

Question: 51. Introduction:

Islam is a comprehensive code of life that recognizes the inherent dignity and rights of all human beings. These rights are not the product of social reform or political revolutions, rather, they ~~are~~ ^{are} divinely granted through revelation. While the Western world only acknowledged fundamental human rights after prolonged struggles and gradual activism, Islam provided them at the very beginning of its message over fourteen centuries ago. Among these, the protection, honour and empowerment of women hold a central place in Islamic teachings. This answer explores Islam's framework of human rights and explains how its approach to women's status differs from that of the modern Western world.

2. Human Rights in Islam

Islamic teachings guarantee a broad spectrum of rights based on justice, equality and social harmony. These rights are enshrined in the Quran and the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him).

2.1 Right to Life and Human Dignity
The sanctity of life is a foundational principle in Islam. The Quran strictly prohibits murder and unjust violence.

"Whoever kills a soul, it is as if he had slain all mankind"

(Surah Al-Maidah 5:32)

Furthermore, all human beings are equal in worth and no racial, tribal or gender-based superiority exists.

2.2 Justice and Social Balance

Justice is not only encouraged but commanded in Islamic law. The Quran instructs believers to uphold justice even against their own selves or close relatives (Surah An-Nisa 4:135). In addition, Islam introduced welfare

systems such as zakat and inheritances, ensuring protection for the vulnerable, including women, orphans and the poor.

3. Status of Women in Islam

Islam elevated the position of women from one of neglect and exploitation to one of dignity, autonomy and spiritual equality. The rights granted to women in Islam cover personal, legal, economic and social domains.

3.1 Spiritual and Legal Equality

In the eyes of Allah, men and women are equal in terms of faith, worship and moral responsibility.

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

- Surah Al-Ahzab 33:35

Women have the right to consent to marriage, seek divorce through khula, enter contracts and seek justice through legal institutions.

3.2 Economic Independence and Social Rights:

Islam grants women the right to earn, own and manage wealth independently. A woman's financial assets remain her own, and she is not required to support the household financially. That responsibility lies with the male guardians. Additionally, the Prophet (PBUH) emphasized the right of women to education and learning.

"Seeking knowledge is an obligation upon every Muslim"

(Ibn Majah).

Many female companions of the Prophet, such as Aisha (RA), became prominent scholars and leaders in religious discourse.

4. The Western Experience of Women's Rights

In Western societies, women achieved legal and social rights only after long periods of marginalization and struggle. For centuries, they were denied the right to own property,

vote, receive formal education or participate in politics. These rights were gradually introduced through feminist movements in the 19th and 20th centuries. While today's Western modern promotes individual liberty and gender equality, it must be noted that its historical trajectory demonstrates a significant delay in recognizing the rights Islam granted to women from the outset.

5. Comparison between Islamic and Western Perspectives:

The Islamic and Western models differ fundamentally in both origin and vision. In Islam, rights are divinely revealed and embedded within a framework of responsibilities, whereas the Western approach is based on secular liberalism and changing societal norms. For example, Islam granted women the right to inherit, manage property and seek divorce more than a

millennium before Western societies adopted similar laws. In the Western tradition, these rights were achieved through activism and negotiation, often in opposition to long-standing patriarchal structures.

In terms of modesty, Islam defines clear boundaries for both men and women in dress and behavior. The hijab, often misunderstood, is an act of devotion, modesty and identity. The Western model emphasizes personal autonomy, including in matter of dress, but lacks the spiritual or moral anchoring that Islam provides.

In the Islamic worldview, family is regarded as the nucleus of society and motherhood is granted immense respect. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said, "Paradise lies under the feet of your mother." However, Islam does not restrict women from public life. Women are allowed to work, lead and contribute to society while observing Islamic values. Unlike

the Western model, which often places individual ambition above collective roles, Islam encourages a balanced approach where a woman's decision to pursue a career, raise a family or both is honored and protected under divine guidance.

Conclusion

The Islamic framework of human rights is rooted in divine revelation and reflects a timeless commitment to justice, balance and compassion. Islam not only recognized women as morally and intellectually equal to men but also guaranteed them legal, financial and social rights long before any secular system. In contrast, the Western model, while claiming progress, reflects a history of delayed recognition and incomplete moral grounding. Islam's balanced approach ensures that women are not forced into any one role but are respected for their choices, protected

in their rights and valued as
integral members of society.
It is this divine clarity and
moral coherence that establish
the superiority of Islam in
safeguarding true human rights
for all.