

**MENSTRUATION NOT AN EVIL – A SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY****1. Gowtham Mageswari Saravanan, (B.A)**

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DOI:10.48047/ecb/2023.12.si4.768

**ABSTRACT**

Menstruation is a natural biological process that occurs in women every 21 to 35 days, signifying their ability to conceive. However, it is still surrounded by cultural and social stigma in many parts of the world, including India. The stigma is deeply rooted in cultural and religious beliefs, as well as social norms and practices, which have been passed down through generations. Factors such as gender inequality, limited education and awareness, and lack of access to menstrual hygiene products perpetuate the taboo. A qualitative research study was conducted using interviews, focus groups, and a questionnaire survey of college students in India to explore the factors contributing to the stigma surrounding menstruation. The findings suggest that education alone is not enough to break the stigma, as even highly educated women still follow orthodox norms of not worshipping or cooking during their menstruation. To combat the myths and conservative beliefs surrounding menstruation, the study proposes addressing cultural and social norms through education and awareness campaigns. The study also suggests providing access to menstrual hygiene products and promoting gender equality. Personal suggestions are made to evaporate the conservative faiths in society regarding menstruation. Overall, breaking the stigma surrounding menstruation can improve menstrual health outcomes for women in India.

**Key Words:** Menstruation, Gender inequality, Taboo, Menstrual hygiene, Education

**INTRODUCTION**

originated and we humans are born, all thanks to the most invaluable, pretentious and quite painful The world I process that is menstruation. The process responsible for the creation of humans entitled menstruation in medical terms. Menstruation is a natural biological process that is a normal part of female reproductive health. Philosophical thoughts on menstruation have been explored by various philosophers throughout history, with different perspectives and interpretations. Philosophical perspective is that menstruation has been stigmatized and treated as taboo in many cultures, leading to a negative perception of the process. This has been attributed to patriarchal systems that have historically oppressed women and viewed menstruation as a weakness or impurity. Some feminist philosophers argue that women's bodies have been objectified and sexualized, and that the shame and secrecy surrounding menstruation reinforces this objectification. On the other hand, some philosophers have celebrated menstruation as a source of power and connection to nature. The process of shedding and renewing blood has been interpreted as a symbol of fertility, rebirth, and regeneration. Philosophers have also explored the spiritual and cultural significance of menstruation in various traditions, including Native American, Hindu, and Taoist beliefs. Overall, philosophical thoughts on menstruation reflect a range of perspectives on the meaning and significance of this natural process. While some view it as a source of shame and oppression, others see it as a symbol of power and connection to nature. Ultimately, the perception and treatment of menstruation has undergone significant changes throughout history and across cultures. While it has been revered and considered a powerful force in some ancient societies, it has also been stigmatized and considered impure in others. In ancient societies such as Ancient Egypt and Greece, menstruation was seen as a sign of fertility and was associated with goddesses of childbirth and creation. However, in other cultures like the ancient Hebrews, menstruating women were considered unclean and were segregated from the rest of society. During the medieval period in Europe, the Catholic Church further perpetuated the stigma surrounding menstruation, associating it with sin and pollution. Women were not allowed to participate in religious ceremonies or touch sacred objects during their periods. In modern times, the scientific understanding of menstruation has improved and attitudes have shifted towards more positive views. Despite this, menstrual stigma continues to persist in many parts of the world, particularly in developing countries where women may not have access to proper menstrual hygiene products or education. According to historian N. N. Bhattacharyya, menstruation goddesses have been worshiped in many parts of India. Mother Earth (Dharti Ma) was said to sleep for a week each month in Punjab. After the navratri, goddess shrines in various regions of the Deccan were closed until the Purnima (full moon day) while she relaxed and rejuvenated. Mother Earth was said to slumber through the scorching weather till the first sprinkle of rain fell in the Malabar area. Even today, a tradition meant to honor the goddess menstruation is celebrated during the monsoon season in Assam's Kamakhya temple and in portions of Odisha (Chawla 1994). The water demon episode is recounted in a historically prominent Sanskrit literature called the Vashistha Dharma sutra, which Chawla claims impacted the following statements on women's roles in society: "A woman is not independent; males are her rulers." According to the Veda, "a female who does not go nude or is momentarily filthy is in heaven," and "because menstrual discharge removes her sins month by month." During three days and nights, a woman in her courses is unclean. But with the passage of time and with the help of scientific research people broaden their vision and we'll enlightened themselves about mensuration and its not been seen as evil anymore but

whereas still in some part of society see it as sign of impurity and still this mensuration has been a taboo for such societies. This perception is also gradually changing in modern India, as women are breaking the silence and challenging the social norms that have long stigmatized menstruation.

●**Objectives of the study**

1. The aim of the study is to explore societal perspectives on menstruation.
2. The objective is to gain insight into the physical and psychological challenges experienced by women during menstruation.
3. The study aims to analyze prevailing societal attitudes towards menstruation and develop strategies to challenge menstrual myths.
4. The goal is to identify the reasons why menstruation is stigmatized in society.
5. The objective is to comprehend the significance of menstrual awareness in removing the cultural association of menstruation with impurity or negativity.

●**REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

This research analyses the views of different authors on the widespread menstrual cruelty in India. As was mentioned above in relation to numerous academics of feminist, social cultural anthropology, and gender studies, the majority of them concentrated on the scientific justifications, menstruation health, rituals, traditions, and cultural elements of this problem as it is widely known in India. This creates a significant difference in the well-being, mental health, way of life, and gender discrimination of women, particularly in India. This research investigates the contributing elements and how they have directly affected the wellbeing of women in society in order to close that disparity. According to the **Urban Sanitation Support Programme (USSP)** team's article from 2019 titled "**Shame, superstition, and secrecy hurting menstrual hygiene, finds study,**" girls in rural and slum areas are considered unhygienic and have taboos against using sanitary napkins, despite the fact that various states provide free sanitary napkins. Slums and remote areas aren't the only places where this is an issue; even in metropolitan areas, women aren't always conscious of how to properly use and dispose of sanitary napkins. The misconceptions, however, extend beyond simply using sanitary napkins and include how to properly discard them as well. Therefore, they should concentrate on ways to dispose of sanitary napkins without any taboos or myths in addition to raising knowledge about using them.

It was argued by **Ilangovan Geetha** (2019) in her well-known 40-minute short film "**Maadhavidai**" (Menstrual cycle) that wearing clothes for periods and wearing the same clothes again for the following menstrual cycle without proper washing and drying could put women at risk for issues with their sexual organs, such as infections of the reproductive tract. Newly menstruating young females will give close attention to their parents or other adult guardians. Girls are cautioned not to even hang these types of garments outside to dry in the weather since guys shouldn't observe those. This is a bad habit, she adds, because wet clothing can spread infections more easily and cause bacterial and fungal illnesses. 2

According to **Guajarati Jasmine's** (2014) study, "**Prevalence of menstrual related taboos in special context with Ayurvedic Rajaswala Paricharya in young girls,**" nuclear families are more common in the 21st century, where the female family member is now in charge of all the household duties, careers, children, and other responsibilities. But even in a combined family,

who will be in charge of taking care of the domestic chores, the kids? Females only, of course. If one female in a household has her period, another female in the family will take over. This is where gender disparity starts. Whether they are a single or joint household. Women are typically the ones who shoulder these duties. Why are men unable to handle the responsibilities? In fact, there are numerous males in this culture who assume all of the responsibilities for the family without reluctance or regard for their gender.

In their renowned article "**Taboos and myths associated with women's health among rural and urban adolescent girls in Punjab,**" Puri S. and Kapoor S. (2006) provided some data that revealed that 41.5% of teenage girls in urban areas and 33.6% of teenage girls in rural areas had been told that entering the pooja room was forbidden. The age group and research region might have contributed to the difference. But many areas of India adhere to the same customs. There are a lot of deity shrines in India. We all venerate women, and we only allow them into pooja halls and churches.

Garg S, Anand T (2015a) expressed their opinions in the essay "**Myths in India regarding menstruation, Techniques to fight it**" Hinduism is seen in some areas of India as being focused on cleanliness and pollution. Because we keep producing them, it is asserted that body excretions are contaminated. Through the biological processes of menstruation and birth, all women, regardless of socioeconomic status, contribute to contamination. It now also represents religious perspectives on how natural systems work. In addition to Hinduism, the majority of the faiths that we all practise in India discuss both cleanliness and pollution. However, there isn't any solid proof that women were immoral or that their periods and deliveries polluted the environment. When it comes to women's periods, only in the name of society and faith did we humans develop so many myths about women's menstruation.

This fear of menstrual bleeding is also common in India, according to **Bhattacharya N. N.** (1980), who wrote the well-known book "**Indian adolescence rituals**". Women frequently separate themselves during their menstrual periods and follow a set of rules that prohibit them from performing certain actions, such as drinking milk, milking cows, touching lights, resting on raised mattresses, using shared hallways, walking by blossoming plants, and stargazing. This was stated in the year 1980, but even 42 years later, women continue to abide by these unspoken laws, particularly in South India.

Washing is important. Teenage girls frequently lack knowledge of the menstruation period because their parents and instructors avoid talking about it, according to the **WaterAid organization's** (2017) renowned magazine "**Menstrual health matters.**" Instead of attempting to pass on societal taboos and limitations that must be adhered to, adult women may not be conscious of biological truth or good hygiene practises. Men and boys typically know less, but it's important for them to comprehend menstrual hygiene so they can support their spouses, kids, parents, classmates, and co workers. Information about society's welfare and communication efforts may aid in achieving this goal. We will also need to improve knowledge of menstruation among parents and among teachers in schools. This study focuses on feminine freedom, it was found that increased decision-making authority and feminine equality in the classroom can be very beneficial.

## • RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Research approach

The research technique used for this study was a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches. We thoroughly researched different papers, theses, and suggestions of previous committees and polls, as well as talked to younger and adults about their opinion about menstruation and how they see it, to deeply explore the reasons behind the orthodox mind set towards menstruation. We collected samples from interested individuals through interviews and questionnaires. This strategy was chosen because it is a flexible research method that enables you to acquire a thorough knowledge of a group's common culture, conventions, and social dynamics; it also provides researchers with direct access to a group's culture and practises. However, the primary disadvantage of the ethnography strategy is that it is a time-consuming method with the possibility of spectator prejudice.

### 3.2 Research method

To attain its goals, the study used qualitative research. Qualitative research is distinguished by its suitability for small groups and lack of measurable findings. Unlike quantitative research, it offers a thorough explanation and analysis of the research issue without limiting the study's scope or the types of responses that can be collected. The effectiveness of qualitative research, on the other hand, is strongly dependent on the researchers' abilities and knowledge, and the findings may not be deemed reliable because they are reliant on the researcher's subjective judgements. Qualitative research is better suited for small samples; therefore the findings might not generalize to larger populations.

### 3.3 Data collection method and tools

In-depth interviews were undertaken for this study to meet the research aims. In-depth interviews are informal dialogues that try to elicit participants' attitudes, feelings, and opinions regarding a given research issue. The fundamental advantage of personal interviews is that they allow for direct and personal engagement between the interviewer and the interviewee while reducing non-response rates. To conduct an efficient interview, however, the interviewer must have the requisite abilities. Furthermore, unstructured interviews allow for greater conversational flexibility, which may lead to unexpected insights into the research topic. However, it's possible that the interview will diverge from the initial research's aims and objectives.

## **DATA ANALYSIS -**

## **DATA ANALYSIS OF FEMALE PARTICIPANTS**

### **●Figure 1**



Out of 32 girls who were surveyed regarding their regular menstrual products, 87.5% of them reported using sanitary pads, while 6.25% reported using tampons and another 6.25% reported using cloth.

### **●Figure 2**



Out of the 32 girls surveyed, 56.3% indicated that menstruation is not considered a taboo topic in their homes, while 43.8% reported that it is. These results suggest that a significant portion of individuals still view menstruation as a topic that is difficult to talk about within the confines of their own homes.

● **Figure 3**



A survey of 32 females revealed that 59.4% of them felt comfortable talking about their period with any male family member. However, 40.6% of the individuals who were still present said they were hesitant to do so. Notably, over half of the individuals who said they felt uncomfortable talking about their periods with male family members were also guys.

● **Figure 4**



In a study of 32 girls, they were asked with whom they feel comfortable in discussing menstruation with male family members. According to the findings, 25% of the girls felt comfortable talking about it with their fathers, 25% with their friends, 21.9% with their boyfriends, 9.4% with their brothers, and 4% with their husbands. Additionally, 14.7% of the girls said they felt at ease talking about their periods with other male family members such as uncles or other relatives who are male.

● **Figure 5**



Despite the fact that 90.6% of the 32 females polled said "No" when asked if they were barred from accessing the kitchen or cooking during menstruation, 9.4% said "Yes." This suggests that there is still a need for increased societal awareness and education on menstruation.

● **Figure 6**



When 32 girls were asked if their families forbid them from participating in religious traditions, 62.5% said "No," 31.3% said "Yes," and 6.2% said "Sometimes." This shows that a sizable proportion of girls face some type of religious constraint from their families.



## ●Figure 7



When 32 girls were asked about the causes for orthodox thinking regarding menstruation, they were given options such as orthodox culture, lack of education, societal association, and lack of knowledge.

34.4% of respondents stated "All of the above reasons," while 28.1% chose "Lack of awareness," 21.9% chose "Lack of education," 12.5% chose "Orthodox culture," and only 3.1% chose "Societal association." This demonstrates that many girls identify numerous reasons, with a disproportionately high number mentioning ignorance, as contributing to traditional attitudes about menstruation.

**Data analysis of male participants**

## ●Figure 8



In a study of 35 males, they were asked if they knew the term "menstruation." 77.1% of the respondents said "Yes," while 22.9% said "No." These results suggest that a significant percentage of males still were not familiar with the term "menstruation" . **Figure 9**



Out of 35 males surveyed, the majority of 71.4% responded that menstruation is a biological phenomenon, while 17.1% believed it to be a body wastage. The remaining 11.4% provided other responses when questioned about their understanding of menstruation.

● **Figure 10**



Based on a survey of 35 males, it was found that 60% of them were open to discussing menstruation with female members of their family, while the remaining 40% were not. This suggests that there is still a lack of understanding about menstruation among some males.

● **Figure 11**



In a survey of 35 males, they were asked with whom they feel comfortable in discussing menstruation with female members in their family, According to the findings 34.3% of them felt comfortable to talk it with their mother, 22.9% of them felt comfortable to talk it with their friends, 20% of them felt comfortable to talk it with their girlfriend, 14.3% of them felt comfortable to talk it with their sisters, and finally 8.6% of them felt comfortable to talk it with their wife.

● **Figure 12**



In a survey of 35 males, they were asked whether they consider menstruation as an "impurity". The results indicated that 74.3% of the participants responded with "No", while 25.7% responded with "Yes". These findings suggest that there is a need for further education and awareness about menstruation among some men in society.

**●Figure 13**

A study conducted among 35 male participants involved asking them whether they believed they needed to be better informed about menstruation. The results showed that 97.1% of the participants responded with "Yes", indicating that they felt they needed more awareness about menstruation. Only 2.9% of the participants responded with "No".

**●Figure 14**

During an interview with 35 male participants, they were asked about their sources of information regarding menstruation. The responses varied, with 34.3% of participants reporting that they learned about it from books, 22.9% from their parents, 22.9% from their girlfriend, 14.3% from their friends, 2.8% from their teachers, and 2.8% from both their friends and books.

**●Findings and results**

In our current society, women face several limitations during their menstrual cycle, including being restricted from performing various everyday domestic tasks that are considered sacred or holy. One prevalent belief is that menstruating women cannot take part in religious rituals, particularly in entering temples, and this is held by both educated and uneducated individuals. This indicates that the

stigma surrounding menstruation is deeply ingrained in social and religious norms and cannot be eliminated solely through improved literacy levels.

The discrepancy in the research findings could be attributed to the specific location and age group that was studied. A similar study conducted by **Singh A J** also yielded comparable results. The current study revealed that women were more likely to hold specific misunderstandings about menstruation compared to men, although there were no significant overall differences. Despite being a natural metabolic process and a typical indication of infertility, menstruation is poorly understood and considered disgusting and unholy, which can lead to psychological issues in adolescents. It is crucial to increase awareness of the physiology of menstruation, especially among women, who are more susceptible to misunderstandings about it.

#### ●**Research Limitation**

- ┌ Like any other study, this research paper had certain limitations that should be considered. Firstly, the size of the participant pool was relatively small, with only 60-70 participants. ? A larger sample size could have increased the reliability of the research findings. ? Additionally, since this was a qualitative research study, it was not possible to measure the examined problems quantitatively.
- ┌ Furthermore, the area of the sample was limited, and only a few school students and undergraduates were included.
- ┌ In some cases, boys showed reluctance in filling out the questionnaire due to feelings of hesitation. Moreover, some participants found the questionnaire strange and were not comfortable answering it, especially the male participants.

#### ●**Menstruation a taboo in Indian society.**

Menstruation, a natural biological process in females, is considered a taboo topic in Indian society. This long-standing taboo has led to women facing discrimination and stigmatization, limiting their access to education, healthcare, and basic menstrual hygiene products. The taboo has its roots in ancient Indian culture and mythology, where menstruation is viewed as impure and dirty. Women were forbidden from participating in religious ceremonies, cooking food, or entering certain parts of the house during menstruation. This belief has been passed down through generations and is still prevalent in many parts of India today. Breaking the stigma surrounding menstruation is crucial to ensure women's empowerment and their right to basic health and hygiene. To this end, various steps are being taken, including awareness campaigns, educational programs, and providing access to menstrual hygiene products. Nonetheless, there is still a long way to go to overcome this taboo and create an inclusive society where menstruation is seen as a natural process, free from shame and discrimination.

The taboo surrounding menstruation in India has deep cultural and religious roots. Many parts of India consider menstruation as impure and unclean, leading to restrictions on women's participation in religious ceremonies, cooking or serving food, and entering temples during their periods. This belief stems from the idea that menstrual blood is impure and contaminates anything it touches. Such beliefs have been passed down through generations and still exist in many parts of the country. Lack of education and awareness about menstruation is another significant factor contributing to this taboo. In rural areas, girls receive no education about menstruation, leaving them unaware of how to manage their periods or use menstrual hygiene products. This lack of knowledge has led to a culture of shame

and secrecy around menstruation. To overcome this taboo, it is crucial to educate girls and women about menstruation and promote awareness through campaigns and educational programs. It is also essential to create a safe and supportive environment where menstruation is seen as a natural process, free from shame and discrimination. The taboo surrounding menstruation in India is firmly rooted in cultural and religious beliefs. It is considered impure and unclean, leading to restrictions on women's participation in religious ceremonies, cooking, or serving food and entering temples during their periods. This belief is based on the notion that menstrual blood is impure and contaminates anything it comes in contact with. This belief has been passed down through generations and is still prevalent in many parts of India today. Lack of education and awareness about menstruation is another significant factor contributing to this taboo. Girls in rural areas receive no education about menstruation, leaving them unaware of how to manage their periods or use menstrual hygiene products. This lack of knowledge has led to a culture of shame and secrecy around menstruation. Menstruation is a taboo in India, and it has serious consequences for women and girls' emotional well-being, behavior, lifestyle, and, most importantly, health. Many girls in economically challenged nations, like India, drop out of school when they begin menstruation. Menstruation-related concerns keep more than 23% of Indian girls from attending school on a regular basis. For female teachers, the monthly menstrual cycle presents additional difficulties. Inadequate menstruation protection alternatives, as well as filthy, hazardous, and non-private facilities in schools for female teachers and pupils, compounded by an unfavourable gender culture and infrastructure, jeopardize their privacy rights. In addition, there are other health and hygienic problems about menstruation and girls that must be addressed. To overcome this taboo, it is crucial to educate girls and women about menstruation and promote awareness through campaigns and educational programs. It is also necessary to create a safe and supportive environment where menstruation is seen as a natural process, free from shame and discrimination. To further support the health and wellbeing of girls and women, it is imperative to provide sanitary products for menstruation, safe drinking water, and adequate sanitation facilities as the top priority.

In India, 77% of menstruating women and girls resort to using old, frequently recycled fabric, and 88% use unhygienic materials like ashes, newspapers, dried leaves, and husk sand as absorbents. This practice can put them at risk of illness due to inadequate hygiene and limited washing facilities. Moreover, the taboo surrounding menstruation in Indian society can cause young women to feel embarrassed or stigmatized due to the smell of menstrual blood, which can have severe impacts on their mental health. The lack of education and awareness about menstruation has contributed to a significant knowledge gap among girls and women, leading to a high dropout rate from schools. Most schools in India lack proper toilets and changing rooms for girls, making it difficult for them to manage their periods in a clean and hygienic way, causing embarrassment, shame, and even health problems. These issues highlight the urgent need for education and awareness about menstrual health and hygiene to break the taboo surrounding menstruation in India.

The social taboo surrounding menstruation has serious implications for women's health, education, and overall well-being. Insufficient menstrual management can expose women to reproductive and urinary tract infections. In India, for example, more than half of women do not have access to sanitary pads, leading them to use unclean materials such as rags, sand, and ash during menstruation. Additionally, the negative perception of menstruation affects girls' education, often resulting in

school absenteeism during their periods. According to UNESCO, approximately 23 million girls drop out of school each year due to inadequate menstrual hygiene facilities.

### ● **Menstrual Hygiene and health**

Proper menstrual hygiene is crucial for promoting the wellbeing and empowerment of women, including transgender men and non-binary individuals worldwide. Unfortunately, many of these individuals face challenges managing their menstrual cycle with respect, dignity, and good health practices. To alleviate the pain and discomfort associated with menstruation, it is important to maintain proper hygiene and a healthy diet.

The onset of menstruation presents new challenges for women that require caution and self-care. However, many girls are stigmatized, harassed, and excluded from society during their periods. Transgender males and non-binary people face prejudice as well, which limits their access to vital hygiene supplies. Gender inequality, discriminatory social norms, cultural stigmas, poverty, and a lack of access to basic amenities such as bathrooms and sanitary products all contribute to unmet menstrual health and hygiene needs. Following basic menstrual health and hygiene practices can help to prevent infections, eliminate unpleasant odors, and improve period comfort.

For women to absorb or collect menstrual blood during their periods, a variety of menstruation goods are available, including sanitary napkins, tampons, period cups, menstrual discs and period pants. With the primary objective of improving awareness about menstrual hygiene, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has started a programme to promote menstrual hygiene awareness among rural adolescent girls aged 10 to 19.

Maintaining good menstrual hygiene is extremely important for promoting overall health and well-being. By following proper hygiene practices during menstruation, one can ensure a comfortable and positive experience:

- ┌ utilizing unscented tampons, pads, and toilet paper as perfumed hygiene items can irritate the skin.
- ┌ Not using feminine hygiene items or soaps While using vaginal hygiene items on a daily basis is advised, doing so during menstruation can have the opposite effect. These synthetic hygiene items can interfere with the natural cleaning process that occurs in the vaginas during menstrual cycles, which can result in infections and bacterial development.
- ┌ Consuming sufficient water. This prevents infections while also aiding in the cleansing of the urinary system.
- ┌ Tracking and monitoring the time. Your menstrual cycle is an important indicator of your general wellbeing. Period irregularities may indicate a number of illnesses. We can keep track of the time using a calendar or a special software on your phone.
- ┌ Visiting a healthcare provider for a yearly check-up. especially in cases where physicians have chosen to specialize in this area. If you notice a change in odor or feel severe or unusual pain, consult a doctor.

Through its development and humanitarian programmes around the globe, In terms of menstrual health and cleanliness, UNICEF is a world authority.. They pledge to develop programmes that help adolescent girls, women, and transgender and non-binary people handle their menstruation safely and respectfully. These programmes will also increase access to materials and facilities.

They focus on four crucial areas to promote better menstrual cleanliness and health:

- ✓ Social assistance
- ✓ Facilities and services, as well as knowledge and expertise
- ✓ Availability of supportive items and absorbent materials

UNICEF primarily assists governments in developing national strategies that span various sectors, including health and education and take menstrual hygiene and health into consideration. Their software is designed to support female equality.

### **Scheme for Promotion of Menstrual Hygiene**

#### **●The program's primary goals are: -**

- ┌ The program aims to increase awareness among teenage girls about menstrual hygiene, improve their access to high-quality sanitary products, and promote the safe and sustainable disposal of sanitary napkins.
- ┌ Under the program, adolescent girls can purchase a bag of sanitary napkins from an ASHA at a reduced price of Rs. 6 per pack.

#### **●Pradhan Mantri Bharatiya Janausadhi Pariyojna (PMBJP)**

The government has set up approximately 8700 Janaushidhi Kendras across the nation to provide Oxo-biodegradable sanitary pads, also known as Suvidha, at an affordable price of one rupee per pad. Ensuring women's health security is a vital goal. The National Rural Livelihood Mission of the Ministry of Rural Development assists small companies and self-help groups that make sanitary pads.

In order to encourage adolescent girls (10–19 years old) in rural regions of particular districts to practice good menstrual hygiene, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare introduced the Menstrual Hygiene Scheme in 2011. The Rashtriya Kishore Swasthya Karyakram program, which seeks to promote hygienic habits, raise awareness of menstrual hygiene management in schools since 2014, and improve knowledge of menstrual hygiene, later extended this initiative to all districts.

#### **●UDAAN scheme and the school MHS for adolescent girls**

Trainers who specialize in this area utilized premade modules to educate frontline healthcare providers in India, commonly referred to as ASHAs, on matters related to menstrual hygiene for adolescents. The ASHAs were responsible for distributing sanitary pads to eligible individuals. For adolescent females who were not attending school, a package of six "Free Days" sanitary napkins was made available for purchase at INR 6 each. The government-run basic healthcare facilities, also known as anganwadis, were designated to sell and purchase these pads on a weekly basis, ideally on Wednesdays.

#### **●Strategies for Fighting Menstrual Myths**

According to the research that is currently available, addressing menstruation myths and social taboos is a suitable method for improving the reproductive health of adolescent girls and women. Due to cultural stigmas and the lack of conversation about menstruation among female role models, particularly their mothers, educating teenage girls about menstrual hygiene is a crucial first step in implementing this technique. Even mature women may be ignorant of correct hygiene practices, perpetuating societal taboos and restrictions instead. Due to their lower literacy rates, women and girls are routinely excluded from decision-making. The health of the neighborhood can be enhanced,



and cultural taboos can be broken, by raising the education levels of women. Menstrual health issues may be effectively addressed through community-based health education campaigns and teacher training programmes. Another essential strategy for breaking cultural taboos and enhancing general health outcomes is educating and including women in decision-making processes. Making sure that women have access to sanitary napkins and suitable washing facilities is crucial to addressing gender inequities. Local production and distribution of inexpensive sanitary napkins can be a good alternative in places where such products are not easily accessible, especially in rural and slum communities. As part of the National Rural Health Mission, the Indian government started a programme in 2010 to provide low-cost sanitary napkins to 1.5 million teenage girls in rural areas. The programme needs to be expanded, though, as it is currently in the experimental stage. It is necessary to involve male partners and alter their belief systems in order to change deeply ingrained social attitudes and cultural taboos.

Men and boys should be educated about menstruation so that they can help their female family members, colleagues, and peers. To effectively spread this information and rally social support against menstrual misconceptions, health workers, certified social health activists, and Anganwadi workers should also receive training in the biology of menstruation. Furthermore, in order to effectively address these issues, youth-friendly health clinics must have a trained staff. To address menstrual health difficulties, a comprehensive strategy that incorporates infrastructure improvements, projects for water and sanitation, health information, and reproductive health programmes is necessary. Teenage girls and women need to be made aware that menstruating is a normal biological process and that it contributes to their fertility.

### ● Recommendations

The study reveals that having higher education does not necessarily lead to a better understanding of menstruation. This highlights a difference between literacy and education. It is crucial to educate all adults, regardless of their level of education, about menstruation to increase awareness, dispel misconceptions, and combat the unjust stigmatization of menstruating women. Women tend to hold more stereotypes about menstruation than men. Therefore, it is essential to provide information about reproductive health to both children and adults, especially females. Even if adolescent girls in rural areas attempt to reject these beliefs, older members of the community may impose their traditional beliefs on them without comprehending them fully. While some programs such as the **Rashtriya Kishor Swasthya Karyakram** adolescent health strategy have made progress in tackling menstruation-related issues by providing counseling, affordable hygiene products, and menstrual knowledge to girls, most initiatives fail to address the societal aspect of the problem. The report highlights that only a small number of initiatives specifically target those who propagate negative attitudes towards menstruation, including "influencers in girls' lives, particularly their mothers and other members of society," who can significantly impact a girl's behavior and how she adapts to her sexual maturity, with long-term effects.



● **Conclusion**

Across societies, women have established distinct ways of living during their menstrual cycles. Although different cultures and religions have created their own unique menstruation practices based on their specific social and ethnic circumstances, there are certain aspects of these practices that are commonly shared. These may involve seclusion, dietary restrictions, and refraining from participating in religious rituals. Instead of viewing menstruation as a negative or impure factor, these cultures perceive the spiritual aspect of menstruation as beneficial. It is evident that the taboos surrounding menstruation are now considered to pose a threat to one's overall health and many individuals are inclined to support the elimination of the stigma associated with this issue. As part of our research into the origins and basis of menstrual taboos, we have analyzed the societal perception of the menstrual cycle as a whole. It seems that patriarchy is the underlying reason for nearly every perspective related to menstrual taboos. Therefore, the root cause of these taboos can be traced back to the historical and ongoing gender-based discrimination against females. Nonetheless, as young women gain greater agency in shaping their own interpretations of religion and menstruation, it is crucial to prioritize education in schools and households as a means to achieve a broader and more far-reaching transformation in society.

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