

MENSTRUAL HYGENE – NOTHING TO SHAME UPON

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Young girls in India face silent struggle, lack of facility and privacy deprive them not only from education but also from many other important aspects which seek to develop them in their social life. The concept of believing menstrual cycle as a taboo combined with the approval of social stigma has been handing down since generations. Therefore, they primarily get deprived of their education as they held provided with no space to change and even they are lacking in mode of development of such time. Resulting to which they wear over used cotton clothes or sanitary pads whole day. This steered them to feel ashamed to go to school and in society too. Adding to the worseness they leave school as they hit the age of puberty. Due to lack of information and awareness they held with such unforgiving step in life, mostly at times the chapter in school regarding menstrual is skipped as it is considered as a matter of shame to teach those things which are ought to be considered as out of bounds. In India with a female population of 315 million, who menstruate and getting far reaching simultaneously may bring some adverse and profound negative effect. Nations round the world are face the issue of this hygiene where women are considered to be in an impure cycle of the month and should not be treated for good things. Similarly, in India though since generations mother have been telling her daughter not to go to temples, or to kitchen, or not to touch anybody, not to join hands to the deity, not to bring their shadow to any person going for respectable work, or to any pure place yet the hygiene of a woman or sanitation of a female was never focused.

WHAT IS A MENSTURAL CYCLE?

When the body of female hits puberty, her body reacts to the changes that her hormones bring into her body. Thought these change effect at different times to ever individual yet all is considering normal. During the time the body start to produce a new set of hormones, which send signal to body and some of which actually makes your body prepared for pregnancy. The cycle of menstrual is a series of natural processes where it might affect your energy, mood, may make you experience pain, cramps. This all happens due to breaking down of the lining of uterus and its shedding. This monthly cycle is even a key for the improved life and hygiene.¹ At any one time, a quarter of women of reproductive age are menstruating. And yet, there is a still a great deal of confusion about how periods affect women's' life, and this has been happening to women since centuries yet many cultures

¹ <http://rubycup.com/all-about-your-period/menstrual-cycle/>

believe that a woman is an “impure soul”. The unfortunate part on this is, it still being into the conscious belief of people lingering with any new other countless myths.

KINDS OF MYTHS

- **Girls can't swim;** yes, it is true that a female body is flowing out with blood but the amount of blood being poured out is not so great in quantum that will pollute the pool or would make others to sense it.
- **Not to wash your head;** sounding like an old wifely excuse or an granny tale of rural area that makes the girls not to go for such kind of washing or otherwise, all the males would brain the smell of blood and that would lead to ashamed situation.
- **Causes loss of blood;** the loss of blood during menstrual cycle is just approximately three table spoon which are actually not affecting one's health or make you faint out of blood loss, or dizzy when u stand up or etc. but if so happen that leads to medical concern.
- **Exercise is bad during cycle;** quite opposite to this, a frequent exercise and healthy person tends to have a better term of cycle as it helps to reduce the toxics out of one's body and the body fells energy with such movements. Simple and gentle exercises may make the body fell relieved and boosted.
- **Not to talk about it;** it's considered to be shameful thing for a woman going through her cycle, therefore she is not supposed to talk about it neither publically nor at her place as males would get to know about it.

Once a female be on her menstrual neither she experience any change in her skin, nor she stinks, nor she walk differently, nor she become inhuman in her activities and nothing as such so why the society even including her own mother, grandmother and other female fellows treat her differently and don't let her and even themselves accept the fact that they are gifted by god in this manner so that they could give birth to a new life and ornament the mankind. Where it should be treated as a kind of privilege and a matter of pride people are having disgusting eye towards this.² By the virtue of norms of society menstrual is supposed to be invisible, silent and so as a woman on her cycle too. This binds limitation on many of the girl's daily lives simply because they are on their menstrual cycle. Lack of knowledge, unaffordability of facilities, approach to the appropriate sanity products are still pushing girls out of schools and having negative right on education.³

THE TIME HAS COME TO PROMOTE- LOUDLY- UNSASHAMEDLY ABOUT THE ROLE OF MENSTURAL HYGEINE MANAGEMENT.

There is clear evidence showing that ignorance of menstrual hygiene is not only damaging the health but also to education, economics and business too. Therefore, MHM (menstrual hygiene management) trying to trigger the situation for a better, stronger and developed

² <https://www.bodyform.co.uk/v-zone/your-first-period/period-myths/>

³ <https://www.sswm.info/content/menstrual-hygiene-management>

and rightful society for women and girls to held with their rights to live and security to their lives.

CONSTITUTIONAL VALIDITY OF MENSTRUAL MANAGEMENT

According to Art 21 of Indian constitution, it empowers every individual to access the right to life and liberty as their fundamental right by which they are authorized to have a healthy and rightful life to live. A person having life on India land-living would be availing the right to live freely and maintain all the dignity to lead their lives. Because of this only Art 21 has been termed as a heart of constitution of Indian constitution, one of the most organic and progressive provision in our living constitution. It also held to the foundation of our law. Keeping the heart of the constitution the most prior basis, the management camps and the initiative taken up are legal as well as own their validity because being a member of India society whether a male or a female peculiar right over their right to live with utmost self-esteem. Going through a period of menstrual also a female has a rightful life with paramount security. As human rights can only attach to living beings, one might expect the right to life to be in some sense primary, since none of the right would have any value or utility without it. Therefore, it endows women to have dignity while their hard times as the Art 21 is just a mere physical act in breathing, it got the much wider scope including every other aspect to make an individual free to live and have the respect to be called alive on the land. As according to the article 'LIFE' is more than a mere animal existence it rather extends to all those limbs and faculties by which life is enjoyed.

STEPS TAKEN BY GOVERNMENTS TO PROMOTE MENSTRUAL HYGIENE MANAGEMENT

By few recent years, not only politicians for the sake of their votes, activists for the awareness and organisations for their promotions have been aiming at the government to take better steps for the sanitation of the girls and women but also many women have succeeded to take a step head towards their own demands for a stately life.

One of the cases could be seen with the group of women in Tamil Nadu who filed a PIL to the Madras High Court for the availability of sanitary pads in every government school by the means of 'NAPKIN VENDING MACHINE' along with incineration processes leading to safe disposal of the napkins. Due to which court not only provided the higher and secondary school girls with availability of sanitary napkins but also quality of napkins is ensured. Count to this the court ordered to have at least one operational incinerator installed in all governmental school. Also the SWACHH BHARAT MISSION addressing the menstrual hygiene has come up with certain guidelines;

- **WATER, SANITATION AND HYGIENE FACILITIES;** the availability of sanitary pad in school was just not the end to mission of hygiene. A proper setup of toilet for girls and even for lady staff should also be given space in the area of sanitation. The place should be well equipped with all the related things needed by a female to

take care of her being it a chamber to change her menstrual napkins or using a toilet. Even every toilet should be having soap and water to wash the needful things and should also be provided with a mug to use water inside the private chamber. And the infrastructure gets complete when there tooled a well-positioned mirror to keep a check on strains all this and certainly more has been provided by Ministry of Human Research Development for a superior rural India.

- **DISPOSAL MECHANISM;** the workers of sanitation would be helpless if they don't get the proper disposal system of used napkins. Therefore, a guideline has been generated which makes schools to provide with bins and that too closely fitted with the lids to minimise seepage of waste. Also, it makes schools associate with hospitals in case of any solid waste disposal(as any core rural school has been facing problem to get in contact with hospital they can opt the pit burning, composing, incineration, etc. kinds of methods).
- **MENSTRUAL HYGIENE MANAGEMENT EDUCATION FOR MEN;** by Rashtriya Bal Swasthya Karyakram medical team, boys male teachers, parents and other social workers were given information about the discrimination being faced by the females. Therefore, educational sessions about the adolescent of both boys and girls were held at both school and societal level by the guidelines given by government in 2015.
- **BUDGET FOR THE MANAGEMENT;** according to survey held only 12% of women avail the accessibility of government provided sanitary napkins. It is more than just demanding the napkins it is even about providing them which would happen when there is enough availability of funds to provide the napkins to them. Though many governments have tried, but they haven't been prompt or judicious in utilizing the funds for the scheme meant for the menstrual hygiene. Unfortunately, expenditure particular to MHM isn't maintained by government under all schemes. It is also data that may not readily available unless the government audits these schemes specifically to find out the money spent on MHM. ⁴

SOME INTERNATIONAL ACHIEVEMENTS IN MHM

- **MHM mini toolbox for teachers and schools (ZAMBIA, 2015);** MHM tends to be an important component for the healthy and developed schools and society. So the nation came up with a SPLASH scheme for a "WASH-FRIENDLY SCHOOL", which stood for school promoting learning achievement through sanitation and hygiene. The main aim to start with this programme in Zambia was to improve the girl's attendance and also to in co-operate this matter as a lesson for them as well as for boys to understand the age effect and take them with a good mind.⁵
- **Small double action pads (Uganda, 2014);** the prior intention in making such pads was to make situation more fixable for females in order to be a part of the society even in

⁴ <https://www.youthkiawaaz.com/2017/05/4-things-can-demand-govt-better-menstrual-hygiene/>

⁵ http://www.washplus.org/sites/default/files/mhm_toolkit2015.pdf

those days. Basically in this idea of programme the council held with programs that how can female make reusable sanitary pads and get to their normal life and activities like a normal life.⁶

- **Voice raise in Washington DC (2015);** a foundation called BeGirl, has been touching sky in the matter of providing affordable, aspirational, highly usable, economic opportunities for women to uplift their situation, and even try to demonstrate the solution to MHM to all the global organization.

Beyond the fact there have been so much of negative and non-acceptable situation regarding the menstrual cycle in world society, still there are certain rituals and customs being followed in some part of world where this day is respected and the girl is pampered on hitting her puberty. According to certain states in **INDIA**, the circle of birth and death and preparation of one female body to give life to another is all sacredness, which need to be worship and should be a moment of joy and celebration.

The ritual of sacredness followed in Karnataka is called “**ritu kala samskara**” which not only give respect to the menstruation but also to menstruating women. In this ritual when a girl hit menstruation she is worshiped by other married women also offering her natural things that would help her have a better flow. The same practice can be seen in Kerala and Andhra Pradesh. Similarly on other hand state like Tamil Nadu calls the ceremony as “**manjal neerattu vizha**” which is a three full day celebration with turmeric bathing ceremony. The celebration is like a small marriage where the girl is gifted with silk sarees and there held so much of pomp in the ceremony. While in the state like Assam the celebration is named “**xoru biya**” which means small marriage and all the follows of a marriage are done in this ceremony in order celebrate the onset of the girls new era in her life. Though the rituals followed and the ceremony celebrated in North is more quiet an under silence, as the girl is tough to practice the menstruation in seclusion. The common practice in these ceremonies is aiming at the female and there developing stage. It also imparts a very positive notion of thinking about every hormonal change in one’s body by one own-self and by others too. By the virtue of these rituals a girl is welcomed in women-hood which allows her to accept the change of her body with affirmative and welcomed spirit. These celebrations let her to fell a new spirit in her new feminine identity. Along with this the formalities equips the girls to adjust physically as well as emotionally during the change and hence for it benefits the celebration of the ceremony and encourages the society to proceed in the same lieu.⁷ By this changing scenarios and right full step taken in order to promote the dignity and maintain the respect of the female in the society has also shined way ahead beside the social work headed by NGOs. Even Bollywood and commercial cinema has come up with numbers of ways to promote the sanitation. Many Bollywood

⁶ <https://sanitationupdates.wordpress.com/2015/05/28/washplus-weekly-focus-on-menstrual-hygiene-management-2/>

⁷ <https://www.quora.com/Why-do-parents-in-South-India-celebrate-their-daughters-first-time-menstruation-cycle-as-big-as-a-marriage-celebration-but-we-dont-see-that-culture-happening-in-North-India>

stars has sported doing something or the other to safe guard the hygiene of feminine body and making people free minded to talk about it.

- **Parineeti Chopra**; she broke the taboo when she was promoting a sanitary brand and made every other person to talk about the menstruation freely and confidently. She broke the bars and held her thoughts by saying not to refer the cycle with a period. She promoted men of the society to talk about it any let the women around them feel comfortable about it.
- **Kareena Kapoor Khan**; she also becomes an immense integral part in the menstrual hygiene management where in Lucknow she promoted the girls who work and inspiring the others to work in their cycle. She believed that god has created this cycle and it should not be behind the doors to talk about. A woman also has a 30 days schedule and a cycle created by nature can't stop it.
- **Shraddha Kapoor**; she promoted the menstrual talks by sharing her school events. According to her it female themselves are not comfortable about their natural cycle then how any other would respect it. She discussed that how she used to talk about her dates and how boys use to be embarrassed them. There for, she gave confidence to the women to talk about it freely.⁸
- **Twinkle khanna**; another rising name in the field of menstrual hygiene is Twinkle Khanna who is promoting the hygiene and even making the women to feel proud of their ability to give birth to a new life. She has no shame to talk about the menstruation and so as all should not feel so. She herself has taken the initiative to a massive central level where she has been taking appointment from the central ministry for the development in the section. She has launched 'WaterAidIndia' and '@dasra' in order to remove the shame of menstruation from society.⁹

Many other celebrities also are working for the improvement of such thinking and such mentality where a female on her menstrual cycle is considered to be impure. Regarding the same the commercial cinema has taken the front seat to bring the awareness to the people. In the light of their stardom they are trying to en-light the lamp of awareness among the rural class and the spirit of freedom in among all segments of the society. **Akshay Kumar** a well-known star has been coming with his new project known PADMAN which would be dealing with the sensitive issue of menstruation under the production of Twinkle Khanna.¹⁰ Though before this there have been numbers of cinematic lines which have tried to promote the issue and bring light to it but they had always been in lack of audience with them. Movies talking initiative for the matter has always been awarded with 'A' certificate but before pad-man, which already limited the scope for the people to approach the movie

⁸ www.mtvindia.com/.../7-celebrities-who-broke-the-taboo-spoke-up-about-periods-52...

⁹ <http://indianexpress.com/article/entertainment/bollywood/twinkle-khanna-padman-supports-campaign-on-menstruation-4673207/>

¹⁰ <https://www.businessinsider.in/One-of-Bollywoods-biggest-stars-will-be-in-a-film-about-Indias-menstrual-man-who-invented-a-pad-making-machine/articleshow/61954938.cms>

as CBFC termed it as adult matter.¹¹ Films like 'Phullu' 2017 was indirectly questioning the society, why menstruation is a taboo for society. Slowly and steadily every aspect of the society is trying to build up a new tempo to disappear the apprehensive behaviour regarding menstruation.

CONCLUSION

In the modern growing society the manufactures of sanitary pads are even putting their best step forward for the uplift-ment of the condition amongst the females and hence for they are taking the best use of social medial and all socially active groups to promote the hygiene and promotion of their products too. Comparing and contrasting the situation of past few decades, the scenario has changed where people are try to come out of the myth and taboo of considering menstruation as a filthy thing, though certainly and situationally rituals holds the hands back and pulls the modernity down yet even the smallest number increased is leading the cause to meet its goal.

Lastly the society is moving towards a '**HAPPY TO BLEED**' mentality society. Resulting to which **may 28, 2017** is regarded as **menstrual hygiene day**, as it is the 5th month of the year and women menstruate for five days and the average menstruation cycle is of 38 days.

The UN's Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council, **WSSCC** is working with the Indian government to change the curriculum in India, and 'change the future of girls'.

¹¹ <http://www.indianwomenblog.org/before-padman-this-bollywood-film-on-menstruation-gets-an-a-certificate/>