



Women Empowerment in Islam and its Implications in the Contemporary World

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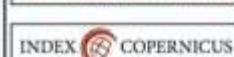
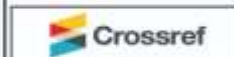
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Abstract:

The main objective of this research paper is to highlight that Islam gives equal opportunities to women socially, politically and economically. She has equal rights as a social and political individual in a Muslim society. Islam upholds a segregated work-sphere for women i.e. it takes into account her physique, self-respect, modesty and protection and rather offers a privileged status. Women have taken part in all spheres of life in the early Islamic era which testifies to the progressive and modern approach of Islam.

Key words:

Islam, women empowerment, Balanced social order, women empowerment in modern times

Islam is a complete code of life. Islam has given a very balanced social order by segregating the rights and duties between men and women. Islam has given enormous liberty to women. Islam has conferred multiple rights to woman by empowering her in every walk of life. The history portrays a very dismal and bleak of women in different civilizations. The women were treated as a commodity and were totally at the back & call of male members. Islam has empowered women in various fields of life. There is no gender disparity in Islam. The west really misinterprets the status of women in an Islamic society, that there are lot of restrictions upon women. Islam envisages the patriarchal model and woman position is submissive in family and society. Whatsoever the West has granted liberty to woman. It is a negative liberty. There is lot of exploitation of female in Western society. Even Allama Iqbal has criticized the Western culture. The girlfriend and boyfriend culture does not make culture does not make any social set up. Although there are lot of challenges confronted to Islam in present 21st century and modern society. The Islam is a rational religion and it has the lot of capability to cope up the modern changes. The qiyas, Ijma and Ijtihad enabled to adopt according to the new circumstances. There are glorious examples of wives and daughters of Holy Prophet, and Muslim woman is serving in battle fields, as a researcher and as business women. Islam is really the guarantor of individual rights focusing on women rights. The history has produced enormous women who are really leader.

“The different researchers have studied from Chamberlain about the women empowerment in Islam. Islam is the complete code of life and has ensured maximum rights to each and every member of society. Islam has conferred highest reverence to women. The Islamic family system is highly appreciable that it has provided lot of security to women.”⁽³⁾

“Badawi wrote in his Essay in 1917, Islam has revolutionize the life of women as compare to her previous status in pre-Islamic era. He has highlighted the poor socio-economic plight women in pre-Islamic era. The Quran and Sunnah has exalted the status of women in the society.”⁽⁴⁾

It is written in women and Islam in Oxford Islamic studies online about the women empowerment that there is a linkage among Islam, women and 21st century. Muslim women have adjusted in a 21st century within Islamic norms and values. The women in Hijab is serving in various fields, but the best place for Muslim woman is home to strengthen the family bondage.

In the book, "Women's Rights in Islam: Normative Teaching versus Practice," in *Islam and Human Rights: written by Riffat Hassan that Islam is the glorious religion and guarantor of human rights specially women rights. It is not the name of faiths and beliefs but it is also name of practice. It is universal religion and really empowered women in the past and also in the present times.*⁽⁵⁾

"Women and Gender in Islam, written by Leila Ahmed in her book that Islam has given very balanced social order by segregating responsibilities between men and women. Although Islamic model is patriarchal, but it does not mean that male is dictator and female is submissive. Woman is the queen of the house."⁽⁶⁾

"Táhirih: A Religious Paradigm of Womanhood" written by Maneck, Susan Stiles (2004). Maneck, Susan Stiles (2004) had written in their book that Islam has erected a very balanced social paradigm, and both man and woman are the pillars of this system. The both men and women are reciprocal to each other."⁽⁷⁾

"Islamic feminism means justice to women". Written by Muhammad Noushad has written in his book that Islam is the only religion that has done justice with woman. The woman was deprived and a downtrodden creature. She is the weaker section of society, and she was empowered despite being physically weaker sex. Man is the protector and guardian of woman modesty."⁽⁸⁾

In the book "In search of Islamic feminism: one woman's global journey" written by and s Fernea, Elizabeth Warnock (1998) that Islamic Feminism is unique in the entire world. Muslim is undergoing the transformational and transactional changes. Islam is a universal religion and it can accept all the challenges of the modern world. The Muslim woman can adapt according to the prevalent changes of the world."⁽⁹⁾

The descriptive and qualitative methodology will be applied on this research paper in order to assess the women empowerment in Islam. The socio-economic and religious approach will be applied on this research paper to analyze religious norms and socio-economic circumstances. The Islamic feminist theory will be applied on this research paper that what is the position of women in Islam? Apart from this the Empowerment Theory will be applied in this research work that what are those factors and indicators which empower women. The NVIVO research software is applied on literature review by generating various forms of themes in form of tree and clouds from text.

Data Analysis Procedure

Data Collection:

The data collection is based on secondary sources i.e. books, magazines, journals, interviews of scholars etc. The primary sources of Islamic law Quran and hadith are also consulted to write this research paper.

Data Preparation:

The data was prepared from studying various books, magazines and newspapers articles. I had made notes by structuring of a research paper. I have divided the paper in different segments the data is collected to fill these components.

Data Exploration:

The notes were studied and relevant pointed were jolted down in order to incorporate them in research paper. The important themes and inferences were highlighted.

Data Reduction:

The data reduction stage plays a significant role in coding of the data. In this study, the Neuman's model for data coding:

Sorting and classifying.

Open coding

Axial Coding

Selection Coding

Interpreting and Elaborating.

Synthesis of data.

Data Interpretation:

In this stage the data were interpreted under themes. The different themes were elaborated according to the research requirement.

Significance of Study:

This study is of the immense importance because the issue of women empowerment is getting popularity all over the world. The Islamic concept of women empowerment is poles apart from Western concept of women empowerment. The International instruments: United Nations Declaration of Human Rights 1948, CEDAW (Convention regarding the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women -1979) and Beijing Declaration 1995 have fully endorsed women empowerment, equality and advancement in all walks of life. Prior to all these International instruments Islam is the herald of human rights, equality and dignity. The West has raised so many objections in post 9/11 scenario. They shift blame upon Islamic values that they are very orthodox, and restricted female freedom.

Statement of Problem:

The major research question or statement of problem is this how Islamic culture and norms have empowered women within family domain. The family is the most cohesive bond and consolidated unit for women. The true practice of Islamic values really empowered women. The women empowerment is very –based term which covers social –economic, political and academic sphere etc. Now, the

question arises the how Muslim women is confronting challenges in the modern world. Is she accommodating according to new requirements? Or confronting difficulty to acquiring rights and liberties? The Western agenda is seeping in each and every civilization and influencing and modifying various cultural norms.

Main Subject:

1- The Social Order of Islam :

Islamic social order is universal in nature. The base of Islamic social system lies on the belief that all human beings are equal. Allah has created human being in form of couple not alone to start a social life. The family is the basic unit of society. Islamic reflects the model of patriarchal society. Islam has introduced a very balanced social order by allocating the various duties to men and women. Woman is the queen of the house. Man is singled out for the outside life to earn bread. The man is responsible for sustenance and maintenance of women and her children. Women's responsibility to look after her husband and properly train the children. Mother lap is the first institution. The man and woman are complementary to each other and equally important to each other. The mother and father are highly respectful, and they are doors of paradise.

Three tiers of social life: Individual, family and society

In Islamic social system there is harmony among individual, family and society. Islam safeguards all these three segments. Individual is the part of family and society. The individual is the part of family and society. The society cannot ignore the rights and duties of the individual and family.

Marriage is spiritual and legal contract between two opposite parties to legalize the generation. Islam has encouraged the institution of marriage in order to protect the women's sanctity. The woman have equal marital rights in Islam. It is sunnah of Holy Prophet to get marry. According to Quran both man and women are garments of each other. Islam has discouraged celibacy for both man and woman in order to preserve their sanctity. Marriage is the foundation block of family and cornerstone of the society.

2- The Concept of Women Empowerment in Islam:

Islam has given reverence, dignity and equality to women. The women were taken from darkness in to the beacon of light. The women were rights, justice and fair treatment. Islam emancipated woman in all respects. Islam is the glorious religion, where women got a respectable place almost about 1400 years ago Provisions for empowerment of women in the Islamic system of life:

"Fear Allah through whom you demand your mutual (rights) and (revere) the wombs (That bore you): for Allah Ever watches over you."(9)

Holy Prophet laid down the example of changing social norms by replacing the old ones. Islam was beacon of light for women. Woman's position was uplifted as a mother, daughter, sister and wife.

Holy Prophet laid down practical example by giving honor to their wives and daughters. According to hadith ;" Hazrat Bibi Fatimah, Hazrat Khadija, Hazrat Asia and Hazrat Maryam are the leaders of women in paradise. "(8) Holy Prophet said that in entire world I love my daughter Fatimah that she is the leader in this

world and paradise. When Fatimah came to meet Holy Prophet, He stood up in her respect and laid down her shawl. Holy Prophet gave of lot of respect to Hazrat khadija that she is most venerated lady in entire world

The status of Women in Pre-Islamic Society:

The women plight was very miserable in pre-Islamic society. She was treated like chattels and animals. The daughters were buried alive at the time of time of birth. When daughter was born, the face of Arabian people became black and they could not face the common people.” (When the news of (the birth of) a female is brought to any of them, his face becomes dark, and he is filled with inward grief! He hides himself from the people because of the evil (and shame) of that which he has been informed. Shall he keep her with dishonor, or bury her in the dirt? Certainly, evil is their decision...) “(10)

There were no basic rights of women at that time. She was always at the back and call of father, brother, husband and son. There is no consent in matrimonial affairs. The man can marry can any time and give divorce to wife at any wife. There were unlimited wives of man.

Under the customary practice in preIslamic era, the women have no legal status. The tribal law determined the women’s rights: fathers sold their daughters into marriage for a price, the husband could terminate the union at will, and women had little or no property or succession rights.

In pre-Islamic society the women was considered as a moveable commodity. The practice of polygamy was very common, and male can keep as much wives as a wants. Even the husband did not did justice with the wives. There was no involvement of women consent in marriage. Even the woman was not allowed to remarry.

In Arabian society, there was vile custom called as “Sawara”. This custom was pertaining to pacify the feud between two tribes. The tribes exchanged a young girl, and that young girl got married to an old man, and treated in harsh manner.

The status of women in other civilizations:

The various civilizations, portrayed a model of Patriarchal society. The property was inherited through male members, and women were not entitled. The tribal laws have limited the rights of women. The woman was treated as property.

The different civilizations portrays a very bleak and pathetic picture of women. The status of woman was very low. There was no law to support their rights. The woman and slaves were not considered as a citizen’s. The woman role was only to serve the table and indulge in domestic duties.

In Greek civilization, the woman was considered the source of all evils. The women life was confined within four walls of houses. She was totally at the back and call of their male members. Plato is called as the first feminist of the western world, and he has written in his book “Republic “that woman should be given education and she should have right to work. Even Plato said that woman can became the philosopher queen (leader) of country. In Roman civilization, the women position was very weak.

When it came to Christianity, Chrysostom says: “Woman is an unavoidable evil, a delicious calamity and an attractive trouble.” Aristotle declared: “The female state is a deformity.” A Roman Catholic, Aquinas, believed: “A female is a

misbegotten male.” Nietzsche, the German philosopher, opines: “Woman is the source of folly, unreason.” (12) In modern Europe, women were not given equal rights and the situation led to feminist movements that have been constantly struggling for equal rights for women. In Hindu society there was a vilest custom of Sati, that she was burnt alive with the funeral pyre of her husband. She was considered as an economic burden upon the family. In Hindu society, there was ban on the remarriage of widow. She was considered as an evil. The domestic violence and harsh treatment was very common with the woman which went unnoticed in the society. She was only considered as symbol of sex. The definition of good wife was to become submissive before the husband.

The Concept of equality in Islam:

Islam treats male and female equally. There is no gender equality in Islam. And whoever does righteous good deeds — male or female — and is a true believer in the Oneness of Allah, such will enter Paradise and not the least injustice, even to the size of a Naqira (speck on the back of a date-stone), will be done to them.” (Qur’an, 4:124)(13)

Man is the head of the family. The man is bread-winner. The responsibility and sustainability lies upon the shoulder of man. The man and woman both can acquire the religious and worldly education. Both are equal in all civil and criminal acts of judicial freedom. “It is obligatory for every man and woman to receive education.”

In marital rights, both man and women have equal rights. The consent of girl is essential for marriage. The man can give divorce to wife, vice versa woman can also take khula on the basis of grounds where the circumstances are not conducive. If the husband is cruel and the in-laws treatment is harsh with girl. She can take khula. The widow has right to remarry and restart her social life. The woman can retain her maiden name after marriage. The woman can retain her own earned money and there is no control of man over it.

Economic empowerment:

Islam has economically empower women within the household domain. Islam has given the right of dower (haq-mahr) to woman after marriage. She is entitled to get maintenance and sustenance before and after marriage. She has right in property. “For men is a share of what the parents and close relatives leave, and for women is a share of what the parents and close relatives leave, be it little or much — a legal share.” (Qur’an, 4:7)(14)

3-The Islamic concept of women empowerment and west interpretation:

The West gives the interpretation that Islam has given very submissive position to women. The West highly criticize upon the concept of polygamy, that Muslim man is allowed to keep four wives at a time. It indicates the relegated position of the women that she is akin to chattel. The West has introduced a gender-balanced society by giving complete equality to both of the sexes male and female. Islamic has given the patriarchal model, where the position of man is dominant as compare to women. The image of Muslim women became a static and politicized symbol of oppression rather than a self-defined notion of identity and religious belonging. The west has highly criticized the “Hijab” for Muslim women that it is

symbol of oppression. Most of the countries have banned the hijab in their respective countries. The west believes that Western secularism is better than the regressive values of Islam.

There is lot of difference between Islamic and Western feminism. Islamic feminism is based on equality, dignity and honour. While Western feminism is based on obscenity, vulgarity and sexual freedom.

In West there were no major rights were availed by women, but they got through feminism. There is visible difference between Islamic feminism and Islamic feminism. The Islamic feminism is based upon dignity, norms and values. The Western feminism is based on vulgarity and sexual exploitation. According to the Western feminism, the women is the oppressed victims of their families, culture and society.

In Western civilization, the women honour and dignity has been compromised and she is highly exploited. She is symbol of sex. The Western feminist accept it as a part of women's freedom. Even few of them fully supports that it is women's rights to earn their bread by adopting the profession of prostitution. Western feminism contradicts with Islamic feminism, because Islam prohibits the extra-marital relations. Islam has exalted the marital relations to the level of sanctity. Islamic feminism is full of norms, while western feminism does not abide by any type of restriction.

The biased Western media has portrayed a very negative image about Muslim woman. It is not exists in reality that woman is degraded and oppressed. The West have fabricated the Islamic norms.

“And for women are rights over men, similar to those of men over women.”

Qur'an 2:228 (15)

Islam has given maximum rights over fourteen hundred years ago, but West have recently recognized these rights. Only recently the Christian Church has recognized women right of property. All these International instruments Beijing Declaration 1995 and CEDAW (Convention regarding the Elimination of discrimination Against Women) 1979 have recently acknowledged women rights.

There is misconception about the status of women in Islam. According to various foreign NGOs and western interpretation that Islam portrays the model of patriarchal society. The right to divorce lies in the hand of husband. The man is dominant as compare to women. Most of western people object upon the issue of testimony and Law of Evidence in Islam. Islam has relegated the status that two women testimony is equal to man.

The West has misinterpreted about women inheritance that she has no equal share in property. It is not like so, because male is the bread winner and have the major share in property.

Islam is a rational religion. It has the lot of flexibility to cope up with the modern changes of the world. Islam has not put limitations upon women in present times, but rather it has really empowered women by further enhancing its honour and rights in the modern times. The woman has right to education. She can acquire both worldly and religious education. The woman has right to work and she can win bread winner to support her family in adverse circumstances. Islam is the first religion that has given women the right to inheritance.

Islam has relaxed the woman in certain matters. Although it is essential in Islam to travel with mahram. But in the present times, the Hajj Ministry has waived off this condition for woman who is above 50 years in age, that she can travel and perform hajj without mahram. The qiyas, ijma and ijthihad enabled the religion to cope up with the modern changes of the time.

The Muslim woman has all types of rights in the modern world. She has the right to work, education, child custody, divorce and inheritance etc. The woman are working as a businesswoman, lawyers, warriors, asylum granter and political proponent etc. She is an ambassador of peace.

Islam has highly condemned various social evils. The Vani (Swara), honor – killing, genital mutilation, marriage to Quran and forcible marriages are prohibited in Islam. Islam also does not like female confinement at home. Such type of practices are common in our society which are totally unislamic. There are three things which are going to determine the status of women in our society: religion, laws and customs. The people and state are not going to implement Islamic values in true spirit. The laws are not sufficient to provide security to our women because there is wider divergence between theory and practice. The customs most of them contradicts with Islamic values are determiner of woman status in our society. There is a need to transform our laws and customs according to Islamic values.

Results:

- 1- Islamic concept of women empowerment has strengthened women position in various fields of life. She can accessibility towards education, media, acquiring health facilities. Islam has really empowered woman.
- 2-There is conflict between Islamic feminism and Islamic feminism. Islamic concept of women empowerment is very comprehensive and provides security to women. Westren empowerment has cracked the culture and broken the family bondage. The girl friend culture and old homes cannot be compared to home. The child day care centre can be compared to mother role within the family.
- 3- There are multiple challenges faced to Islam in the present times, but Islam is the natural religion and can be easily be accommodated in modern circumstances. Quran is book of guidance for all ages. There is no restriction upon Muslim woman and she can participate in any walk of life.
- 4- Islam has given the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and women rights. The last address of Holy Prophet is written in golden words that Holy prophet talked about women and slave liberty.
- 5- Islam has really empowered women. The sources of empowerment are Quran, Sunnah, Qiyas and Ijma. The man and woman are pillars of the society.

Islam is a balanced religion and it provides the panacea for all social existing ills. The Quran, hadith and Sunnah fully supports women empowerment. In Quran there is a Surah Nisa, which supports women rights. Islam provides the International Human Rights Declaration 1400 years ago for mankind which is practicable in every age and all circumstances. Even UN Declaration of Human

Rights incorporated the Islamic values. The women empowerment and feminism are purely western concepts and part of foreign agenda to de-radicalise the Islamic norms and values and to seep in the European culture. Apparently the European culture is the path of freedom but it leads towards destruction. The Muslim in women is not even aware about the reality that what type of status she is enjoying in the society. The International forum has introduced these policies about women empowerment. Islamic social paradigm has laid down such an example where women got all rights which the modern world can envisage at this moment.



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