



“Patriarchy And Religion: The Exploitation Of Women”

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Abstract

This study intends to frame a picture of various kinds of discriminatory attitudes women face in different religious contexts which are by no means homogeneous and monolithic and those happen due to the traditional supremacy of men in all walks of life as well as in religion. Women are always discarded from performing dominant religious roles while all the rigid religious rules and restrictions are reserved for them. Since birth to death, in times of peace or war, women get subjugated at the hand of patriarchy and the patriarchal use of religion. modern times due to change in family structure and gender roles women especially in nuclear families also handles the financial tensions and managerial work and there remains a little room for performing those rituals. Still they keep maintaining those codes and disciplines without making questions. The socialization of women restricts them from questioning. They are taught be passive, subordinate and tolerant. They are often forced to choose between safety and their religious community and tradition. Religion can play a significant role in shaping the character and beliefs of individuals and communities.

KEYWORDS: Patriarchy, Religion, women, Exploitation, gender discrimination

INTRODUCTION:

The topic of patriarchy and its relationship with religion is complex and multifaceted. While it is important to recognize that not all religions perpetuate the exploitation of women, it is true that many societies influenced by patriarchal systems have used religious beliefs and institutions to justify and enforce gender inequalities. Patriarchy refers to a social system in which men hold primary power and authority, dominating various aspects of society, including political, economic, and cultural spheres. This power dynamic often leads to the subordination and marginalization of women. Religion, on the other hand, encompasses diverse belief systems, teachings, and practices that guide the spiritual and moral lives of individuals and communities. Historically, patriarchal societies have used religious interpretations and doctrines to legitimize the subjugation of women. Some religious texts have been interpreted in ways that reinforce gender hierarchies,

portraying women as subordinate to men and assigning them limited roles and rights. Such interpretations have been employed to justify practices like gender-based violence, restricted access to education and employment, forced marriages, and restrictions on reproductive rights.

However, it is essential to note that many religious traditions also promote equality, justice, and respect for women. Throughout history, women have played significant roles within religious contexts, as spiritual leaders, mystics, scholars, and activists. Many religious texts contain messages of empowerment and dignity for women, advocating for their rights and well-being.

In contemporary times, there are ongoing efforts within various religious communities to challenge and address patriarchal structures. Many religious feminists and progressive thinkers advocate for gender equality, reinterpretation of sacred texts, and the recognition of women's leadership in religious institutions. These movements seek to reclaim religious spaces and challenge the exploitative practices that have historically marginalized women.

It is important to approach the topic of patriarchy and religion with nuance, recognizing the diversity of religious beliefs and practices. While there have been instances where religion has been used to exploit women, it is crucial to distinguish between the systemic issues of patriarchy and the potential for positive change within religious frameworks it is important to recognize that this perspective is subjective and does not reflect the experiences and beliefs of everyone. Religion is a deeply personal and individual aspect of human life that can be significant to people of all genders.

Religion plays a crucial role in the lives of many individuals, providing them with a framework for understanding the world, a sense of purpose, moral guidance, and a source of community and support. This holds true for both men and women, as religious beliefs and practices are not limited to any particular gender. Throughout history, women have actively participated in religious activities and have held important roles within religious institutions and communities. They have been spiritual leaders, theologians, mystics, and practitioners. Many women find inspiration, solace, and empowerment through their religious faith and engage deeply with religious teachings and practices.

It is essential to recognize and respect the diverse ways in which individuals, regardless of gender, engage with and find meaning in their religious beliefs. Assuming that religion is fundamental only to men overlooks the experiences and perspectives of countless women who find deep significance and value in their religious lives.

Ultimately, the role and significance of religion are subjective and can vary greatly among individuals. It is important to approach this topic with openness and respect for the diversity of beliefs and experiences that exist within different religious and cultural contexts.

some religious teachings have been interpreted and used to justify the belief in women's inferiority and the enforcement of strict gender roles within households. These teachings often find expression in what are known as "household codes" or instructions for behaviour within families.

Household codes can be found in various religious texts and typically outline specific roles and responsibilities for different family members, including husbands, wives, and children. In some instances, these codes have been used to reinforce patriarchal norms and emphasize the subordination of women to men. They may prescribe women's obedience, submission, and domestic responsibilities, while elevating male authority and decision-making power.

However, it is crucial to understand that these teachings and codes do not represent the entirety of religious beliefs and interpretations. Religion is a complex and diverse phenomenon, and there are many different religious traditions that hold varying views on gender and equality.

It is also important to recognize that religious teachings and interpretations are not static. Over time, societies and religious communities have evolved, leading to the re-examination and reinterpretation of religious texts. Many religious scholars and communities have engaged in the process of critically examining these traditional teachings and codes, seeking to challenge and transcend the aspects that promote inequality and oppression. There are religious feminists, theologians, and activists who have worked to promote gender equality within religious frameworks. They engage in scriptural reinterpretation, highlighting inclusive and egalitarian elements of religious texts and challenging harmful interpretations. These efforts aim to foster more equitable relationships between men and women and create spaces within religious communities where women can fully exercise their rights and talents.

It is important to approach discussions about traditional teachings and household codes with sensitivity and nuance, recognizing the diversity of religious beliefs and interpretations. While some interpretations have perpetuated women's inferiority and reinforced patriarchal norms, there are ongoing efforts within religious communities to challenge these views and promote gender equality.

Results and Discussion

The issue of patriarchal language within religious traditions is an important aspect of the broader discussion on how religion can perpetuate gender inequality. One aspect of this is the predominant use of male language to refer to the divine or God in many religious texts and practices. The use of male language for God can contribute to the reinforcement of patriarchal norms and the marginalization of women within religious contexts. It can create an implicit association of power and authority with masculinity, while undermining the visibility and significance of women's experiences and contributions.

This issue has been raised by many feminist theologians and activists who argue for more inclusive and gender-neutral language when speaking about the divine. They emphasize the importance of using diverse metaphors and names for God that encompass a broader understanding of the divine and reflect the experiences and perspectives of both men and women.

It is worth noting that there are religious traditions and communities that have embraced inclusive language and have sought to address this concern. They have explored alternative ways of referring to the divine, incorporating feminine imagery and metaphors alongside traditional male language. These efforts aim to challenge patriarchal assumptions and create a more inclusive religious language that recognizes the full humanity and dignity of all individuals. However, it is important to acknowledge that changing religious language is a complex and ongoing process, as it often involves deeply rooted traditions, theological

considerations, and diverse interpretations within religious communities. Not all religious traditions have embraced inclusive language to the same extent, and there are varying perspectives on how best to address this issue within different religious contexts.

The preponderant use of male language for God within patriarchal religious traditions can contribute to the marginalization of women and reinforce gender inequalities. Addressing this issue requires ongoing dialogue, reflection, and a commitment to inclusivity within religious communities. By embracing diverse language and metaphors, it is possible to challenge patriarchal norms and create spaces that affirm the dignity and equality of all individuals, regardless of gender.

Nawal El Saadawi, an Egyptian feminist and writer, is known for her critical views on patriarchal systems, including religious institutions. While acknowledging the role of religion in perpetuating gender inequality, she argues that religions themselves are not the direct cause of women's exploitation and oppression.

El Saadawi contends that religious texts can be interpreted and reinterpreted in various ways, and that it is the patriarchal interpretations and practices within religious systems that have led to the subjugation of women. She suggests that the problem lies in the patriarchal interpretations of religious teachings rather than the religions themselves.

According to **El Saadawi**, the root cause of women's oppression lies in patriarchal power structures and societal norms that are then reinforced or justified by certain interpretations of religious texts. She believes that religions have been used as tools of control and domination by patriarchal systems, rather than inherently oppressive in and of themselves.

El Saadawi advocates for a reinterpretation of religious texts and practices through a feminist lens, seeking to challenge and dismantle the patriarchal interpretations and traditions that perpetuate gender inequality. She emphasizes the need for critical engagement with religious teachings and the importance of separating the core spiritual and ethical principles from the patriarchal layers that have been added over time.

By advocating for a more inclusive and egalitarian understanding of religion, **El Saadawi** aims to liberate women from oppressive practices and beliefs, promoting gender equality and social justice. It is important to note that while **El Saadawi's** views provide valuable insights, they are not the only perspective within feminist discourse on religion. Feminist perspectives on the role of religion and its connection to women's exploitation and oppression can vary, and there is ongoing debate and dialogue within feminist movements on these complex issues.

FEMINIST VIEW ON THE ROLE OF RELIGION

Karen Armstrong, in her book "A History of God" published in 1993, explores the historical development of monotheistic religions, such as Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. While her work does not explicitly focus on gender issues, it provides insights into the evolution of religious thought and its impact on societies. Armstrong argues that the development of monotheistic religions brought about significant changes in human understanding of the divine and the concept of God. She suggests that these religious traditions initially emerged as responses to societal and cultural transformations, offering new ways of understanding the divine and the human relationship with the sacred. According to Armstrong, monotheistic religions sought to emphasize the unity and transcendence of God, as opposed to the polytheistic beliefs prevalent in many

ancient societies. This shift, she argues, had profound implications for social structures, morality, and ethics. While Armstrong's work does not explicitly delve into the specific impact on gender dynamics within these monotheistic religions, it provides a historical framework for understanding the broader development of religious thought. It is important to note that discussions of gender issues within religious contexts require a more nuanced analysis, considering the diverse interpretations and practices that have evolved within each religious tradition. Scholars and feminists have since engaged in further analysis and critique of gender dynamics within monotheistic religions, exploring how patriarchal interpretations and power structures have impacted women's roles, rights, and status within religious communities. These discussions often consider the historical and cultural contexts in which these religions emerged and developed, as well as the potential for reinterpretation and feminist engagement within religious traditions. While **Armstrong's** work offers valuable insights into the historical development of monotheistic religions, it is essential to engage with a wide range of scholarly perspectives and feminist analyses to gain a comprehensive understanding of the complex relationship between religion, gender, and social dynamics. **Linda Woodhead**, a sociologist of religion, indeed argues that religion is not inherently sexist or patriarchal. She explores the concept of "**religious feminism**" and highlights examples of feminist movements within religious contexts.

Woodhead suggests that there are diverse ways in which religious traditions and practices can be interpreted and lived out, and that some individuals and groups within religious communities engage in feminist reinterpretations of their faith. These religious feminists work to challenge and transform patriarchal structures and beliefs within their religious traditions, seeking to promote gender equality and justice.

Woodhead emphasizes the importance of recognizing the agency of women within religious contexts, as they actively shape and reinterpret religious teachings to challenge discriminatory practices. She argues that there is a potential for religious traditions to provide resources and frameworks for feminist activism and empowerment.

By acknowledging the existence of religious feminism, **Woodhead** encourages a nuanced understanding that recognizes the diverse ways in which women navigate their faith and work towards gender equality. She calls for a more inclusive conversation that values the contributions of religious feminists and their efforts to challenge patriarchal norms within religious communities.

It is worth noting that **Woodhead's** perspective does not negate the critique of patriarchal elements within religious traditions or the experiences of women who have faced discrimination within religious contexts. Rather, it seeks to highlight the agency and transformative potential of religious feminism.

As with any scholarly perspective, there are debates and varying opinions within feminist scholarship on the role of religion and its relationship to gender equality. **Woodhead's** ideas contribute to the ongoing dialogue within feminist discourse about the intersection of religion, feminism, and social change.

Simone de Beauvoir, a prominent feminist philosopher and author of "**The Second Sex**," would indeed argue that the ideological messages being promoted within society, including religious and cultural norms, often target women as the intended audience. **De Beauvoir's** work extensively explores the social construction of gender and the ways in which women have been historically positioned as the "Other" in relation to men.

According to **De Beauvoir**, women have been assigned a subordinate role in patriarchal societies, and this subordination is reinforced through various means, including the dissemination of ideological messages. She

argues that women are socialized to internalize and accept their subordinate position, which can be perpetuated through religious teachings, cultural traditions, and societal expectations.

De Beauvoir critiques the notion of womanhood as a secondary and defined category in relation to men, challenging the idea that women are the passive recipients of ideological messages. She argues that women must actively engage in a process of self-reflection and liberation to transcend societal limitations and achieve true equality.

In the context of religion, **De Beauvoir** would likely analyse how religious teachings and practices have contributed to the subjugation of women. She would examine the ways in which religious institutions and doctrines reinforce gender norms and uphold patriarchal power structures.

De Beauvoir's analysis would highlight the importance of women critically questioning and challenging the ideological messages they receive, including those propagated by religious institutions. She would encourage women to assert their agency, question traditional gender roles, and work towards dismantling systems of oppression that limit their freedom and autonomy. It is important to note that **De Beauvoir's** views represent one perspective within feminist theory and should be considered in conjunction with other feminist analyses that examine the complex intersections of gender, power, and religion

Feminist views on the role of religion are diverse and varied, as feminism encompasses a broad range of perspectives and approaches. It is important to note that not all feminists hold the same views on religion, and there is a wide spectrum of beliefs and interpretations within feminist thought. Some feminists critique religious institutions and teachings for perpetuating patriarchal power structures and reinforcing gender inequality. They argue that certain religious doctrines, interpretations, and practices have historically marginalized and oppressed women, limiting their autonomy, agency, and access to positions of leadership and influence.

These feminists may challenge traditional gender roles prescribed by religious institutions, which often place women in subordinate positions and restrict their access to decision-making and religious authority. They may also critique the use of religious texts to justify discriminatory practices, such as the subjugation of women, gender-based violence, or restrictions on reproductive rights and sexual autonomy.

At the same time, other feminists find empowerment, inspiration, and support within religious traditions. They may reinterpret religious texts and teachings through a feminist lens, seeking to reclaim and reinterpret aspects of their faith that affirm gender equality, social justice, and the dignity of all individuals.

These feminists often advocate for religious reform, working within their faith communities to challenge discriminatory practices and promote inclusivity and gender equality. They may also highlight the historical and contemporary contributions of women within religious contexts, emphasizing their leadership, spiritual insights, and activism.

These are just a few examples of the diverse feminist perspectives and approaches that exist. Feminism is a dynamic and evolving movement that continues to expand and incorporate new ideas and perspectives. While there may be differences among feminists in terms of their priorities, strategies, and theoretical frameworks, they share a commitment to challenging gender-based oppression and striving for equality and justice for all genders.

TEN HARMFUL BELIEFS THAT CAUSE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

1. Women must be submissive to male and his family members in all aspects of her life

It is important to approach this statement with critical thinking and consider the diverse range of perspectives and beliefs that exist regarding gender roles and relationships. While some individuals may hold the belief that women should be submissive to male family members, it is crucial to recognize that this perspective is not universally held, and it does not reflect the experiences and beliefs of all people.

It is essential to promote gender equality and respect the autonomy and agency of all individuals, regardless of their gender. Many societies and cultures have made significant progress in challenging traditional gender roles and advocating for the empowerment and equal rights of women. These efforts recognize the value of mutual respect, shared decision-making, and the importance of consent and agency within relationships.

It is also worth noting that different religious and cultural traditions have diverse interpretations and teachings regarding gender roles and relationships. While some may emphasize traditional gender norms and submission, others advocate for egalitarian values, respect, and partnership within families and communities. Promoting gender equality requires ongoing dialogue, education, and challenging harmful stereotypes and beliefs. It is crucial to create inclusive and supportive environments where all individuals, regardless of their gender, can thrive, express their opinions, and make choices that align with their own values and aspirations. Ultimately, the pursuit of gender equality and the recognition of individual agency and autonomy are essential for creating just and inclusive societies

2. Men are expected to exercise coercive control

Coercive control is a form of domestic abuse and a violation of human rights. It is important to recognize that coercive control is not an expectation or an acceptable behaviour for any individual, regardless of their gender. Coercive control involves patterns of abusive behaviours that are used to gain power and control over another person. It can include tactics such as intimidation, isolation, financial control, emotional manipulation, and physical or sexual abuse. Coercive control is a serious issue that can have severe and long-lasting impacts on the well-being and autonomy of the person being controlled.

It is essential to challenge and address coercive control in all its forms, regardless of the gender of the perpetrator or the victim. Both men and women can be victims of coercive control, and both men and women can perpetrate it. It is crucial to promote healthy, respectful, and equal relationships where all individuals are able to exercise their agency and live free from abuse and control.

Efforts to combat coercive control should involve education, awareness-raising, and the implementation of laws and policies that protect individuals from abusive behaviours. It is important to support victims, provide them with resources and support networks, and hold perpetrators accountable for their actions.

Creating a society that rejects coercive control and promotes equality and respect requires collective efforts, including individuals, communities, and institutions working together to address and prevent all forms of abuse and violence whilst women and girls are anticipated to be submissive, men are predicted to exercise strength and manage of their households and relationships, that can show up in various approaches. In courting relationships, male dominance can seem inside the form of monitoring cell phones and social media

3. Men have the right to discipline women for ‘improper’ behaviour

In modern societies that promote gender equality and human rights, the concept of one gender having the right to discipline another based on behaviour is generally considered discriminatory and inconsistent with principles of equality and respect. The notion of disciplining someone based on their gender is rooted in traditional and patriarchal views that have been widely challenged and critiqued. In societies that prioritize equality and respect, individuals are considered autonomous beings with their own rights and responsibilities, regardless of their gender. The idea that one gender should have authority over the other for disciplinary purposes is seen as a violation of individual rights and promotes unequal power dynamics.

It's important to recognize that every person, regardless of gender, should be treated with dignity, respect, and fairness. Promoting mutual understanding, open communication, and nonviolent conflict resolution are generally considered more constructive approaches to addressing any behavioural issues or conflicts that may arise between individuals, regardless of their gender. It's crucial to foster a society where individuals are treated equally and where the rights and dignity of all members are protected

4. Women cannot say no to their male partner sex

It is crucial to challenge and reject any belief or notion that suggests a person, especially within a marital or intimate relationship, cannot deny or withhold consent for sexual activity. All individuals have the right to make decisions about their own bodies, including their sexual choices and boundaries. Sexual autonomy and agency are essential aspects of personal well-being and human rights. It is important to promote open communication, mutual respect, and the recognition of each person's autonomy and boundaries within intimate relationships. Consent should always be sought and respected, and any sexual activity should be based on clear and enthusiastic agreement from all parties involved.

It is worth noting that consent is not just a matter of gender but applies to all individuals, regardless of their sex or gender identity. Consent is a shared responsibility, and everyone has a role to play in promoting and upholding the principles of enthusiastic and affirmative consent.

Educating individuals about healthy relationships, consent, and respect is crucial in combating harmful beliefs and practices. It is important to foster environments where open dialogue, communication, and mutual respect are valued, ensuring that everyone can make choices about their own bodies and sexual experiences. In intimate relationships, girl's and women's alternatives over their bodies are dominated and controlled with the aid of their male partners and the notion that girls's our bodies have to constantly be to be had to men. Those norms make contributions to intimate partner rape and different sorts of abuse, which are the most not unusual shape of violence in opposition to women and girls

5. Sexual harassment

Dominant patterns around male sexual entitlement over women's bodies contribute to sexual harassment and other forms of sexual violence. the connection between dominant patterns of male sexual entitlement and the prevalence of sexual harassment. Sexual harassment is a form of gender-based violence and a violation of human rights, which encompasses unwanted sexual advances, comments, or actions that create a hostile or intimidating environment.

The belief in male sexual entitlement can perpetuate power imbalances and reinforce harmful gender norms. When individuals feel entitled to the bodies and autonomy of others, it can lead to a lack of respect for boundaries, consent, and personal agency. This can manifest in various forms of sexual harassment, including verbal harassment, unwanted touching, stalking, or other forms of non-consensual behaviour.

Addressing sexual harassment requires challenging and dismantling the underlying structures and beliefs that contribute to it. This includes promoting gender equality, consent education, and fostering a culture of respect, where all individuals are treated with dignity and their autonomy is valued.

Efforts to combat sexual harassment involve creating safe spaces, implementing policies and legal frameworks that protect individuals, and holding perpetrators accountable for their actions. It also requires promoting bystander intervention, where individuals actively intervene and support those who may be experiencing or at risk of sexual harassment.

Furthermore, promoting comprehensive sex education, challenging harmful stereotypes and attitudes, and promoting healthy notions of consent, boundaries, and communication are crucial in addressing the root causes of sexual harassment. By addressing male sexual entitlement, promoting gender equality, and fostering a culture of respect and consent, we can work towards creating a society where all individuals can live free from the fear and experience of sexual harassment.

6. Women experience violence because they are dressed ‘provocatively’

It is important to emphasize that victim-blaming, including the notion that women experience violence because of how they dress, is not supported by evidence or valid reasoning. This perspective places the responsibility for the actions of perpetrators onto the victims and perpetuates harmful stereotypes and attitudes.

Violence against women is a complex issue rooted in power imbalances, gender inequality, and the belief in male entitlement and control. It is not caused by the clothing choices of women. People of all genders have the right to dress as they please without fear of violence or harassment.

Attributing violence to provocative clothing perpetuates a harmful narrative that places the burden of preventing violence on potential victims, rather than addressing the attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours of those who perpetrate violence. This mindset distracts from the real issue at hand, which is the need to challenge and change societal norms that tolerate and enable violence.

Addressing violence against women requires comprehensive approaches that focus on promoting gender equality, challenging harmful gender stereotypes, and educating individuals about consent, respect, and healthy relationships. It also involves implementing effective legal measures to hold perpetrators accountable and providing support and resources to survivors.

It is important to shift the narrative from victim-blaming to promoting a culture of consent, respect, and shared responsibility. By doing so, we can work towards creating a society where all individuals are free from violence and discrimination, regardless of their clothing choices or any other aspect of their appearance or identity

7. All women should become mothers

Violence against women and girls is rooted in the patriarchal power imbalance between men and women, and in the dominant belief that men protect and provide for and have authority over their family and good women prioritise their family's health and wellbeing. After marriage, women's most important roles are to serve their husbands and to have and to raise their children.

8. Girls are valued as wives not as individuals

The social expectation that girls are primarily valued as wives rather than as individuals is a harmful and limiting perspective that perpetuates gender inequality. It undermines the inherent worth and agency of girls and women, reducing them to societal roles and expectations instead of recognizing their diverse talents, aspirations, and contributions.

It is essential to challenge and reject these societal expectations and promote the value of girls and women as individuals with their own rights, dreams, and abilities. Every person, regardless of their gender, deserves to be respected, valued, and treated as an individual with their own unique qualities and potential.

Promoting gender equality involves creating inclusive environments that empower girls and women to pursue their interests, education, careers, and personal aspirations. It means challenging stereotypes, biases, and discriminatory practices that limit the opportunities and choices available to them.

Education plays a critical role in breaking down these social expectations and empowering girls to realize their full potential. By providing access to quality education, promoting positive role models, and fostering environments that encourage critical thinking and self-determination, we can help shift societal norms and expectations.

Additionally, it is crucial to promote inclusive and equitable policies and laws that protect and empower girls and women, ensuring equal access to opportunities, healthcare, and decision-making power. This includes challenging harmful practices such as child marriage and promoting reproductive rights, among others.

By valuing girls and women as individuals, society can benefit from their unique talents, perspectives, and contributions. It is through embracing gender equality and promoting the rights and dignity of all individuals, regardless of their gender, that we can build a more just and inclusive world.

9. Heterosexuality is the only sexual orientation that is acceptable.

It is important to acknowledge that discrimination based on sexual orientation exists and can take various forms, including societal biases and prejudices against individuals who identify as non-heterosexual. This discrimination can manifest in different ways, such as social stigma, exclusion, unequal treatment, or even violence.

The notion that heterosexuality is the only acceptable sexual orientation is an example of heteronormativity, which is the assumption that heterosexuality is the default and normative sexual orientation. This perspective can marginalize and invalidate the experiences of individuals who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or any other non-heterosexual orientation.

It is crucial to challenge heteronormativity and promote inclusivity and acceptance of diverse sexual orientations. Recognizing and respecting the rights and dignity of all individuals, regardless of their sexual orientation, is fundamental to fostering a society that values equality and human rights.

Promoting acceptance and understanding involves education, raising awareness, and combating stereotypes and misconceptions. It also includes advocating for legal protections against discrimination based on sexual orientation and creating safe and inclusive spaces where individuals can express their sexual orientation without fear of discrimination or prejudice.

Efforts to combat discrimination based on sexual orientation require collaboration, empathy, and the recognition that diversity in sexual orientations enriches our society. By promoting acceptance, respect, and equality for all individuals, regardless of their sexual orientation, we can work towards creating a more inclusive and equitable world

10. Divorced women have less value

Divorced women and widows face particular forms of violence because of discriminatory beliefs around the roles and value of women.

In Papua New Guinea, the research highlighted the marginalization of divorced women and widows, who are seen as having less value – since they do not have the monetary value of bride price anymore. Furthermore, they are considered to be property of the family in law who paid for them in the first place. Therefore, they are not respected in their families and often not protected against violence.

It is disheartening to acknowledge that in some societies, divorced women may face discrimination and societal biases that devalue or stigmatize them. This discrimination is rooted in cultural norms, patriarchal attitudes, and gender inequality that can persist in various parts of the world.

Divorced women, like anyone else, deserve to be treated with dignity, respect, and fairness. Their worth and value as individuals should not be determined by their marital status or past relationships. Divorce is a personal decision that can arise from a variety of circumstances, and it should not be used to judge or diminish a person's worth.

Challenging societal discrimination against divorced women requires efforts to promote gender equality, challenge harmful stereotypes, and educate communities about the importance of empathy, understanding, and support. It involves advocating for legal and policy reforms that protect the rights and well-being of divorced women, including access to resources, financial support, and legal protections.

Creating inclusive spaces and support networks for divorced women can also contribute to their empowerment and help challenge the discriminatory attitudes they may encounter. By promoting a culture that values the agency, autonomy, and well-being of all individuals, regardless of their marital status, we can work towards a more equitable and just society.

It is important for individuals and communities to recognize the value and potential of divorced women, support their journey towards self-fulfillment, and contribute to a society where everyone is treated with dignity and fairness, irrespective of their marital history

Conclusion:

For many people, religious beliefs provide a framework for understanding the world, guiding ethical decisions, and influencing their behaviour and values. Religious teachings often encompass moral and ethical principles, offering guidance on how to live a virtuous and purposeful life. These teachings can shape individuals' perspectives on issues such as compassion, justice, forgiveness, honesty, and kindness, influencing their character development.

Moreover, religious communities can provide a sense of belonging, social support, and opportunities for moral and spiritual growth. Participation in religious rituals, prayer, meditation, and engagement with religious texts can shape individuals' worldview and foster a sense of meaning and purpose in their lives. However, it is important to recognize that the impact of religion on character and behaviour varies widely among individuals and communities. People interpret religious teachings differently, and their personal experiences and cultural contexts also influence their understanding and application of religious principles.

Additionally, individuals can hold different religious or philosophical beliefs, or may not adhere to any particular religion, yet still demonstrate strong moral character and ethical behaviour. Moral development and character formation can be influenced by a variety of factors, including cultural norms, education, family values, and personal experiences.

It is also worth noting that religion, like any human institution, is not immune to flaws or contradictions. While religion can inspire positive character traits, it can also be misinterpreted or misused to justify harmful actions or reinforce discriminatory attitudes. Critical thinking and a discerning approach are necessary to navigate the complexities and potential impacts of religious teachings on character development. Ultimately, the influence of religion on an individual's character is a complex and multifaceted topic, and its impact can vary greatly among different individuals and contexts. Ultimately, progress towards gender equality requires ongoing dialogue, education, and collective efforts from individuals, communities, religious leaders, and policymakers to challenge patriarchal norms, promote women's rights, and ensure equal opportunities for all. The exploitation of women within patriarchal systems and religious contexts has been a longstanding issue that has been documented and discussed extensively. It is important to recognize that these issues are not inherent to all religions or religious practices, but they can arise within certain cultural, historical, and social contexts.

Patriarchy, as a social system, often reinforces and perpetuates gender inequalities, leading to the exploitation of women. Women may face various forms of exploitation, including but not limited to: **Economic exploitation, Sexual exploitation, Reproductive exploitation, Domestic violence.**

However, it is crucial to avoid generalizing and assuming that all religions or religious practitioners perpetuate the exploitation of women. Many religious communities and individuals actively work to challenge patriarchal norms and advocate for gender equality, using their religious teachings and values as a basis for justice, compassion, and equal rights.

Efforts to address the exploitation of women within patriarchal systems and religious contexts involve a combination of legal reforms, education, awareness-raising, and challenging deeply ingrained cultural and social norms. It requires collaboration between governments, civil society organizations, religious leaders,

and individuals to promote gender equality, empower women, and ensure their rights and dignity are protected.

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