CHAPTER VI
CONCLUSION

Amongst the great men of religion who strived to reform society Brahmananda Sivayogi stands apart as the one who took a rationalistic and atheistic path in Kerala. He learned and grasped the essence of the scriptures which many Sanskrit scholars were unable to fathom. He analysed the prevalent beliefs, rites and rituals in the light of what he found out and rejected that which was irrational, primitive and superstitious. He accepted only those beliefs which are not a hindrance to the society’s progress. He exhorted the common man to make use of his reasoning powers and accept that which was logically acceptable. Brahmananda Sivayogi’s greatness lies in his contribution towards the renaissance of Kerala. He opened for the common man a new form of religion which is rational and progressive.

Social mobility is necessary for the dynamic progress of every society. No society can be completely static in its nature. Social movements in Kerala can be distinguished at its structural and cultural levels. All these movements have had ideological base which demands strong involvement. The ideological inspiration moves men to action and brings new hope to every collective group. The new faith becomes a fillip to revolutionary movements propped up, by efficient leadership and a stable organisation. Thus Ideology, organisation and leadership are interrelated.

There should be a charismatic leadership to attract followers who are receptive to a particular ideology. A collective activity carried out under an able leadership brings social change and social transformation. Protest is necessary to maintain a fair rate of change in any society. Protest can bring social change if it has ideological base supported by organisation and leadership. For nearly forty years, Brahmananda Sivayogi worked
incessantly as an organizer, preacher, and reformer in Kerala, amidst aggressive opposition from high caste Hindus and unfavourable socio-economic conditions. Sivayogi’s chief concern was the emancipation of the whole society. He was not a spectacular preacher or propagandist and did not indulge in any lengthy metaphysical dissertations. But the very acts he performed remain as the models of his religious reforms. His life was in essence his message.

My concern has been to understand the social transformation of Kerala from the middle of the nineteenth century to the middle of the twentieth century. This period witnessed the effects of indigenous socio-religious movement undertaken by Brahmananda Sivayogi. While other saints stressed more on the happiness of the individual, Brahmananda Sivayogi desired more the welfare and happiness of the society. The main intention behind establishing Yogasalas was to practice Raja Yoga and provide a meeting place for discussions. His Ananda Matha and the principles helped a lot in the Kerala renaissance movement. As compared to Sree Narayana Guru, Vagbhatananda and other leaders of the renaissance the teachings and performances of Brahmananda Sivayogi helped towards the progressive transformation of the society. The reform movements created self awareness among the deprived sections and helped them to guard against exploitation.

In simple Malayalam, he explained his principles based on ancient scriptures for the benefit of the common man. In order to garner the attention of the scholarly-community he wrote in Sanskrit and interpreted it himself. One such is the matured principles put forward in his last work, Anandadarsam, written in 1927. He maintained that mistakes ought to be corrected even if they are uttered by the teacher. His erudition was one developed solely through his own efforts. Other spiritual leaders and visionaries just repeated or explained what they found in the scriptures. But Brahmananda Sivayogi accepted the logical and rational rejected the
irrational from the texts. He was ready to share his knowledge of yoga with the common man so that they too could gain happiness which was denied to them since time immemorial.

It was during the period between 1893 and 1928 Brahmananda Sivayogi wrote his books. But in contrast to his principles of the early period, the ideas of the late period are more rational. Still for a discerning reader’s eyes it is evident that this is his stage-by-stage evolution towards an intellectual absoluteness. The verses in his first book Sivayoga Rahasyam were in the form of prayer hymns. Though prays for the ecstasy of Yoga, he presents a God who is personified as in the Hindu religious concept. In Sreevidya Poshini, a booklet written in 1899, he eulogises Brahma, the creator. In Siddhanubhuthi written in 1903, he is not meditating to God who is emotional or is charismatic. This can be seen in Ananda Kalpadhrumam written in 1905 as well. In Ananda Vimanam, written in 1916 he praise the same power known by different names. In it, he rejects the famous ancient works held as pure and sacred and exposes its hollowness. In the book Anandadarsam he rectifies and reanalyses his mistakes.

Like Sri Buddha and Mahavira, Brahmananda Sivayogi too, was attracted by the principle of non-violence. Since the desire for bliss is not restricted to the human beings alone, and it includes other living beings as well, he puts forward the concept of universal harmony. He stresses that non-violence is significant not only among human beings but also in the case of all living beings. And by the concept of ‘Ananda Desam’ he emphasises the need for worldwide brotherhood. By freeing the mind of superstitions and evil thoughts we achieve both peace of mind and wealth. Even though he gives importance to mind, Brahmananda Sivayogi does not undervalue the significance of the body. He believes that the physical body is the basis of life ad it is necessary to maintain a healthy physique. He even suggested the proper way of consuming food: two parts food, one part water, and one part air is the most apt advice for physical well being.
The works, sermons, activities and life of Brahmananda Sivayogi embraces an all-round reformation and enlightenment of the society. His message to the people is to give importance to factual knowledge and not elope from the empirical life. Since everyone desires bliss, bliss can be attained through Raja Yoga. Brahmananda Sivayogi practised it himself before he advised and trained others, and practised himself in it. One need not be a saint or a seer in order to practise Raja Yoga and thereby attain salvation. He proved that it is quite possible even while leading a conjugal life. Speaking in general, the popularisation of the Raja Yoga is the contribution of Brahmananda Sivayogi. Brahmananda Sivayogi realised the significance of the mind and he made others aware of the bliss that can be achieved by man through the concentration of the mind. We call ‘God’ the one who is complete and perfect. By conceptualising mind as the God he gave an elevated status to the mind hitherto not attributed by any psychologists or philosophers. The advice of Brahmananda Sivayogi that, logical-reasoning, empirical-experience and authoritative texts are the very foundation of belief, was purely scientific. He succeeded in analysing materialistic thoughts.

Brahmananda Sivayogi was actively involved in his reformatory acts at a time when Kerala was overflowed with irrational ritualistic acts and religious superstitions. It had the favour of antiquity and the aura of spirituality. Such practices are an impediment to social progress and human wellbeing. During this time the activities of the reformist organisations like SNDP Yogam, NSS, Brahma Samaj, Arya Samaj, Ramakrishna Mission etc., were spreading the liberal spirit through out India. Sivayogi accepts some of their ideas while vehemently oppose others. Such sophistry – sanskritisation- being attempted by some leaders to uplift the backward classes has ridiculed by Sivayogi. He criticises and ridicules the followers of Arya Samaj and Sree Narayana Guru who upholds construction of temples and wearing the sacred-thread. He upheld the idea that the blissful state of
mind attained after giving up this pride and class-creed distinctions is the salvation.

Brahmananda Sivayogi reiterates that the real and the greatest triumph is the one over the mind. It is the central idea of his principles. If one is able to control the mind one can easily abstain from all violent deeds. This is achieved not by any external power but by the power of mind. This is ‘mind control’, is the control over the emotional course of action through augmenting the thought-provoking process of the mind. If the mind is set free emotionally the ultimate aim of life, which is ‘attainment of bliss’, is never achieved. All living beings have to undergo the three vital stages of transformation: birth, growth and death. As far as man is concerned there has to be an aim in life. Brahmananda Sivayogi says that it is only through righteous actions one can achieve salvation.

Social change can be brought about only when there is a strong organisational effort to create social consciousness. He realised that if all of the communities are to progress, the practice of many rituals and social evils are to be eradicated. He propagated his message of social reform through his writings and through his close associates. The members of Ananda Samajam branches of Ananda Mahasabha were the agents to spread his message throughout the country. The eradication of superstitions was one of the main aims of Brahmananda Sivayogi. The message included specific reforms to discard the worship of God, pilgrimage, temple oriented culture, animal sacrifice, concept of Hell and Heaven, ‘papa punya’ and the traditional customs such as ‘pulakuli’, ‘thirandukuli’, ‘Sradham’, ‘Thalikettu Kalyanam’, ‘theendal’, etc., Brahmananda Sivayogi exhorted his disciples that these festivals and ceremonies have no Vedic sanction, but were introduced by the priestly class to perpetuate their hegemony. The best known message of Sivayogi is the one exhorting his followers “manssu nannayal manushyan nannyi” (if the mind is good the man will be good).
He considered God, caste, religion, idolatry, and evil practices as a part of superstitions. As a result, the progressive minded people in Kerala, generally, took an opposing stance against superstitions. Brahmananda Sivayogi gave more emphasis to logic. The faculty of reason is the other side of superstitions. He extolled to accept the rational and reject the irrational. He maintained that a rational statement, even if it is uttered by a child, must be accepted. Being attracted to his ideology, many learned people took up atheistic faith. People like Kuttippuzha Krishna Pillai\(^1\), M. C. Joseph\(^2\) etc. laid the foundation stone of atheism in Kerala. Atheism also had exerted its influence on the freedom movement. A pro-Left front emerged inside the Indian National Congress which went on to the formation of Congress Socialist Party which later became the Communist Party of India.

The Communist movement flourished in Kerala and Bengal, where renaissance made deep roots in the society. The basic ideology of the Communist party was the dialectical materialism which was firmly based on logic. One of the factors that contributed to the growth of the Communist movement in Kerala was the activities of Brahmananda Sivayogi and such other thinkers which paved the way for a materialistic outlook among the masses. With regard to matters of God and faith, Brahmananda Sivayogi’s ideas stand similar to Communist Party’s ideologies. At that time rational movement has its influence in Kerala which in turn paved way for the spreading of socialist and communist ideologies. The base for the growth of such ideologies happened to be the rational movement, which gave importance to sheer reason.

Brahmananda Sivayogi and his followers succeeded in eliminating various superstitions and discrediting self-styled God men. People like M. C.

\(^1\) Kuttippuzha Krishna Pillai (1900-1971) Professor of Aluwa U.C.College, was a prominent Leftist intellectual and an eminent rationalist. Served as the President of Kerala Sahitya Academy (1968-71).

\(^2\) Popularly known as Yukthivadi M. C. Joseph who was an active rationalist from Kerala. M. C. Joseph (1887-1981) was one of the founders of Yukthivadi, the first ever rationalist/atheist magazine in Malayalam.
Joseph and A. T. Kovoor travelled all over Kerala and preached against superstitions and blind beliefs. The Communist movement helped them in this enterprise. Another achievement was the stopping of animal-sacrifice in the temples. Brahmananda Sivayogi’s followers had intervened and stopped the killing of fowls in temples like the Attukal Temple in the Thiruvananthapuram district. There after the people of the progressive movements took the initiative to stop animal-sacrifice in temples. As a result of these, objects like gourds were used symbolically instead of fowls to be sacrificed in temples. The ideas of Brahmananda Sivayogi and Sree Narayana Guru helped a lot for spreading of Mahatma Gandhi’s creed of non-violence among the people of Kerala.

Brahmananda Sivayogi’s activities helped to reduce the disparity in temple worship. The temples established by Sree Narayana Guru functioned without any distinctions on the grounds of religion or caste and were open to both the upper and lower class people. Though he was opposed to idolatry, Vagbhatananda Guru did not deny the existence of God. As a result the activities of both these great spiritual leaders did not forbid the believers from worshipping in temples. But the speeches and works of Brahmananda Sivayogi, which decried temples, gods, idols, and superstitions, had a tremendous impact on the temple-worshipping tradition of Kerala. In the day-to-day life, the place of God in the minds of the people deescalated and the number of people who went to temples were drastically reduced. The characterization of penurious priests and temples without any revenue in the novels, stories and screenplays of M. T. Vasudevan Nair is a reflection of that era. Akkitham Achuthan Namboothiri’s long poem ‘Pandethe Mesanti’, too, is a testimony to this condition. In many temples the daily prayers and offerings were discontinued and the conducting of annual festivals came to a halt. The inability to maintain resulted in the handing over of ancestral family-temples to public committees. Many sacred-groves were demolished and
that land was used for agricultural purposes.⁢³ The Theyyam art conducted in sacred-groves in Northern Kerala came to a standstill and the land was used for farming. This disintegration of the temple-tradition which began in the 1930’s was at its peak during the 50’s and the 60’s. In his autobiography, ‘Kanneerum Kinavum’, V.T. Bhattathiripad speaks of the condition of such ill-fated temples.

The spread of Brahmananda Sivayogi’s ideologies and principles helped to lessen the social dominance of the Brahmans and the upper class. The principles and activities of Sree Narayana Guru, Vagbhatananda, Ayyankali and others had played a great part in this regard. The freedom movement and activities of Indian National Congress, Communist Party, and Socialist Party etc. had a positive impact in this sphere. During the period between 1930 and 1960, many agitations took place against feudalism and landlordism. Cherukad’s novels, plays, and biography are a reflection of this age.⁴ The privileged status enjoyed by the Brahmans, Ambalavasies and the Nair communities in the society began to wane day by day.

The most significant effect is the transformation of the social system based on caste. Since he resisted all forms of distinctions, be it in the forms of caste or religion, he contributed to the development of the spirit of fraternity. The caste-names began to disappear from the school registers and many people removed the caste-names affixed with their names.⁵ This trend inspired the upcoming generation also to exclude the caste-names and parents while admitting their children to schools took care not to include it. The caste was restricted to familial and marital matters. The use of caste-names was prevalent, albeit in a small way, in the southern parts of Kerala where institutions and groups which gave importance to caste like S.N.D.P. and N.S.S. were active. In comparison, it was the northern districts of Kerala

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⁢³ Kannattum Kavu, Pazhassi, Kannur District, Kanhirathum Keezhil Kavu Pazhassi, Kannur District
⁵ A. K. Gopalan, Mannath Padmanabhan, K. P. R. Gopalan, K. Kelappan,
which tried utmost to exclude caste. It is a historical fact that Brahmananda Sivayogi’s teachings had influenced greatly northern parts of Kerala.

Secularism has its influence among the Keralites in the middle of the twentieth century resulting in more unity and friendship between different religions and races. By 1940 inter-caste marriages became common as Industrialisation, sophistication and higher education brought closer the individuals belonging to different communities and castes. Many such marriages took place through register marriages disregarding the opposition from the family. While couple from different caste and religion lived together, they continued with their belief without changing their religion or caste. New ideas of social freedom and equality were thus introduced in Malabar society.

It was the activities of the renaissance groups that gave educational benefits and job quotas to the people of the lower class. The lower class gained rights to enter temples, freedom of travel, social equality, and quota to administrative posts and governmental organisations. Rejecting caste rules the lower caste people took up various other professions like teaching, industrial work, office work etc. Hoardings like ‘Brahmin Hotel’, ‘Nair Hotel’ etc. were removed. People became reluctant to ask publicly the caste of others. Using caste names to insult lower castes became illegal. Caste lost its significance except in the case of marriage. A name that gives hint to one’s religion began to disappear and became less suggestive of the religion. Parents began to give names from other religions as well to their children.

The contributions of the renaissance leaders, including Brahmananda Sivayogi, towards education, especially women education are to be specially mentioned. Numerous educational institutions and girl’s schools were started in Kerala. Into the educational sector—which was under the monopoly of the Christian missionaries—other religious sections, caste groups and associations of progressive people also entered. The people of Kerala
welcomed Brahmananda Sivayogi’s enlightening talks on the significance of women education and decided to educate the girls. As women-education became more prevalent, women acquired a respectable status in the society. The status women enjoyed during the early period of the feudal age had vanished by the end of the age, due to the intrusion of male-domination. Sivayogi who wrote books after seeing the pitiful backwardness of the women served his purpose; Women were welcomed to the main stream of life. They opened the path for the liberation of women. 6 He believed that poverty and low status of some people in the society were created by the lack of proper education. Hence he tried to enlighten the poor people in the neighboring areas. The major factor behind the improved social and economic status of women in Kerala is literacy. Now the literacy rate among women in Kerala is high when compared to the other states in India.

Polygamy and polyandry were declined to a great extent and chastity and virginity were upheld. Values like love, affection, compassion etc. have their place in life. The poems of Kumaranasan are examples for this. The feelings of platonic love and divine affection were placed above caste, religion and homeland. These are mirrored in the verses of Changhampuzha, the romantic poet. Romantic poems upheld these values and effectively portrayed their beauty in Malayalam.

People began to look upon priests and god-men with suspicion. Brahmananda Sivayogi’s sermons have a considerable influence in making this awareness among the people and in identifying and unmasking the false ones. The common people forsook the god-men as they did the temples. Brahmananda Sivayogi’s teaching and training of the Raja Yoga to the laymen helped to remove the aura that surrounded the yogis and seers.

Brahmananda Sivayogi played a decisive role in making the citizens of Kerala capable enough to raise their voice against inequality, Brahmin domination, evil practises and superstitions through the use of intellect and

reason. This in turn helped freedom movement and the growth of Congress, Socialist and Communist parties and other progressive organisations. The people of Kerala began to show antagonistic views on fatalism, astrological predictions and irrational faiths. The freedom from the belief in fate and destiny made the new generation more industrious. There was a time when ceremonies like writing horoscope, piercing the earlobes of boys and dipping in holy-water were done compulsorily. The halting of these ceremonies, to a large extent, is the outcome of the sermons and talks of the renaissance leaders like Sivayogi. Even the practice of consulting horoscopes for compatibility came down. A good majority of the Brahmin children were freed from the sacred-thread ceremony. Constructing houses, without any regard for the ‘Vastu appropriateness’ of the plot, became the norm. The ‘adverse’ effects of Vastu were disregarded and only the shape of the plot was considered.

The Hindu religion, in its various organised forms, had its downfall and gradually began to disintegrate. Hinduism which was based on temples, rituals and ‘papa punya’ concepts struggled to exist. To an extent, both Christianity and Islam, in their organised forms continued to keep going. But extreme religious fanaticism was not allowed to grow among them.

The part played by Brahmananda Sivayogi’s ideas in leveling the ground for the growth of a progressive community with Leftist leanings cannot be overlooked. It can be asserted that his radical views enhanced progressive thinking which helped the Communist party to come to power in Kerala in 1957. Though the ministry was dismissed by the Central Government due to the worsening law and order situation as the anti-progressive forces started an agitation with foreign help, the Communist party again came to power in 1967 and many time afterwards. It shows the strong influence of the reformist like Sivayogi on the masses.

Brahmananda Sivayogi adopted an approach that encouraged modernisation, urbanisation and industrialisation. This helped to erase the
feudal impression and marked the rise of modern Kerala. The individual's freedom and his social status got enhanced and the Romanticism, which gave more importance to the self, acquired a high position in literature. Brahmananda Sivayogi like Sree Narayana Guru supported the secular stand of the British rulers of India who initiated progressive social reforms. He gave prime importance to social freedom than political freedom. He rejects parliamentary democracy. He believed that learned minority is better than ignorant majority to create a better society. On the basis of his philosophy, his followers started a campaign against caste prejudices and religious bigotry. He brought an awareness of human rights and an awakening sense of brotherhood among all sections of society.

He proposed four essential steps for social progress namely rejection of all religious and irrational practices, living on manly effort and secure economic self sufficiency, education for all disregarding religion or caste, adoption of Yoga as a way to control mind. In order to save the mass from the degradation in to which the theism has thrown them, the rational thinker Brahmananda Sivayogi preached bold action and strong initiative among the common people. In the wake of his teachings, rationality and equality entered in the minds of the common people and their philosophy, economics, and politics were influenced by it. Thus his search for social equality should be considered as a particular form of modernity for the Keralites.

The prime agency for the spread of Brahmananda Sivayogi's ideologies and principles, the Ananda Mahasabha, and the Alathur Siddhasram is now in the process of disintegration. Brahmananda Sivayogi believed that the ‘Ananda Matha’ will become a religion with global acceptance and it will rise above all existing religions and last for a long time. He was dejected since he lacked enough capital in his hands. He had requested the help of kings and rulers in translating his works to various foreign languages and to circulate it globally. Not only did all this become
fruitless, but the Ananda Mahasabha shrunk in size to a small organization comprising a handful of common people and its functioning became just for namesake.

During his lifetime, Brahmananda Sivayogi’s ideologies and principles had spread and the activities of the Ananda Mahasabha were effectively guided forward and implemented. Brahmananda Sivayogi knew that his teachings can only be spread through the people in power and who have wealth as Sree Buddha’s did under the patronage of King Asoka. But one of the important reasons for the limitation in the spreading of his teachings was the lack of capable disciples and administrators in the Asram during the later years. As decided and proclaimed earlier, it was his wife and main-disciple Yoginimatha who became the president of the Ananda Mahasabha and the administrator of Alathur Siddhasram. Though she was a gifted poetess and a firm believer of the Anandamatha, Yoginimatha was not an individual with adequate administrative skills to manage the future of such a large institution and movement. It can only be favorably judged that she succeeded in efficiently continuing the activities of Brahmananda Sivayogi’s days for a brief period of time.

After Yoginimatha, it was Nirmalananda Yogi who headed the Anandamatha, Ananda Mahasabha, and the Asram for a long time (1956-2007). Nirmalananda Yogi’s activities were limited within a small sphere owing to his immaturity and lack of enough experience. He failed in elevating the status of the Asram and Brahmananda Sivayogi’s teachings to a wider plane during the fifty one years of his administration. Not only that, during his later years the functioning of Yogasalas at various places was in a slow pace and the Ananda Mahasabha began to disintegrate. The publishing and distribution of Brahmananda Sivayogi’s works and the magazine Saragrahi were done just for namesake. As his family members and relatives began to hold on to the wealth of the Asram and its property, Nirmalananda Yogi had
no role either in the administration of the Asram or in popularisation of Brahmananda Sivayogi’s teachings.

From 1993 to 2008, it was Nirmalananda Yogi’s brother, his wife and their three children who indirectly controlled the Asram. The administration and the revenue from the higher secondary school and the training college under the Asram were not used for its welfare. Those who questioned this were removed from the affairs of the Asram. As against the desire of Brahmananda Sivayogi, no efforts were taken to find and train individuals from the new generation in order to propagate Brahmananda Sivayogi’s ideology. Rumors had spread that after Nirmalananda Yogi’s death his brother’s wife and her eldest son would take up the directorship of the Asram. The general public and the Ananda Matha believers had already begun to deviate themselves from the Siddhasram. All these stood as obstacles in the spread of the great Ananda Mahasabha and Anandamatha. Although Brahmananda Sivayogi’s will prohibit the selling of properties of the Asram, it is alleged that many properties had already been sold during Nirmalananda Yogi’s time. Even money orders that come in the name of the Asram were signed for and collected by Brahmananda Sivayogi’s relatives. The subscription amount and the paper quota of Saragrahi were also appropriated. The address Post Box No 1 under the possession of brother’s wife became the mailing address of the Asram.7

After the demise of Nirmalananda Yogi on August 13th 2007, attempts were made to seize control of the Asram wealth and other properties. Ultimately, with the intervention of CPI (M) Area committee of Alathur, a new executive committee for the Asram came into effect. In the Ananda Maha Sabha meeting held on 8th November, 2008, a new committee was appointed with Swami Gangadhara Yogi as the President and Sri Kandappan Babu as the Secretary.

7 Interview with Gangadhara Yogi, Siddhasram, 12 April 2009. Also see Saragrahi, November-December 2008, pp.8 -10.
Till now the new committee has not received any income from the Asram property and many assets have gone outside the premises. Nevertheless, Brahmananda Sivayogi’s principles and teachings continue to inspire the new committee. Only a more competent committee or a dedicated set of followers can ensure the popularisation of the Anandamatha as have been visualised by Brahmananda Sivayogi. As Brahmananda Sivayogi believed only the help of people in power and the collection of money can achieve the much needed worldwide acceptance of his ideas.

Religion, caste, homeland, God—all these are factors that promote the growth of emotional fellowship. The broader associations like Hinduism, Christianity, Islam etc. and the comparatively smaller ones like Thiyya, Nair, Namboothiri, Sunni and the like too fosters companionship within them. It is not easy to detach an individual from his family, ancestral home, caste, and religion. Likewise, an ideology that condemns caste, religion or God will lack emotional existence. Therefore, unlike the associations based on caste and religion, those which condemn them cannot be so large and unified. It is the rituals and beliefs that sustain seers and religions. So sects such as Brahmananda Sivayogi’s Anandamatha and Ananda Mahasabha which deviates from this path finds it difficult to achieve such a strong, unified force for a long time.

Human beings love imagination, fantasy and supernatural world more than the realistic ones. More than the world that he has seen, man is fond of the heard ones above all unheard ones. People of all age—from children to old folks—love fictional stories and legends wove out of imagination and the narratives of miraculous deeds. Since imagined objects like heaven, hell, re-birth, almighty, gods and demons appeals more than the objects in the real world, the common people will not find Brahmananda Sivayogi’s principles acceptable, which rejects all of them. In a changed Kerala, even the scientists have become devotees of God, people worship in temples, love
astrology and are superstitious: in such a society a materialistic and atheistic person would not be welcomed even by the educated class.

Moreover, as the majority of the present-day yogis, seers and priests are worshippers and preachers of God, they will not accept a yogi who, contrary to these, preaches blasphemy, as one among them. The laymen view Brahmamanda Sivayogi more as a saint than as a preceptor of yoga. They will only support the principles of saints and ‘god-incarnates’ who have the paraphernalia of rituals, fictional stories, and tales of miraculous deeds. Therefore, Brahmamanda Sivayogi, who was a rational reformer, did not get a huge following.

Both rationalism and materialism are scientifically based. The rationalists whenever they proclaim truth, their numbers will shrink and their voices are bound to become solitary ones. Though the ‘Yuktivadi Sangham’ found the secret behind the ‘Makaravilakku’ phenomena at Mount Sabari and proved it with photographs, even now the devotees throng to witness this event. The same happened during the opposition against the ‘god-incarnates’. India being a democratic country, politicians are reluctant to hurt the caste and religious sentiments and beliefs of the people. The widespread public support for the Communist party is due to the fact that it is yet to assert and insist on its basic theory—the dialectical materialism. Though the belief in God is in discord with the theory of dialectical materialism, a good majority of the communist supporters are worshippers of God and religious believers.

It is an important fact that no efforts were done to popularise and spread Brahmamanda Sivayogi’s teachings to keep up with the changing times. Till 2008, his works were published and the magazine Saragrahi printed in an outdated style abandoned even in the 1930’s and 40’s. A yellow-colored paper printed with the books title and the author’s name served as the front cover for most of the books. The books published by Siddhasram were in an old-fashioned and outdated manner even in a time of
big scientific and electronic advancement in printing technology. Off-set printing and colorful cover also appeared sometimes. The overall appearance of the books was a discouraging one even for a casual flip through. The content of the Saragrahi was of inferior quality.

Though 16 books of Brahmananda Sivayogi have been published most of them are a repetition of ideas already stated in the preceding ones. The redundancy of ideas makes the works disgusting. If the ideas in all the works are edited, the repetitions eliminated and brought out in a single volume and translated to other languages, undoubtedly he would have some more followers.

Financial constraints were the main problem that affected Brahmananda Sivayogi’s propagations. But during his lifetime his disciples, followers and supporters were ready to donate money. But Nirmalananda Yogi, who served as the Asram director for a long time, closed down the sources of wealth rather than boosting the revenue. But in a period when those god-men who travel all over the world reciting Sanskrit verses in an awful way and teach yoga and Bhakti have assets worth crores, and when the ‘god-incarnates’ run parallel economic system, the reason for the financial break down of the Siddhasram is wholly attributable to incapable administration.

There are many other reasons, in addition to the indifferent attitude adopted by the Asram, which contributed adversely to the spread of Brahmananda Sivayogi’s principles. The greatest fear of man is the fear of death. To escape from this, even temporarily, he believes in God, karma, rituals, re-birth, soul, the nether world etc. Fear incites us to escape from this real world and take refuge in the superstitious world. Brahmananda Sivayogi does not speak on the escape from the fear of death. But at the same time he denies existence of the soul, the nether world and God. Human beings, who long to be free from the fear of death, will never put faith in a Guru who
states there is no permanent comfort or salvation, and advises Raja Yoga for temporary salvation.

Compared to theism, atheistic religions cannot exist for a long time. And they did not exist for a long time. May be, it was the Mahayana sect of Buddhism which helped it to subsist for such a long time. Buddhism that now exists in India and the neighboring countries is different from that preached by Buddha.

The majority who accepted Brahmananda Sivayogi’s principles were the educated middle-class. They came from various walks of life and included village man, village officer, school teachers, moderate landlords, local physicians, advocates, clerks etc. The followers of other yogis are not the ones who understood their principles; they are fascinated by the external appearance. But in the case of Brahmananda Sivayogi, almost all his supporters were the believers of Anandamatha.

No caste or religious sect came in support of Brahmananda Sivayogi who had rejected all castes and religions. In the case of Sree Narayana Guru, the Ezhava community—the caste he was born in and which gained social acceptance through his efforts—gave him much recognition. Sree Narayana Guru, who was ideologically preaching against castes, was disparaged by portraying him as an Ezhava saint. Rich Ezhavas had erected statues and memorials in his name. But no caste-sects were ready to support Brahmananda Sivayogi. The caste he was born in exalted Chattambi Swami as their master. Having taken strict anti-caste stance there is no room for caste-sects to accept him. Even wealthy people were not ready to rally behind him. Only a rich industrialist from Kannur, A.K. Nair stood by him. A.K. Nair came forward to publish Saragrahi and to write his biography.

Non-belief in traditional God is the base for his revolutionary social reforms. This ideology generally appeals not to ordinary masses but to intellectuals and deprived him of the mass base and mass support for his social reforms. Thus deprived of mass support and social base, denied of
class, caste support and patronage, Brahmananda Sivayogi’s life long selfless services to social reform has gone unrecognized in the history of Kerala.

Now, modern Kerala is moving backwards to a time much before that of Sree Narayana Guru’s, Brahmananda Sivayogi’s and Vagbhatananda’s. Towards the end of the twentieth century, these values began to slowly erode itself from the society. With the advent of the twenty-first century it engulfed the society as a cultural depravity. As a result of the unrestrained growth of capitalism and neo rich culture there is an increasing tendency to have a production /market/ competition/ profit/ loss – oriented outlook. Individuals are guided by selfishness and greed. Temples, castes, religions and superstitions are being commercialised to make profit. Temples are being sophistically renovated with much propaganda to attract people and hoard wealth.

The growth of power-politics adopted the unscrupulous ways to grab power through unethical and immoral means resulted in the eclipse of renaissance values. The values and principles put forward by the renaissance leaders and thinkers were circumvented. Their true teachings were conveniently curtailed to project a narrow-minded, selfish couture. Instances of these are the adoption of Chattambhi Swami and Sree Narayana Guru by the Nair and Ezhava community respectively. The moral depravation in politics led to forget Gandhism by the Gandhian . The disintegration of Soviet Union resulted in the loss of faith in socialism globally. This had its impact in the pro-socialist political atmosphere in Kerala. An immoral alliance has developed between political and religious lobbies. A strange coalition of religious and fanatical groups with political parties has begun to emerge. Circumstances for a bloodshed led by hardcore religious-militant groups like R.S.S., Jamat-eh-Islami, and Popular Front (N.D.F.) have surfaced in the state now.
Increased resentment towards the backward class by the forward castes, since the former have financial support, job-quota and educational amenities could also be seen. The forward castes began to demand for quotas now. The rapid pace of modernisation and urbanisation led to the vanishing of villages. In a short time the cities engulfed the rural townships. Transgression of economic imperialism easily succeeded in making Kerala a market for their finished goods. Financial flow from the Gulf increased the dominance of wealth and luxurious lifestyle in Kerala. The moral depravity of progressive artistic and literary institutions, libraries and art clubs are visible in the present day.

Due to all these factors, it can be noted that the values held dear during the time of renaissance got crumbled day by day. Religious extremism grew with generous funding from foreign powers and the wealthy people. They overthrew the economy, cultural stability, and law and order through counterfeit currency, drug-trafficking and smuggling of illegal weapons. Religious militancy resulted in political murders. The unemployed youths are lured with the promise of quick-wealth and made into goons and militants. Before long, mercenaries, mafia-leaders and underworld dons will take over the reins of the city. Faith has become a favourite product for consumerism; patronised by the elite class. Since there is huge revenue from the temples, as a result of escalation in superstitions, false faith, and non-ritualistic practices, the government is also passive towards the growing Bhakti cult. The liquor barons are the next source generating huge revenue: hence there is no prohibition. When ‘profit’ becomes the end for everything, then even the familial life become a prey to it. There is greed for dowry and hence an increase in occurrence of dowry-deaths. The vices of avarice and jealousy become the high-values upheld in a production and competition oriented society. Women are exploited in commercial advertisements. The female ‘body’ becomes ad-hoardings.
Caste-names, which have once vanished from the classroom registers, have reappeared now. Caste-associations upholding the eminence of their particular caste are asserting its influence more profoundly than socio-political services. Rites and customs of early days are being revived for the sake of castes. Parents who forsook the custom of wearing the sacred-thread themselves are conducting it in the form of a celebration for their children. Caste-groups are formed at workplaces which lead to fights. As temples are becoming centres of dignity and a source of income, more and more temples are being renovated everyday. The traditional deities are shunned and new “profitable” and “popular” gods are being worshipped. Old temples are demolished and new concrete mansions are built in its place. Sacred groves are given the status of temples and daily offerings are made. There is competition among people to enter into the temple committee as it gives them social status. The conducting of yagas or sacrifices has come back in the form of business: lakhs are invested and crores made as profit.

Astrology, which once distanced itself from the society, returned with greater force than before and became a part of business. Politicians and film makers consult astrologers. The practice of comparing horoscopes and checking compatibility, which was once confined to the Hindus, had spread to Christian and Muslim communities. Similarly, the practise of forecasting future which was done only in rare occasions before became a common thing now; daily, weekly and annual forecasts occupies the pages of newspapers and journals. The sale of lucky stones and birth stones based on zodiac signs are also on the rise. Another contemporary spectacle is the brisk business done in the name of Akshaya Thritiya day considered auspicious to buy gold jewellery.

There is also an increase in the number of self-proclaimed god-men. In an age of increased social and familial problems, people opt to consult them than a psychologist. Kerala has become a land where the high-class people and bureaucrats queue up to see, touch and to obtain blessings of
these pseudo-divine men. Lots of hospitals and educational institutions have sprung up in the name of these divine-men. Here the patients and students are manipulated. They hoard black-money and unaccounted riches and the government is reluctant to interfere in their affairs.

Akin to the loss of other values upheld at the time of renaissance, animal-sacrifice too resurfaced and gained social acceptance in the temples of Kerala. A proof of this is the overt agitation launched by the members of the Thiyya community in Kasargode in support of the animal-sacrifice. An agitation took place on 2nd May, 2009, at Uduma in Kasargode district against the forest department officials who stopped the ‘Bappidal’ ritual performed in connection with the performance of Wayanad Kulavan Theyyam. Kandanar Kelan, who is the helper of the hunting-deity Wayanad Kulavan, sacrifices the hunted animals brought by the devotees. The liver of the animal is cut out and offered to the Theyyam and the rest is cooked and eaten by the devotees. This forms the ‘Bappidal’ ritual. The forest department officials opposed this as hunting is illegal. The Thiyya community, which considers Sree Narayana Guru as their spiritual leader, took out an agitation against this and the newspaper Kerala Kaumudi justified this act. The news was published under the heading ‘Rites are not Atrocities against wild animals’. The full-page article that came in Kerala Kaumudi substantiates the use of Sree Narayana Guru’s name being used in a bad way to spread superstitions. This is an attempt to make Sree Narayana Guru a ‘god-incarnate’ through supernatural tales. It is also an attempt to erase from the history his social importance.

It is high time to start the second phase of the renaissance movement. A renaissance revolution to free men from the clutches of superstitions and commercialism, nurtured by technological-installations, electronic media, is inevitable. It seems that Kerala can be saved from this

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8 Hunting the wild animals to the sacrifice at the Wayanattu Kulavan ‘kavus’ (groves) as part of the ritual.
9 Kerala Kaumudi, 26 August 2009.
deplorable condition neither by the progressive political parties with its limitations under the democratic system, nor by the State government resting on power politics and vote banks. The atheistic institutions and the intellectual community with its lack of concern are equally powerless.

Here Swami Vivekananda’s words seem relevant. “In India, nothing will succeed unless it takes the name of a sage or a spiritual leader”. It is as per this comment that Dr. Palpu took efforts to sophisticate the people of the weaker sections of the society under the cult-image of Sree Narayana Guru. Even today, the Kerala society respects its spiritualist and priests. An association under the name of a spiritual scholar only can pioneer the second phase of renaissance revolt. Such a renaissance and reformatory movement will never be successfully accomplished by either the SNDP which pictures Sree Narayana Guru as its leader with a dilution of his principles and teachings, or by NSS which projects Chattambi Swami as a Nair-hero. Vagbhatananda’s Adhyatma Sangham, which confined renaissance into dungeons of superstitions and spiritualism, is equally incapable.

Only an establishment which can bring Brahmananda Sivayogi’s ideas and principles from the conceptual level to the plane of action can bring about the desired result. The Anandamatha, Ananda Yogasalas, Alathur Sidhasrama established by Brahmananda Sivayogi are not the deserving candidates to start such an endeavor. But still, his revolutionary ideas and its systematic implementation is more than enough to guide Kerala again in a renaissance path. An institution with adequate man-power, resources and ability has to emerge, in order to revitalize the renaissance movement set in motion by the great Sivayogi. His teachings have made history and its importance could not be minimized though in present day Kerala it has come under a cloud. Those who are fed up with materialistic culture and superstitions will definitely turn to him for solace and mental peace.