CHAPTER II

EMERGENCE OF A RATIONALIST

Society and the religion of our country had passed through numerous phases of change. The inequality and evils involved in the social structure attracted the attention of intellectuals and reformers throughout the history of mankind. Great historical movement has been accelerated by extraordinary individuals involved in unique events. These reformers sacrificed their life for transforming the society.

The greatest social revolutionist Brahmananda Sivayogi was born on 26th August 1852 at Kollankode, a small village in Palakkad district of Kerala. He was the ninth son of Smt. Nani Amma of Karatt family and Sri Kunhikrishna Menon of Kunnath Ravunnyarath at Vallensi. He had nine brothers and one sister.

In his childhood, Brahmananda Sivayogi was called Govindankutty. During that time, Kollankode was a centre of landlordism. His mother was a devout Nair lady who strictly followed the tenets of religion. He lived with his mother in her house as per the existing custom of matrilineal families. His parents and other family members naturally influenced him towards conservatism. Govindankutty accepted all the traditional life of a Nair boy. He visited temples, worshipped individual Gods, involved in prayers, offerings and other religious customs.

He picked up rudiments of learning in the traditional way at home. His parents showed every care to give him good education. Later he was sent to a near by school, the Kollankode Board Elementary School. Several changes had occurred in the field of education in Kerala during this time. But majority were unaware of the importance of English education. Sanskrit scholars were respected everywhere. The students usually had gone to the residence of Sanskrit scholars to master the language. There were several
Sanskrit scholars in Alampallam, the Tamil Brahmin Village at that time. The river Gayathri separates Alampallam village from Kollankode. The well-known scholar Sri Padmanabha Sastri was the Sanskrit Guru who gave guidance to Govindankutty at Alampallam.

His father Kunhikrishna Menon sent his son to Koodalloor Sastrikal for higher course in Sanskrit. He studied grammar, poetry and poetics from his Guru. His grasping power was extraordinary. He had expressed his poetic genius during this time. He wrote devotional poems and hymns. At first he wrote hymns of Koodalloor Bhagavathi as a devotee. The Brahmin Sastrikal felt great pleasure when Govindankutty submitted his poem before him. With great pleasure he informed it to Kunhikrishna Menon.¹ He wrote several devotional songs. These hymns and poems clearly expressed his state of mind. He was conventionally orthodox and superstitious during his boyhood.

Gradually change began to develop in him. His rational mind refused to compromise with the parables advised by Sastrikal to his students. One day Sastrikal recited a hymn which ran as follows:

Brahmanandam paramasukhadam kevalajnanamoorthim
Viswatheetham gaganasadrisam tatwamasyadilakshyam
Ekam nithym vimalamachalam sarvadheesakshibhootheram
Bhavatheetham thrigunarahitham satgurum tham namami”²

(“The ecstasy of Brahma; pleasure of all things, and the embodiment of knowledge. Beyond universe, similar to the firmament, ‘you bee this’ is the real motive. The only eternal pure permanence and the all –witnessed reason; Beyond my imagination, the three virtues of an honorable teacher I bow thee”).

² Ibid., p.16.
After hearing detailed explanation, Govindankutty asked his Guru, “How can Koodalloor Bhagavathi and her temple have the power of a God if a Universal God has full power?” Sastri could not answer him satisfactorily. He approached his mother for further explanation. Her advice to believe in Siva as God and Parvathi as Goddess had great impact in his mind. It is evident from many letters he wrote to his disciples with the beginning of “Uma sahaya padaravindabhyam Namah.” In addition, Govindankutty began to worship the God Subrahmanian. By this time he became well versed in Hindu scriptures and Tamil language. There was nothing spectacular or any sign of his later beliefs of rationalism or atheism in his early life or childhood.

Kunhikrishna Menon sent his son to Ernakulam for getting English education. Arrangements were made to stay with a relative’s family. (As his native place was a small village he could get no world experience to widen his mental outlook and there were no chances of logical thinking). His stay at Ernakulam and acquaintance with a lot of people having different cultures broadened his outlook. His attitude towards God, religion and tradition was undergoing a slow change. Instead of looking upon them with fear and wonder everything was bought under the scrutiny of reason. He developed his knowledge in Malayalam, Tamil, Sanskrit and English. He studied Christianity, Islam, Jainism and Buddhism. This helped him to compare Hindu ideals with that of other religions. His skeptic mind had undergone rapid growth and moved away philosophically from the Hindu fold gradually.

Returning home, Govindankutty continued his critical study of scriptures. Reading and writing were his hobbies. His friends teased him with nick names Muni and Mouni which means an introvert. His introvert character was greatly mistaken by his parents. Thinking that his gloomy attitude will be over by a marriage, they made arrangements for it.

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3 Ibid., p.18.
4 Ibid., p.23.
Accordingly he married Thavukutty Amma of Mukkil Maruthur at Vadavannur. Like all girls from orthodox families she was also engaged in religious ceremonies and rites. He gave full freedom to her and slowly made her aware of the social injustice existed in the name of religion in Kerala and asked to think and act. In the early period, she supported him as a true wife’s duty but later good understanding developed and realized the necessity to do the same for social good.

By this time his family property was partitioned and shifted to a new apartment at Kollankode. People began to call the grown up Govindankutty as Govinda Menon. He had to look after his own family and started his carrier as an Amsam Menon (Village Man), a hereditary post held by Karattu tharavadu. The profession of village man was considered high in those days which are confined only to aristocratic family. He worked only for a short period as he felt hard to obey greedy and selfish higher officers. He resigned his job and turned his attention to teach Sanskrit to near by students. Meanwhile Parambath Govinda Menon, his friend of Kollankode who was practicing as a lawyer in Kozhikode invited him to Kozhikode to the temporary post of a Sanskrit Munshi (teacher). Govinda Menon accepted it and joined as a Sanskrit Munshi at Calicut Native High School which is now known as Ganapat High School.

His short stay at Kozhikode was a turning point in his life. Now he began to make comparative study between classical Indian philosophy and the existing Indian philosophy. He had a large number of friends including western scholars and social reformers. Of them the outstanding were Sri C.Krishnan, the philosopher (later became a Buddhist), the rationalist and the editor of Mitavadi daily, Dr. Ayyathan Gopalan, a Brahmamasajam worker, Manjeri Rama Iyer, a famous barrister who later became active worker of Theosophical society (embraced Buddhism and assumed the name Anagarika Raman), Appu Nedungadi, the author of Kundalatha the
first Malayalam novel, and founder of the Nedungadi Bank and the Malayala Manorama editor Puliyampatta Kunhikrishna Menon.

During this time a branch of Brahma Samaj was functioning at Kozhikode (1898) which was an organisation for social reforms. Govinda Menon participated in the discussions organised in Brahmasamajam under the leadership of Ayyathan Gopalan. He was a frequent visitor at Brahmasamajam and wrote the poem ‘Brahmasankeerthanam’ on the request of Dr. Ayyathan Gopalan. The Brahmasamajam scholars then honored him as Brahmananda Swami Sivayogi, recognising his spiritual and literary knowledge. He had the opportunity to listen to their discourses. It naturally enriched his knowledge. Their rejection of the practice of idol worship influenced him considerably. Even before his arrival at Kozhikode he learnt that caste was an unwanted social institution which was potentially harmful. He slowly emerged out of the traditional Hindu society. Philosophically he moved away from the Hindu fold. Gradually he started practicing Rajayoga. He concentrated in upasana along with yoga practice. He accepted Rajayoga and rejected other branches of yoga like Karma yoga, Jnanayoga and Bhaktiyoga to attain salvation. He adopted an entirely systematic new way of life during his stay at Kozhikode and it made him philosophic.  

In 1899, he gave up his job at Kozhikode and left for his native place. He did not even accept an invitation from Kerala Vidhya sala now known as Guruvayoorappan Zamorine’s College, Kozhikode. At the same time he got an opportunity to join as a Sanskrit Munshi of the Board Middle School at Alathur. By this time he popularly came to be known as Brahmananda Swami in the school. As a practitioner of Raja Yoga, he was also known as a Yogi. During this time, he embraced saintly life and attire completely. He settled at Vanoor near Veezhumala while he was working as a Sanskrit teacher in Alathur Middle School. He named his residence as ‘Sidhasrama’.

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5 Ibid., p.30.
His free thinking and Yoga practice attracted a large number of disciples in the school and outside. He discarded untouchability. His popular works Sidhanubhoothi with Jnanakkummi and Mokshapradeepam were written during this time. Sivayogi had a large number of disciples who had achieved wide popularity in later years. Sri. K. P. Kesava Menon, Advocate General K.V.Soorya Narayana Iyer and the historian Sri. K.V. Krishna Iyer were some among them.

Sivayogi stopped his teaching profession in 1907 and devoted entirely to the activities concerned with his spiritual mission. He established a spiritual institution named ‘Sidhasrama’ in 1907 at Alathur. Brahmananda Sivayogi’s revolutionary activities were accelerated after he settled down at Alathur. He started Anandamatham (Religion of Bliss) and made a tour in some parts of Kerala to propagate the ideals of ‘Ananda matham’ and carried on a consistent struggle against the anti socio-religious practices. ‘Sidhasrama’ proved to be the head quarters of his movement. Thavukutty Amma became his true disciple and got the title Yogini Matha. They both vowed to lead a life of Brahmacharya. Her co-operation was of great assistance to Yogi in his growing in to an atheist. After the demise of Brahmananda Sivayogi, Yogini Matha became the head of the ‘Siddhasrama’ and carried out the role of Yogi.

Brahmananda Sivayogi always had had a thirst for knowledge. Almost a century ago—a time when printing and books were a scarcity and were unable even if one had money—he collected as much as spiritual books as possible. During the time of his authorship of the book Brahma Sangeerthanam, Brahmananda Sivayogi requested to the Brahmin scholars of Kozhikode and Palakkad for a copy of the Upanishads. But his request was turned down; on the grounds that a person of Sudra birth is not merited to check the scriptures. It was Dr. Ayyathan Gopalan who brought the required Upanishad texts from Bombay and gave it to him. After this incident
Brahmananda Sivayogi began to collect such books and diligently studied both that were compatible with his philosophy and were not.

He visited villages and explained the ordinary masses the need for giving up superstitions. These meetings were organised by his followers. He became popular as a writer and an orator. It has been noted by the biographer that in 1911, an incident occurred in Guruvayoor where the oratory skill of Brahmananda Sivayogi was praised. The scene had the presence of the eminent personalities of the literary and cultural world—the great poet, Vallathol, Sir C. Sankaran Nair, Anandha Narayana Shastri, the Chief Justice of Madras High Court, Sundhara Iyer. Onstage, the play Abhijnanasakunthalam was about to be enacted in Sanskrit. Before the performance, Brahmananda Sivayogi was conferred with the task of giving a brief introduction of the play. As he was about to deliver it in Sanskrit someone from the audience demanded for a Malayalam version of it. As a result Brahmananda Sivayogi gave his speech in Malayalam without any prior preparation. The way he presented the account in excellent Malayalam was unanimously praised by one and all. Justice Sundhara Iyer, who was the keynote speaker, praised Brahmananda Sivayogi then and there.⁶

His materialistic ideology had a great appeal to the people. His revolutionary propaganda in villages was not an easy task. Some of his meetings were disturbed.⁷

Sree Narayana Guru, contemporary of Brahmananda Sivayogi started temple construction and consecration of idols to make people co-operative. As a part of it, his followers made attempt to construct temples. In 1910, at Kozhikode, under the leadership of some elites of the community, efforts were started to build the Sree Khandeshwaram Temple. Brahmananda Sivayogi was invited to deliver a speech against the proposed construction of the temple. During his association with Brahma Samaj he had rationally

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⁶ Ibid., p.41.
opposed idolatry and it was due to this he was invited by Dr. Ayyathan Gopalan, a Brahma Samaj activist. The venue was the Kozhikode Town Hall. Many people arrived in order to query the speaker. Orthodox Hindus decided to stop it at any cost. They asked him whether there is a need to oppose idol-worship which had acceptance from the ancient times itself. Brahmananda Sivayogi-the rational yogi- argued, with excerpts from the religious texts, that idol-worship had no approval during the olden times. His speech wiped out the ignorance of many. He also answered and established, with the help of passages from authoritative texts, that Raja Yoga was possible for everyone. By this speech he got appreciation for his progressive ideas and plans for implementation against idolatry, and also gained a wide following of disciples in different parts of Malabar.

Sivayogi asserts:

The real temple of God is the human body.
God is within the heart of all human beings.
So we should dissolve our mind in that God
to seek the eternal pleasure in life.”

Sivayogi understood that the people close their minds with faith in God and fate which are mere beliefs with no basis in reality. As a result, people became superstitious. In order to make them free and equal, he started writing poems in simple Malayalam language to the common people. He urged the people to overcome superstitions. But he became famous through his few lectures, letters, prose and poems. Several people far and wide visited ‘Sidhasrama’ in order to see and discourse with him. His ideas and philosophy attracted the attention of a few atheist, rationalist and humanists. Many became his disciples, others adored him. People attended his meetings in large numbers. His main aim was to reform the people and make them rational and scientific. He explained his ideas through his literary

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works, speeches and advices. Yogi formulated his system of thought, oriented towards socio-religious transformation.

Brahmananda Sivayogi was not a person who traveled much and in addition to Kozhikode a place he had visited was Kannur. Besides he has also went to Thiruvazhiyode; a place in old Valluvanad Taluk. When he went to Thiruvazhiyode to oversee the Anandha Yogasala set up by his followers, the villagers under the leadership of the Amsam Adhikari (Village Officer) gave him a royal welcome. Since the streets were not electrified, the villagers seated Brahmamanda Sivayogi in a palanquin and with flaming-torches took him as a procession. Unlike other spiritual leaders, Brahmamanda Sivayogi did not attempt to establish his knowledge-superiority, engaged in debates or conducted a series of speeches. He just established yoga-centres at places where the believers of Ananda-sect can come together, engage in discussions and can practise Rajayoga. His disciples built more than thirty-five yoga-centres at different parts of Kerala. Disciples outside India, especially from Sri Lanka, used to visit Siddhasramam and were in regular correspondence through mails.

The dramatist and poet, K.C. Kesava Pillai, was Brahmananda Sivayogi’s disciple. One of his letters to Yogi throws light on the zealousness of Brahmananda Sivayogi’s disciples to implement their master’s principles. “As I had been tied down with official duties, it was only yesterday that I completed reading Mokshapradeepam ……… After reading it the first thought that came to mind is that it is essential to have a copy of this book in each and every household; especially, in the house of Nair nobility. At Attukal, here in Thiruvananthapuram, there is a temple dedicated to Goddess Bhadrakali. In this temple, in the Kumbham month every year, there is a ritual; it begins with songs and after ten days ends with animal sacrifice to propitiate the deity. For this more or less hundred goats and five

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9 Ibid., p.65
hundred cocks are killed. Neither the speeches of people like me nor the verses in my book Subhashitha Ratnakaram were potent enough to oppose these. It was at that time that yours Mokshapradeepam came to the possession of one of the citizens. Is there a need to explain further? It had been unanimously decided that the cruel practice must not be conducted from this Kumbham month. Moreover, in order to prove its inhumaness, it has been decided that a poster, together with excerpts from Mokshapradeepam, is to be printed and circulated."

Some disciples of Thiruvananthapuram region demanded Brahmananda Sivayogi to come in person to lead the agitation against a section of temple-goers who were supporters of animal sacrifice. But Yogi replied pointing out the incivility of an audacious struggle and advised them to strengthen their belief in Ananda ideology and to work towards a peaceful awareness among the public.

Thachudaya Kaimal, who hails from Thiruvithamkoor, is the head of the Koodalmanikyam Temple at Irinjalakuda. The Thachudaya Kaimal of that time was a savant. He became interested in Ananda ideology after reading Brahmananda Sivayogi’s books. According to the prevailing norm Kaimal was not supposed to go outside his province, which is Irinjalakuda. As a result, though he had an earnest desire to meet Brahmananda Sivayogi at Alathur, he was unable to do so. Subsequently, he sent his car to Brahmananda Sivayogi requesting him to come to Kaimal’s palace. Though he understood his admirer’s dilemma Brahmananda Sivayogi was not prepared to comply with the request. Nor did he ask him to renounce his title and position. He just advised him to efficiently conduct the responsibilities entrusted on him, to adhere to the new principles and to live peaceful life through the control of the mind.

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11 Letter of K.C.Kesava Pillai to Brahmananda Swami Sivayogi, 7 Dhanu,1088 (ME).
13 Bheeman K., Asathyathil Ninnu Sathyathilekku (Mal.), (Alathur,1980), p.32,
Brahmananda Sivayogi was not ready to accept donations to spread his ideology and for the existence of his way of life - Anandamatha. Nevertheless, he hoped that his literary works will get the patronage of some rich people or kings in other countries and thereby his Anandamatha will get global prominence.

One of his disciples, an aristocratic rich man of Harippad in Thiruvithamkoor province, Alumootil Neelakandan Channar, wished to build a hermitage just like the one at Alathur. He was ready to give one acre of land and a one storey building as a gift. When the news reached the Siddha Ashrama Brahmananda Sivayogi replied that it is pointless to have one more ashramas. He told that he does not need gifts; he needs disciples who live according to the teachings of the Ananda ideology. When Channar wrote again expressing his disappointment, Brahmananda Sivayogi advised him to be contend by building a small pond in the Alathur Ashrama.\textsuperscript{14} Even now we can see the pond in the Alathur Siddhasrama.

Brahmananda Sivayogi had profoundly studied both Islam and Christian religions. He readily accepted those teachings in their religious texts that foster the welfare of the mankind. At the same time he sharply criticised those which stood against it. Many people of the Muslim community regularly corresponded with him and listened to his suggestions. Dr. Kunhalu of Ernakulam and Koyyakutty of Chavakkad were two such men. In between a speech at Kozhikode, when he contempuously criticised blind dogmas many idol-worshippers and orthodox people came against him. It was a Muslim-brother who, when he knew the plot, saved him from bodily harm.

Once, a Christian pastor came to visit Brahmananda Sivayogi. They had a long conversation regarding Christian principles and beliefs. When he saw that Brahmananda Sivayogi agreed upon the goodness preached by Christianity, the pastor slyly put forward his purpose of visit: to invite

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., p.34.
Brahmananda Sivayogi to be a Christian. “I have no hope that God, who was unable to save his beloved Child from crucifixion, will be able to save me,” replied Brahmananda Sivayogi.

It is evident from his statements in various texts that Brahmananda Sivayogi was very much affected by criticism leveled against him. The main critics who opposed his principles were orthodox Hindu scholars. He compares this to the anger of a child when admonished for eating lime. Similarly, the orthodox sects oppose him since he tries to turn back the practice of idol-worship. They oppose him because they have not known the essence of Hindu religion, thanks to their jealousy and competition.

In a historical light Brahmananda Sivayogi points out that both Socrates and Buddha have been criticised and harassed like this. He considers the act of poisoning Socrates for telling that soul is immortal as roguishness. He proposes that Buddhism was condemned and exiled because of this antipathy towards Buddha; since he resisted the racial-religious discrimination and the various acts of idol-worshipping. Brahmananda Sivayogi continues that it is no surprise that he is criticised in a land where great persona like Sri Buddha—great enough to be written a biography Light of Asia by a person of another faith—was also criticised. For both of them the reasons for condemnation were the same. In northern India Dayananda Saraswati was also condemned and poisoned once. He consoles himself that the oppressors do not take up violence just as they did by nailing Christ to the cross.

Yogi criticises the efforts of the lower-class people to emulate the high-class desiring an elevation in social status like never before. Such

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15 Ibid., p.37.
17 Ibid.
18 Ibid, p.29.
20 Ibid ,p..38.
sophistry that existed in Kerala at that time was intended only to lead the so-called backward and lower-class community. “Some spiritualists try to make Nairs build temples, wear the sacred-thread and to wear the facade of priesthood. The Ezhavas has already done both these ‘ceremonies’. Other classes such as Asari (carpenters), Thattan (goldsmith) and Kollan (blacksmith) wore the sacred-thread, tied the tuft of hair at the back of their head, and had begun to perform the ceremonial rites of offerings. These ignorant-beliefs did not exist among them before. These all are the result of the present improvement in religion. These people who desire the advent of a well-being based on religious conviction encourages class-distinctions and ignorant rites,” says Brahmananda Sivayogi. He is criticising the followers of Arya Samaj and Sree Narayana Guru who upholds construction of temples and wearing the sacred-thread.

Brahmananda Sivayogi had to face strong opposition from people of the local Hindu community. For instance, there used to be annual festivals called vela, Kummatti etc. in association with temples and kavus (sacred groves) of Palakkad. This was financed by the fund collected from the residents of that place and was called ‘Koottazhi’. Some people from the neighboring village of the asram came to collect money. Brahmananda Sivayogi, not only refused to give money, but also reprimanded them for this unnecessary extortion. At this the people who came to collect money got angry, and when they began to argue with Brahmananda Sivayogi, one of the visitors who had came to see him commented: “It is better to give them something and be done with them.” To this Brahmananda Sivayogi replied: “It is possible for me to make nobody angry at me if I stop my writing and speeches. But that is not the proper way. I also know that in order to earn a good name these are not the acceptable manner. But what can I do, I am on the side of truth”.

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One of the contestants in the election for Malabar District Board was of Kollamkode royal lineage. When he came to know that Brahmananda Sivayogi was a native of Kollamkode and has a large following of disciples there, the king came to the asram to canvas votes. He requested Brahmananda Sivayogi to ask his disciples to vote for him. In return, he promised to supply timber like rosewood and teak from Kollamkode hills for the needs in the asram. But Brahmananda Sivayogi, who fully knew the value of democracy, replied that he had no use for wood. He added that casting of votes is an act of preference and since it is unjust to persuade the voters, he won’t do it. Disappointedly, the king returned.

**Literary works of Brahmananda Sivayogi**

As a social reformer, Brahmananda Sivayogi never appeared in stages and addressed huge masses. His main intention was to enlighten the people and teach them to liberate themselves from superstitions and ignorance. Even though he was a Sanskrit scholar, he preferred simple Malayalam- the vernacular language- to make the common people aware of their real status in the society. Anandadarsam is the only one written in Sanskrit. He adopted the forms of Malayalam folk songs also for this purpose. Some of his works were translated in to other languages. Mokshapradeepam was translated in to Hindi by his disciple Nishkalanandan in 1928. Another disciple Sreedhara swami made a Tamil version in1949 and an English version by A.K.Anandan in 1950. Anandasoothram was translated into Tamil in 1935 and into English in1950. Another work Vigraharadhana khandanam was also translated in Tamil in1953. All his works repeatedly discuss his ideals on God, Superstitions, Scriptures, Anandamatha and Rajayoga.

Sivayogi’s literary career can be divided in to three distinct periods - the period of Social reform, the period of Refinement and the period of Renovation.2\textsuperscript{3} *Sivayoga Rahasyam* (1893), *Stree vidhya poshini* (1899),

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2\textsuperscript{3} Gopalakrishnan P.V., *Brahmananda Sivayogi and his selected works* (Delhi, 2002), p.98.
Sidhanubhothi (1903), Mokshapradeepam (1905), Anandakalpadrumam (1905) and Anandasoothram (1910) were composed in his first stage. During the refinement period (from 1914 to 1920) he wrote Rajayogaparasyam (1914), Anandavimanam (1916) Vigraharadhana khandanam (1916) Anandamathaparasyam (1919) and Anandakkummi (1920). Anandadarsam (1927), Anandadarsamsam (1928) were composed during the renovation period.

Sivayogarahasyam

Sivayogarahasyam is the earliest work that contained eulogies of Siva, Sree Rama and Sree Krishna in the traditional way. Sivayogararahasyam is a long poem written in Malayalam. In this work, he stresses to experience the Bliss eternal instead of worshipping different forms of God. By the absorption of mind with the ‘Atman’ one will experience the Bliss eternal. He advises Rajayoga to attain this Bliss. He also proclaims that all religious practices are worthless.

Sthreevidhyaposhini

Sthreevidhyaposhini is written in the form of verses. In this short poem he emphasises the right of girls to undergo education and he argues that the social development depends on it. Education is the real ornament of every human being and it should not be denied to women.

Sidhanubhothi

Sidhanubhothi is an anthology of three poetic compositions viz. Sidhanubhothi, Jnanakkummi and Pillathalolippu. Sidhanubhothi is a long poem and the other two works are written in the form of Malayalam folk songs. Kummi is a folk group dance with songs performed by women of Kerala. Jnanakkummi is written in this form and Pillathalolippu is a lullaby. Sivayogi used these two forms of writing to secure the attention of women towards his ideals. In these three works Sivayogi explains the necessity of
controlling the mind, the nature of perfect happiness, rejection of caste and religion, the importance of eternal happiness and Rajayoga.

**Mokshapradeepam**

*Mokshapradeepam* is the most important, popular and elaborate work of Brahmananda Sivayogi. Sivayogi’s ideals were highlighted in this work. He put forward the ideology of the eternal force of the Sakti, the nature of Yoga, futility of caste distinctions, awareness of the essence of religion and humanism. Besides, *Mokshapradeepam* depicts the detailed account of the ideals of Anandamatham. He critically evaluates scriptures and historical events and adopted acceptable facts from them in the evolution of his own philosophy. By rejecting Karmakanda, Gods, religious customs and evil practices he established the fact that mind is the God inherent in beings which is also called as Sakti. One, who controls his mind through Rajayoga, attains salvation or eternal happiness. He argued that it is easy for even the illiterate common man to practice Rajayoga and experience the bliss. According to him, there is only one caste (Anandajathi), one religion (Anandamatha), one country (Ananda Desam) for all.

**Anandakalpadrumam**

*Anandakalpadrumam* consists of hymns to Subrahmanian, Sakti, Krishna, Rama and Siva. Actually he addressed these Gods as symbols. These are forces hidden in human body\(^{24}\). As a reformation work, it insists up on men to worship internal forces instead of external Gods.

**Anandasoothram**

This is the last book written in the reformation period of Brahmananda Sivayogi which contained seven chapters. According to him, Ananda alone is the favorite supreme goal of mankind irrespective of caste, class and religion. Perfect Happiness or Eternal Bliss is the only universally recognised

\(^{24}\) Gopalakrishnan P.V., *op.cit.*, p.98.
supreme goal. Hence Ananda or Eternal Bliss is the true religion. Ritualistic practices like sacrifices, vows, pilgrimages, idol worship and like rituals are instrumental to the fickleness of mind and deterrent to salvation. The essential means to attain this eternal bliss is Rajayoga. In order to stress this point he cites Brahmajnana Tantra:

> It is the mind that does actions. It is the mind that is defiled by the sinful deeds. When the mind is relaxed, one becomes liberated from all sins, and attains Bliss.\(^{25}\)

**Ananda sopanam**

*Ananda sopanam* is a valuable collection of some of the letters received by Brahmananda Sivayogi from his disciples and followers. It gives a clear picture of how Sivayogi’s works enlightened the people and influenced the society.

**Rajayoga rahasyam**

It is a book on Rajayoga. Common man remains away from Rajayoga due to their ignorance and false propaganda of scholars and saints. Yogi gives importance to reason and experience. He propagates that Ananda matham is the most natural and reasonable religion for all human beings and discards all other religions.

**Vigraharadhana khandanam**

*Vigraharadhana khandanam* reveals the futility of idol worship. Ritualistic practices were strongly criticises in it. He proved that idol worship is one of the most irrational things on the solid basis of logic and sacred books of the Hindus. The Hindu rulers and Brahmins spent large sum for a long period for the construction of temples and idol worship. But these people never attained economic prosperity, mental purity, jnana or moksha. The Sastras forbade temple construction, idolatry and priesthood to the

Sudras. According to them they are not eligible to attain salvation. But Brahmins and others who were eligible for these rites never attained Moksha. Hence how can the Sudras attain salvation? Like other works, he insists upon the importance of Rajayoga and the supreme happiness in this book also. He expects the same fate of great scholars who criticized the idol worship\(^{26}\) to himself.

**Anandavimanam**

Sivayogi devoted this work to expose the futility of the concept of Saguna Brahma (God with attributes) and asserts that God is Nirguna (without attributes). He vehemently attacks the religious and social customs, rituals and other evil practices which make distinction among human beings and appealed the people to discard it. He openly criticises the irrational religions, the meaninglessness of the worship of God and the construction of temples for him. People want happiness. If any one wants the religious welfare of the people, abandon the scriptures and observe equality, Jnana, peace and piety and propagate these virtues. He repeatedly insists the people to unite the mind to the happiness which situates in the body. Salvation means liberation from sorrows and attainment of Happiness. Salvation is not death but a state of mind in one’s lifetime.

**Anandamathaparasyam**

*Anandamathaparasyam* is short in size which describes the attributes of Anandamatha. Brahmananda Sivayogi believes that superstitions and evil customs influenced the common people due to their ignorance of Rajayoga. The religious rivalry and misery can be put to an end by the knowledge that the original universal religion of mankind is Ananda alone. There are no caste distinctions like Namboothiri, Nair, Ezhava and religious distinctions like Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity, Brahmasamajam, Arya Samajam and

difference between native and alien. Thus through this work, he desires the establishment of a universal religion and universal brotherhood.

**Anandakkummi:**

*Anandakkummi* is written in the popular folk form of Malayalam, Kummi songs. In it, Sivayogi describes Sakti and Ananda as one and the same. The practice of sanyasa, alms giving, and pilgrimage are subjected to severe attack and upholds manly efforts. He insisted the people to construct yoga Salas instead of temples.

**Anandadarsam**

*Anandadarsam* is a Sanskrit work with Malayalam translation contains his ideals which were expressed in all other books. His intention behind this work was to spread his revolutionary ideals through out India and outside. In it Sivayogi made his comments on Advaita, Superstitions, Truth, Ego, Soul, God, Caste, Karma philosophy, Christianity, Path of knowledge, Idol worship, Mind, life after death, Buddhism, Salvation, Yoga, Vedanta, Ahimsa and Eternal bliss. Through his radical thinking, Sivayogi visualised a new society of universal religion and universal brotherhood.

**Anandadarsamsam**

This work is an abridged form of *Anandadarsam*. In it he points out that virtuous, truthful and meritorious acts give happiness to people. According to him the real meaning of non-violence is not to cause sorrow to our self or to any other being on account of one’s desires and other defects of the mind. He declares that each soul is potentially divine and stands for the rescue of poor, neglected and suppressed.

*The books Mokshapradeepam (1905), Ananda Ksripadhrumam (1905), Ananda Soothram (1910), Ananda Sopanam (1913), Rajayoga Parasyam (1914), Ananda Vimanam (1916), Vigraharadhana khandanam (1916), Ananda Matha Parasyam (1919), Ananda Kummi (1920), Ananda*
Ganam (1923) were penned during his time in Vanoor Asrama. In place of conducting speeches, journeys and conferences, Brahmananda Sivayogi tried to spread his ideology mainly through his writings. But he did not have enough money to print and publish his books. In the early days, it was his disciples who helped him to print and distribute his books. The book-bundles, printed at Thrissur, were carried head-load to Alathur by them. The money collected through its sales was used to bring out new editions and to print new books. The growing demand for his books surprised Brahmananda Sivayogi himself. It was after reading these books, from the hearsay of people who visited the asrama, and through direct contact with these centres that people became interested in Anandamatha and became his disciples. It can be said that he is the only spiritual leader in Kerala who abstained from building asramas and undertaking journeys to spread his ideology.

The Institutions for propaganda

Sivayogi had a group among his followers to organize campaigns to propagate his ideas. There were a large number of local institutions of his followers called Ananda Samajams in different parts of Kerala. They felt the need of a central organization to control and co-ordinate the activities of the Samajams. Discussions were carried out in 1916. Accordingly on 21st and 22nd of April in 1918, a meeting of the followers of Sivayogi from different parts of Kerala and Ceylon was convened in Sidhasrama. This meeting resolved to strengthen and spread Anandamatham and his ideals. A central organization named Ananda Mahasabha was formed with the consent of Sivayogi to guide the works of local institutions-Ananda Samajams. Sivayogi presided over the meeting of Ananda Mahasabha held in 1919 and advised the devotees to follow certain regulations in their way of life:

1. Should not perform violent religious customs.
2. Should abandon Thalikettukalyanam.
3. Funerals should be done at a minimum expense.
4. Priority should be given to the education of the family members
5. Pulakuli and other post funeral customs are unnecessary.  

Even before the formation of Ananda Mahasabha in 1918, there were separate unions for Samajams in Malabar, Cochin and Travancore. By about 1929, at the time of Yogi’s Samadhi there were about 31 Ananda Samajams at different places in Kerala. Besides these centres in Kerala, one centre at Colombo (Ceylon) was also started in 1908.

Under the leadership of direct disciples of Sivayogi like V.K.Kombi Achan, Sivaramakrishna Iyer, G.Krishna Iyer, T.K.P.Anandayogi, C.Kannan Nair, Sooryanarayana Sharma, P.A.Anandan, Vagbhatanandan, N.K.Anandan, Adv. Rama Varier started propaganda of Sivayogi’s principles. Sivayogi’s works led humanity to think against superstitions and useless customs, rituals and social distinctions. Some of his devotees decided to find the real value of his teachings through critical discussions. With this intention in mind, a reading room was built in 1909 January 1st at Thalap in Kannur named Anandachandrodaya Yogasala. In this model, several devotees started Yogasalas in their locality. Another institution called “Ananda pracharana samithi” also started to popularise Anandadarsam the ideals of Sivayogi.

Sivayogi formulated his principles by choosing excerpts, taking examples and pointing out authoritative principles from about sixty authoritative-texts of the early times including the Upanishads, Yogasastras, Bhagavad-Gita, the psalms etc.

It was during the period between 1893 and 1928 that Brahmananda Sivayogi wrote his books. But in contrast to his principles of the early period, the late period ideas got more criticism. Still for a discerning
reader's eyes it is evident that this is his stage-by-stage odyssey towards an intellectual absoluteness. The principles and ideas of Brahmananda Sivayogi, as expounded through his 16 works, are summarized below.

The verses in his first book *Sivayoga Rahasyam* were in the form of prayer hymns. Though he prays for Yogananda he presents a God who is personified as in the Hindu religious concept. In *Strividya Poshini*, a booklet written in 1899, he eulogizes 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 the said work, he rejects the famous ancient works held as pure and sacred and exposes its hollowness. In the part ‘Iswara Dharsana Prekaranam’ in the book *Anandadarsam* he rectifies and reanalyzes his mistakes. Brahmananda Sivayogi corrected the existing concept of God among the populace and proved that such a God is nonexistent. He also believed that the soul, Brahman and the mind are one and the same. Together, he rectifies the existing notion of salvation and establishes that the real salvation is one attained through the ecstasy provided by Raja Yoga.

He rejects all existing religions by establishing that they are irrational. He sharply criticises Hinduism and other religions. On the basis of logic, he revealed the evils and superstitious practices that existed in Hinduism and other religions, and proclaimed to denounce these. Brahmananda Sivayogi criticised the irrational ideas in the spiritual texts and borrowed the logical ones in order to support his ideas. He most sharply criticised the activities of the Hindu followers who believed in the theory of Karma. He questions the unscientific caste system and makes people aware of the absurdity in following caste discrimination.

Sivayogi hated violence and upheld non-violence and made awareness in people to reject non-vegetarian food and to accept vegetarianism. He opposed the killing of animals and the animal-sacrifice. If
children are raised without giving them non-vegetarian food they would not develop a taste for it. He points out the meaninglessness of asceticism, the hollowness of pilgrimage, the deceitfulness of chanting sacred-hymns, and the ill effects of fasting and begging. Like all renaissance leaders, he emphasized the importance education especially that of women education.

Sivayogi brought and read many scholarly authoritative texts. The copies of Upanishads were brought by Dr. Ayyathan Gopalan. He learned and interpreted the Sanskrit texts and borrowed important passages to highlight and cement his ideology. The above-mentioned books which Brahmananda Sivayogi used still remain intact at the Alathur Siddhasrama even now.

The authoritative truths he proved, with examples and logic viz., the triumph of eternal bliss, real happiness is the peacefulness of the mind, the prime victory is the victory over the mind, non-violence is the foremost form of righteousness, rites like sacrifices creates ignorance, happiness is innate etc. resulted in a denial of blindly followed principles and actions, and the formation of new progressive thoughts and principles. On its basis, the caste system, the practise of ‘untouchability’, idolatry, the temple oriented customs, animal sacrifice, superstitions, institutionalized-religion, were opposed and the awareness that all men are equal was developed.

Sivayogi’s commented that there is no dogma that insists on animal sacrifice in sacrificial rites and this practise is an unfortunate mishap that resulted from the wrong interpretation of the ceremonies.30 This angered a group of scholarly Brahmins who were well-versed in the sacred-texts like the Vedas and the sacred hymns. The criticism from a person of Nair community who does not deserve to either study or comment upon the sacrificial ceremonies did not go well with them. They decided to go to the Alathur Siddha Ashrama in order to meet Brahmananda Sivayogi in person and to teach him through a debate that he is in the wrong, and thereby

publicly disgrace him. Sivayogi welcomed his guests. After mutual introduction they enquired quoting relevant precepts on sacrificial-rites, how the sacrifice of animals become an unritualistic act. With appropriate proofs, Brahmananda Sivayogi explained how the practise of killing useful animal came to existence in place of eliminating the “cruel animals” that reside in man’s mind. They returned without further arguments.

At that time, there existed a cruel practise of killing animals like goats and cocks in order to propitiate some evil deities. This custom existed in the temples dedicated to goddesses too. There were also the people who had the rights to kill the poor beasts at the altar. There was also the practise of the meat being cooked in the temple, offered to the deity, and later, being eaten. It was an incident that hurt Brahmananda Sivayogi even during his childhood days and he reacted against it by upholding the Buddhist principle of “Ahimsa Paramo Dharma” [non-violence is the ultimate virtue]. Its echo still resonates in different parts of Kerala.

Sivayogi was very particular that the struggle against the social-evils should never acquire a violent dimension. He believed in enlightening people and changing minds through debates and logically placed arguments. In the book Anandadarsam, he pictures a scene where the fateful sacrificial-animal pathetically pleads to its executioner—man who is supposedly more intelligent—to show some mercy. Having been attracted to this particular principle of Brahmananda Sivayogi, his disciples have worked to stop this evil practice and had accomplished it to some respect. An instance of this is the ceasing of animal-sacrifice in Attukal Temple of Thiruvananthapuram through their efforts.

The regular practise of Rajayoga and the blissful-state attained through it made Sivayogi its advocator. Most people believed that the expertise in Rajayoga is only attained by very high scholars and regular practitioners. Generally, the sages and the seers aided to the growth of such

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a misconception. Sivayogi challenged this stupid-belief. He proclaimed that any common man, if he tries, can achieve mind-control, mental-harmony, and extraordinary feeling of tranquility. He proved this through training his disciples in Rajayoga. Through his books like Siddhanubhuthi, Rajayoga Rahasyam he established that this is the real spiritual salvation. Anyone, irrespective of gender, knowledge, age, religion or caste, can reach such a blissful-state through the systematic practice of Rajayoga.

Both the atheists and the theists desire bliss. Therefore, the instinctual religion of each and every one is Anandam. The birds and the beasts too wish bliss. The members of the Samkhya sect, the Buddhists, the Jains who does not regard God too yearns for ecstasy. What the laymen believe as bliss is the transient contentment achieved through wealth and other means. It is due to the misconception that prosperity of food and wealth is the source of bliss that man does the acts of stealing and other sins. If the belief in God or by serving Him bliss is attained, then everyone will serve God. Then there would not be any guidance needed from the spiritualists or from the Vedas and scriptures of yore. It is due to the desire for pleasure that men runs after and indulges in sins. When analyses logically and on the basis of experience it can be noticed that the goal of all living beings is happiness. It because of the false notions like ‘God fulfils all our wishes’ and ‘He offers heaven after death’ that people pray to God. But through experience they need to realise that this is not true.

Sivayogi reiterates that the real and the greatest triumph is the one over the mind. It is the central focus of his principles. For a person who has gained victory over his mind it is easy to become a practitioner of non-violence. Mind is the doer of violence and other cruel deed. And if one is able to control the mind he can easily abstain from all violent deeds. This is achieved not by any external power but by the power of mind. What that is known by the name ‘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 transformative conditions: birth, growth and death. In truth these three processes take place through the self-activation of mind-power inherent in the matter. As far as man is concerned there has to be an aim in life. Brahmananda Sivayogi says that it has to be bliss and the acts one does ought to be righteous and then only true bliss is achieved.

Sivayogi was ready to search for and acquire the Vedas, Upanishads and the Bhagavad-Gita. At a time when these books were forbidden for the Sudras, he succeeded in reading and mastering it. His erudition was one developed solely through his own efforts. Almost all great personalities like spiritual leaders and visionaries just repeated or explained the things already told in the scriptures. But Sivayogi accepted the logical and rejected the irrational from those texts. He was ready to put across his knowledge in yoga to the common lot so that they too could gain happiness denied to them since time immemorial.

It was in the month of September, 1924 that Sivayogi came to dwell at Alathur asram. His birth-star is Uthradam. In the Uthradam asterism of Chingam month, his disciples used to gather at the Alathur asram to celebrate his birthday. This get together had a jubilant mood and at the same time was non-extravagant. Brahmananda Sivayogi too welcomed it as an occasion for exchanging thoughts and views. Sivayogi, Yogini Matha and the disciples used to discuss issues as ranging from personal matters to spiritual subjects. The disciples dispersed only after planning the agenda for the upcoming year. We get a picture of this birthday celebration from Brahmananda Sivayogi's biography:

"Brahmananda Sivayogi insisted that people who come to the ashram to take apart in the celebrations should have meals together with him and have to stay in the ashram. After having a light meal in the morning he comes and sits outside. The disciples and the visitors gather around. It was
during this meeting that he enquired about the well-being of others and cleared doubts regarding philosophy and spirituality." 32

Brahmananda Sivayogi died on 1929 September 10 (1105 Chingam 25); just one day before his 77th birthday. He had a premonition that his end is coming near and had given a hint to Yogini Matha. He suggested that people coming to attend his birthday to come one day earlier and had made preparations to inform the members of the Samajam that regular programmes like greetings and other activities are not needed this time. 33 Some of his disciples arrived a day before the event. While strolling with them around the asram compound he asked them to remove the sand filled in one of the two graves already prepared for him and Yogini Matha. This made some of them perturbed. Brahmananda Sivayogi’s reply was that since the sand filled is old it is better to remove it.

A week before this, Sivayogi had telegraphed G. Rama Panicker, Ananda Samajam secretary, asking him to come there. Specific instructions were made regarding the future administration of the Siddha Ashrama as well as the functioning of Ananda Mahasabha. After consulting legal advisors and his intimate disciples it was decided to entrust the wealth of Siddhasrama in a Trust formed under the auspices of Ananda Mahasabha. Yogini Matha was selected as his successor to head the Ashram. Conditions were also laid on how to choose the future successors after her. He had also decided on issues like the rights and responsibilities of the Siddha Ashrama and the Ananda Mahasabha on conducting yoga-centres at different parts of Kerala and the guidelines for serially publishing his books.

After the birthday function while the disciples took leave he asked them whether they have to go tonight itself. Couldn’t they postpone it to next morning? Yogini Matha, and the chief-disciple, Jadabharatha Swami were beside him. Many of his disciples postponed the journey. Brahmananda

32 Nair A.K, op.cit.,p.149.
33 Ibid, pp.154-155.
Sivayogi after his ablutions came to the courtyard of the Ashram. The Guru-vandhanam [obeisance to the teacher] and Nischindanam were done at 7 p.m. after Guru-vandhanam Sivayogi conversed with the disciples for a long time. Many counsels were also given. Then it was the time for Nischindanam: to be seated motionless and silent thereby freeing the mind of thoughts. Usually it takes about half an hour. Telling other to sit there and continue he retreated to his room to perform Nischindanam. Jadabharatha Swami accompanied him. After a while, Jadabharatha Swami saw the motionless Brahmananda Sivayogi’s face becoming radiant. Yogini Matha who was engaged in some other activity was immediately summoned. She readily understood the fact. While she was paying obeisance at his feet, Brahmananda Sivayogi passed away. Jadabharatha Swami informed the others. Those who doubted called for a doctor and confirmed the death.

Brahmananda Sivayogi’s Anandamatham (Ananda way of life) became a social movement with in a short period. It did not mean a religion in the modern sense. It was really an association of the people who were seeking the primary aim in life -Ananda or Happiness. He advocated that all human beings, all organisms stand for their eternal bliss. Through his thought provoking verses Yogi insisted the people to discard castes, untouchability, superstitions, irrational religious customs and practices, religious rivalry and propagated universal brotherhood and universal religion.

Sivayogi published the rules and duties of Ananda Samajams along with his will. The written rules and regulations of Ananda Samajams are:

1. Impart the knowledge of Eternal Happiness by practicing Rajayoga along with their own profession like, agriculture, business etc. to all irrespective of caste, education, sex, and economic background.

2. Prove that absurdity of scriptures which insists on vows, holy bath, temple worship, idol worship etc. as a means to salvation.

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34 Bheeman .K., *op. cit.*, p.44.
3. Prove all irrational things even if it said in Vedas or by learned men.

4. Help the people to stop over expenses in the name of religious customs and help them to cease their sorrows.

5. Prove the meaninglessness of temples and sacred places like Kasi, Chidambaram, Rameswaram etc.

6. Help the people to convince that there is no caste, religious and regional distinction among living things and live in peacefully and harmoniously by understanding that all are after bliss.

7. Help the people to discard love towards one’s own caste and religion and teach them to extend non-violence and help to animals and birds realising the fact that they have also the right to live in happy and free in the world.

8. Make people non-violent.

9. Encourage and spread the virtues like respect towards teachers and parents, truth, peace and the importance of human efforts among people.

10. Convince the people that the only way to salvation is the observation of the Ananda way of living.

How much Brahmananda Sivayogi had influenced the Kerala society is well understood from the messages of condolence received on his demise from the eminent people from different walks of life.\(^{35}\)

Brahmananda Sivayogi formulated a revolutionary wave of thought which accelerated the transformation of the Kerala society through his works

\(^{35}\) Ayyathan Gopalan, Dr., Mathrubhumi News paper, 22 Oct. 1929.
Sahodaran Ayyappan, Editorial: Sahodaran, 12 Kanni 1105 (ME).
Vagbhatanandan, Editorial: Atmavidhya Kahalam, 19 Kanni 1105(ME).
and life. As a rational intellect, he stood for the rescue of poor, neglected and ignorant lay man and elevated them to a universal brotherhood. To sum up, that rational humanism is an adequate philosophy of life for all human beings. This philosophy of life consists of both a positive and a negative aspect. Positively, it consists of, adopting logical and scientific method of thinking, and it supports rational, secular and human ethics based on basic human needs and desires. Negatively it rejects God, soul, afterlife and religion. In the Indian context, it also entails rejection of varna-vyavastha including untouchability.