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Date: 10 / 04 / 2026

## Question # 04

### Rights of Women in Islam

Answer:-

#### • Introduction

Islam has granted unprecedented spiritual, social, political, economic and cultural status to woman. It has not only acknowledged the complete personhood of woman but also safeguarded her rights keeping in view her vulnerabilities. In the divine scheme of regulation of the relationship between man and woman, Islam has assigned a position of dignity and honour to woman. Such beneficent regulation is essential for peace, comfort, happiness, continuation of the human species and mankind progress. Islam granted women such rights that were not fully established in western nations until the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

#### • Women in Ancient Civilizations

##### (a) India:-

In India, subjection was a cardinal principle. The rule of inheritance was agnatic, that is descent traced through males to the exclusion of females. In Hindu Scriptures, the description of a good wife is as follows "a woman, whose mind, speech and body is kept in

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subjection, acquires high renown in this world, in the next, she abode with her husband."

### (b) Athens:-

In Athens, women were not better off than either the Indian or the Roman women. Athenian women were always minors, subject to some male - to their father, to their brother, or to some of their male kin. Her consent in marriage was not generally thought to be necessary and she was obliged to submit to the wishes of her parents and receive from them her husband and her lord.

### (c) Roman Law:-

A woman was completely dependent and was described as, a minor, a ward, a person incapable of doing or acting anything according to her own individual taste. If married, she and her property passed into the power of her husband, she was the purchased property of her husband, and like a slave acquired only for his benefit. A woman could not exercise any civil or public office could not be a witness, surety, tutor, or curator. Only by the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the situation started to improve, "by a series of acts starting with the Married Women's Property Act in 1870, amended in 1882 and 1887, married women achieved the right to own property and to enter contracts on a par with spinsters, widows and divorcees".

### (d) Western:-

John Stuart Mill in his essay "The subjection of women" says;

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"We are continually told that civilization and Christianity have restored to the woman her just rights. Meanwhile the wife is the actual bondservant of her husband, no less so, as far as the legal obligation goes, than a slave community so called."

A few Biblical decrees may shed more light on the subject. In the Mosaic Law, the wife was betrothed; a wife to oneself meant simply to acquire possession of her by payment of the purchase money. The girl's consent is unnecessary and the need for it is nowhere suggested in the Law. As to the right of divorce. "The woman being man's property, his right to divorce her follows as a matter of course. The right to divorce was held only by man."

## • Rights of Women in Islam

Eleven centuries before the publication of *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792) by Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797), the foremost feminist, Islam accepted complete personhood of women which was denied to the daughter of Eve by the Occidental sons of Adam.

In the midst of the darkness that engulfed the world, the divine revelation echoed in the wide desert of Arabia with a fresh, noble, and universal message to humanity.

يا أيها الناس ألقوا بكم التي خلقكم من نفس واحدة وخلق منها أزواجاً منهن رجالاً  
نساءً -

"O Mankind! keep your duty to your Lord who

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created you from a single soul and from it created its mate and from them twain has spread a multitude of men and women."

(an-Nisa 4:1)

A scholar who pondered about this verse states, "It is believed that there is no text, old or New, that deals with the humanity of the woman from all aspects with such amazing brevity, eloquence, depth, and originality as this divine decree."

## (ii) As a Child and an adolescent

Despite the social acceptance of female infanticide among some Arabian tribes, the Quran forbade this custom, and considered it a crime like any other murder.

وَإِذَا زُلْزِلَتِ الْأَرْضُ زِلْزَالَهَا فَاسْتَأْذِنَتْ بِنُحُوتِهَا

"And when the female (infant) buried alive - is questioned for what crime she was killed."

(al-Takweer 81: 8-9)

Far from saving the girl's life so that she may later suffer injustice and inequality, Islam requires kind and just treatment for her. Among the sayings of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in this regard are the following:

- (a) "Whosoever has a daughter and he does not bury her alive, does not insult her, and does not favor his son over her, God will enter him into Paradise."
- (b) "Whosoever supports your daughters till they mature, he I will come in the Day of Judgment as this (and he pointed with his two fingers held together)"

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(i) The right of females to seek knowledge is not different from that of males. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said; "Seeking knowledge is mandatory for every Muslim"

### (ii) As a wife (adult)

The Quran clearly indicates that marriage is sharing between the two halves of the society and that its objectives, besides perpetuating human life, are emotional well-being and spiritual harmony. Its bases are love and mercy.

Allah says in Holy Quran;

"And among his signs is this, that He created mates for you from yourselves that you may find rest, peace of mind in them, and He ordained between you love and mercy. Lo, herein indeed are signs for people who reflect"

(ar-Rum 30:2)

### (iii) Right to select spouse on her own Volition

According to Islamic law, women cannot be forced to marry anyone without their consent. Ibn Abbas reports that a girl came to Prophet (PBUH), and reported that her father had forced her to marry without her consent. The Prophet (PBUH) gave her the choice... (between accepting the marriage or invalidating it)

The Holy Prophet (PBUH) says:

"No widow should be married without consulting her and no virgin be married without her assent, and her assent in her silence"

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Even after the marriage ceremony if she declared that she did not assent to it, the marriage is dissolved.

#### (iv) Right to Mahr, Marriage Gift, as inalienable Property

Besides all other provisions for her protection at the time of marriage, it was specifically decreed that woman has the full right to her Mahr, a marriage gift, which is presented to her by her husband and is included in the nuptial contract, and that such ownership does not transfer to her father or husband. The concept of Mahr in Islam is neither an actual or symbolic price for the woman, as was the case in certain cultures, but rather it is a gift symbolizing love and affection.

#### (v) Rules for Married Life

The rules for married life in Islam are clear and in harmony with upright human nature. In consideration of the physiological and psychological make up of man and woman, both have equal rights and claims on one another, except for one responsibility, that of leadership. This is the matter which is natural in any collective life and which is consistent with the nature of man. The Quran thus states:

وَلَهُنَّ مِثْلُ الَّذِي عَلَيْكُمْ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَاللَّيْسَ جَازِئًا لَّهُنَّ  
دَرَجَةٌ وَاللَّهُ عَزِيزٌ حَلِيمٌ

"And they (women) have rights similar to those (of men) over them, and men are a degree above them."

(al-Baqarah, 2: 228)

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### (vii) Right to Divorce / Khula :

Before Islam woman had to adopt a roundabout and crooked course to free herself of her husband who held her in a state of perfect subservience, for neither the law of the land, nor the common law gave her the right to leave her husband by securing separation. Islam gave her this right in clear and unequivocal terms which she could exercise whenever she had a mind to do so. Right to end for an unsuccessful marriage is recognized. To provide for the stability of the family, however, and in order to protect it from hasty decisions under temporary emotional stress, certain steps and waiting periods should be observed by men and women seeking divorce.

### (viii) As a mother:

Islam considered kindness to parents next to the worship of God.

"And we have enjoined upon man (to be good) to his parents: His mother bears him in weakness upon weakness."

(Surah Luqman, 31: 14)

A famous saying of Prophet (PBUH) is  
→ "Paradise is at the feet of mothers."

→ It is the generous who is good to women, and it is the wicked who insults them."

### • Economic rights of women in Islam

Islam has granted women their economic rights: get inheritance, own property, and run

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business.

### (a) Right of independent ownership

According to Islamic law, woman's right to her money, real estate, or other properties is fully acknowledged. This right undergoes no change whether she is single or married. She retains her full rights to buy, sell, mortgage or lease any or all her properties.

### (b) Female employment

With regard to the woman's right to seek employment there is no decree in Islam which forbids woman from seeking employment whenever there is a necessity. Moreover, there is no restriction on benefiting from woman's exceptional talent in any field.

### (c) Female inheritance

In addition, Islam restored to woman the right of inheritance, after she herself was an object of inheritance in some cultures. Her share is completely hers and no one can make any claim on it, including her father and her husband.

## • Political rights of women in Islam

Any fair investigation of the teachings of Islam into the history of the Islamic civilization will surely find a clear evidence of woman's equality with man in what we call today 'Political rights.' This includes the right of election as well as the nomination to political offices. It also includes woman's right to participate in public affairs. Both in Quran and in the Islamic history we find examples of women who participated in serious discussions and argued even with Holy Prophet

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(PBUH) himself. During the Caliphate of Umar (R.A) a woman argued with him in the mosque, proved her point and caused him to declare in the presence of people "A woman is right and Umar is wrong". According to al-Tabri, a woman can claim political leadership.

## Conclusion

Islam has granted the woman the unprecedented socio economic and political rights besides accepting her complete personhood and spiritual well-being that she may attain in communion with God through religious devotions. While westerners had no concept of human rights and civil rights before 17<sup>th</sup> century, even the Magna Carta of Britain came into existence 600 years after the advent of Islam, and no one even knew the principles of Magna Carta. In America and France these concepts of rights can only be found at the end of 18<sup>th</sup> century, and still those rights were only mentioned on paper not actually given to people in real life. But in Islam the rights have been granted by God, they have not been granted by any king or any legislative assembly.