

ABORTION: COMMON SENSE AGAINST SOCIAL MORALS

REHA BHARGAV

Maharishi Dayanand University

Abstract

Abortion remains one of the most contentious ethical, social, and legal issues globally, marked by a persistent conflict between individual autonomy and socially entrenched moral codes. Central to the debate is the struggle between a woman's right to make decisions about her reproductive health and the restrictive influences of cultural, religious, and societal norms. While medical science and ethical pragmatism often support a woman's right to choose, deeply rooted moral doctrines continue to stigmatize and limit this freedom. This paper critically examines the tension between common-sense reasoning, public health considerations, and the moral constraints imposed by society. It highlights how, despite scientific advancements and growing advocacy for reproductive rights, many women remain caught between personal necessity and collective moral judgment. Through this analysis, the article seeks to shed light on the urgent need for a more rational, rights-based approach to abortion discourse.

Introduction

Abortion has long been one of the most polarizing ethical, social, and legal issues across the globe. At the heart of the debate lies a persistent conflict between individual autonomy—particularly women's reproductive rights—and entrenched social or religious moral codes. While common sense and medical science often advocate for a woman's right to choose, societal norms, cultural taboos, and moral doctrines frequently act as roadblocks. At its core, the debate pits **common sense, health, and personal choice** against **traditional, religious, and moral codes** that often restrict women's autonomy. While scientific reasoning and ethical pragmatism argue for a woman's right to choose, many societies continue to view abortion as morally unacceptable, regardless of circumstances. This conflict creates a harsh reality where medical necessity and personal freedom are constrained by social judgment. This article explores the tension between what is rational and necessary from a common-sense standpoint and what is dictated by social morality.

Historical Background

Historically, abortion has not always been viewed as immoral or illegal. In many ancient societies, such as Greece and Rome, abortion was accepted as a method of controlling family size. Hippocrates' oath, often cited by anti-abortion advocates, originally referred more to surgical risks than moral objections.

However, with the rise of organized religion, especially Christianity and Islam, the perception of abortion shifted significantly. Abortion began to be considered sinful, a violation of divine will. Colonial and modern laws, particularly in Western nations, began criminalizing abortion, reflecting religious morality rather than medical necessity.

This legacy continues to influence legal systems and social attitudes today, with many countries retaining laws based on outdated moral frameworks rather than current scientific understanding or human rights.

Common Sense: The Rational Case for Abortion Rights

1. Bodily Autonomy and Individual Freedom- At the core of pro-choice advocacy is the concept of bodily autonomy—a fundamental human right. Common sense dictates that individuals should have authority over their bodies. Forcing someone to carry a pregnancy against their will is a violation of this autonomy and reduces women to vessels rather than independent beings. In a liberal democracy, autonomy and personal liberty are held in high regard. Denying a woman the right to abort infringes upon her freedom to make medical decisions and undermines gender equality.

2. Health and Medical Realities- Medical science recognizes numerous scenarios where abortion becomes a necessity: ectopic pregnancies, fetal abnormalities, or health risks to the mother. In such cases, abortion isn't a question of convenience but survival. A rational society must prioritize life-saving procedures over rigid moral doctrines. Delaying or denying abortion care can result in serious psychological trauma, long-term physical complications, or even death. Common sense, informed by medical ethics, supports abortion as a necessary component of healthcare.

3. Economic and Social Factors- Unwanted pregnancies often result in socio-economic hardship, particularly for low-income women. The inability to afford child care, lack of access to education, or the burden of raising a child in an unstable environment are legitimate reasons to consider abortion. Preventing abortion on moral grounds while failing to provide sufficient social support (childcare, healthcare, education) is hypocritical. Rational policy-making considers the full spectrum of consequences—not just the moral symbolism of childbirth.

4. Prevention of Unsafe Abortions- Criminalizing abortion does not eliminate it; it merely drives it underground. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), nearly 45% of all abortions are unsafe, resulting in over 25 million dangerous procedures each year. These are especially prevalent in countries with restrictive laws. Common sense suggests that legalizing and regulating abortion reduces health risks and saves lives. Public health policy should aim to minimize harm, not increase it under the guise of moral superiority.

In such scenarios, it is rational and humane to allow abortion. Scientific evidence and global health statistics show that access to safe abortions significantly reduces maternal mortality and improves overall public health outcomes. Recognizing this, many countries have legal frameworks to allow abortion under certain or broad conditions.

Social Morals and Cultural Taboos

Despite logical arguments, many societies reject abortion based on **moral, cultural, or religious beliefs**. These moral codes, often derived from conservative ideologies, view life as beginning at conception. Consequently, abortion is considered a sin or even murder. In countries where such values dominate public discourse and policy, women who undergo abortions are **stigmatized**,

criminalized, or **socially isolated**. Laws may prohibit abortion even in cases of rape or incest, forcing women to carry pregnancies under traumatic conditions. Such restrictions show a **lack of empathy and a disconnect from practical reality**. In many communities, women who seek abortions are stigmatized, and laws are influenced more by ideology than by evidence or empathy. The moral condemnation frequently overlooks the circumstances leading to an abortion and ignores the lifelong consequences that forced motherhood can have on women.

Clashing Worlds: Rationality vs Morality

The abortion debate highlights a fundamental clash: **individual rationality versus collective morality**. While common sense advocates for practical, evidence-based policies, social morals are often based on faith, fear, and tradition. This clash creates deep political and cultural divisions. In democratic societies, laws ideally reflect reasoned consensus, yet many still cater to vocal moral minorities. The challenge lies in balancing respect for moral values with the rights and needs of real individuals. A society that allows personal beliefs to dictate public policy risks becoming oppressive. Laws must be built on universal rights and scientific understanding, not religious ideologies or cultural taboos.

The core of the issue lies in the collision between two worldviews: one that emphasizes individual rights and medical pragmatism, and another rooted in collective morality and perceived sanctity of life. While common sense calls for compassion, freedom of choice, and health-centric policies, social morality insists on absolute values, often dismissing lived experiences and context. The fundamental conflict lies between two worldviews:

- **Rationality** emphasizes bodily autonomy, public health, and human rights.
- **Moral absolutism** prioritizes rigid definitions of life and virtue, often ignoring the context.

While moral arguments are rooted in tradition and belief, **they are not universal**. Morality evolves with society, but laws rooted in outdated values prevent that evolution. When morals override reason, the result is not moral purity but **social injustice**, particularly toward women and marginalized groups.

Consequences of Restricting Abortion

1. Public Health Crisis- Where abortion is restricted or banned, women often turn to unsafe, illegal methods. This results in a surge of infections, infertility, and maternal deaths. In countries like El Salvador and parts of Africa, women have been jailed for miscarriages due to ambiguous laws. In contrast, countries with liberal abortion laws (like the Netherlands or Canada) have some of the **lowest abortion rates**—proof that **access to safe abortion** does not promote promiscuity but rather facilitates responsible family planning.

2. Gender Inequality- Restricting abortion disproportionately affects women, particularly those in poverty, marginalized communities, or abusive relationships. It denies them equal participation in society and reinforces patriarchal norms. A society that restricts abortion sends a message: women's rights and health are secondary to abstract moral values. This deepens gender disparities and undermines social justice.

3. Criminalization and Legal Harassment- Anti-abortion laws often result in the prosecution of women, doctors, and healthcare providers. This not only discourages medical professionals from offering necessary care but also erodes trust in the healthcare system. For instance, in parts of the United States, abortion bans have led to the surveillance of miscarriages, delays in miscarriage care, and the imprisonment of women for seeking help.

4. Psychological Impact- Forced pregnancies—especially in cases of rape or incest—can lead to lasting trauma, depression, and even suicide. The psychological toll of being denied abortion care is profound, especially when the resulting child is a constant reminder of abuse or violence.

Restricting abortion leads to a range of serious and often tragic consequences, particularly for women and marginalized communities. When abortion is banned or heavily limited, it does not eliminate the practice—it merely drives it underground, resulting in a rise in unsafe and illegal procedures that threaten women's health and lives. These unsafe abortions are a major cause of maternal mortality, especially in developing countries. Women forced to carry unwanted pregnancies often suffer from severe emotional and psychological trauma, particularly in cases of rape, incest, or health complications. The financial burden of raising an unplanned child can push women further into poverty, disrupt their education or careers, and limit their personal freedom. Additionally, restrictive laws violate a woman's right to bodily autonomy and disproportionately affect those with fewer resources, deepening social inequality. The impact is not limited to individuals; it also strains healthcare systems and social welfare services. Thus, banning or severely limiting abortion causes far more harm than good, undermining both public health and human rights.

A Balanced Approach

The need of the hour is a balanced, inclusive approach. While respecting cultural values, policies must be grounded in reason, science, and empathy. Societies evolve, and so must their morals. Common sense, supported by legal safeguards and health rights, should not be sacrificed at the altar of rigid traditions. Rather than treating the issue in absolute terms, it seeks to protect women's right to make informed decisions about their own bodies without imposing a single moral framework on all. Such an approach combines legal access to safe abortion with strong support systems, including comprehensive sex education, easy access to contraception, and confidential counseling. It also involves clear but compassionate laws that allow for abortion in

cases of rape, incest, health risks, or severe fetal abnormalities, while encouraging informed choices rather than punishment or stigma. By promoting public dialogue, respecting personal beliefs, and ensuring healthcare access, a balanced approach can reduce the need for abortion while safeguarding human rights and public health. Ultimately, it allows reason and empathy to coexist with cultural sensitivity, leading to a more just and inclusive society. The abortion issue does not have to be framed as a binary—pro-life vs. pro-choice. A nuanced, balanced approach is both possible and necessary.

1. Comprehensive Sex Education- Prevention is better than cure. Comprehensive sex education leads to lower rates of unintended pregnancies and, consequently, abortions. Equipping young people with knowledge, access to contraception, and reproductive rights is a pragmatic solution.

2. Accessible Healthcare- Ensuring access to affordable healthcare, contraception, and counseling empowers individuals to make informed decisions. A woman with resources and support is less likely to require an abortion and more likely to make a conscious, healthy choice about motherhood.

3. Legal Framework with Boundaries- While abortion should be legal and accessible, clear legal boundaries can help address ethical concerns. Trimester-based regulations, mandatory counseling (when non-coercive), and medical oversight ensure that abortions are safe, rare, and respectful of all values involved.

4. Support for Parenthood- For women who choose to continue pregnancies, strong support systems must exist: maternity leave, childcare, financial aid, and legal protections. Empowerment means enabling both choices—abortion and motherhood—with dignity.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the issue of abortion is not simply a moral debate—it is a matter of individual rights, public health, and social justice. It is time to reconsider whether holding on to moral absolutism serves society or simply perpetuates suffering. Only when individual choice is prioritized over imposed morality can we claim to live in a truly just society. When common sense and compassion are overshadowed by rigid social morals, the consequences are often severe, especially for women who are already vulnerable. A society that respects freedom, dignity, and equality must ensure that women have the right to make informed decisions about their own bodies. Balancing ethical sensitivity with practical realities, and replacing judgment with understanding, is the only way forward. By adopting a rational, empathetic, and inclusive approach, we can move beyond outdated stigmas and build a future where reproductive rights are seen not as a threat to morality, but as a cornerstone of human dignity. Abortion is not merely a moral or political issue; it is a matter of human rights, healthcare, and individual freedom. The insistence on viewing it solely through a moral lens ignores the complex realities women face every day. While social morals deserve a place in cultural conversations, they should not override **common sense, compassion, or constitutional rights**. In a pluralistic society, laws must accommodate diversity, not impose uniformity. Abortion, when safe, legal, and rare, reflects a society that trusts its citizens, values life in all forms, and embraces reason over rhetoric. Let us strive for a world where a woman's worth is not measured by her reproductive

capacity, but by her ability to choose her own destiny—guided not by imposed morals, but by her own common sense and conscience.

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