

Women Rights in Islam and Western perspective of Feminism.

Introduction.

The literal meaning of "women's rights" refers to entitlements, privileges, and freedom that should be granted to women in society, politics, economics, and cultures.

In contextual sense, "women's rights" refers to legal social and political efforts aimed at ensuring equal treatment, opportunities and protections for women in various societies and cultures. It encompasses the idea that women should have equal opportunities, treatment and legal protection as men, without being subjected to discrimination or inequality based on their gender. Women rights advocate for recognition and promotion of women autonomy, dignity and ensuring they have same rights and choices as men.

Women Rights in Islam

Women rights in Islam and Western perspective of feminism are two significant approaches to achieving gender equality and promoting empowerment of women. These perspectives arise from distinct cultural, historical and ideological background shaping their approaches and priorities

Islam as a major world religion, has its foundation in Hadith and Quran, that provide guidance on the role and rights of women within the faith.

Western Perspective of Feminism

In contrast, Western Feminism emerged as a response to the historical inequalities and restrictions faced by women. It began with the suffrage movement in late 19th and early 20th century, advocating for women's right to vote. The waves of feminism that followed aimed to address a range of gender-related issues, including equal access to education, reproductive rights and challenging traditional gender roles. Western Feminism in history is marked by various waves, each with its own distinct focus and strategies.

Women Rights in the Light of Quran

The Quran, the holy scripture of Islam, laid foundation for women rights over 1400 years ago, presenting a revolutionary perspective in a time when women's status was often marginalized. The Quranic teachings emphasize the inherent dignity, equality and rights of women, guiding their roles as individual and members of society.

(1) Equality and Spiritual World:

The Quran unequivocally asserts the spiritual equality of men and women.

Verses of Surah- Al Nisa

"And whoever does righteous deeds, whether male or female, while being a believer, those will enter Paradise"

underscores that righteous is not gender dependent. This verse dispels any notion of spirituality based on gender.

(2) Economic Independence

Islam granted women the right to own and manage property, a significant stride towards their economic autonomy. The Quran acknowledges women's right and allow them to inherit and manage wealth, ensuring their financial security and empowerment. This recognition affirmed their role as economic contributors rather than dependents.

An example of economic independence of women in Islam can be found in area of inheritance. Allah says in Quran

"All instructs you concerning your children: for the male, what is equal to two shares of female"

(Surah Al Nisa)

By guaranteeing women share of inherited wealth, Islam recognized their financial worth and sought to prevent their economic vulnerability.

(3) Consent in marriage.

Islam establishes the mutual consent of marriage, setting a precedent for women's agency in choosing their life partner. Allah clearly says in Quran

"Do not force your women into marriage against their will".

(Surah Al Nisa)

This verse enshrines the importance of obtaining women's consent, ensuring that her voice is heard.

(4) Legal protection

Quran outlines legal rights for women, emphasizing justice and protection. Verses addressing issues of inheritance, marriage contract and divorce demonstrate a commitment to ensuring fairness and safeguarding women interest within legal framework. Surah says in Quran

"O you who have believed, it is not lawful for you to inherit women by compulsion. And do not make difficulties for them in order to take [back] part of what

you have gave them unless they commit a clear immorality. And live with them in kindness."

(Surah Al Nisa)

(5) Education and Knowledge

The Quran encourages the pursuit of knowledge for both men and women. Allah says in Quran:

"Are those who know equal to those who do not know?"

(Surah Az Zumar)

This verse signifies the value of intellectual growth and importance for education. Quran encourages both men and women to seek knowledge as an act of worship. This perspective elevates the value of intellectual pursuits and positions them as 'a mean to draw closer to Allah'.

(6) Social Participation

Quranic teachings recognize women's active participation in various social, economic and familial roles. The roles of women as mother, daughter and wife is elevated with respect and honor, reflecting their essential contribution as a member of society.

(a) As daughters:

Islam bestowed upon daughters the right to love, care and protection within families. Contrary to pre-Islamic practices of infanticide, the Quran strictly condemned such acts and elevated the status of daughters by acknowledging as source of blessings.

The saying of Prophet (PBUH)

"Whoever has three daughters and provides for them, clothes them, and show mercy to them, they will definitely enter Paradise."

exemplifies the significance of cherishing daughters (The Holy Quran: Surah Al Nisa)

(b) As Wives

Islam affirmed the rights of wives by highlighting principles of mutual respect, consent and partnership in marital relationship.

The Quran emphasizes that "husband's wives are garments for each other", this symbolizes the protective and nurturing role they play. Additionally, women were granted right to retain their property after marriage, ensuring their financial security and independence.

The Prophet's saying further emphasize

"The best among men are those who treats their wives with kindness and respect".

(b) As Mothers

Islam places immense value on roles of mothers, stating that paradise lies under her feet. This reference extends to the rights mothers hold over their children, including obligation of care, respect and financial support. A famous narration of Prophet (PBUH) elevates the status of mother in Islam and their right to compassionate treatment and companionship.

A man asked the Prophet, 'O Messenger of Allah, who among people is most worthy of my companionship. Prophet replied three times "your mother" before mentioning your father.

This emphasizes special role mother hold in the lives of children.

Western Feminism.

The rights which were granted to women in Islam 1400 years ago were granted to women in West during late 19th century and these rights were not comprehensive in contrast to Islamic provision of rights to women.

The historical context of the suffrage movement led to first wave feminism, where women's political participation and right to vote were forefront. Second-wave feminism sought to challenge the traditional division of labour.

and addresses issues like workplace discrimination. Third-wave feminism recognized the interconnectedness of gender with race, class, and sexuality, broadening the movement's inclusivity. Fourth wave feminism utilizes social media platforms for advocacy.

(Feminism: A critical Analysis)

Points of convergence and Divergence in Islam and West.

While both perspectives share the goal of gender equality, they differ in their approaches.

- Women rights in Islam are rooted in religious teachings, while Western feminism operates within a secular context.
- This results in diverse strategies with Islamic interpretations advocating for changes within religious frameworks and West using legal and social activism.
- Women rights in Islam address equality of women in social, cultural, economic and educational perspective, whereas Western feminism targeting cultural norms.

Contrasting approaches of Islam and West in provision of women rights.

women rights in Islam and Western context exhibit contrasting approaches

with Islam often viewed as more comprehensive as addressing various aspects of women's rights. Islam encompasses teachings that are intended to cover multiple aspects of women's rights, the Western approach to feminism has been critiqued for having a narrower focus and facing ongoing challenges.

Islam's perspective on women rights is deeply rooted in religious teaching. The Quran and Hadith provide guidance on issues ranging from education and property rights to marriage and social responsibility. For instance, Islamic teachings stress the importance of education for both men and women, and women entitled to inherit and own property. Additionally, the concept of 'mahr' in Islamic marriage contracts provides financial security for women. These comprehensive teachings empower women in various spheres of life.

In contrast, Western feminism has been divided into various waves, each addressing specific issue. Significant progress has been made in areas like women suffrage, workplace equality, and reproductive rights. Some critics argue certain aspects of women's

experiences are ignored. Western Feminism is also criticized for promoting rights of "white women only". Despite notable achievements, the western feminist movement continues to encounter obstacles. The gender pay gap, lack of representation in political roles, and persistent gender based violence remains prevalent issues.

Conclusion

Islam's comprehensive approach aims to address various aspects of woman's life, considering her role as a mother, daughter, wife and member of community. Quran ensures that women are respected, valued and grant rights that encompass all dimensions of their existence. Islam is seen as a comprehensive framework that addresses wide range of issues affecting women's lives, while Western feminism has historically focused on specific challenges and continues to face limitations in achieving its goal of full gender equality and inclusivity. Understanding these differences can foster a more nuanced conversation about women's rights and contribute to a broader global dialogue on gender empowerment.