IT'S OKAY TO BLEED

MUMBAI

GINPATI...

BAPPA...

MORYA!

GANPATI BAPPA MORYA!!!
It’s Okay to Bleed

Stories of Change by the Akshara Team
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For information contact
Akshara Centre
Dhuru Bldg, 2nd floor
Gokhale Road, Dadar West
Mumbai 400028
India
[T] 022-24316082
[E] akshara.frea@gmail.com
[W] www.aksharacentre.org

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ARPITA, I'M GOING TO MY AUNT'S HOUSE.

THEY HAVE A GANPATI AND I WILL DO THE DECORATION WITH HER.

NO! SHE CANNOT COME INSIDE!

DID! IS HERE!

TRILING!

SHE CANNOT COME INSIDE BECAUSE SHE JUST HAD HER PERIOD. HER ANIMA TOLD ME SO EARLIER.

HOW COME YOU'RE BACK SO EARLY?

OH! IT'S MY AUNT. I TOLD HER THAT I FINISHED MY PERIOD BUT SHE STILL DID NOT ALLOW ME TO ENTER THE HOUSE.
NEVER MIND. LET'S GO TO SNEHA'S HOUSE.

SHIVANI WASN'T ALLOWED TO DECORATE THE GANPATI BECAUSE SHE HAD HER PERIOD!

HOW HORRIBLE!

MY DAD IS REALLY STRICT ABOUT THIS AS WELL.

THAT HAPPENED TO ME LAST YEAR.
DO’s & DONT’s for girls with periods

In India, the common restrictions for girls with periods are:

Girl with period  Girl without period  Not to touch a statue of God, do puja or visit a temple

Not to offer prayers  Not to enter the kitchen and touch pots

Not to touch food and drinking water  Not to touch men and have sexual intercourse
DADI’S
Tales of Reality?

THE LOST RING
THERE WAS A LADY WHO WAS STANDING IN LINE FOR THE BALAJI TIRUPATI DARSHAN WHEN SHE SUDDENLY REALISED...

OH NO, I GOT MY PERIOD.
WELL I’VE COME SO FAR, I MIGHT AS WELL STAY.
A FEW DAYS LATER, HER MOTHER-IN-LAW WAS MISSING SOMETHING PRECIOUS...
WHERE IS MY RING?? MY RING IS MISSING!
IT’S MY FAULT!

THE POLICE WOMAN
MY NEIGHBOUR IS A POLICEMAN AND SHE WAS POSTED FOR DUTY. SO SHE WENT EVEN THOUGH SHE HAD HER PERIOD.

FIVE DAYS LATER...
HER FATHER-IN-LAW SUFFERED FROM A PARALYTIC STROKE!
IT’S MY FAULT!

THE FIRE
THERE WAS A GIRL AS YOUNG AS YOU WHO GARLANDED GOD ON THE THIRD DAY OF HER PERIOD, EVEN THOUGH HER MOTHER TOLD HER NOT TO...

AFTER A FEW DAYS...
THERE WAS A FIRE IN HER HOUSE!!
IT’S MY FAULT!!

WE DO NOT KNOW HOW THESE MISCONCEPTIONS AND STORIES AROUND MENSTRUATION CAME ABOUT. IT IS POSSIBLE THAT AS IT IS CONNECTED WITH BIRTH, IT WAS SEEN IN AWE AND FEAR. SOME ANTHROPOLOGISTS SAY THAT MEN WERE AFRAID OF WOMEN AS THEY COULDBIRTH, AND PUT ALL SORTS OF RESTRICTIONS ON THEM TO CONTROL THEM. GRADUALLY TABOOS TURNED INTO SUPERSTITIONS AND A NUMBER OF PRACTICES WERE FOLLOWED.
FOR MORE INFO, READ ABOUT TABOOS AROUND THE WORLD AT: HTTP://WWW.WOMENSHEALTHMAG.COM/LIFE/PERIODS-AROUND-THE-WORLD
WE ARE 5 WOMEN IN OUR HOUSE AND WE GET OUR PERIODS MORE OR LESS AT THE SAME TIME. SO NOW WHAT? WE DON’T COOK OR CLEAN? IT’S RIDICULOUS. MY FATHER SAID ‘FORGET IT, WE DON’T HAVE TO FOLLOW THESE OLD CUSTOMS!’

I HAD MY PERIODS BUT I DIDN’T CARE AND SAID MY PRAYERS IN FRONT OF THE IDOL AT HOME.

MY MOTHER IS QUITE COOL. I TOLD HER THAT I HAD PRAYED AND SHE SAID:

LOOK, IT’S NOT AS IF GOD IS GOING TO BEAT YOU!

SOMETIMES I THINK THAT OUR OLD PEOPLE TELL US ALL THIS JUST TO SCARE US. AREN’T GODDESSES WOMEN?

I JUST DON’T TELL ANYONE IN THE FAMILY WHEN I HAVE MY PERIOD.

IT’S NATURE, YAAR! PART OF OUR BODY’S FUNCTIONING. DON’T YOU REMEMBER, WHAT WE LEARNED IN BIO CLASS?
What is Menstruation?

When your body hits puberty, your body starts to produce a new set of hormones. These hormones will send out signals to your body, and some of them will tell your body to start to prepare for pregnancy every month. Puberty can start as early as 10 or as late as 16, it depends from person to person.

The menstrual cycle is a series of natural processes that your body goes through. During your period cycle, your hormone levels rise and fall, depending on which stage of your menstrual cycle you are in. These hormones can also affect your mood and level of energy.

Certain hormones released by the pituitary gland in our brain during the reproductive cycle stimulate the ovaries and cause some of the eggs that are present there to grow. The follicles that contain the eggs start producing hormones like estrogen which lead to the thickening of the womb's wall, preparing it to receive a fertilised egg. In case the egg does not get fertilised, our body experiences the breaking down of the thick lining of the uterus.

Menstruation is the biological process where a woman's body releases the blood and lining of the womb.

During this time you may also experience period cramps!

This normally occurs once every month and can last for 2-5 days. Menstruation among women starts upon hitting puberty and goes on till menopause.
TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF

If this is a normal thing for all women all over the world, then why make such a big deal about it?

Right. Instead we should be talking about hygiene and taking care of our periods properly and eating properly because we lose blood.

When I get married and set up my home, I will not allow these taboos.

Me neither...

Decide on what, for you, is a convenient method: Sanitary napkins, tampons or pieces of cloth?

Wash yourself and bathe regularly.

Change your pad or tampon regularly.

Eat nutritious food. Remember, that most Indian girls are anaemic because of poor nutrition.

If you are using cloth strips, make sure they are clean and dry before you use them again.

Discard your sanitary product properly.

Wrap your used pad in newspaper or the wrapping of the next pad you are about to use.

Throw your used pad in a bin.

Don’t throw your used pad in the toilet!

There are many organisations and others taking up this issue of taboos, e.g. the “Touch the Pickle” ad: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5585983l3Iy&feature=youtu.be

You can join campaigns like “Happy to Bleed”: https://www.facebook.com/events/757114674433128/

You can read about menstruation in comic book form in: https://www.menstrupedia.com/
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Akshara’s focus is on half the population of India or its women and girls, especially those who are socially and economically underprivileged and bear the brunt of violence.

Akshara, a Mumbai-based, non-profit women’s organisation and resource centre, has for 22 years been working for the empowerment of women through educational scholarships, building livelihood skills and understanding one’s gender rights.

In order to curb and prevent violence against women so that women can lead productive and dignified lives, Akshara engages with young men to introspect and work towards gender equality and the State to implement laws and provide services for a Safe, Inclusive and Sustainable City.