

Right to avail Menstrual Leave

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Introduction-

The impact of westernization and technology on most developing countries has led to a standard deviation in modern society. However, what reigns is stigmatization in people's minds. Every government tries to enact laws and regulations to adapt to the changing and difficult conditions of society. However, a common problem is the unsynchronized implementation of the permanence for which the rule or regulation was enacted. Although most Asian countries have moved forward, India is debating whether the country needs a law to track menstrual records.

Menstruation is a taboo in India, whether in the workplace or elsewhere; some of us are too timid to address it. In terms of work, some women find it difficult to talk about their periods and the discomfort they experience during them. There is a lot of period awareness going on in terms of educating women about their periods, but there is some stigma associated with it, and women are not discussing their periods and instead choose to remain silent. Endometriosis affects 25 million women in India, according to the Endometriosis Society India, and causes period pain so severe that women may pass out. Similarly, according to the Clinical Evidence Handbook, 20% of women have severe symptoms such as cramping, nausea, and fatigue that interfere with everyday activities.

In India, our legislative system is so primitive that no rule addressing menstruation leave is passed. Many nations, including Japan, South Korea, and Italy, have some type of regulation or legislation governing menstruation leave. Bihar is the only state in our nation that has provided two days of special menstrual leave to women since 1992 through its human resource guidelines. India also saw the Menstruation Benefits Bill, 2017,¹ which was introduced in Parliament and included two days of maternity leave and better rest facilities for women, but nothing significant transpired as a result of this bill. However, many Indian companies have implemented maternity leave for women in their jobs.

When analysing the barriers to adoption of the notion, it should be highlighted that there is a deeper debate here about whether period leave is necessary, or, more crucially, wanted, in the first place. While many

¹ Menstruation Benefits Bill, 2017

women advocate for paid menstrual leave because of the excruciating pain and disruption to professional responsibilities that period pain causes, others have dismissed the idea because they believe that spreading menstrual leave will deepen male preconceptions about female weakness and negatively affect hiring and promotion prospects for women everywhere, due to possible misconceptions that women will end up becoming liabilities to the organisation.

It is important to note that menstrual leave does not have to mean a complete loss of productivity for women – nor does menstrual leave advocates require it to mean a complete loss of productivity. Menstrual leave can easily allow a woman to work from home - which is becoming the norm in many companies today due to the global crisis - and work on her own terms, in her own comfort and flexibility, which will actually increase the productivity of the employee. during this time rather than reducing it.

In addition, it is essential that organizations provide timely education to inform the general public about the prevalence and impact of menstruation and to make everyone aware that menstruation is neither too common to be completely ignored nor too unique to warrant discrimination. This transformation must begin at the bottom of society; men, children and co-workers must be willing to participate in the conversation both personally and professionally. Discussions about periods and cramps must leave the privacy of women's locker rooms. Men must first normalize and personally recognize this extremely common phenomenon; after all, policy improvements and laws to support the leave, while useful in themselves, can only do so much to combat prejudice and insensitivity to menstruation. If we do this as a company, some of our top performers and employees will benefit immensely in terms of satisfaction and efficiency – and India Inc.

Some women oppose the bill because they believe it would deepen bias against women in the workplace and force them to cope with unfair treatment in the form of hiring bias, lower pay, slower promotions and less attendance at board meetings than it is currently.

Culture Machine and Gozoop were the first Indian businesses to adopt this strategy, and a select few soon followed suit, including W&D, a company specializing in women's intimate health, and Industry ARC, a market research organization based in Hyderabad.

To suggest that working in such an environment is normal for women is insulting. Women can take a day or two off each month during their period to manage any health issues such as cramps. Women should be entitled to compulsory menstrual leave in addition to the sick days generally provided to employees. Women rarely have sick days off due to the limited number of sick days available and the fact that they usually use them for menstruation.

Therefore, the idea is that sick days should be used for actual sick days and vacation dates. She has been suffering for a long time due to ignorance of menstrual hygiene. Despite recent conversations on the subject, period sensibility needs to be destigmatized.

What is Menstruation?

A menstruating woman bleeds from her vagina during this period. Other symptoms such as convulsions may also occur. Menstruation occurs when the uterine lining is shed and breaks down into blood. This blood leaves the body through the vagina.

In addition to vaginal bleeding, a woman may experience a number of symptoms related to hormonal changes known as premenstrual syndrome, which includes emotional and physical symptoms such as back or lower back pain, pelvic pain, food cravings, bloating, sore breasts, moodiness. fluctuations, headache, fatigue and even irritability.

Effects-

Menstruation has a number of effects on women. It mostly affects a woman's reproductive system, as well as other organs. Aside from that, it takes a severe toll on the mental side due to the wide variety of feelings that women experience throughout their periods.

As if that wasn't enough, society added to women's grief by discriminating against them on the basis of menstruation rather than sympathizing or assuaging their pain. People have not yet accepted menstruation as a biological event, and its social significance is that it is still considered a taboo in many cultures, forcing women to live alone. The least people can do is make themselves feel better and yet they are left to suffer alone.

What exactly is menstruation leave?

Menstruation causes pain, discomfort, and other health difficulties, making it difficult for women to work. Many of the women requested a day or two off to alleviate their suffering. Menstrual leave is a form of time off that women take when menstruating in order to relax for those who have severe period cramps. Just like when employees would regularly take sick leave. These days are in addition to the standard sick leave offered to all workers.

Why is menstruation tabooed and ignored by the majority of us?

Various social activists, including many political parties and individuals, have undertaken numerous campaigns and protests in recent years to raise awareness for the times, but despite this, it is extremely difficult for people to discuss the issues publicly. Conversations concerning menstruation are still uncommon in our society. Apart from a few educational establishments and corporate enterprises, period sensitivity is not even considered a topic for debate.

As a result, menstruation hygiene is one of our country's most ignored issues. In a country with over 336 million women of reproductive age, it is heart-breaking to learn that over 74% of women still use an old discarded cloth, leaves, to shield themselves instead of safer and more hygienic methods.² There are several evidence that women are being stopped, such as superstitions, misinformation, cultural constraints, and even a lack of access to sanitation facilities.

Global policies on menstrual leave-

Nearly a century ago, the Soviet Union was the one that freed women from paid labour to protect their health, and who later pioneered the concept of statutory maternity leave. Later, labour unions in Japan popularised the notion of menstrual leave, which was later codified into law in 1947. Japan's menstrual policy has been in place for almost 70 years, and it is the only country in Asia with such a regulation for women. Certain areas, enterprises, and provinces in China are rapidly establishing menstrual leave regulations that provide a range of benefits. Taiwan, Indonesia, and Zambia are a few additional nations that recognise menstruation leave and include it in their employee leave policies. Menstrual leave becomes a sensitive issue for women to bring up when there is worry that it would hinder job productivity.

In Zambia, women receive one paid menstrual day each month compared to two paid days for women in Indonesia. Similar to South Korea, which has allowed one such leave per month since 2001, the country has also gone a step further by enacting laws requiring women to be reimbursed for unused menstrual leave and students to take menstrual leave. In Taiwan, women can take one menstrual leave each month, and if they take less than three menstrual leaves in a calendar year, their menstrual leave will not count as sick time.

Period leave policies have been adopted by a number of businesses or employers around the world, including Nike, CoExist (a UK company) and the Victorian Women's Trust in Australia.

Italy tried to pass legislation in 2017 to require female workers to receive 3 days of paid menstrual leave each month, but failed to do so and was heavily criticized by opponents.

In May 2022, the Spanish government passed a menstrual leave law that allows employees to take paid sick leave for severe menstrual problems. This law has been in effect in Japan since 1947, but is largely ineffective.

Anhui is not the first Chinese province to try this. Previously, the policy was first implemented in Hainan and Hubei in 1993 and 2009, respectively. Women in Japan and other Asian countries have had access to menstrual leave since 1947. Women in South Korea receive a day off each month. Taiwan voted in 2014 to allow female workers one day of menstrual leave each month, with three of those days entitled to half pay. In Indonesia, women are legally entitled to a two-day menstrual break every month.

² National Family Health Survey 2015-16

What is the situation in India? With the provision of a doctor's letter, women are permitted to take one or two days off.

Despite its rapid growth, India's female labour force participation percentage is only 23.5%³ Though the gender ratio adjacent to female schooling is steadily improving, a diminishing share of labour employment is seen.

In the informal economy, women make up 32% of the workforce. Collection of rations is not required in such divisions, leaving no options for period leaves. With rare exceptions, most nations that strive for such benchmarks as opportunity to perform are unsettled. In India in particular, women workers in the informal or unorganized sector overcome several difficulties to retain their jobs by acquiring an entity. The main goal is poverty, and each member of the family in such a situation must strive for his own well-being.

Also, because the ladies have struggled for so long without complaining about their menstrual cycle, the owners won't be supportive either. This is a problem with the labour force of the economically disadvantaged sections of the community.

The organized sector must ensure safety and profit for all its employees. However, due to the circumstances in previous countries, menstrual leave remains a nebulous topic.

Ideally, they want employers to design solutions that allow for additional sick days. Every age group has different needs and it can be difficult for businesses to meet them all. A corporation cannot exclusively increase sick pay for female employees. In addition, modern women believe that worrying about menstrual problems makes them appear weak in the eyes of society. No matter how Westernized the country is, public discussion of menstruation and its implications is taboo in Indian society. As a result, many female employees remain mute and want to keep quiet about the ongoing problem.

However, a determination that it is not an essential policy based on several assumptions is not a permissible option.

Most working-class women multitask, from managing the household to adding work experience. A day or two of rest every now and then would benefit both mentally and physically. Furthermore, such short-term breaks should not be used to judge the suitability and acceptability of women's workforces compared to their male counterparts. Women in India are paid much less than men, so even if they were given a few days of additional leave, it would not compensate for their significantly lower salaries.

Another important barrier is the unfavourable conditions of toilets in the workplace for women. Although corporations in both the organized and unorganized sectors are doing this in modern cities, it remains a

³ International Labour Organization

neglected topic. Today's urban Indian has a faulty, inadequate, revolving and unclean toilet that discourages working women. Indian businesses, whether big and busy or small and striving, are still obsessed with cutting costs to the exclusion of any concerted effort to make workplaces women-friendly. For women, not having a safe, private space to exchange used menstrual products can cause worry and tension, reducing congestion and potency.

Thus, during menstrual intervals, women expect access to acceptable facilities such as hygiene, appropriate hygiene supplies and assistance with disposal, as well as a supportive atmosphere in which they can complete menstruation without difficulty.

The situation with menstrual leave in India-

Menstrual leave is not a foreign concept in India, as evidenced by the fact that the Government of Bihar has been giving its female employees two days of extra leave every month since 1992, and The Government Girls School in Ernakulam district has been allowing its students 'period leave' since 1912 during their exams every year, yet this critical subject is still neglected in India.

In 2017, Member of the Kerala Legislative Assembly KS Sabarinathan asked the assembly to look into extending menstrual leave to its employees.

Menstruation Benefits Bill, 2017-

Menstruation benefits bill proposes to give women working in the public and commercial sectors two days of paid menstrual leave each month, as well as better opportunities to rest at work during menstruation. Female students in government recognized schools in class VIII and above would also be eligible. However, if passed, the proposal would be by no means revolutionary, as the Kerala Girls' School has been providing menstrual leave to its female students since 1912 and Bihar has been providing a two-day special leave to women since 1992, known as 'Special Occasional Leave.'

In 2017, Shri Ninong Ering, Member of Parliament, first introduced The Menstrual Benefit Bill. The measure was introduced with the intention of paving the way for women, an age-old law in corporate India that benefits women at work and in educational institutions. The measure was offered again on the opening day of the 2022 budget session, but was ignored by the Legislative Assembly as an "unclean" issue.

However, prior to Ering's bill, there had been some significant developments in this area. Since 1992, the Government of Bihar has been offering two days of menstrual leave to female employees. Women can choose which two days a month they do not want to work.

In 2017, Mumbai-based Culture Machine introduced a "first day leave policy" for its female employees, and many other companies quickly followed suit, including Gozoop, W&D and Industry ARC.

The Directive Principles of the Indian Constitution also encourage the government to act for the welfare of women employees, and Article 42⁴ instructs the government to provide appropriate and humane working conditions, including maternity leave. Since India has the Maternity Benefit Act of 1961⁵, which is legislation pertaining to maternity, which is a biological process unique to women, the government should enact laws pertaining to menstruation, which is also a biological process. And the Constitution of India also allows for the enactment of a law enabling discrimination in favour of women under Article 15(3)⁶, as confirmed by the Supreme Court in *Government of Andhra Pradesh v, P.B. Vijayakumar & Anr*⁷, where it was held that special provisions for women under Article 15(3) means "special provisions which the State may make to improve the participation of women in all activities under the supervision and control of the State may take the form of either.

The bill must cover girls and women in all industries/sectors/professions/jobs, not just white collar. This bill should address blue collar, white collar, pink collar and gold collar occupations as well as all other depictions of collar jobs. When discussing/debating the bill, it is essential not to narrow our focus and focus on just one group of women, because women from all backgrounds menstruate, regardless of the type of work they do. While white- and gold-collar positions have amenities and luxuries that blue-collar jobs do not, basic coverage for blue-collar workers under this bill (if and when passed) would be a step in the right direction.

Below are the main points of the bill-

It aims to provide girls with menstruation school and university students with leave, as well as working women, better facilities for relaxation at work during menstruation and better hygiene measures for women and adolescent girls.

- Paid time off is required because: Menstruation, especially on the first day, can be tiring and upsetting for women. Paid leave is already available in several Indian states, including Bihar and Kerala.
- Importance: Given the importance of hygiene and menstrual health in a woman's life, it is plausible to argue that they also come within Article 21,⁸ which demands the supply of the essential

⁴ Article 42, of the Indian Constitution

⁵ Maternity Benefit Act of 1961

⁶ Article 15(3) of Indian Constitution

⁷ 1995 AIR 1648, 1995 SSC (4) 520

⁸ Article 21 of Indian Constitution

circumstances for women to work with dignity. As a result, giving menstruation leave is a fundamental human rights problem that should be properly examined.

- Accepting a private member account entails the following steps: The Speakers of the Rajya Sabha and the Lok Sabha make the decision on admission. The House's rejection has no effect on legislative confidence in the administration or its departure.
- The Bill's Necessity: This law is urgently needed; it was submitted in parliament after learning about the significant difficulties of the female biological system and the physical discomfort women experience throughout their periods. According to a 2017 study conducted by University College London⁹, the amount of pain a female experience while menstruating is equivalent to the pain experienced during a heart attack. Pain also reduces an employee's productivity, which has an impact on their work.

Which all firms are giving menstrual leave in India?

Several firms, like Dwight, Swiggy, and Zomato, provide menstruation leave to their employees. Many people, however, are still unaware of the hardships that a woman faces during her menstrual cycle. However, recent improvements have helped many firms comprehend period-related concerns; hence, several companies' recent measures are relatively conceivable.

India is not the first country to implement period leave or give time off to female employees. Countries such as Japan, South Korea, and Italy have made menstruation leave mandatory for all female employees as part of their policies. Similar actions are being taken in India, and firms are following suit.

Arguments for using menstrual leaves-

Menstrual leave are the subject of worldwide debate and their use is justified for many reasons, including the following:

The main reason for menstrual sheets is that many women experience extreme pain during menstruation and it is not right to force them to work under such conditions. According to an Indian study of women, 25 million women suffer from endometriosis¹⁰, a chronic condition where the pain during periods is so severe that women almost pass out.

This is a biological phenomenon, not a decision that women voluntarily make on their own, and therefore needs to be seen properly.

⁹ The New England Journal of Medicine

¹⁰ Endometriosis Society of India

Allowing such breaks has the added benefit of increasing productivity by instilling faith in the company's ethics and promoting gender equality, inclusiveness and attention to the needs of employees.

In addition, several research studies have found that periods reduce women's productivity and efficiency because they often have less emotional control and focus during periods, so it is best not to force them to work during such times.

Women are often paid less than men, so providing such time off will not affect the private budgets of companies.

Companies need to understand that offering menstrual leave does not mean a loss of productivity on the part of women. Menstrual leave also provides several benefits to women. If she feels good internally, she will be ready to return to work after just one day of menstrual leave. Many companies allow women to work from home throughout their menstrual cycle.

There should be exceptional women's support groups to raise awareness within organisations. It also offers fundamental conversation points on how to normalise menstruation, cease hiding from it, and why menstrual leave should exist in India. Positive improvements in society result from people having the correct mentality. First, we must instil appropriate menstruation in our society's foundations. Then there should be open room conversations about period discomfort, cramps, and their negative repercussions. All men, women, and children, regardless of age, nationality, or caste, should participate in such a dialogue. Women no longer hide their periods and do not openly talk about such aspects of their lives. Now we must all unashamedly work together to bring about a much-needed shift in our traditional societal standards.

Menstruation should be normalized and other holidays should not be considered gender discrimination. It's time for individuals to act educated, not just by getting degrees, but by-passing laws that support the growing number of women in the workforce. It is not the purpose of one group, but the whole society must step up and speak on this issue.

Every female employee investigates whether private companies, public organizations or start-ups have the right to menstrual leave. No job is done without risking someone's health.

Criticism-

The menstrual leave policy has drawn widespread criticism from around the world. These are the main reasons for his criticism:

Many experts argue that because women have legitimately fought for their advancement, especially in areas like India where women have historically been persecuted, such regulations can stifle women's advancement in the workplace.

They also argue that corporations can use this policy of more days off to justify lower pay or to reinforce prejudice against women in relation to their perceived high value.

They also believe that allowing menstrual leave will lead to the exclusion of women from decision-making responsibilities, as it will reinforce the prejudices that women suffer from in the workplace, namely that they are too emotional and untrustworthy.

They further criticize menstrual leave for perpetuating the decades-old stereotype that menstruation makes women unfit for work, suggesting that women are at a particular disadvantage in the workplace because they are menstruating.

He also criticizes the menstrual sheets for discriminating against men by allowing a woman to have more voles.

Because not all women have the same problems, women who have fewer problems and can abuse these regulations can work full-time throughout their periods.

Some argue that even when menstruation rules are in place, women hesitate to take such leave for fear of being embarrassed and having to justify their absence.

The case for a menstrual leave policy runs into a number of difficult arguments in a society where the word "menstruation" is frowned upon. The first point is that women have been in the workforce for decades and are doing well.

Why do we suddenly feel obligated to give them with menstrual sheets? It is even more difficult because it has become common for women to do this or, more likely, consume Meftas plus (painkiller) every month to show that they are just as busy as their male counterparts.

Another concern is that if menstrual leave is included, more companies will be hesitant to hire women. Organizations around the world have discovered several reasons for not hiring women. That's just another reason to add to the endless list. The rationale reinforces the notion of women suffering in silence to "fit in." In doing so, we are certainly accelerating the patriarchal cycle.

Some argue that it is symbolic and therefore likely to do more harm than good. Organizations and professionals should deal with the situation as they see fit and not be restricted by law. According to Deep Bajaj, it would be illogical to require a 2-day absence because not all women have the same symptoms and their menstrual cycles do not always coincide.

It would legitimize patriarchal stereotypes about how women are vulnerable and promote the idea that they are a burden on society. This results in hiring bias and makes it harder for women to get jobs. However, giving in to this prejudice would mean undermining the entire goal of supporting a gender-inclusive

workplace. Our organization is made up of people from all backgrounds and with different needs. Regardless of gender, the company should pay attention to the requirements of its employees.

It would provide a way for women to abuse these leaves. Women's experiences are particularly irrelevant when the need for menstrual leave is questioned. Women must be able to regulate how they experience menstruation.

The idea that most women can work through their period and can take sick days if they have severe symptoms. Because some women may not have significant symptoms and can function in such a situation, it is callous to assume that every woman can function without any discomfort or agony.

Other argument is that the menstrual leave regulation is discriminatory and illegal. Under Article 15 of the Constitution, only discrimination based on sex is prohibited, although Article 3 allows the state to introduce any additional provisions for women.

When the state must ensure the welfare and resilience of its workers, male and female, is covered in Article 39. Article 42 further discusses the state's duty to ensure fair and humane working conditions as well as maternity assistance.

It is the duty of the state to improve public health and raise the standard of living under Article 47¹⁵. Under the provisions of our Constitution, it is the duty of the state to make laws to address any unique requirements. Consequently, the argument itself is flawed.

Additionally, opponents argue that it would be far more cost-effective and efficient to stop taxing feminine hygiene products, focus on making safer products more readily available, and provide women with safer, cleaner facilities.

Even though it is still mostly taboo in our society, women need to have access to these rights, I can say so after doing some research and knowing about the varied menstrual leave laws in other nations. Similarly, to Anhui, where women are permitted to take two days off during their periods with a doctor's note, we can enact laws in India that, in addition to sick days, permit women who are going through extremely painful periods and are finding it difficult to get to work to take these leaves twice a month. It is unjust to expect them to work in such demanding circumstances.

Media Discussion-

The media debate over the FOP holiday is the latest in a series of social and marketing campaigns aimed at breaking the taboo around menstruation¹¹. Happy to Bleed, an online and offline campaign that aimed to remove the taboo and secrecy associated with public recognition of menstruation, was launched in 2015. It

¹¹ The Indian Journal of Industrial Relations

began in response to remarks by a priest at the Sabarimala temple¹² who reiterated the institution's rule that women of reproductive age are not allowed inside because of the possibility that they might be menstruating.

In an effort to end the taboo surrounding menstruation and address long-standing cultural taboos against public discussion of one's body, students at Jamia Milia Islamia in New Delhi and other universities across the country joined the Pads Against Sexism campaign launched in Germany.

A recent ad campaign by the well-known sanitary pad manufacturer Whisper challenged long-held superstitions such as the one that says a woman shouldn't handle cucumbers when she's bleeding, and challenged taboos associated with menstruation (not exercising, staying indoors). Menstrual stigma is also addressed in the Bollywood film *Padman* starring Akshay Kumar and based on the life of Arunachalam Muruganantham, who developed an award-winning, affordable sanitary napkin for the Indian market. In the film's promotional ads, the producer and cast promote candid conversations about menstruation. Therefore, men tend to advocate for honest conversations about menstruation when portrayed by actors and producers. Therefore, menstruation is likely to continue to be a topic of conversation in Indian society.

After Culture Machine's widely publicized establishment of the FOP holiday, there was heated debate in the media, with some applauding the move as a vital step to support women who experience pain and discomfort during menstruation, while others condemning it as a step backwards that would curtail a hard-won right equal treatment of women at work and prevented their recruitment (because employers might consider them less productive than their male peers). Interestingly, both proponents and opponents of the proposal say that getting your period is "normal" and shouldn't make you feel ashamed. Obviously, they refute this claim with various justifications.

Barkha Dutt, a well-known journalist, strongly condemned the idea in 2017, calling it "goofy" and "paternalistic". She suggested the regulation would backfire and undermine those women who seek to enter careers they have traditionally been denied access to: military combat, for example. She claimed to have been covering the 1999 Kargil conflict while menstruating. In support of Dutt's view, a feminist argument can be made that the policy promotes biological essentialism, which has been used to economically and socially disadvantage women. With the recent revision of the Maternity Benefit Act (2017) extending maternity leave from 12 to 26 weeks, there are concerns that offering multiple types of paid leave to women could cause dissatisfaction among men. In their articles for the Times of India and India Today, Rachel Chitra (2017)¹⁹ and Somya Abrol (2017)²⁰ list some businesswomen (and men) who disagree with the policy, arguing that it would hinder gender equality. Similar claims are made in the well-known online discussion forum "Feminism in India" by Mitsu Sahay (2017).

Proponents of period leave claim that it shows the company's sensitivity to the demands of female employees. They cite chronic conditions such as endometriosis, adenomyosis, and polycystic ovary

¹² Indian Young Lawyers Association vs The State Of Kerala

syndrome (PCOS), which can cause excessive bleeding, irritable bowel syndrome, and nausea in addition to extreme and uncontrollable pain.

Public health research supports these claims: 10% of women of reproductive age have endometriosis¹³. The prevalence of polycystic ovary syndrome is difficult to determine because several sources often report drastically different rates in different populations.

Even women without chronic diseases have substantial discomfort, which can be controlled with over-the-counter painkillers, rest, and DIY therapies. Numerous symptoms can be reduced with rest or by staying away from physically taxing activities (the amount of rest required differs from one woman to another). It is important to realise that not all women with chronic illnesses experience similarly painful periods every month. Stress, hormonal fluctuations, dietary changes, and other factors might make certain cycles more painful than others.

Proponents of FOP say it breaks the social taboo around talking about menstruation. There is a lot of shame and secrecy surrounding the menstrual cycle in India, as in many other countries. Girls often feel guilt, fear, and dread when they experience their first period, when they begin menarche without being aware of their period beforehand. Even in adulthood, knowledge about menstruation and reproductive health remains limited. Cultural taboos and customs related to menstruation exacerbate these problems.

Policy for alternative leave-

As previously stated, women may be entitled to optional FOP leave if they have to travel to work on congested public transport. However, a more practical substitute may be Australian menstruation researcher Lara Owen's idea of "menstrual flexibility"¹⁴. Women with "menstrual flexibility" can skip work during their period and make it up on other days. According to Owens, the law allows women to schedule their workdays around their bodies' natural cycles. It is less likely to incite male animosity or hinder the hiring of women.

Offering wellness leave to all employees would be an even more inclusive option. The concept of "wellness leave" recognizes that all employees can request time off during periods when they are not entitled to sick leave. For example, a female employee may experience uncomfortable cramps or diarrhoea during her period, or a male employee may experience acute stress and accompanying physical symptoms such as headaches, muscle aches or exhaustion.

Employees could undergo medical treatment that they do not want their co-workers or bosses to know about. For example, employees who have had a medically terminated pregnancy or employees who have undergone intimate medical treatment would not want to indicate this on sick leave forms or a doctor's note. Employers

¹³ Rogers, P. Thomas

¹⁴ Owens, L. (2016)

can respect both their employees' right to privacy and their right to vacation by offering a certain number of wellness vacations each year.

Women may receive a limited number of additional wellness leaves each year compared to men because they have more reproductive issues than men.

However, the nature of the employee's job and function cannot be overlooked when determining entitlement to wellness leave. One may argue that physically demanding jobs such as laborers or manual labour deserve more paid time off than white collar jobs performed in the luxury of an office. This raises the question of whether different roles in an organization require tailored leave policies, questions that are difficult to answer but crucial to raise in further discussions about employee wellbeing.

Conclusion-

Menstruation is an inevitable biological phenomenon that all women experience and therefore should be handled appropriately and as a result a menstrual leave policy should be created. The menstrual leave policy does not promote any prejudices or stereotypes, but rather promotes the concept of gender sensitivity. In addition, since menstruation is not an illness, it is not fair to combine menstrual and sick leave.

Different bodies react differently to the pain and discomfort of menstruation. Given the hardships and biological complications women face, I believe it is critical that such a bill be passed and that women be given every opportunity to use this leave when needed.

The basic problem in society is misunderstanding and ignorance of a topic before we think about it. It is legitimate to accuse society of being overly sensitive to solving basic problems. One such concern is menstruation. As the menstruation debate becomes normalized, the issues that circulate within it are classified. When one understands the physical and psychological differences that a woman must experience during such events, the answers to the questions regarding the necessity of menstrual sheets become available.

In this case, paid sheets are more suitable. This is advantageous for the unstructured division of women's forces. They can compensate by working longer hours. For those working in the corporate or organized sector, there is an option like 'work from home' which can be availed on any weekend of the month. If one can complete one's task at a convenient time, there are not many obligations. Companies can ensure that their employees do not use this as an excuse to avoid performing their tasks in this way.

If menstrual sheets are not a desired benefit, the basic toiletries listed above must be available everywhere. Thanks to this, the organization can observe working hours throughout this period. Employees can improve their skills to compete with their co-workers and other colleagues later, within a time frame set by the company.

Menstruation is a physical bodily function that occurs in women, and being ashamed to admit it is the biggest misconception. The concept of frontline feminism applies until all women are rid of the effects of menstruation. Any policy, regulation or legislation must be expressed with caution.

The delay in the discussion of the 'Menstruation Allowance Bill' in the Lok Sabha by the Member of Parliament representing Arunachal Pradesh in 2018 led to a thorough examination of the need for a menstrual leave scheme for working women every month. National policy makers need to take serious steps to address these current issues and such a statement if implemented will have a positive impact and provide solace to many and India requires one.

Finally, menstruation rules should be created to address additional concerns that women confront, such as the absence of a private location at work to change used menstrual materials such as sanitary napkins, adequate rest rooms, fear of stains and odours, and poor hygiene in toilets. These policies should be properly enforced as well. Policies should target women from all backgrounds working across sectors/industries/professions/occupations rather than catering to the needs of women working in one or two specialised areas, because women of all backgrounds menstruate regardless of their occupation. Workplaces must become more gender inclusive since women are an important component of the workforce, and all stakeholders, including governments, companies, and society, must support this endeavour.