

The End of Silent Suffering

Abstract

This paper seeks to examine the year 2025 from the perspective of women. This year there has been multiple evidences that suggest a shift in the consumer awareness and media about period, paid leaves and other issues. Hormonal conversation has been one of the major factors that has refined mental health. The paper also seeks to critically analyze the extent of medical gaslighting in India with respect to period pain. The paper also seeks to explain the various shift to open conversation about menstrual pain and its consequences. The paper also attempts to suggest ways in which this gaslighting can be prevented and help women restore their trust in the healthcare system.

Introduction

For the longest time in our country, issues related to women's health are dismissed no matter how severe the symptoms are especially when related to period pain. Menstruation is often negatively perceived due to misconceptions and biases. Medical Pathologization and normalizations are ways in which the subject of menstrual pain is reduced to nothing but trivialization of most complains. However, it's important to note that despite the normalization of their problems, there is an evident shift in the way people address this problem now. Around 34% of women prioritize menstrual leave over other benefits or incentives.¹ These problems if persist for longer, they are likely to alter the way people perceive this problem and give generalized solutions.

Medical Gaslighting

Women experience multiple kind of symptoms such as backache, headache, mood swings etc. They are also likely to experience anxiety, depression, and PTSD. They have acknowledged these feelings and are likely to seek professional help. However, more often than not, they discover that most health professionals are dismissive about these claims. Studies suggest that most women feel doctors and professionals try to 'normalize' their pain and trivialize any consequences.² This practice is widespread across the country irrespective of geographical differences. Most women also complain of gender bias and stereotypes in the medical field, as a result, there is a lack of clinical research on women's health to contribute to advance studies. The constant trivialization and dismissal by the healthcare professionals have had severe psychological effects such as

¹ *Women's Day 2025: Menstrual leave push redefines workplace priorities* (Business Standard, 6 March 2025) https://www.business-standard.com/india-news/women-workplace-priorities-2025-menstrual-leave-gender-pay-gap-leadership-125030600710_1.html accessed 20 January 2026

² Japneet Kaur Dhillon, 'Psychological Effect of Medical Gaslighting on Female Patients: A Systematic Review' (2025) 10 *International Journal of Innovative Science and Research Technology* 845–852 <https://doi.org/10.38124/ijisrt/25jun646> accessed 20 January 2026

symptom distress, and worsening mental health. General surveys also point towards another pattern that suggest that women are more often referred to psychiatrists and psychologists, whereas men are more likely to undergo investigations for the purpose of medical purpose.³ These factors highlight the failure of one of the most important systems of the country, healthcare. It highlights the gap in the system at various levels such as lack of clinical training, research training, provider-patient dynamics based on biases and stereotypes.

Perimenopause

The perimenopause is the reproductive phase in a woman's life occurring before the final menstrual period, or menopause.⁴ This period begins the late 30's or early 40's and may continue for several years before Menopause. Perimenopause has been an open discussion in many parts of the world, including India. This openness and discussion have raised awareness amongst the women and the youth. Perimenopause often takes a toll on the overall mental health of the individual as it is likely to cause stress, hot flashes and night sweats. Other symptoms include sleep disturbance, mood changes, fatigue etc. During this phase, it is suggested to have regular check-ups to detect early signs of any divergence from normal complains.

Shift in society

The Indian Society once feared from talking about menstrual pains, now they have come a long way were there are open discussions being held about the effects of perimenopause and menopause. More and more feminist are bringing awareness about the wrongful act of normalization of period pain. The discussions to address period poverty were also considered inappropriate or unprofessional. However, the government has been progressive on these matters, The Right of Women To Menstrual Leave and Free Access To Menstrual Health Products Bill was passed in 2022. This ensures that the state tries its best to ensure availability and distribution of menstrual health products free of cost to all women.⁵ By 2025, menstrual conversations became more open and easy-to-discuss topic. Women feel more empowered to share their insights about their experiences and mental health. This shift signifies about a cultural change in the society which no more considers such topics a taboo. They no longer feel the need for a permission to talk about such matters in workplaces or personal life, which in the earlier times was needed from their partner or in-laws. This collective advocacy and political debate have contributed significantly for

³ *Chronic pains go untreated for millions of women globally, finds Lancet study* (The New Indian Express, 29 May 2024) <https://www.newindianexpress.com/nation/2024/May/29/chronic-pains-go-untreated-for-millions-of-women-globally-finds-lancet-study/> accessed 20 January 2026

⁴ Australasian Menopause Society, *Menopause Information Resource (Resource Hub, Australasian Menopause Society, document ID dc385480-d0c0-4033-9e07-bc82306a84f6)* <https://hub.menopause.org.au/Play?pId=dc385480-d0c0-4033-9e07-bc82306a84f6> accessed 20 January 2026

⁵ The Right Of Women To Menstrual Leave And Free Access To menstrual Products Bill, 2022 (bill no.276 of 2022)

bringing this change in the society. Support from the Government has played its role in normalizing these conversations and help create a safe space for women through these regulations. However, menstrual leave's is another issue which requires immediate attention from the parliament and the government. More laws and rules around these subjects will make the shift, from an oppressive to progressive nation, smoother and efficient.

Conclusion

Overall, there has been a significant change from the previous situation in the society. In terms of menstrual leave, there is scope for more progress and this can be efficiently achieved through laws and regulatory compliance orders such as mandatory 2 days leave for all women in a particular age bracket. The points raised above highlight the cultural and structural turning point towards a more advanced nation with more dignity for women. It's important to note that while women are relatively free than they were, there still lies some inherent burden of explanation and self-justification on them.

Ultimately to summarize, it's safe to say that this shift reflects a powerful move. However, the real challenge will always be the execution of existing policies and implementation of new ones. Without positive action plans the risk of openness is temporary attention rather than a real win.

