

**RELEVANCE**  
**OF**  
**MUHAMMAD**  
(S.A.W.)  
**IN CONTEMPORARY INDIAN SOCIETY**

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## **Relevance of Muhammad (S.A.W.) In Contemporary Indian Society**

### **Connecting the ideals with the realities**

Followers of almost every ideology, religion or great personality often try to project their own cherished beliefs as ideally suitable and beneficial at all times to one and all. This often appears to be only a pious attempt to justify or even glorify one's own faith and loyalties. On the contrary, the reasons behind my humble attempt to find solutions to certain problems of modern India, in the life and teachings of a man born 14 centuries ago, are totally different. At the outset, let me briefly explain those very reasons:

1. Muhammad (S.A.W.), born in the year 571 A.D. was not just another preacher or reformer. According to his own announcement, he was the last messenger of God, appointed by God to guide mankind. The message of God, meant to show mankind the path of success in this world and salvation in the eternal world, was revealed to him in its complete and final form. With him ended the long chain of messengers. No messenger or divine revelation would ever follow him. Thus, considering the fact that Muhammad (S.A.W.) remains the last messenger and mankind always has the need and natural right for guidance, it is crucial that this message remains competent

and comprehensive enough to totally satisfy this basic requisite of Mankind throughout all the ages. If his message loses its edge with the passage of time and becomes irrelevant or even less relevant during any age, then it would inevitably lead us to conclude that God has ceased to guide mankind after a particular age, leaving them to grope in the wilderness of ignorance for ever. But it would be very unreasonable to attribute such a cruel apathy to God who repeatedly describes Himself in his last message as the Most Merciful and the Most Beneficent. Even common sense would not permit us to believe that on the one hand, God declares every man as accountable for his actions and holds his actions to be one of the main criteria to decide his eternal abode, and on the other, He fails to enlighten man as to what actions are expected of him and what entitles him to success here and in the hereafter. Because, to leave one in darkness and later punish him for no crime of his, is something inconsistent with God's quality of mercy. Hence it is the dictate of reason, that the message and teachings of the last messenger of God do always possess the vigour and vitality to impart light and guidance to all the people and societies of all times.

2. Holy Qur'an, which is the most authentic source to identify what Muhammad (S.A.W.), the messenger of God stood for, projects him all through as the guide of the whole mankind and not of any particular region, group or age. Addressing him, it says; *"(O Prophet), we have not sent you forth but as a herald of good news and a Warner for all mankind. But most people do not know"*. (34:28)

And *"(O Muhammad), even before you we never sent any other than human beings as Messengers, and to them We*

*sent revelation.* (21:07) He addressed mankind as a whole and his message was meant to bring liberation and salvation to all sections of mankind irrespective of the regions or the times they live in.

3. The message presented by Muhammad (S.A.W.), the ideology promoted by him and the way of life introduced by him were neither his own nor did they emerge from his personal knowledge, research or experience. Obviously, the greatness of any man and any mortal's vision and outlook are always subject to certain limitations. He cannot resist his immediate environment and circumstances imposing certain influences, limitations and prejudices upon his outlook. Such influences naturally render one's message partly or fully irrelevant to the circumstances that are partly or fully different. But the message conveyed by Muhammad (S.A.W.) was the message of the Creator and the Lord of this universe, who is not a prisoner of time or space, who is free from and far above all limitations. It is the message of the Omniscient who, being the Creator of every human being, knows him to his core and hence He alone can fully comprehend all the problems of man and suggest proper remedies for them. Thus, a message that emanates from such a unique source must naturally be, equally applicable and beneficial to all the people and all the societies irrespective of the times and the regions they belong to.

4. Muhammad (S.A.W.) was not a mere visionary but a man of action. He did not confine himself to preaching but virtually proved the power of his message by practically establishing his vision as a system of life over millions of individuals and made it prevail as the recognized law over a remarkably large part of this earth. When he started

preaching the divine truth and the way of life based on it, Arabia was a mere desert of evils with just a few exceptional and isolated remains of virtue. But in a matter of just a couple of decades it was totally transformed into a morally rich, economically abundant, militarily strong and culturally wealthy state, which went down in human history as an epitome of an ideal & welfare state for all times. All the evils which he promised to eradicate were truly eradicated. All the promised virtues were literally established. Complete peace and order was restored. And all this was achieved purely on the basis of truth and on the merit of his message and not by the force of swords or through myths or miracles.

5. Well, all this happened 14 centuries ago. But it is very significant that Man was the real addressee of Muhammad (S.A.W.), and Man has not changed during the course of time. In the words of Richard Livingston, "Man is the real problem in all the ages the old and the modern problem! For, the new world is not so new. Humanity changes its clothes but not its nature. Adam puts on a more elaborate and complicated dress but remains the same old Adam" (Some tasks for education). Withstanding all the onslaughts of material changes and social evolutions, the nature of Man, his basic character, behavior, passions, instincts and attitudes have remained unchanged down the millennia. They are the same as they were during the primitive ages. Any objective comparison of evils and virtues found in the contemporary human society with those that manifested in the various events of global human history would prove this. Hence it would be fully reasonable if one considers any man of the modern age, or even any modern day Indian as the direct

addressee of the message of Muhammad (S.A.W.), which addressed 'Man':

### **The Indian Scenario**

When one begins one's search for the solutions to the problems in the Indian society, the first difficulty encountered is that of priority. Today the Indian scenario is so disturbing and so complex that even the most realistic among the students of sociology would hesitate to have a full look at the ugly face of realities surrounding them. Caste wars, communal hatred, genocides, riots, terrorism, regional and linguistic chauvinism, untouchability, illiteracy, discrimination, injustice, corruption, superstitions, female infanticide, cruelty, immorality, ... so goes the long list of our maladies. Now which among these problems deserves our immediate attention? A nation as diverse as ours is never likely to reach a consensus in response to this question. In fact, what one considers as most serious of all problems depends upon one's world view, and approach to life. In our view, the most serious problem facing Indian society today is the absence of a plausible ideology and this is the root of most of our problems.

Pundit Jawaharlal Nehru once said; "Legislation cannot by itself normally solve deep rooted social problems. One has to approach them in other ways too." But what are those other ways? In a country like ours, the first way one can think of, to solve our social problems is obviously religion. Religion has always been an integral part of our society. During the olden days, this nation had itself given birth to a number of religions. Even today one cannot imagine India without her religions. But today an objective assessment of the prevailing facts would

certainly lead us to conclude that by far the impact of religions on our society have been more negative than positive. In fact the origin of many of our current ills can be traced to religion. Though all the religions might have originally been founded with very pious intentions and lofty ideals, today most of them have either lost their original form or have failed to keep pace with the changing times and have thereby become insignificant or obsolete. Concept of God is the foundation of most of the religions. But today we see this concept at such a level of degeneration that nothing remains immune from being elevated to divinity. Places of worship have been demarcated as the only territory of God. Concept of God has ceased to wield any positive influence on the social, moral and other aspects of human life. God is reduced to mere object of worship and is invoked only occasionally for petty favours. Gods and religions are mere tools in the hands of a few vested interests who misuse the sacred name of God to justify, sanction and promote many evil and harmful practices and sometimes even to endorse totally inhuman rituals.

It is here that the teachings of Muhammad (S.A.W.), the Savior of Humanity, come to our rescue.

### **Concept of God**

The term used by Muhammad (S.A.W.), to represent religion was 'Deen' which means a complete system of life and not a mere set of beliefs. The name of the religion he presented was 'Islam' meaning total submission to the Will of God. In the light of divine revelations, the messenger of God unveiled the true concept of God before mankind. According to this concept, God is not a prisoner in the temple, mosque or church but occupies a central and



dominant position in this extensive universe and in every human life. Every perfection and absolute virtue belongs to God. Here is just one verse of the Holy Qur'an, to show the concept of God presented by him;

*“ He is Allah, there is no God but He, the Knower of the unseen and the manifest, He is the Most Merciful, the Most Compassionate. He is Allah; there is no god but He, the King, the Holy, the All Peace, the Giver of Security. The overseer, the Most Mighty, the Overpowering, the All Great. Exalted be he from whatever they associate with Him. He is Allah, the planner, Executer and fashioner of Creation. His are the names most beautiful. Whatever is in the heavens and the earth extols His Glory. He is the Most Mighty, the Most Wise.” (59:22-24)*

According to the teachings of Muhammad (S.A.W.), God is not a mere object of worship but also the Law giver. Furthermore, regarding worship, he introduced a very unique and comprehensive concept. The term he used for worship was 'Ibadah' which meant moulding one's entire life in accordance with the laws and the rules laid down by God. He saw any act, performed within the limits permitted by the divine law, as an act of worship. That is what the Messenger (s) of God meant when he said "The whole earth is a Mosque for me." Thus he envisaged transformation of the entire human life worship and all this was implied in the very belief in God. He looked at life as an indivisible whole, never allowing it to be fragmented into mutually exclusive compartments called religious and non religious or spiritual and material. His own life was the best illustration of this concept.

It was this all encompassing ideology and this comprehensive concept of God, religion and worship, that brought about a total revolution within a matter of two decades. It was ideology that transformed the Arabian peninsula from being the hub of ignorance, idolatry, debauchery, warmongering, tribal conflicts, racial discrimination, superstitions and moral bankruptcy to be the cradle of knowledge, enlightenment, uncompromising monotheism, discipline, brotherhood, equality, peace, harmony, solidarity, piety and highest standards of moral excellence. Even today, this ideology persists in its pure and original form. Its addressee, the Man also remains unchanged. Any person sensitive enough to learn from history has a great lesson in this successful experiment. If one's prejudices have not blinded him he should consider the possibility of inviting this ideology to occupy the huge ideological vacuum currently prevailing in our society.

### **The Challenge of developing fraternity**

Next to the relation between Man and God, the other arena where we have disastrously failed in the relation between Man and Man. Although many strong agents of division have been active in this country down the centuries, raising walls between human beings, it was hoped that at least independent India would be free from all such forces and Nationalism would help us to fuse the Indian population into one single, integrated unit. But today unfortunately all these dreams stand shattered. Differences of caste, language and region have outgrown all expectations, posing a serious threat to the very existence of our society. These differences have very often taken the form of wild battles in various parts of the country and almost every suggested remedy aimed at bridging the gulf

between these warring factions, has in fact contributed to further polarization and disintegration of the society.

It is a well accepted fact that the most important factor of division in India is caste. The immutable concept of caste is an all India phenomenon, even today. In spite of all its destructive effects witnessed and experienced by our society, neither our series of laws nor the galaxies of our great reformers have succeeded at eradicating this evil. According to the figures provided by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) an official institute, over 35,500 cases of crimes against Dalits of the country were officially registered during the year 2007. (Significantly, regarding these officially provided figures, whether it is the one quoted above or those that will follow, let us not forget that they provide only a glimpse of the real scenario. Many keen observers of the situation in our country believe that these figures hardly represent 5% of the facts.)

'Untouchability in rural India' a widely discussed book released in 2006 contains details of an extensive study conducted by a non government group covering 565 selected villages of 11 different states in India. The facts discovered by this study regarding the plight of Dalits in this country are really shameful. The study revealed that untouchability is being practiced extensively in India not only in private circles but in the government offices too. In 37.8% of the villages surveyed, Dalits were forced to sit separately in government run schools. In 27.6% of the villages, they were prevented from entering the Police Stations! In 35% of the villages Dalits were barred from selling any thing in the local market. In 47% of the villages, Milk Co operatives refused to buy milk from

Dalits. In 25% of the villages, Dalits were not allowed to buy milk from such Co operatives. 64% of Dalits were not permitted to enter any temple. In almost 50% of the villages, they could not use the public cremation ground. In 73% of the surveyed villages, Dalits could not enter any non Dalit house. According to the figures released by the Government of India, during the period between 2001 and 2005, on an average, 3 Dalit women were raped everyday in our country.

### **Human Brotherhood**

This horrible bane of discrimination cannot be completely eradicated unless our society initially changes its outlook regarding the criterion to determine one's status. Muhammad (S.A.W.) too had to encounter such a society, where, birth was the standard to determine the status of a person. The result of this notion manifested itself in destructive conflagration between tribes and races. Blacks and foreigners were treated with contempt. One's colour, tribe, wealth and the glory of one's ancestors were a vital factor in determining one's status. But Muhammad (S.A.W.), succeeded in transforming those discriminating people and their furious tribes into one strong ideological family, with unbreakable bonds of mutual love and brotherhood.

Holy Qur'an says:

*"O Mankind, indeed we have created you of a male and female and have made you nations and tribes, that you may know one another. Lo Allah is Knower and Aware!" (49:13)*

Upholding this concept, the Messenger of God emphasized that all people are created by one God and

originally all human beings are progeny of one man, Adam. Muhammad (S.A.W.), proclaimed *“O Mankind! Indeed your Lord is one and your father is one. No Arab is superior to a non Arab and no non Arab is superior to an Arab, no white is superior to a black and no black is superior to a white except in the matter of ‘Taqwa’ i.e. piety.”* (Musnad Ahmad 5/411). On another occasion, denouncing every kind of discrimination he said; *“Verily your status should not be for putting some one to shame. All of you are the descendants of Adam ... None, except on the basis of righteousness has any superiority over the other ...”* (Musnad Ahmad 5/158).

His contribution to human equality is not confined only to his sayings or to the verses he quoted from Qur’an, the divine book revealed to him. He relied more upon his practice than his sermons, to promote equality and universal brotherhood. He interacted with people and personally convinced and persuaded them to consider piety, righteous conduct and strong character as the yard stick to measure one’s greatness. His teachings and actions were so effective that as people got closer to him, they not only happily gave up their long nourished pride and prejudices based on birth, colour etc., but also began to feel ashamed about entertaining such notions.

On the day of his victorious entry into Makkah, the holy city, when it was time for the prayer, the messenger of Allah invited Bilal (R) an African companion of his, to stand over the roof of Kaaba – that sanctum, sanctorum of the theist world and call people for prayer. When Bilal climbed over roof, some people who were yet to reconcile with the reality of equality and brotherhood, felt offended and expressed their discontent about an erstwhile slave,

who was seen earlier as meaner than an animal, standing on the roof of Kaaba. Muhammad (S.A.W.), noticed this discomfiture and delivered an address, then and there, striking at the very root of this racist sentiment. He said:

*“People should give up taking pride in the deeds of their dead fathers and ancestors who have been reduced to ashes in the hell. People with such pride are more contemptible than a swine subsisting on garbage. God has forbidden you from taking pride in your ancestors. Men are only of two kinds, the faithful and the transgressors. All men are the progeny of Adam and Adam was born of clay.”*

(Tirmizi, Kitab-al Manaqib)

Once when Abuzar (R), a companion of the Messenger, addressed Bilal (R) as “Son of a black woman”, the Messenger’s reaction was immediate. He said; “Abuzar! You still smack of the evil traits of Jahiliyya (i.e. ignorance of the pre-Islamic era).” This brief remark of his was so penetrating in its spirit that Abuzar (R) fell on the ground and asked Bilal (R) to trample his face for the offensive words he had uttered. Such resolute stress on the equality and brotherhood of mankind eliminated all the prejudices that once dominated that society. In the new era, even the erstwhile slaves were chosen on the basis of merit not only to lead large congregational prayers but also to become rulers. Even today it is only this concept of equality before God and brotherhood of mankind that can liberate any society from the shackles of all discriminations.

## **Tolerance**

Another major problem facing the modern Indian society is communalism. This country has been witnessing violent clashes and organized bloodshed between various religious groups since almost a century. These clashes have often turned into massacres of huge scale. The number of such clashes and the damage caused by them in terms of loss of human lives and property have rapidly increased with the passage of time. Figures provided by National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) reveal that India witnessed 59,915 incidents recognized as riots by the government, during one single year i.e. 2007, which means 164 riots per day!

Hatred between communities, which was a phenomenon exclusive to the urban India for long, has now penetrated deep into the innocent atmosphere of rural India too. More and more people seem to be shedding off the spirit of tolerance towards their fellowmen. Surprisingly, when the communal frenzy grips a region and the hysteria of hatred breaks out, not only the professional criminals but even persons who are otherwise considered as just and civilized, indulge in purely inhuman acts, ignoring all the dictates of justice, sanity and civility.

Solution to this crisis lies, neither in discarding religion nor in merging various religious identities into one single unit, but in promoting the spirit of tolerance and respect towards the rights and sentiments of the fellow beings and in motivating people belonging to different groups to come together on grounds, commonly agreed upon by them. This was exactly the solution prescribed by Muhammad (S.A.W.) in a similar scenario that prevailed during his times. Apart from propagating the idea of

original brotherhood and exhorting people to consider every human being as their own brother, irrespective of what his faith is, he taught people to recognize the freedom of every individual to follow the religion of his choice.

Holy Qur'an says; "*There is no compulsion in religion.*" (2:56) On another occasion, it asserts the same in the form of a Question: "*If it had been your God's Will, all those who are on earth would have believed. Will you then compel people against their will to believe?*" (10:99). Qur'an clearly forbids its followers from offending the beliefs and practices of people belonging to other religions. It says; "*Do not revile those other than Allah whom they invoke.*" (6:108)

Madinah the city of the Messenger (S.A.W.) had a large population of Jews. One of his very first acts on entering this holy city was to negotiate a treaty between Jews and Muslims. According to this treaty, it was the responsibility of the state, not only to respect the beliefs of all but also to guarantee them, protection against any kind of harm. Through this treaty, he inculcated the principle of tolerance, in the conscience of the Islamic civilization from the very first day of its inception. When a Christian delegation from Najran came to Madinah, he invited them to stay in the mosque and even permitted them to conduct their prayer on one side of the mosque while he prayed with his companions on the other side.

Muhammad (S.A.W.) inspired a very strong sense of justice in people. He did not permit any kind of injustice even while dealing with the strongest of his opponents or even on the battle field. Holy Qur'an warns; "*O believers,*



*stand out firmly for Allah, as witness to fair deal and let not hatred of any community lead you to depart from justice. Be just. That is next to piety...*" (5:8). According to the teachings of the Messenger (S.A.W.), treating the neighbours fairly and caring for them, irrespective of their faith, is an essential requirement for one to be considered as a Muslim. He once said; "By God, he is not a believer." And he repeated it thrice. When people asked him "who?" he said; "He whose neighbour is not safe from his highhandedness." On another occasion he said; "He is not a believer, who eats to his fill when his neighbour is starving." He proclaimed that life, honour and rights of every citizen have equal sanctity and must be equally respected and protected.

He took steps to completely discourage the potential divisive elements that conspired and tried to breed animosity among the people. Holy Qur'an terms the act of dividing people as mischievous and villainous. It says; "*Truly Pharaoh elated himself in the land and divided people into sections. He was indeed a mischief mongerer.*" (28:4).

In our society the need for peace and harmony is very much felt and is also frequently talked about. But at the same time, the mischievous elements have been given a free hand to play havoc with the sentiments of the people. They can be seen everywhere working openly and also in an organized manner to pollute the innocent minds by spreading blatant lies, provocative misconceptions and hatred. Unless we bring to an end this contradiction in our attitudes and start a genuine struggle to promote the concept of brotherhood, spirit of tolerance, love for peace, strong sense of justice and at the same time, do all that is

possible to contain the elements which sow the seeds of animosity, we have no way out of this grave crisis.

### **Chauvinism**

One more challenge currently threatening our national existence is linguistic and regional chauvinism. During the post-independent era, in spite of all the efforts made to strengthen the spirit of nationalism, it is regionalism that has rapidly grown in the country. It is regionalism that has led to the outcry of separatism and the resultant chaos, burning several parts of our country today. In fact, nationalism, which we so much rely upon, to integrate the citizens of the country, has not only failed miserably in resolving the crisis of regionalism but on the contrary, it has proved to be the very mother of regionalism. In its essence, Nationalism is nothing but love and loyalty to a particular territory. Regionalism hence is only a shrunken form of Nationalism. Fortunately today at least a section of Indian intelligencia is realistic enough to admit, that apart from other factors, basically, it is our emphasis on nationalism, that has resulted in the escalation of regional extremism.

Muhammad (S.A.W.) was born in a society wherein people had very deep rooted and fervent regional feelings. Arabs used to call non-Arabs as 'Ajami' meaning, dumb people. Every city had its own stock of legends and folklore glorifying its past. Muhammad (S.A.W.) tackled this problem by spreading, not nationalism but universalism, which is one of the remarkable characteristics of his message. In his message, God is identified as 'Rabbul Aalameen' (God of the worlds). Prophet's 'Rahmatullil Aalamin' (Blessing for the whole mankind) and the holy book revealed to him is 'Hudallil Aalameen' (Guidance to

whole mankind). He promoted the spirit of Universal brotherhood. Holy Qur'an says; *"And of His signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth and the diversity of your tongues and colours. Indeed there are signs in this for the wise."* (30 : 22). The Messenger of God, convinced people that any of these factors do not make any one greater than the other.

'Hijrah' or the migration of the messenger (S.A.W.) and his followers from Makah to Madinah stands in history as a monumental symbol of victory of truth and ideology over nationalism or regionalism. The fact that Islamic calendar commences from the date of this migration shows how significant this event is in the history of Islam. By clearly stating that "No Arab has any superiority over a non Arab and No non-Arab has any superiority over an Arab..." he shattered the idol of Arab nationalism. His emphasis over the universality of Man, implied one common direction in worship without least hesitation. Besides, believers were motivated to accept one universally common pattern of life. The Messenger (S.A.W.) closed all doors of chauvinism by proclaiming that "whoever calls people towards 'Asbiyyah' (Chauvinism and prejudiced goals) is not among us. Whoever fights with a spirit of chauvinism is not among us and whoever dies for chauvinism is not among us."

### **Strength of Character**

Another arena where the Indian society suffers miserably is that of character and morality. Moral bankruptcy and rampant loss of character are the order of the day; To quote just a few examples:

- 32,766 cases of murder and 21,467 cases of rape were registered in the country during the year 2008.
- Over 1096 lakh cases of various crimes against women were registered during the same year.

A report released by AFP, a reputed international news agency, on 13<sup>th</sup> November 2008 said (Excerpts);

“India needs a complete overhaul in the way it handles allegations of rape. Human rights campaigners say, a German woman dropped a sex attack claim citing pressure and intimidation. The woman alleged that her 14-year-old daughter was raped by the son of a prominent minister in the resort state of Goa but withdrew the complaint later, saying she was made to feel like a criminal. Separately, a British woman who was raped in New Delhi said Indian authorities do not take sexual assaults seriously as her attacker was freed on bail after serving just three months of a 21-year jail sentence. The German woman said in a letter released to the media that since she filed the complaint, she and her daughter had endured a ‘living hell’, as police tried to get her to drop the allegation. ‘We have learnt the bitter truth, that making genuine complaints against the rich and mighty is entirely counterproductive’ the letter said. The woman’s lawyer, Mr. Aires Rodrigues, added that the German woman and her daughter were verbally abused by a doctor who was tasked to conduct a medical examination. “Even the victim was treated like the accused by police”, he added. According to the latest available statistics from India’s National Crime Records Bureau, there were 19,348 rape cases in 2006 – a 678 per cent increase since 1971 when records began. The increase far outstrips rises in other violent crimes such as murder, robbery and kidnapping.

India's first female President Pratibha Patil called for stricter punishments and for women to learn self defense!"

- According to official figures, India has an estimated 70 million drug addicts and the number is significantly on the rise, spreading at a rapid pace in semi-urban and backward areas.
- In 2007, the Ministry of Women and Child Development reported presence of 2.8 million sex workers in India, with 35.47 percent of them entering the trade before the age of maturity i.e. 18 years (Indian Express, 8<sup>th</sup> May, 2007). The number of prostitutes has also doubled in the recent decade (BBC News, 3<sup>rd</sup> July, 2006).
- But according to a report by Human Rights Watch, the number of sex workers in India is around 15 million, with Mumbai alone being home to over one lakh (100,000) sex workers. It is known as the largest sex industry centre in Asia.
- As per the National Survey on 'The Extent, Pattern and Trends of Drug abuse in India' conducted by the Government of India in collaboration with United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, The current prevalence rates within the age group of 12-18 years are, 21.4 percent for alcohols, 3 percent for cannabis, 0.7 percent for opiates and 3.6 percent for other illicit drugs. The survey also indicated a high concentration of drug addiction in certain social segments and high-risk groups, such as, commercial sex workers, transportation workers and street children.
- According to a recent report by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) up to 50 million girls and women are missing from India's population as

a result of systematic gender discrimination. In India, there are less than 93 women for every 100 men. The accepted reason for such a disparity is the practice of female infanticide in India, prompted by the existence of oppressive traditions such as Dowry system which requires the family of the bride to pay out a huge sum of money to the bridegroom at the time of marriage. For a poor family, the birth of a girl child can signal the beginning of financial ruin and extreme hardship. In the backdrop of this scenario, *Diagnostic teams with ultrasound scanners which detect the sex of a child, advertise with catch lines; "spend 600 rupees now and save 50,000 rupees later!"* This implies that by avoiding the birth of a girl, a family could avoid paying a huge amount as dowry on the occasion of her marriage. According to UNICEF, the problem is worsening as the scientific methods of detecting the sex of an unborn baby and performing abortions are improving day-by-day and the availability of these facilities is increasing in rural India.

### **Remedy**

Now if anybody expects our rulers, political representatives, administrators or officers of our government to take effective measures to bring about any change, he just has to cast one look at their attitude and that will liberate him from all such illusions. He will realize that it would be foolish to rely upon the existing laws, the law makers or the law enforcing authorities to eradicate any of these evils. Both our bureaucracy and political class are totally rotten with rampant corruption

and massive criminalization. They are known for their utter inefficiency. To cite a few examples:

- A report presented by Transparency International (TI) in 2005 claims that more than 50% of Indians have direct, first hand experience of paying bribe or peddling influence to get even a legitimate job done in a public office. This anti corruption body estimates that in India the bribe paid only by the truckers amounts to over 5 Billion Dollars per annum. The monetary value of petty corruption in 11 basic departments such as education, healthcare, judiciary, police etc. is approximately Rs. 21,068 crores!
- In the Loksabha formed after the national general elections of 2009, there are 150 newly elected MPs with criminal cases pending against them. The charges against 73 of these MPs are quite serious in nature, such as rape, murder abduction etc. A further disappointing fact that would upset even the extremely optimistic among us who hope for some improvement in the future is that, as compared to 2004, the number of such MPs with criminal records has gone up. There were 128 MPs with criminal cases in 2004 Loksabha, of them 55 had serious criminal records. This indicates an increase of about 17.2% in the number of MPs with criminal records and increase of 30.9% in the number of MPs with serious criminal records. (Statistics based on study by ADR i.e. Association for Democratic Reforms.)

Another frightening fact is that these law makers who have mastered the art of law breaking do not belong to any

one particular region or party. No major political party can claim to be clean in this regard. Obviously, the rot is universal! With the process of elections itself having lost its credibility, art of rigging having achieved its perfection, and with 'season of crimes' being the other name for the time of elections, there is no surprise that our system nourishes such criminals and paves way for them to get elected again and again with impressive margins.

Such being the state of affairs, there is nothing to wonder about, when our esteemed leaders advise our women to learn karate and such other martial arts to combat rape and see no other remedy to the problem. Nor is there any astonishment when a Chief Minister consoles the victims saying; "What is a rape after all? In America, a rape takes place every minute. It is as common as drinking tea. You drink a cup of tea, commit a rape." We have many state governments issuing licenses to prostitution and cabaret centres and earning a pretty share of their income through trade of liquor, and lottery – a form of social gambling. There are a number of other evils around us which we have learnt to peacefully co exist with. Today, an average Indian's apathy towards essential values has increased to such a level and his insensitivity towards moral issues has grown to such an extent that no crime shocks him, no rape moves him, no murder disturbs him and no evil pricks his conscience. Corruption, fornication, theft, robbery, hoarding, black marketing are all integral parts of today's India.

### **An Inspiring Story of Success**

Even the Arabia of Muhammad (S.A.W.) time was not unfamiliar to all these evils. Each evil cited above was rampant in that society too, though in varying proportions.



The only significant difference being that, there was absolute anarchy in that society and we have governments at all levels to witness these evils. The divinely guided strategy adopted by the Messenger of God (S.A.W.) to eliminate all these evils was multi dimensional.

For instance, female infanticide was rampant in Arabia during the time of the last Messenger of God (S.A.W.). Many buried alive their daughters, the moment they emerged from their mother's womb. Rarely did anybody feel sense of guilt about this crime. On the contrary they felt guilty about being identified as the father of a female child. Muhammad (S.A.W.) was successful in totally eliminating this inhuman practice within a matter of a few years throughout the vast area of land that was under the influence of his teachings. He achieved this great goal firstly, by inculcating deep love and fear of God and a strong sense of accountability before Him in every human being. Secondly, he developed in people, great respect for the life of each human being, irrespective of race, creed, religion, region or gender. Thirdly, he glorified the act of protecting and looking after female children to such an extent that people started feeling proud to be called as father of daughters. Even the social practices introduced by him as part of that comprehensive system of life called Islam were fully in support of the female child. To quote just one example, according to the system introduced by him, at the time of marriage, it is compulsory for the boy to pay dowry to the girl and not vice versa! Following are a couple of verses of Qur'an that had great impact on human civilization:

*"And when the girl child that was buried alive is asked, for what sin she was slain." (81: 8,9)*

*"... Whoever kills a human being except (as punishment) for manslaughter or corruption on earth, it shall be as if he has killed all mankind and whoever saves the life of one, it shall be as if he had saved the life of all mankind..." (5:32)*

Belief in the accountability in the life after death or the Day of Judgment is one of the basic tenets of his teachings. He projected 'Taqwa' i.e. fear of Allah and total abstinence from all acts which caused god's displeasure as an essential character of a believer. According to him the desired degree of 'Taqwa' was such that even in the absence of any external hurdle and even in spite of being under pressure to commit a sin, a man was expected to abstain from sin, purely on the ground of his belief in the Omnipresent God, and his sense of accountability before Him.

Qur'an says; *"He (God) knows even the deception of the eyes and all that is concealed in the hearts"* (40:19)

About the Day of Judgment it states; *"Then shall any one who has done an atom's weight of good shall see it and any one who has done an atom's weight of evil shall see it."* (99:78)

This belief worked as a strong moral safe guard. When people embraced these concepts, it was sufficient merely to inform them, about the merit of virtue and vice of evil and they would voluntarily do the right and abstain from the wrong. Arabs were extremely fond of wine and even used to sing songs in praise of wine. But when the divine command forbidding wine was declared in Madinah, even

those engaged in drinking wine at that very moment, threw away all the wine they had with them, without the least resistance. And now it is part of history that on that particular day, the soil of entire Madinah was wet with disposed wine. So was the fate of other evils too.

Secondly, Muhammad (S.A.W.) himself stood before his society as the supreme example of highest character and morality. Holy Qur'an says; "*Verily in the messenger of Allah you have the best example.*" (30:12). He was an absolute ideal for the people in every aspect of life.

Thirdly, he not only explained the distinction between virtue and evil, but also made it obligatory on every believer to personally promote these virtues and struggle to eradicate evils in the society. As a consequence people accepted the establishment of virtue and eradication of evils as their personal and collective responsibility. He said; "*Whosoever of you see an evil action, shall remove it with the might of his arm. If he is unable to do so, he must orally denounce that evil and if he fails even in that, then he must at least have abhorrence for it, and that is the weakest state in faith.*" According to the teachings of Muhammad (S.A.W.) 'Amr bil MaarooF' and 'Nahi Anil Munkar' or, enjoining people towards virtue and forbidding people from doing the evil is a duty of both the individual and the society.

Fourthly, he introduced and implemented punitive laws to treat those who indulged in crimes in spite of all the preventive measures mentioned above.

Teachings of Muhammad (S.A.W.) and the prescriptions suggested by him in the light of divine guidance for the

welfare of human society are incredibly practical, remarkable effective and are exceptionally in conformity with human nature. They are fully capable of not only reforming individuals but also transforming societies and bring about a miraculous change in human life during any age, if accepted and implemented in totality. However, it is not mere knowledge of his sayings but the pure character that blossoms when his teachings are truly followed that is going to revolutionize any society. Let me conclude, with this verse of Holy Qur'an:

*"Verily, Allah will never change the condition of a nation until they change themselves." (13:11)*