

KHULAFĀ-E-RĀSHIDĪN AND THE PROSPERITY OF RELIGIOUS MINORITIES: AN ANALYSIS

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Islam is a message of peace, progress and prosperity for the entire mankind. This universal religion safeguards the respect, education, health, freedom and other facilities of life of the Muslims as well as the Non-Muslims. This is the reason that the Prophet of Islam (ﷺ) established the state where steps had been taken for the prosperity and security of all the human beings without any discrimination. In the state of Madina multi-dimensional measures were taken for the material and spiritual progress of the people having different religions. Abu Bakar (R.A), Umar (R.A), Usman (R.A) and Ali (R.A) became caliphs successively after Muhammad (ﷺ). Keeping in view of teachings of Muhammad (ﷺ), Khulafa-e-Rāshidīn took extra ordinary measures to protect the religious minorities. Peace treaties were held with religious minorities. They were consulted in state affairs and provided freedom of having faith and worship of their choice. Steps were taken to maintain their status and individuality and they were allowed to continue their business activities. It is quite beneficial to study and analyse those measures taken for the welfare of the religious minorities by Khulafa-e-Rāshidīn. These steps may be useful while planning the rights for prosperity and security of the religious minorities in the Modern Muslim States. This research article has been presented to fulfil this literary, scholarly, political and social need.

Key words: *Religious Minorities; Rights; State of Madina; The Prophet (ﷺ).*

Introduction

Islam is a universal religion. It is the true representative of humanity. Islam, that teaches love and respect for all other religions and peoples, does not have any rule or resolution that is against humanity. In Islam, minorities are entitled to all rights which can be considered in an ideal society. The importance of the rights of minorities in Islam can be judged from this blessed saying of the Holy Prophet (ﷺ). He said, “If a person kills a non-Muslim he would not smell the fragrance of paradise, even the fragrance of paradise is spread over the distance of forty years”¹. These warnings are meant to enforce the law given by Islam to protect the rights of minorities. Islam came with the message of establishing a society with high human values. Before the advent of Islam every section of society was subjected to the oppression of the dominating persons. Like other societies there was no concept of the rights for minorities before Islam. Islam has granted to minorities same status as the other citizens had. The Holy Prophet (ﷺ) made the preservation of the rights and privileges of minorities even the protection of their religious rights a part of the constitution of the state of Madina. During the Era of Khulafa-e-Rāshidīn their rights were diligently protected and all the agreements were respected made with them earlier. The Era of Khulafa-e-Rāshidīn is a true picture of Islam which was politically and administratively alike as Prophet’s era. Today the issue of minorities has become a global challenge. History of Islam witnesses that in the Islamic state, minorities had a high position to participate in state affairs and also held the state’s important responsibilities. All this was the result of the teaching given by Holy Prophet (ﷺ).

After the death of the Holy prophet (ﷺ), the Khulafa-e-Rāshidīn maintained the tradition of tolerance for religious minorities. The study and analysis of this glorious history of religious tolerance is extremely useful. This article comprises four parts. The first part covers the introduction of topic and the second section describes the welfare of minorities in the Islamic regarding. The third part contains the role model of the Holy prophet (ﷺ) regarding religious minorities. The fourth section describes measures of the Khulafa-e-Rāshidīn for the prosperity of religious minorities.

Islamic Teachings Regarding the Development of Religious Minorities

Islam teaches for providing education, health, financial support, peace

and respect to all the human being classes without any discrimination. Allah says: there is no compulsion in religion, Truth stands out clear from error, so whoever rejects evil and believes in Allah, hath grasped the most trustworthy hand-hold that never breaks and Allah heareth and Knoweth all things.² It was said in another place: To you be your way and to me mine.³ The importance of the rights of minorities in Islamic society can be judged from this blessed interpretation of the Holy Prophet (ﷺ). He said, Beware! Whovere oppresses a minority person or seizes his rights or hurts him more than he can afford, or takes anything from him without his consent, I shall plead for him on the day of judgement⁴.

This is not just a warning, but a law which was practiced in the Islamic state during the period of Holy Prophet (ﷺ). Once a Muslim killed a non-Muslim and deceased's heir came to the Holy prophet (ﷺ) for judgment. The Holy Prophet (ﷺ) ordered the murderer to be murdered and he was killed⁵.

Role Model of the Holy Prophet (ﷺ) Regarding Religious Harmony

Islam not only taught tolerance but also respected the beliefs of all religions, protected them and their places of worship from abusing. Islam not only respected the other prophets but also regarded them as a part of the faith. After the migration, the Holy Prophet (ﷺ) also made the foundation of a new society with faith among the Muslims and gave them a platform. He paid his attention towards the relation with non-Muslims. The aim was to assure the availability of blessings of peace and security for all the humanity. When the Holy prophet (ﷺ) migrated to Madina, most of the jewish population inhabit there, at that time three major tribes of Jewish Bannu Nazir, Bannu Qurayza and Bannu Quanuqa' were famous tribes of Madina. He contracted with jews of Madina for complete religious freedom, the protection of life and property and the defence of Madina, known as the Mithaq-e-Madina.⁶ The purpose of the Holy Prophet (ﷺ) was that all humanity should benefit from the blessing of peace and security, as well as the area of Madina and the suburbs to be united. The closest neighbours to Madina were Jews. Although they hated Muslims, they had not yet expressed any confrontation and strife, therefore the Holy prophet (ﷺ) made a pact with them giving them complete freedom of religion. The main provisions of the treaty with the Jews were that the prevailing rules of bloodshed and ransom will be continued. Jews will have religious freedom and they will maintain friendly relations with the Muslims. If a third party gets into a war, they will be

supportive of each other. When an external force attacks Madina, Jews will defend along with Muslims. When one of the parties reconciles with the third power, the other will also have to be reconciled, although religious battles will be exempted. A federal government established due to the settlement of this treaty in Madina and its vicinity, Madina was the Capital of this government, headed by Rasul Allah (ﷺ).

In order to further expand the sphere of peace the Holy prophet (ﷺ) also made similar agreements with other tribes as per the circumstances. Islam had given non-Muslims complete freedom throughout their history, they performed their religious rituals freely.

Similarly, a delegation of Christians from Najran came to serve and requested from protection from the Holy prophet (ﷺ). A contract was signed. As per its text: This is the contract from the Holy prophet (ﷺ) for the people of Najran. Under this contract all their goods are left in their possession on the condition that they will pay two thousand sheets (made in Yaman), one thousand in month of Safar and one thousand in month of Rajab, and in return the Najrani and their relatives will remain in the protection of Allah and His prophet (ﷺ), their places of worship and their patronage, and present people and non-existent will be safe and they will not be harmed. Their designation will not be changed. People will be banned to take any interest and whoever takes interest next time, will be relieved from our responsibility.

Khulafa-e-Rāshidīn and Betterment and Prosperity of Religious Minorities.

The meaning of the Khilafat is to succeed and to sit in one place after another. In fact, the Khilafat is the vicegerency of the prophet (ﷺ) for the Ummah after him. It is the highest status in Islam after the prophethood.⁸ The duties of Khilafat are broad in Islam that include the fulfillment of all religious and secular goals. Those who became successors after The Holy Prophet (ﷺ) are Abubakr, Umar, Usman and Ali (R.A). They established the government and made the position of Khilafat like the real Model set by Holy prophet (ﷺ)

Abubakr (R.A) and Religious Minorities

Abubakr (R.A) gave great privileges to minorities in his Khilafat period and made several treaties with them, which are mentioned in history books. When Khalid bin Walīd (R.A.) returned to Iraq and Iran

from the border of Syria, he made agreement with the people of Aanat as per order of Abubakr (R.A.). The major points of this agreement were that: Their churches and monasteries will not be demolished. They can perform their gong all the time except Muslims' prayers time. They can show the cross on their religious festivals. They have to give food to Muslim travellers for three days. They have to take care of the lives and property of Muslims when it is needed.⁹ Another agreement made by Khalid bin Walīd (R.A.) for the people of 'Hera' is that: Do not support any disbeliever against Muslims. Do not oppose Muslims. Do not reveal our secrets for our enemies. If they do not abide by these provisions, their security will also be terminated on our behalf. If they are under our control, they will have all the privileges like other minorities. It is included in this agreement that the Jizya will be forgiven for the elderly who are unable to do work, who are suffered by the catastrophic disaster and the poor who spends his time on charity.¹⁰ We receive many instructions which Abubakr (R.A.) wrote or expressed to commanders of Islamic army. The most important instructions are that he gave to commanders who were sent to Syria. He said:

I advise you to fear Allah. Fight with those who do not believe in Allah. Neither demolish a synagogue, nor kill the children, the elderly and the women. You will find many people who have limited themselves in churches and they do not have any interest in society, leave them alone.¹¹ When the Christians of Najran refused to become Muslim in tenth hijri, the Holy Prophet (ﷺ) had guaranteed them, their lives and their religion in lieu of an annual amount and signed a pact having the terms of this guarantee. When the Holy Prophet (ﷺ) departed from this world and the action against the rebels started in the period of Abubakr (R.A.), the Christians of Najran feared that any action would be taken against them. A delegation of Najran came to Abubakr (R.A.) and requested him to renew their act. Abubakr (R.A.) guaranteed to the delegation and renewed agreement. This agreement is from Abubakr Khalifa of the Holy Prophet (ﷺ), their lives, the land, the nation, the wealth in their suburban villages and those who are in Najran and those who have gone abroad, their churches and everything are protected by Allah. Army service will not be taken from them; they will not be treated harshly as well. Neither priest will be separated from his position, nor any monk will be forced to give up his leadership. It is obligatory for them that they have to fulfil their responsibilities sincerely¹². In the period of Abubakr (R.A.), non-Muslims of the conquered countries were provided full guaranty for their rights. The rights given by Holy prophet (ﷺ) to minorities were also

given by Abubakr (R.A.). The Christians of “Hera”, were assured that their monasteries and churches would not be demolished, those places would not be destroyed where they shelter themselves against enemies whenever needed. Ringing bells will be allowed, the cross will not be banned at the festivals, from aged persons, disabled for work or serious illness, tribute will not be taken.

Umar (R.A) and Religious Minorities

The rights of minorities were protected according to the teachings of the Qur’ān and Sunnah during the reign of Umar Farooq (R.A.) as well. During the reign of his Khilafat, several agreements were finalized with minorities, the most important of which is the agreement with the people of the monh of Azan. No‘man Bin Muqran (R.A.) signed the treaty with monh of Azan during the Khilafat of Umar Farooq (R.A.). The important points of this agreement were as follows: They will neither be forced to abandon their religion nor their law would be altered. They would have to pay a partial fee once a year to the authorized person appointed by us. They will be supported and protected in lieu of Jizya. In case of violation of conditions, the treaty will be abolished.¹⁴ When Umar (R.A.) was appointed Khalifa, the people of Najran Came to him, he had deported them from Najran Yemen and settled in Najran Iraq because he was worried that they would harm the Muslims. He wrote to them: This is the agreement from Amir al-mu‘minin ‘Umar wrote for the people of Najran, Those of them who are leaving (Najran Yemen) have the trust of Allah, none of the Muslims will harm them. Whatever they cultivate for themselves in Narjan Iraq would be a charity in the way of Allah for them, and a reward for their land which they are leaving Najran. The Jizya is waived for them for twenty-four months since their arrival.¹⁵ Umar Farooq (R.A.) thought for the minorities until his very last moment. He, in his last will exhorted his successor to observe The pledges with minorities. They should be protected and not be overburdened.¹⁶ Umar Farooq (R.A.) used to ask people (ﷺ) about minorities. Abu Ubaida bin Jarrah (R.A.) was the commander of Islamic army when he conquered the Fahl province of Jordan by the power of Sword, Muslims army was divided into two groups with different opinions, One of them opined that the occupied area should be distributed among the Muslim soldiers. While the second one argued that since agriculture land is not in our jurisdiction, it would be appropriate that the entire

conquered area may be declared as a common wealth and agricultural lands may be left to their current owners. Tribute received from them may be handed over to Islamic state. Since there was no consensus among the two groups, the case was referred to Umar Farooq (R.A.). He, after a long discussion with other Companions (R.A.) decreed that as per Qur'ānic order, the conquered agricultural lands would be left to their owners and tribute received from them would be deposited in the state exchequer. He continued:

If we have enslaved the inhabitants, who will be the sponsor of the generations that come after us. They would not get any benefit from *dhimmi*s. The descendants of Slaves would also remain Slaves till the Day of Judgment. So do not enslave them. Instead, get *jizya* from them. For Christians festival 'Easter', he ordered that Christians may be allowed to show Crosses without flags outside the city. However, They may not be allowed to show crosses from nearby areas of Mosques or Muslim localities.¹⁷

When Umar (R.A.) subjugated new territories, treaties were made. Some of the treaties mentioned in history are detailed and some are brief. The agreement of Bait-al-Maqdas written in presence of Umar (R.A.) is that: People of 'Alia' (Bait al-Maqdas) are given protection by Amīr al-Mu'minīn. No settlement will be made in their Churches nor they would be captured or ruined. No Christian would be forced to change his religion nor will be harmed nor any Jew would reside with them in Ailia. The undertakings given in this treaty are guaranteed by Allah, his prophet (ﷺ), Khulafa and Muslims subject to payment of *jizya* by them.¹⁸ When Umar (R.A.) was returning from Syria, he saw a few men standing in sunlight and pouring oil on their heads. He asked the people what is the matter? Knowing that they did not pay the fine, that's why they were being punished. Umar (R.A.) asked the reason and found them Impecunious. He ordered to release them and said "I heard the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) says: Do not hurt people; God will punish them on the Day of Resurrection who punish people in world."¹⁹ Umar (R.A.) was very active in the propagation of Islam, he always expressed that no one can be oppressed for changing his religion. A Christian slave of Umar (R.A.) was always persuaded for conversion to Islam, but when he refused, he said that there was no compulsion to accept Islam.²⁰

Umar (R.A.) did not discriminate between minorities and Muslims in terms of civil rights. Murder of any *dhimmi* by a Muslim was compensated by sentencing the murderer to death. No levy was received

from *dhimmis* except jizya and ‘Ushr. Disable to earn persons from minorities were also provided like Muslims, financial support from *bait al-Māl*. This law was enforced in the Khilafat of Abubakr Siddiq (R.A.). Umar (R.A.) continued it.²¹

Usman (R.A.) and Religious Minorities

The rights of minorities were protected according to the teachings of the Qur’an and Sunnah during the reign of Usman (R.A.) as well. In the reign of Usman (R.A.), a Jew tried to be seditious in the presence of Walīd bin ‘Uqba (Governor of Kufa). Jundab bin K‘ab Azadi killed the Jew. Walīd imprisoned him and declared death sentence for the murderer. Jundab escaped from jail with the help of Prison-guard Abū Sinān. When the escape was revealed, on order of Walīd b. ‘Uqaba prison-guard was sentenced to death. This shows that the sanctity of blood of Muslims and non-Muslim minorities is equal in the Islamic state.²² Usman (R.A.) appointed Saad bin Abi Sarrah governor of Egypt, he made a treaty with the chiefs of Noba and all the inhabitants of area, extending from Aswan to the mountainous border on the other side. As per treaty the people of Noba were declared under the protection of Allah and his messenger (ﷺ) Muslims army would not fight with them, nor would attack them.²³ Usman (R.A.) wrote a letter to the tax collecting officer to receive the levy with justice.²⁴

It is important, to be honest, When ‘Umar (R.A.) was martyred and Usman (R.A.) was appointed as the Caliph, people of Najran came to him in Madinah. He wrote to Walīd bin ‘Uqba for the people of Najran: Stance of people of Najran has come to me. I approve all the lands, given to them by Umar (R.A.) in return for their Yemeni lands. Look carefully at what the Prophet (ﷺ) wrote for them, and complete with them what is listed.²⁵ During the period of Usman (R.A.), special care was taken that in the areas which were conquered by peace, no rights were stripped of them. Areas of reconciliation included Hajar, Bahrain, Elah, Dum-ul Jandal, and Azhar which were the settlements received from them only what was mutually agreed. He continued earlier terms decided for the areas conquered by peace by his predecessors, such as the Jerusalem, conquered by Umar (R.A.) through reconciliation, and Damascus by Khalid ibn Walīd (R.A.), as well as many areas of Syria. Similarly, Balad Khorasan, was reconciled with Abdullah bin Amir bin Kreuz.²⁶

Ali (R.A) and Religious Minorities

The reign of Ali (R.A.) was very disturbing, but still the rights of minorities were not disturbed in his period. Once a case came up in which the killer was Muslim and the victim was non-muslim. He ordered by killer to be handed over to the deceased's heirs and decided on the fatwa of Umar (R.A.). But the deceased's heirs wanted to take the diyyat and release of murderer. When Ali (R.A.) came to know about this he called the deceased's heirs and asked them whether there was any pressure? they replied no, then Ali (R.A.) said: The blood of the non-Muslim of Islamic state is the same as Muslim's blood.²⁷ The Holy Prophet (ﷺ) had an agreement with the people of Najran, When they died, they came to Abubakr (R.A.) for renewed contract. When Abubakr (R.A.) died they came to Umar (R.A.) after it Usman and Ali (R.A.).

Ali (R.A.) like his earlier Khalifa, observed the treaties of the minorities and gave all the rights as per *Shari'ah*.

Conclusion

In the view of Islam, every human being, regardless of religion, region or race, has right of respect and privilege. The life and honor of non-Muslims are protected as well. In Islamic state, the blood of a non-Muslim is as worthy as the blood of a Muslim. Islam has forbidden *ikrah* (Compulsion) in matters of faith and religion. Despite being the political power and superpower, Islam has never forced the conquered nations for conversion to Islam.

Islamic State never interfered in the religious affairs of non-Muslims. Their churches were not demolished and they were allowed to build synagogues in their populated areas. History of Islam testifies that the Khulafa-e-Rashidīn, provided tolerance, widespread capacity, indiscrimination, justice, and perfection to non-Muslims.

Islam commands respect for humanity and its dignity. The Prophet (ﷺ) has set this example in practice for all ages, so it appears to have worked in all periods of Islamic history, whether it was the Madinah, the Caliphate of Rashidun, or their Successor's periods.

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