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Women Rights

Definition:

According to United Nations (UN: Human rights office)

"women rights are the fundamental rights that every woman is entitled to throughout her life"

Amnesty International defines it as

"women's rights refer to the entitlements and freedoms that protect women from discrimination and guarantee equality in dignity, opportunities and justice."

Also Kate Millet (feminist scholar) defines it as

"Women rights involve the restructuring of social and political systems that subordinate women to ensure equality & freedom."

Therefore, women rights refer to the freedoms, entitlements and equality granted to women in all spheres of life. Historically, women faced discrimination in most societies, but over the time legal reforms and religious teachings (especially Islam) worked to improve their status.

Concept of women rights in Islam:

Islam granted women dignity and rights 1400 yrs ago, at a time when most societies denied them basic humanity. The concept of women's rights in Islam is based on

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justice, dignity, and equality in humanity while acknowledging biological and social differences between men and women.

Islamic teaching emphasize that women and men are equal before Allah in terms of reward, accountability and moral responsibility.

1. Spiritual Equality:

Islam views women as spiritually equal to men. Quran repeatedly mentions believing men and women together.

Surah Al-Ahzab (33:35)

"Indeed, the Muslim men and Muslim women Allah has prepared for them forgiveness and a great reward"

Also in a Hadith it is quoted. (Tirmidhi)

Prophet (SAW) said:

"Women are the twin halves of men."

2. Right to life & Protection:

Islam discriminated practices like female infanticide and declared women lives sacred. It restored women's dignity and basic human right to life.

Allah says in verse (81:8-9)

"When the female infant buried alive is asked for what sin she was killed."

Also Prophet (SAW) said:

"whoever has a daughter and does not bury

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her alive, not insult her, and does not prefer his sons over her - Allah will admit him to Paradise" (Ibn Hibbal).

3. Economic and Property Rights:

Islam is the first religion which gave women equal financial rights - It gave women independent economic identity.

- Right to own property
- Right to earn and keep her income
- Right to inheritance
- Right to receive mahr (dower)

Verse in Surah Nisa also say: (4:32)

"For men is a share of what they earn and for women is a share of what they earn"

There is a hadith regarding it too:-

Khadija (RA) was a successful businesswoman, and the Prophet (Pbuh) supported her role - showing Islam's approval of women earning."

4. Social and Family Rights:

women have rights within the family and society.

- 1) Right to education:

women are allowed to seek knowledge.

It is a basic fundamental right. There is a hadith regarding it:

"Seeking knowledge is obligatory on every

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Muslim (Male or female) "

2) Right to marriage and consent.

Women also have right in marriage. Their consent is necessary. Forced marriages are discouraged in Islam, and consent must be expressed freely without coercion.

In addition to this after marriage too women should be treated kindly and given equal rights.

Allah says in verse (4:19) "
"live with them in kindness."

And Hadith in Sahih Bulchari highlights:

"A woman's consent is necessary for her marriage."

3) Right to (khula) Divorce.

If marital life becomes impossible, Islam allows women to seek khula.

Incident of Hazrat Jamila Bint Sa'ad is an e.g of it, who was granted khula by Prophet (P.b.u.h)

5) Legal and political rights:

Islam gives women a legal identity and rights to participate in public life. Islam grants women:

- 1) Right to be witness
- 2) Right to seek justice in court
- 3) Right to participate in public affairs and

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politics.

.) Right to express opinions.

Example of it is that during Prophet (Pbuh) time women gave bay'ah (pledge) and also women like Umm Salama and Nusaybah bint Ka'b played advisory and political roles.

6. Protection against oppression:

Islam prohibits mistreatment, injustice and domestic abuse. It protects rights of women by safeguarding their dignity and treating them equal.

Prophet (Pbuh) in his last sermon said: "Fear Allah regarding women, for you have taken them as a trust from Allah."

→ Women's Right in west:

.) Historical Background:

Before the 19th century:

women had no right to vote, no right to own property after marriage, no equal access to education even. They were just seen as property of husbands. Initially, the time changed.

.) Reform Movements:

women rights improved through social and political struggle.

.) Suffrage movements (19th-20th century)

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This included many feminist waves.
Suffrage or suffragette movement was a global struggle for women's right to vote. It was a key part of first wave of feminism and involved decades of activism including protests, advocacy and civil disobedience.

1) Feminist waves: included three different waves:

First:- Voting rights

Second, workplace equality and reproductive rights.

Third, identity, harassment protection

2) Current rights in west:

1) Equal voting rights.

Women have the same rights as men to vote & participate in political decision making. This ensures their voice in government and public policy.

2) Equal employment opportunities.

Laws protect women from discrimination at workplaces. They can apply for any jobs, receive equal training and work in all fields.

3) Protection against Domestic Violence.

Western countries have strict laws and

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shelters to protect women from physical embezzlement or sexual abuse at home. Offenders face legal punishment.

4) Property and Inheritance
Women can own, buy, sell and inherit property independently without needing permission from a husband or guardian.

5) Access to education, leadership, Judiciary
Women have equal access to schools and universities and can serve as judges, lawyers, politicians, CEOs and even in combat roles in the military.

→ Role Models of Muslim Women in Islamic History:

1. Hazrat Khadijah (RA):

She was the first wife of Prophet (PBUH) and first woman to accept Islam. She was a successful businesswoman and employer of the Prophet (PBUH). She supported Islam emotionally, financially, and morally. She was a role model of leadership, generosity and loyalty.

2) Hazrat Aisha (RA)

She was the third and youngest wife of Prophet (PBUH). She was among one of the greatest scholars of Islam, who

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narrated over 2200 hadiths. She was expert in Quran, fiqh, medicine and history. She was role model of knowledge, intellect and education.

3) Hazrat Fatimah (RA)

She was the daughter of Prophet (PBUH) known for piety and modesty. She was a symbol of spiritual purity, patience and family devotion. Also she was given the title of "leader of the women of Paradise".

4) Nusaybah bint Ka'b (RA)

She is a warrior who protected the Prophet (PBUH) in the Battle of Uhud. She fought courageously and was wounded multiple times. She was a role model of bravery and public duty.

5) Umm Salama (RA)

She was wise advisor of Prophet (PBUH). She gave key strategic advices during the Treaty of Hudaibiyah. She was a role model of wisdom, diplomacy and political insight.

Challenges faced in modern era:

1. Cultural practices vs Islamic teachings:

Many societies follow cultural traditions that restrict women - forced marriages, dowry, honor killing etc. have increased

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which Islam discourages. This has created confusion between the culture and religion.

2. Misinterpretation of Islamic Law:

Lack of proper Islamic education leads to wrong interpretations of hijab, inheritance, testimony and marital rights. Women often lose rights which Islam guarantees due to all the misinterpretation.

3. Lack of Access to education:

Still the right of education is not given to women. In some regions, girls face barriers to schooling due to poverty, security issues and societal norms. This limits social and economic empowerment.

4. Economic Inequality:

Even though Islam gives economic rights, its teaching clearly shows the rights granted to women but still they face job discrimination, wage gaps and limited opportunities as compared to men. This increases their economic dependency.

5. Domestic Violence and abuse:

Violence is justified culturally, even though Islam strictly forbids oppression and cruelty. Women face physical and mental abuse even in their home which worsens their health, their image, their position.

lack of legal protection or awareness worsens the problem. There are no specific laws against such crimes and if some are so are not followed.

6. Islamophobia:

Hijab, niqab and Islamic identity are stereotyped in western societies. ~~There~~ It is discouraged in their culture. Muslim women face discrimination, harassment and negative portrayals in media.

7. Feminism:

Modern feminism often promotes absolute equality and individual freedom without limitations which often contradicts with Islamic teachings like equity, family balance and moral boundaries. Some feminist narratives criticize Islamic laws (inheritance, hijab, marriage) without understanding their context, wisdom or protections. This creates confusion, identity conflict and a divide between Islamic rights and western expectations.

Conclusion:

Islam provides a complete and dignified framework of women rights grounded in justice, equity and spiritual equality - where the west focuses on absolute equality and individual freedom. Islam ensures balanced

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rights that protect both women and family structure - Modern challenges often create confusion and hinder the rights Islam already granted - The lives of early Muslim women show that empowerment, education, leadership and dignity are deeply rooted in Islamic traditions - Therefore, the ~~true~~ path to women's upliftment lies not in adopting external ideologies but in reviving and implementing the authentic teachings of Islam.