SYNTHESIS OF YOGA IN LIĬGĀYATISM

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[Note] 1. Lingāyatism of the Kannada vacanas is often wrongly identified with
Viraśaivism of the Sanskrit Śaiva Āgamas. The latter holds (1) that Śiva abides in
one’s heart, his wife Pārvatī, sons Gaṇapati, Kumāra and Virabhadra, a host of cohorts,
Veni, a garland of human skulls, holds a trident, rides a bull and is transcendent,
Mokṣa which is a post-mortem achievement is a companionship with Śiva, i.e.,
vigyanam which even the liberated soul Śiva is the other, (3) that one must
be free from caste discrimination failing which one goes to hell, (4) that one must beg for
livelihood and must not resort to any profession, (5) that one must perform the Vedas
sacrifices and rituals and (6) that since changing caste (varṇa-saṅkara) is a great sin, a
man Śiva cannot become Viraśaiva in this life and if one wants to become a
Viraśaiva one must be born into a Viraśaiva family as a consequence of great merit
acquired over thousands of births. Basavaṇṇa and his followers of the 12th century,
who write vacanas in Kannada, rejected the belief in Kailāsā both as an abode of
ParaŚiva, and as the goal of spiritual life. ParaŚiva, for them is not nirguṇa (featureless),
but niśkṣara (formless), present in everybody in the form of soul. Mokṣa for them is
not an after-death passage from the mortal world to Kailāsā, but eternal union with
LiĬgā (ParaŚiva), attainable in the embodied state. All those who wear iṣṭa-liṅga 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 LiĬgāyata at any time of his life.
Therefore, the name ‘LiĬgāyatism’ is used in this paper in preference to the name
‘Viraśaivism’. Moreover, the Sanskrit literature on Viraśaivism 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 LiĬgāyatism is called Śaṭ-sthala or Śivayoga. But since the
name ‘Śivayoga’ applies to the spiritual programme of the Tamil Śaivas (Śaiva
Nākhaśāntiśa), also, the word ‘Śaṭ-sthala’ is used in this essay as a synonym of
LiĬgāyata 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 worshipped\(^7\). Because of ignorance (mārevu 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 (akhāṇḍa or avirāla). 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 Liṅgāyatata technical name for mokṣa), they are called nivṛtti-śakti (inactive-forces). That is, bhakti-śaktis are the attributes of the pure soul or aṅga. Śaṭ-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.

ŚAṬ-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 Śaṭ-sthala-yoga by an aspirant is preceded by his acceptance of eight doctrines: guru, liṅga, jaṅgama, pādōdaka, prasāda, vibhūti, rudrākṣi and mantra.
The must obtain from an eligible guru an īṣṭālinta, 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 jāngama, who, in return, propagates knowledge and practice of Liṅgāyatism and functions as a social mentor. These are external marks of a Liṅgāyat. All practices related to them are symbolic rituals. The īṣṭālinta 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 kāraṇa-kāraṇa); 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, Śaṭṭhala-yoga. The six phases are (in the ascending order), bhakta, mahēśa, prasādi, pramālinta, saraṇa 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-Liṅgāyat doctrines and practices. He must try to be calm and overcome anger10. Cennabasavaṇṇa has formulated fifty codes of conduct, which a Liṅgāyatā 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 them.\textsuperscript{12}

(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 family\textsuperscript{13} 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 concerned\textsuperscript{14}. 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 Liṅga\textsuperscript{15}. 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 roadside\textsuperscript{16} and of minor gods, who without the capacity to give, vex humans for cheap foods\textsuperscript{17}. 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 beings\textsuperscript{18}. They do not believe in real, independent, individual souls; on the contrary, they believe that each person’s consciousness (āṅga) is Liṅga. Only they call it ātman or āṅga, for want of a better word.

The īṣṭa-liṅga is the symbol of such an infinite consciousness abiding in the individual. Though a bhakta is already initiated to the īṣṭa-liṅga 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, māheśa. If he shows unswerving loyalty (nīṣṭhā-bhakti) to Liṅga he is called māheśa. If anyone worships other gods than Liṅga it means absence of faith and trust in Liṅga. The vacana-writers compare the nīṣṭhā-bhakti to the unflinching love of a woman for her husband and worshipping other deities to her adultery. The devotion to one God (Liṅga or Paraśiva) must be, not mechanical or commercial, but unselfish. 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 Liṅga. In fact, one cannot be called a māheśa, says Cennabasavanna, unless one abstains from adultery and stealing. Moreover, one must be compassionate to all beings and as Basavanna says none can practise true religion without being compassionate. 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 another. A real devotee should think, “other devotees’ welfare is my welfare.”

There is also an argument by Basavanna 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 himself. Therefore, one must fear the consequence of divine wrath and abstain from violence.

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 Liṅgāyatatas, 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 (antahkarana) is the body of Liṅga. The world is regarded sometimes as made of 35 principles (five primordial saktis and their superintending deities, five gross elements, five subtle elements or five vital airs, five karmēṃdriyas, five jñānēṃdriyas, four antahkaranas 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 sakti of Liṅga. Liṅgāyatism does not distinguish body from the soul, sakti 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 iṣṭalīṅga and now he offers objects mentally to the all-pervading Liṅga, before he enjoys them. Still later, he treats his own karmēṃdriyas, jñānēṃdriyas, antahkaranas 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 Lingāyatism does not believe in two worlds. There is but one w from worldlyling’s angle is mortal world (martya-loka) and whic Śānyogi’s angle, is Śivaloka. Even if the goal is really transmu does not advocate abstention of personal happiness. Basavaṅ Lingāyatism, had two wives and firmly believed that conjugal lif 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 thin 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?

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. . . .

According to Lingāyatism, rejection of anything is rejection of "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 immorality; nor shou. to develop greed in the name of prasāda. In a sense the prasādi has n for any object. As Cennabasaṇṇa 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 . . .

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 all things or senses or antahkaran are offered to Linga... It is important not only as prasada of Linga. This does not take away his mental and physical health, nor does it make him self-satisfied. The fresh (agami) karmas
that his mind stops the influx of

4. Panchali-sthala:

In the first three stages the aspirant learns that the separate reality, but a part or body of the aspirant learns that the object it must be offered to Linga as a token of devotional stage he must learn the process of realising it. The only way is meditation, to which the earlier three are stepping-stone: discipline in meditation.

Asthanga-yoga of Patañjali and Haṭha-yoga prescribe pranayama as a prerequisite of time-consuming nature of āsanas a small results, have prescribed only one of the five āsan. padmasana, svastikāsana, ardha-āntrasana and paryankāsan. worship one's istaliṅga, and by this, the time and labour of other āsanas and time devoted for worshipping the īstaliṅga. Moreover, very few pranayama forms are prescribed.

One who wants to learn the technique of meditation has to posture such as padmāsana or paryankāsana, make his sense empty his mind of all its concepts, ideas, desires, etc., conceive pranaliṅga (individual soul), and experience the brilliant light of forms of pranayama including bandhas such as Jalandhara-bandha.

Allama Prabhu, who was an adept in yoga of the Nāṭṭi cakras, surrounding the six Lingas residing in the different parts of the body are ācaraliṅga in the centre of the ādhara-cakra; a little above guru-liṅga in the centre of the svadhishthana-cakra; a little above centre of maṇipura cakra; jāṅgama-liṅga is in the centre of the heart; prasada-liṅga is in the centre of the vīśuddhi-cakra and mah cakra between the eye brows. At the top of the brain there is a set...
which surrounds the Śūnya-liṅga. Sometimes six synonyms of the six liṅgas, respectively, Brahma (Abhava), Viṣṇu, Rudra,Īśvara, Śadāpoṭṭhāna (Śāntyatīta) 37.

This does not mean that there are seven Liṅgas in each person and in each person have innumerable Liṅgas. If that were so, it would contradict the L monotheism. 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 it means is that one Liṅga existing in different cakras has different names 3 note that even the cakras are the subtle forms of śakti, it should become clear that Liṅga is surrounded by the same śakti. The cakras are only places or 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 prasiddhi hand, mouth and sarvāṅga-liṅga (one who has established Liṅga all other organs of the body are pervaded by Liṅga” 39.

The prāṇaliṅgi or The prāṇaliṅgi or prāṇaliṅgi or prāṇaliṅgi (one who has established Liṅga all ov person) experiences brilliant light, which he identifies with Liṅga 40. That is why Vacana writers call it Jyōti. According to some, meditation may begin with drṣṭiyoga or gazing a ışṭaliṅga placed on one’s palm after its worship. The gazing eventually turns concentration such that the image of the ışṭaliṅga in imprinted on the mind. This necessary prelude to meditation 41. When the image of the ışṭaliṅga imprinted or mind occupies the whole body it is called prāṇaliṅga. The extension of medita results in the individual soul’s identification with Liṅga 42.

The five airs (prāṇa, apāna, samāna, udāna and vyāna) operate in two way 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 to 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 Hatha-yogic discipline, has discovered drṣṭiyoga, which is based on the theory that or
the gaze concentrates on the īșṭaliṁga, 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 nāḍis (nerves) beginning from the brain and ending in the bottom of the spine. The right one is called piṅgalā, the left ḫāṭā 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 anṛta (nectar).43

One important consequence of becoming a prāṇaliṁgī is destruction of ignorance and its attendant evils, selfishness and karmas.44 Since the aspirant regards his own body as Kailāśa or temple of Liṅga, he does not regard Liṅga as ‘the other’, and therefore, he does not worship the symbol, īșṭaliṁga.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 Liṅga.46 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
Similarly, Śaṅmukha Svāmi, another vacana-writer says,

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

Mystics enjoy bliss (ānanda) not only in the mystic state, but in the wakin
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 his, 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 incomparable. Once he experiences this supreme bliss he belittles all kinds of sensual pleasure.

6. Aikya-sthala:

Prapaliṅgi learns, not from somebody but from his own mystic intuition, that he is not separate from, but only āṅga (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. Since the soul (āṅga) and Liṅga are substantially the same, their union becomes inseparable and indistinguishable. To stress the point of indistinguishability of āṅga and Liṅga, Tōṇḍada Siddhāliṅga Śrayogi 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 it. 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 sāyuja, 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 sāyuja 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 (sāmipya) 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 form 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.

Sat-sthala-yoga necessarily presupposes that other forms of yoga do not let the original blissful union of anīga and Liṅga. Some of them involve more effort, waste time to produce the desired effect, whereas Sat-sthala-yoga 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 Śiva-practises the different forms of yoga successively. Sat-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 to must sacrifice his personal happiness and one who chooses personal happiness must forget God. Sat-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 of Śiva without being immoral. Similarly, it rejects the idea that one who spiritually interested must turn his back on the society and vice versa. According to Liṅga-yatasm, no yoga can be a satisfactory synthesis of different yoga forms unless the syntheses individual, social and spiritual life or inner experiences and outer activities of Sat-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 carried on in society and family.

The time and energy spent by Haṭha-yogis are enormous compared to smaller results they produce. Liṅga-yatasm involves very few Haṭha-yogic processes and advocates a few āsanas and prāṇāyāma forms, not to achieve robust youthful longevity or occult powers, but to purify the vital air, cakras and other constituents such that the practitioner achieves meditation on Liṅga easily. It synthesises the worship of iṣṭalīṅga with āsanas 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 aspirant develops equanimity towards all objects of his experience. One must earn 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 dāsāha 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 Śaṭ-sthāla-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-Śaṭ-sthāla. 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, mahēṣa tomorrow, etc.; we must practise the essence of each sthāla simultaneously.\(^{53}\)

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