

# Pink

# Carnival!

~ Menstrual Hygiene Day 2019

By Nirman Foundation

28<sup>th</sup> May, 2019 | Dakshinapan, Kolkata

#MHDday2019 #ItsTimeForAction

## Pink Carnival! ~ Menstrual Hygiene Day 2019

**O**n 28<sup>th</sup> May, 2019, in Dakshinapan, Kolkata saw a first of its kind open air, free for all carnival dedicated to menstrual health and hygiene. This Menstrual Hygiene Day, Pink Carnival organized by Nirman Foundation aimed to create a mini festival juxtaposed with bringing conversation on menstruation literally to the public; an attempt to normalize the dialogue around it. The aim was also to bring to the fore numerous initiatives that are taking place around the world. Pink Carnival came alive with an audience of approximately 200 people.

The evening started with a street play by **Dramatically Correct**, a youth theatre group, who immediately drew the attention of the passersby, with their energetic, uninhibited performance that breaks all barriers and dares to speak of the unspoken. The street play began with a social experiment, where a performer roams helplessly with a stained skirt. The reactions perceived among the bystanders ranged from disgust to genuine



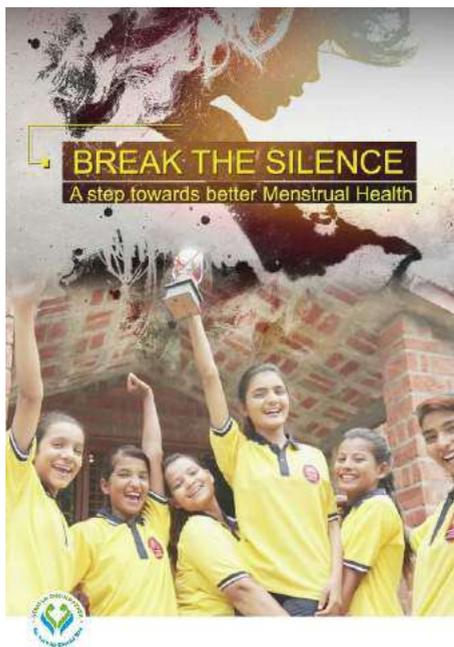
**Performance by Dramatically Correct**

concern for the girl's wellbeing. Only a few individuals came forward to speak for her when she was being charged for her "indecent" (as a part of the play). Dramatically Correct's treatment of social taboos, norms and restrictions in an informal, casual manner makes it relatable for the crowd. Prakash Jha, a fellow audience, said, "I have never attended a program like this before. I have a daughter. I don't want her to go through the same psychological trauma for the stigma that's imposed upon menstruation." Babai Sen in the audience shared, "I agree that men should come forward; that would give the women support to keep moving forward. Thank you for holding this open discussion."

A “Share Your Thoughts” canvas was passed around and it captured insights from the audience. Pink Carnival was an amalgamation of art, film, poetry, street play and enlightening discussions.

No amount of efforts put in towards normalizing menstruation or establishing effective menstrual hygiene management in place, will be sufficient to bridge the care gap that exists. Nirman Foundation will continue to work towards the cause and contribute to build an inclusive society.

**“Break the Silence - A step towards better menstrual health”**, a short film produced by Nirman Foundation was launched to mark the day. The film addresses the various barriers young girls have to face and the need to break away the myths and taboos that shrouds menstruation. The film has also been launched online on the same day on Nirman Foundation’s Website (<http://nirmanfoundation.org/>) and shared on social media.



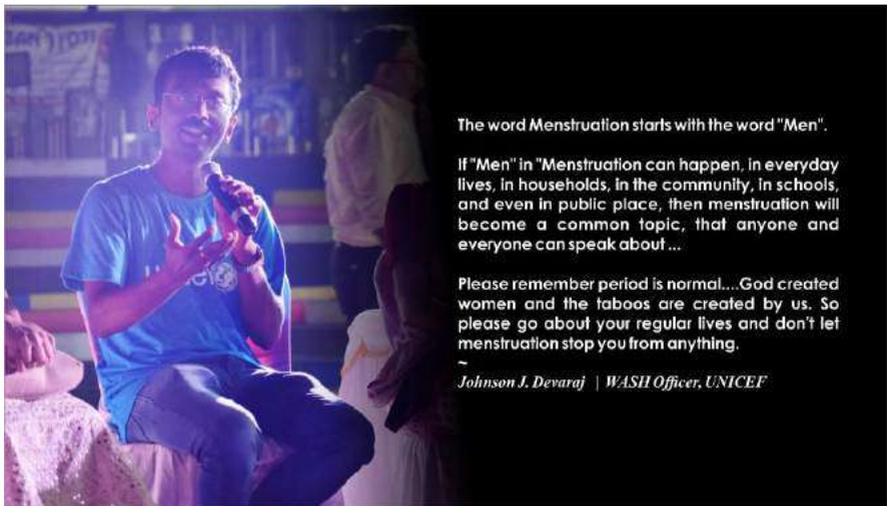
Kaokatha Natyo Goshthi is a theatre group working towards a social change besides performing regular shows on proscenium. Through interactive games and theatrical exercises Kaokatha engaged the public in activities to explore

beliefs that we unknowingly harbor around menstrual hygiene and the myths, taboos and stigma that surround it. They addressed how nuanced and challenging it can be for an adolescent girl to keep herself safe from numerous harms (psycho-social and health wise) and how it is quite possible to be safe too. At the end of one of the activities, when participants were asked whether they would be ready to worship on their menstruating days, one lady said, “Well, now I have to! I will.” while another lady shared “It

**Poster of Film produced by NF**

is extremely difficult to defy social norms. I don't think I can". A lady in the audience mentioned, "Coming across such public events, gives us more reason and strength to be able to tell others that it's ok to not be shy about periods."

**Abira Das**, a grade 11 student of Calcutta International School elocuted a poem written by her--"The Temple Between My Thighs" which connoted the role of art and poetry in de-stigmatising social issues like menstruation. Her performance was much appreciated and the audience applauded her for such bold words at such a young age.



The word Menstruation starts with the word "Men".

If "Men" in "Menstruation can happen, in everyday lives, in households, in the community, in schools, and even in public place, then menstruation will become a common topic, that anyone and everyone can speak about ...

Please remember period is normal...God created women and the taboos are created by us. So please go about your regular lives and don't let menstruation stop you from anything.

~ Johnson J. Devaraj | WASH Officer, UNICEF

An informative adda or a talk show followed, where experts in the field were invited to briefly share their thoughts and experiences in the field of menstrual health and hygiene. The panel members represented multiple perspectives and the discussion evoked curiosity and questions among the audience. The speakers for the session were Johnson Jeyaseelan Devaraj (UNICEF), Sahana Nag (Counselor and Guest Faculty, CCSSS & Jadavpur University, Kolkata), Purvi Tanwani & Namrata Dutta Karamchandani from Anahat, Amarendra Kumar Singh on behalf of Suman Industries Pvt. Ltd. and Debayani Sen from Nirman Foundation. A wholistic discussion took place that touched upon education, awareness, infrastructure, advocacy around menstrual health and hygiene; issues

around availability of affordable hygienic absorbents, disposal of sanitary pads and environmental pollution that it causes were brought up as well. The social norms and taboos, poor education on menstrual hygiene and lack of facilities such as availability of absorbents, period friendly toilets, access to water, etc. are still challenges.

J. Devaraj encouraged men to come forward in supportive roles and create an enabling community and emphasized that menstruation being a normal biological process, should not pose as a hindrance in regular functions for any woman. Anahat shared their experiences and demonstrated their innovative cloth pad product that is an upcoming alternative eco-friendly solution. Suman industries Pvt. Ltd. shared their experiences with low cost pad making unit in Latur, Maharashtra and screened a short video of the process a pad is made, SIPL also kept their low cost sanitary pads for free pick-ups. Sahana Nag put forth the psychological explanations behind myths and beliefs around menstruation and the impact these have on the well-being of young people.

Nirman Foundation shared their experience of working in 105 school in rural and semi urban areas and extended, that while it is extremely important to move towards bio-degradable absorbents, it is also important to currently keep girls in school and provide them with hygienic facilities and encourage debunking myths and taboos,





This is a large Anahat Unnati Pad. The pads we use today is 90% plastic. Our cloth pad is made of 100% cotton cloth, flannel that acts as the absorbent and a leak proof fabric, which is the printed part. This pad comes with wings and doesn't look anything close to a sanitary pad, ensuring no unwanted attention is drawn.

~  
*Purvi Tanwani & Namrata Dutta Karamchandani | Anahat*



Suman Industries Pvt. Ltd.'s training unit in Latur, Maharashtra for making low cost, quality pads, not only trains women from grassroots in production skills, but also ensure that they learn skills of marketing, sales and accounts, to be capable of initiating start ups. While we need to think about sustainable methods, accessibility is the biggest challenge in rural India, when it comes to menstrual hygiene management.

~  
*Amarendra Kumar Singh | Nirman Foundation  
(on behalf of Suman Industries Pvt. Ltd.)*

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We need to address menstrual health and hygiene from a wholistic perspective to ensure well-being of young girls and women. Along with menstrual health and hygiene education, awareness and demythifying menstruation, advocacy and infrastructure development are necessary components for making menstrual hygiene management accessible, affordable, sustainable and inclusive.

When we attend conferences and workshops or engage in similar interactions, we get to learn about so many amazing initiatives that exist around the world. We get exposed to new ideas and perspectives, which can positively influence our lives. It is important to make that experience accessible to all and ensure that the academic concepts can be contextualized and can find a place in the field. Pink Carnival intended to be one such platform.

~  
*Debayani Sen | Nirman Foundation*

The event not only addressed the issues of menstrual hygiene, but also the ecological impact of napkin disposal. — it was a wholesome event. Thanks for the experience  
— Ritu.

कठोर बोले शरूक, No more silence.

"MENSTRUATION IS 'MEN' IN MENSTRUATION. LETS DEMYSTIFY MENSTRUATION"  
N.

BLEED WITH DIGNITY  
— ANIRHAT FOUNDATION



If you love her you can love it!  
— Brisht

#Happy To Bleed!  
Great job Nirman Foundation —  
— HAVE A SOUND MENSTRUAL LIFE - wishing for every girl/woman.

We bleed so that you can BREATHE  
— Abira Bar

Glad and very proud to be a part of and witness this very necessary event! Keep up the good work!  
Wish you

We are badass... we can bleed four days straight without dying.  
— upchoudhary



## NIRMAN FOUNDATION

Drive Change Through Action

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