



Indian Muslims for Secular Democracy  
Equality Justice Compassion Peace

## DOCUMENT

### WHAT IS IMSD?

IMSD is a forum of Indian Muslims committed to the values of democracy, secularism, equality and justice as enshrined in the UN's 'Universal Declaration of Human Rights' and the Constitution of India. It believes that these values are fully in consonance with the core teachings of Islam.

It seeks to rejuvenate the tolerant traditions within Islam and to generate a progressive and liberal voice within the Indian Muslim community so that Muslims in India are able to live in dignity, at peace with self and with all fellow Indians.

IMSD is an independent national movement of progressive Muslims. It is a non-party, socio-political organisation seeking to create an alternative progressive discourse within the community, firmly committed to the cause of modern secular values and gender justice. It is opposed to the forces of conservatism, patriarchy, the domination of the clergy, dogmatism, extremism and violence.

For *IMSD*, anyone who calls or identifies herself/himself, or is seen as a Muslim is a Muslim. It has an open arms policy towards people of all communities who share the values *IMSD* upholds.

### WHY IMSD?

At its launch in 2003, *Muslims for Secular Democracy* (MSD) had noted it was taking birth "at a critical juncture when India's Constitution and democracy are in serious danger of being subverted from within and replaced by a fascist regime". As we re-launch the organisation now as *Indian Muslims for Secular Democracy* (*IMSD*), the signals are even more ominous. No less worrisome is the apparent drastic rightward shift of the political centre across the globe, with racism and religious extremism on the rise.

Sustained hate propaganda, systematic communalisation of India's history, complemented through the 'saffronisation of education', instigation of communal violence and terror to polarise Indian society and painstaking organisation building, have been the *sangh parivar*'s preoccupation for nearly a century now. Today, having made deep inroads into the mass psyche, having infiltrated and captured State institutions, *sangh parivar* outfits including its parliamentary wing (BJP) are cynically misusing and manipulating the instruments and institutions of democracy to subvert them from within.

The suppression of the country's minorities, Dalits, OBCs, tribals, peasants and the working class, are part of Hindutva's agenda to subvert the Indian Constitution. Intense, unchecked hate propaganda has succeeded to the point that anti-Muslim prejudice, and worse, is now the prevailing "common sense".

As an organisation of Muslims, for *IMSD* it is a matter of greater concern that in recent decades, within India and internationally a section of Muslims who claim to speak or act in

the name of Islam and Muslims, reinforce the image of the community as one of ‘fundamentalists’, ‘fanatics’, ‘extremists’, ‘anti-nationals’; a community ‘unprepared for, or incapable of, peaceful coexistence with others’. Extremist and terrorist organisations such as those mushrooming in our immediate neighbourhood, as also the Al Qaeda, ISIS, Boko Haram, are adding fuel to the growing ‘Islamophobia’, in India and globally.

The big challenge before Muslims today is to rediscover the compassionate, pluralistic and tolerant traditions within Islam, the Islam which the bigots and the extremists seek to destroy. MSD is being re-launched as IMSD to promote the values of equality, justice, freedom, compassion, human rights and the rule of law.

## **PRINCIPLES OF IMSD**

*IMSD* stands committed to protecting and promoting the values and principles which constitute the bedrock of our Constitution, as also that of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), 1948. (See ANNEX 1)

*IMSD*’s commitment to the values enshrined in the Indian constitution is both a matter of principle and prudence. For minorities targeted by majoritarian, neo-fascist forces the only guarantee of life with dignity lies not in gaining the ‘goodwill of the majority’, as the RSS demands, but in defense of India’s Constitution that guarantees secular politics, democracy, pluralism, non-discrimination and equal citizenship rights. (See ANNEX 2).

To endorse the Indian Constitution is to defend the secular-democratic values enshrined in it; not only against *Hindutva* but against *all* sectarian, divisive, communal worldviews and forces. Communalists of different hues feed on each other. It is not possible to fight Hindu communalism without simultaneously fighting against Muslim communalism, or communal politics in any other garb.

IMSD’s prime responsibility lies within the community.

The history of all religions shows that any and every religion can be, and is, interpreted in many different ways. *IMSD* supports that strand within Islam which is in consonance with the values enshrined in the UDHR and Indian Constitution: justice, equality, free choice, wisdom and compassion. (See ANNEX 3)

- ***Secularism***

- ***Secular state***

Secularism rejects the notion of a theocratic state – Islamic State, Hindu Rashtra or any other – since a theocratic state is by definition militates against the ideal of equal citizenship rights. For example, only those owing allegiance to the official state religion are eligible to the posts of President, Prime Minister, Chief Justice etc. The barring of women from occupying such posts on grounds of gender is another example.

A secular state is a state which has no religion. Such a religion-neutral (*‘dharmnirpeksh’*) state makes a clear separation between religion and politics, between matters of faith and affairs of the state. While all citizens are guaranteed the freedom of conscience, the state does not favour one religion or another.

- ***Secular society***

In our popular consciousness secularism means equal respect for all religions (*Sarva dharma samabhava*). This is the legacy of the Sufi and the Bhakti movements, our syncretic culture.

As *IMSD* understands it, the word ‘secular’ is not synonymous with ‘atheist’. Nor is being ‘religious’ the same as being ‘communal’.

To be secular is to affirm the inalienable basic rights and freedoms of all human beings, to respect all religions and cultures, even as we reserve the right to critique and reform them for the betterment of our societies. To be communal is to subscribe to the view that all followers of a particular faith have identical social-economic and political interests which are opposed to the interests of those of other faiths.

- ***Democracy and Human Rights***

Democracy is not only about elections, however free and fair. Given the logic of numbers an electoral process could well install governments with a majoritarian worldview. Herein lies the critical importance of the UDHR and the Indian Constitution, both of which guarantee certain rights and freedoms of all citizens; as also the rights of minorities, women, Dalits, OBCs, tribals and other vulnerable sections of society. Without these rights and liberties, democracy will be meaningless, in India or elsewhere in the world.

- ***Fundamental Duties of Citizens***

While standing by the rights and freedoms of individual citizens, minorities, women and other vulnerable sections, *IMSD* simultaneously endorses the fundamental duties of every citizen of India as spelt out in Article 51A of the Constitution. (ANNEX 4)

## **IMSD POSITION ON ISSUES**

### ***1. Minorities and the Indian State***

#### ***(i) Mass Crimes and the Culture of Impunity***

What India has witnessed in recent decades – Nellie (1983), Delhi (1984), Mumbai (1992-93), Gujarat (2002), Kandhamal (2007) – are nothing short of crimes against humanity, pogroms targeting religious minorities with the complicity, connivance, even sponsorship of state actors. Report after fact-finding report keeps pointing towards police partisanship and the devious role of communal outfits in communal conflagrations across the country. The consistently partisan role of the police is another facet of the same problem.

The impunity enjoyed by the masterminds and the perpetrators of ‘mob terror’ has in turn given birth to ‘bomb terror’. If this is bad enough, even more disturbing is the partisan conduct in the investigation of terror acts by security agencies. Over the years a pattern has emerged where frequently young Muslims are detained, framed, tortured and damned only to be declared ‘not guilty’ by the courts in most cases. That’s after long years on incarceration with no accountability for the trauma and devastation inflicted on the accused and their families. On the other hand is the facilitation of the acquittal of Hindu extremists booked in acts of “saffron terror” and police officers guilty of “extra-judicial” killing of citizens in fake encounters.

*IMSD* fully supports the over decade-long demand of secular activists for a law to curb communal crimes incorporating the doctrine of command responsibility. Such a law must address a range of issues pertinent to hate propaganda, build-up to and the subsequent eruption of violence. These include:

- Teaching of prejudice through doctored history books
- Hate Propaganda and demonisation of target groups
- Rumour-mongering

- Arms training by communal groups
- Vigilantism and moral policing
- Communalisation of the police and other security agencies
- Communal misuse of draconian laws
- Doctrine of command responsibility to hold senior officers and communal masterminds accountable for their acts of commission and omission
- Adequate relief, rehabilitation and reparation measures.

India's prevailing culture of impunity must end. The vicious cycle of 'mob-terror' and 'bomb terror' must be broken.

### ***(ii) Institutionalised Discrimination***

The fact that Indian Muslims are victims of institutionalised discrimination resulting in their growing educational and socio-economic backwardness and political underrepresentation (in Parliament down to village *panchayats*) vis-à-vis other socio-religious communities has been brought into sharp focus by the reports of the Sachar Committee and the Ranganath Misra Commission. Both made important recommendations to address the existing democracy deficit. Both have been as good as forgotten.

The uncaring attitude of self-proclaimed secular parties combined with the fierce opposition to the recommendations by the *sangh parivar* constituents in and out of Parliament again ensured that as in case of mass crimes no corrective measures are initiated to ensure non-discrimination and equal opportunities to Indian Muslims.

IMSD supports the demand for affirmative action and diversity programmes to address the issues of widespread poverty, educational and socio-economic backwardness and the political under-representation of Indian Muslims as recommended by the Sachar Committee and the Ranganath Misra Commission.

### ***(iii) Caste among Indian Muslims***

IMSD recognises the fact that while there is no caste in Islam, castes – *ashraf, ajlaf, arzaal*; roughly corresponding to upper castes, OBCs and SC-STs among Hindus – are very much a part of the Indian Muslim reality. It therefore calls for the factoring in the realities of the hierarchical caste based society or *biradaris* in the design of policies and programmes to address Muslim backwardness. We therefore support such policies and programmes for affirmative action in favour of Muslims which factor in the reality of caste. In particular, we demand that the benefit of reservations for SCs must be extended to Dalit Muslims and Dalit Christians.

### ***(iv) Pakistan and the 'Loyalty Test'***

IMSD categorically rejects the two-nation theory propounded by Jinnah, Savarkar and others. Religious minorities across the sub-continent continue to be the worst victims of the tragic partition of the country. We believe that the formation of Bangladesh in 1971 was the strongest refutation, in practice, of the two-nation theory.

Indian Muslims are second to none in their loyalty to the nation and we denounce the *sangh parivar's* daily demand for proof of the same from Muslims. Those who had no role to play in the country's freedom movement are the least qualified to question others' patriotism.

IMSD endorses the view that though we *do not accept the ideology* that led to the creation of Pakistan, we *cannot deny the reality of Pakistan*.

Along with all the peace-loving people who constitute the majority both in India and Pakistan, IMSD supports friendly relations between neighbours, people-to-people contacts and a nuclear weapons-free South Asia. IMSD cherishes the dream that all the SAARC countries will sooner than later come together to form a South Asian Union and a peaceful and prosperous region.

## **2. Issues Indian Muslims must address**

### ***(i) Rejuvenating Islam's Tolerant Tradition, Celebrating Diversity***

Muslims must know that the syncretic or composite culture that India is so proud of would have been impossible if people from different religions had not known how to distinguish between popular culture and essentials of their religion.

Muslims only need to recall the examples of Sufi saints such as 'Gharib Nawaz' Khwaja Moinuddin Chisti, Hazrat Nizamuddin, Baba Farid and numerous others who attracted non-Muslims towards them, providing shared public space for people irrespective of religion, caste and gender.

Common cultural practices – shared language, music, modes of dress, food habits, festivals – promote peaceful co-existence and good neighbourliness in a plural society.

Studies across the world have shown that in societies where there is social intermingling between people of diverse faiths and cultures, there is lesser possibility of mutual prejudice and stereotyping. IMSD strongly condemns those Muslim worldviews and organisations that discourage or declare it sinful for Muslims to socially interact or intermingle with non-Muslims, participate in the festivals of others etc.

In today's urban environment, where people from different religio-cultural backgrounds and traditions live in close proximity, peaceful co-existence demands civic sense, mutual respect and accommodation, some consideration for others' sensibilities. This is a demand that all citizens are expected to meet, irrespective of the religion or the region they come from. Muslims, too, need to examine some of their own practices in this context. Noise pollution through loud-speakers over mosques or temples is not a religious but a civic issue.

### ***(ii) Gender justice***

#### **• Reforms in Muslim Family Law**

While observing that the oppression and exploitation of women is rampant in India across communities *IMSD* upholds the constitutional principle of justice and non-discrimination between the sexes.

Of particular concern to *IMSD* is the issue of Muslim personal law. We believe that all existing personal laws applicable to people of different religious communities in India discriminate against women one way or another and therefore urgently need change.

In case of Muslims, *IMSD* opposes the triple talaq (instant divorce), halala marriages, underage marriage, *muta* marriage, polygamy, female genital mutilation, sex slavery and many other practices prejudicial to women. There can be no 'Islamic' justification for these practices to be permitted in India or elsewhere in the world. The Quranic injunctions which are clearly meant to uphold women's dignity and equal rights cannot be interpreted to justify subjection of vulnerable women to degrading practices.

*IMSD* fully supports the demand for a complete overhaul of the Muslim family law in India based on the Constitutional and Quranic principles of equality, justice and freedom. We call

for immediate legal abolition of the practice of triple *talaq*, *halala* (as practiced), and polygamy (in today's context). IMSD strongly condemns female genital mutilation and supports an end to this practice.

- **Equal Access to Sacred Spaces**

IMSD fully supports the demand of women from different faiths to access sacred spaces. Asking women to stay away from religious places of worship or reverence just because she is a woman violates her dignity and self-respect and goes against all modern values of gender equality. IMSD fully supports Muslim women's right to pray inside mosques; a right that women enjoyed during the lifetime of the Prophet but which has been denied to them by the patriarchs of Islam. It also supports women's equal access, on par with men, to *dargahs*.

- **Women and the Veil**

Among Indian Muslims, the *purdah* system that was on the decline in many parts of urban India has revived in a big way since 1990s. While respecting the right of individual Muslim women to dress as they deem fit, we condemn any attempt by any individual or organisation to compel women behind the veil in the name of Islam and oppose the threats and punishments meted out to them. IMSD rejects the false claim that wearing the veil is an Islamic obligation for all Muslim women.

- **Uniform Civil Code**

In recent decades, the *Sangh Parivar* has repeatedly invoked Article 44 under the Directive Principles in the Constitution that stipulates: "The State shall endeavour to secure for the citizens a uniform civil code throughout the territory of India." The *Hindutvavaadis* who never tire of reference to Article 44 are entirely silent on other Articles (38-50) under the Directive Principles? ANNEX 5

That is because for the *sangh parivar*, the question of a uniform civil code is not about gender justice; rather, it is one more stick to beat Indian Muslims with.

IMSD supports any endeavour by the State to bring about a uniform civil code. Endeavour, in our view, can only mean encouragement of nationwide discussion and deliberation on the issue aimed at evolving a national consensus and not imposing the codes of any one religion, culture, tradition on others. In all such endeavours uniform justice must be the sole criterion.

- **Girls'/Women's education**

Census data shows that Muslim women are far behind men in literacy. In recent years, however, it has been observed across India that given the opportunity, Muslim girls/ women are outpacing Muslim boys/ men in education to an extent that 'marital mismatch' has become a matter of serious concern. Certain clerics are propagating that the solution to this problem lies in limiting girls'/women's education. IMSD condemns this approach; the onus lies on Muslim boys/men to catch up with girls/women in their thirst for knowledge and higher education.

**(iii) Combating religious supremacism, exceptionalism, bigotry, intolerance, extremism and terrorism in our community**

- **Supremacism**



IMSD presumes that people follow the religion which they do only because they believe it to be THE 'right' or 'true' religion. It is one thing to hold such a belief, quite another to be a supremacist. IMSD rejects supremacism which is the worldview that a particular age, race, species, ethnic group, religion, gender, social class, ideology, or culture is superior to other variations of that trait, and advocates those who identify with it to dominate, control, and subjugate those who do not. IMSD rejects the worldview of supremacist Muslims.

Ibn Arabi, the great Sufi theoretician said:

*“Do not praise your own faith exclusively so that you disbelieve all the rest. If you do this you will miss much good. Nay, you will miss the whole truth of the matter. God, the Omniscient and the Omnipresent, cannot be confined to any one creed, for He says in the Quran, wheresoever ye turn, there is the face of Allah. Everybody praises what he knows. His God is his own creature, and in praising it, he praises himself. Which he would not do if he were just, for his dislike is based on ignorance.”*

- **Exceptionalism**

The views of those Muslims who argue that Islam and Muslims are exceptional, very different from all other religions and its followers, are identical to the view Islamophobes have about Islam and Muslims. IMSD rejects both the Islamist and the Islamophobic argument about Islam's exceptionalism.

- **Narrow-mindedness/Bigotry/Intolerance**

IMSD rejects the attitude of those Muslims who are quick to condemn all kinds of social practices as *bidat* (innovation) and therefore prohibited to Muslims. IMSD is proud of Muslims who have made valuable contributions over generations in virtually every field of human endeavour: music, cinema, arts, literature, paintings, sports.

To anyone who preaches narrow-mindedness and bigotry to Muslims, we quote the words of Jalāl ad-Dīn Rūmī, whose *Masnavi* is considered as being the “Quran in Persian” by many Muslims:

*Don't fall down the well of Scripture,  
Use the words to keep moving.*

*Many are trapped in the Quran  
and the Bible, holding to a rope.*

*It's not the rope's fault.  
Let the well-rope pull you out.  
Then let the well-rope go.*

- **Health and Family Welfare**

- **Family Planning:**

For many years now, the *sangh parivar* and other Hindu communal outfits have carried out a sustained propaganda that Muslims oppose family planning because they want to increase their population so that Hindus can be turned into a minority “in their own country”. This baseless propaganda has done immense damage to the image of Indian Muslims in recent decades. Census figures clearly show that Indian Muslims are somewhat behind other communities in the practice of family planning but this gap is consistently narrowing.

Numerous studies in India and elsewhere demonstrate that a family's decision to limit the number of children is closely linked to education and economic well-being of the family.

Ironically, though a growing section among Muslims is adopting family control practices, there remains a clergy-promoted perception among many that Islam is opposed to birth control. IMSD condemns the *sangh parivar* for spreading the vicious and baseless propaganda about unbridled growth of Muslims and we also question the dogmatic stand of the Muslim clergy in India claiming that Islam forbids family planning. On the contrary, Islam encourages Muslims to limit their family for reasons such as health of the woman, financial constraints, family welfare etc.

- **Vaccination/Immunisation:**

IMSD fully supports polio vaccination and other immunisation programmes for children. It strongly condemns those who oppose it, whether on religious grounds or on the bogus claim that it is a surreptitious method of sterilising Muslims.

- **State Subsidy iN Religious Matters**

The question of state subsidy for Indian Muslims going to Mecca for Haj is frequently raised as a glaring example of 'Muslim appeasement'. The fact is that many Muslim religious and political leaders too are opposed to Haj subsidy. They argue that since Haj is a once in a lifetime obligation only for those with means, the subsidy is "un-Islamic" and must be stopped.

IMSD supports the withdrawal of all subsidies and other forms of state support for any kind of religious activity, including the *Haj* subsidy.

- **Crime and Punishment**

- **Apostasy and Blasphemy**

A secular state has laws which define crimes and prescribe punishments for the same. But, by definition, it cannot entertain any notion of sin. Both apostasy and blasphemy may be considered grave sins before Allah, but they cannot be considered as crimes to be punished by a secular state. Those whose religious sentiments are hurt have every right to protest in peaceful, democratic ways. But citizens cannot be allowed to take the law in their own hands for that will only lead to moral policing, vigilantism, mobocracy. A Muslim has as much right to opt out of Islam as a non-Muslim has the freedom to enter it. IMSD therefore opposes the concept of death for an apostate (*murtad*). The right of citizens to critical examination and rational inquiry into any and every religion cannot be curtailed in the name of blasphemy. In the current skewed and narrow discourse underway within the Muslim community where every sect considers the rest outside Islam, the issue of blasphemy needs to be cast aside as it is a serious impediment to an open and free discourse within the Muslim community, for inter-faith dialogue and the development of free thought. The very thought of blasphemy creates a climate of fear among Muslims and deters the individual from any form of critical inquiry and intellectual debate.

- **LGBT community**

Muslims who believe that homosexuality is a great sin are entitled to their view. However, IMSD opposes homophobia and the criminalisation of gay and lesbian sexual orientations. IMSD supports abrogation of Article 377.

- **Degrading Punishments, Death Penalty**



*IMSD* opposes all degrading medieval forms of punishment – lashing, cutting of hands, stoning to death, crucifixion. It also opposes the death penalty which has already been outlawed by more than 100 countries.

### ***Extremism/Terrorism***

*IMSD* firmly rejects the resort to violence as a means of conflict resolution: socio-economic, political, cultural or religious. It strongly condemns all acts of terrorism, including state terror anywhere in the world. *IMSD* denounces organisations and individuals who engage in, aid and abet terrorist acts and condemns those who seek to justify it. Acts of terror can never be justified.

### **STRATEGIES OF *IMSD***

- *Advocacy*
- *Media Outreach*
- *Opinion Building*
- *Alliance Building*

*IMSD* will join hands with secular-democratic groups within India, across the sub-continent and the world, to challenge all those in our midst who promote and preach religious intolerance, sectarianism, extremism, mob terror and bomb terror, with the declared objectives of establishing a Hindu *Rashtra* or an Islamic State.

## ANNEXURES

### ***Annexure 1: UN's Universal Declaration of Human Right, 1948***

*We refer to the following Articles in the UN's declaration:*

*Article 1:* All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.

*Article 2:* Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status....

*Article 5:* No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

*Article 7:* All are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law. All are entitled to equal protection against any discrimination in violation of this Declaration and against any incitement to such discrimination.

*Article 18:* Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.

*Article 19:* Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.

### ***Annexure 2: Indian Constitution***

*We refer in particular to the following Articles in the Indian Constitution:*

*Right to Equality:*

*Article 14:* "The State shall not deny to any person equality before the law or the equal protection of the laws within the territory of India".

*Article 15:* "The State shall not discriminate against any citizen on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth or any of them..."

*Right to Freedom:*

*Article 19:* "(1) All citizens shall have the right

(a) to freedom of speech and expression;

(b) to assemble peaceably and without arms;

(c) to form associations or unions..."

*Right to life and personal liberty:*

*Article 21:* "No person shall be deprived of his life or personal liberty except according to procedure established by law".

*Right to Freedom of Religion:*

*Article 25: Freedom of conscience and free profession, practice and propagation of religion:* “Subject to public order, morality and health and to the other provisions of this Part, all persons are equally entitled to freedom of conscience and the right freely to profess, practise and propagate religion”.

It must be noted that Articles 14, 15, 19 and 21 guarantee rights to *each individual citizen*, not this or that *community of individuals*. Put differently, these are inalienable rights of the ‘ultimate minority’: the individual citizen. All citizens have the right to freedom of speech and expression (Article 19) and the right to freedom of religion (Article 25). In other words, it is every citizen’s right to be a Hindu, Muslim, Christian, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, Parsi, agnostic or atheist.

Articles 26, 29 and 30 which are also part of fundamental rights guarantee the protection and preservation of the religious beliefs and cultural practices of minorities against any majoritarian onslaught. As *IMSD* sees it, to rely on such constitutionally guaranteed community rights to deny the rights and liberties of the ‘minorities within minorities’ violates the very principle of *universal human rights* and is therefore unacceptable.

### **Annexure 3: Quran**

We refer to specific Quranic injunctions:

**Pluralism and Diversity:** "O mankind! We have created you from a single (pair) of male and female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know each other. (Surah 49: Al-Hujraat: 13); “Had Allah willed, He could have made them one community (Surah 42: Ash-Shura: 8)

**Right to Life:** “...and do not kill the soul which Allah has forbidden except for the requirements of justice; this He has enjoined you with that you may understand.(*Surah 6: Al-An'am:151*); “...whoever slays a soul, unless it be for manslaughter or for mischief in the land, it is as though he slew all men; and whoever keeps it alive, it is as though he kept alive all men(*Surah 5: Al-Ma'idah:32*).

**Right to Justice:** The Qur'an uses two concepts: ‘*adl*’ (justice) and ‘*ihsan*’ (compassion).

“O you who believe! be maintainers of justice, bearers of witness of Allah's sake, though it may be against your own selves or (your) parents or near relatives; if he be rich or poor, Allah is nearer to them both in compassion; therefore do not follow (your) low desires, lest you deviate. (*Surah 4: An-Nisa': 135*).

“O you who believe! Be upright for Allah, bearers of witness with justice, and let not hatred of a people incite you not to act equitably. (*Surah 5: Al-Ma'idah: 8*)

**Right to Freedom of Conscience:** The right to exercise free choice in matters of belief is unambiguously endorsed by the Qur'an: "There shall be no coercion in religion." (*Surah 2: Al-Baqarah: 256*); “Let him who will believe, and let him who will, reject (it) (*Surah 18: Al-Kahf: 29*).

"Judgment (as to what is right and what is wrong) rests with Allah alone." (*Surah 12: Yusuf: 40*).

“We have not sent thee (Prophet) as a ward over them. Thy duty is but to convey (the Message).”( *Surah 42; Ash-Shura: 48*).

“And if your Lord had pleased, surely all those who are in the earth would have believed, all of them; will you then force men till they become believers?”(*Surah 10: Yunus: 99*).

“[Prophet] thy duty is only to preach the clear Message.”(*Surah 16: Al-Nahl: 82*).

“And if Allah had pleased, they would not have set up others (with Him) and We have not appointed you a keeper over them, and you are not placed in charge of them”. (*Surah 6: Al-An'am: 107*).

The Quranic dictum, "Let there be no compulsion in religion." (*Surah 2: Al- Baqarah: 256*) applies not only to non-Muslims but also to Muslims. While those who renounced Islam after professing it and then engaged in "acts of war" against Muslims are treated as enemies and aggressors, the Qur'an does not prescribe any punishment for non-profession or renunciation of faith.

#### **Annexure 4: Fundamental duties of citizens:**

We refer to Article 51A of the Indian Constitution:

“It shall be the duty of every citizen of India -

(a) to abide by the Constitution and respect its ideals and institutions, the National Flag and the National Anthem;

(c) to uphold and protect the sovereignty, unity and integrity of India;

(e) to promote harmony and the spirit of common brotherhood amongst all the people of India transcending religious, linguistic and regional or sectional diversities; to renounce practices derogatory to the dignity of women”...

#### **Annexure 5: Directive Principles of Constitution**

We refer to the following articles:

*Article 38.1:* “The State shall strive to promote the welfare of the people by securing and protecting as effectively as it may a social order in which justice, social, economic and political, shall inform all the institutions of the national life.”

*Article 39:* “The State shall, in particular, direct its policy towards securing:

- (a) that the citizens, men and women equally, have the right to an adequate means of livelihood.”
- (d) that there is equal pay for equal work for both men and women.
- (f) that children are given opportunities and facilities to develop in a healthy manner and in conditions of freedom and dignity and that childhood and youth are protected against exploitation and against moral and material abandonment.

*Article 39A: Equal Justice and Free Legal Aid:* “The State shall secure that the operation of the legal system promotes justice, on a basis of equal opportunity, and shall, in particular, provide free legal aid, by suitable legislation or schemes or in any other way, to ensure that opportunities for securing justice are not denied to any citizen by reason of economic or other disabilities.” [Article 39A].

*Article 41:* Right to work, to education and to public assistance in certain cases.

*Article 42:* Provision for just and humane conditions of work and maternity relief.

*Article 43:* Living wage, etc., for workers.

**Article 44:** “The state shall endeavour to secure for the citizens a uniform civil code throughout the territory of India.

*Article 47:* Duty of the State to raise the level of nutrition and the standard of living and to improve public health.