

The Menstrual Cycle



The Menstrual Cycle



What is the Menstrual Cycle?

- The first cycle – menarche - represents the start of puberty and becoming a woman
- Starts approximately around the age of 12
- Cycle commences with an easily identifiable discharge of blood
- The blood flow lasts for about 5 days, and is due to the uterus lining being shed, along with a little blood.



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How is it portrayed in our Sampraday?

- In the Shikshapatri, a woman during menstruation is known as a *Rajsvala*, and the period is referred to as *Maasic Vrat*
- "...Women shall never conceal the period of menstruation"
Shik. Shlok 173
- "During this time, women shall refrain from the touch of persons, clothes and other things for 3 days. On the fourth day they shall purify themselves with a full bath."
Shik. Shlok 174



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What do we do during this time?

- Refrain from religious activities for 4 days
- Give domestic responsibilities to others in the household
- Provide alternative means for cooking – asking possibly a friend, relative or family member
- Important for the rest of the family to co-operate, as a woman is entitled to follow the *aagna* laid down by Bhagwan himself.



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How do we follow it?

- Dependant on the time that *Rajodarshan* (time of the cycle) occurs
- If it occurs at night, as the night is divided into 3 parts:
 - If during first 2 parts, then the previous day is considered the first day
 - If during 3rd part, then the following day is considered the first day
- It is also forbidden for one *Rajsvala* to touch another, and if this happens, a complete bath should be taken.



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Why do we follow it with such sincerity?

There are several reasons ranging from one extreme to another:

- A woman is considered impure due to not only blood loss, but also excretion of heat and harmful toxins
- As a result, her body becomes weaker, and she is required to rest, therefore is allocated 3 days in a month
- Similar concepts include *sutak* (period of impurity consequent upon birth or death of a person) and an eclipse, where religious activity and cooking are prohibited, and only purified by bathing.



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On a more positive note...

- Brahma reveals himself in a *Rajsvala* at this time, so we should avoid touching her as she is on a higher spiritual level

However...

- It is also an inherited curse from the story behind *Rushi Panchmi*
- Story of the Bull and Dog, and their relevance to *Rushi Panchmi*



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Penance

- You have to refrain from religious duties BUT can perform Jaap (Chant) of Bhagwans name.
Women fast on *Rushi Panchmi* as atonement from the “original sin”
- We also fast on this day to clear any unknown sins committed through our *Maasic Vrat* throughout the year
- However, if sins are committed knowingly, there is a huge price to pay, as Bhagwan has requested this should be followed – it is **HIS AAGNA**



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Overcoming Problems faced in Society

- Difficult to follow particularly with young children, or a family to feed
- However it is also a husband's (or any other family member's) duty to ensure that a woman is able to follow her *aagna*, by compromising and reassuring the situation
- Difficult to follow at work or school – so *paap* received is reduced greatly with accidental touch of a *Rajsvala*
 - Ideally, you should shower before cooking at home to ensure the utmost pure environment, as cooked food is offered to Bhagwan.