International Journal of Recent Development in Engineering and Technology
Website: www.ijrdet.com (ISSN 2347-6435 (Online) Volume 15, Issue 10, October 2026)

Menustruation Unmasked: Myths, Facts, And Social Realities.

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***Abstract*-- Menstruation is a natural phenomenon, which has an intrinsic feature of fertility, sexuality, creativity and inner life. The word menses comes from the Latin word that means "months". Menstruation is the natural part of the reproductive cycle in which blood comes from the uterus and exits through the vagina. It is a natural process that first occurs in girls usually between the age of 11 and 14 years and is one of the indicators of the onset of puberty among them. Despite being a phenomenon unique to girls, this has always been surrounded by secrecy and myths in many societies. In India, discussions regarding menstruation and the related issues are still a taboo. The socio cultural perspective of the society toward the issue is particularly a cause of concern. Menstruation has influence on a female's emotional and mental state, way of living and specifically, health. The challenge to deal with these the socio-cultural beliefs, attitudes, taboos, and myths related to menstruation are enormous as it is integrated with the insufficiency of awareness and understanding related to menstruation, puberty and female reproductive health. Menstruation in India is often shrouded in taboo, myths, and cultural stigma. From being seen as impure to facing social restrictions, Indian girls grow up hiding their periods in shame. Despite being a natural process, menstruation is still treated as a subject of silence. Menstruation in India could also be a closed-off topic that finishes up in many young girls feeling ashamed of their bodies. The purpose of the paper is to talk about menstruation and its psychological physiological impact on female body, menstruation related myths prevalent in India, their influence on female's life, relevance of communicating these matters in main care and some strategies to battle the situation.**

Menstruation is a normal part of reproductive cycle. Despite its biological significance, it is often surrounded by silence, stigma and cultural restrictions. In many countries, menstruating women and girls are discouraged from participating in religious activities, cooking, attending social gatherings, or engaging in physical exercise .Also it effect daily life routine including academic achievement, physical condition, behavioral pattern, diet, exercise, mood and sleep pattern. When menstruation starts, it called menarche, which comes out between 11 to15 years with mean age of 13 years. It is an intrinsic feminine experience. Beyond these physiological aspects, it's even linked with psychological aspects such as stress, depression, anxiety, aggression etc. These psychological aspects make a woman more vulnerable in their performances in many different dimensions.

Menstruation is normally viewed as unclean in the Indian society. Restrictions and isolation being imposed on menstruating women in the family have bolstered a bad thought to this phenomenon .The first menstruation is frequently horrifying and traumatic to an adolescent female because it normally takes place without her knowing about it .There is a severe lack of the information regarding menstruation amongst adolescent females at the arrival of first menstrual cycle arrives .Most of the adolescent females had inadequate and inaccurate records about the menstrual physiology and hygiene. Information regarding menstruation is mostly received from mothers, television, friends, instructors and relative's .There are over million menstruating women and female in India, however millions of girls across the India nevertheless face great boundaries to a blissful and dignified journey with menstrual hygiene management (MHM).

Menstruation in India is often shrouded in taboo, myths, and cultural stigma. In Indian culture, taboos get formed when certain beliefs stay identical over a particular period of a while. These beliefs get set and become so embedded in our collective true being that we refuse to abandon them even when the circumstances during which they originated change. From being seen as impure to facing social restrictions, Indian girls grow up hiding their periods in shame. Despite being a natural process, menstruation is still treated as a subject of silence. One common myth is that menstrual blood is dirty or impure .Another widespread belief is that menstruating women should not enter temples or participate in religious activities. A belief that women should avoid bathing, washing their hair, exercising, or eating sour foods during menstruation is also unsupported by scientific evidence. Menstruation in India is sometimes seen as a shameful conversation. Studies estimate that 71 per cent of women do not have any knowledge about menstrual health until after their period of play. Women are often described as "dirty" while menstruating and are commonly separated within the house when dining, praying or participating in other activities.

Cultural norms and religious taboos on menstruation are often compounded by traditional associations with evil spirits, shame and embarrassment surrounding sexual reproduction. In some cultures, women bury their cloths used during menstruation to prevent them being used by evil spirits.

However, there seems to be no logical or scientific explanation for this. In some parts of India, some strict dietary restrictions are also followed during menstruation such as sour food like curd, tamarind, and pickles are usually avoided by menstruating girls. It is believed that such foods will disturb or stop the menstrual flow. As far as the exercise is concerned, many studies in India and elsewhere have revealed that many adolescent girls believe that doing exercise/physical activity during menses aggravate the dysmenorrheal while in real exercise can help relieve the menstruating women with symptoms of premenstrual syndrome and dysmenorrheal and relieve bloating. Exercise also causes a release of serotonin, making one feel much happier.

Menstruation stigma often affects education. Some girls miss school because of pain, inadequate sanitation facilities, a lack of menstrual products, or embarrassment .These barriers can affect their education ,confidence, and participation in public life. In India, an estimated 70 per cent of all reproductive diseases are caused by poor menstrual hygiene. Women often use dirty rags as a replacement for sanitary pads. Even rags that are cleaned can still develop bacteria if not dried properly. Furthermore, 63 million adolescent girls in India, do not have access to a toilet in their homes.. According to one study, only a few percentage ladies use sanitary pads, while the rest use old rags, husk, ash, leaves, mud and soil and such other life-threatening materials to manage their flow.

Menstruation is a phenomenon unique to girls. However, it has always been surrounded by taboos and myths that exclude women from many aspects of socio-cultural life. In India, the topic has been a taboo until date. Such taboos about menstruation present in many societies impact on girls' and women's emotional state, mentality and lifestyle and most importantly, health. The challenge, of addressing the socio-cultural taboos and beliefs in menstruation, is further compounded by the low girls' knowledge levels and understandings of puberty, menstruation, and reproductive health. Thus, there is the need to follow a strategic approach in combating these issues.

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