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Question:

Critically examine the comprehensive rights and status accorded to women in Islam, covering their economic, legal, social, and political spheres. How does Islamic perspective on gender roles and rights differ from contemporary Western Feminism?

I. Exordium:

Since 7th Century, Islam has accorded comprehensive rights and status to women that covers all aspects of ^{her} life such as economic, legal, social, and political. Feminism in Islam diverges fundamentally from feminism in West. Although both Islamic feminism and Western feminism aim for gender equality and justice but their approach and sources of authority is different. Western feminism is a secular movement that seeks to liberate women from patriarchal structures through means that often view religion as a tool of dominance. In contrast, Islamic feminism is a faith-based movement, that seeks to reclaim the original, egalitarian principles found in Quran and Hadith, which feminists see as a source of liberation. In Holy Quran, Allah says:

للرجال مما اكتسبوا
وللنساء مما اكتسبن

"For men is a share of what they have earned,
and for women is a share of what they have
earned."

(Surah Nisa: 32)

This part of ayah highlights the women's liberty,
freedom, equality, rights, and status as that of
men's.

④ Economic Rights of Women

Islam grants women comprehensive economic rights
that were revolutionary at the time of revelation.

Women has right to own wealth and earn
income as independent economic agent. The Prophet
(PBUH) said:

"Women are the co-owners of their
wealth."

(Sahih Bukhari)

This means women has full autonomy to spend,
donate, and manage their wealth. Moreover, women
inherit fixed shares as daughter, mother, wife,
and sister from her family and it is an
obligation on family to grant women her
shares in property.

② Legal Rights of Women:

The legal rights of women in Islam includes right to marriage consent, right to Dowry (Mahr), right to inheritance, right to Divorce (Khula), and right to maintenance (Nafaqa). These rights reflect the fairness and dignity Islam gives to women in private and public life. In Surah An-Nisa, Allah says:

"O who believe! It is not lawful for you to inherit women against their will."

(Surah-Nisa: 19)

This verse highlights the obligation of consent of women before her marriage.

③ Social Rights of Women:

Social rights of women includes the right to be respected, educated, protected, and treated with justice. These rights are rooted in Quran, Hadith, and Islamic scholarly traditions. Al-Qurtubi writes that: "Women have similar rights to those they owe, according to what is reasonable." and Allah talks about social equality between men and women in human dignity in Surah Al-Hujurat:

"Verily, the most honorable of you in

the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you."

This verse provides a foundation for respect, equal treatment, and social inclusion for women.

④ Political Rights of Women:

Along with all other rights, Islam has accorded women significant political rights to participate in decision making, give opinions, and contribute to governance and public affairs. In Quran:

"The believing men and women are allies (awliyas) of one another; they enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong."

(Surah Tawbah: 71)

This verse establishes the mutual responsibility of both men and women in managing societal affairs.

III. Islamic Perspective on Gender roles and rights differs from contemporary Western Feminism

Islam and western feminism both addresses women's rights, but they do so based on very different foundations, philosophies, approaches, and goals. Below are the key differences:

1. Foundation of Rights:

Islam says that rights come from Allah - they are fixed, stable and universal, regardless of time or culture.
 Western Feminism says that rights are based on human legislation, social norms, and political ideologies.

2. Concept of Equality:

Islam promotes equity, where responsibilities can be different. For instance, Men are obligated to provide financially; women are not.
 Contemporary feminism seeks absolute sameness in all roles. Men and women differences often seemed as social constructs not biological or natural.

3. Gender Roles:

Islam recognizes: Mother's special status, Men as a provider, and shared family roles.
 Western feminism denies inherent gendered roles, considering them product of hierarchy.

4. Family Structure:

Islam strengthens family structure through defined feminist roles.
 Western feminism prioritizes individual independence as discourage family structure.

5. Approach to Women's Empowerment:

Islamic empowerment is value-based that can be achieved through dignity, modesty, education, morality, and spiritual equality. In western feminism, empowerment often means breaking all traditional boundaries including family roles.

6. Source of identity:

Islam says identity comes from faith, morality, family roles, and community responsibilities. It means Islamic identity is faith-centered. Western feminism says identity is self-defined, based on personal feelings or societal constructs.

add and highlight references/examples against these arguments.....

7. Concept of Modesty:

Modesty is a core value for both men and women in Islam. The freedom is linked with moral responsibility. Western feminism links freedom with individual choice, even without moral limits.

8. Source of Accountability:

Islam grounds justice Western feminism grounds

in spiritual accountability } justice in legal and
to God, creating internal } societal pressure, creating
motivation. } external motivation.

IV. Critical Analysis:

A critical examination shows that Islam recognized and protected women's dignity and agency at a time when most societies denied them basic personhood. Economically, women in Islam possess full financial independence: they retain ownership of their wealth, inherit property, receive mahr, and are not obliged to spend on the household. Legally, Islam granted women the right to contract, sue, testify, and demand justice. These rights are divinely protected and universal. Socially, Islam upholds the inherent worth of women. The Quran repeatedly addresses that men and women are alike. Islam also emphasizes the sanctity of women in family structures. Politically, Islam recognized women's capacity to recognize participate in public affairs from the earliest Islamic era. Women pledged allegiance (bay'ah) to the Prophet (PBUH), participated in the community consultation, expressed opinions on governance. Thus, the Islamic model provides a balanced

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integration of rights, responsibilities, and moral values.

When comparing this framework to contemporary western feminism, significant philosophical differences emerge. Western feminism - especially in its modern forms emerges on the assumption that equality requires sameness in roles, the differences between men and women are social constructs. Islam, on the other hand, affirms that men and women are equal in worth but may have different roles in the society. Another fundamental difference lies in concept of moral boundaries as integral to honor and freedom in Islam while western feminism stresses liberation from every norm and expectation. A balanced analysis therefore shows that Islam presents a comprehensive rights system that predates feminist movements but rests on foundations different from those of contemporary western feminism.

V. Conclusion:

In conclusion, Islam provides a comprehensive and balanced framework for women's rights that encompasses economic independence, legal protection, social dignity, and political participation. Unlike

contemporary western feminism, which emphasize on individual autonomy and some rebellious ideologies from the defined family structures. The system of Islam has endured across centuries because it demonstrates that women's empowerment is not merely a matter of legal or social recognition but a comprehensive, value-based system.

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