas*, *kuṇḍalinī* and fire all overlap, or perhaps share a phenomenological locale, at the base of the body and abdomen. *Kuṇḍalinī* is not hot when dormant but is aroused through being burnt with heat, and her rising is experienced as heat (see chapter five).

The discussion of this chapter has largely pivoted around the teachings of the *Dattātreyayogaśāstra*, a Vaiṣṇava source that though the systematic articulation of a single authorial voice is still a compilation. In this text *kuṇḍalinī* appears only fleetingly. I have also had recourse to the *Haṭhapradīpikā* and *Śivasamhitā* for extensive teachings on *vajrolī*, the former including practices for women and the latter entirely androcentric. Both these sources

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<sup>127</sup> See forthcoming critical edition for manuscript details.

<sup>128</sup> See Wu (2016) for a similar argument in the Chinese context.

also contain extensive treatments of *kuṇḍalinī*—the former likely resulting from its relatively encyclopaedic nature and the latter due to its *śaiva* orientation. Important aspects of the models of *rajas* and *kuṇḍalinī* are the relocation of sexual ritual to the body of the individual yogi. This point bears emphasis as that is the overriding mode in which the *haṭha* sources treat *rajas* and *kuṇḍalinī*, rather than contexts of sexual activity.

If *rajas* is clearly associated with heat it is more difficult to disambiguate the relationship between *rajas* and *kuṇḍalinī*. White, I think erroneously in relation to the early *haṭha* sources, describes *kuṇḍalinī* as containing *bindu* and carrying it upwards:

In a novel variation on the theme of consciousness-raising-as-internal-ascent, *haṭha yoga* also represents the yogic body as a sealed hydraulic system within which vital fluids may be channeled upward as they are refined into nectar through the heat of asceticism. Here, the semen of the practitioner, lying inert in the coiled body of the serpentine *kuṇḍalinī* in the lower abdomen, becomes heated through the bellows effect of *prāṇāyāma*, the repeated inflation and deflation of the peripheral breath channels. The awakened *kuṇḍalinī* suddenly straightens and enters into the *suṣumṇā*, the medial channel that runs the length of the spinal column up to the cranial vault. Propelled by the yogi's heated breaths, the hissing *kuṇḍalinī* serpent shoots upward, piercing each of the *cakras* as she rises. With the penetration of each succeeding *cakra*, tremendous heat is released, such that the semen contained in the *kuṇḍalinī*'s body becomes gradually refined and transmuted... When the *kuṇḍalinī* reaches the end of her rise and bursts into the cranial vault, the semen that she has been carrying has been transformed into the nectar of immortality, which the yogi then drinks internally from the bowl of his own skull. (White 2021:30)

The closest the early *haṭha* sources come to *kuṇḍalinī* carrying *bindu* or *rajas* are the *Vivekamārtaṇḍa* and *Gorakṣaśataka*. In the *Vivekamārtaṇḍa* *rajas* is moved by *kuṇḍalinī* and both are titled *śakti* but *kuṇḍalinī* is not explicitly designated as containing *rajas*. The *Gorakṣaśataka* mentions *rajas* once as *guṇa* (GŚ 78) and once in its generative capacity (GŚ 87) in a summary of the results of an elaborate description of *kuṇḍalinī* rising through the body and *rajas* is joined with semen: as a result of *kuṇḍalinī* embracing *śiva* (GŚ 86), the *rajas* that is below and the *śukra* (semen) that is above come together in *śiva*, and *prāṇa* and *apāna* also come together (GŚ 87). It appears that White's interpretation of the *haṭha* sources

is influenced by his extensive studies of tantra and alchemy but not supported by textual evidence in the early *haṭha* corpus.

Mallinson and Singleton (2017) argue that yogic body models become overlapping and inconsistent over the development of the *haṭha* corpus. The stance I have taken resists positing original and distinct models of the body. I do not attempt to excavate historical ur-bodies that were never at any stage ‘contaminated’ by neighbouring contexts, histories, peoples and interpretations. Rather yoga body models are always already entangled. Nevertheless, the project of analysing the historical development of the concepts, clearly done by Mallinson and Singleton, is important to appreciate the distinctive bodies of *haṭha* yoga and their genealogical development. Instead of that project here I am attempting to show the imbrication of the models and emphasise the materiality of the body.

### ***Is rajas procreative?***

On a modern biomedical understanding the first flow of menstrual blood is not a procreative substance. Regardless of understandings expressed by *dharmaśāstra* and *āyurveda*, sexual activity at this moment is unlikely to lead to reproduction. The social outcome is sex without reproduction. This is not a comment about sexual culture in yogic communities but an analysis of *rajas*. While conception could ensue from penetrative ejaculatory sex there are some qualifications as to the stage of the menstrual cycle at which to do these practices. In the *Dattātreya yogaśāstra* the woman’s *rajas* is described as new (DYŚ 168) and the man is to practise once a day for three days but without penetration until after ejaculation (DYŚ 164). This would suggest the practice should take place when menstruation has just started. The *Bṛhatkhecarīprakāśa* qualifies that the first day’s *rajas* is to be rejected and the practice is to commence on the second (fol. 103v). In more orthodox mode, yet as evidence that the sources are open to discussing the menstrual cycle, the *Vasiṣṭhasaṃhitā* uses the criterion of

menstrual cycle to identify when householders should have sex in conformity with *brahmacarya* (VS 1.44) and this is understood by *āyurveda* and *dharmasāstra* to be a few days after menstruation has started. Sex during menstruation, such as in the *Dattātreyaśāstra* and *Bṛhatkhecarīprakāśa*, is less likely to result in conception. On the basis of both descriptions of *rajas* and the stage of the menstrual cycle, I would suggest that *rajas* is not a procreative substance.

*Haṭha* does not inherit an abjection of *rajas* though the orthodox *Vasiṣṭhasaṃhitā* repeats traditional injunctions for sexual behaviour. The *haṭha* corpus understands *rajas* as menstrual blood and the generative fluid of procreation as vital to saṃsāric reproduction. The retention or protection of *rajas* facilitates soteriological attainments for men and women and thus *rajas* functions as a vital fluid facilitating yogic soteriology. The specification of the type of *rajas* to be retained in sexual practice, that of early menses, mitigates against such activity leading to conception. Moreso, the interiorisation of sexual ritual in celibate mode mitigates against procreation. This chapter sets the groundwork for the practical orientation of the next that asks what is meant by the instruction to raise and protect *rajas*.

## Chapter Four

### *'I will slay your red dragon'*

[T]hat which could not be suppressed [in the women of the cult], the monthly discharge of their inner depravity...

(Sanderson 1985:202)

And she attains perfection of the body as a result of the practice of *vajrolī*. This yoga makes good fortune and grants liberation even when pleasure has been enjoyed.

*Haṭhpradīpikā* 3.101<sup>129</sup>

Male ascetics are revered throughout Indian literature for retaining their semen and sometimes admonished for releasing it. In the premodern period women are generally considered a danger to men's asceticism, causing them to lose their ascetic power (*tapas*) through ejaculation. Pārvatī uses asceticism and erotic appeal to persuade Śiva to 'lose his seed' yet women retaining their seed is not a theme in the historical literature. However, the modern-day spiritual guru Amma claimed to be 'pure' in the sense of not menstruating, and this was taken as a sign of her divinity (Tredwell 2013:153).<sup>130</sup> Throughout *haṭha* literature the repetitions of the depletion paradigm insist on the importance of *bindu* retention. But what of *rajas*? As we saw in the last chapter *rajas* is female menstrual blood or sexual fluid. Its use

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<sup>129</sup> HP 3.101 *dehasiddhiṃ ca labhate vajrolyabhyāsayogataḥ | ayam śubhakarō yogo bhoge bhukte 'pi muktidaḥ ||* I infer the female pronoun as the previous verses have described the practice of *vajrolī* for the *yoginī*.

<sup>130</sup> 'Regarding the claim in A.'s biography that A., due to her divinity stopped menstruating at the onset of her bhavas, what Gail reports is true' (Albohair 2021:82). 'Before meeting Amma, I was told she was "pure," meaning free of her monthly menstruation. This purity was proof of her divinity.' (Tredwell 2013:153). Contrasting with Amma's assertion of amenorrhea brought on by religious practice is her campaigning work on menstrual hygiene and re-usable sanitary pads (<https://www.amritapuri.org/81578/22saukhyam.aum> accessed 4 May 2023). Thanks to Lucia for making me aware of this case, personal communication, 4 August 2022.

within yoga practice is less clear than *bindu*. This chapter details the practices associated with *rajas* for women.

Chapter three was devoted to identifying the nature of *rajas*, a term that refers to female sexual and menstrual blood and is also understood to occur in men. Chapter three noted how women were instructed to draw it up and protect or preserve it. The driving question of this chapter is to understand what is meant by the instruction to ‘draw upwards and protect’. Corollaries to this question are how the *haṭha* corpus conceives saṃsāric procreation on the one hand and ‘spiritual embryology’ on the other. As there is very little explanation of the instruction to ‘draw upwards and protect’ I identify accounts of menstrual practice and conception that nuance the *haṭha* injunction. I believe that female-oriented Daoist internal alchemy, *nüidan*, offers such a model and include it as a case study in this chapter. As we see there the earliest reference in *nüidan* to the halting of menstruation is the offer to a girl fleeing unwanted marriage that ‘I will slay your red dragon’. I make two arguments in this chapter. One is that ‘raising *rajas*’ could be halting menses. The other is the prosaic approach to sex and sexuality in the sources.

### ***Raising rajas***

If we understand ‘raising *rajas*’ as an exact correlate of the practice for men of *vajrolī*, i.e. drawing *bindu* upwards through the penis, then the practice could be one of drawing menses and / or sexual fluid back up into the body once it has been released. Further, and as a consequence of this, ‘raising *rajas*’ could be a form of menstrual practice that involves altering the menstrual cycle. ‘Raising *rajas*’ has implications for conception: it might be intended to make conception less likely as a result of sex. While raising *rajas* alone might not contribute to the prevention of conception, in combination with the time of the menstrual cycle and other instructions on how sex should be undertaken, a reduction in the likelihood of



conception is possible. Later female-oriented Chinese inner alchemy, *nüdan*, gives a detailed account of refining menstrual blood to stop menstruation as the first step in a process of creating a spiritual embryo and delivering it through the head. The techniques attested for such voluntary amenorrhea include ‘contracting’ as also enjoined in *haṭha* sources. Though there is connectivity in technique, intertextual evidence to link *nüdan* and *haṭha* is lacking. The practice of raising *rajas* involves physical contractions but the physiological implications of the practice are not clear. Like the practice of raising *bindu*, the practice of raising *rajas* cannot be understood on an entirely physiological level.

### ***Prosaic attitude to sex: scripting sex and sexuality***

The long centuries since the period studied here have seen disgust at and erasure of the sexual practices that the early sources teach. *Vajrolīmudrā* is the practice of drawing semen, sometimes conjoined with menses, upwards through the penis. Mallinson (2007a:189-190n149) notes that *Gheraṇḍasaṃhitā* 3.39, dated to 1700 (Mallinson 2004:xiii-xiv), understands *vajrolīmudrā* as a simple posture, Vasu’s 1914 edition of the *Śivasamhitā* omits *vajrolīmudrā* as ‘an obscene practice indulged in by low class Tantrists’ (Vasu 2014:51), and Reiker’s *Haṭhapradīpikā* commentary, prepared under Iyengar’s guidance, describes *vajrolīmudrā*, *sahajolīmudrā* and *amarolīmudrā* as ‘obscure and repugnant practices’ (Reiker 1971:127). An example of the erasure of sex is the substitution of ‘woman’ (*nārī*), evident in all the manuscripts consulted for the recent critical edition, with ‘channel’ (*nāḍī*) in the Kaivalyadhama edition of the *Haṭhapradīpikā*. The historical processes that influence the reception and sanitised redactions of the sources are the replacement of the tantric doctrinal framework of most of the early *haṭha* sources with *vedānta*, as seen in the *Gheraṇḍasaṃhitā* (Mallinson 2004:xiv), the influence of British colonial and Christian missionizing’s disapprobation of sex, and the Hindu Renaissance negotiating the parameters of ‘a monolithic

homogenous Hinduism’ in dialogue with Christianity (Mallinson 2007a:189-190n149). This disgust at and erasure of sexual practice contrasts with the centring of a hedonistic sexual ecstasy as the pinnacle of practice in neo-tantra. In light of these extremes of reception to come, the pragmatism of the sources on sexual technique is all the more evident in its acceptance of sex and sexuality, extending even to the scripting of women’s sexuality.

The instructions for *vajrolī*, *amarolī* and *sahajolī* are the only techniques in the *haṭha* corpus that script real relationships between men and women (rather than the stock dismissals characterising female sexuality enumerated below). I evaluate the language used to define these interactions in terms of pleasure and at times force. I find evidence of both. Overall, this practice is said to liberate even though pleasure has been enjoyed. This liberation, while at times bodiless and thus transcendent of the body, also includes liberation as sovereignty over conception, an analysis that has not to date been drawn to the fore. However, the manuscripts upon which this argument is based are only tentatively established and still rather obscure, especially the *Dattātreyayogaśāstra*. Sex is dealt with in a minority of texts, and even then only with reference to *vajrolī*. *Vajrolī* is itself a fringe practice and not always associated with sex. However, from a meta-perspective the traditions comprise male ascetics disinterested in procreation.

Ondračka (2021) remarks that the general absence of women in the *haṭha* sources contrasts with their sudden appearance in relation to sexual practice. In relation to the *Pātañjalayogaśāstra* he notes, ‘strict sexual abstinence is a necessary condition for the very possibility of beginning a yoga practice. This was intended only for male ascetics’ (2022:85). He gives two reasons for the apparently contradictory appearance of women in sources which are otherwise concerned with the principle of celibacy: first, ‘the rhetoric of prescriptive texts is one thing, and the social reality quite another’, and second, *haṭha* yoga ‘opened itself—at least in theory—not only to non-ascetics but even to women’ (2022:85). Thus, we have a

contrast with the *Pātañjalayogaśāstra*'s strict celibacy and a heterogeneous approach in the *haṭha* sources. Though there is a lacuna on women in general, there is a divergence in sexual practice and a scattering of statements on sexual ethics. Recommendations on celibacy are generally associated with the early stages of the practice and the refrain that liberation is attained though pleasure has been enjoyed reverberates.

Ondračka points to the gap that this chapter addresses when he notes:

[I]t is clear that the *vajrolīmudrā* is a sexual practice and that a yogi cannot do without a woman. What is more, her role is probably much more important than it appears at first sight. Indeed, it must be added that the origins, history, and full significance of this technique have not yet been sufficiently explored.

He suggests, 'the interpretive key to the whole technique lies in this tantric function of the *vajrolī*' (2022:87). However, I do not seek to locate the logic for the lacuna on female practitioners only in prior materials. Rather, I seek to unpick the social and soteriological implications of sexual practice and gender insofar as the *haṭha* sources themselves allow.

White has mapped much material in his 2003 *Kiss of the Yoginī* offering a meta-history of sex and tantra impressive in its reach. In comparison my work is a more modest textual study of a narrower set of sources that nevertheless explores some of the connections he makes for example between Indian and Chinese systems (1993:60-66). In a subsection on 'conceiving conception', White raises questions central to this chapter (2003:90-93). His sources are tantric rather than *haṭha* yogic. He quotes the *Manthānabhairava* as enjoining male practitioners to consume menstrual blood and breastmilk together (2003:90), which he argues is 'physiologically impossible for both to be the emissions of the same woman' (2003:91). However, it is possible to continue to produce breastmilk after menstruation re-occurs subsequent to pregnancy and childbirth, refuting his contention that, 'As the aphoristic opening of the *Manthānabhairava* makes clear, Kaula practitioners were aware that when lactation ceases, menstrual flow begins, and vice versa' (2003:91). He discusses the text's

linking of embryology and identifies conception as the transformation of menstrual blood into breast milk. I think his inclusion of this theme is important and that there are concepts of conception underpinning sexual practice.

White notes, ‘some scholars have viewed the injunction, found in a number of Tantras, to engage in sexual intercourse with menstruating women as a “rhythm method” type of birth control’ (2003:91). This appears an astute observation. He privileges da Vinci and Aristotle for the premodern connection between breastmilk and menstrual fluid (2003:92), before referencing *Carakasamhitā* (2003:93) on ‘the biological truth—known in India since at least the time of the *Caraka Samhitā*—that an embryo is conceived through the intermingling of male and female sexual fluids, which, combined, form the “drop,” the zygote that gives rise to a new being’ (2003:93). This is the view of conception set out below in the *Siddhasiddhāntapaddhati*.

I have only found one scholar who interprets tantric practice as women retaining their menses and am not surprised she is a Sinologist. Despeux, in discussing Daoist sources notes, ‘Other traditions, in India for instance, also insist on the importance of halting menses in women: the power of a yogi’s tantric partner increases as she retains her monthly discharge’ (Despeux 2016:170). Despeux bases this assertion on Darmon’s work (2003:218) which is also used by Mallinson (2018). Despeux describes Darmon’s sources as tantric not *haṭha* but I view them—the *Haṭhapradīpikā* and *Haṭharatnāvalī*—as *haṭha*. Despeux does not specify what she means by ‘halting menstruation’ or make a connection with voluntary amenorrhea in *nūdan*. As we explore the data from the Indian and Chinese sources it may be too speculative to suggest that exactly the same practice is implied in the Indian as the Chinese, i.e. voluntary amenorrhea or permanently halting menstruation, but nevertheless the comparison helps analyse the *haṭha* account.

Langenberg (2018) analyses the natal preoccupation of Buddhist sources in their choices of whether to condemn sexual activity: the Buddhist *vinaya* punishes sex that is potentially procreative more harshly than non-procreative sex, for example homosexual sex or sex with a doll: ‘sexual behaviour, no matter how pleasurable, is taken less seriously if it is not likely to result in potentially heterosexual intercourse’ (2018:14).<sup>131</sup> I think a similar logic is at play in the *haṭha* sources where it is possible to extrapolate from their instructions on sex that it is reproduction that is to be avoided. Further, women in the *haṭha* sources appear to be doing the same practices for the same purposes as their male counterparts: retention of vital essence and birth-control (whether sexual activity is undertaken voluntarily or involuntarily, and whether in mundane or ritual contexts). There is evidence for avoiding procreation as unyogic for example in the *Amṛtasiddhi*, but there is not the horror that Buddhism attributes to the female form, the sexual act, foetal development, childbirth—in fact the entire life cycle of a human being (Langenberg 2017). This is also reflected in the Jainism of the eleventh-century *Jñānārṇava* (Jain 2017) and the seventeenth-century *Yuktiṣrabodha* (Jaini 1991).

### **‘Spiritual embryology’**

The *bindu-rajās* model of the yoga body appears to operate on the basis of a reversal of mundane procreation to effect a ‘reversal of embryology’ or ‘spiritual embryology’. My use of the term is inspired by the practices of Chinese inner alchemy that detail the creation of a golden embryo which the practitioner gestates for ten months before giving birth to through the head (Steavu and Andreeva 2015). Scattered references can be found to concepts of spiritual embryology in literature adjacent to yoga studies. In reference not to the yogic body but to Freud, Eliade uses the term ‘spiritual embryology’ (1963). Goudriaan and Gupta use the phrase ‘religious embryology’ to describe the contents of the *Prapañcasāra*’s chapter two

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<sup>131</sup> Page numbers refer to the preprint version.

(1981:133). Faure footnotes a reference to ‘the old myths of “sacred embryology”’ that were put to rest after the 1875 work of Van Beneden on “the true nature of fecundation” (Faure 2003:35n156). As far as I am aware no scholar has considered the applicability of this term to the processes of *haṭha* yoga which I undertake in this chapter.

### ***Non-ejaculation***

By way of the last item in this literature review I note the more extensive literature on male ejaculation and non-ejaculation than exists in relation to women. Mallinson gives much data identifying whether non-ejaculation is practised in celibate or sexual contexts (2020a) and Hirmer summarises the literature noting, ‘whereas for White semen is expelled but, importantly, reabsorbed along with female fluids (2003: 81–85), Caldwell, writing about her guru’s sexual rites, relays, ‘by all accounts he never attained an erection or ejaculation’ (2001:39); similarly, Hatley suggests, ‘the male practitioner exposes himself to...sexual temptation without fully consummating the act’ (2016: 4)’ (2022b). Concerns with erection, ejaculation and fertility of male gurus continue into the modern-day courtroom and medical verification procedures (India Today 2013, Deccan Chronicle 2014).<sup>132</sup> This connects with menstruation, considered a function of sexual desire in Jainism and Daoism, and likely informing Amma’s claim not to menstruate. However, neither primary nor secondary sources specify this in relation to *haṭha* yoga.

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<sup>132</sup> *Medical reports prove Nithyananda’s potency, confirm him as a man* (2014) *Deccan Chronicle*, 27 November, Available at: <https://www.deccanchronicle.com/141127/nation-crime/article/medical-reports-prove-nithyananda%E2%80%99s-potency-confirm-him-man?infinite=1> (accessed 14 February 2024). *Asaram tells police he is impotent, potency test says he has active libido* (2013) *India Today*, 2 September, Available at: <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/north/story/asaram-tells-police-he-is-impotent-209612-2013-09-01> (accessed 14 February 2024). *Asaram taken for potency test, refuses to cooperate* (2013) Available at: <https://indianexpress.com/article/cities/ahmedabad/asaram-taken-for-potency-test-refuses-to-cooperate/> (accessed 5 August 2022). Thanks to Lucia for these references, 4 August 2022.

This chapter is arranged in three sections: first understandings of conception, second the technique for raising rajās and third the case study of *nūdan*, before concluding on the prosaics of sex with reference to *amarolī* and *sahajolī*.

### ***Conceptions of conception: Not (just) misogyny but embryology***

The texts are misogynist. It is difficult to assess whether the misogyny is a cultural factor unrelated to the practice of yoga or whether it is integral in the techniques, physiology and metaphysics of yoga. On the surface, we might interpret misogyny as indicating that women were not considered suitable practitioners of yoga and moreover did not practice yoga. This however masks a deeper motif at play. The statements admonishing contact with and sexualising and objectifying women may, if read only as misogyny, obscure the fact that the concern is not with sex with women *per se* but with procreative sex. I understand the misogyny to be integral to the practice of yoga in that, understood in ascetic mode, the avoidance of women is necessary in the early stages of practice. The misogyny serves a pragmatic function.

One need not look far for examples of such misogyny. The *Amṛtasiddhi* states that a woman of virtue and beauty is useless without a man just as the techniques of *mahāmudrā* and *mahābandha* are useless without *mahāvedha* (AS 13.3). Not only are women attributed value only in relation to men but this also frames women in terms of procreation. This is not only misogyny but also a preoccupation with embryology and procreation as driving principles of the body and how yoga works. This example also underscores the fact that in the sources women are only discussed in relation to sex.

Also highlighting this latter point is that tropes of fertility and barrenness are commonly associated with women. We see this in the Tibetan homonym *bu med* as ‘woman’ and ‘no son’ in *Amṛtasiddhimūla* 14 which Mallinson and Szántó translate as, ‘The channel/root is a

beautiful woman, [but] useless without a man; the Great Seal and the Great Lock are useless without the [Great] Piercing.’ The translators query the repetition of the Tibetan term *bu med* as likely erroneous (2021:168), however, it may be a deliberate pun on the sense in which women acquire meaning through the production of sons (*bud med* can also mean ‘child’ rather than ‘son’). Gyatso (2009) considers the terms *bud med* (woman) and *bu med* (no son) in the *ro tsa*<sup>133</sup> or virility/fertility section of the *rGyud bzhi* (the *Four Treatises*), the root text for Tibetan medicine since around the twelfth century. Thus, the *Amṛtasiddhimūla* plays on the juxtaposition of women as useless without (male) progeny as well as without a male partner. The *Amaraugha* repeats the *Amṛtasiddhi*’s line but understands the verse, ‘Just as a beautiful and graceful woman without a man, so the great seal and lock are barren without the great piercing’ (Am 26). The *Amaraughaprabodha* 36 and *Haṭhapradīpikā* 3.24 have the same verse: they lose the playful ambiguity of *bu med* as ‘woman’ and ‘no son’ but retain the sense of infertility through the ‘fruitlessness’ (*niṣphala*) of the practice. Elsewhere the *Amṛtasiddhi* deploys the metaphor of ineffective practice as fruitless where those who abandon *bindu* yoga are fruitlessly keeping vigil among barren trees (AS 7.14).<sup>134</sup> This particular fertility metaphor contrasts with the overall direction of the *bindu* paradigm, whereby conventional embryology is to be inverted.

### ***Embryology***

The *haṭha* corpus incorporates an understanding of embryology similar to *āyurveda* and understands the process of yoga as an involution of procreation. I have summarised this material in chapter two. The *Amṛtasiddhi* sums this up: ‘External creation arises from a woman and a man, but external [creation] from a woman and a man [ultimately] results in

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<sup>133</sup> ‘The etymology of the Tibetan term *ro tsa* is obscure, but it is defined as having two goals, to foster sexual performance – to “be able to perform one’s desire” – and to multiply descendants (*bu tsha*), i.e. to be fertile and multiply’ (Gyatso 2009:82).

<sup>134</sup> Infertility is analogised to trees and fruit in contemporary Bangladesh (Nahar 2022:70, 75).



destruction of the bodily creation’ (AS 13.2) (Mallinson and Szántó translation). Though Mallinson and Szántó note, ‘The import of this verse is obscure to us and thus our constitution and translation of it are very tentative’ (2021:132n181) it seems to me this verse is describing saṃsāric reproduction necessitating the death (and rebirth) of the parents. The identity of yogic and procreative body is set out in the *Matsyendrasaṃhitā*. Kiss understands this thirteenth-century text as ‘the product of a transitional phase in the history of yoga between the Śaiva tantric traditions and the *haṭhayogic* teachings of the Nāthas’ (2018:1). It describes the body with both yogic and embryological features. Embedded in a description of the channels, ‘There is a channel (*nāḍī*) with an opening which is connected to the mother’s heart and through which he [i.e. the embryo] is fed, as a field [is irrigated] through an irrigation canal. [The embryo] is gradually nourished by the fluids (*dhātu*) contained in the essences of the food [consumed] by the mother’ (*Matsyendrasaṃhitā* 4.46-4.47ab) (Kiss 2018:330). Thus, in the *Matsyendrasaṃhitā* the single-sex (as I observed in the last chapter) body of yoga is understood in procreative terms.

The eighteenth-century *Siddhasiddhāntapaddhati* includes a section on the role of *rajas* in embryology that is close to *āyurveda*. On the first day of conception the *jīva* takes shape as the embryo (*kalala*) from the union of *bindu* and *rajas*. The relative quantities of semen (*śukra*) and blood (*rakta*) determine the sex of the child, including androgyny (*Siddhasiddhāntapaddhati* 1.68-71) (Gharote and Pai 2005).

Less frequently articulated than the general principles of depletion and interiorisation are accounts of procreation or embryology. The sources set up a contrast between what I am calling ‘saṃsāric’ procreation and a ‘spiritual inversion’ of creation or more specifically ‘spiritual embryology’. The *Amṛtasiddhi* underpins the subsequent corpus in many respects, perhaps not least where it sets out *bindu* as of two kinds, male and female. The ‘external’ union of the two leads to procreation and internal union is yoga (AS 7.8-9). This is in a

celibate context where *rajas*, female seed, is located in men. From a biomedical perspective this might be seen as troubling but as discussed in the close of the last chapter male and female sex organs are attributed to both sexes. *Amṛtasiddhimūla* 13 states the practitioner should ‘slay creation within’ which may refer to procreation and can also be read alongside instructions to kill other entities within the yogic body—such as divinities in the *Amṛtasiddhi* and *kuṇḍalinī* in the *Amarauḅha* (see chapter five).

Following the *Amṛtasiddhi* there are general statements in the corpus that yoga is the internal union of *bindu* (or *retas*) and *rajas* as in *Vivekamārtanḁa* 56 and *Yogabīja* 79-80ab where the union of *rajas* and semen is a definition of yoga. An outlier in the corpus is an embryological account in *Khecarīvidyā* 2.120-124 describing internalised and reversed embryology involving *kuṇḍalinī*. I discuss that example in chapter five. The paradigm of death through mundane procreation clearly underpins the depletion paradigm we see in the *Śivasamhitā* and throughout the corpus: death arises through the falling of semen, life when it is retained, hence one should do one’s utmost to retain one’s semen (ŚS 4.88).

### ***Sex without conception and abortion***

There is only one explicit set of instructions to avoid conception that I am aware of, and this in the later corpus. The practitioner should use the breath to draw up ejaculated semen in the c. 1800 CE *Vajroliyoga* which quotes the ever so much earlier, 700-500 BCE, *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad*. The sources are aware of the mechanics of conception and set out how to have sex without conception. In the *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad*:

If he does not want her to become pregnant, then he should put his penis in her, join [her] mouth with his, breathe [into her mouth] and then breathe out, saying “with my penis I take your semen by means of semen”. She becomes free from semen. And if he wants her to become pregnant then he should put his penis in her, join [her] mouth with his, breathe out and then breathe into her, saying “with [my] penis I deposit semen in you by means of semen”. She is certain to become pregnant. (*Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad* 6.4.10–11) (Mallinson 2018:216)

In the *Vajroliyoga*:

On this matter, the following has been settled: when a yogi wants to achieve yoga while having sex with a lovely woman, by means of the *apāna* breath being drawn up the semen should be drawn up. He should insert his penis in her vagina and say “I deposit the embryo”. If he does not want her to become pregnant, then he should draw up his semen using the *krisi* (?) breath. Saying “I take your semen with semen” the yogi conquers his semen. (Mallinson 2018:216)

These explicit accounts of sex without conception bookend the less explicit accounts of the early *haṭha* corpus. They thus invite a reading sensitive to whether the *haṭha* corpus holds the same objective.

Sexual practices such as the ‘razor’s edge’ (*asidhārāvratā*) penance predate the *haṭha* materials and include both concern with menstrual fluid and ejaculation. Both the *asidhārāvratā* and *vajrolīmudrā* originate in celibate ascetic milieus (Mallinson 2018:201). Hatley charts the development of this practice from Brahmanical ascetic discipline in which training to establish non-ejaculation is key, through to its erasure in *śaiva* tantric ritual context where sexual contact and production of sexual fluids for ritual consumption is more important than continence (2016). Hatley analyses the *Brahmayāmala* (chapter 40), the *Niśvāsātattvasaṃhitā* (*Guhyasūtra* 3.38c-43b) and the *Mataṅgapārameśvara* (11.41-53). The evidence collated by Hatley demonstrates a concern with non-ejaculation as a form of self-control but no explicit context of non-conception. The *asidhārāvratā* in the *Guhyasūtra* harnesses potent and impure materials such as skulls, flesh and menstrual fluid (Hatley 2016:9). Here and in the *Mataṅga* the pursuit is of power rather than soteriology which is also the case in the *Brahmayāmala* (Hatley 2016:9; Sanderson 1985:565). In the *Niśvāsa* the *liṅga* is placed upon the vagina (*liṅgaṃ sthāpya bhagopari*) and failure (i.e. ejaculation) leads to hell (*Niśvāsa* 3.39d) (Hatley 2016:9). In the *Mataṅga* there is no mention of genital contact though the practitioner is in the woman’s embrace and he must not ejaculate (*Mataṅga* 46.c-51). The *Brahmayāmala* departs from these accounts by enjoining penetration (*liṅgaṃ tatra*

*vinikṣipet* 10d) but without orgasm (*kṣobha*). Should orgasm occur intentionally or unintentionally he must make expiations (*Brahmayāmala* 40.22-23). The sources do not situate these discussions in the context of procreation.

The *Vasiṣṭhasaṃhitā* knows of abortion (*bhrūṇahana*), ‘killing an embryo’. It describes daily *prāṇāyāma* for a month as purifying from ‘even abortion’ (VS 3.18). Does this mean *haṭha* practitioners could have been abortionists? The sin of abortion may be being deployed simply to highlight the benefit of *prāṇāyāma* and in no way suggest practitioners might perform abortions. I raise this example to demonstrate that this source is the product of a society in which abortion may have been performed and thus seen by some at least as necessary or desirable.

These examples of non-procreative sex and the reference to abortion situate the *haṭha* corpus in a social context that was aware of the occurrence of such things, and their possible desirability.

### ***Celibacy: avoid women in the early stages of practice***

Where sources appear to be celibate they also allow for sexual encounters. The texts of the early *haṭha* corpus are produced in a range of contexts—from tantric monastic and celibate contexts to householder. In the householder contexts such as the *Śivasāṃhitā* practitioners do engage in sex, and it is taught that they can do so without seminal depletion. Some sources teach the preservation of semen (*bindudhāraṇa*), some avoidance of women in the early stages of practice, and some that liberation is attained though pleasure has been enjoyed. This diachronic analysis of the early sources summarises the material on when women should be avoided.

In the *Amṛtasiddhi* the yogi should avoid the use of fire, indulgence in women and travel at the beginning of practice (AS 19.7) and *bindudhāraṇa* is taught in chapter seven.

In the *Amarauḡha* the yogi should, in the beginning of practice, avoid frequenting fire, women and roads (Am 33). This verse is also in *Amarauḡhaprabodha* 44. The *Amarauḡha* notes *haṡṡha* yoga is twofold, based on *bindu* or *vāyu* (Am 4) though it does not teach the physical practice of *vajrolī*.

The *Goraḡṡasāṡaka* describes the causes of disease which include excessive sex (GŚ 68-69) which is not quite the same as none. Rather than teaching conventional embryology, the result of *kuṇḡalinī* raising is that *rajas* and *śukla* come together in *śiva* (GŚ 87), i.e. spiritual embryology. In its final verse the *Goraḡṡasāṡaka* internalises sex: if there is sex it happens in absorption, in a mind dissolved in the void, not a vagina (GŚ 101). This is not phrased as an injunction to be celibate. The text does not teach *bindudhāraṇa*.

*Bindudhāraṇa* is also not taught in the *Vivekamārtaṇḡa* but the concept of *ūrdhvaretas* is, though not named as such. *Ūrdhvaretas* is one whose semen is upwards. In the *Vivekamārtaṇḡa* *bindu* sealed above the uvula does not fall even if the yogi is embraced by a passionate woman (Viv 51). The sense is that the practitioner is unwillingly embraced, and probably refers to control over seminal emissions in involuntary contact with women. The yogi should be sexually continent (a *brahmacārin*) (Viv 38). This instruction is given in the early stages of the practice, but the text does not specify that this injunction pertains specifically to the early stages of the practice.

For the *Yogaḡīja* the preservation of *bindu* is an outcome of dissolving the mind (YB 101) and neither *bindudhāraṇa* nor *ūrdhvaretas* is taught.

As we saw above in the *Vasiṡṡhasaṡhitā* sex is ordained in brahmanical mode in accordance with the wife's menstrual cycle. The text does not teach *bindudhāraṇa* but pays homage to the concept of *ūrdhvaretas* in attributing the epithet to Śiva (VS 6.14).

The *Khecarīvidyā* does not teach *vajrolīmudrā* nor describe the purpose of *khecarī* as semen retention but does contain one reference to the practitioner as *ūrdhvaretas* (KhV

2.109ab). The text teaches *khecarīmudrā* for the purpose of a meeting with *yoginīs* (*melaka*) (KhV 1.5-12) which puts this within the sphere of interiorisation of sexual affect.

The *Dattātreyaśāstra* teaches *vajrolī* explicitly for men and for women in the context of sexual practice as discussed below. Of note, it uses the term *rakṣita* for the preservation of semen (DYŚ 167), the term used in the preservation of *rajas*. Among things the practitioner should avoid is sexual intercourse with women though many of the manuscripts qualify this as avoiding too much sex with women (DYŚ 69cd-70). The next verse adds the avoidance of tending fires and the gatherings of rogues (DYŚ 71ab). As a result of his practice the yogi looks like the god of love (DYŚ 83cd) and women are overcome by his beauty and want to have sex with him; however, he should avoid having sex and carry out his practice (DYŚ 84-86).

The *Śivasamhitā* compiles contradictory verses on sex. Yogis marry (ŚS 5.35) yet the yogi should avoid the company of women as a hindrance to yoga (ŚS 3.35-37). Indeed, the list of obstacles to yoga include women, lying about on beds, kissing on the mouth, wives, children and sensuality (5.4-5 Mallinson). Even so, the list of sins that a man is not bound by if he practices *yonimudrā* includes sleeping with the guru's wife (ŚS 4.15). Though the greatest obstacle to understanding ultimate reality is enjoyment (ŚS 5.1-2) yogis may achieve liberation while having fun (ŚS 5.258-260). The *Śivasamhitā* references the attainment of *bindudhāraṇa* (ŚS 4.31) and breath and *bindu* stabilisation (*vāyubinduvidhāraṇa*) (ŚS 5.101).

Finally, the *Haṭhapradīpikā* too repeats the adage to avoid fire, women and travelling while beginning yoga practice (HP 1.61). Chapter two of the *Haṭhapradīpikā* concludes with a list of attainments included in which is control over *bindu* rendered as control over ejaculation by Kaivalyadhama (HP 2.80).<sup>135</sup> The *Haṭhapradīpikā*'s teachings on *vajrolī* are not

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<sup>135</sup> Verse number 2.80 in forthcoming critical edition and 2.79 in Kaivalyadhama.

transmitted in all witnesses. The SOAS-Marburg critical edition has assigned witnesses into groups and their delta group does not transmit the teachings on *vajrolī*.<sup>136</sup>

On the basis of these textual sources, it is clear that sex is to be avoided in the early stages of practice, the stabilisation of *bindu* is an outcome of practice (whether resulting from specific practices such as *vajrolī* or an outcome of practices such as dissolving the mind), and a value of *bindudhāraṇa* is the non-ejaculation of *bindu* either through consensual sexual activity (from the perspective of the man) or non-consensual (from the perspective of the man embraced by a woman). Further, and though this point might appear too obvious and well-attested to be worth pointing out, ejaculation is seen to be optional and susceptible to control. Taking this logic to menstruation might at first seem absurd. Before turning to that discussion, I explore the rules taught in the corpus regarding sex.

### ***Prosaics of sex: no sex, no rules, some sex, some rules again***

Having examined the injunctions on avoiding women I now turn to regulations on sex. The *Pātañjalayogaśāstra* is clear that celibacy is a rule of yoga. The *haṭha* corpus instead offers a range of perspectives attuned to different stages of the practice. The *Dattātreya yogaśāstra* acknowledges religious hypocrisy when it suggests it is commonplace to present oneself as a religious mendicant to get sex through deception without undertaking religious observances (DYŚ 47). More frequently attested than the use of deception to obtain sex are references to a prosaic approach to sex. Thus, the yogi who knows *vajrolī* is worthy of success even if he behaves self-indulgently disregarding the rules taught in yoga (DYŚ 152). *Vajrolī* is enjoined for those who have the qualities of auspiciousness, generosity and virtue and is achieved by the disinterested rather than the self-oriented (DYŚ 176). The practice should be done having set aside shame or shyness (*lajjā*) (DYŚ 177). Finally, of all the yogas this one is happiness-

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<sup>136</sup> Workshop on the *Haṭhapradīpika*, Le Foulon, 13-17 June 2022.

making as it results in liberation even though pleasure has been enjoyed (DYŚ 179). Though the *Gorakṣaśataka* counts having too much sex as a cause of disease (GŚ 68-69) the *Śivasamhitā* repeats the *Dattātreya yogaśāstra* position and expands: ‘Every goal that is sought after is sure to be achieved here on earth by means of this Yoga, even after enjoying all pleasures. Using it, yogis are sure to attain total perfection, so one should practice it while having lots of fun’ (ŚŚ 4.92-94) (Mallinson 2007b). The *Śivasamhitā* orients this yoga to the householder without any loss of efficacy: ‘Living in a house filled with children and a wife and so forth, internally abandoning attachment, and then seeing the mark of success on the path of yoga, the householder has fun having mastered my teaching’ (ŚŚ 5.260) (Mallinson 2007b). Finally, the *Haṭhapradīpikā* states that all powers arise for whoever knows *vajrolī*, ‘even someone living according to their own desire without the rules taught in yoga’ (HP 3.82).

To focus further on the *Dattātreya yogaśāstra*’s prosaic rather than moral or erotic attitude to sex, the introduction to the section on *vajrolī* states that the yogi who does this practice is worthy of success even if he disregards the rules (*niyamas*) taught in yoga (DYŚ 152ab). This prosaic attitude to the *niyamas* presumably refers specifically to sexual continence (*brahmacharya*) (though in the *Pātañjalayogaśāstra* 2.30 *brahmacharya* is listed as a *yama* not a *niyama*). This fits with the broader approach across the corpus that, once established in the preservation of semen (*bindudhāraṇa*), it is irrelevant whether principles such as sexual continence are observed.

Before the instruction shifts to how women should practice *vajrolī* the reasons for men to practice are summed up. The oft-extolled verse on the fall of *bindu* leading to death and life from its preservation is given (DYŚ 167) before what I believe is an innovation: ‘New *rajas* appears in the *yoni*s of women like vermilion (*sindūra*); one without vows (*avrata*) should go and enter there and should, through practice, preserve [it]’ (DYŚ 168). Thus, there is an



acknowledgement of the antinomian nature of this practice. The next verse indicates that the purpose for a woman who would practice *vajrolī* is only the preservation of *rajas* (DYŚ 169), rather than perhaps for pleasure.

The trope of characterising women according to their physical attributes is common across Indian literature. Refreshing in switching the gender objectified, but still none the less objectifying, female practitioners are instructed to practice sex with desirable men (*iṣṭa*, also lovers, husbands) or those who know yoga, but not to practice *vajrolī* with those who do not know the teachings of yoga (DYŚ 177cd-178). Further, of all the yogas this one is happiness-making resulting in liberation even when pleasure has been enjoyed (DYŚ 179). This yoga is successful especially for ‘those who have merit’ (*puṇyavatām*) (DYŚ 180ab). The section on *vajrolī* as practiced by a woman with the man in the position of consort is most unusual in the early *haṭha* corpus. Yet it is not only in relation to *vajrolī* that women as practitioners appear. Immediately upon the conclusion of the passage on *vajrolī* the *Dattātreya-yogaśāstra* goes on to describe *sahajolī* and *amarolī* which can be seen as a triumvirate of practices with *vajrolī*, or ancillary to *vajrolī*. In all the sources (except perhaps the *Śivasamhitā*) the tone is clearly pragmatic not erotic or sensational. Liberation and pleasure go hand in hand with one another.

### ***Raising rajas: menstruation as voluntary***

There is no evidence in the *haṭha* corpus that suggests menstruation is voluntary. However, in Śvetāmbara Jainism menstruation is considered voluntary (Leslie 1996:97), a consequence of sexual volition by the woman comparable to a man’s involuntary nocturnal seminal emission. Meghavijaya’s seventeenth-century *Yukti-prabodha* argues, ‘the menstrual flow of a female Arhat, even if she is young, will cease to exist because, like the male Arhat, she will also have

eradicated the libido that is said to be the primary cause for the existence of the menstrual flow' (Jaini 1991:13). In Daoism menstruation is also considered voluntary.<sup>137</sup>

***Dattātreyaśāstra: vessel, agent and beyond gender?***

Not at all reticent in its description of sex is the *Dattātreyaśāstra*—or certainly the newly collated passages from Southern manuscripts. The instructions for *vajrolī* are directed first at the man as the agent then repeated with the woman as agent. My concern here is with the implications for conception of the instructions which involves a technical reading of such intricacies as whether the grammatical locative is stretching the penis *over* the vagina or *into* the vagina (stretched on it in DYŚ 161). The instructions for the male practitioner involve external, non-penetrative sexual activity at least until after ejaculation (DYŚ 164). Conception could not occur from non-penetrative sex. The text does not specifically enjoin penetrative sex after ejaculation. The passage instead instructs the male practitioner in the use of tubes to draw the fluid upwards (DYŚ 165). However, *bindu* has clearly fallen onto or into (the locative can be taken either way) the vagina in the next verse: 'The *bindu* that has fallen into/onto the vagina (*bhage*) should be drawn upwards. One should preserve one's own *bindu* that has moved by drawing it upwards' (DYŚ 166). Conception could result from semen ejaculated into the *yoni* if that is what is being described in this verse—but this is not specified in the text. In the section instructing the female practitioner, external sexual activity is prescribed before inserting only the head of the penis and then drawing up semen full of *rajas* (DYŚ 171-173). In this context of drawing up semen conception could occur depending on the stage of the woman's menstrual cycle.

As we saw in the last chapter, in the latest collation of the *Dattātreyaśāstra āṅgiraśa* becomes a substitute for milk and 'the second thing' is a woman. In the previous chapter I

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<sup>137</sup> Komjathy, personal communication, 12 September 2021.

focused on the fluids. Here I focus on what is, according to the term used in the sources, the vessel (*kośa*). The man ‘drinks’, either through his mouth or by drawing fluids upwards through his penis, the libation (*idā*) (DYŚ 156), the sexual and menstrual fluid of the women stimulated through non-penetrative sexual activity with the penis. The woman is the vessel (*kośa*) to be drunk with an intensity verging on forcefulness (*bhṛśa*)’ (DYŚ 157cd).

The pragmatic nature of the factual instructions compounds the sense of objectification and mere utility of the woman. The passage qualifies the type of woman to be used in this secret practice of *vajrolī* (DYŚ 158d). The trope of secrecy is repeated in the following instructions in which ‘a man *and* a woman can easily obtain success. Having kept a very beautiful and sweet woman in secret, naked (DYŚ 159), get naked yourself and get on top of her as she faces upwards. Lie down, having stopped the breath, stooping a little outside’ (DYŚ 160). Presumably the man is hunched over the woman, in a position to perform sex without penetration as he stretches his penis on the *yoni* (DYŚ 161). That the woman is kept in secret suggests deprivation of liberty, but the sense could be social concealment. This could be an acknowledgement that the practice is somewhat antinomian. However, many other yoga techniques are also to be kept secret. The trope of secrecy does set up a tension between the social acceptability of sexual practice, a counterpoint to the prosaics of sex motif I have been developing.

These practices are presented as done by the man to the woman in a manner which is not at all erotic but pragmatic and possibly harsh: one should have sex (*yabhet*) ‘roughly’ or ‘forcefully’ (*niṣṭhura*) if the semen does not fall (DYŚ 163cd). The term *yabh* for sex is both unusual and explicit with the sense of ‘fuck’. However, in its startling and unique passage the new collation moves from such unqualified objectification of the woman to flip the practice and describe not only how women should practice but uses the same rough terminology and objectification of the male partner.

The *Dattātreyaśāstra* details the steps of the practice for women: ‘one should have sex roughly (*yabhayenniṣṭhuraṃ*) outside the man until (*yat*) there is a result through the penis’ (DYS 171). *Yat* is being taken as a contraction of *yāvat*, ‘until’, i.e. until there is the result of ejaculation. ‘One should combine the potent *rajas* [with] the semen of the penis. Having drawn the penis with both hands, enter just the tip’ (DYS 172). The tautological Sanskrit could be glossed as, ‘combine the potent *rajas* with the ejaculated semen’. The tip of the penis is referred to as a jewel (*maṇi*): ‘When the tip enters then one should perform the practice. After that one becomes capable of drawing *rajas* upwards’ (DYS 173). The passage explicitly mirrors the man’s practice, with the exception that penetrative sex is specified. Perhaps this is the sexual vampirism caricatured in the vedic source by Lopamudrā and resisted by the man in his own practice of *vajrolī* by not penetrating the *yoni*. But then we have an omission. Whereas the man was given an elaborate scaffolding for drawing the fluids up through tubes and *phut*-sounds, the woman is given no details on how to draw the fluids upwards beyond the mere statement that she should do so (DYS 173). This lack of detail recurs in subsequent descriptions of the practice such as the *Haṭhapradīpikā* considered below and the seventeenth-century *Haṭharatnāvalī* and *Yuktabhavadēva* of the same century.

The results of the practice are that her *rajas* is undoubtedly not destroyed and in her body *nāda* becomes *bindu* (DYS 174). *Bindu* and *rajas* become one (*ekībhūya*) in her body and all attainments (*siddhis*) arise (DYS 175). It is not clear whether there is a transition from *rajas* to *nāda* to *bindu*, but it is clear that *rajas* and *bindu* become one. How should we understand this possible transformation in the nature of *rajas*? Presumably *rajas* drawn upwards in this way is not released externally through menstrual blood or conjoined with semen in procreation. Thus, this practice reverses the depletion of vital essences that would otherwise be lost or destroyed. But what happens instead? Is this to be understood as the woman resorbing the menses of one cycle rather than releasing it? Or is this a temporary delay to the

onset of menses such that the regularity of the menstrual cycle is influenced? Finally, could this be a more permanent cessation of the menstrual cycle such that menstruation is halted, i.e. voluntary amenorrhea?

The results stated for the female practitioner do not exactly mirror the results attributed to the man's practice—of victory over death which arises through the fall of *bindu* and life from the preservation of *bindu* (DYŚ 167). As well as treating the man as object, and forcefully so, this passage involves penetrative sex and the woman drawing up the combined fluids. Conception is thus a possibility unless the practice is undertaken in a non-fertile period of the menstrual cycle or if *all* the semen were understood to be drawn upwards.

The *Dattātreyayogāsāstra* makes an apparently gender non-essentialising point in a variant reading in the western ( $\pi$ ) manuscripts not collated in the critical edition: either the man or the woman will achieve success from practice irrespective of their gender, femaleness (*strītvā*) and maleness (*pumstvā*), should they have nothing but their own purpose in mind (DYŚ 155cd-156ab). 'Irrespective of one another's gender, whether male or female' (*yad anyonyam strītvapumstvānapekṣayā*) could be more idiomatically rendered as femininity or masculinity. However, doing so invites a contemporary critical analysis which is unlikely to have been in the minds of the redactors. The eighteenth-century *Bṛhatkhecarīprakāśa* makes the same point: they should undertake the practice with no regard to each other's *strītvā* or *pumstvā* (*sādhayitvānyonyam strītvapumstvāna-pekṣayā vidhim ārabhetām*) (fol. 103v). That either man or woman might achieve success clearly includes the female practitioner as beneficiary rather than mere accoutrement to the man's practice. But how should we take this instruction to *not* have regard to one's masculinity or femininity? Does this simply mean that women as well as men are able to succeed regardless of whether they are biologically male or female? Or does it refer to the manner in which the practice is done, i.e. disregarding gender? Further, does this imply a disregard for sexual attraction or aversion towards the partner? The

specification for the woman to be sweet and attractive (DYŚ 159) suggestions that a man would not choose a partner for whom he felt aversion. The woman is advised to select a partner who is *iṣṭa* and who knows yoga (DYŚ 177-178). *Iṣṭa* can mean one who is desired, or simply a husband or lover. Even if it meant ‘one who is desired’, these two verses twice specify one who knows yoga, suggesting that criterion trumps desirability. Without regard for femininity or masculinity could be understood as regardless of attraction towards the other on the paradigm of sexual tantric practices which range from ecstatic to erotic to visualised to resisted, categories identified by Hatley (2016). Hatley studies the latter, resistance to sex, as ‘the razor’s edge observance’ (*asidhārāvratā*) of texts such as the *Brahmayāmala* also known as the *Picumata*, ‘a practice in which the male practitioner exposes himself to various degrees of sexual temptation without fully consummating the act, maintaining sensory restraint’ (Hatley 2016:5). The practice of *asidhārāvratā* in the *Brahmayāmala*, *Niśvāsa* and *Mataṅga* emphasizes erotic appearance in the description of the female partner’s desired qualities, ‘and there are no statements that she benefits from the ritual’ (Hatley 2016:14). None of this particularly presages the instruction in the *Dattātreyayogaśāstra* to disregard gender if that is indeed the purport of the latter’s instruction. Mallinson notes parallels in Tibetan sexual yoga practices where practitioners are required to disregard one’s gender (Mallinson 2024:59n96). These statements give no acknowledgment of non-heteronormative sexual orientations.

The *Dattātreyayogaśāstra* sets out qualifications for practitioners (DYŚ 176-179) that relate to sexuality which I will consider as part of the prosaics of sex in the last section of this chapter. Here I turn to the *Haṭhapradīpikā*’s passage on *vajrolī*.

### ***Vajrolīmudrā in the Haṭhapradīpikā***

Drawing on the *Dattātreyayogaśāstra* the *Haṭhapradīpikā* is the only other text in the early corpus that describes *vajrolī* practice from the perspective of the female practitioner. Echoing

the *Dattātreyaśāstra*, the *Haṭhapradīpikā* names two things necessary for the practice of *vajrolī* which are difficult to obtain: milk (*kṣīra*) and a woman who is ‘amenable’ or ‘independent’ (*vaśavartinī*) (HP 3.83).<sup>138</sup> Like the *Dattātreyaśāstra*, in the *Haṭhapradīpikā* a woman can practice *vajrolī* by drawing up the semen of a man and protecting her *rajas* by which she becomes a *yoginī*.

The male practitioner is to draw up the *bindu* that has fallen onto or into the vagina of a woman, and the *bindu* that has ‘moved’ (*calita*) and ‘fallen’ (*patita*) should be drawn upwards and protected’ (HP 3.86). That *bindu* moves (*calita*) could be arousal or erection and the *bindu* that has ‘fallen’ (*patita*) ejaculated semen. The familiar results are given of death through the fall of *bindu* and life through its preservation (HP 3.87), the arising of a good aroma in the practitioner as a result of *bindu* preservation, and the rhetorical question, where is fear of death for one whose *bindu* is stable in the body (HP 3.88)?

### ***Draw upwards and protect: ākuñcana and rakṣaṇa***

On the face of it the *Haṭhapradīpikā* does not clearly set out the technique for women. The introduction to the practice states ‘one should practice drawing upwards correctly slowly through the penis (*mehana*); either a man or a woman can attain success from the practice of *vajrolī*’ (HP 3.84). This verse could be considered to hold two separate ideas, the first that

<sup>138</sup> The *Dattātreyaśāstra* (in mss D3 and D4) and *Haṭhapradīpikā* use the term *vaśavartinī* and the *Jyotsnā* glosses this term as *svādhīnā*—either under one’s own control or controlled by someone else. This thesis does not attempt to excavate a subjectivity for women. The meanings of *vaśa* include ‘will’ or ‘desire’, and ranges from ‘control’ to ‘obedience’. *Vartinī* means either ‘situated in’ or ‘obeying’. *Vaśavartinī* is most likely a woman who is obedient to the will of another but could refer to a woman under her own autonomy. There are no other references to *vaśavartinī* within the early corpus. The term does occur in the later corpus in the *Yogacintāmaṇi* in a section on *yonimudrā*, in *Yuktabhavadeva* 241, *Vajroliya* 2, and three times in the *Vācaspatyam*. It may be that these sources are drawing on earlier material perhaps from *Kubjikāmata* 6.36 and *Śivadharmā* 4.10-11 where the term occurs in association with *caṇḍālī*. The *svādhīnā* of the *Jyotsnā* gloss is a woman who is ‘subject to’ or ‘depending on’ (*-adhīnā*) oneself (*sva-*). This can be taken as a woman who is obedient to the yogi, which seems to be the meaning of *vaśavartinī*, or a woman who is independent of the control of another. The *Jyotsnā* uses *svādhīnā* in six other contexts, three meaning to control something else and three meaning to control oneself. In the *Amaraughaprabodha* the ‘capable’ (*adhimātra*) practitioner is *svādhīnā* or ‘self-sufficient’ (*Amaraughaprabodha* 21) (Birch 2024:100). The category of protected women is important in Buddhist *vinaya* for adjudicating sexual ethics. See Langenberg (forthcoming:6) and Jyvājärvi (2011).

men should draw upwards and the second that both men and women can be successful. If, however, this is read as a single unit then women as well as men are being instructed to draw upwards through the penis. Let's for a moment entertain this more unusual second interpretation. On the same logic that *yoni* is not exclusive to biological women, *mehana* could be understood as the generic urinary tract rather than the penis, which would make this practice more physiologically possible for women. It might be understood then that *mehana* does not exclude women from doing this practice. Kaivalyadhama translates *mehana* as 'the inner organs at the pelvic region'. While this could be mere euphemism, inline with the strenuous exegesis that the compilers go to to interpret the practices as non-sexual, this does imply *mehana* is not exclusive of women. If *mehana* is read as non-gender-exclusive it links that instruction with the outcome, i.e. that both men and women can achieve success. In fact, in the latest version of the critical edition, the *yoginī* should use her 'penis' (*mehana*) to draw *rajas* upwards (J7 reports *mehana*,<sup>139</sup> N12 *mehana*, and J10, N17 and N4 report that she should use the *medhra*, a synonym for *mehana*, to do so).

*Haṭhapradīpikā* 3.85 moves into a technical description that can only pertain to men who should blow through a tube into the end of the penis, literally the cave of the diamond (HP 3.85). Echoing the *Dattātreya yogaśāstra* the male practitioner should raise the ejaculated *bindu* that has fallen on or in the woman's vagina (HP 3.86). I will *précis* the key verses on technique in the *Haṭhapradīpikā* for a woman to do this practice. A woman should from skilful practice correctly draw up the *bindu* of a man and preserve her own *rajas* thereby becoming a *yoginī* (HP 3.97). As well as receiving the title *yoginī* none of her *rajas* is destroyed but, switching the order of the *Dattātreya yogaśāstra*, her *bindu* becomes *nāda* in her body (HP 3.98). *Bindu* and *rajas* become one within her body and through *vajrolī* all

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<sup>139</sup> HP J7 *mehenākuñcanādūrdhvaṃ rajasāpi hi yoginaḥ* | See forthcoming critical edition for manuscript details.



attainments are bestowed (HP 3.99). She is a *yoginī*<sup>140</sup> who from upward contractions (*ākuñcana*) may preserve (*rakṣayet*) her *rajas*, as a result of which she knows the past and the future and become a *khecarī* (HP 3.100). This is the key passage for consideration. The concept of preserving *rajas* has implications in terms of technique and consequences from both esoteric and physiological perspectives. If this is understood as halting menstruation it is a direct correlate of the Daoist practice considered below.

There are few indications of the technique for preserving *rajas* by women so the verb *ā-√kuñc* is of note: she should preserve (*rakṣet*) her *rajas* as a result of contracting (*ākuñcanāt*) upwards (*ūrdhvaṃ*) (HP 3.100). The meanings of *ā-√kuñc* is to contract, bend or curl. I understand *ākuñcana* to mean that the practitioner draws *rajas* upwards through muscular contractions. It is unclear whether this involves the creation of suction through *uḍḍiyānabandha*, where the abdominal organs are drawn up and back to create a vacuum at the urethra, or it refers to contractions of the pelvic floor and other muscles. The *Haṭhapradīpikā* uses the term in instructing the practice of *mūlabandha* when the downward moving *apāna* air is moved up forcefully by contraction (HP 3.51). Kaivalyadhama adds that this is contraction of the anus (in which this verse is numbered HP 3.61). In relation to the practice for women, Brahmānanda's commentary (*ṭīkā*) on HP 3.100 defines *ākuñcana* as *yonisaṃkocana*, i.e. contraction or closing of the *yoni*. As discussed in the last chapter it is difficult to assert a precise anatomical location for *yoni*. It refers to both the uterus of biological females and the perineal region of people more generally, as well as meanings of 'source', 'abode', and feminine divine procreative energy.

For male practitioners of *vajrolī* it must be inferred that the technique of *nauli* is used to draw semen upwards through tubes (Mallinson 2018:191). Ondračka references one Hindi source that describes the technique of *uḍḍiyānabandha* or *uḍḍiyānanauli* (Ondračka

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<sup>140</sup> Only  $\alpha_2$ ,  $\gamma_2$ ,  $\eta_2$  and  $\chi$  identify the title *yoginī* and *rajas*.

2021:83n366). It is odd that the sources in general do not give this very important detail, the omission of which means that oral instruction would have been essential. This omission in relation to men's practice gives a certain precedence for the lack of detail on the technique for women. There are two references to *saṃkocana* elsewhere in the early corpus. In the *Gorakṣaśataka* the instruction is given to perform *jālandharā* at the end of the inhale as a form of 'constriction' (*saṃkoca*) in the throat that blocks the path of air (GŚ 62). In order for the breath to enter the *brahma nāḍī* the practitioner is instructed to contract (*kuñcana*) from below after the throat constriction has been done (*saṃkocana*) and draw the abdomen back (GŚ 63ab). Mallinson infers that the contracting below is *mūla-* and *uḍḍiyānabandhas* (Mallinson 2011:270). This understanding of the terms *saṃkocana* and *kuñcana* supports an understanding of *vajrolīmudrā* in *Haṭhapradīpikā* 3.98 as muscular contraction with the implied suction of *mūla-* and *uḍḍiyānabandhas*. Linking the technique of raising *rajas* and using *kuṇḍalinī* to raise nectars, in the *Khecarīvidyā* first the term *saṃhṛti* is used to describe the 'contraction' of the *jīva* before leading it to the base (KhV 3.34), then the yogi is instructed to contract (*ākuñcana*) the base before raising the nectars upwards together with *kuṇḍalinī* (KhV 2.35-36). This connection with the technique for raising *rajas* suggests that while there may be differences in the names and concepts associated with techniques the physiological practice is strikingly similar. *Kuṇḍalinī* is discussed more fully in chapters four and five.

The method of *rajas* preservation for women is worthy of exploration because it is not fully explained in the sources, and the manner of the practice relates to the physiological and soteriological results of the practice. It has also not to date been studied in secondary literature. The data that I have drawn together facilitates a comparison of the *haṭha* practice with Daoism's voluntary amenorrhea.

***Results: perfect body (deha siddhi)***

The benefits for women in the *Haṭhapradīpikā* are very similar to the *Dattātreyayogaśāstra*. Echoing *Dattātreyayogaśāstra* 170 the *Haṭhapradīpikā* identifies the ability to move in the air (*khecarī*) (HP 3.100) and perfection of the body (*dehasiddhi*) (HP 3.101) as results for women (HP 3.100). The loosening of the bonds of terrestriality were considered in chapter two where the cooking of the body reduces its earth-bound nature and in chapter three particularly in regard to *yoginīs*. We see the theme of flight emerge in the analysis of Chinese inner alchemy below. The result of bodily perfection is only the second reference after the *Dattātreyayogaśāstra* to women attaining bodily perfection as the quotation used as epigraph for this chapter (HP 3.101) attests: ‘And she attains perfection of the body as a result of the practice of *vajrolī*. This yoga makes good fortune and grants liberation even when pleasure has been enjoyed.’ Variant readings describe the practice as granting virtue (*puṇya*) that gives liberation to the practitioner. Coming straight after the description of the practice for women one might expect *sādhaka* in the feminine, and therefore inclusive of women’s sexuality, not the masculine. Could this be a use of the generic masculine singular that is inclusive of women?

Might we infer that women are included in the generic masculine singular here, and further included in the general intended practitioner audience by way of the generic masculine singular? The case for the masculine singular to apply to women is established in Sanskrit literature beyond the yoga corpus. In the *Hitopadeśa*’s story of a woman with two lovers the general aphorism is stated in the masculine while the specific referent is a female. ‘If you don’t lose your wits when unexpected things happen, you will overcome every difficulty, as did the wife of the cowherd with her two lovers’ (Törszök 2007:287).<sup>141</sup> Here the generic

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<sup>141</sup> *Hitopadeśa* 2.280 *utpanneṣy api kāryeṣu matir yasya na hīyate | sa nistarati durgāni gopī jāra-dvayaṃ yathā*  
|| Thanks to Wojtczak for this example, personal correspondence, 14 July 2022.

masculine singular applies to the woman. An example from medical literature demonstrates the commentator's disquiet that women are mentioned before men. Ḍalhaṇa, the twelfth-century-commentator on the *Suśrutasamhitā*, feels compelled to explain why women are explicitly mentioned, and mentioned before men, in a passage of that text. In the context of ear piercing for decoration and protection, Ḍalhaṇa argues that 'the prior mention of the woman is because of the greater importance of [earrings for] ornamentation.' Birch noted, in relation to this passage, that though boys and girls may have their ears pierced for earrings that decorate and protect them from evil spirits, it seems the procedure of piercing was more important for girls because of their greater need for decoration.<sup>142</sup> We can infer that standard exegesis was therefore not to include women as referents at all, and certainly not prior to men.

In the *haṭha* corpus the norm is for instructions to be given in the optative masculine singular. Instructional passages, given in the masculine optative or imperative, are generally instructions directed at women as well as men. This grammatical point has a significant impact on how to read the sources in relation to female practitioners. The norm could be that women are always already included and are only specified when anatomical difference impacts the technique that is being taught. Anatomical difference is obviously at play in relation to drawing fluids up through sexual organs. The use of the masculine singular optative throughout the corpus can be taken as inclusive of men and women. I think there is just enough grammatical inclusivity to consider women as possible referents for liberation while pleasure has been enjoyed (HP 3.101).

### ***Śakticālana: stimulating the goddess***

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<sup>142</sup> *Mūla* of *Sūtrasthāna* 16.15 *tato 'ṅganām puruṣaṃ vā grathitakeśāntaṃ [...]* Ḍalhaṇa comments *tato 'ṅganām puruṣaṃ veti aṅganāyā bhūṣaṇaprādhānyāt prānnirdeśaḥ* | Birch, personal communication, 26 July 2022.

An alternative technique for raising *rajas* is given in the *Vivekamārtaṇḍa*. The *Vivekamārtaṇḍa* does not teach *vajrolī mudrā* and does teach sexual continence (*brahmacarya*) (Viv 38). The description of *bindu* and *rajas* includes a practice for raising *rajas* of ‘moving the goddess’ (*śakticālana*). Specifically, *rajas* is propelled by moving the goddess by means of the breath, and thus joins *bindu* (Viv 57). *Śakti* is the means through which in *prāṇāyāma* the *apāna* breath is drawn upwards, joined with *prāṇa* and both are led up to the head (Viv 89). *Śakti* might be synonymous with *kuṇḍalinī* throughout the text—*śakti* is an epithet for *kuṇḍalinī* in *Vivekamārtaṇḍa* 39. No detail is given on how to perform *śakticālana*. Though the description does not address women, on the logic given above women may not necessarily be excluded from this practice.

### ***Comparative case study: nūdan’s ‘slaying the red dragon’***

I have exhausted the *haṭha* sources for detail on what the practice of drawing *rajas* upwards and retaining or protecting it might involve. I turn to adjacent literatures and practice that might provide context to understand the *haṭha* sources. Here I have chosen to focus on Chinese Daoism. While geographically and culturally further afield, *nūdan*, female oriented Daoist inner alchemy, attests a practice of voluntary amenorrhea and describes techniques with which to carry out this practice. However, the problem remains of historical gap as the developed *nūdan* materials on amenorrhea are later, from the sixteenth century onwards.

I have collected all the data I am aware of in the *haṭha* corpus that concerns the way in which women might perform the technique of drawing *rajas* upwards and protecting it and the physiological and soteriological implications of the practice. And yet it is still rather difficult to assess what the intended outcome is. Should we understand this practice as a replica of the practice described for men? If so, why does the description differ such as around the transmutation of *bindu* into *nāda* for female practitioners. Is the intent to avoid conception

and if so how would that work? Non-conception may be an outcome of sex during periods of low fertility but would not be an outcome of drawing semen and menses into the body during fertile periods of the menstrual cycle. Are there other consequences of the practice, such as a delay to the initiation of menstruation, a lengthening of menstrual cycle, or even voluntary amenorrhea, i.e. the cessation of the menstrual cycle and, therefore, infertility? *Nūdan* offers an intriguing account of intentional halting of menstruation or voluntary amenorrhea which I explore in the interest of shedding further light on the *hatha* materials.

The correlation between *hatha* and *nūdan* made here contributes to our understanding of female practitioners of *hatha* yoga adding to broader comparative work—such as by Needham (1983), White (1996), Kohn (2006), Schipper (1993), Samuel (2008), Pregadio (2019, 2020), and more recently Yang (2023) and Steavu (2023)—and I particularly draw on the scholarship of Despeux (2000), Kohn (2006, 2000) and significantly Valussi (2022, 2014, 2008, 2002).<sup>143</sup> Needham notes the striking similarity between Chinese inner alchemy and *hatha* yoga (Needham 1983:282-283; Yang 2023:415). Yang argues:

There is undoubtedly a striking resemblance between techniques found in the first extant *hathayoga* texts and those found in earlier Chinese sources, dating from the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE onwards, relating to *yangsheng* self-cultivation practices, including breathing exercises, sexual cultivation and *daoyin*. While these bodily practices were appropriated from the 9th and 10th century CE onwards by *neidan* practitioners to develop their “alchemical bodies,” similar practices also began to appear in what was to be known as *hathayoga* in India, from the 11<sup>th</sup> century onwards. This historical juxtaposition, with *neidan* preceding *hathayoga* by just a couple of centuries, makes *neidan* a likely candidate for the conduit of knowledge transfer of bodily practices between China and India. (Yang 2023:433-434)

Despeux actually makes the connection with tantric practitioners retaining their menses as noted above, herself drawing on the work of Darmon. Neither Despeux nor Darmon, however, give any explanation for what this might mean.

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<sup>143</sup> Valussi provided invaluable comments on an earlier draft of this work and suggested directions for future work, personal communication, 22 May 2022. I am also ever so grateful to Steavu for commenting on a paper in advance of a presentation on this topic at the American Academy of Religions, November 2021.

Daoist internal alchemy describes a refinement of semen and menstrual blood which provides a parallel, if not a prior model, for the *haṭha* yoga sources. Seminal retention and reversing its flow are fundamental practices in traditions of sexual cultivation or ‘bedchamber arts’, described in manuals dating back to the Warring States, Qin and Han dynasties (475 BCE–220 CE) (Yang 2023:420). In contrast to external alchemy or *waidan*, which is concerned with the compounding of elixirs through the manipulation of natural mineral and metal substances, *neidan* is concerned with compounding elixir within the practitioner’s body. *Neidan*, non-gender specific inner alchemy, starts to develop in the Tang dynasty around the late eighth-ninth centuries, and is firmly developed in tenth-century Zhong-Lü sources. Pregadio discerns antecedents as early as the second century CE (Pregadio 2019:3, 61). The term ‘Zhong-Lü’ refers to the cluster of prose texts whose doctrines apply alchemical imagery and language to earlier regimens of corporeal practice especially ‘embryo respiration’ (*taixi*) and ‘reverting vital essence to repair the brain’ (*huanjing bunao*) (Pregadio and Lowell 2000:469). Distinct from *neidan*, *nüdan* refers to inner alchemical practices for women and the shift towards *nüdan* occurs from the late Ming (1368-1644) and early Qing (1644-1911) dynasties onwards.

According to *neidan*, the body contains ‘vital substances’, including vital essence (*jing*), fluids (*jinye*), subtle energy (*qi*) and spirit (*shen*). Vital essence is ‘foundation or core vitality. It is associated with sexual reproduction and specifically with menstrual blood in women and semen in men’ (Komjathy 2013a:133). Alchemical practice produces clear and sweet saliva referred to as the Jade Nectar (*yujiang*), Spirit Water (*shenshui*), and Sweet Dew (*ganlu*), which is swallowed during Daoist alchemical practice. *Shen* ‘spirit’ is more subtle than *qi* and associated with divine capacities and consciousness. Inner alchemy, which often involves celibacy, attempts to conserve these aspects of self and prevent their dissipation. The basic stages of alchemical practice are threefold: first the transformation of vital essence into *qi*,

second the transformation of *qi* into spirit, and third the transformation of spirit into emptiness (Despeux 2000). This involves the formation of an embryo of spirit and after ten months' gestation giving birth to it through the head. In the first stage, women's practice differs from that of men. Instead of refining the seminal essence and transforming it into energy, menstrual blood is refined by gradually diminishing the flow and eventually stopping it altogether. This is 'slaying the red dragon' (*zhan chilong*).

This system of vital substances, together with the organ-meridian system which is somewhat parallel to Chinese medicine, constitutes the 'Daoist alchemical body'. Like *haṭha* yoga Daoist internal alchemy is based on a model of micro-macrocosmic homologies. It involves 'subtle or mystical corporeal locations' (Komjathy 2007) which include the 'elixir fields' (*dantian*) and Nine Palaces (*jiugong*).

The practice of stopping menstruation or voluntary amenorrhea, which becomes a signature feature of *nüdan*, is first attested in 1310 in the *Annals of the wondrous communications and divine transformations of the sovereign lord Chunyang*: 'Episode n. 106 tells of a 16 year-old girl who, to escape her parent's plan to marry her, hides away on a mountain. Here she meets an old man who tells her: 'I will slay your Red Dragon' (Valussi 2008:61n4).

In the Chinese sources the correlative term for *rajas* is *xue*. Valussi, drawing on Chinese medical literature as I have drawn on *āyurveda*, defines *xue* as, 'the blood that circulates in the female body and that, at different times, nourishes the body, transforms into breast-milk or exits the body in the form of menses. Rather than just a fluid, *xue* is thus a process. It changes shape and degree of purity, it transforms into milk, it is replenished and exhausted' (Valussi 2008:54). *Jing* is vital essence, associated with semen and menstrual blood. *Huanjing bunao* is 'reverting vital essence to repair the brain'. *Zhan chilong*, 'slaying the red or crimson dragon', is voluntary amenorrhea or the stopping of menstruation. We do not have a *haṭha*



correlate for *zhan chilong* as a practice oriented towards women: the gender generic term *vajrolī* is doing this work (though Mallinson coins the term *rajodhāraṇa* 2018:193).

The Daoist materials on voluntary amenorrhea may fill in some details of the sparse *haṭha* accounts. In the *nüdan* practice of voluntary amenorrhea, ‘slaying the red dragon’, menstrual blood is refined and the flow gradually diminished until it stops altogether. In addition, the breasts shrink and the body becomes androgynous. The ‘slaying of the red dragon’, however, is only the first stage in *nüdan*. A female practitioner would then follow the same procedures as a man and is expected to attain success more quickly.

The *Record of the Auspicious Gathering with Daoists* by Quanzhen or Complete Perfection Daoist Qiu Chuji (also known as Qiu Changchun 1148–1227), describes the dissipation of vital essence through the depletion of bodily fluids:

When *qi* goes through the eyes, it becomes tears, when it goes through the nose, it becomes phlegm, and when it goes past the tongue, it becomes saliva. When it goes outside, it becomes perspiration, when it goes inside, it becomes blood, when it goes through the bones, it becomes marrow, and when it goes through the kidneys, it becomes semen. If your *qi* is complete, you live. If your *qi* is lost, you die. If the *qi* is vigorous, you are youthful, and when the *qi* declines, you age. Always cause your *qi* to not scatter. (*Xuanfeng qinghui lu* 5ab, Eskildsen 2004:690)

To attain the Daoist goal, this ordinary pattern is interrupted, and the transformation process reversed, so that *jing*, vital essence, once felt is not emitted but moved back up inside the body and returned to *qi*, more potent now that it has undergone a semi-alchemical transformation (Kohn 2008:244). This technique of ‘reverting vital essence to repair the brain’ (*huanjing bunao*) is similar in energetic or esoteric analysis to drawing *bindu* upwards, especially in the description of *jing* once felt. In the *Amṛtasiddhi* it was as a result of sexual arousal that *bindu* starts rushing downwards and is then turned upwards. Both systems attest to a general downward dissipation of energy *and*, perhaps, an increased rapidity of downward loss due to the feeling of desire all set within the body as cosmos. The next chapter discusses arousal in the *haṭha* sources.

*Neidan*, like *haṭha* yoga, is oriented to the male practitioner with the conservation of vital essence (*jing*) defined in relation to seminal emission and a focus on non-dissipation through male celibacy and sexual purity, where women are a source of temptation and dissipation (Komjathy 2014a:194). On the other hand, *nüdan* focuses on the central importance of the breasts, heart, blood, and uterus, and on menstruation as the primary form of dissipation of women's vital essence, *jing*. In relation to women, the esoteric physiological sites of the uterus and breasts recall the āyurvedic associations of *rajas*, but perhaps this point is too universal to indicate a correlation between the systems.

The *haṭha* sources are almost silent on technique: we read that women can draw *rajas* upwards through contractions and preserve it. Can the Chinese materials fill this gap? In relation to *neidan* three methods are set out in the thirteenth century *Direct pointers to the great elixir* attributed to Qiu Chuji which involves techniques of contracting the body, drawing in the abdomen and coalescing *qi* to complete the great elixir. A result is the creation of an internal elixir that is like a dragon with a pearl, granting people flight, perpetual life and immortality. There is more here to the technique than offered in the Indian sources and the outcomes are very close to the *haṭha* outcomes.

If amenorrhea is to be self-directed, what is the method? In relation to *neidan*, three methods, which are to be practised together, are set out in *Direct Pointers to the Great Elixir*. These methods are the Coupling of the Dragon and Tiger, the Firing Time of the Revolving of Heaven, and Flying the Metal Crystals behind the Elbows. These methods involve techniques of contracting the body (reading *lianshen* for *hanshen*) and drawing in the abdomen (9b), the coalescence of *qi* to complete the great elixir (7b) and swallowing the *jin* fluids (6b). A result is the creation of an internal elixir that is like a dragon with a pearl which grants people flight, perpetual life and immortality (7b) (Komjathy 2013b:120–34). Although it is attributed to Qiu Chuji (1148–1227), the *Dadan zhizhi* was probably not entirely this author's work, and was

likely compiled at a later date, perhaps in the mid-thirteenth-century. The contemporaneous *Chongyang zhenren jinguan yusuo jue* also describes, very cryptically, what appears to be a technique for retaining semen, the White Ox, by sending it upwards through the spine to the brain (Eskildsen 2004:82–83).

Techniques of *nüdan* may be presaged in the poetry of Sun Buer (1119-1183), the accomplished female Daoist and the only woman of the ‘Seven Perfected’ of Quanzhen or Complete Perfection. Sun Buer’s references to the moon may be nascent ideas of refining menstrual blood. Komjathy notes that the poems may be suggesting that menstruation becomes sublimated into more subtle processes, resulting in complete alchemical transformation (Komjathy 2014b:210-212). To move from Sun Buer to the late imperial *nüdan* canon makes a long and rather awkward move in terms of chronology, and the *nüdan* sources are later than the *hatha*. However, I make this move to highlight techniques of voluntary amenorrhea. These techniques involve ‘a process of progressive refinement of the female body through meditation, breathing, internal visualisations and massage techniques with the ultimate goal of attaining physical immortality’ (Valussi 2008:46). Sources such as the ‘Illustrations and sayings on the female practice of refining the self and returning to the elixir’ describe ‘gathering’ whereby the practitioner, aware of the sensation of imminent menstruation, performs practices of meditation, visualisation and ‘gathering’. The practice is halted when the menstrual flow arrives, before being enjoined again. The practice is detailed here:

The commentary says: treatises on female alchemy talk a lot of the female practice, every time they say that, whenever the monthly message arrives, you then have to stop the practice. This description is incorrect. They all err because they have not yet distinguished clearly. In general, as for female practice, what is most important is the *qi* mechanism. But within it there is a distinction between *ren* 壬 and *gui* 癸. If the *ren* water comes first, and the *gui* water has not come yet, this then is ‘the message has arrived’ (*xin dao ye* 信到也). When the message arrives, you know it by yourself. Sometimes the head is dizzy, sometimes the waist hurts; the message has arrived but

the tide [the blood itself] has not yet arrived. At this time you ought to perform correctly the ‘invert the light and reverse the gazing’ method (*huiguang fanzhao* 迴光返照), silently guard the breasts and sea of blood, and use the gathering method, in order to replenish the brain and set the basis. Then, what you have gathered is the *ren* water, it is not the *gui* water. As soon as the *gui* water arrives, you have to stop the practice. You have to wait for 30 hours or two and a half days, when the *gui* water has extinguished, [then] you [can] still use the gathering method. Gather until what day and then stop? In this respect there are the oral instruction of the heavenly mechanism (*tianji* 天機). (*Illustrations and sayings on the female practice of refining the self and returning to the elixir* or *Nügong lianji huandan tushuo*, 2b, in Valussi 2008:60)

Eskildsen has suggested the process of halting menstruation was so arduous it may have resulted from malnutrition (Eskildsen 2004:74). From a contemporary biomedical perspective amenorrhea can result from restricted diet, strenuous exercise and shock. *Nüdan* involves calorific restriction, sleep deprivation due to meditation requirements and auto-suggestion. However, in contrast to these ‘natural’ causes, the technique of ‘slaying the red dragon’ is according to the sources self-directed and intentional. The materials distinguish between the disease of a menstrual blockage and the internal refinement of blood so that it does not appear externally as menses or milk. If practitioners are post-menopausal, they must practise to produce a return of menstruation before ‘slaying the red dragon’.

The technique of *zhan chilong* or ‘slaying the red dragon’ characterizes *nüdan*. This termination of menstruation is a form of voluntary amenorrhea, alongside which the breasts shrink. The major *nüdan* texts describe the resulting ‘female’ body as resembling that of an adolescent boy (Eskildsen 2004:72–74; Komjathy 2014b:205n108). The breasts were noted above as an āyurvedic site important in the collection of *rajas* during pregnancy and its transformation into milk. Valussi notes: ‘The importance of the breasts as producers of milk and of the *yin* secretions that become menstrual blood is attested at least since the twelfth century in Chinese physiology’ (2002:252). Another similarity with the āyurvedic *dhātus* is that *jing* is neither *yin* nor *yang* but is the essence that the body takes from food (known in *āyurveda* as *rasa*) pending full assimilation (Raz 2009:243).

The Daoist female counterparts to the male ascetic were celibate Quanzhen and Longmen nuns; for them, ‘slaying the red dragon’ (*zhan chilong*) was the counterpart of ‘subduing the white tiger’ (*jiang baihu*) and ‘reverting vital essence to repair the brain’ (*huanjing bunao*). The colours used here correlate with *rajas* and *bindu*: the white tiger as *jing* and the red dragon as woman’s store of original *qi* (*yuanqi*) that transforms first into blood and then into menstruation (Valussi 2002:253).

There are clear parallels between Daoist internal alchemy and *haṭha* yoga. These concepts appear to develop in China before India, and the Chinese sources seem to articulate a more coherent system. Land and ocean trade routes were certainly operating before the periods in which these systems are articulated in Indian texts (Samuel 2008; White 1996; Yang 2023:414-415). There is also vigorous debate as well as much further work to be done on the transfer of practice between India, China and Tibet. This is not to argue for a wholesale importation of Daoist internal alchemy into India but to indicate some of the striking similarities, especially in relation to conceptions of the yogic, micro-macrocosmic homologizations between the body and cosmos, manipulation of menstrual fluids as vital energies, the techniques of ‘contraction’ with which they are accomplished, and the powers of, *inter alia*, flight (HP 3.100) which accrue to the successful practitioner.

I place the *haṭha* and *nūdan* practices alongside one another to highlight the potential similarities in menstrual practice. Daoist sources are in some ways more systematic than the *haṭha* ones and the *nūdan* literature may explain what is going on in *haṭha* yoga. The sources show that female practitioners of *haṭha* yoga may have preserved their *rajas* as part of their practice. While it is not clear that this is the same practice as *nūdan*’s amenorrhea, the Daoist model frames a reading of the *haṭha* sources as *yoginīs* practicing voluntary amenorrhea through preserving their *rajas*. I am drawing out points of intersection on menstrual practice and not offering either a comprehensive comparison of the systems or a decisive statement on

the directions of influence. I find the doctrinal similarities helpful for appreciating the possibilities of the practice of drawing *rajas* upwards but partly due to working with the Chinese materials in translation I have not (yet) found intertextual borrowings. *Neidan* predates *haṭha* yoga, but systematic accounts of voluntary amenorrhea in *nüdan* postdate the *haṭha* sources, though the first reference to ‘slaying the crimson dragon’ as noted above is 1310.

I suggest that the techniques in the Chinese sources could parallel the ‘drawing upwards and preserving’ of *haṭha* yoga. Demonstrating similarities in the practices and suggesting that *nüdan* could fill the lacuna in the *haṭha* sources is not the same as demonstrating intertextual borrowings, or indeed demonstrating geographic lines along which peoples, practices and texts may have circulated. However, I hope to have demonstrated parallels between *neidan*, *nüdan* and *haṭha* yoga on the specific topic of menstrual practice. This helps to shed light on practices for women in the *haṭha* corpus. Without this comparative material, i.e. relying only on the *haṭha* sources, I believe it would be too speculative to suggest raising *rajas* could be voluntary amenorrhea. The *nüdan* materials provide an example of cultivating menses that could be akin to raising *rajas*.

Questions remain. Why would woman want to practice voluntary amenorrhea? As well as soteriological objectives there are social implications—contraception and celibacy, androcentrism, and purification—all of which bear back on soteriology.

Thus beheading the Red Dragon, cultivating the menses, transforming blood into *qi*, the transformation of red into white, the shrinking of the breasts, all mark the first stage of the reversal of natural processes, such as old age, decay, but also fertility for women. As menstruation as well as pregnancy and childbirth are part of the depletion that takes the practitioner away from its final aim, fertility, normally a major asset to be nurtured and controlled, is in fact reversed by the *nüdan* practice. This reversal uses the same energies and the same locations of the natural process. As the *Nüdan shize* says:

This is where creating humans and creating immortals part ways. (Valussi 2008:81)

There are many outstanding questions on the relationship between Indian and Chinese bodily cultivation practice in the premodern period and I hope this comparison is a small contribution to that emerging picture. This comparative work to nuance the *haṭha* materials through contemporaneous and antecedent literatures is just a beginning. Directions for future research should include research into Chinese gynaecological materials from the same period as the Indian materials, such as the work of Furth (1999). It is possible that spiritual embryology enters the *haṭha* canon through Tibetan materials. Researching the Tibetan materials too is an important direction to take this work, such as the scholarship developed by Gyatso (2015) and Garrett (2008) into for example the Four Treaties. There are fascinating correlations between the *haṭha* corpus and the praxis of the Bāuls of Bengal (Hanssen 2006, 2002; Das 1992). However, there are difficulties in comparing *haṭha* with Bāul practice due to changes in language and cultural praxis over time and my not reading Bengali or conducting ethnographic research. I have consulted ethnographers who do not attest to a practice of retaining menses by Bāul practitioners alike to the lack of such data on female *haṭha* practitioners. Ethnographic work on New Religious Movements demonstrates the continuing desirability of halting menstruation.<sup>144</sup> Further work in this context remains a *desideratum*.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter has brought together material on conception, techniques for raising *rajas* and sexual practice drawing not only on *haṭha* sources but also on *nūdan*. This material has been imbedded in a discussion of the approach to sex and sexuality in the sources. This chapter has

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<sup>144</sup> Cf. the account of Aum Shinrikyō former renunciant, Ueda Naoko. As a result of her ‘extreme training’ (*kyogen shugyō*), involving a variety of practices such as limiting sleep to three hours each night for several weeks and significantly reducing the intake of food, Ueda, ‘developed the ability to manipulate her energy (*ki*) in order to control her bodily fluids. For example, she became able to stop her menstruation’ (Baffelli 2022:11). ‘According to former members’ accounts, stopping menstruation allowed them to perform austerities easily, but it also eliminated one of the reasons women’s bodies are associated with pollution—menstrual blood’ (Baffelli 2022:30n41).

focused on how women might practise *vajrolī*, but I should note that *vajrolī* is only one of several methods described in the *haṭha* corpus to preserve semen. Some texts do not teach methods for retaining semen at all, such as the *Amarauḡha*, *Yogatārāvalī* and *Yogabīja*. Other texts include different methods for the retention of semen, such as *khecarīmudrā*, *viparītakaraṇī* and the attainment of *rāja* yoga itself.

I have questioned how the practice for women of drawing *rajas* upwards and protecting it might be done. The sources only give muscular contractions, and we noted that the descriptions for men were also sparse, generally omitting the instruction to create a vacuum in order to draw fluids up through the penis. I used the Chinese sources to detail a much more systematic practice with extensive data on how to perform the technique. This discussion presses the question of what the impact of such practice might be, from a temporary raising of *rajas* to permanently impacting the menstrual cycle. This obviously results in inability to conceive and as such delivers a radical sovereignty to women over reproduction. The practice of *vajrolī* for women, as also *amarolī* and *sahajolī*, script interactions between men and women and give glimpses of the social context of sex and sexuality.

The descriptions of *vajrolī* offer keys to explore both the relations between men and women and practices that are specifically directed towards women. *Amarolī* and *sahajolī* do not address instructions for women to practice either on their own or as the dominant partner (as we saw in the *Dattātreyayogaśāstra*'s instruction for women to practice *vajrolī*). The descriptions of *amarolī* and *sahajolī* are important for underlining the sexual pragmaticism of the sources with which this chapter commenced. Many studies have examined these practices (Kvaerne 1975; Feldhaus 1980:104n11; Sanderson 2005:122n82; Mallinson 2019:5, 2018:197; Ondračka 2021:87; Birch 2023:84n129, 100n184), and I will mention only the *Dattātreyayogaśāstra* passage here.



The *Dattātreyaśāstra* discusses *amarolī* and *sahajolī* after its treatment of *vajrolī*. In these portions the instructions are not directed towards the woman but both partners are specifically referenced through the grammatical dual as pervaded by liberation as a result of *sahajolī* (DYŚ 183ab). The *Dattātreyaśāstra* defines *amarolī* as drinking urine through the nose everyday and practicing *vajrolī* correctly (DYŚ 180, cf. HP 3.92-3.96 and *Haṭharatnāvalī*). The three manuscripts of the *Dattātreyaśāstra* that have most recently been collated catalogue a practice hitherto unknown in *haṭha* texts. It is not introduced as *sahajolī* but defined as such at the end of the description (DYŚ 183). The cloth that had been used to wipe the *āṅgirasa*, semen and sweat reappears in a ritual, rather than hygiene, context. The practitioner is instructed to throw the aforementioned old cloth in water (DYŚ 181cd) with ash from burnt cow dung (DYŚ 182). This is used to smear the limbs of the woman and man after the sex of ‘upwards’ *vajrolī* before sitting together happily, pervaded by liberation for a moment (DYŚ 183ab). This statement acknowledges both male and female partner, and post-coital sexual pleasure as they sit together happily experiencing a moment of freedom (*mukta*).

I have focused here on the material that discusses sex. Of course, most of the sources do not contain discussions of sex and if they do the discussions are generally not sustained. I opened this chapter with instructions to avoid women in the early stages of practice. The discussions of sexual practice represent prosaic attitudes to sex rather than moral censure and moreover allow for the attainment of liberation though pleasure has been enjoyed.

What are the implications for sexuality? The Upaniṣads express the growing concern with women’s sexuality as dangerous to men’s asceticism, a risk to their *nivṛtti* ideology in which preserving their vitality, their semen, is key to success. This trope is neatly prefigured in the R̥gvedic hymn where Lopadmudrā ‘sucks dry’ ‘he who roars like a bull’, her panting husband whom she exhausts, that stands as epigraph to the conclusion. The *Vivekamārtaṇḍa* too has a

bull who roars in the context of the *anāhata cakra* (Viv 116). The warnings to avoid women appear to fit the scheme of a female sexuality dangerous to men's asceticism. However, I have tried to show that in the *haṭha* corpus the approach is in fact rather more prosaic. The *Dattātreyayogaśāstra* and *Haṭhapradīpikā* in particular exhibit a prosaic attitude to sexual practice, at variance with the prior and subsequent sexual milieu that is antagonistic to women's sexuality. The sources appear to reify a heteronormative paradigm in their discussions of sexual practice that is somewhat softened by the interiorisation of sexual affect discussed in the next chapter. It is important to emphasise that in these sources women's sexual pleasure is acknowledged, and not as devious or excessive. Women's sexuality is not identified as a justification for sexual practice yet soteriological success is accorded while pleasure has been enjoyed. The *haṭha* texts manage what no others do: to have and act on sexual desire but in a way that does not squander spiritual or even sovereign power. This fits neatly with the argument of *rāja* yoga as sovereign sexuality.

This chapter presents a radical possibility: that the preservation of *rajas*, whether permanent or temporary amenorrhea, offers women the possibility of non-procreative pleasurable sex. This has ramifications for female sexual and social sovereignty: maybe she slays her own red dragon and controls her own contraception.

## Chapter Five

### *Kuṇḍalinī: the matter of emotion*

We do not embrace the body of a beloved, but the *suṣumṇā* channel, curved like a sprout. If there is sex it is spontaneous melting in a mind dissolved in emptiness, not a vagina.

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The last chapter explored the techniques and implications for ‘raising *rajas*’ largely as gross physical actions or ritual sex. This chapter steps into inner experience though not without social sexual implications. The first of two chapters to examine *kuṇḍalinī* this exegesis suggests *kuṇḍalinī* can be understood as visceral sexual affect or material emotion. The next chapter shifts the perspective to a more material analysis and suggests *kuṇḍalinī* functions to dissolve the body and cosmos, designating *kuṇḍalinī* the ‘*pralayatrix*’.

The coiled, snakelike *kuṇḍalinī*, who is aroused<sup>145</sup> and rises upwards during yoga, is intrinsically connected with yoga in the modern and premodern periods. Serbaeva gives a tantric-inspired definition of *kuṇḍalinī* as ‘the cosmic energy sleeping as potential in the human body as well as the process of its awakening’ (Serbaeva 2020:113). Throughout the *haṭha* corpus ‘she’<sup>146</sup> often takes the form of a snake. A snake in the body presents

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<sup>145</sup> I translate the awakening of *kuṇḍalinī* as ‘arousal’ because this has the sense of awakening from sleep and sexual affect. The Kaivalyadhama editors of the *Haṭhapradīpikā* translate *kuṇḍalinī* as ‘arousal’ (HP 4.11, 4.19). ‘*Pra-√budh*’, the usual term for the awakening of *kuṇḍalinī*, is most often associated with waking up from sleep and awakened to gnosis. Of course, *kuṇḍalinī* both herself wakes from sleep and awakens the practitioner in a soteriological sense. The Monier-Williams dictionary gives the definition of its causative as ‘to stimulate (by gentle friction)’ and Apte as ‘to stimulate, excite’. I emphasise the less usual semantic range not to distort the material but to highlight aspects that may help analyse the research questions.

<sup>146</sup> I use the feminine pronoun for *kuṇḍalinī* because she is grammatically feminine, internally to the corpus designated as a goddess and her function in the yogic body turns on a gendered polarity with *śiva*. However, I do not intend the feminine pronoun to attribute to *kuṇḍalinī* an essential feminine nature. The feminine

hermeneutical challenges and possibilities. *Kuṇḍalinī*'s importance increases throughout the early *haṭha* corpus. Absent in the *Amṛtasiddhi* and entering the corpus through *śaiva* influence in *Vivekamārtaṇḍa* 31-39 all the *mudrās* work on *kuṇḍalinī* and by the *locus classicus* that is the fifteenth-century *Haṭhapradīpikā* she is the support of all practices. The *Haṭhapradīpikā*'s chapter three opens with the micro-macrocosmically homologising statement that, just as the leader of the snakes is the support of the earth with her mountains and forests, so *kuṇḍalī* is the support of all yoga practices (HP 3.1). The *Haṭhapradīpikā* gives the synonyms of *kuṇḍalinī* as *kuṭilāṅgī*, *bhujāṅgī*, *śakti*, *īśvarī*, *kuṇḍalī* and *arundhatī* (HP 3.102). *Śakti* is a key and particularly recurrent term for *kuṇḍalinī* but not always a synonym for *kuṇḍalinī* as *śakti*'s radius of meaning is wider. In what follows I include the synonyms given for *kuṇḍalinī* in Sanskrit to capture her multivalent divinity.

There is much literature on *kuṇḍalinī* in the modern period particularly influenced by tantra<sup>147</sup> but there are no sustained studies of *kuṇḍalinī* in early *haṭha* yoga. These two chapters therefore constitute a significant contribution on this lacuna. Scholars working recently on *kuṇḍalinī* include Hatley (2022)<sup>148</sup> and Serbaeva (2020) both of whom specialise more in tantra than *haṭha*. The work of scholars of tantra such as Silburn (1988), Padoux (1990) and before them the scholars around Woodroffe (1974) helped establish the field of tantra studies beyond India. Rather than comparing the *haṭha* materials with such treatments in tantra or drawing on the reception or experiential history of *kuṇḍalinī* in modernity, such as Jung (1932) and Krishna (1971), I focus on the premodern, Sanskrit textual sources on *haṭha* yoga. Padoux notes the imbrication of *haṭha* on tantra by asking in parenthesis, ‘Mais

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designation has ramifications for this chapter's discussion of sexual affect but should not be read only in anthropocentric and heterosexual terms as the other to the yogi.

<sup>147</sup> Cf. Atkinson (2022) for an analysis of the ‘father of modern yoga’ Krishnamacarya's teachings on *kuṇḍalinī* partially based on textual sources.

<sup>148</sup> This article was released as a preprint in 2015 (available at: <https://www.academia.edu/5009633/Ku%E1%B9%87%E1%B8%8Dalin%C4%AB> accessed: 12 November 2020). References are to the 2022 published edition.

*haṭhayoga* et tantrisme sont-ils séparables?’ (Padoux in Brunner 2004:110). I am sympathetic to this line of reasoning but do not collapse the fields since the *haṭha* sources are discrete. I attempt to treat the tantric sources in breadth and the *haṭha* sources in detail.

Latter-day research and publications on *kuṇḍalinī* such as by the Theosophical Society, new age movements and neo-tantra emphasise the erotic nature of *kuṇḍalinī* and highlight sexual practices for pleasure in the frame of liberation. Mallinson opens his article on *Yoga and Sex* referencing a scholarly consensus that yoga owes its origins to sexual ritual, especially *kaula śaiva* tantric traditions, and states that *vajrolīmudrā* ‘is the only *haṭhayogic* practice that has any possible connection with sex’ (2018:184).<sup>149</sup> Here I argue that *kuṇḍalinī* is associated with sexuality. The focus of this chapter on the implications of *kuṇḍalinī* for real-world sexual relations as well as sexual affect may appear to continue an erotic imaginary of neo-tantra but is intended to respond to the sources not their reception. I analyse the early *haṭha* sources rather than the reception sources but acknowledge my framework may be influenced by later developments. Thus, we can see that there are no English language sustained studies on *kuṇḍalinī* in the early *haṭha* period and this and the next chapter are a step towards filling this gap.

### ***Orientating to sexual affect***

In the introduction I discussed the theoretical and methodological tensions attendant on reading texts for affect—of erotic orientalising and reading bodies of texts for bodies of flesh. A critique of textual and iconographic analysis is that it cannot engage issues of ‘gender, sexuality, love, intimacy, and eroticism’ (Lorea and Singh 2023:35). Given these points of departure—of orientalism, and reading texts for bodies—how might we read these sources for sexuality? In contexts other than descriptions of sex, to what extent can the sources be read as

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<sup>149</sup> See Alter (2011), Lorenzen (2011), Muñoz (2011) and White (2003a).

expressing affect, and perhaps sexual affect? What sort of sexuality emerges? In chapters three and four I argued that the sources have a prosaic attitude to sex. Here I argue that the sources also have a prosaic approach to sexuality.

I make the argument for sexual affect through a genealogy of ideas and the language of bliss, nectars and consumption. The genealogy of ritual sex becoming sexual affect is evident in the *vajrayāna* precursors to the *Amṛtasiddhi*. *Caṇḍālī*, the *vajrayāna* correlate of *kuṇḍalinī* illustrates both interiorisation of ritual sex and a trope of consuming elixirs in the body particularly nectar (*amṛta*). In the construction of a phenomenology of sexuality or sensuality the *haṭha* sources use terms such as bliss (*ānanda*, though there is not necessarily a sexual component to this term), *kāma* (desire),<sup>150</sup> *mada* (sexual attraction), less frequently *rati* (also sexual excitement) and enjoyment (*bhukti*). The sources also deploy sexual metaphors. The sexuality that emerges is a prosaic sexuality and a sexual sovereignty. It is a sexuality in which sexual affect is also interiorised and sublimated. In the yoga process sexual arousal is felt and somehow transmuted but the experience is not transcended—yogis may retain the body upon liberation as the site of pleasure.

*Kuṇḍalinī* appears to have a key role which could be described as the inner beloved or even an emotional materiality. If *kuṇḍalinī* is the inner beloved the relationship is both ecstatic and violent. Ecstasy characterises the *rasa* of *kuṇḍalinī* as the producer and consumer of nectarine bliss. Violence is seen in the core definitional function of *kuṇḍalinī* as the force that breaks the bolt, the force that is *haṭha* yoga (HP 3.103) (Birch 2011:538; Mallinson 2019) and the force with which *kuṇḍalinī* is seized and struck.<sup>151</sup> The extent to which *kuṇḍalinī* is inner beloved is explored through the genealogy of *kuṇḍalinī* as *caṇḍālī* and through the *Haṭhapradīpikā*'s use of the term *bālaraṇḍā* and 'seizing' her with force (*balātkāra*). This

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<sup>150</sup> See chapter one for *kāma* as causing and constitutive of the saṃsāric body.

<sup>151</sup> The *Vivekamārtaṇḍa* description of *dhāraṇā* accords this breaking down of the door to liberation to another practice, the space fixation (Viv 138).

analysis illustrates the axis between social and soteriological sexual relations and problematises the use of such textual sources to critique or construct social context.

The majority of the chapter presents a comprehensive thematic analysis of *kuṇḍalinī* in the *haṭha* sources: *kuṇḍalinī* as snake, as blocking the entrance to the central channel before straightening and entering the central channel, and *kuṇḍalinī* as the key to *haṭha* yoga and the forceful language of striking and seizing her. I then set out a genealogy of ritual sex adopted by the *haṭha* corpus and interiorised and adapted as *kuṇḍalinī*. Finally I draw together the affective language of *kuṇḍalinī* in the *haṭha* corpus.

### ***Kuṇḍalinī in the haṭha sources: snake woman (uragāṅganā)***

*Kuṇḍalinī* has key features that reverberate across the corpus: she is characterised as a snake grammatically gendered feminine, is either a blockage or straightens and enters the central channel (though in the *Yogabīja* she is both) and is the key to the functional heart of *haṭha* yoga. Sources prior to the *haṭha* corpus presage *kuṇḍalinī*'s serpentine shape but not the forceful physiological techniques to awaken her. *Kuṇḍalinī*'s snakelike form may be a development from her description as curved. An early description of *kuṇḍalinī* appears in the eighth-century *Tantrasadbhāva* and describes her as curved (*kuṭilākṛtiḥ* 1.56), the *śakti* (power) in the heart in the form of a snake (1.215)<sup>152</sup>. Hatley suggests this might be the first time she appears as such (2022:823). In the *śaiva* sources in which *kuṇḍalinī* first appears she is associated with flowing nectar as Hatley identifies in the sixth- or seventh-century *Sārdhatriśatikālottaratantra*<sup>153</sup> (12.1–2).<sup>154</sup> There is thus an early association of *kuṇḍalinī* with

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<sup>152</sup> *Tantrasadbhāva* taken from Kṣemarāja's commentary on the *Śivasūtra* in the version published in Padoux (1990) along with his translation.

<sup>153</sup> 'This 'potentially very early reference' is to a "primordial coil" (*ādyā kuṇḍalinī*) in the heart in the shape of a bud, possessed of moon, fire, and sun—possibly an allusion to the three principle *nāḍīs*—and associated with flowing nectar' (Hatley 2022:823; Bhatt 1979:106-107).

<sup>154</sup> *Sārdhatriśatikālottaratantra* 12.1-2 *candrāgniravi saṃyuktā ādyā kuṇḍalinī tu yā | hrtpradeśe tu sā jñeyā ankurākāravat sthitā || sṛṣṭinyāsaṃ nyaset tatra dvirabhyāsapaderitam | sravantam cintayet tasminnamṛtam sādhakottamaḥ ||*

flowing nectar in the *Kālottara*. *Kuṇḍalinī* appears as a goddess at the base of the spine in eighth- and ninth-century *kaula* sources such as the *Kubjikāmatatantra*, and is likely to be informing the redactors of the *Amaraughaprabodha*, *Yogatārāvalī* and *Yogabīja* alongside the *devītattva* model of the *Amṛtasiddhi*. The name of the goddess Kubjikā meaning ‘crooked’ or ‘curved’ may derive from *śakti* as internal *kuṇḍalinī* (Schoterman 1982:9-11; Dyczkowski 1988:88-90; Goudriaan 1981:51; Goodall 2011).<sup>155</sup> The earliest mention of *kuṇḍalinī* in Jain texts is in the thirteenth-century *Mantrarājarahasya* (Pratibhāprajñā 2015; Mallinson and Singleton 2017:490n20).

In the *haṭha* corpus *kuṇḍalinī* is described as a sleeping snake at the base of the body which when awakened becomes straight. Her uncoiling results from the force of *haṭha* yoga. The *Amaraughā* offers a snake simile before the description of *kuṇḍalinī*: just as a snake when hit with a stick becomes straight so *kuṇḍalinī śakti* suddenly becomes straight (Am 20). The *Vivekamārtaṇḍa* long recension describes her as vibrating like a snake, pure, resembling the fibre of a lotus stalk (Viv long recension 50). The short recension does not characterise her as a snake. The *Vasiṣṭhasaṃhitā* has *kuṇḍalī* flashing from the space of the heart in the form of a snake, a great blaze (VS 2.18). The *Gorakṣaśataka* states that like a snake struck by a stick, hissing and straightening (GŚ 56-57) she flashes upwards like a streak of lightning (GŚ 79). Not in my core corpus, the *Yogatārāvalī* describes the ‘snake-woman’ (*uragāṅganā*) awakened by *uḍḍiyāṇa*, *jālandhara* and *mūlabandha* after which the breath enters *suṣumnā* and ceases ‘to come and go’, i.e. inhalation and exhalation cease (*Yogatārāvalī* 6).<sup>156</sup> It seems that the *bandhas* have turned her mouth around, presumably away from covering the mouth of the central channel. In *Yogatārāvalī* 12 *kuṇḍalinī* is named as *kuṇḍalī*: awakened, she

<sup>155</sup> The dates for the cult of Kubjikā are uncertain: Goudriaan suggests the regions of Nepal or Kashmir and Schoterman suggests Koṅkan.

<sup>156</sup> *Yogatārāvalī* 6 *uḍḍiyāṇajālandharamūlabandhair unnidritāyām uragāṅganāyām | pratyānmukhatvāt praviśan suṣumnām gamāgamau muñcati gandhavāhaḥ ||*



consumes the remainder of the breath before *prāṇa* goes by the back path to merge in the middle of the place of *viṣṇu*.<sup>157</sup>

*Kuṇḍalinī* is associated with light. The *Khēcarīvidyā* describes a progressive concatenation of splendour: *kuṇḍalinī* has the appearance of a single spider's web (KhV 3.1cd) and a sleeping serpent (KhV 3.9cd), shines like ten million suns (KhV 3.33cd) and the fire at the end of time (KhV 3.35ab), is radiant like a strobe of lightning (KhV 3.36ab), likened to ten million lightning bolts (KhV 3.37cd) and ten million suns (KhV 3.41ab). In *Śivasamhitā* 2.23 she is introduced as the great goddess (*paradevatā*) in the form of a streak of lightning coiled three and a half times, delicate and resembling a snake. In her mouth she has inserted her tail (ŚS 5.79), she is like a sleeping serpent and sparkles with her own light, is made of links like a snake, is the goddess of speech and is called seed (ŚS 5.80).

In addition to its equation of *kuṇḍalinī* as the interior homologue of the cosmic serpent (HP 3.1) the *Haṭhapradīpikā* moves straight from the discussion of women practicing *vajrolī* to *śakticālana*, the technique for the arousal of the goddess (HP 3.102-123). The *Haṭhapradīpikā* frequently refers to *kuṇḍalinī* as a snake: she straightens like a snake hit with a stick (HP 3.57) and in the Kaivalyadhama translation she enters the *brahmanāḍi* 'just as (a serpent) enters a hole', though the term serpent is not in the Sanskrit (HP 2.58). She is coiled like a serpent (HP 3.107), a snake to be caught by the tail (HP 3.109) and has the expanded hood of a serpent (HP 3.110).<sup>158</sup> The text also uses the term snake to describe the mind (HP 4.45).

Though the *Dattātreyaśāstra* supplies unique data on the practice of *vajrolī* it includes next to nothing on *kuṇḍalinī*—Birch describes the *Dattātreyaśāstra*'s reference to

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<sup>157</sup> *Yogatārāvalī* 12 *pratyāhṛtaḥ kevalakumbhakena prabuddhakuṇḍalyupabhuktaśeṣaḥ | prāṇaḥ pratīcīnāpathena maṇḍam vilīyate viṣṇupadāntarāle ||*

<sup>158</sup> The Kaivalyadhama edition appears to understand *paridhāna* as enclosing a sword in a sheath. A sword is an instrument of violence and suggests violent connotations for the practice. But the translation is not attested by the Sanskrit. Mallinson suggests *paridhāna* may refer to the cloth that the tongue is wrapped in, but the verse is so obscure as to make conclusions difficult, personal communication, 9 March 2023.

*kuṇḍalinī* as ‘fleeting, almost inconsequential’.<sup>159</sup> *Kuṇḍalinī* is awakened by breath and fire but not specified as entering *suṣumṇā* (DYS 108). Where the *Dattātreya yogaśāstra* does reference *kuṇḍalinī* she is not a snake—and neither is she in the *Yogabīja*. The *Yogabīja* does describe her as *kuṇḍalī* consisting of eight coils<sup>160</sup> which are to be made straight by means of *śakticālana* (YB 82). Thus, all the texts in the core corpus describe *kuṇḍalinī* as a snake apart from the *Amṛtasiddhi* that omits her but includes the general apparatus and the *Dattātreya yogaśāstra* and *Yogabīja* which omit the reference to a snake form.

The *Amṛtasiddhi* does not teach *kuṇḍalinī* but explains the principle of the body as an interiorised cosmos that contains all the elements found in the three worlds, and more (AS 1.19). Yet the central channel identified in chapter two is the goddess of the centre (*madhyamā*) through which creation (*sr̥ṣṭi*) is inverted and liberation attained. These aspects of the *Amṛtasiddhi*’s yogic body, alongside the goddess element (*devītattva*) and the mighty goddesses at the base of *madhyamā* are ripe for the grafting on of *kuṇḍalinī*. Indeed, Grimes has pointed out an analogue for *kuṇḍalinī* in the *Amṛtasiddhi*’s description of wind ascending through *madhyamā* and piercing a series of knots (*granthis*) before breaking through the door of *brahman* and causing yoga to be successful (AS 13.5-12) (Grimes 2020:4).<sup>161</sup>

### ***Blocking the entrance with her mouth***

The characterisation of *kuṇḍalinī* rising like a snake rearing upwards dominates the literature. However, she also appears as a blockage and this is likely to predate her as a force rising upwards. She appears as such in the tenth-century *vaiṣṇava Pādmasaṃhitā* (2.14a) as ‘a

<sup>159</sup> As noted by Birch in his response to an early draft of this chapter presented at the conference Sanskrit Traditions in the Modern World (28 May 2021).

<sup>160</sup> The eight coils of *kuṇḍalinī* inspires the next chapter which comprehensively analyses these references.

<sup>161</sup> *Kuṇḍalinī* could be a culturally concretised analogy for *prāṇa* based on the *Amṛtasiddhi* omission of *kuṇḍalinī* but inclusion of the template alongside the importance of breath for awakening *kuṇḍalinī* in the corpus. The *Haṭhapradīpikā* describes *prāṇa* in similar terms to *kuṇḍalinī* (HP 4.63). I have not looked at *prāṇa* as a standalone model of the yogic body because I believe it functions more as a technique or element to be leveraged within specific models rather than a model on its own. I do not think *kuṇḍalinī* is merely an elaboration of the breath but instead points to the affective experience and process of *haṭha* yoga.

coiled obstruction that must be straightened out with heat in order to allow breath to rise up the central channel' and the mention at *Netratantra* 7.21 of a blockage called *kuṇḍalā* (Mallinson and Singleton 2007:178ff).<sup>162</sup>

In the *Vasiṣṭhasaṃhitā* *kuṇḍalinī* is a blockage and awakening her allows the breath to be raised (VS 3.51). She is situated above, below and around the navel (VS 2.15) obstructing the movement of breath (VS 2.16). Encircling with her mouth the mouth of the *brahmarandhra* she awakens at the time of yoga by means of downward moving breath (*apāna*) and fire (VS 2.17). She is not described as entering the central channel but her awakened location is higher in the body as she flashes forth from the space of the heart in the form of a snake, a great blaze, eternally dancing in the heart of yogis, before the breath goes through *suṣumṇā* (VS 2.18). The snake awakens but it is the breath not *kuṇḍalinī* that moves upwards in the *Vasiṣṭhasaṃhitā*.

In the second passage on *kuṇḍalinī* in the *Vasiṣṭhasaṃhitā* again it is breath not *kuṇḍalinī* that is raised up following a description of raising *apāna* to the place of fire. Fire burns and awakens *kuṇḍalinī* (VS 3.50) and when she has awakened and vibrated the practitioner is instructed to raise the breath to the *brahmarandhra* in *suṣumṇā* while meditating on *om* (VS 3.15). This practice culminates in the option not to be born again (VS 3.56ef). Clearly, in the *Vasiṣṭhasaṃhitā* it is the breath that should be raised. While *kuṇḍalinī* flashes forth she herself is not explicitly expressed as being raised.

### ***Straightening and entering***

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<sup>162</sup> Common in modern yoga is the concept of *kuṇḍalinī* as a blockage (Atkinson 2022:23-24; Mallinson and Singleton 2017:179-180).

Having set out the material on *kuṇḍalinī* as blockage I turn to *kuṇḍalinī* as straightening and entering the central channel. This material frames the forthcoming discussion of *kuṇḍalinī* as sexual affect.<sup>163</sup>

As noted, the eleventh-century *Amṛtasiddhi* does not mention *kuṇḍalinī*. The text does however provide a map of the body remarkably susceptible to the overlay of *kuṇḍalinī*. The *Amṛtasiddhi* accords high status to the oft-extolled goddess of the centre (*madhyamā*). *Madhyamā* is a synonym for, *inter alia*, *avadhūtī*, the cremation ground (*śmaśāna*), the great pathway (*mahāpatha*), the substrate (*ādhāra*), *suṣumṇā* and *sarasvatī* (AS 2.6) the central channel through which in later iterations *kuṇḍalinī* moves. It is said that even though she has different names in different doctrines she is always one to those who have the eye of knowledge (AS 2.7). The synonyms give the sense of channel or location as well as the fluid that flows (*sarasvatī*), inspiring my tentative conceptualisation of *kuṇḍalinī* as emotional liquidity. She is positioned as flowing between the *gaṅgā* and *yamunā*, ‘happy on her own’, and the practitioner is to bath in their confluence before going to the ultimate destination (AS 2.8). Of the two types of nectar rained by the moon the *mandākinī* (*gaṅgā*) goes via *idā* (AS 3.2) and nourishes the whole body while the other goes by way of the middle of *madhyamā* to bring about procreation (AS 3.4). Thus, the first type of rain is associated with samsāric health and the second with embryology. *Madhyamā* is the creator of all and the destroyer of ignorance (AS 2.4cd) with all the mighty goddesses located at her door of creation (AS 2.5ab).<sup>164</sup> The characteristics of creation and destruction are commonly attributed to *kuṇḍalinī*.

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<sup>163</sup> This is not a heterosexual and anthropocentric analogy of *kuṇḍalinī* rising as the sexual act (*kuṇḍalinī* as penis, ascent as sexual act, and breaking the bolt of *brahman* as orgasm). Similarly, Mallinson does not find suggestions in the literature that inserting the tongue into the nasal cavity in *khecarīmudrā* is analogous to sex (Mallinson 2007a:189n142).

<sup>164</sup> Ring stones associated with goddesses, some with holes in the middle, are attested between the third and first century BCE (Joshi 2002:42) which could inform the circle of *yoginīs* at the base. *Yoginīs*, often numbering 64, are familiar from circular *yoginī* temples associated with the cult of the *yoginī* of the ninth to twelfth centuries (Dehejia 1986:7) though Dehejia notes that internal and external *yoginīs* are distinct: having described the internal *kuṇḍalinī* she notes, ‘It will be apparent that these *Yoginīs* of the internal *cakras* are deities who stand apart from the *Yoginī* of the *Yoginī* temples’ (Dehejia 1986:18).

In addition to these mighty goddesses there is a goddess element (*devītattva*) at the base in which the female generative fluid (*rajas*) rests. *Rajas* is to unite with *bindu* at the esoteric top of the body (AS 7.11-12) implying but not specifying an ascent of the female principle. Note that in this text it is *rajas* that undergoes an ascent like that undertaken by *kuṇḍalinī* in later texts.

In the *Gorakṣaśataka* *kuṇḍalinī* is a blockage and she also moves upwards. In the announcement of the teaching of the stimulation of the goddess (*śakticālana*) the goddess (*śakti*) is described as the coiled *kuṇḍalī* (GŚ 16cd). *Śakticālana* moves her from her home to the centre of the eyebrows (GŚ 17ab) and the two central means for accomplishing this are stimulation of *sarasvatī* and restraint of the breath (*prāṇarodha*) (GŚ 18). These methods will make *kuṇḍalinī* straight. The *Gorakṣaśataka* specifies that it is through making *sarasvatī* move that *kuṇḍalinī* herself moves (GŚ 16-19). Mallinson shows that the practice of *sarasvatīcālana* involves tying a cloth around the tongue and moving it vigorously (GŚ 20-26) (2012:258ff). The result is to draw the end of *suṣumṇā* upwards slightly so that *kuṇḍalinī* extracts her mouth from *suṣumṇā* and *prāṇa* can enter, similar to the *Yogatārāvalī*. Through a combination of *śakticālana*, contracting the throat and inhaling, wind moves up on both sides (GŚ 26). In the description of the techniques of *mūlabandha* the overheated *prāṇa* heats the sleeping *kuṇḍalinī* and wakes her up (GŚ 53-58). The simile of a snake struck by a stick is given whereby *kuṇḍalinī* hisses and straightens herself before entering the channel of *brahman* (GŚ 56). Here, *kuṇḍalinī* is both the blockage and that which moves upwards. The violence of striking with a stick will be discussed below.

In the *Yogabīja* *kuṇḍalinī* is again both a blockage and moves upwards. *Kuṇḍalinī* has eight coils, and the practitioner is to stop the breath firmly and straighten the coils through the practice of *śakticālana* (YB 82). The set-up for *śakticālana* is to sit in *vajrāsana* and practise

for half a month<sup>165</sup> (YB 83cd). Fire is enflamed by the breath and continually burns *kuṇḍalinī* who is ‘the power of life’ (*jīvaśakti*) and ‘the enchantress of the three worlds’ to use the translation of Birch (forthcoming) for *trailokyamohinī* (YB 84). She enters the *suṣumṇā* and along with breath and fire she pierces the knot of *brahman* (YB 85). Then *kuṇḍalinī* herself pierces the *viṣṇugranthi* and remains in *rudragranthi*, and the breath is to be held firmly after inhaling repeatedly (YB 86). There follow two similes. First the splitting of the knots in the spine by the breath are compared to the splitting of knots in bamboo by a red-hot spike (YB 87). Second the itching that arises in *suṣumṇā* due to constant breath practice is compared to the itching that arises from the touch of ants (YB 88). This metaphor connects back to the opening of the *Yogabīja* where the argument that gnosis alone is not enough without baking the body in the fire of yoga is illustrated with the metaphor of ants and scorpions disturbing the body of the meditator (YB 18abc).

The description of *kuṇḍalinī* in the *Khecarīvidyā* is important for appreciating the role of elixirs (this chapter) and dissolution (*laya*) (next chapter) into the five elements. In the *Khecarīvidyā* *kuṇḍalinī* clearly rises upwards. In *Khecarīvidyā* chapter two she goes upwards along with the nectars (*kalās*). Five individually named *kalās* are described at the base between the anus and testicles (KhV 2.32ff) and from these drip the supreme nectar (*amṛta*) (KhV 2.33). The primordial (*ādyā*) *kuṇḍalinī*, the supreme goddess, is also situated at this location (KhV 2.34). The yogi is instructed to contract (*ākuñcana*) that region, hold the breath and by means of the power of the root (*mūlaśakti*) attain the cool nectar (*amṛta*) situated there (KhV 2.35). Note the connection with the technique for raising *rajas* which suggests that while there may be differences in the names and concepts associated with techniques the similarities in practice may outweigh the difference in names. The yogi should lead the *amṛtas* via *suṣumṇā* from *svādhiṣṭhānā* and other lotuses, thinking of himself as being

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<sup>165</sup> For possible variations of this length see Birch (forthcoming:99n65).

sprinkled with a rain of nectar up to the skull (KhV 2.36). It is clearly *kuṇḍalinī* as a supreme goddess (*śaktih śrīkuṇḍalī parā*) who goes to the abode of *brahman* (KhV 2.37). The yogi should recollect her pervading the body from the feet to the head bathed in a surfeit of the nectar produced by the five *kalās* at the root (KhV 2.38). By practicing this technique for five months absorption (*laya*) into the five elements arises and the yogi becomes equal to Śiva (KhV 2.39). Here is a strong connection between *kuṇḍalinī* and the elixirs and it is *kuṇḍalinī* as the great goddess who rises up through the *suṣumṇā*. There is a notable use of visualisation as well as contraction of the base and holding the breath.

The *Khecarīvidyā* is the only work treated here in which she goes up and comes back down. In *Khecarīvidyā* chapter three *kuṇḍalinī* is to be raised upwards as part of the practice of *khecarī*, the yogi drinks nectar and his body is satiated by nectar (KhV 3.4). Not only does she drench the body in nectar, but she also returns to her home in the base (KhV 3.14ab). The *Śivasamhitā* and *Haṭhapradīpikā* have *kuṇḍalinī* ascending but not descending. In the *Śivasamhitā*, following a discussion of *vajrolī*, *sahajolī*, *amarolī* and a little on *śatkicālana* (ŚS 4.78ff) the yogi should firmly move the sleeping *kuṇḍalinī* and force (*bala*) her upwards on the rising *apāna* wind (ŚS 4.105). In the *Haṭhapradīpikā* the great goddess (*parameśvarī*) sleeps obstructing the entrance to the path by which one must go to reach the place of *brahman* (HP 3.104), her awakening clears the impurities of the *naḍīs* (HP 3.123), her movement enables *prāṇa* to enter (HP 3.118), and *śakti* rises upwards with force (HP 3.109). The analysis of the description of *kuṇḍalinī* so far has focused on her assignation as a snake that is sleeping, is to be awoken, and either removed from blocking the base of the central channel or is herself raised upwards through the central channel.

***Kuṇḍalinī is the key (kuñcikā)***

In the *Vivekamārtaṇḍa kuṇḍalinī* is named the highest goddess (*parameśvarī*) and sleeps with her mouth covering the door of the path leading to the pure place of *brahman* (Viv 33). She is awoken by the yoga of fire, mind and breath, and like a needle taking a thread she goes upwards by way of *suṣumṇā* (Viv 34). *Kuṇḍalinī* is used to burst open the doorway to liberation in the same way that a key is used to force open a door (Viv 35). The drawback of this metaphor is that a key is not usually understood as forceful. Birch, following Brahmānanda, to make sense of the force of the metaphor links it to the meaning of *haṭha* yoga: ‘the implication is that the force of Haṭhayoga is the forceful effect of its practice on *kuṇḍalinī*’ (2011:538). The *Haṭhapradīpikā* too states that just as a door is opened with the help of a key, similarly the yogi should open the way to liberation forcefully, using *kuṇḍalinī* (3.101). *Kuṇḍalinī* is the functional core, the key of *haṭha* yoga.

### ***Technique: strike***

Let us consider the techniques for awakening *kuṇḍalinī*. As affective experience *kuṇḍalinī* cannot be directly manipulated: she cannot be ‘seized’ as one might seize the tail of a snake. She cannot be hit as one might hit a snake. Rather she is as if hit. Her arousal effects the process of *haṭha* yoga but she herself is not amenable to direct manipulation. It is through other practices that she is stimulated. In the earlier sources the technique used to awaken *kuṇḍalinī* is to burn her with heat. The yogi is instructed to raise this heat by fanning it with breathing practices. In later sources all the techniques of *haṭha* yoga are thought to work on *kuṇḍalinī* and she is the support of all practices in the *Haṭhapradīpikā*.

The techniques taught to arouse or awaken *kuṇḍalinī* in the *haṭha* corpus are physical and at times forceful as the following summary shows. *Kuṇḍalinī* is framed as a goddess and in the *Amṛtasiddhi* physical techniques are taught to work on the goddesses. As noted earlier of the three central techniques taught, *mahābandha*, *mahāmudrā* and *mahāvedha*, the first is



divided into two types, the perineum lock (*yonibandha*) for the goddesses and the throat lock (*kaṅṭhabandha*) for the god (AS 12.2). Thus, though *kuṅḍalinī* is not named she may be encompassed by these goddesses.

An outlier technique recorded in the *Amaraughā* is one of killing (*māraṇa*) *kuṅḍalinī*.<sup>166</sup> In the *Amaraughā*, with the use of alchemical terminology, the body is a crucible and *kuṅḍalinī* is killed within it. This is a very different paradigm from *kuṅḍalinī* being united with *śiva* in the head. The death of *kuṅḍalinī* implies violence just as does hitting her with a stick. The yogi is to lock the throat and hold the breath in the upper part so that just as a snake hit with a stick becomes like a stick, so the coiled *śakti* suddenly becomes straight; then she is killed or stilled (*marañāvasthā*) and resides in a vessel with two halves (*dvipuṭa*) (Am 20-21). However, the violence is less explicit when ‘killing’ is understood as alchemical ‘stilling’.

In *Vasiṣṭhasaṃhitā prāṇa*, fire and heat awaken *kuṅḍalinī* (VS 3.46-50). It is the breath, eased by the breath, that moves through *suṣumṇā* (VS 2.17). Breath is to be raised while meditating on *om* (VS 3.51). For the *Vivekamārtaṇḍa mudrās* work on *kuṅḍalinī* while in the *Gorakṣaśataka* it is *śakticālana* and restraint of the breath. The teaching on awakening *kuṅḍalinī* is repeated in the *Gorakṣaśataka* as part of the method for attaining *samādhi* when the yogi has stimulated *sarasvatī* and controlled their breath (GŚ 74ff). Moving or stimulating *śakti* (*śakticālana*) is a specific technique described in the sources to awaken her. As noted above, Mallinson translates *śakticālana* as ‘the stimulation of the goddess’ and argues that it involves tying a cloth around the tongue and moving it vigorously in *Gorakṣaśataka* 20-26 (2012). In the *Vivekamārtaṇḍa* breath is to be ‘jerked’ upwards by means of the goddess, from which we can infer *kuṅḍalinī* is intended (Viv 90ab).

According to the *Yogabījā* the practitioner must sit in *vajrāsana* and firmly and repeatedly hold the breath (YB 86). The *Khecarīvidyā* instructs the yogi to contract the base and hold the

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<sup>166</sup> This may have precedents in the *Hevajra* mantra portion discussed below.

breath (KhV 2.35), gives visualisations and recollections (KhV 2.38-39) and its signature practice of *khecarīmudrā* in chapters two (KhV 2.123-12) and three. The *Śivasamhitā* describes elaborate visualisations and specifies the importance of the grace of the guru in teaching the *mudrās* that awaken *kuṇḍalinī* (ŚS 4.21). The yogi is to make every effort to practise *mudrās* to awaken the goddess (ŚS 4.22).

In the *Haṭhapradīpikā* *kuṇḍalinī* is the support of all practices of yoga (HP 3.1). The *mudrās* are intended to awaken *kuṇḍalinī* which causes *rāja* yoga or the state of *samādhi*. Prior to its description of *mudrās* the *Haṭhapradīpikā* insists that every effort should be made in the practice of *mudrās* to awaken the goddess (*īśvarī*) asleep at the door of *brahman* (HP 3.5). These examples have demonstrated that *kuṇḍalinī* herself is not a physical technique. She is not amenable to direct manipulation. It is through other practices that she is stimulated.

Though striking *kuṇḍalinī* is clearly forceful many of the techniques for arousing *kuṇḍalinī* are not violent. *Haṭha* is the Sanskrit term for force<sup>167</sup> and the function of *kuṇḍalinī* is definitional of *haṭha* yoga. The function of *kuṇḍalinī* once aroused is forceful: the piercing or forcing upwards through the locks (*granthis*) in the body to effect liberation. The process of *kuṇḍalinī* rising is forceful and creates a forceful impact: the breaking through of the *brahmarandhra* or exit of the physical body at the crown of the head. This is the key explanation for the language of force. The impact of the arousal and rising upwards of *kuṇḍalinī* is forceful and the techniques deployed to awaken *kuṇḍalinī* and her powerful rising are intimately associated with the definition of *haṭha* yoga.

### ***From striking to seizing***

We have seen that the stimulation of *kuṇḍalinī* is sometimes characterised by forceful techniques and the force of *kuṇḍalinī* rising is definitional of *haṭha* yoga. Contrasting with

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<sup>167</sup> *Haṭha* as ‘force’ is historically and philologically unpacked by Birch (2011) and Mallinson (2020a).

forceful terminology is the devotional reverence articulated in the *Haṭhāpradīpikā* where salutations are invoked to *suṣumṇā*, to *kuṇḍalinī*, to the nectar flowing from the moon, to *manonmanī* and the great *śakti* in the form of consciousness (HP 4.64). How should we understand the association between *kuṇḍalinī* and the language of force and devotion? Should *kuṇḍalinī* be understood as describing the process or function of *haṭha* yoga only as an esoteric account of the body and divorced from social relations? If *kuṇḍalinī* corresponds with the at times socially abjected sexual partner in these sources (see below) and the force of *haṭha* yoga, are there correspondences with sexual culture in the contexts of textual production? I suggest that we cannot treat these sources in an esoteric silo, divorced from the social contexts in which they were produced and without ramifications for social and sexual relations. The use of sexual and violent language is perhaps a product of the material social relations in which the sources were compiled. Here I set out that language. However, I believe we should not only read *kuṇḍalinī* in terms of sexual relations and conflate the sexual partner with the esoteric concept: rather I suggest that *kuṇḍalinī* also articulates the internal phenomenological experience of sexual arousal, sublimated for soteriological objectives.

The term ‘poor young widow’ (*bālaraṇḍā tapasvinī*) is used to describe *kuṇḍalinī* in the *Haṭhāpradīpikā*. The *bālaraṇḍā tapasvinī* dwells in the middle of *gaṅgā* and *yamunā* whom one should be seized with force (*balātkāreṇa grhṇīyāt*) as the highest step of Viṣṇu (HP 3.108-109). *Bālaraṇḍā* is a pejorative term for a young woman or widow who is sexually available or not a mother. Specifically, the Monier-Williams dictionary defines *raṇḍā* as a term of abuse and uses the derogatory term ‘slut’ (Monier-Williams 1872:864). An alternate reading of *baṇḍā* for *raṇḍā* is ‘an unchaste woman’. In the *Haṭhāpradīpikā* the *bālaraṇḍā* is qualified as a female-gendered practitioner of austerities (*tapasvinī*) (HP 3.108). The yogi is instructed to seize her by force the result of which is success in yoga. In modern Hindi *balātkāra* is used to denote rape. As well as rape the term has valences of coercion, force and

violation (Shabdkosh Hindi).<sup>168</sup> In Sanskrit *balātkāra* means the employment of force, violence, oppression and injustice (Monier-Williams 1872:723). *Balātkāra* is given as a synonym for *haṭhātkāra*. However, it is unlikely to have the connotation of rape here.<sup>169</sup> Brahmānanda in the *Jyotsnā* commentary glosses *balātkāreṇa* with *haṭhena* so that the practitioner is to grab *kuṇḍalinī* forcefully. In the *Haṭhāradīpikā* the force with which she is seized mirrors the force with which she rises (HP 3.103). The passage continues with the yogi instructed to awaken the sleeping snake (*bhujagī*) by catching her by the tail so that she rises upwards with force (HP 3.109).

Similar to the way in which *kuṇḍalinī* is described in this *Haṭhāradīpikā* passage is a trope within the corpus of ‘jokes’ that turn on women’s sexual availability and social status. To take but one example from *Haṭhāradīpikā* 4.35 religious texts (*Vedas*, *śāstras* and *purāṇas*) are like ‘public’ women in comparison to the technique of *śāmbhavī mudrā* alone who is ‘like a wife in a respectable family who is not exposed to every gaze’ (Kaivalyadhama 1998:142).

As discussed in the last chapter *vajrolī*, *amarolī* and *sahajolī* are moments in the corpus where sex is enjoined for ritual purposes usually to produce ritual media. In this example from the *Haṭhābhyāsapaddhati* sex is used as a training technique in the preservation of semen (*bindudhāraṇa*). As we have seen the sources are not puritanical but prosaic about sex and once the yogi is established in *bindudhāraṇa* proscriptions on sexual activity depend on the sectarian affiliations of the sources.

While none of this suggests that the *haṭha* sources are condoning or prescribing sexual violence in these descriptions of *kuṇḍalinī*, nonetheless the foregoing discussion situates the

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<sup>168</sup> Available at: <https://www.shabdkosh.com/search-dictionary?lc=hi&sl=en&tl=hi&e=bal%20%81tk%20%81ra> (Accessed 24 May 2023).

<sup>169</sup> The eighteenth-century *Haṭhābhyāsapaddhati*, whose postural sequences are prescribed for those ‘obsessed’ by women instruct the yogi not to use force in sexual relations to practice *vajrolī* (*Haṭhābhyāsapaddhati* folio 28r, 2.1-9) (Birch and Singleton 2019:31n89).

more esoteric *kuṇḍalinī* within a context of social sexual relations. This discussion should be read alongside that of the previous chapter on prosaic sexual ethics.

So far, I have analysed the representation of *kuṇḍalinī* in the *haṭha* sources. The value of this discussion is the thematic aggregation of *kuṇḍalinī* as described in the *haṭha* corpus. *Kuṇḍalinī* is variously the snake, sleeping then aroused, associated with light and brilliance, blocking the entrance to the central channel or rising up and piercing the knots, the key that is definitional of the force of *haṭha* yoga, associated with a violent seizing. This descriptive content is the foundation for developing the analysis in the remainder of this and the next chapter. Having set out the description of *kuṇḍalinī* what of the feeling of *kuṇḍalinī*? I now discuss the proposition that *kuṇḍalinī* is sexual affect. I argue that *kuṇḍalinī* as affect is not merely insubstantial emotion but, oriented to materiality and taking my cue from the central channel as liquid *sarasvatī*, also an emotional materiality. The conundrum of the corporeality of *kuṇḍalinī* also motivates the discussion of the next chapter.

### ***Genealogy of ritual sex to sexual affect***

I have examined how *kuṇḍalinī* is represented in the *haṭha* materials. *Kuṇḍalinī* does not appear from nowhere, and earlier figurations are refigured in the *haṭha* corpus. Here I review those sources that speak to sexual affect. *Kuṇḍalinī* does not appear in the *Pātañjalayogaśāstra*, the *śāstra* that is the perceived progenitor of the yoga tradition, but rather stems from tantric materials with the earliest references occurring in the sixth- or seventh-century *Sārdhatriśatikālottaratantra*. There is significant material in *śaiva* sources on *kuṇḍalinī* as a cosmogonic force, a *śakti* in the heart and an alphabet goddess associated with the subtle sound of creation. Hatley notes, ‘*kuṇḍalinī* first comes into evidence in *circa* sixth to eighth-century C.E scriptures of Tantric Śaivism, known as *tantras* or *āgamas*. While significant to multiple tantric traditions, including the Śaivasiddhānta and Pāñcarātra,

*kuṇḍalinī* attains prominence in the goddess-oriented (i.e. *śākta*) Kaula traditions and the second-millennium texts of Haṭha Yoga' (2022:823). In *vajrayāna* materials *kuṇḍalinī* is synonymous with *caṇḍālī* and the rapture that the *haṭha* techniques seek to harness and disrupt. I do not seek to write a comprehensive genealogy of those sources. Rather I select those elements that bear on the topics I wish to elucidate in relation to the *haṭha* corpus. This helps explicate how *kuṇḍalinī* functions in those sources, how she is creatively adapted to the physical practices of *haṭha* yoga, and the nexus of relationships between *kuṇḍalinī* as an esoteric force of sexual affect in conjunction with social sexual relations in practitioner communities. Yet, rooted in textual studies and constrained by the concerns of the texts' redactors I do not attempt to assert a comprehensive social context for women or sexual relationships in these communities.

*Vajrayāna* sources relevant to the discussion of *kuṇḍalinī* include the ninth-century *Hevajratāntra* and pre-tenth-century *Guhyasamājatantra* and *Samputatantra* and eleventh-century *Kālacakra* and *Vimalaprabhā*. This antecedent literature informs the interiorisation of sexual ritual and we may draw inferences on the relationship between *kuṇḍalinī* and women through the prism of *caṇḍālī*. In the next chapter I deal more systematically with the *śaiva* sources when I consider the material and cosmogonic role of *kuṇḍalinī* in relation to the dissolution of the individual.

As the *haṭha* sources describe the samsāric body as predicated on affect, as caused and constituted by affect, to what extent is the *haṭha* process based on utilising affect? The argument for sexual affect can be based on a genealogy of ideas. I argue there is a genealogy in the concept of *kuṇḍalinī* from tantra to *haṭha* that indicates the interiorisation of ritual sex to sexual affect.

The *Amṛtasiddhi*, the first text in this corpus, 'was composed within a Vajrayāna milieu but is unorthodox insofar as its yoga method is for individual celibate male *yogins* and is

deemed to be superior to the practices of ritual sex taught in mainstream Vajrayāna traditions’ (Mallinson and Szántó 2021:3-4). Mainstream *vajrayāna* teaches sexual practice (orgasm and ejaculation) and a minority of *vajrayāna* schools, including *Kālacakra*, teach non-ejaculatory sexual ritual (Mallinson and Szántó 2021:17).<sup>170</sup> The latter schools name such practices *haṭhayoga*, ‘forced yoga’. The *Amṛtasiddhi* rejects sexual ritual altogether and adapts the stages of the practice—the blisses that mainstream *vajrayāna* and *Kālacakra* deploy to describe sexual pleasure—for a celibate context.<sup>171</sup> For the *Amṛtasiddhi* death arises as a result of the bliss of ejaculation (AS 21.3). Innate bliss arises through the reversal of the ejaculatory breath and sending it up the central channel (AS 22.2). Though it rejects sex the centrality of *amṛta* and association with semen is reflected in the text’s analysis of its title. The *Amṛtasiddhi* concludes by defining *amṛta* as a word for semen, liberation and life and the perfection of the three that it teaches is the ‘perfection of immortality’ (*amṛtasiddhi*) (AS 36.6).

The ritual sex inheritance of the *Amṛtasiddhi* is also seen in its incorporation of the ‘moments’ (*kṣanas*) which *vajrayāna* sources map onto the four blisses. The *Amaraugha* adopts the blisses and understands the ‘moments’ (*kṣaṇas*) as ‘sounds’ (*kvaṇas*) (Mallinson and Szántó 2021:20). These four stages, associated with sexual affect in *vajrayāna*, are adopted by the *Haṭhapradīpikā* from the *Amaraugha* and from there into many texts and commentaries (Mallinson and Szántó 2021:20). However, their sexual origin is masked

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<sup>170</sup> In the *Kālacakra* sources the stages of sexual arousal are enumerated and the final two reversed from the mainstream order. The order of blisses where the final two are reversed is sometimes called *haṭhaseka*, ‘forced consecration’ or *haṭhayoga*, ‘forced yoga’ (Mallinson and Szántó 2021:17; Isaacson and Sferra 2014:96-108). The *Vimalaprabhā*, commenting on the *Laghukālacakratāntra* teaching of *haṭha* yoga as holding back from ejaculation, notes: ‘when the unchanging moment does not arise because the breath is not controlled... having faced or forced the breath to fly in the central channel through the practice of resonance (*nāda*), the [yogi] should accomplish the unchanging moment by being without vibration, as a result of restraining the drops (*bindu*) of semen (*bodhicitta*) in the glans of the penis (*kuliśamaṇi*) in the vagina (*prajñā*)’ (4.119) (Mallinson and Singleton 2017:29). Much work has been done on these sources and their relation to the genealogy of *haṭha* yoga (Mallinson 2020:183; Birch 2011:535; Wallace 2001; Wangchuck 2007).

<sup>171</sup> The mainstream order of the four blisses is *ānanda*, *paramānanda*, *sahajānanda* and *viramānanda*. It is the last two blisses that are reversed by a minority of schools that forbid ejaculation including the *Kālacakra*.

somewhat from the *Amaraugha* onwards. Thus, it is clear that in the historical genealogy of *haṭha* yoga from a *vajrayāna* context *haṭha* yoga incorporates sexual affect in a celibate context.<sup>172</sup>

The process of *haṭha* yoga is frequently described in terms of the production and consumption of nectars in the body and I wonder whether there is a link between bliss (*ānanda*) and nectar (*amṛta*)? If there were then nectar could be understood in affective terms, and, as *kuṇḍalinī* is frequently associated with nectar, she too could be associated with affect—an emotional materiality. The *vajrayāna* genealogy of the *Amṛtasiddhi*, as well as demonstrating the adaption of ritual sex to interiorised sex, also demonstrates the genealogy of tropes of bliss and consumption from ritual sex. We can see this in *caṇḍālī*, the mainstream *vajrayāna* correlate of *kuṇḍalinī*.<sup>173</sup> *Kuṇḍalinī* derives from *śaiva* sources and is grafted onto the initially *vajrayāna* system of the *Amṛtasiddhi*. There are parallels in descriptions of external and internal rituals involving *caṇḍālī* that could suggest *caṇḍālī* derives from social-world rituals.<sup>174</sup>

*Caṇḍālī* is the non-serpentine ‘goddess of fire, who burns at the navel’ (Snellgrove vol 1 1959:27).<sup>175</sup> A *caṇḍāla* in the pejorative language used by the Monier-Williams dictionary is ‘an outcast, man of the lowest and most despised of the mixed tribes (born of a *śūdra*-father

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<sup>172</sup> Note the connection with Daoist inner alchemy where the refinement of *qi* starts with sexual arousal (Kohn 2008).

<sup>173</sup> As noted above the *Amṛtasiddhi* does not name *kuṇḍalinī* though does contain a template where breath is raised and pierces the knots.

<sup>174</sup> There is a widespread trope of the power of the *caṇḍāla* fire that is interiorised in the body. The *Vīṇāśikhatantra*, perhaps sixth to seventh century, instructs the collection of a fire from the house of a *caṇḍāla*, in the context of ‘black magic’: ‘having collected a fire from a *Caṇḍāla* [’s house], he should cause it to flame up with a piece of wood from a funeral pyre; within three nights he will effectuate the eradication [of people who will be forced] to leave relatives and friends’ (*Vīṇāśikhatantra* 167) (Goudriaan 1985). This might indicate that the association between *caṇḍālī* and inner fire is based on an association with outer fire. Aciri and Wenta’s book chapter details many more such examples of this trope (Aciri and Wenta 2022:46-47). I am grateful to Aciri for bringing these references to my attention, personal communication, 16 March 2022. Though the examples cited here do not relate to *kuṇḍalinī* or snakes the trope establishes the power and antinomian nature of the *caṇḍāla* fire which may be interiorised as *caṇḍālī* thus also a possible genealogy for *kuṇḍalinī*.

<sup>175</sup> Cf. Mallinson and Szántó 2021:142n217, Baker 2019:147-163.



and a Brahman mother’ (Monier-Williams 1872) and *caṇḍālī* the female correlate.<sup>176</sup> *Caṇḍālī* and *ḍombī*, likewise *avadhūtī*, are terms that encompass caste-oppressed women sought after for tantric sexual rites.<sup>177</sup> In the body of the *Hevajratāntra* *avadhūtī* is the central channel. *Rakta* or blood moves in the left, and *śukra* or semen moves in the right, and they enter *avadhūtī* at the base. Their contact arouses the ‘thought of enlightenment’ (*bodhicitta*) which is envisaged as *caṇḍālī* burning. *Caṇḍālī*, considered to be *avadhūtī* or *ḍombī*, moves upwards, consuming as she goes. When she reaches the *bodhicitta* in the head it melts and flows downwards (*Hevajratāntra* 1.1.31)<sup>178</sup> (Snellgrove vol 1 1959:36-7). The movement upwards, consumption and the downward flow are important principles of the *haṭha* yoga body. This is similar to the *Gorakṣaśataka* passage.

A potential external ritual correlate for *kuṇḍalinī* can be found in the late ninth-century *Hevajra*. Shortly following the description of *caṇḍālī* blazing upwards is the mantra portion in which there is an external ritual to produce rain involving the image of a snake variously prepared, placed in a two portioned vessel and trampled by *hevajra* (*Hevajra* 1.2.20) (Snellgrove vol 1 1959:31-52). We find an interiorised version of this in the *Amarāugha*. Here *kuṇḍalinī* enters a double vessel (*dvipuṭa*) and is ‘killed’, alchemical terminology for ‘stilled’. The outlier notion of the gods being killed also occurs in the *Amṛtasiddhi*. Here the gods are killed in the central channel as a result of the piercing of *meru* (AS 13.9).<sup>179</sup> It may be that the *Hevajra*’s external ritual has been homologised into the body of the yogi. Extending these ideas and incorporating an interiorised snake, the pre-tenth century *Samṣṭatantra* is a

<sup>176</sup> Tibetan does not have grammatical gender as Sanskrit does. *Caṇḍālī* can sometimes be equated with *ḍombī* and other such words in *siddha* parlance, where the implication is that when personified, she is female (though some authorities etymologise *caṇḍa+ālī*, where *ālī/āli* stands for the male deity Vajrasattva). Thanks to Szántó for clarification on this point, personal communication, 29 April 2022).

<sup>177</sup> For analyses of women involved in such rituals see Hatley 2019, 2015; Törzsök 2014; Aktor 2016.

<sup>178</sup> *Hevajra* 1.1.31 *caṇḍālī jvalitā nabhau || dahati pañcatathāgatān || dahati ca locanādīḥ || dagdhe ’ham sravate śaśī ||*

<sup>179</sup> In the *Gheraṇḍasamhitā* (3.47) Mallinson translates *kuṇḍalinī* as ‘suffocating’ before entering the upward path. This would provide a correlate with *kuṇḍalinī* being killed in the *Amarāugha*. However, in the *Gheraṇḍasamhitā* it might be preferable to take *śvāsa* as ‘hissing’ rather than ‘suffocating’.

*yoginītantra* deriving material from the *Guhyasamāja* and *Hevajra*. The *Samputatantra* treats the *bodhicitta* in terms of psychic channels and winds, then in terms of mantra procedure. Here there is one thread (*tantu*) inside the navel with the shape of a thumb or a snake (*nāgendra*). There are important similarities in the body as alchemical chamber, *saṃpuṭa* or *dvipuṭa*, that undergoes transformations, sublimating the matter and emotion of the body, through alchemical procedures.

The term *avadhūtī* blurs the lines between *kuṇḍalinī* as the energy blocking the central channel or rising up it, and the central channel itself, for which the synonyms given in the *Haṭhpradīpikā* include *avadhūtī*. *Avadhūtī*, like *caṇḍālī*, also refers to a social class with a status perceived as ‘lower’. Hypotheses can be drawn from the social class of the women named in the tantric ritual such that women with lower social status may have less social protection and were more available to practitioners as sexual partners. Aktor (2016) argues there is an inverse correlation between abject social class and divine power. Thus, though the *Amṛtasiddhi* does not name *kuṇḍalinī*, *caṇḍālī* is known to the milieu in which the teachings develop.

*Caṇḍālī* and *gtum mo*<sup>180</sup> describe the experience of sexual affect sublimated for soteriological ends and can be traced to the *haṭha* corpus through the *Amṛtasiddhi* and somewhat masked in the *Amaraṅga* onwards. The *vajrayāna* sources are also significant in relation to embryology. The *Hevajra* describes the raising and uniting of menstrual fluid (*rakta*) and semen (*śukra*) as esoteric interior counterparts to the fluids generated through sexual ritual and figuring yogic function as reversal of embryology. Comparative work such as this with *vajrayāna* sources can help to fill lacunae in the *haṭha* materials which are not metaphysical explanations but practical instructions. However, each *haṭha* source is unique

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<sup>180</sup> Similar to the *Hevajra*, Tibetan materials such as the *Chos drug go man ngag zees by a ba* (oral instruction of the six yogas) have significant practical instruction on *caṇḍālī* and *gtum mo* but a comprehensive treatment is not possible here (Cf. Kragh 2015:352; Mallinson and Singleton 2017:30).

and the mode in which concepts such as *kuṇḍalinī* are deployed must also be context, or text, dependent. This survey of *caṇḍālī* in *vajrayāna* literature helps indicate which elements are preserved and reworked by *haṭha* and what is left aside. It is clear that sexual affect is inherited but not external ritual.

### ***Sexual affect in the haṭha sources***

Having drawn precursors to *kuṇḍalinī* in *vajrayāna* ritual and ritual sex, I turn to the tropes of bliss and consumption in the *haṭha* corpus. Part of the final verse of the *Gorakṣaśataka* stands as epigraph to this chapter. Here I set it out in full:

We drink the dripping liquid called *bindu*, the drop, not wine. We consume the rejection of the objects of the five senses, not meat. We do not embrace the body of a beloved, but the *susumṇā* channel, curved like a sprout. If there is sex it is spontaneous melting in a mind dissolved in emptiness, not a vagina. (GŚ 101)

This verse is the clearest example of the rejection of sex for an internal refiguration, yet it does not appear in all witnesses and may be a later addition. The other *haṭha* sources do not demonstrate the same clarity but nevertheless indicate this theme through a trope of drenching with elixirs and consuming. As the following discussion draws out *kuṇḍalinī* is described as affective experience.

The *Amṛtasiddhi* does not use the term *kuṇḍalinī* but does describe arousal of sexual desire conceived as downward moving energy that the yogi arrests and draws back upwards. The moon in the head rains the nectar of immortality, one stream of which nourishes the body and the other, resembling a cluster of jasmine flowers, goes by way of the goddess of the centre to bring about procreation (AS 3.1-4). In the seventh chapter this idea is repeated with clear sexual affect—*bindu* or semen resides in esoteric locations in the head from where it descends via the central path because of sexual pleasure (*mudā sparśa*) (AS 7.10). I think this

is a key aspect of the preservation of semen (*bindudhāraṇa*):<sup>181</sup> that it must first be felt (probably as feeling rather than physical arousal of the sexual organs, because the latter is not indicated) before it is drawn back upwards. There is a sense in which feeling becomes materially manifest as gross substance. *Bindu* is amenable to being thickened or coalescing (*mūrcchita*) (AS 7.7), the stages of which draw on alchemical transformations (Mallinson and Szántó 2001:119n140). This may also be the case in Daoist sources as discussed in the last chapter: a key but problematic point of intersection between the Indian and Chinese sources is the role of desire as precipitating the coalescing of *qi* or *prāṇa* into *jing* or *bindu* that is, in that form, more amenable to raising—and purification according to the Chinese sources.

The *Amaraughā* too describes nectars flowing in the body and associates them with *śiva* in its description of *laya* yoga. The yogi is enjoined to observe nectar flowing in the body and meditate on the white god (*śiva*) as resembling a phallus (*liṅga*) shining like a jewel and resulting in the enjoyment of supernatural powers (Am 17). The combination of the elixirs flowing in the body and the enjoyment of powers could be interpreted as having felt desire, as in the *Amṛtasiddhi*. In the *Amaraughā* the body becomes full of nectar and there is a rising upwards of bliss:

When the lord of thoughts (*cittarāja*) is still and the sun (*khararuci*) enters completely into the [place] made inaccessible by *meru* (i.e., the central channel); when its fiery state has increased (*udrikta*), the moon melts and the body is quickly made full [of nectar]; when an abundance of bliss (*ānandavṛnda*) rises up, and the darkness of delusion, such as [thoughts of] ‘yours’ and ‘mine’, departs, and when the aperture of the skull bursts open, the extraordinary and unprecedented union of Śiva and Śakti prevails. (Am 13) (Birch, 2024)

Here the filling of the body with nectar precedes the experience of bliss. In his critical edition Birch explains his choice of the ‘abundance of bliss’ (*ānandavṛnda*) instead of ‘root of bliss’ (*ānandakanda*) despite both manuscripts of the *Amaraughā* attesting *ānandakanda*. He argues

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<sup>181</sup> See Mallinson 2018 for the practice of *bindudhāraṇa*.

it would be odd for the *ānandakanda*, as a *cakra* or bulb, to move upwards (Birch forthcoming:86-87n139). I suggest it may refer to the experience, rather than the organ, of the *ānandakanda* moving upwards.

As well as the interiorisation of sex as set out above in the *Gorakṣasataka kuṇḍalinī* consumes. She rises to the head, dries up and consumes the nectars, including the usually cool white fluid that is now hot. As the moon becomes hotter the fluid flows even more until *kuṇḍalinī* embraces *śiva* and disappears (GŚ 82-87). The embryological model is reversed with *rajas* and semen (*śukla*) coming together in *śiva*. Note the role of heat: in the preceding verses (GŚ 76-77) *kuṇḍalinī* rises because she is heated, and here the fluid is heated, and the moon becomes hotter.

The *Vivekamārtaṇḍa* has an extensive treatment of nectar particularly in relation to the practice of inverting the body (*viparītakarāṇi*) (Viv 111-131). In this inversion the yogi drinks the stream of elixir pouring from the digits of the moon (Viv 118). Here the yogi not *kuṇḍalinī* drinks the nectar, but as the yogi presses the uvula with the tip of the tongue he meditates on the goddess as made of the nectar of immortality (Viv 126). The taste is described as salty, pungent, then like ghee and honey (Viv 128). The drinking of nectar is accompanied by a description of consuming a woman: one woman, presumably the stream of nectar that has come from the orb of the moon (*somamaṇḍala*), is consumed by the two, likely the channels *idā* and *piṅgalā*. The third, probably the yogi, delights in her, thereby becoming free from old age and death (Viv 112).<sup>182</sup> This is the only explicit mention of pleasure in this passage. The *Vivekamārtaṇḍa* notes that the state of meditation is accompanied by bliss at various stages (Viv 145, 149) but in absorption the yogi knows neither sorrow nor pleasure (Viv 166).

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<sup>182</sup> Cf. *Yogabhāskara* 65 ‘One woman[, the stream of nectar,] is enjoyed by the two [channels, *Idā* and *Piṅgalā*], having come from the orb of the moon. And then a third[, the yogi,] becomes free from old age and death because of those two’ (Mallinson draft translation).

These examples show how the practice of yoga is described in terms of sexual affect—and a fluid one at that.

### ***Kuṇḍalinī consuming***

*Kuṇḍalinī* is sometimes described as consuming. I suggest that consumption is an affective language though not necessarily sexually affective.<sup>183</sup> In the *Gorakṣaśataka kuṇḍalinī* ‘eats’ (*bhuktvā*) the fluids (GŚ 83) and the yogi’s mind ‘eats’ (*bhuktvā*) the highest and ‘delights’ (*rati*) in the self (GŚ 85). In the *Yogatārāvalī* the awakened *kuṇḍalinī* consumes *prāṇa* and what remains of it leaves by the downward path (*Yogatārāvalī* 12).<sup>184</sup>

The thirteenth-century Old Marathi *Jñāneśvarī* has an extensive description of *kuṇḍalinī* after which the body is to be swallowed by the body. The text teaches *haṭha* yoga but is not part of the core corpus considered here as I do not read Old Marathi. Kiehnle has worked extensively on the Vaiṣṇava *bhakta* Jñāndev (1271/75-1296) whose most significant output was the *Bhāvārthadīpikā* more commonly known as the *Jñāneśvarī* (2005, 1997). The *Jñāneśvarī* is a commentary on the *Bhagavadgītā* and has significant portions on *kuṇḍalinī* in the sixth and eighth chapters. *Jñāneśvarī* 6.247-70 is an extended and rich visualisation of the transformation of the body with the nectar of immortality. *Kuṇḍalinī* is to be raised by means of the three locks, similar to the *Gorakṣaśataka*. Half-closing the eyes and turning the gaze inwards is recommended in the manner of a technique taught in other *haṭha* yogic works as *śāmbhavī mudrā* (Mallinson and Singleton 2017:231). *Śāmbhavī mudrā* is also associated with the *rāja* yoga of the *Amanaska*. After the *kuṇḍalinī* section, ‘Śiva’s secret’ as taught in

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<sup>183</sup> In Buddhist *vinaya* there is a relationship between sexual consent and pleasure (Wijayaratna 2010:121) and ‘premodern Chinese and Tibetan translators of Indic texts made translation choices that emphasized the notion of tasting or pleasure over the idea of agreement of consent’ (Langenberg forthcoming:18). Langenberg, following Hirakawa, gives the example of, *inter alia*, the experience of pleasure even in forced sexual contact such as when a ‘person who is hungry . . . obtains several kinds of delicious dishes’ according to the Chinese Mahāsāṅghika *bhikṣuṇī-vinaya* (Hirakawa 1982:108).

<sup>184</sup> *Yogatārāvalī* 12 *pratyāhṛtaḥ kevalakumbhakena prabuddhakuṇḍalyupabhuktaśeṣaḥ | prāṇaḥ pratīcīnāpathena mandaṃ vilīyate viṣṇupadāntarāle ||*

*Jñāneśvarī* 6.291 is ‘the swallowing of the body by the body’ as explained in the source by *mahāviṣṇu* (Kiehnle 2005:484). Secret doctrines are also taught in the *Dattātreya yogaśāstra* with Śiva’s *saṃketas*, i.e. the secret doctrines of *laya* yoga (DYS 15, 21-26) and in *Yogabīja* 136. The statement on the swallowing of the body by the body in the *Jñāneśvarī* concludes the lengthy teaching on *kuṇḍalinī* (Mallinson 2016:116).

The *Khecarīvidyā* discusses *kuṇḍalinī* at length in the third chapter. Preceding this are two noteworthy discussions of *kuṇḍalinī* in chapter two: one on raising *kuṇḍalinī* and nectar (2.32cd-39) and the other an embryological reversal as already mentioned. Also discussed above is the *Khecarīvidyā*’s account of drinking the elixir that is the internalised *gaṅgā* (KhV 2.116). In *Khecarīvidyā* chapter two the yogi is to eat by means of yoga the meat that consists of *nāda* and *bindu* (KhV 68ab). The choice of the term meat contrasts with the consumption of bliss. It is more gross and antinomian and though it could refer to the products of sex at least in relation to *bindu* the *Khecarīvidyā* does not use the term *bindu* in this sense. There is an ontological materiality to a substance that is amenable to eating, and the identification of *nāda* and *bindu* as amendable to eating suggests they are similar substances.

In the third chapter of the *Khecarīvidyā* the ascetic is instructed to imagine the goddess *kuṇḍalinī* devouring the *jīva* (KhV 3.37-43ab). To indicate the aesthetic or *rasa* of the passage I will set it out in full.

The ascetic should imagine the goddess devouring the entire *jīva* situated there. He should quickly raise [the goddess] who resembles ten million lightning bolts from there [and] having reached the place of Maṇipūra practise there as before. Then, raising [her] up from there, he should lead [her] to the place of Anāhata. Staying there for a moment, o goddess, he should visualise her devouring [the *jīva*] as before. Raising [her] again he should insert [her] into the sixteen-spoked lotus. There too he who knows the path of yoga should visualise [Kuṇḍalinī devouring the *jīva*] as before, o goddess. Raising from there the great goddess who has devoured the *jīva* [and] has a radiance equal to that of ten million suns and leading [her] to between the eyebrows [the *yogin*] should [by means of Kuṇḍalinī] again consume the *jīva*. The tongue, together with the mind, should break the bolt of Brahmā and duly come to rest straight away in the great ocean of the supreme *amṛta*. Joining Śiva, [who is] situated there

[and who is both] the supreme [and] the supreme cause, with the goddess, [the yogin] should visualise their union. (*Khecarīvidyā* 3.37-43ab) (Mallinson 2007a).

In the *Jñāneśvarī kuṇḍalinī* consumes the body and in the *Khecarīvidyā* she consumes the *jīva*. The combination of interiorised eating and sex comes together in this passage with the union of *kuṇḍalinī* with *śiva*. What should we make of this register of bliss, nectar and *kuṇḍalinī*?<sup>185</sup> This seems to describe ecstatic experience. Is there a sense in which this can be understood as sexual affect more specifically?

### *Union of śiva and śakti*

In some sources *kuṇḍalinī* unites with *śiva* as the ultimate stage of yoga. An early example occurs in Somānanda's possibly tenth-century *śaiva Śāktavijñāna*. Here *kuṇḍalinī* rises before resting in *śiva* (*Śāktavijñāna* 10). The unification of *śiva* and *kuṇḍalinī śakti* is a version of internalised sexual union. This does not necessarily imply the union of *śiva* and *kuṇḍalinī*. A synonym for *kuṇḍalinī* is *śakti* but the opposite is not necessarily the case: *śakti* is such a broad term that we cannot infer *kuṇḍalinī* to be the referent everywhere that the term *śakti* is used. There are examples of *kuṇḍalinī* uniting with *śiva* in the head in the *Khecarīvidyā* (3.48-49) and *Gorakṣasataka* (86). The *Gorakṣasataka* concludes its description of *śakticālana* by

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<sup>185</sup> As well as bliss and nectar *kuṇḍalinī* in earlier sources is associated with venom. However, this association does not carry through to the *hatha* sources. In the early *Tantrasadbhāva śakti* is in the heart, a sleeping snake (1.216-217) 'as if made senseless by poison' (Padoux 1990:128). Silburn notes the double meaning of *viṣa* as the poison that brings about death and the 'all-pervasiveness' that is the nectar of immortality (*amṛta*) (Silburn 1988:15). This discussion may be based on the *Tantrasadbhāva*'s description (or the version of it included in Kṣemarāja's *Śivasūtravimarśinī* 2.3) and *Tantrāloka* 3.170. Thanks to Hatley for bringing these references to my attention, personal communication, 13 May 2021. In the *hatha* sources poison is a metaphor for being stuck in conditioned existence (*saṃsāra*) and not associated with *kuṇḍalinī*. In the *Amṛtasiddhi* the guru destroys the sleep induced by the poison of ignorance with a stream of nectar (AS 1.2) similar to the *Yogatārāvalī* where the guru's lotus feet are toxicologists that remove the poison of transmigration (*Yogatārāvalī* 1.1) (Birch 2015:4n2). *Kuṇḍalinī* is thus not explicitly connected with the emission of poison which induces her own slumber or the 'sleep' of the practitioner in *saṃsāra*; rather she consumes the *prāṇa* that brings about the cessation of breathing (*kevalakumbhaka*) before the realisation of *rāja* yoga or *samādhi*. In the *Vivekamārtaṇḍa* poison does not torment the body of the yogi that is constantly full of the digits of the moon, i.e. nectar, even when he is bitten by a snake (Viv 130). In the *Vasiṣṭhasaṃhitā* the sun passage carries poisonous breath, and the moon passage carries nectar (VS 5.23). This idea is repeated in the *Khecarīvidyā* where the sun is called the bearer of poison and the moon is the bearer of nectar (KhV 2.46ab). Though the corpus contains references to poison it is not emitted by *kuṇḍalinī*—and neither does she emit nectar. However, she does swallow nectar.



observing that in this way menses (*rajas*) from below and semen (*śukla*) from above come together in *śiva* following which ‘upward moving breath’ (*prāṇa*) and ‘downward moving breath’ (*apana*) also come together (GŚ 87). In the *Amarauḡha* the technique of *mahāmudrā* makes *kuṇḡalinī* straight (Am 23) and the objective of the work is the union of *śiva* and *śakti* (Am 13). In the *Yogabīja kuṇḡalinī*, having pierced *rudragranthi*, goes to the place consisting of *śiva*; there, yoga arises when the moon and the sun are made the same (YB 89). Finally, the yogi goes beyond the three *guṇas* due to splitting the three *granthis*: from the union of *śiva* and *śakti* the highest state arises (YB 90).

In the *Khecarīvidyā* there is an internalisation of external ritual and a consuming of the elixirs of the body by the yogi. According to Mallinson’s note on the use of the terms *melaka* and *melana* in *Khecarīvidyā* 1.5-9, Ballāla’s commentary defines *melana* is a type of internal physical practice (folio 4v) and defines it as the conjunction of the tip of the tongue and *amṛta*, i.e. the drinking of *amṛta* (folio 4v). This contrasts with *melaka*, or specifically a meeting with *yoginīs* (*yoginīmelaka*) as is implied in *śaiva* texts, ‘in which the *sādhaka* causes a circle (*cakra*) of *Yoginīs* to surround him and grant him *siddhis*’ (Mallinson 2007a:195n198). The *Vivekamārtaṇḡa* picks up this practice whereby through pressing the great hollow at the uvula with the tip of the tongue and meditating on the goddess as consisting of the nectar of immortality one becomes a poet (*kavi*) in six months (Viv 126).

### ***Conclusion: interior beloved and emotional materiality***

In sum this chapter analyses the description of *kuṇḡalinī* in the *haṡha* corpus and traces a genealogy of sexual affect to *vajrayāna* sources. The process of *haṡha* yoga is frequently described in terms of the production and consumption of nectars in the body and I suggest there is a link between bliss (*ānanda*) and nectar (*amṛta*). If there were then nectar could be

understood in affective terms, and, as *kuṇḍalinī* is frequently associated with nectar, she too could be associated with affect—an emotional materiality.

Is the register of bliss and nectar associated with *kuṇḍalinī* an internalisation of sex? *Haṭhayoga* interiorises sex as it interiorises the cosmos as noted: the *Amṛtasiddhi* interiorises the cosmos and sex (AS 7.35) albeit without *kuṇḍalinī*; the *Gorakṣaśataka* rejects external sex for internal (GŚ 101); and the *Haṭhapradīpikā* correlates the cosmic serpent and the interior *kuṇḍalinī* (HP 3.1). We could understand *kuṇḍalinī* as the interior beloved, the beloved divine. And indeed the proximity of the yogi and the beloved is evident in Avadhi Romances as the motivation for undertaking yogic or ascetic practice (Mallinson 2023).<sup>186</sup> ‘Interior beloved’ implies a dichotomy between practitioner and *kuṇḍalinī* yet any dichotomy between yogi and beloved is integrated in the experiential world of the practitioner. Such a metaphorical dichotomy assumes a heterosexual paradigm. The sources appear only to refer to heterosexual sex where physical sex is described, but the presumption of heterosexual sexuality need not draw over into the experience of *kuṇḍalinī* despite her grammatical gender as feminine. Affect is a helpful lens because it gets away from the dichotomy of lover and beloved, or of body as ground of experience or crucible and *kuṇḍalinī* objectified, that which is experienced. The non-duality of experience allows us to slip behind the apparent heterosexual assumptions of the texts.

Could this register of sexual affect be extended to consider *kuṇḍalinī* as emotional materiality? In the next chapter I analyse the ways in which the sources describe *kuṇḍalinī* as having a material nature. That material, combined with this discussion of affect, bliss and elixirs may point to understanding *kuṇḍalinī* as visceral, emotional materiality. And a liquid materiality at that.

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<sup>186</sup> Though Pauwels points to the deliberate irony, even satire, of dressing the romantic hero temporarily as ascetic (2013:23-24).

And what of the connection between the material presented in this chapter and the theme woven throughout the thesis of sovereignty. Does this material contribute to control of sexuality or sexual sovereignty? According to Weeks, ‘Post-Foucauldian analyses tended to emphasise not only power but also governance, seeing the sexual matrix almost exclusively in terms of regulation and control’ (2023:xi). The shift from social sexual relations to interiorised affect that we see in the sources is certainly control of sexual behaviour. It also mitigates against procreative sex, which I have suggested is a key principle of these sources.

Lorea and Singh note that,

Yogic and noncelibate traditions that transmit sexo-yogic teachings are often in tension with monastic and celibate ascetic institutions (Jacoby and Terrone 2009). However, both renunciation and sensuality have a place in Tantric practice. Far from the popular interpretations of Tantra as a libertine ethic of indulgence, the passions are subjected to discipline and regulations in Tantric *sādhana*. Indulgence and licentiousness are never celebrated as Tantric virtues—nondiscrimination is never an excuse for lack of discipline (Barrett 2008, 125)—but when free from attachment, and in ritual contexts, controlled infractions of taboos are part and parcel of several Tantric traditions (Gellner 1992, 144). (Lorea and Singh 2023)

I understand the *haṭha* corpus not only as regulating sexuality as understood by scholars such as Foucault but neither as a licentiousness. I would go further than Lorea and Singh to suggest that the internalisation of sexual affect as *kuṇḍalinī* is not a temporary controlled infraction but the functional, and therefore practical or prosaic, heart of yoga. There are sexual ethics, but they are not those of *vedānta* or the eroticising and censorious colonial gaze. In the prosaic sexuality of the *haṭha* sources sexual affect is fully part of the phenomenological process of yoga. We can thus understand the process of yoga as one of sexual liberation. In the sources that emphasise bodily liberation (*jīvanmukti*) rather than bodiless liberation (*videhamukti*) they do so because the body is the site of experience and pleasure and is dear to the yogi.

Connecting the themes that emerge from this material to the overarching arguments explored in the previous chapter the *kuṇḍalinī* model can be seen to sit within an anti-reproduction worldview. Experiencing bliss internally through *kuṇḍalinī* as interiorisation of sex is a way of experiencing sexual affect without any chance of reproduction. This is about avoiding sex but not about avoiding the bliss of sexual arousal. In fact, arousal is sought after and transmuted for soteriological ends.

## Chapter Six

### *Kuṇḍalinī: pralayatrix*

It is said that *kuṇḍalī* has the form of eight *prakṛtis* coiled eight times starting with the syllable *a* and ending with *kṣa*.

*Vasiṣṭhasaṃhitā* 2.16abcd<sup>187</sup>

The *haṭha* corpus takes the materiality of the body seriously. What of the materiality of *kuṇḍalinī*? The last chapter framed *kuṇḍalinī* phenomenologically, as sexual affect. It considered *kuṇḍalinī* characterised as a snake, blocking and penetrating the central channel, eating bliss and eating the body, and as inner beloved. This chapter shifts orientation and explores *kuṇḍalinī* as the body, as elemental and material. If the matter of the body is important in *haṭha* yoga, then to what extent can we understand *kuṇḍalinī* as material? The study opened with the observations that the early *haṭha* corpus innovates a record of physical techniques that engage the body, alongside incorporating a limited metaphysics that nonetheless provides a rationale for the efficacy of physical techniques. Clearly, *kuṇḍalinī* occurs in almost all texts of the early *haṭha* corpus and in most she is characterised as a snake. Curiously, for these attributes are not immediately plausible, she is described as eightfold. This chapter explores whether *kuṇḍalinī*'s eightfold nature is a clue to her material nature. Following *kuṇḍalinī* by numbers takes us to *sāṃkhya*. This chapter builds on the *sāṃkhya*-derived concept of *prakṛti* as *prōcrēātrix* to posit a heuristic frame of *kuṇḍalinī* as *pralayatrix*: creator and destroyer of the body and cosmos.<sup>188</sup> The *pralayatrix* concept places *kuṇḍalinī*'s

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<sup>187</sup> *Vasiṣṭhasaṃhitā* 2.16 *aṣṭaprakṛtirūpāsāv aṣṭadhā kuṇḍalīkṛtā | akārādikṣakārāntā kuṇḍalīyabhidhīyate ||*

<sup>188</sup> I coin the Latinate neologism *pralayatrix* with some caution, as the Sanskrit *pralayamkarī* or *pralayakartrī* might be more apposite. *Pralayamkarī* and *pralayakartrī* do occur in the *Mahāsubhāṣitasamgraha* and the *vajrayāna Guṇavatī* respectively. However, I use the quasi-Latinate *pralayatrix* to disambiguate my use of the

materiality alongside the materiality of the body and cosmos and asks to what extent there is an identity of body, *kuṇḍalinī* and cosmos. It helps articulate the function of *kuṇḍalinī* in *haṭha* yoga: the mode for both empowerment of the body over the cosmos and the mode for the dissolution of the body and cosmos.

*Kuṇḍalinī* has evoked many interpretations. Some suggest *kuṇḍalinī* is accessible through experience such as the contemporary yoga teacher Krishnamacarya (1888-1989) (see Atkinson 2022). The previous chapter considered *kuṇḍalinī* in this way and added an emotional materiality or fluidity to the frame. Can we go further in identifying a material basis for *kuṇḍalinī*? The yogi and mystic Krishna (1903-1984) attributes to *kuṇḍalinī* an all-encompassing explanatory power that includes a biological basis:

[T]he real cause of all genuine spiritual and psychic phenomena, the biological basis of evolution and development of personality, the secret origin of all esoteric and occult doctrines, the master key to the unsolved mystery of creation, the inexhaustible source of philosophy, art and science, and the fountainhead of all religious faiths, past, present and future. (Krishna 1971:176)

Empiricists may struggle with such extravagant description. Hyperbole notwithstanding this definition includes a biologically causal role for *kuṇḍalinī* in the creation of the cosmos and the individual. It is too easy to dismiss her as unprovable from an empirical perspective.<sup>189</sup> Yet she is taken seriously by the corpus.

### ***Hypothesis: kuṇḍalinī as pralayatrix***

The last chapter delved into *vajrayāna* literature on *caṇḍālī* to consider *kuṇḍalinī* as sexual affect. This chapter turns to the *śaiva* texts. This is not to suggest the *śaiva* sources do not also

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term from these contexts.

<sup>189</sup> Studies that have taken empirical methods to *kuṇḍalinī* experiences and potential benefits include Woollacott, Kason and Park (2021) and Eyre *et al.* (2017).

incorporate *kuṇḍalinī* as interiorisation of sexual affect: they do.<sup>190</sup> I do not take up that literature here but explore the *śaiva* sources that include characteristics of what I am terming the ‘*pralayatrix*’. These characteristics are evident in Mallinson and Singleton’s summary of the *śaiva* characteristics of *kuṇḍalinī*:

In many Śaiva traditions Kuṇḍalinī is also the goddess of creation, the supreme energy which makes manifest the elemental principles (*tattvas*) and effects the evolution of sound... In the most common formulations, the ascent of a single Kuṇḍalinī reverses her cosmogonic role. As she rises through *cakras* associated with increasingly subtle elements, creation is resorbed until finally she goes to dissolution (*laya*) by uniting with Śiva, the supreme element... (Mallinson and Singleton 2017:178ff)

This *śaiva* understanding of *kuṇḍalinī* as reversing cosmogony is unpacked here in relation to its tropes, genealogy and adaptation in the *haṭha* corpus. *Kuṇḍalinī*, though awakened by force and likened to the key of force (see last chapter), challenges the definition of the corpus as *haṭha* and emphasises instead *laya*. Mallinson notes that *laya* yoga or ‘yoga through dissolution’, though known by a variety of methods, is today most associated with raising *kuṇḍalinī* through the *cakras*: ‘The *cakras* are associated with progressively more subtle elements and Kuṇḍalinī’s upward journey represents a reversal of creation, a *laya* or ‘dissolution’ (2016:115). Though the result is dissolution (*laya*) it is precipitated with physical (*haṭha*) techniques. *Śaiva* precursors to the *haṭha* corpus often mention *laya* particularly in the context of meditations that lead the yogi up through a hierarchy of elemental *tattvas* (Mallinson 2016:129n55). The *śaiva* focus on dissolution (*laya*) is one methodological reason for treating *vajrayāna* in the previous chapter and *śaiva* sources here. In the early *haṭha* corpus *laya* is not subordinate to *haṭha* but adapted within a physical context. What is made abundantly clear through an analysis of tantric precursors, however, is how *kuṇḍalinī* functions in the body and the yogi initiates dissolution via physical techniques.

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<sup>190</sup> *Śaiva* sources incorporate ritual sexual activity. The *ādiyāga* sexual rites are associated with *kuṇḍalinī* in *Tantrāloka* 29.96-166a which is the basis of various tantras such as the *Vīrāvalītantra*, *Hṛdayabaṭṭaraka*, *Khecarīmata*, *Yonyarṇava* (Silburn 1988:202-203).

Mallinson describes *kuṇḍalinī* as a ‘method’ for achieving *laya* (Mallinson 2016:115) but I prefer the term ‘mode’ for *kuṇḍalinī* awakens as a result of other methods such as breath work.

The description of *kuṇḍalinī* as eightfold and occasionally as *prakṛti* in the *haṭha* corpus is intriguing because I believe it equates to materiality. I was inspired to develop the concept of *pralayatrix* through the work of Ashton. I turn to *sāṃkhya* not as one among many philosophies, nor because of its distinct alliance with Pātañjali yoga, but, as argued by Torella, as the universal teaching (*sāmānyaśāstra*) of philosophy (Torella 1999). In a study of *sāṃkhya* Ashton developed the concept of *prakṛti* as *prōcreātrix* (2020a). He follows such nineteenth-century scholars as Lassen and Colebrooke to posit *prakṛti* as primordial *prōcreātrix* and make a cogent critique of mechanistic European Enlightenment thinking. Ashton sees in Goethe’s organics a more productive lens for reading *prakṛti* as primordial *prōcreātrix*. He defines ‘*prōcreātrix*’ as ‘she that brings forth, a mother’, or a ‘matrix’ (cognate with the Latin ‘*mater, matris,*’ and the Sanskrit ‘*mātrī*’) (Ashton 2020a:19). The concept of *prōcreātrix* illuminates *kuṇḍalinī* in a functional analysis of her role in *haṭha* yoga. I read laterally from Ashton’s idea of *prakṛti* as the *prōcreātrix* of *sāṃkhya* to analyse *kuṇḍalinī* in *haṭha* not only as *prōcreātrix* but also her inversion—the *pralayatrix*. The term ‘*laya*’ means dissolution and is a key technique in the sources alongside *haṭha*. ‘*Pralaya*’ is the cosmic dissolution at the end of an eon, the destruction or resorption of the manifest cosmos. *Pralaya* also has the sense of loss of consciousness and sleepiness, a sense associated with the unaroused *kuṇḍalinī* and the saṃsāric body prior to the awakening of yoga. I add the Latin suffix *-trix* to mirror the term *prōcreātrix*. Rather than the dissolution of the cosmos the *haṭha* sources are primarily concerned with the dissolution of the individual. Ashton describes *sāṃkhya* as a ‘microcosmology’ rather than a ‘cosmology’, where each living organism is homologous with the wider cosmos (2020b). Though *haṭha* sources exhibit non-dual *vedānta*



and *śaiva* tendencies (Mallinson 2014), the early *haṭha* material is generally consistent with the concept of microcosmology as the unit of focus is the individual.

I hypothesise *kuṇḍalinī* as *pralayatrix* because she is both creative cosmogonic principle—as her synonyms *śakti* and *prakṛti*<sup>191</sup> attest, and her function in the process of *haṭha* is dissolution. The proposition of *kuṇḍalinī* as *pralayatrix* is of *kuṇḍalinī* as modality of undoing the matrix or materiality of body, time and world as she ascends. Ascension, the involution of saṃsāric depletion, lies at the heart of *haṭha* yoga.

To discuss the proposition that *kuṇḍalinī* functions as *pralayatrix* this chapter first considers *kuṇḍalinī* in the *haṭha* corpus in relation to her eightfold nature, maternity, and sleep and dissolution. The second section evaluates the concept of *pralayatrix* with material from the *śaiva* canon on iterations of eight, alphabetic cosmogony and dissolution, and embryology and motherhood. The conclusion evaluates the tensions within and explanatory value of *kuṇḍalinī* as *pralayatrix*.

### ***The eightfold kuṇḍalinī in haṭha sources***

If we approach *kuṇḍalinī* by numbers we would expect to find three and a half coils (Sarbadhikary 2024; Ramos 2020:76, Hatley 2015:4, Silburn 1988:27). In later literature and representations this number becomes iconic in its association with *kuṇḍalinī*. However, of the early *haṭha* corpus only the *Śivasamhitā* describes *kuṇḍalinī* as coiled three and a half times (ŚS 2.23). Instead she is overwhelmingly associated with the number eight: in *Gorakṣaśataka* 86 she goes to the place which has the form of the eight constituents of nature (*prakṛtyaṣṭakarūpaṃ*), in *Vivekamārtaṇḍa* 32 she has eight coils, in *Yogabīja* 82 her eight coils are to be straightened through *śakticālana*, and although it describes her as coiled three and a half times the *Śivasamhitā* also describes her as having eight coils (*aṣṭaveṣṭanā*) (ŚS

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<sup>191</sup> The term *prakṛti* does not retain the specificity of *sāṃkhya* through to *haṭha* as it has morphed through tantra.

5.164). The *Vasiṣṭhasaṃhitā* identifies the eight coils of *kuṇḍalinī* as eightfold with the form of the eightfold *prakṛti* (VS 2.16ab), as used in the epigraph for this chapter. The *Amṛtasiddhi* does not mention *kuṇḍalinī* at all and she does not have an eightfold nature in the *Amarauḅha*, *Vasiṣṭhasaṃhitā*, *Dattātreya yogaśāstra* or *Haṭhapradīpikā*. The *Khecarīvidyā* does not describe *kuṇḍalinī* as eightfold but has a notable account of *kuṇḍalinī* as part of a fivefold embryological iteration (KhV 2.120-124). The number eight, therefore, appears in half of my sources.

Outside my usual corpus the twelfth- to thirteenth-century Pāñcarātrika *Ahīrbudhnyasaṃhitā* has *kuṇḍalinī* with eight mouths (*Ahīrbudhnyasaṃhitā* 32.11) and the body is the ‘city of eight’ (*puryaṣṭaka*) in chapter twenty. Here *puryaṣṭaka* is the intermediate body (or ‘subtle’ body according to the translator) between gross and atomic (1915:122). *Kuṇḍalinī* is the personified *śakti* of *viṣṇu* (*vaiṣṇavī*) and she is surrounded by hoods formed of eight *prakṛtis*, covering the entrance to *suṣuṃṇā* with her mouth (*Ahīrbudhnyasaṃhitā* 32.12). She covers the central mouth of *suṣuṃṇā* (*brahmarandhra*) which itself has five mouths; the other four contain blood (*Ahīrbudhnyasaṃhitā* 32.23).<sup>192</sup> The tenth-century *vaiṣṇava Pādmasaṃhitā* also has *kuṇḍalinī* in eightfold form as the eightfold *prakṛti* (*Pādmasaṃhitā* 2.14a) where she is a coiled obstruction that must be straightened out with heat to allow breath to rise up the central channel (Mallinson and Singleton 2017:178ff).

The corpus’ description of *kuṇḍalinī* as eightfold is the analytic that inspires this chapter. The corpus does not identify to what the eight refer. For that I look to *sāṃkhya*. First, I examine further characteristics of *pralayatrix* in the *haṭha* corpus: *kuṇḍalinī* as the goddess and *kuṇḍalinī* sleeping, and dying.

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<sup>192</sup> ‘Yoga’ according to the *Ahīrbudhnyasaṃhitā* 31.4-15 is ‘the temporal attainment, during life, of a feeling of perfect oneness with the Lord’ (Schrader 1915:123).

### ***Kuṇḍalinī śakti: goddess of creation and destruction***

The specific eightfold characterisation sits within a general characterisation as *śakti* that is easy to overlook—both because of its ubiquity and because *śakti* can simply be a synonym for *kuṇḍalinī*. Yet *śakti* is an important attribute. *Śakti* as power or the goddess has associations with the divine mother and the cosmos as mother. *Kuṇḍalinī* is attributed divine epithets as we saw in the previous chapter.<sup>193</sup> These aspects, along with her eightfold nature, inspire the concept of *pralayatrix*.

The idea of *prōcrēatrix* is the generative mother concept and I am juxtaposing this with the *pralayatrix* as a destructive modality. There are broad themes of creation and destruction in the corpus. The *Amṛtasiddhi*'s *madhyamā* is creator of all and destroyer of ignorance (AS 2.4) with all the mighty goddesses (*sarvā devyo mahābalāḥ*) located at her door of creation (AS 2.5ab). In addition to these mighty goddesses there is a goddess element (*devītattva*) at the base in which *rajas* rests (AS 7.11).<sup>194</sup> Some models of the body are predicated on reversing embryology and *kuṇḍalinī* is occasionally associated with this. This is evident for example in the *Khecarīvidyā*'s deployment of *kuṇḍalinī* as part of a fivefold reversed embryological iteration (KhV 2.120-124).

*Kuṇḍalinī*'s role in the *Khecarīvidyā*'s inversion of embryology situates her within the reversal of embryology discourse. This anti-natal narrative was discussed in chapters three and four in relation to *rajas* and its retention. Here we extend that to *kuṇḍalinī* as *pralayatrix*. The *Khecarīvidyā* uses *kuṇḍalinī* in a fivefold embryological reversal, enumerating the constituents of the foetus as it develops in the womb (KhV 2.120-124). The body of the foetus

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<sup>193</sup> In the *Vivekamārtaṇḍa kuṇḍalinī* is *śakti* (Viv 32). In the *Śivasamhitā kuṇḍalinī* is *kuṇḍalinī śakti* (ŚS 5.164) and a great goddess (*paradevatā*) (ŚS 2.23). For the *Khecarīvidyā* the primordial (*ādyā*) *kuṇḍalinī* is a supreme goddess (*paramā śakti*) at the base (KhV 2.34) and a great goddess (*śaktiḥ śrīkuṇḍalī parā*) (KhV 2.37). The *Haṭhāpradīpikā* lists *kuṇḍalinī*'s synonyms as *kuṭīlāṅgī*, *bhujāṅgī*, *śakti*, *īśvarī*, *kuṇḍalī* and *arundhatī* (HP 3.102). The *Amṛtasiddhi*, without *kuṇḍalinī*, describes the central channel (*madhyamā*) as *avadhūtī* and *sarasvatī* (AS 2.6). The *Gorakṣasāta* associates *sarasvatī* and *arundhatī* with *kuṇḍalinī* (GŚ 16-19). In the *Yogabīja kuṇḍalinī* is the *jīvaśaktir trailokyamahinī* (YB 84).

<sup>194</sup> See footnote in chapter 5 and Joshi (2002).

is produced in the body of the mother by the ‘fall’ or ‘loss’ (*kṣaya*) of the father and all the innate constituents arise by the time the foetus has reached maturity (KhV 2.119). *Kuṇḍalinī* is the first of the five innate (*sahajā*) constituents. *Kuṇḍalinī* is described as the primordial (*ādyā*) *kuṇḍalinī śakti*, the second constituent is *susumṇā*, third the tongue (*jihvā*), fourth the palate (*tālu*), and fifth the place of *brahman* (KhV 2.121-122). The yogi should raise the first and place it in the second, then insert the third upwards into the fourth. After piercing the fourth, the third should enter the fifth (KhV 2.123-124). Thus, *kuṇḍalinī* is incorporated in an embryological explanation of *khecarīmudrā* where the tongue is inserted into the nasal cavity. This section is intriguing for its connections with an involution through constituents, similar to *sāṃkhya*, and for providing a medical analysis which appears to explain the *śakticālana* of the *Gorakṣaśataka*. I include this episode as evidence of a reversal of conventional embryology. However, this explanation does not occur in other early *haṭha* sources though an embryological rationale is at play in the *Guhyasamājatantra* as noted below (Kiehnle 1997:98; Wayman 1977:205ff).

### ***Pralaya: sleep and bodily and cosmic dissolution***

*Pralaya* is the period of sleep between cosmic revolutions as well as dissolution of the body and cosmos. The *haṭha* corpus uses both these senses of the term *pralaya*. In relation to sleep there is a sense in which *kuṇḍalinī* might sleep as the non-active cosmic principle *prakṛti* while in stasis or between active periods (*pralaya*). *Samsāra* is defined by the sleeping *kuṇḍalinī* and the implication is the insentience and bondage of the practitioner. The arousal of *kuṇḍalinī* mirrors the awakening of the practitioner from spiritual ignorance. However, *kuṇḍalinī* awakening does not mirror the arising of the *prakṛti* of *sāṃkhya* as this initiates the life of an individual in *samsāra*, not his escape. In the *haṭha* sources *kuṇḍalinī*'s awakening

inverts the creation of an individual: she involutes the *tattvas* as she rises and recreates in those cases where she also descends (such as *Khecarīvidyā* 3.13).

We see this at play in the *Haṭhapradīpikā* where *kuṇḍalinī* (via the synonym *arundhatī*) enjoys a good sleep (*sukhasupta*) (HP 3.119) prior to awakening.<sup>195</sup> In the *Yogabīja* stages of sleep are applied to the liberated *jīva* who is free from, among other things, the states of waking (*jāgrat*), dreaming (*svapna*) and deep sleep (*susupti*); liberated from these faults (*doṣas*) the *jīva* is like *śiva* (YB 15). *Śiva* is in a sense the correlate of *kuṇḍalinī* in the sources in which she unites with him, and here the liberated *jīva* is *śiva*. The *Khecarīvidyā* describes the process by which *kuṇḍalinī* descends after she has remained above the bolt of *brahman* in order for the practitioner to avoid death: when the yogi sees that the time of his death has passed he breaks the bolt of *brahman* and leads the goddess back to the base; he replaces his *jīva* which has been reproduced from the body of *kuṇḍalinī*, together with the sense-organs in their respective places of action and lives happily and healthily (KhV 3.45cd-47cd). Here *kuṇḍalinī* is not quite the mother but the caretaker of the *jīva*. Outside the immediate corpus she is the mother of the *jīva*, such as the *śaiva* sources discussed below.

As well as sleep, whether cosmic or individual, the term *pralaya* is associated with dissolution (*laya*). This is how the term is taken in the *haṭha* sources which relate to the continuation or dissolution of the body at the end of time. After *kuṇḍalinī* goes to the state of the eightfold *prakṛti* in the *Goraḥṣasataka* she embraces *śiva* before dissolving (GŚ 86).<sup>196</sup> In the *Khecarīvidyā* the yogi can choose to abandon his body at the end of the dissolution (*pralayānta*) of the universe and abide in his own self (*svātma*) (KhV 3.53cd-54ab). Taking this further, in the *Dattātreyayogaśāstra* the firm body of one who practices meditation on the five elements does not die (DYŚ 121) and death is not found even in the dissolution (*pralaya*)

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<sup>195</sup> The SOAS/Oxford-Marburg critical edition adopts *śabdagarbha* (womb of sound) instead of *sukhasupta*.

<sup>196</sup> The term *vilīyate* derives from the same root as *laya* from √*lī*.

of *brahman* (DYŚ 122ab). The *Śivasamhitā* refers to *pralaya* twice. The first references the practitioner burning his enormous mountain of sin with the ‘doomsday fire’ (*pralayāgni*) (ŚS 3.57). The second relates to practising *viparītakṛti* (ŚS 4.69) as a result of which death is conquered and one does not perish even in the cosmic dissolution (*pralaya*) (ŚS 4.70).

In a passage not adopted in the critical edition of the *Yogabīja* some witnesses define *pralaya*: even in the dissolution of Brahman, Viṣṇu and Śiva the yogi does not fall from the state of dissolution (*laya*) in the great element, the sky.<sup>197</sup> This is similar to a verse in chapter one of the *Amanaska* where the yogi is compared to the crow *bhuṣuṇḍa* after a description of dissolution into the elements. Here the yogi enjoys supreme bliss, like the great-souled *bhuṣuṇḍa* and others, even in the dissolutions of Brahman, Viṣṇu and Śiva (*Amanaska* 1.86).<sup>198</sup> Thus, the *haṭha* corpus uses the term *pralaya* in the sense of cosmic dissolution and bodily dissolution.

The term *pralayatrix* refers to destruction, and *kuṇḍalinī* is associated with death, or perhaps more accurately the alchemical sense of stilling. The last chapter explored violence, and this too may accompany destruction. Here I summarise the association between *kuṇḍalinī*, death and alchemy. The channel *kuṇḍalinī* obstructs and in some instances enters is a parallel for the alchemical chamber or crucible in which mercury is stilled (*marāṇa*). This concept of alchemical stilling or death within the central channel appears in the *Amṛtasiddhi* and *Amarauḡha*.

The *Amṛtasiddhi* and *Amarauḡha* incorporate alchemical terminology and compare the body to the alchemical vessel. In chapter six the *Amṛtasiddhi* describes *brahman* and the other gods as unable to carry out their functions without breath (AS 6.18). This is followed by the instruction to use the breath to cut off the breath (AS 6.20), presumably rendering the gods to

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<sup>197</sup> αS<sub>1</sub>S<sub>2</sub>S<sub>4</sub>E<sub>2</sub> 57-58 P<sub>3</sub> after *Yogabīja* 54 *mahāviṣṇumaheśānām pralayeṣv api yoginām | nāsti pāto layasthānām mahātattve vivartinām* || See Birch (forthcoming) for manuscript details.

<sup>198</sup> *Amanaska* 1.86 *brahmaviṣṇumaheśānām pralayeṣv api yoginaḥ | bhuñjate paramānandaṃ bhuṣuṇḍādīmahātmavat* || See Birch 2013:280-281n118, 281n119.

a death-like state (and though *kuṇḍalinī* does not appear in the *Amṛtasiddhi* she is a goddess). Chapter seven continues this theme, noting that all the elements in the body move when breath moves and are stilled when breath is stilled (AS 7.24). Further, it is through contact with the inside of the goddess of the centre (*madhyamā*) that breath is stilled (*mriyate*) at which point *bindu* and mind are also stilled (AS 7.23). An effect of *mahābandha* is the death (*māraṇa*) of breath and making the breath enter *madhyamā* (AS 14.14). This fate of death is extended to *kuṇḍalinī* in the *Amarauḅha*.

In the *Amarauḅha kuṇḍalinī* occurs in a passage describing the great seal (*mahāmudrā*) (Am 19-22). Here *kuṇḍalinī* enters a deathlike state (*marañāvasthā*) and resides in a *dvipuṭa*, a vessel of two parts used in alchemical procedures. A correlation is made between the body sealed with locks (*bandhas*) at the throat and perineum (*yoni*) and the sealed alchemical crucible. The teaching on *haṭha* yoga is announced in the same verse that describes the great seal (*mahāmudrā*). The throat should be locked, and the breath held upwards before a snake simile precedes the description of *kuṇḍalinī*: just as a snake when hit with a stick becomes straight so *kuṇḍalinī śakti* suddenly becomes straight. *Kuṇḍalinī* then enters stillness, literally a death-like state (*marañāvasthā*) and resides in a double chamber (*dvipuṭa*). Thus, the effect of the locks on the body render it similar to an alchemical vessel (*dvipuṭa*). The activation or pot stage, attested in many sources, where the breath goes in the middle channel (Am 37ab) could relate to the alchemical metaphor of the *dvipuṭa*. The *Haṭhapradīpika* recapitulates the *Amarauḅha*'s verse with *kuṇḍalinī śakti* becoming straight like a snake hit with a stick (HP 3.11-12). The *Amṛtasiddhi*'s death of the gods could be a precursor to the *Amarauḅha*'s *marāṇa* of *kuṇḍalinī*. The *Yogabīja* gives an alternate notion to the death of *kuṇḍalinī* in the *Amarauḅha*. In the *Yogabīja* after *kuṇḍalinī* has entered the central channel death itself is overcome due to moon and sun being united (YB 93).

In the foregoing section of this chapter, I analysed the *haṭha* description of *kuṇḍalinī* through the heuristic device of the *pralayatrix*. The hypothesis that *kuṇḍalinī* functions as *pralayatrix* is supported by the characterisation of the eightfold *prakṛti*, the divine nature of *kuṇḍalinī* associated with creation and destruction (though the sources do not go so far as to characterise her as the divine mother), the association between *kuṇḍalinī* and sleep—and bodily and cosmic dissolution, and associations with alchemical stilling. While some of these features fit the concept of *prōcrēātrix* they sit more easily with the creative and also dissolving *pralayatrix*.

### ***Genealogy of kuṇḍalinī: eightfold in sāmkhya***

As in previous chapters I explore antecedent literatures to explicate the metaphysically taciturn *haṭha* corpus. In this chapter that work is a genealogy of *kuṇḍalinī* as *pralayatrix* in *śaiva* literature. Before turning to the *śaiva* sources, we find referents for *haṭha*'s eightfold *kuṇḍalinī* in *sāmkhya*. *Sāmkhya* is an obvious place to look: literally meaning 'relating to number' it develops *prakṛti* as a core metaphysical concept. Through reference to *sāmkhya* we see that *kuṇḍalinī*'s eightfold nature relates to material and cognitive elements (*tattvas*). The early first millennium proto-*sāmkhya* *Bhagavadgītā* identifies Kṛṣṇa's eightfold nature as the five elements or *bhūtas* plus *manas*, *ahaṃkāra* and *buddhi*.<sup>199</sup> The extant orthodoxy on *sāmkhya*, the mid-fourth century *Sāmkhya-kārikā* has a seven plus one schema which may be the dispositions (*bhāvas*) or modes (*rūpas*) of *prakṛti* (*karikā* 63).<sup>200</sup> There are references to

<sup>199</sup> Kṛṣṇa describes his material nature (*prakṛti*) as divided into eight: earth (*bhūmi*), air (*āpa*), fire (*anala*), wind (*vāyu*), ether (*kha*), mind (*manas*), intelligence (*buddhi*) and ego (*ahaṃkāra*) (*Bhagavadgītā* 7.4).

<sup>200</sup> *Sāmkhya-kārikā* 63 *rūpaiḥ saptabhir eva tu badhnāty ātmānam ātmanā prakṛtiḥ sai 'va ca puruśārtham prati vimocayaty ekarūpeṇa* | (Larson 2001:274). Here *prakṛti* binds herself by herself with the use of seven forms and liberates herself by one form for the sake of each *puruṣa*. The text itself does not clarify what these forms are, and there is a divergence of opinion as to what they refer. Burley notes that the eight forms (*rūpas*) are usually assumed to be 'dispositions' (*bhāvas*) that have a role in determining the process of rebirth and one's present life (Burley 2007:177, 204n25). The *Sāmkhya-kārikā* however uses the term *rūpa* not *bhāva*. Burley argues that they are equally likely to be modes of *prakṛti* divided into the categories of *avyakta* (the unmanifest), *buddhi*, *ahaṃkāra*, *manas*, *buddhīndriyas*, *karmendriyas*, *tanmātras*, and the *bhūtas* (2007:204n25). Larson gives the eight *bhāvas* as *dharma*, *adharmā*, *jñāna*, *ajñāna*, *virāga*, *rāga*, *aiśvarya* and *anaiśvarya*. He explains



eight in the commentaries on the fourth- or fifth-century *Pātañjalayogaśāstra*, the ‘explanation’ (*pravacana*) of *sāṃkhya* according to its own colophons, with a discussion on embodied and disembodied stages of bodily dissolution—but no discussion of *kuṇḍalinī*. The *Pātañjalayogaśāstra* has a discussion of beings without bodies or merged in *prakṛti* and the *Pātañjalayogaśāstra* commentator Gauḍapāda gives the eight as *pradhāna*, *buddhi*, *ahaṃkara* and five *tanmātras*.<sup>201</sup> This evidence neither gives us a definitive list of eight nor of course links these directly to *kuṇḍalinī*, yet importantly these sets of eight encompass a cognitive and material range from the sense of self to the five elements.

Somewhat tenuously including the *Yogavāsiṣṭha* in this treatment of *sāṃkhya* sources, it defines the ‘city of eight’ (*puryaṣṭaka*) as eightfold—which may be the same eight as identified by Gauḍapāda. The *Yogavāsiṣṭha* is a reworking of the tenth-century *Mokṣopaya* and tells the story of Cūḍālā and Śikhidhvaja in which *kuṇḍalinī* plays a role in the enlightenment experience of Cūḍālā, studied at length in Funes (2017) and Cohen (2020, 2023). *Kuṇḍalinī* is named as the ‘city of eight’ (*puryaṣṭaka*) and is the supreme power of life

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that they determine the process of rebirth and the quality of the current life and relate to the fifty components called the *pratīyasarga* or ‘intellectual creation’ (2001:239). This is likely to be associated with the fifty phonemes of the alphabet linked with *kuṇḍalinī* in the *śaiva* material discussed below. Thanks to Burley for providing me with these references, personal communication, 26 May 2021.

<sup>201</sup> According to the *Pātañjalayogaśāstra*, for those who are unembodied and those who are merged in matter, the state of *samprajñāta* is characterised by absorption in states of *prakṛti* (YS 1.19) (Bryant 2015:73). The subtle states of *prakṛti*, the *bhāvas*, are taken by Vācaspati Miśra to be ignorance (*avidyā*), by Vijñānabhikṣu as birth and by Bhoja Rāja as *samsāra*. Rāmānanda Sarasvatī considers these individuals to be those who, after the dissolution of their gross bodies, remain in a state of existence devoid of the traditional bodily sheaths (Bryant 2015:75). The commentators hold that beings who are unembodied (*videhas*) or merged in matter (*prakṛtilaya*) are ‘two types of quasi-perfected *yogīs* who do not have gross physical bodies but exist on some other level within *prakṛti*’ (Bryant 2015:73). Vyāsa and Vācaspati Miśra identify the *videhas* as celestial beings. The *prakṛtilayas* are considered by the commentators, ‘to refer to entities who consider themselves to be either unmanifest, primordial *prakṛti* herself, or *buddhi*, the first evolute from *prakṛti*, or the second evolute *ahaṃkāra*, or even the *tanmātras*, five subtle elements’ following *Sāṃkhya Kārikā* 45, ‘where the state of *prakṛti-laya* in question is held to come from *vairāgya*, nonattachment (I.15)’ (Bryant 2015:74). Gauḍapāda’s commentary on this verse states: ‘One might have *vairāgya* but without knowing the 24 evolutes of *prakṛti*. This state, which is founded on ignorance, is... *prakṛti-layānām*. At death, such a person is not liberated, but is merged into the eight evolutes of *prakṛti*—*pradhāna*, intelligence, ego and the five subtle elements. From there, he returns again to *samsāra*’ (Bryant 2015:74-75). Gauḍapāda here refers to the ‘subtle elements’ (*tanmātras*) of sound (*śabda*), touch (*sparśa*), form (*rūpa*), taste (*rasa*) and smell (*gandha*) rather than the ‘gross elements’ (*mahābhūtas*) of earth, water, wind, fire and space.

(*jīvaśakti anuttama*) (*Yogavāsiṣṭha* 81.4)<sup>202</sup>, an epithet used for *kuṇḍalinī* in the *haṭha* corpus. Funes notes that the ‘citadel of eight’ refers to the eight elements that compose the subtle body: five subtle elements (*tanmātras*), ego (*ahamkāra*), capacity for thought (*manas*) and intellect (*buddhi*) (2017:8n23).

Thus, the three categories of mind, intelligence and ego are generally stable across these sources, though Larson has an alternative series of eight in relation to the *Sāṃkhyakārikā* and Gauḍapāda iterates *pradhāna* alongside intelligence and ego in relation to the *Pātañjalayogaśāstra*. There is wider variance on the referents of the remaining five categories: the *Bhagavadgītā* lists the five elements, the *Sāṃkhyakārikā* lists the five groups of five according to Burley yet only the ‘subtle’ elements (*tanmātras*) according to Gauḍapāda on the *Pātañjalayogaśāstra* and Funes on the *Yogavāsiṣṭha*.

Contextualising *kuṇḍalinī*’s eightfold nature in relation to *sāṃkhya* demonstrates her ontological range, part of which are the material five elements. This disrupts an understanding of *kuṇḍalinī* as an aspect of the ‘yogic body’ as mesocosmic or cartographic device mediating between the mind and body, each posited in dualistic separation. Further this disrupts reading *kuṇḍalinī* and the ‘yogic body’ as immaterial subtle body. Instead, because *kuṇḍalinī* and the body are both characterised as composed of the elements they share this bodily materiality. In turn, now there is a logic to the body and *kuṇḍalinī* being affected by bodily practices. My heretofore implicit rationale is that the body must be grounded in materiality to be affected by physical practices. Ascribing this material domain also to *kuṇḍalinī* brings her into the logic of material practice.

I now turn to the *śaiva* sources to continue the exploration of the number eight and look more comprehensively at tantric precursors for the *pralayatrix* concept.

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<sup>202</sup> *Yogavāsiṣṭha* 81.4 *ahamkāratmatām yātā saiṣā puryaṣṭakābhidhā | sthitā kuṇḍalinī dehe jīvaśaktiranuttamā*  
||

### *Genealogy of kuṇḍalinī in śaiva sources*

The *śaiva* sources provide the source material, alongside *vajrayāna* and *pāñcaratras*, from which *haṭha* adopts and adapts. In order to evaluate the concept of *kuṇḍalinī* this section works through some of those characteristics that inform the *pralayatrix* concept. The section introduces the earliest accounts of *kuṇḍalinī* and continues the discussion of eight before considering cosmogony and dissolution, the syllabic cosmogony of the alphabet and the embryology and maternity of *kuṇḍalinī*.

I discuss the following *śaiva* sources that likely inform the *haṭha* treatment of *kuṇḍalinī*: the sixth- to seventh-century *Sārdhatriśatikālottara* and *Skandapurāṇa*, the eighth-century *Tantrasadbhāva*, the eighth- to ninth-century *Bhairavamaṅgalā*, the sixth- to ninth-century *Brahmayāmala* and the tenth-century *Kubjikāmatatantra*. In the *śaiva* sources *kuṇḍalinī* is a key creative or cosmogonic force especially in accounts where the alphabet is understood as a creative sequence. As the *vajrayāna* sources on *caṇḍālī* appear to describe sexual affect and may interiorise rituals originally external to the body of the practitioner, so *śaiva* sources may internalise cosmogony in the body—or *a priori* assume the external to be the internal.

As noted in the last chapter, the *Sārdhatriśatikālottaratantra* has an early reference to *kuṇḍalinī* and the *Tantrasadbhāva*<sup>203</sup> may have the first description of *kuṇḍalinī* as a snake. Like the *Sārdhatriśatikālottaratantra* the earliest recension of the *Skandapurāṇa* is datable to the sixth to seventh century. The *Skandapurāṇa* has a serpent-shaped power in the *nāḍīs* in three states (*jāgrat*, *svapna*, *suṣupta*) (*Ambikākhaṇḍa* 181) (Bakker 2014). The awake, dreaming and deep sleep upaniṣadic schema is extended here to associate the awakening of

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<sup>203</sup> *Tantrasadbhāva yā sā śaktiḥ parā sūkṣmā nirācāreti kīrtitā | hṛdbindum viṣṭayitvāntaḥ suṣuptabhujagākṛtiḥ* [Mallinson emend *veṣṭayitvāntaḥ*] | *tatra suptā mahābhāge na kiñcin manyate ume | candrāgniravinakṣatraitr bhuvanāni caturdaśa | kṣiptvodare tu yā devī viṣamūḍheva sā gatā | prabuddhā sā ninādena pareṇa jñānarūpiṇā | mathitā codarasthena vindunā varavarṇini || Tantrasadbhāva* taken from Kṣemarāja's commentary on the *Śivasūtra* in Padoux (1990).

*kuṇḍalinī* with the awakening of the yogi to ultimate reality and utilises *kuṇḍalinī* as cosmogonic principle. We also find this reference in the *Tantrasadbhāva* where *samanā* is *kuṇḍalinī* in the waking state (*jāgrat*), *jyeṣṭhā* dreaming (*svapna*), and *raudrī* in deep sleep (*susupti*) (Vasudeva in Brunner et al 2013:111).

### ***Genealogy of kuṇḍalinī: eightfold in śaiva sources***

The *śaiva* sources offer rich and complex descriptions of *kuṇḍalinī* in which the number eight features. However, it is not a singularly distinctive feature as *kuṇḍalinī* is associated with many more numbers and with infinity, and different sources understand the number eight differently. For example, the *Bhairavamaṅgalā*, dated by Hatley to the eighth and Vasudeva to the ninth century, situates *kuṇḍalī* in the context of a fairly obscure alphabet *maṅḍala* which could be explaining a missing diagram.<sup>204</sup> To summarise the key points, *kuṇḍalī* has become crooked in eight ways between two *bindus*, she is the great *kuṇḍalinī*, *mahāmāyā* and *parāparā* (*Bhairavamaṅgalā* 29).<sup>205</sup> She is like a garland of fire and effects liberation and bondage (*Bhairavamaṅgalā* 31).<sup>206</sup> She is seen inside the body and at the end of the void (*Bhairavamaṅgalā* 34cd).<sup>207</sup> In the beginning she is one, then twofold, threefold, eightfold, ninefold, sixteenfold and then infinite (*Bhairavamaṅgalā* 35).<sup>208</sup>

Similar to the *Bhairavamaṅgalā*, in the *Brahmayāmala*'s first chapter, *kuṇḍalinī śakti* is shaped like a coil in the alphabet beginning with the vowels. She is enumerated according to various schemas encompassing vowels and voids, but the number eight does not occur. In her

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<sup>204</sup> I am grateful to Hatley for reading portions of the *Bhairavamaṅgalā* with me in Spring 2022 which Somdev Vasudeva produced as an etext in 1997.

<sup>205</sup> *Bhairavamaṅgalā* 29 *ubhau binduṣu madhye tu aṣṭadhākuṇḍalīgatā | mahākuṇḍalinī sā [tu] mahāmāyā parāparā{h}* ||

<sup>206</sup> *Bhairavamaṅgalā* 31 *śaktitrayasamopetā jvālāmālāsamaprabhā{h} | bandhamokṣakarī devī brahmādyā sacarā[caram]* ||

<sup>207</sup> *Bhairavamaṅgalā* 34cd *[drśyate] dehamadhye tu [vyomānte] ca parāpare |*

<sup>208</sup> *Bhairavamaṅgalā* 35 *ekākinī bhavedādau dvidhā ca [tridhā aṣṭadhā] | navadhā [ṣoḍaśā] caiva tataścānantatām gatā{h}* ||

exist the *devīs*, the *dūtīs*, the *yoginīs* and mothers of the *Ucchuṣmatantra*—she creates all following the will of Śiva (*Brahmayāmala* 1.129-133) (Hatley 2007:311, 367-9).

It is in the c. tenth-century *Kubjikāmatatantra*, a tantra of the Western transmission (*paścimāmnāya*), that *kuṇḍalinī* is first found in developed form (Mallinson and Singleton 2017:xix). *Kuṇḍalinī* may be associated with Kubjikā, the ‘crooked’ goddess (Dyczkowski 1988), who in the *Kubjikāmatatantra* Schoterman sees as another form of *kuṇḍalinī śakti* when abiding in the *mūlādhāra cakra* (Schoterman 1982).<sup>209</sup> Heilijgers-Seelen however disagrees with Schoterman arguing instead that *kuṇḍalinī* in the *Kubjikāmatatantra* is rather vague and only referred to a few times (Heilijgers-Seelen 1994:93). The *Kubjikāmatatantra* offers tantalising glimpses of *pralayatrix* tropes but not closely associated with *kuṇḍalinī*. In her study of the *Kubjikāmatatantra* Heilijgers-Seelen describes the use of the *cakra* or *maṇḍala* to reverse creation:

As an object of meditation, the diagram is a means to effect a mental reconstruction of the process of creation, or rather the reverse process of absorption or reintegration of everything created into its original form. By meditating on the powers the practitioner is enabled to identify himself with them, by which practices he gradually realises his identity with the ultimate reality. (Heilijgers-Seelen 1994:17)

The *cakra* thus serves a *pralayatrix* function. However, *kuṇḍalinī* is not mentioned in the *devī cakra* which is a site of creation and embryology (*Kubjikāmatatantra* 14.13-61ab) (Heilijgers-Seelen 1994:39, 53).<sup>210</sup> Though the *Kubjikāmatatantra* refers to the *puryaṣṭaka* several times it does not identify the eight components (Heilijgers-Seelen 1994:110).<sup>211</sup> In this early

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<sup>209</sup> Schoterman discusses the relationship between *kuṇḍalinī* and Mātāṅga, one of Kubjikā’s manifestations (*Ṣaṭsāhasrasamhitā* 4/5.128c) (Schoterman 1982:11).

<sup>210</sup> According to the symbolism of the *devī cakra* the process of creation relates to biology (*Kubjikāmatatantra* 14.24-32) or the genesis of an embryo, and creation relates to philosophy or soteriology (*Kubjikāmatatantra* 14.33-42) (Heilijgers-Seelen 1994:61-7).

<sup>211</sup> Heilijgers-Seelen notes, ‘The eight components of the *puryaṣṭaka* are usually explained as the five subtle elements (*śabda*, *sparśa*, *rūpa*, *rasa*, and *gandha*), *manas*, *buddhi* and *ahaṃkāra*, but other explanations are also found. However, the *puryaṣṭaka* consists of the *tanmātras*, *manas*, *buddhi* and *ahaṃkāra* in *Mahārthamañjari* 38ab and Kṣemarāja on *Svacchandatantra* 11.85cd-86ab; and the *Tātparyadīpikā* commentary on the *Tattvapraśā* 12-13 mentions two other additional options where the association with the number eight is lost’ (Heilijgers-Seelen 1994:110n55; Pandey 1963:530; Brunner 1963:116; Singh 1982:129ff).

reference to *kuṇḍalinī* the overall context contains the tropes of the *pralayatrix* but the specific connections to *kuṇḍalinī* are weak.

Kiehnle has explored both the concept of *kuṇḍalinī* (2005) and that of the heart lotus (1997). In relation to the heart lotus, she focuses on the eight petals (*aṣṭadala*) as an earlier and anatomically lower heart lotus than that of the *Ṣaṭcakranirūpaṇa* with twelve petals (1997:95). She traces the explanation for eight petals to sources such as the *Guhyasamājatantra*, ‘during the development of the embryo as it is seen by the *yogis*, first the three primary channels, and then the five veins of the heart are shaped. Together they make up eight petals’ (1997:98; cf. Wayman 1977:205ff). She notes, ‘As for the petals of the lotus, the number eight deserves further investigation’ (1997:97). Hatley has done some of this further work. He followed his 2015 pre-print article on *kuṇḍalinī* (Hatley 2022) with more recent work on the navel (*nābhi*) and *kuṇḍalinī*. He examines the *nābhi*’s downward historical trajectory through the body, and the number of petals and spokes of the heart lotus or *cakra*, as eight (and sometimes ten) (2021).

We see that the number eight in these early *śaiva* sources is not closely associated with *kuṇḍalinī* but is variously associated with embryology. I turn to this topic broadly in the early alphabetic cosmogony of *kuṇḍalinī* and then more directly in the later *Śāradātilaka*.

### ***Genealogy of kuṇḍalinī: alphabetic cosmogony, nāda and bindu***

The *śaiva* sources attribute cosmogonic power to *kuṇḍalinī* as primordial sound manifest in the alphabet. I contextualise this in the *śaiva* sources before finding remnants in the *haṭha*. This material substantiates the *prōcreātrix* and *pralayatrix* modality of *kuṇḍalinī* but it is not emphasised in the early *haṭha*. It is most evident in the *Vasiṣṭhasaṃhitā* verse that stands as epigraph to this chapter: *kuṇḍalī* has the form of eight *prakṛtis* coiled eight times starting with the syllable *a* and ending with *kṣa* (VS 2.16abcd). In the later *haṭha* corpus this inheritance

may be subsumed under the rubric of dissolution through sound (*nādānusandhāna*). Birch notes that in the later corpus *nādānusandhāna* becomes entirely associated with *laya* yoga (Birch 2013:51).

Building on Padoux, Hatley summarises the development of *kuṇḍalinī* in relation to sonic cosmogony by non-dual *śaiva* philosophers such as Abhinavagupta where *kuṇḍalinī* was conceived in terms of cosmology and theories of language:

They in fact envisioned multiple *kuṇḍalinīs*, as reflected in a threefold scheme distinguishing *śaktikuṇḍalinī*, *prāṇakuṇḍalinī*, and *parākuṇḍalinī*: the cosmogonic creative power, the vital energy of living beings, and the supreme, ineffable power of the divine, respectively. Thus conceived, *kuṇḍalinī* represents “the origin, the substance and the consummation of everything”. Cosmologically, *kuṇḍalinī* is the starting point of emanation when this is conceived of in terms of vibration or sound—the very stuff of creation. As the supreme creative energy, *kuṇḍalinī* unites with Śiva in the form of *bindu*, the ‘point’ or ‘drop’ from which the primordial creation issues forth as subtle resonance. The creative activity of *kuṇḍalinī* then gives rise to the Sanskrit alphabet in an emanative sequence, beginning with *a*—thence mantra (the ultimate form of language) and the sequence of *tattvas* (ontic levels or planes of existence). (Hatley 2022:823; cf. Padoux 1990:124-143; Padoux in Brunner et al 2004:111; Silburn 1988:24).

Mirroring, or presaging, the movement of *kuṇḍalinī*, the *śaiva* sources incorporate the ‘raising’ (*uccāraṇa*) of a mantra as well as the repetition (*japa*) of a mantra. In *uccāraṇa* the mantra, together with the yogi’s consciousness, is joined with the breath and raised up the body’s central channel (Mallinson and Singleton 2017:261; Brunner et al 2004:112). In twelfth- and pre-twelfth-century *saiḍdhāntika* sources *kuṇḍalinī* is associated with the most subtle form of sound and the source of all sound when she is the *śakti* at the top of the cosmos rather than a coiled power at the base (Brunner et al 2004:110). In the *Tantrasadbhāva*’s first chapter she is both coiled at the base and associated with sound (1.122cd) (Heilijgers-Seelen 1994:168-169; Brunner et al 2013:279).

The *Brahmayāmala* situates the syllabic cosmogonic role of *kuṇḍalinī* in an account very similar to those found in the *Bhairavamaṅgalā* and *Tantrasadbhāva*. *Kuṇḍalinī* is shaped like

a coil in the alphabet, beginning with the vowels and associated with increasing numbers (but not eight); in her exist the *devīs*, *dūtīs*, *yoginīs* and mothers and she creates all following the will of Śiva (*Brahmayāmala* 1.133) (Hatley 2007:311, 367-9). Thus, the *nāda* and mantra characterisation of *kuṇḍalinī* in the *haṭha* sources, alongside discussions of mantra that do not directly reference *kuṇḍalinī*, are set out in the *śaiva* sources clearly in relation to cosmogony.

In the seven *cakra* system of the *Ṣaṭcakraṇirūpaṇa*,

These *cakras* symbolise the cosmic processes of emanation and re-integration in six levels and in them the Sāṃkhya categories and (on the phonic level) the letters of the Sanskrit alphabet are represented. By raising Kuṇḍalinī, the inner cosmic Śakti, from the lowest *cakra* to the Sahasrāra, the absorption of the created world and identification of the individual soul with the Supreme is realized. (Heilijgers-Seelen 1994:17)

This and the other *śaiva* accounts of *kuṇḍalinī* characterise her with sonic cosmogonic capacity. *Kuṇḍalinī*, *nāda* and *bindu* are intercalated in *śaiva* and *haṭha* sources. They are also associated with *rajas*. In the *Haṭhapradīpikā* discussed in chapter three we saw that when the *yoginī* preserved her *rajas* her *bindu* became *nāda* (HP 3.98). Does the *śaiva* association of *kuṇḍalinī* with the cosmogonic alphabet and the *praṇava* carry over into *haṭha*, such that *kuṇḍalinī* has a role in cosmogony and dissolution?

The *haṭha* corpus contains some associations between *kuṇḍalinī* and the production of sound as a cosmogonic process but not the intimate connection of the *śaiva* sources. In the *Vivekamārtaṇḍa* the *gāyatri* arises from *kuṇḍalinī*: the *vidyā* starting with *oṃ* which bears *prāṇa* arises from *kuṇḍalinī* and who knows her knows yoga (Viv 31). Later, albeit not related to *kuṇḍalinī*, the *Vivekamārtaṇḍa* has an account of fixation (*dhāraṇā*) on the elements that variously includes seed syllables (Viv 134-138)<sup>212</sup> and results in power over their associated

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<sup>212</sup> Though the earth element is not attributed a seed-syllable (Viv 134) the water element is accompanied by the seed-syllable *ya* (Viv 135ab), the fire element with *ra* (Viv 136ab), the air element with *va* (Viv 137ab) and the space element with *ha* (Viv 138). They are all accompanied by deities.



elements. Curiously enough the *Vivekamārtaṇḍa* recommends a practice of *oṃ* that includes using the body as light (Viv 65-69)<sup>213</sup> but does not specify what this practice is.

The *Dattātreyaśāstra* does not link mantra with *kuṇḍalinī*. It gives one verse on mantra as it gives one verse on *kuṇḍalinī*.<sup>214</sup> It defines mantra yoga as reciting a mantra after installing the letters of the alphabet on the body; by means of just one mantra *siddhi* may arise (DYS 12). In the *Vasiṣṭhasaṃhitā* in the teaching on *prāṇāyāma* the *praṇava* has a creative and destructive role: the first two sounds relate to creation and maintenance and the last, *ma*, is the destroyer or annihilator (VS 3.4). Again, without a specific association with *kuṇḍalinī* but accompanied by sovereignty and *laya*, the *Śivasāṃhitā*'s repetition of three seed-syllables (ŚS 5.234-236) is a mantra which bestows absolute sovereignty and pleasure (*sarvaiśvāryasukhapradā*) (ŚS 5.233). After attaining dominion over women, men, rulers, kings, demons, snakes, celestial beings and becoming the consort of *śakti* (ŚS 5. 242-250) the yogi dissolves in the absolute (ŚS 5.251). This material does not directly relate to *kuṇḍalinī* but does carry forward from *śaiva* sonic cosmogony and dissolution. Ideas of sonic cosmogony and dissolution appear in yoga texts that precede and postdate the corpus detailed here but do not directly relate to *kuṇḍalinī*.<sup>215</sup>

Predating what I refer to as the early *haṭha* corpus the sound that Uddālaka makes while sitting in meditation consists of three and a half parts and is indirectly associated with *kuṇḍalinī* (*Mokṣopāya* 5.54.3-7). This precedes the immolation of his body that I recounted in chapter two in relation to baking the body. As well as the baking trope this episode integrates

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<sup>213</sup> *Oṃ* is described at *Vivekamārtaṇḍa* 65 and equated with various things—it is correlated with the worlds, gods and great light (Viv 65), with *bindu* and light (Viv 67) and is that in which the threefold goddess (*śakti*) are located as will, action and knowledge (*brāhmī*, *raudrī* and *vaiṣṇavī*) (Viv 68). *Oṃ* should be repeated vocally, exercised using one's body as light, and constantly thought on with the mind as the great light (Viv 69).

<sup>214</sup> *Kuṇḍalinī* is named in DYS 108 but implied in 108-112.

<sup>215</sup> Predating the *haṭha* corpus, in Dattātreya's teachings in the *Mārkaṇḍeyapurāṇa* chanting *oṃ* can bring about dissolution in the absolute. In *oṃ* are Viṣṇu, Brahman, Śiva and the *Rg*, *Sāma* and *Yajur Vedas*, and the three-and-a-half syllables which lead to dissolution in *brahman* (*Mārkaṇḍeyapurāṇa* 9). The syllables *a*, *u* and *ma* relate to earth, atmosphere and heavenly realms (*Mārkaṇḍeyapurāṇa* 10). *Oṃ* is considered to be three and a half (*Mārkaṇḍeyapurāṇa* 11-12).

*kuṇḍalinī*: it is *kuṇḍalinī* that enables his body to come back to life, though only tangentially linked with the three and a half of the *om*. Uddālaka is reborn as Nārāyaṇa through the *prāṇas* reanimating *kuṇḍalinī* (Cohen 2020:4).

A much later text, the *Jogpradīpikā* teaches an explicitly tantric breath-control to re-enact the process of creation before enacting dissolution. Here the Sanskrit syllabary is internally recited in sequence while inhaling, holding the breath and exhaling; reciting it in reverse order re-enacts the process of destruction (Mallinson and Singleton 2017:264). The alphabetic cosmogony and dissolution of *kuṇḍalinī* seems the model for this practice.

The *śaiva* sources clearly attribute *kuṇḍalinī* with sonic and alphabetic cosmogonic and dissolving powers. This material is not, apart from the *Vasiṣṭhasaṃhitā*, referenced in the *haṭha* corpus. I have enumerated what traces remain. The clear association with *kuṇḍalinī* demonstrated in the *śaiva* material is ruptured in the *haṭha*. Instead, it is likely that the practice of dissolution into sound (*nādānusandhāna*) inherits this tantric genealogy.

### ***Genealogy of kuṇḍalinī: embryology and motherhood***

The *kuṇḍalinī* model of the body is associated with reproduction in *śaiva* sources in a manner parallel to and at times intercalated with the *rajas* model. I discussed the *rajas* paradigm of the body in chapters three and four and identified a general anti-natal stance and specific instructions that might mitigate against conception. We see the trope of embryology and maternity in the *Kubjikāmatatantra*, where, following the *Tantrasadbhāva*, the *jīva* is *kuṇḍalinī*'s son. The *amṛtakūṇḍalī* is said to have taken the *jīva* within herself as her son, and to convey the soul downwards and upwards, while sleeping herself (*Kubjikāmatatantra* 5.131c-132b)<sup>216</sup> (Goudriaan in Brunner et al 2000:136). However, nowhere in the *haṭha*

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<sup>216</sup> *Kubjikāmatatantra* 5.131c-132b *putravād udare kṛtvā prasuptāṃṛtakūṇḍalī || tayā nīyaty asau jīva adhas cordhvena ||*

corpus is *kuṇḍalinī* referred to as a mother. Arguably her divinity encompasses maternity, a goddess that is both benign (*saumya*) and productive as well as fierce (*ugra*) and destructive, as discussed below.

The twelfth-century *Śāradātilakatantra* incorporates many of the tropes of *pralayatrix*. The *Śāradātilakatantra* is a 'post-scriptural digest' of *śaiva* tantra (Hatley 2020:767) with a 'conspicuous' *śākta* emphasis on *kuṇḍalinī*'s identity as the supreme deity similar to the *Ṣaṭcakranirūpaṇa* (Hatley 2015:5-6).<sup>217</sup> Bühnemann's 2011 translation of chapter 25 demonstrates extensive deployment of many of the tropes considered in this chapter. It develops the themes of procreation and dissolution alongside associations with fire and *rajas*. In the *Śāradātilaka* *kuṇḍalinī* is the *śakti* that is the mother of all (*samastajanantī*) who 'beguiles the world' (*jaganmohinī*) (*Śāradātilakatantra* 25.65), the supreme deity that throbs in the form of a streak of lightning and has a form similar to a sleeping serpent (*Śāradātilakatantra* 25.36). The classic rise and descent of *kuṇḍalinī* is given where the chief queen of the king of serpents awake in the root moves in *suṣumṇā*, pierces the supports (*ādhāras*) like a blazing lightning bolt and worships *śiva* before returning to her house (*Śāradātilakatantra* 25.64). It is *kuṇḍalinī* who leads *bindu* to *śiva*'s abode (*Śāradātilakatantra* 25.66).

*Kuṇḍalinī* has a clear role in procreation. *Bindu* and [*vi*]*sarga* are equated with male (*pumṣ*) and female (*prakṛti*) (*Śāradātilakatantra* 25.50cd). From these two *haṃ* and *saḥ* are produced, the first ending in a *bindu* and the second in a *visarga* and called the male and the female respectively (*Śāradātilakatantra* 25.51). Further, these two define the *ajapā* or *gāyatrī*, the *haṃṣa* mantra with *prakṛti* eternally resorting to *puruṣa* as her refuge (*Śāradātilakatantra* 25.52). Viṣṇu is to be recalled reclining on the coils of a serpent in the ocean of milk

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<sup>217</sup> The sixteenth-century *Ṣaṭcakranirūpaṇa* by Pūrṇānanda is influential on the reception history of tantra and *kuṇḍalinī* through the popularity of its translation in Avalon's *The Serpent Power* (1918).

(*Śāradātilakatantra* 25.59) before a cosmogony is given whereby *nāda* emerges from *bindu* and the body of *śiva* becomes the cause of the worlds (*Śāradātilakatantra* 25.61). The *piṇḍa*, often understood as the body and given by Bühnemann as the ‘solidmass’ is equated with *kuṇḍalinī* who is equated with *śiva* (*Śāradātilakatantra* 25.62).<sup>218</sup> The union of the *piṇḍa* with *śiva* produces a seed (*sabījayoga*) while the dissolution into *śiva* produces no seed (*nirbījayoga*) (*Śāradātilakatantra* 25.63). Thus, the initial phase is productive, and the latter is non-productive. This reproduction is described in propagative rather than embryological terms, taking us back to the discussion of seed with which chapter two concluded.

Imagery strikingly redolent of *rajas* is used. The supreme deity (*parā devatā*) is red like the new *javā* or *japā* flower (*navajavāsindūra*), red lead and the dawn (*Śāradātilakatantra* 25.67), an awn of wild rice in shape (*Śāradātilakatantra* 25.69) and a heap of red lead (*Śāradātilakatantra* 25.75). *Kuṇḍalinī* is associated with nectars and with desire. She worships her husband with streams of divine nectar flowing from the lunar disc located in the etheric lotus (*Śāradātilakatantra* 25.64), experiences supreme bliss with *śiva* (*Śāradātilakatantra* 25.65), partakes of the concentrated nectar of bliss (*Śāradātilakatantra* 25.67), is full of intelligence, dense bliss and knowledge and pours out streams of nectar that flow forth from the moon (*Śāradātilakatantra* 25.78).

The *Śāradātilakatantra* as post-scriptural digest associates *kuṇḍalinī* with the tropes of *prōcrēātrix* and *pralayatrix*: motherhood, embryology and tropes similar to *rajas*, cosmogonic mantra and seedless dissolution. The association of *kuṇḍalinī* with mantra is important and I now focus on that aspect.

### ***Dhāraṇā on the elements: bodily and cosmic sovereignty***

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<sup>218</sup> *Kuṇḍalinī* is sometimes named *piṇḍa* when she is coiled for example in *Yoginīhrdayadīpikā* (Padoux in Brunner et al 2004:111) and in *Tantrāloka* 29.4 the *kula* is synonymous with *piṇḍa* (Silburn 1988:178).

The crow *bhuśuṇḍa*, fleetingly referred to in the first chapter of the *Amanaska*, survives the *pralaya*, the cosmic fire at the end of time.<sup>219</sup> *Bhuśuṇḍa* is an exemplar of the result of dissolution (*laya*) on the gross elements (*Amanaska* 1.85-86).<sup>220</sup> The first chapter of the *Amanaska* opens by dismissing *haṭha* yoga and closes noting that the yogi is seen in the world performing the *tattva* practice for the sake of absorption in *śakti* (*Amanaska* 1.4, 1.84). This is said to be similar to *bhuśuṇḍa* and others who are able to maintain their bodies through cosmic *pralayas*. This episode in the post-sixteenth century *Amanaska* chapter one is outside the timeframe of the core corpus considered here. Even so it inspires this analysis of fixation on the elements (*dhāraṇā*) and dissolution.

This thesis foregrounds the descriptions of the body in the early *haṭha* corpus and not the techniques of yoga. I explore the techniques where they illuminate the models of the body. I summarised the techniques for arousing *kuṇḍalinī* in the previous chapter—essentially breath restraint to increase heat and burn *kuṇḍalinī* or other techniques of stimulating the goddess (*śakticālana*)—but have not yet done so in this chapter. Here I consider the technique of *dhāraṇā*. Yet *dhāraṇā* has ever so little to do with *kuṇḍalinī*.

Through an examination of the eightfold nature of *kuṇḍalinī* it becomes apparent that five of the eight are the elements. The body and cosmos are also elemental, as I set out in chapter one. The technique of *dhāraṇā* taught in the *haṭha* corpus is not associated with *kuṇḍalinī* but it does work in various ways to gain mastery and dissolution through the elements. This section explores descriptions of *dhāraṇā* on the elements. This material indirectly augments the *pralayatrix* paradigm and segues into the overall conclusion to this dissertation that brings together the threads on sovereignty.

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<sup>219</sup> This episode is also narrated in the twenty-first chapter of the sixth part of the *Mokṣopāya* (6.21.14-27) also known as the *Yogavāsiṣṭha*.

<sup>220</sup> See Cohen 2020:8n24; Birch 2013:280n116, 280-1n118; and Timalina 2012.

There are hints of *kuṇḍalinī* in *dhāraṇā* on the elements. In the clearest association of *kuṇḍalinī* and elemental absorption, for the *Khecarīvidyā* the result of recollecting *kuṇḍalinī* as a supreme goddess (*śaktiḥ śrīkuṇḍalī parā*) pervading the body for five months is absorption (*laya*) into the five elements and the yogi becomes equal to Śiva (KhV 2.38-39). In the *Śārṅgadharapaddhati* dissolution (*laya*) of the mind in the nine *cakras* is introduced and concluded with reference to *kuṇḍalinī* (*Śārṅgadharapaddhati* 4350-4363).

Ondračka, building on the work of Flood and Chapple, analyses mastery of the elements in tantra and *haṭha* yoga: the practice of purification of the elements (*bhūtaśuddhi*) and fixation on the elements (*dhāraṇā*) (2023, 2015).<sup>221</sup> In his thesis he states:

At the heart of the technique [of mastery of the elements] is the idea that if a yogi can master the individual building blocks that make up his body, then he will gain control over everything that is made up of these building blocks. Which is not only his physical body, but also the entire material world. These building blocks are the five elements. (Ondračka 2021:95)

I will develop this observation by unpacking it in relation to *kuṇḍalinī* in *haṭha* yoga.

Although *dhāraṇā* is not normally associated with *kuṇḍalinī* awakening, I propose that fixation on and dissolution of the elements helps to think through the embodied nature of *kuṇḍalinī*, alike in elemental form with the body and cosmos. *Kuṇḍalinī* is historically and pedagogically linked with dissolution (*laya*), the body is formed from the elements as likewise is the cosmos, and five of the eight coils of *kuṇḍalinī* are the five gross elements or the five subtle elements. In chapter one I made the argument that the body and cosmos are *a priori* identical, rather than becoming homologues through practices such as ritual inscription

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<sup>221</sup> See chapter two for a discussion of the *bhūtaśuddhi* and *bhūtajaya* in relation to the *Yogabīja*. See also Flood 2000, 2002, 2006:106-113; Chapple 2020:2-3: ‘Vedic rituals and post-Vedic *pūjas*, including Tantric ceremonies, generally begin with a brief or extended meditation known as *bhūta śuddhi* through which one purifies the body by the recognition of the presence of each element and its connection with the senses.’ The *Pātañjalayogaśāstra* discusses the *bhūtajaya* (3.44) as well as the *Mālinīvijayottaratantra* (Vasudeva 2004:303-329) and *Śivasūtra* 3.5.

of the cosmos onto the body.<sup>222</sup> The practice of fixation (*dhāraṇā*) can be done on the elements, as examples from the *Vasiṣṭhasaṃhitā*, *Dattātreyaśāstra*, *Vivekamārtaṇḍa* and *Khecarīvidyā* (in relation to *utkrānti*) show.

The *Vasiṣṭhasaṃhitā*'s chapter four teaches *dhāraṇā* which it defines in several ways. One definition of *dhāraṇā* is fixation on external ether (*ākāśa*) which is correlated with internal *ākāśa* in the heart, the result of which is the ability to move in *ākāśa* (VS 4.3).<sup>223</sup> Here the *haṭha* sources appear to incorporate a vedic understanding of homologies or connections (*bandhus*) between the body and cosmos (that mastery of the elements results in cosmic as well as bodily sovereignty is clear when seen through the heuristic explanation of *bandhus*). The *Vasiṣṭhasaṃhitā* also defines *dhāraṇā* as concentration on the five deities of the five elements (VS 4.5ab).

The *Dattātreyaśāstra* teaches *dhāraṇā* on the elements so that they do not harm the yogi. After *kuṇḍalinī* awakens, the mind and breath enter the central channel (DYŚ 108-109), delivering knowledge of the present, future and past. On the basis of these insights the yogi performs *dhāraṇā* on the element that he has divined will hurt him in order to become free from danger caused by that element (DYŚ 111-112). The five fixations bring about a firm body and he does not die even in the final dissolution of *brahman* (DYŚ 121-122ab). *Kuṇḍalinī* herself is not the technique for fixation on the elements and the outcome is not dissolution of the body. *Kuṇḍalinī* enables the insight into past, present and future that the practice of *dhāraṇā* is based upon (the preservation of *rajas* enables the yoginī to know past, present and future too).

In the *Vivekamārtaṇḍa* *dhāraṇā* is understood as sequential fixation on the elements earth, water, fire, air and space which are in the heart. *Dhāraṇā* on them is not predicated on

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<sup>222</sup> This is not to say that ritual divinisation of the body is not occasionally prescribed. For example, the *Vasiṣṭhasaṃhitā* does prescribe the assignation of one's body with *mantras* (VS 6.27).

<sup>223</sup> Moving in the air is an attainment that *yoginīs* develop through the preservation of *rajas*, see chapter three.

installing these five elements in the body rather they are simply there in the heart (Viv 133-138). For example, the space element is located at the aperture of *brahman* and looks like a mirage together with the lord *sadāśiva*. The yogi should fix his breath and his mind there for two hours. This space fixation is able to break down the doorway to liberation (Viv 138).

A *Khēcarīvidyā* passage articulates the literal control over death, popularly understood as ‘going to the five elements’ (*pañcatva*), that involves *kuṇḍalinī*. As discussed in the last chapter, if the yogi wishes to cheat death, he should imagine *kuṇḍalinī* devouring the *jīva* (KhV 3.38-40), raise *kuṇḍalinī* above the bolt of *brahman* until the time of death has passed and then lead her back to the base centre (KhV 3.44-48). The process of yogic suicide is thus initiated by *kuṇḍalinī* consuming and the unification of *śiva* and the goddess. The result of raising *kuṇḍalinī* is control over the process of leaving the body at the time of death (*utkrānti*) or avoiding death in order to remain in the body.<sup>224</sup>

If the supremely content [yogin] desires to abandon [his] mortal body then he should unite with Śiva, who is in the place of Brahmā, with the goddess, pierce the void, and enter the rock of Brahmā. He should place the ether element in the great ether, the air element in the great wind, the fire element in the great fire, the water element in the great ocean, the earth element in the earth, the mind in the supportless space [and] his sense-organs in the elements from ether to *prakṛti*. Thus abandoning transmigratory [existence and] dependent only on the ultimate reality, untouched by the five elements, the mind and the sense-organs, [the yogin] breaks the orb of the sun and, absorbed in Śiva, [who is] the serene abode of the ultimate reality, he becomes like Śiva. Not in ten billion aeons will he return again. If for the good of the universe he does not abandon [his] body, then he abandons it at the end of the dissolution of the universe and abides only in his own self. (KhV 3.48-55) (Mallinson 2007:133)

Awakening *kuṇḍalinī* enables this inserting of the elements into their cosmic correlates. Thus, the yogi develops power over the most intractable of physiological functions: the inevitability of death. In this practice and in the examples from the *Dattātreyaśāstra* and *Vivekamārtaṇḍa kuṇḍalinī* accompanies these practices of fixation and mastery of the

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<sup>224</sup> As noted in the *Vivekamārtaṇḍa kuṇḍalinī* grants liberation to yogis and is the key of force that pierces the door of liberation (Viv 35). In the *Vasiṣṭhasaṃhitā* the practice of *kuṇḍalinī* culminates in the option to cast off the body (VS 3.56).



elements. *Dhāraṇā* is not a technique to awaken *kuṇḍalinī*. The association is more amorphous. *Kuṇḍalinī* is associated in a causal chronological but not immediately linked. Her involvement is more fundamental if we can ascribe across the corpus the *Haṭhapradīpikā*'s statement that she is the support of all practices.

### **Conclusion**

From her *śaiva* origins *kuṇḍalinī* is adapted to the physical practices of the *haṭha* corpus and develops within that corpus. In earlier sources *kuṇḍalinī* is expressed as a blockage that must be removed for *prāṇa* to enter the central channel. Latterly she herself is raised up. Her explanatory power increases to encompass the whole paradigm of *haṭha* yoga. Half the *haṭha* corpus foregrounds *kuṇḍalinī* as eightfold but does not explain its designation of *kuṇḍalinī* as the eightfold *prakṛti*. This appears to relate to the city of eight (*puryaṣṭaka*) with the eight referring to the five elements (*tattvas*) and cognitive faculties (*buddhi*, *ahaṃkara* and *manas*). *Kuṇḍalinī* has material nature as *tattvas* and *puryaṣṭaka*—derived from her genealogy as *prakṛti*, *māyā* and *śakti*—and is materially identical with the body. Though she may appear esoteric and culturally niche *kuṇḍalinī* serves a material bodily purpose. As *pralayatrix* she is the mode through which the body is undone. Alongside the techniques catalogued in the previous chapter a key practice in the *haṭha* sources is fixation on the elements (*dhāraṇā*). This is tangentially related to *kuṇḍalinī* as charted in the *Dattātreyayogaśāstra*, *Vivekamārtaṇḍa*, *Vāsiṣṭhasamhitā* and *Khecarīvidyā*. *Dhāraṇā* indicates concrete techniques to manipulate the elements—variously through fixation, dissolution and involution.

What explanatory value does the heuristic device of *pralayatrix* hold? It points to both the creation and dissolution that *kuṇḍalinī* encompasses. The tension that the *pralayatrix* concept encapsulates is juxtaposition of fierce (*ugra*) and gentle (*saumya*) applied in goddess

schematics.<sup>225</sup> The *ugra* characteristics of *kuṇḍalinī* include her associations with consuming, violence and death, though she does not deliver the violence and death. The *saumya* characteristics include the production of nourishing elixirs and the experience of bliss. *Rajas* is associated with heat as is *kuṇḍalinī*. *Kuṇḍalinī* becomes hot in the process of awakening, yet she consumes nectar and is occasionally named *amṛtakuṇḍalinī*,<sup>226</sup> encompassing the primordial dualism of *agni* and *soma*, to extend the argument developed by Wujastyk (2003b) to encompass *kuṇḍalinī*. In the *Khecarīvidyā* reversal of embryology she is similar to the way I have characterised the *rajas* model as reversing embryology.

The *pralayatrix* concept frames the themes that I drew out from the *śaiva* materials: the materiality of *kuṇḍalinī* associated with the number eight, alphabetic sonic cosmogony (and dissolution—*nādānusandhāna* is dissolution into sound in the *Haṭhapradīpikā*),<sup>227</sup> and embryology and motherhood. These themes give substance to the core endeavour of this thesis, that of understanding the body presented in the *haṭha* corpus such that *haṭha* yoga works. The *pralayatrix* concept helps to enunciate a principle that I see more broadly in the corpus, that the function of *haṭha*—or *laya*—is to involute or reverse bodily processes. This engenders a power over the body and the cosmos but not abandonment of the body or dissolution as the highest objective. Becoming sovereign over these processes—as the *rāja* yogi—appears more important than surrendering to them. However, re-use of earlier materials is not marked by systematic exegesis or homogeneity across the sources.

The awakening of *kuṇḍalinī* articulates the bodily dialectic of insentient materiality (*jāḍya*) and aroused divinity yet also moves beyond this dialectic. The insentience and

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<sup>225</sup> For studies that explain and deploy such schematics in various contexts see Kaimal (2013:105), Flueckiger (2013), Knipe (2001), Michaels, Vogelsanger and Wilke (1996).

<sup>226</sup> *Tantrasadbhāva* (fol. 7a line 3), quoted in Jayaratha's commentary on *Tantrāloka* 3.67 and by Kṣemarāja on *Śivasūtra* 2.3 (Padoux 1990:128); *Kubjikāmatatantra* 5.131c-132b. In the *Kubjikāmatatantra* 1.78 the *amṛtakuṇḍalinī* strives to punish the god for his arrogance; the *Yoginīhrdayadīpikā* knows of two *kuṇḍalinīs*: the nectarine and the fiery, who strive respectively downwards and upwards (*Yoginīhrdayadīpikā* on *Yoginīhrdaya* 3.86cd, *Yoginīhrdayadīpikā* 1.64) (Padoux 1994:163, 309; Goudriaan in Brunner et al 2000:136).

<sup>227</sup> The oldest manuscript omits *nādānusandhāna* but is taught HP 4.65-105 in Kaivalyadhama. Dissolution occurs at 4.89 and 4.100.

materiality of the sleeping *kuṇḍalinī* as *śakti* and *prakṛti* corresponds to the insentience of the *saṃsāric* body. The awakened *kuṇḍalinī* corresponds to the sovereign body unlimited by the constraints of *saṃsāra*. The dissolution of *kuṇḍalinī* and body undo the parameters of mundane versus divine by stepping outside the cosmic and bodily constraints of *saṃsāra* to deliver a sovereignty over all as hinted at in the *Khecarīvidyā* (and drawn together in the overall conclusion to the dissertation).

The discussion in this chapter is framed by *kuṇḍalinī*'s nature as creative and destructive mother principle functioning on an individual or microcosmological plane. This analysis highlights the imbrication of *haṭha* and *laya* yoga and points to the limitation of referring to that corpus, as I have done, as the *haṭha* corpus. Nevertheless within this corpus *kuṇḍalinī* is forcefully awakened and functions like a key of force. Finally, and connecting *kuṇḍalinī* with the foregoing discussion of *rajas* and embryology, there are entanglements between the undoing of creation and the reversal of embryology. *Kuṇḍalinī* as mother in the *śaiva* sources connects *kuṇḍalinī* and *rajas*.

There is a tension with the *pralayatrix* concept and sources in which *kuṇḍalinī* unites with *śiva*. The unification of *śiva* and *kuṇḍalinī* is better accounted for within the anti-natal paradigm than the *pralayatrix*, though they are similar: one a reversal of procreation and the other a dissolution of creation. However, *kuṇḍalinī* dissolves into *śiva* (GŚ 74-76) en route to *pralaya*.<sup>228</sup> Perhaps these apparent tensions are not contradictions at all but are contained within the concept of the *pralayatrix*. The *pralayatrix* is not solely destructive and fierce but includes emergence as well as dissolution, *saumya* as well as *ugra*. The *pralayatrix* concept is a provisional heuristic device; my intention with pursuing this inquiry is to understand the

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<sup>228</sup> I have chosen to foreground *kuṇḍalinī* over discussion of *puruṣa* or *śiva*. This does not imply the *haṭha* sources inherit a predominately *śākta* genealogy.

bodily function of *kuṇḍalinī* within a tradition that understands the body as material and physical techniques as efficacious.

At stake here is an attempt to recover *kuṇḍalinī* from only being analysed as experiential (as I did in chapter five) or transcendent (as I have tried to avoid). The easy option is to see *kuṇḍalinī* as a yogic body component that mediates between body and mind or transcends body. Digging into her nature as described in the sources brings to the fore her materiality grounded in the body, and the medico-cosmogonic reversal of cosmogony and procreation that is liberation. *Kuṇḍalinī* effects the central purpose of *haṭha* yoga which is to interrupt the process of aging and death. This is not brought about through the rejection of the body, the rendering of the body inconsequential to a cerebral transcendence. Rather the body is the vehicle, the crucible, and *kuṇḍalinī* is that vibrant matter of the body that thwarts the dictates of time and death.

## Conclusion

### *Bodily sovereignty*

[*Lopāmudrā*:] ‘Desire has come upon me for the bull that roars and is held back,  
desire engulfing me from this side, that side, all sides.’

[*The poet*:] *Lopāmudrā* draws out the virile bull: the foolish woman sucks dry the  
panting wise man.

[*Agastya*:] ‘By this soma which I have drunk, in my innermost heart I say: Let him  
forgive us if we have sinned, for a mortal is full of many desires.’

*Ṛgveda* 1.179 (Doniger 2005:251)

In the *Ṛgveda* sexual fluids are presented in zero sum terms: procreative or liberative.

*Lopāmudrā*’s ascetic husband drinks *soma* after she persuades him to engage in procreative sex to replace the ‘protean fluid that, in its human form, has just been ‘sucked’ from him’ (Doniger 2005:250). The ascetic versus procreative dialectic also frames the erotic play of Śiva and Parvatī with the erotic ascetic refusing to release his seed. Parvatī’s asceticism is recounted in erotic mode in Kālidāsa’s *Kumārasambhava*.<sup>229</sup> Closer to *haṭha* yoga, the founders Matsyendra and Dattātreyā are associated with sex in negative and positive ways respectively—Matsyendra represented as ‘ensnared’ in the land of women until Gorakṣa saves him<sup>230</sup> but Dattātreyā willingly engaged.<sup>231</sup> These hagiographies foreground sex and procreation. Combative and fatal sex is told in the story of Bahuḍī and Kāṅhapa in the *Līlācaritra*.<sup>232</sup>

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<sup>229</sup> See Smith (2005) and Tubb (1984) and as studied at length in various publications by Doniger, particularly *Śiva: the erotic ascetic* (1981) published under O’Flaherty.

<sup>230</sup> See Muñoz (2011) and Ondračka (2011).

<sup>231</sup> Such as in *Mārkaṇḍeyapurāna adhyāsa* 36-40. See Rigopoulos (1998) for a history of Dattātreyā across religious traditions.

<sup>232</sup> Recounted also in the earlier Buddhist songs of *Caryapāda* by Kukkuripa.

The yogi Kāṇhapa travels to the forest of the *yoginī* Bahudī and demands a coconut in the thirteenth-century *Līlācaritra* 197. Enraged by her refusal he plucks a coconut with just his gaze. The powerful Bahudī returns it to the tree with her gaze. This continues equally matched until they agree to fight with their bodies in sexual combat. An adept at *ūrdhvaretas*, Kāṇhapa allows his semen to go downwards before drawing up their combined sexual fluid, leaving Bahudī weakened. Bahudī is advised by her preceptor Kāmākhyā to place a diamond in her vagina. In another round of the sexual competition Kāṇhapa sucks up the diamond which reaches his *brahmāṇḍa* and ends his life.<sup>233</sup> Bankar concludes his study with the instructions of Kāmākhyā to Bahudī: ‘hold (*hira*) in the hole during sexual intercourse and win!’ *Hira* means diamond (*vajra*) (Bankar unpublished:16). The tale of Bahudī vividly and lethally illustrates through vernacular song and iconographic representations<sup>234</sup> the *vajrolī* technique as taught in the *haṭha* corpus. Bahudī’s accomplishment in *vajrolī*, though she too is ultimately defeated, demonstrates both the cultural pervasion of the practices considered here only in their textual forms and the existence of a skilled female practitioner.

This study opened with the premise that bodies matter and bodies are matter. The defining principle of the *haṭha* corpus is that physical bodily practices generate power and liberation. The early *haṭha* period sees the emergence of a corpus that innovates teachings on physical yoga based on remarkably simple soteriological systems. I posed the question, what is the understanding of the body such that *haṭha* yoga is efficacious? I discussed this question through three paradigms of the body. I focused on the materiality of the body, avoided disaggregating the ‘yogic body’ from the body, and foregrounded social outcomes as well as soteriological.

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<sup>233</sup> Thanks to Mallinson and Bankar for sharing unpublished draft translations of *Līlācaritra* 197.

<sup>234</sup> See Bankar (2019) for iconography at a Viṣṇu temple in Palasdeva, Pune; Kaṅkāleśvara temple, Beed; cave no. 14 Panhāle Kājī, Ratnagiri; two carvings at the Mahudī Gate, Dabhoi, Vadodara; and at Jabareśvara temple, Phaltan, Satara.

In chapter one I analysed articulations of the body. I included the principles that inform the understanding of the body and the paradigms of the body whereby the practitioner gains power over and inverts the otherwise ‘natural laws’ or saṃsāric constraints of embodiment. The key finding of chapter two was that baking the body digests and purifies the constituents of the body on the model of *tapas*, but without the earlier ascetic paradigm’s paradox of *kāma* destroying *tapas*: here the practitioner can have both. Through chapters three and four and the *rajas-bindu* model the yogi controls conception and reverses embryology, against the backdrop of an implicit anti-natalism and in the context of a prosaic approach to sex. Chapter five set out how *kuṇḍalinī* is a modality of internalising and experiencing sexual affect—usually without a human sexual partner—in the context of prosaic sexuality. Chapter six proposed that *kuṇḍalinī* functions as bodily *pralayatrix*, generating power over the saṃsāric constraints of the body and cosmos, including their dissolution.

Attendant upon these discussions of the body have been articulations of power: power over the body and, indeed, power over the bodies of others and the cosmos. I now bring these threads together to consider first sovereignty over the bodies of others and then the sovereign masculinity of the ascetic body. Finally, I step back to reflect on the method undertaken here and opportunities to extend this study.

### ***Sovereignty over the bodies of others***

*Haṭha* yoga is a mode through which the practitioner develops sovereignty, with implications for the literature on *rāja* yoga. *Haṭha* yoga is partly modelled on controlling reproduction. The vedic material on baking the body points to the vedic sacrifice as embryonic rebirth with the heat of *tapas* as gestative (chapter two). Chapters three and four argued *haṭha* yoga interiorises embryology as a method for attaining power over reproduction. This works in two ways: to reduce the chance of conception and to generate a yogic interiorisation of

embryology. The outcome is that the physiological process of reproduction is controlled both socially and soteriologically. The possible reduction in the likelihood of conception contributes to an ascetic sovereign masculinity. The chapters on *kuṇḍalinī* sidestep, perhaps deliberately, the possibility of procreation by internalising a process that is genealogically sexual and phenomenologically affective. Placing these sources alongside courtly literature on bodily control and sexual charisma adds a layer to scholarly understandings of *rāja* yoga, the yoga of kings. Ascetic sovereignty is predicated on techniques of *bindudhāraṇa* and non-conceptual sex. This is not to say that the texts uniformly advocate sex—they do not—or that historical practitioners were licentious. Certainly, contemporary practitioners are not (Bouillier 2016:301-2). Nevertheless, this framework enables an ascetic sovereignty in accordance with the dictum that freedom (*mukti*) is attained though pleasure (*bhukti*) has been enjoyed.

This ascetic sovereignty grants the possibility of an ascetic empowered within society rather than only when turned away from society—whether this engagement is understood as sexual activity or not. The sources describe the practitioner as becoming charismatic to others, as attractive to women both real and divine. This could be rhetorical, aiming to attract adherents, but another framing is possible. Ali has shown how sexual culture at court is predicated on drawing or attracting (*ākaraṣana*) people into one's orb of influence (2002). I see that narrative at play in the *haṭha* sources. Reading the *haṭha* corpus alongside courtly literature brings new subtlety to the understanding of kingly or *rāja* yoga. *Rāja* yoga, according to the stratification of the *Haṭhapradīpikā*, is predicated on success in *haṭha* yoga—so sovereignty is grounded in control over the production and reproduction of the body.

The *Amṛtasiddhi* presents the yogi as an ecology of beings. The yogi consists of all beings, is worshipped by all, saves people when happy and removes their accomplishments when angry (AS 30.9-10). Given this dissertation argues that yoga develops control over



one's own body and cosmos, how is the body of yogi described in relation to others? This question is important: rather than dismiss comments such as attracting and subduing people and animals as tropes or hyperbole, I argue they indicate something of the social implications of the practice. This question relates to the concept of *rāja* or kingly yoga and contributes to the ongoing scholarly debate on *rāja* yoga by bringing in the social or more precisely the interpersonal.

The primary sources predominately present *rāja* yoga as sovereignty of the yogi's own self achieved through meditation. Much scholarship also focuses on the ascetic and solitary dimension of yoga, such as the *nivṛtti* path.<sup>235</sup> Some yoga scholarship looks at the political and social context of yoga.<sup>236</sup> There is a weighty literature on discourses and technologies of power.<sup>237</sup> Yoga, in some contexts, is power (*yogabala*). In the *Mahābhārata*, yoga is a glorious power through which the yogi becomes mightier than the gods and can burn up the entire universe (*Mahābhārata* 12.289.20-21, 24-29b) (Mallinson and Singleton 2017:369-370). In particular, I draw on Ali's 2002 article 'Anxieties of Attachment' to frame this discussion of social sovereignty. This charts courtly life and the importance of attracting courtiers and lovers, a political and seductive charisma (2002:122) to be developed without loss of self-control. His analysis combines the intoxicating interactions of public, political and ascetic power, themes that cross over into the *hatha* sources.<sup>238</sup> The *hatha* corpus discusses

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<sup>235</sup> Flood (2004) focuses on asceticism across religions and Dhand (2008) explores asceticism (*nivṛtti*) and socially oriented religious action (*pravṛtti*) in the *Mahābhārata*.

<sup>236</sup> Such as Mallinson for the historical period (forthcoming, 2020 and 2019), Sanderson for *śaiva* precursors (2009, 1988) and Bouillier for contemporary lineages (2016). Novetzke and Kale are theorizing the yoga of power: yoga as political thought and practice (2023).

<sup>237</sup> Theorists of power include such dominant figures as Kauṭilya's early first millennium *Arthaśāstra* (see Olivelle 2013), Foucault (1979, 1978) and Bourdieu (1977) and applied in the field of South Asian studies scholars such as Alter (2011) and in the yoga-allied field of *bhakti* see the contributions in Hawley, Novetzke and Sharma (2019). Flood follows Valantasis to see ascetic power as the capacity to change and the capacity to affect the environment in which change is produced (Flood 2002:99; Valantasis 1995:793).

<sup>238</sup> *Hatha* sources are not overtly concerned with polity or governance beyond recommending the yogi practice in a peaceful polity. In yoga texts very broadly references to the world or triple world, that I am taking as cosmos, can encompass many levels: the immediate local environment of the practitioner, the polity or government of the region, the earth as goddess, for example as *pṛthivī*, the triple world (*trailokya*) and the cosmos as elemental and in a temporal cyclic structure of emergence and dissolution.

power and sovereignty in terms such as *aiśvarya*, *siddhi*, *rāja* and *yogīśvara*. Though the sources largely note that liberation can be attained though pleasure has been enjoyed there is an ambivalence over the development of sexual charisma. The *Dattātreyaśāstra* warns of the danger to the yogi's practice of his increasing beauty—that women will be overcome and want to have sex with him—and if he succumbs (like Agastya) his lifespan will be diminished, and he becomes weak (DYŚ 83cd-87ab).

I have demonstrated that the implications of yoga in the *bindu-rajās* and *kuṇḍalinī* modalities are non-procreative sex or an inner experience of (sexual) affect. Here I extend the argument that bodily sovereignty delivers social or interpersonal sovereignty: control of one's own body delivers control over the bodies of others. This is an important contextual frame for understanding *rāja* yoga as more than merely spiritual sovereignty. *Rāja* should be understood as bodily, cosmic and social or interpersonal sovereignty.

Two examples indicate the practitioner's control of his body. We saw the *Yogabīja* define the mighty body of yoga (*yogadeha mahābala*) as victory by the yogi over his own body. This is contrasted with other people who are defeated by their bodies (YB 44-48). The practitioner 'conquers' their body thereby achieving power over the body. The practitioner still has a body, but it is no longer constrained by the normal rules of materiality, causality, time, etc. The shape-shifting yogi becomes a creator, more powerful than the gods (YB 125). The great yogi becomes a god, creator of all, autonomous, with all forms—a *jīvanmukta* (YB 127). This fabulous description stands in evocative contrast with other people who are controlled by their bodies—as lumps of flesh. The *Dattātreyaśāstra* notes the yogi can cast off his body if he wishes (DYŚ 126) and dissolve his self into *brahman* (DYŚ 127ab). Or, if his body is dear to him (*svaśarīraṃ yadi priyam*) he should wander the worlds endowed with *siddhis* (127cd-128ab). He might even become a god and wander about in heaven (DYŚ 128cd). The yogi can shapeshift, becoming instantaneously a man, *yakṣa* or an animal such as a lion, a tiger, an

elephant or a horse (DYŚ 129). These examples from the *Yogabīja* and *Dattātreyayogaśāstra* indicate power over the body.

Two examples demonstrate the yogi gaining control over the bodies of others. The most systematic account of the practitioner developing control over ever greater domains of influence is set out in the *Śivasamhitā*, where it is a result of mantra practice:

At the sight of the practitioner who repeats it one lakh times with his senses subdued, women tremble and become sick with love. They fall shameless and without fear before the practitioner.

Repeated two lakh times, it makes men living in the region come as if to a place of pilgrimage, abandoning their families and possessions. They give him all their property and are under his power.

And when it is repeated three lakh times, all the district governors are sure to be subjugated, together with their districts. With six lakh repetitions, the king is subjugated, together with his dependents, his troops, and his vehicles.

With twelve lakh repetitions, yakshas, rakshasas, and great snakes all come under his control and do his bidding forever.

When it is repeated fifteen lakh times, adepts and sorcerers, together with gandharvas, apsarases, and ganas, are sure to come under the control of the wise master practitioner. Long-distance hearing, clairvoyance, and omniscience arise.

And with eighteen lakh repetitions, using this body the practitioner leaves the ground and rises up. He gets a divine body, wanders freely about the universe, and sees the earth in its perfect entirety.

With twenty-eight lakh repetitions, the practitioner becomes the lord of the sorcerers, wise, able to assume any form he wishes, and very powerful.

And with thirty lakh repetitions, he becomes equal to Brahma and Vishnu. With sixty lakh, he attains the state of Rudra. With eighty, he becomes the principle of Shakti.

With one crore repetitions, the great yogi is absorbed into the Absolute. The practitioner becomes a yogi of great rarity in the three worlds. (*Śivasamhitā* ŚS 5.242-251) (Mallinson 2007:163-166)

The *Śivasamhitā* comes from a *śaktā śrīvidyā* context and is more influenced by ‘love magic’ than other early *haṭha* sources. While the *Śivasamhitā*’s expanding domains of sovereignty—from sexual attraction to political appeal to divinity—are satisfyingly systematic, the

scattering of attainments (*siddhis*) in the rest of the corpus is less so.<sup>239</sup> However, the *Śivasamhitā* does not situate this control of bodies as an outcome of the yogi's control over his own body but mantra practice.

The *Amaraughā* associates *rāja* yoga with accomplishments that include power over others. Early in the text it asserts that without *rāja* yoga a mantra cannot cause the attainment of, among other things, the six magical acts, which in other sources include killing others (Am 5). The *Amaraughā* dismisses mantra practice because it does not deliver sovereignty, sex and control of animals and people:

One devoted to [reciting] mantras would never obtain śivahood and sovereignty; one meditating every day does not obtain even the first union with divine women, and a *haṭhayogī* cannot control cow elephants, horses, bull elephants, camels, givers of gruel and givers of cows without the serenity of [*Rājayoga*]. (*Amaraughā* 6) (Birch 2023)

Towards the end of the 46-verse short recension the yogi is described as a creator and destroyer and an equal to god (Am 42). I have used these examples from the *Śivasamhitā* and the *Amaraughā* to make the point about developing power over the bodies of others.

Acquiring a partner for sex is a specific example of such power relations. As noted in chapter four, the *Dattātreyayogaśāstra* and *Haṭhapradīpikā* name the *vaśavartinī* as the type of woman the yogi should acquire to practice *vajrolī*-sex with. She is more likely to be under the control of the yogi than independent (DYŚ 153-154, HP 3.83). This is not necessarily forceful or against her will—indeed she is said to experience pleasure in the procedure (DYŚ 159).<sup>240</sup>

The ultimate example of controlling people's bodies is taking them over. A key technique for attaining liberation is yogic suicide (*utkrānti*), involving propelling the yogi's vital force out of the head. This usually results in bodiless liberation (*videhamukti*). However, a corollary

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<sup>239</sup> See *Khecarīvidyā* 2.10-18 for a classic though not necessarily unsystematic list of *siddhis* including the ability to assume any form at will (*kāmarūpa*), *jīvanmukti* and becoming like Śiva.

<sup>240</sup> See footnote in chapter four on *vaśavartinī* and Langenberg (forthcoming) for an analysis of consent in Buddhist *vinaya*.

of *utkrānti* is ‘entering another’s body’ (*parakāyapraveśa*)—the projection of the life force of the yogi from his own body to, usually, a dead body—and sometimes a living body.<sup>241</sup> There are references to *parakāyapraveśa* in the *haṭha* corpus. Once in the *Amṛtasiddhi* and twice in the *Śivasamhitā*, the ability occurs in a list of attainments (AS 29.1, ŚS 3.60-61, ŚS 5.111).<sup>242</sup> In the *Amṛtasiddhi* this ability arises alongside power over the arrangement of the body thus linking power over one’s own body and the bodies of others. Nowhere is *parakāyapraveśa* taught as a standalone practice or assessed from an ethical standpoint. Although this is the most extreme bodily control of another it is not a significant feature of the sources.

If the examples of sex and pleasure can be framed as ‘freedom to’ experience pleasure, the yogi’s sovereignty can be analysed as ‘freedom from’ violence or harm caused by other people.<sup>243</sup> The question of violence or coercion has been raised in many of the chapters. The management of social conflict is not the concern of the sources. Yet freedom from violence meted out by others is touched upon. In its discussion of fixation on the elements in the *Dattātreya yogaśāstra* the practitioner becomes free from harm from those elements. If the yogi has premonitory knowledge of a calamity that is to be befall him caused by one of the five elements, he should perform fixation on that element, as a result of which it cannot harm him, and he will not die (DYŚ 111-123). Here the possibility of injury is from an element rather than another person. In the *Yogabīja* as a result of the destruction of ego (*ahaṃkāra*) there is no suffering from water, fire or the stroke of a sword (YB 40-41). While fire and water are naturally arising, a sword is wielded by a person—it is a social, or anti-social—interaction. In the *Khecarīvidyā* by drinking *amṛta* the yogi becomes impervious to attacks by

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<sup>241</sup> In the *Śaṅkaradigvijaya* 9.101-9 Śaṅkara enters the body of the dead king Amaruka in order to gain sexual knowledge and win a debate; and Sulabhā enters Janaka’s alive body to teach him—and leaves again, see Ram-Prasad (2018) and Vanita (2003).

<sup>242</sup> AS 29.1 uses the term *parapurapraveśana*, ŚS 3.60 the term *parakāyapraveśana* and ŚS 5.111 the term *paradehapraveśana*.

<sup>243</sup> Note that Birch uses this analytic of freedom from and freedom to in his article on *jīvanmukti* (2020). Flood too discusses ‘freedom from’ as freedom from restriction, such as the karmic drive (Flood 2004:14).

cutting weapons and unyielding to hostile magic (KhV 2.28-29). In the *Haṭhapradīpikā* the yogi can ward off armed assault (HP 3.47) and having attained *samādhi* is not consumed by death, bound by *karma*, nor subdued by anybody (HP 4.108).<sup>244</sup>

Though ubiquitous in many theologies, the ethical restraint (*yama*) of non-harm (*ahiṃsā*) occurs sparingly in the early corpus (DYS 33, VS 1.39-40 and 1.52, HP 1.38). *Contra* the *Bhagavadgītā* nowhere is the yogi told to take arms. But the yogi does receive the dispensation to live without rules in general (DYS 152, 179, ŚS 4.92-94, 5.260, HP 3.82). Through the practice of *vajrolīmudrā* in the *Dattātreyayogaśāstra* and *Haṭhapradīpikā* the practitioner can live without the restraints of *yama* and *niyama*. This may merely refer to celibacy (*brahmacarya*) as the context is sexual practice. It is clear these texts are not overly concerned to dictate ethical behaviours and that they do not speak to a martial context.<sup>245</sup> Yet freedom from harm by others does emerge as a concern.

In sum, the practitioner who gains mastery of their own body to an extent develops control over the bodies of others. This is evident in examples from the sources on sexual charisma, gaining patrons, controlling men, controlling animals—and assuming the form of animals. The female partner in *vajrolī*, the *vaśavartinī*, is likely under the control of the yogi. Taking over the bodies of others (*parakāyapraveśa*) is not recommended but the technique of *utkrānti* equips the yoga with similar power. Freedom from harm does emerge as a reason to undertake certain practices and as a consequence of undertaking others. This material sheds light on the social or interpersonal relationships between practitioner and those who come into their sphere of bodily influence.

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<sup>244</sup> This verse is not included in the SOAS-Marburg critical edition and the verse number refers to the Kaivalyadhama edition. The critical edition includes this verse within the *Jyotsnā* commentary on HP 2.40 and HP 3.36\*1, in relation to *khecarī*, has a similar construction without the reference to being mastered (*sādhyate*) by someone.

<sup>245</sup> See Pinch (2006) for the rise, and eventual fall, of warrior ascetics from 1500.

I suggest the yogi's ability to control the bodies of others is more than hyperbole or propaganda. This power results from (bodily) progress in yoga and operates on the bodily domain of others. This is especially so not just in relation to sexual charisma but to non-conception when sex is practiced. Ali has shown how sexual culture at court is predicated on drawing or attracting (*ākarṣana*) people into one's orb of influence while remaining unattached oneself. I see that model at play in the *haṭha* sources. This nuances an understanding of kingly or *rāja* yoga. *Rāja* yoga is, among many things, about mastering the bodies of others.

### ***Bodily sovereignty: masculinity***

Reading for women is reading against the grain. My initial urge to search for women in the early *haṭha* period was rapidly quenched by the lack of references to women. Even so, by orienting this study to descriptions of the body in these sources my research findings are significant for the bodies of women in terms of reproductive outputs. Ritual sex seems to be preferred at non-procreative stages of the menstrual cycle (chapter three) and raising *rajas*, if on the model of *nūdan*, may have resulted in voluntary amenorrhea (chapter four). I specifically eschew attempting to divine agency for women in these sources alongside resisting asserting subjectivity for women. The most these phallogocentric sources allow is the recovery of the bodies of women via their menstrual blood and sexual fluid, and (anti-) reproductive outcomes. Controlling reproduction may have been socially and soteriological liberative for women.

Reading for men and masculinity reads with the grain. The sources themselves centre the male ascetic. By reading the male body too through the lens of anti-natalism we recover a sovereign masculinity that is stubbornly non-procreative at least in ideal form. Mallinson in his, 'seminal' article on yoga and sex (2018) draws together textual, ethnographic,

experiential and medical material on *vajrolīmudrā*. He argues the practice would reduce the likelihood of ejaculation by desensitizing the verumontanum (2018:194) and focuses on *vajrolī* as a technique within a celibate context rather than a technique to enable sex without conception. But the sources are not reticent about the yogi's sexual charisma as we have seen above (HP 3.47). Unlike later colonial constructions of masculinity (Alter 2004:497; King 1999:113; Krishnaswamy 1998; Sinha 1995),<sup>246</sup> the physical body and sexual attractiveness of the yogi are not presented as effeminate. Instead, the markers of success in *bindudhāraṇa* are among other things a perfect body and sexual attractiveness. For example, the accomplished yogi in the *Amṛtasiddhi* can enter *samādhi* at will and is compared to the romantic heroes Nala and Bhīma (AS 30.4). Throughout the corpus the practitioner develops a divine body and looks like Kandarpa the god of love (DYŚ 83cd). The yogi becomes sixteen years old (HP 2.47), the archetypal age for sexual perfection, a second god of love, Kāmadeva (HP 2.54), and attracts (*ākaraṣana*) *siddha* women (HP 3.49). *Siddha* women also become attracted to the yogi in the *Vivekamārtaṇḍa* (Viv 128). As noted, the *Dattātreya yogaśāstra* warns of the danger to the yogi's practice of his increasing beauty because women will want to have sex with him. In the *Śivasamhitā* all beautiful women become besotted with and adore the man who regularly meditates upon the internal *svadhiṣṭhāna* lotus (ŚS 5.104). From the perspective of the compilers the yogi is irresistible.

What are the implications for masculinity and soteriology? Does this material merely reflect social constructions of beauty or serve as propaganda to secure practitioners? Is there something more fundamental, related to the praxis and function of *haṭha* yoga? I believe that perfection of the body is key to the embodied liberation taught in the corpus, as opposed to emaciation or rejection of the body for a transcendent liberation. Underlining this exploration

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<sup>246</sup> Yoga itself develops within and in response to this colonial narrative. Black sets out how yoga is available as an anti-colonial resource to produce indigenous masculinity through the figures of Aurobindu, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), Savarkar and, in opposing terms, Gandhi (Black 2020:14).



is both an interiorization of sexual affect and a prosaic attitude to real-world sex: once established in semen-retention (*bindudhāraṇa*) it is irrelevant to their soteriological objectives whether practitioners have sexual relations. Are the texts simply repeating the sexual ethics of the time and culture? There is a sense in the reception history of these ideas that yoga is moralistic about sex. I suggest abstinence is not ethical but practical. It is about soteriology.

In her work on the *Mahābhārata*, Dhand deploys the structural logics of on the one hand the ascetic ideology of *nivṛtti dharma* and on the other the social orientations of *pravṛtti dharma* to elucidate sexual ideology. She points out the frequent infractions of the former, the trope of sages failing in their celibacy (Dhand 2008). Key to asceticism, for Flood, is ‘the denial of reproduction and of sexuality’ which is the reversal of the flow of the body (Flood 2002:5). Biernacki, in ‘real men say no’, analyses representations of the ideal man (*maryāda puruṣottama*) in the person of Rāma. She argues that the masculine rejection of desire via restraint is an assertion of power (Biernacki 1:2012).

Yet the *haṭha* materials go beyond saying no. They innovate in detailing the techniques whereby the yogi maintains sovereignty, or *rāja* yoga, while saying yes. Birch roots an understanding of *rāja* yoga, the yoga of kings, in sources such as the *Amanaska* that reject the forceful techniques of *haṭha* yoga. He frames *rāja* yoga as meditation (Birch 2013). In his most recent work Mallinson (2024:24-26), building on Sanderson<sup>247</sup> and Bouillier,<sup>248</sup> situates his understanding of *rāja* yoga in ascetic monastic institutions where yogi kings have social and sexual relations and do procreate.<sup>249</sup> This problematises the analysis that *vajrolī* could contribute to contraception as some yogi kings do have families and hereditary lineages.

Between the 11<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries a wide range of monastic traditions in the Deccan

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<sup>247</sup> Sanderson describes how *śaiva maṭhādhipatis* from Bengal to Karnataka ruled as kings with royal titles and lion thrones (2009:260-272).

<sup>248</sup> Bouillier gives an account of yogis ascending to power as kingly, in the Kadri *rājā*'s enthronement (2016:126-163).

<sup>249</sup> The mode of succession at the Bhikṣāvṛtti *maṭha* at Srisailam was through inheritance and the king of Kadri paraded in the sixteenth century with his wife and children (Mallinson 2024:25).

and south India produced Sanskrit texts on physical yoga, each staking its claim to this newly emergent practice... The state and name of *rājayoga* reflect developments within the monastic traditions of the time, many of which had freed themselves from royal patronage and become powerful in their own right. (Mallinson 2024:24)

Mallinson details the titling of heads of monasteries as ‘king’ in Kadri, the site of composition of the *Amarauḡha*, in Srisailam, the possible site of composition of the *Haṭhapradīpika*, and in the Sringeri tradition (Mallinson 2024:25). Mallinson here shows the specificity in the time of composition of these sources what Proferes shows diffusely in the much earlier vedic period. For Proferes, ‘the language proper to the domain of kingship was gradually generalised and used to express aspirations towards freedom and self-determination that became progressively more mysterious in nature’ (Proferes 2007:1).<sup>250</sup>

I have foregrounded the sexual charisma of the perfect bodied ascetic (as has also been the focus of scholars in Buddhism).<sup>251</sup> It might appear that the preoccupation of the texts with semen retention (*bindu*) and the sublimation of sexual arousal (*kuṇḍalinī*) are fully accounted by a psycho-analytical explanation of anxiety over virility. A more specific genealogy is found in the body presented in the *haṭha* sources and its genealogy. A perfect body and sexual attractiveness are markers of success in yoga practice. They are aspects of a continuum of attainments that traverse freedom from disease, improvements in health and the generation of powers beyond the saṃsāric domain (*siddhis*). As such, a perfect body and sexual attractiveness are not touted as the purpose of the practice but side-products. Even so they are signifiers of desirable masculinity. The perfect man is one who has transcended gender and sexuality: it is an irrelevance. Sex may be engaged in, but it no longer drains the practitioner of ascetic power.

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<sup>250</sup> Proferes’ study of vedic ideals of sovereignty (2007) demonstrates the resonance of many of the themes explored in this thesis with the early vedic period. Linking with the *pāka* paradigm explored in chapter two he shows how ‘fire was used to symbolically express the understanding of sovereignty prevailing within the social and political constitution of the early Vedic period’ (Proferes 2007:35). This is combined with a universalising discourse that equates the centre of the polity with the centre of the cosmos (2007:75).

<sup>251</sup> Cf. specifically Powers (2009) and more generally Langenberg (2018) and Cabezón (2017, 1993).

### *Methodological reflections*

The method that has been deployed in preparing this thesis is triply comparative: placing passages from the early *haṭha* corpus beside one another, developing ‘models’ to support a thematic analysis, and testing these by a further level of comparison with antecedent literatures. I do not include comprehensive analysis of subsequent literatures due to the need to circumscribe my project but refer to later literature where this touches directly on the material analysed here. The objective of such comparison is most laudable: to understand texts, their contexts and the genealogy of the *haṭha* yoga body. The trouble with such an approach is one of categorisation: both the construction of categories (what I have termed models of the body) and the identification of similarities to and differences from these constructions with reference to intra- or extra-corporal comparison. The most significant critique I see to this methodology is the reification of a monolithic ur-body that not only flattens the heterogeneity of the sources but in so doing falls prey to the tendencies of scholarship that I critiqued at the outset: always reaching for earlier and more systematic accounts as somehow more archetypal and authentic. This urge is quite the opposite of the Hegelian drive for progress, rather a nostalgia for text as uncontaminated univocal expression of a single mind (to which the *Amṛtasiddhi* does come close).

I find the tendency to emphasise difference and antagonism between categories (such as between *śaivas* and *vaiṣṇavas* and between *śramaṇas* and *brahmaṇas*)<sup>252</sup> frustrating because it elides the vastly more frequent and compelling similarities. Yet by creating models of the body, I have done just this. This continues the colonial practice of dismembering (rather than disambiguating, for this adds very little to clarifying the matter) the body.<sup>253</sup>

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<sup>252</sup> I suggest Bronkhorst emphasises contrast and antagonism in *The Two Sources of Indian Asceticism* (1998) as many of those becoming *śramaṇas* were doing so from a brahmanical background.

<sup>253</sup> Khatun makes the connection between the two distinct historiographies, inaugurated in the late eighteenth century, of the focus on sex organs (Laqueur 1992) and the focus on text (Cohn 1996) as processes of

It is not only this thesis that disambiguates models of the body. I follow esteemed scholars in treating *kuṇḍalinī* and *bindu-rajas* (and *pāka* or the ascetic model) as different models of the yogic body with different sectarian genealogies:

‘[T]he Kuṇḍalinī model of the yogic body originates in early tantric traditions, and subsequently becomes assimilated into *haṭhayoga*... However, in the earliest expressions of *haṭhayoga* another, quite distinct, conception of the yogic body predominates. In this model, semen, known as *bindu* (lit. ‘drop’ or ‘point’), is returned to, and prevented from dripping from, its store in the head.’ (Mallinson and Singleton 2017:180)

The models I identify are entangled. *Pāka*, *kuṇḍalinī* and *bindu-rajas* appear to differ in a number of categories: terminology, physiological referent (whether medical or cosmological procreation, or interiorised sex and divinity, all of which of course overlap), technique, physiological and soteriological functions, and sociological implications. This entanglement is significant and is directly referenced in the sources as I have sought to highlight in the preceding discussions. Though I have developed different models and analysed them in different chapters I find a close association between the models particularly when gender is highlighted. Freiburger discusses the scope of the comparative method to tend toward difference or sameness (2019:55-77) and I hope to have emphasised similarity, consistency and complementarity. In relation to the quotation from Mallinson and Singleton, though *kuṇḍalinī* is absent in the *Amṛtasiddhi* the description of *madhyamā* supports her later inclusion. I do not see the raising of *kuṇḍalinī* as somehow in conflict with *bindudhāraṇa*, or a conflict between models that seek to maintain *bindu* in the head or draw it up to the head. I see the apparently scrappy, overlapping nature of the instructions and techniques as a strength of the systems, worthy of analysis and articulation; not deserving of erasure through the

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categorisation (Khatun SOAS gender studies lecture series Autumn 2019). Not only a lens for analysing colonial approaches to women, but dismemberment into sexual organs characterises female body parts in the vedic five fires sacrifice (see Black 2012) and Sati’s body (see Ramos 2017). Cf. Samuelson (2007) and Chatterji and Chaudhry (2012) for literal dismemberment in the colonial era.

positing of earlier systematism. Rather, what is problematic is the implication that there ever was some pure non-contaminated yogic body model that was simply *pāka*, *kuṇḍalinī* or *rajas-bindu*.

Freiberger discusses comparison as method.<sup>254</sup> The selection of the items for comparison are key ways in which the scholar ‘adds something new and innovative to the discourse’ (2019:103). I wish to emphasise complementarity and contiguity of models rather than to separate out one (or three) ur-body models.

Ernst summarises the tensions beautifully:

Once influence has been established, it is felt, one has said something of immense significance; the phenomenon has been explained - or rather, explained away. There is in addition an implicit evaluation in this kind of language. ‘Sources’ are ‘original’ while those ‘influenced’ by them are ‘derivative’. This kind of language contains so many problematic and subjective assumptions that it is hard to see how it helps clarify anything. I would like to argue that what the Germans call *Quellenforschung* (‘search for origins’) often misses the point by excluding or minimising the significance of an author’s interpretation of sources. As Wendy Doniger observes with respect to the study of myth, “The problem of diffusion is more basic than the mechanical complexities or political agendas of this sort of tale-tracking. For on the one hand, diffusion still fails to account for the particular genius of each telling”. (Ernst 2005:15)

Ernst and Doniger (1998:141) confirm for me the importance of context and of comparison.

They also point to a matter that could be improved in future research on this topic: further nuancing of the historical context and sectarian affiliation of the sources.

### ***Sectarian affiliation and doctrinal change***

The *haṭha* corpus is defined by teaching physical practice. As well as this overall innovation change occurs within the corpus. These changes relate to both physical practice and the models of the body upon which practice is based. The *Amṛtasiddhi* is itself marginal, arising in an outlier sect of *vajrayāna* (Mallinson 2016). Throughout this period there is a burgeoning

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<sup>254</sup> On comparison see also Patton and Ray (2000), Smith (1982) and Bakhtin (1986).

of literature on *haṭha* yoga and by the early fifteenth-century *Haṭhapradīpikā* physical practice is well established. Within these sources from the first half of the second millennium, sectarian affiliations both determine the reorientation of praxis and are themselves written out.

The early *haṭha* corpus contain sectarian identifiers and make universalising efforts. The *Dattātreyayogaśāstra* offers an especially clear such statement:

(41) Whether brahmin, ascetic (*śramaṇaḥ*), Buddhist, Jain (*ārḥataḥ*), Kāpālika or Cārvāka, the wise man endowed with conviction (*śraddhayā*) (42) who is constantly devoted to his practice obtains complete success. Success happens for he who engages in the activity [of yoga]. How could it happen for one who is not active [in yoga]? (43) Success in yoga does not arise merely by reading the scriptures. Shaven-headed or bearing a staff or wearing ochre robes (44) or saying “Nārāyaṇa” (*nārāyaṇavadah*), having matted hair, smearing one-self with ash or having “*namaḥ Śivāya*” as one’s sacred utterance or worshipping external images (*bāhyārcāpūjakaḥ*) (45) or marking oneself in the twelve places or adorning oneself with lots of rosaries: if one does not practise or is cruel, how is one to get success? (46) The wearing of religious garb does not bring success [in yoga], nor does talking about it. Practice alone is the cause of success. True, true is this, o Sāṃkr̥ti. (Mallinson 2024)

I wish to extrapolate an epistemological as well as methodological point from this statement and ask what it is that texts do. This is not without regard for what the analysis of sectarianism can reveal, for example in relation to sex: for non-*śaiva* sources teach ritual sex<sup>255</sup> and *śaiva* sources do not.<sup>256</sup> However, I have not analysed the sources for sectarian affiliation systematically throughout the thesis. Partly this is due to the aforementioned resistance to seeking the earliest instantiation of a practice that is somehow uncontaminated; partly this is

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<sup>255</sup> The sources that teach ritual sex in the context of *vajrolī* are the non-*śaiva* sources, though this does not include the *vajrayāna Amṛtasiddhi* which instead interiorises the union of *bindu* and *rajas*. The brahmanical *vaiṣṇava Vasiṣṭhasaṃhitā* also does not teach *vajrolī*-sex but neither does it teach celibacy. Instead, the sex that is condoned conforms to brahmanic orthodoxy on sex for procreation. While it does not teach *bindudhāraṇa* it does revere *ūrdhvaretas* (VS 6.14). The three sources that teach *vajrolī*-sex are the *Dattātreyayogaśāstra* (*vaiṣṇava* non-vedic), *Śivasamhitā* (*śrīvidyā vedāntin*) and *Haṭhapradīpikā* (proto-*vīraśaiva*). Though they teach sexual practice these sources teach the avoidance of women in the early stages of practice.

<sup>256</sup> The *śaiva*-oriented texts, those derived from *paścimāmnāya kaula* whether North or South Deccan, do not teach sexual practice: the *Amarauḡha*, *Goraḡṣaśataka*, *Vivekamārtanḡa*, *Yogabīja* or *Khecarīvidyā*. Though they do not teach *bindudhāraṇa* through *vajrolī*-sex they nevertheless inherit a commitment to the principle of maintaining *bindu* upwards, through *ūrdhvaretas* in the *Khecarīvidyā* (2.109) and for the *Yogabīja* *bindu* does not go down when the mind dissolves (YB 101). The *Amarauḡha* is less concerned to retain nectar in the head but rather focuses on flooding the body with nectar and defines *vajrolī* as when the mind is *sattva* and the breath flows in the central channel (Am 7).

due to a different orientation, that of analysing how texts speak to bodily contexts, or how bodies of words relate to bodies of flesh. For example, the analysis of *rajas* contributes physiological implications of ritual sex for women (and men): that of non-conception; and the descriptions of women reveal caste associations that suggest sexual availability. Beyond this, I believe the point being made by this statement in the *Dattātreyaśāstra* is about praxis: creed and code do not deliver the benefits of yoga, only bodily practice does, the outcomes of which are evident in the body of the practitioner (Am 45).

### *After lives*

In addition to the lack of consistent attention to the sectarian context of the sources there are other analytics that I have not emphasised. By focusing on the body, I have not focused on consciousness or the transcendent more broadly that is also important within these sources. This is evident for example in Advaita-influenced portions of some of the texts, such as *Vivekamārtaṇḍa* (Viv 164), *Śivasamhitā* (ŚS 1.53 and 1.61) and *Haṭhapradīpikā* (HP Kaivalyadhama 4.7, 4.58). Another analytic that I have not emphasised is the breath. Breath straddles the material and ethereal domains and is perhaps the key technique for desiccating the body and of *kuṇḍalinī* arousal. Indeed, in the *Mokṣopāya kuṇḍalinī* is the breath (*Mokṣopāya* 6.8.4.45). The chapter in the *Amṛtasiddhi* extolling the breath identifies just how central the breath is to the key topics examined here—the body, baking the body and procreation.<sup>257</sup> The moon, sun and fire form a cohesive triumvirate that merits further study. They may constitute stable signifiers that help clarify the genealogy of the body.

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<sup>257</sup> The breath is worshipped as the life force in living beings and consciousness in the embodied (AS 6.1) by whom activity occurs and the elements are controlled (AS 6.2). Breath is that which sustains the cosmos (worlds, oceans and realms) (AS 6.3) and the sages and planets (AS 6.4). In the same way that the breath is praised in external regions and orbits, the breath is the sole highest lord in the middle of bodies (AS 6.5) and there is no greater element than breath (AS 6.6). Functions analogous to procreation are attributed to *prāṇa* and *apāna* in their roles as bringing about creation and destruction, bestowing pleasure and pain, causing beings to grow and degenerate (AS 6.12) and the breaths are to be united (AS 6.13). As *bindu* is praised as the highest element in *Amṛtasiddhi* chapter seven so is breath in chapter six (AS 6.14). The key relationship between breath and fire is set out such that breath alone, without consciousness, increases *rasa* because it cooks grains etc. by

A theme that I may have emphasised, perhaps overly so, is sex and sexuality. I have focused on sex because this is a route into analysing the body and is the only context in which women appear in the sources.<sup>258</sup> There is a risk that this thesis contributes to the impression that yoga is all about sex—and if so, this would be incorrect. The *Amṛtasiddhi* states that one should recognise as unperfected the bodies of those who do not observe celibacy (AS 21.4) and this sentiment carries, with variation such as celibacy in the early stage of practice, through the sources. Sex is not, however, an overriding concern of the sources.

There are arguments within the thesis that I would like to explore more deeply, such as the single-sex implication of the descriptions of the body. In future work I would like to develop the emic *ugra* and *saumya* analyses of *kuṇḍalinī* as this could be productive for teasing out the implications of reverence and violence. Further questions remain in relation to ethnography. Ethnographies on Bāul communities do address ritual menstrual praxis (Hanssen 2006, 2002, Knight 2006) but researchers have not, to my knowledge, surveyed female renunciant (*sādhvī*) communities about menstrual practice. Scholars continue to research knowledge transmissions between India and China. However, much remains to be done, and further research in this area should illuminate the topics discussed in chapter four. Research projects combining skills in Sanskrit, Tibetan and Chinese are a *desideratum*.

This thesis is the first to study the body in early *haṭha* yoga through the lens of gender. The significance of the thesis is the close thematic interrogation of the early *haṭha* corpus with a resolute foregrounding of the material body. There are tensions in reading texts for bodily affects which I attempted through genealogies of antecedent literatures and taking the language of bliss and consumption to point directly to bodily experience. The theoretical propensity to a hermeneutics of trust opens up these sources as worlds of possibility. Refusing

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forcing fire to blaze up (AS 6.15). Breath is further eulogised as the substratum of the body, the perception of consciousness, essential to the functioning of the gods, the basis of the experience of the elements (AS 6.16-19).<sup>258</sup> Kessler-Persaud made the same point in relation to the *Vedas*, personal communication, 30 October 2023.



to dismiss these practices as fantastical or fantasy is the ground from which these findings on social as well as soteriological liberation emerge.

## Appendix One

# *Dattātreya yogaśāstra*

Select verses from Mallinson draft critical edition

20 February 2024

12 aṅgeṣu mātṛkānyāsapūrvam mantram jayet sudhīḥ |

ekena cāpi siddhiḥ syān mantrayogaḥ sa ucyate ||

14 alpabuddhir imaṃ yogaṃ sevate sādhakādhamah |

mantrayogo hy ayam prokto yogānām adhamah smṛtaḥ ||

15 layayogaś cittalayāt saṃketais tu prajāyate |

ādināthena saṃketāḥ sārdhakoṭiḥ prakīrtitāḥ ||

21 tiṣṭhan gacchan svapan bhūñjan dhyāyec chūnyam aharniśam |

ayam eko hi saṃketa ādināthena bhāṣitaḥ ||

22 nāsāgradṛṣṭhimātreṇa aparāḥ parikīrtitāḥ |

śiraḥpāścātyabhāgasya dhyānaṃ mṛtyuṃ jayo 'paraḥ ||

23 bhrūmadhyadrṣṭimātreṇa paraḥ saṃketa ucyate |

†līlā† vibhūtilepaś ca uttamaḥ parikīrtitāḥ ||

24 svasya dakṣiṇapādasya aṅguṣṭhe laya uttamaḥ |

uttānaśavavad bhūmau śayanaṃ cottamottamaḥ ||

25 śithilo nirjane deśe kuryāc cet siddham āpnuyāt |

evam ca bahusaṃketān kathayām āsa śaṅkaraḥ ||

26 saṃketair bahubhiś cānyair yaś cittasya layo bhavet |  
 sa eva layayogaḥ syād haṭhayogam ataḥ śṛṇu ||  
 33 laghvāhāras tu teṣv eko mukhyo bhavati nāpare |  
 ahiṃsā niyameṣv ekā mukhyā bhavati sāmkr̥te ||  
 41 brāhmaṇaḥ śramaṇo vāpi bauddho vāpy ārhato 'pi vā |  
 kāpāliko vā cārvākaḥ śraddhayā sahitaḥ sudhīḥ ||  
 42 yogābhyāsarato nityaṃ sarvasiddhim avāpnuyāt |  
 kriyāyuktasya siddhiḥ syād akriyasya kathaṃ bhavet ||  
 43 na śāstrapāthamātreṇa yogasiddhiḥ prajāyate |  
 muṇḍito daṇḍadhārī vā kāśāyavasano 'pi vā ||  
 44 nārāyaṇavado vāpi jaṭilo bhasmalepanaḥ |  
 namaḥśivāyavākyaḥ vā bāhyārcāpujako 'pi vā ||  
 45 sthānadvādaśapuṇḍro vā mālābhir bahubhūṣitaḥ |  
 kriyāvihīno vā krūraḥ kathaṃ siddhim avāpnuyāt ||  
 46 na veśadhāraṇaṃ siddheḥ kāraṇaṃ na ca tatkathā |  
 kriyaiva kāraṇaṃ siddheḥ satyam eva tu sāmkr̥te ||  
 47 śiśnodarārthaṃ yogasya kathayā veśadhāriṇaḥ |  
 anuṣṭhānavihīnās tu vañcayanti janān kila ||  
 60 tato dakṣiṇahastasya aṅguṣṭhena ca piṅgalām |  
 nirudhya pūrayed vāyum iḍayā ca śanaiḥ sudhīḥ ||  
 68cd śarīralaghutā dīptir jaṭharāgnivivardhanam ||  
 69 kṛśatvaṃ ca śarīrasya tadā jāyeta niścitam |  
 tadā varjyāni vakṣyāmi yogaviḥṇakarāṇi tu ||

70 lavaṇaṃ sarśapaś cāmlam uṣṇaṃ rūkṣaṃ ca tīkṣṇakam |  
 atīva bhojanaṃ tyājyaṃ strīsaṃgaṃ gamanaṃ bahu ||  
 71ab agnisevā tu saṃtyajyā dhūrtagoṣṭhīś ca saṃtyajet |  
 83cd kandarpasya yathā rūpaṃ tathā tasyāpi yoginaḥ |  
 84 tasmīn kāle mahāvighno yoginaḥ syāt pramādataḥ |  
 tadrūpavaśagā nāryaḥ kāṃkṣante tasya saṃgamam ||  
 85 yadi saṅgaṃ karoty evaṃ bindus tasya vinaśyati |  
 āyuhkṣayo bindunāśād asāmarthyaṃ ca jāyate ||  
 86 tasmāt strīṇāṃ saṅgavarjaṃ kuryād abhyāsam ādarāt |  
 yogino 'ṅge sugandhiḥ syāt satataṃ bindudhāraṇāt ||  
 87ab tasmāt sarvaprayatnena bindū rakṣyo hi yoginā |  
 94 indriyāṇīndriyārthebhyo yat pratyāharati sphuṭam |  
 yogī kumbhakam āsthāya pratyāhāraḥ sa ucyate ||  
 95 yad yat paśyati cakṣurbhyāṃ tat tad ātmeti bhāvayet |  
 yad yaj jighrati nāsābhyāṃ tat tad ātmeti bhāvayet ||  
 96 jihvayā yad rasayati tat tad ātmeti bhāvayet |  
 tvacā yad yat saṃspṛśati tat tad ātmeti bhāvayet ||  
 97 evaṃ jñānendriyāṇāṃ tu tat tat saṃkhyān tu sādhayet |  
 yāmamātraṃ pratidinaṃ yogī yatnād atandritaḥ ||  
 108 vāyuh paricito yatnād agninā saha kuṇḍalīm |  
 bodhayitvā suṣumnāyāṃ praviśed anirodhataḥ ||  
 109 vāyunā saha cittaṃ ca praviśec ca mahāpatham |  
 mahāpathaṃ śmaśānaṃ ca suṣumnāpy ekam eva hi ||

110 nāmnā matāntare bhedaḥ phalabhedo na vidyate |  
 vartamānaṃ bhaviṣyaṃ ca bhūtārthaṃ cāpi vetty asau ||  
 111 yasya cittaṃ sapavanaṃ suṣumnāṃ praviśed iha |  
 bhāvyaṇ anarthān vijñāya yogī rahasi yatnataḥ ||  
 112 pañcadhā dhāraṇaṃ kuryāt tat tad bhūtabhayāpaham |  
 pṛthivīdhāraṇaṃ vakṣye pāṛthivebhyo bhayāvaham ||  
 121 tato dṛḍhaśarīraḥ syān mṛtyus tasya na vidyate |  
 ity evaṃ pañcabhūtānāṃ dhāraṇāṃ yaḥ samabhyaset ||  
 122ab brahmaṇaḥ pralaye vāpi mṛtyus tasya na vidyate |  
 125cd vāyum nirudhya medhāvī jīvanmukto bhaved dhruvam ||  
 126 samādhiḥ samatāvasthā jīvātmaparamātmanoḥ |  
 yadi svadeham utsraṣṭum icchā ced utsṛjet svayam ||  
 127 parabrahmāni līyeta tyaktvā karma śubhāśubham |  
 atha no cet samutsraṣṭum svaśarīraṃ yadi priyam ||  
 128 sarvalokeṣu vicared aṇimādiguṇānvitaḥ |  
 kadā cit svecchayā devo bhūtvā svarge 'pi saṃcaret ||  
 129 manuṣyo vāpi yakṣo vā svecchayā hi kṣaṇād bhavet |  
 siṃho vyāghro gajo vā syād icchayā jantutāṃ vrajet ||  
 130ab yatheṣṭam evaṃ vartate yogī vidvān mahēśvaraḥ ||  
 146cd nityam abhyāsayuktasya jaṭharāgnivivardhate |  
 147 āhāro bahulas tasya sampādyah sāmkrte dhruvam |  
 alpāhāro yadi bhavet agnir dehaṃ dahet kṣaṇāt ||  
 150cd atha vajrolīlakṣaṇam

vajrolīm kathayiṣyāmi gopitām sarvayogibhiḥ |  
 151 atīvaitad rahasyaṃ hi na deyaṃ yasya kasya cit |  
 svaprāṇais tu samo yaḥ syāt tasyaiva kathayed dhruvam ||  
 152 svecchayā vartamāno 'pi yogokta niyamair vinā |  
 vajroliṃ yo vijānāti sa yogī siddhibhājanaḥ ||  
 153 tatra vastudvayaṃ vakṣye durlabhaṃ yena kena cit |  
 labhyate yadi tasyaiva yogasiddhiḥ kare sthitā ||  
 154 kṣīraṃ caikaṃ dvitīyaṃ tu nārī ca vaśavartinī |  
 na sambhaved yadi kṣīraṃ tattulyaṃ kathayāmi te ||  
 155 pibed āṅgīrasaṃ kiṃ cid yadi kṣīraṃ na labhyate |  
 sāmṅkṛtir uvāca  
 āṅgīrasākhyam kiṃ vastu bhagavan kathayasva me ||  
 156 dattātreyah  
 strīṇām āṅgīrasaṃ yonau idāpānāt tu jāyate |  
 tat pibet puruṣo 'bhyāsī yadi kṣīraṃ na labhyate ||  
 157 tathāpi tat kṣīragaṇaṃ kiṃcinmātram api dhruvam |  
 nārīdhatuṃ punaḥ kośe pibed ādarato bhṛṣam ||  
 158 kṣīrābhāve tadrasaṃ tu kṣīratulyaṃ bhaved dhruvam |  
 abhyāsaṃ śṛṇu vajrolyā vakṣyāmy atirahasyakam ||  
 159 sukhāni labhate nārī siddhiṃ ca puruṣo yathā |  
 nārīṃ ramyām adhaḥ sthāpya rahasye tu digambarām ||  
 160 svayaṃ digambaro bhutvā uttānāyās tathopari |  
 śayānaḥ kumbhakaṃ kuryāt kiṃcin namraḥ svayaṃ bahiḥ |

161 anynoyaṃ dṛḍham āliṅgya yonau śiśnaṃ na cārpayet |  
 mithaś cādharapānaṃ ca kuryād galaravādikam ||  
 162 viluṭhec ca sukhenaiṃ yāvat prasvedasaṃbhavaḥ |  
 yadi skhaled bahir vīryaṃ tataḥ svedena mardayet ||  
 163 jīrṇavastreṇa saṃmārjya tad vastraṃ rakṣayed budhaḥ |  
 yadi bindur na skhalati niṣṭhuraṃ tu yabhet bahiḥ ||  
 164 yonau śiśnaṃ tu nārpyeta yāvad bindur bahiḥ patet |  
 evaṃ tu tridinaṃ kuryād ekaikaṃ vāram eva ca ||  
 165 tatas tu śaranālena phūtkāraṃ vajrakandare |  
 śanaiḥ śanaiḥ prakurvīta vāyusaṃcāraṅgānāt ||  
 166 tad bhage patitaṃ bindum abhyāsenordhvam āharet |  
 calitaṃ ca tathā bindum ūrdhvam ākṛṣya rakṣayet ||  
 167 evaṃ ca rakṣito bindur mṛtyuṃ jayati tattvataḥ |  
 maraṇaṃ bindupātena jīvanaṃ bindudhāraṅgāt ||  
 168 sindūrasadṛśaṃ yonau strīṅām asti navaṃ rajaḥ |  
 tatrāvratō 'py ayaṃ gacchet tad ābhyāsenā rakṣayet ||  
 169 vajrolīm abhyāsen nārī rajo rakṣārtham eva ca |  
 yadi nārī rajo rakṣed vajrolyā sā hi yoginī ||  
 170 atītānāgataṃ vetti khecarī vā bhaved dhruvam |  
 dehasiddhiṃ ca labhate vajrolyabhyāsayogataḥ ||  
 171 abhyāsasya kramaṃ vakṣye nārīṅām ca śanaiḥ śanaiḥ |  
 yabhayen niṣṭhuraṃ puṃsām bahiḥ śiśnena kevalam |  
 172 rajaḥ pūrīta vīryaṃ taṃ †śiśnavīryaṃ† samāharet |

*liṅgaṃ karābhyām ākuñcya maṇimātraṃ praveśayet ||*  
*173 yāvan maṇipraveśaḥ syāt tāvad abhyāsam ācaret |*  
*tataḥ paraṃ samarthā syād ūrdhvam ākuñcayed rajaḥ ||*  
*174 tasyās tadā rajo nāsaṃ na gacchati na saṃśayaḥ |*  
*tasyāḥ śarīre nādas tu bindu tām eva gacchati ||*  
*175 sa bindus tad rajaś caiva ekībhūya svadehagau |*  
*vajrolyābhyāsayogena sarvasiddhiḥ prajāyate ||*  
*176 ayaṃ yogaḥ puṇyavatām dhanyānām tattvaśalinām |*  
*nirmitsarāṇām sidhyeta na tu mātsaryaśālinām ||*  
*177 lajjām vihāya varttavyo yogābhyāsas tu īdrśaḥ |*  
*iṣṭaiś ca puruṣaiḥ sārddham athavā yogavedibhiḥ ||*  
*178 yo vettīmaṃ yogaśāstrām sandhīm tena sahācaret |*  
*ajñātayogaśāstreṇa vajrolīm strī tu nābhyaset ||*  
*179 sarveṣāṃ api yogānām ayaṃ yogaḥ sukhaṃkaraḥ |*  
*tasmād ayaṃ vakṣyamāṇo bhoge bhukte 'pi muktidaḥ ||*  
*180 tasmāt puṇyavatām eva ayaṃ yogaḥ prasidhyati |*  
*amarīm yaḥ piben nityaṃ nasyaṃ kurvan dine dine ||*  
*181 vajrolīm abhyasec ceyam amarolīti kathyate |*  
*pūrvoktajīrṇavastraṃ tu prakṣipec ca mite jale ||*  
*182 tajjale bhasma saṃkṣīpya dagdhagomayasambhavam |*  
*vajrolīmaithunād ūrdhvam strīpuṃsor aṅgalepanam ||*  
*183 āsīnayoḥ sukhenaiiva muktavyāparayoḥ kṣaṇam |*  
*sahajolīr iyaṃ proktā śraddheyā yogabhiḥ sadā ||*



184 etaiḥ sarvair tu kathitair abhyaset kālakālataḥ |

tato bhaved rājayogo nāntarā bhavati dhruvam ||

185 na diṅmātreṇa siddhiḥ syāt abhyāsenaiḥ jāyate |

rājayogapadaṃ prāpya sarvasattvavaśaṅkaram ||

186 sarvaṃ kuryān na vā kuryād yathā ruciviceṣṭitam |

yadā tu rājayogena niṣpannā yoginaḥ kriyā ||

193 yaḥ saṃsmṛtyā munīnāṃ api duritaharo yogasiddhipradaś ca

kāruṇyād yaḥ pravaktā sukhahṛdayahrto yogaśāstrasya nāthaḥ |

tasyāhaṃ bhaktiśunyo 'py akhilajanaguror bhakticintāmaṇer hi

dattātreyasya viṣṇoḥ padanalinayugaṃ nityam eva prapadye ||

## Appendix Two

# *Gorakṣaśataka*

*Select verses from Mallinson draft critical edition*

*11 May 2021*

*16 śakticālam idānīm tu pravakṣyāmi samāsataḥ |*

*kuṇḍaly eva bhavec chaktis tasyāḥ saṃcālanakramah ||*

*17 svasthānād ābhruvor madhyaṃ śakticālanam iṣyate |*

*tatsādhane dvayaṃ mukhyaṃ sarasvatyās tu cālanam ||*

*18 prānarodham athābhyāsād rjvī kuṇḍalinī bhavet |*

*tayor ādau sarasvatyās cālanam kathayāmi te ||*

*19 arundhāty eva kathitā purā viddhiḥ sarasvatī |*

*asyāḥ saṃcālanenaiva svayaṃ calati kuṇḍalī ||*

*20 idāyāṃ vahati prāṇe baddhvā padmāsanaṃ dṛḍham |*

*dvādaśāṅguladairdhyam ca ambaram caturaṅgulam ||*

*21 vistārya tena tan nādīm veṣṭayitvā tataḥ sudhī |*

*aṅguṣṭhatarjanībhyām tām hastābhyām dhāyaed dṛḍham ||*

*22 svaśaktyā cālayed vāme dakṣiṇe ca punaḥ punaḥ |*

*muhūrtadvayaparyantaṃ nirbhayaś cālayed imām ||*

*23 ūrdham ākṛṣyate kiṃ cit suṣumnā kuṇḍalīgatā |*

*tena kuṇḍalinī tasyāḥ suṣumnāyā mukham vrajet ||*

24 jahāti tasmāt praṇo 'yaṃ suṣumnāṃ vrajati svataḥ |  
 vāmena pavanaṃ pūrya kaṅṭhasaṃkocane kṛte ||  
 25 sarasvatyāś cālanena pakṣāt syād ūrdhvago marut |  
 sūryeṇa pūrayed vāyuṃ sarasvatyāś ca cālanāt ||  
 26 kaṅṭhasaṃkocanaṃ kṛtvā vakṣābhyām ūrdhvago marut |  
 tasmāt saṃkcālayen nityaṃ sukhasuptām arundhatīm ||  
 27 asyāḥ saṃcālanenaiva yogī rogaiḥ pramucyate |  
 gulmaṃ jalodaraṃ plihā ye cānye tundamadhyagāḥ ||  
 28 sarve te śakticālena rogā naśyanti niścitam |  
 prāṇarodham athedānīm pravakṣyāmi samāsataḥ ||  
 47 kumbhakaṃ pūrvavat kṛtvā recayed iḍayānilam |  
 kaṅṭhotthitānalaharaṃ śarīrāgnivivardhanam ||  
 53 adhogatim apānaṃ vai ūrdhvagatim kurute balāt |  
 ākuñcanaṃ ca tatprāhur mūlabandhaṃ tu yoginaḥ ||  
 54 apāne cordhvage jāte saṃprāpte vahnimaṇḍalam |  
 tato 'nalaśikhā dīrghā vardhate vāyunāhatā ||  
 55 tato yātau vahnyapānau prāṇam uṣṇā svarūpakam |  
 tenātyantapradīptena jvalano dehagas tathā ||  
 56 tena kuṅḍalinī suptā saṃtaptā saṃprabudhyate |  
 daṇḍāhatā bhujamgīva niśvasya ṛjutām vrajet ||  
 57 bile praviṣṭe ca tato brahmanāḍyantaram vrajet |  
 tasmāt nityaṃ mūlabandhaḥ kartavyo yogibhiḥ sadā ||  
 58 kuṃbhakānte recakādau kartavyoḍḍiyanābhidhaḥ |

*baddho yena suṣumnāyāṃ prāṇas tūddīyate tataḥ ||*  
*62 pūrakānte tu kartavyo bandho jālandharābhidaḥ |*  
*kaṅṭhasaṃkocarūpo 'sau vāyumārganirodhakaḥ ||*  
*63ab adhasat kuñcanaenaiva kaṅṭhasaṃkocane kṛte |*  
*68 divā suptir niśāyāṃ ca jāgarād atimaitunāt |*  
*bahusaṃkramaṇān nityaṃ rodhān mūtrapurīṣayoḥ||*  
*69 viṣamānnāsanābhyāṃ ca śayādaprāṇacintanāt |*  
*śīghramutpadyate yogaḥ stambhayed buddhito yamī ||*  
*74 prāṇābhyāsas tataḥ kāryo nityaṃ sattvāsthayā dhiyā |*  
*suṣumnāṃ layate cittaṃ na ca vāyuh pradhāvati ||*  
*75 śuṣke male tu vāyoḥ syād gatir askhalitā tath |*  
*adhogatiṃ vihāyāśu mūlabandhanirodhataḥ ||*  
*76 apānaś cordhvago bhūtvā vahninā saha gacchati |*  
*prāṇasthānaṃ tato vahnih prāṇāpānau ca satvaram ||*  
*77 miltvā kuṇḍalī yāti prasuptā kuṇḍalākṛtiḥ |*  
*tenāgninā ca saṃtaptā pavanenaiva cālitā ||*  
*78 prasārya svaśarīraṃ tu suṣumnāvadāntare |*  
*brahmagranthiṃ tato bhītvā rajo guṇasamudbhavam ||*  
*79 suṣumnāvadane śīghraṃ vidyullekheva saṃsphureḥ |*  
*viṣṇugranthiṃ prayātyuccaiḥ sattvajam hṛdi saṃsthitam ||*  
*82 śaṣṭhaṃ cāvīratir bhrāntiḥ saptamaṃ parikīrtitam |*  
*viṣayaṃ cāṣṭamaṃ caiva anāsthā navamam smṛtam ||*  
*83 yātīnducakraṃ yatrās te śuklaśleṣmadravātmakam |*

*tatra siktīm grasaty uṣṇām kapham śītasvabhāvakam ||*  
 84 *tathaiva rabhasā śuklam candrarūpaṃ hi tapyate |*  
*ūrdhvaṃ pravahati kṣubdhā tathaivaṃ sravatetarām ||*  
 85 *tasyāsvādavaśāc cittam bahiṣṭham viṣayeṣu yat |*  
*tad eva paramaṃ bhuktvā svasthasyātma rato bhavet ||*  
 86 *prakṛtyaṣṭakarūpaṃ ca sthānam gacchati kuṇḍalī |*  
*kroḍīkr̥tya śivam yāti kroḍīkr̥tya vilīyate ||*  
 87 *ityadhordhvarajaḥ śukle śive tadanu mārutaiḥ |*  
*prāṇāpānau samāyātau sahajātau tathaiva ca ||*  
 88 *bhuvā cālpam analpaṃ vā pāvakas tv ativardhate |*  
*drāvayaty akhilān vātān agnimuśāhiraṇyavat ||*  
 89 *ādhibhautikadehe tu cādhidaivikavigrahe |*  
*deho 'tivimalaṃ yāti tad vakṣyāmy adhunā sphuṭam ||*  
 90 *tadātivāhikaṃ mukhyaṃ sarveṣāṃ tu madātmakam |*  
*jādyabhāvavinirmuktam amalaṃ cinmayātmakam ||*  
 91 *tadātivāhikaṃ mukhyaṃ sarveṣāṃ ca madātmakam |*  
*jādyabhāvavinirmuktaḥ kālarūpasya vibhramaḥ ||*  
 92 *iti taṃ sasvarūpā hi matī rajjubhujāṅgavat |*  
*tattvarūpasya sandehaḥ kālenātyuditasthitih ||*  
 93 *ādhibhautikarūpo 'yaṃ mṛgatr̥ṣṇāmbuvad dṛḍhaḥ |*  
*kālarūpeṇa dehena madhye samavalokitam ||*  
 94 *viśvaṃbharādi tasyaiva kṛtaṃ nāmādhibhautikam |*  
*na śabdārthasvarūpābhyāṃ satyaṃ tac chaśāṅgavat ||*

95 antarodeti duḥsvapno yasya pratyaya utthitah |  
puruṣoḥ kiṃ pramatto 'sau gajonmattanirīkṣavat ||

96 mṛṣaivodeti sakalaṃ mṛṣaiiva pravilīyate |  
raupyabuddhiḥ śuktikāyāṃ strīpumso bhramato yathā ||

97 svapnajñānaṃ na dehākhyam sa eva vā sambhaved dṛḍham |  
tathaiva suvicāreṇa sthiraṃ ca bhramaṇād anu ||

98 tathaivedaṃ śarīraṃ tu dṛḍhabhāvanayā sphuṭaṃ |  
ādhibhautikabhāvena jaḍarūpaṃ vijṛmbhate ||

100 tathaiva bhūmikāḥ sapta jñānajanyasamudbhavāt |  
anagniprokam ityādau sadā sukham avāpnuyāt ||

101 yā bindvākhyeti dhāra vigalitamanasāstām pibāmo na madyam  
pañcānām indriyāṇām viṣayanirasaṇaṃ carvayāmo na māṃsam |  
āliṅgāmo na kāntāṅkurakuṭīlataṇuṃ kuṭīlataṇuṃ nāḍikāṃ tām suṣumnām  
śūnye citte pralīne pravilayavivaśaṃ maithunaṃ cen na yonau ||

## Appendix Three

# *Vivekamārtaṇḍa*

Select verses from Mallinson draft critical edition

11 April 2022

- 7ab *yonistānakam aṅgrimūlaghaṭitam kṛtvā dṛḍham vinyasen  
medhre pādamaṁ athaikam eva hṛdaye dhṛtvā hanuṁ susthiram |*
- 13 *ṣaṭcakram ṣoḍāśādhāram trailokyam vyomapañcakam |  
svadehe ye na jānanti katham sidhyanti yoginaḥ ||*
- 14 *ekastambham navadhvāram triśunyam pañcadaivatam |  
svadehe ye na jānanti katham sidhyanti yoginaḥ ||*
- 16 *ūrdhvam medhrād adho nābhoḥ kando yoniḥ khagāṇḍavat |  
tatra nāḍyāḥ samutpannāḥ sahasrāṇi dvisaptatiḥ ||*
- 20 *satatam prānavāhinyas tistro nāḍyaḥ prakīrtitāḥ |  
idāpiṅgalāsusumṇāḥ somasūryāgnidevatāḥ ||*
- 31 *kuṇḍalinyāḥ samudbhūtā gāyatrī prāṇadhāriṇī |  
praṇavādyaḥ tathā vidyā yas tāṁ cetti sa yogavit ||*
- 32 *kuṇḍordhvam kuṇḍalī śaktir aṣṭadhā kuṭilīkṛtā |  
brahmadvāramukham nityam sukhenāvṛtya tiṣṭati ||*
- 33 *yena mārgeṇa gantavyam brahmasthānam nirāmayam |  
mukhenāchāḍya tad dvāram prasuptā parameśvarī ||*

34 prabuddhā vahniyogena manasā marutā saha |  
 sūcīvad guṇam ādāya vrajaty ūrdhvaṃ suṣumṇayā ||  
 50 prasphurad bhujagākārā padmatantunibhā śubhā |  
 prabuddhā vahniyogena vrajaty ūrdhvaṃ suṣumṇayā ||  
 35 udghāṭayet kapāṭaṃ tu yathā kuñcakayā haṭhāt |  
 kuṇḍalinyā tathā yogī mokṣodvāraṃ vibhedayet ||  
 38 brahmacārī mitāhārī yogī yogaparāyaṇaḥ |  
 abdād ūrdhvaṃ bhavet siddho nātra kāryā vicāraṇā ||  
 39 kandordhvaṃ kuṇḍalī śaktiḥ suptā mokṣāya yoginām |  
 bandhanāya ca mūdhānām yas tāṃ cetti sa yogavit ||  
 68 bindumūlaṃ śarīraṃ tu sirās tatra pratiṣṭhitāḥ |  
 plāvayanti śarīraṃ yā āpādalamastakam ||  
 51 khecaryā mudritaṃ yena vivaraṃ lambikordhvataḥ |  
 na tasya kṣarate binduḥ kāmīnyāliṅgatasya ca ||  
 53 calito 'pi yadā binduḥ saṃprāptaś ca hutāśanam |  
 gacchaty ūrdhvaṃ hataḥ śaktyā nibaddho yonimudrayā ||  
 54 sa eva dvividhā binduḥ pāṇḍuro lohitas tathā |  
 pāṇḍuraṃ śukram ity āhur lohitākhyam mahārajaḥ |  
 55 vidrumadravasamkāśam yonisthāne sthitaṃ rajaḥ |  
 śāsisthāne vased bindur dvayor aikyaṃ sudurlabham ||  
 56 binduḥ śivo rajaḥ śaktir bindur indū rajo raviḥ |  
 ubhayoḥ saṃgamād evo prāpyate paramaṃ padam ||  
 57 vāyunā śakticālena preritaṃ khe yadā rajaḥ |



*bindor ekatvam āyāti yo jānāti sa yogavit ||*  
*58 śodhanam nādījālasya ghaṭanam candrasūryayoḥ |*  
*rasāṅgam śoṣanam samyak mahāmudrābhidhīyate ||*  
*59ab vakṣyonyastahanur nipīḍya suciram yoniṃ ca vāmāṅhriṇā*  
*hastābhyāmapi dhārayet pravīṭam pādāṃ tathā dakṣiṇam |*  
*65 bhūrbhuvāḥ svarīme lokāś candrasūryāgnīdevatāḥ |*  
*yasya mātṛāsu tiṣṭanti tat param jyotir om iti ||*  
*66 trayāḥ kālās trayo lokās trayo devās trayāḥ svarāḥ |*  
*trayo devoḥ sthitā yatra tat param jyotir om iti ||*  
*67 akāras ca ukāras ca makāro bindsamjñakāḥ |*  
*tridhā mātṛāḥ sthitā yatra tat param jyotir om iti ||*  
*68 icchā kriyā tathā jñānā brāhmī raudrī vaiṣṇavī |*  
*tridhā śaktiḥ sthitā yatra tat param jyotir om iti ||*  
*69 vacasā taj japed bījam vapusā tat samabhyaset |*  
*manasā tat smaren nityam jyotir om iti ||*  
*89 ūrdhvam ākṣya cāpānavātam prāṇe niyojayet |*  
*mūrdhānam nayate śaktyā sarvapāpaiḥ pramucyate ||*  
*90ab dvārāṅgam navakam nirudhya marutam pītvā dṛḍham dhāritam*  
*nītvākāśam apānavahnisahitam śaktyā samucchālitam |*  
*103 caratām cakṣur ādīnām viṣayeṣu yathākramam |*  
*yat pratyāharaṇam teṣām pratyāhārah sa ucyate ||*  
*104 yathā pratāpakālastho raviḥ pratyāharet prabhām |*  
*trītyāṅgasthito yogī vikāram hanti mānasam ||*

- 105 aṅgamadhye yathāṅgānāṃ kurmaḥ saṃkocam ācaret |  
yogī pratyāharaty evam indriyāṇi tathātmani ||
- 106 yaṃ yaṃ śrṇoti karṇābhyāṃ priyam apy athavā priyam |  
taṃ tam ātmeti vijñāya pratyāharati yogavit ||
- 107 aramyam athavā ramyam yaṃ yaṃ paśyati cakṣuṣā |  
taṃ tam ātmeti vijñāya prayāharati yagavit ||
- 108 uṣṇāṃ vāpy athavān uṣṇam yaṃ yaṃ sprśati carmaṇā |  
taṃ tam ātmeti vijñāya prayāharati yogavit ||
- 109 agauilyam athavā gauilyam yaṃ yaṃ sprśati jihvayā |  
taṃ tam ātmeti vijñāya prayāharati yogavit ||
- 110 sugandham vā vigandham vā yaṃ yaṃ jighrati nāsayā |  
taṃ tam ātmeti vijñāya pratyāharati yogavit ||
- 111 candrāmṛtamayīm dhārām āhārayati bhāskaraḥ ||
- 112 ekā strī bhujyate dvābhyām āgatā somamaṇḍalāt |  
tṛtīyo ramate yo 'tra sa bhaved ajarāmarah ||
- 113 nābhidehe vasaty eva bhāskaro dahanātmakah |  
amṛtātmā sthito nityam tālumadhye ca candramāḥ ||
- 114 varṣaty adhomukhaś candro grhṇāty ūrdhvamukhe raviḥ |  
jñātavyam kāraṇam tatra yena pīyuṣam āpyate ||
- 116 tridhā baddho vṛṣo yatra roravīti mahāsvanaḥ |  
anāhataṃ ca tac cakram hṛdaye yogino viduḥ ||
- 118 mūrdhnaḥ ṣoḍaśapatrapadmagalitaṃ prāṇād avāptaṃ haṭhād  
ūrdhvāsyo rasanām niyamyā vivare śaktim parām cintayet |

utkallolakalājalaṃ ca vimalaṃ dhārāmayam yaḥ piben  
 nirdoṣaḥ sa mṛṇālakomalatanur yogī ciraṃ jīvati ||  
 126 sampīḍya rasanāgreṇa rājadantabilaṃ mahat |  
 dhyātvāmṛtamayīm devīm ṣaṇmāsena kavir bhavet ||  
 128 cumbantī yadi lambikāgramaniśaṃ jihvā rasasyandinī  
 sakṣārā kaṭukātha dugdhasadṛśā madhvājyatyulyāthavā |  
 vyādhīnām haraṇaṃ jaropaśamaṇaṃ śāstrāgamodīraṇaṃ  
 tasya syad amaratvam aṣṭaguṇitaṃ siddhāṅganākarṣaṇam ||  
 130 nityaṃ somakalāpūrṇaṃ śarīraṃ yasya yoginaḥ |  
 takṣakenāpi daṣṭasya viṣaṃ tasya na pīḍyate ||  
 131 indhanāni yathā vahnis tailavartīva dīpikaḥ |  
 tathā somakalāpūrṇaṃ dehī dehaṃ na muñcati ||  
 133 hṛdaye pañcabhūtānām dhāraṇaṃ ca pṛthak pṛthak |  
 manaso niścalatvena dhāraṇety abhiddhīyate ||  
 134 yā pṛthvī haritālahemarucirā tattvārthamūlāsritā  
 samyuktā kamalāsanena hi catuḥkoṇe hṛdi sthāyinī |  
 prāṇaṃ tatra vilīya pañca ghaṭikaṃ cittānviṭaṃ dhārayed  
 eṣā stambhakarī sadā kṣitijayaṃ kuryād bhuvo dhāraṇā ||  
 135 ardhendupratimaṃ ca kundadhavalaṃ kaṇṭhe 'mbhutattvaṃ sthitaṃ  
 yat pīyūṣayakārabījasahitaṃ yuktaṃ sadā viṣṇunā |  
 prāṇaṃ tatra vilīya pañca ghaṭikaṃ cittānviṭaṃ dhārayed  
 eṣa duḥsahakālakūṭajaraṇā syād vāruṇī dhāraṇā ||  
 136 yat tālusthitaṃ indrabījasahitaṃ tattvaṃ trikoṇe jvalat

*tejo rephayutaṃ pravālarucinā rudreṇa yatsaṃyutam |*  
*prāṇaṃ tatra vilīya pañca ghaṭikaṃ cittānviṭaṃ dhārayed*  
*eṣā vahniḥyayaṃ sadā vidadhatī vaiścānarī dhāraṇā ||*

*137ab yad bhinnāñjanapuñjasaṃnibham idaṃ vṛttaṃ bhruvor antare*  
*tattvaṃ vāyumayaṃ vakārasahitaṃ yatreśvaro devatā |*  
*prāṇaṃ tatra vilīya pañca ghaṭikaṃ cittānviṭaṃ dhārayed*  
*eṣā khe gamanaṃ karoti yamiṇāṃ syād vāyavī dhāraṇā ||*

*138 ākāśaṃ ca marīcivārisadrśaṃ yad brahmarandhre sthitaṃ*  
*yan nāthena sadāsivena sahitaṃ śāntaṃ hakārākṣaram |*  
*prāṇaṃ tatra vilīya pañca ghaṭikaṃ cittānviṭaṃ dhāyared*  
*eṣā mokṣakapāṭāpātanapaṭuḥ proktā nabhodhāraṇā ||*

*145 svādhiṣṭhāne śubhe cakre sanmāṇikyasilopame |*  
*nāsāgradrṣṭir ātmānaṃ dhyātvā yogī sukhī bhavet ||*

*149 sravatpīyūśasampūrṇe lambikācandramaṇḍale |*  
*nāsāgradrṣṭir ātmānaṃ dhyātvānandam avāpnuyāt ||*

*163 yat samatvaṃ dvayor atra jīvātmaparamātmanoḥ |*  
*samastanaṣṭasaṃkalpaḥ samādhiḥ so 'bidhīyate ||*

*164 indriyeṣu manovṛttir atrāpekṣādvayā hi sā |*  
*advayatvaṃ gate jīve na mano nendriyāṇi ca ||*

*166 nābijānāti śītoṣṇāṃ na duḥkha na sukhaṃ tathā |*  
*na mānaṃ nāpamānaṃ ca yogī yuktaḥ samādhinā ||*

*167 pīḍyate na ca kālena bādhyate na ca karmaṇi |*  
*pīḍyate na ca rogeṇa yogī yuktaḥ samādhinā ||*

*171 dugdhe kṣīraṃ ghr̥te sārpir agnau vahnir ivārpitaḥ |*  
*tanmayatva vrajateva yogī yuktaḥ samādhinā ||*

## Appendix Four

# *Yogabīja*

Select verses from Birch draft critical edition

3 February 2022

*8 anirvācyā padaṃ vaktuṃ śakyate na surair api |*

*svātmaprakāśarūpaṃ tat kiṃ śāstreṇa prakāśyate ||*

*9 niṣkalaṃ nirmalaṃ śāntaṃ sarvātītaṃ nirāmayam |*

*tad eva jīvarūpeṇa puṇyapāphalair vṛtam ||*

*10 śrī devyuvāca*

*paramātmapadaṃ nityaṃ tat kathaṃ jīvatāṃ gatam |*

*tattvātītaṃ mahādeva prasādāt kathayasva me ||*

*11 īśvara uvāca*

*sarvabhāvapadātītaṃ jñānarūpaṃ nirañjanam |*

*vārivat sphuritaṃ svasmiṃs tatrāhaṃkṛtir utthitā ||*

*12 pañcātmakam abhūt piṇḍaṃ dhātūbaddhaguṇātmakam |*

*sukhaduḥkhaiḥ sadā yuktaṃ jīvabhāvanayākulam ||*

*13 tena jīvābhīdhā proktā viśuddhe paramātmāni |*

*kāmaḥ krodho bhayaṃ cintā lobho moho mado rujah ||*

*14 jarā mṛtyuś ca kārpanyaṃ śokas tandrā kṣudhā tṛṣṇā |*

*dveṣo lajjā sukhaṃ duḥkhaṃ viśādo harṣa eva ca ||*

*15 jāgrat svapnaḥ suṣuptiś ca śānkā garvas tathaiva ca |*

*ebhir doṣair vinirmuktaḥ sa jīvaḥ śiva eva hi ||*

*16 tasmād doṣavināśārtham upāyaṃ kathayāmi te |*

*jñānaṃ ke cid vadanty atra kevalaṃ taṅ na siddhaye ||*

*17 yogahīnaṃ kathaṃ jñānaṃ mokṣadaṃ bhavat īśvari |*

*yogo 'pi jñānahīnas tu na kṣamo mokṣakarmaṇi ||*

*18 devyuvāca*

*ajñānād evo saṃsāro jñānād evo kim ucyate |*

*yogenaiva tu kiṃ kāryaṃ prasannagirayā vada ||*

*19 īśvara uvāca*

*satyam etat tvayoktaṃ te kathayāmi sureśvari |*

*jñānasvarūpaṃ evādaḥ jñeyaṃ jñāne na sādhanam ||*

*20 ajñānaṃ kīdrśaṃ ceti pravacāryaṃ vivekinā |*

*jñātaṃ yena nijaṃ rūpaṃ kaivalyaṃ paramaṃ śivam ||*

*21 asau doṣair vimuktaḥ kiṃ kāmakrodhabhayādibhiḥ |*

*sarva doṣair vṛto jīvo jñāne tu mucyate katham ||*

*22 devyuvāca*

*svātmārūpaṃ yadā jñātaṃ pūrṇatvād vyāpakaṃ tadā |*

*kāmakrodhādi doṣaṇām svarūpān nāsti bhinnatā ||*

*23 paścāt tasya vidhiḥ kiṃ ca niṣedho 'pi kathaṃ bhavet |*

*vivekī sarvadā muktaḥ saṃsārabhramavarjitaḥ ||*

*24 īśvara uvāca*

*paripūrṇasvarūpaṃ tat satyam etad varānane |*

*sakalaṃ niṣkalaṃ caiva pūrṇatvāc ca tad eva hi ||*

25 *kalanāsphūrtirūpeṇa saṃsārabhramatām gatam |*  
*niṣkalam nirmalam sākṣāt svarūpaṃ gaganopamam ||*

26 *utpattisthitisamhārasphūrtyajñānavivarjitam |*  
*etad rūpaṃ samāyātaḥ sa kathaṃ mohasāgare ||*

27 *nimajjati varārohe tyaktvā vidyām punaḥ punaḥ |*  
*sukhaduḥkhādimoheṣu yathā saṃsāriṇām sthitiḥ ||*

28 *tathā jñānī yadā tiṣṭhed vāsanāvāsitas tadā |*  
*tayor nāsti viśeṣo 'tra samā saṃsārabhāvanā ||*

29 *jñānaṃ ced īdrśaṃ jātam ajñānaṃ kīdrśaṃ punaḥ |*  
*jñānaniṣṭho virakto 'pi dharmajño vijitendriyaḥ |*  
*vinā yogena devo 'pi na mokṣaṃ labhate priye ||*

30 *devyuvāca*  
*anyat kiṃ cit paridhyeyaṃ jñāninām nāsti saṅkara |*  
*viraktātmaikaniṣṭhānām kathaṃ mokṣo bhaven na tu ||*

31 *īśvara uvāca*  
*apakvāḥ paripakvās ca dvividhā dehinaḥ smṛtāḥ |*  
*apakvā yogahīnās tu pakvā yogena dehinaḥ ||*

32 *pakvaṃ yogāgninā deham ajaḍaṃ śokavarjitam |*  
*jaḍaṃ tu pārthivaṃ jñeyam apakvaṃ duḥkhadaṃ bhavet ||*

33 *dhyānastho 'sau tathāpy evam indriyair vivaśo bhavet |*  
*niyamyā tāny ato gāḍhaṃ tathāpy anyaiḥ prabodhyate ||*

34 *śītoṣṇasukhaduḥkhādyair vyādibhir mānavais tathā |*  
*anyair nānāvidhair jīvaiḥ śastrāgnijalamārutaiḥ |*



*śarīraṃ pīḍyate tais tu cittaṃ saṃkṣobhyate tataḥ ||*  
 35 *tathā prāṇavipattaḥ tu kṣobham āyāti mārutaḥ |*  
*tato duḥkhaśatair vyāptaṃ cittaṃ prakṣubhyate nṛṇām ||*  
 39 *ahaṃkṛtir yadā yasya naṣṭā bhavati tasya vai |*  
*dehaṃ tu bhavate naṣtaṃ vyādhayas tasya kiṃ punaḥ ||*  
 40 *jalāgniśastraghātādibādhā kasya bhaviṣyati |*  
*yathā yathā parikṣiṇā puṣṭā cāhaṃkṛtir bhavet ||*  
 41 *tena mānena naśyanti pravartante rujādikāḥ |*  
*kāraṇena vinā kāryaṃ na kadā cana vidyate |*  
*ahaṃkāraṃ vinā tadvad dehe duḥkhaṃ kathaṃ bhavet ||*  
 44 *īśvara uvāca*  
*śarīreṇa jītāḥ sarve śarīraṃ yogibhir jitam |*  
*tat kathaṃ kurute teṣāṃ sukhaduḥkhādikaṃ phalam ||*  
 45 *indriyāṇi mano buddhiḥ kāmakrodhādikaṃ jitam |*  
*tenaiva vijitaṃ sarvaṃ nāsau kenāpi bādhyate ||*  
 46 *mahābhūtāni tattvāni saṃhṛtāni krameṇa ca |*  
*saptadhātumayaṃ dehaṃ dagdhaṃ yogāgninā śanaiḥ ||*  
 47 *daivataiś ca na lakṣyeta yogadehaṃ mahābalaṃ |*  
*bhedabandhair vinirmuktaṃ nānāśaktidharaṃ param ||*  
 48 *yathākāśaṃ tathā dehaṃ ākāśād api nirmalam |*  
*sūkṣmāt sūkṣmatataraṃ dehaṃ sthūlāt sthūlaṃ jaḍāj jaḍam ||*  
 49 *icchārūpo hi yogīndraḥ svatanthro hy ajarāmarah |*  
*krīḍate triṣu lokeṣu līlayā yatra kutra cit ||*

50 *acintyaśaktimān yogī nānārūpāṇi dhārayet |*  
*saṃharec ca punas tāni svecchayā vijitendriyaḥ ||*  
 51 *maraṇaṃ tasya kiṃ devi pṛcchasīndusamānane |*  
*nāsau maraṇam āpnoti punar yogabalena tu ||*  
 52 *puraiva mṛta evāsau mṛtasya maraṇaṃ kutaḥ |*  
*maraṇaṃ yatra sarveṣāṃ tatra jīvaty<sup>259</sup> asau sukhī ||*  
 53 *yatra jīvanti mūḍhās tu tatrāsau mriyate sadā |*  
*kartavyaṃ tu na tasyāsti kṛtena na vilipyate |*  
*jīvanmuktaḥ sadā svasthaḥ sarvadoṣavivarjitaḥ ||*  
 54 *viraktā jñāninaś cānye dehena vijitāḥ sadā |*  
*te kathaṃ yogibhis tulyā māṃsapiṇḍāḥ kudehinaḥ ||*  
 66 *prāṇāpānasamāyogāc candrasūryaikyatā bhavet |*  
*saptadhātumayaṃ deham agninā jarate dhruvam ||*  
 67 *vyādhayas tasya naśyanti chedaghātādikās tathā |*  
*tathāsau paramākāśarūpo dehy avatiṣṭhate ||*  
 68 *kiṃ punar bahunoktena maraṇaṃ nāsti tasya vai |*  
*dehīva dṛśyate loke dagdhakarpūravat yathā ||*  
 70 *nānavidhair vicārais tu na sādhyam jāyate manaḥ |*  
*tasmāt tasya jayopāyaḥ prāṇāyāmo hi nānyathā ||*  
 79 *īśvara uvāca*  
*prāṇāpana samāyogas tathaiva rajaretasoḥ |*  
*saṃyogaś candrabhānvoś ca jīvātmaparamātmanoḥ ||*

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<sup>259</sup> Following Birch 2020:219n70 not the draft critical edition shared in 2020 which reads YB 52d as *tatrāsau jīvate sukhī*.

80 evaṃ tu dvandvajālasya saṃyogo yoga ucyate |  
 adhunā saṃpravakṣyāmi yogābhyāsasya lakṣaṇam ||  
 81 marujjayo yasya siddhaḥ sevayet taṃ guruṃ sadā |  
 guruvakraprasādena kuryāt prāṇajayaṃ budhaḥ |  
 82 nirudhya mārutaṃ gāḍhaṃ śakticālanayuktitaḥ |  
 aṣṭadhākuṭilībhūtāṃ ṛjvīm kuryāt tu kuṇḍalīm ||  
 83 etad eva paraṃ guhyaṃ kathitaṃ tu mayā tava |  
 vajrasanagato nitya māsārdhaṃ tu samabhyaset ||  
 84 vāyunā jvalito vahniḥ kuṇḍalīm dahate 'niśaṃ |  
 saṃtaptā sāgninā jīvaśaktir trailokyamohinī ||  
 85 viśate vajradaṇḍe tu suṣumṇāvanāntare |  
 vāyunā vahninā sārdhaṃ brahmagranthir vibhidhyate ||  
 86 viṣṇugranthiṃ tato bhittvā rudragranthau ca tiṣṭhati |  
 tatas tu kumbhayed gāḍhaṃ pūrayitvā punaḥ punaḥ ||  
 87 bhidyante granthayo vaṃśe taptalohaśalākayā |  
 tathaiva pṛṣṭhavaṃśe tu granthibhedas tu vāyunā ||  
 88 pipīlikā yatra lagnā kaṇḍūs tatra pravartate |  
 suṣumṇāyām tathābhyāsāt satataṃ vāyunā bhavet ||  
 89 rudragranthiṃ tato bhittvā padaṃ yāti śivātmakam |  
 sandrasuryau samau kṛtvā tatra yogaḥ pravartate ||  
 90 guṇatrayādatīto 'sau granthitrayavibhedanāt |  
 śivaśaktisamāyogāj jāyate paramā sthitaḥ ||  
 91 yathā karī kareṇaiva pānīyaṃ pibate tathā |

*suṣumṇā vakranālena pavanam grasate sadā ||*  
*93 mokṣamārge prasiddhā sā suṣumṇā viśvadhārīnī |*  
*yatra vai nirjitaḥ kālaś candrasuryanibandhanāt ||*  
*96 recake kṣīṇatām yāte pūrakam poṣayet [\*śoṣayet] sadā |*  
*sa eva nāthasaṅketāḥ siddhasaṅketalakṣaṇaḥ ||*  
*97ab guruprasādān marutaḥ susādhanam*  
*tenaiva cittaṁ pavanena sādhitam |*  
*101 anenābhyāsayogena nityam āsanabandhataḥ |*  
*cittaṁ vilīnatām eti bindur no yāty adhas tathā ||*  
*104 kathitam tu tava prītyā etad abhyāsalakṣaṇam |*  
*mantra haṭho layo rājā yoge 'ntarbhūmikāḥ kramāt |*  
*eka eva caturdhāyam mahāyogo 'bhidhīyate ||*  
*108cd haṭhena grasyate jāḍyam haṭhayogaḥ sa ucyate<sup>260</sup> ||*  
*109 jāḍyagrāsam samādāya cittaṁ yāti vilīnatām|*  
*pavanaḥ sthairyam āyāti layayogodaye sati ||*  
*116 yogasiddhiṁ vinā dehaḥ pramādān naśyate yadā |*  
*pūrvavāsanayā yuktaḥ śarīram cānyad āpnuyāt ||*  
*122 abhyāsasya phalam devi kathayāmy adhunā sphuṭam |*  
*ādau rāgāḥ praṇāsyanti paścāj jāḍyam śarīrajam ||*  
*123 tataḥ samarasībhūtvā candro varṣaty anāratam |*  
*dhātūmś ca grasate vahniḥ pavanena samantataḥ ||*  
*124 mahānādāḥ pravartante mārđavam yāti dehakam |*

<sup>260</sup> After 108ab vβM<sub>1</sub>π insert the following verse (omitted by α) *hakāreṇa tu sūryo 'sau ṭhakāreṇendur ucyate | sūryācandramasor aikyam haṭha ity abhidhīyate ||*

*jītvā pṛthvyādikaṃ jāḍyaṃ khecaraḥ bhavate naraḥ ||*  
*125 sarvajño 'sau bhavet kāmarūpaḥ pavanavegavān |*  
*krīdate triṣu lokeṣu jāyante siddhayo 'khilāḥ ||*  
*126 kapūre līyamāne kiṃ kāṭhinyaṃ tatra vidyate |*  
*ahaṃkāraśyate tadvad dehe kaṭhinatā kutaḥ ||*  
*127 īśvaraḥ sarvakartā ca svatanthro viśvarūpavān |*  
*jīvanmukto mahāyogī jāyate nātra saṃśayaḥ ||*  
*136 svayam eva prajāyante lābhālābhavivarjite |*  
*yogamārge tathaivehaṃ siddhijālaṃ pravartate ||*  
*137 parikṣakaiḥ varṇikābhir hema ity ucyate yathā |*  
*siddhibhir lakṣayet siddhaṃ jīvanmuktiṃ tathaiva ca ||*  
*139 siddhibhiḥ parihīnaṃ ca naraṃ baddhaṃ tu lakṣayet |*  
*ajarāmarapiṇḍo yo jīvanmuktaḥ sa eva hi ||*  
*140 śvānakukkuṭakīṭṭādyā mṛtiṃ samprāpnuvanti vai |*  
*teṣāṃ kiṃ piṇḍapātena muktir bhavati sundari ||*  
*141 na bahiḥ prāṇa āyāti piṇḍasya patanaṃ kutaḥ |*  
*piṇḍapātena yā muktiḥ sā muktir na tu gaṇyate ||*  
*142 dehaṃ brahmatvam āyāti jalatām saindhavaṃ yathā |*  
*ananyatām yadāyāti tadā muktasya lakṣaṇam ||*

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