

MENSTRUAL EQUITY: OVERCOMING SOCIAL AND CULTURAL CONSTRAINTS

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Abstract

In the Article entitled 'IS IT A SIN TO HAVE PERIODS?' The author will critically examine the Hindu culture and beliefs' restrictions on menstruating women, particularly the prohibition against entering the temple during menstruation. The author additionally features the lawful parts of this issue. In addition, the situation of menstruating women in other religions and the restrictions they face due to their religion's beliefs are the subject of this article. Through this article, the author aims to raise awareness of her opposition to the restrictions placed on women during menstruation. This article's central idea is to persuade readers to treat menstruating women as normal human beings and to view menstruation as a natural process.

Keywords – Menstruation, Impure, Taboo, Religious Beliefs, Temples, Discrimination, Restrictions.

I. INTRODUCTION

In our society, menstruation is stigmatized. This stigma developed as a result of traditional beliefs that menstruating women are impure. Women are omitted from many aspects of cultural life due to stigmas associated with menstruation. While some of these are beneficial, others could be detrimental. The social and cultural norms, beliefs, and practices of menarche can affect women's capacity to manage their periods with dignity. Period stigma hurts a person's quality of life, ranging from physical issues like a possible lack of access to supplies for sanitation to verbal shaming of menstruating women as "dirty" or "unclean."¹ Menarche is a significant biological event because it signals the beginning of a woman's reproductive phase. When the younger generation is not given

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¹ Shabnam Omidvar, Fatemeh Nasiri Amiri, Afsaneh Bakhtiari and Khyrunnisa Begum, 'A Study on Menstruation of Indian Adolescent Girls in an Urban Area of South India' (2018) 7(4) JFMPC <<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6132001/>> accessed 13th November 2023

logical explanations of normal physiological processes like menarche, they are left confused and incapable of distinguishing amongst myth and truth. Many outdated practices and myths edge usual biological processes like menarche. Despite this, one can treasure a woman sitting in an abandoned corner of a household in any village because of her periods. In the past, mere remark on the subject was considered taboo in India, and cultural and social influences still appear to impede knowledge advancement. The emotional state, mentality, and way of life of girls and women, and most importantly, their health, are all affected by taboos about menstruation that are prevalent in many societies. Every woman has to deal with menstrual hygiene at some point in her life, but not enough people know the menstrual cycle². The restrictions encompassing this issue in the general public keep young ladies and ladies from articulating their feminine necessities. It is presently turning out to be progressively perceived that the social and social meaning of period connects with the physiological interaction to deliver socially resolved standards and practices. Menstruating women face restrictions in India and other nations and religions that make their lives difficult and prevent them from exercising their inherent human rights.

II. MENSTRUATION AND SCIENCE

The menstrual cycle is a complex, recurring process in the female body, characterized by hormonal fluctuations that prepare the uterus and ovaries for potential pregnancy. In adult women, this cycle typically spans 21 to 40 days, with an average duration of 28 days. The menstrual cycle persists until menopause, around the age of 50, when ovarian function ceases, marking the end of the reproductive phase.

Two crucial events define the menstrual cycle: ovulation and menstruation. While the normal cycle is often considered 28 days, individual women may experience variations, with cycles ranging from 21 to 40 days³. The onset of menstruation is conventionally regarded as the beginning of the cycle, although menstruation itself is the culmination of a process. The cycle is generally divided into menstruation (lasting about five days), a

² Ibid

³ Yasmine Al Sayyad, 'What We Still Don't Know About Periods' (*The New Yorker*, 12 April 2023) <www.newyorker.com/books/under-review/what-we-still-dont-know-about-periods> accessed 13 November 2023

proliferative phase (up to the 14th day), and a secretory phase (until the next menstruation)⁴.

External manifestations of menstruation are influenced by cyclical changes in the endometrium, the lining of the uterus, which consists of tubular glands within a vascular framework. At the start of the proliferative phase, following menstruation, the endometrium is thin with short, straight glands, and the ovaries are inactive⁵. Under the influence of pituitary gland gonadotropic hormones, an ovarian follicle containing an ovum matures in one of the ovaries. This follicle, surrounded by granulosa cells, secretes the estrogenic hormone estradiol, leading to proliferative changes in the endometrium⁶. The glands grow taller, and the entire endometrium becomes thicker and more vascular.

Around mid-cycle, ovulation occurs, during which the ovum is released from the follicle, travels through the fallopian tube, and reaches the uterus. The emptied follicle transforms into the corpus luteum, which continues to secrete estrogen and now also produces progesterone⁷. This hormone induces the secretory phase in the endometrium, causing gland distension and increased vascularity. The endometrial appearance resembles early pregnancy, preparing for potential ovum implantation. If fertilization does not occur, the endometrium breaks down, resulting in menstruation. Menstruation is considered the outward manifestation of the conclusion of one cycle and the commencement of the next.

Upon the ovum's death, the corpus luteum degenerates, ceasing hormone production. The sudden withdrawal of estrogen and progesterone triggers endometrial blood vessel spasms, causing most of the endometrium, except the basal layer, to disintegrate and shed some blood. Plasmin, an enzyme in the endometrium, dissolves blood clots, ensuring the menstrual discharge is typically fluid. The total blood loss during menstruation is typically limited to around 50 milliliters (1.69 U.S. fluid ounces)⁸. Following menstruation, the endometrium regenerates from the residual basal layer during the proliferative phase of the subsequent cycle.

⁴ Ibid

⁵ Yasmine Al Sayyad, 'What We Still Don't Know About Periods' (*The New Yorker*, 12 April 2023) <www.newyorker.com/books/under-review/what-we-still-dont-know-about-periods> accessed 13 November 2023

⁶ Jessica A Grieger and Robert J Norman, 'Menstrual Cycle Length and Patterns in a Global Cohort of Women Using a Mobile Phone App: Retrospective Cohort Study' (2020) 22(6) *Journal of Medical Internet Research* <<https://www.jmir.org/2020/6/e17109/>> accessed 13th November, 2023

⁷ Ibid

⁸ *Supra* note 6

Certain women may encounter warning signs preceding menstruation, such as pelvic discomfort, breast tenderness (attributable to the response of these organs to estrogen), and emotional stress. Ovarian hormones prompt the retention of sodium and water in tissue fluids, contributing to premenstrual tension, often referred to as premenstrual syndrome (PMS). Diuretics, medications that enhance urine production, may offer relief for some individuals experiencing these symptoms.

Upon the commencement of menstrual flow, the uterus undergoes contractions to expel both blood and the disintegrating endometrium. These contractions can be particularly uncomfortable, especially for young women who have not undergone pregnancy. The degree of menstrual discomfort, including the mentioned symptoms, varies widely among women and may fluctuate over time. Nevertheless, these discomforts typically do not disrupt regular daily activities.

Recognizing and addressing premenstrual symptoms is essential for promoting the overall well-being of women. Acknowledging the hormonal factors at play and considering therapeutic interventions, such as diuretics, can provide relief for those grappling with the discomfort associated with the menstrual cycle. It is crucial to appreciate the individual variability in symptoms and offer support to ensure that menstrual-related discomfort does not unduly affect a woman's quality of life.

III. CULTURE DISCOURAGES MENSTRUATING WOMEN FROM LEADING NORMAL LIVES

Menstruation is a regular biological process that countless mythologies and Delusions have surrounded. Menstruation is still regarded as filthy and impure in Hindu mythology. The Vedic era is where this myth got its start. When Lord Indra, the king of gods, is said to have cut off the head of Vishwaroopacharya, the second educator of the idols, women are said to have developed "Rajaswala Dosha" (menstruation). Lord Indra was given the "Brahmahatya dosha" because he slayed a Brahmin. He distributed it amongst the prithvy (land), Samudra (water), vriksha (tree), and stree (women) to get rid of it⁹. From that point on, women could conceive and began menstruating every 28 to 30 days. it has been

⁹ Dr. Tanu Anand, 'Menstruation Related Myths In India: Strategies For Combating It' (2015) 4(2) JFMPC
<<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4408698/#:~:text=The%20origin%20of%20this%20myth,a%20part%20of%20Indra's%20guilt>>, accessed 13th November 2023.

stated in the Veda that guilt, of assassination of a brahmana, seems steadily as feminine stream as females had taken upon themselves Indra's responsibility.

Another reason behind the discrimination against menstruating women is that there are three gunas (or qualities) according to the Indian yogic philosophy. Tamas is black, Rajas is red, and Sattva is white. Anything that comes out of the body, like sweat, blood, tears, and so on, is harmful, so they are called tamas¹⁰. Tamas is haziness or lack of definition. Therefore, traditional Hindus consider touching a woman in her period an "inappropriate" act.

Antiquated sacred writings like Manusmriti, upheld male-centric thought of controlling women's sexuality as it expresses that the man must monitor his better half to guarantee the purity of his offspring. Since the fourth century, keeping women out of religious shrines has been customary. The reason for this was to prevent priests and other men from being tempted to have sex.

These religious beliefs of considering menstruating women impure imposed many restrictions on women such as they cannot pass in the kitchen or temples, sleep during the day, bathe, wear florals, have sexual activity, touch other men or women, dialog loudly, or touch pickles while menstruating. A menstruating woman's touch causes a pickle to rot, according to the myth. The basil plant is viewed as sacred in Hinduism; Therefore, menstruating women are prohibited from touching it. They are forbidden to even let their shadow fall on it in some extreme cases, or it is alleged that the plant will pass away. Hindu values prohibit women from going to temples while they are flowing. On the boardings in front of the sanctuaries, it reads: Women during the monthly period are not permitted. Going to the temple was the most restricted activity (87.4%), followed by not touching pickles (48.6%)¹¹. Both urban and rural girls reported these restrictions in equal measure. Among illiterates, the notions that "a woman must have a purifying bath after menstruation" and "evil spirits entry in the body of menstruating girl can be prevented by placing broomsticks or footwear or neem leaves around the girl" were significantly more prevalent.

The limitation on menstruating women to enter places of religious worship has now turned into a hostile issue of the time. There are numerous famous and ancient temples

¹⁰ Ibid

¹¹ R Juyal, SD Kandpal and J Semwal, 'Social aspects of menstruation-related practices in adolescent girls of the district of Dehradun' [2013] IJCH 23(3)

such as Ranakpur Temple (Rajasthan), Lord Kartikeya Temple (Pushkar), Patbausi Satra Temple (Assam), Sree Padmanabhaswamy Temple (Thiruvananthapuram) adhere to the beliefs of their followers but still prohibit menstruating women from entering¹².

The goddess Kamakhya known as the bleeding goddess is worshipped in Kamakhya temple which is situated in Kamarupa in Assam. The "garbhagriha" of the shrine is believed to contain Shakti's mythical womb and vagina, and it is believed that the goddess menstruates in June. As of now, it is whispered that the Brahmaputra River close to the sanctuary changes to red¹³. The Kamakhya devi devotees are then sprinkled with holy water and the temple is closed for three days. Irony can be seen in the well-known Kamakhya temple where devotees worship a bleeding god and consider the menstruating water holy but restrict menstruating women from entering the temple.

Women's menstrual cycles are seen as an integral part of the natural cycle of life and should be respected to maintain balance and harmony in society. Some scholars argue that providing menstrual leave to women is a way of recognizing the importance of this natural cycle and promoting balance and harmony in the workplace and society. In theory, while Hindu philosophy recognizes menstruation as a natural bodily process and does not view it as impure or sinful, cultural and social taboos surrounding menstruation have contributed to the stigma surrounding menstruation in India. However, some scholars argue that Hindu philosophy also provides a basis for recognizing the importance of menstrual leave as a way of promoting balance and harmony in society.

- **DOES THE LAW DISCRIMINATE AGAINST WOMEN WHO HAVE PERIODS?**

Human rights are the rights that each person has because of their dignity. Menstruation is allied to human dignity. Mocking, stigma, and embarrassment associated with menstruation undermine the concept of human dignity. Gender disparity, thriving poverty, humanitarian disasters, and hurtful customs can all transform the monthly cycle into a period of hardship and disgrace, which can sabotage their pleasure of human rights.

¹² Vikas SV, 'Why are menstruating women not allowed in Sabarimala Temple? Centuries old beliefs and customs' (*One India*, 28 September 2028) <www.oneindia.com/india/why-are-menstruating-women-not-allowed-sabarimala-temple-centuries-old-beliefs-and-customs-2784065.html#:~:text=There%20are%20certain%20beliefs%20in,Naishtika%20Brahmachari%20or%20a%20celibate> accessed 12 November 2023

¹³ Muthender Velishala, 'The Red Brahmaputra' (*Speakingtree.in*, 14 June 2018) <<https://www.speakingtree.in/blog/the-red-brahmaputra>> accessed 31 January 2024

Law never discriminates against any individual. Part III of the Indian constitution mentions Fundamental rights which, without discrimination, protect the liberties and freedom of the citizens. As the author of this article mainly talks about the social discrimination against menstruating women, the fundamental rights being violated due to the mindset of society regarding menstruating women are Art. 14, Ar. 15, Art. 17, and Art. 25.

- Violation of Art. 14 and Art. 15 - The State is prohibited from denying anybody equality before the law or equal protection of the laws under Article 14 of the Constitution¹⁴ therefore barring menstruating women from entering into a state-owned temple is a violation of Article 14. Furthermore, discrimination based on gender is expressly prohibited under Article 15¹⁵. So, excluding menstruating women from entering the temple and allowing men is against Article 15.
- Violation of Article 17 - It mainly deals with the removal of untouchability¹⁶. During menstruation, women are excluded from public gatherings and forced to live in separate rooms so that no one will be touched by them because they are regarded as dirty and impure in our society, and their touch is also regarded as dirty and unclean. This exclusion violates Article 17 and is against the fundamental rights of menstruating women.
- Article 25 gave Indians the individual right to religious freedom¹⁷ but still menstruating women are not permitted in temples in many parts of India and society prevented them from exercising their fundamental rights to practice their religion, it is never mentioned that Indians the term used in Article 25 exclude menstruating women.

In the recent *Sabarimala Case*¹⁸, the Sabarimala Temple, a renowned Hindu temple situated in the State of Kerala and devoted to Lord Ayyappa prohibits young ladies and ladies somewhere in the range of 10 and 50 years old from entering the Temple complex. This boycott which has been forced for the sake of religion and custom has been legitimate on two grounds, First and foremost, the ladies of the age bunch having the monthly cycle cannot connect with themselves in extraordinary otherworldly discipline

¹⁴ Constitution of India, art. 14

¹⁵ Constitution of India, art. 15 (1)

¹⁶ Constitution of India, art. 17

¹⁷ Constitution of India, art. 25 (1)

¹⁸ *Indian Young Lawyers Association v The State of Kerala* [2019] 11 SCC 1

for a significant stretch recommended for the Sabarimala journey¹⁹. Second, their presence in large numbers during the pilgrimage may naturally undermine the pilgrims' efforts to control their sexual urges, which are the most important part of the pilgrimage's austerities²⁰.

While considering a plea, the Supreme Court questioned the Lord Ayyappa temple's ban on women. It stated that since God does not discriminate between men and women, there should be no gender discrimination on the temple grounds²¹. The majority concluded that it was against the fundamental rights of females between the ages of 10 and 50 to be excluded from the temple.

- **IS MENSTRUATION CONSIDERED TABOO IN OTHER RELIGIONS?**

In Judaism, a lady during a monthly cycle is called niddah and might be restricted from specific activities. The Jewish Torah, for instance, forbids having sexual relations with a woman who is having menstruation.²² A woman is exempt from the niddah ritual while she is having a period and for a week after that until she takes a mikvah, or procedural bath, which is mostly lone for wedded women²³. A wedded pair must refrain from having sensual relations and bodily closeness during this time. Universal Judaism disallows ladies and males from contacting or passing belongings to one another during this time.

Islam Women are not allowed to pray when they have menstrual periods. During menstruation, women should adhere to certain rules. They shouldn't be quick and the leftover diets of Ramadan should be finished at different dates. Hajes are permitted during menstruation; circumambulation of the Kaaba is likewise allowed²⁴. They are allowed to pass in the mosque's prayer room, but they are not required to pray, and they are encouraged to attend Eid celebrations and other Muslim gatherings. After the period,

¹⁹ Prime Legal, 'The Sabarimala Case: The Supreme Court of India' (*Prime Legal*, 25 November 2022) <<https://primelegal.in/2022/11/25/the-sabarimala-case-the-supreme-court-of-india/>> accessed 13 November, 2023

²⁰ Ibid

²¹ Supra Note 10

²² Marla J. Selvidge, 'Mark 5:25-35 and Leviticus 15:19-20: A Reaction to Restrictive Purity Regulations' [1984] 103(4) JBL 619

²³ Ibid

²⁴ Supra note 14

a shower (Ghusl), which is likewise mandatory for both partners' later sexual practice, is additionally compulsory before prayer may continue²⁵.

Menstruation is regarded as “a natural physical excretion that women have to go through every month, nothing more or less” in Theravada or Hinayana Buddhism²⁶. However, menstruating females are not permitted to enter shrines in some subfields of Japanese Buddhism. Menstruation is not measured as a divine hindrance to sacred practice in Nichiren Buddhism (Japan), although a woman who is menstruating may choose not to bow out of comfort²⁷. Women shouldn't go into temples or shrines when they're menstruating because it will be perceived as dirty. In Sri Lanka, Buddhism, this is likewise valid for their spouses and different males, who have been in a household with discharging ladies.

It is evident that menstruation is taboo in several religions as well, and menstruating women must adhere to numerous strict religious practices. Similar to Japan, South Korea has cultural norms that discourage open discussions about menstruation. The societal silence around menstruation can contribute to a lack of awareness, perpetuating myths and stigmas.

In some Middle Eastern countries, menstruation is often considered a private and impure matter. Women may face restrictions during their menstrual cycles, such as limitations on participating in religious activities or entering certain spaces. These practices are rooted in cultural and religious beliefs.

In various African countries, menstruation stigma exists, leading to challenges in menstrual hygiene management. Limited access to menstrual products, lack of proper sanitation facilities, and cultural taboos contribute to difficulties for women and girls during their menstrual cycles. While discussions around menstruation in Western countries have become more open in recent years, challenges still exist. Period shaming, stereotyping, and the so-called “pink tax” (higher prices for women's products) are issues that women in Western societies may face.²⁸

²⁵ Supra note 14

²⁶ Supra note 2

²⁷ M. Guterman, P. Metha and M. Gibbs, 'Menstrual Taboo Among Major Religions', (2007) 5(2) IJWHSP

<<https://ispub.com/IJWH/5/2/8213#:~:text=Judaism%2C%20Christianity%2C%20Islam%2C%20Hinduism,from%20men%20at%20this%20time>> accessed 11 November 2023

²⁸ Supra note 22

IV. MENSTRUATION LEAVE A STEP TOWARDS PROTECTING WOMEN

The concept of menstrual leave has garnered attention in India as a significant policy concern concerning women's health and overall well-being. Menstrual leave entails providing women with the option to take time off from their work duties during their menstrual cycles, whether it be compensated or uncompensated. This policy has been gaining popularity globally, with India being no exception. In the country, the judiciary has addressed the issue on various occasions. One noteworthy instance occurred in 2017 when Culture Machine, a Mumbai-based media company, implemented a policy allowing women employees to take the first day of their menstrual cycle as paid leave²⁹. This initiative received widespread acclaim and garnered coverage from numerous media outlets.

The menstrual cycle, viewed as an inherent part of the natural order, holds significance in maintaining societal equilibrium and harmony. Advocates argue that granting menstrual leave to women acknowledges the importance of this biological cycle, fostering balance and harmony within workplaces and society. While Hindu philosophy itself recognizes menstruation as a natural bodily process devoid of impurity or sin, prevailing cultural and social taboos in India have contributed to the stigma surrounding menstruation³⁰. Nevertheless, scholars posit that Hindu philosophy also offers a foundation for acknowledging the importance of menstrual leave in cultivating societal equilibrium.

The introduction of menstrual leave policies is perceived as a crucial stride in enabling women to exercise their fundamental rights meaningfully. Such policies contribute to gender equality by acknowledging and addressing the distinctive challenges women encounter in managing their menstrual cycles, ensuring that discriminatory practices based on gender do not prevail in workplaces or educational institutions. It is imperative, however, to implement these policies in a manner that respects all employees' rights, irrespective of gender, and avoids contravention of other constitutional rights, such as the right to work and the right to equality.

Despite the absence of a specific "Menstrual Bill" in India, various initiatives and proposals have emerged to address menstrual health and hygiene. The "National

²⁹ Sruthi Darbhamulla, 'Menstrual Leave And Its Global Standing' (*The Hindu*, 27 February 2023) <<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/explained-menstrual-leave-and-its-global-standing/article66554246.ece> > accessed 13 November 2023.

³⁰ Ibid

Menstrual Hygiene Scheme,” launched by the Indian government in 2018, aims to promote menstrual hygiene management among adolescent girls and women³¹. This initiative encompasses distributing free sanitary pads in rural areas and constructing menstrual hygiene management facilities in schools and public spaces.

While the concept of menstrual leave as a legal provision is undergoing discussions and consultations in India, its potential benefits for women’s health, empowerment, and challenging menstrual stigma and gender stereotypes are evident³². However, a careful and strategic approach is essential to ensure the effectiveness, fairness, and sustainability of such provisions.

Menstrual leave, as a legal provision, has the potential to be a transformative tool for women’s empowerment in India. By acknowledging the unique challenges women face during their menstrual cycles and affording them the time to manage these symptoms, menstrual leave becomes instrumental in promoting gender equality in the workplace and enhancing overall well-being. One empowering aspect lies in enabling women to take control of their health and well-being.

Beyond health improvements, menstrual leave can contribute to fostering gender equality by mitigating the stigma and discrimination faced by women. Employers, by recognizing and addressing the challenges women encounter during their menstrual cycles, signal their commitment to creating an inclusive and supportive workplace. Additionally, menstrual leave can play a role in advancing women’s economic empowerment by narrowing the gender pay gap and enhancing overall employment prospects. Providing women the flexibility to manage their menstrual cycles fosters a more equitable playing field, leading to increased economic opportunities and better outcomes for women and their families.

³¹ Anshul Prakash, Archika Dudhwewala, Deeksha Malik and Shreya Sukhtankar, ‘Looking Beyond the Law: The Case of Menstrual Leave in India’ (*SCC Online Blog*, 2023), <<https://www.sconline.com/blog/post/2023/03/07/looking-beyond-the-law-the-case-of-menstrual-leave-in-india/>> accessed 13 November 2023

³² Tahira Noor Khan, ‘The Period Leave Conundrum: An Encouraging Policy Or A Roadblock To Women’s Careers?’ (*The Indian Express*, 8 March 2023) <<https://indianexpress.com/article/lifestyle/life-style/do-women-need-paid-period-leave-or-will-it-lead-to-discriminatory-behavior-at-workplace-8484134/>> accessed 13 November 2023

V. CONCLUSION

The menstrual cycle is a dynamic process orchestrated by hormonal fluctuations, preparing the female reproductive system for potential pregnancy. The interplay of hormones, the development and release of the ovum, and the cyclical changes in the endometrium collectively define the stages of the menstrual cycle, culminating in menstruation if fertilization does not occur. Understanding this intricate biological process is essential for comprehending female reproductive health and fertility.

Since menstruation and social fallacies have been intertwined for a long time, there are a lot of misconceptions and negative stereotypes about this natural biological process that people who have menstrual cycles go through. However, a closer look reveals that these fallacies are not based on scientific facts but rather on cultural, historical, and social biases. Cultural mentalities have frequently connected periods with disgrace, humiliation, and pollution. People who menstruate face negative consequences as a result of these fallacies perpetuating harmful taboos. The notion that women who have menstruation are impure, unclean, or even dangerous has persisted due to social and religious beliefs regarding menstruation. Menstruating women may, as a result, be restricted or excluded from a variety of activities, including religious services, social gatherings, and even educational opportunities.

Women's participation can be restricted and gender inequality exacerbated by these restrictions, which can have a significant impact on their lives. In numerous general sets of laws, there are endeavors to safeguard against direct separation given the feminine cycle. To promote gender equality and prevent explicit discrimination against menstruating women, laws and regulations have been enacted. Discrimination based on menstrual status is generally not explicitly supported by the law.

Although this is not the case for all religions, there are instances in which social and religious beliefs have contributed to the taboos and stigma associated with menstruation. Different religious beliefs and social standards have shaped perspectives towards the feminine cycle, bringing about the view of it as impure, unclean, or even spiritually contaminated in some contexts.

The discourse surrounding menstrual leave in India reflects a nuanced intersection of cultural, philosophical, and legal considerations. While acknowledging the natural cycle of life and the importance of women's health, policymakers and employers must navigate

these discussions carefully to ensure that menstrual leave policies are not only implemented but are also effective, fair, and supportive of women's rights and well-being. The ongoing debates and consultations provide an opportunity to shape policies that can genuinely contribute to societal harmony, gender equality, and women's empowerment in India.