

## **Growth of Wahabism in Eruvadi and its fallout-**

### **i) Introduction-**

Eruvadi is a town panchayat, under Nanguneri Sub district of Tirunelveli district. Nambi river is flowing through Eruvadi is the dividing line between Hindu settlements and Muslim settlements. Thereby, Muslim community is residing on the Northern side of river bank and the Hindu community is residing on the Southern side of the river bank. Moreover Hindu-Muslim Population in Eruvadi was proportionate before 1990s, however, in later point of time Muslims became majority. As per 2011 census, population in Eruvadi was over 18000 persons and the major religious composition in Eruvadi is Muslims-10,546 persons (58.37%), Hindus-5245 persons (36.6 %), Christians-897 persons (5%). It is further noticed that, Muslims population got saturated in their original area of settlement and started settling on the sides of Hindu residential area by purchasing their lands. An unofficial estimate says that, at present there are about 18,000 Muslims in Eruvadi and among them about 3000 Muslims are working abroad. Muslims at present comprise about 63-65% of the eruvadi population and Hindus are reduced to about 30% and the rest could be Christians.

Predominantly, Muslims of Eruvadi belong to SunnatJammat and they are members of six sunnatJamaat Masjids recognized by Wakf board, existing in Eruvadi. The jamaats are Mela Mohallam Avoodu Mudali Jumma Masjid, Peer Shahib Grand Mosque/ Nadu Mohallampalli vassal, KeelaMuhallamJumma Masjid, Baith-U-Salam Jumma Masjid, MohaideenJumma Masjid/Kattalaitherupalli vassal, and LebaiValaivuPalli vassal.

### **ii) Attributes of Sunnat Jamaat-**

The SunnatJamaat is the larger tradition in the State, being followed by about 80 % of people in the State. Sunnatjamaat tradition is largely an Indian tradition, with liberal values and world views. They give importance for festivals and celebrations, as like other Indian religions. While, fundamentalist wahabi Muslims ignore celebrations as Haraaam.

### iii) Nature of Wahabism-

Wahabism/ Towheed/ Salafism is a religious fundamentalist ideology which has its origin from Arab country Saudi Arabia. Ideologically Wahabism teaches purity and fundamental path of Islam, which criticizes the moderate India based SunnatJamaat. The wahabi ideology advocates Shariat based penal system and it strict adherence to Quran and Hadith. The wahabis view non-believer as sinners/ Kafirs.

### iv) Agenda of Wahabism-

The moderate religious traits being observed by SunnatJamaat people were vehemently opposed by Wahabis on the ground of religious impurity. Wahabis are religious puritan outfits, aimed to reshape Indian Islam as per the Islamic practices in Saudi and Gulf countries. **The Wahabi groups active in Eruvadi are JAQH, TNTJ, Hijiri committee and TMMK.** They view the practices of moderate Sunnat Jamaat namely Kanduri worship, Milad-e-nabi, Santhakoodu procession during Moharram, Dharga worship and other beliefs as anti-Islamic. Wahabis were also successful in stopping the “Kanduri” celebrated in various SunnatJamaat in **Eruvadi since 2013 and had put obstacles to Santhanakoodu procession organized in Eruvadiduring Moharram festival.** **It is to be stated that events like “Kanduri” and Santhanakoodu during Moharram would help in social intermixture of Muslims with other people and helps prevent ghettoization of Muslims.**

**Presently, about 1000 Muslims in Eruvadi, either directly or indirectly are under the influence** of fundamental path of Islam being preached by Wahabi/ Towheed outfits. The Wahabi masjids in Eruvadi are Eruvadi Muslim Jamaat, North Main Road, Eruvadi, Eruvadi Muslim Jamaat, Bismi Nagar and AR-Rahuman Masjid Al-Aksha Nagar. The above group also runs their own Madrassas in Eruvadi. A trend has been observed that, Wahabis are trying to take over /capture the masjids run by traditional Sunnat Jamaat by getting infiltrate in to the management. Earlier, Wahabis tried to capture management of MelaMohallamAvoodu Mudali Jumma Masjid and Keela Muhallam Jumma Masjid in to their fold, but the sunnat jamaat stakeholders managed to thwart their attempt. However, Baith-U-Salam Jumma Masjid management fell in to the trap of Wahabis. Moreover, Mohaideen Jumma

Masjid/Kattalaitherupalli vassal was recently been infiltrated by Wahabis, which may eventually lead to capture the management.

#### V) Wahabi outfits in Eruvadi -

- **Hijri committee-** The Hijri committee of India (HCI) is an Islamic body engaged in publication, research and propagation of a universal Islamic Lunar calendar. The HCI emphasizes for adaptation of a universal Hijri calendar by the global Muslims for coordinating charity, sacrifices and worship in Islam. Besides, the Hijri calendar also marks important events in Islamic history, based on lunar cycles, with a view to avoid conflicts on dating system based on other calendars. In this context, the HCI, while adorning divine status to Hijri calendar, it also advocates for unity of dates among global Muslims as various man made calendars are susceptible to defects and errors in the course of time. The HCI, argues that the criterion for the Islamic calendar is derived from Holy Qur'an and any religious observance based on wrong dates would make the Act useless.

The HCI has presence in three Indian States viz Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu. The HCI's Kerala address is ARA 18, Azadi Lane, AIMS P.O., Edappally North, Cochin – 682041, Kerala, India. HCI's Tamil Nadu office functions from 160/101, North Main Road, Eruvadi, Tirunelveli- 627103 and its Karnataka office functions from East Road, Rose Garden, Austin town layout, Austin Town, Neelasandra, Bengaluru- 560047. The Salafi Education Trust registered in the Hijra Committee's Bengaluru Address appears to be the 'Funding Authority'.

The HCI's Tamil Nadu chapter functions in the name of Eruvadi Muslim Jamaat (EMJ). The EMJ in Eruvadi has three Masjids and three Madrassas overseen by important EMJ functionaries namely Sirajudeen, G. Saffi, K. Mustafa Hassan, Sulthaniya Musthafa and Aboobucker Alimalik. Besides, the EMJ maintains a finance network through the following entities for transacting money received abroad and the local funds. The details of the entities are-

- Eruvadi Muslim Association (EMAN)
- Al-Noor Charitable and Educational (ACE) Trust
- ISMA Charitable Trust.
- Nellai Eruvadi Baithulmaal.
- AR-Rahman Charitable and Educational Trust.

The above entities are identified as social service organizations among Muslims in Eruvadi. It is to be stated that Eruvadi Muslim Association (EMAN) is a charitable body functioning under the control of Hijri/EMJ, Eruvadi. The EMAN has about 1700 members in Gulf countries from Eruvadi and the EMAN has branches in Jeddah, Riyadh, Dammam, Oman, Qatar and Kuwait. The EMAN gets the monthly contribution of minimum 10 Dirhams per member and one may also contribute more than the said amount. Thus EMAN is a source of foreign money to EMJ. Further, the Nellai Eruvadi Baithul Maal is under the control of aforesaid G. Saffi, K. Mustafa Hassan and one Sulthaniya Mustafa. Further, the ACE trust is headed by one M.A.Azad, S.I.Sulthan, SalauddinMasurand Rifaiof Eruvadi, whereas the AR-Rahman Charitable and Educational Trust, is led by one GhooseMohideen, MuthuMohideenand MehadiMeeran of Eruvadi and the ISMA Charitable Trust is being maintained by oneJaffar.

It is to be stated that the EMJ coordinates the activities of above trust though whatsapp groups and through which financial benefits meant for various identified Muslim beneficiaries are determined based on their requisition application to the EMJ. Some support offered by EMJ are distribution of monthly financial support of Rs 1000/- to 40 individuals, further interest free gold loan scheme and housing schemes for poor Muslims with zero down payment. Further,

the ISMA trust is running a low cost hospital by the name Ibn Sina Medical Center, Eruvadi. The EMJ also meets out medical expenditure to its followers, for taking treatment in hospitals referred by its medical team. The Nellai Eruvadi Model School is also functioning under the management of EMJ. In exchange to the benefits, the beneficiaries had to adopt and follow wahabist ideology of Islam.

The above financial network of the EMJ is based on the principle that the monetary needs of a fellow Muslim should be addressed with a view to prevent the neo-converts to Islam from reverting back to their original religion due to financial constraints. Further, the financial resources are to be utilized for purifying the religion from Sirkh practices and in this context the moderate Sunnat Jamaat comes under the attack of EMJ, for not being confirmed with the original tenets of Islam. The above entities of EMJ are involved in expansion of wahabism in Eruvadi and its neighborhood.

- **Tamil Nadu Muslim Munnetra Kazhagam (TMMK)** trust is constructing a Madrassa under the name – “Taqwa Islamic Center, (MatharashaTaqwa)” at its own property (01 acre) in Anakkarai road, Eruvadi, Nanguneri Taluk, Tirunelveli district. The TMMK byintends to use above Madrassa premise for a Towheed ideological based masjid, in anticipation of expansion of Eruvadi town towards Anakkarai road in future. However, TMMK trust concealed the Masjid purpose of the building, while obtaining building plan approval from the Pulioorkurichi Panchayat. TMMK has a missionary wing for propagating Islam namely **Islamia Prachara Peravai**, which preaches Islam in its fundamentalist form.
- **TNTJ-** Tamil Nadu Towheed Jamaat is a outfit having presence in TN and in other States it is identified al All India Towheed Jamaat. The out has strong presence in Sri Lanka and it is named as Sri Lankan Towheed Jamaat. It was banned in the aftermath of Sri Lankan bomb blast on Easter day in 2019. The outfit has its chapted in Australia namely Australian Towheed Jamaat. All chapters of TNTJ in India and abroad are coordinated by TNTJ headquarters in Chennai.
- **Other hardline outfits-** It is to be stated that in the past 10 years, Muslims of Eruvadi are also targeted by the radical Islamic ideologies propagated by **PFI, INLP** and **Palanibabapasarai** elements. **SDPI/PFI** elements in Eruvadi are radicalizing Muslim population in the name of religion. On the aspects of conversion/ imparting religious teachings to newly converted Muslim women, PFI based organization namely “Arivagam” was functioning in Eruvadi. However, the centre was sealed after the ban of PFI. The prominent PFI functionaries namely

Mohideen Abdul Kadar, RiayasAhamad, Anwar Mohideen, Physical Educator Jawaheer and various PFI cadres had stopped their open activities after the PFI ban. However, cadres, functionaries of PFI are strongly connected with each other and they are in close connect with Eruvadi based SDPI leaders namely AhamadNavavi and TeglanBagavi.

#### **VI) Funds for Radicalization:**

The EMJ members proclaim that they use funds at their disposal to 'support' and provide 'monthly sustenance' to neo-converts to Islam and that the Hijri committee is in close contact with 'Neo-Convert' training centre based in Valmiki Street, East Tambaram, Chennai namely Way to Paradise maintained by the Jamaatul Janna trust. The trust is primarily involved in conversion activities and the converts are given training in fundamentalist Wahabi ideology. The trust is being run by individuals namely Mohamad. Akram, Sheik Mohamad and Mohamad. Haneef (all resident of Valmiki Street, East Tambaram, Chennai).

The EMJ members also proclaim that freeing a prisoner (meaning funding legal battles for the release of Muslim Prisoners involved in various offences) is an obligation that the Jamaath takes seriously and that funds are provided for such instances as well, though no specifics are available. Further, the Jamaath members proclaim that known radical Islamist preachers such as Abdul khader ManBayee, MohamadHussainManbayee and Abdul Rashid Salafi (radical Hijri preacher in Eruvadi) are strict adherents of the concepts advocated by Hijri Committee. Among them imams namely Abdul khaderManBayee and HussainManbayeewere questioned by NIA and the SIU wing of TN Police on earlier occasions, to ascertain their involvement if any, in Coimbatore Car blast case.

#### **vii) Nexus among Wahabis to attack Sunnat Jammat tradition-**

***As a rare gesture, Wahabis in Eruvadi namely Hijiri committee, TMMK and TNTJ would join hands and unitedly oppose Sunnat Jamaat traditions and practices namely Santhanakoodu procession during Moharram, Milad-e-Nabi, Kanduri festivals and Dharga worships in***

**Eruvadi. *The Wahabi groups opposed the SunnatJamaat practice of Santhanakoodu through litigations.***

vii) **Expansion of Wahabism-** Wahabism has seen a considerable growth in Tirunelveli district. It is evident from the growth of wahabi madrassas and masjid in places like Eruvadi, Vijayapathi coast, Barkitmanagaram, Pettaikulam, Melapalayam, Kalakadu, Pathamadaai, Pettai, Moolakaipatti, Munanchipatti, Sethakurchi, ThysiyavilaiThulkaipatti, Panagudi, Kallidaikurichi andSuthamalli. The expansion of Wahabis over a long term would go against the interest of moderate Sunnatjamaat traditions. The wahabis have strong nexus with Imams based in Sri Lanka, Malaysia and various Arab countries. Wahabi madrassas also receive foreign Imams to Tirunelveli district.

viii) **Global connect of Wahabism-** Moreover, during the course of Israel-Palestine war, the Islamic countries like Turkey, Egypt, Iran, Yemen etc had voiced for Palestine. Moreover, the USA is seen as the root cause for all sorrows of Muslims. However, no Islamic country including the Saudi Arabia could effectively prevent Israel from bombarding on Palestine people. In this context the heroic acts demonstrated by extra-territorial militant outfits like Hamas, Hezbollah, Houthi are winning confidence of Muslim people across the world, including among Muslims in India. The Saudi Arabia's image of de facto leader among world Muslims is getting denuded amidst the growing popularity of above said extra-territorial militias. Globallythe gap between Shias and Sunnis is getting reduced and the global Muslims are moving towards oneness in the context of ongoing Israel-Palestine war. Wahibist ideology is getting strengthened in this backdrop.

ix) **Conclusion-**The various agenda driven radical imams of Wahabism might try to exploit the emotions of Muslim youths to radicalize them on the path of extremism citing the sufferings of Palestine and the growth of Hinduthva in India. In this scenario the prevalence of moderate Sunnat Jamaat would act as a counter force against fundamental Wahabis in the State. Further, effective measures on de-radicalization, counter-radicalization, counter-terrorism and social media check, might deter extremist agendas in our soil.

