Scope of Human Rights in Islam:
An Analytical Study of Islamic Concept of Human Rights
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Abstract

Islam tends to formulate such a society of human beings in which they enjoy the reciprocal grounds of relationship among themselves. It urges upon its followers to fulfill the responsibilities they are accountable for, rather than demanding satisfaction of their rights from others. This is how a reciprocal relationship of discharging duties comes into existence. Responsibility of a person is the right of his other fellow and vice versa. All dimensions of the Islamic concept of human rights forcefully endorse the unconditional acceptance of dignity of the man which is the fundamental right of any child of ‘Adam’. Second most important aspect of the issue is the ground of the mutual relationship. Islam does not miss to emphasize that each dimension of relationship among human beings must be based on fear of Allah, the Almighty. Hence everybody is strongly connected with each other through a network that each knot of it has been knit with deep sense of realization that the individual has relations with his other fellows either to please his Lord or leaves someone on the same basis. So seeking the pleasure of Allah or having fear of His displeasure is the sole criteria that has to be observed by every human being in order to establish his associations with other fellow-beings. Personal gains and interests in this regard are so mean that ultimately cause massive damage towards human dignity which finally ends up into the deprivation of human beings from their inherent rights. This Islamic doctrine of endorsing human rights is a fundamental cure of the social disease that is caused only due to negative change in human dealings that parents petition against their children whereas the children launch complaint against their parents. So is the case of brothers, sisters and all other associates. Every one is left all alone in this type of society. Islam has got a beautiful system to address this issue by introducing reciprocal way of discharging the duties. The charter of duties of each segment of society has beautifully been described in the following hadith of the Prophet Hazrat Muhammad (PBUH): “Every one of you is responsible, and every one of you will be accountable for (his or her) domain.

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Hence the head of the state is responsible and he will be accountable, the man is guardian and will be accountable for his area of responsibility, the wife is in command to take care of her husband’s home and she will be accountable, the servant is custodian of the property of his master and will be asked about his discharge of duties. Behold! Hence each one of you is responsible, and will be answerable for (his or her) domain.”

Keywords: Islam, Holy Quran, Rights, Justice, Ihsan

Introduction
Islam is custodian of dignity and respect for human beings. It has got the dynamic spirit to safeguard the mutual rights, honour and the promotion of permanent values in human society. The topic of Human Rights is one of the most important and latest contents of the modern times’ discussions which determine the standing of any country and nation in the present world. However Islam is the only bright and brilliant civilization that embraces this concept from the day one that rises on horizon of the universe and brightens and enlightens with its shining and vibrant rays as it has been mentioned in the holy Quran: “And indeed We have honoured the Children of Adam”.

Similarly a crystal example from the early social life of the holy Prophet Hazrat Muhammad (PBUH) that in the age of 20 years only, 20 years before his Prophethood, he participated in an ‘oath ceremony’ known as ‘Half-ul-Fuzool’ in the history. This ceremony took place in the house of Abdullah Bin Judaa (PBUH) and the oath was aimed at maintaining the peace, dignity and mutual respect among the fighting elements and forces of Arabs. The issue was so significant that the holy Prophet Hazrat Muhammad (PBUH) says: “I witnessed the oath in the house of Abdullah Bin Judaan. I would not be willing to withdraw from the honour of being one of the participants of the occasion even in lieu of the heavy compensations of a flock of red camels, and If some one appeals for assistance in the name of that oath even in Islamic era, I would extend my help to him.”

The elation of the holy Prophet Hazrat Muhammad (PBUH) in regard with the oath is quite understandable if the contents of the oath are comprehended which are:
“Witness to Allah! Together we all would rise and we would keep making efforts against the suppressor till he delivers the rights to the oppressed one. This oath would not cease to exist till oceans would continue wetting the oysters and the mountains of Makkah firmly keep kissing the heavens with their lofty tops and till our economy is based on social equality.”

The spirit of the oath is to accentuate and warranty the assurance of provisions of the human rights even in the days when the world was unable to comprehend the meaning of rights. The holy Prophet Hazrat Muhammad (PBUH) picked up the forceful significance of the oath and appreciated it even when he was only 20 years old. His association with the oath is a true reflection of his 23 years long Prophetic struggle that ultimately ended up in bringing about such a revolution that safeguarded the human rights in true letters and spirits.

**Status of Human Being**

Before we come to discuss the subject under discussion, it is essential to know about the rank and stature of the man that has been bestowed upon him by Islam among other creatures. In fact the idea of human rights in Islam is based on respect, dignity and equality that he has been appointed as the vicegerent of Allah soon after the occurrence of his special creation as it has been manifested in the holy Quran: “And (remember) when your Lord said to the angels: Verily, I am going to appoint a vicegerent on the earth.”

On the creation of Adam followed by clear and loud declaration on account of his appointment as the Vicegerent of Allah, the angels were asked to prostrate before him in order to establish his significant decorum as it is stated in the holy Quran: “And (remember) when We said to the angels: Prostrate yourselves before Adam.”

This first chapter of human existence has an adequate amount of evidence to establish the superiority and supremacy of Adam to all creatures and other forces in the universe. This has been mentioned in the holy Quran as per following: “And indeed We have hounred the Children of Adam.”

In this verse the fact has been revealed that Allah (SWT) has very kindly blessed the children of Adam with ingrained nobility and dignity without referring them to mere external factor connected to the social or material stature. So every misconception of dignity based on wealth or family background has forcefully been denied in Islam. Hence every child of Adam was granted the most respectable place in the society under the
dynamic and revolutionary cover of this verse until he proves himself otherwise. So the verse has its deductions that enable the human history to qualify the following significant criteria based on social practice in human life:

No Scope for Aristocratic Approach in Islam
All human beings are from the same origin. The holy Quran testifies this theory on practical grounds as Allah addresses the mankind in the following vivacious verse: “O mankind! Be dutiful to your Lord, Who created you from a single person (Adam), and from him (Adam), He created his wife [Hawwa] (Eve).”10

No Room for Ethnic or Territorial Supremacy
Similar to the previous point, it is worthy to note that Islam does not permit any ethnic prejudice to barricade the way of provision of rights to all human beings on equal grounds. All children of Adam enjoy the rights of dignity and honour. The holy Quran says: “O mankind! We have created you from a male and female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know one another.”11

The holy Quran enlightens us that all human beings are from one male and female. So there is no question for any existence of class differences among them. As far as the differences based on family backgrounds and different segment of society are concerned, it is important only to know each other. This does not mean at all to cause differences among them. Similar and same spirit can be observed in the last sermon of the holy Prophet Hazrat Muhammad when he was addressing his noble and loyal companions. His voice was loud and clear while he said, “O mankind! Behold! indeed your Lord is one and no doubt your father is one”12

Belief in one and the only Lord and concept of one father formulate the sense of universal brotherhood and weld the entire mankind in such a strong thread of relationship which keeps them well joined to each other with harmony and unity based on belief. How pretty this slogan is to unite the mankind, the children of Adam! [It may be underlined that all Muslims are our brothers in faith; while non-Muslims are our brothers in creation] “One Lord, one father. One Lord, one father.” After few utterance of the same slogan, one must realize and enjoy the deep sense of strength of oneness of mankind and universal brotherhood. This is a dream and cherished desire of Islam to maintain and upkeep this strongly welded oneness of entire mankind on the basis of belief of oneness of Allah. The hadith reveals both spiritual and material aspects as the one Lord satisfies the belief system of the mankind
and concept of one fatherhood makes them synchronized under a strong fiber of brotherhood. The holy Quran does give importance to this point and addresses the entire mankind numerously. Sometimes with the expression of “O mankind!” and sometimes with the slogan of “O children of Adam!”

**NO Arrogance / Superiority Based on Colour / Beauty**

Similarly every child of Adam has been created good looking. No one can claim extra ordinary privileges on the basis of his view about himself that he is more beautiful than others. It is clearly mentioned in the holy Quran: “Verily We created the man in the best stature (mould)”

Same concept has been emphasized in the last sermon of the holy Prophet forcefully to deny all the standards of priority which have no involvement of human efforts and just enable them enjoy special privileges based on only born traits and features and it sets the common standards of honour and dignity which are achievable by all human beings with hard work and actions. The holy Prophet emphasized: “Behold! No Arab is superior to any non Arab, and no non Arab is superior to any Arab, neither the red is superior to the black nor black has any superiority to any red, but due to only piety”

Try to explore the brilliant point that establishes the unique standard of superiority and honour which is linked with piety. Work and hard work (actions) are the only standard to fortify the standing of any human without discrimination of gender. The holy Quran says: “And for all, there will be degrees according to that which they did, that He (Allah) may recompense them in full for their deeds. And they will not be wronged.”

One and the same standard for both man and woman has been ensured which is stated in another verse of the holy Quran: “For men there is a reward for what they have earned, and (likewise) for women there is a reward for what they have earned.”

All human beings are equal and the only difference in their ranks will be determined by virtue of their righteous deeds. And these deeds will be hung to their neck & they will be punished or rewarded on the basis of their deeds. This is the message that one easily learns from the verses mentioned above, and the message of the last sermon of the holy Prophet needs not to be emphasized in this reference.

**Employment of all Universal Resources for the Service of all Human Beings on Equal Grounds**

Above all, Allah (SWT) affirms the fact in His divine Book repeatedly that all resources of the universe have been dedicated for the service of all
human beings equally. Every body has all rights of access to reach and approach the resources available in the universe on equal basis. Allah has already made every thing available, dutiful and submissive to all without any discrimination. The only task which is left to the man is to explore the opportunities to make the things in his favour. Let us read the holy Quran in this regard: “He it is Who created for you all that is on the earth.”

Same has been repeated in the holy Quran in another fashion: “See you not (O man!) that Allah has subjected for you whatsoever is in the heavens and whatsoever is in the earth.”

One Origin of the Entire Mankind
The above mentioned points qualify man to enjoy all rights and rewards in life without any discrimination. This is how Islam successfully kills all kinds of discriminations which hinder the smooth provision or simply cause deprivation of rights to the mankind. All discriminatory possible sources to promote status oriented differences in human society, mere gender based discrimination, or the differences which often appear on ethnic grounds or generated on the basis of colour and language were strictly banned and every possible practice was eliminated and strictly proscribed. Islam has the pride to rise with its shining rays to enlighten the universe and to release the mankind from the oppressive clutches of brutal and cruel systems that deprived them from their rights. Now onwards no concept was to exist to deprive anyone from his or her rights regardless of the fact whosoever he or she is, whether male or female, rich or poor, black or white or belongs to east or west. The message was loud and clear that “All human beings are children of Adam and Adam was made from clay”.

This cancelled all self drawn outlines by the human mind to formulate the society as his will and wish. The declaration aimed at lifting up the status of the man and not to let him become slave of a man like him. Even the Prophet was not granted the license to proclaim his mastership over others. The holy Quran says: It is not (possible) for any human being to whom Allah has given the Book and Al-Hukm (the knowledge and understanding of the laws of religion) and Prophethood to say to the people: “Be my worshippers rather than Allah’s.” On the contrary (he would say): “Be ‘Rabbiyyeen’.” “When you made the people slaves, whereas their mothers had conceived them free.”

In order to support the noble cause of human liberty, the prophet hood is aimed and this one of its major goals is that the Prophet is deputed to his Ummah to liberate them from the clutches of slavery by playing his significant and vibrant role as the commissioned one by Allah. See what
the holy Quran says: “He releases them from their heavy burdens and from the fetters (bindings) that were upon them.”

In the light of the above mentioned facts, Islamic concept of human rights emerges before the reader in the glaring following bullets:

*Dignity of mankind*

The theory of human rights in fact depends to be established on provision of inherent respect to the mankind. No concept of human rights could be implemented practically until and unless the honour of human beings is determined in the general spectrum. The only privilege for any individual to enjoy superiority to his or her fellow beings is the ‘Piety’. The holy Quran does not validate any provision for any preference to be given to any one other than piety. It is expressed in the holy Quran: “Verily, the most honourable of you with Allah is that who is the most pious amongst you.”

*Equality of all Human Beings*

The obvious end result for the inherent dignity of entire mankind is social equality. Superiority and point of preference is only piety and hard work. The holy Quran has this good news for the humanity: “And for all, there will be degrees according to that which they did.”

*Liberty and freedom*

Islam broke all idols and liberated the mankind from oppression of all types of exploitations as one of the most significant and major role of the Prophethood was decided by Allah: “He releases them from their heavy burdens and from the fetters (bindings) that were upon them.”

This obviously resulted in the absolute freedom of the mankind from the bloody clutches of all other forces than the actual force and that is the real Lord: Allah.

*Brotherhood*

It is not only brotherhood that Islam promotes through its revolutionary and progressive programme, but Islam calls upon the humanity to believe in one Lord and one father belief system that converts all different colours of children of Adam submitting to one Lord and descending to one father. This belief system gathers them despite the physical distance based on geographical units. This pearls the mankind into one race thread. This is how a nation comes into being with a brilliant identity mark of ‘Brotherhood’ under the shade of the holy Quran. The holy Quran says: “The believers are nothing else than brothers.”
How beautifully this verse ties the people living in one belief system with each other through the connection that denies all kinds of differences. This forceful might of Islamic belief system has been reflected in the following hadith of the Prophet (PBUH):

“Verily the believer is like a strong building that its some part strengthens its other part.”

This hadith is enlightening us that as each and every unit of the building causes strength for the other unit by joining strongly with each other, the concept of comprehensive brotherhood emerges under the umbrella of Islamic belief system that denies every possible disparity which has even the slightest potential to damage the fabric of this brotherhood.

**Justice**

Injustice is one of the serious threats that hamper the smooth promotion of human rights in the society. How Islam could have afforded to overlook this important social aspect. Hence it urges to go to any extent for the effective execution of the provisions of Islamic system of Social Justice. Same spirit can be observed in the event of theft when a lady named ‘Fatimah’ from a respectable family was caught alleged. Allegation was proved and the Prophet (PBUH) was approached not to cut her hand. The Prophet (PBUH) got angry and uttered sentence that set an indiscriminatory pattern of the society. He said: “And by God! If Fatimah daughter of Muhammad (PBUH) had committed the theft, I would have cut her hand also.”

Why should not have happened this all episode in this fashion when the paved foundation was already laid down by the holy Quran itself. It draws our attention: “Say (O Muhammad! (PBUH): “My Lord has commanded justice.”

“And give full measure and full weight with justice.”

“Indeed, We have sent Our Messengers with clear proofs, and revealed with them the Scripture and the Balance (justice) that mankind may keep up justice.”

"O you who believe! Stand out firmly for justice, as witnesses to Allah; even though it be against yourselves, or your parents, or your kin, be he rich or poor, Allah is a Better Protector to both (than you).”

“O you who believe! Stand out firmly for for Allah as just witness, and let not the enmity and hatred of others make you avoid justice. Be just: that is nearer to piety; and fear Allah.”
No Compulsion in Deen (Freedom of Religion)
In spite of the fact that Islam rightly believes that it is the only and the latest version of divine message which has been enjoyed by Allah, and no other religion is acceptable for the solution of the entire mankind, but it does not allow its followers to exercise any authority to compel any non-Muslim to convert himself to Islam. This Quranic statement pertains to a crystal and clear stance about the subject. The holy Quran says: “There is no compulsion in religion.”

The message reflected out of this text provides a strong foundation to establish a strong structure of coexistence and tolerance in a way that no one has any license to compel anyone to be converted forcefully. This socio religio base is provided to avoid any unfortunate occurrence based on any intolerant event to hinder the provision of the fundamental right of religion in Islamic society.

Unique System of Social Justice
Keeping in view the comprehensive social justice system provided by the holy Quran and Sunnah of the holy Prophet, one can easily conclude that this is only Islam that stops all sort of discrimination and hurdle in the way of provisioning of justice. This is to ensure provision of rights to all human beings regardless of the fact that some one has got enmity against anyone, or some decision may result against one’s own interests or his relatives or parents. It is emphasized that Allah deserves more to be taken care off than all other relations and associations. It means that provision of justice to the mankind is actually to protect Allah’s respect and His rights. This concept of linking human rights with the rights of Allah Almighty and His dignity is a unique feature of Islamic practical norms that makes every follower of Islam so responsible and conscious to avoid the breaching of the Islamic identity and discipline. The holy Quran further puts emphasize to furnish this topic with His following divine orders: “Verily, Allah commands that you render back the trusts to those whom they are.”

It is further described in the holy Quran: “Verily, Allah commands justice the doing of good.”

The divine injunction to observe justice in due course of trust rendering and provision of rights to the deserving people, which is further followed by another supplementary divine ruling of doing good (Ihsan) is obvious and clear in its meanings. If justice is missing in rendering of services, this obviously means deprivation of the people of their rights. Justice (Adl) is soul of rendering of services and provision of rights. But Ihsan is essence of justice (Adl). Adl is mere provisioning of exact rights to whom they are, but doing well in this context means to do some thing more positive and constructive and to sacrifice one’s own rights for other...
fellows. This aims at evading the society from any possible venture of selfish approach and to instill such practices that every human being must preemptively initiate discharge of obligations on his part to pay the rights of others even by sacrificing his own rights.

Conclusion
One can easily learn and infer that the society based on justice (Adl), doing good (Ihsan) and reciprocal grounds of discharge of obligations and rendering of services always enjoys a peaceful life without any fear of clash of interests. Human beings in this society live under the dynamic shield of divine guidance of Allah and no one can damage this stuff and break this rope that its one side is strongly held by the believers and the other is held with Allah. Similarly the Islamic concept of human rights is factually based on eternality and sanctity. It is because this does not base on any human legislation, but this is sanctioned, approved and further provisioned by the Almighty Allah, the Sustainer and the Cherisher of all the worlds. No law of any land or legislative or constitutional forum neither can undo it nor is authorized to legislate against its spirit. The wide range of this comprehensive concept of human rights in Islam has been embodied under the dynamic and divine spirit of the last sermon of the holy Prophet where he declared these rights unable to be ceased until some one is proven guilty for dishonouring the same. He said that

“If the people keep discharging their duties, testifying the ‘Oneness of Allah’ and the ‘Prophethood of Muhammad (PBUH) keep offering the prayers and observing the fasting, the right of their lives and properties will be protected under the safe custody and guard of Islam except those who are proved otherwise to breach the discipline and dishonour the clause of protection of other’s life and property.”

Same spirit can be observed in clause 63 of Medina pact. It was stated that: “And this is a full guarantee from Allah and Muhammad (PBUH) the messenger of Allah, for provisioning of all rights to those who stand loyal and firm to the piety and good deeds.”

This guarantee and assurance of life and respect and provisioning of all human rights is absolute excluding one point and that if some one is not loyal to the Islamic state and the system being operated under its dynamic divine guidance. This theory of being loyal to the Islamic state can easily be derived from the above stated text because it not only Muhammad (PBUH) alone in person is mentioned in the clause to provide
warrantee of all rights with Allah, but it is Muhammad as the ‘Messenger of Allah’ stands with this assurance.

Hence it is proved that the way Islam stands to provision the rights of all human beings in the light of direct and divine guidance of revelation of Allah, and no system can be compared with it as there being a strong possibility of the involvement of human sentiments to protect one’s own benefits or at least favouritism.
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Muhammad Tariq Ghauri

Notes & References

2. Al-Quran, Bani Israeel, 17: 70
3. ‘Half-ul-Fuzool’: This oath took place in the month of Z-ul-Qaadah (20 years before the Prophethood) soon after the battle of Fijar which took place in the month of Shaban. This oath is famous with this name because it was executed and administered due to the untiring efforts of the three persons whose names were commonly sharing the substance of ‘FAZL’, those were: Al-Fazl Bin Fuzalah, Al-Fazl Bin Widaah and Al-Fazl Bin Qudhaah For ref pl see Ibne Hisham, Abdul Malik, As-Seerah An-Nabawiyyah, Dar-ul-Kitab il Arabi, Beirut, Lebanon.1429 Hjri/2008. p: 90/1 and see Tabari, Ibne Jareer, Imam: Tareekh-ul- Umam Wal-Mulook, p:302/2 and Hasan Ibrahim Hasan: Tareekh-ul-Islam, p:205/1.
4. Abdullah Bin Judaan Taymee: son of the paternal uncle of Hazrat Ayeshah (RA). He is famous in the history because of his generosity and hospitality. Pl. see Ibne Hisham, As-Seerah An-Nabawiyyah,p:91/1
5. ibid. This was narrated by Ibne Is-haq on authority of Hazrat Talhah Bin Abdullah, Tabee without mentioning the name of Sahabi. So this hadith is Mursal, not Marfoo.
6. ibid.
7. Al-Quran, Al-Baqarah, 2:30
8. Al-Quran, Al-Baqarah, 2:34
9. Al-Quran, Bani Israeel, 17: 70
10. Al-Quran, An-Nisa,4:1
14. Al-Quran, At-Teen,95:4
15. Ahmad Bin Hambal, ibid.
16. Al-Quran, Al-Ahqaf,46:19
17. Al-Quran, An-Nisa,4:32
18. Al-Quran, Al-Baqarah,2:29
19. Al-Quran, Luqman,31:20
20. Ibne Abi Hatim Ar-Razi, As-Siqat, p:55/2; Ibne Katheer,Ima-dud-Din, Al-Bidayah wan-Nihayah, p:301/4
Scope of Human Rights in Islam:
An Analytical Study of Islamic Concept of Human Rights
Muhammad Tariq Ghauri

22 ‘Rabbaniyyeen’ is plural of ‘Rabbani.’ This is an attributed noun towards ‘Rab’. It means those who belong to Allah.
24 Al-Quran, Al-Araf, 7:157
25 A-Quran, Al-Hujurat, 49:13
26 Al-Quran, Al-Ahqaq, 46:19
27 Al-Quran, Al-Araf, 7:157
28 Al-Quran, Al-Hujurat, 49:10
29 Bukhari, As-Saheeh, hadith No. 467, p: 182/1; Muslim Bin Al-Hajjaj Al-Qusherri, As-Saheeh, hadith No. 2585, p: 1999/4; Muhammad Bin Esa At-Tirmizee, As-Sunan, hadith No.1928, p: 325/4; Abdur Rahman An-Nisai, As-Sunan, hadith No. 2560, p: 79/5
30 Bukhari, As-Saheeh, hadith No. 3288, p: 1882/3; Muslim As-Saheeh, hadith No. 1688, p: 1315/3; At-Tirmizee, As-Sunan, hadith No.1430, p: 37/4
31 Al-Quran, Al-Araf, 7: 29
32 Al-Quran, Al-Qurani, 6:152
33 Al-Quran, Al-Hadeed, 57:25
34 Al-Quran, An-Nisa, 4:135
35 Al-Quran, Al-Maidah, 5:8
36 Al-Quran, Al-Baqarah, 2:256
37 Al-Quran, An-Nisa, 4:58
38 Al-Quran, An-Nahl, 16:90
40 Ibid, p:135/4
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