

How did Islam highlight the human dignity and greatness. Explain.

1) Introduction:-

Islam lays great stress on the dignity and greatness of human. It stresses the elevated status of humans above all other creations. At several instances in Quran we find mentions of superiority of man and his noble purpose on Earth. The teachings of Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) elaborate the greatness of man. He started his preaching in Arab when the people were living their lives like animals and gradually taught them about their real status and goal in the world.

2) Meaning of Human Dignity:-

The word 'dignity' has been derived from 'dignitas' (Latin), which means "a quality of being worthy and honorable". In Islamic lexicon, human dignity refers to 'the distinctive status conferred upon man by Allah (SWT) over other creatures'. It is both an honour and a responsibility (amanat).

3) How Islam Highlights Dignity and Greatness of Humans:-

Islam highlights the human dignity and greatness through Quran and the Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

a) Calls Man a Crown Jewel of All Creatures

Islam names man as the crown jewel amongst all creatures on earth.

ولقد كرّمنا بني آدم ... (Bani Israel: 70)

Verily! We have honoured the children of Adam. We carry them on land and the sea.

b) Calls Man A Creature With Best Form

Quran explains how man has been created in the best form both to highlight his status and responsibilities

لَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ فِي أَحْسَنِ تَقْوِيمٍ (Al-Quran)

c) Man has been conferred with Knowledge.

Allah clearly mentions in the Quran that humans are the only creatures blessed with knowledge

وَعَلَّمَ آدَمَ الْأَسْمَاءَ كُلَّهَا (Al-Baqara)

And He taught Adam the names, All of them.

d) Man as the Viceroy of God on Earth

A clear sign of honourable status of man is the fact that he has been appointed as the deputy of Allah on Earth. This has been mentioned in Surah Al-Baqara in a conversation between Allah and angels.

إِنِّي جَاعِلٌ فِي الْأَرْضِ خَلِيفَةً (Al-Baqara: 31)

"I am placing a Deputy on Earth."

e) Prostration of Angels for Man

Yet another evidence of the honorable status of humans is the fact that they are the only creatures that was prostrated by angels on the command of Allah (SWT).

This event is mentioned in Surah Al-Baqara.

f) Equality of All Humans

This honour or greatness is not an attribute of specific class of humans, it is universally applicable. Quran says:-
"He created you from a single being, then of the same kind made its mate."

g) Islam Sets Clear Criteria for Greatness

While setting the status of man, Allah also commands man to stick to the greatness that has been conferred upon him:-

اِنَّ اَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ اَتْقٰى

The noblest among you in the sight of Allah is the one best in conduct (49:13)

4) How Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)

Taught Human Dignity :-

The arab of Pre-Islamic era was immersed in barbarism. It was prophet Muhammad who reinstated their dignity.

a) Ended Wars and Created Harmony

To teach men about human dignity, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) forged alliances and concluded treaties. Sir William Muir accepts that this is way Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) solved issues of disunity in Arab.

b) Highlighted Importance of Education.

Knowledge is one of the most distinctive feature of mankind. He highlighted the importance of education in following words :- "Knowledge is the lost property of believer, he should get it wherever available."

c) Highlighted Individual Responsibility

The status of high dignity comes

with equally high responsibilities. Islam focuses on this aspect too. In the words of Holy Prophet (PBUH) :- **كلكم راع وكلكم مسؤول عن رعيته**
"All of you are shepherds and each of you is responsible for his flock."

d) Highlighted Collective Responsibility

Human dignity also demands them to spend their energies in the establishment of a just social order that implements divine laws of equality, harmony and justice for all.

e) Dignified Status of Women

The status of dignity is not restricted to male gender, it is equally applicable to the females. One hadees-e-Nabvi mentions :- "O people! fear Allah concerning women. You have taken them on the security of Allah....."

5) What Human Dignity Demands-

The endowment of dignity and greatness is a responsibility

and demands men of certain duties:-

a) Obedience to God

This is the foremost requirement for maintenance of human dignity.

ولا خلقتا الجن و الانس الا ليعبدون (Al-Quran)

I have created Jinn and Humans; they should worship me.

b) Administration of Justice on Earth

Creation of a just social is yet another requirement for sustained human dignity. Quran says: "Let not the hatred of a people prevent you from dispensing justice."

c) Conclusion:-

A clear theme of Islam is highlighting the dignified status of man amongst all other creatures. Several injunctions of Quran and Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) highlight this dignity while also laying clear rules for the maintenance of this status. ~~the status of man~~