

Q The Charter of Madina played a vital role towards the formation of Islamic State.

Discuss. (2019)

I Introduction

The Charter of Madina played a key role in the establishment of an Islamic State in Madina. The Holy Prophet's migration from Makkah to Madina was aimed at the formation of a society based on the principles of Islam. In Madina, a diversity of people from various regions and religions lived. The development of a nation could only be materialize if there would be peace and calmness in society. In order to achieve a peaceful state, the Holy Prophet (PBUH) converge all the tribes on a single platform and gave a unanimous constitution to all the tribes of Madina. The charter paved a way out for the establishment of a welfare state erected on the pillars of Islam.

II Demographic Scene of Madina

Madina, well-known as Yathrib, was a home to Muslims, Christians, Jews, and polytheists.

The description of all these groups of people is given below:

(a) Muslims/ Companions of Prophet (PBUH)

One category of people were believers of Islam. Companions of Holy Prophet (PBUH) were divided into two groups: Al-Ansar (The Helpers) and Al-Muhajirin (the Emigrants). They were free and had liberty to build an Islamic society. However, there was a problem with them. The large number of Muhajirin was accommodated by Ansars, but this led towards economic imbalance which was further worsened by economic boycott of Muslims by anti-Islamic agents.

(b) Madinese Polytheists

Polytheists of Madina were also of two types. One category did not have grudge on Muslims, while other category harboured evil intentions for Muslims. The latter could not resist the Muslims publicly, therefore,

They obliged to fake amicability and friendless.

Two tribes are famous from them: Al-Aws and Al-Khazraj.

(c) The Jews

The third group of people existent in Madinah were Jews. They came Madinah from Syria and used to pride their Syrian-Israeli origin.

There were three major tribes of ^{the} Jews:

Banu Qainuqa, Banu An-Nadir, and Banu-Quraizah

This was the demo-political scene of Yathrib.

III Charter of Madinah

Charter of Madinah was a constitution of Madinah, written and promulgated by Holy Prophet (PBUH) in 622 AD. He (PBUH) realized the need of a constitution for the establishment of a harmonious society where the principles of Islam can be applied smoothly. Thus, he invited the Muslims and all other religious groups - Arabs, Christians, Jews, and Polytheists - and recommended the formation of Madinah a city state. After acquiring their assent, he wrote and promulgated a

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first ever constitution of Madina known as Charter of Madina or Constitution of Madina. It was a great achievement and landmark in politico-constitutional history of Arab.

IV Importance of Charter of Madina

The Charter of Madina is of a great (important) importance as it led towards the establishment of an Islamic state. Firstly, it is considered as first ^{written} constitution in the world. Prof. Hamidullah claims that it is world's first constitution of a state in written form. He states that the Aristotalis Constitution of Athens was actually an account of Athens, not a constitution. Similarly, the Magna Carta, English Feudal Rights Bill, was came after 6 centuries of ^{Madina} Charter. Moreover, it also preceeded the American Constitution of 1787 by more than 1000 years. Secondly, it was a modern charter as it was established for plural society. Last but not the least, it led towards the formation of first nation-state in history. Although Madina was a city at that time, this

charter remained applied till the beginning of Ummayyad Dynasty. Hence, it is landmark document grouping a number of tribes in a single state.

(v) Basic Provisions of Madina Charter

Madina charter was composed of 47 clauses. It was a comprehensive constitutional document covering all aspects of a state. The basic provisions of it are as follows:

- (1) The charter defined the rights and duties of both of the citizens and the Head of the state.
- (2) It abolished the private customary justice system. Hence, the provision of justice became responsibility of the centralized public institution of the community of state.
- (3) It laid down the principles of defence and foreign policy.
- (4) It established a social insurance system known as Ma'agil.
- (5) It recognized that the ~~was~~ opinion of the Prophet (PBUH) would be the last word in case of differences, and there would ^{be} no

limit to his legislation.

(6) It gave equal rights to all citizens and say in governmental matters.

(7) It also gave religious liberty to all citizens, especially those of ^{the} Jews.

VI Impacts of Madina Charter

Madina charter was proved a very fruitful effort in gaining peace and prosperity in the region. Being profited by this peace, Holy Prophet (PBUH) preached Islam with full zeal and zest. Moreover, the chaos in society caused by internal tensions among tribes was diminished. The major positive impacts of Madina charter can be are following.

(1) Formation of an Islamic State

The formation of an Islamic state was made possible through this charter. This charter recognized the Holy Prophet (PBUH) as a leader of the state. The principles of Islam were promulgated. As the sole legislator of Madina was Holy Prophet (PBUH), the state legislation was as per the Islamic

rules and according to Allah's will. Moreover, principles of the foreign policy of Madina were laid down by him. These principles reflect the policy of Islam. They include dawah, peace, and recognition of ^{the} Muslims as a power to be reckoned with. In a nutshell, the Charter of Madina laid down the basis of society on Islamic principles. Bernard Lewis opines that the assumption of Prophet a role of statesman was an only method through which the objective of Prophet hood could be achieved.

(2) Establishment of a Just and Peaceful State

The articles of Madina charter gave equal and just rights to all citizens. Similarly, it also gave a centralized justice system held by a public institution. This system brought peace and diminish all the ~~be~~ tribal conflicts. Prof. Hamidullah rightly stated that:

"... the constitution... brought a very important... at least for Arabia... very revolutionizing method of justice system... establishing a ^{centralized} public institution for seeking justice instead of seeking it by his own hands..."

VII Concluding Conclusion

In summation, the charter of Medina, written and promulgated by Holy Prophet (PBUH) in 622 AD, was a landmark in the political and constitutional history of Arabian Peninsula. It laid down the formation of a state based on the principles of Islam. It was an Islamic state in true spirit and letter. It gave equal rights to all citizens and empowered them with religious liberty. The success of this constitution is proved by the prosperity which Medina gained during that era. After so many years, it still serves as a role model for all those Islamic states, or more accurately Muslim states, who desire to reach the state of prosperity.