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## Empowering Women: An Analytical Study of Women's Rights in Islamic Teachings

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### ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to analyze women rights in Islamic perspective. This research motive is to explore Islamic supportive vision towards women participation in every sphere of life. The qualitative and analytical methodology is applied to this research. By observing the primary sources of Islam and secondary data as well; it can be examined that Islam promote equality for all mankind in every phase of life, without any gender discrimination. It governs equal rights for women in indoor and outdoor activities and in social or professional affairs also.

**Keywords:** Islam, Gender, Rights Discrimination women It should be consciously a universal and humanitarian operation

### Aims of the Research:

1. What is the status of women in Islam?
2. What is the attitude of Islam towards gender discrimination?
3. What are the rights of women in Islamic perspective?

### Methodology:

For this research qualitative methodology is implemented, by relating the textual and analytical approaches. For achieving the purpose of research, Quranic text with Prophetic mores of hadith will be widely analyzed based on central subject of gender equality.

### Literature review

#### Introduction

Before exploring Islamic attitude towards women rights it is better to evaluate historical overview of ancient empire regarding gender discernment and women status. In primeval times at the time period of Athens women were subjected to their father, brother, husband and sons to fulfill their needs and desires and were considered as the minor members of

the family. In Roman times wife is considered as property of men and treated as a slave who is not able to do anything by her own desire. Even she is not allowed to participate in any social activity or at professional level. In Christianity women were considered as embarrassment of being like a women, disgrace and egress of hell. In ancient Arab ,people before Islam treated women inhumaneness and killed them. Daughters were buried when they were born .There is no concept of respect , dignity and marrying women .<sup>1</sup>In contrary to all these time periods Islam revolutionized human beings with equality tradition. Holy Prophet (PBUH) gave ancient Arab people the vision of treating women equally as men in all affairs of life. As well as women were given more respect , care, affection and love.

Before this article many researches has been taken regarding women in Islam and their status but this research emphasize on rights of women in Islamic perspective. Privileges having women from the beginning of Islam but still they are facing prejudice in educational institutes, political affairs and professional workplace. They are fronting challenges, domestic violence, troubles and psychological abuse due to social patriarchal and wrongly interpretation of Islamic principles. This article will explore true Islamic vision regarding women and their rights.

### **Status of Women in Islam**

Islam is the religion brought a revolutionary change in societies by granting equal rights to all human beings regardless of their gender, color and caste.

كَانَ النَّاسُ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً<sup>2</sup>

*“Mankind was of one religion (before their deviation)”*

Islam gives a complete charter of human rights for both men and women eradicating gender discrimination. Women are given a complete supportive system, protection, privileges regarding education , inheritance and politics etc. Islam upraise their status as a mother ,daughter or sister. Islam acknowledged gender nature and their allied differences regarding physical development. It preserved their rights and responsibilities on equality bases. Allah said in Quran:

فَأَسْتَجَابَ لَهُمْ رَبُّهُمْ أَنِّي لَا أُضِيعُ عَمَلَ عَمَلٍ مِّنْكُمْ مِّنْ ذَكَرٍ أَوْ أَنزِلُ بَعْضُكُمْ مِّنْ بَعْضٍ<sup>3</sup>

*“Never Will I suffer to be lost the work of any of you, be he male or female : ye are members, one of another”*

But some of feminists and liberalists want to impose western culture which relegate women position and status in society, leading towards lack of religious norms, decadence of honor of women and respect. This results away from the righteous path of Allah Almighty. <sup>4</sup>Due to conservative cultural norms and patriarchal social system embedding the vision of subordinating women in public affairs as compare to men. Women are not encouraged to attain education, participate in political and social affairs

especially in rural areas this raise disparity between men and women. Islam allowed women to work with men under some conditions for her own protection .Women can contribute in development of society as a valuable human source<sup>5</sup>.

### **Women Rights in Islam**

Islam is the religion revolutionized the whole Arab ancient society with human rights and privileges. Men and women get equal rights in all spheres of life. Quran clearly depicts on several issues regarding gender identity, rights, equality, needs and responsibilities. In Quran many surah discuss women related issues for example, *Nikkah*, *Mahr*, *divorce*, relations etc which depicts importance and status of women in Islam. This can be more clarify by the given charter depicting Quranic Surahs on women affairs:

- **Surah Al Baqra** = Gender and sexuality
- **Surah Al Nisa** = Women veil and Social affairs
- **Surah Al Noor** = Sexual Relations
- **Surah Al Talaq** = Divorce and related problems
- **Surah Al Ahzab** = Gender and sexuality
- **Surah Al Mujadillah** = Edicts of social behavior between women and men

There are many egalitarian verses of Quran demonstrating equal responsibilities and rights for both genders depending on their creation and nature. This revolutionary change of women prestige admitted even western intellectuals as **John Esposito** stated:

*“Women were not accorded ever with such legal status in other cultures until centuries later”*<sup>6</sup>

All western scholars accept Islamic revolutionary edicts and copied with some changes in their own countries. Islam governs women rights in the following ways:

#### **i. Family Rights:**

Islam established a family system based on mutual bonding, understanding and love .Nikkah is considered as obligatory on both men and women to save moral fiber , purity, character and chaste of couple. Allah said in Quran:

هُنَّ لِبَاسٌ لَّكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ لِبَاسٌ لَّهُنَّ<sup>7</sup>

*“They are your garment and you are theirs.”*

Women as wife has some responsibilities and rights regarding her family. Men as a husband has to fulfill his family needs. Everyone has his own rights and obligations based on their creation and nature. Holy Prophet (PBUH) said:

تُنَكِّحُ الْمَرْأَةَ لِزَوْجٍ بِمَالِهَا، وَلِحَسَبِهَا، وَلِجَمَالِهَا، وَلِدِينِهَا، فَاطْفَرُ بِذَاتِ الدِّينِ تَرَبُّثَ يَدَاكَ<sup>8</sup>

This marital system is just not to satisfied biological needs but it's a mutual relation bonding. Husband is indulged to give *mahr* to his wife at the time of wedding and he is responsible to fulfill all financial needs of his family after marriage<sup>9</sup>. This is how Islam protect a women and build a strong family system for the development of a society.

## ii. Economic rights:

Holy Prophet (PBUH) introduced a balanced financial system based on socio-economic justice. Allah Almighty is the only owner of whole universe and human beings are permitted to earn and distribute it as a trustee. Allah said in Quran:

نَحْنُ قَسَمْنَا بَيْنَهُمْ مَعِيشَتَهُمْ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَرَفَعْنَا بَعْضَهُمْ فَوْقَ بَعْضٍ دَرَجَاتٍ<sup>10</sup>

Holy Prophet (PBUH) recognized economic system based on brotherhood, charity and earnings for the benefits of one another , circulated among poor and needy people. Islam strictly prohibited interest, monopolization of market, robbery and black market. Both men and women allowed to work , earn money and take benefits from the bounties of God Almighty with directions and bounds of moderation. Men is oblige to hold financial responsibilities of his family and women is obliged to raise his generation on strong ethics and norms. With all her prior responsibilities, women are also allowed to earn money and get employment under some restrictions and by following religious values.

At the time of Holy Prophet(PBUH) ,*Sahabiyat* has participated in eagerly in different business affairs to earn money as shown in the following table<sup>11</sup>:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agriculture and Cultivation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Handicraft</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trade and Business</li> </ul>
Hazrat Asma Binte Abe Bakar(R.A)	Hazrat Zainab (R.A)	Hazrat Khadijah (R.A) and Hazrat Khola Binte Toqet(R.A)

Now a days, women outside at work place treated as minorities and men are benefitted more in case of laws, wages and social status. Income disparity is most challenging aspect for women in contemporary world. Beside this women are trying to work side by side with men.

## iii. Rights of Property Ownership:

Islam held laws and regulations for distribution of property and inheritance. Through these laws and regulations both men and women can transfer and

name the property 12. The objective of Islam is to secure and give financial protection to women in all phases of her life .Allah said in Quran:

وَلِلنِّسَاءِ نَصِيبٌ مِّمَّا تَرَكَ الْوَالِدَانِ وَالْأَقْرَبُونَ مِمَّا قَلَّ مِنْهُ أَوْ كَثُرَ نَصِيبًا مَّفْرُوضًا<sup>13</sup>

*“And for women there is a share in what their parents and close relatives leave, whether it is little or small, these are obligatory shares”.*

Islam specified rights of men and women to get property proprietorship and for equal distribution of wealth. Women sharing in fathers and spouse's property is identified. A proper quantity of sharing is specified in form of shares in her male relatives father, brother and sons within their lives as well after their death. This sharing quantity is varied regarding men and women based on their privileges and obligations. But this variation or difference doesn't means the superiority of women over men<sup>14</sup>. Before Islam women has not given any right to own wealth or property sharing. Islam has given women right to even hold ownership or purchase, contract or sell it to other by their own desire She also had right to get her maintenance or care of child compartment in case of living with him ,divorce or in situation of death of her husband.<sup>15</sup>

#### iv. Political Rights:

Islam organized a society with a political system based on equality and justice. Allah said in Quran:

لَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا رُسُلَنَا بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ وَأَنْزَلْنَا مَعَهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْمِيزَانَ لِيَقُومَ النَّاسُ بِالْقِسْطِ<sup>16</sup>

*“Indeed, we sent Our messengers with clear proofs, and with them We sent down the Scriptures and the balance of justice so that people may administer justice.”*

Islam titled to equality and both men and women has right of citizenship and radical asylum regardless of their caste, religion, color and gender discrimination. Human beings can meet their needs by utilizing the resources of earth bestowed on them Allah Almighty under independent and impartial judicial system derived from humanitarianism and liberal vision of Holy Prophet (PBUH) jurisdictive system<sup>17</sup>

. Women can participate side by side with men in political affairs without violating religious standards of modesty, virtue, honor and dignity. In Quran:

وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتُ بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْلِيَاءُ بَعْضٍ يَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ<sup>18</sup>

*“The believers, men and women ,are protectors one of another ;they enjoin what is just, and forbid what is evil”*

Women have right to vote for the assortment of ruler, to working at administrative levels, scholarship competitions, teaching and policies making etc...

The objective of Islam is social stability and protection of human lives from several offenses by enforcing laws and giving punishments on criminal acts. These laws and punishments are in form of *Tazir*, *hadud*, and *Qisas* equally implemented for both men and women. This shows vision of Islam is to preserve dignity, life and freedom.<sup>19</sup>

### **Women rights and existing challenges:**

Islam acknowledged women with equal rights in all phase of her life but women's are still facing violence, brutality and other social problem because patriarchal customs and override Islamic values. That leads towards forced marriages, restricted mobility and denial of education etc. Selective application of Islamic principles or Shariah laws and misinterpretation of Quranic text promote gender injustice. That is the reason that women are facing challenges, more described in detail as following:

No	Feature	Islamic Teachings	Contemporary Realities
1)	Spiritual Equivalence	In front of God men and women are both equal. One who is more pious more beloved to Allah.	Often avowed in personal belief
2)	Legal Rights	Islam give equal rights to both men and women in inheritance, business and property	Uneven enforcement
3)	Education	It is obligatory on both male and female to seek education.	Admittance varies widely.
4)	Marriage Rights	Islam held <i>Nikkah</i> between men and women based on	Patriarchal customs and traditional applies sometimes override.

		specified <i>mahr</i> and consent of both.	
5)	Participation in Public and social affairs.	Muslim women can actively participate in political, social and economic affairs of life as early Muslim women Hazrat khadijah(R.A) who is a successful business woman, Hazrat Ayesha (R.A) who is a renowned political figure and narrator of 2000 hadith. Umme Saleem and Umme Attiyah gave medical facilitation to the injured people at battle. <sup>20</sup>	Mostly this aspects depend on cultural, social and family norms.

Islamic principles support more egalitarian values than are being practiced and applied today.

### **Participation of women in Contemporary Pakistani societies:**

In contemporary Pakistani societies women participation is improving from the previous days in rural areas as compare to urban areas. Because in Urban areas women are still facing challenges and gender discrimination issues as in the time of ancient Arab. They are not able to get education, participate

in economic and political affairs and even not given respect to women will and desires. While in rural areas women are able to work in line with men due to the educational improvement. If we do a comparison between men and women participation in social progress of a society then women active cooperation is very less in number as compare to men as shown in the Gender Index ranking of Pakistan 2022<sup>21</sup>

<b>Participation</b>	<b>Men</b>	<b>Women</b>
Political Participation	67%	33%
Educational Involvement		70%
49%		
Labor Force		70%
49%		
Communication Technology Usage	70%	30%

This Indexing shows that women participation is very less in number as compare to men due to poverty, cultural phenomena's, lack of awareness and belongings. In spite of that Islam promote and encourage women cooperation in social development and raising Ummah on religious path<sup>22</sup>. We all need to work for the women awareness and education to promote actual religious values of Islam regarding women status and participation in social and the whole nation development.

### **Conclusion:**

In modern era some feminist and liberalists trying to blame Islam is the religion promoting inequality, restraints women's liberties and encouraging gender perspicacity. In contrary to this Islam is the religion of equality, justice and truth. Islam revolutionized the Arab society with humanitarian rights and responsibilities to build a balanced and moderate society. Islam upraised the women status in her family, society or in very sphere of life. Islam give women rights to get marry, inheritance, property proprietorship etc.. Women has given equal rights to actively participate in political, social and professional workplace. In contemporary world women are still facing challenges, treated as minorities, facing violence, oppression and discernment. Both gender rights variation in Islam doesn't means any discrimination or preference of men over women but actually these privileges based on their physical creation and duties but this does not meant gender discrimination or priority of men over women in Islam. It is the responsibility of every man on individual or Government level to bring true vision of Islam regarding women and their rights at social and judicial level.



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<sup>2</sup> - Al Baqrah:2/213

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