

GENDER AND RELIGION

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Abstract

The present paper attempts to analyse the complex relationship between culture, religion, and Feminism. It assesses how both organised religions, and personal spiritual convictions can shape, challenge, and potentially transform gender relations. The subtle patterns and dynamic of gender pervade all areas of religion, both explicitly and implicitly, whether fully recognized or unacknowledged. Religious ideologies influence gender role attitudes.

INTRODUCTION

Gender is central to most religious orders. Religion can have a contradictory status in women's lives. Women's position within societies is regulated by religious institutions at the family and community levels. As gender hierarchical attitudes are a reflection of power relations in a society, they need to be researched on. Most human religions, from tribal to world religions, have treated woman's body, in its gender-specific sexual functions. Studies in this vein explore the ways that women's and men's roles are constrained and shaped by religious practice. Gender is a social construct. It is an aspect of identity that is gradually acquired through the process of socialisation. Traditional gender stereotypes characterise men as rational and self-controlled, and women as weak and emotional. Women are more likely to self-report as being religious.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study of gender and religion explores the ways that religious practice influences male and female behaviour. Recent studies analyse the ways that gender itself structures religious and spiritual ethics and practice. Diverse religions display a variety of gendered systems. Religion – particularly traditional, established religions – expects compliance, conformity. Men are socialised to be more dominant. The present study explores how gender roles are associated with religion. It examines how religion and gender interlink in India.

Patriarchy

Patriarchy is central to the religions. Religious ideologies are usually produced by other social factors like historic conditions. The ethnographic record demonstrates that there is often a significant difference between how patriarchal gender relations are prioritized in formal religious spaces and how they are practiced. Women traditionally having been marginalised in domestic roles gave them more time to devote to religion. Men and women are socialised differently and women are socialised to be more compliant and passive. The religious institutions, shaping religious ideology, could be said to reflect patriarchal values, then it could be argued that males benefit from the system at the disadvantage of females. Strong religious ideology is cast as being related to traditional gender role attitudes. Women experience more deprivation – material, spiritual and relative – than men, because of patriarchy. Religion continues to influence the realms of marriage and family- thus taking over a large space in the private life of individuals. The role of a woman is often defined in religious scriptures on their capacity for motherhood.

Gender and participation in religion

A traditional view is that women's expressive role nurturing and caring is a good match with religious faith. Women are more likely to self-report as being religious. Raising children in their religion and taking them to religious places was seen as part of that role. Women's proximity to childbirth, childrearing, caring for the sick and caring for the elderly all, it is suggested, gives them reason to pray and seek spiritual support. Women are more get involved in religious sects. In recent times men have drifted away from the main established religions. Some New Age beliefs are consciously and deliberately female-orientated. Gender and religion are not separate, and neither is feminism and gender. These institutions and movements continue to retain their complex intersections, without assuming the precedence of one over the other.

Religious spaces

As religion becomes more a private matter than a public one, it appeals more to women, particularly women who perform a domestic role and look after children. Religion influences the social construction of gender role attitudes. Some sects are very male-dominated and can have quite extreme and conservative views about the

role of women in society. Woman's life- choices, wishes and decisions are informed by "culture and tradition". Practices, and social institutions could be simultaneously sites of oppression and empowerment and resistance. The institutions of family, religion, and gender in a bidirectional interaction that can be mutually reinforcing and/or contradictory. Although religious ideology may help support the psycho-emotional wellbeing of individuals, they may also inculcate gender inequitable norms.

Interrelation between Gender and religion

In recent times there has been greater or revival of interest in the study of the place of women in the religions. There has been increasing publications on the perceptions of religion on women and even vice versa. Male and female scholars have interestingly shown efforts to understand the increasing interest of the female scholars in the arena of spirituality. The expansion of education among the women have contributed to these discussions. UN Women has also set its agenda on these lines.

CONCLUSION

Religions have a significant impact on gendered relations. Religion, influence social stratification through gender role ideology. Widely debated and often misunderstood, gender concerns have immense significance. The social influence of the religions is a complicated arena. The study of gender and religion can and needs to be explored. Scholarly works on gender and religion analyse gender as a social category; and understand how gender is produced, reproduced, taught and negotiated, and transformed in accordance with religious sanctions. While religion is often understood to be conservative and restrictive of the individual—especially women's in regards with agency, it is important to note that religion too is shaped by gender logics, where norms are articulated, negotiated, and subverted. One can state that gender and religion remain intimately intertwined with one another, Religious ideology and gender role attitudes are deeply intertwined and interdependent institutions.

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3. https://jilifc.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Religion_and_Gender_Equality_UNWOMEN.pdf accessed on 7
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