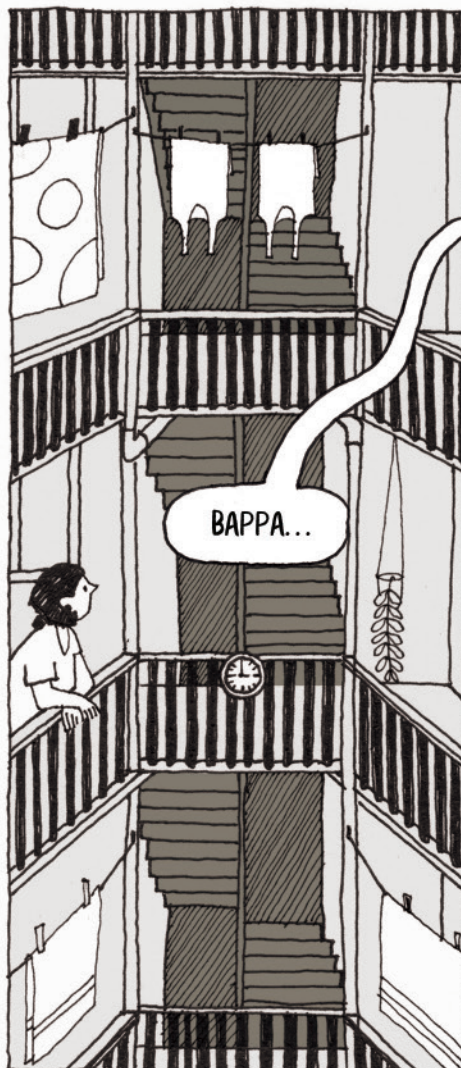
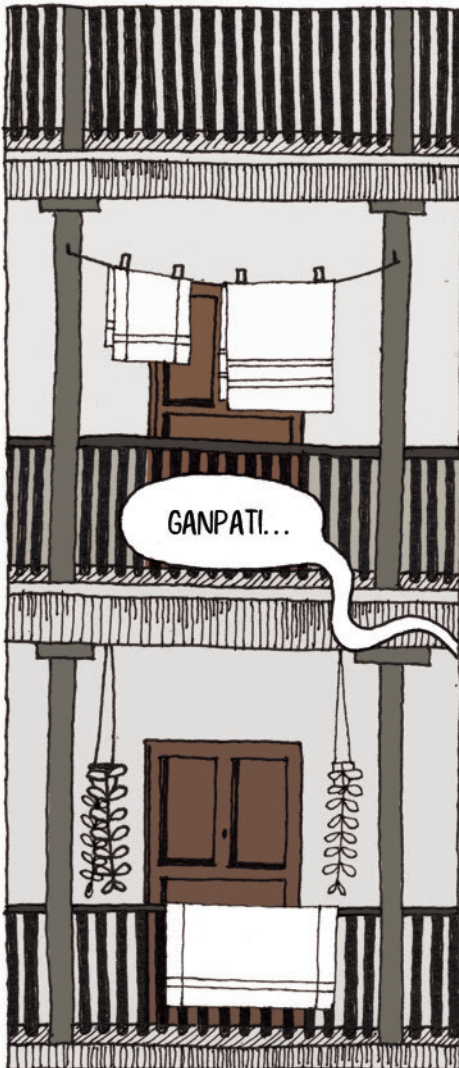


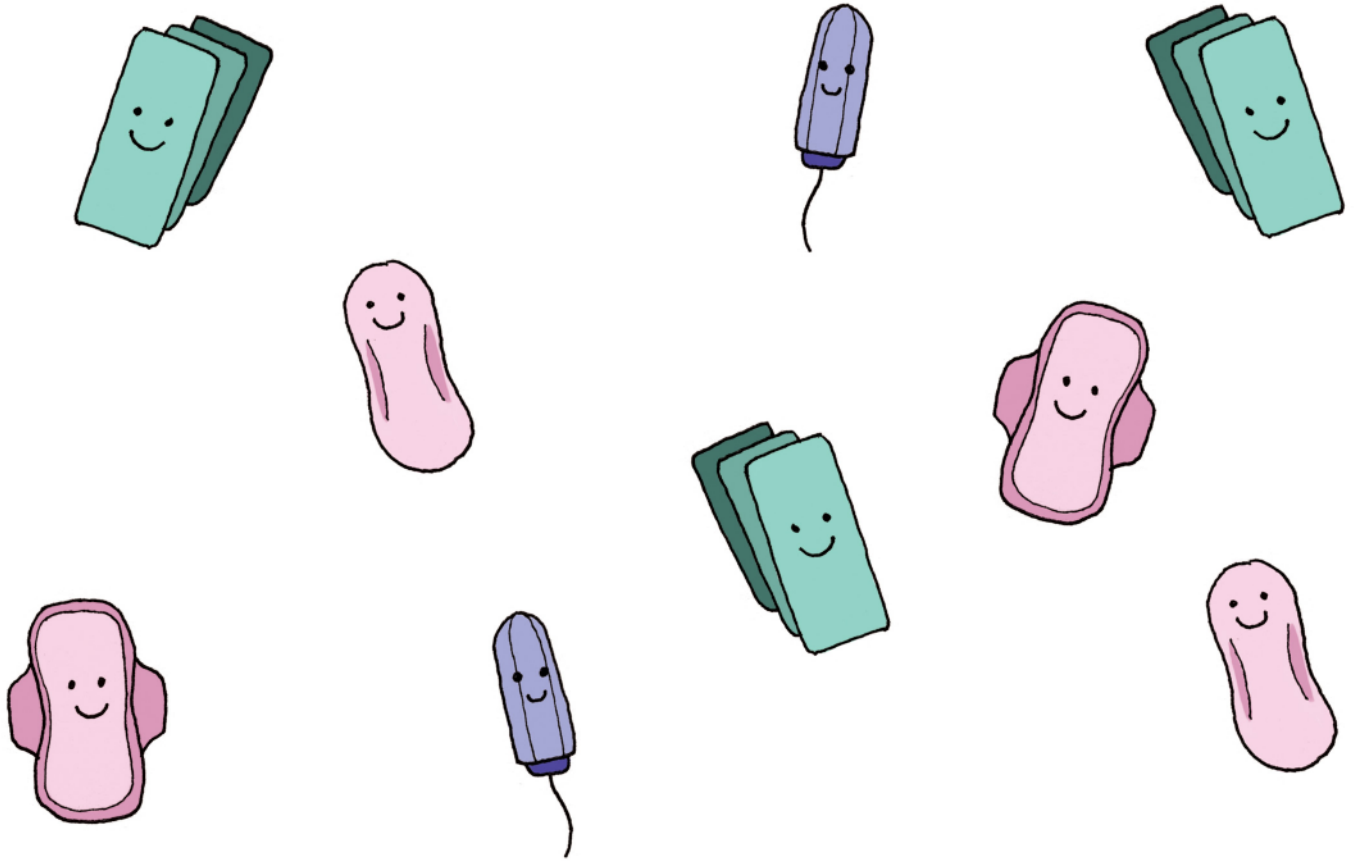


# IT'S OKAY TO BLEED

MUMBAI

STORIES OF CHANGE BY THE AKSHARA TEAM





## It's Okay to Bleed

Stories of Change by the Akshara Team

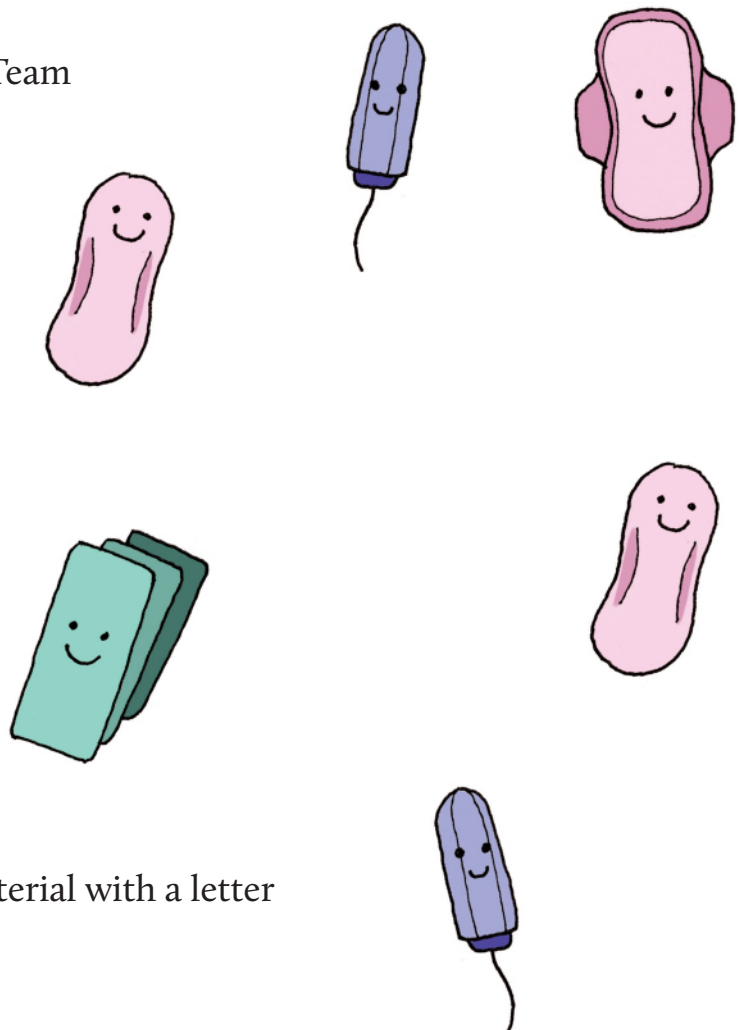
Produced in 2018

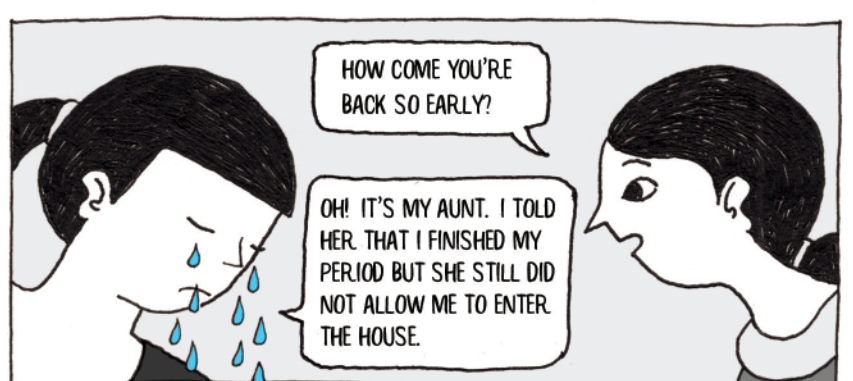
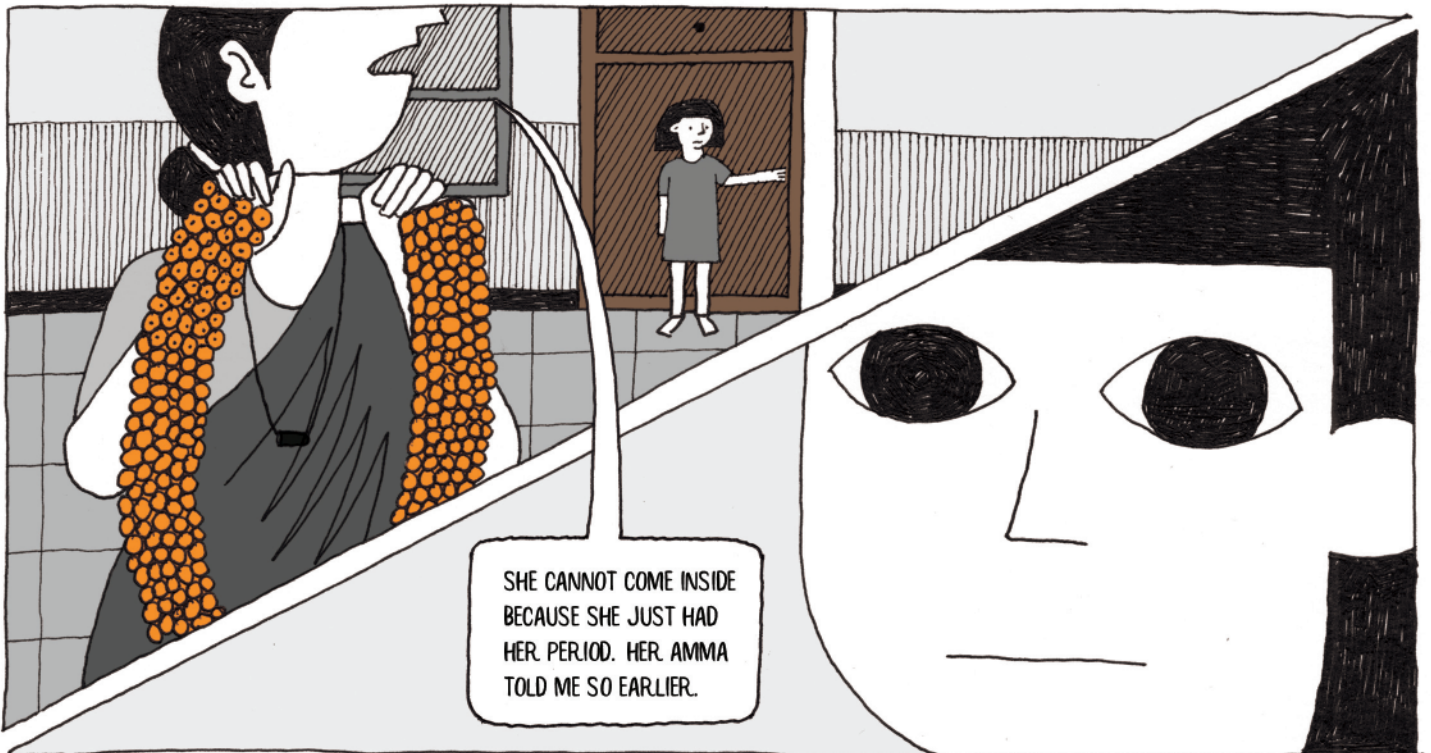
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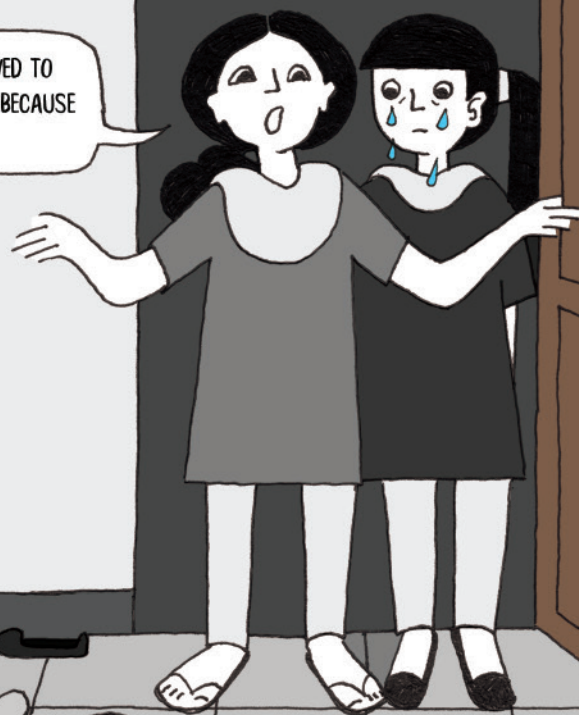
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SHIVANI WASN'T ALLOWED TO DECORATE THE GANPATI BECAUSE SHE HAD HER PERIOD!



HOW HORRIBLE!

MY DADI IS REALLY STRICT ABOUT THIS AS WELL.

THAT HAPPENED TO ME LAST YEAR.

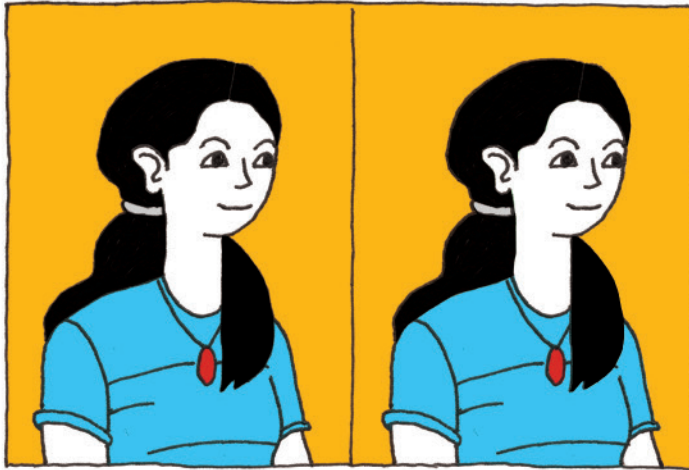


# DO's & DONT's for girls with periods

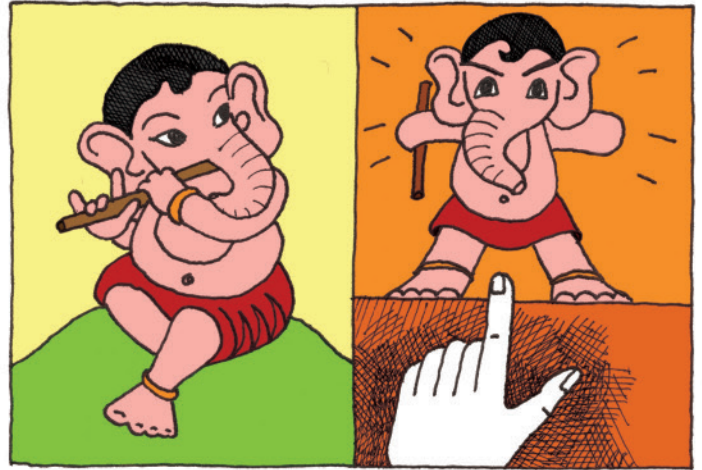
IN INDIA, THE COMMON RESTRICTIONS FOR GIRLS WITH PERIODS ARE:

GIRL WITH PERIOD

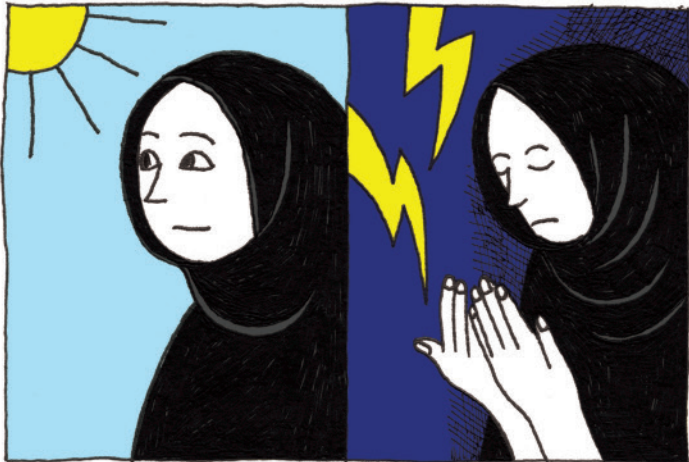
GIRL WITHOUT PERIOD



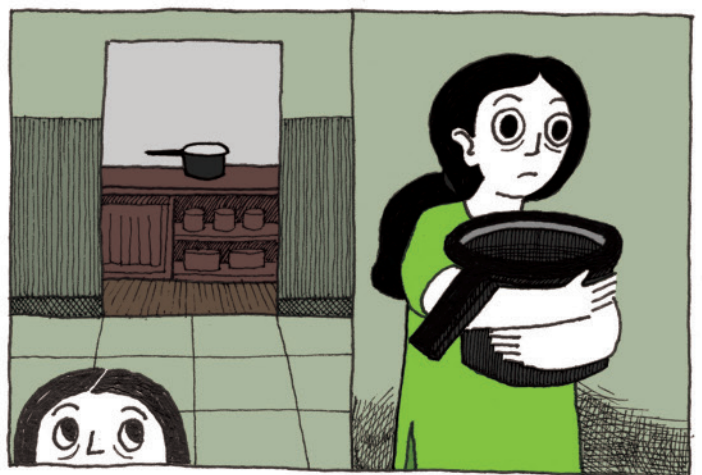
NOT TO TOUCH A STATUE OF GOD, DO PUJA OR VISIT A TEMPLE



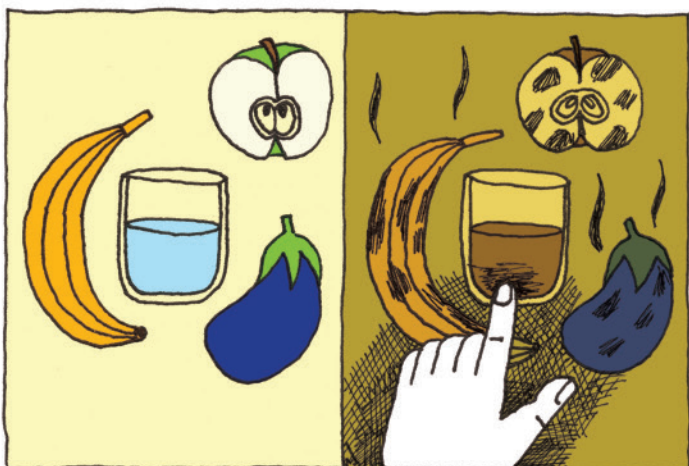
NOT TO OFFER PRAYERS



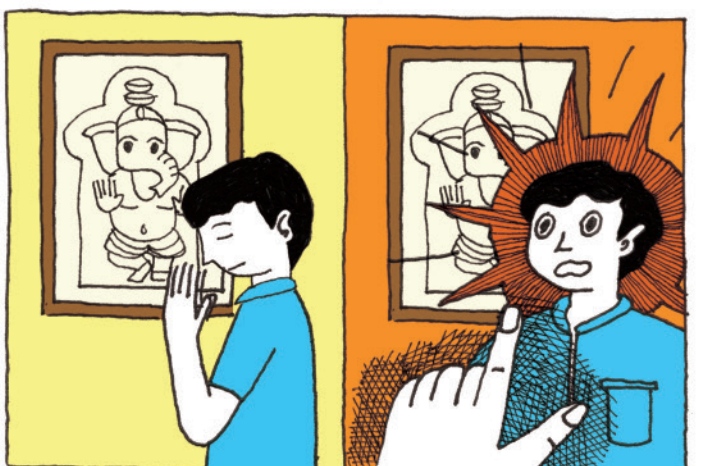
NOT TO ENTER THE KITCHEN AND TOUCH POTS



NOT TO TOUCH FOOD AND DRINKING WATER



NOT TO TOUCH MEN AND HAVE SEXUAL INTERCOURSE

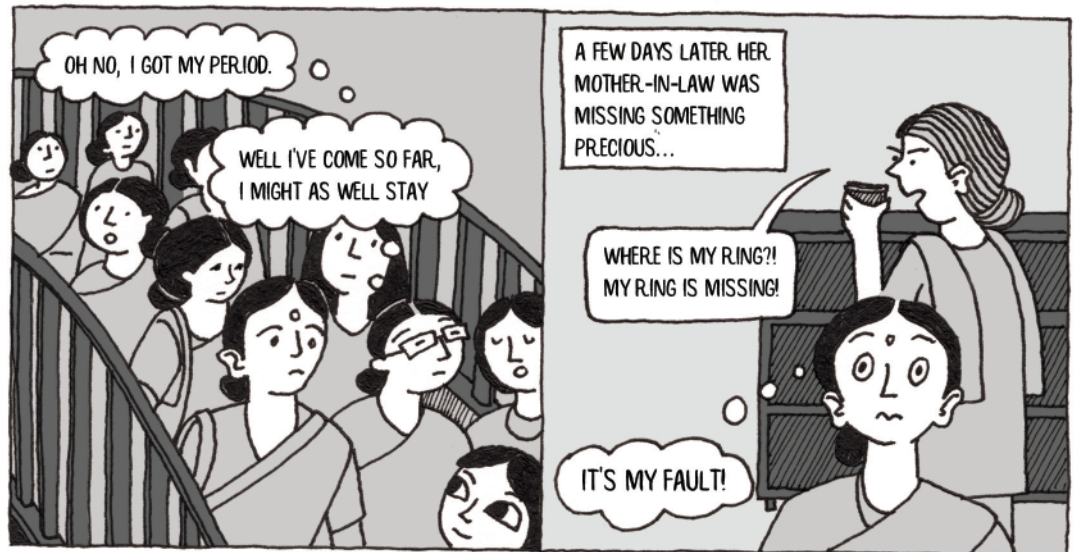




# DADI'S Tales of Reality?

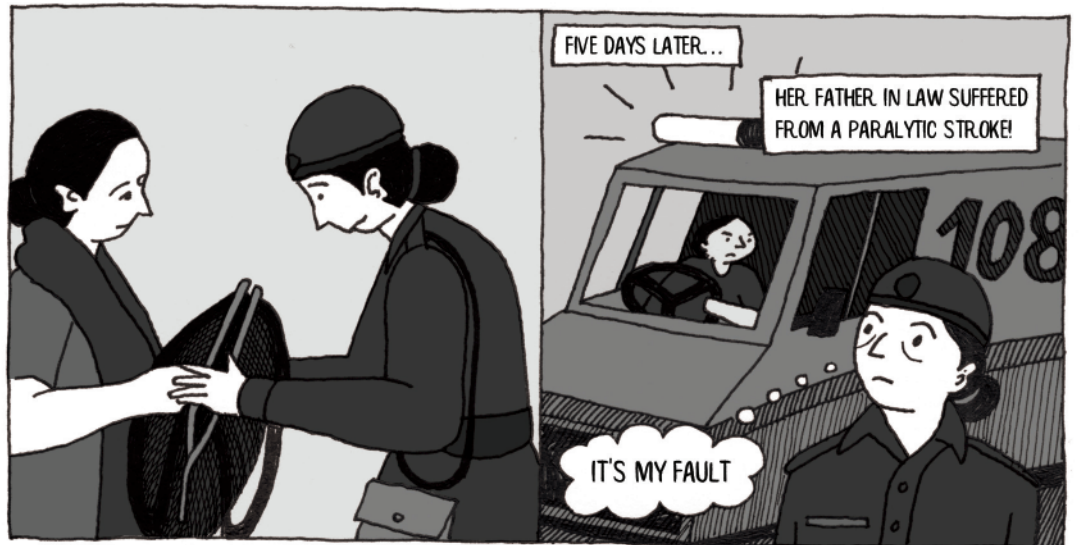
## THE LOST RING

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



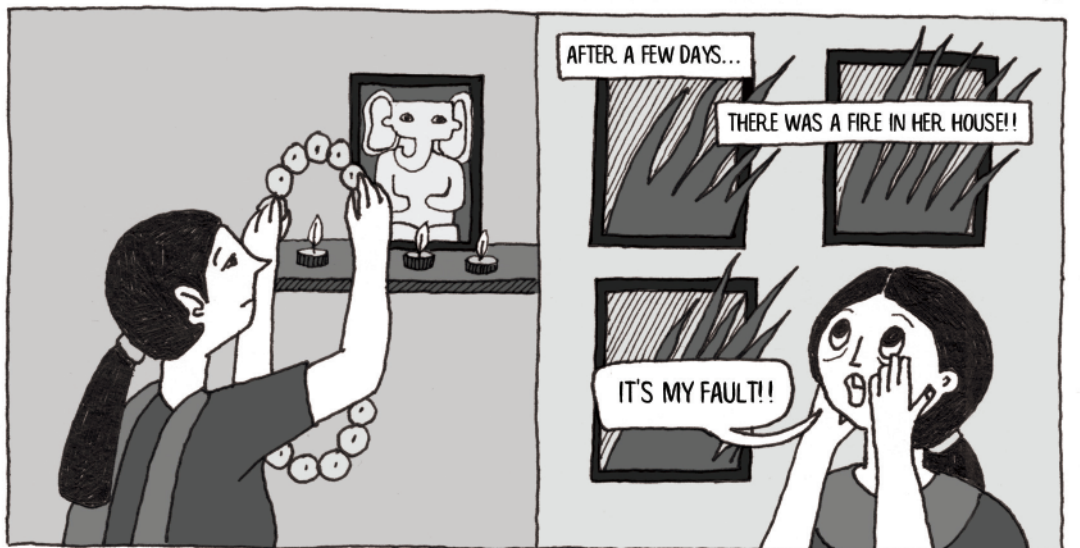
## THE POLICE WOMAN

MY NEIGHBOUR IS A POLICEWOMAN AND SHE WAS POSTED FOR DUTY. SO SHE WENT EVEN THOUGH SHE HAD HER PERIOD.



## 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...



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 COULD GIVE BIRTH, 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](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.

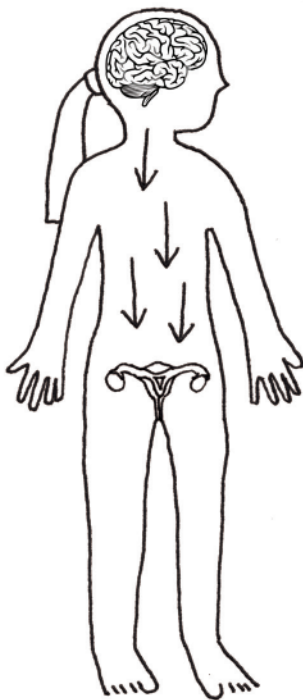
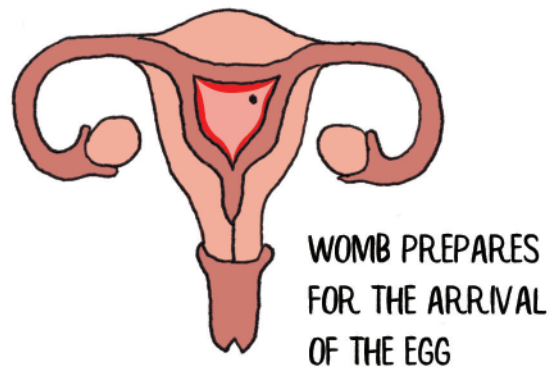
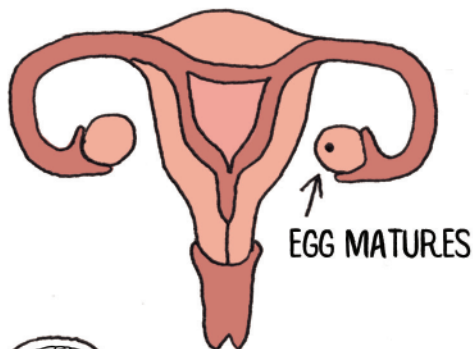
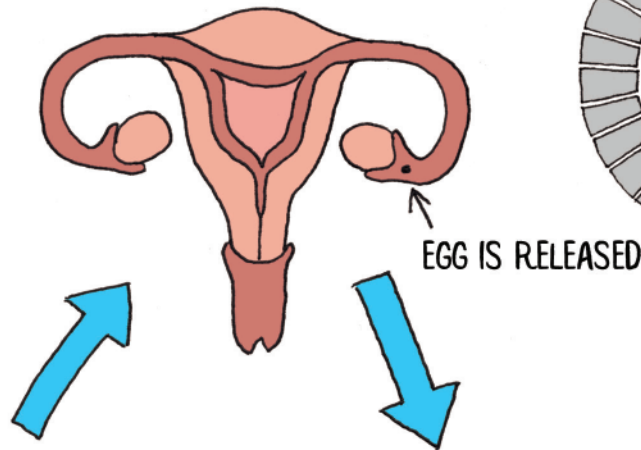
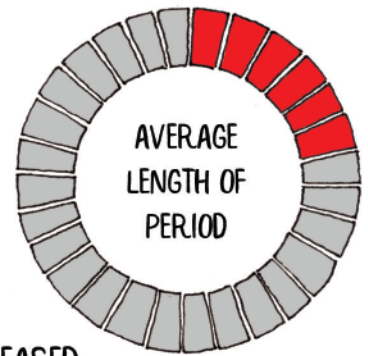


IT'S NATURE, YAAR! PART OF OUR BODY'S FUNCTIONING. DON'T YOU REMEMBER WHAT WE LEARNT IN BIO CLASS?

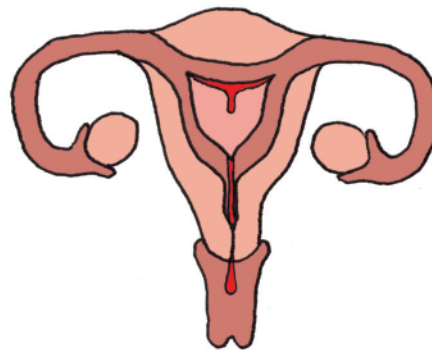


# WHAT IS MENSTRUATION?

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.



IF THE EGG IS UNFERTILIZED, THE WOMB LINING IS SHED



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 OESTROGEN 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.

IF THIS IS A NORMAL THING FOR ALL WOMEN ALL OVER THE WORLD, THEN WHY MAKE SUCH A BIG DEAL ABOUT IT?

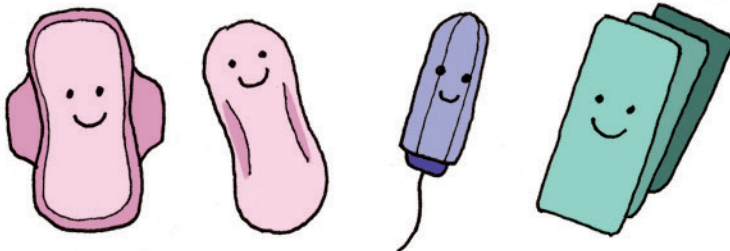
RIGHT. INSTEAD WE SHOULD BE TALKING ABOUT HYGIENE AND TAKING CARE OF OUR PERIODS PROPERLY AND EATING PROPERLY BECAUSE WE LOSE BLOOD.

WHEN I GET MARRIED AND SET UP MY HOME, I WILL NOT ALLOW THESE TABOOS.

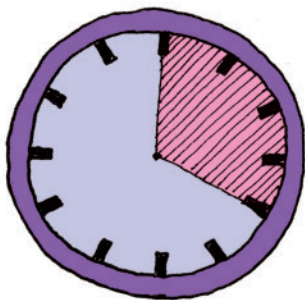
ME NEITHER.

# TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF

DECIDE ON WHAT, FOR YOU, IS A CONVENIENT METHOD: SANITARY NAPKINS, TAMPONS OR PIECES OF CLOTH?

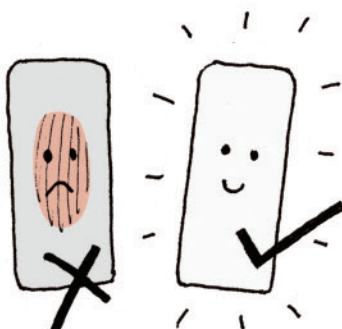


DISCARD YOUR SANITARY PRODUCT PROPERLY.



CHANGE YOUR PAD OR TAMPON REGULARLY

WASH YOURSELF AND BATHE REGULARLY



IF YOU ARE USING CLOTH STRIPS, MAKE SURE THEY ARE CLEAN AND DRY BEFORE YOU USE THEM AGAIN.

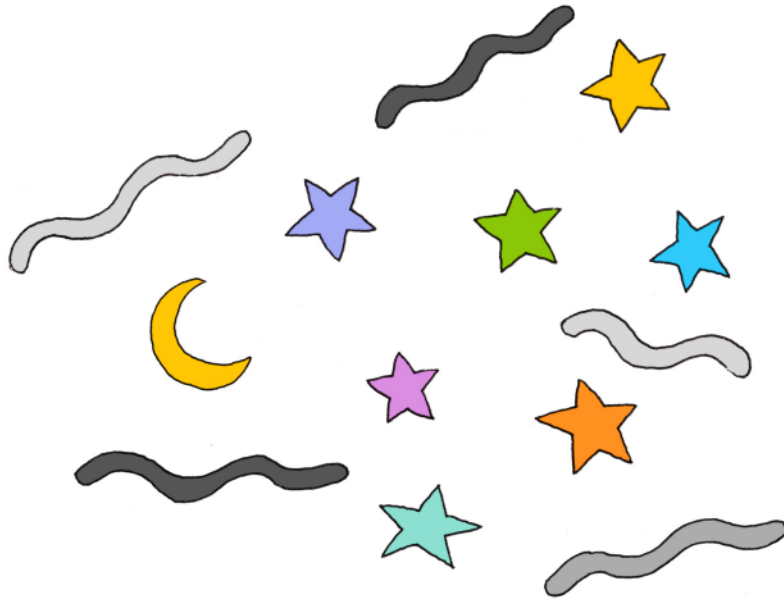
EAT NUTRITIOUS FOOD. REMEMBER THAT MOST INDIAN GIRLS ARE ANAEMIC BECAUSE OF POOR NUTRITION.



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=5S8SD83ILJY&FEATURE=YOUTU.BE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5S8SD83ILJY&feature=youtu.be)

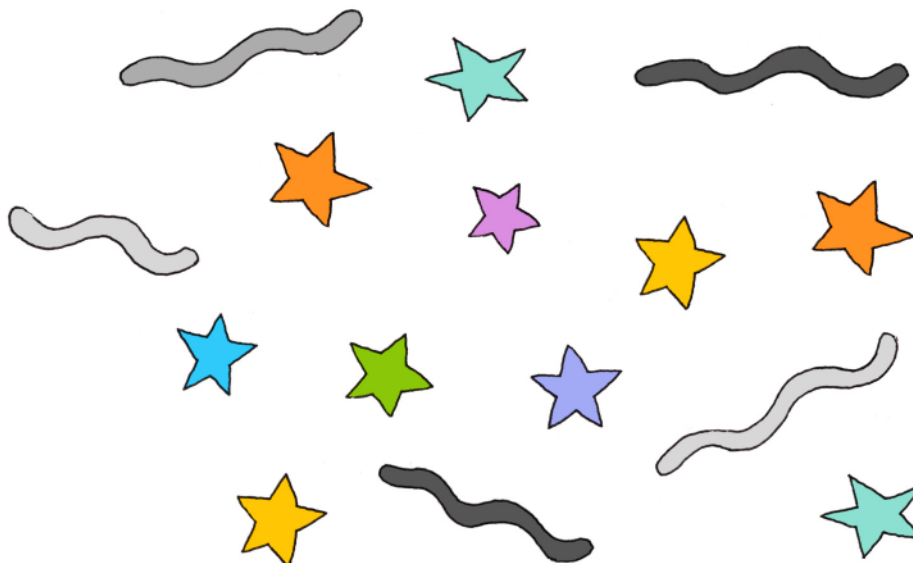
YOU CAN JOIN CAMPAIGNS LIKE 'HAPPY TO BLEED':  
[HTTPS://WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/EVENTS/7577746744337128/](https://www.facebook.com/events/7577746744337128/)

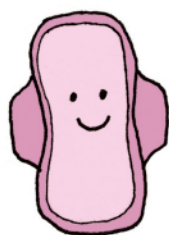
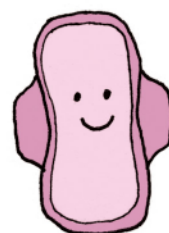
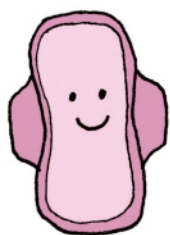
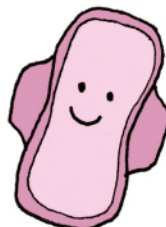
YOU CAN READ ABOUT MENSTRUATION IN COMIC BOOK FORM IN:  
[HTTPS://WWW.MENSTRUPEDIA.COM/AUDIO-VISUAL-PREVIEW/](https://www.menstrupedia.com/audio-visual-preview/)



## Acknowledgments

This booklet was conceptualised and written by Nandita Gandhi based on the stories of change which emerged from the innovative evaluation tool used during the Mapping Change Project. Sincere thanks to all the girls of the 2016 batch who so generously shared their lives and stories. We are grateful to Madhuri Kamat for supervising the project, Sunita Bagal and Ujjwala Mhatre for program co-ordination and the Advisory Group of Dr Kalyani Talvelkar, Dr Ketaki Ranade, Shweta Ghosh, and Sudipta Dhruv for their invaluable suggestions. The first draft was written by Vishakha Gupta. Special thanks to Manjima Bhattacharya and the American Jewish World Service, USA for supporting the project. The striking cover and illustrations are done by Anjora Noronha (Kadak collective).





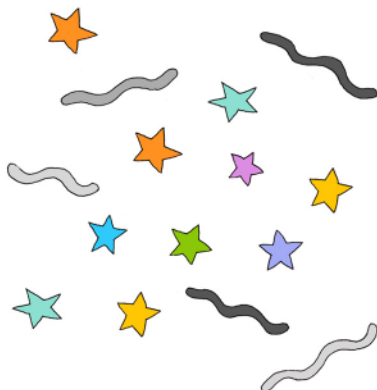


Akshara's focus is on half the population of India or its women and girls, especially those who are socially and economically underprivileged and bear the brunt of violence.

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.



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