

'Impure' women

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It is not only the Dalits that are 'untouchable' in Indian society. Indian women when having their period are not supposed to approach any of the spiritual places, temples or other. But as explained by a young woman at the Jaguri women's rights association based in New Delhi, in some cases, women are even 'isolated' within their own home when having their period – in terms of sleeping, eating, and any other activities. However, the cultural phenomena of women's impurity linked to their period is not something specific for India. Although the specific 'punishment' or rejection is different in different cultures and contexts, women's menstruation has become a symbolic target for male exclusion of women in many parts of the world. Not too long ago, women in for example Spain were not welcome to church during the days when they had their period. Although this is now abandoned, the notions of impurity of menstruating women continue. Men that find women 'dirty' or not sexually attractive during the time when they have their period is still quite common. And women themselves have of course also internalised this image of their 'impurity'/dirtiness during menstruation in different ways.