

SYNTHESIS OF YOGA IN LIṄGĀYATISM

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(Karnataka).

[Note: 1. Liṅgāyatism of the Kannada vacanas is often wrongly identified with Viśiṣṭaism of the Sanskrit Śaiva Āgamas. The latter holds (1) that Śiva abides in Kailāsa, with wife Pārvatī, sons Gaṇapati, Kumāra and Vīrabhadra, a host of cohorts, (2) that he is a godhead of human skulls, holds a trident, rides a bull and is transcendent¹, (3) that *mokṣa* which is a post-mortem achievement is a companionship with Śiva, i.e., *svayam*, in which even to the liberated soul Śiva is 'the other'², (3) that one must observe caste discrimination failing which one goes to hell³, (4) that one must beg for livelihood and must not resort to any profession⁴, (5) that one must perform the Vedic sacrifices and rituals and⁵ (6) that since changing caste (*varṇa-saṅkara*) is a great sin, a non-Viśiṣṭa cannot become Viśiṣṭa in this life and if one wants to become a Viśiṣṭa, one must be born into a Viśiṣṭa family as a consequence of great merit acquired over thousands of births⁶. Basavaṇṇa and his followers of the 12th century, who wrote vacanas in Kannada, rejected the belief in Kailāsa both as an abode of Paraśiva and as the goal of spiritual life. Paraśiva, for them is not *nirguṇa* (featureless), but *nirākāra* (formless), present in everybody in the form of soul. *Mokṣa* for them is not an after-death passage from the mortal world to Kailāsa, but eternal union with Liṅga (Paraśiva), attainable in the embodied state. All those who wear *iṣṭaliṅga* are equal and therefore, one should not observe caste discrimination and the related practices like taboo. One must earn one's livelihood honestly and the excess must be surrendered to the needy. Anyone can become a Liṅgāyata at any time of his life. Therefore, the name 'Liṅgāyatism' is used in this paper in preference to the name 'Viśiṣṭaivism'. Moreover, the Sanskrit literature on Viśiṣṭaivism is scanty and whatever is available is influenced by the vast Kannada vacana literature of the 12th and later vacana-writers.

2. The spiritual path of Liṅgāyatism is called Ṣaṭ-sthala or Śivayoga. But since the name 'Śivayoga' applies to the spiritual programme of the Tamil Śaivas (Śaiva Siddhāntins) also, the word 'Ṣaṭ-sthala' is used in this essay as a synonym of Liṅgāyata Śivayoga.]

Metaphysical background :

According to Liṅgāyatism, the universal consciousness (more often called Liṅga and very few times called Śiva or Paraśiva), qualified by *Śakti*, deliberately divided itself in the beginning into *aṅga* (individual souls) and Liṅga, or the worshipper and the worshipped⁷. Because of ignorance (*marevu* or *avidyā*) the individual soul thinks that it is separate from and independent of Liṅga, that it is a body-mind complex and not soul and that the goal of its life is, not reunion, but sense-pleasure. This ignorance keeps it engaged in selfish activities, which in turn bind it to the *samsāra*.

According to the vacana-writers, the original division is not actually a division of Liṅga or Śiva (the cosmic consciousness), because he is really indivisible (*akhaṇḍa* or *aviraḷa*). It is only division of his *śakti*. The *śakti*, which is with Liṅga, is called *kalā-śakti* and that which rests with the *aṅga* (individual soul) is *bhakti-śakti*. Out of the former Liṅga creates the entire universe, including the sentient and non-sentient beings. Though in itself the *śakti* is neither evil nor good, it constitutes good or bad body-mind complex and environment for the bound souls depending upon their *karmas*. Since the soul is ignorant it thinks wrongly that the environment provokes it to do selfish activities and therefore, it calls such an environment *pravṛtti-śakti* (provoking force)⁸. The forces that make the universe are the same forces, which make the human personality. But since the forces of the individual can be converted so as to help him achieve his spiritual goal, the original union with Liṅga or *Liṅgāṅga-sāmarasya* or simply, '*sāmarasya*', (which is the Liṅgāyata technical name for *mokṣa*), they are called *nivṛtti-śakti* (inactive-forces). That is, *bhakti-śaktis* are the attributes of the pure soul or *aṅga*. Ṣaṭ-sthala, which is a systematic spiritual discipline prescribed by the Liṅgāyatas is the way to convert the *kalā-śaktis* into *bhakti-śaktis*, so that we unite with Liṅga.

ṢAṬ-STHALA YOGA:

Liṅgāyatism, like other systems of Indian philosophy, regards ignorance of one's own true nature and true goal as the starting point of suffering in the beginningless chain of births and deaths. One who realizes his present despicable predicament alone can understand the necessity of liberation.

The practice of Ṣaṭ-sthala-yoga by an aspirant is preceded by his acceptance of eight doctrines: *guru*, *liṅga*, *jaṅgama*, *pādōdaka*, *prasāda*, *vibhūti*, *rudrākṣi* and *mantra*.

He must obtain from an eligible *guru* an *iṣṭaliṅga*, which is regarded as the symbol of the universal consciousness present in the individual, sip *pādōdaka*, consume only these things which are first offered to Liṅga, apply *vibhūti* (sacred ash) to specific parts of his body and utter the only mantra “*Om namaḥśivāya*”. He must give money and things to *jaṅgama*, who, in return, propagates knowledge and practice of Liṅgāyatism and functions as a social mentor. These are external marks of a Liṅgāyata. All practices related to them are symbolic rituals. The *iṣṭaliṅga* is a symbol of the universal consciousness present in us; *vibhūti* implies that the aspirant determines to wipe out the impurities of the three *puras* or three-fold body (*sthūla*, *sūkṣma* and *karāṇa-sarīra*); consumption of *prasāda* implies the aspirant’s vow to treat all things of the world as *prasāda* (gift of Liṅga); and so on. The aspirant must transcend this stage and learn their philosophical significance; otherwise he will remain in the same elementary stage throughout his life. But one, who wants to achieve *mokṣa*, the original union, must in addition undergo the six-phased spiritual programme, *Ṣaṭ-sṭhala-yoga*. The six phases are (in the ascending order), *bhakta*, *mahēśa*, *prasādi*, *prāṇaliṅgi*, *śaraṇa* and *aikya*.

1. Bhakta-sṭhala:

Since the *bhakta* (aspirant of the first stage) is new to the spiritual discipline, he should act according to the *guru*’s advice, without questioning whether they are necessary or effective. In fact, the first condition of beginning the spiritual programme is that one must have faith (*viśvāsa-bhakti*) in the *guru*’s way, because he has already accomplished his goal. As Basavaṇṇa says, “to know the path of Śiva one must know the path of the *guru*”⁹. The four important instructions of the *guru* he has to follow are as follows.

(a) Once a person is converted to Liṅgāyatism, he must believe in the doctrines and practices of Liṅgāyatism and must not violate them. He should develop good moral character and abstain from his earlier non-Liṅgāyata doctrines and practices. He must try to be calm and overcome anger¹⁰. Cennabasavaṇṇa has formulated fifty codes of conduct, which a Liṅgāyata must observe unfailingly. Some of them are ethical. For example, the *bhakta* must not commit adultery with others’ wives, or steal others’ money¹¹.

(b) The aspirant must not only abstain from bad company, but also must try to be, as far as possible, in the company of the spiritually advanced people, so that, on the

one hand, he is not allowed to think of self-indulgence, and on the other, he gains sufficient opportunity to learn spiritual ways of from them¹².

(c) The aspirant must not renounce the family, society or duty and retire to forest. It is his duty to earn for the survival of his family¹³ and therefore, nobody should shirk the responsibility of doing duty in the name of renunciation. There is no high or low in so far as professions are concerned¹⁴. However, in order for survival one should not beg or steal or earn in an immoral way.

(d) One must not only work for oneself and one's family, but also one must earn more than necessary, not in order to hoard for future or for his grand children, but in order to feed the needy. Like earning for survival, feeding the needy is his duty. Here also he must observe two rules. (1) He must not share his earning with a sense of egotism or with a profit motive. (2) He must give it to others as if he is their servant (*dāsa*) or servant of the society. Such a giving is technically called *dāsōham* (*dāsa* = servant, *aham* = I am) or *dāsōha*. Similarly, one who receives it must treat it as *prasāda* (gift) of Liṅga¹⁵. The sense of servitude is essential for destroying the sense of ego and selfishness.

2. Mahēśa sthala:

Adherence to strict monotheism and adherence to strict moral conduct characterise the *māhēśvara-sthala*.

a. Liṅgāyatas being philosophically strict monotheists censure both worship of inanimate objects like trees, winnowing fans, pots, stones on the roadside¹⁶ and of minor gods, who without the capacity to give, vex humans for cheap foods¹⁷. There is no place in Liṅgāyatism for Pārvatī, Gaṇapati, etc. whom other Śaivas worship. Even the Śiva, whom the Liṅgāyatas normally call Liṅga, is free from epithets such as 'residing in Kailāsa, wielding a trident, wearing garland of human skulls, etc.' ascribed by the Āgamas and mythologies (Purāṇas). Their Liṅga pervades everything in the world including human beings¹⁸. They do not believe in real, independent, individual souls; on the contrary, they believe that each person's consciousness (*aṅga*) is Liṅga. Only they call it *ātman* or *aṅga*, for want of a better word.

The *iṣṭaliṅga* is the symbol of such an infinite consciousness abiding in the individual. Though a *bhakta* is already initiated to the *iṣṭaliṅga* worship, his devotion is neither steadfast nor loyal to one God. He often tends to practise polytheism for selfish

purposes and in this sense **his** polytheism takes him away from his goal, namely, *mukṣa*. If he shows unswerving loyalty (*niṣṭhā-bhakti*) to Liṅga he is called *mahēṣa*. If anyone worships other gods than Liṅga it means absence of faith and trust in Liṅga. The vacana-writers compare the *niṣṭhā-bhakti* to the unflinching love of a woman for her husband and worshipping other deities to her adultery¹⁹. The devotion to one God (Liṅga or Paraśiva) must be, not mechanical or commercial, but unselfish²⁰. Performing worship for a material benefit, like rituals and sacrifices performed by the early Vedic people, is not indicative of true devotion (*bhakti*).

b. Liṅgāyatas hold that it is not enough that an aspirant worships only one God, or for a longer time; he must develop moral constancy. In the first stage he was introduced to moral codes. But in the second stage he is advised to practise them as a religious vow. Liṅgāyatas insist unanimously that devotion without righteousness is not favoured by Liṅga²¹. In fact, one cannot be called a *mahēṣa*, says Cennabasavaṇṇa, unless one abstains from adultery and stealing²². Moreover, one must be compassionate to all beings and as Basavaṇṇa says none can practise true religion without being compassionate²³. Devotion to God and compassion to fellow beings are necessary and complementary to each other. To worship God and neglect morality is like one hand cutting off another²⁴. A real devotee should think, "other devotees' welfare is my welfare"²⁵.

There is also an argument by Basavaṇṇa and Jēḍara Dāsimayya to the effect that since all living beings are forms of Liṅga, hurting any one of them for selfish purposes amounts to hurting Liṅga himself²⁶. Therefore, one must fear the consequence of divine wrath and abstain from violence²⁷.

Telling lies, adultery with others' wives or husbands, deceiving, robbery, taking bribes, etc., which hurt others' feeling are different forms of violence like killing or mutilating. The purpose of abstaining from all these forms of violence is not escaping from the consequence of divine wrath; nor are truthfulness, showing compassion to all forms of life, etc. aim at acquisition of divine grace. The two forms of moral behaviour only aim at being less and less selfish. Unselfishness has two spiritual advantages. (1) An unselfish mind is a pure mind and a pure mind can easily meditate while a selfish mind cannot. (2) An unselfish mind can perform selfless acts, which breed no karma. A mind, which is free from *karma*, is free from rebirth and is almost liberated (*mukta*).

Anyone who wishes to attain the original re-union with Liṅga must, therefore, take a vow to purify his mind by means of moral behaviour.

3. Prasādi-sthala:

Patañjali's Yoga and Haṭha-yoga prescribe *āsanas* (bodily postures) and *prāṇāyāma* (regulated breathing) for the purification of the physical body so that it becomes fit for meditation. But these two techniques can at best purify only the gross body (*sthūla-śarīra*). The Liṅgāyatas, however, as an alternative to this suggest that the aspirant must develop a special philosophical attitude towards one's own body and the world. According to Liṅgāyatism, the world including the human body and mind (*antahkaraṇa*) is the body of Liṅga. The world is regarded sometimes as made of 35 principles (five primordial *śaktis* and their superintending deities, five gross elements, five subtle elements or five vital airs, five *karmēndriyas*, five *jñānēndriyas*, four *antahkaraṇas* and *jīvātman*) and sometimes as made of only eight principles (five gross elements, *ātman*, the sun and the moon). In any case the principles are different forms of *śakti* of Liṅga. Liṅgāyatism does not distinguish body from the soul, *śakti* from Liṅga, in order to call one reality and the other unreality or *māyā*.

The term '*prasāda*' has a special significance in Liṅgāyatism. We offer food to Liṅga as a token of gratitude and what is offered becomes *prasāda*. It is holy food and one who eats it is believed to become himself holy. A Liṅgāyata is taught to treat not only what he eats and drinks, but also all other objects of his experience, such as form, taste, smell, etc. as *prasāda* (gift) of Liṅga. This presupposes his belief of Liṅga's omnipresence. Earlier he used to offer only edible objects to the physical *iṣṭaliṅga* and now he offers objects mentally to the all-pervading Liṅga, before he enjoys them. Still later, he treats his own *karmēndriyas*, *jñānēndriyas*, *antahkaraṇas* as *prasāda* of Liṅga. Any one who develops such a philosophical attitude is a real *prasādi* and his body, which is nourished by such food and drink, is believed to become *prasāda-kāya* (holy body) or Kailāsa or temple of Śiva. Such devotion is called *avadhāna-bhakti* (attentive devotion), because the devotee is always attentive about treating all objects of experience as *prasāda*.

Most spiritual disciplines prescribe abstention of mundane happiness and even mundane relations, in an attempt to attain transmundane happiness. The so-called transmundane happiness is not really transmundane but only sense pleasure derived from objects like honey, ghee, milk, sweet, etc. available in heaven. This is based on a

wrong philosophical doctrine that the mortal world is evil and the
 But Liṅgāyatism does not believe in two worlds. There is but one w
 from worldling's angle is mortal world (*martya-loka*) and which
 Śaivayogi's angle, is *Śivaloka*. Even if the goal is really transmut
 does not advocate abstention of personal happiness. Basavaṇṇa
 Liṅgāyatism, had two wives and firmly believed that conjugal life
 spiritual life. On the one hand, the unfulfilled instincts always ha
 do not allow him to meditate and, on the other, (warns Basavaṇṇa),
 in mental and physical maladies. Moreover, it is illogical to think
 desire is opposed to spiritual life. A woman saint says,

They say that we must please Liṅga by renouncing gold.
 Are gold and Liṅga opposed?
 They say that we must please Liṅga by renouncing woman.
 Are woman and Liṅga opposed?
 They say that we must please Liṅga by renouncing land.
 Are land and Liṅga opposed? ...
 They say that we must please Liṅga by renouncing senses.
 Are senses and Liṅga opposed?
 They say that we must please Liṅga by renouncing world.
 Are world and Liṅga opposed? ...²⁸

From this it follows that renunciation is not advised as a
 spirituality. But one who wants to enjoy must do so in a moral way
 of the close associates of Basavaṇṇa, says,

If a devotee is interested in a woman he must marry he
 If a devotee is interested in land, he must buy it and set
 If a devotee is interested in gold, he must earn it. ...²⁹

According to Liṅgāyatism, rejection of anything is rejection of p
 effect means rejection of an opportunity to become holy. Th
 Basavaṇṇa, whatever comes to us we must offer to Liṅga and en
 However, we should guard ourselves against immorality³⁰; nor shou
 to develop greed in the name of *prasāda*. In a sense the *prasādi* has n
 for any object. As Cennabasavaṇṇa says,

We must offer Liṅga the tender sunlight of the morning
 We must offer Liṅga the shadows of the evening;
 We must offer Liṅga the below, the middle and the top;
 Whatever the object we must offer Liṅga ...³¹

In another vacana the same author says,

Before our body touches, objects must be offered to Liṅ
 Before our mind touches, objects must be offered to Liṅ

Before our ears, eyes, nose, tongue and
 Objects must be offered to Liṅga ...³²
 It is important not only to offer things or senses or *antaḥ*
 as *prasāda* of Liṅga. This does not take away his minimum
 mental and physical health, nor does it make him self-in
 that his mind stops the influx of the fresh (*āgāmi*) karmas³³

4. Prāṇaliṅgi-sthala :

In the first three stages the aspirant learns that the
 separate reality, but a part or body (*aṅga*) of Liṅga and that
 object it must be offered to Liṅga as a token of devotional
 stage he must learn the process of realising it. The only way
 meditation, to which the earlier three are stepping-stones
 discipline in meditation and is called *anubhāva-bhakti* (meditation)

Aṣṭāṅga-yoga of Patañjali and Haṭha-yoga prescribe
prāṇāyāma as a prerequisite of meditation. The Liṅgāyoga
 complex, laborious and time-consuming nature of *āsana*s and
 small results, have prescribed only one of the five *āsana*s
padmāsana, *svastikāsana*, *ardhacandrāsana* and *paryāṅkāsana*.
 worship one's *iṣṭaliṅga*, and by this, the time and labour of
 other *āsana*s and time devoted for worshipping the *iṣṭaliṅga*.
 Moreover, very few *prāṇāyāma* forms³⁵ are prescribed.

One who wants to learn the technique of meditation has
 posture such as *padmāsana* or *paryāṅkāsana*, make his senses
 empty his mind of all its concepts, ideas, desires, etc., concentrate
prāṇaliṅga (individual soul), and experience the brilliant light³⁶.
 forms of *prāṇāyāma* including *bandhas* such as *jālandhara-bandha*.

Allama Prabhu, who was an adept in yoga of the Nāṭh
cakras, surrounding the six Liṅgas residing in the different parts
 bottom of the spine is *ācārāliṅga* in the centre of the *ādihāra-cakra*
guru-liṅga in the centre of the *svādhiṣṭhāna-cakra*; a little above
 centre of *maṇipūraka cakra*; *jaṅgama-liṅga* is in the centre of the
 the heart; *prasāda-liṅga* is in the centre of *viśuddhi-cakra* and *mahā*
cakra between the eye brows. At the top of the brain there is a seventh

called *saḥasrāra*, which **surrounds** the *śūnya-līṅga*. Sometimes six synonyms for the six liṅgas, respectively, Brahma (Abhava), Viṣṇu, Rudra, Īśvara, Sadī Upaniṣat (Śāntyatīta)³⁷.

This does not mean that there are seven Liṅgas in each person and inn person have innumerable **Liṅgas**. If that were so, it would contradict the L monothicism. Nor does it mean that Liṅga exists only in special parts of the body. If it so meant, it would contradict the theory of omnipresent Liṅga. What means is that one **Liṅga** existing in different *cakras* has different names³ note that even the *cakras* are the subtle forms of *śakti*, it should become clear t Liṅga is surrounded by **the same śakti**. The *cakras* are only places or p disciplining which one can **mystically intuit Liṅga**. One who realizes the Śūny also called *bayalu* (space) or *cid-bayalu* (spiritual space) is certain that there difference between one part of the body and another so far as the existence of L it is concerned. Tōṇṭada **Siddhaliṅga** Śivayōgi, a great yogi of the 15th century, "Can there be any difference between a tree and its branches? Can there t difference between a body and its organs? . . . For one who consumes the l *prasāda* hand, mouth and **all other organs** of the body are pervaded by Liṅga"³⁹.

The *prāṇaliṅgi* or *sarvāṅga-līṅgi* (one who has established Liṅga all ov person) experiences brilliant **light**, which he identifies with Liṅga⁴⁰. That is why vacana-writers call it Jyōtirlīṅga.

According to some, meditation may begin with *dr̥ṣṭiyoga* or gazing a *iṣṭaliṅga* placed on one's **palm** after its worship. The gazing eventually turns concentration such that the **image** of the *iṣṭaliṅga* in imprinted on the mind. This necessary prelude to meditation⁴¹. When the image of the *iṣṭaliṅga* imprinted or mind occupies the whole **body** it is called *prāṇaliṅga*. The extension of medita results in the individual soul's identification with Liṅga⁴²...

The five airs (*prāṇa*, *apāna*, *samāna*, *udāna* and *vyāna*) operate in two ways: a man who has not undergone training in *āsana*, *prāṇāyāma* and various *bandhas*, t operate in such a way that **he is dominated** by various selfish desires and is forced go morally astray, whereas **the same airs** can be spiritually helpful in a man who undergone Haṭha-yogic discipline. But Śaṭ-sthala-yoga, which aims at the sa spiritual benefits without prescribing the complicated, laborious and time-consum Haṭhayogic discipline, has **discovered** *dr̥ṣṭiyoga*, which is based on the theory that or

the gaze concentrates on the *iṣṭaliṅga*, our breathing is automatically regularised and by that the mind is able to think nothing else. As a result, the fire in the basic *cakra*, *mūlādhāra*, sparkles and the *kuṇḍalinī*, which is sleeping in a coiled manner, with its head downward, is aroused.

There are three *nāḍīs* (nerves) beginning from the brain and ending in the bottom of the spine. The right one is called *piṅgalā*, the left *iḍā* and the central *suṣumnā*. The lower gate of the *suṣumnā* (called *brahma-randhra*) is blocked by the tail of the sleeping *kuṇḍalinī* in a man who is seeking sense-pleasure always because of ignorance. Once the *kuṇḍalinī* is aroused the lower gate of the *suṣumnā* is opened. It is said that the 'fire' in the lowest *cakra*, *mūlādhāra*, reaches the other end of the *suṣumnā* and heats up the pot of nectar in the *sahasrāra*. The same idea is expressed in other words. The *kuṇḍalinī*, thus aroused, moves upwards through each of the six *cakras*, ultimately uniting with Śūnya-liṅga abiding in the *sahasrāra* (located in the top of the brain). The upward movement of the *kuṇḍalinī* brings about unmatched bliss, which is compared to *amṛta* (nectar)⁴³.

One important consequence of becoming a *prāṇaliṅgi* is destruction of ignorance and its attendant evils, selfishness and *karmas*⁴⁴. Since the aspirant regards his own body as Kailāsa or temple of Liṅga, he does not regard Liṅga as 'the other', and therefore, he does not worship the symbol, *iṣṭaliṅga*⁴⁵.

5. Śaraṇa-sthala:

The aspirant of the fifth stage is called śaraṇa (one who has surrendered himself to Śiva). Like many mystics the world over, many of the Liṅgāyata saints, both men and women, who lose their selfishness, unhesitatingly regard themselves as wives of Liṅga⁴⁶. Their loss of *jīvatva* (selfishness and individuality) results in the gain of *Liṅgatva* (divinity). The loss of self is total such that a śaraṇa regards his own thoughts, words and acts as those of Liṅga. Of such a śaraṇa Cennabasavaṇṇa says,

Śaraṇa does not touch anything before Liṅga which is at
the tip of the skin touches it;
Śaraṇa does not see anything before Liṅga which is at
the tip of the eyes sees it;
Śaraṇa does not hear anything before Liṅga which is at
the tip of the ear hears it; ...
Because śaraṇa has Liṅga all over his body ...⁴⁷

Sanmukha Svāmī, another vacana-writer says,

All my acts are your acts;
All my words are your words;
All my sights are your sights; (etc.)⁴⁸

Mystics enjoy bliss (*ānanda*) not only in the mystic state, but in the waking state also, especially by spontaneously surrendering themselves completely to Liṅga. In fact, he is called *śaraṇa* because of his complete surrender. Just as a traditional wife surrenders her all to her husband and regards her husband's happiness as her happiness, so also the *śaraṇa*, who has had mystic experience, surrenders himself completely to Liṅga and regards Liṅga's happiness as his happiness. Just as his experience is called *śivānubhava* or *liṅgānubhava*, his bliss enjoyed during and after the experience is called *liṅgānanda* or *śivānanda*. The bliss is incomparable⁴⁹. Once he experiences this supreme bliss he belittles all kinds of sensual pleasure⁵⁰.

6. Aikya-sthala:

Prapālīṅgi learns, not from somebody but from his own mystic intuition, that he is not separate from, but only *aṅga* (part) of, Liṅga. Yet there is a sense of 'I' left in him. In the *śaraṇa* state he sacrifices that sense also. But that is only temporary. Several meditations assure him that he is not separate from Liṅga, but one with Liṅga. In other words, he becomes an *aikya* or *liṅgaikya* (one who has identified himself with Liṅga). The several unity experiences take away from him the sense of 'I' (subject) as a result of which he loses the sense of object also. That is, he lives in a state, which transcends the subject-object duality. He is not aware of himself as distinct from God and compares the original union to the merging of a river in a sea, to the melting of a hailstone in a pond, to ghee uniting with ghee, etc.⁵¹. Since the soul (*aṅga*) and Liṅga are substantially the same, their union becomes inseparable and indistinguishable. To stress the point of indistinguishability of *aṅga* and Liṅga, Tōṇṭada Siddhaliṅga Śivayogi argues that the golden ornaments when melted would not become gold again unless they came out of gold; similarly, Basavaṇṇa, Cennabasavaṇṇa, Allama Prabhu and others would not become Liṅga again unless they evolved from it⁵². For this reason the union is called *sāmarasya* or *liṅgāṅga-sāmarasya*. The concept of *sāmarasya* is, therefore, different from the Āgamic concept of *sāyujya*, according to which, the liberated soul does not unite with Śiva indistinguishably, but remains separate from him, although it enjoys enduring companionship with him.

It should be noted **that the analogies of river uniting with sea, hailstone melting in a pond and the like, must not be misinterpreted to mean that the liberated soul passes from one place to another in order to unite with Liṅga.** Such a passage is actually conceived by the Āgamic Vīraśaivas, who regard *sāyujya*, not, *sāmarasya*, as the supreme goal of life. The soul eligible for *mokṣa* moves after the death of the body from the mortal world to Kailāsa. The concept of *sāyujya* is congruent with the concept of transcendent God, whose abode is Kailāsa. But since the Liṅgāyatas believe in the omnipresent Liṅga, they cannot think of a passage of the soul from a Godless place to Kailāsa, where it gains proximity (*sāmīpya*) to God and, though it attains pure form (*sārūpya*) of God it remains aloof from him. The union of *aṅga* and Liṅga is best expressed by employing the analogy of parts of space uniting with the greater space. When the pots, jars, houses, etc which contains limited parts of space are destroyed the parts of space merge in the greater space without traversing any distance. So also, the souls transcend their limitations and merge in the cosmic soul without traversing any distance.

From the foregoing discussion it follows that according to Liṅgāyatism, man is a synthesis of physical, biological, psychological and spiritual forces, which can work alternatively: left to themselves, they bind us to the sorrowful *saṃsāra* for ever; or, if they are controlled and guided to flow in the right direction or made to manifest their hidden nature, we cease to be separate from Liṅga and consequently from sorrow, and attain eternal blissful union with Liṅga. The forces, which bind us to *saṃsāra*, are the same forces, which liberate us.

Secondly, man is already divine and what is in Liṅga is also in *aṅga*, like gold present in golden ornaments. Because of forgetfulness (*marevu*) or ignorance (*avidyā*) he has forgotten his original nature. Śaṭ-sthala-yoga is the way of recollecting one's original nature.

Thirdly, Śaṭ-sthala-yoga is able to strike a balance between worldly life and a life of renunciation, as a result of which it looks neither abnormal nor impracticable nor irrational.

SYNTHESIS:

For a Śaṭ-sthala-yogi, who wants to attain the original blissful union with Liṅga, his life from the earliest spiritual life to the stage in which he attains it his entire

life is yoga; and after he attains it the remaining part of his life is also yoga. Thus the word 'yoga' is used in the sense of discipline in the first case and in the sense of blissful union with Liṅga in the second case.

Ṣaṭ-sthala-yoga necessarily presupposes that other forms of yoga do not lead to the original blissful union of *aṅga* and Liṅga. Some of them involve more effort, more waste and take a longer time to produce the desired effect, whereas Ṣaṭ-sthala-yoga is more compressed, direct, easier and shorter. What makes it more attractive is its nature of synthesising different systems of yoga, such as Karma-yoga, Bhakti-yoga, Jñāna-yoga, Mantra-yoga, Haṭha-yoga and Rāja-yoga. This does not mean that a Śivayogi practises the different forms of yoga successively. Ṣaṭ-sthala-yoga is not a combination, but a harmonious synthesis of these forms of yoga.

It has become almost a universal traditional dictum that God and personal happiness are exclusive of each other such that a serious devotee who chooses God must sacrifice his personal happiness and one who chooses personal happiness must forget God. Ṣaṭ-sthala-yoga instead of rejecting one for the sake of the other synthesises the two harmoniously. It insists that one must work and enjoy the fruit (*prasāda*) of Liṅga, without being immoral. Similarly, it rejects the idea that one who is spiritually interested must turn his back on the society and vice versa. According to Liṅgāyatism, no yoga can be a satisfactory synthesis of different yoga forms unless it synthesises individual, social and spiritual life or inner experiences and outer activities. Ṣaṭ-sthala-yoga not only condemns people who renounce their social and family life and retire to the forest to lead spiritual life there, but also holds that spiritual life can be led in society and family.

The time and energy spent by Haṭha-yogis are enormous compared to the smaller results they produce. Liṅgāyatism involves very few Haṭha-yogic processes and advocates a few *āsana*s and *prāṇāyāma* forms, not to achieve robust youthfulness, longevity or occult powers, but to purify the vital airs, *cakras* and other constituents such that the practitioner achieves meditation on Liṅga easily. It synthesises the worship of *iṣṭaliṅga* with *āsana*s and *prāṇāyāma*.

By introducing the concepts of *prasāda*, *kāyaka* and *dāsōha* it synthesises Karma-yoga, Bhakti-yoga, Jñāna-yoga. By treating everything as *prasāda* of God, an aspirant develops equanimity towards all objects of his experience. One must earn for oneself and one's family and must distribute the excess to the needy, with a sense

humility. Both the concept of *prasāda* and the concept of *dāsōha* aim at inculcating in the aspirant selflessness necessary for losing the sense of individuality (*jīvatva-bhāva*). A person who is less selfish and more equanimous is able to perform meditation (*dhyāna*). *Dhyāna* is the only way of acquiring true knowledge of oneself, which according to Liṅgāyatism, is *mokṣa*.

In a sense, the Ṣaṭ-sthala-yoga does not really have six stages, as is generally believed. Bhakti (devotion) may gradually intensify in different stages of one's life, but it includes the aids to *bhakti*, namely, utterance of mantra, selfless distribution of our earning, meditation, etc. in every stage. That is why the spiritual discipline is sometimes called Miśra-Ṣaṭ-sthala. Just as we cannot offer God taste, smell, form, etc. of a fruit severally, but only collectively, so also, we cannot practise the different means to *mokṣa* severally, but only collectively. That is why Basavaṇṇa and Cennabasavaṇṇa say that since we do not have an endless life, we cannot be *bhakta*, today, *mahēśa* tomorrow, etc.; we must practise the essence of each *sthala* simultaneously⁵³.

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