

October 2023



## **SEWA SANDESH**

A Monthly Newsletter

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[www.sewainternational.org](http://www.sewainternational.org)

# Editors Note

*Namaskar,*

Menstruation, also known as periods or menstrual cycle, is an essential part of women's lives. It is a natural process that occurs in various stages of women's lives and is intricately linked to their health and personal well-being. For over the past three years, Sewa International has been running an awareness program on this subject. Especially among adolescent girls, Sewa International has provided training on menstrual health topics to more than 9,000 girls. To facilitate this, Sewa International has also developed a "module" based on international standards. Additionally, this module guides cultural norms and practices related to menstruation in the Indian context, particularly for women of reproductive age.

In Sewa International's menstrual awareness program, discussions are held with students about their daily lives, including nutrition, customs, and rituals during menstruation.

During menstruation, women face menstrual bleeding, which typically lasts for 3 to 7 days. During this time, women often experience abdominal pain, fatigue, irritation, and other cyclic symptoms. The module specifically addresses how to deal with misconceptions and misunderstandings related to this.

Despite the challenges of menstruation, it is a healthy process and should not be viewed negatively. The Sewa team has given special attention to this issue. Society should consider menstruation as a part of health and personal freedom, and women can lead their daily lives normally along with it. Our team is providing awareness on this.

Special attention should be paid to hygiene during menstruation, and the importance of a healthy diet and exercise should not be forgotten. Women can continue their daily activities without interruption and should embrace it as a natural process. Sewa International's awareness program focuses on this. Our goal is to spread positive awareness about menstruation among people. Let's come together...

It is essential to increase awareness in society and provide accurate information about women's health so that this natural process can be understood and supported.

A change is needed in the human perspective and knowledge of menstruation so that we can prioritise the health and well-being of the entire society and assist women in embracing this important natural process with courage and acceptance.

Let us all come together and normalize "PERIODS" just like health and well-being.

*Dhanyawaad !*



# Periods Talk: The Missing Chapter

The word "period" has always been spoken in whispers, carrying a sense of stigma. Through years of social conditioning, a culture of silence has been built around what is a perfectly normal biological phenomenon. Even today, menstrual

hygiene is not considered a priority in Bharat, leaving many young girls unaware of their biological changes until they experience them.

Sewa International achieved a momentous milestone in October by educating 9,000 young girls across 25 schools in Delhi/NCR. It fills us with pride as we continue to break the stigma surrounding menstruation and promote menstrual health. While there has been a sea of change in normalising the conversation around periods, there is still a long way to go, starting right from the schools.



## Empowering Entrepreneurs Now & Beyond...

In a world where women's aspirations have long been curbed by societal prejudices, inspirational stories emerge right from the roots of Kutch. The journey of our Sewa Entrepreneurs acts as a beacon of hope for countless generations of women who have yearned to chase their dreams.

We stand behind every strong woman who strives to fulfill her dreams in all their glory. Sewa International provides them with a safe space to make their dreams flourish, proving that encouragement can amplify a woman's potential beyond measure.

Through extensive skill development training, we have empowered countless women. Each of them reminds us that when nurtured with respect and courage, they leave a mark that lasts for years to come. Their unwavering spirits, resilience, and decisions inspire not only themselves but also the world around them, now and forever!



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# Adversity to Advocacy – A Survivor's Story

Amma and Baba, their faces etched with the burdens of life, were forced to make 1,500 bricks every day. They were just two among many, struggling to make ends meet in a world where their lives seemed predestined. Khem Lal was just six when he joined them, working 18 hours a day, and even then, they would struggle to get two meals.

Khem Lal's journey began in the unforgiving crucible of child labor. His small hands were not meant for play but for grueling tasks like coal breaking and brick packing. His childhood slipped through his fingers, replaced by the cold, unfeeling touch of the bricks he worked with. His parents were both construction site workers, working for a daily wage. Just when they thought their life was getting better, they were sold from one contractor to another.



*Scan to read more about Khem Lal's journey and ongoing efforts to combat forced labour and human trafficking, explore the most recent article exclusively featured in the pages of the Indian Express:*

Born into a life of bonded labourers, Khem Lal struggled to understand that his reality was anything but normal. Despite the backbreaking work they endured, his family had nothing to show for it – no ration card, no access to clean drinking water, and no proper roof over their heads. They lived in cramped spaces and were, for all practical purposes, enslaved.

Despite the hardships, his father emphasized education as a means to escape their plight. His words stayed with Khem Lal, and he started finding ways to study and attend school. At 13, Khem Lal began skipping work to attend school. While it worked for some time, when the contractor got wind of this, all hell broke loose. The contractor would regularly beat him up.

After nearly three years of suffering, a ray of hope emerged in the form of an NGO. They rescued Khem Lal's family from the abyss of bonded labour, offering them a chance at a life beyond the clutches of their tormentors. Years passed, and Khem Lal graduated with a Master's in Social Work, his heart full of compassion for those who, like his family, had been ensnared in the web of exploitation.

In 2020, Khem Lal co-founded SAANS, an organization dedicated to raising awareness about bonded labour and human trafficking. Together, they worked tirelessly to educate the world and advocate for change. Khem Lal's painful past became his most potent weapon for turning adversity into advocacy.

In his tireless pursuit of a better future, Khem Lal Khaterji embodies a profound truth – that even in the darkest of circumstances, one can find the strength to break free, create change, and inspire hope. Today, Khem Lal continues to be a change-maker as a Sewa Fellow at Sewa International.



# Act of Sewa

The world is facing the reality of climate change, with flash floods being experienced in various parts of India this year. These so-called natural disasters are often construed as an 'Act of God,' but blame fairly lies on human actions. From Assam to Sikkim, roads were washed away, buildings reduced to rubble, and vital infrastructure left in ruins

When nature expressed its fury in the form of floods surging through the states of Assam and Sikkim, selfless volunteers of Sewa stepped up to assist the stranded flood victims with basic amenities. Reflecting on 25 years of Sewa's expertise in disaster management, Sewa stood by the victims affected by these devastating floods. Sewa's volunteers risked their lives to provide essential services to those affected by the floods.



# Safe Water for a Brighter Future

Access to clean water, proper sanitation, and hygiene is recognized as a fundamental human right. According to a report published by the United Nations, it is estimated that around 2.2 billion people lack access to safely managed drinking water, including 703 million who do not even have basic water services. Moreover, 3.5 billion people lack safely managed sanitation, with 1.5 billion lacking basic sanitation services. Additionally, 2 billion individuals lack even a basic hand-washing facility, and 653 million have no handwashing facility at all.

This lack of access to essential services extends to millions of school children who do not have access to safe drinking water. Consequently, each year, numerous children suffer from waterborne illnesses due to poor water quality. These illnesses not only jeopardise their health but also disrupt their education, resulting in missed school days and hindering their academic progress.





***Together, we've sketched stories of change,  
etching hope into hearts. We want to express  
our sincere gratitude for your continued support  
and readership.***



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