



## MENSTRUAL JUSTICE: AN ANALYSIS OF HYGIENE, SOCIAL TABOOS, CULTURAL PRACTICES, AND LEGAL RIGHTS

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### **ABSTRACT**

*This article talks about menstruation, a biological phase of a woman's life; it is a topic that society has a negative outlook/perspective on. Menstruation is a natural and biological process of the female body that is triggered by the rise and fall of hormones. This article also explains the perspective/opinion of society, culture, religion, and Ayurveda regarding menstruation. This article covers all aspects, including menstrual hygiene, menstrual products, social taboos, and restrictions. It also highlights how, due to widespread misconceptions, menstruation is treated as a shameful topic, which has a deep impact on females' mental and physical health, education, and gender equality. Females face a lot of difficulties due to these deep-rooted myths and restrictions; most of the girls left the schools due to the shame and no proper management of their menstrual days. Many working women also struggle during their periods due to a lack of appropriate management. Many myths regarding menstruation are prevalent in society, while some sections of the same society consider menstruation pure and celebrate it. Furthermore, the study can result in the violation of women's legal rights, particularly their right to dignity, health, and education. The article emphasises the need for awareness, policy, support, and a change in social mindset to ensure menstrual justice. This article gives an overall account of how society has turned a natural biological process into something shameful, making it a social taboo without understanding it fully or knowing its essence.*

**Keywords:** Ayurveda. Menstruation, Gender Equality, Justice.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Menstruation is a monthly process where a female's body releases blood. It is also known by other names such as menses, menstrual period, menstrual cycle, or period. Periods can lead to

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many types of difficulties for females, like Premenstrual Syndrome and many irregularities. Periods can change due to stress, diet, or conditions like PCOS, thyroid issues, or uterine fibroids. A doctor should be consulted if periods are consistently very heavy (soaking through a pad/tampon every hour), last longer than 8 days, or stop suddenly for more than 90 days. Menstruation is such a taboo topic that people are not even ready to talk about it. There are many myths in society regarding menstruation that are deeply rooted in people's minds since ancient times. Even though women bleed every month, they are often not fully aware of their periods. This topic is so hidden in our culture that even women feel shy to talk about it. Due to a lack of awareness, many people do not know about menstrual hygiene, what periods are, what products to use, or how to stay clean with proper sanitation, and how to stay protected from UTIs (Urinary Tract Infections). People are not even aware of the schemes run by the government for menstruation awareness.

### **MEANING AND SCIENTIFIC BASIS OF MENSTRUATION**

Menstruation, commonly known as periods, is the regular discharge of blood and mucosal tissue from the inner lining of the uterus through the vagina, signalling that pregnancy has not occurred. Period blood is composed of about half blood and half tissue, which flows from inside the uterus through the cervix and comes out through the vagina. Menstruation is driven by hormones that fluctuate throughout the monthly cycle. Menstruation is a vital and natural process in women's lives, viewed in Ayurveda as a unique mechanism of self-purification rather than impurity. This monthly cycle reflects the balance of doshas- Vata, Pitt, and Kapha- and offers profound insight into overall health and vitality. Periods begin when a girl attains puberty, usually between the ages of 11 and 13. An average healthy menstrual cycle is between 21 and 35 days, lasting for 2 to 7 days. Women experience significant hormonal changes in their bodies during menstruation, causing mood swings, severe cramps, heavy bleeding, headache, vomiting/nausea, dizziness, and many women even feel a feverish sensation. Before and during periods, many experience Premenstrual Syndrome (PMS), including bloating, breast tenderness, mood swings, acne, headache, and fatigue.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Cleveland Clinic, 'Menstrual Cycle (Normal Menstruation):<https://my.clevelandclinic.org> accessed 29 March 2026

## **MENSTRUAL HYGIENE AND PRODUCTS**

During periods, it is of utmost importance to maintain hygiene to safeguard yourself from various health issues. It is crucial to take care of your body during periods because it is a time of high energy loss, hormonal changes, and weakness. Despite progress, many women remain ignorant about menstrual hygiene, with zero awareness or maintenance in society. Most of the females don't know how to take care of their bodies during periods, what to eat/drink, what precautions to take, and many other things. Many types of menstrual products could be used to absorb or collect blood during menstruation, including sanitary pads, tampons, menstrual cups, menstrual discs, and period underwear. Proper hygiene should be maintained during periods by washing the hands, discarding used disposable menstrual products, changing sanitary pads every few hours, changing tampons every 4 to 8 hours, clean cups every day after use. Any female during her period should follow a hygiene routine, wear lightweight, breathable clothes, change your menstrual products regularly, keep the genital area clean, use toilet paper, tampons, or pads, drink enough liquids, and track and monitor her periods. To manage period symptoms, focus on nutrient-dense foods that combat inflammation, reduce cramps, and replenish iron, such as leafy greens, ginger, dark chocolate, and bananas. Hydration is key to reducing bloating, while avoiding excess salt, caffeine, and processed sugars helps manage mood swings and pain.<sup>2</sup>

## **SOCIAL TABOOS AND RESTRICTIONS**

According to many studies, a negative image of menstruation has been formed in society. Menstruation is subject to many taboos and restrictions in most religions. Society considers this a taboo subject, wrapped in silence and shame. People avoid talking openly about this because society views menstruation as unclean, unholy, and shameful. Societal norms often perpetuate the myth that menstrual blood is impure and the misconception that menstruating women bring bad luck. It is a common religious practice to forbid women from entering the kitchen, visiting temples, or taking part in religious rituals while menstruating, as they are considered impure during this time. In some regions, women are kept in isolation during their periods. They are completely shunned; nobody even glances at them, and they are forced to use separate dishes for eating and drinking. Women are expected to avoid touching anything, particularly religious artefacts and kitchen utensils, during their menstrual cycle, as they are

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<sup>2</sup> Unlimit Health, 'WASH – WATER, SANITATION & HYGINE <https://unlimithealth.org> accessed 29 March 2026

considered taboo or unclean. They are treated as social outcasts during their periods, like someone suffering from a severe, filthy contagion. Every girl has to face such useless and senseless traditions and restrictions. These social evils are detrimental to women's physical and mental health, their education, their rights, and their whole lives.<sup>3</sup>

### **CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE: CELEBRATION OF MENSTRUATION**

Despite widespread social taboos and deep-rooted prejudices, some communities still consider menstruation sacred and celebrate it, rather than treating it as inauspicious. In Orissa, the Raja Festival and the celebrations that come with it are a way to honour the fertile land that 'Bhudevi' gives us and pray for a good harvest. The Raja Festival, also known as Raja Parba or Mithuna Sankranti, is celebrated in Orissa, India. It is said that Mother Earth, who is the epitome of feminine energy, or 'Bhudevi' as she is called, goes through 3 days of menstruation in the middle of June. The Raja Festival is celebrated for 3 days, and each day has its own speciality. The word 'Raja' is taken from 'Rajaswala', which loosely translates to 'menstruating women'. Another beautiful thing to note here is that Orissa isn't the only state that has a festival and celebration to mark the menstrual cycle. In Tamil Nadu, there is the 'Manjal Neerattu Vizha', and in Karnataka, there is 'Ritu Kala Samskara', which celebrates the onset of puberty in girls and celebrates the fact that they are now powerful enough to bring life into this world. In Andhra Pradesh, when a girl gets her period for the first time, it is celebrated in a grand ceremony called 'Pedamanishi Pandaga'. The Ambubachi Mela is an annual Hindu mela at Kamakhya Temple in Guwahati, Assam. This mela is the celebration of the yearly menstruation course of Goddess Kamakhya.<sup>4</sup>

### **LEGAL RIGHTS AND THEIR VIOLATION**

Deep-rooted taboos surrounding periods have severely infringed upon the fundamental rights of girls and women. Articles 21 and 21A of the Indian Constitution guarantee fundamental rights to citizens. Article 21 secures the "Right to Life and Personal Liberty", encompassing the right to a dignified life, privacy, and a dignified life, privacy, and a clean environment. Article 21A mandates "Right to Education", ensuring free and compulsory education for children aged 6 to 14 years. Despite constitutional protections, women are deprived of a life

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<sup>3</sup> National Institutes of Health, 'Menstruation related myths in India: strategies for combating it <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov> accessed 30 March

<sup>4</sup> The Times Of India, 'The Indian Festivals that celebrates menstruation <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com> accessed 30 March 2026

with dignity due to discrimination and shameful treatment during menstruation, leading to poor health and interrupted education, driven by societal biases. But, in a landmark 2026 ruling, the Supreme Court of India recognised menstrual health as a fundamental right under Article 21(Right to Life and Dignity) and Article 14(Equality). The ruling mandates free, biodegradable sanitary pads and functional, gender-segregated toilets in all schools (Classes 6-10) to ensure dignity, bodily autonomy, and equal educational opportunities, aiming to eliminate “period poverty”.<sup>5</sup>

## **CONCLUSION**

Menstruation is a very vast topic with diverse perspectives among people. This topic has been viewed quite negatively. To neutralise this issue, society and the government must act together to create a supportive system for women. So that women in this society can feel safer and more at peace, and do not have to face any struggles. In India, there is a pressing need for people to change their mindset towards this topic. The government should actively work on promoting sexual health and comprehensive sex education within society, so that individuals can develop a clear understanding of their bodies and are empowered to make informed and responsible decisions for themselves.

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<sup>5</sup> C.G. Arora, Constitution of India 12